

but it neither does that nor tries to. Lambert is rightly sceptical of clean slate/new population scenarios, but states explicitly that the early chapters of his book (those cited) are ‘not about how Kentish law related to other legal traditions, but about how law functioned and what law meant within Kentish society’. A more precise reference (to Lambert 2017, 71–2) suggests that it has mistakenly been imagined that the Germanic tradition of *ā*, ‘law’, was the Romano-British tradition. Another specific reference initially seems to be of no relevance at all, except that just over the page cited (Ibid, 99; see p 100) Lambert concludes that (in respect of legislation on theft) earlier Anglo-Saxon kings ‘were imposing new and foreign punitive priorities against the grain of native legal culture’. This is hardly a passage that foregrounds or suggests that indigenous tradition was the bedrock of the legislation. An article of my own is referenced as exemplifying the assumption that ‘ethnicity’ (and migration) were key factors of changes in the fifth and sixth centuries. It is true that I accept that migrations were a significant phenomenon – across most of Europe and beyond, in fact; it is also true, as fuller appraisal of the available literature would have shown, that I have consistently argued (from empirical evidence; and by no means alone) that a wave of larger group-identity formation (sc ‘confederation’) was a major phenomenon outside the Empire in the late second to the fifth centuries that appears to have been especially dynamic in some parts of Germanic-speaking Europe – which is rather different from proceeding on the unthinking basis of a habitual presupposition. I am willing to categorise identities as ‘ethnic’ in some circumstances, but personally *never* employ a concept of ‘ethnicity’ unless I need to discuss it as used by others. The first page specifically referred to from that article in fact reviews the hybrid origins of a reconstructed Anglian identity in England, including direct if limited evidence of a Romano-British component.

Where there is nothing good to say, nor sympathetic or encouraging comments that could be justified, it would be lovely to pass over in silence. But this book is being given a vast amount of uncritical publicity, and endorsement from some influential individuals who have no excuse not to know better. Fake history differs from fake news only in terms of time-depth. There are infinitely worse forms of historical misportrayal than anything perpetrated here, even if the issues are live and sensitive in current cultural politics. But you can’t fool all of the

people all of the time: nonsense will eventually get sorted from reality in future study and research. I stress that the selection of specific flaws pointed out here are all readily verifiable cases of factual error or false argument, not differences of opinion. Unless you take the view that only attitude matters and veracity does not, this is not work of publishable quality in any defensible view, and the publishers need to reflect on how they identified peer-reviewers. This booklet trumpets forth the very opposite of the proper critical approaches responsible academics try to instil in the students they seek to educate: respect for and care with evidence and interpretative methods – ie ensuring that you know what you are talking about; reading secondary sources with care and objectivity – not seeing only what you are looking for whether it is there or not, or cherry-picking references. ‘Post-truth’ is the disreputable realm to which this profoundly deficient work belongs, and it should be treated as such. We are better than this, ALL of us; the subject is better than this; and any and every target readership deserves infinitely better than this.

HUGHES, S S, MILLARD, A R, LUCY, S J, CHENERY, C A, EVANS, J A, NOWELL, G and PEARSON, D G 2014. ‘Anglo-Saxon origins investigated by isotopic analysis of burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK’, *J Archaeol Sci*, **42**, 81–92

HUGHES, S S, MILLARD, A R, CHENERY, C A, NOWELL G and PEARSON D G 2018. ‘Isotopic analysis of burials from the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Eastbourne, Sussex, UK’, *J Archaeol Sci: Reports*, **19**, 513–25

LAMBERT, T 2017. *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

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The Pritlewell Princely Burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003. By LYN BLACKMORE IAN BLAIR SUE HIRST CHRISTOPHER SCULL. 295mm. Pp xxix + 514,

339 figs, 50 tabs. MOLA Monograph 73. Museum of London Archaeology, 2019. ISBN 9781907586507. £35 (hbk).

The Anglo-Saxon Princely Burial at Prittlewell, Southend-on-Sea. By SUE HIRST and CHRISTOPHER SCULL. 230mm. Pp 108, ills (many col). Museum of London Archaeology, 2019. ISBN 9781907586477. £15 (pbk).

The Prittlewell Princely Burial presents the results of the excavation of a burial from Prittlewell, near Southend (in Essex), which, the book argues, dates to the late sixth century AD. The quantity and quality of the finds, including items made of gold, identify this as the grave of someone of high status, justifiably described as 'princely'. The excavation and the subsequent finds conservation and research were carried out to a very high standard, and the results are embodied in this publication, for which all the many contributors deserve congratulation. The text, accompanied by many photographs and drawings, covers all possible details of the site, its history and archaeology, the grave and its contents, and its wider contexts within Essex and beyond. Many further illustrations and data are available in the online archive hosted by Archaeology Data Service (ADS), which this reviewer successfully accessed. The publication in print of so much detail is welcome to this reviewer, who suspects that online resources are not consulted as often as they should be, partly because of lack of awareness of what is available. The Prittlewell site seems to have found the best, if an expensive, solution: a longer, more detailed book (*The Prittlewell Princely Burial*), which forms the main report, and one that is shorter (*The Anglo-Saxon Princely Burial at Prittlewell*) yet which contains a text that brilliantly compresses the conclusions of the main report while giving a good introduction to the processes of archaeological excavation and analysis. The finds are on display in Southend Museum. Anyone can discover the site as the museum display, book or webpage, then read further using whichever medium suits them best.

The burial was discovered in the course of road widening: an intact Anglo-Saxon burial, not previously damaged by human or animal activity, simply left to disintegrate *in situ*. The many finds included metal vessels still hanging on the walls of the timber burial chamber where the burial party had left them. The excavators and conservators have been able to virtually reconstruct the processes of construction, decay and collapse of the chamber and its contents.

This was a considerable achievement since most organic material had decayed, leaving only discoloured soil to show where wooden chamber, coffin, boxes or textiles had been, except where they had been in contact with metal. Of the body of the person buried, only few fragments of teeth survived. *The Prittlewell Princely Burial* is a demonstration of the value of skilled excavation. Incompetent digging would have found the complete objects, but many artefacts would not have been recognised. The lyre is a case in point, which, consisting as it did simply of brown soil and a few metal fittings, was nonetheless able to have its shape, form and size established – even to the extent that it was revealed to have been repaired and buried face down, making it the most complete of the lyres excavated from an Anglo-Saxon burial, despite hardly any of its fabric surviving.

The initial discovery of the Prittlewell burial in 2003–4 attracted much attention, with many preliminary presentations of the finds. The delay in post-excavation research and publication was caused by sustained local opposition to the road widening scheme that had been the occasion for the excavation. Only when this was resolved in 2009, by withdrawal of the road widening, could responsibility for funding post-excavation research and publication be agreed, taken on by Historic England and Southend Borough Council. In that context, this project has been completed in an admirably timely fashion, whereas ignorance of the reason for the delay had caused some criticism.

Exhaustive studies of each and every artefact type include reconstructions and precise accounts of location in the burial chamber. Many tiny details were discovered and recorded: paint on a wooden box, scratched names on a spoon, tiny images of hares with flying ears on the hanging bowl. The labour that would have been required to construct and install coffin, chamber and burial mound is calculated as around 140–55 person days, involving several different teams. Such estimates can only be approximate, but it is clear that this represented many times the labour and resources needed for a simple inhumation.

A small criticism of *The Prittlewell Princely Burial* is that, as often happens, finds from cremations have been missed in the comparative reviews. Also, the discussion chapters perhaps include more general accounts of early medieval burial and society than is needed, and the Bayesian chronological calculations remain opaque to the statistically incompetent. But these are all minor quibbles; the overwhelming

impression is of admirably thorough and knowledgeable scholarship and technical expertise.

The aspect of the burial that has attracted most attention is the presence of two gold foil crosses, probably placed on the eyes of the dead person. This immediately suggested Christianity. The crosses are so small and fragile they must have been made for the funeral and therefore have direct bearing on the belief of the person buried or those who laid out the body. This is a dramatic confirmation that Christian burial need not preclude lavish grave equipment, and it also led to much discussion of the relationship of this burial to the account given by Bede of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. An initial premise was that this burial must post-date the Augustinian mission of AD 597. The broad date range of AD 580–620 given by coins, artefact typology and ¹⁴C would allow this burial to slot neatly into Bede's narrative, which suggests that the East Saxon king Sæbert was converted by 604 but by his death in c 616 had lapsed to paganism. However, relating Prittlewell to recent chronological analysis of Anglo-Saxon burial (Bayliss and Hines 2013) gives instead a date range of AD 575–605 (95 per cent probability), which means that this Christian individual may have been buried before Augustine arrived in Kent. This is not, however, a real problem. Christianity was known in Britain long before 597: Rricula, the wife of Sæbert, was sister-in-law of the Christian Queen Bertha in Kent and could have been baptised, possibly with a role in the Prittlewell burial. This kind of linkage between historically recorded individuals and archaeological evidence is intrinsically attractive, but in this case can only be speculation.

The Prittlewell Princely Burial compares favourably with the publications of Sutton Hoo (Bruce Mitford 1975–83; Carver 2005). All three represent a high level of scholarship and expertise, with investment both in excavation and research. All provide detailed accounts of artefacts and assemblages, with extensive technical and scientific input, together with wide-ranging comparative artefact study and accounts of the history of the sites. Carver (2005) has a wider remit, as an excavation report of a substantial part of the Sutton Hoo cemetery, whereas the other two each focus on a specific elaborate burial. Otherwise, Carver (2005) and *The Prittlewell Princely Burial* recognisably belong to the same phase of archaeological research, concerned as much or more with the ideological, social, political and economic structures of early medieval society as with historical narrative.

Overall, both *The Prittlewell Princely Burial* and *The Anglo-Saxon Prittlewell Princely Burial* do indeed 'restore the East Anglian kingdom to its proper place in the world of the late 6th and 7th centuries' (Hirst and Scull, 105).

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The King in the North. The Pictish realms of Fortriu and Ce: collected essays written as part of the University of Aberdeen's Northern Picts Project. By GORDON NOBLE and NICHOLAS EVANS. 245mm. Pp xiv + 207, frontisp, 16 col plates, 71 figs. Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2019. ISBN 9781780275512. £14.99 (pbk).

This collection of essays is a summary of the results of the *Northern Picts* project carried out by a team from the University of Aberdeen from 2014 under the leadership of Gordon Noble. The volume, and much of the project itself, was funded by Elizabeth and Don Cruikshank, to whom the volume is dedicated. With one exception, the essays are abridged and re-fashioned from previous publications that were issued during the course of the project with admirable promptitude. These essays cover the historical and archaeological evidence for the emergence of Pictish communities between the fourth and the seventh century, including new investigations at the forts of Burghead and Dunnicaer, a harvest of new cemeteries, mainly located from the air, new objects and a new understanding of the Gaulcross hoard and a groundbreaking review of the early Pictish monuments carrying symbols, powered by new dates and identified original contexts of use. The star of the show is certainly Rhynie, where monumental