410-900: Some early Kings, but who were the Hastingas?

Exploring the History of Eastern Sussex from the end of the Roman occupation of Britain in 410 to 900

This is a difficult period from which to find historical data for eastern Sussex. Every now and again someone will ask something like: Who were the Hastingas? Where was Hæstingaceastre? Was there a battle between the Saxons and Britons near Ashburnham? Did Offa really found a minster church at Bexhill? Where is Hastings burghal fort? Could this part of Sussex have been Jutish? When was the Kingdom of Sussex established? When did Sussex become part of Wessex? Did Alfred the Great ever visit Hastings? Etc.

To make life more difficult in answering these questions we find that discussion of the Saxon Kingdom of Sussex is nearly always focussed on Sussex between Pevensey to Chichester. So in essence there is very little direct data between 450 – 900 about the area between Pevensey and the Isle of Oxney in Kent, otherwise known as Hastingas. So when and why was it first called Hastingas? To give some answers, or more usually the best approximations to answers, we need to go back to the end of the Roman occupation then follow through the histories of both Sussex and Kent to the time of King Alfred who died in 899. The history is scattered but closer reading of the relevant sections of relevant books and papers that can be found clarifies things a little. This leads to the conclusion that we need to look more closely than expected at Kent for influences on the Hastings area. But before proceeding it is worth defining a few terms that will be used in this paper.

Acculturation: A relatively modern term used in historiography to describe the results of contact between two or more different cultures. From these composite cultures emerge, in which some existing cultural features are combined, some are lost, and new features are generated.

Romano-Britain/British: This refers to the land and people of the Roman province of Britannia at the end of and for some time after the Roman occupation, the end of which is normally dated 410AD. This terminology is used as the British had adapted to Roman ways. The length of time the population remained Romano-British after the Romans left varies according to where in Britain they lived, so the further they were away from Saxon, Angle and Jutish incomers the longer they could be termed Romano-British. Once fully acculturated with the incoming Germanic peoples the term English can start to be applied to the people within the whole area now known as England.

Cantiaci, Regni, Trinovantes, Belgae: These refer to the pre-Roman tribes of south-east England (see Fig.1). They probably spoke a Belgic (west Germanic) language. Their neighbours were the **Atrebates** and **Catuvellauni**. The near correspondence between these areas, the post-Roman kingdoms and even today's counties is remarkable.

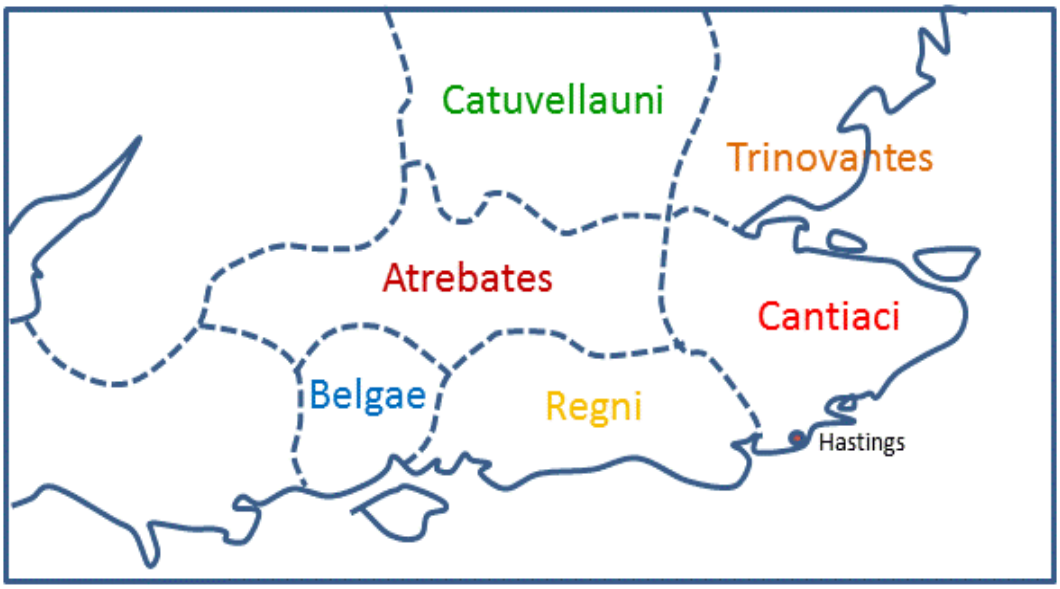


Figure 1.The Romano-British tribes of South-East Britannia

Incoming peoples:

Jutes/Jutish: Probably came from Jutland in present day Denmark. They were closely associated with the **Frisians** from the North Sea islands off Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands and may have originally moved to Jutland from the Baltic shores of what is now north Germany.

Franks/Frankish: Germanic people who lived in the region of the lower and middle Rhine, Netherlands and Belgium. They later merged with northern Gauls. Modern France takes its name from these people.

Angles: A group from the south of Denmark and adjacent areas of Germany.

Saxons: A larger group, lying between the Angles and Franks, but extending much deeper south-eastwards into Germany.

– wara: As a word ending means 'people of'. Alternatives are '**– ge'** (used somewhat earlier) and **'– ingas'** (concurrent usage). An example is Cantwara for the people of Kent.

Rapes and Lathes: Used in Sussex and Kent respectively these words refer to sub-areas of the kingdoms. In Sussex the Rapes extended from the coast northwards to the Kentish or Surrey borders. Their origin is obscure but they did pre-date the Norman invasion. After 1066 the Normans modified them. In Kent Lathes were established rather earlier and they were 'zonal' around the more important towns.

Littoral: The coastline and the area immediately behind it. A word used quite frequently in modern French but infrequently in the UK.

Saxon Shore: This refers to the littoral between Brancaster near the Wash in north Norfolk to Porchester in Hampshire, via Pevensey. It also extended across the English Channel to involve a similar length of the French littoral.

Embayment: The description of a wide area of coastal low lying land that becomes inundated following a sea level rise, forming a large shallow bay.

Spellings: A mixture of Roman (Latin) prefixed L., 'Old English' prefixed OE., and modern place names is used throughout. Spellings can vary as they are copied from original spellings which were variably recorded. Where OE. letters are used pronunciation is phonetic but the following mini pronunciation guide may be helpful: ɾ= is just a long legged r; þ and ð both = th; ſ= long s – like sh; æ=short a as in 'cat' but if it is ǽ it is more like 'ai' ; œ= like O in the alphabet; h is always pronounced at the beginning of a word, even if the next letter is a consonant.

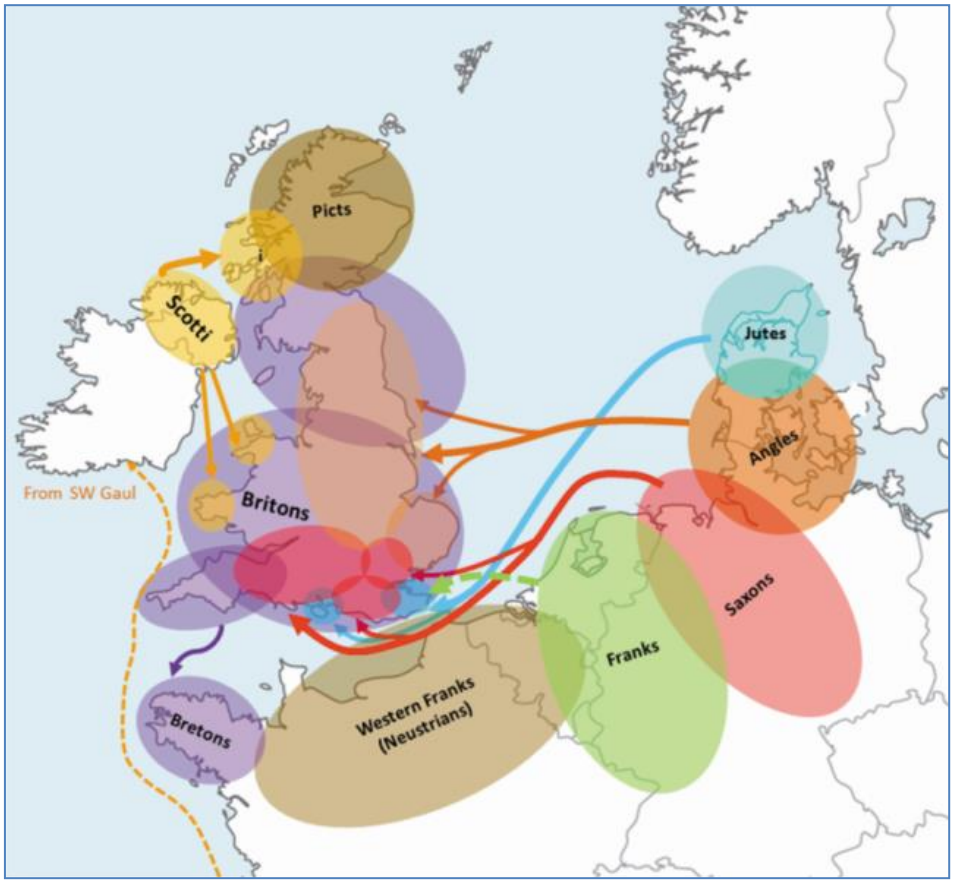


Figure 2.

The acculturation effects of 'Anglo-Saxon' migrations. A possible Frankish influence on Kent and East Sussex is shown as a green dashed arrow. The influence of Scotti on the western fringes is in yellow, with late coastal migration to Ireland from SW France as a dashed line. Note also some probable concurrent reverse coastal migrations of Romano-British to Brittany.

From Foord K and Clephane-Cameron N (2015)

The Coast of south-east Sussex has changed dramatically over the millennia. The coastline of eastern Sussex would have been very different between 450 – 900 and this must be taken into account when considering Hastingas. If we were transported back to say 700 we might have wondered where we were as we gazed at more prominent headlands and large tidal embayments that no longer exist.

Although Pevensey levels were wide dry areas in the late Mesolithic/early Neolithic periods, they became prone to inundations as sea levels rose after the mini Ice Age. By Anglo-Saxon times Pevensey had become an embayed shallow open estuary, dotted with small islands. These islet areas can still be recognised today as their names are suffixed 'ey' or 'eye'.

If we were viewing from Fairlight, just east of Hastings, the panorama over Rye Bay and Dungeness would show a similar but much bigger area of a tidal lagoon trapped behind a large shingle bank that then extended from Pett Level to Old Romney. This meant that the River Rother, then called the Limen entered the sea near Old Romney rather than Rye. Earlier still in Roman times its exit was near Lympne. Williamson highlighted these coastal changes as long ago as 1931, but did not include any discussion of any associated sand and

shingle movements. Those particularly interested in this should review the work of Romney Marsh Research Trust (RMRT), most of which is available on-line. Their papers on this complex environment are invaluable, as they enable us to understand the historical geographic context of south-east Sussex's and East Kent's former coasts, from Fairlight eastwards.

The history of Bulverhythe (OE. *Burg wara hyð* – harbour of the people of the burgh) and the Coombe Haven valley which lies between St. Leonards-on-Sea and Bexhill appears more complicated. The recent archaeological work related to a new road across it has confirmed an earlier proposition of Smyth and Jennings that the margins of the valley became used by man from the Neolithic period. There was also evidence of iron working within its river catchment area e.g. at Crowhurst during the Iron Age, followed by much heavier iron working in Roman times. This activity was also associated with local cereal farming, but must have caused considerable tree loss associated with charcoal making (for smelting) and forest clearance (for farming) as following this quantities of alluvium were washed into the valley floor, covering and raising what had been fresh water marshland. This area, still prone to flooding at times of heavy rainfall, continued to be farmed after the Romans departed. Some salt-water marshland developed inland from *Burg wara hyð* making it less useful for farming. This would have been the scene in 450 – 900.

Post 410 Romano-Britain remained well established for a while along the Saxon Shore littoral after Rome departed. The Classis Britannica fleet which had earlier been associated with iron making in Sussex, particularly around Hastings (possibly L. *Mutuantonis* [Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire]) had withdrawn, possibly disbanded in the mid-3rd century. This dating is evidenced by coin finds, the majority of coins in the Hastings area being dated between 69 – 193, with much reduced activity occurring after about 250.

But there had been early Saxon raids on the vulnerable coast. The Roman shore fort of L. *Anderida/Anderidos* was built circa 293 in response to this and also to control trade as part of the work of the Count of the Saxon Shore, a title bestowed between 286 – 305. The task of this senior Roman official was to protect the coasts of south-east Britain and western Gaul from the attacks of Saxon 'pirates' (but also see Myres's comments below concerning trade and administration). In this the Count was assisted by a fleet, based on the River Seine at Andrésy (L. *Anderetia* or *Anderetium*) near Paris in France and called the 'Classis Anderetianorum Parisius'. This fleet operated both on the rivers and coastline on both sides of the English Channel. Its base has often been thought of as Pevensey due to the similarity of Pevensey's Roman name. Evidence for this fleet and the confusing name can be found in the 'Noticia Dignitatium' which recorded Roman officialdom as it existed at the end of the 5th century.

The south-east coastal areas of Britannia had already allowed some Germanic peoples to come and settle before the end of the 4th century (and it should be noted that the final Roman legions were often also drawn from such folk) and these had already acculturated. Modern historical wisdom is that the (also) Germanic post-Roman incomers were rather more influenced by this relative stability than might have been expected from the traditional history that 'barbarians' came in and killed or chased out the Romano-British in an historic ethnic-cleansing operation. This effect is considered by some historians to have been significantly stronger in the very south-east in Kent and Essex where the Cantiaci-

Romano-British and the Trinovantes-Romano-British were more 'Romanised' than the Regni-Romano-British between Pevensey and Chichester.

The tribal patterns of pre-Roman Britain (Fig. 1) had not been altered by the Roman occupation, but there had been considerable Romanisation of Britons and after the adoption of Christianity by the Romans also Christianisation. The people could be called Romano-British and initially, for 50 years or more, the veneer of Rome persisted. But even before the Romans finally departed in 409/410 there were problems along the coasts from raiding parties from across the North Sea, from Frisians, Jutes and Saxons around the south coast and Angles in the east. This drove the development of a system of forts along the Saxon Shore, the nearest of which to us were at Lympne (L. *Portus Lemanis*) and Pevensey (L. *Anderida/Anderidos*). These forts were built quite late within the Roman occupation (end of 3rd century). It is believed that they existed mainly to control trade, but also as a show of strength against 'the Saxon pirates'. They were mirrored on the other side of the Channel, for the raiders also nibbled along those coasts (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Saxon-Shore forts and their equivalents on the north coast of Gaul. These were developed at a late phase of the Roman occupation of Britannia. Earlier the Roman 'Classis Britannica' fleet had operated in the English Channel up until the late 3rd century, but in this later phase a fleet, called the 'Classis Anderetianorum Parisius' was used.

To help protect the shores of Britannia the Romano-British had recruited men from Germanic tribes even before the end of Roman Britain, and where these had settled their presence 'aided' the further changes about to occur. Following 410 the Romano-British structures gradually broke down but some organisation persisted with local 'kings' appearing. Vortigern (perhaps some sort of High Lord or Overlord of the area of southern post-Roman Britannia called Britannia Primus, possibly originated from Gwent (… it's all a

bit vague...) and his council invited some ‘Angles’ into the territory of the Cantiaci, which had retained a significant Romano-British culture, to help with holding off other less desirable attentions from across the North Sea. This group arrived at Ebbsfleet in north Kent, sometime before 450, led by the near mythical Hengist (*aka ‘Stallion’*) and Horsa (*aka ‘Horse’*). Gildas* spikily refers to their original settlement on the "*east side of the island... and there fixed their sharp talons*". Nennius* clarified that this first settlement was on the Isle of Thanet, but records the year as 447. Archaeological discoveries on Thanet have supported the presence of an early Germanic settlement there. Gildas, a moralist, not an historian, judged Vortigern to be careless and lacking foresight, he called him unlucky (L. *infaustus)* , which was very mild for Gildas. In Kent the aggression which started to occur came from the ‘invited’ incomers in circa 450 and mainly occurred in north and west Kent. East Kent may have had a gentler time with an influx of Jutes who would later have a major influence in forming the local regnal families. **For Gildas and Nennius see Giles, JA.*

Hengist and Horsa, the leaders of the ‘invitees’, and their men at first helped fight off ‘*the Picts’* (probably the name given to anyone from ‘the North’), but realising that the land was good and their hosts weak the news got back home and more Saxons, Angles and Jutes arrived. Hengist and Horsa (probably not their given names, but ‘nommes de guerre’) then fought the local Romano-British at Aylesford (Kent). Horsa was killed and replaced by Œric Æsc or Oisc, son of Hengist from whom the later kings of Kent took their family name ‘*Oiscingas*’. The next year there was another battle with the Romano-British at Crayford, with the Romano-British losing and their leaders bolting to London which remained a safer haven. Following this still more immigrants arrived into Kent, particularly Jutes. Nine years later Hengist and Æsc/Oisc were penetrating deeper into Britannia and in 465 another battle took place at Wipped’s Creek (unknown location, possibly in present day Surrey or north Hampshire) with the death of a dozen British chiefs. Another battle in 473 sent the Romano-British leaders fleeing presumably to the north and west, but it was unlikely that there was any mass displacement of the general population.

The implication of all this is that the ‘action’ was in north Kent, with the invaders then driving deeper into Surrey and north of the Thames, engaging the Atrebate and Catuvellaunian Romano-British (see map above). This may well have left east and southern Kent open and more peaceable people arrived, mainly Jutes, who settled and started to acculturate with the remaining Cantiaci, who probably spoke a Belgic language not dissimilar to the Germanic language of the incomers. The Jutes established a ‘kingdom’ in east Kent, which acculturated with the remaining Romano-British culture. They also remained, at least initially, influenced by Frankish culture from across the sea.

Jutish Kent, the kingdom that was formed by the Jutes appears to have extended beyond what is Kent today and incorporated the traditional territories of the Cantiaci, including all of Kent, eastern East Sussex (i.e. Hastingas), eastern Surrey and London south of the Thames. This implies that in the Hastings and Battle areas we may have a rather more Cantiaci Romano-British and Jutish/Frankish Kentish history than the rest of Sussex which was Regni Romano-British then South Saxon. Chevallier suggested that there may also have been some north Frankish influence on the Hæstingas, a view generally supported by other historians. However, the Jutes appear not to have ventured much further into Sussex, perhaps satisfied for the moment with their holdings, perhaps somewhat deterred by the aggressive South Saxons and disappointed with the poor soils around what would become Hastingas. Some voyaged down the coast and settled in the Isle of Wight and around the

Solent (becoming known there as the OE. *Wihtwara* and the OE. *Meonwara* respectively). On Hengist's death Æsc/Oisc became king of all Kent in 488 and ruled for either 24 or 34 years (according to which version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC) that you read).

Because some areas were further from the central influence of their 'kingdoms' than others sub-regions developed. In the south of Kent one of these called Limenwara was around Lympne. In Kent there are near present day echoes in the Kentish lathe now called the District of Shepway, in south Kent. When this was first mentioned in approximately 700 it was named after the Limen River (the precursor of the River Rother which later changed its course and would later still be part of the defined boundary between Kent and Sussex). The Limenwara formed an early administrative subdivision of Kent to the east of Hastingas, although the Limenwara would never be as 'independent' as the Hastingas, which we start to discuss below. The name means '*people of Limen'*, with Limen being the name of the former eastern arm of the River Rother, which at that time entered the sea at Old Romney. It was based around two main settlements, with Lympne as the original centre of administration and Lyminge as the territory's minster and centre of ecclesiastic administration.

Sussex after 477 According to its foundation myth, Sussex was invaded slightly later, and from its west – after 477 by Saxons (led by someone who may have been called Ælle) rather than Jutes. Spreading east from around Selsey they took a while to reach Pevensey (OE. *Andreadesceastre*), with its residual Romano-British stronghold based on the Roman Saxon-Shore fort. The coastal plain of west Sussex and the Vale of Sussex between the Arun River and Pevensey must have been attractive to the 'South Saxons', but east of Pevensey the more difficult sub-Wealden terrain of Hastingas trapped between two large tidal embayments (fig.4), with their extensive mud flats and the Wealden forest (OE. *Andredes leag)* would have been less attractive, and the Saxons may have also met some early resistance from Jutes who had already migrated to there from Kent.

The story of the Saxon invasion of the Regni territory goes like this: As described in the ASC (A & F) (Swanton's translation): 477 – '*Here Ælle and his three sons Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa came to Britain with three ships at the place which is called Cymen's Shore* ('Cymenes ora', probably the Owers, a sandbank off Selsey [See Mawer and Stenton, 'The Place Names of Sussex']) *and there killed many 'Welsh' (*i.e. Romano-Britons*) and drove some into the wood which is named the Weald (OE. Andredes leag*)'.

Until 485 it was so far so good for the people who lived in our area, to be called Hastingas sometime in the future, who were away from the wilder events of north Kent and would have only been slowly introduced to any newcomers. But Ælle then turned eastward and in 485 *'Ælle fought against the Welsh* (the Romano-British) *near the margins of Mearcred's Burn'* . So by 485 we get to a small conundrum centred around 'Town Creep' which lies off the B2096 from Battle to Netherfield. This may be the site of the nebulous Battle of Mercredsburn, [*OE. mære* (boundary) *OE. burna*(stream)]. If this happened could it have indeed been a border fracas with the Kentish Romano-British allied with their new Jutish neighbours, the boundary being deemed the small river called Wallers Haven (which enters the north east of the Pevensey Levels) and its tributaries?

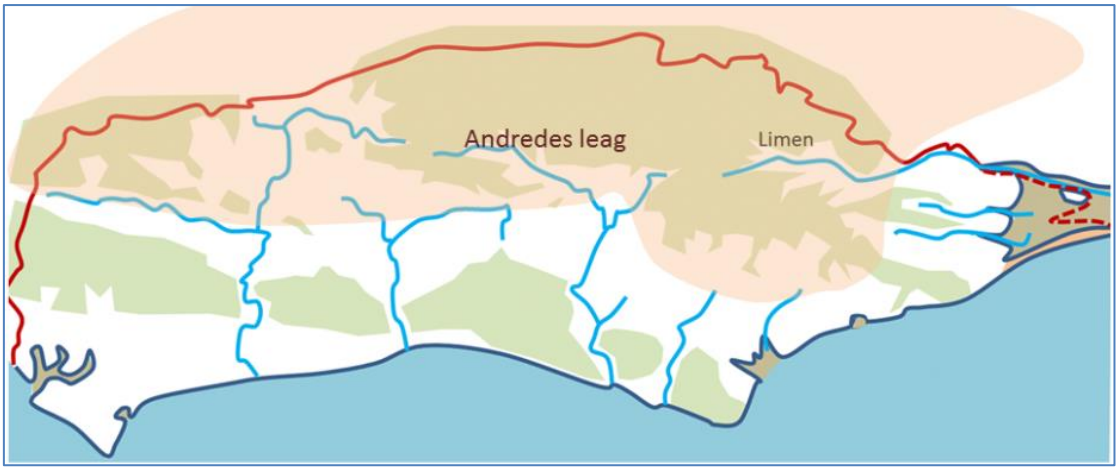


Figure 4. Base map of Sussex in circa. 800. Showing the tidal embayments at Chichester, Selsey, Pevensey, Bulverhythe and Romney (the 'Rye Camber') plus the huge shingle bank on which Old Winchelsea would stand, main rivers, land over 60m (200ft) in green and the possible extent of the Andredes leag in buff. Note that the River Limen (later the Rother) at that time flowed eastwards north of the Isle of Oxney and entered the sea near Lympne in Kent

The outcome of this battle is undefined, just like its site, but the ASC records that in 491 the South Saxons turned on the Romano-British at OE. Andreadsceastre (formerly *L. Anderida*, or as in the Noticia Dignitatium *L. Andreridos* – present day Pevensey) and wiped it out… the ASC says *'Here Ælle and Cissa besieged Anderitum and killed all who lived in there; there was not even one Briton left there.'*

The villagers of Ashburnham and Penhurst in East Sussex had an oral history that a pre-Saxon earthwork known as Town Creep, situated in Creep Wood which adjoins the two villages, was the site of Mercredsburn. Oral tradition surviving to the end of the 19th century referred to the earthwork as being the site of a town which was besieged and destroyed by the Saxons. Even today a 'Penhurst Harbour' is referred to by Penhurst residents (*Hahn, R: Personal communication*). In 1896 a member of The Sussex Archaeological Society investigated this claim, and subsequently published a paper concluding that the earthwork was a possible old Roman way fort and the location for the battle of Mercredsburn, that the name 'Creep' could have an etymology derived from the latter part of 'Mercrede', whilst the 'burn' (or stream) may refer to the Ashburn stream (a tributary of Wallers Haven) running nearby. Later the theory was somewhat peremptorily discounted, but the rumours still rumble. Today Creep Wood is managed woodland and the features previously discussed by Tatham and Napper in the Sussex Archaeological Collections Vols. 37-40 are obliterated. Although is not impossible to imagine from the contour maps, which indicate a small steep sided plateau that it could have been a very strategic site, with a view all the way down the valley to Pevensey, future formal investigation is unlikely. In any case Welch (in Brandon) suggests that Mercredsburn could have been the Ouse or Cuckmere, west of Pevensey, so the claim that it is Waller's Haven/Ashburn stream is not strong.

Hæstingas is first mentioned around the same time as the Limenwara (above), i.e. 700, but it is considered that both of these areas must have pre-dated this by a century or two, even if not with quite the same names. It is noted that the earlier the name the more likely it was that the name of a person rather than a geographical locale would be the prefix, so Hæstingas on these grounds would have pre-dated Limenwara.

The evolution of the Rapes of Sussex is much less certain than that of the Lathes of Kent. The early Sussex Rapes numbered five or fewer and the early boundaries are uncertain but it appears clear that at least some of their boundaries may not be identical with those of Domesday, since some of the Norman's six 1086 Rape boundaries cut through the middle of Hundreds, and some Hundred boundaries cut through villages (Thorn and Thorn). After the Conquest the Normans had modified the Rapes to number six, centred on new coastal or near coastal castles – the Rape of Hastings contained 13 hundreds. The pre-Norman Rape of Hastings is reported to have had 9 ½ hundreds and this might have reflected the area of the Hastingas. In the Rapes of Hastings and Lewes, but not in more western Rapes, Lathe Courts persisted as independent local courts beyond 1066, which may be an indication of pre-Conquest Kentish influence in local legal matters in the eastern Rapes. The Lathe courts became redundant by the 14th century.

The centre of Hastingas must have been Hæstingaceastre, the site recorded just before 900 of the Alfredian burghal hidage fort, and also where Athelstan later set up a mint in 928. We have previously discussed at some length the probable position of Hæstingaceastre in '*1066 and the Battle of Hastings, Preludes, Events and Postscripts*' (Foord and Clephane-Cameron). The analysis suggested that the fort or fortified settlement stood somewhere west of the town centre of present day Hastings and has been lost to the sea by cliff erosion. A small port lay nearby at OE. *Burg wara hyð* (harbour of the people of the burgh – now Bulverhythe).

Burghal forts were established in the late 9th century as English defences against Viking raids, and were part of the Alfredian strategy to recover all of England from the Danes, with the coastal forts designed to deter further Viking raids. The burgh of Hæstingaceastre had the income and support of the people of 500 hides (94sq.miles/243sq.km) of productive land attached to it. This area is perhaps about 50% of the total area of Hastingas, so would correlate well as the other 50% would have been non-productive forest/marsh etc. The wall length of all the burghal forts related to the supporting hidage and for Hæstingaceastre is estimated to have been about 625m (2060ft). If the fort was square each wall would have been about 160m long and the contained area about 2.5Ha (6 acres). If the southern boundary was a cliff face (as seems likely for Hæstingaceastre) it may have been larger. Often OE. *ceastre* meant not a just a castle or fort, but a town enclosed by an earthen wall topped with timber or sometimes of stone, and Hæstingaceastre appears to mean the stockaded town of Hastings (the precursor of the newer town which would develop in the Bourne valley east of the hill on which the Norman castle now stands and now Hastings 'Old Town').

The natural boundary for this sub-region, whether as an outlier of Kent or of Sussex, in the earliest days must have been in the west from a point north of the extensive Pevensey Bay embayment, eastwards possibly as far as the Limen river which at that time flowed north of the Isle of Oxney, and to the north the Wealden forest (see Fig. 5)

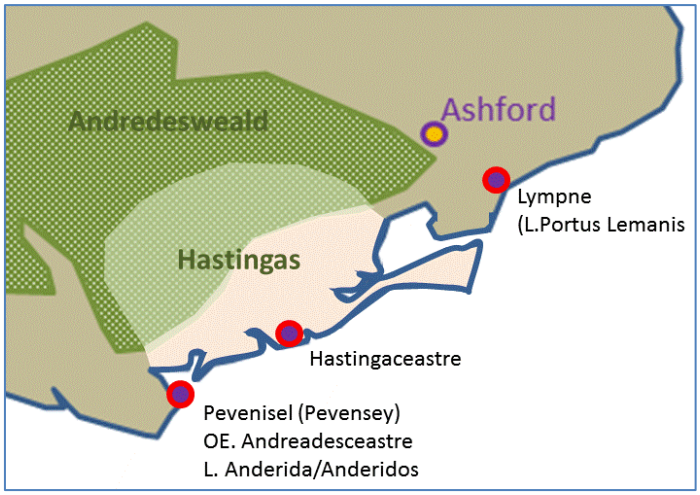


Figure 5. The possible coastal and Wealden extent of Hastingas territory between the natural 'pinch points' of the Wealden forest, Pevensey and Romney embayments. ©BDHS

It is also noted that there is a Hastingford (across the River Uck) just north of Heathfield (38km/24 miles from Hastings) and Hastingleigh (leigh= clearing or meadow) just southeast of Ashford in Kent (64km/40miles from Hastings), which might indicate the 'extended range' or 'zone of influence' of Hastingas (Figure 6). The name Hastingford suggests a planted community, maybe made under the laws of King Ine in the late 7th century. The first recorded spelling for Hastingleigh (in 993) was Hæstinga lege.

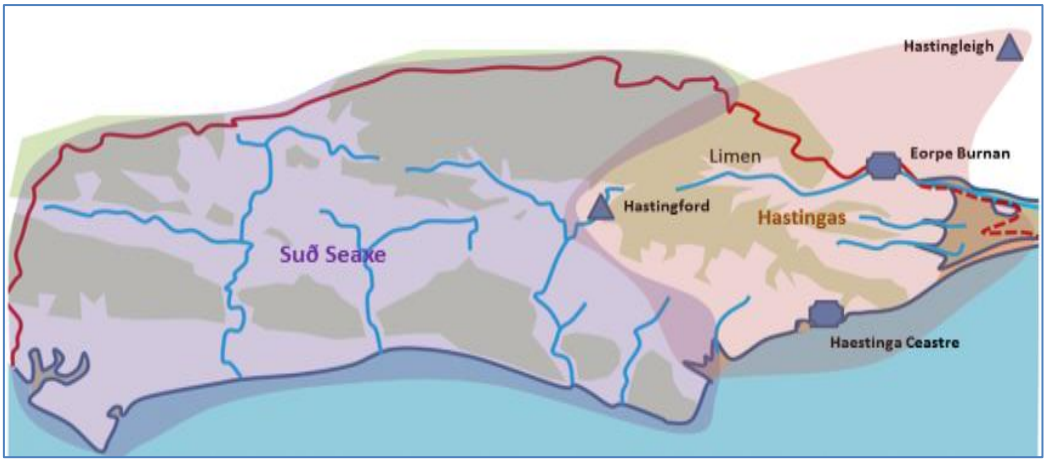


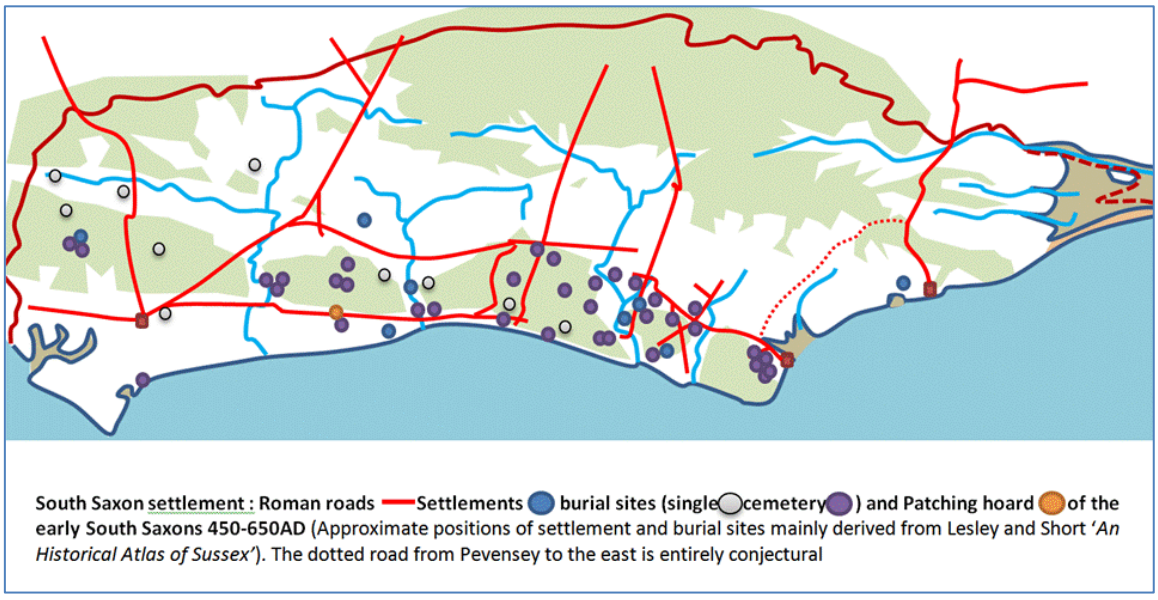
Figure 6. The possible early 'zone of influence' of the Hastingas, stretching into Kent ©BDHS

So we can postulate that Hastingas was 'frontier country' between the South Saxons to the west and the somewhat more developed Jutish Kingdom of Kent to the east. Also Sussex at times was itself a divided 'kingdom': Sub-kings for east and west are sometimes recorded (see Appendix 1 for the possible names and dates of these). Even today it is seems a long way from Rye to Chichester, along a difficult road or a discontinuous railway and Sussex has been administratively divided into East and West counties. The long thin nature of Sussex does not lend itself to rapid physical communications and the early South Saxons

were probably held at bay by Kent, as undesirable neighbours, particularly after the former brutally sacked Pevensey.

So what else has been found, inferred and theorised about 'Hæstingas', Kent and Sussex in that long grey period 450 – 900? The following is based on truly scanty evidence (or as Brandon says, near transparent evidence!) particularly with regard to Sussex and even more so for Hæstingas, and little from Kent, but we shall try to focus on where Hæstingas fits into the story. After all, as Reaney concluded that a "*people whose individuality could be remembered for some 500 years and who, at the end of that period, could be mentioned in a national chronicle side by side with the people of Kent and the South Saxons, must have been more than a mere fragment of a larger kingdom*". Berry points out that neither archaeological finds or place-names provide evidence for early settlement in Kent south of the North Downs and that the modern Hastingleigh in Kent may be a relic of a clearing in the once extensive forest as an outlier of Hæstingas.

Sussex Archaeological Society records on its web-site that the written record is not reliable and archaeological evidence, particularly burials, has provided the main evidence of where the early Saxons settled in Sussex. Saxon cemeteries have been found at Alfriston, Selmeston, Bishopstone, Beddingham, Glynde, Saxonbury (Lewes) and Woodingdean. The Anglo-Saxon objects displayed in the ground floor gallery at Barbican House Museum in Lewes are from some of these sites. Myres postulates that Sussex became somewhat fragmented in Saxon times into zones divided by the rivers that flow south and cut through the South Downs, and because of this there was no natural centre, and that Roman Chichester soon became relatively unimportant, with Pevensey (L: *Anderida/Anderidos* - later OE: *Andreadesceastre*) fort becoming a major defensive centre at the end of the Roman period and onwards into Romano-British times. He suggests that its importance was such that it eventually gave its name to the Wealden forest as 'OE. *Andredesweald*'. We also know that the coastal plain of west Sussex and Vale of Sussex, between the South Downs and the Weald had been well settled by the Romans and that there was a network of roads linking farms and villas in mid-Sussex as far east as Pevensey Roman fort, so the terrain would have been easy to cross (Figure 7).



South Saxon settlement : Roman roads —— **Settlements** ● **burial sites (single** ○ **cemetery** ● **) and Patching hoard** ● **of the early South Saxons 450-650AD** (Approximate positions of settlement and burial sites mainly derived from Lesley and Short '*An Historical Atlas of Sussex*'). The dotted road from Pevensey to the east is entirely conjectural

Fig.7

Recent work by the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) has uncovered evidence of a probable Classis Britannica era Roman settlement at Kitchenham Farm (Boreham Street) and it is clearly conceivable that this was linked by track to the west at Pevensey and to the east to the previously active Roman iron workings north of Hastings, the roads from whence led northwards and then branched eastwards – not that anyone has yet found definite evidence of its route. It has been postulated that this was a low grade Roman track rather than a full blown 'via' (*Cornwell, L: personal communication*). It would have been wedged between the Wealden forest and the headwaters of the Pevensey bay tributaries.

So how far eastwards did Ælle of the South Saxons get? And who might have stopped him? Was it a combination of Cantiaci and Jutes? The distance between Boreham Street, (which then stood at the inland end of inlets from the inundated Pevensey Bay and where there is a bridge over Wallers Haven) and the southern limit of the ancient Wealden Forest is very narrow and could have been a defensible 'pinch point' (Fig. 5). We really do not know whether or not 'Mearcred's Burn' *"river of the frontier agreed by treaty"* was near Ashburnham and whether or not the burn was the Ashburn stream or the larger Wallers Haven; but if so this might have marked the limit at that time of South Saxon forays to the east.

Many place names in Sussex are Saxon names, the Saxons having settled the lowlands of Sussex and named most of what we see today, but there are name frequency difference going from west to east, which could indicate poor penetration of South Saxons eastwards of Pevensey.For example place names including '*hamtun'* are only found in the west of Sussex and are unknown in Kent. In the Hastingas area there are more '*ham(m)'* names than '*tun'* names, much more so than in the rest of Sussex to the west. The map of place names ending '*tun'* and '*ingtun'* is given as Fig.8. It is wise not to rely too much on place-names but fortunately in 1086 it was largely unchanged Saxon place names that were recorded in the Domesday Book by the Normans, although not necessarily absolutely accurately. This gives us a residual old English place name history. *'Ing'* or *'ings'* place-names are very common in the Hastingas area and this has been shown to refer to '*a place associated with'* which can be a person, people or a local feature, (e.g. Wartling – place belonging to Wyrtele). Whilst these sort of *'ing'* names point to early sixth century settlement (Stenton), *'ing'* names were still being formed later, so we must take care with analysis. *'Ingtun'* and '*ingham*' names were slightly later names (e.g. Whatlington – farm or settlement of Hwætel's people; Kitchenham – Cyssi's home or enclosure) possibly formed in more settled times. There is also a profusion of *'ham'* names, such as '*Uckham*' rather more towards Kent than Pevensey. '*Village.net'* have published 17 '*ing/ings'* names, 9 '*ingtun/ingham'* and 37 *'ham'* names in the Hastingas area alone. Figure 9 below includes most of these '*ham*' names plus some additions. Stenton notes that both the place names and field systems of Hastingas have affinities with Kent, suggesting but not proving colonisation from Kent.

Of course the big question is the origin of the name Hastingas itself. Here it is shown that *'ingas'* is subtly different from *'ing'* and means 'people of' which could be named after a tribe or place and may be a later suffix than '*-ge' or '-wara'* (as in 'OE. *Surridge* (Surrey)' or '*Limenwara*') which also meant 'people of'). So Hæstingas is from Old English and means settlement of Hasten's or Hæsten's people. Hæsten would have been a (to us unknown) local chieftain or sub-regulus, possibly extant circa 600. The nearest translation of OE.

hæste means ‘raging’ or ‘violent’, so the name does not help us to decide if it was a real name or nickname, one suspects the latter. But whatever Hæsten’s etymology it is clear that Hastingas as an entity must have existed before 710, when we have the first recorded version of the name – so possibly it had existed for a century or two. Hasten the Viking as mentioned in the ASC(A,E) for 892 – 894 is clearly a total red herring as he lived nearly 200 years after Hastingas is first recorded!

Figure 8. Distribution of ‘tun’ (tan circles) and ‘ingtun’ (blue circles) place names in Sussex. Note a relative sparsity of such names within the Hastingas area (modified from ‘Historical Atlas of Sussex)

Figure 9.Prominence of place names ending in ‘ham’ in the Hastingas area

The Kingdom of Sussex was originally OE. *Suð Seaxe*, meaning the land of the South Saxons, but the kingdom seems to have remained fragmented and vulnerable to outside power struggles – and only protected by its geography between the Weald and sea. From 495 onwards yet more Saxons arrived and started to take over parts of Hampshire north of the Meonwara Jutes (who lived around the Solent) and work northwards, fighting the Romano-British of the Thames valley area at Salisbury in 552 and eventually forming the kernel of the Kingdom of Wessex. But this was a little far west to affect Hastingas at this time – except to note that by 568 Wessex as part of an aggressive expansion mainly to the west and north had also expanded north of the Weald into Surrey, forcing the Jutish Kingdom of Kent back into its home territory. This event is the first recorded conflict between two groups of colonisers (i.e. Saxons and Jutes), rather than a battle against the Romano-British. The location of this conflict was 'Wibbandun', which can be translated as

'Wibba's Mount', but the site has not been definitely identified. Of course if the folk memory of the battle of Mercredsburn is correct this may have been the very first unrecorded conflict between the Saxons and Jutes.

Between about 514 and c.600 South Saxons are not mentioned in any records until in 607 the West Saxons under Ceolwulf fought a campaign against them. The result is however unrecorded. Later 'kings' of Sussex do not claim descent from any of Ælle's sons and a century and a half later, other families had risen to prominence. It is from these that the kings are selected. Unfortunately, no authentic king list remains and also the 'kings' may have ruled in groups of three or four at a time, with power being shared between them – a tentative list of no guaranteed accuracy is given in Appendix 1.

In about 661 a first reference to a sub-king Æthelwalh of Sussex is found, from brief mentions in Eddius's '*The Life of Bishop Wilfrid'**, in the same year that Wulfhere of Mercia had gained control of Sussex. Æthelwalh was possibly a younger son of Cynegils of the West Saxons, although how he became 'king' of Sussex is unknown. Wulfhere made him marry Eafe, daughter of the Christian king Eanfrith of the Hwicce and accept baptism. The relevance of this is that the South Saxons were among the last to convert to Christianity from paganism. According to Bede's history they remained stubbornly "heathen" until very late in the 7th century. Christianity returned nearly 100 years later in Sussex than in Kent and it was only after Sussex had a maybe somewhat reluctant Christian king and after the founding of Selsey Abbey in 681 that Christianity truly took root. Hastingas at the eastern end of Sussex might have remained pagan somewhat longer than western Sussex, but equally the influence of stronger Christianity from Kent might have had the opposite effect.
* *See Colgrave, B.*

Christian Kent retained its etymology from the original pre-Roman Cantiaci, and also retained recognisable Romano-British city names (e.g. Canterbury from Cantiacorum, Dover from Dubris), unlike all other kingdoms which almost completely lost links with their Roman names. It had a more elaborate culture than other English settlements and there were continuing connections with the Franks. But a strong Frankish influence is not supported by linguistic evidence or the fact that Kent remained pagan until St Augustine arrived in 597. The Frankish princess Bertha married king Æthelbert of Kent in about 560, and brought a Frankish bishop with her, but this did not bring about an immediate mass Christian conversion.

After 597 Augustine established an archbishopric near Canterbury. He was allowed to worship at the small surviving Romano-British church of St Martin's, before founding a more formal minster in Canterbury itself, which is probably when the Roman ruins were first substantially reoccupied. Augustine had been sent by the Pope of Rome and represented the Roman church. The Romano-British church, now thought of as the Celtic church, had survived in north-west Britain and Wales and after nearly 200 years their liturgies had diverged from those of Rome. In 603 the first meeting took place between St Augustine and the Celtic church. It was arranged by king Æthelbert I of Kent via the Hwicce, the Romano-British people of the area around Gloucester and Bath, who had successfully acculturated with both the West Saxons from the south and Angles from the north whilst retaining some of their cultural identity and church organisation. Bede writes that the meeting was at 'St Augustine's Oak', on the border between the Hwicce and West Saxons, perhaps near Wychwood in Oxfordshire. A second meeting followed at Abberley in

Worcestershire probably close to the border between the Hwicce and Pengwern, the area north of the Hwicce. It was attended by seven bishops of the Celtic church, who were singularly unimpressed by Augustine and the meeting ended with no agreement of co-operation or unity being reached. Æthelbert I's prestige may have dropped after this failure and Kent started to have a slow but unstoppable decline in importance and influence, although they still retained links with the Franks of northern France. After Æthelbert I's death there were a succession of short tenure Kentish kings, but Kent held on to some influence over OE. *Surridge* (Surrey).

Egbert became king of Kent c.664. He established an abbey at Chertsey in Surrey, which he must have held. Egbert died suddenly in 673 – 675, which led to a crisis as neither of his sons was of age and the Mercians under king Wulfhere promptly took Surrey from Kent, then Kent itself was invaded and occupied by the Mercians. In 675 the Meonwara of south Hampshire and the Wihtwara of the Isle of Wight, both of the same Jutish extraction as the Cantware of Kent who had been subsumed by Mercia were 'added' to Sussex by Mercia, as part of a 'deal' to ally Sussex and Mercia after Æthelwalh's baptism. This appears all to have been part of Wulfhere's policy of pressuring the West Saxons from both the north and the east. Eighteen months later the Cantwara rallied behind Egbert's younger brother Hlothere. Kent was retaken and later Hlothere got as far as controlling London (OE. *Lundenwic)*, the first Kentish king to do so since 616. He also probably regained Surrey. Later he agreed to share power with his nephew, Eadric, who became sub-king of West Kent (Kent, west of the Medway). Eadric, not liking that King Hlothere held the rest of Kent as well as being his overlord then made an unusual alliance with the South Saxons.

That Kent and Sussex had avoided conflict, possibly since the time of Ælle, may be because of the buffer zone afforded by Hastingas and the fragmentation of Sussex. Eadric now encouraged the South Saxons to attack Kent, and one interpretation suggests that he possibly used as an inducement the offer of control of the somewhat disputed Hastingas. This would have meant the South Saxons crossing into east Kent via Hastingas, presumably without much opposition. Hlothere was killed in the ensuing battles. So in late 685 Eadric got his wish and became king of all Kent, possibly having de facto ceded the sub-region of Hastingas to the South Saxons, or at least acknowledged that Hastingas was nominally part of Sussex.

This was clearly a time of political manoeuvring by the major kingdoms of England. The South Saxons appeared to be allied to Mercia, while Kent was more aligned to the West Saxons. So the South Saxon move appears part of a larger disturbance. Kent had had about two centuries of near stability with only the 673 – 675 hiccough. A reasonably accurate list of the kings of Kent is given in Appendix 2.

Cædwalla, a West Saxon who had been exiled, mustered an army and invaded Sussex. His control of Sussex at this time was short lived as he was beaten back by Ealdormen Berhðun and Andhun but he gained full control of Wessex by 685 and then Sussex, killing the ealdormen and king Æthelwalh. Within two years he had taken control of all Surrey, Sussex and Kent. He swept through and fully annexed Sussex, presumably again crossing the hapless Hastingas territory (although this is not specifically recorded) into Kent which became a battleground between Mercia and the West Saxons, but Kent was finally occupied by Cædwalla and in 686 – 687 he left Mul, his brother, to rule Kent in his name.

In 687 the Cantwara revolted and Mul, with twelve of his companions, was trapped and burned to death in a house. Cædwalla responded by laying waste to Kent, seemingly with little effect on control, but soon had to abdicate as he was dying from a wound previously received in fighting the Wihtwara (the Jutish 'cousins' of Kent) in and around the Isle of Wight in 686. ASC (A,E) records him as going on pilgrimage to Rome in 688, dying there. His West Saxon successor, Ine, withdrew from Kent, but kept hold of Sussex, ruling it through sub-kings (see below).

687 saw Mercia in turn pounce on Kent. The Cantware were unable to resist and Kent became a Mercian vassal kingdom. Sighere of Essex, a client king of the Mercians, may have governed Kent for a short period (687 – 688), before king Æthelred of Mercia appointed Oswine, who was probably descended from the Kentish king Æthelred, as sub-ruler of Kent – in the mistaken belief that the Cantware would accept him as king because he was 'one of their own'. He may have remained sub-king up to 690, after which he was succeeded by Wihtred, the youngest son of the former Kentish king Egbert. Details are somewhat unclear as there was a co-ruler Swæfheard of Essex, also placed by Mercia, who survived Oswine by two or three years and may have also briefly co-ruled with Wihtred, but eventually Wihtred entirely freed Kent. In 694 Wihtred settled with Ine of the West Saxons over the killing of Mul, giving Wessex £30,000 [(ASC A,B,F) – the value of a royal heir's life] and the two kings agreed on the borders of Kent, Surrey and Sussex – which confirmed the Kentish loss of Surrey, and may have settled the issue of the Hæstingas territory. After this the West Saxons and Kent were between them able to keep Mercia at bay.

692–717 saw Sussex have one of the more identifiable 'sub-kings', Noðhelm also known as Nunna, granted land to his sister Noðgyð and others in four charters. He was styled 'Nothelmus rex Suthsax' in the body of one charter, but he signed it as Nunna rex Sussax'). Noðgyð was granted land to build a minster, and in the charter it states that she promised to be Bishop Wilfrid's nun and to go on a pilgrimage. Noðhelm's last surviving charter, in which he was called Nunna rex Suthsax', is dated 714, probably in error for 717, so his reign began in or before 692 and ended in or after 717 (*Sawyer references S42-45. See Appendix 3 for more details of these charters*).

725 started with Wihtred of Kent dying and he bequeathed Kent to his three sons, Alric, Æthelbert II and Eadberht with each son taking his own districts to govern. Alric quickly disappeared but his brothers appeared to rule harmoniously, Æthelbert II probably governed east Kent and Eadberht west Kent (and later was also regent of east Kent from 747, when Æthelbert II became a recluse). Eadberht soon appointed a new sub-king to manage west Kent, firstly his son to about 762, then Eanmund who may have been king of all Kent in 762-764. The situation concerning Æthelbert II and Eadberht is confusing as Bede's '*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum'* ends here and with it goes the detail of Kent's history. After this charters remain the major source of information (see Sawyer S1-41). A reasonably accurate list of the kings of Kent is given in Appendix 2.

Mercia turned on Kent in 764 when Offa of Mercia moved into Kent. Offa made a sudden visit to Canterbury and manoeuvred his own candidates Heaberht and Egbert onto the Kentish throne in order to keep out the West Saxons. Any transitional rulers of Kent disappeared. These imposed rulers actually came from the Kentish noble lines, probably descended via the Oisingas female line.

However Offa was unable to prevent the election of Jænberht, former abbot of St Augustine's, and his opponent, as archbishop of Canterbury. In spite of this Mercian power was in the ascendant. Sometime in 770 Offa had gone on to subjugate Sussex but equally clearly the Hastingas were somehow not included in this, which would suggest that Mercia had first entered Sussex from the west and/or north. This would be rectified one year later – in 771 the chronicler Simeon of Durham recorded the defeat of the people of Hastings (L. *gens Hestingorum)* by Offa of Mercia. It is not clear if this was done via Kent or Sussex (or both).

This is the first recorded use of the word Hestingas of which Hestingorum is the genitive. The action has the appearances of a 'mopping up' operation as Hastingas had been left as the meagre content of a Mercian sandwich between Sussex and Kent. One also wonders about the religious status of Hæstingas as if it had remained pagan until this time did Offa plant churches to aid conversions, or if already Christian did he regard it as a strong base for the new minster church which he established at Bexhill in 772? At the same time he may have encouraged the building of the original St. Helen's Church at Ore in Hastings, Peasmarsh minster and maybe Udimore Church and others. Certainly by the time of the Conquest the Hastings area was well churched as shown in Fig. 10.

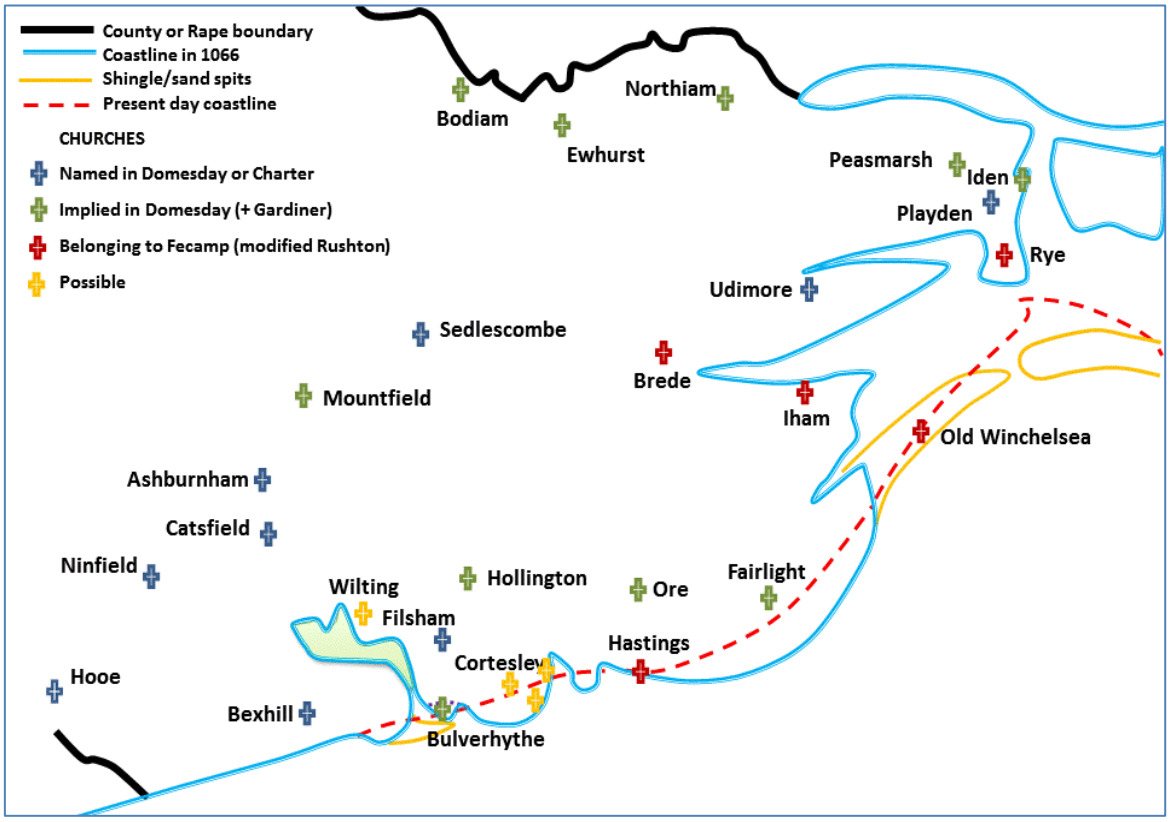


Figure 10. Pre-Domesday Saxon churches in the Hastingas area. With one exception the dates of foundation are uncertain. The earliest was Bexhill minster (772) followed possibly by a minster at Peasmarsh, then (also uncertainly) St Helen's, Ore and Udimore churches ©BDHS

Offa signed himself 'king of all the English' on two charters of 774 – 775 which were intended to trap Jænberht, archbishop of Canterbury, into accepting the Mercian king's over-lordship. No reference was made at this time to any sub-king of Kent, and the ploy met with unexpected resistance when Egbert II backed by the Cantwara suddenly assumed control of all of Kent, with some help from the West Saxons. So after a decade of subjugation Kent rebelled against Mercia. Egbert was able to defend Kent, beating Mercia at the Battle of Otford (776) and ruling for about nine years, possibly with support from Cynewulf of the West Saxons. Ecgberht died sometime between 779 – 784 and his son Ealhmund succeeded him.

In 779 Offa defeated Cynewulf of the West Saxons at Bensington (Benson in south Oxfordshire). But it took another five years for Offa to return his attentions to Kent. In 785/786 Ealhmund was killed and Offa moved in again. From this point forwards Kent would only three times briefly reassert any independence (796, 802 and 823) and remained most if the time until 825 under the control of Mercia. In 790 Offa and then in 795 his duke Beorhtwald on his behalf granted lands at Pevensey, Hastings and Rotherfield to the Abbey of St Denis in Paris. In both cases the word Hastingas is used in the original Latin of the charters.

Sussex after 770 would never be an independent kingdom again and would stay under the thrall of Mercia until in about 823, when for a brief two years a person called Baldred managed to take power in Kent. By 825 he may have also been in control of Surrey and Sussex (if so crossing Hastingas…?). This was a very short lived supremacy as when Ecgberht of Wessex defeated the Mercians at the Battle of Ellandon in 825 the sub-kingdoms of Essex, Sussex and Surrey also submitted to him. The West Saxons then rapidly moved into Kent, presumably in a pincer movement through both Sussex and Surrey led by Ecgberht's son, Æthulwulf, who saw off Baldred and therefore seized the whole of the south-east for Wessex. With respect to Ecgberht, the Cantwara may have been content to have him as king as he was descended from the *Oiscingas* Kentish kings via the female line.

Wessex took control and Surrey, Sussex and Kent were ruled by Æthulwulf, based in Kent as a sub-king. Sussex had become a province of Wessex. After 839AD following Æthelwulf's accession to the throne of Wessex, the presumptive heir of Wessex remained sub-king in charge of Kent, Sussex and Surrey – and also from now onwards kings were to have Kentish, not West Saxon names. In 857 Æthelwulf confirmed the holding by the Abbey of St Denis in Paris of lands at Rotherfield, Hastings, and Pevensey in Sussex; and also in London (Sawyer S 318). Again the name Hastingas is used in the original untranslated Latin charter.

In 860 when Æthelberht became king of Wessex, the position of sub-king of Sussex, Surrey and Kent was abandoned and they became full provinces of Wessex. The blight on the horizon was Viking attacks which had started to threaten Kent from very late in the 8th century. From the mid-830s these increased in frequency. There was a large raid into the Romney area in 843 and in 870 the Danes attacked Wessex, whose forces were now commanded by king Aethelred and his younger brother Alfred. At the battle of Ashdown (871), Alfred routed the Viking army, but then Wessex suffered more defeats. His brother died and in 871 Alfred, to be the Great, became king of Wessex. Alfred is known to have held estates at Beckley and Rotherfield in the Hastingas area.

Danes led by King Guthrum seized Chippenham in Wiltshire in early 878 and used it as a base from which to heavily raid and start to occupy Wessex. The West Saxons were reduced

to guerrilla warfare. But in May 878 Alfred's army defeated the Danes at the Battle of Edington, following which Alfred concluded peace with them in the Treaty of Wedmore. Many of the Danes returned to East Anglia where they settled and in 886, Alfred negotiated a partition treaty with the Danes to form an area known as 'The Danelaw' where Danish customs and law pertained. Alfred had retained control of western and southern Wessex including Sussex, regained control of Kent, but also gained west Mercia. This was to be the future kernel of England.

The Danish threat remained, and Alfred restructured the Wessex defences. First, he reorganised his army and secondly was the architect of the defensive series of Burghal Hidage forts or fortified towns, with local examples near *eorþe burnan** (which literally translates as 'Earth Stream' and is probably Castle Toll near Newenden) and at *hæstinga ceastre** (original Hastings, Hæstingaceastre, probably lost to coastal erosion as discussed above). * *Spellings from Nowell's transcription via Butler's copy (Fig.11).* If Castle Toll is Eorþe Burnan this burgh took the form of an 8Ha (20 acre) enclosure on a low peninsula which was defended primarily by the marshland of the former River Limen on three sides and by a broad bank and ditch on the southern side. Partial excavation of the southern ditch in 1971 showed that it was not completed in its intended form but was reduced in scale and remained unfinished. There is a strong possibility that this is the unfinished Eorþe Burnan of the Burghal Hidage, mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 892 as having been 'an incomplete fort' attacked by the Danes, whose fleet of 250 ships made landfall at Appledore in Kent and sailed up the river.

Alfred also had built a navy of new fast larger ships giving him a defence in depth against Danish raiders. Alfred died in 899, aged 50, and was buried in Winchester.

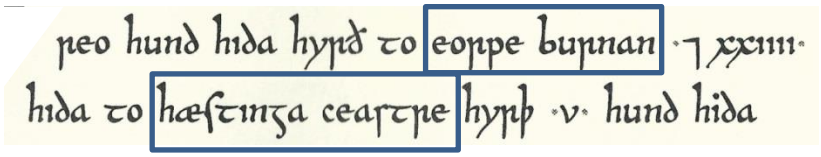
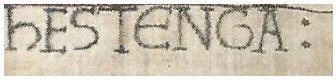


Figure 11. Excerpt from the Burghal Hidage transcription by M Butler after Nowell (BL- Add MS 43703 255r), concerning Eorpe Burnan and Hæstinga Ceastre

This concludes the relevant local history to 900, but the story of the continuing Viking raids and their part in the development of history and dynastic lines of England affecting our area up until 1066 can be read in Keith Foord's and Neil Clephane-Cameron's book which covers the really quite complex Preludes to 1066. Hastingas is mentioned in the ASC for the last time in 1011 in conjunction with more huge Viking raids involving Sussex and Hastingas. But Hæstingaceastre as a place name survived perhaps another 200 years, certainly beyond 1066 as its name is embroidered on the Bayeux Tapestry 'HESTENGA CEASTRA', with a second example of 'HESTENGA', as shown in Figs. 12 and 13 below..



Figures 12 and 13. Excerpts from the Bayeux tapestry

Conclusions: Maybe before Hæstingas was coined it is unlikely but not impossible for a battle to have taken place at Penhurst/Ashburnham between South Saxons and Romano-British and/or Jutes from Kent.

We can infer that the name Hæstingas was applied to this small but distinctive part of present day East Sussex and its people for maybe 600 years, certainly from before 701 (possibly from c. 500) until at least the late 11th century.

Sussex itself was seldom a unitary kingdom and often under the over-lordship of others, or briefly crossed in transit e.g. in 683/5 and 823/5; but the person 'Hasten' or 'Hæsten' who gave rise to the name *Hæsten ingas* – people of Hæsten – is unknown.

If an estimate is made that the western boundary of Hæstingas was either from the inland north-west point of the Pevensey levels extending into the Weald towards Heathfield (which would virtually correspond with the western boundary of the Norman Rape of Hastings), or more modestly along the line of Wallers Haven from the north-east boundary of the levels, and in both cases the eastern boundary was the River Limen we can make an estimate from Domesday of how many people lived in the area pre-1086 – 5000 to 6000. Also if the area of productive land to support 'hæʃtinʒa ceaʃtɾe' in the Burghal Hidage is correct the total area covered by this might also correspond to the part the Norman Rape of Hastings south of the Wealden Forest.

Clearly seafaring, maybe some early ship building and fishing would have developed at Hæstingaceastre (from its small port at Bulverhythe [OE. *Burg wara hyð*]), at Rye (OE. *Ria, Rya*) and Old Winchelsea (OE. *Wincel-ea*) where a fishing village may have been established on its shingle bank in circa 800AD. Salt panning was carried out on the Rye/Rother Camber and early farming would have been carried out on the better land including on Alfred's estates at Beckley (OE. *Beccan-lea*) and Rotherfield (OE. *Hryðeranfelda*), as well as at all the *–hams, -ings, -inghams* and *ingtuns, -felds* and *–leahs*.

Most of the time Hæstingas appears to have been ignored by neighbouring Sussex and Kent, although it probably had more cultural connections with Kent if we take into account the place name, field structure and Frankish influences that have been described.

Hæstingas was of course going to have a sudden severe shock in 1066.

RULERS of SUSSEX from 491(477) until 900

Notes on the table below:

At this time Sussex appears to have been a far from a unitary Kingdom and seldom in total control of its own affairs. Yellow shading represents control of the Kingdom of Sussex in its own right, starting with Ælle who invaded 477 but could not be said to be in full control of Suð Seaxe until 491. He may or may not have been succeeded by one of his sons, Cissa. There follows a blank period, with no information, when it is assumed that Suð Seaxe was fragmented and uncertain data is represented by a paler shading.

By 686 Sussex was subjugated by Wessex (blue), but this broke down in a somewhat confused way with tenuous information in 722. There appears to have been a struggle against Wessex and a split of Sussex into East and West, with the possibility of some linkage to Kent in the East – no doubt involving the Hastingas. The sub-King Watt may have also been something to do with Hastingas, but this is tenous. Once this period was over Sussex became subjugated by Mercia (green), until an upstart, Baldred, briefly moved into Kent,

only to be removed rapidly by Æthelwulf, son of Ecgberht of Wessex after the Battle of Ellandon in 825. Æthelwulf became sub-King of Kent (pink), Surrey and Sussex a position the heirs presumptive of Wessex held until the position was abolished in 860 and Wessex was ruled as a unitary Kingdom.

As with Kent no claim of absolute accuracy is made for this table. It is a best effort.

(477)491	**Ælle**		
515?	**Cissa**		
No mention until			
c.661	Wulthere of Mercia appoints and allies **Athelwalh to 685**		
	Sub-King **Ecgwald**		
		Ealdormen **Berthum (d.686) Andhun**	Whitwara and Meonwara ceded to Sussex by Wulthere of Mercia
686	**Cædwalla (**685**-688)**		Subjugated by Wessex
688	**Ine**		
	Sub-Kings **Noðelm (692-717) Watt** (?in East) **(692-700) ?Osric (700-?)** Ealdorman **Bryni (c700-?)** Sub-King **Æthelstan (714-722)**		
722	Possible revolt against Ine of Wessex led by **Ealdbert**		
725	**Æthelbert** may have continued struggle vs. Wessex in the West.		
	Possibility that Eastern Sussex may have recognised **Æthelberht II of East Kent**		
758	Uncertain – possibly dual West **Osmund** East **Ealdwulf**		
770	**Offa** of Mercia subjugates Sussex		Haestingas subjugated **771**
	Sub-Kings **Oswald (772-?) Oslac (?776-785 Ealdwulf (?-791)**		
791	Direct Mercian rule		
796/796	**Ecgfrith**		
796	**Cœnwulf**		
821	**Ceolwulf I**		
823	**Baldred**	Seized Kent (+Sussex) from Mercia. May have been an opportunist Mercian	
825	**Ecgberht** of Wessex (802-) defeated the Mercians at the Battle of Ellandon. **Kent, Surrey and Sussex become part of Wessex,** Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent his son **Æthelwulf**		

839	**Æthelwulf**	Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent **Athelstan to 851** then **Æthelbald**
858	**Æthelbald**	Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent **Æthelberht**
860	**Æthelberht**	Position of Sub-Kings abolished
865	**Æthelred**	
871	**Alfred**	
899	**Edward**	

RULERS of KENT from circa 447 to 900

Names, relationships, spellings and dates in Kent can all be very confusing, particularly at first. Multiple sources have been consulted, and these often conflict and confuse issues further, so there is again a disclaimer to say that *the table below is a best effort with no guarantee of absolute accuracy.* The situation is made worse by the frequent adoption of dual kingship in Kent and supremacy changes with appointments of sub-kings.

ca. 447	**Horsa (d.450) and Hengist**	Foundation myth first rulers. Nicknames.	
488	**Æsc/Oisc/Escus**	Name uncertain, may be generic.	Founder of Kent Dynasty 'Oiscingas'.
512	**Octa/Ossa**	? Son of Oisc. Controls Surrey and Middlesex	There is considerable name and date confusion at and before this point. There may have been more kings as Ossa and Octa may be different people.
540	**Eormenric/Hermenric**	Also assumed control of Essex	
560	**Æthelbert I**	Defeated by Ceawin of Wessex, Wessex pushes Kent back to East Surrey. Still overlord of Essex.	First Christian king of all Anglo-Saxon kingdoms
616	**Eadbald**	Loses over-lordship of Essex	
640	**Earconbert**		
664	**Ecgbert I**	Still has control over parts of Surrey	

674/5	**Hlothere/Lothaire**	Later controls London and possibly Surrey after which Sub-King of West Kent/Surrey is **Eadric**, son of Ecgbert.	In about 683 Eadric gets South Saxons to invade East Kent and following several battles Hlothere is killed in 685
685	**Eadric**		Cædwalla of Wessex invades Kent
686	**Cædwalla**	**Mul** Sub-king to brother Cædwalla of Wessex	Mul killed and Caedwalla's successor **Ine** withdraws from Kent but holds Sussex
687 **688**	**Æthelred I**	**Sighere/?Sæberht** Mercian client king of Essex	Cantwara revolt against Wessex. Mercia invades**.**
690		**Oswine (-690)** Sub-king of Kent, co-ruler **Swaefheard** of Essex who for 2 or 3 more years may have co-ruled with **Wihtræd**	Oswine a Mercian placeman but of Kentish 'Oisingas' decent. Wihtræd a son of Ecgbert I (664) above.
c.693	**Wihtræd**	Brother of Eadric. Frees Kent. Bequeaths Kent to 3 sons	
725	**Æthelbert II** (East Kent)	**Eadberht I** (West Kent)	**Alric** (dies)
747	**Eadbert I** (all Kent)	Sub-King of West Kent **Eadbert II**	
759		Sub-King of West Kent **Eanmund**	
762	**Eanmund/Sigured**		
764	**Offa**	Subjugated by Mercia	
764		764-764 Sub-King **Heabert**	
c.770		From c. 770 Sub-King **Ecgbert II**	
773/774	**Ecgbert II**	Battle of Otford 776: Kent defeats Mercia	Declares Kent independence
779/784	**Ealhmund**		

785 **787**	**Offa** Son **Ecgfrith** co-ruled from 787	Mercia retakes direct rule	Both Offa and Ecgfrith died in 796
796	**Eadbert II Praen**	Rebellion without church support	Origin uncertain, said to be 'a priest'
798 **807**	**Cœnwulf**	Sub-King **Cuthred** Ealdorman **Oswulf**	Mercia mercilessly retakes Kent
		Ealdorman **Eadwald?**	
821	**Ceolwulf II**		
823	**Baldred**	Seized Kent (and Sussex) from Mercia. May have been an opportunist Mercian Ealdorman	
825	**Ecgberht** of Wessex (802-) defeated the Mercians at the Battle of Ellandon**.** **Kent, Surrey and Sussex become part of Wessex.**	Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent his son **Æthelwulf**	
839 **851**	**Æthelwulf**	Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent **Athelstan** to 851 then **Æthelbald**	
858	**Æthelbald**	Sub-King of Sussex, Surrey and Kent **Æthelberht**	
860	**Æthelberht**	Position of Sub-Kings abolished	
865	**Æthelred**		
871	**Alfred**		
899	**Edward**		

Sawyer – List of Charters for the Kingdom of Sussex

S 42–49 (E-Sawyer references)

Osmund (of Sussex) ?758 or ?765 - ?772 (2)

S 48. 762 probably for 765. Osmund (king), to Walhhere, his comes; grant, for the construction of a minster, of 12 hides (tributarii) at Ferring, Sussex. , Selsey

S 49. 770. Osmund, king, to Wærbald, comes, and his wife Tidburh, for St Peter's Church (Henfield); grant of 15 hides (manentes) at Henfield, Sussex, with later confirmation by Offa, king of Mercia. , Selsey

Æthelberht (of Sussex) ?733-? (2)

S 46. 733 x (747 x c. 765). Æthelberht, king of Sussex, to Diosza; grant, for the construction of a minster, of 18 hides (tributarii) at Wittering, Sussex, with a note of the transfer of the land by Diosza to his sister and confirmation by Offa, king of Mercia. , Selsey

S 47. Æthelberht, king of Sussex, to Wilfrid, bishop; grant of a half-hide (tributarius) at Chichester, Sussex. , Selsey

Noðelm/Nothhelm/Nunna (of Sussex) ?692-?714 (4)

S 45. 692. Nothhelm (Nunna), king of Sussex, to Nothgyth, his sister; grant, in order to found a minster, of 33 hides (cassati) at Lidsey, Aldingbourne, Lenstedegate (? Westergate in Aldington) and (North) Mundham, Sussex. , Selsey

S 44. (a) c. 705 x (? 716 x ?). Nunna, king of Sussex, to Berhfrith, famulus Dei; grant of four hides (tributarii) at Peppering by the river Arun (Tarente), Sussex. , Selsey

S 43. 775 for c. 705 x c. 717. Nunna, king of Sussex, to Eadberht, bishop; grant of 20 hides (tributarii) at Hugabeorgum and Dene (probably East and West Dean near Chichester, Sussex). , Selsey

S 42. 714 (? for 717 or 724). Nunna, king of Sussex, to Beadufrith and the brethren of Selsey; grant of 4 hides (manentes) at Herotunun, 3 (cassati) at Tættæshamstede and 3 at Sidlesham, Sussex. , Selsey

This is a sparse record and compares with 41 charter records for Kent (S1-41)

Selected Bibliography

Armstrong, JR. *A History of Sussex*. 1971

Arnold, CJ. *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*. 1997

Ashley, M. *The Mammoth Book of British Kings and Queens.* 1999

Ayto, J , Crofton, I & Cavill, Pl. *Brewer's Britain and Ireland*. 2005

Barker, E. '*Sussex Anglo-Saxon Charters, part 1'* Sussex Archæological Collections; 86: 42-101, 1947

Berry, BJL : *Hastingleigh, 1000-2000AD*. 2002

Blair, PH. *Roman Britain and Early England, 55 BC-AD 871* 1975

Brandon, P (ed.). *The South Saxons*. 1978

Brookes, S & Harrington, S. *The Kingdom and People of Kent, AD 400-1066: Their History and Archaeology.* 2010

Brooks, N. *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church, 400-1066.* 1998.

Butler, M *The Burghal Hidage – A Text of the 'A' Version.* 2014

Chevalier, CT. *'The Frankish origin of the Hastings tribe'* Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol 104: 56-62

Cleeve, J and Williams, R : '*Cliff Erosion in East Sussex'* Sussex Studies No.5. 1987

Coates, R. '*On the alleged Frankish origin of the Hastings tribe*' Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol 117. pp. 263-264

Colgrave, B (ed./trans: *The Life of Bishop Wilfred* by Eddius Stephanus. 1927

Combes P & Lyne M *'Hastings, Haestingceastre and Hastingaport'* Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol.133: 213-24

Drewett P, Rudling D and Gardiner M. *The South East to AD1000*. 1988

Eddison, J, Gardiner, M and Long, A (eds.) : *Romney Marsh: Environmental Change and Human Occupation in a Coastal Lowland.* OUCA Monograph 46, 1998

Fairley, W. '*Notitia Dignitatum or Register of Dignitaries'*, in Translations and Reprints from Original Sources of European History, Vol. VI:4. 1899

Foord, K & Clephane -Cameron, . *1066 and the Battle of Hastings - Preludes, Events and Postscripts* – particularly Chapters 2-4. 2015

Gardiner M *'Economy and Landscape Change in Post-Roman and early Medieval Sussex 450-1175'* in Rudling D (ed.) The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000. Kings Lynn

Gardiner, M : *Saxo-Norman Hastings , Reflections on its Development*. HAARG Journal, New Series 8 1999

Gardiner M *'Some Lost Anglo-Saxon Charters and the endowment of Hastings College'* Sussex Archaelogical Collections, 1989, Vol127: 39-48

Gelling, M. *Place-Names in the Landscape*. 1985

Giles, J A (ed.) *Gildas: 'The Works of Gildas' in Six Old English Chronicles.* 1866

Giles, J A (ed.) *Nennius: 'History of the Britons' in Six Old English Chronicles.* 1866

Giles, JA(trans.), *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History 1858*

Greenway, DE. ed. *Historia Anglorum: Henry of Huntingdon, History of the English*. 1996

Higham, N J and Ryan, MJ, *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape.* 2011

Haslam, J : *King Alfred and the Vikings: Strategies and Tactics 876-886 AD,* in Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 13, Semple S (ed.) Oxford University School of Archaeology, *2005*

Hill, DH *'The Burghal Hidage – the establishment of a text,'* Medieval Archaeology XIII 1969

Johnston, RDE (ed.) : *Research Report No 18 – The Saxon Shore:* The Council for British Archaeology*,* 1977

Jones, ME. *The End of Roman Britain* 1998

Kelly, S.E). *Anglo-Saxon Charters VI: Charters of Selsey*. OUP for the British Academy 1998.

Kelly, SE. '*The Control of Kent in the Ninth Century*'. Early Medieval Europe. 2 (2): 111–31 1993.

Kirby, DP. *The Earliest English Kings*. Revised Edition. 2000

Laing, L & J. *Anglo-Saxon England*. 1979

Leslie K & Short B (eds) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex.* 1999

Lloyd, J. *'The Origin of the Lathes of Kent'* Archaeologia Cantiana, 2013, Vol.133

Lucy, B. *Twenty Centuries in Sedlescombe*. 1978

Mansfield, S. *'The Jute and Saxon settlement of Kent and Sussex '* Battle & District Historical Society Journal. 2014 Vol.19

Martin, M. '*Anglo-Saxon Kent*', in Williams JH (ed.) The Archaeology of Kent to AD 800. 2007

Mawer A and Stenton FM. *The Place Names of Sussex*. 1930

Mawer, A. *Problems of Place Name Study*. 1929

Myres, JNL. *The English Settlements.*, 1989

Napper, H.F *'Towncreep: Is It Mercredsburn*?' Sussex Archaeological Collections, 1894 Vol.39, 168–174.

Napper, HF *'Town Creep'* Sussex Archaeological Collections, 1896 Vol. 40: 267.

Padgham, D : *The Lost Settlement of Bulverhythe*, HAARG Journal, New Series 12 (2001)

Reaney, PH : *A Survey of Kent Place Names*, Archaeologia Cantiana 73 (1959) 62-74

Roberts, RG. *The Place Names of Sussex*. 1914

Robinson, DA and Williams, RBG : *'The Sussex Coast, Past and Present'* in Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society, The Geographical Editorial Committee, University of Sussex, 1983

Romney Marsh Research Trust Monographs 1-5 (1988 – 2011) http://rmrt.org.uk/monographs/

Rudling D (ed.) *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*.

Rushton, NS *'Parochialisation and patterns of Patronage in 11th Century Sussex'* Sussex Archaeological Collections, 1999, Vol 137: 133-52

Salway P *The Oxford History of England: Roman Britain*. 1981

Sawyer, PH. *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An annotated list and bibliography.* Royal Historical Society, 1968

Seeck, O (1876) *Noticia Dignitatum - Occidentalis* - Particularly sections VII. 100, XXVIII. 10 & 20, XLI.17 and XLII.23 (can be found on-line)

Sellar, AM (trans.) *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*. 1907

Sherley-Price, L (trans.) *Bede: A history of the English Church and People.* 1955

Smyth, C and Jennings, S : '*Mid-to late Holocene Forest Composition and the effects of Clearances in the Coombe Haven Valley, East Sussex'*. Sussex Archaeological Collections 126, pp 1- 20. (1988)

Stenton, FM. *Anglo-Saxon England.* 1971

Stevenson, J ed. *Simon of Durham - The Church Historians of England*. 1855

Swanton, M (Ed.) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.* 1996

Tatham HER. '*On the traditional site of a Town in the parish of Penhurst'* (Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol. 37 1890

Tatham HER. '*Ancient Site called Towncreep'* Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol. 38 1892

Tatham HER. '*Traces of an old Road near Towncreep'* Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol. 39 1894

Thomas G. *Resource Assessment and Research Agenda for the Anglo-Saxon Period*. 2013

Thorn, C & Thorn, F. "*Sussex*" 2007. Part of the Hull Domesday Project www.domesdaybook.net/home

Thorpe, L (trans.) Geoffrey of Monmouth - *History of the Kings of Britain.* 1973

Walker, HE '*Bede and the Gewissae: the Political Evolution of the Heptarchy and its Nomenclature'* Cambridge Historical Journal, Volume 12, Issue 2 January 1956, pp. 174-186

Welch, MG in Brandon, P (ed.) *The South Saxons: Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*. 1978

Welch, MG. *Anglo-Saxon England*. 1992

Whistler RF *'Penhurst: Being some account of its Ironworks, Manor House, Church, etc'* in Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol.36 1888

Williamson, JA *The Evolution of England*, 1931

Wood, I '*The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels'* in Lapidge M & Dumville D (ed.) *Gildas: New Approaches*. 1984

Woodbridge-Witney, KP. *The Kingdom of Kent*. 1982

Yorke, B '*Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms'* Battle & District Historical Society Journal 2009 Vol.14

Yorke, B. *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*. 1990

Web sources

www.ancestraljourneys.org/belgicengland.shtml

www.britannia.com '*Timeline of British History*'

http://darmc.harvard.edu/ '*Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations'*

www.historyfiles.co.uk

www.pase.ac.uk *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE)* is a database which aims to provide structured information relating to all the recorded inhabitants of England from the late sixth to the late eleventh century.

http://pelagios.org/maps/greco-roman/ '*Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire'*

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/archaeology/Lyminge_Research_design.pdf *'Lyminge: an archaeological research agenda for the pre-Viking minster and its associated settlement*'