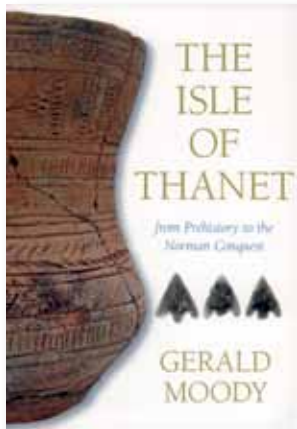


# Off the Beaten Path in England and Spain



*The Isle of Thanet from Prehistory to the Norman Conquest*  
by Gerald Moody (Stroud: Tempus, 2008). 188 pp., 103 illus.,  
cloth, £17.99, ISBN 978-0-752-44689-9.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD HODGES, *Williams Director, Penn Museum.*

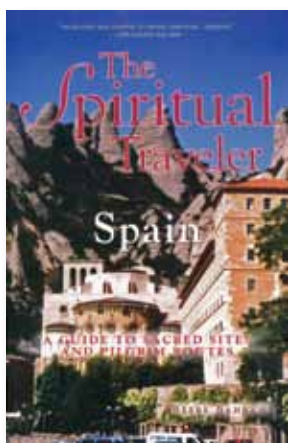
Every part of southern England has a rich and almost continuous archaeological history, from the Upper Palaeolithic era onward. The little-known Isle of Thanet, southeast of London—a peninsula projecting north-eastward off the north coast of Kent—is no different. Separated from the heartland of Kent by the River Stour, this “island” includes the Victorian bathing resorts of Broadstairs, Margate, and Ramsgate. Reculver, at the north terminus of the River Stour, was a great Roman fortress guarding the straits to London. Pegwell Bay, to the southeast of the Isle, is long associated with the fabled landings of the Anglo-Saxons, and there today can be found a full-sized replica of an Anglo-Saxon ship. Gerald Moody’s short, readable book surveys the archaeology of this subregion of Kent since the Ice Age. It is a modern sequel to the Reverend John Lewis’ *The History and Antiquities of the Isle of Thanet* (1736), an antiquarian tour de force that laid the groundwork for many Victorian archaeologists to mine Thanet’s many barrows and cemeteries.

The first 50 pages of the book describe how the island became a segment of Kent. Moody draws upon a modern survey by the Trust for Thanet Archaeology, reconstructing the sequence of curiously shaped islands from Mesolithic, Early Bronze Age, Roman, and early Modern times. The island is rich in early prehistoric finds from Palaeolithic hand-axes to the Neolithic causewayed camp recently excavated at Court Stairs. Not surprisingly it is no less rich in later prehistoric times, with numerous Bronze Age barrows, remarkable bronze hoards from Ebbsfleet and Minnis Bay, and significant Iron Age farms including a fortified promontory on North Foreland. The author calls it an imperial (Roman) outpost, but by any European standards, it has a dense number of small maritime villas, including Abbey Farm villa, which has recently been excavated. This concentration undoubtedly made it an attractive area in early Anglo-Saxon times, as evidenced by many cemeteries associated with this period. The richest of all these cemeteries is Sarre, tucked in the Stour valley. Nineteenth century excavations here produced a stunning array of imported Frankish goods as well as Byzantine silver spoons. Dating mostly to the 7th century, Sarre has been connected

with the rise of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Kent, and its close links with the Merovingian kingdom of Neustria. Although an old excavation, it has fascinated contemporary archaeologists and historians alike as a cornerstone in the commercial rise of Middle Saxon. Perhaps more might have been made of this intriguing if little-known site and its connections with other Thanet settlements. Certainly, this was the apogee of the Isle, because with the Normans, the English Channel ports of Dover

and Sandwich to the south, and Rochester to the west, offered better harbors and protection.

Gerald Moody's book offers an appealing glimpse of a seldom visited part of Kent that in many periods was almost a stepping stone for travellers coming from Continental Europe, heading by sea towards either the Thames estuary and London, or the fertile valleys and hills of Kent.



*The Spiritual Traveler Spain. A Guide to Sacred Sites and Pilgrim Routes*  
by Beebe Bahrami (Mahwah, New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2009). 347 pp., numerous black and white photographs, paperback, \$24.00, ISBN 978-1-58768-047-2.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD HODGES, *Williams Director, Penn Museum.*

Spain has always been at a crossroads between Europe and Africa, and between the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. Today's Spaniards—Castilians and Catalans—owe their origins to peoples who have moved between these spheres: Iberians, Celts, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, Arabs, and Berbers. This book traces the many places associated with the sacred, spanning this kaleidoscope of peoples, from dolmens to great mosques and cathedrals. Bahrami begins with a short (and uncritical) introduction to the prehistory and history of these places, then in part two describes Spain's many sacred landscapes ranging from cult springs and mountains to its celebrated sacred cities (Córdoba, Granada, and Santiago de Compostella being the best known). Part three, the bulk of the book, describes ten pilgrim routes in some detail. A short, but well-informed bibliography concludes the book.

The strength of this book lies in the informative and very personalized list of places assembled by the diligent author. Most of all, Bahrami has tracked down where the sacred ceremonies are still sustained, providing the reader and visitor with an accessible shortcut to living histories and vibrant folkloric traditions and mythologies. The author writes with a felicitous ease, in many ways recalling (in the first person narrative) an earlier tradition of guide books. Strangely, its weakness as a guide book is that there is no general map, and no maps are included of the pilgrim routes. Indeed the illustrations are generally few, with only black and white photographs. Those truly dedicated to finding out more about the timelessness of the sacred in Spain, and especially those wishing to explore beyond the obvious cities and monasteries, will find this to be a good starting point, and perhaps an appetizer for one of the most glorious and transcendent patrimonies of Europe. 🏠