

# When Kent Invaded Essex



Fig.1. There may have been two early Cantian colonies north of the Thames: a coastal colony to the east with Camulodunon as its capital, and a smaller colony to the west centred on Braughing and Puckeridge. A northern branch of the Trinovantes held land between the rivers Stour and Alde.

Fig.2. SS Type gold stater (ABC 2237) with Kentish banded flan and horse with Kentish clumpy hooves, struck in Essex c.55-45 BC, probably at Camulodunon. Found Methwold, Norfolk, 1996. Ex Chris Rudd.



Fig.3. S Type gold quarter stater (ABC 2249) with Kentish banded flan and Kent-inspired stylised war trophy, struck in Essex c.55-45 BC. Found near Great Dunmow, Essex, 1996. Ex Chris Rudd.

Since December 2015 three SS Type gold staters (ABC 2237), struck in Iron Age Britain c.55-45 BC, have come up for auction – two in London, one in Aylsham. This is unusual because SS Type gold staters are extremely rare, with only 14 examples recorded. This prompts me to tell you about a tribal 'land grab' that took place in southeast Britain over 2,000 years ago, a hitherto hidden conquest that only a few people know about. I'm referring to a recently discovered Cantian 'colony' in Essex, heartland of the Trinovantes ('battle slayers') whose capital was Camulodunon (modern Colchester). This early Cantian colony was founded c.55-45 BC, a whole generation before Dubnovellaunos, a powerful Kentish king, invaded Essex in c.15-5 BC.

The Dubnovellaunos invasion of Essex was first suggested by Sir John Evans in 1864. But some later numismatists doubted that Dubno in Essex was the same person as Dubno in Kent. Indeed Van Arsdell stated categorically in 1989 that they were two different people. It wasn't until Rainer Kretz published 'From Kentish lad to Essex man' (Chris Rudd List 31, 1998, p.1-6) that most folk were persuaded that CantianDubno and TrinovantianDubno were

one and the same person. Evidence for a much earlier pre-DubnoCantian colony in Essex has only emerged gradually over the last 20 years, thanks in no small measure to some extremely rare coins found by metal detectorists north of the River Thames. This coin evidence comes in four main forms: Essex banded flans, signs of Kent in Essex, inverted leg potins, and an Essex die re-used in

Kent. It's the first time all the evidence has been publicly presented. So I'll keep it simple.

## Essex Banded Flans

One of the defining features of Cantian gold coins, including the earliest struck c.55-45 BC, is banding on the obverse side of the flan. Kretz (1998) says: "This feature is composed of two 'ruts' running



Fig.5. Nine distinctive symbols which collectively distinguish early Cantian coins from the coins of almost all other tribes, except those struck in Essex by migrant rulers from Kent. Compelling evidence of an early Cantian colony north of the Thames.

4. Like the Nazi SS emblem, S-shapes also represent lightning flashes. Finney's Thunderbolt gold quarter stater (ABC 2255), north Thames c.55-45 BC. Found Ely, Cambs., 2004. Ex Chris Rudd.





Fig.6. A silver *denarius* of Julius Caesar, left, with its Gallic arms trophy and seated captives, may have inspired Kent's trophy quarter staters (ABC 192, 195), right, which were copied in Essex.



Fig.7. The pentagram, seen here on a Pythagorean ring and Kent gold quarter stater of Dubnovellaunos (ABC 198), right, was an ancient symbol of mind-body harmony. Druidic influence on Cantian coin design?



Fig.8. North Thames silver unit (ABC 2258) with four Kentish dragon heads, four Kentish bucrania, a horse with a Kentish S-tail and a Kentish pentagram below.

across the flan, leaving raised ridges in between – not dissimilar to the depressions left by countless lorries on a tarmac road surface...Its purpose might have been of a practical nature i.e. to prevent the blank from slipping between the dies, but the possibility that it had some deeper significance cannot be ruled out."

Shortly afterwards, or perhaps at the same time, gold coins with banded flans

Fig.9. Weald Net (ABC 177), the first gold stater struck in Kent c.55-45 BC, with banded flan, S-rings symbol and fishing net (prototype of X-box symbol seen on north Thames quarter stater ABC 2520). Found Chelmsford, Essex, 1995. Ex Chris Rudd.



Fig.10. Roman ruins at Colchester (Camulodunon).

were minted in Essex (ABC 2237, 2243, 2249). To me this suggests that a Cantian king could have crossed the Thames and taken some Trinovantian territory, either by a politically expedient marriage or – more likely – by military force. "Essex banded staters and quarters offer clear evidence of Cantian settlement north of the Thames at a relatively early date," says Dr. John Sills (pers.comm. 3.3.2016).

### Signs of Kent in Essex

There are nine symbols that characterise early Cantian coins. In most cases these icons differentiate Cantian coins from the early coins of almost all other British tribes. An exception is a small unknown tribe north of the Thames whose uninscribed coins carry these symbols – an early colony of the Cantiaci it would seem.

All nine Cantian symbols can be seen on later or near contemporary coins north of the Thames, especially in Essex. For example, Kent's war trophy (ABC 192, 195), originally inspired by a silver *denarius* of Julius Caesar struck in Spain, 46-45 BC (Sear RCV 1404), also occurs

on three north Thames gold quarter staters (ABC 2243, 2246, 2249); and Kent's distinctive pentagram, seen on no fewer than five Cantian coins (ABC 249, 282, 285, 309, 354), also occurs on a north Thames silver unit (ABC 2258), which also displays four Kentish dragon heads, four Kentish bucrania (bull skulls) and a horse with a Kentish S-tail. Of course this might merely be due to inter-tribal artistic borrowing – north Thames nicking nice ideas from south Thames. But I don't think it is. Here's why.

### Inverted Leg Potins

One of the earliest and most distinctive 'small change' coinages produced in Iron Age Britain were the tin-rich bronze coins, popularly known as 'potins', cast in clay moulds – not die struck – by the Cantiaci of Kent. David Holman, the foremost authority on ancient Cantian coins, has recently realised that a very rare type of potin – the Inverted Leg type – appears to have been minted, not in Kent like all the other many types and varieties, but north of the Thames, possibly in the Braughing/Puckeridge area.



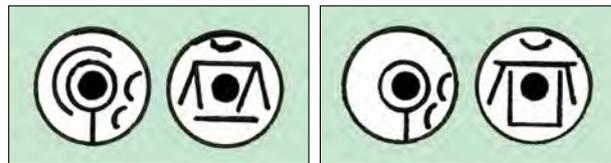
Fig.11. Essex gold stater of Addedomaros (ABC 2511), king of the Catuvellauni c.45-25 BC, probably struck at Camulodunon, capital of former Cantian colony. Note Kentish S-rings symbol.

Fig.12. A horned serpent or dragon with fan-shaped fishtail occurs on a Kent silver unit (ABC 243), left, and then on an Essex silver unit (ABC 2282), right, both c.50-30 BC. Evidence of a Cantian colony in Essex.

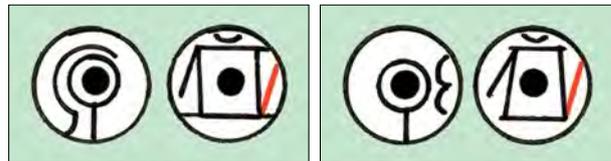


Fig.14. Thumbs Up gold stater (ABC 186) struck in Kent c.50-40 BC re-using reconditioned die from SS Type stater (ABC 2237) struck in Essex c.55-45 BC. The uprooted corn stalk in a clenched fist, perhaps inspired by a Carnutes bronze (LT 7070), right, may symbolise a return to Kent by the king who issued both staters.

Fig.15. When Dubnovellaunos of Kent captured Camulodunon, where he struck this gold stater c.10 BC-AD 8 (ABC 2389), he was reclaiming an earlier Cantian colony that had been lost to Addedomaros, king of the Catuvellauni. Note banded flan.



Kent Nipples potins, ABC 174, Allen O1 and P1.



Essex Inverted Leg potins, ABC-, Holman G4/6, 1a and 2a.

Fig.13. Of the 19 provenanced examples of Inverted Leg potins 14 are from north of the Thames, including six from Braughing-Puckeridge area. Only one has been found in Kent. Evidence of a more westerly Cantian colony.

to Kent by Addedomaros, king of the Catuvellauni, and that shortly after he'd returned to Kent he struck Thumbs Up staters, re-using an SS Type die with the letters SS erased (pers.comm. 1.3.2016).

### A King of the Segontiaci?

Who was the ruler who struck SS Type gold staters and quarter staters (ABC 2237, 2242, 2246, 2249), in the heart of Trinovantian territory, probably at Camulodunon? Dr. John Sills believes that the SS may refer to the Segontiaci, one of the five tribes that surrendered to Caesar in 54 BC when he was in the region. I find this a plausible proposal. Commios, formerly king of the Atrebates in Gaul, branded the plain obverse of his British gold quarter staters (ABC 1028, 1031) with a big letter A for Atrebates. So maybe a king of the Segontiaci – one of the tribes located in Cantion (Kent) perhaps? – copied Commios when he crossed the Thames with his cavalry and invaded Camulodunon in Essex?

For their help I thank Jane Bottomley, Elizabeth Cottam, David Holman, Rainer Kretz and John Sills.

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Holman thinks these Inverted Leg potins were minted c.60-45 BC, which coincides neatly with the date of SS Type gold staters and Cantian-style quarter staters minted north of the Thames. Dr. John Sills believes that Inverted Leg potins were made by a separate and more westerly group of Cantian migrants than the group who struck the SS Type staters and other Essex banded gold coins, which have a more coastal distribution (pers.comm. 3.3.2016).

### Essex Die Reused in Kent

One of the most persuasive pieces of evidence for an early pre-DubnoCantian colony in Essex comes from Rainer

Kretz. He realised that Thumbs Up gold staters (ABC 186) – an extremely rare Cantian type struck in Kent c.50-40 BC – had been minted from a reconditioned obverse die that had previously been used to strike SS Type gold staters in Essex. Is that so unusual? You bet it is! Kretz says: "This would represent only the second recorded case within the British series of a die used to strike two separate tribal coinages – one Trinovantian, the other Cantian," (A new life for an SS stater die, Chris Rudd List 134, March 2014, p.2-3). So how did this happen? Dr. John Sills reckons that the Cantian ruler in Essex who struck SS Type staters was forced to retreat back