

Sample paragraph from Chapter 4, p.89

Nonetheless, historians and archaeologists in modern times have persisted in assuming that kings there were; they just happen to be invisible. Wildly extrapolating from the evidence of one or two named rulers before the ninth century, they assume a fully-fledged monarchy functioned in the south-western kingdom along the lines of the emerging contemporary English kingdoms that were consolidating themselves over the seventh century (and ferociously squabbling with each other), or the later Welsh kingdoms. In this chapter I propose an alternative hypothesis for south-western society and governance, one in which kings appear but then disappear. In fact, a considerable body of evidence exists which ought to direct us towards the conclusion that, far from being a centralised kingdom with permanent kings, greater Cornwall at this stage was a decentralised society with impermanent and relatively powerless elites. The only puzzle is why majority opinion clings so tenaciously to a romantic picture of kings and kingdoms.