Ritual is a popular theme in Roman studies and this attractive and well-written volume brings an invaluable contribution to the subject. It is a collection of ten papers focusing on southeast Britain looking at religion in rural contexts (Black), Roman London (Hall and Shepherd), Springhead (Andrews), Surrey (Bird), Wanborough temple site (Williams), Sussex (Rudling), Hayling Island (King and Soffe), votive offerings (Bagnall-Smith), temples in the late and post-Roman period (Smith) and the interaction between temple sites and churches (Henig).

The volume is not a radical reassessment of our understanding of ‘landscape’ in the Roman period (which has gone further in prehistoric studies) – the Preface tells us that the title was “to reflect the wide range of locations and contexts dealt with by the various papers” (vii). The volume is a highly useful and detailed account and analysis of known and new data concerning religion from experts that know the local material extremely well. It is a valuable resource for anyone undertaking research on the subject. A number of papers, however, do emphasise that religion in Britain was not restricted solely to recognisable gods or constructed temple environments: “there were spirits everywhere” (Bagnall-Smith p.165). The ‘landscape’ was highly ritualised in Roman times and this can be demonstrated from the volume.

The religious significance of ‘natural’ places as parts of symbolic landscapes is clear. Not only were temples often associated with watery settings, for example, such as Springhead (Andrews), temples along the Bosham Stream in Sussex (Rudling pp.108-9) and the sacred Hayling Island (King and Soffe p.139), but watery landscapes themselves were also subject to veneration with deposits of human skulls in the Walbrook stream and metalwork in the Thames (Hall and Shepherd pp.39-41). Urban sites were also influenced by the sacred landscapes in which they were set, as illustrated with Verulamium (Henig p.198). Ritual deposition in other contexts such as pits, ditches and shafts (Black pp.1-8) demonstrates the broad and complex nature of the religious ‘landscape’.

Continuation from the Iron Age and earlier prehistoric landscapes is also marked; religion in the Roman period took place in the context of previous activity. This is recognised at temples such as Wanborough (Williams p.87-9) and Springhead (Andrews p.56) but also villas (Black p.17), other settlements, prehistoric monuments (Rudling p.120) and ‘natural’ places. The two final papers in the volume (Smith; Henig) demonstrate that religious meaning often survived into and beyond late Roman times. Although structures were not always maintained, places and landscapes retained sanctity and remained in use (Smith p.178).

The papers could sometimes benefit from more acknowledgement of each other, such as the article on Springhead (Andrews) drawing on Smith’s late Roman analysis. Religion was “part of the fabric of everyday life” (Black p.1) and as such it would also have been useful to have addressed a greater range of activities. There were smith (Bird p.79) and hearth (Bagnall-Smith p.165) gods, for instance: iron-working sites in the Weald (Rudling pp.128-9) could reveal religious beliefs connected with the metalworking processes themselves in this landscape. This is an important book and will undoubtedly encourage further research.