

# Early Medieval Buckinghamshire

Michael Farley, February 2008

## 1. Introduction

*Nature of the evidence: history of research: role of material culture*

This survey covers most of historic Buckinghamshire, which is now served by the Sites and Monuments Record of the County Council and Milton Keynes Council. It does not cover a few, largely Thameside, parishes formerly within the county but now within Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The County Museum service covers the whole of the modern administrative area of Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire, probably a creation of the tenth century, has always been more of an administrative convenience than a natural entity. Buckingham, the original county town, lost its position to Aylesbury in the medieval period, the latter gaining its position largely due to its county-centred location rather than to any particular commercial advantage.

Although Buckinghamshire has been fortunate in having one of the earliest county archaeological societies (founded in 1847) also early Victoria County History volumes, which included a review of Saxon remains by Reginald Smith (1905) and early Royal Commission inventory volumes (1912 and 1913), it has only produced a handful of antiquaries such as Browne Willis (1755) and Langley (1797) with any strong interest in its physical remains. Nor did the county produce an early group of excavators. The only significant piece of work relevant to the early medieval period, albeit of lasting national importance, was the investigation of the Taplow barrow in 1883 (Smith 1905). This excavation resulted in the most significant discovery of its kind prior to Sutton Hoo, and figured, for instance, in consecutive issues of the *Illustrated London News*. Recent important discoveries adjacent to the barrow will be noted below. Apart from Taplow, Wing church was early recognised as being of Saxon date (Baldwin Brown 1903)

In the interwar and immediate post-war years, subsequent to publication of the VCH and RCHM volumes there was little fieldwork or even thought, on the early medieval period in the county apart from, peripherally, the writings of ET Leeds who was based at Oxford. Useful syntheses of early Saxon period finds in mid and south Buckinghamshire were, however, published by Jack Head (1946 and 1955) and a little work on Wing church by Jackson and Fletcher (1962)

The curator of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's County Museum was from the 1930s a 'correspondent' of the Ordnance Survey and this led to the mapping of reported finds, albeit with a central Bucks bias. This record together with other Ordnance Survey data was eventually to provide the foundation of the County's Sites and Monuments Record (Pike 1995). In the late 1960s a field archaeologist was appointed to the County Museum, leading to the gradual development of a county archaeological service carrying out fieldwork, both excavation and fieldwalking, as well as evolving planning functions. The 1960s had seen the arrival of several excavating societies, particularly in north Buckinghamshire, whose work was often published, if at all, in newsletter form. Pressure from these groups and the County Museum, led to the establishment of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit in 1971 to cover the archaeology of the new city (Zeepvat 1991). The unit closed in 1994 having published the results of most of its work in a series of important monographs.

The county falls into several distinct geographic regions which influence settlement pattern, community identity and the character of archaeological discoveries. The inhabitants of north Buckinghamshire have stronger links with adjacent Northamptonshire than with the Thames-influenced occupants of the south; the occupants of the west side of the county look to Oxford rather than to Aylesbury and those of the east to Bedfordshire, to Hertfordshire, to the former county of Middlesex and of course London. Although these modern contact-zones are a simplification, to an extent they were apparent even in the Saxon period. The water catchment areas and geological formations tend to support the same pattern. The dominant dip slope block of the Chilterns drains mostly south to the Thames, the western (Oxfordshire-influenced) section of mid-Buckinghamshire into the Thame (and ultimately the Thames) and the eastern Chilterns into the Colne, which is shared with Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The drainage pattern of Aylesbury Vale - largely clayland but with significant 'islands' of other free-draining material, feeds in three directions, west into Oxfordshire, east into the Ousel (which in turn drains into the Ouse and ultimately the Wash) and north into the Ouse itself. The north of the county has quite significant superficial glacial deposits and much of the Chiltern area is not as might be expected exposed chalk, but is also mantled by superficial deposits of one kind or another which has implications both for landuse and for the character of archaeological discovery.

The volume and character of archaeological discoveries is much influenced on the one hand by the extent of ground disturbance whether arising through development, ploughing etc, but, on the other hand the quality of site preservation is influenced by the absence of such disturbance. The county has, for instance, a number of well-preserved mediaeval earthworks which are protected in the Chilterns by woodland, and elsewhere by longstanding grassland. However, neither woodland nor grassland are productive of archaeological cropmark sites, visible at certain times of year from the air, so this protection is both a gain and a loss. Cropmark sites are limited mainly to the gravels of the Thames and Ouse with some on pockets of free-draining geology in Aylesbury Vale. The area north of the Chilterns has been fairly extensively flown by the national agencies and the writer, but flight restrictions arising from the presence of Heathrow restrict recording flights in south Buckinghamshire providing another bias.

The county as a whole has been subject to extensive development creep around all of its historic centres such as Marlow, High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Olney and also around, and infilling, individual villages many of which have doubled in size over the last few decades. At Milton Keynes large-scale development, based initially around core villages, continues, and Aylesbury is set to expand yet again into the Vale of Aylesbury within the next few years.

Partly in response to these developments fieldwalking, casual discoveries, the monitoring of linear pipelines and other watching briefs have, together with excavation, provided an explosion of information about the early medieval period since the 1970s. To this must be added finds reported by detectorists, long documented by the County Museum and the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit, but whose recording is now efficiently covered by the Portable Antiquities Scheme's Finds Liaison Officer.

Apart from the Milton Keynes monograph series noted above, the main flow of final publication has been and continues to be, into the *Records of Buckinghamshire*, published by the County Society since 1854. In the late 1980s the arrival of contracting archaeological units presaged production of a considerable grey-literature as well as (more recently) limited-circulation, individual monographs on single excavations.

The level of attention given to environmental evidence within published excavation reports reflects to some extent the date when they were compiled. Recent reports show more appreciation of the benefits of building-in environmental research strategies from the outset. Dominique de Moulins, English Heritage's Regional Archaeological Science Adviser, has appraised the relatively limited amount of published Buckinghamshire evidence as part of this project. Her conclusions are integrated within the body of the text.

In terms of documentary resources for the period, there are rare references to the county in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, none in Bede, a few charters and wills, references in the Tribal and Burghal hidages, and of course Domesday. Recent decades have seen significant papers in the *Records of Bucks* on historical aspects of the period, for example on charters and wills by Baines (e.g. 1972, 1979, 1981, 1983) and Reed (1979), its saints by Hagerty (e.g. 1987), and on the interpretation of Domesday by Bailey (e.g. 1990, 1992). There has also been a little work on place and field names building on the early work of EPNS work (1925).

The boundary of the Danelaw negotiated by Alfred with Guthrum (Whitelock 1955, 380-1) is recorded as running from Bedford 'up the Ouse to Watling Street' the crossing being at Stony Stratford, leaving Castlethorpe, Hanslope etc in Danish hands. Although direct references to Viking activity in the county are few, several of their campaigns required passage through Buckinghamshire, and along the Thames to Reading - with all the impact that this may have had on riverside settlements such as Marlow, and also in connection with their Ouse-based activities centred on Bedford. There has been some discussion about a few possible Scandinavian place names in the county.

## 2. Inheritance

### *Key features inherited from earlier periods*

There were two small Roman period towns in Buckinghamshire: Magiovinium, with an earthwork defence, at the crossing of the Ousel on Watling Street and Fleet Marston on Akeman Street west of Aylesbury. Magiovinium extended a considerable distance beyond its formal boundary along Watling Street, the 'overflow' apparently being occupied by small industrial units and these extramural areas are the only areas to have been excavated in recent decades. The extent of Fleet Marston has not been investigated, but it too seems to have extended some distance along its accompanying road.

Little attention has been paid to the question of survival of these two centres into the post-Roman period and there are only sparse late finds associated with them. The fairly large-scale excavations at Magiovinium produced a coin list ceasing before AD 400. Excavation of an area outside the town exposed an inhumation cemetery the latest of two radiocarbon dates on these remains being cAD 400. (Neal 1987). A few early Saxon sherds are reported in the vicinity. More interestingly, and for some reason generally overlooked, is the evidence for secondary reuse of buildings for inhumation burial within Magiovinium at the 'Bathing Station' site. Burials within the ruins of urban or semi-urban Roman-period structures are reasonably seen as indicative of a cultural transition phase.

At the Fleet Marston settlement, probably more of a roadside settlement than a town, a pewter hoard may indicate activity at the site into the fourth century and a hypothetical link can be suggested between it and the later nearby settlement of Quarrendon, which in turn has a legendary association with one St Osyth. A single early Saxon brooch find near Fleet Marston could indicate an adjacent cemetery. It is unlikely on present evidence that either place had much effect on local events by the mid-fifth century at the very latest. One Buckinghamshire villa (the Rye at High Wycombe) has an undated inhumation cemetery nearby

Three villa sites in the county have received fairly extensive investigation, Hambleden (Cocks 1921), Latimer (Branigan 1971) and Bancroft (Williams and Zeevat 1994). At Mantles Green, Amersham some of the outbuildings have been excavated and small parts of other villas including the Rye at High Wycombe. Branigan (1967) has argued for regular spacing of villas in the Misbourne valley in the Chilterns and new villas or their potential sites, seem to come to light in the county every decade or so, gradually expanding the number of these key sites in the landscape. The emerging picture is of a 'well-villared' county across varying topographies. By implication this suggests a fairly well-structured landscape in the high-Roman period. Numerous lesser settlements have come to light over the last three decades filling the gaps between them and perhaps implying a rural hierarchy since the bulk of these sites appear to have an agricultural base. Some of these lesser settlements can be quite extensive such as that at Ashfurlong, Olney.

It is difficult enough to gauge the size or bounds of estates in the Romano-British period and even more problematic to link them with landholdings recorded in Later Saxon charters and wills, but one Buckinghamshire link has been posited for Brill by Baines (1993) and it certainly seems as good a candidate as any in the county. Although we have little evidence of the character of landholding units in the late fifth and sixth centuries generally, some land was clearly gifted by kings to ecclesiastics (as may be the case at Aylesbury), and elements of land-unit coherence between the Roman and Saxon periods, although very difficult to prove, seems reasonable; after all it would be easier in the early Saxon period to usurp one key landholding figure and to take over an existing mantle covering both land and tenants, as happened at the Norman Conquest, than to wage a lower level war against numerous peasants. The presence of some Buckinghamshire churches within hillforts (Kidd 2004) might indicate survival of some form of hierarchical continuity of land ownership.

The difficulty in demonstrating continuity between the Romano-British, sub-Roman and Saxon periods on rural sites through artefact evidence is well-known. With Buckinghamshire villas, for instance, the latest coin evidence from Hambleden is late fourth century; from Latimer cAD 300 and from Bancroft again late fourth century. Hambleden and Latimer were excavated before the reliable recognition of Saxon ceramic but at Bancroft 152 sherds were found and a single grubenhaus was discovered adjacent to an outlying mausoleum(Williams 1994 et al. This is not a great deal considering the extent of excavation here and it looks as if the site was for all practical purposes abandoned. Much of Buckinghamshire falls within the market of the Oxfordshire late Roman pottery industry and it is possible, given more closely refined dating of this industry, that some progress might be made in assessing the cessation at least of Roman-period ceramic use in the county. The dramatic increase in coin finds of recent years might also help in this assessment.

At the Latimer villa, Branigan (1971 and 1973) has claimed the existence of a successor cruck-type structure of late Roman- post Roman date but this suggestion has not received widespread acceptance and the excavated area was very small. In the 1971 report (pp191-201) a paper by Baines discusses the vexed question of 'British' continuity in the Chiltern region as a whole, a

subject rehearsed many years previously by Stenton (1943). The theme was subsequently further explored by Rutherford Davis who defines a 'British province' (Rutherford Davis 1982, 42 etc) based on St Albans whose people were, or would become the *Cilternsaetan*. In the writer's view the principal difficulty with this theory, so far as the Buckinghamshire Chilterns are concerned, is that very little artefactual material of this period of *any* kind survives here to enable any judgement on settlement to be formed, let alone sufficient to evaluate the 'ethnicity' of the occupants. This absence of artefacts may owe more to the character of the Chiltern landscape and the nature of development here than reflect the real position. The issue of continuity has recently been re-assessed by Baker (2006) who examines in particular the distribution of British place names.

On an Iron Age and Roman (non-villa) rural site at Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes (Williams 1996) a few small scattered Saxon pits, not closely dated, were recorded. Work in advance of construction of the Aston Clinton bypass on the Lower Icknield Way by the Buckland/ Drayton Beauchamp parish boundary, recorded an Iron Age enclosure and land divisions flanking a trackway whose alignment was reflected in the later landscape. Some of these ditches were recut in the Roman period, indicating at least recognition of their function. Roman features included waterholes and finds indicated a nearby building. There was 'slim' evidence for continuing use of the site into the 5-6<sup>th</sup> and an early Saxon inhumation cemetery was discovered on Tring hill overlooking the site (see on). A close relationship between cemeteries and settlements of early Saxon date have been noted elsewhere in the county.

One important site which will be referred to later and which relates to the question of 'ethnicity' of the occupants is that at Walton by Aylesbury, where there is evidence for Roman (including late Roman) activity, and also early, mid and late Saxon occupation. Although continuity of occupation can never be proved, this is a very good candidate and the evidence will be reviewed later under 'Settlement'. At this stage suffice it to say that the earliest dating of the site does not fit the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's apparent account of the subjugation of Aylesbury in 571, confirming in part the imprecise nature of such dates, but the place name Walton *might* incorporate a *wealh* = Welsh element. When it was suggested in 1976, slightly tongue-in-cheek, that we may here be faced with British using 'Saxon' artefacts, this was considered a controversial suggestion (Farley 1976) although probably less so now with the breakdown of the once simple linkage between artefacts and ethnicity.

### 3. Chronology.

#### *Note on conventional sequence; artefact chronologies; scientific dating*

As noted above, there is insufficient material at present to address chronology within the immediate post-Roman period. Aylesbury is the only text-named place in the county until the eighth century, which is a disadvantage, but a number of place names later appear in charters and there are three mint towns.

Apart from the difficulties of a putative sub-Roman or British phase in the Chilterns noted above, to which no artefacts can be linked, chronology within the county has followed the conventional archaeological framework of early, middle and late Saxon. Pottery has played a key role for the whole period and of course dateable grave goods for the early Saxon period. Later metalwork including coins, is exceptionally rare in archaeological contexts, although of course increasingly apparent as metal detected finds.

Eight sites have radiocarbon dates: Dorney (Foreman 2002), Hartigans (Williams 1993), Taplow (Anon 2006), Wolverton (Preston et al 2007), Wing (Chapman 2008) and Aylesbury (Allen 1983 and Farley 1986).

The former Milton Keynes Unit had a ceramic fabric series (or series) but the County Archaeological Service (whose field unit is closed) had only a series of site-specific sequences. Neither is now maintained. The existing ceramic chronology can be fairly simply stated as there are relatively few sites. Classic stamped sherds and their associations are key in distinguishing between early Saxon and Iron Age assemblages since there are some fabric similarities. It is unclear which early Saxon fabrics (highly variable both on-site and between sites, e.g. the north and centre of the county) continue into the mid-Saxon period and much more work needs to be done on the topic.

Somewhere at the tail-end of the early Saxon period vegetable-tempered (formerly called 'grass-tempered') wares appear in some quantity. These sherds are important diagnostically because they seem to be largely confined to the Saxon period in the county, being exceptional in the Iron Age or if there present, containing a far lower percentage of included vegetative material. The writer has in the past put forward the view that vegetable-tempered wares in Buckinghamshire are centred on the seventh centuries and seem to disappear shortly after that - possibly leaving a ceramic gap. Although for mid and north Bucks there may still be an element of truth in this proposal, Blinkhorn (in Foreman 2002) records plentiful vegetable-tempered wares amongst pottery from a group of pits at Dorney with a spread of radiocarbon dates AD 600-900 cal.

In the mid-Saxon period, sparse sherds of Ipswich and Maxey-type wares (the latter with a few bar-lug or swallow-nest forms) appear in the north of the county, and form a useful reference point. Uniquely at Dorney three Tating ware sherds are recorded also sherds from a North French vessel, and recently at nearby Taplow a sherd possibly from an eastern Mediterranean amphora or flagon. Individual sherds of Ipswich ware have been recorded in mid-Bucks e.g. at Walton, and Aylesbury (Dalwood 1989) and in the Milton Keynes area at e.g. Pennyland (Williams 1993) and Wolverton (Preston forthcoming). Maxey (Northants) type wares have been recorded only in the north of the county, at Chicheley (Farley 1980), Great Linford (Mynard 1992) and at Wolverton (Preston 2007) among other places.

The most significant and widely-distributed zone-marker ceramic of the later Saxon period is the distinctive shell-tempered St Neot's type ware. Some of this, presumptively early in the sequence, is extremely fine and well-potted; later shell-tempered fabrics in the north of the county continue the tradition. The arrival of the first St Neot's ware has been taken to be a late tenth-century indicator (although an earlier date is possible) and it occurs on or near many settlement sites across the county. Otherwise, there is little else distinctive to place in the tenth century but some well-gritted handmade wares with upright rim-forms appear to be of the eleventh century at Walton (Farley 1976) and there are suspicions that some fine gritted wares of similar date may have been produced in kilns at Denham (Farley 1988). An identifiable late fabric is claimed at Dorney (Blinkhorn in Foreman 2002). Late stamped wares occasionally occur but are rare in the county. Finally, a few sherds of Stamford ware have been identified but others may have been overlooked. The thorough study of Oxfordshire fabrics carried out by Maureen Mellor (1995) may be of value for Buckinghamshire but the county now lacks expertise to carry this study forward.

Returning to non-ceramic artefacts, dating of types from early Saxon graves is highly dependant on the contribution of object-specialists from outside the county. A few early artefacts stand out such as the early Bishopstone belt-plate and a late-Roman animal-headed type buckle from Walton. Middle Saxon material is less common; there are handled combs from the Prebendal, Aylesbury (Farley 1986), Dorney (Foreman 2002) and Wolverton (Preston 2007) and copper-alloy pins from Dorney (Foreman) and Wolverton (Preston) and quern from Dorney (Foreman 2002). In addition there are now many, normally context-less pieces found by detectorists, including tag ends, hooked tags, stirrup mounts and coins of the middle and late Saxon period, commonly in private ownership. There are also some nineteenth-century Thames finds, some of Viking character.

Finally, place names in the county have not any received in-depth study of their formation since the EPNS volume of 1925 although some aspects have been addressed by e.g. Bailey (2000). An apparent association has been noted between villages with 'ton' names and the discovery of vegetable-tempered pottery suggesting their origins in the later early/ mid Saxon period (Farley in Hunn 1994)

#### 4. Landscape and land use

*Use of natural places; coastlines (and related structures); rivers (and related structures); woodland; designed landscapes; agriculture, fields and field systems; horticulture; hunting and gathering; strategies (including fishing)*

Archaeological evidence on the wider landscape of the county is generally poor for this period and it is not until the later Saxon period with the arrival of charters and the Domesday account that any kind of picture emerges, although place names provide some guidance for earlier periods.

Rivers feature in Domesday principally as sources of eels, or in connection with mills (for which there is no direct archaeological evidence but see Bailey 1997 for Domesday list), and a single beaver bone from Walton and the occasional fish bone are about the only archaeological evidence for local waterways although the existence of waterside structures on the Thames and Ouse might be anticipated. The existence of woodland and hedgerow can clearly be indirectly demonstrated by excavated charcoal for instance, but due to charcoals longevity in the soil, only good contexts are to be trusted and there are few such contexts available. Some sites in Milton Keynes (much of which is on clay) have produced waterlogged deposits, principally well-type features. Two of these at Westbury (Ivens 1995) produced in-situ ladders. At Pennyland a range of timber pieces was analysed and also wood chips from preparation. Wood here included hazel, field maple, oak, ash, alder, willow, hawthorn and blackthorn, any of which apart from willow, would today be readily available as hedgerow trees.

The Chilterns are the most wooded part of the county today and were probably also the dominant wooded area in the Saxon period (Darby 1962). There were, however, other recognised wooded areas including Bernwood, noted fleetingly in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle in AD 921 when Viking raiders passed through (see also Broad and Hoyle 1997), also Whittlewood in the north-west, shared with Northamptonshire whose settlement patterns have been the subject of a recent study by the Whittlewood Project (Jones and Page 2001, 2003; Page and Jones 2003).

There is little evidence from Buckinghamshire as to how these woodlands were managed in the period but it is apparent, judging from the 'medieval' villages with Saxon names elements lying

*within* the woods, that there was plenty of arable within their bounds. Despite their obvious age it would be a mistake to regard these woods as fixed in extent, even if botanically defined as ‘ancient’ since it is becoming apparent (for example at Ashridge in the Chilterns) that there was often Romano-British occupation - including fields - within what would be botanically classified as ‘ancient woodland’. It is perhaps best to regard woods as a shifting resource. Although fluctuating they will always tend to be sited, as Rackham has pointed out, on land more agriculturally marginal. The county does have a number of Chiltern margin parishes with a distinctive elongated shape running up either the Chilterns dip or scarp slopes; early recognition of the need for settlements to share arable, pasture and woodland resources.

Although there is plenty of animal bone evidence from excavated sites, with cattle and sheep being equally present, the exploitation of wild animal resources seems to be minimal, although antler sometimes figures as a craft by-product. The presence of polecat and wild boar at Wolverton (Preston 2007) provides a rare glimpse of woodland exploitation.

The limited amount of seed evidence suggests that the dominant cereal is hulled barley; free-threshing wheat (bread or rivet wheat) has completely replaced spelt wheat. An important radiocarbon-dated deposit of cereals (cal AD 670-870 at 95% confidence) which included rivet or bread wheat, hulled barley, oats and rye, has recently been identified at Taplow (Allen 2006)

Finally there is the question of Saxon field boundaries. No early Saxon site in the county has yet produced anything resembling a contemporary field and although numerous settlements have been excavated nationally, they are rarely claimed elsewhere. Nor do boundaries of any type seem common in early Saxon settlements. Early land divisions there surely were, but they must have consisted either of ditchless hedge boundaries or temporary hurdles. Boundaries within settlements seem to emerge at the same time as halls become more common than grubenhauser; for example at Pennyland (Williams 1993). Possibly the construction of halls represents a greater investment in one place than grubenhauser, perhaps accompanying a change in social structure.

In the medieval period, Buckinghamshire north of the Chilterns is a land of ridge and furrow. The origins of this form of agriculture have been much debated and a date in the tenth century generally assumed. Although the ‘destructive’ furrows often cut earlier archaeological sites, no good evidence has come from the county to assist the debate. The establishment of this kind of semi-permanent agricultural practice in the late Saxon period, implies stability for the associated landholdings many of which later would have become recognised as parishes.

A new approach to study of the landscape of the period is offered by the Buckinghamshire Landscape Characterisation project utilising air photographs and early map-based evidence for historic land use study of the whole county. Where it is possible to strip away, for example, enclosure period boundaries to reveal earlier patterns, these deserve particular study although it may be difficult to ascertain at what date they were established.

Although an area fraught with difficulties of interpretation, species-counting, used for example by Casselden (1986) on hedgerows in the Chilterns, might usefully be linked with other methods of study.

## 5. Social organisation

The question of land tenure has been briefly considered above. As previously noted the early history of the county in the post-Roman period is unclear although some continuity with late Roman rural estates is possible. There is no denying the fundamental changes which took place in the fifth and sixth centuries, probably involving much social turbulence, nevertheless the proselytising work of the seventh century as described in other counties by Bede and recounted also in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, records the side-by-side presence of both British and Saxon dynasties in the southern counties. Evidence for this in the area which was to become Buckinghamshire comes on the one hand from the Tribal Hidage noting the presence of the *Ciltersaetan* and possibly other groups such as the *Hendrica* (Bailey 1994) whom will have had their own leaders whether British or Saxon, but also in the rich, almost certainly royal, burial at Taplow. Whether, as Blair has argued the king buried in the mound was a sub-king of the kingdom of Surrey or of, for example, the *Ciltersaetan* is clearly open to debate. The burial is in a dominant position atop a steep slope overlooking a wide arc of the Thames and apart from the clear nod in the direction of the waterway as at Sutton Hoo, it lies on the Buckinghamshire side and the buried person's territory which is likely to have extended far into the Chilterns beyond. It is possible there may yet be other Taplow-type graves remaining to be discovered within Buckinghamshire – no one for instance predicted the recent discovery of the rich burial at Prittlewell in Essex

This is perhaps a useful point to acknowledge that there is uncertainty in these early centuries as to how the county was politically divided. Did west Buckinghamshire, for example, fall into West Saxon territory (from which it was probably evangelised); did the Middle Saxon's bounds stop at the Colne on the east of the county and how far west did Anglian territory extend in these formative years? Part of the area is covered in a discussion by Blair (1994). By 675 there appears to have been Mercian dominance (Bailey 1994).

Cemeteries of the period will be discussed further on, however the presence of weapons in several graves (and amongst Thames river finds), albeit often only a spear which could have been used either in hunting or conflict, but more definitively in the form of a few shield, may be noted as indicating a necessity for self-defence far less apparent in the Roman artefact record.

Transactions in land are recorded in three wills: Aelfgifu, the Aetheling Aethelstan and Ealdorman Alfheah (Whitelock 1939) and also by ratification of the sorrowful transfer of an estate at Risborough by Archbishop Sigeric into the hands of the Bishop of Dorchester for cash (90 pounds of refined silver and 200 mancuses of the purest gold – no mean sum) to enable the archbishop to buy off the Danes who at that time were threatening to destroy his church in Canterbury (EHD 1995).

The later charters and Domesday provide a clearer vision of landholding and accordingly of status which is absent from the earlier centuries. Bailey has done much analysis of who held land in Buckinghamshire pre-Domesday and of the size of holding (for example Bailey 1990 and 1992 on hidage). This work can be supplemented by that of Baines who has analysed all of the county's charter bounds (for instance Baines 1979, 1980, 1982). Present day parish boundaries in Buckinghamshire, as elsewhere, can normally be expected to reflect Late Saxon estate boundaries and probably earlier ones also, as hinted at by work at Buckland/ Drayton Beauchamp (Mansfield unpub). Of particular interest are those boundaries utilising natural features such as rivers and

streams, which may be presumed amongst the earliest. There has recently been a slightly inconclusive investigation on the Buckinghamshire/ Bedfordshire county boundary (Moore 2007)

It is probable that the boundaries of hundreds, the late Saxon sub-county administrative unit would have also co-incided to some extent with patterns of landownership. Hundred meeting points, the focus of these units, are often discussed although few have been identified on the ground. The hundred mound of Secklow in modern Milton Keynes, has been identified and excavated by Adkins and Petchey (1984). It lies at the junction of three parishes boundaries confirming the antiquity of their bounds, and it is possible that Desborough hundred met in the area later known as Desborough Castle near High Wycombe..

Finally, Brill was a royal centre by the time of Edward the Confessor, probably a base for hunting in Bernwood although to date there is no direct archaeological evidence for finds of the period from Brill.

For a discussion of the classes of Buckinghamshire residents at Domesday see Bailey (2002)

## 6. Settlement

*Rural settlement; urban settlement; settlement hierarchies; permanence and mobility*

Until the incidental discovery of the settlement at Walton, Aylesbury, during excavations in 1973-4 (Farley 1976, and later Dalwood 1989) no early Saxon occupation site was known in the county, and examples were not common in England as a whole. Shortly afterwards Hartigan's and Pennyland were discovered (Williams 1993), then a single grubenhaus at Bancroft (Williams 1994), followed by Saxon sites in Bierton at The Vicarage (Allen 1986) and Church Farm (SMR data): at Pitstone - first indicated by fieldwalking (Bull 1978) then by excavation (Phillips 2005): at Fenny Lock (Ford 2001), at Buckland/ Drayton Beauchamp (Masefield 2006) and most recently at Taplow (SMR data) and Wolverton (Preston 2007). It is worth noting that all of these sites, bar one, are north of the Chilterns.

In addition surface finds of vegetable-tempered pottery near mid-Bucks villages including Halton, Dinton, Bierton, Oving, Wendover and Haddenham are probably indicative of early-middle Saxon settlement (but see previous discussion of this fabric),

So far as middle-Saxon period only sites are concerned there are difficulties in identifying ceramic exclusively of this date, but Maxey ware is one such fabric. One site in the north of the county, Chicheley where only a boundary ditch is known at present (Farley 1980) could indicate a single-phase site, as could Dorney with Ipswich ware (Foreman 2002). Some of these sites are discussed below.

Apart from sites where there was apparently continuity throughout the Saxon period, and consequently middle Saxon wares are obviously to be expected (see on) middle Saxon fabrics otherwise occur in small quantities from a variety of sites where they are either associated with early Saxon or with late Saxon sherds; examples are Great Linford church (Mynard 1991), and Leckhampstead (Anon 2006, 201) both in the north of the county. In a few instances other varieties of middle Saxon fabrics (apart from Maxey and Ipswich) having links to Northamptonshire wares have been recorded, for example at Little Woolstone church (Mynard 1987).

Late Saxon sites - here taken to be those where St Neot's ware have been found - are far more numerous. The readily distinguishable sherds have turned up in or near very many existing villages or settlements including Walton, Bedgrove, Bradwell Bury - with an irregular post-built structures (Mynard 1994), Great Linford (Mynard 1991), Weston Underwood (Enright 1996) and Loughton (2003). Tenth-century ceramic comes from boundary ditches near St Dunstan's at Monks Risborough (SMR data).

Walton, now a suburb of Aylesbury, has been the subject of a number of investigations (Farley 1976, Dalwood 1989, Bonner unpublished, Ford 2004). A good argument can be made here for continuity of occupation from the early Saxon period (and possibly earlier) through to the present day, pretty well on the same location. Grubenhaus are distributed across a distance of at least 400m (one of them burnt down; Bonner unpublished) and there is an early cemetery nearby. At Walton there are at least nine post and post-in-trench type structures - some certainly small 'halls'; finds include sceattas and Ipswich ware and there is a substantial boundary of tenth-eleventh century date associated with a later manorial site which was itself enclosed within an earthwork. There is also evidence to suggest that Walton Street, which runs through the hamlet into Aylesbury was established by the tenth century.

Other sites thought to have potential for continuity include Bierton (Allen 1986) and Pitstone (Bull 1978 and Phillips 2005). At Bierton, where there was a high-status late Iron Age settlement which was succeeded by a villa, much early-mid-Saxon pottery has been found within the village close to the church and evidence of a post-built structure was recorded during work (unpublished) at Bell's Farm within the existing village envelope. Pottery has, however, also been found in the fields indicating an element of dispersed settlement. At Pitstone the existing parish church again provides a focus. Here fieldwalking (Bull 1978) produced early Saxon sherds and St Neot's ware and recent excavation on the other side of the church located four grubenhaus. (Phillips 2005). The concept of 'polyfocal settlement' and shifting settlement during the early-middle Saxon period has been widely accepted but whilst there is some validity in the concept several Buckinghamshire villages have produced good evidence for continuity of site. At Walton and Bierton for example, free-draining limestone not far from water seems to be the attraction and it is likely that elsewhere in Buckinghamshire where similar islands of free-draining geology occur other examples of continuity of site will be found. The writer considers that the unfashionable concept of geographical determinism has much to offer.

Although it is obviously far easier to identify Saxon settlement evidence away from existing nucleated villages and site plans retrieved through this work are inevitably more complete than village-centred investigations, this does by default emphasise the role of dispersed settlement. By definition, work on even quite small areas within modern village envelopes obviously has better potential for addressing the continuity discussion. An attempt has been made to look specifically at this issue in the Whittlewood project (see on).

The most important early-middle Saxon site to be investigated in the north of the county is Pennyland in Milton Keynes (Williams 1993). This site was not in the immediate vicinity of a village unlike those noted above, but a kilometre distant from the nearest, Great Linford. It was sited on and around the enclosures of a levelled Iron Age site. Pennyland produced thirteen grubenhaus and two halls. The grubenhaus were fairly randomly distributed, as is not uncommon for this period, with little evidence of patterning. The halls were probably within enclosures. An

unusual find here was of a wattle-revetted well/ waterhole with parts of a ladder; a second ladder was found at Hartigans with a single grubenhaus in the vicinity (Williams 1993).

The most coherent evidence for a site whose dominant occupation period was middle Saxon (although there may be earlier occupation in the vicinity) is that at Wolverton Turn, Milton Keynes (Preston 2007). Although much damaged (and much excavated) the site appears to consist of a substantial ditched enclosure of mid-Saxon date, so far unique in the county. There are associated radiocarbon dates of AD 690-890 cal. and the site produced both Ipswich and Maxey ware. It contained one identified rectangular post-built structure and a grubenhaus lay nearby. Further her grubenhaus have subsequently been found here possibly indicating an earlier presence (Thorne 2005). North of Milton Keynes at Chicheley, a single ditch, possibly a field boundary, containing middle Saxon Maxey ware was noted above, and is one of the sparse indications of a single phase mid-Saxon settlement in the county (Farley 1980). An important mid-late Saxon site which produced a considerable range of metalwork, the Westcroft Centre, Milton Keynes, was destroyed largely without investigation shortly after the closure of the Milton Keynes Unit (Ford 2000). Clusters of metal-detected finds, in so far as their location is reported, would repay more detailed study in the county. Concentrations of such finds have on occasion received the pseudo-classification of 'productive sites' but the writer shares Richard's view (1999) that as an aid to their understanding the term 'is meaningless and should be abandoned'. Some such may be fairs or markets but many are likely to be damaged settlements.

A number of areas of village shrinkage and 'deserted' settlements within or close to existing villages have been explored in Milton Keynes (Great Linford, Loughton, Tattenhoe, Shenley Brook End, Caldecotte etc.). These investigations have not generally produced evidence of continuity from the early Saxon period and only sparse middle Saxon evidence. An exception is Westbury (Ivens 1995) which produced two of wells with surviving ladders and a small inhumation cemetery, but unusually no certainly associated settlement. At Bradwell Bury, in Milton Keynes, the former a significant place name, quite a substantial enclosure probably of Late Saxon date and unique for the period in Buckinghamshire, was succeeded by a medieval earthwork (Mynard 1992).

As noted previously, a research project designed to address issues relating to settlement evolution using both documentary and fieldwork sources has recently been carried out on the former area of Whittlewood Forest, much of which lay in Northants but which included some Buckinghamshire parishes (the Lillingstones, Akeley etc). The results of the work have been published in several papers (including Jones and Page 2001, 2003, 2006). The area was previously well known in Buckinghamshire on account of some well-preserved 'village' earthworks but there had been little fieldwork here. The study showed that as elsewhere in the county there was widespread evidence for Romano-British settlement and landuse, however here evidence for early Saxon use of any kind whether dispersed or nucleated proved elusive and the writers concluded that the area had been subject to post-Roman retreat. Where evidence was found - including the results of some test pitting within villages, it was of a start date after AD 850 for present day villages. This commencement seems to be based on the earliest possible date for St Neots ware. There seems to have been an absence of early (and much middle) Saxon pottery. This may be due to a number of factors e.g. poor survival on the surface of handmade wares, difficulties in distinguishing them from wares of other periods, or genuine absence in this area. If the latter was the case then the most likely explanation is that it was marginal land first colonised extensively during Romano-British subsequently abandoned, however, as a pollen diagram show although there was some evidence of increasing woodland in the post-Roman period, the land remained substantially open.

If it was no longer cultivated from local settlements then its use for grazing from places further afield is a possibility.

The rural sites discussed so far are in central or north Bucks, north of the Chilterns. The Chilterns and the Thames terraces present a different problem as archaeological settlement evidence from these areas is sparse and there has been relatively little excavation or fieldwalking; nor has the restricted air photographic evidence on this part of the Middle Thames been productive of sites of this period. Two south Buckinghamshire sites of significance should be first noted, Taplow and Dorney.

The importance of the barrow at Taplow is well known and its position within a churchyard will be noted further on. That the Taplow burial mound stood on or near a large infilled ditch, was first recorded in the original excavation: that this ditch was one of a sequence of hillfort defences has only recently been demonstrated by excavation (Allen 2000 and Anon 2006). Evidence for settlement contemporary with the mound included a probable building and pottery and cereal grains from the upper fills of the hillfort ditch.

A substantial programme of archaeological investigation on two linear schemes extending over several kilometres in south Buckinghamshire, between downstream Eton and upstream Taplow, centring on Dorney, provided the first major opportunity to get to grips with multi-period settlement in the south of the county, although of course the works avoided existing settlements. Interestingly the extensive investigations resulted only in the discovery of one (arguably two) sites. The principal site, at Lake End Road West, was quite different in character to those north of the Chilterns, or further upstream for that matter, consisting almost entirely of groups of large pits (over 120) apparently lacking any accompanying buildings. The content of the pits was not particularly distinctive, but there were hints of cess in some primary fills, succeeded by refuse deposits. A few sherds of Tating ware, an imported German ware, rare in rural contexts raises the interest of the site (probably the nearest find of this ware would be the sherd from Bedford - Slowikowski 1991). Considering all of the evidence the excavators posit the presence of some kind of seasonal market at the site (Foreman 2002). This idea has been put forward for clusters of metal detector finds in this country and elsewhere, for instance in Denmark. In the latter country a has been proposed as the origin of the town of Ribe. A second south Buckinghamshire site, a curious settlement complex, was excavated on the same linear scheme, at Lots Hole. This seems to have had Saxo-Norman boundary features which included St Neot's ware but other identified structural elements were, perhaps surprisingly, ascribed by the excavator to the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The only other archaeological settlement evidence from the south of the county is a probable grubenhaus adjacent to a cemetery at Hitcham, suggested following re-analysis of earlier finds (Farley 1989). To date no settlement sites have been examined in the heartland of the Chilterns.

Taking the broader view, it seems that in Buckinghamshire relatively randomly dispersed clusters of grubenhaus without clear territorial divisions, indicate early settlement; clusters of rectangular post-built buildings (commonly in embryo enclosures) are likely to be middle Saxon in date, although the Lake End Road pit complex hints at the existence of other site variants at this period. There is no evidence as yet for any late-period grubenhaus.

Unfortunately, there are no coherent plans of Late Saxon buildings from the county. Overall, the direct archaeological evidence for rural settlement in the Saxon period across the county remains pathetically small in volume compared with the evidence indicated on the one hand by place names, and on the other by Domesday. .

Next, the subject of urban settlement. No Buckinghamshire towns were larger than market towns and the only towns directly mentioned in the late Saxon period are Newport Pagnell, Buckingham and Aylesbury, all of which were briefly mint towns. Newport, on the Ouse, had burgesses and was an unusual borough in that it was not in royal hands (Darby 1962). It has been suggested that it was founded in the 870/880s by the Danes as a combined trading and frontier post (Baines 1986). There is little archaeological evidence available of its extent or character, and only sparse finds (Beamish 1993).

Buckingham was noted both in the Burghal Hidage and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (AD 914) and also had burgesses. For a discussion of its foundation see Baines (1984, 1985). There have been various, so far unsuccessful attempts to predict the line of its Saxon defences and of its twin - the Chronicle notes 'both of its fortifications'. The loop of the Ouse which contains the high ground on which the town's castle was subsequently built, must be the site one element, but a small scale excavation here produced only a few sherds of St Neot's ware and a mid-Saxon pin (Hall 1975). The material from a small, unpublished, excavation by the writer within the town needs reviewing.

Aylesbury, first mentioned as a place in AD 571, and certainly a king's town, probably containing a residence (place name 'Kingsbury') had no burgesses mentioned at Domesday but had dominion over several hundreds around and a considerable revenue from its market. It lay within a hillfort (Farley 1986) and, as will be discussed later, had a minister. When the writer first recorded the hill fort's ditch in a builder's excavation, he erroneously interpreted it as a burghal defence (Farley 1974) but the subsequent discovery and excavation of a more substantial length of ditch showed that it to be Iron Age with a secondary middle Saxon re-use. There is plentiful early Saxon occupation evidence at nearby Walton on the other side of the Bearbrook as has already been described, but relatively little from Aylesbury itself, which is surprising, although there is clear evidence for Middle Saxon occupation (see section on churches). The absence of recorded evidence of earlier date may in part be due to the presence of numerous large medieval pits in the core of the town which cut the underlying limestone. Where pits are absent the basal limestone either seems to be fairly shallow (e.g. in Kingsbury, George Street, Market Square and Buckingham Street), or to lie beneath a deep topsoil up to a metre deep (Bonner 1996). This topographical variation has not been satisfactorily explained. Discoveries of human burials are frequent here (see on). Briefly becoming a mint town, Aylesbury was to become a classic small market town initially contained within the defences of the preceding Iron Age hillfort but with a large market area developing beyond the defences which in the medieval period itself became enclosed by buildings.

Brill, previously noted as the site of a house of Edward the Confessor is worth noting again in a possible proto-urban context since it was apparently significant enough to acquire an earthwork castle post-conquest.

The site of 'Sashes' an island in the Thames on the Buckinghamshire/ Berkshire border should also be noted; a burghal hidage site (Hill 1969) critical to control of the river for which no conclusive evidence has yet been produced on the ground, it never acquired urban status and may have been short-lived.

There is little doubt that there would have been other small 'towns' in the county in the Late Saxon period, possibly including the following: Amersham, Chesham, Marlow, Wycombe, and Olney, all of which occupy favourable geographic positions on rivers and have other clues to a pre-Conquest

existence. Amersham for example, has a villa and probable Saxon cemetery just outside its bounds hinting at continuity; Olney has the large Romano-British Ashfurlong settlement nearby, and tantalising clues of an early church (Collard 1988); Wycombe has a villa just down the valley and a reference to St Wulfstan passing through, admittedly just after the Conquest (Baines 1988); Chesham is mentioned in a will; its origins may lie near its church rather than on the present High Street, possibly a medieval replanning. Other possible early towns include Winslow and Burnham..

## 7. The built environment.

### *Buildings; communal structures ; townscapes*

There are insufficient plans of Saxon structures from the county (apart from grubenhaus) to reach any general conclusions about form, although a number of post and post-in-trench structures have been recorded at Walton. The most important standing structure of the period is Wing church (see on for churches).

Towns have been briefly discussed under ‘settlement’ above. Little is known about their internal layout, however their principal role - apart from those few which were defended or had some royal input - was as markets and hence areas set aside for this purpose no doubt had a strong influence on layout. In one town (Aylesbury) an approach road can be demonstrated to have been in existence in the tenth century, through evidence acquired outside the town.

## 8. Ceremony, ritual and religion.

### *Use of natural places; funerary monuments and cemeteries; ceremonial monuments; temples and religious buildings; votive deposition*

Anglo-Saxon cemeteries provided the earliest material for study of the period in the county; in fact Reginald Smith writing in 1905 and Jack Head in 1946, had little else to write about, apart from attempting to relate cemetery finds to the hypothetical movement of peoples (e.g. the ‘advance’ of Saxons) recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

The evidence from Buckinghamshire is not extensive; it is not a county replete with the barrows that in other counties provided a weekend’s digging for Victorian gentry and subsequent material for later analysis. Apart from the rich finds from Taplow, the only cemeteries to be recorded in any meaningful way prior to the 1980s were at Dinton, Bishopstone, and Tickford near Newport Pagnell. These early discoveries indicated two facts which broadly remain true today, that Buckinghamshire cemeteries were relatively small and that they were largely inhumation. The number of known urned cremation burials from the county is probably in single figures.

Subsequent to the listing of cemeteries made by Jack Head (1946), a number of other cemeteries have been discovered and old finds reviewed. The most recent listing was in 1994 (Farley in Hunn 1994) but since then several further cemeteries or single burials of the early Saxon period have come to light as follows: Shenley Brook End, Westbury (Ivens 1995), Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe (Parkhouse 1996), Soulbury (Parkhouse 1997), Dorney (Foreman 2002), a single burial not far from the Taplow barrow (Allen 2002) and Drayton Beauchamp (Masefield 2006). Most

recently a large inhumation cemetery has been discovered near Wolverton (Zeepvat pers. com.) These finds slightly redress the central Buckinghamshire bias of earlier discoveries but still leave a substantial gap in the Chilterns and south.

Of the recent discoveries, three have been relatively extensive by Buckinghamshire standards: Dinton near Aylesbury (Hunn et al 1994), Westbury, Shenley (Ivens 1995) and Drayton Beauchamp (Masefield 2006). Dinton was a mixed inhumation cemetery of twenty graves, sixteen of which had grave goods, and probably dated from the late fifth-sixth centuries. The excavation was on the periphery of an eighteenth-century discovery. It appeared to have a two-family centred grouping and its location may have been related to a pre-existing field boundary. At Westbury (Ivens 1995) a small aligned cemetery of seven inhumation was discovered, three having grave goods; the most striking burial was prone and accompanied by a gold pendant. At Drayton Beauchamp an eighteen-grave inhumation cemetery (several furnished), was recently discovered during road construction; it included a female grave with jewellery. All modern cemetery investigations include an appraisal of the age and sex of those buried, and the more recent reports consider pathologies.

These recent discoveries have all come from flat cemeteries with no indication of surmounting barrows. Apart from Taplow, only one barrow, the Cop at Bledlow (Head 1938) has been considered to be primarily a Saxon barrow, and that only following a re-interpretation of the evidence (Farley 1992). However, there are a number of low names in the county, some of which are recorded in a note on Buckslow (?an eponymous name) near Buckingham; many of these may record the sites of levelled barrows (Farley 1997). There are also the well-studied 'heathen burial' references in charters, one of which at Ashendon where there has also been a brooch find, may indeed record a 'pagan' grave.

Two finds of hanging bowl escutcheons from Oving and Brill may hint at the presence of other graves of status in mid-Buckinghamshire.

In terms of pre-Christian religious associations, perhaps the most important is the presence of a weoh ('temple/ shrine') name incorporated in Weedon north of Aylesbury. Recent fieldwork on the slopes of Weedon Hill have failed to reveal any trace of this, however the presence of an 'old churchyard' in a village now without a church might provide a tenuous clue to an earlier ritual location (Farley 1997). The Chilterns meanwhile, at least have 'Grims Ditch' as passing reference to paganism.

Before moving on to a brief discussion of burials associated with early churches, an interesting site in Milton Keynes may be noted. This site, first identified by Mynard and associated with a St Neot's sherd, subsequently from a small area produced at least 97 unaccompanied inhumations, some in succession (Parkhouse 1998). Radiocarbon dates put this cemetery into the late ninth-tenth centuries (uncalibrated dates), however, as the cemetery lies some 200 metres from the parish church, it is possible that it could fall into the theoretical grouping of open field Christian cemeteries established before the clear development of a parochial system of churches

Having noted one grey area, it might be worth mentioning another, the presence of a few 'holy wells' such as St Rumbold's near Buckingham, St Osyth's near Aylesbury, and of the hermitage of St Werburga near Brill. Buckinghamshire's saints have been discussed in some detail in a series of articles by Hagerty (e.g. 1987)

Churches were rarely noted in the Buckinghamshire Domesday and only 4 can be directly inferred, namely Buckingham, Aylesbury and Haddenham and the 'monastery' of North Crawley. , although several priests are recording as holding land. One place name, 'Whitchurch', leaves little doubt as to its origin. The first three of the churches could be considered 'minsters', that is founder churches with rights over lesser churches subsequently established in their territories. Bailey (2003) has recently examined the claims for other pre-conquest churches.

Only one of the Domesday group, Aylesbury, has a little related archaeological information derived from investigations within the town and a watching brief within the church. Dealing with the latter first, Durham (1978) recorded traces of an early nave and possible later west tower, both preceding the present medieval structure. The writer plotted past discoveries of burials which are widely spread across the old town core, and supported the idea of an extensive minister churchyard (Farley 1979). This was later confirmed in excavations at George Street (Allen 1983 ) with four radiocarbon dates AD 830-920 (cal). Subsequently, excavations at the Prebendal demonstrated the existence of a hillfort within which the town had been sited and that its ditch had been re-cut in the Middle Saxon period (Farley 1986, report in prep). Aylesbury is linked with St Osyth who was allegedly born at nearby Quarrendon (there are early Saxon sherds from here), which may in turn be linked to the Fleet Marston small Romano-British town, as noted earlier. An association between hillforts and churches, referred to nationally by Morris (1989), has been locally noted by Kidd (2004). This relationship has implications for land tenure and primacy, noted in previous discussions.

Another group which can be added to the list of churches above are those containing fabric demonstrably of the period. Taylor (1980-4) has been taken as the authority on standing structures here. None of them, with the possible exception of Wing, coincide directly with any form of documentary evidence. Taylor's churches are: Wing, where, excavation on an adjacent development site produced 77 burials beyond the existing churchyard boundary, some certainly Late Saxon, contained within a large boundary ditch, indicative of a church of some status (Holmes 2000 and Chapman 2008): Hardwick, Iver, Lavendon, and Little Missenden. In addition (post-Taylor) it is reasonably claimed that the demolished St Nicholas, within whose churchyard the Taplow barrow is had Saxon origins (Stocker and Went 1995).

Altogether this gives a very small number of Saxon churches for the county and cannot reflect the true state of affairs in the county any more than the 3 in the Domesday list for Oxfordshire in comparison with 57 for Berkshire, and 352 for Suffolk. It is highly likely that the bulk of Buckinghamshire's parish churches had been established by the late Saxon period. Proving this will be difficult. Hopefully, watching briefs during building work in churches may eventually produce the required evidence, although in practice this well-established process seems only to have produced limited information in Buckinghamshire.

Finally, a few weapons of Viking-type have been discovered in the county. None have any certain associations but it is entirely likely that one day an isolated burial may turn up associated with a churchyard as has happened in several other instances in the UK.

## 9. Warfare, defences and military installations.

*Military installations and military infrastructure; forts and defensive earthworks; castles and fortified houses; ships and shipping; battlefields; frontiers*

Direct evidence for early conflict comes only in the AD 571 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reference to Aylesbury and the next conflict situation arrives with the Danish wars which lead to the establishment of the two (or three) burhs briefly discussed under the topic of urban settlement. The campaigns around Bedford and Northampton recorded in the Chronicle will certainly have had an impact on the county. The Ouse, probably navigable past Bedford with difficulty just into Buckinghamshire in small boats, will have provided both a benefit and an unwelcome corridor for invading forces. The same effect will probably have been even more pronounced in the Thames valley with constant conflict around the Thames and upstream Reading. The burh of Sashes on an island in the Thames, part in Buckinghamshire and part in Berkshire will undoubtedly have played a part in this. There are some finds of both actual Viking weaponry and weaponry of the period from the Thames, which was navigable for trade as far upstream as Oxford. Its numerous 'aits', now either removed or bypassed by subsequent improvements to Thames navigation, may have provided naturally defended stopover points. In a flush of enthusiasm for defining and locating elusive defensive Viking military earthworks some years ago, one writer (Dyer 1972) proposed the ringwork at Hawridge as such a site but this proposal has not received widespread support.

The general disruption of the Viking period is hinted at with the ASC entry reference to activities of the Danes between Aylesbury and Bernwood in 921 and later, indirectly, by money supplied by the Bishop of Dorchester to the Archbishop of Canterbury in exchange for an estate at Risborough, when the archbishop had to buy off the Danes in AD 994/5 (EHD 1955, 527).

No battle cemeteries of any period have been identified in the county with the possible exception of a group of undated inhumations discovered in the nineteenth century by Holman's Bridge, Aylesbury, at that time (almost certainly incorrectly) attributed to the Civil War and removed for reburial in the churchyard at Hardwick.

Finally, Alfred's treaty with Guthrum which established the southern limit of the Danelaw, excises the NE corner of the county from the control of Wessex, but as the boundary seems largely to follow natural features there will be no associated remains unless the sides established 'frontier' posts as suggested by Baines for Newport Pagnell.

## 10. Material culture.

*Domestic items; luxury good ; and artefacts*

Finds from early cemeteries have been briefly discussed above. Apart from Taplow with its well-known collection of princely finds, they are unexceptional.

In terms of material range and quality the finds from Taplow are unmatched in the county, with extensive weaponry, drinking horns, elaborate buckles, a lyre, gaming pieces, claw beakers, buckets, textile and imported Coptic pieces. It is hoped that one day the British Museum will be able to find the resources to complete the catalogue of finds from the site, whose preparation it commenced many years ago.

The settlement sites previously noted have produced a good selection of domestic items, particularly of the early Saxon period. However, nearly all of these can, however, be replicated on settlements excavated on a larger scale elsewhere, such as West Stow in Suffolk (West 1985). For later periods many finds, particularly dress items such as brooches, strap tags, hooked tags, stirrup mounts etc, have increasingly come to light through metal detecting, those recorded being entered on the PAS database and website. These finds provide opportunities for establishing regional production centres and styles. Less well represented are items of iron since they are both less attractive to finders, are often less readily classifiable and generally require X-ray and cleaning to identify their characteristics (e.g. pattern-welding). Certainly many more coins have come to light as the result of detecting including sceattas, coins of Offa, Cnut and Aethelred II, Aethelstan (?) and a probable small hoard with coins of Ceowulf of Mercia (874-9) from Pitstone. It is obviously of great importance that these finds have the closest possible provenance recorded in the relevant SMRs, to ensure for example, that emerging clusters of finds receive due attention when land development is being considered.

## 11, Crafts, trade and industries

### *Crafts; industries; raw material acquisition; sites or areas of production and consumption markets and exchange*

No certain areas of stone or mineral extraction of the period are known in the county. The most obvious potential candidates, if they could be located, would be the quarries required for construction of churches containing Saxon fabric such as Wing. One line of approach would be detailed examination of the petrology of the stone in existing churches, but this has yet to be attempted. In the south of the county, apart from flint and occasional deposits of conglomerates and siliceous Denner Hill stone, there is no locally available building stone, although it is possible that bands of Totternhoe stone might have been available on the Chiltern scarp. North of the Chiltern scarp there are some limestones and sandstones but generally these are not of very good quality until the oolitic deposits around Weston Underwood are reached. Until the arrival of brick, Buckinghamshire buildings were largely of timber although often on stone footings. Disused village quarry pits are always worth investigating for localised deposits. For example the place name 'Quarrendon' might include a stone element. A rotary quern from the settlement at Walton, Aylesbury, made from Greensand which outcrops about 10 miles distant close to the Bedfordshire border is an unusual find since if querns are found at all in this period, they are commonly of imported lava, which was also used of course in the Roman period and so survivals are not easy to distinguish. Closer provenancing of the Walton quern would be worth considering.

Spinning, weaving, bone and antler working and some woodworking are all represented in settlement evidence and occasionally hints of smithing. The latter is best represented at the mid-Saxon period site at Dorney where some 42kgs of slag have been recorded from a series of pits over a distance of 200m (Foreman 2002). In north Bucks, west Bucks and the Chilterns small deposits of smelting waste have been recorded, but to date their association seems to be Romano-British.

Ceramic has been discussed above. Although a proportion of it, particularly of the early period, is suspected to have been locally produced, no firing areas of the Saxon period have been identified.

Among pottery recovered from the medieval kilns at Denham were some pieces which on grounds of form, were suspected to be pre-twelfth century (Farley and Leach 1988, 75-6). At Brill ceramic of the medieval period is readily identifiable but Ivens has identified some possible production of earlier material, but probably post-Saxon. There has been no coherent countywide research on ceramic and many existing assemblages would repay re-examination.

The urban markets inferred from Domesday and other sources discussed in a section above, were an important justification for a town's existence. The only rural market site to have been suggested is the riverine site at Dorney (Foreman 2002).

## 12. Transport and communication.

### *Transport networks; methods of transportation; ports; warehouses*

The Thames and to a lesser extent the Ouse were navigable in the county and for the southern area at least, would have provided an important link with London. However, with the exception of Lake End Road noted above, the only riverside place suspected to be involved in London trade is Marlow where there would also have been a useful crossing point, albeit by boat.

Watling Street apparently maintained its importance as a through-route, providing a focus, for instance, for the settlements of Stony and Fenny Stratford, although deviating in some places from its Roman course. Akeman Street, which ran through Aylesbury and on to Bicester, seems to have maintained its general course (apart from in the town) but certainly beyond Aylesbury its course later deviated through Grendon Underwood (nb place name).

The credibility of the Icknield Way - or its various courses - once considered pivotal to communication between Wessex and East Anglia, has been given a bit of a battering recently by Harrison (2003) and an excavation on the course of the present Lower Icknield Way showed no evidence for its predicted course here, rather the contrary (Masefield 2006). However, the name *icenhylte* does appear in a Late Saxon charter for Risborough through which it would pass (Baines 1981).

## 13. Legacy

Domesday Book with its detailed picture of landholding and values before and after the Conquest is obviously a key document for study of the transition period. The present limited state of archaeological research in the county on either side of the 1066 fault line, is such that it would be a brave archaeologist who could ignore it. However, Domesday's real limitations in recording the two chronological worlds it spans are very apparent. Its hugely incomplete record of Buckinghamshire churches, or any other structure for that matter (apart from mills) is one obvious example. It has very little to say about any craft skills, agricultural practice or land management, and its record of settlement although extremely useful, has limits - particularly so far as non-nucleated settlement are concerned. Nevertheless its extraordinarily detailed record provides a benchmark for archaeologists.

The legacy which the archaeology of the late Saxon period in the county provides for the post-Conquest era is to say the least, fragmentary. Ironically, the important discoveries which have been made for the early-middle Saxon period have generated far more knowledge than for the later years. Thus we have little idea what Late Saxon domestic buildings in the county look like, let alone principal houses, and conversely, perhaps ten times more evidence for the form of Norman churches as against late Saxon ones. Curiously not a single example of Saxon stone sculpture, common in other counties, has been authenticated and Late Saxon crafts and trade are largely represented by single finds, normally without context, although a few finds clusters may hint at emerging markets.

Buckinghamshire has as yet no Raunds, however there are tantalising clues pointing to some Late Saxon settlement focii lying at a distance from surviving (commonly nucleated) settlement; these are largely indicated by ceramic finds (for example Lots Hole). Although, as has been argued above, there is good evidence for continuity throughout the period on some geographically well-sited settlements, quite extensive excavations on 'medieval' sites such as in Milton Keynes those at Great Linford, Tattenhoe and Westbury, have despite ceramic evidence for Late Saxon occupation produced little or no evidence for Late Saxon structures. It is possible that such structures had shallow foundations, of whatever form, and that evidence will only be preserved in fortunate circumstances such as, for instance, where topsoil deposits have been protected from later disturbance.

Although the extent of open-field systems has been well mapped, and there is little doubt that the origins of much of it lay in the Late Saxon period, as yet there has been little analysis of their evolution in relation to individual (nucleated) settlement development, and even less to relationships with dispersed settlement, although Roden (1973) has carried out much analysis of open field systems in Chilterns parishes and progress has been made through the Historic Landscape Characterisation project..

Finally, there is only sketchy evidence for the early layout or character of Buckinghamshire's principal towns and only limited investigation inside other potential small Late Saxon semi-urban places. This litany of negatives has to be balanced against the extraordinary increase in knowledge about the distribution and of character of earlier periods, so perhaps the next decade will see similar advances for the Late Saxon period.

#### 14. Research themes

The following are partly themes and partly practical suggestions.

- Ceramic underpins chronology in the county. Study is now only on a site-by-site, unit-by-unit basis by varying organisations and there is no functioning unified reference collection. Establishing and maintaining an effective county or regional series is essential in order for research in the period to develop further. This is a prime instance where English Heritage funding could be put to good use regionally as it is for environmental matters. If such a collection was actively maintained, clarity could be established for the definite intra-county differences in ceramic which exist, unsurprisingly as Buckinghamshire has one foot in the Thames Valley and the other almost other in the Midlands.

- Lack of development in the Chiltern generally, apart from in the High Wycombe area, has meant few if any opportunities have arisen to get to grips with basic questions about the 'British' element of Chiltern culture. It also means that virtually nothing is known of the origins of Chiltern villages and towns. Every opportunity should be taken to gather further information here. There may be something to be said for a more pro-active approach, for example organising surface collection or test-pitting in gardens (pace the Whittlewood Project), and certainly more fieldwalking near existing settlements where opportunities present.
- A number of excavations and artefact collections in the county took place or were assembled over twenty years ago. There is little doubt that knowledgeable re-examination of some of these assemblages would bring to light Saxon material (such as Ipswich ware) not previously recognised.
- Buckinghamshire has several settlements which offer potential for studying landuse continuity. Walton, Aylesbury and the nearby Bierton have been mentioned in the text, as well as Taplow, but there are other suitable research areas such as Olney, Amersham and Brill.
- Excavations on linear schemes near Dorney have hinted at the role the Thames might play in the county's early history, but strikingly absent from the record is any direct archaeological evidence for Saxon, or that matter medieval waterfront sites or associated settlement. Opportunity should be taken to see if this is a real or apparent absence.
- Some investigations have taken place within the early urban centres of Buckingham, Newport Pagnell and Aylesbury but little if any grasp of internal plan has been gained for any of them and every opportunity should be taken to pursue further research here.
- The county has a number of unpublished excavations with potential information about the period which remain in limbo either because of closure of units or because of other problems. Publication of these should be pursued.
- The oldest unpublished excavation of all is that of the Taplow mound, the material having been inherited by the British Museum. It would be good if their proposed publication programme on the material initiated in the 1980s could be brought to fruition.
- There has been some environmental sampling on excavations but the results have often proved disappointing. On multiperiod sites the chances of contamination by survival are also high. Potential single-period deposits deserve a great deal of attention.
- It is very satisfactory that numerous detected finds are now being fully recorded. The next step is to consider the results more fully in association with existing SMR data and to enhance the archaeological value of the results by identifying concentrations and also by considering possible stylistic, and in the case of coins, political links.
- It has to be recognised that some retrieved metal finds may be indicators of e.g. plough-damaged cemeteries and settlements, and appropriate action to prevent further damage should be taken where this is the case.

- Mill sites and churches are among the site-types which are significantly underrepresented in the archaeological evidence compared with the documentary evidence. Every opportunity should be taken to redress this balance. The question of the 'missing' Saxon churches can only be addressed by the continuing use of watching briefs during works on, or adjacent to, church structure. Consideration should be given to initiating intensive research study into one or two churches with suspected early fabric, including assessment of the source of their stone.
- Finally, the immense value of the interim notes from field units published in *South Midlands Archaeology* (CBA) and 'Archaeological Notes' in *Records of Buckinghamshire* (Bucks Archaeological Society) should be stressed. These short accounts give some chance of keeping track on work which curator's have decided may eventually warrant full publication, even if such 'final' publications may be years ahead. Organisations which carry out fieldwork but do not provide even these meagre details for the public should be named even if they cannot be actively prevented from working in the county!

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