

SOLENT THAMES RESEARCH FRAMEWORK REGIONAL ASSESSMENT THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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Introduction

The early medieval period is one of important social, political, economic, cultural and ethnic change. Study of the period is supported by some documentary sources and by archaeology, but the interpretation of both sources is complex and controversial. Some of the key developments in this period, such as the extent of continuity of late Romano-British society, culture and economy; the date and nature of the arrival of Anglo-Saxon culture and its associated Germanic incomers; settlement of the land; the transition from paganism to Christianity; the development of kingdoms; the emergence of urbanisation; land division and use; and the development of minsters, estates and manors, are all open to intense debate. What is certain is that these seismic shifts in culture, religion, economy and, to an arguable extent, population, took place, and is in this period that many of the administrative structures which underpinned later medieval society, and indeed persist to the present day, were created. Archaeological evidence, traditionally given second place in terms of authority to documentary evidence, is being given increasing precedence in efforts to resolve the difficulties of the early medieval period. Archaeological exploration in the Solent Thames area has been, and will continue to be, central to exploring the issues and establishing a framework for interpreting the early medieval past.

Early medieval material culture is, however, relatively sparse in comparison to the preceding and following periods, which in itself raises a number of problems for interpretation. As Steve Clark noted for Berkshire, the majority of Anglo-Saxon pottery, handmade and fired at relatively low temperatures is very rarely found in fieldwalking exercises, even where Anglo-Saxon settlements have been identified. Coins circulate only from the mid-Saxon period: secular settlement consisted of timber-framed buildings and sunken-featured buildings, whose structures do not survive well in the archaeological record, and successful Anglo-Saxon urban settlements lie destroyed or inaccessible underneath modern towns. This is a difficult period to detect and find in fieldwork and evaluation exercises (Hey & Lacey 2001).

Early Anglo-Saxon furnished cemeteries, with their wealth of material culture, offer the most 'visible' aspect of early medieval archaeology, and this region has provided a number of important cemetery sites. The visibility of such burial places, however, led to considerable antiquarian interest in them; as a consequence, some of the more important early Anglo-Saxon furnished cemeteries in the research area were excavated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with inevitable loss of archaeological

information. Nonetheless, the material evidence, particularly from the cemetery sites, indicates that this region is particularly interesting in the way it exhibits a rapid spread of Anglo-Saxon culture in areas where we might arguably least expect it, for example on the Hampshire downs.

For the early and middle part of the Anglo-Saxon period (c 450-850), the boundaries of the modern counties which make up the Solent Thames area, with the probable exception of the Isle of Wight, have only a broad and passing relationship with any territorial boundaries which can be reconstructed for the Anglo-Saxon period. David Hinton has drawn attention, for example, to the various place-names straddling the borders of modern Hampshire, such as North Tidworth in Wiltshire and South Tidworth in Hampshire, which offer convincing evidence of earlier territorial units now cut by modern boundaries (Hinton 2007). By the later Anglo-Saxon period, however, the territorial boundaries which still provide the framework for modern county boundaries (at least until the boundary revisions of the historic counties from 1974) were established, so that it is no surprise to find some real overlap between the Solent Thames counties and Anglo-Saxon territorial divisions. The straight boundary sections between Surrey and Berkshire, for example, were established by the ninth century (Clark 2007: Gelling 1976 844), and the shire itself was first referred to in AD 860.

All counties in this region have provided key sites for interpreting the Anglo-Saxon past, and all the counties, without exception, still have the potential to answer the significant questions of the period through their surviving early medieval archaeology. Excavation and research in the region has, however, been of variable quality and intensity. The presence of a university has had a significant impact on the history of archaeological activity in the area: those parts of Oxfordshire lying within reach of the University of Oxford, for example, have been intensively studied, fieldwalked and excavated, and have provided a significant range of published evidence. Buckinghamshire, by contrast, traditionally suffered from a lack of excavation, but the picture has changed, for example through the Whittlewood Project, led by the University of Leicester. In the whole (modern) county of Buckinghamshire, only the important seventh-century barrow at Taplow, poorly excavated in 1883 and more recently re-assessed by Oxford Archaeology, is a significant site (Farley 2006). It is also worth noting that a proportion of the recorded archaeology in the region exists due to the work of outstanding individuals, rather than as a result of any coherent national or county framework. Into this category falls the work of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's County Museum curator in the 1930s, who was responsible for the mapping of reported finds around central Buckinghamshire, or the famous and influential work of E.T. Leeds around Oxfordshire and the adjoining parts of modern Berkshire. Modern development and industry, rather than research needs, have led many of the excavations in the region. In this respect, the Isle of Wight, lacking a university, not subject to major modern developments, and without funding or individual resource to promote early Anglo-Saxon archaeology, has been poorly served by excavation, although its potential for answering a number of key questions about the period, particularly about early ethnicity and the nature of Anglo-Saxon early settlement, is great. There is a real need for systematic archaeological survey to identify and investigate Anglo-Saxon sites and for a re-assessment of the island's metal detected evidence.

Though there are no overviews taking in the specific region under discussion in this framework, there are a number of significant and important county and landscape overviews of the medieval period relating to this region. All were covered by some of the earliest editions of the Victoria County Histories: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were recorded in the VCH for 1900 (Doubleday 1900); Berkshire in VCH for 1906 (Smith 1906); Buckinghamshire for 1905 (Smith 1905); Oxfordshire for 1939 (Salzman 1939).

Inheritance

The question of the date of transition from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon used to be phrased in terms of movements of people. Now, however, the transition is usually more cautiously framed in terms of the abandonment of Late Romano-British culture (though that culture is notoriously very difficult to pinpoint in the archaeological record) and the beginnings of very visible Anglo-Saxon culture use, with the suspicion that the people using Anglo-Saxon culture - and speaking Old English - were probably, though not absolutely necessarily, of different ethnic origin from the native Romano-British. Some of the Romano-British may have adopted an Anglo-Saxon way of life, at which point they became effectively invisible as Romano-British and actually 'Anglo-Saxon' in the archaeological record. DNA and other analysis of skeletal material may yet answer the question of how many of those buried in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were descended from continental Germanic migrants, and how many were the native '*wealh*' who had adopted a new lifestyle, but the question of whether Romano-British people who adopted Anglo-Saxon culture, if indeed any did, regarded themselves as Anglo-Saxons will remain contentious. The issue of transition, then, must focus in the present state of technology on when people living in the region adopted Anglo-Saxon ways of living and of burying their dead, rather than on whether those people were native Romano-British or new Germanic incomers.

There is some evidence that, in pockets of the region, a Romano-British way of life continued even where Anglo-Saxon material culture had come to dominate adjacent neighbourhoods. The Chiltern area has (questionably) been put forward as an area under 'British' control into the Anglo-Saxon period, and there is place-name evidence suggesting activity continuing into the early Anglo-Saxon period at Walton, by Aylesbury. The 'Hwicce' of Oxfordshire have also been posited as a surviving group of native British. There is also a case for arguing for continuity and cultural adaptation at the Roman town of Dorchester in Oxfordshire, where the Romano-British cemetery at Queensford Farm continued in use with a change in the cultural affiliation of the grave-goods - in contrast to the majority of 'Germanic' burials in the region, which appear to belong to newly-founded Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. The argument for Dorchester as a Roman-British power centre continuing into the fifth century may be supported by the presence of very early Anglo-Saxon style burials inserted into the nearby Dyke Hills earthworks, which have been interpreted as evidence for the presence of Anglo-Saxon *foederati* warriors supporting the rule of a local Romano-British tyrant: exactly the mechanism described by Gildas and Bede by which Anglo-Saxon warriors were introduced into England in the first place.

Elsewhere, however, evidence for a continuation of a Romano-British way of life, or even for any continuity or contiguity between 'Romano-British' and 'Anglo-Saxon' people is elusive. Settlement reorganisation can have many causes and evidence needs to be considered carefully. In Oxfordshire, important excavations at Barton Court Farm demonstrated early Anglo-Saxon settlement in close proximity to the villa, but no evidence for the continued use of the buildings - until bodies were inserted into them in the sixth century. The presence of Anglo-Saxon buildings on the site is also unlikely to be evidence for native Romano-British inhabitants adopting Anglo-Saxon building styles, because the settlement does not respect earlier Romano-British boundary ditches, indicating a significant break with the Romano-British use and partitioning of the land. The coastal part of this region, where some continued contact with Rome and Gaul might be expected, provides little evidence for continuity. In Hampshire, no finds have been made of imported pottery in the fifth century. The *civitas* capitals, Winchester and Silchester, show no signs of continued urbanisation into the 5th century. Hinton suggests that only the Otterbourne hoards hint at continuing Romano-British authority and contact with Gaul, but the evidence in Hampshire generally suggests that apart from low-level continuity and adaptation, there is scant evidence for continuity of estates, forts or urban centres, nor for the presence in Hampshire of any *laeti*, *foederati* or mercenary soldiers. Evidence for continuity at Portchester is ambiguous. In Berkshire, identifying the decline of Roman activity is hampered by lack of robust dating evidence, so that, for example, the date of abandonment of the Roman rectilinear field systems of the Berkshire Downs by an aceramic population cannot be identified (Bowden et al 1993, 111).

Early medieval cemeteries provide tantalising glimpses of evidence for continuity or at least cross-cultural links. A few cemeteries across the region offer positive evidence of use of Romano-British cemeteries into the Anglo-Saxon period - Queensford cemetery, Dorchester and Itchen Abbas, Hampshire, the Roman mixed-rite cemetery near Bray, at Lowbury Hill, Oxfordshire. In addition, however, the region offers a number of examples of cross-cultural links in cemeteries. The contrasting evidence for intermixing of new burial rites in some areas - Meonstoke in Hampshire, for example - and areas without any apparent overlap in material culture needs further review and investigation.

Also ripe for review is the extent to which Romano-British estate boundaries continued in use into the Anglo-Saxon period. Evidence from Oxfordshire, specifically around the Bampton area, points to some overlap; David Hinton has raised the possibility of some plausible continuity of boundaries around the villa at Rockbourne, Hampshire; David Tomalin has suggested pre-Anglo-Saxon origins for some of the estates in the Isle of Wight, and similar evidence of Roman estates surviving into the Anglo-Saxon period has been discussed by Mike Farley for Buckinghamshire.

Deliberate re-use of earlier monuments by Anglo-Saxons, especially Bronze Age and Roman barrows, has been noted for this region as elsewhere (Blair 1994). Re-use may have been to legitimise Anglo-Saxon rule, or to appropriate cultural markers, such as the re-use of the Roman temple site at Lowbury Hill, Oxfordshire, for a barrow burial, or the princely barrow at Taplow, Buckinghamshire, sited within an Iron Age enclosure. Iron Age hillforts, Bronze Age barrows and other prehistoric monuments

crop up frequently as boundary markers in Anglo-Saxon charters, suggesting that these monuments influenced the route of boundaries.

Post-Conversion use of earlier monuments included their use as execution cemeteries. Examples from this region include burials at Bronze Age barrows (Stockbridge Down, Hampshire), prehistoric earthworks (Ave's Dyke, Oxfordshire); Roman villas (for example, Shakenoak Roman villa in Oxfordshire). Probable examples occur in other counties, and a review of undated excavated inhumations without grave-goods in these contexts across the region would probably yield further cases of execution cemeteries; such has already been the case for the Harestock cemetery, excavated in the 1980s. The majority of burials at this cemetery, located on the boundary of Anglo-Saxon Winchester, were young males, some decapitated before burial. Recent carbon14 dating of the skeletons has established a 9th- to 11th-century date, confirming the likelihood that this is the site of execution burials. Other burials at re-used monuments may not necessarily be deviant. Annia Cherryson's carbon14 dating programme has also revealed a rare example of a 9th- to 10th-century burials in a barrow at Bevis's Grave, Hampshire (Blair 2005, 244). John Blair has posited that the very late use of primary and secondary barrows may be a phenomenon relating to the south coast, noting further examples in Sussex and Wiltshire (Blair 2005, 244).

Church foundations were also deliberately focussed on earlier monuments, prehistoric (Bampton, Oxfordshire appears to be located on a Bronze Age barrow complex), or more often Roman sites: towns (Winchester and Dorchester), possible villas (Romsey Abbey). In Buckinghamshire some churches were located within Iron Age hillforts (Kidd 2004). In this context it is worth noting that recent investigative work at Abingdon in Oxfordshire and Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire have demonstrated that both Anglo-Saxon settlements, both of which are characterised by early religious foundations, were situated within an Iron Age defensive structure. The remains of the forts at both sites are ephemeral, and were only noted by excavation. It may be that other important Anglo-Saxon settlements within the region have similar associations with earlier defensive structures.

Chronology

Radiocarbon dating is problematic for the early medieval period, especially because of the flatness of the radiocarbon calibration curve during the early and middle phases of the Anglo-Saxon period, but nonetheless radio-carbon dating has proven to be crucial in the dating of a number of mid- to late Saxon sites in the region.

Coin evidence has been useful in dating the final phase of occupation at a number of Romano-British sites across the region, but use of coin dating then becomes problematic until the introduction of silver *sceattas* at the end of the seventh century.

Pottery provides further levels of difficulties, not least because revisions of pottery evidence suggest that even that which we thought we knew may now be considered suspect: organic- or 'grass'- tempered wares, were once thought to be early Anglo-Saxon, but their date range is extending, and they may not even be exclusively Anglo-Saxon. The lack of organic-tempered wares at Wraysbury, Berkshire, a site dated to the 5th century, has also led to questions over the assumed early date of organic-tempered production (Timby 2003, 127). Overall, the region has not yet produced the

necessary stratigraphic sequences to allow confident dating, but some pottery sequences for the region exist: Hamwic has provided a series of types for the mid Saxon period, and 'Winchester ware', though not plentiful, is useful for dating later Anglo-Saxon contexts. 'Cotswold-type' ware, found in Berkshire, has a relatively broad date range beyond the Anglo-Saxon period. Some diagnostic Ipswich and Maxey type wares have been found to the north of Buckinghamshire and St Neot's type ware in Buckinghamshire becomes useful from the late tenth century. Anglo-Saxon urban Oxford and Winchester both have tight dating sequences. Mike Farley has pointed up the chronic shortage of study - and facilities for study - of pottery sequences in Buckinghamshire.

Dating based on artefacts and typologies has been widely used to date this period. Tania Dickinson's work on saucer brooches remains an outstanding contribution to dating fifth-, sixth- and seventh-century burials and settlements in the Thames Valley part of the region, but artefact dating has its own problems, particularly of objects rarely found in a burial context, and even when artefacts are part of a mortuary assemblage, the question of their age when buried is still an issue.

Landscape and land use

Palaeoenvironmental evidence

Surprisingly for the early medieval period, due to the wealth of information from documentary sources providing basic general but crude indications of land-use, there has been relatively little engagement of palaeoenvironmental science to define, corroborate or map interpretation of distributions land-use. In this sense comprehension of the early medieval landscape is in some places weaker than that in prehistory (Allen 1996). This needs to be rectified by obtaining a combination of long stratified and dated landscape sequences and more local onsite proxy data. Good examples of stratified sequences that relate to the wider landscape environs can be seen in, for instance, the palynological record from the alluvium in the Itchen valley at Winnal Moors, Winchester (Waton 1982; 1986 – but see Allen 2000b for some caution in interpretation), and from colluvial records such as Chalton, Hampshire (Bell 1983) and Duxmore, Newbarn Combe and Redcliffe, Isle of Wight (Allen 1992). Local proxy palaeoenvironment data have been obtained as short pollen sequences from Cowdery's Down, Hampshire (Waton 1983), and snail and other data from across the region, and in rare instances waterlogged plant remains (Scaife 1996). The combination of on-site and off-site data such, as could potentially be achieved at the Chalton ridge (Champion 1977) and from colluvial valley bottom studies (Bell 1983), should be seen as one of the major ways forward in mapping early medieval landscapes and land-use. Saxon fields and field systems, though they exist, have largely been neglected from palaeoenvironmental, geoarchaeological and archaeological study with rare exceptions (Bowden *et al.* 1993). This clearly needs to be rectified, especially as there are limited documentary sources to aid this work.

Landscape across the region

The region has a wide range of landscape types, which makes a simple summary of landscape and land use in the area difficult. Across the region, knowledge of crops and land use can be assessed from only a few specific excavations. Wheat, barley,

oats and rye were grown across the region, with no particular specialisation apparent anywhere. The extent to which Roman arable reverted to grassland is not clear: evidence from different parts of the region does not offer one coherent picture, and it is likely that in this, as in the process of Anglo-Saxon settlement, the story is complex and there were local and regional variations.

Parts of the region are well represented in surviving Anglo-Saxon charters, especially Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Surveys of Anglo-Saxon charters in conjunction with landscape topography and archaeology have demonstrated that charters can provide valuable insights into Anglo-Saxon estates and land use.

Woodland

Parts of the region were wooded during this period, and provided a resource for timber, forage, charcoal and hunting. The Chilterns may have been wooded throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, as might Bernwood, and evidence shows that Whittlewood in the north-west of Buckinghamshire regenerated during this period.. In Berkshire, large areas to the east seem to have been wooded by the end of the period. Forests were also in existence before the Norman Conquest around the Forest of Bere and the New Forest in Hampshire, and in Oxford around the area of Wychwood and Woodstock. Even without archaeological evidence, place-name evidence indicates that parts of this area were relatively 'empty'. It has been suggested that East Berkshire, for example, was largely open woodland, used for foraging pigs and hunting (Hooke 1988 147-50).

Not all these woods were 'empty' of settlement and arable areas, nor were their boundaries necessarily fixed: Mike Farley has cautioned that woodlands should be regarded as a 'shifting resource'. More pollen sequences, tied to radio-carbon dates, are required if the picture is to be clarified. In the Isle of Wight, wooded clays to the north were probably not cultivated for arable before the Norman Conquest, if the distribution of finds of this period is taken as a guide.

Farming

Evidence for field systems and agricultural practice across the region remains elusive. Exemplars such as Wraysbury, Berkshire (Astill & Lobb 1989, see also Pine 2003, Dodd 2003) and Taplow, Buckinghamshire, (Allen, T. *et al.* 2006), provide rare exceptions. Excavations under the castle mound at Oxford revealed late Anglo-Saxon ridge-and-furrow and grain drying is evidenced at the late Chalton Manor Farm, Hampshire.

.At Taplow cereals included bread wheat, hulled barley, oats and rye (cal AD 670-870), and the free-threshing wheats had replaced spelt wheat as the predominant wheat crop (Green 1994, 85; Moffett 2006, 48-9). The main syntheses of the Saxon plant remains are by Frank Green (1981; 1997). Other sites provide information locally useful but rather limited e.g. Wickhams Field, Berkshire (Scaife 1996).

Hamwic animal bones provide the best evidence in the region for stock-rearing in the middle Anglo-Saxon period. Anglo-Saxon stock was the same size and weight as Romano-British animals, and butchery patterns suggest there was no shortage of hay

and fodder for the animals, and that surpluses of cattle and sheep were being reared. Though cattle and sheep predominate in the archaeological record, recent research by Bradley Hull on animal and human isotopes, which included sites from Hampshire, indicates that pigs and chickens may have been a more important food resource in the early Anglo-Saxon period than surviving animal-bone evidence suggests (Hull 2008).

The detailed analyses at Wraysbury were able to show the presence of higher proportions of pig than normal, but with cattle and sheep. The presence of hare and deer provide rare evidence of hunting (Coy 1989), while the charred plant remains (Jones 1989) included wheats, barley, oats and hazelnuts, and Jones (1989) was able to suggest that some of this assemblage (oats) may have been animal fodder. More remarkable, but increasingly common from more recent excavations (see below) was the evidence of fish (Coy 1989), largely eel (over 80%), indicating that this was a significant proportion of the diet. Fish bones were recovered here largely because of the very large scale and intensive sieving programme largely instigated by Jenny Coy.

Rivers, intertidal and coastal

The potential location of former mills may provide securely, well-dated waterlogged deposits rich in ecofactual and artefactual evidence lacking from many of the drier sites. Associated with this are likely to be modification of river channels and also wharves and jetties. Fish traps and eel baskets have been recorded on the Kennet at Anslow's Cottages and Wickams Field and on the Thames at Eton and Yarnton, and potentially exist in the Ouse, Buckinghamshire. These, or similar sites, could provide evidence for fish preparation or consumption in waterlogged deposits. Apart from rivers, the intertidal zone also provides evidence for fishing, fishtraps etc. Within the Solent Thames corridor, only two projects have systematically examined these areas for such data; Langstone, Hampshire (Allen & Gardiner 2000), and Wootton-Quarr, Isle of Wight (Tomalin *et al.* forthcoming) The onset of sieving programmes and systematic recovery of fish remains from early (and later) medieval sites provides significant evidence of inland and marine fishing and trade to be determined (cf. Barrett *et al.* 2004a).

Detailed stratified sequences from palaeo-valleys (rivers, streams and brooks) can provide detailed information about the changing local environments and land-use away from the channel. More importantly they can provide details of the nature of the channel, its water flow, depth, vegetative state etc. A good example can be seen by Evans' molluscan work at Anslows Cottages (1992b).

Fish traps and eel baskets may be present in a number of intertidal locations (e.g. Langstone harbour and Wootton-Quarr) and these have long stratified deposits from which geoarchaeological and proxy palaeoenvironmental data have been obtained. Other such locations also probably exist, especially on the Isle of Wight (e.g. Shalfleet, Yar and Newtown). Evidence of early medieval boats (river or maritime) are exceptionally rare but fragmentary evidence of a vessel was recovered from Langstone harbour (J. Satchell pers. comm.) and such finds when studied fully with the sediments in which they were recorded provide regionally important palaeoenvironmental and pollen data. Offshore sites, such as Langstone, have also provided very rare, and rarely dated, evidence of wicker hurdle oyster parcs where oyster spats were protected as a part of oyster farming industries.

Within riverine, floodplain, low-lying and intertidal locations the presence of waterlogging provides the opportunity of a much greater array of palaeoenvironmental proxy data, through combined analysis of waterlogged plant remains, insects and pollen. A number of key early medieval sites provide these contexts (Hamwic, Porchester, Yarnton, Anslows Cottages etc.) and have often not been fully exploited. The insect remains from Hamwic for instance (Robinson 2005) were only recently studied, despite the record of their presence since the 1970s.

Social organisation, economy and subsistence

The region has early links with several different ethnic or tribal groups which may be broadly equated, according to the documentary sources, with the Jutes, the West Saxons, and the Anglian Mercians. The people of southern Oxfordshire were south Saxon in their material culture, but had trading links further afield with Kent, while the northern and western part of the county had closer affiliations with the Anglian regions. The southern part of early medieval Hampshire was, according to Bede, part of Jutish territory, as was the Isle of Wight: the archaeological evidence points to Southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight being part of a south-coast system, with little contact further north, while the northern part of the county was more closely linked to the Upper Thames Valley. Early Buckinghamshire was probably divided between the West Saxons, who may have controlled the western part, and Middle Saxon and Anglian groups, though by the late seventh century the Mercians appear to have dominated Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. By the eighth century, Hampshire lay within the kingdom of Wessex, but Mercia and Wessex were fighting for control of Berkshire, and the lands including the Thames Valley and Berkshire Downs between the seventh and ninth centuries. By the early ninth century, the south of the Solent Thames region had come under the control of the West Saxon kingdom, but Berkshire continued to remain in Mercian hands, though by the time of King Alfred's birth at Wantage in 849, Berkshire, too, appears to have transferred to the West Saxon kingdom. The northern part of the region lay within the Danelaw, and Scandinavian influence, particularly in northern Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, should be taken into consideration, though this region has less to offer in terms of research into Viking/Anglo-Saxon interactions than elsewhere. The River Ouse, in the area where Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire meet, was an important military frontier in the 10th century.

Evidence for early power centres, perhaps as transfers of power from Roman authority to petty kings, is rare - there is nothing in the Hampshire Roman centres of Portchester, Winchester or Silchester to suggest any such system. There is no evidence to date for settlements in or close to Roman villas in Hampshire. Equally in Berkshire there is no evidence of re-use of Iron Age hillforts for defence in the sub-Roman period, such as has been identified further west in the country. In Oxfordshire, however, the early Anglo-Saxon burials at Dorchester with chip-carved belt fittings have been linked to possible *foederati* or early Anglo-Saxon mercenaries supporting a local Romano-British tribal leader (Hawkes 1986). The role of Aylesbury has been discussed above.

Much analysis has taken place on the significant number of furnished inhumation cemeteries in the region, which indicate that these represent the families of the early Anglo-Saxon settlers. Discussion continues as to the meaning of the uneven distribution of grave-goods amongst the buried population. However, excavation of cemetery sites is uneven across the counties: Oxfordshire and parts of Berkshire have been well served, but other areas have been sparsely excavated. On the Isle of Wight, there has been no recent, modern excavation of an early cemetery, although the late fifth- and early sixth-century cemeteries on Bowcombe and Chessell Downs indicate the importance of the archaeology here for reassessing the historical record of early Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Not until the seventh century is there clearer evidence for the emergence of an elite, in the form of the rich barrow burials at Taplow, Buckinghamshire, Cuddesdon, Asthall and Lowbury Hill, Oxfordshire, of which Taplow is significantly the most complete, excavated and spectacular example. It is also at this period that there is evidence for visibly 'higher status' buildings appearing, though excavated examples are scarce in this region. The buildings indicated by crop marks at Long Wittenham and Drayton in Oxfordshire, not far from the Milton II cemetery where the seventh-century Kentish gold and garnet composite brooches were discovered in the nineteenth century, are reminiscent in layout of palace sites identified by aerial photography in Northumbria. The most important early/middle Anglo-Saxon high-status complex excavated in the region remains the site of Cowdery's Down, Hampshire. In the same county, Chalton also shows signs of social hierarchy in the layout of the buildings. The timber halls at Chalton may not be on the same scale as those at Cowdery's Down, but the high-status hanging bowl escutcheon found at the site indicates that it was home to a member of the elite. For the later Anglo-Saxon period, Netherton, Faccombe and Portchester are especially good examples.

The establishment of the 'wic' settlement at Hamwic shows strong central control, with regulated street patterns and building layout. It may be that other trading sites remain to be excavated in the region: Eastwyke Farm to the south of Oxford town centre is of particular interest, but remains unexcavated or explored.

The development of large 'multiple estates' in the Anglo-Saxon period is attested in the documentary evidence but are harder to see in the archaeological evidence, though the case has been made for the large parishes around Carisbrooke on the Isle of Wight having their origin in early Anglo-Saxon estates (Hase 1994). The later break-up of large estates into smaller estates in the tenth and eleventh centuries has support from evidence within the region. John Blair has pointed to Twynham as an example of the division of 'minster' parishes into smaller units (Blair 2006, 514-9).

The development of later Anglo-Saxon systems of government and justice, including shire and 'hundred' courts, is more visible in the form of shire meeting places, such as Scutchamer Knob in Oxfordshire, the excavated hundred mound of Secklow, in modern Milton Keynes (Adkins and Petchey 1984), and Gallibury Hump on the Isle of Wight. It is also graphically evident in the execution sites, some of which have been discussed above, prominently located in the landscape on boundaries, meeting places, routeways, old monuments and hilltops.

The mechanism by which towns developed their layout and functions in the later Anglo-Saxon period is currently undergoing assessment and revision. Some towns in the region - Winchester prominent amongst them - were already important ecclesiastical and probably royal centres before the later Anglo-Saxon period. A number of sites gained status as a result of the creation of *burhs* in the ninth century. Others may have developed as ecclesiastical or elite foundations: John Blair has drawn attention to the number of small Anglo-Saxon towns which had a minster site at their core, and the same may be true elsewhere (Blair 2007). Overall, urban development in the region has been particularly well studied, and includes a diverse range of urban settlement.

The region contains a number of important later Anglo-Saxon royal sites, including Old Windsor in Berkshire, Brill in Buckinghamshire (recorded in the documentary evidence, though there is as yet no archaeological evidence for royal settlement here), Woodstock in Oxfordshire, and Winchester. The importance of the region to the late Anglo-Saxon economy and administration is illustrated by the number of known 'burh' sites from the region, including Wallingford, Oxford, Winchester, Southampton, Sashes, Twynham,

Settlement

Rural settlement

The region has a number of well excavated Anglo-Saxon settlement sites supported by good environmental evidence, though these are not evenly distributed across the region. Important early settlements include a cluster of sites around Oxford; early excavations at Sutton Courtenay and Cassington by E.T. Leeds, and more modern excavations at New Wintles (Eynsham), Barrow Hills (Radley) and Barton Court Farm. Elsewhere, early Anglo-Saxon buildings have been excavated in the Micheldever Valley, Hampshire, and the excavations at Pennyland, in Milton Keynes. In Berkshire, a large area of the settlement at Wraysbury has been revealed (Astill and Lobb 1989). Early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the region conforms to the national pattern of small, non-hierarchical and unenclosed settlements consisting of a few timber halls and ancillary sunken-featured buildings.

The region has produced evidence for the noted Anglo-Saxon phenomenon of 'shifting settlement'. Worton Rectory Farm, Yarnton, Oxfordshire is typical of this type of settlement. Occupied from the late sixth to ninth century, its associated buildings crept across the landscape. The region also has cases of continuity, such as Walton in Aylesbury, where there is good evidence for continuous occupation in the same location from the early Anglo-Saxon period to the tenth century. Wolverton Turn within Milton Keynes resembles the Middle Saxon enclosure excavated by Oxford Archaeology at Higham Ferrers (NorthHampshire), a possible collection point for animals for renders.

Important rural middle/late Anglo-Saxon rural settlements have been excavated at Yarnton, Oxfordshire, and a more damaged but important site at Wolverton Turn. The site at Yarnton illustrates a decisive change in settlement layout in the eighth century, with more ordered settlement divided into paddocks, a driveway, and buildings set out within enclosures. During the 9th century a second hall was built within a new

enclosure, and a small cemetery was present on the site. These changes are associated with environmental evidence for the intensification of arable farming, the resumption of hay cultivation and the expansion of the area under cultivation to include heavier clay soils. Perhaps the change to a new settlement form and the evidence for intensification of farming reflect the need to provide grain, poultry and perhaps other produce as renders to the nearby minster at Eynsham. Elsewhere in the Thames Valley there is similar evidence for increasing specialisation and intensification of agriculture; cattle farming at Lechlade in Gloucestershire, perhaps sheep farming at New Wintles near Eynsham and at Shakenoak, pig farming and horse rearing on the Buckinghamshire bank of the Thames, and fishing at Wraysbury.

Late Anglo-Saxon rural sites have been identified through finds of pottery, indicating that they underlie modern settlements: there are no significant excavated late Saxon rural settlements in the region. Post-hole evidence from Cogges, Oxfordshire, offers some fragmentary archaeological evidence to support the idea that, in the tenth century, land was divided up into smaller manorial units: the postholes indicate a small house lying near a small two-cell stone church.

Urban settlement

There is a wealth of Saxon urban economic data from the towns and urban centres in Hampshire such as Hamwic and Winchester, though the latter still remains largely unpublished. Details of the surplus of sheep and cattle within Hamwic, and of evidence of young pigs and possibly sheep being reared in town possibly in yards, as well as pigs and fowl are recorded (Bourdillon 1988; 1993; 1994; 1997; Hamilton-Dyer 2005). This level of detail of interpretation has only been possible by constant review of data from Hamwic and record onto a single database. From recent excavations in Hamwic significant charred, mineralised and waterlogged plant assemblages have been recovered (Clapham 2005; Carruthers 2005; Hunter 2005), which have been largely neglected in other urban centres. Similar work has been conducted in part in Winchester (but not published) and should be conducted in other urban Saxon centres throughout the Solent-Thames region. Even small-scale evidence recorded in small interventions, provided analysis and recording is compatible, should enable review and the high level of interpretations seen here. Then the character and diversity of urban centres can be defined and larger trade, markets and economic networks suggested.

Oxford has provided useful evidence for the layout of late urban houses. In the town, houses were set in fairly generous enclosures, and a picture of the types of tenements and their commercial frontages has been built up from excavation, as well as examples of elaborate uncellared buildings from the western edge of the town.

The importance of defining both urban and rural economies is that they are clearly directly inter-related, and studying the detail of town economies cannot be completed without a good comprehension of the rural economy which supplies it. With rare exceptions little attempt has been made to use the palaeoenvironmental and palaeo-economic data to investigate these interpretations, but see Bourdillon (1988).

The built environment

The Anglo-Saxon built environment consisted almost entirely of wooden buildings, either sunken-featured buildings or larger aisled halls. Sunken-featured buildings, so characteristic of early Anglo-Saxon settlement, were first recognised as such in this region, through excavations by E.T. Leeds at Sutton Courtenay. The first timber wooden buildings outside the palace complex at Yeavinger were discovered in this region, too, at Chalton, Hampshire. Both Chalton and Cowdery's Down are type sites for timber building construction. Both demonstrate a range of building techniques, though whether the variety of construction methods used by the Anglo-Saxons has any chronological significance is still unclear.

Masonry buildings were almost entirely limited to ecclesiastical structures. Surviving examples from the region include St Swithun's church tower at Wickham, Berkshire, dating to the 10th or 11th century, which may, like St Michael's church, Oxford, have had defensive as well as ecclesiastical functions. Middle Anglo-Saxon Winchester was dominated by the Old Minster, perhaps with other stone-built structures around it. Stone used for constructing the region's buildings will be discussed below, but it is worth noting here that, compared to other parts of the country, Anglo-Saxon structures in the region use surprisingly little Roman *spolia*, though the larger Roman villas and settlements in the region, including Silchester, could have provided a useful source of raw materials. This is particularly interesting given the suggestion that re-use of Roman building material had a symbolic appeal for Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics. It cannot be argued that the whole region had readily-available building stone, and therefore did not need to rob surviving Roman structures - Buckinghamshire, for example, is poor in stone resources. It may be that the West Saxon approach to church building material differed from that prevailing in other kingdoms.

By the eleventh century, Portchester had an aisled timber hall and a stone-footed tower: it is always cited in the context of *Gethyncthu*, which states that a thegn's residence should have a '*burh-geat*' and a bell. There was also a stone building in the Brooks at Winchester, and evidence from the ninth-century phase at Old Windsor includes a stone building with window glass and roof tiles. None of these buildings are certainly secular, however - the Brooks building was a church by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, and the Portchester structure has burials around it, suggesting that it, too, was a church or chapel.

Ceremony, ritual and religion

Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries

The quality and quantity of evidence across the region is variable, due more to uneven archaeological investigation rather than due to uneven presence of sites. Most known sites in Berkshire, for example, were excavated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and evidence was poorly recorded, while Oxfordshire has been particularly well served by excavations, so that Oxfordshire inhumation cemeteries (Abingdon, Berinsfield) have a national importance in defining and interpreting early Anglo-Saxon furnished inhumation ritual. Cremations across the region have been less well studied, though both cremation and inhumation were standard rites, with cremation the minority ritual; more importantly, the opportunity for studying cremation and inhumation as concurrent practices by one population has not yet been exploited.

In mortuary ritual, as in so much of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, sites from this region have been key to understanding and defining cultural practice. The two cemeteries at Winnall, Hampshire were key for defining the transition to Final Phase burial, which marked the abandonment of the cremation ritual and the signalling of a new vocabulary of mortuary artefacts. The conversion to Christianity is strongly implicated in this change in burial ritual, though the exact mechanism by which the traditional folk cemeteries gave way to 'Final Phase' burial is not clear.

The recently excavated cemetery at Hamwic (Southampton Football Stadium), with burials and cremations into the seventh and possibly eighth centuries, and high-status grave-goods, gives evidence for the origins of the 'wic' site at Hamwic.

Pre-Christian ritual sites

Evidence for shrines or other sacred sites in this region, as elsewhere, is very limited. Excavations at Weedon, Buckinghamshire, a site with a 'weoh' (temple/shrine) place-name element have not provided any evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity. John Blair, working from observations of sites within the region, has suggested that square structures apparently superimposed on earlier barrows may represent early Anglo-Saxon shrines. It has also been posited that the 'annexes' added to the halls found at sites such as Cowdery's Down and Chalton may represent shrines. Helena Hamerow has further argued that some of the material found deposited within sunken-featured buildings may represent some form of ritual or structured deposit, and again, information from excavated sites within the region has been key in the creation of this theory.

Evidence for continued use of Roman Christian sites is limited. The Thornborough, Buckinghamshire temple continued in use into the early 5th century based on coin finds.

Churches, Minsters and parishes

The process of transition from non-churchyard to churchyard burial is not clear for this period, though it may be that Christian, unenclosed churchyard burial may have preceded burial within a churchyard. Several sites within the region, including Chimney Farm, near Bampton, Oxfordshire, Whitechurch, Hampshire and St Mary's, Hamwic, and now a burial site at Milton Keynes radiocarbon dated to the ninth/tenth centuries, may represent open field cemeteries established before the development of a parochial church system.

The mid-Saxon period saw the emergence of important settlement and ecclesiastical sites in the Solent Thames area. Important minsters developed at Bradfield, Abingdon and Cookham in Berkshire, the Old and New Minsters at Winchester and Nunnaminster for example.

Very few churches can be shown to have a pre-Conquest foundation date, either through excavated evidence, or because the standing structure contains material of Anglo-Saxon date. The region has very few standing structures of Anglo-Saxon

origin. At Wing church, Buckinghamshire, recent excavations have shown that the Middle - Late Anglo-Saxon churchyard extended beyond the existing boundary (Holmes 2000).

In addition, not all pre-Conquest foundations were recorded in Domesday - only three in Oxfordshire, for example. Yet the bulk of the region's churches were almost certainly established before the Conquest - the research agenda for the region could usefully try to work out new approaches to demonstrating their foundation dates. Oxfordshire has a cluster of late Anglo-Saxon charcoal burials, and others have been discovered at Winchester and Romsey. The purpose of this particular ritual is unclear.

Votive deposition

It is possible that some of the large numbers of swords and spearheads recovered from the River Thames over the years, such as the Abingdon sword, may represent deliberate, 'votive' depositions, though the idea will remain speculative until there is any clear evidence for deliberate, rather than random or accidental deposition. By contrast, Hampshire's rivers have not produced collections of weapons to support the idea of water-deposition into the Anglo-Saxon period. Equally, some of the region's coin hoards (see below) might repay further consideration in terms of possible votive purpose.

Transport and communication

The fate of Roman roads across the region needs further investigation. Evidence from Berkshire suggests that a number of important places in the mid or later Anglo-Saxon period are located close to the line of now extinct Roman roads, indicating that stretches of road continued to play an important role in transport and communication into the Anglo-Saxon period. Where Anglo-Saxon settlements lie close to Roman roads on the site of former Roman market towns, such as Alton and Havant in Hampshire, these settlements may 'hint at continuing low-level market functions'. Watling Street and Akeman Street, which run through the region, seem to have maintained their importance, as a number of 'street' place-names testify. However, the current debates over the relevance of the Icknield Way as a route linking Wessex and East Anglia illustrates that not all Roman roads can be assumed to have been used during the period without corroborative evidence (Harrison 2003).

Rivers were also key to transport and communication, though the extent to which the region's rivers were navigable by boat is not certain. Finds show that water catchment areas dominated lines of communication in the region. The clearest example of this, perhaps, is from Buckinghamshire, which came into existence as an administrative unit in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Buckinghamshire formed disparate communication links according to their location within the county: in north Buckinghamshire, links were with Northamptonshire; in the west of the county, links were with Oxfordshire; and to the east, inhabitants were in closer contact with Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and London. Excavations in Oxford have identified evidence for control and channelling of the river: a probable late Anglo-Saxon canal associated with the important minster at Bampton, Oxfordshire, has been identified by John Blair, and a possible mid-Saxon channel

marker in the Holybrook at Coley Park Farm, Berkshire are further evidence of the effort expended on managing and maintaining waterways for transport.

Material Culture

Finds from the furnished early Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemeteries of the region suggest a generally wealthy population, not with the same access to the continent as their Kentish counterparts, but with a sufficiently robust economy to include the usual range of Anglo-Saxon metalwork, jewellery and containers in the graves. The richest surviving burial from this period, and the only one to rival finds at Sutton Hoo, remains the 'princely' burial at Taplow, Buckinghamshire, with its extensive weaponry, feasting equipment, a lyre, gaming pieces, clothing artefacts, gold metalwork, and imported artefacts. A catalogue of finds from the site still remains to be published.

Taplow aside, material culture of the region is relatively modest. In spite of the presence of Hamwic and Winchester, there is nothing from Hampshire to rival the wealth of Taplow. However, both the Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire have produced individual graves with luxury goods comparable in vocabulary, if not in quality and quantity, to the Taplow grave, and recent metal-detected finds from the Isle of Wight indicate that further 'princely burials' from this region may yet be found. 'Luxury goods' from the region include high status pottery - Tating ware from the Rhineland - at Old Windsor and the middle Saxon trading site at Dorney, Berkshire. Also from Berkshire is a chance find of a late eighth or early ninth century sword pommel with intricate filigree wires (Hinton 2005 101-2).

The Solent Thames region includes a number of important late Anglo-Saxon settlements, two of which, Oxford and Winchester, have been subjected to detailed research and excavation, even if the areas excavated have been determined mainly by development rather than research needs. Both have yielded significant finds demonstrating the wealth of late Anglo-Saxon urban dwellers. From Winchester come the high quality cast copper-alloy strap ends and other metalwork, and Late Anglo-Saxon Winchester was also the most important source of high quality manuscript and textile production, and was responsible for the influential and distinctive 'Winchester Style' of art.

The region's finds include a number of coin hoards: post-Roman hoards from Otterbourne, Hampshire; a seventh century hoard of nearly one hundred coins and gold and garnet clasps from Crondall in north Hampshire, an eighth-century hoard from Aston Rowant, Oxfordshire, late ninth-century hoards from Pitstone in Buckinghamshire (AD 874-9) and Hook Norton in Oxfordshire, ninth-century hoards associated with a coffin and burial in St Mary's churchyard, Reading, and in Kintbury churchyard, Berkshire.

Finally, a significant quantity of metal-detected finds are being unearthed from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, which may transform our understanding of the Middle Anglo-Saxon period.

Crafts, trades and industries

Rivers provided an important resource: mid-Saxon fish traps and an eel basket have been identified at Anslows Cottages, Berkshire, and a probable fish trap at the Theale Industrial site (Berks). The large mill-wheels found at Old Windsor have been dated by dendrochronology to the late seventh century; the Domesday Book emphasises the importance of mills and fisheries for estates. The region also includes coastal areas. Use of coastal resources on the Isle of Wight is of particular interest; current research indicates the existence of early medieval fish weirs and fish traps. Faunal evidence from excavations of late Anglo-Saxon Oxford indicate the importance of fish in the diet at this time.

Although the region boasts a number of important ecclesiastical and royal centres, and other evidence - street names, documentary sources - imply a range of thriving industries, archaeological evidence for craft and technology is less robust. Iron ore was smelted at Romsey, probably Christchurch, Winchester and possibly Riverdene in the Mid Saxon period (Hampshire). There is also evidence for iron smelting and iron smithing from Wraysbury, Berkshire, using local bog ores (Astill and Lobb 1989 87), while the enigmatic middle Anglo-Saxon site at Dorney, Buckinghamshire, has produced around 42 kg of slag from pits, and there is evidence for sophisticated iron production around Southampton from a relatively early date. There is evidence for specialised gold working from eighth-century Hamwic.

Pottery produced in the region was not traded widely, although the presence of useful clays in Oxfordshire meant that potters here had a considerable output through the period. There was pottery production at Micheldever, Hampshire, with sophisticated firing techniques, but the evidence suggests that pottery production was rural and local. By contrast, the presence of St Neot's ware and Stamford ware in the region emphasise trade and contact beyond the Danelaw in the later Anglo-Saxon period.

The need for stone to build churches was one of the factors tying the region together: Hampshire, poor in building stone, for example, sought material from Bath, but also drew heavily on the Cotswolds and the Isle of Wight for supplies (Hinton 1997; Potter 2006). Building stone was also transported into and out of the region: stone quarried from Oxfordshire found its way into late Anglo-Saxon churches in Warwickshire. Stone for St Michael's church, Oxford came from more local quarries at Burford. There was a quarry at Binstead, on the Isle of Wight; it has been suggested that the fish weirs and other wooden structures on Quarr beach, radiocarbon dated to this period, were associated with the quarriers working at Binstead. A full picture of stone quarrying and distribution across the region has yet to be drawn, however. The source of the stone used to build Wing church in Buckinghamshire is not known, for example: more petrological analysis of surviving Anglo-Saxon building fabric would be useful across the region. What is becoming increasingly apparent is that limestone outcrops in the region - sources of stone - are linked to finds of coins, suggesting that, for the middle and later Anglo-Saxon periods, stone trade played a significant part in the economy and in the creation of political and ecclesiastical exchange networks.

There is evidence for two Hampshire mints, Southampton (Hamwic) until the 1020s, and Winchester. Berkshire had two, one at Wallingford, now in Oxfordshire, and a short-lived one at Reading. Mints in Buckinghamshire were at Newport Pagnell, Buckingham and Aylesbury.

The location and development of non-burh markets still needs further work. Recent excavations at Lake End Road, Dorney, indicate that rural sites could have important, perhaps seasonal, market functions from the middle Anglo-Saxon period; craft working also appears to have taken place at the site (Foreman et al 2002, 69-70). Recent metal detecting finds need reviewing for further evidence of middle Anglo-Saxon and later non-urban markets. Froglands Farm to the south-west of Carisbrooke Castle indicates a market at this site, for example, and place name evidence at Lamport suggests a pre-burh market. Similar possible sites need to be identified to further a research-based programme of excavation (Ulmschneider 2003).

Documentary and archaeological evidence suggest that the region was significant for textile production, embroidery, boneworking, and manuscript production. Ecclesiastical centres played an important part in effecting the output of such material.

Warfare, defences and military installations

There is a single example of a re-used hillfort at Whitsbury Camp in Hampshire. Prehistoric dykes and ditches in Hampshire may have been brought back into currency as boundary or territorial markers, but unlikely for defence.

There are problems in identifying the date and purpose of a number of earthworks in the region which may relate to the early medieval period. 'Grim's Dyke', 'Grim's Bank', and other dykes and ditches in the vicinity of Roman Silchester may relate to the late Iron Age or early Roman period, but there is no firm dating evidence for these structures. The other 'Grim's Ditch' sites, near Streatley and north Oxfordshire, are definitely of prehistoric origin. Even where earthworks pre-date the Anglo-Saxon period, it is not unlikely that a number of them were re-used for defensive purposes during the period; such has been postulated for the 'Devil's Ditch' earthwork across the Portway in Hampshire. The hillfort ditch at Aylesbury was recut, either for defence or for the minster precinct.

Viking incursions were clearly reported as having a devastating effect in the documentary sources, but they are less visible archaeologically. The decline of formerly thriving settlements is the most obvious evidence for this in the Solent Thames region, especially Hamwic. Coins also show the economic impact of the early Viking raids, especially in Hampshire. The northern part of the region was the most closely involved in the military struggle against the Vikings; the Vikings are recorded as having fortified an encampment at Reading in 871, while fortified burhs at Wallingford, Oxfordshire and Sashes Island, Berkshire/Buckinghamshire and Oxford are evidence of the West Saxon response to the Viking threat. In the north of the region burhs are believed to have been located at Buckingham and Newport Pagnell. The coastal part of the region also bore the brunt of Viking attacks, and Portchester, Winchester and 'Hamton' are all included in the list of burhs requiring defence and maintenance. Recently excavated evidence of timber buildings and an enclosure underlying the Norman stronghold of Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight have been posited as a further 'burh' (Young 2000).

Viking presence is also indicated by a number of excavated finds. The man found buried outside Reading in 1831 with a horse and Scandinavian style sword has been identified as perhaps a Viking leader, and an argument has been made for identifying the Viking metalwork found by the river at St Clements in Oxford as probable further Viking burials.

Legacy

The physical remains of the period are unimpressive in this region, on the whole. The true legacy of the Anglo-Saxon period lies in its impact on settlement, landscape and landscape organisation and administration. Large administrative units were formed in this period and survived until at least the county boundary changes of 1974, including the county of Berkshire. It was in this period, too, that the majority of the settlements and parishes which survive today emerged and were named.

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