

Chapter 11: Discussion and conclusions

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THE ANGLO-SAXON SETTLEMENT EVIDENCE

The sunken featured buildings

The settlement evidence consisted of two sunken featured buildings, SFB 4 and SFB 38, which predated the cemetery. SFB 4 lacks any evidence for superstructure and it is possible that it was not a building. However, a number of sunken featured buildings (SFBs) apparently without postholes were identified at West Stow (eg SFBs 7, 13, 14, 25, 29, 30 & 67 — West 1985, Figs 44, 65, 68, 102, 113, 114 and 220). Given the incomplete excavation of SFB 4 the exact form of the structure cannot be ascertained.

SFB 38, by contrast, did produce evidence for a superstructure, but the plan as recovered has certain anomalies (Fig. 88). One posthole (58) was located at the SE end on the longitudinal axis, but no corresponding posthole was located at the NW end. However a centrally-placed posthole (59) was found on the longitudinal axis. The existence of a central post in SFBs can be paralleled at Mucking (eg GH 204 — Hamerow 1993, Fig. 71). Two other postholes (82 & 83) were defined on the edge of the cut at the W and E sides respectively. There are no external postholes which could be associated with the structure. If the plan of SFB 38 as recovered was to conform to plans known from other sites, then it would be necessary to assume that other postholes existed originally.

The excavated evidence suggests that at least two of the postholes (58 and 59) as well as the pit or hearth (80) were already filled in when the SFB was filled, because the fills of these features were distinct from and sealed by the main SFB fill. This suggests that any standing structure had been removed, or demolished, before the SFB pit was filled in.

It is not appropriate given the very limited evidence to consider the likely function of the SFBs here, though some points are worth stressing. At West Heslerton, where over 50 of the structures were examined, the excavator found no evidence to indicate that they provided housing of any sort, but rather that they functioned as storage sheds associated with craft and industrial processes and food preparation. This assertion has been based as much on the existence of associated features (eg metal-working furnaces and a malt kiln) as on the waste material contained within the structures, since the latter do not necessarily have any bearing on their original function but rather may relate to an abandonment phase (Powlesland 1990, 37).

The finds from the Didcot SFBs include animal bone: cattle and sheep or goat bones were present within both structures, together with pig in SFB 4 and horse in SFB 38. All of these domesticates are well represented at other Anglo-Saxon settlements including Mucking (Hamerow 1993, 76–77) and West Stow (West 1985, 86).

The dating of the Didcot sunken featured buildings is based entirely on the evidence of the pottery recovered from their fills. Most of the pottery came from the probable sunken featured building 4. It has been argued by Booth (this volume) that the absence of sand-tempered wares argues against a very early, ie 5th-century, date. Recent analysis at Mucking has indicated the increased use of grass-tempered wares in the late 6th and the 7th centuries (Hamerow 1993, 31, Figs 14–17). However, Booth suggests that the small assemblage from Didcot is likely to be earlier rather than later (this volume). If we accept the 6th-century date for the settlement activity then we ought perhaps to envisage a phase of abandonment prior to the commencement of burial activity *c* AD 650.

THE CEMETERY

Limits of the cemetery

The small size of the cemetery and the lack of any well defined boundaries prevents the detailed discussion of the cemetery plan (Fig. 89). The archaeological investigation was limited to the area of the proposed development and it seems unlikely that the full extent of the cemetery was exposed. A considerable percentage of the excavated area was heavily disturbed and stained. Many of the burials excavated were in extremely poor condition, often with the skeletons merely lying on the gravel surface and without a discernible grave cut. Grave 17 in particular had suffered considerable damage and the skeleton had been redeposited and was only semi-articulated.

Age, sex and cemetery population

The cemetery population as excavated comprised 17 individuals. There were 13 adults and four subadults (Table 40). There were no multiple burials and no charnel was recovered. On the basis of the osteological evidence it was possible to assign sex to seven adults; there were three males and four females. Six adults could not be sexed. Three individuals have been identified only tentatively as either male (skeleton 3) or female (skeletons 4 & 11). Associated objects offer only a limited indication of

Table 43 Grave characteristics:

Grave no.	Orientation	Body position	Diagnostic grave goods	Suggested date
1	SSW-NNE	propped up originally, this seems to have been followed by collapse		
2	WSW-ENE	supine	gaming pieces, padlock	7th
3	W-E?	legs only, extended		
4	S-N	on right side		
5	NE-SW	on left side		
6	W-E	on left side		
7	NNE-SSW	on left side	silver pendant, beads	7th
8	NW-SE	supine		
9	NNW-SSE	supine		
10	S-N?	?		
11	S-N	supine		
12	NW-SE?	?	beads, bead on ring, work box	7th
13	ESE-WNW	supine		
14	SW-NE	supine		
15	SW-NE	supine		
16	NW-SE	?	pin suite	7th
17	?	?		

the likely sex of indeterminate adults. The unsexed adult in grave 16 was furnished with a very slender pin suite of a type which may have fastened some form of lightweight head-dress, for example a veil (Ross forthcoming), and was therefore perhaps a female. Only five of the adults could be aged with any precision: two were ageing (graves 2 and 4), one was probably in his 30s (grave 5) and one in his 40s (grave 1). The individuals in grave 15 and grave 8 at 17-25 years were both in the teenage/young adult phase. The individual in grave 10 could not be closely aged but is classified as a young adult. The accuracy of the sex and age estimates has been directly affected by the poor level of preservation of the assemblage.

In keeping with current practice no attempt was made to sex the skeletons of the four subadults. One probable infant (skeleton 12) was aged approximately 3-5 years; this estimate is at best tentative. Grave 12 was the richest in the cemetery, and the burial was associated with rings, beads, shears, a work-box and a probable chatelaine; the associated objects suggest that the child was female. Skeleton 6 was aged 6-8 years and skeleton 9 was 9-11 years. Both are classified as subadults. The individual in grave 7 was aged 14.5-15.5 years and wore a necklace of glass beads, pierced Roman coins and a silver pendant; the grave goods suggest that this subadult was possibly female.

There were no newborn infants within the group buried at Didcot. An under-representation of

infants is not unusual, for example at Dover (Evison 1987, 146) there was only one child under five years, while at Berinsfield there were 13 under fives but no newborn infants. It is generally assumed that infant mortality would have been high and that therefore a different method of disposal must have been used. It is also assumed that being particularly fragile, infant bones do not survive well.

In terms of the population using the cemetery, the sample size is so small that any calculations would be severely compromised by a number of unknown variables (Stirland 1989, 52). Firstly, the archaeological evidence for the temporal and spatial extent of the cemetery is imprecise. Secondly, it is not clear that every category of individual within the population, especially the infant component, was buried within the cemetery. Finally, we are unable to estimate age with any degree of precision. This makes it very difficult to determine the potential size of the group at any one time.

Body position (Table 43)

The position of four individuals is unknown (10, 12, 16 and 17) and a further grave (3) contained only the extended legs of an adult. The original position of the individual in grave 1 was unclear. When found the skeleton was apparently supine, but the compressed appearance of the skeleton is difficult to explain unless the body was originally sitting up.

There was some staining to the left of the body which might represent traces of a coffin. Of the remainder of the burials, seven were supine (2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 15), three (5, 6 and 7) were laid on their left side and one (4) on its right side.

Supine burial has long been recognised as the most common in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, for example Lechlade (Boyle *et al.* forthcoming), Berinsfield (this volume), Norton (Sherlock and Welch 1992), Appledown (Down and Welch 1990), Alton (Evison 1988), Buckland, Dover (Evison 1987), Portway (Cook and Dacre 1986) and Sewerby (Hirst 1985). At Didcot where burial was supine, legs were extended and sometimes crossed at the ankles. The positions of the arms and hands showed a little more variation: extended with hands by the sides, slightly flexed with hands on the pelvis, semi-flexed with hands on the waist or fully flexed with hands crossed on the chest. In only one example does hand position clearly relate to the presence of objects within the grave. The young adult male in grave 8 appeared to be holding the now perished wooden shaft of his spear and the left hand was therefore bent at the elbow with the hand resting on the chest while the right arm lay extended by the side.

The head of skeleton 8 was propped forward onto the chest and facing the feet. This grave would otherwise have been too small to allow supine burial. In the same way grave 7 seemed too small for the body. The excavators at Appledown (Down and Welch 1990, 19) argued that the crouched position may result from a grave being dug too small for the body, which had to be flexed to fit. The position of the skeleton in grave 7 certainly supports this assertion. Hirst (1985, 36) has additionally suggested that a crouched position may be indicative of hasty or careless burial, since smaller graves are less effort to dig.

As stated above the individual in grave 1, may have been propped up in the grave, whether this was against an object of perishable material or against the side of the coffin, it is not possible to determine. However, the decay of either coffin or perishable support would account for the final position of the body. This was suggested for graves 12 and 38 at Portway, Andover (Cook and Dacre 1986, 56), while at Berinsfield four individuals (4, 35, 128 and 149) were recorded as having their heads propped up against the grave side while another (152) rested on a stone (Boyle and Dodd, this volume).

Correlations between burial position and wealth, reflected by grave goods have been suggested elsewhere. It has been proposed that a burial position which displayed the grave goods to best advantage might have been deliberately selected (Evison 1987, 133; Hirst 1985, 37-8). Grave 12 is the wealthiest burial at Didcot; unfortunately the skeleton was poorly preserved and the body position uncertain. The four unaccompanied burials from Didcot are equally uninformative: one (15) was supine; another (6) on its left side; and two

(10 and 17) could not be determined. Therefore at Didcot any correlation between body position and number, or types, of objects cannot be sustained, and may not be significant given the likely date range of the burials (see Chronology and the 'Final Phase' below).

Grave dimensions

It was possible to obtain measurements of grave length and width for 11 graves and the depth for nine. Grave length ranged between 1.05 and 2.6 m with an average of 1.65 m. Six of the graves (1, 2, 4, 8, 11 and 14) were above the average and unsurprisingly contained adults. Of the five graves which were below average length (3, 6, 7, 9 and 12), four contained the burials of subadults, as one might anticipate.

Grave width ranged between 0.50 and 1.4 m with an average width of 0.79 m. Seven graves had above average width (1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12 and 14) and four were below (6, 7, 8 and 9). Surviving grave depth ranged from 0.18 to 0.57 m with an average of 0.32 m. Four of the nine graves had above-average depths (1, 2, 9 and 12). It is noteworthy that two of these (9 and 12) were the graves of children and furthermore grave 12 contained the richest burial in the cemetery.

There do not appear to be any patterns which relate to age, sex or status, although it is noteworthy that the largest grave in the cemetery (1) is the only one which had possible evidence for both a grave marker and a coffin (see below). It is possible that apparently empty space may have been used for grave goods of perishable material, such as wood or cloth (cf. Berinsfield graves 35 and 91).

Grave structures

A small number of possible grave structures were identified. A shallow ovoid feature (5) cut the top of the grave fill of burial 1. The fill of the feature was a mid brown very sandy clay loam with flecks of charcoal and a few sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery. It may have been a post-hole holding a possible grave marker (Hogarth 1973, Type IIa). This is the largest grave excavated in the cemetery and the fact that some staining around the body was recorded, possibly indicates the presence of a coffin. A posthole for a grave marker was located at the head end of grave 152 at Berinsfield while at Appledown the marker posts at the head ends of graves 19 and 22 appear to have been inserted during backfilling (Down and Welch 1990, 15).

There is some suggestion that the semi-circular gully 68 which lay to the SW of SFB 38 could originally have been a complete circular gully surrounding a central burial. If this was the case, the remaining portion of the gully and the central area may have been destroyed by modern activity, especially a large rubbish pit. Parallels for this type of burial feature are known from a number of sites

including Lechlade, Butler's Field (Boyle *et al.* forthcoming), Appledown (Down and Welch 1990, Fig. 2.13), Spong Hill (Hills *et al.* 1984) and Morning Thorpe (Green, Rogerson and White 1987, Fig. 5). In addition, modern disturbance and staining may have obscured the existence of other external grave structures and markers.

Finally, it has been noted elsewhere (Cook and Dacre 1985, 53; Evison 1987, 161; Down and Welch 1990, 14–15; Boyle and Dodd this volume) that graves may have been marked by mounds of earth, thereby allowing for the display of a level of status which was otherwise unmarked.

Orientation

Note: the position of the head is always given first

Quite a wide range of preferences is represented among the 16 burials for which orientation could be determined (Table 41). There were three S-N (4, 10, 11), three NW-SE (8, 12, 16), two W-E (3, 6), two SW-NE (14 and 15), one SSW-NNE (1), one WSW-ENE (2), one NE-SW (5), one NNE-SSW (7), one NNW-SSE (9) and one ESE-WNW (13). Although there appears to be little pattern to the orientation of the excavated graves, there is in fact a pronounced bias. The majority of the graves (12 out of 16) are aligned with their head end to the W of a NNW-SSE axis. Only three graves have their heads to the E of this line, and one grave is aligned NNW-SSE. Geake refers to a preference for a W-E orientation among 7th-century burials (Geake 1990, 85) and this is confirmed at Didcot. Unsurprisingly, given the 7th-century date of the cemetery, there is no relationship between orientation of the graves and the Roman ditches, as has been found at other earlier Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, like Berinsfield (this volume) and Lechlade (Boyle *et al.* forthcoming). The ditches had silted up by the 6th century before being cut by SFBs 4 and 38.

Chronology (Table 44)

None of the graves were intercutting so it was therefore impossible to establish relative dates on the basis of stratigraphic relationships. The chronology of the burials is therefore derived largely from the dating of associated diagnostic objects. Thirteen individuals were buried with grave goods and these artefacts are discussed in detail elsewhere (Chapter 9).

The diagnostic finds associated with the burials all point to a 7th-century date for the cemetery (Chapter 9 and Table 41). Only the Roman coins (7 and 12) and pottery sherds (7, 12 and 14) have no particular chronological significance; they are a common feature of Anglo-Saxon graves from the 5th through to the 7th century. A single fragment of Roman pottery was located in grave 12 in the region

of the upper torso. It is likely to have been deliberately placed. The remaining sherds derive from the grave fills and bearing in mind the known Roman activity on the site, are almost certain to be redeposited.

Six individuals were buried with knives which have been tentatively classified as Böhner A, which although predominantly of 5th- and 6th-century date, are known in some early 7th-century contexts. The Böhner C knife (grave 1) has a predominantly 7th–8th-century distribution. Burials with knives and other simple objects are common in the 7th century, for instance at sites like Standlake, graves 1 and 4 (Dickinson 1974, 243 and 247).

The dating of silver wire knot rings, one of which was found in grave 12, has been recently re-assessed in the context of the cemetery at King Harry Lane (Ager 1989, 219) and the 7th-century date re-affirmed.

Other finds including small iron buckles with plain oval loops and rectangular plates, such as the one associated with the young adult male in grave 8, are typical of the 7th century (Ager 1989, 221). Biconical and barrel-shaped beads although common in 7th-century contexts are also well evidenced in the 6th century so should not necessarily be seen as diagnostically 7th-century. Work-boxes such as that in grave 12 are well dated to the 7th century and more specifically to the period from AD 650 onwards (Chapter 9).

All of the burials appear to date entirely to the 7th century and possibly more specifically, the period AD 650–700.

Christianity and the 'Final Phase'

The 'Final Phase' furnished burial is generally regarded as typical of a 7th- and early 8th-century type and is characterised by the fact that although most burials have some grave goods, they are fewer and often of a different type compared to the 5th- and 6th-century cemeteries. Brooches and long bead strings were replaced by short necklaces of small monochrome beads, pendants in gold and silver, bronze and silver wire knot rings, chatelaines and work-boxes while the 'typical' male burial of the period was accompanied by small buckles and the occasional shoe-tag (Matthews 1962; Hyslop 1963; Meaney and Hawkes 1970; Ager 1989; Boddington 1990; Geake 1992) or no grave goods.

Further categories of burial are identified by Geake (1992, 86), and among these is the unfurnished burial. These are characterised by supine extended inhumations and are usually on a roughly west-east alignment. In so far as these unfurnished burials can be dated, it is pertinent that they are known from at least the mid-7th century, while furnished burial continues into the early eighth century (Evison 1987; Speake 1989). Therefore: 'The use of grave goods is ... not likely to be a simple matter of chronologically evolving preferences.' (Geake 1992, 86).

Table 44 Distribution of grave goods

GRAVE NO.	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12	G13	G14	G15	G16	G17
OBJECT TYPE																	
knife	x	x		x	x		x	x			x		x	x			
spearhead								x									
buckle								x				x					
gaming piece		x															
finger ring				x													
silver 'locket'							x										
chatelaine											x						
silver ring											x	x				x	
pin												x					
toilet set																x	
work-box													x				
shears													x				
spindle whorl		x															
copper-alloy coin							x										
silver coin							x										
monochrome glass bead							x						x				
polychrome glass bead											x		x				
wooden? bead																	
bone bead																	
misc. iron	x	x			x				x								x
misc. copper-alloy		x		x													
misc. silver							x										
nail														x			
flint flake			x	x													
textile																	x

In the 1920s and 1930s when T C Lethbridge investigated 7th-century cemeteries, he initially interpreted the graves as being those of the poor (Lethbridge 1931, 1936). Subsequently he interpreted them as the graves of early Christians, due to the decline in 'conspicuous display' or the practice of burial with grave goods, and this view has been maintained by other writers (Evison 1956; Hyslop 1963, 193). The opposing hypothesis was developed by Leeds who refuted the view that 'When Christianity was adopted in any given district the pagan burial-places fell into disuse, and the practice of depositing personal possessions, whether arms, jewellery or other equipment with the deceased quickly came to an end' (1936, 96). He saw burials with a reduced quantity of grave goods not as a separate Christian group but rather as the last manifestation of a pagan way of life (Geake 1992, 84) and actually coined the term 'Final Phase' (Leeds 1936, 96-114). Recent work which has focused on burial practice in the period AD 600-800 (Geake 1992) has acknowledged that the relationship between earlier and later practices is likely to be complex. Geake (1992, 89) highlights the general lack of specific documentary evidence to suggest that the mode or location of the burial of converts in the 7th and 8th centuries was closely regulated (James 1988, 139; Morris 1983, 49-50).

The evidence from Didcot does not provide any evidence that burials without grave goods formed a distinctive group within the cemetery, as they occur throughout the cemetery with no obvious clustering.

Status and social organisation

Because of the small size of the burial group at Didcot no attempt has been made to apply any of the accepted methods of wealth assessment such as counting the number of object 'types' in each grave (cf. Arnold 1980, 108; Hirst 1985, 97-104; Welch 1990, 80). Recent research has inclined towards emphasising the *variety* of factors which may reflect social organisation and status particularly age- and gender-related ones (Clark forthcoming). Perhaps most convincingly it has been suggested that the number and quality of grave goods may relate to the status of individuals within family groups rather than different families as a whole (Down and Welch 1990, 190). However, this view makes the interpretation of rich subadult burials rather problematic. In this respect the work of Crawford (1990, 87, 247, 265) is illuminating. She argues that children in Anglo-Saxon society achieved adult status between the ages of 10 and 12 years. The most richly furnished graves at Didcot are those of two subadults, graves 12 and 7. This is paralleled at Marina Drive where a number of well-furnished children's burials with necklace sets were found (Matthews 1962).

In general terms it appears that during the 7th century the larger cemeteries that were common in

the 6th century fell out of use and were replaced by a greater number of small dispersed cemeteries in which possibly extended family groups were buried. The cemetery at Didcot may represent the burial ground of a single household, although this hypothesis must remain tentative given our incomplete knowledge of the full extent and context of the cemetery.

Cemetery plan and organisation

What survives of the cemetery reveals little in the way of cemetery organisation and it is unlikely that we have the whole picture. Certainly the cemetery must have been organised in some sense as there are no intercutting graves and at least one possible grave marker was identified. Otherwise the group is too small and dispersed to talk of clustering on any basis.

THE SITE IN ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT

There is no existing evidence which suggests that the two SFBs are part of a larger complex, while the full extent of the cemetery is unknown. However the area occupied by the Power Station which covers the area to the N, S and E of the site is unlikely to be susceptible to aerial photography. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the land immediately to the W of the excavated area has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and consequently has not been cultivated, and is therefore not susceptible to aerial photography. The plan of the excavated area (Fig. 89) strongly suggests that both the cemetery and the settlement continue westwards below the SSSI, and this needs to be considered in any discussion of the role of the site.

The site lies 4 km S of the confluence of the Ock, the Thames and the Thames in an area which has produced a concentration of evidence for both burial and settlement for the early Anglo-Saxon period. This evidence dates from the very earliest period of settlement as evidenced by the famous weapon burials from Dyke Hills, Dorchester (Kirk and Leeds 1954) and a number of burials from the Abingdon I cemetery (Leeds and Harden 1936), through to the 7th century and later. The 5th and 6th centuries are discussed in more detail elsewhere (Dodd this volume) and are only mentioned in passing here.

The evidence for 5th-century activity in the region consists principally of burial evidence, while by the 6th century there is more abundant evidence of numerous small concentrations of settlement activity (Fig. 84) as evidenced by the excavations at Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1923, 1927, 1947) and the cropmark complexes at Milton, Drayton and Long Wittenham (Benson and Miles 1973, Maps 33-35). Recent excavation by the OAU has uncovered further traces of the village at Sutton Courtenay

(Barclay forthcoming). Sixth-century burial activity is evidenced by the cemeteries of Milton I, Long Wittenham I and Appleford. The recovery of the 6th-century *Perlrandbecker* and a number of burials from within the Power Station along with the settlement evidence from the present site are indicative of 6th-century activity in the immediate vicinity of the site. It is likely that the *Perlrandbecker* would originally have accompanied burials.

By the 7th century burial activity in the area had shifted slightly and changed as evidenced by the appearance of the smaller cemeteries Milton II and Long Wittenham II. The burials at Long Wittenham II were excavated by J Y Akerman in 1862 following the discovery of a single burial which was found approximately one quarter of a mile from the 6th-century cemetery, Long Wittenham I. The precise location is therefore unclear although it is known to be on the E side of Moor Ditch. Approximately ten graves were excavated and associated grave goods included monochrome biconical beads, linked pins, silver wire knot rings (grave 6) and knives (graves 8 and 9) (Dickinson 1976, 176). The cemetery at Milton II is known from finds made during the 19th century, again by J Y Akerman. Although a number of the burials were unaccompanied the cemetery is perhaps best known for the pair of gold and garnet composite brooches which were recovered (Avent 1975, Pl. 73-74) (Dickinson 1976, 182-184).

Dorchester-on-Thames is located only c 8 km to the ENE. Bede referred to Dorchester in an entry for the year AD 635, which describes the baptism of Cynegils, king of the West Saxons, by the missionary priest Birinus, and the establishment of his episcopal see in the town (HE II, 7). Yorke has argued that the choice of Dorchester reflects the importance of the area in the emerging kingdom of the Gewissae, and that it may well represent their original heartland (1989, 94). Indeed, Dorchester may have been the original royal centre of the kingdom of the West Saxons. In the event, the see at Dorchester was short-lived and it was transferred to Winchester c 660 (Yorke 1989, 94) probably in the face of increasing Mercian aggression. It is therefore

highly likely that the area in question which was a core area of the West Saxon kingdom in the late 5th and the 6th century had by the latter part of the 7th century become peripheral, existing as it did on the fringes of the expanding kingdom of Mercia.

Unfortunately the surviving archaeological evidence for early Anglo-Saxon activity at Dorchester is problematical, and this has led some writers to suggest alternative candidates for the early royal centre; for example Hawkes (1986, 88) has considered the previously mentioned cropmark complexes at Long Wittenham and Drayton, both of which are located within a 5 km radius of the Didcot cemetery. At Drayton an L-shaped alignment of rectangular structures has been identified, the largest of which is a great hall measuring 25 x 8 m in size (Hawkes 1986, 89; Benson and Miles 1974, 65-6, Map 35). The Long Wittenham complex appears to consist of SFBs around an L-shaped arrangement of at least three hall houses. Since neither site has been excavated these hypotheses must remain tentative.

Both the settlement and cemetery at Didcot should be seen within the context of a constantly changing landscape dominated by dispersed hamlets with limited evidence for urban or village nuclei. In this framework it is appropriate to echo the arguments of Boddington, who recently criticised the view that there was an extensive replacement of pagan cemeteries by Christian burial grounds in the 7th century, and suggests that the whole process of cemetery shift should be seen as part of a constant process of addition and abandonment as the Anglo-Saxon landscape evolved in response to numerous social, economic and religious factors (Boddington 1990, 196).

This model of constant change undertaken by a dynamic culture as opposed to one of static exploitation of the landscape interrupted by rapid shifts, concords with the surviving material culture of the region which can be traced from the 5th century through to the 7th century, and appears to represent a large and culturally unified area extending throughout the Upper Thames valley (Dickinson 1976).