Chapter 13

The Early Medieval Period: Resource Assessment

by Anne Dodd

with contributions by Sally Crawford and Michael Allen and incorporating the county assessments by Steve Clark (Berkshire), Michael Farley (Buckinghamshire), David Hinton (Hampshire) and Ruth Waller (Isle of Wight)

Introduction

A preliminary draft of this chapter was prepared by Sally Crawford, and was expanded and updated by the present author. The Introduction, and the sections on Inheritance and Social Organisation, are largely by Sally Crawford, the remainder largely by the present author, drawing on and incorporating material from the county assessments available online (referenced here as Clark 2007; Farley 2008; Hinton 2007; Waller 2006). Only selected references are given here; full references for works cited by the county contributors can be found in their bibliographies online. We are very grateful to John Blair, Derek Keene, Stephanie Ratkai and Michael Shapland for providing information about currently unpublished sites and research, and for allowing us to refer to this in advance of their own publications. Responsibility for any errors or omissions lies with the present author.

Nature of the evidence

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 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 seismic shifts in culture, religion, economy and, to an arguable extent, population, took place, and it is in this period that many of the administrative structures were created that underpinned later medieval society, and indeed persist to the present day. 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 (SFBs), structures that do not survive well in the archaeological record, and successful Anglo-Saxon urban settlements lie beneath modern towns, where they are only rarely accessible and much has been destroyed by later development. This is a difficult period to detect and find in fieldwork and evaluation exercises (Hey and Lacey 2001).

Early Anglo-Saxon furnished cemeteries, with their wealth of material culture, offer the most 'visible' aspect of early medieval archaeology. 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 Solent-Thames area were excavated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with inevitable loss of archaeological information. Nonetheless, the material evidence indicates that this region is particularly interesting, as 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 relationship with any putative Anglo-Saxon territorial boundaries. 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
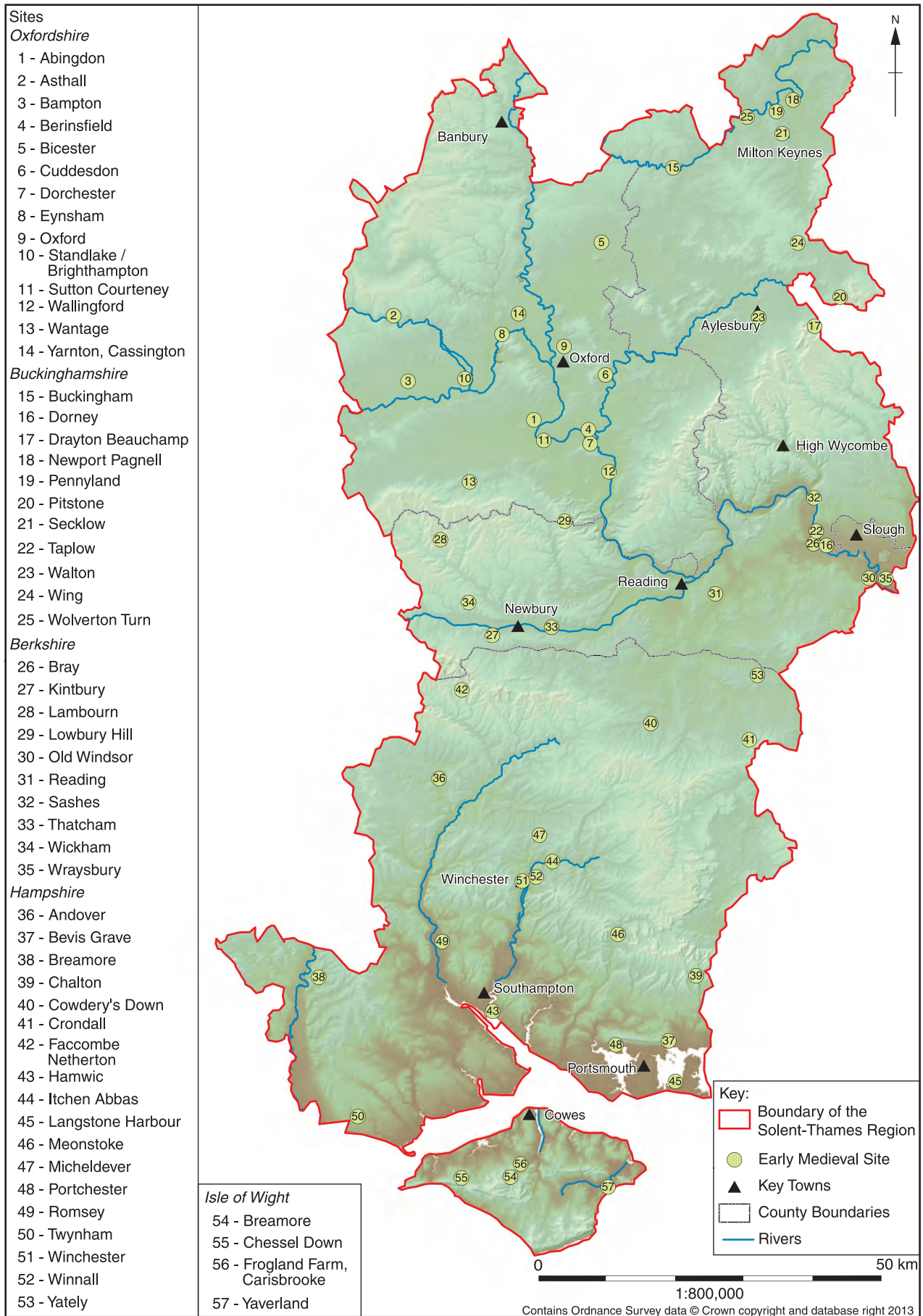
Sites

Oxfordshire

1 - Abingdon
2 - Asthall
3 - Bampton
4 - Berinsfield
5 - Bicester
6 - Cuddesdon
7 - Dorchester
8 - Eynsham
9 - Oxford
10 - Standlake / Brighthampton
11 - Sutton Courteney
12 - Wallingford
13 - Wantage
14 - Yarnton, Cassington

Buckinghamshire

15 - Buckingham
16 - Dorney
17 - Drayton Beauchamp
18 - Newport Pagnell
19 - Pennyland
20 - Pitstone
21 - Secklow
22 - Taplow
23 - Walton
24 - Wing
25 - Wolverton Turn

Berkshire

26 - Bray
27 - Kintbury
28 - Lambourn
29 - Lowbury Hill
30 - Old Windsor
31 - Reading
32 - Sashes
33 - Thatcham
34 - Wickham
35 - Wraysbury

Hampshire

36 - Andover
37 - Bevis Grave
38 - Breamore
39 - Chalton
40 - Cowdery's Down
41 - Crondall
42 - Faccombe Netherton
43 - Hamwic
44 - Itchen Abbas
45 - Langstone Harbour
46 - Meonstoke
47 - Micheldever
48 - Portchester
49 - Romsey
50 - Twynham
51 - Winchester
52 - Winnall
53 - Yately

Isle of Wight

54 - Breamore
55 - Chessel Down
56 - Frogland Farm, Carisbrooke
57 - Yaverland

Key:
— Boundary of the Solent-Thames Region
● Early Medieval Site
▲ Key Towns
☐ County Boundaries
— Rivers

0   50 km

1:800,000

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Figure 13.1 Early Medieval sites mentioned in the text

which still provide the framework for modern county boundaries were established (at least until the boundary revisions of the historic counties from 1974), 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 9th century (Clark 2007: Gelling 1976, 844), and the shire itself was first referred to in AD 860.

History of research

The Solent-Thames resource assessment brings together four counties that are not usually considered as a group, and there are therefore no earlier overviews taking in the specific region under discussion. The history of research into this period has been reviewed for each county by the county contributors. This informa-tion is summarised below and can be found in more detail in the individual county assessments. In addition, the current Thames through Time project provides a detailed review of the evidence for our period from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Thames Valley (Booth *et al.* 2007).

All counties in this region have provided important sites for interpreting the Anglo-Saxon past (Figure 13.1), and all still have the potential to address the significant questions of the period through their surviving early medieval archaeology. Previous excavation and research has been of variable quality and intensity. Here, as elsewhere, 19th- and 20th-century development led to many (often spectacular) discoveries, but also to the irrecoverable destruction of archaeological evidence. One of the key points to emerge from the present resource assessment, however, is the extent to which our knowledge of the early medieval resource is skewed; by the impact of modern development that focuses research in limited areas; by the presence of 'honeypot' sites that dominate the archaeological story of our region; and by the effect of modern administrative boundary changes that have removed significant areas of the region's archaeology from their historic context. The early medieval archaeology of Berkshire has perhaps suffered most, since the intensively researched Upper Thames Valley sites of North Berkshire lay within the area transferred to Oxfordshire in 1974, creating a completely artificial imbalance of resources between the two. A similar dislocation has resulted from the transfer of Thames-side parishes between Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and a series of new unitary authorities.

In Buckinghamshire there was little systematic research into the early medieval archaeology of the county before the 1970s. Since then, however, there has been an explosion of information, largely as a result of increasing development pressures, although much of this has been focused on the areas around the county's historic towns and villages. The work of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit, between 1971 and 1994, has provided a particularly important resource. The rural archaeology of the county has benefited from the recent Whittlewood Project, led by the University of Leicester, which studied village development in the north-west of the county.

The presence of the university at Oxford meant that the surrounding area saw an unusually high level of early investigations, and the archaeology of the early medieval period has benefited from the work of researchers such as Stephen Stone at Standlake in the 19th century, and E T Leeds at Sutton Courtenay, Abingdon and elsewhere in the early 20th century. The threat to the archaeology of the Thames gravel terraces from intensive quarrying was identified in Don Benson and David Miles's influential study of the cropmarks of the Upper Thames Valley (1974). During the later 20th century, pressure for development and ongoing quarrying of the gravel terraces of the Upper Thames has underpinned continuing excavation and research in parts of the county, although areas further away from Oxford and the Thames have been less explored.

In Berkshire, as elsewhere, the pattern of archaeolog-ical activity in the 19th and early 20th centuries was largely influenced by antiquarian interest in visible monuments such as barrows, and chance discoveries arising from quarrying and railway development. In the post-war period the pressure for housing and gravel extraction continued to drive patterns of archaeological work, and major town centre redevelopments took place from the 1970s on. At that time a series of large-scale surveys across much of the county revealed a dearth of Anglo-Saxon material in the interior of East Berkshire, to the south of Reading, and in the Kennet Valley. More recently, the Lambourn Valley has begun to produce significant evidence for early-mid Anglo-Saxon activity, and finds from recent excavations at Lambourn, Kintbury and Thatcham are beginning to confirm long-held suspicions about the antiquity of these settlements.

The onset of sustained archaeological research into Anglo-Saxon Hampshire is largely datable to the period from the 1960s on, with a number of important early to mid Saxon cemetery excavations, systematic investiga-tions at *Hamwic*, the campaigns of the Winchester Research Unit led by Martin Biddle, and the investigation of rural settlement at sites such as Chalton, Cowdery's Down and Faccombe Netherton. By contrast, 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 investi-gate Anglo-Saxon sites and for a re-assessment of the island's metal-detected evidence.

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 (in itself notoriously difficult to pinpoint in the archaeological record) and the beginnings of very visible Anglo-Saxon culture use. It is suspected 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, becoming '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. Whether Romano-British people who adopted Anglo-Saxon culture, if indeed any did, regarded themselves as Anglo-Saxons will however 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.

The Roman small town of Dorchester-on-Thames and its surrounding region have produced some of the most important archaeological evidence for this process of transition. Burials from the town were interpreted many years ago 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 (Hawkes and Dunning 1961). Recent work has added to the evidence for a high-status late Roman presence in the town (Plate 13.1), and has demonstrated that at least one burial in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery nearby at Wally Corner, Berinsfield is of the early to mid 5th-century, and therefore earlier than published (Booth *et al.* 2012, 22-23; Hills and O'Connell 2009). This has led to renewed interest in the possibility that the earliest Anglo-Saxons in the region were involved with the protection of Dorchester, located on the eastern boundary of the late Roman province of *Britannia Prima*.

Evidence for the 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, Abingdon, 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 6th century (Miles 1986). 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

Plate 13.1 Late Roman belt-buckle, Dyke Hills, Dorchester-on-Thames, *copyright Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford*

of the land. At Bierton, north-east of Aylesbury, Farley draws attention to substantial quantities of early to mid Saxon pottery near to a Roman villa that succeeded a high-status late Iron Age settlement, and to the evidence from Walton by Aylesbury, where both late Roman and early Saxon occupation is present.

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 5th century. The *civitas* capitals, Winchester and Silchester, show no signs of continued urbanisation into the 5th century, and the evidence for continuity at Portchester is ambiguous. Hinton suggests that only the Otterbourne hoards hint at continuing Romano-British authority and contact with Gaul, but there is scant evidence in Hampshire for continuity of estates, forts or urban centres, or for the presence of any *laeti, foederati* or mercenary soldiers. As elsewhere, however, there are a number of cases where early Saxon settlement is found on or near to the sites of Roman villas, as in the Meonstoke area, for example, and at Northbrook, Micheldever north of Winchester. In both cases sunken featured buildings, and Anglo-Saxon finds including 5th-century brooch types, are reported from nearby.

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).

A very few cemeteries provide tantalising glimpses of evidence for continuity or at least cross-cultural links. The lack of continuity may be in itself an interesting indicator of contemporary attitudes. Burials continued at the Roman cemetery at Frilford (Oxfordshire) into the early 5th century and early Saxon burials were found adjacent and superimposed on different alignments (see Fig. 11.1 for location). The cemetery at Itchen Abbas (Hampshire) is reported to include a male burial with

hob-nailed footwear amongst several hundred graves, including cremations, and objects datable to the mid to late 5th century. Another candidate, although poorly understood, is the Roman mixed-rite cemetery at Hoveringham Gravel Pit near Bray, Berkshire, where there was evidence for early 5th-century metalworking and an 'early Saxon floor surface' cut by later burials.

Also ripe for review is the extent to which Romano-British estate boundaries continued in use into the Anglo-Saxon period. 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, perhaps to legitimise Anglo-Saxon rule, or to appropriate cultural markers, is indicated by the re-use of the Roman temple site at Lowbury Hill (Fig. 11.1), the Iron Age hillfort at Taplow, and prehistoric earthworks at Oliver's Battery, Winchester, for princely burials in the 7th century. The re-use of Bronze Age barrows for Anglo-Saxon graves in communal cemeteries is a widespread feature in the region, and is particularly marked in the 7th century. Examples include cemeteries at Stanton Harcourt (Fig. 7.1) and Standlake (Oxfordshire), Field Farm, Burghfield (Berkshire) (Fig. 9.1), and Bargates, Christchurch and Portway East (Hampshire). 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.

Plate 13.2 Photograph of mass Viking burial in the henge ditch at Oxford, *copyright TVAS*

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) and prehistoric earthworks (Ave's Dyke, 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. Radiocarbon dating of the skeletons has established a 9th- to 11th-century date, confirming the likelihood that this is the site of execution burials (data from Winchester City Council Museums Service). The silted-up ditch of a henge at Oxford was chosen for the burial of a group of men now interpreted as a probable Viking raiding party executed in the late 10th century (Pollard *et al*. 2012; Plate 13.2). Other burials at re-used monuments may not necessarily be deviant. Annia Cherryson's radiocarbon dating programme has also revealed a rare example of 9th- to 10th-century burials in a barrow at Bevis's Grave, Portsdown, 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 (ibid.; now see also Semple 2013).

Some evidence exists for the use of earlier monuments as sites for churches. The important minster church at Bampton (Oxfordshire) appears to have been located on the site of Bronze Age barrows (*South Midlands Archaeology* 28, 47–9), while recent investigative work at Abingdon in Oxfordshire and Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire has demonstrated that the Anglo-Saxon settlements, both of which are characterised by early religious foundations, were situated within an Iron Age defensive structure (Allen 2011; Farley 2012). The association between hillforts and churches in Buckinghamshire has been reviewed by Kidd (2004). The re-use of old Roman towns for the establishment of bishops' seats is evidenced in the region at Winchester and Dorchester, and it seems likely that Romsey Abbey was built on the site of a former Roman villa.

Chronology

Anglo-Saxon sites in the region have traditionally relied heavily on artefact dating, and for many years this provided answers that were adequate for the broad characterisation of the region's archaeology as 'early', 'middle' or 'late' Anglo-Saxon. More accurate chronologies are now however needed to make progress with key questions such as change in settlement and burial organisation in the region over time, and this will require better dating of key artefact types.

Here, as elsewhere, pottery has always been widely used to date sites (see also Material Culture, below). The early Anglo-Saxon pottery is not however particularly helpful for dating, and the most consistent chronological marker is the disappearance of decoration, generally dated to the 7th century. The persistence of the common organic-tempered tradition throughout the mid Saxon period, with no obvious change in form, style or technique, makes the recognition of the transition from early to mid Saxon exceptionally difficult. At *Hamwic*, Jane Timby has identified a broad evolution of fabric types through the mid Saxon period (Andrews 1997), but it is unclear how far this can be applied outside the local context. Elsewhere there is no distinctive local mid Saxon pottery tradition, and ceramic dating often relies on the presence of occasional sherds of imported wares. Maxey-type ware is found in northern Buckinghamshire, but not elsewhere in the region. Ipswich ware occurs sporadically and in small quantities across the region and can be a valuable chronological indicator. Continental imported pottery occurs at *Hamwic*, and occasionally elsewhere in very small quantities. Late Saxon pottery is more readily datable and identifiable, with a number of distinctive local traditions, and significant levels of identifiable regional imports such as St Neot's type ware. Type series have been developed for major urban centres including Oxford, Winchester and Southampton, although there remain considerable uncertainties about the dates at which different industries originate, first arrive in the region, and go into decline.

Late Roman coins and pottery have been used to date the final phase of occupation at a number of Romano-British sites, although it is acknowledged that sites could have continued in use after Roman coinage ceased to be imported and late Roman pottery ceased to be produced. Although the use of coins was revived amongst the Anglo-Saxons from the mid 7th century onwards, and silver *sceattas* were apparently minted in very large numbers, coins are never as abundant as in the Roman period, and remain relatively rare finds on most sites in the region.

Dating based on other artefact types has been particularly valuable in the dating of cemeteries of the 5th to 7th centuries, with detailed study of the evolution of decorative styles on brooches by Tania Dickinson, John Hines and others. Other researchers have enhanced our understanding of the dating of beads and pendants, buckles, pins, spears and shield bosses, although these are rarely datable to within less than half a century. It is likely that this will be significantly enhanced by the results of a major new study of the chronology of Anglo-Saxon graves and grave goods of this period, and the implications of this for understanding the chronology of early Anglo-Saxon burial in the region will need careful consideration (see now Bayliss *et al*. 2013). Artefact dating has its own problems, however, and even when artefacts are part of a mortuary assemblage, the question of their age when buried is still an issue.

The dating of burials from the evidence of grave goods has also, inevitably, led to an almost exclusive focus on the study of accompanied burials from cemetery sites in the region.;the dating of unaccompanied burials is usually only inferred from indicators such as alignment, orienta-

tion and rare direct stratigraphic relationships between graves. This is perhaps a particularly serious shortcoming in terms of our understanding of the later phases of cemetery use, when unaccompanied burials may have been more numerous. Artefacts are not generally very informative for the dating of rural settlement sites in the region, which are much poorer in surviving material culture than contemporary sites in eastern England, particularly during the mid Saxon period. Many sites have been dated on little more evidence than an absence of decorated early Saxon pottery, and the presence of organic-tempered wares. Pottery is the most common chronological indicator for urban sites although other datable artefact types such as strap ends, hooked tags, pins and brooches occur occasionally.

Until the last ten years or so, scientific dating methods were not often used for sites of this period in the region, typically being confined to excavations with a major component of environmental and geoarchaeological research, or to isolated human burials. An early exception was Cowdery's Down, where radiocarbon dates were obtained for the settlement in the absence of datable artefacts. A series of radiocarbon dates was also obtained for the unusual mid Saxon trading or meeting site at Dorney. Elsewhere, the use of scientific dating was sporadic, and there was a widespread belief that the nature of the radiocarbon calibration curve meant that radiocarbon was unlikely to add much to what was known from pottery and other artefacts. As dating techniques have improved, however, scientific dating methods have been much more systematically employed, and have been very influential in promoting reconsideration of conventional models. A major radiocarbon dating programme at Yarnton, for example, revealed that what was thought to be a conventional early Saxon settlement of SFBs and post-built halls was in fact largely datable to the 8th and 9th centuries (Hey 2004), and radiocarbon dating has been important in identifying mid Saxon re-use of the hillforts at Aylesbury and Taplow.

Wherever possible, radiocarbon dating should be based on sequences of samples from well-stratified deposits, to support the use of Bayesian modelling; this allows estimates to be calculated for events that are not directly dated, and may be of great value in re-assessing conventional chronological models in the future. Some re-visiting of archival material from earlier sites may also be of value, together with recalibration of old dates that are often quoted in publications in ways that are difficult to use today. The use of other scientific techniques such as dendrochronology and archaeomagnetic dating is less widespread, although useful results have been obtained where suitable samples were available; for example, dendrochronology was used to date 10th-century waterfront revetment timbers at St Aldate's in Oxford.

Landscape and land use

The region has a wide range of landscape types, which makes a simple summary of landscape and land use in the area difficult. Historic Landscape Characterisation studies have been completed for Buckinghamshire, West Berkshire and Hampshire, but our period lies largely beyond their chronological reach. For the end of our period, Domesday Book can provide a general overview of the resources of the region, but such generalisations inevitably simplify almost immeasurable diversity at a local level. The *Domesday Geography of South-East England* (Darby and Campbell 1962) reviews the evidence for each county, followed by a general summary for the region. The mapping of ploughteams suggests a much heavier emphasis on arable farming in Buckinghamshire north of the Chilterns, Oxfordshire and North Berkshire than in north-east and Chiltern Buckinghamshire, east Berkshire, and much of Hamp - shire (ibid., fig. 170). Conversely, high woodland values are recorded across the Chilterns and east Berkshire, into north-east Hampshire, and along the Avon valley at the western edge of the New Forest (ibid., fig. 174). The greatest values of meadowland, unsurprisingly, are concentrated in the river valleys, principally along the Thames and its tributaries, notably the Ock and the Kennet, but also along the Rivers Avon, Test and Itchen in Hampshire, and substantial quantities of meadowland are also recorded from the claylands of north Buckinghamshire (ibid. fig. 176). In an age when we assume most people were largely self-sufficient in basic agricultural produce, however, it is clear that they needed access to a range of resources, and the record of estate holdings and settlement centres does not necessarily provide an accurate guide to the location of these within the landscape.

One notable characteristic of the region is the existence of long, thin 'strip' estates on the slopes of the Chilterns and Berkshire Downs, which provided their occupants with access to a full range of resources. In her study of a group of parishes in the Vale of the White Horse, on the downs in North Berkshire (and now largely transferred to Oxfordshire), Della Hooke shows from the evidence of charters how long, thin 10th-century estates had access to meadow, watermeadow, pasture and marsh in the Vale, with arable (and the settlement nuclei) in a wide band around the springs and streams of the scarp foot at the 100m contour, and open downland pasture on the higher ground to the south (1987). A similar group of parishes can be found between Taplow and Eton on the north bank of the Thames in south Buckinghamshire (Plate 13.3). These estates extend from meadow and fisheries on the Thames floodplain up to woods and commons on the infertile gravels of the Burnham plateau to the north, with the villages located roughly halfway between on the 45m contour (Julian Munby in Foreman *et al.* 2002). In other cases, estates would have rights in resources at some distance from the main settlement; the woodland rights of Oxfordshire medieval manors in Wychwood, for example, were studied by Beryl Schumer (1984).

Charters and place names can be a rich source of information about landscape and land use in our period. In the present study region both have perhaps tended to
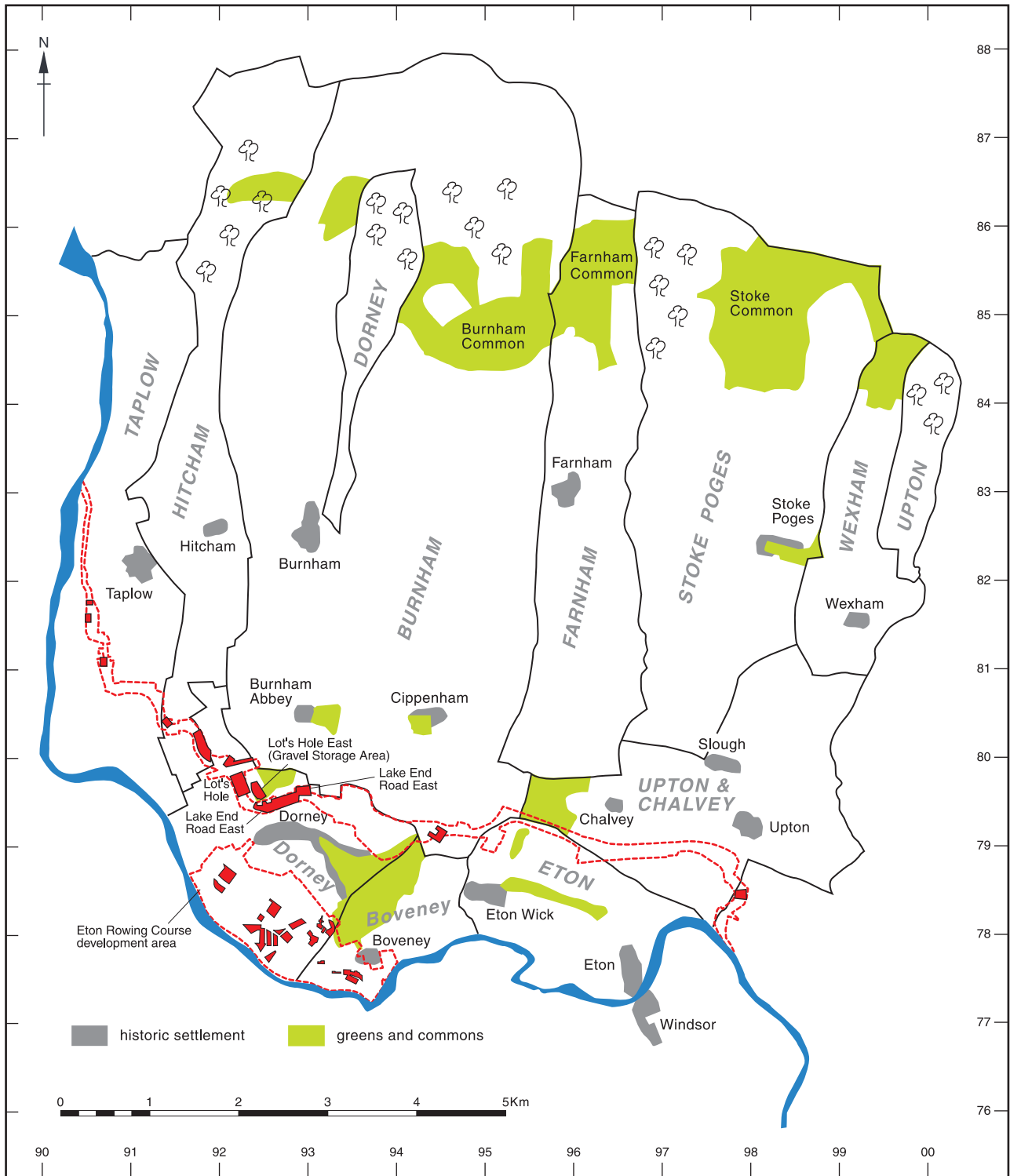
Plate 13.3 Chiltern-edge parishes in the Middle Thames, *copyright OA*

be under-exploited, although an important study of contrasting Berkshire landscapes by Della Hooke illustrates how informative these sources can be (1987; 1988). In recent years increasing interest in landscape archaeology and landscape studies is encouraging researchers to look anew at the potential of place names (see, for example Clark 2007; Cole 2010). Here we can see how names reflect places chosen for settlement, the *denu* and *comb* names of Chiltern valley settlements, *mere* settlements which drew water from ponds, *welle* names

recording the springs of the scarp-foot springlines, *dun* names for sites on well-drained whaleback-shaped hills, eg settlements on dry ground within marsh, *broc* settlements with muddy streams, and moors and marshes preserved in *mor*, *fenn* and *mersc* (Cole 2010, 22). The abundant placenames in *leah* and *feld* across the region record woodland pasture and clearings, and some places record farm crops and livestock: Wheatley, Rycote, Pishill, Swinbrook, Shiplake and Shipton, Oxford, Horspath and, perhaps surprisingly, watercress at Cassington (ibid., 24).

The recovery of plant remains and animal bone in excavations provides the main resource for understanding agricultural practice during the Anglo-Saxon period. Much of this remains very site-specific, but for a recent regional review see Mark Robinson's discussion of the evidence from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley (Booth *et al.* 2007). Some of the key published assemblages are also noted below. At the start of our period, 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. In the Thames Valley, Robinson suggests there was a decline in the intensity of agricultural exploitation, but that the lack of evidence for substantial regeneration of scrub and woodland means that cultivation and grazing were continuing, albeit at a reduced level (ibid., 29-30). The early Saxon period also sees a significant change in cereal production, with the widespread adoption in the Upper Thames Valley of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) in place of the spelt (*T. spelta*) generally cultivated in the region during the Roman period (ibid., 317-20). It is less clear how quickly this change took place in the Middle Thames Valley. Barley was also a major crop at early Saxon sites in the region; the evidence for cultivation of oats is ambiguous, but oats were probably deliberately grown, along with beans, peas and flax. There is little evidence for the cultivation of rye in the Thames Valley.

An extensive campaign of environmental research during the Yarnton excavations has provided very important evidence for intensification of agriculture from the 8th century onwards (ibid., 331-4; Hey 2004). Changes in the weed assemblages at this time provide evidence for more intensive ploughing and the spread of cultivation onto heavier clay soils; over the same period, former grass pasture was converted to hay meadow, and a wider variety of plants were being grown. Rye and lentils appear, albeit in small quantities, alongside wheat, barley, oats, flax, beans and peas, with grape and plum pointing to a resumption of horticulture. The quantities of charred cereals found begin to increase again, after a marked decline in the post-Roman period. Evidence for horticulture also comes from late Saxon deposits in a channel of the Thames at Oxford, where seeds of celery, plum, apple and summer savory were found.

The region has not yet produced much evidence for the origins of open field farming, although occasional references in charters may hint at this. The limited evidence is discussed by the county contributors. For Buckinghamshire, Michael Farley notes that although the county north of the Chilterns is a land of ridge and furrow there is as yet no good evidence from the county for the date at which this originated. In her study of the late Saxon estates of the Vale of the White Horse, Della Hooke identifies a number of features such as headlands, furrows and acres mentioned in charter bounds that imply some form of open field agriculture (1987, 138-9). Steve Clark also notes a charter reference to open field features on the boundary between Chievely and Winterbourne (2007). For Hampshire, David Hinton notes occasional references to 'acres' in 10th- and 11th-century charters, but comments that the soils of Hampshire did not lend themselves to the creation of ridged strips with deep furrows. Although an extension of cereal cultivation in Hampshire over the Saxon period is likely, it is difficult to prove.

Animal bone evidence from sites in the region is not easy to interpret, as assemblages are affected by factors of preservation and disposal practices. However, pigs and sheep/goats appear to have been more important in the agricultural economy of the Thames Valley than during the late Roman period, and poultry were distinctly more common; at Barton Court Farm, the evidence suggested a meat diet dominated by beef in the Roman period, giving way to one with a greater emphasis on mutton, pork, poultry and fish in the early Saxon period (Booth *et al.* 2007, 320-21). By the mid Saxon period, if not before, there is some evidence for specialisation. An increasing emphasis on the keeping of sheep for wool is suggested from Eynsham (Jacqui Mulville, in Hardy *et al.* 2003); similar evidence is reported from nearby New Wintles Farm and Shakenoak (Blair 1994, 20, 22; Hawkes 1986). At mid Saxon

Plate 13.4 Pigs in woodland, Winchester calendar, *copyright The British Library Board, 002482 Cotton Tiberius B.V. Part 1, f.7*

Wolverton Turn, Milton Keynes, horse bone reached an unusual 11% of the main domestic NISP at the site, with both young and old animals present, and Naomi Sykes has suggested this could be compatible with an emphasis on horse breeding (The animal bone, in Preston 2007). Polecat and wild boar were also identified from this site. At Wraysbury, a high ratio of pigs, the presence of young animals, and the Domesday evidence for abundant woodland resources suggested that the rearing of pigs may have played a major part in the economy of late Saxon estates here and nearby (Clark 2007; Booth *et al.* 2007, 320-21; Plate 13.4).

Very large assemblages of animal bone from *Hamwic* have been studied over a number of years, but few have been published in full. An overview was recently published by Sheila Hamilton-Dyer in the context of the analysis of a further 9000 bones from the St Mary's Stadium site (Birbeck 2005, 140-54). The animal economy of the town was overwhelmingly based on the three main domesticates, cattle, sheep and pig, and largely drawn from older cattle and sheep that had already been used for other purposes. Some pigs and poultry may have been raised in the town, and some fish and shellfish was eaten, although fish does not appear to have formed a major component of the diet. The biometrical data that have now been collected on a very large scale for *Hamwic* animals show that the town's meat resources were drawn from a single group of closely related animals, probably from the immediate hinterland, and this has been interpreted as a sign of the central organisation of provisioning and communal use of rubbish pits for domestic and industrial waste (ibid., 153-4).

The St Mary's Stadium project was also the opportunity for the first major programme of environmental sampling and analysis to be undertaken for *Hamwic*, and provided important results. A study of mineralised plant remains by Wendy Carruthers (ibid., 157-63) suggested that cereals formed the major part of the diet, with peas and beans also being consumed on a regular basis; the range of other foods consumed was fairly limited, including native hedgerow fruits, apples and pear or quince, plums, a few grapes, and plants used for flavourings, including mustard and the non-native species fennel, coriander and dill. Charred plant remains were studied by Kath Hunter (ibid., 163-73). Interestingly, wheat was very under-represented in the assemblage, which may reflect the supply of ready-milled flour or even ready-baked loaves to *Hamwic* from elsewhere. More barley chaff was present, and it was notable that barley and oats often occurred together; it is suggested this mixed crop or drage was supplied to the settlement for animal fodder.

The waterlogged plant remains were studied by Alan Clapham (ibid., 173-81). In addition to the species identified amongst the mineralised remains, this analysis also identified lentils, a possible gooseberry seed, sloe, dog rose and opium poppy. It is suggested that hazelnuts and wild strawberries could have been grown in gardens or orchards in the settlement and catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) could have been a medicinal herbal tea. Hemp and flax were probably grown for their fibres, used in the manufacture of ropes and cloth; however, the seeds of both species can be used to make oils. An interesting group of seeds were from taxa of coastal or marine habitats, including sea-beet, samphire and carrot, which may have been used as vegetables; a single parsnip seed, if of the cultivated type, could also have been grown in a local garden. The remains of at least five or six honey bees were also identified, and suggest that bees were kept nearby (Mark Robinson in ibid., 181-3).

For the late Saxon period, good assemblages of animal, fish and plant remains have been published from Eynsham Abbey (Hardy *et al.* 2003), Oxford (Dodd 2003) and Southampton French Quarter (Brown and Hardy 2011). An important reference for the region is now provided by the recently published studies from Winchester, both from the intramural Northgate House/Discovery Centre site and from the suburbs (Ford and Teague 2011; Serjeantson and Rees (eds) 2009). At Northgate House/Discovery Centre, sheep were the predominant species represented, which contrasts with the evidence from both *Hamwic* and the Winchester suburbs, and may indicate some socio-economic difference in diet. Sheep become more numerous in the suburban assemblages, at the expense of cattle, during the Saxo-Norman period, though as this

Plate 13.5 Hunting, Winchester calendar, *copyright The British Library Board, 068370 Cotton Tiberius B.V. Part 1, f.7*

encompasses the late 10th to 12th centuries, and therefore overlaps with the Northgate House/Discovery Centre late Saxon phase, this difference may be more apparent than real. The slaughter pattern suggested a mixed sheep economy, with some younger animals killed early for meat, while others were kept longer for their secondary products and breeding. The same pattern was observed with cattle bone, with both young animals and older breeding cows and draught oxen present. Some neonatal pig bone would be consistent with the rearing of pigs in urban backyards.

Unusual remains included a badger humerus with cut marks consistent with dismemberment of a carcass for meat or fat, and a mustelid metatarsal, possibly from a pine marten skinned for its fur. Domestic fowl were kept for both meat and eggs. Charred wheat, barley, oats and a little rye were present, and the low incidence of chaff indicates that grain, at least for human consumption, was supplied to the town ready processed as flour. Pulses such as peas and beans also continued to form a significant part of the diet, and the same range of fruits was identified as at *Hamwic*, although some of the more unusual herbs such as coriander, caraway, lovage and dill were absent. Interestingly, wild turnip (cf. *Brassica rapa*) seeds were common and could have been from plants used as a root or leaf vegetable.

The Anglo-Saxon elite were keen hunters, though game never represents more than a small proportion at any site (Plate 13.5). David Hinton notes a higher proportion of venison at Faccombe Netherton and Portchester than at other sites, and Portchester also produced evidence for the hunting of wild birds, including falconry (Hinton 2007). The evidence for hunting in the Thames Valley was reviewed by Booth *et al.* (2007, 340). In her study of different landscape types in Berkshire, Della Hooke concluded that east Berkshire, much of which was later taken into Windsor Forest, was sparsely populated and heavily wooded. She notes possible charter evidence for *haga* features, substantial fences or enclosures already demarcating woodland set aside for hunting in the late Saxon period. Three parks are also mentioned: *bogeles pearroc* in Winkfield parish, and *godan pearroc* and *hwitan pearroc* in Waltham St Lawrence, which may already have denoted private hunting grounds (1988, 148, fig. 6.10).

Palaeo-environmental data also have great potential significance as indicators of change in climate, hydrology, ecology and farming practices over time, and over a wider area than single sites. Mike Allen notes good examples of stratified sequences that relate to the wider landscape such as 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 at sites such as Chalton, Hampshire (Bell 1983) and Duxmore, Newbarn Combe and Redcliffe, Isle of Wight (Allen 1992). Local proxy palaeo-environmental data have been obtained as short pollen sequences from Cowdery's Down, Hampshire (Waton 1983a), 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 in palaeo-environmental, geoarchaeological and archaeological studies, with rare exceptions (Bowden *et al.* 1993). This clearly needs to be rectified, especially as there are limited documentary sources to aid this work.

Rivers, intertidal and coastal

The palaeohydrology of the River Thames and the changing environment of its floodplain have been studied in detail by Mark Robinson; at Oxford, the evolution of a series of channels of the Thames and the islands between that supported the river crossing has been the subject of a long-running programme of research (Booth *et al.* 2007; Dodd 2003).

It is clear, not least from the evidence of Domesday Book, that fisheries were widespread on the rivers of the region, particularly on the Thames, and eels were probably the main catch. Fish traps and eel baskets have been recorded on the Kennet at Anslows Cottages south of Reading and at Wickhams Field, and potentially exist in the Ouse, Buckinghamshire (Butterworth and Lobb 1992; Crockett 1996; Plate 13.6). The evidence for river fishing along the Thames Valley was reviewed by Booth
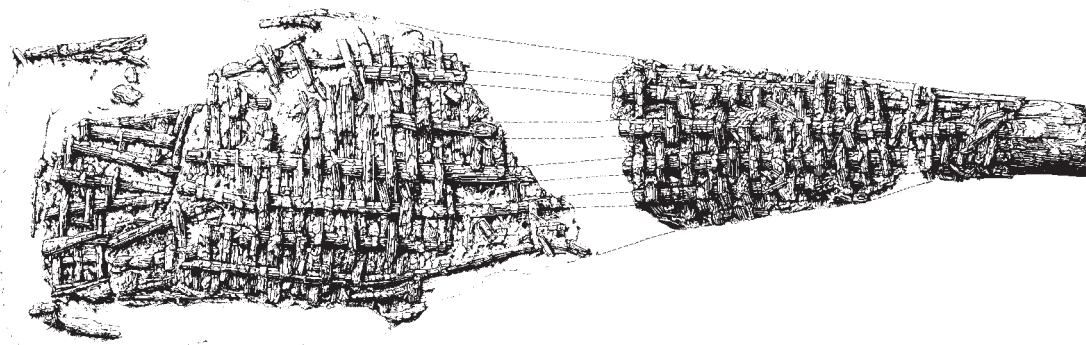

Plate 13.6 Eel-trap at Burghfield, Berkshire, *copyright Wessex Archaeology*

et al (2007, 340-41), and a particularly large and diverse assemblage of fish was found at Wraysbury (Coy, in Astill and Lobb 1989, 111-24). The region's rivers and watery habitats clearly also provided an important resource for the trapping and hunting of wading and water birds, and geese were kept on the floodplains (Booth *et al.* 2007, 340). Timbers found at Anslow's Cottages may be related to the management of water meadows (Butterworth and Lobb 1992, 176). Mike Allen comments that 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 and Gardiner 2000), and Wootton-Quarr, Isle of Wight (Tomalin *et al.* 2012; see Fig. 7.1 for location). Other such locations also probably exist, especially on the Isle of Wight (for example Shalfleet, Yar and Newtown).

The remains of marine fish and shellfish are found in increasing numbers as excavators routinely sieve samples for the recovery of small bones. At the Northgate House/Discovery Centre site, Winchester, some 4800 identifiable bones were analysed from late Saxon deposits, with herring representing some 60% and eel some 30% of the groups (Nicholson, Fish Remains, in Ford and Teague 2011). The remainder comprised flatfish, particularly plaice, small cod, whiting and hake, and a mixture of sea fish such as bass, sea bream, conger eel and grey mullet and river fish such as trout, pike, dace, gudgeon and stickleback. Shellfish were also consumed, including oysters and carpet shells, and some cockles and mussels. The evidence for traded marine fish and shellfish far inland in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley is reviewed by Booth *et al.* (2007, 340-41).

By the time of Domesday Book, mills were widespread across the region. The re-introduction of water-powered milling in the Anglo-Saxon period seems, on present evidence, to date from the mid Saxon period, but the only excavated site in the region, at Old Windsor, remains unpublished. Here, dendrochronological and radiocarbon evidence suggests the mill was in operation in the early 8th century (Keene, forthcoming). A small millstone, possibly imported from Germany, was found at the mid Saxon site at Dorney (Foreman *et al.* 2002, 37), and Della Hooke notes charter evidence that there was a mill on a mill stream at Woolstone by the 10th century, which suggests that mills were being established on the estates in the Vale of White Horse at least by this time (1987, 138).

Social organisation

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. Over much of the region, including the Thames Valley and probably northern Hampshire and western Buckinghamshire, the material culture of the 5th and 6th centuries is predom-inantly identified as Saxon, and identifiable with people Bede refers to as the Gewisse. There is also a marked element of Kentish influence in the material culture of this region, most notably in the grave goods at Taplow, and this may reflect the power of the kings of Kent in southern England in the late 6th and early 7th century. The extent of Anglian influence in eastern Buckinghamshire is unclear, while recent work by Nick Stoodley is providing archaeological support for Bede's assertion that the people of southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were Jutes.

By the middle of the 7th century, Mercian expansion into the Thames Valley was pushing the rulers of the Gewisse southwards into Hampshire, and their takeover of former Jutish territory may be reflected in the establishment of their bishopric at Winchester and the emporium of *Hamwic* on the south coast. The Thames Valley remained disputed territory for two hundred years, although for much of the time it was under the control of the Mercians. Grave goods of the 7th century no longer reflect such tribal identities, and the Mercians are not distinctive in the archaeological record, except perhaps for the high-status cremation at Asthall. Documentary sources show that the kings of Mercia had residences at Thame and Benson at the foot of the Chilterns, and they presumably controlled the whole of Buckinghamshire. Hampshire lay within the kingdom of Wessex. By the middle of the 9th century, the kingdom of Wessex had re-established control of the region south of the Thames, while Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire remained Mercian.

It is clear from historical sources that the people of Wessex and Mercia retained a strong sense of their distinctive identities throughout the late Saxon period, and old rivalries continued to resurface in dynastic disputes well into the 11th century. At the same time, however, the rulers of Wessex emerged from the Viking wars of the 9th century as the leading power in England, and were ultimately to extend their control over the whole country. Throughout the period of the Viking wars and the creation of the Danelaw in the north and east, the Solent-Thames region remained almost entirely within English-controlled territory, with the possibly temporary exception of a small portion of north-east Buckinghamshire.

Evidence for early power centres, perhaps as transfers of power from Roman authority to petty kings, is rare – there is nothing in the Roman centres of Portchester, Winchester or Silchester in Hampshire to suggest any such system. 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, while in Buckinghamshire the re-occupation of hill forts at Aylesbury and Taplow appears to date from the mid Saxon period. In Oxfordshire, however, the evidence of a high-status late Roman presence at Dorchester, together with very early Anglo-Saxon burials, has led to the suggestion that Germanic mercenaries may have been brought here to defend the late Roman town.
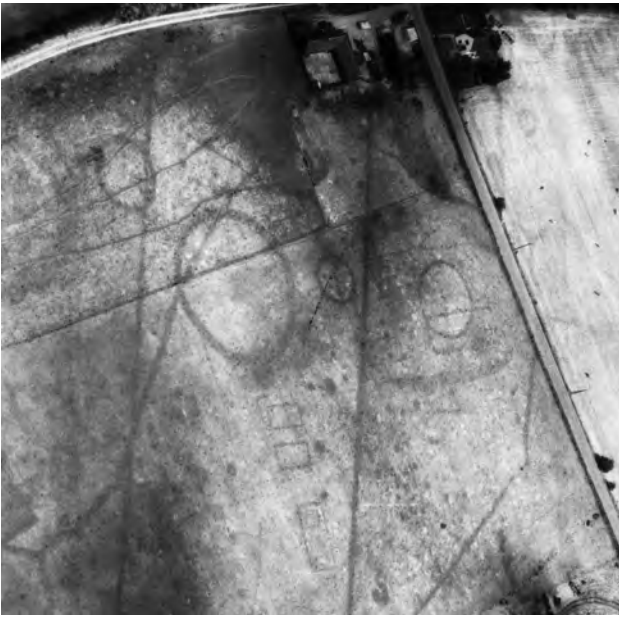
Much analysis has taken place on the significant

Plate 13.7 Cropmarks of Saxon halls at Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, *copyright Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography (AFT91, 25th June 1962)*

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. Not until the 7th century is there clearer evidence for the emergence of an elite, in the form of the rich barrow burials at Taplow, Buckinghamshire, and at Cuddesdon, Asthall and Lowbury Hill, Oxfordshire, of which Taplow is significantly the most complete, excavated and spectacular example (see Plate 13.8 below). It is also at this period that there is evidence for visibly 'higher status' buildings appearing, though excavated examples are scarce in this region. A complex of buildings comparable in scale to the excavated palace at Yeavering in Northumberland has been identified south of the Thames at Sutton Courtenay, and may have been a power base of the Gewisse (Plate 13.7). It is located not far from the Milton II cemetery where 7th-century Kentish gold and garnet composite brooches were discovered in the 19th century, and is close to Dorchester, where the first bishopric of the West Saxons was established around 635. The elaborate complex of buildings at Cowdery's Down in Hampshire is also interpreted as an elite residence, although there is little evidence to suggest who the owners were. The establishment of the 'wic' settlement at *Hamwic* shows strong central control, with evidence for regulated street patterns and centralised supply of food and possibly raw materials.

The development of large 'multiple estates' in the Anglo-Saxon period is attested in the documentary evidence but is 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). Minster churches are likely to have been established in

many places across the region during the late 7th and early 8th centuries, and the documentary evidence associated with some of them suggests that they were originally endowed with huge estates running to hundreds of hides. The later break-up of these large holdings into smaller estates is recorded in documentary sources throughout the region. It is possible that the three reorganisations of the settlement at Yarnton, Oxfordshire between the 8th and the 10th centuries may be reflecting changing patterns of land holding. The small estates of the late Saxon period were the precursors of the manors and parishes of the medieval period, and the archaeology of the present study region has some evidence for the development of estate centres, such as Faccombe Netherton.

Berkshire and Hampshire are both mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* by the late 9th century, but the definition of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire is thought to date from the early years of the 11th century. The development of later Anglo-Saxon systems of government and justice, including shire and hundred courts, is visible in the form of the shire towns themselves, and 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 burials increasingly being recognised prominently located in the landscape on boundaries, meeting places, routeways, old monuments and hilltops.

Although society remained overwhelmingly rurally based, the first towns in the region develop from the late 9th century onwards. Some towns in the region – Winchester prominent amongst them – were already important ecclesiastical and probably royal centres before the later Anglo-Saxon period. Winchester, Oxford and Wallingford were fortified as part of the network of defended *burhs* established in response to the Viking threat, and were to develop into important centres of administration as county towns. Alongside these, smaller towns appear to have been developing, though only identifiable as places with a market or traders mentioned in Domesday Book. John Blair has drawn attention to the number of places of this kind that had a minster site at their core, and the presence of a resident high-status ecclesiastical community may have provided a stimulus for craftworking and trade.

Settlement

Early Saxon 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 counties. Early Anglo-Saxon settlement generally conforms to the national pattern of small, non-hierarchical and unenclosed rural settlements consisting of a few timber halls and ancillary sunken-featured buildings.

Although early Saxon settlements nationally clearly varied considerably in size, it has been estimated that most might have been home to communities of perhaps 30-50 people (Hamerow 2012, 71).

The largest number of known early Saxon settlement sites in the Solent-Thames region are in the Oxfordshire Thames Valley; these were reviewed recently for the *Thames through Time* series, where a full summary can be found (Booth *et al.* 2007, 88-98). The most extensive early Saxon settlement excavation in the region took place here, at the contiguous sites of Barton Court Farm/Radley Barrow Hills near Abingdon (Miles 1986; Chambers and McAdam 2007). At Barton Court Farm, a group of seven SFBs and several post-built structures were found on the site of a modest late Roman villa. Pottery dating from perhaps as early as the mid 5th century was recovered from the main Roman ditches, suggesting little or no lapse between occupation periods. This may have been an outlying part of the larger settlement focus at Radley Barrow Hills, some 300 m to the north-east. Here, a total of 45 SFBs were found, but only 7 rectangular post-built structures could be identified, with varying degrees of confidence, among a mass of postholes. Some smaller post-built ancillary structures were suggested, and numerous fencelines. One of the most interesting aspects of the site was the clear presence of a central group of buildings apparently arranged around three sides of an open space. Both sites were dated to the 5th to 6th centuries.

The remains of other important settlement sites were the subject of earlier salvage recording at Sutton Courtenay and Cassington. During the 1920s and 1930s E T Leeds recorded the remains of the first Anglo-Saxon settlement to be recognised in this country, comprising an area of at least 33 SFBs near the village of Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1923; 1927b; 1947). However, much of the site was lost to gravel quarrying. At least three areas of settlement remains and two areas of burials accompanied by characteristic early Saxon grave goods were found within an area roughly 2km west and north of the village of Cassington during gravel quarrying in the 1930s and 1940s, and it is likely that an extensive area of early Saxon settlement of considerable interest has been largely lost here (summarised in Hardy *et al.* 2003, appendix 6). More recently, 10-12 SFBs were found at Oxford Science Park, Littlemore; evidence for other buildings at this site may have been destroyed by ploughing and the full extent of the settlement may not have been recovered within the excavated area (Moore 2001a).

More commonly within the Oxfordshire Thames Valley, SFBs are found singly or in small numbers in restricted investigation areas (Booth *et al.* 2007, 88-98). While the accumulation of this kind of evidence in places such as Eynsham and Abingdon is valuable, it does not provide the opportunity to study these buildings as part of their wider contemporary settlement landscape. Cropmark evidence suggests that these kinds of buildings could be widely spread, and the region has produced evidence for the noted Anglo-Saxon phenomenon of 'shifting settlement'. Away from the Thames gravels there is currently much less excavated evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlements in Oxfordshire, although occupation of this period is indicated by substantial numbers of burials and pottery scatters. Finds associated with early to mid Saxon settlement were excavated at the disused Roman villa at Shakenoak (see Fig. 11.1 for location), and elsewhere features of Anglo-Saxon type and date have been found at Wootton near Woodstock, Churchill near Chipping Norton, Kirtlington, Bicester, Wantage and possibly from Cogges near Witney (HER data; Harding and Andrews 2002; see also Dodd 2010).

Evidence for early Saxon settlement in Buckinghamshire has been accumulating quite rapidly since the 1970s. Until the incidental discovery of the settlement at Walton, Aylesbury, in 1973-4 (Farley 1976, and later Dalwood 1989) no early Saxon occupation site was known in the county (for this important multi-period site see also below). Shortly afterwards Hartigan's and Pennyland were discovered (Williams 1993), then a single SFB at Bancroft (Williams and Zeepvat 1994), all in the Milton Keynes area, followed by sites in Bierton at The Vicarage (Allen 1986) and Church Farm (SMR data). The site at Pitstone was first discovered by fieldwalking (Bull 1978) then by excavation (Phillips 2005). Others are known at Fenny Lock (Ford and Taylor 2001), Aston Clinton (SMR data) and at Taplow (Allen *et al.* 2009), and recent excavations at Brooklands, Milton Keynes, have located a small number of SFBs and pits (OA forthcoming). The most important early-middle Saxon site probably remains Pennyland in Milton Keynes (Williams 1993), which was not in the immediate vicinity of a village but approximately 1km distant from Great Linford. It was sited on and around the enclosures of a levelled Iron Age site. Pennyland produced 13 SFBs and 2 post-built halls. The earliest phase comprised a scatter of unenclosed SFBs, and may have extended beyond the area of excavation. The appearance of enclosures at the site in the 7th century is discussed further below. An unusual find here was of a wattle-revetted well/ waterhole with parts of a ladder; another ladder was found at Hartigans with a single SFB in the vicinity (Williams 1993).

The direct archaeological evidence for rural settlement in (new) Berkshire is sparse and somewhat fragmentary, usually consisting of SFBs and assemblages of pottery associated with ditches, pits or postholes. SFBs have been found at three rural sites and are thought to be representative of earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement. The SFB at Wellands Nursery, Wraysbury contained 171 sherds of 5th-century pottery, a hearth fragment, a spindlewhorl, animal bones and a quern fragment (Pine 2003a, 123). At Ufton Nervet near Newbury the SFB contained a whetstone, an iron ring and 280 sherds of pottery including 10 decorated sherds which placed the site in the 6th century (Manning 1974, 49-54). At Charnham Lane, Hungerford the truncated remains of an SFB contained early organic-tempered and sandy ware pottery, animal bones including a cow skull, and charcoal (Ford 2002, 27). The first two of these SFBs were found on the sites of Roman enclosures, but what

all three sites have in common is that they were found positioned within relatively large areas of excavation and yet lack other contemporary buildings.

In contrast, a recently excavated site at Wexham, Slough, has revealed two early Anglo-Saxon timber halls without any accompanying SFBs (Preston 2012; Plate 13.8), one of which may have been deliberately located within an Iron Age enclosure. The lack of co-occurrence of these two building types may perhaps be a local peculiarity, but post-built halls can be hard to detect during excavations, and may simply not have survived on other sites. Alternatively, the SFBs may be isolated buildings on the periphery of settlements, or evidence of highly dispersed settlement (Ford 2002, 81), as at Stanton Harcourt, Gravelly Guy, Oxfordshire (see Fig. 9.1 for location). The finds within the Berkshire SFBs do not offer much clue to their function, but it is generally thought that weaving or some other industrial use is likely.

A gazetteer of early Saxon sites in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight datable to the 5th to 7th centuries was completed around 1990 by Sonia Hawkes (Hawkes 2003, 201-207). More recent work, and new discoveries, were reviewed by Russel (2002) and by Hinton for this resource assessment (2007), and further reports have subsequently appeared in *Hampshire Studies*. Early sites have been identified in the valley of the River Anton at Andover, reviewed in the context of work at Goch Way, near Charlton (Wright 2004). Here, SFBs found at Goch Way and Old Down Farm are thought to form part of a wide area of dispersed settlement of the 5th to 7th centuries either side of the river, probably to be linked

with the contemporary cemetery at Portway, some 1.4km to the west. At Micheldever two SFBs were found at Northbrook, on the site of what was probably a modest Roman villa, and early Saxon finds from metal-detecting suggest there was a cemetery nearby (Johnson 1998). Five SFBs and 12 pits were found at Abbots Worthy, near Winchester, downhill of the nearby cemetery at Worthy Park (Fasham and Whinney 1991). A focus of activity at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke has been the subject of numerous investigations; here a combination of chance finds, metal-detecting, purposive excavation, field walking and geophysical survey has identified pits, SFBs and post-built structures along with more than 13 burials of 6th- and probable 7th-century date (Russel 2002; Entwistle *et al*. 2005). At Portchester, excavations within the Roman fort identified a phase of occupation datable to the 5th to 7th centuries. Within the excavated area were four SFBs, 2 irregular post-built structures and a well, along with evidence of ploughing; the excavator suggested this could have formed part of a sequence of shifting settlement and cultivation throughout this period (Cunliffe 1976, 121). Despite evidence for numerous cemeteries, neither Hawkes nor Waller (2006) was able to report any excavated settlement remains of this period on the Isle of Wight.

Mid Saxon settlement

The mid Saxon period saw important changes in the settlement pattern. The Solent-Thames region contains an impressive range of good examples of increasingly

Plate 13.8 Excavations of a 6th century hall-house, Wexham, Berkshire, *copyright TVAS*

specialised site types; of the expression of social status and ownership through the appropriation of significant sites and the construction of more elaborate buildings; and of the control of access to space, and closer control of livestock and crops, by the widespread creation of enclosures within settlement sites. Yet, as examples accumulate, the difficulties of interpreting mid Saxon sites are becoming more apparent. The overlapping archaeological signatures of high-status secular and minster sites, and the likelihood that such places saw mixed and changing use over time, can complicate issues of interpretation (see, for example, Thomas 2012, 52; Hamerow 2012, 98-101). Helena Hamerow asks why it is that the archaeological record of the mid and late Saxon periods seems to be so dominated by 'high-status' settlements (Hamerow 2012, 164). She suggests this is a problem that requires not just further research but 'a new conceptual approach' to understanding why we find the farms and dwellings of ordinary farmers (who must, after all, have made up the vast majority of the population) so difficult to identify.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that there may have been significant regional variations in the way in which rural settlements developed in the mid Saxon period (Thomas 2012, 46-7). This question has recently been addressed by John Blair, on the basis of data collected during an ongoing investigation of the results of development-led excavation for this period (Blair 2013). He suggests that there are genuine and very substantial disparities in the evidence for mid Saxon settlement (*c.* 650-850), with a concentration of abundant evidence in the East Midlands, Norfolk and the Wash catchment, and a marked scarcity of settlement evidence elsewhere. Over much of England the building and everyday material culture of this period may be 'below the horizon of archaeological visibility'. It is possible that this reflects a continuing, or renewed, influence from British culture across much of the country, which had less impact in those parts of eastern England where contact with north-west Europe and southern Scandinavia remained strongest (ibid.). The true range of mid Saxon settlements in the present region may therefore only become apparent through the systematic use of scientific dating techniques, and an over-reliance on artefact dating in the past may have prevented us from recognising mid Saxon elements on sites interpreted as entirely early Saxon.

The re-use of prehistoric hillforts as a focus for high-status activity in the mid Saxon period is gradually emerging from recent work in Buckinghamshire. Ayles - bury, first mentioned as a place in AD 571, probably contained a royal residence (place name 'Kingsbury') and certainly a minster. It lay within an Iron Age hillfort (Farley 1986) and excavation revealed that the Iron Age ditch had been re-cut in the mid Saxon period. It is clear that a large minster cemetery of mid to late Saxon date lies beneath the town centre (see below; Farley 2012). The exceptionally rich barrow burial overlooking the Thames at Taplow was located adjacent to another late prehistoric hillfort that was reoccupied during the early

to mid Saxon period. The evidence available from limited excavation for the re-use of the site suggests that this included both burial and domestic occupation; a high proportion of deer bone amongst the faunal remains and the presence of a sherd of imported east Mediterranean pottery would be consistent with high-status occupation, although very little structural evidence was recovered (Allen *et al*. 2009). There is now growing evidence for the re-use of fortifications of this kind by the kings of Mercia, and place-name evidence suggests that they may have formed part of a wider system of specialised satellite settlements in their vicinity (this is discussed, for example, in Blair 2013 and in Baker and Brookes 2013).

The evidence from Taplow can be associated with another unusual site found at Lake End Road West, Dorney, roughly 4km downriver on the Thames terraces. Here, finds from over 100 mid Saxon pits included one of the largest assemblages of imported finds and pottery yet known from outside the *wics* (Foreman *et al*. 2002). No evidence for contemporary buildings was found in the area, and it was suggested that this could have been the site of a market or fair, or even (given the absence of coins) of meetings or councils. The dating of the imported finds suggests that the site could have been in use in the period *c*. 740-80.

The site at Pennyland was reorganised in the 7th century into a more regular layout with a trackway and enclosures defining two house plots and paddocks. By the mid 8th century occupation seems to have shifted elsewhere, and the excavated site contained only four SFBs, a well and several probable granaries (Hamerow 2012, 80-81). At Aylesbury, numerous excavations over many years have gradually revealed a long sequence of occupation within the suburb of Walton (Ford and Howell 2004; see also Stone 2011 for the most recent work, with a summary of previous discoveries). 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. Some 10 SFBs are distributed across a distance of at least 400m (one of them burnt down; Farley 2008) and there is an early cemetery nearby. There are also now known to be at least 11 post and post-in-trench type structures, some certainly small 'halls'; finds include *sceattas* and Ipswich ware and there is a substantial boundary of 10th- to 11th-century date associated with a manorial site which was itself enclosed within a later earthwork. There is also evidence to suggest that Walton Street, which runs through the hamlet into Aylesbury was established by the 10th century.

Part of a mid Saxon settlement has also been excavated at Water Eaton, Bletchley; here, parts of two ditched enclosures and a trackway were identified, with a single SFB inside one of the enclosures (Hancock 2010). A sherd of Ipswich ware and 14 sherds of Maxey ware were also recovered. Michael Farley comments that the most coherent evidence for a site whose dominant occupation period was middle Saxon is that at Wolverton Turn within 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 cal AD 690–890 and the site produced both Ipswich and Maxey ware. It contained one identified rectangular post-built structure and an SFB lay nearby. Others have subsequently been found here (Thorne 2005).

Andrew Reynolds (2003) and Helena Hamerow (2012, 102-5) have drawn attention to the appearance of large buildings, enclosures and regular axial or 'courtyard' layouts as probable markers of high status settlements from the first half of the 7th century onwards. There is increasing evidence that a royal centre approaching the scale of the excavated palace at Yeavering (Northumberland) was located south of the Thames, between the villages of Drayton and Sutton Courtenay (Oxon). The site was first identified from cropmarks visible in aerial photographs (reproduced in Booth *et al.* 2007, fig 3.26; see Plate 13.7). Subsequent exploratory excavations have confirmed the presence of a complex of halls apparently arranged in an L-shaped group, the largest of which is now known to measure in excess of 30x10m (Hamerow *et al.* 2007; Wessex Archaeology Time Team 2010). A number of reported metal-detected finds include a fragment of a gold disc brooch, gold droplets and copper alloy horse harness mounts with Style II decoration; these support the view of a high status site here in the late 6th and early 7th century (Hamerow *et al.* 2007, 170-79, 185-6). Fourteen *sceattas* datable to the period 700-730 suggest the site retained a role as a recognised meeting place for trade into the 8th century (D M Metcalf in Hamerow *et al.* 2007, 180-83). A second group of halls has been identified on aerial photographs at Long Wittenham, some 6km to the east. The date of these is unknown, but the largest has been estimated as measuring some 21x10m, which suggests the possibility of another significant complex here.

The late Saxon monarchs held many estates within (modern) Oxfordshire, including Faringdon, Wantage, Bampton, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Wootton, Kirtlington, Headington, Benson and Cholsey; other royal residences known from documentary evidence include Woodstock and Islip, and possibly Hook Norton (see Blair 1994, 109 and fig. 62). However, only a couple of places can be identified as mid Saxon royal vills; a significant proportion of late Saxon royal estate centres and residences lay in or near country which offered good hunting, and seem likely to have been quite late and associated with the increasing development of royal hunting grounds in the region. Wulfhere of Mercia ratified a charter for the minster at Chertsey in 672-4 'in the residence which is called Thame' (ibid., 49). The outlines of two large oval enclosures are preserved in the street plan of the town, one of them containing the parish church, and these may be the sites of early ecclesiastical and secular centres; this has so far not been confirmed by excavation. The location of the royal residence at Wantage where King Alfred was reputedly

born in 849 is also unknown. The first reliable reference to the royal vill at Benson occurs in the witness list to a purported grant to the minster at Abingdon by Aethelbald of Mercia in the period 727-36. It must subsequently have been taken by the West Saxons, as Offa is recorded as recapturing it from Cynewulf of Wessex in 779. Recent excavations uncovered some early Saxon remains, but nothing of the mid Saxon royal residence has yet been identified (Kelly 2000, 22-7 no. 5; Blair 1994, 55; Pine and Ford 2003).

Excavations in Banbury in 1997-9 investigated the north-east corner of a previously unsuspected ditched enclosure of mid Saxon date on the site of the later castle of the bishops of Lincoln. The ditch may have been waterfilled, and a single small building was present within the excavated area. A sherd of Ipswich ware occured with other mid Saxon pottery, and three coins were found fused together, two of them coins of Burgred of Mercia datable to the period 871-4 (the middle one being unidentifiable). The only other coin is one of Cnut. Other Anglo-Saxon finds included horse furniture, a copper alloy toilet implement, a bun-shaped loomweight, lava quern fragments, a purple phyllite whetstone and a gaming piece made from a horse tooth. The site continued in use after the mid Saxon period, but the remains were ephemeral and not closely datable; possible evidence for stone structures was noted but the exact nature of occupation is uncertain. The site was subsequently developed as a palace of Alexander, bishop of Lincoln in the early 12th century. At the time of writing, a report on the excavations is in preparation (Hewitson *et al.* forthcoming), and we are grateful to Stephanie Rátkai for the opportunity to include this information in advance of publication.

At Yarnton (Hey 2004), a wide-ranging investigation showed a decisive change in the form of rural settlement during the 8th century, which then persisted into the 9th. During the 8th century what seems previously to have been an area of dispersed and shifting settlement was reorganised into an ordered settlement, with paddocks, a droveway, and buildings set out within enclosures. Amongst these were a granary and a possible fowlhouse as well as at least one hall and a number of SFBs (Plate 13.9). During the 9th century a second hall was built within a new enclosure, and a small cemetery was present on the site. An extensive programme of environmental research showed that the reorganisation of the settlement was associated with the intensification of arable farming, the resumption of hay cultivation and the expansion of the area under crops to include heavier clay soils. Perhaps most significant of all, two very similar sites that are likely to be contemporary with Yarnton were found nearby at Cresswell Field and Worton, both comprising hall-type and ancillary buildings with trackways, enclosures and probable associated SFBs. It is possible that 8th-century Yarnton and its neighbours formed part of the endowment of the minster at nearby Eynsham. If so, might these self-contained, enclosed and organised farmsteads be the holdings of free tenants of the minster at this time?

Plate 13.9 Reconstruction of Middle Saxon buildings at Yarnton, *copyright OA, drawn by Peter Lorimer*

Another glimpse of a 7th- to early 8th-century settlement may come from the site at New Wintles Farm near Eynsham. This site has never been fully published, but seems to have remained essentially small scale and unenclosed throughout (Hawkes 1986; Booth *et al.* 2007 108-9 and fig. 3.32; Hamerow 2012, 83). The contrast with Yarnton is striking, and the site perhaps bears comparison with that excavated recently at Riverdene near Basingstoke, Hants (below).

Astill (1984) identified a number of sites in Berkshire that appear to have been 'central places' of higher importance, often at the centre of secular or church administrative units. Settlements with characteristics of higher status centres in the mid and/or late Anglo-Saxon period include Aldermaston, Bucklebury, Compton, Cookham, Kintbury, Lambourn, Reading, Old Windsor and Thatcham. Archaeological evidence from Reading, Thatcham and Old Windsor is beginning to confirm the existence of higher status settlements at this time, based partly on the discovery of Ipswich ware. Perhaps the most important is Old Windsor. The excavations of 1952-58 remain unpublished and only outline details have so far been available, but a new review of the evidence is due for publication in 2014, and we are very grateful to Derek Keene for permission to use this information here (Keene forthcoming). What seems initially to have been an ordinary riverside settlement was developed, probably from the early 8th century, into an elite centre with a mill, a sequence of timber halls and a building possibly constructed using stone, tile and window glass, but apparently identified only from rubble. Finds assemblages that include Ipswich ware, Tating ware and decorative metalwork suggest a high-status place

integrated into the trading networks of the 8th century, and probably one that was used intermittently by the royal court. The mill and other buildings were destroyed by fire in the late 9th or early 10th century, prompting suggestions of a devastating Viking raid. Use of the site seems to have been revived towards the middle of the 11th century, with timber halls laid out to the west of the earlier focus; this can be associated with evidence for Edward the Confessor's interest in Windsor during the latter part of his reign, and a number of royal councils were held there. Royal interest in the site persisted into the middle of the 12th century, although increasingly as an adjunct to the new riverside castle.

Reading was described in Asser's Life of King Alfred as a royal estate in 870, when the Vikings arrived to set up an encampment, perhaps to the east of the town, between the Thames and Kennet. The late 9th century also saw the burial of a coin hoard alongside a coffin and inhumation in St Mary's churchyard, suggesting that the minster may have been in existence by this stage. Pottery of early to mid Saxon date has been found in numerous excavations in the centre of Reading, but no structural evidence has been recovered.

Both Old Windsor and Reading have produced sherds of Ipswich ware, a distinctive type of mid Saxon pottery which may indicate high status sites, especially when found towards the outer limit of its distribution range, such as the Thames Valley (Plate 13.10). Excavations at 12 Church Gate, Thatcham, have found two sherds of this pottery in a ditch (Wallis 2005). St Mary's Church at Thatcham has long been suspected as an early and important mother church (Kemp 1968) and Thatcham itself was a royal estate and the centre of a hundred in
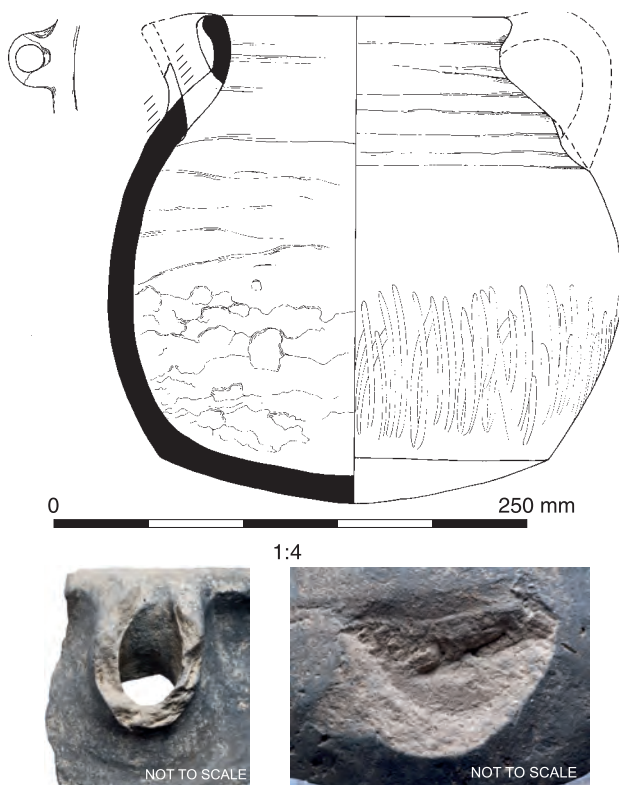
Plate 13.10 Ipswich Ware vessel, *copyright OA and Wessex Archaeology*

Domesday Book. Further excavations at this site also produced organic- and limestone-tempered pottery consistent with a middle Saxon settlement. Whilst there is no suggestion that settlement started any earlier, Thatcham's location close to the line of a Roman road and a small Roman town has been remarked upon (Lobb and Rose 1996, 94).

Lambourn was mentioned in King Alfred's will. It has been assumed that the Anglo-Saxon royal core of this settlement lay within the small oval marked out by a pattern of lanes, with the church at the southern edge and settlement perhaps extending slightly to the south of it (Astill 1984, 70-71). Archaeological evaluations at the Red Lion Hotel, just outside the oval but within Astill's predicted area of Saxon settlement, produced ditches and 'negative features' associated with Anglo-Saxon pottery. This includes 2 decorated sherds which may be from a bossed urn of 5th- or early 6th-century type and other organic tempered and sandy wares thought to be 'early' Anglo-Saxon. The subsequent watching brief at this site produced evidence for postholes and flint surfaces, associated with less chronologically diagnostic early-middle Saxon pottery, which taken together suggests 'substantial and long lasting settlement' (Foundation Archaeology 1999a and b).

Excavations at Wraysbury, on the opposite bank of the Thames from Old Windsor, found an area of late Saxon settlement to the north of St Andrew's church (see below). Excavation 100m to the west of the church, however, found considerable quantities of material of mid to late Saxon date, including pottery, two glass beads, iron objects and five coins comprising two *sceattas*,

two pennies of Offa and one of Coenwulf (Astill and Lobb 1989, 68). No contemporary structural remains were found, so the nature of this site remains uncertain.

At Portchester, the early Saxon huts were replaced by what appeared to be two groups of structures separated by an open space, each consisting of at least two buildings with associated wells and pits; one of the buildings had an adjacent enclosure defined by a fence. This phase of occupation appears to have lasted from the 7th century through the 8th and 9th centuries. Ninth-century artefacts, notably coins including a Carolingian gold import, decorative metalwork and imported east Mediterranean glass, seem to suggest higher status than most settlements, though the recognition since the 1970s of mid Saxon 'prolific sites', apparently trading-places rather than residences, raises the likelihood that the old fort was a landing-place and perhaps a mart (Cunliffe 1975 for the excavations; Ulmschneider 2003 for *sceattas* and 'prolific sites'). Perhaps in some ways comparable is the mid Saxon settlement evidence from Yaverland on the Isle of Wight (unpublished; see Waller 2006). This site, partially excavated by *Time Team* in 2001, had at least two post-built houses located at an area of former Roman occupation within the earthworks of a former Iron Age hillfort. Waller comments that this site overlooks the navigable Brading Haven, a natural harbour known to have been used for trade during the Roman period.

Hampshire also has two well known and well preserved sites of this period that have been very influential in the study of Anglo-Saxon timber building technology and in the development of ideas about the expression of status in settlement organisation noted above (Reynolds 2003; Hamerow 2012). The excavations at Church Down, Chalton, and particularly at Cowdery's Down, Basingstoke, revealed rural settlement sites that showed elaboration of buildings and control of space and access by the use of enclosures (Addyman and Leigh 1972; 1973; Millett 1983). At Chalton, there is a two-phase sequence of enclosures and buildings, with numerous lesser buildings, including some grouped around a square; the excavators considered it likely that these represented the homesteads of different families. Millett has subsequently suggested the layout might suggest a 'chief' with dependents and labour force (Millett 1983, 247-9). At Cowdery's Down two successive phases of the layout of the site incorporated large and elaborately built structures associated with fenced enclosures. These were superseded by the remodelling of the site into a single compound, with new buildings, in the third phase. By then, however, the settlement as a whole was expanding, with even larger buildings. David Hinton (2007) comments that the interpretation of the site as one always of high status but also showing increasing ostentation in its buildings still seems valid. Both sites are considered to be of 6th- to 7th-century date, although the quantities of finds recovered from both were very small and the pottery undiagnostic. An enamelled mount and ring from a hanging bowl were found in a pit outside one of the larger post-built halls at Chalton.

A further site of this period was discovered in 1995 at Riverdene, Basingstoke, only 1km from Cowdery's Down (Hall-Torrance and Weaver 2003). Riverdene is thought to be slightly later than Cowdery's Down, with a single radiocarbon date obtained on animal bone giving a range of cal AD 610–890 at 95% probability, or cal AD 650–780 at 68%. A total of 8 possible post-built structures and up to 11 SFBs were identified, although many of these were not very well preserved or particularly coherent in plan. They are thought to represent elements of a settlement dispersed over a wide area. Although there was no certain evidence for any enclosures or trackways within the excavated areas, the excavators suggested that the site may have been divided into different land-use zones, with evidence for some grouping of SFBs and post-built structures. Some 4km to the north-west of the Cowdery's Down settlement, excavations in 1995 at Monk Sherborne found the remnants of a rectangular post-built building within an enclosure system, a short distance from the remains of a substantial Roman winged corridor villa. A Roman pit adjacent to the post-built building had slumped or been re-cut in the Anglo-Saxon period, and within it were found an iron belt buckle and belt fitting with silver wire inlay and plating. Both are likely to be Frankish imports dating from the early 7th century. Metalworking debris was present within the post-built building and elsewhere on the site, although there was insufficient evidence to prove that it was of Anglo-Saxon date (Teague 2005).

Late Saxon settlement

Examples of excavated late Saxon rural settlements are rare in the region, and investigation has depended to a much greater extent on the accumulation of information from a wider variety of sources, including fieldwalking, survey, small-scale test pitting and 'keyhole' excavations within the built-up areas of modern villages. In recent years the most systematic investigations of rural settlements have been undertaken in Buckinghamshire. 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.). Michael Farley notes that these investigations have not generally produced evidence of continuity from the early Saxon period and only sparse middle Saxon evidence. Two exceptions may be Westbury (Ivens *et al.* 1995), which produced a couple of wells with surviving ladders and a small inhumation cemetery, and Walton, Aylesbury, where small ditched plots or enclosures were laid out in the late Saxon period, and were probably used as paddocks or pasture for livestock (Stone 2011; see above for early and mid Saxon occupation at this site). In both cases there was no certainly associated settlement.

At Bradwell Bury in Milton Keynes quite a substantial enclosure, probably of late Saxon date and unusual for the period in Buckinghamshire, was succeeded by a medieval earthwork (Mynard 1992). A number of irregular post-built structures were also recorded here

(Mynard 1994). Elsewhere at the Milton Keynes sites and others (Walton, Bedgrove, Bradwell Bury (Mynard 1994), Great Linford (Mynard 1992), Weston Under-wood (Enright and Parkhouse 1996) and Loughton (Pine 2003b)) evidence for late Saxon occupation comes in the form of the readily distinguishable St Neot's ware pottery. South of the Chilterns, the excavations at Lot's Hole, Dorney found evidence for a large enclosure bounded by a trackway on the south, and containing a post-built structure that could represent one or two phases of a 'hall' type building (Foreman *et al.* 2002).

The recent Whittlewood project studied a block of 12 parishes crossing the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border. Here, both nucleated and dispersed settlements exist in what was formerly part of Whittlewood Forest. The authors of the report suggest that the character of the area might owe much to its deliberate preservation by the Crown as an area of woodland, pasture and hunting grounds, in which the expansion of arable cultivation was discouraged and prevented, leading to 'the creation and survival of an alternative midland landscape' (Jones and Page 2006, 223-6). The Whittlewood project showed that a landscape of dispersed farmsteads existed in the area before 850. Some of these, termed 'pre-village nuclei', underlie both later nucleated and later dispersed villages; others were abandoned and subsumed into the open fields (ibid., 234-5). In other cases, both nucleated and dispersed, the 'pre-village nucleus' appears to date from the period between 850 and 1000. In the authors' words, 'Whether a single pre-village nucleus or many nuclei developed into a nucleation or a multi-nodal village, a hamlet or farmstead, seems to rest in the critical phase of transition which has become known as the 'village moment'' (ibid., 235). The villages of Whittlewood, both nucleated and dispersed, seem to have developed by a process of slow growth outwards from earlier settlement foci, but the authors note that this might be in contrast to other parts of the midlands (ibid., 236).

What appears to be emerging is a picture of increasing complexity at a regional and 'micro-regional' level, where different chronologies and processes might lie behind superficially similar end results. In Gabor Thomas's words, 'grandiose theories on village origins are becoming increasingly untenable' (2012, 45), and the substantial dataset collected by John Blair for the period tends in the same direction (see above and Blair 2013). There would seem to be an excellent case for renewed investigation of this topic across the varying landscapes of the Solent-Thames region. John Blair (pers. comm.) suggests that we should see Buckinghamshire as part of the eastern zone of building culture, where settlements of the mid to late Saxon period are relatively abundant and visible. The culture of building and everyday settlement in the rest of the region may have been subject to different influences, resulting in much lower levels of archaeological visibility.

In Oxfordshire, traces of possible Anglo-Saxon predecessors to post-Conquest manorial centres have been identified in excavations at Cogges, near Witney, where the post-trenches of timber structures were

Plate 13.11 Bow-sided late Saxon building at Bicester, *copyright Wessex Archaeology*

overlain by the buildings of the priory founded around 1100, and at Deddington and Middleton Stoney castles (Blair 1994, 135-6). The most impressive group of buildings of this period yet known in the county were excavated at Chapel Street, Bicester (Harding and Andrews 2002; Plate 13.11). Here, five substantial timber buildings associated with ditches, pits and a probable 6-post granary were excavated along the east bank of the River Bure, opposite the parish church which has been identified as a probable Anglo-Saxon minster housing the relics of St Eadburh. The settlement site is likely to have been occupied between the later 10th century and the 12th century. The largest building, which probably dates from the 11th century, was bow-sided and measured 23m in length and up to 6.25m in width. The nature of this settlement is unclear, but John Blair notes that the area is known as Bury End, which could imply some kind of defended site here before the reordering of the 12th-century planned town around the market place to the north (Blair 2002, 139-40).

The 10th century saw another significant change at Yarnton, with the abandonment of the mid Saxon farmstead and the probable relocation of the estate centre towards the medieval manor house and church to the north-east. Excavation and survey revealed that much of the intervening area had been laid out in a series of small, rectilinear plots, some of which were cultivated, while others were probably individual farmstead tofts (Hey 2004). Another group of small enclosures, laid out around a waterhole, was excavated at Manor Farm, Drayton (Challinor *et al*. 2003), not far from Sutton Courtenay, and a ditched enclosure containing a probable house and dating from the 10th to the 12th centuries was found in a small excavation in the heart of

the village of Brighthampton (Ford and Preston 2002).

Wraysbury remains the best-known excavation of a late Saxon rural settlement in Berkshire. Here two late Saxon ditched enclosures were found, and two buildings were partially excavated; a third building was inferred from a large deposit of well-preserved daub, some with plaster attached (Astill and Lobb 1989). Substantial collections of bird, animal and fish bone are thought to be kitchen waste and discussed above. Small scale evidence has come from Hungerford and Ufton Nervet.

David Hinton's review of late Saxon settlement evidence from Hampshire notes a number of small-scale investigations but nothing that has yet revealed much of the form of rural settlement of the period in the county. Hampshire does have two well-known excavated high-status settlements. At Portchester, following a phase of rubbish dumping (see below), a new complex of buildings was laid out in the 10th century comprising a substantial hall, a separate post-built building that may have been a store, and a third buttressed hall with an internal subdivision that the excavator suggests was possibly domestic in function (Cunliffe 1976). A second 10th-century phase of building saw the main hall replaced, and a new building added, followed, around the beginning of the 11th century, by the construction of a tower on stone foundations. The description of the attributes of the thegnly residence in the 11th-century text *Geþyncðo*, the church, kitchen, bell-house and enclosure gate, suggested the possibility that this structure may have been a bell tower. A small cemetery of some 21-22 burials developed next to the tower in the middle of the 11th century.

The estate at Faccombe Netherton was first mentioned in a charter of 863. Slight remains on the site suggest the

presence of a settlement here before the middle of the 9th century, but the earliest substantial excavated buildings are dated to the period *c.* 850-925 and comprised an aisled timber hall and a building constructed using flint for at least its lower walls, interpreted as the private apartments. By the middle decades of the 10th century, *c* 940-980, the complex comprised the retained and repaired hall, a new building interpreted as private accommodation with a latrine, a kitchen (occasionally used as a smithy) set to the south, and possible domestic or agricultural buildings. By around the year 1000, the complex had been surrounded by a bank and ditch. A group of new regularly aligned domestic buildings comprised a large hall with private apartments set immediately to the south and a possible small kitchen beyond, and a further post-built building of unknown function set at right-angles to the north end of the hall. The excavator suggests that the church of St Michael, set some 50m south-east of the domestic buildings, was probably in existence by the same time (Fairbrother 1990).

Urban settlement

The region contains the important middle Saxon *wic* settlement of *Hamwic*. Modern excavations in the area began in 1946 with redevelopment following wartime destruction and it is now estimated that *Hamwic* spread over an area of some 47ha, of which some 4.5% had been investigated by 2005 (Birbeck 2005, 4, 196). Excavations up to 1983 were reported and synthesised by Morton (1992), followed in 1997 by the publication of the important Six Dials site (Andrews 1997), the St Mary's Stadium site (Birbeck 2005) and most recently, reports on the Deanery School site near to St Mary's Church towards the southern edge of the settlement (reported in *Hampshire Studies* 67 (II) for 2012). Three

0   40 mm

2:1

Plate 13.12   Gold pendant from St Mary's, Southampton, *copyright Wessex Archaeology*

possible early nuclei have been suggested, a minster or mixed secular/ecclesiastical high status enclave around St Mary's Church (Plate 13.12), later the mother church of Southampton; the waterfront; and the Six Dials area. Current evidence suggests the densest settlement may have been focused along the NW-SE axis represented by Six Dials and the Chapel Road area, with less dense settlement towards the river, and around St Mary's (Morton in Birbeck 2005, 197-8). Evidence from the Stadium excavations supports the dating of *Hamwic* to the period from the later 7th century to the middle of the 9th century, although some occupation continued thereafter at a much reduced scale. Other trading settlements probably existed, associated with other river valleys in Hampshire (Birbeck 2005, 190), but the scale of *Hamwic* is currently exceptional. It was a place of intensive craft working, but without evidence for large-scale zoning; instead, the impression is of a 'patchwork' of different crafts, probably interdependent for tools and materials, carried on in individual houses side by side (Andrews 1997, 205; Birbeck 2005, 204). Its population at its maximum extent might be estimated at somewhere around 2000-3000 people, amongst whom there may have been significantly more men than women (Andrews 1997, 253). Series H (Type 49) *sceattas* were minted at *Hamwic*, and there is clear evidence for international trade although it is now suggested that this might have been on a smaller scale than previously supposed (Birbeck 2005, 203). The recent excavations at St Mary's Stadium and the Deanery, in contrast to earlier work, have included substantial environmental research.

The Solent-Thames region has a large variety of places where late Saxon urbanism can be investigated, and some where a considerable amount of important work has already been carried out.

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 that contains the high ground on which the town's castle was subsequently built must be one element of the site, but a small scale excavation here produced only a few sherds of St Neot's ware and a mid-Saxon pin (Hall 1975).

The re-occupation of an Iron Age hillfort at Aylesbury during the mid Saxon period has been noted above, and there is evidence for both a minster here (see below) and

a royal residence (from the place name Kingsbury). By the time of Domesday Book Aylesbury, a king's town, had dominion over several hundreds around and considerable revenue from its market. 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 is known as the site of a house of Edward the Confessor. It acquired an earthwork castle post-Conquest, but it is unclear whether there was any proto-urban development here.

Modern Oxfordshire contains two important Burghal Hidage sites, Oxford and Wallingford, both probably selected for fortification as part of a chain of *burhs* guarding important Thames crossings (the others being Cricklade, Wilts, and Sashes Island near Cookham, Berks). Oxford is the only one of the group to lie on the Mercian bank of the river, and the record in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that Edward the Elder took control of it in 911-12, along with London, lends support to the idea that it may initially have been a Mercian rather than a West Saxon foundation (see Haslam 2010 for an alternative interpretation). Oxford has been the subject of extensive archaeological investigations since the 1960s (see Dodd 2003 for a synthesis of work up to the turn of the 21st century). The late Saxon defensive rampart and its facing stone wall have been revealed in numerous excavations and its course is generally well understood, although uncertainties remain about the extent of the original defended area and the chronology of possible later extensions. A distinctive late Saxon street surface has been identified under most of the streets in the city centre, suggesting that they originated as part of a formal gridded plan, as at Winchester.

Investigations along the line of the later Thames Crossing at the south of the medieval town have shown that there was a developed crossing in place by the mid Saxon period, and accumulating evidence for a large mid to late Saxon cemetery around Oxford Cathedral supports the suggestion that the minster church of St Frideswide was located here. The nature of occupation within the *burh* during the 10th century is not currently well understood, but Oxford seems to have developed rapidly in or by the early 11th century, when its central street frontages appear to have been quite densely built-up. Finds assemblages comprising pottery, metalwork, bone, leather, stone and some wooden objects have been recovered and studied, although these are not on the scale of assemblages from contemporary Winchester. The town has benefited from detailed environmental and geoarchaeological studies for this period and programmes of dendrochronological and radiocarbon dating.

The *burh* of Wallingford had a hidage assessment of 2400 hides, equivalent to Winchester (Plate 13.13). Eclipsed by Oxford and Reading from the 13th century

Plate 13.13 Aerial view of Wallingford burh, *copyright Environment Agency Jan 2003*

onwards, it eventually declined into a small market town. As a result, it retains good potential for investigation of its late Saxon and medieval archaeology, and stretches of the defensive rampart remain upstanding. Limited investigations of the rampart have shown it to be constructed of earth and turves, with evidence for a timber revetment; it was subsequently heightened, and fronted or capped by a stone wall. Excavation in the 1980s revealed a late 10th- or early 11th-century timber-lined cellar at Nos 9-11 St Martin's St in the centre of the town, and more recently a mortar mixer and a large number of burials dating from the late Saxon period and later have been excavated, associated with the lost town centre church of St Martin (Booth *et al*. 2007, 276 and fig. 5.38). Opportunities for excavation have, however, been more limited than at Oxford, and the Wallingford *Burh* to Borough Project, initiated in 2001, has provided an important stimulus for renewed research into the origins and development of the town. Oxoniensia contains a number of interim reports (eg. Christie *et al*. 2010), and the project monograph has recently been published (Christie and Creighton 2013). This also publishes earlier excavations, including the important work carried out at Wallingford Castle in the 1960s.)

The project has provided the opportunity to investigate a number of important questions relating to the form and function of *burhs*. The reason why Wallingford was chosen for fortification remains unclear, and the project is investigating both possible early and mid Saxon predecessors and the evidence for reworking of the surrounding landscape, redirection of routeways, water supply and the river crossing. Wallingford also represents a valuable case study for the way in which *burhs* were organised, and the chronology of urban development. Christie *et al*. suggest a model that would see late Saxon Wallingford as a defended area that was used in a number of different ways: open space for grazing, storage, temporary refuge and the holding of fairs, thegnly residences focused on early churches, a high-status residence on the site of the later castle, and 'urban' occupation essentially limited to the street grid in the south-east quarter of the town (2010, 46).

Elsewhere in Oxfordshire, Bampton was the site of an important minster and a royal manor, and is recorded in Domesday Book as having a market. John Blair has suggested that the early market was located to the south of the minster precinct, and a sunken-floored building of probable 11th-century date has been excavated here (Mayes *et al*. 2000). Abingdon is likely to have been another early minster settlement, and was the location of an important abbey of the Benedictine reform. Domesday Book records the presence of 10 merchants living in front of the church gate, suggesting that a small urban community was becoming established here. Although very little is known of the town at this period, it has recently been shown that its medieval boundaries still followed the line of the defensive ditch of the Iron Age oppidum that once occupied the area (Allen 1997; Brady *et al*. 2007).

Although now in Oxfordshire, the *burh* of Wallingford was the principal town of late Saxon Berkshire, with 512 house plots recorded in Domesday Book. The second place in the county recorded in the Burghal Hidage is *Sceaftesege*, which has been identified with Sashes Island in the Thames at Cookham, the site of a mid Saxon minster church and a late Saxon royal estate. Nothing of the burghal fortification has yet been discovered. Reading is described as a borough in Domesday Book, with 59 houses shared between the royal manor and the estate of the minster church; a mint operated at Reading during the reign of Edward the Confessor. Astill (1984) suggested that the early town was probably located around the church of St Mary, but very little evidence for it has yet been recovered. By the time of Domesday Book, Old Windsor is described as having 95 *hagae* and occupation evidence of this period appears to have been recovered during Hope-Taylor's excavations. On a very much smaller scale, Domesday Book records 7 *hagae* at Aldermaston, 9 at Faringdon (now in Oxfordshire but formerly in Berkshire) and 12 at Thatcham, all three royal estates and minster centres (Astill 1984; Blair 1994, 119). At Aldermaston and Thatcham Astill suggests this early settlement is likely to be found in the area near to the church (1984). Whether such small numbers of properties can be considered to be 'urban' in any meaningful sense is perhaps doubtful, but the numbers are comparable with the numbers of merchants recorded at Abingdon.

At Southampton, *Hamwic* appears to have been in decline by the middle of the 9th century. The location of the Burghal Hidage fortification has not been certainly identified, although it has been suggested that this was the former Roman small town/port known as Clausentum on the east side of the Itchen estuary. By the 10th century, if not before, occupation seems to have been firmly established on the site of the later medieval town of Southampton to the west. Evidence has been found in a number of excavations for the existence of a defensive ditch enclosing an area smaller than the later medieval walled town, although this may have been a short-lived feature. A review of late Saxon pottery in Southampton identified numerous sites within this proposed enclosure and on the line of the proposed enclosure ditch pottery of this date (Brown 1994 fig. 5, table 1). However, more than half the assemblage had come from excavations outside the proposed enclosure, to the north of the medieval walled circuit (ibid., 150, table 7), and amongst this the pottery from Bargate St (SOU 142) contained 'superb' imported vessels. More recently, investigations on the Lower High Street (SOU 266), within the 'enclosed area', found remains of late Saxon timber-framed buildings with hearths and rubbish pits, and excavations slightly to the north, on the west side of the High St, found numerous late Saxon pits and evidence for boundary ditches at right-angles to the street alignment (Brown and Hardy 2011).

Further substantial evidence of mid to late Saxon occupation has also been recovered beyond the area of the proposed enclosure. Excavations at the West Quay Shopping Centre found mid Saxon pottery and glass, an

8th-century *sceat* and a coin of Ceolwulf of Mercia, dating from 821-23. Substantial late Saxon evidence was also found at the site, comprising the remains of larger and smaller post-built buildings with wattle and daub walls, and evidence for copper alloy and iron working, textile manufacturing and the making of combs, knife handles and ice skates from animal bone (Southampton City Council). Hinton (2007) suggests, additionally, that the reporting of a 'post-in-trench' hall from beneath the medieval castle (Oxley ed. 1988, 47) may suggest that there was an aristocratic nucleus in use from the mid Saxon period onwards, and the town may have expanded around it. The quantity of imported pottery noted by Brown, largely from Northern France, provides archaeological evidence that the late Saxon settlement here was functioning as a port (1994, 147), and he notes Rumble's suggestion that *Hamtun* may have been 'an estate within which there were several centres of activity rather than a single occupied site' (ibid. 128).

Winchester was the capital of the late Saxon kings of Wessex, and the largest *burh*. Its pre-eminence in the study of late Saxon urbanism in southern England was established by the work of the Winchester Excavations Committee, under the leadership of Martin Biddle, which carried out 4 major and 20 smaller excavations in the city over the period 1961-72. Sites investigated included the mid to late Saxon cathedral, the medieval bishops' palace at Wolvesey, the Norman castle and underlying late Saxon evidence, and late Saxon and medieval houses on the west side of Lower Brook Street (medieval Tanner Street). The Winchester Research Unit, founded in 1968, carried on the work of post-excavation analysis, historical research and publication. The Unit's publications to date include major surveys of the early medieval and medieval city that incorporate the important early documentary evidence surviving for Winchester (Biddle 1976; Keene 1985), the Winchester mint and its output (Biddle 2012) and the extensive collections of small finds recovered from the Unit's excavations (Biddle 1990). Interim reports of the excavations appeared in the *Antiquaries Journal* between 1964 and 1975 but the final reports have not yet been published.

A campaign of excavation targeting sites on the defences and in the suburbs was subsequently under-taken under the auspices of Winchester Museums; publication of the results is currently underway (Rees *et al*. 2008; Serjeantson and Rees 2009). Large-scale excavations were also conducted by the Museums Service in advance of the construction of the Brooks Shopping Centre in the heart of the historic city (Scobie *et al*. 1991). Excavations in advance of development in the north-west corner of the historic city, undertaken by Oxford Archaeology, have recently been published (Ford and Teague 2011). Here, a programme of scientific dating suggested that the late Saxon street seen in the excavations had been established in the period 840-880. This was soon followed by the establishment of occupation along the street frontage, and there was substantial evidence for craftworking including dyeing, metal working and bone working (ibid. 189-90; Plate 13.14). The *burh* at Winchester is understood to have been established as a response to the Viking threat in the late 9th century, and was protected by the reinstatement of its Roman walls. Biddle and Hill (1971) proposed that a grid of surfaced streets formed part of the initial plan of the *burh*, and that it had been designed from the outset to function as a defended town. The south-east area of the city contained the ecclesiastical enclave of the Old, New and Nunnaminsters, along with the late Saxon royal palace, which has yet to be securely located by excavation. Parts of the town were densely built up by the early 11th century, and the evidence from the Oxford Archaeology excavations (and the still unpublished Staple Gardens cemetery) suggests that this may have begun in the north-west quarter of the town more than a century earlier (Ford and Teague 2011). It is possible that this could represent relocation of some of the functions of *Hamwic* to the safer environment of the walled city.

Plate 13.14 Bone spoon from Winchester, Hampshire, *copyright OA*

Winchester has evidence for pre-Conquest urban churches, for domestic housing and for craftworking, as well as abundant evidence for material culture, diet and lifestyle. It is to be hoped that the eventual full publication of Winchester's key sites will make more widely available a very substantial resource for the future study of late Saxon urbanism. At the time of writing, Tom Beaumont James's *English Heritage Book of Winchester* (2007) provides an accessible overview of the city's archaeology and history. Work is also underway once more to finalise and publish the city's Urban Archaeological Assessment, and Historic Towns Atlas.

Hinton (2007) notes that the *burh* of Twynham (now Christchurch) was, like Southampton, a small one. It used to be assumed that it was chosen solely because of the minster, but the Bargates excavation shows that the river-mouth was attracting attention earlier than the foundation of the church. Excavation within the town has traced the defences, but has also shown that it was slow to develop; the market may have come at the time of the defences, and the gate leading out from it could perhaps be late Anglo-Saxon, but pottery, coins and other data do not demonstrate significant urban life.

Domesday Book records markets at three other places, and the clusters of sites around Andover and Basingstoke suggest that those were places where local and regional trading was likely to have happened well before the end of the 11th century.

At Portchester, a distinct break in the sequence was identifiable at around the time (904) that the site is recorded as passing into the king's hands. The earlier buildings went out of use and the site was used for the tipping of large quantities of food refuse, particularly animal bone, oysters and shellfish. Barry Cunliffe suggests this could be associated with the recorded Burghal Hidage fortification of Portchester in the early 10th century (1976, 303).

Elsewhere, work at Romsey has identified elements of late Saxon occupation around the abbey (Scott 2001, 155-7). It is suggested that the three main streets of the historic town, which meet at the market place outside the abbey gate, may have been in existence at this time. The remains of three late Saxon buildings and elements of potential property boundary ditches have been identified in excavations. The evidence suggests that at this stage the growing settlement comprised a series of relatively wide plots laid out alongside the roads, and within them the buildings were well spaced out and not aligned on the street frontage.

The built environment

Buildings associated with rural settlement in the region are generally considered to consist of either timber 'halls' or sunken-featured buildings. However, in the light of current research and evolving views about the nature of mid Saxon settlement in the region (see above), we need to look more closely for evidence of ephemeral types of buildings that may not conform to traditional expectations. In this context, the evidence from late Saxon towns for buildings with cob and post-and-mud walls (see below) may be particularly relevant, if we assume that early town buildings are likely to have followed rural practice.

The impressive range of well-preserved timber 'halls' from Church Down, Chalton and Cowdery's Down made a substantial contribution to the study of Saxon building techniques (Addyman and Leigh 1972; Millett 1983). A range of well-preserved buildings were also recorded and considered in detail at Faccombe Netherton (Fairbrother 1990). The buildings from these sites still remain among the key examples cited by Hamerow in her recent updated survey of building techniques (2012, 17-66). Elsewhere in the region, however, buildings are rarely well-preserved. Among the few exceptions are the mid Saxon buildings from Yarnton, the mid and late Saxon buildings at Portchester and the late Saxon buildings at Bicester, which display both post-in-posthole and post-in-trench techniques. The apparent simple functionality of buildings constructed with posts in individual postholes may belie a much more elaborate superstructure; at Eynsham, for example, part of a collapsed wall from a 10th-century post-built hall had survived in the fill of a pit. Here it was apparent that the wall had been constructed of vertical timber studs alternating with panels of plaster set on wattle frames (Blair and Hamerow 2003).

Few excavations have revealed much of the internal features of 'halls', although evidence for partitions, hearths and internal posts and slots possibly from benches sometimes survives. It is very likely that some buildings had upper storeys, and internal post settings are sometimes interpreted as supporting a loft. The poor survival of internal features in these buildings makes their function difficult to interpret, and this is usually compounded by a general lack of associated finds and environmental remains. However, some evidence for a greater diversity of building types is gradually emerging, and the appearance of more specialised buildings is generally seen as a mid to late Saxon development. Within the present study region, buildings at Yarnton were interpreted as a granary and a fowlhouse, and a granary was identified at Pennyland; a building containing an oven built with re-used Roman tile at Portchester may have been a kitchen or bakehouse, and latrines were identified at Eynsham and Faccombe Netherton. Evidence for very large outdoor hearths from mid Saxon Eynsham implies that cooking was also undertaken in the open air.

The region in general has not featured greatly in the typological and functional study of SFBs. Considerable numbers have been excavated at the settlement sites noted in the preceding section of this chapter, the largest sample coming from Radley Barrow Hills, and largely replicate what has been observed elsewhere (Hamerow 2012; Tipper 2004). Although SFBs seem to become less common over time, the evidence from Yarnton shows that they continued to be used through the mid Saxon period, and one, dated by radiocarbon, could have been backfilled as late as the late 9th century (Hey

2004, 65). Although two-post SFBs predominate in the regional sample, other types of construction are known and the region has good examples of a range of more unusual SFB features. At Oxford Science Park, Littlemore, for example, three fully excavated SFBs had no evidence for postholes, and five had stakeholes in the base, with at least 146 counted in SFB1, and a marked concentration of stakeholes around the edges of SFB9 (Moore 2001a, 168-176). Convincing evidence for stakeholes in the base of SFBs occurs at many sites in the region, including Yarnton, Radley Barrow Hills, Micheldever Northbrook, and Basingstoke Riverdene. SFB1 at Littlemore and SFB28 at Radley Barrow Hills are described as containing centrally placed hearths, and central deposits of ash and charcoal were found in SFB38 at Didcot (Boyle *et al.* 1995) and SFB21 at Yarnton Worton. Several sites in the region have examples of repair and replacement of structures in the same position, and at Barrow Hills it was estimated that around 50% of the SFBs were refurbished or replaced in or near the same location (Chambers and McAdam 2007, 80-81).

There is currently little certain evidence for the use of stone in secular buildings, and in most cases it seems to be associated with high-status and urban sites. At Faccombe Netherton, flint was used for the lower walls of a structure interpreted as private apartments, datable to the late 9th or early 10th century (Fairbrother 1990), and the presence of a stone building at Old Windsor in the 8th and early 9th century, possibly with a tiled roof and glazed windows, was inferred from a deposit of rubble (see above). A stone building associated with gold working dating from the later mid Saxon period underlay the nave of the later St Mary's Church in Lower Brook Street, Winchester, and it has been suggested that this may have formed part of a high status settlement in the area (see Biddle 1975b, 305-10). Mid Saxon buildings using possible limestone sills for cob walls were found in excavations at Beech House Hotel, Dorchester (Rowley and Brown 1981, 13); a coin of Burgred of Mercia (852-74) was recovered from the wall of the latest of these buildings. At Portchester, a structure interpreted as a possible stone or stone-founded tower was constructed at the beginning of the 11th century (Cunliffe 1976). Surviving stonework in the region's churches is considered below.

The buildings found at *Hamwic* were essentially in the same style as those on rural settlements (Morton 1992, 42). They were rectangular, were constructed of timber with wattle and daub infill, and had either thatched or shingle roofs, earth floors possibly strewn with straw, bracken and reeds, and often centrally placed hearths (Birbeck 2005, 199). The evidence from Six Dials suggests that, at least in the more densely occupied parts of *Hamwic*, the buildings were set quite close together within plots aligned along the streets.

Excavations in the region usually recover an incomplete record of late Saxon urban buildings, which have often suffered considerable truncation from intensive later activity, and are only partially revealed in small town-centre excavations. There is very little evidence for the form of 10th-century buildings in Oxford, although it is likely that these were essentially of the same form as rural post-built 'halls', and some may have been constructed with cob or post-and-mud walls (Dodd 2003, 35-41). The appearance of cellar pits in the town in the early 11th century may be a sign of increasing pressure on central space, and numerous examples have been excavated. Oxford also provides evidence for the development of a distinctive form of urban plot in the early 11th century, with small street frontage structures interpreted as stalls, larger workshop buildings behind, and the largest buildings, with cellared storage, at the rear (ibid.). The late 9th- and early 10th-century buildings identified in recent excavations in the north-west quarter of Winchester were set close to the street frontage, and were constructed on surface-based sill beams, with walls of wattle and daub or cob (Ford and Teague 2011, 194-5). Cellar pits appeared during the late 10th and early 11th century, along with the introduction of structures built with large rectangular-sectioned posts set into the ends of deep elongated pits. This more substantial building technique has been associated with houses of higher rank in 11th- and 12th-century Winchester. However, our understanding of urban buildings in Winchester and elsewhere in the region is currently limited by incomplete publication of many earlier excavations. Oxford, Winchester and Wallingford had defences of stone or stone-facing during the late Saxon period, and Oxford and Winchester had metalled streets.

Ceremony, ritual and religion

Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries

The early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of the Upper Thames Valley (covering much of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire) were studied by Tania Dickinson (1976). Her distribution plan, updated with more recent discoveries, was published with a table summarising key features and publication references by Booth *et al.* (2007, 418-29). For Hampshire, information has come from a number of different sources, discussed below. Overall across the region the quality and quantity of evidence is variable, and it is unclear whether this is due to uneven archaeological investigation or an uneven presence of sites. Most known sites in (new) Berkshire, for example, were excavated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and evidence was poorly recorded. In contrast Oxfordshire has been particularly well served by excavations, so that Oxfordshire inhumation cemeteries at Abingdon and Berinsfield (Leeds and Harden 1936; Boyle *et al.* 1995) 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; the opportunity for studying cremation and inhumation

as concurrent practices by one population has not yet been exploited. At the time of writing, the implications for the region of the recent dating project for Anglo-Saxon grave goods remain to be assessed (Bayliss *et al.* 2013).

Michael Farley comments that the evidence from Buckinghamshire is not extensive; apart from the rich finds from Taplow, the only adequately recorded cemeteries prior to the 1980s were at Dinton, Bishopstone, and Tickford near Newport Pagnell. These early discoveries indicated that Buckinghamshire cemeteries were relatively small and that they largely comprise inhumations. The number of known urned cremation burials from the county is probably in single figures. Lists of known cemeteries were compiled by Jack Head in 1946, and by Michael Farley in 1994 (Hunn *et al.* 1994). Since that time further cemeteries and single burials have come to light (see Farley 2008 for complete list). Most recently a large inhumation cemetery has been discovered near Wolverton (Zeepvat pers. com.). Recent finds slightly redress bias of earlier discoveries, but still leave a substantial gap in the Chilterns and south. Here, a single isolated 7th-century female burial with an amethyst pendant and a silver ring was found during the Eton Rowing Course excavations near Boveney; her grave was some 80m from two prehistoric barrows, but apparently isolated from any other Saxon activity (Foreman *et al.* 2002, 28-34).

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 20 graves, 16 of which had grave goods, and probably dated from the late 5th to 6th centuries. The excavation was on the periphery of an 18th-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 *et al.* 1995) a small aligned cemetery of 7 inhumations was discovered, 3 having grave goods; the most striking burial was prone and accompanied by a gold pendant. At Drayton Beauchamp an 18-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, has been considered to be a Saxon, rather than an earlier, barrow, and that only following a re-interpretation of the evidence. 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. 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.

The largest numbers of known early Saxon cemeteries in the region are within modern Oxfordshire (Booth *et al.* 2007, 419), although as elsewhere many sites were discovered during the 19th or early 20th century and are essentially only known from the grave goods retained in museum collections. Large cemeteries (for the region) containing in excess of 100 burials are known from Abingdon, Berinsfield, Long Wittenham and Standlake Down, and cemeteries with around 70 known burials, or more, were discovered at Brighthampton, Lockinge and Wheatley. Some 54 burials were excavated from a cemetery at Watchfield. Although the distribution of Oxfordshire cemeteries has a strong bias towards the Thames gravels and particularly the area between Abingdon and Dorchester, known sites spread far up the Cherwell Valley and onto the Berkshire Downs. Most of the sites have been dated on the basis of grave goods, including many studied by Dickinson in museum collections. On this basis the cemeteries are broadly divided between those of the 5th to 6th centuries, and those of the 7th century, this latter group showing a marked expansion along the valleys of the Windrush and Evenlode into West Oxfordshire.

Two cemeteries in the county show clear evidence for continuing use of late Roman burial grounds well into the 5th century. At Frilford (see Fig. 9.1 for location) one cemetery contained both late Roman and up to 28 early Saxon burials (see Booth *et al.* 2007, 168), while recent excavations 3km away at Tubney Wood have identified a small cemetery where unaccompanied burials of Romano-British type have been radiocarbon dated to the 5th to early 6th century (Simmonds *et al.* 2011). Recent radiocarbon dating of burials from Shakenoak Villa, North Leigh (see Fig. 11.1) has also demonstrated the presence of burials of this date (ibid.), while radiocarbon dating of skeletons from the Berinsfield cemetery has identified at least one individual who is likely to have been buried before AD 466 (Hills and O'Connell 2009). Systematic radiocarbon dating of skeletons from late Roman and suspected early Saxon burial sites is clearly called for in future, and has the potential to challenge many current assumptions.

The 5th- and 6th-century cemeteries in the county show the same range of burial practice as is found elsewhere in the country; weapons are found with between a half and two thirds of male burials, and characteristic round saucer and disc brooches and amber beads with female burials. Booth *et al.* 2007 figs 4.25 and 4.26 show a range of typical grave goods for the region. The brooch styles are considered to have predominantly 'Saxon' affinities, and small-long and square-headed brooches are only present in relatively small numbers.

While cremation appears to have been less common than inhumation, significant numbers of cremations are

known from some cemeteries, most strikingly from Abingdon where 99 cremations were identified along - side 128 inhumations, Long Wittenham (more than 51 cremations with 196 excavated inhumations), 13 cremations at Frilford, and more than 12 alongside 67+ inhumations at Brighthampton (ibid., 420-27). The Oxfordshire evidence suggests that there was a marked shift in burial grounds during the 7th century, although the scarcity of datable grave goods in the early 7th century, and the paucity of associated radiocarbon dates, makes it difficult to be more precise about the date at which these changes took place. The county contains good examples of the re-use of Bronze Age barrows for new cemeteries in the 7th century (notably at Standlake and Stanton Harcourt), the appearance of small new possible 'family' burial grounds (as at Didcot Power Station) and of high status 'princely' burials in individual barrows (as at Asthall) (see also Booth *et al*. 2007, 185-93).

Steve Clark has reviewed the evidence from modern Berkshire, where the majority of known early Saxon burial sites consist of single burials or small groups, many of which were investigated before the advent of modern excavations and recording standards. Of the 35 Anglo-Saxon burial sites on the Sites and Monuments Records for Berkshire 16 were first investigated in the 19th century or before, whilst another eight were excavated before 1945. Three of the most significant, and possibly earliest, Anglo-Saxon burial sites are among those excavated long ago. The East Shefford cemetery (north of Wickham) consisted of at least 71 graves and may have been in use from as early as the 5th century until the late 6th century. The first excavations covering the bulk of the cemetery were not properly recorded, and the site suffered from looting according to Harold Peake, who excavated 27 remaining undisturbed graves in 1912. Pottery found with these burials suggested a Frankish influence at the site (Peake 1931, 129-30). Although the cemetery appears to have been dominated by inhumations, one or possibly two funerary urns may also be attributable to the site.

The early burial evidence from Reading now mainly consists of the mixed cemetery from the Broken Bow/Dreadnought site near Earley, discovered (as at East Shefford) in the course of railway works. The site contained 5 inhumations and 9 cremations and was attributed by its excavator to the 'late pagan' period (Stevens 1894), although one of the burials is thought to display 'sub-Roman' characteristics (Lobb and Rose 1996, 92). Further down the Thames a confused set of records suggests a number of early burials at Aston Remenham, although Dickinson dates the site to the 6th century. It is possible that three or more burials have been found, one accompanied by many weapons. There are other potentially early – but poorly recorded – burial sites in the Reading area (for example at Pangbourne, Purley and the Oxford Road, Reading) and in the Lambourn Valley (a single inhumation between East - bury and East Garston, and a possible site in the valley brought to light by metal-detector finds). A cremation of

possible late 5th-century date was found at Beenham in 1992 (although the SMR also lists it as Bronze Age).

The expansion of Anglo-Saxon settlement is probably reflected in the wider distribution of 'pagan' burials and cemeteries, which in the main most likely date to the 6th century onwards. The only other large furnished cemetery found to date in new Berkshire is the final phase (probably 7th century) site at Field Farm, Burghfield, south of the Kennet and Reading, consisting of at least 50 inhumations in and around a Bronze Age barrow. Although this is the only large cemetery recorded to modern standards the acid soil conditions mean that skeletal remains survived in only a couple of the graves (Butterworth and Lobb 1992). The Field Farm site is perhaps a rare example of a pre-churchyard burial ground where we can also identify the likely contemporary settlement site, in this case Wickhams Field, although this is only evidenced by two wells and a number of pits (Crockett 1996). The burial at Lowbury Hill represents the best example in Berkshire of the high status barrow burials of the period (see Booth *et al*. 2007, 390 for a summary); a second barrow burial at Cock Marsh, Cookham is less well understood.

A map and gazetteer of early Anglo-Saxon sites in Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight, was prepared by Sonia Hawkes to accompany the publication of the cemetery at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, north of Winchester, and was published posthumously (2003, 201-7, figs 1.1 and 1.2). This listed sites of more and less well preserved cemeteries and numerous finds of burials and probable grave goods. More recent developments, including publications of older sites, were reviewed by Russel (2002), and by Stoodley (2006). David Hinton discusses the evidence in some detail in the Hampshire county survey for this assessment (2007), where he considers its implications for our understanding of late Roman to early Saxon continuity, cultural affiliations and social status. Hampshire has a number of cemeteries that have contributed important data for the study of the period, and David Hinton draws attention to the evidence for change in burial practice from the 5th/6th centuries into the Final Phase cemeteries of the 7th to 8th centuries, seen, for example, in the two Winnall cemeteries near Winchester, and the Portway East and West cemeteries at Andover. Significant sites include those associated with *Hamwic* (Birbeck 2005; Cherryson 2010), and a notable group in the vicinity of Winchester. The latter include Winnall I and II (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), Worthy Park, Kingsworthy (Hawkes 2003), Itchen Abbas, a poorly understood mixed cremation /inhuma-tion cemetery 1.5km east of Worthy Park, and the recently discovered site at Twyford south of Winchester, where 18 burials have been excavated from a much larger cemetery (Dinwiddy 2011).

The re-use of prehistoric barrows and other earthworks for Saxon burials is evident at numerous sites in the county, including Bevis's Grave at Bedhampton on the Portsdown Ridge and Oliver's Battery, Winchester. Elsewhere in the county, notable cemeteries, often with

substantial numbers of both inhumations and crem-ations, are known at Alton, Mount Pleasant (Evison 1988), Andover, Portway East (Cook and Dacre 1985) and Portway West (7th- to early 8th-century; Stoodley 2006), Christchurch Bargates (Jarvis 1983), Horndean Snell's Corner (Knocker 1956). Also in this group are sites such as Micheldever and Meonstoke, where evidence suggests cemeteries have been considerably disturbed (see above). The cemetery at Breamore, discov-ered as a result of metal-detecting, appears to have had an unusual number of weapon burials, and an absence of cremations. David Hinton comments that it is also unusual in being located on the valley floor by the River Avon, which invites comparison with the cemetery at Christchurch Bargates, which also had more weapons than usual, and was located at the mouth of the river. These two cemeteries appear different from those elsewhere in the county.

For the Isle of Wight, Hawkes noted 13 sites, of which the most significant is the large mixed cremation and inhumation cemetery at Chessel Down, which contained some exceptional grave goods (see also Waller 2006). The cemetery evidence from the Isle of Wight was previously reviewed in detail by Arnold (1982).

The region contains a number of sites that provide good evidence for burial practice in the mid to late Saxon period. Burials have been found apparently in isolation, in small numbers at settlement sites, in larger numbers in open 'field' cemeteries that may have been under church control, and in graveyards at minster sites themselves. The evidence from the Thames Valley was reviewed by Booth *et al.* (2007, 263-73). Elsewhere, around 100 burials were excavated from a large cemetery in Milton Keynes Village (Parkhouse *et al.* 1996). Two burials here were radiocarbon dated to the 10th to 11th centuries, but seven sherds of Ipswich ware and one of Maxey ware were also found and the excava-tors suggest the cemetery may have been in use from the mid Saxon period into the post-Conquest period. The cemetery lies some 200m from the church of All Saints, and the excavators suggest there could have been an earlier church on the cemetery site, preserved in the place name Chapel Yard.

In a recent study of burials from *Hamwic*, Cherryson (2010) notes 8 unfurnished burials of the late 8th century from St Mary's Stadium (II), possibly a small family burial ground, and at least 19 individuals from a late 9th-century burial ground at Six Dials, which she suggests may have been under church control. At Marine Parade (SOU13), some 80 burials of men, women and children were found north and south of a double-celled timber church; radiocarbon dates suggest the church and its cemetery were in use from the 8th century into the 9th century. With the minster church of St Mary's located only some 300m to the south-west, it is likely that this site was under the minster's control, and Cherryson suggests that its eventual disuse might reflect increased access for ordinary people to St Mary's itself. The evidence invites comparison with, for example, the crowded cemetery of hundreds of late

Saxon burials excavated at Staple Gardens, Winchester (S Teague pers. comm.), or the late Saxon burials found beneath St Aldate's Church in Oxford (Tyler 2001). The evidence for churchyard burials is reviewed below.

Pre-Christian ritual sites

The identification of pre-Christian ritual sites is problematic in the present study area, as elsewhere. There may be little if any surviving evidence of sacred springs, groves, trees and mounds, and the pagan shrines referred to in contemporary written accounts have proved elusive archaeologically. Possible examples have been suggested in the study area at New Wintles Farm near Eynsham and Cowdery's Down (Blair 1995), and more recently at Black Bourton, Oxfordshire (Gilbert 2008). Excavations at Weedon Hill, Buckinghamshire, a site with a 'weoh' (temple/shrine) place-name element, have not produced any evidence (Farley 2008). 'Special' or 'placed' deposits are increasingly being suggested at settlement sites (for a recent discussion of the evidence, see Hamerow 2012, 130-40). These are most commonly whole or partial animal burials, with cattle skulls partic-ularly strongly represented. Unusual human burials from the early Saxon settlement at Sutton Courtenay are noted by Hamerow (2012, 133), and a young adult found in a pit at Oxford Science Park Littlemore may have been buried in a crouched position or simply thrown in (Moore 2001a, 176).

Other notable deposits in the region include a dog burial from the base of SFB118 at Audlett Drive, Abingdon (Keevill 1992), while at Yarnton an uncooked goose had been deposited intact in the top of a pit, and the skulls and jaws of cattle and horses had been deposited in SFBs (see Booth *et al.* 2007, fig. 5.24). A semi-complete and deliberately perforated jar had been placed on the base of an SFB at Brooklands, Milton Keynes, which also contained piglets and ten pike heads (OA forthcoming). David Hinton (2007) notes further evidence from Cowdery's Down, where a complete cow had been buried in a pit that showed evidence for distinct and deliberately placed layers in it, with part of a pig's jaw near the base. He also notes Stoodley's identi-fication of a possible shrine at the cemetery of Portway East, and reminds us that the objects people carried and wore, and their decorative motifs, should also be seen as evidence for their beliefs.

More attention has also been paid in recent years to the possibility that weapons found in the River Thames might represent votive offerings, rather than simply casual losses. Substantial numbers of swords, seaxes and spearheads have been recovered from the river, and a review of the evidence was published by Booth *et al.* (2007, 231-4). So far, similar concentrations of weapons have not been found in other rivers in the region, although a 6th-century spearhead found in a minor channel of the River Windrush close to a Roman ford may fall into this category (Allen and Robinson 1979; Allen pers. comm.).

Churches, minsters and parishes

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity saw the re-adoption of disused Roman towns in the region as the seats of West Saxon bishops, firstly at Dorchester on Thames, around 635, and secondly at Winchester, which became the seat of the West Saxon bishop around 660. The Old Minster at Winchester is discussed further below. The mid Saxon bishopric at Dorchester was short-lived, and the area was subsequently absorbed into the Mercian sees of Lichfield, and then Leicester; the bishopric of Dorchester was re-established in the late 9th century following the Viking occupation of Leicester, surviving until its transfer to Lincoln in 1072. Evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in Dorchester and its immediate vicinity has been recovered in a number of excavations. Perhaps the most striking results were from the Beech House Hotel excavations, which uncovered two successive phases of small rectangular buildings on stone foundations, the later phase potentially dated to the middle of the 9th century by a coin of Burgred of Mercia (Rowley and Brown 1981).

In a recent detailed study of Dorchester Abbey, Warwick Rodwell has argued that the most likely location for the mid Saxon cathedral of St Birinus is on the site of the later (and present) abbey church. Given the practice of the time, it is possible that there was more than one building here, but he suggests that the principal structure may have been a relatively small transeptal church like the contemporary Old Minster at Winchester (2009, 26-7). No upstanding remains survive, and excavations to date have found no conclusive evidence of a church from this period. There does, however, appear to be an area of probable surviving late Anglo-Saxon masonry in the north wall of the present church, suggesting the former existence of a large arch leading into a *porticus*. Burials excavated at the site in 2001 include some that are likely to be of Anglo-Saxon date, which would imply a pre-monastic cemetery to the north of the present church (ibid., 29-31).

The establishment of bishoprics was followed in the late 7th and early 8th century by the foundation of minster churches across much of England. No upstanding remains survive for any of these within the region, and their existence has been proposed from a combination of: limited contemporary documentary evidence, dedications and traditions linking them with otherwise obscure local Anglo-Saxon saints, later evidence for unusual importance and residual authority beyond the immediate parish, and topographical factors. In many cases, archaeological research is now beginning to provide solid support, most often from the discovery of mid and late Saxon burials across relatively wide areas, implying the existence of substantial cemeteries. Within the present study area, the Thames Valley was the location of an exceptional number of important minster churches, and these were reviewed by Blair (1996; see also Booth *et al.* (2007, 247-58); for Buckinghamshire see Bailey (2003) and for Hampshire, see Hase (1988)). The fortunes of minster churches varied. A number were refounded during the Benedictine reform of the 10th to early 11th century, while others appear to have continued to serve their local regions, but at a reduced level, having been deprived of the greater part of their original landed endowments. During the late Saxon period, private estate churches built for thegnly and aristocratic residences, both in the countryside and in towns, are thought to represent the origins of many later parish churches. In most cases in the region the commonest surviving elements are towers, and these are included in Michael Shapland's detailed study of Anglo-Saxon Tower-Nave churches (Shapland 2012); we are very grateful for access to this information in advance of publication. A comprehensive review of the Anglo-Saxon church has been published by John Blair (2005).

Churches were rarely noted in the Buckinghamshire Domesday and Michael Farley comments that only four can be directly inferred, namely Buckingham, Aylesbury, Haddenham and the 'monastery' of North Crawley, although several priests held land elsewhere. The place name Whitchurch leaves little doubt of its origin. Of these the first three could be considered 'minsters', that is founder churches with rights over lesser churches subsequently established in their territories. Of this group only 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 a possible later west tower, both preceding the present medieval structure. Michael Farley (1979) plotted past discoveries of burials, which are widely spread across the old town core and support the idea of an extensive minster churchyard. This was later confirmed in excavations at George Street (Allen 1983) with four radiocarbon dates of cal AD 830–920. 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 2012). Aylesbury is linked with St Osyth who was allegedly born at nearby Quarrendon. An association between hillforts and churches has been locally noted by Kidd (2004).

Another group that can be added to the list of known pre-Conquest churches in Buckinghamshire are those containing fabric demonstrably of the period. None of them, with the possible exception of Wing, coincides directly with any form of documentary evidence. The church of All Saints, Wing, dating from at least the 9th and possibly from the 8th century, has the most extensive surviving remains. These comprise part of the fabric of the nave and its north and south aisles, together with a polygonal apse over a vaulted crypt at the east end of the chancel, (Plate 13.15). Excavation on an adjacent development site recovered 77 burials from what would appear to be a large Saxon and medieval cemetery contained by a substantial boundary ditch, indicative of a church of some status (Holmes and Chapman 2008). The graves in the excavated area were laid out in closely packed rows; one was radiocarbon dated to the period cal AD 660–890, and two others gave mid to late Saxon

Plate 13.15 The church at Wing, Buckinghamshire,
copyright Buckinghamshire County Council

radiocarbon dates. The cemetery continued in use into the post-Conquest period. Elsewhere, Taylor (1980–4) also notes Saxon fabric at Hardwick, Iver, Lavendon, and Little Missenden. In addition (post-Taylor) it is reasonably claimed that the demolished St Nicholas, whose churchyard contains the Taplow barrow, is of Saxon origin (Stocker and Went 1995).

For Berkshire and Oxfordshire, probable and possible minster sites are mapped and discussed by John Blair in the historical atlases published for both counties (1998a; 2010a). The evidence for Abingdon is also discussed in the recent edition of the abbey's Anglo-Saxon charters (Kelly 2000). The most extensive archaeological investigations to date have taken place at Eynsham (Hardy *et al.* 2003). Here, evidence was found for high-status occupation in the early 8th century, associated with the establishment of enclosures containing post-built halls. The evidence for continuing, uninterrupted occupation at the site through the 9th century suggests that this can all be linked with the minster that is identifiable from documentary sources at that time. A 10th-century phase of reconstruction of the enclosures and buildings was followed in the early 11th century by the construction of the reformed Benedictine abbey (Plate 13.16). The excavations recovered important evidence that the abbey was built on a formal claustral layout. Elsewhere, work has been carried out at Bampton, where evidence suggests the minster was laid out in relation to Bronze Age barrows and within a large oval enclosure; Bicester and Oxford, where excavations have recovered evidence for mid to late Saxon cemeteries that can be associated with probable minster churches; and at Abingdon, where limited investigations have suggested the form of the late

Saxon Benedictine abbey church (Blair 2002 for Bicester; Booth *et al.* 2007, 248-55; Allen 2011).

The evidence for minsters in Berkshire comes largely from documentary sources which indicate that Bradfield was established by the 670s as a Mercian foundation (Kelly 2000, 3-7) and Cookham was in existence by *c.*750, with a charter of 798 recording a long tussle between the Mercian and West Saxon royal houses for control of the site. Sonning is recorded in 964 as a second seat of the Bishop of Ramsbury, suggesting an important church to go with the large landholdings attached to this estate. Domesday Book provides late evidence for the likely minster status of churches at Aldermaston, Bray, Compton, Bucklebury, Lambourn, Reading, Streatley and Thatcham. Some of these churches may have been in existence from the late 7th, 8th or 9th centuries, but others could be the result of later foundations and reorganisations (Blair 1998a). The majority of these churches retained large medieval parishes, although presumably still much shrunken from their original areas of pastoral responsibility. It also seems likely that the foundation of a minster church was a catalyst that encouraged the emergence of significant settlements at many of these sites, and the concentration of minsters close to the important 'highway' of the Thames was no coincidence (Blair 1996).

Churchyard burials positively dated to the Anglo-Saxon period are rare in Berkshire, and tend to depend on finds such the late 9th-century coin hoard which accompanied a burial in St Mary's churchyard Reading, which has been interpreted as a Viking (and presumably therefore not necessarily Christian) interment (Blair 1998a). A collection of 10th-century coins was found with a skull in Kintbury Churchyard in 1762. Burials in the vicinity of this churchyard have been reported on at least six subsequent occasions, although all without grave goods and therefore not strictly datable (Meaney 1964, 48). Nevertheless the suspicion is that these finds point to a late Anglo-Saxon churchyard, which may have extended beyond the current limits. Despite the lack of written evidence it is possible that Kintbury possessed a church of minster status, given the size of its medieval parish and its status as the centre of a Domesday hundred. An undated burial, suspected to be 'Saxon or earlier', has also been found outside the modern churchyard at Aldermaston, prompting suggestions that either the churchyard has shrunk or it was preceded by a pre-Christian burial ground (Chadwick 1985, 84).

Evidence for late Saxon private churches, and for surviving fabric of this period, is limited in both counties. John Blair has suggested that, rather than simply being an accident of survival, this may reflect a relatively slow development of local churches in the area compared with elsewhere in England (Blair 2005, 421). Excavations at Woodeaton in Oxfordshire revealed the remains of a timber church of the early to mid 11th century underlying the present building, and excavations in Wallingford have revealed a mortar mixer and a long sequence of burials associated with the lost urban church of St Martin (Blair 1998b; Booth *et al.* 2007, 267 and fig.
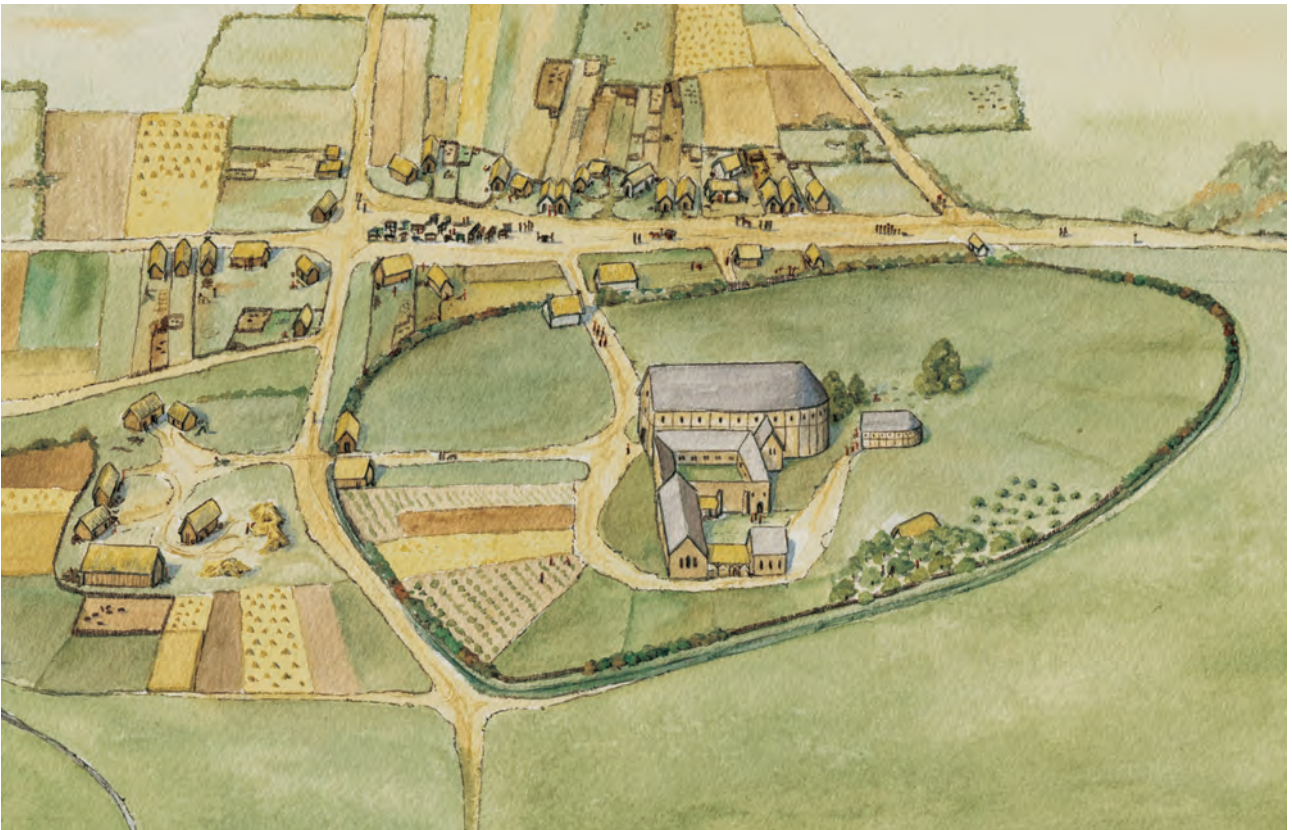
Plate 13.16 Reconstruction of Late Saxon Eynsham, *copyright OA, drawn by Ros Smith*

5.38). The most substantial surviving pre-Conquest remains are those of the tower of St Michael at the Northgate in Oxford, which has been dated by John Blair to the period 1010-1060 on architectural grounds (Dodd 2003). Recent excavations at Oxford Castle have provided further support for the view that the standing St George's Tower may also be of Anglo-Saxon date, and possibly associated with another pre-Conquest gate church (see Plate 1.6). Other pre-Conquest churches in the town are known from documentary references. Outside Oxford the most impressive surviving remains of Saxon church architecture in the county are to be found at St Matthew's, Langford, where the early post-Conquest tower shows a mixture of Norman and Anglo-Saxon features (Shapland 2012, 575-92). The church is also notable for its surviving sculpture, comprising two crucifixion scenes and a sundial. The architectural style of the tower dates it to the period when Aelfsige of Faringdon held the estate, a surviving Anglo-Saxon landowner who was evidently prospering under the Normans. Elsewhere, Saxon fabric survives at Cholsey, Caversfield, North Leigh, Swalcliffe and Waterperry.

New Berkshire has only one clear example of a surviving Anglo-Saxon building, the church tower at St Swithun's, Wickham, which (excepting the uppermost levels) dates from the late 10th or early 11th century (Shapland 2012, 724). The place-name Wickham suggests Anglo-Saxon consciousness of a nearby Roman settlement and the church is situated on a Roman road and re-uses Roman tiles and ballisters in its fabric. Michael Shapland suggests that this was a place that had

long held significance in the local landscape, and the tower may have been constructed at an estate centre of Ealdorman Aelfhere of Mercia (ibid., 728). Claims have been made that various other churches in Berkshire incorporate Anglo-Saxon work in their later fabrics, including Boxford, Bucklebury, Cookham, Speen (said to be '11th century') and Stanford Dingley. At Hurley Priory excavations in the 1930s uncovered stone footings said to be from an Anglo-Saxon church underneath the early Norman priory, in addition to possible Anglo-Saxon work surviving in the nave (Rivers-Moore 1939, 24-25).

The Christian archaeology of Hampshire has been relatively well served. Churches have been excavated in Winchester: the Old and New Minsters (at the time of writing only interim reports are available (Biddle 1970; 1972; 1975a), the west end of the Nunnaminster (Winchester Museums Service 1993, unpaginated) and two lesser urban parish churches in the Brooks, revealing development sequences from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards at St Mary's and St Pancras (Biddle 1975b, 312-21). The Winchester Excavations Committee's investigations of the Old Minster revealed the remarkable development of an elaborate church, now totally lost above ground. In its earliest phase, the minster church was a small cruciform structure built entirely of re-used Roman materials, with a building interpreted as the tower of St Martin to the west (Biddle 1970, 314-321, fig. 13). The growing cult of St Swithun was probably the reason why the space between these buildings, where the saint's grave was located, was subsequently enclosed in

an elaborate link building with side apses, itself then enlarged with the addition of an elaborate west-work. Finally, the east end of the church was rebuilt with the addition of an elongated apsidal chancel over a crypt, with lateral apses to north and south. In the interim report, the western and eastern developments of the church are suggested to date from the 970s to the 990s. The south wall of the adjacent New Minster and what appears to have been the south range of its associated cloister were also identified. A third small Winchester church excavated is extra-mural St Maurice (Qualmann 1978).

Romsey Abbey is traditionally considered to have been founded by Edward the Elder in 907. The footings of the late Saxon abbey still survive, beneath Norman rebuilding, and the piecemeal investigation of this important site was drawn together by Scott (1996). Excavations have revealed evidence for timber-built structures and floors beneath the late Saxon abbey, substantial quantities of animal bone that included high-status elements such as bird and deer, and quantities of slag from iron smelting (Scott 2001). It seems likely that this derives from high-status occupation on the site during the mid Saxon period, which may have been a royal estate centre or possibly a minster church (ibid.; Hase 1988). Scott suggests that the iron produced at Romsey may well have been taken to *Hamwic* to be finished and worked into objects (2001, 155). A number of charcoal burials have also been recorded and are likely to be associated with the late Saxon abbey. Geophysical survey at Wherwell hints that the first, late 10th-century phase there included an eastern apse (K. Clark in Roberts 1998, 152).

Some investigations have also taken place in lesser churches. Excavations at Yateley revealed the small nave that was the original Anglo-Saxon element there (Hinton 1983). A similar-sized nave was also excavated at Hatch Warren (Fasham and Keevil 1995, 76-83), while at Little Somborne the nave had been reduced in length at the west end (Webster and Cherry 1976, 182). Yateley was not a parish church in the Middle Ages, but was dependent upon Crondall, where recent work has shown that there too the south aisle arcade was on a mortared flint wall, possibly also part of an Anglo-Saxon structure. Absence of direct dating evidence from such work is typical, as also at Otterbourne, where the footings could as well be Anglo-Saxon as Norman or later (Hinton 2007). The late Saxon period must have been the period when many parish churches and private chapels were built, encroaching on the prerogatives of the 'minsters' (Hase 1988), many probably being timber predecessors of later medieval stone buildings. The stone foundations at Portchester that may have supported a timber tower have been noted above, and the burials around it suggest the bell tower appropriate for a thegn's residence, implying ecclesiastical use, even if as a private chapel not a parish church (Cunliffe 1976, 49-52, 303). Many churches may have started as single-cell structures, with chancels added later, though only St Mary's, Winchester, can be cited, and that may not have

had ecclesiastical use before its enlargement (Biddle 1975b, 313). Unfortunately, the chancel at Yateley was not available for excavation (Hinton 1983).

There are no surviving Anglo-Saxon churches on the Isle of Wight, although two are thought to contain Saxon remains, with a possible 2-cell church within the 12th-century nave at Freshwater, and the possible sundial and north wall of the chancel at St George's Church, Arreton (Waller 2006).

Transport and communications

The fact that none of the country contributors to this resource assessment was able to make much comment on this topic suggests that it remains under-researched in the region. There is little direct archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon routeways (although late Saxon street surfaces have been recorded within central Oxford), or for boats or installations associated with the use of the region's rivers and coastal waters for navigation. A number of studies, however, suggest that there is considerable potential for investigating these topics by drawing on a wider range of sources. These include known Roman roads that may have remained partially in use, documentary references to routeways of different kinds, placenames, the distribution of coins, hoards and traded goods, the location of settlements, bridges and fords, and topography. The evidence for Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire and the Upper Thames has been reviewed by John Blair (1994; 2007; 2010b; for placenames see also Cole 2010) and the topic has also been considered by John Baker and Stuart Brookes, whose recent study of the landscape of civil defence during the Viking Wars incorporates a detailed assessment of placename evidence for routeways, river crossings and landing places in Wessex, with a detailed case study of the Thames Valley (2013).

Evidence for trade routes such as saltways from Droitwich to the Thames survives in documentary references and place names, and a cluster of *sceatta* finds including the Aston Rowant hoard along the scarp slope of the Chilterns suggest the existence of a significant trade route on the line of the reputed Icknield Way. Although doubts have been raised about the reality of the Icknield Way, Michael Farley notes that the name *icenhylte* appears in a late Saxon charter for Risborough, through which it should pass (2008), and Della Hooke notes references to both *ikenilde stret* and the Ridgeway (*hrycwaeg*) in her study of the charter evidence for the late Saxon estates in the Vale of the White Horse (1987, 139, fig. 3). In Hampshire, research has shown that some Roman roads remained partly in use, and David Hinton notes that the obligation to carry out bridgework in the mid and late Saxon period implies road maintenance, even if the king's authority would have been needed to enforce it (2007). He also suggests that the proliferation of horsegear among finds of the late Saxon period shows that riding had spread beyond the ranks of the aristocracy by the 11th century.

Rivers are also thought to have been key to transport and communication, though the extent to which the region's rivers were navigable by boat is not certain. In the absence of direct archaeological evidence for river navigation in the form of wharves and landing places, much must still be inferred from the evidence of settlement and cemetery locations, the distribution of traded goods, placenames and documentary references. The distribution of early Saxon cemeteries in the region shows a marked bias towards river valleys, particularly along the Upper Thames, which has long been proposed as a corridor for the movement of incomers into the interior of the country. However, it is also true that many of the region's cemeteries have been discovered in the course of quarrying on river gravel terraces, and the spread of settlement by other routes may still be significantly underrepresented in the archaeological record. The likelihood that river valleys did play a significant role in early communication systems is reinforced, however, by the marked clustering of important sites around the confluences of the Thames and its tributaries.

The control and exploitation of rivers and estuaries can also be seen in the archaeology of Hampshire. David Hinton has noted the rich finds and profusion of weaponry at the recently excavated cemetery at Breamore, by the River Avon, and the relatively weapon-rich cemetery at Christchurch Bargates, at the Avon estuary. Rich and exotic grave goods were revealed at the 5th- to 6th-century Chessell Down cemetery on the Isle of Wight, and recent metal-detected finds suggest the existence of other cemeteries of comparable wealth elsewhere on the Island (Waller 2006). This is clear evidence for seaborne communications along the Channel in the early Saxon period, thought to have been under the control of the Jutes. David Hinton notes the rare find of a simple log-boat dated to around the year 500, which has been raised from Portsmouth Harbour and may have been used in local coastal trade.

The establishment of *Hamwic* may mark the displacement of the south coast Jutes by the West Saxons, and the continuing seaborne trade evidenced by imports at *Hamwic* itself, on the Isle of Wight, and at Portchester had presumably passed under their control. Continuing use of a long-lived trading site overlooking the natural harbour of Brading Haven into the mid Saxon period is noted by Ruth Waller (2006). Here, two post-built houses formed part of a sequence of Saxon occupation established at the site of an Iron Age hillfort and village, and a Roman harbour. Mid Saxon use of rivers for inland travel and trade is implied by the presence of large assemblages of finds, including imported goods and luxury items such as glass, at the Middle Thames sites at Old Windsor, Wraysbury and Dorney. Much of this material may have been imported via the port at *Lundenwic*. In their review of placename evidence for the Thames Valley, Baker and Brookes (2013, 283-6 and fig. 56) observe that the Upper Thames has abundant placenames referring to river crossings such as fords and bridges, but little evidence for places where boats landed, while below Goring there are only a few places

where the river could be crossed, but placenames associated with landing places for boats are common.

Evidence suggests that substantial river works were carried out in the late Saxon period in order to improve navigability and trade. Several stretches of possible bypass and tributary canals of the 10th to 12th centuries have been recognised on the Upper Thames at Radcot, Bampton and Wallingford, and the 12th-century Chronicle of Abingdon Abbey records that the late Saxon monks constructed a new navigation cut on the Thames (Blair 2007). The Oxford boatmen using Abingdon Abbey's new navigation cut paid their tolls in herrings, presumably brought upriver on return journeys from London. For Hampshire, Christopher Currie has discussed new evidence for the improvement of navigation on the lower Itchen (2007). Trading networks are most clearly visible in the archaeological record in the form of non-local goods and materials such as marine fish and shellfish, architectural stone, querns, millstones, whetstones and pottery. Evidence for these in the region increases significantly in the late Saxon period. The potential of architectural stone as an indicator of regional resource and transport networks was identified by Jope (1956), and the distribution of mid to late Saxon pottery types in the Oxford region was illustrated by Maureen Mellor (1994, fig. 7). Such distributions must reflect the possibilities of the contemporary transport and communication networks, even if they also reflect other factors such as ownership and control of resources and markets. With the enormous increase in data now available from two decades of development-led excavation, an updated review of the quantity and distribution of non-local goods in the region could make a significant contribution to the renewed research interest in transport and communications.

Material culture, crafts, trades and industries

Early Saxon

Our evidence for the material culture of the region during the early Saxon period derives largely from two sources, grave goods in cemeteries and finds from settlement sites. The county reviews also note the increasing contribution of finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Grave goods from cemeteries in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire were catalogued by Tania Dickinson (1976) and her work remains the most detailed and comprehensive overview of this class of material in the region. The range of objects surviving from graves are broadly typical of those across the country, and, as elsewhere, textiles, leather and wood are underrepresented in the surviving record. Spears and shields, more rarely seaxes and swords, are the characteristic of male graves, with jewellery most characteristic from female graves, usually brooches and beads, quite commonly pins, and rarely rings and bracelets. Belt and strap buckles in copper alloy and iron occur with both male and female graves. Many graves

contain knives, suggesting that these were common personal possessions and some graves (almost all female) contain combs and toilet implements (tweezers, picks, scoops, brush holders and scrapers). A symbolic significance for these types of objects, associated with personal appearance, is suggested by their occurrence in miniature form with cremations. Women's graves commonly contain objects that were probably suspended from a belt; these are typically iron or copper alloy rings, iron rods often interpreted as keys (symbolic or functional), and occasionally bags or purses evidenced by surviving 'bag rings' of ivory or iron, 'strike-a-lights', now generally considered to be purse mounts, and collections of rings and broken objects (often Roman or earlier).

Vessels occur in a number of graves in the region. The commonest type are wooden stave 'buckets' with copper-alloy or iron bindings. Metal vessels of cast or sheet bronze

Plate 13.17 The Taplow Mound, *copyright T Allen*, and a selection of the artefacts, *copyright Trustees of the British Museum*

are rarer and their association in the region with high-status male burials suggests that they were prestige items. Glass vessels are even rarer and known from only a few graves. Both plain and decorated pottery urns were used for cremations, and pottery vessels were also occasionally deposited in inhumation graves. Some of the more distinctive objects, particularly brooches and pottery, suggest an early association between the Thames Valley and 'Saxon' continental regions. The grave goods of this region can be contrasted with those of northern and eastern England, traditionally considered 'Anglian', where different brooch styles occur along with wrist-clasps and girdle hangers, both absent here. A few examples of elaborate Kentish-style garnet-inlaid disc brooches occur, though in general grave assemblages in the region are more modest than those found in eastern Kent. 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 (Plate 13.17). This and other princely graves from the Upper Thames Valley region are discussed further by Booth *et al.* (2007).

The material culture of Hampshire cemeteries in the 5th and 6th centuries is superficially similar. Stoodley has noted, however, that women buried in the cemeteries in the north of the county, such as Alton and Andover, wore pairs of brooches pinned at the shoulder, in the style of the Saxon 'peplos' dress, while those in the south of the county, at Droxford and Worthy Park, and possibly on the Isle of Wight, appear to have been wearing a single pin or brooch, indicating a different style of costume. He suggests that the single pin or brooch is comparable with contemporary burials from northern Jutland, and that archaeology may be providing support for Bede's observation that the people of southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were part of a Jutish enclave connected with Kent. By contrast, those in the north of the county can be more readily associated with the Saxon culture of the Thames Valley (Birbeck 2005, 190-92).

Pottery is usually recovered at early Saxon settlement sites in the region, although assemblage sizes can vary considerably. In his discussion of the small assemblage from Yarnton (117 sherds), Paul Blinkhorn noted evidence from Pennylands and West Stow that different SFB backfills contained very different quantities of pottery, ranging from none at all to hundreds of sherds (Pottery report in Hey 2004, 271). He suggested these differences could reflect site use and disposal practices, with the implication that the area investigated at Yarnton may have been one where little pottery was used or disposed of. Two of the largest assemblages from the region were studied by Blinkhorn from Radley Barrow Hills (9131 sherds; Chambers and MacAdam 2007) and Eynsham Abbey (6248 sherds; Hardy *et al.* 2003). The assemblages comprised handmade jars and bowls in quartz-, chaff- and calcareous/limestone-tempered fabrics. Only 3-4% of the pottery was decorated, a proportion consistent with other assemblages elsewhere, with decoration comprising stamps, bosses and incised patterns.

Pottery aside, the range of other finds from Barrow Hills is typical of the relatively limited surviving material culture of early Saxon settlement sites in the region. The assemblage comprises a few brooches, buckles, toilet items and pins of types also found as grave goods, a rather larger number of combs, parts from a small number of locks and keys, an arrowhead and two ferrules, a few iron tools, nails and knives, parts from a possible snaffle bit, metal bucket fittings, spindlewhorls, loomweights, pin beaters and numerous bone pins or needles (Chambers and MacAdam 2007). More unusual were two objects interpreted as razors. Many of the objects used at the site must have been made of organic materials such as wood, wool and leather, evidence for which is rarely recovered.

How people obtained these possessions remains obscure. Simple bone, wooden, leather and iron objects were presumably made at the settlements themselves, but there is little evidence in the Solent-Thames region to clarify how iron was obtained, or how the women of the region acquired the amber beads that are so characteristic of 6th-century grave assemblages. Rare evidence for the casting of an elaborate bronze brooch was found at the settlement site at Purwell Farm, Cassington (Arthur and Jope 1962-3, 3). Many of the more prestigious objects are likely to have been gifts, and the obligation of leaders to reward their followers with generous gifts in return for service and loyalty is a strong theme in surviving Anglo-Saxon literature. In the absence of a coin economy, we can only assume that some goods would have been obtained in exchange for agricultural produce, through a process of more or less formal barter and marketing. Pottery production is assumed to have been largely local in scale, but some may have been obtained from some distance (Booth *et al.* 2007, 323-4).

Mid Saxon

Our evidence for material culture over much of the region becomes sparser through the mid Saxon period, as the practice of burial with grave goods declined. A marked change in the types and use of grave goods in the 7th century is evident across the country, and reflected also in the present study area. Not only do the styles of the objects change, but there is increasing evidence for social polarisation, with a smaller number of furnished graves containing richer objects, and a larger number of graves containing little or nothing. Whether this reflects changing access to portable wealth in life as well as changing attitudes to burial of the dead is an important question. The richest cemetery of this period in the Upper Thames Valley, Lechlade Butler's Field, lies just outside the present study area, in Gloucestershire (Boyle *et al.* 1998; 2011). Nothing on this scale is known elsewhere in the Thames Valley, although 7th- to early 8th-century types of grave goods are recorded from numerous places, with a notable concentration in West Oxfordshire (see Booth *et al.* 2007, 418-29). The largest

known cemetery of this date in the Thames Valley is Standlake Down, discovered in 1825, where up to 100 graves seem to have been present, including at least one identifiable rich female burial with gold pendants and a silvered bronze foil cross (Dickinson 1976 v ii, 202-7).

In Buckinghamshire, a small group of 5 burials from Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes included one with knotted silver wire rings, beads of glass and amethyst and a silver pin probably from a linked pin and chain set (Parkhouse and Smith 1994). In Hampshire, the cemetery known as Winnall II, near Winchester, was one of the early type-sites for the material culture of Final Phase cemeteries. Comparing it with other sites known at the time, Meaney and Hawkes (1970, 45-6) suggested that late cemeteries appeared to be characterised by a high proportion of unfurnished graves and graves with only a simple buckle or knife, a decline in weapon burial and the appearance of new weapon types. There were also new types of object such as wooden caskets and cylindrical sheet-bronze thread boxes with female graves, and new, simpler types of jewellery including silver linked pin and chain sets, plain glass beads on silver wire rings, pendants of gold, silver and garnets, and buckles for narrow belts. The evidence from Hampshire is providing important contextual information about some of the more conspicuous cemeteries of the 7th century, particularly those with an unusual emphasis on weapon burial at *Hamwic* and Bargates (Stoodley in Birbeck 2005; Hinton 2007). Other cemeteries with notable 7th-century grave goods have been reviewed by Hinton (2007) and Stoodley (2006).

The mid Saxon period saw a great expansion in trade and the processing of agricultural surplus into tradeable goods. The minting and use of coins began again, in the form of the *sceatta* coinage, apparently produced in great quantities during the later 7th and early 8th centuries. Over 150 *sceattas* are known from *Hamwic*, some of them probably brought from abroad, and many probably minted at *Hamwic* itself and nearby. It is clear that *sceatta* coins were being brought into the Upper Thames and Thame valleys, where distribution maps show notable concentrations. The region's finds include a number of coin hoards: a 7th-century hoard of nearly one hundred coins and gold and garnet clasps from Crondall in north Hampshire, an 8th-century hoard from Aston Rowant, Oxfordshire, late 9th-century hoards from Pitstone in Buckinghamshire (AD 874-9) and Hook Norton in Oxfordshire, 9th-century hoards associated with a coffin and burial in St Mary's churchyard, Reading, and in Kintbury churchyard, Berkshire.

By the standards of the region, the trading and manufacturing centre at *Hamwic* provides the most substantial insight into material culture at this time. A useful overview of the evidence was published with the Six Dials excavation report and reports on some of the finds have been published (Andrews 1997; Andrews 1988; Hinton 1996; Hunter and Heyworth 1998). Its occupants were engaged in the production of a range of goods that were presumably destined for home consumption as well as export. Even if the scale of production was unusual,

and despite some evidence for gold-working and gilding, the output seems to have been relatively mundane. Textile production was a major activity at *Hamwic*, judging by the common occurrence of spindlewhorls, loomweights and thread pickers at most excavated sites, although it is not clear whether this was a specialised activity in certain households, or a widespread secondary or part-time activity undertaken in many. There is also a strong signature for metalworking, including some technologically accomplished work. Copper alloy products included pins, buckles and fittings for straps and belts, finger rings, hooked tags and brooches, fittings for boxes and chests, tweezers, spoons, rings and loops. Ironwork included technically accomplished knives, a variety of iron tools, wool-comb teeth, building and household ironwork, buckles and strap-ends, bucket handles, bells, a spur and a sword pommel. The main products of *Hamwic* bone and antler workers seem to have been combs and textile tools (spindlewhorls, needles and threadpickers). The preparation of hides and working of leather is evident from structural remains and waste, although direct evidence for leather goods is lacking. The glass assemblage from *Hamwic* suggests that vessels were present in some numbers, but it is considered unlikely that glass was made at the site, and much of the assemblage is likely to represent cullet traded for re-use in beads and jewellery.

The commonest mid Saxon dress items found in the region are pins with biconical, globular and decorated heads, and strap ends; these are, however, found in much smaller quantities than on contemporary sites in eastern England. There are relatively few brooches from this period, but an unusual metal-detected example of an equal-armed bow brooch from Yarnton is exactly paralleled at the Frisian trading settlement at Domburg (Hey 2004, 286-8, plate 15.1 (b)). A fine iron disc overlaid with embossed silver sheets forming a cross with interlace was found at Wraysbury and is of late 7th- or 8th-century date (Astill and Lobb 1989, 90-94). As Christianity spread through the region in the late 7th and early 8th century literacy and the use of books will have spread with it, but evidence for this remains very slight. Despite the rich material culture of monastic sites in eastern England, there were relatively few finds from mid Saxon Eynsham, although these did include two styli, three *sceattas* and eight sherds of Ipswich Ware.

In general, our understanding of trade, processing and manufacturing activities in the mid Saxon period is very limited outside *Hamwic*. Evidence from the Thames Valley was reviewed by Booth *et al.* (2007), but elsewhere the county assessments suggest little has been found. Some evidence that traded goods were moving along the Thames comes from the mid 8th-century trading or marketing site at Dorney (Foreman *et al.* 2002), where finds included Niedermendig lava quernstones, a millstone that may have come from Germany, possibly imported whetstones, and fragments of three glass vessels, found in association with North French and Tating-ware pottery. Tating ware is also reported from Old Windsor. Possible inland marketing sites are increasingly being recognised from concentrations of metal-

detected finds. Mid Saxon finds from Froglands Farm to the south-west of Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight suggest a market at this site, for example; similar possible sites need to be identified to further a research-based programme of excavation (Ulmschneider 2003).

The likelihood that an inland market existed close to the high status complex at Drayton/Sutton Courtenay, where 14 *sceattas* have now been found, has been noted above. The recovery of fragments of gold and gold/copper solder at this site suggests that luxury metalwork may have been produced there for an elite early 7th-century settlement (see above), and there is also evidence for gold-working associated with a possible high-status enclave around the minster at mid Saxon Winchester. Large deposits of iron smelting slag were found at Romsey, and it is suggested that iron was smelted there and supplied to *Hamwic* for finishing and working (see above).

Plain handmade pottery in quartz-, chaff- and limestone-tempered fabrics continued to be used in Oxfordshire into the 8th century and possibly even later, and is indistinguishable from undecorated pottery of the early Saxon period. This has led to considerable difficulties in understanding the chronology of sites of the period (see above); indeed, so little identifiable material of later 8th- and 9th-century date was present at Yarnton and Eynsham Abbey that Paul Blinkhorn has suggested there may have been a complete hiatus in pottery use in western Oxfordshire at this time (Hardy *et al*. 2003, 172-4). Often the only recognisably mid Saxon pottery on sites in the area is Ipswich Ware, which has been found in small quantities at an increasing number of sites in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire. At *Hamwic*, some 18% of the total pottery assemblage is made up of imported pottery from northern France and Belgium in fine fabrics made on a fast wheel (J Timby and P Andrews, in Andrews 1997). Of the remainder, Jane Timby notes that organic-tempered wares dominate the local assemblages in the first half of the 8th century, and appear to carry on early Saxon traditions. Around the middle of the 8th century sand-tempered wares become the dominant form, with some chalk-tempered ware also present. From the late 8th century through the first half of the 9th century the composition of the local assemblages changes again, with mixed-grit wares becoming dominant, accompanied by small quantities of shell-tempered and flint-tempered wares. The great majority of vessels were simple cooking pots, and these could have been very locally made, although no kiln sites have yet been identified.

Late Saxon

The production of coin expanded again in the late Saxon period, with mints operating from the growing network of towns. There is evidence for two Hampshire mints, Southampton (until the 1020s) and Winchester; a major study of the Winchester mint has recently been published (Biddle (ed.) 2012). Berkshire had two, one at Wallingford, now in Oxfordshire, and a short-lived one

at Reading that operated during the reign of Edward the Confessor. The mint at Oxford was probably established in the reign of Alfred, and continued in operation throughout the late Saxon period. Mints appear to have operated for brief periods at the three Buckinghamshire towns of Newport Pagnell, Buckingham and Aylesbury.

The most substantial study of material culture of the late Saxon period from the region is the two-volume publication of the Winchester small finds, which considers both the objects themselves, and the way in which they were produced (Biddle 1990). This has since been supplemented for the suburbs and defences (Rees *et al*. 2008), and by the report upon Northgate House/ Discovery Centre (Ford and Teague 2011). At Northgate House/Discovery Centre evidence was found for a variety of crafts, including the working of metals, bone and textiles. Typically, however, this appears to have been small-scale and mixed, and suggests a style of industrial activity not unlike that suggested for *Hamwic* (above), in which households may have made a variety of different products in limited quantities. A large number of potsherds stained with the dye madder were found at the Northgate House/Discovery Centre site, and suggest that households were carrying out small-scale spinning followed by the dyeing of yarn in ordinary cooking pots. A review of the evidence from Oxford includes wooden objects, shoes and other leather items from waterlogged deposits around the Thames channels on the south side of the town (Dodd 2003), and evidence from the Thames Valley as a whole has been considered by Booth *et al*. (2007). As in the mid Saxon period, there is widespread, if small-scale, evidence for tools, products and waste, but little that identifies any substantial production sites, although the smelting of iron from bog ore was noted at late Saxon Wraysbury (Astill and Lobb 1989).

The spread of Viking styles of metalwork across the country in the late Saxon period is signalled by a fine buckle plate of late 9th-century date from Eynsham (Hardy *et al*. 2003, 251-4, plate 9.2). This is associated with the increasing prominence of horsegear in finds assemblages of the time, and notable Upper Thames Valley examples are reviewed by Booth *et al*. (2007, 341-3). Other metal items are rare, but the PAS is bringing more to light, such as the skillet ornamented with a cross from the Isle of Wight (Plate 13.18). This was probably owned by the clergy and used in baptismal rites.

Maureen Mellor's study of the pottery of the Oxford Region remains the primary source for late Saxon ceramic traditions in the Upper Thames Valley (1994). The largest quantities of late Saxon pottery here are from Oxford itself, where three fabric traditions dominated the supply of the utilitarian cooking and storage pots used in the town: a handmade and possibly quite local shelly ware (Mellor's Fabric OXB); St Neot's-type ware (Mellor's Fabric OXR) supplying fine-walled wheel-thrown vessels; and a long-lived oolitic limestone-tempered handmade ware now usually known as Cotswold-type Ware (Mellor's Fabric OXAC). The introduction of decorative tableware in the form of

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Plate 13.18 An Early-Medieval sheet copper alloy skillet of seventh to eighth century date, Isle of Wight (PAS IOW-0D5540), *copyright Frank Basford*

tripod pitchers in quartz-tempered Medieval Oxford Ware (Mellor's Fabric OXY) is probably datable to the Norman period.

Much of the pottery from excavations at Winchester has not been published; the 8,000 odd sherds of late Saxon pottery from the Northgate House/Discovery Centre site is the largest published assemblage, and was analysed by John Cotter (Ford and Teague 2011). Here the pottery was dominated by chalk-tempered coarse-ware traditions. Wheelthrown sandy Michelmersh-type wares were also in use, although much less common, and all these wares may have been produced at the nearby Michelmersh kilns (Mepham and Brown 2007). Winchester ware (MWW), probably introduced *c*. 950, was a high quality wheel-thrown glazed sandy ware that is quite exceptional in the region at this date and was presumably used for decorative tableware, including spouted pitchers. As elsewhere, pottery in late Saxon Winchester seems primarily to have been used for storage jars and cooking pots; the Northgate House/ Discovery Centre assemblage also included limited numbers of bowls, cresset lamps and crucibles.

Late Saxon pottery from Southampton was discussed by Duncan Brown (1994), who also studied the pottery assemblage for the recently published French Quarter excavations (Brown and Hardy 2011). Here, the assemblage was dominated by flint-tempered coarse-ware, with much smaller amounts of sandy and organic-tempered sandy wares. The great majority of the assemblage comprised jars/cooking pots, with a few jugs or pitchers, a very few bowls and a single shell lamp. Some regionally imported pottery is represented by Michelmersh-type ware and probable Winchester ware;

Brown comments that the quantities of continental pottery are lower than on other sites, but the usual range of North French types is represented.

Understanding of late Saxon material culture in the region is dominated by assemblages from urban sites. This undoubtedly results in part from the lack of excavated rural settlements of the period in the region, and opportunities are needed to redress this imbalance.

The material culture of late Saxon rural settlements, however, may also have much to tell us about the relationship between town and country, and whether goods were really moving into and out of towns via developing marketing networks. Clearly, the owners of rural estates had access to facilities of their own. At the top of the range, the aristocratic and well-connected late Saxon owners of Faccombe Netherton had a smith working on site, casting gold and copper alloy, gilding with mercury and possibly inlaying with silver (Fairbrother 1990, 62). Ivory carving was carried out at the reformed Benedictine abbey at Eynsham in the early 11th century; two fragments of carved ivory were found, one on walrus ivory and the other on probable elephant ivory. One was clearly unfinished, providing evidence for on-site manufacture (Hardy *et al*. 2003, 267-70). At the other end of the range, a small smithy was present at 10th-century Yarnton; it was probably a small-scale forge used for occasional repairs to estate ironwork, and a number of objects found nearby may have been scrap collected for melting down (Hey 2004, 79).

Pottery seems to have been 'bought in' at all the settlement sites, however. The same fabrics as are evident at Oxford were in use at late Saxon Yarnton, Eynsham and Bicester. The late Saxon pottery assemblages at Manor Farm Drayton, and The Orchard, Brighthampton were smaller, but included the same local types. Unusually the pottery at Drayton also included 6 sherds of Ipswich-Thetford type ware, which is very rare for the region. Also found at the same site was a fine zoomorphic strap-end with silver wire and niello decoration, which is most likely to date from the later 9th century. At Faccombe Netherton the cooking pots were in a range of handmade coarsewares that were presumably obtained from elsewhere, as were the small numbers of identified vessels in Winchester ware and Stamford ware.

Warfare, defences and military installations

There is no doubt that the region in the Anglo-Saxon period was directly involved in the many conflicts of the age. Before we have any written record of the inhabitants of the region, the important finds from Dorchester-on-Thames and Berinsfield (see above) may reflect the presence of Germanic mercenaries and their families brought in to defend the Romano-British town and its community. But for much of the Anglo-Saxon period, at least up to the Viking wars of the 9th century, there is little in the archaeological record that reflects the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* accounts of battles and conquests. No

excavated settlements of the period show any sign of defences, and no battlefields or battlefield cemeteries have been certainly identified.

A number of linear earthworks in the region have sometimes been tentatively ascribed to the post-Roman, pre-Conquest period, but many of these, including Grim's Bank around Silchester, the North Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch earthworks, and Grim's Dyke running west from the Thames at Streatley are now considered likely to be late Iron Age or Roman in origin (Clark 2007; Booth *et al*. 2007, 369-70). The series of parallel earthworks on Greenham and Crookham Commons are of uncertain date, as are linear earthworks to the west of Reading running south from the Thames (see Clark 2007). For Hampshire, David Hinton also notes the ambiguous evidence for re-use of prehistoric earthworks such as the Devil's Ditch earthwork across the Portway road east of Andover, Bokerley Dyke, which still forms part of the boundary between Dorset and Hampshire, and another Devil's Dyke west of North Tidworth. Unusually for the region, David Hinton notes some scattered evidence for post-Roman re-use of the hillfort of Whitsbury Camp (Ellison and Rahtz 1987). The late Bronze Age/early Iron Age hillfort at Taplow was reoccupied in the early to mid Saxon period, although there is currently only limited evidence for the way in which it was being used; the reoccupation of the hillfort at Aylesbury is likely to date to the mid Saxon period and to be associated with the foundation of a minster church there (see above).

The Viking wars and the Anglo-Saxon response are more clearly visible in the archaeological record of the region, which contains important evidence for the study of these events. The establishment of the region's larger *burhs* (later towns) has been discussed above. One of the best examples in the region of a temporary fortification is the *burh* of *Sceaftesige*, assumed on etymological grounds to have been located at Sashes Island, a site in the loop of the Thames adjacent to Cookham (Gelling 1973, 81). A map of the area dated to 1560 shows a bank called the 'warborow' blocking off the river channel closest to the Berkshire bank, which could conceivably have survived from the Anglo-Saxon period (Bootle and Bootle 1990, 10-13). The Danish army overwintered at Reading in 871, and Asser tells us they constructed a fortification between the Thames and Kennet at Reading. Astill (1984, 73) suggests that the most likely site for the camp is the area later occupied by Reading Abbey, with a defensive line running along what was to become the western Abbey Precinct wall as far as the 'Vastern' or 'stronghold'. Two probable Viking burial sites are known in the area, a single individual with a horse and sword found near Reading in 1831, and two men with weapons found at Play Hatch, Sonning in 1966 (Evison 1969).

Following the peace treaty concluded between Alfred and Guthrum, the boundary between English territory and the Danelaw probably ran across the north-eastern corner of Buckinghamshire, and it has been suggested that Newport Pagnell may have been founded as a Danish frontier and trading post (Baines 1986).

Ruth Waller notes that excavations at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight have revealed Anglo-Saxon occupation at the site of the Norman fortified stronghold. It has been suggested, given the strategic importance of the site, that timber buildings found within the lower enclosure of the castle may have been part of a late Saxon *burh* (Young 2000). Although Viking raids on the Island are recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* there is no direct archaeological evidence.

Since the completion of the county contributions for this resource assessment, a new study of the evidence for the Viking wars has been published by John Baker and Stuart Brookes (2013), which focuses on southern England and the kingdom of Wessex and contains a detailed discussion of the Thames Valley. Although Baker and Brookes review the evidence for the well-known major fortified sites, their main concern is to understand how these places functioned within their landscape context, and what this can tell us about the strategy and reality of warfare at the time. A detailed case study of the Thames Valley discusses the location of beacons and look-out sites and the way in which they formed integral links in the communication lines from one stronghold to another. Baker and Brookes also argue that we should not see the civil defence network revealed by the Burghal Hidage as 'the result of a single moment of inspiration', but rather as a stage in the evolution of strategic systems, an evolution that had been underway from the 7th century and was to continue through the 10th century and into the second Viking wars of the reign of Aethelred. The range of different types of stronghold evident in the Burghal Hidage, and the way in which some were replaced, and the burghal system was expanded, suggests to Baker and Brookes a system that incorporated old and new resources, which were adapted, augmented or abandoned as circumstances changed.

While the first Viking wars are the most strongly marked in the archaeological record of the region, the renewed conflict of the late 10th and early 11th century is also being recognised, particularly in some very recent work at Oxford. At Oxford Castle, excavations have revealed evidence comparable to that at Cricklade and elsewhere for the heightening and strengthening of the original rampart (Oxford Archaeology 2006a; in prep). Most recently, the skeletons of up to 37 young males have been found buried in the silted-up ditch of a henge just north of the late Saxon town (see Plate 13.2). The results from radiocarbon dating and isotopic and osteological analysis of these individuals suggest that they were most probably a group of professional soldiers, quite possibly a Viking raiding party, who had been executed in the later 10th century (Pollard *et al*. 2012). Contrary to earlier interpretations, the radiocarbon dating does not support identification of the group as victims of the notorious St Brice's Day massacre in 1002.

Legacy

There are few physical remains of the period in the region. The cathedrals, abbeys and minster churches of the Anglo-Saxons were demolished and rebuilt under the Normans. Elsewhere, with a building tradition based largely on timber, very little survives. Only a few examples of Anglo-Saxon architecture remain in the region, most notably the towers of St Michael's and probably St George's at Oxford, the crypt and apse at All Saints Church, Wing, and the towers at St Swithun's Church at Wickham and St Matthew's Church at Langford. Parts of the late Saxon rampart at Wallingford remain upstanding, and sections of the city wall can still be seen above ground at Winchester, some of it thought to survive from the Roman period although nothing is specifically attributed to the Anglo-Saxons. The Saxon rampart and wall are completely lost above ground at Oxford, although a section of the wall and rampart found in excavation has been preserved *in situ* in a display at Oxford Castle. A number of known burial mounds survive, including Taplow and Asthall, and the prehistoric mound used as a meeting place now known as Scutchamer Knob at East Hendred, near Wantage. Finds from excavations form an important resource in the county and city museum services of the region, and exceptional collections are held at Winchester, Southampton, the Ashmolean at Oxford and the British Museum.

The true legacy of the Anglo-Saxon period lies in its enduring impact on language and culture, settlement, landscape organisation and administration. Place names across the region derive in very great part from the way in which the Anglo-Saxons described the landscape around them and the way in which it was used. The names and identities of the county administrative units and dioceses that form the basis of much of our local and church administration today derive from the Anglo-Saxon period. So too does much of the settlement network. Major towns such as Oxford, Winchester, Southampton, Aylesbury and Reading originated in the mid to late Anglo-Saxon period; Buckingham and Wallingford, although much declined today, were also important places at the time, while many of the region's market towns developed from places that were Anglo-Saxon minsters and royal estate centres. Although displaced from its original Anglo-Saxon site, Windsor remains a major royal residence even today. Across the region, much of the rural settlement framework of parishes, villages and hamlets may have its origins in the estates of the late Saxon period, although the dating of village plans cannot yet be carried back this far in the region. The street plans of towns, however, often preserve considerable elements of the late Saxon layout, with the line of defences often clearly legible even when upstanding elements have disappeared; bridges, fords, streets and market places often remain where they were a thousand years ago, and many churches and their accompanying graveyards still occupy their Anglo-Saxon sites.