

EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY IN SURREY: THOUGHTS ARISING FROM A BOOK AND A CONFERENCE

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Although to the best of my knowledge a full assessment of the archaeological evidence for buildings in Surrey from the 5th to 11th centuries CE has never been attempted, were one to be written it would not make for the most riveting reading. This is because of the quantity and quality of the archaeological data. There are a modest number of sites with undoubted evidence for buildings (e.g. Hurst Park, East Molesey; Andrews 1996), about as many where the evidence is more equivocal (e.g. Althorpe Grove, Battersea; Blackmore and Cowie 2001), and a few more where the excavated pits and gullies may represent structures other than roofed edifices (Woodbines, Kingston upon Thames; Bishop 2002). It is a poor showing when compared to what is known from neighbouring counties, let alone from other parts of the eastern half of England. (This essay purposely omits ecclesiastical buildings, for which the evidence is also far from plentiful and almost entirely from the final century or so of the period.)

But, to turn this around, what might we conclude on the strength of the evidence known from elsewhere about building techniques, settlement morphology and more in Surrey in this period? Can we consider ourselves unlucky that the county has so far failed to yield any truly significant early medieval settlement archaeology, if we employ as our yardstick of significance featuring in discussion in published national-level syntheses? Or might the poverty (often in more than one sense) of the existing data be telling us something significant about and representative of the period?

The following discussion is not an exhaustive cataloguing and analysis of all of the available data. It is a partly thematic, partly chronological review of the evidence from the aggregated historic and current county area in light of insights gained from two things I did in 2019: read Prof John Blair's new monograph *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Blair 2018), and attend the Medieval Settlement Research Group's (MSRG) Spring Conference, 'New Discoveries in the Cambridge Region: Medieval Settlement in the A14 Corridor and its Wider Context', held in Cambridge in late March to present and assess the early medieval results from large-scale archaeological excavations done prior to the construction of a new section of trunk road that were reported too late to make it into Blair's book. In other words, at the time, these two things represented the cutting edge of English early medieval settlement archaeology.

MSRG Spring Conference 2019 speakers and paper titles

Speaker	Title
Richard Mortimer (CgMs)	Excavation of a Middle Saxon 'King's Enclosure' at Conington
Emma Jeffrey (Headland Archaeology)	The development of settlement near Brampton from the Early Saxon to the post-Conquest periods
Lyn Blackmore (MOLA)	Fit for a king? Anglo-Saxon material culture at Conington and in the wider project
Lara Carretero (MOLA)	Medieval plant economy around Conington and Brampton: preliminary archaeobotanical results
John Blair (University of Oxford)	Grid-planning as a tool for decoding Anglo-Saxon settlements
Sam Lucy (University of Cambridge)	Early Anglo-Saxon settlement in East Anglia in context
Christopher Lewis (University of Leicester)	Houghton, a hamlet in a land of villages: the life and death of a medieval settlement
Carenza Lewis (University of Lincoln)	Contrasting contexts, complementary questions: perspectives from non-deserted settlements around the A14

Right time, wrong zone?

The subdivision of England into regions in which medieval rural settlement morphologies and densities differed is nothing new; one only has to think of Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell's Central Province of nucleated villages with flanking Northern & Western and South-eastern Provinces characterised by hamlets and isolated farms (see Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 1–12, including an acknowledgement of the debt owed to Oliver Rackham's earlier identification of a central belt of 'planned landscapes' with 'ancient landscapes' on either side). Prof Blair has entered a new tripartite division into the mix, this time based on excavated archaeological rather than historical geographical data.

Early on in his book, and informed by a nationwide analysis of unpublished "grey literature" reporting the results of development-led archaeology, Blair discusses the uneven distribution of the data and identifies a 'core zone' or 'eastern zone' (the latter being the term used more frequently throughout the book) in which the majority of archaeologically-visible, so-called Early and Mid-Anglo-Saxon-period settlement evidence is situated (Blair 2018, 27-34). This takes in East Anglia, some of the East Midlands, Lincolnshire and the easternmost portions of Yorkshire. In other words it excludes Surrey, and by quite some margin. The historic county area instead falls within what Blair (2018, 72) refers to as a 'middle

zone’ between the ‘British west’ and ‘eastern zone’, one that he characterises in the following terms;

[It] had furnished burials, buildings and settlements in the Anglo-Saxon mode before 600, and princely barrow burials and “great hall complexes” during circa 600-650; it is the area from which “ordinary” post-hole and post-in-trench structures withdrew after 600, and to parts of which they spread again after 900.’ (Blair 2018, 72)

Seen in this new national context, or considered as I did over the course of a day conference which focused predominantly on data from Cambridgeshire and to a lesser extent the wider East Anglian region, it should be absolutely no surprise that historic Surrey (or indeed the present administrative county area including Spelthorne) has yielded so little in the way of early medieval settlement archaeology, despite it having been the site of several large-scale programmes of excavation (e.g. North Park Farm, Bletchingley — Marples and Poulton 2019; Wey Manor Farm, Weybridge — Hayman, Jones, Marples and Robertson 2015; and, outside of the historic county area, Hengrove Farm, Staines — Poulton, Hayman and Marples 2017).

But to stop there and conclude that the known data are entirely representative of the settlements that existed in Surrey between the 5th and 11th centuries (to stray beyond Blair’s chronological termini of around the years 600 and 1100) is perhaps premature. One reason for thinking this is because, unlike Cambridgeshire and by extension the entirety of Blair’s ‘eastern zone’, Surrey is not badly set when it comes to documentary testimony from the period, beginning in the late 7th century and continuing steadily if unevenly through to the time of Domesday Book and beyond. Consequently, we get infrequent and all-to-often opaque references to what are hard to avoid terming settlements: for example, from the reign of Offa of Mercia (757-96), *in regione Suthregeona . villa regali . nomine Freoricburna* ‘in the region/district of Surrey [at] the royal vill named Freoricburna’ (S 144; Briggs 2018, A8–A9), or *villam quæ confucto nomine Beaddingtun appellatur* ‘a town commonly known as Beddington’ at which St Æthelwold died in 984 (text and translation as per Lapidge and Winterbottom 1991, 62–63). These references, though of considerable historical interest, tell us nothing about the morphologies of the settlements in question, nor about the functions and designs of their component buildings or structures.

Place-names offer another source of insight regarding the built environment, although the only unproblematic example from the pre-Norman Conquest period is Barnes ‘the barns’ (it is attested in an Old English (OE) text of circa 1000 as *Of Bærnun*; S 1458a; *CDEPN*, 37; Kelly 2004, 192, 197-98). Others on slightly later reliable record give morphological pointers, but such evidence must be viewed objectively. For example, Albury and Burstow both incorporate forms of OE *burh* ‘stronghold’, implying some form of fortified space defined by earthworks and/or a palisade, but these are complicated by the fact that the use of the term may have arisen from proximity to such a feature — moreover, one that could have

pre-dated the early Middle Ages — as opposed to being descriptive of the settlement itself (see generally Parsons and Styles 2000, 74–79, and for Burstow, Dodgson 1966).

We know, therefore, that in Surrey there were settlements — the neutral term ‘central place’ would seem overly cautious for the above-mentioned examples — at which members of the most elite levels of early medieval English society were occasionally present. Whatever their precise nature(s), these places were almost certainly very different to the ones in which the lower social orders lived, about which the already-scanty documentary record has even less to say. Place-names add a little bit more to the picture, but provide at best brief testimony and all too often their original significance is ambiguous or wholly obscure. If nothing else, the above serves to show that there is no chance of understanding the rural settlements of Surrey in this period through the documentary record alone.

Settlements that weren’t settlements?

The earliest extant text pertaining to Surrey (albeit preserved in a later manuscript and in a form that betrays a complex story of reworking; see the discussion by Kelly 2015, 91–104) is the charter of the early 670s by which the minster community at Chertsey received a substantial landed endowment from Frithuwald ‘sub-king of the province of the Surrey people’. The grant is recorded as having being promulgated at a gathering of important political and ecclesiastical leaders;

iuxta uillam Fritheuuoldi iuxta [...] fossatam Fullingadich “next to the vill of Frithuwald next to the ditch [called] *Fullingadic*” (S 1165; Kelly 2015, 90, 94, 102)

What are we to make of this information, and the fact the meeting did not take place in the vill of the sub-king, but at a location adjacent to it? The location of Frithuwald’s vill has yet to be found (suggestions range from St George’s Hill, Weybridge to somewhere in the Kingston/Dittons area) so there is no way of knowing how it compared to other elite centres of the period, such as the excavated great hall complexes at Lyminge in Kent and Cowdery’s Down in Hampshire (Blair 2018, 112, 117, 120–21). It was clearly a centre associated with Frithuwald, at which he chose to perform a key act derived from the political power he held (although it could have been one of several vills he controlled and peregrinated between — this one being the one characterised by being situated close to the *Fullingadic*). But does this have confirm that it was a well-established settlement made up of a set of permanent buildings?

Twice in the early chapters of his book, Blair draws together an impressive body of documentary references to tents in which kings, aristocrats and leading ecclesiastics stayed during major assemblies held in open-ground locations that often required days of travel to access (2018, 65–67, 108–111). In conjunction with negative archaeological evidence for structural remains associated with clearly-significant sites of above-average activities, be they royal vills, assembly-places or market sites, it does raise major question marks over the automatic acceptance of *uillam Fritheuuoldi* as a great hall complex — indeed, it chal-

lenges the fundamental conception (at least in my mind) of a settlement as a collection of perennial structures.

A reference in the 8th-century *Vita Wilfridi*, or Life of St Wilfrid, to the vill of King Æthelwulf of the South Saxons as ‘his own vill in which he lived’ up to *circa* 680 does suggest he chose to dwell there for longer than as if it were an agglomeration of temporary tented structures (Blair 2018, 131; some degree of literary effect must be allowed for).

Frithuwald’s vill next to the *Fullingadic* might well be conceptualised in similar terms, albeit it should be emphasised that the relevant textual evidence is much less specific than for Æthelwulf’s contemporary vill. By contrast, the decision to host the assembly — attended by 12 named witnesses, most if not all of whom would have been accompanied by a retinue — at a site distinct from the vill may have been a practical decision arising from a lack of space inside or in their immediate environs of any of its buildings or non-permanent structures. Blair has previously cited the locational information given about the assembly convened by Frithuwald, along with another grant made in 809 *iuxta monasterium quod dicitur Crogedena* ‘next to the minster called Croydon’, as implicit of ‘open-ground assemblies beside establishments which lacked space to house them’ (Blair 2005, 279; S 164; Brooks and Kelly 2013, 495–96). Perhaps the tents of non-local attendees besides Frithuwald and his retinue were pitched there, and consequently the main order of business was also conducted outside of the vill.

In this period, no royal vill was inhabited year-round by a (sub-)king and his extended household, but to see the great hall complex as being the only form that the attested royal vill took in this period may not be as secure as once imagined (the list in Sawyer 1983, 289–98 makes for interesting re-reading in this light). Certainly, to read the words *uillam Fritheuuoldi* as proof of the existence of a permanently-occupied sub-royal palace in late 7th-century Surrey would be well wide of the mark.

Non-earth-fast buildings

As well as shining a light upon the written evidence for elite use of tents in early medieval England, Blair also provides in his book an invaluable discussion of non-earth-fast building techniques and their implications so far as the archaeological under-representation of buildings in this period is concerned. He cuts to the heart of the matter by observing that archaeologists have only foundations to study for this period, and inevitably this has led to such remains taking on a distorted level of importance: no archaeological evidence for a building, no building (see Blair 2018, 52). A plethora of techniques, from non-wooden wall materials such as turf and cob through to ground-level timber-working solutions like root mantles and interlocking ‘laftwork’, all could leave little or no trace archaeologically (Blair 2018, 51–53). Why these grew to be favoured in the ‘middle zone’ in the period *circa* 600–900 is far from clear, but it does not mean that there was a regression in architectural ambition and execution so far as the above-ground structures were concerned.

However, before “archaeologically-invisible” traditions of building construction are accepted as a comforting explanation for Surrey’s current dearth of early medieval settlement archaeology (aside perhaps from 5th- to 7th-century sunken-featured buildings), note must be taken of the presence of several nationally-important excavated sites in adjoining counties, some very close to Surrey’s historic borders. Blair pays considerable attention to all of the following in *Building Anglo-Saxon England*: Wraysbury (Buckinghamshire); Old Windsor (Berkshire); Westminster (Greater London); Cowdery’s Down (Hampshire); and, a little further afield, Bishopstone (Sussex). In every case, an explanation can be advanced for why the settlement can be considered unique or highly unusual given the present state of knowledge, but at the end of the day few if any of them represent the outcome of circumstances that could not have been replicated in Surrey.

A conclusion much like Blair’s about non-earth-fast building techniques has already been drawn in respect of the earliest medieval settlements in Surrey a number of times by Rob Poulton — first over 20 years ago, in fact, in relation to the earliest phase of occupation at Bridge Street in Godalming, of 9th-century if not possibly slightly earlier origin (Poulton 1998, 205). Most recently, he has contended that, in and around Surrey, ‘settlement at this period had a relatively low ground impact and that what survives archaeologically does not reflect the lived reality’ (Marples and Poulton 2019, 182). It would certainly help to explain the greater preponderance of non-structural features filled with domestic-type refuse of early medieval date found in Surrey, such as Rectory Grove in Clapham (Densem and Seely 1982; Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 22–27). But to what extent are we seeing the full picture from the excavations that do find such remains?

An illustration of a possible ‘lived reality’ at odds with excavated archaeological remains is provided by the artistic reconstruction of the Hurst Park “settlement” at its peak produced by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU), which shows sunken-featured buildings (SFBs) intermixed with “halls” and both surrounded by enclosures formed of wooden fences (published in Poulton, Hayman and Marples 2017, 300 Fig. 10.15). It seems to have gone unremarked until now that far more SFBs have been found in the historic Surrey county area than earth-fast timber buildings (the same point has been made with regard to the evidence from Greater London by Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 141–42). The question becomes whether this disparity is a meaningful original one, i.e. is representative of the proportion of SFBs relative to other contemporaneous types of building, halls etc., or a product of how early medieval settlement remains have been identified and investigated in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Hurst Park excavation uncovered seven or eight SFBs of 6th- or 7th-century date, set well apart from one another (16 metres being the smallest distance between two of them; see Andrews 1996, 71 Fig. 44). Thus it is conceivable that buildings and fences could have stood in between them. Shallower cut features may well have been destroyed given a ‘considerable degree of truncation’ was noted at Hurst Park, with as much as 40 centime-

tres of gravel removed by medieval and later land uses, especially in the ‘central—southern’ part of the site (Andrews 1996, 61).

The majority of the early medieval features at Hurst Park, however, lay to the north of the area where truncation was most severe. Furthermore, a number of cut features attributable to this period were excavated. Two post-holes of up to 50cm depth were found at opposite ends of feature SFB 69, in addition to the examples within the cuts of other SFBs. A sub-circular pit of slightly wider dimensions but shallower depth (40cm) than the SFB 69 post holes was also found 50 metres beyond the western limit of the SFBs. Lastly, the excavation uncovered a number of shallow ditch-like linear features, seldom surviving to more than 20cm depth, undated but positioned in ways that mirror adjacent early medieval features in ways that suggest contemporaneity (Andrews 1996, 69, 75–76).

These features would imply that, if “halls” and fences did occupy some of the spaces in between the sunken-featured buildings at Hurst Park, all of their associated post holes or sill-beam slots were shallower than the post holes, pits and ditches that were found. Of course, an alternative conclusion would be that there were no such structures, or at least not the number and/or range envisaged in the SCAU drawing. It is may or may not be significant that Surrey’s only known earth-fast buildings of comparable date are known from not so far away at South Lane, Kingston (6th century; Hawkins, Cain and Wooldridge 2002) and Roehampton (7th century; Dawkes 2012). At neither site were they found co-located with sunken-featured buildings, which may well be meaningful (although the extents of the excavated areas may be a major contributory factor here; the South Lane site in particular was comparatively small), but nevertheless it is unarguable that the two building-types existed concurrently in the same district.

At a micro level, could it be that the groups of SFBs to date uncovered at several places in Surrey represent the non-domestic zones of larger and more complex “zoned” settlements, such as Dominic Powlesland has proposed in respect of the one at West Heslerton in Yorkshire (Powlesland 2003; further to which see Blair 2018, 140–41)? This is not to exclude the possible co-existence of earth-fast buildings in the immediate area of the SFBs, just that there was a sufficient spatial dislocation between the two building types as to mean that an archaeological excavation based upon a typically-sized development site in present-day Surrey or South London on balance would not necessarily be sufficiently extensive as to cover both “zones”. This does require settlements, or their component “zones”, to have remained fixed in their locations rather than “shift” or “wander” across the landscape as has been posited in respect of several excavated examples — most emblematically at Mucking in Essex — but if what has been found thus far in Surrey represent single phases of activity then it is possible the buildings were abandoned simultaneously for replacements on a new site (see Hamerow 2012, 67–70, including footnote 2 for a brief comment on hints of a very diffuse settlement pattern on the gravels north of Heathrow Airport).

It might be contended that this raises a more fundamental point; where SFBs are found alone without any corresponding evidence for house-like buildings, can groups of them truly be described as settlements? Or does a settlement have to comprise buildings in which people “lived” as opposed to “worked”, by doing things like eating and sleeping? Very probably this is to misconstrue the early medieval world through a 21st-century mindset and eyes, but nevertheless it brings us back to the issue of the present numerical imbalance between SFBs and other, more obviously domestic types of building represented in Surrey’s 5th- to 7th-century archaeological record, and so to differential settlement topography as one of maybe a multiplicity of reasons for why this should be.

The earliest “medieval” settlements

In moving away from “invisible” to “visible” settlement archaeology, this essay will employ a broad chronological approach alongside a thematic one. Blair’s book has a chronological start-point of around the year 600 CE, meaning that it largely omits almost two centuries of “post-Roman” settlement archaeology. By contrast, such data were very much to the fore in a number of papers at the MSRG conference, based on the results of the fieldwork in the A14 Corridor as well as other East Anglian archaeological research projects, especially the contributions by Emma Jeffrey, Sam Lucy and Carenza Lewis.

It was interesting to hear Prof Lewis report that Currently Occupied Rural Settlement project test-pitting frequently finds Romano-British and “Anglo-Saxon” pottery from the same portions of settlements, often the centres of villages and near churches. Such coincidences that led her to conclude most of the investigated settlements have at least one (small) area of continuous Late Roman to early medieval activity (including in the A14 area) — although the excavated SFBs found close to the churches and at Mortlake and Lambeth do not appear to perpetuate Roman-era occupation, rather post-date it by a number of decades (for Mortlake, see Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 50). Such nuances may not be apparent in data derived from test pitting alone.

Dr Lucy offered another very valuable perspective on 5th-century evidence. Based on her work on Mucking (most pertinently Lucy 2016), she made a case for a number of Late Roman-type pottery fabrics (including Portchester D, Oxfordshire red/brown slipped and Mayen wares) being produced, consumed and deposited a number of decades later than has previously been accepted, into the early 5th century, hence the presence of sherds as apparently non-residual artefacts alongside “Saxon” pottery within the basal fills of SFBs. There is a well-recognised mid-/late Roman tradition of sunken-featured buildings in Kent (especially on Thanet) but these are distinct in form from later SFBs, including all the excavated examples at Mucking. Therefore, the issue would appear to be with the dating of the ceramics, and the crucial timeframe is very much the first half of the 5th century.

Mucking is an unusual site in terms of the extent to which it has been investigated (and published), yet the not-infrequent mentions of its 5th-century cemetery in the same breath as the ones at Mitcham and Croydon (e.g. Bird 2004, 171) offer a modicum of encourage-

ment to do the same in respect of its early settlement evidence. More concretely, the presence of Portchester D ware in the basal fills of the earliest 5th-century SFBs at Mucking should prompt fresh contemplation of its period of production, not least in the Surrey region, given it was produced in the excavated kilns at Overwey near Tilford and no doubt elsewhere in the county area (Clark 1949). The three kilns at Overwey were assigned a very tight dating to the years *circa* 363–68 (Clark 1949, 55) but, even if accurate, of course this does not apply to the wider local pottery industry, whether producing Portchester D ware or Alice Holt/Farnham grey wares.

Dr Lucy was critical of some previous readings of supposedly primary fills of SFBs as overly simple, stressing that the basal fill of such a feature may be thin and artefact-light, but has much more to say about actual dating of the feature than the bulk of the fill containing later material, possibly redeposited from middens. It is a source of regret that more precise information about the contexts in which Late Roman pottery including sherds of Portchester D and Oxfordshire slipped wares were found in some of the SFBs at Tulse Hill has not been published (see Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 32). It is to be hoped that in the future more attention is paid to the issue during excavation of SFBs found in Surrey — or, to take a more charitable approach, to the accurate and unambiguous presentation of the excavation data. This is especially true of “precocious” places like Mitcham and Croydon, which come closest to resembling Mucking in the historic county area (cf. Swift 2019, 11 and 41 for comparable early dates of Quoit Brooch Style metalwork and the graves in which they were found at Mitcham and Mucking). Mitcham has already yielded one SFB, albeit probably of 6th-century date, and with only residual Roman-period ceramic fragments in its fill (Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 34–35).

The cessation of Portchester D ware and Alice Holt/Farnham grey wares production is hard to date given coinage no longer provides such a reliable chronological framework after the start of the 5th century (see Bird 2004, 170), but the same can be said of the historically-derived periodic end/start dates of 410 and 449 CE. In Surrey and elsewhere, SFBs are a building type absent from the Romano-British architectural repertoire, and as such represent an early medieval innovation, one for which in-migration of people from continental Europe is the obvious explanation (cf. Hamerow 2012, 53). This serves to show why paying more rigorous attention to archaeological context offers so much potential for refinement of chronologies in this period.

SFBs: function follows form?

In terms of the functions of early medieval SFBs, it is now clear that few if any were houses but instead served craft/industrial/ancillary purposes. They are often associated with weaving and textile production. This was certainly adjudged to be the case at Conington and other contemporaneous settlements excavated as part of the A14 Corridor project. Both Jeffrey and Blackmore in their respective presentations made connections between SFBs and weaving/textile production; the latter went so far as to conclude it was the main industry undertaken in the excavated settlements (with the exception of the one at Bramp-

ton). Blackmore also commented that the recovery of shears and finer bone “gulley” pins from SFBs at Conington may indicate cloth finishing was exclusively undertaken there and not in neighbouring settlements.

The best evidence in this regard found in historic Surrey comes from Lambeth Palace, where an at-present unpublished excavation uncovered a single SFB containing among other things three antler thread pickers, a bone comb and, most remarkably, ‘31 lead loomweights, closely spaced in a broad row against the north-east edge of the building, suggesting they had fallen from a loom positioned against the wall’ (as per Howe, Jackson and Maloney 2014, 263). Blackmore observed that the distribution of such artefacts in other SFBs indicates that weaving was undertaken on the north-west side of the building to get the best light, but given the size of the Lambeth example (4 x 1.8 metres — its orientation is unknown to the author), the precise provenance of the loom weights is somewhat relative.

Important additional factors that call into question the automatic acceptance of weaving-related objects denoting SFBs as buildings used for weaving have been highlighted by Prof Helena Hamerow (2012, 62–64), including the possibilities that SFBs were used for storing looms and/or other materials (notably grain); that they played host to multiple craft activities; and that weaving could also have taken place in earth-fast buildings. The presence of an oven attached to the south side of an SFB at Mortlake reinforces that the building type served multiple purposes (Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 50-52; cf. Hamerow 2012, 63 for example of a large *Grubenhäuser* in Lower Saxony that incorporated a stone oven as well as yielding 104 loomweights).

A full assessment of the sizes and material cultures of SFBs (encompassing both obvious and more questionable examples) in historic Surrey would be a valuable enterprise, particularly given there is some evidence from other parts of England linking larger-sized SFBs to specialised cloth production by the 7th century (Hamerow 2012, 158). Without seeking to pre-empt in any way the findings of such a study, it is too tempting not to pass comment here on the fact that the latest-dated SFB in historic Surrey, found on the site now occupied by Kingston upon Thames Crown Court and ascribed to the 7th century. Appropriately, five loom-weight fragments were found in the feature — yet its dimensions are below average for an SFB in the Greater London region (Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 110–111, 114, 138–40). A case of mistaken identity, or something more meaningful?

Enclosed settlements and spaces

Moving forward in time a little, Blair considers ‘circular’ space and concentric and radial plans at multiple places in his book, although, once again, Surrey fails to be the venue for any circular/radially-planned enclosure he identifies (Blair 2018, 143–48; it must be added that none of his examples are from south-east England). There are, however, a small number of sites in the county that, even if they do not meet Blair’s criteria for inclusion, may have early medieval origins.

Enclosures with curvilinear boundaries comprise another subject area where the same question of “settlement or not?” could and should be asked. Fresh consideration is even more necessary in light of suggestions made by Dennis Turner almost 20 years ago. He identified a grouping of Surrey villages that he had dubbed, albeit with a pre-emptory caveat about the name, ‘Early “Enclosure Settlements”’ (Turner 2001, 15). Arguably more problematic than the acknowledged shortcomings of the name is the lack of clarity surrounding his cited examples, with no accompanying plans and opaque verbal descriptions. Some of the examples are reasonably obvious; the ‘vaguely circular’ enclosure at Ewell, for instance, is readily identifiable as the land within the one-way system of the B2200 made up of sections of Spring Street, Chessington and London Roads encircling Bourne Hall (see plan depicting its existence in 1408 in Deedes 1913, facing xxii). The claimed enclosure at Hambledon, on the other hand, despite being described as ‘rather larger than the others’ and excluding the church (as well as being embanked and sub-rectangular: Turner 2001, 16), is all but impossible to pinpoint — unless it is commensurate with a rather marginal-looking bloc partly framed by lanes running between Hambledon Road and Buss’s Common.

Such is the diversity within Turner’s claimed grouping that it is legitimate to ask if framing these topographical features in terms of settlement genesis and morphology rather than as enclosed spaces is not to approach the issue in the wrong way. It was unfortunate that Turner’s essay appeared the year before a major study of English rural settlement patterns that included an extended discussion of curving ring-fenced ‘agrarian structures’, which very likely would have clarified the issue considerably (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 85–116). More curious is his failure to make the link with already-published work on apparently early holdings defined by arc-shaped boundaries in the Surrey Weald at Rumbeams in Ewhurst and Hascombe (English 1997).

A small but clear Surrey example of a curvilinear enclosure for which there is good historical evidence for its early existence but none for any internal occupation can be found near Bisley, adjacent to Warbury Lane and immediately north of Hill Place Farm. This lies in the vicinity of a landscape feature attested as (*to*) *eceles hamme* in the vernacular boundary description of the Pyrford estate contained in a credible diploma text of 956 (S 621; Kelly 2001, 267). Blair drew attention to the first element as a possible reflex of Latin *ecclesia* ‘church’, intimating a site of Romano-Christian significance (Blair 1991, 111, 112 Fig. 29; also Blair 2005, 378 note 36). This reading, though attractive and linguistically not impossible, has been superseded by one based on OE (*i*)*ece/ls* ‘estate addition’ (Kelly 2001, 270). It fits the estate-edge situation of the feature in question, and the notion of opportunistic enclosure to take advantage of limited areas of “better” land. More than that, it also chimes with some of the identified senses of the other name element, OE *hamm*: ‘cultivated plot on the edge of woodland or moor’, ‘enclosed plot’ (Gelling and Cole 2014, 51–52).

This is not to say such “structures” excluded all habitation. Detailed work by Stephen Rippon on the example at Puxton in Somerset identified, in addition to the former boundaries of small fields and paddocks, an earthwork platform that yielded evidence of occupation from at least the 10th century when subject to archaeological investigation (see Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 114, 115 Fig. 4.21). But they do appear to have been created to define the extent of an area of land for farming (be that agrarian or pastoral production), not the limits of buildings and associated structures. There can be no doubt that there are more features of this type awaiting identification in the Surrey landscape (others would appear to exist in the Bisley—Knaphill area, and Dr Judie English put forward multiple examples in both Chiddingfold and Cranleigh parishes in her contribution to the Medforum's recent Medieval Landscape study day), which increases the chances that one such embanked enclosure might be investigated archaeologically, to the extent that not only can a date of creation be identified but also a representative picture obtained of the internal land-uses in its earliest phases of existence.

A not-insubstantial number of curvilinear enclosures identified in England contain known or suspected monastic foundations, including a few, such as Lambourn in Berkshire and Bishopstone in Sussex, not too far distant from Surrey (cf. Blair 2005, 197–98; for Bishopstone see Thomas 2008, 336–37). No such enclosure can be traced to the same extent in Surrey. There are suggestions of a curvilinear enclosure in the topography of the south-west quarter of medieval Guildford town (above all the curve of Castle Street/Chapel Street) but this is half the size of published curvilinear minster enclosures (something not picked up by Briggs 2009, 10). It has been taken time and again to represent a pre-burghal settlement nucleus, incorporated into the new burh established in the second quarter of the 10th century during the reign of Æthelstan (O'Connell and Poulton 1984, 45 Fig. 19; dating of burghal foundation as per Hill 2000). Recent archaeological scholarship raises the distinct possibility that it is actually a secondary element in the proto-urban topography of Guildford, possibly created as late as the 11th century; I will explore this matter in detail in a future article.

Turner analogised his ‘enclosure settlements’ to the enclosures around minsters (2001, 15). Despite the historic county having had a healthy population of minsters of various types (indeed, almost certainly more than those listed in Blair 1991, 92–103), he struggled to perceive very much of significance in their topographical contexts, either in terms of surviving earthworks or boundary lines, or perceptible through historic maps or excavated archaeological features (Turner 2001, 15). He did at least claim ‘traces of a possible enclosure at Old Woking’, site of a minster recorded twice in the 8th century, a brief statement that has had a major influence over the ongoing archaeological work there (Turner 2001, 15; Blair 1991, 95; Savage and Savage 2016). This enclosure — or possibly enclosures, to follow the published depiction of the constituent boundaries (Savage and Savage 2016, 4 Fig. 1) — had a rectilinear, not curvilinear, plan. A non-rounded perimeter would not be unexpected for a monastic foundation with roots perhaps as far back as the 7th century; Blair

(2005, 196) has argued rectilinear enclosures have been under-represented in previous studies.

Recent archaeological work has all but fatally undermined this hypothesis. The one point on the postulated enclosure boundary at Old Woking from where suitably early evidence has been recovered (a deposit of animal bones, subjected to radiocarbon dating that returned results in the range cal AD 663–721 at 65% probability) has been proposed to be the boundary of a precursor ‘pagan Saxon religious site ... taken over for construction of the first Christian church in Woking’ (Savage and Savage 2016, 7). This interpretation may be regarded as somewhat speculative, and must be reconciled in the first instance with the admittedly limited evidence for sites of likely non-Christian religious practices (Blair 1995). More fundamentally, the findings of further test pitting in 2019 have spurred the conclusion that the boundaries of Old Woking churchyard, of which the south and east ones were deemed “monastic” in origin by Turner, date from the first half of the 12th century (reported in Rose and Bond 2020, 17).

The erection of testable hypotheses is an important part of archaeological research, just as fieldwork is for “truthing” them, but Old Woking acts as a reminder that flimsy proposals founded largely upon late and/or indirect evidence and with little critical consideration of the wider context should not become influential to a disproportionate extent. The same applies to Turner’s broader notion of ‘Early “Enclosure Settlements”’, few if any of which merit primary interpretation as settlements.

Kingstons

If there is one place in historic Surrey with what could be characterised as having a substantial early medieval archaeological record, it is Kingston upon Thames. The evidence has been collated and considered more than once before (Hawkins 1998; Briggs 2018), but new discoveries continue to be made and published (Good 2019). What makes Kingston even more interesting is that it also appears several times in documentary sources between the 9th and 11th centuries — although there is an unfortunate mismatch between the dates of the archaeological and historical evidence (Briggs 2018, A23). Furthermore, the place-name Kingston derives from OE *Cyningestūn*, a recurrent compound that has been the subject of an exceptional quantity of scholarship over recent decades (above all Bourne 2017, but also Hough 1997, Probert 2008 and Brookes 2016).

Several of the papers given at the MSRSG conference dwelt exclusively or substantially on a site excavated as part of the A14 archaeological mitigation work at Conington in Cambridgeshire. Here, the totality of a ‘fortified settlement’ of the 7th–8th centuries was revealed, characterised by a ‘defensive ditch’ interrupted at one point by ‘an imposing gated entrance’ (MOLA Headland Infrastructure 2018). In his conference paper, Richard Mortimer also mentioned a biologically-female deviant burial, buried in a prone position in the gateway. On the basis of all this evidence and more, it has been proposed that this settlement was the *cyningestūn* recalled in the place-name Conington.

Taking a very objective position, in the absence of equivalent archaeological work conducted within the present village of Conington, it would be premature to accept without reservation the equation of the excavated settlement with the source of the place-name. Notwithstanding this significant lacuna, what has been uncovered at the A14 site in Conington parish does appear to correlate positively with certain suggested characteristics of *cyningestūnas* proposed in previous published research. Therefore, can the evidence from Conington be compared at all with what has been found at or is otherwise known about Kingston upon Thames?

Unfortunately, the sharply-contrasting natures of the archaeological work done at the two locations largely precludes this, although one or two more general points can be made. The low-lying nature of the so-called 'central Kingston island' at the confluence of the Hogsmill River and Thames, i.e. the most probable site of the original *cyningestūn*, means the ditches found at 78 Eden Street (5th to 6th century in date: Good 2019, 75–76, 97–98) and 29 Thames Street (8th to 10th century: Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 114) may have served dual purposes as boundary and drainage features. The Eden Street ditch was wide (5 metres at one point; see Good 2019, 76 Fig. 3) but appears to have defined a relatively small area devoid of contemporary features or finds, like a field or paddock rather than a fortified enclosure. The Conington settlement, by contrast, was sited atop a gravel ridge and as a result its ditches were potent manifestations of protection and authority, not utilitarian drainage infrastructure (MOLA Headland Infrastructure 2018).

At the risk of straying into the realm of making a contention on the basis of negative evidence, it was interesting to hear Lyn Blackmore's conclude in her conference paper that the excavated material from the Conington settlement was not of out-and-out royal quality, as might be anticipated had it served as an intermittent royal residence. Instead, aspects of its material culture such as the evidence for cloth finishing are compatible with the interpretation of it having a central role within a royal estate. This would accord with the situation at Kingston, which seems to have been subordinate to the nearby royal vill of *Freoricburna* until the late 9th century or later (Briggs 2018, A16, A20). But the absence of elite material culture of 7th-, 8th- and 9th-century date from the 'central island' must be seen in the context of a general paucity archaeological finds of this period — one that individual objects like the fragment of loom weight from 82 Eden Street (Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 109) cannot overcome. Much more new evidence (and perhaps reevaluation of existing excavated assemblages) will be required before truly meaningful statements can be made about the degrees of similarity and difference between the material cultures of 7th/8th-century Conington and Kingston.

Grid planning

The careful laying out of settlements in axially or morphologically regular ways, from the alignments of buildings within 7th-century great hall complexes through to later planned nucleated villages, has been covered by an enormous (and still growing) body of literature.

What Blair has done in recent years, latterly in conjunction with Stephen Rippon and Christopher Smart, is to show that there is an extra layer of precision in some early medieval settlement layouts, arising from planning in modules set out on a measured grid using a *groma* (rather than less accurate ropes, as were employed for later planned settlements; cf. Blair 2018, 387). Grid-planning of settlements appears to have been practiced in two phases: *circa* 600–800, and *circa* 940–1050. It is a topic that appears in many places throughout Blair’s book (with a useful summary discussion on pages 148–49), and was also the subject of his presentation at the MSRG conference (plus is explored in even greater depth in another new book of which he is a co-author: Blair, Rippon and Smart 2020).

Blair perceives the use of an ‘Anglian’ short perch of 15 feet, and less commonly a “West Saxon” long perch (ultimately of Frankish origin) of 18 feet, to lay out settlements on co-axial grids. In his book he provides examples of excavated sites from counties adjacent to Surrey, such as Lyminge in Kent and Faccombe Netherton in Hampshire (Blair 2018, 121, 369; in his conference presentation he also offered highlighted Hatch Furlong in Basingstoke as an unusual example of a settlement showing regularity across one axis only), but offers no instances located within its historic bounds.

It is surely for reason of the numerical and areal limitations of the excavated data that grid-planning has not been identified in any early medieval settlements in historic Surrey thus far. It might be contended that it would have been found at Althorpe Grove had the excavations been more extensive, given Battersea’s credible links to Barking, a major monastic centre between the late 7th and mid-9th centuries (Blackmore and Cowie 2001, 70–71, 86–87). Croydon, another place with well-attested early elite connections, and where excavations conducted in the vicinity of the Minster were much smaller in scale yet uncovered one gully dated to the period *circa* 650–850, could conceivably be another candidate (Drewett 1974, 24–26; S 164; Brooks and Kelly 2013, 496).

Grid-planned settlements, even when laid out using the same perch measure module, did not inevitably have the same morphology, and the technique certainly wasn’t one that went hand-in-hand with nucleation — instead it seems to have formed the framework for later, higher-density arrangements of internal boundaries, plots and buildings within some nucleated settlements (Blair 2018, 318). For this reason, if future archaeological excavations do not reveal evidence of gromatic surveying in an abandoned early medieval settlement site in Surrey, careful examination and measurement of the boundaries shown on historic maps covering the county’s historic villages and towns might do so.

Compact nucleations, ‘semi-nucleations’, and isolated farms

The innate attractions of nucleated villages (or, to go one step further, the ‘classic midland village’; Blair 2018, 282) as objects of study is understandable, but has come at the expense of the development of an equivalent depth of understanding of other medieval rural settlement types. This is particularly true of a region like Surrey where nucleated villages

were the exception, never the rule, and which has suffered further from a lack of scholarly scrutiny in regional studies (even Rippon 2008). Nationally, debates about the century in which early medieval nucleated settlements came into being have largely given way to a more nuanced understanding of early 'strip-plot' frameworks developing into or being eclipsed by 'concentrated toft-and-croft villages' in England in the mid-11th to mid 12th centuries (Blair 2018, 409 — a view supported by Prof Lewis in her conference presentation). What, then, was the standard settlement form in Surrey between the 7th and 11th centuries?

In contradistinction to compact nucleations, Blair introduces the idea of 'semi-nucleations' — namely, a 'semi-articulated village mode [...] normal over much of England between the seventh and eleventh centuries' (Blair 2018, 282) — as a way to characterise the most common type of settlement in this period. These were loose groupings of farmsteads set about 100 metres or more apart from one another (and so sometimes extending for a kilometre or more) associated with crofts and paddocks, beyond which lay tracts of less-intensively exploited land. Blair stresses that these were found mostly in his 'eastern zone', the evidence for them being 'much thinner' outside of that core (Blair 2018, 294). Furthermore, his examples are derived from large-scale excavations of the sort that, as has been pointed out already, have so far failed to yield any significant early medieval settlement remains in Surrey, or at least ones consistent with the 'semi-nucleation' paradigm (for discussion of the enigmatic series of features at Wey Manor Farm, see Hayman, Jones, Marples and Robertson 2015, 125).

Blair acknowledges that for the most part 'we glimpse just tiny fragments' of semi-nucleated settlements as a result of archaeological excavation (2018, 301). Have such fragments been glimpsed in Surrey? Very probably, although so limited is our view that there is no standout candidate. More to the point, the morphology and setting of a settlement cannot be determined by a handful of features uncovered, very likely not in their entirety, in a small number of evaluation trenches or test pits. Waterloo House in Epsom, where a watching brief on geotechnical trial pits recovered evidence for an agricultural soil dated to *circa* 900–1050 along with a pit and gravel/flint/clay surface of comparable date, exemplifies this (Sabel 2000; Surrey HER Monument 4797).

To see what little has been found as the remains of truly isolated farms may be seem like a more conservative explanatory approach, and one that would correlate well with the later medieval settlement patterns found in many parts of Surrey (Blair 1991, 62). However, it runs up against Blair's startling comment that 10th- and 11th-century isolated farm sites 'remain stubbornly elusive archaeologically' (2018, 328). Rural pottery sherds may be explicable as manuring scatters, not the signatures of abandoned settlement sites — as was argued by Orton (1989, 171) in respect of most early medieval pottery sherds found at Carshalton. I am not aware of any field-walking exercise undertaken in Surrey that has been able to report the discovery of a site which yielded a volume and density of pottery sherds consistent with a site of pre-Norman occupation as opposed to cultivation.

Different approaches, using historical and place-name evidence, may conversely allow us to perceive rural settlements in Surrey in this period more clearly than the at-best meagre archaeological data. Charter bounds sometimes contain names that are equivalent to later settlement names — for example, Balham ((*to, fram*) *bælgan ham*; S 645) and Hollicks near Weybridge ((*of*) *Haleuuik*; S 353) — but this is not in itself probative of their existence in the 10th/11th century. Indeed, in the case of Hollicks, archaeological evaluation found the site of the farm was occupied continuously between the 12th and 20th centuries, but no specific evidence for earlier medieval occupation (Hayman 1991).

A better-evidenced example comes in the form of Thorpe, where an excavation by SCAU in 2008–09 found ‘Three Late Saxon/early medieval pits [...] that seemingly do not respect the boundary formed by the King’s Highway, and therefore pre-date it’ (Munnery 2011). The date of the metalled road later recorded as the King’s Highway is far from certain, and may itself be pre-Norman. What elevates these features above others of the same period found elsewhere in Surrey is that the place-name Thorpe has very particular implications. The derivation of the name is OE *throp*, the subject of a major interdisciplinary study (Cullen, Jones and Parsons 2011). Archaeologically, settlements bearing name comprising or containing this element have been adjudged to be mostly ‘small, compact places, exhibiting clear signs of planning’ but seldom any evidence for occupation prior to the 10th century (Cullen, Jones and Parsons 2011, 108). In the case of Thorpe, three pits provide no more proof or otherwise for planned settlement morphology than they do accurate dating for their formation, whereas the place-name etymology points to a particular type of settlement, one that the historical testimony associated with Chertsey Abbey and in Domesday Book, in corresponding to national trends, places the establishment of which in the late 10th or first half of the 11th century (this is discussed at much greater length in Briggs 2012; see also Kelly 2015, 71–72, 101).

And what of compact nucleated villages? Did they exist in Surrey before the Norman Conquest? The county does have a reasonably well-known group of regularly-planned villages on former estates of Chertsey Abbey; known, it should be added, in no small measure as a result of the earlier work of Prof Blair (1991, 58–60). These have been apportioned to the 12th century primarily on the basis of extant church buildings and latterly also archaeological evidence from Egham (Blair 2001, 60; Turner 2001, 12). It could be argued that earlier dates of origin might be admissible in light of subsequent excavations and research projects elsewhere in England, as well as Chertsey’s own pre-Norman monastic credentials (especially its regularisation in 964, on which see Kelly 2015, 20). With its ‘ladder-plan’ morphology of streets enclosing rectilinear plots (and no clear sign of grid-planning), the Chertsey village of Effingham bears a resemblance to Shapwick in Somerset — the subject of a well-known, decade-long research project which concluded on the strength of excavated ceramics that the village was laid out in the period *circa* 950–1050 (see Blair 2018, 410–11 Fig. 151).

Important new evidence regarding Effingham came to light in a recent trial trench evaluation of land immediately north of the churchyard, a site outside of the envelope of the suggested planned medieval village (SLR Consulting Ltd 2012, 27–41; Surrey HER Monument 23038). Two features, a ditch and a pond, were uncovered that contained significant quantities of so-called Saxo-Norman Chalky pottery sherds, a type dated to the period *circa* 1000–1150 (Surrey medieval type series code SNC: SyAS Medieval Pottery Study Group 2017, 9–10). While it is by no means clear that these features were elements of a precursor settlement to the village (further archaeological evaluation work has been undertaken but the results have not yet been made available), the evidence might stand for a slight westward shift of activity at Effingham by 1150 — also the end of the period now understood to have seen the advent of ‘toft-and-croft villages’ in England. Thorpe provides a strong body of evidence for Chertsey having been an innovator in estate management and, more relevantly, new (compact) settlement creation in the century or so before 1066 (indeed, pre-*circa* 1050 may be admissible as a *terminus ante quem*), but none of the constituent strands proves it was apt to be considered a compact nucleation, let alone grid-planned.

This is not to say, however, that the Chertsey demesne villages were the first nucleated rural settlements in Surrey. The pre-urban (or, as has been argued, proto-urban) settlement in modern-day Reigate known for better or worse by the Domesday Book name-form *Cherchefelle* has been posited to have been ‘a relatively large nucleated settlement’, one that furthermore represented ‘a controlled expansion [from an earlier core around the parish church] in the 11th and 12th centuries’ (Poulton 1986, 35). Something not dissimilar has been proposed more recently in respect of Godalming, with not one but two 10th- to 12th-century areas of new settlement appended to earlier nuclei around the parish church and royal estate centre; in the case of the latter this has been described as taking the form of ‘a compact group of house plots’ (Poulton 2018, 3–5). A lot of this line of interpretation comes from a mix of Domesday Book data and later manorial documents. When taken with the ceramic evidence (especially from Mint Street, where some pottery is now held to be of ‘Late Saxon’ date; Poulton 2018, 3), and then assessed in terms of identified national trends, there is arguably good reason to date such developments to the decades immediately before the Domesday Survey, not as far back as the 10th century.

More straightforwardly rural in character, at least prior to the 20th century, is Old Malden, where a 1997 excavation at St John’s Vicarage revealed several sets of ditches and gullies on similar alignments, some associated with pottery sherds of mid-11th to mid-12th-century dates (Andrews 2001, 174–76). These have been interpreted as vestiges of a nucleated settlement, possibly a double-row village with a back lane to the south, and it has been suggested as well that Malden’s open-field system was instituted prior to the Norman Conquest, ‘at the same time as the house-plots were delineated along Church Road’ (comments by Christopher Phillpotts in Andrews 2001, 202, 203; but see also page 219 for a much more sceptical position about dating taken by the lead author). Suggestive as it is, the evidence from Old Malden is somewhat fragmentary and in the absence of

comparable features known from elsewhere within the medieval settlement envelope therefore should not be treated as probative of a compact nucleation of the later 11th century.

Equally suggestive and simultaneously inconclusive in this regard are the population figures given in Domesday Book for a number of lesser estates in Surrey; places like Tyting and Tuesley, which were both assessed at only one hide (the following builds upon comments in Blair 1991, 28). The Domesday hide was not a set areal unit, but generally there was a positive correlation between hidage and physical area of a landholding. As a consequence, it is intriguing to see them having recorded populations of 7 and 8 respectively, probably heads of households/families, comparable to those for nearby estates with much higher hidage assessments (the figure for Tuesley included a slave: Morris 1975, 1, 15, 2, 2). While it should be recalled that these were the numbers obtaining in 1086, not 1066 or earlier, it does point to concentrations of people in some comparatively small areas in later 11th-century Surrey.

An obvious means of housing a population of the size of the ones Domesday Book attributes to Tyting and Tuesley while maximising the available land would be in a compact nucleated settlement. A counterpoint to this is 'semi-nucleation' as an alternative model of distributing population across an area of agricultural production, yet in other English regions it was being superseded by more compact arrangements by the middle of the 11th century (Blair 2018, 408–414). There is no trace of a compact nucleation at either Tyting or Tuesley nowadays, although the possible site of some form of abandoned medieval occupation has been identified at the latter (Surrey HER Monument 4727).

There is an irony in semi-nucleation having been perhaps the "default" mode of settlement organisation across many parts of England — and so by inference Surrey as well — for most of the early Middle Ages yet also being much harder to identify with certainty in the absence of very large-scale excavation (or a composite picture built up from many smaller, proximate interventions) than its much less common and less long-lived counterpart, compact nucleation. The evidence assembled above is fragmentary, and some of what has been suggested can be expected to be found erroneous through future archaeological investigations, but the basic principle that settlements of varying sizes and morphologies existed in Surrey in that period will surely hold true. Surrey may not have been a region characterised by nucleated settlements by the close of the 11th century, but nor was it one devoid of them.

Later estate centres

It is a well-recognised — but by no means universally appreciated — fact that the term manor was an innovation of 1066 or later in England (being Medieval Latin *manerium*, but possibly of Old French origin, from a noun meaning 'dwelling, residence'; Lewis 2011, 138). As Chris Lewis observes, 'Historians have never shrunk from placing the origins of the [English] manor in the period before the word came into use' (Lewis 2011, 123), al-

though this has caused some archaeologists and toponomasts to use the term in not altogether appropriate contexts (see, for instance, Parsons and Styles 2000, 77–78, for repetition of Margaret Gelling’s interpretation of the Gloucestershire place-name Bibury, on record as early as 899, as meaning ‘Beage’s manor’). In the absence of a OE term that has endured or being readopted in recent times (*burh* now having different connotations as a more overtly military fortified centre or stronghold; see also Lewis 2011, 145–46, 149–50 for discussions of *tūn*, *land* and *cotlif*), we are left with the apposite if bland combinations of terms like elite, estate, or seigneurial on the one hand and centre or complex on the other to refer to the archaeological and historical evidence.

Surrey has a fair number of later medieval manorial sites that have been the subject of archaeological excavation on a scale above a handful of trial trenches or test pits, but very few ante-date the 13th century. Even the earliest example, Brooklands, the ‘long range’ layout of which has been analogised to 10th-/11th-century complexes found in Northamptonshire (Gardiner 2007, 172), began life no earlier than *circa* 1150 (although it did produce limited evidence for an 8th-century phase of occupation — Hanworth & Tomalin 1977; see also Ketteringham 1984 for Lagham in Godstone and Poulton 2017 for Woking Palace, both sites that began life at the end of the 12th century). Thus, the county does not at the time of writing have any excavated site of both the size and antiquity of the likes of Bishopstone in Sussex or Facombe Netherton in Hampshire (summarised in Blair 2018, 186–87, 355–56, 365–67).

Yet again, we are left trying to establish how much this is down to the lack any suitably-located archaeological work, and the scarcity of such sites in Surrey in the first place. It cannot be denied that, where archaeological work has been conducted in appropriate locations in the past, some evidence has been found: the likes of Battersea and Croydon have been mentioned already, as has Kingston from a slightly different perspective (further to which see Lewis 2009). These examples aside, however, there are surprisingly (or, by this stage, maybe not so surprisingly) few additional cases in the historic county area that can be cited (see Poulton 1987, 207, 211; Blair 1991, 56 — tellingly, Turner 2004 makes no reference whatsoever to archaeological data from pre-Norman Conquest seigneurial sites).

One important but arguably under-appreciated exception located in what was historically part of Middlesex is the site in Shepperton Green occupied by and so known as Saxon County (now Primary) School. Excavations in 1967 and 1973 uncovered a range of early medieval features, some consistent with buildings and in one case representing the totality of its ground plan; a number of inhumation burials had previously been found to the north and east of the excavated areas (Canham 1979, 97). The completely-excavated building is identified in the excavation report as a *grubenhaus*, i.e. SFB, despite the admittedly-limited dating evidence from its fill pointing to ‘at least’ an 8th- or 9th-century origin (Canham 1979, 109, 110). It is more appropriate to understand it as a cellared or sunken-floored structure, of which there are several 8th-/9th-century examples known (albeit none a pre-

cise parallel: see Thomas 2008, 348–49, 351; Reynolds 1999, 128 Fig. 51; Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 92–93, 99–100; Blair 2018, 347–49, 353 Fig. 131). Meanwhile, two sets of features posited to represent portions of the footings of rectangular timber buildings are assigned to the 11th–12th centuries (Canham 1979, 105, 109, 111).

In general terms, the spatial distribution of the various excavated early medieval features at Saxon Primary School is consistent with what has been found in other complexes of an elite character. The same applies to the presence of an adjacent, pre-11th-century cemetery containing oriented inhumations (comparable with the likes of Raunds Furnells and Ketton Quarry in the East Midlands, and Portchester in Hampshire: Blair 2018, 367 Fig. 137, 369 Fig. 139; Reynolds 1999, 126 Fig. 49). What distinguishes the site from many of its probable peers is the historical context provided by the early charters in the Westminster Abbey archive that mention Shepperton; most notably so far as this essay is concerned a mid-11th-century writ of Edward the Confessor to Teinfrith, ‘my churchwright’ (*mine circwirhtan*: S 1131; also S 1293 and 894). It is far from inconceivable that the buildings on the Saxon Primary School site belong to one or more period of elite lay tenure, or else to its ownership by Westminster — although the evidence for 8th-century (and credibly even earlier) occupation means a broader range of explanations must be considered.

The preceding two paragraphs are an abbreviated recapitulation and reconsideration of the main findings of the 1968 and 1973 excavations; I hope to publish a fuller account elsewhere in due course. (It is also the case that a truly comprehensive reassessment of all of the evidence, including the excavation archive, would be a very desirable future endeavour.) Nevertheless, hopefully it has been shown that Saxon Primary School stands out at the county level for the numbers of early medieval buildings identified and their dates. The sunken-floored building is especially noteworthy for being not only the sole credible example of 8th- to 10th-century date known from the administrative county area, but also one of wider regional scarcity. By virtue of its historic Middlesex situation, it could be argued that it is tangential to discussion of elite complexes in early medieval Surrey, but its proximity to the Thames and hence to the areas along and beyond its south bank means it is unlikely there were no comparable settlements across the river.

Reference to the charter testimony obtaining to historic Surrey would strongly suggest that it was not a region atypical from others in a way that would have meant it did not stand a chance of developing estate centres and secular buildings of “elite” character. It saw the break-up of large “multiple” estates into smaller ones (as charted by Blair 1991, 31–34). In fact, clear evidence for the existence of bookland estates in lay elite hands in Surrey prior to 900, earlier than took place (or is attested) in other some English regions, is provided by the will of Ealdorman Ælfred from the period 871 x 899 (S 1508; see also Blair 1991, 17 and 31 for speculation about their origin). But this does not change the fact that many big estates in Surrey only fragmented in the later 10th or 11th centuries, largely without surviving documentary evidence for when and how this took place. Consider, for instance, Bed-

dington; a Winchester episcopal estate at least as late as 984 (when St Æthelwold died there: Lapidge and Winterbottom 1991, 62–63; also S 1444 and 815), yet divided into two separate holdings by 1066, neither of which remained in the bishopric's possession (in S 815 it is said to have comprised 70 hides including detached portions at Chessington and Tandridge, both also in lay hands by the time of the Norman Conquest: Morris 1975, 19,4;15; 29,1–2).

One of the few times when Surrey evidence is made the subject of discussion in Blair's book is when he cites part of the Domesday entry for Shalford relevant to its pre-1066 ownership (Morris 1975, 19,37). The text is clear in providing the information that 'Two brothers held it in the time of King Edward, each of whom had his own house' but what follows has generated more than one different reading. Blair translates the passage in question as 'they lived in the same homestead', in his eyes making it a direct attestation of the archaeological phenomenon of grouped houses and the 'unit system' (Blair 2018, 370–71;). By contrast, Gardiner interprets it in an institutional rather than topographical way, suggesting that it signified the brothers 'ran their different demesne farmsteads, but might nevertheless have maintained a single court for the manor' (Gardiner 2007, 176). Irrespective of the divergent readings, what is made unusually clear in the Shalford Domesday entry is that there were two non-urban seigneurial houses in existence within the estate prior to 1066.

Such direct references to buildings outside of urban contexts (excluding mills, churches and chapels) are exceedingly rare in the Surrey folios of Domesday Book. Specific mentions of halls are found in a small number of Surrey entries: two at Wandsworth (Morris 1975, 21,3); one with a mill adjacent at both Dorking and Chertsey — the latter was also associated with a *ferraria* 'smithy' (Morris 1975, 1,13; 8,18); and individual halls at Wyke and Paddington (Morris 1975, 18,2; 21,7). What the Dorking and Chertsey references hint at is most probably a universal truth for all Domesday-era manorial halls in Surrey; they were not standalone structures, but components of complexes of buildings.

Gardiner (2007, 171) offers some useful comments about "halls" in Domesday Book, although much of what he contends is based upon the more clear-cut wording found in Domesday entries for other English shires, making it of limited applicability to Surrey. Notably, he makes a case for a hall (identified as Latin *aula*, although in Surrey the word used in all but one instance is *halla*, a borrowing from the OE cognate *heall*) as primarily a tax collection point that could be no different from a standard farm rather than an architectural-remarkable building. Nevertheless, this should not cause the immediate dismissal of the above-mentioned Domesday testimony. The annalistic accounts of Hardacnut dying 'as he stood at his drink' while attending a wedding feast at Lambeth in 1042, the sort of occasion that is most credibly understood to have been held inside, does hint that halls in the sense of substantial buildings capable of hosting elite and/or communal activities existed in Surrey in the 11th century (Swanton 2000, 162–63 inc. footnote 12; cf. Blair 2018, 406–408).

The pairing of medieval manors and churches in Surrey is well recognised in Surrey, as elsewhere (Blair 1991, 135, 136 Fig. 40 and 138 Fig. 42). In his recent book, Blair highlights 'a large and important group [of 10th- to 12th-century churches that] adjoined the only residences', with the church often being placed hard up against the boundary of the enclosure around the seigneurial centre (2018, 376). Such evidence for a close locational relationship between many churches and seigneurial sites, not least when there is a surviving or recorded church building of pre-12th-century date, means there is genuine potential for future discoveries of this nature to be made in Surrey. One hugely interesting probable example that has already been investigated archaeologically is Wotton, where a very small-scale excavation in 1975 found two parallel stone wall foundations on a north-south alignment of credible 11th-century date, a matter of metres west of the surviving nave which may be contemporaneous (Fowler 1976; reappraised in Briggs 2020). Other promising candidates include the likes of Compton, Albury, Titsey and Stoke D'Abernon (the last distinguished by its apsidal chancel and hence perhaps a somewhat earlier church building, albeit not as early as some have claimed; see discussion in Blair 1991, 116, 203 note 74).

Conclusions

Surrey has a habit of appearing as a blank on distribution maps of early medieval archaeological finds and phenomena. So it is with the map of non-elite rural settlements, 45 in total, in England studied by Hana Lewis in her newly-published monograph (Lewis 2019, 2 Fig. 1.1). But what does this actually signify? A genuine lack of non-elite settlements in the period, or a lack of ones which have been investigated archaeologically to an extent and standard as to meet the criteria for the inclusion in Dr Lewis' study? It must be remembered that not only was every early medieval settlement different, but in the vast majority of cases so too were the circumstances of its excavation in recent decades (those uncovered along the A14 Corridor may be something of an exception inasmuch as multiple discrete settlements were excavated simultaneously or successively within the context of the same project).

The intention behind this essay is to offer explanations not excuses for the present state of knowledge about early medieval settlements in Surrey; to give hope for future discoveries while also tempering expectations about what might be found in the years and decades to come. Seen in the context of what has been established through the work of Blair and others, the county (be it historic or contemporary) does not appear as unfortunate as it might have done after reading the opening paragraph of this essay. The greater preponderance of excavated SFBs than earth-fast buildings in the 5th to 7th centuries; the near absence of evidence for 8th-/9th-century buildings; the lack of traceable gromatically-surveyed rectilinear regularity identified in excavated settlements; and the fact that much of the evidence from late within the study period is very late, i.e. from *circa* 1050 onwards — all of these accord with the broader regional and national pictures.

The reasons behind the above are many and varied, and it would not be appropriate to dissect each in turn. Instead, the remainder of this essay will be given over to making a number of synoptic points pertinent to wider themes. In a number of ways, the imbalance in numbers of excavated SFBs and other building types (which is consistent with the Greater London and no doubt elsewhere; see Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 141) encapsulates themes that recur across time and space. The present situation whereby three post-in-hole buildings of the 6th and 7th centuries but several times that number of SFBs are known from the historic county area can be attributed to a significant degree to a combination of varying circumstances of excavation, quality of archaeological method, perhaps settlement topography, and also a modicum of chance (this is before attempting the tricky task of working out original numbers of the two building types constructed and that stood at any one time — the discussion provided in Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 141–42 appraises the issues as least so far as are relevant to the Thames valley).

The small scale of most excavations in Surrey should also be born in mind. The keyhole-like investigations at Croydon and Wotton produced significant results, and would surely have done to a much greater extent had the excavated areas been larger. It might also be suggested that there has been an element of misfortune in where some development-determined work has taken place, given the recovery of early medieval evidence suggestive of activity on the periphery of a settlement, such as at Mitcham (Ford 2004, 104) and Godalming (Poulton 1998, 193, 204, although this may be a site where there were buildings that left no cut features deep enough as to survive subsequent truncation).

There are important counterpoints to the two observations made in the previous paragraph. The first is that large open-area excavations have been conducted in a number of locations distributed across the county, yet have seldom encountered early medieval settlement remains, and never of a scale and quality equivalent to those known, even if only at one or two places, from neighbouring counties. Rather more representative in areal terms of many excavated sites in Surrey is the one on the north side of Downing Street in Westminster where portions of three 8th- and 9th-century buildings, including an annexed hall, were revealed — albeit two were superimposed one on top of the other (Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 90–100; Blair 2018, 288). Proximity to Lundenwic and perhaps Westminster Abbey may be a key factor here, but nevertheless it demonstrates what can be found when trenches happen to be positioned in the right place.

If the future for early medieval settlement studies in Surrey looks a bit rosier than it might have done previously, this should be because there would seem to be real justification in revisiting the results of past excavations (most notably Saxon Primary School, but also on a thematic level the evidence for and from SFBs in the county area) as well as anticipating the results of future fieldwork. This is without mentioning the roles more exhaustive scrutiny of the historical sources, assessment of place-name etymologies, and landscape survey of features like curvilinear enclosures could have to play.

It is fair to say the study of more or less any aspect of the early Middle Ages is seldom a study in simplicity, but in complexity and a paucity of evidence that leaves open multiple possible explanations. The profusion of new research on early medieval settlements in northern Europe undertaken in the past three decades, and the many books, articles and more that have resulted from it, provide frameworks that permit the more meagre bodies of evidence from regions like Surrey to be scrutinised and, to a greater degree than would otherwise be possible, interpreted. Surrey has more to contribute to discussions regarding early medieval settlements and secular buildings than has been recognised up until now, and certainly the potential to contribute much more in the future.

Postscript. I have written a full review of *Building Anglo-Saxon England* to appear in a future volume of the *Journal of English Place-Name Studies*.

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