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## Anglo-Saxon

### *Introduction*

Key texts: Poulton 1987; Gardiner 1988a; Gardiner 1988b; Blair 1991; Hines 1997; Williams 1998; Cowie 2000; Cowie with Harding 2000; Hines 2004; Blair 2005; Hamerow 2005; Harrington and Welch 2007; Cowie and Blackmore 2008; Reynolds 2009; Williams 2010; Sawyer 2012; Bayliss et al 2013.

The period from the withdrawal of the Roman legions to the Norman Conquest is a long and complex one that saw change from a largely subsistence economy to one that was at least partially geared towards surplus production for sale at market centres. By the end of the period there was elaborate territorial division, both secular and ecclesiastical, whereas the geographical pattern of control in the earlier part of the period is not well established. Neither economic nor political developments are likely to have followed a linear path of development through over six hundred years.

Both archaeological and documentary sources of evidence rarely survive in great numbers despite their diversity, with the former biased towards evidence from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and the latter towards the later part of the period. The two have not always been well integrated.

### *Discussion*

- Political and administrative geography

The origins of Surrey as a county are not well understood, in particular what scale of territory the name was first used for, even though it clearly has the connotation of being a southern district of somewhere. There is a good case that it did not apply to the whole of the historic county, and it is not known how and when the historic county developed to assume the boundaries it had acquired by the later Anglo-Saxon period. It is far from clear that cultural affinities to parts of neighbouring counties that are apparent from certain artefact types are directly related to areas of political control. Understanding of the development of territories is most likely to emerge from analysis of documentary evidence.

The development of sub-divisions of the county also needs detailed investigation. Research as part of the *Landscapes of Governance Project* has identified Surrey (together with western Kent and Wealden Sussex) as an area with very regular hundreds (although Surrey is not one of the areas identified for detailed analysis in the project). This suggests reorganisation, probably in the later Anglo-Saxon period, although some hundreds in the west of the county appear to show continuity from early ecclesiastical estates or putative *-ingas* territories. The inclusion of all of Surrey in the Diocese of Winchester (excepting the small number of the Archbishop of Canterbury's peculiars) it was seen as a unit by the early eighth century.

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On a more local scale, the development of “multiple estates”, manors, estates, minster parishes, and local parishes require investigation with respect to their centres, boundaries, number and date. Continuity across periods needs to be established rather than assumed. The origin of the long strip parishes running south from the Downs would be of particular interest.

The extent to which Viking raids troubled Surrey could probably be best understood through critical re-evaluation of documentary evidence and assessment of local legends. Burghal Hidage forts were probably established at Southwark and Eashing. Establishing whether the latter occupied the site that is usually presumed would contribute to a broader understanding of “emergency *burhs*”. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, there is little doubt that the area from the Thames valley to the dip slope of the Downs was the more important part of the county. To what extent this was the result of dependence on London or on the transport opportunities provided by the rivers is unclear.

Key issues:

- The origins and scale of the territory first known as Surrey.
- The relationship between archaeological evidence of areas with cultural affinities to areas of political control.
- The emergence and nature of Anglo-Saxon territorial divisions within the historic county.
- The development of manors and parishes.

- Communications

Evidence of whether Anglo-Saxon routes were of more than local significance is limited, as it is for the extent to which Roman roads remained in use throughout the period. These questions might be addressed through the location of finds along possible routes, especially coins. Placing lines of communication in the context of specific sites, such as potential hundred meeting places, may suggest their relative importance. Linear defensive earthworks, such as that on the eastern boundary of the county, may point to the strategic importance of certain routes, in the case the line of the present A25. Strings of village along spring lines north and south of the Downs are also likely to suggest significant lines of communication. Place name elements, including those with “bridge” or “street” may point towards pre-Conquest roads. Rivers, particularly the Thames, were often more important transport routes than roads, with “hythe” place names indicating landing places. It is difficult to establish whether causeways, such as those in the lower Wey valley, are pre- or post-Conquest. Again, place name evidence may suggest early examples.

- Settlement evidence

Surrey has produced little direct evidence of Anglo-Saxon buildings of any date. Sunken featured buildings are known from several sites, but only one hall, at Kingston. For the earlier part of the period, no clear relationship has been identified between cemeteries and settlement. Evidence of finds from test-pitting may point towards likely locations of settlement, especially if the mid-Saxon

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settlement shift identified in other parts of England and later nucleation have relevance for Surrey. Caution is, however, required as in the later medieval period Surrey appears to have had few nucleated villages of any size.

Place name evidence has a role to play, but habitative place names are not easy to date. Moreover, a name may have been transferred to a different site if a settlement moved. Continuity of the name of a place is also no guarantee of continuity of settlement.

Domesday Book provides evidence for manors at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, but has little direct relevance for settlement, especially as some manors appear to have been spread over different environmental regions and may well have contained various dispersed settlement foci. By the time of Domesday, Surrey appears to have had few places displaying urban or proto-urban characteristics other than Guildford and Southwark. The decision to establish a defended site at Guildford, perhaps in place of Eashing, may represent its urban beginnings, but also raises the question of whether a high-status site already existed there. Other documented high-status locations, with possible exceptions such as Kingston and Leatherhead, have proved elusive. It is possible, but far from certain, that occasional finds of high-status artefacts may correlate with nearby high-status settlements.

Key issues:

- The location of settlements associated with early cemeteries.
- The relationship between excavated sites and later settlements.
- Changes over time in settlement morphology.

- Land use and environment

The question of land use inevitably overlaps with that of rural settlement and suffers from some of the same difficulties. Place name evidence probably has the greatest potential, especially in studies of field names in individual parishes, as this may indicate the earlier character of the land. The often accepted model of permanent settlements in Wealden areas developing from temporary settlements based on transhumance has not been substantiated by archaeology, but evidence from charters about detached Wealden holdings and from the gradual increase in reported artefacts may give some indication about their use.

Detailed historic landscape characterisation analysis has the potential to suggest aspects of the chronology of landscape development. The creation of open-fields in some parts of the county may be better understood in the light of work done in other parts of the country. Environmental evidence, for example from seeds, pollen, or peat cores may provide pointers to agricultural practice or its absence.

The relationship between the development of parishes and earlier estates may help in understanding later Anglo-Saxon landholdings. It must, however, be taken into account that some parishes may

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have been amalgamations of more than one holding, and that place names suggesting specialised activities could apply to particular settlements within an estate rather to whole estates.

Key issues:

- While a detailed study of place names of individual fields across the county is unrealistic, studies of individual parishes could provide much useful information.
  - Finding direct evidence of land use from environmental sampling.
- Material culture and the economy

Artefacts from furnished burials in the early Anglo-Saxon period have created a bias in knowledge towards the earlier centuries. Finds reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) are beginning to change this picture, but detailed analysis of PAS material is still required. It would be helpful to know, for example, if early Anglo-Saxon PAS artefacts complement or conflict cemetery-based models of Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural expansion in Surrey. Numismatic evidence from the PAS may provide indications about the location and character of coin-based exchange activity.

The frequently cited conclusion that Surrey was aceramic for much of the Anglo-Saxon period needs to be carefully examined. Where middle Anglo-Saxon pottery has been found, it needs to be established what was imported and what was made locally. Numbers of known metal artefacts have significantly increased by the PAS, but would benefit from systematic analysis.

Evidence from other sources of specific forms of industrial activity in the county is limited. Domesday Book indicates that a number of Surrey watermills must have Anglo-Saxon origins. Locations of undisturbed sites capable of investigation are difficult to predict.

Key issues:

- An up-to-date reassessment and record of Anglo-Saxon finds, including those known from the PAS, is needed.
  - Analysis of whether PAS finds modify understanding of the spread of Anglo-Saxon culture in Surrey.
  - Locations of exchange activity suggested by numismatic evidence.
- Belief and Burial

Surrey has an unparalleled concentration of pagan place names, particularly in the south-west of the county. There are also likely to have been other pagan religious sites that cannot be recognised from their place names. While the deities and place-name elements of known sites have received attention, the nature of the sites, including their relationship to contemporary political centres, and of the religious practice that occurred there have not. It is highly unlikely that “paganism” was a single

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polytheistic religion. There may have been some continuity from Romano-British religious belief, though this is not manifested in excavated temple sites.

The process of conversion to Christianity is not well understood and may well not have proceeded evenly. Furthermore, the lack of archaeological evidence from early Christian sites, even when there is documentary evidence as at Chertsey, makes reaching clear conclusions more difficult. The earliest churches may have been on different sites from their predecessors. Churches identified as “minsters” appear to have been established at varying dates, may have had diverse origins and purposes, and may not all have possessed the same status in the later Anglo-Saxon period, as appears to have been the case in Kent. It is likely that the currently accepted list of “minsters” is incomplete, although convincing approaches to identification are not straightforward.

Evidence in surviving church buildings that has been claimed to be Anglo-Saxon in date would merit reconsideration, which could well lead to both additions to and deletions from the accepted corpus. The phenomenon of a “Saxo-Norman overlap”, as long perceived in Sussex, makes it difficult to place eleventh century buildings either side of the Conquest.

Nineteenth century excavations of pagan cemetery sites were often unsatisfactory but provided some important information that continues to inform debate, not just locally. There have been fewer modern excavations of such sites, but where there have been they have provided important evidence. The site at Tadworth may represent the transition to Christianity, although the presence or absence of grave goods is not decisive in determining whether burials are Christian or not. The (unpublished) seventh century cemetery north of Dorking may be analogous, as may the recently excavated cemetery at Hawks Hill. Some of the pagan cemeteries show reuse in the later Anglo-Saxon centuries as execution cemeteries; it may be possible to identify others.

Key issues:

- Locations and religious practice of pagan sites.
  - Identification of additional sites for early churches.
  - Reassessment of evidence for which church features are pre-Conquest.
  - Re-evaluation of the evidence from pagan cemeteries.
- Changes through time

Over a period of some 650 years it is clear that major changes will have occurred under all the headings considered here. Surrey in 1066 was a very different place from circa 410. Changes in territorial organisation, settlement, agriculture and other economic activities, belief systems and sacred places were all significant.

The question of continuity from the late Roman period into the fifth and sixth centuries remains largely unanswered, and with the comparative lack of evidence for the period immediately after the withdrawal can probably only be addressed with a greater understanding of the changes that occurred in the fourth century.

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Among the far-reaching changes occurring during the Anglo-Saxon centuries were conversion to Christianity, manorialisation, the emergence of the county as a territorial and political unit, the development of parishes, the usage of coinage, and the appearance of market centres.

Key issue:

- Any evidence of continuity (or otherwise) of settlement and territorial units into the post-Roman period.
- Who were the drivers of change? Royalty and secular elites? Ecclesiastical institutions? The ordinary populace?
- Can aspects of various pre-Conquest changes in, for example, settlement nucleation or major church benefactions be detected in the pre-Conquest period?

*Conclusions*

Much could undoubtedly be achieved through the reassessment of existing publications and finds. The study of place name evidence in conjunction with investigation of landscape features may help to illuminate various issues including those related to settlement, land use and environment. Analysis of the databases such as the PAS, the Early Medieval Corpus of Coins, and various artefact-specific books has the potential to assist understanding of material culture together with aspects of social and economic activity and to provide a better picture of their locations. While little new documentary evidence is likely to emerge, re-evaluation of known sources is likely to yield new insights. With the present weakness of knowledge of settlement and habitation, excavation where opportunities arise and test-pitting in existing villages and towns have the potential to shed significant new light.

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