

Landscapes of Burial in Early Medieval Wessex:
The Funerary Appropriation of the Antecedent Landscape,
c. AD 450–850

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Archaeology, April 2014

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of the reuse of prehistoric monuments—notably Bronze Age barrows—for early medieval burial has long been recognised as remarkably prevalent in the archaeological record. This systematic study of the landscape context of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial in Wessex assumes a broader outlook, and considers all aspects of the antecedent landscape which may have influenced the siting of funerary locales. Engaging primarily with archaeological evidence, complemented by documentary and place-name sources, it examines the influence of topography, land-use, territorial organisation, and perceptions of ancient features on the location of burial sites, and the role played by burial in the formation of group identities. Moreover, it investigates the emergence and evolution of the practice of monument appropriation, and its exploitation and adaptation by an increasingly defined elite class.

The selection of three case study counties—Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset—within a discrete area of southern England which, by the latter part of the period of study, had been incorporated into the kingdom of Wessex, allows the evidence to be examined at local and sub-regional levels, and facilitates supra-regional comparisons. The burial record is scrutinised and analysed with the aid of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in order to construct a detailed picture of the influence of topography and other aspects of the natural and man-made environment on burial location. It also reveals the significant impact that antiquarian and modern archaeological investigation patterns have had on the distribution and nature of the burial record.

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ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

Attached herein is a CD containing Appendices 1-3, in Microsoft Excel .xlsx format.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIP	Archaeological Investigations Project (http://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip)
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , ed. and trans. Swanton 1996
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
DB	Domesday Book
DEB	Gildas, <i>De Excidio Britonum</i> , ed. and trans. Winterbottom 1978
DIO	Defence Infrastructure Organisation
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
GIS	Geographical Information System(s)
HER	Historic Environment Record
HHER	Hampshire Historic Environment Record
L	Translations and notes on charter bounds cited by database number in <i>LangScape</i> (http://www.langscape.org.uk)
Margary	Roman roads cited by number in Margary 1973
NGR	National Grid Reference
NMR	National Monuments Record – denotes entries in the online database, <i>Pastscape</i> (http://www.pastscape.org.uk)
OE	Old English
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England
S	Charters cited by catalogue number in Sawyer 1968
SFB	Sunken-floored building
SHER	Southampton Historic Environment Record
WSHER	Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scholarly interest in the phenomenon of the ‘reuse’ or ‘recycling’ of prehistoric and Roman remains during the early medieval period is a relatively recent but significant academic development. Research into the appropriation of ancient monuments and landscapes in funerary contexts by early medieval communities—which had long been observed, but seldom explored, by archaeologists—gathered momentum with the publication of papers by Bradley (1987), Lucy (1992), Williams (1997) and Semple (1998). In recent years, the broader topic of early medieval perceptions of the past has been approached and pursued from various perspectives by archaeologists, toponymists, literary scholars, historians and prehistorians. Such research has shown that early medieval communities were acutely aware of the ancient features which were embedded in their landscape, and that they consciously appropriated them in geographically and temporally nuanced ways (e.g. Crewe 2012; Halsall 2010; Reynolds 2009; Semple 2013; Thäte 2007; Williams 2006).

From an archaeological standpoint, burial practices have the potential to reveal much about the ways in which past societies conceptualised their inherited landscape. In their selection of funerary sites, mourners were influenced both by practical concerns and by the symbolic implications or ‘cultural meanings’ of the palimpsests of natural and antecedent elements which constituted the landscape (Barrett *et al.* 1991; Bevan 1999: 69-70; Lucy 1998: 76; Parker Pearson 1993). The positioning of burial sites can be interpreted as the establishment of a shared link to geographical location, the embedding of group identity in place or the ‘staking of claims’ to resources (Bevan 1999: 75; Lucy 1992; Parker Pearson 1982; Williams 2006).

The fundamental aim of this thesis is to determine whether the natural and humanly modified antecedent landscape had a decisive influence upon the locations of funerary sites in Wessex during the ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ period. The chalk downlands of central Wessex are renowned for their dense concentrations of extant prehistoric monuments, a considerable number of

which are known to have been appropriated for early medieval burial (Semple 2003; Williams 1997). As yet, however, no comprehensive landscape-orientated investigation into early medieval burial has been carried out in this region. A central objective of this thesis is thus to conduct a systematic, up-to-date assessment of the landscape context of burial sites dating from the mid-fifth to mid-ninth centuries AD in a discrete area of Wessex. It is necessary to review all of the evidence, as 'cherry-picking' only those sites for which evidence of appropriation has already been identified would present a distorted impression of the funerary record. 'Monument reuse' is just one device which was employed in early medieval mortuary topography, and the ways in which communities interacted with the landscape were complex and multifaceted. Rather than focusing solely on the appropriation of prominent funerary earthworks, this thesis examines the relationship between burial sites and all aspects of the landscape deemed discernible at the time of burial. Another key objective, therefore, is to establish the specific motivations behind the location of cemeteries and burial sites.

On the micro level, the research will address the ways in which burial sites directly relate to physical elements of the landscape, such as lines of movement, boundaries, settlements, watercourses, earthworks and other antecedent features. On the macro level, it will look at the ways in which socio-political and ideological factors affected these decisions, and how the locations of burial sites and funerary events in the landscape contributed to the formation and reaffirmation of group identities. Particular attention will be paid to sub-regional and localised patterns in burial practices, and to the integration of contemporary settlement evidence (Chester-Kadwell 2009; Semple 2008: 410).

THE PERIOD AND AREA OF STUDY

The period between the mid-fifth and mid-ninth centuries represents a transformative era. It spans the creation and expansion of the kingdom of Wessex and its conversion to Augustinian Christianity, but precedes the universal adoption of churchyard burial (Blair 2005: 463-71). It also encompasses the deep-rooted societal and landscape changes of the 'long eighth century' (Rippon 2010; Wickham and Hansen 2000). Moreover, the

practice of 'monument reuse' is thought to have reached a zenith in the seventh and early eighth centuries (Semple 2013: 6). By expanding the period of study to include the centuries which preceded and followed this apparent peak, it is possible to investigate the origins and development of this practice. As pre-Christian and conversion-period attitudes towards prehistoric and Roman features are the focus of this thesis, the mid-ninth century or the end of the 'Middle Saxon' period (see below) is thus used as a cut-off point. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine 'Late Saxon' Christian perceptions of the past in great depth, and examples of the direct funerary 'reuse' of antecedent features beyond the mid-ninth century are, in any case, considered to be rare.

Wessex is defined here as the area which had come under the control of the West Saxon kingdom by the mid-ninth century, broadly delineated as the historic counties of Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, and Hampshire, with Berkshire and Devon on the periphery. This thesis focuses on three of these historic counties—Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset—to enable a more detailed and nuanced examination of the evidence.¹ The area of study ostensibly bridged an ethnic and cultural divide between 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'British' influence, at least until the seventh century. This research will therefore also investigate to what extent the funerary appropriation of the antecedent landscape can be considered an integral part of burial practices on either side of this apparent divide.

WIDER CONTEXT

This study sits within the broad context of the study of antecedent landscapes and burial in early medieval northwest Europe. The phenomenon of the recycling of ancient remains can be identified throughout this period and region, and significant scholarly work on this topic has been carried out by Petts (2000) in the context of western Britain, Driscoll (1998) and Maldonado (2011) in relation to Scotland, O'Brien (2009) with regard to Ireland, Effros (2001) and Halsall (2010) in relation to Merovingian France, and Thäte (2007) for Scandinavia and Germany. The principal objective of this thesis does, however, remain in-depth exploration of how this topic applies to Wessex, and the focus

¹ Specific reasons for the selection of these particular counties are outlined in Chapter 4.

of the contextual analysis is therefore the material most directly relevant to southern and western England.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis begins in Chapter 2 by reviewing the history of the discipline of early medieval archaeology in England and contextualising the issues that will be addressed in this research. The landscape character and archaeological background of Wessex as a region, and the historical background of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, are addressed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 outlines the approaches and methodologies employed in the research, defining the procedures followed in the collection, collation, refinement, and analysis of the data.

The county-based chapters follow, in Chapters 5.1 to 7.2. Each county is addressed over two chapters. The first of each pair of 'county chapters' is concerned with describing the topographical, historical and archaeological background of the county, and critically reviewing the burial evidence, while the second is devoted to analysing the data and summarising the emergent themes. Chapter 8 begins with a synthesis of the results and patterns which have been elucidated from the county chapters and from the study area as a whole, followed by a thematic discussion of the evidence. Overall deductions and key findings of the thesis are summarised, methodological issues are acknowledged and potential avenues for future research are proposed in the concluding chapter.

TERMINOLOGY AND CONVENTIONS

The term 'Anglo-Saxon' (or simply 'Saxon') is contentious, carrying with it particular assumptions, not least the notion that groups of people can be defined and categorised in terms of discrete ethnic entities (Lucy 1999: 33; Reynolds 1985). In this thesis, the term 'early medieval' is therefore the principal term used to define the period AD 450-1066. 'Anglo-Saxon' is not employed as a period term, unless repeating its usage by others. It is, however, used to denote a particular style of burial and cultural tradition. The term remains within single apostrophes throughout, unless in reference to the kingdoms. 'Early Saxon' (c. AD 450–650), 'Middle Saxon' (c. AD 650–850) and

'Late Saxon' (c. AD 850–1066), as well as 'Early-Middle Saxon' (c. AD 450–850) and 'Middle-Late Saxon' (c. AD 650–1066), are also unavoidably used as culturally neutral period terms. These will also remain in inverted commas throughout.

Where parishes and counties are referred to throughout the text, these denote the pre-1851 ecclesiastical parishes and historic counties, unless otherwise stated. Similarly, unless otherwise stated, hundreds are the Domesday hundreds. The hundred names are those used by Thorn (1989a; 1989b; 1991), with single inverted commas indicating a name derived from a place which disappeared before the early nineteenth century, and double inverted commas indicating a name found only in the Exon Domesday or Geld Rolls, for which no later equivalent is known.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to set the thesis in its disciplinary context, to provide a background against which to examine ideas and interpretations, and to aid the identification of themes or areas that have hitherto been overlooked or warrant further investigation. Many of the burial sites that will come under scrutiny in this study were the subject of antiquarian excavation. An understanding of the nature and circumstances of these pre-modern investigations is crucial to an appreciation of the ways in which such sites have been interpreted, and how reassessments can be made in light of advancements in archaeological theory and practice. This chapter therefore provides a critical overview of the development of the discipline of early medieval archaeology, from its origins in antiquarianism and historical research to the present day. The first part of the chapter takes the form of a historiographical review of the various trends and themes in the literature published thus far on the subject of early medieval archaeology. It is structured broadly chronologically but also thematically, and reference is made to more recent developments within the discussion of certain themes. Subsequent sections of this chapter will discuss theories of landscape, past research and current established trends regarding the phenomenon of monument appropriation, and approaches to gaining an understanding of early medieval perceptions of the natural and man-made landscape. Other key concepts that are relevant to this thesis will also be introduced.

Few detailed critical histories of early medieval archaeology have been written as yet (cf. Lucy 1998: 5), and historiographical overviews have tended to be fairly condensed, serving to introduce more general works (e.g. Arnold 1988; Higham 1993; Richards 1987). Although this review is by no means exhaustive, as it would be impossible (and indeed unnecessary) to cover every aspect of early medieval archaeology within the scope of this chapter, some of the major themes are addressed and the following questions are posed:

- i. How have perceptions and approaches to 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology evolved and altered over the past three centuries and in recent years?
- ii. How have views and interpretations been influenced by contemporary political, social and religious conditions, as well as by the circumstances and characters of individual authors or groups of scholars?
- iii. How have current approaches and techniques of analysis evolved in recent years, and what is the role of interdisciplinarity?

Historical and archaeological interpretations are always subjective, as individualised ideas and assumptions are incorporated into even the most objective empirical methodologies (Ucko *et al.* 1991). Archaeological discourses are inevitably the product of how the past is perceived in any given period or particular context, and theories and approaches to archaeology tend to change in 'paradigm shifts' as new ones are introduced. As Lucy (1998: 5) has noted, a constant dialectic is at work between past research and new ideas and discoveries.

Within 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology, certain well established and pervasive interpretations of the archaeological record, particularly cemetery evidence, remained largely unchallenged until the latter half of the twentieth century. Ideas of mass population movements or rigid and dubious historical frameworks were still regarded as accepted models until relatively recently. It is not the intention of this chapter to disregard past interpretations on the basis that they are 'out of date'; these perspectives must be reviewed with a critical eye, and with an awareness that the significance and meaning of archaeological evidence change in accordance with different societal, political and religious conditions. Past approaches must not, therefore, be judged by today's standards, but within their historical context.

As stated in Chapter 1, the term 'early medieval' is applied as a catch-all term to denote the period c. AD 450–1066, regardless of ethnic or cultural connotations. Throughout much of this chapter, however, it is necessary to employ the term 'Anglo-Saxon', as this was the label in use during the early history of the discipline.

'ANGLO-SAXON' ARCHAEOLOGY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISCIPLINE

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

'Anglo-Saxon' cremations were first illustrated and recorded by Sir Thomas Browne, who unearthed a group of fifty pottery urns from shallow soil near Walsingham, Norfolk, in 1657 (Fig. 2.1). He was unsure of the antiquity of the urns, but believed them to be Roman, originally publishing them the following year as *Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall, or a Discourse of the Sepulchrall Urnes lately found in Norfolk* (Browne 1658). The discipline of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology was yet to take shape, and in some ways Browne's work represents the last time for centuries that early medieval artefacts, mortuary practice, and attitudes to mortality could be interpreted without the intention of substantiating rigid historical frameworks or preconceived ideas of invasion and settlement (Williams 2002: 47).



This image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 2.1 Cinerary urns depicted in *Hydriotaphia* (Browne 1658).

Prior to the development of 'Anglo-Saxonism', the generally accepted origin narrative for England was the 'Brutus myth', which traced the ancestral lineage of the English back to the Trojans (MacDougall 1982). The desire for exotic, non-English ancestors, with tales of chivalry and knighthood, was influenced by the presence of a Norman French ruling class. Amongst increasing scepticism, however, the validity of the Brutus model gradually declined from the sixteenth century onwards, and a new origin story, more easily supported by historical documents, was advanced. 'Anglo-Saxonism' initially evolved from its role in political and ecclesiastical debates of the sixteenth century. Following the Reformation, non-Classical origin stories were called upon to legitimise the authority of the Church of England. Indeed, antiquarian interest in 'Saxon' studies was stimulated by the need to establish a historical model of the early English church, which would demonstrate its continuity with this newly formed Church (Sweet 2004: 192).

Although the English public were not initially sympathetic to the 'Anglo-Saxons', whom they perceived as 'barbaric', from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, interest in the ancestries of English, Welsh and Scottish cultures grew. Conflict with France and other parts of Europe stimulated a rise of nationalism, as the British strove to set themselves apart from the European 'other' (Hobsbawm 1990). 'Anglo-Saxon' antiquities were of considerable importance for the construction of a sense of nationhood in eighteenth-century England; indeed they became 'crucial to all that defined the English nation' (Sweet 2004: 190). Principles of freedom, common law, and the political system were all regarded as achievements of England's 'Anglo-Saxon' ancestors.

By the early eighteenth century, the excavation of graves and cemeteries, particularly visible earthworks such as barrows, had become a popular activity among antiquarians. Between 1719 and 1743, William Stukeley conducted extensive fieldwork on the chalk downlands of Wessex, particularly among the prehistoric barrows on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. Although Stukeley took care to note 'how the body was posited', he often failed to reveal *where* it was 'posited', thus not appreciating the significance of primary, secondary or intrusive interments (Marsden 2011: 11). This disinterest in, or unawareness of, later intrusive burials was near universal among the barrow diggers of the eighteenth century (Semple 2013: 4). In Kent, although 'Early Saxon' barrows

attracted particular attention for their rich grave-goods, early medieval remains were not correctly identified until the Revd. James Douglas published the results of his Kentish excavations as *Nenia Britannica* in 1793. The Revd. Bryan Faussett had been one of the first to excavate early medieval burials (in 1757-77), although he failed to recognise them as such, attributing them to 'Romans Britonized' or 'Britons Romanized'. The results of his excavations were published posthumously as *Inventorium Sepulchrale* by Charles Roach Smith (Faussett 1856).

The nineteenth century

Interest in archaeology was heightened during the nineteenth century, partly due to the rise of the 'leisured classes' and advances in the study of geology and evolutionary biology (Geake 1997: 2). Numerous discoveries were made during this period, as a result of urban expansion, the construction of railways and quarrying (Lucy 1998: 11). Antiquarian barrow digging also continued with fervour. William Cunnington and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, together with their excavators, the Parker brothers of Heytesbury, Wiltshire, were at their most prolific in Wessex at the beginning of the century (Fig. 2.2). Secondary 'Saxon' interments began to be recognised, with such burials often interpreted as the result of practical expediency following a battle or skirmish (e.g. Slight 1816).

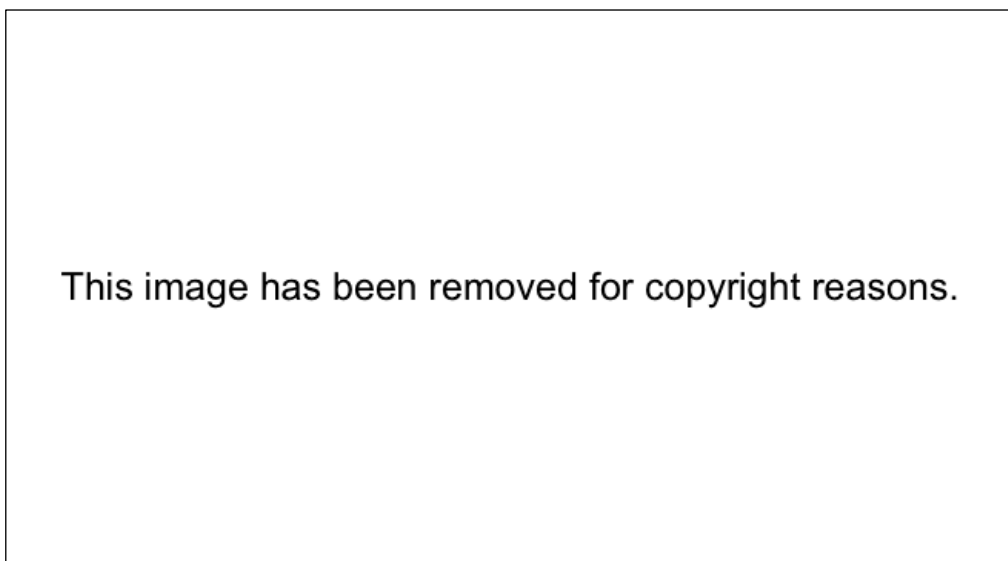


Fig. 2.2 The Parker brothers at work on Normanton Down, Wiltshire, supervised by Cunnington and Colt Hoare (© Wiltshire Museum).

The similarities between early medieval English and continental material and the variations in artefact types found within England were first considered by John Mitchell Kemble (1849), who, in this regard, pioneered the comparative technique. He called into question the accuracy of the narratives of Bede and the ASC, regarding such sources as a 'confused mass of traditions borrowed from the most heterogeneous sources, compacted rudely and with little ingenuity, and in which the smallest possible amount of historical truth is involved in a great deal of fable' (Kemble 1849: 3). He was, however, an 'uncompromising Germanist', having studied under the Brothers Grimm and considering himself first and foremost a scholar of 'German-Saxon' (Dilkey and Schneider 1941: 463; Wiley 1979: 228).

Although Kemble did not believe that the native British population was completely eradicated, he had no doubt that large-scale migrations took place, and that 'Germans coming over the Black Sea pushed Kelts northward, westward and southward' (Wiley 1979: 237). The first distribution maps showing areas of different Germanic tribal groupings were created by Thomas Wright (1852; 1855), a colleague and sympathiser of Kemble's. Amongst the general public and mainstream historians, Kemble did not achieve great popularity. The 'Oxford School', a separate circle of historians which included Green, Freeman and Stubbs, was more in tune with popular perceptions of Germanic culture in the mid- to late-nineteenth century (cf. Lucy 1998: 10). Their representations of a heroic and superior Teutonic race from which the English were directly descended, and their themes of race and ethnicity, were more suited to the prevailing social and political climate. As avowed English nationalists, they felt that Germanists such as Kemble had 'attacked the national story with weapons of foreign scholarship' (Sims-Williams 1983: 1). In the Victorian era, the search for English national origins had strong imperialist, as well as nationalist, undertones (Williams 2007a).

Archaeologically, the unmitigated accumulation of material and data was the prime concern. The study of fifth- and sixth-century burial sites predominated, although they were not necessarily recognised as such at the time. Sites such as these yielded grave-goods which could be placed in collections. At this time, a major concern for historians and early archaeologists was to raise awareness of 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology and to secure the place of early medieval

antiquities in museums such as the British Museum. Both Roach Smith (1850) and John Yonge Akerman (1855), a numismatist and excavator, worked to provide overviews of the material and to distinguish 'Anglo-Saxon' artefacts from Romano-British or earlier material. H.M. Chadwick (1907) was the first to attempt a general work on the origins of the 'Anglo-Saxons' by combining historical and archaeological evidence. Little work was done, however, to catalogue the finds in terms of chronology or typology.

Chronological and typological approaches

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a substantial corpus of early medieval material, recovered largely from 'Early Saxon' burials, had been amassed. A survey of the material was produced from an art historical perspective by Gerald Baldwin Brown (1903a; 1903b; 1915a; 1915b), and the first Victoria County Histories were compiled by R.A. Smith between 1900 and 1926. As variations in form and decoration began to be identified in 'Anglo-Saxon' artefacts, the need arose for a system of classification. Thus typological and chronological schemes began to be devised for early medieval finds, based on the similarities between ornaments or cinerary urns excavated in England and their continental counterparts. Seminal work in this field was conducted by E.T. Leeds, who produced the first comprehensive synthesis, having observed that a 'general survey of the material in keeping with the advanced ideas demanded by modern scientific methods' had not yet been produced (Leeds 1913: 3). Sequences for the distribution and development of artefact types were also established by scholars such as Nils Åberg (1926), who discussed the possibility of devising chronologies for objects based on the presence of datable coins in the same, or associated, context. Although his work was an attempt at a general synthesis, it concentrated mainly on brooches and metalwork (Myres 1986: xx). There are clearly significant flaws in the reliance on relative dating by sequences, especially as continental coin-dated chronologies may not be compatible with the situation in Britain (Scull and Bayliss 1999).

J.N.L. Myres (1937: 320) saw the potential of archaeology to shed light on 'the main questions outstanding in this period: 'the character and distribution of the earliest settlements, the continental provenance of the invaders, the fate of Romano-British institutions and population'. In *Roman Britain and the English*

Settlements (Collingwood and Myres 1936), he endeavoured to combine archaeological evidence with historical and place-name sources, although he later admitted that his work was intended 'primarily for history students' (Myres 1986: xxiv). It could indeed be said that he fitted the archaeological evidence into established historical frameworks.

Although significant comparisons can be drawn between the approach taken by Anglo-Saxonists in the early twentieth century and the culture-historical method employed by prehistorians such as V.G. Childe, 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology developed independently, and in some ways predates similar methods used in prehistory (Lucy 1998: 12).

Post-1930: major themes and paradigm shifts

In the inter-war years, new approaches to research into the early medieval period began to take shape. During the 1930s, attempts had been made by the newly formed Research Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Societies to shift the focus of enquiry away from funerary and monastic sites and towards settlement sites, in order to shed light on lifestyles and the domestic economy (Gerrard and Rippon 2007: 529). Such excavations provided the necessary material for classifications of pottery (e.g. Myres 1969; 1977) and metalwork.

The long-held belief that the conversion to Christianity signalled the end of furnished burial was questioned by T.C. Lethbridge (1931; 1936) as a result of his excavations at Burwell and Shudy Camps, Cambridgeshire, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He recognised that there must have been a transitional phase, in which Christian cemeteries were being created while pagan burial customs still lingered. He argued that some early pagan cemeteries remained in use through this period. The 'Final Phase', a term coined by Leeds (1936), was seen as a distinct development from earlier burial types. This helped to distinguish and define conversion-period cemeteries as well organised inhumation burial grounds, often containing barrows, without grave-goods (see below).

Following World War II, continental archaeologists began to publish material on cemeteries in northern Germany, the Low Countries and Scandinavia, and collaboration with English archaeologists resumed (Myres 1986: xx-xxi). While

theoretically and methodologically 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology continued in a similar vein, the increasing unpopularity of Germanic cultural traditions amongst the British public, partly as a result of the conflict, inevitably had an effect on the way early medieval archaeology was viewed and presented (e.g. Leeds 1936). The aversion to the concept of Germanic origins for the English led to a resurgence in the study of 'Arthurian Britain' (e.g. Kendrick 1938).

From the middle of the twentieth century, the degree of continuity between Roman Britain and 'Anglo-Saxon' England became a major topic of research and debate, discussed in greater detail below. Early medieval settlement archaeology only began to be studied in more detail as a result of 'rescue' excavations from the 1960s onwards.

Early landscape archaeology

Landscape archaeology has developed and grown rapidly over the past fifty years to become a mainstream approach, bringing together a variety of elements of research that were previously studied in isolation (Rippon 2009). W.G. Hoskins' seminal work, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955), combined local history, geography and field archaeology with the aerial photographic techniques of analysis developed by O.G.S. Crawford, Kenneth St Joseph and Maurice Beresford in the inter-war and early post-war era. Aerial photography allowed areas of archaeological importance to be viewed on a broader scale, and revealed that the population in the Iron Age and Romano-British period was far greater than was previously thought (cf. Higham 1993: 8; Rippon 2000: 47). Landscape archaeology continued to develop in the 1970s and 80s, in parallel but quite independently from processual and 'rescue' archaeology. Techniques such as fieldwalking, geophysical survey, open area excavation and environmental analysis helped to greatly advance knowledge of the post-Roman period.

Historical geography: estates and territories

Working in parallel with archaeologists and historians in the 1970s and 80s were historical and settlement geographers, who were conducting research into the development of territories and their boundaries. Enthusiasm for the idea of

continuity from later prehistory through to the early post-Roman period was beginning to grow, providing a major stimulus for such research.

As a result of the new directions taken by landscape orientated research, burial data began to be seen to have direct relevance to the study of settlements. The view of the Wessex and southern English landscape rendered by Desmond Bonney (1966; 1972; 1976) was suggestive of continuity from prehistoric to early medieval times and beyond. He argued that estates and parishes could be traced back to 'pre-Saxon' times on account of documentary and field-name evidence for 'Pagan' or 'heathen' burials on their boundaries. His conclusions were, however, challenged by Ann Goodier (1984), Martin Welch (1985), and more recently by Simon Draper (2004; 2006). Draper has instead emphasised the connection between burial sites and topographical features and possible contemporary routeways which, he argued, had a significant influence on the location of both burials and boundaries. Although the same features are likely to have influenced boundary location prior to and during the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period, he has stressed (2006: 74) that close correlation and congruity do not necessarily signify continuity.

Furthermore, Bonney was writing at a time before any 'Early-Middle Saxon' settlements had been 'clearly recognised archaeologically' in Wiltshire (Bonney 1966: 25), and many aspects of his hypothesis were later found not to be supported by the archaeological evidence. A re-evaluation of boundary burial by Andrew Reynolds (2002) has emphasised that 'Early Saxon' communities did not necessarily regard settlement and burial as separate spatial entities, and often sited cemeteries in close proximity to their settlements, rather than in liminal locations. Doubt has also been cast on the antiquity of parish and town boundaries by Williamson (1986), who instead suggested the continuity from relict rectilinear field systems to parish boundaries in East Anglia and Essex. Oosthuizen (2011a; 2011b) has recently argued that there is considerable evidence for continuity of land division between later prehistory and the early medieval period, with rights to grazing related to transhumance and common land established in prehistory.

The nature and chronology of the development of the 'Anglo-Saxon' kingdoms has been a matter of much debate. Steven Bassett (1989) argued for a system

of competing 'micro-kingdoms', the weakest of which were gradually eliminated or absorbed by more powerful neighbours. Bassett equated these 'micro-kingdoms' with the administrative districts referred to by Bede and in the seventh-century Tribal Hidage as *regiones*, and suggested that areas with *-ingas* place-names, such as *Readingas* and *Basingas*, meaning 'people or dwellers of' a particular district, could be equated with such units. It is thought that this suffix can, however, also be applied to smaller territorial units within *regiones* (Yorke 2000: 84). The first element of some district names with the *-ingas* suffix seems to derive from a personal name. This name is traditionally thought to be that of a founder, pioneer leader or head of a kin group (Dodgson 1966), although Hines (1995: 82) has suggested that it may have had connotations of dominance and subjugation; i.e. 'people belonging to' a particular leader. The suffixes *-ware*, *-ge* and *-saete* are also found, usually in combination with a topographical feature; *-saete* names which include a town name, such as *Wilsaete*, are thought to be a later creation, for the purposes of taxation and administration (Yorke 2000: 84). Yorke (1990: 13) argued that a number of *regiones* or *provinciae*, which can be detected in many of the larger kingdoms of the seventh or eighth centuries, were probably in existence by the sixth century. She also suggested (1990: 27) that these units may reflect Roman organisation, as 'Anglo-Saxon' estate centres were often sited at river- or spring heads, at villas or significant Roman settlements. Attempts to reconstruct 'early folk territories' have recently been made by Rippon (2012) and Dickinson (2012). During the seventh century, such territories are thought to have been incorporated into local federations, and these federations into over-kingdoms (Blair 1994: 49).

Territories known as 'great estates' are also thought to have taken shape in the 'Middle Saxon' period. These estates were composed of a number of settlements dependent upon a centre known as a *caput*, or in the case of royal estates, a *villa regalis*, and were subject to division into manorial units towards the end of the first millennium AD by a process of 'estate fragmentation'. This system, also known as the 'multiple estate' model, was developed by Glanville Jones in the 1960s and 70s, partly by expanding on earlier studies by Maitland, Stenton and Jolliffe. There was much debate amongst these historians as to the differentiation between terms such as *soke* and *shire*, with Jolliffe regarding the

two as analogous, and arising from a pre-feudal 'era of the folk' (Gregson 1985: 340). Jones (1976) presented evidence for the growth of 'Anglo-Saxon' land units based on lords, tenants and estates, and his multiple estate model was a conceptual framework for analysing inter-settlement organisation. He drew attention to the similarities between the Northumbrian *shire* and the Welsh *maenor*, proposing that the organisational structure had 'Celtic' origins. The model was critiqued by Nicky Gregson (1985), who identified problems of definition, methodology and empirical application in Jones' work. She pointed out that the Welsh terminology used in the multiple estate model (*maenor*, *commote*, etc.) is interchangeable with terms used in the context of English medieval and post-medieval estates and manorial groups. The model was also dismissed by Bassett (1989: 20) as 'unhistorical', as, he argued, there is no evidence for this particular form of land organisation during the period in which early kingdoms developed.

The 'New Archaeology'

Processual archaeology, also known as the 'New Archaeology', was a movement that arose in the late 1950s and 60s as a result of increasing opposition to the culture-historical tradition and the invasion hypothesis. Processualists strove to answer questions about human society and societal change, using more objective and empirical scientific approaches and computer-aided and mathematical methodologies.

Up until 1980, medieval archaeology showed little concern for the relationship between theory and practice (Driscoll 1984: 104), although this was to change, through the work of two former students of Colin Renfrew: Chris Arnold and Richard Hodges. Arnold (1980; 1984; 1988) was determined to approach 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology in the same way as 'pure' prehistory. In his opinion, the subject had for too long been pervaded by conservatism and isolationism (Arnold 1988: 2). In 1982, Philip Rahtz, a late convert to theory, presented the case for a 'New Medieval Archaeology', which would be free from the constraints of historical models (Driscoll 1984). Rahtz believed that medieval archaeology should no longer be subservient to history, serving merely to illustrate narrative accounts or verify historically documented events. Instead, he thought, it was up to archaeologists to assert their autonomy, to disregard

biased and inaccurate historical sources and to focus on the archaeological record. In *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, Hodges (1989) also employed 'new archaeological' methods, including an absolute reliance on archaeological evidence.

The approach of these self-styled pioneers has been criticised for being too evangelical and grandiose (e.g. Gerrard and Rippon 2007: 540). Their methodology was arguably too mechanistic and their interpretations unconcerned with factors such as individuality, identity, gender or ethnicity. The movement was, however, successful in providing medieval archaeologists with the confidence and the atmosphere in which to pursue their investigations in a less elitist environment (Gerrard and Rippon 2007: 540).

Post-processualism

In reaction to the perceived impersonality and detachment of processual approaches, post-processualism focused on human experience and symbolism. The archaeology of death and burial was particularly receptive of such an approach, and post-processual theory was employed in the interpretation of both prehistoric and early medieval burials (although it was adopted later and only partially by many early medievalists). Post-processualism identified the 'performative and embodied qualities' of mortuary practices, in that they can be indicative of conscious decisions to create and reinforce aspects of identity, on a personal, familial, local or regional scale (cf. Williams 2006; 2007b). Julian Richards (1987) examined the symbolic aspects of 'Anglo-Saxon' funerary urns, and Heinrich Härke's (1990; 1992) studies of the inhumation weapon burial ritual drew attention to its symbolism. Both of these scholars did, however, retain elements of processualism in their approaches.

Meaning, as well as form, became of vital importance. Material culture could no longer be studied in isolation; rather than being considered passive indicators of ethnic affiliation, artefacts were seen to have 'biographies' and the 'agency' to affect and direct social structures and behaviour (Lucy 1998: 18; Williams 2007b: 5). Studies of mortuary practices (e.g. Parker Pearson 1993; Williams 2006) have focused on the active roles of mourners in burial ritual, as well as the symbolic and historical context of funerary expressions. Attitudes within the

discipline of early medieval mortuary archaeology have undergone a dramatic evolution over the past thirty years, having been more receptive of post-processual theory than the field of rural settlement (Gilchrist 2009: 389). As a result, grave-goods are, on the whole, no longer regarded merely as possessions, or simplistic indicators of rank or status; rather, they are regarded as representing conscious statements of social identity.

The use and abuse of historical narratives

Historical sources, principally Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Gildas' *Ruin of Britain* and the *ASC*, have been employed to varying extents by early medieval archaeologists and historians since modern study of the period began in the mid-nineteenth century. Many early medievalists have read these sources in an uncritical manner, exploiting the archaeological, place-name and linguistic evidence in order to confirm or validate them.

E.T. Leeds was sceptical of both of these documentary sources, believing them to be 'by no means impartial' and 'mutually contradictory' (1913: 10). In this respect, he had much in common with earlier scholars such as Kemble, who had also been wary of these narratives (cf. Higham 1993: 2; Hodges 1989: 10-12). Nevertheless, in many ways, the established historical frameworks dictated approaches to early medieval archaeology up until the mid-twentieth century. Any stylistic or morphological variations between artefacts found in different areas of England were attributed to the influx of Anglian, Saxon and Jutish cultural groups in particular regions, in accordance with Bede's description of 'Anglo-Saxon' tribes. Although he professed to doubt the veracity of the historical documents, arguing that they were unreliable and contradictory, Leeds (1913) still relied heavily on the model provided by Bede, discussing chapter by chapter the artefactual evidence for the presence of 'The Angles', 'The Saxons' and 'The Jutes'.

Myres (1986: 46) thought it unfathomable that any discussion of the continental background to the 'English settlements' could start from any other point than Bede's, and argued (1986: 13-14) that Gildas could be used as a 'credible and most valuable witness to a broad sequence of events in Britain' in the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Sir Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943) was

also heavily reliant on historical sources and place-name evidence, arguing that ‘the extreme rarity of British place-names in Sussex points to English colonisation on a scale which can have left little room for British survival’. The view that individuals buried in the same context as Germanic-style artefacts were naturally themselves immigrants only served to perpetuate racial, ethnocentric interpretations of the archaeological evidence.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, attention was once again drawn to the subjective and agenda-driven nature of early medieval documents. Sims-Williams (1983) argued that Bede and the ASC could not have accurately documented the events of the period. The ASC, he claimed, is chronologically ‘suspicious’ and shows every sign of manipulation for dynastic ends. As they cannot be tested archaeologically, he concluded that their only value lies in what they can reveal of the political situation and heroic tradition of the ‘Early Saxon’ period.

Migration and ethnicity

The years leading up to the early 1990s saw a crisis of identity in ‘Anglo-Saxon’ archaeology, and the culmination of a debate between two camps: those who argued that the *adventus* involved a mass population movement (cf. Hamerow 1997); and those who were in favour of a smaller-scale influx of Germanic aristocratic and warrior elites, who became the new estate-holders of eastern and southern lowland England, politically and culturally dominating the British population (e.g. Esmonde Cleary 1989; Higham 1993).

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although perspectives fluctuated to some degree, the general consensus was that substantial population movement had occurred. These migrations could even be traced by looking at the distribution and stylistic changes of artefacts. Leeds (1913: 25), for example, argued that the progress of the ‘Teutonic invaders’ could be traced along river courses, rather than Roman roads, and that the variation in artefacts between different regions of England could be attributed to the ‘different racial elements of which Teutons were composed’. Chadwick (1907: 12) had argued the impossibility that ‘the invasion of Britain could have been carried out

successfully except by large and organised forces', nor did he challenge Gildas' assertions of the large-scale extermination of Britons.

Any suggestion of folk migration had become unfashionable and 'politically incorrect' by the late 1980s and 90s, as epitomised by Julian Richards (1988: 145) who, parodying Myres' idea of tracing immigration through the distribution of artefacts, asks whether these anthropomorphic 'marching pots wore jackboots'. With processualism came the desire to reappraise the evidence, by disregarding subjective historical sources and adopting a more objective, quantitative approach. The 'elite dominance' model—or the idea that only a small number of warriors and aristocrats arrived on English shores, with origin myths of large-scale migrations being created much later—was endorsed to varying degrees by Arnold (1984; 1988), Hodges (1989) and Higham (1993). Higham argued that there was a process of acculturation and mutual influence rather than mass immigration, in which 'upwardly mobile' Britons were buried in 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries with Germanic rites and costumes in order to better their social status. The Old English language was adopted for same reason. It must be noted, however, that these cemeteries were not necessarily elite, and weapons and dress accessories were not the preserve of the rich (Hills 1992). Higham (1993: 180) has pointed out that it would be impossible to identify the burial of a Briton who had adopted 'Anglo-Saxon' culture, especially as it would probably be their intention to 'blend in'.

Although 'anti-migrationist' feeling was still prevalent in the 1990s, migration regained a certain relevance as a social process as a result of post-processualism. Heinrich Härke's (1990; 1992) controversial work addressed the ethnic symbolism of the weapon burial rite. He argued that the influx of immigrants was on the scale of 100,000 to 200,000 people, rather than the tens of thousands proposed by Higham (1993). Härke did, however, concede that British survival was also much higher than traditional views suggested (Welch 1992; Williams and Sayer 2009: 8). Härke (2007) has recently made an attempt to clarify the complex issues of cultural and biological affiliations in this period. He emphasises (2007: 12) that the idea of 'race' is a *biological* classification, and is not comparable with ethnicity, which is a *cultural* concept. It is only when the terminology becomes confused, usually for political reasons, that the migration debate becomes tainted with connotations of racism. Lucy (1998),

however, has argued that even ethnicity is flawed as a concept when applied to the early medieval period. She insisted (1998: 107) that ethnicity was far more flexible and fluid in the pre-modern era than we now perceive it to be, as 'several different ethnicities could be held by one person at the same time', and political affiliation was perhaps more important to identity.

With regard to methods for the inference of migration levels on interregional, regional and local scales, Hamerow (1997) has proposed that ethnographic models of migration could be useful, although it is unlikely that any sufficiently close comparisons could be found. Härke (2007: 13) has reiterated that only ethnic groups can be inferred from archaeological evidence, although this is only a possibility, as some people may have adopted the material culture of another ethnic group. He suggests (2007: 17) that stable isotope analysis holds great potential in this regard (see below). Genetics research carried out at UCL (Weale *et al.* 2002) found that central English and Frisian samples were 'statistically indistinguishable', suggesting a 'substantial migration of Anglo-Saxon Y chromosomes' into this area of England (Fig. 2.3). In a more recent paper, Härke (2011) portrays 'Early Saxon' society as one of division and 'apartheid', in which Britons and 'Anglo-Saxons' (in roughly equal proportions) remained culturally and socially separate. He argues that it was only in the seventh and eighth centuries that a common 'English' identity was forged (Härke 2011: 19-20).

Roman to early medieval transition

The period between the fourth and seventh centuries is among the most contested and controversial in the first millennium AD. Perspectives on the perceived continuity, or discontinuity, of Romano-British way of life in this period are wide-ranging, and different points of view have been represented in various studies over the past quarter of a century (Brown 1974; Dark 2000; Esmonde Cleary 1989; Higham 1993; Wilson 1981). While historical geographers such as Bonney (1972; 1976) began to look for long-term continuity in terms of territorial units and land use, up until the 1970s and 80s the perception of the political and economic climate in this particular period of transition was still largely catastrophic. The traditional view envisaged a total collapse and disintegration of Romanisation in terms of industry, pottery production and building

construction, and a rapid running-down of the fourth-century economic system in Britain as a whole (e.g. Brown 1974; Esmonde Cleary 1989). In contrast, others have allowed for a considerable degree of continuity, proposing that the decline of the British way of life and the decay of Roman institutions was a slow, gradual process (e.g. Dark 2000; Wilson 1981).



Fig. 2.3 Modern densities of introgressive Y-chromosome DNA, indicative of immigration from northwest Europe (M. Thomas, reproduced by Härke 2011).

Dark (2000) has argued that British political bodies (the Romanised tribal units of the Iron Age) remained strong following the adventus. Esmonde Cleary (1989: 161), however, insisted that there was 'no slow drawing-down of the blinds: the end was nasty, brutish and short'. He maintained (1989: 149) that there was a complete financial, military and physical collapse, as evidenced by the formation of a 'dark earth' layer during this period. It was, he argued (1989: 161), an internal collapse, rather than a direct result of the influx of ethnic

'Anglo-Saxons'. They did not immediately seize power; rather, by the time they began to establish themselves on the western side of the North Sea, British society had already collapsed. Britons accepted 'Anglo-Saxon' culture in the absence of anything else. Esmonde Cleary's vision of 'Early Saxon' Britain is that of a post-apocalyptic society, formed from a fusion of the two cultural entities following a 'discernable post-Roman but non-Saxon interlude' (1989: xi). Dark (2000: 227-8) does not conceive of a clear east/west divide within fifth- and sixth-century Britain; instead, he believes it to have been made up of a 'patchwork' of culturally distinct groups of British Romano-Christians and pagans, together with Germanic communities (*contra* Esmonde Cleary 1989, who argued that Britain was predominantly non-Christian).

The gradual decline of Romano-British culture is associated with the concept of 'living memory'; that is, it took approximately a hundred years before the collective memory of Roman Britain died out. Dark (2000) views fourth- to sixth-century Britain within a pan-European context, arguing that many similarities can be observed between western and northern Britain and the rest of the Late Antique world. Indeed, Britain was, in his opinion, the most successful sub-Roman society, as it was even exporting its own religion and culture to neighbouring territories. Continuity has been observed at a basic agricultural level (Esmonde Cleary 1989), although it has also been argued that the only real continuity is that of land utilization (Wilson 1981). Higham's (1993; 2004) interpretation is a class-orientated picture of an 'Anglo-Saxon' *adventus* led by powerful aristocratic and warrior elites, which Britons were ultimately unable to resist.

In terms of burial evidence, it could be argued that the cemeteries at Wasperton (Warwickshire) and Frilford (Berkshire) demonstrate continuity of use from the Romano-British to early medieval periods. Hamerow (1997: 36) has remarked on the infrequency of hybrid 'Anglo-British' burials, although there are nine burials at Wasperton that could be interpreted as hybrid. Esmonde Cleary (1989) suggests that Wasperton may have been a family cemetery, whose British occupants adopted Germanic material culture in response to social and political changes around them. At Mucking, within the settlement of over 200 buildings dating from the early fifth to the seventh-eighth centuries, two 'Early

Saxon' cemeteries are situated in proximity to, but in clear separation from, four Romano-British burial grounds (Hamerow 1993).

CEMETERY RESEARCH AND CATEGORISATION

'Early Saxon' cemeteries have, on the whole, been fairly comprehensively published, compared to 'Middle-Late Saxon' burial sites. Excavation reports have tended to consist of a minimum of descriptions of the grave-goods, a discussion of the site and a grave catalogue, listing grave-goods and often the position or orientation of skeletons and osteological information, where available (Lucy and Reynolds 2002: 7). The most problematic issue, however, has been the frequently long delay between excavation and publication. For example, the report on excavations conducted at Dover Buckland cemetery in the 1950s was only published in the late 1980s (Evison 1987), and Sonia Chadwick Hawkes' 1960s fieldwork at Worthy Park, near Winchester, was published posthumously forty years later (Hawkes and Grainger 2003). One good example of consistent and prolifically published material is the Spong Hill monograph series (e.g. Hills 1977; Hills and Lucy 2013; McKinley 1994; Rickett 1995).

Site reports have, in the past, been criticised for being purely empirical and lacking adequate interpretation. The situation improved to a certain extent in the 1990s, as analysis and interpretation of data were given priority, rather than simple inventories of material. The last decade has seen the publication of a number of important cemeteries. A recent report on excavations at the 'Anglo-Saxon' settlement and cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill, Suffolk (Lucy *et al.* 2009) has been successful in bringing together many different strands of evidence and in placing the site in its wider landscape context. Martin Carver's (2005) *Sutton Hoo: A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground and its Context* provides a detailed synthesis of all the investigations undertaken at the site since 1983, and assesses the artefactual and environmental evidence in the appropriate local and regional landscape setting. Recent publications of other key sites include Wasperton, Warwickshire (Carver *et al.* 2009); Market Lavington (Williams and Newman 2006) and Pewsey (Annable and Eagles 2010), both in Wiltshire.

Important scientific advances have been made in the last few decades, in terms of greater precision in AMS radiocarbon dating, particularly for unfurnished sites and the accurate dating of earlier sites (e.g. Scull and Bayliss 1999). The long tradition of relative and typological dating methods in early medieval archaeology has led such approaches to become engrained in the discipline; although it could now be argued that scientific dating methods have rendered typologies and chronologies obsolete. Correspondence analysis (CA), a program designed to create 'averaged' relative sequences through the statistical analysis of assemblages from a series of geographically-controlled sites, has, however, been used in some areas of Scandinavia and England (Scull and Bayliss 1999; and see Dickinson 2002: 79-81).

More advanced osteological techniques have been developed, for example in Jacqueline McKinley's (1994) work on cremations from Spong Hill. DNA extraction offers the possibility of assigning gender to ambiguous or immature remains, or identifying familial relationships within cemeteries, although the application of the method to 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology is still 'work in progress' (Hills 2009). The scientific examination of skeletal material and grave-goods has also been driven by the analysis of stable isotopes. Radiogenic isotopes of strontium, and occasionally lead, have been used to identify ancient immigrants, a technique that has been employed in recent cemetery and settlement excavation projects (e.g. Montgomery *et al.* 2005). The advancement of techniques such as geophysical survey, dendrochronology, as well as zoological, botanical and environmental analysis, must also be considered. The implementation by landscape archaeologists of technologies such as GIS has also contributed to the development of more sophisticated technologies of analysis. As well as facilitating complex analysis of the landscape, through simulation, viewshed and catchment analysis, GIS has also been used in site recording. At West Heslerton in Yorkshire, for example, GIS facilitated the integration of site drawings and photographs of graves with artefacts within the grave catalogue (Haughton and Powesland 1999).

The 'Final Phase' model

First coined by E.T. Leeds in the 1930s, the term 'Final Phase' was initially used to define cemeteries which were founded around or after the middle of the

seventh century and abandoned in the following century. A common characteristic of the 'Final Phase' cemetery is its close proximity to a precursor burial ground, hence the 'two-cemetery model' defined by Hyslop (1963) through her analysis of a pair of cemeteries at Chamberlains Barn, near Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, and supported by Winnall I and II (Fig. 2.4; Meaney and Hawkes 1970) and Portway East and West (Cook and Dacre 1985; Stoodley 2006) in Hampshire. Another identifying feature of this group is the relative paucity of grave-goods, with utilitarian items most common, as well as more 'refined' styles of jewellery in comparison with sixth-century pieces (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 45). Such cemeteries reflect changes in material culture and burial practices which were taking place across most of northwest Europe (Welch 2011: 280). The fact that the founding of these new cemeteries coincides with the conversion, at least nominally, of most Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Christianity, together with the decline in the 'pagan' customs of cremation and furnished burial, greater uniformity in grave orientation (consistently west-east), and the apparent distancing of burial grounds from settlements, prompted religious explanations for their appearance (Hyslop 1963; Lethbridge 1931; 1936).

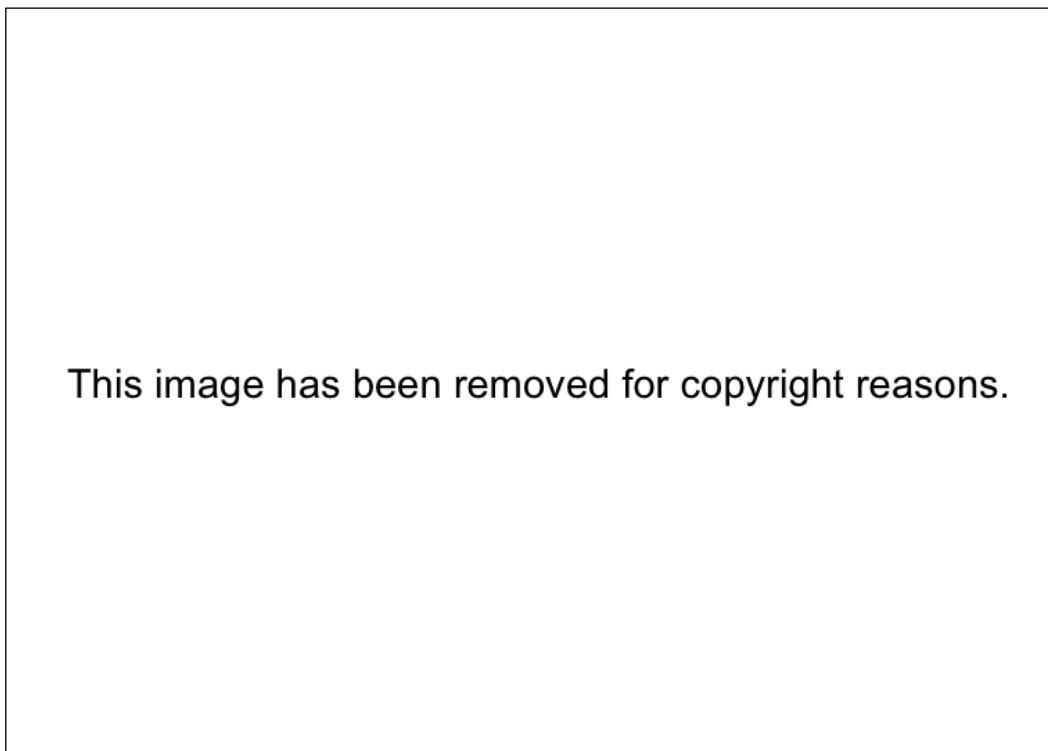


Fig. 2.4 Plan of Winnall II 'Final Phase' cemetery (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: Fig. 5).

In a more recent review of the model, Boddington (1990) was, however, sceptical that Christianity was the primary factor, or even that 'Final Phase' cemeteries should be treated as particularly remarkable, given that burial grounds had been continually founded and abandoned in earlier periods too. He argued that their establishment was due to a wider variety of landscape, social, economic and religious pressures.

A recent project to refine the dating of 'Early Saxon' graves and grave-goods, funded by English Heritage in collaboration with Cardiff University and Queens University Belfast, has indicated that furnished burial ended more abruptly than previously considered (Bayliss *et al.* 2013). A sample of 572 later sixth- to early eighth-century burials from across England were reassessed using a range of techniques including high-precision radiocarbon dating of selected bone samples, seriation of grave assemblages, the revision and review of artefact typologies, and Bayesian modelling. The analysis concluded that the final phase of the routine practice of burial with grave-goods occurred within a relatively short space of time, c. AD 670-690.

Post- and sub-Roman burial traditions

The cemetery category identified as 'sub-Roman' (Phillips 1966; Rahtz 1977) is a feature of Romanised areas of western Wessex, and is typified by Cannington in Somerset (Fig. 2.5; Rahtz *et al.* 2000; Williams 2006: 211-4). Such cemeteries are characterised by rows of west-east graves, sometimes lined with stone, few or no grave-goods, and an ambiguity of religious affiliation, although association with non-ecclesiastical Christianity is generally favoured (cf. Davey 2005: 108-9; Petts 2004; Rippon 2012: 67, 302-3). Longevity of use is another feature of this cemetery type; radiocarbon dating has shown that Cannington, for example, was in use between the fifth and eighth centuries (Rahtz *et al.* 2000).

A considerable degree of mortuary diversity has, however, recently been identified within the burial traditions of 'non-Anglo-Saxon' post-Roman Britain (Petts 2000; 2009). Together with the type mentioned above, Petts (2004: 78) has identified a second group, characterised by north-south alignment; a range of grave-goods, pottery vessels, coins, hobnailed shoes and boots, and for

women, 'low value' items of jewellery, such as hairpins, bracelets, etc.; and a wider variety of burial positions, including crouched and prone. Both this and the previous group were found in the late and post-Roman cemetery at Poundbury, Dorset (Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 2004; Petts 2004).

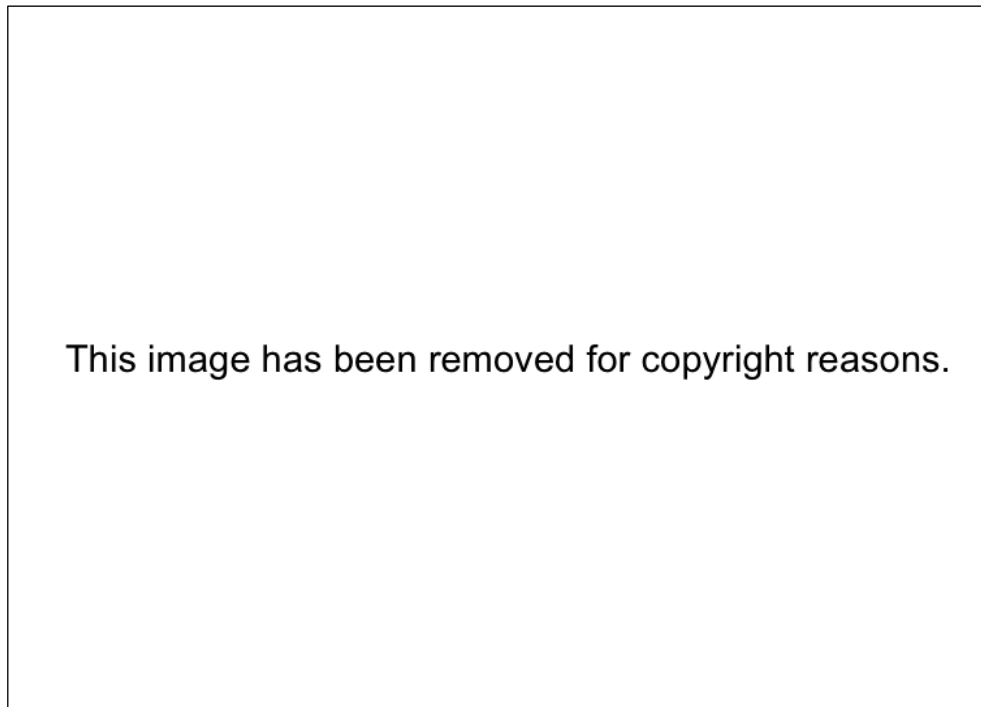


Fig. 2.5 Plan of Cannington cemetery (Rahtz 1977).

It is possible to identify a number of burial sites in Somerset and Dorset with phases of use spanning the late Roman, post-Roman and early medieval periods, although some seem to have been disused before West Saxon 'cultural dominance' began to take hold in these areas (Turner 2006: 133-4). Former Roman temples, which had not originated as funerary sites, in some cases became the focus for burials and cemeteries. No clear break in terms of burial traditions can be discerned at any point between the fourth and eighth centuries in western Wessex despite the conversion of the wider area to Christianity, although some sites went out of use in sixth or seventh centuries. The burial traditions of Dorset and Somerset are indeed characterised by striking continuity in both location and practice (Blair 2005: 26).

In Dorset, evidence from the Isle of Purbeck demonstrates that cemeteries could exist entirely separately from churches during the period of study. At Ulwell, Swanage, a cemetery of around 60 dug graves and cist burials has been shown by radiocarbon dating to have been in use throughout the seventh and

eighth centuries, perhaps later (Cox 1988). Other similar sites in the area may also date to the early medieval period, although they have not been scientifically dated. Such sites do not have any identifiable relationship with a church or chapel, yet it has been argued that they probably functioned as Christian field cemeteries (Turner 2006: 134).

THE ‘SIGNIFICANCE OF LANDSCAPE’: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL APPROACHES

In the 1990s, proponents of post-processual and phenomenological approaches to archaeology began to emphasise the importance of viewing the physical environment not as a passive backdrop, but as an active transformer of society and culture, which can only be understood within the context of the society which inhabits it at any given time. Such approaches were developed and adopted by prehistorians such as Ashmore and Knapp (1999), Barrett (1994) and Tilley (1994). In contrast with the field of prehistory, however, medieval archaeology has generally resisted embracing theoretical approaches to landscape, and arguably has yet to develop a universal and cohesive theoretical framework (Gilchrist 2009; McClain 2012). Echoing the sentiments of Matthew Johnson (2007: 117-9), Roberta Gilchrist (2009: 391) maintains that scholars of medieval landscape and rural settlement tend in particular to shy away from more reflective and experiential approaches in favour of rigid empirical studies. As Stephen Rippon (2009) has advised, however, the intrinsic value of rigorous evidence-based original research should not be underestimated, and a more useful approach incorporates relevant theoretical elements into such research without placing inordinate emphasis on social agency. Similarly, recent studies of early medieval landscapes by scholars such as Nick Corcos (2002), Simon Draper (2006) and Mary Chester-Kadwell (2009), while not advocating a return to environmental determinism, recognise the importance of topography, pedology and other aspects of the natural environment in shaping landscape character and past communities’ experience of their surroundings (Rippon 2009: 241; cf. Williamson 2013).

As noted above, the field of early medieval burial archaeology has perhaps been more receptive than settlement archaeology to post-processual theoretical

concepts. The research by Sam Lucy (1998) into the landscape context of 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries of East Yorkshire combined social and symbolic approaches, partly influenced by the work of prehistorians such as Parker Pearson (1982; 1993) and Bill Bevan (1994). Lucy's study revealed that the topographic position of cemeteries shifted over time, with the locations of fifth- and earlier sixth-century burial sites contrasting markedly with later sixth- and seventh-century ones. Lucy related this to an increasing 'marginalisation of the dead', and to the restriction and control of access to more prominent and visible locations by an emerging social elite due to motivations of power and display. Howard Williams (2006) has also focused on the ritual performance surrounding funerary practices, notably the idea that graves and burial locations reflect the active role of mourners in funerary ritual, a concept first developed by Parker Pearson (1982) and Bradley (1984). Indeed, new concepts of identity and ideology in landscape-aware studies by Williams and other early medievalists (e.g. Carver 2001; Chester-Kadwell 2009; Devlin 2007; Sayer and Williams 2009; Semple 1998) have been influential in their own right (Semple 2013: 7).

REUSE, MEMORY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PAST

John Mortimer (1905) was perhaps the first to acknowledge the early medieval funerary reuse of barrows, through his research into the earthworks of East Yorkshire, and more recent studies have increasingly recognised that the appropriation of prehistoric monuments was indeed a common phenomenon throughout early medieval England (e.g. Lucy 2000; Williams 1997; 1998a). These studies have also tended to show that Bronze Age barrows are the most favoured monument type for intrusive burial. It should, however, be kept in mind that the targeting of these highly visible and perceivably artefact-rich sites by antiquarians, has resulted in a distorted impression of early medieval burial location (Semple 2013: 226). In mid-twentieth-century discussions of the phenomenon (e.g. O'Neill and Grinsell 1960), practical expediency was often considered the sole motivation for the deposition of the dead within pre-existing mounds. Yet this explanation is unsatisfactory, not least because individuals interred in such places, such as the female burial at Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire (Speake 1989), often display markers of considerable social status,

and substantial physical investment was required to adapt such above-ground monuments for secondary burial (Semple 2003: 74; Williams 2006: 32).

The ‘past in the past’

In recent decades, the concepts of multi-period use and the symbolic ordering of landscapes have been recognised, and it has become apparent that attitudes to the past were integral to the construction of identities in pre-modern societies (Bradley 2002; Evans 1985; Hobsbawm 1983; Holtorf 1996; 1997). In his discussion of the ‘striking juxtaposition of prehistoric and early medieval monuments’ at Yeavinger, Northumberland, Richard Bradley (1987), was the first to propose the idea that monument reuse was an intentional strategy in the early medieval period. He argued that, far from being indicative of passive ‘ritual continuity’—as suggested by Brian Hope-Taylor (1977), excavator of the Yeavinger complex—the reoccupation of this ancient landscape represented an attempt by a social elite to legitimise its status and justify its claim to the land through reference to the past. In this way, the fabrication of a link with the ancient world was a political and social strategy, in which mythical ancestors were used in claims to authority and status (Williams and Sayer 2009: 4). Attempts to harness of the power of fictional historical characters are evident in the genealogies of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the origin myths recorded in the *ASC* (Howe 1989). Ancient monuments provided a tangible material connection to the past, and an idealised, liminal space, for the creation and negotiation of identities (Williams 1997: 25; 2006: 199). Crucially, forging a perceived link with the ‘British’ or Roman past allowed elite groups in ‘Anglo-Saxon’ England to ‘stake claims’ to land, resources, and authority (Geake 1992; Howe 2002; Lucy 1992; Williams 1997: 26).

Another topic of much scholarly investigation has been the construction of new funerary monuments in the early medieval period. The significance of isolated late sixth- and seventh-century primary barrows, in contrast with ‘egalitarian’ barrow cemeteries, was originally discussed by Shephard (1979a; 1979b) from a processual perspective. Shephard, and later Scull (1999) and Stoodley (1999), saw such developments as a response to increasing social stratification. Lucy (1992) similarly argued that ‘Early Saxon’ communal barrow cemeteries in North Yorkshire reflected attempts to legitimise power struggles resulting from

an increasingly hierarchical society. Martin Carver (2001; 2002) has argued that the rise of monumentality at the end of the 'Early Saxon' period represented an ideological signal in response to political insecurity. Semple's (2003) study of burial topography in northern Wiltshire demonstrated that prominent earlier landscape features could be seen in the context of political statements in contested areas. The reuse of monuments in prominent topographic positions was also seen in a similar light by Härke (in Fulford and Rippon 1994), Lucy (1998) and Williams (1999b).

Religious interpretations for barrow burial have also been proposed by Van de Noort (1993), who argued that this form of monumentality represented a conspicuous and ostentatious display of paganism, in response and in resistance to the growing power of Roman Christianity. Furnished burial—perhaps even barrow burial—may not, however, have been explicitly non-Christian, and may have offered an alternative to churchyard burial for wealthy elites in the seventh and early eighth centuries (Geake 1992; Welch 2011: 274). Moreover, as Carver has recently advised (2010: 15), the dividing line between paganism and Christianity is likely to have been somewhat fluid at this time, as neither religion was formally institutionalised; rather, he sees paganism and Christianity as 'two hands of the same persona', with 'considerable interdigitation between the two'.

It is now recognised that perceptions of landscape are key to our understanding of how ancient worlds informed funerary practices in early medieval society. Sarah Semple (1998) was the first to attempt to address this issue in an interdisciplinary way, considering the archaeological, literary, historical and linguistic evidence. In her original paper, she demonstrated that there was growing superstition and wariness of prehistoric sites in the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period, as such places developed negative connotations. This study was complemented by Reynolds' (1998) research into locations of execution burial and deviant burial, which, he found, also began to be associated with prehistoric monuments from the eighth century onwards, as the use of such sites for burial by the general population declined. Aside from funerary reuse, barrows and other earthworks were also appropriated for other functions. They were frequently used as assembly places or moots (Pantos 2004; Semple 2004), and as Vicky Crewe (2012) has shown, they were also incorporated into 'Early-

Middle Saxon' settlements. All of these studies demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between early medieval society and earlier monuments. The motivations behind monument reuse and monumentality in the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period were many and varied, and this was a widespread phenomenon, which can be identified in many areas of western Europe (Effros 2001; Halsall 2010; Thäte 2007; and see Semple 2013: 53-7).

Belief systems and the natural world

While monument reuse evidently had an important influence on early medieval mortuary topography, burial location is likely to have been motivated by a variety of other factors, including proximity to (perhaps archaeologically invisible) ritual and sacred sites, such as ephemeral temples or shrines, and natural features. Despite the survival of seventh-century literary references to 'temples of the idols' and 'profane shrines', material evidence for formal religious built structures in the 'Early Saxon' period has proved elusive (Carver 2010: 11; Hutton 1991: 270-1). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while enthusiasm for the concept of a shared Teutonic ancestry was at its peak, the naturalistic elements of Germanic paganism were emphasised, and possible templates for as yet undiscovered 'Anglo-Saxon' temples were sought from Iron Age and medieval Scandinavia (Semple 2007: 367-8). Place-names featuring the OE elements *hearg*, 'temple, hilltop sanctuary', or *weoh*, 'holy place, idol, altar', both of which appear in early charters, have long been viewed as indicators of places of worship, and evidence for such edifices was meticulously sought (Stenton 1941; Wilson 1992).

Archaeologically, Blair (1995) has identified some possible examples of more ephemeral pagan shrines, including several categories of square enclosure, thought to derive from Iron Age and Romano-Celtic traditions. Evidence from Yeavering, Northumberland, supports the idea that ritual practice was embedded within the same palimpsest as domestic and everyday life, as well as funerary practices. The interweaving of the ritual and domestic is a concept which has also been addressed in relation to later prehistory (Bradley 2005; Sharples 2010).

Scholarly approaches have now moved away from simply seeking to validate the written sources through material evidence (Semple 2010: 22). More recent research on the significance of the natural environment within the early medieval world view (e.g. Lund 2010; Semple 2007; 2010) demonstrates that an insight into early medieval perceptions of natural and sacred places can be gained through multidisciplinary landscape-led approaches. While direct continuity of ritual practice cannot be assumed, it is now recognised that certain sites and landscapes, especially those with distinctive topographical features, held a long-standing sacred significance, and were continually re-appropriated between the Bronze Age and the 'Early Saxon' period (Semple 2007).

Romanitas

Meaning literally 'Roman-ness', this term is defined by Turner (1998: 1) as 'the notion of belonging politically or emotionally (or both) to a universal order and culture associated in one way or another with the Roman Empire'. It is used to express a sense of adherence to Roman identity, and, when applied to post-Roman societies, a nostalgic desire to recapture the power of Rome.

Place-name and archaeological evidence attests to the fact that the Roman buildings were widespread and highly visible in the landscape of early medieval England (Bell 2005: 19). Although extant and ruined Roman stone and masonry buildings were not unique to the English landscape, they would undoubtedly have provided a strong visual contrast given that the dominant 'Anglo-Saxon' architectural tradition was in timber (Shapland 2013: 37), as indeed was that of 'Celtic' western Britain (Laing 1975: 382-3). Moreover, the permanence of stone, in comparison with the ephemeral and organic qualities of trees, may have had ideological implications (Shapland 2013: 34). *The Ruin*, a poem which dates from the second half of the tenth century and is contained within the Exeter Book, depicts the picturesque splendour of a decaying city, possibly *Aquae Sulis* (Bath). The stone-built city is described as 'the work of giants' (Mackie 1934), almost certainly a metaphorical expression rather than a statement of literal belief, as the Roman origins of such places are likely to have been common knowledge (Bell 2005: 21).

The wholesale recycling of Roman building materials and religious sites became commonplace in the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period, as part of a strategy of legitimisation by royal and ecclesiastical elites, as an association with continental culture and the Roman Church was a powerful political statement (Bell 2005; Morris 1989).

The 'reuse' of Roman objects

The 'magpie-like tendency' of early medieval individuals to collect Roman objects (Williams and Newman 2006: 173) has long been noted in both funerary and settlement contexts. Pierced Roman coins are particularly common, among a wide range of other objects such as brooches, vessels and keys. The significance of the practice did not begin to be explored until the mid-twentieth century, and was initially thought to indicate the survival of Romano-British ethnicity and material culture (Leeds 1945). The corpus of Roman finds from 'Anglo-Saxon' burial contexts was first examined in detail by Roger White (1988; 1990), who asserted that ethnicity could emphatically not be inferred from artefacts alone. White (1988) found that Roman objects were particularly common in the graves of women and children, and suggested that certain items had amuletic properties, whilst others were chosen for their practical value. The concept of collecting *objets trouvés* as curiosities or amulets has also been explored by Meaney (1981), who showed that some items were considered to have been imbued with magical properties.

Eckardt and Williams (2003) have argued that it was the remote antiquity of Roman objects that gave them their appeal, allowing them to be used as blank canvases to 'define social memories relating to the past' (2003: 146, 159). This argument does, however, presuppose that people were not aware of the histories of the objects, a suggestion that Devlin (2007) in particular has disputed.

There appears to have been a high degree of selectivity in the curation and funerary deposition of various Roman items throughout the 'Early Saxon' period and beyond, reinforcing the idea that they were more than simply heirlooms. The peak of reuse seems to be in the sixth century, although some hanging bowls, which are usually deposited in seventh- and eighth-century contexts,

may be of Roman origin (Geake 1999). Moreover, new items of jewellery which incorporate glassware fragments, such as millefiori, and other materials of Roman manufacture, also appear in high-status seventh-century graves, perhaps related to a resurgence in *Romanitas* and continental influence (Geake 1999: 17).

Archaeologies of memory

The mnemonic qualities of landscape features have long been recognised in regard to prehistory (Bradley 1993; Edmonds 1999; Tilley 1994), and more recently, ‘technologies of remembrance’ (and forgetting) have been recognised in the context of early medieval England. Studies such as Williams’ (2006) volume have begun to address how ‘social memories’ were produced and reproduced through burial rites and material culture, and how memory and the remembrance of the dead influenced life and death in different communities over the course of the early medieval period. Williams’ study used case studies from across Britain, and there is scope to investigate the topic of burial location and memory using similar methodologies at a more localised level. Devlin (2007) has, however, added the caveat that archaeologists often fail to define memory as it applies to particular studies, and argued that the whole notion of social and collective memory is flawed, as memory can only exist in the mind of individuals (cf. Foot 1999; Halsall 2010: 251-2).

Boundary clauses in early medieval land charters can also be regarded as mnemonics or ‘mental maps’, as prior to the advent of cartography, boundaries were described and recounted. The fact that the bounds are in the vernacular, rather than Latin, demonstrates that they were a well established and practical way of recalling the boundaries of estates (Devlin 2007: 46-7; Howe 2002). Topographic markers, which may seem ephemeral to the modern reader, were deliberately chosen for their significance and memorable nature. In a broader sense, toponyms can reflect communities’ complex interactions with their surroundings, and are intimately involved in the formulation and negotiation of identity and ‘sense of place’ (Basso 1996; Howe 2002; Jones and Semple 2012; Morphy 1995).

SUMMARY

As this chapter has demonstrated, approaches to 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology have changed almost beyond recognition over its 200-year history. Our knowledge of the period has greatly improved through the accumulation and interpretation of both funerary and settlement evidence, and research continues to be driven by the potential to make technological, methodological and theoretical advances. The development of landscape archaeology, and the large-scale research and 'rescue' excavations of the 1960s-1980s, had a great impact on our understanding of the late Roman and early medieval landscape (Rippon 2000). This is not to say that traditionalists no longer exist within the discipline, or that discordances between different factions have been resolved. Tensions can still be identified between 'theoretical' archaeologists, and historical archaeologists who dispute the relevance of theoretical discourses to their discipline.

Early medieval archaeology has long been dominated by the migration debate, in which ideas of military aggression and conquest, mass invasion or population displacement (both 'Germanic' and Romano-British) can be traced back to nineteenth-century perceptions of race and ethnicity (Lucy 1998). Attempts in the past three decades to approach the subject of migration levels from a post-processual standpoint have provoked varying degrees of controversy. The idea that ethnicity, as a cultural construct, can be identified unproblematically in the archaeological record is debatable. Ethnicity is thought by some to be highly flexible, and many remain sceptical about the validity of inferring ethnic identity from material remains (e.g. Lucy 1998; and see Härke 2007). Yet we must also be wary of allowing 'postmodern' twenty-first-century perceptions of class and social structure to influence interpretations of identity in the early medieval period.

Attitudes regarding the post-Roman or Late Antique period, formerly conceived as the Dark Ages, also remain contentious. The wildly contrasting views recorded in a BAR volume which resulted from a conference held at York in 2003 (Collins and Gerrard 2004) are indicative of the extent to which this field polarises archaeological opinion, although perhaps less so today than was the case twenty years ago. It has been suggested (e.g. Devlin and Holas-Clark

2009; Rippon 2000) that it is only through interdisciplinarity that any meaningful conclusions can be reached about this period, and that ignoring other fields of research can only be counterproductive.

Recent publications (e.g. Bintley and Shapland 2013; Crewe 2012; Jones and Semple 2012; Reynolds 2009; Semple 2007; 2013; Thäte 2007) have embraced interdisciplinarity, demonstrating that it is possible to utilise literary sources, documentary sources, place-name evidence, published reports and grey literature, combined with landscape theory and rigorous archaeological methodologies, in a progressive and useful way. Whilst it is vital to avoid insularity and to maintain an open dialogue with research conducted at a national and European level, it is also important to be aware that attitudes and burial practices varied from place to place (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999; Semple 2013; Williams 1997). Equally, it must be recognised that any such patterns may partly reflect the history of archaeological investigation. Burial sites and settlements should also not be examined in isolation from one another (Chester-Kadwell 2009). The value of employing a 'micro-topographical' approach and conducting detailed regionally and locally focused studies should not be overestimated, as in this way, a 'more nuanced understanding' of early medieval landscapes, ideologies and identities can be achieved (Semple 2008: 410).

CHAPTER 3

WESSEX: BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the evidence from three of the historic counties of Wessex, namely Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset. Although the boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom varied during the period of study, these counties, together with Somerset, Berkshire and Devon, had all come under West Saxon control by the mid-ninth century. The history of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom holds relevance to the thesis, not least because the archaeological material has often been interpreted by past scholars through the framework of narratives provided by the documentary sources. Following a brief overview of the physical landscape of the region, and the research history of early medieval Wessex, the historical background and development of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom will be outlined.

Landscape character

The Wessex region is often perceived to be overwhelmingly dominated by chalk downland; this is partly a result of the long history of archaeological investigation on the chalklands, which are often considered the 'cradle' of British prehistory (Aston and Lewis 1994a: 2; Sharples 2010: 15). Although cretaceous bedrock does underlie a large swathe of the region, spanning central Dorset, south and east Wiltshire, and central Hampshire, the Wessex landscape is highly diverse. It also incorporates sheltered coastal plains underlain by tertiary sands and gravels in Hampshire, clay vales and Jurassic limestone hills in Dorset and northwest Wiltshire, the low-lying marshland of the Somerset Levels, and the rugged uplands of Exmoor to the west. It is divided between the 'Central Province', 'South-eastern Province', and 'Northern and Western Province' areas of historic landscape character by Roberts and Wrathmell (2000). The topography, geology and hydrology of the thesis study area will be examined in greater detail in the county chapters.

Past research

Early medieval Wessex is a broad topic of study, both in terms of chronology and geography. Different regions, periods and perceived ethnic and cultural groups have therefore often been studied in isolation, with contrasting research agendas and themes. The counties of Devon and Somerset have a long history of research into the Roman to medieval transition, while further east, furnished cemeteries of the 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition have inevitably attracted the most attention. The diversity of the 'Anglo-Saxon' burial rite has been the subject of much examination, while the variations and subtleties in British funerary traditions in the west have, to a certain extent, been overlooked (Petts 2009).

The most comprehensive study of the development of early medieval Wessex, written from a historical perspective but incorporating the archaeological evidence, perhaps remains Barbara Yorke's (1995) *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*. Chapters in the edited volume *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex* (Aston and Lewis 1994b) represented one of the first attempts to bring together landscape-focused studies of rural settlement and burial, while more recently, the research assessments and agendas devised as part of the Solent Thames and South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF) projects (Clark 2007; Crawford and Dodd 2007; Greenaway 2006; Hinton 2007; Waller 2006; Webster 2007) have provided useful overviews at regional and county levels. Annia Cherryson (2005a; 2005b) has conducted a comprehensive survey of early medieval funerary rites in Wessex, including a gazetteer of burial sites and possible burial sites, although burial practices, rather than landscape context, were the primary consideration. Sam Turner's (2006) investigation of the development of the early medieval church in southwest England showed how the distinctive and varied physical and humanly modified landscapes created strong regional differences in monumentality and religious organisation. Studies by Scull (1993) and Stoodley (1999) on the relationship between burial practices and the development of the kingdom of Wessex have also been significant.

This brief summary clearly does not do justice to the volume of research that has been carried out on the topic of early medieval Wessex. Development-led work has also provided a significant contribution to knowledge. This thesis will

make an original contribution by incorporating all strands of evidence from the study area, conducting detailed analysis of landscape context on a local level, and identifying shared themes on a broader level. This approach ‘provides the basis for an enriched appreciation of early medieval perceptions and engagements with ancient monuments’ (Semple 2009: 32).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The decline of Roman society

By the late Iron Age, the area that would later become Wessex was divided between tribal groups, which then formed the basis of Roman *civitates* (Fig. 3.1; Yorke 1995: 3). Although it is difficult to reconstruct the precise boundaries of these units in the absence of written records, it is known that the territories of the Belgae and Durotriges fell within Wessex, as did parts of the land belonging to the Dobunni, Atrebates, Dumnonii, and Regni tribes (Eagles 2004: 234; Yorke 1995: 4). The *civitates* do not correspond with the later shire boundaries, with the possible exception of parts of the border between the *civitas Durotrigum* and the *civitas Belgarum*; this may correspond with the Somerset-Wiltshire boundary in the Selwood Forest area, and possibly the convergence of the Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire boundaries further south (Eagles 2004: 234). The whole region was also contained within the *Britannia Prima* diocese by the early fourth century, administrated from Cirencester (Yorke 1995: 4). The region is varied in terms of the extent of Roman influence; Devon and western Somerset, controlled by the Dumnonii, show far fewer signs of Romanisation than the rest of what was to become Wessex (Yorke 1995: 4). A network of roads connected the *civitates* capitals and lesser centres, supplementing the existing trackways along the ridges of hills and river valleys. High concentrations of villas can be observed around towns such as Bath and Ilchester (Yorke 1995: 6).

There are signs of an economic decline in the last quarter of the fourth century, although the circumstances surrounding the decline of Roman Britain are the subject of continued debate, and opinions are varied as to whether this process

was sudden or gradual.¹ It is likely that a major overhaul of the defences of towns was carried out, perhaps after the arrival of Count Theodosius in 369, with bastions added at Bath, Ilchester and Winchester, and stone fortifications at *Cunetio* in Wiltshire (Cunliffe 1993: 268-73). In 406, three British claims were made to the imperial rule, and continental sources such as the Byzantine writer Zosimus record a British revolt in 409, the subsequent expulsion of imperial officials, and ultimately, severance from the Empire (Cunliffe 1993: 274). Coin issues and items manufactured elsewhere in the empire ceased to arrive in the British Isles after the first decade of the fifth century, and the insular pottery industry and market economy ended soon after (Esmonde Cleary 1989). As the production of new material culture was greatly reduced and styles were slow to be replaced, and arguably, the archaeological record can reveal only a limited picture of life in Wessex for most of the fifth century. Recent research into late Roman pottery styles in Dorset has, however, shown that there is increasing evidence of the innovation of new forms and fabrics into the early fifth century (Gerrard 2010).

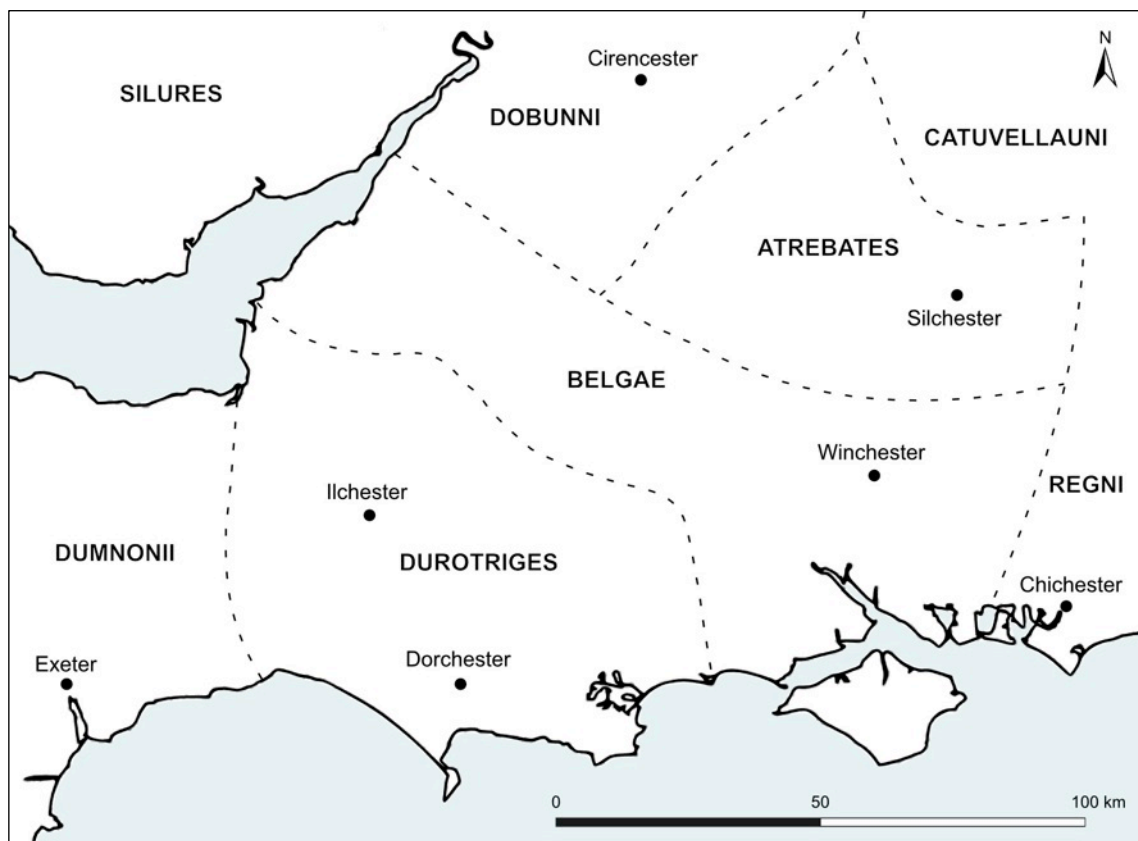


Fig. 3.1 Postulated boundaries of Roman *civitates* in Wessex (after Millett 1990: 67; Todd 1981: 125; Yorke 1995: Fig. 2).

¹ See papers in Collins and Gerrard 2004.

Esmonde Cleary (1989: 73-5, 139-61) has proposed that many villas and settlements suffered dereliction or conversion into 'squatter' occupation as a consequence of the removal of the Roman tax system that had supported certain sectors of society. This is a characteristically extreme scenario, however, and it is likely that many aspects of Roman infrastructure and a sense of *Romanitas* remained strong for at least a substantial part of the fifth century, if not longer. The occupation of rural settlements in Wessex, such as OD XII on Overton Down in Wiltshire (Fowler 2000), appears to have continued in a stable manner into the fifth century, although beyond AD 400, evidence for continuity is more elusive (Draper 2006: 29).

Documentary sources for early Wessex

In common with other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, early sources for the area that would later become Wessex are few and unreliable, leading some scholars to regard the fifth century as an essentially proto-historic period (Arnold 1984: 164). A highly approximate chronology can be gleaned from the writings of Bede, Gildas, and from the annals of the *ASC*, although the historical accuracy and authenticity of these accounts has long been disputed. Kemble (1849: 3) was among the first of the Anglo-Saxonists to dismiss the historical narratives relating to the period as works of fiction, containing the 'smallest possible amount of historical truth' mixed with a 'great deal of fable' (see Chapter 2). Yet in the intervening period, many historians and early medievalists, such as Myres (1937; 1986), have often read these sources in an uncritical manner, using the archaeological, place-name and linguistic evidence to validate prevailing historical frameworks.

Over the past thirty years, it has become increasingly acknowledged that sources such as the *ASC* cannot be relied upon to provide an adequate narrative of the 'Early Saxon' period. The version of events described in its annals has been shown to conflict with other sources of information, prompting renewed scepticism (Sims-Williams 1983; Yorke 1993; 1999). Although the *ASC* provides the only account of the foundation of the West Saxon kingdom, it was written nearly four centuries after the events described took place. Moreover, the annals were written after the advent of Augustinian Christianity, yet they describe events which occurred prior to the Conversion (Yorke 1993:

45-50). They may indeed tell us more about ninth-century Wessex, and how the West Saxons wished to perceive the origins of their kingdom, than they can about the events themselves (Yorke 1989: 84; 1990: 128). Furthermore, the *ASC* was written from the perspective of the 'victors', and the achievements of the West Saxons, and the actions of their rivals, were undoubtedly portrayed from a biased viewpoint. The annals are further undermined by the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List (Dumville 1985; 1986), in which the reigns of the sixth-century kings appear much shorter than those in the *ASC*, suggesting that they were artificially lengthened by those seeking to glorify the early history of the kingdom (Yorke 1995: 34).

Another source is provided by the sixth-century British cleric, Gildas, whose *De Excidio Britanniae* was drawn upon by the Northumbrian monk, Bede, in the composition of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the early eighth century. Gildas' account also has an agenda and subtext, as his writings were intended as a denouncement of the shortcomings and degeneracies of the contemporary clergy and laity (Yorke 1993: 45). It is not known for certain where he was based at the time of writing (Sims-Williams 1983: 5); although he is traditionally associated with Glastonbury, it has been argued that his connection with this location may be a fabrication of the later medieval pilgrimage 'industry' (Webster 2007: 170; Yorke 1995: 14), and Higham (1993: 161) and Dark (1994) have suggested that he may have been based in Dorset or Wiltshire.

The Laws of Ine, king of Wessex c. 688-726, provides a 'rare glimpse of Britons living within an Anglo-Saxon kingdom around the turn of the eighth century' (Grimmer 2007: 102). The law code was promulgated in 688 x 693, although it only survives as an appendix to the Laws of Alfred in a manuscript dated c. 930. It depicts a slightly different view of relations between Britons and 'West Saxons' to that of the *ASC*, which implies that warfare is the only interaction between the two groups in the 'Early Saxon' period; Britons are given legal status and a *wergild*, albeit inferior to that of individuals of 'Saxon' identity (Grimmer 2007: 103-4). Ine's Laws show that co-existence, if not assimilation, had been achieved by the later seventh century, and that the adoption of a 'West Saxon' identity was probably encouraged (Ward-Perkins 2000; Yorke 1995: 72).

Some of the most valuable early medieval documentary sources, particularly for the purposes of this thesis, are the boundary clauses which often accompany early medieval charters, usually written in the vernacular. These can present a detailed picture of the contemporary landscape, with references to topographic landmarks and other potentially archaeologically identifiable features, such as 'heathen' burial places (cf. Reynolds 2002). The majority of the boundary clauses date to the tenth century, although some are earlier. Their dating is a contentious issue, however, as forgery and later additions were common, and most surviving copies were reproduced by post-Conquest scribes.

The origins of Wessex

By the time Wessex had reached the peak of its power in the ninth century, the kingdom controlled a large proportion of southern Britain; prior to this, however, West Saxon control of certain areas was intermittent and insecure (Aston and Lewis 1994a: 1; Yorke 1995: 1). The ASC gives the impression that the origins of Wessex lay in southern Hampshire, and state that the kingdom was founded by a figure named Cerdic, and his son, Cynric, who landed at *Cerdicesora* (possibly Christchurch harbour) in AD 495, and conquered the surrounding area in the following decades. That Cerdic was at the root of the West Saxon dynasty is supported by the Genealogical Regnal List, although this places his reign later, between 538 and 554 (Dumville 1985; 1986). Cerdic is said to have fought a key battle at *Cerdicesford* in 519 (interpreted as Chalford, on the River Avon south of Salisbury), the date of which is marked by the ASC as the beginning of the Wessex lineage. The Isle of Wight was purportedly conquered by Cerdic in 530, but was passed to his relatives Stuf and Wigtar upon his death four years later. Cynric is said to have fought at Old Sarum in 552, and possibly at Barbury Castle on the Marlborough Downs with Ceawlin in 556. Bede (whose source in this case was his contemporary, Bishop Daniel of Winchester) appears to contradict the ASC by indicating that southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight did not come under West Saxon rule until their conquest by King Caedwalla in 686-8. Bede and Asser refer to the founders and people of the kingdom of Wight and its as Jutes, and place-name evidence seems to support this (Yorke 1989: 89-92; 1995: 36-9), although this may

reflect the later development of a 'Jutish' identity within this area, regardless of the ethnic origins of its inhabitants (Hills 1979: 316).

Such accounts of the kingdom's founding are clearly obscure and are largely based in legend and mythology. The location names, from which the names of the legendary characters are derived, and the idea of a small group of ships landing on the shoreline, seem particularly resonant of Germanic foundation myths based in oral traditions, such as the legend of Hengist and Horsa (Howe 1989; Yorke 1995: 33). Such obviously fabricated names as 'Port'—said to have landed at *Portesmupa* (Portsmouth) in 501 and to have fought a battle with 'noble Britons' (Cunliffe 1993: 278)—are clearly the product of a later attempt at forming an etymological link with important places in the landscape, and emphasise the legendary nature of the tales. It is interesting, then, that the names Cerdic and Caedwalla are anglicised versions of British names, while the name Cenwalh also points to a British connection (Yorke 1990: 138-9). This is perhaps indicative of attempts to forge a common identity.

On the basis of sources such as the ASC, historians have traditionally believed, therefore, that the emergence of Wessex began in southern Hampshire, perhaps in the Winchester area. It is now generally accepted, however, that it took place further much north, in the Upper Thames region (Hamerow *et al.* 2013: 49). Bede refers to the people of Ceawlin, the first West Saxon king, and the seventh-century king Cynegils, as *Geuissae* or *Gewisse*, a tribe whose territory lay in the Upper Thames valley, where the most intensive fifth-century evidence in the region that would later become Wessex has been located. That this was an affluent area is indicated by the presence of 'princely' burials dating to the late sixth century and other finds of prestige or 'exotic' goods (Yorke 1990: 132). Dorchester-on-Thames would later be chosen as the site of the first West Saxon see or bishopric in the second quarter of the seventh century, and a number of high-status finds have been recovered from the town (Yorke 1995: 34).

In the sixth century, the *Gewisse* may have 'branched out' westwards along the Thames valley to a certain extent, attested by the culturally 'Saxon' character of cemeteries at Fairford, Lechlade and Kemble (Yorke 1995: 57). By the end of this century, however, Mercian power was in ascendance, culminating in a

victory against over the control of the Hwicce of Gloucestershire in 628. The Gewisse are said to have allied themselves with the Northumbrians, adversaries of Mercia, perhaps intensifying the antagonism between the two kingdoms. Mercian activity in Gloucestershire forced the Gewisse southwards, and the Salisbury Avon valley is thought to have come under Gewissan control by the end of the sixth century, enabling expansion into western Wiltshire and Dorset. The conquest of Somerset came comparatively late, and began (according to the *ASC*) with two key battles: Bradford-on-Avon in 652 and *Peonnum* in 658. The latter was identified in the nineteenth century as Penselwood, near the convergence of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire (Kerslake 1876), although several other possible locations have been proposed (cf. Barker 1986; Hoskins 1960). Cenwalh became the first Saxon patron of Sherborne (Dorset), and Malmesbury (Wiltshire) and Glastonbury (Somerset) are recorded in charters dating from the reign of Centwine (676-85). Exeter was part of the West Saxon kingdom by 680, according to *The Life of St Boniface* (Yorke 1995: 60). Much of Wessex was under Gewissan control by the time Ine came to the throne in 688, with the exception of Devon, which continued to be controlled to varying extents by Dumnonia through the eighth century (Higham 2008).

A new see established at Winchester in the mid-seventh century led to the division of the West Saxon bishopric. Dorchester-on-Thames ceased to function as a see soon after, however, as Mercian power grew in the Upper Thames area. Winchester was in a strategic position for Gewissan expansion into the 'Jutish' provinces, which was urgently needed in order to prevent further encroachment from the South Saxons (Mercian allies) to the east. King Caedwalla ensured the conquest of the 'Jutish' area in the 680s, becoming overlord of the South and East Saxons. Ine also ruled Surrey and the South Saxons, but only the Jutish kingdoms and the *Basingas* remained Gewissan throughout the eighth century. Only by the second half of the eighth century were the kings conferred the title 'West Saxon', once their territories had expanded more considerably (Yorke 1989: 93-4; 1995: 34). Rivalry between Wessex and Mercia lasted well into the ninth century, and any conquests made by the West Saxons must be viewed as opportunistic developments, rather than a calculated or inevitable process of expansion (Higham 2008: 27).

Historical background: summary

To summarise, it should be remembered that the chronologies and locations of events gleaned from documentary sources such as the *ASC* are by no means accurate, and should be regarded with some scepticism in the absence of substantiating archaeological evidence. They are nonetheless valuable in the context of this thesis, not least because they can provide an insight into how the West Saxons of the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period envisaged, or wished to portray, their genesis. Even though the accounts may be fictional, they present an idea of how they perceived their identity and their own past, and a glimpse into their world view and the landscape they inhabited.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS AND APPROACHES

THE STUDY AREA

Within Wessex, three 'case study' counties have been selected, which will form the focus of analysis: Wiltshire, Hampshire (excluding the Isle of Wight), and Dorset (Fig. 3.2). Although the shires were not established until relatively late in the period of study, they remain useful and convenient points of reference, and provide the most effective and practical way of collecting data and reviewing the evidence. The three counties were selected on the basis of a number of factors:

- The counties form a discrete geographical area, providing a coherent unit of investigation, and would enable the collection of a sufficient, yet manageable, amount of data.
- The geology and topography of the area is diverse, incorporating a mixture of chalk downland and areas of varying landscape character; this would provide the potential to explore how burial relates to these variations.
- The burial record of Dorset is thought to reflect a greater degree of 'British' survival during the period of study, whilst in Hampshire and much of Wiltshire, 'Anglo-Saxon' furnished burial traditions are considered to predominate.
- The counties have contrasting research traditions and histories of investigation: the chalklands of Wiltshire and Dorset have a strong antiquarian tradition, with varying degrees of modern archaeological investigation, whereas in Hampshire, predominantly modern rescue and development-led archaeology has taken place.
- There were also practical considerations, such as the accessibility of data: the HERs of Hampshire and of Wiltshire and Swindon, for example, are directly searchable online.

The historic county boundaries were reconstructed using the *English Ancient Counties* GIS (Southall and Burton 2001) and the maps in the Phillimore and

Alecto editions of Domesday Book (Munby 1982; Thorn 1989a; 1989b; 1991; Thorn and Thorn 1979; 1983). Any parishes that were not part of the Domesday county, such as Thorncombe, which lay in Devon until 1844, were not included in the area of study. Distantly outlying parishes, such as Stockland, which formed part of Dorset until 1844 despite being geographically separate from the main area of the historic county, were also excluded.

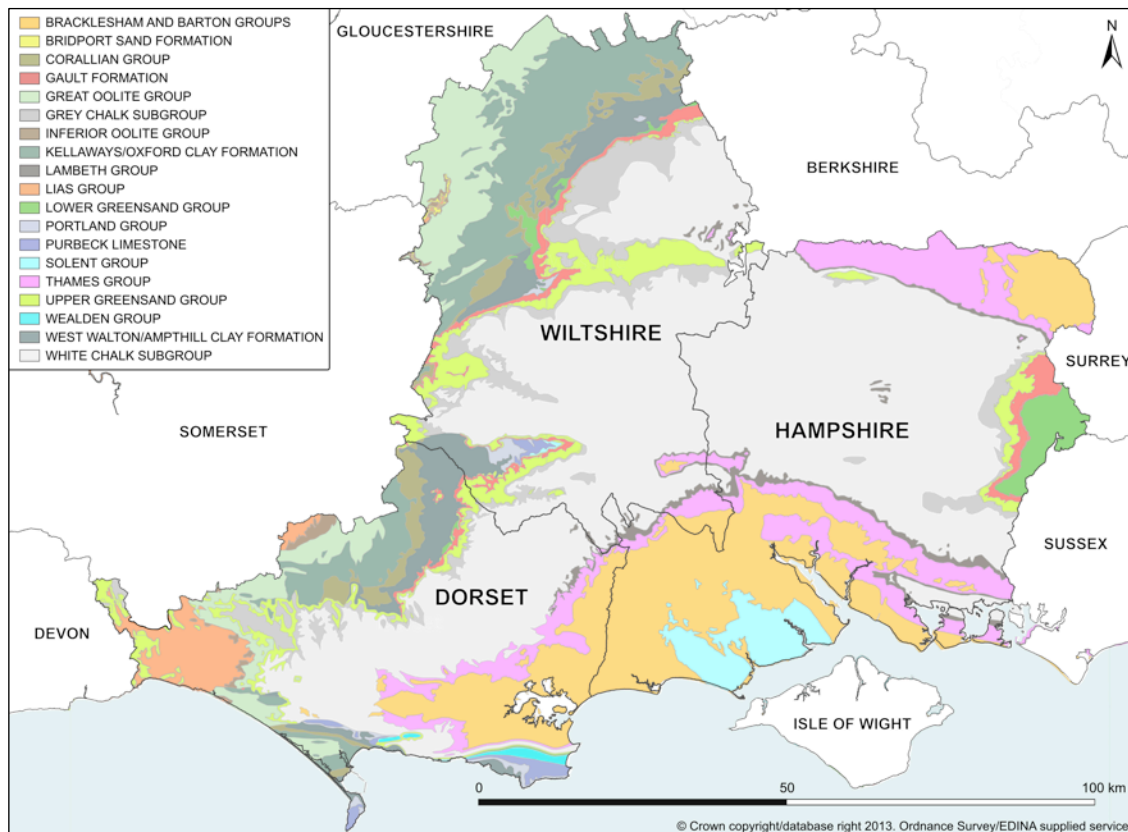


Fig. 3.2 The study area, defined as the historic counties of Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, and its bedrock geology.

Introducing *pays*

The ways in which social territories were organised in the past is crucial to an understanding of the historic landscape. Differences in landscape character from area to area would have been apparent for those inhabiting and travelling through the countryside, and had a significant impact upon land-use, economy, and society (Draper 2006; Rippon 2012: 3). Although it is possible to trace a number of shires (OE *-scir* or *-saete*) as far back as the eighth century, and in some cases to earlier tribal divisions, the administrative system of counties was, to a great extent, a construction of the ninth to eleventh centuries (Yorke 1995: 84-9). Moreover, shires often gave little regard to the existing cultural or

physical landscape. Parts of the historic county boundaries may, therefore, cut across the grain of the natural and cultural landscape, and in order to comprehend the landscape during the period of study, we must identify the territories and geographical zones which held significance for contemporary communities.

For each of the three counties, the evidence will therefore be examined within the framework of *pays*, which, in effect, represent 'nested' units of investigation within the study area. *Pays* is a term employed in landscape history and historical geography to identify, define and categorise areas or social territories that possess an innately distinctive cultural or topographic identity (Everitt 1970; Phythian-Adams 1993: 24; Rippon 2012: 18). These areas can be defined by geology, pedology, hydrology; or physical geography, such as areas of downland, heathland, lowland vale, fenland or moorland. Phythian-Adams (1993) has, for example, discussed the impact of the physical landscape upon human territoriality through his concept of 'cultural provinces' based on river-drainage basins and watersheds, which represent 'identifiable lines of punctuation' in the landscape. Landscape character can also be shaped by other less tangible characteristics, such as historic cultural identity, or by past or present land-use, such as industrial activity or open field agriculture (Thirsk 2000).

Although it could be argued that this type of approach is environmentally deterministic, it is useful in that it emphasises the 'constant process of negotiation between societies and land' (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002: 33). Moreover, the delineation of *pays* highlights the extent to which administrative units are often artificially imposed upon the landscape, as the product of opportunistic or strategic conquest and expansion. Of course, territorial divisions did exist in the period of study too, and studying the landscape at a local level can help to identify these early units. Although the act of mapping *pays* is, in effect, still a modern construct, their existence cannot be disputed, and their demarcation is necessary for the purposes of the thesis. Whether variations in funerary traditions between different *pays* can be identified during the period of study will be considered in the three county chapters.

Key secondary sources for the identification of *pays* in the study area are relevant chapters in the *Domesday Geography of South-West England* (Darby 1967; Welldon Finn 1967) and *South-East England* (Welldon Finn 1962), and the *Land of Britain* reports produced by the Land Utilisation Survey in the 1930s and 40s. Both of these sources, however, are arranged in a county-by-county format, and it is essential to look beyond these divisions and consider patterns within the region as a whole. Another useful reference for identifying landscape character areas is the *Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (Roberts and Wrathmell 2000), and the accompanying GIS data (Lowerre *et al.* 2011), part of an English Heritage project to map nineteenth-century settlement and terrain.

DATA COLLECTION AND COLLATION

The specific methods employed in gathering and processing the data for the three counties will now be outlined. The primary objective was to create an up-to-date dataset of all burial sites dating from c. AD 450-850 for each of the three counties, in a sortable and searchable format. This would render the data easily accessible and manageable, and enable it to be analysed in a consistent manner. Another fundamental objective was to link the datasets to a GIS, which would allow site locations to be verified, facilitate the production of illustrative material, such as distribution maps and more localised plans, and aid analysis.

The decision was taken to include all burial sites dating from the period AD 450-850, rather than only those with a noted association with antecedent monuments. This would allow the sites to be placed in their broader contemporary context, and would help to reveal whether differences exist between sites that possess evidence for the appropriation of earlier features and those that do not; for example, whether are they associated with different types of grave-goods, date from different periods, are in different topographic or geographic locations, or pertain to particular social groups. This process would subsequently aid the identification of other factors that could have affected burial location in conjunction with or independently from the presence of man-made antecedent features, including watersheds, geological or topographical boundaries, contemporary routeways, and territorial divisions. By considering all

of these factors, it would be possible to gain a more accurate impression of the significance and value of the past landscape in early medieval burial practice.

During the data collection stage, it was necessary to examine the relevant published and unpublished sources—particularly those written before the mid-twentieth century—with a critical eye, and in the case of excavated sites, it was crucial to assess the nature, extent and circumstances of investigation, as well as the standard of recording. It was vital to scrutinise the interpretations provided by the excavators and the authors of reports, to determine the extent to which they may have been influenced by their own preconceptions or by the prevailing opinions of the time. For sites excavated prior to the advent of modern fieldwork techniques, findings often needed to be revised and reconsidered in the light of advances in archaeological theory and practice.

Secondary and published sources

Published gazetteers of early medieval burials were initially consulted, commencing with Meaney's (1964) *Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* and Geake's (1997) gazetteer of conversion period (c. 600-850) funerary sites. Data was then gathered from Cherryson's (2005a; 2005b) thesis (which focuses on Wessex), Appendix 2 of Draper's (2006) publication (which concentrates purely on Wiltshire), and Semple's (2003) 'Gazetteer of cemeteries and burials in North Wiltshire'. It was considered logical and necessary to consult the gazetteers in this order, progressing from the 'macro' to the 'micro', as well as roughly chronologically by date of publication. Alongside these sources, Grinsell's (1957) 'Archaeological Gazetteer' for Wiltshire, and Reynolds' (2009) national catalogue of 'deviant' burial sites, were also referred to. The data contained within the gazetteers, especially those published some time ago, were carefully scrutinised. Meaney's (1964) catalogue, for example, lists numerous burials found without grave-goods, many of which may have been misidentified by antiquarian excavators; some relate to hearsay accounts and others are unlocated (Tingle 1991: 79, cited by Draper 2004: 56).

Trawls of the county journals and national journals, such as *Medieval Archaeology*, were conducted, to identify any sites that might be missing from the published gazetteers, and to provide detail on the sites. Other published site

reports, articles and publications were inspected, and references were checked against the *British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography*.¹

Unpublished reports and other sources

The online HERs and NMR were consulted, and archaeological reports were located by searching the Archaeology Data Service's Grey Literature Library,² and Bournemouth University's AIP.³ The HERs were then contacted to obtain details of any relevant burial sites not yet entered into the online databases, as well as any recently conducted archaeological investigations that had produced evidence of burial or settlement from the period of study. Further sources for the sites and unpublished reports held by the HERs were also viewed.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme database was trawled at researcher level, to locate find-spots of burial-indicative artefactual evidence (such as weapons and jewellery).⁴ Although human remains may not have been recovered, clusters of two or more artefacts which are often deposited as grave-goods, such as certain types of jewellery or weapons, in a small area may indicate a burial or cemetery. The decision was taken not to include such sites in the datasets, however, due to the lack of definitive evidence for burial.

Datasets and GIS

With reference to the above sources, all definite, probable and possible early medieval burial sites were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for each county (Appendices 1-3).

A GIS was then set up for each county, initially including the following layers:

- *English Ancient Counties* (Southall and Burton 2001)
- *GIS of the Ancient Parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850* (Southall and Burton 2004)

¹ <http://www.biab.ac.uk>

² <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>

³ <http://cswb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip>

⁴ <http://finds.org.uk>

- *Parish Region, County Region and District Borough Unitary Region 2011* boundaries (Ordnance Survey 2011).

The spreadsheets were imported into the GIS, allowing sites to be plotted as individual georeferenced points.⁵ The relevant OS 1:25,000 raster tiles were also then imported into the GIS to contextualise the sites. The grid references given by secondary sources were checked against these maps, the HERs and other documentary and cartographic sources for accuracy. The names of the ancient or ecclesiastical parishes in which the sites were located were determined by comparing the points with the *Ancient Parishes* polygon layer (Southall and Burton 2004). As the GIS version is not accurate at a larger scale, the original electronic maps upon which the GIS shapefile was based (Kain and Oliver 2001) and First Edition OS maps were consulted in the case of sites close to parish boundaries. Where discrepancies in location, name or parish were present, these were noted, and sources were checked.

It was important to identify whether any meaningful relationship could be found to exist between burials and territorial boundaries or possible pre-existing territorial centres. A map of the Domesday hundred boundaries was drawn for each county, with reference to the Phillimore and Alecto editions of Domesday Book (Munby 1982; Thorn 1989a; 1989b; 1991; Thorn and Thorn 1979; 1983), and these were imported into the GIS. Spreadsheets listing known and probable locations of Roman sites, minsters and other possible 'central places' were also produced and imported into the GIS.

DATA REFINEMENT

Once all the data for each county had been collected, it was necessary to refine it, discounting any burial sites which were deemed too ambiguous, or which lacked sufficient information. To be included in the dataset, one or more of the following criteria had to apply:

- i. The presence of burial indicative artefacts datable to c. AD 450-850, in or close to a certain or probable grave.

⁵ Both QuantumGIS (QGIS) and ESRI ArcMap GIS programs were used.

- ii. The presence of human remains (or, in the case of soils that result in poor bone preservation, the presence of a clearly distinguishable grave-cut), together with characteristic features of burial during the period of study.
- iii. The presence of an intrusive burial within an earlier burial mound, which could reasonably be interpreted as early medieval; for example by stratigraphic evidence. It was, however, important to bear in mind that the practice of ancient monument reuse is known to have occurred at other times, such as during the Romano-British period (Hutton 2011; Williams 1998b).

It was also important to recognise that dating artefacts by typology and seriation is not without problems, as they may be passed down from previous generations as heirlooms or acquired earlier in a person's lifetime. Most items found in furnished graves can, however, be dated to within a century, and some grave-goods, such as certain items of jewellery, can be dated to within half a century.

Classification and sub-division

Following the exclusion of any unconvincing sites, it was then necessary to classify the data according to the presence and absence of monument reuse, and to further sub-divide these categories according to the types of past features with which the burials were associated. Studies by Semple (2008) and Crewe (2012) have looked at methods of identifying and categorising sites with monument reuse.

In this thesis, for a burial site to be considered *directly* associated with a prehistoric or Roman feature, one of the following criteria had to apply:

- i. One or more graves intrusive within (cut into) the feature.
- ii. One or more graves within 50m of the feature.

In order for a burial site to be considered *indirectly* associated with a prehistoric or Roman feature, the following criterion had to apply: one or more of the graves had to lie within 300m of an earlier feature. These features must have

been visible during the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period. It was borne in mind that past features visible at the time of burial may have since been destroyed by ploughing, construction or quarrying activity.⁶

REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE AND ANALYSING THE DATA

For each county, the review of the evidence aimed to scrutinise the association between the burial sites and the antecedent landscape, contextualise the burial sites within the historic landscape, assess how they interrelate, highlight any localised contrasts and idiosyncrasies, and identify any regional differences or preferences in topographic setting or in the selection of appropriated monuments. The final objectives for each county were to present the empirical data in the form of graphs, charts and maps, and to analyse and interpret the results.

Field visits

Reconnaissance visits to key sites (where appropriation of earlier features had been identified) were made, in order to:

- i. Identify what could be seen from the site, and from where it could be seen (as it is not always possible to establish this simply by studying two-dimensional maps or photographs).
- ii. Assess the terrain and topography.
- iii. Obtain a photographic record of the site and the surrounding landscape for reference.

A handheld GPS was also used, to verify the locations of any visible features.

Assessing the influence of modern archaeological patterns

It was important to assess the extent to which the distributions of burial sites in the datasets had been influenced by patterns of modern archaeological intervention, and to take this into account when assessing the significance of these distributions and interpreting the landscape context of the sites. ArcMap

⁶ See Crewe 2012: 109-11 for a discussion of this issue.

was used to create 'kernel density' plots of modern archaeological investigations (field evaluations and post-determination/non-planning events between 1982 and 2010) from data downloaded from Bournemouth University's AIP. As the majority of these events occurred after the inception of PPG16 in 1990, most of the archaeological activity mapped is closely linked to construction and is therefore more intensive in built-up areas and along routes of infrastructure. Moreover, this distribution will have been influenced by the perceived archaeological potential in proposed areas of development; in turn determined by past research and existing perspectives. The density plots are therefore only broadly representative. Distribution maps of excavated barrows, including antiquarian and earlier twentieth century investigations, were also produced and scrutinised in the 'analysis' chapter for each county.

Other sources for reviewing the evidence

Charters

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, boundary clauses can provide a detailed written record of the local topography, and demonstrate which features in the landscape were important or visible to contemporary communities. Of particular interest for this research were references to routeways which passed close to, or may have been intervisible with, burial sites in the dataset. As the majority of the surviving clauses postdate the period of study, however, it was important to bear in mind that 'back-projection' is not necessarily reliable.

Extant charter bounds were consulted, with reference to Sawyer's (1968) list and the eSawyer database.⁷ For translations of and solutions to the bounds, the *LangScape* online database,⁸ and the work of Grundy (1919-21; 1924; 1926-28; 1935-38), were consulted. The reliability of the latter have more recently been called into question (e.g. Hooke 1990), however, and where available, the *LangScape* elucidation was examined first. Before citing a charter, its authenticity according to Sawyer's (1968) annotations also was checked.

Place-names: secondary sources

Place-name derivations and interpretations were examined by consulting the

⁷ <http://www.esawyer.org.uk>

⁸ <http://www.langscape.org.uk>

relevant volume for each county (Coates 1989; Gover *et al.* 1939; Mills 1977; 1980; 1989; 2010).

Aerial photography

Aerial photographs are also valuable sources of information, as they can be used to ascertain whether early medieval features overlay or respect prehistoric or Roman features, such as field systems or settlements. Original photographs were consulted at the HHER and WSHER, and transcriptions published by Fowler (2000) and McOmish *et al.* (2002) were also examined.

Burial sites and the physical landscape

The data was considered in relation to topography and altitude, bedrock and superficial geology, and hydrology, as these factors are likely to have influenced burial location. The following steps were taken:

- The approximate height above Ordnance Datum (aOD) was checked by consulting the contour lines and spot heights recorded on the 1:25,000 OS map, and heights given in excavation reports.
- Topographic maps were created using OS 1:10,000 Land-Form PROFILE Digital Terrain Model (DTM) tiles, processed in ArcGIS.
- The geological data was gathered from Geology Digimap,⁹ with reference to the British Geological Survey lexicon.¹⁰
- Floodplains were defined for the purposes of this thesis as areas with superficial alluvial, river terrace or tidal flat deposits, or areas highlighted in the Historic Flood Map (Environment Agency 2012).

⁹ <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk>

¹⁰ <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/lexicon>

CHAPTER 5.1

WILTSHIRE: BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

The appropriation of prehistoric barrows for early medieval burial has long been recognised as a particularly prevalent phenomenon in the chalk downlands of Wiltshire. The practice was first revealed by antiquarian ‘barrow diggers’ (e.g. Cunnington 1860; Hoare 1812; 1821a), and although the material remains from graves captured the attention of these early investigators, their disinterest in the significance and implications of this funerary practice was manifest. Desmond Bonney (1966), through his hypothesis that the antiquity of parish boundaries was attested by the close proximity of ‘pagan Saxon’ burials to such boundaries in Wiltshire, drew fresh attention to the relationship between early medieval burial sites and earlier barrows, as many of these funerary sites in boundary locations were indeed secondary barrow burials. The significance of this association has been the subject of much controversy (e.g. Goodier 1984; Reynolds 2002: 172-4; Welch 1985), and as Simon Draper (2004) has argued, it is conceivable that the location of early medieval burials was influenced by existing routeways, rivers or topographic features, to which estate boundaries also later conformed.

The role of Chapters 5.1 and 5.2 is to scrutinise the relationship between burial sites dating from the period of study in Wiltshire and the earlier landscape. In light of the research history outlined above, a key consideration will be the correlation between burials and boundaries, and whether claims made by past scholars in this regard can be substantiated by the evidence, in the case of individual sites and in the county overall. To begin, the historical background, geology, topography and landscape character of Wiltshire will be outlined, and the landscape context of all burial sites dating from the period of study in the county will be reviewed. In Chapter 5.2, the relationship between the Wiltshire dataset and the natural and humanly altered antecedent landscape will be

analysed, and the key themes and patterns that have emerged will be summarised.

Research traditions

The prehistoric earthworks and megaliths of Wiltshire have perhaps been studied more extensively than those of any other county in Wessex. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wiltshire, and in particular the chalk downland, was a 'stamping ground for many of the greatest names in antiquarian and archaeological research' (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 13). William Cunnington senior (1754-1810) and Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838) carried out some of the earliest documented excavations, principally of barrows and other visible earthworks. Although early medieval burials in Wiltshire only became the subject of antiquarian investigation as a by-product of the examination of prehistoric monuments, it is difficult to overestimate the impact that this investigation history has had on the burial record of this period. Wiltshire undoubtedly possesses a large number of barrows, yet the focus on these monuments, combined with the archaeological indiscernibility of flat cemeteries, has perhaps created a distorted impression of the nature of the funerary record. Intrusive burials within barrows have been found through previous research to make up a significant proportion of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the county (e.g. Cherryson 2005a: 29-32; Eagles 2001: 202; Semple 2003; Williams 1998a; 1999b), and this thesis will seek to determine whether this is primarily due to the excavation bias, or if it is indeed the result of a conscious choice made by early medieval communities.

Until relatively recently, medieval landscape archaeology in Wiltshire was a relatively neglected field of study, overshadowed by research into prehistoric 'ceremonial' landscapes (cf. Pollard and Reynolds 2002). In more recent years, however, valuable landscape-orientated fieldwork and research has been conducted into the Roman to medieval period, notably on Fyfield and Overton Downs (Fowler 2000), in the Compton Bassett area (Reynolds 1994a; 1994b; 1995) and on Salisbury Plain (Entwistle *et al.* 1993; 1994; Fulford *et al.* 2006b; McOmish *et al.* 2002). As Draper (2006: 1) has commented, there is no shortage of relevant documentary, archaeological and landscape evidence relating to early medieval Wiltshire. Bruce Eagles (1994; 2001; 2004) has

conducted systematic reviews of evidence pertaining mainly to the fifth to seventh centuries in the county, while Draper's (2006) work on the Roman-to-medieval transition in Wiltshire addressed in particular the development of early medieval territorial units. He also drew attention to the implications of the marked 'chalk and cheese' contrast in topography and geology between the southern and eastern half of the county (predominantly chalk uplands) and the north and east (limestone, clay and greensand), arguing that through place-name evidence, it is possible to detect a greater level of Brittonic survival in the western half of the county (Draper 2006: 50-55).

The distinctive group of early medieval burial sites in the Avebury region has been examined by Sarah Semple (2003; 2013: 38-44), who argued that the nature of the funerary record was influenced by the status of the area as a contested political frontier between the sixth and eighth centuries. Semple (2003: 73; 2013: 41) found that burials associated with prehistoric monuments accounted for 80% of the known funerary record in the Avebury area. The importance of the natural topography, as part of a range of components which constituted this funerary ritual, was highlighted, and it was proposed that the visual prominence of many of the burials may reflect statements of power and competition (Semple 2003: 81; 2013: 44).

The most comprehensive study of Wiltshire's place-names was carried out by Gover *et al.* (1939) as part of the EPNS series, and this work has not yet been surpassed. Grundy's work on Wiltshire's plentiful surviving charter bounds (1919; 1920) also remains useful, although more up-to-date translations of many of the charters have been produced as part of the *LangScape* project.¹

Roman inheritance and 'Early Saxon' settlement

Life in southwestern Britain in the later fourth and early fifth centuries has often been characterised by decline, decay and destruction (Esmonde Cleary 1989; Faulkner 2000), with towns deteriorating after a third-century peak, and villas falling into decline from the early fourth century. Some evidence can be found, however, for new phases of construction in the last part of the fourth century in Wiltshire. Work appears to have been carried out at villas in Ramsbury and

¹ <http://www.langscape.org.uk>

Great Bedwyn, and new mosaics commissioned at Cherhill and Bradford-on-Avon (Draper 2006: 29). At the rural settlement on Overton Down, there is significant structural evidence relating to the years after AD 350, and signs that the site flourished in the late fourth and perhaps early fifth centuries. Fowler (2000: 102-11) has argued that the site was occupied until c. 440, although no evidence can be firmly dated to beyond the end of the fourth century (see below). Similarly, at Coombe Down on Salisbury Plain (Entwistle *et al.* 1993; Fulford *et al.* 2006b), phases of settlement may span the period between the Middle Iron Age and the sixth century AD, although continuity of occupation cannot be assumed.

The perception that migration was the principal contributory factor leading to the presence of 'Anglo-Saxon' material culture and the adoption of 'Germanic' building traditions has been particularly pervasive within research into post-Roman Wiltshire (e.g. Eagles 1994; 2001). The idea that groups or individuals of continental origin did arrive in Wiltshire cannot be dismissed wholesale, however, and it is likely to be a combination of this and other factors, such as the mutual transmission of ideas and indigenous acculturation (Lucy 2000: 172), that resulted in the development of a distinctively 'Anglo-Saxon' funerary tradition in Wiltshire during the fifth and sixth centuries. Cultural influence does, however, appear to have originated from two primary directions: the heartland of the Gewisse in the Upper Thames valley to the northeast, and from the supposedly 'Jutish' territories of the Hampshire Basin to the south and southeast.

Whilst the earliest 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries are located predominantly in the Salisbury Avon valley area, settlement evidence from the 'Early Saxon' period in southern Wiltshire is not extensive. Only a handful of settlement sites with structural evidence have been excavated to date, mainly in the northern two-thirds of the county (see below). Although it was previously argued that early settlements were predominantly located in hilltop locations, on well-drained but relatively infertile soils (Arnold and Wardle 1981), the archaeological evidence now suggests that a variety of topographic locations were exploited, and highlights the importance of rivers as foci for activity, as well as interfacing zones between different geological formations (Draper 2006: 96; Hamerow 1991).

Territorial background

Although the proto-shires of *Wilsæte* and *Wiltunshir* are not mentioned explicitly until the ninth century (AD 802 and 878 respectively), both terms are likely to have been in use before this time, possibly during the eighth century (Yorke 1995: 84). Whether *Wilsæte* originates from an early *regio*, or if was a late seventh- or early eighth-century creation, is a matter of debate (cf. Draper 2006: 59); in any case, it is likely to have been composed of numerous smaller territories. A number of possible *regiones* have been proposed, including the *Canningas* in the Bishops Cannings area, the *Collingas* in Collingbourne Ducis/Kingston, and the *Manningas* in Manningford (Draper 2006: 57). Some possible 'British' territories also have been identified by Eagles (2001: 213) in the Upper Wylye (Deverill), Nadder and Ebbles valleys. The area now recognised as Wiltshire ultimately emerged at the core of the dominant kingdom of Wessex, but whilst the southern half of the county lay in the political heartland of the Gewisse by the 'Middle Saxon' period, documentary evidence suggests that the area north of Salisbury Plain remained disputed until the start of the ninth century (Yorke 1990: 136). From the mid-seventh century, the expansion of Mercia southwards following the annexation of the Hwicce resulted in the Gewissan abandonment of the bishopric at Dorchester-on-Thames by the 660s, and led to a frequently contested political frontier between the Gewisse and the Mercians in the northern half of the county.

The surviving charters for Wiltshire, which date predominantly from the tenth century, provide a detailed picture of the pre-Conquest landscape of the county and crucial insight into early medieval territorial organisation. A total of 63 estates can be identified, some of which are described in bounds surviving as part of charters, in detached bounds, or in independent estate surveys (Costen 1994: 97). It is debatable whether pre-tenth-century territories can be reconstructed from these documents, as it is not known whether the bounds describe estates or component parts of estates that were already in existence or whether these units were carved out anew (Reynolds 2009: 206). It seems likely, however, that the limits of farms were already recognised, and that the bounds describe established land boundaries.



Fig. 5.1.1 Reconstructed map of the Domesday hundreds of Wiltshire (after Thorn 1989b and Draper 2006: Fig. 26).

Of all the southwestern counties, Wiltshire's Domesday hundreds are the most difficult to reconstruct (Thorn 1989b). With the exception of *Wrderusteselle*, which combines the hundred name *Wrde* (Highworth) with the place-name *Rusteselle* (Lus Hill), the text of DB does not give hundred headings, and mentions the hundreds of "Cicementone" (equivalent to the 'modern' hundred of

Chedglow) and *Sutelesberg* (Startley) only in passing. Moreover, places are generally not listed in hundred groups, unlike the text of Exon Domesday for the other southwestern counties (Thorn and Thorn 1979). The hundreds of Wiltshire can therefore only be reconstructed from the contents of the near-contemporary Geld Rolls (Thorn 1989b). Nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to allow a reasonably accurate representation of the Domesday hundreds to be drawn (see Fig. 5.1.1). Many Wiltshire hundreds seem to have been delimited by natural and man-made landscape features, such as rivers, Roman roads and the summits of hills and ridges (Thorn 1989b).

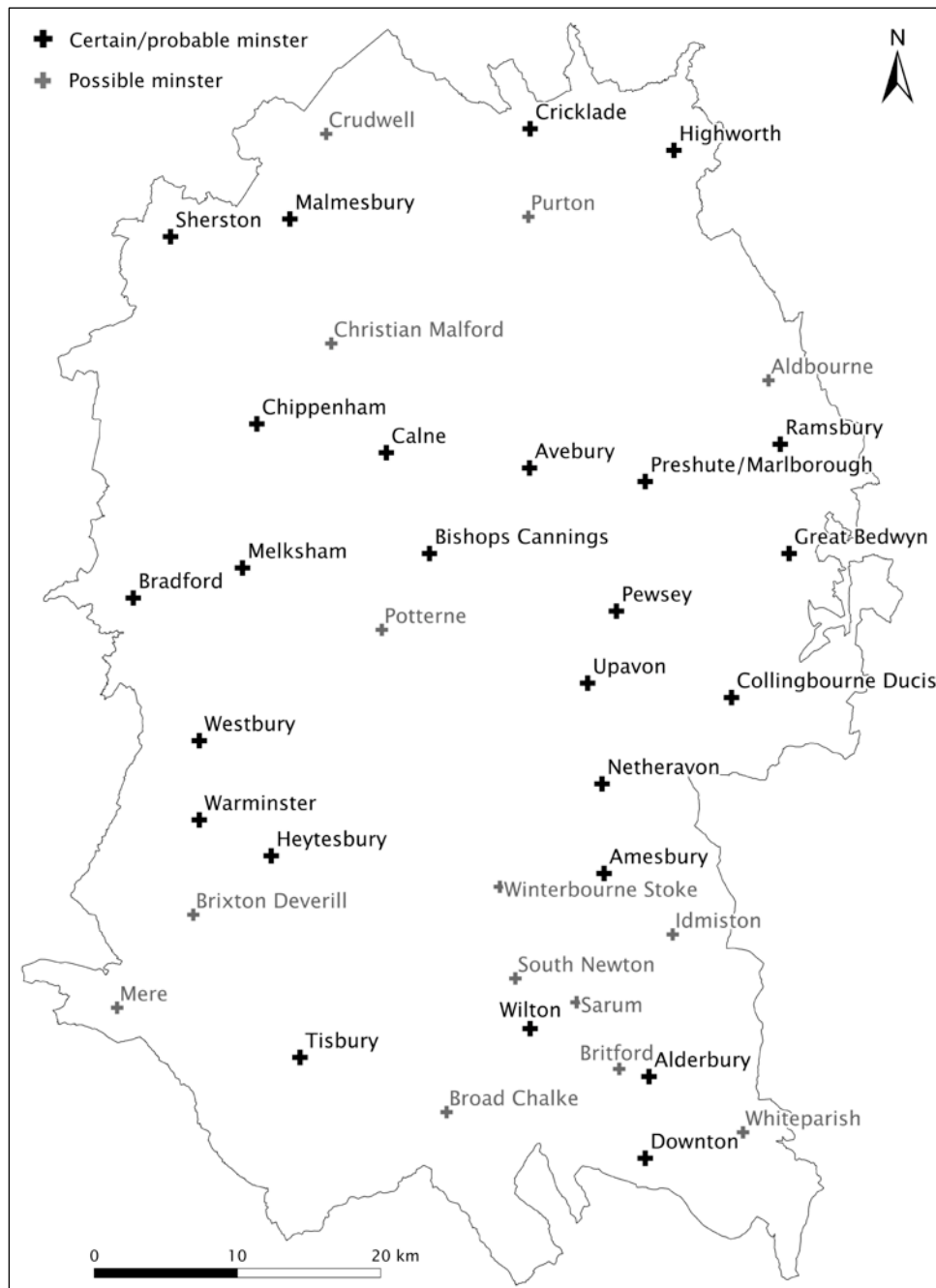


Fig. 5.1.2 The minster churches of Wiltshire (after Draper 2006: 61 and Pitt 1999).

The pattern of 'Middle-Late Saxon' minster churches in Wiltshire has been discussed by Jonathan Pitt (1999; see Fig. 5.1.2). It is possible that the *parochiae* of some minsters can be reconstructed from Domesday hundreds, although boundaries are likely to have shifted considerably through changes in estate ownership in the pre-Conquest period.

Topography, hydrology and geology

Two main elevated chalk outcrops—the Marlborough Downs to the north and Salisbury Plain to the south—dominate the county (Fig. 5.1.3; Fig. 5.1.4). These are separated by the Vale of Pewsey, which is predominantly underlain by Upper Greensand geology. North of the Marlborough Downs lie the clay Vale of the White Horse and the Corallian limestone ridge. The northwestern corner of the county is characterised by southwest-northeast bands of limestones and clays. In the far south are the northern limits of the chalk plateau known as Cranborne Chase, the bulk of which lies in Dorset.

The highest altitudes in the county are found on the ridge which represents the southern scarp of the Marlborough Downs, overlooking the Vale of Pewsey; 295m aOD is reached on Milk Hill, and 294m aOD on the adjacent summit of Tan Hill. Most of the southern half of the county is drained by the River Avon, known as the Salisbury Avon or Hampshire Avon, which rises in the Vale of Pewsey and flows into the Channel at Christchurch in the historic county of Hampshire, and its tributaries.

The major tributaries of the Avon—the Ebbles, Nadder and Bourne (and, indirectly, the Wylde and Till)—all converge in the Salisbury area. The northwestern corner of the county is drained to the west by the Bristol Avon and its tributaries, while the catchment area of the Upper Thames lies in the northern part of the county. The Marlborough Downs are predominantly drained by the Kennet, which flows eastwards through the towards the River Thames.

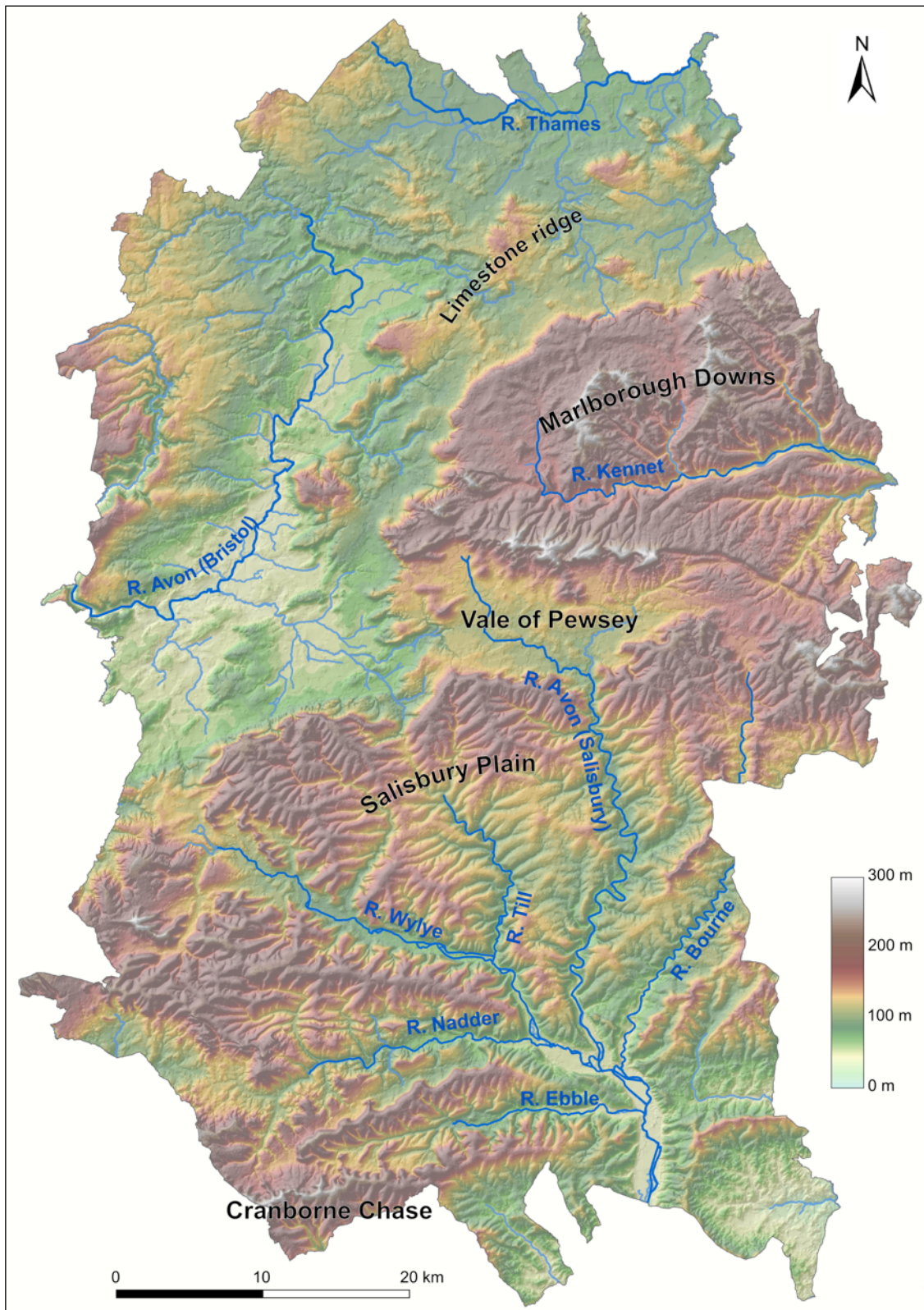


Fig. 5.1.3 The topography and hydrology of Wiltshire (terrain map: © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

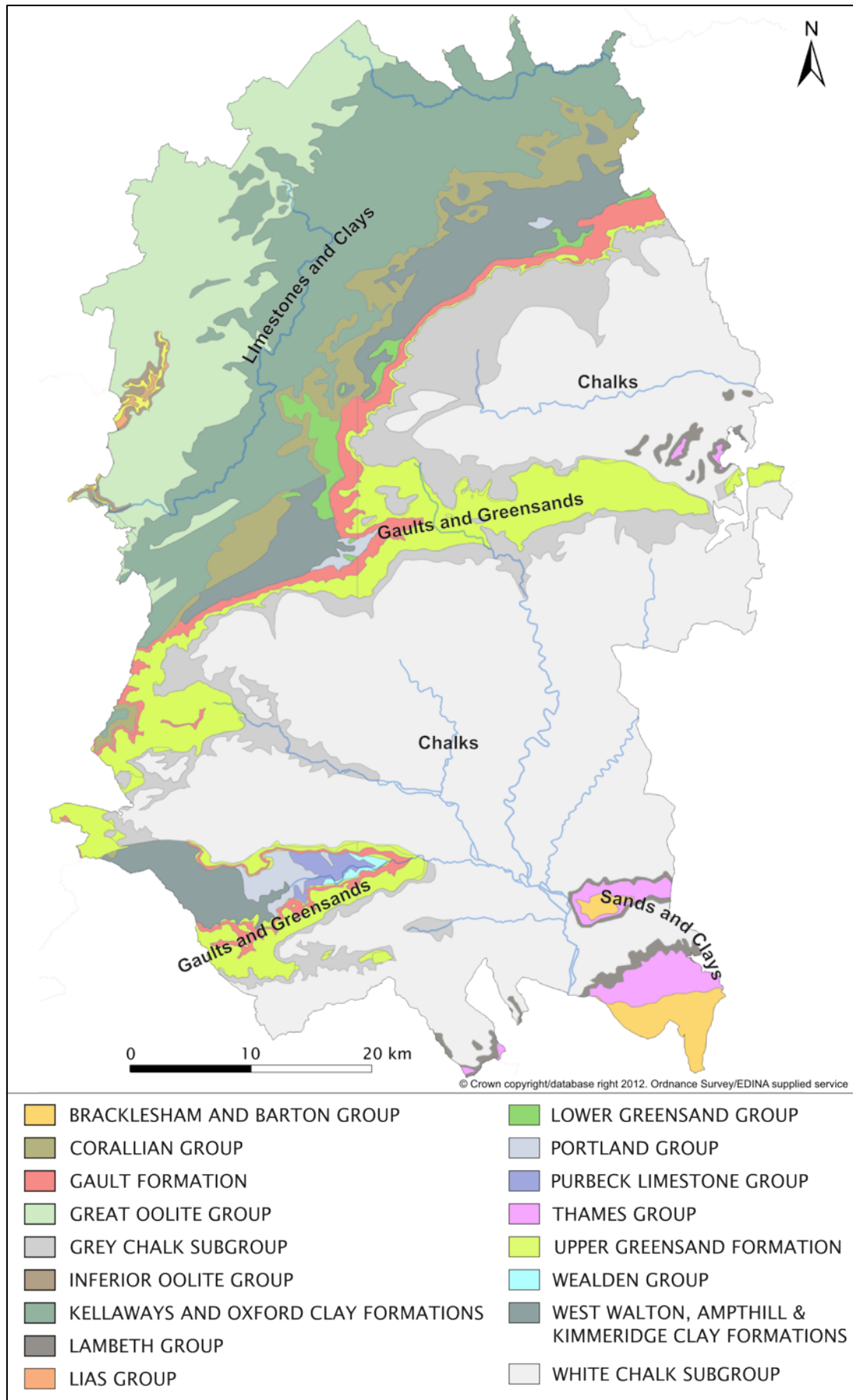


Fig. 5.1.4 The bedrock geology of Wiltshire.

The *pays* of Wiltshire

Wiltshire is traditionally divided into two main topographic zones: upland and vale, or ‘chalk’ and ‘cheese’, a distinction observed from as early as the sixteenth century by John Speed and William Camden (Draper 2006: 4; Welldon Finn 1967: 61). The landscape of Wiltshire is, however, far more complex than this simplistic dichotomy implies, and a wide variety of landscape character areas or *pays* can be identified. For the purposes of this thesis, the county has been divided into eight *pays* (Fig. 5.1.5). Although the topographical regions of Wiltshire have already been discussed in some detail by Draper (2006: 4-6), Lewis (1994: 172-3) and Welldon Finn (1967), greater consideration will be given here to the Romano-British and early medieval archaeological background and the potential significance of these regions for communities during the period of study.

Cotswolds

The Cotswold hills form part of a Middle Jurassic outcrop which extends from Somerset to Yorkshire. In Wiltshire, the modern towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Chippenham and Malmesbury mark the eastern limits of this *pays*. The bedrock geology is formed of calcareous mudstones and limestones of the Great Oolite Group, with a narrow band of Cornbrash limestone to the west of Malmesbury and Chippenham. These rock formations generally create relatively fertile soils, which are much lighter than in the neighbouring clay-dominated *pays*, and the topography is characterised by steep valley slopes and flat-topped hills. Modern land-use is mixed arable and pastoral, with wooded areas on the valley slopes. Wool and stone were the most important resources for trade in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and DB records only a moderate density of plough teams in the area (Welldon Finn 1967: 20; Fig. 5.1.6).

The southern part of the *pays* was well settled in the Romano-British period, with numerous villas and rural settlements, while the towns of Nettleton Shrub and Easton Grey were linked by the Fosse Way (Fig. 5.1.7). The area is also traversed by the Roman road between *Aquae Sulis* and *Cunetio*. A sixth- to seventh-century settlement has been located at Cowage Farm, Foxley, southwest of Malmesbury. Here, cropmarks of a possible ‘elite’ complex—similar to Cowdery’s Down and Chalton in Hampshire (see Chapter 6.1), and

Yeavinger, Northumberland—and probably incorporating a church, were discovered in the 1970s, and were investigated by geophysical survey and small-scale excavation (Blair 2013: 27; Hinchliffe 1986). Minsters were established at Bradford-on-Avon, Sherston and Malmesbury (Hase 1994; Haslam 1984; Pitt 1999).

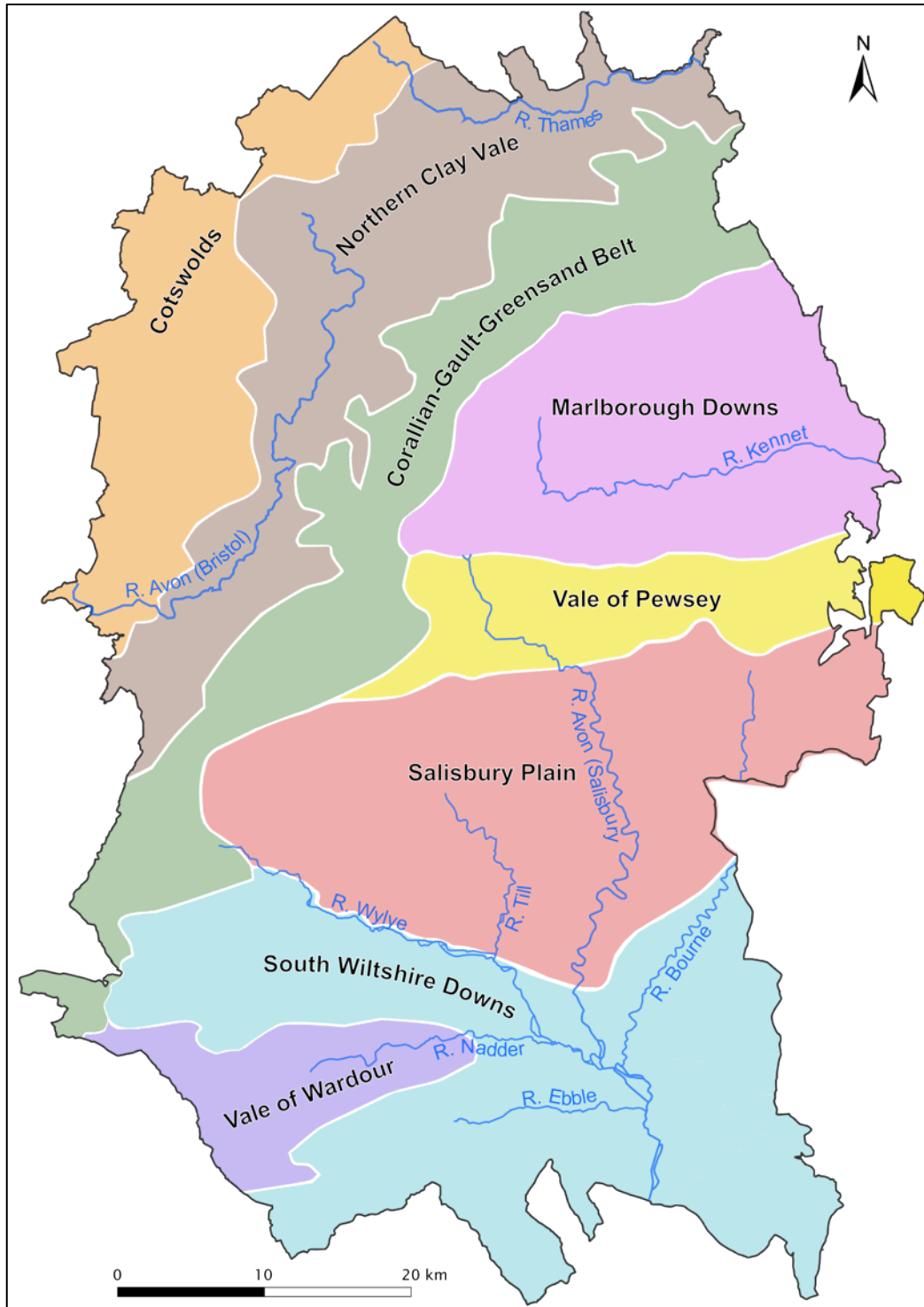


Fig. 5.1.5 The pays of Wiltshire.

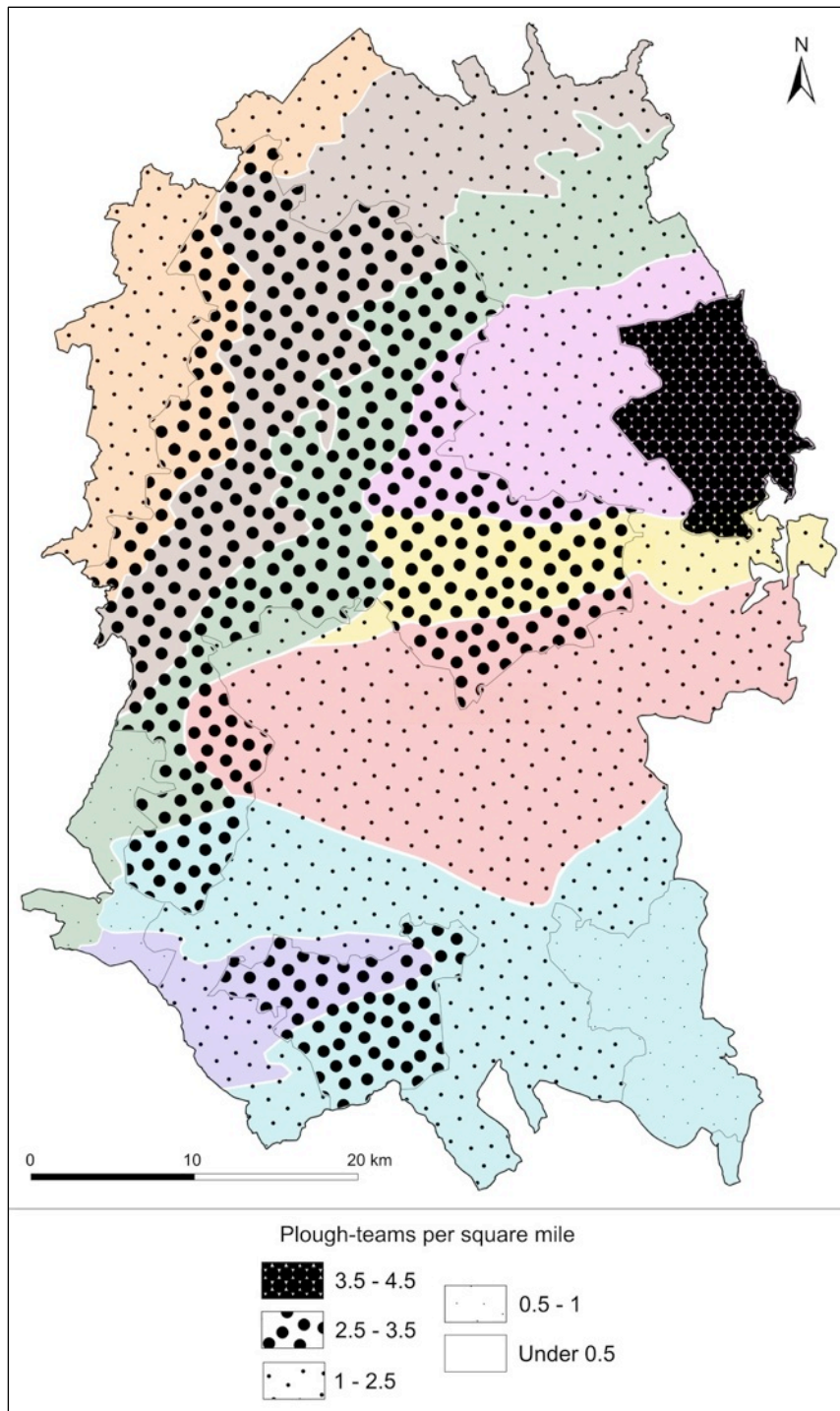


Fig. 5.1.6 The density of Domesday plough-teams in Wiltshire (after Welldon Finn 1967: 20), overlain on map of *pays*.

Northern Clay Vale

This *pays* is part of a crescent-shaped geological belt, which extends from Oxford to Trowbridge. In Wiltshire it stretches from just above Highworth in a southwesterly direction via Brinkworth, following the course of the Bristol Avon through Chippenham and Melksham. The land is drained by the Upper Thames in the north and by the Bristol Avon in the south. This typically low-lying area is

dominated by Oxford Clay, which gives rise to heavy soils that are difficult to plough and prone to waterlogging; in the river valleys, however, superficial sand and gravel deposits improve the fertility and workability of the earth. The heavy clay soils do not appear to have been a hindrance to early cultivation and settlement, as preserved ridge and furrow earthworks and a high density of Domesday plough teams in the clay areas suggest extensive arable cultivation (Lewis 1994: 177; Welldon Finn 1967). In many areas, however, land-use is dominated by meadowland and pasture (Fry 1940; Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983; Welldon Finn 1967).

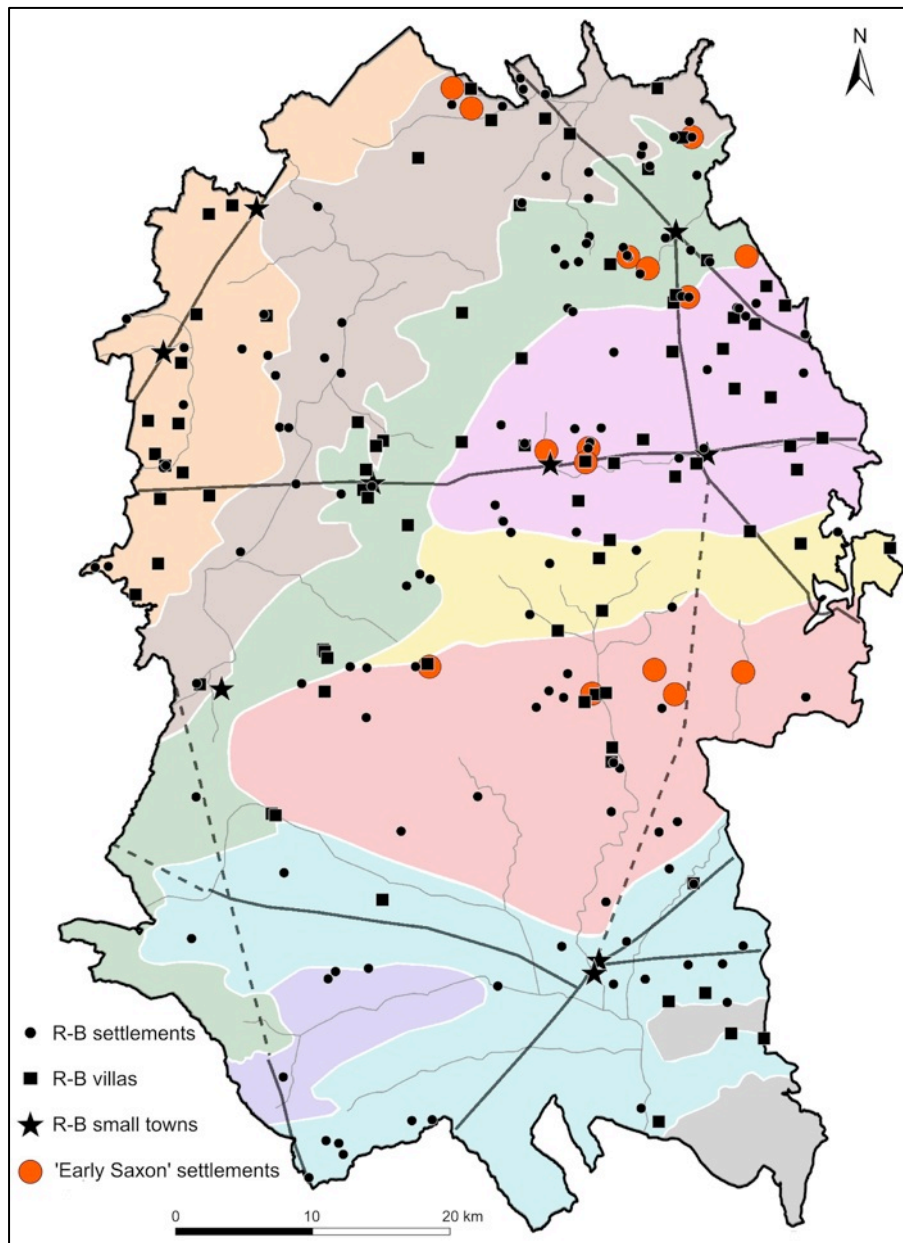


Fig. 5.1.7 Romano-British settlements, villas and small towns, and 'Early Saxon' settlements (based on data from the WSHER and Draper 2006: Appendix 1); and Roman roads (Margary 1973); overlain on map of *pays*.

Roman settlements and villas in the Northern Clay Vale appear to have been clustered predominantly in the river valleys, while the watershed between the Bristol Avon and the Thames seems to have been avoided, with only one villa found on higher ground at Minety. In the extreme north of the county at Ashton Keynes, a possible SFB was excavated in 2003 (WSHER SU09SW402), and an 'Early Saxon' post-built structure was found 2km to the northwest in 2002 (WSHER SU09NW400). This area is likely to have been part of the Mercian kingdom, at least intermittently, until the ninth century (Reynolds and Langlands 2006).

Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt

This *pays* follows the southwestern boundary of the county between Semley and Chapmanslade, extending diagonally to the northeastern corner in parallel with the Northern Clay Vale. The geology is mixed, dominated by clays, mudstones, siltstones and sandstone, together with gaults and greensands. The land is undulating, with low hills ranging from 100m aOD in the gault and greensand areas to 180m aOD on the Corallian ridge, and forms the eastern watershed of the Bristol Avon and the southern watershed of the Upper Thames. The land-use is mixed, with wooded areas in the lower clay vales, and arable and pasture on the lighter soils of the sandstone and limestone zones (Fry 1940; Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

A significant number of Romano-British settlements have been located near the modern town of Swindon. Five 'Early Saxon' SFBs were excavated in the Old Town in the 1970s on the site of a Romano-British settlement (WSHER SU18SE323, SU18SE402). Another possible SFB was discovered on the south-eastern outskirts of the town during an evaluation in 2005, within sight of a Roman building complex (WSHER SU18SE313, SU18SE411). Together with the Northern Clay Vale, the area formed part of a contested frontier between Mercia and Wessex in the late seventh and eighth centuries; the ASC states that in 825, Egbert of Wessex decisively defeated Beornwulf of Mercia at the 'Battle of *Ellandun*', putting an end to Mercian dominance in the region (Yorke 1990: 122). The site of the battle is thought to lie in the parish of Wroughton or Lydiard Tregoze, near the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs. A

number of probable sixth-century burial sites have been discovered along this stretch of the interface between these two *pays* (see below).

Marlborough Downs

This *pays* comprises a major upland plateau, composed of undulating chalk hills drained by the Kennet to the south and the River Og to the east. In the central part of the *pays*, to the north and west of Marlborough, where elevations can reach in excess of 250m aOD, clay-with-flints and alluvial deposits overlie hard nodular White Chalk. On the lower Downs around the periphery of the *pays*, the geology is softer, marly Grey Chalk. The land drops away sharply in the form of steep escarpments along the northern and southern edges of the downs. The light, freely draining soils have been subject to intensive cultivation in the past, as evidenced by the numerous field systems visible on aerial photographs (Fowler 2000). Today, the wooded areas and 'old grassland' of the Fyfield and Overton Downs in the high altitude zones contrast with arable cultivation on the valley slopes, while at medium altitudes, grassland and arable is interspersed with sarsen scatters (Fowler 2000: 11).

Romano-British villas and rural settlements are distributed across the upper Downs, north, east and west of *Cunetio*, and on the escarpment edge. A series of wells containing late Roman votive material have been found in the Silbury Hill area, inside Avebury henge and south of the settlement at West Kennett long barrow (Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 178-80). Southwest of the Avebury henge monument, excavations have revealed post-built structures and SFBs, providing evidence for fifth- to sixth-century settlement (Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 192-3; WSHER SU06NE401). Organic-tempered pottery has also been recovered from the Romano-British settlement site at Ogbourne St George (WSHER SU27NW329), and the villa at Cuff's Corner in Clyffe Pypard (WSHER SU07NE304). Excavations at Overton Down XII have revealed evidence for settlement into the late fourth and possibly fifth century (Fowler 2000).

Vale of Pewsey

The high terrain of the chalk downland to the north and south gives way to sandstones and siltstones of the Upper Greensand Formation in this *pays*, where altitudes vary between 100 and 150m aOD. The land is drained by the

upper reaches of the Salisbury Avon. Roman villas have been found alongside the upper extent of the Salisbury Avon at Charlton (WSHER SU15NW302), on the edge of Salisbury Plain, and at Manningford (WSHER SU15NW304), close to the fifth- and sixth-century cemetery at Blacknall Field, Pewsey (Annable and Eagles 2010). The fertile soils, and the abundance of springs and natural resources, ensured the Vale's relative prosperity by the time of the Conquest (Lewis 1994). Since the medieval period, land-use has been mixed between woodland, pasture and arable (Fry 1940; Lewis 1994; Welldon Finn 1967).

Salisbury Plain

Although Draper (2006) does not differentiate Salisbury Plain from the rest of the South Wiltshire Downs, it should arguably be considered a distinct entity. The Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA), which encloses an area of nearly 39,000 hectares and forms a substantial proportion of the *pays*, represents a uniquely well-preserved archaeological landscape, as its military occupation has precluded intensive agricultural exploitation (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 2). The SPTA forms an important study area for modern archaeological research within Wiltshire, possessing a multitude of exceptionally well preserved features, such as prehistoric and Romano-British field systems, barrow cemeteries and other earthworks.

The geology and topography of Salisbury Plain is naturally distinctive, being of a considerable altitude and comprising a thick mass of elevated chalk incised by deep valleys and combes (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 5). The predominant bedrock is White Chalk, notably of the Seaford Chalk Formation. Soils overlying this formation tend to be freely draining but shallow, containing high quantities of large flint nodules, making their suitability for cultivation fairly low (NERC 2012). In contrast, the Salisbury Avon, Bourne and Till valleys possess fertile gravel and alluvium-based soils. Extensive field systems on the downland attest to widespread cultivation during later prehistory and the Romano-British period, although the medieval economy of the Plain was largely pastoral (McOmish *et al.* 2002). Earthworks of a variety of Romano-British unenclosed settlements survive on the Plain, including eleven compact and linear villages, while villa sites are focused on either side of the Avon. At Coombe Down in the northeastern part of the Plain, Early and Middle Iron Age enclosures were

succeeded by a Roman trapezoidal enclosure and a late Roman settlement. A feature originally thought to have been an 'Early Saxon' SFB was excavated on the same site in 1992, although the presence of such a structure was later discounted (Fulford *et al.* 2006b). At Compton, on the western side of the Avon at Enford, a possible 'Early Saxon' settlement is surrounded by three villa sites (WSHER SU15SW400).

South Wiltshire Downs

The chalk downland landscape to the south of Salisbury Plain is characterised by the alluvial valleys of the Rivers Bourne, Nadder, Ebble, Wylye, and Salisbury Avon, which converge between the parishes of Alderbury and Downton. The rivers create fertile zones of alluvium and gravels between the undulating chalk ridges, and the land has been subject to more intensive arable cultivation in the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods than Salisbury Plain, resulting in fewer 'relict' landscape features. Romano-British settlements and villas are concentrated to the east of Salisbury, particularly on ridges to the east of the Bourne and along the River Dun.

Vale of Wardour

The Vale of Wardour is composed of a mixed geology of sandstones, clays and limestones, and its landscape forms a stark contrast to the surrounding chalk areas. The area is drained by the Nadder and its tributaries, many of which originate from springs. The streams are flanked by steep-sided and wooded valley slopes, and the low-lying hills reach altitudes of between 120 and 200m aOD. Fieldwalking has located evidence for a significant level of prehistoric activity (Gingell 1983), while Roman settlements have been identified in Chilmark, Donhead St Mary and Tisbury (WSHER ST93SW305). A minster was founded at Tisbury, possibly as early as the seventh century, suggesting that the economic potential of the area was considerable from an early date (Pitt 1999: 50-2). The probable Roman-Celtic shrine at Teffont (WSHER ST93SE302)—a place-name that translates from the Old English as 'spring on the boundary' and may be derived from the Latin *fontana*—is suggested to have marked the edge of the *civitas Durotrigum* (Eagles 2001: 213).

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BURIAL SITES IN WILTSHIRE, c. AD 450–850

The Wiltshire dataset comprises 94 burial sites dating from the period of study (Appendix 1). This includes one site—Warren Hill—which lies in the historic county of Hampshire, but in close proximity to the county boundary and within the eastern limits of Salisbury Plain. One site (Martin 28), in the historic county of Wiltshire but close to the Dorset border and part of a group of sites on the opposite side of the county boundary, will instead be included in the Dorset dataset.

The majority of the sites are located in the South Wiltshire Downs, Salisbury Plain and Marlborough Downs *pays* (Fig. 5.1.8); there is a notable absence of burial data from the period of study in the Cotswolds and the Northern Clay Vale, with the exception of an isolated burial found in the latter *pays* at Castle Eaton, in the northeast corner of the county. In the northern part of the county, sites are mainly found at comparatively high altitudes; a notable proliferation of sites can be identified on the Marlborough Downs, especially on and close to its northern escarpment, which overlooks the Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt (Fig. 5.1.9). In the south, sites are predominantly located in the river valleys of the Salisbury Avon, Till and Wylde, and on the slopes of the Bourne and Ebbel valleys. A number of sites are also located on the watershed ridges between these river valleys. A strong bias can be identified towards areas of chalk geology (Fig. 5.1.10; see Chapter 5.2 for more detailed analysis of this relationship). This distribution partly reflects a bias towards the chalk downland areas by antiquarian investigators of prehistoric monuments, from which numerous intrusive early medieval inhumations were recovered, as well as the improved preservation and visibility of features in these areas as a result of land-use history and the chalk geology.

The absence of evidence in the Cotswolds and Vale of Wardour *pays* is likely to be primarily a product of the low density of modern archaeological investigations (see Fig. 5.1.11). In certain areas of the Cotswolds in particular, this is partly a result of a lack of development due to planning restrictions. Eagles (1994; 2001) and Draper (2006: 50-2) have argued that a higher concentration of Brittonic place-names in the north and west of the county reflects a continuation of British hegemony in these areas. This does not

explain the absence of post-Roman burials, however, and it is uncertain whether this is because these are archaeologically invisible, or whether they have merely not yet been found, due to misidentification or underinvestigation.

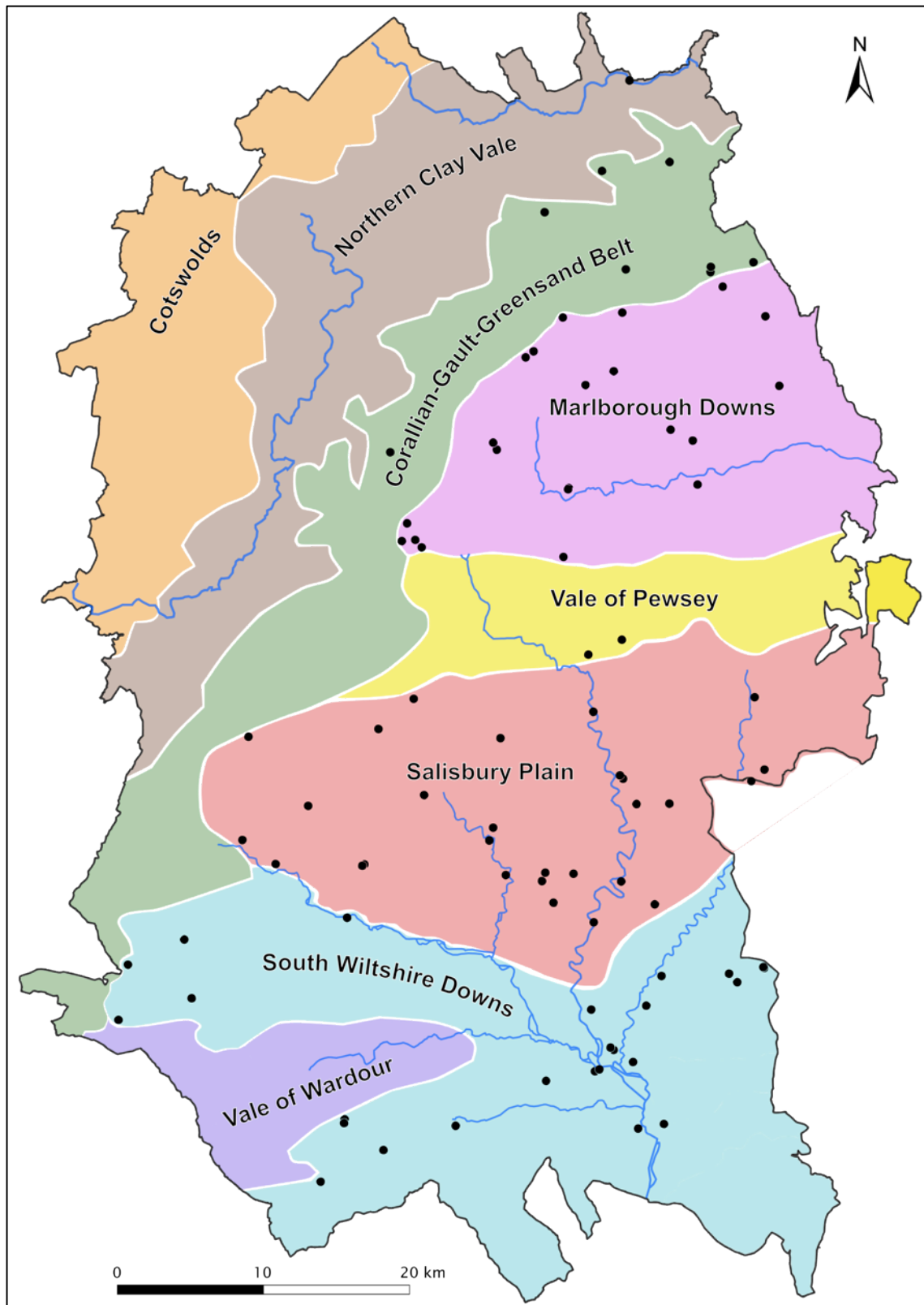


Fig. 5.1.8 Distribution of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset, overlain on map of *pays*.

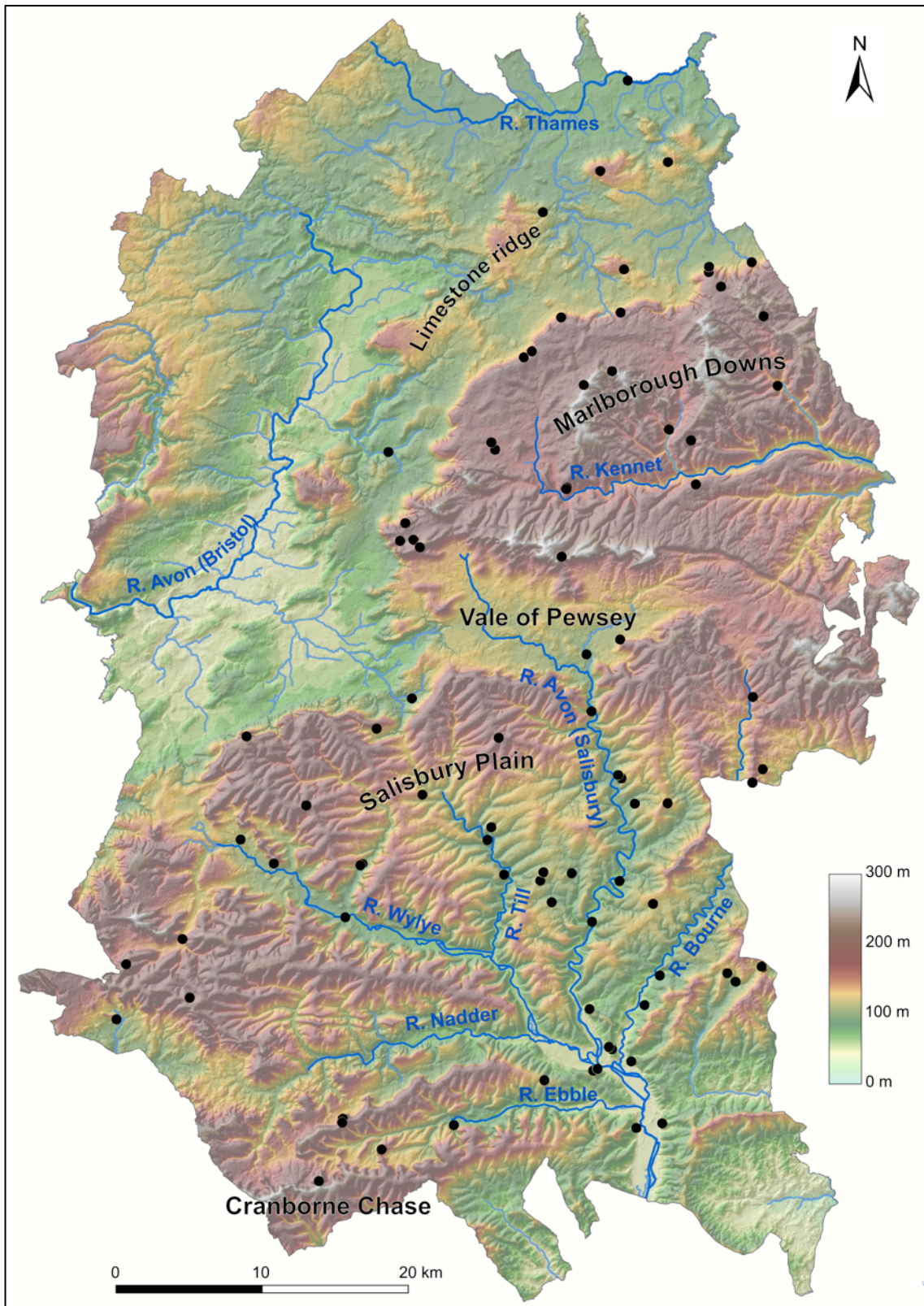


Fig. 5.1.9 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset, overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

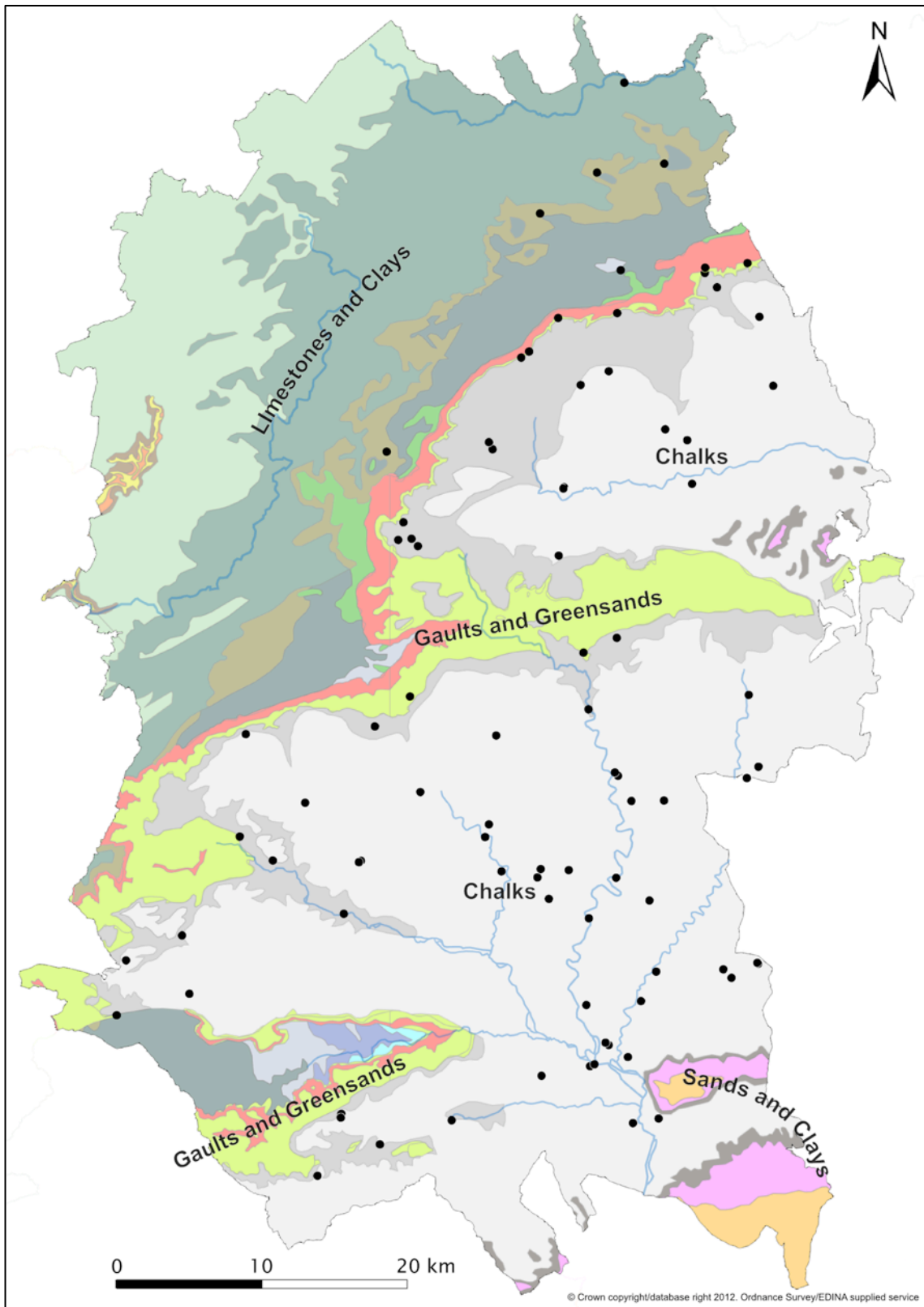


Fig. 5.1.10 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset and bedrock geology.

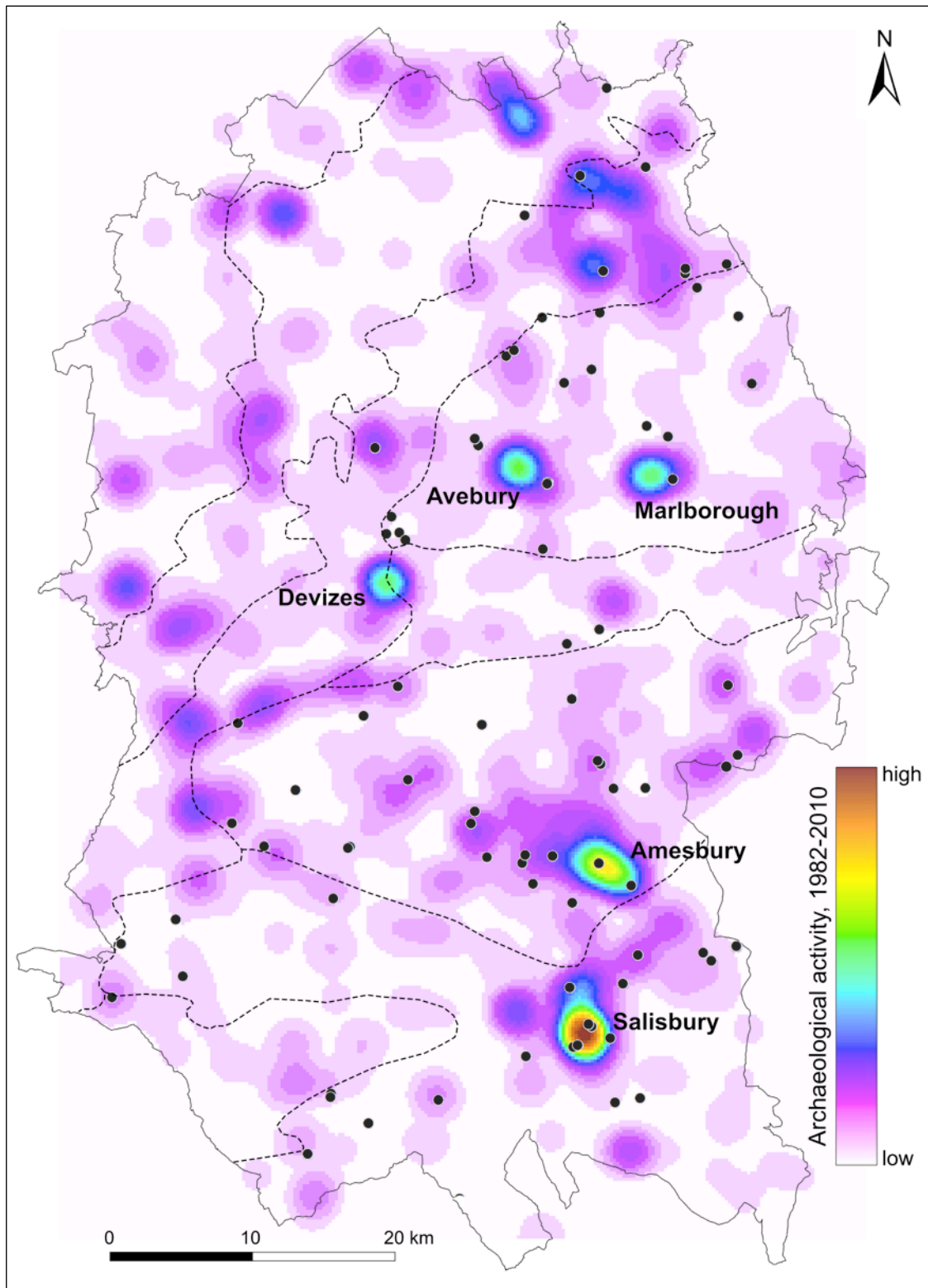


Fig. 5.1.11 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset, overlain on kernel density plot of archaeological investigations, 1982-2010 (data from the AIP). The dashed outlines of the *pays* are also marked.

BURIAL IN WILTSHIRE, c. AD 450–850: REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

The significance of each burial site within its local area, and the implications of the evidence from each locality for the thesis as a whole, will be addressed in this section. Site names in bold type are as they appear in the Wiltshire dataset (Appendix 1).

Northern Clay Vale

This *pays* has been subject to a relatively low density of archaeological interventions over the past thirty years (see Fig. 5.1.11), and only one burial site dating from the period of study has been located here, in the Upper Thames valley, as a result of plough disturbance in the late 1970s (Fig. 5.1.12). A fifth- or sixth-century burial accompanied by three pierced Roman coins and several glass beads, was discovered in the parish of **Castle Eaton**, less than 100m from the Gloucestershire border, which follows the line of the Upper Thames river (Draper 2006: 146; Friend 1980). The site lies on alluvial deposits and Oxford Clay bedrock, at an altitude of 74m aOD. A Roman villa at Hannington Wick lay 2km to the east, and the site of a possible SFB and other potential early medieval settlement features have been uncovered 1.5km to the west (Draper 2006: 146; WSHR SU19NW650). Although the historic county boundary postdates the burial, the Upper Thames itself forms a significant natural line and landmark in the landscape, and was an important corridor of communication in the early medieval period (Dickinson 1976; Yorke 1995: 298).

A fording place in the river was located just to the north of the burial site, and the area between Castle Eaton and Kempsford was a key strategic point. This was the scene of the battle of Kempsford at the beginning of the ninth century, at which West Saxon hegemony over northern Wiltshire was conclusively determined (ASC 802). The fortified manor of Kempsford later defended the passage across the river (NMR SU 19 NE 7). The Castle Eaton burial should be considered in the broader context of the growing power of the Gewissan kingdom between the late fifth and early seventh centuries, which is reflected in an increasing number of burials in the Upper Thames valley with prestige weapons such as swords (Dickinson 1976). Isolated and highly visible burials in boundary zones or adjacent to routeways have been interpreted as statements

of power and territoriality, although more commonly in later sixth- and seventh-century contexts (e.g. Semple 2003; Williams 1999b). It could be conjectured that the burial had a sentinel function, guarding the fording place, although the absence of weapons and low-lying topographic position weaken this hypothesis (O'Brien 1996: 184-5). It is also possible that the burial belonged to a larger cemetery which has been lost through ploughing, perhaps related to the probable settlement located in a similar topographic position just a few hundred metres to the west.

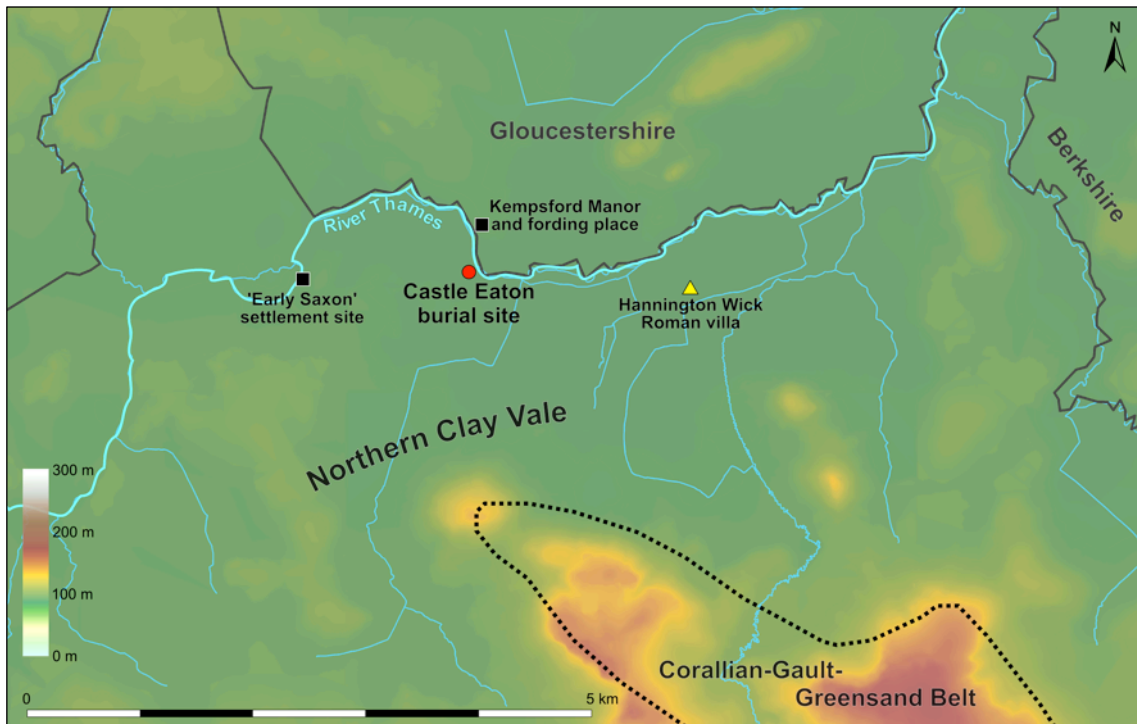


Fig. 5.1.12 Location of the Castle Eaton burial site (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

While it could also be speculated that the pierced Roman coins were an expression of Romano-British identity, their use as decorative or amuletic pendants is well attested in culturally 'Germanic' contexts, both in England and on the Continent (cf. King 1988; Meaney 1981: 220; White 1988: 99). Similar examples from mid fifth- to sixth-century 'Anglo-Saxon' graves have been identified in the Upper Thames region, notably at the extensive and wealthy cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Gloucestershire), 6km to the northeast, where two graves contained pierced Roman coins (Boyle *et al.* 2011: 84-5).

Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt

Representing an intermediate zone between the limestone and clay *pays* of the northwest corner of the county, and the chalk landscapes of the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain to the south and east, the Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt is an area of diverse geology and terrain. This area has also produced evidence for a comparatively high concentration of Romano-British settlements, including the probable site of *Durocornovium* in Wanborough (WSHER SU18NE300), which had a considerable population at its zenith in the late third and fourth centuries, and is likely to have served as an administrative centre (Draper 2006: 9). As previously mentioned, several 'Early Saxon' settlements have been located in the northeast of the *pays*, including SFBs in Swindon Old Town which are considered to have been occupied between the sixth and eighth centuries. Seven burial sites from the period of study have been located here, predominantly in the northeastern corner (Fig. 5.1.13).

Limestone ridge and clay vale

A chain of outcrops in the north and west of the *pays* forms the Corallian limestone ridge, while to the south is a predominantly low-lying area of sandstones and clays. A seventh-century burial site has been discovered as a result of development-led investigation at **Abbeymeads** in Blunsdon St Andrew, 6.5km north-northwest of Swindon Old Town and c. 500m west of the Ermin Street Roman road. This road, denominated Margary 41, was a major route which linked *Corinium* (Cirencester) with *Londinium*, via *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester). An evaluation in 2000 at Abbeymeads provisionally identified six grave cuts (Cotswold Archaeology 2003); a full excavation in 2007 revealed several of these to be natural features, and two burials of early medieval date were excavated, two metres apart (McSloy *et al.* 2009). The probable adult male in Grave 1 was crouched, head to the northwest, and was accompanied by a knife. The probable adult female in Grave 2 was extended with the head to the southwest, and was accompanied by an iron-bound bucket, a pin with garnet mount and a single glass bead. The items deposited with this latter burial date it (and, by association, Grave 1) to the second half of the seventh century, and display similarities with objects found at Lechlade, Gloucestershire (McSloy *et al.* 2009: 162, 167). As Andrew Reynolds has noted (McSloy *et al.*

2009: 170-2) the grave-goods place the burials within the context of the Upper Thames funerary 'milieu'.

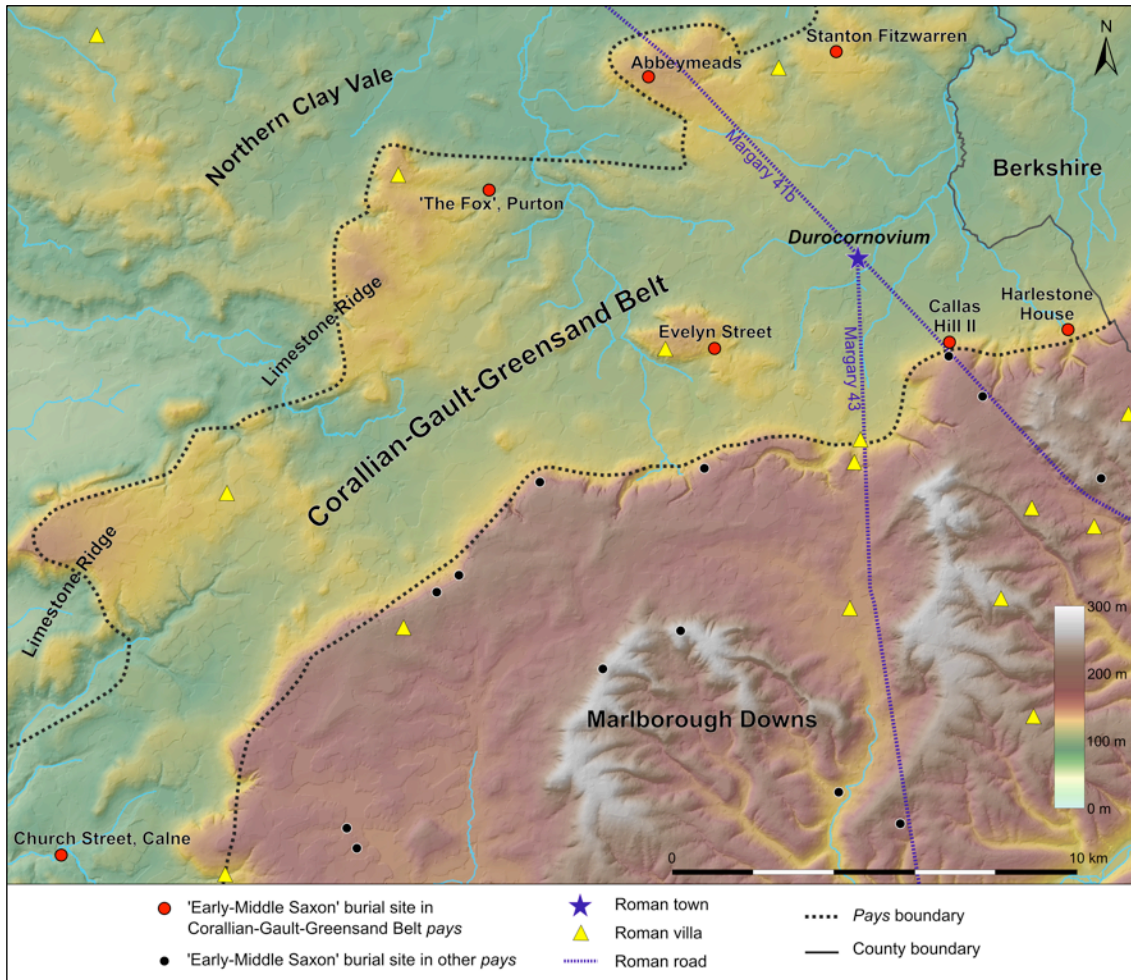


Fig. 5.1.13 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, and other key sites, in the Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

This area of Northern Wiltshire was a contested zone in the seventh century, amidst Mercian expansion from the north and west. The individuals buried here, however, show no signs of being anything other than 'ordinary' members of the local population (McSloy *et al.* 2009: 172). Evidence for a long history of occupation on the site included Romano-British enclosures dating from the first and second centuries AD, and Bronze Age and Iron Age pits, perhaps denoting seasonal settlement activity on higher ground by communities with more permanent dwellings in the Upper Thames valley (Brett and McSloy 2011: 111-13). A Romano-British trackway located 500m southeast of the burials may have linked Ermin Street with Groundwell villa, a further 400m to the south (McSloy *et al.* 2009: 160).

Three further sites on Corallian limestone displayed no apparent association with earlier monuments or features. Seven kilometres southwest of Swindon Old Town, and on the opposite side of the River Ray, at '**The Fox**', **Purton**, an inhumation cemetery, comprising at least ten burials of probable late seventh- to early eighth-century date, was excavated during the first quarter of the twentieth century as a result of quarrying activity (Cunnington and Goddard 1912; Grinsell 1957: 98). The site is in a low-lying valley location to the east of the church, close to a spring which feeds a tributary of the Ray. At **Stanton Fitzwarren**, 4.5km east of Abbeymeads, a possible seventh-century burial with a tanged iron knife was located in 1906, adjacent to the parish boundary with Highworth (Goddard 1913: 322). In the late 1990s, part of a west-east burial associated with fifth- to seventh-century deposits was excavated in **Church Street, Calne**, adjacent to the churchyard of St Mary's, the site of a minster (Fielden 1998: 154; McMahon 1997). If the minster is, as Haslam (1984: 103) has argued, of late seventh- or early eighth-century foundation, the burial may be associated with either the early church or a precursor to it.

Within the low-lying clay vale to the south and east of the limestone ridge, Swindon Old Town is located on a conspicuous hill formed of Purbeck and Portland Group limestones and sandstones. On the south-facing slope of this hill, on Kimmeridge Clay, a burial accompanied by a spearhead and a knife was discovered in 1929 in **Evelyn Street** (Cunnington 1933: 156). A further inhumation appears to have been found in 1978 in the same street, although some sources imply two investigations of the same burial (Draper 2006: 161).

Upper Greensand–Grey Chalk interface

Two sites—Harlestone House and Callas Hill II—have been located on Upper Greensand bedrock, at the foothills of the Marlborough Downs (see Fig. 5.1.13). Just under a kilometre from the historic boundary with Berkshire, at the base of the chalk escarpment and near the source of the Lenta Brook, evidence for early medieval settlement and burial has recently been discovered at **Harlestone House**, Bishopstone. Three SFBs were excavated by Foundations Archaeology, the corner of one of which [1016] had been cut by the isolated grave of a 35- to 45-year-old female (Fig. 5.1.14; King and Bethell 2011). The skeleton was crouched on the left side, and was accompanied by a knife and a

clay spindle whorl. Pottery and another spindle whorl recovered from the SFB [1016] indicate a sixth- to seventh-century date for the building, suggesting that the interment was made no earlier than the seventh century. This building itself overlay an earlier SFB [1075]. Prehistoric ditches and gullies were also recorded on the site.

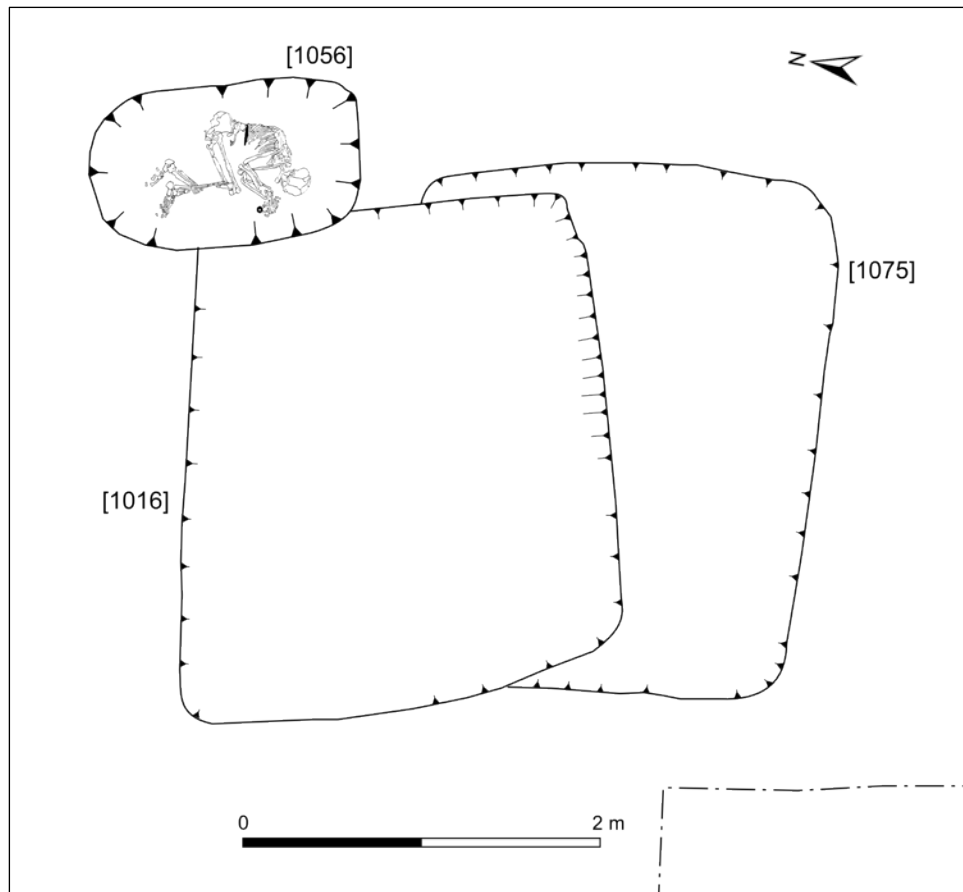


Fig. 5.1.14 Plan of two of the SFBs and the early medieval grave at Harlestone House, Bishopstone (after King and Bethell 2011: Fig. 6).

It seems likely that the settlement was abandoned before the burial was made, although this is not certain. The placement of early medieval burials within older features of settlements, a practice suggested by Crewe (2012: 158) to demonstrate a concern for continued land ownership and ancestral presence, is relatively common. The interment could also be interpreted as a ‘termination deposit’; a conscious attempt to repurpose the space as the house came to the end of its functional ‘life’ (Hamerow 2006; Sharples 2010; Tipper 2004). An ‘ancient’ trackway known as the Icknield Way, which arguably extends across a large part of southern England following the line of the chalk escarpments (Harrison 2003), and is mentioned in a number of local charter bounds, also

runs through Bishopstone, and is likely to have influenced the siting of both the settlement and the burial.

Three kilometres west of Bishopstone, 250m east of Ermin Street and 250m north of the Icknield Way, **Callas Hill II**, Wanborough, is located at c. 118m aOD, close to the foot of the Marlborough Downs escarpment (Fig. 5.1.15). An east-west burial of sixth- or seventh-century date, accompanied by a spearhead, bucket mount and pottery fragments, was found to have been cut into the remains of a second- to fourth-century Romano-British villa (Smith 1978: 136; WSHR SU28SW300). The villa may also have incorporated a temple, housing a spring.



Fig. 5.1.15 Earthworks of Callas Hill Roman villa, and the Callas Hill II burial site (centre left), looking northwest over the clay vale. Photo: author.

Wanborough is recorded in 854 as *Wenbeorgan* or *Wænbeorgan* (S312), interpreted by Gover *et al.* (1939: 283-4) as deriving from *wenn* or *wænn beorg*, ‘barrow resembling a wen or boil’. The charter to which the bounds are attached is, however, considered to be of spurious authenticity, and an alternative explanation for the place-name is that it preserves an allusion to Woden. A cluster of theophoric toponyms referring to this god, who was regarded as a progenitor of the West Saxon royal house, can be identified in central Wiltshire

(Reynolds and Langlands 2006). Earlier translations of the ASC (e.g. Ingram 1823) interpreted *Wodnesbeorg*, the site of two battles, as Wanborough, although the site is now accepted to be Adam's Grave long barrow, which is indeed referenced in the bounds of Alton Priors as such (see below). The credibility of this latter site is reinforced by its proximity to other Woden-derived names such as the Wansdyke and Woodborough Hill.

Summary: Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt

A fairly strong spatial relationship can be observed between Roman settlements and early medieval burial sites in this *pays*, despite the fact that the majority of the burial sites date from the sixth to eighth centuries AD. The sites lie predominantly on higher ground and avoid the clay vale, although this may be a product of archaeological visibility and history of investigation. Callas Hill II and Harlestone House are examples of the appropriation of earlier buildings, which may have been ruined or abandoned. The paucity of grave-goods at sites such as Abbeymeads and Harlestone House may merely reflect the dwindling investment in grave-goods during the seventh century (Geake 1997). Similarly, crouched burial may be part of the typical variations in burial position during this period, rather than an indication of ethnic affiliation (Lucy 2000: 80).

Marlborough Downs

This elevated chalk downland landscape is known for a high concentration of remarkably well preserved and significant prehistoric megaliths and earthworks, particularly in the Kennet valley area. In her examination of the early medieval burial evidence of the Avebury region, Semple (2003) noted, however, that certain types of antecedent monument or feature were favoured for funerary appropriation by early medieval communities while other types were avoided. This *pays* has contributed 24 sites to the Wiltshire dataset, many of which lie on the northern and western periphery of the downland, near to the interface between chalk and Upper Greensand geologies; others lie close to the boundary between the White Chalk and Grey Chalk formations (Fig. 5.1.16).

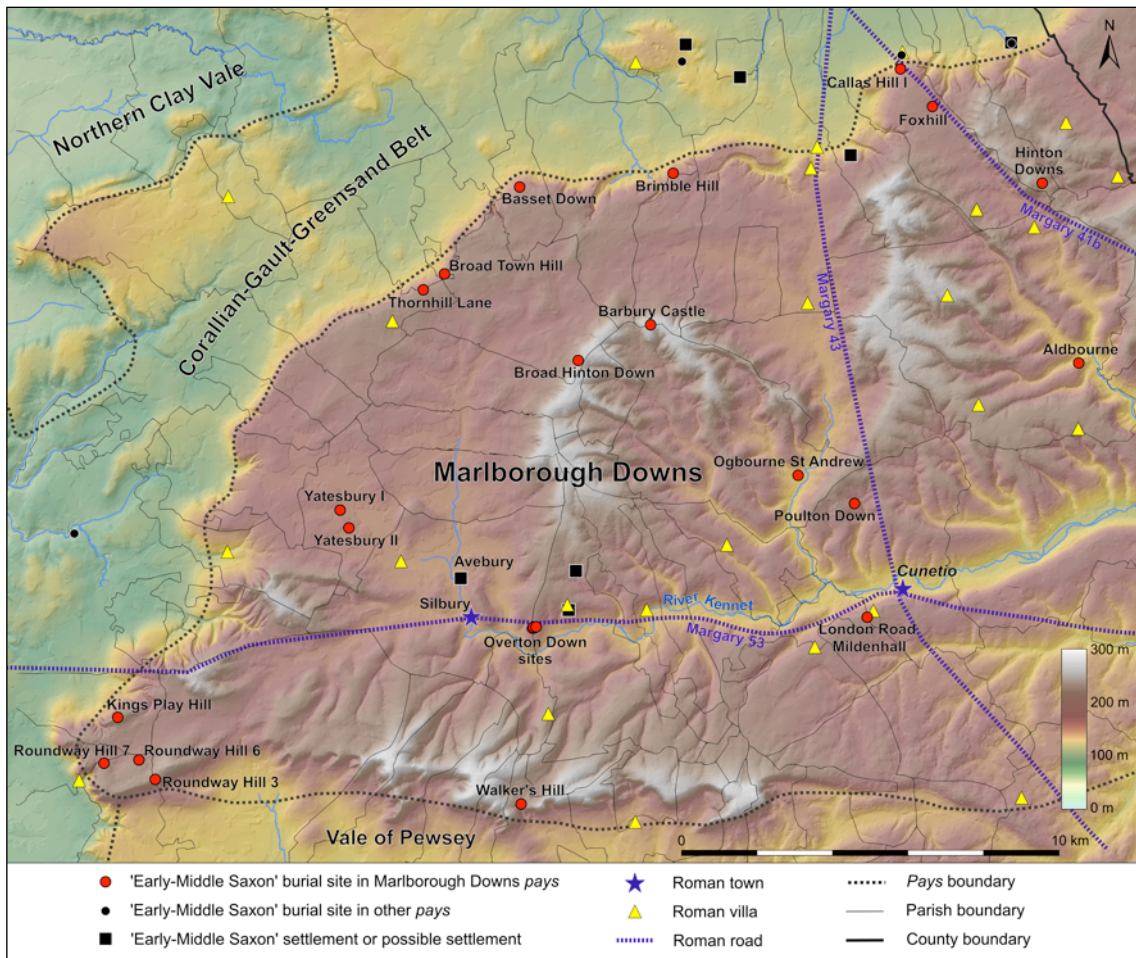


Fig. 5.1.16 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, and other key sites, in the Marlborough Downs *pays* (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Ermin Street and Aldbourne

Progressing in a southeasterly direction along Ermin Street, **Callas Hill I** is situated 350m south of Callas Hill II, at 152m aOD on the northern Grey Chalk escarpment of the Downs, close to the interface with Upper Greensand. The inhumation of a 'young Saxon', with a sixth- or seventh-century spearhead and a broken iron knife, was found in 1927 just to the west of the Roman road, 'four feet deep in chalk and covered by another four feet of rainwash from the hillside' (Goddard 1928: 91; Passmore 1928: 244). The site is located adjacent to the crossroads between the road and the *icen hilde weg*, 'Ickniel Way', mentioned in the eleventh-century bounds of Wanborough (S1588). The same bounds also refer to *haeðenan byriels* where this routeway meets the eastern boundary of Wanborough, 500m east of Callas Hill I.

Continuing along Ermin Street and climbing to a height of around 185m aOD, a burial site known as **Foxhill** lies 1.3km southeast of Callas Hill I, in a near identical position on the western edge of the Roman road. Here, a cemetery of between six and eight burials was excavated in 1941, with grave-goods including a sword, shield bosses, spearhead, knife, square-headed brooch, saucer brooches, and a globular pot (Cunnington 1942). The square-headed brooch suggests a sixth-century date (Hines 1997), while one of the shield bosses belongs to Group 8, which spans the later sixth and seventh centuries (Dickinson and Härke 1992: 21-2).

On **Hinton Downs**, Little Hinton, 3.5km southeast of Foxhill and 500m east of Ermin Street, an extended inhumation, orientated with the head to the south and accompanied by a Swanton (1973) Type E3 spearhead of late sixth- to early seventh-century date, was found near the surface of a bowl barrow in the late nineteenth century (Goddard 1913). A cremation and bronze dagger were also found in a large cist at a greater depth. The barrow sits at 225m aOD on the White Chalk, at the southern end of a ridge with which Ermin Street runs parallel, and it is possible that another routeway, following the ridge-top, passed adjacent to the barrow. In any case, the mound sits on the false crest of the slope, and is therefore likely to have been clearly visible from the Roman road, which passes the base of the slope to the southeast (Fig. 5.1.17). A Roman settlement has been located 295m to north of the site (WSHER SU28SE303), and there is evidence for four Roman villas within 2km. The mid-ninth-century bounds of Little Hinton (S312) refer to a *folces dic*, 'folk's dyke or ditch', c. 400m south of the barrow, on the southern boundary of the estate, which also formed the boundary between the hundreds of Thornhill and Ramsbury (Crittall 1970; Grundy 1919: 175).

A group of broadly contemporary sites—Harlestone House, Callas Hill I and II, Foxhill, Hinton Downs and Abbeymeads—which all lie close to Ermin Street and/or the Icknield Way, can thus be identified. The probability that Ermin Street continued in use in some form through the period of study is reinforced by the place-name Stratton St Margaret (*Stratone* in DB), derived from *stræt tun*, 'farm on the paved (Roman) road' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 33), midway between Abbeymeads and Callas Hill. It is debatable whether by the sixth or seventh century the *stræt* still had 'Roman' connotations; if so, it is possible that the road

was actively appropriated and used in the formation of local identities (cf. Dickinson 2012; see Chapter 8). Some of the sites may alternatively represent a continuation of the Roman tradition of roadside burial (Philpott 1991). The possibility that it was simply a functional routeway, and that burial sites were located close to it for more pragmatic reasons, such as ease of access, should not be disregarded, however.



Fig. 5.1.17 Hinton Downs barrow (centre), viewed from close to the site of the Roman road, looking northwest. Photo: author.

Five kilometres south of Hinton Downs, a cemetery of 36 inhumations was excavated at **Aldbourn** in 1960 and 2007-8 (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2008; Meyrick 1961). The village is situated in a chalk basin near the source of the Aldbourn, a tributary of the Kennet, and at the convergence of several dry valleys and ridges. The cemetery sits at 152m aOD on the north-facing slope of a ridge to the south of the village, overlooking one of these coombes. The grave orientation was fairly uniform, and the grave-goods consisted of simple and utilitarian knives and dress fittings. In these respects, Aldbourn can be seen as a fairly 'typical' seventh-century rural burial ground, although as Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2008: 14) have commented, such cemeteries are relatively elusive in Wessex. A case of leprosy stood out as particularly unusual amongst the various other pathologies common in rural communities of this period. A 'Middle

Saxon' settlement and iron smelting site has been located at Ramsbury, a few kilometres to the south (Haslam 1980), and Pitt (1999: 92) has suggested that there may have been a minster at Aldbourne. There is no evidence to suggest that this was anything other than the cemetery of an 'ordinary' rural community, however, and no apparent earlier features were identified on the site or in its vicinity.

Northern escarpments of the Downs

The interface between greensand and chalk geologies is considered to have been an attractive zone for settlement in the early medieval period, as it offered access to a mixed resource base and freshwater springs (Lewis 1994; Wright 2012). A probable early medieval SFB, together with pottery sherds and a bone comb of seventh- or eighth-century date, were excavated in such a location at Liddington in advance of the construction of the M4 motorway (Fowler and Walters 1981: 113-5). A Romano-British settlement which yielded first- to second-century pottery was also uncovered during the same project, one kilometre northwest of Liddington Castle hillfort, which may also have been refortified in the post-Roman or early medieval period (Webster and Cherry 1977: 214). A remarkable pattern in the distribution of early medieval burial sites can be identified along the northern edge of the Marlborough Downs (Fig. 5.1.18). Although the pattern of land exploitation and settlement is likely to have been a major factor in the siting of these burials, it is also probable that their location was influenced by the prominent position afforded by the escarpment and the presence of a routeway, feasibly a continuation of the Icknield Way, which may later have been a *herepað* (Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 225).

The easternmost site in this group is on **Brimble Hill**, Wroughton, where excavations in 2000, prompted by metal-detector finds, produced two late sixth-century inhumations (Pollard 2002: 291). The individuals were an elderly male with a sword, two spearheads, shield boss and buckle, and a child with a pair of gilded saucer brooches and two amber or glass beads. The site lies at 163m aOD, on the false crest of the slope when viewed from modern Wroughton, formerly *Ellendun*, which is named in the *ASC* as the location for a battle between the kings of Wessex and Mercia in AD 825 (*ASC* 825; Gover *et al.* 1939: 278). Although this episode of conflict took place at least two hundred

years after the Brimble Hill interments were made, the ASC gives the impression that the northern Wiltshire area was already a contested zone in the sixth century, as skirmishes are recorded at sites such as Barbury Castle in 556 and at Dyrham, Gloucestershire, in 577 (ASC 556, 577).

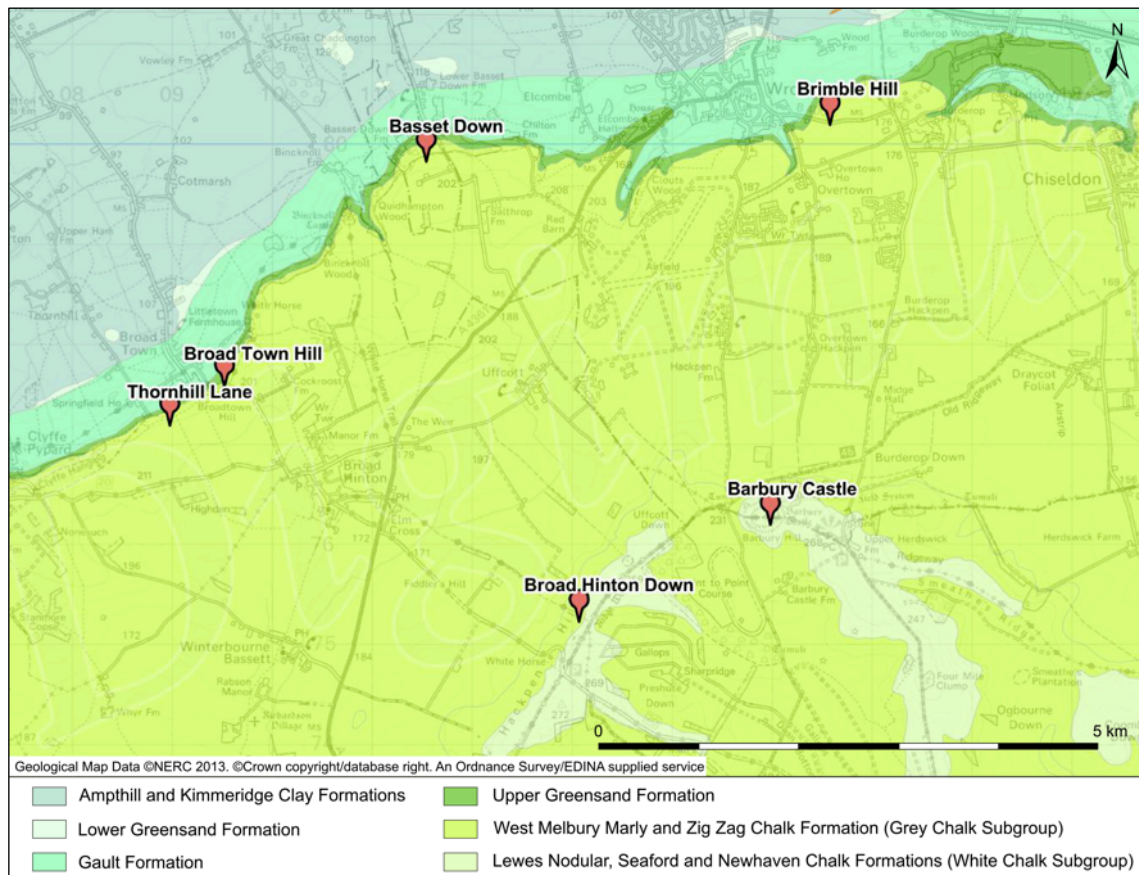


Fig. 5.1.18 The geology of the northern Marlborough Downs, and ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in the dataset.

Four kilometres west of Brimble Hill, another pair of probable sixth-century burials were found in 1822 in the grounds of the **Basset Down** estate, in the ecclesiastical parish of Wroughton (Goddard 1895). Human remains were discovered when work was carried out to level ground on the steep chalk escarpment south of Basset Down House, and two adult inhumations were found side-by-side (although it is not clear whether they occupied the same grave), with grave-goods including part of a shield, a spear, a knife, a large number of amber beads, and saucer brooches (see Semple 2003: 86). Further skeletons were found to the west during the 1830s. Roman material, including pottery and quernstones, was also unearthed, indicating the likelihood of a nearby Roman building or settlement. This site also lies on the false crest of the escarpment, in a similar topographic position to Brimble Hill.

Three kilometres southwest of Basset Down, along the greensand–chalk interface, the inhumation of 35–45 year-old male, radiocarbon dated to the sixth or seventh century (AD 540–680, at 95.4% probability), was found on **Broad Town Hill** in 2000 (Clarke 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004). The burial was located on a steep slope, at just under 200m aOD, with wide ranging views over the clay vale to the north. It also lay near the boundary between the hundreds of Selkley, Blagrove and Kingsbridge, and close to several trackways, at least one of which has been suggested to have early medieval origins (Fig. 5.1.19; Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 225). Clarke (2004) has argued that the shallow grave, absence of grave-goods and ‘crossroads’ location are indicative of the individual’s outcast status and a possible execution burial. The loss of the upper part of the body and any potential grave-goods can, however, be explained the fact that the grave was located on a steep incline and had been subject to considerable erosion (Fig. 5.1.20).

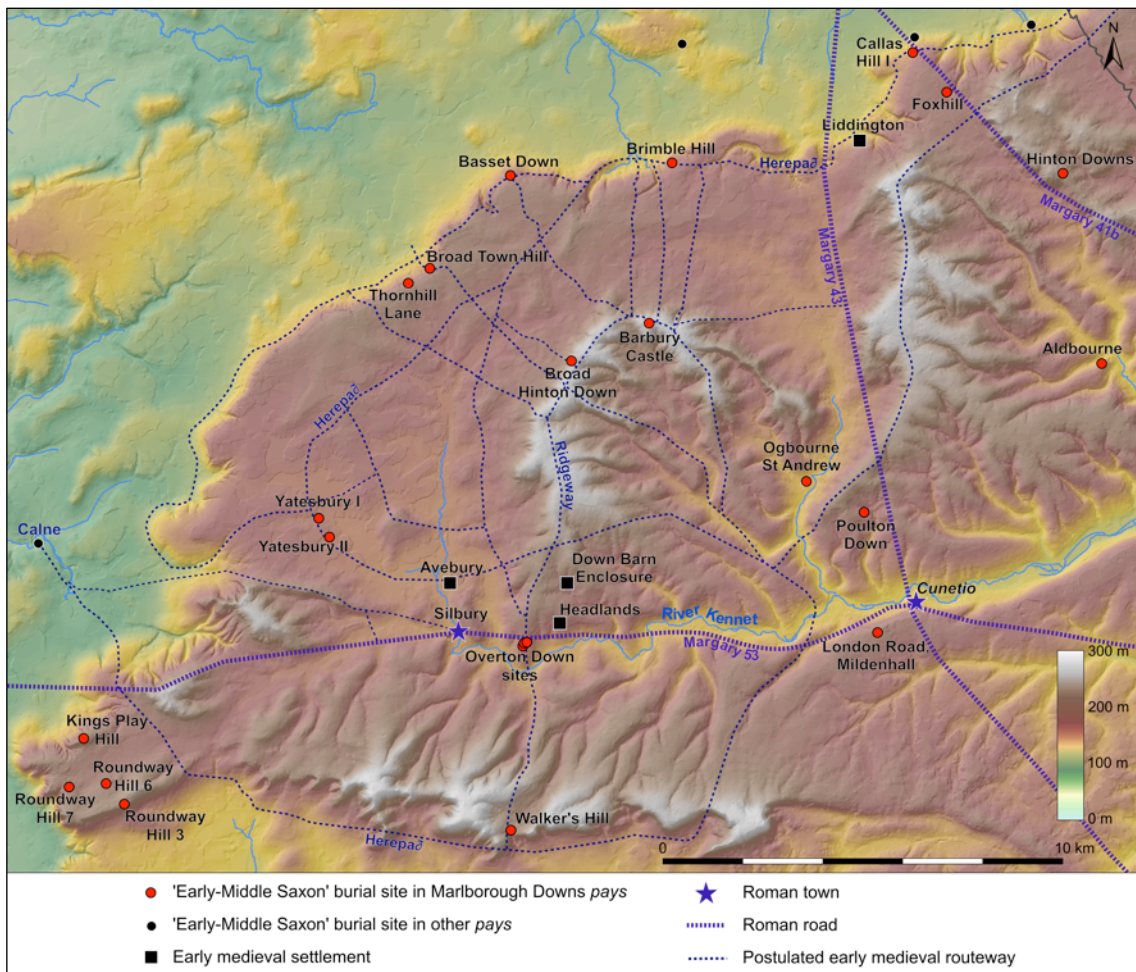


Fig. 5.1.19 Roman and early medieval routeways on the Marlborough Downs (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

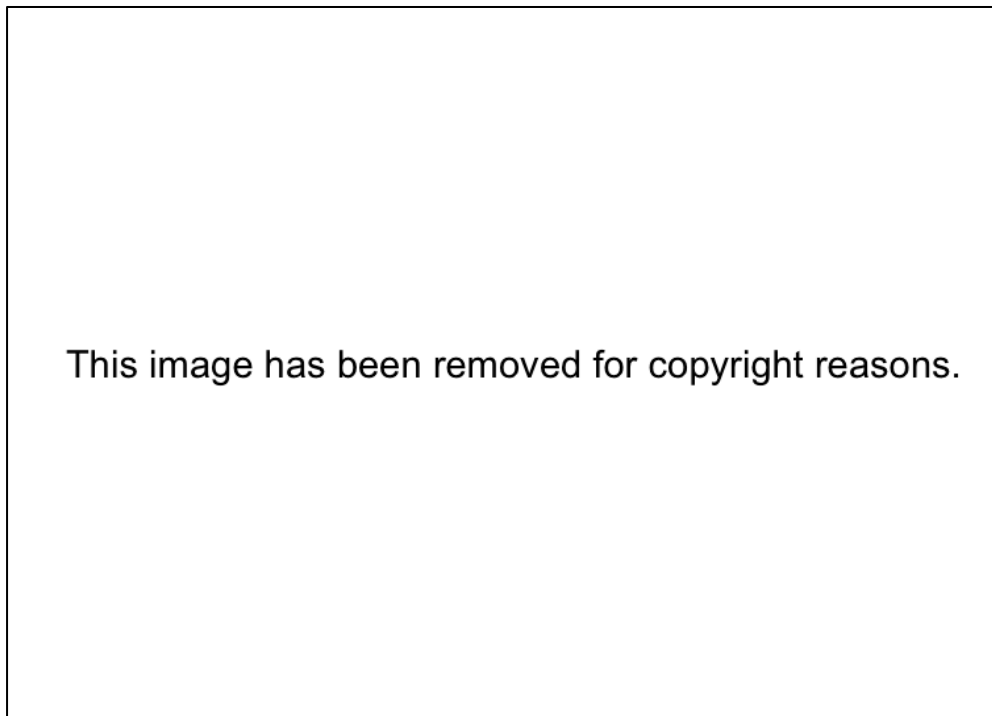


Fig. 5.1.20 The Broad Town Hill burial viewed from the northeast, pictured with a 0.5m scale (Clarke 2003).

Provided that the radiocarbon date is correct, the burial predates the period in which exclusion and distancing of deviant individuals from the communal cemetery space became commonplace. Deviant burials seem to have been integrated into conventional fifth- to seventh-century cemeteries, albeit often placed in a peripheral location, sometimes separated from the main area by an earlier linear feature, as is the case at Portway East, Hampshire (Reynolds 2009: 201-2). This spatial isolation of such individuals at the scale of cemetery organisation does, however, suggest that there was an emerging awareness of the concept of segregating or ostracising the 'suspicious dead' over the course of the 'Early Saxon' period (Reynolds 2009: 203). Moreover, Reynolds (2009: 209, 217-8) has argued that increasing evidence for isolated 'outcast' burials of seventh-century date can indeed be identified, especially in boundary locations, and it is possible that the Broad Town burial fits into this class. Its proximity to the boundary between the hundreds of Kingsbridge and Blagrove, which runs perpendicular to the chalk escarpment, less than 150m west of the burial, may be of significance. The hundred boundary between Blagrove and Selkley does, however, merely respect the topography, following the line of the escarpment, and the burial is in a comparable location with other, non-deviant, isolated burials along the Grey Chalk shelf of the Marlborough Downs. Furthermore, the

severely eroded state of the grave precludes the drawing of any firm conclusions regarding the burial position or the presence or absence of grave-goods.

Six hundred metres southwest of Broad Town Hill, at the top of the escarpment, an indeterminate number of inhumations were found in the early nineteenth century within a bowl barrow near **Thornhill Lane**, Cliffe Pypard (Anon 1860: 256; 1897: 86). Located close to the surface of the mound, the burials were interpreted as intrusive, and accompanying finds included a spearhead, and amber and glass beads. The amber beads indicate a sixth- or seventh-century date for the burials, as these are thought to have been uncommon in the area before this time (White 1988: 17). At just under 200m aOD, the site lies in a commanding location overlooking the valley below (Fig. 5.1.21). The barrow is situated close to the parish boundary, although as discussed for Broad Town Hill, this merely follows the line of the scarp.



Fig. 5.1.21 View from the Thornhill Lane site, looking northwest over the Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt and towards Broad Town Hill (far right). Photo: author.

At Cuffs Corner, just over a kilometre southwest of the Thornhill Lane site, early medieval organic tempered pottery (the remains of around five vessels) was found on the site of a Roman villa, suggesting continuity of use, or reuse, of the

settlement site (Smith 1978: 136). The settlement at Cuff's Corner lies in a similar topographic position and altitude to Thornhill Lane barrow, and it is possible that there is an association between the two sites. The funerary activity at Thornhill Lane could, however, equally be associated with a settlement on the greensand at the base of the escarpment. Nine inhumations beneath 'large sarsen stones' were found to the north of the villa in 1854 and were considered by Goddard (1913: 227) to be 'Late Celtic or Romano-British'. Although 'stoning'—the apparent weighting down of corpses with large stones—is relatively rare in 'Early Saxon' contexts, 65 examples from twenty sites, including Alvediston (see below), have been identified (Reynolds 2009: 81), and it is possible that this cemetery also belongs to the period of study.

Two further sites have been located on the prominent White Chalk shelf to the south of the previous four sites (see Fig. 5.1.18). Iron knives, a spearhead and a sixth- or seventh-century seax were found prior to 1934 within **Barbury Castle** hillfort, at 263m aOD, but no associated burials were located (Meaney 1964: 265), raising the possibility that the objects represent votive depositions (Semple 2003: 88; 2013: 78). Several skeletons were found within the ramparts during the Second World War, but these were located at some distance from the earlier finds. A battle at *Beran byrg* or 'Bera's stronghold', understood to be Barbury Castle, is recorded in AD 556 (*ASC* 556). The bounds of *Ellendun* in a charter (S585) dated AD 956, mention *ealhæræs byrgelse*, 'Ealhere's burial place', which may be located at Barbury Castle or in one of the tumuli to the west (Grundy 1920: 54-5). An inhumation and iron spearhead were found within a bowl barrow on **Broad Hinton Down**, just over 2km southwest of Barbury Castle and in a similar topographic position, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Grinsell 1957: 162).

Roundway Hill and Kings Play Hill

At the western extremity of the Marlborough Downs, Beacon Hill projects out into the greensand valley to the west, and is flanked by Kings Play Hill to the northeast and Roundway Hill to the southeast. A central sunken plateau lies to the east of Beacon Hill, dividing Kings Play Hill and Roundway Hill. A group of four early medieval burial sites, all associated with barrows (although two may be in primary mounds), has been located within a kilometre radius of a central

point, one on Kings Play Hill at 230m aOD, and three close to Roundway Hill between 203 and 206m aOD (Fig. 5.1.22). The Roundway Hill sites are referred to by Cunnington's (1860) classification numbers.

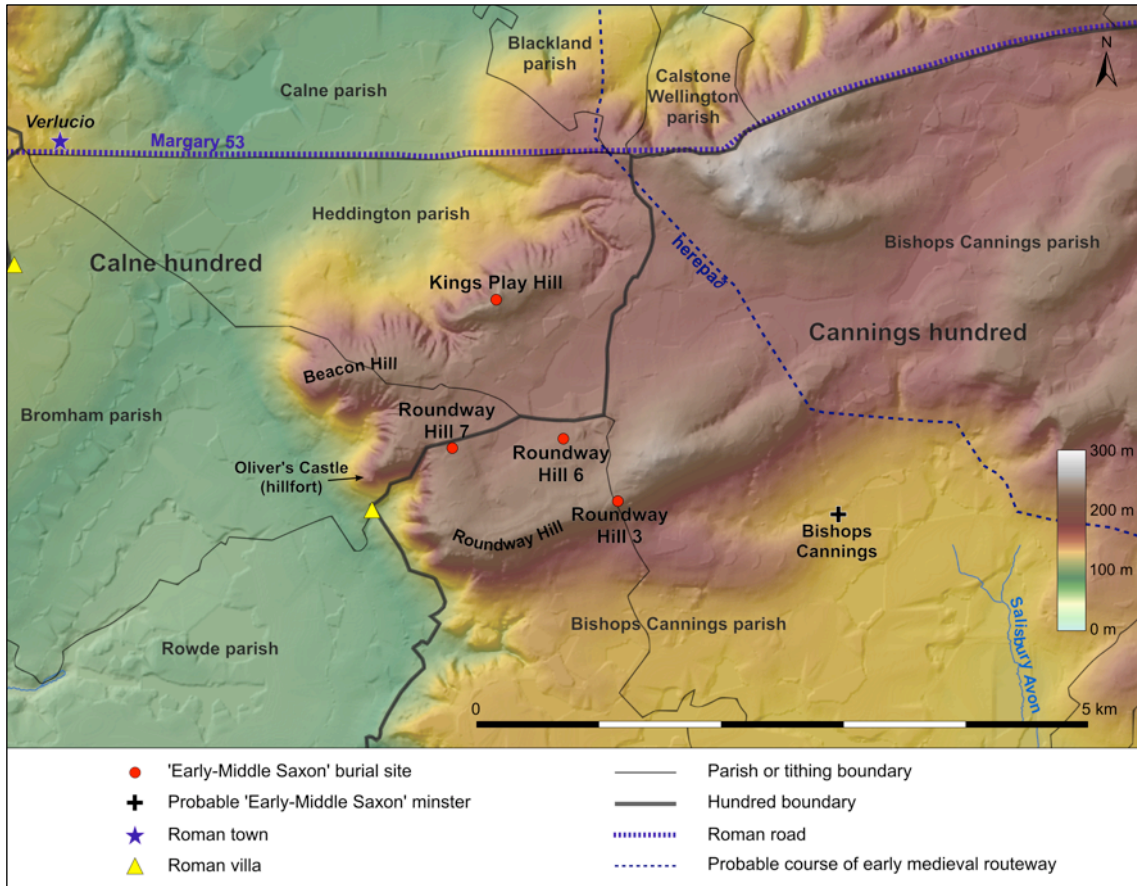


Fig. 5.1.22 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites on Roundway Down and Kings Play Hill, and other key sites in the area (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

As one of the most notable 'high-status' female seventh-century burial sites in Wessex, **Roundway Hill 7** has been the focus of much past discussion. A bowl barrow was first excavated in 1840 by Lord Colston and Stoughton Money, revealing an extended female inhumation, accompanied by exceptionally rich grave-goods which included a cabochon garnet and gold necklace, composite gold pin-suite, and yew-wood bucket with bronze fittings, all contained within an iron-bound wooden coffin or chest. This ensemble dates the burial to c. AD 700, and the iron mounts found within the grave raise the possibility that this was a bed burial, although the fittings may alternatively originate from a coffin. Semple and Williams (2001) have carried out a programme of reinvestigation at the site, including geophysical survey and further excavations. A significant finding was that the original Bronze Age burial had been removed or destroyed in the early

medieval period, and its chamber had possibly been enlarged. Two additional crouched Bronze Age burials were located on the chalk floor of the inner ditch: an adult contemporary with the monument near the northwest terminal, and a later juvenile burial near the southwest terminal. A further Bronze Age cremation had been inserted into the outer ditch, and another at the northwest terminal of the inner ditch adjacent to the crouched adult.

The barrow lay 70m south of the boundary between the parishes of Bishops Cannings and Bromham, and the hundreds of Cannings and Calne. The topographic position is unremarkable in comparison with the dramatic escarpment and commanding views c. 100m to the west, but as Semple (2003: 77) has noted, a routeway connecting the downland and a Roman villa at the base of the escarpment (WSHER ST96SE300) may have passed the site. The route of a *herepað* has been traced between Calne and Bishops Cannings, following a modern minor road known as Harepath Way, which intersects the Roman road north of Kings Play Hill, and effectively cuts off the western extremity of the chalkland from the rest of the Marlborough Downs (Baker and Brookes 2013: 254-5; Pugh and Crittall 1953). Its route may then be traced past Harepath Farm, near the southern scarp of the Downs to the east of Bishops Cannings, before proceeding east towards Alton Priors.

Approximately 1.4km southeast of Roundway Hill 7, a round barrow known as **Roundway Hill 3**, variously interpreted as Bronze Age or early medieval in construction, was first excavated by William Cunnington senior in 1805. He located a west-east orientated inhumation accompanied by an iron ring, thirty ivory gaming pieces and a possible shield boss. It was reopened in 1855 by William Cunnington junior, and a disinterred skeleton was recovered, identified by Thurnam as a c. 50 year-old male, of Roman or later date (Cunnington 1860: 159-61). The barrow is adjacent to the boundary between two tithings of Bishops Cannings, and 'Boundary Mounds' are marked on the First Edition OS map. Numerous round barrows are located on the ridge to the northeast of this one, but this is the only one on a boundary. This raises the question as to whether the boundary predates the burial. This site is also the only one of the Roundway Hill group which is situated on the edge of the chalk escarpment and thus benefits from far-reaching views, and potential visibility from settlements in

the valley below (Fig. 5.1.23), although it is barely discernable from Bishops Cannings.



Fig. 5.1.23 View over the western limits of the Vale of Pewsey from a short distance southwest and downslope of Roundway Hill 3, with the modern Devizes White Horse in the foreground. Photo: author.

Seven hundred metres northwest of Roundway Hill 3, William Cunnington junior (1860: 162-4) also opened two conjoined round barrows. In the easterly of the barrows, **Roundway Hill 6**, he found a shallow apparently unaccompanied interment which had been subjected to considerable disturbance, interpreted as secondary early medieval, in addition to a prehistoric cremation in a cist and a Bronze Age inhumation. The northernmost site in this group, on **Kings Play Hill**, Heddington, a barrow containing the inhumation of an adult male and 36 iron nails (suggesting the former presence of a wooden coffin), was interpreted as primary (Cunnington 1910). The barrow lies in the hundred of Calne, just under a kilometre from the boundary with Cannings. It overlooks the plateau on which Roundway Hill 6 and 7 are located, and is 25m higher in altitude, and could thus perhaps be seen as ‘presiding’ over these sites.

The church at Bishops Cannings may have been a minster (Pitt 1999: 88), and together with All Cannings this estate is conjectured to have formed the folk territory of the *Caningas* ‘people of *Cana*’ (Draper 2006: 57; Gover *et al.* 1939:

250). This group of burial sites therefore lies on the periphery of this unit, and Eagles (2001: 223) has speculated that the funerary events represent a statement of domination following 'Anglo-Saxon' incursion into territory which was formerly under the control of the Dobunni. By the end of the seventh century, though, any such smaller territories are likely to have been subsumed into local federations or sub-kingdoms (Blair 1994: 49).

Southern escarpment

Two intrusive burials, of a possible woman and child, were found in a bowl barrow in Alton Priors by Thurnam (1860: 326). The barrow is one of a group of three on a level area between **Walker's Hill** and Knap Hill, known as *Ceorlacumbes* 'churls' coombe' in the probable tenth-century bounds of the estate (S272). No grave-goods were recovered, but it was noted that the mounds may have been previously disturbed, and an early medieval date for the burials has been suggested (Cherryson 2005b: 179-80). The burial site lies in a significant place in the early medieval landscape of northern Wiltshire, in a gap between two hills through which the 'Great Ridgeway' (see below) passes, a kilometre south of its intersection with the East Wansdyke at Red Shore. It also commands far-reaching views over Woodborough Hill and Vale of Pewsey. Adam's Grave, a Neolithic long barrow which overshadows the site to the west (Fig. 5.1.24), has been identified as *Wodnesbeorg* 'Woden's barrow', recorded in the ASC as the site of two battles (ASC 592, 715), although the account of the latter battle between Mercia and Wessex is more credible. The site lay close to the limits of the West Saxon territory during the late seventh and early eighth centuries, during which time the nearby Wansdyke is also likely to have been constructed (Reynolds and Langlands 2006: 32).

A sixth-century sword was found in a Roman midden on Knap Hill by the Cunningtons (Cunnington 1911-2: 54), just over 500m from the Walker's Hill burial site, and a seventh-century gilt pyramidal stud, probably a sword fitting, has also been found relatively recently near Adam's Grave (Reynolds and Langlands 2006: 33). Although these finds are more likely to represent votive depositions, or objects lost in battle or by chance, Reynolds and Langlands (2006: 33) note that the 'sentinel' significance of any potential burials found here should not be overlooked. The placing of a prominent elite burial in this

locality may have acted as a form of mnemonic, or a memorial to the ‘great carnage’ said to have ensued here (ASC 592), although similar motivations could also apply to votive offerings. In light of the place-name, documentary and archaeological evidence, it has been speculated (Wilson 1992: 14) that this was an area which possessed strong ritual connotations, perhaps pertaining to a cult of Woden. With the possible exception of Wansdyke, the theophoric toponyms are more likely to postdate the period of study, however, as both the ASC and the bounds of Alton Priors in which *Wodnesbeorg* features (S272) were composed after the late ninth century (Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 233).



Fig. 5.1.24 Knap Hill (left), Adam’s Grave (on the summit of Walker’s Hill, right), and the Walker’s Hill burial site (centre, between the two hills), from the Ridgeway close to Red Shore, looking southwest. Photo: author.

Central part of the plateau

Funerary evidence from the period of study is conspicuous in its absence from the megalithic monuments of the Upper Kennet valley (Semple 2003). Structural settlement evidence is well attested, however, and three SFBs tentatively dated to the sixth century have been excavated at Avebury (Pollard and Reynolds 2002: 192). A group of funerary sites has been identified in Overton, 2.3km southeast of this settlement at Avebury and broadly contemporary with it.

A few undated skeletons were found c. 1957 in the agger of the *Aquae Sulis–Cunetio–Londinium* Roman road, when ground was levelled close to the junction between this road and the Ridgeway (Fowler 1970: 53). Excavations in the 1960s of a Bronze Age barrow (**Overton Hill 6b**) and three Roman barrows (**Overton Hill 6, 6a and 7**), 50-100m to the northeast (Fig. 5.1.25), produced evidence for funerary reuse in the fifth or sixth centuries AD (Smith and Simpson 1964). Overton Hill 7, previously opened by both Hoare and Thurnam, contained a tomb dated by pottery and other artefacts to the second century AD, while a child burial on the periphery of the same mound was dated to the early medieval period on the basis of grass-tempered sherds (Smith and Simpson 1964). Finds of human bone and chaff-tempered pottery in barrows 6 and 6a indicated the probable presence of further early medieval burials. Unlike the Roman barrows, barrow 6b was considered to have been untouched by antiquarian investigation (Smith and Simpson 1966). A crouched burial, accompanied by a Beaker and other Early Bronze Age items, was located in the central grave pit, above which were the secondary Bronze Age cremation deposits of two individuals. Four considerably later inhumations, all likely to date from the sixth century, comprised a child, two adult males—one with grave-goods including a shield boss and spearhead—and an adult female with ten amber beads and a bronze Roman key. A fifth-century date had been suggested by Eagles (1986) for the female burial, but as strings of more than a few amber beads are not generally found until the mid-sixth century, this is unlikely (Geake 1997: 47; Huggett 1988: 64; White 1988: 16-17).

The barrows lie to the south of a small enclosed settlement and field system known as Crawford's Complex, which probably dates from the late Roman or early post-Roman period, and part of which was imposed on earlier 'Celtic' fields (Fig. 5.1.25; Fowler 2000: 55-9). A kilometre northeast of the barrows, the 'Headlands' complex, which incorporates a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age enclosed settlement, divided by an early medieval tithing boundary, and a possible Roman villa, was an important focal point in the landscape (Fowler 2000: 59-60). The presence of post-Roman settlement evidence in the immediate area of the Overton Hill barrows suggests that there was little spatial separation between the living and the dead here at this time. It is increasingly recognised that 'Early Saxon' communities were not averse to living alongside

contemporary cemeteries, as demonstrated by sites such as Grove Farm, Market Lavington (see below), or indeed prehistoric funerary sites (cf. Crewe 2012). It perhaps also signals a desire to keep a close eye on funerary sites and ancestral monuments, especially in such a frequently traversed landscape.

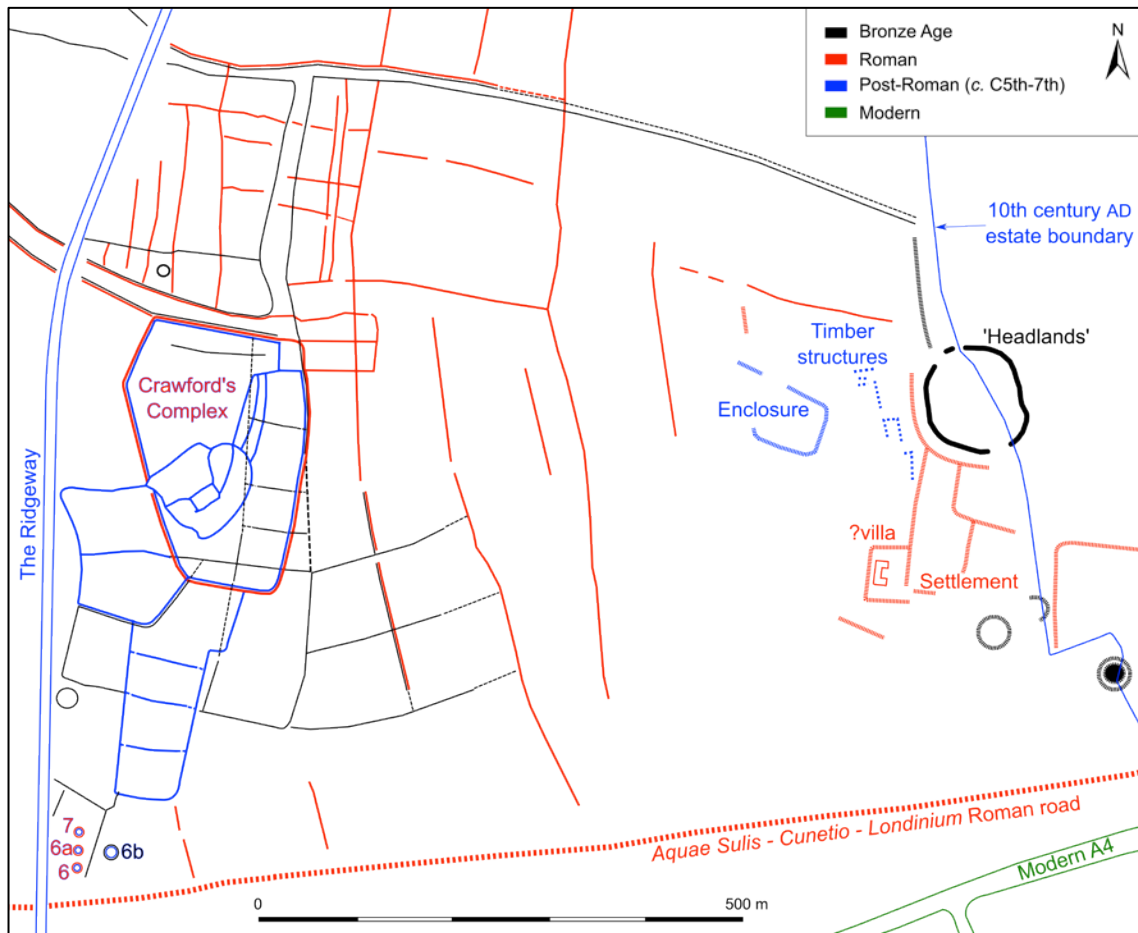


Fig. 5.1.25 Earthworks and cropmarks on Overton Hill/Down, mapped from aerial photographs (after Fowler 2000: Figure 4.2).

A crucial question to be addressed is whether barrows 6, 6a and 7 were recognised as being of Romano-British construction when the early medieval secondary interments were made. The excavators remarked that the Roman barrows were 'almost imperceptible' in comparison with the larger Bronze Age bowl barrow (Smith and Simpson 1964: 68), and this is confirmed by a 1930s aerial photograph (Fig. 5.1.26). This degradation is likely to have been largely caused by medieval and post-medieval ploughing, however. Post-holes were discovered in the ditches of barrows 6a and 7, suggesting that the barrows had originally been surrounded by timber settings. Standing posts are a feature of both 'Anglo-Saxon' and Romano-Celtic pagan ritual practice (Blair 1995), and it

is possible that the mounds continued to be identified by above-ground markers. Alternatively, knowledge of their biographies may have remained in social memory for the three centuries prior to their reuse. As Hamerow (2002: 124) has argued, 'the continued use of old boundaries, geographical divisions, and meeting places is intrinsically likely, although it need not imply that these boundaries were politically maintained'. The Romano-British barrows may have defined such a dividing line in the landscape, and their reuse could have reinforced or reestablished this boundary.



This image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 5.1.26 Oblique 1930s aerial photograph of Overton Hill, looking northwest. Barrow 6b is visible, whereas the other barrows (6, 6a and 7) lie to its left and are imperceptible (after Fowler 2000: Plate XIII).

There is no apparent evidence that the Roman road was in use during the period of study, although it appears to have been mentioned in the bounds of *Ofærtune* (S547), possibly West Kennett. The Ridgeway, however, was evidently an important routeway. It is alluded to in the compound *strætford* in the late tenth-century bounds of West Overton (S784), and it may also be the *herepað* mentioned in the bounds of East Overton (S449), dated AD 939

(Fowler 2000: 61). The element *stræt* implies a paved road, and *strætford* suggests that the passage through the river was metalled or reinforced to support frequent or heavy traffic (Costen 1994: 105). In its present linear form, the section of Ridgeway which runs across Overton Hill is demonstrably later than the field systems it overlies and cuts (Fowler 2000: Fig. 2.1). Fowler (2000: 22) has therefore argued that it must have developed after the abandonment of the 'ancient' landscape depicted on the aerial photographic transcription, but before the beginning of the tenth century; that is, around the fifth to sixth centuries AD. The relative modernity of this particular stretch of the Ridgeway need not mean, however, that the general pattern of movement through the landscape and the tenurial organisation have changed dramatically since later prehistory. Although the mapping of fixed physical lines in the landscape is a later construct, earlier routes are likely to have been sited in broadly similar locations. Rather than a single ridgeway, it is more realistic to envisage a collection of droveways which together made up a 'Ridgeway route' (Fowler 2000: 256). There is evidence to suggest that downland on the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain was used for the seasonal grazing of herds and flocks from as far afield as the lowlands of the Hampshire Basin in later prehistory (Oosthuizen 2011b: 174). It is not unreasonable to believe that a tenurial structure was present by the late Roman period, partially determined by 'lines of movement through this landscape, which were essentially elements in a late prehistoric transhumance route' (Fowler 2000: 257).

In summary, then, the early medieval burials on Overton Hill were placed adjacent to an important routeway which, by the time it was consolidated into a formal track or road sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries AD, was used by seasonally migrating groups, potentially from wide-ranging areas of Wessex. It is also likely to have been used by anyone moving through the landscape on a day-to-day basis. This was an accessible, visible and ancestrally (or at least locally) symbolic funerary locale.

The value of using place-name evidence in conjunction with archaeological fieldwork is exemplified at Yatesbury, situated 6km northwest of Overton Hill and c. 3.5km northwest of Avebury, on a low spur of land to the west of a small brook known as the Yatesbury Bourne. Ekwall (1936) was the first to propose that *Etesberie*, the Domesday name of the village, derived from OE *geat burh*,

'pass or gap in a fortified enclosure'. The first element of this derivation, however, was all but dismissed by Gover *et al.* (1936: 264) due to the apparent lack of any convincing evidence on the ground for such a feature. Yet fieldwork carried out in the village as part of the Compton Bassett Area Research Project (CBARP) in the 1990s mapped three enclosures, including Enclosure 3, which lies at the heart of the village and is fossilised in its plan (Fig. 5.1.27). Earthwork survey and targeted excavation showed that this feature had originated in the late Roman period, and that the largest of its ditches was of probable 'Middle Saxon' date. Furthermore, an opening was revealed at its southern end, confirming the possibility that the *herepað* originally ran directly through the village, and corresponding convincingly with the *geat* of the place-name (Reynolds and Semple 2012: 93).

Baker and Brookes (2013: 117), however, argue that the *geat* element is more likely to allude to the gap in the Wansdyke at Red Shore, several kilometres to the southeast, which may have been controlled from Yatesbury via the network of beacons. In any case, the *herepað* was undeniably an important communication route, linking Wroughton with Marlborough, via Yatesbury and Avebury (Reynolds 1995: 28), and it is highly likely that a routeway between the latter two settlements followed a similar course from the Roman period or earlier: a Romano-British settlement was excavated 500m southeast of Yatesbury village centre in 1992 (WSHER SU07SE312), and Windmill Hill villa (WSHER SU07SE305) also lies adjacent to the route.

In the eighteenth century, an inhumation burial in a stone coffin, accompanied by a gold ring and spearheads, was discovered close to the surface of a barrow known as **Yatesbury I**, to the south of Yatesbury House Farm (Stukeley 1743). Semple (2003: 85) has suggested that this was a primary early medieval barrow burial, as no prehistoric material was recovered. In 1833, two further intrusive early medieval skeletons were discovered when a double barrow (**Yatesbury II**) was lowered in Barrow Field, 500m to the southeast of Yatesbury I, adjacent to a track known as Barrow Way or Yatesbury Lane, the conjectured route of the *herepað* (Fig. 5.1.28). The burials, in the southernmost mound, were accompanied by a cylindrical metal workbox with lid and chain, 'terracotta' beads, and a large knife or seax. The workbox can be dated to the late seventh century and indicates a high-status female burial (Draper 2006: 147). The

barrow was reopened in 1849 by Merewether, who found a 'primary' cremation burial (Smith 1879: 331-3).

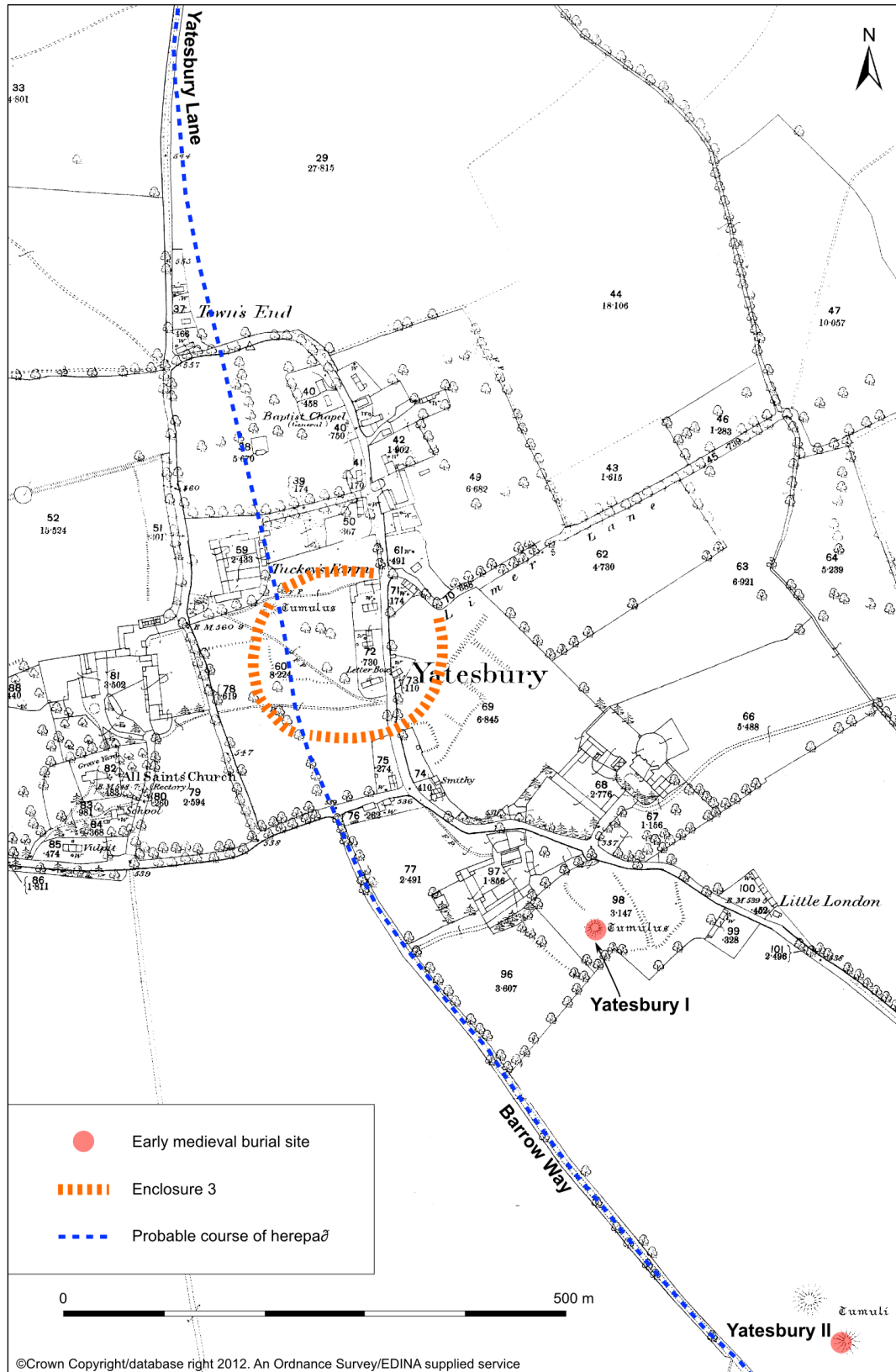


Fig. 5.1.27 Map of Yatesbury, showing the former course of the *herepað* and Enclosure 3 (after Reynolds 1995: Fig. 2).

Prior to levelling, the barrows had been considerably larger and more imposing, perhaps over six metres in height (Semple 2003: 76). The proximity of the barrow to, and its visibility from, the routeway seem to have been determining factors in the choice of location for the Yatesbury II burials. The barrow is visible from most directions, around 270 degrees, but is obscured from view by a rise in the land on the approach to Yatesbury from Avebury. The visual impact of the mound may have been enhanced by the fact that it only comes into view once it is in close proximity.



Fig. 5.1.28 The Yatesbury II barrow (right-hand mound on the skyline), looking north from Barrow Way. Photo: author.

Potentially one of the latest early medieval secondary barrow burials in Wessex is located 3km north of Marlborough, in the churchyard at **Ogbourne St Andrew**. A round barrow was excavated by the Cunningtons in 1884-5, revealing an inhumation in a firwood coffin with iron clamps, near to the centre of the mound at a depth of c. 1.5m, as well as a cremation at a depth of c. 2.1m (Cunnington 1885). Semple (2003: 79; 2013: 42) has identified similar fittings dating from the ninth or tenth century, indicating that the burial may even postdate the period of study.

On **Poulton Downs** in Mildenhall, 1.6km southwest of Ogbourne St Andrew, a sixth- or seventh-century female with an iron knife, two iron buckles, a bronze pin or needle, and three beads, including one of amber, was discovered in a Roman well a depth of 7m (Meyrick 1949). The site lay 500m west of the *Durocornovium–Cunetio* Roman road (Margary 43), and was investigated after ploughing unearthed a profusion of pottery, ceramic building material and stone masonry, indicative of a substantial Roman settlement. The well was excavated to a depth of almost 16m, although the excavators estimated that its total depth may have exceeded 30m. In the chalk downland landscape, access to a good water supply was ‘probably the single most important factor in determining settlement location and viable forms of subsistence’ (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 10). To this end, the technology for the excavation of wells developed from the Neolithic onwards, and considerable landscape engineering took place in the Romano-British period.

Finds from within the Poulton Downs well suggest that it was in use throughout the Romano-British era, although it had clearly ceased to be in operation by time the ‘burial’ was made, as much of it had filled with rubble. Meyrick (1949: 221) construed that the individual discovered in the well had ‘met a violent end’, by accident or design, as the body had ‘landed on a sarsen, and another rock had been thrown in on top’. Reynolds (1996: 26) regards it as a possible sacrificial execution, and it could be speculated that the individual was held responsible for the cessation of the water supply, perhaps with implications of witchcraft. Although literary evidence suggests that openings in the earth and rock were considered dangerous places in ‘Late Saxon’ England, representing a form of hell or a sinister underworld, there is little archaeological evidence for the association of pre-Christian funerary events with caves, pits or shafts (Semple 2013: 71-2). It is perhaps inadvisable to overstate the significance of what may be purely the result of an accident or an isolated act of violence.

Three kilometres south of Poulton Downs, a skeleton with an iron knife or spearhead was found by workers along **London Road, Mildenhall**, in 1927 (Passmore 1928: 244). The site lies at 198m aOD on Forest Hill, part of a ridge south of the Kennet, just over a kilometre southwest of *Cunetio*. Evidence including finds of floor and flue tiles and tesserae strongly suggest that a villa was located on Forest Hill (WSHER SU26NW303), enclosed by the earthworks

of a hillfort (WSHER SU26NW203). The location of the early medieval burial implies it was placed within the ruins or earthworks of either the villa or the hillfort, although past reports on the burial make no mention of this. The burial site is also very close to the parish boundary. This boundary is, however, followed by the modern A4 London Road, suggesting that a routeway along its course predates, and influenced the location of, both the boundary and the burial.

Summary: Marlborough Downs

Rather than merely a product of the modern archaeological investigation history, the distribution of burial sites seems genuinely biased towards the periphery of the downland and the geological boundary between the chalk and the greensand. The prominent chalk escarpments are decisive in shaping patterns of burial. However, the association with some territorial boundaries, on Broad Town Hill for example, may be fortuitous, as these land divisions have clearly been influenced predominantly by the topography.

Baker and Brookes (2013: 254) have shown that the network of *herepaðas* in northern Wiltshire was designed to control access to the chalk upland of the Marlborough Downs in the 'Late Saxon' period. It is reasonable to believe that these routes followed pre-existing droveways which had been established to enable and control access to seasonal pasture on the downland, although perhaps originally in a more dispersed form. Burial sites such as Yatesbury I and II, and those on Overton Hill, are positioned to take full advantage of passing traffic along such routeways.

The potential chronological gap of five centuries between the interments at Overton Hill 6b and the burial at Ogbourne St Andrew attests to the endurance and longevity of the practice of intrusive barrow burial. A close association with Roman remains in and around the Kennet valley can also be identified.

Vale of Pewsey

The fertile loam soils produced by the weathering of the Upper Greensand bedrock have permitted more extensive agricultural exploitation in this *pays* over the past millennium than the thinner chalk downland soils. The probable

destruction of evidence by ploughing in the most fertile greensand areas, combined with a relatively low density of archaeological investigations (see Fig. 5.1.11), has resulted in the discovery of only two burial sites in this *pays*, both of which are on the Grey Chalk, close to the southern limit of the Vale and the foot of the Salisbury Plain escarpment (Fig. 5.1.29).

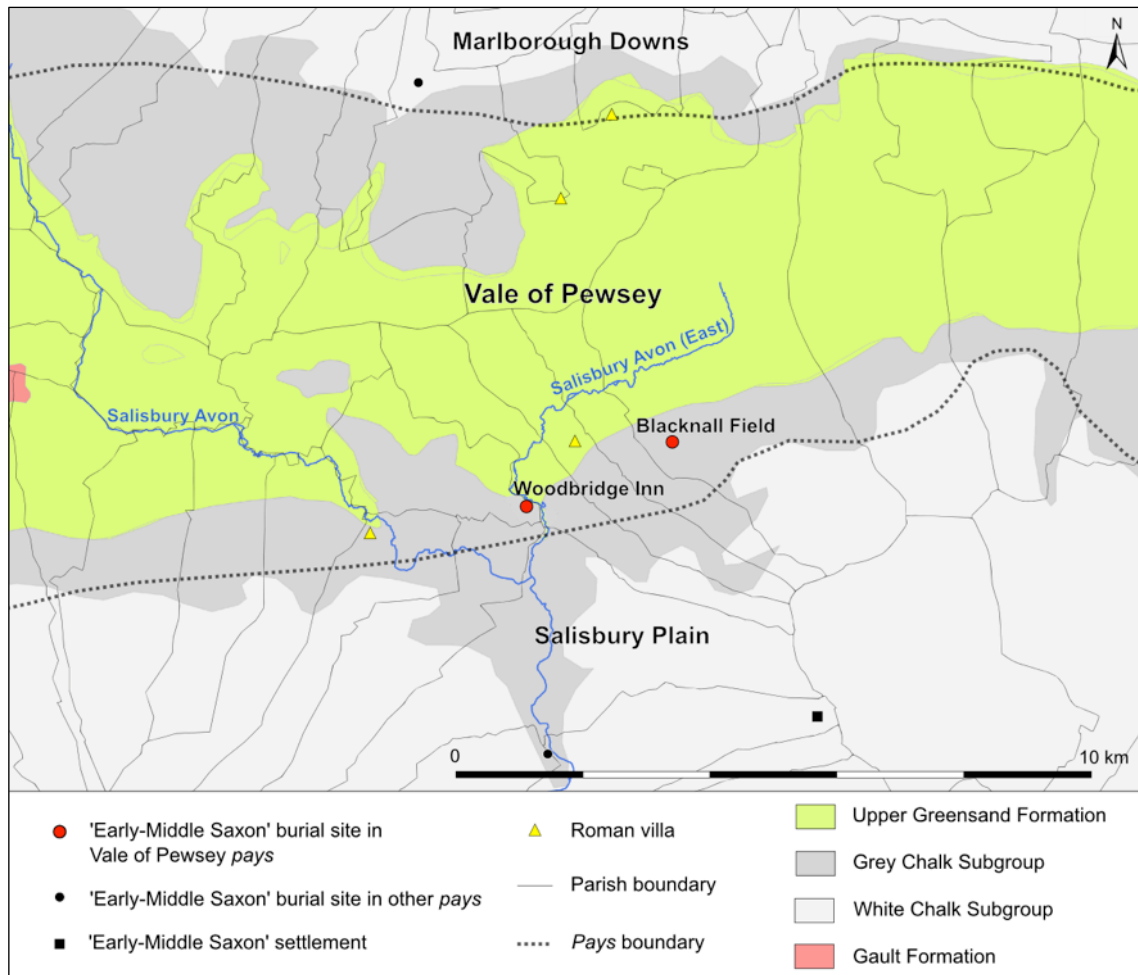


Fig. 5.1.29 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and settlements, and Roman villas, in the Vale of Pewsey, showing the bedrock geology and the pattern of parishes.

Two west-east skeletons, together with a shield boss and a spearhead, were found at **Woodbridge Inn**, North Newnton, as a result of road widening in 1935 (Cunnington 1935). Possible Bronze Age ring ditches have been identified from aerial photographs nearby (NMR SU 15 NW 7). The site lies approximately 100m from the eastern branch of the upper Salisbury Avon, and under 100m aOD. **Blacknall Field**, Pewsey, 2.5km to the east-northeast at 120m aOD, is a field cemetery of over a hundred graves, including four cremations (Annable and Eagles 2010). A Roman villa has been located near the church at

Manningford Bruce, 1.2km from Woodbridge Inn and 1.5km from Blacknall Field.

Salisbury Plain

The regular pattern of downland ridges on this elevated chalk plateau is punctuated by river valleys and coombes, and the morphology of ecclesiastical parishes and tithings reflects the topography, hydrology and land-use history. A striking number of Romano-British settlements were located high on the Plain, where arable cultivation intensified over the course of the Romano-British period. This is evidenced at Chisenbury Warren, Enford (WSHER SU15SE402), where there may be continuity of settlement into the fifth and sixth centuries AD. A large group of 28 burial sites from the period of study has been identified in this pays (Fig. 5.1.30).

Northern edge of the Plain

A cemetery and associated settlement on the interface between the greensand and chalk geologies reiterates the importance of this zone for early medieval communities. Located on the periphery of the Plain, at the western limit of the Upper Greensand formation which underlies the Vale of Pewsey, **Market Lavington** is a rare excavated example of an early medieval cemetery contiguous to an extensive and broadly contemporary settlement. Forty-two inhumation burials, spanning the fifth and sixth centuries, were excavated in 1990 at Grove Farm, north of St Mary's churchyard, although unstratified finds to the north and west of the excavated burials suggest continuation of use into the seventh century (Williams and Newman 1998; 2006).

The cemetery sits at c. 100m aOD, just 50m south of the Easterton Brook, and SFBs were located 50m southeast of the burials. As Nick Stoodley (in Williams and Newman 2006: 174) has commented, it is rare in Wessex for an early medieval 'community' burial ground to be closer to a watercourse than a nearby contemporary settlement, and in this case, it would seem that the location of the settlement directly influenced the siting of the cemetery. This perhaps signals a desire to keep a close eye on the dead, as on Overton Hill.

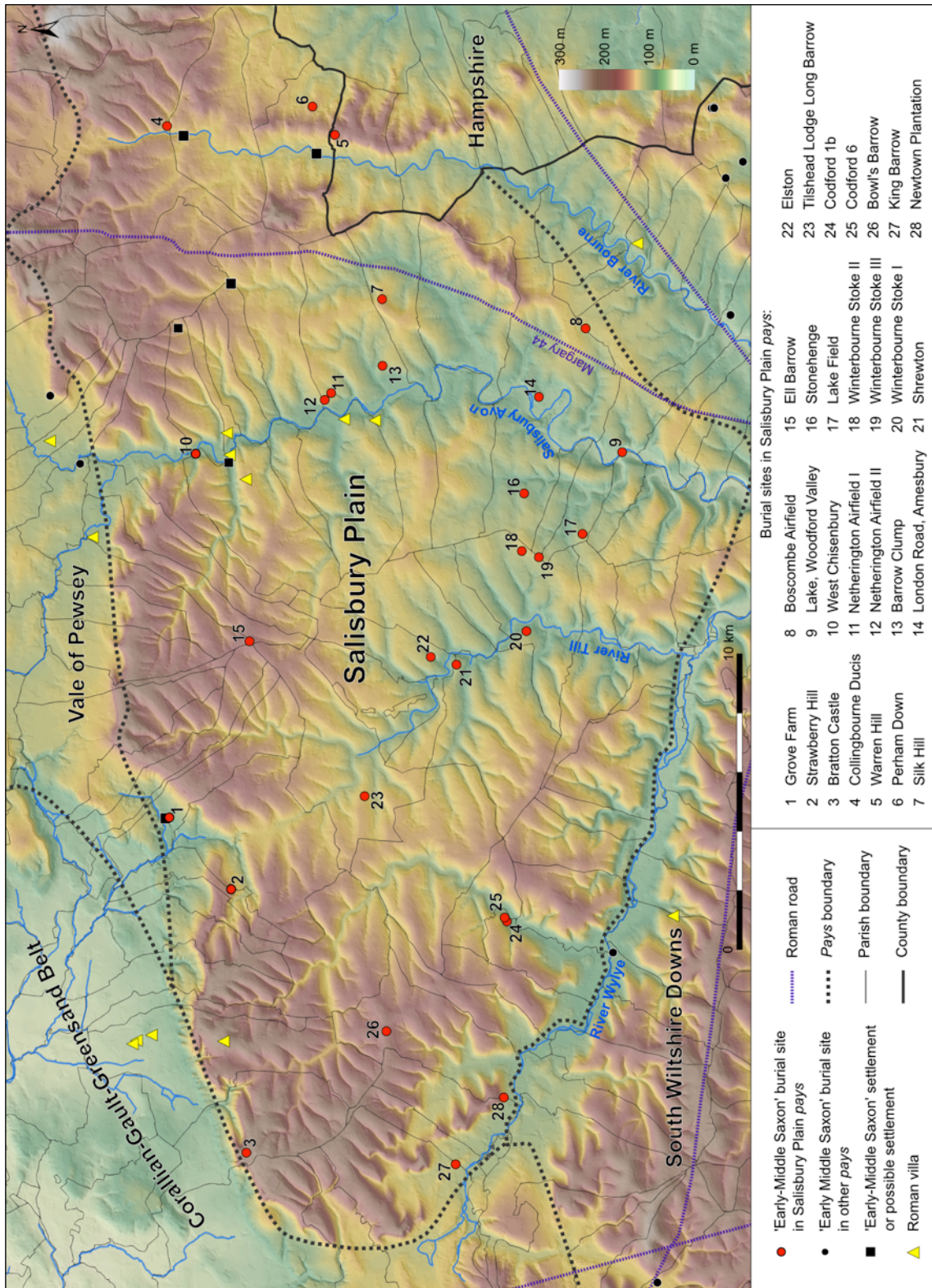


Fig. 5.1.30 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and settlements, and Roman villas, in the Salisbury Plain pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

A small rectangular Romano-British feature denominated Structure 1, possibly an ancillary building, was identified within the fifth- to sixth-century cemetery area. Grave 11 cut the mortar floor and dwarf wall of this structure, and this grave was in turn cut by an 'Early Saxon' boundary ditch, possibly delineating or subdividing areas of the cemetery. Large quantities of recovered pottery and ceramic building material, as well as aerial photographic evidence, also indicate the presence of a first-century AD villa 200m to the west (Williams and Newman 2006: 171). The presence of 'Germanic' grave-goods and *Grubenhäuser* prompted Eagles (2001: 217) to conjecture that an 'immigrant community was planted there, at the limit of territory newly acquired in the late fifth century, perhaps to mark its new "ownership"'. Yet as Sam Lucy (2000: 168) and Simon Draper (2006: 39) have warned, it is hazardous to make ethnic inferences from artefactual evidence or even from building traditions, and as Hamerow (1997: 33) has commented, 'few archaeologists would argue that all, or even the great majority, of the people who lived in "Anglo-Saxon houses" were in fact Germanic immigrants or the direct descendants of immigrants'. That is not to say, however, that settlement continuity between the Romano-British and 'Early Saxon' periods at Grove Farm can be taken for granted.

On **Strawberry Hill**, at the eastern end of a Grey Chalk ridge, overlooking Market Lavington from c. 2.5km to the southeast, a few sporadic finds, including a black glass bead, a sword, and human bone, were made during the first half of the nineteenth century (Cunnington 1933: 172). A probable barrow (WSHER ST95SE603) has been identified on the false crest of the western slope which overlooks Market Lavington, and although the precise locations of the early medieval findspots are unknown, it could be speculated that the finds were associated with burials in such a barrow, which was perhaps visible from the settlement below. As the finds have only been broadly dated to the fifth to eighth centuries, however, it is impossible to determine how any potential burials relate temporally to the settlement at Market Lavington.

A further 9km to the west, an inhumation accompanied by an axe and a sword was found by Jeffery Whittaker within a possible bowl barrow at the southern entrance to **Bratton Castle** hillfort, at the top of the White Chalk escarpment at 220m aOD. Whittaker's excavations at Bratton Castle in the eighteenth century are thought to be some of the earliest in Wiltshire, and the recording was, at

best, limited. Cunnington later found three skeletons near the surface of a long barrow in the centre of the hillfort, about 150m to the northwest, although no dating evidence was recovered (Hoare 1812: 55). The location is similar to that of Barbury Castle.

Bourne valley and downland to east

Moving to the far east of the *pays*, a community cemetery and at least two isolated burial sites have been identified in the Bourne valley and on higher ground to the east.

Together with Market Lavington, **Collingbourne Ducis**, is one of two excavated 'Early-Middle Saxon' cemeteries in the county located close to a contemporary settlement, although the pre-eighth-century settlement evidence is fairly limited (Ginghell 1978). A series of four radiocarbon dates recovered from the site provided eighth- to tenth-century dates for most of the features, while one slightly earlier structure was dated to between the seventh and ninth centuries, suggesting that more extensive preceding settlement may have been located to the north and west (Pine 2001: 110-14). The cemetery seems to have served a community of average wealth and status, although a probable bed burial intimates a higher status for at least one individual. Collingbourne Ducis and Collingbourne Kingston seem to form a 'topographically coherent valley-unit', perhaps a discrete *regio*, which may have formed part of a possible seventh-century sub-kingdom centred on Bedwyn (Draper 2006: 57-8; Pitt 1999: 134-5).

Around 5km south of Collingbourne Ducis, the estates of North and South Tidworth belonged to the hundreds of Amesbury and Andover respectively (Munby 1982; Thorn and Thorn 1979), although they have since been united to form the civil parish of Tidworth, in the modern county of Wiltshire. The site on **Warren Hill**, South Tidworth, thus lies in the historic county of Hampshire, but as previously mentioned, it will be discussed in this chapter as it is situated within 200m of the historic county boundary and within Salisbury Plain *pays*. In 1992, human remains were discovered by soldiers on a small spur of Warren Hill at 170m aOD, and excavations carried out at the site by Roy Entwistle and students from the University of Reading in the same year revealed the inhumations of four adult males with weapons (Nenk *et al.* 1993: 287). The individuals lay side by side in the same grave, and were considered to have

been buried at the same time. The burials were deemed by Härke and Entwistle (2002) to date from the middle of the sixth century, although the date could conceivably range from the late fifth to the early seventh century. The grave had suffered considerable disturbance by a modern military trench, and was situated at the northern end of a Roman or prehistoric lynchet which formed part of an extensive field system. This is the only quadruple weapon burial known from fifth- to seventh-century England (Härke and Entwistle 2002: 50). Williams (2006: 190) has commented that given the 'collective' nature of the grave, the possibility that the burials relate to an episode of conflict, or inter-community violence, is not unfeasible.

An extended south-north inhumation, accompanied by an iron knife, spearhead and unidentified iron object burial was discovered in 1987, 'in the side of a military trench cut into a round barrow at South Tedworth on the edge of Salisbury Plain' (NMR SU 24 NW 64), but the precise location is uncertain. It is possible that the barrow in question is the one 160m to the south of the previous site, also on Warren Hill (WSHER SU24NW683), although Härke and Entwistle (2002: 50) state that it is unexcavated.

On **Perham Down** in North Tidworth, 1.2km northeast of Warren Hill at 140m aOD, the inhumation burial of an adult male, accompanied by a split-socketed spearhead and a 'mammiform' shield boss, was found in 1939 (Stevens 1942). The shape of the shield-boss suggests a seventh century or later date (Dickinson and Härke 1992). A prehistoric ditch runs southwest-northeast, passing the site less than 500m to the east. First marked as 'Ditch' on the 1924 1:2500 OS map although the line of it is drawn on earlier maps. Given the considerable distance from the ditch and the burial site, however, there may only be a coincidental association between the two.

A probable 'Middle Saxon' settlement or farmstead in use over several generations has been located in the Bourne valley, within a bend in the river, 1.6km west of Perham Down (WSHER SU24NW401). Evidence for iron working was also recovered.

Watershed between the Bourne and the Avon

Two sites have been located on higher ground west of the River Bourne and east of the Salisbury Avon, both of which are associated with distinctive and prominent bell barrows and involve interments accompanied by weapons.

A bell barrow on **Silk Hill**, Milston, was excavated by Hoare, who described it as ‘the loftiest and most conspicuous tumulus on the hill’ (Hoare 1812: 194). It was found to contain an inhumation, thought to be intrusive, accompanied by a spearhead, probably dating from the fifth or sixth century. Three further skeletons were found in 1941 close to the surface of a barrow on Silk Hill, although it is possible that they came from a bowl barrow 250m to the east (WSHER SU14NE729), which would imply that more than one mound in the group had been reused. The barrow group sits at 140m aOD on a ridge which forms the watershed between the Avon and the Nine Mile River, the latter of which rises at the eastern foot of Silk Hill and joins the Avon at Bulford. The site lies close to the projected line of the *Sorviodunum–Cunetio* Roman road (Margary 44), which possibly corresponds with the modern road marked on the 1:25,000 OS map as ‘The Old Marlborough Road’.

On **Boscombe Airfield**, 7km south of Silk Hill, another bell barrow was found to contain probable secondary interments, accompanied by a socketed spearhead, a bronze belt-hook, iron shears and a small bronze finger ring, when it was levelled in 1930 (Newall 1931). The barrow lay at 114m aOD, on the boundary between the parishes of Amesbury and Idmiston and the hundreds of Amesbury and Alderbury.

Salisbury Avon valley

Six sites lie alongside the Avon, or on the valley sides within 1km of the river. At the southernmost site in the Salisbury Plain *pays*, in the hamlet of **Lake, Woodford Valley**, a waterlogged fifth- to early sixth-century burial was discovered during a watching brief by Wessex Archaeology relating to the construction of an amenity lake (McKinley 2003). The inhumation of a 20-25 year-old female, which lay beneath a grave cover of fourteen oak timbers, was radiocarbon dated to AD 450–610 (95% probability). The site lies at 60m aOD on alluvial deposits, 50m from the western banks of the Avon and 6km

upstream from Old Sarum. The burial was orientated south-north, and was fully prone. The practice of pronation occurs in almost all periods and traditions, and has attracted a variety of possible interpretations, including the superstitious prevention of revenantism, perhaps due to the perception that the deceased held supernatural powers or that they were in some way dangerous, even in death (cf. Reynolds 2009: 68-76). Individuals to have received this burial treatment include possible examples of 'cunning women' or practitioners of folk magic, although these are usually accompanied by a range of amuletic grave-goods (Dickinson 1993a; Geake 2003; Meaney 1981). Alternative explanations for pronation, such as a belief in the necessity of journeying into the underworld after death, are also conceivable. Although Margaret Faull (1977: 9) has suggested that pronation could represent an indicator of British identity, it would be unwise in this case to speculate on the cultural allegiance of the individual, in the absence of any other diagnostic evidence. Prone burial is, however, one of the traits identified by Cooke (1998: 250) and Philpott (1991) as possible markers of paganism in late Roman cemeteries, together with decapitation, the positioning of coins in the mouth, and hobnail footwear.

As McKinley (2003: 15) observed, the spiritual connotations of the watery place and the liminal location of the Lake burial site are potentially significant. It is situated between two probable fording places: *Wiflesford* (Wilsford), 'Wifel's ford', and *Diarneford* (Durnford), 'secret or hidden ford' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 326, 363, 372). Bridges or fords were central to the 'Anglo-Saxon' cognitive landscape, as evidenced archaeologically by ritually deposited weapons close to such features (Lund 2010: 55). Such places had layered meanings in Scandinavian mythology, representing an interface between the realms of the living and the dead (Lund 2010: 54-5). River cults were also an important Romano-Celtic tradition: Gildas wrote that the Romano-British once 'heaped divine honours' on 'mountains, hills and rivers' (*DEB* 4, 2-3). A range of Roman material found in natural bodies of water, such as rivers and bogs, is increasingly being viewed as votive in nature (Hutton 2011: 3). Evidence for Romano-British settlement in the immediate area of Lake is, however, remarkably absent. Four Bronze Age bowl barrows are located within 300m of the site, but intrusive barrow burial was not chosen as the medium for this burial.

At **West Chisenbury**, the northernmost site along the Avon within Salisbury Plain *pays*, an extended burial accompanied by an iron spearhead was found in a shallow grave in 1928 (Cunnington 1930: 84), and other burials were apparently discovered nearby (Meaney 1964: 267). The site lies on river gravel deposits at 90m aOD, 50m west of the Avon, in a remarkably similar topographic position to Lake, Woodford Valley. West Chisenbury was formerly a detached tithing of Netheravon, while East Chisenbury, on the opposite bank of the river, represented the Domesday manor of Chisenbury (Crowley 1980). Excavations close to a probable Roman villa at Compton, just over 1km to the south-southeast, produced organic-tempered sherds which could be 'Early Saxon' (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 109), while documentary evidence suggests that this was a populated and traversed landscape in the early medieval period. The modern A345 road, which passes close to this settlement site and the West Chisenbury burial site, may have early origins as a thoroughfare linking the Pewsey Vale and the lower Salisbury Avon valley, in between the two chalk masses on either side of the river (Crittall 1959).

The early tenth-century bounds of Enford (S427) refer to a *straet*, suggested by Grundy (1919: 232) to have been located on the southern boundary of the parish. The presence of the hamlet Longstreet—*Langestret* in 1242 (Gover *et al.* 1939: 329)—on the east bank of the Avon opposite Enford village, and Longstreet Down at the eastern end of the same tithing, supports the notion that a made-up road ran between the river and the eastern boundary of the estate. Alternatively, the place-name may refer to a road running parallel with the river, close to the hamlet of Longstreet. *Herepaðas* are also mentioned twice in the bounds. One of these probably ran along the northern boundary of East Chisenbury, northeast of Chisenbury Camp (Grundy 1919: 229), while a second, known as *ceaster herepað*, may have run along the eastern boundary of Enford, perhaps meeting the *Sorviodunum–Cunetio* Roman road east of Coombe Down. The morphology of the parishes suggests that this latter *herepað* also defined the eastern boundaries of Upavon, Manningford and Pewsey.

Five kilometres downstream from West Chisenbury and 500m east of the Avon, at 111m aOD on the south-facing slope of a spur, the single inhumation burial of a 'young person', with the head to the west, was found at a depth of 1.2m

below existing ground level at **Netheravon Airfield I** in October 1938 (Cunnington 1939). The only finds were 21 iron nails with wood adhering to them and a piece of iron, perhaps indicating the former presence of a wooden coffin. Cunnington (1939) remarked on the likelihood that a small barrow originally covered the grave, 'similar to that opened on King's Play Down, Heddington'. Although the site is not on a parish boundary, it did lie on the boundary between two Domesday manors, Choulston and Figheldean (Bonney 1976: 76-8; Crowley 1995: 106-10). Reynolds (2002: 181) has suggested that the combination of the boundary location and the wooden coffin is indicative of a dispossessed thegn.

Three hundred metres to the northwest, at **Netheravon Airfield II**, a burial had previously been discovered during the construction of cellars for the officers' mess on the same airfield in 1913. This burial lay at 113m aOD on the west-facing side of the same spur as Netheravon I, less than 250m east of the river and overlooking the valley. The inhumation was extended, at a depth of 60cm, head to the west, accompanied by a socketed spearhead, together with pieces of iron and rivets attached to a piece of wood, probably representing the remains of a shield. The site lies 50m south of the boundary between the parishes of Figheldean and Fittledon, and the hundreds of Amesbury and Elstub. The distance between Netheravon Airfield I and II is not excessive, and it is possible that they are part of the same cemetery, or that the two isolated burials are connected in some way.

One of most significant early medieval community cemetery sites excavated in Wiltshire in recent years is **Barrow Clump**, Figheldean, 2km southeast of Netheravon Airfield. As the site has been excavated to modern standards, and the foundation of the cemetery predates what is considered to be the main period of monument reuse, it has the potential to reveal valuable information about an earlier phase of the tradition of barrow appropriation. A bell barrow, situated at 110m aOD on the break of slope of a gentle spur overlooking the Avon valley, 1km east of the river and 2km west of Silk Hill, Barrow Clump is the only extant mound in a group of c. 20 round barrows in an area of c. 135,000m². The other barrows in the group are plough levelled, and have been detected by aerial photography and fluxgate magnetometer survey (Fig. 5.1.31).



This image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 5.1.31 Magnetometer plot revealing the barrow cemetery around Barrow Clump, Figcheldean (Payne 2004).

Barrow Clump was first excavated in the 1890s by Hawley, who found a crouched skeleton, beaker and flint dagger, which he interpreted as primary, three further crouched adult interments and one infant, interpreted as secondary Bronze Age (Hawley 1910). In 1935, a socketed iron spearhead was found in a 'rabbit scrape', implying an early medieval intrusive interment. Excavations in 2003-4 by English Heritage, as part of a project to investigate the effect of badger damage on ancient monuments, revealed thirteen inhumations in twelve graves (Last 2004; 2005). Twenty-five further graves were unearthed in 2012 and 22 in 2013, as part of Operation Nightingale, a project which uses archaeology as a means to aid the recovery of soldiers injured in recent conflicts (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013; P. Andrews *pers. comm.* 2013). This has brought the total number of excavated early medieval graves to 59, so far predominantly on the southern and eastern sides of the barrow (Fig. 5.1.32), and further excavations are scheduled for 2014. The geophysical survey of the surrounding barrow group also detected anomalies

which may represent graves in several of the levelled barrows (Payne 2004). It is possible that some represent primary early medieval barrows, or form part of an extended barrow cemetery. Barrow Clump has been protected from destruction by tree cover and by its prominence in the landscape.

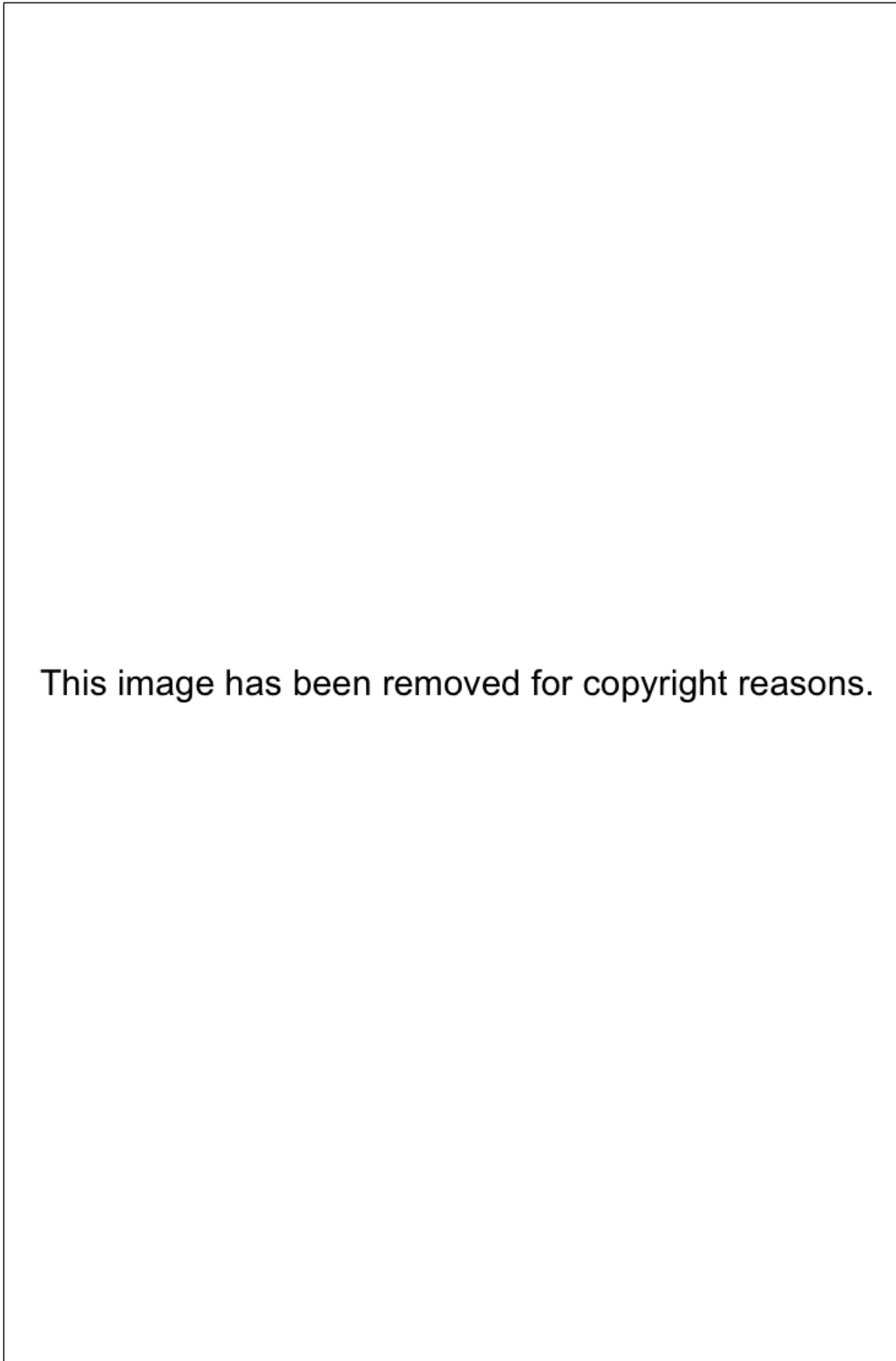


Fig. 5.1.32 Barrow Clump draft plan, last updated following the 2013 excavations (after P. Andrews *pers. comm.* 2013).

Grave-goods uncovered thus far suggest a sixth-century date for the early medieval burials, and mark Barrow Clump as broadly contemporary and comparable with other 'Early Saxon' cemeteries in southern Wiltshire, such as Petersfinger, Charlton Plantation, Collingbourne Ducis and Winterbourne Gunner. The lack of Kentish or Anglian material, however, suggests that wider links within southern England were fairly limited (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: 4, 17). Several relatively high-status burials were identified, such as a female with numerous items including a small square-headed brooch and two button brooches, within a possible coffin in Grave 2699, and a male with a bronze-bound bucket and spearhead in Grave 2668. Although none of the burials is likely to have been made before AD 500 (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: 18), numerous items of Romano-British manufacture, including a Colchester-type brooch and Trumpet brooch, both dating from the first or second century AD, and pierced Roman coins (Fig. 5.1.33), were recovered from a number of the graves.



Fig. 5.1.33 Pierced Roman coin found within an early medieval grave at Barrow Clump during the 2013 excavations (not to scale). Photo: author.

There is extensive evidence for Roman settlement in the Barrow Clump area. Five hundred metres to the south, on the opposite bank of the Avon, geophysical survey has revealed the plan of a corridor villa amongst multi-period features including another small group of round barrows (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 104-5), and excavation 150m east of the villa has uncovered extensive evidence for Romano-British settlement (Graham and Newman 1993; McKinley

1999b). It has been suggested that villas located within the river valleys on Salisbury Plain operated as estate centres for goods produced by agricultural villages on the downland (Fulford *et al.* 2006b: Chapter 7; McOmish *et al.* 2002), and Netheravon's role as an estate centre may have continued into the early medieval period. Within the hundred of Elstub, a minster is most likely to have been located at Netheravon, although as Pitt (1999: 94-6) has noted, the parish of Enford was the largest in the hundred, and its church also had early origins. Figheledean, probably 'Fyglā's valley' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 366), was in the hundred of Amesbury (Thorn and Thorn 1979), and was composed of six tithings, three on either side of the Avon. Barrow Clump lay in the southernmost tithing to the east of the river, which was known as Ablington, probably 'Ealdbeald's farm' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 366), in an open field recorded in 1790 as 'Barrow' field (Crowley 1995). 'Early Saxon' settlement evidence in the area is elusive, however, and the settlement associated with Barrow Clump may equally lie in the Avon valley or on the downland.

Stoodley (2007b) carried out a tentative analysis of the social context of the cemetery, after a small sample of graves had been excavated. As a reasonable proportion of the potential extent of the cemetery has now been revealed, some notable patterns in the grave arrangement are beginning to emerge, although it will be possible to ascertain a more accurate picture once analysis of the 2013 finds, and any further discoveries in 2014, has been completed. Particularly intriguing are the possible relationships—chronologically and socially—between the individuals buried in the berm and those buried in the barrow ditch (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: 28). A higher proportion of graves are aligned with the ditch than perpendicular to it, and the latter appear to be clustered in the southeastern part of the barrow (Fig. 5.1.34), on the opposite side to the village of Figheledean. Half of the burials excavated in 2012 were accompanied by grave-goods. A notable cluster of burials without grave-goods was located the berm, perhaps representing later additions, or a group belonging to a different social status or funerary tradition (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: 27). Sixteen of the burials have been identified as female and ten as male, while a further eight are juvenile or infant burials. A line of weapon burials aligned with the ditch can also be identified.

Five kilometres downstream from Figheldean, in **London Road, Amesbury**, several burials with knives or seaxes were found during road widening before c. 1835, although no additional details are known (WSHER SU14SE400). Further burials likely to date from the period of study have also recently been excavated in Amesbury (P. Andrews *pers. comm.* 2013).

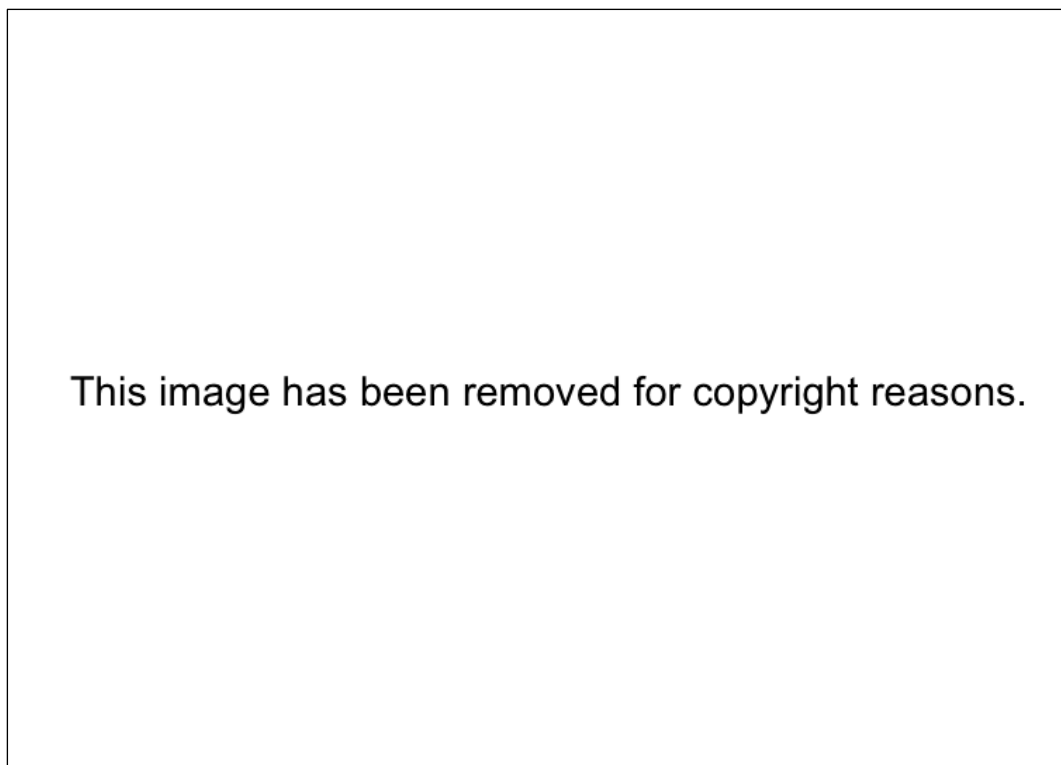


Fig. 5.1.34 Early medieval graves excavated at Barrow Clump, up to and including 2012 (after DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: Fig. 3).

Downland between the Salisbury Avon and the Till

In a more elevated position on open downland, 12.5km northwest of Amesbury, **Eil Barrow**, Wilsford, is a large isolated long barrow near the southern end of a north-south ridge, from which a chain of smaller ridges and coombes extend perpendicularly. Excavations by Thurnam (1869: 196) revealed the apparently unaccompanied extended inhumation of a 'large male', 30-60cm from the surface, with a possible sword cut in the skull. Hoare (1812: 175) commented on the aptness of the 'ancient British title of Eil', which he considered to signify 'conspicuous', and remarked that he knew of 'no single object in this wild district, which so generally attracts the eye at a distance'. The barrow is first mentioned only in the fourteenth century as *Ellebergh* (Gover *et al.* 1939: 326), and may derive from 'elder-tree barrow' or a personal name. It lies on the

boundary between the hundreds of Rowbury and Swanborough, and at the convergence of the parishes of Wilsford, Market Lavington, Tilshead and Charlton, as parts of these boundaries either follow the crest of the main ridge or terminate on it. The narrow strip tithings of Market Lavington extended from the low-lying gault and greensand vale in the northwest to the high downland in the southeast. Seasonal grazing on downland at the southeastern end of the parish, close to Ell Barrow, may be evidenced by the place-name Summer Down (Rippon 2012: 219). The barrow may therefore have been located adjacent to a transhumance route leading to and from this area of downland, which perhaps followed the ridge-top northwards to connect with a routeway along the top of the Salisbury Plain escarpment. Draper (2004: 56) has speculated that this was a 'Late Saxon' execution burial, due to the boundary location, cranial cut and absence of grave-goods, although such an interpretation is unlikely, given the investment of effort afforded in a secondary barrow burial.

A more convincing example of early medieval execution burial is known from **Stonehenge**, Amesbury, 10km south of Ell Barrow. A decapitated skeleton was excavated in 1923 by William Hawley within the monument and to the north of South Barrow (Pitts *et al.* 2002). The c. 28-32 year-old male had been decapitated by a single blow from the rear-right, and had been placed in a tight grave. Although the remains had been presumed lost throughout most of the twentieth century, they were rediscovered in 1999 and radiocarbon analysis conducted in 2001 produced a seventh-century date (Pitts *et al.* 2002). Subsequent retesting, however, gave a revised date of AD 660-890 (at 95% probability), which is more fitting for a 'deviant' interpretation (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). Reynolds (2009: 211) has speculated that the Stonehenge circles lay on the boundary between the hundreds of Wonderditch and Amesbury. Yet the boundary between the parish of Amesbury and the tithing of Normanton—part of Wilsford parish but in Amesbury hundred—lay 800m to the south of Stonehenge (Crowley 1995). The hundred boundary is therefore likely to have been sited 1.5km south of Stonehenge, following the boundary between Normanton and Durnford.

In a similar topographic position to Stonehenge, c. 2.4km to the southwest, in **Lake Field**, Wilsford (a different parish to that in which Ell Barrow is located, but

of the same derivation), a burial with a spearhead, probable shield boss and knife was found in one of the Lake Barrow Group round barrows prior to 1763. The precise location and barrow type are uncertain, however.

A small disc barrow known as **Winterbourne Stoke II**, part of the extensive Winterbourne Stoke Group (Fig. 5.1.35), was opened by Hoare (1812: 119), revealing a stone cist which contained a few fragments of bone and a glass bead. The bead was described as similar to a 'Saxon' one found by Pitt Rivers at Winkelbury Hill (see below), and the barrow displayed evidence of having been previously opened or robbed, raising the possibility that the cist once contained an early medieval secondary interment (Cherryson 2005b: 185). The disc barrow lies at 115m aOD on the west-facing slope of a hill overlooking the Till valley.



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Fig. 5.1.35 Winterbourne Stoke Barrow Group (Hoare 1812: 120-1), with Winterbourne Stoke III bell barrow marked by author. Winterbourne Stoke II is to the north of the uppermost barrow.

Six hundred metres to the south-southwest, at 106m aOD on a ridge which extends in a southwesterly direction from the same hill, lies **Winterbourne**

Stoke III bell barrow. Here, five or more undated secondary inhumations, interpreted as early medieval, in addition to a 'primary' cremation, were also found by Hoare (1812: 122). The barrow is located on the boundary between the parishes of Winterbourne Stoke, Wilsford and Durnford, and at the convergence of the hundreds of Dolesfield, Amesbury and Wonderditch. Many of the estates in the hundred of Dolesfield, or the southern Till valley catchment area, were referred to simply as *Wintreburne* in DB (Thorn and Thorn 1979). Winterbourne Water was the former name of this river, which was later renamed in reference to the village of Tilshead, *Theodulveside* in DB (Gover *et al.* 1939: 10, 236). It has been conjectured (e.g. Draper 2006: 57, 69; Pitt 1999: 71) that the Winterbourne or Till valley formed a discrete fifth- or sixth-century estate or *regio*. Pitt (1999: 71) has suggested that the *stoc* affix indicates that Winterbourne Stoke was the 'holy place' of this estate.²

Till valley

A disc barrow denominated **Winterbourne Stoke I** is located 2.5km west of the main Winterbourne Stoke Group, on the western side of the Till valley at 95m aOD. The barrow was excavated by Cunnington and Hoare, revealing a primary cremation and an intrusive inhumation accompanied by a probable early medieval knife (Hoare 1812: 113). This single utilitarian grave-good suggests a seventh-century date, but whether the burial can be considered culturally 'Anglo-Saxon' on the basis of this item is questionable.

Shrewton, in the parish of Maddington, was also referred to as *Wintreburne* in DB. Here, 60m south of the boundary with Orcheston St George (part of Heytesbury hundred at Domesday), an extended skeleton, accompanied by a knife, 'drinking cup' and bronze girdle ornaments, was found when a windmill was erected at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Hoare 1812: 174). In 1968, the inhumation of a 45- to 50-year-old woman, with an early seventh-century gold bracteate, was uncovered during rescue excavations (Smith 1969: 128). The site lies at 107m aOD on a spur, 300m from the Till. A *herestret* is mentioned in the undated bounds of Addestone, the southern part of Maddington (S1589). This road forms part of the eastern boundary and almost

² The possible religious connotations of the OE element *stoc* have been discussed by A.H. Smith (1956: 153-6).

certainly corresponds with the modern B3083, which continues south, passing 450m to the west of Winterbourne Stoke I. At **Elston**, another Domesday *Wintreburne*, two skeletons and an early medieval knife were discovered in 1856 (Cunnington 1933: 168; Robinson 1987). This site lies 900m north of the Shrewton burials, on the opposite side of the Till and at a similar altitude.

Five kilometres northwest of Elston and Shrewton, **Tilshead Lodge Long Barrow** is located at 130m aOD, on the slope of a spur which rises to the west of the source of the Till. The barrow was excavated by Hoare (1812: 91-2), who revealed a superficial west-east inhumation at the eastern end, and later by Thurnam (1869: 196), who located another shallow west-east burial towards the centre of the mound, with grave-goods including a shield boss and mountings, and a copper alloy-bound wooden bucket. These grave-goods suggest a late sixth- to early eighth-century date, and it is possible that the two inhumations are contemporary with each other.

Chitterne valley

West of and parallel with the Till is the Chitterne Brook, a seasonal watercourse which joins the Wylfe at Codford, and which may contain the Brittonic element *ceto*, 'wood' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 163). A barrow group known as the Ashton Valley Barrow Cemetery originally comprised ten bowl barrows and a bell barrow, all of which were originally excavated by Cunnington and Hoare in 1801, but are nearly all now ploughed out. The barrows were located in the parish of Codford St Peter, at c. 100m aOD on the south-facing slope of Codford Down, west of the Chitterne. In a possible early medieval bowl barrow denominated **Codford 1b**, a north-south inhumation was located in the remains of a wooden coffin, within a large cist (Hoare 1812: 78). Another bowl barrow, of probable prehistoric but possible early medieval construction, known as **Codford 6**, contained an extended skeleton accompanied by a firwood bucket with copper alloy strips and a possible spearhead (Hoare 1812: 78).

Downland between the Ashton and the Wylfe

A long barrow known as **Bowl's Barrow**, Heytesbury, sits in a very similar topographic position to Ell Barrow, at the meeting point of several ridges and at a considerable altitude (189m aOD). This barrow was excavated by William

Cunnington senior in 1801 (Hoare 1812: 87), by Thurnam in 1864 (Thurnam 1869), and by William Cunnington junior in 1885-6 (Cunnington 1888). Near the east end at a depth of about 85cm, Cunnington senior found a southwest-northeast skeleton with a bronze buckle and a few pieces of bronze, and towards the centre, two further burials, with the heads to the south. Although the barrow was not on an ecclesiastical parish boundary, the morphology of the neighbouring parishes and the topography suggest that an estate boundary previously ran through or past the barrow (Southall and Burton 2004). A *bodelusburgge*, which may represent Bowl's Barrow, is mentioned in 968 in the bounds of Edington (S765). The site lies 500m from the hundred boundary with Warminster. Aside from the possible boundary location, and similarities with Ell Barrow, there are no indicators of deviancy, although another long barrow, Knook Barrow, located 2.5km to the southeast, was found to contain four headless superficial interments (Cunnington 1933: 164).

Wylve valley, north of the river

A massive long barrow known as **King Barrow**, Warminster, which lies in the shadow of Battlesbury and Scratchbury hillforts, was the second long barrow to be opened by Cunnington in 1800 (Eagles and Field 2004: 64; Hoare 1812: 72). The barrow occupies the edge of a low bluff at 127m aOD, 380m north of the Wylve and less than 50m from the boundary with the parish of Bishopstrow. Three southwest-northeast orientated skeletons, one accompanied by a probable seventh-century sword, were found to have disturbed an earlier cremation.

About 2.8km southeast of King Barrow and about the same distance north of the Wylve as the previous site, at **Newtown Plantation**, Heytesbury, three skulls and a headless skeleton were found in 1952 during the construction of a house on behalf of Lord Heytesbury. On the pelvis of the skeleton was a sixth- or seventh-century iron buckle. The skulls had been placed in a pit in the chalk about 3m east of the northwest corner of the house, and the skeleton was a further 8m to the north-northwest. The site lies just a few metres from the boundary with the parish of Norton Bavant, and between the hundreds of Heytesbury and Warminster, near the foot of the steep south-facing slope of Cotley Hill which leads down to the Wylve. The burials have been interpreted by

Draper (2004: 56) as belonging to an execution cemetery, although the date of the buckle, if correct, would make it an unusually early example of such a site.

Summary: Salisbury Plain

On the downland in this *pays*, numerous weapon burials of the fifth and sixth centuries, inserted into prominent prehistoric round barrows (particularly bell barrows), have been identified. In the valleys, such burials are also found in the absence of barrows, some of which lie on boundaries. Unaccompanied or sparsely furnished secondary round barrow interments on boundaries are also located near watersheds and boundaries. The two unaccompanied burials in long barrows high on the downland (Ell Barrow and Bowl's Barrow), may date from later in the period of study, or as Draper (2004: 56) has espoused, could conceivably be 'Late Saxon' and thus postdate the period of study. The community cemetery at Barrow Clump, on the slopes of the Avon valley, is likely to have been an important focal point in the landscape.

South Wiltshire Downs

Separated from Salisbury Plain by the Wylde in the west, and the watershed north of the Bourne in the east, this *pays* has revealed the most extensive evidence for burial during the period of study in Wiltshire, contributing 32 sites to the dataset (Fig. 5.1.36).

Wylde valley, south of the river

Located just metres from the Wylde, **Sherrington Long Barrow** sits on river terrace deposits at 83m aOD, on the opposite side of the river to and potentially intervisible with Codford 1b and 6. It was excavated by Cunnington in 1804 (Hoare 1812: 100; Lambert 1806b), and by Thurnam and the Rev. Fane in 1856, although no records of this latter excavation survive (Eagles and Field 2004: 58). In the centre of the barrow at a depth of 45cm (point 'B' on Fig. 5.1.37), Cunnington found a west-east interment with a spearhead, and below point 'C' at the same depth, another west-east skeleton with a double-edged sword, spear, shield boss, knife and buckle. To the east of this skeleton were two others; an adult and a child, with a small knife and a piece of lead. Further burials, possibly four, were found later by Thurnam.

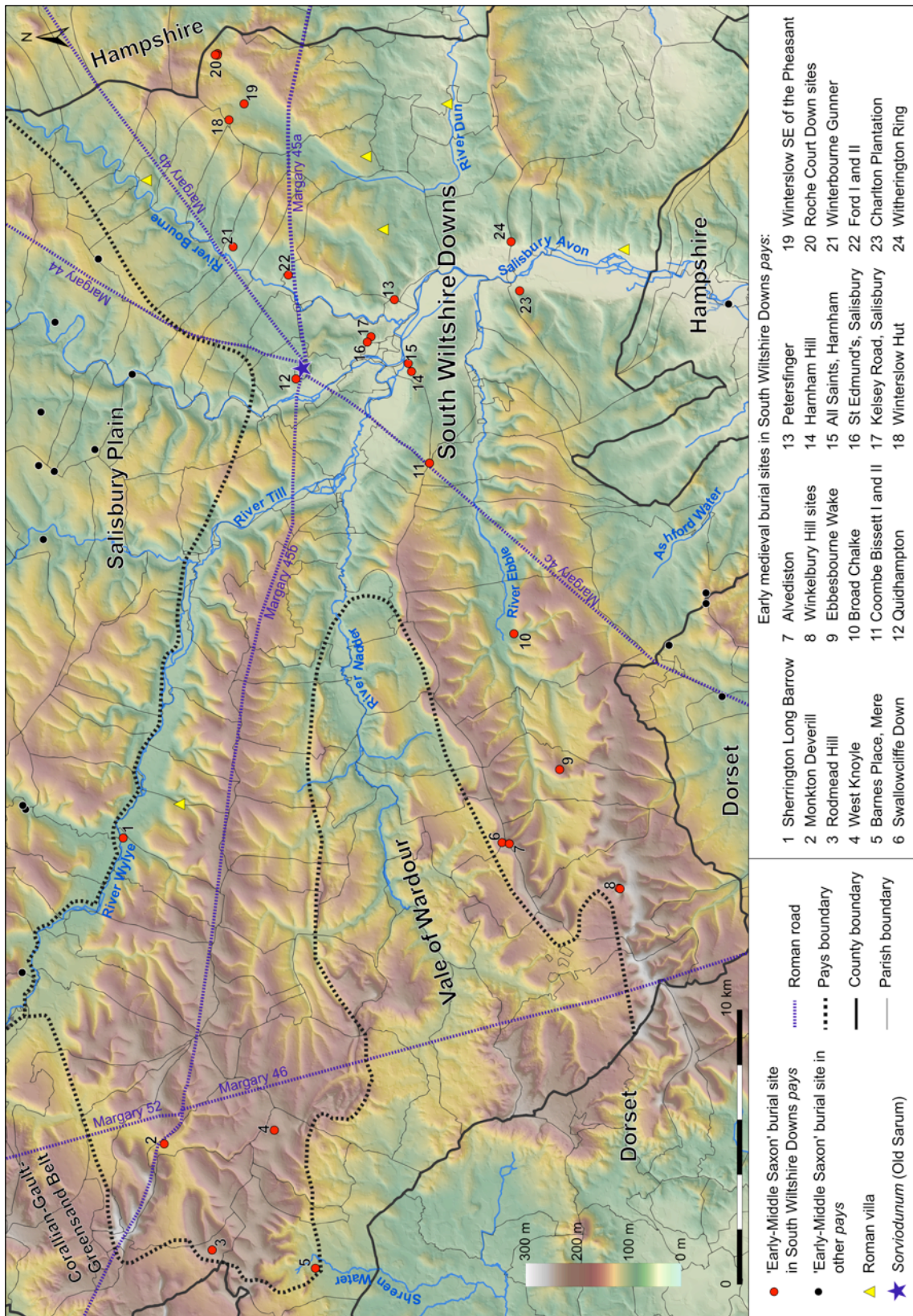


Fig. 5.1.36 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, Roman villas and small towns, in the South Wiltshire Downs pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

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Fig. 5.1.37 Watercolour of Sherrington Long Barrow and associated finds, by Philip Crocker (Lambert 1806b).

While long barrows are typically found on valley slopes or ridge-tops, as Eagles and Field (2004: 61) have noted, the siting of these monuments on Salisbury Plain appears remarkably riverine. Sherrington derives from *Scearntune*, ‘mud or dung farm’ (Gover *et al.* 1939: 229), which may be a reference to the waterlogged, boggy terrain of the area immediately south of the Wylfe. The long barrow is not mentioned in the tenth-century bounds of Sherrington (S766), and *Mædenbeorge* is likely to denote Boyton Long Barrow on the western boundary. A routeway referred to as *wille weg*, ‘spring or Wylfe way’, passes 175m to the east of Sherrington Long Barrow, crossing the river at *Odenford*, ‘Oda’s ford’, in the northeastern corner of the estate. The river also forms the boundary with Codford parish, and the border between Heytesbury and Branchbury hundreds; Sherrington was a detached part at of the latter hundred at Domesday. Eagles (2004: 238) has also speculated that the Wylfe formed the northern boundary of the Durotriges. It is debatable, however, whether such divisions have still been relevant by the seventh century, and a folk territory of the ‘people of the Wylfe’, i.e. of the valley catchment area, is more feasible.

'Deverill' valley and downland to the south

At **Monkton Deverill**, fifteen inhumations were uncovered during a watching brief for the construction of the Codford-Ilchester pipeline in 1989-90, although the full extent of the cemetery is unlikely to have been revealed (Fig. 5.1.38; Rawlings 1995). The site sits at 130m aOD on a low bluff, just over 250m east of the Wylve and near the edge of the floodplain. The immediate underlying geology is superficial deposits of thick calcareous clay with lenses of chalky gravel. A ring-ditch encircled an undated primary burial in Grave 736, upon which the grave of a partially flexed secondary juvenile burial [733] had been superimposed. The latter burial was accompanied by the only grave-good—a seventh-century knife—and was orientated northeast-southwest with the head to the northeast. The remainder of the graves were orientated with the head to the west/southwest, and were probably broadly contemporary with 733.

Some graves had partial stone linings, and blocks of masonry 'almost certainly reused from a nearby Romano-British building' (Draper 2006: 153). The cemetery thus exhibits characteristics of sub-Roman cemeteries in western Wessex (Petts 2004; Rahtz 1977). The question remains, however, as to whether it should be interpreted as belonging to the 'Christianizing phase of English mortuary practice' (Rahtz 1977: 53), e.g. Winnall II (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), or the 'British' sub-Roman tradition, e.g. Cannington (Rahtz *et al.* 2000). The ring-ditch is more suggestive of the former group, although it is possible that it represents a Roman barrow. It is not known how long after the construction of the barrow the secondary burial was made, but another grave [759] is partially cut into the fill of the ditch, and is therefore considerably later.

The Roman road known as Margary 45b crossed the Wylve at Monkton Deverill, and was traversed by another Roman road (Margary 46/52 between *Aquae Sulis* and *Vindocladia*), c. 1.3km southeast of the cemetery. An Iron Age and Romano-British temple was located on Cold Kitchen Hill, 1km to the northwest, which Eagles (2001: 214; 2004: 236) has speculated lay on or close to the boundary between the *civitates* of the Belgae and the Durotriges, and possibly also the Dobunni.

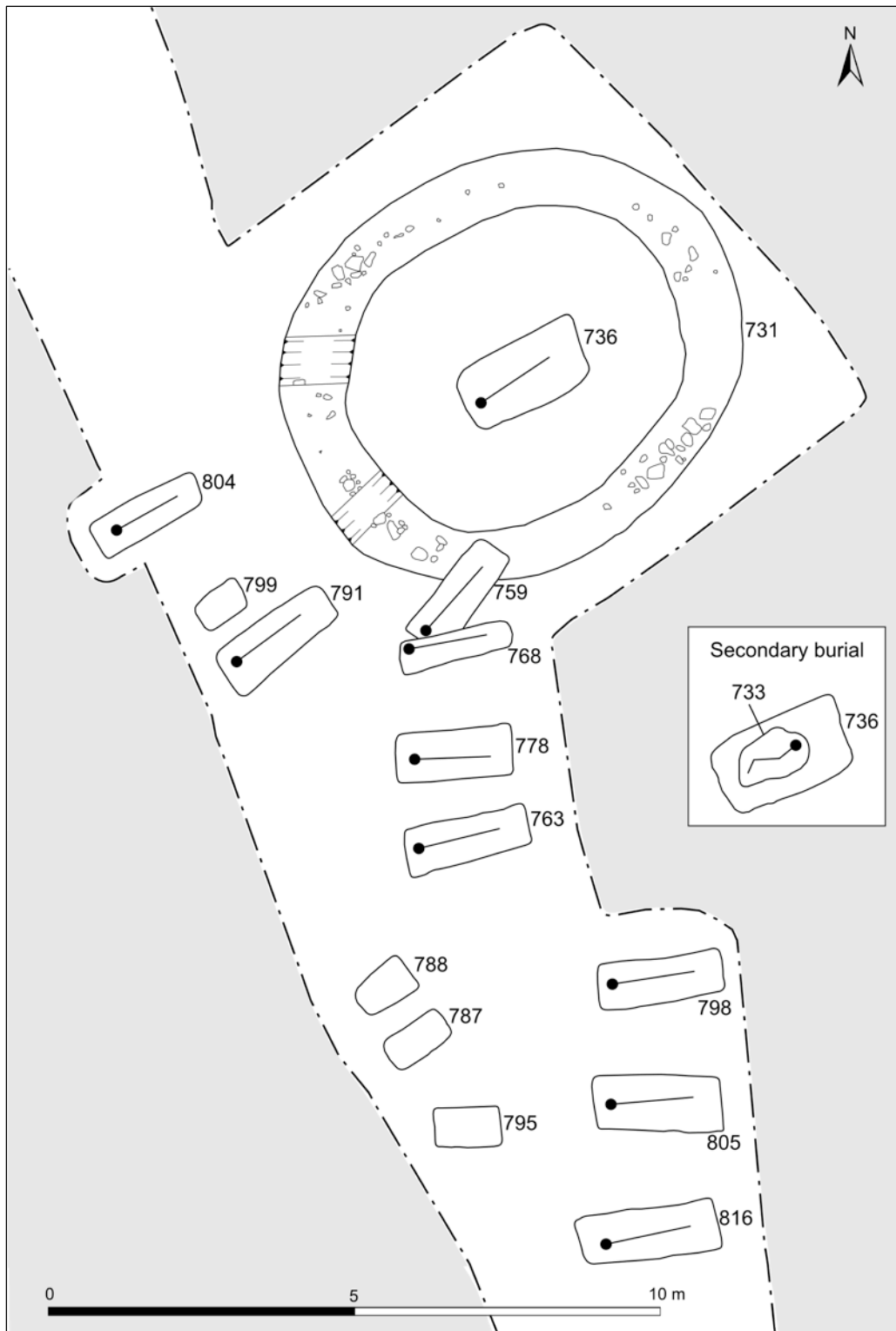


Fig. 5.1.38 Monkton Deverill cemetery, with schematic depictions of burial position (after Rawlings 1995: Fig. 3).

A saucer barrow, one of two on **Rodmead Hill**, Maiden Bradley, was excavated in 1807, revealing an extended inhumation, accompanied by a wood-bound bronze bowl, Group 7 'sugar-loaf' shield boss (Fig. 5.1.39), sword, two knives and two spearheads (Hoare 1812: 46-7, Plate IV). The finds date the burial to

the second half of the seventh century. The barrow sits at 228m aOD, on the broad, flat summit of the hill, 120m west of a prehistoric sub-oval enclosure (WSHER ST83NW645). It is also less than 500m northeast of the historic county boundary with Somerset. In another bowl barrow excavated by Hoare and Cunnington in 1807, at **West Knoyle**, the inhumation of a 'robust man', similarly with a 'sugar-loaf' shield boss, spearhead and knife was revealed (Hoare 1812: 48). The barrow, which lay at 205m aOD on a northeast-facing slope leading down to a shallow coombe, was the smaller of two adjacent mounds, and Grinsell (1957: 119) suggested that it may be of primary early medieval construction. Hoare (1812: 48) described the shield boss as 'exactly similar to the one before described on Rodmead down', and stated that 'the articles found in this barrow, as well as the mode of interment, mark it to be of the same era as the one at Rodmead'. Furthermore, at both of these sites, the barrow selected for intrusive interment was one of a pair. A ridgeway linked the two sites, alongside which lay a later prehistoric or Roman enclosure on Charnage Down (WSHER ST83SW625), similar in morphology to the enclosure on Rodmead Hill.

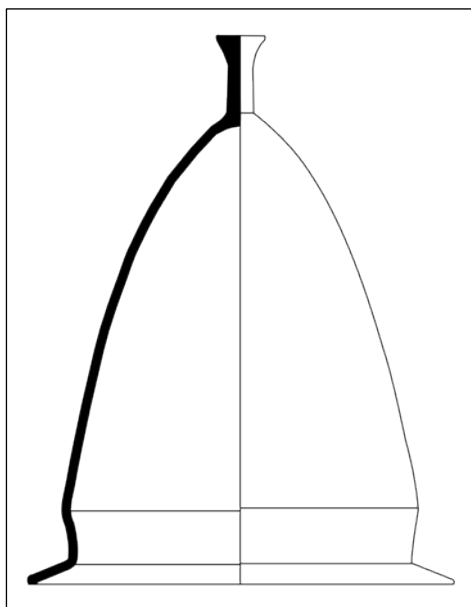


Fig. 5.1.39 Rodmead Hill 'sugar-loaf' shield boss (redrawn after Evison 1963: 85).

A burial was recorded during the refurbishment of a house at 9, **Barnes Place, Mere**, in 1995 (Wessex Archaeology 1995). The supine inhumation was orientated with the head to the west and was accompanied by grave-goods including a gold bracteate (similar to ones found at Shrewton and Harnham

Hill), two pendants, one with an inset garnet (similar to those found with the Roundway Hill 7 burial), and four glass beads. The grave-goods indicate a high-status seventh-century female burial. Part of a left mandible belonging to a second individual was found in 2007 and may suggest that it was part of a cemetery. The burial site lies just under 200m east of St Michael's Church. Although there is no unequivocal evidence for a minster at Mere, Pitt (1999: 59) has demonstrated that it has 'good evidence for superior status', some of which is 'early enough to suggest that both church and status date from the Saxon period'. Mere is located at the source of the Shreen Water, a tributary of the Stour in Dorset, and is in a similar topographic location to Tisbury, a known minster site (see below). The D-shaped outline of a possible early ecclesiastical enclosure or minster precinct, fossilised in the street and field plan, can be identified (Fig. 5.1.40).

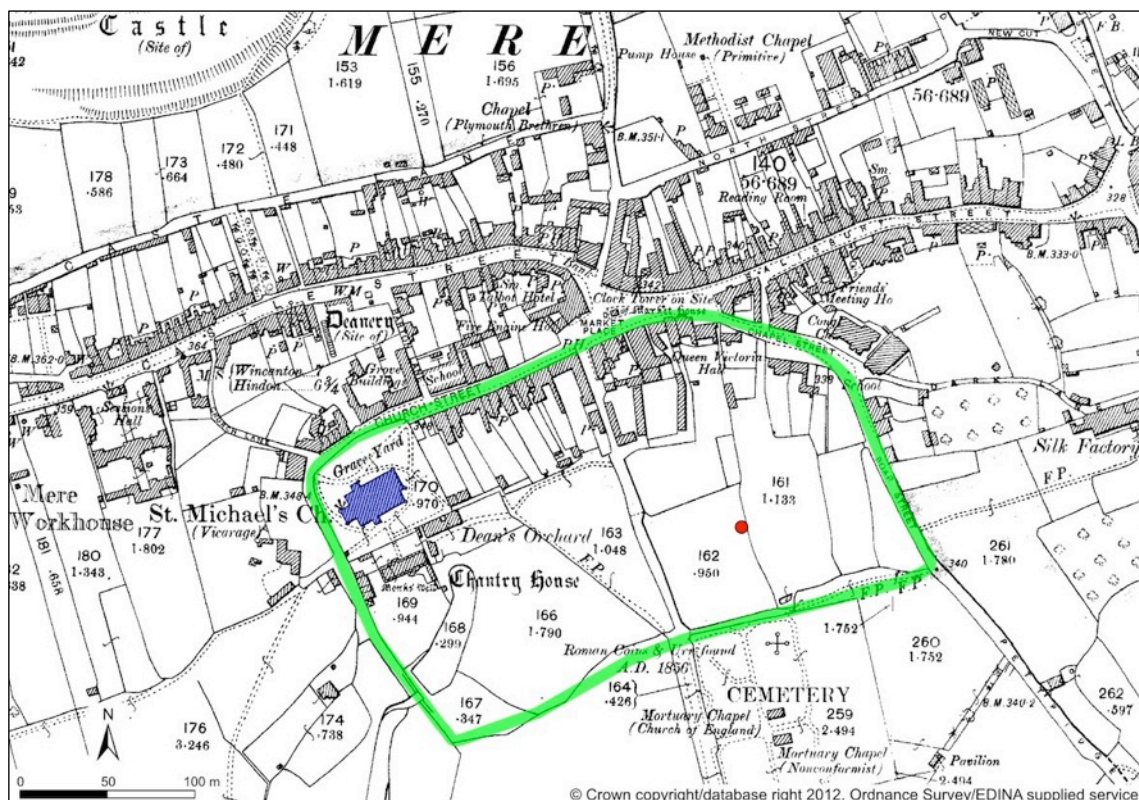


Fig. 5.1.40 First Revision (1901) OS map of Mere, with the Barnes Place burial site marked in red, the church in blue, and the postulated curvilinear enclosure in green.

The burial site and the church both lie within this postulated enclosure, while just to the south of it, a hoard of Roman denarii was found in 1856 (WSHER ST83SW301). Petts (2011: 108) has noted that high-status women of possible Christian identity tend to be buried outside of ecclesiastical centres in the

seventh century, although such isolated burials are nevertheless rare and should still be regarded as exceptional. The grave-goods accompanying the individual interred here demonstrate no explicit religious symbolism, however, and it would be unwise to attempt to assign her to a particular elite group.

Cranborne Chase and the Ebble valley

The high-status late-seventh-century female burial found within a Bronze Age barrow on **Swallowcliffe Down**, on the parish boundary between Ansty and Swallowcliffe, has already been discussed at length and with great effect (e.g. Speake 1989; Williams 2006: 27-35). Although it is unnecessary to repeat previously articulated arguments, the importance of the site necessitates its re-examination in the context of this thesis. Excavated in 1966 by Faith and Lance Vatcher, it remains one of the richest and most complex female burials yet discovered in Wessex. It should be considered in conjunction with the male burial within in a primary barrow at **Alvediston**, c. 250m to the south. In this low, ditched barrow, Clay (1926) found an extended inhumation accompanied by a spearhead, iron knife, Group 7 'tall straight cone' shield boss, thought to date from the second quarter of the seventh century (Dickinson and Härke 1992: 21), and part of a Kimmeridge shale bracelet, all of which showed signs of 'ritual fracture'. Clay (1926: 437) also reported that 'six very large blocks of flint' had been 'intentionally placed' on top of the skeleton and had crushed the skull. The burial was interpreted as primary, as Iron Age pottery was discovered under the floor of the barrow, which had also truncated an Iron Age cattle-way. The grave-goods suggest that this burial may be slightly earlier than the female burial.

The Swallowcliffe Down and Alvediston sites are located at 220m and 219m aOD respectively, on a prominent ridge which extends for more than 16km on a west-southwest to east-northeast alignment, forming the watershed between the Nadder and the Ebble (Fig. 5.1.41). The boundaries of several hundreds and various parishes respect this watershed: the northern boundary of Stowford hundred and of Bishopstone (a detached part of Downton hundred) follow the ridge-top, while parts of the southern boundaries of Dunworth and Cadworth hundreds, and of Compton Chamberlayne (a detached part of Damerham hundred), are also defined by it. The Ebble rises near the western boundary of

Alvediston, c. 2.5km south of the burial sites, although it is only a seasonal watercourse until it reaches Broad Chalke.

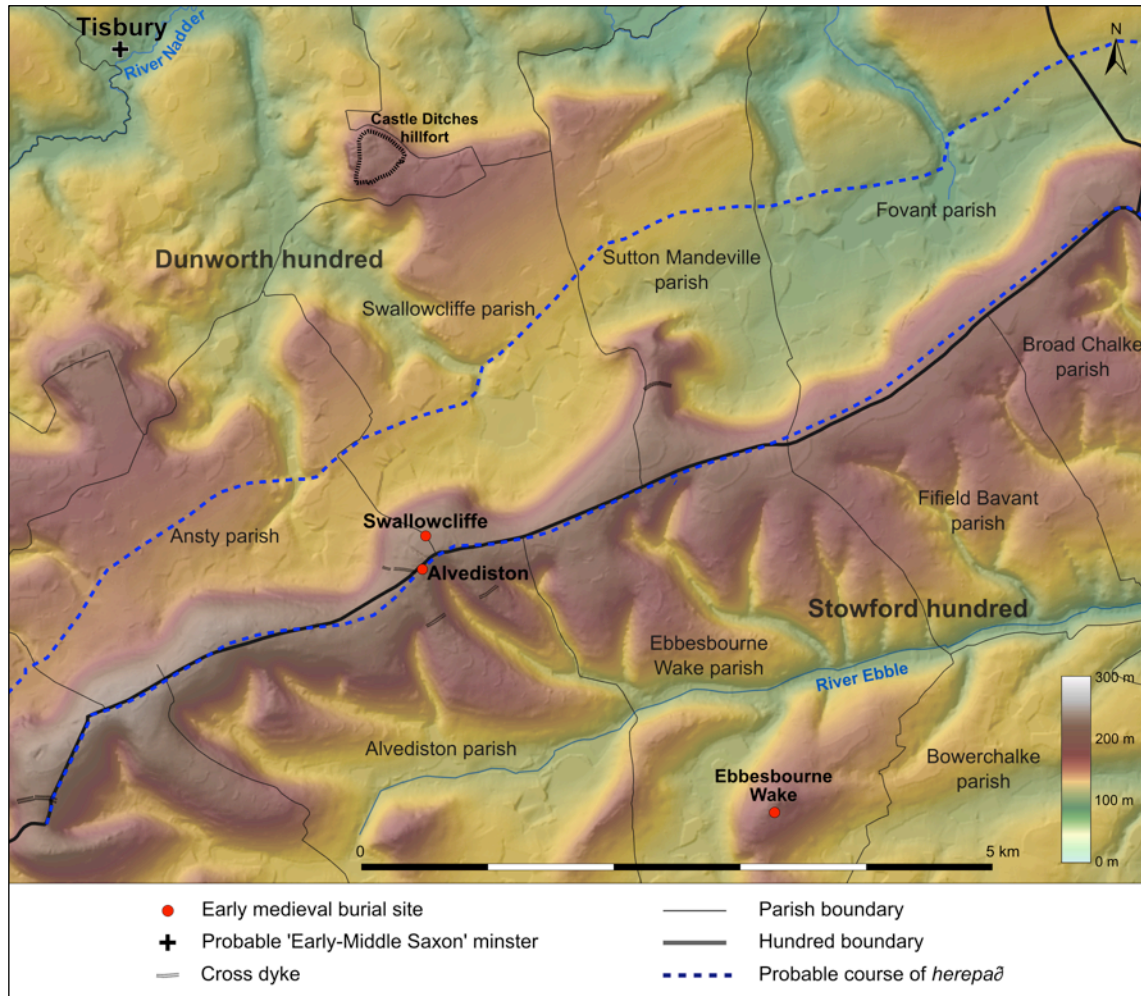


Fig. 5.1.41 Swallowcliffe Down and Alvediston (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The western Ebbles valley may be regarded as a potential 'early folk territory' or *regio*. Pitt (1999: 45) has demonstrated that the *parochia* of Broad Chalke was of considerable size, encompassing much of the Ebbles valley and perhaps the entire area that later became the hundred of Stowford. It is possible that such a 'folk territory' was analogous to this hundred, although as it only covers an area of just under 100km², it is perhaps more typical of a later 'great estate' (Hooke 1998: Figs. 18 and 21; Rippon 2012: 151). Eagles (2001: 213) has argued that the absence of pre-seventh-century finds implies that the western Ebbles valley remained in 'British' hands until this time. The parish boundaries within the Ebbles catchment area follow a regular pattern, incorporating both valley and downland. The Ackling Dyke Roman road is not respected by any of these

boundaries, except for part of the southern boundary of Broad Chalke. This could suggest that the Roman road postdates the territorial units, although it is more likely a reflection of the fact that the estates are arranged in order to incorporate a full range of terrain and resource types. Topographic features such as the river and the watershed, as well as differences in land-use potential, are likely to have had a long-standing influence on territorial divisions. From the Late Bronze Age, the Ebbles–Nadder ridge was modified by the construction of spur and cross-ridge dykes—short stretches of boundary which enhanced and worked with the topography to restrict access to parts of the landscape (Sharples 2010: 51).

The area centred around Tisbury, in the Nadder valley to the north, represents another possible *regio*. Although no archaeological confirmation has yet been found, Tisbury ‘has perhaps the best [documentary] evidence for the existence of a religious community in the early Saxon period’ (Pitt 1999: 50), as a charter dating from 759 (S1256), and the Life of St Boniface, written before 769 (Whitelock 1979: 778-82), both make explicit references to the presence of a minster there. As Blair (2005: 230) has noted, the woman interred at Swallowcliffe is of a similar age and status as the earliest noble abbesses. As Petts (2011: 107-8) has posited that elite Christian women, unlike their male counterparts, were largely buried outside church centres in the seventh century, and that burial rites were defined by gender rather than labels such as ‘secular’ or ‘ecclesiastical’. Although there is no direct connection with a holy order in this case, the influence of ecclesiastical agency as well as secular power is evident, notably the presence of a bronze sprinkler connected with liturgical practices. The pair of glass palm cups alone mark Swallowcliffe as exceptionally high-status, and the full suite of grave-goods displays wide ranging influences. The closest English parallel for the maplewood casket is from Finglesham, Kent, although similarities with Frankish examples can also be identified (Speake 1989: 30). Speake (1989: 125) argues that the sprinkler, which is paralleled in an example found in a Norwegian Viking grave, is unquestionably of Celtic manufacture. Prestige ‘Celtic’ items, notably hanging bowls, are frequently found in seventh- to early-eighth-century ‘Anglo-Saxon’ contexts, such as the wealthy male burial at Ford II (see below), and are likely to be of British rather than Irish manufacture (Geake 1999; Youngs 2009).

Williams (2006: 27-35) sees the Swallowcliffe burial site as a platform for a series of collective ritual acts and performances, of which the funeral was only one part, and unlikely to have been the last. As the area around the barrow has not been excavated, the presence of other graves around the monument cannot be ruled out (Williams 2006: 32). A spearhead found outside the grave, but apparently associated with the burial, could be a votive offering, suggesting that this was a site to visit and venerate. Part of the mid-tenth-century bounds of Swallowcliffe (S468) follow the ridgeway adjacent to the Alvediston burial, describing it as a *herpaþ*. The bounds then cite the Swallowcliffe barrow as *posses hlæwe*, perhaps 'Poss's barrow' in reference to a male landowner (Speake 1989: 122-3).

The interments were made at a time of kingdom formation and consolidation. It cannot be known whether the female individual was part of the West Saxon aristocracy or a local elite kin group, and it is hazardous to attempt to assign the burial to a particular group in the absence of more substantial evidence. Blair (2005: 230) has suggested that she was a transmitter of social ritual, and that her food vessel was symbolic of the hospitality of her household or kin group. Is it significant that she is on the Nadder/Tisbury side of the *herpaþ* and territorial boundary, while he is on the Ebble side? Was the Alvediston male burial deliberately placed on the 'wrong' side of the boundary, held down by heavy stones and with fractured grave-goods, as a symbol of his renunciation by a Nadder valley-based elite? He was perhaps considered in some way deviant, but still warranted a burial befitting of his status, and was thus covered by a low mound in the absence of any pre-existing barrows on the southern side of the boundary.

To the south of the Ebble, another ridge runs parallel with the Ebble–Nadder ridge. A prominent, steep-sided, downland spur projects northwards from this ridge, and an Iron Age hillfort or promontory fort known as Winkelbury Camp lies at its northern end (Fig. 5.1.42). Three hundred metres south of this hillfort, at 260m aOD on the summit of Winkelbury Hill, an early medieval cemetery and two barrows containing secondary early medieval inhumations were excavated by Pitt Rivers in the 1880s (Fig. 5.1.43).

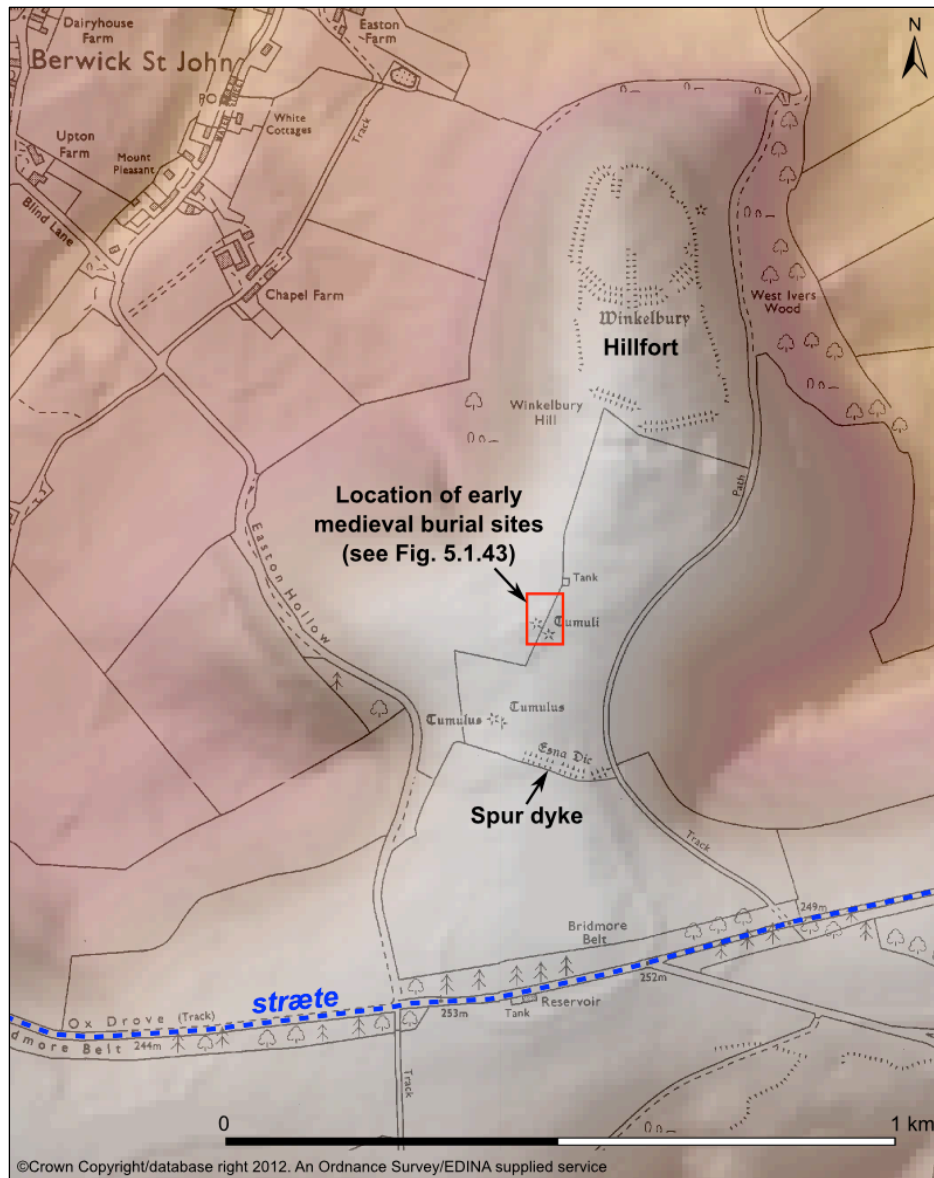


Fig. 5.1.42 Sites on Winkelbury Hill, Berwick St John.

The easternmost barrow, **Winkelbury Hill Barrow 1**, was the largest of the mounds and featured a ditch and causeway. It was found to contain a large west-east grave in a central position, a metre deep in the chalk (Pitt Rivers 1888). The grave had previously been robbed and the skeleton had been badly disturbed. At each corner of the grave were post-holes, perhaps relating to standing posts or markers of some description. At the undisturbed east end of the grave were fragments of iron which Pitt Rivers considered to be clamps from a coffin, although some of this metalwork exhibits similarities to the iron bed fittings found at Swallowcliffe Down. No prehistoric burial was found, but was implied by Bronze Age sherds within the mound and a bronze awl in the silting of the causeway across ditch and bank at east. **Winkelbury Hill Barrow**

2, a bowl barrow with a slight ditch and causeway, contained a grave paved with 'tabular flints', close to the surface and in a central position (Pitt Rivers 1888). Within the grave were two burials, one described as 'scattered through the soil', interpreted by Pitt Rivers as primary, and an extended west-east male interment with a tanged iron knife, interpreted as secondary.

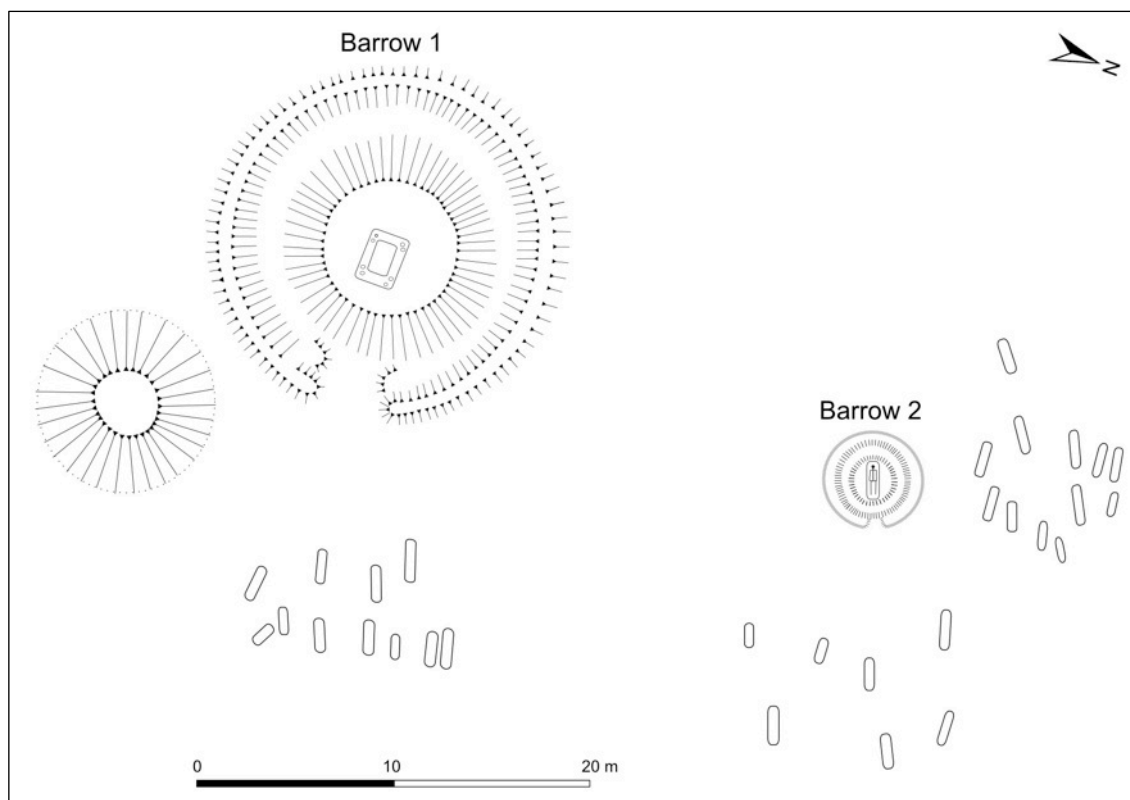


Fig. 5.1.43 Winkelbury Hill Cemetery and Barrows 1 and 2 (after Pitt Rivers 1888).

Following the identification of a number of long, narrow depressions in the turf to the north and east of the barrows, further excavations by Pitt Rivers (1888) revealed 31 inhumations—26 adults with heads to the west, and two children with heads to the east—in shallow graves (**Winkelbury Hill Cemetery**). The majority of the skeletons were supine extended, although several were interred on their sides. Finds included six iron knives, a bronze pin, two bronze discs, a buckle, and three glass beads, and in one grave, iron rods and open work fittings, perhaps from a chatelaine or satchel, suggesting a seventh-century date for the burials.

Hilltop places were undeniably an important element of both the 'Anglo-Saxon' and Romano-Celtic pagan spiritual topography (Semple 2013: 70), which was also incorporated into the early Christian ritual landscape. Winkelbury Hill is

located on a discrete spur, cut off from the main ridge by a spur dyke which is referred to in the mid-tenth-century bounds of Berwick St John (S582) as *esnadiche* 'servants' ditch' (Grundy 1920: 33). The ridge-top routeway is also referred to as a *stræte* or 'made road' in the same charter, suggesting frequent and heavy traffic along the ridge, at least by the 'Late Saxon' period. The self-contained and secluded, yet accessible, setting of the spur perhaps further enhanced its status as a powerful spiritual locale.

Just under 5km northeast of Winkelbury Hill, a burial with a probable Group 6 shield boss and three iron shield plates was found on the south-facing slope of Barrow Hill, **Ebbesbourne Wake**, by workmen in the early 1920s. It was subsequently excavated by Clay (1925a), who found a spearhead by the right shoulder. The hill is located at the end of a spur which extends northwards from the same west-east ridge as Winkelbury Hill. A barrow was also located c. 100m northeast of the burial (Clay 1925c). Five kilometres east-northeast of Barrow Hill, at **Broad Chalke**, a cemetery of 25 inhumations was also excavated by Clay (1925b). The site lies at the entrance to a coombe, 400m south of the Ebble and 350m southeast of the church, at 92m aOD. The burials had been dug into the end of a long strip lynchet, and only eight were accompanied by grave-goods, including a shield boss, spearheads, knives and buckles. As previously mentioned, the church at Broad Chalke was of relatively high status (Pitt 1999: 44-5). As Clay (1925b) noted, however, this cemetery was not exceptionally wealthy in material terms, although the paucity of grave-goods is more indicative of a later seventh- or early eighth-century date.

At 120m aOD on a small hill at the eastern end of the Ebble–Nadder ridge, c. 1.75km north-northeast of Coombe Bissett village, four now indiscernible barrows were opened by Cunnington in 1803 (Hoare 1821b: 26-7). In one of them, **Coombe Bissett I**, he found an exceptionally well furnished grave which was apparently devoid of human remains. The extensive list of finds, which generally suggest an early seventh-century date, included a sword in the remains of a wooden scabbard, two garnet- and shell-set bronze pyramidal sword studs, three spearheads—including Swanton (1973) Types C2 and E2—two iron knives, a shield with studs and a Group 6 shield boss, a small bronze buckle and two iron buckles, one gold and five silver wire slip rings, a gilded bronze skilnet, a wooden vessel, a palm cup and a cone-beaker. The soils

produced by the weathering of White Chalk bedrock generally afford a high degree of skeletal preservation, and the inhumation is unlikely to have decayed. It may have been robbed, although the *in situ* survival of such high-status grave-goods makes this unlikely. Another possible explanation is that the mound represents the memorial to an individual who had been afforded a Christian burial in the ecclesiastical centre of Wilton, 3km to the north (Musty 1969: 113). Alternatively, the skeletal remains may have been exhumed and moved to an ecclesiastical burial ground at a later date. The absence of prehistoric finds, as well as Cunnington's observation that the mound appeared to have been erected after the pit was made, suggest the barrow was primary (Bonney 1966: 29).

Within another of the barrows, **Coombe Bissett II**, Cunnington found two unaccompanied skeletons, interpreted as intrusive, although no 'primary' deposits were found (Hoare 1821b: 26-7). The interments have been interpreted as early medieval based on their proximity to Coombe Bissett I. It is possible, though unlikely, that the grave-goods were deliberately housed in a separate barrow to the interments which they accompany. The barrows lay close to the convergence of the *Vindocladia–Sorviodunum* Roman road (Margary 4c) and two other routeways: the Ebbles–Nadder ridgeway (which also passes Swallowcliffe Down and Alvediston and is marked on the modern OS map as 'Old Shaftsbury Drove') and 'Drove Lane', which links the ridgeway with Coombe Bissett village. They are also close to the boundaries of three other parishes—Britford, West Harnham and Netherhampton—and the boundary between the hundreds of Cadworth and Cawdon.

Old Sarum and Salisbury

At **Quidhampton**, Stratford sub Castle, 100m northwest of the ramparts of Old Sarum, two adult inhumations were recorded during gas pipeline excavation (Fig. 5.1.44; Fowler 1970: 53; Smith 1970: 208). Grave-goods included two applied brooches, a glass bead and bronze pin; and a bronze clip, ivory ring and associated iron and bronze objects, possibly the remains of a bag. The burials were originally considered to be fifth-century, but bags of this type are usually found in late seventh- or early eighth-century contexts (Cherryson 2005b: 168-9; Geake 1995: 183-4). *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum) was a strategic

Roman fort controlling a major crossroads, and was allegedly seized by Cynric, King of Wessex, at the battle of *Searo byrig* in AD 552 (*ASC* 552). It is believed to have been a royal residence later in the early medieval period, and may be the *æpelware byrig*, 'fort of the noble folk or royal line' (Semple 2013: 166) or 'Æthelwaru's fortification' mentioned in the bounds of *Afene* in AD 972, in reference to a routeway which ran *fram hambres buruh*, 'from Amesbury', to *æpelware byrig* (S789). However, these bounds evidently describe Little Durnford, to the north of Old Sarum (Bonney 1969). Amesbury clearly lies outside the area delineated by these bounds, and *æpelware byrig* is more likely to signify Alderbury, 7km to the south (Gover *et al.* 1939: 374). It is therefore a small stretch of the routeway itself which represents the boundary marker in this case. The Roman road towards *Iscalis* (Margary 45b) crosses the Avon at Stratford Bridge, just over 500m due west of the burials. This road may have been linked with another routeway leading north from Old Sarum, mentioned in S789 as *weg* or 'way', via a track outside of the ramparts which may have passed adjacent to the burial site (Fig. 5.1.44).

Five early medieval cemeteries have been discovered in or around the modern town of Salisbury. At **Petersfinger**, a field cemetery of 70-71 inhumations in 63-4 graves, perhaps originally two adjacent cemeteries serving different communities, dates primarily from the sixth century (Draper 2006: 147). At **Harnham Hill**, 73 regularly arranged and predominantly east-west inhumations were excavated by Akerman (1853a; 1853b). Roman-style jewellery including finger-rings and bracelets accompanied several of the burials (Eagles 2001: 218). The field in which this cemetery was located was known as 'Low field', said to be derived from *hlaew*, owing to presence of possible barrows (Jackson 1854: 198). A female skeleton with bronze pin and two possible sixth-century saucer brooches was found at **All Saints, Harnham**, in 1931 (Shortt 1948: 345), and 'twenty to thirty' inhumations, with shield bosses, knives, bucket mounts and spearheads, were found at **St Edmunds, Salisbury**, in 1771-4 (Cunnington 1933: 155-6). In **Kelsey Road, Salisbury**, an apparently isolated single inhumation with an iron spearhead, small knife and iron chisel, was found in 1878, perhaps an outlier from the St Edmunds cemetery (Cherryson 2005b: 172-3).

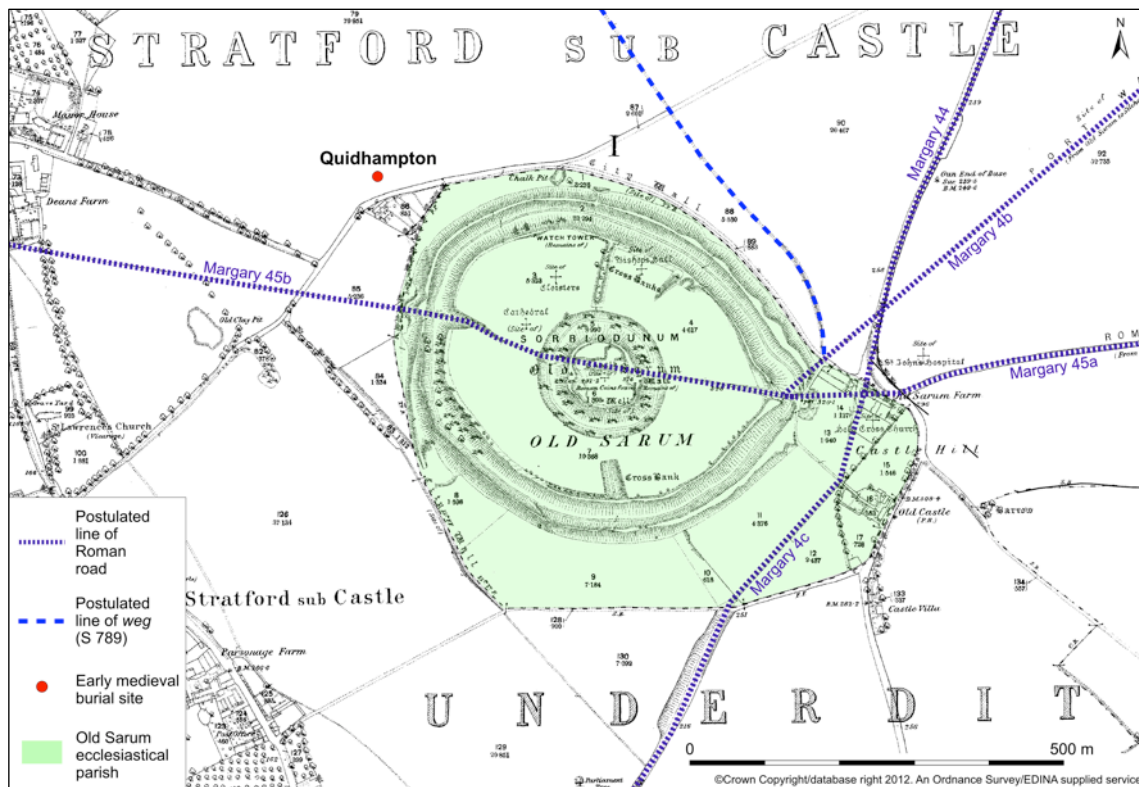


Fig. 5.1.44 The Quidhampton burial site in relation to Old Sarum and the pattern of Roman and early medieval routeways.

East of the Bourne

To the east of the narrow strip parishes which straddle the Bourne, the parish of Winterslow, which is large in comparison with the average size for Wiltshire, abuts the Hampshire border.

A ‘colossal’ bell barrow at **Winterslow Hut**, on the boundary with Idmiston, was opened by the Rev. A.B. Hutchins in 1814 (Hoare 1837: 209). One of the largest bell barrows in Wiltshire, it has a surviving diameter of 30m and height of 3.5m (NMR SU 23 NW 22). In it was an intrusive skeleton, accompanied by a carinated shield boss and strap handle, a spearhead of Swanton Type C2 (1973: 161), a buckle, and a copper alloy-bound wooden bucket (Cook 2004: 104; Stevens 1939: 176, Pl. 1). These finds suggest a sixth- or seventh-century date.

At **Winterslow Southeast of the Pheasant**, a skeleton with a circular bronze brooch and sword scabbard, perhaps of a fifth- or sixth-century date, was found by Akerman in 1870. Although the WSHER entry (SU23SW401) places the site 800m southeast of Winterslow Hut, the location is uncertain, and Cunnington

(1933: 156-7) has suggested that the burial may belong to Roche Court Down Cemetery (see below).

Just over 2km east of Winterslow Hut and less than 400m from the Hampshire border, a Bronze Age barrow and linear earthwork provided a focus for successive early medieval funerary events on Roche Court Down (Fig. 5.1.45). This group of five sites, which lies at 137m aOD on a saddle between more elevated areas of downland to the north and south, was excavated by J.F.S. Stone in 1930 (Stone 1932). **Roche Court Down Barrow 1** contained a sherd of early medieval pottery but no human remains, and Stone (1932: 576) described the barrow as 'completely undisturbed', implying that this was a non-mortuary or 'cenotaph' monument. **Barrow 2** was interpreted as a primary early medieval monument, in the centre of which was a male inhumation in a large cist filled with flint nodules, head to the west-northwest and accompanied by a small iron knife in a scabbard, a buckle or clasp, and sheep leg bones. **Barrow 3** was of Middle Bronze Age construction, and contained a superficial secondary interment interpreted as early medieval in addition to the primary burial. **Roche Court Down Flat Cemetery**, to the north of the barrows, contained sixteen individuals in thirteen graves, all aligned roughly east-west. The only grave-goods were two iron knives and the leg of an ox. A possible seventh-century date can be suggested for Barrows 1-3 and the cemetery, and comparisons with the Winkelbury Hill sites can be drawn. Roche Court Down Barrow 1 was also marked by a standing post (Semple 2004: 145-6), a noted feature of pre-Christian ritual sites (Blair 1995), which reinforces the possibility that this location was the focus for both funerary and non-funerary ceremony.

Forty metres west of Barrow 1, **Roche Court Down Execution Cemetery** comprised eighteen skeletons, seventeen of which were male, all buried within the ditch of a linear earthwork (WSHER SU23NE604). There were eleven incidences of decapitation, eight of wrists bound behind the backs, two of pronation, and seven of multiple burial. Heavy flints had been placed on top of many of the interments. Stone (1932: 576) acknowledged that there was an emerging group of execution cemeteries associated with earthworks on the periphery of Wiltshire, but interpreted these individuals as 'Saxons or Jutes ... slaughtered by the Romano-Britons' in the fifth or sixth century. This cemetery exhibits classic indicators of deviancy in an early medieval context, and

although no diagnostic material was recovered, it is likely to postdate the seventh century, and potentially the period of study of this thesis. It can therefore be speculated that Roche Court Down developed negative connotations later in its biography as a funerary locale.

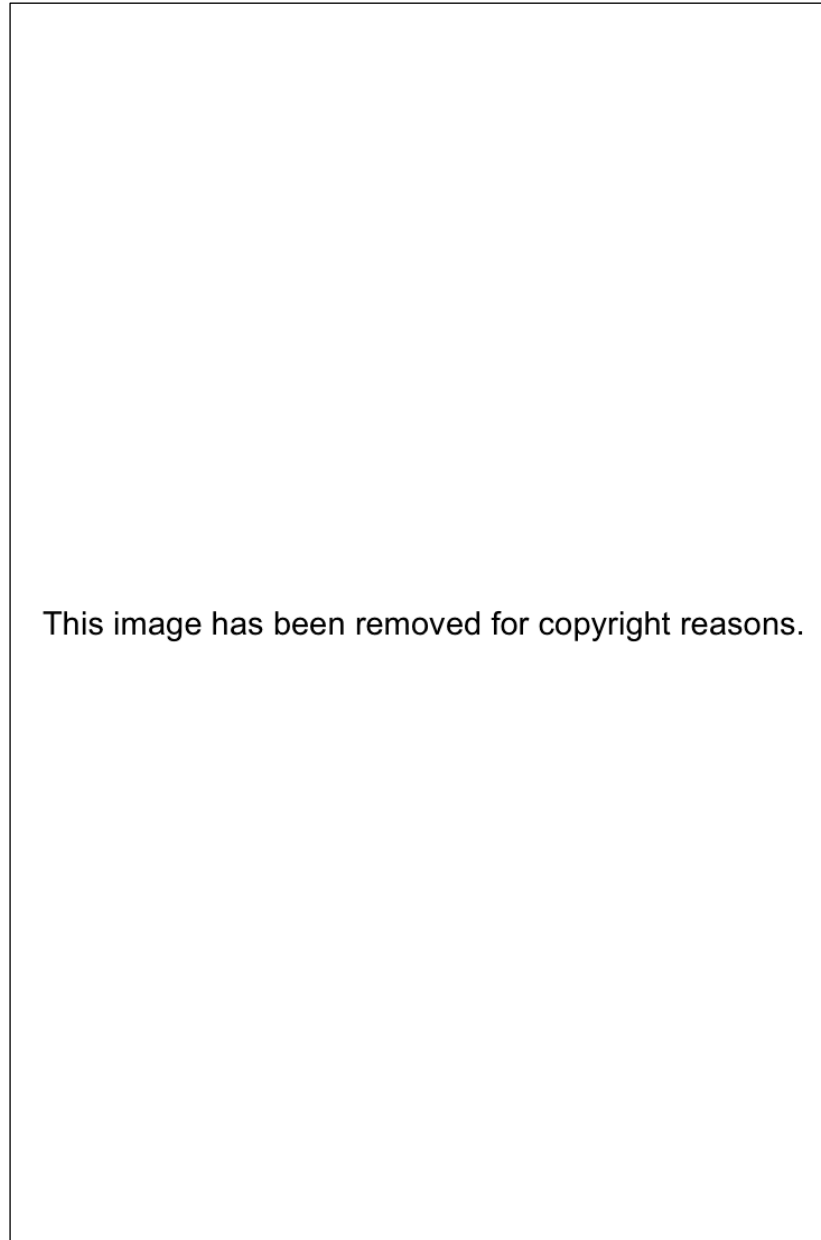


Fig. 5.1.45 Roche Court Down (after Stone 1932: Plate II).

Lower Bourne valley

Two burial sites have been located in the valley of the River Bourne, which, amongst many other seasonal or semi-seasonal watercourses in Wiltshire and elsewhere, was also known as the Winterbourne, as is reflected in the names of several estates in the valley (Gover *et al.* 1939: 2, 384).

In the narrow strip parish of **Winterbourne Gunner**, an inhumation cemetery of 85 graves was excavated between 1960 and 1997 (Musty and Stratton 1964; Taylor 1995). The majority of the burials were west-east and supine extended, although one was prone, and grave-goods suggest a fifth- to sixth-century date. The excavations undertaken in 1994 by Time Team revealed that several burials were clustered around a pond barrow, and an extensive barrow cemetery was identified from aerial photographs (Taylor 1995: 23). With regard to the date, and the fact that this is a community cemetery focused on an earlier mound, parallels can be drawn with Barrow Clump. The cemetery sits at 68m aOD, 350m east of the Bourne and 500m southeast of the point at which the river is crossed by the 'Portway' Roman road (Margary 4b) (see Fig. 5.1.36).

In Laverstock, just over 2km downstream from Winterbourne Gunner and 4km northeast of the convergence of the Bourne and the Avon, ploughing activity led to the surfacing of a Bronze Age cremation, the tip of an iron sword, a bronze strip, and unburnt human remains, all within a large ring-ditch. A further ring-ditch was also observed by the farmer, and excavations were subsequently carried out in 1964 (Musty 1969). Investigation of the first ring-ditch or levelled barrow, known as **Ford I**, located the primary Bronze Age grave which had contained the cremation, and although the secondary grave is likely to have been obliterated by ploughing, the surface finds are indicative of an intrusive early medieval burial. At **Ford II**, c. 23m to the southwest, a penannular ditch encircled a primary adult male inhumation, accompanied by two spearheads, a shield boss, a bronze hanging bowl, a bone comb, a seax within a sheath, and a buckle. The hanging bowl in particular suggests a later seventh- to early eighth-century date (Geake 1997: 186), and the grave-goods in general indicate a burial of considerable prestige. The bowl contained the remains of probable onions and crab apples, rendering it all the more symbolic of feasting and hospitality, noted symbols of power and wealth (Blair 2005: 232; Geake 1997: 83-4).

The topographic position of the Ford barrows is unremarkable, situated on low-lying ground at 69m aOD, comparable to that of the Winterbourne Gunner cemetery. Like Winterbourne Gunner, they are, however, close to important communication routes, lying 150m north of the Roman road between Old Sarum and Winchester (Margary 45a), and 1.5km southeast of the 'Portway'

Roman road between Old Sarum and Silchester (Margary 4b) (see Fig. 5.1.36). The mid-century bounds of *Winterburnan* (S543), probably Laverstock, refer to a *burh weg*, 'fort way', likely to represent one of these Roman roads. These bounds also refer to a watercourse named *læfer*, undoubtedly the Bourne. Although Gover *et al.* (1939: 382) derive the first element of Laverstock (*Lavertestoche* or *Lavvrecestohes* in DB) from *læwerce* 'frequented by larks', it is more likely to be a reference to the river, as Laver is a well evidenced British river-name (L543.1.00). The second element of the place-name signifies either that this was a dependent settlement of an estate centred on the Laver/Bourne valley, or that it was the 'holy place' of the valley (see Winterbourne Stoke, above).

Lower Salisbury Avon valley

Two burial sites lie on opposing sides of the Avon, c. 5km north of the Hampshire border (Fig. 5.1.46). At **Charlton Plantation**, Downton, a few hundred metres west of the river at 50m aOD, a fifth- to seventh-century inhumation cemetery was excavated in 1981 (Davies 1984). The cemetery contained 42 graves, with a range of grave-goods including shield bosses, swords and brooches. Although the site is not directly associated with any earlier features, a low mound just outside the cemetery has been identified as a possible barrow. On the opposite side of the river, in the parish of Alderbury, at an altitude of 70m aOD, a single north-south inhumation burial was located in 1874 within the bank of a lynchet, which forms part of a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age enclosure and field systems known as **Witherington Ring** (Cunnington 1933: 170). The burial was accompanied by a long double-edged sword with a decorated pommel, a shield boss, knife, ferrule, and strike-a-light, and is considered to be broadly contemporary with those found at Charlton Plantation. The sites lie just over a kilometre downstream from the point at which the Ebbles converges into the Avon, creating a single broad river, which could be crossed via a ford directly between the two sites (Fig. 5.1.46). They are also located approximately midway between two minster sites, Alderbury and Downton (Pitt 1999). The Witherington Ring burial lay just north of the parish and hundred boundary, and a barrow containing human remains but no associated items was also said to have been located c. 18m from the site (Cunnington 1933: 170). Numerous metal detector finds from the immediate

area, including several 'Early Saxon' brooches recovered from c. 500m to the southeast, at the base of the slope, are recorded in in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database (e.g. Henry 2012; Willis 2013), perhaps suggesting the presence of a cemetery.

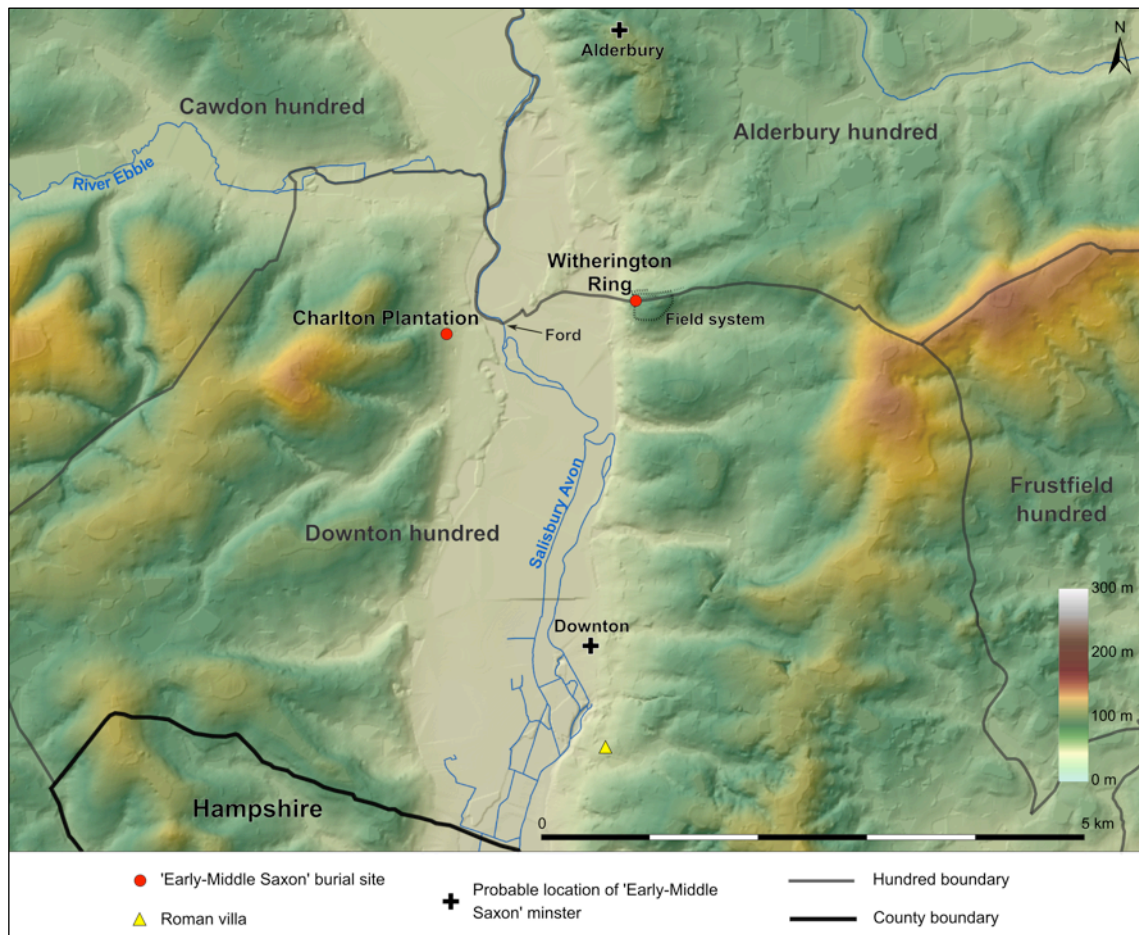


Fig. 5.1.46 Charlton Plantation and Witherington Ring (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Summary: South Wiltshire Downs

The transition from the valley-based community cemeteries of the fifth and sixth centuries (predominantly on lower ground in the east) to the isolated high-status burials of the seventh and early eighth centuries (biased towards higher ground in the west) is particularly evident in the South Wiltshire Downs *pays*. Winterbourne Gunner is one example of an early cemetery focused around an earlier barrow in a valley location, although evidence for prehistoric features at other field cemeteries, such as at Harnham Hill, may have been lost. While most of the earlier cemeteries are by no means impoverished, the later burials stand out as exceptionally well furnished. Some sparsely furnished seventh-

century cemeteries, such as Monkton Deverill and Winkelbury Hill Cemetery, however, reflect the general trend away from a high quantity of grave-goods during this period. In the seventh century, linear features are utilised to demarcate funerary zones, notably at Winkelbury Hill and Roche Court Down.

CHAPTER 5.2

WILTSHIRE: ANALYSIS

BURIAL SITES AND THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Bedrock geology

The geological formations underlying the vast majority (89%) of the burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset belong to the Chalk Group (Fig. 5.2.1; Table 5.2.1). Other geological groups account for 9.6% of the sites, while one site lies on the boundary between different formations or have not been located to sufficient accuracy to determine the underlying geology. While the correlation between chalk geology and burial site distribution is striking, it partly reflects the fact that this bedrock underlies 51% of the land area in the historic county of Wiltshire.¹ In addition, archaeological features from aerial photographs and grave cuts on the ground are more readily identified in chalk areas. The history of prolific antiquarian investigation is another influencing factor in chalk downland areas such as Salisbury Plain, where the land-use history has also resulted in the survival of a greater number of upstanding earthworks.²

Of the sites underlain by Chalk Group geology, 79% are associated with the White Chalk Subgroup, 20% with the Grey Chalk Subgroup, and one site is on the boundary between the two chalk subgroups. The large proportion of sites on White Chalk is likely to reflect the fact that this subgroup underlies a much larger area of the county than the thinner bands of Grey Chalk. Formations belonging to the White Chalk Subgroup indeed underlie 70% of all burial sites. This subgroup is defined as 'Chalk with flints, with discrete marl seams, nodular chalk, sponge-rich and flint seams throughout' (NERC 2012). The Seaford Chalk Formation—a 'firm white chalk' which can contain large flint nodules (NERC 2012)—is the most prevalent overall, underlying 23 sites.

¹ Chalk Group geology underlies c. 1800km² of 3554km² (Southall and Burton 2004; calculated in QGIS).

² For a more in-depth examination of the significance of the preponderance of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in chalk areas see Chapter 8.

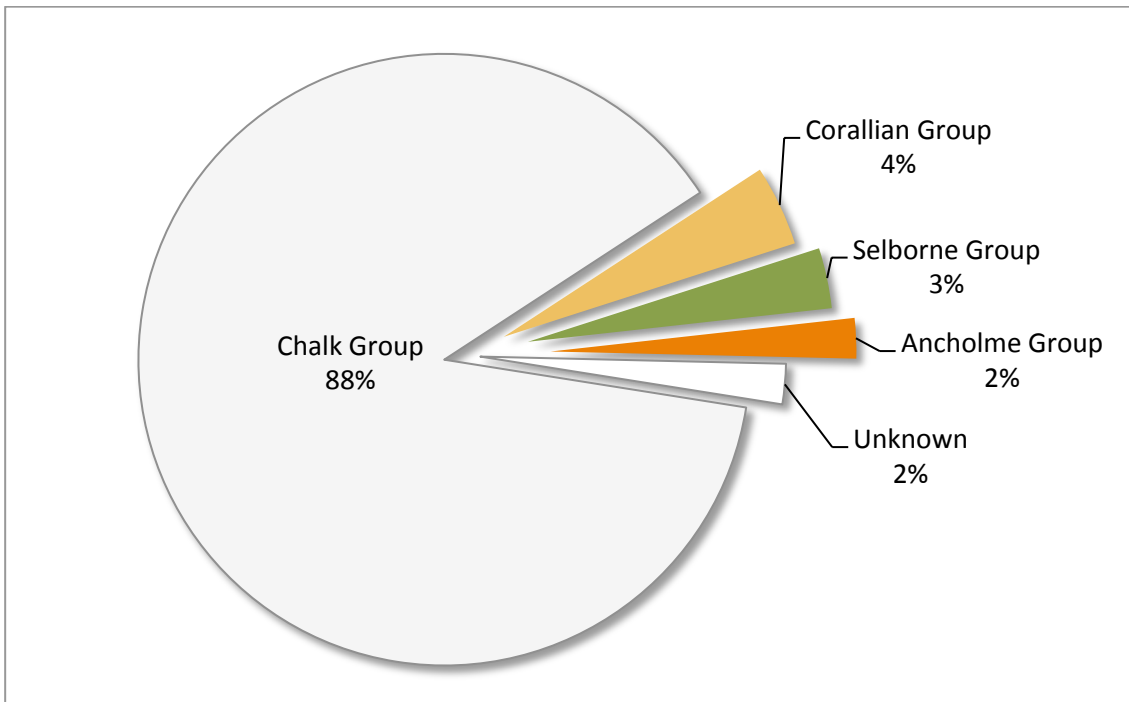


Fig. 5.2.1 Chart showing the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset associated with different bedrock geological groups.

Table 5.2.1 The numbers and proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset associated with various bedrock geological formations.

Bedrock geology		Number of sites	
Group	Subgroup/Formation		
Ancholme Group	Kimmeridge Clay Formation	1	2 (2%)
	Oxford Clay Formation	1	
Chalk Group	Grey Chalk Subgroup	17	84 (87%)
	White Chalk Subgroup	66	
Corallian Group	Hazelbury Bryan and Kingston Formations	1	4 (4%)
	Stanford Formation	3	
Selborne Group	Upper Greensand Formation	3 (3%)	

Of the 55 burial sites directly associated with earlier features (see below), 51 sites (93%) are on chalk bedrock. A further three are on Upper Greensand, but close to the interface with the chalk. There is thus a slight percentage increase of 4% between the proportion of all burial sites on chalk, and the proportion of burial sites with evidence for direct reuse on chalk.

Hydrology and altitude

No correlation between burial sites and floodplains is immediately apparent (Fig. 5.2.2). Only seven of the 94 sites in the dataset (7%) are located on a floodplain, and 52% lie within 1km of a floodplain. In certain areas, such as the Wylve valley, however, a riverine pattern of burial can be identified (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 111). The large group of sites in the 100-500m category may indicate that burial sites were set back from rivers, but still intervisible with them.

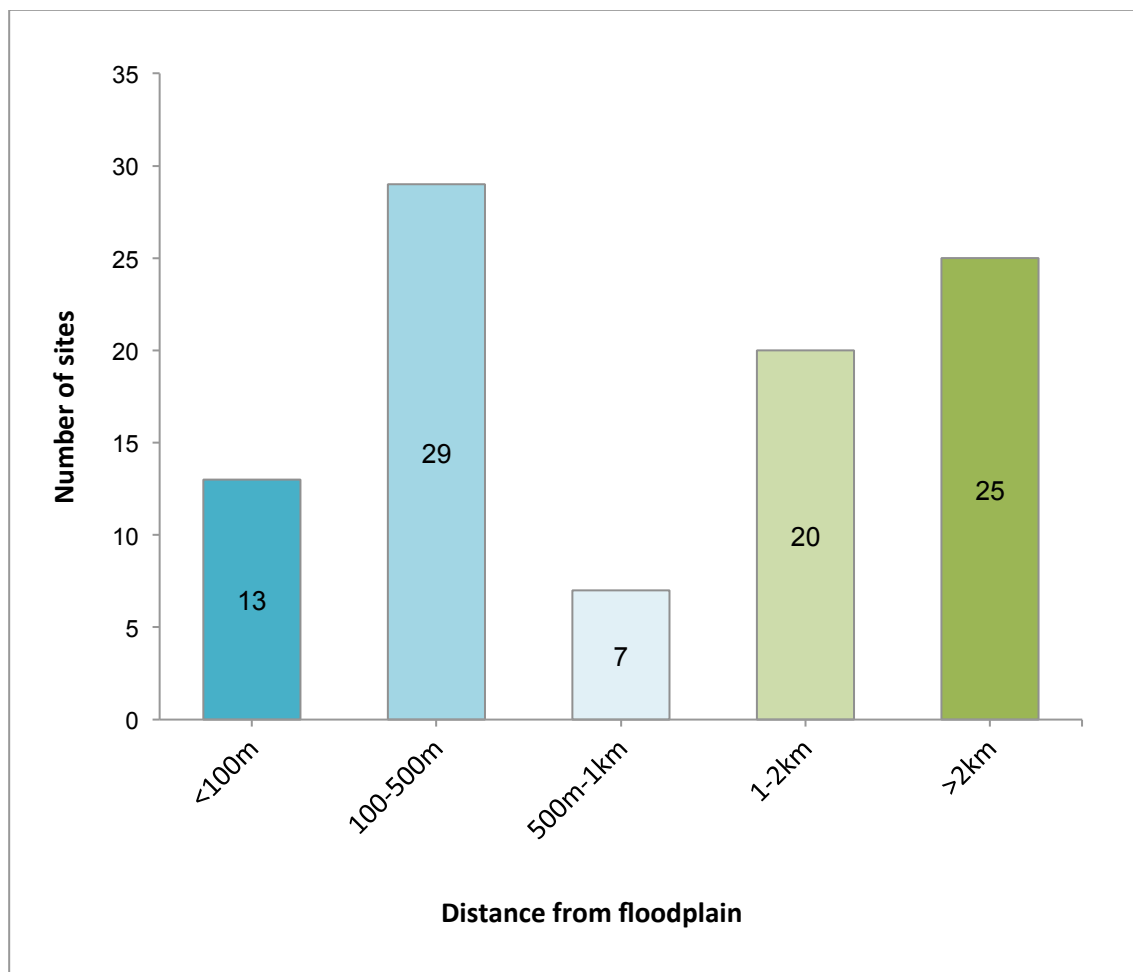


Fig. 5.2.2 Graph showing the relationship between distance from a floodplain and 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset.

Analysis of the altitude of closely dated burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset reveals that a greater proportion of all sites are above 100m aOD than below this level. The proportion of higher altitude sites is greater in the seventh- to ninth-century category. Unfortunately, however, many sites in the dataset are simply not dated that closely, and many fall into the 'sixth- to seventh-century' range. Only a reduced number of sites could thus be included in this analysis. Furthermore, high-status (predominantly post-AD 600) burials are more likely to be closely dated, as more attention has been paid to such sites. Overall, however, the results appear to uphold the principle that the location of burials increased in altitude in the seventh century, which Lucy (1998: 99) has argued reflects the increasing marginalisation of the dead.

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it would potentially be more revealing to analyse the relative altitude of burial sites, and their association with settlements, in more localised areas.

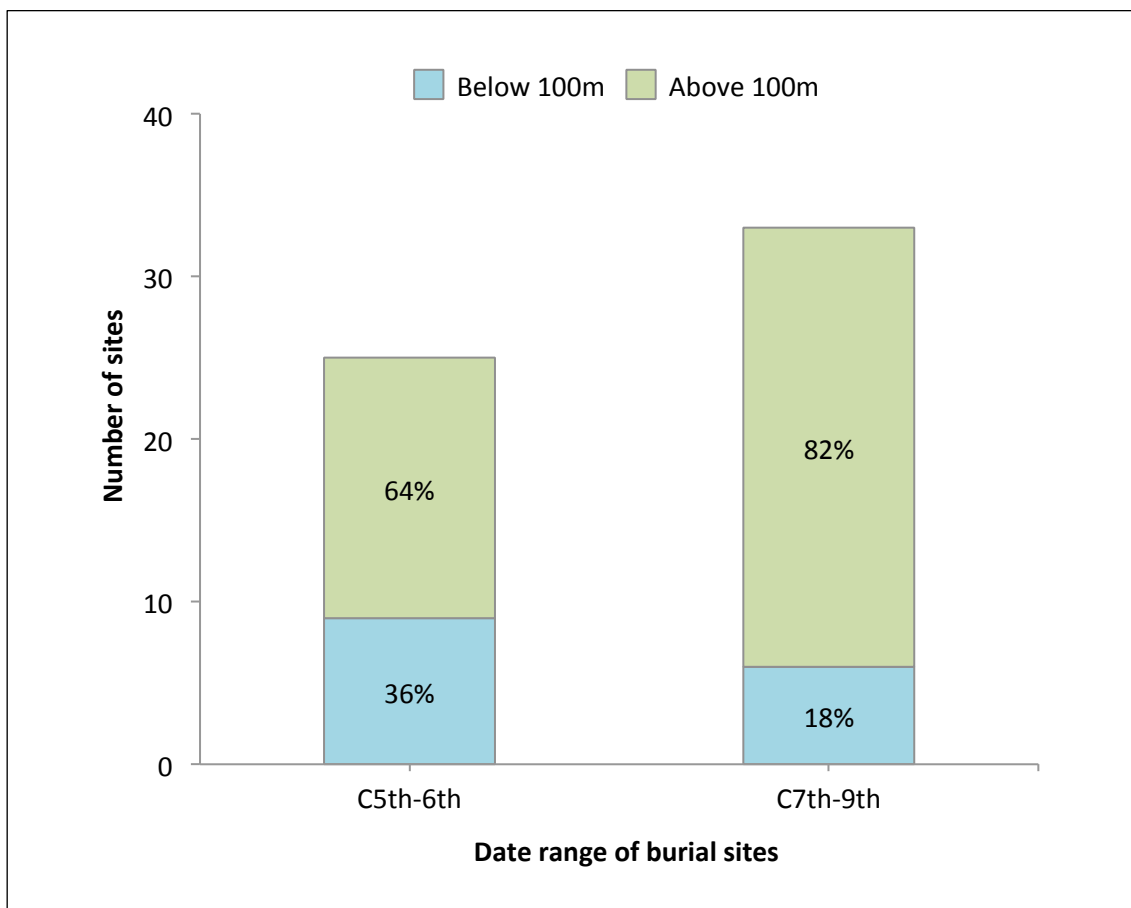


Fig. 5.2.3 Graph showing the approximate proportions of earlier and later burial sites above and below 100m aOD.

APPROPRIATION OF THE ANTECEDENT LANDSCAPE

This section will address the nature of the relationship between burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset and aspects of the antecedent landscape. Of the 94 burial sites,

- Sixty-nine sites (73.4%) are associated *either directly or indirectly* with one or more antecedent monuments or features. Of these,
 - Fifty-five sites (58.5%) demonstrate evidence of *direct* association with one or more earlier features.
 - Fourteen sites (14.9%) are associated *only indirectly* with one or more earlier features.
- Twenty-five sites (26.6%) do not appear to be associated with any earlier features.

Numerous sites are associated with more than one type of earlier feature, and some sites are associated with past features both directly and indirectly.

Four categories of earlier feature have been defined for the purposes of this analysis (Fig. 5.2.4; Table 5.2.2). Certain features are more difficult to categorise than others. For example, it is possible that some ruined Roman villas and settlements may have degenerated into earthworks by the time the early medieval burials were made. If structural evidence has been located, however, such sites have been placed in the 'Roman buildings or built structures' category.

The most commonly appropriated category is 'funerary or ritual monuments', with 57 incidences of association, at 50 (53%) of the burial sites (some sites are associated with more than one feature in this category). The 'non-funerary earthworks and settlement features' category is also significant, comprising 34 instances of association, at 26 sites (28% of the dataset). Although previous studies have tended to focus on the reuse of funerary and ritual sites, these figures demonstrate that the implications of the appropriation of other landscape features should not be overlooked.

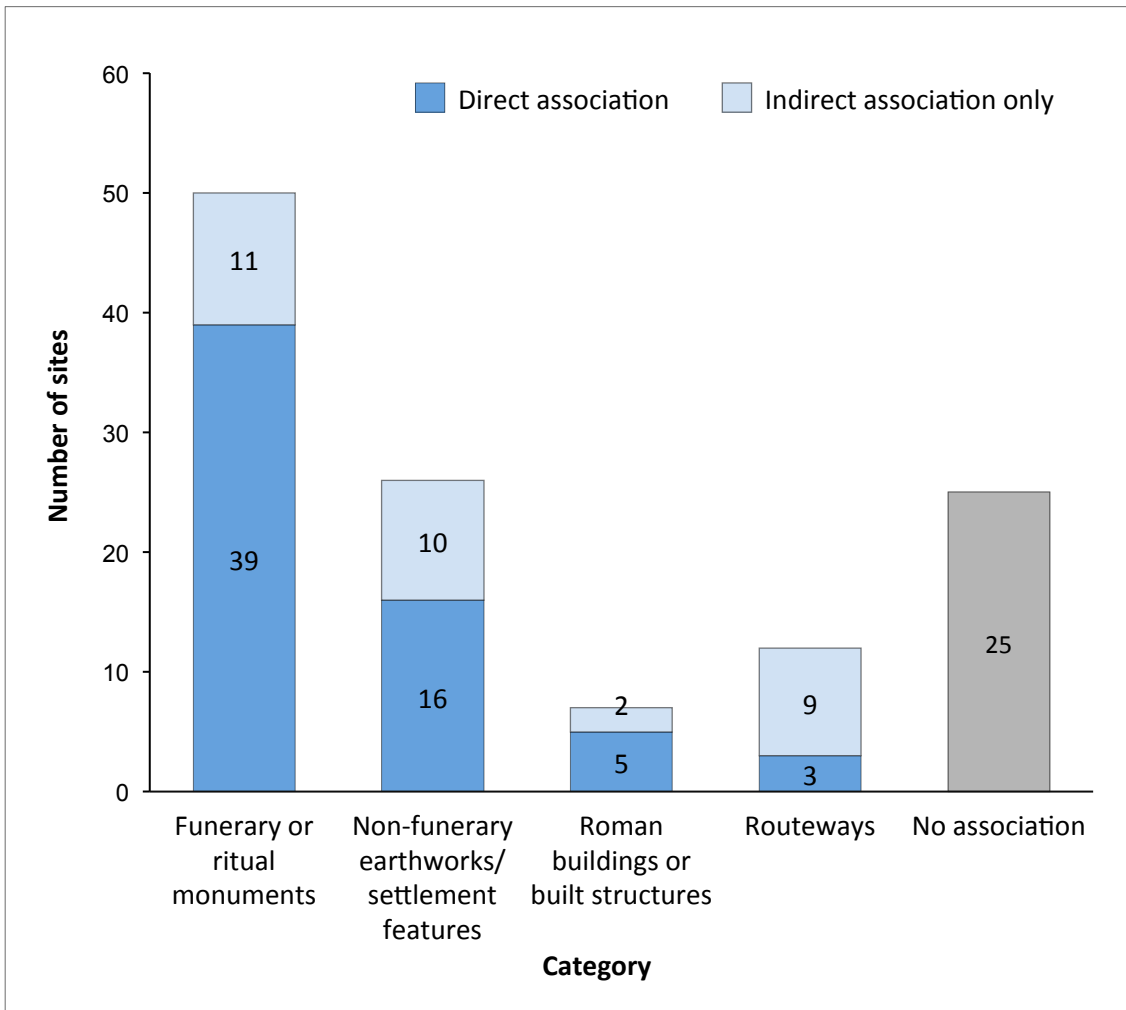


Fig. 5.2.4 Graph showing the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites directly and indirectly associated with different categories of antecedent feature.

Funerary and ritual monuments

Barrows

Forty per cent of all burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset are directly associated with an earlier barrow. Round barrows account for 82% of the total number of incidences of direct association with barrows; 31 burial sites (33% of the dataset) were found to be directly associated with such barrows (Table 5.2.2).

Data from the WSHER shows that the majority of excavated barrows in Wiltshire were opened in the nineteenth century, predominantly by Hoare, but also by Cunnington and Thurnam. Many of these are undated, or were described as 'without result' or 'unproductive'. As the area surrounding the mound is unlikely to have been excavated, evidence of wider use of the monument as the focus for a cemetery is likely to have been overlooked.

Table 5.2.2 Numbers of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset associated with different categories of antecedent feature (the figures differ from those shown in Fig. 5.2.4 as some sites are associated with more than one feature).

Earlier features		Number of sites	
		Directly associated	Indirectly associated
Funerary or ritual monuments	Round barrow	31	17
	Long barrow	5	1
	Double barrow	2	–
	Megalithic monument	1	–
Non-funerary earthworks/ settlement features	Linear earthwork	8	2
	Field system	6	6
	Hillfort	3	3
	Enclosure/settlement	2	4
Roman buildings or built structures	Other Roman built structure	3	1
	Roman villa	2	1
	Temple	1	–
Routeways	Roman road	3	9

Due to the high number of round barrows associated with sites in the Wiltshire dataset, appropriated round barrows are sub-divided according to their type (Table 5.2.3). Different morphological categories of round barrow can be identified (Fig. 5.2.5), and several classifications of barrow types have been made, including by Hoare (1812: 21-2), Grinsell (1957), and Ashbee (1960), with styles other than the common bowl barrow often denominated 'fancy barrows'. Categorising appropriated round barrows also aids the determination of whether subtle differences in morphology and appearance influenced the choice of a particular mound by the early medieval individual or community, although many other factors must also be considered. As with other types of antecedent landscape feature, the prevalence, distribution and landscape setting of different barrows is equally likely to have affected the likelihood of their reuse (Williams 1997).

Bowl barrows are by far the most common type of barrow in Wiltshire (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 33); an HER search suggests that there are around 1600 bowl barrows in the county, accounting for 76% of all barrows (Fig. 5.2.6). This may partly reflect the fact that the bowl barrow could be regarded as a 'generic' type of barrow, and many barrows may therefore have been misidentified or arbitrarily categorised as such. The number of bowl barrows directly reused for burial during the period of study does not, however, reflect the proportion of bowl barrows in Wiltshire as a whole. Although bowl barrows are the most commonly reused type of funerary mound in the Wiltshire dataset, with 15 incidences of direct association, this barrow type still only makes up 52% of the appropriated barrows of known type (Fig. 5.2.7).

Of the c. 1600 bowl barrows listed in the WSHER, only about a quarter are recorded as having been excavated and recorded. Excavated bowl barrows are noticeably clustered in certain areas, particularly the Winterbourne Stoke/Amesbury area near Stonehenge (Fig. 5.2.8), while those associated with early medieval burials are fairly evenly distributed.

Table 5.2.3 Numbers of burial sites associated with particular types of round barrow.

Type of round barrow	Number of sites	
	Directly associated	Indirectly associated
Bell	5	–
Bowl	15	10
Disc	2	–
Pond	1	–
Saucer	1	–
Roman	3	3
Unidentified	4	4

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Fig. 5.2.5 Schematic cross-sections of round barrow types, after Megaw and Simpson 1979: 210.

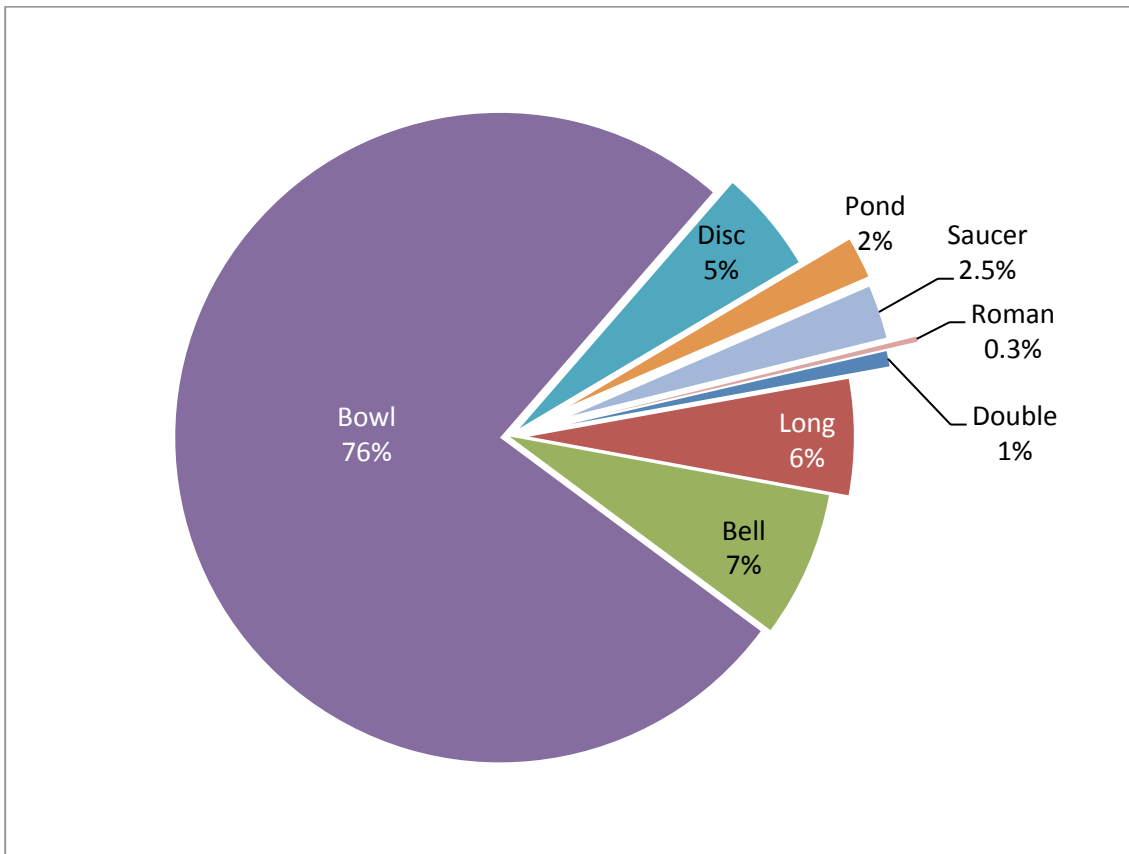


Fig. 5.2.6 Chart showing the approximate proportions of identified barrow types in Wiltshire overall (data from WSHER).

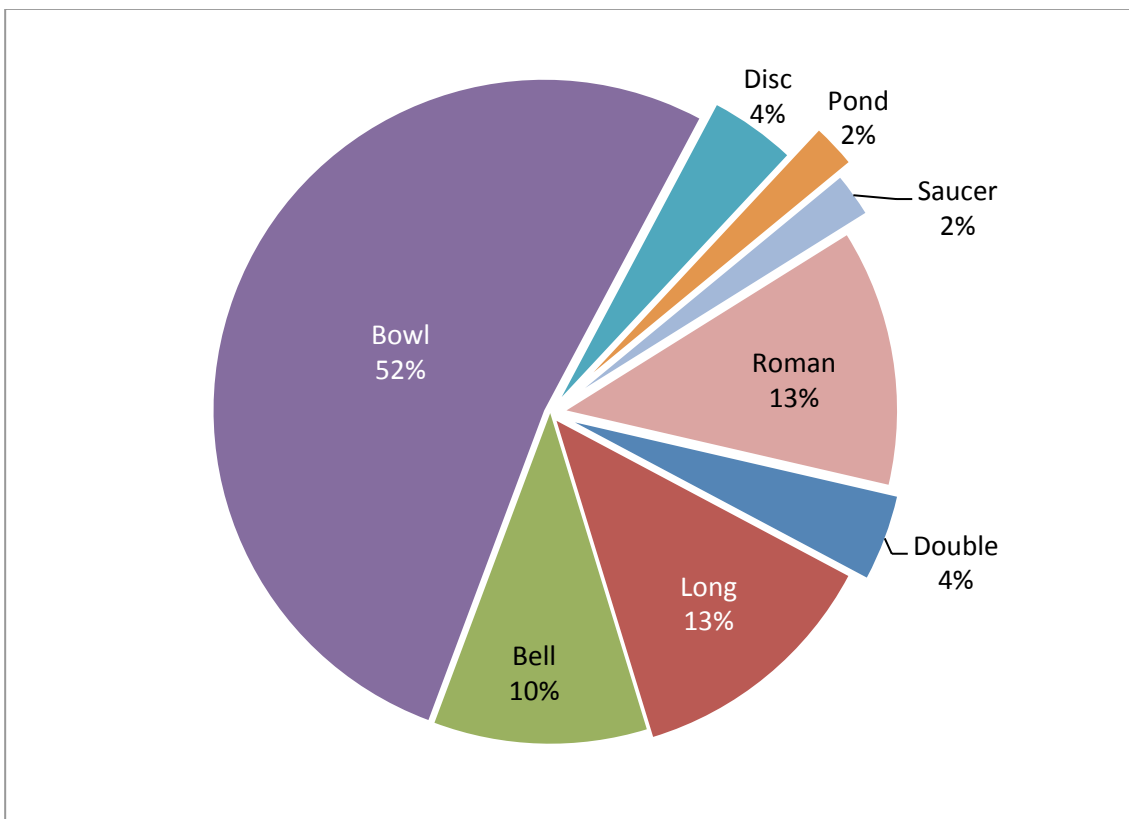


Fig. 5.2.7 Chart showing the proportions of identified barrow types associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset.

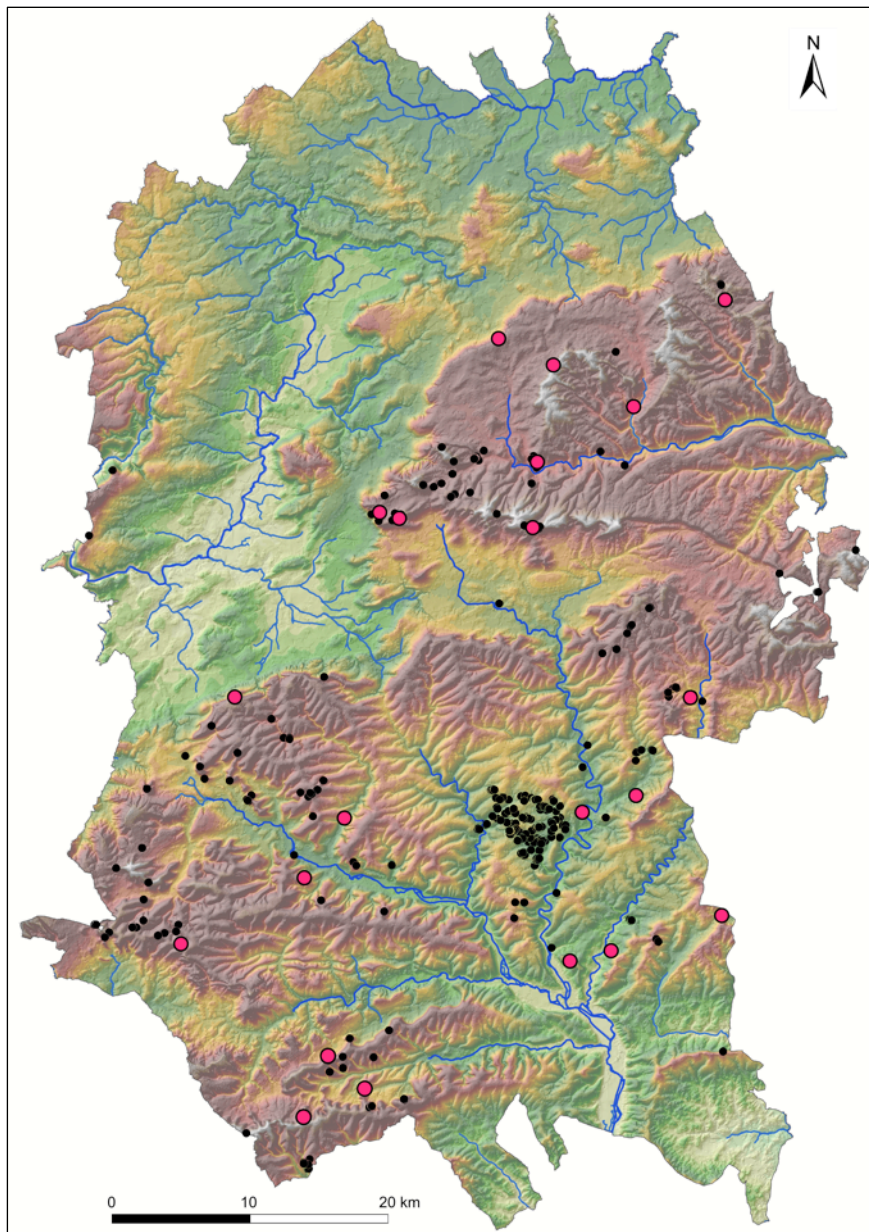


Fig. 5.2.8 All excavated bowl barrows (black), and bowl barrows associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burials (red). Overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The proportions of appropriated disc, pond and saucer barrows, compared to other types of barrow, are similar to the proportions in which these barrows are found in the county overall. Certain other types of barrow, however, are associated with a higher proportion of burial sites in the dataset than the proportion they represent in the county as a whole. Long barrows, for example, account for 13% of barrows of known type associated with sites in the dataset, even though they only represent 6% of barrows in the WSHER overall (c. 113 of just under 2000). Bell barrows also make up 10% of appropriated barrows of known type, despite only accounting for 7% of all barrows in the WSHER.

Perhaps the most disproportionately frequently reused barrow in Wiltshire is the Roman barrow, which represents 13% of appropriated barrows of known type, even though they only make up 0.3% of barrows in the county. The sample size is very small, with three of the five known Roman mounds in the county (and all of the appropriated ones) being those on Overton Down. It could be suggested, however, that these barrows were preferentially chosen for a particular reason, such as the possibility that knowledge of their origination remained in the collective memory of the community, or that their morphological characteristics served the needs of the deceased and their mourners. Moreover, their topographic position may have been favoured. Roman barrows in Britain are often found on hill slopes, rather than on hill crests like many of their prehistoric antecedents (Eckardt *et al.* 2009: 68). It has been suggested that the Overton Down barrows are on a north-south alignment (rather than west-east like the Roman road) in order to be visible from the late prehistoric-Roman settlement and possible villa at 'Headlands' (Fowler 2000: 59). Occupation of this site may have continued into the post-Roman period, and thus the visibility of the barrows may have had continued resonance. The reuse of Roman barrows is relatively rare nationally, but a notable example is Linton Heath, Cambridgeshire, where over 100 intrusive inhumations of late fifth- to late sixth-century date were recovered from a probable Roman barrow (Dunning and Jessup 1936: 41, 49).

Although bell barrows and long barrows have been excavated in diverse areas of the county, those reused for early medieval burial are grouped in discrete geographical areas. While excavated bell barrows are generally located in the eastern half of the county, those that are also associated with early medieval inhumations are found only on higher ground between the river valleys of the Till, Avon and Bourne in the southeast of the county (Fig. 5.2.9). The bell barrow at Barrow Clump, for example, may have been selected for funerary appropriation due to its unusual morphology, possessing a berm of several metres to separate the mound from its ditch (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013; Stoodley 2007b). The morphological idiosyncrasies of this type of monument, which allowed certain burials to be enclosed in the area between the two ring-ditches, may have been deemed a more suitable burial location by this particular early medieval community than the more typical bowl barrows

that predominate in the surrounding landscape. It is possible, however, that the other barrows surrounding Barrow Clump formed part of an wider funerary locale in the early medieval period.

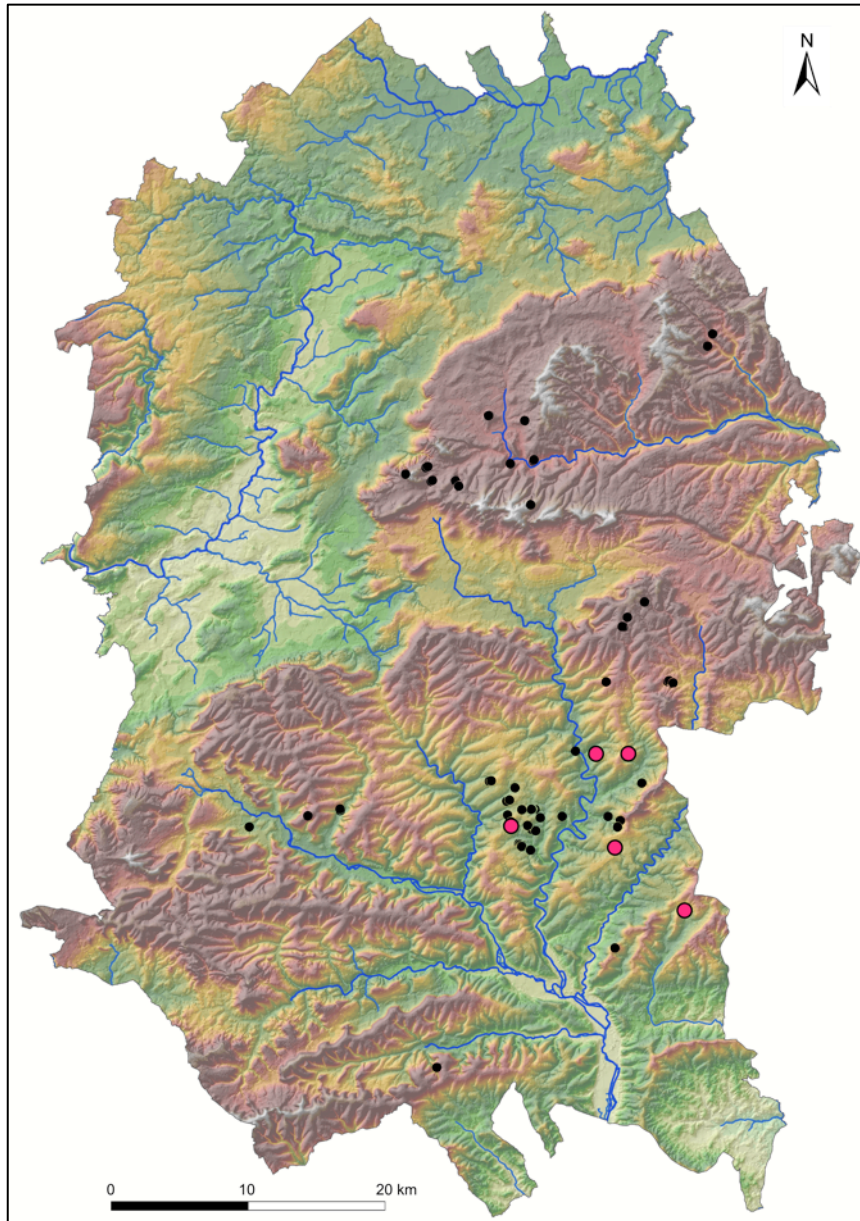


Fig. 5.2.9 All excavated bell barrows (black) and bell barrows associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burials (red), overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Early medieval burial sites associated with long barrows are found in the Wylve valley and in the western part of Salisbury Plain (Fig. 5.2.10). Many of these barrows were opened in the nineteenth century by Cunnington, Thurnam and Hoare; between 1800 and 1809, Cunnington excavated a quarter of all known long barrows on Salisbury Plain and the South Wiltshire Downs (Eagles and Field 2004: 48). Many such barrows have also been excavated in the

Marlborough Downs area, yet only one early medieval burial site (Kings Play Hill) was found to be (indirectly) associated with a long barrow. It could therefore be suggested that long barrows were preferentially chosen in the western Salisbury Plain and Wylde valley areas, but not on the Marlborough Downs (Semple 2013: 41). As Williams (1997: 21) has, however, noted, such is the considerable size of many long barrows that intrusive burials are likely to have been missed by excavators in many cases, and indeed most have only been partially investigated. The potential remains, therefore, for the discovery of further early medieval burial sites associated with long barrows.

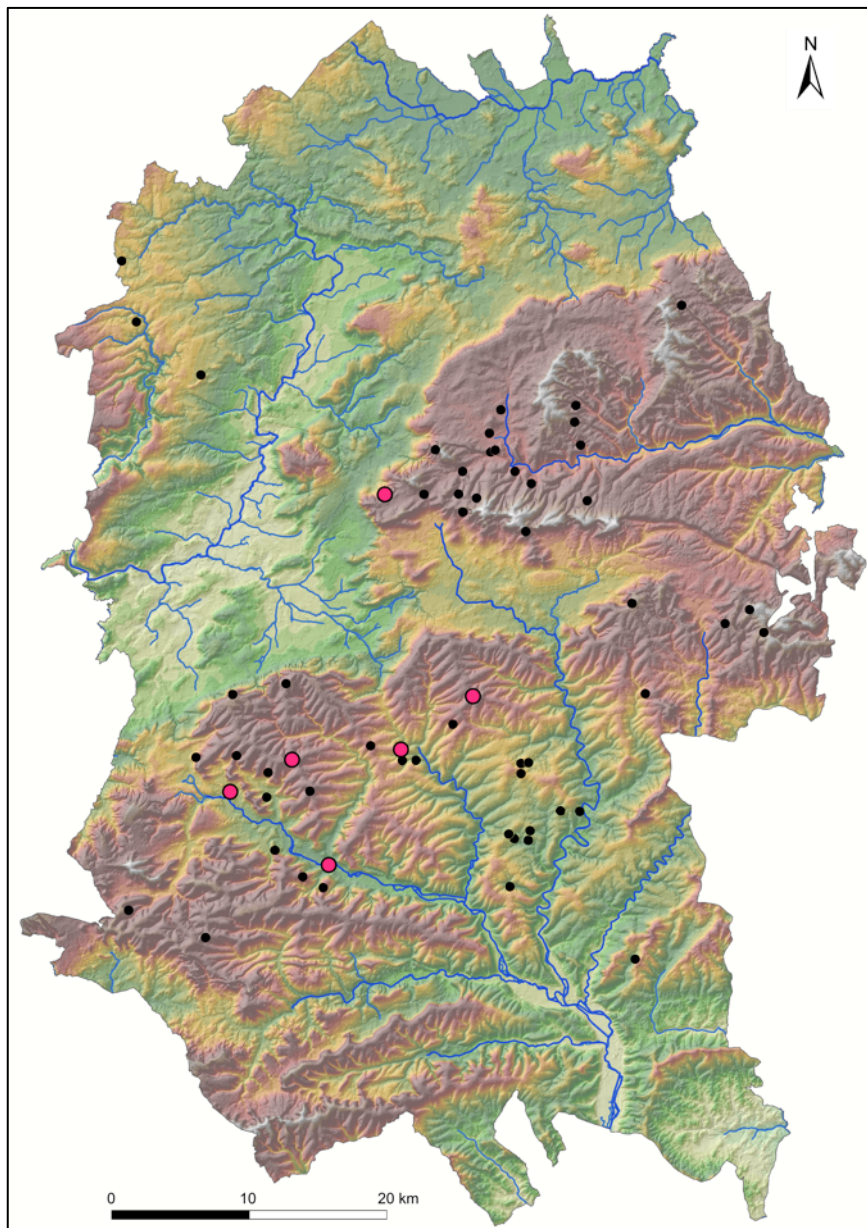


Fig. 5.2.10 All excavated long barrows (black) and long barrows associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burials (red), overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Megalithic monuments

The probable decapitation burial found within Stonehenge is the only example in the county of the appropriation of this type of monument. Early medieval burials at prehistoric stone settings are unusual in Britain, although examples have been found at Little Rollright, Oxfordshire, and at Yeavinger, Northumberland (Pitts *et al.* 2002: 140).

Non-funerary earthworks and settlement features

Features in this category are appropriated at 28% of burial sites in the dataset; directly associated at 17% of sites. Unlike the appropriation of barrows for secondary burial, which is evidently a deliberate and meaningful act, the reuse of non-funerary earthworks is more difficult to interpret. It cannot be assumed that these features were reused consciously and deliberately, and the location of such burials may have been influenced by other factors.

Eight sites are directly associated with linear earthworks, five of which are located on Roche Court Down, Winterslow, where the ditch was perhaps used to delineate and define different funerary zones, and another is on Warren Hill, Tidworth, where a quadruple burial was dug into the earthwork. Both of these locations are on the periphery of the county, are of sixth- or seventh-century date, and are in elevated areas of chalk downland. Two sites are directly associated with hillforts: Barbury Castle, on the boundary between Wroughton and Ogbourne St Andrew, and Bratton Castle, Westbury, both of which are located on the edge of prominent escarpments. In the case of Bratton Castle, the burial was also intrusive within a barrow.

Five sites are directly associated with field systems: Witherington Ring, on the boundary between Alderbury and Downton, and the four sites on Overton Down. Although the siting of burials within an earlier field system cannot necessarily be defined as deliberate appropriation, the fact that burial took place on land which showed signs of having been under cultivation may be significant.

Two sites are directly associated with prehistoric settlements or enclosures. It could be argued that the act of burial in such a location changed or modified the

function of the space. At Harlestone House, Bishopstone, although there was prehistoric occupation evidence, the site had also been used for 'Early Saxon' settlement, and it is more likely to have been this latter settlement which was consciously appropriated.

Roman buildings and built structures

Eight instances of association with features in this category have been identified, at seven burial sites (7% of the dataset). Five sites (5%) are directly associated with features in this category.

At Callas Hill II, Wanborough, the decision to inter a fifth- to seventh-century male with a spearhead and bucket mount within the remains of a Romano-British villa complex was clearly a conscious one. The sixth- to seventh-century female 'burial' within a Roman well on Poulton Downs, Mildenhall, was more ambiguous. The circumstances of the appropriation of a Roman building at Grove Farm, Market Lavington, are similar to those of the isolated female burial at Harlestone House. In this case too, the burial location is more likely to have been directly influenced by the presence of a contemporary settlement, rather than the earlier occupation of the site.

At the Monkton Deverill cemetery, several of the graves were found to be lined with blocks of Roman masonry, although in the absence of structural evidence for Roman settlement, the site cannot be included in this category. At Basset Down, Wroughton, however, more concrete indications of Roman settlement were located, together with reused Roman artefacts among the grave-goods.

Routeways

Twelve sites (13% of the dataset) are associated with Roman roads, three directly and nine indirectly. This is higher than the proportion of sites associated with long barrows, hillforts, or Roman built structures. This is the only category with which a greater number of sites are associated indirectly than directly; the majority of associated burial sites lie 50-300m from a road. This may reflect the potential visibility of burial sites from a considerable distance along such roads, allowing sites to remain discernible even when set back from the routeway (Chester-Kadwell 2009: 142).

In Wanborough, Callas Hill I and Foxhill are both sited alongside Ermin Street, and it is possible that the Roman road contributed to the forging of identities in this area during the earlier part of the period of study (see Chapter 8). All four sites on Overton Down are found within 300m of the Roman road between *Aquae Sulis* and *Cunetio*; one lies within 50m. Quidhampton also lies close to a major intersection of Roman roads.

The two sites at Coombe Bissett also lie within 300m of Roman roads, while Ford I and II in Laverstock lie approximately 150m north of the road between Winchester and Old Sarum. These two pairs of sites are high-status seventh century burials, undoubtedly located close to corridors of communication to enhance visibility and access.

BOUNDARIES

Parish boundaries

Thirty-seven of the 94 sites in the dataset (39.4%) lie within 100m of a parish boundary (Fig. 5.2.11; Fig. 5.2.12). This is broadly comparable with the results of the analysis conducted by Bonney (1966), which found that 42% of 69 sites in Wiltshire lay on or within 152.4m (500 feet) of a parish boundary. Twenty of the burial sites which lie within 100m of a parish boundary (54%) are directly associated with barrows or probable barrows, four of which are likely to be of primary early medieval construction (Alvediston, Coombe Bissett I, Ford II and Roundway 3).

Although there is a strong correlation between parish boundaries and burials in the Wiltshire dataset, it is important to determine whether other independent factors may have influenced the location of the burials and/or the boundaries. The average parish size in Wiltshire is 6.7 km², compared to c. 7.9 km² for Hampshire and c. 6.9 km² for Dorset (Southall and Burton 2004), and it is therefore statistically more likely than in other counties for any given point within a parish to be closer to a boundary.

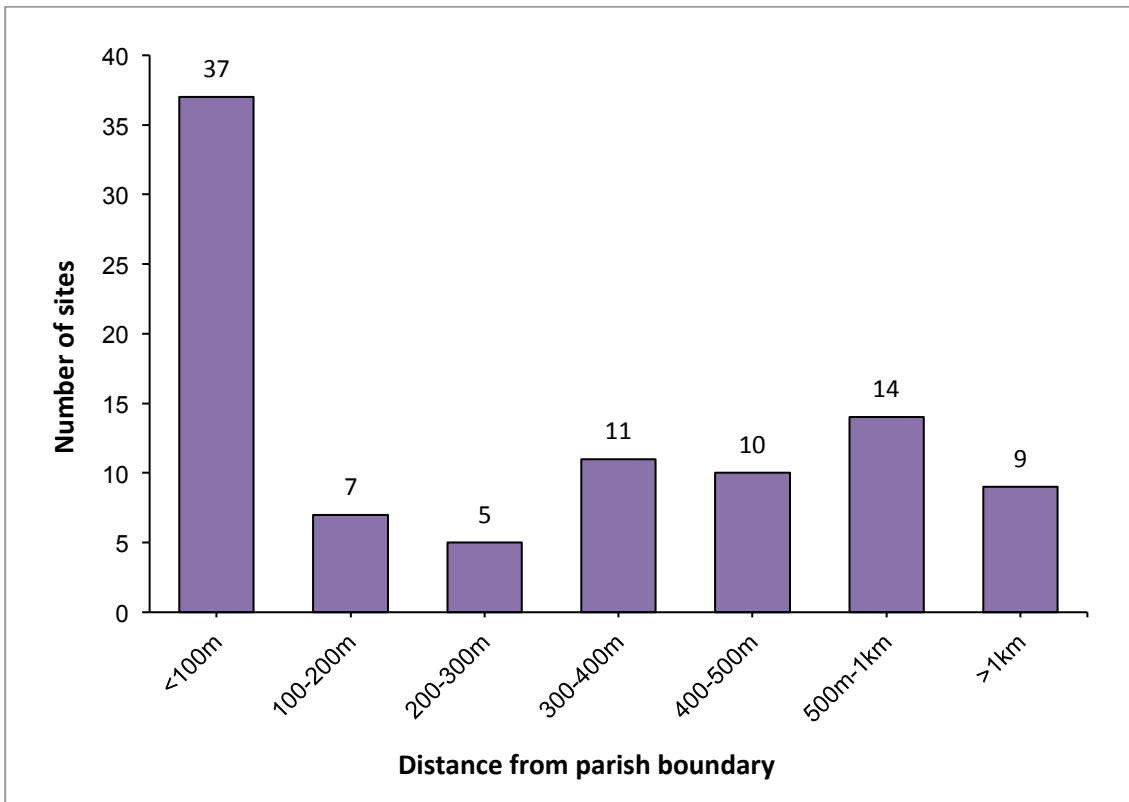


Fig. 5.2.11 Graph showing the relationship between the distance from parish boundaries and the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites.

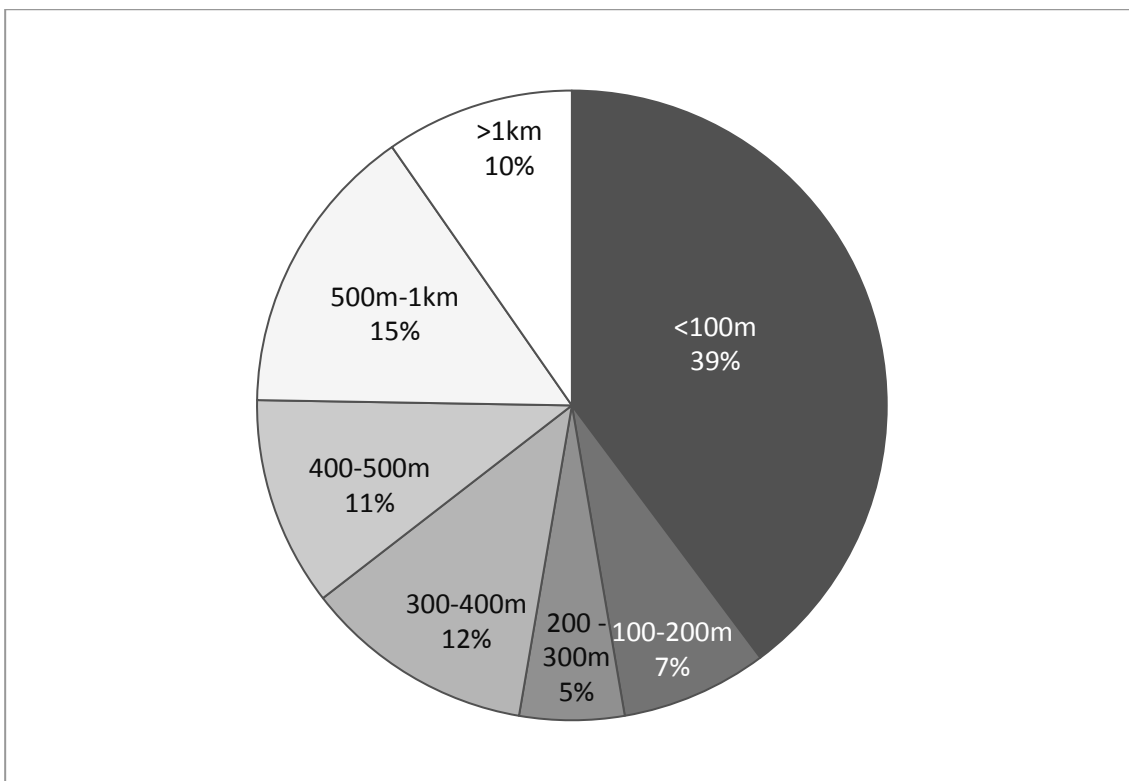


Fig. 5.2.12 Chart showing the relationship between distance from parish boundaries and the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites.

The relationship between parishes and the topography and hydrology is particularly evident on the chalk downland in the south of the county, where strip parishes often straddle the rivers and terminate along the summits of intervening ridges. Numerous sites in southern Wiltshire lie on such ridges and are thus also close to parish boundaries. From the early medieval period, if not earlier, land was divided in a way that was most efficient for subsistence farming, and a combination of topographical zones and soil types was therefore incorporated into each tithing or estate: the valley floor was used for meadow, the lower slopes for arable, and the upper areas for pasture (Betley 2000: 35; McOmish *et al.* 2002: 12). Thus many parishes in central Wiltshire, for example, such as Pewsey, Marden and Wilsford, are distributed between the downland of Salisbury Plain and the lower lying and fertile Vale of Pewsey.

Draper (2004: 57) has demonstrated that all 30 of the early medieval burial sites in his Wiltshire sample which were within 150m of a parish boundary also lay within 1km of a major routeway. A kilometre is a considerable distance to be considered an association, and many of the routeways Draper cites are unlikely to be earlier than, or even contemporary with, the burial sites. Yet it must be conceded that the majority of the sites in the Wiltshire dataset for this thesis which do lie under 100m from a parish boundary are indeed close to Roman roads, *herepaðas* or other earlier or contemporary routes, which either define the boundary itself or are a separate feature of the burial location.

Hundred boundaries

Sixteen burial sites in the Wiltshire dataset (17%) are located within 100m of a Domesday hundred boundary, and 58 sites (61.7%) lie within 1km. Thirty-five sites (37.2%) are located over 1km from a hundred boundary (Fig. 5.2.13; Fig. 5.2.14). Eight (50%) of the sites on hundred boundaries are directly associated with barrows, although three of these are probably primary early medieval mounds.

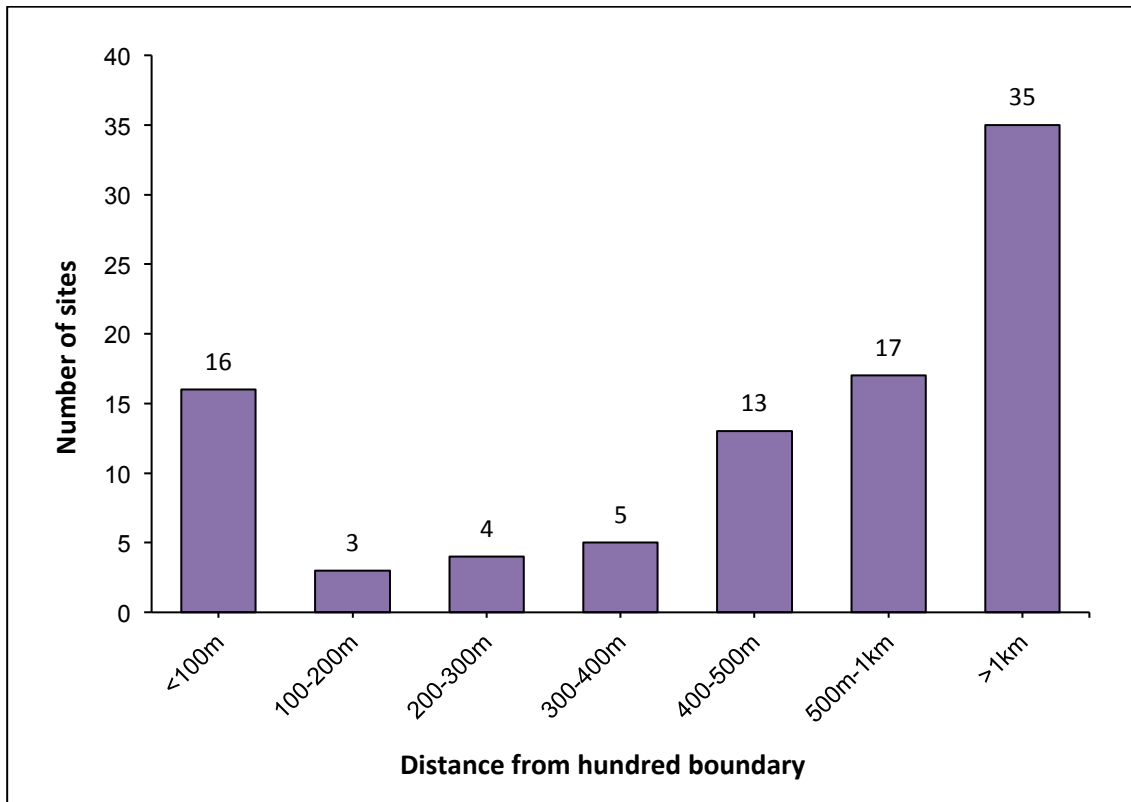


Fig. 5.2.13 Graph showing the relationship between distance from Domesday hundred boundaries and the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites.

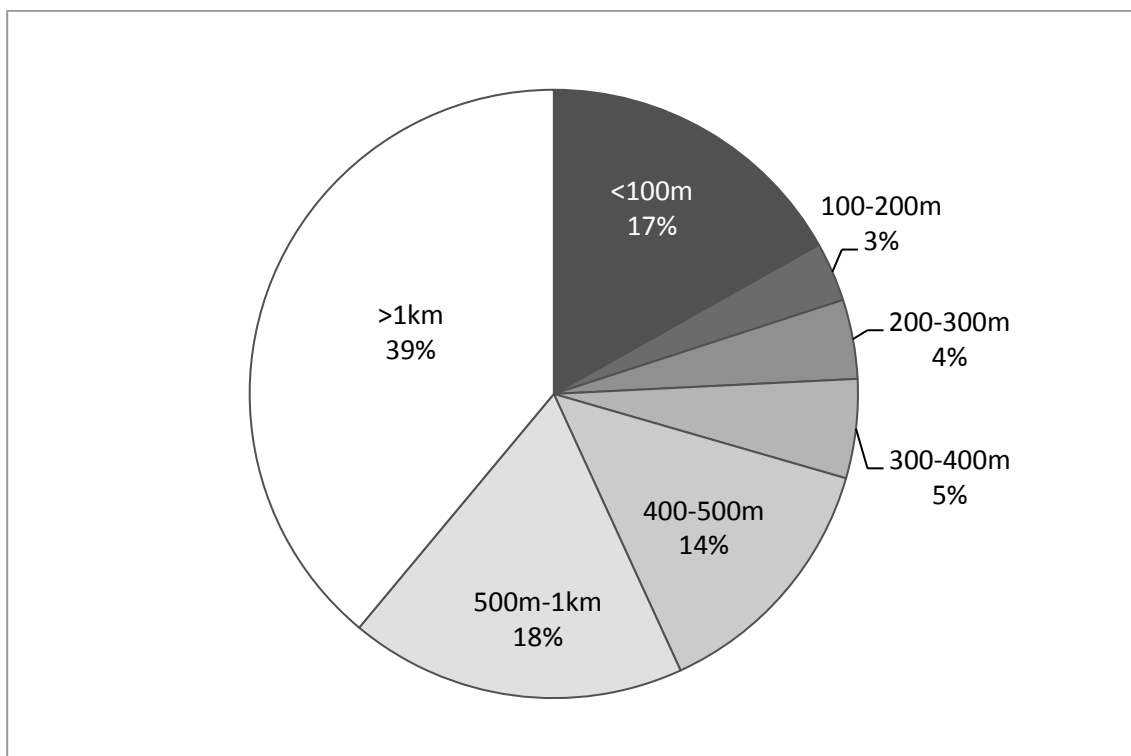


Fig. 5.2.14 Chart showing the relationship between distance from hundred boundaries and the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites.

There does not appear to be a positive correlation between the number of sites and distance from hundred boundaries, as the proportion of sites within 100m is low compared with those at a greater distance. It is important to consider, however, that these territorial units are much larger in area than parishes, and 61.7% of sites lie within 1km of a hundred boundary, even though hundreds in Wiltshire can be up to 20km wide. It is also essential to consider the individual sites in context, and although there may not be an overall correlation, the relationship between certain individual sites and hundred boundaries may be worthy of consideration. Although back-projection inevitably has its problems, it is possible that some of these units preserve earlier folk territories. At Alvediston, for example, the boundary follows the ridge-top, and at Sherrington, it follows the River Wylye; both natural territorial markers.

SUMMARY

The objectives of the Wiltshire chapters were to determine the extent and scale of the funerary appropriation of the antecedent landscape during the period of study, and to scrutinise the nature of this phenomenon. It has been confirmed that this was indeed a widespread and popular practice: 73% of burial sites are associated with at least one visible element of the earlier landscape. It has also been established that a broad range of earlier features were appropriated. Secondary barrow burial was a particularly common phenomenon in the county during the period of study: 40% of all burial sites are directly associated with an earlier barrow. This was an enduring custom, which nonetheless underwent a process of evolution through the period of study. Cemeteries pertaining to communities or kin groups which focused on earlier barrows, such as Barrow Clump, Overton Down and Winterbourne Gunner, are a defining feature of the fifth and sixth centuries. From the seventh century, funerary sites which appropriate antecedent features are ostensibly characterised by individual burials, although this may be a reflection of the limited extent of excavation areas. Overall, the majority of burial sites associated with earlier features date from the sixth to early eighth centuries, although dating is far from satisfactory. These results are consistent with Semple's findings in the Avebury area (2003; 2013: 42).

Specific individual monuments or features were chosen due to a number of factors, including morphology and adaptability, topographic position and proximity to or visibility from routeways or contemporary settlements. Certain barrow types, such as bell barrows and long barrows, appear to have been preferentially chosen in particular geographical areas. As early Christian sources attest, modified barrows or mounds with added structures, such as the Roman barrows with post-built surrounds on Overton Hill, were 'powerful ancestral sites' (Semple 2013: 105). This could also apply to mounds of contemporary construction, such as the 'cenotaph' barrow at Roche Court Down (Barrow 1). A number of barrows of primary early medieval construction have been identified, although such monuments are often difficult to distinguish from earlier barrows (Musty 1969: 111). This can perhaps be seen as a localised variation on the practice of appropriation, although it should also be contextualised within wider European developments in above-ground monumentality (Blair 2005: 53; Halsall 2010: 279).

Geology certainly exerted a decisive influence on burial location, as an overwhelming majority of sites are situated on chalk bedrock, although this is partly a result of archaeological biases. It was also observed that the interface between different geologies was an important zone during the period of study. Whilst there is a correlation between burial sites and proximity to territorial boundaries, this may be due to independent factors, notably topography and hydrology. Through the examination of documentary and place-name evidence in combination with the archaeological data, it has been shown that contemporary routes through the landscape were significant in shaping patterns of burial in Wiltshire; this is related to issues of display, access and identity. There is evidence to support the contention that the adoption of prehistoric and Roman features, as part of a complex funerary package (Semple 2013: 44), was a strategy that was employed and adapted by various elite groups in response to a changing territorial system around the beginning of the 'Middle Saxon' period.

Ultimately, the Wiltshire study area is a somewhat arbitrary construction, as the county did not exist for much of the period of study. It is therefore important to look beyond its boundaries before drawing any firm conclusions. Major themes that have arisen through the examination and analysis of the data from

Wiltshire, and other patterns which will undoubtedly become apparent through subsequent research, will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 6.1

HAMPSHIRE: BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

The area now recognised as the county of Hampshire represents a key component of the Wessex heartland. By the time the city of Winchester was appointed the *de facto* capital of the Kingdom of Wessex in the ninth century, it had been a seat of considerable power for three centuries. The founding of a minster church in the second quarter of the seventh century, and the subsequent relocation of the West Saxon bishopric from the Gewissan domain of the Upper Thames valley to this former Roman *civitas* capital on the banks of the Itchen, heralded a geographical shift in power towards the Winchester area (Yorke 1989: 93). The establishment and growth of the trading *emporium* of *Hamwic* at the mouth of the River Itchen over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, and the development of a proto-urban centre in Winchester itself by the end of the ‘Middle Saxon’ period, was supported and facilitated by increased agricultural production and manufacturing in the rural hinterland (Moreland 2000; Stoodley 2002), a further indicator of the region’s ascendancy. Yet despite its growing power and wealth, the territory now recognised as Hampshire was still highly fragmented during the ‘Early–Middle Saxon’ period, and a shire did not begin to take shape until the ninth century at the earliest.

The period of study of this thesis—the mid-fifth to the mid-ninth century AD—was a time of great change in the Hampshire area, and this process of transformation is reflected in the burial record. New burial grounds were founded in rural areas from the seventh century; and by the eighth century, community cemeteries scattered along the river valleys began to be supplanted by densely distributed cemeteries in the two major settlements. In common with the situation in Wiltshire, pressure from surrounding kingdoms and the emergence of a new elite class from the early seventh century are also reflected in isolated burials and, arguably, increasingly hierarchical funerary practices. There is a great deal of variation, however, and complex patterns can

be observed and deciphered through detailed examination of the burial record (cf. Dinwiddy 2011; Stoodley 2006; Stoodley and Stedman 2001).

This chapter will begin by summarising the archaeological investigation traditions of Hampshire and the late Roman and 'Early Saxon' settlement background. The early medieval territorial background will also be addressed, before outlining the county's physical geography and landscape character. An in-depth review of the funerary evidence from the period of study will then follow.

Research traditions

In the early years of antiquarianism, the upstanding Bronze Age monuments of Hampshire attracted less attention than those of Wiltshire or Dorset, or at least yielded less spectacular finds and less comprehensive reporting (Allen 2007; Grinsell 1938-40). The Rev. Richard Iremonger was responsible for the earliest known barrow excavations in Hampshire, opening several in his native village of Wherwell in 1805 (Everill 2012: 402). The labourers Stephen and John Parker of Heytesbury, Wiltshire, who, with their employer William Cunnington senior, excavated over 400 Wiltshire barrows between 1795 and 1810, also made a minor foray into Hampshire. Working with Richard Iremonger, the Parker brothers investigated several barrows and parts of the hillfort on Old Winchester Hill, on the boundary between Meonstoke and Exton, in 1807 (Everill 2012: 405; Schadla-Hall 1977). The Hampshire Field Club, founded in 1885 by T.W. Shore, was, in its early years, concerned with the passive appreciation of extant earthworks, monuments and standing buildings, with few reports of excavations taking place (Whinney 1985: 22). Notable early exceptions were the small-scale but comprehensive excavations of the Roman town at Silchester, carried out between 1889 and 1909 (Whinney 1985: 22).

The bedrock geology has been a key influencing factor in the presence, survival, recognition and investigation of the major elements of the archaeology of the county (Allen 2007: 2). The Hampshire chalkland, in common with much of Wessex, was featured prominently in the work of early pioneers of aerial reconnaissance, notably the early work of Crawford and Keiller (1928). Impressive monuments in calcareous areas were the target of excavations in

the earlier twentieth century, notably C.F.C. Hawkes' work on hillforts (Whinney 1985: 26-7). Exceptions were the Silchester excavations in the late nineteenth century, in an area underlain by London Clay (cf. Fulford and Clarke 2002), and the investigation of New Forest barrows by Piggott (1943). A countywide survey of barrows was published by Grinsell (1938-40).

The first summary of the 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeology of the county, compiled by R. A. Smith as part of the Victoria County History series (Doubleday 1900), drew attention to the paucity of artefactual evidence from the Hampshire mainland in comparison with the Isle of Wight (Hinton 2007: 1-2). In the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, the main source of data was the occasional discovery made during building work or railway construction, such as at West Ham near Basingstoke, or at Droxford (Anon 1908: 79-80; Dale 1903; 1906). The first systematic excavations of early medieval cemetery sites took place after the Second World War, when Captain Guy Knocker was put in charge of investigating discoveries made during road construction, such as at Snells Corner, Horndean, in 1947 (Knocker 1955). From the 1950s, the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works began to finance archaeological 'rescue' excavations, which improved prospects for the investigation of cemeteries, despite modest budgets (Hinton 2007: 2). The first major cemetery sites to benefit from this funding were Winnall (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), Worthy Park (Hawkes and Grainger 2003) and Alton (Evison 1988), excavated in the 1950s and 60s. The 'Early Saxon' cemetery at Portway East (Cook and Dacre 1985) was discovered in the mid-1970s as a result of the expansion of Andover, and excavations there were funded by a grant from the Ministry of the Environment. Around the same time, similar financing also enabled an extensive cemetery to be uncovered at Droxford, following the disuse of the railway line which had first prompted its discovery (Aldsworth 1978).

Important research into post-Roman and early medieval settlement also took place in the 1960s and 70s, notably work by Martin Biddle (1972; 1975) in Winchester, and by Peter Addyman and David Hill (1968; 1969) in Southampton. This was also a fruitful period for the investigation of early medieval rural settlements, including those at Chalton Down (Addyman and Leigh 1973; Addyman *et al.* 1972; Cunliffe 1973), Cowdery's Down near Basingstoke (Millett 1983), and Old Down near Andover (Davies 1979).

Development-led investigations, such as those driven by the construction of the M3 motorway, which cuts across the Middle Itchen and Upper Dever valleys, revealed a great amount of detail (Fasham and Whinney 1991).

Hampshire represents an effective study area for research into the early medieval period, with a fairly ample range of material now available, though not quite comparable with Wiltshire. Translation and interpretation of the county's surviving charter bounds was carried out by Grundy (1921; 1924; 1926; 1927; 1928); and some, but not all, of these elucidations have now been updated as part of the *LangScape* project.¹ Gover's (1961) unpublished manuscript remains the only comprehensive source on the county's place-names; a study of the settlement names has been published by Richard Coates (1989), but does not include field-names and lacks the detail of the EPNS volumes. Most crucially, a plethora of early medieval burial and settlement sites have been excavated to modern standards, principally through development-led archaeology. In terms of recent archaeological research, Nick Stoodley (e.g. 1999; 2006; 2007a; 2010) has been one of the most prolific investigators of early medieval Hampshire, with Barbara Yorke (e.g. 1989; 1994; 2010) approaching the material predominantly from a historical perspective. Little consideration has yet been paid to the specific topic of this thesis, however.

Roman inheritance and 'Early Saxon' settlement

During the Romano-British period, fortified and unfortified towns—notably the *civitas* capitals *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) and *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester)—alongside smaller market towns, were a prominent feature of the area that would later become Hampshire (Fig. 6.1.1). Little was known about the archaeology of Roman Winchester prior to the early twentieth century, and systematic excavation did not commence until the 1940s (Clarke 1979; Collis 1978; Cunliffe 1964; Qualmann 1997). *Venta Belgarum* was established in the first century AD, and as the capital of the *Belgae*, was the fifth largest and one of the most important towns in Roman Britain (Qualmann 1997). *Calleva Atrebatum*, which was also established in the first century AD, and covered c. 40 hectares, developed from an Iron Age *oppidum* (Fulford *et al.* 2006a).

¹ <http://www.langscape.org.uk>

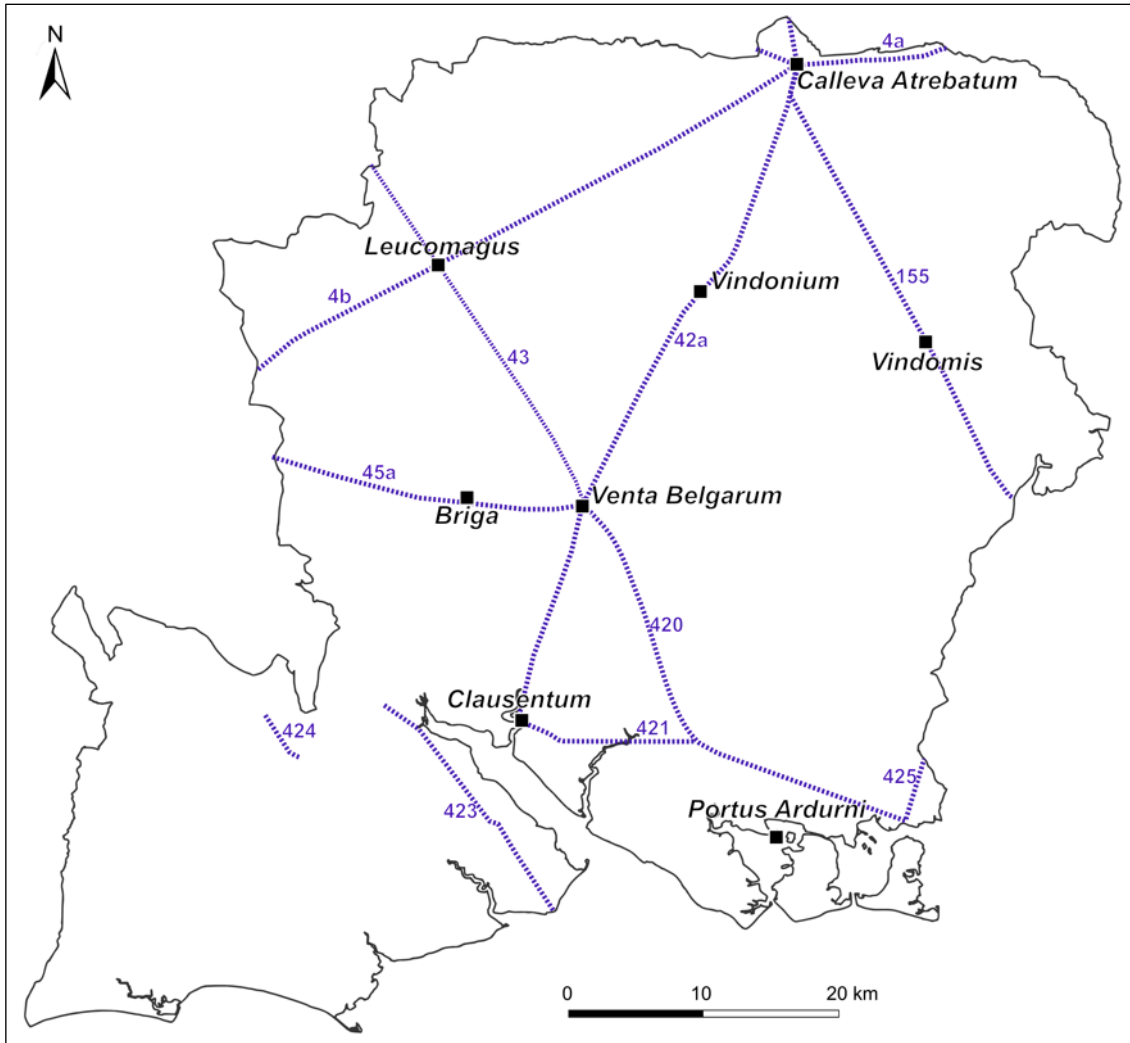


Fig. 6.1.1 Roman roads, and definite or probable Roman towns and forts, in Hampshire (after Margary 1973).

Villas were located predominantly in the major river valleys and in the lowlands, on the fringes of the chalkland, and around the towns, with the fullest extent of villa development probably taking place in the late third and fourth centuries AD. The rise of large villa estates in the later Roman period implies the existence of largely dependent rural populations (Massey 2006: 24). Intensive farming on the chalkland is evidenced by large field systems and embedded farms, and the fundamental landscape character of some areas may not have differed greatly from that of the Early Bronze Age (Ellison and Harris 1972). Thus Romano-British rural settlement existed within a 'dense matrix of contextual landscape features, many of considerable antiquity', including linear boundaries, fields and trackways (Palmer 1984).

Evidence for temples and religious buildings is elusive, and such structures have been found only at Winchester, Silchester, and Hayling Island (Downey *et al.* 1979; King and Soffe 1998). There is an increasing awareness, however, of the prevalence of more informal rural religious sites or *loci consecrati*, attested by votive activity at prehistoric sites and natural features (Massey 2006: 31). Late Roman inhumation cemeteries are generally well attested in the county, notably at Owslebury, 6km to the southeast of modern Winchester (Collis 1994), and at Lankhills on the periphery of the same city (Booth *et al.* 2010; Clarke 1979). The latter site included six atypical burials, which exhibited features similar those seen in 'Early Saxon' graves; these burials may date from the fifth century, although evidence suggests that the use of the cemetery ended abruptly at the beginning of that century (Booth *et al.* 2010; see below). Little is known regarding the extent and location of cemeteries at Silchester, aside from early cremation burials (Fulford *et al.* 2006a).

Evidence for the continuation of urban life beyond the early fifth century remains elusive at the two *civitas* capitals. There is, however, certainly a strong case to suggest that *Calleva Atrebatum* was occupied between the fifth and seventh centuries, before its abrupt abandonment (Fulford *et al.* 2006a: 273-82; Hinton 2007: 4). The Roman forts at *Portus Adurni* (Portchester) and *Clausentum* (at Bitterne, on the eastern shore of the Itchen in modern Southampton), both of which produced sixth-century, if not fifth-century, artefacts, may have remained in use (Hinton 2007: 5); post-Roman burials have been found at the latter site, albeit dating from the seventh century at the earliest (see below).

Fifth- to early eighth-century rural settlements appear to have been situated predominantly along the river valleys, such as adjacent to the River Wey near Alton (HHER 39130), close to the River Loddon at Cowdery's Down near Basingstoke (Millett 1983), along the River Anton near Andover (HHER 23089), and at various sites along the Rivers Avon, Test, Dever, Itchen and Meon (Fig. 6.1.2). The high-altitude sixth-century settlement at Chalton Down (Addyman and Leigh 1973; Addyman *et al.* 1972), on the edge of the South Downs, is some distance from a permanent watercourse, but is served by seasonally-flowing chalk winterbournes.

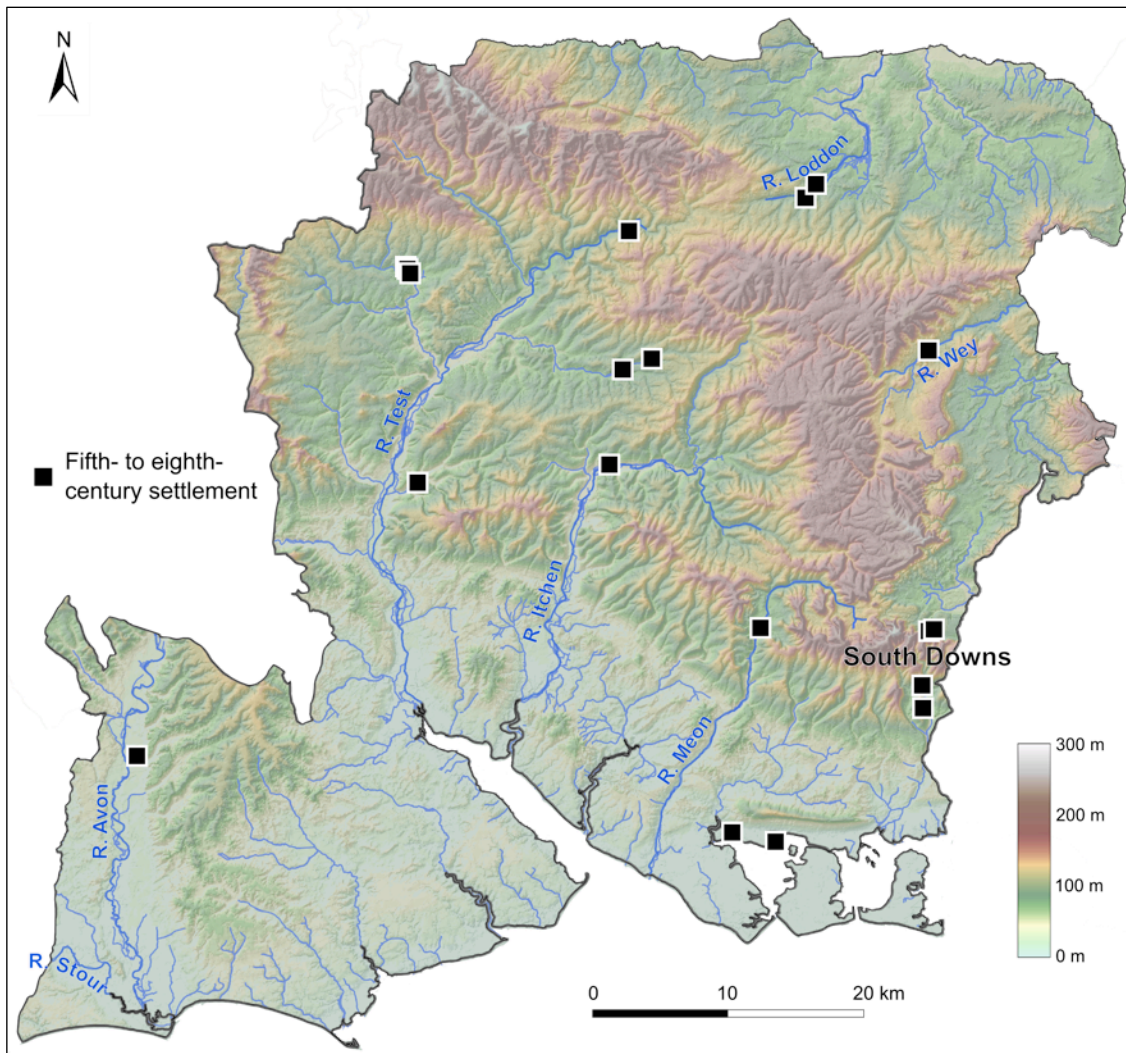


Fig. 6.1.2 Fifth- to early eighth-century settlements or possible settlements in Hampshire (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Territorial background

Evidence from the Burghal Hidage suggests that the earliest territory of *Ham tunscir* was created from the former ‘Jutish provinces’ in the southern part of the county, perhaps during the reign of Ine in AD 688-726, and comprised the area south of Winchester (Yorke 1989: 96; 1995: 88). Another ‘proto-shire’ encompassed the area between Winchester and Wallingford, including the *regio* of the *Basingas* (around Basingstoke). The Winchester area was later merged with *Ham tunscir* to form the medieval county of Hampshire, and the land that now forms part of modern Berkshire became severed from northern Hampshire as a result of Mercian overlordship in the seventh or eighth centuries.

century, became the seat of the West Saxon see in the 660s, and was the only bishopric in Wessex until the founding of another at Sherborne in 705. There is also mention of a monastery at Redbridge, 5km west of Southampton, in AD 686 (Hase 1988: 45). Hase (1988) has discussed the evidence that the system of mother churches in Hampshire was created by an act of royal policy in the late seventh or early eighth century, which linked the provision of parochial churches to the *villa regalis* system. The division of minster *parochiae* into smaller units has been documented in relation to Twynham, in modern Christchurch (Blair 2005: 514-9), and charters provide further evidence for the sub-division of larger units.

‘Proto-urban’ settlement

The ‘Middle–Late Saxon’ period saw the emergence of two key West Saxon centres: one in modern Southampton, at the mouth of the Itchen, and another at Winchester, c. 18km upstream along the same river. Following the regression of urbanism in the post-imperial period, the late seventh and early eighth centuries saw the development of *emporia* or *wics* (Hill and Cowie 2001; Hodges 1982; Scull 1997: 273-4). *Hamwic*, in modern Southampton, rose to prominence in the early eighth century, and by the middle of the same century covered 45 hectares and had a population of at least two or three thousand (Morton 1992b). Though not strictly urban, it can be defined as a large non-agrarian settlement, which specialised in the trading of goods and the minting of coins. Yorke (1995: 68) has argued that it is ‘inconceivable that such a large body of people could have been brought together without royal involvement’, and has speculated that the formation of a planned settlement at *Hamwic* was part of a strategy devised by King Ine in order to keep the former ‘Jutish’ lands under close control. More recently, however, the discovery of a seventh-century cemetery at St Mary’s Stadium (see below) has prompted suggestions that it was not founded *de novo* in Ine’s reign; rather it developed from an earlier royal estate (Stoodley 2002). Although *Hamwic* was in terminal decline by the late ninth century, a successor settlement developed shortly after, under 500m to the southwest (Morton 1992a: 73).

As *wic* settlements declined, *burhs* developed, and Winchester became an archetypal *burh* by the end of the ninth century. There is, however, no evidence

to suggest that the area within the Roman walls of Winchester was urban in character, or indeed even densely populated, prior to this time (Biddle 1973: 246), and it has even been suggested that the site was under cultivation (Cherryson 2005a: 249). Yet the fact that it was chosen as the location of the see suggests it was an important focal point, conceivably a royal estate or residence (Biddle 1973: 237).

Topography, hydrology and geology

The topography of the county is varied, characterised in particular by a series of chalk folds running approximately from west to east. From south to north these are: the Winchester–East Meon Anticline, the Winchester–Kings Somborne Syncline, the Stockbridge Anticline and the Micheldever Syncline (Fig. 6.1.4). The Winchester–East Meon Anticline is particularly high in altitude, meeting the South Downs at its eastern end. The coastal region is relatively flat, intersected by shallow valleys containing alluvial deposits. The Hampshire Downs form a major watershed, with rivers to the north of this catchment flowing towards the Thames, and those to the south draining into the Solent and English Channel. These two drainage basins are known as the London Basin and the Hampshire Basin respectively. In the Hampshire Basin catchment area, a series of north–south valleys have been carved by the major rivers: the Avon, Test, Itchen and Meon. Although erosion during interglacial periods imprinted deep coombes and long ridges into the chalk downland, very few permanent watercourses now flow through this landscape, due to the porous nature of the bedrock. On the periphery of the chalk downlands, however, seasonal streams known as winterbournes or lavants run intermittently. These ephemeral watercourses often feature in early medieval charter bounds as *floda* or *flodan*, and in Hampshire, this element it is thought to signify a stream that only runs following heavy rain (Jepson 2011: 53); the term appears in several charters, such as those of Droxford (S446; S276) and West Tisted (S488; S511).

Aldsworth (1974: 16) has suggested that Hampshire's water table may have dropped dramatically over the past millennium, perhaps by as much as 60m in some areas. The decreasing water table has been exacerbated by over-abstraction of water from the chalk aquifer, particularly over the past two centuries.

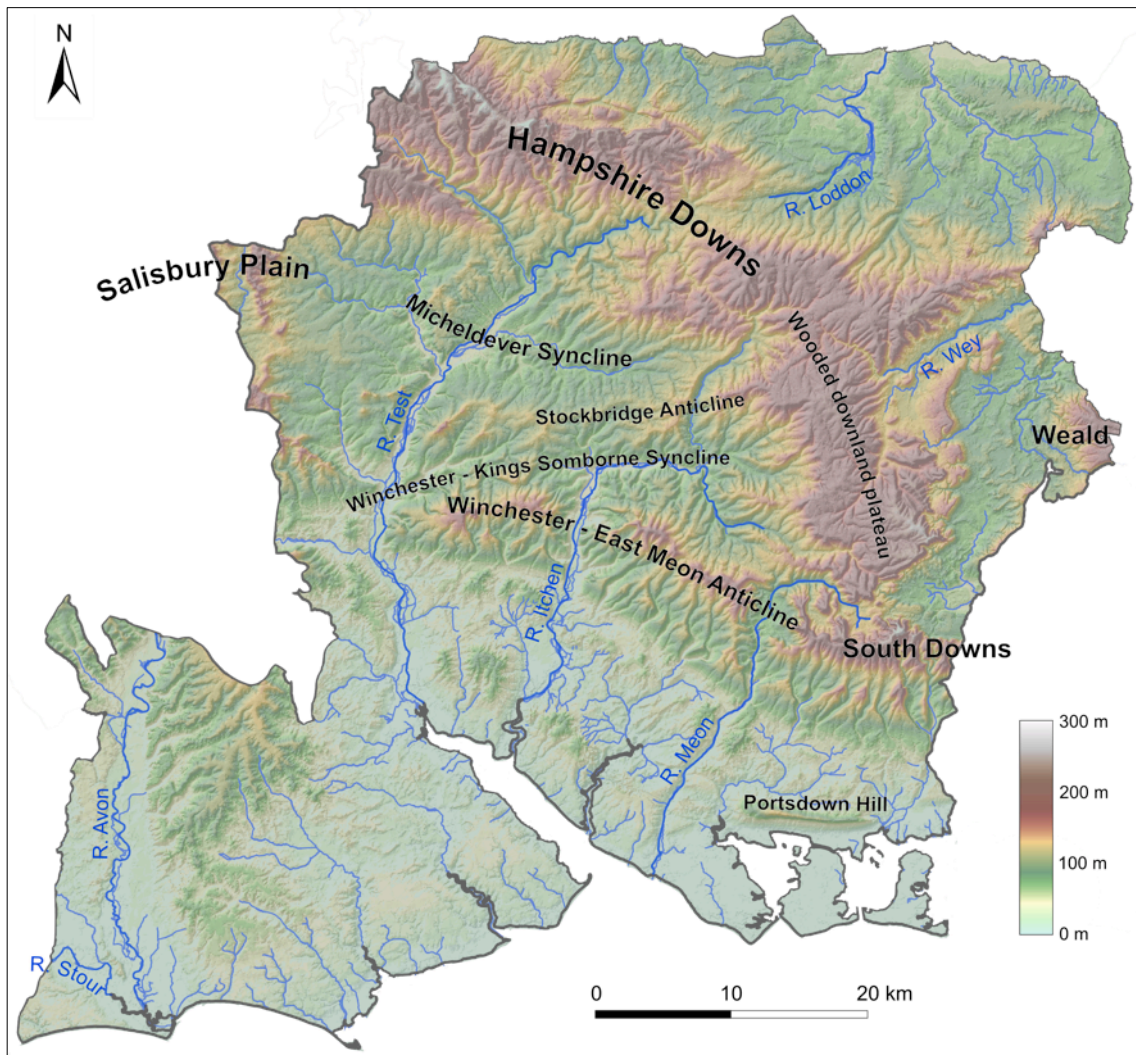


Fig. 6.1.4 The topography and hydrology of Hampshire (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Calcareous deposits dominate the bedrock geology of much of central Hampshire, forming a wide and thick belt across the county (Fig. 6.1.5). This gives rise to characteristic hills, scarps and downland. Superficial deposits of gravel and alluvium have formed in the major valleys in more recent times, while two earlier types of deposit exist in places on the chalk plateau surfaces: sarsen stones—the compacted remains of Eocene sands—and clay-with-flints, the result of the decomposition of chalk *in situ* or the destruction of sand and clay strata (Klingelhöfer 1991b: 26-7). Sarsens have been largely cleared from the landscape for agricultural improvement and as a source of building material; and while clay-with-flints deposits also originally covered a much more extensive area, these are now found only on the summits of hills and ridges.

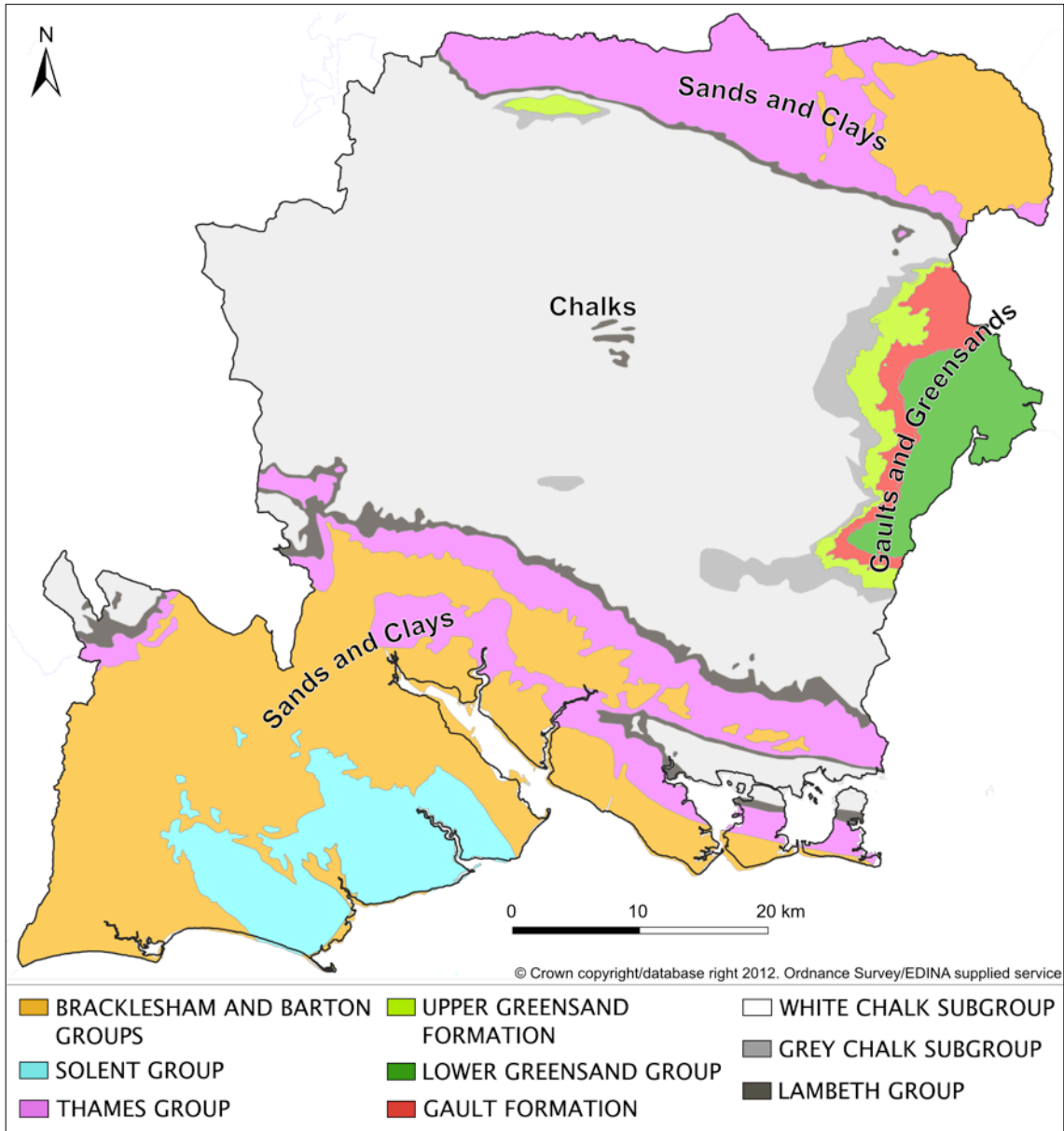


Fig. 6.1.5 The bedrock geology of Hampshire.

The Weald anticline—the bulk of which lies in Sussex, Surrey and Kent—extends into the east of Hampshire, in the form of the elevated Greensand Ridge and the clay Low Weald. The oldest geological formations in the county—greensands and gault formations deposited in the Lower Cretaceous period—outcrop to the east of Alton, close to the border with southwestern Surrey and northwestern Sussex. There are several contrasting rock strata in a relatively small area, creating a varied and distinctive landscape. Both northern and southern Hampshire are characterised by softer clays and sands, deposited in the more recent Tertiary period. There is also a substantial concentration of soft, unconsolidated (superficial) deposits in these lowland areas from the Tertiary and Quaternary periods.

The pays of Hampshire

For the purposes of this thesis, six *pays* have been identified within Hampshire (Fig. 6.1.6).

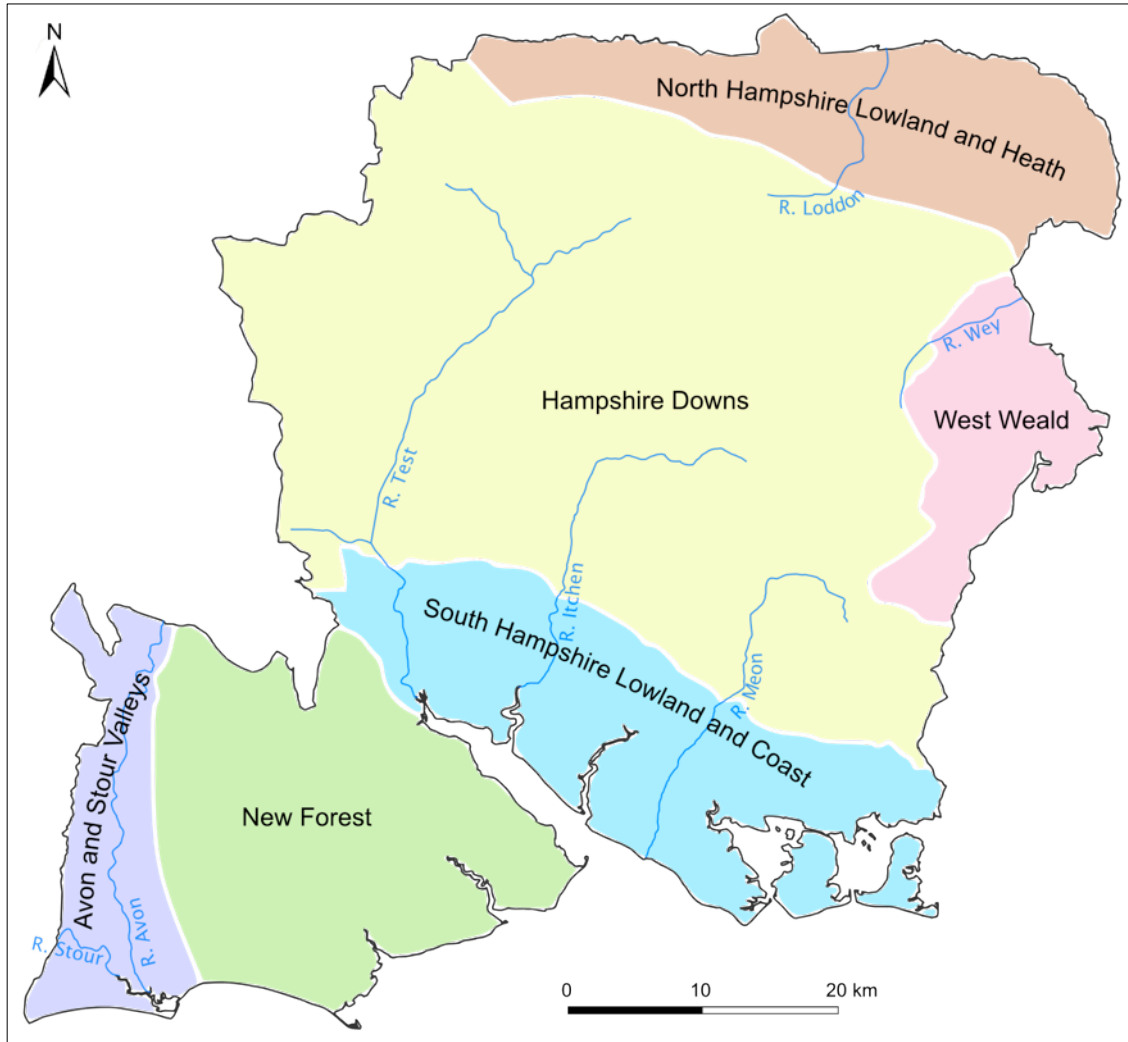


Fig. 6.1.6 The *pays* of Hampshire.

North Hampshire Lowland and Heath

This is a generally low-lying area of mixed arable and pasture, with areas of ancient woodland. The landform is gently undulating, with altitudes ranging between 50 and 100m aOD. In the eastern part of the *pays*, sandy soils give rise to acidic conditions and waterlogging, and a strong heathland character. Further west, London Clay and permeable sands give rise to loamy soils, which are heavy in places, and the landscape is dissected by chalk streams.

There is a noticeable absence of Bronze Age barrows or settlements in the southern part of the *pays*, while there is a moderate density of barrows in the

northern part, closer to the Berkshire border (Gardiner 2007). In the far north of the *pays* lies Silchester which, as previously discussed, was an Iron Age settlement and later the Roman *civitas* capital, *Calleva Atrebatum* (Fulford *et al.* 2006a). The uniformity of the northern boundary of Hampshire, with its apparent disregard for earlier territorial units and its conspicuous incorporation of Silchester, implies its imposition rather than gradual negotiation, perhaps, as suspected by Margaret Gelling (1976: 844-5), during a period of contestation between Wessex and Mercia in the seventh or eighth century (Yorke 1995: 88). *Calleva* did not, however, re-emerge as an important early medieval town, and it has been suggested that there was deliberacy in its abandonment, probably by the early seventh century (Fulford *et al.* 2006a: 280).

A low density of Domesday plough-teams is recorded in the eastern corner of this *pays*, reflecting the infertility of the damp, acidic, sandy and gravelly soils, while a moderate density is recorded in the western part (Fig. 6.1.7).

West Weald

As previously mentioned, this is the western extremity of a larger *pays* which is located predominantly in Sussex, Surrey and Kent. This is a distinctive, varied and complex landscape, incorporating plateau outcrops and steep escarpments. The landform reflects the underlying geology, which consists of gault clays in the west (part of the Low Weald), and sandstones and cherts of the Lower Greensand formation in the east (part of the Greensand Ridge). Altitudes of 180m aOD are reached on the Greensand Ridge in the east of the *pays*, close to the Sussex border. The greensand hills and the sand and gravel plateau are characterised by dense tree cover, although in many areas this is a result of mass planting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historically, the generally low fertility and marginal nature of the sandy soils gave rise to a heathy unenclosed landscape with areas of dense woodland (Hampshire County Council 2012b). Although there are a considerable number of Bronze Age barrows, the apparent absence of field systems or settlements suggests a lack of landscape exploitation during the later prehistoric period. In the Romano-British period, proto-industrial activity, such as pottery manufacturing, utilised the woodland resources.

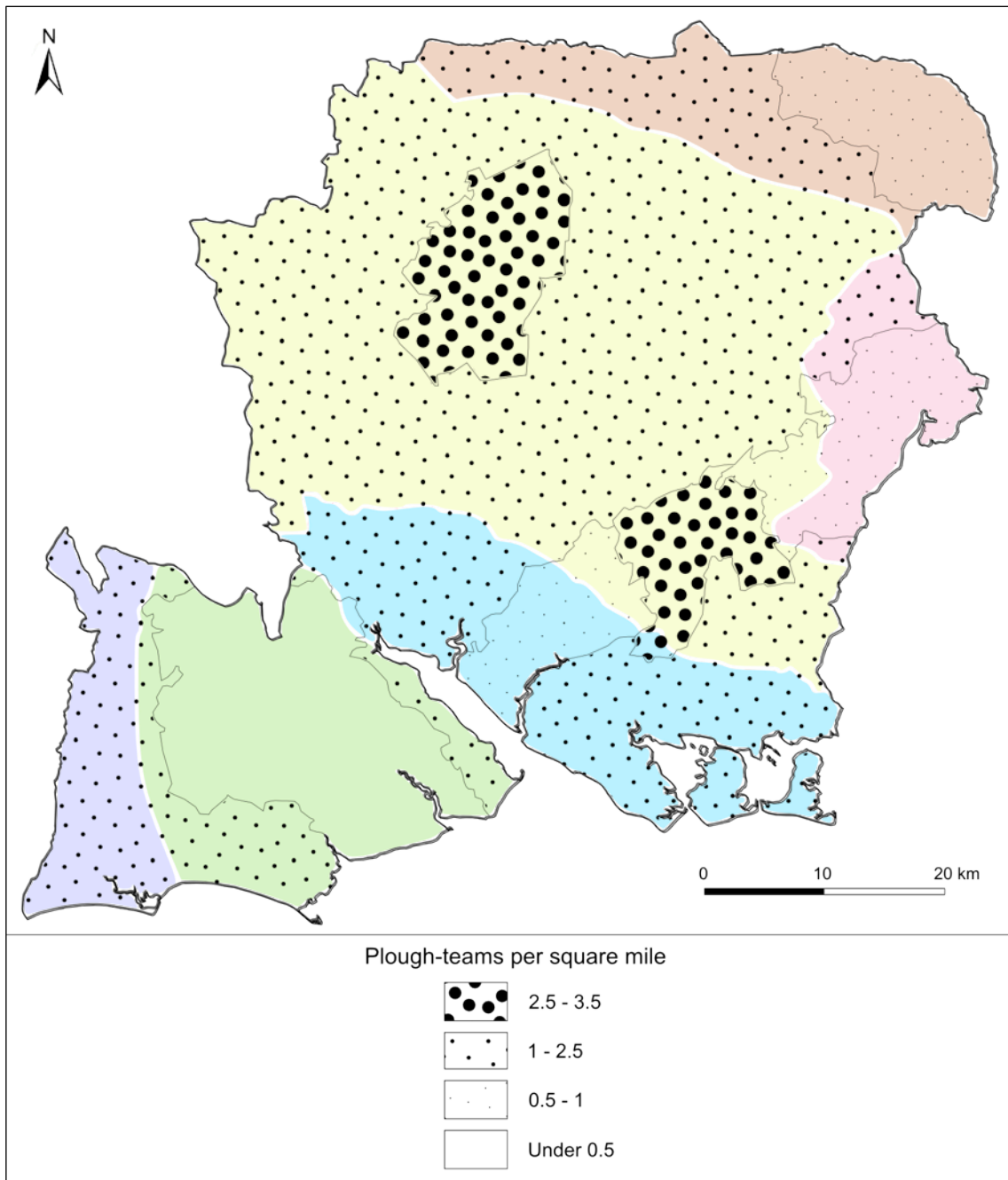


Fig. 6.1.7 Density of Domesday plough-teams in Hampshire (after Welldon Finn 1962: Fig. 92), overlain on map of *pays*.

The Weald was known as *Andredesweald*, ‘Andred’s forest’, and was also referred to as *mycclan* or *micla wudu*, the ‘great wood’, attesting to its far-reaching extent in the ‘Late Saxon’ period and earlier (Hooke 2010: 118-20, 123). The OE element *weald* is used in literary sources to denote ‘woodland’, although continuous tree cover in this *pays* cannot necessarily be inferred from the use of the term. Eighth-century charter evidence does, however, suggest that this was an area in which woodland and wood-pasture were divided between various folk groups to be utilised for resources and seasonal grazing

(Hooke 2010: 138). A generally low density of Domesday plough-teams is recorded for the southern part of the pays, with a higher density in and around the Wey valley in the northern part (see Fig. 6.1.7).

Hampshire Downs

The largest *pays* in the county, the Hampshire Downs area essentially encompasses two character areas: the crescent-shaped band of high downland, and the lower downland which is punctuated by the major river valleys. The highest altitudes are reached on the edge of the South Downs (the bulk of which lies to the east in Sussex), in the southeast of the *pays*, where the most elevated in a sequence of summits is Butser Hill, at 270m aOD. The bedrock is predominantly White Chalk, with Grey Chalk on the periphery and isolated areas of clay and silt. The pedology is generally characterised as well drained and calcareous, with heavier loamy soils resulting from the superficial clay-with-flints deposits on hilltops and ridges, where there is also increased woodland cover.

The extent to which the highest Hampshire Downs were wooded in the past is a matter of debate. This *pays* has had little palaeoenvironmental attention in comparison with the central Wessex chalklands of Wiltshire and Dorset (Allen 2009), but seems to have formed the boundary between two major cultural and ecological zones in the Neolithic: the Wessex region which comprised a mosaic of woodland and woodland clearings, and Sussex which had more uniform woodland cover (Allen and Gardiner 2009). Widespread small-scale clearance is likely to have taken place both in areas during the Bronze Age (Drewett 1978: 27). Field systems and cropmarks associated with Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman features indicate that the downland landscape was exploited for cultivation in these periods (Massey 2006: 17). Along the major rivers, such as the Upper Itchen, villas tended to be sited up the downland rather than in the valleys, in contrast with the 'Early Saxon' pattern of settlement (Fasham and Whinney 1991; Hawkes and Grainger 2003: 2-4). The southeastern corner of the *pays*, between the South Downs and the Solent, was particularly extensively settled in the Roman period, with villas emerging there and along the county boundary, suggesting the presence of a routeway leading north from the Solent. Woodland regeneration may have taken place in the late or post-

Roman period. At least the southern part of the wooded downland plateau (Hampshire County Council 2012a; see Fig. 6.1.4), including much of Froxfield and Privett, is known to have been covered by a great *haga*, 'game enclosure or uncleared forest', in the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period (ASC 757; Grundy 1927: 190; S283). Reasonably high densities of plough-teams are recorded in DB around the Upper Test and Upper Meon valleys (see Fig. 6.1.7), while low to moderate densities are recorded in the rest of the *pays*.

Avon and Stour Valleys

Between the New Forest and the historic county boundary with Dorset lie the broad, open, and relatively flat, valleys of the Avon and Stour. Both rivers flow into the Channel close to Christchurch. The western side of the Avon valley is defined by steeply wooded slopes, particularly at Breamore Wood in the northwest, while the eastern valley side is more open, with a series of wide terraces which now provide important heathland habitats. Land-use is dominated by pasture, interspersed with water meadows. Iron Age and Roman sites are present in the northern part of the area, such as the Roman villa at Rockbourne (Morley Hewitt 1966), which attests to the fact that the lower valley areas were more extensively settled than the high downland in this period. A relatively low density of plough-teams is recorded here in DB (see Fig. 6.1.7).

South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

This is a well enclosed, low lying and heavily wooded area, with sand, sandy gravel and clay soils. Between the Test and Itchen, the landscape is elevated with respect to the coastal plain, and the topography is moderately undulating. To the east of the Itchen, the landscape is lower lying with shallow undulations, principally sloping in a southerly direction. Soils are seasonally to permanently waterlogged, predominantly heavy clays. The mixed geology and topography creates some lighter silty soils with better drainage and of higher agricultural quality, particularly around the tributaries. In the medieval period, the area incorporated the Forest of Bere Ashley. West of the Test, the valley of the River Dun and lowland to the west of Romsey also form part of the character area. The woodland is likely to have been exploited for resources in all periods, but there is little evidence of agriculture on the heavier soils.

Several Neolithic long barrows are sited along the Portsdown Hill anticline, a prominent ridge overlooking the coast. There is Bronze Age evidence in the form of barrows and settlements. Roman settlement evidence tends to cluster on the top of the valley sides, and the landscape is traversed by Roman roads. There is limited evidence of Roman activity on the heath, and Iron Age and Roman industrial activity was focused on the coastline, such as salt production on the margins of Hayling Island, which was also the site of an Iron Age shrine and Roman temple. A low to moderate density of Domesday plough-teams is recorded in this area (see Fig. 6.1.7).

New Forest

This *pays* incorporates the inland landscape character area recognised as the New Forest—broadly reflecting the medieval hunting estate founded by William I in c. 1079, and encompassed by the modern New Forest National Park—together with the open and exposed arable and pastoral coastal plain to the south. The topography of the Forest is characterised by a network of broad valleys, separated by low plateaux and flat-topped ridges, which decline southwards from 125 to 60m aOD (Davies *et al.* 1998: 10). The geology is composed of tertiary sands and clays, and the soils are of limited agricultural potential in the Forest, although those on the coastal plane are predominantly well drained and loamy, having developed over marine and river gravel terraces. The modern landscape is varied: high open heathland plains contrast with extensive tracts of ancient and ornamental woodland, parkland, and small-scale enclosed farmland.

Although significant forest clearance began during the Bronze Age, arable cultivation rapidly exhausted the soils, causing many areas to revert to heathland (Davies *et al.* 1998: 16). A large number of round barrows (c. 250) attest to the presence of an extensive Bronze Age funerary landscape. Further clearance and cultivation during the Iron Age is evidenced by enclosures and field systems, and an important pottery industry developed in the third and fourth centuries AD. On the coastal plain, there is some evidence of salt working in the Iron Age and Romano-British period. There is little evidence for post-Roman occupation of the Forest, although it is likely to have been exploited for natural resources and for grazing (Davies *et al.* 1998: 17). The poor soil quality

in the Forest is reflected in the very low density of Domesday plough-teams, at only 0.07 per square mile (see Fig. 6.1.7); other aspects of the medieval landscape are in much greater evidence, however, with extant features including deer parks and coppice banks (Davies *et al.* 1998: 19).

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BURIAL SITES IN HAMPSHIRE, c. AD 450–850

The Hampshire study area has produced 72 burial sites from the period of study (Appendix 2), primarily in the Hampshire Downs and South Hampshire Lowland and Heath *pays*, while no sites have been identified in the North Hampshire Lowland and Heath, West Weald or New Forest areas (Fig. 6.1.8).

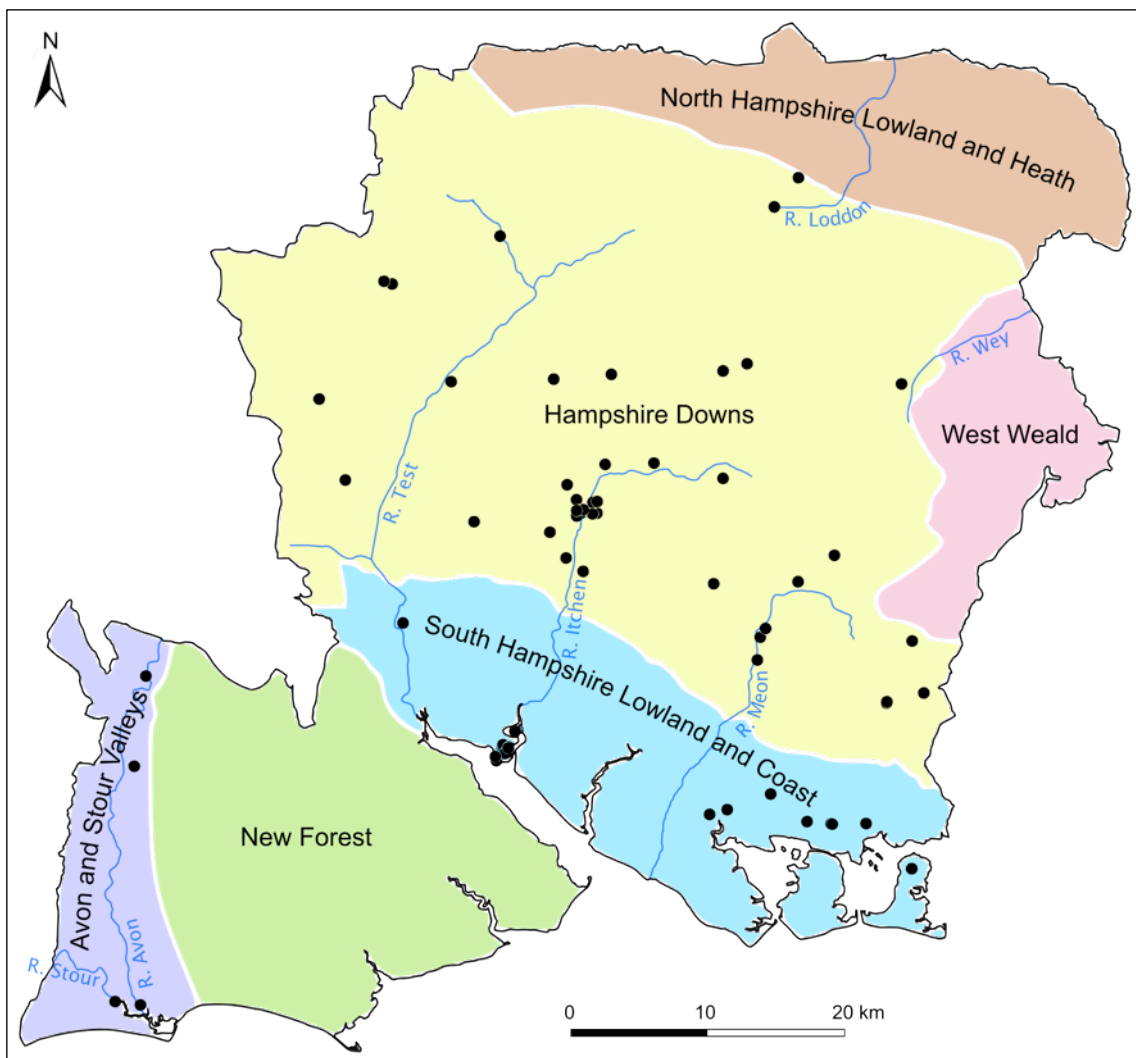


Fig. 6.1.8 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, overlain on map of *pays*.

'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites are found predominantly in valleys of rivers and streams (Fig. 6.1.9). Indeed, the most noticeable feature is the strongly riverine pattern of distribution. Although some do lie on the downland, none have been discovered in the highest areas of the Hampshire Downs (in the northwest of the county and on the wooded downland plateau to the southeast). These areas are more densely wooded than corresponding areas of chalk downland in Wiltshire. There are noticeable groupings of early medieval burial sites on the Winchester–East Meon Anticline (and in the valleys which intersect it), and within the Winchester–Kings Somborne and Micheldever Synclines. There is also a conspicuous group on Portsdown Hill, a chalk outcrop which affords good views over Portsmouth and the Solent from an elevation of c. 130m aOD in an otherwise low lying landscape.

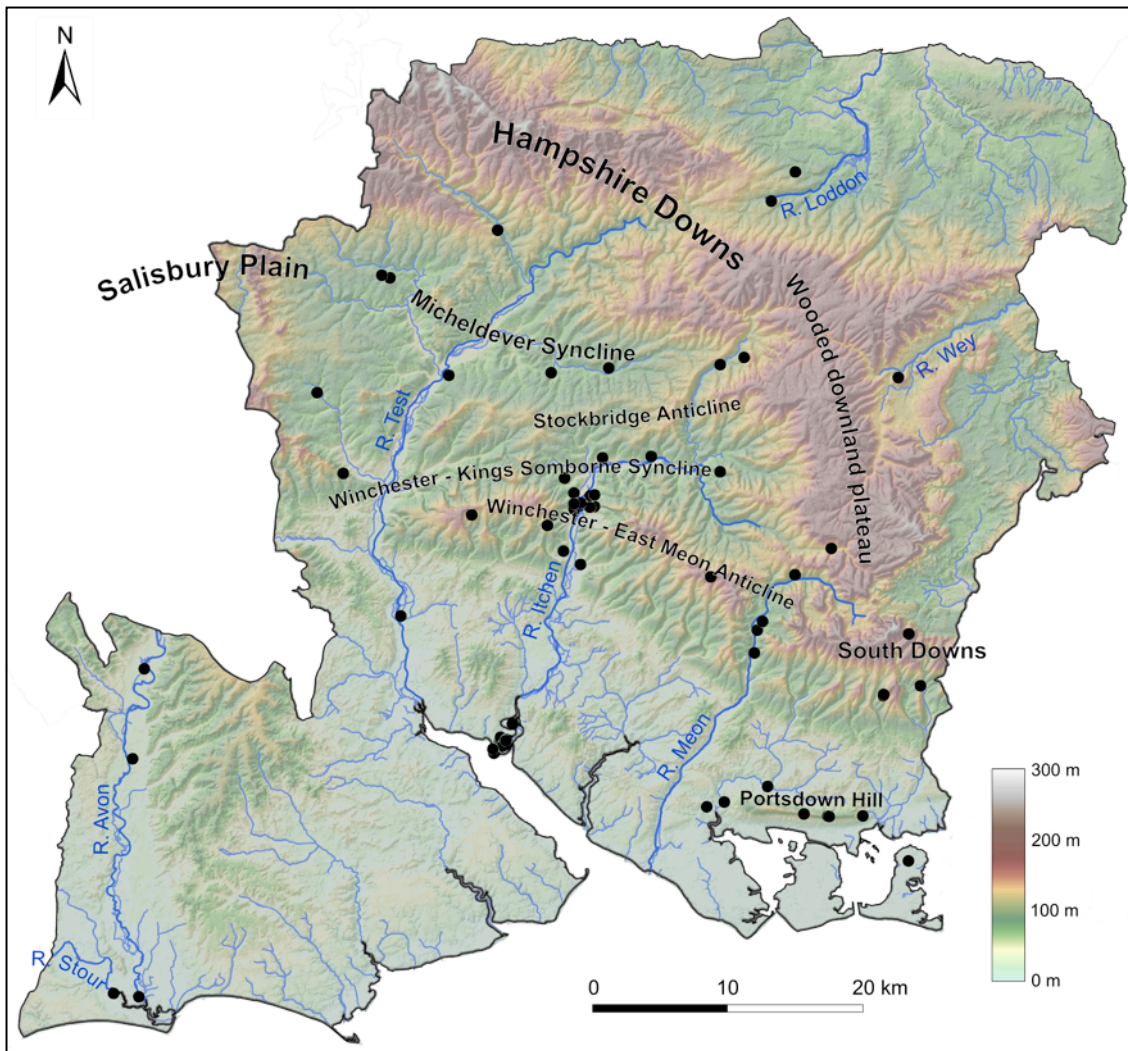


Fig. 6.1.9 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

In terms of bedrock geology, the majority of the burial sites are underlain by White Chalk. Notable exceptions are Bargates, Iford Bridge, Huckles Bridge, Romsey Abbey, and the Southampton sites, all of which lie on sands and clays of the Bracklesham Group; Oak Lodge, Southwick, which is underlain by London Clay of the Thames Group; and Fareham I, which is on sands and clays of the Lambeth Group (Fig. 6.1.10)

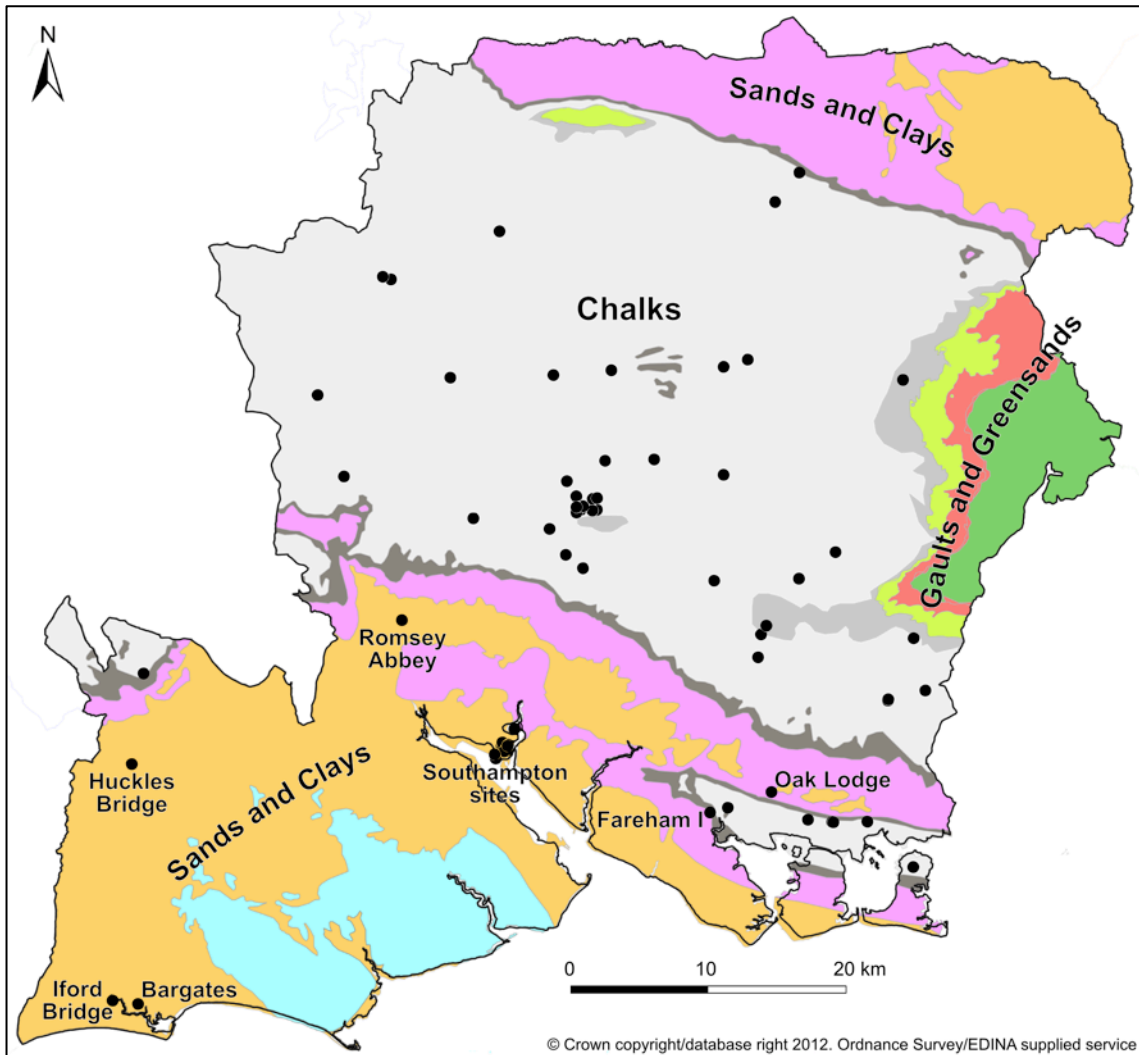


Fig. 6.1.10 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, overlain on map of bedrock geology.

Many of the 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites are clustered in the modern urban areas of Winchester and Southampton: 28 sites are located in these two administrative areas combined (excluding the non-urban areas of the City of Winchester district), accounting for 40% of the dataset. Evidently this is partly a product of the fact that the highest densities of modern archaeological interventions are found in these areas (Fig. 6.1.11). Moderate densities of archaeological investigation can also be identified in the towns of Romsey and

Andover; and to the north of Winchester and around Basingstoke, which partly relates to the construction of sections of the M3 motorway in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

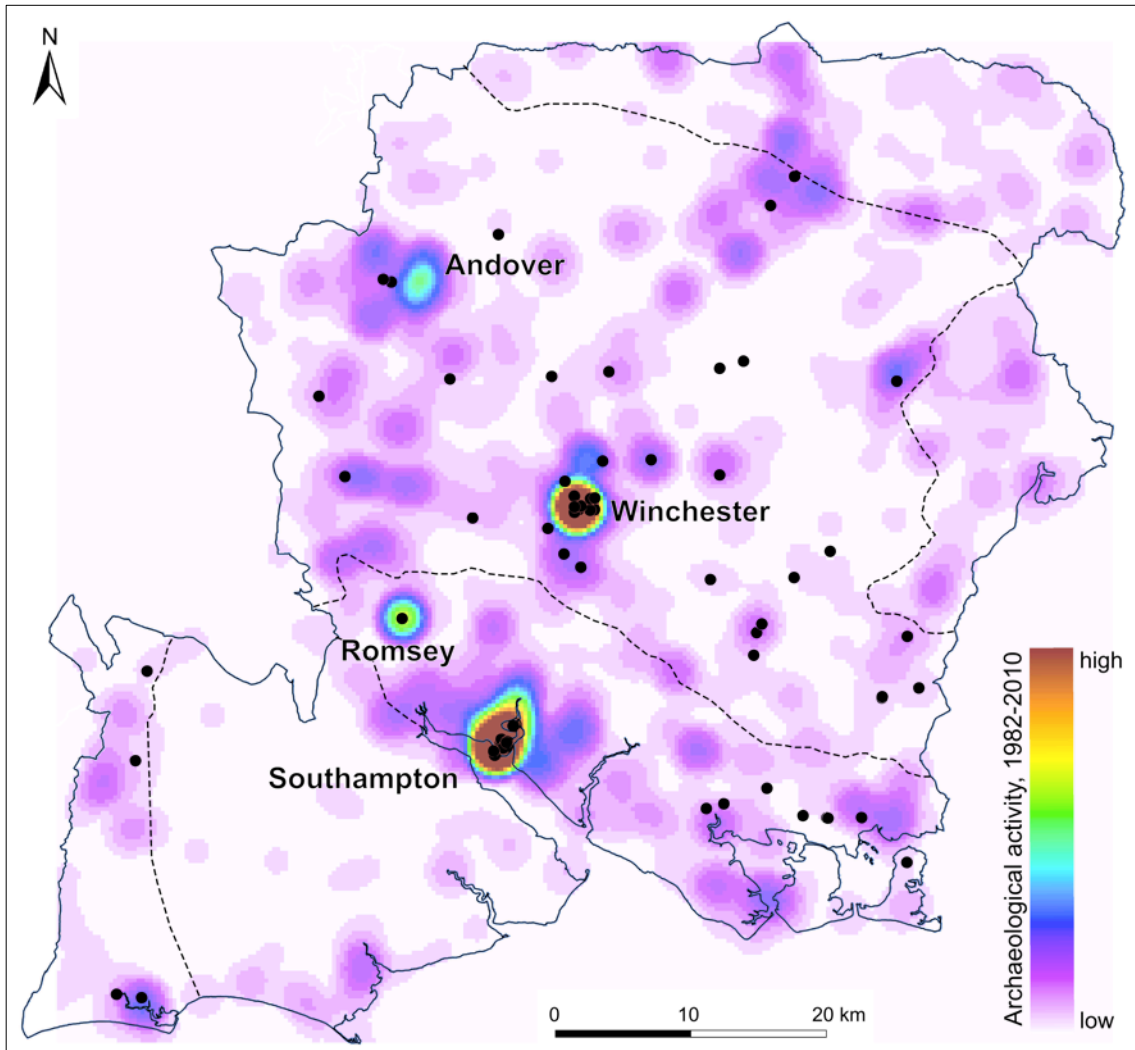


Fig. 6.1.11 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, overlain on kernel density plot of archaeological investigations, 1982-2010 (data from AIP). The *pays* are also marked.

The burial site distribution reflects the pattern of archaeological activity to a large extent. The only two burial sites located in low density areas—Brown Candover and Preston Candover, c. 15km northeast of Winchester—were found prior to 1982. The New Forest and the high chalkland are areas of low density, both in terms of recent archaeological activity and of early medieval burial sites. The infrequency of development-led archaeological work accounts in part for the absence of early medieval burial sites in sparsely populated areas, although the investigation of numerous barrows in the New Forest prior to 1982 did not produce any early medieval material (Piggott 1943). Hampshire

is also one of the most heavily wooded counties in England, with around 20% of the land area covered by woodland (Hampshire County Council 2011). Although much of this woodland is in the New Forest (up to a third of the wooded area of Hampshire), there are also extensive areas of plantation woodland on the Downs. This has affected the number of sites identified by aerial reconnaissance, as well as ground level survey.

BURIAL IN HAMPSHIRE, c. AD 450–850: REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

The evidence from each of the *pays* will now be examined. Site names in bold type are as they appear in the Hampshire dataset (Appendix 2).

Hampshire Downs

Thirty-nine sites have been located in this extensive chalk-based *pays* (Fig. 6.1.12).

Loddon valley

Two sites are located in the north of the *pays*, close to the source of the River Loddon. Two north-south orientated inhumations, accompanied by a bone comb and small bronze object, of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ date, were found in 1966 during housing construction at **Popley**, Monk Sherborne, and more burials have since been found nearby (Cherryson 2005b: 61-2; HHER 19497). Just under 3km to the southwest, and 220m south of the River Loddon, a grave was discovered at **West Ham**, Basingstoke, during the construction of the Alton Light Railway in 1899 (Anon 1908: 79-80). It contained an extended skeleton accompanied by two spearheads, a seax, bronze hanging bowl, iron skillet and bone gaming pieces, indicating a late seventh- or early eighth-century date, and an individual of considerable status (Geake 1997: 87). There was no apparent association with any earlier features here, or at Popley, although both were poorly recorded. Both sites, however, lie within 3.5km of the high-status sixth- to seventh-century settlement at Cowdery’s Down (Millett 1983), and the seventh- or eighth-century settlement at Riverdene (Hall-Torrance and Weaver 2003).

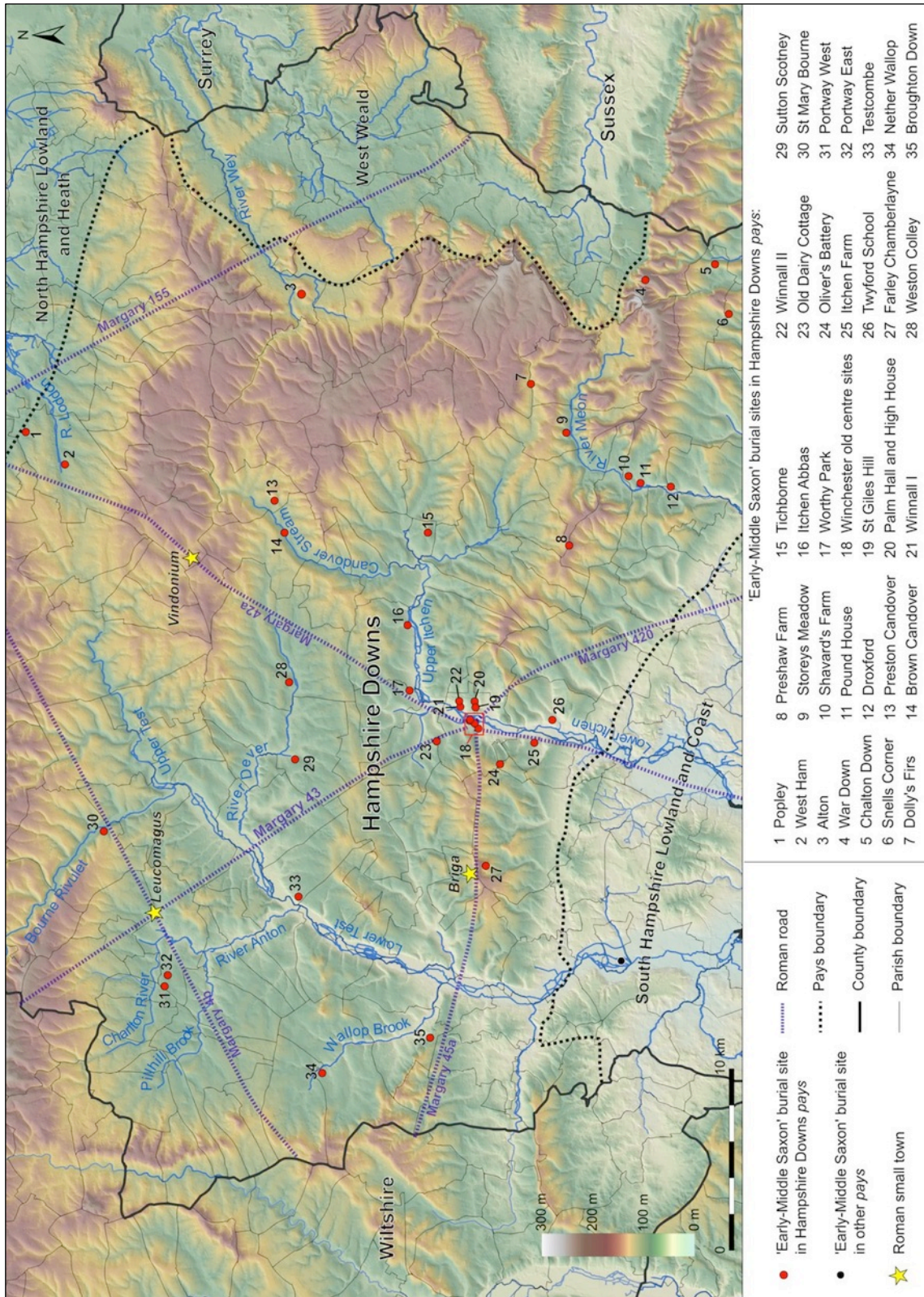


Fig. 6.1.12 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, and other key sites, in the Hampshire Downs pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Wey valley

A substantial mixed-rite 'Early Saxon' cemetery has been excavated at **Alton** (Evison 1988), in the east of the *pays* and close to the boundary with the West Weald. Alton lies close to the geological interface between the chalk and the Upper Greensand, which gives rise to a spring line, and the place-name is likely to derive from OE *æwielltun*, 'spring farm' (Coates 1989: 22). The cemetery site is located on a hill to the south of the town, between the River Wey and a tributary known as the Lavant Stream, 1.2km southeast of the main source of the Wey. The site was initially discovered during the laying of foundations in 1960, and rescue excavations were carried out shortly after and in the following year. Several further inhumation burials and a possible cremation have since been found, bringing the total of number to 72 inhumations and 75 or 76 cremations.

The extensive range of grave-goods suggest that the cemetery was in use between the fifth and seventh centuries. The early seventh-century male burial in Grave 16 was accompanied by exceptionally wealthy items, including a sword and an ornate silver gilt buckle, which is comparable to buckles found in princely graves at Taplow in Buckinghamshire, and Broomfield in Essex (Evison 1988: 18). This buckle, as well as a sixth-century square-headed brooch, demonstrate a particular connection with Kent (Evison 1988: 45). Two rectangular structures, similar to those found at Spong Hill, Norfolk, were also present, in one case supporting a cover over the grave, and in the other perhaps supporting a raised platform upon which the cremation was placed (Evison 1988: 34-5). No prehistoric or Roman features were recorded at the site. Grave 41 was, however, accompanied by a bronze Roman key, similar to that found at Overton Down 6b, Wiltshire (see Chapter 5.1), and numerous other Roman objects had been deposited as grave-goods (Evison 1988: 42).

South Downs

In the southeast of the county, c. 3km from the historic boundary with Sussex, a series of finds indicative of sixth- or seventh-century funerary activity was found between the 1930s and 1970s, within and close to a bowl barrow on **War Down**, Buriton (Cunliffe 1975). The site lies at 244m aOD, on the summit of a north-south ridge which forms part of the South Downs range of chalk hills.

Butser Hill, on the adjacent ridge to the west, is the second highest point in Hampshire, at 270m. Human remains were first found on War Down in 1932, when a fire-watching tower was constructed on top of the most elevated of a group of five Bronze Age bowl barrows (HHER 26513). In 1963, a sixth- or seventh-century Swanton E2 spearhead (Swanton 1973: 81-2; 177-9), similar to those found at Alton and at Snells Corner (see below), was unearthed from the same barrow at a depth of 0.6m, and a probable sixth-century pottery sherd was found 18m to the south in 1973 (Cunliffe 1975: 59). The crest of the ridge has been planted with conifers and deciduous trees since its acquisition by the Forestry Commission in the 1920s; prior to that, there is no evidence to suggest the ridge had been anything other than open downland (Cunliffe 1975: 59). Although now obscured by vegetation cover, in the early medieval period the site may therefore have commanded wide ranging views towards the West Sussex border to the east, the South Coast to the south, and Petersfield to the north.

Several settlements, dating from the 'Middle Saxon' period or earlier, have been identified in the vicinity of War Down (Fig. 6.1.13). A significant ridge-top 'village', which incorporated 61 separate buildings, including numerous sixth- or seventh-century SFBs, was excavated in the 1970s on Chalton Down, 5km to the south (Addyman and Leigh 1973; Addyman *et al.* 1972). A probable 'Middle-Late Saxon' successor to this settlement has been located at a lower altitude at Manor Farm, in the area occupied by the present-day village of Chalton (Hughes 1984; Welch 1985: 22). Cunliffe (1975: 60) has suggested that the dispersed nature of the finds from War Down implies the presence of a cemetery. If this is the case, it provides a striking contrast to the valley setting of other community cemeteries in Hampshire, such as Storeys Meadow and Twyford School (see below). The settlement on Chalton Down provides compelling evidence that 'Early Saxon' communities inhabited elevated places in this part of Hampshire (Arnold and Wardle 1981), although this still seems to be the exception rather than the rule. It is also possible that the funerary activity on War Down postdates the abandonment of the Chalton Down settlement in the mid-seventh century, or that it represents an isolated burial or small group of burials associated with a valley-based settlement, such as at Buriton, where 'Early Saxon' settlement activity has also been identified (HHER 34591).

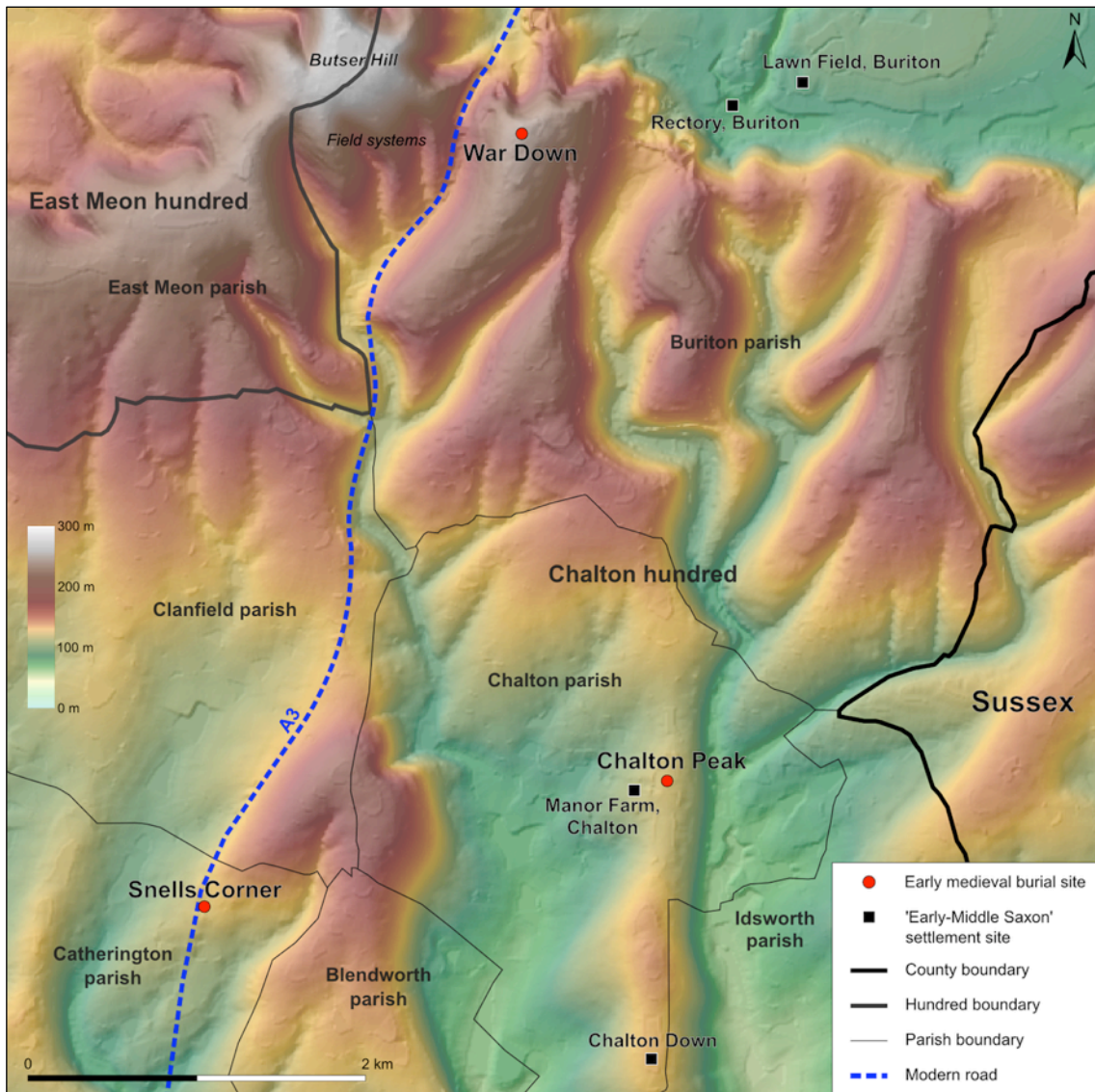


Fig. 6.1.13 War Down, Chalton Peak and Snells Corner in context (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The location of War Down is significant as a liminal place in the context of both Hampshire and Wessex. The frontier between land pertaining to the South Saxons and the 'Jutish provinces' is likely to have followed much the same line as the present boundary with West Sussex (Yorke 1994: 13), and War Down may have lain within the territory of the *Meonware*, 'people of the Meon (valley)'. Initially an independent territory, the *Meonware* is reported to have been temporarily placed under South Saxon control by Wulfhere of Mercia in the mid-seventh century, before being conquered and annexed by the West Saxons in the second half of the same century (Yorke 1994: 14). It is not clear how much of southeastern Hampshire this territory covered, although it could be speculated that the major watershed delineated by the South Downs range

from Butser Hill to the county boundary represented a natural frontier between 'folk territories'. It could thus be postulated that any burials located on this prominent hill served a sentinel function, or that the incorporation of burials into an existing mound formed a territorial marker similar to those mentioned in early Irish law tracts (Charles-Edwards 1976; O'Brien 1996: 184-5; 1999; 2009; and see Chapter 8).²

At **Chalton Peak**, 1.6km north of the 'Early Saxon' settlement on Chalton Down and 200m east of the 'Middle-Late Saxon' settlement at Manor Farm, Chalton (Hughes 1984), metal detecting in 2002 revealed a shield boss and spearheads (Keyte 2003), and subsequent geophysical survey produced a number of anomalies interpreted as graves. A small scale excavation followed, resulting in the discovery of an adult female inhumation burial in a north-south grave with a fragment of early medieval pottery, and traces of a second grave. The site lies at 119m aOD, on the same north-south ridge as the Chalton Down settlement, overlooking the modern village of Chalton. Considering its proximity to Manor Farm, an association with this later settlement is plausible. However, the grave-goods, and the fact that the site is located on the same ridgeway as Chalton Down and in a comparable topographic position to War Down, suggest contemporaneity, if not association, with the earlier settlement.

At a crossroads known as **Snells Corner**, 5km south-southwest of War Down and 2km north of the village of Horndean, a multi-period cemetery associated with a large disc barrow or 'platform barrow' was discovered during road improvement works in 1947 (Knocker 1955). The site lies at c. 125m aOD on a gentle southwest-facing spur of Horndean Down. The Ministry of Works excavations uncovered 33 inhumations dating from the period of study, together with ten other inhumations, of which one was possibly Bronze Age, three Iron Age and six Romano-British (Fig. 6.1.14). The barrow, which had a diameter of 60m, contained a primary unaccompanied crouched inhumation, which was initially considered to be of Early Bronze Age construction but may potentially belong to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (Knocker 1955: 118). The other burials lay c. 50m south-southwest of the barrow, beyond a modern minor

² Similar arguments have again been raised by O'Brien and Breathnach as part of a new online resource, *Mapping Death: People, Boundaries and Territories in Ireland, 1st to 8th centuries AD* (<http://www.mappingdeathdb.ie>).

road, which may have destroyed evidence of further graves. The feet of the early medieval individuals were pointing towards the barrow, perhaps in veneration of the monument. There were three shallow Iron Age graves within the same group, one of which had been cut by an early medieval grave [S.28], removing the upper part of the skeleton. The Romano-British burials formed a separate group, 15m to the southwest.

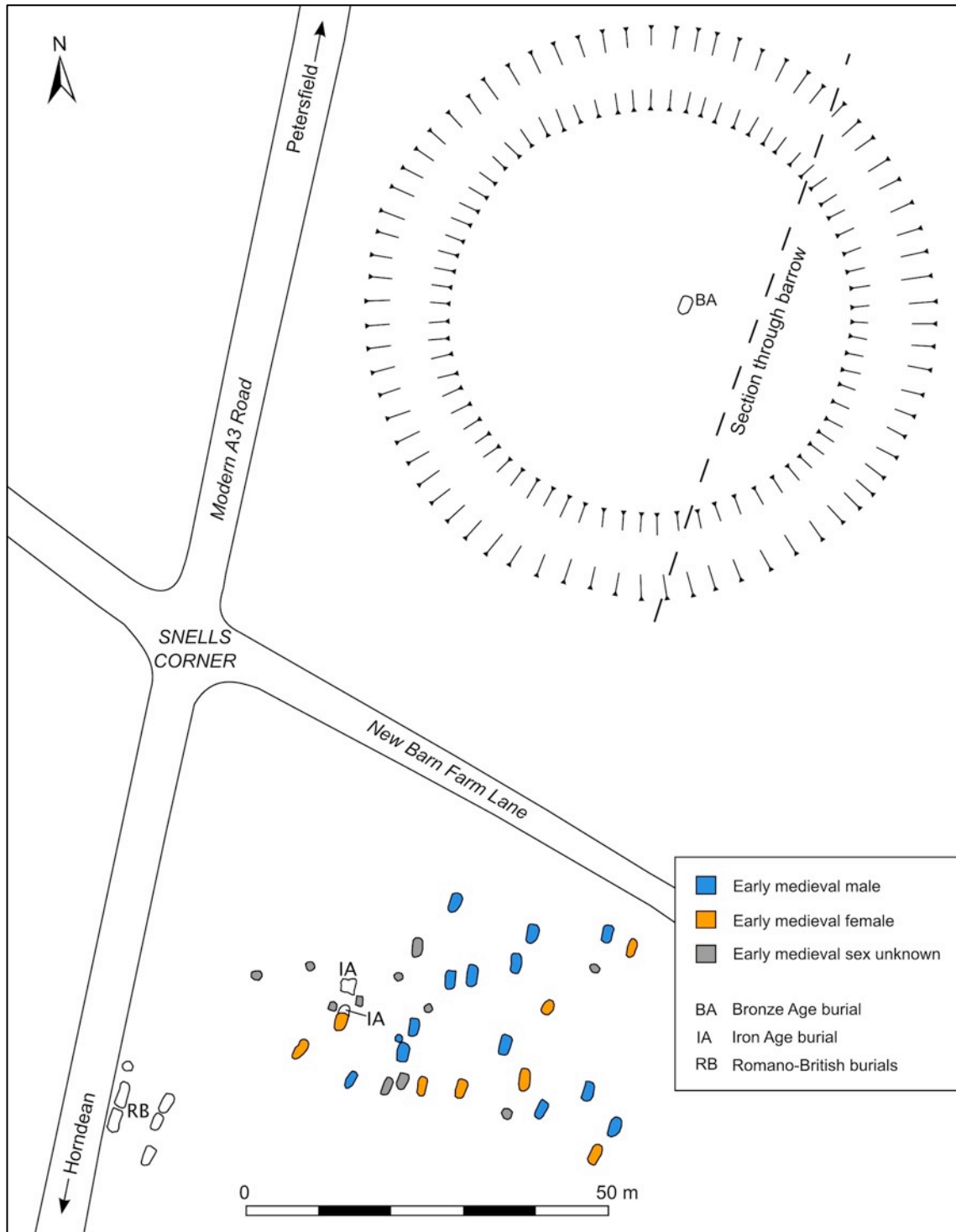


Fig. 6.1.14 Plan of the Snells Corner cemetery (after Knocker 1955: Fig. 2).

Grave-goods were associated with 27 of the 33 early medieval burials, and included probable seventh-century shield bosses, spearheads, knives, bronze rings and several beads. Like War Down, Snells Corner also lies close to the Sussex border, and a cooking pot found with one of the female burials was described as 'pure South Saxon' (Knocker 1955: 121; Meaney 1964: 100). Nick Stoodley (1997: 220) has noted the 'strategic' position of the site and the high proportion of males and male-gendered grave-goods, and has argued that the cemetery was perhaps associated with a military garrison (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 166). Although garrisons certainly became an important aspect of civil defence during the reign of Alfred and the period of Viking incursions in the later ninth and tenth centuries, there is no evidence to suggest that they featured in the landscape of seventh-century Hampshire (Baker and Brookes 2013). Furthermore, of the 33 graves, only 13 males, seven females and three juveniles could be conclusively identified (Knocker 1955). As it was not possible to ascertain the gender of the remaining ten individuals, and with such a small sample, it cannot be stated with any certainty that there was a gender imbalance. Indeed, Knocker (1955: 119) even remarked upon the 'high percentage of females'.

A *terminus post quem* for the Roman burials was provided by three later fourth-century coins, while the earliest 'Anglo-Saxon' burials are likely to date from the seventh century. Is it possible, then, that the Romano-British cemetery was still perceptible when the site was reused, or that local communities retained knowledge of the cemetery for up to three hundred years? Although this is a considerable time interval, and no evidence of post-built structures or grave markers were discovered in the Romano-British cemetery, their close proximity of the early medieval burials, combined with a lack of intercutting, indicates some awareness of their existence. The disturbance of one of the Iron Age graves, however, suggests that the presence of these two burials was not recognised or recognisable in the early medieval period.

Meon valley area

A few kilometres north of the Meon valley and east of the source of the River Itchen, at **Dolly's Firs**, East Meon, a bronze-gilt buckle plate with a zoomorphic pattern and central garnet setting, described as 'Jutish', together with other

objects now lost, were found c. 1842 during road construction (Hooley 1937). The believed location is close to a cutting on the southern side of the modern A272, east of West Meon Hut junction, at 116m aOD, near to the East Meon–Privett parish boundary. O.G.S. Crawford suggested that the finds may have derived from an intrusive burial within a barrow (Meaney 1964: 98), and although a mound was located nearby, it was declared as probably natural (NMR SU 62 NE 17). The tenth-century bounds of a parcel of land in East Meon and Privett suggest that the assumed site of the finds was at the crossroads between a *strete* and a *herpoðe* (Grundy 1926: 197-8; S811). Despite the unassuming low lying topographic position, the documentary evidence thus suggests that this was a prominent location, at least in the ‘Late Saxon’ period, supporting the impression given by the objects, that a high-status female individual was interred here. The area lay on the periphery of *Andredesweald*, with nearly the whole of Privett being covered by a great *haga*, ‘game enclosure or uncleared woodland’, and is characterised as a barren, perhaps lawless landscape (Grundy 1927: 190). The *Chronicle* records in AD 757 that Sigebryht was driven into *Andredesweald* by Cynewulf, before being killed by herdsman at *privetes flod*, ‘Privett’s flood’ (ASC 757). This feature is identified by Grundy (1927: 190) as a winterbourne mentioned in the bounds of West Tisted as *sciteres flodan*, ‘shooter’s flood’, located 1.7km northwest of Dolly’s Firs.

Nine kilometres to the west-southwest, on the west-east ridge known as the Winchester–East Meon Anticline, at **Preshaw Farm**, Corhampton, human remains, accompanied by two pendants on a gold chain, were discovered in 1870 when a farm cart became embedded in a trackway (Kendrick and Hawkes 1937). One was a gold disc or bracteate with interlace decoration, and the other a ‘gold-mounted cabochon garnet cut into a segmented, flower-like design’, suggesting a date of around AD 600 (Geake 1997: 154). The grave was subsequently investigated by Mr. Walter Long of Corhampton House. The site lies at 173m aOD, close to the boundary with the parishes of Kilmeston and Warnford, which follows the ridge-top. A *herepað* following the ridge-top is also mentioned in a grant of woodland at Millbarrow, just under 1km to the west (Grundy 1926: 161-2; S693). The site is not seemingly associated with any earlier features, although four bowl barrows are situated within 150m to the

north. Both this site and Dolly's Firs are on the periphery of the hundred of Meonstoke, and perhaps also that of the territory of the *Meonware*.

The most recently excavated 'Early-Middle Saxon' rural cemetery site in the county at the time of writing—**Storeys Meadow** in West Meon—provides new and compelling evidence for the appropriation of a Bronze Age round barrow at a community cemetery. The site is located at 100m aOD on a gentle south-facing slope overlooking the Meon valley, 250m north of the river. A ring-ditch was initially identified on aerial photographs, and its presence was confirmed by geophysical survey and trial trenching (Roseveare 2008; Smith 2011). Excavations carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) in 2011, prior to residential development, revealed 50 early medieval inhumation burials in 49 graves (including a pregnant female and unborn child), in and around a circular ring-ditch with an internal diameter of 24m, and a mid-sixth- to mid-seventh-century AD cremation burial to the west of the ditch (Fig. 6.1.15). An Early Bronze Age cremation burial in an inverted urn was located within the area enclosed by the ditch, and was probably contemporary with the construction of the monument, although this could not be conclusively determined (Ford and Falys 2012: 4). The crouched inhumation of an Early-Middle Bronze Age infant, which provided a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the ring-ditch, and an adult cremation with fragments of Early Bronze Age biconical urn, partly truncated by a crouched early medieval burial, were also found (Ford and Falys 2012: 4).

The ground surface within the ditch circuit was underlain by unweathered chalk, indicating the former presence of a mound, levelled by ploughing (Ford and Falys 2012: 3). The absence of any early medieval intrusive burials within the area enclosed by the ditch can perhaps also be explained by the actions of later ploughing. Evidence was found for cultivation up to the edge of the ring-ditch in the Romano-British period or possibly earlier, and although the ditch had become in-filled by the time the early medieval cemetery was founded, the mound is unlikely to have been ploughed over until after this final phase in its life-history as a funerary site (Ford and Falys 2012: 3-4). The mound was evidently a visible and a significant place in the landscape, used to define the cemetery and reinforce its identity. It is possible, however, that the mound itself was not disturbed for intrusive burial, and that with the exception of the burials

in the ditch, the cemetery was predominantly 'associative' in nature (Semple 2008: 411, 415).

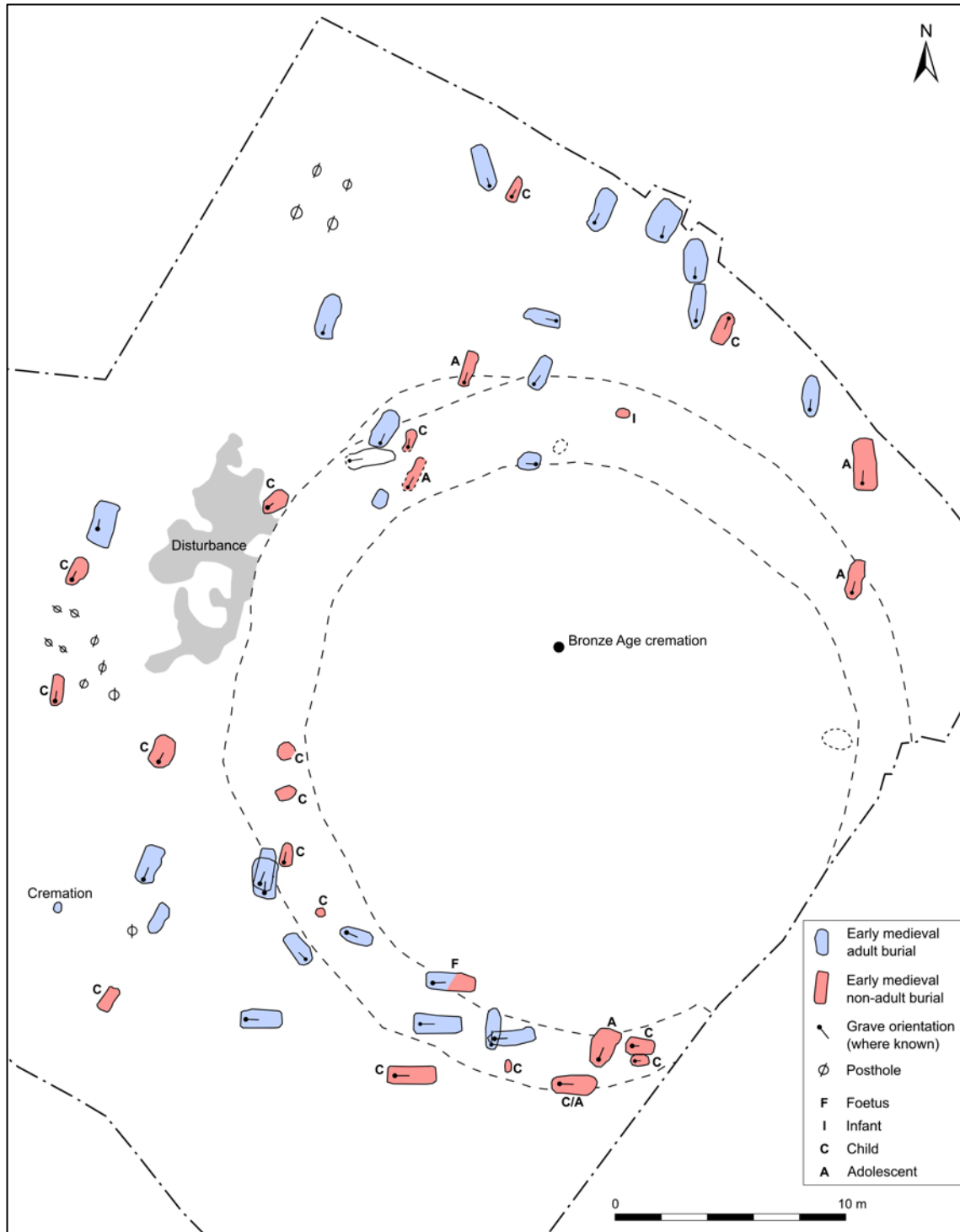


Fig. 6.1.15 Plan of the Storeys Meadow site, showing the ring-ditch of the Bronze Age barrow and the early medieval burials (after Ford and Falys 2012: Figs. 3 and 4).

In addition to the single early medieval cremation, nine of the early medieval inhumations were also radiocarbon dated. The earliest date produced was AD 413-599 (at 100% probability), the latest was AD 652-728 (at 73% probability),

and the remainder fell within the sixth- or seventh-century range. This suggests that the cemetery was in use broadly between the early sixth and the end of the seventh century. The individuals were buried in a variety of crouched and extended positions, with south-north featuring as the most common alignment. With a few exceptions, the burials were either broadly aligned with the ring-ditch or orientated with the head pointing towards it. There was no notable gender imbalance.

Storeys Meadow should be considered in the context of other broadly contemporary community cemeteries, many examples of which have been found on the slopes of the Meon and Itchen valleys (e.g. Shavard's Farm, Droxford, Itchen Abbas, Worthy Park, Twyford School: see below). It is, however, distinguished from other cemeteries in the area by its direct reuse of a prehistoric monument, as well as some other unusual characteristics. There was a high proportion of child and adolescent burials; 50% of the cemetery population was non-adult. Moreover, a higher frequency of serious pathologies and skeletal abnormalities, such as tuberculosis, sinusitis, hip dysplasia and leukaemia, has been identified here in comparison with similar nearby cemeteries (Ford and Falys 2012: 41). There was also evidence of medical intervention: three cases of well healed trepanation (all within the southwestern quadrant of the ring-ditch, on the outer edge of the ditch, and all without grave-goods), and one possible case of crutch use. This has led Ford and Falys (2012: 41) to venture that skilled medical practitioners were operating in the West Meon area during the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period. Overall, the health and social status of the cemetery population at Storeys Meadow is comparable with that of other community cemeteries in the area, demonstrating indicators of poverty and poor living conditions (Ford and Falys 2012: 42). While disease and low life expectancy undoubtedly affected all sectors of society in the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period, the evidence from this site certainly reinforces the case that the funerary appropriation of earlier monuments was not restricted to powerful individuals or elite groups in the sixth and seventh centuries (Semple 2013: 51).

Four kilometres south-southwest of Storeys Meadow, the remains of at least 21 individuals were uncovered at **Shavard's Farm**, Meonstoke, between 1972 and 1999, although only 15 graves were excavated (Devenish and Champion 1978;

Stoodley and Stedman 2001). The site is located on a promontory of the river terrace, c. 500m east of the River Meon, and 300m southeast of Meonstoke Roman villa, into the ruins of which 'Early Saxon' SFBs were found to have been cut (Fig. 6.1.16; Hinton 2007: 7). It could be speculated that this villa estate formed the focus of a *regio*, perhaps analogous to the later hundred of Meonstoke. The majority of the burials at Shavard's Farm are thought to date from the seventh century, although two which lie c. 20-30m southwest of the main group are more likely to date from the preceding century. One seventh-century burial—in Grave 3—stood out as particularly high-status, accompanied by items including a Group 7 sugar-loaf shield boss and sword, and marked by a standing post (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 165). Adjacent to and oddly juxtaposed with this apparently high-status male burial, in Grave 4, was a prone female with the arm bent behind the back, accompanied by a single knife (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 166). A possible late Roman linear ditch, on a north-south orientation, appears to have influenced the layout of the burials in the cemetery (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 162).

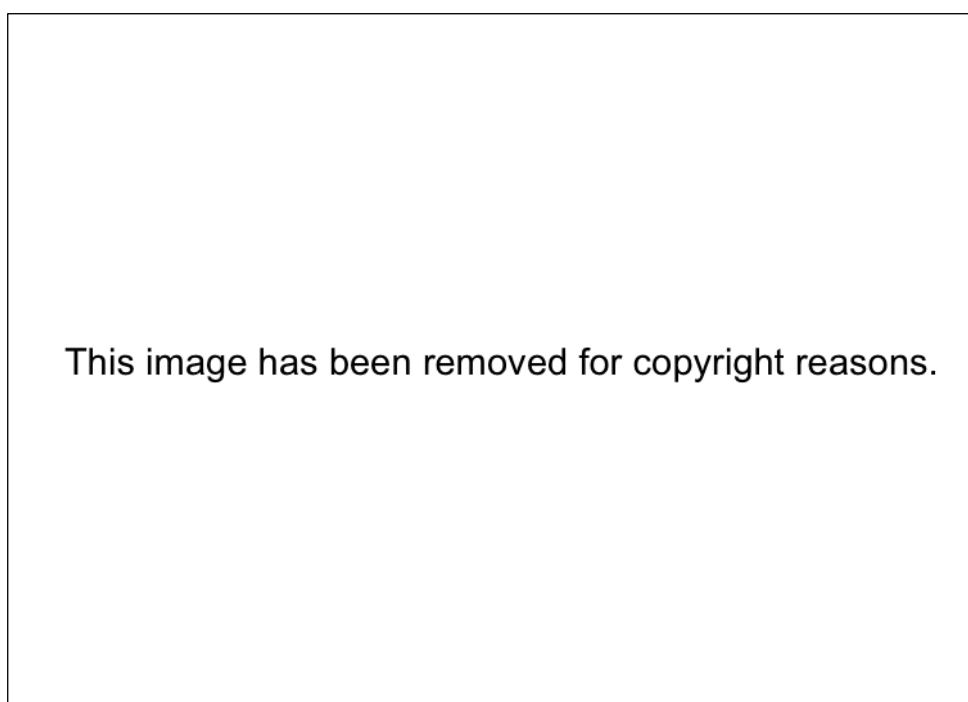


Fig. 6.1.16 Reconstructed early fourth-century façade of Meonstoke Roman villa, cut by the postholes of an 'Early Saxon' SFB following its collapse. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Another noteworthy feature of the cemetery is the extensive deposition of flint: in two cases, several large flints had been placed in the fill above the upper part

of the skeleton, while layers of flint had been placed above the skull of two individuals (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 159). In another case, the knee was raised and supported by chalk blocks and a flint placed above the kneecap. Although this latter practice is rare nationally, it is fairly common in Hampshire, also occurring at Droxford, Worthy Park, Winnall II and Portway East (Stoodley and Stedman 2001: 160). A flint cairn, which may be an earlier feature, or perhaps contemporary with the burials, was located in a central position within the cemetery, perhaps emphasising the important role that the material played in the burial practices of this community. This was also an important building material in the area in the Roman period, as can be seen from the villa façade (see Fig. 6.1.16).

Seven hundred metres south of Shavard's Farm, excavations in 1985 at **Pound House**, Meonstoke, revealed two skeletons in shallow east-west graves, with an 'Early Saxon' iron buckle (HHER 54735). No association with earlier features was noted. A further 1.7km to the south, at **Droxford** (but in the ecclesiastical parish of Soberton), a cemetery was first discovered during the construction of the Meon Valley railway line in 1900-02. Although numerous artefacts were recovered by local antiquarian William Dale, no formal written records of these investigations survive (Aldsworth 1978: 94; Dale 1903; 1906). Fieldwork in 1973 revealed that the original ground surface level had been almost completely obliterated by railway, road, and building works (Aldsworth 1978: 99). However, excavations carried out the following year on a narrow strip of surviving land revealed 41 graves, each containing an extended inhumation, and two further probable grave cuts. The majority were orientated west-east, although four were north-south. The number of exposed graves probably exceeds 200, and around 100 further burials may lie to the north of the most recently excavated area. A bronze-mounted wooden bucket found in 1900-02, similar to one found at Petersfield, Wiltshire, is probably later fifth- or earlier sixth-century (Aldsworth 1978: 174), while the large number of amber beads in Graves 10, 20 and 21 (Aldsworth 1978: 173) suggest a later sixth-century date (Geake 1997: 47; Huggett 1988: 64; White 1988: 16-17). Numerous objects of Roman manufacture, including a probable third-century 'crossbow' brooch, were also found (Aldsworth 1978: 170), suggesting that such items were desirable as

keepsakes, heirlooms or simply 'fashionable' items, as evidenced at Barrow Clump in Wiltshire.

The bounds of *Drocenesforda*, possibly 'ford at the dry place' (Coates 1989: 67), are described in three charters: S276, S446 and S600, dated AD 826, 939 and 956 respectively. The earliest charter (S276), which is of questionable authenticity and is almost certainly a later forgery, makes reference to *hepenum birigelsum*, 'heathen burials', suggested by Grundy (1924: 76) to have been located along the eastern boundary, to the south of the cemetery site. It is possible, however, that the boundary marker is a reference to the pagan 'Early Saxon' burials at Droxford (Aldsworth 1978: 175).

Candover valley

Moving to the north of the Itchen valley, 11km west of Alton and 15km northeast of Winchester, human remains and weapons were reported to have been found at a long barrow in **Preston Candover** in the nineteenth century (Shore 1893). Most of the finds have since been lost, but a spearhead, as well as a seax found close to the edge of the barrow in 1939, appear to be of early medieval date (Cherryson 2005b: 61). The barrow sits at 114m aOD, on a gentle spur overlooking the Candover valley, 600m east of the valley bottom. A tributary of the River Itchen, the second element of the name of this watercourse derives from the Brittonic *defr* or *dofr*, 'water or stream' (Grundy 1921: 139). A winterbourne, the perennial head of the Candover Stream was further north prior to modern water extraction, but is now located several kilometres below Preston Candover. The barrow also lies just over 500m northeast of the boundary with the parish of Chilton Candover and the hundred boundary between Bermondspit (in which the site lies) and 'Mainsborough'. Overall, the evidence suggests that the barrow once contained secondary inhumations of 'Early-Middle Saxon' date. As Semple (2013: 82) has pointed out, however, the finds may represent non-funerary votive deposits, and it is indeed possible that they are not contemporary with the human remains.

Less than 2km south of Long Barrow Field, and only 50m north of Candover Stream, an inhumation burial, accompanied by a seax, was found in 1959 at the edge of a disused gravel pit in **Brown Candover**, Northington (Meaney 1964: 95). The knife was typologically dated to AD 350-450, however, suggesting that

the burial may predate the period of study. Strip parishes and tithings straddle the valley, and the north-south tithing in which this burial site lies was a detached part of Northington until 1888, when it was amalgamated with Brown Candover to its west (First Edition OS map; Southall and Burton 2004). The bounds of *Kendefer* (S360), dated AD 900 but probably forged at least a century later, mention a *widan herpaðe*, 'wide *herepað*', which probably ran alongside the Candover Stream (Grundy 1921: 141), and therefore passed adjacent to the site, at least in the 'Late Saxon' period.

Upper Itchen valley

On elevated ground to the east of the convergence between the River Itchen, the Candover Stream and the River Alre, at **Tichborne**, New Alresford, an extended inhumation with the head to the west, accompanied by a bone comb and fragments of the skull of another burial, was found during the levelling of ground for a cricket pitch in 1948. Beneath it was a midden, containing Iron Age and Roman pottery sherds and an Iron Age bone weaving comb (Cottrill 1952: 360). It is uncertain whether the association between the early medieval burial and earlier occupation site is a product of deliberate or coincidental placement.

Just over 5km west of Tichborne and 150m north of the River Itchen, human remains were discovered during the laying of a gas pipeline through the playing field of **Itchen Abbas** Primary School. Winchester Museums Service undertook a small-scale excavation in 1984, revealing in plan 20 inhumation burials, mostly aligned east-west, at a depth of just under a metre below existing ground level (Youngs *et al.* 1985: 180-1). Only one north-south aligned burial, which had been damaged during trench cutting, was excavated, and was found to contain an extended male skeleton accompanied by an iron spearhead, sword and knife, a bronze chape and two bronze belt fittings (Youngs *et al.* 1985: 180-1). Two further graves were excavated in 1986; one contained the skeleton of a young male accompanied by a bronze coin, the remains of a 'purse', and hobnails near the feet, while the other was unaccompanied (McCulloch 1991). In 1991, over 100 further funerary features, including cremations, were recorded, and c. 60 graves were revealed in plan (McCulloch 1992). Three years later, a watching brief prompted the excavation of a grave containing the skeleton of an infant, accompanied by a vessel which was similar to a mid-fifth

century example found at Alton (Nenk *et al.* 1995). The grave-goods excavated in 1984 were also attributed to the mid- to late fifth century, although some of the burials displayed characteristics of late Roman burial, such as the presence of hobnails (Henig 1984: 199; Philpott 1991: 173).

The River Itchen formed the parish boundary with Avington, and the hundred boundary between 'Bountisborough' (which incorporated Itchen Abbas) and Fawley. The tenth-century bounds of land at Avington (S699) refer to *haethenan byrigelsan*, probably located just over 1km southwest of the cemetery, and a *herpað* which ran along the southern bank of the Itchen (Grundy 1921: 97).

Three and a half kilometres due east of the Itchen Abbas cemetery, and c. 5km north of Winchester, at **Worthy Park**, King's Worthy, 94 inhumations and 46 cremations were uncovered in 1961-2, perhaps only half of the potential number of graves (Hawkes and Grainger 2003). The majority of the inhumations were orientated with the head to the west, although in a considerable number of cases they were orientated north-south or south-north, and the cremations were distributed throughout the cemetery (Hawkes and Grainger 2003: Fig. 1.5). The finds suggest that the cemetery was in use between the fifth and seventh centuries AD. Grave 9 was accompanied by two pierced Roman coins and a Roman key, amongst other items, while Grave 30 had an exceptionally extensive assemblage, including 30 amber beads and nine Roman coins, perhaps collected in a bag or pouch (Hawkes and Grainger 2003: 15-7, 34-41). A few of the burials were unaccompanied, and some only had one item, such as a knife. This may indicate that these burials form a seventh-century group, falling within the period in which grave-goods declined in popularity.

The cemetery, which covered at least 900m², was situated at 65m aOD, just over 300m north of the Upper Itchen. It was situated in Abbots Worthy, later part of King's Worthy, close to the boundary with Martyr Worthy. These three estates, along with Headbourne Worthy, are all referred to in DB as *Ordie* (Munby 1982). It is possible that together these four estates formed an 'early folk territory' or the core of a valley-based territory in the Upper Itchen (cf. Klingelhöfer 1991a). The mid-tenth-century will of Ælfsige, Bishop of Winchester (Edwards 1866: 343; Whitelock 2011: 114) refers to 'the two Worthys' (probably

King's and Martyr), suggesting that at least two distinct manors or settlements were present at least by this time (Coates 1989: 182-3). The place-name probably derives from *wordig*, 'curtilage or enclosure' or small farm, although Grundy (1926: 127) has suggested *word-ig* 'curtilage or enclosure island', a possible reference to an islet in the River Itchen. Worthy Park is also adjacent to a hundred boundary, as Martyr Worthy is in Fawley, while King's Worthy is split between Micheldever and Barton. The Roman road leading into Winchester (Margary 42a) passes just under 300m west of the cemetery. A sixth- to eighth- or ninth-century settlement, which may be associated with the cemetery, was discovered c. 550m to the south at a site known as Abbots Worthy, during a watching brief on the construction of the M3 motorway in 1983 (Fasham and Whinney 1991).

Two female burials, in Graves 43 and 78, were interred in a prone position. As Reynolds (2009: 53) has pointed out, a 'judicial interpretation' was originally proposed for these burials, and explanations were initially sought from the laws of the period (Hawkes and Wells 1975: 118-22). Pronation does not necessarily signify misconduct, however, and may simply reflect the wide range of burial rites employed during this period (Lucy 2000: 80; see Chapter 5.1). While hundred boundary locations are regarded as characteristic of deviant burials in 'Late Saxon' contexts, given the date and overall character of the Worthy Park cemetery, its proximity to a hundred boundary is perhaps not particularly significant in this regard. It is possible that the burial ground was used by communities on both sides of the divide, although it is more likely that this part of the boundary postdates the cemetery. It is referred to in a charter dated AD 825 as *ealdærmannæs mearcæ*, 'the earl's boundary' (S273), and diverts from its natural course down to the Itchen.

Winchester

Eleven burial sites dating from the period of study have been found in and around the multi-period settlement of Winchester (Fig. 6.1.17). Winchester has been occupied from at least the Middle Iron Age, and the first century BC saw the construction of a ditched enclosure known as Oram's Arbour, which is likely to have functioned as an *oppidum*. Occupation of this enclosure declined in the decades prior to the Roman conquest (Booth *et al.* 2010: 5), and its eastern half

was later incorporated into the Roman town of *Venta Belgarum*. As discussed earlier in this chapter, our knowledge of the layout and nature of settlement in the pre-burh early medieval town is fragmentary. Although the area enclosed by the Roman walls was not densely populated, the founding of a major ecclesiastical site in there in the seventh century implies the presence of a royal estate or residence, possibly a precursor to the ‘Late Saxon’ royal palace which was located near the Old Minster (Biddle 1973: 237). Winchester’s Roman past also undoubtedly influenced the location of the bishopric, for practical as well as ideological reasons.

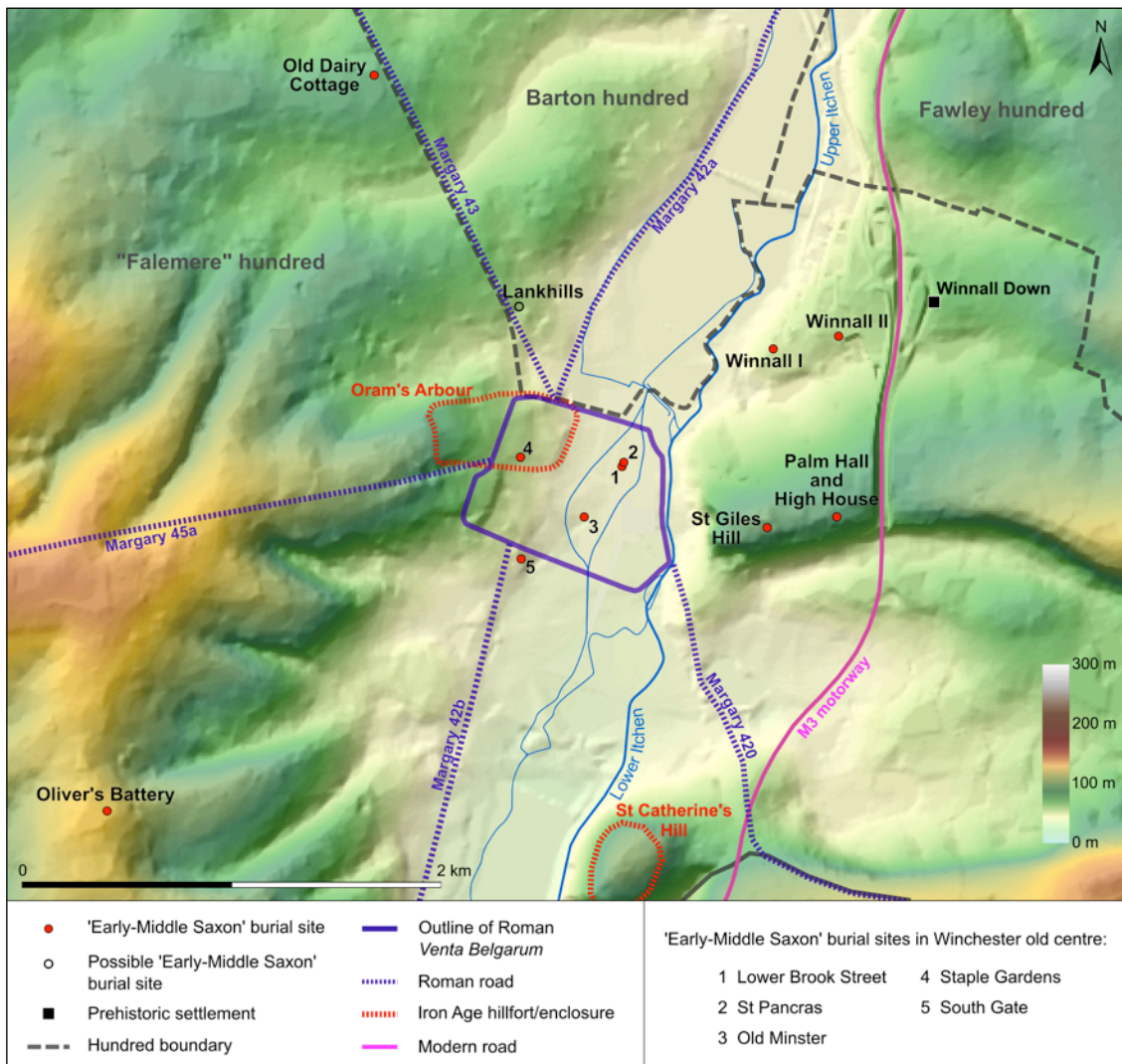


Fig. 6.1.17 Location of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites, and other key sites, in and around Winchester (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service). The course of the river through the Roman town walls has been adapted to show its possible course during the period of study.

The fact that the entire area within in the old centre of Winchester is underlain by Roman archaeology generates particular issues for the analysis of burial

medieval burial location, and it is important to consider whether cemeteries deliberately appropriated Roman features, or whether direct association represents only coincidental superimposition. It is also crucial to view the individual incidences of funerary activity within the wider context of the 'reuse' of the Roman town for early medieval ecclesiastical and secular purposes.

Winchester: old centre

Over 700 inhumations were found when the remains of the **Old Minster**, Winchester Cathedral Close, and parts of its associated cemeteries, were excavated in the 1960s (Cherryson 2005b: 85). Although most were without grave-goods, indications suggest that some of the excavated burials date from the seventh century (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992: 222). The full report and the results of radiocarbon dating, due to be published shortly (Kjølbye-Biddle and Biddle *forthcoming*), will no doubt shed more light on the nature and chronology of the earliest phases of burial. The minster lay on an 'island' of elevated land within the floodplain of the Itchen, surrounded by marshy ground as a result of the disrepair of Roman drainage systems. The location is thus fairly typical of minster sites in southern England (Blair 2005: 193).

Just under 300m northeast of the Old Minster and on the same area of raised land, in **Lower Brook Street**, Winchester St Maurice, four west-east inhumation burials were discovered in 1971 (Biddle 1975). One was unaccompanied, another two each had a single buckle and iron implement, while another individual wore an elaborate necklace with two collars; one composed of glass beads and pendants of gold, garnet and silver, and the other comprising c. 27 silver rings (Geake 1997: 156; Hawkes 1990). The necklace has been dated to the second part of the seventh century, and the cemetery is thought to have been in use during the later seventh and early eighth centuries, as a timber domestic building was constructed on the site in the later eighth century (Geake 1997: 156). The probable edge of a Roman fort, and a Romano-Celtic temple dating from c. AD 100, was discovered beneath the early medieval stratigraphy. In the late third century, the entire area, including the temple, was levelled for the construction of a 'workshop'. This was rebuilt a number of times, possibly becoming a dwelling. Occupation lasted well into the fifth century and perhaps into the post-Roman period (Biddle 1972; 1975). This is clearly an example of

association by superimposition, and it cannot be stated with any certainty that the knowledge of the existence of a religious structure on the site remained, or that the placement of the early medieval burials on the site was in any way connected to this.

Less than 50m north of the Lower Brook Street burials, three west-east burials were found on the site of **St Pancras** Church (Biddle 1975: 318-21; Keene 1985: 743). One of the burials, which lay below the northwest part of the earliest church, was dated to c. AD 640-780, and it has been suggested that this burial is associated the Lower Brook Street cemetery (Cherryson 2005b: 84). Alternatively, the St Pancras group may have formed part of a separate cemetery which, given that one of the other burials has been dated to c. AD 800-920, continued in use into the ninth century. It may, however, be possible that the later of the radiocarbon dated burials and the undated burial were closely linked to the church, perhaps related to the ecclesiastical foundation (Cherryson 2005b: 88).

On the western side of the city, 288 burials were excavated at **Staple Gardens**, Winchester St Thomas, between 1984 and 1989 (Kipling and Scobie 1990). The majority, if not all, of the burials may postdate the period of study, as seven produced radiocarbon dates ranging between the later eighth and late tenth century, suggesting that they date from the second half of the ninth century. It is possible, however, that the cemetery was founded just prior to AD 850. Most of the burials were unfurnished, and evidence for coffins or wooden linings was found in nearly 20% of the graves (Cherryson 2005a: 290). Although no evidence for an associated church has been located, despite the late date, Cherryson (2005a: 233) has advised that the potential for such a discovery should not be dismissed, as large parts of the site remain unexcavated. The large number of burials at Staple Gardens does, however, demonstrate that the Old Minster was not the only location for burial within the Roman city walls, although it may represent a satellite cemetery of a broader minster complex (Blair 1988: 51; Cherryson 2005a: 241), and reflects the increasing population density from the mid-ninth century. The cemetery is located just inside the Roman city walls, on the periphery of Oram's Arbour. Roman coins were found in some of the graves, and although some may represent accidental inclusions, the positioning of some examples implies intentionality (Cherryson 2005a: 288).

Two burials were recorded in a ditch just outside the Roman city walls at **South Gate**, Winchester St Thomas, during excavations on the site of St Thomas Parish Hall following its demolition in 1971. One of the burials was supine and extended, and the other, which showed early signs of leprosy, lay on its side, legs flexed. Radiocarbon analysis indicated a date of c. AD 700, i.e. after the founding of the Old Minster, and it has thus been speculated that the individuals were deliberately excluded from its burial ground, perhaps due to some form of perceived deviancy (Kjølbye-Biddle 1992: 221, cited by Cherryson 2005a: 274). It is important to remember, however, that the burials still predate the period in which churchyard burial became commonplace for all sectors of society, and the Church undoubtedly sought to restrict and control access to the 'exclusive' burial grounds next to churches (Cherryson 2005a: 276). Exclusion from such sites could therefore apply to the majority of the population, not only wrongdoers, and as previously discussed, physical exclusion of deviants from community cemeteries was in any case not generally practised until later in the 'Middle Saxon' period (Reynolds 2009: 201-3; see Chapter 5.1). The entrance to the town at South Gate had, however, been blocked by this time, perhaps as part of a system of controlled access to the walled area, and the burial of individuals in a ditch so close to the gate would appear to be a statement of intent, whether on the part of the mourners or of higher authorities. It perhaps represents continued respect for the Roman custom of extramural burial. Alternatively the site may have held a special significance for those interred, due to its proximity to the Roman walls or to the Old Minster (Cherryson 2005a: 274).

In summary, although it is difficult to identify the motives behind the siting of individual burial sites in relation to Roman or prehistoric features in Winchester, the broader significance of the reuse of the Roman town and the sense of *Romanitas* fostered by the ruins of the town are nevertheless worthy of consideration. The funerary activity cannot, however, be separated from ecclesiastical and secular use of the area.

Winchester: environs

To the east of the city, an 'Early Saxon' inhumation cemetery containing at least eleven individuals has been located in the **St Giles Hill** area, Winchester St

Peter Cheesehill, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Cherryson 2005a: 251; 2005b: 87; Meaney 1964: 101-2). Isolated burials and a range of objects, including a sword pommel, iron buckle, key, knife, spearhead, amber bead, glass beads and shield bosses, have been recovered from the area, pointing to a fifth- or sixth-century date. At least seven further apparently unfurnished burials—many of which were orientated north-south—have been found during construction work on a house at Netherwood in 2000, and during an evaluation and watching brief by TVAS in Northbrook Avenue in 2009-10 (NMR SU 42 NE 52; Stoodley 2011: 36). St Giles Hill occupies a prominent topographic position, which is likely to have afforded a panoramic view of the area enclosed by the Roman walls. The HHER (27077) reports that 'three inhumation burials with associated Saxon material' were discovered 330m east of St Giles Hill, at **Palm Hall and High House**, on the boundary between three parishes—Chilcomb, Winnall and Winchester St Peter Cheesehill—although no further details are available.

A broadly contemporary cemetery to the St Giles Hill burials was discovered 850m to the north at **Winnall I**, as a result of railway construction in the 1880s (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 4). Railway workers reported the discovery of a number of shallow graves, without covering mounds, some had which had already been partially destroyed. Three shield bosses survive, one of which is thought to date from the mid-sixth century, while the other is late sixth- or early seventh-century. The site lies at 50m aOD, 670m northeast of the Roman city walls. Three hundred metres to the east-northeast, at **Winnall II**, 49 inhumations dating from the seventh to early eighth century AD, thought to be part of a successor cemetery to Winnall I, were excavated in the second half of the 1950s (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 7). In almost all cases, the burials were orientated with the head to the west, and half of the graves contained an iron knife, many of with one or two other items. There were a few more elaborate items of jewellery, such as the Kentish influenced disc brooch from Grave 21 and the pin-suite from Grave 8. About thirteen of the burials were apparently unaccompanied, although several of these had been disturbed and/or were infant burials. The graves containing the most items tended to lie in the central part of the cemetery, perhaps confirming that they were earlier than those with just a knife or no accompanying objects (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 29).

Winnall I and II remain type sites of the 'two cemetery' model coined by Hyslop (1963). Audrey Meaney has argued (Hawkes and Meaney 1970: 30-2) that there is little evidence for the influence of Christianity at Winnall II, and has drawn attention to the carelessness of the depositions and the persistence of 'pagan' indicators, such as the three instances of stoning (the double burial in Grave 24, and Grave 25) and three of decapitation (Graves 11, 23 and 25). Indeed, Sonia Chadwick Hawkes (Meaney and Hawkes 1970: 52) has suggested that Augustinian Christianity was slow to exert a significant effect on the burial traditions of the general population at Winnall, despite the establishment of a bishopric in the mid-seventh century less than 1.5km to the southwest. Although recent arguments proposed by John Hines, with the support of new scientific analyses (Bayliss *et al.* 2013), suggest a swift orthodoxy in terms of Christian burial traditions, the evidence from Winnall nevertheless remains more indicative of a relatively protracted process of conversion. Extensive prehistoric settlement and funerary evidence has been uncovered on Winnall Down, c. 450m northeast of Winnall II (Fasham 1985), and it is perhaps of interest that the focus of funerary activity at Winnall shifts closer to these features in the seventh century.

A late Roman cemetery was discovered in 1961 in the grounds of Lankhills School, alongside the Roman road between Winchester and Cirencester (Margary 43). The site lies to the west of the Itchen, in a similar topographic position to the Winnall cemeteries, just under 400m north of the Roman city walls. Over 750 inhumation graves and over 30 cremation burials were uncovered during excavations in 1967-72 and in 2000-05, dating predominantly from the fourth century AD (Booth *et al.* 2010; Clarke 1979). Although a group of burials of possible 'Early Saxon' character were tentatively identified during the first series of investigations, no grave-goods or incidental inclusions of indisputably fifth-century date have been found, and no post-Roman material has been identified within the cemetery, other than a possible 'Early Saxon' stave-built bucket (Booth *et al.* 2010: 461). As Booth *et al.* (2010: 462) have argued, 'the absence of evidence for continued burial during the fifth century would seem to indicate that, with the exception of a small number of anomalous burials, the use of the cemetery ended (perhaps, as has been suggested, rather

abruptly), some time fairly shortly after c. AD 400'. This site has not, therefore, been included in the dataset.

Just over 1km north of Lankhills, along the same Roman road, a cemetery characterised by 'deviant' burials has been located. In 1989, the construction of a barn at **Old Dairy Cottage**, Harestock, led to the discovery of 17 inhumations in 15 graves, although at least one of these burials postdates the period of study. There were seven instances of decapitation, one of which had been buried with four neo-natal lambs placed across the knees (Reynolds 2009: 120, 172). The burials were recorded *in situ* and were fully excavated the following year, although the full extent of the cemetery was not established. The skeletons were predominantly aligned with the feet to the northeast, parallel with the line of the Roman road, and overlay a ditch containing first- to second-century pottery. No skulls were found in articulation with the skeletons, but some had been placed at the side of the body. Good bone preservation ensured that severed and refitting neck vertebrae were recovered intact, and a clavicle bone and jaw bone were found to display signs of traumatic blows (Nenk *et al.* 1991: 157-8). Although a number of iron buckles found with one group of burials suggested a seventh-century date, two of the graves produced radiocarbon dates of AD 775-965 and 890-1020 at 95.4% probability (Cherryson 2005b: 85).

Old Dairy Cottage lay at the meeting point of four ecclesiastical parishes—Littleton, Weeke, Headbourne Worthy and Winchester St Bartholomew, Hyde—and of three earlier estates—Headbourne Worthy, Chilcomb and Easton (S309, S376 and S695). The place-name Harestock is recorded in the charter bounds of all three of the above estates as *heafod stoccan*, 'head stakes', which has been interpreted as a reference to posts upon which criminals' heads were exposed (Meaney 1995: 30; Reynolds 2009: 31). The practice of setting of thieves' heads *buton ðam port-weallon on ðam heafod-stoccum*, 'outside the town-walls upon head-stakes', is referenced in an Old English translation of the 'Legend of the Seven Sleepers' (Skeat 1881: 492), written in West Saxon dialect with some evidence of the influence of Winchester vocabulary, probably in the late tenth or early eleventh century (Cubitt 2009: 3). It has been suggested (Cherryson 2005a: 308; Reynolds 2009: 119) that the individuals interred here were excluded from contemporary burial grounds in Winchester,

such as Staple Gardens and Old Minster, and ‘banished’ to the limits of the *territorium*, which may correspond with the Chilcomb estate (Biddle 1976: 256-7).

More prosaic interpretations for *heafod stoccan*, such as posts marking the head or limit of a ploughland (Grundy 1919: 178; Rackham 1986: 173-4), have also been proposed, but are less credible given the usage of the term in this near contemporary account. The location of the Old Dairy Cottage cemetery on the edge of Winchester, in combination with the charter and place-name evidence, are compelling indicators that a judicial explanation for the decapitated skeletons can be proposed (Reynolds 2009: 119). The site is of crucial importance, as it is potentially the first excavated example of an execution cemetery which is substantiated by surviving early medieval documentary evidence (Reynolds 2009: 120). The date of the execution cemetery seems unlikely to fall within the period of study of this thesis, however. Two other excavated execution cemeteries—Stockbridge Down and Meon Hill—lie within 13km of Old Dairy Cottage, on either side of the River Test near Stockbridge. Both were dated to between the later tenth and eleventh century on the basis of coins of Edward the Confessor (Hill 1937; Liddell 1933; Reynolds 2009: 116, 121). Yet given the potential seventh-century date of other items recovered at Old Dairy Cottage, it is possible that a conventional burial ground was located here prior to the foundation of the execution cemetery, as was perhaps the case at Roche Court Down in Wiltshire (see Chapter 5.1).

Two and a half kilometres southwest of the old centre of Winchester, in the ecclesiastical parish of Winchester St Faith, a richly furnished early medieval grave was found in 1930 when a trench was cut across the bank of a sub-rectangular enclosure known as **Oliver’s Battery** (Fig. 6.1.18), in an attempt to date the earthworks (Andrew 1934a; 1934b). No plans or photographs of these excavations survive, but the published report indicated that the skeleton was left relatively undisturbed *in situ*. The site was reinvestigated by Richard Whinney of Winchester Museums Service in 2005, but neither excavation nor geophysical survey could locate the remains (Yorke 2010: 77). The earthworks are thought to have originated as an Iron Age or Romano-British hilltop enclosure, and were reused during the English Civil War. The site overlooks Winchester from the false crest of a broad chalk ridge at 125m aOD, and its visual impact is thus

enhanced by the natural topography. The early medieval burial had been dug into the most prominent northeastern corner of the enclosure, which may have resembled a barrow when viewed from the valley below (Andrew 1934b: 11), and it is probable that this eminence was a major factor contributing to its selection as a funerary site. A round barrow 80m to the northwest of the burial site was also excavated in 1930, and was found to contain prehistoric cremations and post-medieval secondary inhumations, probably also relating to the Civil War.

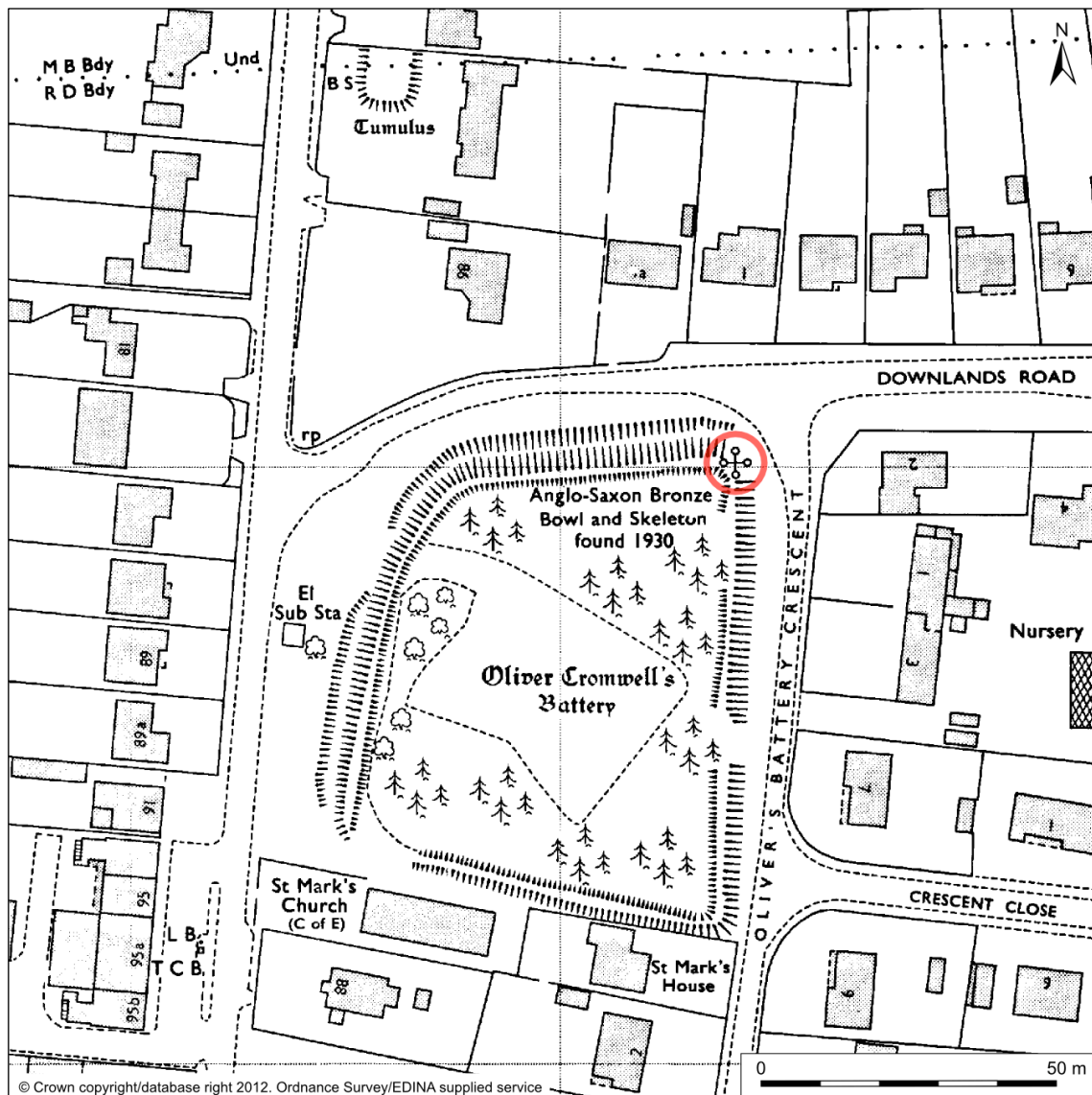


Fig. 6.1.18 Location of Oliver's Battery burial site (extract from 1970 OS 1:1250 map).

The inhumation at Oliver's Battery was extended and orientated north-south, with the head turned to face east, and was accompanied by a bronze hanging bowl with trumpet spirals on the escutcheons, a 'cocked-hat' seax with a silver

pommel, and a Swanton C2 spearhead (Andrew 1934b; Geake 1997: 154; Swanton 1973: 50-5). These items indicate a late seventh-century date, and an individual of considerable status. Similarities can be observed with the primary barrow burials at Ford II in Wiltshire and Lowbury Hill in Berkshire, and with the poorly recorded burial at West Ham, also accompanied by hanging bowls (Yorke 2010: 80-1). The seax from Ford II is also closely comparable and thought to be contemporary (Geake 1999: 8).

As previously noted, there is evidence to suggest that during the reign of Ine, in the later seventh or early eighth century, two early shires were created: *Hamtonscir*, in the coastal zone to the south of Winchester, and another from Winchester northwards to Wallingford (Yorke 1995: 89). This, along with the establishment of the West Saxon see at Winchester in the middle part of the seventh century, demonstrates the increasing importance of the city as both a power base and frontier zone, perhaps fostering tensions between competing elite groups. The location of the burial is outlying with respect to the city, 2.6km southwest of the Old Minster and some distance from other broadly contemporary cemeteries, but would have commanded a clear view of the old centre. The Roman road (Margary 45a) lay 1.2km to the north of the site, and as Barbara Yorke (2010: 81) has noted, the comparable burial site at Ford II in Wiltshire was situated along the same road, 29km to the west. It is possible that a ridge-top routeway, linked with the Roman road, also passed close to Oliver's Battery.

Lower Itchen valley

A broadly contemporary burial site to Oliver's Battery has recently been found at **Itchen Farm**, c. 3km south of the centre of Winchester and 500m west of the River Itchen. Two burials, which have been radiocarbon dated to the seventh century AD, were found during the excavation of a three-hectare site by TVAS in preparation for a new 'Park and Ride' scheme (Lewis and Preston 2012). The burials were placed adjacent to an extensive Late Iron Age to Roman enclosure complex, and no other early medieval material was found anywhere else on the site. A Neolithic burial, an unenclosed Bronze Age settlement including a post-built roundhouse, and numerous Roman trackway ditches were also excavated.

The site is on the gentle slope of a southeast facing chalk spur, which overlooks the Itchen valley towards Twyford.

Grave 2045 was situated at a distance of c. 2m from the western side of the roundhouse, and was aligned with a Roman trackway located c. 4m to the south (Fig. 6.1.19). In this grave, the skeleton of a young adult male had been interred in a supine position with the head tilted to face south towards the trackway, and a sarsen stone had been placed at each shoulder, curiously reflecting the burial rite of a Neolithic child interment found on the same site (Lewis and Preston 2012: 24). The grave-goods comprised a small knife and the base of an early Roman pot, yet radiocarbon dating (AD 533-643) places the burial in the sixth or earlier seventh century (Lewis and Preston 2012: 24). Grave 2114 lay 19m to the northwest of Grave 2045, and contained the remains of an older male individual. The inhumation was aligned with two parallel routeways: the *Claesentium–Venta Belgarum* Roman road, c. 30m to the west, and a metalled late third- to early fourth-century trackway, c. 50m to the east. The skeleton lay supine with the head tilted to face west (towards the Roman road), and was buried with a small blade or spearhead, as well as twelve residual fourth-century pottery sherds and the disarticulated leg bones of another individual. The radiocarbon date of AD 602-667 suggests that this burial is broadly contemporary with Grave 2045 (Lewis and Preston 2012: 24).

The earthworks of the Iron Age or Romano-British enclosure are likely to have remained a prominent feature in the immediate landscape, and may have been an influencing factor in the choice of burial site in the seventh century AD. Similarly, although perhaps less credibly, the ditch of the roundhouse could also have remained visible, attracting Grave 2114. It could be speculated that the enclosure sits on an established boundary. The isolation and unconventionality of the burials, combined with the paucity of grave-goods, could also be indicative of deviancy or outcast status, although exclusion from a conventional cemetery for this reason is unlikely at such an early date.

On the opposite side of the valley and 1.6km to the southeast of Itchen Farm, a late fifth- or sixth- to early eighth-century community cemetery associated with probable prehistoric settlement features has recently been revealed at **Twyford School**. Excavations carried out in 2007 by Wessex Archaeology uncovered 18

inhumation graves, although additional burials may have been previously destroyed by landscaping to the east of the excavated area (Dinwiddy 2011: 75). Ten burials were accompanied by identifiable grave-goods, including shield bosses, a seax, disc brooches and a cabochon glass pendant, suggesting that the cemetery was in use between the late fifth or sixth century and the early eighth century. A small penannular ditch, c. 6m in diameter, with an opening on its southeastern side, lay 25m to the east of the burials (Fig. 6.1.20). Although this feature was tentatively proposed to represent a late prehistoric roundhouse, it was not firmly dated and may be contemporary with the burials (Dinwiddy 2011: 77; HHER). The fact that no surviving early medieval burials were found within the ditch is, however, more suggestive of an earlier date for the construction of this feature. Post-built structures were also found just north of the penannular ditch, at about the same distance from the burials, but are also more likely to be prehistoric features than contemporary funerary structures (Dinwiddy 2011: 81).

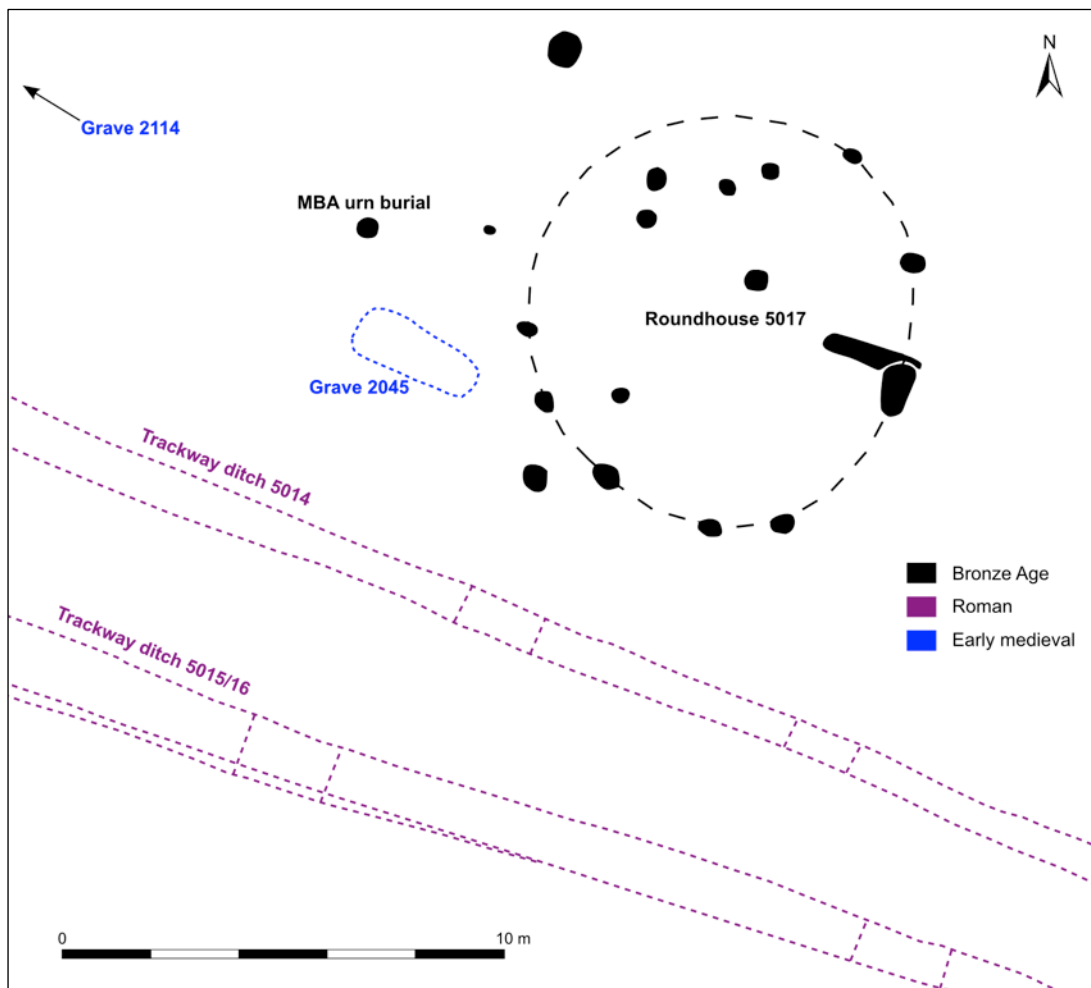


Fig. 6.1.19 Bronze Age roundhouse and associated features, Roman trackways, and one of the early medieval graves, at Itchen Farm (after Lewis and Preston 2012).

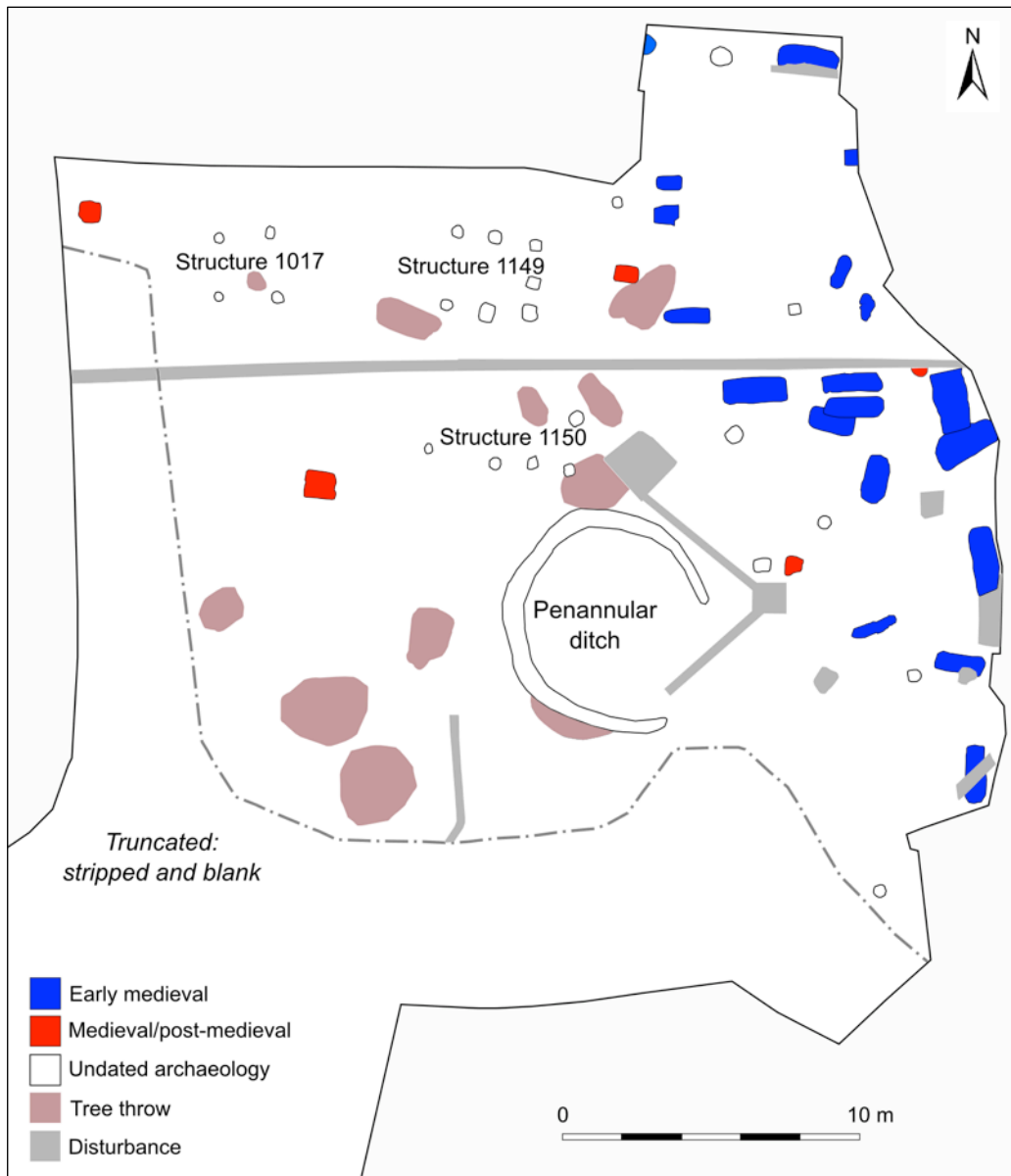


Fig. 6.1.20 Plan of the early medieval cemetery and other features at Twyford School (after Dinwiddy 2011: Fig. 2).

Western Winchester–East Meon Anticline

Just under 8km west of Winchester, two skeletons were discovered by soldiers during the digging of trenches in **Farley Chamberlayne**, c. 1914. One of the inhumations was described as that of a 45- to 50-year-old man, accompanied by a carinated iron shield boss, 'similar to those of a Saxon date' (Meaney 1964: 97-8). The burial site is in an elevated location, at 141m aOD on Mount Down, the south-facing slope of Farley Mount. The north-facing slope of the same hill is known as Beacon Hill. The site lies 850m south of the Roman road (Margary 45a), and 1.5km southeast of Ashley Down Camp, a univallate hillfort which was reoccupied in the Roman period and may represent the *Briga* mentioned in

the Antonine Itinerary (HHER 25194; Rivet and Smith 1979: 278). It is also 1.7km southwest of Sparsholt villa (HHER 23647). The slope upon which the burial site is located faces away from these Roman features, however. It does overlie 'Celtic' field systems (NMR SU 42 NW 8), although given the intensity of agricultural activity on the chalk downland in the Iron Age and Roman period, this is not necessarily of significance.

Dever valley

Moving to the north of Winchester, twelve inhumations and four cremations were discovered at **Weston Colley**, Micheldever, during University of Winchester excavations in 2003-6 (Fern and Stoodley 2003; 2004a; 2004b; N. Stoodley *pers. comm.* 2012). The site lies on the crest of a hill at 90m aOD, c. 250m north of the River Dever. Human remains and numerous finds had first been discovered in the nineteenth century as a result of railway construction, but no formal recording was carried out (Meaney 1964: 98). Three graves (1-3) were excavated in 2003, one of which contained a burial accompanied by a copper alloy supporting-arm brooch identified as belonging to Böhme's (1974: 10-4) *Typ Perlberg* group, and a 'Frankish' buckle, suggesting a later fifth-century date for these burials (Fern and Stoodley 2003: 13). Metal detecting also located a pierced Roman coin, which may have derived from one of the graves. Five inhumations and four cremations were subsequently uncovered in 2004.

Grave 4 was at the centre of an annular ditch, perhaps indicating the former presence of a (ploughed-out) barrow (Fig. 6.1.21). This large grave incorporated flint packing and evidence for a timber lining, and contained the inhumation of an adolescent female, accompanied by grave-goods including a necklet, purse, possible wooden box and knife, typical of the seventh-century 'Final Phase' (Fern and Stoodley 2004a: 9). Cremations 1-3 appeared to be placed within the ring-ditch and therefore postdate it, although the sequence was not clear. Cremation 4 seemed to have been cut by the ditch on the southwestern side, and may therefore be earlier, perhaps dating from the fifth or sixth century (Fern and Stoodley 2004a). Pottery analysis has found that some of the sherds from Cremations 1-3 are seventh-century fabrics (N. Stoodley *pers. comm.* 2012). This is a particularly late example of early medieval cremation burial, although it

is not unique in this respect (see St Mary's, Southampton, below). Three further inhumations were excavated in 2005. Grave 9, which had been heavily truncated by the ring-ditch, contained a small-long brooch, annular brooch and ring; Grave 10 contained a sub-adult with a knife, belt fittings and beads, possibly contained within a bag; while Grave 11 contained an adolescent accompanied by a spearhead, shield boss and board, knife and belt fittings, thought to date from the sixth century. One further grave was excavated in 2006, revealing a heavily disturbed and truncated burial, accompanied by an iron knife.

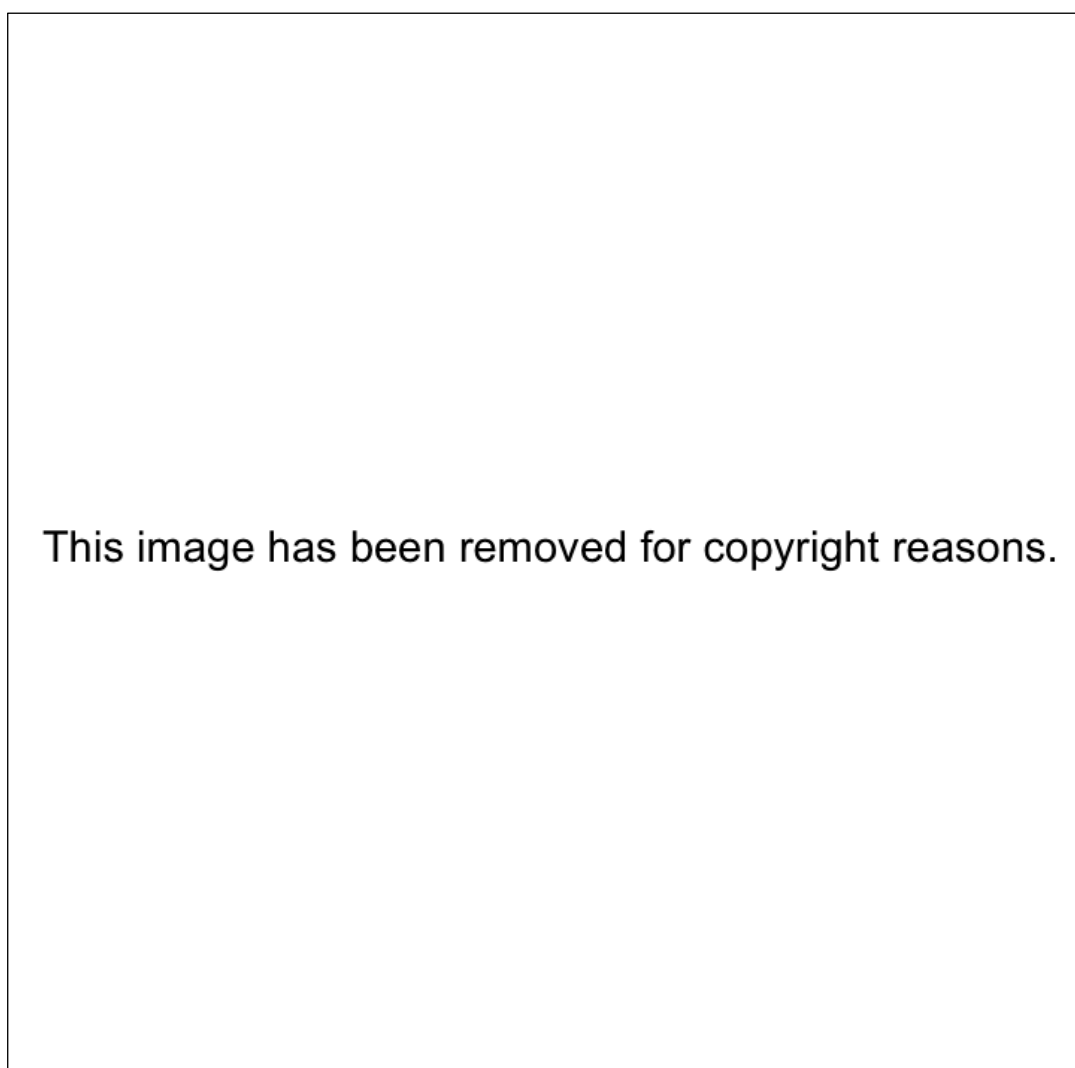


Fig. 6.1.21 Trench 1, excavated in 2004 at Weston Colley, showing the ring-ditch, Graves 4 and 7, and Cremations 1-4 (after Fern and Stoodley 2004a: Fig. 5).

Weston Colley was a long-lived cemetery, which displays evidence of innovation and evolution of burial practices from the fifth to seventh century. No prehistoric material was recovered, and the ring-ditch or barrow is likely to be a

primary construction relating to Grave 4, reflecting the trend towards the above-ground marking of graves in the seventh century. A broadly contemporary settlement, at least to the earlier phase of burial, with evidence for two SFBs, has been found 1km to the east, at Northbrook, north of Micheldever village centre and adjacent to the River Dever (Johnston 1998). The settlement lies in close proximity to a Roman building, a phenomenon that has been increasingly recognised within the county, most notably at Meonstoke (Fern and Stoodley 2003: 3). This perhaps indicates that the same 'family' unit continued to occupy the estate, or at least that the estate continued to have the same focus, and that there was a continued claim to this land (Petts 2000: 123).

Just over 4km west of the Weston Colley site and in a similar topographic position on a spur, at **Sutton Scotney**, Wonston, a skeleton with the head to the west and accompanied by a spearhead, was found in 1921 (Meaney 1964: 101). The site is located at the edge of Chalk Dell on the northeast-facing slope of a hill at 75m aOD, overlooking the Dever valley. It is clearly intervisible with the village of Sutton Scotney, and although this settlement is not known to have origins in the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period, several finds of fifth and sixth century items have been made within c. 1km (HHER 37171, 37172, 37173). A long barrow 2.5km to the south-southeast was found to contain a 'secondary cremation burial of the Romano-British period' (HHER 22603; Hughes 1987: 3).

Bourne valley

In the valley of the Bourne Rivulet, a tributary of the Upper Test, an inhumation burial was found at Derrydown Copse, **St Mary Bourne**, during the construction of a farm track in 1875 (Stevens 1895: 71). The grave was a metre deep in the chalk, accompanied by a probable early medieval buckle. The site lies on the brow of the hill, 235m west of the Bourne, with views to the southeast, away from the current village centre of St Mary Bourne and the 'Portway' Roman road between Old Sarum and Silchester (Margary 4b). The Roman road crossed the Bourne c. 420m north of the site, although this road is not mentioned in the bounds of *Hysseburnan* (contiguous with the parishes of St Mary Bourne and Hurstbourne Priors), dated AD 900 (S359). At the base of the hill, adjacent to the river, c. 220m east of the burial site, Roman pottery, coins and the possible remains of Roman buildings, as well as inhumations in oak coffins, were

uncovered in 1866 (NMR SU 44 NW 3). The early medieval burial site is therefore indirectly associated with these features. A barrow referred to in the same bounds (S359) as *ceardices beorg* has been proposed as the burial place of the legendary figure Cerdic, who reputedly died in AD 534 (Yorke 1989). It was located just under 3km southwest of the Derrydown Copse burial site, at the southwestern corner of St Mary Bourne parish (Grinsell 1938-40: 32; Grundy 1927: 211; NMR SU 44 NW 10).

North Andover plateau

Five hundred metres south of the Charlton River, an indirect tributary of the Test, at **Portway West**, Andover, an 'Early–Middle Saxon' cemetery was excavated in 1981 (Stoodley 2006; 2007a). An earlier mixed-rite cemetery, known as **Portway East**, 800m to the east, was also excavated in 1974 (Cook and Dacre 1985; Fig. 6.1.22). Portway is thus an example of the 'two cemetery' model or pattern, which sees the supersession of a fifth- to sixth-century burial ground by a newly founded cemetery in the seventh or eighth century (Boddington 1990; Stoodley 2006: 63). This phenomenon appears to have been more common in the northern part of Hampshire, although long-lived cemeteries spanning both periods, such as Worthy Park, are also present in the area. Portway East and Portway West are located 200m and 660m northwest of the 'Portway' Roman road (Margary 4b) respectively, and just over 3km south-southwest of its intersection with the Ermin Way (Margary 43) at East Anton. A trackway known as the Harrow Way, which may have prehistoric origins, and an Iron Age settlement lies between the two sites (Champion *et al.* 1974). Three 'Early Saxon' settlements have been located within 2km to the east, at Goch Way (Wright 2004), Old Down Farm (Davies 1979) and 'North of Churchill Way West' (Ault 1997).

Seventeen graves were excavated at Portway West, in three distinct clusters. There remains the possibility, however, that many more burials have been lost due to landscaping and development in the area, and the cemetery could potentially have contained between sixty and a hundred interments (Stoodley 2006: 64; 2007a: 154). To the northwest of the main group, four graves were focused around a small Bronze Age barrow, of c. 15m in diameter. One male inhumation was found within, and aligned with, the barrow ditch, in an almost

prone position. An apparently empty grave lay within the area enclosed by the ditch, and a further two unexcavated graves were located just outside it. The other two groups of burials were each associated with penannular ditches, considered to be contemporary with the burials. A double burial of two decapitated males was located a couple of metres outside the penannular ditch closest to the barrow. The cemetery is less than 100m east of the boundary between Foxcotte (a tithing of Andover parish) and Penton Mewsey. The First Edition OS map shows that the boundary follows a trackway, adjacent to which, 650m southwest of the cemetery, lay a Bronze Age barrow until its destruction in 1917 (HHER 16955). The antiquity of the path is perhaps attested by the position of the barrow, and the fact that it forms the boundary between two chalkland strip parishes/tithings suggests that it was a droveway between the valley bottom and higher pasture. The track intersects with the Harrow Way next to Portway West, and it could be argued that the crossroads or 'trackside' location of the cemetery is more significant than the proximity of the parish boundary.

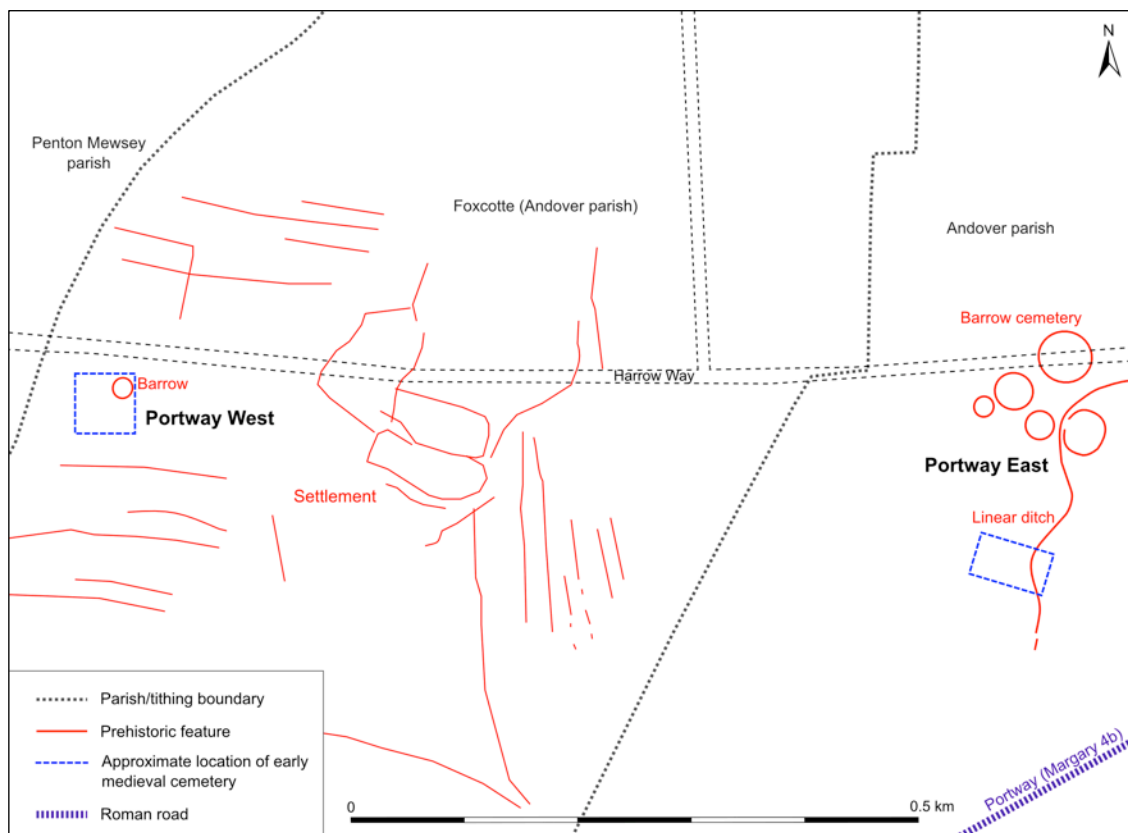


Fig. 6.1.22 Location of the Portway West and Portway East cemeteries, and the Roman road in bottom right (after Stoodley 2006).

The earlier Portway East cemetery is also indirectly associated with a Bronze Age barrow cemetery; there, the burials lay c. 150m south of the barrow group. The Portway sites raise important issues about the decisions involved in the location of cemeteries in the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period, many of which have been addressed by Nick Stoodley (2006; 2007a). The reasons behind the decision either to mark graves or groups of graves with new ring-ditches, or to appropriate existing monuments may be closely linked. The prehistoric linear ditch, which continued to define the eastern limit of the cemetery, was also a visible and important feature, as demonstrated by the fact that graves within and outside it follow the same alignment (Cook and Dacre 1985: 13; Stoodley 2007a).

At Weyhill, 2.6km to the west-northwest of Portway West, an iron spearhead and 'Saxon knife', amongst other material including a bone needle, stone chisel, Roman coin and medieval pottery, was found when a bowl barrow was opened by the Rev. R.M. Heanley and Ernest East in 1911 (Williams-Freeman 1915: 115-6). The excavators are said to have referred to a possible primary burial and seven secondary burials, although later accounts make no mention of these (NMR SU 34 NW 8). The probable foundations of a windmill were also found to have been dug into the barrow. The first element of the place-name Weyhill may derive from OE *weoh*, 'shrine, temple or holy place' (Coates 1989: 174), or *hlaw*, 'barrow'; possibly a corruption of both (Semple 1998: 121). The village was the location of an important annual fair from at least the thirteenth century, focused on a large mound or barrow, close to the convergence of the Harrow Way and other 'ancient' routeways (Heanley 1922). The barrow excavated in 1911 is located less than 150m northwest of the nineteenth-century site of the fairground, and in the apparent absence of any other mounds in the vicinity, is highly probable that this was the barrow which formed the focus of the fair. The spearhead found within the mound could be interpreted as a votive deposition, yet the additional presence of a knife suggests that there is a strong possibility that the finds relate to an intrusive 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial or burials. Some of the finds dating from other periods may reflect the long-standing veneration of the site.

Upper Test valley

At **Testcombe Gravel Pit**, Chilbolton, an early medieval shield boss and spear, and possible inhumation, were found in 1931 (Meaney 1964: 97). The lynchets and banks of a 'Celtic' field system, and a number of large pits containing Iron Age and Romano-British pottery, animal bone, oyster shells and fragments of wattle and daub, were also apparent. The site lies on river terrace deposits, 500m east of the convergence of the Rivers Anton and Test, and just under 3km west of the Roman road (Margary 43).

Wallop valley

Three to four kilometres west of the confluence between the Lower Test, the Somborne Stream and the Wallop Brook, a north-south orientated grave was recorded at the eastern end of **Broughton Down**, Broughton, in 1875 (Meaney 1964: 95). The well preserved skeleton within the grave was accompanied by a spearhead, knife and shield boss, indicating an 'Early Saxon' date. It was located c. 150-200m east of a line of four barrows (NMR SU 33 SW 3), and 360m north of the Roman road (Margary 45a). The barrows lie at the summit of the slope, while the early medieval burial site is on the slope side, overlooking the Wallop valley.

Just over 6km to the north, at Brewery House Farm, **Nether Wallop**, another inhumation burial of probable 'Early Saxon' date, accompanied by a knife and spearhead, was found in the mid-twentieth century (Cherryson 2005b: 55-6; HHER 21916; Meaney 1964: 101). The site is 250m west of the Wallop Brook, on a gentle valley slope at 75m aOD. Nether Wallop parish incorporates Danebury hillfort, which lies just over 3km east of the burial site, while the boundary with Wiltshire, and Roche Court Down just beyond, are located 4km to the southwest.

Summary: Hampshire Downs

The most striking feature of the evidence from this *pays* is the riverine pattern of burial sites. This is especially noticeable in the case of the larger community cemeteries; sites on higher ground or further away from rivers, such as Farley Chamberlayne, Preshaw Farm and War Down, tend to be isolated inhumations. Although the inhumation rite generally dominates, cremation is also practised,

including a particularly late example at Weston Colley. Jewellery and dress accessories appear to be absent from some cemeteries, where traditionally 'male-gendered' grave-goods such as weapons, are well attested, perhaps suggesting that women were displaying their status and identity in other, less archaeologically visible, ways.

An 'associative' relationship with earlier monuments and features is exploited at several cemeteries, notably Storeys Meadow and Snells Corner in the postulated territory of the *Meonware*, echoing the pattern of burial identified by Semple (2008) in West Sussex. This practice, combined with isolated female burials on the periphery of the Meon valley area, may be related to the consolidation of the identity of this tribal group in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Avon and Stour Valleys

Four 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites have been discovered in this *pays* (Fig. 6.1.23).

At **Shallows Farm, Breamore** (but in the ecclesiastical parish of Woodgreen), a round or sub-oval barrow provided the focus for a richly furnished sixth-century cemetery. The mound has been dated to the Bronze Age on the basis of fragments of collared urn, and geophysical survey has located ditches of probable Bronze Age date in proximity to the monument (HHER 55464). The site is located on the edge of the floodplain of the Avon, 200-300m from the watercourse and 3km downstream from the point at which the river crosses the Wiltshire border. It sits at c. 30m aOD on river terrace deposits above White Chalk bedrock, close to the interface with the sands and clays of the Lambeth Group. Metal detecting on the site in the 1990s first revealed sixth-century artefacts, notably an inscribed bronze Byzantine bucket, probably imported from Antioch, in modern Syria (Edwards 2001: 9). Only a few other examples of buckets of this type have been discovered in England; one from Bromeswell in Suffolk, and two from Chessell Down on the Isle of Wight (Eagles and Ager 2004: 92). Anomalies were subsequently identified through magnetometer survey, and test-pitting in 1998 confirmed the presence of graves (Berkshire Archaeological Services 2001). Ten inhumations were excavated from four

trenches, both in and around the mound, during an evaluation by Time Team in 2001, although the extent of the cemetery was not determined (Edwards 2001). The burials were accompanied by grave-goods including six stave-built buckets (Cook 2004: 58) and numerous weapons.

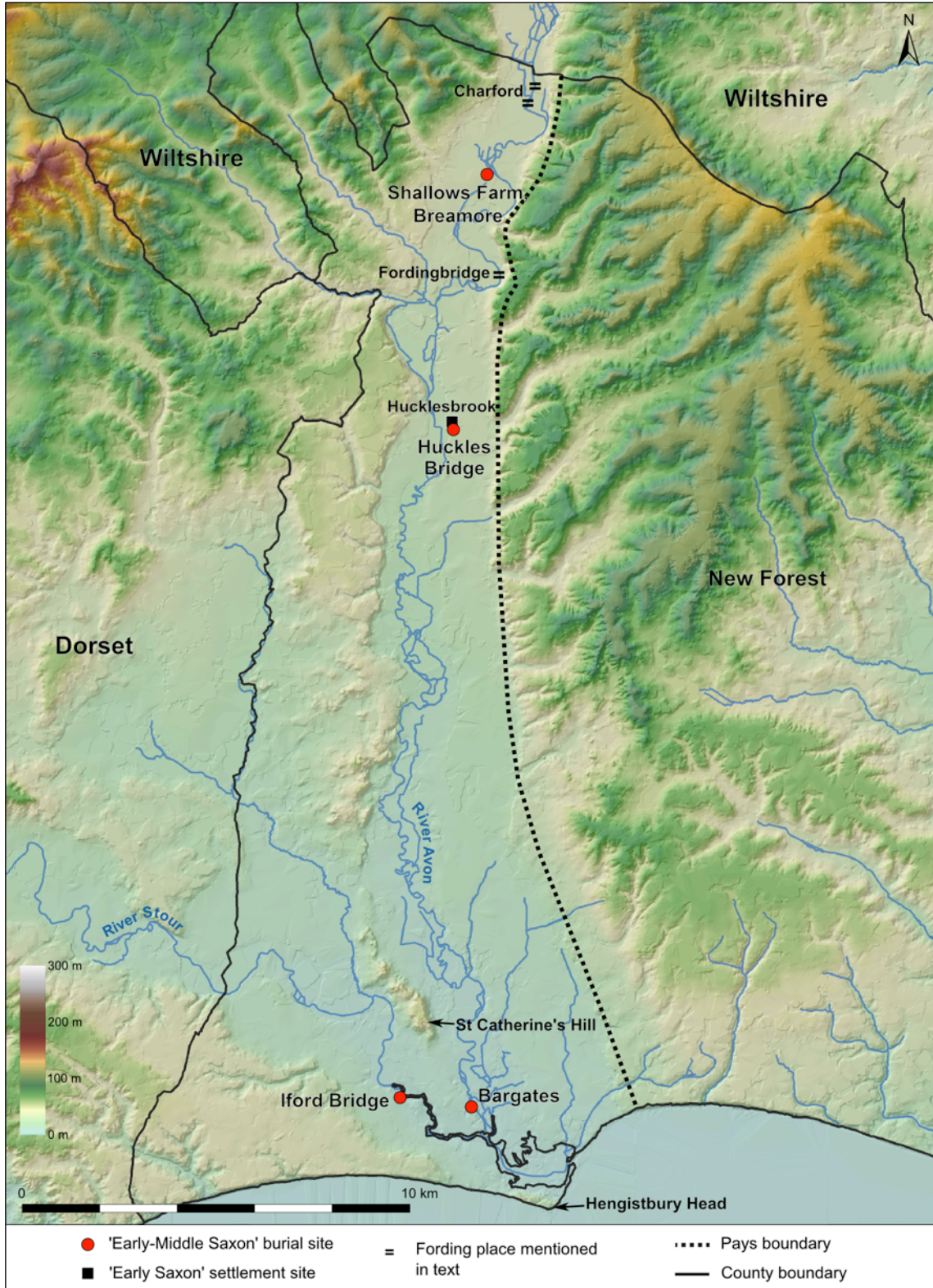


Fig. 6.1.23 Key sites in the Avon and Stour Valleys pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The high quantity of weapons, and the apparent absence of jewellery and female dress accessories, has prompted comparisons with Bargates (see below) (Edwards 2001: 72), and in terms of the weapon combinations, it could also be compared with St Mary's Stadium I (see below). Parallels have also been drawn between finds from Breamore and imported items, including Frankish pieces from cemeteries in the Salisbury area, such as Winterbourne Gunner, Petersfinger and Harnham Hill in Wiltshire (Eagles and Ager 2004: 92). Artefactual evidence recovered predominantly from cemeteries suggests that the Avon valley was particularly well connected, both provincially and with the wider area, particularly the Isle of Wight, which may have been a trading post for goods into the area, as well as further afield (Ulmschneider 1999; 2003). The fact that the Shallows Farm cemetery was focused on a prominent landscape feature, adjacent to the river, suggests that it was intended to be conspicuous and highly visible to travellers. The close proximity of two of the skeletons in Trench 5 implies that the individuals (505 and 506) were interred and on display at the same time, together with numerous grave-goods, including a bucket, shield, spearhead and garnet-inlaid buckle (Edwards 2001: 18). A number of stake-holes cut in the mound, within Trench 1, may suggest that a post-built structure was also present (Edwards 2001: 15).

There are numerous fording places along this section of the Avon, as attested by the place-names Fordingbridge (*Forde* in DB) and Charford (*Cerdeford* in DB), both within 3km of Shallows Farm (see Fig. 6.1.23). Movement across the landscape on a west-east axis was thus facilitated, and such fords may not have hindered navigation on the river itself, as vessels are likely to have been of shallow draught (Eagles and Ager 2004: 93). Charford may be the location of an early sixth-century battle at *Cerdicesford in fluvio Avene*, 'Cerdic's ford on the River Avon' (ASC 519; Coates 1989: 51). Although many places associated with the figure Cerdic are unidentifiable and almost certainly fictional, Charford is a convincing candidate for identification with the place mentioned in the ASC (Coates 1989; Yorke 1989: 91). Now preserved only in the names of two farms and a manor house, the ford is likely to have been c. 2km north of the Breamore site and only a few hundred metres south of the Wiltshire border, which may have represented a boundary between the *Wilsaete* and the people of *Hamtunscir* (Eagles 2001: 205; Yorke 1989: 85-6). Although such exact

divisions are unlikely to have existed in the sixth century, the potential frontier location of Shallows Farm cemetery is nevertheless an important factor to consider.

Just under 7km south of Shallows Farm, at **Huckles Bridge**, on the parish boundary between Fordingbridge and Ibsley, a single grass-tempered cremation urn was found during road widening in 1926-7 (HHER 21080). A fifth- or sixth-century SFB, associated with a Bronze Age ring-ditch—probably a ploughed-out barrow—was found nearby during gravel extraction in the 1980s (Davies and Graham 1984). The site is located at 25m aOD, on alluvial deposits over sands and clays of the Poole Formation.

At **Bargates**, Christchurch, excavations in the late 1970s revealed at least 30 inhumations and four cremations, of probable late sixth- and seventh-century date (Fig. 6.1.24; Jarvis 1983). The cemetery sits at 5m aOD on the gentle northeast-facing slope of a low northwest-southeast orientated alluvial sand and gravel ridge, midway between two imposing antecedent places: the important Iron Age centre at Hengistbury Head (Sherratt 1996: 216), and St Catherine's Hill, atop which prehistoric enclosures, barrows, and a possible Roman building have been located (NMR SZ 19 NW 30). The Bargates cemetery lay on the floodplain of the River Avon, c. 100m outside the area enclosed by the 'Late Saxon' *burh*. Occupation evidence dating from the Neolithic, and the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, was also found on the site, while two Bronze Age ring-ditches, probably barrows levelled by late medieval ploughing, formed the focus of the early medieval cemetery.

Over three quarters of the graves in the early medieval cemetery contained knives, and eleven contained weapons; including four with a spearhead and a shield boss, and one with a shield boss and two spearheads. Both Jarvis (1983) and Stoodley (1999) have commented upon the preponderance of 'male-gendered' graves with weapons. However, as only eleven graves were interpreted as male (all on the basis of the grave-goods, as bone preservation was almost non-existent), and nineteen were of indeterminate gender, it cannot be stated with complete certainty that there was a significant gender imbalance. Moreover, it cannot be said for certain that weapons were necessarily the preserve of men during this period (Lucy 1998: 34). The absence of jewellery

and dress accessories, such as brooches, is indeed notable, but as preservation was very poor, it is possible that some objects had decayed without trace (Jarvis 1983: 105). Grave 18, which contained a spearhead and a knife, was surrounded by a small penannular ditch.

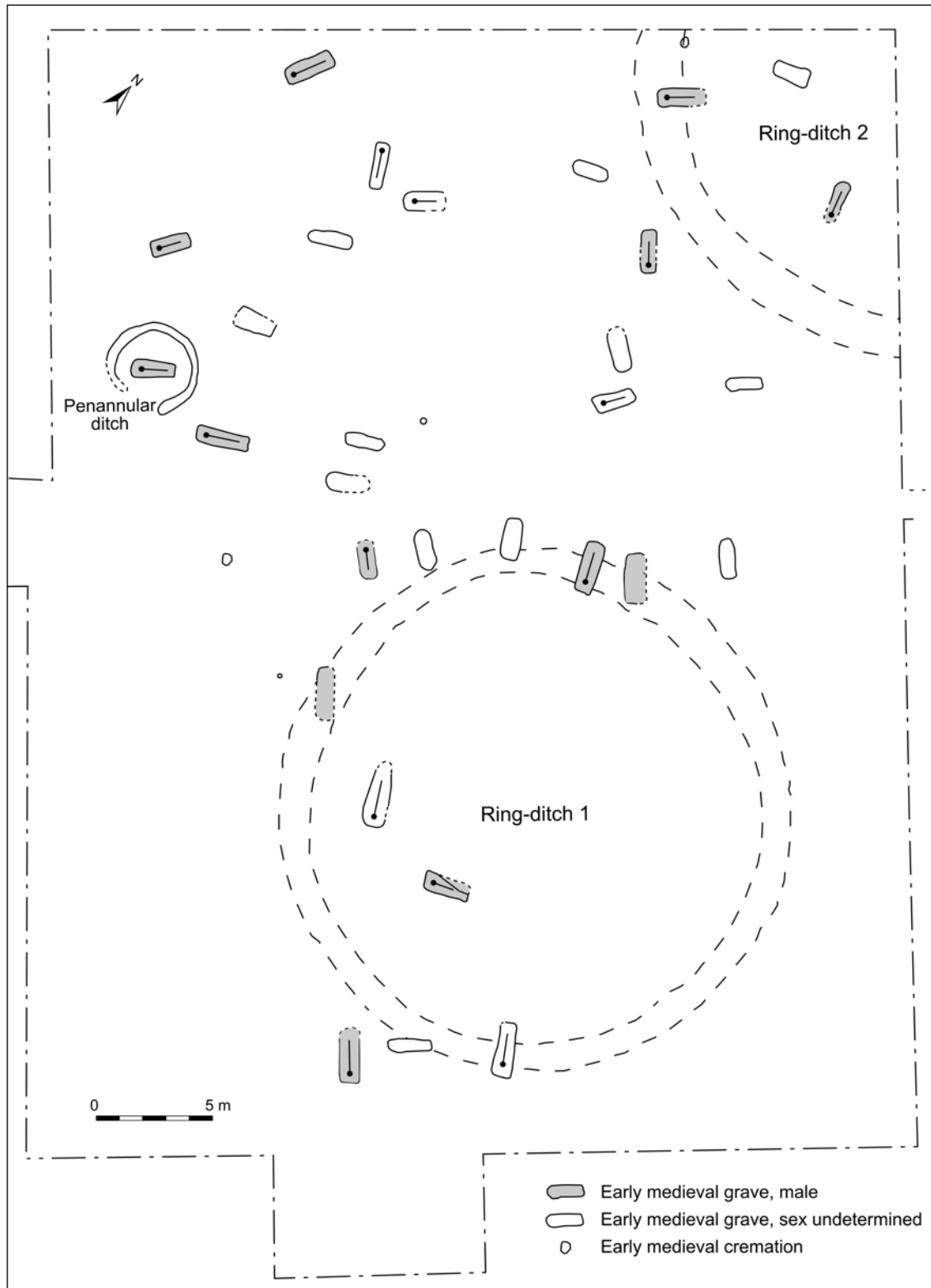


Fig. 6.1.24 The Bargates cemetery and the two Bronze Age ring-ditches (after Jarvis 1983: Fig. 57).

Evidence for the ‘Middle Saxon’ occupation of the *burh* area is inconclusive, and the isolated find of a loom weight at Wick, 1km to the south, represents the only ‘Early Saxon’ evidence in close proximity (Jarvis 1983: 17). The earliest documentary reference to Christchurch—formerly *Tweoxneam*, deriving from OE *betweonan eam*, ‘between the rivers’, i.e. the Avon and the Stour—dates from AD 900 (ASC 900; Coates 1989: 54). Although the date of the foundation of the earliest church at there is unknown, Hase (1975, cited by Jarvis 1983: 9) has concluded that it was the mother church of a large *parochia*, which displays indicators of considerable antiquity.

Just under 2km west of Bargates and 130m west of the Stour, at **Iford Bridge**, Christchurch, a cremation within an early medieval urn was found beneath a sarsen in 1933 or 1938 (Meaney 1964: 94; NMR SZ 19 SW 41; Reed 1947: 283). The fabric of the vessel is not closely datable, but a sixth-century date can be suggested.

Summary: Avon and Stour valleys

All of the ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in this *pays* are located on floodplains, underlain by river terrace deposits. The cremations at Huckles Bridge and Iford Bridge, dating to the later fifth or sixth century, probably represent the earliest burial evidence located thus far, the former site lying in close proximity to a possible associated settlement. The sixth- and seventh-century cemeteries focused on Bronze Age barrows at Breamore and Bargates are both characterised by unusual assemblages. The Avon was an important corridor of communication, with far-reaching networks of trade and influence, and this is reflected in the combination of grave-goods and the above-ground marking of graves. The kin group buried at Breamore, in particular, displays indicators of exceptional status, probably achieved through hospitality and gift exchange (Edwards 2001).

South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Twenty-eight burial sites dating from the period of study have been discovered in this *pays* (Fig. 6.1.25).

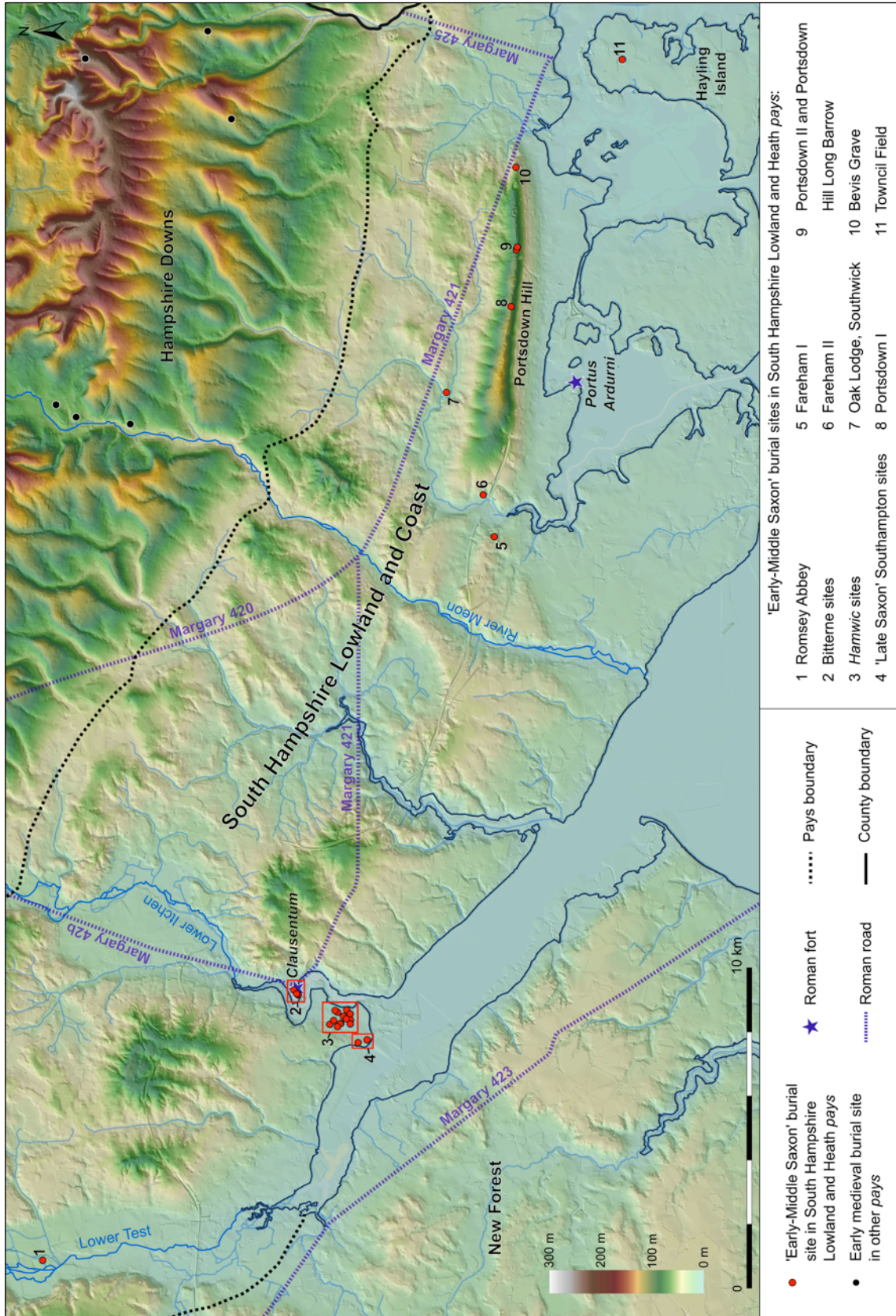


Fig. 6.1.25 ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites, and other key sites, in South Hampshire Lowland and Coast pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Lower Test valley

At **Romsey Abbey**, excavations in 1973-91 and 2004 have revealed 45 probable early medieval burials, all with the heads to the west (Cherryson 2005b: 62; Scott 1996). No grave-goods or coffins were found, but one of the graves was partially lined with stone; and four lay on charcoal beds, two of which were radiocarbon dated to the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period (680-1000 and 790-1170, at 95.4% probability). The burials may be associated with an earlier minster, as evidence suggests that an eighth-century church occupied the site prior to the founding of the nunnery in the ninth or early tenth century (Collier 1991). It is, however, possible that the burials postdate the period of study. A Late Iron Age and Roman settlement, possibly occupied until the late fourth century, with first- to second-century timber buildings and a large second-century ditch, was discovered in Narrow Lane, 100m to the south (HHER 24860; Scott 1993).

Southampton

Nineteen burial sites from the period of study have been located within modern Southampton, in three discrete zones: within the area of Roman settlement on the Bitterne peninsular, in the 'Middle-Late Saxon' town of *Hamwic*, and in the area of the 'Late Saxon' settlement to the southwest. Early medieval burial practice in the Southampton area has already been examined in detail by Annia Cherryson (2005a: 251-66; 2010) and Nick Stoodley (2002; 2010), but will nevertheless be re-examined here in the context of this thesis.³

Bitterne

The Bitterne peninsular, in the ecclesiastical parish of South Stoneham, was the location of a Roman port and small town, probably the *Claesentum* of the Antonine Itinerary, which may have functioned as a shore fort from the late fourth century, and was later utilised as a 'Late Saxon' *burh* (Johnston 1977). One of Southampton's two main groups of seventh- to early eighth-century cemeteries has been found here, c. 1km northeast of *Hamwic* and on the opposite side of the Itchen. The discovery of human remains was first made at the beginning of the nineteenth century, on the north side of Bitterne Road

³ See Cherryson 2010: Table 4.2 for a list of radiocarbon dates obtained for sites in *Hamwic* and 'Late Saxon' Southampton.

West, between the Inner Fosse and Northam Bridge, most likely between SOU 207 and 414 (Fig. 6.1.26).⁴ Over 50 skeletons were uncovered in 1804-05, orientated east-west and with evidence of coffins, in deposits immediately overlying Roman levels (Englefield 1805: 119-20). Many more skeletons were revealed as a result of groundworks during the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, and a total of at least 138 east-west burials have been found within the area to the west of, and enclosed by, the Inner Fosse (Cottrell 2011: 47). Only since the 1980s, however, have inhumations in the area been excavated and recorded with due care and attention (Cottrell 2011: 47).

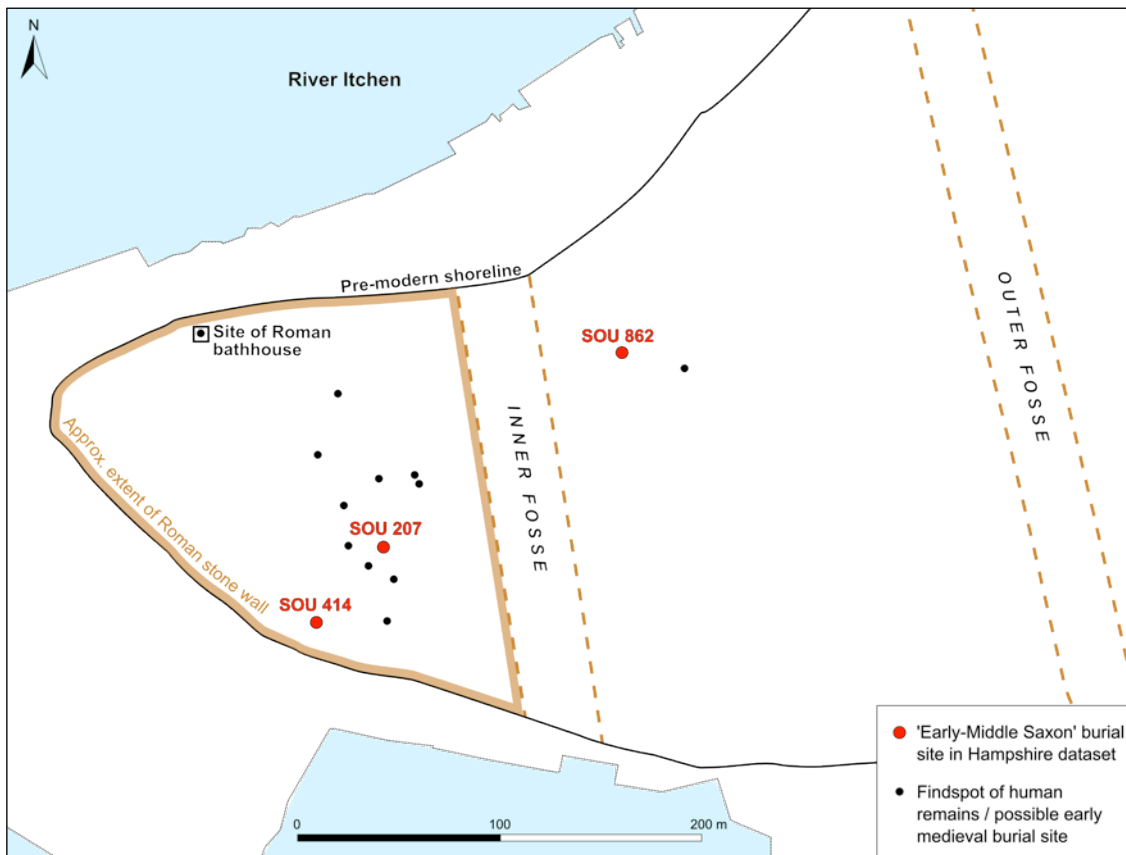


Fig. 6.1.26 Early medieval and undated burial sites on the Bitterne peninsular. Red dots represent burial sites in the Hampshire dataset; black dots represent findspots of undated inhumations or human remains (see Cottrell 2011).

Two sites to the west of the Inner Fosse, and within the area enclosed by the probable fourth-century stone wall (which was extant until the late medieval or early post-medieval period), have been recorded to modern standards, in known locations, and have thus been included in the dataset. Parts of nine

⁴ The SOU prefix denotes the archaeological site code allocated by Southampton City Council, by which the many of the sites in the city are commonly known.

east-west skeletons, possibly confined, were found at **SOU 207** during a watching brief near to the north corner of Hawkeswood Road and Bitterne Road in 1984. Radiocarbon dating of one of the burials indicated a late seventh- or eighth-century date (Cherryson 2005b: 72-3; SHER MSH1658). In 1989-90, six further east-west burials were found at **SOU 414** during excavations on the south corner of Hawkeswood Road and Bitterne Road (Hughes 1991: 37). One was accompanied by a spearhead, initially thought to date from the fifth or sixth century, but identified on re-examination as a Swanton (1973) Type C2, deposited predominantly in the seventh century (Cherryson 2005a: 265). A radiocarbon date from another of these burials provided a late seventh- to eighth-century date (Nenk *et al.* 1991: 159; Smith 1991). The close proximity and similar dates of SOU 207 and 414, as well as the fact that the burials found in 1804-05 probably lay between these two sites, certainly strongly suggest that the burials are all part of the same cemetery. Because this is not certain, however, SOU 207 and 414 are treated as separate sites in the dataset.

Between the inner and outer ditches of *Clausentum*, and outside the area enclosed by the Roman stone wall, fifteen inhumations, mostly orientated east-west, were found at **SOU 862** during a watching brief on groundworks at 75, Bitterne Road, in 1998 (Southern Archaeological Services 1998) (see Fig. 6.1.26). There were no grave-goods, but radiocarbon dating of three of the inhumations suggests a probable late seventh- and eighth-century date for most of the burials, with the cemetery perhaps continuing in use into the ninth or tenth century (Cherryson 2010: 60). It is unlikely that they belong to the same cemetery as SOU 414 and 207, as they lie 500m northeast of these sites, outside of the Inner Fosse, and appear to be in a discrete group (Cottrell 2011: 48). Furthermore, no human remains have been found within SOU 862 and the Inner Fosse (Cherryson 2010: 60).

Finds of human remains have been made at twelve other locations of modern investigation on the Bitterne peninsular (see Fig. 6.1.26), and although these have not been included in the dataset due to an absence of dating evidence, the east-west orientation of many of the burials, and their proximity to SOU 207, 414 and 862, make it highly likely that they date from the period of study. It is also probable that many further early medieval inhumations remain undiscovered (Cottrell 2011: 61-2). The burials in Bitterne lack both the

elaborate grave-goods found at St Mary's Stadium I (see below), and the above-ground markers found there and at several other of the *Hamwic* cemeteries. The apparent absence of the latter could be explained by the restricted areas of investigation; more probably, it reflects variations in burial traditions and practices, and possibly an absence of elite settlement on the eastern side of the Itchen (Cherryson 2005a: 266; Stoodley 2010: 46).

Hamwic

Thirteen burial sites dating from the period of study have been found in the ecclesiastical parish of Southampton St Mary, within the area occupied by the 'Middle Saxon' *emporium* of *Hamwic* (Fig. 6.1.27). None of these appear to be associated with earlier features, and although isolated prehistoric finds have been made, there is little evidence for occupation of the area prior to the 'Middle Saxon' period. Primary penannular ditches have been identified at several of the burial sites, however. Indeed, *Hamwic* has produced six of the ten examples in Wessex of penannular ditches, a feature which is more common in southeast England, particularly Kent (Cherryson 2005a: 312).⁵ This is perhaps an indication of the innovative and distinctive nature of burial practices in *Hamwic* at this time, partly the result of the wide ranging external influences afforded by its status as a trading centre on an international scale.

Several discrete cemeteries appear to have been founded in *Hamwic* just prior to or during the development of the *emporium* in the early eighth century (Cherryson 2010: 57). Excavations carried out at the site of a mixed-rite cemetery at **St Mary's Stadium I**, in 1998-2000, revealed 24 inhumations and 18 cremations (Birbeck 2005). Two inhumations had previously been recovered from an adjacent site (SOU 20) in 1975 (Holdsworth 1980). Further disarticulated remains found at SOU 1 (Morton 1992a: 48), to the south of SOU 20, are also likely to be part of the same cemetery (Birbeck 2005: 11).

⁵ Penannular ditches have been identified in Southampton at SOU 32, Cook Street (four examples) and SOU 1553, and elsewhere in Wessex at Ford II (Wiltshire), Portway West (two examples) and Bargates.

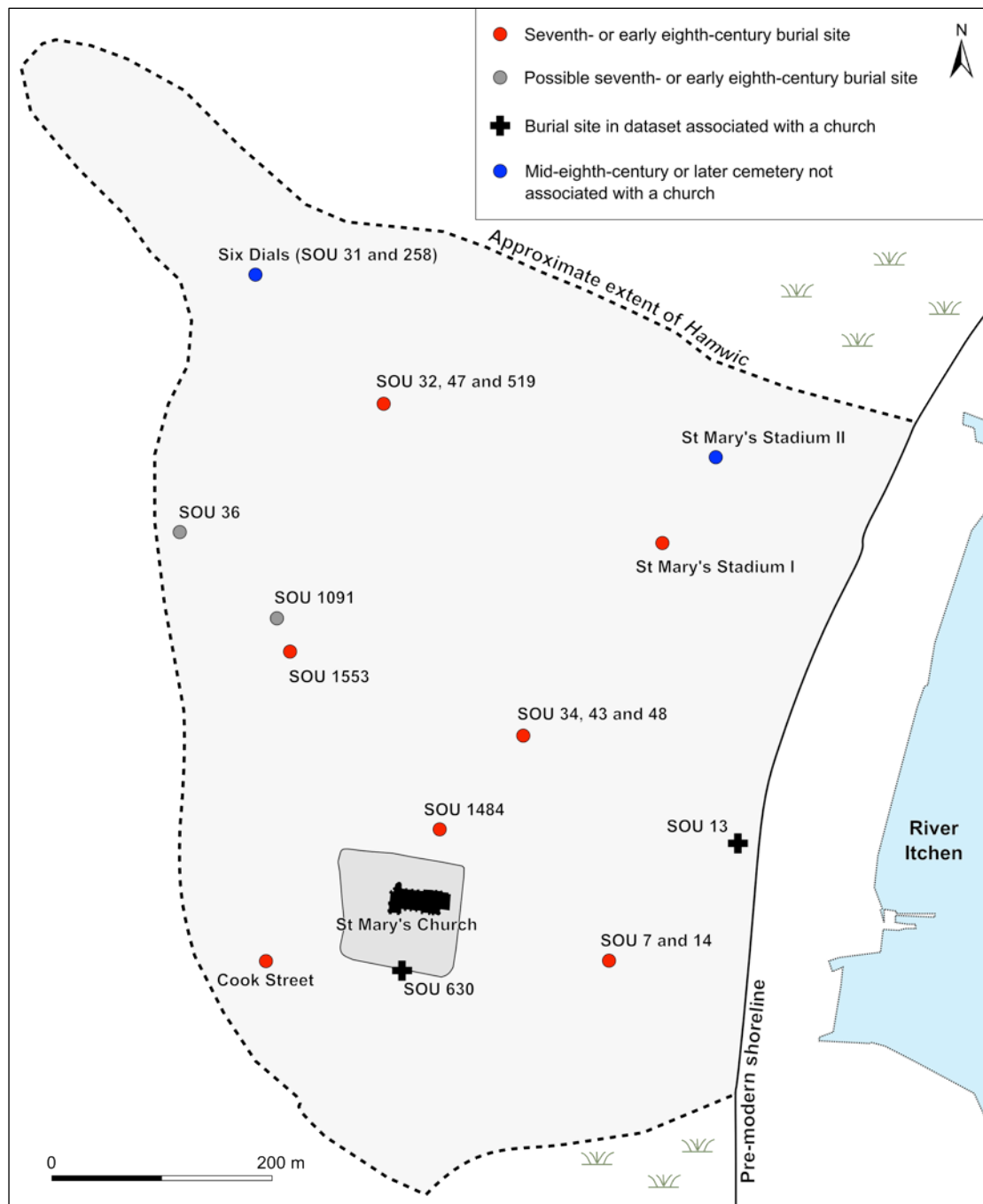


Fig. 6.1.27 Approximate outline of *Hamwic*, showing the locations of certain and probable 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites (after Birbeck 2005; Morton 1992b).

Most of the graves were orientated west-east, and there was some evidence for coffined burial. Two graves had possible settings for above-ground markers. Charcoal from three of the cremations produced radiocarbon dates ranging between the seventh and early eighth centuries. Such late examples of cremation are rare, although they are paralleled at Weston Colley and Storeys Meadow in Hampshire; as well as outside the area of study, at Apple Down I in West Sussex (Down and Welch 1990; Stoodley 2010: 46). The majority of the

inhumations were accompanied by grave-goods, and high proportion (46%) by weapons; even more remarkable were the complex combinations of weapons within individual graves (Stoodley 2002: 324; 2010: 42). The presence of intricate gold jewellery also prompted speculation of a royal connection, but although rare in Hampshire, such items are not exceptional elsewhere (Stoodley 2002: 324). The assemblage does, however, support the case that a high-status elite settlement was present in the *Hamwic* area during the first decades of its existence.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the St Mary's Stadium I cemetery was founded before the settlement at *Hamwic*, between c. AD 650 and 720 (Birbeck 2005; Cherryson 2010: 57; Stoodley 2010: 40). This supports the argument that *Hamwic* was not founded from scratch by King Ine around AD 700, but that it had an antecedent, probably a seventh-century royal estate, responsible for extracting tolls from its rural hinterland (Scull 2002: 308; Stoodley 2002: 329).

Approximately 300m northwest of St Mary's Stadium I, a broadly contemporary inhumation cemetery was excavated in **Clifford Street (SOU 32, 47 and 519)** in 1968-9 (Morton 1992a: 171). At SOU 32, ten graves were found to contain human remains, and there were six other apparently empty grave-like features, although the absence of skeletal remains in these features probably reflects the fact that preservation was generally poor. All of the graves were aligned approximately east-west, and one (Grave 560) was surrounded by a penannular ditch. There were also possible settings for above-ground markers. A sceatta dating from c. AD 700-715 was found in the fill of one of the graves. A feature tentatively identified as a timber building, perhaps a double-celled church—a feature of the eighth century or earlier—or a mortuary chapel, was also identified. Further skeletons were discovered 14m to the south, at SOU 47, in the nineteenth century.

A similar site to SOU 32, with comparable structural features, lies 500m to the south, in the **Cook Street (SOU 254, 567 and 823)** area (Garner 1993; 2001; Garner and Vincent 1997). A cemetery was found during archaeological excavations in 1986-9 (SOU 254), 1994 (SOU 567) and 1997-8 (SOU 823), revealing 21 inhumation burials—three of which were surrounded by penannular ditches—and two skeletons and two skulls in a large boundary ditch

just to the west of the graves. In a fourth penannular ditch, no grave was found. The full extent of the cemetery is unknown. The boundary ditch was possibly the first 'Middle Saxon' feature in the area, built to demarcate either the cemetery or the settlement (Garner 2001: 188). Grave-goods of a knife and linked pins were found with one burial, and late seventh- to early eighth-century radiocarbon dates have been obtained (Garner 2001: 177). Following the disuse of the cemetery, the area seems to have remained relatively undisturbed, perhaps due to continuing respect for the individuals interred there.

On the western periphery of *Hamwic*, at a site known as **SOU 1553**, at 69-72 St Mary Street, a cemetery of at least eight graves, focused around a central female grave within a penannular ditch, was recently excavated (Garner 2012). The burial within the ditch was radiocarbon dated to 660-680 (at 68% probability).

A further two burial sites have been discovered near to SOU 1553, which may also date from the later seventh or early eighth century (Cherryson 2005a: 251). The skeleton of an neonate, apparently buried within a 'Middle Saxon' rubbish pit, and other human remains, were recorded during excavations at **Kingsland (SOU 36)** in 1946-50, and in 1986, the disarticulated remains of at least two more individuals were discovered 10m from the site of the original excavation (Morton 1992a: 48, 198). 'Middle Saxon' deposits and features, including stake-holes, post-holes and pits, containing domestic rubbish, were revealed during a watching brief and excavation at **Kingsland Square (SOU 1091)** in 2000-2 (Garner 2003). A grave surrounded by a possible penannular ditch was also identified.

Evidence for another probable early eighth-century cemetery has been found during three investigations at the southern end of **Golden Grove (SOU 34, 43 and 48)**. Human bones and nine or ten bronze keys, pins and a green glass palm cup were found at SOU 48 in the nineteenth century (Addyman and Hill 1969: 68; Morton 1992a: 193). In 1961, the remains of at least five individuals were found during investigation SOU 43 (Morton 1992a: 207). Three further relatively intact interments were found in 1962 during SOU 34, to the west of SOU 43. Pottery dating from around the mid-eighth century was found in a pit

which postdated the burials (Morton 1992a: 193). All of these burials are thought to be part of a single cemetery.

Further possible late seventh- or early eighth-century burials have been recorded during excavations within *Hamwic* (**SOU 7 and 14**). At SOU 14, a burial, indicated by the discovery of the lower part of a single east-west grave (Morton 1992a: 152). SOU 7, 47m from SOU 14, comprised the disarticulated remains of at least two inhumations recovered from pits dating from the 'Middle Saxon' period, and an east-west sub-rectangular feature 1.4m in length, interpreted as a grave (Morton 1992a: 85). It is not known whether these discoveries represent isolated burials, two separate cemeteries, or one larger cemetery.

Two churches are thought to have been located in 'Middle Saxon' *Hamwic*, each associated with a burial ground. At least 81 inhumations were excavated at **SOU 13**, on Marine Parade, in 1973 (Morton 1992a: 121). The burials lay either side of a trench and post-hole structure, suggesting the presence of a double-celled church, making SOU 13 one of the earliest excavated early medieval churchyards in Wessex (Cherryson 2010: 60; Morton 1992a: 123, 136). Grave-goods were found with only two of the burials—a knife with one, and an iron object with another—although unstratified items, such as two other knives and part of a chatelaine, may also be regarded as originating from graves (Morton 1992a: 133-4). All were aligned east-west, and only one showed signs of having contained a coffin. Four of the skeletons were radiocarbon dated in 2003, confirming that the cemetery was of 'Middle Saxon' foundation, in use between the late seventh and ninth centuries (Cherryson 2005a: 279). One of the lower-level skeletons, however, produced a mid-sixth to mid-seventh-century date, which, if correct, may imply that an earlier field cemetery occupied the site prior to the construction of the church (Cherryson 2005a: 279).

At the southern end of 'Middle Saxon' *Hamwic*, two burials were excavated at **SOU 630** in Chapel Road, south of St Mary's churchyard, in 1994 (Smith 1995). The inhumations were radiocarbon dated to AD 676-895 and 769-883. St Mary's was in use from the ninth century and is considered the mother church of Southampton (Hase 1994: 45). These burials may represent part of a cemetery

attached to the church. A single human skeleton, radiocarbon dated to AD 645-685, was also recently found to the north of the churchyard, at **SOU 1484** (Garner and Elliott 2009). Several other burials which postdate the period of study have also been found in the vicinity.

At least two other sites in *Hamwic* postdate the mid-eighth century, but do not seem to have been associated with any ecclesiastical structures. A smaller group of ten later inhumations was found at **St Mary's Stadium II**, 100m to the north of the mixed-rite cemetery at St Mary's Stadium I (Birbeck 2005). All were supine extended or slightly flexed, orientated with the heads to the west. None of the burials were furnished, and there was no evidence of grave structures or above-ground markers. Although it is possible that these burials were part of the St Mary's Stadium I mixed-rite cemetery, their separation from the earlier cemetery and the differences in funerary provision, combined with a radiocarbon date of AD 650-950 from one of the inhumations, indicate a later eighth-century date for the cemetery. A number of west-east inhumations were excavated at **Six Dials (SOU 31 and 258)** in the late 1970s and 80s (Andrews 1997). The burials appeared to overlie mid-eighth- to mid-ninth-century deposits of slag, charcoal and pottery, and were thus interpreted as belonging to a cemetery established in the later ninth or tenth century. The radiocarbon dating of one burial, however, produced a date of 550-690 (at 95.4% probability). Although this burial could fall within the period of study, Cherryson (2005b: 68-9) warns that the date may be incorrect as it contradicts the stratigraphic evidence. Alternatively, it is possible that the dated material had become re-buried as a result of disturbance.

'Late Saxon' Southampton

A successor settlement to *Hamwic* was founded in the later ninth or early tenth century, c. 400m to its southwest. Three burial sites have been located here, none of which appear to be associated with prehistoric or Roman features. Only one site—Lower High Street II—included burials that have been securely dated to the 'Early Saxon' period, and may suggest occupation of the area prior to the establishment of the 'Late Saxon' settlement. Evidence for 'Early-Middle Saxon' smithing has also been found in the ramparts of the town (Oxley 1988: 41, 43).

At least three burials, included the fragmentary remains of two males in a pit, were uncovered at **Lower High Street I (SOU 161)**, Southampton Holy Rood, during excavations in 1966 (Platt 1975). Radiocarbon dating of one of the burials produced a late eighth- to eleventh-century date (Cherryson 2005b: 67). The radiocarbon dating of a human tooth found during excavations at **Lower High Street II (SOU 266)** between 1986 and 1991, produced a late fifth- to seventh-century date (Cherryson 2005b: 67). In 1957, a skeleton accompanied by glass beads was recovered from site of Poupert's Warehouse (**SOU 334**), which lies in the vicinity of SOU 266 (and is considered part of the same site). This suggests the presence of one or more burials in the vicinity of the Lower High Street site, and indicates occupation, or at least funerary activity, in this area prior to the foundation of the 'Late Saxon' town. A human skeleton was found in a large early medieval ditch during excavation at **Upper Bugle Street III (SOU 124)**, Southampton St Michael, in 1976-7 (Shaw 1986). The skeleton had apparently been thrown in while the ditch was being in-filled. It has been radiocarbon dated to between the late eighth and early tenth centuries (Cherryson 2005b: 77).

Wallington valley

At **Fareham I**, within the vicinity of Old Turnpike Road, Fareham, two later sixth-century cremation urns were found prior to 1880 (Hawkes 1969; Meaney 1964: 97). The site is located at 25m aOD on Reading Formation bedrock, west of the River Wallington. On the opposite side of the Wallington, 1.35km east-northeast of Fareham I, a possible round barrow was investigated in or prior to 1926 following an avalanche in Clapper Hill Quarry, at a site known as **Fareham II** (Hawkes 1969: 53; Meaney 1964: 97). The site lies at c. 20m aOD, c. 150m east of the river, on White Chalk. A spearhead, thought by Hawkes (1969: 53) to date from the later sixth century AD, had previously been found on the site at the end of the nineteenth century. Two inhumations, accompanied by a flint tool, were found, and closer to the surface were further burials, interpreted as secondary. Further human remains, representing approximately eleven individuals, were found below the section in the quarry in 1969 (HHER 26040).

An 'Anglo-Saxon' inhumation was reported near to **Oak Lodge, Southwick**, adjacent to the River Wallington, 3.4km northeast of Fareham II (HHER 24585; NMR SU 60 NW 5). No further details are known, however.

Portsdown Hill

On the summit of the chalk ridge known as Portsdown Hill, a Bronze Age and early medieval cemetery known as **Portsdown I**, Wymering, was discovered in 1948 during road widening (Corney 1967). Excavations in that year, and in 1956, uncovered at least 25 inhumations in 20 or more graves. Only three of the graves contained grave-goods—an iron knife, a buckle and a conical shield boss—which date the cemetery to the second half of the seventh century. A Bronze Age cremation and secondary Bronze Age burials were also uncovered during the excavation; it is possible that a barrow may have covered the cremation, although no trace now survives, and this may have formed a focus for the later early medieval cemetery. One of the early medieval graves also cut a Bronze Age pit containing a food vessel and flints. Comparisons have been made with Snells Corner due to the predominance of males (Stoodley 1999: 102). As Corney (1967: 40) has warned, however, the sample is so small that it would be inadvisable to draw any firm conclusions from this.

Under 2km east of Portsdown I, on the summit of the same ridge, twelve secondary interments were found within **Portsdown Hill Long Barrow**, Wymering, during chalk extraction in 1816 (Anon 1816; Bradley and Lewis 1968: 29; Slight 1816). The inhumations appear to have been in distinct graves, with some graves containing more than one individual. The point of an iron pike is said to have been implanted in one of the skulls, and it was therefore suggested the individuals were the victims of a nearby battle (Anon 1816). It is possible, however, that the weapon became embedded in the skull after burial, and the regular west-east orientation of the graves implies organised and well established burial practices.

Excavations in 1966 at **Portsdown II George Inn**, c. 100-150m to the east-southeast of Portsdown Hill Long Barrow, prior to road improvement work, revealed two further early medieval inhumations, c. 21m apart (Bradley and Lewis 1968). Considering their proximity to the long barrow, these burials may be associated with the same cemetery, and many further graves in the area

between the two sites may have been destroyed by road construction in the nineteenth century (Bradley and Lewis 1968: 50). Grave 1 contained a c. 25-year-old male, head to the west, accompanied by three knives, a buckle, and fragments of a copper alloy-bound 'tub' or bucket (Cook 2004: 60). Evidence of a coffin or planks, and a flint lining, were also present. Grave 2, which cut Iron Age features, contained an unaccompanied individual on the same orientation. The head had been severed from the neck and the hands placed in the lap, possible indicators of execution burial (Bradley and Lewis 1968: 41, 50; Reynolds 2009: 59), although it also could be explained by interpersonal violence or an alternative burial rite. Although this grave is in a peripheral location in comparison with the burials found in 1816, it is closer to the long barrow than Portsdown II Grave 1.

Approximately 2.5km due east of Portsdown Hill Long Barrow, another Neolithic long barrow on the same ridge, **Bevis Grave**, formed the focus of a large seventh- to tenth-century cemetery (Fig. 6.1.28). Eighty-eight individuals were found in 71 graves during excavations in 1974-76, in advance of the construction of the A3(M) road, although many more burials may remain undiscovered (Rudkin 1974; 1975; 1976; 2001). The inhumations lay within and adjacent to the southern ditch of the long barrow, which had been largely destroyed by chalk digging in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most of the inhumations were on a west-east alignment, although two were orientated south-north; most were supine and extended, but six were on their sides. Twenty of the inhumations were accompanied by grave-goods, mainly knives and buckles, although one was buried with a hanging bowl, similar to one found at the sixth- to seventh-century settlement on Chalton Down (Geake 1999: 6).

The long barrow lies on the false crest of the slope at the eastern end of Portsdown Hill, and is thus highly visible from the east. The ridge itself is a conspicuous landmark both from the sea to the south and from far inland to the north, hence also the 'Portsdown Forts', built on this ridge in the 1860s to defend Portsmouth against the threat of French invasion. A possible Roman cobbled road surface, cut by the early medieval burials, was also found to follow the barrow ditch (Rudkin 1976). The Roman road linking Hayling Island with *Claesentum* and *Venta Belgarum* (Margary 421) passes 600m to the north. Radiocarbon dating of five of the inhumations by Cherryson (2005b: 48)

confirmed the longevity of the cemetery: the earliest calibrated date was AD 595-665, and the latest was AD 890-1020 (both at 95.4% probability), implying it was in use at least between the first half of the seventh century and the mid-tenth century.

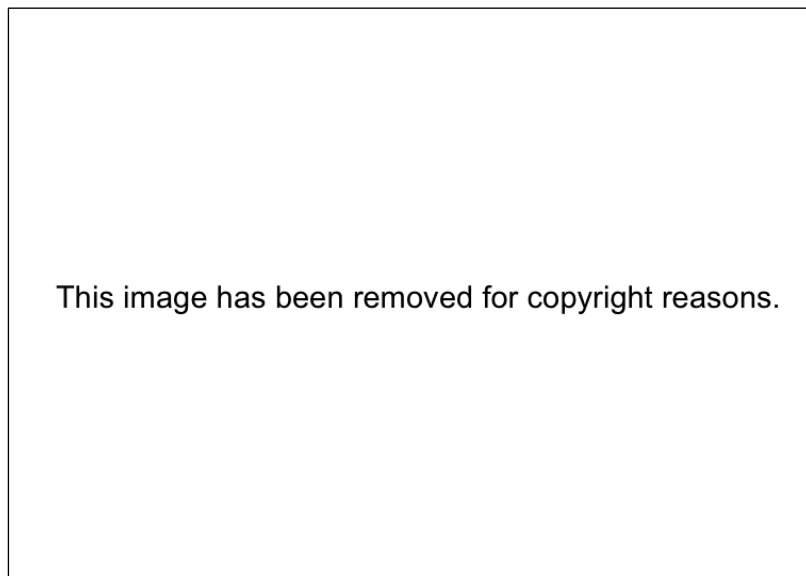


Fig. 6.1.28 Bevis Grave long barrow and early medieval cemetery (after RCHME 1979: Fig. 34).

Hayling Island

Just under 5km southeast of Bevis Grave, in **Towncil Field** on Hayling Island, 14 sherds of 'Saxon' cinerary urn, together with pottery sherds, were found in 1965 (NMR SU 70 SW 37). The sherds were part of several vessels, one of which was decorated and is dateable to the seventh century. Like those found at Fareham, these urns are likely to have been survivors from larger cemeteries. The finds were made 150m from the site of an Iron Age temple or shrine dating from c. 50 BC, replaced in c. AD 55-60 by a Roman temple which continued in use into the early third century (Downey *et al.* 1979; King and Soffe 1998: 35-48). A 'Middle Saxon' settlement (NMR SU 70 SW 58) was found to overlie the temple complex. It appears that substantial parts of the temple were standing, and were reused during the eighth to ninth century.

Summary: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Highly distinctive and innovative burial practices can be identified in this *pays*, to an even greater extent than in the Avon and Stour valleys. There is a markedly high concentration of penannular ditches, and it has been speculated

(Stoodley 2010) that communities in this area of southern Hampshire were deliberately setting themselves apart through this new form of monumentality. The barrow reuse on the chalk ridge of Portsdown Hill partly reflects the higher density of such monuments here, in comparison with the lower lying areas. Moreover, monuments such as Bevis Grave provided enhanced visual impact in combination with the topography.

CHAPTER 6.2

HAMPSHIRE: ANALYSIS

BURIAL SITES AND THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Bedrock geology

The majority of the 71 burial sites in the Hampshire dataset (65%) are located on chalk bedrock, predominantly of the White Chalk Subgroup (Fig. 6.2.1; Table 6.2.1). A further 28% lie on silt, sand or gravel formations belonging to the Bracklesham Group, while a small minority lie on the London Clay Formation and on the sands and clays of the Reading Formation.

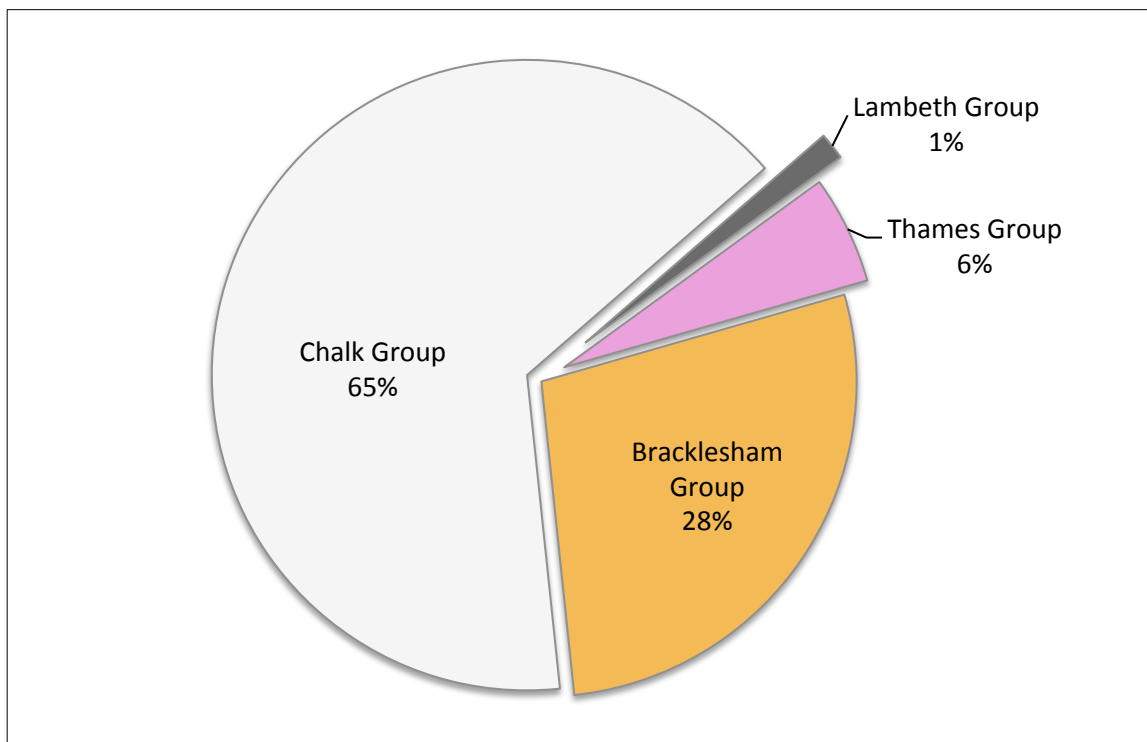


Fig. 6.2.1 Pie chart showing the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset associated with different bedrock geological groups.

To a certain degree, these results reflect the fact that chalk underlies a substantial proportion (nearly 50%) of the land area of the historic county of Hampshire.¹ As previously discussed, the archaeological investigation history

¹ Chalk Group geology underlies c. 1832km² of 3772km² (Southall and Burton 2004; calculated in QGIS).

and visibility of features in different geological areas is also likely to have affected the distribution of burial sites.²

Table 6.2.1 Numbers and proportions of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in the Hampshire dataset associated with various bedrock geological formations.

Bedrock geology		Number of sites	
Group	Subgroup/Formation		
Bracklesham Group	Branksome Sand Formation	2	20 (28%)
	Earnley Sand Formation	3	
	Poole Formation	1	
	Wittering Formation	14	
Chalk Group	Grey Chalk Subgroup	1	46 (65%)
	White Chalk Subgroup	45	
Lambeth Group	Reading Formation	1 (1%)	
Thames Group	London Clay Formation	4 (6%)	

Of the 28 burial sites directly associated with earlier features (see below), 24 sites (86%) are on Chalk Group bedrock, three (in Bitterne) are on Thames Group geology and one (Bargates) is on Bracklesham Group bedrock. There is thus a considerable percentage increase of 32% between the proportion of all burial sites on chalk, and the proportion of burial sites with evidence of direct reuse on chalk. The large number of sites in *Hamwic* and ‘Late Saxon’ Southampton, which are all on Bracklesham Group and are not associated with any prehistoric or Roman features, partly accounts for this, however.

² For discussion of the significance of the bias of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in favour of chalk areas, see Chapter 8.

Hydrology and patterns of settlement

Sixty-one of the 71 burial sites in the dataset (86%) are situated within 1km of a floodplain; this includes 30 sites (42% of the dataset) which are actually located on a floodplain (Fig. 6.2.2). Although the correlation between known 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and floodplains is striking, it is partly a reflection of the pattern of archaeological investigation; as has been noted in Chapter 6.1, a high proportion of modern archaeological interventions have been carried out in the river valleys as a consequence of the riverine pattern of settlement which persists in modern Hampshire. The scarcity of known burial sites on the highest chalk downland also accounts for the low number of sites at any great distance from floodplains, as it is only in these areas that permanent watercourses are absent. The high number of sites within the modern towns of Winchester and Southampton (28 sites) is also likely to have created a bias in the results: Winchester lies on alluvial and river terrace deposits on the floodplain of the Itchen, while much of Southampton is built on river terrace and tidal flat deposits.

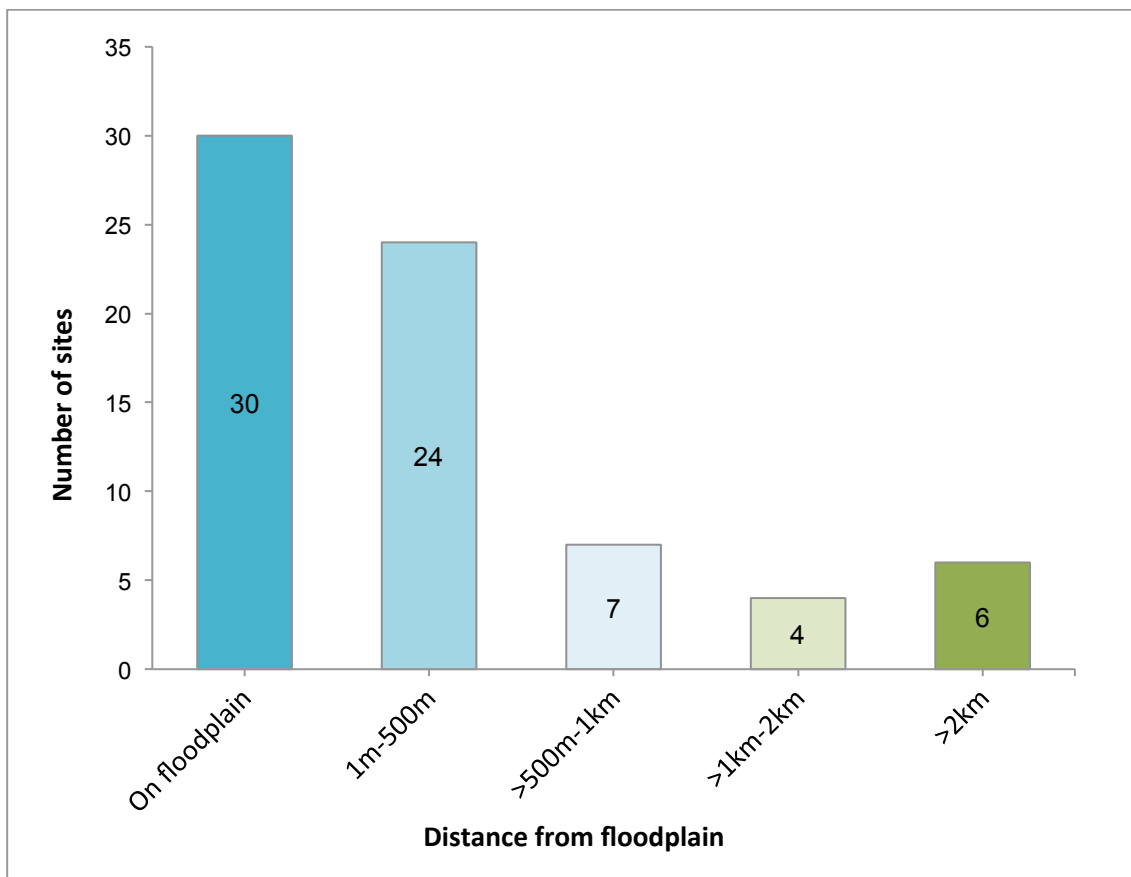


Fig. 6.2.2 Graph showing the relationship between floodplains and 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset.

The results are also likely to reflect the pattern of 'Early-Middle Saxon' settlement. The majority of fifth- to early eighth-century settlements discovered thus far in Hampshire are distributed along the river valleys, as are a number of community cemeteries. Closer examination of the patterning of burial sites and settlements in the river valleys is revealing. In almost all cases, where a cemetery and a broadly contemporary settlement have been discovered in close proximity to each other, the settlement is consistently closer to the river and at a lower altitude than the burial site. This is exemplified in the Dever valley at Micheldever. Here, evidence for two sixth-century SFBs was found at Northbrook, less than 50m from the river and on the 75m contour (Johnston 1998). The fifth- to seventh-century mixed-rite cemetery at Weston Colley, 1km to the west, was located 350m from the river on a slightly raised spur at 91m aOD. The Worthy Park cemetery and Abbots Worthy settlement (Fasham and Whinney 1991) also display a similar spatial relationship. This cemetery-settlement topographic arrangement can be found in nearly all of the river valleys in the central and northern part of the county, including the Wallop, Chalton, Upper Itchen, Loddon and Wey valleys. It is also the case in the Portsmouth Harbour area, where the settlement at Cams Hill, Fareham (Eddisford 2009), is closer to the waterfront than the Fareham I and II burial sites.

The situation is perhaps slightly different in the Avon and Meon valley areas. At Huckles Bridge, both the cremation burial site and the settlement evidence (Davies and Graham 1984) were found on low-lying marshy ground, approximately equidistant from the Avon. At Shavard's Farm, Meonstoke, although the settlement was marginally closer to the river than the cemetery, it was also on slightly higher ground, on the site of a Roman villa. Obviously, we cannot be certain of the association between particular cemeteries and settlements, but in many cases it is implied by contemporaneity and a distance of one or two kilometres between the two.

Rivers and waterways were undoubtedly of vital importance for 'Early-Middle Saxon' communities in Hampshire, and there are numerous practical reasons why settlements might have been preferentially sited near watercourses. River valleys offer a continuous supply of water for communities and livestock in comparison with an often seasonal and unpredictable supply on the downland,

a readily available source of food, and access to other resources, such as reeds, gravels and hay meadows (Allen 2009: 4). They also provide a natural topographic corridor, with movement on both sides facilitated by fording places, such as the one mentioned in the early ninth-century bounds of Martyr Worthy, close to the Abbots Worthy settlement site (S273). In the Upper Itchen area, Roman villas and farmsteads had been situated on the downland above the valley, and the settlement shift towards the riverside in the 'Early Saxon' period arguably signified 'breaking with past tradition' (Hawkes and Grainger 2003: 2-4). This model of post-Roman relocation is widely acknowledged, and is thought to be partly a result of soil degradation and environmental pressures (e.g. Welch 1985). Environmental data from the Abbots Worthy settlement site does, however, suggest that mixed farming was practised on a considerable scale and that the whole range of terrain and land-uses were exploited, from hay meadows on the floodplain to grazing on the downland (Fasham and Whinney 1991). This perhaps indicates that the Roman estate continued to be farmed, and that only the locations of dwelling places changed (Hawkes and Grainger 2003: 4). That this shift took place early is intimated by the lower valley slope location of Itchen Abbas cemetery, which incorporates late Roman burials.

What, then, were the motivations for the siting of cemeteries above the settlements on the valley slopes? The positioning of burial sites on spurs or slopes has been considered by scholars in relation to issues of prominence and visual impact (e.g. Semple 2003; Williams 1999b). Tree cover permitting, cemeteries such as Weston Colley and Worthy Park would, in theory, have been most visible from the base of the valley and the opposite valley side, while visual access would have been restricted from more elevated parts of the downland on the same side as the cemetery. It is, however, debatable whether the cemeteries would have been discernible from any great distance, especially as the valley slopes are not particularly steep. Alternatively, it could be speculated that the dead performed a 'sentinel' function, overlooking and protecting the settlement, although again, the slightness of the slopes and barely appreciable difference in altitude between cemetery and settlement makes this argument less plausible (O'Brien 1996: 184-5). The fact that many of these cemeteries were situated alongside drove routes leading up on to the downs may be of particular significance, as such locations are more likely to

have facilitated access and display, and signalled the community's control over the surrounding land and resources (Brookes 2007a; 2007b; and see Chapter 8).

APPROPRIATION OF THE ANTECEDENT LANDSCAPE

Of the 71 burial sites in the Hampshire dataset,

- Thirty-six sites (50.7%) are associated *either directly or indirectly* with one or more earlier features. Of these,
 - Twenty-eight sites (39% of the dataset) are *directly* associated with one or more earlier features (some also indirectly).
 - Eight sites (11% of the dataset) are associated *only indirectly* with one or more earlier features.
- Thirty-five sites (49.3%) do not appear to be associated with any earlier features.

A lower proportion of sites are associated with earlier features than in Wiltshire, where 73% of the dataset were associated with antecedent features, 59% directly. In Hampshire, the number of burial sites *not* associated with any earlier features is almost equal to the number of sites that *are* associated in some way with earlier features. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the figures for Hampshire are heavily skewed by the high number of sites in modern Southampton, where fewer burial sites demonstrate evidence for the appropriation of earlier features. In the *Hamwic* area in particular, this is partly due to the fact there is little evidence for the earlier occupation of the area, and partly because any such evidence may have been destroyed by medieval and later development.

The earlier features appropriated at 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites were divided into four main categories (Fig. 6.2.3; Table 6.2.2). Annular or penannular ditches that are more likely to represent settlement features such as roundhouses, rather than barrows, were included in the 'settlement/enclosure' sub-category. In the case of Roman settlements, it can be difficult to determine

whether built structures were still surviving at the time of the early medieval reuse of the site. If it is likely that there were extant or ruined buildings, the 'Roman buildings and built structures' category was used. If instead it is more probable that only earthworks were visible, the 'non-funerary earthworks and settlement features' category was used.

No category stands out as having been particularly favoured for appropriation, although a slightly higher proportion of sites are directly associated with 'funerary and ritual monuments' (23%) than with the category 'non-funerary earthworks and settlement features' (20%).

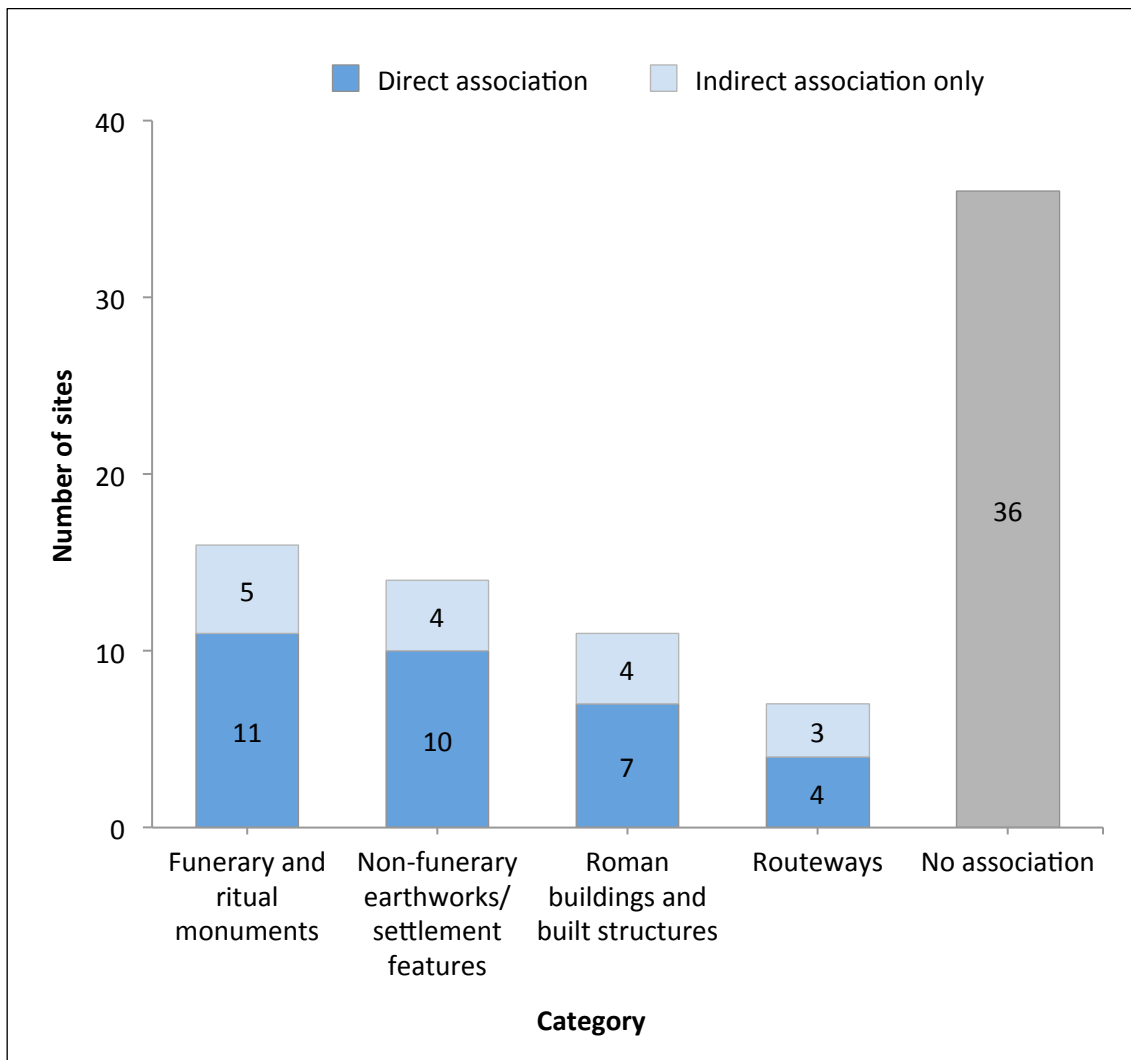


Fig. 6.2.3 Graph showing the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset directly and indirectly associated with different categories of earlier feature.

Table 6.2.2 Numbers of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in the Hampshire dataset associated with different categories of antecedent feature (the figures differ from those shown in Fig. 6.2.3 as some sites are associated with more than one feature in each category).

Earlier landscape features		Number of sites	
		Directly associated	Indirectly associated
Funerary and ritual monuments	Round barrow	7	4
	Long barrow	3	–
	Cemetery/burials	2	1
Non-funerary earthworks/ settlement features	Settlement/enclosure	7	2
	Linear ditch	3	–
	Field system	2	1
Roman buildings and built structures	Other Roman building	6	3
	Temple	1	–
	Villa	–	1
Routeways	Roman road	3	3
	Trackway	2	1

Funerary and ritual monuments

Barrows

Only 14% of burial sites in the Hampshire dataset are directly associated with an earlier barrow or barrows, compared to 40% of sites in the Wiltshire dataset. This is partly due to the fact that there are fewer known barrows in Hampshire than in Wiltshire, even though the land area of the historic county of Hampshire is slightly greater than that of Wiltshire.³ Nevertheless, 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset are associated with only c. 0.6% of the known barrows in the county, compared to c. 1.9% in the case of Wiltshire.

Round barrows

Seven sites (10%) are directly associated with round barrows. Only about 117 (11%), of the c. 1000 known round barrows in Hampshire have been subject to archaeological excavation (Fig. 6.2.4), although many are listed as displaying depressions or mutilations which may represent evidence of unrecorded past excavations. Hampshire round barrows excavated prior to the twentieth century did not benefit from the relative skill and experience of prolific Wiltshire antiquarians such as Cunnington and Hoare and their workers; one is described as having been 'rudely opened' (Grinsell 1938-40: 349). Numerous round barrows in the New Forest were excavated in the 1940s by Stuart Piggott (1943), but no evidence of early medieval activity was identified. There is a noticeable absence of barrows of all types in the eastern part of the high Hampshire Downs, defined as 'wooded downland plateau', where tree cover and low agricultural potential may have precluded settlement until at least the 'Late Saxon' period.

Hampshire is considered to lack major concentrations of the so-called 'fancy barrows' that frequently overlie Beaker or 'Wessex' burials, with only 19 disc barrows (compared to 100 in Wiltshire) and around 30 bell barrows (compared to 140 in Wiltshire) listed by Grinsell (1938-40; 1974; cited by Gardiner 2007). The damage caused to many barrows in Hampshire by medieval and post-medieval cultivation has, however, created problems of identification and

³ The HERs and NMR suggest that there are around 1100 recorded barrows in Hampshire, compared to just under 2000 in Wiltshire.

categorisation. All of the earlier round barrows associated with burial sites in the dataset are thought to be of the bowl barrow type, although several were ploughed-out by the time of excavation.

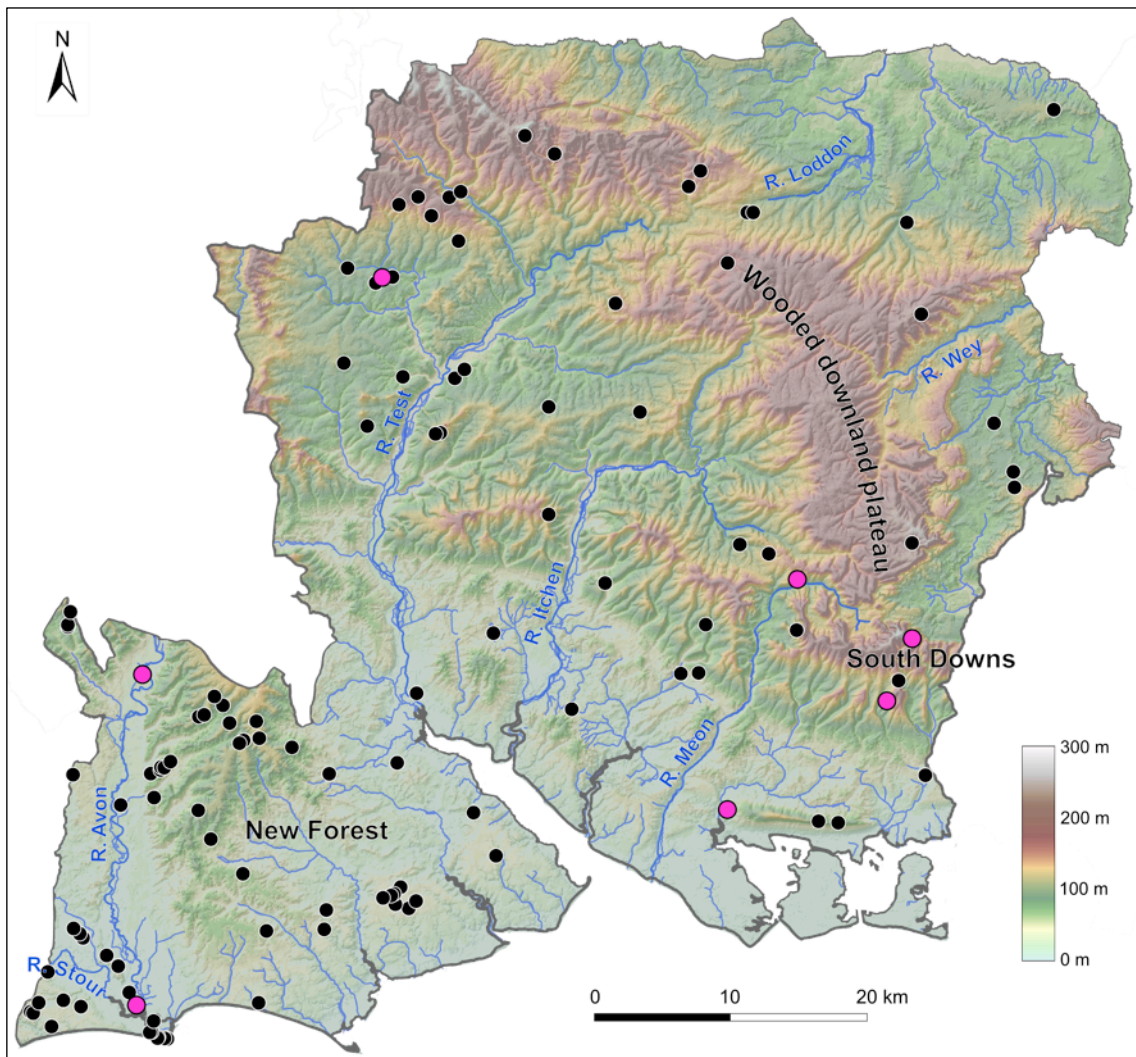


Fig. 6.2.4 Excavated and recorded round barrows (black) and round barrows associated with burials dating from the period of study (magenta). Terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

Three of the burial sites directly associated with round barrows are located in the Meon valley and on the edge of the South Downs; i.e. within or on the periphery of the putative early medieval territory of the *Meonware*. These comprise two cemeteries, each focused on a prehistoric barrow: Storeys Meadow and Snells Corner. Finds suggestive of intrusive burials were also found in and around a barrow on War Down, although the mound itself has not been excavated archaeologically. Further finds which may derive from secondary barrow burials, were also made at Dolly's Firs and Preshaw Farm.

The funerary appropriation of barrows at several sites in the Meon valley area perhaps indicates the transmission of ideas through this region in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Earlier barrows were also part of the funerary repertoire of the Avon valley, with richly furnished sixth-century burials focused on a Bronze Age barrow at Shallows Farm, Breamore, and a probable seventh-century cemetery and primary penannular ditch in and around two Bronze Age mounds at Bargates. Portway West, which lies in the north Andover plateau, between the Upper Test valley and Salisbury Plain, is also characterised by a combination of small associative primary monuments and intrusive burial within an earlier barrow.

Long barrows

Hampshire has very few Neolithic monuments in comparison with neighbouring counties, lacking the causewayed enclosures, henges and cursus monuments which dominate the landscapes of Wiltshire and Dorset. There are only c. 35 known or probable long barrows in Hampshire, in contrast with over 100 in Wiltshire (Gardiner 2007). Notable concentrations of long barrows can, however, be found to the west of the Avon valley on the edge of Cranborne Chase, and in a line north and west of the Stockbridge Anticline between the parishes of Over Wallop and Wonston (Fig. 6.2.5). Only c. 11 long barrows have been excavated to any degree, and apart from the work undertaken at Bevis Grave (where the mound itself had already been subject to considerable erosion), only one long barrow, at Nutbane, north of Andover, has been the subject of extensive modern excavation (de Mallet Morgan 1959). Three long barrows are associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, two of which are found on Portsdown Hill, the narrow chalk ridge which overlooks Portsmouth and the English Channel. Since the sample is small, it would be unwise to attempt to identify any patterns in the selection of different barrow types.

Non-funerary earthworks and settlement features

Features in this category are appropriated at 20% of burial sites in the Hampshire dataset; directly associated at 14% of sites. Seven sites (10% of the dataset) are directly associated with prehistoric or Roman settlement activity. Oliver's Battery is the only example in Hampshire of a burial placed within a

large and prominent extant non-funerary earthwork, and it is perhaps significant that it was the apparently isolated burial of a high-status individual. The topography and the earthworks combine to create a prominent site, with a similar visual impact to that of barrows in elevated areas of Wiltshire. As has been suggested, it is possible that it was its resemblance to a barrow which attracted the burial (Andrew 1934b). At Itchen Farm and Twyford School, ring-ditches of probable roundhouses appeared to be the focus of funerary activity, although it is possible that these features too were interpreted as barrows, that they lay on established boundaries, or that the associations were coincidental.

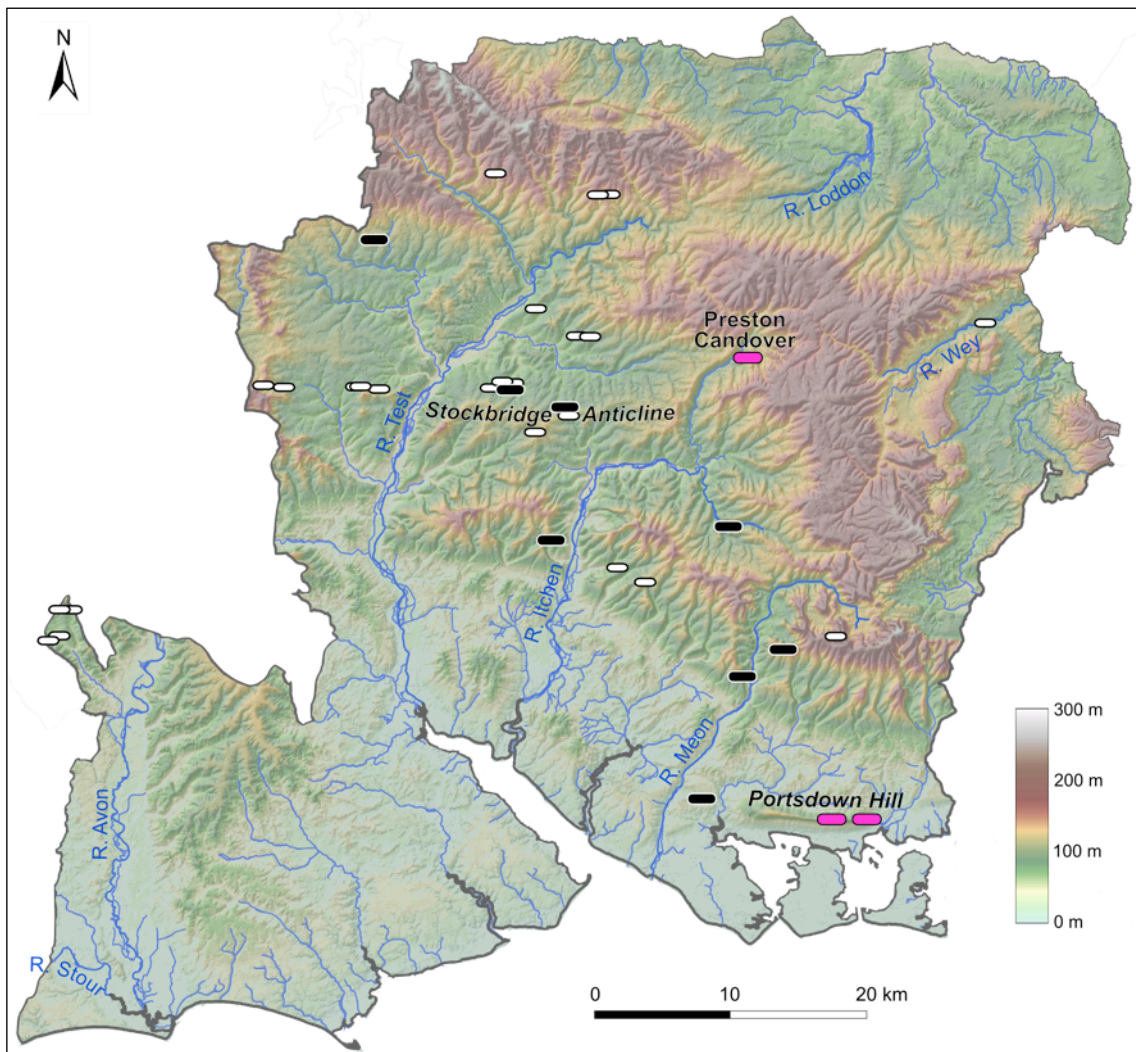


Fig. 6.2.5 Excavated and recorded long barrows (black), unexcavated or unrecorded long barrows (white), and long barrows associated with sites in the dataset (magenta). Terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service. Symbols not representative of orientation.

Burials found at Portsdown II, Testcombe Gravel Pit and Tichborne directly overlay Iron Age and Romano-British deposits, although it is difficult to judge

whether such features were visible prior to the digging of graves, and if so, whether deliberate and meaningful appropriation or merely coincidental superimposition took place.

Roman buildings and built structures

Eleven burial sites (Fig. 6.2.6) are associated with this category (15% of the dataset); a higher proportion than in Wiltshire (7% of the dataset). This may be partly a consequence of the counties' respective inheritances and investigation histories. Wiltshire did not possess a Roman town of *civitas* status or higher, and its small towns, such as *Cunetio*, have not been extensively excavated. In Hampshire, by contrast, the major *civitas* capital of *Venta Belgarum* developed into an important early medieval centre; moreover, Winchester is now one of the most archaeologically investigated and recorded places in Europe. Three burial sites here (South Gate, Lower Brook Street and St Pancras) were found to be directly associated with Roman buildings or built structures, and two sites (Old Minster and Staple Gardens) lie within the Roman walls but lack direct evidence for appropriation.

The three sites on the Bitterne peninsular in Southampton (SOU 207, 414 and 862) are directly associated with the Roman fort or defended settlement of *Clauentum*. Whilst it is tempting to view *Clauentum* as a discrete funerary zone in the seventh and early eighth centuries, the possibility that it continued to be occupied should not be dismissed wholesale. The area enclosed by the Roman walls is, however, small, and the question remains as to where the individuals buried at *Clauentum* lived. The burials dated thus far are broadly contemporary with the early phases of the development of *Hamwic* (or perhaps with its predecessor). Stoodley (2010: 46) has argued that it is significant that the Bitterne burial sites were concealed from view by the Roman walls, in contrast with the contemporary St Mary's Stadium I cemetery, which lay close to the waterfront and would have been highly visible for those navigating the Itchen. Stoodley suggested that restricted visual access was part of a strategy of dominance imposed on those burying at Bitterne by the elite group based at *Hamwic*. Alternatively, however, it could be argued that the privacy afforded by the walls was desirable for the community burying there; or, as the walls

themselves were a prominent feature in the landscape, they may have been regarded as an effective landmark, drawing attention to the burial site.

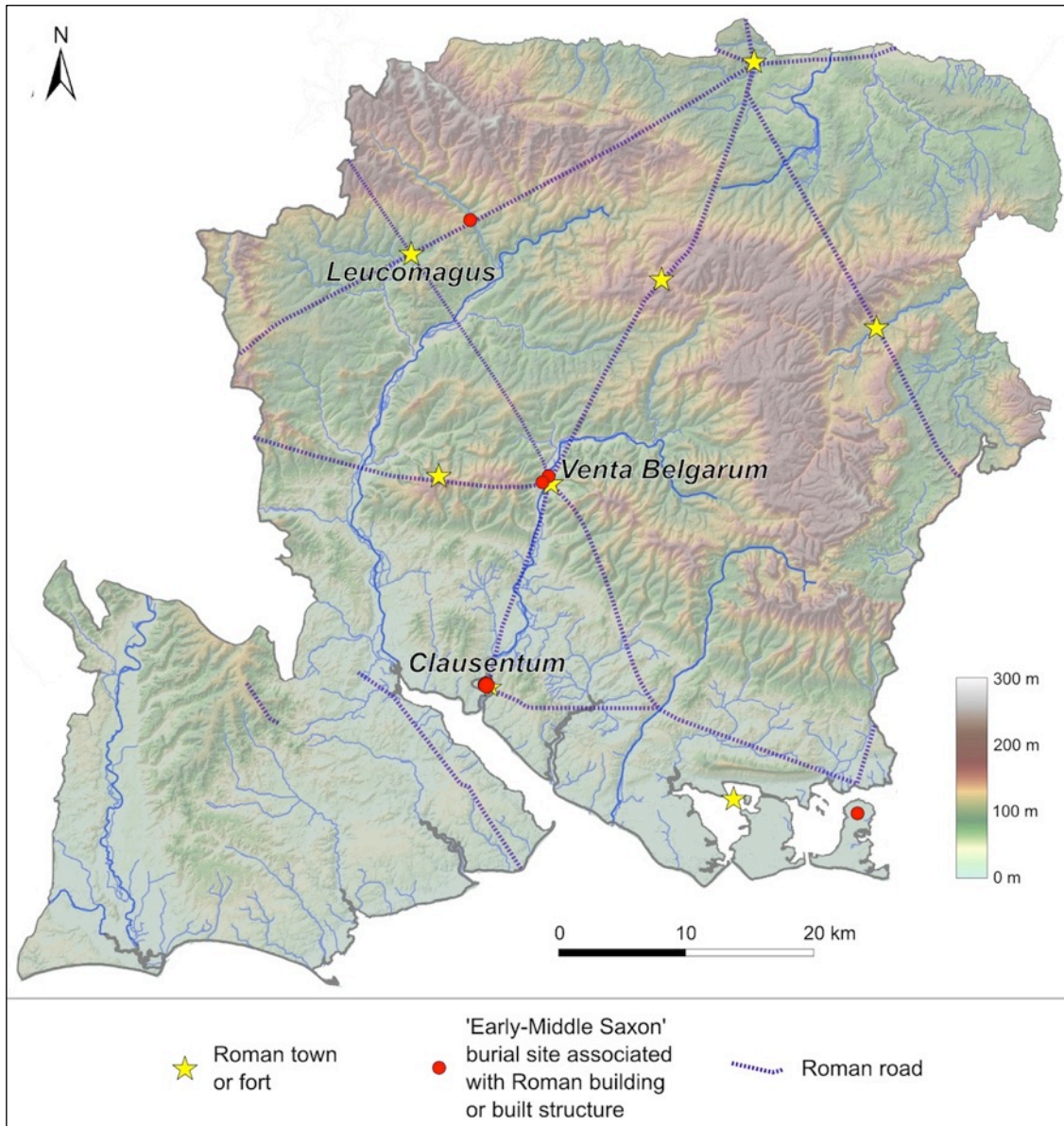


Fig. 6.2.6 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites associated with Roman buildings and built structures. Terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

There are three examples of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites associated with rural Roman buildings.⁴ The cremation cemetery on Hayling Island is directly associated with a Roman temple, while the cemetery at Shavard's Farm is indirectly associated with the Meonstoke Roman villa, and the isolated burial at St Mary Bourne also lies close to probable Roman buildings.

⁴ The possible motivations for the funerary appropriation of Roman buildings will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Routeways

Seven burial sites (10% of the dataset) are associated with Roman roads or earlier trackways.⁵ This is a slightly smaller proportion than in Wiltshire, where 13% of sites were found to be associated with such features. Old Dairy Cottage, South Gate and Itchen Farm are examples of ‘roadside’ burial, and Worthy Park cemetery is also close to a Roman road. Itchen Farm is also associated with minor trackways, as is Portway West.

BOUNDARIES

Parish boundaries

Of the 71 burial sites, 19 (27%) were found to lie within 100m of a parish boundary (Fig. 6.2.7; Fig. 6.2.8). This is a lower proportion than in Wiltshire (40%). Only two of the burial sites which lie within 100m of a parish boundary (3%) are directly associated with barrows (Portway West and Portsdown Hill Long Barrow), in comparison with 54% in Wiltshire. There does not seem to be any particular correlation between burials and parish boundaries in Hampshire, and a high proportion of sites lie at a distance greater than 500m from such a boundary. Moreover, only a few sites in Hampshire are actually located *on* a parish boundary, as half of the sites in the first category lie 50-100m from the boundary. Many of the sites within 50m of a parish boundary are located in Winchester, which was divided into numerous small ecclesiastical parishes.

Bonney (1972) reported that in Hampshire, ‘over forty per cent of the pagan Saxon burial sites which may be located with accuracy lie on or near ecclesiastical parish boundaries’. Although religious affiliation is problematic to discern, arguably nearly all sites in the Hampshire dataset (with the exception of a few, for example in *Hamwic* and Winchester, associated with possible church structures) can be defined as non-Christian. This study has therefore demonstrated that a smaller proportion of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in Hampshire are on parish boundaries than previously thought.

⁵ The significance of association with earlier routeways also be discussed in Chapter 8.

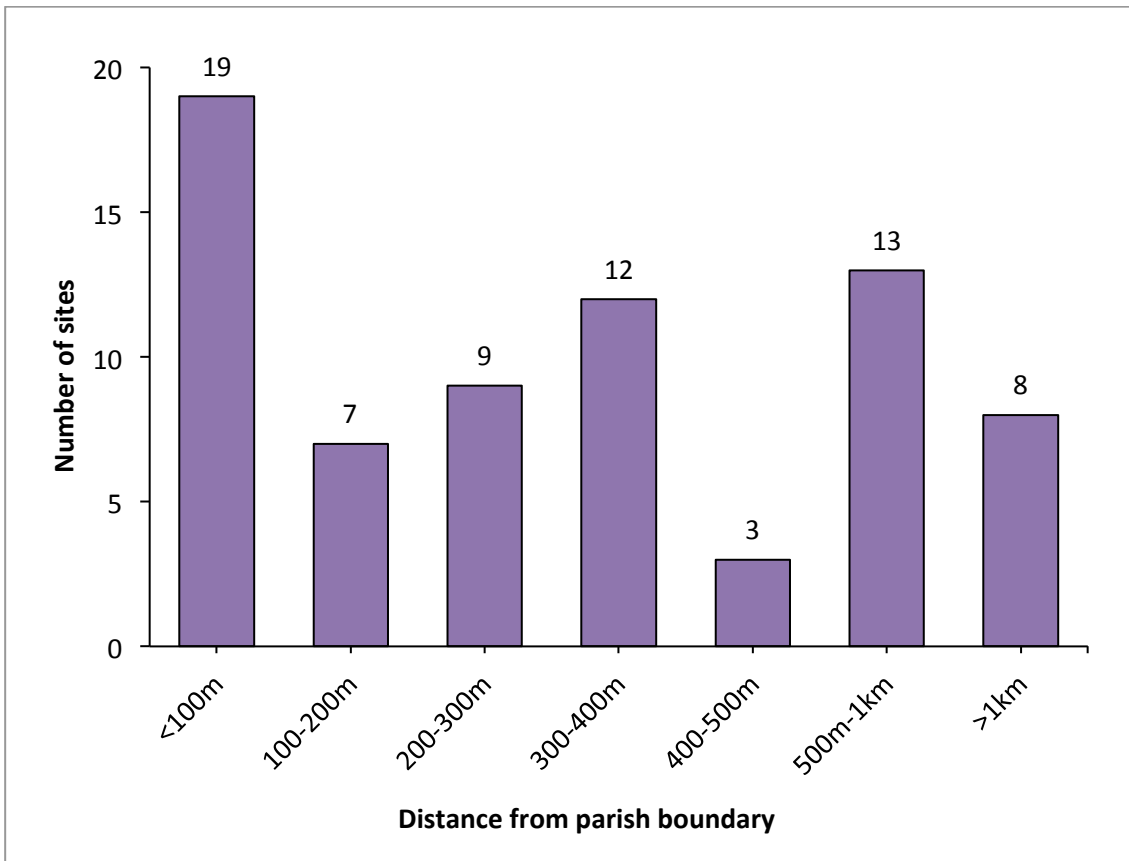


Fig. 6.2.7 Graph showing the relationship between distance from parish boundaries and the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset.

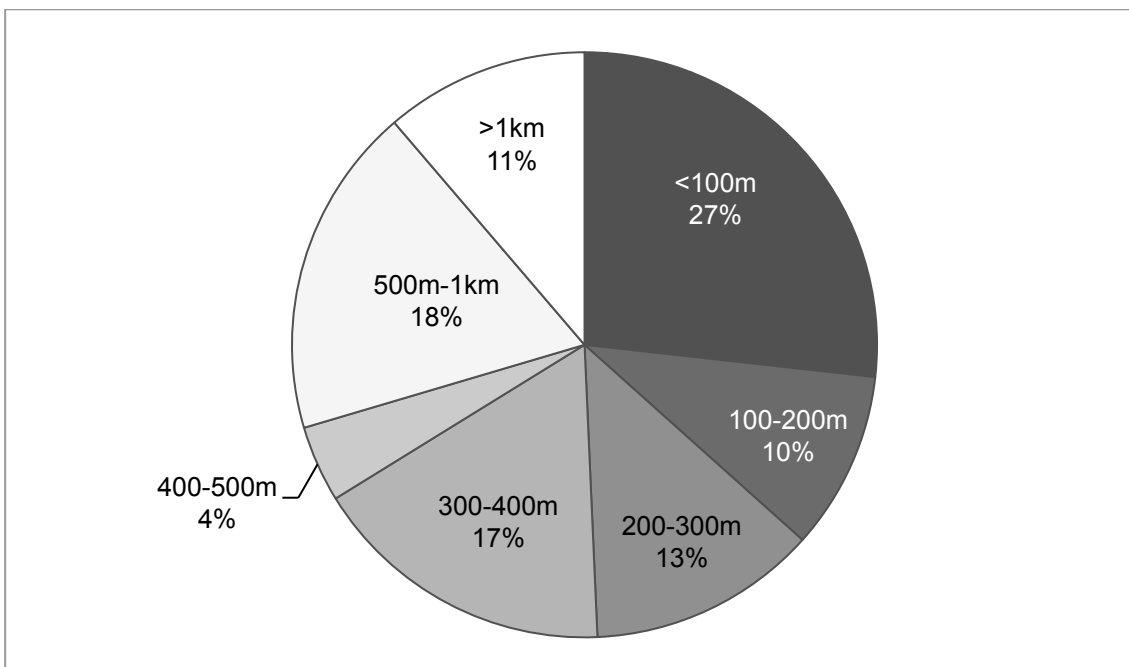


Fig. 6.2.8 Pie chart showing the relationship between distance from parish boundaries and the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset.

The average size of ecclesiastical parishes in Hampshire is c. 7.9km², compared to c. 6.7km² for Wiltshire. The morphology of Hampshire's parishes is also perhaps less influenced by the natural topography, hydrology and land-use potential than those of Wiltshire. As a consequence, while these factors still impact upon burial location, the burial sites themselves do not necessarily coincide with boundaries. This may be due to the fact that estates in Hampshire underwent more substantial fragmentation, amalgamation and transformation in the 'Late Saxon' period. As Thorn (1989a: 34) has highlighted, while parts of the boundaries of some estates follow topographical and antecedent features, it is 'clear that many boundaries were artificial and circumscribe entities that had been broken away from larger units'. This is also reflected in the difficulties encountered in 'georeferencing' many of the county's charter bounds: many of the solutions are doubtful, and many estates are unidentifiable, as they incorporate parts of various modern parishes (Grundy 1921).

Hundred boundaries

An inverse correlation between the number of sites in the Hampshire dataset and distance from hundred boundaries is evident from analysis of the results, as a greater proportion of sites are located over 1km from a hundred boundary than within 1km of such a boundary (Fig. 6.2.9; Fig. 6.2.10).

Only two cemeteries are situated on a hundred boundary: Old Dairy Cottage and Worthy Park. These sites are in fairly close proximity to each other, north of Winchester. Although both sites have produced unusual or deviant burials, the presence of such burials is only of direct significance in the case of Old Dairy Cottage, as this is the only possible example of a judicial execution cemetery which may date from the period of study (although it is more likely to postdate it).

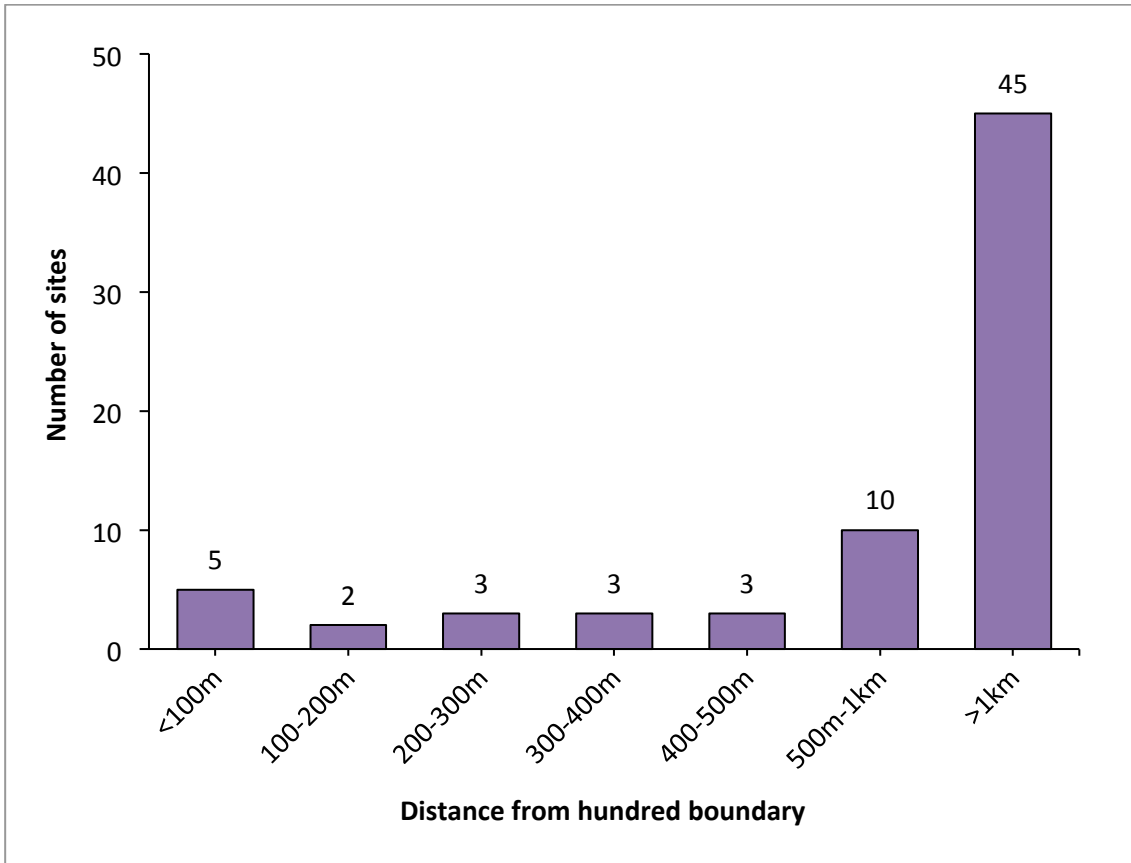


Fig. 6.2.9 Graph showing the relationship between distance from Domesday hundred boundaries and the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset.

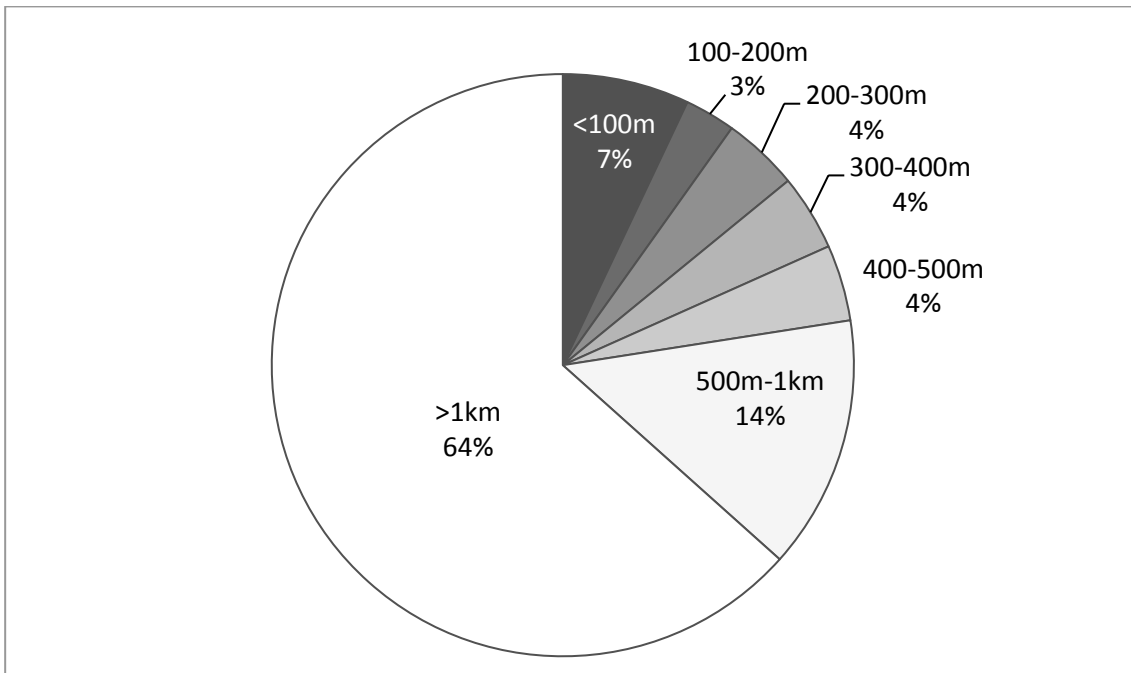


Fig. 6.2.10 Chart showing the relationship between distance from hundred boundaries and the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Hampshire dataset.

SUMMARY

Examination of the Hampshire dataset has revealed that burial sites dating from the period c. AD 450-850 are frequently found in association with antecedent features, though not as extensively as in Wiltshire. In particular, there are far fewer examples of the appropriation of round barrows. This is partly a result of the absence of an antiquarian tradition of barrow digging, coupled with the infrequency of modern development-led investigation of such monuments, and to a certain extent the detrimental impact of intensive agriculture and urbanisation. The prevalence of associative groupings rather than intrusive burial suggests that even where prehistoric earthworks and other monuments have been subject to archaeological investigation, 'Early-Middle Saxon' burials may have been missed. Recently excavated sites such as Storeys Meadow are, however, promising as they indicate the potential for the discovery of further cemeteries clustered around earlier barrows, even those that have been plough-levelled.

Unsurprisingly, chalk underlies the majority of the burial sites, although the proportion of sites underlain by calcareous bedrock is not as high as in Wiltshire, largely due to the proliferation of sites in Southampton. It has been shown above that hydrology was of fundamental importance to 'Early-Middle Saxon' communities in Hampshire, and the topographical regularity of possible settlement-cemetery pairings in certain river valleys is a particularly significant observation. Rivers did not necessarily form boundaries, although numerous levels of territorial arrangements are likely to have existed. Although individual farmsteads and small communities may have faced each other on opposing sides of the river, both sides may have come under the wider jurisdiction of a kin-based polity rooted in the river valley (Chester-Kadwell 2009: 153-4; Semple 2008).

Contrary to previous assertions (Bonney 1966: 28; 1972: 171), 'boundary burial' does not 'predominate' in Hampshire, especially when compared with Wiltshire; that is, there is not a particularly strong correlation between burial sites and the margins of ecclesiastical parishes or Domesday hundreds. As noted above, this may be related to more extensive 'Late Saxon' estate restructuring in

Hampshire. Where burial sites *are* located at the limits of parishes, these boundaries do tend to coincide with topographical features or trackways.

Diverse and eclectic burial practices can be identified in ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ Hampshire, as Stoodley (2010) has previously observed. The near absence of the isolated high-status secondary barrow burials that are so prevalent in Wiltshire has been noted by Stoodley (2010: 51) and corroborated by this research. The archaeological investigation history, as well as the distribution of such monuments, may in part explain this. In addition to ancient monuments, there were other, perhaps more forward-looking, ways of demonstrating prestige. The increasing importance placed on the above-ground marking of graves in the seventh century is particularly evident, with most of the penannular ditches hitherto found in Wessex concentrated here. They are a notable feature of *Hamwic*, a specialised settlement and trade hub which came under the close control of royal authority and was contingent on an increasingly defined social order (Brookes 2007a; Scull 2002). These new forms of monumentality, together with the distinctive character of female costume, and the regular rows of west-east graves at St Mary’s Stadium I, are indicative of influence from (and competition with) external forces, particularly Kent and—directly or indirectly—Merovingian Francia (Cherryson 2005a: 189, 312; Halsall 1995; O’Brien 1999: 137; Stoodley 2002: 328; Welch 2002). Burial practices, concurrently innovative yet standardised on a supra-regional level, are likely to have been an essential part of ensuring that status continued to be recognised in this increasingly competitive and closely defined society (Hamerow 2002: 193).

Weapons are well attested in certain cemeteries, although more noteworthy is the absence of some other types of grave-goods, such as jewellery and dress fastenings, at the same sites (Stoodley 2006). The principal examples of cemeteries of this type—Snells Corner, Bargates and Breamore—are all associated with earlier barrows, demonstrating that cues were taken from the past too. The absence of traditionally ‘female-gendered’ grave-goods is not necessarily indicative of a gender imbalance (*pace* Stoodley 2006; 2010) and may instead be a result of poor preservation, or due the fact that women were expressing their identity in different ways. Although Stoodley (2010: 51) has

suggested that women's fashions in Hampshire were restrained and modest, they may merely be less archaeologically visible.

In the Meon valley area, associative burials placed around earlier barrows at Snells Corner and Storeys Meadow can perhaps be conceptualised within the framework of Semple's (2008) findings in West Sussex, as a reflection of kin groups attempting to consolidate claims to territory in the absence of an overarching centralised authority. As the social composition of community cemeteries like Storeys Meadow testify, the appropriation of monuments was not the preserve of high-status individuals or elite groups in the seventh century; rather, such features 'continued to hold potency and meaning for ordinary people and communities too' (Semple 2013: 51).

The appropriation of earlier linear features, such as the Roman trackways upon which graves at Itchen Farm are aligned, or the prehistoric ditches which appear to delimit Portway East and Shavards Farm, is also noteworthy (Stoodley 2010: 46-7). Are the functions of these latter features changing or essentially remaining the same; that is, demarcating a boundary between spaces or territories? The linear ditch at Portway East was clearly still functioning as a dividing line in the landscape; and as Stoodley (2007a) has commented, although cemeteries were not formally enclosed in this period, they still made use of existing features.

CHAPTER 7.1

DORSET: BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

In the final case study chapter of this thesis, the focus shifts to the south and west, to the historic county of Dorset. Together with eastern Somerset, this is considered one of the more heavily 'Romanised' zones of Wessex, which retained a strong Romano-British identity into the early medieval period (Blair 2005: 26). Evidence for 'Early Saxon' settlement and burial is often considered to be near absent in the county (e.g. Welch 1985), and perhaps partly as a result of this assumption, the burial record pertaining to the period of study in Dorset has not captured the same attention as it has in the eastern counties of Wessex.

Cemeteries considered to be of the sub-Roman tradition, while also remaining elusive until recent decades (Green 1984: 152), are now fairly well attested, notably in the Dorchester area (Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 1984). In Dorset, as in Wessex in general, however, burials and cemeteries regarded as 'British' have tended to be discussed independently from their 'Anglo-Saxon' counterparts, employing different approaches and interpretations, and perpetuating a dichotomy between the two traditions (cf. Petts 2009). The period of study, particularly the fifth and sixth centuries, was characterised by marked social, political and religious transformation, reflected in divergent mortuary practices (Williams 2006: 24), and it is more appropriate to consider a multiplicity of customs and practices in operation at a localised level, rather than a simplistic bipartite division between British and English or Christian and pagan (Blair 2005: 13-15). This is not to deny that distinctive groups of cemeteries can be identified, such as the type epitomised by Cannington in Somerset (Rahtz *et al.* 2000). The inference of religious or cultural affiliation from grave contents, structure or orientation, however, is not always reliable, and it is inadvisable to use the presence (or absence) of artefacts or grave characteristics typically attributed to a particular cultural identity as indicators of ethnicity (Tabor 2008;

Welch 1985: 14-15). Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that, in the absence of scientific dating, it can be difficult to distinguish between sub-Roman burials and 'Final Phase' 'Anglo-Saxon' (or even Iron Age) burials, characterised as they are by a paucity of grave-goods and a broadly west-east alignment (Petts 2004: 81). For these reasons, the datasets for this thesis include all burials that have been dated, either artefactually or by scientific method, to the period of study, regardless of perceived cultural identity.

Research traditions

In a similar vein to Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire, the prevalence of upstanding monuments and earthworks in the chalk downlands of Dorset attracted the attention of antiquarians and early archaeologists. From the early eighteenth until the later nineteenth century, inordinate emphasis was placed on the excavation of barrows, which the antiquarian Charles Woolls (1839) pronounced 'almost the only source from whence any information can be derived of the manners and customs of the early inhabitants of Britain'. This has, in turn, has affected the distribution of early medieval funerary evidence, due to the discovery of secondary burials dating to this period within the mounds, although these were often not recognised as such until much later.

In his travels to the county in 1723, William Stukeley remarked upon the ancient field systems of Cranborne Chase, and attributed the linear earthworks of Bokerley Dyke and Combs Ditch to the Belgic predecessors of the Romans; he also noted that disc barrows on Oakley Down were cut by the Ackling Dyke Roman road, demonstrating their pre-Roman antiquity, and reported on the destruction of barrows by agricultural workers, such as at Fordington near Dorchester, to the dismay of the local community (Grinsell 1959: 70; Stukeley 1776). The *History of and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* by John Hutchins, first published in 1774, was one of the first publications to document the opening of barrows (Hutchins 1813). At the turn of the nineteenth century, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, often alongside William Cunnington, carried out fieldwork in Cranborne Chase, which he considered a natural extension of the chalklands of Salisbury Plain, and published his findings in *Ancient Wiltshire* (Hoare 1812). Charles Woolls was a key commentator and observer of early barrow explorations in Dorset, whose *The Barrow Diggers* (Woolls 1839)—a parody of

the grave-diggers dialogue from Hamlet—also contained a series of detailed notes on the opening of numerous Dorset mounds. Charles Warne was another important chronicler of antiquarian excavations, a significant work being the *Celtic Tumuli of Dorset* (Warne 1866). Warne was highly critical of the ‘morbid appetite’ and ‘idle acquisitiveness’ of many of the early barrow diggers, lamenting that ‘a nation’s earliest monuments’ had become the ‘prey of such wanton aggression’ (Marsden 2011: 95). Indeed, Grinsell (1959) later commented that ‘in no county in southern England are the records of excavation of barrows more chaotic, through bad excavation, than in Dorset’.

As the first national Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Pitt Rivers commenced his investigations of Bokerley Dyke and Wor Barrow, amongst numerous other sites in Cranborne Chase, during the 1880s and 1890s (Pitt Rivers 1888; 1892; 1898). Mortimer Wheeler (1943) carried out large-scale excavations of Maiden Castle in 1934-7. A full-scale survey of the county was published by the RCHME between 1952 and 1975, in contrast with the surrounding shires, for which surveys were never carried out (RCHME 1952; 1970a; 1970b; 1972). While few early medieval sites were identified as a direct result of this survey, it has contributed to the knowledge of aspects of the antecedent landscape with which early medieval burial sites might be associated. In the 1980s and 1990s, development-led projects, such as those relating to the Dorchester and Puddletown bypasses, revealed important Roman and sub-Roman sites such as the Tolpuddle Ball cemetery (see below). There are no officially designated cities within the ancient boundaries of Dorset, however, and the county is still under-investigated in terms of the amount of commercial archaeological work carried out (see below).

As previously discussed, there is still a degree of fragmentation in the study of early medieval burial practice in the county, as is the case in western Britain as a whole. The paucity or absence of grave-goods has often led to burials being overlooked by Anglo-Saxonists and, in many cases, being erroneously dated (Cherryson 2005a: 23; Lucy and Reynolds 2002: 11). The increasing availability and accuracy of scientific dating of such sites over the past few decades, however, has enabled the identification of early medieval burials which may otherwise have been misinterpreted (Green 1984; McKinley 1999a; see also Aston 2011; Gerrard 2011). The post-Roman or ‘Late Antique’ period in the

South West remains a controversial topic, which has stimulated animated debate in recent decades (cf. Collins and Gerrard 2004).

The antecedent landscape

Dorset lay within the Roman *civitas* of the Durotriges, the capital of which is thought to have been *Durnovaria*, modern Dorchester (Fig. 7.1.1; Putnam 2007: 35; Yorke 1995: 22). Substantial late Roman cemeteries lay on the periphery of the town, initially along the arterial routeways but later sprawling over a wider area (Putnam 2007: 54). Over a thousand graves have been excavated from Poundbury cemetery, predominantly dating from the fourth century, implying a sizeable urban population at that time (Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 1987). At Crab Farm in Shapwick, a combination of aerial photography, geophysical survey and excavation has revealed a fort or citadel in the centre of a substantial unwallled town—possibly the long-sought *Vindocladia* of the Antonine Itinerary—occupied during the Iron Age and Roman period (Putnam 2007: 76; see below). The increased wealth of Durotrigan land owners by the fourth century is reflected in the construction of villas, notably around Dorchester and Ilchester, although those in the latter group lie predominantly on the Somerset side of the border (Putnam 2007: 84). A dearth of villas on the chalk downland, in comparison with the richer alluvial valleys and claylands, may be a reflection of the fact that the chalk soils had undergone considerable mineral depletion by the Roman period (Groube and Bowden 1982: 48).

The earthworks of Bokerley Dyke, which formed part of the historic boundary between Dorset and Wiltshire, are a significant feature in the Wessex landscape. Despite having been the subject of extensive excavation and intensive landscape fieldwork intermittently since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the chronology of the earthworks is still poorly understood, as a result of their tremendous complexity (Bowen 1990: 15). The dyke stretches for over 5km in length, comprising numerous components, including a bank and ditch of ‘considerably larger dimensions than those which constitute the normal run of Wessex boundary ditches’ (Bowen 1990: 15). Many of the features are certainly prehistoric, while the date of some others can only be postulated due to their truncation and disturbance by later features (Bowen 1990: 15). A tentative chronology has been proposed, which sees the

stabilisation of the dyke as a political frontier occurring sometime in the Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age, as indicated by differences in land allotment patterns (Bowen 1990: 15). An Iron Age settlement (Pentridge 15) on the western side of the dyke expanded in the Roman period, but was abandoned a fairly short time after. The post-Roman phase in the development of the earthworks is discussed below.

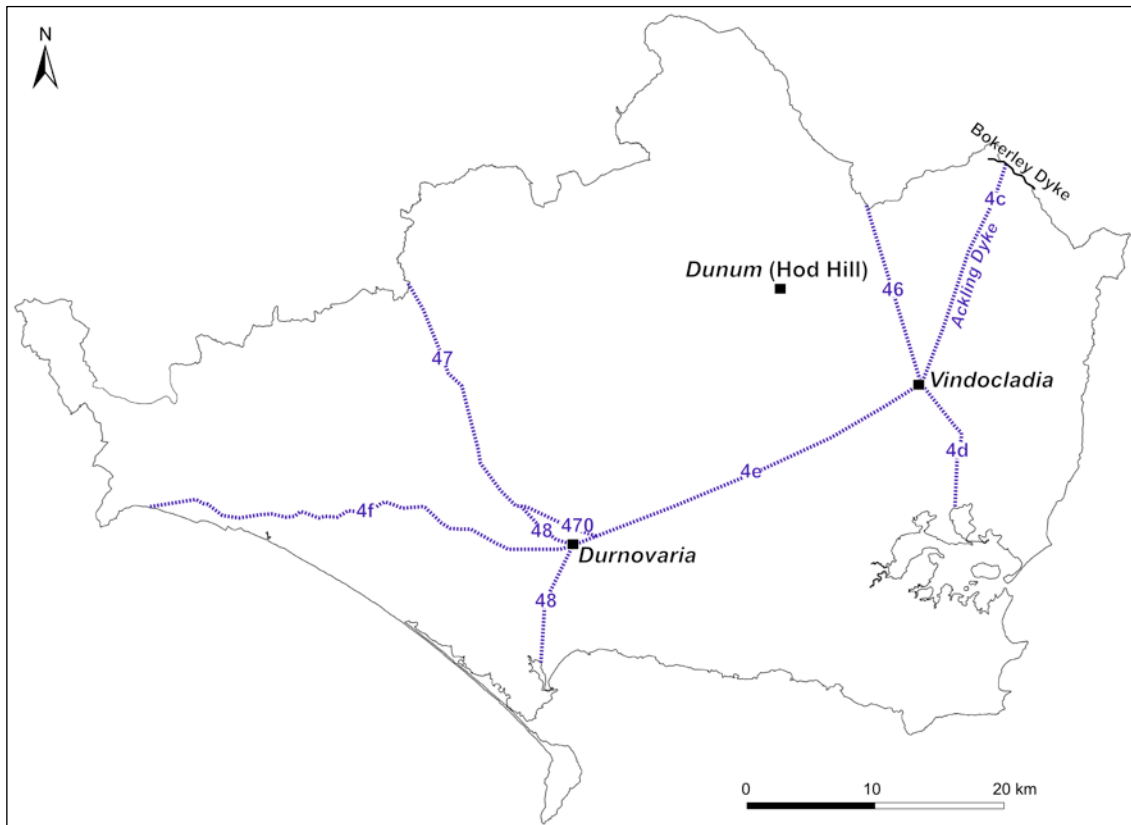


Fig. 7.1.1 Roman roads (after Margary 1973) and major Roman settlements in Dorset. Bokerley Dyke is also marked.

Early medieval settlement and territorial background

Dorset is first mentioned as a distinct territory in AD 845, when the people of *Dornsaetum* are said to have fought alongside the people of Somerset against Danish raiders (ASC 845), while the name *Dorseteschyre* is first recorded in the English version of King Eadred's will, composed in 955 (S1515). Documentary sources assert that British resistance to 'Saxon' domination was initially strong in Dorset: the Battle of *Mons Badonicus*, which is thought to have taken place in the late fifth or early sixth-century, is cited by both Gildas and Bede as a key event which ensured the continued British primacy over the region (Yorke 1995: 15). The favoured site of the battle is the Iron Age hillfort of Badbury Rings,

close to the confluence of the Rivers Tarrant and Stour in northeast Dorset (Myres 1986: 159-60), although other locations have been proposed (cf. Burkitt and Burkitt 1990). The supposed British victory at this battle is generally considered to explain the absence of fifth- and earlier sixth-century furnished cemeteries, such as those found in the Salisbury Avon valley in Wiltshire or the Test and Itchen valleys in Hampshire—and the apparent near absence of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ burials west of the Stour for at least a century after the event (Eagles 1994; Hall 2000; Yorke 1995). Furthermore, Yorke (1995: 60) has suggested that the ‘Saxon’ settlements of the Salisbury Avon valley did not come under the control of the Gewisse until the late sixth century, which then provided a ‘launching pad for expansion into west Wiltshire and [northeast] Dorset’. Teresa Hall (2000: 2) has also argued that the lack of pagan cemeteries in Dorset implies that a ‘Saxon infiltration of Dorset’ did not take place until the third quarter of the seventh century, ‘following the defeat of the British at Penselwood in 658’. Although such ‘invasionist’ narratives have prevailed in the discussion of the origins of early medieval Dorset, it is important to bear in mind the dangers of an overly literal use of the documentary sources, many of which were written some years after the events supposedly took place, often from a biased viewpoint, and are not necessarily supported by the archaeological evidence.

It has been suggested that Bokerley Dyke had a significant influence on the early medieval settlement pattern in eastern Dorset (Eagles 1994: 17). Eagles (2004) has argued that the eastern limit of the *civitas* of the Durotriges followed the line of Bokerley Dyke, and that Teffont, which derives from ‘spring on the boundary’, north of the Nadder in Wiltshire, also lay along this border. It is possible, however, that the latter name refers to a different boundary, perhaps with the territory of the Wylve valley. The archaeological evidence suggests that the dyke was augmented in the early post-Roman period, although none of the earthworks are truly defensive in character and are mostly unfinished (Bowen 1990: 40). It has been argued (Eagles 1994; Yorke 1995: 23-4) that together with Selwood Forest and West Wansdyke, Bokerley formed a frontier between native Romano-British communities and advancing ‘Anglo-Saxons’ in the fifth and early sixth centuries, and that the earthworks were intended to deter movement and control access to the Dorchester area along the Ackling Dyke

Roman road. Combs Ditch, another east-facing ditch, near Blandford Forum and 5km west of the Stour, is also thought to have been refurbished in the late Roman or early post-Roman period (Eagles 1994: 17). Eagles (2004) has suggested that the area between these dykes, centred on Badbury Rings and extending as far north as Pen Hill, formed a *pagus* or territory under 'Saxon' control by the sixth century, attested by findspots in this area (see below) and a burial with sixth-century 'Anglo-Saxon' grave-goods at Oakley Down. The archaeological evidence for such a territory is, however, scant.

'Early Saxon' findspots are sparsely distributed across the county, with isolated artefacts accounting for most of the fifth- and sixth-century material. An equal-armed brooch and part of a cruciform brooch, probably dating from the first half of the fifth century and thought to be the earliest 'Anglo-Saxon' finds, were discovered along the River Stour, in the shadow of the Iron Age hillfort of Hod Hill (Eagles 1994: 13). Continuous occupation from the late Roman period through to the early medieval period is most likely to have occurred on the periphery of Dorchester at Poundbury, where both a sub-Roman settlement and its Romano-British predecessor, which itself had continued in use into the fifth century, have been identified (Green 1987; Keen 1984: 205). The sub-Roman settlement, which incorporated remnants of the Roman cemetery including mausolea, was occupied from the fifth probably until the early seventh century (Green 1987; 2004). James Gerrard's (2010) research into South-East Dorset Orange Wiped Ware (SEDOWW) has shown that 'sunken-featured buildings' of a distinctive type were associated with this late fourth- and fifth-century fabric. While Dorset lacks the *Grubenhäuser* present in many areas of the chalk and limestone downlands of southern England (Heaton 1992: 125; Tipper 2004), these buildings at Poundbury are potential candidates for a late Roman and early post-Roman architectural form (Gerrard 2010: 306; Green 1987; 2004).

Archaeological data on post-Roman secular life in Dorset in general, however, is undeniably sparse; indeed there is a dearth of excavation and survey data on settlement from this period (Heaton 1992: 125; Welch 1985). Social, economic and settlement development in the 'Middle Saxon' period is thought to have been driven by ecclesiastical patronage, highlighting the importance of monastic houses and/or royal residences, notably in the Blackmore Vale, around Sherborne and Gillingham (Barker 1984; Heaton 1992: 125; Keen

1984). A pair of proto-industrial sites provide the only potential evidence, albeit indirect, for such development: Chantry Fields in Gillingham, where two grain drying ovens were archaeomagnetically and radiocarbon dated to the seventh or eighth century (Heaton 1992), and Worgret, near Wareham, where the timbers of a possible watermill, with evidence for iron smelting, have been dated to the late seventh century (Hinton 1992). Eighth-century settlement in Dorchester is mainly attested by the discovery of *sceattas* in the town (Keen 1984: 207).

Documentary sources are fairly sparse, with only about a third of the number of identifiable estates with surviving charters or bounds that survive for Wiltshire. Although formally constituted around the tenth century, the hundreds of Dorset may derive from territorial units established during the period of study (Thorn 1991). Although DB mentions only two Dorset hundreds in passing, Exeter (Exon) Domesday contains the tax returns for 39 hundreds in the county, and examining both books in tandem provides valuable evidence for the identification of places (Thorn and Thorn 1983). Whereas the Phillimore edition of DB (Thorn and Thorn 1983) only provides a map of the ‘modern’ hundreds—that is, those that survived into the nineteenth century—Frank Thorn’s (1991) more in-depth study, published in the Alecto edition, provides a more accurate representation of the Domesday hundreds and manors, reconstructed from Exon Domesday (Fig. 7.1.2). Several of those hundreds that appear in Exeter Domesday were subsequently dismantled and their component parts redistributed.

Hall (2000) has reconstructed the possible pattern of minsters in Dorset (Fig. 7.1.3), dismissing the previously asserted link between Roman villas and high-status churches. Although in most cases it is difficult to determine whether Domesday hundreds correspond with early minster *parochiae*, the hundred of Sherborne matches exactly with the likely *parochia* of its church (Hall 2000: 41). Close correlations between hundred boundaries and probable minster *parochiae* can also be identified at Whitchurch Canonorum, Gillingham, Cranborne and Puddletown (Turner 2006: 112).

Topography, hydrology and geology

The highest recorded altitudes in Dorset are just short of 280m aOD on the Upper Greensand-capped Lewesdon and Pilsdon Hills, which are part of the Axe Hills to the north of the Marshwood Vale and west of Beaminster (Fig. 7.1.4). The northern escarpment of the Central Chalk Downslands also reaches heights of over 260m aOD. The main chalk belt dips gently southwards towards the Poole Basin, and is dissected by the River Stour, which flows through the county in a northwest-southeast alignment towards the English Channel. Rivers such as the Frome and Piddle, as well as numerous seasonal streams, rise in the Central Chalk Downslands. The northern edge of the downslands to the west of the Stour forms Dorset's main watershed: all rivers to the south of this watershed flow southwards into the English Channel, while the Rivers Parrett and Yeo, to the north of the downslands, drain into the Bristol Channel.

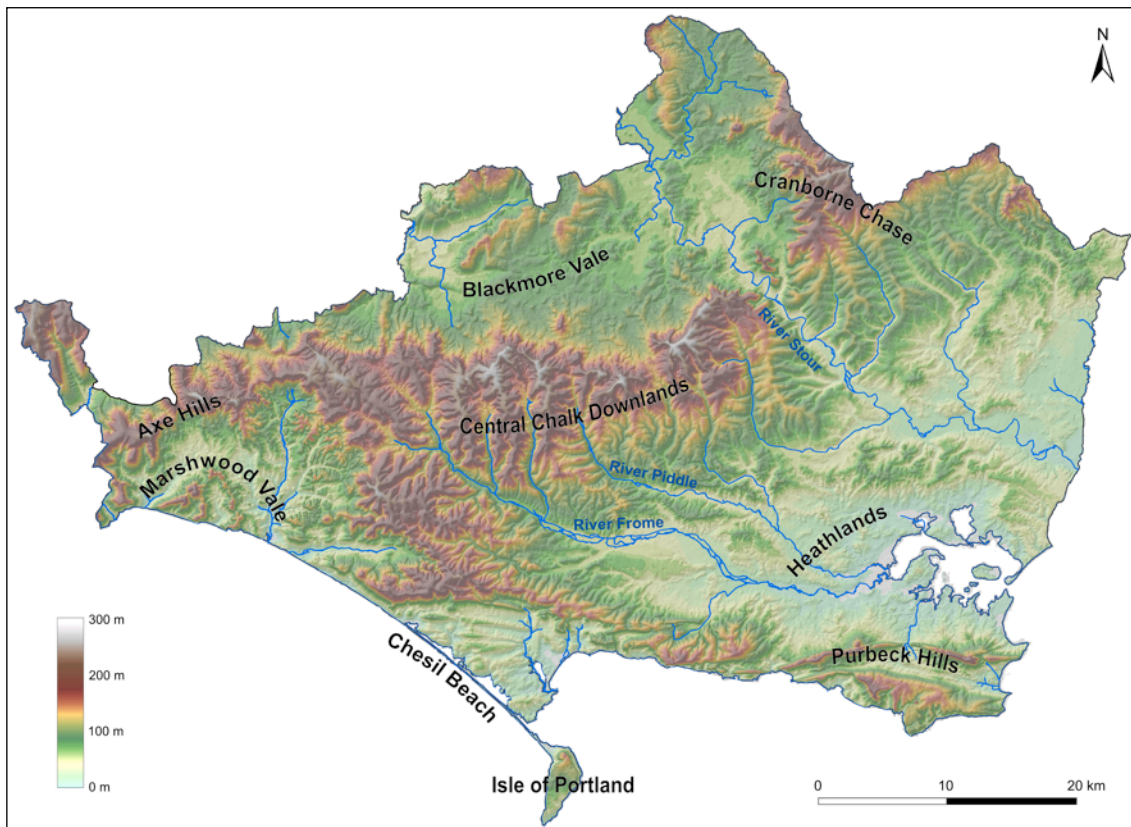


Fig. 7.1.4 The topography and hydrology of Dorset (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Dorset possesses a varied geology (Fig. 7.1.5), which has contributed to the development of distinct regions and has influenced the ways in which the land has been exploited by past communities. The bedrock geology of Dorset is

entirely sedimentary, consisting predominantly of limestones, sandstones, shales and clays formed in the Jurassic and Cretaceous eras (Stanier 2004: 16-17). Cretaceous chalklands dominate the central part of the county, in a band which extends from Cranborne Chase in the northeast, to Eggardon Hill and Dorchester in the west. Areas of chalkland are also found in the south, forming the northernmost ridge of the Purbeck Hills, which run parallel to the coastline. Sands and clays in the southeast are represented by the continuation of the Bracklesham and Barton, and Thames Groups found in southern Hampshire, while in the north and in the far south and west, limestones, mudstones and clays predominate. Thin bands of Upper Greensand and Gault are also found on the periphery of the chalk. More recent superficial deposits of sands and clay-with-flints are located in some areas.

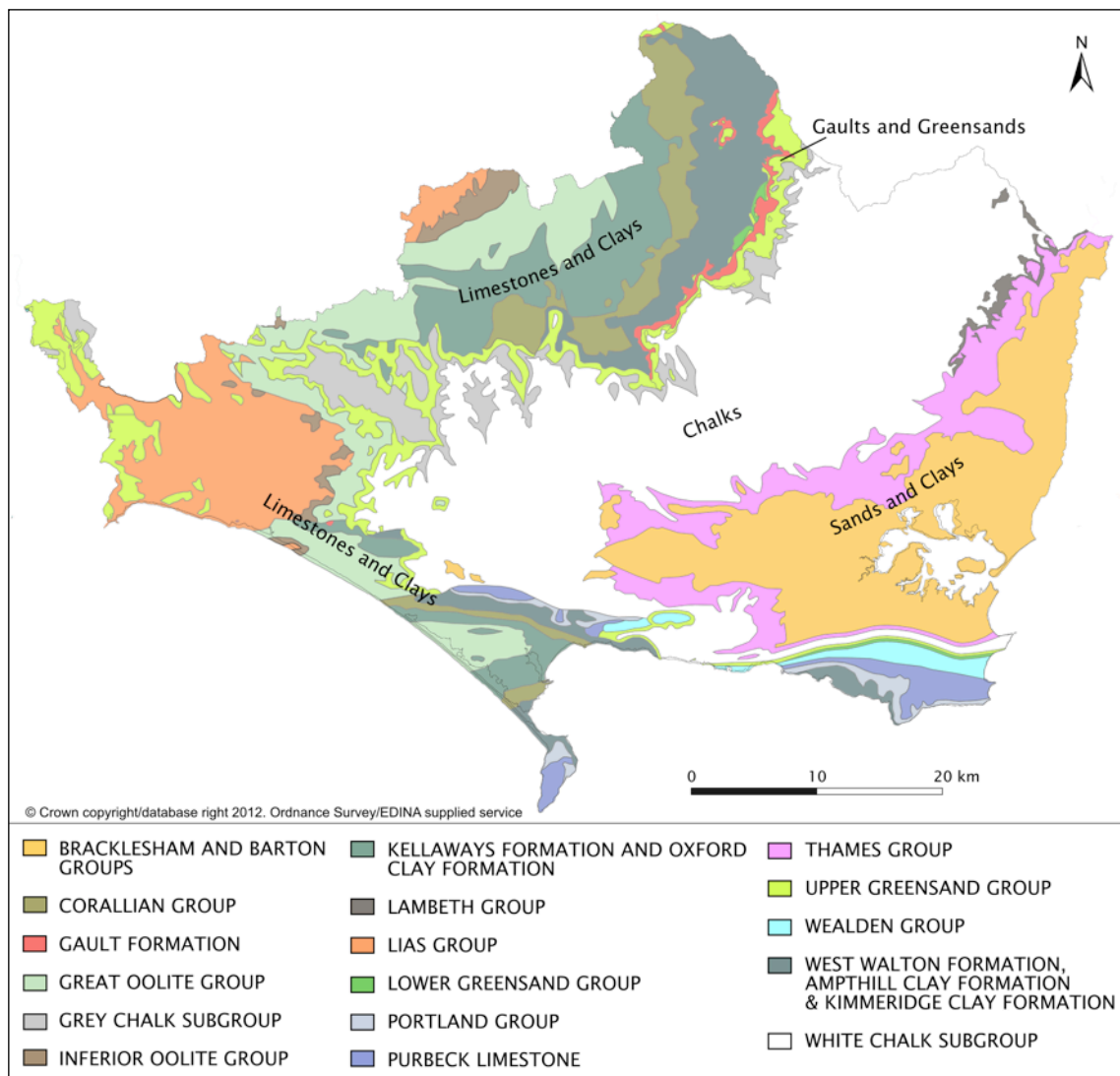


Fig. 7.1.5 The bedrock geology of Dorset.

The *pays* of Dorset

Seven *pays* have been identified in Dorset (Fig. 7.1.6).

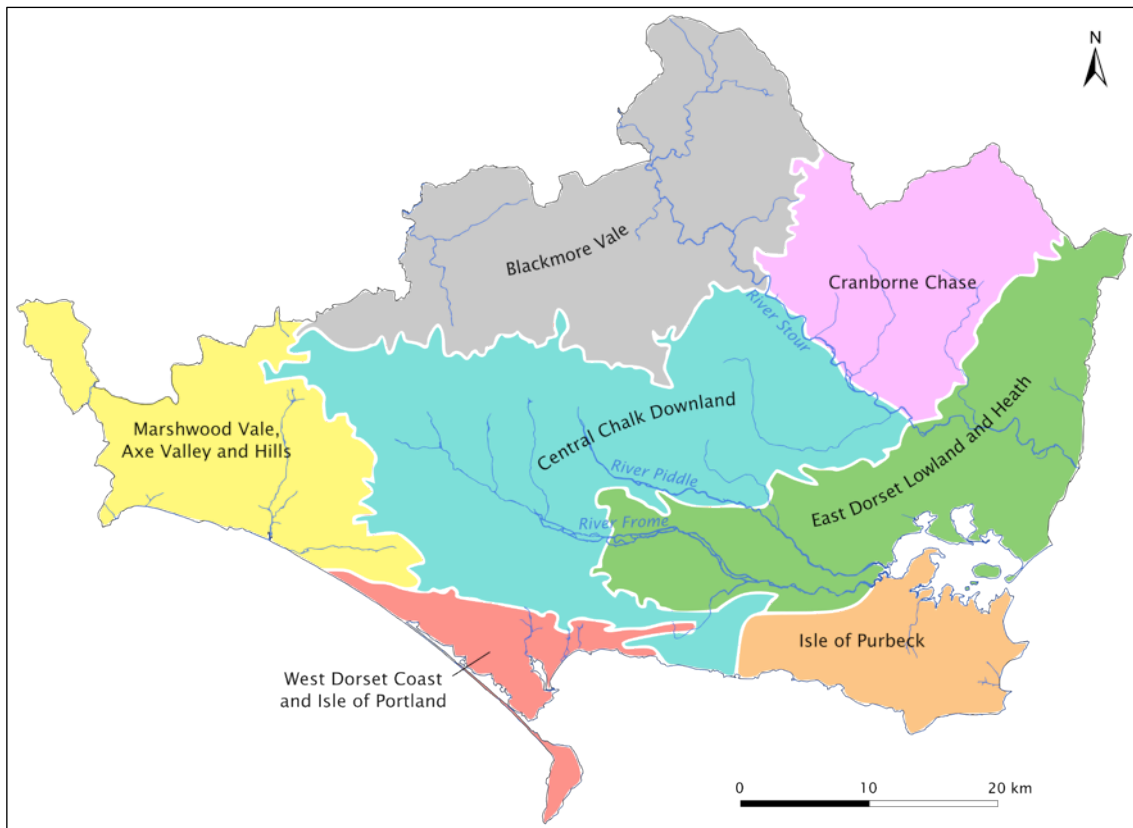


Fig. 7.1.6 The *pays* of Dorset.

Cranborne Chase

Cranborne Chase was highly significant in the development of archaeology as a discipline, owing to the work of local estate owner General Pitt Rivers in the late nineteenth century, and attracted the attention of antiquarians and early archaeologists due to its abundance of well preserved archaeological remains (Barrett *et al.* 1991: 8). The Chase lies on a chalk plateau, which stretches from the River Stour in the west to the Avon in the east, and includes parts of Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire. As the majority lies in Dorset, however, the part which lies in Wiltshire is incorporated into the South Wiltshire Downs *pays*, and the part which lies in Hampshire is contained within the Avon and Stour valleys *pays*. The topography of Dorset Cranborne Chase dips gently towards the south, and the underlying chalk is capped by clays and gravels. The name of the area is derived from its status as a royal hunting estate, which until its disfranchisement in 1830 covered an area of over 700,000 acres (Bowen

1990: 1). The estate was given legal protection as grazing land for deer in the early thirteenth century, although the origins of the Inner Chase may be ‘Late Saxon’ (Bowen 1990: 1). Bokerley Dyke, which is discussed in greater detail in other parts of this chapter, forms part of the northeastern boundary of the *pays*. The earliest known documentary reference to the Bokerley earthworks appears in the bounds of Martin, Wiltshire, in a charter dated c. AD 945 (S513): *ende lang dich to wideyate*, ‘along the ditch to Woodyates’ (Mills 1980: 236). *Bockedic* first appears in assize rolls dating from 1280, and may derive from *bucc*, ‘male deer’, possibly an allusion to the hunting of deer on the Chase or to the thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century Blagdon deer park, the boundary of which was partly formed by the earthwork (Bowen 1990: 15; Mills 1980: 235-6).

Cranborne Chase is characterised by a high concentration of extant or traceable Neolithic monuments, many of which were appropriated for burial in the early medieval period (see below). The enigmatic 10km-long monument known as the Dorset Cursus, which traverses the *pays* on a northeast-southwest alignment, is thought to have been constructed towards the end of the fourth millennium BC (Barclay and Bayliss 1999), and its orientation seems to have affected the layout of Bronze and Iron Age field systems (Barrett *et al.* 1991). Neolithic henge monuments are located at Monkton Up Wimborne and Knowlton (Green 2000), and a large number of long barrows are present in the area, many of which are also exceptional in their length; all of the excavated examples in Dorset, with the exception of one at Bradford Peverell, are found on the Chase (see Chapter 7.2). Recent environmental work in the Allen valley has established that there was only limited cultivation of the downland in prehistory; rather, it was focused on the valley floor, with large tracts of grassland pasture on the slopes (French *et al.* 2007). A low to moderate density of plough-teams is recorded in DB (Fig. 7.1.7), reflecting the reasonable arable potential but largely pastoral land-use. The survival of tangible evidence of prehistoric and Roman field systems in many areas of the Chase is testament to the relatively low level of arable cultivation since prehistory.

East Dorset Lowland and Heath

This *pays* lies within the geological formation known as the Poole Basin, and stretches in a crescent shape from the Hampshire border almost to Dorchester

(English Nature 1997: 4). A partially man-made habitat, which developed from open oak and hazel woodland probably as a result of the advent of more intensive agriculture during the Bronze Age (English Nature 1997: 21), open heathland once covered over 50,000 hectares of southeast Dorset. Although up to 85% of this has now been lost, the *pays* is defined as the original extent of the heath (English Nature 1997: 21). Poole Harbour was an important landing stage and trading site from the Iron Age (Wilkes 2004). The low density of plough-teams recorded in DB (see Fig. 7.1.7) reflects the infertility of the acidic sandy soils and the extent of heath cover, although more fertile alluvial soils are present in the river valleys, where settlement was more concentrated.

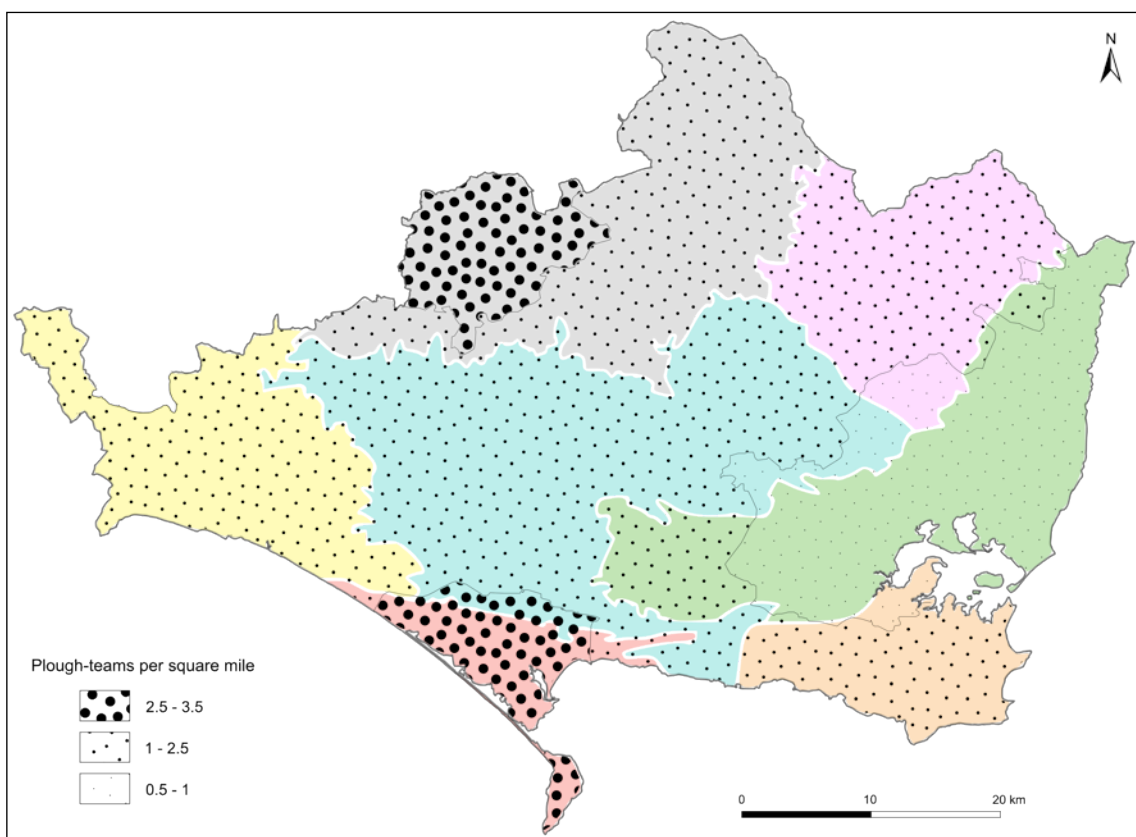


Fig. 7.1.7 Density of Domesday plough-teams in Dorset (after Darby 1967: 86), overlain on map of *pays*.

Isle of Purbeck

Although Purbeck is technically a peninsular rather than an island, it arguably possesses a distinct, insular identity, partly as a result of its historical role as a marginal centre of manufacture (Hinton 2002). Pottery produced around the margins of Poole Harbour and on Purbeck achieved a province-wide distribution during the Roman period (Gerrard 2010: 294). Kimmeridge shale has been

exploited since the Bronze Age and became a focus of Roman industry (Putnam 2007: 130). Purbeck marble was another desirable material, targeted by Romano-British stonemasons for the production of tombstones and inscribed stones, and later used in the construction of churches (Jope 1964; Putnam 2007: 130). A high density of Roman settlements is found in the southern part of the 'island', including villa sites such as Bucknowle (NMR SY 98 SE 64). A moderate density of Domesday plough-teams (see Fig. 7.1.7), and evidence for medieval strip lynchets on the coastal headlands and steeper valley sides, suggest that arable cultivation was fairly extensive by the Middle Ages. Much of these marginal areas were later given over to pasture.

Blackmore Vale

The majority of this *pays* is low-lying, predominantly below the 75m contour, and is underlain by Kellaways and Oxford Clays. It is delimited by the Central Chalk Downlands to the south and Cranborne Chase to the east, and incorporates the upper Stour and Yeo valleys, as well as more elevated Great Oolite limestone areas in the north near to the border with Somerset and Wiltshire. The density of plough-teams recorded in Domesday ranges from moderate to high (see Fig. 7.1.7), and in the medieval and post-medieval periods mixed farming predominated, with arable in open fields surrounding the villages and pasture on the heavier wet clays. Evidence for Roman settlement is sparse in the northeast, but numerous villas have been located in the Sherborne area (Putnam 2007).

Central Chalk Downlands

The bulk of the chalkland lies to the west of the Stour, encompassing the central swathe of the county. Environmental evidence from the Mount Pleasant henge enclosure (see below) supports the tenet that that extensive woodland clearance took place in the Neolithic, followed by long periods of grazing, interrupted by limited regeneration in the Late Neolithic, and intermittent cultivation and grassland into the medieval period (Wainwright 1979: 209). Plough-soil deposits at Mount Pleasant indicate that the surrounding landscape was cultivated in the Roman period (Wainwright 1979: 210). The modern downland landscape is only lightly wooded and is characterised by pasture and large arable fields. A number of long barrows, nearly all of which have never

been excavated, are scattered across the landscape in the Dorchester area, as well as distinctive bank barrow monuments and causewayed enclosures. During the Roman period, the walled town of *Durnovaria* was a trading hub, particularly for Purbeck marble, shale and the pottery industries from Poole Harbour and the New Forest (Putnam 2007). As on Cranborne Chase, a moderate number of plough-teams per square mile are recorded in DB (see Fig. 7.1.7), reflecting the reasonable fertility of the light chalk soils.

West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland

The pebble bank of Chesil Beach links the mainland with the Isle of Portland, a 'tied island' composed of Portland and Purbeck Limestones overlying a thicker layer of Kimmeridge Clay. The chert beds found within the Portland stone was a significant resource used for tool-making in prehistory. Quarrying for Portland stone has taken place since the Roman period and expanded in the medieval period. Excavations in the village of Weston near the centre of the 'island' produced evidence for occupation from the late Iron Age throughout the Romano-British period, including unusual small round buildings with stone footings and large quantities of local and imported pottery (Palmer 2009). By the end of the early medieval period, Domesday records that the population density of this area was the highest in Dorset (see Fig. 7.1.7).

Marshwood Vale, Axe Valley and Hills

In the far west of the county, the low-lying and gently undulating Lias Clay Marshwood Vale is surrounded by the horseshoe-shaped Chideock Hills and dramatic sea cliffs to the south, and by the Axe hills and valley to the north. The Iron Age hillforts of Coneys Castle, Lamberts Castle, Pilsdon Pen and Lewesdon Hill, which all lie within a distance of 10km of each other in an unusually high concentration, overlook the Vale from the ridge of hills to the north and west. In some areas a thin layer of Gault Clay, which decreases in depth towards the far west of the county, overlies the eroded lias. The clay soils are poorly drained in the bowl of the Vale.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BURIAL SITES IN DORSET, c. AD 450–850

The Dorset dataset comprises 23 burial sites, including one site (Martin 28) which is located in the historic county of Wiltshire, but is in close proximity to the county boundary and is better discussed as part of the Dorset Cranborne Chase *pays*. The Dorset sites are located predominantly in Cranborne Chase and the Central Chalk Downlands *pays* (Fig. 7.1.8), mostly at moderate altitudes (Fig. 7.1.9) and on chalk bedrock (Fig. 7.1.10).

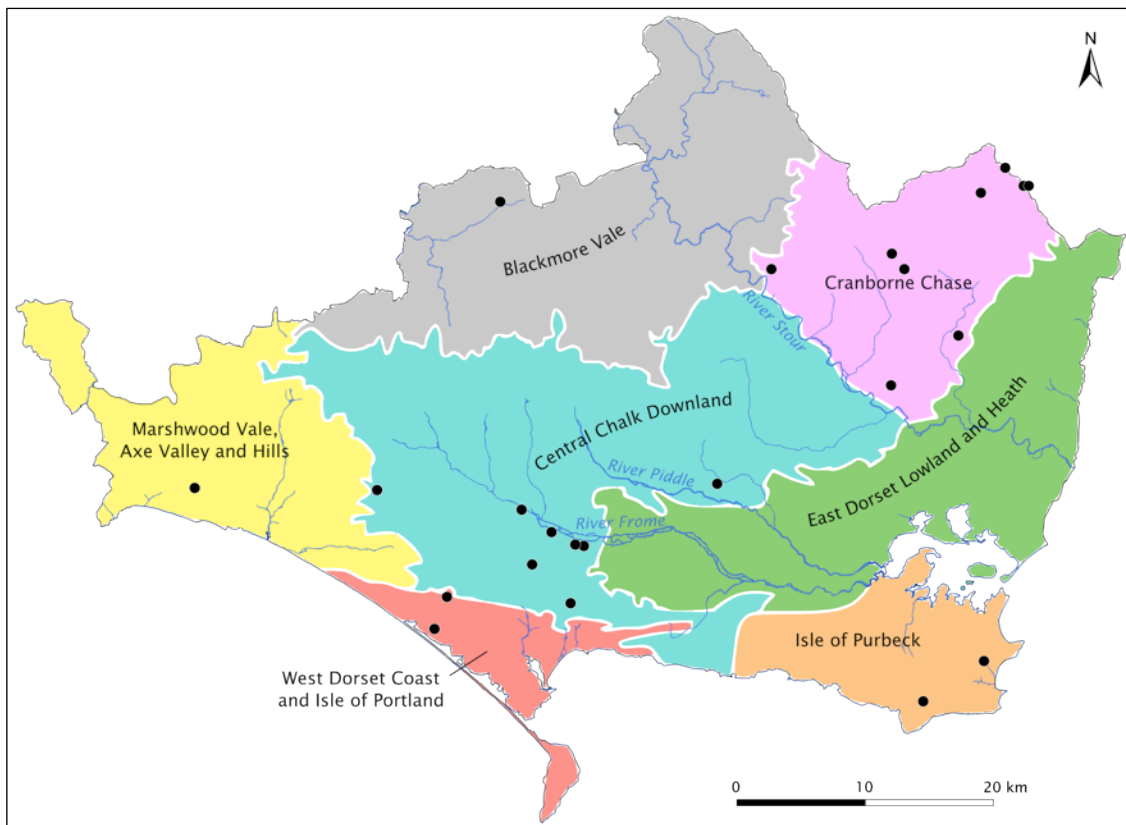


Fig. 7.1.8 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset, overlain on map of *pays*.

Approximately 1100 archaeological interventions took place between 1982 and 2010 within the historic county boundaries of Dorset (data from AIP). The historic county covers 2553km², compared with Hampshire, which has an area of 3772km² (Southall and Burton 2001), and where roughly 2250 interventions were carried out during the same period. This means that while Dorset covers 68% of the area of Hampshire, only half as many interventions took place in the former county. The highest densities of archaeological intervention were found in and around Dorchester, Wareham and Poole, with moderate densities of activity in Sherborne and Shaftesbury (Fig. 7.1.11).

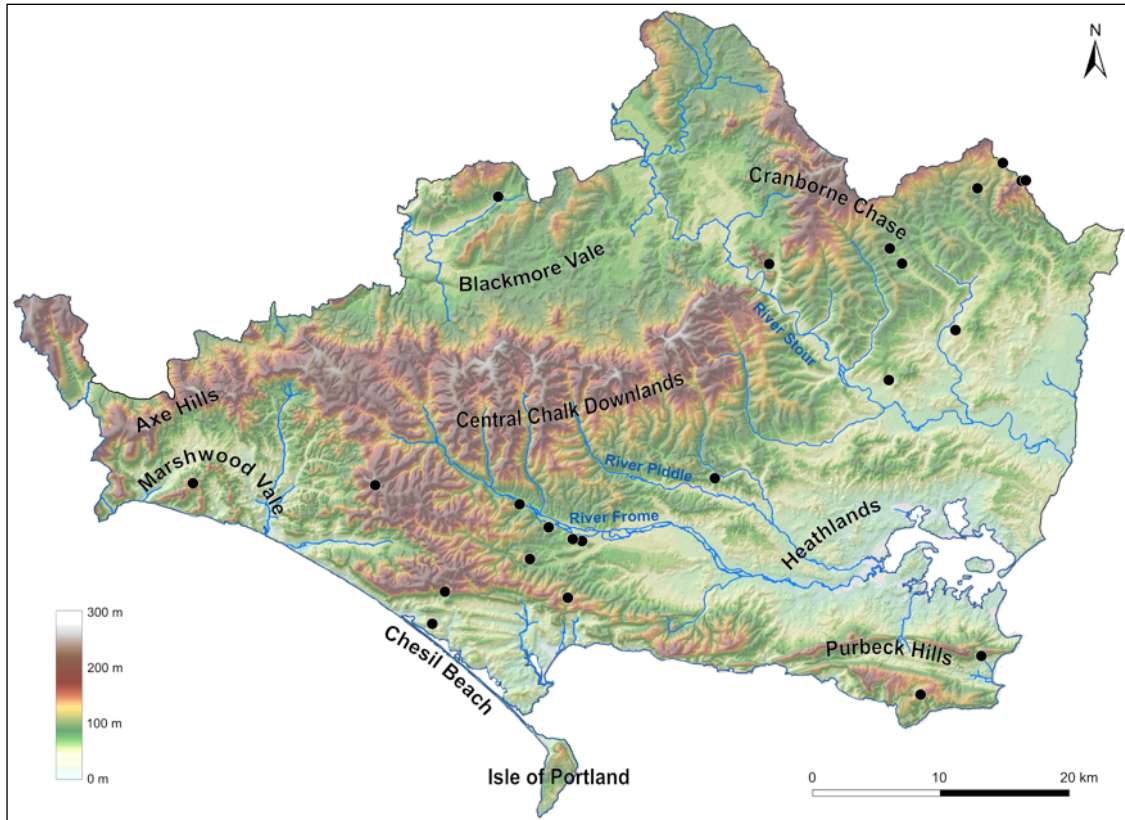


Fig. 7.1.9 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset, overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

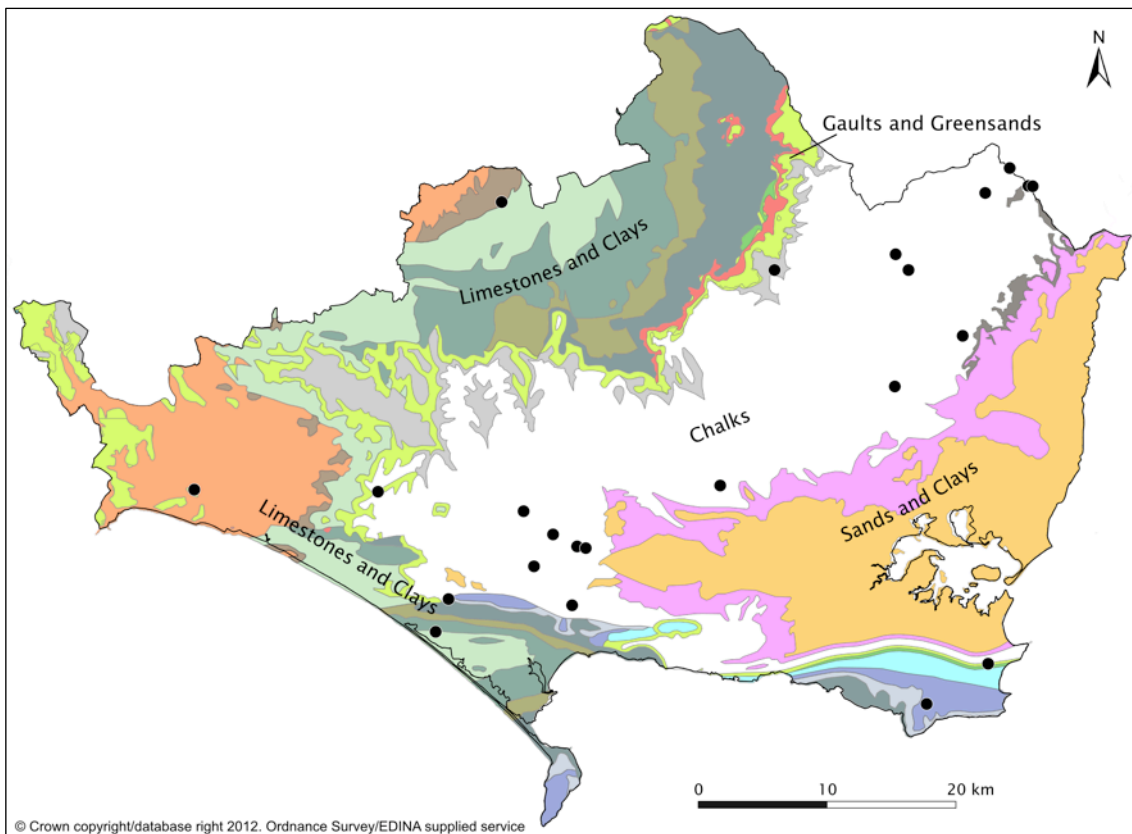


Fig. 7.1.10 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset and bedrock geology.

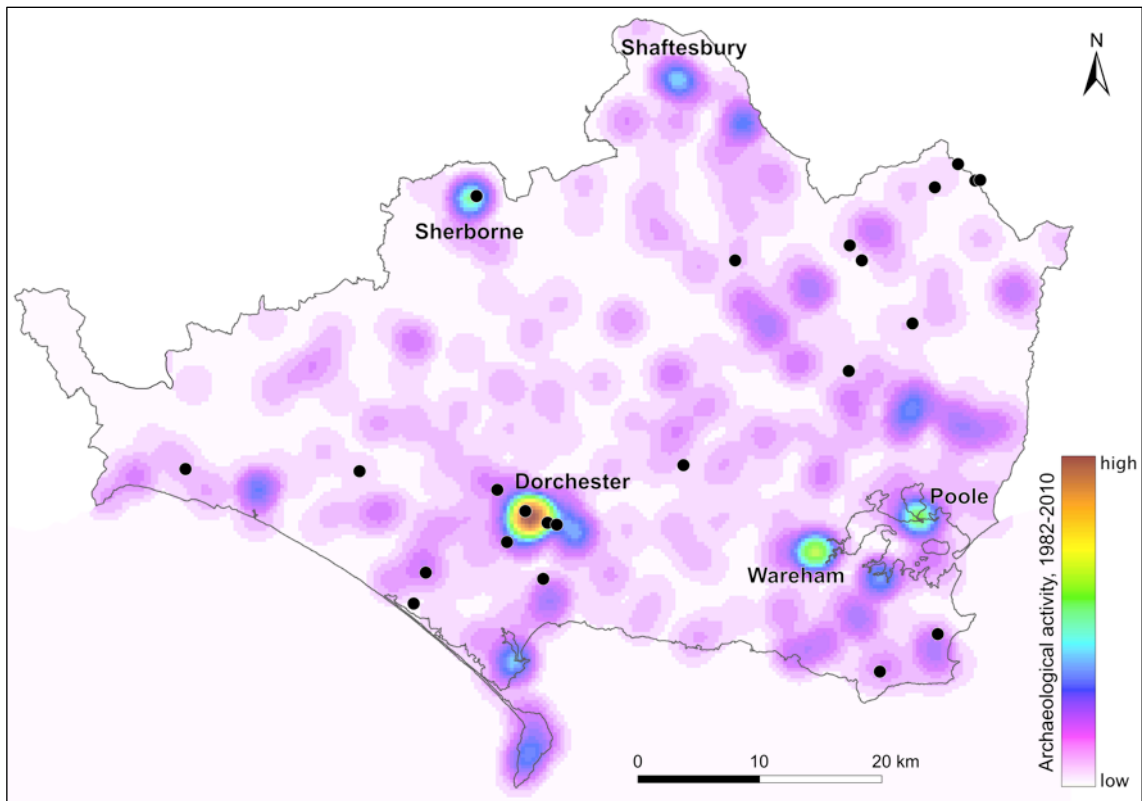


Fig. 7.1.11 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset, overlain on kernel density plot of archaeological investigations, 1982-2010 (data from the AIP).

The path of archaeological activity along the River Stour, in towns such as Wimborne and Blandford Forum, can also be identified, although the two burial sites along this corridor—Hambleton Hill and Shapwick—were discovered as a result of antiquarian or modern research investigation. A moderate density area on the Isle of Purbeck, on the southern shore of Poole Harbour, relates to oil-fields and other industrial development, but no early medieval burial sites were discovered. The only burial sites that do in fact reflect the pattern of modern investigation are those discovered in Dorchester and Sherborne. Many of the sites in the dataset—such as those in Cranborne Chase—were discovered as a result of antiquarian investigation but lie in areas of low density in terms of modern intervention.

BURIAL IN DORSET, c. AD 450–850: REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

The burial sites will now be reviewed on a *pays-by-pays* basis, in order to contextualise them within the Dorset landscape. Site names in bold type are as they appear in the Dorset dataset (Appendix 3).

Cranborne Chase

This predominantly chalk downland area has contributed nine sites to the Dorset dataset (Fig. 7.1.12); two further possible sites have been excluded from the dataset due to a lack of dating evidence, but will be nevertheless be discussed below.

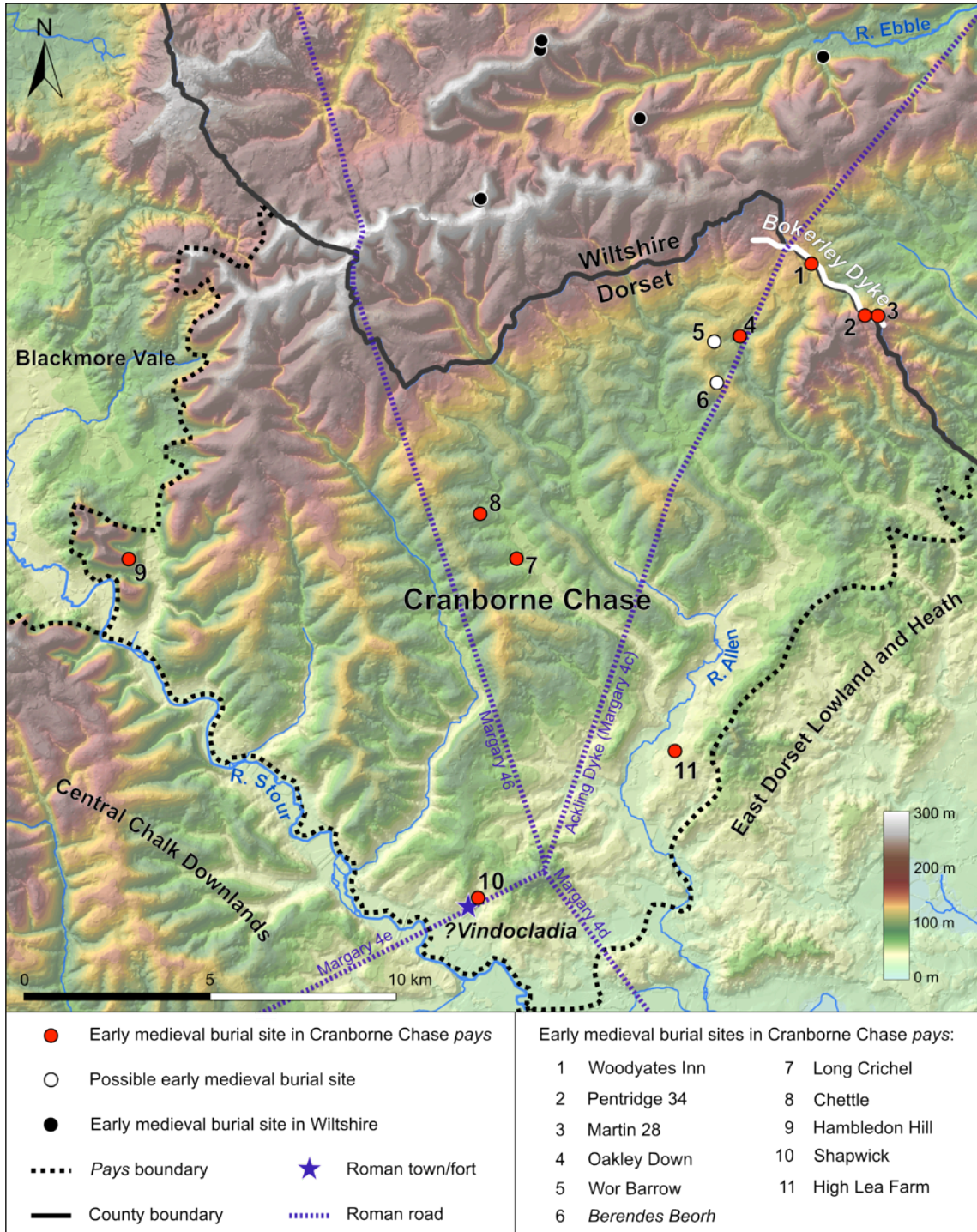


Fig. 7.1.12 Map showing certain and possible ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites, and other key sites, in Cranborne Chase (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

It has been suggested (Green *et al.* 1982: 57; Mercer and Healy 2008: 324) that the Cranborne Chase burials represent an outlying group on the edge of 'Saxon' settlement in the Salisbury Avon valley area. It could indeed be argued that the Cranborne Chase sites should be considered in parallel with sites belonging to the South Wiltshire Downs group—Winkelbury Hill, Swallowcliffe Down, Alvediston, Ebbesbourne Wake and Broad Chalke—all of which lie south of the River Nadder, predominantly in and around the Ebbles valley (Fig. 7.1.12). The Dorset Cranborne Chase group certainly has much in common with the South Wiltshire Downs group, as both possess a combination of apparently isolated richly furnished burials and small cemeteries of sparsely furnished burials, associated with earlier barrows in a high proportion of cases. Moreover, both groups are broadly contemporary, likely to date from between the later sixth and later seventh century.

Bokerley Dyke area

Excavations by Hoare at the beginning of the nineteenth century of a long barrow close to Bokerley Gap in Pentridge revealed a richly furnished seventh-century female burial, which displays notable similarities with the Swallowcliffe Down bed burial. The **Woodyates Inn** long barrow, denominated Pentridge 23 by the RCHME, is situated in a ploughed field at 115m aOD, 85m west of Bokerley Dyke and the county boundary (Fig. 7.1.13). It is still visible as a low bump, highlighted by the plough lines in the field (Fig. 7.1.14). Hoare (1812: 235) recounts that the barrow was found to be 'surrounded with large sarsen stones', fragments of which are still thrown up by ploughing today, and it has been suggested that the barrow may have been bounded by a stone circle or kerb, although it is also possible that the stones derive from a chamber within the barrow (Green 2000: 61). The barrow also lies just under 300m north of the northeastern terminus of the Dorset Cursus, a Neolithic monument believed to have formed a grand avenue between existing groups of long barrows (Green 2000: 61). Although the majority of its length is only detectable through aerial photography or geophysical survey, small sections of the southern bank are still extant, and may have been more prominent prior to medieval ploughing. A round barrow containing secondary early medieval burials is situated close to the other end of the Cursus (see Long Crichel, below).

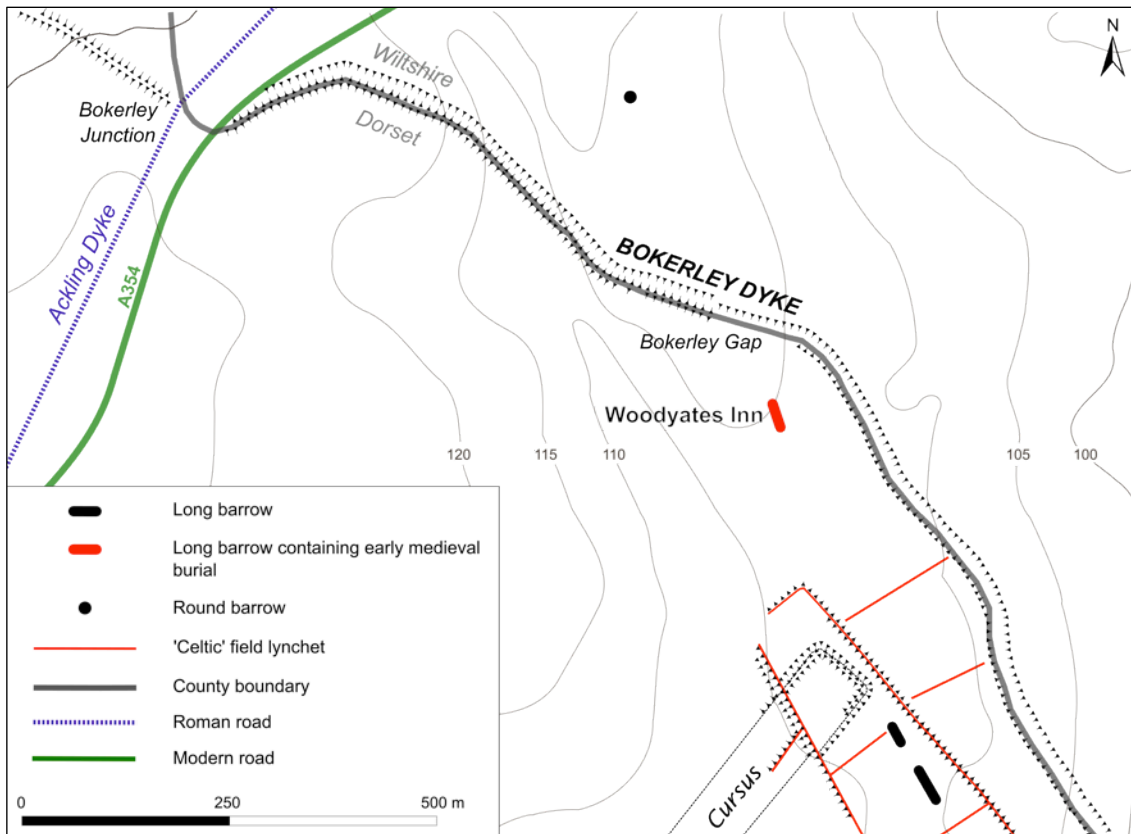


Fig. 7.1.13 Plan showing Bokerley Dyke and archaeological features in the vicinity of the Woodyates Inn long barrow. The pattern of field systems is also marked (redrawn after Bowen 1990: Figure 1).

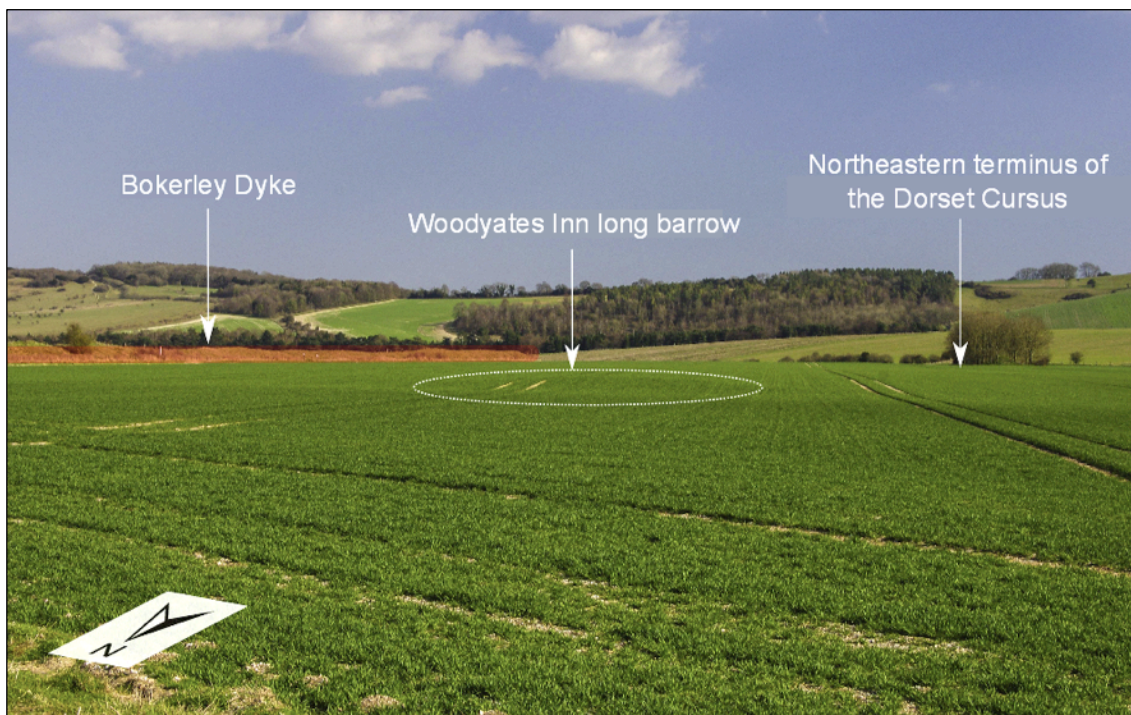


Fig. 7.1.14 View from west of Bokerley Gap, looking south towards Woodyates Inn long barrow (circled in white) and the terminus of the Dorset Cursus (approximate location marked). The line of the Dyke, which curves off to the left behind the barrow, is highlighted in red. Photo: author.

Within the long barrow, Hoare (1812: 235) found a hook, clench bolt and buckle and an ivory ring, from a bag or pouch. Below was an extended female inhumation, with two further clench bolts close to the head. Grave-goods included a biconical gold bead, similar to one found at Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire; a jet bead; two glass beads, one threaded on a gold wire ring; and a millefiori plaque suspended from a gold chain. Although this plaque seems ultimately to have been used as a pendant (Fig. 7.1.15), the closest Anglo-Saxon parallels are from linked pin suites—such as the one found with the female burial at Roundway 7 in Wiltshire—and it may originally have formed a centrepiece for such an item (Geake 1995: 245). Millefiori glass inlays are common within Roman objects, and some of the larger pieces of millefiori used in seventh- and eighth-century ‘Anglo-Saxon’ jewellery may be reused Roman work (Geake 1995: 266; Wedlake 1982: 132; White 1988: 148). It is conceivable that such items therefore furnished the wearer, or the grave in which they were deposited, with a sense of *Romanitas*. The iron objects found with the burial have been suggested to represent the surviving traces of a bed or similar structure on which the corpse was interred, and may have been accompanied by fine textiles, a further similarity with the Swallowcliffe burial, with which it is broadly contemporary (Speake 1989: 107).



This image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 7.1.15 The Woodyates Inn pendant, likely to incorporate reused Roman millefiori work (© Wiltshire Museum).

Woodyates is mentioned as *Wudegate* in 869 x 870 (S342) or *Wideyate* in 944 x 946 (S513), meaning ‘gate in the wood or wooded area’, perhaps a reference to Bokerley Gap (Mills 1980: 272).

Two kilometres southeast along Bokerley Dyke from the Woodyates Inn long barrow, a bowl barrow denominated **Pentridge 34** by the RCHME (and Grinsell’s 13b)¹, was also opened by Hoare (1812: 234):

In my return to Woodyates Inn, I followed the western side of Bokerley Ditch, and in my way observed several barrows ... The largest contained two skeletons, and several instruments of iron, viz. a lance-head, two knives, and an article of bone.

These would appear to represent late fifth- to early eighth-century intrusive interments in an earlier barrow. The barrow is 80m from the county boundary, close to the summit of Blagdon Hill, where the ramparts of Bokerley Dyke are most substantial in height (Fig. 7.1.16; Bowen 1990: 35). The barrow is one of a pair of mounds associated with Grim’s Ditch (Pentridge 17), another ambiguous linear earthwork, although the exact relationship between the linear and the barrows is unclear due to disturbance and past excavations (Bowen 1990: 35-7). A further two barrows (Martin 26 and 27) are associated with a linear earthwork (Martin 78) on the Wiltshire side of the historic county boundary.

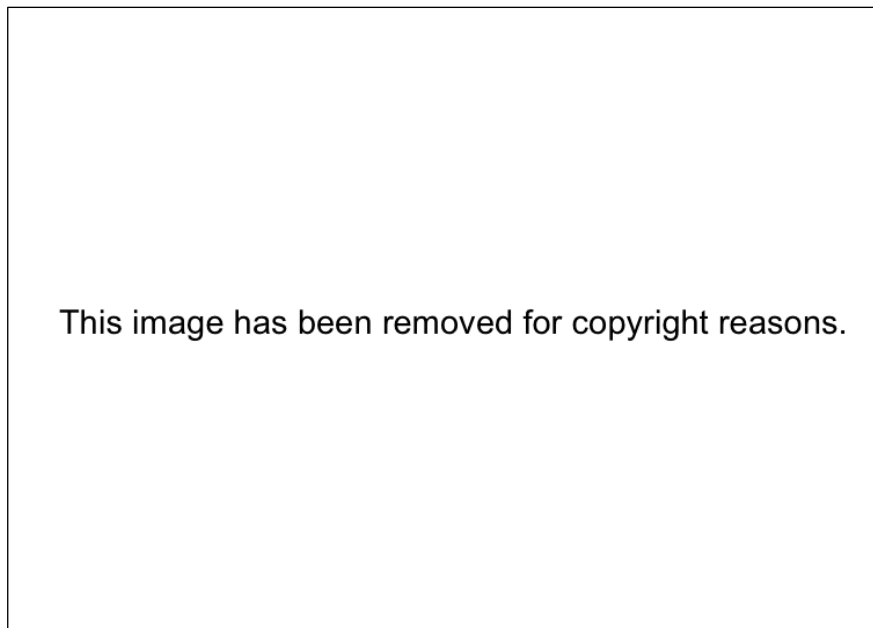


Fig. 7.1.16 Plan of Bokerley Dyke, Grim’s Ditch, other linears and barrows (after Bowen 1990: Fig. 23). Pentridge 34 is marked in red, while the location of Martin 28 (just off the map) is indicated with an arrow.

¹ The NMR records appear to confuse the numbering of barrows Pentridge 33 and 34.

Also on the Wiltshire side of the boundary, 350m due east of Pentridge 34, lies **Martin 28**, another bowl barrow in which a 'Saxon interment' was found in 1842 (Bowen 1990: 16). This is also associated with a linear (Martin 80A), thought to be a continuation of Grim's Ditch. As Bowen (1990: 35-6) suggests, the location of the barrows is undoubtedly of territorial significance. This may have influenced the location of the early medieval inhumations within Pentridge 34 and Martin 28. The place-name is mentioned in a mid-tenth-century boundary clause as *(ge)mære tun*, 'farm at the boundary' (Gover *et al.* 1939: 402; S513).

A group of 'execution burials' was discovered by Pitt Rivers (1892) close to Bokerley Junction, possibly on the Wiltshire side of the boundary, and intervisible with Wor Barrow (see below). There was no dating evidence for the burials, but Reynolds (2009: 146) has drawn comparisons with early medieval execution sites associated with linear earthworks, such as Roche Court Down, on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. Eight inhumations are suggested to be those of 'executed wrongdoers' (Reynolds 2009: 146), two of which were interred together and with one other burial formed a group sited in the gap in the dyke through which the Ackling Dyke passes (see Fig. 7.1.13; Reynolds 2009: Fig. 36). The remainder were buried in the various ditches to the north of the dyke, on both sides of the Roman road, and two appear to have been sited on the county boundary itself. A leg of one of the individuals was flexed in a 'hopping' position, analogous to one of the Roche Court Down burials (see Chapter 5.1).

Oakley Down

Moving 2.6km southwest from Bokerley Junction along the Ackling Dyke, within the extensive barrow group on **Oakley Down** (Fig. 7.1.17), a bowl barrow, also known as RCHME Wimborne St Giles 120 (Bowen 1990: Fig. 1) or Grinsell's (1959: 143) Wimborne St Giles 1, was excavated by Cunnington and Hoare in the early nineteenth century. The intrusive extended skeleton of an adult female, orientated northeast-southwest and accompanied by numerous glass and amber beads and a gilt bronze brooch, was found at a depth of c. 65cm, as well as a primary crouched male inhumation. Hoare (1812: 236-7) described the excavations, remarking that the barrow was 'so close to the Blandford road [the modern A354], that a part of it has been cut away', and on the female burial, he reported that:

Round the neck were found a great many very small glass beads ... with about twelve other beads rudely formed of amber; there were besides two rings ... Near the ear or left shoulder was a circular clasp of brass, with a rim five-eighths of an inch in diameter, projecting from it, and stamped or cut within with the rude figure of a human face ... The whole interior of this little ornament is strongly gilt; the tongue of the clasp is of iron, and has some filaments of linen cloth adhering to it. On the left side of the skeleton were some broken pieces of a thin iron ring ... several other bits of iron were dispersed about, but too much corroded to ascertain for what purpose they were originally used.

The high number of amber beads suggests a later sixth-century date for the burial (Geake 1997: 47; Huggett 1988: 64). The barrow lies 100m from the parish boundary with Pentridge, at an altitude of 91m aOD on the south-facing slope of a dry tributary valley, the line of which is followed by the parish boundary to the south. Extensive lynchets of field systems have been mapped by the RCHME to the north (Fig. 7.1.17), and the concentration of settlement and fields 'is remarkable for its intensity, its range of date, from Neolithic to post-Roman, and the nature of its components and relationships' (Bowen 1990: 52). The close relationship between lynchets and barrows or ring ditches is also notable. The barrow in which the sixth-century interment was made was not exceptional in size, and was surrounded by other much larger barrows; there must, therefore, have been other motivating factors behind the choice of this monument.

Eight hundred metres to the west, near to the summit of a ridge which divides Oakley Down and Handley Down, a large Neolithic long barrow known as Wor Barrow was excavated by Pitt Rivers in 1893-4 and was found to contain 17 burials, including eleven decapitations and eight multiple burials (Pitt Rivers 1898; Reynolds 2009: 114). Although Reynolds (2009) has suggested that the burials may be of early medieval date, the site has not been included in the dataset, as no dating evidence was found, and the interments are likely in any case to postdate the period of study. Wor Barrow is sited high on the chalk downland, with an east facing aspect and intervisibility with the execution site at Bokerley Junction discussed above. Lying just to the west of the parish boundary between Handley and Wimborne St Giles, it has been identified with *Pegan Beorh*, a barrow mentioned in the eleventh-century bounds of Handley

(Grundy 1936: 116; S630). This identification is by no means certain, however, as other barrows lie along the same boundary. Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest that Wor Barrow was a place of execution, the modern name of the barrow has been suggested to derive from *wearg beorg*, ‘criminals’ barrow’ (Fägersten 1933: 131, cited by Reynolds 2009: 114). It also lies on the boundary between the Domesday hundreds of ‘Alvredesberge’ and Handley. Although it appears odd that the execution site was not mentioned in the Handley charter bounds, as Reynolds (2009: 114) speculates, ‘it seems that the ancient boundary either did not include Wor Barrow itself, or that the execution burials pre- or post-date the written evidence’.

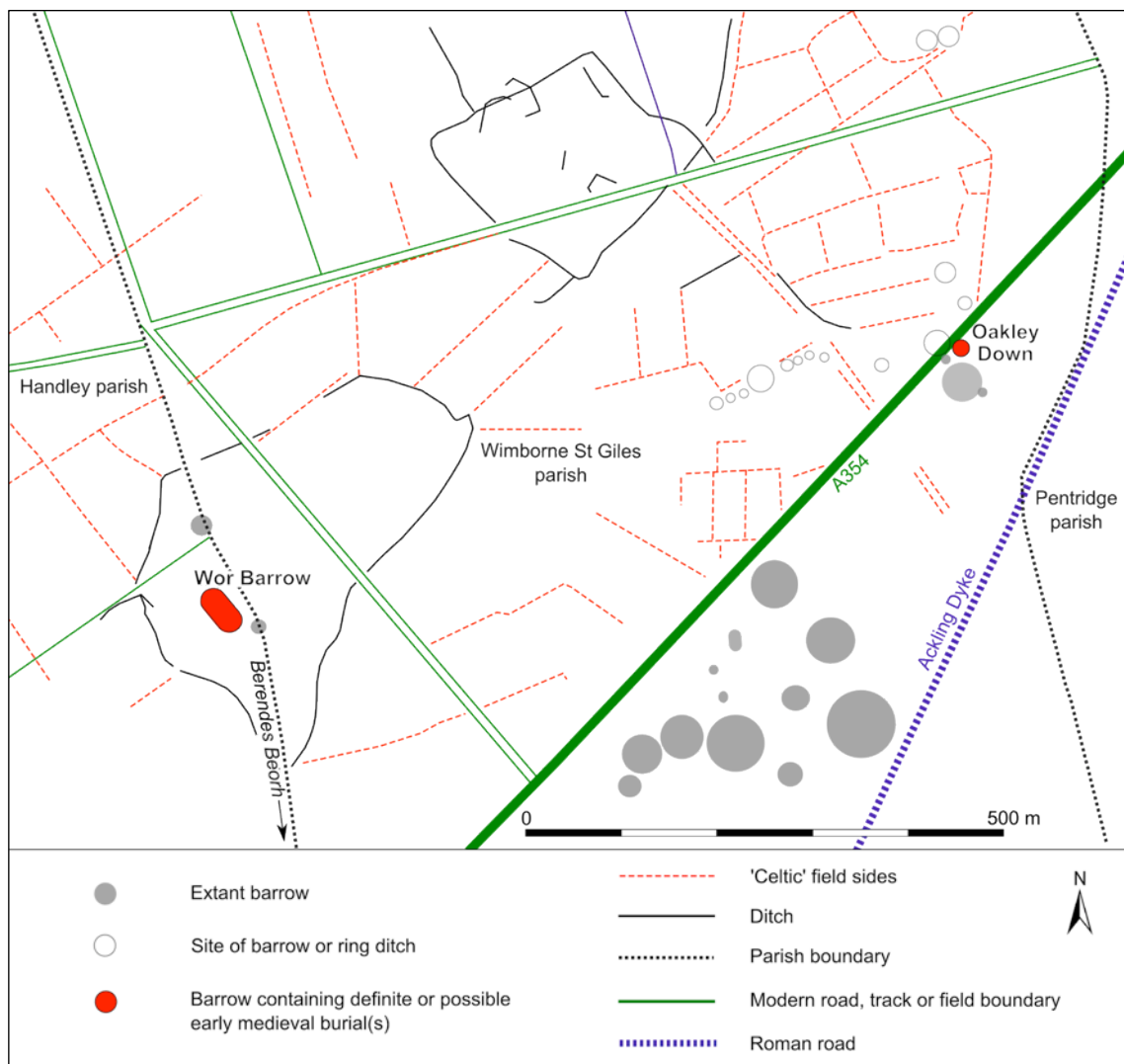


Fig. 7.1.17 ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites and other features on Oakley Down (after Bowen 1990: Plan 3).

A further possible early medieval burial site, not included in the dataset due to the lack of dating evidence, lies on the crest of the ridge south of Oakley Down, just under a kilometre south along the parish boundary from Wor Barrow and 150m southeast of Ackling Dyke Roman road. A large barrow, thought to be the one referenced in the bounds of Handley (S630) as *Berendes Beorh* (Grundy 1936: 116), is flanked by two smaller mounds, and it was in the easterly of these that Cunnington excavated two intrusive extended burials. Hoare (1812: 243) recalled that ‘one foot and a half from the surface [c. 46cm], he met with two skeletons, which from their position, he well knew were not the original tenants of the mound’. Below these inhumations, as in the largest of the three mounds, he found urned cremations within a stone cist. The barrows lie at the meeting point of three parish boundaries—Handley, Wimborne St Giles and Gussage All Saints—and on the hundred boundary between Handley and ‘Alvredesberge’. The Ackling Dyke Roman road passes 150m to the southeast. OE *berende* can be translated as ‘fruitful’ or ‘productive’, although Grundy (1936: 116) interprets it as a personal name, i.e. ‘*Berend*’s barrow’. The location of the barrow in a boundary location would suggest an early medieval date for the two secondary inhumation burials recovered from it, but the absence or loss of any grave-goods and the date of the excavation precludes any firm conclusions.

Central Cranborne Chase

Close to the southwestern terminus of the Dorset Cursus, the excavation of two round barrows, denominated Long Crichel 5 and 7 by Grinsell (1959: 77), and Long Crichel 19 and 20 by the RCHME (Bowen 1990: Fig. 1), was carried out in 1959-60 in advance of deep ploughing (Green *et al.* 1982). The two barrows, now barely perceptible, lay 170m apart on the gentle south-facing slope of a spur of Launceston Down, overlooking a combe which inclines towards the Crichel Brook, a winterbourne. Three inhumations, thought to date from the seventh century AD, were found in the top of the easternmost barrow, Grinsell’s **Long Crichel 7** or RCHME’s Long Crichel 20 (Fig. 7.1.18). The barrow was situated in Long Crichel parish, which was part of Knowlton hundred, and was located 270m east of the boundary with Tarrant Launceston parish and ‘Langeburgh’ hundred. Just over a kilometre to the northeast, on Thickthorn Down, lies the extant southwestern terminal bank of the Dorset Cursus.

Earthworks of a multiple dyke, designated RCHME Long Crichel Linear 7, project in a southwesterly direction from this terminus, passing the barrow c. 350m to its north (Bowen 1990: 49). This dyke, in conjunction with the Cursus, is thought to have represented a formidable land division cutting across the grain of the country during the Neolithic (Bowen 1990: 49).

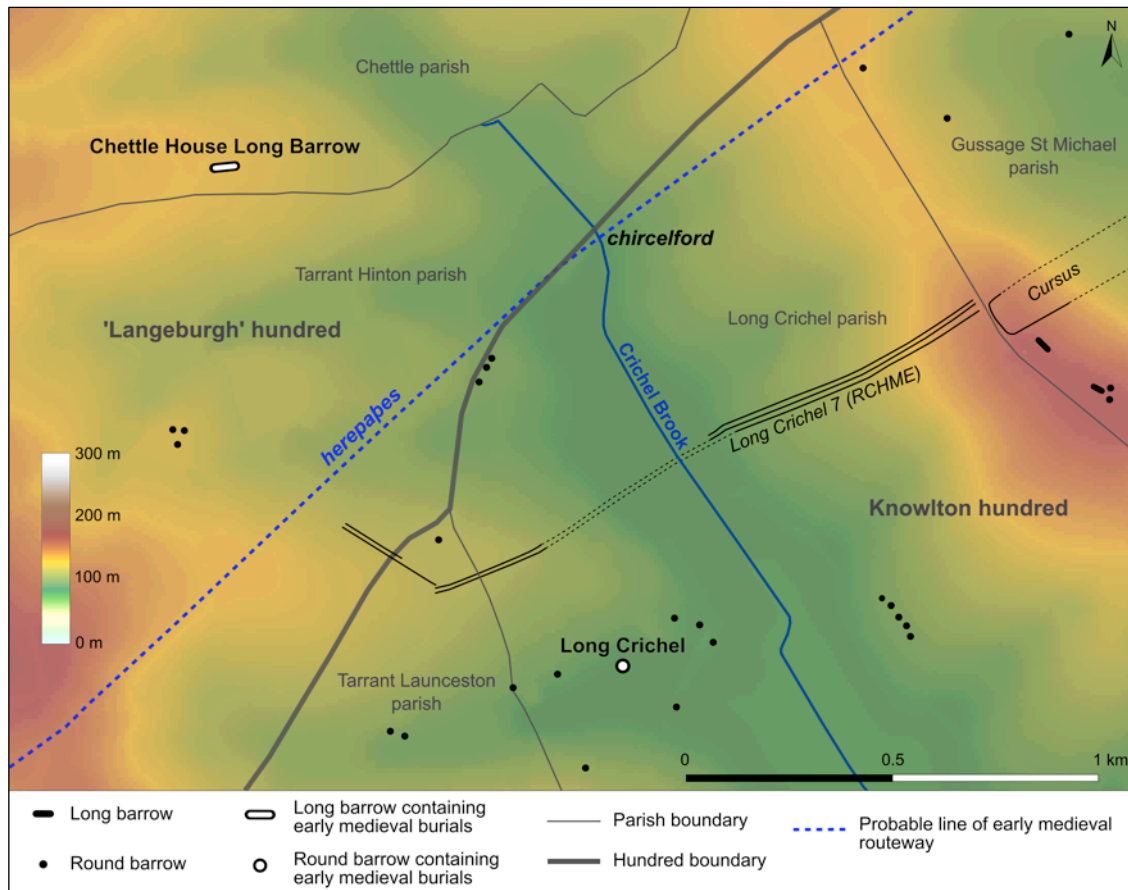


Fig. 7.1.18 Plan showing Long Crichel and Chettle House, and key archaeological features (redrawn after Bowen 1990: Area Plan 2), overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The Long Crichel barrow demonstrated two phases of construction and four series of interments, indicating that it was the intermittent focus of funerary ritual over at least two millennia (Green *et al.* 1982: 44, 53). Initially an Early Bronze Age turf-built bell barrow, it enclosed two crouched interments in a deep central grave. It was adapted and enlarged, retaining its bell barrow form, and a second inhumation shaft was dug (Green *et al.* 1982: 53). Representing the third Bronze Age phase were a number of 'Deverel-Rimbury' cremations, close to the top of the mound (Green *et al.* 1982: 54). The final phase in the life-history of the funerary monument is represented by the interment of three extended burials, heads to the southwest (on the same orientation as Long Crichel Linear

7), in shallow parallel graves at the top of the mound. These inhumations disturbed some of the earlier cremation burials (Green *et al.* 1982: 44). In Grave 11, a male of c. 18 years was accompanied by the only finds: a bronze buckle, an iron buckle plate, an iron awl, and an iron knife. A child in Grave 10, and the disturbed and fragmentary burial in Grave 12 of a probable male in a flint-lined pit, were both unaccompanied. Some skeletal remains of other individuals were also recovered from the graves (Green *et al.* 1982: 48). Flint packing or lining was found in Graves 10 and 11, similar to graves at Winterbourne Gunner, Wiltshire (Musty and Stratton 1964). The heads of these individuals were both supported by small pillows of chalk rubble, resonant of Grave 1 at Portway East, Hampshire, where support was provided by a flint nodule (Cooke and Dacre 1985: 23). A seventh-century date was suggested for this last phase of burial in the barrow on the basis of the iron knife and the simple utilitarian nature and general paucity of grave-goods (Green *et al.* 1982: 58).

One and a half kilometres northwest of the Long Crichel site lies **Chettle House** long barrow. One of two long barrows on or very near the Chettle parish boundary, this example lies to the south of Chettle House, just over 50m from the parish boundary with Tarrant Hinton, while the mound more commonly known as 'Chettle Long Barrow' is situated on the western perimeter of Chettle parish. The barrow was first opened c. 1727, revealing 'a great quantity of human bones, and with them spearheads and other warlike instruments'. Approximately 50 years later, a small, possibly female, extended skeleton was found at a shallow depth following erosion by sheep (Hutchins 1813, cited by Warne 1866: 2). Sir Joseph Banks' diary of an excursion to the area in 1767 (published 1900) recounts that 40 years previously, 'one opening at the Eastern end' had been made, and that 'a little way below the surface of the real Ground ... he found many Bones, Brass heads of Spears and some Coin [*sic*]'. He also implies that a second opening was made about a third of the way along the barrow to the west, but 'was never carried deep enough, so nothing was discovered in it' (Banks 1900: 143-9). Although detailed analysis of grave-goods or skeletal remains is not possible, given the circumstances of the finds, an 'Early-Middle Saxon' date can be suggested for the probable secondary inhumations in the barrow. The barrow is an imposing monument, 98m long and 20m wide (Fig. 7.1.19). It sits at an altitude of 84m aOD, on the gentle

southeast facing slope of a spur which projects from the same ridge as that upon which the Long Crichel barrow is situated.



Fig. 7.1.19 The western end of Chettle House long barrow (photo: author).

The tax returns for Exeter Domesday imply that Chettle lay in 'Langeburgh' (or 'Long Barrow') hundred in 1086 (Thorn 1991; Thorn and Thorn 1983). This hundred was dismantled after Domesday, and its manors were redistributed to Cranborne, Pimperne and Monkton Up Wimborne, the latter of which appropriated Chettle. 'Langeburgh' hundred contained a dense concentration of long barrows, at least one of which is likely to have been a hundred meeting place. One of the Chettle long barrows is a possible candidate. Although it is not in a particularly central location, moots were not necessarily in the centre of the hundred, and there was often more than one meeting place for each hundred (Pantos 2004). Chettle, known as *Ceotel* in 1086, probably derives from OE *cetel* or 'kettle', in reference to the topography, i.e. a deep valley surrounded by hills (Mills 1980: 290), while the Long Crichel place-name (and neighbouring Moor Crichel) derives from Old Welsh/Cornish *crüg*, 'mound, barrow' and *hyll*, 'hill', probably referring to Crichel Down (Mills 1980: 275). Crichel is first mentioned in 935 in the bounds of Tarrant Hinton (S429), *anlang wic herepapes to chirceford*, 'along the farm *herepað* to Crichel ford'. This ford

was probably located c. 1km north of the Long Crichel barrow, at the point at which the modern A354 crosses the Crichel Brook.

Herepaðas were roads wide enough to be used by a multitude (Baker and Brookes 2013: 143-4), and by the time this charter was written in the tenth century, such thoroughfares were well established, existing ‘near the top of a hierarchy of route-ways enabling long-distance travel within and between individual kingdoms’ (Baker and Brookes 2013: 146). A few centuries earlier, when the interments at Long Crichel and Chettle were made, the routeway, if indeed it was in existence, may not have taken the form of a fixed line in the landscape, but rather a broader corridor of communication. The presence of a thoroughfare through this area may have influenced the location of these two sites, although the considerable distance between the sites and the known *herepað* route makes it difficult to determine whether this was the case. The proximity of the Cursus, and of Linear 7, is also of potential significance, perhaps defining a territorial boundary between the two sites.

Western Cranborne Chase

The largest ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ cemetery yet discovered in Cranborne Chase was situated within a Neolithic causewayed enclosure close to the hillfort at **Hambledon Hill**. The site lies on the east-facing slope of Stepleton Spur, overlooking the Iwerne valley from an altitude of c. 130m aOD, on White Chalk geology with clay-with-flints outcroppings. Three graves were discovered in an exploratory trench in 1977, and a further eight graves and one possible grave were excavated the following year, making a total of eleven or twelve (Fig. 7.1.20; Mercer and Healy 2008: 317). The excavation of adjacent areas produced no further burials, implying that the limits of the cemetery were defined on all sides. Among the small number of grave-goods were two Böhner’s (1958) Type C knives, one in the largest grave—Grave 5—and one with the double burial in Grave 12; and an iron pin in the latter grave. Further items may have been lost through ploughing, however. The paucity of grave-goods and character of the cemetery have been described as ‘typical’ of the seventh century (Mercer and Healy 2008: 324), yet there is nothing to mark out the burials as distinctly ‘Anglo-Saxon’, rather than more generally post-Roman, in identity. The cemetery population is suggestive of an extended family group,

which included relatively elderly individuals, and there is no evidence that the individuals were involved in any violent skirmishes or struggles, which are suggested by Eagles (1994: 27) to account for other 'Anglo-Saxon' finds on hillforts in Dorset (Mercer and Healy 2008: 521).

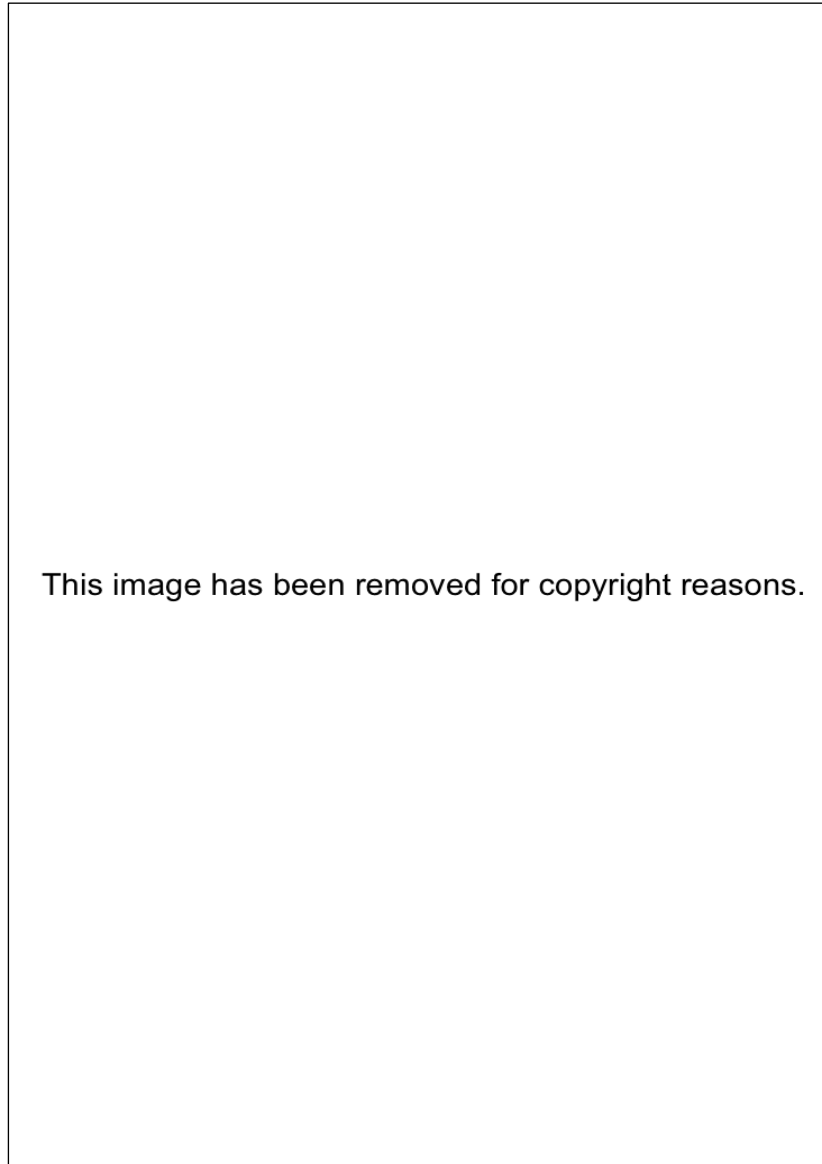


Fig. 7.1.20 Excavation plan of the Stepleton enclosure, Hambledon Hill, with early medieval burials and parish boundary marked in red (after Mercer and Healy 2008: Fig. 3.116).

Graves 1-11 formed the main group, in an 18m-long north-south row of roughly east-west orientated graves with the heads to the west, on and perpendicular to the inner outwork bank. Grave 12, an outlier located 16m southwest of the main group on the clay-with-flints, comprised a contemporary double burial of two adult females (c. 18-25 and c. 30-40). It must be assumed that the deaths of these two women occurred sufficiently close to each other to permit their

interment at the same time, and the ages are suggestive of a mother-daughter or sibling relationship (Stoodley 2002: 115). Grave 10 was empty, but may have contained an infant or juvenile, as immature skeletal preservation was poor and there was extensive plough damage. The row of graves extended away from the parish boundary between Hanford and Iwerne Courtney; the closest—Grave 1—lay just 10m from the boundary, while Grave 12—the double burial—was the furthest from the boundary at a distance of 37m. Graves 1–5 (closest to the boundary) were male, of which Grave 5 was the largest and deepest, and the burials to the south of Grave 5 were all female or sub-adult. While the close relationship between the cemetery and the boundary does not appear to be fortuitous, it is possible that locations of both the cemetery and the boundary were influenced purely by the topography, following the ridge-top of Stepleton Spur. The peripheral location of the double burial is interesting; it is fairly common for such burials to differ in some way from others in the cemetery (Stoodley 2002: 116-7), and a double burial in Grave 2/2A at Portway East, Hampshire, was also in an isolated peripheral location (Cook and Dacre 1985).

Southern Cranborne Chase

The most southerly burial of the Cranborne Chase group was found at **Shapwick** in the early nineteenth century. Woolls (1839: 105) recounted that:

while the labourers of Mr. M. Small were occupied in lowering a hill midway between Badbury Camp and Shapwicke, they discovered in a Cist cut in the chalk a Skeleton doubled up, and near it an exceedingly curious bone instrument, which has at one end a small circular hole drilled through it, and at the other extremity eight short teeth like those of a comb. It is four inches long and one inch wide and is part of the rib of a Deer.

Although the exact location of the ‘hill’—presumably either a barrow or natural mound—is not known, from Woolls’ description it seems likely to have been located along the Roman road towards *Durnovaria*, just over a kilometre southwest of Badbury Rings. Grinsell (1984: 50) suggested that it was in the vicinity of NGR ST950025, and the probable outline of a ploughed-out ring-ditch, revealed by geophysical survey of the area by the National Trust close to this location, may represent the remains of the barrow mentioned by Woolls (Fig. 7.1.21). Grinsell (1984: 50) also commented that the burial was probably

'Saxon'. The bone comb and crouched inhumation within a stone cist indeed point to a seventh-century burial of the sub-Roman tradition. The location of the burial is also intriguingly close to complex indicators of antecedent settlement. Less than 100m from the probable burial site, the cropmark outline of a fourth-century fort was first identified in 1976, and fieldwalking in 1991 produced fragments of mosaic and painted plaster and pottery dating from the first to fourth centuries AD (M. Papworth *pers. comm.* 2013). The geophysical survey carried out by the National Trust has revealed the extent of the settlement, which is thought to represent *Vindocladia*, mentioned in the *Antonine Itinerary* as lying on the road between *Durnovaria* and *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum) (Putnam 2007: 76). A linear feature, dated to the Early-Middle Bronze Age, and reused as an Iron Age boundary, provides evidence for the earliest occupation of the site. The characteristics of the grave and the proximity to the Roman settlement may indicate a desire to express Romano-British identity or convey a sense of *Romanitas*.

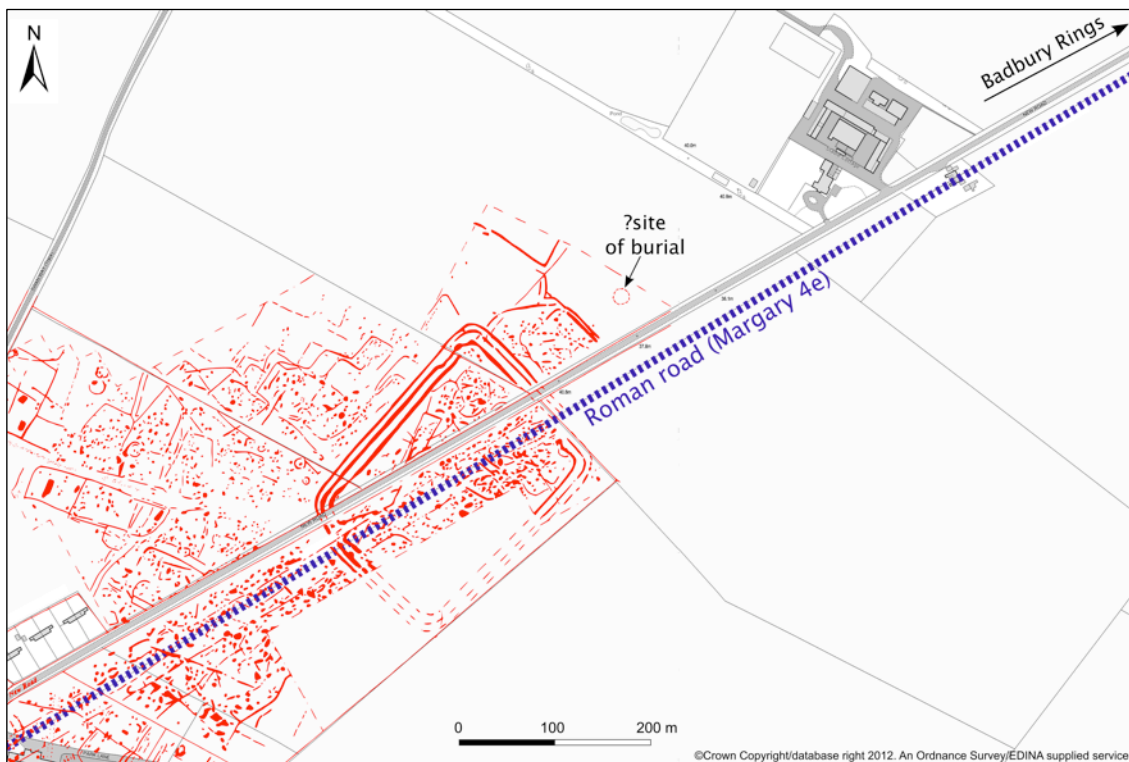


Fig. 7.1.21 Transcription of features from geophysical surveys at Shapwick, including part of the probable *Vindocladia* Roman settlement and fort (after M. Papworth *pers. comm.* 2013). The approximate location of the Shapwick burial site is also marked.

Excavations by Bournemouth University have recently revealed an extensive cemetery of probable post-Roman or early medieval date, adjacent to a large

Early Bronze Age barrow (denominated HLF 9), part of a wider barrow group at **High Lea Farm**, Hinton Martell, in the Allen valley in the southeast of the *pays* (Gale *et al.* 2008). The cemetery sits at 41m aOD on White Chalk, on the opposite side of the River Allen to the rest of the Cranborne Chase group. It lies 6.5km northeast of Shapwick and the same distance southeast of Long Crichel, and 4km southwest of the henge complex at Knowlton. The outlines of over 70 graves were revealed in plan in 2006, most of which were aligned broadly east-west and lay to the east and southeast of barrow HLF 9 (Fig. 7.1.22), although the full extent of the cemetery was not revealed. Many of the graves to the southeast of the barrow were also imposed on a smaller, probable Middle Bronze Age, ring-ditch, although Gale *et al.* (2008: 112) are doubtful that it was distinguishable in the post-Roman period, as the graves appear to cut it indiscriminately. The graves were densely packed and there was no evidence of inter-cutting (Gale *et al.* 2008: 112), implying well established funerary practices and a high degree of organisation and perhaps the marking of graves.

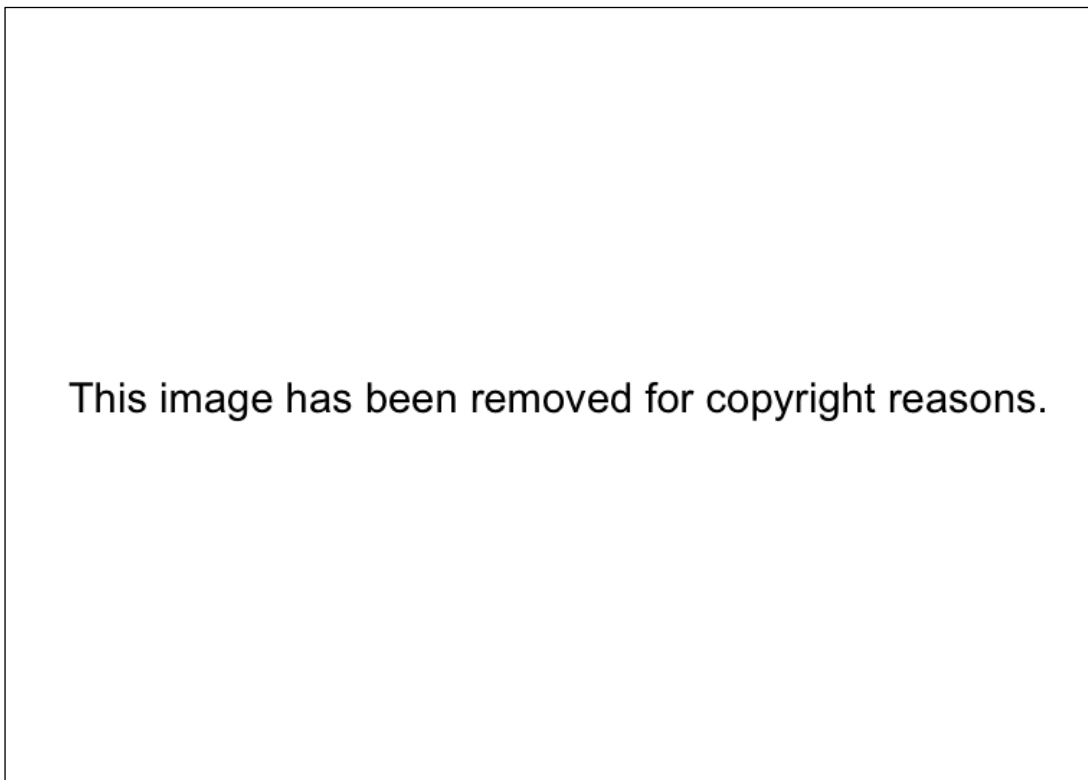


Fig. 7.1.22 Aerial view, looking northwest, of some of the probable post-Roman graves at High Lea Farm, centred on the small MBA ring-ditch. The main EBA barrow is above. The burial radiocarbon dated to the eighth century AD is located to the right of the area under excavation here, beneath the spoil heap (re-covered following excavation in previous seasons). Photo: © Bournemouth University and AerialCam, courtesy of John Gale.

Only two of the graves were excavated, each of which contained an unaccompanied supine extended adult. Sampling of an oak plank covering one of these burials produced a radiocarbon date of AD 723-740 at 95.4% probability (J. Gale *pers. comm.* 2013). Unstratified finds of an iron knife and spearhead elsewhere on the site may derive from a burial from close to the surface of the central part of HLF 9, destroyed by ploughing. The site also incorporated a Late Iron Age to Romano-British settlement complex. High Lea Farm, together with Shapwick, may indicate the presence of a funerary tradition in the lower lying chalk valleys of the southern periphery of Cranborne Chase which incorporates the appropriation of earlier barrows. With regard to the associative grouping of a cemetery around an earlier barrow, similarities can be noted with Storeys Meadow, Hampshire, although the burials at High Lea Farm are more consistently orientated and appear to lack grave-goods.

Another cemetery comprising at least 16 burials, some orientated east-west, was discovered in 1958, c. 4.5km northeast of High Lea Farm and in a very similar topographic position, at Knowlton, Woodlands (Field 1962). The cemetery is adjacent to the Neolithic–Bronze Age Knowlton Circles complex and Great Barrow. Although undated, the burials were interpreted ‘Middle-Late Saxon’ or later based on their orientation and proximity to Church Henge. Given the date obtained at High Lea Farm, the possibility remains that these too date from the period of study. They are perhaps, although not necessarily, associated with a precursor to the medieval church.

East Dorset Lowland and Heath

Although no conclusive funerary evidence dating from the period of study has yet been located in this *pays*, the potential for such discoveries should not be overlooked. A plain pot, possibly, but not necessarily, a cremation urn, was found in 1930 at a depth of 1-1.3m ‘in sand, resting on charcoal’ at Redhill, Canford Magna (in modern Bournemouth), close to the historic boundary with Hampshire (Eagles and Ager 2004: 92). Finds of ‘a dozen or so small pots with wide mouths and high shoulders’, possibly early medieval cremation urns, have also been made in West Walls, Wareham (RCHME 1970a: 323, 614). Five inscribed Romano-British architectural fragments, probably from a nearby villa, were discovered during the restoration of Wareham church in 1841-2. They

have been tentatively dated to the seventh-ninth century, and perhaps derive from a precursor burial ground to the minster which was in existence by the end of the eighth century (Hall 2000: 13; Yorke 1995: 69-70). Yorke (1995: 70) has argued that the memorial stones bear the names of 'prominent British Christians', commemorated in a 'traditional British manner after the official conquest of the area by "Anglo-Saxons"', and are another indication of the survival of a dominant 'Celtic' culture in the area. It has also been suggested (Hall 2000: 13) that the inclusion of the stones within the make-up of the church indicates a disregard for those commemorated, although their preservation *in situ* could equally imply the opposite.

Isle of Purbeck

Only two sites on the Purbeck peninsular have been artefactually or scientifically dated to the period of study, and can thus be included in the dataset (Fig. 7.1.23). A further five possible sites have also been located, however. These sites—Ballard Down I (Warne 1866: 72-3), Swanage Bay (Cherryson 2005b: 41-2) and Belle View Road (Cherryson 2005b: 41), all in Swanage; Smedmore Hill, Steeple (Farrar 1959); and Church Knowle (RCHME 1970b: 596)—lack dating evidence, but seem to belong to a distinctive sub-Roman group. Such burials are generally extended, aligned east-west, sometimes in cists, and unaccompanied (RCHME 1970a; Turner 2006: 134-5).

In 1949, three unfurnished cist graves were discovered during building work at Shepherd's Farm, **Ullwell**, in the parish of Swanage (Farrar 1949); in 1982, further graves were discovered through quarrying activity prior to building work at the farm, and excavations subsequently uncovered a cemetery, containing at least 57 extended inhumations in north-south rows of west-east graves (Cox 1988). Radiocarbon dates suggest that the cemetery was in use throughout the seventh century AD. The topography is steeply sloping, on the south-facing slope of Ballard Down (Fig. 7.1.24), which rises from 56 to 61m aOD within a short distance of the site. The cemetery lies 70m from the boundary with the parish of Studland, which follows the line of Ullwell Stream. The cemetery is underlain by Lower Greensand, although the graves were primarily cut into colluvial greensand and chalk deposits derived from eroding outcrops on Ballard Down (Cox 1988: 37).

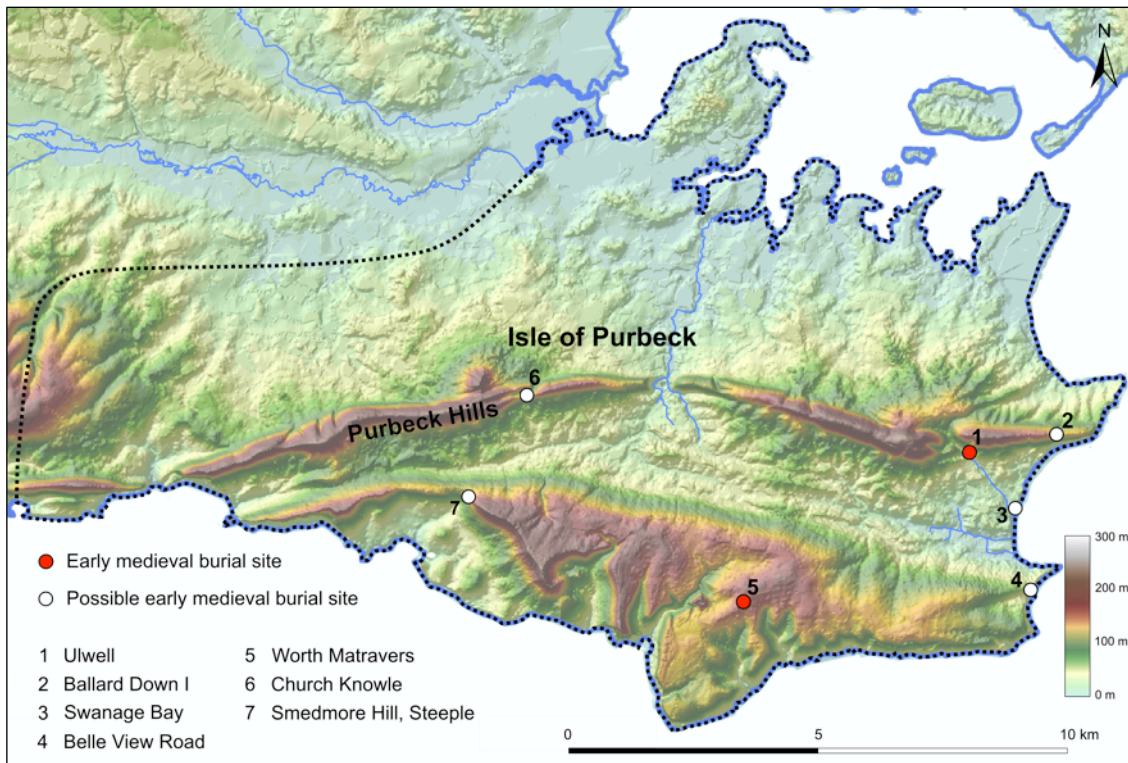


Fig. 7.1.23 Definite and possible ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites on the Isle of Purbeck overlain on terrain map (© Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

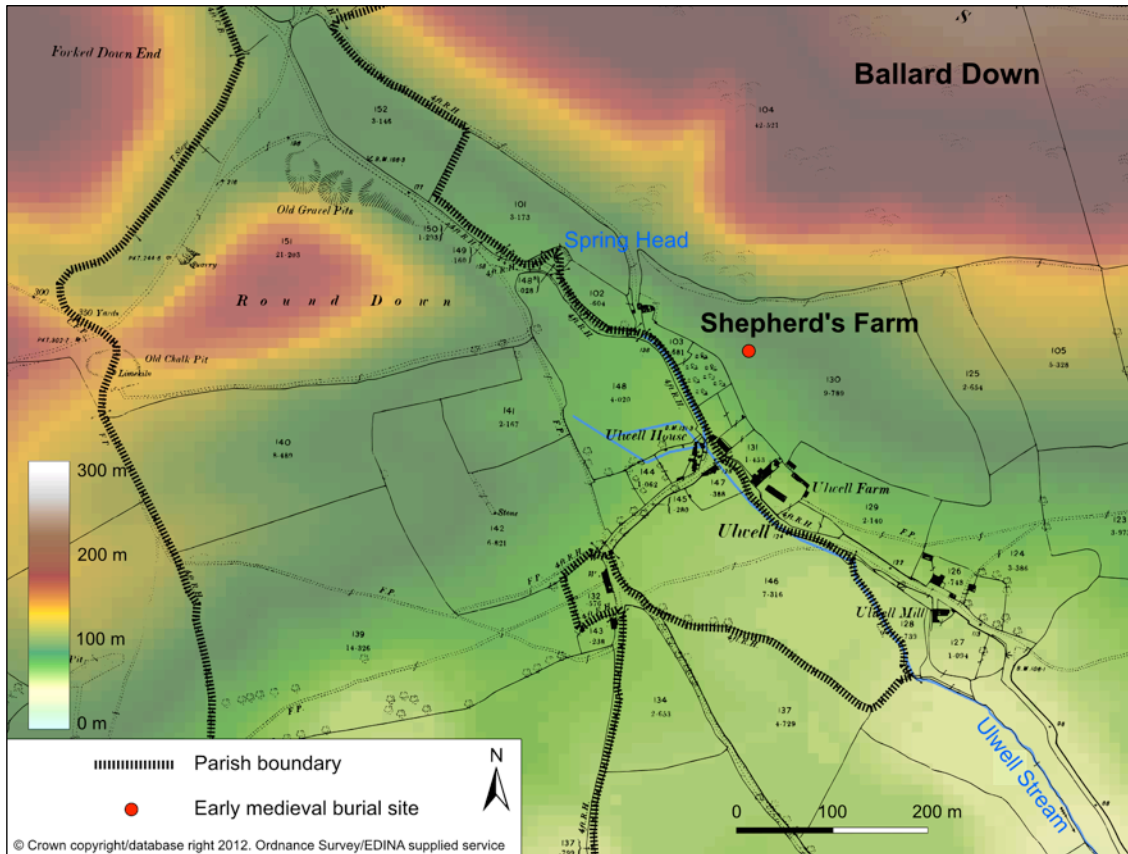


Fig. 7.1.24 First Edition OS map (1889) showing the burial site at Shepherd's Farm, Ulwell, overlain on terrain map.

The excavator divided the graves into four categories, ranging from plain earth graves (51%) to cist graves with walls and occasionally lids (24.5%); the remainder contained stone slabs at the head and feet, or only a rubble lining or kerb (Cox 1988: 37, 43). There was no significant disparity between the sex of individuals, and varying age groups were evenly represented. Scant information on pathologies was available due to poor preservation of skeletal remains (Cox 1988: 44). The occurrences of superimposition or reuse of graves seem to have been intentional, suggesting that they were marked in some way. Graves that are superimposed or reopened do not all appear to be 'special', however, and there seems to be no correlation between reopened or superimposed graves and sex, age, grave type or grave-goods.

The overall impression is that of an organised cemetery, in use over several generations, perhaps representing a static local community (Cox 1988: 45). The lack of any obvious indicators of Christianity, the lack of grave-goods and the uniformity of the west-east graves are all traits of the sub-Roman cemeteries characterised by Cannington in Somerset (Rahtz *et al.* 2000). The excavator refers to the reuse of a Roman roof tile (Cox 1988: 46), although it is not clear in what context this item was found; and a copper alloy Roman coin was also found in the upper fill of one of the graves (Cox 1988: 45), but this is likely to be residual. It is possible, however, that these materials were a conscious inclusion, as is thought to be the case at Caistor-by-Norwich in Norfolk, where flints and Roman tiles may have been deliberately placed over the inhumations to mark the graves (Myres and Green 1973), or at Monkton Deverell in Wiltshire, where graves in a cemetery close to a Roman road and a Romano-Celtic temple incorporated Roman masonry (Rawlings 1995; see Chapter 5.1).

Cox (1988: 46-7) claims that the large-scale quarrying and manufacturing in Purbeck during the Romano-British period 'may have enabled the survival into the seventh century of cultural affinities closer to the vestiges of the Roman world than with the Anglo-Saxon settlement of southern England'. A spring head lies at the foot of the chalk slope, 200m northwest of the cemetery (Fig. 7.1.24), and Ulwell is thought to derive from OE *ule* and *wella*, 'well or spring frequented by owls' (Mills 1977: 56). The toponymic allusion to this feature suggests that it held some significance, although the first recorded reference to the place-name is thirteenth-century. Aside from its practical importance, is

plausible that the spring may have been a focus for ritual. Springs and wells are known to have attracted ritual or religious activity, as attested by votive depositions, standing crosses and the application of Christian dedications to river crossings, springs and wells (Blair 2005: 477-8; Semple 2013: 72). The cemetery is also adjacent to one of only two natural passes through the Purbeck chalk ridge, another possible influencing factor in the choice of location (Cox 1988: 37).

Just under 6km southwest of Ulwell, a post-Roman cemetery, within a highly complex multi-phase site, was excavated in 2011 by the East Dorset Antiquarian Society (EDAS) in Football Field, **Worth Matravers**, in advance of the construction of an access road for a new housing development. Twenty-six east-west graves were uncovered, although the full extent of the cemetery was not revealed. The only artefact found in association with any of the burials was a small copper alloy buckle, dated typologically to *c.* AD 550 (Ladle *forthcoming*; Morgan 2011a; 2011b). Earlier features on the site include a Neolithic ditch, Bronze Age roundhouse, Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age midden, Roman barn, and evidence for the working of Kimmeridge shale in the Romano-British period (Ladle 2012). A Roman cemetery comprising 17 or 18 neo-natal and infant burials was also excavated. Post-Roman occupation was attested by the presence of ‘pie-crust’ pottery sherds (Morgan 2011a). Some of the grave linings were constructed of Roman roofing tiles and Purbeck limestone masonry (Ladle *forthcoming*), and in this respect, parallels can be drawn with Ulwell, and Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire (see Chapter 5.1). This also suggests that at least some of the buildings had gone out of use.

Blackmore Vale

This *pays* has yielded only one burial site which has been dated to the period of study. This is a predominantly low-lying pastoral area, in which features are less readily identified by aerial photography than on the chalk downland (Papworth 2011: 107). Excavations by Wessex Archaeology in 1997 in **Tinney’s Lane** on the eastern side of Sherborne in advance of housing development, uncovered a multi-period site, including four unaccompanied inhumations (Fig. 7.1.25), one of which—the north-south crouched burial of a *c.* 30-35 year-old female—was radiocarbon dated to AD 430-660, suggesting a mid-sixth-century date

(McKinley 1999a). The four graves were located close to each other and were of a similar form, initially suggesting contemporaneity. However, another crouched burial in Grave 125, 6m to the west of the early medieval burial, produced a calibrated radiocarbon date of 370 BC–AD 10, placing it in the Middle-Late Iron Age. Crouched burial is indeed common in the Iron Age of southwest England (Whimster 1981), while in ‘Early Saxon’ contexts, it is regarded as a less common but nevertheless widespread rite (Reynolds 2009: 63). It has been suggested (e.g. Eagles 1979: 46; Faull 1977: 9) that crouched burial may reflect a continuation of British practices, perhaps even representing an ethnic indicator in early medieval funerary contexts, although the apparent increased frequency of this rite in seventh- and eighth-century ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cemeteries in East Yorkshire indicates that it cannot be explained in such simple terms (Lucy 2000: 80, 172). The close proximity of the early medieval burial to the Iron Age grave and to the other two burials, as well as the lack of intercutting, suggests that the graves were marked in some way. It is possible that members of the early medieval individual’s family or community were making a statement of British identity by burying their dead close to their ancestors, although this is only conjecture.

The purported British origins of the religious centre of Sherborne are, then, of particular interest. Made an episcopal seat in 705 to administer the West Saxon territory west of Selwood, Sherborne became one of the most important ecclesiastical centres in Wessex, of which Aldhelm was the first bishop (Hall 2000: 11; Keen 1984: 208). Barker (1984: 5) argues that ‘early Sherborne cannot be seen merely as a place and a parish with an episcopal connection, but as an institution of which the bishopric was an outward expression, part of an established ecclesiastical order’. It had not been a Roman town, unlike nearby Ilchester, although this was not necessarily a prerequisite for the appointment of *sedes episcopales* in the eighth and ninth centuries (Keen 1984). A grant of ‘a hundred hides of *Lanprobi*’ was made by Cenwalh in 671, possibly for the establishment of a new cathedral, and it has been proposed that *Lanprobi* represented the site of an already established British church and Christian enclave at Sherborne. The place-name is thought to relate to the elements *lan* or *lann*—a common prefix in Cornwall and Wales meaning a cleared space or enclosure, in some cases containing a chapel or church—and

St Probus of Cornwall (Baring-Gould and Fisher 1913: 107; Barker 1977, 127; 1984; Finberg 1964; Keen 1984: 210; O'Donovan 1988). Barker (1984: 4) has identified a D-shaped enclosure in the centre of the town (Fig. 7.1.26), which she argues is a likely candidate for *Lanprobi*, as it 'corresponds closely to members of a class of planned ecclesiastical settlement of a type at present best exemplified in Ireland'. More recent research, however, has placed the site of *Lanprobi* at the Old Castle, as the rectilinear formation of Sherborne's streets suggests a planned layout, built afresh at a distance from the monastery (Hall 2000: 53).

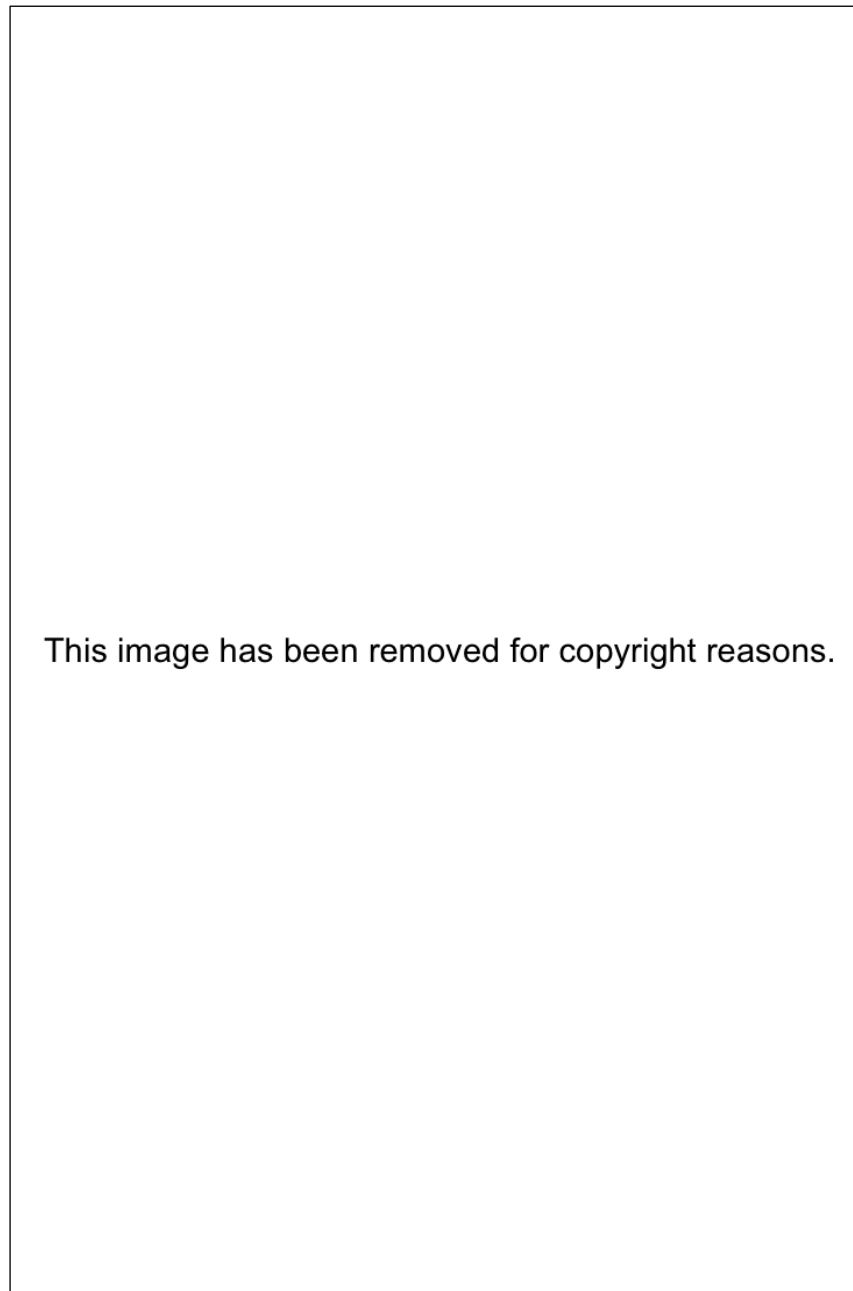


Fig. 7.1.25 Tinney's Lane excavated area (after McKinley 1999a: 55). Early medieval Grave 14 is marked in red, while the other graves are marked 12, 17 and 125.

Another burial site in this *pays* which may date from the period of study, but lacks dating evidence, is at Langham, just under 3km west of the centre of Gillingham (NMR ST 72 NE 8). Over 100 extended inhumations, all with the heads to the west, were found during limestone quarrying in 1868. The only items recovered were two brooches and a few sherds of 'rough pottery' (RCHME 1972: 35-6), and similarities have been noted between this site and sub-Roman cemeteries in Somerset (RCHME 1972: xxvi-xxvii).

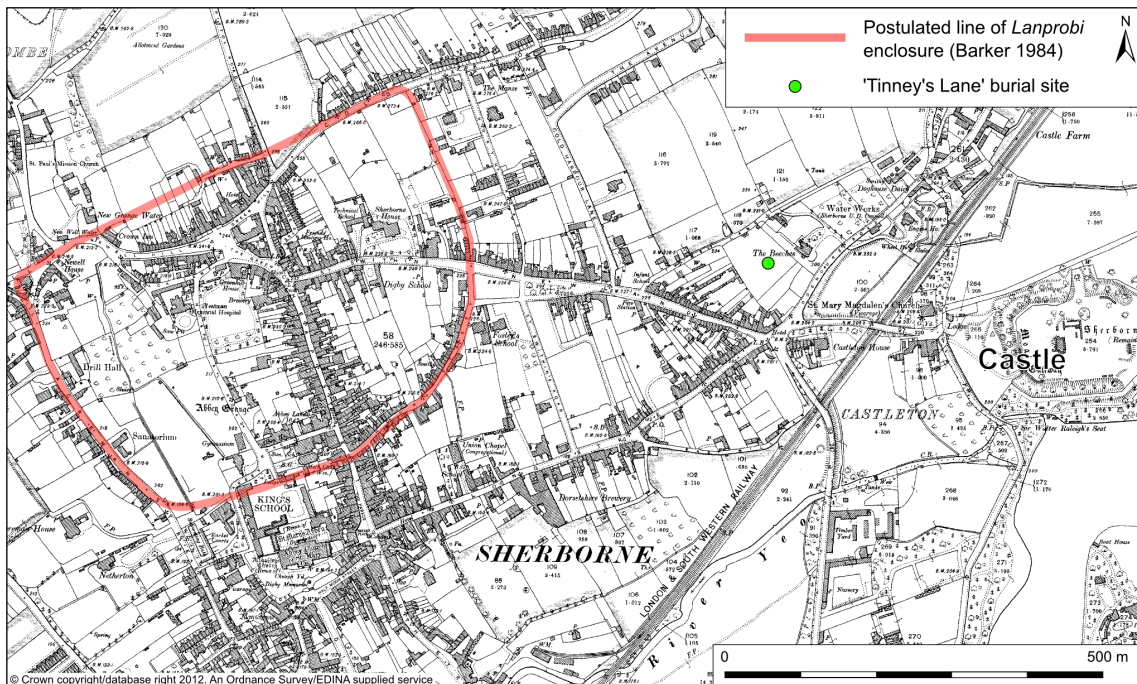


Fig. 7.1.26 The potential site of *Lanprobi* as proposed by Barker (1984), the Old Castle, and Tinney's Lane burial site.

Central Chalk Downlands

After Cranborne Chase, this *pays* has contributed the second largest number of burial sites to the Dorset dataset (Fig. 7.1.27). Eight sites have been discovered here, through a combination of antiquarian fieldwork, research investigation and development-led intervention. Five of these lie within a couple of kilometres of Dorchester, an area characterised by a greater intensity of modern development in comparison with the rest of Dorset. This area also incorporates two of the county's most iconic archaeological monuments: the Iron Age hillfort of Maiden Castle, and Mount Pleasant henge. While the discovery of early medieval burials at Maiden Castle resulted from extensive research excavations (Sharples 1991; Wheeler 1943), investigations at sites like Mount Pleasant

(Wainwright 1979), Poundbury (Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 1987), Trumpet Major (Green 1984) and Bradford Peverell (Hawthorne and Pinder 1989) were instigated in response to the risk of damage or destruction by industrial or residential development, or by ploughing.

East of the Piddle

The easternmost site in the Central Chalk Downlands group, **Tolpuddle Ball**, Tolpuddle, is situated c. 12km east of the county town, on the east-facing slope of a ridge between the River Piddle and Bere Stream, at c. 84m aOD. A late Roman and early medieval cemetery was excavated in 1998 in advance of construction work relating to the A35 Tolpuddle to Puddletown bypass scheme. The graves were arranged in a fairly regimented layout, predominantly west-east with heads to the west, and contained c. 50 inhumations (Fig. 7.1.28; Hearne and Birbeck 1999: 226-7, 229). No *in situ* grave-goods were recovered. On the basis of the date of Burial 5198 (cal. AD 250-450 at 95% probability), the cemetery seems to have been established in the fourth or fifth century AD. C14 dates for four other burials ranged across the later sixth and seventh centuries AD, which may represent the main period of use (Hearne and Birbeck 1999: 227). Although continuity of use through the period c. AD 400-700 cannot be taken for granted, the coherent grouping of the individuals raises the probability that this was the case.

The southern edge of the cemetery is skirted by the boundary with the parish of Affpuddle, and between the hundreds of Puddletown (in which it lies) and Bere (Regis). The graves are on the same alignment as the boundary, suggesting that it predates the burials. Two Bronze Age ditches were also discovered, one of which runs in a north-south direction through the cemetery, whilst another appears to separate a grave in the southeast corner of the cemetery [5139] from the rest of the graves. Another grave [5134] cut both of these ditches which may suggest that these prehistoric features were not discernible or of any significance. The cemetery displayed no positively Christian features, and the excavators argue that it seems more strongly *non-pagan* than *positively Christian* (Hearne and Birbeck 1999: 228). It is similar in many respects to Ulwell, as Hearne and Birbeck (1999: 229) have noted.

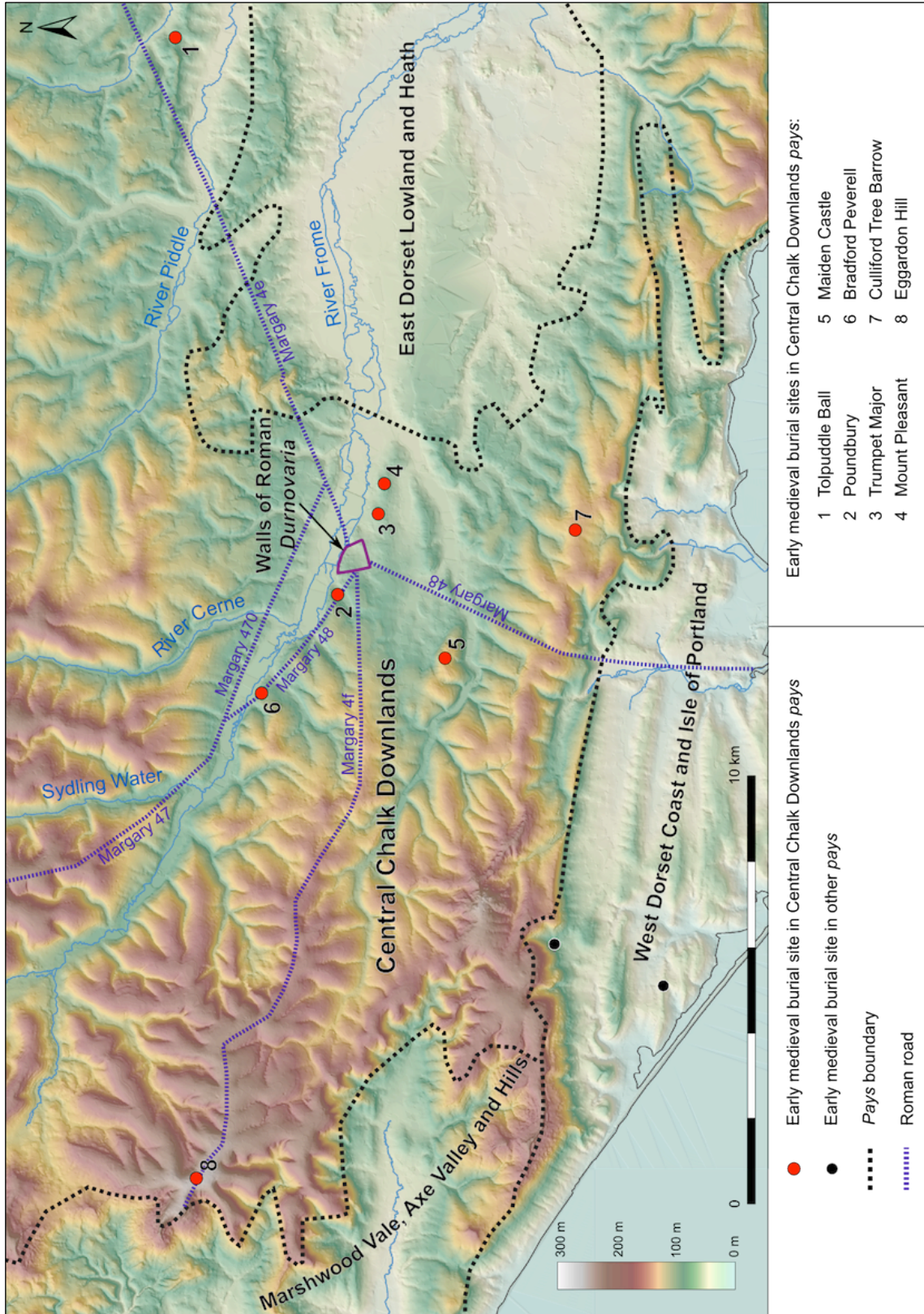


Fig. 7.1.27 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Central Chalk Downslands pays (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

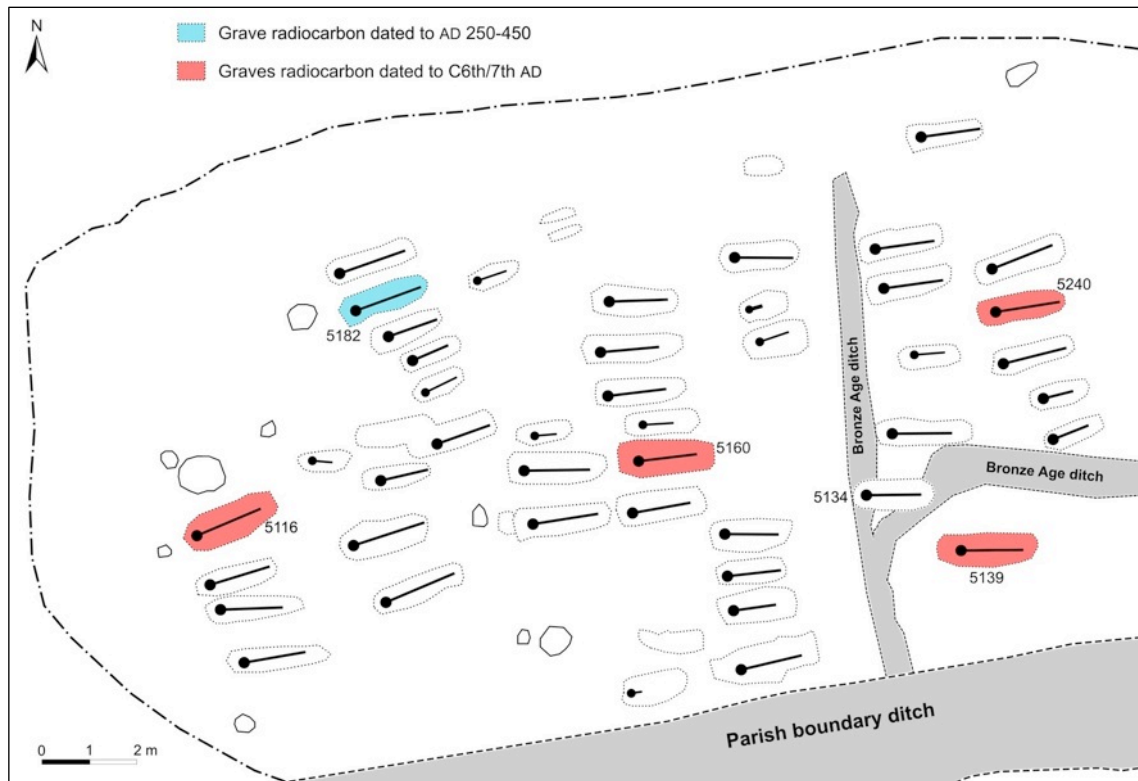


Fig. 7.1.28 Tolpuddle Ball cemetery plan (after Hearne and Birbeck 1999: Fig. 29), with schematic representations of burial orientation.

Dorchester area

Excavations between the 1960s and 1980s at **Poundbury**, on the northwestern outskirts of modern Dorchester, have revealed a highly complex multi-period site, with features including Neolithic pits, Bronze Age timber structures, Iron Age hillfort and settlement enclosures, Roman buildings, aqueduct and possible temple (Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 1987). A burial area founded in the third century AD was superseded by the main late Roman inhumation cemetery, which was in use throughout the fourth century and incorporated well over a thousand burials. In the fifth century, following the disuse of the late Roman cemetery, the hillfort was reoccupied and refortified, and the temple may also have been adapted for continued religious use. Fifteen post-Roman buildings and other structures were also identified (Green 1987: 71).

Only three burials certain to date from the post-Roman or early medieval period could be identified, in Area E of the excavations (Fig. 7.1.29). Grave 1188 was located in the ditch of a sixth- or seventh-century AD enclosure (PR13), and is thought to postdate it, while Graves 512 and 1341 cut ditches relating to sixth- or seventh-century enclosure PR5 and fifth-century structure PR11 respectively

(Farwell and Molleson 1993: 83). Further burials may also be later than post-Roman features, but this has not been securely determined.

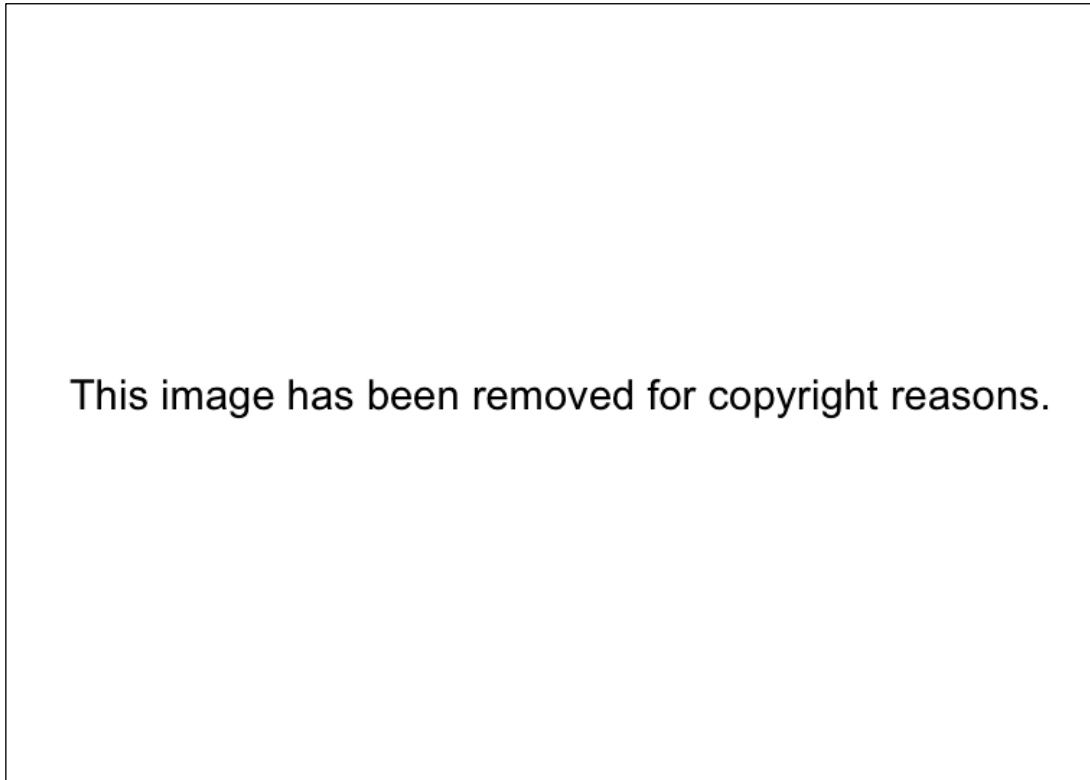


Fig. 7.1.29 The hillfort, aqueduct, and other features at Poundbury, with the general location of the post-Roman burials marked in red (after Farwell and Molleson 1993: Fig. 1).

Just over 2km southeast of Poundbury, on the eastern edge of Dorchester, another post-Roman cemetery was located in the 1890s, during the construction of a villa which was later converted into the **Trumpet Major** public house. Alongside prehistoric settlement features and other earthworks were two groups of inhumation burials, both originally thought to be Roman (Banks 1893). The first group consisted of five burials, one of which was accompanied by a knife; the second group comprised four burials with a range of grave-goods including silver rings, glass beads, a further knife and a bone comb (Green 1984). Re-examination of the finds revealed them to be early medieval, probably seventh-century. Christopher Sparey Green (1984: 151) has speculated that the regular southwest-northeast alignment of the first group of graves was perhaps influenced by the presence of a routeway leading out of *Durnovaria* towards Purbeck to the southeast. Green (1984: 151) also

suggested that Bronze Age barrows are likely to have occupied this ridge, given the proximity of Conquer Barrow and Two Barrows.

Seven hundred metres east of the Trumpet Major, along the same ridge, **Mount Pleasant**, a henge enclosure which possesses morphological similarities with Avebury, was excavated by Geoffrey Wainwright in 1970-71 (Wainwright 1979). The main earthwork enclosure, which measures c. 370m west-east and c. 320m north-south, was constructed in the early-to-mid third millennium BC. Site IV, a complex timber and sarsen structure measuring c. 43m in diameter and located within the main enclosure, was constructed in the later centuries of the same millennium, and is partly overlain by an Iron Age roundhouse and a rectangular enclosure of probable Romano-British date.

The excavations revealed two discrete inhumation graves just under 100m apart (Fig. 7.1.30). Grave 1 lay near the western entrance of the main enclosure and contained the inhumation burial of an elderly male, extended with the head to the west-southwest, accompanied by a small iron knife and a corroded iron buckle. Grave 185 partly cut the ditch fill of Site IV and contained the apparently unaccompanied extended skeleton of a young adult female (c. 17-25 years), with the head to the west. On the southern side of this latter grave was a packing of large flints and one sarsen, while at the northern end of the grave lay two flints and two sarsens. The flint lining of Grave 185 is reminiscent of that of the seventh-century graves at Long Cichel (see above). Schweiso (in Wainwright 1979: 181-3) interpreted both of the inhumations as seventh-century on the basis of the finds from Grave 1, and their similarity with the Maiden Castle burials (see below). The appropriation of henge monuments or megalithic sites for early medieval burial is rare, however. No radiocarbon dates for the burials were obtained, and Semple (2013: 41) has remarked that they are unconvincing on closer inspection.

The Mount Pleasant burials were located at 75m aOD, 350m south of the River Frome, on the ridge of a spur which projects into the valleys of the Frome and its tributary, the South Winterbourne, which also surrounds Maiden Castle to the west. The henge enclosure lies in the parish of West Stafford, although the boundary with Fordington (in the modern civil parish of Dorchester) skirts its western perimeter.

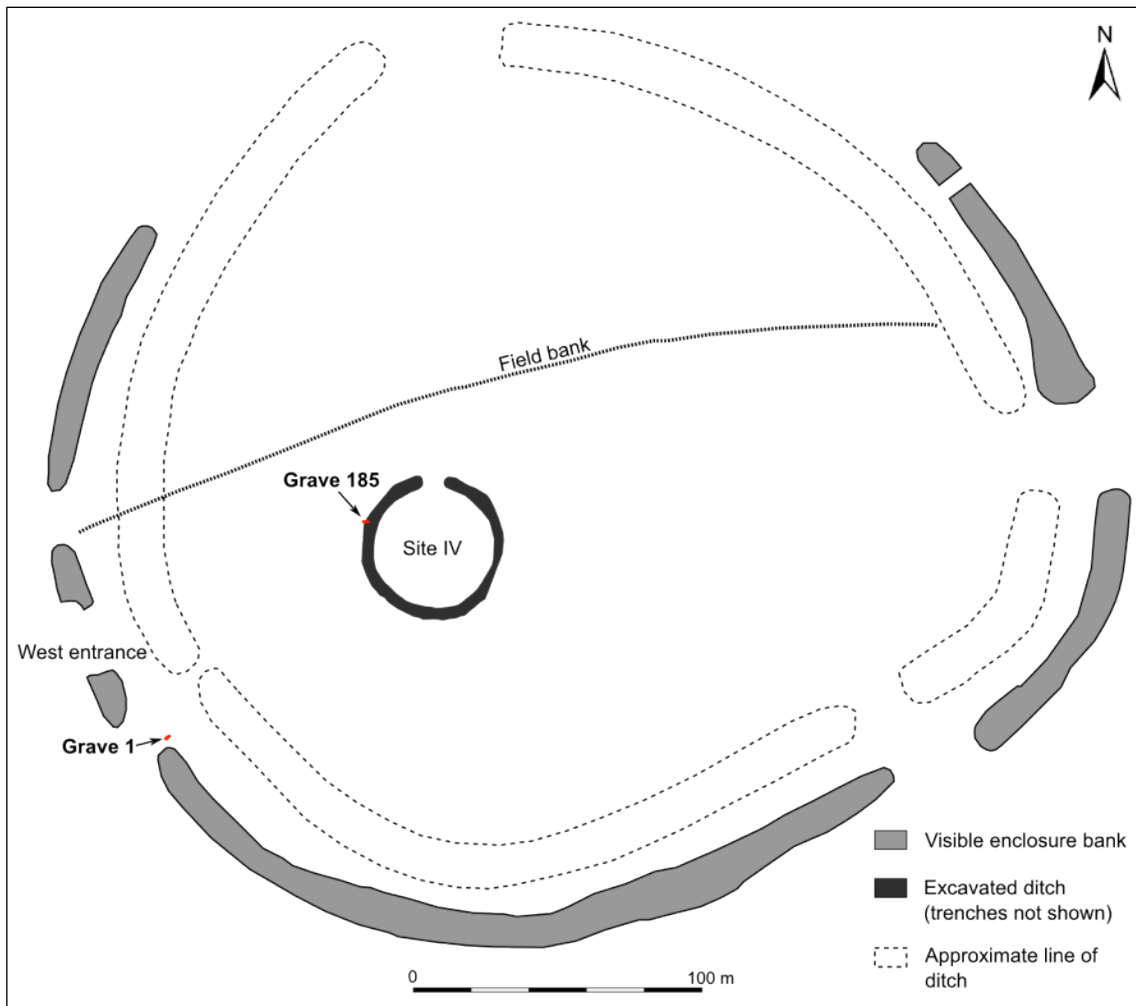


Fig. 7.1.30 Mount Pleasant (after Wainwright 1979: Fig. 3), with the locations of the early medieval graves also marked.

On the opposite side of Dorchester to Mount Pleasant, excavations at **Maiden Castle** by Mortimer Wheeler revealed two burials that are both now thought to date to the early medieval period (Wheeler 1943). Both of these graves lay at the eastern end of the bank barrow which runs across the centre of the hillfort on a west-east orientation. The burials were separated by a distance of c. 18m, and were situated 30-35m south of a Romano-Celtic temple (Fig. 7.1.31). The corpse interred in the westernmost burial (Q1), which lay 21m from the east end of the bank barrow, had been mutilated and dismembered and was apparently unaccompanied. Originally thought to date to the Neolithic, radiocarbon dating of the skeleton produced a date ranging from between the seventh and ninth centuries AD (Brothwell 1971). The individual was described as a 25- to 35-year-old male, and although the elbow, knee and ankle joints were in articulation, in Wheeler's (1943: 21) opinion, the limbs and head had been 'roughly hacked from the body shortly after death, and three fruitless attempts

had been made to obtain access to the brain by circular incisions'. Brothwell (1971: 237), however, dismisses Wheeler's assertion that the injuries to the head represent attempts at post-mortem trepanation or decapitation, as they are too dispersed. He contends that there is likely to have been 'intentional hacking at the body with a sharp weapon in order to remove the lower arms, the thighs, and the lower legs', while other injuries might be 'combat wounds or unplanned adventitious mutilation'. Although the blows to the head could have been fatal, it is difficult to determine whether the individual was dismembered before or after death.

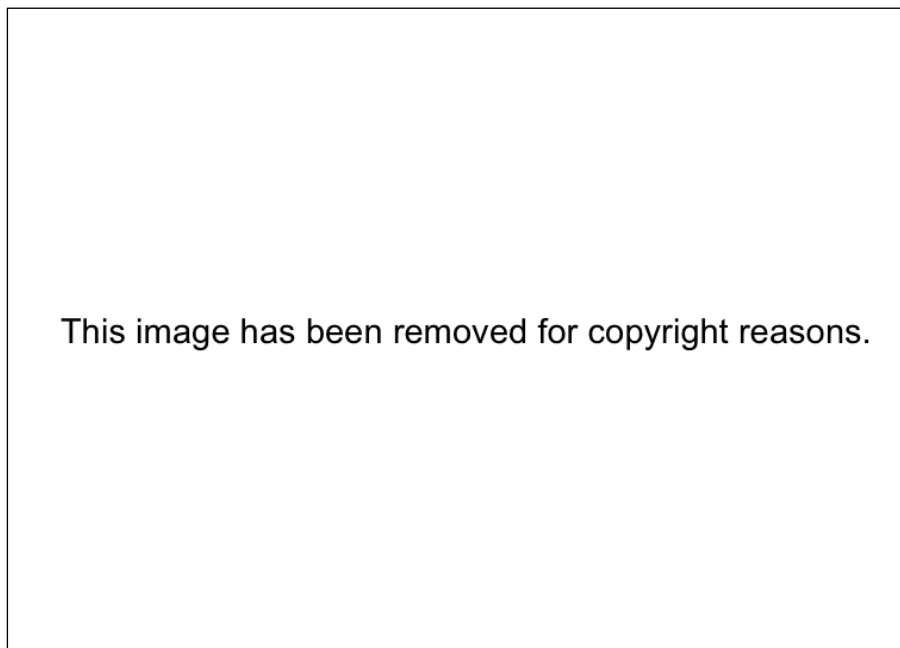


Fig. 7.1.31 Schematic plan of Maiden Castle earthworks, showing Wheeler's (1943) trenches (after Sharples 1991: Fig. 45), and the location of early medieval burials.

The other individual (Q7) was described by Wheeler (1943: 78) as a 'strongly built man in the prime of life' with a Frankish scramasax and knife, probably dating from the first half of seventh century, as well as fragments of belt fittings. Wheeler (1943: 78) comments that this 'solitary hill-top burial, within the shadow of the Roman temple, is unlikely to represent more than some band of pioneers or brigands who may have sheltered momentarily in the ruins and there have interred a casualty in a clumsy and shallow grave'. Three late Roman burials were also excavated by Wheeler in the centre of the hillfort between the ditches, and Sharples (1991: 152) found two further possible late Roman child burials 30m to the north. The temple is no earlier than AD 379, as its floor sealed fourth-century coins including one of Theodosius (Wheeler 1943: 75).

Maiden Castle lies in the ecclesiastical parish of Winterborne St Martin, which was composed of three settlements: Rew in the west, Martinstown in the centre, and Ashton in the east (Thorn and Thorn 1983: 55). As Ashton Farm lies at the foot of the southern slope of the hillfort, it is likely that the land within it belonged to the Manor of Ashton. While Martinstown and Rew belonged to the Domesday hundred of Dorchester, Ashton was originally in Cullifordtree (Thorn and Thorn 1983: note 55,1, appendix). It can thus be surmised that the boundary between the Cullifordtree and Dorchester hundreds lay to the west of the hillfort.

More elaborately furnished than the other sites discussed in the Central Chalk Downlands thus far, and the most explicitly 'Anglo-Saxon' in identity, is the seventh- and eighth-century cemetery at **Bradford Peverell**, just under 3km northwest of Poundbury along the Roman road towards *Lindinis* (Ilchester) (Fig. 7.1.32). Eight inhumations were found during the construction of a patio in Frome View in 1977, and excavations over the following two years and throughout the 1980s revealed ten further burials, although the full extent of the cemetery has not been determined (Hawthorne and Pinder 1989). The shallow graves, at least seven of which were orientated west-east, were arranged in rows. Eleven had grave-goods, including knives, buckles, a spearhead, silvered bronze 'purse-mount', necklace with glass beads, biconical gold bead, triangular cabochon and silver disc pendants, bone combs and a hanging bowl (Geake 1995: 503). Post-holes and large flints, possibly relating to above-ground grave markers, were found in some of the graves.

The site lies at 90m aOD on the northeast-facing slope of a spur of Penn Hill overlooking the River Frome, adjacent to the probable course of the Roman road and under 100m from the course of the Roman aqueduct. This strong association with prominent aspects of the Roman landscape contrasts with the apparent 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural identity of the grave-goods, although it is possible that the hanging bowl and some items of jewellery are reused Roman pieces. The cemetery also lies 150m from a spring, which may have had ritual connotations, as previously mentioned for Ulwell.

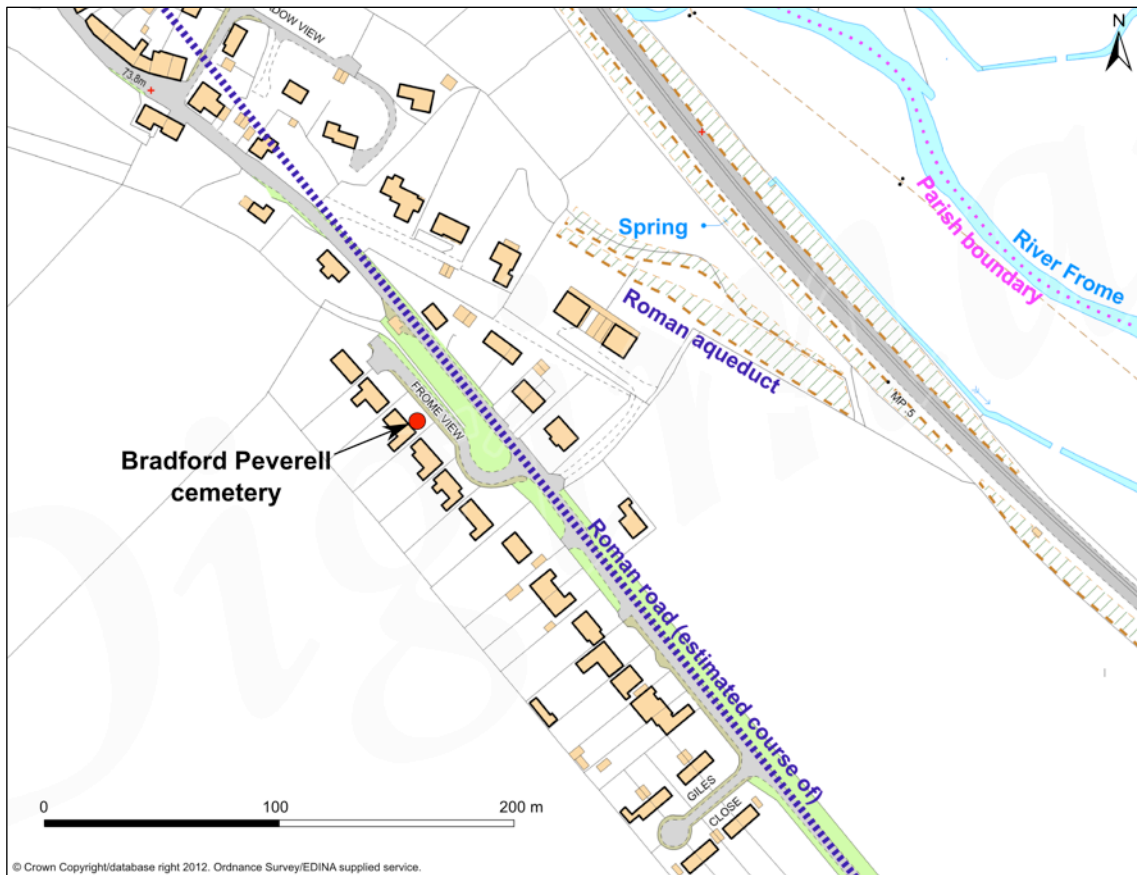


Fig. 7.1.32 Bradford Peverell early medieval cemetery and Roman features.

Southern chalk ridge

On the chalk ridge approximately 4km to the south of Dorchester in the parish of Whitcombe, a bowl barrow known as **Culliford Tree Barrow**, or the ‘Hundred Barrow of Culliford Tree’, was opened in the autumn of 1858, revealing four extended inhumations ‘stacked’ on top of one another (Warne 1866: 18-9). Warne’s account of the excavation, based on information supplied by Rev. W. Barnes (although it is not clear whether either party was present at the event) is as follows:

The barrow was one of large size, and bowl shape, and was opened on its south west side ... at a shallow depth, a skeleton was found extended, with its face towards the East ... the remains of three other individuals were disturbed, each lying in the same position as the first, and the whole placed vertically, or overlying each one the other, with about eighteen inches of earth intervening between them respectively. At the neck of one of the bodies, that of a female, were the beads of a necklace, apparently amber, and of a spherical form, with the exception of two, which were cylindrical in shape, with gold plates on their bases

... The amber beads with the gold plating indicate a period of time far later than that of the tumuli of the district, which are in general of the most remote age.

Approximately 1m below these burials was an Early Bronze Age collared urn containing ashes, calcined human bones, and a small pottery accessory vessel. The jewellery associated with the female burial does not appear to survive, and although Piggott (1938: 102) included the barrow in a list of Early Bronze Age 'Wessex graves', particularly due to the presence of gold and amber, an 'Early–Middle Saxon' date is also plausible. The barrow lies less than 50m from the boundary with the parish of Winterborne Came, in the centre of Cullifordtree hundred, to which it appears to have given its name, making the barrow the probable candidate for the Domesday hundred meeting place (Mills 1977: 196; Thorn and Thorn 1983).

A large bank barrow lies 300m to southeast of Culliford Tree Barrow, in Broadmayne (NMR SY 78 NW 7). While the bank barrow at Maiden Castle may have provided a marker to the control of the territory and resource of the Frome River and surrounding valley streams, the bank barrow at Broadmayne perhaps delineated the long barrows, territory and resource in the eastern Ridgeway, to the south of the Winterbourne and in the coastal zone (Woodward 1991: 131). Culliford Tree Barrow is located close to the ridge-top, which is followed by the South Dorset Ridgeway, under 3km east of the tenth- or early-eleventh-century Viking mass grave discovered by Oxford Archaeology on Ridgeway Hill in 2009 (Loe *et al.* 2014). It is possible that an early medieval routeway, perhaps a *herepað*, followed the ridge-top, although no charter bounds for estates in this area survive to potentially verify this.

Western limits of the chalk

On the western fringes of the *pays*, excavations in 1982 by Dorset Institute of Higher Education of a round barrow close to the highest point on the ridge (252m aOD), to the southeast of the hillfort on **Eggardon Hill**, uncovered 3 west-east unfurnished extended burials in separate parallel graves (Putnam 1982; 1983). The remarkable similarities in layout with the Long Crichel graves have been noted (Cherryson 2005a: 181). Radiocarbon dating of the burials produced a seventh- to tenth-century date for the burials (AD 640-980 at 95.4% probability) (Cherryson 2005b: 24-5). A Bronze Age cremation urn was also

found at the edge of the barrow. The main focus of the excavations was the Roman road from Dorchester to Exeter which runs along the ridge, and by which the barrow had been cut. The road carried slight traces of central traffic ruts, and was in a good state of preservation, with no signs of repairs or resurfacing (Putnam 1982: 181).

A small prehistoric or early Roman earthwork enclosure had also been cut by the ditch of the Roman road, which passed through an opening in a pre-existing cross-ridge dyke, and traces of strip ploughing preceding the known open field pattern of Askerswell were found to run parallel with the road (Putnam 1982: 181). The barrow lies on the boundary between the parishes of Askerswell, Powerstock and West Compton, and between the hundreds of Eggardon and 'Modbury' (to which West Compton belonged). The name of the former hundred may suggest that the hillfort or nearby mound, possibly this barrow, was a hundred meeting place. The seventh- to tenth-century date produced by radiocarbon dating may mean that these boundaries were already in place when the interments were made. The burials may be of a similar date as those found in Bevis Grave long barrow in Hampshire, and both of these sites suggest a persistence of the practice of secondary barrow burial well into the conversion period and possibly beyond, although this is by no means 'the norm' (Cherryson 2005a: 186).

West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland

Two burial sites dating from the period of study have been discovered in this *pays* (Fig. 7.1.33). South of the Central Chalk Downlands, the gently undulating limestone and clay landscape around Portland and Chesil Beach was an area of relatively high population density at Domesday, supported by the abundance of exploitable natural resources (Darby 1967: 92-3). Although no particularly large individual settlements are recorded, the population density of over ten per square mile and the high plough-team density are indicative that the area was comparatively prosperous (Darby 1967: 99). Two possible minster sites have also been proposed by Hall (2000: 19-20), at Portesham and Abbotsbury.

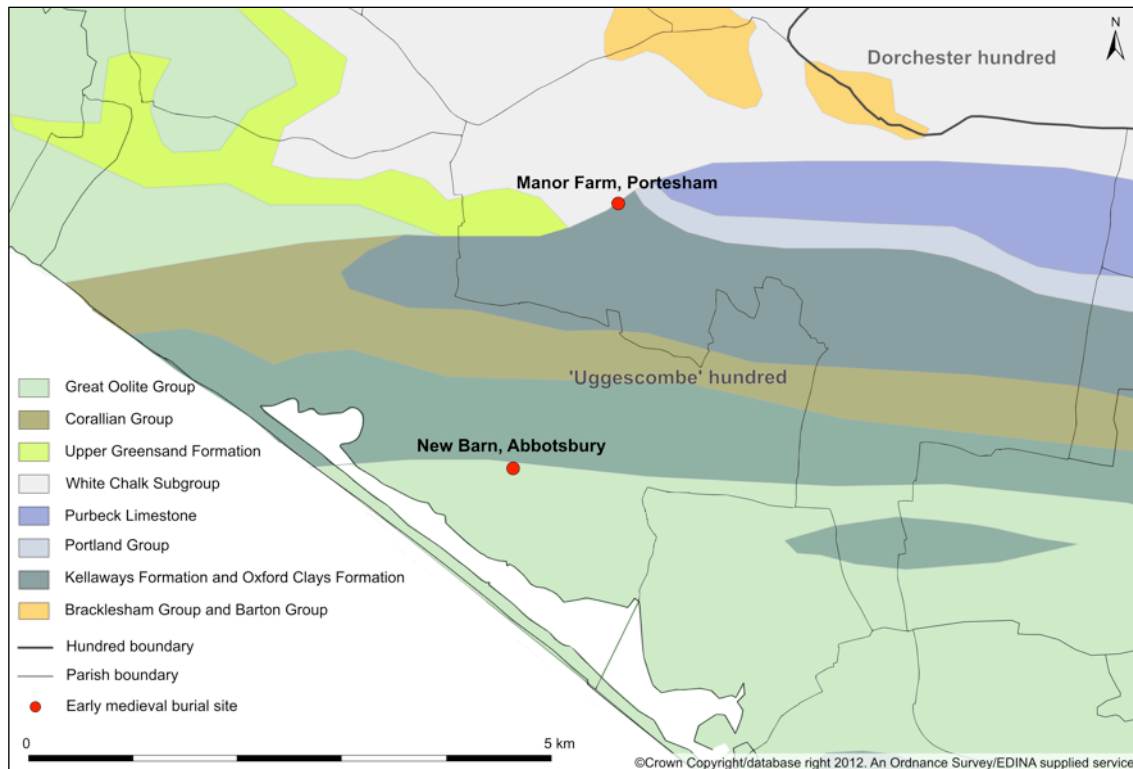


Fig. 7.1.33 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the West Dorset and Isle of Portland *pays*, and simplified bedrock geology.

A significant multi-period site, including a group of post-Roman burials, was discovered in 2000 during development-led excavations at **Manor Farm, Portesham** (Valentin 2000; 2003). Settlement and funerary activity from the Middle Bronze Age onwards were identified, including Iron Age storage pits and Durotrigan burials. A circular structure with stone foundations, dating to the beginning of the Roman period, may represent a temple or shrine.² The post-Roman burials, which lay c. 50m to the south of this structure, comprised at least eight extended west-east adults and an infant. Four of the adults were in three discrete graves, while four lay within a pit, perhaps a form of 'family vault' (Valentin 2003: 56). One of the individual graves contained a saw, and all of the burials were associated with residual Iron Age or Roman pottery. Two of the skeletons from the pit were radiocarbon dated to AD 580–660 and 640–770 (95.4% probability). There was osteological evidence that one of the adults in the pit and one found in a separate grave were related, suggesting that the burials are all broadly contemporary (Valentin 2003: 56).

² Circular Romano-Celtic temples are also attested at Maiden Castle and at Hayling Island, Hampshire (Valentin 2003: 51).

Despite an apparent hiatus in occupation during the second and third centuries AD, Manor Farm seems to have been a longstanding site of ritual or religious activity, perhaps focused on a natural spring immediately to the north (Fig. 7.1.34; Valentin 2003: 65). It is situated close to the foot of a south-facing escarpment and the interface between Kimmeridge Clay and White Chalk bedrock, adjacent to a probable drove route leading up onto the downland.

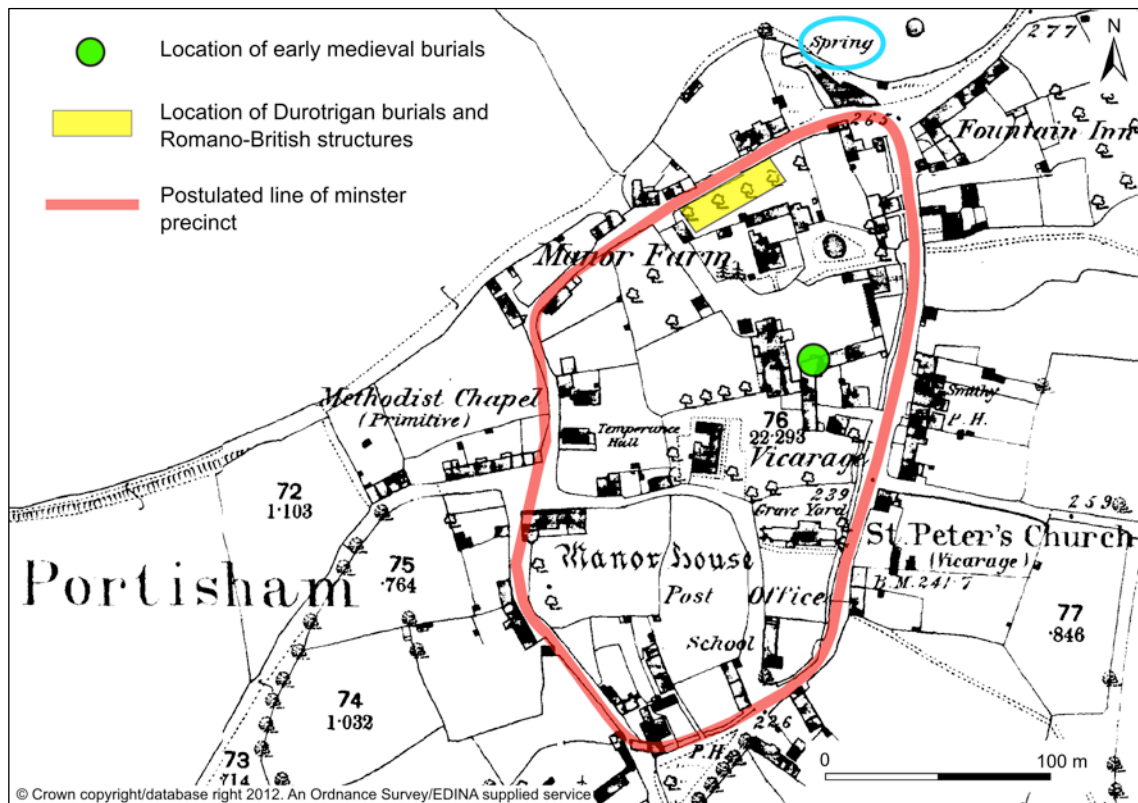


Fig. 7.1.34 Post-Roman and Durotrigan burials, Roman structures, postulated line of ecclesiastical enclosure, and natural spring, at Manor Farm, Portesham.

As noted above, Portesham has been proposed as a possible minster site, perhaps superseded by Abbotsbury in the 'Late Saxon' period. Ditches containing large amounts of 'Saxo-Norman' pottery found at Manor Farm may relate to a minster precinct surrounding the site (see Fig. 7.1.34; Valentin 2003: 60-1). Although the early medieval burials may be associated with the minster, the radiocarbon dates suggest that they predate the period in which minsters were founded in Dorset (Hall 2000: 2; Valentin 2003: 61). The curvilinear rather than rectilinear shape of the possible enclosure does, however, suggest a more organic development, rather than a planned layout (Hall 2000: 72). This may indicate that Portesham was a 'British' monastic site, perhaps later a dependent chapel of a minster.

A few kilometres south of Portesham, a probable bowl barrow opened in the 1870s at **New Barn, Abbotsbury**, was found to contain 'several' cist burials, said to be 'curiously huddled together' and perhaps superimposed; the burials were accompanied by spearheads, a knife, dress pins, a ring and a 'lady's case for nick-nacks' (Penny 1877). Potsherds found close to the surface, in one case associated with cremated bone, may represent secondary cremations of Bronze Age or early medieval date (Grinsell 1959: 85). The site lies on limestone of the Great Oolite Group, at an altitude of approximately 50m aOD, on the north-facing false crest of a west-east ridge known as Walls Down. The West Fleet and the English Channel are visible to the southwest, while the view to the south is obscured by another limestone ridge parallel to Walls Down. Although the antiquarian account does not include sufficient detail to allow any conclusive judgements, an early medieval date seems highly likely. The grave-goods seem to culturally 'Anglo-Saxon', and although the use of cists is also common in the sub-Roman tradition, it is not necessarily indicative of cultural affiliation. As Cherryson (2005a: 323) has observed, although the presence of stone-lined graves is primarily confined to the western part of Wessex, this can be attributed to the availability of raw materials: the limestone bedrock provides a ready source of workable stone.

Marshwood Vale, Axe Valley and Hills

One burial site dating from the period of study has been located in this *pays*, on **Hardown Hill**, Whitchurch Canonicorum, on the western fringes of the county (Fig. 7.1.35). At 207m aOD, the summit of Hardown is the highest point within the Chideock Hills. In 1916, rabbit erosion revealed a collection of early medieval finds from within one of a group of barrows near the top of the hill (Fig. 7.1.36). A depression was noted in the top of the mound, perhaps indicating the collapse of an internal burial cist (Wingrave 1932). The objects discovered included ten spearheads, an axehead, a knife, a shield boss and a brooch (Fig. 7.1.37). A reappraisal of the finds by Evison (1968) suggests that the deposition of the objects was made between the middle of the fifth and the middle of the sixth century, although she cautions that 'as there may have been six or more graves, the actual time range could be considerable'. No human remains were found, but the acidity of the soils produced by the weathering of the chert

bedrock may have precluded the survival of bone. It has also been suggested, however, that the finds could represent a hoard or votive offering rather than being funerary in nature (Green 1984: 152; Semple 2013: 80, 249).

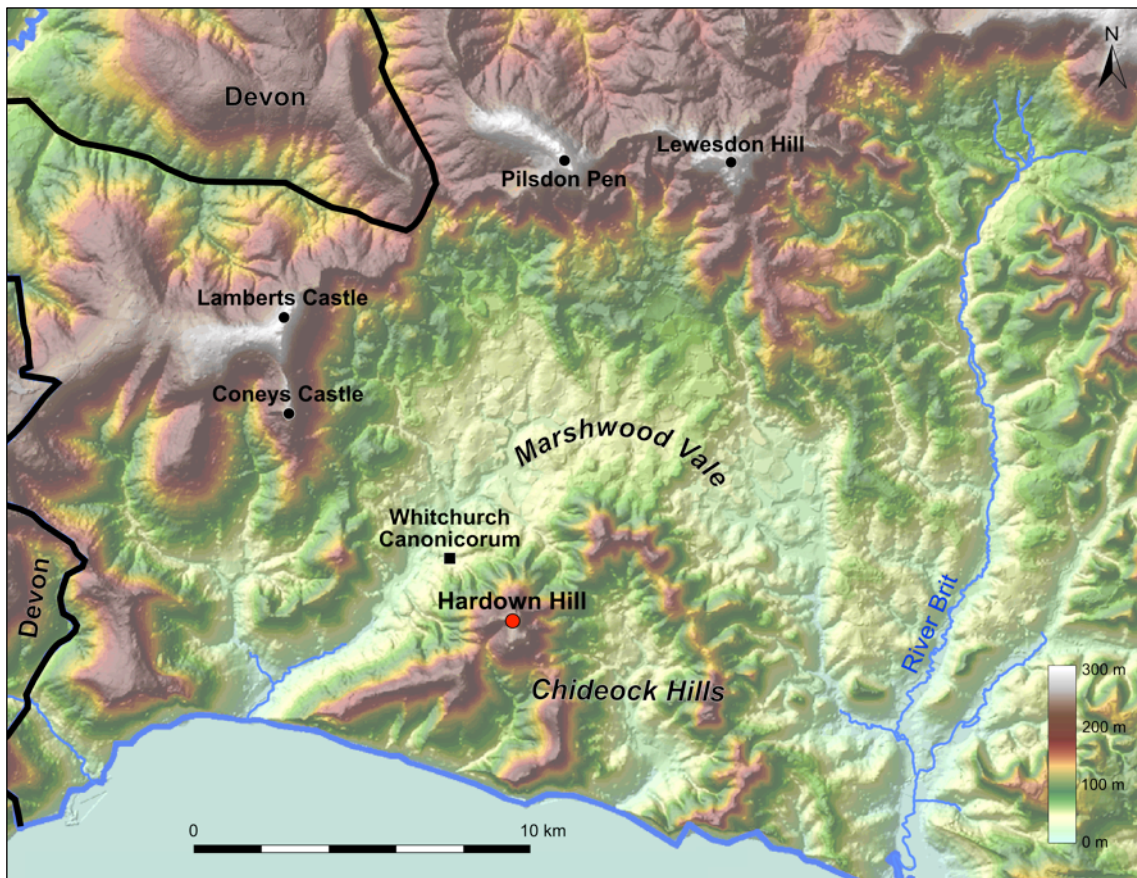


Fig. 7.1.35 Hardown Hill in the context of the Marshwood Vale area. The four hillforts to the north of the vale are also marked (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Hardown is particularly significant as it may represent the most westerly group of 'Anglo-Saxon' furnished burials in Dorset, and indeed in Wessex. Other isolated finds, some associated with human remains, have been made in southern Somerset, but not as far west. Given the highly dispersed distribution of other burials with 'Anglo-Saxon' grave-goods in the rest of the county and in western Wessex as a whole, however, the location of the site should not be regarded as exceptionally anomalous. The church at Whitchurch Canonicorum, 1.3km to the northwest, exhibits several indicators of minster status (Hall 2000: 13). It is dedicated to a fourth-century Roman martyr, Candida, and there is evidence of the reuse of Roman building material, from a villa or earlier (fifth- or sixth-century) British monastery, perhaps on the same site.

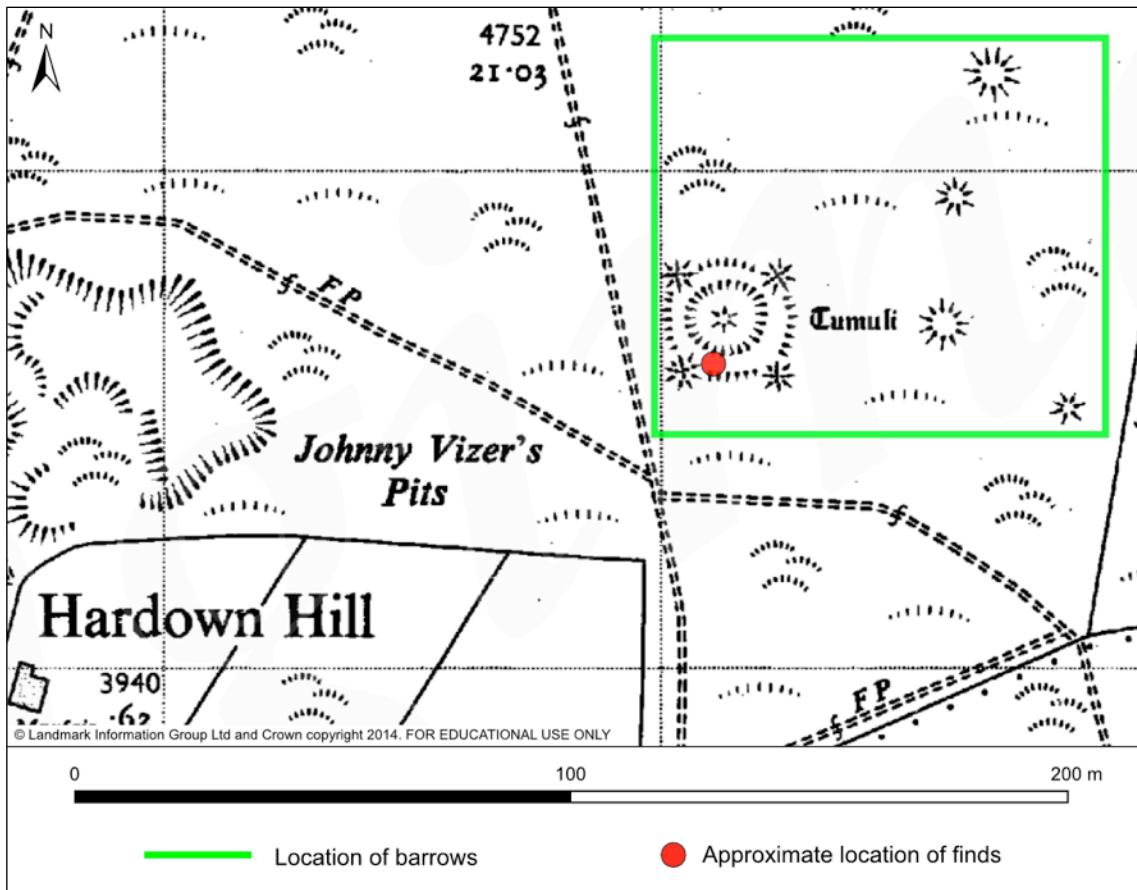


Fig. 7.1.36 Location of barrows and early medieval finds on Hardown Hill.



Fig. 7.1.37 Finds from Hardown Hill. Photo: Barry Welch, courtesy of Dorset County Museum.

CHAPTER 7.2

DORSET: ANALYSIS

BURIAL SITES AND THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Bedrock geology

Geological formations belonging to the Chalk Group underlie 17 (74%) of the 23 sites in the Dorset dataset (Fig. 7.2.1 and Table 7.2.1). This is a slightly lower proportion than in Wiltshire (89%) but greater than in Hampshire (65%). Two further sites in the Dorset dataset are situated on Upper Greensand geology; while Kimmeridge Clay, Cornbrash Formation and Inferior Oolite Group each account for one site. Chalk bedrock underlies less than 40% of the total land surface of the historic county of Dorset, compared to 51% in Wiltshire, and 49% in Hampshire.¹

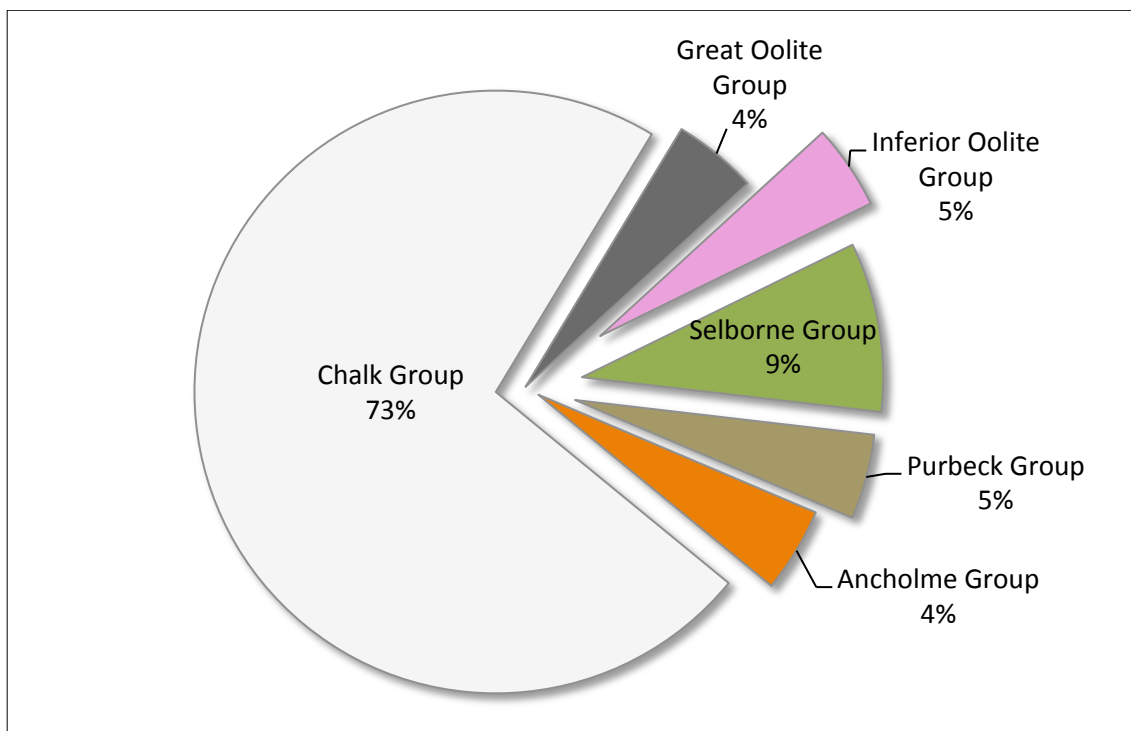


Fig. 7.2.1 Pie chart showing the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset associated with different bedrock geological groups.

¹ Chalk Group geology underlies c. 940km² of the total area of historic Dorset, which is 2532km² (Southall and Burton 2004; calculated in QGIS).

Table 7.2.1 Numbers and proportions of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in the Dorset dataset associated with different bedrock geological formations.

Bedrock geology		Number of sites
Group	Subgroup/Formation	
Ancholme Group	Kimmeridge Clay Formation	1 (4%)
Chalk Group	White Chalk Subgroup	17 (74%)
Great Oolite Group	Cornbrash Formation	1 (4%)
Inferior Oolite Group	N/A	1 (4%)
Purbeck Group	Durlston Formation	1 (4%)
Selborne Group	Upper Greensand Formation	2 (9%)

As the size of the Dorset sample is small, however, it would be unwise to draw any firm conclusions from these statistics. Moreover, antiquarian investigation is responsible for the discovery of nearly all of the burial sites on the chalk downlands of Cranborne Chase, and as previously discussed, the bias towards chalk is also likely to have been influenced by the visibility and preservation of grave cuts and skeletal remains in soils formed by this geology.²

Of the 22 sites directly associated with earlier features (see below), 17 (77%) are on White Chalk bedrock; the remainder are underlain by limestone or Upper Greensand geology.

² See Chapter 8 for discussion of the significance of the bias of ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ burial sites in favour of chalk areas.

Hydrology and patterns of settlement

In contrast with Hampshire, which demonstrated a very strong relationship between floodplains and burial sites dating from the period of study, no such correlation is identifiable in Dorset, as a greater number of sites are situated more than 500m from a floodplain than within 500m of a floodplain (Fig. 7.2.2). The small size of the sample does, however, mean that the results are not necessarily of statistical significance. Furthermore, the nature of past investigation will inevitably also have influenced the distribution of the sites with respect to hydrology, as antiquarian or research excavations, responsible for the discovery of the majority of sites in the dataset, have taken place predominantly on the chalk downland. Indeed, the only burial site in the '>100m' category is Tinney's Lane, Sherborne, which was discovered as a result of modern development-led work.

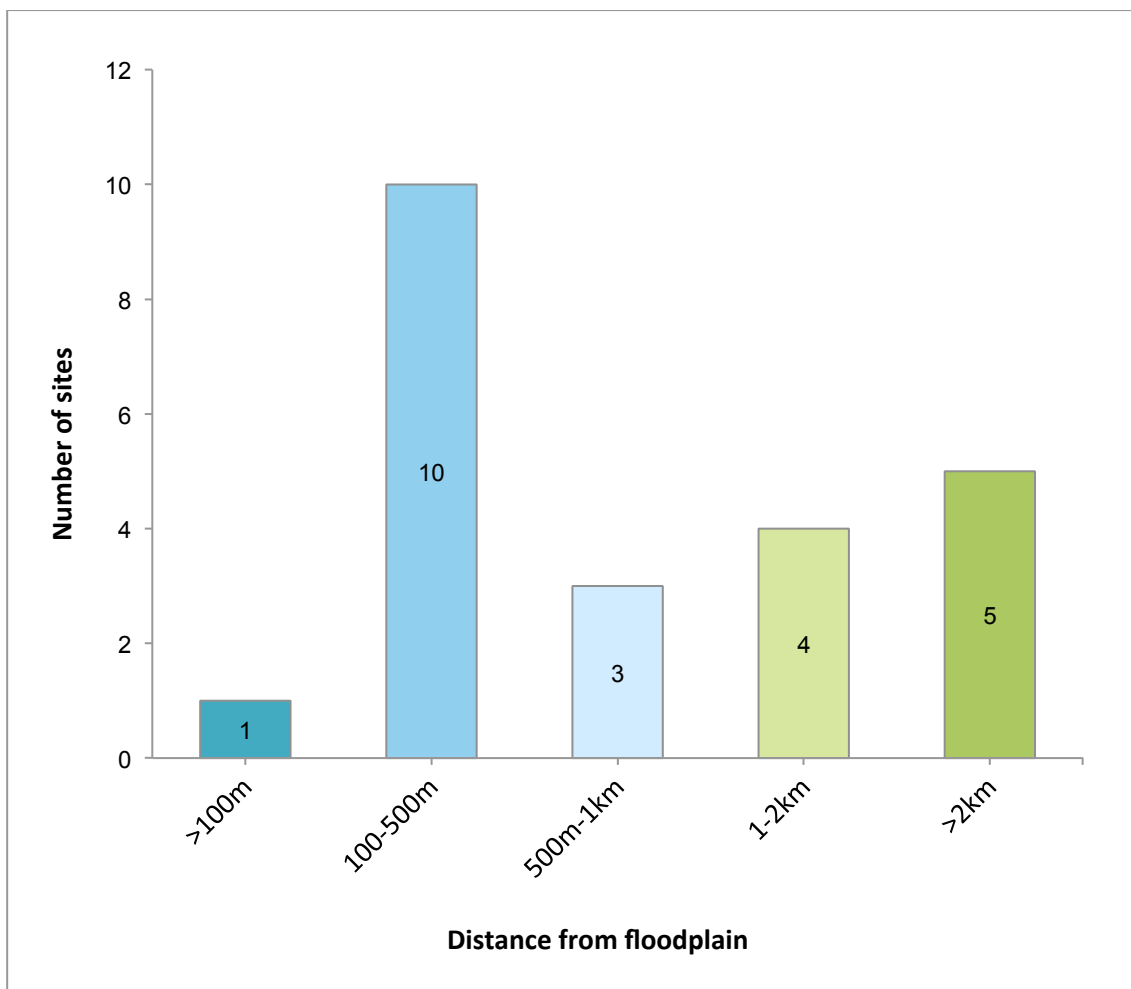


Fig. 7.2.2 Graph showing the relationship between floodplains and 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset.

Nevertheless, the relatively high proportion of sites in the 100-500m category is noteworthy. This category includes a line of cemeteries to the south of the River Frome near modern Dorchester: Bradford Peverell, Poundbury, Trumpet Major and Mount Pleasant. Poundbury is the location of the only structural evidence for fifth- to seventh-century settlement excavated thus far in the county. This perhaps suggests that settlements were located along the lower slopes of the valley, with cemeteries in slightly more elevated positions, as was the case in Hampshire. The highest parts of the chalk downland are certainly unlikely to have been extensively settled or farmed due to soil degradation by later prehistory, and there is little evidence for Roman villas in such areas (Groube and Bowden 1982).

In general, it is difficult to relate early medieval burial sites to contemporary patterns of settlement in Dorset, as evidence for the latter is so elusive. However, possible 'Early Saxon' cremations have been located near Wareham, where seventh-century proto-industrial activity has also been discovered (Hinton 1992). A possible sub-Roman inhumation cemetery has also been found at Langham, near Gillingham, c. 3km west of another seventh- or eighth-century proto-industrial site at Chantry Fields, Gillingham (Heaton 1992).

APPROPRIATION OF THE ANTECEDENT LANDSCAPE

Of the 23 burial sites in the Dorset dataset,

- Twenty-two burial sites (95.7%) are *directly* associated with at least one antecedent feature, some of which are also indirectly associated with earlier features.
- One burial site (4.3%) does not appear to be associated with any earlier features.

The most commonly appropriated earlier features are 'funerary and ritual monuments', with 82% of sites in the Dorset dataset directly associated with features in this category. The appropriation of 'non-funerary earthworks and settlement features' is also prevalent, however, with 45% of burial sites directly associated with features in this category (Fig. 7.2.3 and Table 7.2.2).

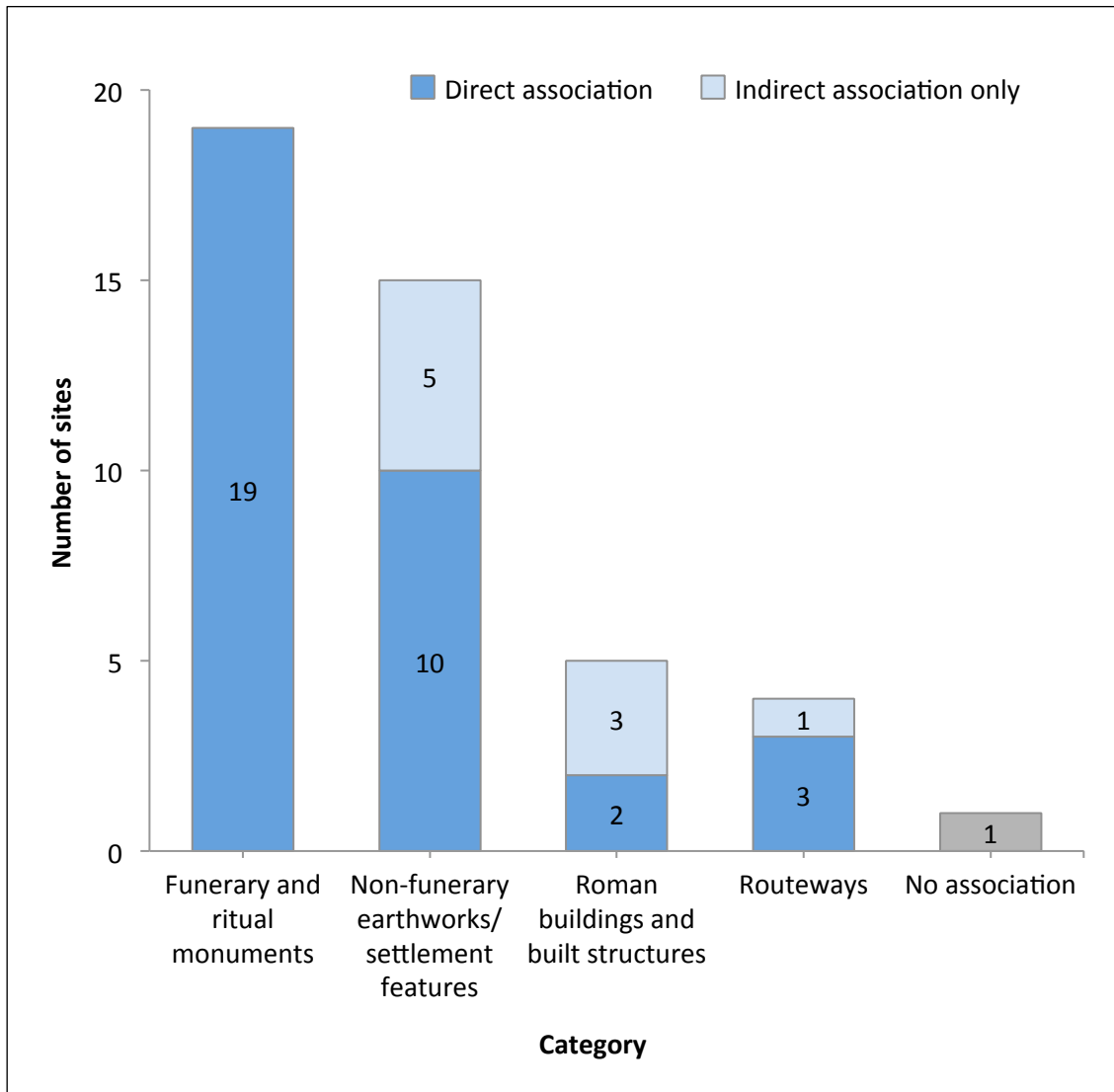


Fig. 7.2.3 Graph showing the number of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset directly and indirectly associated with different categories of earlier feature.

Funerary and ritual monuments

Barrows

Over half (52%) of the burial sites in the Dorset dataset are directly associated with an earlier barrow or barrows (compared to 40% in Wiltshire, and 14% in Hampshire). As in the other counties, round barrows are the most commonly appropriated type: 39% of sites in the Dorset dataset are directly associated with round barrows. This is a higher proportion than in Hampshire (10%) or Wiltshire (33%), although the small sample size, combined with the investigation history, is likely to have created a certain degree of bias.

Table 7.2.2 Numbers of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset associated with different categories and sub-categories of earlier features.

Earlier landscape features		Number of sites	
		Directly associated	Indirectly associated
Funerary and ritual monuments	Round barrow	9	2
	Earlier cemetery/burials	7	–
	Long barrow	2	–
	Bank barrow	1	–
	Henge enclosure	1	–
Non-funerary earthworks and settlement features	Enclosure/settlement	6	2
	Field system	2	3
	Linear earthwork	2	2
	Hillfort	2	2
Roman buildings and built structures	Temple	1	1
	Aqueduct	–	2
	Farm building	1	–
	Roman fort	–	1
Routeways	Roman road	3	1

Approximately 1500 round barrows are recorded in the county, c. 230 of which (c. 15%) have been subject to some form of excavation, of which records survive, although it must be stressed that many of these interventions were only partial and/or were conducted by unskilled or amateur antiquarian excavators. The majority of excavated round barrows are on the chalk, and a large proportion are located in Cranborne Chase, particularly along the line of the Ackling Dyke (Fig. 7.2.4). Seven of the nine round barrows directly associated with burial sites from the period of study are on chalk bedrock, five of which are located in Cranborne Chase. One is on Upper Greensand (Hardown Hill), and one is on Kimmeridge Clay (New Barn). Items which may indicate 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural affiliation were found at both of these sites.

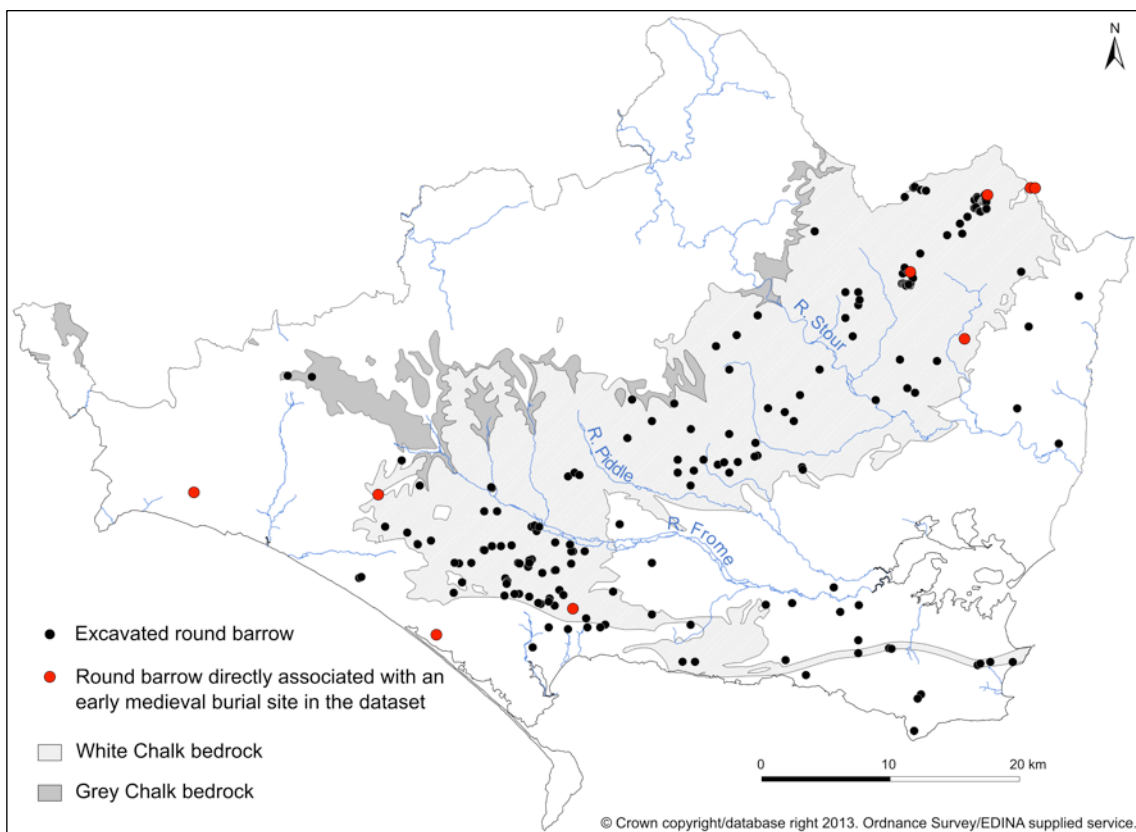


Fig. 7.2.4 Excavated/recorded round barrows (data from NMR), and those associated with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset.

There are c. 60 certain or probable long barrows in the county, of which c. 10 have been excavated and recorded. The remainder are either unexcavated, or display signs of having been opened but not recorded. Many are significantly plough-levelled or are only visible as cropmarks. All of the excavated long barrows in Dorset are on chalk bedrock, and two (20% of the excavated

examples) have produced intrusive inhumations dating from the period of study, both in Cranborne Chase (Fig. 7.2.5). Given that only a small proportion of these monuments have been excavated, the potential remains that further secondary inhumations of early medieval date are associated with other long barrows in the county. Similarities between the richly furnished female burial at Woodyates Inn long barrow, and Swallowcliffe Down in Wiltshire, have been noted. The numerous finds from Chettle House long barrow in the eighteenth century are more indicative of an 'Early-Middle Saxon' cemetery. Possible 'Late Saxon' inhumations were also located within Wor Barrow, the first long barrow to be excavated using 'modern' techniques by Pitt Rivers.

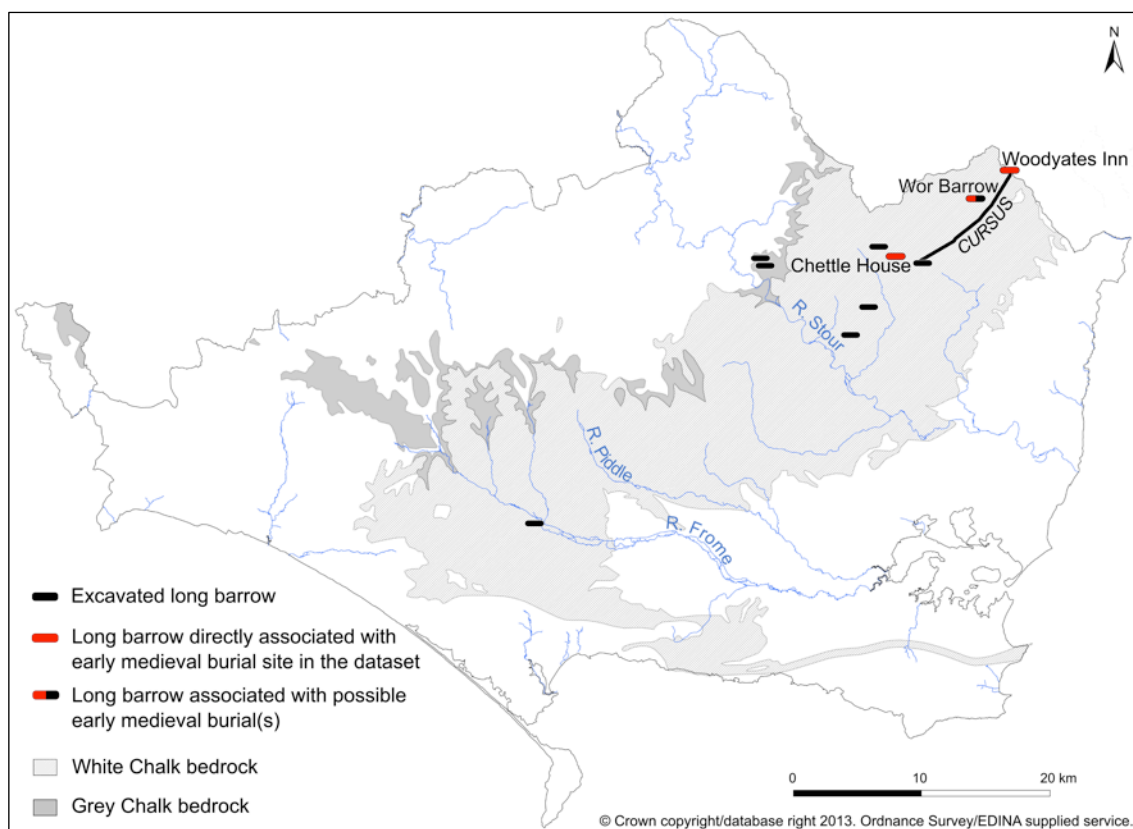


Fig. 7.2.5 Excavated/recorded long barrows (data from NMR), and those associated with early 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset. Barrow symbols not representative of orientation.

Six certain or probable Neolithic bank barrows have been identified in Dorset. This poorly understood monument type is found almost exclusively in this county, and may represent the material expression of a territorial or symbolic boundary, rather than performing a funerary function (Sharples 1991). Some may have resulted from the extension of an existing long barrow. The only excavated example lies within Maiden Castle, and was found to contain two

early medieval inhumations. The potential remains for the discovery of further burials of early medieval date within other bank barrows in the county, although the placement of interments within the Maiden Castle bank barrow is likely to have been influenced by a combination of factors. These may have included the presence of the hillfort itself, the Roman temple and the Roman burials, as well as any potential territorial divisions represented by the bank barrow or hillfort.

There are numerous further instances of intrusive barrow burial which may date from the period of study, particularly in the Central Chalk Downlands and Isle of Purbeck *pays* (cf. Cherryson 2005b). Some of these burials are unaccompanied, and some have previously been identified as Romano-British owing to the inclusion of Roman material in the graves.³

Earlier cemeteries/burials

Seven burial sites (36% of the dataset) are directly associated with a prehistoric or Roman cemetery or burials, where no evidence for barrows was found. In the case of the late Roman cemeteries at Poundbury, Tolpuddle Ball and Worth Matravers, this is less likely to represent active 'reuse'; rather, it is indicative of continuity of use and function into the post-Roman period. Manor Farm also demonstrated evidence of long-term funerary and ritual use. At Maiden Castle, however, there seems to have been a break in the use of the site, and the two isolated early medieval burials within the bank barrow does not appear to be directly connected with the Roman funerary site. At Tinney's Lane too, the interval between the Iron Age and early medieval funerary use of the site is considerable and it is difficult to envisage continuity based on the current evidence.

Henge enclosures

While there are around 15 known henge-type monuments in Dorset, few have been fully excavated. Only the Mount Pleasant henge enclosure has been found to be associated with burials dating from the period of study, although it is possible that the cemetery found within the Knowlton Circles complex is also 'Middle Saxon' in date. Although the multifaceted monument at Mount Pleasant

³ Possible Romano-British examples of intrusive barrow burial in Dorset, and their significance, are discussed in Chapter 8.

cannot be unequivocally defined as either exclusively ritual or exclusively secular in function, it has been placed in the 'funerary and ritual monuments' category, as there is evidence that communal feasting and other forms of ritualised activity took place here during the Neolithic (Thomas 2002: 205). It was occupied too, if only for short periods, and was for a time surrounded by a highly defensive timber palisade (Wainwright 1979). It is, however, doubtful that any such knowledge about the various functions of the site in the remote past was possessed by the post-Roman period. By this time, Mount Pleasant lay within an agrarian landscape; the site had been subject to Iron Age and Romano-British ploughing and the earthworks of the embanked enclosure may have already been reduced.

Non-funerary earthworks and settlement features

There are eleven incidences of direct association with features in this category, at 45% of the burial sites. Enclosures and settlement features predominate. At Mount Pleasant, the early medieval burials were not only associated with the henge monument, but also with aspects of a later phase in the site's biography: Iron Age and Romano-British agrarian or settlement enclosures at Site IV. It is possible that these enclosures lay on or close to an established territorial boundary. Although the two burials were apparently isolated, further burials may have been located within the area enclosed by the henge.

Association with hillforts is attested at Maiden Castle, Eggardon Hill and Hambledon Hill. At Hambledon Hill, the seventh-century cemetery was most directly associated with a causewayed enclosure, another ambiguous Neolithic monument type which is likely to have originally served a variety of purposes. Based on the fieldwork at henge enclosures such as Mount Pleasant, Durrington Walls and Marden, Wainwright (1979: 246) proposed a model of successive focal centres in prehistory, which is most clearly demonstrated in the South Winterbourne valley area. The causewayed enclosures and related bank barrows at Maiden Castle were the focus of activity in the third millennium BC, superseded from c. 2000 BC by the embanked enclosure at Mount Pleasant. Shortly after 1000 BC Maiden Castle once again became the focal point, and finally the valley (Dorchester). Early medieval burials are associated with all four of these phases in Dorset.

The post-Roman cemeteries at Worth Matravers, Manor Farm, Trumpet Major, Poundbury and Tolpuddle Ball were found in relation to evidence for antecedent settlement as well as funerary activity, indicating the long-term multipurpose use of the sites. Such sites demonstrate that settlements and cemeteries were not necessarily separated by any considerable distance in the post-Roman period and earlier.

Three isolated intrusive barrow burials are associated with Bokerley Dyke: Martin 28 and Pentridge 33 directly (although the latter contained two skeletons), and Woodyates Inn indirectly. These burials raise some important questions about territoriality, such as whether the linear earthworks of Bokerley Dyke formed a significant boundary or frontier at the time the interments were made, or whether they were simply prominent landmarks. Moreover, does the richly furnished female secondary barrow burial at Woodyates Inn, less than 100m west of the Dyke, reflect 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural expansion within the Cranborne Chase zone (Eagles 2004)?

Roman buildings and built structures

There are two incidences of direct association with features in this category, and four of indirect association. Maiden Castle is directly associated with a temple, and Poundbury indirectly. Worth Matravers is associated with a Roman barn. Bradford Peverell and Poundbury are indirectly associated with an aqueduct, and Shapwick is indirectly associated with a Roman fort.

Routeways

Three sites (14%) are directly associated with Roman roads: Bradford Peverell, Eggardon Hill and Shapwick. Unlike in Wiltshire, where a higher proportion of sites were associated indirectly than directly with such features, only one site in the Dorset dataset, Oakley Down, is indirectly associated with a Roman road.

BOUNDARIES

Parish boundaries

Of the 23 sites in the Dorset dataset, eleven (48%) were found to lie on or within 100m of a parish boundary (Fig. 7.2.6); this is a higher proportion than in Wiltshire or Hampshire, where the percentage of sites within 100m were 40% and 30% respectively. Despite the small sample size, there does appear to be a fairly strong correlation between burial location and parish boundaries. Three sites—Eggardon Hill, Tolpuddle Ball and Hambledon Hill—lie on or within a few metres of a parish boundary, and at the latter two, the boundary seems to have demarcated the edge of the cemetery. The average parish size in Dorset is c. 6.9 km², compared to c. 6.7 km² in Wiltshire and c. 7.9 km² for Hampshire (Southall and Burton 2004). The narrow, elongated shape of many of the chalkland parishes reflects the need to encompass downland and alluvial valley soils within the same estate, as part of a strategy of combining seasonal grazing with arable cultivation (Groube and Bowden 1982: 53). The small sample size of the dataset, however, makes it impossible to draw any reliable conclusions from the relationship between burial site distribution and the pattern of parishes.

Hundred boundaries

There does not appear to be a significant relationship between burial sites in the Dorset dataset and distance from hundred boundaries (Fig. 7.2.8; Fig. 7.2.9). Two sites in the Central Chalk Downlands—Eggardon Hill and Tolpuddle Ball—are located on such boundaries. In Cranborne Chase, Woodyates Inn and Pentridge 34 are located in close proximity to a hundred boundary, but the same line is also followed by the county boundary and Bokerley Dyke. These latter burial sites are likely to date from no later than the early eighth century, and thus predate the establishment of a formalised hundredal system of administration, although some such units undoubtedly have earlier origins (Reynolds 1999: 77). Instead, Bokerley Dyke itself may have represented a more significant territorial division in the landscape at this time. There is no evidence of deviant burial practices at any of the burial sites which lie close to hundred boundaries in Dorset.

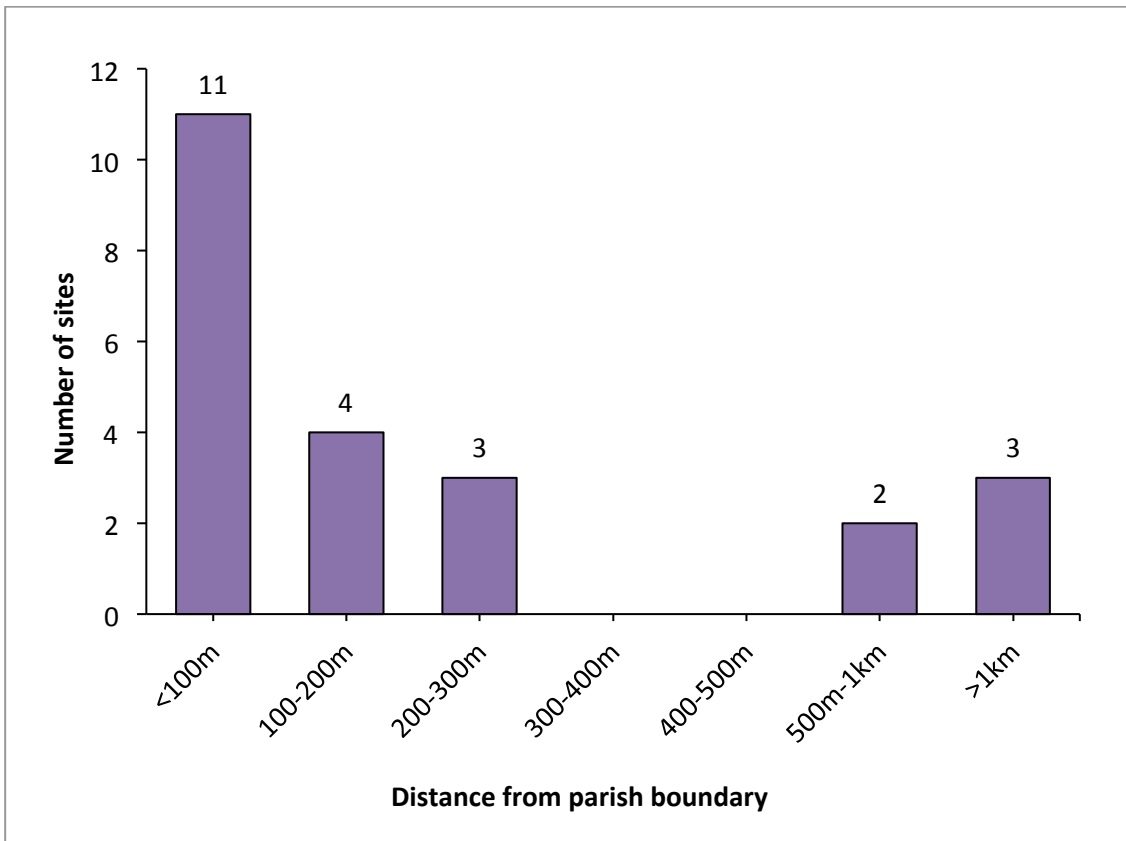


Fig. 7.2.6 Graph showing the relationship between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset and distance from parish boundaries.

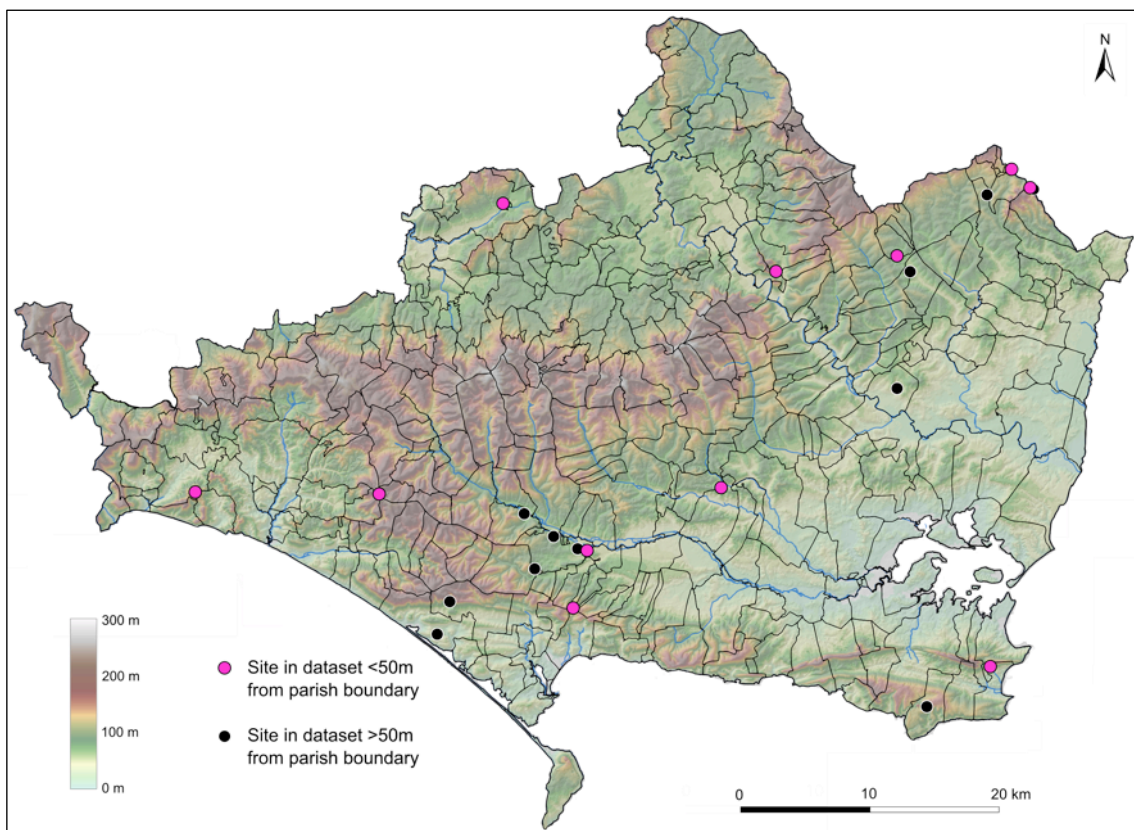


Fig. 7.2.7 Map showing the relationship between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset and ecclesiastical parish boundaries (Southall and Burton 2004).

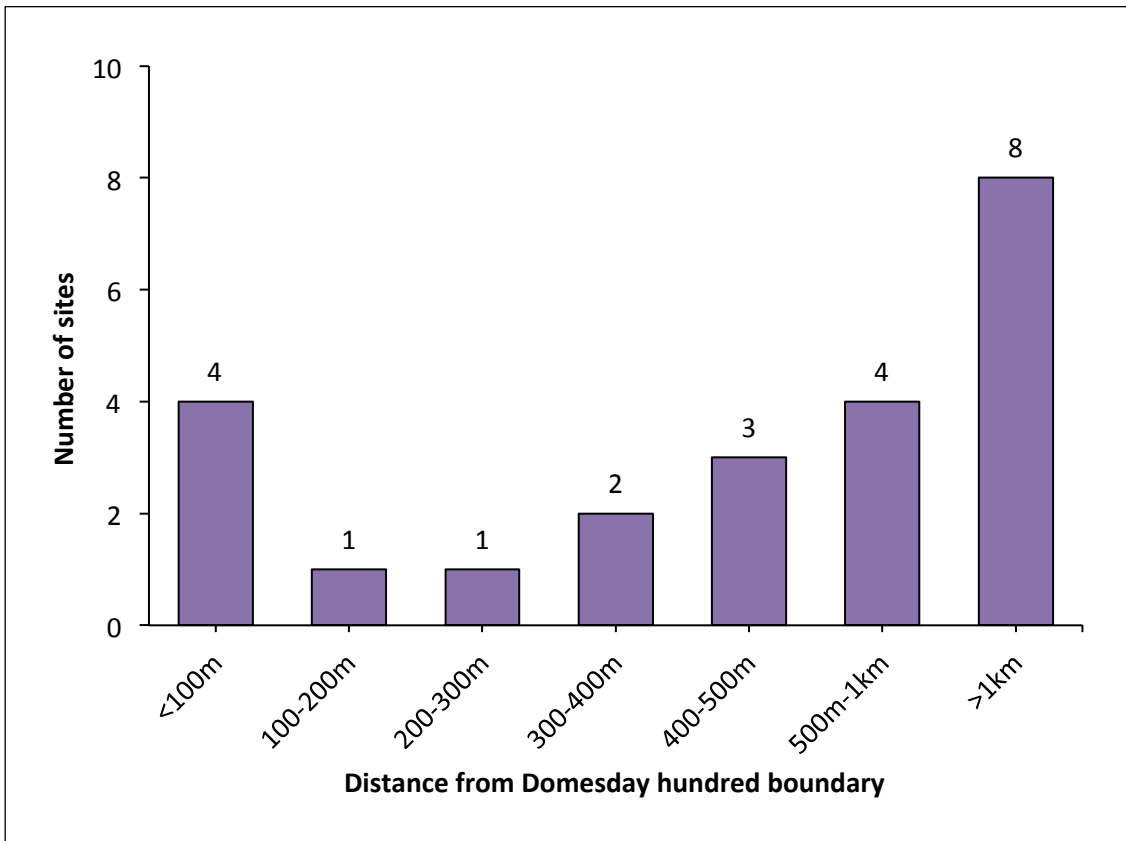


Fig. 7.2.8 Graph showing the relationship between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset and distance from Domesday hundred boundaries.

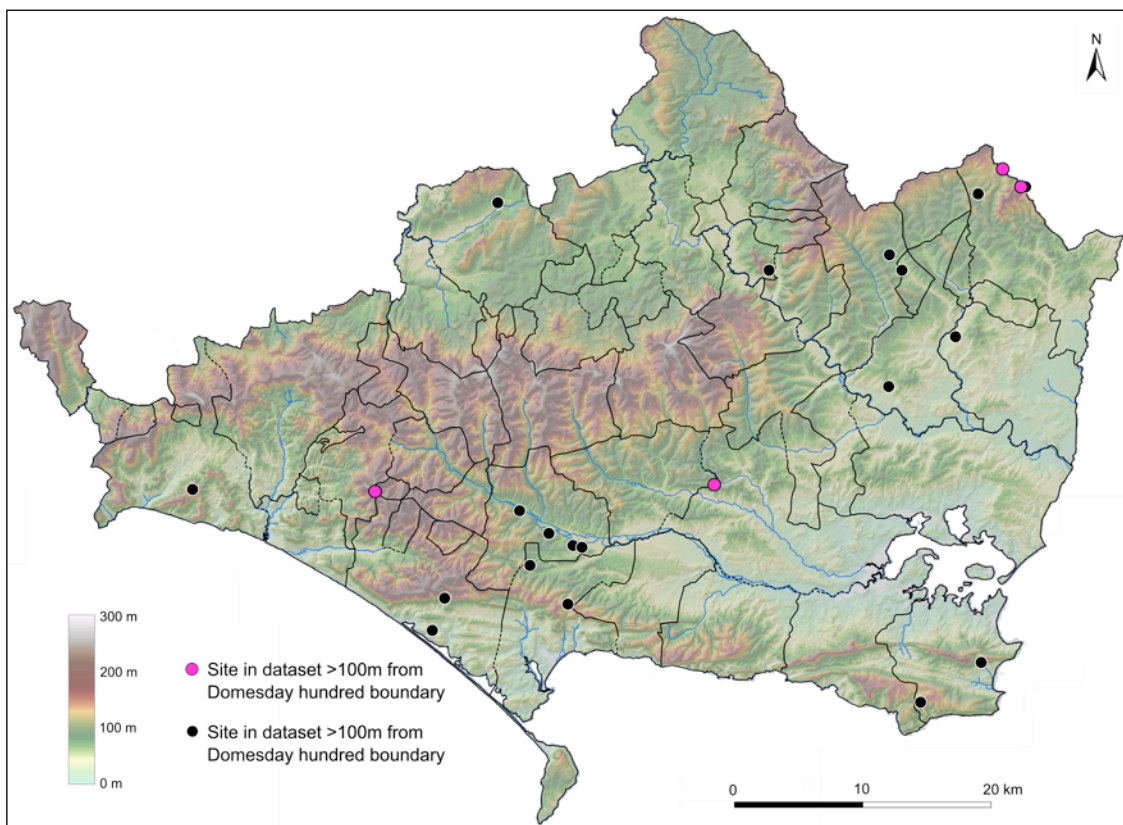


Fig. 7.2.9 Map showing the relationship between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the Dorset dataset and Domesday hundred boundaries (after Thorn 1991).

SUMMARY

Far from being bereft of evidence for burial during the period c. AD 450-850, the Dorset dataset has made a varied and thought-provoking contribution to this research. It has highlighted some key themes which have resonance for the thesis as a whole, and which will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter. In particular, it has brought to the forefront the issue of the possible continuity of burial practices from the late Roman to early medieval period, a phenomenon which was less perceptible in the other counties. The similarities between certain graves that have been denominated 'Anglo-Saxon' and those representative of the 'British' tradition, have necessitated a reconsideration of whether such simplistic and polarising labels can legitimately be applied, an issue to which David Petts (2009: 218-20) has recently drawn attention. Some sites which have in the past been termed 'Anglo-Saxon', such as Long Crichel, feature few grave-goods and west-east orientated graves, often with a stone packing or lining; all features of sub-Roman cemeteries such as Cannington in Somerset. The evidence from Dorset has also raised the question as to whether seventh-century cemeteries with a high proportion of unfurnished burials, defined as 'Final Phase' elsewhere in Wessex, such as Winnall II in Hampshire (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), may have more in common with sub-Roman burial traditions than previously considered (and possibly vice versa).

A remarkably high proportion of the burial sites are directly associated with earlier features. Only one site—Shepherd's Farm, Ulwell—is not associated with any antecedent features, although the Roman material found in the graves there could be considered an alternative form of reuse, or another way of referencing the past. The Cranborne Chase group displays notable affinities with sites in southern Wiltshire, where a combination of prominent topographical features and earlier monuments is used to create powerful statements of prestige between the late sixth and early eighth centuries. Burial sites such as Hambledon Hill, Long Crichel and High Lea Farm utilise earlier monuments, yet there is nothing about the burials to unequivocally identify them as culturally 'Anglo-Saxon'. It could be suggested that this reflects the partial adoption and selective incorporation of aspects of 'Anglo-Saxon' identity into a dominant indigenous culture (Blair 2005: 26). It certainly indicates considerable interaction between kin groups of different cultural and funerary traditions.

Whether monument reuse in itself can be regarded as an 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition is debatable. Perhaps the most intriguing sites identified through this research are those that have not been included in the dataset. These comprise intrusive barrow burials which are either unaccompanied and undated, or are associated with non-residual Roman material and have in the past been interpreted as Roman (see Chapter 8). Whether these are examples of a Romano-British tradition of monument appropriation or they are post-Roman, they point to a localised tradition of funerary barrow reuse in Dorset.

The evidence from Dorset supports the idea that widespread cultural interaction and mutual influence on religious and mortuary practices took place during the period of study (Blair 2005). The positioning of burial sites in Dorset demonstrates complex interaction with the antecedent and natural landscape, which in many cases may be indicative of a survival of Romano-Celtic identity, and possibly localised religious cults, until relatively late. Moreover, the hilltop locations of sites such as Hambledon Hill, and Winkelbury Hill in Wiltshire, cannot be explained purely by political or territorial motivations, and may also have had long-standing religious or spiritual connotations, influenced by local customs and traditions.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The evidence from the three counties has now been systematically re-examined and analysed, and some preliminary observations have been made regarding the ways in which elements of the antecedent landscape were appropriated and incorporated into 'Early-Middle Saxon' funerary traditions. The county boundaries are, to a certain extent, arbitrary divisions, however, and it is important to look at the study area as a whole in order to identify any overarching patterns. Moreover, the observations that have been made in the county-based chapters must now be examined in greater depth in order to ascertain the motivations behind the selection of certain features, topographic positions or specific locations. The significance of these funerary practices must also be explored within the broader context of 'Early-Middle Saxon' society.

This chapter will begin by providing an integrated synthesis of the results from the three counties and the study area as a whole, comprising brief summaries of some of the key findings with regard to landscape context, geology, the appropriation of earlier features, and the relationship between burial sites and boundaries. The subsequent section will comprise a thematic discussion of the evidence in its wider social context, by way of two broad sets of themes: land-use, territory and group identity; and society, ideology and religion. There is, of course, considerable overlap between these themes, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive.

SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

Through the drawing together of the results of the county-based analyses, a number of original findings and advancements in knowledge regarding the funerary traditions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' Wessex can be revealed.

In summary, the thesis provides:

- The first comprehensive critical exposé of whether traditions of ‘reuse’ may largely be a product of variations in geology, agrarian practices and the preservation of monuments, and of patterns of antiquarian and modern archaeological investigation.
- A new perspective on ‘western’ traditions in Dorset, revealing these to be varied and strongly influenced by long-standing connections to significant natural foci and man-made features, and a strong critique of the idea of ‘introduced’ practices or the ‘diffusion’ of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ ideas from east to west.
- Evidence for strikingly riverine patterns of settlement and burial in some areas, particularly the Hampshire Downs.
- A strong and compelling link between burial rites and land-use, common resources and the movement of people and goods (such as livestock) over varying distances between resource areas.
- A re-evaluation of the ‘burials and boundaries’ debate, demonstrating that correlations are present between burials and parish boundaries in Dorset and Wiltshire, and to a lesser extent in Hampshire (relating to the influence of the physical environment on boundary location and the ‘Late Saxon’ reorganisation of territories).
- Reinforcement of the idea that a change occurs in the purpose and intensity of ‘reuse’ traditions in the later seventh century, connected to changing agrarian practices and the altered nature of land ownership or land-holding, resulting in larger territories coming under the control of the nobility and the Church.
- Reinforcement for the notion of the elite adaptation and deliberate emulation of an earlier and well established tradition of barrow burial from the late sixth or early seventh century onwards.

Landscape context: general patterns

Throughout the study area, ‘community’ cemeteries (groups of ten or more graves) are situated primarily on the lower slopes of valleys. The importance of

river valleys for 'Early-Middle Saxon' communities is particularly evident in the Hampshire Downs *pays*, where a strikingly consistent spatial relationship between community cemeteries and settlements has been observed (see Chapter 6.2). Most cemeteries are located adjacent to a routeway or artery of communication, such as a trackway or droveway, Roman road, or river. While accessibility from settlements was naturally a prime consideration, visibility (either from routeways or from the opposite side of the valley) has also been identified as an important factor in many cases; other possible interpretations are discussed below.

'Community' cemeteries associated with earlier barrows generally follow the same pattern outlined above,¹ and there is a degree of consistency in the topographic positioning of these sites throughout the period of study, although those of later foundation tend to be in less accessible, higher-altitude locations.² The funerary appropriation of barrows for communal burial in the 'Early Saxon' period is well attested (Williams 1997: 22; Semple 2013: 225). This is the case in the study area too, although cemeteries of this type encompass the entire period of study. Most have been excavated to modern standards, and dating is therefore generally more reliable than that of isolated burials. Winterbourne Gunner, in the Bourne valley, is potentially the earliest in this group, while Barrow Clump and Breamore, in the Salisbury Avon valley, were established in the sixth century. The remainder are predominantly seventh- or eighth-century, although the use of Bevis Grave long barrow as the focus for an early medieval cemetery may persist into the ninth century or later. Inhumation is the dominant rite, although a small number of cremations have been found at Bargates and Storeys Meadow.

The Salisbury Avon valley could be considered the 'core' area for this practice of communal barrow burial, while the Meon valley and Cranborne Chase are perhaps 'outliers'. These cemeteries are later in date and appear to be characterised by associative rather than intrusive burial. Smaller groups of intrusive barrow burials are, however, found over a wider geographical area and

¹ Notable examples are: Barrow Clump and Winterbourne Gunner, Wiltshire; Storeys Meadow, Snells Corner, Bevis Grave, Portway West, Breamore and Bargates in Hampshire; and High Lea Farm, Dorset.

² The seventh-century cemetery on Winkelbury Hill, Wiltshire, is in an elevated watershed location, although it is accessible via a ridge-top routeway.

within a broader chronological time frame; from the sixth-century burials on Overton Hill in north Wiltshire to the seventh- to tenth-century group on Eggardon Hill in west Dorset. Although barrows are the most common and significant feature appropriated at 'community' cemeteries, there are exceptions. Twyford School in Hampshire, for example, was situated in close proximity to a probable prehistoric roundhouse, and earlier linear ditches play important roles at Portway East and Shavards Farm, Hampshire, and at Roche Court Down, Wiltshire. The appropriation of Roman towns or built structures for communal burial is predominantly a feature of southern Hampshire (notably Bitterne and Winchester) and Dorset (Poundbury), although this partly reflects the distribution of major Roman centres.

Isolated individual burials occupy a wide variety of topographic positions and are associated with a diverse range of earlier features; as such, the motivations for appropriation (discussed below) are likely to vary considerably. Dating of isolated intrusive barrow burials is often vague due to the antiquarian date of many of the discoveries. The practice does seem, however, to be a feature of the late sixth to early eighth centuries, which corroborates the findings of other studies (Semple 2003; Lucy 1998; Williams 1997).³ Such burials are overwhelmingly concentrated on the chalk downland of Wiltshire in the Marlborough Downs, Salisbury Plain, South Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase *pays* (although, as previously discussed, this partly reflects the investigation history). Isolated burials are frequently situated on watersheds and/or ecclesiastical parish boundaries, close to routeways.

Results of the analysis

Geology

The strong correlation between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and chalk bedrock has already been noted, and this relationship can also be observed in the study area as a whole: 78% of all burial sites are located on chalk (Fig. 8.1). As far as burial sites with evidence for direct appropriation of earlier features are

³ Isolated burials which may predate the sixth century have been found in Hampshire at Brown Candover; and in Wiltshire at Lake, Woodford valley, and Castle Eaton; but were not directly associated with any earlier features. An exceptionally late example of individual barrow burial, identified as belonging to the ninth or tenth century (Semple 2013: 42), is located at Ogbourne St Andrew, Wiltshire.

concerned, an even higher proportion (88%) are situated on chalk geology. The apparent pre-eminence of the chalklands in the early medieval mortuary topography of the study area relates to a number of factors. Although it partly corresponds to contemporary patterns of settlement and land-use (see below), it is also heavily influenced by taphonomic factors and patterns of archaeological investigation.

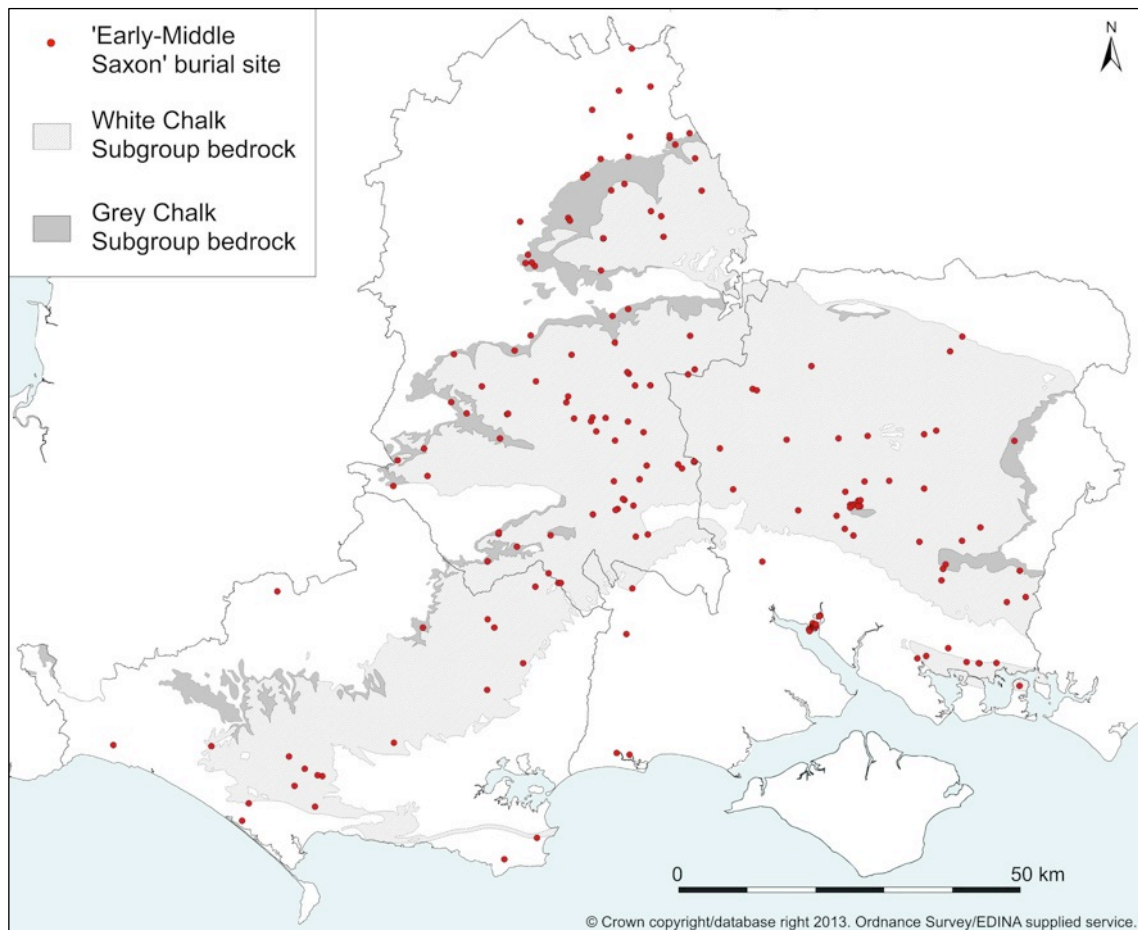


Fig. 8.1 Map of the study area, showing the relationship between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and chalk geology.

It is hard to overstate the impact of calcareous geology on the character and distribution of the archaeological record. Broadly speaking, archaeological features are more readily identified in chalk areas, particularly in thin, well-drained chalk soils such as those found on the Wessex downland. Compared with waterlogged clay soils, for example, such soils have a greater capacity to reveal the presence of buried features as differential marks in bare soil, and are conducive to the formation of cropmarks over buried features during periods of increased soil aridity. Furthermore, the preservation of skeletal material and artefacts is generally good (Sharples 2010: 11). This is not the case in all areas

of chalk bedrock, however. In soils formed by superficial clay-with-flints deposits, features are extremely difficult to identify; moreover, the acidic nature of these soils accelerates the degradation of human bone and metalwork (Fern and Stoodley 2003). Clay-with-flints soils are generally unsuitable for cultivation and such areas often have a greater degree of tree cover (Everitt 1985: 74), adversely affecting the probability of identifying features by aerial reconnaissance. Only five or six burial sites have been found in clay-with-flints areas: Eggardon Hill, and part of the Hambledon Hill cemetery, Dorset; West Ham and part of the Weston Colley cemetery, Hampshire; and London Road, Mildenhall, and possibly Barbury Castle, Wiltshire. Three of these sites on clay-with-flints are associated with hillforts, and all are likely to have been situated on marginal or uncultivated land. These sites do, however, range from high-status isolated interments (West Ham) to sparsely furnished community cemeteries (Hambledon Hill), and it is impossible to make any generalisations regarding the social or economic significance of their locations.

The history of land-use in certain areas of the chalk downland has allowed numerous barrows and other prehistoric and Roman earthworks to remain extant, at least up until the twentieth century. In Salisbury Plain, for example, their continued survival is partly due to the designation of the area as a military training area in the modern period (McOmish *et al.* 2002). The preservation of these features is also a partial reflection of the fact that the fertility of soils on the high chalkland was already largely exhausted by the Romano-British period, and that the land has been used predominantly for grazing (Groube and Bowden 1982: 48). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that certain monuments were actively avoided and perhaps protected from damage by later prehistoric and Romano-British cultivators (Chadburn and Corney 2001: 45-6). The sheer density of upstanding prehistoric and Roman earthworks and megalithic monuments on the Wessex chalk downlands attracted the attention of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian investigators, who used the area as a 'stamping ground' (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 13). This, in turn, has contributed to a bias in the distribution of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites, as well as producing an 'enhanced view of monument reuse, specifically the use of barrows for early medieval burial' (Semple 2013: 226).

Appropriation of antecedent features

Over half (55%) of the 189 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the study area are directly associated with at least one identifiable aspect of the antecedent landscape (Fig. 8.2). Moreover, 67% are associated either directly or indirectly with an earlier feature. This compares with the results of Williams' study, which found that 54% of the burial sites in his small sample demonstrated evidence of monument reuse (Williams 1997: 4). Research conducted by Semple (2003: 73; 2013: 40) found that the proportion of burial sites in the Avebury area at which prehistoric monuments were appropriated was remarkably high, at c. 80%. This research has found that 83% of burial sites in the Marlborough Downs *pays* are directly associated with at least one earlier feature. This is indeed high, but not exceptional; in Cranborne Chase and the Central Chalk Downlands of Dorset (and indeed every Dorset *pays* in which evidence for burial from the period of study has been found, apart from the Isle of Purbeck), 100% of the burial sites are associated with earlier features. Nevertheless, when compared with other *pays* in Wiltshire and Hampshire, the Marlborough Downs figure is undoubtedly high.⁴ Methodological factors must also be considered, however; the analysis undertaken for this study included all earlier features deemed discernable at the time of interment, while Semple's (2003) study focused on the reuse of prehistoric monuments within a discrete area of the *pays*.

A significant proportion (49%) of the appropriated features in the study area are in the 'funerary and ritual monuments' category, while a substantial minority (27%) are in the 'non-funerary earthworks and settlement features' category (Fig. 8.3). Williams' study found that nationally, 69% of the appropriated features were barrows, while in his Wessex sample barrows represented 81% of the reused features (Williams 1997: 17, 20-1). The results of this study instead show that 44% of the appropriated features are barrows. Williams (1997: 21) also remarked upon the 'lack of reused Roman structures for burial in Wessex' in contrast with the Upper Thames valley and Kent, with such features only accounting for 5% of the appropriated monuments in his Wessex sample. This thesis has, however, demonstrated that 12% of the appropriated features, at least in this part of Wessex, fall into the category 'Roman buildings

⁴ In South Hampshire Lowland and Coast the figure is 32%; in Hampshire Downs it is 44%; in South Wiltshire Downs it is 50%; and in Salisbury Plain it is 57%.

or built structures'. Methodological differences, together with the contribution of a further fifteen years' worth of archaeological discoveries to the datasets, are likely to account for some of the differences between Williams' (1997) findings and those of this thesis.

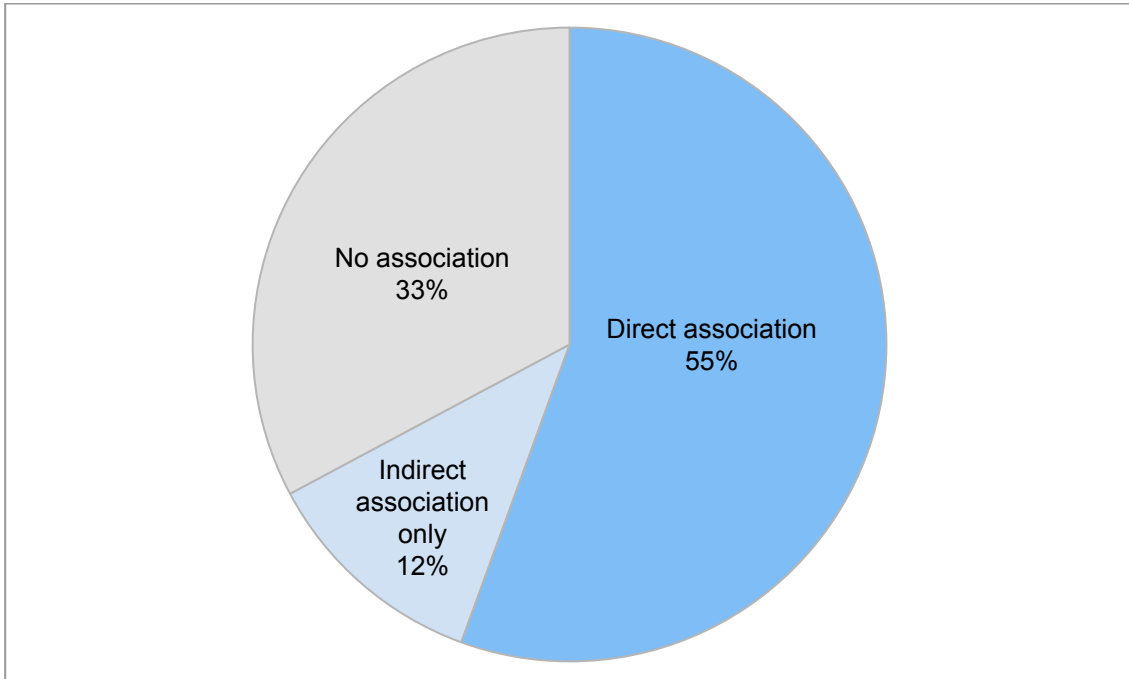


Fig. 8.2 Chart showing the proportions of 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the study area directly associated, indirectly associated and not associated with earlier features.

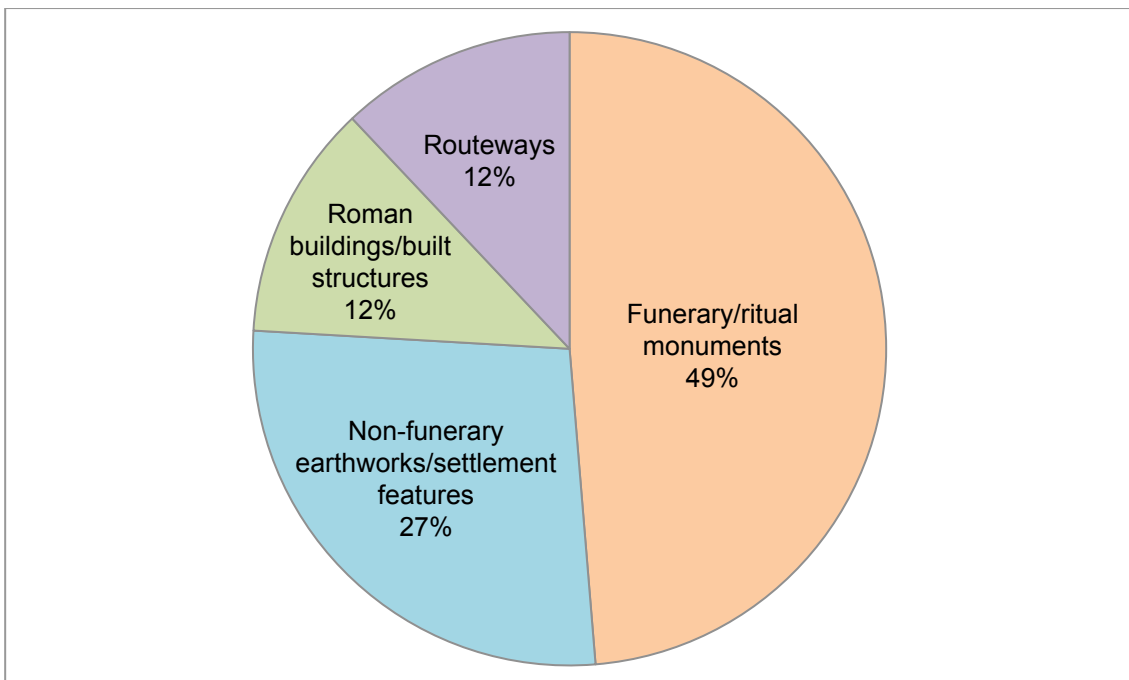


Fig. 8.3 Chart showing the proportions of different categories of earlier feature associated directly or indirectly with 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites in the study area.

There is a weaker correlation with Roman roads (less than 12% of burial sites in the study area lie within 300m of a Roman road), in comparison with Kent, where 35% of Brookes' (2007b) sample of 'Early Saxon' burial sites lay within 100m of a Roman road.

Within the study area it has been possible to identify some striking sub-regional variations in terms of the types of appropriated antecedent features. As mentioned in the county-based analysis chapters, burial sites associated with long barrows are preferentially located in the Wylve valley and the western part of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, Cranborne Chase in Dorset, and Portsdown Hill in Hampshire (Fig. 8.4). Although geographical trends in the selection of round barrows with distinct morphological characteristics, such as bell barrows, were also identified in Wiltshire, it was not possible to carry out this analysis for the whole study area. Moreover, the small sample size precludes the drawing of firm inferences from these distributions.

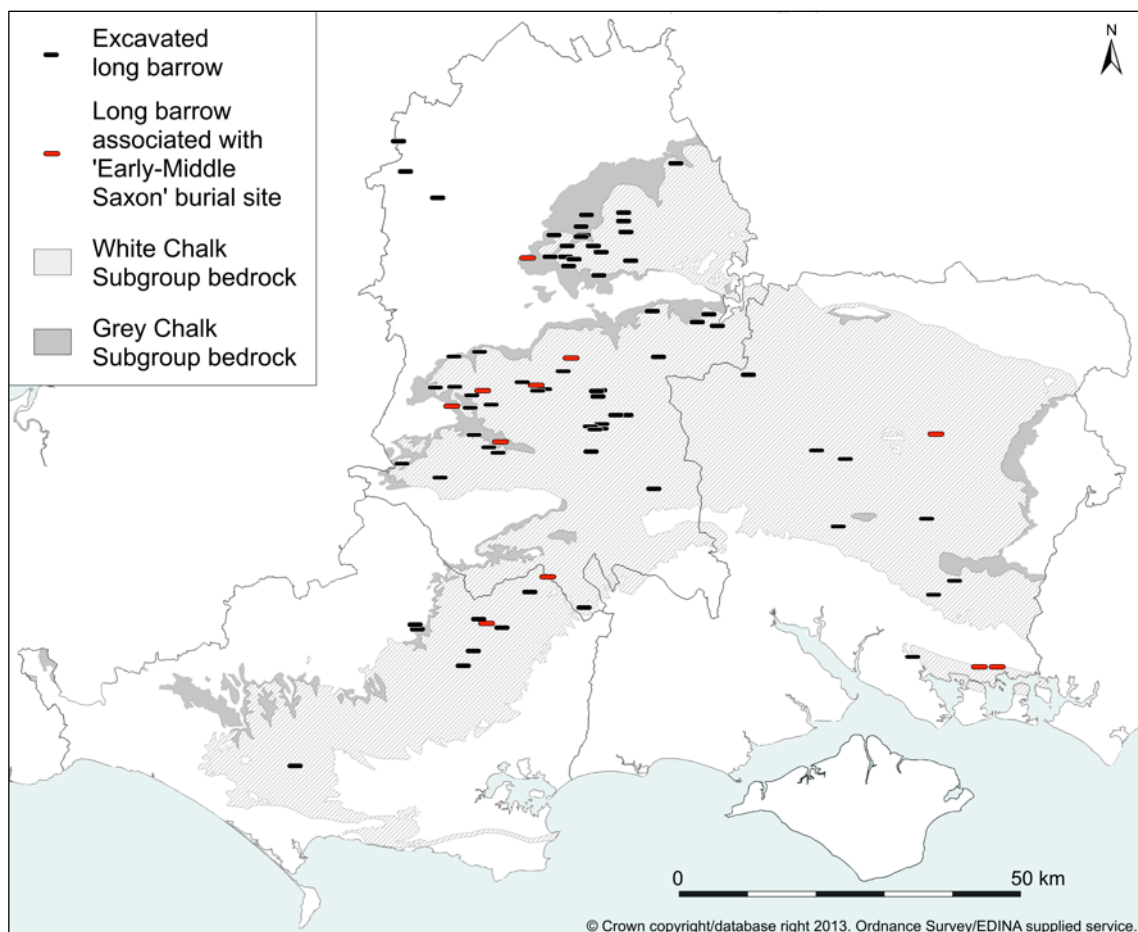


Fig. 8.4 Map showing all excavated long barrows, and those associated with early 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites. Symbols not representative of orientation.

Parish and hundred boundaries

This research has found that 35% of the burial sites in the study area are situated within 100m of an ecclesiastical parish boundary. This figure is broadly comparable with those attained by Bonney (1966; 1972) and Goodier (1984), although one exception was Hampshire, where Bonney (1972: 171) found that 40% of burial sites lay on or near parish boundaries, yet this research attained a lower figure of 27% (see Chapter 6.2). Although, as Goodier (1984) has previously argued, the correlation between burial sites and parish boundaries is certainly statistically significant, it is important to move beyond statistical analysis, and to scrutinise this relationship and examine other factors which may have influenced burial location. Of the burial sites which lie within 100m of a parish boundary, 37% are directly associated with an earlier barrow. Conversely, of the burial sites which are directly associated with a barrow, 42% lie within 100m of a parish boundary. This confirms that while a wide variety of sites are associated with parish boundaries, intrusive barrow burials display an especially strong tendency to be situated on or near these boundaries. The key relationship, then, is between burials and barrows. As prominent markers and mnemonic aids, barrows continued to delineate boundaries and routeways, and had a significant influence on early medieval mortuary geography.

The correlation between 'Early-Middle Saxon' burial sites and Domesday hundred boundaries in the study area is considerably weaker: only 13% of the burial sites are situated within 100m of a hundred boundary. Of the burial sites in the study area that are located within 100m of a hundred boundary, 36% are directly associated with an earlier barrow. Of the burial sites which are directly associated with a barrow, on the other hand, only 15% lie within 100m of a hundred boundary. This indicates that while intrusive barrow burials occupy a variety of locations within Domesday hundreds, there is a fairly strong tendency for those burial sites that *do* lie close to hundred boundaries to be directly associated with a barrow.

THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Land-use, territory and group identity

Territorial organisation and contemporary land-use patterns are fundamental to an understanding of the landscape context of early medieval burial sites. It is essential to consider how the surrounding landscape and wider *pays* may have been worked, ordered and conceptualised by contemporary communities. This section will explore the ways in which patterns of land-use, topography and movement may have contributed to the formation of identities in the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period. It will also investigate the roles that communal and individual burial sites might have played in the reinforcement of these identities and in the negotiation of rights to land and resources. Isolated barrow burials in the area of study are frequently located on ecclesiastical parish boundaries, and are found almost exclusively on the chalk downland, where the network of parishes owes much to the topography and the ways in which the land was worked and farmed in the early medieval period and earlier. It is therefore of particular importance to provide a critical reassessment of how and when these boundaries might have taken shape (the 'Bonney hypothesis'), and what function and meaning such zones held when the burials were made.

'Early folk territories': background

'Early Saxon' territoriality has been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry (see Chapter 2), and although the existence of *regiones* is beyond dispute, the extent to which these units represented discrete socio-political entities is still uncertain (Woolf 2000: 91). Equally nebulous are their origins. Yorke (2000: 86) has argued that the emergence of *regiones* 'based on the Roman infrastructure of *civitas* capitals and other significant sub-units of the Roman provinces' is not implausible, due to the improbability that the Roman territorial system had dissipated to such an extent to necessitate state formation 'from scratch'. Dark (1994) and Eagles (2004) have similarly proposed continuity between *civitates* and early medieval kingdoms or *regiones*. Draper (2006: 114) and Rippon (2012: 185) have, however, advised that there is currently no credible evidence that any functioning Romano-British territorial units survived intact into the early medieval period, and that any suggestions to this effect are highly speculative. Yorke (2000: 86) indeed admitted that the 'degree of survival at this level was

probably variable and *regiones* are likely to have been of different dates, sizes and origins', and that it is not impossible to conceive that some were founded as late as the seventh century for administrative purposes. It is generally accepted that the largest 'Early Saxon' units, often referred to as 'early folk territories'—which are likely to have been kin-based and rooted in common identity rather than representing units of exploitation—covered an extensive area (perhaps 250-400km²) and were arguably divided into 'great estates' or 'multiple estates' in the 'Middle Saxon' period (Rippon 2012: 151). Units pertaining to either of these stages or tiers of territorial organisation, as well as larger kingdoms, may have been referred to as *regiones* in 'Late Saxon' texts.

The 'river and wold' model, formulated by Everitt (1977) and furthered by Phythian-Adams (1987) and Fox (1989), emphasised the impact of topography, pedology and water supply on early settlement and land exploitation patterns, and envisaged 'nested' territories within drainage basins and river valleys. Other studies (e.g. Everitt 1986; Semple 2008) have drawn attention to the unifying quality of rivers as a common resource, and valleys as natural units within which social territories were based and identities were formed. In Wessex as in other parts of the country, 'early folk territories' are thought to have been predominantly valley-based and separated by watersheds. The boundaries of Domesday hundreds, notably in southern Wiltshire, highlight the importance of valleys as the 'preferred zones for settlement and communication' (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 113; Williamson 2013: 55-6). As late as the post-medieval period, watersheds were still perceived as frontiers, to the extent that they were considered 'marriage horizons' (Williamson 2013: 80).

The fact that the names of some *regiones* reference areas of landscape character, particularly 'wastes', such as moors, woods or pastures (e.g. Markfield, 'open land of the Mercians' and Horninghold, 'the wold of the *Horningas*') which are considered to be communal in nature, has prompted speculation that 'Early Saxon' social territories and identities were rooted in rights to common land (Hooke 1998: 144, 160; Lewis *et al.* 1997: 55; cf. Oosthuizen 2011b). Areas of pasture often underlay or ran alongside territorial boundaries, sharing resources between communities; thus common land may not only have defined the identities of individual territories but may also have

facilitated their coalescence into sub-kingdoms (Everitt 1986: 144; Lewis *et al.* 1997: 59; Oosthuizen 2011b: 168).

Patterns of agriculture and transhumance have left tangible traces on the chalkland landscape of Wessex. Palaeoenvironmental analysis has shown that grassland pasture on the downland slopes was created through woodland clearance in the Neolithic, and was actively managed and maintained over millennia (French *et al.* 2007; O'Connor 2009). As Draper (2006: 112) has noted, although it is 'hard to underestimate the importance of the light and well-drained downland soils for arable agriculture prior to the advent of the heavy mouldboard plough', pasture was of vital importance to the downland economy. Of course, land-use varied considerably from area to area. There can be little doubt, for example, that arable production continued to intensify markedly in many areas of Salisbury Plain in the late Roman period, as attested by substantial lynchets and complex irrigation systems (McOmish *et al.* 2002: 100). The fertility of chalk soils is rapidly exhausted by intensive cultivation, however, and as mineral exhaustion impacted upon crop yields from the Iron Age onwards (Groube and Bowden 1982), grazing was vital for the survival of communities on a subsistence level. There was a continued and constant need for pasture. Pollen sequences from Wessex (albeit away from the chalkland, in Devon) suggest that there was 'little significant change' between the fourth and sixth centuries AD, and 'continuity at the end of the Roman period in an essentially pastoral landscape' (Rippon *et al.* 2006: 49). Moreover, a climatic downturn, particularly around AD 500, forced grazing to take precedence over crop growing (Baillie 1999; Oosthuizen 2011a).

This further reinforces the idea that pasture was a critical resource, access to which communities may have sought to emphasise through burial. Communal activity and assembly, perhaps partly related to the seasonal movement of livestock, is in itself likely to have been crucial in maintaining group identity, as Woolf (2000: 102-7) has shown through the exploration of parallels from Scandinavia and Ireland. Group identity is equally likely to have been expressed and consolidated via the medium of funerary events, which provided a stimulus for a kin group or groups to convene and to forge collective memories (Pantos and Semple 2004; Semple 2013: 44; Williams 1997: 17, 25;

2006). Prominent landscape features, as mnemonic aids, often formed an integral part of these processes (Devlin 2007: 46).

Routeways, boundaries and ‘community’ cemeteries

Close proximity between ‘Early Saxon’ burial sites and routeways is a prevalent occurrence in the study area, as in other regions: Semple (2013: 32) has identified this as a ‘consistent and important feature of cemetery location’ in Painsthorpe Wold, East Yorkshire, throughout the fifth to eighth centuries, while Brookes (2007b) has noted a persuasive trend for similar positioning in the ‘Early Saxon’ funerary landscape of Kent. It is necessary to consider the hierarchy and topography of contemporary routeways in the chalklands of Wessex. Aside from Roman roads, long-distance routes or droveways for seasonal transhumance commonly followed ridge-tops or watersheds, and are considered to be of considerable antiquity as they are often preserved in relict upland landscapes (Fowler 1998; 2000: 256; Hooke 1985: 58; McOmish *et al.* 2002: 121-2; though see Sherratt 1996: 218). Many of these routes are later recorded as *herepaðas* in ‘Middle-Late Saxon’ charter bounds. The often cyclical pattern of such routes (notably on the Marlborough Downs) contrasts with the linear configuration of Roman roads (Brookes 2007b: 145). Shorter local tracks connected the valley-based settlements with arable land on the lower slopes and pasture on the higher downland. The routes of these droveways and tracks probably fluctuated somewhat within a wider corridor, with different lines taken by different groups according to practicality and purpose, shifting as the ground became rutted and impassable (Fowler 2000; 256-7; Reynolds 1999). Their lines are likely to have become more consistent in the ‘Middle-Late Saxon’ period, however, as land ownership restricted lateral movement. A *lamba pæth*, ‘lambs’ path’, is mentioned in the tenth-century bounds of East Overton, for example (Fowler 2000: 216; S449).

Droveways provided the ‘obvious boundaries for farms, estates and administrative units’ in the early medieval period, resulting in the ‘strip parishes’ which characterise many areas of the chalkland (Draper 2006: 112). Although this is a broad generalisation, it usefully outlines the conceivable sequence of events: routeways, many of which may already have represented boundaries prior to the ‘Early Saxon’ period, later naturally came to demarcate estates and

began to be formalised and committed to writing during the 'Middle Saxon' period. Caution is advised when describing this as continuity, however, as the apparent stability in the location of boundaries does not necessarily signify that they were purposely maintained or managed (Draper 2006: 74; Hamerow 2002: 124). Furthermore, as the boundaries of these estates are likely to have been delineated and reaffirmed by 'perambulation' or 'riding the bounds', they would naturally have followed a track, path, or at least an accessible route (Devlin 2007: 46). In short, it could be argued that routeways were more directly influential on the siting of burials than boundaries.

Fifth- to eighth-century 'community' cemeteries in the study area—amongst others, Worthy Park and Itchen Abbas in Hampshire; Portesham, Long Crichel, Chettle House and High Lea Farm in Dorset; and Barrow Clump and Broad Chalke in Wiltshire—display a strong tendency to be located adjacent to local drove routes leading from the valley bottom up onto the downland (Fig. 8.5). The group of sixth-century intrusive barrow burials on Overton Hill, Wiltshire, are situated less than 100m from the Ridgeway, a route which links the Kennet valley with an area referred to in the tenth century as *dun landes*, 'downland' (Fowler 2000: 216; S449). This route has early origins in a more dispersed, fluctuating form, but was perhaps consolidated into a single track by the late Roman period, and was later followed by the boundary between West Overton and Avebury (Fowler 2000: 257).

It could be argued that part of the significance of cemeteries on routeways lay in controlling access to farmland and higher pasture, although it must be stressed this is only one of a number of possible interpretations, and that the significance of cemeteries was undoubtedly much more complex. How the control of access to resources through burial may have functioned in practice is unclear, but it is possible to surmise that cemeteries provided visual cues for people moving through the landscape, signalling the rights to land of particular groups, and were perhaps perceived as metaphysical boundaries (Semple 2003: 83). This would clearly have been a multifaceted process, and burials may have acted in conjunction with man-made physical boundaries or natural places that were imbued with meaning, for which evidence may not have survived. Cemeteries adjacent to routes leading up to common pasture may also have emphasised

and reinforced the sense of community identity fostered by shared grazing rights.

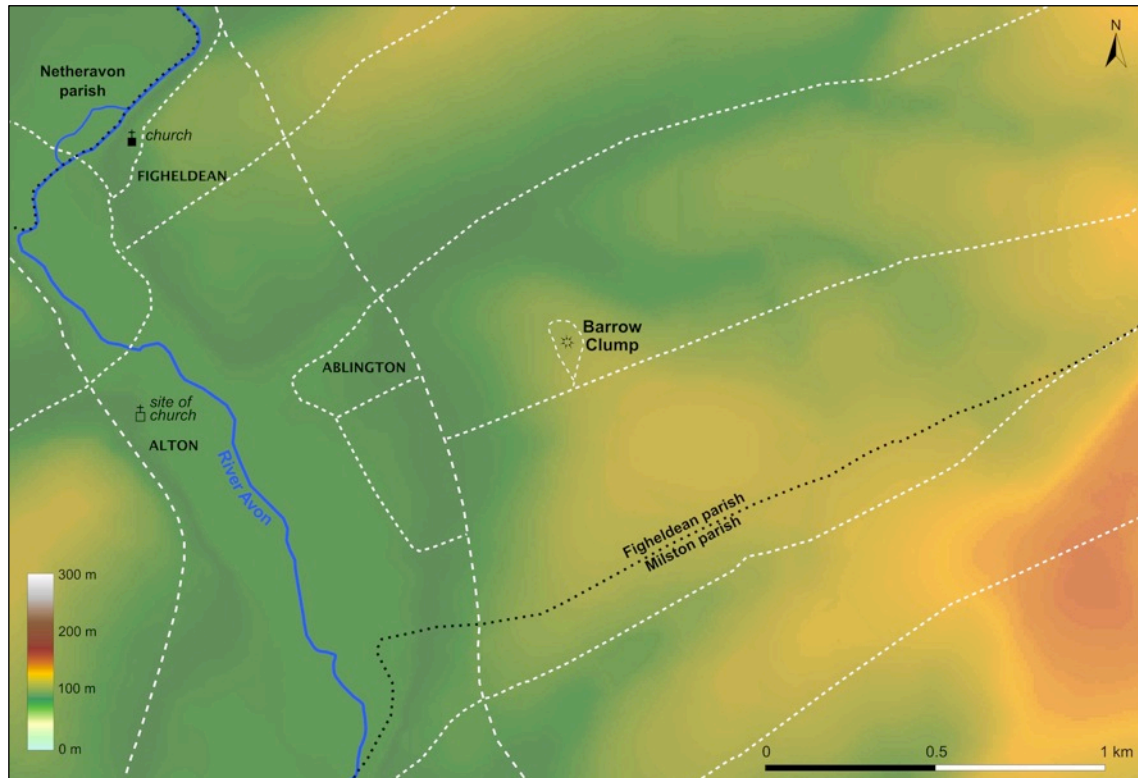


Fig. 8.5 Map showing Barrow Clump and, in white, the pattern of local droveways (on a southwest-northeast orientation between the valley bottom and the downland) and other routeways present by 1839 (Crowley 1995) (terrain map © Crown copyright/database right 2012. Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

Roman roads, in combination with funerary sites, may also have played an important role in the formation of group identities in certain areas. Recent research led by Tania Dickinson has demonstrated that the Roman road between Canterbury and Dover, flanked by high-status sixth- and seventh-century burial sites, was fundamental in consolidating the identity of the folk territory of the *Eastringas* in eastern Kent (Dickinson 2012; Dickinson *et al.* 2011). Place-name, documentary and archaeological evidence attests that the Finglesham–Eastry–Woodnesborough area was a political and religious nodal place. Royal status in some areas during the ‘Early Saxon’ period was ‘built up on foundations of pagan cult’ (Blair 2005: 57), and Woodnesborough’s association with the cult of Woden was thus particularly important for those seeking to establish an elite position (Behr 2000: 40; Dickinson 2012: 157). The group of predominantly sixth-century burial sites in the Wanborough area of Wiltshire—including the cemetery at Foxhill and the apparently isolated burial at

Callas II, both situated at the 'roadside' of Margary 41b, a few kilometres south of the Roman town of *Durocornovium*—may perhaps be conceptualised in the same light. The place-name Wanborough may have similar theophoric origins as that of Woodnesborough, although other derivations are possible (see Chapter 5.1). Foxhill is part of a line of three sites along the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs (together with Brimble Hill and Basset Down) which have produced saucer brooches, indicating links with the Upper Thames valley (Dickinson 1993b; Annable and Eagles 2010). These sixth-century burials predate the Wessex-Mercia tensions which later characterised this area of the Marlborough Downs (Semple 2003: 82; Yorke 1995: 61-2). The Wanborough area is connected via the aforementioned Roman road with the Upper Thames at Cricklade, and burials beside this road may have been intended to reinforce links with the Gewissan heartland, although it may also signify a continuation of the Roman tradition of roadside burial (Philpott 1991), or motivations of display and access.

It is possible that some 'Early-Middle Saxon' cemeteries actively marked out boundaries, as well as reinforcing them. This could be regarded as a somewhat 'processual' interpretation; indeed, the idea that megaliths defined territorial boundaries and legitimated rights to resources was espoused by Colin Renfrew in the 1970s (Renfrew 1976) and was later criticised for its disregard for historical context and specific cultural meaning (Hodder 1984: 53). Similar concepts were also approached from a structuralist standpoint by Shephard (1979a), who argued that barrows communicated ownership in a literal way. Although current academic debate has progressed from simple functionalism, territorial legitimisation through burial and monumentality remains a prominent theme in early medieval scholarship. Brookes (2007b: 149), for example, has recently argued that funerary monuments in early medieval Kent were used to 'visibly differentiate community territories', while Semple (2013: 46) has emphasised the significance of burial and the appropriation of earlier features in defining group associations and claims. Moreover, recent work on Irish traditions (e.g. O'Brien 2009: 142-3; Ó Carragáin and Sheehan 2010) argues for a strong connection between cemeteries and the margins of topographical and territorial zones, and the use of burial mounds as boundary markers. There is no reason why a similar relationship between boundaries and burials could

not have existed in Wessex, although unlike Bonney (1966; 1972; 1976) we cannot go so far as to associate them with 'Middle-Late Saxon' estate boundaries; at best, we can argue that funerary sites relate to 'natural boundaries' or earlier forms of territorial division (O'Brien 2009: 142).

How, then, can the appropriation of earlier features at 'community' cemeteries be interpreted in the context of territory and identity? These enduring monuments perhaps added legitimacy, authenticity and gravitas to their claims to land and rights over territory (Bevan 1999: 75; Lucy 1992; Williams 1997). Combining ephemeral funerary events with permanent above-ground memorials enabled the creation of long-lived memories connected to individuals and the community, which could be called upon at a later date (Halsall 2010: 253; Williams 2006: 146). Ritual procession and group assembly, during or after funerary events, may also have helped to consolidate boundaries, as well as playing a major part in identity reaffirmation (Williams 1999b: 75; 2006: 186). Prehistoric barrows may themselves have been situated on existing ancient boundaries, such as at Portway East (Stoodley 2007a). At Storeys Meadow and Snells Corner, within the possible extent of the *regio* of the *Meonware*, sizeable prehistoric barrows were selected as the focus of cemeteries in the sixth and seventh centuries, if not earlier, with funerary use continuing into the late seventh or early eighth century. The apparent associative, rather than intrusive, nature of the burials here could imply a greater sense of respect for the 'ancestors' (Charles-Edwards 1976; Semple 2008: 415), although the former presence of secondary burials in the plough-levelled mound at Storeys Meadow cannot be ruled out, given their discovery in the barrow ditch. There are similarities in landscape context between community cemeteries which incorporate barrows and cemeteries at which no evidence for appropriation has been found. Although there is undoubtedly a strong relationship between community cemeteries and rivers, especially in the Hampshire Downs *pays*, this cannot be divorced from the pattern of contemporary settlement.

Roman towns were also focal points for 'Early-Middle Saxon' communities in some areas, although in most cases funerary events are secondary to settlement choices. This is certainly the case in Dorset, where continuity in both occupation and burial at sites such as Poundbury can be identified. In the Meon valley, Hampshire, the literal superimposition of new buildings over the ruins of

villas may be regarded as attempts by certain groups to claim leadership (Halsall 2010: 259-60), although this is locally variable and riverside locations are preferred even in the absence of antecedents. With the establishment of cemeteries inside the former Roman walled settlements of Winchester and Bitterne, decisive changes were made to the functions and character of these spaces, as intramural burial became acceptable. The contravention of Roman traditions of extramural burial may even be regarded as a deliberate act of overwriting the Imperial past (Halsall 2010: 260), although the fact these cemeteries do not seem to predate the seventh century somewhat weakens this theory. It could be argued that the nature of funerary activity in urban areas and their environs, as opposed to rural areas, was influenced by the 'shadow' of Roman occupation. This is particularly notable in the placement of cemeteries adjacent to arterial routeways radiating from *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) and *Durnovaria* (Dorchester).

Isolated burials: land-use, territory and identity

Although broadly similar motivations regarding territory and land-use can also be proposed for the distinct phenomenon of isolated burial within antecedent features, the chronology and specific topographic context of this practice are highly idiosyncratic. The socio-political implications of this will be discussed in the following section. Although dating is often vague at best, most examples of this burial type within the study area can be placed in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Such sites are generally in more elevated positions than cemeteries, occupying what may have been common pasture. It could be suggested that their emergence partly relates to agricultural intensification and changing landscape character during (or shortly before) a period known as the 'long eighth century', c. 660-830 (Hamerow 2002: 192; Wickham and Hansen 2000). Pollen sequences indicate significant changes in land-use from the seventh century onwards, including the cultivation of cereals and other arable crops and the appearance of improved grassland (Rippon *et al.* 2006). A more prescribed and regulated use of space can also be inferred from settlement sites and from the Laws of Ine (Hamerow 2002: 193). The increasing pressure on land and resources may have led to bolder statements of ownership or rightful inheritance by an emerging landed class. As has previously been conjectured, the placement of isolated burials in earlier barrows may be seen in

a similar context as the ancestral 'grave-mounds' (*fert* or *ferta*) in contemporary Irish law tracts, the 'inhabitants' of which, according to superstitious belief, arbitrated and wielded power over claims to land, and repelled hostile advances, even in death (Charles-Edwards 1976; O'Brien 2009: 142-3).

Such burial sites are largely restricted to the chalk downland of Wiltshire and Dorset. In Cranborne Chase, the probable seventh-century intrusive barrow burials adjacent to the linear earthworks of Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch—Woodyates Inn, Pentridge 34 and Martin 28—are indicative of attempts to emphasise an established territorial boundary, although they are not necessarily related to an ethnic or cultural divide (*pace* Eagles 2004). Primary monumentality in the form of male barrow burials in the South Wiltshire Downs and the Marlborough Downs can be seen as more powerful, ostentatious symbols, created in response to challenges to territorial control (Semple 2003). The apparent absence of isolated barrow burials or monument appropriation for individual burial in other areas could signify that there was less pressure on resources, or that there was no dominant or centralised authority (Semple 2008: 415). It is possible, however, that such burials have simply not been found or recognised. The male burial within the earthworks of a hilltop enclosure at Oliver's Battery, together with isolated female burials which may be associated with barrows at Preshaw Farm and Dolly's Firs, suggest that the practice was employed in Hampshire, and that the comparatively few examples may largely reflect the lack of an antiquarian tradition.

There is a tendency for isolated burials to be associated with long-distance rather than short-distance droveways. Preshaw Farm (Hampshire), for example, is adjacent to a routeway linking Exton and Meonstoke with the downland. Swallowcliffe Down, Alvediston and Coombe Bissett I and II, as well as Yatesbury II (Wiltshire), are also situated next to long-distance droveways, later *herepaðas*. As noted above, common land is thought to have 'straddled' boundaries between territories, and long-distance droveways were in similar locations. Certain routeways, particularly those that followed watersheds, may thus have been situated in 'buffer zones' between territories. This was certainly the case in the Wolds, East Yorkshire, which on a larger scale formed a seasonally traversed upland 'stepping stone' between two core lowland regions (Semple 2013: 27). There, the positioning of isolated burials adjacent to upland

routes from the sixth century onwards indicates an ‘increasing attempt by a minority in signalling a particularly distinctive identity via the funerary scene’ (Semple 2013: 37), and in Wessex too, there appears to be an intensification in the exploitation of long-distance watershed routeways by an elite minority.

Whilst for Kent, Brookes (2007b: 151) notes that sites visible from Roman roads are favoured for burial over those overlooked by more ‘mundane’ droveways, in Wessex both types of long-distance route are utilised. An oft-cited clause in the Laws of Ine, which discourages travel *butan wege geond wudu gonge*, ‘through the wood off the highway’ (Attenborough 1922: 42-3), suggests that importance was given to main thoroughfares. Visibility from such routes may thus have been preferred for the location of funerary sites, as it allowed a wider audience to be targeted (Bevan 1999: 88). There is, however, an obvious issue with interpreting intrusive barrow burial in terms of display and visibility, as although barrows were prominent features, it remains to be reconciled how the presence of intrusive early medieval burials could be recognised by ‘outsiders’ unless externally marked in some way (Brookes 2007b: 148). In practice, display is likely to have relied on local or regional knowledge of the significance of landscape features—both man-made and natural—and while the funeral itself was inevitably transient, lasting memories of individuals and communities were forged through a combination of processes.

Society, ideology and religion

The evidence from ‘community’ cemeteries in the area of study has reaffirmed the previously asserted notion that the appropriation of earlier features was not merely the preserve of the upper echelons of society throughout the ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ period (Semple 2013: 51). While ‘monument reuse’ in the context of ‘community’ cemeteries occurred throughout the period of study, the emergence, from the later sixth century, of isolated primary and secondary barrow burials may be considered a reflection of an increasingly defined elite class. Even intrusive barrow burials which lack elaborate grave-goods are nevertheless characterised by a substantial investment of labour and resources (Semple 2003: 74). The appearance of above-ground monumentality in the form of penannular ditches is another feature of this transitional period which must be contextualised. This section investigates how the landscape setting of

burial and the reuse of earlier features relates to wider social changes and the inception of Augustinian Christianity, and addresses whether there is evidence for long-term sacred continuity or spiritual or ritual associations with earlier features in the study area.

Kinship, exchange and monumentality

Comparatively little is known about 'Early Saxon' social structure, although evidence from cemeteries indicates a degree of stratification in the fifth and sixth centuries, with hierarchies becoming more apparent from the late sixth century (Härke 1997; Hines 1995). It seems unlikely that society was wholly egalitarian, even in the immediate post-Roman period, as this had not been the case in Roman Britain, or indeed anywhere else in contemporary northwestern Europe (Crewe 2012: 209; Scull 1993; Williams 1999a). The general consensus is that 'Early Saxon' society was kin-based, although kin groups in a broader sense are likely to have been defined by identity and affiliations beyond actual blood-relations (Woolf 2000: 92).

Although it is problematic to extrapolate kinship ties from the archaeological record, the study of exchange can be a fruitful approach, as material culture is likely to have played an important role in establishing relationships between individuals and mediating relationships between communities (Sharples 2010: 92). In the kinship model, a single prominent individual or family retains a monopoly on resources, although this control is often short-lived (Brookes 2007a: 23; Hodges 1988; Sahlins 1972). The 'centre-periphery' theory advanced by Hodges (1988) sees the growing power of Merovingian Francia as having a destabilising effect on 'Early Saxon' society, the influx of prestige goods fostering increasing competition between groups to manipulate and retain their hegemony over exchange networks (Brookes 2007a: 23-4). Gift-exchange may also have accelerated the process of aggregation of kin groups around powerful leaders. Continental influence, reinforced by the adoption of Christianity, ultimately culminated in a tributary system which relied on defined social classes, and the establishment of fixed trading places, such as *Hamwic*, by the 'Middle Saxon' period (Brookes 2007a: 24; Hodges 1988: 5). Gift-exchange and commodity-exchange are not necessarily mutually exclusive,

however; nor should the latter be seen as a direct replacement of the former (Brookes 2007a: 26).

The group buried at the sixth-century cemetery focused on a Bronze Age barrow at Breamore epitomise the kin-based system of gift-exchange. Here, the mourners were clearly demonstrating the privileged status and far-reaching connections of their kin group through the conspicuous display of prestige imported items. It is not known what goods, materials or services were offered in return, but the buckets suggest that their status was partly achieved through hospitality and feasting (Edwards 2001: 78). A prominent landscape feature was selected in order to achieve maximum visibility from the River Avon, a route over which the kin group perhaps exerted control. A Frankish coin-weight has also been found close to the cemetery (Edwards 2001: 77), implying that commodity-exchange took place on the site and hinting at the development of more sophisticated economic arrangements. Reynolds (2012, cited by Hamerow *et al.* 2013: 62) has recently argued that some 'Early Saxon' cemeteries in Kent had an 'after-life' as the sites of markets and assembly places. River boundaries, fords and bridging points, with their liminal yet accessible qualities, as well as mounds, were particularly valued locations for assembly (Semple 2013: 73). The Breamore barrow was situated on a raised gravel terrace, adjacent to the river and in close proximity to a number of fording places (Eagles and Ager 2004; see Chapter 6.1), making it an attractive site for assembly in a variety of contexts: gift-exchange, trade, and perhaps an arena for kin-group relations and identity consolidation at funerary as well as non-funerary events.

It is perhaps significant that all of the other sixth-century examples of cemeteries associated with barrows in the study area are found either in the Salisbury Avon valley area or in the central Marlborough Downs at Overton Hill and all focus on morphologically unusual barrows. These sites lie within a corridor which formed a direct route between the English Channel at Hengistbury Head and the Upper Thames valley (Sherratt 1996: 216). At Winterbourne Gunner too, Frankish influence is manifest in the francisca or 'throwing axe', amongst other items (Eagles 2001: 215; Musty and Stratton 1964). Grave-goods recovered from these cemeteries transmit diverse and eclectic cultural signals and include, for example, Anglian items as well as

recycled or reproduced Roman pieces (Eagles 2001: 218). At Barrow Clump, dress styles and fashions are ostensibly relatively provincial, with little indication of influence from further afield (DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013: 17). The numerous Roman items are, however, a distinctive feature of this assemblage. It could be suggested that these objects were 'heirlooms', intended to emphasise the Romano-British ancestry of the individuals or the community, or that they reflect the adoption of *Romanitas* as a conscious strategy. Alternatively, they may have been coveted because they were 'antique' or were thought to have amuletic properties (Eckardt and Williams 2003; Meaney 1981). They belonged to a community which cannot be defined in simple ethnic terms, and their reuse is most likely to demonstrate the ingenuity of an evolving society in incorporating elements of an 'old' way of life into new fashions (White 1990: 146).

The barrow was a potent symbol for these 'cosmopolitan' 'Early Saxon' kin groups. The appropriation of earlier monuments, as well as the creation of primary mounds, can be considered as part of a wider European phenomenon of barrow building and above-ground commemoration during the fifth to eighth centuries, in areas such as the Rhineland and northern Switzerland (late fifth- and earlier sixth-century conquests of Merovingian Francia) and southern Scandinavia (Blair 2005: 53; Halsall 2010: 279). Through the appropriation of barrows, kin groups at Breamore and Winterbourne Gunner could thus demonstrate their far-reaching connections, not only with their grave-goods but also through their mode of burial. Although the use of existing monuments could be regarded as a socially inferior practice to the construction of primary mounds, it also fulfilled the aim of consolidating territorial control by referencing an established local and ancestral tradition (Loveluck 1995: 88-9).

The seventh century saw an increase in trade, partly related to the growing requirements of the Church, although the availability of Mediterranean imports seems to have waned (Hinton 1990). By the latter half of the same century, production in southern Hampshire, particularly in the Itchen valley north of *Hamwic*, probably exceeded subsistence level (Fasham and Whinney 1991: 78; Stoodley 2002: 327). Royal interest in fixed trading places was particularly focused on the revenue generated through the extraction of tribute or tolls, and *Hamwic* expanded and flourished under West Saxon control, their access to the

Thames curtailed by Mercian interests (Stoodley 2002: 327-8; Yorke 1995: 62). *Emporia* were not the only channel for trade in the 'Middle Saxon' period, however, and were part of an emerging group of diverse settlement sites (Moreland 2000; Wright 2012: 297). Above-ground monumentality, in the form of penannular ditches (perhaps accompanied by covering mounds) and marker posts, is a notable feature of cemeteries in *Hamwic*. Seventh-century burials surrounded by barrow ditches have also recently been excavated at Stoke Quay in the East Anglian *emporium* of Ipswich (Shelley 2013). Despite the absence of evidence for monumentality on the opposite side of the Itchen from *Hamwic*, burial sites in Bitterne are instead defined by the arguably more powerful statement of appropriating the built heritage of Roman *Claesentum*.

Noble classes, minsters and 'elite' burial places

By the later seventh century, if not earlier, an integral element of societal structure was the system of *fyrð-bote* or universal military service, essentially a form of taxation (Adams 2004: 117). The relationship between land tenure and military service is apparent in the Laws of Ine:

Gif gesiðcund mon landagende forsitte fierð, geselle CXX scill. and ðolie his landes; unlandagende LX scill., 'if a nobleman who holds land neglects military service, he shall pay 120 shillings and forfeit his land; a nobleman who holds no land shall pay 60 shillings' (Attenborough 1922: 52-3).

The confiscation of land was thus a way of enforcing *fyrð* attendance to which a fine might have failed to effect (Adams 2004: 118). Reynolds (2009: 212) has suggested that the individual buried in a coffin on the boundary between two Domesday manors at Netheravon Airfield I, Wiltshire, might represent a dispossessed thegn or *gesið*, and it could be speculated that the individual forfeited his land by neglecting the *fyrð*. A routeway marked on the First Edition OS map—probably an ancient local driveway leading up onto the downs—does, however, follow the same course as this boundary and is thus likely to predate it. The drove-side location, coupled with the possible former presence of a covering mound (see Chapter 5.1), suggest that conspicuous display or the control of resources were important considerations. Moreover, another isolated individual burial (or pair of burials) has been found in an almost identical position 350m to the north, at Netheravon Airfield II. Burials of this type on

routeways and/or boundaries are consistent with the changes in society and landholding during the seventh century.

Around the start of the 'long eighth century', kings began to grant *bocland*—land held in perpetuity with the support of a written charter—to noble families for the purpose of ecclesiastical foundation. The inalienable right to land, as well as the exemption from *fyrð-bote* that *bocland* provided, led to the exploitation of the system by nobles who acquired land and benefits under the false pretences of founding minsters (Blair 2005: 101). It is probable, however, that many of the grants merely formalised and added permanence to the tenure of land already held by prominent kin groups (Blair 2005: 104). The new stability afforded by *bocland* prompted an upsurge of elite investment in the landscape (Rippon 2010: 62), and the exertion of an 'increasingly firm grip ... by local aristocrats on the land and the people who worked it' (Hamerow 2002: 193). Although this period was generally characterised by a decline in expenditure on grave-goods, the final phase of furnished burial among the elite classes was intrinsically linked with this renewed interest in the rural landscape. Barrow burials, both intrusive and primary, were a key part of this. The 'reuse' of earlier monuments in this period was not necessarily concerned with 'ancestry'; rather, it could be argued that the tradition was in a sense 'forward looking' and linked with aspirations regarding landholding and the 'overwriting' of the past (Halsall 2010). Such ambitions ultimately came to fruition in the 'long eighth century' with the attainment by the nobility of inalienable rights to land.

It is eminently plausible that the high-status individuals buried in barrows during the later seventh and early eighth centuries—such as at Roundway Hill, Swallowcliffe Down, Coombe Bissett and Ford—were baptised Christians (Welch 2011: 275). In this case, why did their mourners choose to forego burying their dead within minster foundations, instead preferring elevated locations on watersheds or prominent positions alongside routeways? For the English royalty and nobility, there were a number of obstacles to overcome before churchyard burial, and indeed the Roman Church in general, could be wholly accepted. As well as more general misgivings over submission to centralised authority, there are compelling reasons why, even after baptism, they would elect to 'retain traditional modes of burial' elsewhere in the landscape (Blair 2005: 59). As previously mentioned, 'ancestral' barrow burials

were thought both to mark and protect the boundaries of family land; thus being 'relegated to the graveyards of churches' also meant losing their power to 'defend the land which they left to their heirs', during a crucial stage in the process of territorial formation (Blair 2005: 60; Charles-Edwards 1976: 86). Simple motives of territorial hegemony and control do not necessarily explain the appearance around this time of isolated female barrow burials, however.

Perhaps the most acceptable form of Christianity among the elite classes was monasticism, due to its compatibility with kin-based society and its amenability to incorporation into existing noble households (Blair 2005: 58). The area of study, in particular, is part of a central zone in which substantial interaction between the British Church—already characterised by a strong monastic element—and the emerging English Church took place (Blair 2005: 25). There was an upsurge in monastic patronage and, at least nominally, Christian piety amongst the aristocracy during the latter half of the seventh century. Indeed, as Yorke (2003: 245) has observed, 'active personal involvement of royalty in monasticism seems to have been initiated by kings themselves', with two recorded instances of abdication (Caedwalla and Centwine) on the grounds of pilgrimage or retirement to monastic life. Cult status was reached by heroic ascetic figures such as Guthlac and his sister Pega, who were members of the Mercian royal family (Colgrave 1956; Meaney 2001). Much of this outward display of religious devotion is likely to have been founded in political strategy by noble families themselves, and in religious propaganda by contemporary chroniclers. The hagiographic *vitae* of the early eighth century were designed to legitimate the 'ancient sanctity of monastic houses' (Semple 2013: 137), which were inexorably linked with noble houses.

The female burials on Swallowcliffe Down and Roundway Hill are contemporary with this monastic boom in Wessex during the reign of Ine. The first of numerous royal nunneries to emerge during the late seventh and early eighth centuries was founded by Bugga, the daughter of Centwine (Yorke 2003: 254). Women were the 'religious specialists' of royal households, and wielded considerable secular power based on mortuary cults (Blair 2005: 85). Although it is unlikely that the individual buried at Swallowcliffe was herself an abbess (Blair 2005: 230), the burial perhaps drew upon some of the motifs of the eremitic tradition. It could be conjectured that the barrow was considered an

apposite location for solitary contemplation, and that the bed burial suggests she was literally ‘taking up residence’ in an anchoritic sense. The liturgical sprinkler and other items concealed within a box may suggest that she performed special rituals (Geake 1992: 93; Petts 2011: 111), and comparisons can be drawn with the bed burial of a young adult female with leprosy at Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire, also accompanied by a casket (Malim and Hines 1998; Williams 2006: 101). It is possible that noble families sought to elevate their female representatives to cult status, and part of this process included burial in isolated yet accessible locations such as Swallowcliffe Down. Connection with the landscape was important, and hilltops may have held particular resonance with local populations (Blair 2005: 144; Semple 2010: 27). The deposition of a spearhead within the Swallowcliffe barrow may relate to the veneration of the site.

As has been observed in previous studies (e.g. Geake 1997; Semple 2013: 48), isolated female burials in the area of study are found predominantly in earlier barrows, while individual burials within primary mounds tend to be male. To this we can add that male barrow burials are more likely than female secondary interments to be located adjacent to Roman roads (e.g. Coombe Bissett and Ford), rather than other categories of routeway. Drove ways were used by the general populace in everyday life and to access seasonal pasture, and burial sites adjacent to them may perhaps be compared with wayside shrines, as barrows containing revered female individuals were perhaps venerated by travellers (Everitt 1986: 186-7). Roman roads, conversely, were used by peripatetic kings and sub-kings to traverse their territories (Brookes 2007b: 150; Semple 2013: 226), although there is no reason why other sectors of society would not also have continued to use these routes.

Divergent burial customs

Many of the ‘richly’ furnished seventh- and early eighth-century isolated barrow burials in the study area—Rodmead Hill and West Knoyle in Wiltshire, and Woodyates Inn in Dorset, in addition to those previously mentioned—are located on what is considered to have been the western periphery of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ influence at least up until the seventh century (Eagles 2001). Several of these burials lie within an area, south of the Wylve and in Cranborne Chase, in

which numerous place-names of Brittonic derivation can be identified, which Eagles (2001: 223) views as indicative of “Anglo-Saxon” intrusion into new territory’ (cf. Draper 2006: 42-3). Loveluck (1995) has similarly argued that individuals buried in graves on the fringes of ‘Germanic’ cultural influence in the Peak District belonged to a ‘native’ elite which chose to adopt styles and burial customs in order to ingratiate themselves with, or assimilate into, the new ‘Anglo-Saxon’ dominant ruling class. This author would, however, argue that it is unnecessary and potentially unhelpful to make distinctions based on ethnic affiliation, and that the funerary evidence from the study area is clearly more complex than a simplistic bipartite division between ‘British’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cultural influence allows.

Broadly speaking, however, funerary customs usually categorised as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ seem to have become rapidly established in the central and eastern part of the study area, notably in the Salisbury Avon valley. This was perhaps due to a comparatively dense population distribution (apparent from the cemetery sites despite the elusiveness of settlement evidence) of relatively mobile and outward looking kin groups, which in turn facilitated the transfer and exchange of ideas (Eagles 2001: 201). Different communities and social groups forged their own funerary identities, some of which preserved Romano-British traditions, while others were more receptive of imported material culture and new customs (Lucy 1998: 105). The various burial practices that can be recognised in the area of study are likely to represent a fusion of diverse aspects of native and non-native traditions (Draper 2006: 40-3, 49-50). Although there was no single, homogenous ‘British’ burial rite during the fifth to eighth centuries, and unaccompanied burials are inherently problematic to interpret and categorise, unfurnished or sparsely furnished cemeteries of west-east graves are generally attributed to the ‘indigenous’ post-Roman population, as they are deemed to represent a continuation of the standard late Roman rite (Draper 2006: 49; Petts 2004; 2009). Seventh-century sites in Dorset, such as Ulwell and Tolpuddle Ball, are notable examples of this cemetery type, and at least the latter has Roman antecedents, if not direct continuity. Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire, with its single knife and Roman masonry grave-linings, also appears to display sub-Roman traits (Petts 2004).

The problems inherent in defining burial sites according to ethnicity are apparent in a distinct group of burial sites in Dorset at which earlier features are appropriated. The small groups of secondary burials within barrows at Eggardon Hill and Long Cichel and the cemetery within a causewayed enclosure at Hambledon Hill have all been labelled 'Anglo-Saxon', despite the fact that the graves were unfurnished or contained a single utilitarian item and were orientated west-east or southwest-northeast. Although it could be suggested that these sites convey a 'hybrid' identity, it is also true that they are contemporary with the 'Final Phase', which is in any case characterised by a decline in the provision of grave-goods. Isolated unaccompanied barrow burials on Salisbury Plain, such as Winterbourne Stoke I and Ell Barrow, may be later or may belong to a different tradition. Conversely, isotope analysis of burials found at Hicknoll Slait in Somerset, associated with an iron knife, glass beads and an unstratified 'sugar-loaf' shield boss, indicated that at least one of the individuals was raised locally (Davey 2005: 112-21; Rippon 2012: 302-3; Tabor 2008: 173-4).

The idea that monument appropriation is an innately 'Anglo-Saxon' custom is in itself questionable, as barrow burial is attested elsewhere in early medieval Britain and Ireland (Charles-Thomas 1976; Driscoll 1998; Maldonado 2011; O'Brien 1999; 2009; Petts 2000; cf. Semple 2013: 51-3) and it is likely, as Blair (2005: 54) has noted, that 'Early Saxon' communities were influenced by their 'insular neighbours' as well as their continental ones. Roman antecedents are also plausible (Williams 1998b); indeed, Overton Hill is an example of an 'associative' Roman barrow cemetery. Ronald Hutton (2011) has recently drawn attention to the compelling evidence for Romano-British ritual activity at prehistoric ceremonial sites, while Darvill (2004: 227) has suggested that the level of Romano-British interest in long barrows has been 'significantly underestimated'. Blair (1995: 3) has also noted that 'so much thought has been given to the possible influence of British Christians on the Anglo-Saxons that we have scarcely bothered to ask about the influence of British pagans'. There is some evidence in Dorset for a Romano-British tradition of intrusive barrow burial, although the examples are insecurely dated and could equally be post-Roman.⁵ Nevertheless, they further emphasise the fact that monument

⁵ A round barrow adjacent to the Roman road between Bradford Peverell and Dorchester was

appropriation in the area of study is not restricted to burials traditionally categorised as ‘Anglo-Saxon’.

Antecedent and natural features as ritual foci

Although much ‘Early-Middle Saxon’ ritual activity is inevitably archaeologically invisible (Blair 2005: 184), there are some indications of the spiritual connotations of certain landscape features and locales. Archaeological and place-name evidence suggests that hilltops held particular significance (Semple 2010: 27). The adaptation of Romano-Celtic temples and hilltop sites for possible Christian worship or burial—such as at Lamyatt Beacon and Pagan’s Hill in Somerset (Leech 1986; Rahtz 1951; Rahtz and Harris 1957)—is attested from the late Roman period (Yorke 1995: 155). The locations of groups of burials of ambiguous religious and cultural affiliation in elevated locations at Winkelbury Hill, Eggardon Hill and Hambledon Hill were evidently influenced by a combination of topographical and antecedent elements. These sites are simultaneously accessible and isolated; both Winkelbury and Eggardon are situated in close proximity to ridge-top routeways and the spiritual seclusion of the former site is enhanced by its separation from the ridge by a spur dyke (Semple 2010: 27). All three sites are also just outside the ramparts of hillforts.

Natural springs are another facet of both pagan and Christian ritual cognition which survived into the medieval period as cult sites (Morris 1989; Semple 2010: 30; Yorke 1995: 156). Manor Farm, Portesham (Dorset), located in the vicinity of a spring head, was a focus for burial from the Iron Age onwards and the location of a possible Romano-Celtic temple, indicating the long-term spiritual significance of the site. At Ulwell (Dorset) too, place-name evidence together with the location of the seventh-century cemetery demonstrate the significance of the spring in the medieval period, if not earlier (see Chapter 7.1). The importance of such water sources for settlement must also be recognised, however, as both funerary and non-funerary sites are associated with spring

found to contain an intrusive inhumation accompanied by Samian ware (NMR SY 69 SE 60), while a barrow at Melcombe Horsey contained an intrusive inhumation with Samian ware and a Roman coin (Grinsell 1959: 119; NMR ST 70 SW 56; RCHME 1970b: 175). At Portesham, a bowl barrow denominated Cunnington’s Ridgeway 8 contained a superficial intrusive child inhumation in a grave constructed using a Roman roof slab, with a Roman pottery sherd (NMR SY 68 NW 69; RCHME 1970a: 449-50). An intrusive inhumation with a Romano-British penannular brooch was also discovered in a round barrow overlooking Coombe Bottom, Purbeck (NMR SY 97 NE 27).

lines at the geological interface between greensand and chalk in Wiltshire and Hampshire. The transitional qualities of watery places, which were perhaps perceived as cognitive boundaries between the realms of the living and the dead, as well as more literal territorial and spatial divisions in the landscape, are another recognised element of early medieval mortuary topography (Lund 2010), exemplified at Lake, Woodford valley, Wiltshire (see Chapter 5.1).

Negative connotations of antecedent features: deviant burial

As previous studies (notably Reynolds 1998; 2009; Semple 1998) have shown, increasingly negative perceptions of antecedent features during the 'Middle-Late Saxon' period can be gleaned through documentary and archaeological evidence. The appropriation of earthworks and megalithic monuments at execution cemeteries or isolated deviant burial sites is perhaps symptomatic of the influence of the Church upon attitudes towards pre-Christian sites, although as the endurance of barrow burial throughout the period of study shows, such perceptions are unlikely to have become widespread among rural populations until the end of the 'Middle Saxon' period. The isolated burial at Stonehenge, Wiltshire, is the most plausible example of judicial execution to date from the period of study, and the lack of evidence for the appropriation of megalithic sites for 'conventional' burial supports the idea that superstitious beliefs surrounded such features during the period of study (Semple 2003).

Prominent linear earthworks were perhaps perceived as liminal places or thresholds, or as stark reminders of authority (Williams 2006: 90). The tendency for execution sites to be situated at the limits of territories can be conceptualised in a similar way. Furthermore, as has been shown earlier in this chapter, boundaries or 'buffer zones' between territories are likely to have been characterised by wastes or agriculturally marginal land, which is likely to have had practical implications for the siting of such cemeteries. The 'execution cemetery' on Roche Court Down, Wiltshire, is characterised both by the appropriation of linear earthworks and by a 'boundary' location, although the burials have not been securely dated and there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the individuals had been subject to formal execution. Old Dairy Cottage, Hampshire, is located adjacent to a Roman road, and its placement in a frequently traversed location was perhaps intended to act as an effective and

visible deterrent against wrongdoing (Reynolds 2009). This site is also more likely to postdate the period of study, however, as indicated by radiocarbon dating and by the fact that comparable cemeteries nearby (Meon Hill and Stockbridge Down) were dated to the tenth or eleventh century (Reynolds 2009: 116, 121).

Draper (2004) has also suggested that some unaccompanied isolated burials in barrows on Salisbury Plain and the South Wiltshire Downs might be 'Late Saxon' execution victims, yet deviant burials in barrows are generally rare (Thäte 2007: 276). In the absence of solid evidence for execution, fifth- to eighth-century 'deviant' burials are equally likely to have alternative explanations, such as interpersonal violence or the continuation of the late Roman decapitation burial rite, which 'seems not to have had a judicial motivation but a religious one' (Philpott 1991; Reynolds 1998: 229). That is not to say, however, that capital punishment did not take place in the period of study; the Laws of Ine, for example, explicitly refer to punishments for wrongdoing, including hanging and the severing of hands or feet. Moreover, early execution sites have been detected archaeologically in other areas of England (Reynolds 2009).

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this thesis was to ascertain whether the antecedent landscape influenced the funerary locations chosen by communities in Wessex between the mid-fifth and mid-ninth centuries AD. It also aimed to investigate which monuments or earlier features were particularly fundamental to mortuary topography in the period and area of study. The central objectives were to carry out a detailed examination of burial sites and their landscape context in a discrete area of Wessex and to determine the factors that contributed to the selection of funerary locales, both on a localised landscape level and on a broader societal level. These objectives have been achieved through the collation and analysis of published and unpublished archaeological material, place-name evidence from charters and other sources, with the aid of GIS.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Prehistoric and Roman remains provided the foci for a multitude of funerary locales in 'Early-Middle Saxon' Wessex. Indeed, over half of the burial sites examined in this research were identified as directly associated with at least one such feature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly half of the appropriated features were barrows, although a significant proportion were non-funerary in nature. Through analysis of the antiquarian and modern archaeological investigation history, it has been shown that sub-regional and localised patterns in the appropriation of different types of antecedent monument may in some, but not all, cases reflect true variations. Barrows possessing unusual morphological characteristics appear to have been preferentially selected for appropriation in some areas, but other factors, such as topographic prominence, visibility, and proximity to other man-made or natural features are likely to have been equally influential. It is perhaps only possible to conclude that the appropriation of earlier 'monuments' within certain cemeteries during the 'Early-Middle Saxon' period resulted from highly localised preferences (Semple 2013: 106-7). Nevertheless, it can be argued that these monuments were exploited to add weight to territorial claims, enhance the visual impact of

funerary sites, and provide mnemonic cues for future events. The emergence of isolated barrow burial from the late sixth century is strongly associated with the definition and consolidation of emerging or evolving territorial units, namely kingdoms and sub-kingdoms.

The evidence indicates that contemporary land-use zones, patterns of movement and the creation and consolidation of group identities had a decisive influence on the location of community cemeteries, and all of these aspects articulated together as part of an integrated landscape. It has been shown that droveways and other routeways had a strong influence on the locations both of boundaries—many of which were consolidated and formalised in the ‘Middle-Late Saxon’ period—and of burial sites, particularly in the chalkland *pays*. Community cemeteries tended to be situated adjacent to short-distance droveways linking the valleys and the downland, reflecting the expression and perpetuation of group identities and the assertion of claims to land and resources, particularly pasture. Ancient monuments were, in some cases, employed to enhance and authenticate these assertions, to provide focal points for group assembly and identity reaffirmation, and to foster a sense of place. Existing barrows were a common but not universal choice in this context.

Conversely, isolated high-status burials were often situated beside long-distance droveways or Roman roads and on watersheds, zones which represented both physical boundaries and territorial frontiers. This topographical positioning relates to issues of display—perhaps even conscious attempts by elite groups to attract veneration and cult status for their dead—territorial consolidation and changes in land-use and in economic and social structures from c. 600 and particularly during the ‘long eighth century’. Barrow burial and the funerary appropriation of prominent earthworks continued in parallel with the gradual adoption of churchyard burial over a period of several centuries from c. 650 onwards. Elite groups exploited and adapted an already established tradition, using this recognised funerary motif to associate themselves with the land and to garner support among the populace, but also to demonstrate their dominance and territorial hegemony.

The appropriation of antecedent features was certainly not an elite invention of the late sixth century, having taken place in the context of community

cemeteries—and indeed settlements—from the fifth century onwards. Barrow burial was already a powerful symbol throughout the area of study as well as further afield, and a ‘medium understood’ by local populations (Loveluck 1995: 88). By the seventh century, however, elite groups perhaps sought to monopolise the established tradition of monument appropriation as part of a political strategy (Crewe 2012: 208, 228-9). Elite families, regardless of ethnicity, adopted a new approach to an established funerary tradition in response to a rapidly changing society and shifting territorial frameworks. There are striking similarities between the topographic positioning of the ‘Early Saxon’ community cemetery at Winterbourne Gunner and that of the later isolated burial or burials at Ford, for example, suggesting deliberate emulation. Royal houses and other elite kin groups perhaps felt it pragmatic to retain the associations and support of the predominantly pagan rural population (Yorke 2003: 245), although superstitions surrounding ancestral sites may have prevailed in all sectors of society. Reuse and monumentality need not have had overtly ethnic or religious connotations; it was a custom which conveyed allegiance to a particular cultural paradigm, of which there were nonetheless strong regional and chronological variations.

The funerary reuse of earlier monuments cannot be considered a uniquely ‘Anglo-Saxon’ tradition, as the numerous parallels and antecedents—both continental and insular—are manifest. Intrusive barrow burial and the funerary appropriation of other prehistoric earthworks has been seen to occur in areas of Dorset too, even in the absence of conclusive evidence for culturally ‘Anglo-Saxon’ traits. This not only demonstrates the mutual interaction between communities during this period, but also the potency that ancient features held throughout the study area, especially when combined with distinctive topographical elements.

CAVEATS AND TRAJECTORIES

Inevitably, a number of methodological issues and limitations, as well as possible refinements and future avenues of study, have been identified through the course of this research. The criteria for determining direct or indirect association produced some ambiguous instances of appropriation, which may merely represent coincidental superimposition. The antiquarian date of many of

the discoveries also has resulted in vague and insecure dating, and the re-examination of finds held in museum collections or a programme of radiocarbon dating, building on that undertaken by Cherryson (2005a), may help to establish a more precise chronology for monument appropriation. It may also be fruitful to explore the possible sub-Roman tradition of intrusive barrow burial in Dorset, preferably with the application of scientific dating.

Due to the constraints of the thesis, it was only feasible to include sites with conclusive evidence for burial, but integrating data on potential funerary sites from the Portable Antiquities Scheme could be of value. Despite the poor preservation of barrows and other earthworks in many parts of the study area, recently excavated sites, such as Storeys Meadow in Hampshire, demonstrate that the potential for the discovery of early medieval cemeteries associated with even plough-levelled monuments remains high. Geophysical survey and targeted excavations at potential sites, especially taking into account the wider area around barrows, may have considerable value, although caution should of course be exercised in the case of invasive techniques. Finally, as attested by Fowler's (2000) research on Overton Down, it would be useful to interrogate further the relative chronology of burial sites and routeways, which could be achieved with the use of aerial photographic transcriptions recently produced by the National Mapping Programme (NMP) and LiDAR imagery.

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