

Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon Period Research topics and priorities

Settlements

We need more targeted approaches to the identification and recording of Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon evidence, which is often obscured by later settlements and rarely given the priority it deserves, particularly within the development management process. Within settlements, test-pitting produces reasonable results for later periods, but significant new data for this period will only be produced via evaluation and excavation. Results need to be published in a timely manner.

In undeveloped areas, methodologies need to be developed to allow us to interpret what Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon surface scatters represent. Analysis of the distribution of artefacts recorded by the PAS or recovered by fieldwork would help in establishing relative settlement distribution, densities and cultural links.

The benefits of 'big data' projects have been demonstrated, but their conclusions are necessarily very high level. More detailed regional and sub-regional studies have provided finer-grained results, and more of these should be undertaken. Projects need to use GIS to manage the multiple large datasets required.

We would benefit from a detailed study of the changes in settlement types and forms over time during the Early, Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon periods. Such studies need to take a sub-regional approach, and need to consider environmentally distinct areas and known political entities.

Characterisation of settlement forms and functions is still desirable and necessary, to be informed by fieldwork including fieldwalking, metal-detecting, geophysical survey and trial trenching. These should include settlement diversity models based on size, status and function.

The apparent dislocation between Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon settlements needs to be quantified and tested.

The extent and nature of Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon landscape reorganisation, village nucleation, field systems and land reclamation all need further exploration.

Reference should be made to the way that Anglo-Saxon settlements and organisation of the landscape influenced the medieval landscape.

Further work is required on the relationships between churches and settlement sites throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

The discrepancy between the archaeological evidence for the Danish occupation of East Anglia and the description of destruction provided by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* requires further study. Finds data collected by the PAS has a lot to contribute here.

The development and role of towns in the Anglo-Saxon landscape needs to be considered; changes in their internal layouts and housing densities, their role as centres of supply and demand all need further study. The relationship between urban sites and their rural hinterlands needs to be explored.

The development of urbanism outside of *wics* needs further study, including its development around middle Anglo-Saxon minster sites, Alfredian/Danish burhs and late Anglo-Saxon monastic sites.

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Churches, Monasteries and Cemeteries

The adoption of Christianity at a popular level is still poorly understood and further study is needed to understand how this manifests itself within the archaeological record.

The role, development and landscape impact of monasteries and minsters needs further study. They are especially important for understanding the conversion to Christianity and the development of settlements, as well as for monastic archaeology. Multi-disciplinary studies incorporating archaeological, historical and landscape research are necessary.

The relationship between early Christian sites and Roman sites needs to be explored further, especially given the archaeological potential of the latter.

Middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are rare discoveries, but where they are located they need to be well excavated and recorded, with a full range of scientific techniques applied. Attention needs to be paid to grave structures and traces of coffin fittings, where these survive.

The refinement of radiocarbon dating through Bayesian modelling, and the application of oxygen isotope analysis to human bone in order to date and plot population movement should be more widely explored.

More work needs to be done to identify and characterise the diversity of funerary practices employed during the Conversion period. The origins of churchyard burial are still obscure in the region.

The full impact and implications of the results of the *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods Project*, with furnished burial ending c. AD 680, need to be contemplated and reconciled with existing interpretations.

Isolated burials and groups of burials should be routinely radiocarbon-dated in order to ascertain whether or not they are Middle or Late Anglo-Saxon.

The nature of the impact of the Danish incursions on religious sites (and other classes of sites) needs to be explored more fully.

The archaeological potential of many of the region's Late Anglo-Saxon monastic houses remains very high, and further documentary research and fieldwork would be beneficial. This should examine the wider landscape holdings of the houses and examine their role in the Late Anglo-Saxon landscape.

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Economy

The increased interest in environmental determinism and the importance of agricultural production need to be capitalised upon and explored more fully. The development of Anglo-Saxon fieldscapes needs further investigation. How far can the size and shape of fields be related to the agricultural regimes identified? To what extent are Roman field systems reused? What is the evidence for open field systems in the region in the Anglo-Saxon period?

Within excavated sites, priority should be given to the detailed examination of good animal bone, charred cereal deposits and palaeoenvironmental data, which has the potential to inform emerging models of Anglo-Saxon agricultural practices.

The role of water management and land reclamation are important themes. This includes the Fenlands, the reclamation of coastal marshes, the creation of water meadows and meadow pasture in the river valleys and the role of rivers and canals in the economic development of the landscape. The exploitation of the shoreline also requires greater study.

Production and processing of food for urban markets is a key element of understanding the relationship between towns and their rural hinterlands. The interchange between rural food supplies and urban industrial and craft products was essential for both town and village or hamlet. The East of England, historically rural with few large towns, is well-placed to study this problem.

Environmental archaeology in urban areas should be targeted on relationships with sites in the rural hinterland. There are very few assemblages of bones and charred crop from rural farm sites. This is particularly the case for the Middle Anglo-Saxon to post-medieval periods. Without more information on rural sites involved in production and processing our picture of urban economies will remain severely biased.

Craft production: There is a need for a much larger rural assemblage of artefacts to study distribution of product types. The Anglo-Saxon pottery industry is still not properly understood. A regional assessment of evidence for local production centres would be useful, following models for Cambridgeshire and, more specifically, Ipswich Ware. Rural production centres for pottery should be targeted for excavation.

Datasets held by the PAS, the Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds and HERs should be better integrated to enable detailed assessment. The details of material culture need to be studied, including careful examination of technological innovation, the adoption of new materials and practices, the production of specialised products and the pattern of artistic influence.

Links with north-west Europe need to be further examined, and whether ethnicity and regional contacts can be traced through the finds.