

SAXMUNDHAM'S EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ORIGINS: EXCAVATIONS TO THE EAST OF WARREN HILL

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Summary

Recent excavations on the valley terrace to the east of the river Fromus have identified the first definitive evidence of Saxmundham's early Anglo-Saxon origins. Part of a farmstead or small hamlet was revealed, represented by the remains of three timber hall-type structures, nine sunken featured buildings and numerous pits. A typical range of finds for the period was recovered which, along with radiocarbon dates, indicate that the settlement was occupied during the late fifth to sixth centuries AD. By the late Saxon period, the focus of settlement appears to have shifted to the south around the church of St John the Baptist and close to the river crossing.

INTRODUCTION

SAXMUNDHAM IS A SMALL market town in eastern Suffolk, located approximately 28km to the north-east of Ipswich. Much of the historic core of the town extends along the valley to the west of the river Fromus, a minor tributary of the river Alde. The investigations that form the subject of this paper were focused some 150m to the east of the river, where 6ha of former agricultural land was to be redeveloped for housing. Following on from geophysical survey and evaluation trenching, two excavation areas were opened by Oxford Archaeology (OA) East in the latter part of 2015.¹ In addition to the anticipated early Bronze Age pits and middle Iron Age settlement evidence, the larger of the two areas (Area 2) also revealed extensive early Saxon remains, the presence of which had not been suggested by the previous evaluations. The early Saxon settlement was located on the sand and gravel of the river terrace, broadly following the 15–16m contour and extending to the east of Warren Hill and north of Street Farm Road (TM 388 634; SXM 043; ESF23311; Fig. 134). This article focuses on the Anglo-Saxon evidence; the prehistoric remains (shown as dark grey on Fig. 134) are summarised in a separate article and the excavation report is freely available to download from the OA Library.²

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Recorded as *Sasmunde(s)ham* (and under various other spellings) in the Domesday Book (1086), the name may refer to the homestead or village of a thegn named *Seaxmund*.³ At the time of the Norman Conquest, Saxmundham was part of the hundred of Plomesgate and had two manors (Hurts and Murkets), both held by Roger Bigot.⁴ Three churches are recorded associated with the manors, of these the church of St John the Baptist, part of the manor of Murkets, lies approximately 450m to the south of the site on Church Hill Road. This manor was eventually joined with the main manor Hurts in 1778; the current Hurts Hall is set within parkland to the south of the church (Fig. 134).

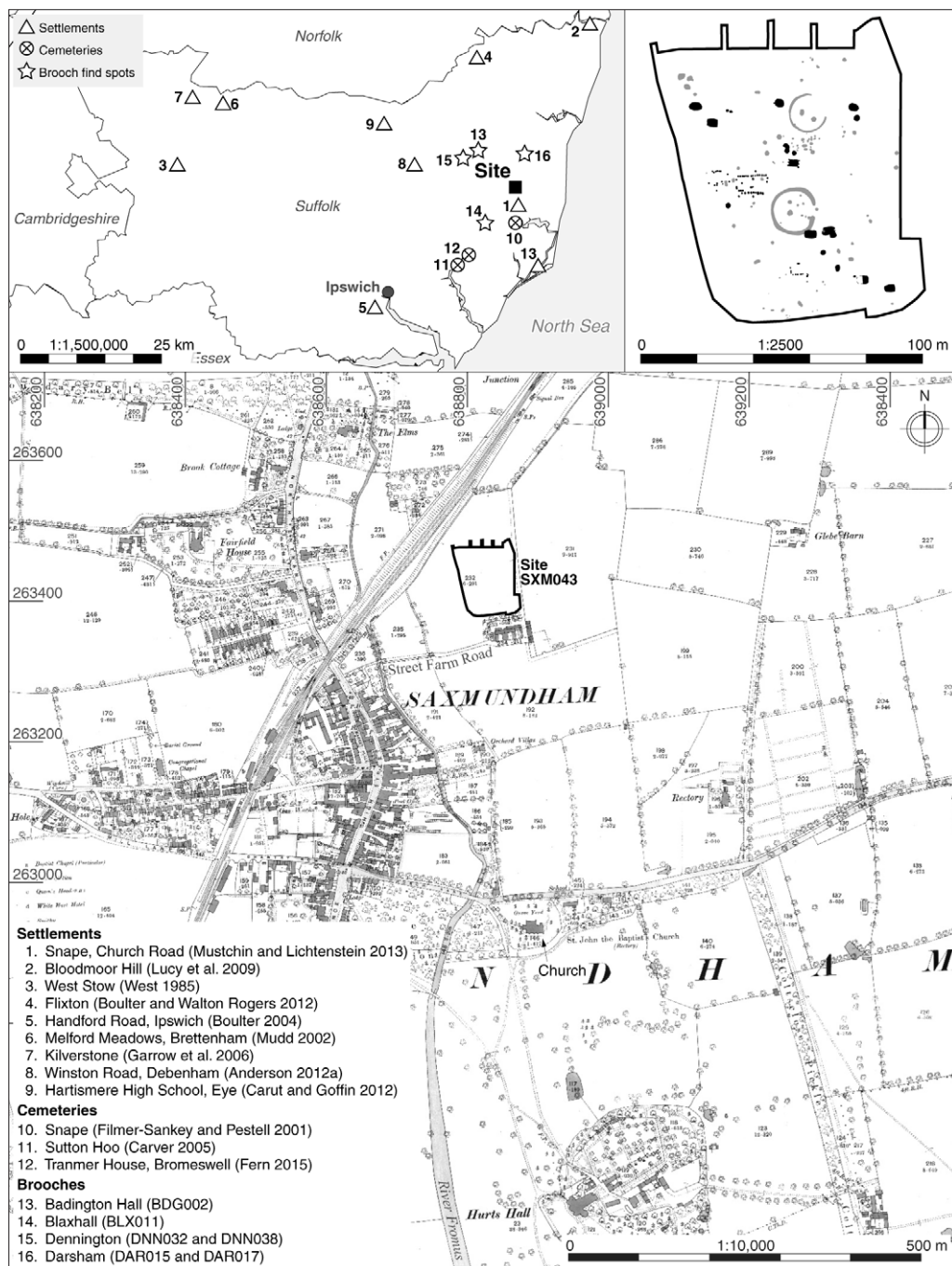


FIG. 134 – Site location overlain on First edition Ordnance Survey map (1885) showing other early Saxon sites mentioned in the text.

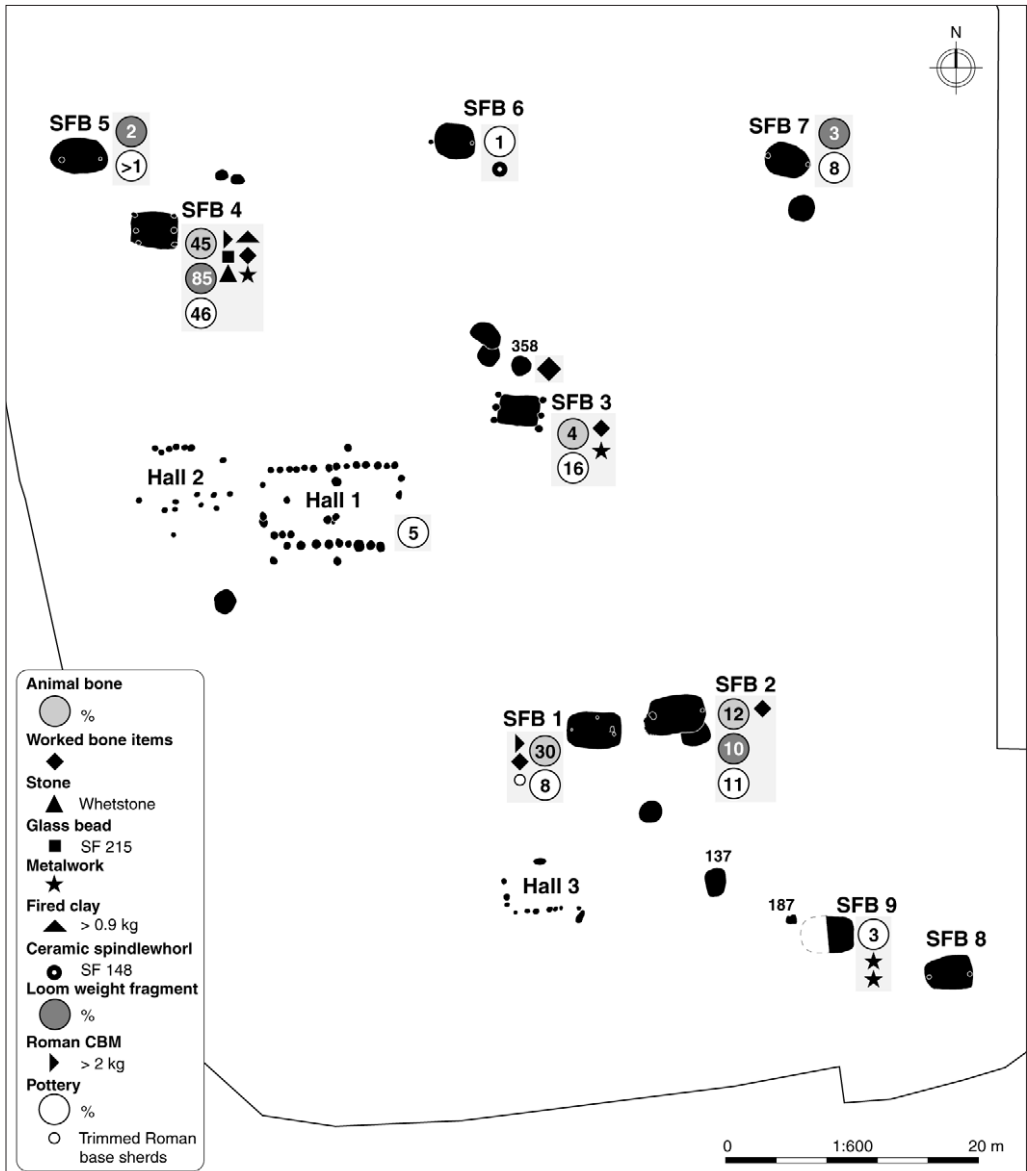


FIG. 135 – Overall plan of early Saxon features with associated finds distributions.

Prior to this investigation, few finds or other remains directly relating to the earlier Anglo-Saxon period had been recorded within Saxmundham parish, apart from a single possible early to middle Saxon ditch identified in an evaluation on the western edge of the town in 2014 (SXM 034; not illustrated).⁵ Contemporary settlement remains are also notably sparse in the wider area, although several sunken featured buildings (SFBs), a post-built structure and associated pits have been identified to the west of Church Road, in the neighbouring parish of Snape (Fig. 134: 1).⁶ Also within Snape parish is a significant early Saxon barrow cemetery, including a boat burial, located 3.5km to the south of the site (Fig. 134: 10).⁷ Further cemetery

sites may be indicated by the numerous early Saxon brooches that have been recovered by metal detecting within the parishes bordering Saxmundham, at Badington Hall (Fig. 134: 13); Blaxhall (Fig. 134: 14); Dennington (Fig. 134: 15); and Darsham (Fig. 134: 16).

THE EARLY ANGLO-SAXON SETTLEMENT

Forming a broad swathe across Area 2 was a scatter of east to west aligned rectangular post-built halls, SFBs and related features representing part of an early Saxon settlement occupying the eastern valley terrace (Figs 134 and 135). The main structure was a fairly centrally located hall (Hall 1), with a less well-defined post-hole building located immediately adjacent to the west (Hall 2). A third possible hall or dwelling lay approximately 30m to the south-east (Hall 3). Five SFBs were grouped to the north and north-east of Halls 1 and 2 and a further four were positioned to the north-east and south-east of Hall 3. Associated with the SFBs in particular were a number of shallow pits of varying size. Pottery and other datable finds recovered from the backfills of the SFBs and other features suggests a late fifth- to sixth-century date for the settlement (see Table 1 for fabric descriptions and codes), broadly supported by the results of two radiocarbon determinations. As a result of the acidic nature of the local geology, preservation of plant remains was extremely poor across the site, although a small assemblage of animal bone was recovered that enables some reconstruction of the settlement's economy.

Halls

Hall 1 (see Figs 135 and 136), which measured 11m by 6.6m (externally), had well-defined northern and southern walls, although the end walls were less clear. Two probable entrances are discernible within the longer walls, although these were not opposing, while a number of post-holes survived within the building that may in part represent one or more internal divisions. Overall, the post-holes varied between 0.3m–0.85m in diameter and were between 0.1m–0.5m deep. Post-pipes observed in two examples suggest timber diameters of between 0.12m–0.25m. Possible repair/replacement of posts was also evidenced by two groups of overlapping post-holes, while the position of external 'raking' posts may be indicated by two post-holes placed to the south and one to the north of the main walls. Fills of four of the post-holes yielded a total of ten sherds (209g) of early Saxon pottery, including two decorated sherds (see Fig. 136: 1–2), along with a few fragments of animal bone. An incomplete possible nail and an iron fragment represent the only metal finds from this building. Bulk samples contained only sparse charred plant remains, including occasional cereal grains, hazelnut shell fragments and single examples of weed seeds (stinking mayweed and brome).

The plan of adjacent Hall 2 (Fig. 136) was less well defined than that of Hall 1, with the northern wall forming the clearest surviving element. Combined, the scatter of seventeen post-holes suggests a building measuring between 7m by 4.5m in plan, although more than one phase or structure may be represented. The post-holes, which varied between 0.29m–0.53m wide and were between 0.12m–0.4m deep, contained single fills that produced no finds. Hall 3 to the south (Fig. 135) was represented by a group of ten post-holes forming the southern and eastern walls and two small external pits, indicating a building footprint of at least 6m by 3m. The post-holes measured between 0.2m–0.4m in diameter and 0.1m–0.4m deep; the only finds from these comprise three sherds of residual late Bronze Age pottery. Bulk samples from both Halls 2 and 3 produced few plant remains, comprising a single charred grain from each (barley and possibly rye respectively).

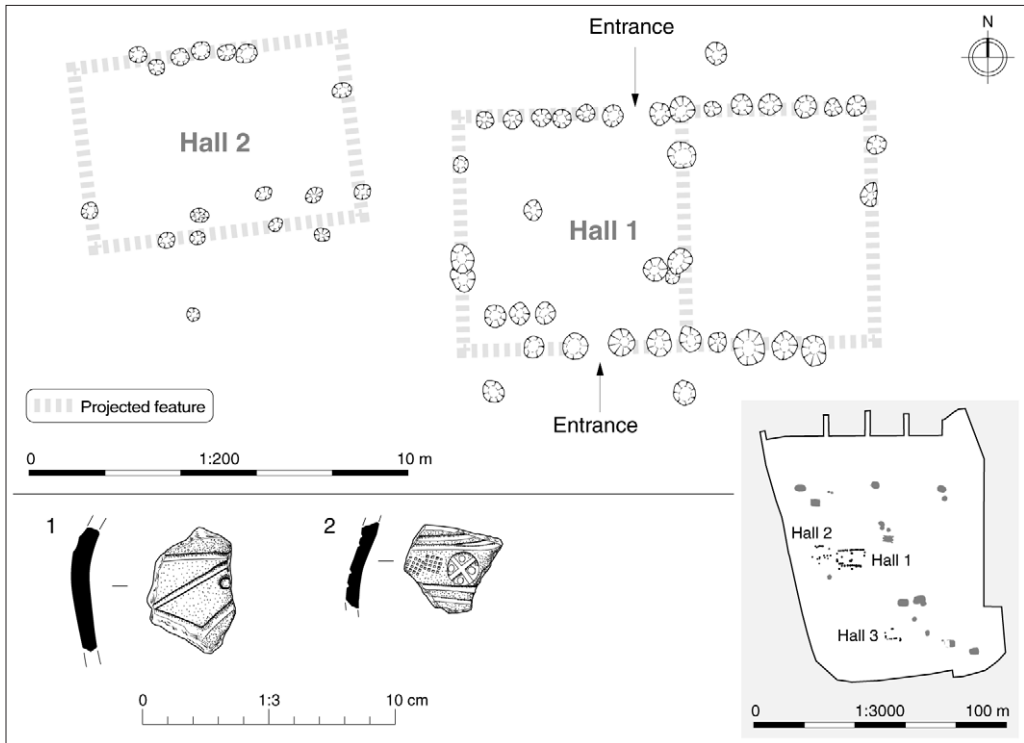


FIG. 136 – Halls 1 and 2 with illustrated pottery.

*Illustrated items**Pottery*

1. ESFS body sherd (Fig. 136: 1). Fine sandy matrix with some white mica and occasional coarser rounded quartz. Smoothed/burnished internally and externally. Grooved diagonally and horizontally, and stabbed. Fill 249, post-hole 208 in Hall 1.
2. ESFS body sherd (Fig. 136: 2). Very fine sandy matrix, occasional mica. Smoothed internally and externally. Incised horizontal lines, stamps (square grid and circular X with pellets). Fill 276, post-hole 235 in Hall 1.

Sunken featured buildings (SFBs)

A range of SFB forms was evident across the site, although all nine were similarly aligned and displayed the characteristic fairly steep-sided and flat-based sub-rectangular or oval pit. Various configurations of associated post-holes were evident, with the two post-hole type being the most common. The SFB pits ranged in length from 3.2m–4.9m and in width from 2.4m–3m; all were fairly shallow at 0.05m–0.5m deep. In general they contained a single fill of loose greyish-brown silty sand with varying amounts of gravel. The fills were excavated by quadrant where feasible, with the locations of finds along with the (largely unproductive) environmental samples being mapped within the lower 0.1m of the basal deposits. Numerous artefacts were recovered from the SFB pits, with distributions illustrated on Fig. 135. Notable finds are illustrated with the SFB from which they were recovered (Figs 137–143; see Table 1 for pottery fabric codes and descriptions).

SFB 1 (Two/three post-hole type; Fig. 137) was located to the north of Hall 3 in the southern

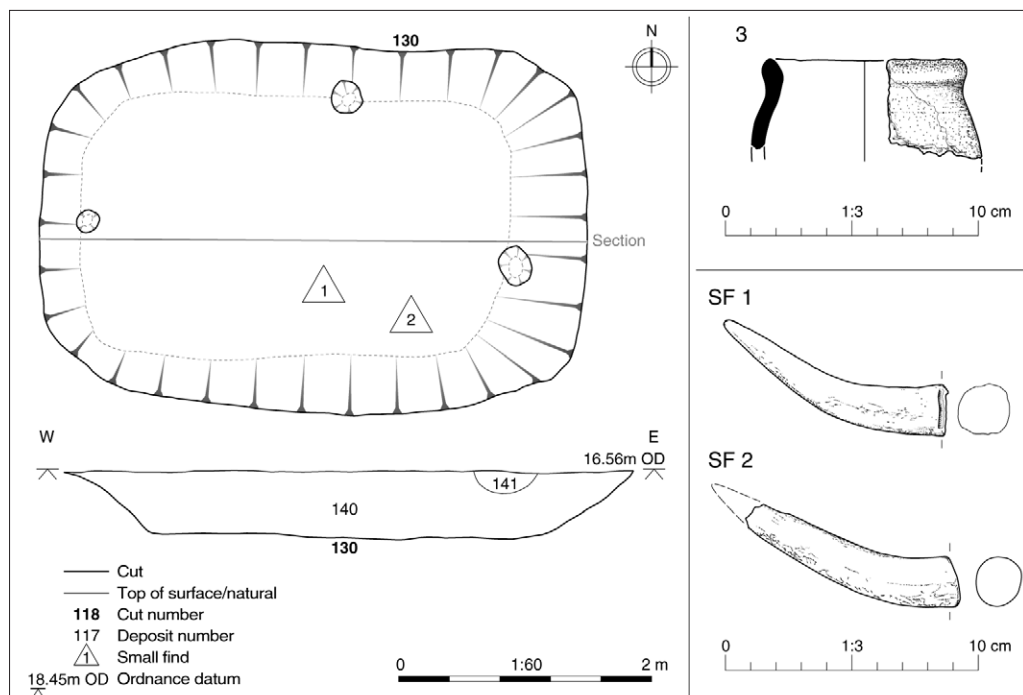


FIG. 137 – SFB 1 with illustrated finds.

part of the site (Fig. 135). It measured 4.7m long, 3m wide and 0.5m deep and contained a main fill along with a discrete deposit of fired clay or daub. Two opposing post-holes were located within the western and eastern ends of the pit respectively, with a further post-hole positioned along its northern side.

The mapped finds from the main basal fill comprise two pieces of red deer antler waste, retrieved from the same context in the south-east quadrant. Both consist of tine ends, one (Fig. 137: SF 1) removed by saw and the other (Fig. 137: SF 2), more painstakingly, with the aid of a knife.

In total twenty-five sherds of early Saxon pottery were recovered in a range of fabrics including sandy, calcareous, grog-tempered and granitic, the latter being the most common. Only one form was identifiable, a flaring rim from a globular jar (Fig. 137: 3). Other finds include an incomplete copper-alloy steelyard arm (SF 5, not illustrated), missing one of the loops at the fulcrum end. The arm has characteristic notches to represent the gradation scale, but unusually tapers to a pointed tip rather than a terminal knop or loop. It is of a form typically encountered in Roman assemblages (for example, from Colchester or Hacheston) and may potentially be a curated item.⁸ However, Roman tile (2118g) and a small collection (149g) of Roman pottery were also present within the assemblage, including two large trimmed base sherds, of which one displayed signs of burning. Animal bone (1955g) recovered from this SFB includes the remains of a newborn piglet. Environmental samples from the main pit yielded occasional charcoal while the post-holes did not contain any preserved plant remains.

Illustrated items

Pottery

3. ESSC globular jar (see Fig. 137: 3). Upright rim and sloping shoulder, 120mm diameter, 17 per cent complete. Moderate rounded chalk inclusions in a fine sandy, slightly micaceous matrix. Fill 140 in SFB 1.

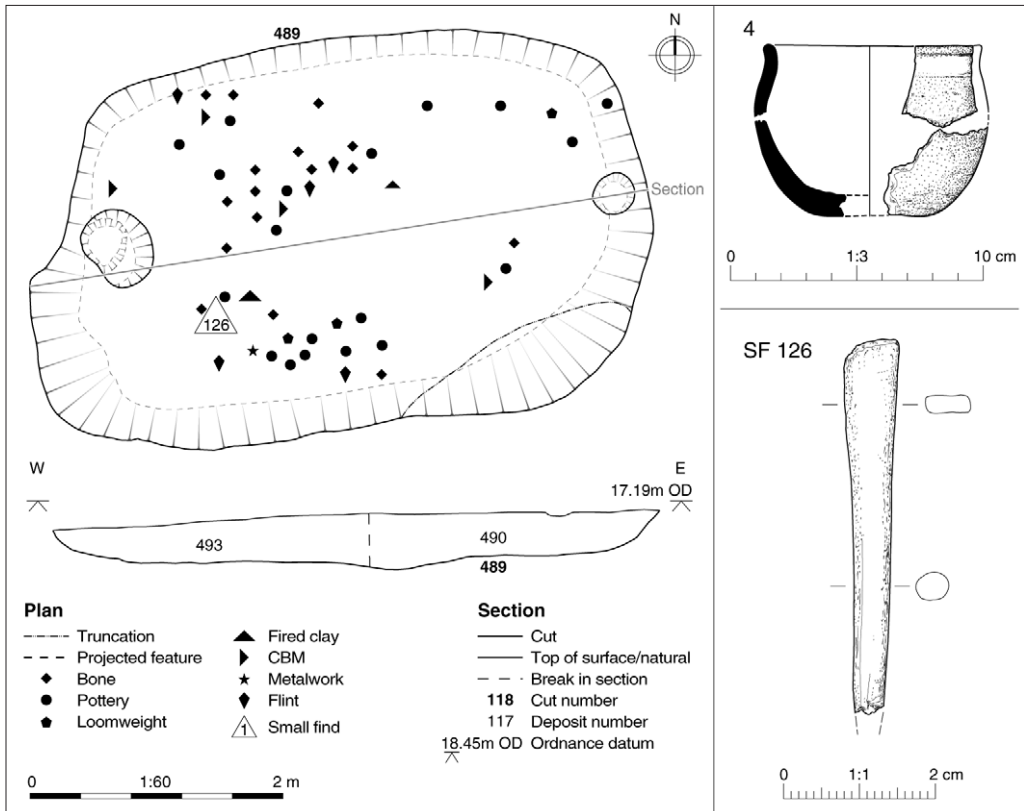


FIG. 138 – SFB 2 with illustrated finds.

Antler waste

- SF 1 Complete antler tine end (see Fig. 137: SF 1), sawn cleanly from the tine in a single direction and partially snapped, with a saw trace of 1.5mm width nearby. Antler surface is degraded, but no traces of any further working. Length 96mm, width 17mm, thickness 21mm. Fill 140 in SFB 1.
- SF 2 Fragmentary antler tine end (see Fig. 137: SF 2), the tip fractured away, cut from the remainder of the tine with the aid of a knife, rather than a saw. No signs of any further modification. Length 87mm, width 19mm, thickness 20mm. Fill 283 in SFB 1.

SFB 2 (Two post-hole-type) (Fig. 138) was positioned immediately adjacent and to the east of SFB 1. SFB 2 was of a similar size (4.9m by 3m by 0.4m) with a slightly irregular plan and two opposing post-holes on its long axis. Its single fill produced a varied collection of finds, many of which were found within the western half. Of the mapped basal deposit finds, a notable object is the upper part of a bone awl (SF 126) cut from a pig fibula, with a straight shaft of oval section and a lightly expanded head, cut laterally by a knife, that was found in the south-west quadrant. Fragments of clay loom weight (129g) were found within both the north-east and south-west quadrants. Finds from the upper part of the fill (not illustrated) comprise a single fragment of copper alloy (SF 209), possibly a pin, a corroded iron fragment (SF 212), a piece of antler (SF 199), a possible flint strike-a-light and fragments of structural daub (254g).

This SFB also produced forty-seven early Saxon pottery sherds, with cross-links evident between several vessels in each of the quadrants. Sherds include rims of four bowls (two globular (Fig. 138: 4), one straight sided, one slightly shouldered) and three jars of uncertain

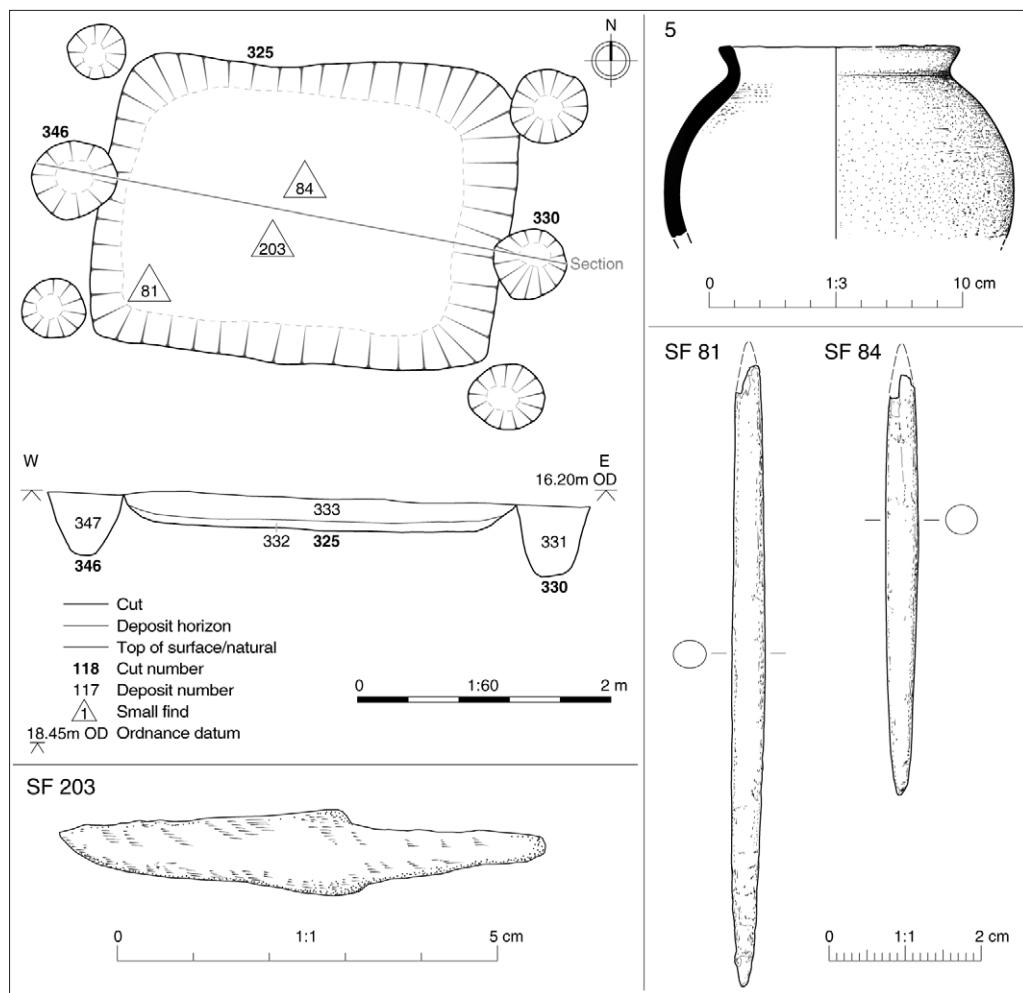


FIG. 139 – SFB 3 with illustrated finds.

form. As with SFB 1, residual Roman pottery (157g) and tile (1626g) were also present. Charred plant remains were sparse with single grains of wheat, barley and oats and a single legume (probably a pea) being recovered, along with charcoal from one of the post-holes. A pig mandible selected from the small animal bone assemblage (781g) returned a radiocarbon date of 530–640 cal AD (at 95.4% confidence, SUERC-71015 GU42665).

Illustrated items

Pottery

4. ESSC globular bowl (see Fig. 138: 4). Upright rim, 120mm diameter, 9 per cent complete. Fine sandy matrix with moderate rounded chalk and occasional flint. Smoothed surfaces. SF 110, 119 and 121; fill 492 in SFB 2.

Worked bone

- SF 126 Fragment of the upper part of a bone awl (see Fig. 138: SF 126), made from a pig fibula, with the head cut from the proximal end of the bone. Straight shaft of oval section, fractured across the lower part, leading at the other end to a lightly expanded head with a near-flat apex. Lightly polished along the shaft. Length 50mm, width 7.5mm, thickness 4mm. Fill 492 in SFB 2.

SFB 3 (Six post-hole-type) (Fig. 139). This SFB was positioned a few metres to the north-east of Hall 1 and over 20m to the north of SFB 1. It was of a different form, comprising a main pit cut (3.3m by 2.4m by 0.3m) with a row of three external post-holes located at the western and eastern ends respectively. Finds mapped across the thin (0.05m) basal deposit comprise a small fragment of a bone comb (SF 82, not illustrated) and two bone pin-beater fragments (Fig. 139: SF 81 and SF 84), all of which were found in the western half of the SFB. The two pin-beaters are fragmentary and survive in degraded condition. They are long implements of circular section, tapering to either end, allowing them to be defined as double pointed.

No loom weight fragments were present although a collection of structural daub (991g), possibly from an oven, was recovered, along with small quantities of animal bone (249g). Of note is a small iron whittle-tang knife (SF 203), with back and blade curving towards the point. This is of probable Anglo-Saxon date, *c.* fifth–seventh centuries, with parallels in Evison's Type 1 knives and West Stow Group B knives.⁹

Anglo-Saxon pottery comprising twenty-two sherds of ten vessels was recovered from across the four quadrants and one post-hole fill, with cross-links noted between them. Sandy wares were the most frequent, granitic wares second, and shelly wares the third most common. A probable copper-alloy coin, in poor condition, was also found within the main fill and may be an early Roman issue, perhaps a *sestertius*, *as* or *dupondius* of first- to third-century date. This may have been a curated item, although other Roman finds were present, comprising small quantities of residual tile (155g) and pottery (11g). Of the sampled post-holes, one produced a single barley grain, while the others contained only occasional fragments of charcoal.

Illustrated items

Iron object

- SF 203 Incomplete whittle-tang knife (see Fig. 139: SF 203). It has an elongated rectangular tang set in line with the back of the blade, which terminates at its attachment end in old breaks. The blade is triangular in section, with curved/concave back and cutting edge that tapers towards the tip. The entire object measures 68.99mm in length (39.87mm at blade), 11.48mm in height, 3.48mm in thickness, and 4.68g in weight. Date *c.* fifth–seventh centuries AD.¹⁰ Fill 333 in SFB 3.

Pottery

- 5 ESMS globular jar (see Fig. 139: 5). Flaring rim, 150mm diameter, 11 per cent complete. Medium sandy with moderate coarser quartz/flint. Smoothed externally, worn internally. Fill 333 in SFB 3.

Worked antler and bone

- SF 81 Fragment of an elongated double-pointed pin-beater of antler or bone (see Fig. 139: SF 81), circular in section and tapering towards pointed terminals at either end. It survives in poor condition with a degraded surface and both terminals are now missing. Traces of polish on some parts of the surface. Length 163mm, width 9mm, thickness 8mm. Fill 333 in SFB 3.
- SF 84 Fragment of a double-pointed pin-beater (see Fig. 139: SF 84), probably produced from a bone midshaft and tapering towards a rounded point at one end, which is damaged at the tip. Flattened oval in section and tapering from the centre towards the opposite end, which has fractured away. Slightly degraded surface with only slight traces of polish. Length 111mm, width 9mm, thickness 8mm. Fill 333 in SFB 3.

SFB 4 (Six post-hole-type) (Fig. 140). SFB 4 was positioned 16m to the north of Hall 2 and 27m to the north-west of SFB 3 (see Fig. 135). Its form also varied from the majority, comprising a main pit cut (3.7m by 2.8m by 0.35m) with a row of three internal post-holes arranged at the western and eastern ends respectively. This SFB produced a large assemblage of finds including seven metal objects, although most of these are fragments of a thin copper-alloy sheet. Notable mapped objects from the basal fill include an incomplete whetstone in a

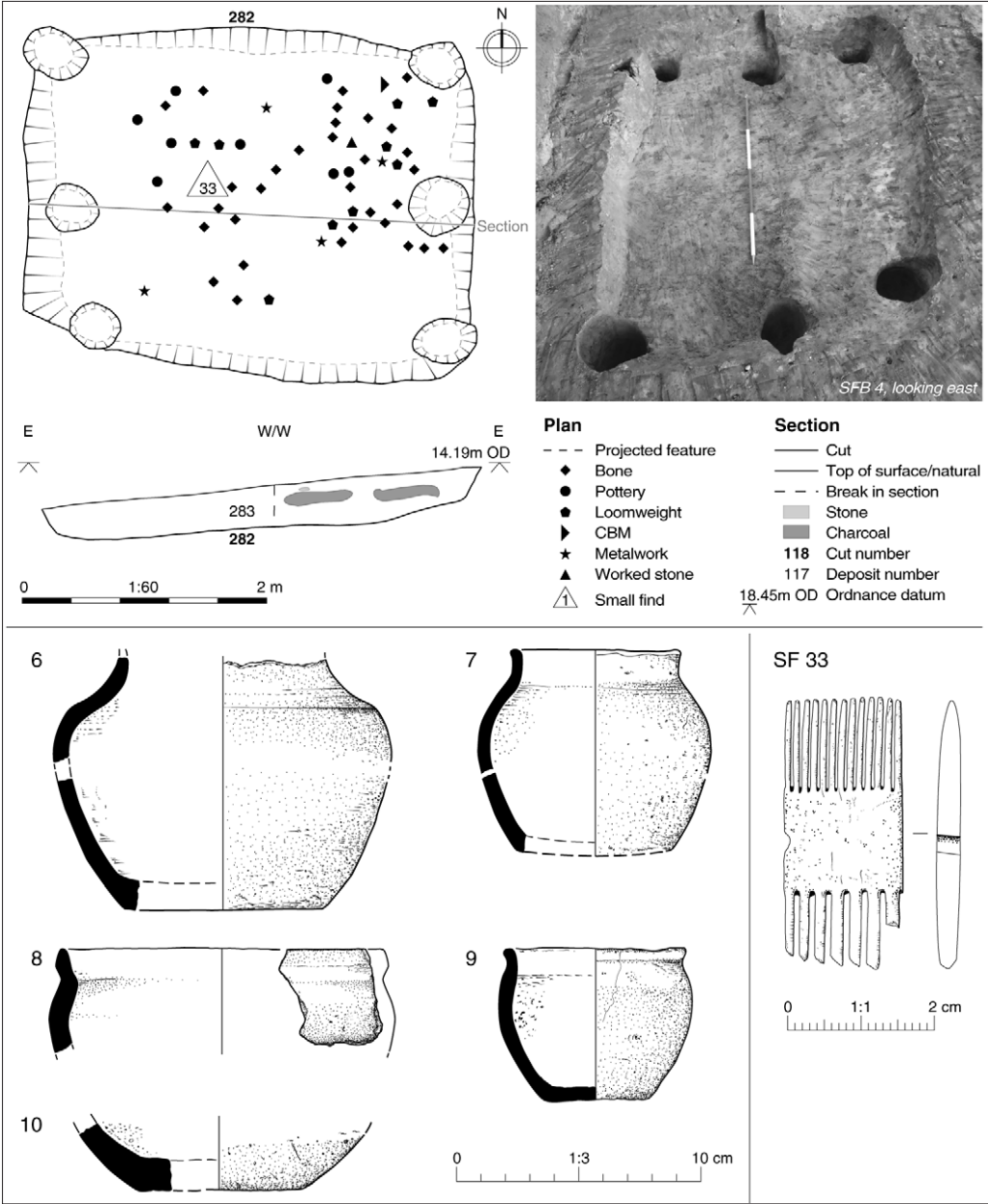


FIG. 140 – SFB 4 with illustrated finds.

fine micaceous siltstone (SF 67; not illustrated). It measures 75mm by 63mm, is 13mm thick and has been smoothed through use on one surface and on three edges. The upper surface has a deep, narrow groove worn into it and a second groove is present on one outer edge, suggesting it has been extensively used for sharpening a thin blade. Similar whetstones have been found in sixth- to seventh-century SFBs at West Stow.¹¹ Other finds from the north-east

quadrant comprise a piece of metalworking debris (slag), while a globular copper-alloy fragment was found in the south-east quadrant and a heavily corroded iron object in the south-west quadrant. Fragments of clay loom weight (1409g) were present across the base of the SFB. Finds from the upper part of the fill comprise a collection of structural daub (991g), a tiny opaque blue-green glass bead (SF 215, 3mm in diameter; not illustrated) and a probable iron staple or clamp (SF 10). The latter is of a common, long-lived form but with potential parallels in other early Saxon contexts (such as West Stow or later contexts at Thetford).¹²

A fragmentary antler tooth segment from a double-sided composite comb (Fig. 140: SF 33) was also found in the upper part of the fill. It includes a complete set of fine teeth, cut to eight per cm, and a series of coarse teeth, cut to five per cm. All of the fine teeth survive in good condition and show signs of some wear in the form of lateral lines along their length, more pronounced on one side than the other. The ends of the coarse teeth have fractured away and the surviving sections are worn to the same extent as the fine teeth. The principal interest of the fragment lies in the juxtaposition of fine and coarse teeth. The majority of double-sided composite combs of the early Anglo-Saxon period have similar tooth values on either side of the comb. There are a few combs, however, from West Stow with coarse and fine teeth of precisely the same values as seen here.¹³ They belong to a type of double-sided composite comb identified at Spong Hill, as well as Lackford and West Stow, occurring in contexts of the mid-fifth to mid-sixth centuries.¹⁴

Alongside a moderate group of Roman tile (2731g), six sherds of Roman pottery and one intrusive medieval sherd, this SFB produced the largest assemblage (ninety-one sherds) of early Saxon pottery. Granitic and shelly wares are most frequent, but a few sandy and organic wares were also found. Eight vessel forms could be identified: a jar with a sloping neck, two slightly shouldered jars, a globular jar with vertical rim and flat-angled base, two globular bowls and one straight-sided bowl (see Fig. 140: 6–10). One body sherd has a solid boss or lug, and one sherd appears to have *Schlickung* (see Anderson, below). A large animal bone assemblage (2954g) was also recovered, from which a cattle ulna was sampled and radiocarbon dated to c.400–540 cal AD (at 95.4% confidence, SUERC-67330 GU40896). Preserved plant remains within the samples taken from the SFB include charred cereal grains (barley and wheat) and legumes (peas and beans), in addition to single seeds of vetch and black bindweed, with no obvious spatial distribution.

Illustrated items

Pottery

6. ESCF slightly shouldered globular jar (Fig. 140: 6). Flat-angled base. Rim removed but worn edge suggests continued use. Fine sandy. Burnished externally and worn internally. Fill 283 in SFB 4.
7. ESSS globular jar (Fig. 140: 7). Vertical rim, 120mm diameter, 17 per cent complete. Moderate shell (most leached) and fine/medium sand. Smoothed. Fill 283 in SFB 4.
8. ESO1 globular bowl (Fig. 140: 8). Vertical rim, 160mm diameter, 10 per cent complete. Abundant grass (burnt out) and sparse fine sand. Oxidised externally, smoothed. Fill 283 in SFB 4.
9. ESSS globular bowl (Fig. 140: 9). Vertical rim, 100mm diameter, 40 per cent complete. Flat-rounded base. Moderate shell/chalk (leached) in fine sandy matrix. Smoothed externally, worn internally. Fill 283 in SFB 4.
10. ESSC base sherd (Fig. 140: 10). Moderate rounded chalk inclusions in a fine sandy, slightly micaceous matrix. Oxidised externally. Fill 283 in SFB 4.

Worked antler

- SF 33 Incomplete antler tooth segment from a double-sided composite comb (Fig. 140: SF 33), originally riveted on one edge. Width 38mm, thickness 3mm. Fill 283 in SFB 4.

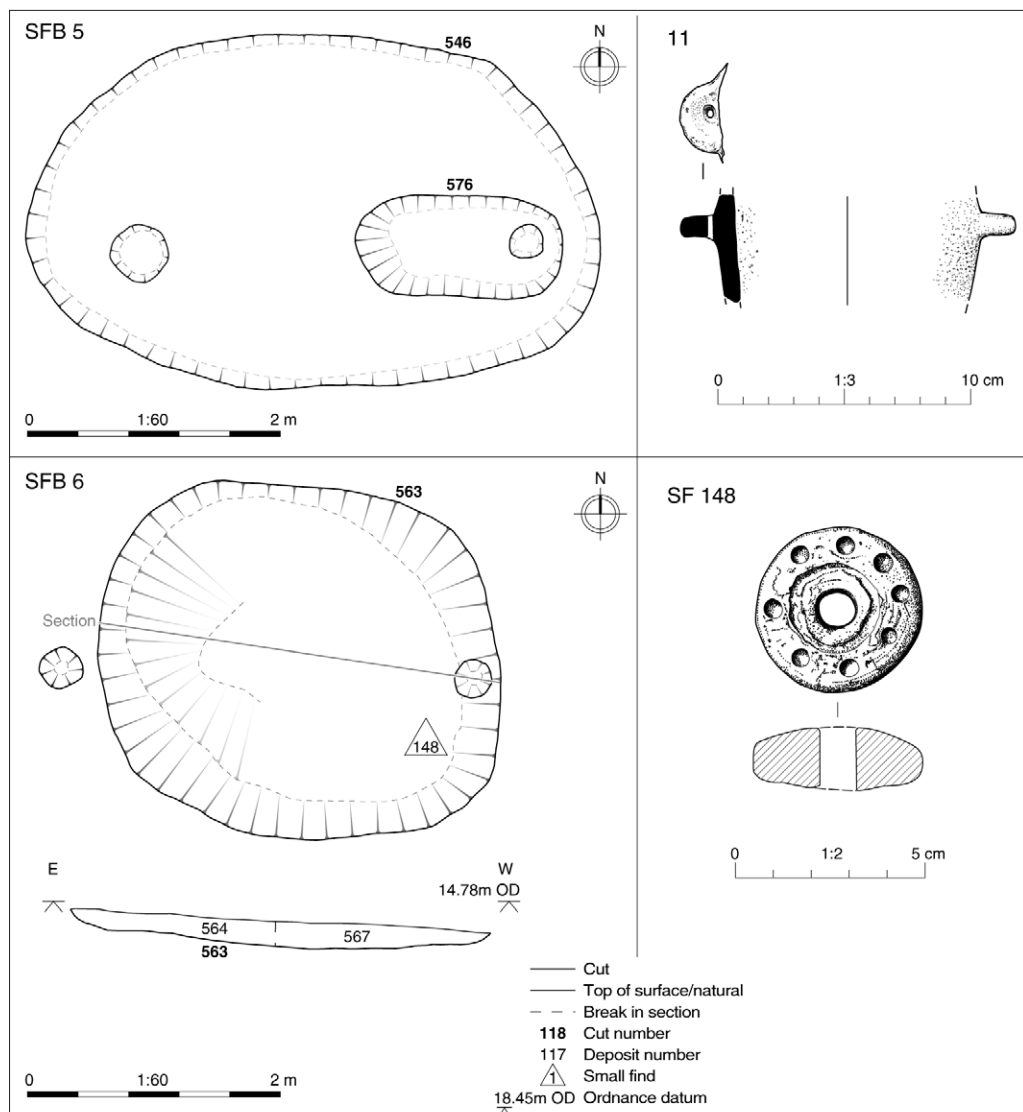


FIG. 141 – SFBs 5 and 6, pit 576 with illustrated finds.

SFB 5 and pit 576 (Two post-hole-type) (Fig. 141). Located roughly 4m to the north-west of SFB 4, SFB 5 was very shallow and almost oval in plan (4.4m by 2.7m by 0.12m) with two opposing post-holes. Its fill was cut by a deep oval pit (576) positioned within its eastern half, which measured 1.9m wide by 0.46m deep. Very few finds were present within the SFB, comprising a few fragments of loom weight (25g), a single sherd of undecorated granitic-tempered early Saxon pottery, a small amount of animal bone and a residual flint. A larger group of finds was found within the two deposits filling the later pit, comprising seventeen sherds (120g) of early Saxon pottery including a hanging vessel with side lug (Fig. 141: 11), alongside small fragments of lava quern and animal bone, an unidentified iron object and a

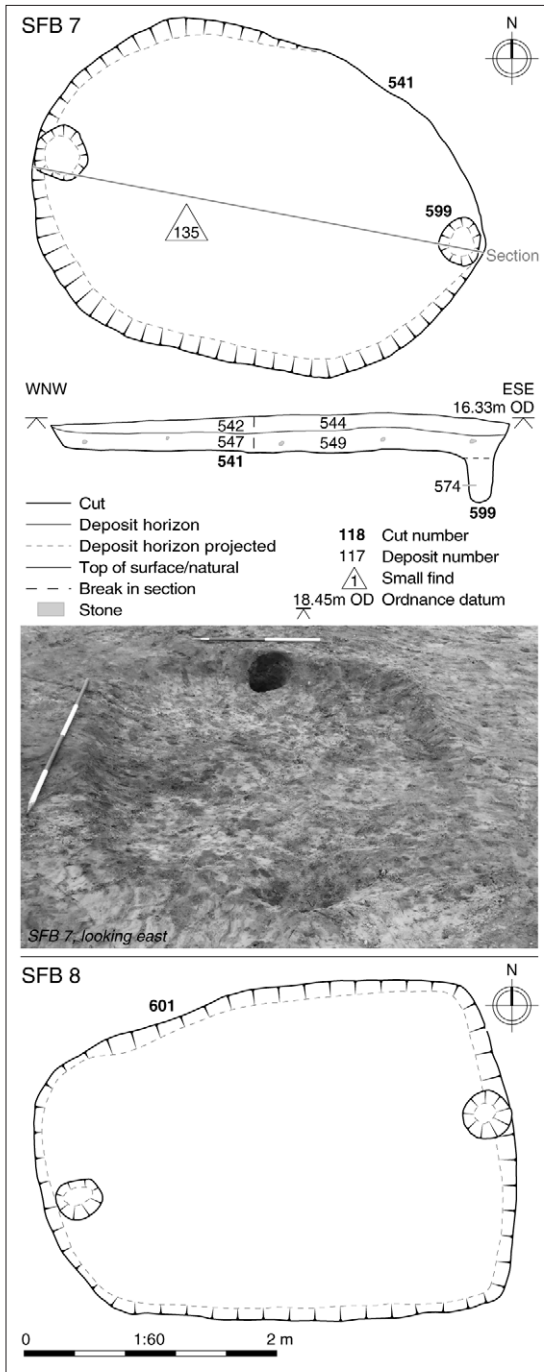


FIG. 142 – SFBs 7 and 8.

single sherd of Roman pottery. The only charred plant remains recovered from this SFB comprise single charred grains of barley from each of the post-holes.

Illustrated items

Pottery

- 11 ESGG hanging vessel with side lug (Fig. 141: 11). Fine sandy with sparse granitic inclusions and grog. Fill 578 of pit 576 cutting SFB 5.

SFB 6 (Two post-hole-type) (Fig. 141). SFB 6 was located 25m to the east of SFB 4 and a similar distance to the north-east of Hall 1. Two opposing post-holes were evident, the more easterly of which was positioned within the shallow oval pit cut (3.22m by 2.78m by 0.2m), while the second lay outside to the west. Relatively few finds were recovered from the fill, including small quantities of animal bone, pottery and residual flint. Mapped finds from the basal deposit comprise a ceramic spindle whorl (Fig. 141: SF 148) and a poorly preserved copper-alloy fragment with blackened surface, possibly from a vessel or similar item (SF 142, not illustrated), found in the south-east quadrant. Flat or disc-shaped spindle whorls with two opposing but evenly sized faces, such as SF 148, were in use up until the end of the sixth century and a sixth-century date is suggested for this example.¹⁵ Whorls of similar shape have been found locally in sixth-century contexts at West Stow and a single example with impressed or stabbed dots came from 30km up the coast at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville.¹⁶

Just four sherds of early Saxon pottery were found, two of granitic temper from separate vessels, and two of quartz temper from a single vessel. Single specimens of wheat, barley and a small legume were recovered from the SFB, along with a single barley grain from one of the post-holes.

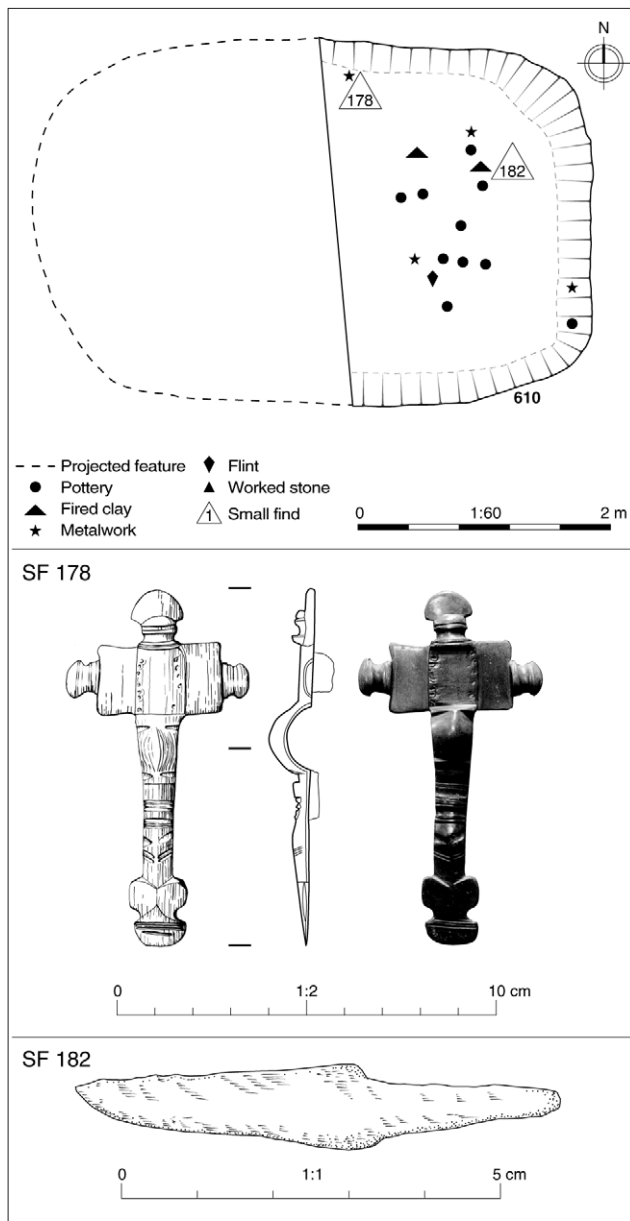


FIG. 143 – SFB 9 with illustrated finds.

*Illustrated items**Ceramic object*

SF 148 A complete clay spindle whorl (Fig. 141). The whorl (36g) is flat with curved sides (type B317) and is 16mm thick, has a diameter of 46mm and a central perforation of 10mm. The upper surface is decorated with an irregular incised circle surrounding the central perforation which is encircled by eight impressed dots. Made from a fine micaceous silty clay which is hard fired and reduced to an even dark grey. Fill 565 in SFB 6.

SFB 7 (Two post-hole-type) (Fig. 142). Positioned approximately 22m to the east of *SFB 6* was a slightly larger *SFB* (*SFB 7*; 3.6m by 2.65m by 0.25m) with two internal opposing post-holes located at its eastern and western ends. Two fills were identified, with the lower (0.2m thick) deposit being slightly greyer in appearance. In addition to pottery, notable mapped finds from the basal fill include a possible fragment of quernstone (SF 135, not illustrated) found in the south-west quadrant and a small piece of clay loom weight from the north-west quadrant. Other finds from the upper part of the fill comprise small amounts of animal bone and daub alongside residual Roman tile (1137g) and single sherds of Bronze Age and Roman pottery. In total twenty-five sherds of fifteen early Anglo-Saxon vessels were recovered, eleven sherds from the lower fill and fourteen from the upper. Granitic and shelly wares are again the most frequent fabric groups; two jar rims in calcareous fabric are also present. No cross-links were present between the upper and lower layers. Occasional wheat and barley grains were found in samples from the lower fill, while single grains of oats and barley and hazelnut shell fragments were retrieved from the upper fill.

SFB 8 (Two post-hole-type) (Fig. 142). This *SFB*, located in the south-east corner of the site, was the least well-preserved example on the site, measuring 3.8m by 2.8m in plan and just 0.05m deep. The remains of two internal opposing post-holes survived, one of which produced a single barley grain; no finds were recovered from these post-holes or the main pit fill.

SFB 9 (Fig. 143). Located a few metres to the north-west of *SFB 8*, *SFB 9* (4m [projected] by 2.9m by 0.15m) was also very truncated, particularly across its western half, and no associated post-holes were identified. The basal deposit produced a well-preserved copper-alloy cruciform brooch (Fig. 143: SF 178). This object is near complete, missing its pin and outer edge of the catchplate, and although of slightly irregular manufacture, is a readily identifiable object type of the early Anglo-Saxon period. The use of half instead of fully round knobs, combined with the form of the head and foot, indicate that it most likely belongs in Martin's Type 3 cruciform brooch group.¹⁸ This in turn suggests a late fifth- to mid-sixth-century AD date range for the brooch, probably c.475–550 AD (see also those excavated at Morning Thorpe, Spong Hill, Bergh Apton and Westgarth Gardens for object types in groups FA2a and FA2b dated to between c.480–550 AD).¹⁹ Other metal objects comprise an iron whittle-tang knife (Fig. 143: SF 182) with straight back and incomplete cutting edge. This is of a form seen in other Anglo-Saxon contexts and parallels Evison's Type 2 knives and Group A knives from West Stow.²⁰ It is of probable Anglo-Saxon date, c.fifth–seventh centuries AD. Undiagnostic items (not illustrated) include a corroded iron nail (SF 180) and fragment of copper-alloy sheet (SF 181) that may be a vessel fragment or repair.

This *SFB* produced thirteen sherds of early Saxon pottery, representing nine vessels. Eight sherds of four sandy vessels include a jar with a sloping neck. A grog and granitic rim sherd is from a straight-sided bowl with a flaring rim. Other sherds are granitic and coarse quartz types. A small amount of structural daub, a single Roman pottery sherd and a residual flint were also recovered.

Illustrated items

Metal objects

SF 178 An incomplete copper-alloy Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch (Fig. 143), missing the pin and outer edge of the catchplate due to old breaks. The entire object has a dark green patina. It measures 92.80mm in length, 48.37mm in width at head, 10.97mm in width at bow, 4.45mm in thickness at bow, and 33.51g in weight. Probably c.475–550 AD. Fill 611 in *SFB 9*.

SF 182 Incomplete whittle-tang knife (Fig. 143). It is missing parts of the blade, tang and possibly the tip due to old breaks. The knife has a rectangular tang set at the centre of the blade,

expanding towards the blade, and possibly missing its terminal end. The blade is triangular in section, missing most of its cutting edge due to old breaks, and has a back that runs straight to the tip. Where the cutting edge of the blade joins the tang it appears slightly convex, but this is uncertain due to the preservation of the object. This knife measures 85.63mm in length, 18.44mm in height at blade, 6.73mm in thickness, and 14.25g in weight. Fill 611 in SFB 9.

Pits Several sub-circular pits were located in proximity to the SFBs, with another positioned to the south of Hall 1 (see Fig. 135). These were of various sizes, measuring between 0.8m and 2.7m wide and 0.1m to 0.4m deep, with the shallowest being close to SFB 9. They generally contained fills of similar composition to those within the SFBs, although one of the larger examples (pit 137) to the east of Hall 3 incorporated a thick deposit of burnt flint within its middle fill. The pits produced relatively low levels of finds, including small quantities of early Saxon (and earlier) pottery, animal bone and Roman tile, although one pit (pit 358) that lay immediately to the north of SFB 3 yielded a bone smoother created from a fragment of the midshaft of a cattle metacarpus (SF 216, not illustrated). Also of note are the remains of the head and forelimbs of a foetal or newborn calf recovered from pit 187, adjacent to SFB 9. Samples from the pits produced sparse charred plant remains (a single indeterminate charred grain) and varying amounts of charcoal.

FINDS

Metalwork (Dr Andrew Brown)

A range of objects (twenty-one in total), probably spanning at least the fifth–seventh centuries AD, was recovered from several of the SFBs and Hall 1. This date range for the objects is most clearly demonstrated by the cruciform brooch (Fig. 143: SF 178) and two iron knives (Fig. 139: SF 203 and Fig. 143: SF 182). Although many of the eleven copper-alloy objects are fragmentary, and the ten iron items often heavily corroded, their recovery from defined Anglo-Saxon domestic contexts is suggestive that those items from the SFBs and Hall 1 are likely to be contemporary. Unfortunately, preservation is generally quite poor, resulting in fragmentary or corroded objects that are in many instances essentially unidentifiable. The Roman steelyard arm and coin may represent curated items (see, for example, West Stow), although a more likely explanation is that they were incorporated along with other Roman material when the SFBs were backfilled.²¹

Anglo-Saxon pottery (Sue Anderson)

A total of 278 sherds of early Saxon pottery (4812g) was collected from thirty-six contexts during the excavation. Apart from ten sherds from subsoil and natural deposits, the assemblage was all recovered from contexts and features which are assigned to the early Anglo-Saxon period. Most sherds were collected from eight of the nine excavated SFBs. Ten sherds were recovered from post-holes which were part of Hall 1.

Fabrics were grouped on major inclusions (other than sand, except where sand is the only inclusion). However, it should be noted that, as with all handmade pottery, fabrics were extremely variable even within single vessels and categorisation was often difficult. Background scatters of calcareous material, unburnt flint, grog, white mica and other less common inclusions, such as felspar and ferrous pieces, were present in many of the fabrics. All Saxon wares were handmade, and colours varied throughout from black through grey, buff and brown to red, often within single vessels. Table 1 shows the distribution of early Anglo-Saxon pottery by fabric.

Description	Fabric	No	Wt/g	eve	MNV
<i>Organic tempered</i>					
Heavily grass tempered with few other inclusions	ESO1	6	85	0.21	5
Grass tempered but containing a much greater proportion of sand than ESO1	ESO2	2	11	0.07	2
<i>Quartz tempered</i>					
Coarse quartz tempering; moderate to abundant large grains of sub-rounded quartz in a finer sandy matrix	ESCQ	5	64		4
Medium sand tempering with few other inclusions, sand grains generally well-sorted	ESMS	19	673	0.22	8
Fine sand tempering with few other inclusions, some white mica	ESFS	39	357	0.22	30
Very fine sand and abundant white mica	ESSM	1	8		1
<i>Grog tempered</i>					
Grog and sand tempering. Grog usually red and very coarse, but may also be grey	ESGS	7	34		7
Sand, red grog and granitic inclusions	ESGG	3	49	0.15	3
Sand, grog and calcareous inclusions	ESGC	15	88	0.12	3
<i>Calcareous tempered</i>					
Sparse to moderate fine shell and sand tempering, shell generally leached out	ESSS	53	748	1.10	28
Coarse shell tempering with few other inclusions	ESCS	21	498		11
Sparse, rounded chalk in a fine to medium sandy matrix, sometimes leached	ESSC	16	474	0.38	9
<i>Granitic tempered</i>					
'Charnwood Forest' type, containing granitic tempering (dark mica, feldspar)	ESCF	79	1621	0.40	38
Mixed calcareous and granitic inclusions	ESCM	1	8		1
Organic tempering in association with granitic inclusions	ESOM	4	43		4
<i>Miscellaneous</i>					
Quartz conglomerates in a fine or medium sandy matrix	ESQC	1	6		1
Mixed inclusions – bone, shell, flint	ESHW	1	29		1
Early Anglo-Saxon import?	ESIM	5	16		1
<i>Total early Saxon</i>		278	4812	2.87	157

TABLE 1 – Early Anglo-Saxon pottery by fabric group.

Many sites in East Anglia and the Midlands have produced similar fabric groups, although they occur in different proportions. In general, quartz-tempered and granitic types tend to be the most common fabric groups at sites in East Anglia, although in the later early Saxon period these appear to have been replaced to some extent by grass-tempered pottery. Organic tempering is thought to be a late early Saxon development in Essex and Suffolk.²² At this site,

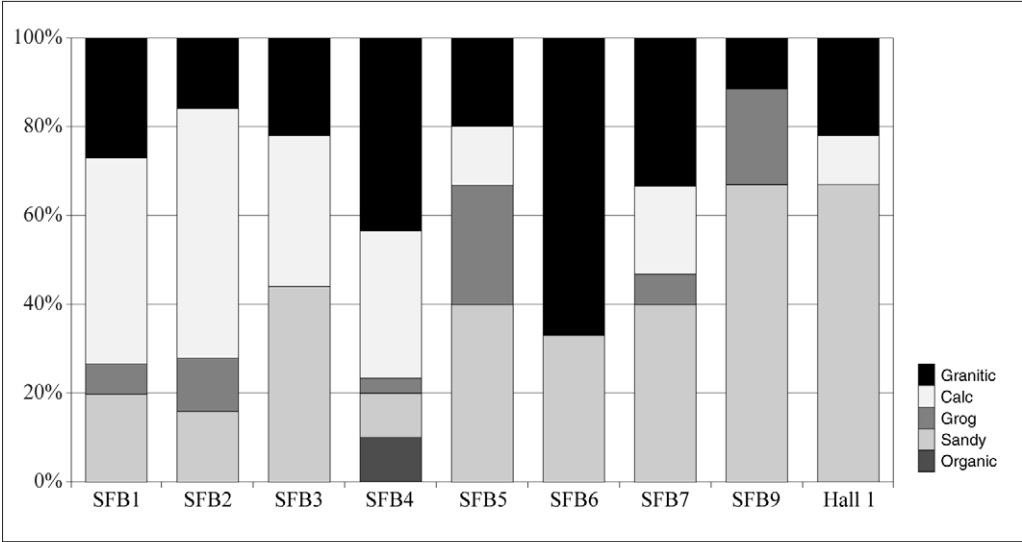


FIG. 144 – Distribution of pottery fabric groups.

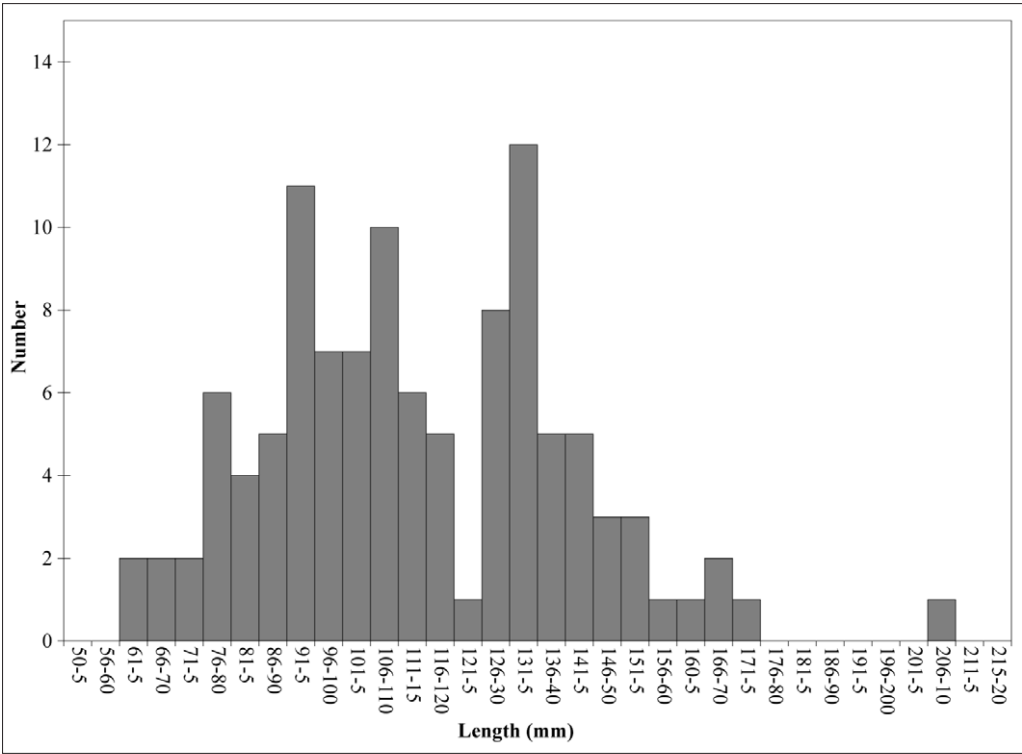


FIG. 145 – Early Anglo-Saxon pin-beater lengths.

calcareous, granitic and quartz-tempered fabrics were equally frequent, based on the minimum number of vessels (MNV). All other fabric types produced less than thirty sherds each.

No vessels are complete, but some full profiles are present. Twelve vessels were identified as bowls, one as a hanging vessel with side lugs (Fig. 141: 11), and fifteen as jars. One other vessel may have had a small applied lug (or solid boss) on the body. The majority of vessels are globular forms, occasionally with a slight shoulder, and there were several straight-sided bowls.

One large granitic vessel appears to have been covered with the type of coarse slip known as *Schlickung* although, unusually, this had been partly covered with a thin layer of fired clay post firing. Only five have some form of decoration, one with a possible boss (or side lug, as noted above), three with incised lines, and one with deeply grooved horizontal and diagonal lines and a stabmark (Fig. 136: 1). One of the sherds with incised lines is also stamped (two different types: a rectangular grid, and a cross-in-circle with pellets in each quarter; Fig. 136: 2).

Discussion of pottery

This assemblage shows elements which place it broadly within the sixth century, such as the predominance of globular forms and the high proportion of granitic-tempered wares. No sharply carinated vessels were identified, although the deeply grooved decorated sherd and the sherd with *Schlickung* may indicate a small, later fifth-century component to the assemblage. Decorated pottery is suggested to belong to the early part of the sixth century at Bloodmoor Hill.²³ Later wares, in this assemblage represented only by organic-tempered fabrics, are present but fairly rare.

Fig. 144 shows the distribution of the major fabric groups in the SFBs and Hall 1 (MNV). SFB 5 includes the finds from the pit that cut this building, which were probably redeposited from the SFB pit fill. Only SFBs 1 and 2 have closely similar assemblages in terms of fabric groups, perhaps because they were adjacent structures. The high proportions of grog-tempered pottery in SFBs 5 and 9 are also noteworthy, although these structures were located at opposite ends of the site.

Groups of SFBs with similar fabric ranges were noted at Bloodmoor Hill and West Stow.²⁴ Similar proportions of fabric groupings were also present in the SFBs at Flixton Quarry (e.g. 068:0285 and 068:0286, and 068:0266 and 068:0279), and these buildings also contained similar ranges of vessel forms.²⁵ Unfortunately, there were few identifiable forms in the Saxmundham assemblage, but globular bowls and jars were the most frequently identified types in all the SFBs. Decoration occurs rarely. It may be of significance that two of the sherds with incised decoration were from post-holes in Hall 1. Of the others, one was from the pit cutting SFB 5, and one was from subsoil. The vessel with *Schlickung* surface treatment was from SFB 4.

Comparison of fabric proportions with other assemblages from Suffolk suggests that Saxmundham is different even from the closest groups in having almost equal groups of fine sandy, sparse shelly and granitic wares. Saxmundham is located almost equidistant between four groups from Bromeswell, Debenham, Flixton and Carlton Colville.²⁶ Flixton groups are dominated by sandy wares, Carlton Colville by sandy and organic wares, Debenham by medium and fine sandy wares with some shell, whilst at Bromeswell shelly wares formed more than 50 per cent of the group with granitic wares second most frequent. In Ipswich, at Handford Road, shelly wares formed around two-thirds of the assemblage with only small quantities of sandy, granitic and organic wares.²⁷ Saxmundham therefore appears to be situated in a transitional area between the sandy fabrics of northern East Anglia and the shelly wares which typify the Ipswich area in both this period and in the eleventh–thirteenth centuries.

Loom weights (Graeme Clarke)

The excavations yielded seventy-four ring-shaped (unfired) clay loom weight fragments (1653g) from four of the SFBs. The assemblage was unevenly distributed across the four SFBs, with the largest group deriving from SFB 4 (85 per cent by weight), followed by SFB 2 (10 per cent), SFB 7 (3 per cent) and SFB 5 (2 per cent).

All the loom weight fragments were manufactured from a single fabric type, consisting of a fine dense sandy clay matrix containing sparse unburnt angular flint inclusions. Three fragments (313g) were identifiable as loom weights of intermediate type, representing 19 per cent of the assemblage by weight. They had measurable or projected diameters of between 78mm and 90mm, while the example from SFB 4 (189g) was the only fragment to retain an estimatable hole diameter of between 24–29mm. A further hand-formed flattened lump from SFB 4 has two deep fingertip impressions.

In terms of size, these weights show similarities with other loom weights of intermediate type commonly excavated at contemporary settlements in Suffolk, such as Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville and West Stow.²⁸

Objects and waste of antler and bone (Ian Riddler)

A small assemblage of worked antler and bone objects, including a tooth segment from a composite comb, two pin-beaters, a pig fibula awl and a bone smoother, are accompanied by two fragments of red deer antler waste. They represent a typical assemblage, combs, textile-manufacturing equipment and implements for other crafts forming the principal objects of the early Anglo-Saxon period.²⁹

The double-pointed pin-beaters (Fig. 139: SFs 81 and 84) from SFB 3 are of a type that has been associated with the warp-weighted loom, which was in use across most of the Anglo-Saxon period.³⁰ There are few examples of double-pointed pin-beaters from late Saxon contexts, but they are common finds in the early and middle Saxon periods. Double-pointed pin-beaters have previously been separated into two groups, on the basis of their lengths.³¹ With the benefit of a larger sample, acquired over the last twenty years, the same situation can still be seen to prevail, although the precise lengths for each group can be revised slightly. The shorter group now extends from 60mm to 120mm and the longer group from 121mm to 175mm (Fig. 145). Double-pointed pin-beaters recovered from settlement contexts occur as single finds, but also in groups of two or three implements, endorsing the idea that they may have been retained and used in sets and not just as single implements.

Forming a common object type for this period is the bone awl (Fig. 138: SF 126) from SFB 2. The series of early Anglo-Saxon bone awls produced from pig fibula occur in two basic types, either with the head formed from the distal end of the bone and left largely unmodified or, as here, with the head cut from the lower part of the proximal end and lightly modelled. Comparable awls have come from early Anglo-Saxon contexts at Harston Mill and West Stow.³²

A bone smoother fashioned from the midshaft segment from a cattle metacarpus (SF 216; not illustrated) appears to have been held in the hand, with the thumb along the inner channel, and used as a smoothing or polishing device. The choice of bone and the shape of the object suggest that it may originally have been a fragment of worked bone waste, similar to those from West Stow, which was subsequently adapted for a different purpose.³³

Tine ends such as those recovered from SFB 1 (Fig. 137: SF 1 and SF 2) were removed in the early stages of antler working, after the antler had been reduced (usually by sawing) to its various components, including the burr, the crown, the beam and the tines. Small quantities of antler waste are common finds on early Anglo-Saxon settlements.³⁴ Indeed, waste assemblages of this period are characterised by their small size and by the dominance of antler over bone.³⁵

Faunal remains (Angelos Hadjikoumis and Vida Rajkovača)

A total of 353 identifiable fragments of mammalian and bird remains came from contexts dated to the early Saxon period (Table 2). The numbers, albeit statistically small, are sufficient for interpretation about the prevalence of the three main livestock species on the early Saxon settlement. As the most important and versatile domestic animal, cattle accounted for more than all other species collectively, with pig the second most important 'food species'. Sheep/goat was suspiciously low, especially for the period, and contrasts with most other relevant assemblages.³⁶ Beyond the three main food species, the taxonomic range is completed by the few remains of equids, with identifiable elements belonging to horse.

Remains of red deer antler are present in the assemblage, a raw material probably collected in the woods. The additional presence of three bones of red and roe deer more strongly suggests these animals were also hunted, yet only sporadically, and therefore of marginal importance in the diet. Frequencies of specimens attributed only to size categories (i.e. 'large', 'medium', 'small'), are in broad accordance with the frequencies of identified taxa. The possibility of the presence of smaller (than sheep/goat and pig) mammals remains open, but it is highly unlikely that they played an economically important role. In addition to the mammalian remains, a bird ulna was also recorded, tentatively identified as possibly belonging to a (domestic?) goose. The presence of domestic dogs is indirectly attested through the gnawing marks noted on several specimens of other species.

Of note are the remains of the head and forelimbs of a foetal or newborn calf recovered from pit 187, possibly associated with SFB 9 immediately to its east. It is unknown whether the vertebral column and hind legs were also originally deposited with the rest of the remains but have since been lost through attrition or truncation. This animal must have died shortly before or after birth, as indicated by tooth analysis. It was not possible to note any butchery marks, although visibility on foetal and newborn bone surfaces is often poor.

Mortality patterns were explored for cattle, pig and sheep/goat. The mortality profile for cattle was based on epiphyseal fusion and dental eruption and wear data. The two analyses agree that the highest mortality occurred in late second, third and fourth years and they are also in accordance in suggesting that very few animals survived to full maturity or old age. The sample of pig postcranial elements with epiphyseal fusion state preserved is even smaller than cattle and thus should be interpreted with caution. Along with study of dental eruption and wear data, the most likely scenario is that the main mortality peak occurred late in the first year and in the second year. Few selected pigs were kept to full adulthood as reproductive stock, while some may have been consumed as tender meat. The scapula of a newborn piglet recovered from SFB 1 indicates that breeding pigs were kept on or near the site. Whether the animal in question was deliberately slaughtered or represents (the usually high) natural mortality amongst piglets is unknown.

There were few indications concerning the ratios of male and female animals in the sub-adult and adult cohorts. Only two cattle pelves could be sexed and both were female. Concerning pigs, based on the morphology of mandibular canines still in mandibles (or the morphology of

Taxon	Hand collection		
	NISP	NISP%	MNI
Cattle	113	53.6%	7
Equids	4	1.9%	1
Pig	58	27.5%	8
Sheep/goat	28	13.3%	3
Red deer	7	3.3%	1
Roe deer	1	0.5%	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>21</i>
Large mammal	70	49.3%	N/A
Medium	71	50.0%	N/A
Small mammal	1	0.7%	N/A
<i>Total</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>N/A</i>

TABLE 2 – Taxonomic composition of Early Saxon faunal assemblage.

alveoli in cases where they were missing), the assemblage yielded one male and five female animals. This suggests that more females were kept until older ages as reproductive stock.

Cattle, pig and sheep/goat bear evidence of cutmarks (skinning, dismembering and filleting), as well as chopping and percussion marks. Dog-gnawing marks were also present on the bone assemblages from SFBs 1, 2 and 4.

Charred plant remains (Rachel Fosberry)

Despite fairly extensive sampling of the Anglo-Saxon features, these produced similarly small assemblages of plant remains, all preserved by carbonisation. Both diversity and density of plant remains were low, while the absence of chaff elements limited the identification of barley and wheat varieties. No spatial distributions were discernible within the SFBs and it is probable that the charred plant remains were incorporated unintentionally within the backfills. Legumes were relatively frequent finds, notably peas and beans, both of which would have been staple crops of particular value as they can be dried and utilised all year round.

DISCUSSION

by Graeme Clarke with Rachel Clarke, Sue Anderson and Angelos Hadjikoumis

Introduction

The settlement remains identified to the east of Warren Hill provide the first physical evidence for Saxmundham's long-suspected early Anglo-Saxon origins (Fig. 134). Typical of the period, the swathe of post-built structures, SFBs and associated pits strung out along the west-facing terrace of the river Fromus probably represent part of a farmstead or hamlet set within a wider pattern of dispersed settlement focused on the lighter soils of the region's river systems.³⁷ It is thought that the early Anglo-Saxon colonists established themselves at the heads of the Deben and Orwell estuaries, utilising the valleys to access favourable sites further inland.³⁸ Evidence of their settlements (and cemeteries) is increasingly coming to light, including within the valleys of the rivers Gipping (Handford Road, Ipswich; Fig. 134: 5), Thet (Melford Meadows, Brettenham and Kilverstone; Fig. 134: 6 and 7), Deben (Winston Road, Debenham; Fig. 134: 8) and a tributary of the Dove (Hartismere High School, Eye; Fig. 134: 9).³⁹ More extensive settlement remains have also been excavated in the region, notably at Mucking (Essex) overlooking the Thames, at West Stow on the Lark (Fig. 134: 3) and at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville on the Waveney (Fig. 134: 2), all within Suffolk.⁴⁰

Settlement origins, chronology and layout

Despite the absence of Roman features within Area 2, the occurrence of pottery, tile and a number of metal objects in the backfills of the SFBs in particular strongly hints at the presence of a settlement of this period in the vicinity. The range of tile (121 fragments, weighing 9306g) includes tegula, floor-tile, box flue and imbrex and is indicative of a fairly high-status building nearby. The record of a Roman lamp discovered 100m to the south-west of the site and closer to the river (recorded in the Historic Environment Record) could also be of relevance for locating this building.

Early Anglo-Saxon settlement may have been established on the bank of the river Fromus as early as the late fifth century AD, although the main phase of occupation here occurred during the sixth century. The small quantities of pottery recovered from most of the SFBs seem to indicate that the settlement was relatively short-lived, with the site being abandoned or shifting elsewhere before the end of the early Saxon period. It is probable that not all the SFBs and post-built structures were occupied at the same time; the presence of organic-tempered

sherds in SFB 4 towards the north-west edge of the site perhaps indicates that this was the latest structure to be backfilled. Clearly, the full extent of the farmstead has not been established, which on current evidence occupied an area measuring at least 60m east-west by 80m north-south. No associated boundaries were identified, a common phenomenon on settlement sites of this date, although occasionally existing relict Roman field ditches were utilised.⁴¹ It is possible that the Saxmundham farmstead was much larger, but is unlikely to have been on the scale of the more extensive settlement excavated at West Stow. This covered an area of 1.8ha and revealed over eighty buildings including fourteen post-hole structures and sixty-nine SFBs.

Halls

In terms of layout, Hall 1 was probably the principal dwelling, with Halls 2 and 3 perhaps being more ancillary structures or representing the houses of family units with their attendant SFBs.⁴² Hall 1 was a large structure, seemingly more substantial than the largest post-built structure (Hall 2) identified at West Stow, which measured 9.75m long and 4.27m wide. Although Hall 1 covered an area of 11m by 6.6m, the measurement of the most complete (northern) wall line indicates a more comparable distance of 9.8m between post-hole centres, while at 6.2m the width (between post-hole centres) is still greater. The West Stow Hall 2 was situated on the crest of a hill among a group of early SFBs and was interpreted as the central hall or dwelling. Its construction included a number of double post-holes along with a partition at its eastern end and a central hearth; thought to show similarities with examples of continental longhouse seen in Westphalia and Holland.⁴³ None of the Saxmundham halls had surviving floor surfaces or hearths, while the absence of wattle and daub suggests the walls were infilled by vertical planking similar to those excavated at West Stow and Mucking.⁴⁴ The 'weak' eastern and western sides probably formed gable ends as described for a similar example excavated at Bloodmoor Hill.⁴⁵

Sunken featured buildings (SFBs)

Within the Saxmundham settlement, the associated SFBs formed loose groups, sometimes in pairs, predominantly positioned to the north-east of the halls. This is a fairly typical arrangement seen at larger excavated settlements including West Stow, as is the range of pit sizes and post-hole configurations. Most of the SFBs measured less than 4.5m in length, which may support the interpretation that the settlement did not continue to be occupied into the seventh century, when it has been suggested that the larger form of SFB may have appeared.⁴⁶

SFBs are the most recognisable feature of Anglo-Saxon settlement sites across much of Britain and their interpretation has been the subject of much debate. Analysis suggests that they were constructed with suspended rather than sunken floors and often served a variety of functions over their lifetime, predominantly as workshops or stores.⁴⁷ At Saxmundham the majority (six) of the SFBs were of the two post design with two having six post-holes and one with no post-holes; a range typical across the region (for example at West Stow, Bloodmoor Hill and Mucking).⁴⁸ The varying arrangements of posts would have supported the thatched roof structure with walls around the pit filled by wattle and daub.⁴⁹ Structural pieces of fired clay recovered from SFBs 1–4 and 7 are likely to be the remains of internal ovens or hearths, although these may relate to later use.

Only two SFBs (3 and 7) contained basal deposits that could perhaps be interpreted as being the result of gradual accumulations 'falling through the floorboards' as has been inferred for some of the evidence from West Stow.⁵⁰ However, no particular groups or *in situ* artefacts were identified to indicate the spatial organisation within the SFBs, or their function. As has been found on contemporary sites, the majority of the SFB fills appear to represent the backfilling

of the pits with midden and other waste material following their abandonment.⁵¹ Consequently, the artefacts found within the SFBs do not necessarily reflect their original use, which is echoed by the variability, in terms of quantity and type, of the assemblages recovered. Adjacent SFBs 1 and 2 (to the north of Hall 3) both produced very similar assemblages including noticeably higher proportions of Roman pottery, and similar proportions of early Saxon pottery fabrics (see Fig. 135). Both of these SFBs (along with SFB 4) also produced animal bone displaying signs of butchery, while SFB 4 contained the greatest range of finds including the highest proportions of textile-working equipment (see Fig. 135). Some evidence of curation of Roman objects may be indicated by the presence of the steelyard arm and coin, although given the relative abundance of pottery and tile of this period they may equally have been unintentionally incorporated within the SFB backfills.

Site economy and husbandry strategies

The economy of the Saxmundham settlement was based on mixed arable and pastoral farming, and the farmstead would have been established within what was already a managed landscape.⁵² Although the period is traditionally associated with a rise in the importance of sheep, the percentages from a number of similarly dated assemblages from the region paint a picture of cattle dominance and a heavy reliance on domestic sources of meat.⁵³ All of the assemblages viewed against the Saxmundham faunal material are quantitatively more substantial yet, with the exception of West Stow, they all seem to share the preference for cattle.

Sample size from Saxmundham is insufficient for studies of meat provisioning and distribution, or considerations of what made up import or export, though the kill-off profiles appear to suggest the focus was on meat production. On-site breeding of cattle and pig is indicated, as is processing of carcasses. There is very little evidence to support any specialisation on the settlement, like that recorded on a number of sites in the region (e.g. Wicken Bonhunt or Brandon).⁵⁴ However, the lack of evidence for specialisation does not necessarily mean the farmstead was inefficient in terms of food production, as the results could be indicative of a diverse economic strategy where the settlement acted as a self-sufficient producer and a consumer of food and other animal products. Whilst animals could be indicative of cultural or social preferences, environmental conditions as a defining factor in the farmstead's economy must not be overlooked. High cattle numbers, a livestock species ideally suited to the region's low-lying landscapes, could be indicative of the site's important position in the network of settlements involved in trade or exchange of goods and animals. Some exploitation of wild resources is evident, while the scant plant remains point to the cultivation of wheat, rye, barley, oats, peas and beans; all typical of the assemblages recorded at many contemporary sites in the region.⁵⁵

Clearly, a range of activities was being undertaken within the settlement, some of which may have been carried out in the open rather than within the halls or SFBs. Many of the pottery sherds displayed signs of sooting and/or burnt food residues indicative of cooking-related activities. One vessel recovered from SFB 4 was covered in a coarse slip, known as *Schlickung* (see above); a similar surface treatment was also observed on large cooking pots or storage vessels excavated at West Stow.⁵⁶ Textile working formed part of the settlement's day-to-day activities and the typical assemblage of spinning and weaving equipment recovered largely from the SFB pits reflects this. The presence of antler waste suggests that some, if not all, of these craft items were manufactured on site. Fragments of loom weights and a single ceramic spindle whorl were also found, with the vast majority (85 per cent) of weights deriving from SFB 4. Metalworking may have been undertaken within the vicinity of SFB 4, although the paucity of evidence suggests that this was not a frequent activity.

CONCLUSIONS

This part of the Fromus valley has clearly been a favourable location for settlement since at least the early Bronze Age.⁵⁷ The discovery of an early Saxon settlement on the eastern side of the valley is of significance as it not only provides the first evidence for the origins of Saxmundham, but adds to the small but growing corpus of non-funerary sites in east Suffolk. Based on ceramic evidence, the Saxmundham site appears to have been situated in a transitional area between the sandy fabrics of northern East Anglia and the shelly wares which typify the Ipswich area. The apparent short-lived occupation of this site fits well with the model of fairly mobile settlement suggested for the wider region during the early Saxon period. The underlying cause for this shifting settlement pattern is unknown, but is thought to have been agriculturally driven.⁵⁸ It is probable that in the later Anglo-Saxon period settlement coalesced to the south of the site around the church and river crossing. Following the grant of a market in 1271/72, the town relocated to the western side of the river Fromus, around the current High Street.⁵⁹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was funded by Hopkins Homes Ltd. Thanks are extended to Myk Flitcroft of CgMs Consulting and Rachael Abraham of Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service for their guidance and advice. The project was managed by Matt Brudenell and the fieldwork directed by Graeme Clarke. The paper's graphics are the work of Séverine Bézie with finds illustrations produced by Gillian Greer. The early Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch was drawn by Roz Hall. Finally, the efforts of the OA East excavation staff and post-excavation teams are gratefully acknowledged. Sarah Percival (spindle whorl), Ted Levermore (fired clay) and Katie Anderson (Roman tile) are also thanked for their specialist contributions which have been integrated within this report. This article was edited and prepared for publication by Rachel Clarke.

NOTES

- 1 Fry and Roseveare 2014; Dyson 2015; King 2015.
- 2 Billington *et al.* forthcoming; <https://oxfordarchaeology.com/oalibrary>; Clarke 2017.
- 3 Ekwall 1960, 406.
- 4 Copinger 1909, 161–64.
- 5 King 2014.
- 6 Mustchin and Lichtenstein 2013 (revised 2014); Ennis 2016.
- 7 Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001.
- 8 For example from Colchester: see Crummy 1983, no. 2508; and Hacheston: see Blagg *et al.* 2004, no. 222.
- 9 Evison 1987, 113–17; West 1985b, 61, fig. 240.13.
- 10 Evison, 1987, 115.
- 11 West 1985b, fig. 118.4; fig. 127.7 and 8.
- 12 West 1985b, nos 242.6–8; Rogerson and Dallas 1984, nos 114–31.
- 13 West 1985b, figs 123.6 and 150.15.
- 14 Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski 2013, 138 and fig. 2.58.
- 15 Walton Rogers 2005, 24.
- 16 West 1985a, 139; Lucy *et al.* 2009, fig. 4.53, 362.
- 17 Walton Rogers 2006, fig. 2.18.
- 18 Martin 2015, 40–63.
- 19 Martin 2015, 128, table 12; Penn and Brugmann 2007.
- 20 Evison 1987, 113–17; West 1985b, 61, fig. 240.4–9.

- 21 West 1985a and b.
- 22 Hamerow 1993, 31; K. Wade, pers. comm.
- 23 Tipper 2009, 209.
- 24 Tipper 2009, 206; Anderson 2013.
- 25 Anderson 2012b.
- 26 Bromeswell: Anderson 2015; Debenham: Anderson 2012a; Flixton: Anderson 2012b; Carlton Colville: Tipper 2009.
- 27 Anderson 2005.
- 28 Carlton Colville; Lucy *et al.* 2009; West Stow: West 1985a and b.
- 29 Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski 2011, 133 and fig. 7.5a.
- 30 Riddler 1996, 136; Walton Rogers 1997, 1755.
- 31 Riddler 1996, 136.
- 32 Crummy 2016, 119–20; West 1985b, figs 61.10 and 247.1–2.
- 33 West 1985b, fig. 247.9–10.
- 34 Riddler 1996, 135.
- 35 Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski 2011, 123.
- 36 Albarella and Pirnie 2008; Crabtree 2013; O'Connor 2014, 3.
- 37 Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 136–37; Hamerow 1993, 97.
- 38 West 1999, 44.
- 39 Handford Road, Ipswich: Boulter 2004; Melford Meadows, Brettenham: Mudd 2002; Kilverstone: Garrow *et al.* 2006; Winston Road, Debenham: Anderson 2012a; Hartismere High School, Eye: Caruth and Goffin 2012.
- 40 Mucking: Hamerow 1993; Cowie and Blackmore 2008, 137; West Stow: West 1985a, 149–52; Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville: Lucy *et al.* 2009.
- 41 Mudd 2002, 113.
- 42 West 1985a, 168–69.
- 43 West 1985a, 111–12.
- 44 West Stow: West 1985a, 111–12; Mucking: Hamerow 1993, 13.
- 45 Lucy *et al.* 2009, fig. 3.42.
- 46 Hamerow 1993, figs 6 and 8; Tipper 2004, 66.
- 47 Tipper 2004, 185.
- 48 West Stow: West 1985a, 121; Bloodmoor Hill: Lucy *et al.* 2009, table 3.1; Mucking: Hamerow 1993, 10.
- 49 West 1985a, 121.
- 50 West 1985a, 117–20.
- 51 Tipper 2004.
- 52 West 1985a, 169; West 1999, 44.
- 53 Crabtree 2012.
- 54 Crabtree 2012.
- 55 West 1999, 44.
- 56 West 1985a, 129.
- 57 Billington *et al.* 2018.
- 58 Hamerow 1993, 86.
- 59 *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, 1257–1300, 183.

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