

SERF Research Agenda conference discussion points for the Anglo-Saxon period

- Romano-British (RB)/Anglo-Saxon (AS) transition - exploring cultural change harnessing traditional archaeological survey with metal-detector finds. A better understanding of AS occupation on RB sites including shore forts and villas - bringing Eccles to publication would represent a big step forward.
- Issues concerned with the integrity of and access to data, especially for the Early AS period. How do we approach extracting meaningful info from fast deteriorating cemetery archives; how do we integrate Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) data?
- The need to combine strategies for investigating 'total landscapes' with detailed research on individual settlement biographies - this presupposes complementary roles for both developer-led and amateur archaeology also drawing upon University input for establishing research aims.
- A desperate need to construct ceramic type series for the South East region drawing upon scientifically-dated assemblages. Current understanding is very fragmented; we do not know how localised ceramic traditions relate to each other. This has important implications for dating sites and reconstructing patterns of regional exchange/trade.
- Produce a prioritised list for bringing key sites to publication. A number of important settlement excavations deserve attention - Chalton, Hants, and various Mid-Late Saxon sites in the vicinity of Folkstone/Dover.
- More work needed on reconstructing environmental and geomorphic change in the early medieval period - extend the excellent work undertaken at Romney Marsh into other South East wetlands
- Approaches to investigating Early Medieval settlement and exploitation of the Weald. How well does Everett's 'Continuity & Colonisation model' stand up to archaeological scrutiny. Target 'early enclosures' identified by recent topographical studies in Surrey and Sussex.
- Develop a more systematic approach to investigating the impact of Christian conversion on local communities and landscapes. Too much emphasis has hitherto been placed on focal churches (many poorly excavated). Need to place these ritual foci in their landscape and archaeological context. This approach could be profitably applied to AS monasticism in Kent, as currently being undertaken by Gabor Thomas.
- More work needed on AS urbanism in the South East. We still know embarrassingly little about the Middle Saxon origins of trading settlements such as Fordwich, Sandwich and Pagham Harbour, Sussex. To what extent were these integrated into a wider network of rural markets and beach sites similar in character to Santun? How closely were Lower Saxon towns in Kent integrated into the burghal system of Wessex? How do we characterise the early phases of burghs such as Chichester and Lewes? Was their economic role acquired in later stages of development? And finally, what evidence is there for the integration of these focal sites into a wider landscape of civil defence involving beacons, communication networks and private fortifications?