

enclosure extending at least c. 3.0m by c. 1.5m, and, allowing for truncation of c. 200mm at its top, may originally have been driven from a ground level of c. 1.6m–1.7m OD. It is clear from their size in cross-section and their fairly regular spacing that the stakes are likely to have supported heavy, wattle rods woven around them. The rounded corner of the feature is also characteristic of wattle-walled structures. However, the function of the structure is not clear. A number of fish traps of early and middle Saxon date constructed with similar materials have been found on the Thames and Essex tidal foreshores in recent years,⁹ but the layouts of these provide no close parallels for this structure. In addition, it was built at a level above the estimated Thames high tides in the Saxon period¹⁰ and it seems the structure was built on the shore, beyond the tidal range.

The intervals between two of the stakes is c. 0.7m, which is a common door-width. The structure could be a shelter for either people or animals for which parallels exist both on the Iron Age Severn estuary shore¹¹ and in Saxo-Norman London, where round-cornered wattle-walled buildings and animal pens were built c. 1070–1110 at Guildhall Yard.¹² There are arguments for regarding this method of construction as one employed throughout the first millennium AD.¹³

This structure is a very rare example of early Saxon period woodwork from

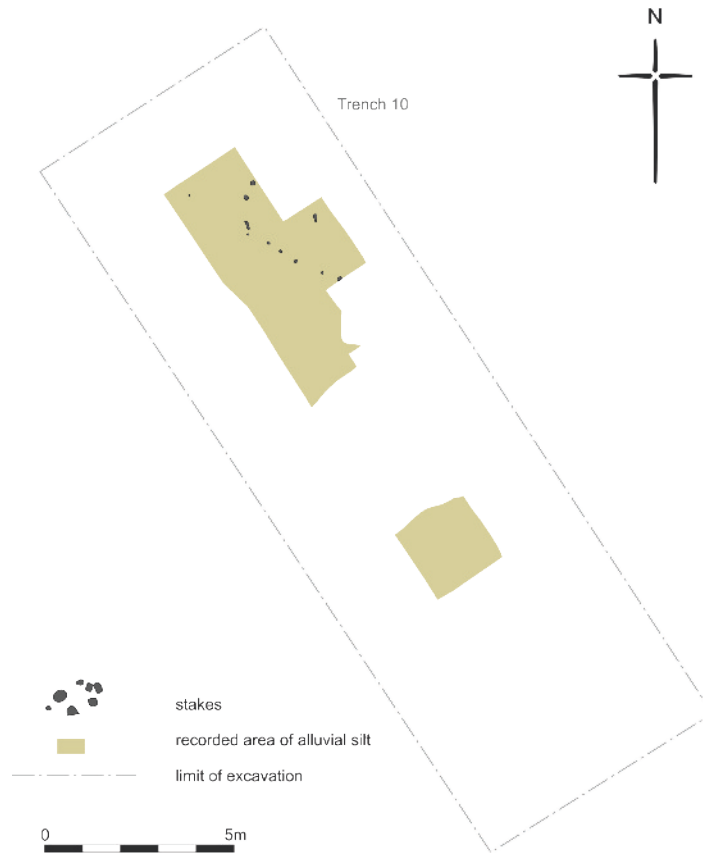


Fig. 3: an early Saxon structure in Trench 10

the London region and it is tantalisingly difficult to ascribe a clear function to it due to lack of supporting evidence.

Late Saxon and Norman activity

The Roman quarry pits in Trench 1 were cut through by a shallow channel, again on a north-west to south-east alignment, and part of the north-eastern

side of the channel survived. A large number of other posts, stakes and traces of wattle structures ran along it, providing evidence of attempts at management or consolidation. An area of collapsed wattle (Fig. 4) represented the remains of several indistinguishable phases of fencing or revetment. Three of the stakes apparently associated with the wattle provided consistent C¹⁴ dates of AD 870–1030, AD 890–1030, AD 890–1040 (all 95% probability).¹⁴ These features lay slightly down the slope of the channel side, the upper edge of which lay a little to their east, as shown in (Fig. 5).

The channel edge was later revetted by an alignment of stakes, staves and boards to the south-east. Two radially-cleft beech stakes retained a radially-cleft board on edge. Another board was set vertically as a stave. Both oak boards were fine 1/32nd clefts and carried peg holes that were evidence of their probable previous use as weatherboarding, which was usually fastened with willow treenails to the wall posts in a building. There was no evidence for the beech stakes being reused. Their felling date was proven by dendrochronology to be winter



Fig. 4: the late Saxon wattle-work under excavation