

## EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN ENGLAND (Figs. 2, 3)

In recent years there has been increasing discussion about Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns and a number of models have been proposed or implied. Their purpose has been to understand the complex relationships between the various, often conflicting, types of evidence. These, in turn, have differing degrees of reliability making comparisons between them hazardous. The two most commonly used forms of evidence are a case in point, that of place-name elements and pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Some Old English place-name elements may belong to the 6th and 7th centuries and their geographical location overlaps, but is not restricted to, areas where there is archaeological evidence for occupation in the form of cemeteries and settlement sites. In areas where quantitative analysis has been carried out, early place-name elements are located predominantly on heavier, good quality soils, often in valley locations. The pagan cemeteries are most commonly located on light, poorer soils and locations, often not in valleys.<sup>1</sup>

Detailed topographical studies have revealed how in Wiltshire and NE. Dorset pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are frequently located on or within 500 ft of parish boundaries,<sup>2</sup> and the analysis has been carried out for other parts of the country.<sup>3</sup> The results have been taken to imply the earlier origins of the boundaries and the units of land they enclose. An attempt has been made to test some of the theories concerning the relationship between settlements as implied by place-name elements, parish boundaries and settlements, in various areas of southern England, incorporating land-use as the main parameter.<sup>4</sup> The results supported philologists' and Bonney's conclusions regarding the siting of cemeteries in relation to their settlements,<sup>5</sup> with the interpretation that they conform to the concept of least-cost locational analysis, being on marginal land near the outer limits of territorial units.

The problem with many of the conclusions drawn from such studies is that they conflict with the evidence from the growing number of excavated early Anglo-Saxon settlement sites, particularly those where the associated cemetery can be identified with reasonable certainty. The excavations of Catholme, Staffs.,<sup>6</sup> West Stow, Suffolk,<sup>7</sup> Mucking, Essex,<sup>8</sup> Cassington, Oxon.,<sup>9</sup> Eynsham, Oxon.<sup>10</sup> and Bishopstone, Sussex<sup>11</sup> make it clear that some nucleated settlements existed, located on light, well-drained soils, especially chalk and gravel, with an adjacent cemetery. There is also a growing body of evidence from a number of cemetery sites for the existence of nearby settlements.<sup>12</sup> In addition there are excavated settlements whose cemeteries have not been located, but which still share the same location types.<sup>13</sup> Something is seriously wrong with the assumptions that are made concerning settlement patterns in early medieval England, since these sites are in the same types of location as the cemeteries.

An important factor which has been overlooked in previous studies is that not only are pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries frequently located near parish boundaries, but so also are the excavated contemporary settlements. This is the case with Chalton, Catholme, West Stow, Bishopstone, Mucking, Cassington and Eynsham (Fig. 2), but it would be misleading to suggest that this is a general rule, as exceptions, such as Old Down Farm, Andover, Hants. and Cowdery's Down, Hants., can be found. All of these sites are deserted, and with the exception of Catholme and Old Down Farm, the desertion took place in the 7th and 8th centuries. These excavations make up the set of extensively excavated settlement sites in southern and Midland England.

It has been argued of Bishopstone that 'the settlement simply moved downhill into the valley, perhaps when conditions became more stable'.<sup>14</sup> Equally, the occurrence of settlements which were established in the late 7th and early 8th centuries has been noted with some frequency.<sup>15</sup> While not wishing to imply that such a pattern can be applied to the whole of Anglo-Saxon England at this time one recent writer has noted in Northamptonshire a 'massive lay-out of the landscape, artificially dividing it into groups of long strips'

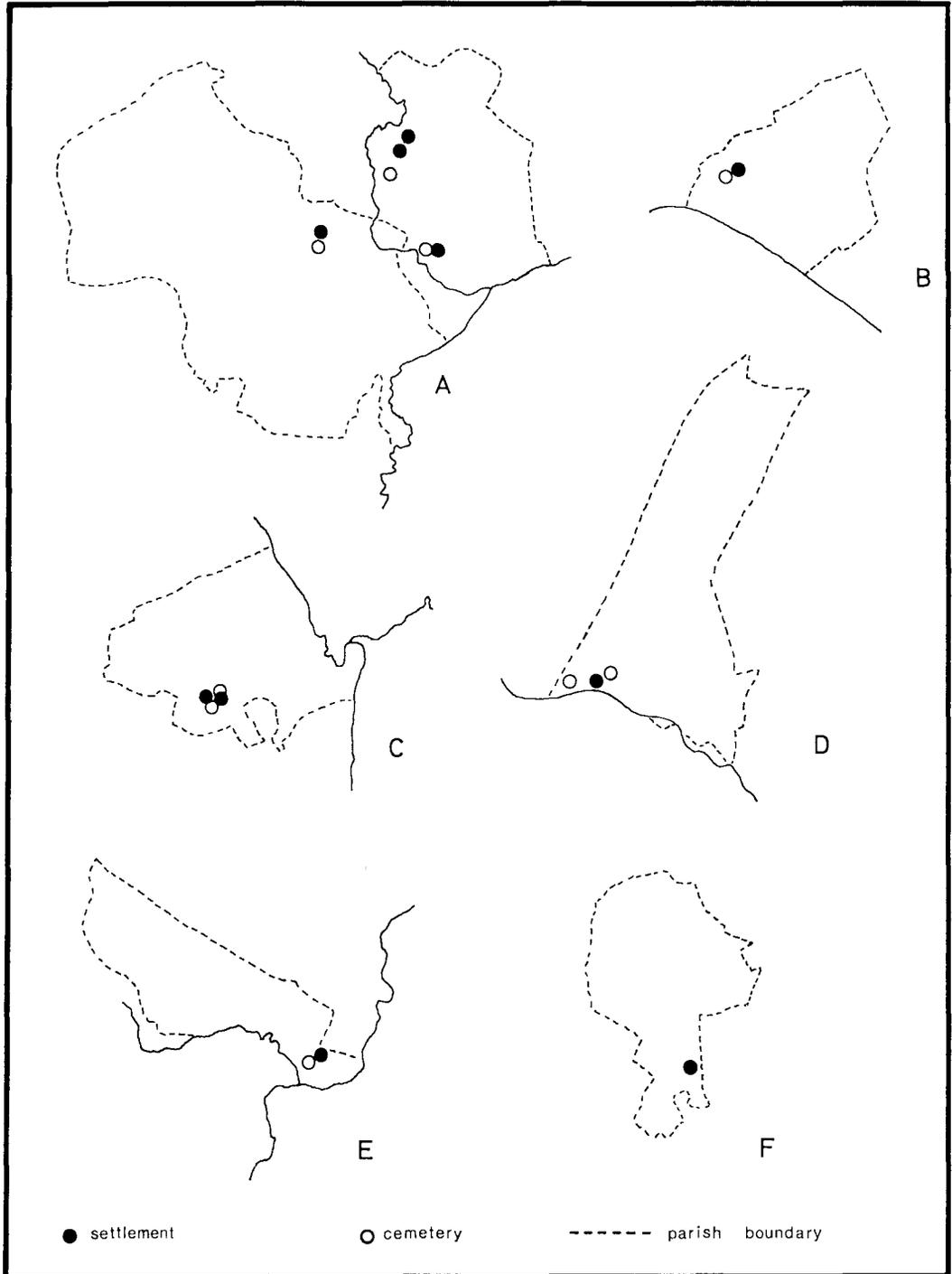


FIG. 2

The relationship of early Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries to parish boundaries

a — Eynsham and Cassington	d — West Stow
b — Bishopstone	e — Catholme
c — Mucking	f — Chalton

in the 8th century, and which bear no relationship to the pattern of 'initial settlement'.<sup>16</sup> In southern England, at least, this movement was onto heavier soils implying a radical adjustment to the organization of the rural economy.

The weight of the evidence makes it more difficult to accept the usual objection to such a model, an objection which is applied to the subject of deserted sites as a whole (especially deserted medieval sites), although not to prehistoric settlements which for some reason are not considered. That is the belief that deserted sites are 'atypical' and that, as far as early Anglo-Saxon England is concerned, 'typical' villages lie underneath existing villages. It is also pointed out that there may be an inherent bias in our site location techniques.<sup>17</sup> The dangers of using such terminology as 'typical' are well known. When settlement relocation has been shown to be such a common, continual, process in Europe it would be wise to reconsider the status of 'deserted' sites. All one can state with certainty is that of the early Anglo-Saxon nucleated settlements in Midland and southern England that have been extensively studied by archaeologists, the majority were deserted before the end of the 8th century, lay near to a parish boundary and were located on light, well-drained soils. Regarding bias in site location techniques it should be stated that of the excavated examples five were located as the result of gravel extraction, two of redevelopment and one by fieldwalking. An adjacent cemetery has been located in six of the eight examples. Just as it is dangerous to argue that such settlements are atypical on the basis of negative evidence, it is unjustifiable to argue that they are necessarily typical when the size of the population is so small.

If we are to consider the desertion of such settlements as a separate phenomenon it is first necessary to examine the dating evidence closely to ensure that a single event is not being confused with a more continual process. The dating of such settlements is notoriously difficult due to the paucity of finds, yet from the chronologies produced by the excavators certain trends emerge. There is rarely evidence of 'continuity' of settlement or population; while Romano-British settlement sites are often found to be near Anglo-Saxon examples, the majority have rarely produced datable artefacts later than *c.* A.D. 400. The Romano-British settlement at Chalton terminated in the 4th century<sup>18</sup> and while 5th-century pottery has been claimed from fieldwalking Roman sites in the area the evidence has yet to be presented;<sup>19</sup> at West Stow no material later than the 4th century has been found associated with the nearby villa at Icklingham;<sup>20</sup> a 6th-century settlement at Willington, Staffs, was positioned within a Romano-British farmstead deserted in the 4th century;<sup>21</sup> at Bishopstone there is a marked lack of definite evidence for occupation of the underlying Romano-British settlement beyond A.D. 400.<sup>22</sup> The date ranges of the early Anglo-Saxon settlements are often dependent on material in associated cemeteries. At Mucking the occupation is dated from the early 5th to the early 8th century;<sup>23</sup> at West Stow from the 5th to mid 7th;<sup>24</sup> at Bishopstone occupation beyond the 6th century was 'unlikely';<sup>25</sup> at Chalton the latest datable objects from the settlement were 7th century;<sup>26</sup> at Eynsham the settlement ranged from the 6th to the late 7th or early 8th centuries.<sup>27</sup> At Catholme however, seventeen radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement was occupied from the 6th to the 10th century.<sup>28</sup> This evidence can be compared with the evidence for the establishment of new settlements in the middle Saxon period. In addition to the examples from East Anglia studied by Wade-Martins<sup>29</sup> where a continuously shifting settlement pattern is argued for, even in the absence of early Anglo-Saxon occupation, there are the examples described by Bell in Sussex.<sup>30</sup> Early Anglo-Saxon pottery, however, has been claimed from excavations in the present village of Chalton.<sup>31</sup>

As a model it would be surprising to find total conformity, especially when we are considering a relationship whose frequency of occurrence will depend on a number of factors. Whilst in southern England the distribution of settlements and early place-name elements is controlled by topography, placing cemeteries on poor land near boundaries,<sup>32</sup> in eastern England the cemeteries are found less frequently on boundaries but the distribution of cemeteries on particular land types is the same as in southern England, that is grades 3 and 4 respectively.

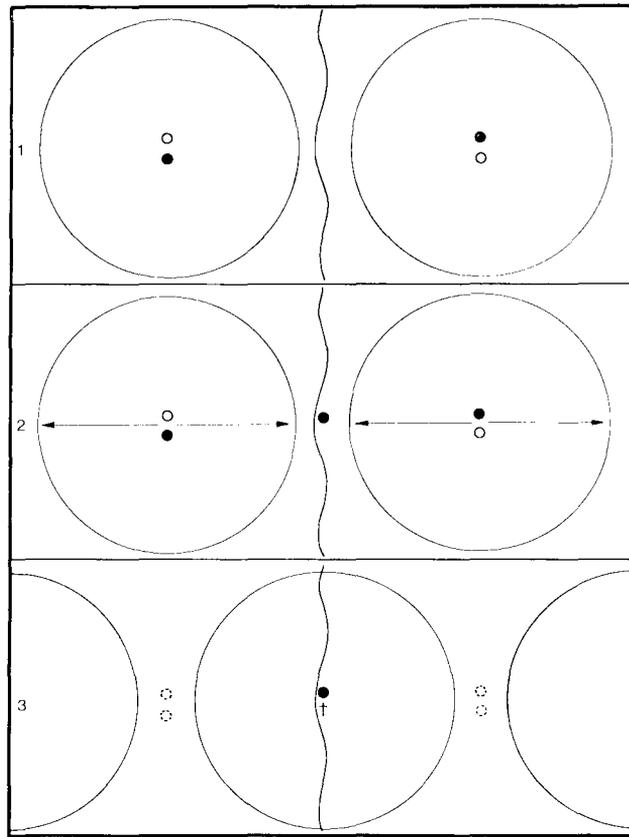


FIG. 3

Diagram showing proposed process of desertion in the 7th century A.D. and relationship between settlements, cemeteries, deserted settlements/cemeteries and land units

Whatever the causal processes it is the writers' belief that the major shift in settlement location is not merely concerned with the relocation of settlements within a defined land unit, but with the reorganization of such territorial units, some of whose new boundaries later become fossilized as parish boundaries. It is suggested that the change is the result of new land-use requirements. It is to these new settlements that the majority of early place-name elements belong, irrespective of the pattern of usage of such names before that time, of which we have little direct information.<sup>33</sup> The result of this shift in settlement location is that not only are cemeteries found on parish boundaries and/or low grade land classification, but so also are the excavated settlements. Whatever the actual causes of this change, it may have had considerable implications for the organization of 7th- and 8th-century Anglo-Saxon society. Such a model satisfies all the available evidence; early settlements adjacent to cemeteries in relatively poor locations; early place-name elements in more suitable locations, particularly valleys, not closely associated with pagan cemeteries;<sup>34</sup> Bonney's observations regarding the occurrence of cemeteries on parish boundaries; the evidence of a major shift in settlement location represented by the desertion of the majority of known early Anglo-Saxon settlements; and the development of new centres in the 7th and 8th centuries.

G. J. ARNOLD and P. WARDLE

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> C. J. Arnold, 'Early Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns in southern England', *J. Hist. Geog.*, 3 (4) (1976), 309-15.
- <sup>2</sup> D. Bonney, 'Pagan Saxon burials and boundaries in Wiltshire', *Wilt. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.*, 61 (1966), 25-30.
- <sup>3</sup> B. N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside* (Oxford, 1979), 177-78.
- <sup>4</sup> Arnold, op. cit. in note 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Bonney, op. cit. in note 2. For further analyses, see D. Bonney, 'Early Boundaries in Wessex', in P. Fowler (Ed.), *Archaeology and the Landscape* (London, 1972), 168-86; D. Bonney, 'Early boundaries and estates in southern England', in P. Sawyer (ed.), *Medieval Settlement: continuity and change* (London, 1976), 72-82; for analysis of place-names and pagan Saxon cemeteries see J. McN. Dodgson, 'The significance of the distribution of the English place-name in *-ingas, inga-* in south-east England', *Medieval Archaeol.*, ix (1966), 1-29; J. McN. Dodgson, 'Place-names from *hām* distinguished from *hamm* in relation to the settlement of Kent, Surrey and Sussex', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1 (1973), 1-50; B. H. Cox, 'The significance of the distribution of English place-names in *-hām* in the Midlands and East Anglia', *J. English Place-name Soc.*, 5 (1973), 15-73.
- <sup>6</sup> S. Losco-Bradley, 'Catholme', *Current Archaeol.*, 59 (1977), 358-64.
- <sup>7</sup> S. West, 'The Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow: an interim report on the excavations, 1965-8', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 13 (1969), 1-20.
- <sup>8</sup> M. U. and W. T. Jones, 'The crop-mark sites at Mucking, Essex, England', in R. Bruce-Mitford (ed.), *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Europe* (London, 1975), 133-87.
- <sup>9</sup> D. Benson and D. Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels* (Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survveys, 2, 1974), map 27; B. V. Arthur and E. M. Jope, 'Early Anglo-Saxon pottery kilns at Purwell Farm, Cassington, Oxfordshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, vi-vii (1962-63), 1, fig. 1.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Gray, 'The Saxon settlement at New Wintles, Fynsham, Oxon.', in T. Rowley (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon settlement and landscape* (Oxford, 1974), 51-55.
- <sup>11</sup> M. Bell, 'Excavations at Bishopstone, Sussex', *Sussex Archaeol. Coll.*, 115 (1977).
- <sup>12</sup> M. Bell, 'Saxon settlements and buildings in Sussex', in P. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (London, 1978), 46; K. N. Moore and D. J. Algar, 'Saxon "grass-tempered ware" and Mesolithic finds from near Petersfinger', *Wilt. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.*, 63 (1968), 103-05; C. Hills, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham, Part 1* (East Anglian Archaeol. Rep., 6, 1977), 4-5.
- <sup>13</sup> For examples on chalk hilltops see P. V. Addyman and D. Leitch, 'The Anglo-Saxon village at Chalton, Hampshire: second interim report', *Medieval Archaeol.*, xvii (1973), 1-25; T. C. Champion, 'Chalton', *Current Archaeol.*, 59 (1977), 364-69; M. Millett, *Excavations at Cowdery's Down Basingstoke: Interim Report* (Basingstoke, 1980); S. M. Davies, 'Excavations at Old Down Farm, Andover. Part 1: Saxon', *Proc. Hants. Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, xxxvi (1979), 161-80.
- <sup>14</sup> Bell, op. cit. in note 11, 241.
- <sup>15</sup> Bell, op. cit. in note 12, 47-48; P. Wade-Martins, 'The origins of rural settlement in East Anglia', in P. Fowler (ed.), *Recent work in rural archaeology* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1975), 137-57.
- <sup>16</sup> D. N. Hall, 'New evidence of modifications in open-field systems', *Antiquity*, LIII (1979), 273.
- <sup>17</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Buildings and rural settlement', in D. M. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), 54-55.
- <sup>18</sup> B. Cunliffe, 'A Romano-British village at Chalton, Hants.' *Proc. Hants. Field Club. Archaeol. Soc.*, xxxiii (1976), 64.
- <sup>19</sup> B. Cunliffe, 'Saxon and Medieval settlement patterns in the region of Chalton, Hampshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 16 (1972), 3.
- <sup>20</sup> C. M. Kraay, 'An early Christian object from Icklingham, Suffolk', *Antiq. J.*, xxii (1942), 219-20; J. Liversidge, 'A new hoard of Romano-British pewter from Icklingham', *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, iii (1959), 6-10.
- <sup>21</sup> Losco-Bradley, op. cit. in note 6, 359.
- <sup>22</sup> Bell, op. cit. in note 11, 175-77.
- <sup>23</sup> Jones and Jones, op. cit. in note 8, 156; S. E. Rigold, 'A group of three sceattas from excavations at Mucking Essex', *Brit. Numismatic J.*, 47 (1977) 127-28.
- <sup>24</sup> West, op. cit. in note 7, 17-18.
- <sup>25</sup> Bell, op. cit. in note 11, 238.
- <sup>26</sup> Champion, op. cit. in note 13, 367.
- <sup>27</sup> Gray, op. cit. in note 10, 51.
- <sup>28</sup> L. E. Webster and J. Cherry, 'Medieval Britain in 1978', *Medieval Archaeol.*, xxxiii (1979), 243-45.
- <sup>29</sup> Wade-Martins, op. cit. in note 15.
- <sup>30</sup> Bell, op. cit. in note 12, 46-72.
- <sup>31</sup> Champion, op. cit. in note 13, 369.
- <sup>32</sup> Arnold, op. cit. in note 1.
- <sup>33</sup> Wade-Martins, op. cit. in note 15; Bell, op. cit. in note 12, 46-72.
- <sup>34</sup> See also F. G. Aldsworth, 'The Droxford Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Soberton, Hampshire', *Proc. Hants. Field Club Archaeol. Soc.* xxxv (1978), 178-79.