

# Des. res. (close City and Thames)

## Early and middle Saxon buildings in the Greater London area

LYN BLACKMORE

IN MAY 1985, fifty years after the publication of Wheeler's study of London in the Saxon period<sup>1</sup>, evidence of Middle Saxon occupation, including structural remains, was discovered by the Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology, on the Jubilee Hall site in Covent Garden<sup>2</sup>. By coincidence the discovery closely followed several papers which, using the distribution of chance finds and the documentary and topographical evidence<sup>3</sup>, suggested that the London referred to by Bede was not within the Roman walls, where no evidence of early or middle Saxon timber structures has yet been found, but to the west of the City in the area of The Strand/Aldwych, or 'old wic'. Until the Jubilee Hall excavation however, these hypotheses were based on no more structural evidence than those of Wheeler or later workers<sup>4</sup>.

The discoveries on the Jubilee Hall site prompted a general survey of early and middle Saxon sites within c 20 miles of London, which have produced evidence for fourteen structures. Anglo-Saxon buildings have been widely reviewed<sup>5</sup>, and those at Mucking, at the mouth of the Thames estuary, have been much discussed<sup>6</sup>, but work on the London area has so far been limited to general distribution maps of early Saxon sites<sup>7</sup>. The purpose of this article is to correlate the evidence from the London area, with reference to some contemporary structures in southern and eastern England. The late Saxon buildings excavated in the City are not included here, since they are being researched by the Department of Urban Archaeology.

1. R. E. M. Wheeler *London and the Saxons* London Museum Catalogue No. 6 (1935).
- 2a. R. Whytehead 'The Jubilee Hall site reveals new evidence of Saxon London' *Rescue News* 37 (Summer 1985) 4-5.
- 2b. D. Whipp 'Thoughts on Saxon London' *London Archaeol* 5, no. 6 (1986) 148-50.
- 3a. A. Vince 'The Aldwych: Mid Saxon London Discovered' *Current Archaeol* no. 93 (1984) 310-13.
- 3b. A. Vince 'New light on Saxon pottery from the London area' *London Archaeol* 4, no. 16 (Autumn 1984) 432-5.
- 3c. M. Biddle 'London on the Strand' *Popular Archaeol* 6, no. 1 (July 1984) 23-7.
- 4a. J. Haslam 'The Saxon pottery' in M. Hammerson 'Excavations on the site of Arundel house in the Strand, WC2, in 1972' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 26 (1975) 221-2.
- 4b. J. G. Hurst 'Anglo-Saxon and Medieval' in *The Archaeology of the London Area, current knowledge and problems* London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Special Paper no. 1 (1976) 60-1.
- 4c. For summary see Blackmore in R. Whytehead and L. Blackmore 'Excavations at Tottenham Court, 250 Euston Road, NW1' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 34 (1983) 82-4.
- 5a. C. A. R. Radford 'The Saxon house: a review and some parallels' *Medieval Archaeol* 1 (1957) 27-38.
- 5b. M. Beresford and J. G. Hurst (eds) *Deserted medieval villages* (1971) London.

### Sunken-featured buildings

'Compact bungalow; cosy split-level home' 'Summer cottage with pasture' 'Light industrial unit' 'Store house with cellar': any of these descriptions could be applied to these structures. Over 500 sunken-featured buildings, or *grubenhäuser* (hereafter SFB) have now been excavated across England, but their function, status and date remain unclear, due to the great variation in their size, shape, post arrangement, relationship to other features, and the finds within them. The majority are of two post type, with opposing posts at the mid-point of the short walls; others have four posts (at the corners or at the mid-points of the walls), or three or more posts along opposing walls<sup>8</sup>. The long axis of the structure generally lies W-E or NW-SE. The true SFB is most common in the early Saxon (migration) period, when some may have been used as temporary accommodation only; Middle Saxon period SFBs are fewer, and many may have been outbuildings rather than dwellings. Late Saxon SFBs show a more developed rectangular form; some of the examples excavated in the City<sup>9</sup> were lined and had wooden floors; they may have been cellars to buildings of some sophistication.

Seven SFBs and one possible example have been excavated within the immediate London area, of which the complete examples range from 2.3 × 2.25m to 5.5 × 2.85m in size. In the following descriptions the site numbers correspond to those in both Figs. 1 and 3.

- 5c. P. Addyman 'The Anglo-Saxon house: a new review' *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972) 273-307.
- 5d. P. Rahtz 'Buildings and rural settlement' in D. Wilson (ed) *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1977) 49-98.
- 5e. P. Rahtz 'Gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon domestic settlement sites' in *ibid* 405-52.
- 6a. M. U. Jones 'Excavations at Mucking, Essex: a second interim report' *Antiq J* 54 (1974) 183-99.
- 6b. M. U. Jones 'Saxon sunken huts: problems of interpretation' *Archaeol J* 136 (1979) 53-9.
- 7a. H. Sheldon and L. Schaaf 'A survey of Roman sites in Greater London' in *Collectanea Londiniensia* London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Special Paper no. 2 (1978) 71-3, Fig. 1.
- 7b. A. Dyson and J. Schofield 'Saxon London' in J. Haslam (ed) *Saxon towns in Southern England* (1984) 289, Fig. 96.
8. The first classification of SFBs according to post-hole arrangement was by W. U. Guyan in 'Einige Karten zur Verbreitung der Grubenhäuser im Mitteleuropa im ersten Nachchristlichen Jahrtausend' *Jahrbuch der schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte* 42 (1952) 174-97.
- 9a. W. F. Grimes *The Excavation of Roman and medieval London* (1968) 155-9.
- 9b. V. Horsman 'Saxon buildings near Billingsgate' *Popular Archaeol* 5, no. 4 (Oct. 1983) 28-32.
- 9c. J. Schofield *The building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* British Museum Publications (1984) 28-9.

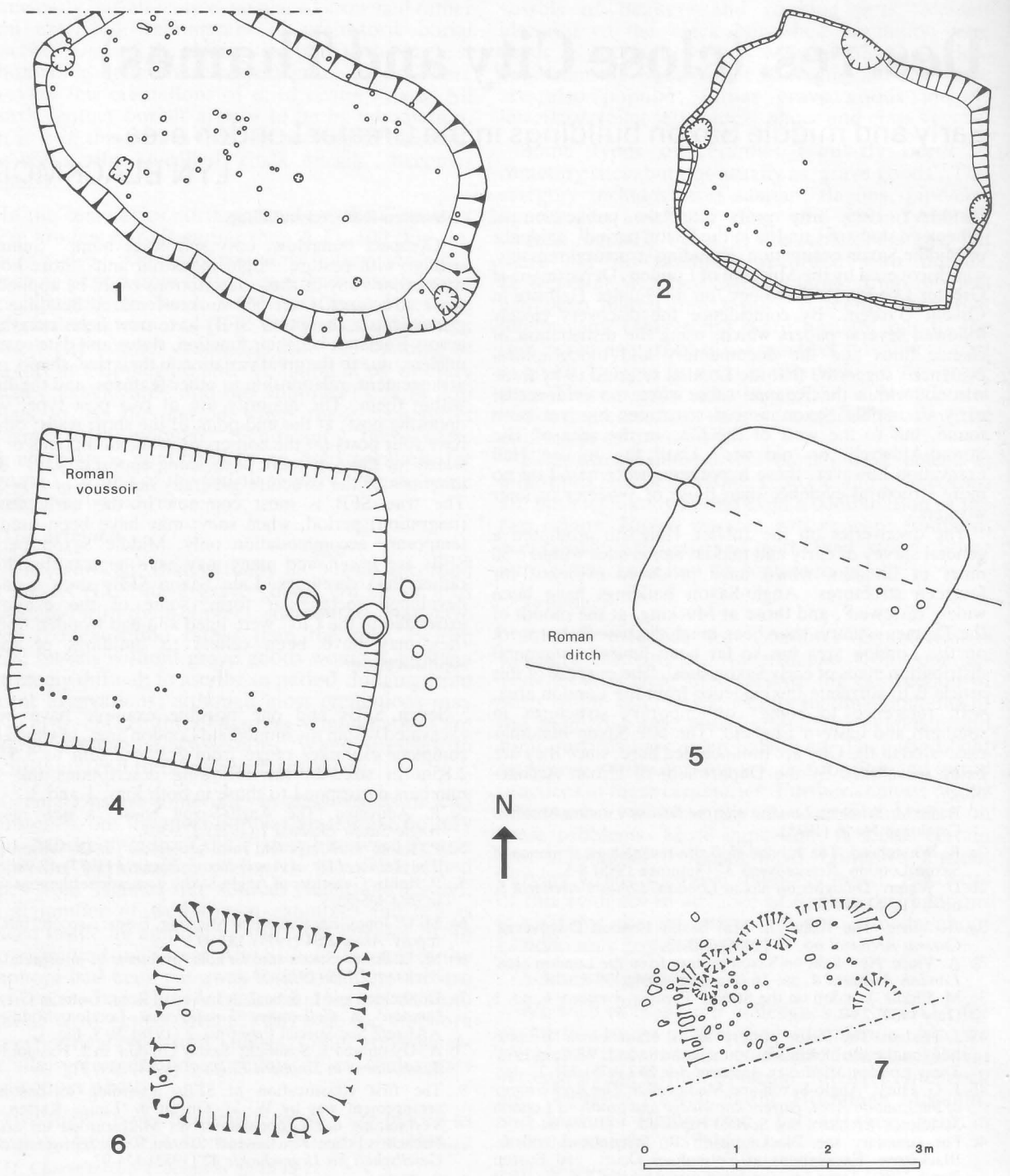


Fig. 1: sunken-featured buildings (1, 2 after Mills; 4 after Philp; 5 after Hart; 6, 7 after Canham).

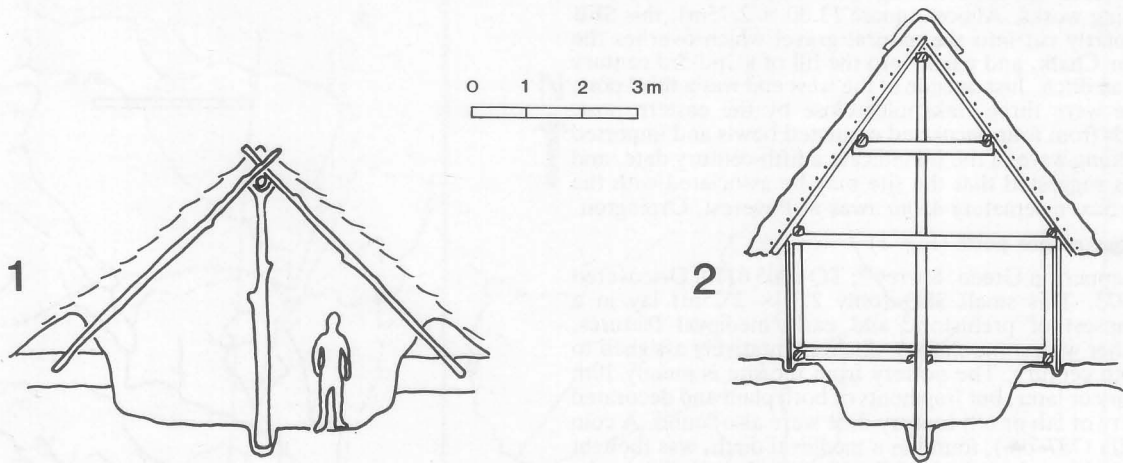


Fig. 2: sunken hut or super-structure? (1 after Farley; 2 after West).

#### A. Two-post structures (Fig. 1)

1. Holloway Lane, Harmondsworth<sup>10</sup>, TQ 0672 7791. Discovered in 1982 during gravel extraction (ongoing). Roughly square in form ( $3.52 \times 2.92\text{m}$ ), with a scoop at the mid-point of the north wall (not a post-hole) suggesting the position of the door. The finds, which include an iron girdle hanger of early Saxon type, and the location of the SFB (bounded on one side by a prehistoric ditch, and on three sides by Roman gullies, presumably still visible at the time of construction), suggest a 5th-7th century date.

2. Holloway Close, West Drayton<sup>11</sup>, TQ 0606 7835. Discovered in 1984, during a watching brief on the construction of a gas main beside the M4 motorway. Slightly boat-shaped ( $5.5 \times 2.85\text{-}3.00\text{m}$ ), with the door possibly on the southern side, between two pairs of stakeholes; the western post is clearly inside the sunken area, but that at the eastern end was set back a little. An early Saxon date is indicated by the pottery, which includes one small sherd (organically-tempered) decorated with a rosette stamp, from a stake-hole, and pottery similar to the early Saxon material from Hanwell<sup>12</sup>. Other finds in the area comprise a stamped sherd (sand-tempered) found in the field to the west of the SFB, an urn containing 31 glass beads (found half a mile away at Longford<sup>13</sup>) and other pottery scatters from around West Drayton.

SFBs 1 and 2 were both situated on the Thames Gravels, with post-holes  $c$  0.3m in diameter, and between

10. J. Cotton, J. Mills and G. Clegg *Archaeology in West Middlesex* (1986) 71.

The site was excavated by the former Greater London Archaeology Dept, now part of the Museum of London (DGLA) to whom I am greatly indebted for this information.

11. As fn 10.

12. R. E. M. Wheeler *op cit* fn 1, 136-9.

13. Cotton *et al*, *op cit* fn 10, 73.

14. B. Philp 'Site 23: an Anglo-Saxon hut at Lower Warbank,

0.12-0.3m deep from the floor of the structure. Internal stakeholes may have supported screens or other furniture.

3. Jubilee Hall. Possible 2-post structure,  $2.75 \times 2.25\text{m}$ , max. depth  $c$  0.7m. See Fig. 5 and below.

#### B. Two-poster derivatives (Fig. 1)

4. Keston: Lower Warbank Field, Kent<sup>14</sup>; TQ 4142 6322 (eleven miles from London). Discovered in 1970 during excavations on the site of a Roman villa in advance of road construction. Almost square ( $4.00 \times 3.40\text{m}$ ), with near vertical walls, this SFB was constructed on a slope, with the long axis following the contour (surviving depth  $c$  0.205-0.41m); the position of the entrance was not clear. Outside (to the east) was an arc of seven post-holes (possibly not contemporary). Inside was a third post-hole, near the eastern post, and groups of stakeholes, interpreted as supports for a possible partition and loom(s). The fill contained 50% Roman material, Saxon pottery (mainly plain, some decorated), bone pins and needles, a triangular bone comb, and a lead weight (possibly weaving tools). A provisional date of  $c$  450-550 AD was suggested for the SFB, which, despite the number of cemeteries along the north side of the North Downs, is the only Saxon structure on the chalk. The proximity of the site and that at Darenth, where Saxon pottery and loomweights have also been found<sup>15</sup>, to Roman villas prompted speculation on continuity of occupation from the Roman period, now been attested at Heybridge and Colchester in Essex, and suggested at Shepperton<sup>16</sup>.

Keston, Kent' in *Excavations in West Kent 1960-1970* (Dover: Kent Archaeol Rescue Unit, 1973) 156-63.

15. 'Site 22. An Anglo-Saxon occupation site at Darenth, Kent' in *op cit* fn 14, 155, Fig. 46.

16aP. Drury and N. Wickenden 'An early Saxon settlement within the Romano-British small town at Heybridge, Essex' *Medieval Archaeol* 26 (1982) 1-40.

16bP. Crummy 'Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester' *Colchester Archaeol Rep* 1; CBA Res. Rep. 39 (1981) 1-6. See also fn 19.

5. St. Mary Cray: 10-20 Kent Road, Kent<sup>17</sup>; TQ 4707 6737. Discovered in 1982 during excavations in advance of building works. Almost square (3.00 × 2.75m), this SFB was partly cut into the natural gravel which overlies the Upper Chalk, and partly into the fill of a 2nd-3rd century Roman ditch. Just outside at the west end was a third post; inside were three stakeholes close by the eastern post. Sherds from four decorated carinated bowls and imported Shlickung ware in the fill indicate a fifth-century date, and it was suggested that the site may be associated with the large Saxon cemetery 450m away at Poverest, Orpington.

**C. Four corner posts (Fig. 1)**

6. Shepperton Green, Surrey<sup>18</sup>; TQ 0705 6770. Discovered in 1973. This small SFB (only 2.3 × 2.25m) lay in a palimpsest of prehistoric and early medieval features, together with some shallow ditches tentatively assigned to the 6th century. The pottery from the site is mainly 10th century or later, but fragments of both plain and decorated pottery of 5th or 6th century date were also found. A coin of Offa (757-796), found in a medieval ditch, was thought to have been deposited c 792-820, with the possibility of a slightly later survival. The finds from the SFB included a bronze pin of 8th or 9th century type, which, unless intrusive, suggests that this SFB is a late example of the type. The presence of three pagan Saxon cemeteries in the same parish, however, indicates extensive occupation of the gravel terrace in the early Saxon period<sup>19</sup>.

**D. Incomplete structures (Fig. 1)**

7. Brentford: 234-246 High Street<sup>20</sup>, TQ 1780 7750. Excavated in 1970-71, this SFB was situated close to a major Roman road in an area of late Roman occupation. The surviving portion (2.35 × 1.35m) was truncated in depth, but would appear to be aligned north-south, with a post at the mid-point of the north wall, and two posts (one perhaps a replacement) at the north-west corner. A number of stakeholes lay inside and just outside the sunken area, but no clear pattern could be discerned.

8. Ham, near Kingston-upon-Thames<sup>21</sup>, TQ 1693 7157. Parts of two or more SFBs were discovered in February 1950 during observation of gravel extraction. They contained animal bones, unbaked clay loomweights, and pottery of 5th and 6th century date including a faceted carinated urn illustrated by Myres<sup>22</sup>.

17. F. A. Hart 'The excavation of a Saxon grubenhaus and Roman ditch at Kent Road, St. Mary Cray' *Archaeol Cantiana* 101 (1984) 187-216.

18. R. Canham 'Excavations at Shepperton Green 1967 and 1973' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 30 (1979) 97-124.

19aIbid 99, 110-14, considers the relationship of these early cemeteries with the parish boundaries and Roman sites in the area.

19bD. Longley and R. Poulton 'The Saxon cemetery at Upper West Field, Shepperton' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 33 (1982) 177-85.

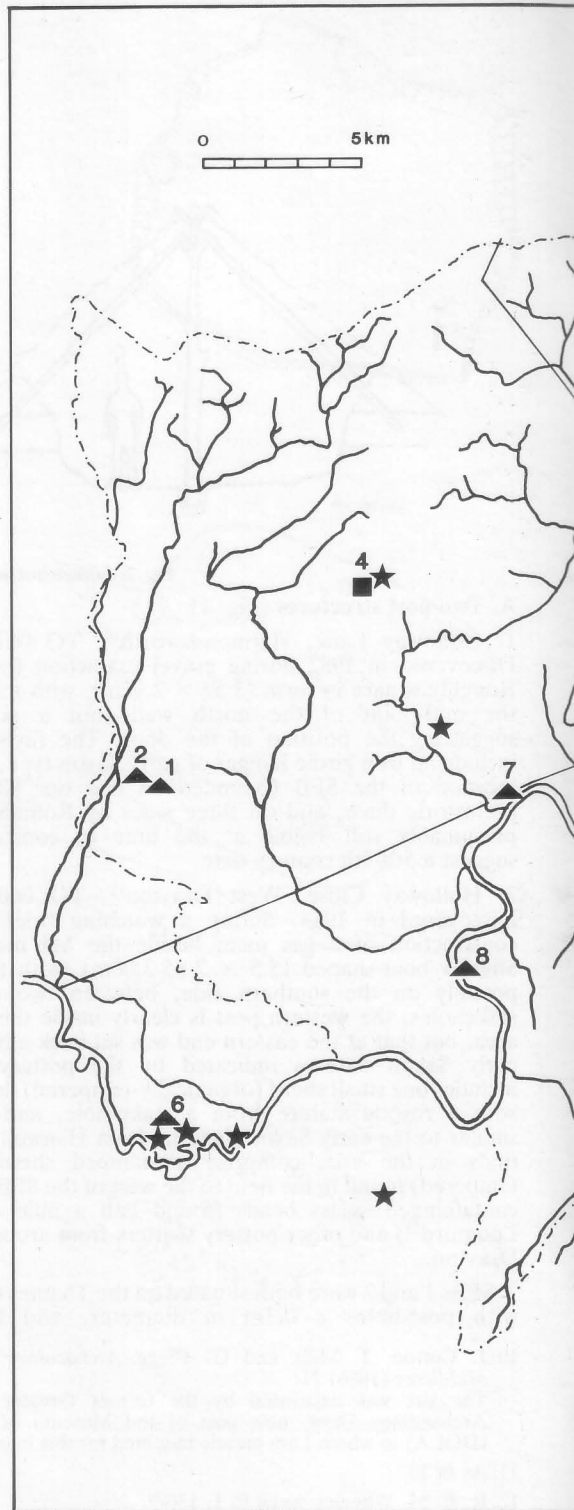
20. R. Canham *2000 years of Brentford* HMSO (1978) 30; 150.

21. *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 52 (1952) 101.

J. Morris 'Anglo-Saxon Surrey' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 56 (1959) 143.

22aR. Poulton and P. Jones *pers. comm.*

22bJ. N. L. Myres *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Pottery* Cambridge (1977) Vol. 1, 247; Vol. 2, Fig. 201, No. 1044.





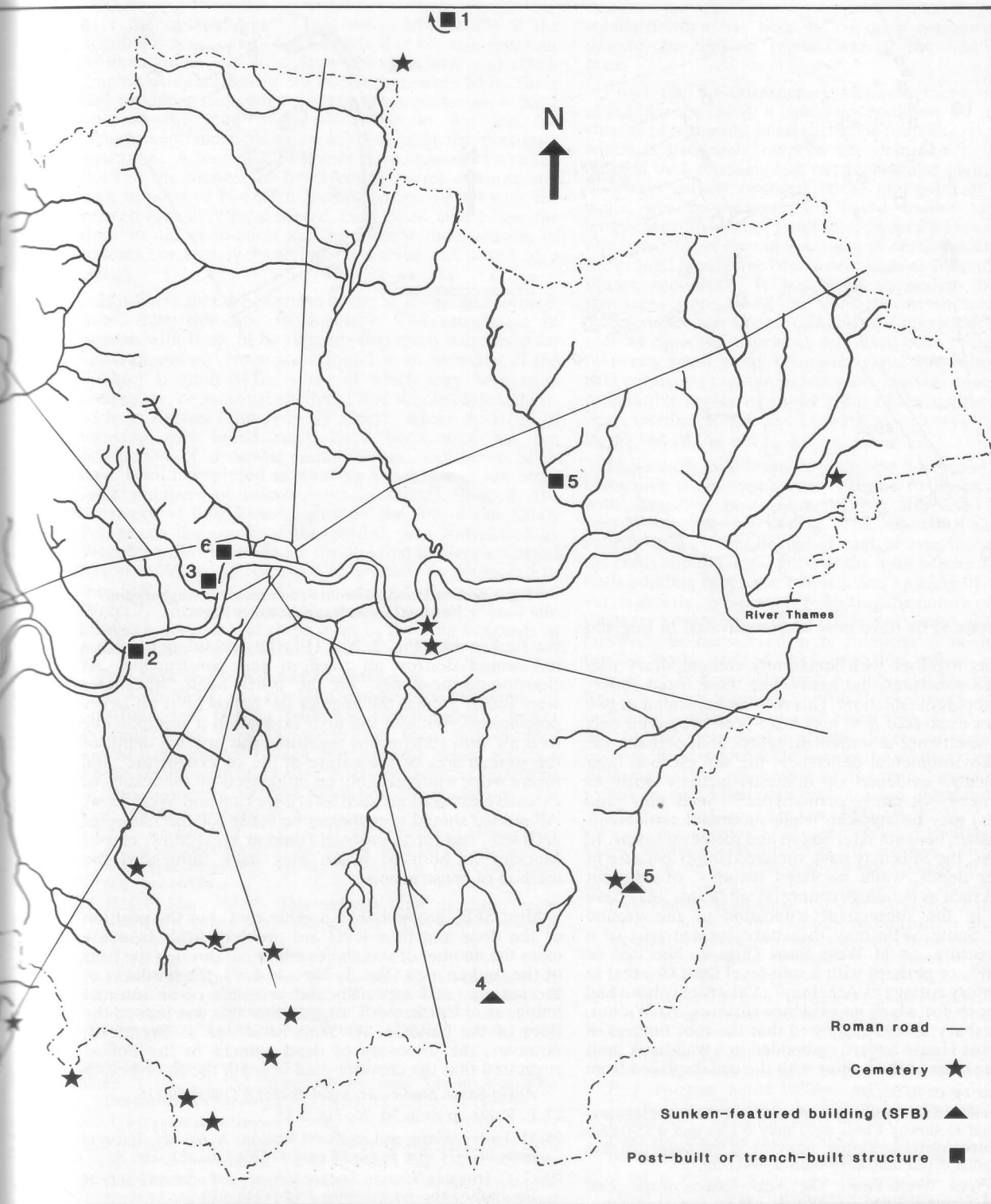


Fig. 3: the distribution of early and middle Saxon buildings in the Greater London area.

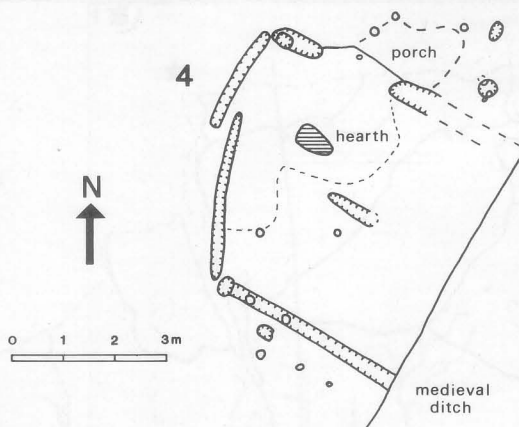
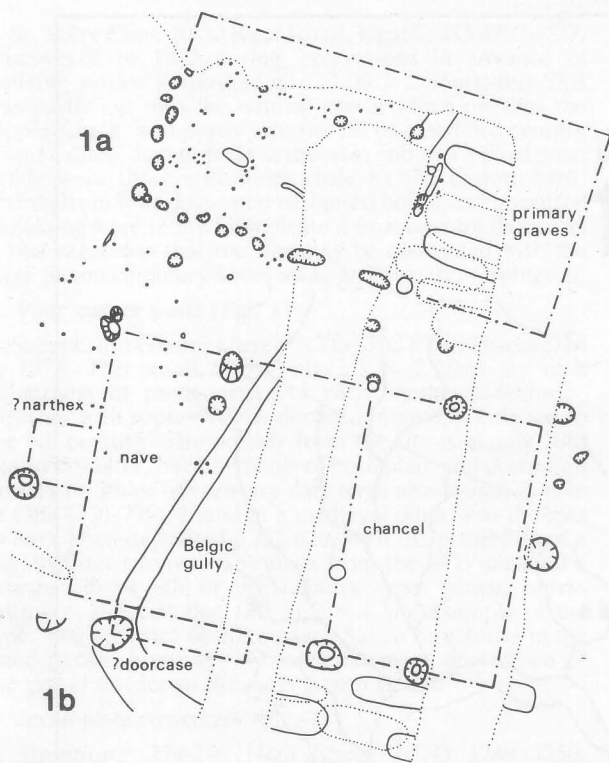


Fig. 4: post-built and sill-beam structures at Nazeingbury and Northolt (1 after Huggins; 4 after Hurst).

Numerous SFBs have now been excavated in England in

settlements together with apparently contemporary timber-framed structures, but many, like those listed above, stand in apparent isolation. This may be explained in two ways. Sites excavated now may have been preserved only because the attempt at settlement failed, and, perhaps due to some environmental deficiency, the site escaped later developments: evidence of domestic activity such as weaving need not imply permanence<sup>23</sup>. Such sites (and their finds) may be atypical, while successful settlements have vanished beneath later Saxon and medieval towns. In other cases, the SFB may have survived simply because of its greater depth, while associated features, or adjacent structures such as buildings resting on sill beams, may have vanished in the subsequent truncation of the ground surface<sup>24</sup>. Some SFBs may thus have formed part of a larger structure, as at West Stow (Fig. 2, No. 2)<sup>25</sup> or Puddlehill<sup>26</sup>, or perhaps with a split-level floor like that in a 19th century cottage at Athelney<sup>27</sup>; Others may have had roof supports for which no evidence survives. At Walton, near Aylesbury, it was suggested that the roof timbers of the two-post House 8 were embedded in a wall-bank built around the edge of the hollow with the soil displaced from 23. P. Rahtz *op cit* fn 5d, 60.

24. The Brentford SFB was c 0.2m deep, while those at Holloway Lane and Holloway Close were only 0.15m and 0.15-0.25m deep respectively; at Keston, however, it was suggested that the original depth may have been 0.46-0.61m.

25. S. E. West 'West Stow, The Anglo-Saxon village' *East Anglian Archaeol* 1 and 2 (1985): 1, 120.

26. C. L. Matthews and S. C. Hawkes 'Early Saxon settlements and burials on Puddlehill, near Dunstable, Bedfordshire'

the sunken area (Fig. 2, No. 1)<sup>28</sup>; the backfilling of such a hut would destroy all trace of this construction. At Bourton-on-the-Water, on the other hand, stakeholes were found around the edge of the hollow, but no larger post-holes<sup>29</sup>. Without full area excavation it is impossible to draw firm conclusions regarding the original depth of the sunken area or the nature of the superstructure, and future work will inevitably be influenced by the results of extensive excavations such as at Mucking and West Stow. Allowance should nonetheless be made for the nature of each site, and for the subsoil (sand at West Stow, clay at Mucking<sup>30</sup>), both of which may have influenced the method of construction.

Most SFBs probably had a gable roof, but the position of the door and floor-level are problematical. In many cases the number of stakeholes which cut through the base of the sunken area (Fig. 1, Nos. 1, 4, 7), the hardness of the surface, and especially the presence of an internal lining, as at Colchester<sup>31</sup>, suggest that this was indeed the floor of the building. At West Stow and at Brentford, however, the discovery of dead animals in the hollow suggested that the creature died beneath the floor-boards

*Anglo-Saxon Stud in Archaeol & Hist* 4 (1985) 59-116.

27. P. Rahtz *op cit* fn 5d, 76, Fig. 2.13.

28. M. Farley 'Saxon and medieval Walton, Aylesbury: Excavations 1973-74' *Rec Bucks* 20 pt. 2 (1976) 178, 181, Fig. 8.

29. G. C. Dunning 'Bronze Age settlements and a Saxon hut near Bourton-on-the-Water' *Antiq J* 12 (1932) 279-93.

30. R. Huggins *pers. comm.*

31. P. Crummy *op cit* fn 16.

over the sunken area<sup>32</sup>. This seems improbable if the building was occupied, but credible if it was non-domestic or abandoned. At West Stow the structural and stratigraphic evidence leaves no doubt that some SFBs there had raised or suspended floors<sup>33</sup>. This would allow for a door in the long side rather than at the end, an arrangement much more in keeping with the post-built structures. A four-post SFB may have supported a raised floor in the manner of Iron Age granaries or those still seen in parts of Northern Europe today. In this case the sunken area may have served as an open area below the floor to aid ventilation and to prevent the intrusion of rodents, or it may have been enclosed and acted as a cellar.

It is likely that the function of the SFB changed through time, from domestic to ancillary. The association of hearths with some SFBs suggests that many were used for accommodation. None were found in or near any of the Greater London SFBs, some of which may have been temporary, or seasonal shelters (?for shepherds). Others, such as Keston (and possibly Ham), where evidence of weaving was found, may have been used for the production of domestic requirements, and many SFBs have been interpreted as weaving sheds due to the often large numbers of loomweights in them<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, the discovery of four loomweights on the site of the Savoy Palace, to the south of the Strand, was considered by Wheeler sufficient evidence for 'the first non-ecclesiastical Saxon building outside the City', which he compared to the SFBs at Sutton Courtenay and Bourton-on-the-Water<sup>35</sup>. The recent excavations on the Jubilee Hall site however, suggest that there were in the area buildings of much greater sophistication.

#### Post-built and trench-built buildings

As with SFBs, the size and construction technique of post-built and framed buildings varies greatly. Fewer examples have been excavated, but there is a chronological development (which may to some extent reflect a need to economise on timber<sup>36</sup>). There are local variations in the longevity of any one type, but considerable

32aR. Canham *op cit* fn 20, 30.

32bS. E. West *op cit* fn 25, 1, 111-21; the presence of a lower layer of fine silt, beneath general debris in the fill of the sunken area is interpreted as dust slipping between the floor-boards into the void below.

33. *Ibid* 2, Figs. 283-9b. This includes some excellent reconstruction drawings which elevate some SFBs to quite spacious residences.

34. M. U. Jones *op cit* fn 6b, 57.

At both Mucking and West Stow loomweights were found not in neat rows (as if fallen directly from the loom), but in great heaps. It was suggested that the 100+ unfired loomweights found in hut 54 at Mucking may have fallen from storage in the rafters.

35aWheeler *op cit* fn 1, 139-40.

35bE. T. Leeds 'A Saxon village near Sutton Courtney, Berkshire' *Archaeologia* 72 (1923); 77 (1927); 92 (1947).

36. R. Huggins *pers. comm.*

37. P. Dixon 'How Saxon is a Saxon house' in Drury (ed) *Structural Reconstruction* Brit Archaeol Rep 110 (1982) 279.

38. *Ibid* 277, 278. (Conversely, the aisled houses which were the norm on the continent are rare in Britain until the late Saxon period, although used here in prehistoric and Roman times).

39. S. James, A. Marshall, M. Millett 'An early medieval building

standardisation has been noted on a nationwide scale, despite the 'intense regionalism of the English tribal areas'<sup>37</sup>.

From the 5th-6th century onwards there developed alongside the SFB a building tradition of post-built structures with substantial earth-fast foundations, of a type which is extremely rare on the continent<sup>38</sup>. They are defined by a precisely laid out rectangular plan, with the doorways usually opposed at the mid-point of the long walls; the proportions are based mainly on simple length:breadth ratios<sup>39</sup>, and at Cowdery's Down<sup>40</sup> and a number of other sites in lowland and north-eastern Britain the ground plans have been interpreted as combinations of square modules<sup>41</sup>. It has been suggested that many structures were based on standard measurements (the 5.03m rod or the 4.65m rod) and that important buildings such as churches or palaces may have been designed by a relatively small group of master carpenters who ensured that consistent measurements were used on each site; the remarkable regularity in the plans of these structures has been ascribed to the use of markers or cords during the laying out of the site<sup>42</sup>.

These early post-built, or wall-post buildings (the most commonly found type) were followed firstly by buildings with staggered posts (Fig. 4, No. 1a), and then by post-in-trench structures (Fig. 5, No. 2), which allowed (or called) for a greater degree of control over the placing of the posts and the installation of the infill between them. In both building types the number and spacing of the posts varies greatly, presumably reflecting the nature of the roof timbers. Structures with irregular post-holes should not, however, be considered more primitive than those with regular posts: indeed they probably reflect a greater degree of skill in achieving a stable construction with timbers which were not 'true'<sup>43</sup>. Arguably the latest technique was the use of a sill beam (Fig. 4, No. 4; Fig. 5, No. 6); this permitted a greater degree of stability, and became the standard technique in the medieval period. At Billingsgate the sill beams of the late Saxon buildings rested on slots filled with consolidated foundations<sup>44</sup>, but

tradition' *Archaeol J* 141 (1984) 182-215.

(The circular structure at Shepperton, listed by Rahtz as early Saxon, has been reinterpreted as mid-late Iron Age (*Med Archaeol* 1968, 159; Rahtz *op cit* fns 7d 86, 7e:438; Canham *op cit* fn 18)).

40. M. Millett and S. James 'Excavations at Cowdery's Down, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1978-81' *Archaeol J* 140 (1983) 151-279. Some of the excellent reconstruction drawings are included in I. Longworth and J. Cherry *Archaeology in Britain since 1945* (exhibition catalogue) British Museum Publications (1986) 133-42.

41. M. Millett and S. James *op cit* fn 40; at Mucking however only one building in 66 appears to fit this model (P. J. Huggins *pers. comm.*).

42. P. Huggins, K. and W. Rodwell 'Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian building measurements' in Drury *op cit* fn 37, 21 and 27. P. J. Huggins 'Saxon building measurements' in J. G. B. Haigh (ed) *Computer Applications in Archaeology 1982*, University of Bradford (1983) 103-110.

Both systems were used at Mucking; Cowdery's Down now fits the 4.65m rod (P. J. Huggins *pers. comm.*)

43. F. W. B. Charles 'Buildings with irregularly spaced posts' in Drury 1982 *op cit* fn 37, 101; a useful summary of the sequence of construction of various building types, ancient and modern.

44. V. Horsman *op cit* fn 9a.



with earlier structures the evidence is rarely so clear; at Catholme, and at Althorpe Grove, for example, there are wall trenches which contain post-holes at one end but not at the other<sup>45</sup>. Some buildings combine two or more methods, as in building 4 at Hamwih, where all three techniques were used<sup>46</sup>. Together with differential survival, this may lead to misidentification if the whole building is not available for excavation, as is frequently the case.

#### A. Post-built (Fig. 4, Nos. 1a, 1b)

1. Nazeingbury, Essex<sup>47</sup> TL 386 066. Two buildings in a cemetery, discovered in 1975-76, during excavations in advance of gravel extraction, both interpreted as churches belonging to a hospice run by nuns. The proportions of both structures are, like those of the palaces at Cheddar and Yeavinger, based on the standard 5.03m rod<sup>48</sup>. The earlier was of staggered post-hole type, the first of its kind in England (although it was suggested that buildings with 'double-centred' post-holes may in fact have been of similar form, with two half posts in each hole). The walls were probably of horizontal planks slotted between the uprights. The later church (which may have coexisted with the first for some time) comprised a series of widely spaced post-holes; no evidence was recovered to indicate the nature of the walling between them. The dating of the site to c 650-850 has now been confirmed by the discovery of a charter dated to c 700 wherein the Essex king Swaebred grants land to build a 'house of God' at Nazeing<sup>49</sup>.

#### B. Post-in-trench/sill beam (Fig. 5, No. 2)

2. Althorpe Grove, Battersea<sup>50</sup> TQ 2699 7699, discovered 1975. A complex of Saxon features was revealed which cut into the alluvial subsoil and were sealed by a layer of weathered brick-earth. One long north-south slot was traced for c 8m, with a post-hole at the north-west corner and part of a return to the east. Parallel to this slot and c 2.5m to the west of it, was a second slot which terminated at a similar point at the northern end. Both intersected with apparently contemporary east-west gullies. The area was peppered with stakeholes; although few were found between the two long slots. No floor levels were found, but fragments of daub with wattle impressions indicate the nature of the walling. These enigmatic features may equally represent part of a very large building with internal bays or partitions; different phases of a smaller building;

45. S. Losco-Bradley 'Catholme' *Current Archaeol* no. 59 (1977) 358-64.

46. P. Holdsworth 'Saxon Southampton: a new review' *Medieval Archaeol* 20 (1976) 26-61 (p. 32, Fig. 14).

47. P. Huggins 'Excavation of Belgic and Romano-British farm with middle Saxon cemetery and churches' *Essex Archaeol Hist* 10 (1978) 29-117.

48. P. Huggins, K. and W. Rodwell *op cit* fn 42, 36-8.

49. K. N. Bascombe forthcoming, R. Huggins *pers. comm.*

50. B. Richardson 'Excavation Round-up 1976' *London Archaeol* 3, no. 2 (1977) 39. S. McCracken in prep.

51aP. Rahtz *op cit* fn 7d, 82, Fig. 2.15.

51bP. Rahtz *op cit* fn 7e, 415 and refs. therein.

51cT. Champion 'Chalton' *Current Archaeol* 5, no. 59 (1977) 356-69.

51dK. Wade 'A settlement site at Wicken Bonhunt' in *The Archaeology of Essex to 1500* C.B.A. Res. Rep. No. 34 (1980)

a building with an annexe, or different structures. Among the closer parallels in plan are various post-in-trench middle Saxon houses at Chalton, Hants, and post-in-trench/sill beam structures at Wicken Bonhunt<sup>51</sup>. The occupation is dated to c 650-850 by a few sherds of Ipswich-type ware, with two stamped sherds similar to those from the Savoy, Jubilee Hall and Barking Abbey, and one sherd from Northern France. Evidence for earlier Saxon occupation in the area has been found only 1 mile away at Rectory Grove, Clapham<sup>52</sup>.

3. Treasury site, Whitehall<sup>53</sup> TQ 300 799. The structural remains comprise the eastern end of a building 5.5m wide, the southern wall of which was traced for at least 7m, with a possible eaves-drip gully beside it. The interior was divided into at least two bays by two opposing principal posts set in post-holes along the wall face at 5.5m from the east wall. Between the posts, some of which were founded on re-used Roman and later tiles, or broken quernstone, were narrow slots for sill-beams. The walls were possibly of upright timbers, many of which had collapsed inwards. Several large stones found outside the north wall may have served as thatch weights on the roof. The life-span of the structure is not known; but the easternmost part was constructed over a sunken area filled with compressed vegetation, which produced a handled comb similar to the one found at Althorpe Grove; this was sealed by a raft for the floor of the structure. The pottery from the destruction debris comprises mainly Ipswich-type ware, but also includes 9th-century Badorf-type and Tating wares; this appears to be contemporary with the last phase of Jubilee Hall or a little later<sup>54</sup>.

#### C. Sill-beam (Fig. 4, No. 4; Fig. 5, No. 6)

4. Northolt, Middlesex<sup>55</sup> TQ 133 841, discovered 1961. Three sides of a large timber building (5 × 5.5m+) represented by beam slots with substantial post-holes at the north and west corners; the fourth side was cut away by a medieval ditch. Inside was a thick gravel floor in the northern corner, with a hearth opposite the door. A slot at the approximate centre of the room was interpreted as a roof support. Only hand-made Anglo-Saxon pottery was found in the building, which was provisionally dated to the 8th or 9th century. The absence of Ipswich ware here may simply reflect on the trading connections of the site, but since pagan burials were also found on the site a 6th or 7th century date is not impossible. The location of the door,

96-102.

52. R. Densem and D. Seeley 'Excavations at Rectory Grove, Clapham, 1980-81' *London Archaeol* 4, no. 7 (1982) 177-81.

53. H. J. M. Green 'Secrets of Whitehall' *Illustrated London News* 22 (1963) 1004-5.

D. Wilson and G. Hurst 'Medieval Britain in 1961' *Medieval Archaeol* 6-7 (1962-63) 309.

H. J. M. Green and R. Huggins, forthcoming in *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc.*

54. R. Huggins *pers. comm.*

55. D. Wilson and G. Hurst 'Medieval Britain in 1961' *Medieval Archaeol* 6-7 (1972-73) 309, Fig. 97.

56. Excavations are still in progress; plans of the features discovered so far are on display at the Passmore Edwards Museum until October 1986. I am indebted to Ken McGowen and Sheila Girardon for this information.

57. R. Whytehead *op cit* fn 2.



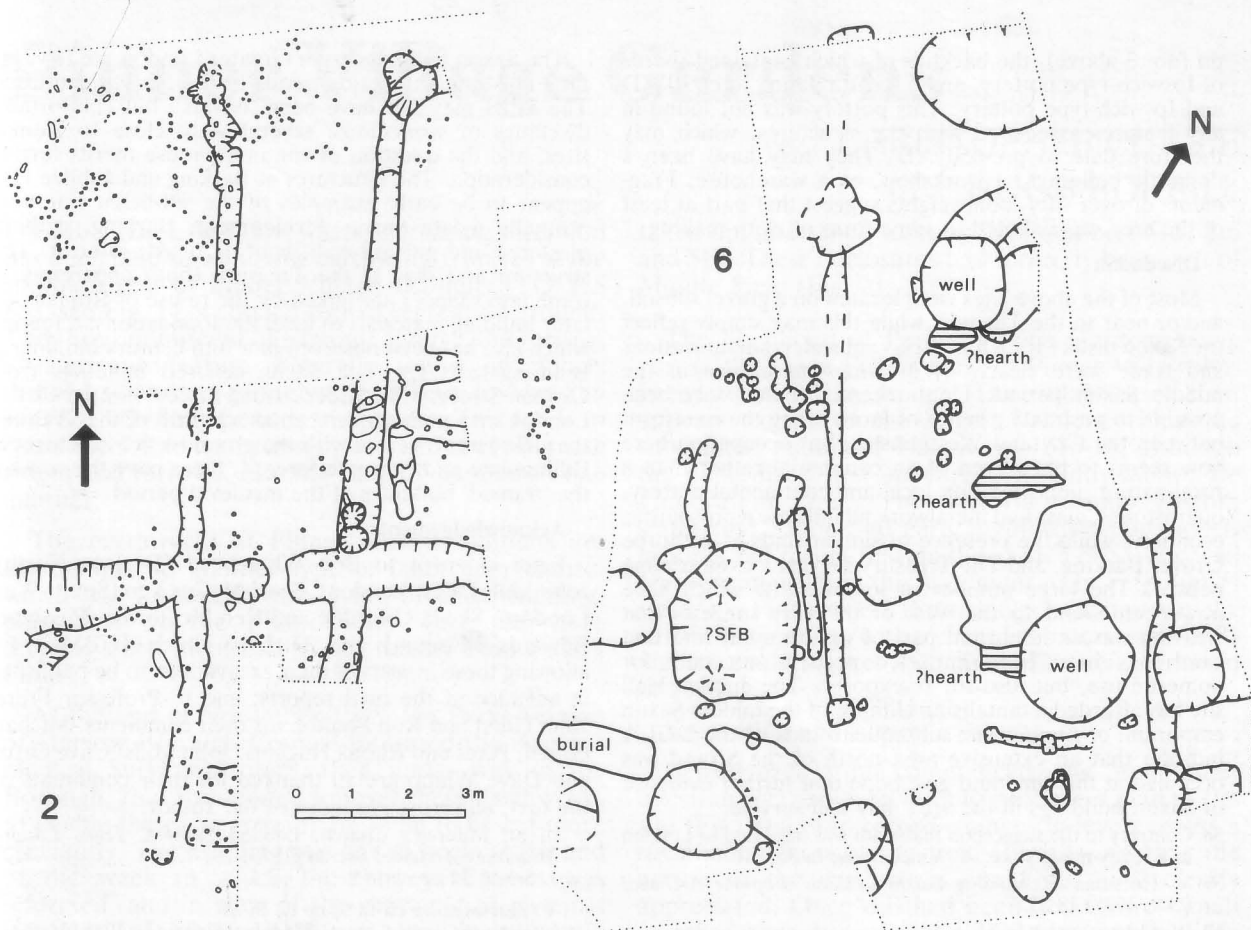


Fig. 5: post-in-trench and sill-beam structures at Althorpe Grove and Jubilee Hall (2 after McCracken, 6 after Whytehead).

(in the north-east wall near the north corner, with a possible porch), the irregular nature of the north-west wall and the general shape of the structure are all atypical of Saxon domestic timber buildings, and it may be that the structure served some other purpose. The site probably forms part of the Saxon and early medieval village of Northolt.

5. Barking Abbey, Essex<sup>56</sup> TQ 4393 8393. Current excavations here have revealed at least one structure of middle Saxon date in an area of Saxon occupation to the south of the abbey (founded c 666 AD). Aligned more or less north-south, it measured c 9 × 5m, with a possible internal partition based on a wooden sill-beam dividing the interior into two areas. The building was founded on sill-beams levelled up with Roman tiles, with upright timbers founded on ragstone and tile post-pads. The walls were constructed of wattle and daub, although there is some evidence that the southern wall may have been of wooden planking. This building was constructed over a large pit, and the resulting structural problems caused the walls to be repositioned and the floors to be renewed on five occasions. Such persistence, together with the fact that, in its final form, at least one wall was internally

plastered and painted white, suggests that the building, or its location, were of some significance. It was apparently destroyed by fire, in the mid-late Saxon period. Further remains of a structure of similar size and construction are separated from the first building by a modern wall; it is not yet clear whether they form part of the same or a different structure. The pottery from the site includes Ipswich-type ware and imported wares, some similar to those from Jubilee Hall.

6. Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden<sup>57</sup> TQ 3040 8085. The main feature was a probable building c 5m wide, aligned NW-SE, comprising two long slots c 0.3m wide and c 0.18m deep, of which the western terminated in a square post-hole at the south-west end, with smaller post-holes at intervals along the eastern face. Between these slots were traces of hearths, and numerous post-holes, possibly screens or partitions. The full length of the structure and the position of the door are problematical since it may have extended considerably to the south-west, where opportunity for excavation was limited. Just to the west of the western slot was a smaller structure (possibly not contemporary). These features were apparently succeeded by a number of pits and wells, and a possible SFB or large

pit (no. 3 above), the backfills of which contained sherds of Ipswich-type pottery, and a sceatta dating to c 720 AD and Ipswich-type pottery. This pottery was not found in any features associated with the structures, which may therefore date to pre-650 AD. They may have been a domestic buildings, a workshop, or a warehouse. Fragments of over fifty loomweights suggest that part at least of the area was devoted to some form of cloth-making.

### Discussion

Most of the above sites were located on a gravel subsoil, and/or near to the Thames; while this may simply reflect the Saxon dislike for a heavy clay subsoil, communications and trade were clearly of growing importance in the middle Saxon period. Until recently it has only been possible to postulate a series of farms along the riverfront between the City and Westminster, but occupation here now seems to have been of an commercial rather than a rural nature; imported non-local and continental pottery, quernstones, glass and metalwork all indicate a prosperous economy, while the presence of similar finds at Althorpe Grove, Barking, and The Treasury suggest a close trading network. The large number of loomweights which have now been found to the west of the City suggests that weaving was an important part of the economy and that wool may have been imported perhaps not only for domestic use, but also for re-export<sup>58</sup>. The Jubilee Hall site has afforded a tantalising glimpse of the middle Saxon emporium of *Lundenwic*; subsequent finds by the DGLA indicate that an extensive area north of the Strand was occupied at this time and give hope that further evidence of Saxon buildings in the area may still survive.

58. Contrary to the suggestion that cloth was imported to London in a ready-made state: A. Vince *op cit* fn 3a, 310.

59. V. Horsman 'Rebuilding Saxon London' *Popular Archaeol* (Oct. 1985) 18-23.

60. W. Grimes *op cit* fn 11.

P. Marsden, T. Dyson and M. Rhodes 'Excavations on the site

The Saxon buildings from Greater London are few, but they illustrate the major trends in the 5th-9th centuries. The SFBs may not have been 'hovels', but comfortable dwellings or workshops; several were close to Roman sites, and the question of continuity/reuse merits further consideration. The structures at Barking and Jubilee Hall appear to be early examples of the sill-beam tradition, normally a late Saxon development. Barking, with its plastered and painted wall, is of particular interest. This structure and that at the Treasury (both apparently of some importance) are linked by the re-use of Roman and later building materials to level the foundations, a feature which also has been observed in a 10th-century building at Billingsgate<sup>59</sup>. The late Saxon celled buildings from Cannon Street, Milk Street, Bread Street<sup>60</sup>, in the City of London may perhaps be seen as a hybrid of the SFB and the sill-beam; together with the ground-level structures at Billingsgate and Newgate Street<sup>61</sup>, these pave the way for the 'framed' buildings of the medieval period.

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I am indebted to Bob Whythead (DGLA, North), John Mills (West London), Scott McCracken (South-West London), Sheila Girardon and Ken McGowen (Passmore Edwards Museum) and Michael Green (HBMC) for allowing these aspects of their excavations to be published in advance of the final reports; and to Professor Frere, John Hurst and Rob Poulton for their comments. Michael Green, Peter and Rhona Huggins, John Mills, Clive Orton and Dave Whipp are all thanked for their comments on the text; all errors are those of the author.

of St. Mildred's Church, London 1973-74' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 26 (1975) 181-7.

J. Schofield *op cit* fn 9.

61. V. Horsman *op cit* fn 9; *op cit* fn 57.

L. Webster and J. Cherry 'Medieval Britain in 1975' *Medieval Archaeol* 20 (1976) 165-6.

## Excavations & Post-Excavation Work

**City**, by Museum of London, Department of Urban Archaeology. A series of long term excavations. Enquiries to DUA, Museum of London, London Wall, EC2Y 5HN (01-600 3699).

**Croydon & District**. Processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collection every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Mrs Muriel Shaw, 28 Lismore Road, South Croydon, CR2 7QA, tel. (01) 688 2720.

**Greater London** (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to Louise Priest, DGLA, Museum of London (01-600 3699 x241). Local enquiries to:

North London: 3-7 Ray Street, London EC1R 3DJ (01-837 8363).  
South-West London: St. Luke's House, Sandycroft Road, Kew, Surrey (01-940 5989).

Southwark and Lambeth: Port Medical Centre, English Grounds, Morgans Lane, London SE1 2HT (01-407 1989).

West London: 273A Brentford High Street, Brentford, Middlesex (01-560 3880).

**Hammersmith & Fulham**, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Sandford Manor and Fulham High Street. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace,

Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, S.W.6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, S.W.6. (01-731 0338).

**Kingston**, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Marion Shipley, Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston. (01-546 5386).

**North-East London Boroughs**, by Passmore Edwards Museum. Enquiries to Pat Wilkinson, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, E.15. (01-534 4545).

**Surrey**, by Surrey Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to David Bird, County Archaeological Officer, Planning Department, County Hall, Kingston, Surrey. (01-541 8911).

**Vauxhall Pottery**, by Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society. Processing of excavated material continues three nights a week. Enquiries to S.L.A.S., c/o Cuming Museum, 155 Walworth Road, S.E.17 (01-703 3324).

*The Council for British Archaeology produces a monthly Calendar of Excavations from March to September, with an extra issue in November and a final issue in January summarising the main results of field work. The Calendar gives details of extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The annual subscription is £5.50 post-free, which should be made payable to C.B.A., 112 Kennington Road, SE11 6RE. (01-582 0494).*