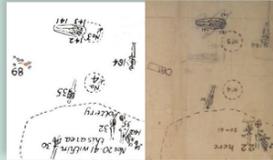


The excavations uncovered a total of eight hollows that would have formed the principal below ground element of what are called sunken-featured buildings, these being the smaller buildings shown here. It seems probable that the shallower evidence for the larger post-built structures that are most prominent in the image was lost through truncation before archaeological work began. The viewpoint looks approximately north. (Drawing by Giles Patison © Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

**Hurst Park, East Molesey  
c. AD 550**

Comparative plans from  
Guildown burials



discrepancies in various details.

published by AWG Lowther in 1931 – have drawn-out considered for its suggestively Saxon features, while examination of the records from the Guildown site – first re-assessment of select material has produced revelations on such aspects as the dating or provenance of assemblages. Descriptions in a Coroner's Report from 1951 of an isolated burial at Compton were recently re-



Pig remains of Saxon date from Old Woking

Discovers do not always rely on new excavations, and – in addition to advances made in place-name studies – (cover image © TVAS), revealing them to be local to Cornwall, rather than the Guildford area. took strontium and oxygen isotopic analysis of teeth from three 'deviant' (atypical) burials excavations at Guildown cemetery by TVAS (Thames Valley Archaeological Services) under provided dates of AD 663-721 and irrefutable Saxon presence in the settlement. Minor carbon dates from an assemblage of animal bones – mainly pig – recovered in test pitting advances are able to be made in local fieldwork. At Old Woking, radio-

Although early medieval studies have the advantage of documentary evidence – particularly from the 6th century onwards – the historical accounts are often rife with bias and must be treated with caution. Saxon and Viking studies are also complicated by issues of ethnicity and religion, and it clear that rather than notions of mass migration or simple 'Christianisation' of pagan practices, identities formed through a variety of processes.

**The Saxon period AD 410-1066**

**Where can I discover more?**

Surrey lacks many notable Saxon remains which are still standing and can be viewed today, as most excavated sites are now re-buried with little to see on the ground. However, various Saxon barrow earthworks can still be seen in the landscape, as at Banstead or (albeit less so) Farthing Downs. Although a small number of parish churches may boast Saxon foundations, the only one with



particularly pre-Norman features in its fabric is St Mary's in Guildford.



St Mary's, Guildford (top) and Gally Hills, Banstead Downs (left)

**Some sources to learn more on Saxon Surrey**

- Blair, J (1990) *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement before 1300*
- Hunt, R (2002) *Hidden Depths: an Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*
- Poulton, D (1990) *Saxon Secrets in Surrey*

**Other suggested resources**

- UCL Institute of Archaeology's **Beyond the Tribal Hidage** (ucl.ac.uk/early-medieval-atlas/map-data/beyond-tribal-hidage-data)
- University of Cambridge/King's College London's **The Electronic Sawyer** (esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk)
- King's College London's **Langscape** (langscape.org.uk)
- Jorvik Viking Centre** (jorvikvikingcentre.co.uk)
- Exploring Surrey's Past** (exploringsurreyspast.org.uk)

In addition to the Society's own handling collections and teaching resources, local loans boxes are available from many of the county's museums, as well as Surrey History Centre.

Saxon exhibits can be viewed at local museums including Guildford, Godalming and Kingston, and the Museum of London, Sutton Hoo, Ashmolean and other churches in the region including Worth and Sompting are also worth a visit.



“Promoting the study of archaeology and antiquities...and any other matters or things relating to the pre-history and history of the County.”

- *Articles of Association  
Surrey Archaeological Society*

Surrey Archaeological Society, Hackhurst Lane, Abinger Hammer, Surrey RH5 6SE

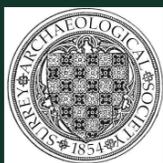
Tel: 01306 731275

Email: [info@surreyarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@surreyarchaeology.org.uk)  
[outreach@surreyarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:outreach@surreyarchaeology.org.uk)

[www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk)

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**Saxon Surrey**



Explore your local heritage and discover more about the origins of Surrey's earliest settlements

- AD1066 Death of Edward the Confessor, leading to the Norman Conquest
- AD1016-1042 Rule of Danish kings, beginning with Sweyn Forkbeard, causing Aethelred to flee to Normandy
- AD1002 Aethelred orders St Brice's Day Massacre of Danes living in England
- AD910-920 Guildford becomes a town at Kingston
- AD900-970 English kings are said to be crowned and Viking armies
- AD893 Battle of Farnham between West Saxon and Viking armies
- AD891 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is begun
- AD871 Battle of Reading, in which Aethelred and his brother Alfred fail to capture the Viking-held town

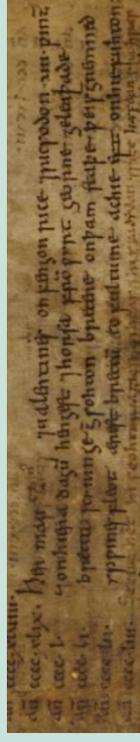
- AD760 Construction begins on Offa's Dyke between England and Wales
- AD731 Bede completes his Ecclesiastical History of the English People
- AD664 Synod of Whitby
- AD597 Mission of St Augustine, who founded a monastery at Canterbury
- AD540 Gildas writes the 'Ruin of Britain'
- AD495 Wessex kingdom founded under Cerdic (who had a British name)
- AD477 Foundation date given for the Kingdom of Sussex by Saxon warlord Aelle
- AD449 Traditional landing of Hengist and Horsa in Kent and beginning of Saxon invasions
- AD410 Sack of Rome by Visigoths and Britain told to look to its own defences

## Christians and Pagans

By c. AD 700, the conversion to Christianity was mostly complete, and charters record minster churches at Farnham and Chertsey. Few churches today retain Saxon fabric, other than foundations as at Farnham (*far left*), though St Mary's, Guildford has features such as pilaster strips and double-played windows which date to the late 10th or 11th century. Although the Vikings' arrival in the late 8th century re-introduced paganism, their impact was not as strong in Surrey, with only a handful of finds including the Chertsey sword – an offering recovered from the Thames (*bottom right*) – and Tilford axe. (Photos: David Graham, Mary Alexander, Brian Wood © Chertsey Museum; Drawing: David Williams)



## The fall of Rome and coming of the Saxons

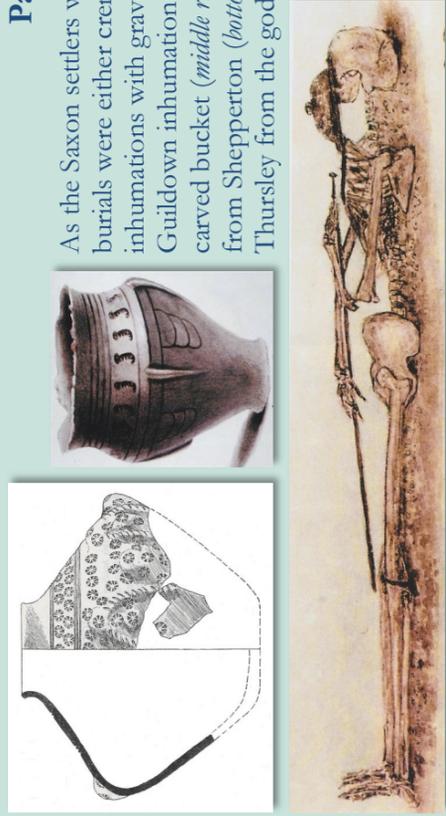
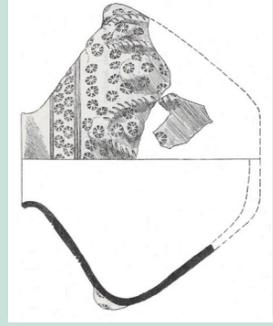


Evidence for early 5th century – so-called 'Dark Age' – Surrey is extremely limited, due to an almost complete dearth of written records or dateable artefacts for sites. At Flexford, however, a rare coin struck in the Mediterranean AD 408-23 (*right*, showing Honorius and Theodosius II) attests to continued use of the Roman road at the site. Despite continental accounts for Roman withdrawal in 410 and the subsequent arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, the earliest English sources – including Bede's *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – are not contemporary with the events described and should not be taken at face value. (CCCC MS 173: The Parker Chronicle, Folio 4v © Corpus Christi College, Cambridge CC Lic.; Photo: David Calow)



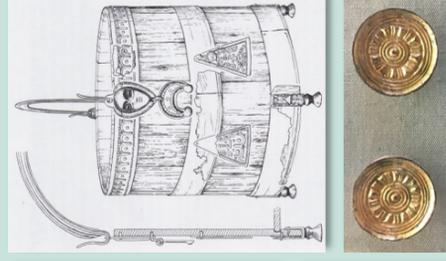
## Early domestic settlement

Most of Surrey's Early Saxon sites – including those within the historic county – have suffered from poor quality antiquarian excavations and a lack of closely dateable artefacts. As structures were built out of timber, they are rarely uncovered, and only a small number of 5th and 6th century sunken-featured buildings – also referred to as *grubenhäuser* – are known, including ones at Hurst Park, Shepperto and Farnham (*left*). These would have usually formed a complex incorporating at least one rectangular hall, and although many were later re-used as middens, domestic artefacts such as loomweights (as from Farnham, *left*) indicate specialist functions. (Photos: E Borelli; Anne Sassini)

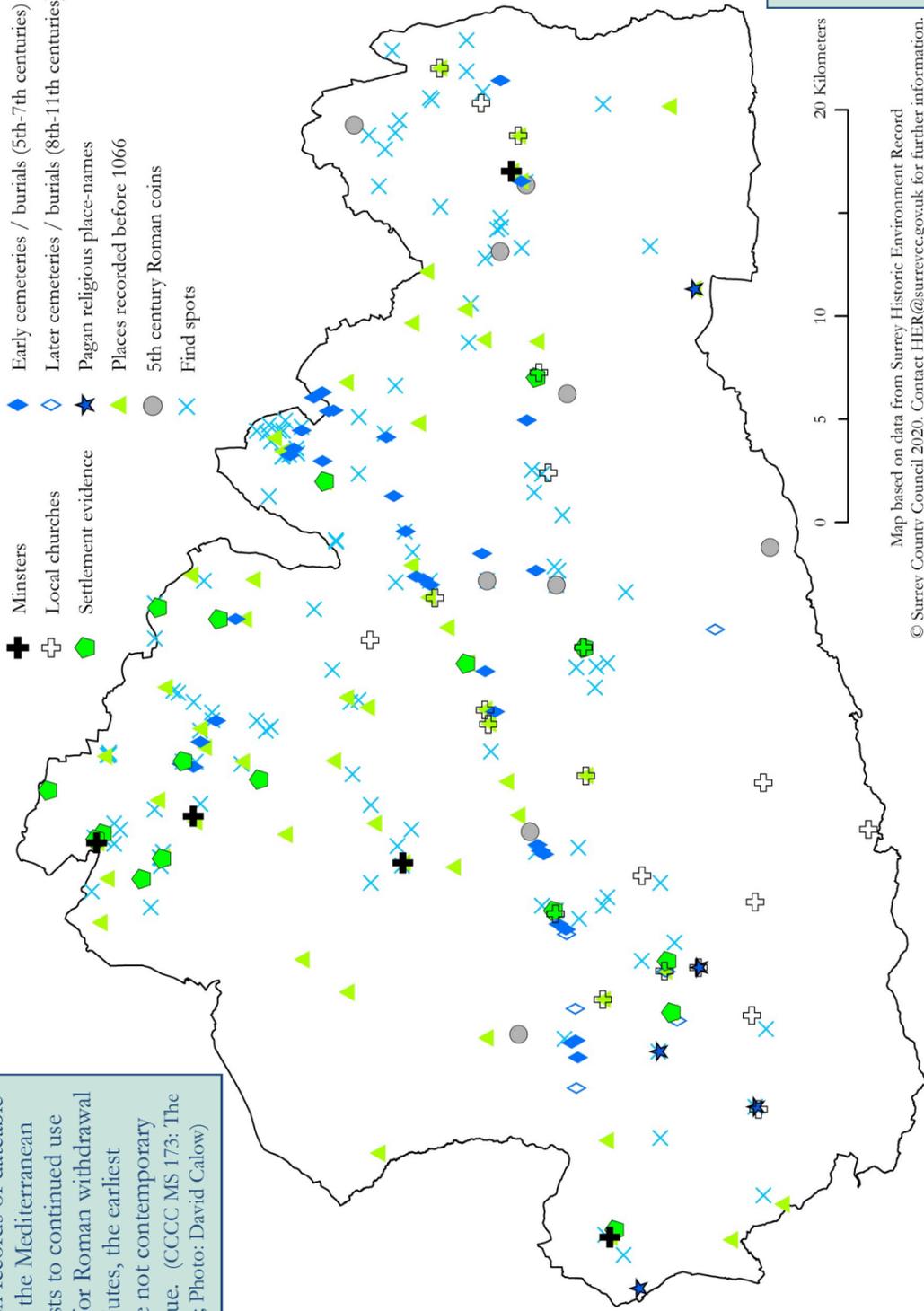


## Pagan burials and sacred sites

As the Saxon settlers who first arrived were pagan – rather than Christian – their burials were either cremations often contained in ceramic urns (*left*), furnished inhumations with grave goods (such as beads and brooches as in the 6th century Guildford inhumations (*right*), more intricate items such as the Watersmeet carved bucket (*middle right*) or weapons as in the early 6th century warrior burial from Shepperton (*bottom left*)), or mixed rite. Occasional placenames – such as Thursley from the god Thunor – also attest to former sacred places. From the later 6th and 7th century, barrows were raised over particularly high status burials, as at Farthing Down, which was accompanied by a wooden cup with bronze bindings (*upper right*). (Watercolours: c/o Guildford Heritage Services; Drawings: AWG Lowther & David Williams; Photos: SyAS)



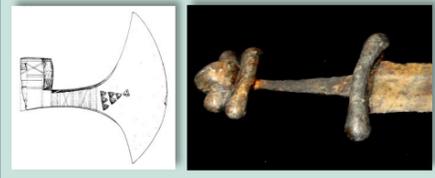
Minsters  
Local churches  
Settlement evidence  
Early cemeteries / burials (5th-7th centuries)  
Later cemeteries / burials (8th-11th centuries)  
Pagan religious place-names  
Places recorded before 1066  
5th century Roman coins  
Find spots



Map based on data from Surrey Historic Environment Record © Surrey County Council 2020. Contact HER@surreycc.gov.uk for further information.

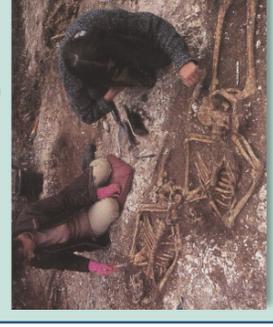
## Metal Detecting

If undertaken responsibly, metal detecting can make important contributions to archaeological knowledge. Detectorists are reminded that it is illegal to trespass – remember all land has an owner! – and to record finds with their local Finds Liaison Officer and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. For more on the Code of Practice, see [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)



## Law and order

As Surrey was a frontier which at various times fell under Wessex, Mercian and Kentish kingdoms, its control was of great importance, and law and order in Late Saxon society was particularly strict. For major crimes, the death penalty was issued, which for most involved hanging. Execution cemeteries – mostly 8th-11th century and positioned on the edge of territories – are known at Guildown, Ashtread, Staines and Banstead. Burials were often placed over earlier ones, with hands tied behind their back (as at the Goblin Works site, Ashtread), or occasionally decapitated as in the multiple grave from Guildown (*above*). (Photos: Surrey County Archaeological Unit and AWG Lowther)



## Late Saxon burhs

In response to Scandinavian attacks – including the sacking of Chertsey Abbey – a network of fortified *burhs* was established. The *burhs* served as both military sites such as Eashing (*bottom*) – which occupied a strategic position over-looking the Wey – and towns as at Southwark and Guildford, the latter replacing Eashing in the 10th century. Trade and the minting of coins took place in Late Saxon towns, as seen in coins from Guildford such as that of Cnut (reign 1016-35). (Photo: Guildford Heritage Service; Map: Surrey County Archaeological Unit)

