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ABSTRACT

The relationship between sites of Early-Anglo-Saxon activity and territorial boundaries, once much-debated, has been subject to little direct exploration in recent years despite its significance for landscape history. This article examines this important relationship using data from the Suffolk Historic Environment Record and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It is suggested that the association between deserted settlement sites and parish boundaries has a much longer pedigree than is often suggested, persisting through the Norman Conquest and beyond. It is argued the origins of this relationship can be usefully understood in terms of territorial reorganisation following settlement abandonment.

Introduction

The relationship between parish boundaries and Early Anglo-Saxon activity was once the subject of intense academic interest on the part of landscape historians. In recent decades, however, this relationship, although often repeated in studies of the territorial landscape, has been little explored and to some extent neglected, despite its potential implications for the development of settlement patterns and territorial boundaries in the early Middle Ages. The purpose of this paper is to suggest that relatively untapped datasets from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and various local Historic Environment Records (HERs), interpreted through GIS software, present new opportunities to reassess this significant relationship and its later historic parallels.

The origins and development of ecclesiastical parishes and their boundaries has been the subject of much research (for example, Winchester 1990; Rackham 1986), and the importance for landscape history of understanding the development of parish boundaries has long been recognised. Oliver Rackham, for example, highlighted how the relationship between parish boundaries and other features, such as roads and field boundaries, can contribute much to exploring changes in the landscape (Rackham 1986, 19–20). The boundaries of secular estates laid out in Middle and Late Saxon charters are remarkably close to the boundaries of many later parishes, suggesting that the origins of some parish

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boundaries may be found in these periods (Hooke 1998; Hooke 2010). Others, however, have suggested that the origins of parishes may, be much earlier.

Desmond Bonney, working in Southern England in the 1960s and '70s, first drew scholarly attention to the association between parish boundaries and Early Saxon activity, highlighting that 29 per cent of Early Saxon burials in Wiltshire are situated on parish boundaries, while a further 20 per cent can be found within 500ft (152m) of the nearest territorial boundary (Bonney 1979, 41). To Bonney this suggested that the Saxon estate boundaries that later 'fossilised' into parish boundaries had emerged 'somewhat earlier than has been generally supposed', potentially in the Roman period or before (Bonney 1979, 43). In essence, he suggested that the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes 'existed or were coming into existence … within the pagan period' (Bonney 1979, 43). Such notions were partly supported by the work of Ann Goodier. Taking a statistical approach to the study of the relationship between Early Saxon sites and parish boundaries, she reaffirmed the relationship between Early Saxon material and parish boundaries, although identifying only 17 per cent of Early Saxon burials as associated with territorial boundaries. This relationship suggested to Goodier that in the centuries after the collapse of Roman Britain, Anglo-Saxons did indeed bury 'their dead on their own boundaries' (Goodier 1984, 14). It was, however, argued that the boundaries themselves were Early Saxon, rather than belonging to an antecedent period, with boundary burial a key process through which territorial units were established and formalised (Goodier 1984, 1–21). The relationship between funerary activity and territorial boundaries has also been emphasised in areas beyond England. Elizabeth O'Brien, for example, has suggested that boundary burial was an important phenomenon in Iron Age and early medieval Ireland (O'Brien 2020).

Such an approach has, however, proved controversial and has been challenged in several ways. While it has been strongly argued that Early Saxon folk groups did indeed bury their dead at or near territorial boundaries (Williams 2006, 186–7), Andrew Reynolds and Martin Welch have challenged this assertion on a number of grounds. Reynolds, although agreeing that there is a relationship between Anglo-Saxon funerary activity and boundaries, has suggested that due to the character of parish boundaries in the area studied by Bonney the 160m distance he employed may, in fact, include burials that lie closer to the centre of the parish than the periphery. 'Heathen burials' highlighted by Bonney are in the opinion of Reynolds often deviant burials or execution cemeteries, the location of which in marginal areas is well attested (Reynolds 2009, 203–6; Reynolds 2002, 171–94). Welch takes such arguments further, suggesting that any evidence of Early Saxon activity that lies within the boundary zone is the result of Early Saxon funerary monuments being employed as boundary markers when defining the bounds of Late Saxon estates (Welch 1985, 13–25). Andrew Russel has further argued that the relationship between Early Saxon activity and parish boundaries is simply the consequence of the established association between Early Saxon settlement and rivers, along which parish boundaries were drawn in the medieval period (Russel 1985, 96–114). Simon Draper has similarly suggested that the relationship between Early Saxon burials and parish boundaries may be due to the influence of another factor; in Draper's opinion, the link between Early Saxon funerary activity and parish boundaries is the result of a preference among Early Saxon peoples for burying their dead in the landscape surrounding routeways and prehistoric burial sites. Such 'obvious and convenient'

landmarks later formed boundary markers between estates in the Late Saxon period, along which parish boundaries were drawn (Draper 2004, 55–64).

While most researchers have discussed the relationship between parish boundaries and Early Saxon sites largely in terms of funerary activity, others, such as C. Arnold and P. Wardle, have considered the relationship between Early Saxon activity and parish boundaries in entirely different terms (Arnold and Wardle 1981, 145–9). Although agreeing that there is a relationship between sites of Early Saxon activity and parish boundaries, they argued that Early Saxon settlements and cemeteries often occurred together, usually on poor, light soils that were easy to work. When such settlements were deserted in the seventh and eighth centuries, their territory was later absorbed by successful settlements in the local area. As the deserted occupation sites were located on what later became undesirable, relatively infertile soil due to changes in ploughing technology, the areas they once occupied became peripheral to the currently occupied settlements; such marginal spaces, in time, came to form the boundary between territories. Although they acknowledged that there is indeed evidence of funerary activity near parish boundaries, Arnold and Wardle regarded this as a result of the close spatial relationship between settlements and cemeteries, with the funerary evidence observed by Bonney and Goodier a consequence of cemeteries remaining fixed in the landscape, even after their attendant settlement shifted or was abandoned. The relationship between Early Saxon sites and parish boundaries is thus the result of a significant period of settlement movement, a process which set in motion 'the reorganization of … territorial units, some of whose new boundaries' were later 'fossilized as parish boundaries' (Arnold and Wardle 1981, 148).

Despite this previous scholarly interest, the debate surrounding this significant relationship has fallen off the academic radar in recent years, with the association between parish boundaries and Early Saxon activity often repeated but rarely analysed in detail or challenged (e.g. Chester-Kadwell 2009, 12–14). The relatively untapped datasets from the PAS and the ever-growing quantity of information recorded with the various local HERs offer new opportunities for the relationship between Early Saxon settlement and parish boundaries to be reassessed.

The Relationship Between Failed Settlement and Parish Boundaries in East Suffolk

In order to re-examine the relationship between sites of Early Saxon activity (defined here as three pieces of pottery or metalwork) and parish boundaries, GIS software was used to place finds of Early Saxon metalwork and ceramic material from the PAS and Suffolk HER back into the landscape of 97 parishes in Suffolk (Figure 1). The landscape of England comprises many countrysides, the product of social and environmental diversity. Such variety means that this study area cannot be seen as typical of England as a whole; a single landscape, representative of the entirety of the English countryside, does not exist. The area here explored is, however, both environmentally and topographically diverse. It stretches from the acid sands of the Suffolk Sandlings, itself a highly varied landscape, to the fertile but often waterlogged clay plateau of High Suffolk. Exploring such a diverse area of the English countryside allows the impact of external environmental factors upon the association between parish boundaries and Early Saxon material to be mitigated to some extent.

When data from the PAS and Suffolk HER is examined within the context of the local landscape, using a threshold of 200 m, following Chester-Kadwell's work on the
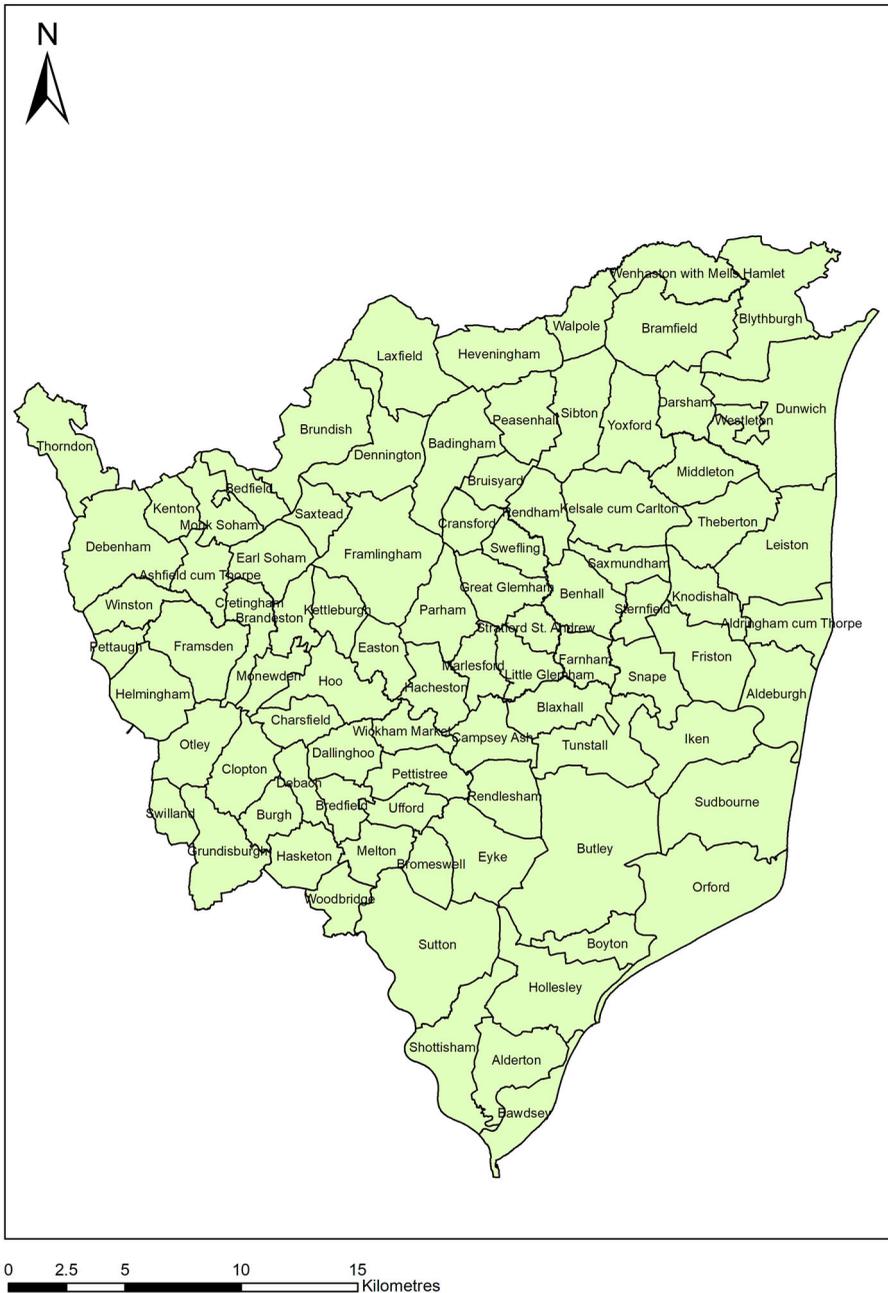
Figure 1. The Suffolk parishes. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

relationship between, for example, Early Anglo-Saxon settlements and soil boundaries (Chester-Kadwell 2009, 121) a clear relationship between concentrations of Early Anglo-Saxon archaeological material and parish boundaries becomes apparent. While only approximately 33 per cent of the total area of the parishes studied is within 200m of the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes as recorded in 1851, 64 per cent of the 31

Early Saxon sites within the study area are located within 200m of the nearest parish boundary (Figure 2). Indeed, 55 per cent of all Early Saxon metalwork recorded with the PAS is located within 300m of a parish boundary. Subjecting the data to a Chi Square test confirmed that this relationship was meaningful. Although it must be noted that the boundaries of parishes have long been subject to change, the pattern highlighted here is indicative of a clear and evident relationship between Early Anglo-Saxon activity and the boundaries of Late Saxon and post-Conquest estates that were fossilised into the parochial system when tithes were granted to newly founded churches by local lords.

As previously suggested, this relationship has been viewed both through the lens of settlement and funerary activity. It is apparent, therefore, that before the link between concentrations of Anglo-Saxon material and parish boundaries can be understood, the relationship between Anglo-Saxon archaeological material recorded with the HER and PAS and settlement and cemeteries must first be explored.

It is undeniable that much of the Early Saxon material recorded via the PAS is derived from funerary activity. Within the study area, a number of funerary deposits located on parish boundaries can be identified in the metalwork recorded with the PAS. This material, largely consisting of brooches and sleeve clasps, is comparable with assemblages recovered from excavated cemeteries in East Anglia, such as those in Suffolk at West Stow and Snape, as well as Spong Hill, Norfolk (West 1985; Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001; Hills 1977). Indeed, on the boundary between the parishes of Campsey Ashe and Blaxhall, a number of burned and fire damaged artefacts are recorded with the PAS, an assemblage which must be seen as evidence of a cremation cemetery as opposed to domestic occupation (see, for example, PAS SF3874 and PAS SF3877). Such evidence apparently supports Bonney and Goodier's suggestion that the relationship between Early Saxon material and parish boundaries results from funerary deposits placed in areas devoid of occupation, employed to demarcate and legitimise territorial bounds.

The paucity of evidence for domestic activity in the available PAS data should not, however, simply be taken to suggest that the area surrounding cemeteries was devoid of occupation; the scarcity of settlement evidence should, instead, be seen as arising from biases inherent in the types of artefacts most often recovered by metal detectorists. Typical domestic assemblages such as that from West Stow consist very largely of ceramic material as well as bone and iron objects (West 1985, 122–30), artefacts that are often conspicuously absent from assemblages recovered by metal detectorists. Their absence results from the patterns of artefact recovery by metal detectorists rather than any real historic pattern; bone and ceramic material is not recovered by metal detectors and the majority of detectorists discriminate against iron objects (Robbins 2012, 99–100), creating a situation in which Early Saxon domestic evidence is notably lacking from assemblages recorded via the PAS. Further, when domestic objects such as lead spindle whorls, typical of many excavated Early Saxon settlements (West 1985, 139), are recovered by metal detectorists, they are difficult to date in the unstratified context from which metal detectorists retrieve them and are rarely definitively attributed to the Early Saxon period (see, for example, PAS SF-3E1AFF). As such, the slight evidence for domestic activity recorded with the PAS in the study area should be seen as indicative of biases inherent in the recovery process, rather than of a lack of settlement activity in the past.

Excavated settlements, however, can shed further light on the relationship between settlements and cemeteries. Many Early Saxon settlements have attendant cemeteries, such as
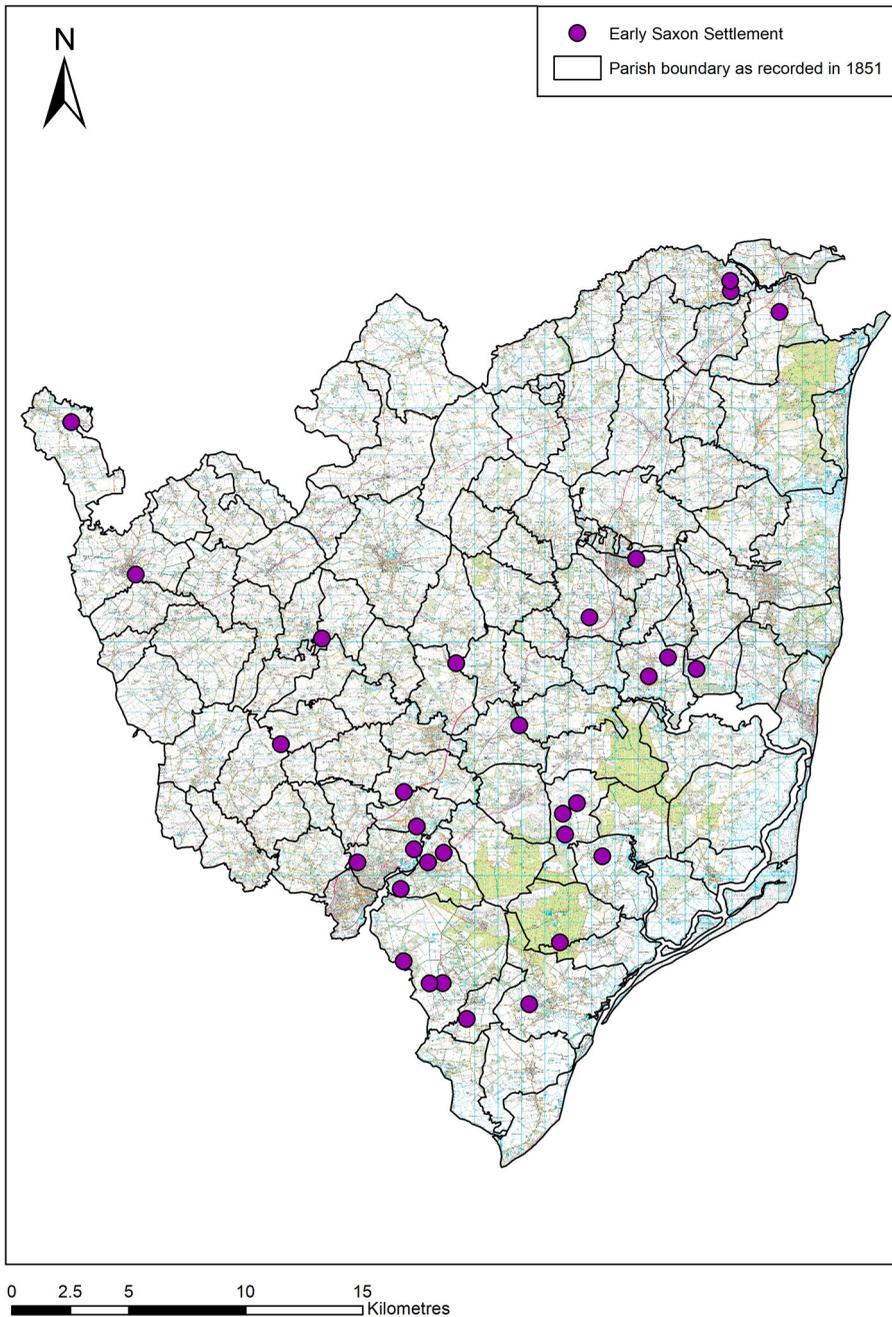
Figure 2. The distribution of Early Saxon settlements and their close spatial relationship with parish boundaries. A significant number of Early Saxon sites are located within 200m of the nearest parish boundary. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

Rendlesham (Suffolk), Mucking (Essex), and Bishopstone (Sussex) (Minter *et al.* 2016, 40–43; Hamerow 1991, 4; Bell 1977). Although such a pattern is not ubiquitous, it is evident that there was a relationship between settlements and cemeteries in the Early Saxon period.

Hence, it is reasonable to postulate that Early Saxon settlement and cemetery sites frequently occurred together (Reynolds 2002, 186), often in the area currently marked by parish boundaries. Although much of the material recorded via the PAS and Suffolk HER derives from funerary deposits, it can be suggested that, due to the close relationship between many Early Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries, concentrations of metalwork and ceramic material can be used with reasonable certainty as a proxy for settlement at a regional scale. It is through the lens of settlement activity that the relationship between parish boundaries and Early Anglo-Saxon settlement can begin to be understood.

It is necessary to consider, however, whether (as Russel has suggested) the link between Early Saxon settlement and parish boundaries has to some extent at least been exaggerated by the close spatial relationship between rivers and settlement, (Russel 1985, 96–114). It is indeed true that many parish boundaries in East Suffolk follow watercourses, and it has been demonstrated by Mary Chester-Kadwell that many Early Anglo-Saxon settlements can be found in riverine locations (Chester-Kadwell 2009, 95). Contrary to the assertions of Russel, however, it is evident that the scale of association goes far beyond this, with 65 per cent of parish boundaries around which Early Saxon settlement can be found running perpendicular to rivers, from the valley floor to higher ground, rather than simply following the watercourses themselves (Figure 3). Further explanations for the relationship between Early Anglo-Saxon settlement and parish boundaries must be sought.

Although many have explored the link between deserted sites of activity and territorial boundaries solely in the first centuries after the collapse of Roman Britain, such a pattern should not be explored in temporal isolation. The long-term association between boundaries and deserted settlements must now be brought to the fore. When data from the PAS and HER is placed back into the context of the surrounding landscape, it becomes apparent that the relationship between abandoned settlements and territorial boundaries continued into the Middle Anglo-Saxon period and beyond. Within the area studied, 61 per cent of the 32 concentrations of Middle Anglo-Saxon material are located within 200m of a parish boundary, with many sites situated upon parish boundaries showing evidence of occupation and activity into the ninth century (Figure 4). Although previously unexplored, the relationship between deserted sites of settlement and activity in the Early Anglo-Saxon period and parish boundaries, is thus part of a much longer pattern. Indeed, within the area studied it appears to continue into the post-Conquest period.

While Domesday vills that did not achieve parochial status are relatively rare in the landscape of the English Midlands, they are a common feature in Suffolk, particularly in the south and east of the county. Although in many cases these settlements continued to be occupied by single farms in the period after settlement shrinkage, they failed to thrive and develop into parishes, their territories being absorbed into that of more successful surrounding settlements. The relationship of these failed or shrunken settlements to parish boundaries can be usefully explored with respect to the debate surrounding the association between parish boundaries and Early Saxon settlement. The location of a total of 27 Domesday vills that did not achieve parochial status can be securely identified using place-name evidence and HER data in the area explored here, and 88 per cent of them lie within 200m of the nearest parish boundary (Figure 5). The association between deserted or shrunken settlement sites and parish boundaries has apparent later historical parallels, continuing unabated into the period after the Norman Conquest and beyond.
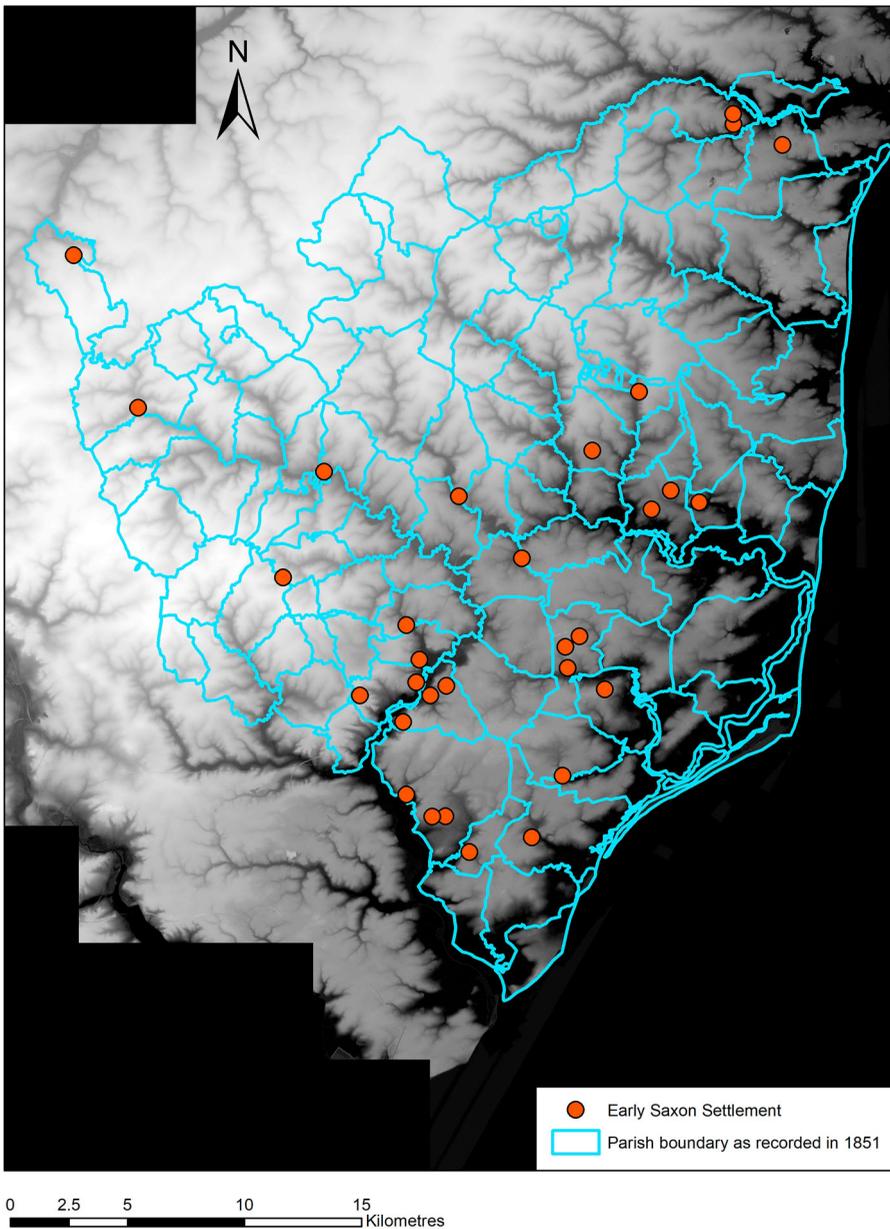
Figure 3. The distribution of Early Saxon settlements and their relationship with topography. The boundaries on which Early Saxons settlements can be found are not simply those that follow topographic features as suggested by Russel (1985). (LIDAR Data from Edina Digimap. Drawn by author.)

It is plausible that the relationship between parish boundaries and Early Anglo-Saxon activity is indeed the result of settlement desertion and territorial reorganisation in much the same way as suggested by Arnold and Wardle. When settlements were deserted, the area in which they once stood may have become a marginal zone between territories. As cultivation expanded from successful settlement centres in the area, the extent of arable cultivation, and therefore the territorial limits of the successful settlements, were,
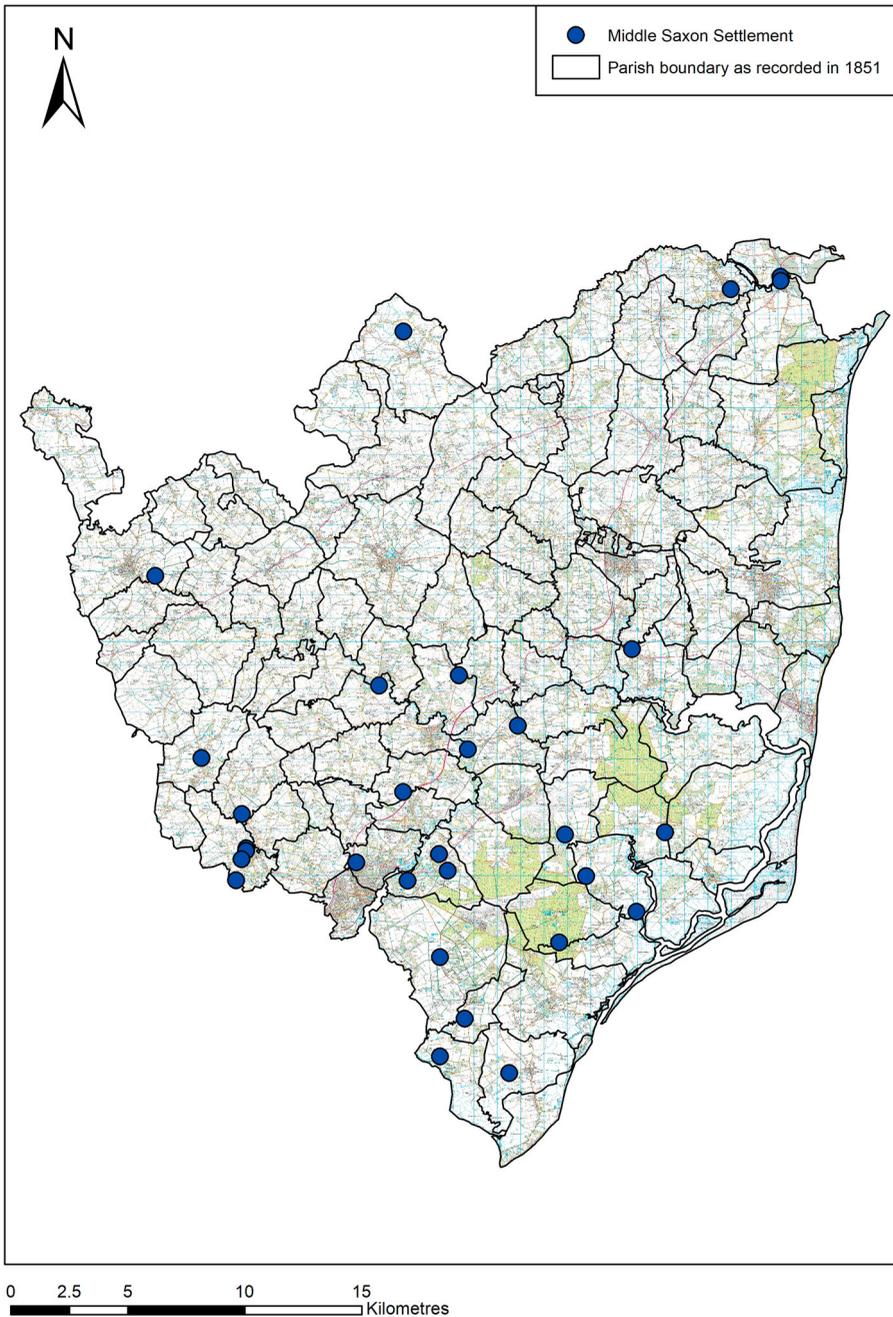
Figure 4. The distribution of Middle Saxon settlements and their close spatial relationship with parish boundaries. It is evident that the link between parish boundaries and deserted settlements is not simply restricted to the Early Saxon period. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

perhaps, progressively enlarged to encompass newly broken ground that was brought into arable agricultural systems. Once the front of cultivation from two settlement centres met, the territorial limits became fixed, a pattern that may have resulted in the margins of
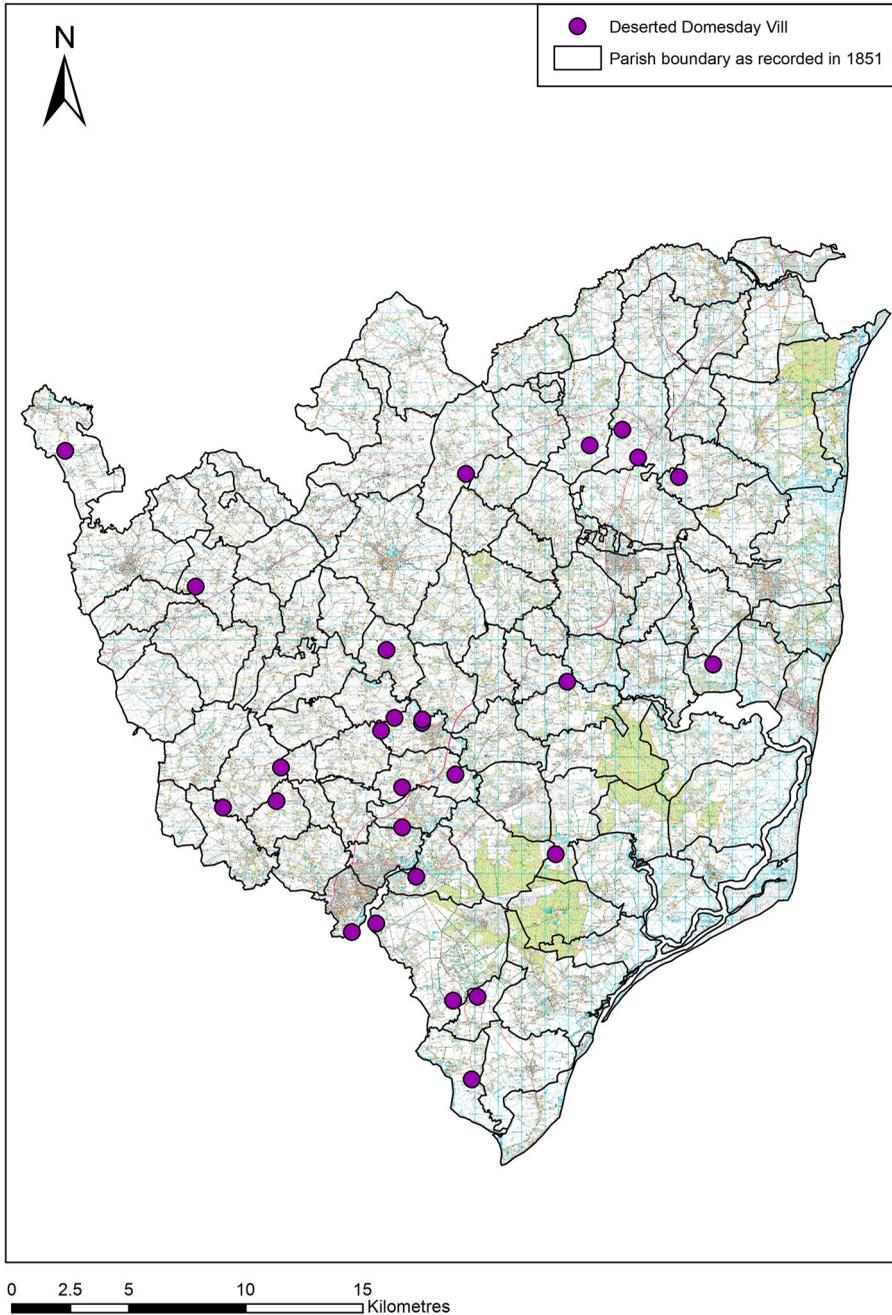
Figure 5. The distribution of failed Domesday vills and their close spatial relationship with the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

territories becoming cemented into the landscape in the area once occupied in the preceding centuries. It was these territories that later became fossilised as parishes. That 55 per cent of the boundaries associated with Early Saxon settlement follow the field boundary

pattern adds further weight to this argument; with the extent of arable cultivation defining the limits of the territory, when the front of cultivation from two settlement centres came into close proximity, the boundaries of agricultural activity became coterminous with territorial limits.

The long-term link between abandoned settlement sites and parish boundaries does, however, call the model proposed by Arnold and Wardle into question. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the time in which many of the Domesday vills ceased to exist as territorial and administrative units (Newman 2000, 7) the territorial landscape of East Suffolk was, already well developed, with an extensive system of vills and parishes stretching across the relatively densely populated countryside (Dymond and Northeast 1985, 38–39). If a settlement failed in the same way as suggested by Arnold and Wardle, then it is unlikely that the landscape in which it once stood was simply deserted, especially when it is considered that the site of many shrunken Domesday vills continued to be occupied, albeit in a limited form, to the present day. Vills such as Peyton in the parish of Ramsholt and Colston in the parish of Badingham, for example, lost their territorial and administrative function but continued to be occupied by Peyton Hall and Colston Hall respectively. While the administrative and territorial functions of the Domesday vill declined, and territorial reorganisation did indeed occur, the wholesale abandonment of the landscape likely did not.

One possible interpretation of this pattern is that as settlement desertion occurred the lands of the failed territory were redistributed between surrounding settlements rather than simply falling into ruin. As the territory was reasonably equitably divided between local successful settlements, this territorial reorganisation resulted in the shrunken or failed settlement site being located within the boundary zone between surrounding territories.

It remains to be explained, however, why this territorial reorganisation should have been equitable rather than one territory simply absorbing the other. The extraction of resources from the peasantry by the elite may shed light on the even distribution of the lands of failed settlements after desertion occurred. The medieval vill, as well as a territorial unit, was a unit of taxation. As settlements failed and their inhabitants moved to surrounding more successful settlement sites, the financial obligations expected by the state may have persisted past settlement shrinkage and territorial decline; it is possible that the territory of the deserted settlements were equitably split between surrounding successful settlement sites in order to share the additional labour and taxation burden equally.

Similar processes may have been at work in the Early Saxon period. The abandoned Early Anglo-Saxon settlements belong to a period in which renders and tribute were increasingly required from those who worked the land, initially paid in kind through goods and food rents. The obligation to pay these customary tributes to both estate centres and later to the English kings may have persisted after the failure of the settlements from which they were once extracted because the renders were still due from the land, if not from the settlement, of each territorial unit. The equitable division of the territories of failed settlements may, therefore, have been coterminous with the even distribution of the burden of taxation and labour services; in return for each territorial unit equitably absorbing the responsibility to deliver these goods and services, the land from which these taxes were previously expected was divided in an even manner.

Much has been written about the Early and Middle Saxon territorial landscape of Suffolk (Carver 2005, 489–503; Scull 2019, 127–37; Warner 1996, 152–6). Martin Carver identified a 'Sandlings Province', a broad swathe of territory in south-east Suffolk that could have formed the heartland of the early East Anglian Kingdom (Carver 2005, 489–503). More recently, a more nuanced picture has been presented, with Chris Scull, in particular, suggesting that there may have been many small territories, each focussed on a river valley, with their boundaries defined by the watersheds of rivers such as the Blyth, Alde and Deben. Within these territorial units, centres of trade, administration and justice can be found, such as the high-status settlements at Coddenham and Rendlesham (Scull 2019, 127–37).

It is within such large territorial units that the settlement change and territorial reorganisation took place. While the watershed territories highlighted by Scull were the long-lived landscapes of local and regional elites, the shifting territorial units explored in this paper were the smaller farming territories of individual, perhaps kin-based, groups, nested within the larger territorial framework. The model proposed here is compatible with that put forward by Scull, dealing with the local landscapes of smaller groups that formed the constituent parts of these larger valley-based territories.

The processes outlined here can be well illustrated in the parishes of Marlesford and Parham (Figures 6 and 7). On the boundary between these parishes sits a deserted Early Anglo-Saxon settlement site, more or less equidistant between the later occupation centres surrounding the parish church. The most plausible interpretation of this pattern is that the Early Saxon site on the parish boundary once had its own territory that was later divided between nearby settlement sites. In the Early Saxon period, the settlement near the parish boundary would have stood alone within its own territory. During later centuries, settlement developed in the area surrounding the parish churches in neighbouring Marlesford and Parham. When the occupation site on the parish boundary declined, and ultimately was abandoned, the demands for taxation from the local elite, likely based at Rendlesham, persisted, and the burden of this taxation, as well as the territory from which it was once extracted, was evenly redistributed between the two neighbouring successful settlement sites. The abandoned settlement was left near the newly formed territorial boundaries, approximately equidistant between the two successful settlement centres (Figure 7). The territorial boundaries of these Middle Saxon settlements were later fossilised into parish boundaries as tithes were granted to newly founded churches by local lords. Such a pattern is repeated throughout East Suffolk, both in the Early Saxon period and beyond.

While 88 per cent of failed Domesday vills in the study area are located within 200m of a parish boundary, 12 per cent are not. It may be that, in these cases, due to local manorial structures or varying levels of population in the area, the division of territory was not equitable, with a single successful settlement absorbing a larger proportion or the entirety of the failed territory, as well as its taxation obligations. With the whole territory of the failed occupation site absorbed by another successful settlement, the newly formed boundaries did not overlay the shrunken or abandoned settlement. Such a pattern explains those failed settlements from all periods that do not lie within the boundary zone.

As previously noted, the relationship between funerary activity and territorial boundaries has become entrenched in current discussion of burials and the territorial landscape, both in England and beyond. The model of settlement change and territorial
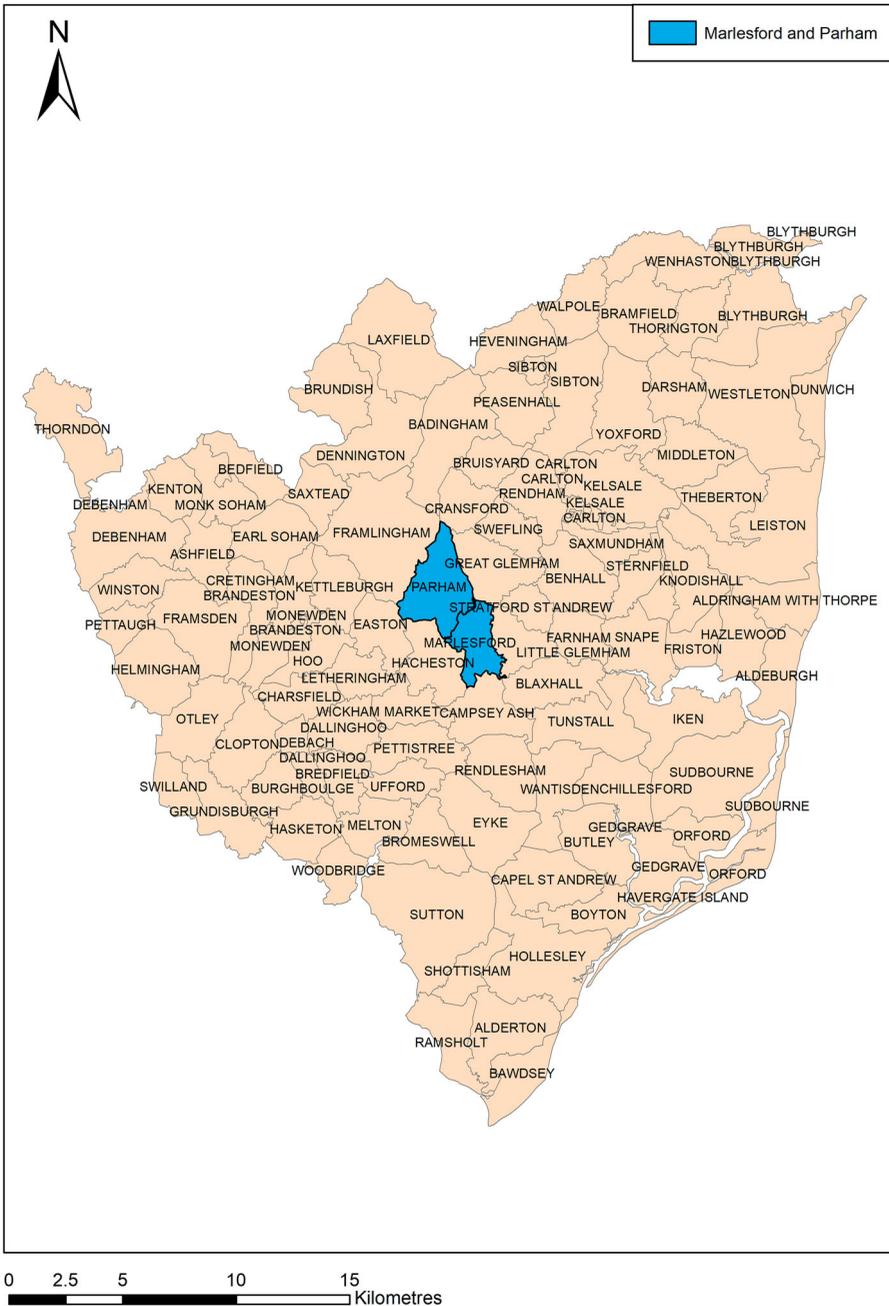
Figure 6. The location of Marlesford and Parham within East Suffolk. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

reorganisation here presented suggests that the link between funerary activity and the boundaries of territories cannot be uncritically accepted. Although, as previously acknowledged, there is indeed evidence for cemeteries and burials on the margins of territories, these are in many cases associated with contemporary settlements. One should
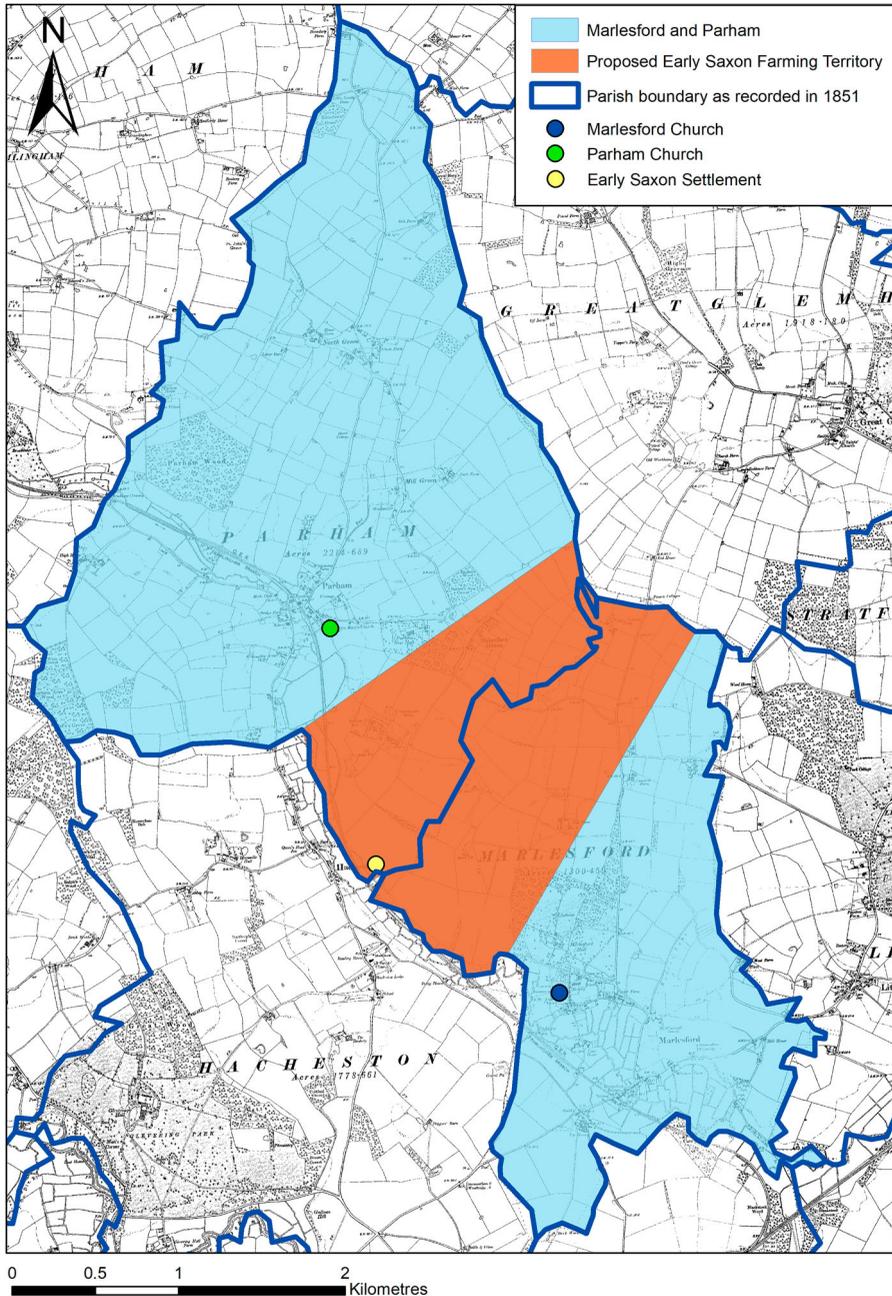
Figure 7. The location of the Early and Middle Saxon settlements in Marlesford and Parham. The Early Saxon site once had its own territory. It is suggested that when this settlement was abandoned, the territory, along with the burden of taxation with which it was once associated, was evenly divided between nearby settlement sites. This equitable division resulted in the deserted settlement being left standing near the newly formed territorial boundaries. (© Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey (100025252). Drawn by author.)

not be viewed without the other. In this light, the Early Saxon funerary activity identified by Bonney and Goodier can be viewed as the residue of occupation and activity, fixed in the landscape even after the attendant settlement has shifted. In the wake of this settlement change, the territory of the shrunken or deserted site was equitably redistributed, leaving the former occupation site along with its cemetery, located near the newly formed territorial boundary. Such settlement change and territorial reorganisation persisted throughout the Norman Conquest and beyond, manifested in the enduring relationship between deserted Domesday vills and parish boundaries.

Conclusion

The untapped datasets of the PAS and local HERs, interpreted using GIS, have made it possible to revisit and reassess the once much discussed association between Early Saxon material and parish boundaries and its significance for landscape history. The link between failed Early Saxon activity and parish boundaries must not be discussed in isolation: the relationship between parish boundaries and Early Saxon settlements was an early expression of a trend that continued into the period after the Norman Conquest and beyond, manifested in the close spatial relationship between shrunken Domesday vills and territorial bounds.

Although it was once strongly argued by Bonney and Goodier that the link between parish boundaries and Early Saxon settlement was the result of funerary activity placed on existing or developing territorial bounds to demarcate and legitimise them, the evidence presented here begins to call this into question. Instead, the long-term association between parish boundaries and shrunken or deserted settlement suggests that such a relationship can be interpreted as the result of territorial reorganisation in the centuries after the failed settlement declined or lost any territory associated with it. It is here suggested that this territorial reorganisation was relatively equitable due to the persisting demands for taxation from the elite that continued beyond the decline of the settlement or territory to which the dues were attached. After settlements failed, their territories were reorganised; in order to ensure equitable distribution of the burden of taxation, the lands from which these dues were previously extracted were also evenly split.

Such equitable distribution of the territory of the previous settlement resulted in the newly formed boundaries overlaying the once occupied site. Although the model proposed by Arnold and Wardle is indeed plausible, the long-term association between deserted settlement and parish boundaries begins to call this into question; in High Medieval Suffolk, a time in which the territorial landscape was well established, it is unlikely that the lands of the failed settlement were simply abandoned, especially when it is considered that often only the administrative and territorial function of the vill declined while settlement continued in a limited form, often a single farm, on the previously occupied site. Instead, it is more likely that the territory of the failed settlement was redistributed equitably between surrounding settlements, a process that resulted in the shrunken settlement being left standing in the area surrounding the parish boundary. Such even division did not, however, occur in all cases; due to the demographic and manorial structures of some areas, the division of land may not have been equal between surrounding territories, with some settlements accepting a greater share or perhaps the entirety of the failed

territory along with the tax burden associated with it. Such circumstances account for those settlements of all periods that do not lie within the boundary zone.

The relationship between Early Saxon settlement and parish boundaries was once the subject of intense debate, particularly among landscape historians. Recently, however, this significant relationship has been somewhat neglected, often discussed in studies of the development of territories and landscapes but rarely directly confronted. Here, it has been shown that, using the datasets provided by the HER and PAS, this association can begin to be understood as part of a long-term trend of settlement shrinkage and desertion and territorial change. The datasets from the various local HERs and PAS should be explored using GIS software in other areas of the English landscape and beyond to further understand the relationship between deserted settlements and parish boundaries.

Abbreviations

HER: Historic Environment Records.
PAS: Portable Antiquity Scheme.

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Disclosure Statement

Notes on Contributor

Tom Cox is undertaking a PhD at the University of East Anglia. His research focusses on the landscape of Roman and Early Medieval East Anglia and the ways in which artefact assemblages recovered by fieldwalking and metal detecting can be used to understand landscape change in these periods. Email: tom.cox@uea.ac.uk

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