

RENDELSHAM, SUFFOLK: FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES

Summary

The Naunton Hall estate in Rendlesham, Suffolk, has between 2008 and 2014 been the subject of extensive field survey and targeted small-scale excavation. The main survey methods have been systematic surface collection with metal detectors, magnetometry and topographical survey, and the mapping and analysis of aerial photography. There has also been some analysis of relevant historic mapping, limited geochemical survey, and two borehole transects across the floodplain and valley slopes of the River Deben and a tributary stream to establish the preservation and potential of palaeoenvironmental data. These data-sets have all been integrated within a project GIS.

The survey has identified a complex and nationally-important sequence of settlement and activity from late Prehistory to the present day. This includes a rich and extensive settlement complex of the 5th–8th centuries AD (the early–middle Anglo-Saxon period) which is of national and international significance.

Archiving and assessment have been completed for survey and evaluation. This document outlines a research agenda for future work. It identifies 1) priorities for analysis of the survey data, and 2) priorities for future fieldwork to address questions of site characterisation and context that can only be resolved through further survey and intervention. The authors are Christopher Scull, Faye Minter and Jude Plouviez, and the document has been discussed and endorsed by the Rendlesham Project Stakeholder Group.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background to the Project

The modern civil parish of Rendlesham lies on the east side of the River Deben in south-east Suffolk. It incorporates terrains that in the past provided a range of resources: marsh or water meadow in the valley bottom, agricultural soils on valley slopes, and interfluves which are now intensively cultivated but which in the past were heathland and sheep-walk, and in Rendlesham more recently military airfield and plantation woodland. It lies within the area of light soils in south-east Suffolk known as the Sandlings. Characteristic soils in this area are Newport 2 and the less fertile Newport 4 very sandy soils over Crag geology, but Rendlesham lies at the southern end of the Burlingham 3 fine loamy soils over glacial boulder clay deposits, providing a very mixed local pattern (Williamson 2008, 29-67).

Rendlesham is mentioned by Bede (*H.E.* iii. 22; Colgrave & Mynors 1969) as the East Anglian *vicus regius* (royal settlement) where King Swithelm of the East Saxons was baptised in AD 655x663. It has consequently long been a focus of antiquarian and historical attention, and interest intensified after the discovery of the Mound One ship burial at Sutton Hoo, c 6km to the south-west, in 1939 (Bruce-Mitford 1948). Cremations were recorded in the early 19th century but otherwise hard evidence for an Anglo-Saxon site was frustratingly elusive until 1982 when fieldwalking and limited excavation (RLM 011) indicated Anglo-Saxon settlement activity north-west of the parish church of St Gregory the Great (Bruce-Mitford 1974; Martin et al 1983, 235; Newman 1992, 36-8). Although the potential significance was clear, little about the material recovered suggested a site of unusual status.

1.2 Survey and Evaluation

In 2007 the landowner of the Naunton Hall estate sought archaeological assistance in response to illegal metal-detecting on arable land. Damage was being caused by repeat visits, suggesting that significant archaeological material was being stolen. The land affected included at least one field outside the area of the 1982 fieldwalking. The response by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) was to undertake in 2008-9 a controlled metal-detector survey of the area being damaged. This was augmented by limited magnetometry, a desk-top assessment of information in the county Historic Environment Record (HER), and plotting of available aerial photography within the 1982 survey area.

The initial metal-detecting survey confirmed a concentration of archaeological material in the ploughsoil that included coins and other finds consistent with a high-status early to middle Anglo-Saxon site and showed that this evidence spread over a much wider area than initially thought. In 2009 the metal-detector survey was therefore expanded to cover the full Naunton Hall estate, under an agreement between the individual detectorists and the landowners. The survey area covers 150ha. It forms a transect 3km north-south along the east side of the Deben valley and up to 1.25km east-west across the grain of the landscape (Fig 2). It was undertaken as part of a larger project, co-ordinated through SCCAS, which provided finds recording to Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) standards, and expert academic and professional guidance, and through which complementary fieldwork including further magnetometry was commissioned. Field evaluation was undertaken in 2013-14 to ground-truth the results of non-intrusive survey and to allow assessment of the condition and potential of archaeological deposits.

1.3 Assessment and Research Priorities

Formal assessments of significance and potential for analysis have been undertaken for both non-intrusive survey data (Minter et al 2016c) and for the 2013-14 field evaluation (Caruth et al 2014). The latter informs the former, but the much smaller evaluation data-set is to be analysed and published as a stand-alone exercise.

The survey assessment presents and quantifies the data gathered by the different survey techniques, provides a chronological account of the material and its importance, and assesses the overall significance and potential of the survey results in the context of the original objectives and the relevant national and regional research frameworks. It then identifies on this basis priorities and high-level research goals for analysis of the data-set generated by field survey. It does not identify priorities for further fieldwork. For reference, the integrated assessment of the potential of the survey data is included as an appendix to this document.

This Research Agenda therefore sets out two sets of priorities:

- 1) For analysis and dissemination of the survey data; and
- 2) For future fieldwork to address questions of site characterisation and context that can only be resolved through further survey and intervention.

These are intended as a framework that will guide future research activity, not as a prescriptive agenda or a detailed project specification. Detailed research plans and funding applications that address these priorities will be developed separately.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

2.1 The Data-set: Aggregation and Integration

The potential and significance of individual components of the data-set vary by character and chronology. This is, however, one of the largest, most extensive and best recorded ploughzone assemblages known from the United Kingdom, and is unusual both in its chronological range and in the extensive complementary data from magnetometry and the analysis and transcription of aerial photographs. Consequently, even those elements of the material culture assemblage and broader survey data that have only limited or local potential and significance in themselves have greater importance as components of an integrated data-set bearing on patterns of activity and settlement from the second millennium BC to the third millennium AD. There is, therefore, sometimes a case for further analysis to establish spatial or chronological context, especially in the balance between synchronic and diachronic perspectives, because the group value of some data is greater than their individual significance.

2.2 Site Sequence and Landscape

The survey area represents a transect 3km north-south along the east side of the Deben valley and 1.25km east-west across the grain of the landscape, a sample area large enough to be sure that any patterns of presence, absence and clustering of finds are real, and to examine how patterns change with terrain. Combined with the complementary evidence of aerial photography and magnetometry and – for the early modern period – historic mapping, this represents a data-set of high potential to examine changing patterns of settlement and activity within the immediate landscape context over more than two millennia to the present day.

Even before detailed analysis it is clear that the Rendlesham data represent a complex sequence of settlement and activity that has local and regional significance for the understanding of settlement character and dynamics and their landscape contexts, and a national significance stemming from the unusual diachronic time-span and the potential to elucidate periods of change or transition. Of particular importance are the indications of coherent development without a break in activity from the late 4th to the early 8th centuries, the evidence for a change in size and status during the 8th to 10th centuries, and indications of an aggregation of settlement in the 10th and 11th centuries around a green that persisted until the 18th century. Also significant are the evidence for marked changes in configurations of settlement during the 1st to 4th centuries AD, and for patterns of activity in the landscape from the 12th to the 16th centuries.

The archaeological recognition of a major elite centre of the 5th to 8th centuries at Rendlesham adds very significantly to our understanding of the early medieval geography of the region and helps place in context the elite barrow cemetery at Sutton Hoo, the emergent trading centre at Ipswich, and other elite sites known from metal-detecting such as Coddensham. Contextual and comparative analysis within the Deben valley and south-east Suffolk has the potential to contribute significantly to current debates on geographies of power and how rulership was articulated in the landscape during the early middle ages (cf Higham and Ryan 2010; Semple 2013).

2.3 Settlement, Society and Economy

As established in the assessments above of data by class and period, the Rendlesham survey data-set has high potential to characterise and clarify key aspects of settlement, society and economy, both synchronically and diachronically, over a time-span of more than two millennia. Of national and international significance are the coin sequence from the 6th to the 17th centuries, which represents an outstanding resource for long-term monetary and economic history, and the combined data-set for the 5th to 8th centuries, which represents the development and character of a central place complex that is as yet unparalleled in the early medieval archaeology of the United Kingdom in its extent, longevity, material wealth and complexity. Rendlesham presents some major challenges to received models of economy and society in south-east England during the 5th to 8th centuries, and has important implications for our understanding of the development of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and their place in the Merovingian and North Sea worlds.

The data-sets for other periods do not have such high significance, except as elements of an unusually long-term, extensive and well-structured sample, but are none the less of regional or national importance. In particular, they represent changing configurations of rural settlement, production and consumption, and allow the characterisation of settlement and community within contemporary social, communication and supply networks. As such they have good potential to contribute to both comparative synchronic analyses and longer-term diachronic studies.

2.4 Survey Methodology

The combination of remote sensing, aerial photography and surface collection is not new, but the integration of systematic metal-detecting at this intensity and scale with magnetometry and aerial photography is unusual, as is the opportunity to compare the results with those of conventional fieldwalking over the same areas. There is no doubt that neither the extent nor the quantity of material in the ploughsoil would have been recognised by conventional fieldwalking, and that we owe our understanding of the sequence of settlement and activity here primarily to the metal-detected assemblage. This has important implications for approaches to extensive field survey and, if considered in comparison with other recent survey work that has integrated metal-detecting with other techniques (eg. Foard and Morris 2012, 22-30; Foard and Curry 2013, 99-118), the Rendlesham

data-set and experience has high potential to contribute to the development of survey method and practice.

2.5 Taphonomic Processes and the Interpretation of Ploughzone Archaeology

Material has entered the ploughsoil through a variety of taphonomic pathways, and elucidating these is important to understanding the patterns of past activity represented by the ploughzone assemblage. Because of the quality of the material culture assemblage and the precision with which it has been recorded, and the complementary survey and excavation data, there is high potential through the examination of spatial clustering, patterns of co-occurrence, and comparison with material from excavated deposits to distinguish between classes of material that were most probably dropped on an old ground surface, those that directly represent disturbed archaeological deposits, and those that represent manuring from middened farmyard and domestic waste. There is also potential to examine how material may have moved in the ploughsoil as a result of recent agricultural activity. This is important both for the understanding of past activity at Rendlesham, and for the wider understanding of the taphonomic factors that may structure, and constrain the interpretation of, other ploughzone assemblages.

Because of the potentially high degree of confidence that can be attached to interpretation of past activity from the ploughzone archaeology, there is high potential for the Rendlesham assemblage to inform and enhance the interpretation of other sites known primarily or exclusively from metal artefacts recovered from the surface or the ploughsoil. This is particularly true of the 5th- to 8th-century material, which can be characterised as representing a range of activities undertaken at, and characteristic of, an extensive central place complex, and which can thus be used as a baseline against which to calibrate assemblages from contemporary 'productive sites', but because of the chronological range of the material and the precision with which it has been recorded this potential also exists for other periods.

2.6 Conservation Management and Protection

The data from surface collection and limited intervention provide a good basis from which to address the questions of conservation management and protection of ploughzone and buried archaeology. This has been factored in to an assessment of condition and risk factors for the most significant areas of archaeology undertaken in accordance with the COSMIC methodology, with outline recommendations for future management (Minter et al 2016a). This primarily addresses agricultural impacts, but the threat to the evidential significance of the site from illegal metal-detecting has been mitigated by the retrieval of a sufficiently representative sample, and the physical threat from looting has diminished very significantly over the course of the survey. It appears that the long-term presence of detectorists working with the agreement of the landowner has deterred illegal activity; increased local knowledge, engendering a sense of ownership and stewardship, may also have played a part here.

The survey data has potential for comparative studies of threats, impacts and protection responses, and to act as a baseline for long-term condition monitoring should this be considered useful or necessary. The material culture assemblage also has significant potential for the investigation of the preservation of non-ferrous metal artefacts in ploughsoil, in relation both to impacts and movement by agricultural machinery and as a result of chemical decay. Elements of the copper-alloy assemblage from Rendlesham have been made available to the AHRC / Historic England project *Ploughzone archaeology: interpreting loss of data from metal artefact decay (rates, reasons and conservation management implications)* hosted by Huddersfield University.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION OF THE SURVEY DATA

Five high-level research goals for analysis of the survey data are identified in the survey assessment (Minter et al 2016c): establishing site/landscape sequence and chronology; characterising past activity and settlement (primarily from material culture, and primarily synchronic); elucidating patterns of development and change (diachronic); understanding regional and wider contexts; conservation management and methodological issues. These are of course complementary and mutually-dependent, and specific analyses of different aspects of different elements of the data-set will contribute to more than one.

Alongside these it is possible to identify further strands of research that will be key to understanding the sequence of settlement and activity at Rendlesham, and its wider contexts. Of particular relevance to the survey data are landscape history perspectives and the study of place names, both discussed below.

3.1 Survey Data: Priorities for Analysis

3.1.1 *Sequence and Chronology*

To identify and date, as far as possible, a relative sequence of settlement and landscape features through:

- further interpretation of the magnetometry results to characterise feature types and clarify possible physical and spatial relationships
- comparative interpretation of magnetometry and aerial photography to clarify characterisation and relationships, and aggregation to produce composite mapping
- review of the material culture assemblage to refine identification and chronological attribution and range where possible
- identification of chronologically diagnostic material culture profiles and assemblages
- investigation of spatial associations between mapped settlement and landscape features and significant assemblages of chronologically-sensitive material culture items
- comparative analysis of mapped settlement and landscape features against historic mapping

3.1.2 *Past Activity and Settlement*

To characterise settlement and activity synchronically, so as to enhance understanding of economy, society and human agency at any one time or period in the past, through:

- specialist analysis of the material culture assemblage to refine identifications
- specialist analysis of the material culture assemblage to establish social, economic and cultural signatures for each time-slice or period
- integration of mapped settlement features, material culture distributions, and the material culture profile to characterise the extent and character of settlement and activity
- technical and compositional analysis of metalworking finds and residues, and compositional analysis of the coinage

3.1.3 *Patterns of Development and Change*

Building on this, to investigate long-term dynamics of settlement and activity, and of changes in material culture and the materialisation of identities, through:

- diachronic analysis of the character, configuration and extent of settlement and landscape features, and of spatial patterns of activity indicated by material culture distributions
- diachronic analysis of material culture signatures
- diachronic analysis of key data-sets such as the early medieval to post-medieval coin sequence or the sequence of early medieval dress-accessories

3.1.4 *Regional and Inter-Regional Contexts*

To contextualise Rendlesham and add to broader understanding through:

- comparative synchronic study at regional and inter-regional scales to place settlement and activity at Rendlesham against broader patterns of subsistence and economy, and within wider social, economic, administrative and political networks
- comparative analysis of longer-term dynamics at regional and inter-regional scales
- comparative analysis at regional and inter-regional scales of key elements of the material culture assemblage bearing on issues of social and cultural identity, contact and communication, and economic and monetary history

3.1.5 *Conservation Management and Methodology*

To protect the potential and significance of the archaeological resource at Rendlesham, and to develop management and interpretation of ploughzone assemblages, through:

- assessment of condition and development and implementation of management plan
- assessment of survey methodology
- developing and testing approaches to the analysis of ploughzone material culture assemblages
- developing and testing approaches to the integrated analysis of remote sensing data and ploughzone assemblages
- evaluating and sharing these conclusions and experiences

3.2 Landscape History

Landscape history will form a key strand in any programme of research. Reconstructions of the physical environment, land-use patterns and systems of communication (by land and water) in the medieval and early post-medieval periods can help us to think in new ways about social and economic processes in earlier, less well documented periods. In addition, some of the features recovered at Rendlesham by geophysical survey were evidently created at, or shortly before, extant features of the working countryside, and can be usefully analysed within this wider spatial context.

In a similar way, by considering the ‘after-life’ of settlement in the Rendlesham area, and in particular by tying-in the distribution of late Anglo-Saxon and medieval artefacts to documented systems of land use, occupancy and tenure, it may be possible to shed additional light on the various components of the Rendlesham complex in earlier periods. In more general terms, the sheer quantities of metalwork recovered from periods after the 8th century should, when considered within a wider economic/landscape context, be able to shed important light on a number of key areas of interest in medieval history, especially the character of social change, and the growth of a monetarised rural economy, in the course of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

3.3 Place Names

Place-name studies have the potential to make an important contribution to analysis and contextualisation of the survey data, and to broader landscape history: place-names are important sources for geographies of settlement and lordship in the second half of the first millennium AD in the Deben valley and more widely in South East Suffolk, and for the medieval and later settlement and farming landscape at Rendlesham. Analysis should focus 1) on the major OE names of the Deben valley and SE Suffolk (of which Rendlesham is one), drawing on the work recently published by Briggs and Kilpatrick (2016); and 2) on the minor names recorded in the medieval and early modern records for Rendlesham and its manors, mostly held by Suffolk Record Office and hitherto largely unstudied.

3.4 Options for Dissemination

Interim interpretative accounts for both public and professional/academic audiences have been published or are in press (Minter et al 2014; Scull et al 2016). Further papers in the relevant academic journals on specific aspects of data, interpretation and methodology are envisaged.

The favoured dissemination strategy would be a synthetic monograph, setting out the project background and methodology, and presenting an interpretative narrative based on analysis of the integrated data-set, backed by a digital data-set comprising an illustrated summary catalogue of finds and selected remote-sensing data.

4. PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE FIELDWORK

The survey and the material culture assemblage it has yielded constitute a dataset of high potential and international significance in its own right, but one which poses a range of questions that can only be answered by further survey and intervention. Broadly speaking, these issues can be addressed at two scales: the settlement complex at Rendlesham itself, and the broader landscapes of the Deben valley and surrounding areas of which it was and is a part.

4.1 Site specific

4.1.1 Priorities for investigation

There is a need to characterise in greater detail the sequence of activity, the layout and development of the early medieval complex and its predecessor and successors, to test the identification of different activity zones or settlement areas of different social and functional character, and to refine understanding of the farming economy, provisioning and consumption, craft activity and exchange.

Detailed research objectives and methods will be developed in specific funding applications but on the basis of current understanding it is possible to identify the following priorities:

- test the AP identification of the hall in Park Field and determine whether there are other buildings in the vicinity
- clarify the sequence of early medieval boundary ditches in Park Field evaluated in 2013
- clarify the character of late Roman activity in Park Field
- investigate the evidence for a focus of non-ferrous metalworking in Park Field

- date the major linear features in Park Field, Black Croft and Kitchen Piece in order to provide time-depth to the palimpsest of features identified by remote sensing and aerial survey
- characterise and date the settlement evidence in Sand Walk, Dog Kennel and School Field: is there evidence for ground-level buildings? is there evidence for settlement shift?
- test for inhumation burials in Sand Walk and Dog Kennel and evaluate their preservation
- investigate farming, provisioning, consumption and environment through the optimal retrieval of faunal remains, plant macro fossils and samples for micromorphological analysis: this can be achieved through the appropriate sampling of occupation or midden layers, and of pit, *Grubenhäuser* and ditch fills, which will be excavated to address the other priorities identified above

A further question, but one that is less amenable to resolution through fieldwork, is when any predecessor to the present medieval parish church of St Gregory the Great was founded, and whether it had a direct relationship with the elite settlement of the 7th and 8th centuries.

4.1.2 Remote sensing and excavation

On a site of this extent and complexity, in a working agricultural landscape, excavation of any but a fraction of the site is impractical and would be prohibitively costly. A sampling approach must therefore be adopted, with future work targeted at areas and deposits with the highest potential to answer major research questions, and preferably with the potential to address two or more.

As noted above, detailed research objectives and methods will be developed in specific funding applications but the broad fieldwork methodology should build on and refine the staged approach used successfully for field evaluation in 2013 and 2014. This will involve:

- 1) The targeted deployment of complementary remote-sensing techniques (such as caesium magnetometry, resistivity, magnetic prospection, electromagnetic induction and ground-penetrating radar) to model buried archaeology with greater precision and resolution than the extensive magnetometry undertaken 2008-14; and
- 2) Excavation of key areas and features, guided by the results of remote sensing, to investigate and characterise the sub-surface archaeology, and to retrieve cultural and biological material that will allow the dating and characterisation of past activity.

Excavation may range from relatively large open areas, intended to allow the definition of building plans and spatial relationships, to small trenches intended to date or elucidate stratigraphic relationships between key features known from remote sensing. In view of the known physical conditions and constraints imposed by the cultivation cycle the largest area open at any one time will probably be in the order of 30 x 30m (900 sq m).

Excavation must take account of material in the ploughsoil, and sampling strategies must be consistent with those used during evaluation in 2013-14 (Caruth et al 2014). An appropriate sample of all ploughsoil must be excavated by hand, metal-detected and sieved, and where ploughsoil is subsequently removed by machine this should be done in 10cm spits with each spit metal-detected before removal. Bulk samples should be taken from all excavated contexts and the remainder sieved.

There must be no intervention without the prior assurance that there are the resources necessary for post-excavation analysis, dissemination and archiving, in particular expertise in the analysis of

human skeletal remains, faunal remains, plant macrofossils, metalworking residues, scientific dating and soil micromorphology as well as pottery, metal finds and other material culture items.

4.1.3 Fieldwalking

In 1982 gridded fieldwalking was undertaken over 14 ha in Park Field, Kitchen Piece, and the meadow north of Naunton Hall (RLM 012) which is now under pasture. Gridded fieldwalking was not undertaken during the 2008-14 survey: it was not necessary to the project's research aims, especially as the metal-detectorists were retrieving and spatially recording visually-identified pottery, stone, flint and glass, and so the cost was not justifiable; furthermore, the cultivation cycle and ground preparation meant that conditions were rarely suitable (and even more rarely optimal) for fieldwalking.

Metal-detecting in Park Field and Kitchen Piece has allowed a useful comparison of what is recognised and retrieved during systematic fieldwalking and metal-detecting (Minter et al 2016b). Systematic gridded fieldwalking appears to yield a higher recovery of pottery than metal-detecting, but identified no metal items; pottery and other non-metal artefacts as well as metal items were recognised and recovered during metal-detecting. The assemblage recovered during metal-detecting probably under-represents pottery whereas fieldwalking failed to identify an enormously rich and extensive assemblage of metalwork in the ploughsoil. Ideally both should be used as complementary techniques. Extending the area surveyed by systematic fieldwalking in 1982 might provide useful complementary information on differential spatial distributions and rates of retrieval between metal and ceramic finds of the same dates, and should the opportunity arise it should be taken.

4.1.4 Metal-detecting

The metal-detecting survey 2008-14 has generated an internationally-significant material culture assemblage, and has established and secured the long-term research potential of the site. There is always the possibility of highly significant individual finds but from the perspective of academic understanding further metal-detecting will inevitably be subject to the law of diminishing returns. The current assemblage is large enough to be considered representative and to be subjected to statistical interrogation, and although further finds will add incrementally to its significance and potential they are unlikely to change fundamental understanding.

Having said this, each new find is an aggregate addition to knowledge and the presence of authorised detectorists has been shown to discourage illegal activity. Continuing metal-detecting to existing standards of identification and recording will therefore contribute to understanding of the site, and to protection and conservation management of the archaeology. The main issues, without dedicated project funding, are the lack of capacity of the Suffolk Portable Antiquities Scheme to process what is still a large number of finds, the lack of resource to keep the 2008-14 project database open to new information, and questions over the ability of CIMS to purchase all new material indefinitely.

4.2 Landscape and Settlement Context

The archaeological recognition of a major central place at Rendlesham raises questions about its landscape and settlement context in the Deben valley and surrounding areas, not least its relationship with Sutton Hoo.

The current state of understanding is based on a small number of past interventions and single finds, the results of fieldwalking undertaken during the SE Suffolk survey in 1982-89 (Newman 2005),

metal-detector finds recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the transcription of aerial photographs undertaken as part of the National Mapping Programme between 2001 and 2016. Current commercially-funded survey and excavation projects relating to new infrastructure are adding substantially to the data available for SE Suffolk, including the Deben valley. Taken together these constitute a valuable data-set of high potential, and will be utilised in any project to analyse and contextualise the Rendlesham survey data (above).

The pattern of interventions, chance finds and metal-detector finds are partial, localised and subject to recognition and retrieval bias. Valuable though the more systematic data retrieved through the SE Survey is, survey at Rendlesham has demonstrated that surface collection of pottery may seriously underestimate the complexity, richness and extent of past settlement activity. Similarly, comparison of aerial photography transcriptions and the results of magnetometry at Rendlesham show that the two are complementary: a significant proportion of features identified by magnetometry are undetected by aerial survey, and vice-versa.

Thus, in order to locate Rendlesham more firmly within the landscape, settlement patterns and socio-economic networks of which it was a part, and to understand its relationship with Sutton Hoo within the local geographies of power and lordship, properly representative and comparable data are required. Good comparable and contextual data can be generated in a number of ways using the suite of approaches deployed during the Rendlesham survey:

4.2.1 Definition and characterisation of known sites

Where sites are known, or suspected, from pottery scatters, chance finds or metal-detected finds, the opportunity should be taken to enhance understanding through complementary survey. For example, systematic metal-detecting and geophysics may help to define the extent, character and date of sites identified through fieldwalking, and the retrieval of metal objects may significantly enhance understanding of past activity.

4.2.2 Extensive survey

Rapid geophysical survey at a landscape scale is now a practical proposition with the development of lightweight wheeled arrays that can be towed behind a vehicle or quad bike and geo-located by GPS. The value of such approaches has been demonstrated by the results of landscape-scale survey in the Vale of Pickering, North Yorkshire (Powlesland 2010) and around Stonehenge (Gaffney et al 2012). Such techniques could be deployed effectively in the relatively unencumbered agricultural landscapes of the Deben valley, and it is realistic from the purely technical point of view, to envisage a survey transect that would link the National Trust property at Sutton Hoo with the Rendlesham survey area. When combined with existing data-sets this would be a powerful research tool, and provide a secure basis against which to make informed decisions on priorities for follow-up survey and intervention.

4.3.3 Field evaluation and intervention

As at Rendlesham, survey might be followed by targeted evaluation and excavation to ground-truth survey data, test interpretations, and date and characterise sub-surface archaeology.

4.3.4 Environmental history

Modelling the past environment in the immediate surroundings of the Rendlesham settlement is important to understanding the natural resources, opportunities and constraints conditioning past

farming and subsistence practices, and the environmental impacts of those regimes. Further questions, significant in assessing the location and functions of Rendlesham as an early medieval central place, are conditions in the floodplain of the river valley, and how far upstream the river Deben was tidal and navigable to sizeable vessels.

Pilot geoarchaeological survey in 2015 identified palaeochannels of the Deben and wet/waterlogged deposits able to provide data on the past Holocene vegetational development of the valley and human impacts upon it. A more detailed geoarchaeological survey, building on this potential, must be a priority in future fieldwork.

4.4 Options for Dissemination and Engagement

Any programme of future fieldwork should have as its goal rapid analysis and scholarly dissemination. This will be through a synthetic monograph backed by digital resources, and papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Given the intense public interest in the project to date there must also be a programme of communication, outreach and engagement. A project website will provide progress reports and interim material for public as well as academic and professional audiences, and provide a gateway to other resources. Consideration should be given to a publication for a non-specialist audience. Research results should be showcased at Ipswich Museum and the NT Visitor Centre at Sutton Hoo, and inform permanent displays at both. It is highly desirable, if plans to develop community facilities at the parish church of St Gregory come to fruition, that there should be interpretation materials on display in the church, and that a relationship should be developed with the National Trust at Sutton Hoo with a view to linking public interpretation of the two sites within their landscape.

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