

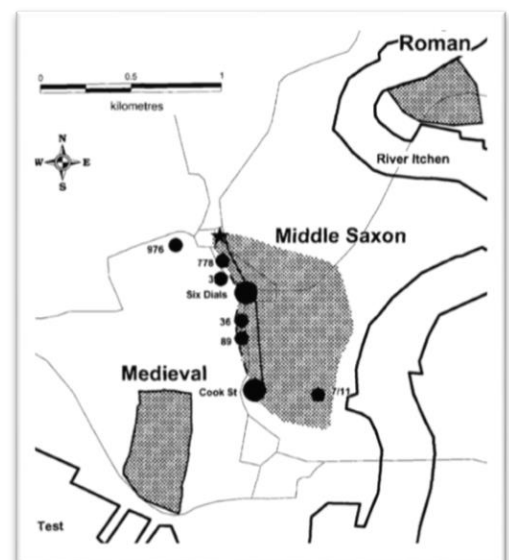
## SAS Study Day 2018: Hamwic – the Middle Saxon Settlement of Southampton

Our Study Day on 16<sup>th</sup> June at St Joseph's Hall provided a detailed view of the archaeology of Hamwic, when an audience of sixty members and visitors were treated to news of the latest discoveries and research on the settlement. Talks featured the growth and development of this community, which thrived on the west bank of the Itchen from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries; with details of daily life, industries, death and decline.

The six speakers are all experts in different aspects of the settlement: **Nick Stoodley** in *Before Hamwic: The Itchen Valley in 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD and origins of the 'wic'* spoke about earlier Saxon settlements inland, which until the 7<sup>th</sup> century appeared to keep away from the Itchen estuary and coast. The excavation of an elite Saxon cemetery prior to building the SFC football stadium at St Mary's uncovered early cremation burials but few grave goods, and radiocarbon dates were uncertain. The discovery of high status 'furnished' burials gave rise to suggestions that the area may have been the site of an Anglo-Saxon royal estate, with a military role to support the growth of trade, and the settlement of Hamwic grew up to service it.

**Matt Garner** in *An Introduction to Hamwic* discussed the extent and plan of Hamwic, where St Mary Street and Chapel Road survive as main routes through the area. In over 70 years of excavation several cemeteries were uncovered and analysis of burials gave insight into the subsistence, health and beliefs of the population. Radiocarbon dates on burials showed the pattern of different types of cemeteries during the existence of Hamwic. Pits filled with domestic and industrial rubbish hinted at international trading links. Recent work indicates that the settlement had a greater extent and longer lifespan than previously thought.

*Location of Roman, Saxon and Medieval areas superimposed on map of modern Southampton; + sites excavated in St Mary Street.      SCCAU.*



After coffee **Ian Riddler** talked about *Antler and Bone Working at Six Dials, Hamwic*. His analysis of the large collection of antler and bone waste from Hamwic has identified four phases of production for goods such as antler and bone combs, pins and decorative objects, concentrated in the north of the occupation area. Dating of these phases has been problematic and dependent on evidence from coins and ceramics, but recent suggestions of a wider timescale for the settlement led to the development of a more workable timeframe. This has implications for ideas regarding the circulation of bulk commodities for craft production or exchange networks, with goods of similar manufacture discovered in widespread areas of Europe.

In the early afternoon Professor **David Hinton** spoke about *Gold, Silver & Copper Alloys: Metals and Trade in Hamwic*. He discussed how these finds may reflect the settlement's trading contacts. While the excavation of St Mary's stadium site vastly increased the number of objects of precious metals found here, Professor Hinton

concluded that more everyday objects found in pits and wells, such as pins, pots and coins are of greater significance in the study of trade links.

**Phil Andrews** spoke next on *Iron and Ironworking* in Hamwic, where there is no evidence for iron smelting but ample traces of smithing activity (mostly waste slag and at least three blacksmith's hearths). It is thought that iron smelted at Romsey was transported to Hamwic for manufacture into goods for domestic use such as shovels, buckets and barrels made of staves bound with iron bands. Steel-edged knives were produced, and weapons such as swords and daggers as well as cart wheels. Many of the iron objects deteriorated after excavation, but from scientific analysis there is evidence of a high degree of technological knowledge and superior workmanship, which has been recorded by x-ray photography.

The final speaker of the day was **Andy Russel**, whose talk *Hamwic: the End of the Line?* looked at the later stages of the settlement and various theories concerning its decline in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. He showed records of the use of the name Hamwic, first recorded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, while Hamtun appears towards the 9<sup>th</sup> century; and in 10<sup>th</sup> century the settlement further south is referred to as South-Hamtun. Viking raids were recorded by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle at Hamwic in the 840s and 860 but the traces of a few burned houses and hurried burials dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century do not suggest a sudden catastrophic end. However, these houses were not rebuilt at all, and by the later 9<sup>th</sup> century occupation at Hamwic had ceased. Much evidence of late Saxon occupation has been revealed beneath Medieval Southampton, suggesting that by the 10<sup>th</sup> century the centre of occupation had moved to the south.

Congratulations to Matt Garner who gave us the idea for the day and recruited the speakers, and thanks to everyone who helped in the preparations and on the day.

**Sarah Hanna**