



Death and Taxes: The Archaeology of a Middle Saxon Estate Centre at Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (Oxford Archaeology Monograph)

Alan Hardy, Bethan Charles

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How did Middle Saxon kings govern their estates, and how did the mechanism of early forms of regional administration work? A spectacular site on the outskirts of Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire has demonstrated that archaeology can add significantly to the debate. Between 1993 and 2003, Oxford Archaeology undertook a major programme of survey and excavation on the outskirts of the town, uncovering extensive remains dating from the Middle Bronze Age to the late medieval period. This volume deals with the Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains, and concentrates on a large 8th-century complex of enclosures and buildings, along with other structures including a large malting oven. It is argued that this represents the infrastructure of a purpose-built tribute centre for a royal estate. The character of the material evidence indicates that wide variety of produce came into complex and was then redistributed rather than consumed on site. The centre administered judicial as well as economic affairs. Evidence of the human remains from an execution site was found - some of it possibly linked to the sudden demise of the tribute centre at the beginning of the 9th century. In addition, the evidence of a well-preserved Reduced Ware pottery manufactory is an indicator of the later role of the area as an industrial estate of the medieval borough of Higham Ferrers.

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