

## **Furnished Female Burial in Seventh-Century England: Gender and Sacral Authority in the Conversion Period**

**Abstract:** A new, refined chronology for seventh-century graves and grave goods in England has revealed a marked increase in well furnished female burials beginning in the second quarter of the seventh century. The present study considers what gave rise to this phenomenon and concludes that the small number of royal nuns and abbesses who figure so prominently in written accounts of the Conversion were part of a wider, undocumented change in the role of women that began several decades before the founding of the first female houses. It is argued that these well furnished graves reflect a new investment in the commemoration of females who came to represent their family's interests in newly acquired estates, their importance enhanced by their ability to confer supernatural legitimacy onto dynastic claims.

### **Introduction**

It is well known that women – primarily royal women -- played a prominent role in the Conversion of Anglo-Saxon England from the middle decades of the seventh century onwards, as reflected most strikingly in their founding and running of monasteries.<sup>i</sup> A small number of richly furnished female burials containing explicitly Christian objects have, furthermore, long been seen as directly linked to this phenomenon.<sup>ii</sup> Yet the date, number and distribution of well furnished female burials – not all of which were exceptionally rich or

contained overtly Christian objects -- make it unlikely that all or even most of the women buried in this way were directly attached to religious houses. This raises the possibility that the small number of nuns and abbesses who figure so prominently in written accounts of the Conversion were part of a wider, undocumented change in the role of women that pre-dated the foundation of the first female houses.

A landmark study published in 2013 by John Hines, Alex Bayliss and others, provides the first absolute chronological framework for Anglo-Saxon inhumations and grave goods of the sixth and seventh centuries based on high-precision radiocarbon dates, further refined by statistical modeling. The results of the study, which examined a national sample of around 600 furnished burials from 224 sites, reveal a marked increase in what the authors call 'well furnished' or 'substantially furnished' female burials beginning in the second quarter of the seventh century.<sup>iii</sup> This is several decades earlier than previously thought and well before the founding of the first female religious houses in England.<sup>iv</sup> This 'surge' peaked in the 660s and continued until, roughly, the 680s, by which time furnished burial had largely ceased. These burials are geographically relatively widespread (Fig. 1) and characterized by a range of new artefact types, often made of precious metals and exotic materials. The authors of the study regard this 'remarkably intense and rich concluding phase of deposition in female graves' – a phase that marks the reversal of a 'dis-investment in female burial that characterizes the preceding three or four decades' -- as presenting them with their 'greatest challenge'.<sup>v</sup> These burials undoubtedly represent an intriguing and significant development, and the chronologically and

geographically nuanced picture of burial rites that Hines and Bayliss's study presents, when considered together with other archaeological and written evidence, opens up new interpretive possibilities in relation to gender and authority in seventh-century England.

The start of the increased investment in female burials is assigned to the start of Hines and Bayliss's Phase FD, that is approximately the 630s; it then continued through to the end of Phase FE in (roughly) the 680s, a period which saw the end of the furnished burial rite itself.<sup>vi</sup> This increased investment thus commenced just as the short-lived phase of exceptionally lavish male princely burials – such as those found at Sutton Hoo, Taplow, and Prittlewell -- was dying out.<sup>vii</sup> It is of course tempting to see a causal link between the two developments. John Hines has suggested, for example, that female furnished burial may have received greater emphasis because it was no longer 'culturally appropriate' to bury weaponry with males after the early seventh century, while female dress accessories were not 'subject to the same direct public and political interests' as weaponry.<sup>viii</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that the focus would have shifted so decisively to female burials purely *faute de mieux*, and that these burials were merely vehicles for the 'compensatory consumption of material wealth' once it was no longer appropriate to display such wealth in male burials.<sup>ix</sup> This explanation, furthermore, does not adequately take into account the richly symbolic content of some of the new forms of artefacts associated exclusively with these female burials. It would, in any event, have been possible to express a family's position via the burial of a male ancestor by means other than the deposition of weaponry, for example by including coins, highly ornamented belt

buckles, feasting equipment, etc. Indeed, male weapon graves did persist throughout this period, notably at the major emporia (see below), but these are much less numerous than their well furnished female counterparts. Some other explanation must therefore be sought.

The present study considers these female burials, their cemetery contexts, distribution and the finds they contain to see if these offer any further clues as to the social context of this remarkable phenomenon. It is argued that these well furnished graves reflect a new ideology of investment in the commemoration of aristocratic females who came to represent their family's interests in newly acquired estates, their importance enhanced by their ability to confer supernatural legitimacy to dynastic claims and to bear the generation to whom property would pass.

### **The seventh century: Changes in the furnished burial rite**

The Anglo-Saxon furnished burial rite as it developed during the fifth and sixth centuries is now generally seen as a means by which families and households established their position via the public burial of ancestors, both male and female, and that items selected for burial embodied 'social identities, relationships, roles and obligations'.<sup>x</sup> The authors of the 2013 study have demonstrated that the furnished burial rite reached a peak for both genders in the middle of the sixth century, in terms of the quantity and range of grave goods.<sup>xi</sup> The period from c 580 to c 630 then saw a marked decline in the deposition of grave goods, with the notable exception of the handful of male princely burials already mentioned dating to the decades around 600.

Thereafter, both male and female burials were generally less richly furnished and contained fewer gender-specific items, although competitive display via a mortuary 'tableau' still appears to have been an important element of the burial rite.<sup>xii</sup>

The seventh century also saw major changes in the types of grave goods deposited with both genders, although fewer burials overall contained strongly 'gendered' grave goods.<sup>xiii</sup> Furnished male burials, for example, not only became – from the late sixth century -- much less numerous,<sup>xiv</sup> but were also characterized by 'a greater uniformity' in the range of object types deposited with them, especially with regard to weapons such as swords and shields.<sup>xv</sup> For females, the focus shifted sharply away from dress items such as brooches, wrist-clasps, buckles, and long strings of glass and amber beads, to shorter, lighter necklaces and objects that were often concealed in bags and other containers. Dress accessories and other grave goods lost the regional diversity so characteristic of the sixth century and became comparatively uniform. Many display clear Frankish and eastern Mediterranean influences, a trend which is now generally seen as signaling elite status and an allegiance to new systems of power, rather than the adoption of Christianity per se.<sup>xvi</sup>

Female infants and girls below the age of twelve (the age around which they are thought to have attained adult status<sup>xvii</sup>) were more likely to be well furnished in the seventh century than before and were accompanied by the same sorts of objects as women, such as chatelaines, containers and necklaces. An analysis of 46 cemeteries from various regions carried out by Nick Stoodley revealed, for

example, that during the period c. 525-625 (Stoodley's date group 4), no infants or children below the age of seven were buried with female-gendered items; for the period c. 625-700 (date group 6), 13% of burials with such items were of infants or children below the age of seven. To judge from the near-absence of male-gendered grave goods with children from c. 575 onwards (date groups 5 and 6), the burials of boys remained poorly furnished or unfurnished.<sup>xviii</sup>

### *Necklaces, amulets and 'objects of memory'*

Amongst the range of new artefact types that appeared during Hines and Bayliss's Phases FD and FE to replace typical northern Germanic forms, necklaces (or necklets) with suspended pendants are especially noteworthy. John Hines sees the advent of bulla, glass cabochon, and other pendants as indicating a 'new phase of investment in the furnishing of women's necklaces'.<sup>xix</sup> This style of necklace is clearly in imitation of Byzantine and Frankish fashion and the more ornate examples would have constituted the most ostentatious form of dress ornament of the period, with the possible exception of composite disc brooches. The political and religious associations of women's necklaces in the Scandinavian, Frankish and Anglo-Saxon worlds have recently been explored with particular reference to gold bracteates and mounted gold coins.<sup>xx</sup> Barbara Yorke has, furthermore, pointed to early written sources – notably Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* -- that reflect the important role that necklaces played in the identity of high-status women in the seventh century and that 'hint that the wearing of such jewellery might be connected with [their] religious roles'.<sup>xxi</sup> The supernatural associations of necklaces, as well as their role in display, are, for example, evident in the story recounted by Bede of Breguswith – mother of Hild

– whose dream-vision of a precious necklace appears to identify it with the future abbess and saint.<sup>xxii</sup>

In addition to pendants made of gold and gems, many of which bear cruciform designs (e.g. Fig. 2), a range of other objects -- including mounted beaver teeth and animal claws, cowrie shells, fossils and shield-shaped pendants – were evidently amuletic in nature, i.e. credited with magical qualities that could prevent harm or bring good luck.<sup>xxiii</sup> Indeed, Hines and Bayliss' study appears to confirm that the seventh century saw an increase in the inclusion in female graves of a range of objects that can reasonably be described as amulets. Cowrie shell pendants, for example, generally associated with female fertility, are dated to Phases FD and FE, while shield-shaped pendants, although late sixth-century in origin, were more commonly deposited in the seventh, as were mounted beaver teeth.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Some of these, as well as other objects, had been in circulation for some time prior to burial and thus had extended 'biographies'. Fragments of glass drinking vessels, as found in a recently excavated mid-seventh century grave at West Hanney, Oxon., and items of jewellery that were broken and in some cases repaired are typical. Examples include a damaged and patched composite disc brooch from the cemetery at Boss Hall, near Ipswich (discussed below) and a silver cruciform pendant from Grave 187 at Lechlade, Glos., an arm of which had broken off and been replaced.<sup>xxv</sup>

Burials in which the deceased was laid out on a wooden bed are another highly distinctive feature of the mid to late seventh century. Twelve certain and nine possible examples of 'bed burials' have been identified, with a clear cluster occurring in the Cambridge region. Most are associated with adult females; only one is certainly male. It has been suggested that bed-burial should be regarded as a variant of the coffin burial, i.e. as a particular way of displaying the body. A religious interpretation has also been mooted, namely an association of the grave with rest and sleep prior to resurrection.<sup>xxvi</sup> A further dimension, however, is suggested by a story concerning the Merovingian ruler Pippin II's mother Begga, as recorded in the *Vita Geretrudis*. When she entered her convent at Andenne, the nuns of Nivelles sent her, along with books and relics, the bed in which her sister Gertrude had died.<sup>xxvii</sup> The bed was then carried, along with the relics, into the convent church and placed on the altar. In this case, the bed appears to be both a sacral and commemorative object.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### *Containers and concealment*

Amulets and other objects were often concealed in a variety of containers, another prominent and distinctive feature of female burials of phases FD and FE.<sup>xxix</sup> The association with females is again clear. Perhaps the most common containers were leather or cloth pouches of which, at most, a bag-ring or fastener survive. Helen Geake identified as many as sixty-five of these in her study, again found mostly with women.<sup>xxx</sup> Wooden boxes or caskets with (usually) iron fittings are also relatively common during the middle and later decades of the seventh century. Forty of the forty-three wooden boxes identified in the sample analysed by Hines and Bayliss were found with females.<sup>xxxi</sup> Most, if not all, could

be locked or bolted.<sup>xxxii</sup> Very rarely, a padlock appears to have been included as part of a bag collection.<sup>xxxiii</sup> At Westfield Farm, Ely, the padlock key to a casket buried with a girl aged between ten and twelve was included with her girdle-group, while the maplewood casket from Grave 15 at Bloodmoor Hill, Suffolk, was padlocked with the key apparently placed inside the casket. The casket also contained a piece of pleated textile.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Comparable fine, pleated textiles were found in several well-furnished female burials in the Harford Farm and Buttermarket, Ipswich cemeteries. Crowfoot suggests that such fabrics may have been used in veils as well as in the long, decorated head-dresses, the wearing of which was condemned by Aldhelm in his treatise on virginity, addressed to the nuns of the monastery at Barking.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Small, cylindrical, copper-alloy containers sometimes referred to as 'work boxes' were often suspended from a chatelaine worn at the waist. The repoussé-decoration found on the lids of some of these containers echoes the designs -- often cruciform -- seen on the scutiform pendants worn on necklaces (FIG 2). The scraps of textile and plant material they sometimes contain have suggested to some an amuletic function, the contents relating to women's involvement in healing and, perhaps, textile production (itself an activity which was believed to have magical associations).<sup>xxxvi</sup> Geake has observed, however, that a number of the boxes also contain small metal dress fittings, suggesting that the scraps of textile represent fragments of clothing. The 'work box' found in Grave 18 at Harford Farm, for example, contained a silver pin suite along with two small copper-alloy dress-hooks 'looped over a carefully bias-folded strip of hemp tabby, and then wrapped in a neat roll with a larger piece of the same weave'.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Such textile fragments might, therefore, like relics, derive their importance from a 'direct physical connection' with a particular individual, rather than having a purely symbolic significance.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Indeed, Catherine Hills has recently made a compelling case for interpreting these as containers for secondary relics. She notes that an important collection of such relics was held at Chelles, a double house with close connections to England. Hilda's sister, Hereswith, for example, had made her home there and Hilda was due to join her: 'Relics from the Holy Land and elsewhere reached Chelles at a time when Anglo-Saxon women were living there, and in contact with their relatives back in England, providing a means for the dissemination of ideas about relics, perhaps specifically associated with women'.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Evidence of the (presumably organic) contents of these containers generally does not survive, although we cannot rule out the possibility that some were buried empty, as important items in their own right. Where objects are found within them, these commonly include small dress items, equipment associated with textile production, coins (sometimes perforated for suspension), beads, glass vessel fragments, knives, amulets and combs. The prominence of objects associated with 'markedly domestic and household functions' in such collections is, however, unlikely to have been a means of emphasizing the 'special domestic role' of females, as has been argued.<sup>xl</sup> Rather, items such as textile equipment -- often spindlewhorls and shears -- should be seen as primarily symbolic of gender, stage in the lifecycle and status (i.e. that of 'freewoman') just as the burial of weapons with males is now recognized as denoting the status of the deceased and his family, but not necessarily a life spent as a warrior.<sup>xli</sup>

Chris Scull has suggested that the concealment of grave goods in containers may represent 'a compromise between pressures to abandon ostentatious furnished burial on the one hand and on the other to deposit with the deceased items which embodied identity and the worth of individual and kin'.<sup>xlii</sup> The appearance of locked containers in graves of this period is, however, also suggestive of changing concepts of personal property, and could indeed be regarded as 'affirmation of ownership or the right to own property'.<sup>xliii</sup> An important further dimension is added by Howard Williams, who suggests that the concealment, in some cases the locking away, of objects inside bags and boxes 'may have defined an intimate engagement between the living and the dead through gift-giving' and should thus be seen as a 'statement of consignment and dedication'.<sup>xliiv</sup> He argues, furthermore, that certain objects, notably those associated with aristocratic court culture, came to have an 'enhanced commemorative role' so that jewellery, feasting and drinking equipment, etc., 'accrued prestige and associations through their circulation among the living'.<sup>xlv</sup> Following Sally Crawford, he emphasizes the votive nature of such grave goods, seeing them as gifts to the dead, broadly analogous to intercessory prayer.<sup>xlvi</sup> The transaction between the living and dead would involve, in effect, the provision of a burial furnished with special, prestigious items to ancestors with the power to bestow property. The burial of such objects in the grave of an important female member may have been a means by which a high-status family could harness, indeed appropriate, the power that these objects conveyed, in much the same way that monasteries appropriated the power of relics.<sup>xlvii</sup> Certainly, the overwhelming association of such objects with females suggests that, within the Anglo-Saxon family, as in

Northern Gaul, 'the sacred seems to have located itself on the side of the women'.<sup>xlviii</sup>

## **The geographical and topographical contexts of well furnished female burials**

### *Geographical distribution*

The distribution of furnished female burials of phases FD and FE as revealed by Hines and Bayliss's study is relatively widespread, but also displays certain concentrations.<sup>xlix</sup> During Phase FD (i.e. pre-c 650), a major concentration is evident in east Kent, with a smaller cluster in East and North Yorkshire and a few examples in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk (FIG 3). In Phase FE, east Kent remains prominent in the distribution of such burials, despite the establishment of numerous new cemeteries, but a clear westerly drift is also apparent, notably along the Thames Valley. Northumbria remains prominent, as do Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The isolated barrow burials of the Peak District – such as the famous example at Cow Low -- represent a new geographical locus for well-furnished females.<sup>1</sup>

The distribution of furnished male graves of broadly the same period in the Hines and Bayliss study (their Phases ME and MF) reveals less emphasis on Kent and a near-complete absence of such burials north of the Wash. Distinctive but small groups of male barrow burials appear on the North Downs of Surrey and the Wiltshire Downs. A clear north-south divide is thus apparent, with the presence of nineteen furnished (including seven well furnished) Northumbrian

female burials of phases FD and FE in Hines and Bayliss's sample standing in marked contrast to the near-absence of comparable male burials.<sup>li</sup> The female presence also remained more marked in Kent, especially towards the end of the burial sequence in the late seventh century.<sup>lii</sup>

The study by Hines and Bayliss thus clearly reveals the prominence of furnished female burials in Kent and Northumbria to be a new and distinctive feature of Phases FD and FE. The prevalence of Frankish and Frankish-inspired items in these burials may seem unsurprising given the close relations of both kingdoms with the Frankish world. Indeed, the connection between the distribution of such objects in women's graves and the process of the Conversion has been made before.<sup>liii</sup> It is, however, also instructive to compare the distribution of well furnished burials to that of the earliest Anglo-Saxon double houses, i.e. monasteries housing separate communities of male and female religious and normally headed by an abbess, itself a Frankish innovation.<sup>liiv</sup> As already noted, the female burials under consideration were not found in monastic cemeteries or directly associated with churches. Nevertheless, the distribution of the earliest documented double houses corresponds remarkably closely to the distribution of well furnished female burials of Phase FD (FIG 3).<sup>liiv</sup> When foundations of the late seventh and early eighth centuries are included, the distribution broadly mirrors that of burials of Phase FE. The possibility that the distributions both of well furnished burials and double monasteries are reflections of similar strategies regarding the role of females in legitimizing newly gained and precariously held assets, is explored below.

### *Furnished female burials in rural cemeteries*

The study by Hines and Bayliss indicates that ‘the great majority of women buried in well-furnished graves ... appear to be associated with rural communities’.<sup>lvi</sup> This is in contrast to the cemeteries associated with the major emporia at London, Ipswich and Southampton, where well furnished male burials – some of which have been plausibly interpreted as those of foreign merchants – are more prominent.<sup>lvii</sup> Similarly, most isolated barrows of this period contain furnished male burials.<sup>lviii</sup> In Wiltshire, for example, 51% of isolated barrow burials could be identified as male, and only 8% as female.<sup>lix</sup> Shephard’s seminal study demonstrated that isolated barrows were almost invariably located in visually prominent locations, often near routeways and boundaries, and were far more likely to contain richly furnished burials than flat-graves or barrow burials in communal cemeteries. He also observed that ‘sex differences count much less in the provision of grave goods for those in isolated barrows than for those in [flat-grave] cemeteries’.<sup>lx</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that the burial of men and women in isolated barrows served much the same purpose, namely to ‘[strengthen] hereditary claims to resources’ in the face of territorial pressure.<sup>lxi</sup>

Most of the well- furnished female burials under discussion occur in rural cemeteries newly established in the seventh century, although some have also been found in the larger, ancestral burial grounds established in earlier centuries.<sup>lxii</sup> The treatment of well furnished female burials within rural cemeteries in terms of body position, grave structures and depth, location within

the burial ground, etc., varies widely, however, as the following examples make clear.

A large, though incompletely excavated, cemetery at Lechlade, Glos., was probably established in the late fifth century; 223 inhumations were excavated. Twenty-six females and sixteen males could be dated to the seventh century on the basis of accompanying grave goods. Of the former, eight were well furnished and of these, five were included in the Hines and Bayliss study and radiocarbon dated to Phase FD or FE.<sup>lxiii</sup> One of these, Grave 187, lay within the cemetery's only identified ring ditch, indicating the probable existence of a barrow; the grave contained a necklet with the repaired silver cruciform pendant already mentioned and a piece of textile interpreted as the remains of a head-dress.<sup>lxiv</sup> The other seven burials lay within 15m of Grave 187; there thus appears to have been a cluster of well-furnished females in this part of the cemetery. One of these was interred with a newborn infant, but apart from Grave 187's probable barrow and exceptional depth (0.75m), there was nothing unusual about these burials to distinguish them from less well-furnished examples.

A cemetery established in the fifth century at Dover-Buckland (Kent) was partly excavated in the 1950s, revealing some 170 inhumations, although this is now known not to represent the entire burial ground thanks to more recent excavations.<sup>lxv</sup> The excavator identified fourteen distinct burial plots based on the shape, orientation and placement of graves. One of these, plot E, was focused on a prehistoric burial mound. Eleven plots were in use during the seventh century with seven of these containing females described by the excavator as

'rich' or 'medium rich';<sup>lxvi</sup> one -- Plot H -- contained four such burials (Graves 107, 110, 124, 160) dating to the later seventh century.<sup>lxvii</sup> While two of the well furnished burials at Buckland had large flints piled on top or around the edge of the grave (Gr. 6 and 161) and another was in a contorted, prone position (Gr. 67), the treatment of these females as a group in terms of the depth of the grave, the positioning of the body, and the use of grave markers, could not be readily distinguished from that of their poorly furnished counterparts.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Cemeteries that were newly established in the seventh century display a similar lack of consistency in terms of the placement and treatment of well-furnished female burials. At the Harford Farm cemetery in Norfolk, for example, 46 WE oriented graves lay in two groups separated by some 200m; both were laid out within a prehistoric barrow cemetery and together are thought to constitute a relatively complete burial ground.<sup>lxix</sup> Twenty-eight percent were unfurnished while twenty-three percent were modestly equipped. Five burials, all female, stand out as well furnished. As Williams has noted, these burials were not set apart or distinguished in any other way that can be readily discerned, although it should be noted that the state of skeletal preservation was poor.<sup>lxx</sup>

Forty-five WE aligned inhumations were uncovered at the incompletely excavated seventh-century cemetery of Winnall II, Hants., overlooking Winchester.<sup>lxxi</sup> Of the twenty burials identified as female, five were well furnished. None of these was unusually deep and no grave markers were recorded. Four of the burials (Graves 5, 7, 8 10) lay in the same, uneven, row, with the fifth (Grave 21) lying some three metres to the east. In contrast, the

seven well-furnished females uncovered at the relatively poorly recorded cemetery at Chamberlain's Barn, Leighton Buzzard, were distributed across the cemetery of 68 burials, and were not restricted to one zone or row.<sup>lxxii</sup>

At Bloodmoor Hill, twenty-six WE aligned graves lay in several clearly structured rows established within a pre-existing settlement (FIG 4).<sup>lxxiii</sup> While the settlement probably originated in the sixth century, the cemetery is unlikely to have been established much before the mid seventh. Radiocarbon dates and grave goods suggest it was in use for at most fifty years, whereas the settlement was occupied for 150-200 years. The cemetery included eleven adults, a further three sub-adults or adults, and four juveniles or sub-adults. A further five small graves where bone did not survive are likely to have contained juveniles. Five of the burials were male based on skeletal evidence; ten were probably or certainly female, based on skeletal evidence and grave goods. The total size of the contributing population represented by the cemetery is estimated to have been between twelve and twenty-nine individuals. Four of the female burials stand out as well furnished (Graves 11, 15, 22, 23), one containing a necklace with a silver sheet cruciform pendant (FIG 5). Although Grave 11 appears originally to have been relatively deep and Grave 15 probably contained a coffin, it should be noted that the deepest grave at the site was an unfurnished child's burial (Grave 14), which was also coffined. It is notable that the excavation uncovered no exceptionally large buildings or high-status material culture of the seventh century, despite having preserved midden deposits. The fact that the cemetery was divided into zones according to status and gender – the well-furnished females all lay in the same part of the cemetery, while juveniles were similarly

clustered -- further militates against the interpretation of this as the burial place of several equally ranked households. Scull has suggested that the cemetery could have been the burial ground 'of a single establishment, perhaps a large farm or small estate centre' and that this establishment housed a female religious community.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

At Westfield Farm, just to the west of Ely, fifteen later seventh-century inhumations were uncovered. It is unclear whether this represents a complete cemetery, but it does at least appear to represent an intact burial group.<sup>lxxv</sup> Five of the individuals buried here were sub-adults – a high proportion, as at Bloodmoor Hill. Taking both skeletal evidence and grave goods into consideration, five of the burials were probably or certainly male and six were probably or certainly female. The only two richly furnished burials were both young females, the richest, Grave 1, being aged between ten and twelve years. Neither grave was exceptionally deep, although Grave 1 was unusually wide. Grave 1 was positioned centrally within the cemetery and probably originally lay beneath a barrow. It contained a pair of glass palm cups, a necklace with silver and gold pendants (including a gold cruciform pendant), a silver pin and chain, comb, girdle-group, padlocked box and a veil or mantle. Grave 2 lay some 8m away and was furnished with a cylindrical 'workbox', Roman brooch, antler spindlewhorl and five amethyst beads, possibly contained in a bag. The position and partial disarticulation of the skeleton indicate either a delayed burial or the reopening of the grave and manipulation of the body while still semi-articulated.<sup>lxxvi</sup> This may reflect the special status of the individual in question

and appears to echo the reburial, recounted by Bede, of the founder of the monastery of Ely herself.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The positioning and treatment of the females buried in well furnished graves thus follows no consistent pattern. Where several such burials occur in the same cemetery, it is not possible to establish whether they represent several generations of the same family, or whether all were buried at around the same time, suggesting that they represented several households. More work and data are needed if such distinctions are to be made.

## **Conclusions**

The evidence considered above raises the question of whether a link existed between the prominence of well furnished female burials in the seventh century and new attitudes – arriving from the Frankish world -- towards property and inheritance. As Patrick Wormald observed, the seventh and early eighth centuries saw the accumulation of landed wealth in female hands: around half of Kentish charters that pre-date 760 ‘are for women or women’s foundations’ while six out of twenty-two early charters from Mercia and the West Midlands are also for women, few of whom, as far as we know, were royal.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Endowing churches and founding family monasteries offered, from around the 660s onwards, a well-documented solution to the predicament presented by ‘accumulations of new wealth in the vulnerable hands of women’, many, though by no means all, of whom were widows.<sup>lxxix</sup> Yet this may not have been the first or only strategy employed by leading families to safeguard their property.

It is likely that there were significant numbers of women living a religious life outside of monasteries in seventh-century England. As Sarah Foot has observed, 'women could, and did devote themselves to the religious life without leaving their own homes (and...without the lands by which they were supported being permanently removed from the control of their kindred)...'.<sup>lxxx</sup> Such female *deo deuotae* 'are not easily distinguished from the inhabitants of [minsters]' and would not appear in written sources unless a transfer of land was involved.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Bede's passing mention of St Hilda '[living] the monastic life with a small band of companions' on one hide of land beside the River Wear before becoming abbess of Hartlepool is suggestive of such a scenario, albeit not one that Bede was likely to dwell upon.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Also of possible relevance is the Minster-in-Thanel legend, recorded in several Latin and Old English works, which relates the story of the late seventh-century princess Eormengyth, who chose to be buried one mile east of the minster, quite possibly under a barrow, rather than *ad sanctos*.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The well furnished burials at Bloodmoor Hill and Westfield Farm, Ely are perhaps the best candidates for such groups of female religious, although the latter may equally have been one of several burial grounds that served the double monastery at Ely.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

As already noted, a striking feature of the period from the 630s onwards is the burial of female children with adult dress items and grave goods, a marked departure from fifth- and sixth-century practice. This may appear surprising given that Salic law indicated that Frankish women of childbearing age were more highly valued in terms of *wergeld* than younger females.<sup>lxxxv</sup> In the laws of Aethelberht and Ine, however, no mention is made of age in relation to *wergeld*,

and it may be that in seventh-century England, status trumped life-course, at least in this context. The furnished burial of female children – even on occasion infants – is not, furthermore, inconsistent with the idea of these individuals as being in some sense ‘consecrated’ and playing a commemorative role within families of high rank. As Foot notes, ‘some women were dedicated to religion by their parents and placed in the cloister in infancy’ where they could ‘intercede on behalf of their kin, so ensuring the permanent preservation of its memory’.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Thus, in the 640s, King Oswiu ‘in fulfillment of his vow to the Lord...gave his daughter Ælfflæd, who was scarcely a year old, to be consecrated to God....’<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

The shift in the expression of gender in burial that began in the second quarter of the seventh century may thus reflect the use by high-ranking families of the lavish burial of ‘consecrated’ female ancestors to confer supernatural legitimacy over claims to property. By the later seventh century, such burials may even have provided an alternative means of cultivating a dynastic identity for families without the resources or royal connections to found a monastery and thereby gain permanent rights to its assets. As Martin Welch suggested with regard to barrow burials, well-furnished female burials could have ‘[served] as “landowners” charters in a pre-literate society, providing proof of the right to receive food rents and services....’<sup>lxxxviii</sup> These burials --especially if marked out in some way, e.g. with mounds (including prehistoric mounds) -- could, like monasteries, have been a means of permanently earmarking patrimonial land. This could explain the decision to bury a single, well furnished female sometime towards the end of the seventh century in the Boss Hall cemetery near Ipswich, after the burial ground had already been out of use for some time. The female in

question was furnished with, amongst other things, a wooden casket containing a damaged and repaired composite disc brooch, Merovingian gold coin, silver cosmetic set and one or more elaborate necklaces.<sup>lxxxix</sup> An even more striking example is the seventh-century cemetery at Street House, Loftus, NE Yorkshire. The cemetery – containing 109 graves -- displayed a unique layout, with single and double rows of inhumations defining a rough square. Gaps in what was effectively an enclosure formed by burials indicate the existence of one or two entrances. A small number of graves lay within the enclosure. These included a richly furnished female bed burial, Grave 42, a ring ditch indicating the presence of a mound and a possible ‘mortuary house’. The enclosure formed by the burials would have provided an exclusive and formal setting for Grave 42. The site as a whole, as Semple and Williams note, appears to reflect ‘the structuring principles and organization of burial within and outside a church; important graves acted as foci within the enclosed sacred space’. It is of course intriguing to speculate whether the woman buried in Grave 42 was a member of the Deiran royal family, founders of the double monastery at Whitby, which lay some 20km along the coast to the south.<sup>xc</sup>

But why would the burial of females in particular have played a sacralizing role for families seeking to commemorate their ancestors and legitimate their continuing right to landed assets? While it is of course impossible to answer this question conclusively, some possible reasons can be given. Matthew Innes has argued (based primarily on Carolingian sources) that the transmission of family memory was largely the responsibility of women, making them central to the legitimation of family power.<sup>xc1</sup> This, coupled with their child-bearing role, would

have made women lynchpins of the dynastic structure of aristocratic families. But the females in well furnished graves appear also to have been important in establishing their family's relationship with the supernatural; they may even have possessed a 'consecrated' status, signaled by certain grave goods and by the Mediterranean-style dress items with which they were buried, and affirmed by a Christian ideology which took the view that 'women are by nature closer to Christ than is possible for men'.<sup>xcii</sup> There are good grounds for thinking that Anglo-Saxon women already played a special role in pre-Christian cults; the rapid development of their role as 'religious specialists' in the seventh century may, as Barbara Yorke has suggested, be due in part to the incompatibility for men of a Christian, monastic vocation and a role as war leader (as demonstrated by the disastrous attempt by Sigebert of the East Angles to reconcile the two).<sup>xciii</sup> This echoes sources recording the founding of double houses in seventh-century Gaul, which portray females as conferring religious legitimacy (and acting as the monastery's *gubernatrix*), while their male relatives appear as protectors of the monastery and defenders of its assets.<sup>xciv</sup> Indeed, in the absence of primogeniture and in the face of endemic warfare resulting in the death of many male family members, it is likely that some of the women buried in this way had come to exercise direct control over their family's assets in much the same way that abbesses controlled monastic assets.

Recent work thus demonstrates that well furnished female graves became prominent in the burial record of Anglo-Saxon England several decades before the founding of the first female religious houses. Although these burials were not monastic, their distinctive geographical distribution – which differs from that of

contemporary furnished male burials -- closely mirrors that of the earliest monasteries, suggesting that both reflect similar strategies for the legitimization of newly gained holdings. The objects contained in these burials reflect an emphasis on the sacred, on commemoration, and perhaps on property. It has been argued here that their distribution, contents and context – all of which would repay more detailed analysis – suggest that these burials were not an alternative to, or substitute for, male weapon burials. Instead, the archaeological evidence, when considered together with written sources, points to an undocumented tradition of females ‘embodying the spiritual power’ of land-owning families, a tradition upon which the royal abbesses of the later seventh and eighth centuries were able to build.<sup>xcv</sup>

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank John Blair, Tania Dickinson, Howard Williams and Barbara Yorke for their guidance, encouragement and insights in relation to an earlier draft of the text. I am also grateful to Maxine Anastasi for preparing the figures.

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<sup>i</sup> Indeed, one-third of the chapters in Book IV of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* concern female religious and their monasteries. P. Wormald, ‘Appendix: Hilda, Saint and Scholar’, in P. Wormald, *The Times of Bede* (Oxford 2006), pp. 267-76.

<sup>ii</sup> These have been discussed in some detail by John Blair and David Petts: J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 170-5, 230-3; D. Petts,

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*Pagan and Christian. Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 2011), pp. 105-14; see also S. Lucy, S., R. Newman, N. Dodwell, C. Hills, M. Dekker, T. O'Connell, I. Riddler, P. Walton Rogers, 'The Burial of a Princess? The Later Seventh-Century Cemetery at Westfield Farm, Ely, *Antiquaries J* 89 (2009), pp. 81-142.

<sup>iii</sup> The criteria by which a furnished burial can be judged to be 'well furnished' are not explicitly defined by Hines and Bayliss. Indeed, in the absence of a larger-scale study of this phenomenon, defining a burial as 'well-furnished' remains to some extent a subjective exercise. For the purpose of the present study, burials accompanied by exotic items such as garnets and cowrie shells, artefacts containing precious metals, or glass vessels, have been regarded as 'well furnished', although inclusion of such 'precious' materials is not the only potential criterion; cf. Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 538. I am grateful to John Hines for his advice on this subject.

<sup>iv</sup> J. Hines and A. Bayliss (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework* (London 2013), pp. 529, 539. For the figures used in their final seriation, see pp. 298 and 408.

<sup>v</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp. 458, 520

<sup>vi</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 529 and table 8.2

<sup>vii</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 533; While most of

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these burials date to the first quarter of the seventh century, that from Prittlewell appears slightly to pre-date 600. C Scull, A Bayliss, C Bronk Ramsay, G Cook and G Williams, 'Dating and Chronology' in L Blackmore and I Blair (eds), *The Prittlewell Princely Burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003*, MOLA Monogr Ser (London, forthcoming).

viii Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 542.

ix Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 542.

x C. Scull, 'Social Transactions, Gift Exchange, and Power in the Archaeology of the Fifth to Seventh centuries', in H. Hamerow, D. Hinton and S. Crawford (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2012), pp. 848-64, at p. 852.

xi Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 529.

xii Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 479; A comparable development, though less closely dated, has been observed in relation to Merovingian cemeteries in central Austrasia. G. Halsall, 'Female Status and Power in Early Merovingian Central Austrasia: The Burial Evidence', *Early Medieval Europe* 5/1 (1996), pp. 1-24.

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<sup>xiii</sup> In early Wessex, for example, 53% of fifth- and sixth-century inhumations were clearly 'gendered' compared to only 24% of seventh-century inhumations. N. Stoodley, 'Burial Rites, Gender and the Creation of Kingdoms: the Evidence from Seventh-Century Wessex', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology & History* 10 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 99-108, at p. 101. See also: H. Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods in Conversion Period England* (Oxford, 1997); Geake, 'Invisible Kingdoms', figs. 2-6; N. Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear. A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR Brit. Ser. 288 (Oxford 1999a), p.143.

<sup>xiv</sup> For the 650s, identifiably female burials outnumber male burials by as much as six to one. Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp. 476, 479.

<sup>xv</sup> Hines and Bayliss. *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 529.

<sup>xvi</sup> H. Geake, 'Invisible Kingdoms: The Use of Grave-Goods in Seventh-Century England', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology & History* 10 (Oxford 1999), pp. 203-15, at p. 212; S. Crawford, 'Votive Deposition, Religion and the Anglo-Saxon Furnished Burial Ritual', *World Archaeology* 36/1 (2004), pp. 87-102, at p. 94.

<sup>xvii</sup> S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1991).

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<sup>xviii</sup> Geake, *Use of Grave Goods*, 128-9; Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear*, p. 113 and Figs 101 and 102 and Tables 84 and 85. It should be noted that the remains of infants cannot be sexed osteologically, and so these observations are based on the gendered grave goods with which they were buried.

<sup>xix</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 530.

<sup>xx</sup> M. Gaimster, 'Image and Power in the Early Saxon Period', in H. Hamerow, D. Hinton and S. Crawford (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 865-91.

<sup>xxi</sup> B. Yorke, "'The Weight of Necklaces': Some Insights Into the Wearing of Women's Jewellery from Middle Saxon Written Sources' in S. Brookes, S. Harrington and A. Reynolds (eds), *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, BAR Brit Ser. 527 (Oxford 2011), pp. 106-11, at p. 106.

<sup>xxii</sup> Yorke, 'Weight of Necklaces', p. 108; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), IV.23. Necklaces are presented in a less positive light in the rather grisly story of Æthelthryth, daughter of the king of the East Angles and eventually abbess of Ely, who developed a tumor beneath her jaw during her final illness, a fate regarded by her as just punishment for the wearing of precious necklaces as a young girl. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV.19.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> A. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR Brit. Ser. 96 (Oxford, 1981).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Cowrie shell pendants are dated to phases D and E in Hines and Bayliss's study (their Type PE 10-a; Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, Table 10.1). Their study also includes eight burials with beaver tooth pendants (their Type PE10-b; doi: 10.5284/1018290) and concludes that, while 'relatively frequent in later burials,' these objects might 'have been present and been buried in an earlier phase as well'. Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp. 401-5; Meaney regards these pendants merely as 'late'. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, pp. 127, 136, 162.

<sup>xxv</sup> H. Hamerow, with A. Byard, E. Cameron, A. Düring, P. Levick, N. Marquez-Grant, A. Shortland, 'A high-status seventh-century female burial from West Hanney, Oxfordshire', *The Antiquaries Journal* 95 (2015), pp. \*\*\*; C. Scull, *Early Medieval Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk* (London, 2009); A. Boyle, D. Jennings, D. Miles, and S. Palmer, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade, Gloucestershire: Volume 2* (Oxford, 2011). A more extensive list of examples may be found in: H. Williams, 'Engendered Bodies and Objects of Memory in Final Phase Graves' in J. Buckberry and A. Cherryson (eds), *Burial in Later Anglo-Saxon England, c. 650-1100* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 26-37, at p. 33. It should be noted, however, that the burial of such 'objects of memory' was not a new phenomenon, nor one that was entirely restricted to females. The pendant cross buried with St Cuthbert is an example of an object with an extended biography from a male grave. M. Welch, 2012. 'The Mid Saxon "Final

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Phase”, in H. Hamerow, D. Hinton and S. Crawford (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2012), 266-87, at p. 273.

<sup>xxvi</sup> T. Malim and J. Hines, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill* (York, 1998), pp. 267-8; Hines and Bayliss *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 552. Malim and Hines identify eleven certain examples of bed burials; the recent discovery at Street House, Loftus, brings the total to twelve. S. Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House, Loftus, North-East Yorkshire* (Hartlepool, 2012).

<sup>xxvii</sup> R. Le Jan, R., ‘Convents, Violence and Competition for Power in Seventh-Century Francia’, in F. Theuvs, M. De Jong and C. van Rhijn (eds), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 243-69, at pp. 267-8.

<sup>xxviii</sup> It is worth noting the remarkable beds found in chamber graves in the Alamannic cemetery at Oberflacht in southern Germany, several of which were in the form of houses, complete with roofs. See: P. Paulsen, *Die Holzfunde aus dem Gräberfeld bei Oberflacht und ihre Kulturhistorische Bedeutung* (Stuttgart, 1992). In terms of construction, however, the beds in Anglo-Saxon graves are quite different from the Merovingian-period examples found in some high-status continental burials. Malim and Hines, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill*; G. Speake, *A Saxon Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down* (London, 1989), figs. 91-3.

<sup>xxix</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 520.

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xxx It should be noted, however, that bags or pouches are also found in earlier burials. Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*, pp. 79-81; A. Boyle, D. Jennings, D. Miles, and S. Palmer, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade, Gloucestershire: Volume 2* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 73-4.

xxxii Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp. 227-9.

xxxiii Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*, pp. 82-3.

xxxiiii For example, Didcot Grave 2 and Finglesham Grave 6. A. Boyle, A. Dodd, D. Miles, A. Mudd, *Two Oxfordshire Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries: Berinsfield and Didcot* (Oxford, 1995); S. Hawkes, S. and G. Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent* (Oxford, 2006).

xxxv Lucy et al. 'The Burial of a Princess?', p. 123; S. Lucy, J. Tipper and A. Dickens, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville, Suffolk*, *East Anglian Archaeology* 131 (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 407, 414.

xxxvi The textiles were found in Harford Farm Graves 1, 19B, 22, 28 and Buttermarket Graves 2962 and 4275; E. Crowfoot, 'The Textiles', in K. Penn, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass, 1989-91. Part II, The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Harford Farm, Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk*, *East Anglian Archaeology* 92 (Dereham, 2000), pp. 82-91; E. Crowfoot, 'Textiles', in C. Scull, *Early Medieval Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk* (London, 2009), pp.

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228-31, at p. 231; Aldhelm, 'De Virginitate' LVIII, in *Aldhelm. The Prose Works*, transl. M. Lapidge and M. Herren (Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979). It is interesting to note in this connection that the *vita* of St. Gertrude reveals that veils, like beds, could be 'biographied objects': Gertrude instructed her nuns to bury her in an old veil that had previously belonged to an unnamed holy woman; B. Effros, 'Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom', *Viator* 27 (1996), pp. 1-10.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> A. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR Brit. Ser. 96 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 184-6.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Crowfoot, 'The Textiles', p. 90.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Geake notes three instances where the 'work box' itself was concealed in a box, bag or pot. Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*, p. 35.

<sup>xxxix</sup> C. Hills, 'Work Boxes or Reliquaries? Small Copper Alloy Containers in 7<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon Graves', in S. Brookes, S. Harrington and A. Reynolds (eds), *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, BAR Brit Ser. 527 (Oxford 2011), pp. 14-19, at p. 16.

<sup>xl</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 539; cf Halsall, 'Female Status and Power', p. 23.

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<sup>xli</sup> H. Härke, *Angelsächsische Waffengräber des 5. Bis 7. Jahrhunderts* (Köln, 1992);  
M.J. Enright, 'Warlords and Women in the First Millennium', in D. Quast (ed.),  
*Weibliche Eliten in der Frühgeschichte* (Mainz, 2011), pp. 145-84, at p. 151-2.

<sup>xlii</sup> C. Scull, 'Implications for Anglo-Saxon Economic History' in Hines and Bayliss,  
*Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp. 545-8, at p. 548.

<sup>xliii</sup> Lucy et al. *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill*, p. 408.

<sup>xliv</sup> Williams, 'Engendered Bodies', p. 33. The act of concealing apotropaic objects  
may also have served to enhance the latter's protective qualities. D. Eastop,  
'Outside In: Making Sense of the Deliberate Concealment of Garments within  
Buildings', *Textile, the Journal of Cloth and Culture* 4.3 (2006), pp. 238-55.

<sup>xlv</sup> Williams, 'Engendered Bodies', p. 35. The deposition of glass fragments as  
well as whole vessels could, however, equally relate to the practice of feasting  
and drinking at the graveside. See M. Innes, M., 'Keeping it in the Family: Women  
and Aristocratic Memory, 700-1200', in E. van Houts (ed), *Medieval Memories:  
Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (London, 2001), pp. 17-35, at pp. 26-7.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Williams, 'Engendered Bodies', p. 28; Crawford, 'Votive Deposition'.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition', p. 244.

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<sup>xlviii</sup> Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition', p. 267.

<sup>xlix</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, figs. 10.8 & 10.9.

<sup>l</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 536.

<sup>li</sup> The nineteen Northumbrian female burials of Phases FD and FE included in Hines and Bayliss's sample derive from the cemeteries of West Heslerton, Castledyke, Uncleby and Garton Slack (Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, figs. 10.6, 10.7; doi: 10.5284/1018290, e-fig. 73).

<sup>lii</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 536 and figs. 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7.

<sup>liii</sup> For example, Geake 'Invisible Kingdoms', p. 212.

<sup>liv</sup> H. Mayr Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London 1972), p. 151; J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in England', in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 49-68.

<sup>lv</sup> Frustratingly little evidence survives for early female houses in East Anglia, despite that fact that the first Anglo-Saxon royal women known to have travelled to Francia to enter religious houses were East Anglian princesses. Well-furnished female burials, on the other hand, are relatively well represented in the kingdom.

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B, Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London 2003), p. 18;

Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* III, 8.

<sup>lvi</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 539; cf Geake 1997, *Use of Grave Goods*, p.128.

<sup>lvii</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 536; C. Scull, 'Foreign Identities in Burials at the Seventh-Century English Emporia', in S. Brookes, S. Harrington and A. Reynolds (eds), *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, BAR Brit Ser. 527 (Oxford 2011), pp. 82-87.

<sup>lviii</sup> Isolated female barrow burials include those from Swallowcliffe Down and Roundway Down in Wiltshire, both of which were richly furnished and inserted into prehistoric burial mounds. Speake, *A Saxon Bed Burial*; S. Semple and H. Williams, 'Excavation on Roundway Down', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 94 (2001), pp. 236-239.

<sup>lix</sup> Stoodley, 'Burial Rites, Gender and the Creation of Kingdoms' p. 103.

<sup>lx</sup> J. Shephard, 'The Social Identity of the Individual in Isolated Barrows and Barrow Cemeteries in Anglo-Saxon England' in B. Burnham and J. Kingsbury (eds), *Space, Hierarchy and Society. Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis*, BAR International Ser. 59 (Oxford, 1979), pp. 47-79, at p. 67; see also figs. 8 & 9.

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<sup>lxi</sup> Shephard, 'Social Identity', p. 47; Shephard notes that there are 'no certain instances on record of infants or juveniles as the sole occupant of an isolated barrow'. 'Social Identity', p. 67.

<sup>lxii</sup> Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, p. 537.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Graves 14, 84, 95/1, 138, 148, 172/2, 179, 187; Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods* Table 7.1.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Boyle et al. *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field, Lechlade*, p. 37.

<sup>lxv</sup> V. Evison, *Dover: Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery* (London, 1987). A further 244 burials were uncovered in 2010; K. Parfitt and T. Anderson, *Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, . Excavations 1994* (Canterbury, 2010).

<sup>lxvi</sup> Evison, *Dover: Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, Table XXX.

<sup>lxvii</sup> It was not possible to include burials from this excavation in the radiocarbon dating programme undertaken by Hines and Bayliss; the phasing and chronology proposed in the excavation report have therefore been relied upon here (Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, pp 93-95; Evison, *Dover: Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, fig. 104).

<sup>lxviii</sup> Evison, *Dover: Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, pp. 129-34, 150 and fig. 108.

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l<sup>xix</sup> K. Penn, *Excavations on the Norwich Southern Bypass, 1989-91. Part II, The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Harford Farm, Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk*, East Anglian Archaeology 92 (Dereham, 2000).

l<sup>xx</sup> Williams 'Engendered Bodies', p. 30.

l<sup>xxi</sup> A. Meaney and S.C. Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire* (London, 1970).

l<sup>xxii</sup> M. Hyslop, 'Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire', *The Archaeological Journal* 120 (1964), pp. 161-200.

l<sup>xxiii</sup> Lucy et al., *Bloodmoor Hill*.

l<sup>xxiv</sup> Lucy et al. *Bloodmoor Hill*, p. 425.

l<sup>xxv</sup> Lucy et al., 'The Burial of a Princess?'

l<sup>xxvi</sup> Lucy et al., 'The Burial of a Princess?', p. 112.

l<sup>xxvii</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV, 19; A. Mason, 'The Early English Cult of Saints in Long-Term Perspective', in A. Gnasso, E. Intagliata, T. MacMaster and B. Morris (eds), *The Long Seventh Century: Continuity and Discontinuity in an Age of Transition* (forthcoming).

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lxxviii Wormald, 'Hilda, Saint and Scholar', p. 269.

lxxix Wormald, 'Hilda, Saint and Scholar', p. 271.

lxxx S. Foot, *Veiled Women Vol. I. The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 56; cf. J. Nelson, 'Gendering Courts in the Early Medieval West', in J. Smith and L. Brubaker (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185 - 198.

lxxxi Foot, *Veiled Women*, p. 58.

lxxxii Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 23.

lxxxiii S. Hollis, 'The Minster-in-Thanel Foundation Story', *Anglo-Saxon England* 27 (1998), pp. 41-64; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 232-3.

lxxxiv Lucy et al. 'The Burial of a Princess?', p. 136.

lxxxv J. Nelson, J. and A. Rio, A., 'Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe' in J. Bennett and R. Mazo Karras (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 103-17.

lxxxvi Foot, *Veiled Women*, p. 39.

lxxxvii Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 24.

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lxxxviii Welch, 'The Mid Saxon "Final Phase"', p. 273. Sarah Semple has made a similar observation in relation to Anglo-Saxon barrow burials (male and female) in North Wiltshire. These, she argues, were sited at political boundaries or nodal points in the landscape. They were also often associated with ancient monuments that could have provided both 'a physical display of power' and 'divine sanction'. S. Semple, 'Burials and Political Boundaries in the Avebury Region, North Wiltshire', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 12 (Oxford, 2003), pp. 72-91.

lxxxix Scull, *Early Medieval Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket*. Sally Crawford has made the compelling suggestion that this burial in a seemingly abandoned cemetery was 'an act of reclaiming or dedicating the ancestral burial space'; Crawford, 'Votive Deposition, Religion and the Anglo-Saxon Furnished Burial Ritual', p. 95.

xc S. Semple and H. Williams, 'Landmarks of the Dead: Exploring Anglo-Saxon Mortuary Geographies' in M. Clegg Hyer and G. Owen Crocker (eds), *The Material Culture of the Built Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World* (forthcoming); Sherlock, *A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House*.

xcii Innes, 'Keeping It in the Family', pp. 17-19.

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<sup>xcii</sup> J. Gerchow, 'Early Monasteries and Foundations (500-1200)', in J. Hamburger (ed), *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 2008), pp. 13-35, at p. 13.

<sup>xciii</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 18; B. Yorke, 'The Adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Courts to Christianity', in M. Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North. Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD300-1300* (York, 2003), pp. 243-58, at 253-4, 256. See also Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 174.

<sup>xciv</sup> Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition', pp. 265-6.

<sup>xcv</sup> Yorke, 'The Adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Courts to Christianity', p. 255.