

DATA PAPER

ASKED – the Anglo-Saxon Kent Electronic Database

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The dataset covers the burial records from excavation of 3500 people and their associated artefacts from 120 cemetery sites in Kent, southern England, from the period AD 400–700. It was assembled to facilitate the respective PhD research programmes of the authors, using published, unpublished and grey literature sources. It was made publicly available in 2008 via the Archaeology Data Service as a Special Collection and has had regular downloads thereafter by students, academics and international colleagues. The intention is to expand the dataset nationally, with the next upload to take place in 2012 to cover southern England.

Keywords: Anglo-Saxon, Kent, inhumations, artefacts, cemeteries

Funding statement

Both editors received funding for their PhD research from the British Academy 1998-2001. The further updates were carried out under the Leverhulme Trust funded 'Beyond the Tribal Hidage' project 2006-9 (grant number F/07 134/BH).

Context

Spatial Coverage

The modern county of Kent, comprising the early Anglo-Saxon polities of East and West Kent either side of the river Medway, in Southern England, United Kingdom.

- Northern boundary: North Sea coast of Kent (1.439209 N)
- Southern boundary: English Channel coast of Kent (0.001373 S)
- Eastern boundary: English Channel coast of Kent (51.391180 W)
- Western boundary: County boundary of modern Kent with Surrey (50.927824 W)

Temporal Coverage

AD400 – AD750

Methods

Steps

The first step was to create an Access database of relational tables. Brookes was responsible for database development and maintenance. Both editors undertook data capture and input. Data from the project fell into three categories; a decision was made to frame the data around the burial records of individuals, with their associated artefacts as a sub-set. The three categories were Site data; Grave record; Artefacts. Data was entered into this standardised format from publications including grey literature. Original site archives held in museums and field units were used for the unpublished cemetery sites. Artefacts were – wherever possible – physically inspected in archives to ensure completeness of records.

Sampling Strategy

A total sample was used to produce the data, including the creation of new data from the unpublished sites, using established criteria and typologies.

Quality Control

A thesaurus of terms was produced for data entry. Harrington produced a reference manual of typological material to ensure the accurate ascription of type to unpublished artefacts before data entry. All published material was also examined in detail. Geospatial information was checked against existing site gazetteers^{1,2,3} (also National Monuments Record, Kent Sites and Monuments Record). Checking of data was undertaken at regular intervals by both editors, and further revised before the transfer of the deliverables to the ADS on completion of the project.

Constraints

The data was produced jointly. Some difficulties arose when merging the design master and replica datasets (two versions on floppy disks existed in the period 1999–2000). Access to unpublished material was generously given on request for the most part, but some data was embargoed by the data holder.

Dataset Description

Object Name

Anglo-Saxon Kent Electronic Database (ASKED)

Data Type

The data consists entirely of textual and numerical data extracted from secondary (published and unpublished) sources, and primary artefacts.

Format Names and Versions

The original database was Access 97 (8.0). The tables have been saved individually as CSV files. Additional explanatory files are included in PDF (v. 1.4), JPEG and CSV formats.

Creation Date

Data collection was carried out between January 1999 and November 2000, with data entry completed by January 2001. Further additions were made April to May 2008 prior to deposition.

Dataset Creators, Roles and Affiliations

Sue Harrington and Stuart Brookes, UCL Institute of Archaeology

Repository Location

Archaeology Data Service:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1000069>

Publication Date

November 2008

Language

English

License

CC-BY

Reuse Potential

The data is a reference source for early Anglo-Saxon archaeologists and provides a reliable listing that can be augmented for discrete researches. It fulfils the two-fold aim of providing accurate geo-spatial information for burial sites, in addition to a full prosopography of archaeologically-identified individuals from this region. It is a valuable teaching aid and introduction to the data for students. It has also been used for statistical analyses. Users are encouraged to feed back with revisions and additional data that can be added to subsequent editions of the database. New data can be appended to the burial record for each individual, for example osteoarchaeological analysis of disease or qualitative assessments of gender. The next version, covering southern Britain south of the Thames AD 400–700, and re-named 'The Early Anglo-Saxon Census' is due for deposition in 2012, with the eventual aim of total national coverage.

References

1. **Meaney, A** 1964 *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites*. London: George Allen & Unwin;
2. **Richardson, A F** 2000 *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of Kent*. Cardiff: University of Cardiff;
3. **Richardson, A F** 2005 *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of Kent*. Oxford: BAR British Series 391.

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