

**Research and  
Archaeology:  
a Framework for  
the Eastern  
Counties,  
2. research agenda  
and strategy**

**edited by Nigel Brown  
and Jenny Glazebrook**

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**Cover illustration**

Iron Age settlement at Wardy Hill, Cambridgeshire

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# Summary

This regional research framework provides an overview of the archaeological resource in the five eastern counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, and highlights key research issues. The framework is one of a number currently being prepared for various regions in England.

November 1990 saw the publication of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16), and this marked a clear turning point in the organisation of archaeology in England. Previously archaeology had been peripheral to the planning process; the new guidance fundamentally altered this, and archaeological concerns are now an integral part of the planning system, administered by local authority archaeologists advised and assisted by English Heritage. Archaeological work arising from the planning process is now funded by developers and carried out by archaeological contractors operating on a commercial basis. These new patterns of working were augmented by the publication, in 1994, of Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15).

The implementation of these new planning procedures generated a sharp increase in archaeological fieldwork. Increasingly, however, a number of individuals and organisations expressed concerns that much of the work lacked a coherent research focus. In response to these concerns a wide-ranging consultative process carried out within the archaeological discipline led to the publication by English Heritage of *Frameworks for Our Past* (Olivier 1996), a document which set out the need for regional research frameworks.

Local authority archaeologists within the five eastern counties have a long established regional co-ordination group, and this has facilitated the preparation of a research framework for the eastern counties. The format of the framework was suggested by the tripartite structure set out in *Frameworks for Our Past* and comprises:

*Resource assessment*: the current state of knowledge and understanding.

*Research agenda*: gaps in knowledge, potential of resource, research topics.

*Research strategy*: priorities and methods for implementing the agenda.

The framework adopts a chronological format, and is published in two parts. Part 1 comprised the resource assessment and was published in 1997 as *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties 1. resource assessment* (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 3). This volume *Research and*

*Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. research agenda and strategy* (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8), represents Part 2 of the framework. A full description of the processes by which the framework was produced is provided in the introduction to Part 1 and summarised in the introduction to Part 2. Each volume can be used independently, but together they form a single framework and are best regarded as a whole.

The *Resource Assessment* comprises an introduction and seven period-based chapters dealing with Palaeolithic and Mesolithic; Neolithic and Bronze Age; Iron Age; Roman; Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Rural; Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval Urban; Post-Medieval and Later. These papers provide succinct summaries of the evidence available for the region. Each chapter is provided with an extensive bibliography, which enables the reader to access the wider literature. The period divisions in part reflect the expertise available within the region. The split between rural and urban in the post-Roman chapters is purely a matter of convenience in dealing with the large body of data available for these periods. It is recognised that future studies will need to explore the interdependence of towns and the countryside. Similarly the post-medieval and later chapter does not provide a complete account of the complex archaeological data for the recent past; rather it consists of three linked essays on fortifications, industrial archaeology and parks and gardens.

The *Research Agenda* follows the same format as the resource assessment with seven period-based chapters which set out something of the potential of the evidence currently available within the region, together with gaps in knowledge and research topics. In addition to the period contributions, a thematic chapter includes a range of research issues which could usefully be addressed within the region and which cut across one or more of the period divisions. The final chapter comprises a *Research Strategy* which considers priorities for future research and outlines an integrated approach to research within the region, exploring collaborative arrangements and partnerships.

This research framework for the eastern counties will provide a firm foundation for archaeological work within the region, both in generating high quality research and in ensuring that the full potential of the results of PPG15 and PPG16 investigations is developed. Synthesis and interpretation are seen as central to this purpose. However, research is a dynamic process and it is recognised that the present framework is very much a statement at a particular point in time, and will require periodic review, amendment and updating.

‘Every body does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun, and a bag worn with the use of Money has more beautiful proportions than a Vine filled with Grapes. The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way’.

William Blake  
(letter to Dr Trusler 23 August 1799)