

# An Archaeological Resource Assessment of Roman Northamptonshire

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Note: For copyright reasons the figures are currently omitted from the web version of this paper. It is hoped to include them in future versions.

## 1 Introduction

This document represents a brief survey of the current resource available for study of the Roman period in Northamptonshire as part of the East Midlands Regional Research Frameworks Project (Cooper 1999). It includes an outline of the resource as it is currently understood and a statement on issues for a research agenda and strategy for the county.

The Northamptonshire sites and monuments record currently contains 1573 records related to the Roman period, which constitutes 22.5% of the total. A large proportion of the undated cropmark sites are, however, also likely to be Roman and/or Iron Age in date and should be added to this total. In Northamptonshire this period is characterized by intensively occupied and large scale rural landscapes related to expanded agricultural production, regional scale craft and industrial production of pottery and iron, the construction and use of an extensive network of roads, and the foundation and development of many local market and religious centers. Discrete formal ceremonial sites are found in both small towns and rural sites, and detectable burial rites become far more common on both rural and small town sites with later Roman inhumation cemeteries common at larger settlements.

Aerial survey, field walking, geophysical survey, metal detecting and excavation have all made a significant impact on our understanding of the resource for the county in this period:

### *Aerial survey*

A long term programme of aerial survey has provided invaluable extensive landscape coverage on permeable geologies under arable cultivation but results are patchy on the claylands and in areas of permanent pasture and woodland. This produces a resource that is biased in distinctive ways. The National Mapping Programme has completed its work on roughly 70% of the county and alongside other surveys within the region (cf. The National Forest, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire) provides an invaluable systematically recorded resource for the future.

### *Fieldwalking*

Field walking has been widely undertaken in Northamptonshire by both professionals and amateurs, although as is so often the case, few have been fully published. The most notable readily available accounts are the Brigstock survey (Foster 1998), the Raunds Area survey (Parry, forthcoming) and the work of David Hall and Paul Martin, much of which has been assessed by the author (Taylor 1996). The technique is restricted to arable land but the robust nature of much Roman pottery means that sites are usually detectable from the surface and systematic walking has frequently been used ahead of PPG16 related development. Many reports on the latter work are available in the evaluation reports held at NSMR but have not been systematically collated as a survey resource in their own right. An additional group of systematically recorded sites across the middle reaches of the Nene Valley has been collated but awaits publication (Steve Young pers. comm.).

### *Geophysical Survey*

Developer funded evaluations have demonstrated that magnetic susceptibility and magnetometer surveys represent an effective method of rapid ground survey for identifying Roman settlements in many parts of the county though they rapidly lose the ability to define wider landscape boundaries and

track ways away from core occupational areas as magnetic contrasts fall away. Resistivity survey is occasionally used and has had some success in defining the layout of buried stone structures (e.g. at Croughton; CAS 1996).

### *Metal Detecting*

Well recorded amateur detecting has greatly enhanced our understanding of Roman coinage and other metalwork in the county but many extensively detected sites would benefit greatly from the collation of their existing coin lists and non-ferrous assemblages.

### *Excavation*

The county has a very good record of excavation and intensive watching briefs. The Nene Valley in particular has had a long tradition of archaeological intervention especially on villa sites. The area stripping of rural and urban settlements other than villas, however, is surprisingly limited with very few fully reported examples of extensively excavated settlements within the county in the last 20 years. Long standing and recent major excavations at Piddington, Stanwick, Wollaston, Courteenhall and Crick promise to remedy this situation but large areas of the county will still have seen very little modern excavation in comparison to the number and range of Iron Age sites.

The general state of preservation of Northamptonshire's pre-medieval landscape has been estimated by Kidd for the First Millennium BC resource assessment and need not be repeated here. A more detailed account of archaeological potential and likely state of preservation is, however, now available for the probable Roman small towns of the county in the light of the Northamptonshire Extensive Urban Survey.

## **2 Chronology**

The basic framework for a ceramic chronology of the period is available through combining information from a number of existing studies of particular wares (e.g. Howe & Perrin 1980) and the synthesis of larger excavated groups such as those in Towcester (Brown & Alexander 1982; Brown & Woodfield 1983) and immediately outside the county around Milton Keynes (e.g. Marney 1989).

An important area of former concern in dating Late Iron Age and first century coarse wares has recently been addressed by Friendship-Taylor (1998) but work of similar quality does not exist for the different fabric and form traditions found more commonly to the north and north west of the county. The recent publication of a number of backlog reports from the Nene and Welland research committee excavations near Peterborough, however, does now provide good basic data for a reappraisal in the former area.

For later periods, the Upper Nene valley greywares saw much early work through the excavation of kiln sites (e.g. Johnston 1969) and the publication of excavations of shell tempered kilns at Harrold in Bedfordshire (Brown 1972) provides useful backgrounds for understanding these important regional coarse wares, but would benefit from synthetic study in the light of recent excavations. Publication of the major settlement excavations noted above and at Odell in Bedfordshire should help improve the picture of common local coarse ware chronology, though the Welland valley still remains something of a gap, which may only be improved with the publication of rural settlement excavations on the Leicestershire side of the valley (e.g. Empingham, Drayton and Ketton).

Despite these developments it is important that we continue to consider the implications of 'Long waves' (Going 1992) in pottery production and their attendant chronological biases, especially in relation to the dating of settlements of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century from the county. As with many areas there are special problems of constructing late 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century chronology in the absence of reliable late dated artefacts and the possibilities for C-14 dating in this context, especially in relation to environmental data and continuing traditions of inhumation, need to be considered.

Coinage also provides a good chronological source especially for urban and larger rural sites but low levels of coin loss (especially up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) on many rural sites and all first-second century settlements mean it is frequently of less value in this respect.

### **3 An Introduction to the Resource Assessment**

Before summarizing the current archaeological resource thematically it is useful to note some overarching biases in the record for the county. These primarily relate to the impact on our current understanding of the history of archaeological intervention (such as the distribution of excavated sites of the period), biases of AP visibility and coverage and progress in mapping this information. Likewise, the location of areas of extensive and intensive systematic surface examination (e.g. D Hall data, Raunds), and research orientated material culture studies, especially in relation to metal detecting (Mark Curteis' work) all have a distinctive impact upon our understanding of the county's archaeology. The detailed effects of this will become more apparent in the sections that follow but overall the impression is that the lower and middle Nene valley and its flanking hills, the area immediately in and around Northampton and the Ise valley have seen the majority of work. The upper Nene, and the west and north west of the county by contrast have seen proportionately less attention and are still less well understood.

### **4 Themes for the Resource Assessment**

The following sections summarise the quality and quantity of evidence currently available to us for the county when addressing particular themes of research chosen to reflect current concerns within the discipline:

#### **4.1 Settlement Form**

Evidence for the morphology and layout of settlements and the changing architectural traditions used within them are an important resource for studies of changing rural social organisation and status. This includes current evidence for settlement size and nucleation, especially in relation to the development and nature of non-villa rural settlements and urban/roadside settlements during the mid-late Roman period.

The focusing of excavation on the architecture of villas and the conceptual separation of Iron Age from Roman has tended to fragment and bias our understanding of settlement architecture and morphology for the early part of the period. In particular, we have until recently, had a surprisingly poor understanding of the layout and morphology of entire early Roman farmsteads. It is clear, however, that small, enclosed settlements of the Wootton Hill Type were transformed or abandoned during the Late Iron Age - early Roman transition (e.g. Wootton Hill: Jackson 1990; Blackthorn: Williams & McCarthy 1974; Wollaston: Meadows 1996; Earls Barton: Windell 1982, 1983; Irchester: Hall & Nickerson 1967). Where excavation has been sufficiently extensive, it is apparent that settlement was restructured around agglomerated groups of ditched enclosures and trackways predominantly of rectilinear form. These appear to be the norm for rural settlements in the early Roman period but there is a suggestion that these boundaries were ignored or altered to less archaeologically visible form (e.g. hedges) in the later Roman period. Some high status rural sites were enclosed in the later period, usually with walls that often followed earlier boundary divisions but now focused occupation around the main building range (e.g. Piddington: Friendship-Taylor 1999; Stanwick: Neal 1989; Cosgrove; Quinnell 1992; and like Bancroft just outside the county).

Looking at domestic architecture on rural settlements, there appear to be clear distinctions between the traditions for central southern Northamptonshire and those to the northeast. In the former, round houses are common and continue with their gradual transformation into stone alongside the foundation and gradual development of row type villas largely from the Flavian period on (e.g. Friendship-Taylor & Friendship-Taylor 1997; Thorplands: Hunter & Mynard 1977; Overstone: Williams 1976; Brixworth: Woods 1970; Great Weldon: Smith et al 1990; Redlands Farm: Keevill 1992). In the north east of the county the initial continuity of round houses was replaced from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by aisled buildings and villas (e.g. Apethorpe: RCHME 1975; Great Oakley: Meadows 1993a; Wakerley: Jackson & Ambrose 1978), which seem to be part of a tradition extending through South Lincolnshire, North Cambridgeshire and Rutland of which Orton Longueville, Lynch Farm, Barnack, Empingham, Whitwell and West Deeping are part. Unfortunately, modern excavations of villas in the Lower Nene Valley are rare and so little can be said with confidence. It is also clear that other important timber architectural traditions existed, which are poorly understood due to the lack of any specific interest in studying them in the past and their susceptibility to damage by cultivation.

At a larger scale, there are no major towns in the county but a dense pattern of smaller roadside settlements/small towns is reasonably well mapped. Where evidence is good enough many seem to have had Late Iron Age predecessors (e.g. Duston: RCHME 1985; Towcester: Walker 1992; Irchester: Hall & Nickerson 1967; and possibly Ashton) and, or were significant religious as well as economic foci (e.g. Titchmarsh, Brackley/Evenly). The evidence currently available almost always suggests that growth was organic alongside major roads and dendritic patterns of track ways that linked the core of each settlement to their surrounding agricultural landscapes (e.g. Ashton, Titchmarsh, Irchester and Bannaventa). Enclosure, when it happened, was a secondary event that cut across the existing grain of a town's layout and that only protected its core (e.g. Bannaventa: Dix & Taylor 1988; Irchester: Windell 1984; Towcester: Woodfield 1993).

Little is known about the function, development and emerging roles of these nucleated settlements during the Roman period. Few of the towns have had significant modern excavations in their core but those at Ashton constitute an extremely important dataset that requires publication. Excavation on the fringes or extramural areas of Towcester (Brown & Woodfield 1983), Irchester (Windell 1984; Dix et al. 1991; 1994; Dix & Masters 1992; Masters 1997; Meadows 1997) and Bannaventa (Dix and Taylor 1988) and rescue excavations at Titchmarsh (NAU unpublished) and Laxton (Jackson & Tylecote 1988) help to fill out the picture but needs properly published artefactual and paleobiological data for any detailed assessment. A review of all the probable Roman towns, currently underway as part of the county's Extensive Urban Survey, will help to provide an overview of their current potential and future possible research strategies for their investigation.

#### 4.2 Settlement Location and Landscape Organisation.

Summaries of the evidence for settlement patterns, stability and shift in the location of settlement, and the basic layout of intervening land boundaries as a guide to changing patterns of social organization, are key to understanding Roman rural society in the county. Critical to this is some understanding of networks of settlement locally and regionally, rather than just individual sites. How far this is achievable is currently highly varied, but is already possible in some parts of county.

Good information is currently available from the Nene Valley around Raunds and Wollaston and away from the river in a smaller survey around Brigstock, but generally information from the north and west of the county and much of the clay lands is still needed. Both Raunds and Wollaston suggest some localized settlement shift during the late Iron Age or shortly after the conquest within long established bounded landscapes. Excavation on nucleated and dispersed settlements seems to suggest a greater degree of continuity on the former, dating from at least the Late Iron Age. Such settlements are known at Duston and Stanwick though publication of the excavations at both is awaited.

Where excavation has been on a significant scale or carried out to more rigorous modern standards, results indicate that most villas within the county appear to have had late Iron Age predecessors (e.g. Ashley: Taylor & Dix 1985; Brixworth: Woods 1970; Piddington: Friendship-Taylor 1999; Stanwick: Neal 1989; Weekley: Jackson & Dix 1988). Until recently our understanding of non-villa rural settlements has been very poor but landscape orientated excavation and observation strategies as part of large scale developer funded projects, such as those at Wollaston (Meadows 1996 & pers comm.), Crick (Chapman 1995) and Courteenhall (Ovendon-Wilson 1997; Thomas 1998; Buteux pers. comm.), is now improving the situation. Although at an early stage, this work seems to suggest that many of these settlements were relocated from nearby predecessors or were new foundations during the first and second centuries AD as rural settlement was reorganized within an existing bounded landscape.

Thanks to the quality and recent systematic mapping of aerial photography, information is available to assess the morphology of agricultural landscapes in a number of parts of the county. This is continually augmented by large-scale prospection ahead of modern development (e.g. Bramptons/Dallington: Cadman 1995; Ecton: Meadows 1993b; Upton: Buteux & Jones 2000) but the real need is to extend paleoenvironmental studies and link them to other material correlates of changing agricultural practice during this period. In order to develop a balanced and extensive understanding of how landscapes in the region developed, it will be critical to integrate analyses of boundary form and pattern, with environmental, artefactual and geochemical data that informs our understanding of land use. One approach to this issue is currently the subject of work at Crick, Wollaston and Courteenhall.

#### 4.3 Agriculture

The quality of our existing evidence for agricultural practice (as reflected in the structural evidence for periods of innovation, change or stability, alongside the palaeoenvironmental record, and patterns of land division and use) is also currently highly variable. Whilst excavations from the county have provided many dated examples of key changes in the organisation of agriculture, we still have very little detailed work on palaeobotanical and faunal remains of this period, especially away from the major river valleys or small towns/roadside settlements.

Synthesis of the published and unpublished environmental information is currently much needed as part of a regional overview, but it is already clear that few of the existing published excavations from the county contain any such information. Valuable results of preliminary work at Wollaston have demonstrated the presence of a significant area of probable viticulture in the middle Nene valley that awaits further analysis and publication. Likewise the extensive programmes of work at Stanwick villa, Redlands Farm and Courteenhall need to be synthesized before any clearer picture of patterns of environmental change and agricultural regimes is developed for the county. These key projects need then to be augmented by the additional datasets collected as part of smaller briefs and published accounts from other parts of the county (such as that from Croughton, Irchester, Aldwincle and Crick). Critically, however, there is still very little comparable environmental data from areas away from the Nene valley and gathering such information remains a high priority.

Sufficient information is currently available to study the structural development of Roman rural landscapes over significant parts of the Nene valley. Alone, such information tends to produce somewhat descriptive maps, which still often tell us little about the dynamics of agricultural land use in the Roman period. It is imperative if we are to understand the development of Roman agricultural life to develop approaches that integrate structural, environmental and artefactual data into models of land use, agricultural practice and exchange. With this in mind it is important to shift our thinking from an emphasis on solely structural and artefactual evidence to incorporate approaches that assist in the delineation of 'use areas'. In particular, this requires us to think of preliminary survey strategies (field walking, aerial photography, geophysics, geochemistry) and periods of active intervention (microtopography of stripped surfaces, environmental sampling and excavation) as providing highly significant landscape datasets for the study of the agricultural environment. Only when extant projects of this kind are completed and future opportunities for such work taken, will we be better placed to answer key questions about agricultural specialisation, centralization, the separate or similar development of upland, clayland or even potentially formerly wooded areas, and changing patterns of land use through time.

#### 4.4 Craft Production and Industry

The nature and distribution of evidence for pottery and tile production, and the iron working industry are currently areas of real potential in Northamptonshire. A long tradition of work on the major regional Roman pottery industries gives reasonable data sets on the location of production sites, their date and technology, but is still poor on the context of production and the analysis of patterns of supply (see 4.5 below). Critically, earlier site based work on the upper Nene valley pottery kilns (e.g. Johnston 1969) needs synthesizing in order to fill a significant gap in our understanding of coarseware production, supply and use in the region (cf. Fulford & Huddleston 1991, 35 & 39). Furthermore, any opportunity should be taken to study the landscape context of known and suspected kiln sites located between Northampton and Wellingborough in order to better research the organization of the industry. The study of tile production is, if anything, similar but worse and little recent consideration has been given to assessing the link between the two.

A second concern is the continuing absence of a recognized and regularly used fabric series for the county. Though certain common wares are well known the study of chronology, production, and supply is hampered by the lack of comparability between reports. Whenever possible fabric descriptions need to be consistent and preferably cross-referenced with major fabric series (such as the National Roman Fabric collection; Tomber & Dore 1998). This is particularly important in relation to the major excavated groups currently awaiting publication from Stanwick and Ashton, which have the potential to provide major synthetic studies for the Lower and Middle Nene valleys.

Iron production has been the subject of recent synthetic summaries (e.g. Condrón 1997, Schrufer-Kolb 1999) but information on the development and extent of the industry is still very fragmented and in need of upgrading. Earlier field walking surveys have provided good basic datasets on the patterns and extent of iron production sites across the county but much additional information is required if they are to be better understood. Primarily, these surround the need to better date the industry and begin differentiating between the locations of various stages in the process and the scale upon which they occurred. If much, or even a significant proportion of the sites currently known can be demonstrated to date to the Iron Age and, or Roman period this region (which includes neighbouring areas of Rutland and Lincolnshire) is likely to have been one of the most important centers for the industry nationally.

Little is known about the economic and social context of the iron industry despite evidence being available from a number of earlier excavations. Dispersed patterns of iron smelting within the agricultural landscape of the Welland are known from Harringworth (Jackson 1981) and Wakerley (Jackson and Ambrose 1978). Evidence for more concentrated and potentially large scale iron smelting comes from nearby Laxton (Jackson & Tylecote 1988), but the wider layout and function of the settlement is still very poorly understood. Likewise, the unpublished excavations at Ashton strongly suggest that iron smithing was a significant element in the town's development and economy. Unfortunately, however, these have tended to be considered in isolation and a wider research framework that considers patterns of extraction, roasting, smelting, smithing and exchange is much needed if the role of this industry is to be understood.

Currently ample scope exists for assessing other potential industries as little or no work has been done. In particular, possible craft specialization linked to agricultural products such as textiles, horn, leather and bone is in need of examination, especially in relation to the still small number of important excavated groups from the small towns and larger villas.

#### 4.5 Urbanism, Economic Integration and Communications

This is clearly related to the themes above but focuses on the study of markets for agricultural and industrial produce at regional and national level, and numismatic study of evidence from Roman settlements. A generalised understanding of the small towns of the county is not bad but critical evidence from excavations (e.g. coins, metalwork and pottery from Ashton, Titchmarsh and Duston) needs publishing. The NSMR contains much useful numismatic information for the county and in recent years has started to show the excellent results possible for Late Iron Age and Roman ritual foci (Curteis 1996) but needs synthesis for Roman period. Many extensive and important coin lists are available both from metal detecting and excavations on both small town and rural settlements but to date only approximately 15 have been published.

Evidence for the road and riverine networks is also generally relatively good but is highly fragmented as yet and has not been pulled together as part of single study. The transfer of the NSMR to GIS based archive provides an ideal opportunity to assess our current understanding of the overall network from the many small-scale interventions and the aerial photographic evidence plotted as part of the National Mapping Programme. Any such work is important in order to help direct future briefs, especially in the light of renewed recent academic interest in the significance of road and river networks to Roman imperialism (e.g. Laurence 1999). Perhaps surprisingly given the amount of development work on the gravels and alluvial deposits along the Nene there has also been little research pulling together information on riverside installations and communications in the county. Significant evidence is available from a number of existing projects, such as the bridge at Aldwinckle (Jackson & Ambrose 1976), a causeway at Irchester (Keevill & Williams 1995), and probable mills at Redlands Farm (Keevill 1992) and Towcester, Wood Burcote (Turland 1977), and the potential for future discoveries may still be present at a number of locations along the lower reaches of the valley.

#### 4.6 Ritual and Religion

Whilst individual excavations have provided useful information on the more obvious material remains of Romano-British religious sites (e.g. Brigstock: Greenfield 1963, Colleyweston: Knocker 1965) or burials (e.g. Ashton and Laxton) there remains a great deal of work to be done. The possible religious function of some smaller Roman towns/roadside settlements is already suggested from survey evidence

but little is known from excavation. At the heart of this is the continuing need to better examine religious foci within both rural and larger nucleated/small town sites such as Cosgrove, Titchmarsh, Irchester and Towcester. Many probable rural religious sites have come to light through metal detecting, and in the absence of any immediate likelihood of excavation, the analysis of such surface finds groups (preferably under controlled conditions) will remain the best option for their study. Evidence for such sites spanning the Later Iron Age and Roman periods is now common, largely through the efforts of Mark Curteis (pers. comm.), but the establishment of a portable antiquities officer post provides further opportunities for the better recording and synthesis of this growing body of information.

Much excavated evidence is already available for other forms of settlement but a strong tendency to overlook evidence for ritual practice in such contexts (by contrast with Iron Age archaeology) has led to a potentially important gap in research. That such structured deposits did occur in domestic contexts is ably demonstrated by the articulated animal deposits discovered at Quinton (Friendship-Taylor 1974; 1979), and needs to be considered in all future excavation projects on such sites.

Evidence for specific religious traditions is somewhat limited by the lack of modern excavation on such sites but the discovery of decorated lead tanks at Ashton and Rushton (as well as the material from Durobrivae just beyond the county) may well suggest the presence of significant late Roman Christian communities in the county.

Rural burials are sparse in number on any one site but commonly present and recent reviews of this phenomenon (Pearce 1999; Taylor in prep.) suggest some significant patterns in burial location and tradition. The excellent data from Ashton, where both substantial cemetery and boundary burial groups are recorded, alongside limited work at Laxton, provide a key opportunity to better understand later Roman urban traditions and compare and contrast urban-rural relationships with the traditions noted above.

## **5 Conclusion; Some suggested future research themes and priorities**

Northamptonshire generally has a wealth of information on the Roman period. Despite this the past tendency toward site based and orientated work means that there are still of course many inadequacies with the existing data. Clearly the challenge for projects such as this is not only to reiterate gaps in our knowledge but to initiate new agendas that will inform future work in the region. In the sections below a few preliminary remarks are made on obvious gaps in our knowledge and possible objectives for the immediate future based on current concerns within the subject. It is intended as no more than an initial list of suggestions for discussion at this stage but critically is based upon an approach that focuses on the need to develop wider research questions on the nature of indigenous society within the region and its interaction with Roman imperialism.

### **5.1 Context of conquest and geography of administration**

A primary concern must be to work towards a better knowledge of the social and economic structure of Late Iron Age society in the county, especially given the suggestion that it lay towards the intersection of three major tribal societies (cf. Sandy's summary and Curteis 1996). Linked to this is the need to reconsider evidence for military intervention and occupation during and shortly after period of conquest. The impression currently is that it was a very limited and transitional phase with the best evidence lying outside the county. If this is so it is clear that we should look to other aspects of early cultural geography of the county that relate to subsequent reorganisation of the countryside and the development of local centres, especially in the landscapes of the first century AD. Given this, the direction, method and date of construction of the main road networks in relation to pre-existing landscape, the direction of broader military strategy and the establishment of Civitas centres (there are none in county) needs work. The importance of this network in structuring the subsequent development of roadside settlements and small towns is still relatively poorly understood but work in other provinces is starting to establish its ideological and practical significance to the fabric of Roman imperial administration.

Specific recommendations worth considering in this regard may therefore be:

- Ensure the collation, through GIS, of information from areas of intensive investigation to provide basis for integrated landscape studies that study changing settlement location and form, and patterns of land use in key blocks across county such as Raunds, Crick, Wollaston, and Courteenhall from Iron Age to Early-medieval period.
- Encourage desk-based re-evaluation of other areas of intensive and extensive survey information such as that from D Hall or Foster around Brigstock, and identify areas for potential landscape study elsewhere in county.
- Establish basic criteria for archiving information from new field survey and metal detecting about scatter location, date and extent.
- Investigate analytical approaches to the interpretation of the NMP survey data for the county as part of regional overview.
- Current small towns survey provides good context for revaluation of major nucleated settlements from the county in their regional context but there is a clear need for the publication of the major excavations at Ashton alongside the minor excavations and detailed surveys at Titchmarsh, Irchester, Duston and Towcester.
- Collate information on road networks for county from NMP and SMR within a GIS in order to provide basic up to date understanding of the former communications network of the county.

## 5.2 Rural Society and Economy

Though we have a tremendous amount of evidence it is still largely fragmented. In order to understand continuity and change in agricultural society need to produce better integrated overall strategy, especially where intensive recent work allows. Particularly useful are approaches that treat agricultural practice as a social strategy through integrated study of landscape organisation (see above) and paleoenvironmental analysis (van der Veen & O'Connor 1998). The chronic shortage of published/completed botanical and faunal reports from Roman sites in the county represents a major handicap here. Related to this is a particular need to better understand the cultural landscapes of craft/industrial production as part of local rural settlement practice (e.g. Wakerley) or specialised/nucleated communities (e.g. Laxton). In order to better understand the regional context for variability in local strategies it is important to look at the role and status of secondary nucleated settlements and larger villas in relation to the development of their neighbouring agricultural landscapes and the evidence for a provincial economic system built around wider communication networks and administrative centres.

Specific recommendations here might mirror some of those above but additional considerations could be:

- The prioritisation of paleoenvironmental analysis in larger project briefs, especially aimed at identifying when, where and why agricultural strategies were altered. The information from these studies being maximised by integration with the evidence for changing landscape architecture and settlement produced through GIS based analysis (5.1 above).
- Renew efforts to evaluate upper and lower Nene valley pottery industries in relation to their settlement/landscape context. Better identify source areas for other significant industries such as Beds shell tempered, and grog-tempered pottery. Work in New Forest/Alice Holt demonstrated very valuable results obtainable by taking a landscape orientated approach to such an industry.
- Link fabric analyses and kiln location studies regionally to establish the degree of independence or link between the pottery and tile industries and better assess supply patterns.
- Essential to audit information for the iron industry from county and establish areas where significant blocks of landscape may still survive to provide contextual study of the industry (e.g Laxton/Rockingham Forest and Higham Ferrers/Bedfordshire border areas). Database for former is being worked on (Schrüfer-Kolb pers. comm.) and differentiates between roasting, smelting and smithing, but local knowledge of state of preservation and context is often missing from this information.
- Key to understanding long-term changes in iron industry also lies in better chronology for production, based on routine scientific dating when sites assessed. Similar studies in East Yorkshire have established large scale of production in Iron Age that would otherwise have been undated.



- The general absence of work on stone industry is also a possible area for consideration that to my knowledge is little understood. May be worth considering tile and stone provenance work together as evidence for organisation of building practice.
- Synthetic approach to the study of coin diagrams from major and minor sites is clearly feasible in county thanks to current approach to recording. Work by Reece (1995) and Davies & Gregory (1991) in East Anglia shows the potential of such approaches and if not already underway should be considered.
- The auditing of information regarding roads in the county would provide ideal opportunity to produce coverage on SMR GIS that gives important geographical context to patterns of settlement, production and exchange noted in any of studies above.
- Collate and assess significance and pattern of architectural forms present - especially in relation to development of timber and masonry based traditions on rural settlements.

### 5.3 Religion, Social Status and Identity

Much recent work on Iron and Roman Britain has pointed to the evidence for the construction and maintenance of distinct regional identities, often at varying scales. Future work in the county would do well to incorporate this thinking in relation to the impact of incorporation within the Roman Empire. In this respect, new projects would benefit from considering settlement architecture, for example, as possible expressions of identity and status through time and space (e.g. a possible contrast between communities in the north east of county and those in the central south). Buildings clearly have practical functions but distinctive regional and chronological patterns are often caused by important social differences, an insight long recognized in architectural studies of later periods. Equally, portable material culture and identity has received much recent attention for the Late Iron Age (e.g. Curteis 1996; Jackson & Dix 1988) but the period boundary sees the disappearance of interest in these possibly significant local differences. Such considerations are also valuable in considering marked difference between nucleated/rural settlement assemblages as evidence for variation in social status. Likewise, the role of long term ritual traditions and religion in particular is important in this context, and consideration of the possibility of structured deposition and animal burial, the ritual associations of architecture, and human rural and boundary burial may all prove very fruitful.

Many of the specific recommendations are apparent from the comments above but the following provide some additional points for discussion:

- Future excavations of rural settlements in particular may benefit from slight shift away from their perception as purely economic/functional institutions to look at possibility that structures and material culture use may relate to issues of social identity or status. Such an awareness has helped reinvigorate study of IA settlement.
- Any work that may help in understanding the context for the establishment of LIA and Roman shrines in county will help to understand shift in ritual focus widely seen away from settlement based activity to focus on places of special significance and their relationship to the LIA cultural/political landscape. Important here, given early/fragmentary nature of much of evidence from county so far.
- Assess the extent to which small towns and other nucleated roadside settlements may have been founded on IA predecessors or as ritual centres. Most are considered in terms of their economic and social context but work nationally on circumstances and purpose of their foundation is still scarce.
- Many burials recorded in archival records and in course of regular development excavations but rarely in significant numbers. Tendency to research cemetery burial has overlooked significant numbers now known from across county as a whole. Now becoming a focus of research with important implications about rural religious belief and burial tradition.
- Extensively excavated late Roman cemeteries from contexts outside the major towns are rare But Ashton data plus lesser groups from other sites eg Laxton, Lynch Farm, provide opportunity to consider later urban burial traditions in their widest context, and should be a priority.

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