

# **An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda for the Roman Period in the East Midlands**

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This document comprises a draft research agenda for the Roman period in the East Midlands. It is intended as a discussion document that incorporates extracts that are included in the broader resource assessment and research agenda document for stage 2. It draws on the results of the resource assessments provided for a seminar at County Hall, Leicester (Bishop; Taylor, Liddle; Myers; Bennett) and available as draft chapters on the web ([WWW.le.ac.uk/archaeology](http://WWW.le.ac.uk/archaeology)).

## **1 Introduction**

The wealth and sheer diversity of Roman period archaeological remains in the East Midlands make the region a significant area for the study of the history of Roman Britain. Despite a number of gaps in our knowledge and a general lack of synthesis, there has been sufficient survey and excavation work to propose an agenda for the future that can be challenged through further work. Certain characteristics of the region in the Roman period place it in an important position to answer much wider issues about the development of the province and throughout this paper reference has been made to the position of the East Midlands in the wider context of Roman Britain. Key among these characteristics is that:

- On the one hand the region clearly incorporates a wide range of landscapes that in many respects reflect much of the diversity of southern and central England. From the wetlands of Lincolnshire and the Humber, to the major valleys of the rivers Witham, Trent, Soar, Welland and Nene to the uplands, claylands and sandstones of the midlands there is a remarkable degree of diversity.
- The region also incorporates the likely extent of one of Late Iron Age Britain's major social polities which subsequently formed one of its larger civitates, namely the Civitas Corieltauvorum and at this level the region constitutes a useful focus for study of the Roman period in its own right.
- This superficial unity, however, masks the fact that within the development of the Roman province the region incorporates a key zone of transition between the developed civilian dominated and classicizing landscapes of towns, roadside settlements, villas and other rural settlements of the south and east and the zone of long term military occupation in which we see the continuing development of indigenous Iron Age traditions of settlement in the north and west. How and why this transition is evident is a key area of enquiry that has important implications for the study of Roman Britain as a whole and its development within the Empire.

These key issues can be seen to run through many different aspects of the archaeology of the period in the region but the following sections first summarise the strengths and weaknesses of our current knowledge before introducing potential research themes for the

future. Clearly other themes could and should be considered but for the purposes of this paper only some key broad issues have been outlined.

## 1.1 The Resource

Archaeological evidence for the Roman period is both extensive and abundant across the East Midlands. In places the remains are densely distributed, of high quality and materially rich. Elsewhere, however, evidence is sparse and remains very poorly understood. Roman period records constitute between 8 and 22% of the entire archaeological resource on the county SMRs for the region but the quality and accessibility of much of this information is variable.

The Sites and Monuments Records for the region currently contain over 6000 records related to the Roman period. Whilst this constitutes a large proportion of the total it is likely to under represent the true figure as a significant number if not the majority of undated cropmark sites recorded are also likely to be Roman and/or Iron Age in date. Throughout the region the period is characterized by intensively occupied and extensive rural landscapes related to expanded agricultural production, regional scale craft and industrial production of pottery, salt and iron, the construction and use of an extensive network of roads, and the foundation and development of many local market and religious centres. Discrete formal ceremonial sites are found in both urban and rural locales, and detectable burial rites become far more common on both rural and town sites with later Roman inhumation cemeteries common at larger settlements.

Before outlining the current archaeological resource under a series of thematic headings below it is useful to note some overarching biases in the record for the region. 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) and biases in aerial photographic visibility and coverage and progress in mapping this information. Likewise, the location of areas of extensive and intensive systematic surface survey and research orientated material culture studies, especially in relation to metal detecting (e.g. Mark Curteis' work and the portable antiquities scheme) have all had a distinctive impact upon our understanding of the region's archaeology. The detailed effects of this will become more apparent in the sections that follow but in all the impression is that in the north and west of the region we have a reasonable overview of the military history of the period but know little in detail about the development of settlement and landscape outside one or two well surveyed areas. Further south survey evidence and an increasing body of excavations have the scope to provide a good overview of the development of the main river valleys of the region in the Roman period. For this to happen, however, much of this work needs to be synthesised either in outline or through full publication of key datasets.

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

- **Aerial survey:** A long tradition of aerial survey by both regional and national flyers such as Pickering, Foard and Riley has provided invaluable extensive landscape

coverage primarily on permeable geologies under arable cultivation. Results on the claylands and in areas of improved pasture and woodland, however, are patchy. This has produced a resource that is biased in distinctive and now reasonably well-defined ways. The National Mapping Programme has completed the transcription and mapping of photographs over roughly 60% of the region with surveys of the National Forest (MacLeod 1995), Nottinghamshire (RCHME 1999), Northamptonshire (Deegan in prep.) and Lincolnshire except the fenland (Bewley 1998) substantially or wholly completed. The publication of this work and access to its results in archive will provide an invaluable systematically recorded resource for the future analysis of the development of settlements, field systems and communications across the region as a whole. At present this region has a more complete resource in this regard than any other in England.

- **Field survey:** Field walking has been widely undertaken in a number of areas across the region by both professionals and amateurs alike. Unfortunately, as is so often the case, few of these surveys have been fully published or their archives made readily accessible. Furthermore, this resource is understandably biased towards predominantly arable, parts of the region such as Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, lower lying areas of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. Notable readily available accounts can be considered to work at two scales - extensive, regional or sub-regional surveys and intensive local surveys. Significant examples of the former are the work of David Hall and Paul Martin, much of which has been assessed by the author (Taylor 1996; forthcoming) in Northamptonshire, the Fenland and Humber wetlands surveys in Lincolnshire (Hallam 1970; Hayes & Lane 1992; Van der Noort & Ellis 1997; 1998), the Medbourne Survey (Liddle 1994), the Trent Valley Survey in Nottinghamshire (Knight & Howard 1994) and synthesis of field survey evidence of upland areas in Derbyshire on the magnesian limestone (Hart 1981) and in the Peak district (Makepeace 1998). Smaller scale more intensive surveys such as the Brigstock survey (Foster 1998), the Raunds Area survey (Parry 1994; forthcoming), the Roystone Grange survey (Hodges 1991) and survey of Ropsley and Humby (Lane 1995) have also been undertaken. Additional groups of systematically recorded sites across extensive blocks of landscape in the region, especially in Leicestershire and the middle reaches of the Nene Valley in Northamptonshire have been collated but await publication.

The technique is restricted to arable land but the robust nature of much Roman pottery means that sites are frequently detectable from the surface and systematic walking has regularly been used ahead of PPG16 related development. Many examples of the latter are available in evaluation reports held within SMRs across the region but have not been systematically collated as a survey resource in their own right despite increasing consistency in methodology and reporting of the results.

- **Geophysical Survey:** Developer funded evaluations have demonstrated that magnetic susceptibility and magnetometer surveys represent an effective method of rapid ground survey for the identification Roman settlements over many soil types

and geologies across the region 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 associated with villas or other primarily later Roman buildings (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 region but many extensively detected sites would benefit greatly from the collation of their existing coin lists and non-ferrous assemblages. The systematic identification and recording of metalwork from Roman sites represents a potentially very valuable source of information about their chronology and possible status. The advantages of such an approach have been demonstrated in East Anglia (e.g. Gregory & Davies 1991) and recently locally by Curteis at Titchmarsh (Curteis *et al* 2000). The employment of portable antiquities officers in the region as recently for Northamptonshire may provide greater scope for the development of this resource in future.
- ***Excavation:*** The region has a highly variable record of excavation and intensive watching briefs. Some areas such as the Nene Valley have had a long tradition of archaeological intervention especially on villa sites. In some areas such as Lincolnshire, the majority of significant scale excavations are of antiquarian or early-mid twentieth century date and thus of limited use for many questions we might wish to ask today. Furthermore, the area stripping of rural and urban settlements other than villas has been surprisingly limited with very few fully reported examples of extensively excavated settlements within the region in the last 20 years. A tendency among Roman period archaeologists to focus on the architecture of buildings has led to a situation in which understanding of the broader settlement context of rural sites in particular is poor and notably worse than that achieved for Iron Age settlement. Long standing and recent major excavations on rural settlements at for example Dunstons Clump (Garton 1987), Rampton (Knight 2000), West Deeping, Piddington (Friendship-Taylor 1999), Stanwick (Neal 1989), Wollaston (Meadows 1996), Courteenhall (Ovendon-Wilson 1997; Thomas 1998) and Crick (Chapman 1995) promise to remedy this situation in and around the major river valleys of the region but large areas elsewhere have still seen very little modern excavation. In part this is a consequence of familiar issues such as the visibility of the archaeological record, the history of archaeological interest, the scale and intensity of modern development and the extent of arable cultivation.

It is, however, noticeable that the under representation of Roman rural settlement evidence through excavation has probably been further exacerbated by three further factors. First, a long tradition of focusing on Roman military history in the north and west of the region (reflecting a wider trend nationally as one moves north) has tended to leave rural settlement as a less studied backdrop to the analysis of forts and their vici. Second, has been the perhaps surprising failure of PPG16 related excavations as a follow up to evaluation to focus on the area stripping of Roman rural settlements. This may in part be because of the difficulty in defining the nature and

extent of occupation on Roman sites when encountered by evaluation trenching, especially where evidence for domestic structures is absent or has been lost. Finally, is the continuing and wider spread problem noted above of the tendency in Roman archaeology to focus on the materially rich or more highly visible sites or parts of sites to the detriment of excavation of the 'ordinary'.

## 1.2 Chronology

Understanding the development of society in Roman Britain within the East Midlands is ultimately dependent upon our ability to construct and use a sound chronological framework. The basic chronological frameworks for the Roman period in England are now reasonably well developed but much local variability in terminology and dating practice has led to problems of comparability in wider regional syntheses. This is due to several factors, including our dependency on the presence of well dated ceramic 'finewares', the paucity or lack of chronological certainty in the use of metalwork finds, a tendency to attempt to tie inherently 'fuzzy' archaeological dates to specific historical events and our continuing unwillingness to use methods of absolute dating in areas or periods where conventional typological methods are of doubtful or no use.

In the majority of cases date brackets for phases of activity or excavated sites are still dependent upon a long developed but in places still uncertain chronological framework for fine and coarse ceramics. Most ceramics are ultimately dated through association with better-dated material located in historically dated contexts primarily on the continent. Dating through the use of other forms of material culture and in particular metalwork is problematic, partly because of the longevity of circulation possible for coinage and other precious metalwork noted by Reece (1995) and others but increasingly because the assumptions and associations used to date some forms of metalwork such as brooches are themselves in dispute (cf. Haselgrove et al forthcoming). Confusion is also still often caused by a tendency to try to force our necessarily loose dating brackets for a particular group or phase into an inappropriately tight chronological horizon in order to associate it with specific historical developments. In addition to presenting a misleadingly precise view of events this has the tendency to lead to a situation in which different archaeologists use a plethora of dating terms from a specific historical date (e.g. c. AD130), to the reigns of individual emperors (e.g. Hadrianic) to broader terms to the nearest half or full century (e.g. mid second century) thus hindering comparison. Finally, it is important that we learn to appreciate that although Roman archaeology in Britain is dealing in the strictest sense with a relatively short lived historical period there are places and periods in which the techniques and approaches of prehistoric archaeology to the construction of chronologies are appropriate. This is evidently the case when dealing with upland or other environments within the region where evidence for occupation may be short lived or poor in dateable material culture. It is not always sufficient to say that the presence of a small quantity of dateable Roman material culture is sufficient to date activity at a site. If we do we are in danger of confusing the presence of a horizon of Roman material culture with a chronological period of activity (the first to fourth centuries AD).

For the purposes of this assessment the Roman period is generally considered as two broad phases in order to structure the discussion and to pull out broad trends in developments over time. These phases cover the early Roman period from the initial conquest of the region up to the end of the second century AD and the later Roman period from the third century AD to the late fourth-early fifth century AD. They do not correspond with clear discernible changes in the archaeological record and much of the data for the later second and third centuries cannot be so easily divided but is sufficient for the purpose of this review where the intention is to pull together the evidence into a broad overview of the region.

A basic framework for a ceramic chronology of the period is available for most parts of the region through combining information from a number of existing studies of particular wares (e.g. Howe & Perrin 1980 for lower Nene Valley wares) and the synthesis of larger excavated groups such as those in Towcester (Brown & Alexander 1982; Brown & Woodfield 1983), Leicester (Connor & Buckley 1999) and Lincoln (Colyer *et al* 1999; Jones 2002). On occasion these can be augmented by referring to more general corpora nationally or immediately outside the region as around Milton Keynes (e.g. Marney 1989).

For the early Roman period an important area of former concern in dating Late Iron Age and first century coarse wares from the south of the region 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 region. In particular, much work still needs to be done on pulling together the grog and shell gritted wares common in south Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire and their chronological development. The recent publication of a number of backlog reports from the Nene and Welland research committee excavations near Peterborough (e.g. Mackreth 1996) and the excavations around Empingham in Rutland (Cooper 2000), however, do now provide good basic data for a reappraisal of the southern end of this area.

In the later Roman period, the absence of reliably and closely dated finewares from many areas hampers the analysis of settlement history. The especially conservative development of pottery traditions in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire from the mid second to fourth centuries AD make dating difficult in the absence of imported or wider specialised regional products. Problems in dating activity over much of the west and north of this region in the later Roman period are exacerbated by the absence of published corpora for the Mancetter-Hartshill industry on the Warwickshire-Leicestershire border, later Nene Valley products, the pottery from the Swanpool kilns and Derbyshire wares.

The Upper Nene valley grey wares 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; Brown 1994) provides useful backgrounds for understanding these important coarse wares in the south of the region but both would benefit from synthetic study in the light of recent excavations. The development of such corpora is currently limited for some areas until the publication of the major settlement excavations noted above and occasionally variable standards in their reporting. All these issues have recently been addressed in some detail by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (Willis 1997) and thus need not be repeated here.

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. 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 late Roman 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.

## **2 The Resource Assessment**

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

### **2.1 Forts and the Military**

In looking at evidence for the military history of the region a broad northwest: southeast divide is soon apparent. South and east of a zone following the Trent Valley and Fosse Way, evidence for Roman military installations and activity is sparse and where present largely of short duration. To the north and west, however, a different record emerges, which demonstrates extensive and sometimes long lived (if intermittent) military occupation. At present our knowledge of the overall distribution of military sites is reasonably good and has clearly been improved by increased use of aerial photographic and geophysical survey in the last 20 years. In outline these discoveries have enabled us to be confident of the twofold division noted above but much still needs to be done if we are to understand the process of the militarisation and demilitarisation of the landscapes of the region.

Excavation on the majority of known sites in Derbyshire suggests a phase of initial militarisation in the AD50s with the construction and occupation of forts at Strutts Park west of the Derwent at Derby, and Chesterfield (CARC 1973; Lane 1973; Courtney 1975; Ellis 1989) followed by further fortifications and deployments during the 70s with a new base at Little Chester in Derby (Brassington 1967, 1982a; 1982b; 1993; 1996; 1997; Dool & Wheeler 1985; Todd 1967; Webster 1961; Williams 1991), Brough on Noe (Bartlett 1959; 1960; Dearne 1993; Jones & Thompson 1965; Jones et al. 1966; Jones & Wild 1968; 1970; Richmond 1938), and Melandra (Bruton 1907). Less securely dated sites are the possible fortlets at Castle Hill Camp (Kay 1961) Sawley (Todd 1967b) and Highstones (Hart 1981).

Moving into north and west Nottinghamshire the distribution of this network of early forts, marching camps and vexillation fortresses can be said to be relatively well known thanks

partly to aerial photography. The chronology and nature of its construction, use and abandonment, however, is far less well understood. Military installations are known at Broxtowe, Calverton (Welfare & Swan 1995), Farnsfield (Riley 1977; Swarbrick & Turner 1982), Osmanthorpe (Bishop & Freeman 1993), Gleadthorpe, possibly Scaftworth (Page 1906; Bartlett & Riley 1958; van der Noort & Ellis. 1997) and Littleborough (Wade & Ford 1973). Only Osmanthorpe, a Neronian fortress occupied for only a short time is securely dated through modern excavation. Taken alongside the limited information from finds and trial excavations at Broxtowe and Littleborough, however, it seems that the majority of sites in this area were abandoned after the AD70s.

To the east along the Trent Valley in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire first century forts have long been claimed to exist at the location of each of the subsequent roadside settlements along the Fosse Way at Margidunum, Ad Pontem, Crococalana and Vernemetum. Evidence for conquest period or indeed later forts at these sites, however, is limited. The 1963 and 1965 excavations at Thorpe by Newark (Ad Pontem) do indicate the presence of a first century fort (Forcey 1994) thought to have been slighted by the AD70s, but elsewhere the evidence is largely predicated upon expectation rather than evidence. Certain forts do exist at Holme (JRS 1961, 120), Marton (Worrell 1997) and Newton on Trent but none are as yet well dated.

In the south and east of the region by contrast, there are far fewer definite examples of first century military installations and the suggestion that they acted as the spur to the development of roadside and urban settlements is largely unsupported. An assumed early fort at Lincoln is still to be found and the evidence for an early fort at Leicester is still slight (Clay & Mellor 1985). This said, however, a fortress was clearly established at Lincoln by the AD60s but had become a Colonia by AD96 (Jones 1988). There is also some support for a first century fort at Ancaster (Todd 1981) though corroborative evidence from recent further evaluations was lacking (Hirst in prep.) and possibly some indication from aerial photography of a site at Owmbly. Taken alongside the known sites at Great Casterton (Todd 1968), Longthorpe (Frere & St Joseph 1974; Dannell & Wild 1987) and Water Newton (Mackreth 1995) and the evidence for possible military buildings at Old Winteringham (Whitwell 1995) this may suggest a further string of forts overseeing the route north from Godmanchester along Ermine street to Lincoln and the Humber in the first century AD and possibly primarily in the Neronian and Flavian periods.

Other possible sites have been noted at Wigston Parva (Liddle 1995) in Leicestershire and Kirmington in Lincolnshire (Jones & Whitwell 1991) though the latter may be an example of later Roman fortification of a roadside settlement. Despite numerous attempts to find early military sites associated with roadside settlements and at key strategic locations elsewhere in the south of the region no definite examples have been recorded in Northamptonshire.

Archaeological evidence for military occupation or more accurately military installations largely comes to an end by the end of the first century AD over most of the region and certainly by the mid-second century. The absence of excavation on any significant scale on many of the sites in Nottinghamshire, however, should caution against the idea that Brough in

Derbyshire is necessarily the only site reoccupied in the mid-late second century and in continuous use until the fourth century.

## 2.2 Settlement

Settlements of the Roman period are extremely numerous across the region but as is often the case are very unevenly distributed and usually poorly understood. The patterns in the region broadly follow trends seen nationally (Taylor forthcoming) and are largely affected by the factors of archaeological visibility and history of research noted above.

*Distribution* - broadly, settlement evidence across the region can be considered to vary in two major ways. On the one hand our understanding of the evidence for rural settlement can be considered to vary according to a broad upland lowland divide as a consequence of differences in the survival, visibility and methods of recording of the archaeological evidence. On the other, there are significant archaeological differences in the nature and pattern of the evidence itself that seem to reflect variation in the development of rural society in different parts of the region. Nowhere are these differences more apparent than in Derbyshire where patterns of historic land use in upland areas have left a potentially rich record of relatively well-preserved upstanding earthworks of settlement and field systems. Both Hart's (1981) and Makepeace's (1998) surveys, however, have so far succeeded primarily in locating settlements and describing their more obvious visual characteristics and further work investigating their chronological and agricultural development in detail is needed. Outside the upland zone the evidence for settlement is of a different kind in which denuded arable landscapes reveal sites in the form of crop marks and artefact scatters. In areas such as the Coal measures and clays to the south of the uplands where aerial photography is rarely successful, very little is known, although recent field walking by local societies such as the Ockbrook and Borrowash Historical Society has shown that these landscapes were densely settled in the Roman period.

For many years the same could have been said of the claylands of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire but sustained campaigns of local fieldwork largely by or in conjunction with amateur societies has radically altered our understanding of the density and nature of Roman settlement over the last 25 years (Liddle 1995; forthcoming; Hall 1985; Taylor 1996; Bowman 1995). The extent and sheer quantity of this information, though inevitably limited in detail, represents a very important resource for the study of changing rural settlement patterns that urgently needs to be synthesised and more widely disseminated.

Where aerial photographic evidence is good and importantly where it has already been systematically assessed and plotted through the NMP evidence for Roman settlement patterns is again very good and accessible for future research. In Nottinghamshire, the Trent Valley, the gravels of the Smite/Devon Valley and the Sherwood sandstones have all produced extensive and detailed cropmark evidence for Iron Age and Roman settlement and field systems (RCHME 1999). Likewise the lighter well drained soils over the Lincoln edge, Limestone Heath and Chalk Wolds in Lincolnshire show the extent and distribution of Roman settlement well (Bewley 1998). In Lincolnshire, however, there appears to have been less of a tradition of local field walking both here and in the Clay Vale where aerial

photography is of limited value. Consequently, knowledge of Roman rural settlement in this area is still limited although gradually being filled out by metal detecting reports and evaluations as part of PPG16 related developments.

Zones within the region that have been subject to both sustained aerial survey, field walking and excavation are rare but do exist and constitute a very valuable resource for the study of rural settlement development at a detailed local or micro-regional level. Examples include several parts of the Middle and Lower Nene Valley (Meadows 1996; Parry 1994; forthcoming), the Lower Welland Valley (e.g. Cooper 2001) and increasingly parts of the Trent (Knight & Howard 1994).

***Morphology & Architecture*** - 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 nucleated urban/roadside settlements during the mid-late Roman period. The past focus of excavation on the architecture of villas and the conceptual separation of Iron Age from Roman have 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.

As a consequence our understanding of the main forms both chronologically and spatially of rural settlement in particular are still poor but some trends are becoming apparent. It is clear that small enclosed settlements like those at Holme Pierrepont (O'Brien 1979), Gamston (Knight 1992), Dunstons Clump (Garton 1987), Wootton Hill (Jackson 1990), Woolaston (Meadows 1996) and Earls Barton (Windell 1982; 1983) are a common feature of many of the later Iron age to early Roman landscapes of the region that represent a continuation of traditions of rural settlement from the former. The degree to which this tradition is the dominant one in the Early Roman period in the region though is still uncertain. Alongside these simple farmsteads are found groups of individual rectilinear enclosures and enclosure complexes arrayed alongside long distance and local tracks and droveways. Though not as common as the simple enclosed settlements in some areas they appear to have been a significant settlement form in many of the extensive and highly structured agricultural landscapes of the main river valleys of the region in places such as Ferry Farm, Nottinghamshire (RCHME 1999) and Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (OAU 2002).

To the north and west the results of the survey work noted above are beginning to draw out major distinctions in the nature and materiality of rural settlements in different parts of Derbyshire that is largely though not entirely reflected in the upland lowland divide. In lowland areas of the south and east of the region rural settlements often utilise significant quantities of Roman material culture and some may be considered small villas in relation to their architectural development though as yet little is known of their overall morphology. In the uplands and western areas of the region by contrast settlement traditions appear to retain the characteristics of pre-existing Iron Age farms (Barnatt & Smith 1997) often simple enclosed forms associated with local field systems.

In the few cases across the region where excavation has been sufficiently extensive, it is apparent that rural settlement was often restructured around agglomerated groups of ditched enclosures and trackways predominantly of rectilinear form from the Late Iron Age and up to the second century AD. This appears to be a common development 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 higher status rural sites were enclosed in the later Roman period, usually with walls and or ditches 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; Lockington, Ripper 1998, Butler 1998; Cromwell, Whimster 1989; Barton in Fabis, RCHME 1999).

**Architecture** - Looking at domestic architecture on rural settlements, there appear to be a range of clear distinctions between the traditions found in central and southern parts of the region from those to the northeast in Lincolnshire and eastern Nottinghamshire and the northwest in western Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. These differences are partly in form but more commonly in the emphasis placed on the use of particular architectural traditions in different areas.

In southern and central Northamptonshire round houses are common and continue to be used until 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 region, in Rutland, southern and central Lincolnshire and parts of southern Nottinghamshire the initial continuity of round houses was replaced from the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD century by aisled buildings and villas (e.g. Apethorpe: RCHME 1975; Great Oakley: Meadows 1993a; Wakerley: Jackson & Ambrose 1978, Norton Disney, Oswald & Buxton 1937; Empingham, Cooper 2001; Whitwell, Todd 1981; Little Hay Grange, Palfreyman 2001). Here too row type villas develop during the second to fourth centuries, sometimes alongside aisled buildings (e.g. Norton Disney, Mansfield Woodhouse Oswald 1949, and Winterton, Stead 1976; Goodburn 1978). A smaller number of larger rural settlements primarily found in the major river valleys of the region develop into substantial winged corridor or courtyard type villas. Unfortunately, modern excavations of villas in the region are relatively rare and so little can be said with confidence about the development of their plans in detail. This is particularly problematic in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire where many of the villa excavations are of antiquarian or early twentieth century date. 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.

**Nucleated settlement (Roadside Settlement, Small Towns and Vici)** - At a larger scale, a relatively dense pattern of smaller roadside settlements/small towns is reasonably well mapped across the region. Much work needs to be done to better collate the evidence

for the overall pattern of these sites but at present there appears to be a reasonable distinction between sites in the south and east of the region, where roadside settlement/small towns are densely and evenly spread and often grew to substantial sized civil settlements and the zone to the north and west of the Trent where civil settlements never grew to any size or whose history of occupation was closely tied to the fortunes of neighbouring military communities.

Where evidence is good enough many if not the majority of roadside settlements in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire along the Fosse Way seem to have had Late Iron Age predecessors (e.g. Duston: RCHME 1985; Dragonby, May 1996; Towcester: Walker 1992; Irchester: Hall & Nickerson 1967; Medbourne, Liddle 1995; Ancaster, Todd 1981; Navenby; Palmer-Brown 1994; Sleaford, Elsdon 1997; Crococalana, TPAT 1991) and, or were significant religious as well as economic foci (e.g. Titchmarsh, Curteis *et al* 2000; Thistleton, Greenfield 1962). 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, Burnham & Wachter 1990, 279-81; Irchester, Taylor 2001). 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; Tripontium, Lucas 1981; 1997; Horncastle, Field & Hurst 1983).

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, Thistleton and Ancaster constitute extremely important datasets that require publication. Excavation on the fringes or extramural areas of a number of other settlements such as 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 palaeobiological data for any detailed assessment. A review of all the probable Roman towns has recently been carried out for Northamptonshire as part of the Extensive Urban Survey (Foard, Ballinger & Taylor 2001), and this will help to provide an overview of their current potential and future possible research strategies for their investigation. Similar surveys for other areas would be extremely adventitious.

### **2.3 Settlement and Landscape.**

*Dynamics of Change* - 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 region. 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 extremely variable, but is already possible in some parts of region.

Good information is currently available in Northamptonshire from the Nene Valley around Raunds and Wollaston and away from the river in a smaller survey around Brigstock (Foster 1988), but generally information from the north and west of the county (though the recent projects at Crick will help to address this somewhat) 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.

Elsewhere in the region evidence is patchy but the archives and publications from the Lincolnshire sections of the Fenland survey (e.g. Hayes & Lane 1992) would merit further work as well as the large number of parish surveys now completed (though largely unpublished) across Leicestershire and Rutland. In Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire there are fewer examples of such extensive surveys, partly exacerbated by the difficulty of reliable dating of settlement from ceramics in this area but a combination of excavation and field survey is starting to suggest a measure of continuity from the Iron Age in southern Derbyshire. This is in marked contrast to the pattern suggested so far for the uplands of Derbyshire where a majority of sites investigated in any detail (e.g. Roystone Grange, Hodges 1991; Staden, Makepeace 1983, 1987, 1989, 1995; Rainster Rocks, Dool 1976) appear to have been founded in the second century AD. It has been suggested that this marks a significant expansion in rural settlement activity in the uplands in the second century that may in part relate to the redeployment of military garrisons to locations further north (Branigan 1991) but further investigation of this issue is currently underway (Bevan n.d.).

Where excavation has been on a significant scale or carried out to more rigorous modern standards, results indicate that most villas within the region 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; Whitwell, Todd 1981; Empingham, Cooper 2001; Long Bennington, Leary 1994). 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 Raunds (Neal 1989; Keevill 1992), Wollaston (Meadows 1996 & pers comm.), Crick (Chapman 1995) West Deeping (Rackham in prep.) and Courteenhall (Ovendon-Wilson 1997; Thomas 1998; Buteux pers. comm.), are now improving the situation. The Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire work, predominantly in the major river valleys suggests much local continuity though with a greater degree of change in areas closest to the major roads and emerging towns (e.g. Taylor 1996). 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. During the course of the second to fourth centuries this process saw the gradual rise of larger rural settlements, villas and 'village' like centres as some of the smaller farms were abandoned in some though not all areas.

*Settlement and field Systems* - 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 region. 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; Lockington, Ripper 1999) but the real need is to extend palaeoenvironmental 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.

## **2.4 Agriculture & Environment**

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 region 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 (cf. Monkton this volume).

Synthesis of the published and unpublished environmental information is currently much needed as part of a regional overview, but it is already clear that relatively few of the existing published excavations from the region contain 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 (Brown *et al.* 2001). Likewise the extensive programmes of work at Stanwick Villa, Redlands Farm, Courteenhall and especially West Deeping need to be synthesized before a clearer picture of patterns of environmental change and agricultural regimes is developed for the river valleys of the southern end of the region begins to emerge. These key projects need then to be augmented by the additional datasets collected as part of smaller briefs and published accounts from rural contexts in other parts of the region (such as that from Empingham, Cooper 2001; Ketton, Northamptonshire Archaeology in prep.; Carsington, Dunstons Clump, Garton 1987; Croughton English CAS 1996; Irchester, Aldwincle and Crick). Critically, however, there is still very little comparable environmental data from areas away from the river valleys and nucleated settlements and gathering such information remains a high priority.

Sufficient information is currently available to start study of the structural development of Roman rural landscapes over significant parts of the region. Aerial photographic mapping of the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Trent Valley, the Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire sandstones and the Welland and Nene Valleys all provide good if fragmentary information about the broad layout and extent of field systems and settlement forms for the Iron Age and Roman periods. 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

but through integration with field survey and targeted excavation and environmental sampling it should be possible to fill out or currently limited understanding considerably. In upland Derbyshire the rich dataset of reasonably well preserved earthwork enclosures and field systems have been mapped to a significant extent but likewise await targeted further ground based research in order to better date activity and understand the processes of agricultural and environmental change.

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.

## **2.5 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 East Midlands. Home to several regionally significant pottery industries and in the Lower Nene valley & Mancetter-Hartshill centres, two of national scale as well as one of the three main foci for iron production in Roman Britain, the study of these industries and their significance to the society and economy of the province is especially important.

*Pottery and Tile* - 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 3.6 below).

The Roman roadside settlement at Mancetter on the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border and described in some detail by Burnham & Wachter (1990, 225-60) and subject to excavations in 1927, the 1950s (Oswald & Gathercole 1958), 1964 (Mahany 1971), 1973 (Hartley 1973) and 1981 (Scott 1981) has long been known to be the centre for a nationally significant pottery industry specialising in the production of mortaria (Swan 1984; Hartley 1973). Though much is now known about the products and development of this industry it still awaits a single synthesis. Critically, earlier site based work on the upper Nene valley pottery kilns (e.g. Johnston 1969), the Swanpool, Knaith and Bourne kilns also needs synthesizing in order to fill a significant gap in our understanding of coarse ware production, supply and use in the region (cf. Fulford & Huddleston 1991, 35 & 39; Willis 1997). Furthermore, any opportunity should be taken to study the landscape context of known and

suspected kiln sites located between Northampton and Wellingborough and from the Leicester Forest area (Liddle 1982) in order to better research the organization of these still poorly understood industries. Our understanding of pottery production and dating in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire is even weaker and the absence of recent syntheses of Derbyshire wares (that constitute the majority of material from the mid-second to fourth centuries at sites like Little Chester) and the grog and shell gritted wares of south Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire clearly represents a major handicap to work here. Excavations of kilns associated with these products have been few but are sufficient to give some indication of where to start to look (e.g. Derby racecourse, Brassington 1971, 1980; Hazelwood, Brassington & Webster 1988; Holbrook, Kay 1962; Newark, Brown 1904). 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 within the region.

A second concern is the continuing absence of a recognized and regularly used fabric series for the region. 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 working* - Iron production has been the subject of recent synthetic summaries (e.g. Condron 1997, Schrufer-Kolb 1999; 2000) but information on the development and extent of the industry is still fragmented and in need of upgrading. Earlier field walking surveys in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire have provided some good basic datasets on the patterns and extent of iron production sites across the region 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 (especially north Northamptonshire, Rutland and Lincolnshire) is likely to have been one of the most important centres for the industry nationally (cf. Crew 1998).

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 Haringworth (Jackson 1981) and Wakerley (Jackson and Ambrose 1978) in Northamptonshire and Creton Quarry, Lincs. (Trimble 1995). Evidence for more concentrated and potentially large scale iron smelting comes from Laxton (Jackson & Tylecote 1988; Crew 1998), Goadby Marwood, Thistleton & Medbourne (Liddle 1995), Hibaldstow (Smith 1987) and Sapperton (Simmons 1995). All of the latter might be considered potential or certain small towns although the wider layout and function of these settlements is still very poorly understood. Likewise, the unpublished excavations at Ashton strongly suggest that iron smelting (if not smelting as well) was a significant element in the town's development and economy that urgently needs publication. Unfortunately, these excavations have tended to

be considered in isolation and few published though a wider research framework that considers patterns of extraction, roasting, smelting, smithing and exchange, much needed if the role of this industry is to be understood is now available and awaits publication (Schrufner-Kolb 2000, in prep.).

*Non-ferrous-metal working* – evidence for other forms of metal extraction and working is even more fragmentary though there are good reasons to believe that parts of the region or specific settlements were significant centres for production. Primary among these has been consideration of the significance of lead mining and smelting in Derbyshire. The initiation, organisation and scale of lead mining as well as the distribution of the final product have been central to a number of considerations of the Roman landscape of the White Peak (e.g. Dool & Hughes 1976; Branigan 1985). Unfortunately, studies of clearly identified Roman mining sites are rare and in any case likely to be difficult given the extensive later history of mining in the same areas. The study of lead pigs has provided the opportunity for much speculation about the location, nature and scale of the operation thought to be associated with the centre of the industry – *Lutudarum* – though there is nothing currently available in the evidence to necessarily suggest that this was a specific place or centre rather than an association, guild or partnership linked to an area. That said excavations at Carsington (Branigan et al. 1986), Roystone (Hodges & Wildgoose 1980), and Lumb Brook, Hazelwood (Brassington & Webster 1988) have all located significant if relatively small scale lead smelting works associated with rural settlements of a variety of dates. Elsewhere, several small towns within the region have examples of scrap lead and pewter as well as part or whole vessels that may be indicative of foci for lead and pewter working but on a relatively modest scale. Likewise, evidence for copper alloy smelting suggests it was dispersed and generally on a small scale with work taking place on both rural (e.g. Rampton, Ponsford 1992) and urban sites (e.g. Towcester, Brown & Alexander 1982).

*Wood, bone and antler, leather & Textiles* - Currently ample scope exists for assessing other potential industries but as yet 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 in the region. To date no one site has produced extraordinary quantities of waste or working materials that would indicate they acted as a key centre but evidence from a number of excavations on larger villas and towns suggest the widespread presence of textile, bone and leather working (e.g. Leicester, Causeway Lane, Connor & Buckley 1999; Towcester Alchester Road Suburb, Brown & Woodfield 1983).

*Salt* – both the Fenland surveys and subsequent aerial photographic and ground based survey have identified the very extensive and important nature of the salt industry in the marginal wetlands of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire (Hall & Coles 1994; Lane & Morris 2001; Bell, et al 1999; Lane & Trimble 1995). This excellent work has already demonstrated the early inception of this industry in the Late Bronze Age (Chowne et al 2001) but if the evidence from field walking and limited excavation in the Fenland is any guide the industry became a very substantial aspect of the economy of rural settlements in the Lincolnshire Fens during the Iron Age and Roman periods (e.g. Hayes & Lane 1988).

Many of the saltern sites so far identified from survey, however, have not been further tested by excavation and the small scale of earlier interventions means that we still have little or no idea of the organisation of salt production or its scale at the level of either an individual settlement or smaller part of the landscape let alone across the region. Much speculation has surrounded the degree to which salt production in this area during the Roman period was an imperial monopoly and whether in part the Lincolnshire Car Dyke was constructed to help ensure its continuing health (e.g. Simmons 1979) based largely on long held assumptions about how particular tenurial conditions might translate into the archaeological record (Taylor 2001b). To a degree this tradition has simply handicapped attempts to study the changing role of salt production in later prehistory and into the Roman period on the ground. Follow up work to the Fenland survey has partly helped remedy this situation but sustained research on this industry is still much needed.

*Querns and Stonework* – evidence for quarrying and the use of stone is limited across the region. Whilst settlement based study of the provenance of material used for roofing and construction is widespread and has helped to demonstrate the potential significance of Swithland slate, and Barnack, Ancaster and Lincoln stone extensive and large scale later extraction is likely to have largely obliterated any surviving traces. Nevertheless attempts to provenance materials do on occasion prove useful and synthesis of the extent and scale of redistribution of these materials, especially in regard to programmes of construction in urban, villa and religious contexts could prove extremely useful in better understanding patterns of trade.

## **2.6 Urbanism, Economic Integration and Communications**

This issue 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. Our generalised understanding of the small towns of the region is not bad but critical material evidence from excavations (e.g. coins, metalwork and pottery from Ancaster, Thistleton, Tripontium, Ashton, Titchmarsh, Sapperton, Hibaldstow Old Winteringham and Duston) needs publishing. SMRs and paper archives contain much useful numismatic information for the region and local work 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 35 have been published to any significant degree.

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 a single study. The transfer of most SMRs to GIS based platforms 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; Davies 2001). Perhaps surprisingly given the amount of development work on the gravels and alluvial deposits along the major river valleys there has also been

little research pulling together information on riverside installations and communications in the region. 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 regions river valleys.

## **2.7 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. Leicester, Cooper 1996; Ancaster, Todd 1981, Hirst in prep; Ashton, Dix 1985; and Laxton, Jackson & Tylecote 1988) 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 (e.g. Titchmarsh, Curteis *et al* 2000; Irchester, Taylor 2001a; Kirmington, Jones & Whitwell 1991; Red Hill, Elsdon 1982) but much of the most significant excavated evidence awaits publication (especially at Thistleton). At the heart of this is the continuing need to better examine religious foci within both rural (e.g. Cosgrove, Quinell 1992) and larger nucleated/small town sites such as Irchester and Towcester. Many probable religious sites have come to light through metal detecting (e.g. Red Hill, Nettleton, Titchmarsh) 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 in the south of the region is now common but the establishment of portable antiquities officer posts 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 Walesby, Bishop Norton, Caistor, Brough, Thorpe by Newark, Ashton and Rushton (as well as the material from Durobrivae just beyond the region) may well suggest the presence of significant late Roman Christian communities in the region focused on its small towns and larger rural roadside settlements.

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 that are worth pursuing. The excellent excavated data from Ashton, where both substantial cemetery and boundary burial groups are recorded, Ancaster (Todd 1981; Hirst in prep.), and Thistleton, alongside more limited work at

Laxton (Jackson & Tylecote 1988), Newark (Kinsley 1989), Lincoln and Leicester (including ongoing work south of the city) provide a key opportunity to better understand later Roman urban traditions in the region.

### **3 Research Agenda**

#### **3.1 Chronology**

We still have patchy knowledge of several of the pottery industries of the region and the lack of a recent synthetic overview of several more. In consequence knowledge of chronology, especially in the Late Iron Age to Roman transition period and also the third-fourth century is not as strong as it could be in the west and north west of the region.

The limited recording of many field walking and metal detected groups in the past means that many sites identified by artefact groups are still only poorly understood. This can be rectified, either by the better recording of collections and the inclusion of those details in SMR entries, or the reassessment of extant collections. The development of portable antiquities officer schemes is helping to rectify this problem for new material in some areas.

Synthetic work on recent developments in the understanding of chronological detail amongst some metalwork groups especially brooches also limits opportunities to assess pottery based chronologies in the Iron Age - Roman and late Roman - early medieval periods. There is a pressing need for the publication of major industries such as Mancetter Hartshill and the Upper and Lower Nene valley and the dissemination of comparable fabric and dating schemes between workers in the region.

Radiometric dates have very rarely been used in contexts where other dating evidence in the Roman period is tenuous or absent and consequently some areas of debate such as late - post Roman inhumation and the chronology of settlement activity in artefact poor upland areas remain uncertain. Greater awareness of the potential of using such techniques will help to resolve this problem.

#### **3.2 The Late Iron Age Landscape and Strategy and Consequences of Conquest**

It is critical in looking at early period of conquest and subsequent change to consider the extant landscape of Late Iron Age societies across the region into which Rome came. It is important that this landscape and its complexity is not seen as just a backdrop or limiting factor but an active and important part of the processes of change that were to come during the course of the first and second centuries AD.

Settlement and rural landscape evidence for this transitional period is best considered together and there are equally good reasons to argue that we should treat this period as a single entity for treatment rather than impose artificial divide around the conquest. If we look at evidence across the region it is clear that whilst some sites (e.g. Enderby, Clay 1992) did not continue into the Roman period the more common pattern was for Roman

settlements to overly or sit adjacent to their Iron Age antecedents (cf. Taylor 1996; Clay in press). This is especially true of villas but differences in the pattern of continuity or first century abandonment or relocation of settlement from area to area across the region is a key research question that we increasingly have the survey and excavation evidence to be able to attempt to answer (e.g. Taylor 2001c).

Equally the impressive history of aerial photographic reconnaissance and now its systematic mapping provides the opportunity to synthesise widespread information about the morphology, extent and relationship of the rural landscapes of later prehistory with evidence for potential early Roman forts. Though perhaps surprisingly rare in the south and east of the region the general pattern of military bases further north is starting to become clearer and through targeted excavation it should be possible to improve our understanding of the chronology and strategy of the initial move into the region and the local impact of temporary garrisons. Whilst it would be optimistic to think that such archaeological work could ever reconstruct military campaigns in detail (the archaeological chronology is simply not refined enough for this to be possible in the majority of cases) it could provide key information about overall patterns of military dispositions and strategy in relation to existing Iron Age communities. Especially important in this regard is if possible to better establish the evidence for early forts and significant Late Iron Age settlements at Lincoln and Leicester. Furthermore, such targeted work should be possible to separate out those military installations likely to have been associated with the initial move into the region, those that were occupied after the army moved into the north or that were occupied in the period after the Boudiccan revolt, and those whose role was associated with later garrisoning of the north and west of the region

In this regard further work that provides a critical evaluation of the supposed military evidence for the foundation of *vici* and other small towns is also of great importance. In several parts of the south and east of the region a long tradition of searching for early *vici* associated with military installations that could have acted as the spur to urban roadside settlement has largely failed to demonstrate any such link. Even where early military sites have been located we must be wary of necessarily assuming that the link between fort and town is causal in the absence of any early associated settlement. Further north and west a consideration of the role of military establishments in a post Flavian context, especially in relation to the development of *vici* and other roadside settlements and the development of the iron and lead industries is much-needed and would provide valuable insights into the nature of urban development and military civilian relations in a key transitional region within the Roman province.

Looking further afield the time is surely right for a study of the evidence for the deliberate construction of new framework of communications to ensure supply to the major military garrisons and Hadrian's Wall to the north possibly seen in the construction of the Fosse Dyke and canals and waterways of the Fenland. There is clearly need in many areas of country to consider the wider question of the degree to which military demands for supply affected regions away from immediate military contact. This issue is especially pertinent to the East Midlands given its links via Humber and east coast to York and the north.

### 3.3 Urbanism

Research priorities in this area have recently been the subject of two national overviews published in the CBA volume *Britons and Romans* (Burnham *et al* 2001; Millett 2001). I will not reiterate these issues here other than to say that there is a critical need within the subject to shift the emphasis in future by focusing on the question of urbanism as a social process rather than focus on towns as an object of study.

At one level such a statement may seem obvious but it creates an important distinction for studying the places we think of as towns in Roman Britain by shifting the emphasis from whether a place was a town to what the people of this place did and what was their role within wider society? How and in what ways was the position of this settlement different from that of rural settlements within its region? What constitutes a town clearly depends on the geographical and historical context of each place within a particular society (cf. Millett 2001, 65). In the context of the East Midlands (and indeed a number of areas of Britain) is the extent to which nucleated or centralised places of social power in Roman Britain developed from existing foci in the Late Iron Age or were consequent upon a series of far reaching changes brought about by conquest and subsequent administration? Were the central places of the Roman *Civitas Corieltauorum* the same social phenomenon as their predecessors even when located in the same place?

At a practical level the implications of this change are:

**Origins** – when looking at the origins of potential urban centres the issue becomes not was there an Iron Age predecessor or early fort (though such information is a useful starting point) but what was the nature of the original focus within its contemporary context and how did this change through time?

Two obvious lines of enquiry could be:

The study of Roman forts and their *vici* as single related foci in order to better understand whether they were established as local centres in their own right during the period of military occupation or subsequently. Was there any significant gap between military occupation and the establishment of a settlement focus? Was the history of the settlement closely tied to that of the military community and abandoned when they moved on?

If there was a focus of occupation in the Late Iron Age what was this place like? It is possible, indeed probable that some were pre-existing Late Iron age political or religious foci but not the significant economic or population centres they were to become. In such circumstances were they fundamentally different institutions from their successors? Some Late Iron Age foci understood only through fragmentary evidence of finds or trial excavation may be fortuitous discoveries of sites that actually had no bearing on subsequent Roman settlement. Just as past approaches that felt the origins of Roman nucleated settlements were answered by the discovery of any form of early military association can be seen to be

flawed, so do those that settle for similar arguments in relation to Late Iron Age predecessors.

**Growth and Development** - the review above of the existing evidence for the growth and development of nucleated settlements suggests that the pace, form and date of change varies considerably across the region but points to a series of key questions on:

Flavian to Antonine growth - whilst pretty much all of the significant roadside settlements and major towns of the south and east of the region can be seen to be well established by the mid to late second century the pace and direction of their growth for the previous century is far less clear. The results of the recent EUS for Northamptonshire (Foard, Ballinger & Taylor 2002) and this review suggest that the evidence we already have is good for a significant sample of the sites but that our understanding is hampered by the lack of synthesis or survey of the rest.

Vici development - north and west of the Trent and Fosse nucleated settlements are largely limited to vici associated with military installations. What is less clear is the degree to which the development of these settlements is closely associated with the fortunes of their neighbouring military communities. Dearne's (1991) review of three sites from Derbyshire is an important starting point but we have a long way to go before establishing whether Little Chester and possibly Buxton are the only real examples from this part of the region where the settlement can be considered to have developed independently of the fortunes of military communities.

Organic or planned development alongside major roads - where archaeological evidence is best the internal morphology of most of the small towns seems to have been largely organic alongside trackways and droves running from the settlement core out into the neighbouring agricultural landscape but all such sites are also linked to major roads. Several appear largely as ribbon developments along them (e.g. Hibaldstow, Sapperton & Tripontium) but a number are more complex in plan and their relationship to the construction of the major roads more ambiguous. Certainly recent surveys at Irchester, Titchmarsh, Bannaventa, Thistleton, Ancaster and others suggests that a number sit rather awkwardly alongside their associated main roads and potentially calls into question whether in part the layout of each was established before the main road. The frequently somewhat asymmetrical resultant plan then helps to explain the diverse and complex form of later defences enclosing their core.

How was architectural space within settlements arranged? Is the suggestion of limited zonation structured between the main road frontages and peripheral /back plot areas true?

To what extent can the roles of these sites be differentiated from neighbouring rural sites? If they became significant demographic and economic foci what was their impact on the development of the immediate rural landscape (Taylor 2001c)?

**Roles** – what were the range of primary roles developed by these communities through time? In particular do most or even many seem to have been pivotal to the development of

specialised craft production landscapes for pottery and iron production for example in their environs?

Several seem to have been at least partly religious and burial centres and questions must arise over the degree to which they came to act as key foci for maintaining the economic and administrative cohesion of the region.

Integration and Impact – How and to what extent were these sites integral to their immediate landscapes and to wider regional or national economic developments? What was the interrelationship between the development of roadside settlements and rural settlement, land use and agriculture in the surrounding region? In order to answer these questions there is an urgent need for us to focus on studying flows of material culture (e.g. Cooper 2000; forthcoming) and synthesise the results of palaeofaunal and botanical research?

Regional variation in its national context – there are good reasons to feel that variation in the development, form and roles of such nucleated settlements is the norm across the province and it is already apparent that this region incorporates examples of much of that diversity. At a simple level the region clearly incorporates a commonly observed threefold division between what we might call strictly military vici (where settlement and fort histories match each other closely and which display little overt link to their surrounding hinterlands), military associated but ultimately independent vici and civilian/roadside settlements.

This categorisation is only a start for among the roadside settlement and other major nucleated settlements of the region there is a great deal of variability in development during the Roman period. . Some for example appear to have primarily acted as local foci for craft production and possibly agricultural processing and exchange, whilst others in part depended on their being local or national religious foci or were closely linked to the maintenance and support of communications along the newly developed road system.

Why in the Later Roman period were some of these centres provided with defences and not others? Is there evidence that they were ever intended as a continuous or linked chain or were they rather the result of local initiatives at individual sites? In this regard there is a greater need to step back from the excavation and survey of specific sites to consider the network as a whole and indeed to consider whether there was ever a substantially complete urban or partially urban network of settlements across the region. Towards the end of the Roman period is there evidence that the histories of the defended settlements and the major towns noticeably different from their neighbours and can we see sub regional differences in this?

UADs and EUS clearly provide an ideal opportunity to systematically evaluate such questions and should be further encouraged for those areas where not done. These should not, however be considered as separate freestanding agendas. A planning and development lead agenda for this, however, clearly leaves gaps and there is need for research on green field sites either as part of specific research projects or in other contexts (e.g. EH work at Owmbly – Olivier 1997). Especially in the latter case the incorporation of survey and evaluation data need to be adequately provided as part of PPG16 responses in order to go

into local GIS through the SMR system in a way that can be used to build up a wider picture of settlement development.

The region incorporates several examples of significant excavations that remain unpublished and remedying this situation remains a priority. Wherever possible the publication of these sites should be used as the opportunity to produce a new overview of the settlement within its broader context.

In the event of new excavation it is critical that support is given to research driven thematic work on artefactual and palaeoenvironmental data in order to better understand the social and economic role of these settlements, something that we still have a chronic shortage of both regionally and nationally.

### **3.4 Communications and New Geographies of Power**

Though there has been sporadic but significant attention given to the road system over the years the difficult admixture of records for even well established roads in the form of visible earthworks or cropmarks often supplemented by localised excavations and routes extrapolated across landscape in local and national literature make attempts at coherent interpretations of the extent, development and role of the network difficult.

Routing and Dating – tendency has been to assume that the major roads were built as part of the campaigns of conquest but evidence to confirm this is still largely dependent on the seeming association of many major routes with military sites. There remain however, good reasons to challenge this and there is a clear need for continuing efforts to better refine our understanding of the chronology of road network construction. This issue is especially important as it represents a key phase in which the economic, social and political geography of the province was established and formalised and the region incorporates three of the most important roads in the province as well as a large and complex network of local and regional routes.

We also need to move away from simply mapping roads as part of producing a road atlas of Roman Britain to think more about how and why individual routes were laid out in relation to Roman understandings of the landscape into which they came and over which they wished to ensure political and social hegemony. In this context work that focuses more on understanding local and regional terrain, surveying knowledge and practice, the existing Late Iron age landscape of boundaries, local centres and track ways and wider strategic concerns of the advance to the north in the later first century AD are all important. Furthermore, this needs to be considered alongside the potential role of rivers and artificial waterways in understanding the overall framework for communications and transport and the degree to which the existing grain of the landscape was altered and maintained during the Roman period. Given this, work on such features should always consider the broader context of the region's landscape and attempt to draw in other details relevant to the understanding of that feature locally.

Furthermore, once an understanding of a route's dating, direction and construction becomes established it then becomes key for us to look at the role and importance of roads and waterways in creating landscapes of differential access, and primacy both in relation to the rise of nucleated or urban populations, rural social status and craft and agricultural production. To what extent are key places or areas in rural landscape marginalized or changed by new landscape of transport (e.g. Taylor 2001c)?

### **3.5 Rural Settlement, Landscape and Society**

The East Midlands is an ideal area for large-scale syntheses of patterns of land use and rural settlement through the abundant, if not always immediately accessible data that we already have. The key to success is going to lie in successfully integrating different sources of information via GIS, willpower and time on the part of those most directly involved and critically grants to aid the publication or web based dissemination of the results.

Poorly understood areas of the region need new primary fieldwork and this is invariably best carried out by local field workers, adequately trained and motivated. The key to avoiding the creation of new backlogs however, is to agree basic standards for the recording of new material, its transferral into SMRs and wider synthesis from the start.

We all need, if we are going to advance this work, to take a more analytical and interpretative approach to its study. We are all aware of the limitations of survey data compared to excavation but it is a resource that can help us build models on a scale we could never achieve otherwise and we should not be scared of sticking our necks out. The continuing, sometimes deathly, torpor of this subject has partly come about precisely because we have not in stark contrast to the results obtained in this field in continental Europe and the Mediterranean.

Rural settlements of the Roman period in Britain are conspicuously not well understood. Opportunities for excavation and survey on a significant scale should be taken whenever possible in order for us to start to build up a good resource for the study of these homes and social foci for the majority of Roman society. Past emphasis on buildings, the classification of settlements and simple hierarchies usually based on assumptions about Roman social order have not served the subject well. Just because we know there are lots of settlements of x type does not mean we understand their roles and inter relationships through time.

Where development lead threats are part of contiguous ongoing programmes (e.g. major housing or quarry consents) it is important to try to take the opportunity to investigate neighbourhood groups of settlements in their immediate landscape context through targeted excavations and strip and mapping strategies that are to a comparable standard. This approach is not easy but has provided excellent insights in the Low Countries, France and Germany into how local rural networks of communities worked and how they utilised and manipulated their landscapes.

Research funded excavation and survey is likely to be limited in the future, especially as so many academics of the Roman period work outside Britain. That said the responsibility is

there to try to tackle questions and critically areas of the landscape that are otherwise unlikely to be investigated via PPG16 or Heritage Management related project.

### **3.6 Artefact Production, Exchange and Consumption**

Iron – there is a pressing need to continue auditing the information we already have for the iron industry across the region, especially given that it extends across several authority boundaries. Such a process could establish areas where significant blocks of landscape survive and provide an analytical context for the future study of the industry. Given its long history this may best be done as a cross period study.

Pottery – in addition to the publication of synthetic studies of formerly well-studied industries there is the need for assessments of the less well-understood potential groups in order to encourage local fieldwork to collect and collate quantifiable groups of material and to map their broad extent. Synthetic work focusing on flows of material culture and patterns of consumption across the region will significantly improve our understanding of local society and economy. Future excavation opportunities also need to focus on the study of production sites within their immediate wider context in order to see how they were organised.

A framework for the study of Roman pottery is already available and provides detailed series of questions about assessing the industry and using pottery studies to elucidate questions about wider economic and social life (Willis 1997). It is imperative that such an agenda is incorporated in future briefs and its information more widely disseminated amongst local field workers.

Salt – the industry is well studied through field survey but there is still great scope to better understand differences in its technology, impact and exchange through time and across the varied ecological zones of the Fens. Wider synthesis of this work, however, needs to be done in association with the evidence from across the wider Fen Basin beyond the region.

Secondary products of agriculture, which form an important and possibly crucial area of the agricultural economy remain almost invisible across the region. Modern excavations record much information that could be used for such studies but it is important that briefs and research designs incorporate a thematic approach to the integrated treatment of biological and artefactual evidence from the start.

Building materials - Though building materials are routinely recorded as part of the excavation of settlements, we still have little understanding of the potential significance economically and socially of the extraction, production and marketing of such materials. Though in many cases we see essentially local strategies of acquisition this should not be assumed and could provide a useful additional insight into the scale and direction of economic networks.

This raises the wider issue of how we hope to encourage study of the flow of materials as a guide to exchange networks more widely through artefact analysis of the kind done by Nick Cooper (2000b; forthcoming) There are important issues in the consistency of recording of

artefactual evidence and its dissemination to other workers in the field that need to be discussed

If we are to better address the ways in which social and economic practice was mediated there is a pressing need nationally for the research of Coinage as an index to processes of monetisation. There is and will continue to be an ever expanding resource for study but at present, with one or two notable exceptions, we simply are not tackling the role of coinage in society in Britain through archaeological means.

Patterns of material consumption and the social context for the use of different forms of material culture are an important and expanding area of research. Recent examples of the benefits of such approaches, which again treat assemblages thematically in relation to their archaeological context of use and deposition need to be more widely appreciated and again should encourage the restructuring of briefs for excavation. Key examples are for example the roles of material culture in dining, diet, dress, architectural status display, all issues covered in the recent CBA volume (James & Millett 2001).

### **3.7 Ritual, Religion and Identity**

One of the first issues we need to address is to better understand and integrate within considerations of Roman period practice, what were the contexts for and nature of indigenous Late Iron Age practice across the region. This in part is an issue better dealt with in Steve Willis' contribution but it is clear here that the relatively few well understood shrines and other Roman religious sites we have in the region are often founded on or very near to Iron Age predecessors. There is great scope for studies that attempt to locate and evaluate religious sites and practices in the broader landscape through the use of survey techniques and particularly the wealth of new information becoming available through metal detecting and the portable antiquities schemes. Third, though we have often recognised significant religious foci within both rural and urban contexts in the region we still have a poor understanding of the practices and beliefs associated with them. To what extent are such sites the founding reason for the settlements often associated with them?

A striking feature of the landscape of burial in the region is still the surprisingly small numbers of dead we find in the earlier Roman period. Where are they? If they are not to be found it is critical we think about attitudes to death in this period and why practice should change so markedly later. Are there notable differences between attitudes taken across the region or between different communities (for example the military, roadside settlements and rural settlements)?

A number of reasonably substantial later Roman cemeteries have been excavated in the region but few have been published and there is still a noticeable shortage of osteological studies on such groups. The identification of further cemeteries and plans for their management as a future research resource is also important given their particular susceptibility to destruction by ploughing. Excavations on and around rural settlements have recorded a surprising number of burials in isolation or associated with settlement and field

system boundaries. This phenomenon recently evaluated by Pearce (1999) needs research and could be achieved through the collation of archive information in some areas.

There is still a noticeable tendency amongst archaeologists of the period to treat settlements as centres for rational economic processes rather than recognising the implications of many of the discoveries of Iron Age work in which ritual practice and belief can be judged to have been an integral part of many aspects of routine social existence. It is important that we be willing to recognise the potential religious or ritual aspects of special deposits and 'irrational' practices on sites we excavated the future and compare these with known Iron Age and Roman practice elsewhere.

## **Prospect**

The East Midlands has a very rich and diverse record of archaeological remains of the Roman period. A very small proportion has been recorded archaeologically to any significant but this is compensated for by a particularly good and in parts well documented tradition of aerial photographic reconnaissance and field survey.

These remains are complex and fundamentally varied in form and through their study and synthesis have the potential to inform us greatly about an important region within the Roman province. Regionally diverse in both landscape and archaeology the East Midlands provides an ideal opportunity to study a part of the province that was both profoundly civilian and urban in nature and at its other extreme remained a domain of military involvement if not occupation and long lived indigenous tradition and settlement. Furthermore, the region in incorporating several of the country's major river valleys and central uplands and two if not more major industries provides the opportunity to better understand the Roman period nationally through a cross-section of its central societies.

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