

# COMPLEX ASSEMBLAGES, COMPLEX SOCIAL STRUCTURES:

*RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE UPPER AND MIDDLE  
THAMES VALLEY 100BC TO AD100*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Late Iron Age and Early Roman Britain has often been homogenised by models that focus on the resistance/assimilation dichotomy during the period of transition. The main objective of this thesis is to examine the rural settlements of this period through the lens of Cultural Theory in order to tease out the more nuanced and diverse human landscape that the material suggests. This approach begins to develop new ways of thinking about the variability observed in rural settlement from the end of the Middle Iron Age (MIA) to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The selected study area is the Upper and Middle Thames Valley. The thesis uses the grid/group designations of Mary Douglas' Cultural Theory as a tool to produce a more multifaceted picture of the period, exploring the assemblages of these rural settlements to understand the nature of the socio-political structures of the region, beyond the anonymity of tribal affiliation and the faceless economical dichotomy of high and low status.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 summarises the state of play in the study of Late Iron Age and Early Roman Britain within the study area. The strengths and weakness of Cultural Theory, how it has been used in the past, and what role it has played in this research will be introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the dataset and the patterns observed, as well as why and how the types of artefacts examined are integral to the formation of the worldview of people. Chapter 5 offers interpretation of the data through the lens of the Cultural Theory model whilst Chapters 6, 7, and 8 place six case studies from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley under inspection and show in greater detail the potential of Cultural Theory as a tool for thinking about rural settlement variation.

This study re-characterises the rural Upper and Middle Thames Valley as a place where there was a wide variety of worldviews during the period of great cultural and socio-political transition of the centuries straddling the turn of the first millennium. It suggests that the varying success and longevities of these rural settlements may have depended upon the ability of their inhabitants to either change their worldviews or to find similarities in the new organisation of their world.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

The following abbreviations are used in the text of the thesis:

- **EIA:** Early Iron Age
- **ER:** Early Roman
- **HER:** Historic Environment Record
- **LIA:** Late Iron Age
- **LMIA:** Latest Middle Iron Age
- **LPRIA:** Late Pre Roman Iron Age
- **LR:** Late Roman
- **MIA:** Middle Iron Age
- **NMP:** National Mapping Programme
- **NMR:** National Monument Record
- **PAS:** Portable Antiquity Scheme
- **PRIA:** Pre Roman Iron Age
- **SMR:** Sites & Monument Record



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## **CHAPTER 1                      INTRODUCTION**

---

### **1.1    Introduction**

Our understanding of the transition from the Late Iron Age societies of Britain to the 'romanized' province of Britannia has itself undergone much transition in the last century. Although the past 30 years have brought the concept of Romanization from Haverfield's 'betterment' of a primitive people, there is still much that is not understood about the social structure of communities during this difficult time. Hingley (1984a) attempted to provide a model for Thames Valley societies in the form of Germanic Mode of Production, an economic tool for getting at the regional complexities seen in the archaeological record. Recently, this model has been challenged as being overly simplistic (Moore 2010; Booth 2011), yet there has been little progress in finding a way to explain the variation both in responses to Roman Imperial entanglements and in the material assemblages left behind. This thesis seeks to address the problem by exploring the data through the lens of Cultural Theory, a method developed by Structuralist anthropologist Mary Douglas in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1982a; 1982b; 1982c; 1996; 1999) and used to some effect within that discipline, as well as within sociology (although its most current field of use is that of marketing and Risk Management (Nuth 2007; Tansey and O'Riordan 1999)).

The main objective of this research is to begin to develop new ways of thinking about the variation in rural settlement from the end of the Middle Iron Age (MIA) to the beginning of the 2nd century AD. This thesis seeks to discover if the use of Cultural theory and grid/group designation can help us understand the variability in the material culture of LIA/ER Britain rural settlements, indicate greater variety in socio-political structures of people's lives, and produce a more complex picture of the period than the homogeneous anonymity of tribal affiliation and the faceless economical dichotomy of high/low status. In order to test if this is so, I have chosen as a study area the Upper and Middle Thames Valley.

## **1.2 Limits of the study area – space**

The River Thames cuts an extensive swathe through the southern part of Britain. From its source in the Cotswolds to its wide lazy transects across Berkshire, before plunging through the Goring Gap and headlong out to sea, the Thames is a major feature in the Southern landscape. Conveniently (if somewhat arbitrarily) divided (like Gaul) into three parts – Upper, Middle and Lower, it was decided to limit this study to the Upper and Middle, reasoning that the Lower Thames, the tidal part of the river, would have had different experiences, perhaps more coastal than riverine, that would change the nature of the assemblages. Rather than choosing the traditional upstream limit for the Lower Thames, at Teddington Lock, it was decided to terminate the study area at Staines, the tidal limit during the Late Iron Age /Roman period. Thus the region examined is that stretch of the Thames Valley which begins at the source of the river and continues to Staines, including an area approximately 10km to either side of the actual waterfront, and extending up major tributaries wherever the 10km buffer zone impinges on them. The reasoning behind selecting 10km was the estimated distance of easy day return foot travel to or from the water's edge, as estimated by studies of non-mechanised societies and their travel times (Amato 2004). This restriction creates, admittedly artificially, the semblance of an individual's 'home landscape'.

I have also taken the decision to exclude the larger urban settlements from the study, although of course their significance and relationships to the surrounding rural sites cannot be ignored. One could easily defend this decision based purely on the fact that the bulk of the populace lived in rural areas (Fulford 1982:404) and thus the 'hearts and minds' that would need to adapt to Roman influence would be found in the countryside, not the cities and towns. However, the rationale behind my decision is threefold: firstly that the amount of material from such places as Cirencester (Corinium) and Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) is so prodigious as to be overwhelming, to the detriment of the study. Secondly, such sites, particularly Cirencester, have seen such fragmented excavation and exploration due to the piecemeal nature of urban

development work, that stitching all the pieces together to form a contiguous picture of settlement would be a self-contained project on its own and far beyond the constraints of this thesis. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly for my argument, (lest the other two reasons seem to be the mere shirking of difficult work), one of the main goals of this research was to identify variability of social structure and by extension, the self-identification of individual communities, relying heavily on a framework involving worldview and self-perception (Chapter 3). Any singular worldview was likely to become blurred in a more urban setting. As Aristotle wrote in *The Politics*, 'A city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence'. The structure of the Roman provincial city had the potential to 'erode the display of human diversities' (Sennett 1994:114), shifting the nature of this 'melting pot' of individuals to an atmosphere where people begin to homogenise and relate their identity with the 'city' more than other affiliations.

### **1.3 Limits of the study area- time**

To examine the period of transition, the decision was taken to limit the chronological scope of the study to a 200 year window spanning from 100 BC to AD 100. This time frame would be wide enough to see some 'bigger picture' patterns, but not produce an unmanageable amount of material. It might be argued that communities in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries were still in a period of transition, but I feel that the time of most dramatic cultural adaptation will have occurred in the first few generations after AD 43. The choice to extend the time scale back to 100BC is supported by the necessity of examining the impact of continental influence on PRIA society in the run-up to the Conquest. The dates offered are therefore roughly half a century before Caesar's contact to half a century after Claudius'.

It was not always possible to stay rigidly within the temporal guidelines, and so some assemblages were examined that stretch as far back as the Late Middle Iron Age (LMIA) and as far forward as the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Unless the available brooch or ceramic assemblages were specific enough to provide a tighter chronology, most dates given are rather broad. The

dating of sites and artefacts recorded in this study have been drawn from the published reports and archived records. Unfortunately, few of these resources are standardised in their terminology, but some attempt has been made to organise the sites within broad periods. The dating terms utilised in this thesis and the dates to which they apply may be found in Table 1.1.

| <b>Broad Period</b>           | <b>Start</b> | <b>End</b> | <b>Referential usage</b>                   |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Pre Caesarean Iron Age        | 100 BC       | 55 BC      | Before Caesar's landings                   |
| Late Iron Age                 | 54 BC        | AD 0       | First 50 years of Roman contact            |
| Very Late Iron Age            | AD 1         | AD 42      | Run-up to Claudian invasion                |
| Mid-1 <sup>st</sup> century   | AD 43        | AD 70      | from Claudius to post-revolt               |
| Late 1 <sup>st</sup> century  | AD 71        | AD 100     | Final years of the 1 <sup>st</sup> century |
| Early 2 <sup>nd</sup> century | AD 101       | AD 150     | Beginnings of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> century  |
| LIA/Early Roman               | 100 BC       | AD 150     | Apparent continuous occupation             |

*Table 1.1. Dating terms and definitions*

Along the Thames 158 rural sites have been selected, within a 10km corridor on either side of the river. These sites are those showing evidence for habitation within the selected temporal parameters of 100BC- AD100, although it will be appreciated that tight phasing is not always possible on such sites, and that there will of necessity be a bit of temporal ‘wobble-room’. The ceramic, glass, metal, and stone finds, along with the faunal remains and results from environmental analysis (where applicable) from these sites have been entered into an Microsoft Access database so that queries produced from the program can highlight patterns which, when paired with the structural arrangements of the settlements, can help to determine grid/group classification. This in turn, through the interpretive framework of Cultural Theory, will suggest the social structure of the communities to which the assemblages relate. I hope to show that the attribution of high and low status to sites is unhelpful, in that it stems from assumptions about taste and choice in the past that may not be accurate. The assemblages of households and the motivations behind the choices of the consumer are far more complex. By getting away from the

simplistic idea of the high and low status rural settlement, and by questioning the perceived knowledge of tribal affiliations of these communities we can begin to think about individual societal responses to change. Communities would have tried to navigate the fog of transition in a variety of ways- imitation, hybridity, rejection- and these responses, and the severity of degree, would have depended upon the ways in which the individuals saw themselves and how they fitted into their world. This ability to analyse the worldview of communities based upon an examination of the objects they choose to surround themselves with is key to Douglas' Cultural Theory and I have made use of this to create a map of the Thames Valley which does not highlight tribal territories or separate rich farmsteads from the poor, but rather indicates the variety of worldviews held by the people of LIA/ER Southern Britain. This may help us begin to think about the region and this period in new ways and shed more light on the complexity of rural Roman Britain.

## **1.4 Structure of this thesis**

This dissertation will begin with an overall survey of the theoretical and research frameworks that have guided the study of the region for the past few decades (Chapter 2). The concept of romanization, already well-trodden territory, will also be discussed. Chapter 3 defines Cultural Theory and discusses the uses to which it may be put. Also introduced is the methodology to be used in the gathering and collating of the data and the techniques of analysis, as well as the rationale behind the creation of complex assemblages and how Cultural Theory, perhaps seen as a relic of the structuralist past, can be put to use in the interpretation of the varying nature of these assemblages.

Chapter 4 introduces the dataset and begins to set out the trends visible from such a heavily excavated region. Sub-sections explore the way that the changes in theoretical trends have altered the interpretation of various classes of archaeological materials and outline why looking at each of those types of evidence can help classify worldview. Chapter 5 explains how the sites were classified and what that grid/group designation can mean for the social structure of each

type of settlement. These discussions are drawn from the wider body of site data, which has been superficially examined; the stage is set for the in-depth study of the case studies.

In Chapters 6 through 8, six very different archaeological sites from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley are placed under scrutiny, which show in far greater detail the usefulness of using Cultural Theory as a framework for re-thinking rural settlement variation. Where broad patterns could be disseminated from the entire Upper and Middle Thames valley region, specific details can be extracted from the better documented sites that form these chapters. It is demonstrated that the macro view for the region is substantiated in the micro view of the individual site. Chapter 9 concludes with some proposals for rethinking the LIA/ER socio-political structure in the Thames Valley and makes recommendations for further work along these lines, as well as critiquing the industry which is now providing so much of the data we must all work with.

## **CHAPTER 2                      BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA**

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### **2.1      Introduction**

The attempt to understand the process of transition and its effects in the LIA populace of Britain has generated an embarrassment of riches in terms of the sheer volume of writing on the subject. Yet in spite of all the speculation, generalisation, sweeping narratives, and synthetic explanations of historians and archaeologists alike, there is still no particularly convincing explanation for why some rural communities seem to have adopted Roman material culture at different rates and to different degrees than others. The simple explanations of opportunity, economy, and sheer rural stubbornness (i.e. passive resistance) will not do, as they are too monofocal and do not take into account the wide variety of individual responses that are likely during such a time of instability. The complexities of a society in transition deserve complex analyses and it is in this spirit that this thesis will examine the multiplicity of human reaction to cultural and political transition.

Encouraged by the possibilities hinted at by Sharples' (2010) examination of Wessex Bronze Age society in transition, which explores the relationship between people, their materials, landscape and artefacts on the one side, and their view of the world on the other, I will use the material assemblages to explore the differences between communities throughout the Thames Valley. These communities seem to produce heterogeneous responses to the ebb and flow of 'romanization', hybridisation, or whatever comparable term is current en vogue, but which really reduces down to simply being human in a changing world. Whilst agreeing with Gardner (2001:36) that to some extent the process of change and hybridisation continues for the entire length of Roman presence in Britain (and one might claim even beyond, as the reaction to the absence is at least as significant as the reaction to the presence of Roman influences), the main focus of this work will be the earlier stages of that contact.



This chapter first introduces the geographical characteristics of the study area before visiting the current state of research in the region, the theoretical approaches recently used as well as the traditional models of social structure within Late Iron Age and Early Roman southern Britain. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the thorny issue of the concept and terminology of 'romanization'.

## **2.2 The Thames and her tributaries**

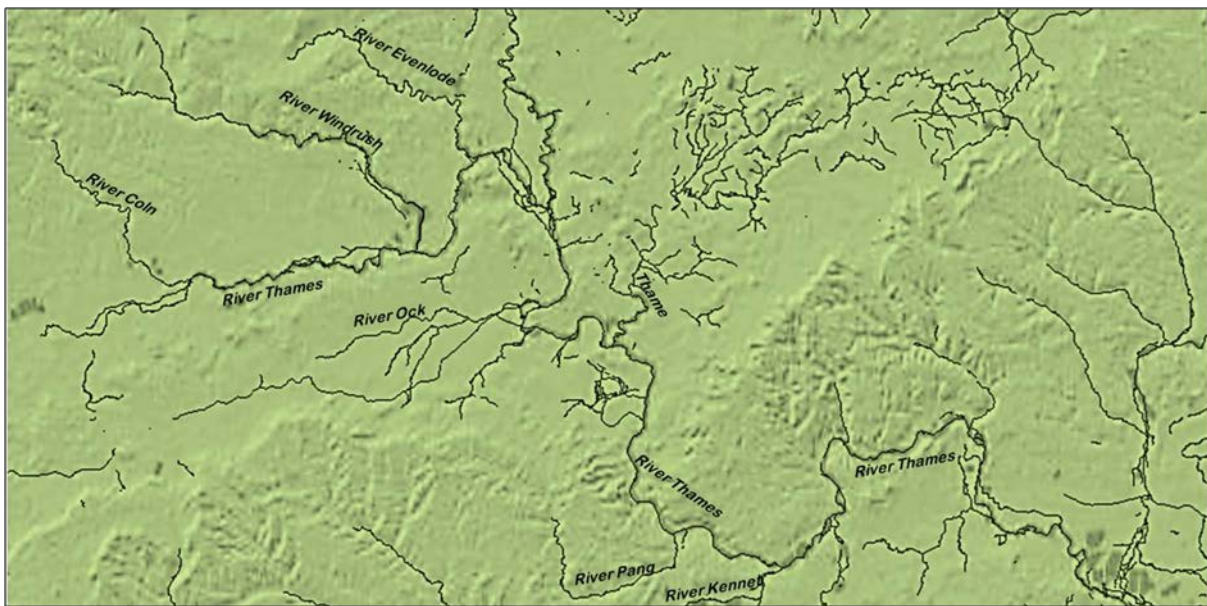


*Figure 2.1. Upper and Middle Thames Valley and her tributaries*

The River Thames has flowed through what is now southern England for approximately 55 million years, albeit not always along the same course (Morigi *et al.* 2011). Carved out of the Jurassic limestone in the Upper extent, incised through the Chilterns, and descending into the great London basin, the river is fed and replenished by a host of tributaries all along its extent (Figure 2.1). Significant settlement activity has in particular been noted near the confluences of the Leach (Allen *et al.* 1993; Boyle *et al.* 1998; Miles *et al.* 2007), the Windrush (Allen & Robinson 1993; Hey 1996; Lambrick & Allen 2004; Booth & Simmonds 2011), and the Thame (May 1977; Yates 2007:40-1; Lambrick 2009). The valley floor, the gravel terraces through

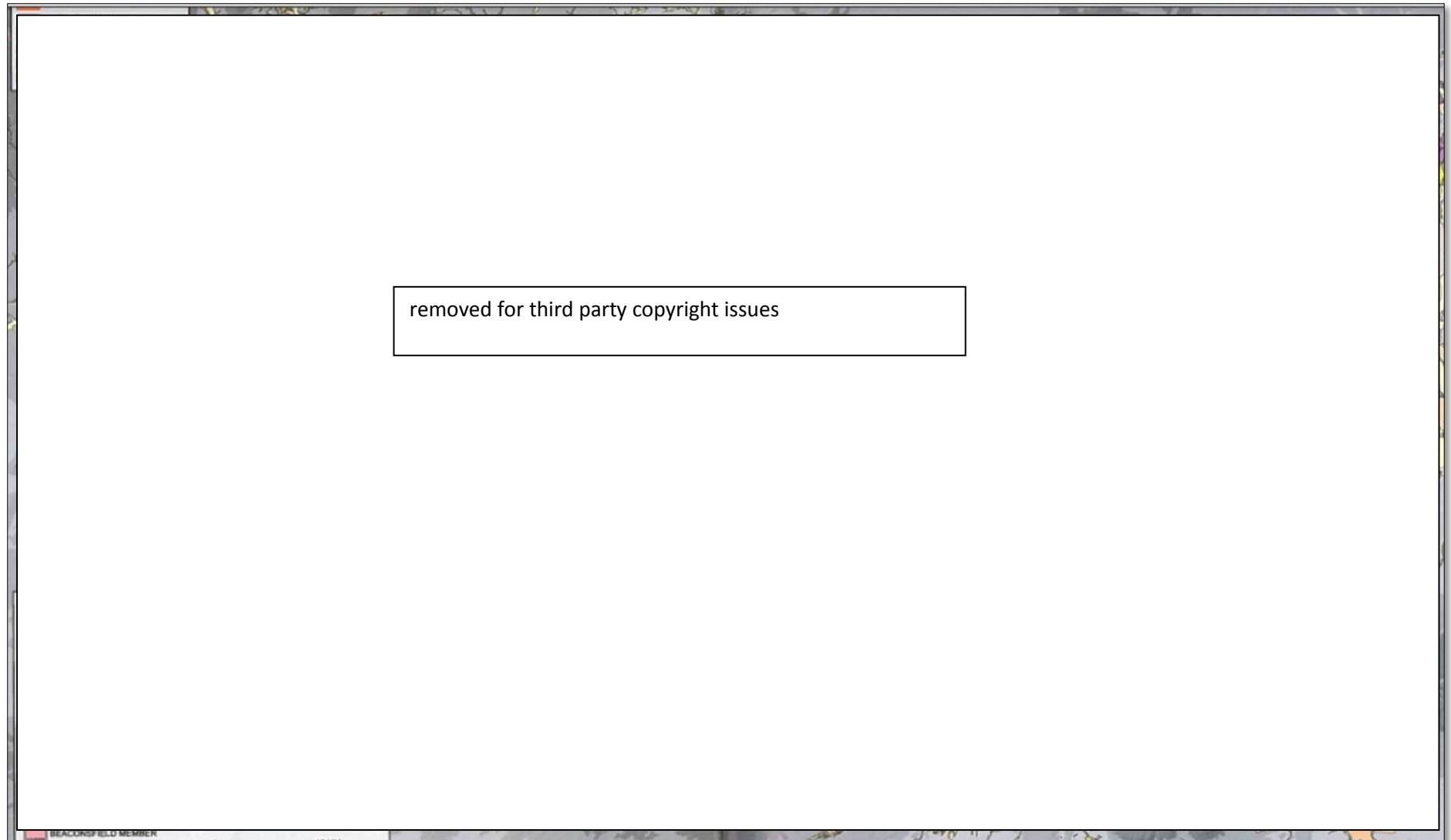


*Figure 2.2. Soils of the Upper and Middle Thames (Booth et al. 2007:4-5)*

which the river has cascaded, and the confluences of the tributaries with the main river have all proved to be areas of human exploitation for the past 5000 years. The characters of the river and the surrounding geology are broadly similar between the Upper and Middle Thames, although gravels and floodplain alluvium are far more prevalent in the drift geology west of the Goring Gap (Figure 2.2). The gravel extends up to three kilometres in width on either side of the river in both the Upper and Middle parts of the valley, but is largely absent in the Goring Gap, where the river cuts through the chalk and greensand of the Chilterns. This lack of gravel marks the dividing point between the Upper and Middle Thames, which are usually considered to be separate entities (Booth *et al.* 2007:6).

The waters of the Thames have carved their legacy into the landscape, but the river alone has not caused all of the changes to the valley. During the time span covered by this thesis, the Thames valley experienced drastic hydrological changes as a result of the intensification of agricultural activity by the end of the Bronze Age and into the Early Iron Age (Allen *et al.* 1997:118). By the Middle Iron Age, the permanent water table had risen significantly and flooding events were common; this was followed by more dramatic seasonal flooding and extensive alluviation in the Late Iron Age and for most of the Romano-British period (Lambrick 2009:33). Although the climate itself during the period from 150 BC to AD 400 was warmer and drier than previously (Lamb 1981:56), the persistence of flooding, erosion, and alluviation suggests that the environment was undergoing changes, in part almost certainly driven by anthropogenic action, that had significant impact on the lives and the landscapes of the inhabitants of these riverine settlements.

The presence of the gravel terraces and their related free-draining soils has encouraged the use and settlement of the region for millennia. These same gravel resources are also the instruments of their own destruction; a source of material since antiquity, the region has seen an exponential increase in the intensity of extraction since the beginning of the industrial era, culminating in wholesale stripping and quarrying in the later 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Although attention was called to the danger to archaeological remains posed by such intense extraction in the 1960s and 1970s (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1960; Benson & Miles 1974; Gates 1975), Taylor (1972:112) expressed concern that there was so much destruction happening to archaeological sites that there would be few sites left to record by the year 2000. Happily, and in large part due to the formation of rescue units in the 1970s and the institution of Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) in 1990, this prediction proved incorrect. In fact, the glut of information that has been derived from these sources presents us now with an unrivalled opportunity to investigate large geographic areas with massive amounts of detailed data. This bounty is not without its pitfalls, the flood of information leading to the danger of ‘drowning in data’ (Thomas 1991). Apprehension about the ability to keep up with publication and dissemination has been (Cunliffe 1990) and continues to be a point of valid concern (Bradley 2006; Cunliffe 2011a:11), and not one restricted to the Thames Valley region. Whilst there exists some optimism (Bradley 2006: 10-11; Cunliffe 2011b:204) about the future of commercial archaeology’s input to the research community, many of the sites that are only now being published were excavated decades ago; all the hindsight in the world cannot correct for poor practices and partial recording. However, despite the limitations that such instances put on the quality of some of the data, there is still such abundance that the Thames Valley is the perfect location to examine the variety in settlement assemblages.

### **2.3 The LIA in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley**

The serious study of the Iron Age in the Thames valley goes back to the investigations of Stephen Stone in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, although there had been plenty of antiquarian notice of the region prior to that (Gibson 1695; Hearne 1711). The involvement of founding contributors to the discipline of archaeology such as Pitt-Rivers (Lane Fox 1870), Rolleston (1884) and Leeds (1931) continued through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a host of local societies were established (Levine 2003:45-7) which examined, amongst other periods, the pre-

Roman remains of the Thames. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the introduction of aerial photographic survey in the region and the free-draining soils of the gravel terraces permitted pioneers such as Riley (1942;1943) and Allen (1938;1940) to record vast tracts of the archaeological landscape that were visible as earthworks and cropmarks. With the development of regional-based assessments of archaeological potential, the Thames Valley, particularly the upper part, began to be seen as an excellent location to ‘investigate settlement variation and interrelationships’ (Hingley 1984a:53).

Early on, syntheses of the region were attempted (Frere 1961; Denington & Morgan 1966; Harding 1972; Cunliffe & Miles 1984) which, with varying degrees of success, opened up discussion about the various models which might be used to understand the complexity of the period, which had been freed of the overly simplistic culture/invasion explanations of the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hawkes 1959; Clark 1966). At the heart of the new modelling was the core/periphery dichotomy and the redistributive power of the core elites (Champion 1989; Cunliffe 1991:130). These models of the Iron Age (Cunliffe 1974; 1984; Haselgrove 1984) have in turn begun to be challenged (Hill 1993; 1995; Creighton 2000), with some attempting to replace the hierarchies of the traditional model with egalitarian, communal societies (Sharples 2010; Moore & Armada 2012:48). Of course the danger here is replacing one set of generalisations with another. Moore and Armada write:

‘the divergence between areas where hierarchical models have been challenged, and where they have not, broadly reflect those archaeologists and disciplinary frameworks who regard ethnography and anthropology as helpful and those that argue instead that social models should be based on the evidence in classical texts’ (2012:46).

The past four decades have seen the region explode with new information but also with new ways of thinking about the way societies may have worked. A new series of syntheses of the Upper and Middle Thames has emerged in recent years (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick 2009; Morigi *et al.* 2011), incorporating many of these new ideas. These volumes amalgamate the data from the region and present it in a format meant to appeal to both a public and a scholarly

audience; spawned from a single corporate machine, the undertaking has had such a long gestation that they are, as Bradley writes of all syntheses, 'out of date immediately' (1996: 38). Nonetheless the Lambrick and Booth volumes will likely be the definitive influence on studies of the region for some time to come.

One of the more significant of these new lines of thought has been in the area of settlement form and spatial analysis to reconstruct communities and their organisation (Clarke 1972; Hingley 1984a). The simplistic economic function of households or smaller communities as suppliers for hierarchical elite were challenged by the recognition of the household as a social unit (T. Moore 2006:83-5). Hingley offered essentially small isolated self-sufficient social units with individual households forming the basic complete productive unit, and suggested that these individual households controlled their own means of production (Hingley 1984a; Hill 1995a; Stevens 1996:40). This blend of anthropological kinship models with Marxist economic observations permitted a shift in focus onto the individual and possible variety in communities (Lang 2008:53).

Against this backdrop of often heated discussion concerning LIA social organisation has been another equally charged debate about the degree of influence the Continent had on social and change. Whilst many retain the idea that social change was driven by contact with Continental ideas and goods (Haselgrove 1982; Cunliffe 1988; 2005), others have offered that such changes were largely motivated from within (Willis 1994; Creighton 2000; Hill 2007). The Upper Thames Valley in particular has been seen as maintaining a conservative PRIA tradition for far longer than those regions with direct Continental contacts (Haselgrove 1986a:85). Not all contact need have resulted in material imports; Allen (2000:32) has suggested that the disappearance of large storage pits on settlements may be the result of rising powerful elites, modelling themselves on continental examples of taxation, removing the need for storing great surpluses at the settlement level.

Certainly, PRIA southern Britain was no stranger to foreign commodities or cultural influences crossing the Channel from Gaul and the wider world. Trade had been passing back and forth over that stretch of sea for millennia (Cunliffe 2001; 2004; Bourgeois & Talon 2009; Needham 2009). Closer to the period in discussion, the traffic in objects and ideas is also highly likely to have included the re-location of some Continental peoples to the shores and interior of southern Britain in the form of a group that we must assume, thanks to Caesar and Roman nomenclature, were a Gaulish entity known as the Belgae (regardless if that is a term they would have used to describe themselves or not!). The history of the Belgic presence as an observable archaeological event is a long and convoluted one, and will not be elaborated upon here (but see Cunliffe 2005:6-10). The main point is that although cultural contact with new ideas and transformative technologies (the rotary quern, the potter's wheel) had been going on for some time, none had such an apparently jarring effect as direct contact with the Roman military and administrative machine.

What is clear is the fact that sweeping generalisations (e.g., the Upper Thames is a conservative region) no longer hold up in the face of so much new information. Homogeneity of settlement structure has now been called into question (Haselgrove 1995; Moore 2006; Barrett *et al.* 2012), although no single satisfactory model for the variability has been put forward. The LIA of southern central Britain and, by extension, the Thames Valley in particular may not be understood by only viewing the entire area as one region but rather by also looking at the 'sub-regional or local level' (Barrett *et al.* 2012:443). At such levels, Haselgrove suggested the personal nature of power could 'go far towards explaining the observed variability of British sites' (1995:86). Although there do appear to be regional trends, there is also sufficient variation to suspect that there were significant social and cultural differences between communities (Haselgrove 2004:19).

## **2.4 Early Roman Upper and Middle Thames Valley**

The Thames Valley has been integral to the study of Roman Britain, not least because of the significant role of the river as a major route-way into the hinterlands of southern central Britain. The region is also criss-crossed with a network of LIA trackways which in many cases are made more substantial in the Roman period (Taylor 2007:66; Booth 2011). The Upper Thames Valley has produced a wide range of aerial photographic and excavated evidence for Roman-period rural settlements and extensive agricultural use for the period (Miles & Jones 1979; Miles 1984; Allen *et al.* 1993; Fenner 1994; Boyle *et al.* 1998; Henig & Booth 2000; Holbrook 2006; Miles *et al.* 2007). A variety of factors such as the nature of the soils, woodland cover, intense development, and flying restrictions have impeded the recovery of comparable evidence for much of the Middle Thames (King 2004:358; Booth *et al.* 2007: 10), yet there is still a growing body of excavated evidence for that region (Jefferson 2003; Framework Archaeology 2006; Carew *et al.* 2006; Hayman *et al.* 2012; Allen *et al.* forthcoming).

Many settlements in the Upper and Middle Thames underwent reorganisation in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century; this reconfiguration will have been carried out by the inhabitants themselves, and so reflects to some degree personal choice, a factor which must be significant (Smith 1978; Rippengal 1993: 93). Although 'native-type settlements in the Upper Thames Valley during the early Roman period are often identified by the presence of rectangular enclosures' (Meadows 1999:62), in reality, any distinction between very LIA and early post-Conquest settlements is difficult to see in the archaeology; it has even been suggested that the Roman conquest is 'archaeologically invisible on the gravels' (Lambrick 1992: 105). This in many ways should be seen, given the past experiences in the study of Roman Britain, as liberating rather than confining. Without the framework of an historical narrative, the material evidence can begin to speak for itself.

When Hingley pointed out (1989: 4-5; 1990c:76) that the focus of Romano-British settlement studies was concentrated on villas as opposed to rural settlement, he was correct for the time.



Like a man searching for lost keys under a lamppost, archaeologists were seeking to understand the character of Roman Britain in the villas, not because the answer was necessarily there, but because it was where the light was being shed. This imbalance in evidence and excavation was also lamented by others (Miles 1989: 115; Millet 1990; Branigan 1991: 92; Clarke 1998: 28). The introduction of PPG16 (described earlier in the text) inadvertently redressed this inequity by providing a glut of rural settlement data. Yet the same model —distinguishing the settlements by apparent wealth (Hingley 1990c:75) —was often being employed.

A noticeable difference between the Upper (particularly the extreme upper end of the river and its related Cotswold uplands) and Middle Thames Valley is the paucity of villa establishments in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Robinson proposed that a high population density along with a fossilised system of land use prevented later development of large scale villas (1992a: 60). Conversely, Hingley (1984a; 1988: 95) has argued that the Upper Thames Valley was inhabited by social groups whose more egalitarian arrangement created ties to the community at large which diminished the attractiveness of Roman-style settlement organisation in the decades after the conquest. Although based at the time upon examinations of cropmarks and a few rescue visits, subsequent intense fieldwork has not proven Hingley's model to be incorrect *per se*. Excavations have demonstrated that there was probably much more distinction between settlement organisation in the region (Allen 2000: 13-4; Henig & Booth 2000: 105; Miles *et al.* 2007; Powell *et al.* 2007; Powell *et al.* 2009). Yet the strength of Hingley's argument lay in positing a landscape not solely dominated by hierarchical social structures with a uniform desire to adopt Roman-influenced practices.

The survival of rural settlements on the Thames Valley gravels has been attributed by Fulford to the degree of romanization (1992:27-9); he observes that sites without visible signs of a romanizing influence on settlement structure were those which were established in the earlier Iron Age and which did not survive into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, whilst sites which were established in the LIA survived and showed evidence of embracing romanized material. Fulford does indeed

raise a valid question: why do some settlements survive, indeed thrive, after conquest and why are some abandoned? However, his generalisation based upon chronology and degree of romanization carry a danger of making the argument circular. A more nuanced model is required to seek the answer (see Chapter 5.2.1).

## **2.5 Romanization – the on-going debate**

*‘The Roman Conquest was, however, a Good Thing since the Britons were only natives at the time.’*

*(Sellar & Yeatman 1930:11)*

If there is only one constant in archaeology, it is that each age of scholars rushes in a new theory to discredit the old. Gibbon’s vision of the Roman Empire was torn down in 1912 by Haverfield, who wrote of Rome’s past:

‘The old theory of an age of despotism and decay has been overthrown, and the believer in human nature can now feel confident that, whatever their limitations, the men of the Empire wrought for the betterment and the happiness of the world’ (1912:9-10).

Even half a century after Haverfield, these ideas were hard to change; the Romans were still considered to have ‘improved the lot of the Britons’ (Frere 1967: 342). The Roman Empire was in many ways archetypal, and often forms a ‘cognitive model’ (Woolf 2001) for understanding both pre-Roman and subsequent empires. Although the benefits of empire are almost always more heavily weighted on the side of those who rule, there are undoubted attractions to many of those who willingly collaborate and who become incorporated into the ever-shifting, all-consuming mass that is an empire. At the heart of the debate was the issue of *humanitas* - that ‘set of ideals to which all men might aspire’ (Woolf, 1998), the very virtue of being Roman which carried with it ‘moral and cultural obligations’ (Woolf, 2001). Therefore, it was incumbent upon the Romans to shine this light of civilisation upon all the less fortunate and barbaric lands, ‘recruiting them to an empire in which they now had a share’ (Woolf, 2001). It is no coincidence that this view of Roman cultural contact bears a similar theme to the ‘White man’s burden’ philosophy of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For over a century, this model of glorious Rome civilising the barbaric world was a plausible one. However, by the late 1980s, a sea change in Roman studies was to occur; just as Haverfield had discounted Gibbon, a host of scholars were prepared to undo Haverfield's vision. Fuelled in part by a post-colonial and post-imperial perception of the modern world, some archaeologists began to rewrite the definition of romanization (Millett 1990a; 1990b; Whittaker 1997:149; Freeman 1993; Woolf 1998). In this new view, to varying degrees, the indigenous populations had more of a hand in the romanization process; it is important to note that the actual view of 'romanization' had not significantly altered. Others began to argue for a re-assessment of the term (Hingley 1989; 1991; 1993; 1994; 1997; 2000; Clarke 1996; Cooper 1996; Barrett 1997; Mattingly 1997), replacing a concept deemed 'intellectually lazy' (Mattingly 2006:xii) with more complex concepts such as identity and resistance to domination. Some even postulated that the term Romanization should be removed entirely and replaced with words like 'creolization'<sup>1</sup> (Hawkes 1999; Webster 2001), 'globalisation' (Hingley 2005a), and 'hybridization' (Carr 2002; Redfern & DeWitte 2011).

Far from the view of the beneficent Empire, scholars now were discussing the agency of the native elite; cultural incorporation may often have begun by some well-placed individuals as a placatory form of imitation, but reached the masses as a 'residue of the years of occupation' (Morkot 2001:240). The lure of *humanitas*, whether a sincere gift of Rome, or as a pretext (Hanson 1997), also proved to be a strong motivator, for who would not want to appear, as Woolf wryly observed, 'cultivated, enlightened, and humane' (1998:55)? Economic benefits were equally likely influences for change; entrepreneurial craftsmen who now had access to wider markets might tailor their products to be more pleasing to the larger imperial customer base. After a period of occupation and sustained contact, Britons might actually have felt that the 'new' styles belonged to them as well. One would be advised to remember that the term 'Roman' serves to identify material that was used in Britain during the time of Roman

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<sup>1</sup> Webster's use of creolization focussed only the under-privileged, which can be just as misleading as focussing only on the elites.

administration, not material that was Roman in origin (Freeman 1993:444; Cooper 1996:86; Jones 1997:36). The material culture of 'conquered populations' has begun to be seen as remaining indigenous even when adopted from and adapted to external elements (Hingley 1996:42). Similarly, if new products were consumed, but used in 'non-Roman' ways, can they no longer be considered 'Roman' artefacts? Consumption of Roman products does not necessarily equate to the consumption of those products in a Roman manner <sup>2</sup>(Woolf 1998:176; Miller 1997).

Although new approaches to the study of Roman Britain have begun to re-write the way we think about romanization, for many, it still seems to be regarded through the 'trickle-down' economic model, in which elites acquire Roman goods which eventually saturate the market to the point that the 'plebs' can also experience these products. A paucity of such goods on a given site has often been explained as native resistance (Carr 2002; Mattingly 2006; Hingley 1997) whereas rapid changes in the assemblage of a site are explained by acculturation (Millett 1990a; 1990b; Fulford 1992). Even the view of romanization as the saviour of the savage has still not entirely faded from the discourse:

'During late prehistory, progressive economic forces were at work, even while a regenerative, recurrent worldview was maintained. The economic changes were not reflected in social expression through material culture until the end of the Iron Age. The newer progressive view could be equated with Romanization' (Wilson 2008:309).

The problem with seeing romanization as a deliberate process is that it allows archaeologists and others to treat a very significant transition as a mechanical procedure:

'The site was romanized early in its history, which is not surprising since the Dobunni were pro-Roman and quickly adopted Roman ways<sup>3</sup>' (Shawyer 1999:59).

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<sup>2</sup> Miller offers an ethnographic example of an exotic import (Coca-Cola) to Trinidad, where the product goes through a transformation from an emblem of Americanization to one of localisation, a transition through which it has lost most of its foreign connotations and attributes.

<sup>3</sup> There are two things which are overly simplistic in this statement; the issue of the tribal identities will be addressed in Chapter 9.

This sounds less like the social and cultural behaviour of individual human beings and more like the paving over of a landscape by a Roman machine. As long as we persist in this type of simplistic view, 'we fail to come to grips with the fact that in studying Roman Britain we are presented with a highly complex, changing, and perhaps above all, a highly stratified society' (Rippengal 1996:232-3). This study seeks to help rectify this by offering a more complex model for a complex world.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

The study of interaction between the inhabitants of southern Britain and the expanding Roman Empire during the century before and after the commencement of the first millennium AD has been fraught with difficulty for decades. Divested of its political and reflexive baggage with the end of modern imperialism and the hyper-compensation of post-colonialism, the archaeology of this period can perhaps look for new ways to see the shifting power negotiations and social changes that were taking place. Certainly there exists now a staggering (if not overwhelming) body of data with which to address the problem. The following chapter will elucidate the methodology used during this search for a different way in to the material.

## **CHAPTER 3                      THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY**

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### **3.1     Introduction**

As outlined in the previous chapter, recognising and thinking about variation in the rural LIA material culture is integral to forming a picture of the responses of individual communities to the growing influence of the Roman Empire in Britain. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework, namely the application of Cultural Theory to the data. Subsequent sections explain the decisions taken with regard to study area's spatial and temporal limits, how data was collected and to what use it was put. Herein also is defined the concept of the 'synergistic assemblage' and how this approach may produce a more precise picture of community, and thereby social structure. Specific aspects of the artefact types are then outlined.

### **3.2     Mapping social structure: Cultural Theory and Grid/Group dynamics**

*'Roman Britain was an outpost of the Classical world, where anthropological or sociological theories and their accompanying jargon, introduced from the shadowy and depersonalized world of prehistory, have little place.'*

*(Frere 1988)*

It has been stated in Chapter 2 that the study of LIA/ER Britain has received a variety of theoretical treatments over the decades. It seems that nearly every generation produces a new theoretical framework, drawn from a related social science, that tears down what went before, a linear march of 'theoretical evolution', working toward the theory of 'life, the universe, and everything' (Adams 1979). Sadly, this has created a Sargasso Sea of social science theory, where the discarded detritus of past thoughts lie abandoned. In many cases, as I have argued elsewhere (Morrison forthcoming), the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. In the determination to pluck something 'new' from other disciplines and apply it to archaeology, valuable 'old' ideas have been cast aside or even largely ignored due to their relationship to a

discarded framework. It is in this context that I will introduce the potential of structuralist anthropologist Mary Douglas's Cultural Theory or 'grid/group' theory. Firstly, the underpinnings of Douglas's work and its applications in archaeology will be reviewed along with the main argument for the importance of public and private self-identification in the assignment of 'social structure type' within the bounds of Cultural Theory. The strength and weakness of Lévi-Strauss' structure of binary opposition will be touched upon, alongside a review of the current anti-structuralist arguments in archaeology. Having established which elements of binary opposition are useful and which are not, the role of diagonal opposition is defined.

### **3.2.1 What is Cultural Theory?**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the identity of the LIA/ER inhabitants of Britain has been under much scrutiny and theorization. Archaeologically, however, the concept of identity is a thorny one; contemplating the identities of people long dead is ever fraught with difficulty. Some have gone as far as to suggest that this branch of investigation is a dead end: 'Identity is beyond the reach of archaeology' (Brather 2002:174). Yet our understanding of the events and social structures of the past would be better if we could know how people viewed themselves in their world. One discipline which 'has a lot to say about identity' is sociology (Craib 1986:1) and it is from this realm that many archaeologists have aligned their theoretical orientation. Possibly one of the most commonly relied upon theories from this discipline derives from the work of Anthony Giddens (1979; 1984; 1986; 1991). Gardner (2001:48) summarises the crux of Giddens' structuration theory as 'the relationship between (social) structure and (individual) agency, these being viewed as a duality rather than a dualism (i.e. mutually embedded in a recursive relationship rather than dichotomously opposed)'. Given that I wholeheartedly embrace both the recursive nature of Janusian thought and the polythetic treatment of assemblages to soften dichotomies (see 3.3.4), one might be forgiven for wondering why Giddens' structuration does not form the theoretical framework of this research. Indeed, Giddens' 'ontology of the social'

(Bryant & Jary 2001:45) was designed to illuminate both 'how actors are at the same time the creators of social systems, yet created by them' (Giddens 1991: 204).

Whilst we can only rarely know the individual in archaeology (Hodder 2000: 31), neither do we need to only construct our narratives on the large scale. Indeed, looking at the micro scale brings us much closer to the archaeology of the quotidian. Murphy (1978:239) rightly applauded that 'the discipline has stepped back from its macro institutional preoccupations and is finding new universes to explore within the micro-domain of everyday life'. Structuration tries to 'bridge the gap between the micro and macro levels of analysis' (Gardner 2004:34). Given that structuration has been embraced by so many and put to such good use by archaeologists, why not use it here? One of the main criticisms of Giddens is that he does not acknowledge the formation of conditions for actions taken, nor the conditions which allow actors to 'cope successfully with unintended consequences' (Bryant & Jary 2001:17-8). Others have argued that in the face of empirical analysis, structuration is too simplistic (Pred 1986:9; Craib 1998: 62-74; Moore 2006:1; Linsley & Shrives 2009: 497). Additionally, although describing his 'structure' in structuration as consisting of 'rules and resources' (1984:xxxi), Giddens never seems to explore the 'resources' side of things, ignoring 'the interplay between cultural rules and material resources that determine the direction of social change' (Scott 2007: 90). It is precisely this interplay which is integral to examining cultural transitions. The shortcomings of structuration as a theoretical framework for this kind of work are summed up by Craib:

'What [Giddens] leaves us with is a theory of simple complication. It is complicated because he identifies a lot that must be taken account of: the agent and the agent's unconscious ..., the process of structuration and the duality of structures, time-space constitution, reproduction and related ideas such as presence availability and so on. It is simple in that the result is a series of generalizing and descriptive concepts which are simply aligned with each other. It is difficult not to see the concepts of structuration and the duality of structures as a verbal solution to the rocky problems that have broken the major theoretical systems of sociology from structural functionalism to Marxism' (1986:73).

This is not to wholly discount Giddens and structuration; as Craib lists, many concepts are thought about and problems raised that require addressing. Unfortunately, Giddens papers over



many of the cracks without actually resolving anything. His desire to blend structure and agency has been diluted, at least in archaeological discussions, to an elevation of agency to primacy (Moore 2006:1). Gardner (2001; 2004) has made a good work of modifying and enhancing Giddens by introducing the further dimensions of temporality and materiality to the social element, but it seems to me that this line of thinking had already been explored from a slightly different angle by Mary Douglas (1970; 1982) and subsequently Michael Thompson (1982; 1990) and Aaron Wildavsky (1987) in other disciplines. That alternative is Cultural Theory. Giddens' repetition (1984: 14-37) and the habitus of Bourdieu (1977) focus on daily 'practices', which may be constrained by many factors, including semiotics, ideologies, traditions or identities (Shennan 1993:58; Pauketat 2010:140). All these influences and meanings were seen by Douglas to be explained by social structure (Hendry 1999: 559), the formation and nature of which is shaped by the worldview of the agents.

At this point, the concept of worldview should be defined, as it will feature prominently in subsequent discussion. A worldview — or *eine Weltanschauung* as Kant put it — (Naugle 2002:59), is a concept enveloping one's beliefs and impressions which allow one to make sense of the world around us and to figure out how to act accordingly in it. The definition has been expanded upon over time, and now is generally understood to be 'an all-encompassing philosophy of life, composed of a personal or a social ideology'<sup>4</sup> (*ibid.*:64). The Oxford English Dictionary defines worldview as a 'set of fundamental beliefs, values, etc., determining or constituting a comprehensive outlook on the world; a perspective on life'. This can be understood as a concept of the world held by either an individual or a group and it is in the spirit of this definition that the term will be used in the following chapters.

In trying to compare the conditions for the existence of different kinds of worldviews, Douglas (1970, 1982, 1986, 1994, 1998) developed a matrix model, called grid/group (Figure 3.1). The

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<sup>4</sup> For comprehensive review of the uses of *Weltanschauung* and 'worldview' in philosophy, sociology, and theology, see Naugle 2002; Naugle's purpose, however, is to advance an argument for appropriating the terms for use in the Christian Evangelical movement.

grid axis of the matrix inversely corresponds to the degree of autonomy an individual has over the selection of their role(s) in society - the 'dimension of individuation' (Douglas 1982a: 190). For example, gender or age may restrict an individual to a limited set of social roles. A high-grid position indicates that there social roles are rigidly fixed; a low-grid position designates a society where individuals have more freedom to choose their social roles. As the grid decreases, one can expect boundaries to become increasingly weak, and subject to arbitration among increasingly competitive individuals (McLeod 1982:138).

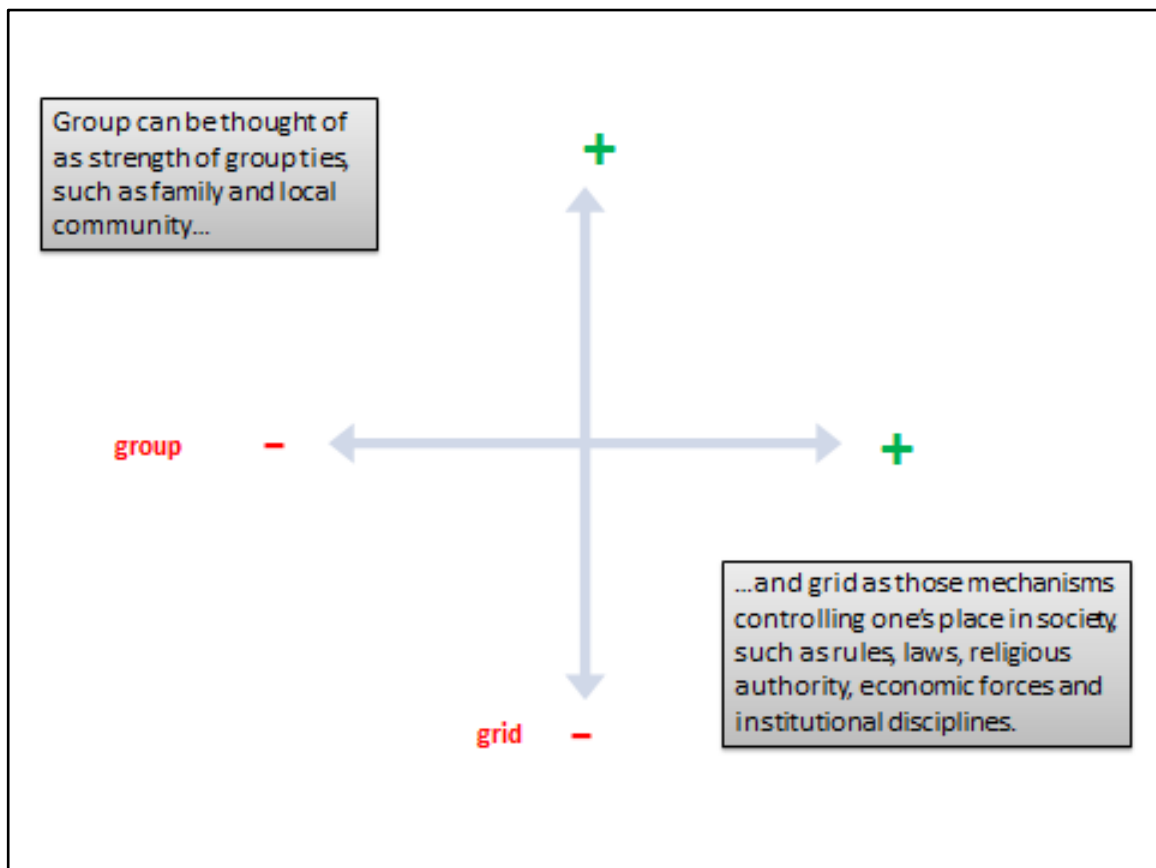


Figure 3.1. The relationship between grid and group expressed as a matrix

The group dimension is connected with an individual's commitment to their community, what Douglas describes as the degree of social incorporation (*ibid.*). Individuals in the high-group position are tightly bonded by loyalty to others in the group (and the notion of the group itself); low-group individuals are more 'free agents' and 'there may be little cohesion between the actors and a limited sense of interdependence' (Linsley & Shrives 2009: 501). Ultimately, the

grid/group matrix forms four distinct cultural groups, or worldviews: individualists, egalitarians, hierarchists and fatalists (see Figure 3.2). In its simplest terms, grid/group offers possible answers to the questions ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What can I do?’ (Tansey & O’Riordan 1999: 78).

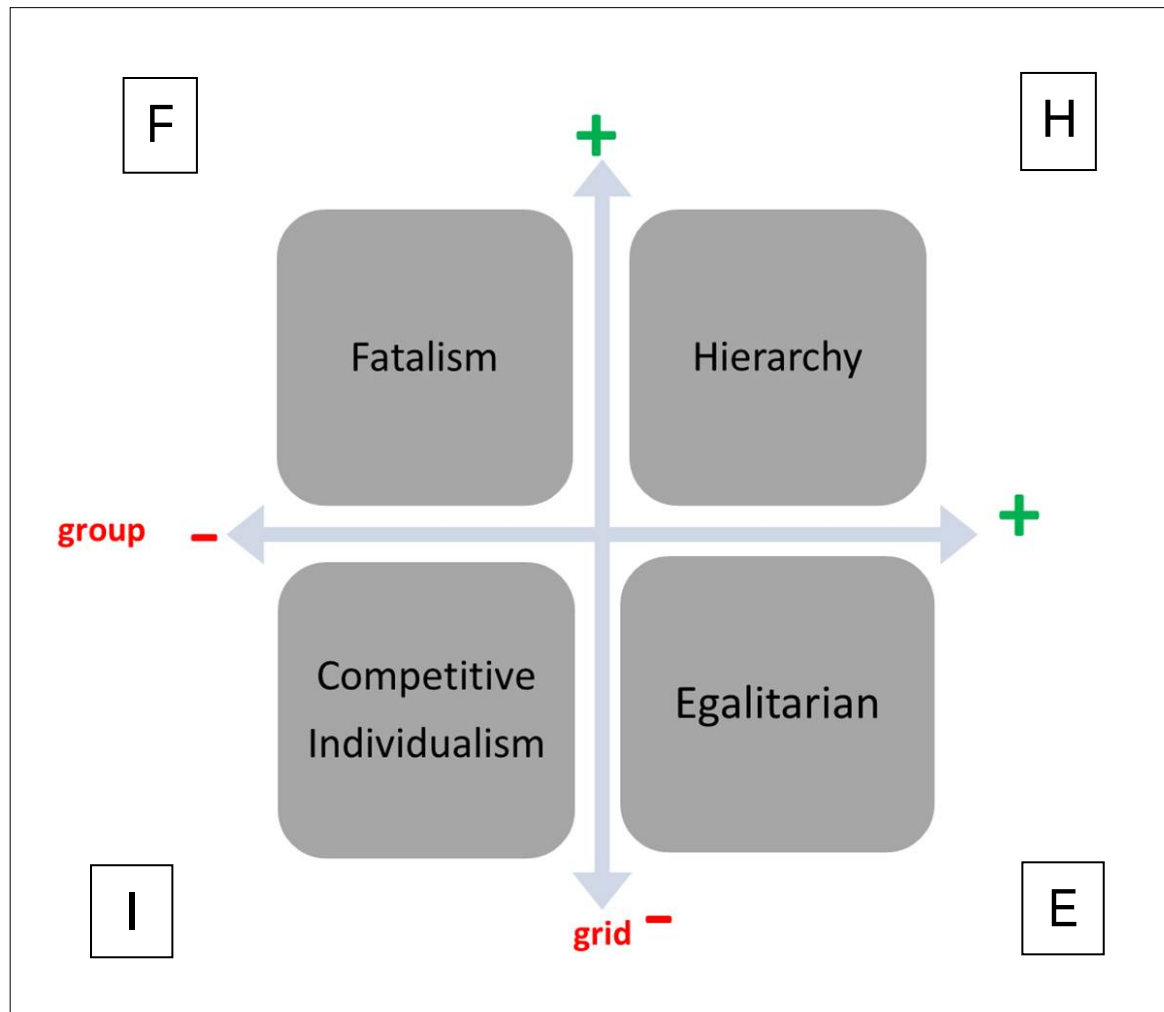


*Figure 3.2. The grid/group matrix with 'worldview types' depicted*

Each of these types of societal structures relate to specific ways of viewing the world. Figure 3.2 illustrates the matrix in terms of these worldviews; a letter designation has been assigned to each quadrant and for the remainder of this text, these solitary letters will refer to the particular type of community. Below I will describe their characteristics in brief, but more will be said about them both in Chapter 5 and in the chapters dealing with the case studies (6-8).

**E –Egalitarian (weak grid, strong group)**

Ideally this group has little or no internal differentiation. All members have equal say over the decisions taken by the group<sup>5</sup>. With no strong voice, internal conflicts are rarely resolved with ease. Self-regulation in the group exists by threat of expulsion – no one has the authority to make laws or mandates. Due to the seriousness of the only mechanism for discipline, disagreements are often internalized and hidden, leading to factionalism and splitting. Group boundaries and membership are strongly defined. (a commune)

**H –Hierarchy (strong grid, strong group)**

This group is defined by strong group boundaries and a rigid system of rules and social controls. Everyone knows his place within the social order and there is loyalty to the group regardless of station within it. Tiered authority allows for a variety of disciplinary options, allowing for easy resolution of internal conflict. (an Edwardian household)

**I – Individualist (weak grid, weak group)**

Individuals in this type of community have very weak bonds holding them as a collective and loyalties can shift rapidly. The rule of the day is opportunism, with each individual succeeding or failing by their own merit. Controls are also weak, although there may be several individuals at any time vying for overall influence of the remainder. (Big Man society)

**F – Fatalist (strong grid, weak group)**

Fatalists fall outside of any true group identity but unlike Individualists, they are controlled from outside their sphere of influence. There are strong restrictions on behaviour and there may be very little personal choice permitted in their lives. (prison population)

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<sup>5</sup> However, it is understood ‘that so-called egalitarian societies are rife with inequalities’ (Sassaman 2010:171).

Technically, the zero-point — the nodal confluence of the diagram—is the realm of the individual who neither exerts control over others, nor is controlled himself. He exists without group affiliation and without any imposition of rules. This space is occupied by the Hermit/Recluse. However, this category is usually exempted from applications of Cultural Theory because of the rarity of the condition or because it is too difficult to comprehend the worldview of total social withdrawal<sup>6</sup>. Douglas writes ‘Pusillanimously, I prefer to leave the hermit off the map of social controls, crediting him with full escape’ (1982b:11).

Douglas postulated that communities inhabiting each quadrant of the matrix had reached a consensus (subject to change) ‘about the best kind of society to live in’ and ‘about the good life and right behaviour’ (1982b:7). Of what her theory could do, Douglas wrote:

It means that most values and beliefs can be analysed as part of society instead of as a separate cultural sphere. [It] does not mean that an individual's values are not freely his own. It does not substitute sociological for economic determinism. But what the theory does mean is that the number of cultural packages among which people choose when they settle for any particular kind of social environment is limited. When one chooses how one wants to be dealt with and how to deal with others, it is just as well to be clear as to what else may be unintentionally chosen. Each inhabitable part of the grid/group diagram has got its own miseries and compensations. The theory predicts or explains which intellectual strategies are useful for survival in a particular pattern of social relations. (1982b:7)

In no sense was Cultural Theory ever meant to be the definitive answer to all social structure. Humans, separately or collectively are far too complex to be stuffed into a box; at any given time, Douglas writes, ‘all four types [of cultural bias are] competing with one another’ (1998:96).

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<sup>6</sup> But see Thompson 1990:29-33 and Mitleton-Kelly 2004:14-23 for a less fleeting sociological treatment of the Hermit.

### **3.2.2 Criticisms of Cultural Theory**

Several decades have passed since Douglas first suggested the grid/group organization of social structures; it is a tribute to the dynamism of the model that it has evolved and changed much over that time. Thus, even in her own writings, the Cultural Theory of *Natural Symbols* (1970) is radically different, indeed from some perspectives contradictory, to the theory presented in *In the Active Voice* (1982). Essentially, she made a leap from 'structuralism to ethnomethodology' (Spickard 1989:152). Douglas could appear to be far from consistent - positions of group and grid in the matrix as well as the strength of their interdependency change from year to year (Fardon 1999: 111-12; Spickard 1989). Earlier versions of her theory tried to organize cosmology, but she later abandoned this and concentrated on ideology, a far more productive and successful application. Some criticism has focused on her apparent reversal in the definition of Fatalists; in *Cultural Bias* (Douglas 1978) she offers a repressed slave population as an example of this type, while in *Missing Persons* (Douglas & Ney 1998) she claims that the Fatalists (or Isolates) are the 'freest' because they are not trying to organise anything. Other criticisms revolve around the confusion created by her changing the axes on her matrix between publications (Sharples 2010:293). Above all, critics of grid/group theory were troubled by the potential to force societies into the extreme definitions of the four quadrants. Indeed, these might produce caricatures of societies along pre-determined lines. But as Cultural Theory has flown Douglas' nest and taken up residence in economics, sociology, risk management, and even archaeology, it has been changed and adapted in ways that have spoken to many of her early critics – sharp dichotomies are softened through polythetic criteria.

Over the years, Douglas's approach in *Natural Symbols* particularly has drawn much criticism; a general disdain for grand narratives led to many post-modern anthropologists turning away from Douglas' theories on principle (Fardon 1999:209). Many dissenting voices argued that the model is largely deterministic and static. Douglas (1999:412) herself acknowledged these criticisms and set about explaining how researchers such as Aaron Wildavsky and Michael

Thompson had begun testing the method's applications in risk management and were discovering that all four types of worldview were present in any community, but that they were in constant struggle for the 'main voice', thus dynamising the static model. The matrix is meant to be 'a diagram of *possible* social environments, across which an individual may move' (Douglas 1982c: xxiv).

Another criticism of Cultural Theory is that it is deterministic and ignores individual agency (Tansey & O'Riordan, 1999). However, Rayner (1992) suggests that even though Douglas supports the notion that structures in societies will *tend* to suggest the behaviour of individuals based upon their worldviews, she acknowledges the possibility that one cannot completely anticipate how individuals will behave in every situation. Hendry (1999) has overcome the notion that Cultural Theory cannot be applied in situations where an individual may belong to multiple groups with differing worldviews (such as attending a hierarchical church whilst at the same time being a member of an egalitarian club). In such a case, the individual could be expected to have a lesser degree of commitment to the group that is furthest from his personal ideology. This embraces the concept of the personal and social 'selves', which is to say, the public and private faces of identity.

Use of Cultural Theory seems best suited for conditions where comparisons can 'be drawn from societies that differ only in some respects while being culturally or temporally close' (Fardon 1999: 115-16). In this light, the LIA/ER south of Britain seems ideal.

### **3.2.3 Applications in archaeology**

Whilst the work of Mary Douglas in collaboration with Baron Isherwood on consumption, communication and the 'world of goods' (1978) has received some attention from archaeologists in the recent past (Hingley 1984a; Woolf 1998), the potential for archaeological applications of Douglas' grid/group analysis have been slow in coming. All but ignored by Douglas herself, the possibilities have been recognised by a few archaeologists for some time

(Gosden 2004; Gregory 2004; Hulin 2006). Most recently, Niall Sharples (2010) has utilised grid/group organization to explore some themes in the social structure of Bronze Age Wessex, albeit imperfectly. Sharples give the impression of misreading Cultural Theory and in addition to superficially grafting it onto the end of the monograph, he goes about things in such a way that the result appears to be simply self-affirming rather than truly analytical. His use of hierarchical and big man society as synonymous (2010:307) suggest his misunderstanding of Douglas's matrix, reducing the utility of 'life in four dimensions' to only two; he offers us a one-dimensional contrast between hierarchists and egalitarians, with little scope for flexibility between them<sup>7</sup>. Differences in social structure should not be thought of as simply 'hierarchy versus egalitarian'; this discounts one at the expense of the other, and in any case the uniformity of structure is highly unlikely. But despite this criticism, Sharples' work is certainly a useful opening for bringing Cultural Theory to the archaeological table and is already generating discussion. Recently, Moore and Armada (2012:48) have suggested that research into the interrelationship between communities may benefit 'from exploration of alternative concepts'. They call for 'a move to more diverse models rather than static archetypes'. In the same volume, J.D. Hill proposes that for understanding the social complexity of the British Iron Age, a 'potentially useful tool is to follow Niall Sharples' suggestions of using Mary Douglas's notion of grid and group' (Hill 2012:260).

Economic theories can tell us how the people of Britain got the materials that they wanted; Cultural Theory can help explain why they may have wanted them. Asking this question allows us to contemplate the worldview of the people being studied. The archaeologist can utilise the relationship between choice and ways of life (Giddens' *lifeworlds*: Scott 2007:83) by inverting the 'means-end reasoning chain' (Thompson *et al.* 1990: 57); that is, rather than deducing preferences from ways of life, we can begin to speculate about ways of life based upon preferences. Giddens (1984:12-3) and Merton before him (1936) maintained that unintended

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<sup>7</sup> Sharples has since demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the two dimension at work, but in a semi-facetious manner as he explores the grid and group of 'historically important figures working on British Iron Age material' (2012:677).



consequences play a key role in social organisation; in forming social structures, individuals make any number of commitments, both by design and in unanticipated ways. Yet whilst 'preferences emerge as unintended consequences of attempting to organise social life in a particular way' (Thompson *et al.* 1990:57), this should not be seen as a way of relegating choice-making to the realm of the unconscious. If preference formation is unintended, acting upon those preferences or deliberately changing them is not. If preferences can be patterned from the structure of the social organisation, then the inverse relationship should be explored. However, if pre-determined (even unintended) preferences seem to eliminate the free will of the agent, one should not forget that the act of *choosing* is still very much embodied in the individual; one is free to capitulate to ones preferences or to re-define or disguise oneself by changing those preferences.

If we can deduce social structure from choices, this has real potential archaeologically, where often all that remains are the fragments of material choices. After discovering *what* people have chosen, we can use Cultural Theory to explore *why* they may have chosen it.

In understanding how communities see the same world differently, we can begin also to think about how they may react differently to similar events. For example, if a ship is sinking, those with a hierarchical worldview may prioritise who gets to the lifeboats first (women and children first, or less nobly, upper class first). Egalitarians might simply go with a 'first come, first served' approach to filling the lifeboats, whilst Individualists take a sharp-elbowed 'every man for himself' attitude. The Fatalist may decide that the struggle to survive is futile and elect to stay on board, reasoning that they would just as soon die on the sinking boat than in the freezing water or starving in a lost lifeboat. Four different worldviews, four different choices. Whilst neither as simplistic nor overtly dramatic as a sinking ship, the transition from the Late Iron Age into the period of Roman influence in Britain was an event that demanded a response. Cultural Theory may allow us to understand why that response was so varied, in a more complex and nuanced way than the traditional resistance or assimilation model. Nonetheless,

caution must be taken in interpreting the archaeology solely through this lens of Cultural Theory. In a passage that reads rather like a warning to me about this very thesis, Douglas writes 'However fully we accept that people use domestic space to express distinction, it would still be hazardous to deduce these orders from the material remains alone' (1972:514).

Admittedly, there is a certain subjectivity involved in the use of the theory as applied to the archaeological data. That is to say, in assigning a space on the grid/group matrix, one is forced to make some subjective decisions. There is in fact a great danger, should one blithely ignore the problem, of shoe-horning sites in to boxes according to the narrative one wishes to tell. However, if one is aware of this danger and attempts to police oneself diligently then there should be no more subjectivity involved in the application of grid/group than exists in much of the post excavation and synthetic work currently produced. Indeed, one might argue that *all* archaeological interpretation is forced to be subjective to some degree.

### **3.3 Creating assemblages – specialism or synergy?**

*'Whatever has grown to greater size is more easily identified if it is broken up into parts; but the parts, as I have remarked, must not be countless in number and diminutive in size. For over-analysis is faulty in precisely the same way as no analysis at all; whatever you cut so fine that it becomes dust is as good as blended into a mass again.'*

*(Seneca, Epistle LXXXIX)*

Can any object exist in isolation<sup>8</sup>? As vessels of past experience, objects are cognitive innovation made manifest in the physical realm. Once created, an object no longer simply expresses the culmination of an individual's creativity and technical skill. Pregnant with possibility, the object becomes an ambassador in a universe of interactions. Imbued with all the qualities, signs, and meanings imposed by its creator at the point of technological completion,

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<sup>8</sup> Having asked this, can any *settlement* exist in isolation? Although the classification of the rural settlement evidence might be seen as implying a removal of inter-settlement relationships and social structures, such is not my intent. Indeed, hierarchical sites are likely to have junior or senior partner sites linked to them (e.g. p243) whilst sites with differing worldviews would still have to function within the broader regional social structure. For further discussion of this, see Chapter 9.3.

the object then is free to form diverse relationships with other objects and people with whom it comes into contact, re-shaping and re-defining those qualities and meanings at each encounter.

Although perhaps having lain dormant in the earth for centuries or millennia, artefacts cannot be seen as fossils of creativity; the object springs to 'life' at the point of contact, that is, at the moment of excavation. Objects recovered from archaeological contexts have gone without interaction for long years, but excavation gives them a second opportunity to form new relationships both with people (the excavators) and other objects (other artefacts in the assemblage). It is this new interaction that the archaeologist must interpret; the past cannot be revisited. Therefore, the way in which these assemblages are formed is of great importance.

For a long time, archaeologists have made a practice of dividing up site reports into two main parts: the front section which contains the overarching purpose of the excavation with its main results, along with external comparanda and discussions and the back half, where the artefacts themselves are further subdivided and reported on. As an organisational system, it seems to work. However, the problem has been that with few exceptions (Lambrick and Allen 2005; Barrett *et al.* 2000; Crummy 1983; Cool 2007) the grouping of the artefacts has largely been based upon the material from which the artefacts were manufactured. Each type of object is, particularly in commercial units, whisked away to a specialist, often outsourced to persons who are unfamiliar with the site and have only the vaguest notion of the context (theoretical, not to say archaeological) of the assemblage. This system of analysis is not to be denigrated; that is not my purpose. Rather, it is hoped that the point of re-integration of these artefacts into the final reports might be altered. Instead of relegating them to the back of the report, perhaps they can be more fully integrated into the site narrative. As Spradely (2001:109) wrote, 'If the theory of identity as multi-layered and dynamic is accurate, then our approach to the evidence should also be multi-layered and dynamic.' Thus if we accept the premise that one's identity is linked to one's view of the world and one's role within it, then the key to teasing worldview from an archaeological site must also be multi-layered and dynamic.

In her stimulating 1982 paper 'Six honest serving men', Nina Crummy postulated that we could gain a deeper insight into the lives of artefacts and their users by asking a simple series of questions that ultimately would lead to the grouping of small finds by their function rather than their materials or even their individual typologies. Thus rather than a list of copper brooches and a list of iron brooches, followed by a list of copper bracelets, one might begin to think of all of these as items of personal adornment. Crummy's exhortations were timely and correct, yet they only pertained to the specialism of 'small finds' – why stop there? Clearly the specialists need to see their specific materials, but after the reports are returned, it might be even more valuable to take the time to re-integrate the various artefacts to a more holistic end. Such section headings as 'The animal bone' and 'The pottery' might be replaced with more synergistic groupings such as 'eating and drinking' and 'grain production'. These groups would, respectively, contain the details of the artefacts pertaining to ceramics and food waste in the one instance, grinding, storage and CPR (charred plant remains) in the second.

In the formative years of archaeology as a discipline, objects were usually grouped into assemblages that conformed to certain rules. These rules were generally derived from observation of the objects characteristics, grounded in modern Western sensibilities. The typological grouping of objects in the Pitt-Rivers Museum is a classic example of this forcing of objects into categories which might not resonate with their co-habitants and creators. Studies have shown that different cultural frames of reference can generate different approaches to objects (Nisbett *et al.* 2001). How might Iron Age men and women have grouped their objects? We could occasionally be on shaky ground with function as a categorising criterion; we can only speculate as to how some artefacts were actually put to use, in spite of our best assumptions. Perhaps we can imagine how people in the past might have separated objects into public-ness and private-ness, that is, things one expects everyone to see and know about, and things one keeps to oneself, either deliberately ( e.g. through secrecy) or through unintentional practice (e.g. cooking a meal in a back room). Or perhaps we must determine that as we can never know

how such groups might have been formed, then the holistic assemblage – looking at it all together – must be the way forward.

To examine the system of the household, Douglas (1982a:86-7) defined the ‘family system’ to be a fourfold complex, to which I have parenthetically added the related material culture:

- Rest (shelter/structural evidence)
- Care of the body (grooming objects)
- Clothing (adornment objects)
- Food (ceramics and faunal/plant remains)

These divisions, as represented by an aspect of the material assemblages from archaeological sites, can be put together into a more holistic assemblage called ‘household’. Meadows (2001) suggests this as a means of getting around the difficulty of identifying households in the absence of houses, that is to say, structural remains. This particularly poses a problem in the Upper Thames Valley where the geology on gravel terrace sites makes preservation of structures rare. Meadows calls for ‘an integrated study of the household, all archaeological features, each artefact and biological residue, in fact every trace of habitation’ (2001:61). Indeed, creating household assemblages has been used to very good effect in many areas of archaeology (Allison 1999; 2004; Blanton 1994; Lane 2006; Giles & Parker-Pearson 1999; Stanish 1989), albeit not without some serious limitations. For example, Lane’s ethnoarchaeological work has suggested that the assemblage preserved in the material record may not reliably indicate the assemblage of the ‘living’ household (2006:51-2) but rather the detritus of abandonment. Another problem with household archaeology is that it seems to have little consistency, with the ‘aims and agendas of the archaeologists who carry out studies that are termed ‘household archaeology’ are as variable as are the theoretical strands of archaeology itself. Household archaeology served to provide a richness of detail, but was not an end in itself’ (Tringham 2006:6926). Using the concept of a household or domestic assemblage *does* allow us to think about the objects that

people chose to surround themselves with on a daily basis, and considering those choices gives us a window into their worldview.

### **3.3.1 In defence of Structuralism and the evolution of the binary pair**

In a post-structuralist world, Lévi-Strauss's (1973) use of binary opposition seems to be a relic of a hoped-to-be-forgotten era — an embarrassing, old, eccentric (and probably 'casually' racist) Auntie perched in the corner of the modern theoretical sitting room. Moore (2006:1) rightly points out that the slightest whiff of structure is, in current archaeological parlance, 'anathema'. Indeed, the original uses of binary opposition – 'in which the second term is seen to be a negative corrupt version of the first' (Gosden 1994:55) *did* lend themselves to an implicitly racist and elitist interpretation of societies and individuals: civilised/savage, white/black, upper-class/lower-class. Nonetheless, tools should not necessarily be shunned because of the poor use to which they have been put; the flame which burns also can warm.

Pope (2007; 2003b) argues that structuralism and the binary oppositions to which archaeologists clung in the 1990s should be swept away. She maintains that these dualisms should be replaced by concepts of practice and identity (2007: 222). However, much of the anti-structuralism argument presented seems to be spawned from a general dissatisfaction with one major dualism: the male/female binary opposition of the genders. This tack is a familiar one as gender archaeology becomes more widely debated, but those complexities (into which I do not propose to delve any further here) do not justify the complete rejection of binary opposition as a useful tool. Structuralism as expressed through Cultural Theory does not remove the individual, nor does it reduce all to a Marxist binary opposition of class (although there are certainly elements of this inherent in the system). Indeed, the 'boxes' of the grid/group configuration need not be seen as rigid confinements, but rather enclosures where there is scope for the individual to 'wander around' in the box as well as cross from one to another (see 3.2.2 and 5.2.5).

Moving away from the modern approach to artefacts in an archaeological assemblage, that is, avoiding grouping things by simple categories such as material or function, one begins to think about assemblages based upon the interconnectedness of the objects among themselves. Keane's (2003, 414) 'bundling of qualities' as conceptual combinations are particularly helpful in understanding the value of the complex assemblage. Indeed *combination* is the key to objects reaching their full potential as both speakers for the past and innovators for the future. Ward and Kolomyts (2010:101) describe combination as a directly relevant process underlying inventiveness 'because combinations are not mere summations of the elements merged. Instead they can yield *emergent features*'. These emergent features, the product of Janusian thinking (Rothenberg 1979), may be seen in the archaeological record as innovative objects. Janusian thinking is the practice of holding two opposite thoughts in one mind at the same time, considering their relationships and how they interact and then formulating something new from those thoughts. This type of creativity can be most potent when the points of opposition bring together the exotic and the familiar (Ward & Kolomyts 2010: 102). Thus, imagining the role of objects in combinations as driving forces for emergent change may help to explain the 'hybridisation' of artefacts belonging to societies in transitional cultural contact. This ability to hold both the familiar and the new may also help us think about how new objects could be used to articulate traditional social relationships without causing a major change in worldview in some cases.

In truth, the binary pair is sometimes *not* particularly useful, most notably in the now-abandoned savage/civilised model of 'romanized' Britain (see Chapter 2.5). Yet another pair is used in nearly every discussion of LIA and Roman archaeological sites – high status/ low status. The label 'high status' still carries with it all of Haverfield's baggage of Romanization, suggesting a betterment of life and happiness that could only be achieved with the accumulation of Roman things. We can, from our modern Western world perspective, appreciate that high status equates to having indoor heating and decorated samian dishes. Yet what if this perspective is not the same as the worldview held by those living in Britain in the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC and AD?

To illustrate the point, imagine an archaeologist 2000 years in the future, with few written records to explain 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. He examines two settlement sites – one has structural remains of a rural stone domestic dwelling with several phases of continuous occupation. Its remains indicate a period of disrepair prior to end of use. An adjacent building suggests the keeping of horses for transport. The second settlement, contemporary to the final phase of the first, indicates the use of more advanced building techniques. Evidence for transport is shown by the rusted remains of an advanced vehicle which epigraphy suggests was called a ‘cortina’. What is our archaeologist to make of these sites? The dilapidated building with primitive transport must be a low status farmstead whilst the settlement with the sophisticated artefact suggests higher status. Rather, with the benefit of living in these times, we can recognise that the country house with stables is far more high status than the estate housing. The exercise indicates the possibility of getting it wrong if one relies solely on a perspective related to a modern sense of the value and meaning of things. Perhaps high/low status is as meaningless as native/Roman in understanding how people dealt with transition in this period. In spite of Pope’s statement that ‘the continued use of the private/public dichotomy is lamentable’ (2007:225 fn33), and of Hodder’s admonition to be critical of ‘the universality of our own assumptions’ (1986:45), I believe that there is still room for development in the use of dichotomous relationships. In a sense, high grid/low grid and strong grid/weak grid are every bit as much binary pairs as inner/outer and savage/civilised; the utility of Cultural Theory is that by placing these two binary pairs in a matrix, far more variation and room for nuance is permitted. Holistic assemblages from individual sites are used in order to create polythetic classifications of sites. Polythetic classification ‘identifies classes by a combination of characteristics, not requiring any one of the defining features to be present in all members of a class’ (Douglas 1982a: 200-1) Only a majority of possible representatives need be present in each case, which softens the edges of the dichotomy.



### **3.4 Collecting the data**

Three main sources were exploited for this research: Historic Environment Record (HER) archives, excavation reports, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). HER documents varied greatly in quality and relevance between authorities, but in general there was sufficiently accurate and detailed information to provide the type of data required for this study. Unfortunately, due to the nature of some of the records held by these offices, much of the information could neither be tightly dated nor even geo-referenced to a useful degree of accuracy. More than a quarter of a century has passed since David Miles wrote '[the SMRs] contain data that more closely resembles [*sic*] the discoveries of Walpole's *Three Princes of Serendip* than those of scientific enquiry' (1982: 62), yet even today there is an element of incoherence in the way in which some of the information is categorised and made available. Yet one hastens to add that even a flawed system in this area is preferable to no system at all!

Data gathered from these offices was collected until the end of 2011. It is understood that the rolling nature of data entry into the HER system means that there is always a backlog and it would be impossible to include all sites excavated or reported up to the end of 2011; however, there should be a sufficient number of sites examined to provide a workable sample.

The excavation reports used for this research fell into two pairs. The first pair is the published work, which includes on the one hand monographs on specific site excavations, and on the other, reports published in small runs by the commercial units who have undertaken the relevant work. The second pair was more difficult to work with, as it comprises unpublished 'grey literature' retrieved from commercial unit offices and online reports produced by some commercial units. These reports vary in quality from the excellent to the absurd and the quality is not differentiated along unit lines. All reports examined ranged in date from the early twentieth century to the end of 2011.

In addition to these sources, the PAS database has been gleaned to retrieve any artefacts that may be relevant to the study. As with the HER data, PAS find spots are often not very precisely given and there is also the possibility that artefacts have been misidentified or mislabelled in the database leading to exclusion of pertinent items. However, the sheer volume of information compiled by the PAS and the fact that artefacts reported there are rarely seen again made inclusion of this resource practically compulsory.

### **3.4.1 Factoring in the PAS**

The PAS proved a useful tool for seeing where detection is most active, and also occasionally shed light on the potential of some cropmark areas. Interestingly, the most thought-provoking patterns in the PAS data were the negative areas; the Windsor-Datchet area of the Middle Thames was particularly barren. This may be a factor of land ownership; large tracts are held by the Crown Estate, which is rather strict about its permissions for metal detecting. Any finds being located in these regions may have been done without sanction and thus go unreported. Conversely, large concentrations in the Wantage area are less likely to be a reflection of comparatively increased LIA/ER activity and instead reflect the recent use of monitored metal detecting rallies to glean material from fields (Levick 2011). It would be of great interest to replicate these supervised rallies in other areas – the Wantage area may be an indicator of what is *typical* rather than exceptional and is visible only because of such focused attention.

Despite the incredible usefulness of such a scheme as the PAS, it must be noted that, although varying from county to county, between 15% and 20% of the artefacts were reported without find spot coordinates. Therefore, the extent of finds distribution is even greater than would appear from the plotted maps.

I am particularly concerned by the distribution of brooches from excavations compared to those reported by the PAS. With the exception of some of the larger open excavations (Claydon Pike, Thornhill farm, Cleveland Farm, and Somerford Keynes), the numbers of brooches recovered is

shockingly low. The above mentioned excavations all made use of metal detectorists, going over the spoil heaps and features to ensure higher recovery rates; how many metal finds have been lost where this technique was not employed (Old Shifford Farm and Eton College Rowing Lake, to name only two of the sites where feature fills were often removed by machine) and what does that disparity, suggested by the high numbers of brooch finds in the PAS, mean for the grid/group typology? As ever, we can only work with what we have.

### **3.4.2 Quantifying quality**

As suggested above, different HERs and archaeological units provided data in a range of qualities. Based upon the excellent scaling system used by Moore (2006:12) I have ranked the 'usefulness' of the data in the same fashion. Table 3.1 is largely based on Moore's:

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Excavated to a high standard. Report contains detailed descriptions of contexts and finds as well as specialist contributions with data for re-assessment. Generally larger scale investigations.                  |
| 2 | Smaller scale excavations carried out to a high standard. May or may not include specialist report. Artefact data and plans presented.                                                                             |
| 3 | Excavations of any size or quality reported in a poor manner (data/plans not provided or only partially referenced).                                                                                               |
| 4 | Evaluations and watching briefs; interim reports with no specific data.                                                                                                                                            |
| 5 | HER reports based on observation of feature only; Aerial photography without excavation. Stray finds and PAS reports; HER reports of field-walking or antiquarian finds; notes never followed up with publication. |

*Table 3.1. Scale ranking quality of excavation and report*

It is understood that this ranking is highly subjective and it is in no way meant to reflect badly on those excavators whose sites fall into any category less than the ideal. It may be that every recording effort is little more than an 'eye-witness account of destruction' (Bradley 2006: 6) but

some witness statements are more helpful than others. Bradley (1996:44) posits that the division between 'sites' and 'chance' or stray finds should be eliminated. Whilst I acknowledge the value in these types of finds, the reliability of their reported geographical location can be questioned often enough to consign them to a low ranking (unless the map of the stray finds reflects the map of the excavations - then the pattern can be assumed to be true (Hodder 1976:20-1)). There must be recognition of the degree to which the available information can be put to use. This technique also makes possible the creation of a visual representation of areas that could benefit from more intensive and rigorous examination.

### **3.5 Sample sizes and case studies**

The Thames Valley is an exceptionally generous region, archaeologically speaking. Recent expansions in development have made it even more so. If every site from the source to Staines that had ever produced LIA or Roman material were included in the dataset, then the figures would be entirely unmanageable, and utterly beyond the scope of a thesis. Therefore the decision had to be taken about what criteria would assure a site a place in the set. Too stringent, and there would be too few sites for statistical analysis; too liberal and the criteria would be arbitrary and pointless. It was decided to focus on those sites which exhibited evidence either of structural remains, groups of domestic debris which would suggest previous but poorly preserved structures, or such assemblages which by nature of the detritus might suggest very close proximity to a domestic settlement site. Such is the nature of developer-funded archaeology that all too often the area allocated for evaluation or excavation is a mere 100m from a truly interesting settlement!

Additionally, after the sites with excavation data had been collated, a general survey of aerial photographic record of the region was conducted by examining the results of the National Mapping Programme (NMP). Sites which on the surface appeared to be of a LIA/ER settlement nature were added to the overall site map in order to see if they filled in any gaps or offered deeper insight about settlement patterns. In the difficult matter of taking the entire landscape

into consideration whilst focusing on one site, it is all too easy to forget that in many parts of the study area, settlements are so closely spaced and so well served by either river or trackways (or both) that they seem nearly to be one continuous habitation site. In order to think about not only the excavated sites in the study, but also how they relate to the entire landscape, I engaged in regular reference to the data from the aerial survey. Without this, it would be easy to lose track of the proximity of some known sites to cropmarks which may represent contemporary settlement, as yet unexplored. This possibility, particularly in the case of Stubbs Farm or Old Shifford Farm, has the potential to change the entire interpretation of the site's nature. The extensive cropmark data was also used to hypothesise the application of grid/group analysis where little or no material has been excavated, such as at the Dyke Hills.

Of the myriad HER and NMR records, watching brief reports and grey literature sites that were examined at the first level of screening, 158 sites emerged that were suitable for inclusion in the dataset. A summary of all sites investigated may be found in the Appendix. After consideration at a somewhat superficial level, six sites were selected for further analysis. These selected sites were relatively evenly distributed across the study area to help eliminate false or misleading results. The sites were Claydon Pike, Somerford Keynes (Figure 6.1), Barton Court Farm, Old Shifford Farm (Figure 7.1), Eton College Rowing Lake, and Southlea Farm (Figure 8.1). These sites were not only selected for their geographic location but for the diversity in excavation technique, resources, and promptness of publication. They are presented in pairs in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, representing accordingly the uppermost reaches of the Upper Thames Valley, the Windrush confluence region, and the Lower Thames. Of particular interest is the pairing in Chapter 8, where Eton College Rowing Lake, with a vast amount of archaeology was constrained by time and money if juxtaposed with Southlea Farm, a site with far less material but with almost an excess of resources and no time pressures. Although the quality and quantity of data from this last case study was nowhere near to the other five, it is hoped that, inasmuch as one cannot always have perfect data available, Cultural Theory will prove to be useful even with such sparse data.

The data collected for the 158 sites included fabric and form of the chronologically relevant ceramic assemblages, breakdown of faunal assemblage by food species, metalwork (exclusive of nails and unidentified fragments), and other worked objects in bone or stone. Additionally, data was gathered on structural remains at such sites where structures could be identified. This information was managed using Microsoft programs Access 2010 and Excel 2010; mapping was accomplished with gvSIG OA Digital Edition 2010.

### **3.6 Artefactual analyses considered**

Having argued that a synergistic and polythetic approach to material assemblages is a good way to examine a variety of object types within a single framework (3.3), it is necessary to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in trying to homogenise a collection of artefacts that may fluctuate so widely in shape form material and function. A variety of methods must be applied when considering such a wide range of materials. One cannot hope to apply a universal system of analysis to all types of materials; strategies that work for analysing ceramic sherds will not be particularly helpful in examining faunal skeletal remains. The following sections will outline the specific methodologies applied to the different classes of artefacts.

#### **3.6.1 Structures**

Structural features of the Late Iron Age in the Thames Valley are on the whole, poorly preserved, leaving the excavator with post-holes and circular drip gullies, rarely a floor surface or hearth. There is some scant suggestion of possible construction from turves on floodplain and first terrace sites (Lambrick & Robinson 1979:138; Allen *et al.* 1984; Henig & Booth 2000:82) but the identifiable signs are scant and thus may be often overlooked. Early Roman features often fare little better unless masonry wall footings remain. Enclosure ditches can hint at the presence of structures within and cropmarks of a certain shape and size can be supposed to be structural remains. What use was made internally of structures can, for the most part, only be guessed at. Where floor surfaces remain, chemical analysis can indicate the level of occupation and whether human, animal or shared (Conway 1983), but these circumstances of

preservation are rare and the analysis costly. Stone built structures survive to a greater degree where not robbed away and it is often possible to reconstruct floor plans for such buildings and begin to suggest internal specialization of function.

Meadows (2001:59) suggested that archaeologists begin to 'look beyond 'the house' in our investigation of the household'. As we can rarely reconstruct the actual composition of the household – who lived in which buildings and with whom – it becomes necessary to form a 'model household'. We *can* infer structures or spaces within the structures as being dominated by certain activities and even further can speculate about gender roles and division of labour. Hingley defines these model households as any 'group who used and resided within a single house or group of closely related buildings' (1990a: 128).

Particularly on the river gravel sites, flooding and fluctuations in the water table (both ancient and as a result of modern gravel extraction practices) are likely to have taken their toll on structural remains, leaving the nature of settlement ambiguous. Ploughing of rich alluvial soils can also remove the delicate traces of the timber structures. So without physical remains, can we determine if houses were present? Perhaps. Determining the arrangement of domestic areas at sites where structures are poorly preserved, or even absent, requires that different evidence for occupation and domestic activity be explored. As Pryor writes, 'perhaps the main conclusion to be drawn is that the presence of buildings should not always be sought from constructional evidence alone: negative evidence, the way in which surrounding features 'behave', and, above all, general artefact and ecofact distributions will all help to define the sites of lost buildings'(1983: 197). Where the data is available, this study examined environmental and artefactual assemblages that suggested structures may have existed on or very near the excavated area, even where no factual indication of the construction techniques or materials was possible.

Care must be also taken when considering the chronology of structures. It is not sufficient to categorise the roundhouse as the earlier 'native' structure and the rectilinear shape as the

Roman innovative replacement (see Keevil & Booth 1997). Examples from outside the study area, from excavations at Holme House in Piercebridge, Teesside, and at Winterton by the Humber, show a simple rectilinear villa with circular stone buildings adjacent. At Piercebridge, there appears to have been a round timber construction initially, later replaced in stone, but ‘arguments for progression are not sustained by the evidence’ (Harding 1984:18), as the stone circular building appears to have been built alongside, or even after the rectilinear building. This may demonstrate a conscious choice to ‘retain or revive’ pre-conquest native forms, perhaps even creating a ‘para-Roman skeuomorph’ of the Iron Age round house tradition, in which the poorer workers on the farmstead would feel more comfortable (*ibid.*:19).

Unless actual dating evidence from sealed contexts exists, there is every possibility that in certain situations where both building types exist on a single site, they may have been contemporaneous. Given that we have very little evidence (barring the uprisings of the AD60s) for wide scale rebellion against Roman administration, it is likely that the reorganising of the social systems in the Thames Valley was on the whole achieved through gradual and orderly change. This easing into change may have led some settlements to respond in a like manner to Fallers’ (1955:290) Ugandan chief, who conducted his British business in a modern office, but met with traditional clients in a thatched hut.

### **3.6.2 Ceramics**

For three of the case studies, the type of data I wished to collect as well as some of the analysis had already been gathered and written up in the form of two unpublished theses. Karen Meadows (2001) provided ceramic analysis for the Barton Court and Old Shifford sites and provided an interesting supplement to the late Robert Rippengal’s (1996) interpretation of Claydon Pike. I have used the theses in tandem with the published accounts of the sites, in order to explore any inconsistencies that may have crept into the data between early post-excavation (when the theses were written) and publication. In the case of Claydon Pike, this proved a



valuable exercise, as there were real discrepancies between the information detailed in the theses and in the published reports, as will be discussed in greater detail below (6.3.2).

Popular forms are quantified and analysed for patterns of preference to detect innovations in cooking, dining, and drinking habits. However, it is understood that there may be much that is misunderstood in the use of forms. A mortarium may have been manufactured for preparing Roman dishes, but there is little proof that this is how they were always used, particularly in a rural context. Miller (1985) has shown that even if vessels of a particular type are primarily used for one purpose, over time they may be put to a variety of purposes, and ultimately vessels of any type may end their lives as storage pots. The ubiquity of biscuit tins as household storage in the modern home is proof of the continuity of this pragmatic behaviour. Clearly, like those who use them, pots too have fluid identities!

Fabrics have also been quantified site by site, by major group so that any emergent patterns may be examined separately from form, although in the final analysis both aspects are merged in discussion. Percentages are drawn from total sherd counts provided in the reports, as that data presentation was universal; only some reports provided EVE or weight data.

### **3.6.3 Animal Bones**

King (1978:207) once noted that the efforts of archaeosteologists are diminished when the results are not fully integrated into the main narrative of the site; now, however, many reports make good use of the faunal data. Where data was provided, faunal records were examined in order to suggest cooking and eating practices; faunal data was also used to determine the main economic focus of the rural settlements. Where possible, the bones from feature groups have been identified by animal type. The main meat providing animals have been separated from the overall assemblage and examined for data relating to average age at consumption, use of secondary products, dominant food source species and exoticism.

It is understood that there may be some inconsistency in the inter-site comparison of animal presence and consumption. Differential survival of bone can vary from species to species, as

well as between soil types. Butchery practices and cooking methods can also affect preservation (King 1978:210). However, these difficulties surely do not mean that such comparison is without value; they do suggest that close comparison of sites on the faunal evidence alone is fraught with the danger of false assumption. However, when integrated with other artefact types into the synergistic assemblage, and utilised for broad pattern analysis, the results are beneficial. Based on King's method, I have only included faunal data for sites which produce more than 200 bone fragments, anything less being considered to be statistically useless. A higher threshold is recommended by Casteel's (1976-7) magic number of 1400 fragments, or Maltby's (1996:17) 1000. Whilst undoubtedly larger numbers are more desirable, numbers of this size cannot be regularly acquired, particularly on smaller sites restricted in scale and rigour by development concerns.

#### **3.6.4 Small finds**

Artefacts of metal, glass, worked bone and stone, as well as rare leather and textile evidence are grouped under the heading 'small finds'. As suggested by Crummy (1982) and demonstrated in subsequent publications (Crummy 1983; Rippengal 1996; Lambrick & Allen 2005; Barrett *et al.* 2000; Cool 2007; Allison 2004) and as explained in more detail above (3.3), grouping small finds by function rather than material may be more useful. Considering their public-ness or private-ness may also help to explain the role these objects played in their communities and may even help illuminate how they entered the archaeological record in the places and manners in which they did.

Where reports were of sufficient quality, small finds were considered from sealed phases within the temporal limits of the study, but also from unstratified contexts. This was done based upon the logic that there is little difference between an unstratified find from an excavation and a metal detected stray find reported to the PAS. However, the unstratified material received the same quality rank as the excavation report to which they refer.

Metal, stone, and bone small finds recorded in this study were principally those related to personal adornment, grooming, medicine and leisure time. Glass small finds relating to vessels were grouped with ceramics in the eating/drinking assemblages.

### **3.6.5 Coinage**

Archaeologists have little trouble embracing the notion that ‘pots are not people’, yet there has been traditionally no resistance to the idea that coins *are*, at least where the Late Iron Age of southern Britain is concerned. Work by Ian Leins (2008) and Tom Moore (2011) has begun to indicate that the things we thought we knew about ‘tribal’ coin distributions and their relation to regional power structures may not be accurate. Inconsistencies with the supposed leaders named on coins, the assumed semiotics of leadership inferred from the iconography of the coins, and the very nature of the tribal organisation itself is called into question. More will be said about the nature of these southern British ‘tribes’ elsewhere (9.3.1); here I wish only to discuss the reason for completely excluding numismatic evidence from the database.

Numismatists and archaeologists alike have been trapped in a self-imposed circular argument regarding Iron Age coinage for some time: the coins are identified based upon where they are found, and the boundaries of the tribe are demarcated by where the coin type is distributed. Worse still, there has not been one chronology of these coins that can be completely validated (*contra* van Arsdell). Even the bulk of the Celtic Coin Index housed at the University of Oxford, a world renowned collection, has been recovered as stray finds and detector discoveries. The spatial data alone for these items is often sketchy at best, and the temporal contextual data is virtually absent. There are of course, LIA coins recovered from sealed contexts, but these only tell us the last known period of use for this coin and without a full understanding of the lineage of minting rulers, like one has for the Roman coin assemblage, one cannot accurately create even a loose *relative* chronology of the coins, let alone hope to understand how the different ‘tribal’ entities shift over time.

All this is not to relegate the LIA coinage to ignominy; there is a vast amount of information to be gleaned from these artefacts. They can reveal much about exchange patterns, intercommunity ties, metallurgical technologies, and non-linguistic communication and power negotiation. However, the attempt to link coinage with identity and power (with regard to specific personages and regions, rather than power in the abstract) is problematic. For this reason, I have examined an assemblage devoid of coins, to see what patterns in social structure and identity expression might emerge without the blurring of the picture by the coins<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to explain the theoretical framework through which the data will be interpreted. The reasons for looking backward into sociological and anthropological theory of the last century are explained and variable usefulness of exploring binary pairs as part of a two-dimensional matrix is outlined. The importance of the holistic assemblage is examined and the parameters of the assemblages used in this research are defined. The spatial and temporal limits of the study area are delineated and the data collection methods are given. Finally, the methodology applied to the various types of materials and artefacts is defined. With these factors explained, the ground is prepared for a more in depth consideration of the data collected and what those components may tell us about worldview and social structure in the LIA/ER Thames Valley.

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<sup>9</sup> With the wisdom of hindsight, it is clear to me now that although the reasons for setting aside the Iron Age coinage are valid, there was no good justification for ignoring the body of evidence presented by Roman coinage. Indeed, this might have shown some very interesting patterns amongst the rural settlements. This omission will be rectified in subsequent work derived from this thesis.

## CHAPTER 4                      THE DATA

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### 4.1 Introduction

*‘Pattern recognition is indeed a valuable first step, but it must be followed by rigorous testing against the totality of the data, lest the patterns which we find obvious and interesting obscure others that may have been more significant to the communities we are trying to understand’*

*(Cunliffe 1999: 62)*

Rather than starting with (questionable) assumptions about social structure in the LIA/ER period of Southern Britain and then trying to graft the data from settlement sites onto that established framework, this study attempts to allow the data – the artefacts, features, and environmental evidence – to suggest the social structures. Of course, the first stage of attempting to explain variations in rural settlements during transition is to see if there truly is variation. A cursory look at many of the sites of this period in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley might lead one to think of them as all of a piece. Bradford quite rightly admonished that there was a growing danger of ‘precipitate distinctions’ being made about settlements, based upon the ‘tangible apparatus of occupation...shared so much in common by contemporary farms and “hamlets” at parallel but basically similar stages’(1942: n. 25). Even in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a fraction of sites known to us now, he realised that it would be all too easy to let the ubiquity of certain artefact and feature types blur into a haze of uniformity. More recent thinking has recognised that there is some significance to the diversity in rural settlement and material culture patterns, which suggest varied forms of social organization (Hingley 1984; Bevan 1999; Moore 2007; Hill 2011).

This chapter presents the dataset and explains what types of artefacts were examined and why those categories are significantly important to understanding the character of the site. Also examined herein are the patterns produced by examining the dataset.

#### **4.1.1 Criteria for grid/group analysis**

Before embarking on a more in-depth exploration of the material evidence from the dataset, it is important to understand how the evidence will be used in order to establish patterns and to offer interpretations. Because the model of Cultural Theory is central to this work, it is necessary to offer some standardized framework by which the assemblages will be sorted.

Subjectivity is ever a difficulty with the application of grid/group analysis. For Douglas, 'grid and group are offered as tools for describing in a more controllable fashion the way that social pressures reach an individual and structure his consciousness' (1973:112). Using these tools can be problematic, as one must avoid the danger of what Mamadouh warns of as 'bird spotting - spotting representatives of each cultural bias, for the sake of spotting them' (1999:405). It is necessary to be clear about what characteristics in the sites and assemblages led to the assignment of a cultural 'type'. Because the approach is intended to be polythetic, however, creating a 'tick-box' set of criteria would, I believe, lead to more artificiality rather than less. Sharples (2010:299) outlined some loose archaeological corollaries for Douglas' list of low-grid/high group societal characteristics to useful effect; Table 4.1, drawing on Douglas (1978), Ostrander (2003) and Thompson *et al.* (1990), gives this treatment to all four of the types and serves as a guide for how the theory was applied to the archaeological record of each site.

In common with Hingley's (1984) Germanic Mode of Production model, Cultural Theory also looks at the distinctions between group and individual based settlement, and the role of boundary in defining the identity of the inhabitants. Yet Cultural Theory goes a bit further, and offers insights to not only the formations of identity but to the basis of worldviews. Hill's 'Hierarchs and Levellers' (2011:244) are still working in only one dimension (grid); exploring grid and group offers us the chance to identify more subtlety.

|                                                               | Egalitarian                                                                          | Individualist                                                                                                                   | Hierarchist                                                                                                               | Fatalist                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boundaries                                                    | Boundaries are significant and may often be re-configured                            | Boundaries are few and sporadic; if present, they fluctuate frequently                                                          | Physical boundaries may exist; social boundaries are more effective                                                       | Boundaries are significant and may change capriciously                                               |
| Ritual activity                                               | Cosmology reflects scapegoating/witchcraft; purity and cleansing are required        | Cosmology reflects a pragmatic view; rituals may be spontaneous and idiosyncratic                                               | Cosmology reflects structure; routinised traditions and sacrifices                                                        | Cosmology reflects a "millennial/ end-of-the-world bias; ritual activity may not occur               |
| Personal display - body                                       | Bodily differentiation of the individual is limited; few items of personal adornment | Bodily differentiation of the individual may occur; other avenues of display may take precedence or replace personal adornment. | Bodily differentiation of the individual through adornment is common; sumptuary rules may regulate ornamentation          | Bodily differentiation of the individual through adornment is rare; symbolic systems are unelaborate |
| Personal display - feasting/dining                            | Decoration on tableware is uncommon; imports and exotic ingredients rare             | Openness to exotic foodstuffs and materials to enhance competitive displays; tableware may be decorated                         | Decoration is common; imported materials may be present or imitated where they integrate with routinised symbolic display | Decoration is rare; access to imports or exotic foodstuffs is highly limited                         |
| Storage of resources                                          | Surpluses are not obvious; all resources held in common                              | Surpluses are acquired by individuals for competitive feasting and/or gifting                                                   | Group orientated goals allow for surpluses to be acquired and held by authority                                           | Storage of surplus not observed;                                                                     |
| Zonation of space                                             | Enclosures are not subdivided; no evidence of specialisation                         | Space is not normally divided, however may be divided to provide competitive arenas; specialisation is frequent                 | Space is frequently divided; zonation regulates activities                                                                | Enclosures are subdivided; specialism is not observed                                                |
| Treatment of 'exotic' material                                | May be used in ritual 'cleansing' deposition                                         | May be used to enhance competitive gifting networks                                                                             | May be used to supplement/complement existing symbols of rank within the collective                                       | May not be offered due to exclusion; may be rejected based on voluntary withdrawal                   |
| View of the natural world (after Thompson <i>et al.</i> 1990) | Nature <sup>10</sup> is ephemeral and has negative effects to be countered           | Nature is benign and has positive effects to be taken advantage of                                                              | Nature is perverse/tolerant and has positive effects if placated                                                          | Nature is capricious and has negative regardless of behaviour                                        |
| Attitudes to risk                                             | Oppose risks that will inflict irreversible dangers on the group                     | Entrepreneurial ; will risk new ventures to achieve success                                                                     | Will risk new encounters if advised by experts/authorities                                                                | Ignores risk; neither seeks out opportunity nor avoids risk                                          |

Table 4.1 Criteria by which grid/group classification was applied to the assemblages

<sup>10</sup> Thompson and others use the term *nature*, although it is acknowledged that this concept may have modern Western and romantic overtones. *Cosmos* might be a term to define 'that which is beyond direct human control and predictability', but I choose to retain *nature*.

## 4.2 The dataset

In a perfect world, all 158 sites in the gazetteer<sup>11</sup> would have been excavated to the same standard, and reported in totality. The reality is that even with the best of intentions, some excavations and reports do not deliver as one might hope; there may be difficulties in the fieldwork or in some cases, a full publication may never come to light, leaving only hints and whispers in brief notes. As outlined in Chapter 3.4, a quality scale, replicated here for convenience, was created to separate the wheat from the chaff (Table 4.2). I hasten to add at this point that, barring a few glaring exceptions, a low rank on the quality scale is more derived from the usefulness<sup>12</sup> of how the excavation was conducted or the data reported in the publication, than with passing judgement on the conditions of excavation and post-excavation analyses and reporting.

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Excavated to a high standard. Report contains detailed descriptions of contexts and finds as well as specialist contributions with data for re-assessment. Generally larger scale investigations.                  |
| 2 | Smaller scale excavations carried out to a high standard. May or may not include specialist report. Artefact data and plans presented.                                                                             |
| 3 | Excavations of any size or quality reported in a poor manner (data/plans not provided or only partially referenced).                                                                                               |
| 4 | Evaluations and watching briefs; interim reports with no specific data.                                                                                                                                            |
| 5 | HER reports based on observation of feature only; Aerial photography without excavation. Stray finds and PAS reports; HER reports of field-walking or antiquarian finds; notes never followed up with publication. |

*Table 4.2 Scale ranking quality of excavation and report*

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 1 contains the gazetteer. The gazetteer entry numbers are given parenthetically after site names in the text.

<sup>12</sup> *Usefulness* refers in the first instance to this study but also is applicable to future researchers.



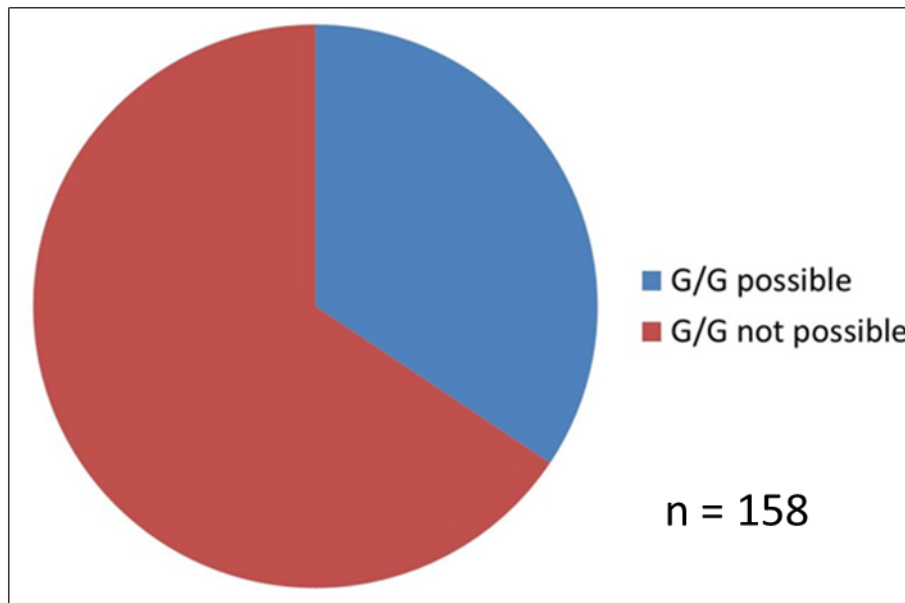


*Figure 4.1. Proportion of sites which could not be classified by grid/group*

Of the 158 sites examined, 48 were known only through reported cropmarks, stray finds, or brief notes in newsletters. The remaining 110 provided information of a varying degree of utility; the number of sites which provided sufficient information to allow any degree of confidence in assigning the grid/group designation was 55 (Figure 4.1). A further breakdown of the sites by quality of report where grid/group was possible to comment on and of those where it was not (Figure 4.2) indicates the difficulties imposed by restricted access to information. Not to belabour the point, but how much more useful would this research (or indeed any research based upon ‘preservation by record’) be if the data were presented in such a way that anyone could access it for re-interpretation or analysis. Many of the \*3 reports appeared to deliberately obfuscate real numbers and descriptions with generalities that one can only hope do not extend to the archived records<sup>13</sup>. Even in such cases where the records available were not comprehensive enough to confidently assign a grid/group designation, examining the reports from so many excavations allowed for similarities and differences to become apparent,

<sup>13</sup> As stated in Chapter 3, for the scale of this study, personal inspection of the archives of over 100 sites was not deemed feasible and thus I have relied upon published and ‘grey’ literature.

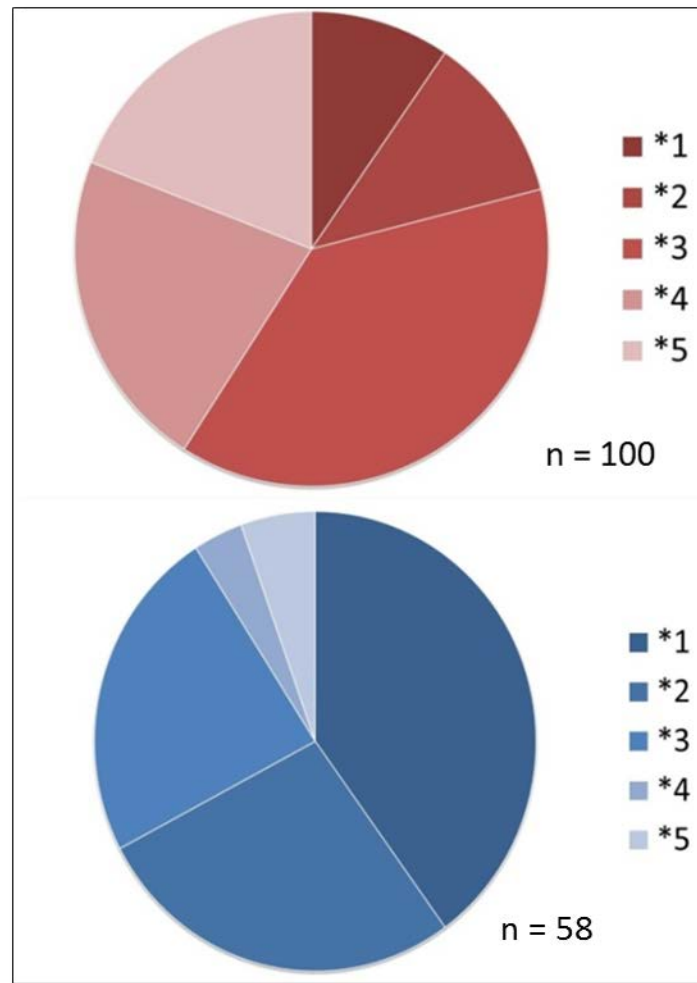


Figure 4.2. Breakdown of sites by quality of report/excavation according to scale Table 4.2;  
(sites where no classification was possible, above)

indicating that whilst there are great parallels between sites in the Thames Valley, there are also variations which should be explored, even between sites that may appear similar and are often grouped together, such as LIA Barton Court Farm and Gravelly Guy (Allen 2000:20-1) because of their use of enclosure. Yet the ways in which these enclosures are constructed and maintained, as well as the role they may have performed (beyond the functional) indicates differences between these sites.

It must be clearly noted that in many cases, the phasing of the site did not make a clear division between the LIA and ER periods. In the majority, a LIA/ER monophase was indicated and for these entries the same grid/group designation was entered in each column (LIA and ER). In

some cases, the occupation of the site did not appear to extend much past Conquest; these sites have an entry in the LIA column only. Similarly, a few sites only began post-Conquest, and have only an ER column entry. Interestingly, of the sites where the chronology permitted a distinct phasing between the LIA and ER periods, some clearly suggested different attributes which resulted in my recording a change in grid/group designation. The implications of this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Variations in the placement of boundaries – the open and enclosed settlements– are also a reflection of the worldview. ‘The way a society divides up its operational space, whether it is a collective resource with a few boundaries, or a fiercely guarded individual resource, is a social variable of critical importance to our grid/group analysis’(Rayner 2003:262). These social variables are matters of individual or group choice, dictated either by personal preference, practical necessity, or both. Practical necessity is easily understood, but the realm of personal preference, of taste, can be very difficult. Taste, too, can determine the material variables reflected in the archaeology.

The LIA/ER landscape in the Thames Valley is usually divided up between high-status and low-status sites. Taste and choice seem to be neglected in the application of a ‘fineware litmus test’ developed for deciding the wealth of a settlement. Ceramic assemblages have been used to help assign these labels by calculating percentages of finewares or imports to determine the nature of the settlement (Evans 2001) or if it displays the right amount of material (>5%) to be considered high status (Booth 2004). It has been noted that sites with analogous morphological characteristics may have disparate fineware percentages. Booth writes ‘it is not clear if there are other criteria or characteristics which distinguish these sites [from one another], but such characteristics have not been identified so far and at present all these sites must be seen together’ (Booth & Simmonds 2009:77). I offer that the other criteria which define the nature of the site can be seen in the other materials and in the structure of the settlement layout. When viewed in their entirety, they show variations which allow for more subtle divisions than

high/low status. Sharples correctly points out 'It is surely the role of archaeology to devise a model of social relationships which does not conflate societies that have invested a considerable amount of energy in differentiating themselves' (2010: 245).

Many of the sites had material in quantities so small as to be unhelpful. In many of these cases, it was a factor of the excavation (almost always developer-driven) being restricted to threatened areas only, which often just missed the settlement focus. At Thrupp House (#120), for example, the MIA assemblage points to a highly sophisticated use of decoration on pottery, which was probably continued through the LIA/ER, as suggested by the presence of an early stamped samian platter. However, because the settlement seems to have 'wandered around', as is fairly typical, the LIA/ER activity was not in the area excavated. In such an instance, grid/group orientation cannot be credibly suggested from a single samian platter or brooch; nonetheless, the presence of these scant items in relation to the MIA assemblage and the location of cropmarks and proximity to Barton Court Farm [7.3] all provide clues that could be used to tentatively put forward an orientation (in this case, Hierarchical, based on criteria in Table 4.1).

Barthes observed that collections of objects (assemblages) may enjoy the status of language and speech systems. Bodily adornment, garments, and food systems could be seen as language and as such relate some meaning other than the simply utilitarian. Barthes' believed that the conditions that drove communities to adapt this material language occurred when (1) new material needs are born, (2) economic requirements bring about the disappearance or promotion of certain materials, or (3) ideology limits individual invention and subjects it to taboos, requiring individual innovation to be transcended by community determination. (1968:29)

Each of these three agencies can be seen to be at work in the transitional LIA/ER period. Generally speaking, the 'language' of the material culture has been understood in terms not unlike that of regional dialects: the basic structure of the language is common, but the actual words vary from region to region. I believe that it may be possible to refine this, and perhaps

begin to think of LIA/ER material 'language' in the same manner as the wide variety of patois was seen in rural French villages in the pre-War 20<sup>th</sup> century; that is, each small community having its own particular 'take' on the language, related to the whole, perhaps even using many words in common, but with subtle differences that may be used to recognise other differences in the socio-political alignments of these communities. To do this a complete lexicon must be built up - it will not do to try to understand a language by only looking at the verbs.

Although in a post-semiotic world it may no longer be fashionable to think about meaning in this way, particularly with reference to language, I feel the analogy is a useful one, in that even amongst a set of communities who speak the same language, using the same assemblage of words, the meaning and use to which those words are put may vary from individual to individual, in part perhaps based upon their view of their world and place in it. Similarly, the variation in consumed materials and organisation of living space may suggest different meanings, either overtly in a native resistance model (Carr 2002; Hingley 1997; Mattingly 2004;2011) or more subtly, perhaps even unconsciously, driven by complex mechanisms of taste and perception. In either case, these objects 'consumed both for their social [public] meaning . . . and for their private meaning' (Solomon 1983: 324) may have helped to either strengthen traditional worldviews or negotiate adaptation to new ones. The following sections will look at the significance that different categories of the material evidence may have held for the communities we wish to examine.

#### **4.2.1 Public and private access – structures and boundaries**

The forms of structure which people create are a reflection of multiple factors: the tangible, such as the availability of suitable materials, and the intangible, such a taste, choice, and social conventions. People constructing buildings and enclosures are 'informed by cultural knowledge and they act within cultural constraints' (Wilk 1990:35). How far can we understand these cultural constraints by examining the remains of structure in the LIA/ER Thames Valley? Let us first consider the possible ramifications of changing architectural styles.

The Hindi word for room *kamra* originates from the Portuguese *camara*. Prior to the introduction of loan words into the Hindi language there was no mechanism for expressing a permanent structuralized partitioning of a domestic structure. Buildings such as the Mughal forts and even provincial domestic dwellings in rural areas today make use of only one solid wall structure, the external walls. Interior divisions are either non-extant in smaller residences, or when privacy is called for, partitioned by use of hanging carpets, blankets or moveable screens. Thus the public and private domains of the dwelling are highly mutable and this hints at the ability to experience a multiplicity of public and private identity within a fixed setting. One might extrapolate this example to the LIA roundhouse, in which often very little is known about internal division and yet one can infer from the assemblages of materials often found on floor surfaces that there was some sort of sub-division of use of space. This has been explored archaeologically through both cosmological and sociological lenses (Hingley 1989; 1990; Parker-Pearson & Richards 1994; Parker-Pearson & Giles 1997). Later, when Roman building traditions are more firmly embraced this flexibility in internal division and use of space and identity is lost and becomes quite literally cast in stone. Thus the location of rooms and the access allowed to separate permanent rooms becomes the chief way of maintaining the public/private dichotomy within the familial and domestic setting.

It would be wrong to assume that there was a totally linear evolution of structures in the Thames Valley or indeed in Southern Britain<sup>14</sup>; evidence from some locations such as Cleveland Farm (#25) (Powell *et al.* 2008:31-2) within the study area as well as at Shakenoak (Broadribb *et al.* 2005) and Combe East End (Speake 2012), suggest that the tradition of circular constructions, both in timber and in stone, in some places lasted unchanged into the 3<sup>rd</sup> and perhaps 4<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>15</sup>. In general, these are exceptions to the rule, but it is precisely these

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<sup>14</sup> Mattingly (2006:368-9) suggested that the number of later roundhouses were likely underestimated, based on unexcavated cropmarks of rural sites. It may be that round remained a more common architectural template well into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beyond.

<sup>15</sup> The Cleveland Farm evidence for 2<sup>nd</sup> century and later roundhouses is rather thin, but of the three posited, one does appear to have been a domestic focus.

variations in practice that attract interest and present the opportunity for Cultural Theory to be used.

Going back to the Hindi linguistic example, there is, prior to the domestication of foreign loan words in the very recent period, no word for *privacy*, *private*, or *to make private*. Proximal words, *gopnīyatā* and *nijī* exist but they carry within them negative connotations, suggesting sneakiness, deceit, and malevolence in the desire to keep something hidden, rather than the innocent desire to have privacy. This juxtaposition between public and private, hidden and exposed, sneaky and honest is a factor for rigorous exploration. Simply assuming PRIA Britons viewed privacy as we do today, or even as their Roman contemporaries did, will not suffice. Rippengal (1996: 69-70) suggests that a major reason for the difference in PRIA British structures and Roman-influenced ones is the differing worldview held by the two. He describes the division as falling between nature and culture and that the very construction of the house becomes a symbol of the natural world against 'modern' innovation.

Thus in this frame, the PRIA roundhouse demonstrates what in the current vernacular is described as 'architectural honesty'; that is, it conceals nothing about its components. The roundhouse is organic in shape, built in materials that come from life and have themselves a 'lifespan'. Rippengal adds to this that roundhouses were impermanent structures, 'rapidly and inevitably subject to all the natural processes of decay and degeneration' (1996:69); to this I would also add re-generation. The re-building of roundhouses on or adjacent to the sites of identical precursors may suggest a birth-death-rebirth cycle for some structures (Harding 2009:278-9; Webley 2007).

Contrast this with the construction of the rectilinear, Roman-inspired buildings. Timber is plastered and painted, stone used for many faces and supports. Roofs are clad not in natural reed thatching but in baked terracotta or stone tiles. Interior walls are put up to hide routine activities and natural earth floors are replaced with rammed chalk or mortar. Even indoor

heating comes not from an open, honest central hearth fire, but instead rises unseen from hidden underground chambers through flues (Rippengal 1994:94-5).

Clarke (1998:35) decries these observations as romantic and accuses Rippengal of resurrecting the noble savage myth by relating 'honesty' to the open and organic nature of the PRIA home. I cannot speak for Rippengal's intentions when remarking on these dichotomies, but for me, they present a very clear opposition which works well with the social structures described by Douglas. That they may be romantically phrased may not make them any less true.

Hingley (1989:153-6) suggested increased social complexity is indicated by the ever retreating headman, from shared living space to private rooms (within the rectilinear building) to the walled compound. This change is also illustrated in the context of modified aisled halls (Cunliffe forthcoming). Yet these cannot be seen only as a shift to the private realm, for is not such withdrawal also a very public display of power and the importance of boundary?

The notion of division maintained in Roman domestic buildings between the public and the private, and the degree to which one's importance was acknowledged could be displayed by which of the rooms into which one was allowed access, how close to the 'inner sanctum' one could get (Nevett 2010:143-4). This public/private dichotomy suggests other binary pairs; Bourdieu observed that the Berber house is strictly divided into light and dark, inner and outer, male and female. 'The woman is the lamp of the inside and the man is the lamp of the outside' (2003:110). The ordering of the space into specific realms can suggest the worldview of those creating the order, as can the method by which the order is accomplished. For example, contrast the open-plan interior of the timber roundhouse – space is ordered but is organic and mutable. Once built in stone, the rigid lines of the rectilinear house could be seen to express man's domination over nature. Douglas suggests that the general attitude towards nature can be indicative of other fundamental worldviews of that community (1982c). Strong group communities rely on 'symbolic distinctions between inside and outside' whereas weak group



communities may have no interest in symbolic expression at all, preferring spontaneous expression (Douglas 1973:103-4).

As discussed in Chapter 3.6.1., the survival of LIA/ER rural structures in the Upper and Middle Thames valley is rather scant. In some cases where structural remains are not obvious, scatters of domestic debris can suggest the presence of a structure. In association with ring or penannular gullies, these are interpreted as roundhouses, although how they were constructed is uncertain. Because of the uncertain relationship between these gullies as cropmarks and actual use as a domestic structure, very few sites provided confirmation of a 'house'. The overwhelming majority of these sites produced roundhouses, expectedly; however, a few also showed evidence of rectangular structures and in some cases both types appeared to exist in the same phase (Figure 4.3). Of these, four may be aisled structures, likely constructed at the very end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, which makes them particularly interesting, as this is an early date for aisled structures in the region. Only the Claydon Pike and Canhurst examples are confirmed

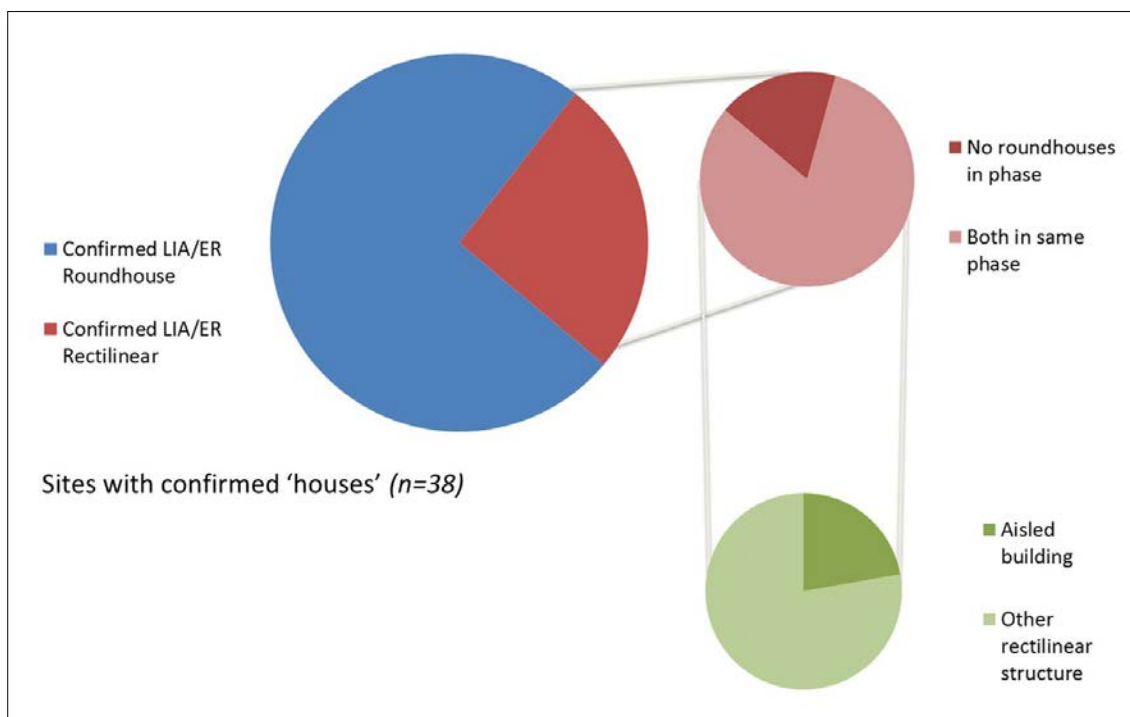


*Figure 4.3. Breakdown of construction types on sites where evidence for the presence of structures was strong*

aisled buildings, although the Eton College example is strongly suggested by the excavator (see Chapter 8.2.3) and a strong argument can be made for the re-interpretation of the post hole arrangement at Barton Court Farm (see Chapter 7.2.3).

The dispersed nature of the distribution of 1<sup>st</sup> century aisled buildings may either be a genuine indication of their rarity or a product of biasing the dating of these structures to the middle 2<sup>nd</sup> century in such cases where the chronology is unclear. Regardless, the location of these four probably has much to do with their proximity to significantly powerful places in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century – Claydon Pike to Cirencester, Canhurst to Silchester, Eton to Staines (or perhaps Taplow), and Barton Court Farm to the oppidum at Abingdon (Figure 4.4).

In such locations where the contemporary round and rectilinear structures did not include an aisled building, the nature and function of the rectangular buildings is less easy to speculate. The adoption of the new building methods vary, from the use of stone footings for a timber building as at Manor House Farm, Hatford to the more traditional use of posts, wattle and daub as apparent at Tar Farm, Gill Mill (Figure 4.5).

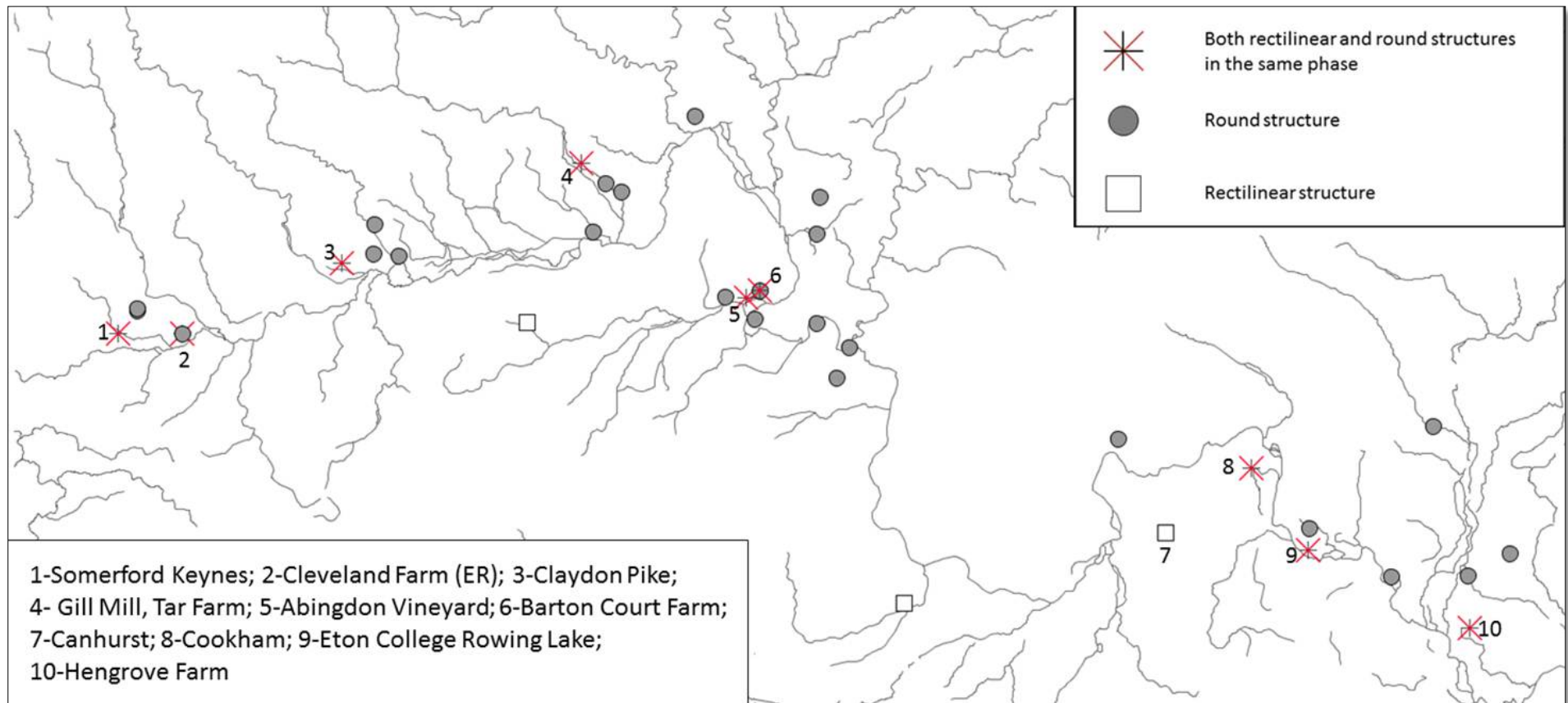


*Figure 4.4. Distribution of sites referred to by Figure 3*

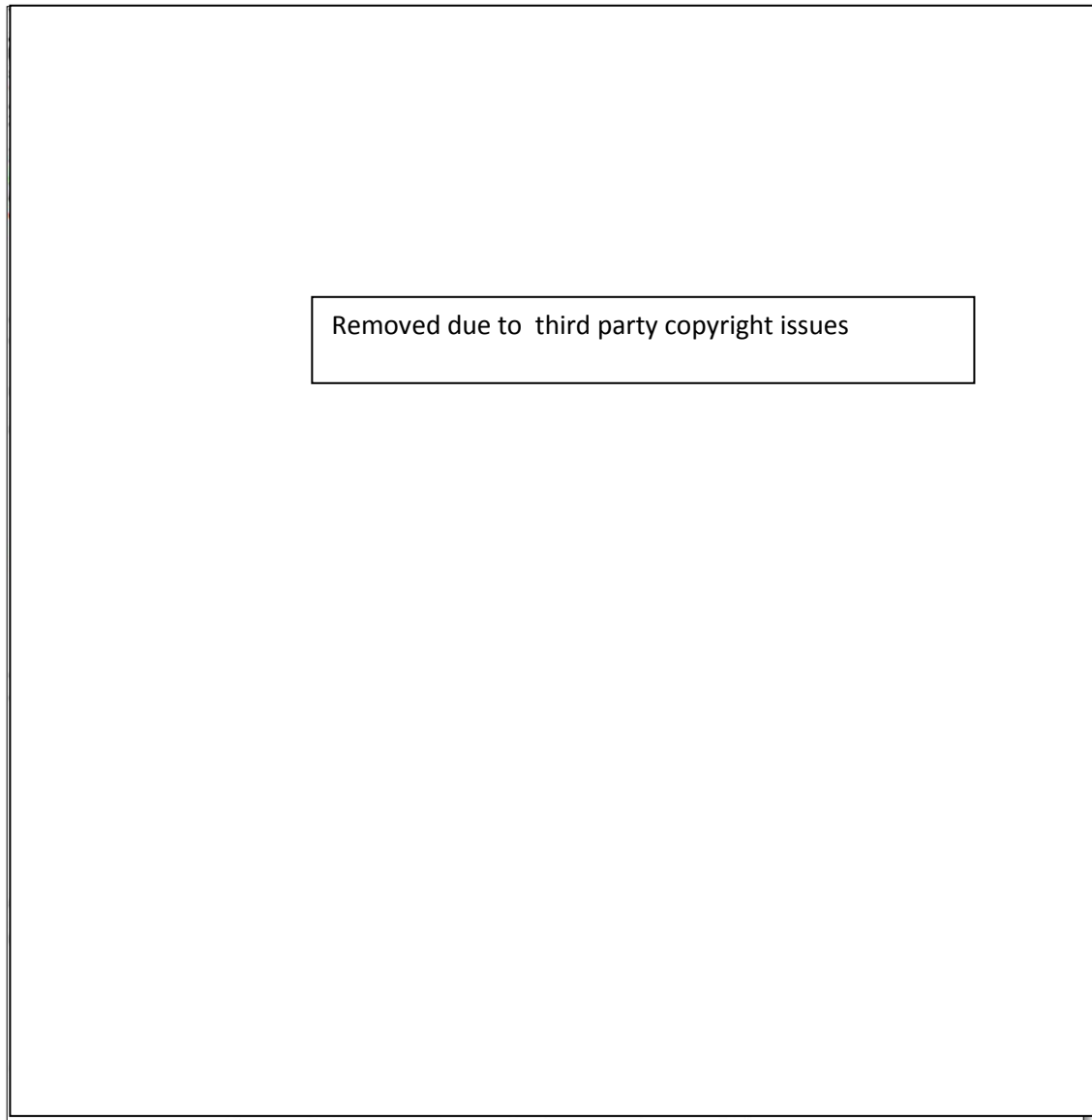


*Figure 4.5. Tar Farm, Gill Mill; ring gullies of likely roundhouses as well as a rectilinear post built timber structure which has so far been attributed to the same phase. The post-excavation work at time of writing is in a very early state.*

Enclosure boundaries also vary widely from site to site. In some sites, considered typologically as 'open settlements', enclosure ditches still form an integral part of the definition of the domestic (or at least occupied) space. Where such occupation spreads or domestic foci could be discovered, most were enclosed by some form of substantial ditch (Figure 4.6). This dominance of enclosure may be largely illusory, the product of a combination of excavations biased towards ditched enclosures from cropmarks and geophysical survey as well other factors which are difficult to pinpoint. Nonetheless, the overall importance of boundary enclosures, in a

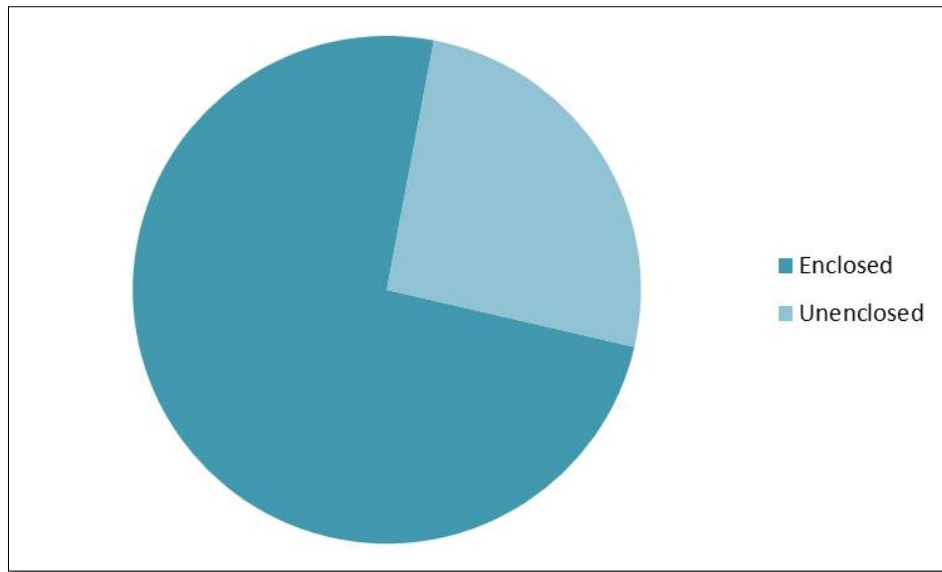


*Figure 4.6. Proportion of sites which utilised enclosure ditches in the settlement*

settlement context beyond the pragmatic use of stock and field boundaries, hints at a desire to both demarcate and protect in the LIA/ER Thames Valley.

Boundaries, like structures, can be more than simply functional features (Hingley 1984b 1990b; 1990c; Collis 1996; 2006; Bevan 1997; Taylor 1997). As an integral part of a community's built environment, ditches and earthworks, apart from providing drainage, demarcation, or protection, also can serve as what Bourdieu termed a mnemonic aid for the occupants, helping to continually re-establish and confirm the values and conventions of the society (Bailey 1990:25). Changes in these physical constructions can suggest changes in the societal structures with which they are interconnected.

A good example of how boundary definition can reflect the societal changes experienced by a community is seen at Cotswold Community (#27). From the LMIA until the earliest part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the community appears to have been unenclosed and focused on a large palisaded stock enclosure. The competitive individualism of the site was expressed largely through the display of this wealth on the hoof. It is possible that personal adornment had also formed a medium for competitive display, as brooches were particularly abundant on this site.

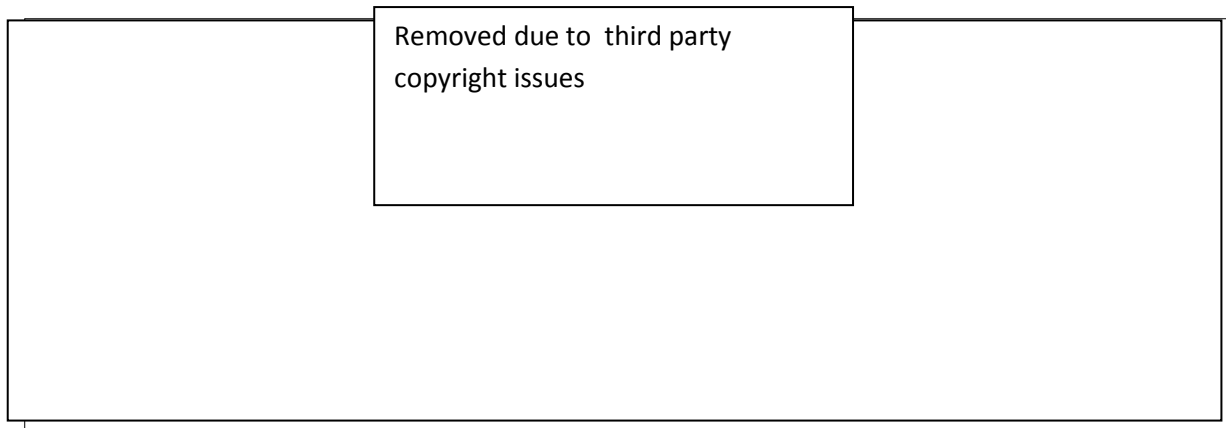


*Figure 4.7. Use of boundaries at Cotswold Community - LIA phase (l), early-mid 1<sup>st</sup> century (m), and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (r) (after Powell et al. 2010)*

Nearly 50 brooches were recovered from the site, including a continental Gaulish Unguiforme brooch, unusual for Britain (Powell *et al.* 2010: 104). Alternatively, one could argue that since the brooch assemblage comes from either unstratified detectorist finds, surface finds, or from stratified Late Roman contexts<sup>16</sup>, that adornment did not play a major role in social relationships on this site in the ER period and that the abundance of copper alloy finds at Cotswold Community 'may point to recycling and reworking of scrap metal, which would also account for the large quantities of fragments recovered' (Powell 2010:119). In either case, the character of the LMIA settlement radically changes from this apparent competitive individualism to a tightly bounded and protected community in the early part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Figure 4.7). The palisade is torn down and major ditched boundaries are dug, enclosing all aspects of farm activity; within the enclosure are animal paddocks, a well, and evidence suggesting several structures.

Until the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the assemblage in the enclosure shows little sign of Roman influence, despite the proximity of the growing establishment at Cirencester. The ceramic assemblage is unsophisticated and both the small scale metalworking and the faunal remains (older slaughter patterns in cattle) suggest self-sufficiency (Strid 2010:95). Some event has prompted this shift from open competitiveness to enclosed withdrawal. The recovery of

<sup>16</sup> apart from a single Colchester-type and the rare Gaulish import

four fired clay slingshots from this period may suggest that the inhabitants felt threatened; certainly that might cause a shift in the dominant worldview. Curiously, the isolated enclave does not long remain so, and by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, internal divisions appear within the enclosure; these first hints of zonation and the 'Middle Roman' phase assemblage suggest that the community, now forged into a strong group as a result of an unknowable threat, began to also apply or accept more rules to order their activities. Within the span of less than two centuries, the inhabitants of this small farm community seem to have shifted around the grid/group matrix from Individualist to Egalitarian and eventually to accept a Hierarchical worldview. Curiously, the settlement at Bernwood First School (#11) underwent a similar open to heavily fortified transformation from the LMIA to the LIA but appears to have been abandoned by the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century (although it is possible that further ER settlement exists outside the area excavated; cropmarks are not extant in this developed area).

Webley writes that despite the dynamic relationship between people and settlements necessitating frequent rebuilding, 'the simple fact that farmsteads were not normally rebuilt on the [same] spot is important as it suggests that households were not constructed as permanent institutions' (2002: 38). Yet there are examples of structures directly replaced by newer buildings, both in the traditional and in new construction techniques (Rudling 1997; Miles *et al.* 2007). Certainly the re-cutting of ditches along the same alignments for many generations also indicates permanence. The dominant worldview of the inhabitants would likely determine whether the past was broken with or if traditional locations were preserved. Bourdieu stresses that the 'home', and by extension perhaps the immediate (open or enclosed) environs, is what inculcates social order and 'social reproduction' in pre-literate society; Giddens stresses repetition in pre-modern societies (Gardner 2004: 44). Both of these can be seen as assurance that the 'built environment' in the LIA/ER period is of great significance in the formation and preservation of the way in which these rural inhabitants viewed the world around them.

#### **4.2.2 Consumption of food and drink - ceramic and glass vessels**

There are many reasons for examining the ceramic, and to a lesser extent<sup>17</sup>, the glass vessel assemblage in order to think about the worldviews of their users. Consumption can be a symbolic action, with goods becoming either more or less desirable based upon the role they play in a 'semiotic landscape' (Gell 1986:110). The worldview of the consumer must come into play when interpreting the success or failure of a new object to thrive in a new environment. In the attempt to understand the social dynamics connected to consumption, the best place to look is household behaviour (Blanton 1994:197).

The introduction of new ceramic forms, as well as new cooking and dining practices has the potential for disrupting societal structure (Pred 1986). An interesting recent example of this can be seen in Cowan's (1983) comparison of the time consumption between Victorian and early 20<sup>th</sup> century middle-class homes. She discovered that despite the wave of 'time-saving' devices introduced into homes, women still spent about the same time labouring with domestic chores and found no time to pursue extra-mural activities such as employment. Indeed, only when the catastrophe of war necessitated these women entering the work force did the full potential of the labour saving domestic devices come to the fore. Thus we can see that the introduction of new artefacts and their potential to alter the temporal taskscape can also effect societal change. Saddle querns take up to three hours to grind 1kg of grain, but rotary querns do it in fifteen minutes (Webley 2002:246-7). Does the creation of this 'free time' alter the role of the grinder in the community? Does she just grind more in the three hours? Are her tasks within the settlement altered to take on more responsibilities, and whose time does that liberate? If we can consider this for one object —the quern— what changes might we envision for the adoption of completely new dining and cooking containers. Do new recipes and cooking techniques take more time? Assuming that the 1<sup>st</sup> century rural domestic space was not constantly strewn with food-encrusted dishes, bowls, and beakers, does a more 'sophisticated' ceramic assemblage

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<sup>17</sup> A lesser extent, not because of lesser utility but rather that vessel glass for this period so rarely survives in any meaningful quantities or condition in the archaeological record.



mean someone has a lot more tidying to do after each meal? Could the rejection or discounting of some techniques, ingredients, or artefact forms be an attempt to not 'rock the boat'?

Another consideration is the location of where the ceramic material was being used and where the cooking was carried out. Cooking at the front of the house, near an entrance increases the potential for the activity to be observed by outsiders as suggested by the evidence from in the Low Countries and Germany, whereas in Denmark indications are that the cooking was conducted at the more private rear of the structure (Webley 2002:298). If visibility were desired, this might have repercussions for how open one might be to changes in architectural design, unless some accommodation for cooking in plain sight could be made. Ethnographic examples exist for the great importance of knowing who made the food, such as among the Brahmins of India (Karve 1962:22). Public or private prejudices are expressed through cooking, eating, and drinking: drinks may be for strangers, meals may be more intimate (Douglas 1972a: 65). To share a drink can occur anywhere; to partake in a prepared meal suggests the intrusion of those outside the home into the intimacy of the living space.

It was hoped that using a large number of quantified data would shed some light on the use of ceramic fabrics and form in the study region. Some sites, in particular smaller evaluation and watching briefs, produced only tens of sherds and thus were not included in any form of analysis. Other sites only provided ceramic quantification as either 'Iron Age' or 'Roman' pottery, and thus the Roman assemblage might span 400 years, and the Iron Age assemblage potentially more than that. In the more recent publications and grey literature, there is a noticeable trend within some of the units to standardise the quantification and reporting of ceramic materials, along with a presentation of tabulated data by phase. This is to be highly applauded and encouraged, as the researcher who wishes to examine great numbers of sites is constrained by time from accessing the archived material and reports in order to construct phased quantifications.

Some of this standardised data has been previously put to good use (Evans 2001; Booth 2004; 2012) in noting the regional Upper Thames Valley trends in rural use of finewares and in particular samian ware. One of the patterns in this study which echoed the earlier smaller-scale survey of Booth was the variation seen between the presence of certain types of fabrics and forms on sites which have previously been lumped together as belonging to a class of uniform rural farmsteads. Where a difference of fineware percentages has been noted in the past, the label high or low status has been applied, but by including other factors from other material assemblages it is hoped that such simplistic explanations can be built upon.

Looking at the decoration of the ceramic assemblage can also give us some insight about the social structure. The decoration may be simply aesthetic, or may express some particular meaning to either the users of the pots or those who view them. This meaning may serve to reiterate to the members of the community any number of societal conventions. In rigidly hierarchical societies, ceramic decoration can identify who made or who is allowed to use which pottery forms (David *et al.* 1988: 369-70). Absence of decoration may also be a desired reflection of a community's values and beliefs, either to avoid ostentation or escape possible ranking.

Figure 4.8 shows some of that variation by highlighting the mixed reception which oxidised wares were greeted, whereas the reduction in Belgic wares between the LIA and ER periods is nearly universal (Old Shifford farm is a notable exception). More interesting still is the composition of the fineware category between the same sites. For example, the fineware totals for the LIA phase at Cotswold Community (#27) and Altwood Bailey (#139) make up a largely equivalent proportion of the assemblages and from this, the two settlements might be thought to be similar types of sites. The detailed breakdown of the finewares (Figure 4.9), however, shows that whilst the fineware at Altwood Bailey consisted mostly of mortaria with some samian, Cotswold Community (LIA) had no mortaria or samian at all, and was concerned

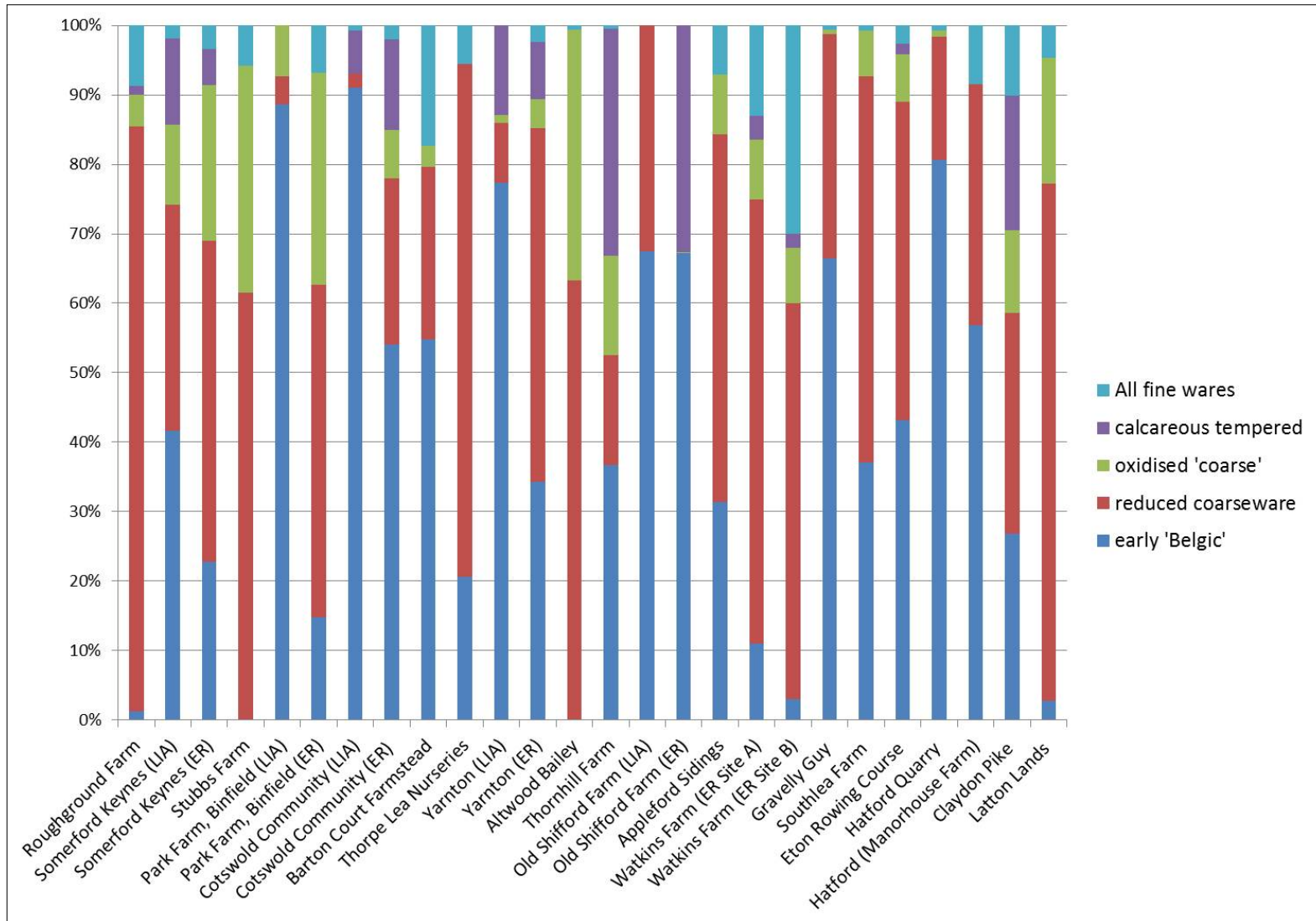


Figure 4.8. Major fabric types by site

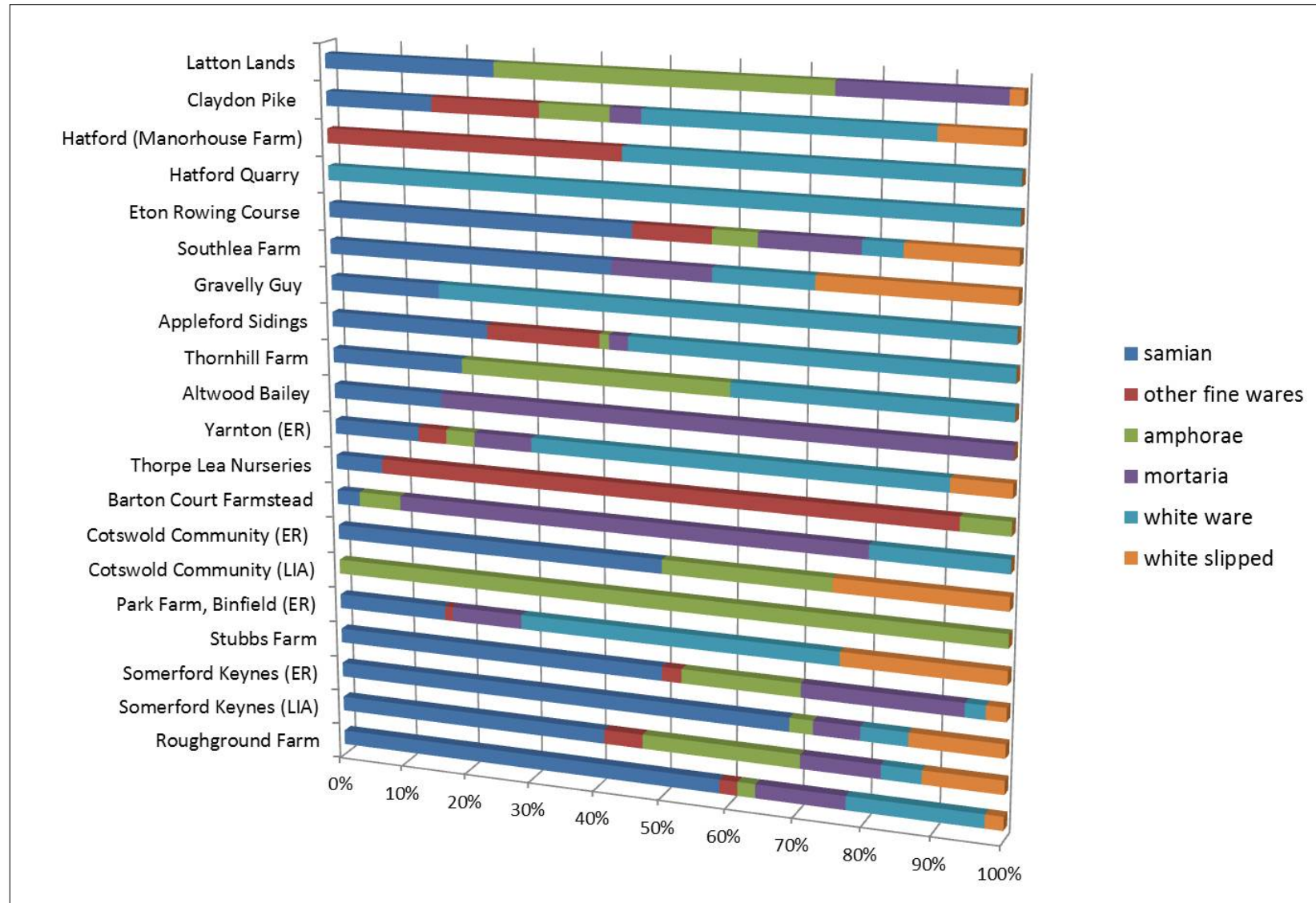


*Figure 4.9. Detailed breakdown of the finewares*

exclusively with amphorae. Clearly, the two sites were selecting which types of imports were consumed based upon very different criteria.

Looking at those sites where forms were quantified and phased, one can see that, as has been noted many other times, jars dominate most rural assemblages in the LIA and gradually decrease in number (although usually not in dominance) throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> and into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Figure 4.10). However, the quantification of forms is not without its pitfalls, and the unresolved issues over what constitutes a jar, a dish or a necked bowl have likely obscured some of the usefulness of examining forms (Booth 2012; Willis 1998:112-3; Webster 1976:17-9). Many of the bowls might be classed dishes, many of the bowls, classed jars. The interesting exceptions at Barton Court Farm and Old Shifford Farm indicate that something different was occurring on those sites, and these are explored in greater detail in Chapters 7.2 and 7.3 respectively. However, the ubiquity of the jars at a time when variation is plain in many other facets of the material assemblages brings to mind the work of Miller (1985) and the multiple uses to which a single object type may be put; uniformity of artefact need not imply uniformity of use or indeed, of the user.

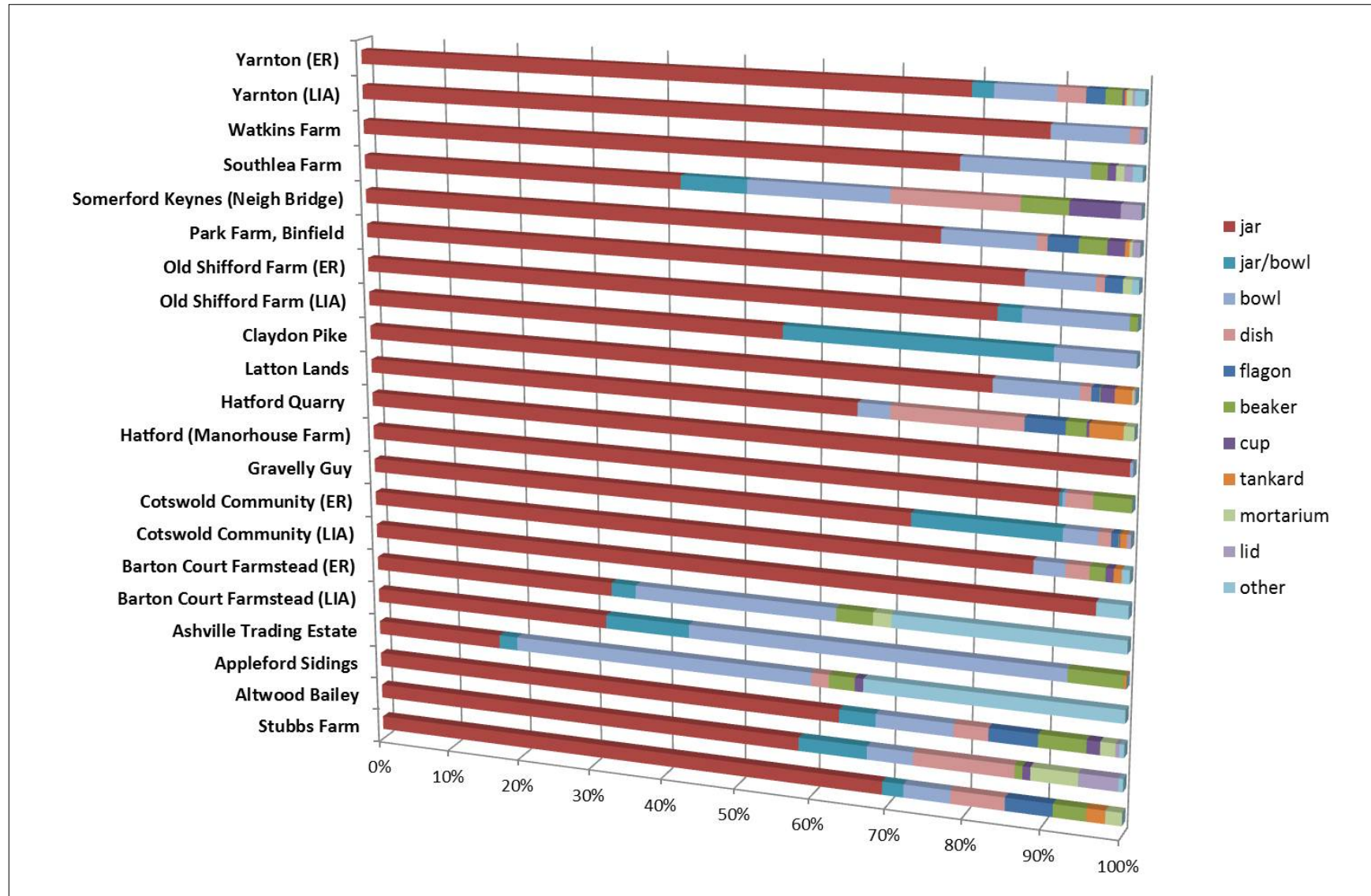


Figure 4.10. Relative proportions of forms identified

#### **4.2.3 Adornment and display of the body - metalwork**

The bulk of the metalwork considered for this study related to personal adornment, which requires us to think about the uses of bodily display and the role of the body as object. The utility of an holistic assemblage as well as an appreciation of the interconnectedness of things and people has been introduced (Chapter 3.3). In Section 4.2.1 above, the importance of structure, and by inference the domestic house, to the understanding of the worldview of the inhabitants was suggested. The anthropomorphisation of the house, with the implied interconnection to the human bodies of the inhabitants is a well-established area of study. (Griaule & Dieterlen 1954; Blier 1983; Brück 1999; Bussagli 2005; Lane 1994; 2006;). In some instances practices involve the dressing of the house (Blier 1983: 377-8) for certain events, with parts of the structure correlating to explicit displays of parallel ornamentation on the inhabitants. This strengthens the utility of examining adornment practices alongside settlement structure and spatial arrangement.

Beyond the external appearance and analogy of internal (to the structure) arrangements, Foucault demonstrates the internal (to the body) connection between material structures and the human body (1990:101-2), citing the ancient physician Antyllus for the classical view of the medical variables of the house. He relates how the design and outlay of a building affects health and how some rooms were considered better or worse for certain ailments and treatments of the body – a sort of medical feng shui. In this relationship between the body and the home, there is also a temporal element, as Antyllus prescribed in meticulous detail the requirements of the body during the seasons of the year and the hours of the day. One might extrapolate from these varying temporal requirements for bodily care that there might equally be as much variety (perhaps regulation?) with regard to bodily display and ornamentation?

Clearly there are more modern parallels regarding the temporal dictates of body display and adornment, as evidenced by various lengths of temporal cycles. In the shorter cycle, the circadian rhythm of social life determines the appropriateness of body display: who would

arrive at a dinner party wearing dressing gown and pyjamas? Seasonal changes, beyond even the call of practical protection from the elements, in fashion and dress have been displayed by Western society for centuries, fuelling fads in the competition to maintain rank and visibility.

A longer life cycle of dress and display is exemplified by the change in apparel expectations among the American upper and middle classes in the late nineteenth century (Stone 1965: 235). Over the course of the first fifteen years of a male child's life, the type of dress he was expected to exhibit began with what modern western eyes would call a 'frilly dress', followed by the 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' suit from ages 3-6 and penultimately the donning of short trousers, dubbed rather inappropriately 'knickers' in the American vernacular. Each 'fashion upgrade' indicated the passing of a life stage for the young boy, culminating with the acceptance into adult society marked by the presentation of long trousers. The societal culture linked passage of time to bodily display in the form of clothing. In other societies, temporal progress might be marked more directly and permanently on the body by a series of tattoos or scars (Brain 1979; Ebin 1979).

Objects play a significant role in defining liminality in the stages of the human lifecycle, as can be seen in a plethora of examples. In the ancient past, stages of life were apparently linked to particular objects, as evidenced by work with some Chalcolithic burials in Hungary, where it seems that grave goods suggest delineation not only by gender, but also by age. Much like the cessation of short trousers for the 19<sup>th</sup> century 15-year old, a particular type of armband appeared to belong only to males aged 5-25, its abandonment a marker of progression to adulthood (Sofaer-Derevenski 1997). Such examples underline the importance of bodily accoutrement for the establishing of one's identity, one's sense of place in the world.



In a more modern context, induction into either military life or into prison<sup>18</sup> requires a public and ritualised divestment of one set of adornments and dress, replacing it with the objects which define the new mode of life. In the past, monks who chose to live under St Benedict's holy rule were required to give up all possessions:

'nor to have anything whatever as his own, neither a book, nor a writing tablet, nor a pen, nor anything else whatsoever, since monks are allowed to have neither their bodies nor their wills in their own power'

(Benedict, Chapter XXXIII *Whether monks ought to have anything of their own*)

Here one can see that objects and the human body are linked almost indistinguishably. Identity is bound up in dress and adornment at these nodes of transition in the human experience. Just as we can see dress and adornment change on the individual level when such a life changes take place, so can a change in the life of a community be reflected in its dress and adornment. We are no longer bound by the old conventions that changing artefacts mean a change in ethnicity or prove the invasion of a new population. As a community travels through time, it undergoes a variety of changes that are reflected in the objects forming its material culture. How these changes are affected by new influences and conservation of old ideals is fluid, leaving behind an artefactual assemblage from which we must attempt to tease some idea of what and how these inanimate objects and their living components communicated to the larger world.

Why place such emphasis on adornment objects? Perhaps it is the closest we can get to the personal expressions of individuals long past. Ornamentation, either direct body modification such as scarification or tattooing or the use of jewellery as personal adornment, may be seen as communicative whole-body expressions of emotions ranging from pride and desire to grief and melancholy. Animals use the other senses to communicate and humans are no exception. Sadly, the picture we create of prehistory is often a mute one. We focus on the visual – perhaps an

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<sup>18</sup> Both these examples are strong grid populations, and certainly for the newly initiated recruit as well as for the prisoner, weak group (fatalist) as well. The strong group identity of the military hierarchy is only achieved at a later stage, after the recruit has been subjected to the fatalist experience.

ethnocentric Western limitation in some cases- but certainly in part due to an archaeological record that leaves few traces of evidence for other sensory impact. Unless noisemaking or music making artefacts or images of their use are recovered, we must use pure supposition to fill the audio void with the likely cacophony of, amongst other things, braying livestock, clattering food preparation, and clamouring children. Although some work has been done on prehistoric soundscapes (Boivin *et al.* 2006) and archaeoacoustics (Watson & Keating 2000), we are mostly reduced to chasing the aural equivalent of shadows. Thus we are left with the visual simply because it is the most prevalent sense that can be applied to the archaeological remains. For all the volumes of typologies printed and museum cases filled with brooches, hairpins and necklaces, there is no escaping the temporal shift. These items do something even now, but it can be in no way related to what they did in the prime of their 'lives'. The artefacts we now possess are bereft of their intended partners. They are one half of a symbiosis, and the missing half is the living body upon which they were displayed, not simply as an applied veneer, but as an integral part of their existence. These objects, displayed by and upon the human body, form a trinity where object, body, and self 'are not perceived separately but simultaneously as a totality' (Entwistle 2000:10). We could take these artefacts from their bubble wrapped finds boxes and glass fronted shelves, pin them on, drape them over our necks but it would not reproduce the symbiosis; it would in effect be a re-animated corpse, not a return to the 'life' the object took part in during its normal 'lifecycle'. The supplied modern corporeal component would be the wrong piece of 'software' melded to outdated 'hardware'. We may never be able to say with any certainty what this motif or that style meant in terms of symbolic display or coded message of resistance; however, we may be able to say something about the use of display and how that relates to the social structure of the communities we wish to examine.

Draping the body in clothing and adornment helps shape the identity of the wearer: 'clothes make the man'. Sennett proposed that people in 19<sup>th</sup> century America and Western Europe lived up to their clothes; in a sense, they allowed the clothing and jewellery they wore dictate the actions they felt they could publicly engage in (1994:67). This concept is probably best

exemplified by Oscar Wilde's expressed difficulty in living up to his blue china! Yet the identity the clothes represented was an ideal, not a realised identity. Sumptuary laws from many ages and cultures have linked external dress and decoration to one's station in life. Therefore it should be possible from the emphasis placed on display to infer an established societal constraint.

Can we ever ascribe meaning to the articles of personal adornment and display? A current theoretical trend determines to recognise the agency of objects (Gosden 2005), paired with the philosophy rooted in Alfred Gell's work (1992) that we should stop looking for what objects mean but rather what they do. (This clever distinction can become blurred as one examines what objects are meant to do, as opposed to what they do do). The meanings of objects are 'dialectically related to situated social action...meaning is precarious; its reproduction may result in its reconstitution' (Tilley 1990:74-5). Clearly assuming prehistoric meanings of objects is problematic, particularly when they may be subject to change. Sahlins proposed that these symbols indicated a 'differential interest to various subjects' with regard to their 'place in their specific life schemes' (1981: 69). This 'place' must be seen to be both temporal and spatial; thus in different geographical locations or over time, the symbols may represent a variety of things - do a variety of things - to further the expression of the body either as individual or collective statements. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to assume that because a certain object or artefact type 'meant' one thing to 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome, it would express the same meaning to someone in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Thames Valley.

Haverfield was guilty of such an error in his interpretation of a piece of Castor-ware pottery found in Northamptonshire, dating to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Haverfield, 1912a). The cup bears the image of Hercules and Hesione from the classical Graeco-Roman myth, but only the lion-head of Hercules' shield shows any skill, according to Haverfield. The human figures are 'grotesque', Hesione's hair is wild in the Celtic fashion, and he assumes that the native artist 'could not cope' with the human form. Modern scholarship offers us a different view, however, with the current

discourse on possible intentional resistance to imperial domination by retaining native iconography within the context of classical themes (Hingley 1997; Scott 2003). The themes of domination and resistance are examined as the driving forces behind cultural transformation (Kurchin 1995). Quite apart from the simple opposition of oppressive Roman and resistant native, it might be useful to consider the effect of taboos on iconography stemming from varying worldviews or cosmologies. Differing attitudes to the display or representation of human or deified forms may be as valid an explanation for Haverfield's 'incompetent' artwork as is an active rejection and defiance of Roman ideals.

Two of the most informative categories of metalwork which emerged from the study were brooches and locking devices. Despite nearly 400 brooches recorded in the study and a further 598 plotted from PAS, the brooches fail to present as much insight as one might have hoped. The link between excavation methodology and the number of brooches recovered was so glaringly apparent that it calls into question the practice of hanging so much interpretation upon the humble brooch. Whilst the role of the brooch as chronological marker is useful and the variation in brooch types gives us much information about external creative influences and technological methods, the idea that we can infer ethnic or personal identity from these finds seems to be missing something. Rather than indicating if the owner was displaying resistance to Rome or affiliation with the Atrebates, the deeper message to tease out from the brooches and other forms of personal adornment such as rings and bracelets (although these were not as common until the later Roman period) is that of the appeal of display. Carr argued that brooches were chosen for representing identity because they are eye catching and visible, worn high on the body and seen in all social spheres and by a large number of people (2002:272-3). Whilst this might be so on the metalled streets of Corinium, one might ask how many 'large numbers of people' was the average rural farmwife likely to see. To whom would she be daily expressing her resistance? Perhaps it is more plausible to envision that in rural places, such objects were selected or rejected based upon other, perhaps more difficult to identify criteria. Might the

absence of brooches from a settlement reflect not a poverty stricken farmstead without access to these objects, but rather a community where taste argues against showy or vulgar display?

The breakdown in type for the largely 1<sup>st</sup> century brooch assemblages from these sites (Figure 4.11) highlights the peculiarity of four sites: excavations at Claydon Pike [6.2], Somerford Keynes [6.3], Thornhill Farm (#118), and Cleveland Farm (#27). These sites are all in relatively close proximity to each other, with the possibility that Thornhill Farm is truly a part of the Claydon Pike settlement. We may be seeing an Upper Thames Valley/ Cirencester catchment area predilection for ornament and personal display via brooches. Or we may be seeing the result of data skewed by different recovery practice: All but Cleveland Farm were excavated by the same team around the same time and made heavy use of metal detectorists. Brooch distribution from the PAS was plotted around the sites in the study to determine if there were significant quantities of 1<sup>st</sup> century brooches being found proximal to excavated areas where brooches were under-represented (Figure 4.12). The most notable product of this exercise was a distribution of both detectorist activity and an indication of variable county PAS reporting practices. Unfortunately, although confirming the general distribution of brooches over the study area, the PAS data did little to provide new insights into the nature of personal adornment and bodily display from site to site.

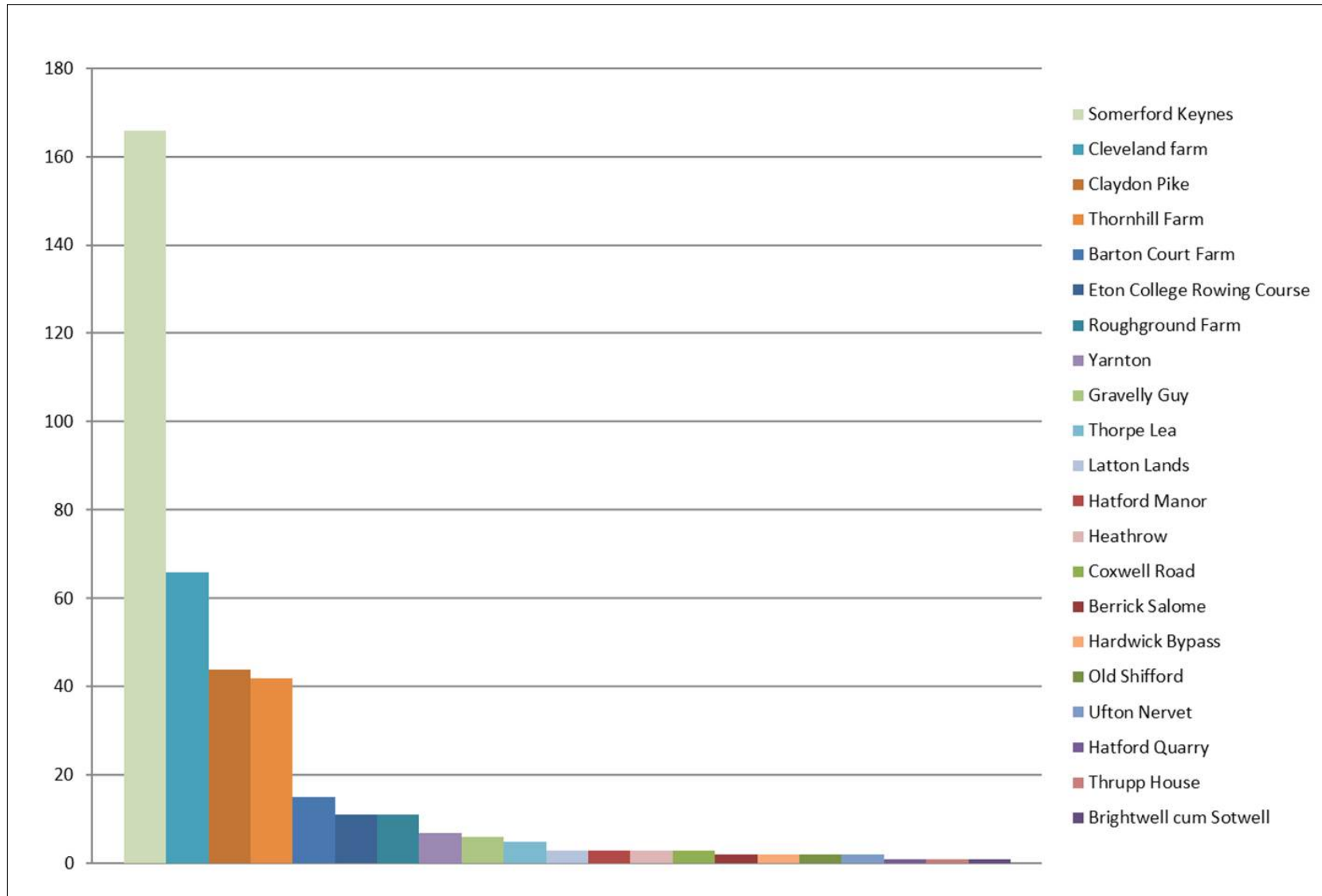


*Figure 4.11. Comparison of brooch quantities from sites where brooches were recovered.*

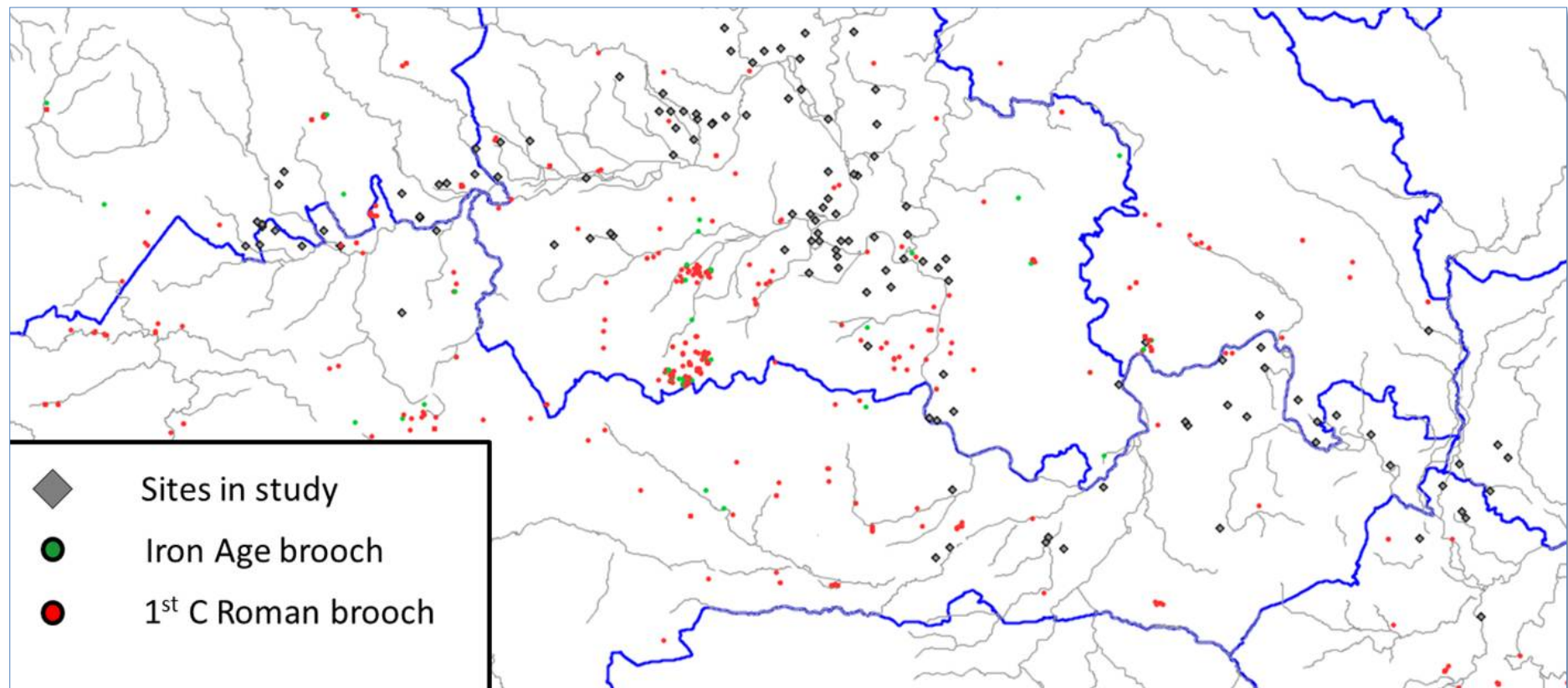


*Figure 4.12. Distribution of PAS brooch finds dated LIA and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, reported within the study area. (PAS search date 15/01/12)*

As for the breakdown of the brooch types, sites with a greater number of brooches showed some preferences; sites where only 1-5 brooches were recovered made meaningful interpretation more difficult. Figures 4.13 and 4.14 show the breakdown by type of the brooches from sites with more than two brooches from the LIA/ER period. Amongst the sites, there seems to be a wide variation in the choice of style. Isolating the four previously mentioned sites with the larger numbers of brooches (Figure 4.15), one can begin to perhaps see a regional preference for the Polden Hill (a Colchester type) brooch across three of the sites. The post-conquest continental-inspired Hod Hill brooch seem more popular at Cleveland Farm and Somerford Keynes, two sites which appear to share the Individualist designation, perhaps being more open to newer styles and influences. Chapter 5 will look more closely at the relationship between grid/group designation and these items of display.

Perhaps more thought provoking than the brooch assemblage was the pattern noted amongst the sites which produced locking mechanisms and keys. These were by no means ubiquitous and the other materials from these sites suggest that only certain grid/group orientating were concerned with locking things away from public access or concerned with private security (Figure 4.16). The implications of this variable are discussed more thoroughly in Section 5.3.3 below.



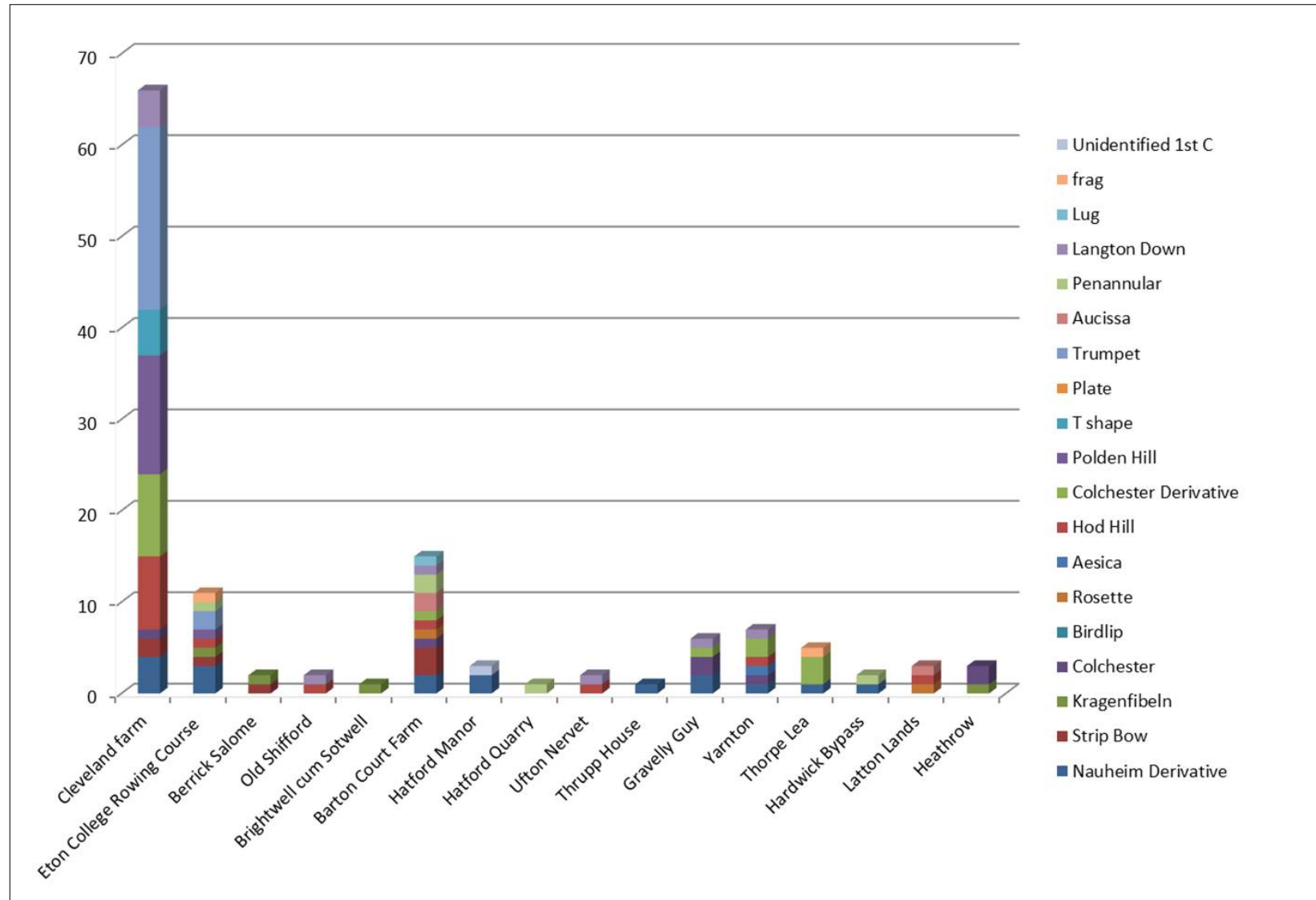


Figure 4.13. Brooch types by site

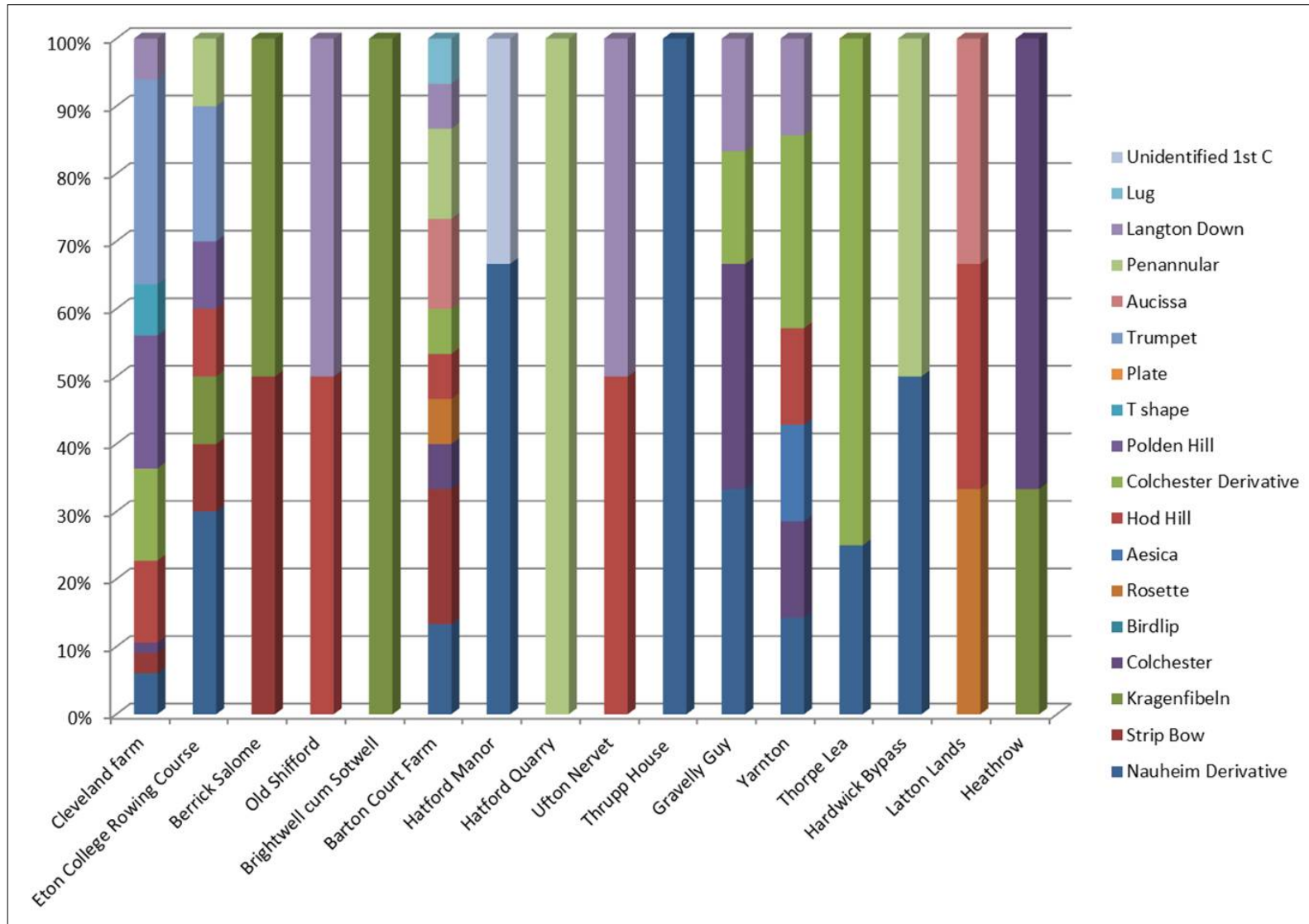


Figure 4.14. Brooch types as proportion of site assemblages

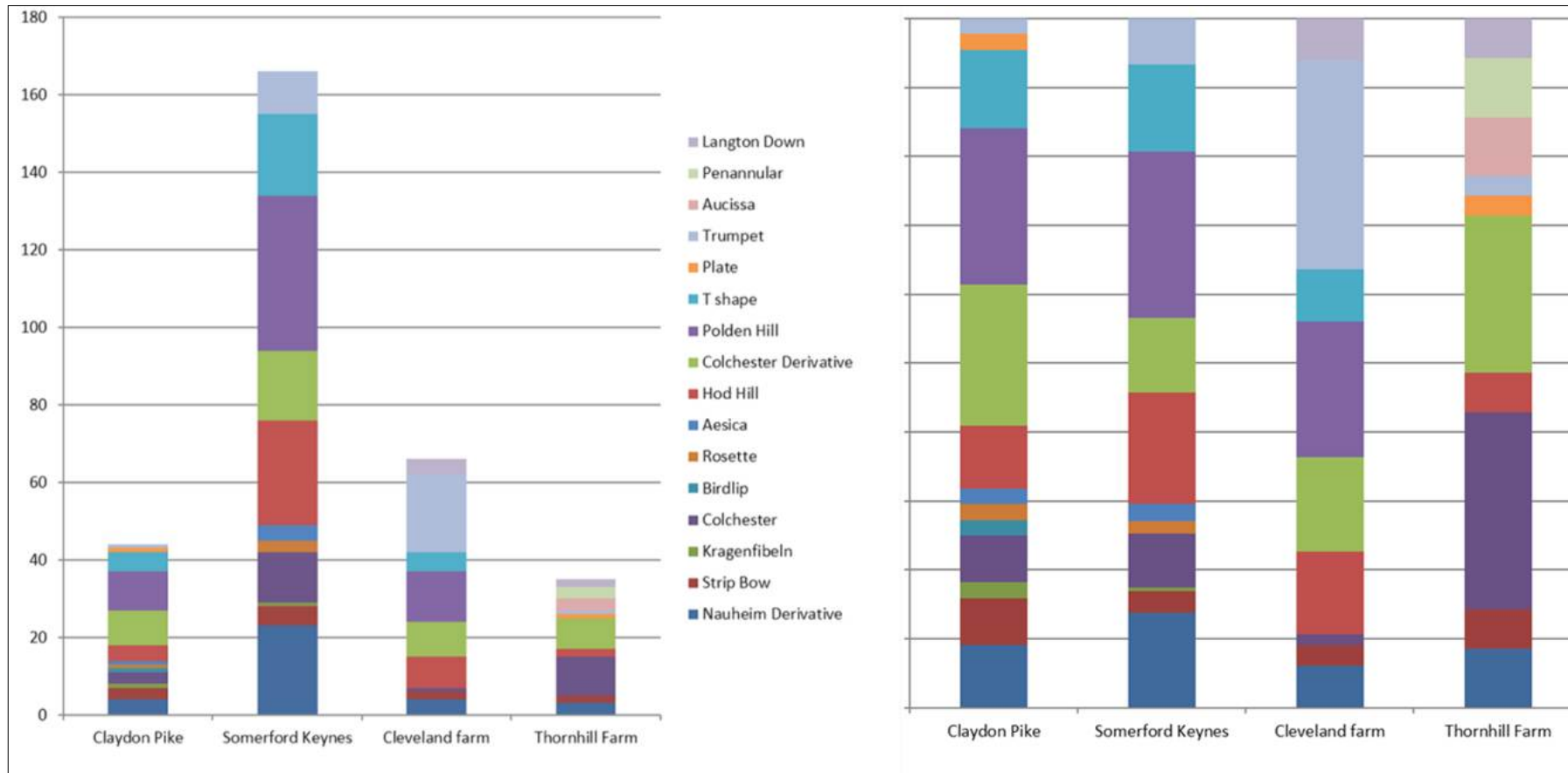


Figure 4.15. Brooch types displayed by actual count (l) and as proportion of whole number recovered (r)

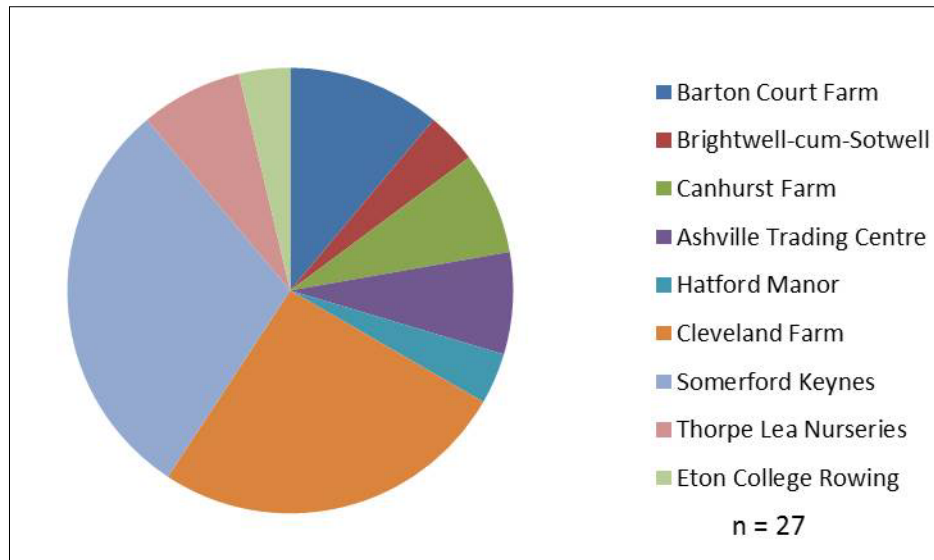


Figure 4.16. Total of locking mechanisms and keys recovered, broken down by site

#### 4.2.4 Faunal and organic evidence

Despite the limitations imposed by the lack of standardised reporting on the one hand, and the frequency of small assemblages on the other, some sites provided enough faunal data by phase to begin to explore some intersite comparisons. Figure 4.17 shows the relative proportions of the five major identifiable species from sites with sufficient data. The most obvious overall pattern was unsurprisingly the shift in emphasis from sheep to cattle during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, although there were some sites which showed no noticeable change in sheep numbers during the period, such as at Old Shifford Farm, where instead there is a dramatic increase in the presence of horse. At Yarnton, the ER period saw a reduction in the dominance of cattle, but rather than a corresponding increase in sheep totals, which remain largely constant, there is an increase in pig, which is interesting, given the overall dwindling of pig on rural sites after the end of the Iron Age.

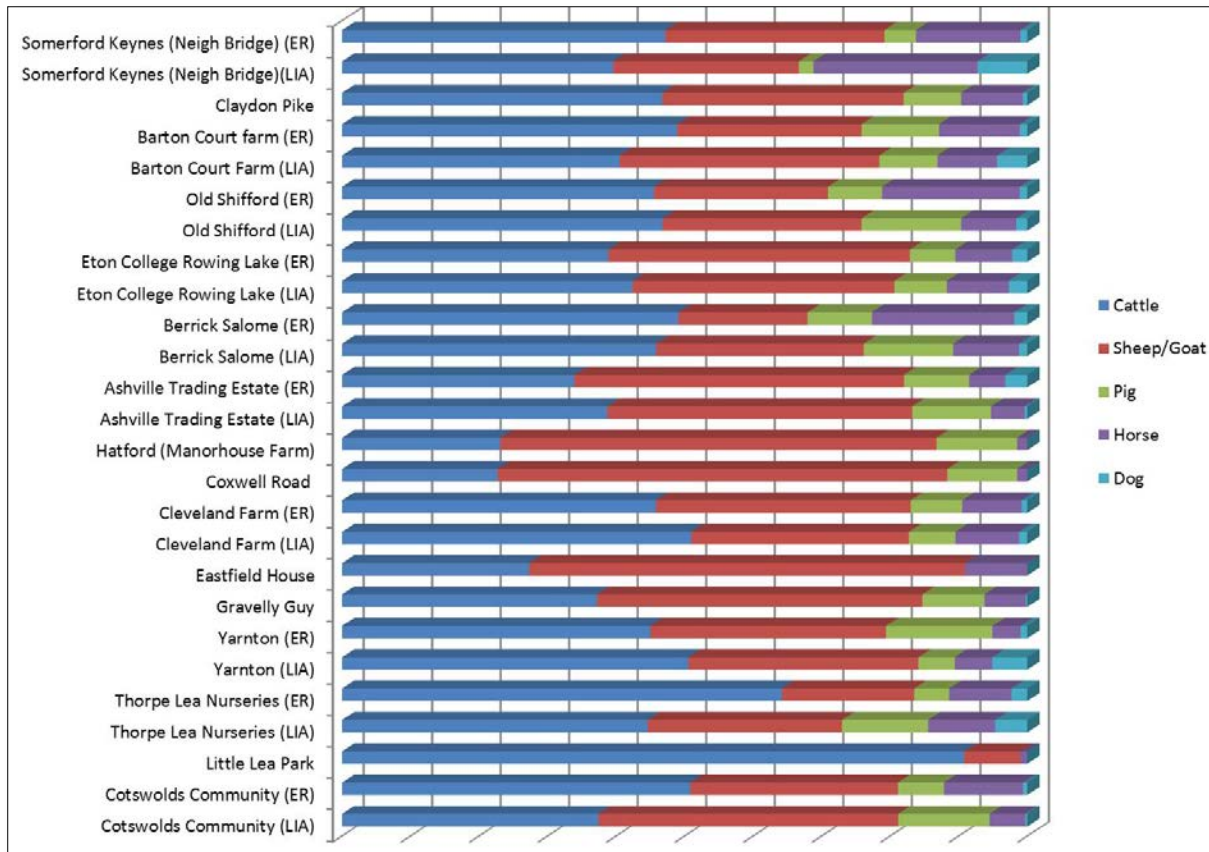


Figure 4.17. Table shows the relative proportions of five major species from sites which provided quantified recovered identifiable animal bone totals by phase.

Of the major meat bearing species, the same sites plotted on a ternary chart indicate that most sites fall within a generally consistent pattern (Figure 4.18). Here, the significant outliers along the 'Cattle' axis at Little Lea Park and Eastfield House may result from small sample sizes, as they provided just over the minimum for inclusion. However, the exceptional nature of the Coxwell Road and Hatford sites is likely to be genuine; they are both on the Corellian ridge where sheep would thrive and both sites appear rather conservative in their consumer choices. On the other end of the spectrum, Thorpe Lea Nurseries in the ER phase shows a significant leap in the presence of cattle when compared with the LIA phase. This may reflect the incorporation of the existing farmstead into the Roman supply networks keeping nearby Staines supplied with beef, as has been suggested for the 1<sup>st</sup> century site at Dorney (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 601). Apart from such obvious outliers, if one were to only look at the faunal assemblages from this group of sites,

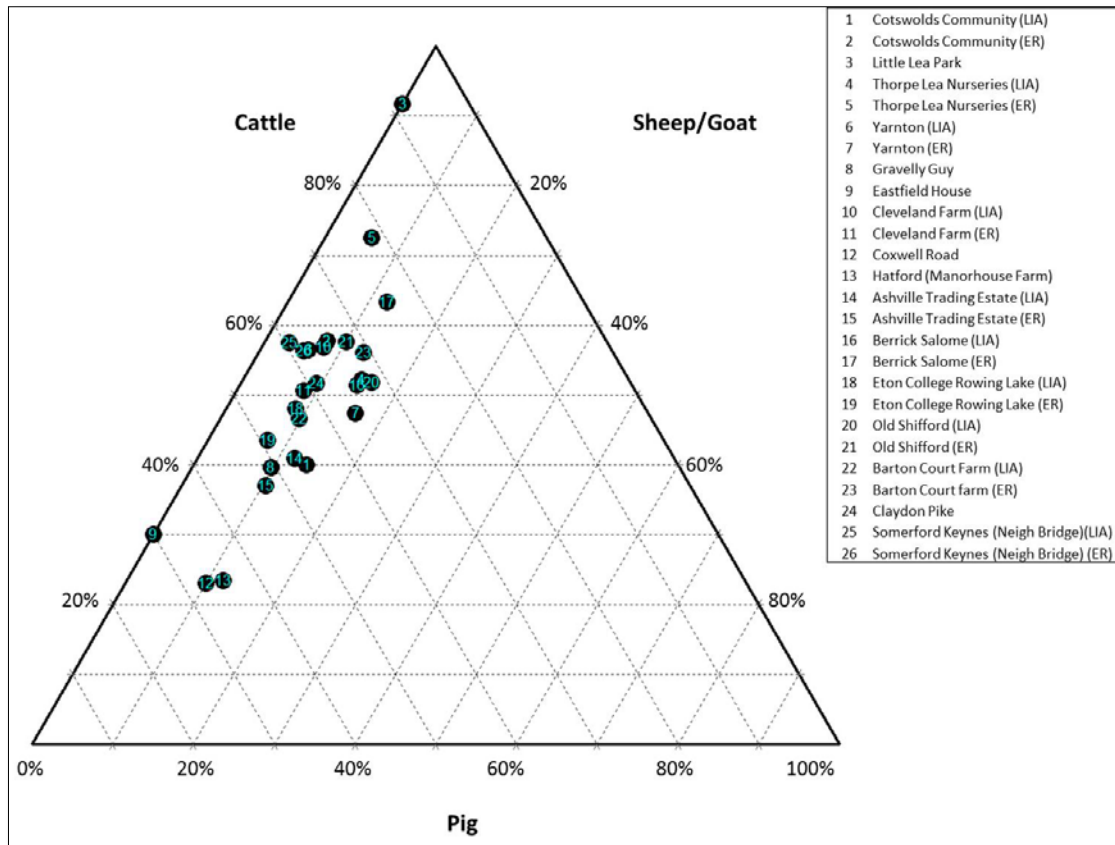


Figure 4.18. Relative proportions of three major meat providing species

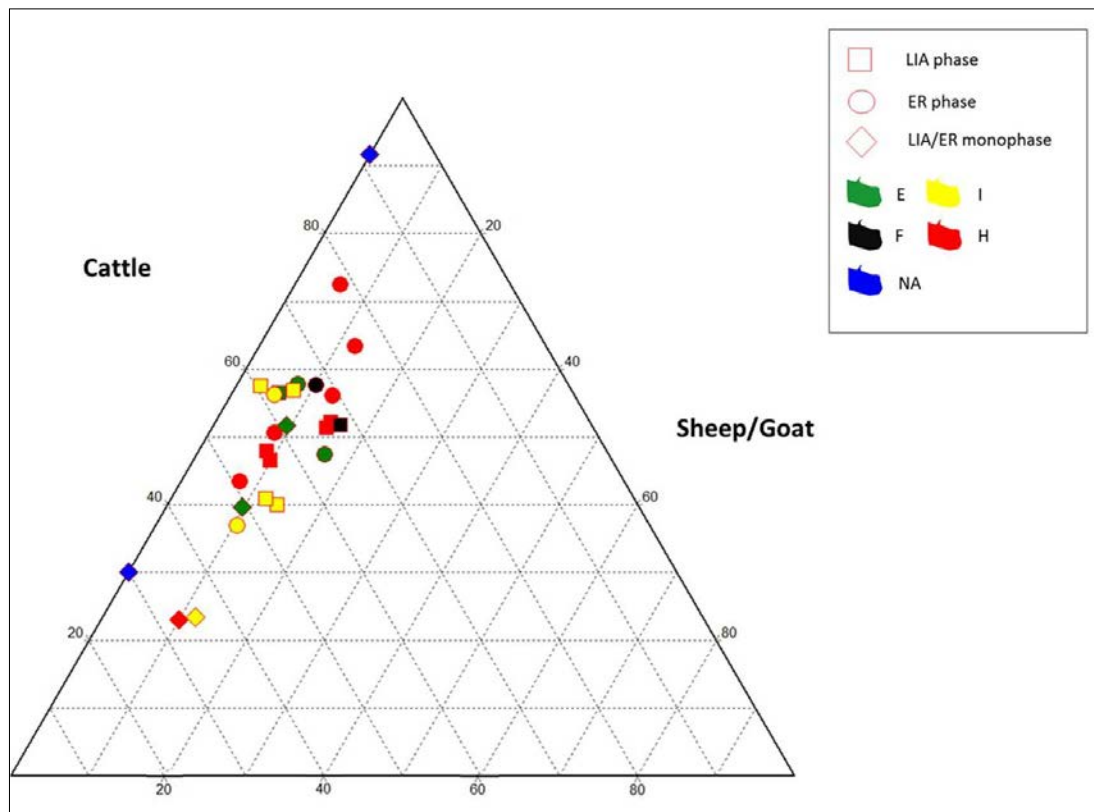


Figure 4.19. Grid/group orientations of sites referred to in Figure 4.18

one might come away with the impression that within an acceptable standard of deviation, these sites in either phase were similar, nearly to the point of uniformity. However, when the entire character of the sites is considered by looking at all aspects of the assemblages and the physical layout of the settlement, variation is apparent. This is clearly indicated by plotting the possible grid/group orientation of the sites on to the ternary chart (Figure 4.19). There is some clustering on the chart, with the two outliers, Little Lea Park (#68) and Eastfield House (#142) both providing little other artefactual evidence to assign grid/group type. Unfortunately the faunal remains did not provide as much information for this study as hoped, at least in terms of comparison of dominant species exploited. However, some use was found where it was possible to examine if and how animal remains were disposed of (Knight 2002:295; see also Chapter 6.2.6). Naturally, some of the variations we see in site assemblages are due to the fragmentary and incomplete nature of the artefactual record, based upon the whims of site taphonomic conditions, recovery methods, and finds retention procedures; there is nothing we can do about some of these issues. But with those factors aside, we still have a wealth of information about the variety of materials LIA/ER people of the Thames Valley could choose from, according to their personal taste; the mechanisms which drive individual or collective taste are complex, but Cultural Theory was designed to explore them (Douglas 1996:65).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

I must reiterate here that the grid/group classification is a tool to help us think about variation of response – why are some sites romanized and others not and why do so many rural sites change so drastically in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century? As Douglas said, four types are not enough – ‘eleven thousand or a million would not be enough to cover the variety that is out there’ (1998:101) the way people see their world and choose materials to surround themselves, consciously or unconsciously, which reflect and express that vision. In the next chapter, we shall look at the four quadrants of the grid/group matrix and the sites that seem to correspond with them, followed by an exploration of some of the patterns indicated.

## **CHAPTER 5                      INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA**

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### **5.1      Introduction**

In this chapter the variation in the rural settlement assemblages is considered through the lens of Cultural Theory to help model the differing ways that the inhabitants of these sites may have seen their world and their place in it. Firstly, the four cultural biases described briefly in Chapter 3.2.1 are examined more fully with reference to some of the sites in the gazetteer. This is followed by discussion of some of the patterns noticed by using this classification system and some possible interpretation of these is offered. Finally, the usefulness of tribal territory designations is questioned and the concept of public, private, and multiple identities is addressed, with regard to how the individuals who lived in these places and who made, used, and discarded these artefacts may have seen themselves and their neighbours.

### **5.2      Four different worldviews**

#### **5.2.1    The Egalitarians – Type E**

Type E social structures are those which exhibit strong group bonds but are low-grid, meaning the rules that constrain behaviours within the group are few. Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of sites which I have classified as E- type communities, based upon the criteria in Table 4.1. Table 5.1 shows whether the settlement remained in that classification from the LIA into the ER period, are abandoned in the ER period, or if the ER assemblage is so different as to suggest a change in worldview (see 5.2.5 for further discussion of ‘mobility’ around the grid/group matrix).

A major characteristic of the egalitarian community is the lack of any leadership or decision-taking organisation. An individual trying to rise to this position would likely be accused of trying disrupting the group. One way around this would be to permit the elevation of an individual



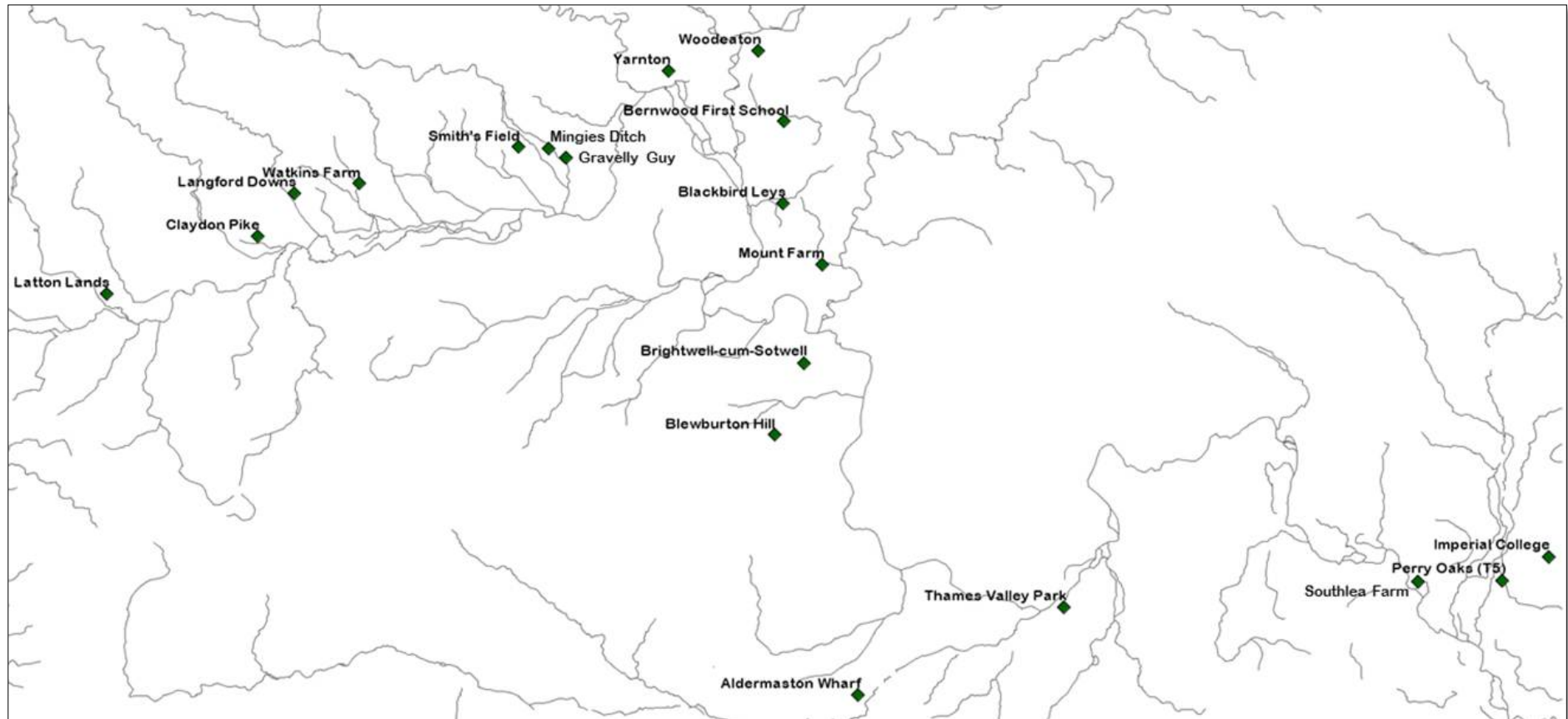


*Figure 5.1. Distribution of sites classified as exhibiting characteristics of Type E worldview*

| Site Name              | LIA | ER |
|------------------------|-----|----|
| Aldermaston Wharf      | E   | H  |
| Bernwood First School  | E   | -  |
| Blackbird Leys         | E   | I  |
| Blewburton Hill        | E   | -  |
| Brightwell-cum-Sotwell | E   | H  |
| Claydon Pike           | E   | E  |
| Gravelly Guy           | E   | E  |
| Imperial College       | E   | E  |
| Langford Downs         | E   | -  |
| Latton Lands           | E   | E  |
| Mingies Ditch          | E   | -  |
| Mount Farm             | E   | -  |
| Perry Oaks (T5)        | E   | E  |
| Smith's Field          | E   | H  |
| Southlea Farm          | E   | E  |
| Thames Valley Park     | E   | E  |
| Watkins Farm           | E   | H  |
| Woodeaton              | E   | I  |
| Yarnton                | E   | E  |

*Table 5.1. Sites classified as Type-E as defined by use of Table 4.1*

who would claim to have a supernatural link, such as a shaman; alternatively, guidance may be sought from seeking random signs or conducting divination exercise. At any time, the existence of the group is threatened by the potential for factionalisation and splitting. This threat is countered 'by strengthening the barricades against the outside. Such drains on their attention and resources make for inefficiency' (Douglas 2005b: 11). These barriers can be literal and figurative, with the enclosure boundary the major feature common to the E type site. 'Danger lies in transitional states: simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable . . . whenever the lines are precarious we find pollution ideas come to their support' (Douglas 2005a:116; 165). This transitional locus can be expressed as the boundary. Boundaries and enclosure are integral to E type groups. Ditches serving as enclosure boundaries on the sites listed in Table 5.1 often exhibited multiple recutting events. The fact that pragmatically this may be a response to rapid silting-up in no way negates the proposition that recutting ditches simultaneously performs the function of re-establishing cosmological boundaries and removes the danger of pollution to the interior. This worldview is trapped in a

vicious cycle, for pollution is ‘a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined’ (Bergesen 1978:1015).

From these E type settlements, decoration in both personal adornment and in the ceramic assemblage was minimal. For this worldview, ‘thrift is more elegant, more appropriate than vulgar display’ (Douglas 1992:228). Simple unadorned objects help reduce the principal danger within the egalitarian community – splitting due to jealousy. Status is understated and objects are not used to propel any individual above the group. When this does occur and material possessions are the catalysts for envy and greed within the group, accusations of witchcraft can follow (Owen 2003:297; Niehaus 2012:47). The egalitarian worldview leads to beliefs that ritual practice does not so much propitiating nature so much as it casts out evil (Douglas 1973:137). The greatest danger to the group is the impurity of the non-member and this may be seen as either a human outsider or as ‘exotic’ materials which contaminate the group. This may be seen in the archaeological record as manifestations of ‘witch cleansings’, cures, or even projected killings, where the ‘evil’ is moved from the individual to an animal or inanimate proxy, which is in turn killed (Jackson 1977:280;). Witch cleansing movements, though they may spread from one community to the next, spread as specific solutions offered to a given community and its members for their particular troubles. They are not universal actions intended to save the world in general from evil (Douglas 1973:146; Douglas 1970). This may offer some explanation for why on several of the sites (Table 5.2), ‘ritual’ burials and practices seemed to vary so greatly.

| Site Name              | Evidence                                                                      |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mingies Ditch          | two (human) cremation burials placed in boundary ditches; one sheep cremation |
| Brightwell-cum-Sotwell | LIA boundary ditch with horse head, brooches, and whole pot                   |
| Bernwood First School  | linear pit alignment boundary with LIA inhumations in pits                    |
| Mount Farm             | upper half of human female upstanding in pit                                  |
| Gravelly Guy           | human remains mingled with animals within burial                              |
| Latton Lands           | two human males buried in deviant positions (see text)                        |

*Table 5.2. Type E sites with unusual depositions within boundary fills*

Several sites within the study exhibited unusual practices, including Gravelly Guy which yielded mixed human and animal burials. At Mingies ditch, there was a sheep cremation in one of the paddocks (Lambrick & Robinson 1993:130). The causeways at the Yarnton settlement showed evidence of ritual activities taking place on their surfaces, perhaps countering the impurity of contact with the world beyond the boundaries? The clearest example of what may be a witch expulsion is at Latton Lands, where a male was buried after being only partially burned, accompanied by an iron knife and a whole pot; another male was buried face down, his hands bound behind his back, although he was accorded a coffin. Both of these burials were placed in the boundary ditches. At Mount Farm, the upper half of a middle aged woman was placed in a shallow grave cut into a boundary ditch. The burial appeared to have been undisturbed and the incomplete nature of the corpse to be deliberate.

Although there are similarities in the idea behind the practice, the manner in which the 'cleansing' is carried out differs greatly. Broken or killed artefacts may be one form of witch cleansing, with the evil embodied in the object prior to its execution and deposition. Immersion in water, long recognised as a regional practice, may occur less to propitiate watery or chthonic deities (Fitzpatrick 1984; Bradley 2000:37-8; Cunliffe 2005: 570) and more to make use of the purifying property of water; 'in water everything is dissolved, every form is broken up...nothing that was before remains after immersion...water purifies and regenerates because it nullifies the past' (Eliade 1958:194). Similar parallels have been drawn to dirt (Douglas 1966:160-1), which perhaps serves as the 'purifying' agent in pit deposition.

'Strong group/weak grid societies make the most use of periodic ritual activity' (Bergesen 1978:1020), which may include deposition in hoards. Sharples observes that within the E type, 'exchange relationships are limited, and the material derived from these [relationships] features strongly in ritual deposits' (2010:299). This may be seen as the community's attempt to restore the balance of purity within the interior space. At Goring (#148), a hoard contained five early Roman coins and two 1<sup>st</sup> century brooches. A ditch in Yarnton (#130) revealed rare *terra nigra*

and late 1<sup>st</sup> century Rhenish ware sherds on a site that for the most part had no other finewares; could these have been obtained in exchanges and later ritually cast out? At Northfield Farm (#135) the LIA/ER settlement is largely identified based on its cropmarks, as the bulk of excavation has concentrated on the Bronze Age activity. It appears to be defined by ditched enclosure boundaries, within which are pits and up to six possible hut circles. Quantities of metalwork have been dredged from the river nearby at Day's Lock, perhaps placed in the river by the inhabitants.

With a worldview that establishes outside as a danger and the inside as pure, there is therefore a need to protect and preserve the interior with boundaries and cast out the bad. Hingley (2005a; 2006a; 2006b) has recently attempted to distinguish between rituals of the interior and those associated with boundaries, suggesting that the latter may create and maintain group identities. This is entirely in keeping with the observations of Cultural Theory.

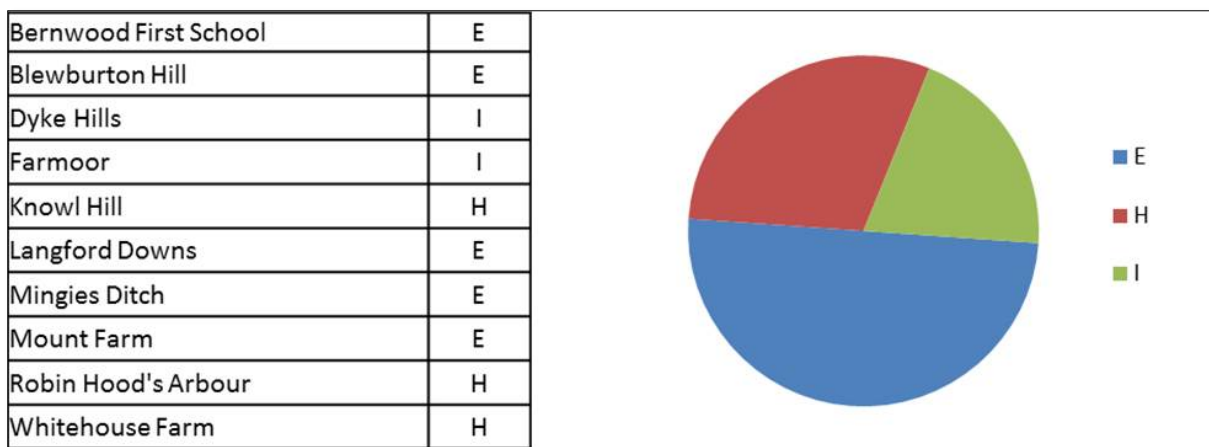


*Figure 5.2. Sites which are abandoned by the beginning of the ER period*

Of the sites classified as Type E, 25% of them did not survive into the ER period. Figure 5.2 depicts the sites that were abandoned, with the majority being egalitarian. What may have caused these settlements to fail? The answer may be intrinsically linked to the worldview of these communities. Researchers at Stanford University, using computer simulation, compared demographic stability and rates of migration for both egalitarian and unequal societies (Rogers

*et al.* 2011). They discovered that when times were consistently tough, egalitarian groups survived better than hierarchical ones, because the deprivation was equally spread out. However, when hard times fluctuated (often a product of specialised farming ) it was the hierarchical groups which remained more stable, due to the deprivation being absorbed in largest part by the lower strata, allowing for the survival of the senior strata and in turn the overall structure of the group. As a result of their social organisation, egalitarian groups weren't able to adapt to fluctuating conditions as quickly and many may not have been able to remain cohesive settlements.

### **5.2.3 The Hierarchists – Type H**

Type H social structures are those which exhibit both a strong group and strong grid structure, meaning that rules dictating acceptable behaviours within the group are many and well defined. Figure 5.3 shows the distribution of sites which I have classified as H-type communities, based upon the criteria in Table 4.1. The Table 5.3 shows whether the settlement remained in that classification from the LIA into the ER period, are abandoned in the ER period, or if the ER period marked the origins of the settlement.

The hierarchical worldview 'subordinates the good of the individual to that of the whole' (Douglas 2005b:8); it is therefore a highly efficient framework in matters of coordination, with its coherent structure of subordination and command. Individual competition is seen as disruptive to time-honoured traditions and the inexorable cycle of the generations. The structuring of decision-making roles at the top 'offers the subliminal and conscious reassurance that order prevails against chaos' (Crumley 1987:156). This is the kind of society that takes the long view and its self-reinforcing energies explain why cultures built upon such premises endure (Ostrander 2003:22). Curiously, within this study, none of the sites with an H designation showed the characteristics of having shifted to a different grid/group type. Some did seem to disappear by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but most endured, perhaps a factor of their compatibility with the hierarchical order of Roman organization.

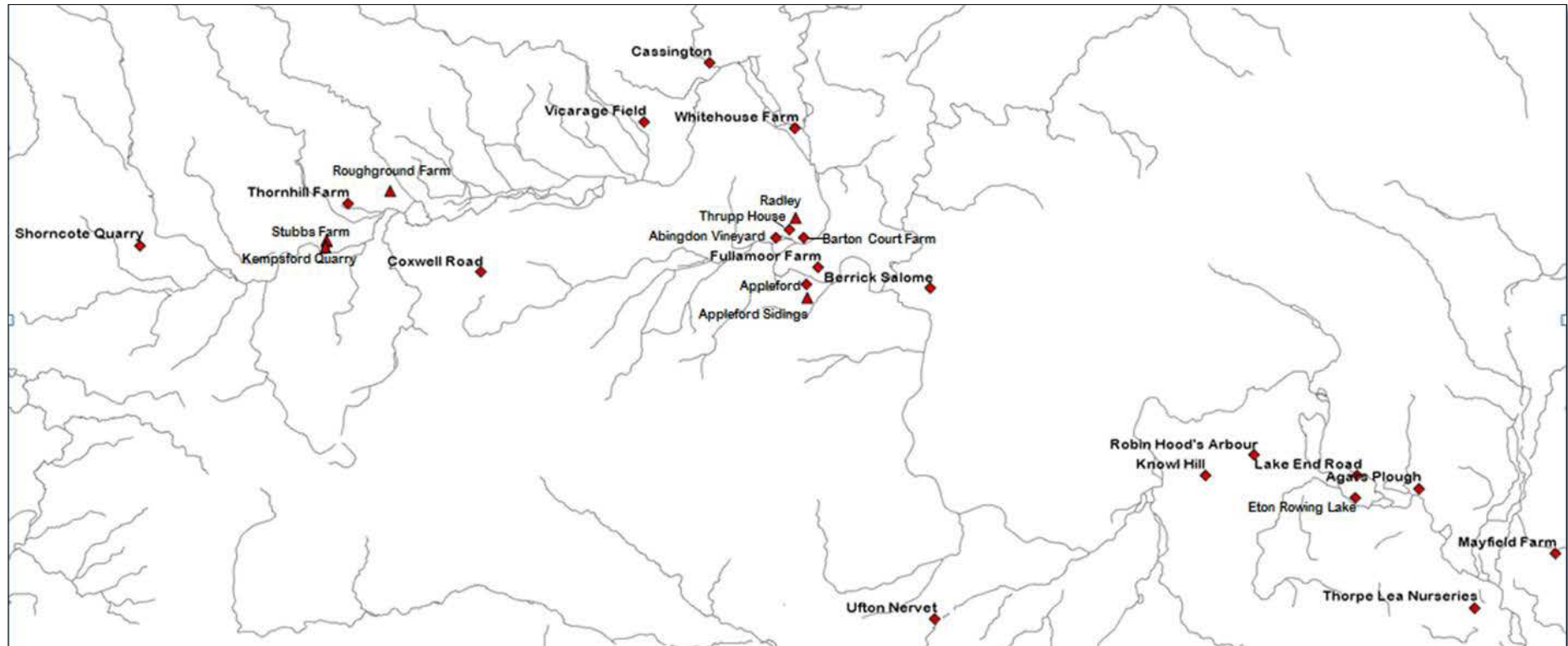


*Figure 5.3. Distribution of sites classified as exhibiting characteristics of Type H worldview; triangles represent Type H settlements established in the ER period with no LIA predecessor*

| Site Name               | LIA | ER |
|-------------------------|-----|----|
| Abingdon Vineyard       | H   | H  |
| Agars Plough            | H   | H  |
| Appleford               | H   | H  |
| Barton Court Farmstead  | H   | H  |
| Berrick Salome          | H   | H  |
| Cassington              | H   | H  |
| Coxwell Road, Faringdon | H   | H  |
| Eton Rowing Course      | H   | H  |
| Knowl Hill              | H   | -  |
| Lake End Road, Eton     | H   | H  |
| Mayfield Farm           | H   | H  |
| Robin Hood's Arbour     | H   | -  |
| Shorncote Quarry        | H   | H  |
| Thornhill Farm          | H   | H  |
| Thorpe Lea Nurseries    | H   | H  |
| Thrupp House Farm       | H   | H  |
| Ufton Nervet            | H   | H  |
| Vicarage Field          | H   | H  |
| Whitehouse Farm         | H   | -  |
| Fullamoor Farm          | H   | -  |
| Appleford Sidings       | -   | H  |
| Kempsford Quarry        | -   | H  |
| Radley                  | -   | H  |
| Roughground Farm        | -   | H  |
| Stubbs Farm             | -   | H  |

*Table 5.3. Sites classified as Type-H as defined by use of Table 4.1*



The tiered strata of this type of structured collective can be seen in the archaeology as a disparity of wealth and/or goods within the settlement. This is visible at Barton Court Farm (see Chapter 7.2) and at Thornhill Farm where boundaries demarcate individual occupation areas. This is true to some extent at Claydon Pike as well<sup>19</sup>. One indicator of status may be in the choice of visible personal display, such as brooches, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.3. Of the sites from which LIA/ER period brooches were recovered, the other aspects of the assemblages suggested an overwhelming bias to the type H hierarchical worldview (Figure 5.4).

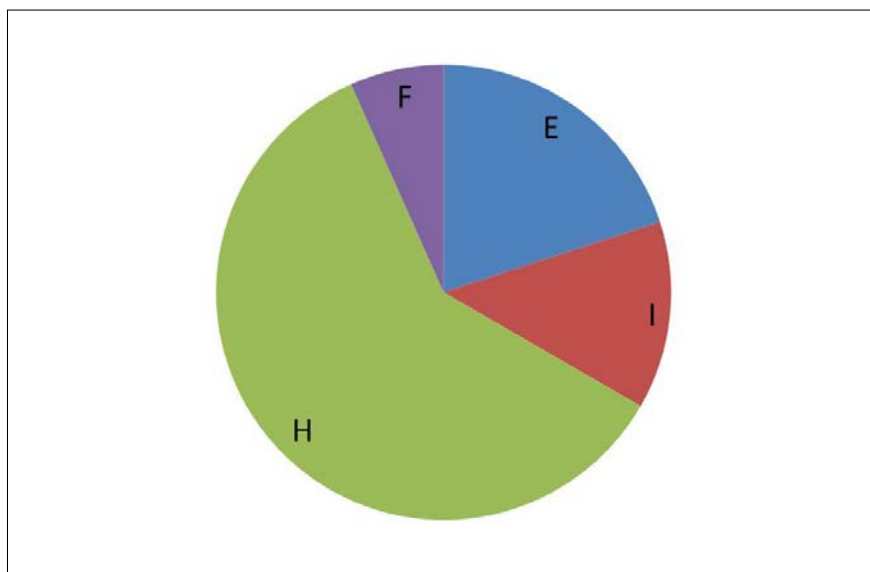


*Figure 5.4. Grid/Group designation distribution for sites where brooches were recovered.*

Some of the sites ascribed to the H grid had keys or locking mechanisms, a characteristic I have generally attributed to the Individualist community, where restricting access to private domains and/or possessions can be seen as a part of competitive behaviour. Only a minority of sites which yielded security items appeared to otherwise best fit the H classification, but the importance of locking things away in either worldview need not be contradictory. Indeed, across what Ostrander (2003:17) refers to as ‘the stable diagonal’ (Figure 5.5), some few cosmological traits will be held in common; in this case, the need to separate private access

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<sup>19</sup> But see Chapter 6.2 for various interpretations of this site.

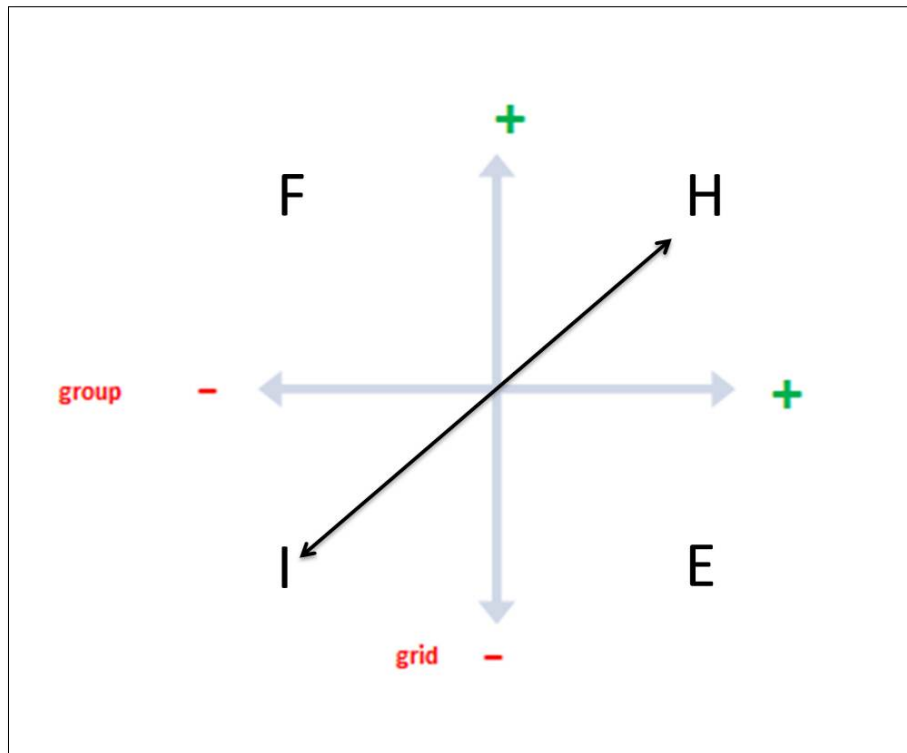


Figure 5.5. Ostrander's 'stable diagonal'

from public. This may be seen as arising from a lack of trust inherent in a competitive community (I) or one where a disparity of wealth exists (H). In the E community (theoretically), resources are equally shared and distributed, whilst the fatalist feels that there is probably nothing worth protecting.

Based on partial information, it was still sometimes possible to tentatively suggest a designation for some sites. For example, the report for Canhurst Farm, excavated in the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not provide good data for the material found; in keeping with many publications of the time, it concentrated only on 'finds of significance', which largely means attractive items. It is likely that the early archaeological techniques, which in this instance seem to have largely relied on chasing the footings of the later Roman masonry buildings, may have missed much that would now be recognized as the LIA/ER precursor to the Late Roman buildings. The report details several pieces of La Tène metalwork (including an enamelled pin and a decorated sword chape) as well as early samian pottery. No brooches were found, but the metalwork and samian suggest a degree of wealth and the importance of display. A single pair of iron keys was found,

suggesting the importance of security. In this case, an H designation is probably correct, although tentative; information about animal bone deposition would have helped strengthen the argument.

Where ritual activity appears on H sites, the motivations may stem from the social structure, as in the previous examples (cf. 4.2.1; 4.2.2). Born out of the practice of acknowledging the need to appeal to those who command power and influence (and the deity(ies) has the highest position in the hierarchical structure, and thus the ultimate power over the fate of the individual and the group), then it becomes necessary to offer propitiatory prayers and sacrifices. In such situations, the artefacts may also appear to be sacrificed as in I type practices, but the motivation behind the ritual killing of the pot or the bending of the sword is different.

Another feature of the H worldview is the routinisation of piety 'towards authority and its symbols' (Ostrander 2003:26; Douglas 1973:87); formal shrines and sanctuaries could be seen as expressions of this. At Appleford, a four post structure was interpreted as a shrine, whilst a similar feature at Smith's Field was surrounded by a ditch with an articulated cow burial, perhaps as a foundation deposit. At Barton Court Farm, an otherwise empty enclosure containing a single cremation burial remained undisturbed until the Late Roman period, suggesting the formal demarcation of a sanctuary space; this is seen also at Roughground Farm, a site which appears to have no obvious LIA precursor. Here a single cremation resides in an enclosure which also contains the gully of a round structure (Allen *et al.* 1993:53). In a very recent development, a similar feature, with several cremations adjacent to the circular gully, has been revealed at the LIA/ER focus of activity at Gill Mill (Paul Booth, *pers. comm.*) This type of activity has also been noted at Wakerly, Northants, where a 1<sup>st</sup> century house was replaced by a four post shrine (Gwilt 1997: 165). These sanctuaries may reflect the veneration of the original dweller of the round structures, the house of the ancestor fossilised in routinised practice.

Some of the sites in this category had similar characteristics with the other high-grid type and it was difficult to determine which they represented (cf. 4.2.4). However, by taking into account

their likely relationships with neighbouring sites, it is suggested that they were probably communities compatible with a hierarchical view, but were the lower 'junior members' in that ranked collective.

### **5.2.2 The Individualists – Type I**

Type I social structures are those which exhibit both a weak group and weak grid structure, meaning that members of the community feel weak bonds to other members and that the rules dictating acceptable behaviours within the group are few and subject to constant negotiation. Figure 5.6 shows the distribution of sites which I have classified as I-type communities, based upon the criteria in Table 4.1. Table 5.4 shows whether the settlement remained in that classification from the LIA into the ER period, are abandoned in the ER period, or if the ER assemblage is so different as to suggest a change in worldview (see 5.2.5 for further discussion of 'mobility' around the grid/group matrix).

In this type of worldview, the well-being of the community does not come before the well-being of the individual. The prominent virtues are individual courage, intelligence, perseverance, and success. Risks are seen as opportunities; power and wealth are the rewards (Douglas 2005b).

These communities operate on the same premise as the 'Big Man' societies, which revolve around shifting allegiances and leadership, with competitive feasting forming a big part of the obtaining of social alliance for influence. This can be seen in the creation or accumulation of food surpluses (Dalton 1977) and the acquisition of exotic or showy artefacts for gifting. The potentially competitive nature of feasting could have affected the structure of society as a whole resulting in marked changes in the material culture as well as the socio-political and economic make-up of the LIA/ER period (Ralph 2006).

Opportunities to make economic allegiances outside the group will be seized upon and exploited, often to the prosperity of the community as a whole, and more particularly to the successful big man in particular. Occasionally this initial success may backfire, leading to either the failure of the settlement, as perhaps is indicated at Somerford Keynes [6.3] or by the

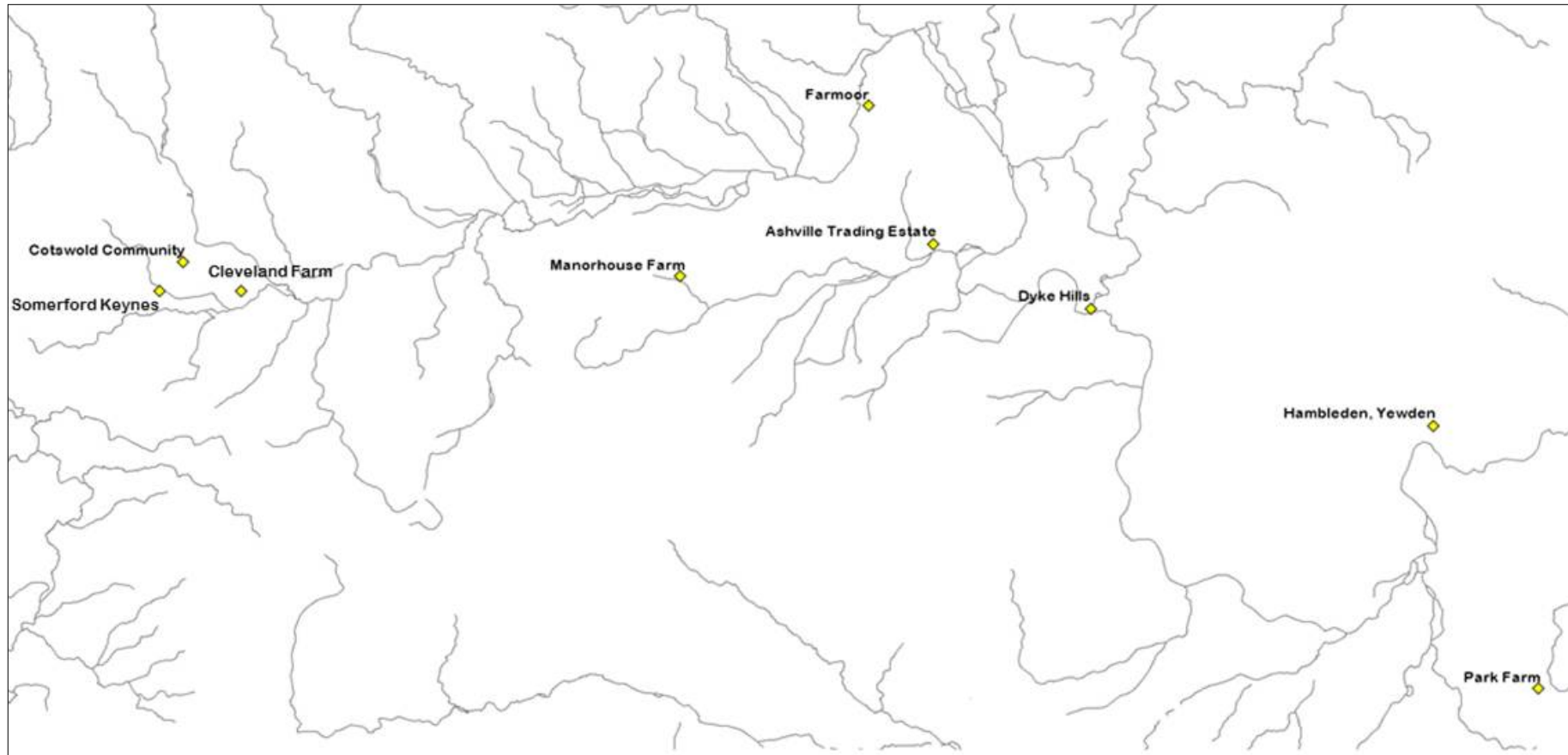


*Figure 5.6. Distribution of sites classified as exhibiting characteristics of Type I worldview*

| Site Name                       | LIA | ER |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|
| Ashville Trading Estate         | I   | I  |
| Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes   | I   | H  |
| Cotswold Community              | I   | E  |
| Dyke Hills                      | I   | -  |
| Farmoor                         | I   | -  |
| Hambleton, Yewden               | I   | H  |
| Hatford (Manorhouse Farm)       | I   | I  |
| Park Farm Binfield              | I   | I  |
| Somerford Keynes (Neigh Bridge) | I   | I  |
| Totterdown Lane, Horcott Pit    | I   | I  |

*Table 5.4. Sites classified as Type-I as defined by use of Table 4.1*

cementing of the big man into a more rigid power holder, perhaps expressed at Cleveland Farm (#25) where the changing assemblages suggest a shift from the I-type to the H-type group.

Under the influence of this type of worldview, we can see the shades of Vercingtorix or Cassivelaunus – leaders who rose to the top by persuading and maximising their popularity and prestige. This is not a true hierarchy, even though there are war leaders and ‘chief-kings’. In such a structure, gifting of food or materials is used as a competitive strategy for gaining influence (Hold-Cavell 1997:25-7). Such individuals who rise to the top in this way may exist only for as long as it takes for the next big man to come along and undermine him. This may explain some of the difficulty Roman leaders had in dealing with the political structure of Britain initially. It is all well for the Big Man to negotiate a treaty, but when his influence is trumped by another rising star, the terms and conditions are nullified. One can imagine the Roman administrators suffering the same confusion that European settlers of the North American

plains did – they may have traded for ownership of land with a ‘chief’ only to find that when a ‘Bigger Man’ held sway, the claim was not recognised. This led to many misunderstandings in the American Midwest, and to the negative stereotype of the Native American as being false – an ‘Indian giver’. The Roman world was a strict hierarchy, filled at once with a strong sense of group identity as well as copious rules and traditions which regulated even the simplest of activities. A low group-low grid environment or even the stronger group/low grid (E-type) may have caused them difficulty by communicating in different terms, with wholly different frames of reference.

The material from the assemblages of these sites shows a general lack of decoration or display, apart from the previously mentioned anomalies at Cleveland Farm and Somerford Keynes, where an abundance of brooches were recovered, albeit most from unstratified contexts. These may have been used in some form of competitive display, but may also have been collected in quantity for recycling purposes. The other notable class of metalwork which was present on these sites was security items. Figure 5.7 shows the proportion of locking devices recovered from the sites in the gazetteer, along with the grid/group classification; an overwhelming bias to the Type-I is obvious. An environment of competition and one-upsmanship inevitably breeds a desire to secure material gains and restrict access, although such desire is not solely a product of the individualist worldview (see above 5.2.3).

Douglas (1973:104) refers to the individualist cosmology of spontaneous expression and lack of regular ritual practice; no magicality. The sites that have been classified as Type-I exhibit a lack of ritual or votive depositional activity. However, the presence of a structured deposition, perhaps of prized artefacts, need not rule out a Type-I classification if other aspects fit. ‘Low grid is especially prone to contradictions’ (Douglas 1978:46): contrary to the cosmology of Type-E, complex social relations of competitiveness if Type-I may lead to the idea that anyone can be influenced, for a price. This may prompt the conspicuous deposition of highly valuable things, to show elaborate gifting to influence nature/deity.

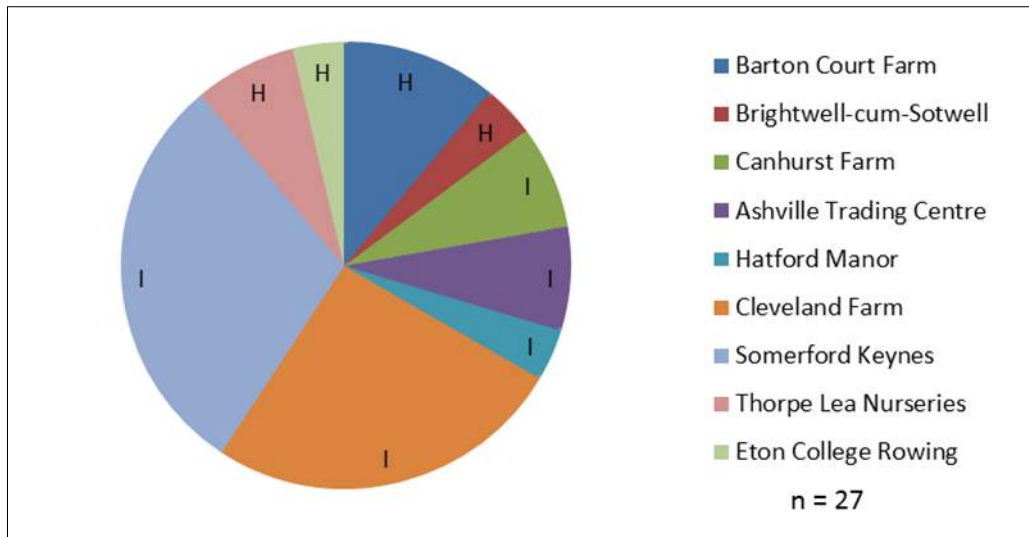


Figure 5.7. Proportion of security items and their related grid/group designation

At Ashville Trading Estates (#7), field systems show intermittent blocking and recutting, suggesting either different phases of farming practice, or ‘possibly changes in ownership’ (Parrington 1978:36). The excavator also invited comparison between the layout and arrangement of the Ashville site and the unexcavated location at the Dyke Hills (#36) (*ibid.*:39). This similarity might be expected of two locations existing at important route nodes (for Ashville, the river Ock and a prehistoric trackway of some duration, whilst at the Dyke Hills, the confluence of the rivers Thames and Thames, as well as comparable trackways); these sites are optimally places for a thriving competitive structure.

Not all the sites fit classification perfectly; the floodplain settlement at Farmoor shows evidence for intermittent use, suggesting that the inhabitants withdrew at times when the land became too wet to use. Based upon the material in the assemblage and the lack of enclosure, Farmoor appears to fall into the Type-I designation, yet one might ask ‘who determined when the flooding was serious enough to withdraw?’ Individuals within the community might compete for that role, increasing their influence on the co-habitants, but the possibility exists that the settlement could represent a Type-H community, with the Farmoor inhabitants serving as the junior partners in a hierarchical relationship with a settlement as yet undiscovered located higher up on the gravel terrace. It is difficult to even speculate about what happened during the



LIA/ER transition, as the evidence seems to show a gap in occupation from around 100BC to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Lambrick & Robinson 1979:140)

Perhaps even flimsier evidence hints at an I-type settlement near Cricklade (too insubstantial to include in the list). Of structure at this site (#30), there is only slight evidence of a wattle and daub 'hut' (Radford 1972:77); too little remained of the sill beams to suggest a shape. 1<sup>st</sup> century pottery was recovered, although nothing pre-Flavian. As the report was primarily confined to researching the medieval fortifications, so the Roman (and certainly any pre-Roman) material receives cursory comment. The report suggests that the site must have served as a port (*ibid.*: 95-6) which begins in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, without any apparent military influence, and carries on into the 4<sup>th</sup> century; later finds indicate a 4<sup>th</sup> century structure in the vicinity of some grandeur which the excavators mooted as a villa similar to Kingshill. Where the settlement was located in the 1<sup>st</sup> century is unknown, but taking advantage of such a niche occupation as 'wharf management' would suggest openness to the entrepreneurial. A similar interpretation is offered for the settlement at Hambleden (#51) which may have had its LIA/ER origins in serving a specialised function in a very entrepreneurial sense, but eventually grew into a villa complex which appears to align itself with a more hierarchical worldview.

With time, the elaboration of the competitive activity can tend to be greater than any individual can master (Tansey & O'Riordan 1999:79). This is seen ethnographically, for example, among the Mambila of Cameroon, whose elaborate one-upmanship of beer and feast gifting can lead to the temporary leadership of one man over an entire village for the purpose of organising and carrying out his ostentatious display (Rehfishch 1987: 139-42). It would be unsurprising if this temporary leadership became a more permanent arrangement in some instances, and this may help clarify the position of those settlements such as Cleveland Farm or Hambleden (Yewden) which seem to shift from low- grid/low- group to high-grid/high-group. Indeed, such a scenario is not entirely unlike that described by Haselgrove as the 'hierarchisation' of a prestige goods system as a result of short-term elaboration (1982b:80-1).

The worldview which encourages and supports the internal competitiveness of the Big Man society can also, on a smaller scale, be expressed as the individual thirst for competition conveyed by trade or entrepreneurial success. Examples of this may be seen as the specialization of niche industry: a tile depot at Somerford Keynes, a possible grain depot at Ashville, or the production of oak charcoal at Park Farm, Binfield. By the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century most of these settlements had either ceased or had been incorporated into a wider system where there was no room for fluctuating leadership and few established rules.

#### **5.2.4 The Fatalists – Type F**

Type-F social structures are those which exhibit a weak group but strong grid structure, meaning that members of the community feel weak bonds to other members but that the rules dictating acceptable behaviours within the group are many and rigid. I have only classified one site as an F-type community, based upon the criteria in Table 4.1. Old Shifford Farm forms one of the case studies in Chapter 7 and so will receive due attention there [7.3].

The fatalist community is kept from joining fully in with other groups based on a series of rules and regulations; conventions prevent them from taking a larger role in their own destinies. In a modern sense we might see this as those barred from certain job opportunities because of ethnicity or education. Urban inhabitants are often more likely to have this experience (Douglas 2005b: 9), but as this study has excluded urban spaces, it was not expected that any F type sites would be visible. In their conservative assemblages, they would appear in some ways like closely guarded E groups<sup>20</sup>. Display items would also be few, and since low-group communities may ‘foster the symbolic separation of society and nature’ (Ostrander 2003:25), there may be boundaries, similar to E groups.

One area where they differ markedly is in the concept of ritual; boundaries for the F settlement are symbolic physical barriers whilst for the E group they are more spiritually charged (4.2.1). Ritual activity may not be visible on such sites, not because these communities are atheistic but

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<sup>20</sup> cf Ostrander’s stable diagonal (Figure 5.5)

because their worldview may tend to see the deities, or less specifically, nature, as churlish and implacable – it will do no good to try to influence them. Millenarian movements are often born out of communities such as this – those who feel they have been marginalised to the point where there is nothing left to lose, and so the ‘end of the world’ is deemed a preferable alternative<sup>21</sup>. Not everyone with this worldview is so radical; this designation also includes those who ‘avoid alignment, who do not intend to lead or persuade or organise; keeping apart from the struggle’ (Douglas 1998:102). The LIA/ER world may have been one in which it was very difficult to ‘drop out’ – only one site in 160 produced the strong suggestion of the F type worldview, at Old Shifford Farm [7.3]. In a few other cases, at Agar’s Plough (#39) and at Stubbs Farm (#112), the material and layout of the site suggested this designation, but only when viewed in isolation. By broadening the view to take in the neighbouring landscape, one must consider the proximity of the H settlements at Eton College Rowing Lake and Kempsford Quarry, respectively. In these instances, it may be that rather than Agar’s Plough being a subjugated or outcast settlement, it represented the ‘junior partner’ in a hierarchical relationship with the Eton site. These settlements may be thought of as occupying a space in the grid/group matrix straddling the line between H and F.

One would expect that given the similarity between an isolate or repressed community and the ‘low man on the totem pole’ settlement within a hierarchical dispersed community would make the F type settlement nearly invisible; only Old Shifford Farm seemed like a true and purposeful isolate. If a group deliberately wished to alienate themselves from the Roman intrusion into their lives, it was in some measure possible by a very literal withdrawal from society. Looking briefly outside the Thames Valley, Keith Branigan and Martin Dearne (1992) investigated over 100 caves in the Peak District and the Mendips and found that a number of them had been inhabited during the period of Roman occupation. Although some had obviously been used only

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<sup>21</sup> If we envision the community to which Boudicca and Prasutagus belonged as strong grid, but without a sense of group following the ‘bequeathal’ to Roman, then we might see the events of AD60 as more of a millenarian-type revolt than as a well-planned military act of insurrection; that, however, is an exploration not to be indulged here.

as temporary shelters, more than twenty of the caves showed extensive residential occupation over the late 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most of the artefact assemblages are native in character, with only a small percentage of 'romanized' products found in cave workshops (Branigan & Dearne, 1992). Could these sites represent an element of society with a strongly-held *isolate* worldview? We can only speculate about what might lead to the development of this type of society. Whilst Douglas often used a slave, prisoner, or military to provide context for this type of community (Douglas 2006:6), we might also think about those driven to extremes by economic external pressures. Farmers of the American Midwest in the Depression Era on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having lost their land and livelihoods often developed this fatalist view; with the increase of taxation in Roman Britain around the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, perhaps we can envision a parallel development of disenchanting and disinherited farmers whose land has been absorbed into larger, managed 'corporate' farms. In some cases, the isolate community may have resulted from having 'lost patronage and been pushed out of the culture of competitive individualism' (Douglas 2005b:9); this may be what happens to the inhabitants of some I type sites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, such as at Somerford Keynes (see Chapter 6.3). It is even possible that some of these displaced rural inhabitants find themselves with few options but to move to the growing urban centres and small towns.

### **5.2.5 Moving around the matrix**

In several of the sections above, settlements have been referred to which seemed, by the changing characteristics of the assemblages, to have shifted their position on the grid/group matrix. Whilst the extinction or abandonment of a settlement is in many cases rather straightforward, the mechanism which allow 'wandering around' inside the matrix require a bit more discussion. Figure 5.8 shows the distribution of sites which appear to exhibit this shift and the direction of the shift.

One of the criticisms that Cultural Theory has faced is that it is too rigid a template upon which to graft the myriad ways that human societies structure themselves. It is argued that one should

not be able to simply confine a community's socio-political outlook to an inflexible box. Figure 5.8 highlights only those sites which have a distinctly different orientation in the ER period. It has been postulated that 'people change their ways of life whenever successive events (that is, *surprises*) intervene in such a way as to prevent the preferred pattern of relationships from delivering on the expectations it has generated' (Thompson *et al.* 1990:75). This has variously explained as Path Dependence (Ferguson forthcoming) or Punctuated Equilibrium (Gould & Eldredge 1977) but at its simplest imagines that communities and individuals will retain their worldview unless some monumental event or trauma shakes them from it. Change can be explained by the theory of surprise (Thompson *et al.* 1990: 69–81): that is to say that the way people live their lives are resistant to change, and events that do not fit expectations or challenge a worldview are frequently explained away. However, the 'cumulative impact of successive anomalies or surprises provoke a change of paradigm' (Mamadouh 1999:401-2). One line of Durkheimian thinking, supported by Douglas, is that ill-defined, ambiguous, or marginal social situations generate ideas of power, potency, or danger. Transitional times offer up just such a mix and how one responds to the power and danger is dependent on the worldview.

In a simple one-dimensional model, this allows for a pendulum swing, between for instance Egalitarianism and Hierarchy; but with the two dimensions of Cultural Theory, the options multiply to twelve types of possible transition (Figure 5.9). Thompson *et al.* summarise these twelve paths with hypothetical examples that show each move is socially possible (1990:76-7); we can perhaps draw an example from the archaeology to do the same.

The floodplain settlement at Mingies Ditch (#79) in the Upper Thames was probably only a seasonal settlement with a gravel terrace counterpart nearby; the material suggests the characteristics of type E. Not far away at the closest point of the gravel to the floodplain is the site at Smith's Field (#106), which in the early phases also appears to exhibit E traits. However, by the very LIA, the rising water table and increased flooding led to the abandonment of the site. Around this same time the ER phase of Smith's Field begins to resemble an H type community. It

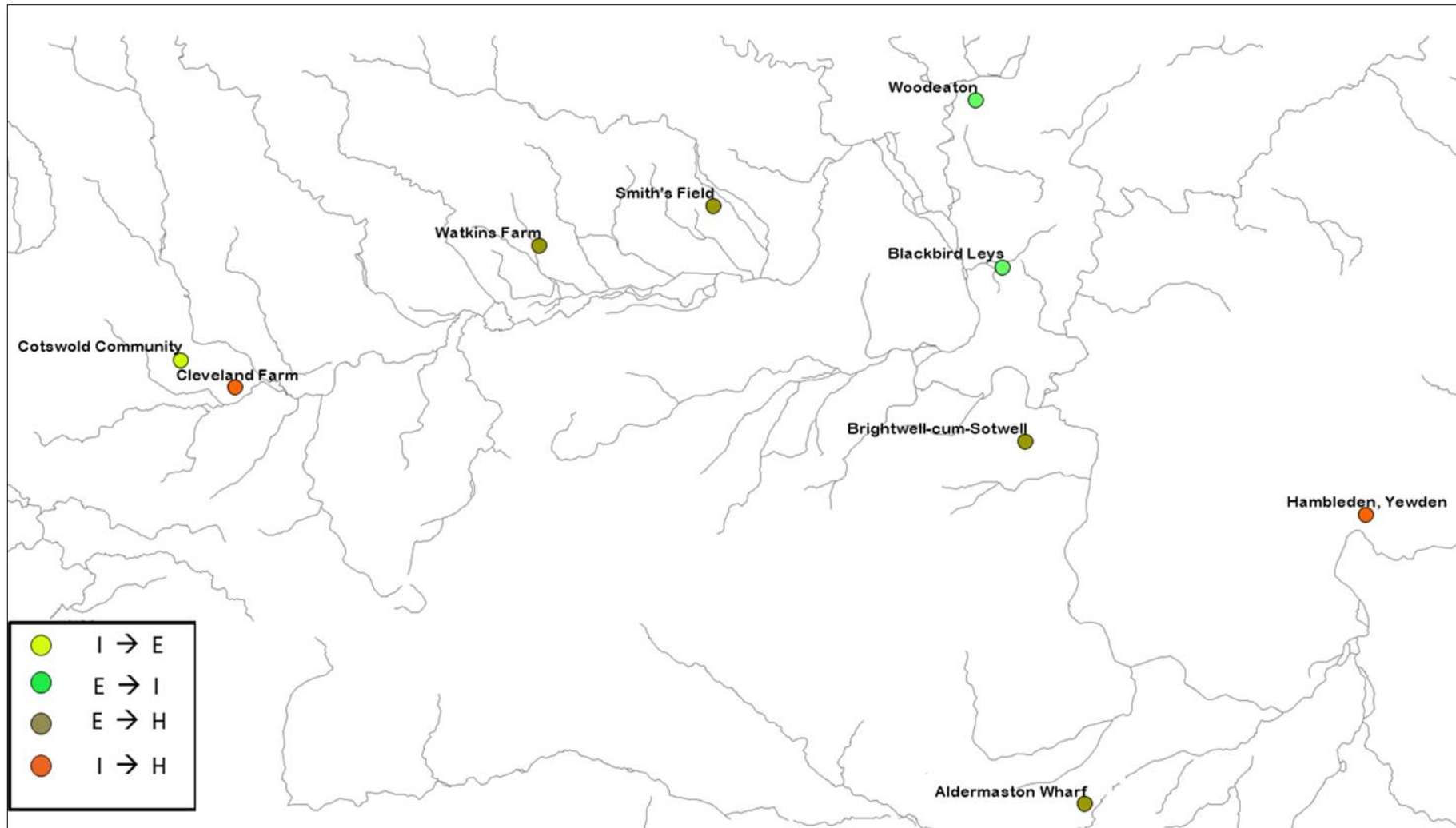


*Figure 5.8. Distribution of sites whose grid/group classification appears to shift at some point between the LIA and ER periods.*



*Figure 5.9. Thompson's model of movement possibilities within the two-dimensional matrix*

is pure speculation that the sites were in the LIA worked and occupied by the same group, but if so, could we further hypothesise that the event which dislodged them from their low grid worldview was the environmental change and its effects on them? The egalitarian point of view sees nature as an ephemeral force (Thompson 2003:5109), whose negative effects need to be countered, often by cleansing rituals; perhaps the seasonal flood cycle affirmed this cosmology. The failure of this system to keep the rising floodwaters at bay may have resulted in a shift in cosmology; the hierarchical view of the natural world is that it behaves in a way that is generally unexpected or undesirable (perverse) but may be influenced (tolerant) (Schwarz and Thompson 1990:7). The erection of a shrine at Smith's Field may be part of that propitiation activity. The possibility that changes in settlement pattern and social structure may be the result of single traumatic or climatic events as opposed to gradual or cumulative processes has been raised in recent discussion (Barrett *et al.* 2012; Meyer & Crumley 2012; contra Haselgrove & Pope 2007:12-13); I offer that at a more fundamental level, worldview was altered by such

events, and the changes we see in the archaeological record are the manifestations of that changed perspective.

### **5.3 Archaeobotanical support**

At a point in my research, after the sites had been assigned their grid/group designations where possible, I came across an unpublished thesis <sup>22</sup>(Stevens 1996) that explored the social organisation of some Iron Age communities based upon the analysis of cereal plant remains. For the sites in his study Stevens divided the samples between large seeded sites and small seeded sites. Large seeded sites produced evidence that cereal crops were threshed, winnowed, and coarse and fine sieved prior to storage; small seeded sites only threshed and winnowed prior to storage (245). Within his case studies, Ashville, Whitehouse Farm, Mount Farm, and Danebury are shown to be large seeded, whilst Abingdon, Gravelly Guy, Yarnton, and Claydon Pike are determined to be small seeded (248, Table 8.1). He interprets this to suggest that the large seeded sites may have engaged in inter-household cooperation, a coordinated effort to maximise the labour pool, ensuring the crops were processed to the fullest extent before storage. In the small seeded sites, this joining of labour in was largely absent (*ibid.*). This interpretation of communal activity provides support for the postulated 'grid/group' location obtained from the artefacts and features. The assemblage suggests that Ashville is an I-type community, with few rules, but with the social structure in place to allow a persuasive 'Big man' to coordinate a short-term confederacy of households. Danebury, outside the region examined in this thesis, may be seen even without close scrutiny as either another Big Man community, or perhaps a more rigidly defined and controlled H type society; in either instance the ability of an individual to wield temporary or longer-term influence would ensure the coordination of labour. Whitehouse Road also exhibits this H type structure (although Mount Farm would seem, at least in the LIA, to be an E type). Conversely, Abingdon Vineyard, Gravelly Guy, and Yarnton all exhibit traits which suggest an E type egalitarian community with little implementation of

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<sup>22</sup> The timing of discovering this thesis is relevant, since it in no way informed the classification of the sites and therefore may be seen as a potentially independent verifier.



rules or leadership. This does not suppose that the members of these communities were unwilling to help each other out, but that perhaps without a coordinating individual(s) to take charge, the labour could not be used to maximum effect. Anyone who has tried to get a dozen friends to quickly decide where to go for lunch can understand that, even with the best will in the world, egalitarian groups can flounder when it comes to efficiency.

Curiously, Stevens was divided on Claydon Pike, which he felt the seed size data could permit the assigning of either large or small to (242). This reflects the complexity of this community; although I have assigned an E type structure, I believe that Claydon Pike is figuratively higher up-grid in the 'E box' than many other sites of this designation (see Chapter 5.2.7). Perhaps Mount Farm also fits this description, but too little of the settlement focus for the LIA/ER period was excavated to make such a claim.

Offering an alternative to his communal activity interpretation, Stevens shifted focus, using exchange as an explanation for the differences in his archaeobotanical data. He suggested that material would be processed further if it was to be used in exchange, resulting in assemblages 'consisting mainly of larger seeded species and glume bases'. Under this approach, the sites were arranged as those receiving grain as exchange (Danebury, Ashville, Mount Farm, White House Road, and Claydon Pike) and those which did not receive grain at all (Abingdon, Yarnton, and Gravelly Guy). Once again, there is support for the grid/group designations; Claydon Pike falls firmly in the exchange network, as would be expected from its slight aberrations from E archetype (Chapter 5.2.7). Equally, the E type sites, with firm recognition of group boundaries, would be unlikely to acquire foodstuffs as part of normal exchange; purity of food can be a major factor in maintaining the overall purity of the group (Douglas 2005a:72). If Stevens is incorrect, and these sites were recipients of grain as trade, they may have accepted the crops in the less processed stage deliberately to avoid 'pollution' of the group. Ethnographically, there is often a distinction made between the purity of cooked and uncooked foods (Douglas 1966:33); grain which required more processing before grinding might be seen as 'raw'.

Although Stevens' work (2003) has been criticised (Van der Veen and Jones 2006), they seemed to have misunderstood the thrust of his argument, since they arrive at the same conclusions. Either of Stevens' interpretations of the social mechanisms behind the variation in the archaeobotanic evidence seemed to uphold the suggestions implied by grid/group analysis, at least in the named cases. I was heartened to discover that in these instances, two separate lines of enquiry - my own and Stevens' - led to the same conclusions; I hasten to add, however, that this is in no way *proof* that the use of the grid/group model is correct. I do not intend that Cultural Theory be applied to find 'the ultimate answer', but rather to help us ask better questions.

## **5.4 Some emergent patterns**

### **5.4.1 The MIA – ER settlement hiatus**

Several sites in the Upper Thames seemed to exhibit an absence of ceramic material which could be securely dated to the LIA; this has led to the proposal of a settlement hiatus spanning the period from the very end of the MIA to the beginning of the ER period. What factors could have caused this period of abandonment? Building on the premise that a major settlement dislocation may have caused instability in the socio-economic structure of Wessex at the end of the MIA (Cunliffe 1984:30-8), Allen posited something similar may have occurred in the Windrush confluence area of the Upper Thames valley. However, he noted that the apparent hiatus for this period 'may be partly illusory' given the survival of MIA pottery styles and economy right up through to the Roman period (1990:79). The site at Watkins Farm (#124) is an example of this apparent gap in the record. Although there appeared to be little pottery from the LIA, nearly a kilogram of Droitwich briquetage sherds were recovered, the majority of which were of Morris Type 2, a later Iron Age fabric (Allen & Morris 1990:52). The inference from this must be that the settlement continues throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC into the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, but that the overwhelming preference was for the pottery forms and fabrics which were popular in the MIA. Later excavations at Abingdon Vineyard (Allen 1997:6) and at

Wyndyke Furlong, an extension of the Ashville Trading Estate (#7), also indicated that the pervasive use and production of traditional MIA forms has masked the continuity of settlement activity in some of these sites.

Quite apart from countering the proposed hiatus with cultural explanations, one must also consider the occasionally haphazard gamble that governs the placement of developer funded archaeological excavation. Until 2011, the extensive settlement site at Gill Mill (#47) was interpreted as experiencing this LIA hiatus, with evidence of MIA settlement and then no material earlier than the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. However, in the subsequent 18 months, new areas of the quarry have been stripped for gravel extraction, revealing a large LIA/ER settlement area. In the Middle Thames, other pragmatic solutions present themselves in the form of possible environmental events; alluviation at Staines, Runnymede, and Berkyn Manor Farm (#153) all appear consistent, suggesting a flooding propensity, increasing river levels, or rising water table in the late 2-3<sup>rd</sup> century (Needham 2000:216).

#### **5.4.2 Preservation of ritual landscapes**

It has been acknowledged for some time that there must have been a sense of the past in the past (Gosden & Lock 1998; Bradley 1987; 1993; 2005; Ucko & Layton 1999), that the inhabitants of a landscape at any period would have had some awareness of the manipulations wrought on that landscape by their ancestors and predecessors. What they may have thought about those predecessors or their motivations is not something that archaeology can explore. But we can think about the relationships between the communities of a particular period with reference to their past based upon the siting of settlements in a landscape already populated by reminders of the dead. Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary monuments are widespread over the Upper and Middle Thames valley and would have been still apparent to the people of the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. That so many settlements are proximal to these sites can help us to think about the perception of the past in the past. Hey referred to these places as ‘inherited landscapes’ (2007:162) and discussed the occurrence of pastoral settlements respecting earlier

monuments, a pattern noted earlier by Lambrick (1992; Lambrick & Allen 2004). Particularly in the Lower Windrush area, Lambrick suggested that the monuments may have demarcated a space for communal grazing and sharing of resources. This egalitarian distribution of resources is not surprising, given the distribution of Type-E settlements in that area (Figure 5.1).

One of the more striking patterns from this study was the proximity of cursus monuments to 'villa-like' structures. The Dorchester cursus (Figure 5.10) appears to terminate just to the east of the villa complex at Burcot Farm; nearby the Overy Cursus lies adjacent to cropmarks at Shillingford which represent at least a proto villa. Further to the west, the Drayton Cursus may have some bearing on the location of the putative villa based upon the Appleford pewter hoard. One possible interpretation of this phenomenon may be found in the Hierarchical worldview, which celebrates the past and reveres institutionalised practices and adheres to time-honoured traditions (Hillier 2006 :25). Reference to Figure 5.3 highlights the concentration of H-type settlements in this region.

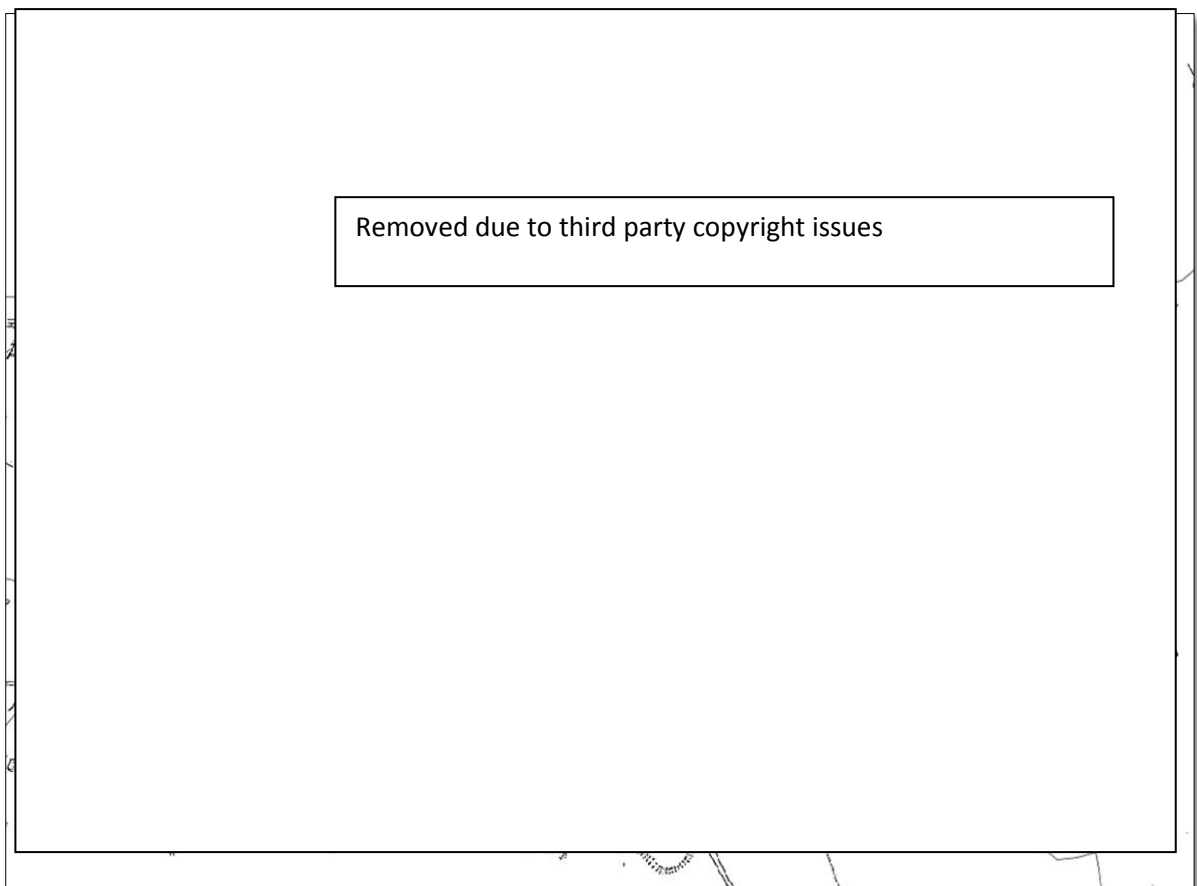


*Figure 5.10. Cropmarks from the NMP showing the proximity of the Dorchester cursus to Burcot Farm villa and the Overy cursus to the proto-villa at Cook's Farm, Shillingford.*

#### **5.4.3 The Middle Thames 'vacuum'**

A pattern that was revealed by looking at both the settlement evidence and the PAS data was that on the distribution maps, an area of the Middle Thames stretching from Goring to Henley was noticeably sparser (Figure 5.11). No single satisfactory answer can be offered here, but there are a few contributing factors which might help explain the occurrence. One suggests the environment and the changes to the floodplain and character of the river during this period. This reasoning might also explain the LBA-ER hiatus that has been noted at many riverside settlement areas from the Goring Gap to the tidal zone (Needham 1991; Carew *et al.* 2006; Hayman *et al.* 2012). Also notable was the absence of LIA/ER sites on the southern banks. Another possibility may relate to the social structure tied to land use in the run up to the changes brought about by the Roman influence on the region. However, with no good data to use for grid group classification, it would be foolish to speculate using that model.

It may be that the area has simply not been subjected to the same intensity of development, exploitation, and study as the rest of the Thames. For example, the gravels of the West London area, although not as intensively surveyed by aerial photography prior to the explosion in development, were nonetheless considered to be far more thinly distributed with prehistoric monuments than the Upper Thames. Yet excavations such as that at Heathrow, Perry Oaks, and Imperial College have shown there to be an abundance of Bronze Age monuments, as well as prehistoric and Romano-British settlements.

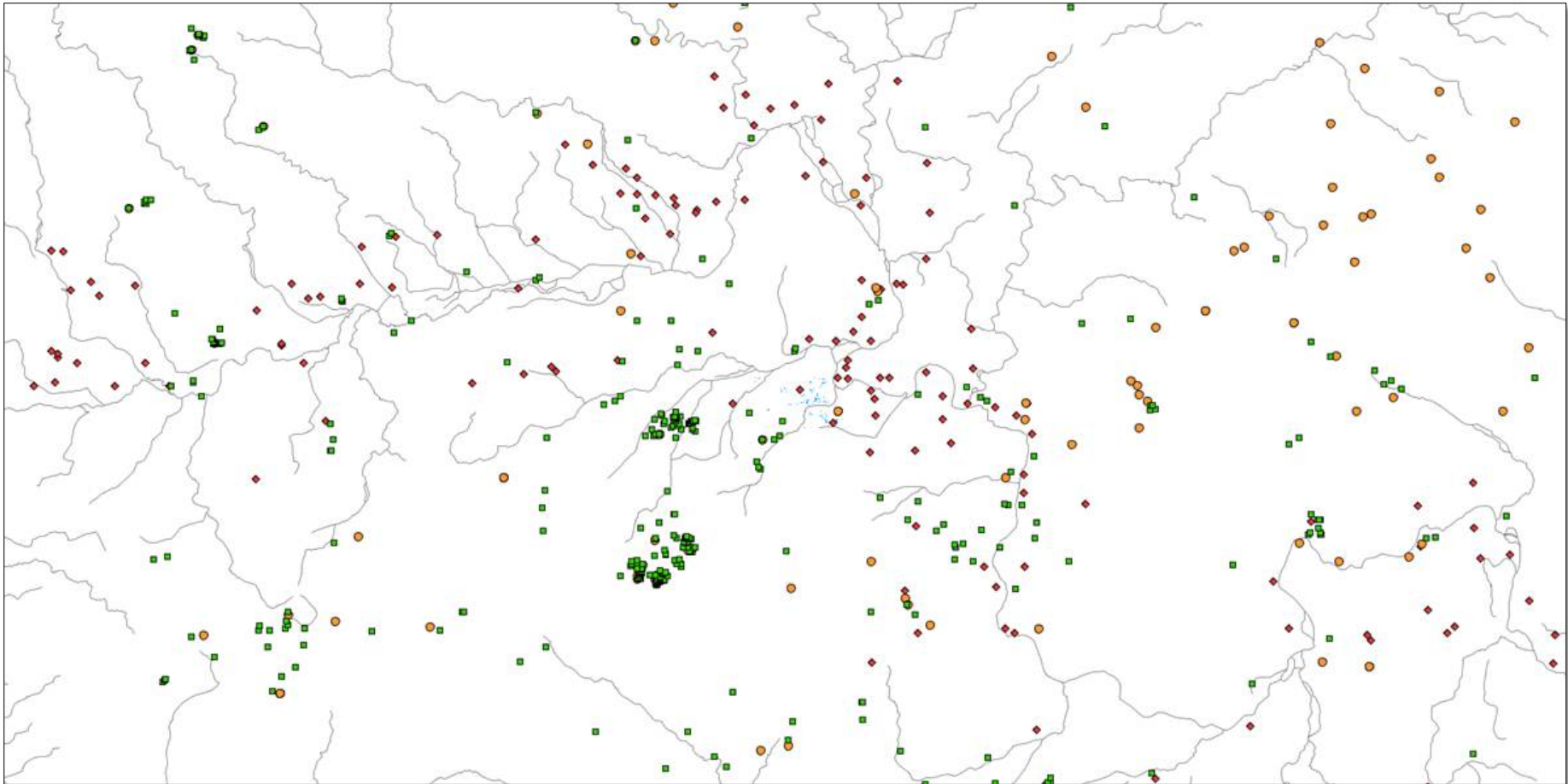


*Figure 5.11. Distribution of Iron Age coins and LIA/ER brooches from the PAS plotted over the sites in the gazetteer to illustrate the 'Middle Thames Gap'*



*Figure 5.12. Intensity of wooded area (green) in the 'Middle Thames Gap' compared to the rest of the study area. (after Smith & Gilbert 2000:50)*

Modern land ownership and use may also be part of the reason for this gap; large tracts of land in part of the region are held by the Crown Estate and even larger tracts are under woodland (Figure 5.12). This wooded area, one of the largest in southern England (Smith & Gilbert 2000:50), will have made any crop or soil marks invisible to traditional aerial survey techniques, as is obvious from the absence of data obtainable for the region from the National Mapping Programme.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have looked at the four types of classifications under in the model of Cultural Theory and have seen how some of the sites in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley may fall into those classifications. We have also, through the lens of the grid/group characteristics, offered interpretations of how and why the material assemblages of those sites have been chosen and how worldview may have shaped the destinies of the settlements. It is worth

repeating that the four ways of organising are in fact extreme, archetypal descriptions but they are based on sets of convictions about how the world is seen to be (Mitleton-Kelly 2004:2; Thompson *et al.* 1990:76). One might ask how it is that there can exist all these different worldviews in such an environment, when everyone is practically living right over the field from each other. Douglas (2003a:225-6) responded to such criticism:

‘It is easy to be scathing about whether communities divide into hierarchical groups, egalitarian groups, individualist groups: They do not, and no one ever said they do. A cultural bias is a point of view, with its own framing assumptions and readily available solutions for standardised problems. Scattered persons not in any group at all may share a similar cultural bias. It is a question of a way of life, and the way of life depends heavily on the way of earning a living and on the social relations that are entailed’.

Most of the settlements are relatively small, some very long-lived, and most utilising some blend of pastoral and arable activities to sustain themselves. The population size we can only speculate about – certainly their numbers are not obvious in the burial archaeology, largely a factor of funerary practice. It has been suggested that these types of settlements were inhabited most probably by a single extended family (Smith 1978; Hingley 1989:8) Some of these family settlements were likely linked to others in the region through extended kinship, not unlike the Scottish ‘highland clan’ kinship relationships (descendants of a single great grandfather) (Hingley 1984:6-7). In these places one might expect to see a clustering of settlements reflecting a similar worldview, but that is not entirely necessary. Although a modern assessment, research on the effect of urbanisation of rural spaces in in England has shown that by the third generation of static farming families, there is a shift from ‘altruism to individualism’ (Champion and Shepherd 2006:)- that is, the group is no longer as important as the success of the individual. Whilst this might not lead to wholesale shift in worldview of the settlement, it may lead to individuals for the family striking off in new directions and either pursuing competitive opportunities, or establishing new settlements within a new frameworks. Whilst the effects of Roman urbanisation may not bear comparison to the siren lure of cities to a modern rural



population, the fact that change was in the wind would not be lost on the more restless members of traditional societies. That new settlements were being established at this time is plain – why they were established and by whom, are questions that may ‘not be directly answerable archaeologically, [but] we need to think about the processes’ (Hill 2007:23).

Sharples (2010) sees the Bronze Age (at least in Wessex) transitioning from a dominant Type-H worldview to a Type-E. In the Upper and Middle Thames valley, I would offer that, broadly speaking, the LIA/ER period marks the near-extinction of the Type-E worldview as the influx of new materials, people, and ideas lead to a shift towards Type-H. This shift from Egalitarian to Hierarchist is described by Thompson *et al.* (1990: 77) as the ‘co-opting of the rebel’; in other words, the distinction between pure insider and impure outsider becomes blurred by a combination of the passage of time and the exposure to new elements.

Between any of these rural settlements, true homogeneity is an illusion; ‘societies are not monolithic, and different elements are capable of reacting quite differently to contact with an external culture’ (Clarke 1996:83). By ‘different elements’, Clarke here is referring to elite and non-elites, but I would replace those words with ‘differently structured worldviews’. Additionally, this would not have been so much an external, alien *culture*, for we know that awareness of Roman activity would have preceded actual contact by decades. Rather this is contact with an external *concept of reality*, far more monolithic and implacable than any that pre-Conquest communities might have encountered amongst their neighbouring communities.

Individuals groups may perform the same or similar actions (in as far as we can see from the archaeological remains) but they may have had very different motivations for doing so. We don’t need tribes, in the classical sense, to explain social organisation; in fact without them, we can see the smaller socio-economic units Cunliffe suggested in 1981 (36). Each settlement at the individual level different, yet all are variations on a few major themes and each bound together by the river, the modified landscape, and often by necessity.

Of course, perhaps too much can be made of some of the apparent variation in occupation assemblages – Thompson (1939: 209) showed ethnographically that indigenous Australians utilised completely different materials in different seasons. For sites such as Mingies Ditch or Farmoor, where riverside flooding occupation may be argued to have been a seasonal holding only, perhaps the artefacts associated with such sites are not completely representative of the entire yearly application and interaction of the inhabitants and their objects.

Yet in spite of such variables, when considering not only rural variation in settlement assemblages, but also in the varied response and survival of 1<sup>st</sup> century settlements into the middle 2<sup>nd</sup> century, thinking about grid/group orientation and the effect of worldview on individual communities is still useful. The following three chapters place six very different archaeological sites from the Upper and Middle Thames Valley under scrutiny and show in far greater detail the application of using Cultural Theory as a heuristic framework for re-thinking rural settlement variation. To clarify the criteria for the grid/group classification of the case study sites, the information from Table 4.1 is reproduced for convenience.

|                                                               | Egalitarian                                                                          | Individualist                                                                                                                   | Hierarchist                                                                                                               | Fatalist                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boundaries                                                    | Boundaries are significant and may often be re-configured                            | Boundaries are few and sporadic; if present, they fluctuate frequently                                                          | Physical boundaries may exist; social boundaries are more effective                                                       | Boundaries are significant and may change capriciously                                               |
| Ritual activity                                               | Cosmology reflects scapegoating/witchcraft; purity and cleansing are required        | Cosmology reflects a pragmatic view; rituals may be spontaneous and idiosyncratic                                               | Cosmology reflects structure; routinised traditions and sacrifices                                                        | Cosmology reflects a "millennial/end-of-the-world bias; ritual activity may not occur                |
| Personal display - body                                       | Bodily differentiation of the individual is limited; few items of personal adornment | Bodily differentiation of the individual may occur; other avenues of display may take precedence or replace personal adornment. | Bodily differentiation of the individual through adornment is common; sumptuary rules may regulate ornamentation          | Bodily differentiation of the individual through adornment is rare; symbolic systems are unelaborate |
| Personal display - feasting/dining                            | Decoration on tableware is uncommon; imports and exotic ingredients rare             | Openness to exotic foodstuffs and materials to enhance competitive displays; tableware may be decorated                         | Decoration is common; imported materials may be present or imitated where they integrate with routinised symbolic display | Decoration is rare; access to imports or exotic foodstuffs is highly limited                         |
| Storage of resources                                          | Surpluses are not obvious; all resources held in common                              | Surpluses are acquired by individuals for competitive feasting and/or gifting                                                   | Group orientated goals allow for surpluses to be acquired and held by authority                                           | Storage of surplus not observed;                                                                     |
| Zonation of space                                             | Enclosures are not subdivided; no evidence of specialisation                         | Space is not normally divided, however may be divided to provide competitive arenas; specialisation is frequent                 | Space is frequently divided; zonation regulates activities                                                                | Enclosures are subdivided; specialism is not observed                                                |
| Treatment of 'exotic' material                                | May be used in ritual 'cleansing' deposition                                         | May be used to enhance competitive gifting networks                                                                             | May be used to supplement/complement existing symbols of rank within the collective                                       | May not be offered due to exclusion; may be rejected based on voluntary withdrawal                   |
| View of the natural world (after Thompson <i>et al.</i> 1990) | Nature <sup>23</sup> is ephemeral and has negative effects to be countered           | Nature is benign and has positive effects to be taken advantage of                                                              | Nature is perverse/tolerant and has positive effects if placated                                                          | Nature is capricious and has negative regardless of behaviour                                        |
| Attitudes to risk                                             | Oppose risks that will inflict irreversible dangers on the group                     | Entrepreneurial ; will risk new ventures to achieve success                                                                     | Will risk new encounters if advised by experts/authorities                                                                | Ignores risk; neither seeks out opportunity nor avoids risk                                          |

Table 5.5. Criteria by which grid/group classification was applied to the assemblages

<sup>23</sup> Thompson and others use the term *nature*, although it is acknowledged that this concept may have modern Western and romantic overtones. *Cosmos* might be a term to define 'that which is beyond direct human control and predictability', but I choose to retain *nature*.

## CHAPTER 6

## CASE STUDIES: UPPER THAMES VALLEY

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Claydon Pike (Longdoles Field) and Somerford Keynes (Neigh Bridge), two rural farmstead sites in the Upper Thames Valley, in what might be considered the ‘catchment area’ of Cirencester (Figure 6.1). They are by no means the only sites of this character in the region; more than 60 of the sites in the overall dataset are in this vicinity. These case studies reveal in more detail the result of grid/group analysis on the interpretation of the material assemblages and features.



*Figure 6.1. Chapter 6 sites in their geographical context with some neighbouring sites*

## 6.2 Claydon Pike (Longdoles Field)

### 6.2.1 Introduction to the site

Claydon Pike lies in proximity to the confluence of three rivers, the Thames, the Cole, and the Coln, and it is approximately 17km ENE of Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes. It is split between the modern parishes of Fairford and Lechlade by a small NW-SE running stream which perhaps coincidentally separates the major temporal phases of the site, with the LIA/Roman site on the

SW bank and the MIA precursor on the NE. Although the MIA phase (Warrens Field) will be mentioned in brief, it is the later settlement activity which concerns this study, and so this section pertains to the discoveries at Longdoles Field (Figure 6.3). The site, much like the bulk of Upper Thames Valley sites in close proximity to the rivers, and identically to Somerford Keynes, is geologically situated on the First Gravel Terrace of the Thames, approximately 1km north of the floodplain for the Coln.

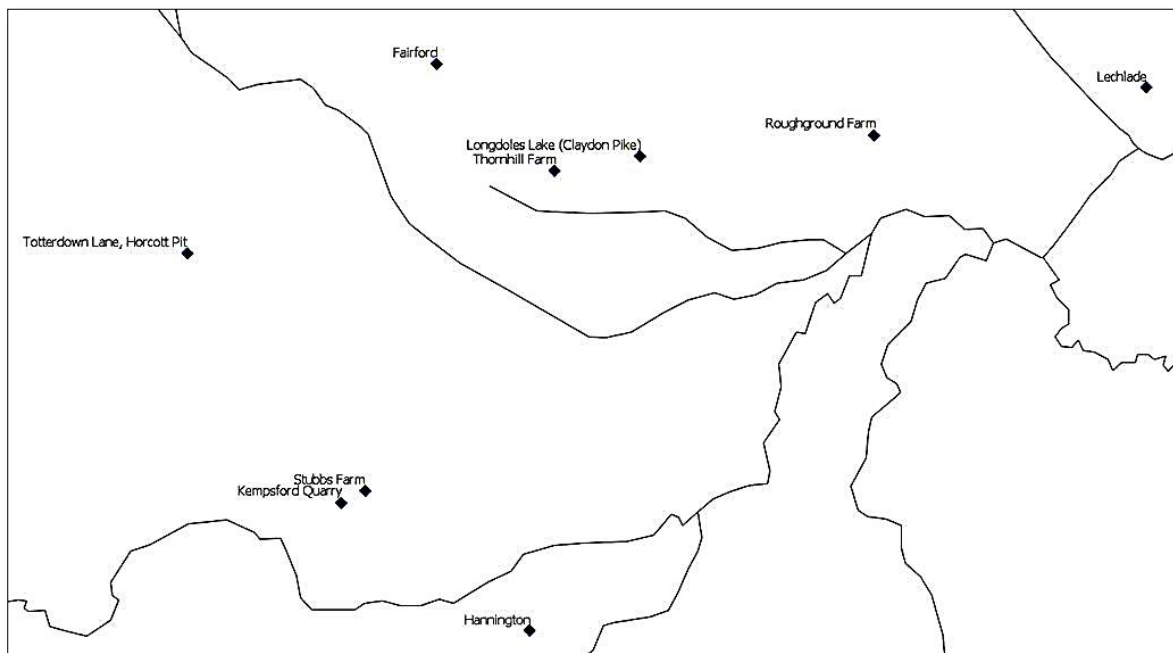


*Figure 6.2. Relative location of Claydon Pike to other sites in the database in this region*

A complex of cropmarks was observed from aerial photographs in 1959 and 1969, and the danger to the archaeological remains they represent was highlighted in Roger Leech's survey of the river gravels (1977). The surrounding area had already undergone severe action through gravel extraction, with Warrens Field and Longdoles Field in line for the same treatment. The Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd (now Oxford Archaeology) developed a comprehensive research design for both fields and neighbouring Thornhill Farm (Jones & Miles 1979) and began excavation in that same year. The fieldwork continued for 5 years, ending in 1984; the publication, a casualty of the harrying schedules of commercial units, would not be completed until 2007. This has created some difficulties which will be discussed in 6.2.2.

Excavation at Warrens Field revealed a complex of enclosures and roundhouse gullies that situated on gravel islands which rose above the marshy ground of tributary palaeochannels. Along with a series of ditches and pits, these features dated to the MIA, suggesting a small farmstead that ‘wandered’ from west to east over the period, island hopping with no more than 4 houses in use at any one time (Miles *et al.* 2007:25). Towards the end of the MIA or beginning of the LIA settlement on Warrens Field ended and shifted south-westerly across the stream to Longdoles Field. Although the initial excavation reports claimed a possible start date for this settlement in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the final publication suggests a start date cAD25, implying a period of settlement hiatus. The ubiquity of this phenomenon in the Upper Thames Valley has been discussed in Chapter 5.2 and there is no reason to suspect that Claydon Pike is any different from the majority of sites mentioned in that discussion.



*Figure 6.3. Aerial photograph of Claydon Pike showing both Longdoles Field and Warrens Field. 1976, ©Crown copyright*

Therefore it is perfectly plausible that the hiatus is largely illusory and the MIA settlement simply kept shifting into the LIA. That the Warrens Fields gravel islands were still functional in the LIA is attested to by the presence of an enclosure from the LIA/ER phase of adjacent Longdoles Field on each one of these islands (*ibid.*: 31;35;39). Aerial photographs suggest the presence of palaeochannels in Warrens Field is more extreme than in Longdoles Field, and given the increasing fluvial inundation during this period (Robinson 1984:6), perhaps this was a factor in the halt of the easterly progression and the jump across the stream, where the gravel platforms remained less threatened. It is the excavation occurring on this new settlement site that concern the following sections.

Although post-excavation work was carried out and interim reports published (Miles and Palmer 1983a; 1983b; 1990), the preparation of the final reports was stalled in the late 1980s. Whether through lack of funding or due to higher priorities in the commercial ventures of the OAU, Claydon Pike did not receive a full publication until 2007 (Miles *et al.* 2007). However, in the intervening decade, two doctoral theses were written which examined the raw data from the excavation. Robert Rippengal, University of Cambridge, completed his dissertation in 1996 using Claydon Pike as a case study for exploring the relationship between material culture and social structure; Karen Meadows, University of Sheffield, also used the data and Sarah Green's original pottery reports in 2001 to examine the effects of 'Romanization' on patterns of consumption of food and drink in the LIA/early Roman period. Both these works reflect one version of the site's chronology; the 2007 publication follows a different one, with predictably drastic changes to the interpretation<sup>24</sup>. The next section attempts to reconcile these differences into something useful for discussion.

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<sup>24</sup> I find it very curious that the 2007 monograph completely ignores the existence of Rippengal's work, and whilst citing Meadows in the context of her conclusions about household traces (88) and her overall theme of the social context of food and drink consumption (92), this is done without acknowledging (or perhaps deliberately ignoring) the difference between her division of phased material and the final publication, which in fact alters a great deal of the interpretation with regard to the 'Romanisation' issue.

### 6.2.2 Differences in opinion

The original interpretation of the site indicated a LIA settlement established across the stream after the abandonment of the MIA site. This site was a highly organised nucleated settlement that took advantage of a natural gravel platform and exercised clear zonation and a system of paddocks and enclosures that suggested a pastoral landscape managed by relatively few people (Miles 1984:199). This arrangement prospered until c AD70 (Phase ER1) when a complete restructuring of the settlement occurred, although site zonation and the LIA trackway were retained. Indeed, the course of the trackway which connected Claydon Pike to other neighbouring farmsteads was not only preserved but given a metalled surface and ditches to either side, a ‘proper Roman road’ (Miles and Palmer 1983:91). Additionally, the first rectilinear structure was erected on the gravel platform, an aisled building nearly 19m in length. Activity also expanded around this time to a second gravel platform to the SW, where a temenos was constructed, so described based upon both its form and the fragmentary evidence of a tazza, a significant quantity of fine vessel glass and a cone of umbrella pine, commonly imported to Britain as incense (Miles and Palmer 1990:23).

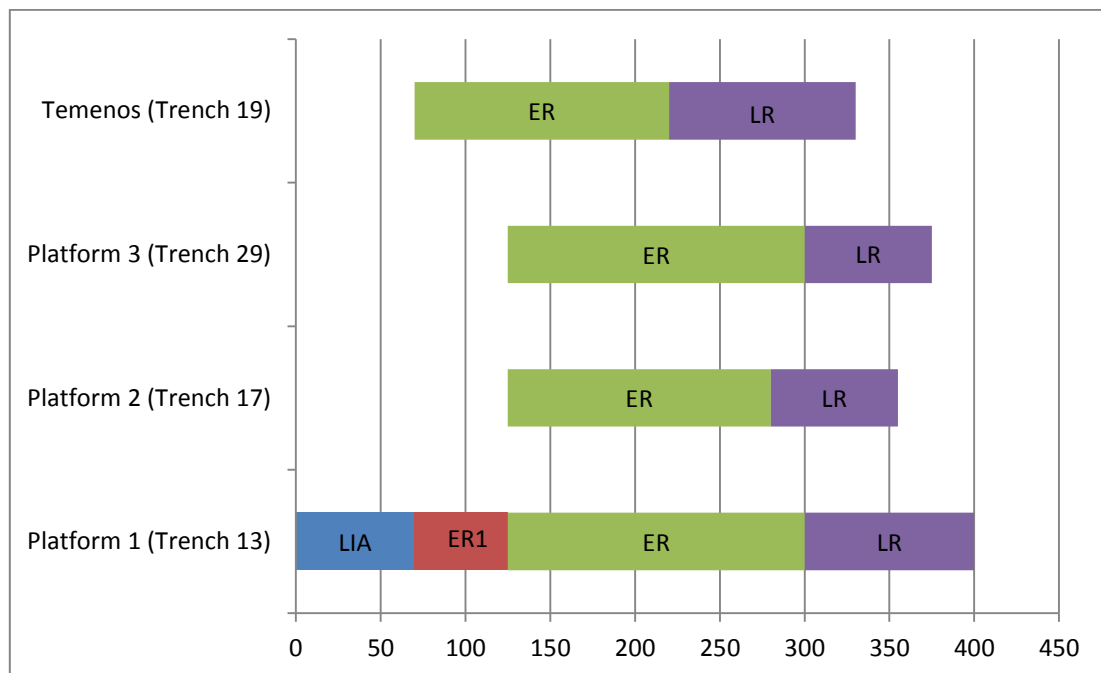


Figure 6.4. Original site phasing for Claydon Pike, Longdoles Field (after Rippengal 1996:178)



Phase ER described a second aisled building and the colonisation of a third gravel platform to the west of Platform 1, interpreted as an expansion occurring cAD125 (Rippengal 1996:176). The major divergence in the site narrative between this and the publication in 2007 is that the number of phases has been foreshortened. All of the activity reported as ER1 is pushed forward and merged with ER to create Phase 3, beginning cAD125. Phase 2 thus refers to everything occurring on the site from its inception around AD25 to 125. This has the effect of making the two aisled buildings contemporaneous both with each other and with the Platform 3 activity as well as the temenos, which was allowed to keep its function if not its name – it is simply referred to as the ‘religious focus’ (Miles *et al.* 2007: 164-5).

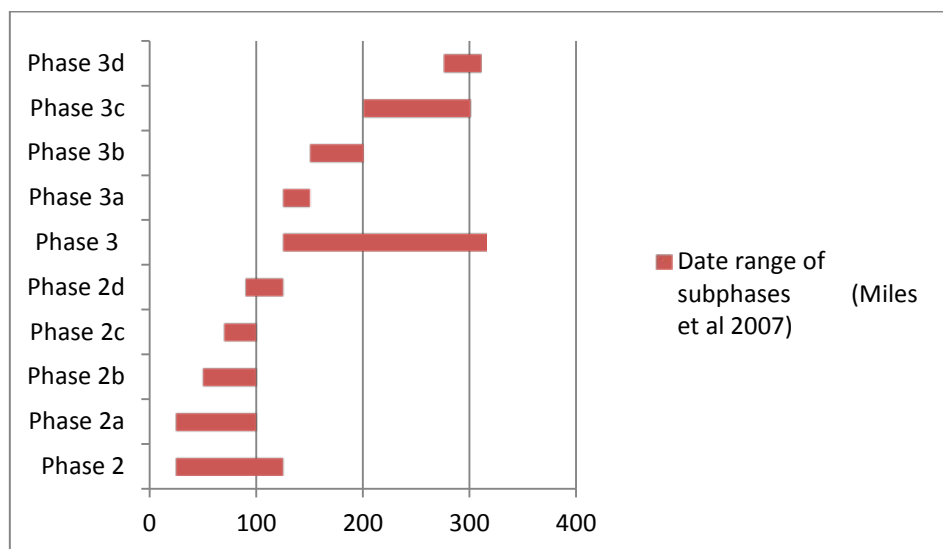


Figure 6.5. Phasing of Claydon Pike, Longdoles Field after second wave of post-excavation

The reasons for this major overhaul of the site narrative seem to stem from the re-assessment of the ceramics from key contexts during the resurrection of the post-excavation work. The original ceramic analysis was carried out by Sarah Green in the 1980s and large parts of a draft report were prepared on the basis of these data. When the project was re-opened, the form and fabric data were then re-coded to ‘bring them into line with the pottery recording system applied to most OA sites in the region since 1990’ (Green and Booth 2007, CD-ROM section

3.2.3). Some contexts considered to be significant to the phasing of the site were re-examined and the phase data was recalculated. However, the selection of which ceramics were looked at to re-phase the site may have been subject to personal bias. The following excerpt is worth quoting in full (emphases are mine):

[I]t was hoped that the context groups selected for detailed recording would prove representative of the site assemblage as a whole. It is therefore worth noting the variation in representation of the two major fabric classes for which comparative data are available; samian ware and amphorae. The samian ware total for the whole site was some 1984 sherds, of which 1482 (74.7%) occurred in the fully recorded groups. The comparable data for weight (more valid, since this was the primary measure for the full site assemblage) indicate that 72.7% of the samian was from groups subsequently fully recorded, against a site average of only 37.1% for all pottery. The representation of 4 amphorae in the fully recorded sample is not dissimilar, with 62.9% (by weight) of the material occurring in these context groups, though interestingly this sample only contained 42.9% of all the amphora sherds from the site. ***It does seem, therefore, that the selection of contexts for detailed recording involved a degree of 'cherry picking', with a bias towards groups containing samian ware and amphorae.*** This suggestion is supported by the high incidence of samian and amphora sherds in unphased contexts, suggesting ***that these groups were selected for recording on the basis of ceramic interest rather than stratigraphic importance.*** This may have been subconscious, and is in any case understandable, but it ***may reduce the value of the assemblage as a whole in terms of comparison with other sites from the region***' (Green and Booth 2007, CD-ROM section 3.2.3).

Unfortunately, without access to Green's original datasets, one is forced to work within the chronology of the more recent phasing<sup>25</sup>. Whilst Rippengal did have access to the original, he deliberately created his own site phasing (Table 6.1). This created the flexibility he desired for a comprehensive analysis of the ceramics, but it also produced some problems: the new date brackets did not precisely fit conventional temporal descriptions of LIA, Early Roman and Late Roman periods (assigning AD200 to the Late Roman is a bit of a stretch!) and the dates within the brackets overlapped.

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<sup>25</sup> Attempts were made to contact Sarah Green, both by electronic and terrestrial post, but without response. I am sure that she would have been only too happy to answer questions about the earlier ceramic report, but I was unable to make contact.

| Date Bracket | Phase | Brackets combined                   |
|--------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 0-100        | LIA   | 0-75, 0-100, 50-100                 |
| 70-250       | ER    | 70-125, 100-200, 70-250             |
| 200+         | LR    | 200-300, 250-400, L3rd-400, 200-400 |

Table 6.1. Rippengal's modified chronology for Claydon Pike, Longdoles Field (1996:186)

Rippengal (187) attempted to banish these problems by arguing that change is a long tailed process and does not occur overnight. Even the seemingly radical changes involved in adopting new structural design and building techniques are likely to have taken a long time to come about. He writes ' behaviours and attitudes may linger for some time, not eliminated [by changing materials] but simply transplanted into the new setting' (188). Thus he argued that his 'fuzzy sets' of delineation would reflect this. I would not wish to refute his assertion that changes may be invisibly gradual until a seemingly abrupt manifestation, but his phasing is not particularly helpful for exploring the types of questions I wish to raise. Meadows (2001) also had access to the unadulterated ceramic analysis and the difference between LIA, ER1 and ER materials formed the crux of her argument for Claydon Pike. Unfortunately, she provided no useful tabulation of her data sets for other researchers to examine, and where data was presented, fabric description based solely on colouration make it difficult to re-create the dataset she was working with. Hence, with all other avenues blocked, and despite the fact that I too believe the LIA/ER1 phasing might raise some interesting patterns for my work, I am forced to rely upon the re-coded, resurrected and possibly incredibly biased Phase 2 (AD25-AD125) data from 2007 for the empirical quantitative analysis of materials. I will, however, be drawing on the original discussions (Miles and Palmer 1983a; 1983b; 1990; Allen *et al.* 1984) and reflecting upon the 'what if' scenario of the earlier phasing when contemplating conclusions.

To be fair, the introduction to the Miles *et al.* Chapter 4 comes with a disclaimer, stating that the chronology was difficult and the dating tentative (69). Although in 1984 Miles admitted that the

Claydon Pike chronology was 'in particular imprecise' (197), one cannot help but think that the simplification of the phasing may have had more to do with the hand-me-down nature of the final leg of post-excavation work. It is not my intent to castigate the re-workers of the report – they have done an admirable job under the restraints imposed upon them by the harsh realities of the commercial archaeology process. This site is, nonetheless, a cautionary example of how delaying publishing can obfuscate the results of excavation.

### **6.2.3 Structures**

The difficulty in seeing non-masonry structural remains in soils such as this has been previously mentioned (Chapter 1.2; 5.2) and does not require overstating; suffice to say that the lack of good evidence for LIA domestic structure on this site was due to its location. Strictly following the adjusted chronology, there are no actual structural remains in Phase 2 of the site. Domestic activity is suggested by both the accumulation of 'household artefacts', such as animal and ceramic debris and personal items (Miles *et al.* 2007:88; Meadows 2001:58) and the presence of three ring gullies (Figure 6.6). No floor surfaces remained nor were any postholes present that might suggest internal arrangement. Spatial analysis of finds within the most intense areas of occupation did suggest a differentiation of building usage, with the southern area more likely to have hosted sites of dwelling and the northern area given over to more industrial activity such as metalworking and animal husbandry activities (Meadows 2001:201).

The disparate phasing makes it necessary to at least briefly examine the rectangular buildings of Phase 3, since they had been previously assigned to the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. B1, the aisled building measuring nearly 19m in length, was erected directly over the site most likely to have served as a domestic focus in the LIA (perhaps related to Gully 1765). Indeed, if one is speculating that the reordering of the site occurs during ER1, it may be appropriate to consider the aisled buildings as co-existent with the scanty evidence for domestic structures hinted at by Gully 506, and Gully 1645. Its associated finds suggest an interior of some sophistication, with a fragment of painted wall plaster and some window glass recovered. As neither a floor surface

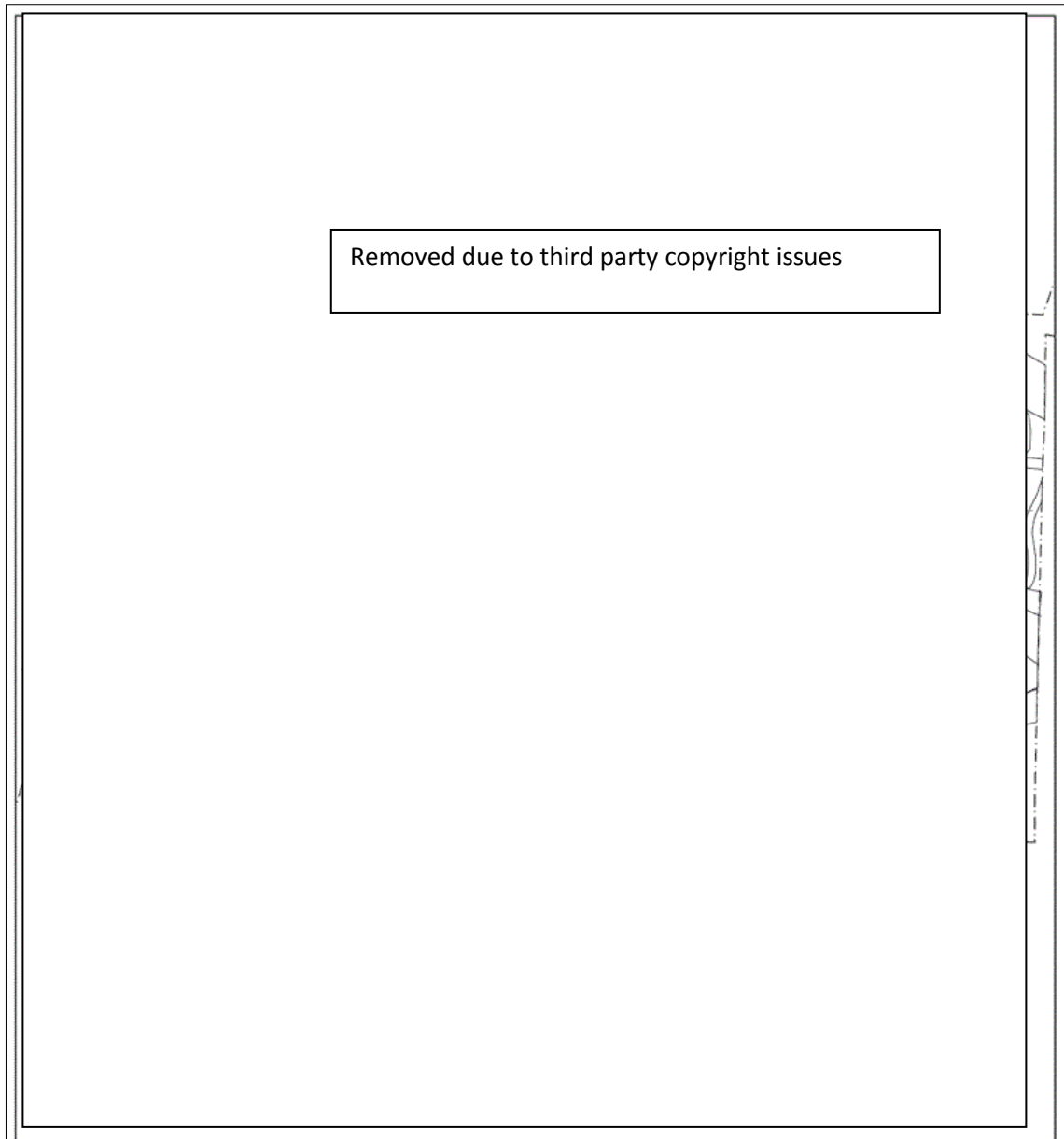


*Figure 6.6. Platform 1 (Trench 13) Phase 2 with possible roundhouse gullies marked in black (after Miles et al. 2007:71)*

nor any internal structure to indicate divisions remained, only concentrations of material can suggest the internal layout. The northern end of the building had a greater concentration of animal bones suggesting specialised use of that area.

As most of the pottery comprised flagons, cups, bowls, dishes, and mortaria, perhaps for it can be surmised that this was a dining area. Structure B2, an apparent westerly extension to B1, was related to pit 2526, which contained equally large amounts of animal bone as well as a ceramic assemblage more in keeping with cooking – jars were by far the more dominant with

flagons, dishes and cups in smaller numbers. Given this evidence, the food preparation area can be seen to have been kept distinctly separate from the dining. Dining may be viewed as a public activity; with the cooking removed from prying eyes, the methods of food preparation then enter the realm of the private. The implications of this difference will be examined below (6.2.4; 6.2.6).

Contemporary with the use of Building B1 and its probable B2 extension, on gravel Platforms 2 and 3 there are indications of circular buildings (Figure 6.7). Gullies 1208 and 1446 on Platform 2 are approximately 8m and 3.5m in diameter respectively; Platform 3 hosts a further circular Gully 2881, at nearly 4.75m in diameter. Both areas show abundant domestic detritus. Whilst this material could be derived from middening deposited away from the main settlement focus, it is equally likely that these structures represent dwellings. If these are roundhouses, then their presence is noteworthy regardless of which chronology one follows – they would seem to fall into the earliest part or the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in either case. At a time when the main habitation centre was utilising the Roman style of architectural design and materials, other individuals are living in traditional round buildings made of cob and thatch and in a specifically designated area. An alternative explanation for the possible Gully 1446 structure is that it represents animal/hay storage/manure facilities built in the traditional round style. By AD200 a timber slot building with a similar function is constructed on the spot, but is rectangular (B6).

It should be noted that when a smaller aisled building of similar construction (B3) which seemed to serve as an ancillary building to B1 was constructed, the area where Gullies 506 and 1645 may have represented roundhouses was left undeveloped, perhaps suggesting that the structures were still in use, or at the very least, that the memory of those structures played an important part in the siting of the new masonry buildings.

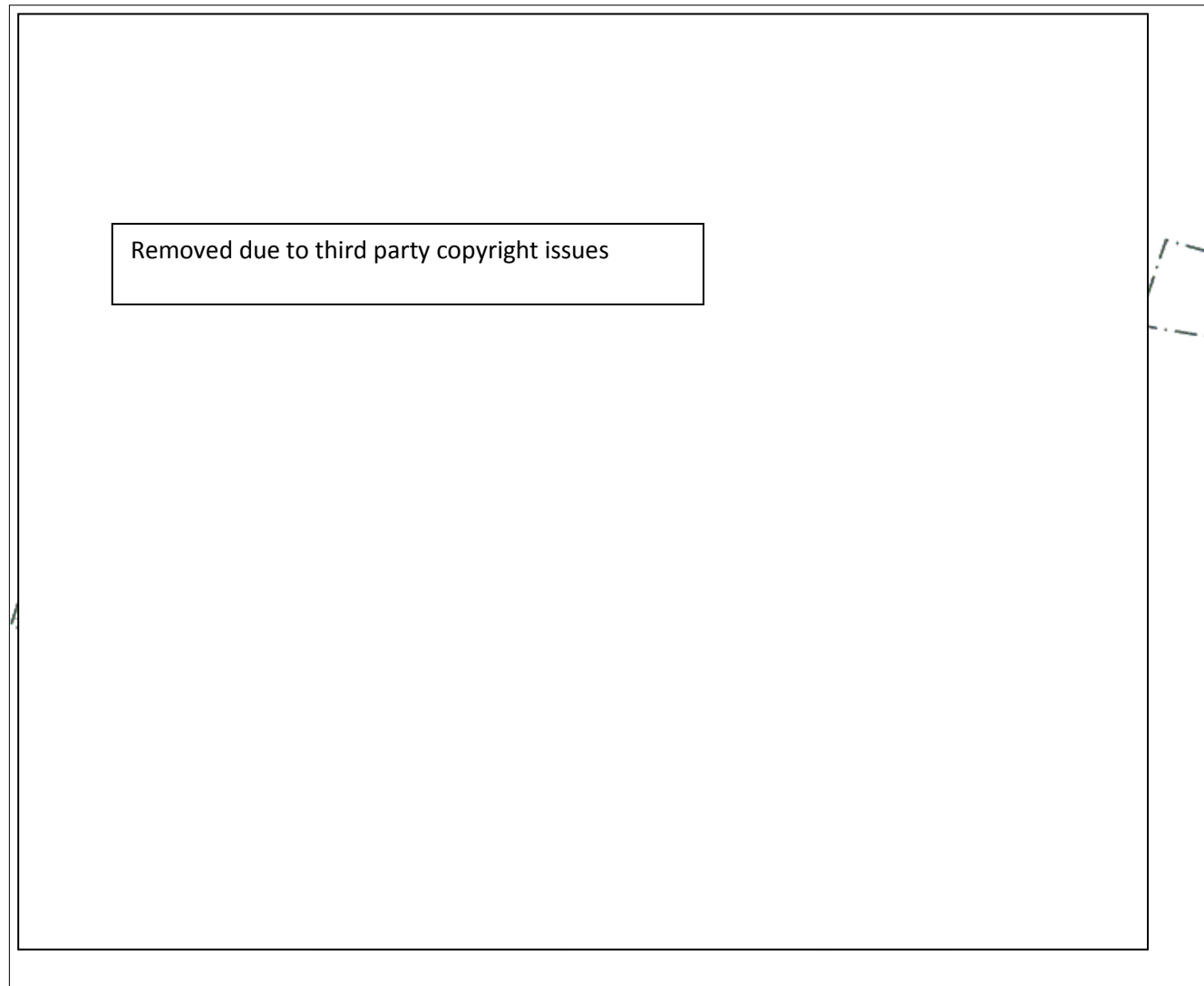


*Figure 6.7. Phase 3b plan showing the three main rectilinear structures. Possible roundhouse gullies picked out in black, with blue indicating work/storage spaces of a similar construction. (after Miles et al. 2007:95)*

Of the ritual focus on Platform 2, little can be said with regard to structure. Nothing survived to indicate a LIA/ER building, and all that can be inferred is the location of a space for specialised function. The area of religious focus, defined by the character of the assemblage found there, would have served the inhabitants, allowing them to make both their propitiatory depositions and offerings of thanks to ensure the continued success of the farm.

One other structure from this period deserves mention – the ‘gatehouse’ which straddled the former LIA trackway which was upgraded to Roman road. This gateway with stone footing and timber posts appears to have regulated travel from the west, but as the trackway and subsequent road was unimpeded on the eastern side, it raises certain questions about public and private entrances. The gate is believed to have been too narrow to permit wheeled access, thus restricting entry to those ahorse and on foot<sup>26</sup>. Wheeled vehicles would have to travel around to the eastern entrance and there are a series of cropmarks which suggest an alternative system of trackways which could lead travellers from the west around to the eastern access.

#### **6.2.4 Ceramic and glass vessels**

##### ***Ceramics***

A comparison of the percentages of some fabric types associated with Meadow’s LIA and ER1 phases and Miles’ Phase 2 shows that the overall information about percentages of material on the site is essentially in agreement. The significance of looking at Meadows’ breakdown of the AD 25-125 period is in the comparison of LIA to ER1 material. Figure 6.8 shows that whilst fine wares and mortaria greatly increase at the settlement following AD 70 (not an unexpected result), the amounts of amphorae arriving on site stays relatively constant from the LIA through to AD 125, a distinction that is lost by simply looking at the total from Phase 2.

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<sup>26</sup> The identification of animal bone belonging to a donkey may suggest pack animals which *could* gain entry via the narrow gatehouse. See Chapter 6.2.6.



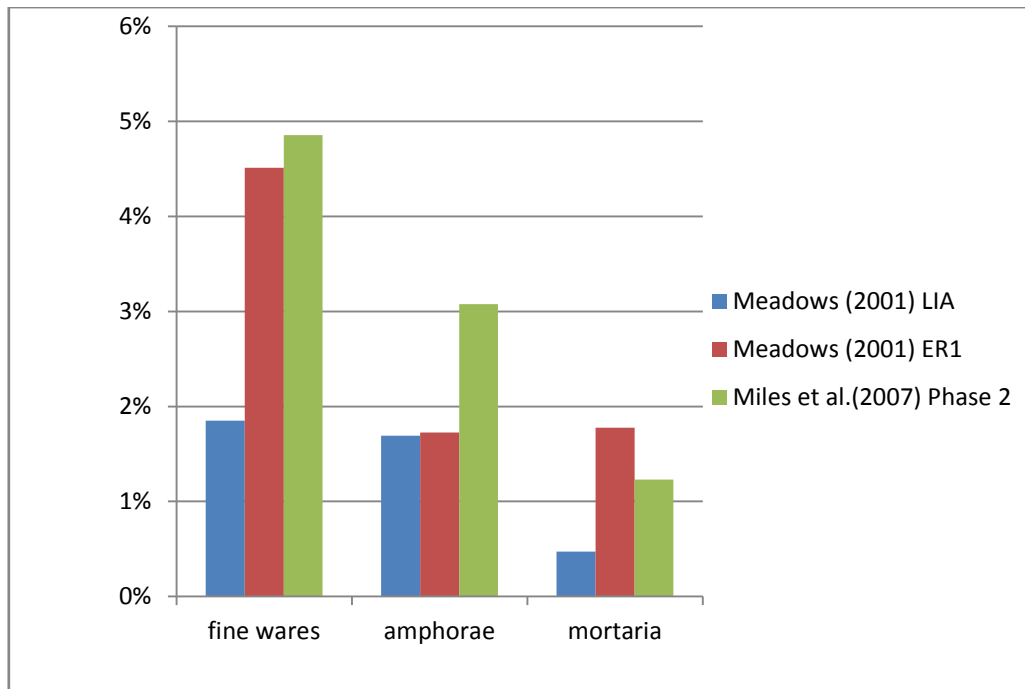


Figure 6.8. Comparison of fabrics assigned to different phases from the original and secondary reports

With regards to the local ‘native’ fabrics, the two reports are essentially in agreement, clearly showing a preference for either the early ‘Belgic’ fabrics or their locally produced Roman-influenced equivalents. It would seem that when the LIA fabrics drifted out of production, they were replaced at Claydon Pike by reduced coarseware (See Figure 6.9), of which North Wiltshire and Savernake origins were favoured, hinting at a preference for local production over imports (Booth 2007: 132). Likewise, the preferred forms of containers remained largely unchanged across the Phase 2 and Phase 3 assemblages (Figure 6.10), with the only noticeable shift a slight increase in dishes commensurate with a decrease in jars. In either case, the dominance of locally produced wares during the 1<sup>st</sup> century suggests openness to new materials and dining practices, but preference for the traditional. This need not be seen as resistance, but of the materials reflecting the worldview of the inhabitants, as will be discussed more fully in 6.2.7. The Northern area of Platform 1 (which saw the least intense domestic settlement and may have served more as a functional space for animal paddocking and metalwork) had a higher concentration of LIA preferred fabrics, where the more intensely

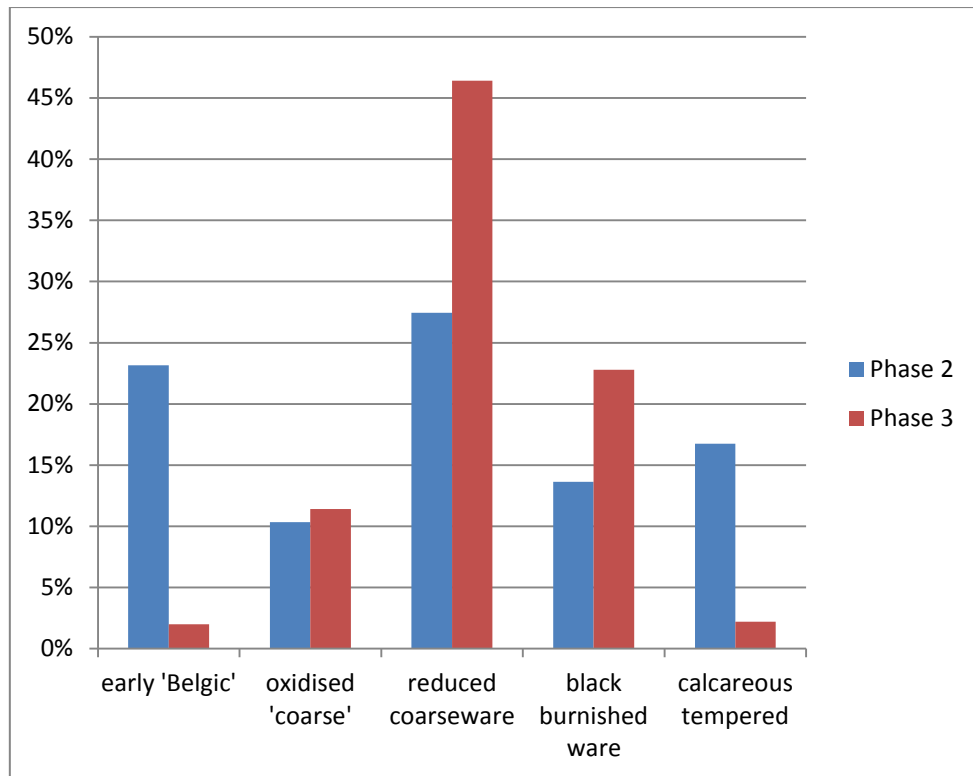


Figure 6.9. Comparison between Phase 2 and 3 indicates that LIA fabrics were largely replaced with reduced coarseware.

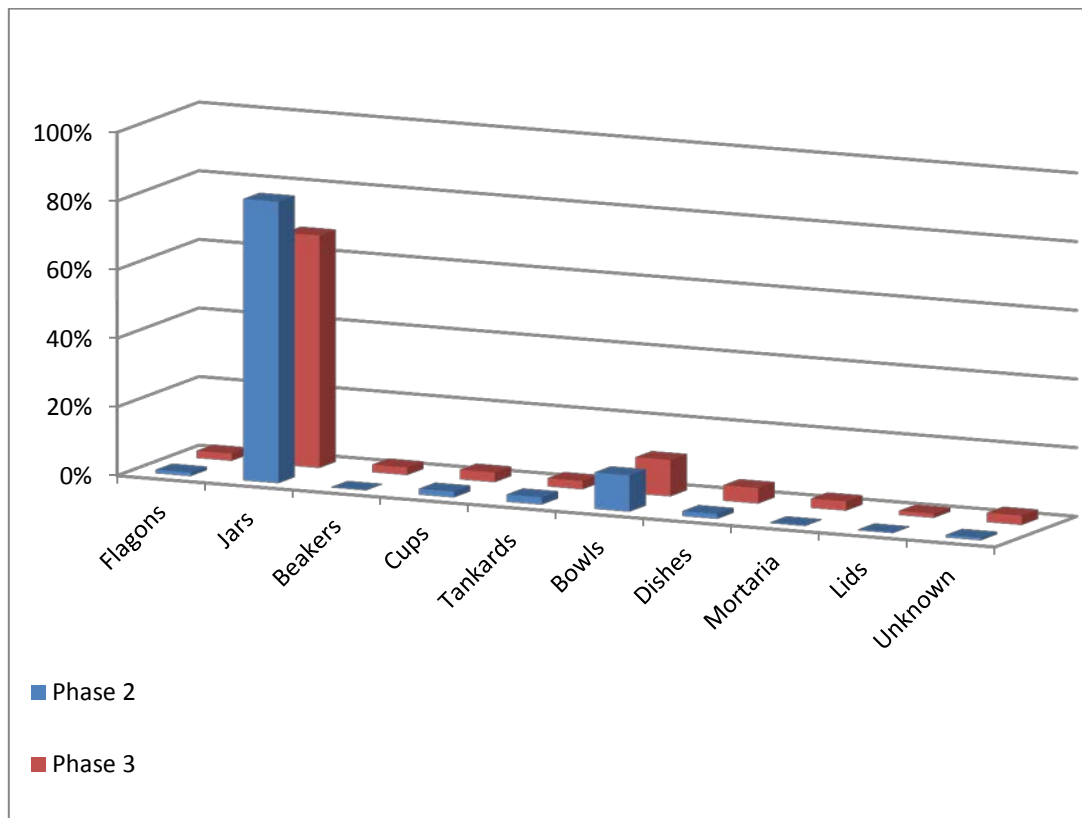


Figure 6.10. Comparison of ceramic forms identified in Phase 2 and 3 assemblages

occupied southern half showed a dominance of the fabrics that continued to be popular in the ER period (Meadows 2001: 222). Noting that the north used more amphorae and less personal adornment than the south which preferred adornment and mortaria Meadows suggested personal preference between different households, although also allowing that the apparent differentiation might be representative of change over time. Either way, she believed that the evidence showed a presence of 'Roman-like' objects on the site prior to the ER reorganisation of the site (226). This may have been two different LIA households, living in equality, only with different preferences for what things to eat or use. An alternative explanation may be that the southern area represented a place of communal aggregation whilst the northern area was the actual dwelling and working spaces of individuals. This tradition may have continued even after the adoption of new building techniques, as the ceramic evidence in building B1 indicates feasting and food preparation whilst the other areas are dominated by jars (212).

The actual sherd count for samian recovered from Phase 2 is surprisingly low (Miles *et al.* 2007:79) yet of the sherds recovered, less than 6% were from decorated vessels. This has been interpreted as either as a choice driven by a form of religious austerity or 'a reflection of the relative poverty of this rural site' (Webster 2007: CD-ROM section 3.2.3). Given the other evidence that Claydon Pike was in fact a thriving and wealthy community, this seems to be a false line of speculation. Certainly the choice of plain bowl is markedly different from many similar contemporary sites in the region, but this is likely saying more about the choices of the inhabitants than about their lack of purchasing power.

In her analysis of the food containers, Meadows observed that the Roman-style vessels in use at Claydon Pike were less related to serving and more to 'the flavouring of food' (2001:248). With mortaria more frequently recovered than cups and beakers, it seems likely that preparing food with new ingredients was perhaps more important than serving and eating that food from new tableware. Although Meadows argued that food prepared with elaboration was a marker for

wealth, it may not be necessary to think of the addition of olive oil and wine to the local gastronomy as a technical elaboration. Indeed, what may be visible at Claydon Pike may be the LIA version of a modern Westerner eating Chinese takeaway with a fork and knife – the ingredients may be imported, but the tableware comfortably familiar.

### ***Glass***

Cool's report on the Phase 2 glass admits some dismay that the most abundant glass forms that should be represented in this phase, bowls and cups and an unguent bottle which date from the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> century, are found only in Phase 3 contexts (Miles *et al.* 2007: 81). This need not be a mysterious anomaly if one considers that much of the activity ascribed to Phases 3a and 3b in the re-worked chronology are in fact attributed to ER1 in the original. The phasing is further thrown into question by the observation that the restructuring during Phase 3 should be reflected by changes of glass forms from the simple bowls most often found on rural sites to a greater diversification, but this is not evident until the later part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Cool 2007, CD-ROM section 3.7). Meadows cites Cool as suggesting that some of the vessel glass, particularly a Hofheim cup, may have come to the site during the LIA, which would hint at the residents having access to imported goods before the 'Romanization' of the landscape. Unfortunately, once again, the inconsistencies in the two versions of post-excavation work lead to confused speculation. All that can be safely said about the glass at Claydon Pike is that in both the LIA and ER periods, some glass vessels were being brought to the settlement. Whether these were selected by the inhabitant deliberately or formed parts of larger 'gift packages' from officials or traffic passing through on the road to Cirencester must be left to conjecture.

### **6.2.5 Metalwork**

Cool suggests that in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century, local trends in brooches may have been shifting to a more decorated and showy design (Cool 2007:344), and thus the adoption of the more decorative and shiny Hod Hill brooch would have had much more to do with it simply falling within the acceptable limits of taste at the time, and less to do with its foreign origins. The later

Colchester derivatives which are even further along the decorative scale can then be seen as part of a natural progression towards the more visually 'busy' rather than a design based upon Roman influences. A comparison of the brooch types from Longdoles Field with the assemblage from Somerford Keynes (Figure 6.11) indicates that whilst many of the same types were equally popular at both sites, the small number of brooches found at Claydon Pike for the importance of the settlement is significant. Additionally, the Hod Hill brooch was preferred less than some of the local styles.

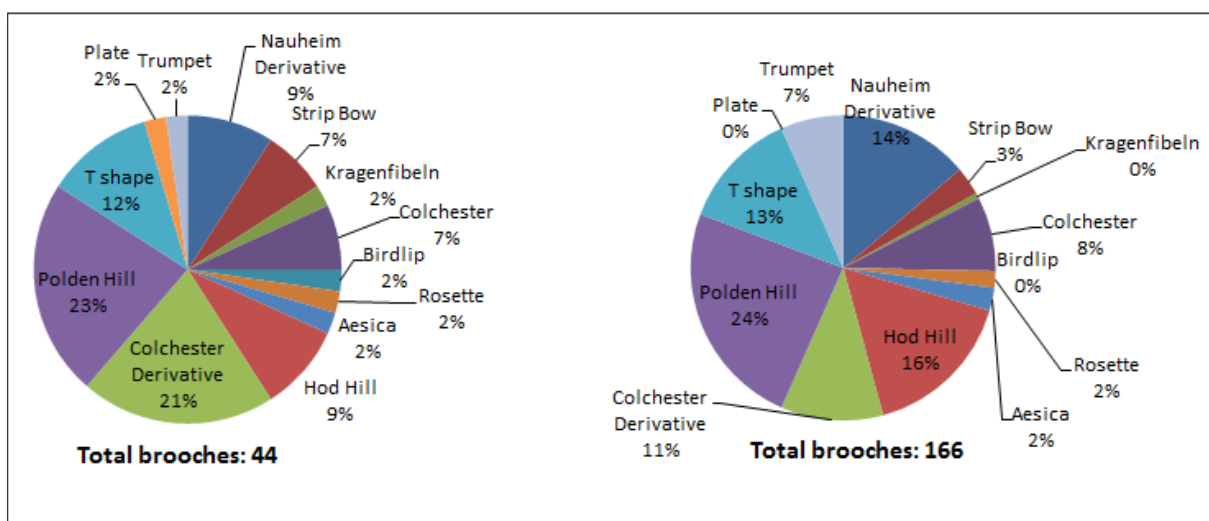


Figure 6.11. Comparison of brooch types from Claydon Pike (l) and Somerford Keynes

It would seem that the category of brooch worn at Claydon Pike is not atypical for the region, but the paucity of number at such an affluent site deserves some comment. Although some of this may be due to recovery practices, when paired with few other personal adornment items from Phase 2, it would seem that showy display may not have played a key role in social communications in this community. There are only two rings, both intaglio, which can be dated to this period; one, set in iron, depicts Jupiter's eagle whilst the other is of clasped hands with cornucopia, a symbol of success through harmony (Henig 2007:CD-ROM, Section 3.4). Cool postulates that this use of iron instead of gold is evidence that the owner of the ring (by her inference, an inhabitant of the site) was aware of and abided by the sumptuary laws forbidding gold rings to those below Senatorial or *equitates* rank (2007: CD-ROM, Section 3.4). It is ,

however, equally likely that the rings represent the occasional presence of persons with that custom, such as visiting trade from Corinium, or alternatively a gift – the clasped hands ring would be a particularly appropriate image for a Roman customer sealing a trading arrangement with the farm.

Only one fragment of a glass bracelet and three beads can be ascribed to Phase 2, and the beads are of such a type that its range stretched from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 8th AD. No hairpins could be confidently attached to Phase 2 suggesting that hairstyles were not following Roman trends and whatever means LIA women used to restrain their hair was likely continued for some time, although apparently invisible archaeologically. There is also a complete absence of shoe nails, indicating that in the 1<sup>st</sup> century at least, continental footwear was not adopted on this site.

Apart from brooches, the LIA metalwork is scant. Interestingly, consultation of the PAS database for the area immediately around the former site of Claydon Pike (as both Longdoles Field and Warrens Field have been under several metres of water as boating lakes since before the inception of the PAS) indicates that very little has been retrieved. Several gold and silver LIA coins from the Celtic Coin Index are recorded as having been found nearby, hinting perhaps at the importance early importance of the site; otherwise the only two entries are decorative bits LIA horse gear,<sup>27</sup> suggesting that the role of horses was significant both before and after Roman entanglements (Figure 6.12). This is supported by both the number and treatment of horse bones on the site, as well as the presence of a very early Roman fragment of a cavalry harness clip (Grew 2007: CD-ROM Section 3.4). From this one might envision a farm that saw buyers come from Corinium or points beyond to secure horses or cattle and bringing in wealth and occasional imported goods via this trade. However, the societal impact of these new goods was for the most part minimal.

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<sup>27</sup> PAS finds ID WILT-A40537 and WILT-A29AF3



*Figure 6.12. Two copper alloy mounts interpreted as horse gear, one with triskele motif, found near Claydon Pike.*

#### **6.2.6 Faunal and organic evidence**

The bulk of the animal bone fragments were recovered from Trench 13 (Platform 1), as indeed were the majority of sherds and small finds, which is keeping with the understanding of that location being the genesis of the settlement as well as the site of continual inhabitation (Figure 6.13). There was a small proportion of the assemblage which showed evidence of burning, but within that small proportion, a significant percentage, (84%) belonged to ovicaprids. It has been suggested that this may represent the roasting of lamb/mutton as opposed to the treatment of pork and beef joints, which may have been boiled (Sykes 2007, CD-ROM Section 4.3).

The assemblage is notably dominated by cow and sheep<sup>28</sup>, with a decided age difference shown in the age of the remains. In Phase 2, cows appear to have been allowed to live longer lives than either sheep or pigs, indicating that the secondary products of cattle were of greater value than the secondary products of sheep. Whilst there is little doubt that the wool of sheep was used, with the presence of a spindlewhorl and bone bobbin hinting at textile production on site, it

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<sup>28</sup> The recovery of only two goat horn cores from a Late Roman context suggests that sheep may have been the more numerous, if not sole representative of the ovicaprids at Claydon Pike, particularly in the earlier phases (Sykes 2007: CD-ROM Section 4.3).

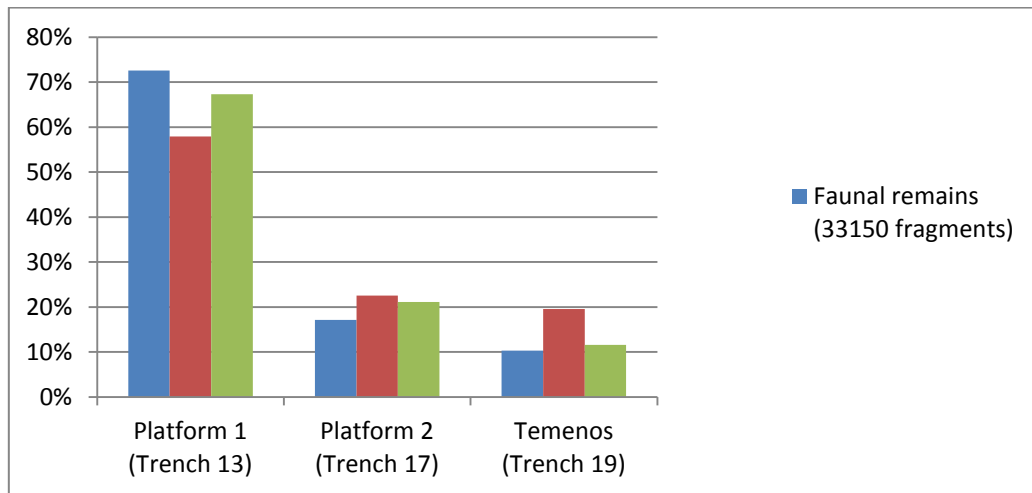


Figure 6.13. Percentages of material by intrasite location

would appear that the cattle were the more prized economic unit. This may have been for their milk, as Caesar tells us ‘Most of the inland inhabitants do not sow corn, but live on milk and flesh’ (De Bellico Gallo V.14), whilst Strabo judges the sophistication of the inland British farmer poorly by observing that they ‘although well supplied with milk, make no cheese’ (Geography Vol. II, Book 4.2). Yet it is possible that these both refer to sheep’s milk and that the predominance of cattle served quite another purpose, such as a marker of status akin to what might be found in some rural African communities (Doran et al. 1979) or in the Irish vernacular sources (Jackson 1964). In either case, it would appear that the importance of both species did not alter from the LIA to well in to the Roman period, as Figure 6.14 indicates, although the majority of Phase 3 sheep seem to have been kept to a more mature age, indicating a rise in value of secondary products.

Indeed, the only major change in animal presence, apart from the decline of the frog (perhaps due to the drying out of the site which was likely to have begun in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD), is the marked decrease in the amount of equid remains recovered. It has been suggested that prior to the Roman presence in Britain, horses were largely feral animals that were selectively captured



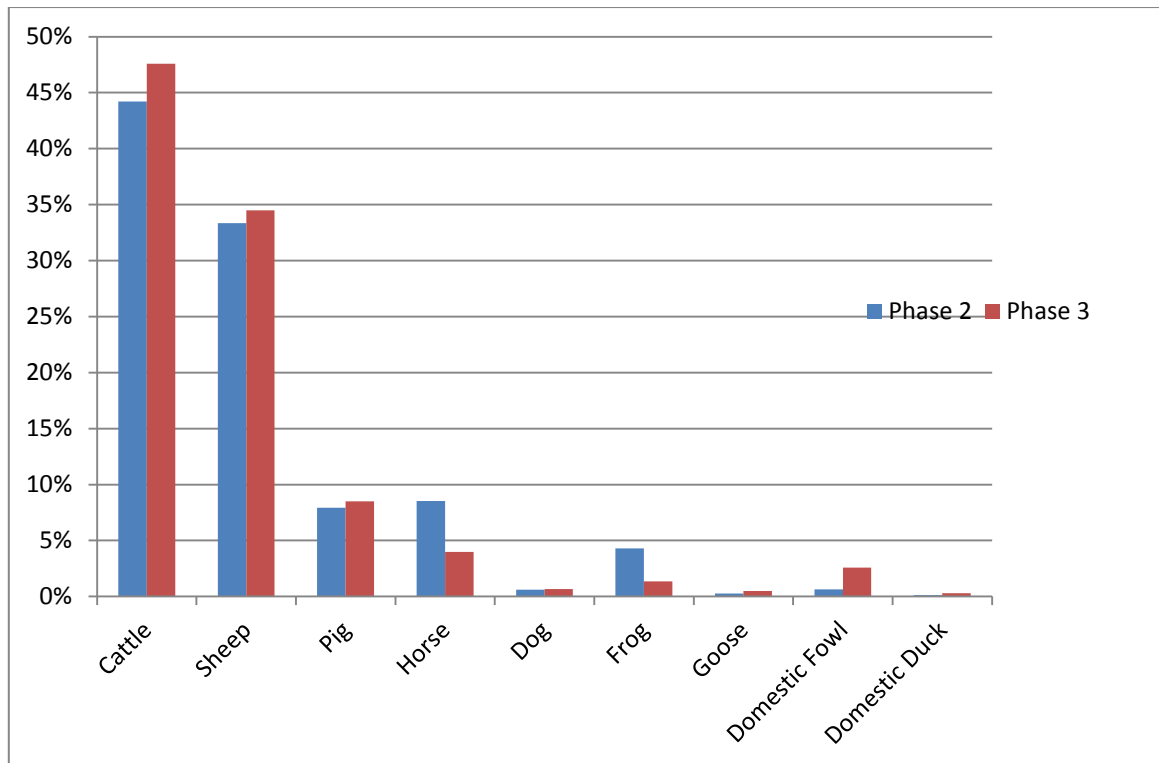


Figure 6.14. Main identifiable species (NISP) from Platform 1 (Trench 13)

for use as needed, an observation borne out of the relative absence of foetal and juvenile bones at settlement sites (Harcourt 1979:158). It may be that this freedom to help oneself to local herds was curtailed by the administration in the Roman period and may account for the reduction in horses at Claydon Pike in that period – foetal horse remains are only found in Phase 4 Late Roman contexts.

Curiously, horse remains seem to have received different treatment from the other main mammal species, perhaps due their role as a non-food (although some horse bones did show signs of butchery, more were found complete than any other species, suggesting that butchery was rare and that horse did not form a staple of meat consumption). Additionally the deposition of horse remains was treated in a wholly different manner than other animals on the site, perhaps suggesting that this deposition was deliberate (Figure 6.15).

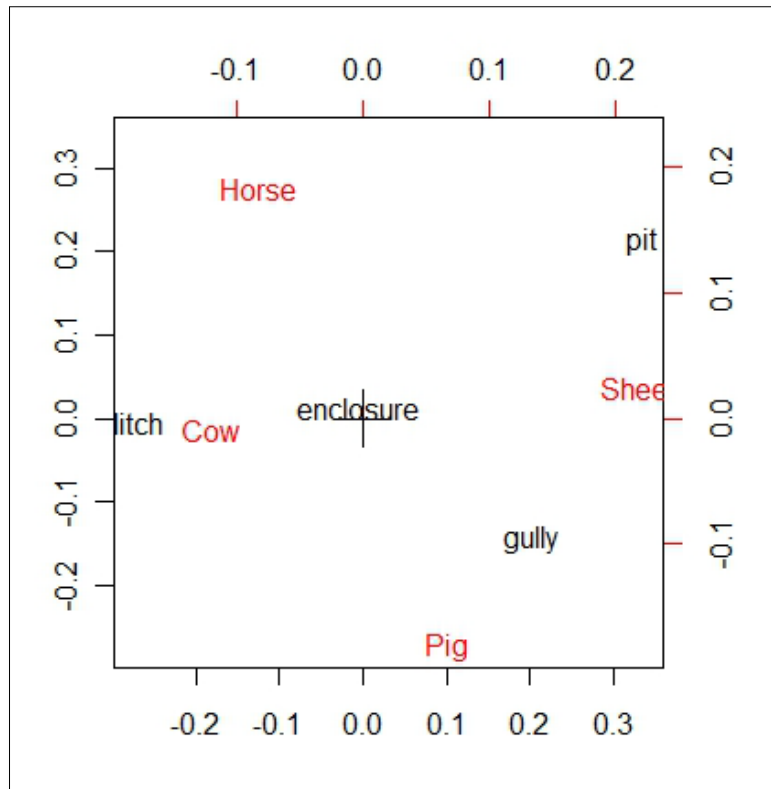


Figure 6.15. Correspondence analysis suggesting that there is a non-random difference between the deposition of horse bones and pig bones ( $\chi^2=23.3, p = 0.005$ )

Standing apart from the horse remains was a complete metacarpal of a donkey from Platform 1. The presence of this species in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD strongly indicates that Claydon Pike was host to imported animals. It is argued that breeding populations of donkeys were only established in Britain during the Medieval period (Dent 1978:53-4) and whilst they are not unusual on LIA/Roman sites on the continent, there have been few recorded examples in Britain (Sykes 2007: CD-ROM Section 4.3). Imported for use as pack animals, the donkey at Claydon Pike may represent either a possession of the farm or a transport beast which had expired during a shipment. The narrowness of the gatehouse along the trackway to the settlement has been noted above (6.2.3) – perhaps donkeys laden with goods were used rather than wider wheeled vehicles.

In the structure B1, 30% of the animal remains were pig and 31% bird. This is a high percentage of domestic fowl and may suggest the shift in eating patterns from the LIA reluctance to eat

birds<sup>29</sup> and indicate a more Roman-style cuisine. The presence of hare and fish bones also suggests a wider variety in meat dishes than might be expected. Claydon Pike represents a rich and successful farming and ranching community, which may have grown more prosperous by supplying either the Roman military<sup>30</sup> or the growing urban centre at Cirencester (Corinium). This wealth would have allowed access to the 'spoils' of Romanization. It may, however, be speculated that these exotic dining practices were not standard to daily eating in the community and may represent feasting events, perhaps to entertain customers from nearby Corinium, who would expect such fare to be at table.

The analysis of the faunal assemblage suggests that although some of the conditions for economic exploitation of animals changed to some degree between the pre- and post- conquest phases of activity, there was far more stability of practice than one might expect during 'Romanization' of such a successful community. Claydon Pike was a wealthy traditional settlement that chose to express that wealth only in part through the use of Roman-style consumables, particularly concerning the flavouring of food. Here can be seen 'the up front and communal use of Roman style goods within a decidedly native context' (Meadows 2001: 235).

### **6.2.7 Putting it all together**

Both the final publication of the site and the theses drawing from the raw post-excavation work agreed on the ultimate understanding of Claydon Pike as a hierarchical community where status and display were the basis of the settlement's structure. I believe that the evidence may show something rather different, and that Douglas' work helps to explain why.

The original phasing of the site relied on a significant military presence at Claydon Pike, in order to account for the new architectural style of B1-3, samian ware and military metalwork. This has

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<sup>29</sup> Julius Caesar wrote of the Britons, 'They do not regard it lawful to eat the hare, and the cock, and the goose; they, however, breed them for amusement and pleasure' (*De Bello Gallico* V.12). Certainly these are largely absent on Iron Age sites from southern Britain but more apparent within assemblage from the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century onwards.

<sup>30</sup> Some evidence for military contact (a sherd inscribed with LEG II and the previously mentioned cavalry fitting among them) hints at this.

been convincingly refuted first by Hingley (1989:160) and later by Booth (Miles *et al.* 2007:80). While Booth's argument rests largely on the revised phasing, Hingley challenged the military connection on the grounds that the traditional formula of 'high status goods + no villa = military intervention' was wrong. He proposed, rather, that Claydon Pike represented a wealthy site which could choose Roman things but did not build a villa (until the 4<sup>th</sup> century) because it didn't wish to live in such a manner. He suggests that the people who live at this prosperous settlement were largely egalitarian (1989:43).

So here we have two majorly divergent views of Claydon Pike –

- a strict hierarchy with the LIA peasants living in the northern part of Platform 1 and the owner in the southern part, where domestic evidence suggests a more variety of materials (Rippengal 1996:203; Meadows 2001:233). By the early Roman period, the southern dwelling(s) are replaced by rectangular buildings where the affluent residents drink wine from beakers and eat foods with Roman flavours while their inferiors drink beer from tankards in more humble and traditional structures.
- a broadly egalitarian community where display is secondary to the prosperity of the farm. A lack of storage pits or four post structures may suggest imported grain held in a common store, a function of building B3 by the early Roman phase. Building B1 and its LIA predecessor may have been communal areas where members of the community gathered for feasting and deliberation, perhaps even from neighbouring farmsteads. Wealth of the site is attested to by the pre-conquest access to imported foodstuffs, but tableware is distinctively local in form and fabric.

Although by the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century, Claydon Pike is clearly hierarchical, with a 'proper' small villa and lesser 'cottage-type' buildings as well as a demarcated cemetery (Miles *et al.*

2007: 169-184), the above summaries illustrate that from the LIA to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century the picture of social structure is less clear. The overall assemblages indicate a conservative rural society, a definition in keeping with either scenario. Can we determine which might be more correct? This is where Cultural Theory can help shed light.

That the Longdoles field settlement falls to the right of the group line in the matrix is clear; carefully delineated boundaries can be the first signs of outlining a group identity. The settlement not only used enclosures and ditches to mark out 'us' from 'not us' but a gated entryway to the settlement was also constructed. It is unlikely from the evidence that this gateway and the related fencing was in any way intended to provide defence from a physical threat; rather it helped to identify who belonged and who didn't in a manner suggesting defence from cosmological threat.

If we concede that this site falls to the right in the group category, where might it reside on the grid axis? Douglas wrote that 'grid is visible in the physical signs of discriminated rank, such as food or clothing' (1982a: 192). At Claydon Pike in the LIA and Early Roman period there is little evidence for this type of discrimination. Low grid communities exhibit little in the way of organisation. Apart from the organisation imposed by the geology (forcing settlement to remain in the gravel islands rising out of the marsh) and the provision of boundaries, organisation of space seems without rigid regulation. There is no apparent designated location for middening of waste or for treatment of the dead in this period (Meadows 2001:223). Access to all aspects of life in the settlement seems to have been free of limitation based upon any sumptuary basis.

Habitation occurring in the 'domestic zone' of Platform 1 in the LIA was replaced by B1; if we can speculate that B1 was contemporary with roundhouses at 565 and 1645, then looking at the rest of the evidence from animal bone and the food containers begins to create a picture. Perhaps that area marked a location for communal eating in the LIA, of the kind described Diodorus Siculus (V.28.4), and was still performing that function in the ER period, albeit under a new Romano-British style roof. The aisled hall now becomes the aggregation point for the

people who live and work on the farm, and perhaps even neighbouring farms as well. Dining may have taken place in the northern part of the building, based on the concentration of finds; not long after the aisled hall is built, an extension to the building is required, in the form of a specialised kitchen area (B2). The aisled building may not be so much the high status home of the owner, as the 'village hall' serving all the residents of the farming community and on occasion, entertaining visitors from further afield who provided the farm with business. The public consumption of Roman-style foods eaten may be seen to have its counterpoint in the 'traditional' use of materials and methods conducted out of site privately in the kitchen wing. Douglas observed that 'ostentatious hospitality is a feature of a low-grid ethnography' (1982a:197) and if such hospitality was occurring, yet within a largely unaltered traditional framework, then it would seem that Claydon Pike in the LIA/Early Roman period could be placed within the lower right hand corner of the grid-group matrix – designation Type 'E'.

As a closely knit Type E community, the people at Claydon Pike would have been cautiously open to outside ideas and influences (having no strict rules to prevent access to such things), but the importance the group itself would have remained the utmost priority. What defined a member of the group as opposed to an outsider could clearly be seen, both by a simplicity of appearance and by the adherence to tradition. As mentioned above, the placement of a society within a box of the matrix does not mean that all communities so defined are identical – there is scope for degree within each box. If this were not so, then all Type E settlements in the study would appear to have identical materials and an identical narrative – a highly suspicious result for any study! In each box, there is room for mobility and although Claydon Pike appears to exhibit the characteristics of Type E, their position could be marked as slightly higher in the box than midpoint. Some rules are in operation, even if they are not the rules of hierarchy. There are clearly rules on the placement of horse remains (Figure 6.14) and where ritual activity will take place.

Claydon Pike generally seems to have expressed openness to food and drink but remained more conservative with regard to items of personal adornment. Perhaps there was an economic requirement to accept new food products; non-traditional foodstuffs acquired through business connections would be utilised out of pragmatism, but would not influence the actual substance of the daily meal. Traditional cooking methods and meats remained common practice but they could be flavoured with the use of olive oil other new goods.

If Claydon Pike is an egalitarian settlement, it is not alone (Hingley 1989:43). A line of lettering in the tessellated floor of the aisled hall at Thruxton reads QUINTVS NATALIVS NATALINVS ET BODENI. If Quintus is Roman (or sees himself as so) and the 'native' Bodeni are still considered important enough to be mentioned alongside him, then perhaps this may, as Hingley wrote 'suggest a fairly egalitarian type of social structure' (*ibid.*:152).

Rippengal's conclusions about Claydon Pike were that although it was not a village after the pattern that had been assumed prior to excavation (Miles 1988:72), that there was evidence for 'a closely defined form of social organisation' (1996:221). He even went as far as identifying a lack of overt signs of social stress or resistance, yet his explanation for the 'retention of a 'traditional' roundhouse and certain tableware that seem to take as their points of reference the pre-Roman past' is that the inferior inhabitants were 'expressing dissent from the messages being sent by the occupants of the Main Buildings' (1996:234-5). This is a classic example of making the evidence fit the standard resistance v capitulation model of Romanization. This case study and the other examples in this thesis show that the situation, as evidenced through the material culture, is rather more complex.

A quick consideration of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century activity at Claydon Pike throws our Type E settlement into sharp contrast with what it became. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was a definite and major overhaul to the social organization of the site, visible in the material culture. A large assemblage of padlock and tumbler key fittings point to a strong desire to lock things away, strictly separating things for public awareness and things to be kept private. A shrine was

erected at this time also, not in the heart of the settlement, where the religious focus had been in earlier times, but to the northeast of the main area of activity and served by a cobbled pathway leading not to the villa, but away toward another Roman road to the north. Although likely the villa owners frequented the shrine (Miles *et al.* 2007:209) and probably built it, it would seem that they would prefer to keep other local patrons from entering their compound.

The reconfiguring of the structures on Platform 1 including the erection of a 'proper' villa building and the abundance of personal adornment items, particularly bracelets and finger rings, denote a tiered society where display of status is of ever increasing importance. The 4<sup>th</sup> century also introduces the first regulated burial area, with a small cemetery to the west, just off the road leading into the settlement. Some of the burials have their own individual enclosures, indicative of a social hierarchy even in death. This Type H society is clearly at odds with the more communal egalitarian way of life in earlier years. What could have caused the change? Any answer must be pure speculation, but perhaps there is a change of ownership of the farm, bringing in a new family group with a different worldview? Alternatively, perhaps the community suffered such a trauma that its members were forced to re-evaluate their worldview with dramatic results (Chapter 5.1). Of course, it should be noted that the nearby settlement at Thornhill Farm (#118) may have actually been part of the Longdoles Field settlement. Their separation is not a geographically large one and if the two were considered one in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century, then the argument for Claydon Pike as an egalitarian community is drastically weakened. Thornhill Farm suggests a hierarchy and if linked with Claydon Pike, then it may have served a subservient role to the senior status individuals at Longdoles Field. However, without the excavation of the strip in between the two sites, or indeed, a complete re-evaluation of the two sites in tandem (not an injudicious thing to do), the interpretation of the sites as neighbours with different ways of looking at the world, and two different results of their response to change, stands.



## 6.3 Somerford Keynes

### 6.3.1 Introduction to the site

The field at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes lies directly on the southern bank of the River Thames and only 6km due south of Cirencester, Roman Corinium (Figure 6.16). The site is geologically situated on the First Gravel Terrace of the Thames and is located on the immediate floodplain of the Thames, thus being overlain by a narrow band of the alluvial clay which is found along most of the river. Originally known as a series of cropmarks that covered an area of over 2.5 hectares, the area was further brought to the attention of archaeologists by reports from responsible metal detectorists, who noticed a marked increase in the amount of metal finds recovered in the field. When the area was acquired for gravel extraction in 1986, a rescue excavation was conducted by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (Miles *et al.* 1987:46).

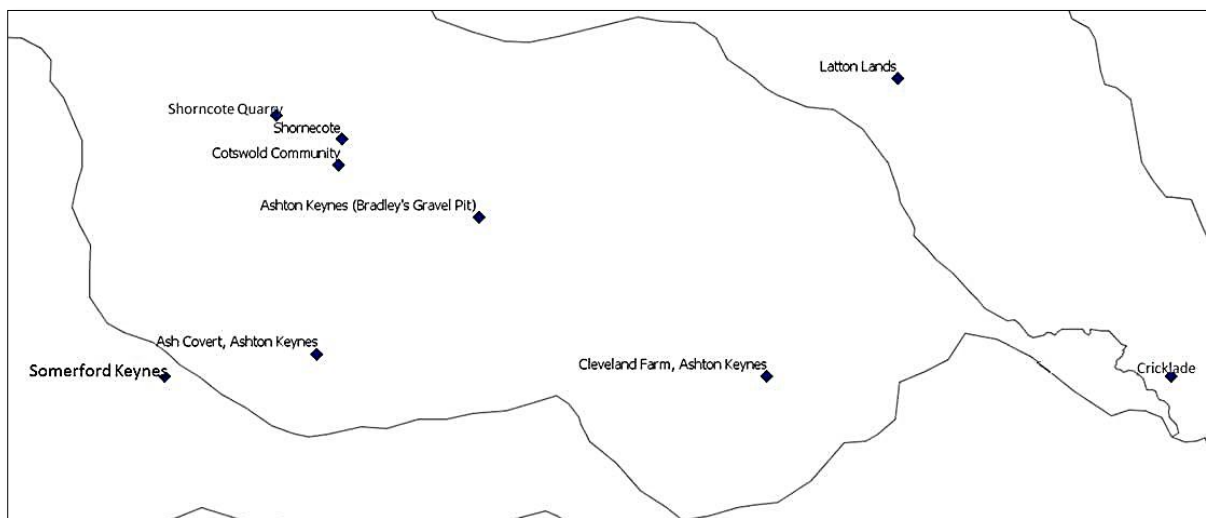


Figure 6.16. Relative location of Somerford Keynes to other sites in the database in this region

Although only very limited funding was available and there were only 6 months in which to complete the work, the Unit revealed a substantial part of a Late Iron Age and Roman settlement (Figure 6.17). The site was flooded for much of the latter half of the excavation, reducing the amount of information which could be gleaned, and only a small amount of post-excavation work was conducted on the materials at the time. The record was taken up again in 2004 and

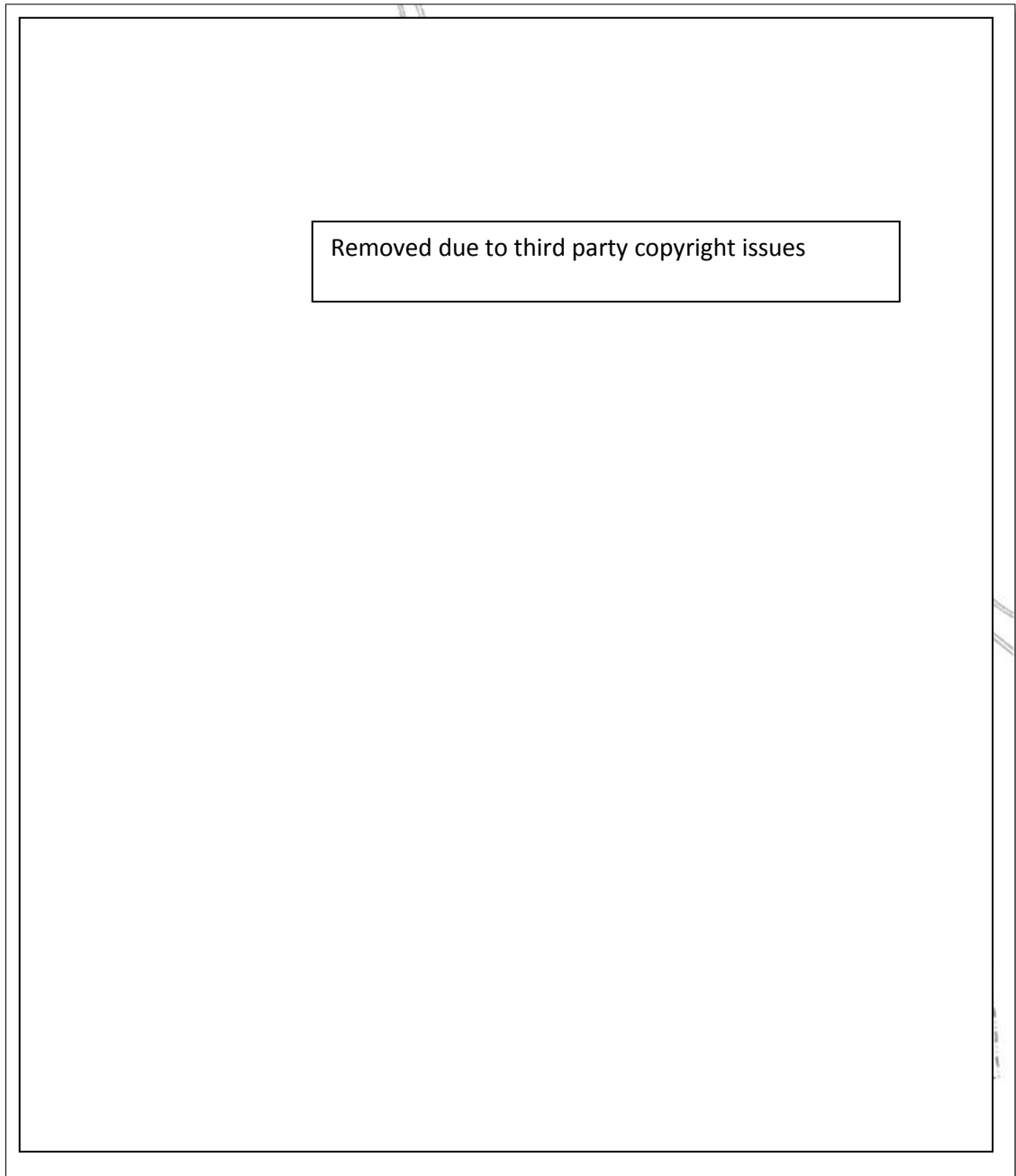


*Figure 6.17. Plan showing location of features and OAU trenches (Miles et al. 2007:232)*

published as a chapter in a monograph dealing with several excavations in the Cotswold Waterpark environs (Miles *et al.* 2007).

The features revealed at Somerford Keynes were chiefly enclosure ditches dating to the LIA/ER period (Phase 1) of varying shape, with no clearly repeated dimensions. Some MIA pottery scatters did suggest the presence of earlier settlement nearby, perhaps mirroring the evolution

of the Claydon Pike settlement, but no features at Somerford Keynes could be phased to that period. As at Claydon Pike, the late 1<sup>st</sup> century/early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Phase 2) saw the erection of an aisled hall at the site and by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Phase 3), there was a massive reorganisation of the layout of the settlement, with most previous features disregarded in favour of a new linear ditched enclosure system.

The settlement at Somerford Keynes is hardly in isolation – this area was densely populated in the LIA/ER as is attested to by the abundant cropmarks in the region. Approximately 1km to the east and again 1 km to the south there were contemporary settlements which have been destroyed without proper excavation in the 1980s. Scant evidence noticed at the periphery of these gravel sites showed Roman domestic activity, from the 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> centuries (Hingley 1983, GLOCS report). Work conducted at Cotswold Community also indicated rural Roman settlement 2 km to the north of Somerford Keynes, and the entire area is well served by trackways and relative proximity to Ermine Street (less than 8km away). Additionally, being situated less than 100m from the (modern) bank of the Thames suggests that riverine mobility may also have served the settlement with regard to communication and exchange.

### **6.3.2 Structures**

As at Claydon Pike, the remains of Phase 1 structures are largely non-extant, although some evidence for a domestic structure can be seen in Trench 17 (Figure 6.18), where a circular gully (419) delineates a space 8.5m across and circumscribes a posthole (422). Although material from the gully itself is mostly early 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery, many of the finds related to this area are of a more mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> century date. Additionally, a pit cluster to the northwest (400; 401; 402) which may represent refuse deposition from the structure produced 1<sup>st</sup> century material including a denarius of Vespasian. Less convincing is a gully arc in Trench 5 (328) which was mostly obscured from investigation by the arbitrary limits of the trench. Yet its dimensions and phasing make it possibly similar in character to 419. Unfortunately, more than 35% of the finds were recovered from unstratified locations and it does not appear that that there was an

attempt to analyse the materials spatial relationships for material other than metalwork, leaving little trace of domestic assemblages which might point to absent houses. To the southwest of potential structure 328, eight postholes were identified, forming a probable rectilinear timber post built structure of uncertain function. Roughly 8 x 4m and lying SW-NE, the structure was associated with ceramic materials that ranged from the mid-1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century, although the fact that it appears to have been cut by Phase 1 ditch 142 suggests a date at the earlier rather than later end of that range.

A completely different alignment was used for the construction of the only apparent Phase 2 structure within the excavated areas; an immense aisled hall was built N-S (Figure 6.19). Larger than the hall at Longdoles Field, this structure measured 27m in length and was over 12m wide.

When Hingley wrote of it during its excavation, he reported that was also 1<sup>st</sup> century in date (1989:39), but the 2007 published report pushes this aisled hall out to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, possibly in keeping with the Claydon Pike re-dating (in the same volume) but also based on the fill of a posthole which contained samian sherds, suggesting an early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date. However, since the authors also report that 'many of the postholes seem to have been replaced at some point' (Miles *et al.* 2007:236), this casts a bit of doubt on the certainty of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century material as original post packing – it may have been introduced during the second phase of posthole installation. Aisled halls from the 1<sup>st</sup> century are not completely unheard of, and in both this case and at Claydon Pike, it appears that there is sufficient evidence to at least consider the possibility of an earlier introduction of the architectural type to the region.

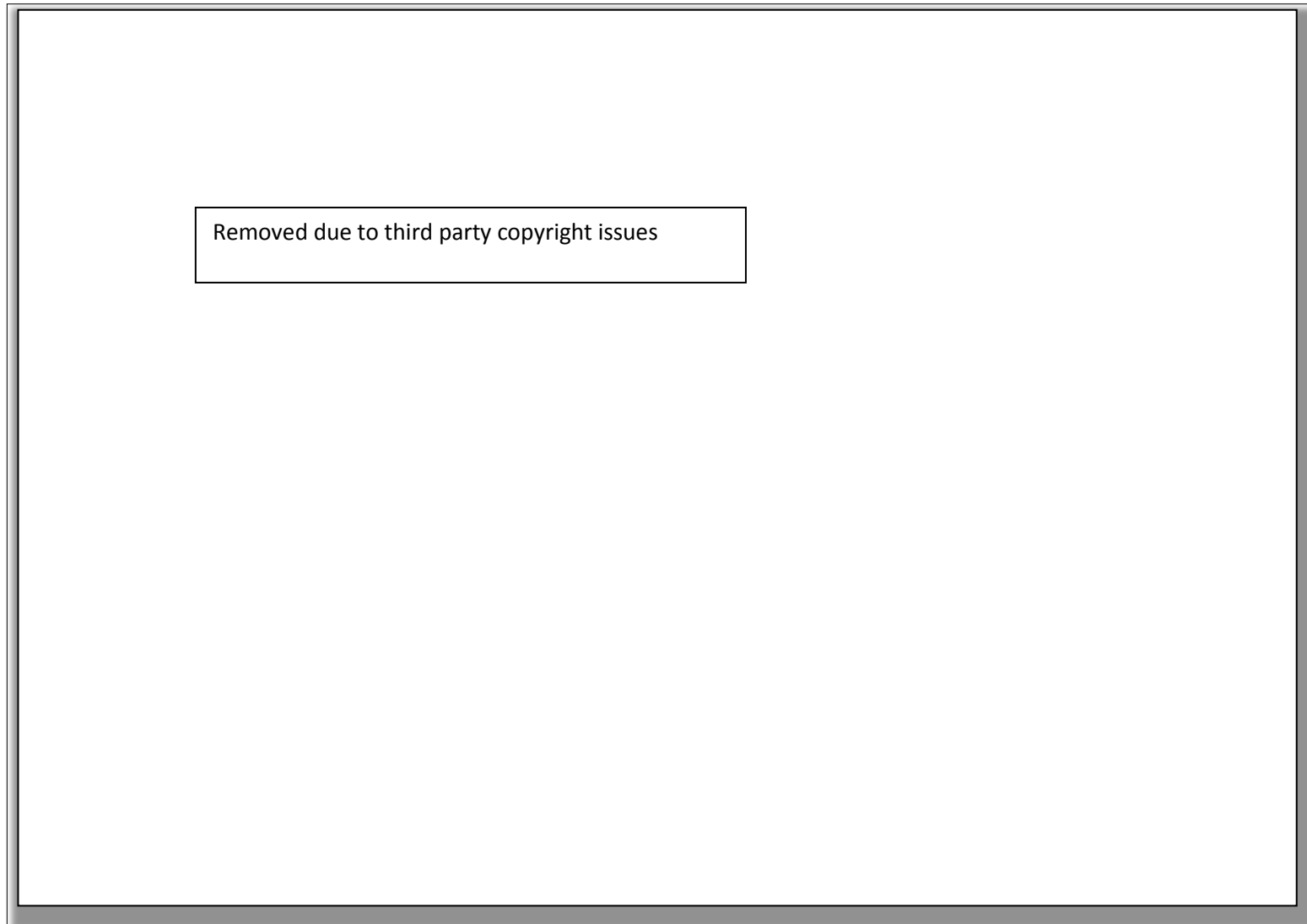


*Figure 6.18. Trench 17, showing in blue the possible structure (after Miles et al. 2007: CD-ROM Section 5.2)*

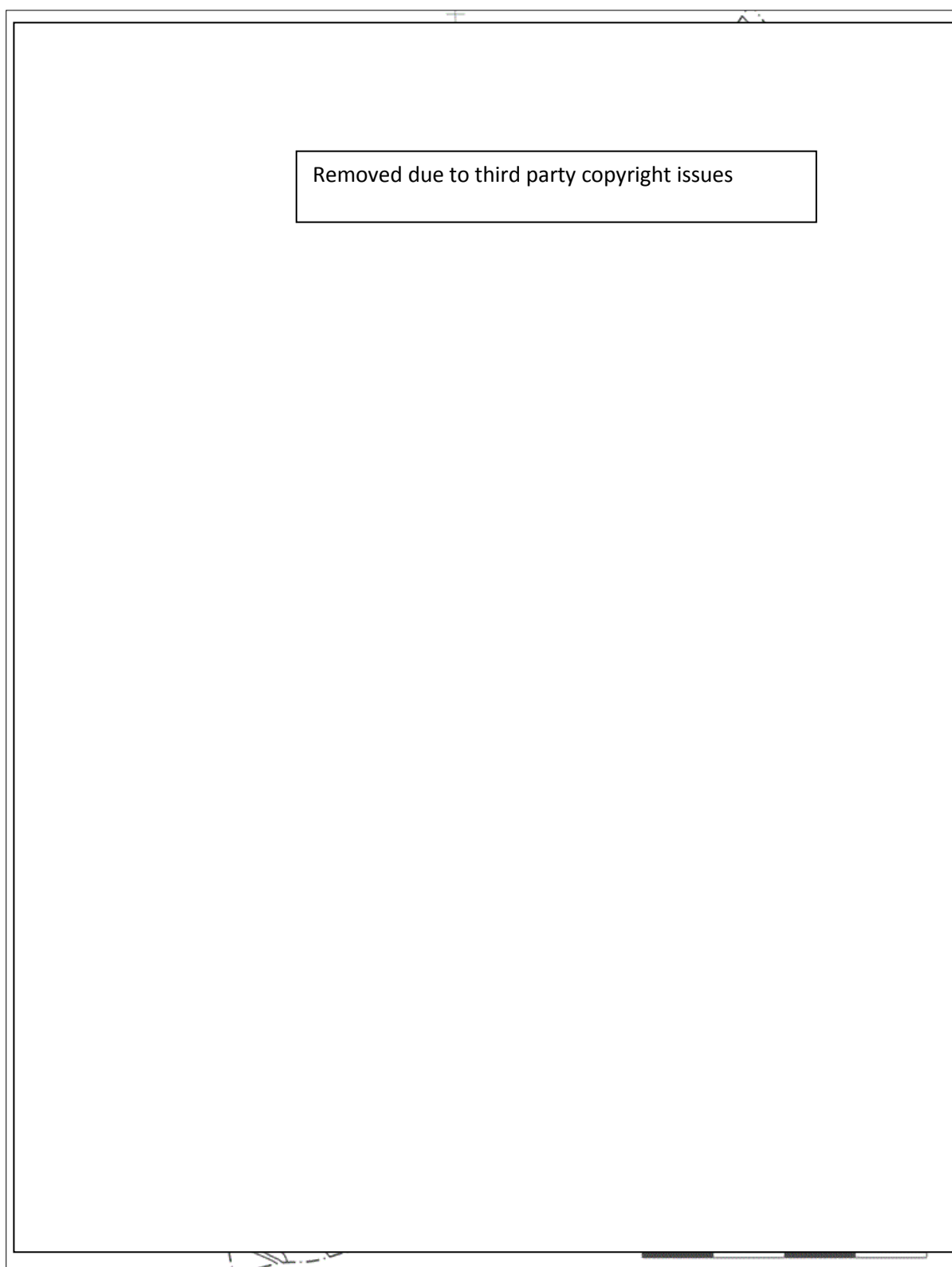


*Figure 6.19. Trench 5, Phase 1 possible structures in blue; Phase 2 aisled hall in green  
(After Miles et al. 2007: CD-ROM Section 5.2)*

The use of the aisled hall appears to have been markedly different than that at Claydon Pike; there is little evidence for domestic occupation directly related to the building. Whilst its size implies grandeur, the building does not appear to have hypocaust heating, nor are there any traces of window glass or painted plaster. Despite the lack of under floor heating in the hall, hypocaust material accounts for over 7% of the ceramic building material from the site (an impressive 678.5kg as opposed to the 434kg from Longdoles Field). This material appeared to be located largely in a line along one of the walls of the hall, interpreted as being perhaps a storage area for tiles. This, along with the prodigious amounts of CBM on site, has led to the suggestion that at some point the Somerford Keynes settlement served as a tile depot; the site lies conveniently on the way to Cirencester from the Minety kilns, which lie 12.5 km to the south, and the material recovered appeared to be exclusively of that origin. The implications of this suggestion will be discussed later (6.3.6).

### **6.3.3 Ceramic and glass vessels**

#### ***Ceramics***

As mentioned above, more than a third of the ceramic assemblage was from unstratified layers, allowing residuality and redeposition to skew the significance of any realistic interpretation of the fabrics and forms represented. A comparison (Figure 6.20) of the material assigned to Phase 1 against the sum of Phase 1 and the 'Phase 0' unstratified ceramics shows that whilst it would be foolish to combine the two, (even where the unstratified Early Belgic material likely belongs to Phase 1), including the Phase 0 material in this way allows one to see that the minute amounts of amphorae and mortaria are consistent in either case; there is no appreciable change of the percentages of fine wares, or mortaria and amphora. However, a comparison of the material which could be phased indicated a settlement that did not appear to place much emphasis on the use of new Roman cooking practices (Figure 6.21). Whilst the amount of amphorae and mortaria in use seems to have consistently small from the LIA through to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the amount of samian does increase noticeably at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Even so, the preference appears to have been for locally produced coarsewares.

The report calls attention to an unusual number of lead rivets for the repair of ceramics, but curiously it is not the samian and fine wares that are most often being repaired; rather, it is local coarseware which has been chosen to have its use extended. When the residents did splash out on samian, they seemed to enjoy decoration more than their counterparts at Claydon Pike; the percentage of decorated samian was 15%, a serious variation from the austere assemblage at Claydon Pike, which was only 4%. It would seem that decoration was a more important aspect of ceramic display at Somerford Keynes; however, it might be inferred that regardless of how else status was being displayed in this society, it was not through the ostentatious consumption of new food and drink.

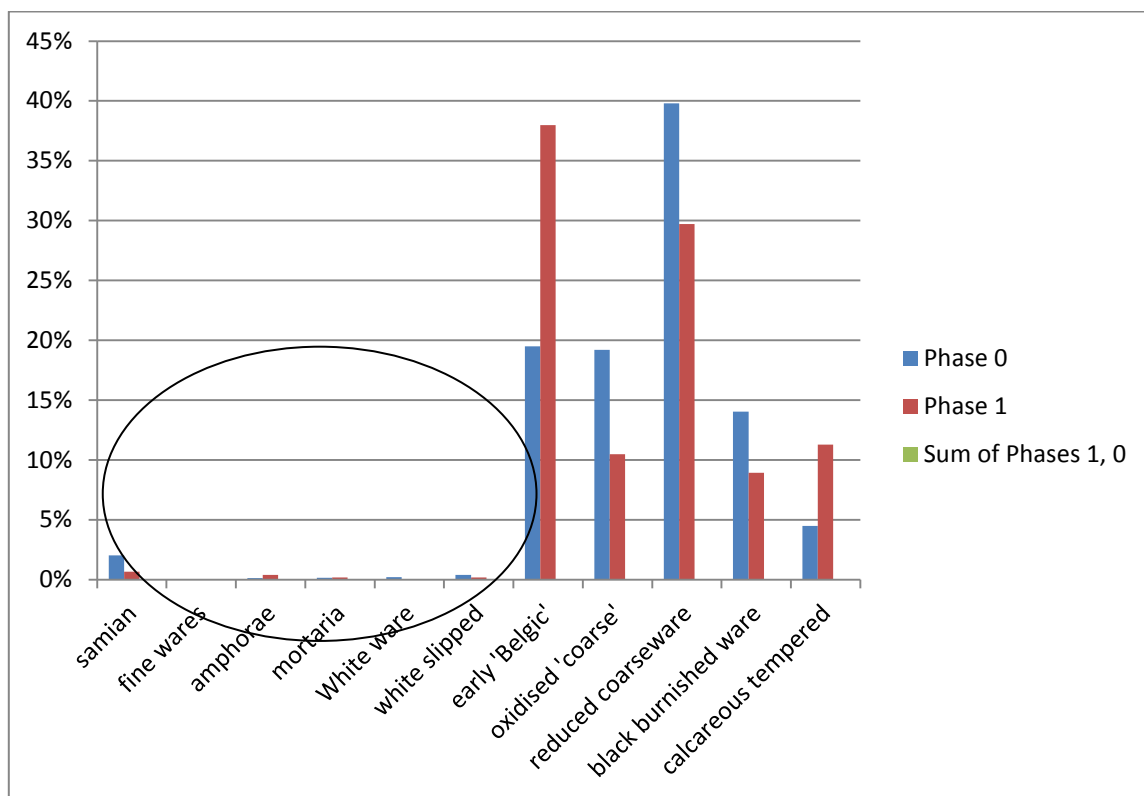


*Figure 6.20. Comparison of Phase 1 and unstratified 'Phase 0' ceramics; circled area highlights the lack of significant alteration of percentages amongst fine wares*



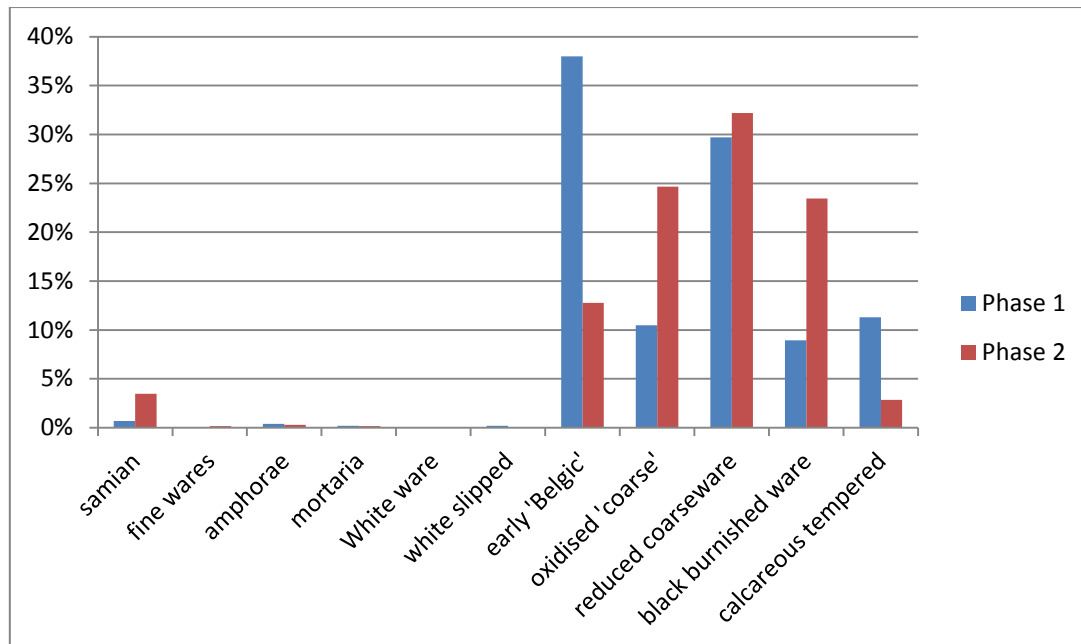


Figure 6.21. Frequencies of fabrics by phase at Somerford Keynes

Unfortunately, Brown's pottery report for Somerford Keynes does not break down the EVEs for vessel type by phase. Nonetheless, the percentages indicate that, like many rural sites, the jar is the dominant form, followed by bowls (Figure 6.22). The preference for beakers and cups over tankards is also suggestive of more conservative choices with regard to dining practice. An imported bowl from Lyon in a Phase 1 context hints at the ability to acquire expensive imports, but the overall trend is for the local and commonplace, suggesting that personal preference is for the traditional.

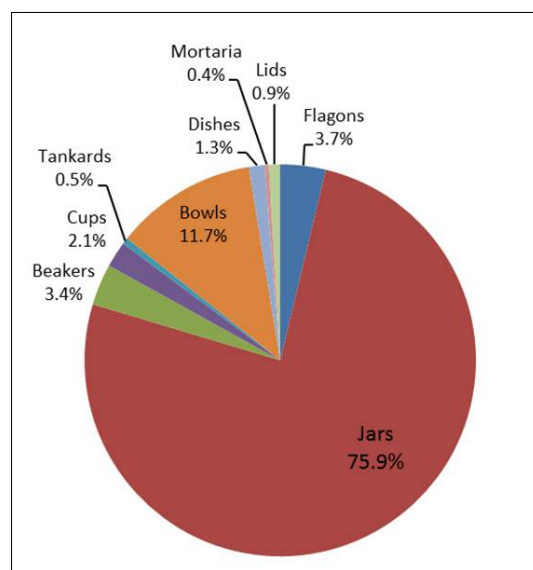


Figure 6.22. Ceramic forms at Somerford Keynes, all phases

### **Glass**

Fewer than 30 fragments of vessel glass were recovered from Somerford Keynes, all of them dating between the mid-1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Where form could be identified, they appear to represent small bottles, although the contents can only be guessed. Whilst Cool writes that occasional contents analysis of such bottles has revealed them to contain olive oil (2006:63-4), the paucity of ceramic evidence for the embracing of Roman style cooking might lead one to look for other explanations on this site. Given the apparent importance of physical appearance in this community, as indicated by the metalwork described in the following section, perhaps it would be more appropriate to think of these bottles as containing some form of unguent or perfume.

#### **6.3.4 Metalwork**

Somerford Keynes exhibits an unusually large assemblage of metal finds, particularly with regard to brooches. Compared with the brooch assemblage for the same period at Longdoles Field, Claydon Pike, it is clear that the use of brooches was more significant at Somerford Keynes. In both cases, just over 15% of the area identifiable by cropmarks was actually excavated, - 1.3 hectares at Longdoles field and 0.4 Hectares at Somerford Keynes. Despite the more rigorous use of metal detectors at the Somerford Keynes site, the difference in quantity cannot be explained solely by that factor. It has been suggested that the number of 'high status' metal finds are indicative of a 'better class' of settlement very nearby but unexcavated (Miles *et al.* 2007:251), yet this need not be the only explanation. Whilst the ceramic assemblage suggests a modest and traditional private life of the people who lived in this settlement (the private actions of cooking and eating), the metalwork tells a story of a more flamboyant and display-oriented public face.

Not including coins, over 1000 metal objects were recovered from Somerford Keynes; unfortunately, due to the nearly 20 year delay between excavation and post-excavation analysis, much of the ironwork had decomposed to a degree where even x-rays were uninformative with

regards to their possible shape or function. Yet of the finds which survived, the vast majority (barring nails) were items of personal adornment (Figure 6.23). When compared with the breakdown of metalwork recovered from a similar temporal span at Claydon Pike, the difference is glaringly obvious (Figure 6.24). Public display through the medium of personal adornment seems to have been a practice at the Somerford Keynes settlement in a way which is very different from the egalitarian group at Longdoles Field. Not only are brooches much more common at Somerford Keynes, but Roman influenced forms such as the Hod Hill type are seemingly more popular forms (see Figure 6.11).

The numerous finds have led to the suggestion that there must be a ritual focus nearby to account for the quantity of brooches and other adornments, yet this is an unsatisfactory

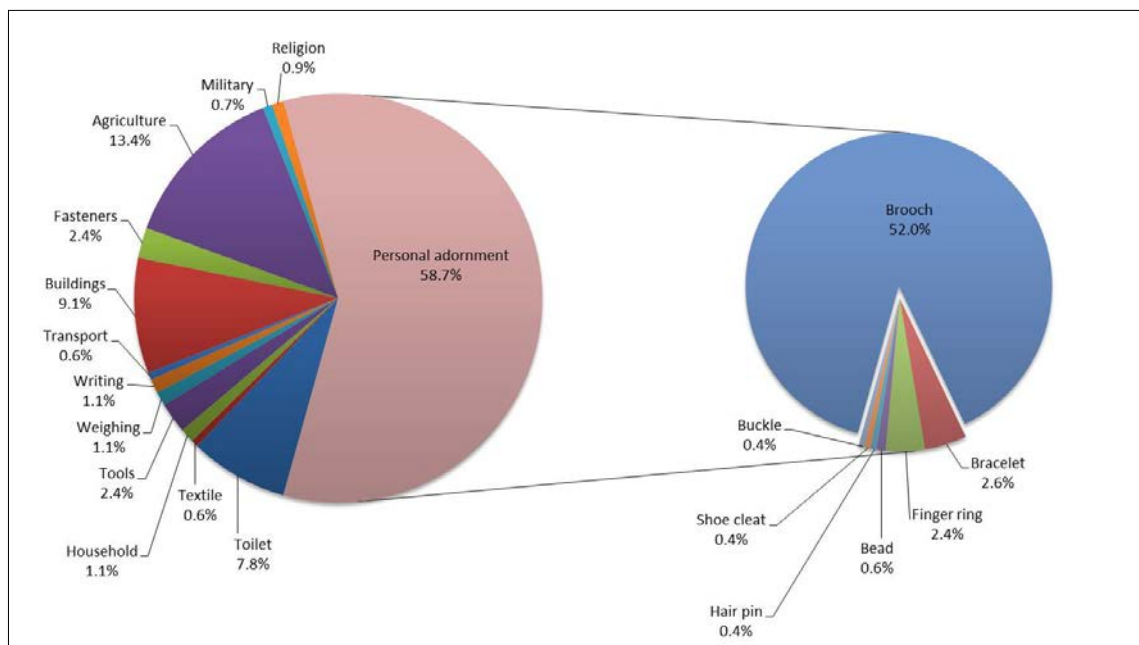


*Figure 6.23. Breakdown of the metalwork (excluding nails) recovered from Somerford Keynes, with personal adornment items further broken down on the right*

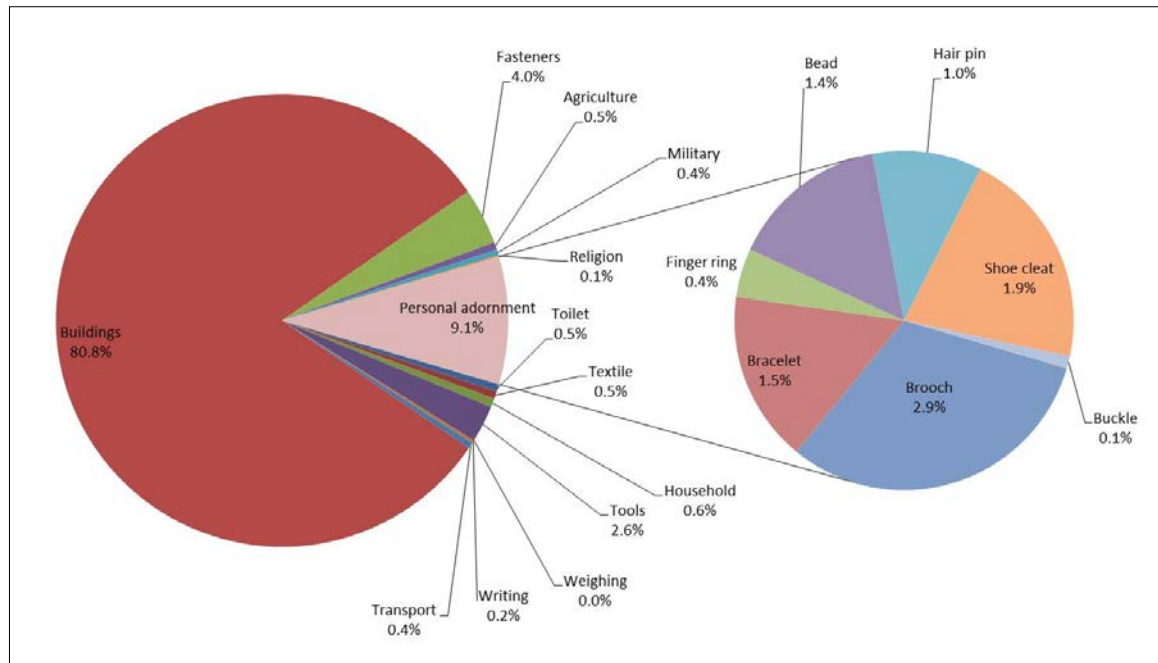


Figure 6.24. Breakdown of the metalwork (excluding nails) recovered from Longdoles Field, with personal adornment items further broken down on the right

explanation. At Claydon Pike there was a known ritual focus — if not a true temenos, then at least an obvious space set aside for votive deposition; yet there were no such quantities of objects to match the amount recovered from this site. What is noted in the report which seems more plausible is that the site was the regular recipient of ‘official interest’ (Miles *et al.* 2007:253) – visits from either military or civic officials who had a vested interest in the operations of the site. The interpretation of the site as a tile depot gains credence from this line of thinking, as well as the presence of weighing and writing paraphernalia, and other small finds of unusually high status, such as seal boxes. Alternatively, it is possible that these metal objects were being gathered by the occupants for purposes of recycling, as suggested at Cotswold Community (Powell 2010:119).

One final category of small finds is of particular interest when contemplating the worldview of the inhabitants: security items. At Somerford Keynes there are no less than 6 perforated bell shaped studs which are most often used as lockable box or chest fittings (Cool 2007: CD-ROM Section 5.3). Additionally, the assemblage includes a fragment of a barrel padlock and a slide

lock bolt. Key handles are also present. Indeed, given that much of the ironwork was unrecognizable due to neglect in post-excavation storage, there may have been several more such locking devices on site. Such a preponderance of locking mechanisms suggests inhabitants who are concerned with securing their possessions and making certain that their private spaces stay private. Thus we see a complicated split between the public showy display of adornment and the private retreats where traditional simple ways can be adhered to.

### **6.3.5 Faunal and organic evidence**

Examination of the faunal evidence collected from Somerford Keynes suggests a picture which is entirely consistent with the ceramic scenario; the animals consumed for food are typical of a LIA rural site and that does not change throughout the Roman period use of the settlement (Figure 6.25). Sheep seem to be the primary food animal, with cattle killed in their prime for meat consumption, but also with a significant number left to a mature age, indicating their importance as providers of secondary products. Pig was eaten only rarely and domestic fowl were practically absent (Evans 2007: CD-ROM Section 5.4.2). Pathology of the sheep remains indicated that several individuals suffered dental abnormality or tooth loss – this can be caused by ingestion of soils which occurs due to over-cropping pastureland (Radostits *et al.* 2000:188). This may suggest either restrictions on access to adequate pasture lands, or alternatively, that the people living here did not make animal husbandry their primary concern. The pathology on the horse remains suggest that the animals were hard working, and some cattle remains also showed signs of use for traction (Miles *et al.* 2007:268). These might suggest a population of working animals kept to transport the heavy tiles to or from the depot.

There was no environmental evidence gathered from Phase 1 of this site, but the lack of quern stone fragments (apart from a single piece of rotary quern from a ditch fill) point to a probable

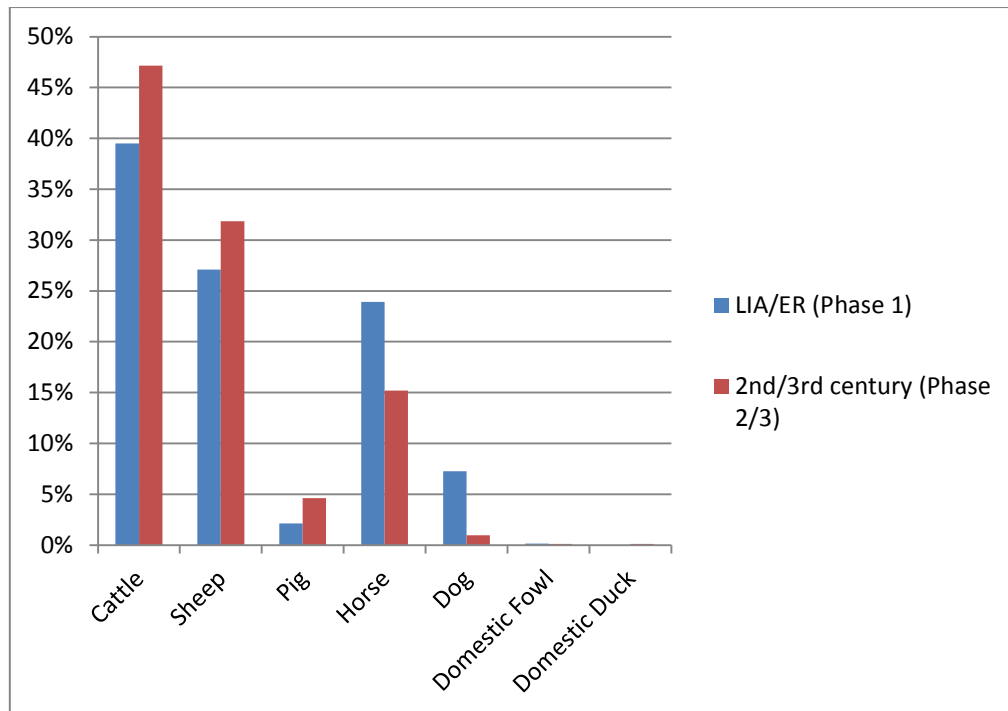


Figure 6.25. Percentages of species from faunal assemblage

lack of cereal growth or processing here in the LIA/ER period. The presence of a later corn drier<sup>31</sup> certainly suggests a change in the economic focus of the site, and this is in keeping with the complete reversal of prosperity the site sees in the later 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

### 6.3.6 Putting it all together

Compared to the site at Claydon Pike, the interpretation of the Somerford Keynes settlement is rather more straightforward. The settlement seems to begin in the LIA with the possibility of a MIA precursor very nearby. The system of enclosures and possible houses indicate a small scale rural farmstead which, based upon the ecofactual evidence, appears to have relied on a pastoral economy. The juxtaposition of fine metalwork and commonplace ceramics have led some to speculate that either this represents an undiscovered ritual focus or an undiscovered settlement

<sup>31</sup> Robinson expresses doubt that this is the function of the feature; in spite of abundant charcoal confirming its use for heating *something*, the 'virtual absence' of any cereal remains suggested to him a different use for drier, although he offers no speculation (Miles *et al.* 2007:269).

of higher status nearby. Looking at the material through the lens of the grid/group matrix presents another option which does not rely on the undiscovered intangibles.

The ubiquity of 1<sup>st</sup> century/ early 2<sup>nd</sup> century personal adornment at the site suggests a population who invest a lot of their resources in items of personal public display. The site is not large enough to propose a population that includes an invisible underclass of inhabitants who do not have access to brooches and bracelets, so we can speculate that there was in general open access to such items. The site seems to indicate little evidence of zonation or regulated use of space. Even the enclosures form only the most pragmatic of boundaries; they are functional but seem to be without pattern or regularity. They appear to not necessarily serve a cosmological function and the assemblage suggests that outside influences were not rejected (although there are definitely specific choices being made). This lack of emphasis on boundaries and openness to external ideas suggest a low group identity; the apparent fluidity of roles and lack of zonation and intrasite regulation point to a low grid situation. By Douglas' matrix, this identifies Somerford Keynes as an Individualist community – type I.

Individuals in this type of community have very weak bonds holding them as a collective and loyalties can shift rapidly. The collective is very opportunistic and individuals will seek out new ideas for exploitation, with each individual succeeding or failing by their own merit. The rigidity of rules and regulation is weak, as is overall leadership, although there may be several individuals at any time vying for overall influence of the remainder. Low-group cultures will tend to have self-interested preferences based upon an individualized identity; low-grid cultures will tend to ignore norms and decide to do things 'their way' (Chai *et al.* 2010:3). Certainly the construction of such a large aisled hall, an 'unusual example in the region' (Miles *et al.* 2007:271), points to a desire to try something experimental. Equally unique is the idiosyncratic approach to repairing and curating what might be considered low-status ceramics. Douglas wrote that 'low-grid conditions tend to cultivate idiosyncrasy' (1982a:240), and this behaviour is evident in the assemblages.

Residing in the lower left box of the matrix, Somerford Keynes can be seen as the innovative settlement which took advantage of the changes swirling around them. Their worldview made them open to new ideas and influences, as seen in the metalwork and the buildings. The entrepreneurial drive allowed them to establish themselves as a depot for the Minety tile production centre.

Type I communities choose to specialise, yet these low-grid/low group communities, in their desire for individual success, often 'generate remedies which make the later troubles worse than the first' (Douglas 1982a:239); in other words, they fall victim to their own success. The settlement at Somerford Keynes seems to have experienced precisely this. Whilst the finds suggest a certain selective affluence through the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the prosperity may have gathered the attention of those with more power and organisation behind them. During Phase 3 (mid-2<sup>nd</sup> /early 3<sup>rd</sup> century), the site undergoes a complete reorganisation of boundaries, with a series of parallel ditches cutting across nearly everything that had gone before (the dark grey phase of Figure 6.17). At this time too, there is an apparent increase in military objects, suggesting a more direct interest in the depot than the early laissez faire involvement. This shift was not to affect the inhabitants at Somerford Keynes for long, however, as by the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Minety kilns had gone out of use; with the tile no longer coming through the site, and with the former pastoral activities possibly neglected for too long to make a comeback, the settlement is abandoned.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

At Claydon Pike, we saw a group of individuals living in a possibly egalitarian community, where long-established boundaries defined the group space, but members of the group did not rely upon personal adornment or ostentatious dining practices to denote status or hierarchy. Indeed, the relative paucity of artefacts which might be used to visually negotiate one's place in the community suggests that they were not necessary because the interpersonal dialogue did not work in that medium. Quite the opposite, Somerford Keynes appears to represent a



community which thrived on individual public expression, with personal adornment possible a major social signifier of competitive display. Whilst the cooking and eating practices of both sites seem largely unchanged by the reaction to a Roman presence in the region, the economic responses couldn't be more different. Claydon Pike remains true to its farming and ranching roots, only modifying its practices to accommodate the occasional trade relationship; Somerford Keynes largely abandons its pastoral focus and throws itself into a new market with a new material by becoming a depot for the Minety tile kilns. This forged new relationships with the Roman administration in a way that Claydon Pike likely did not have to deal with. By sticking with what they were best at, and placing the traditions of the group first, Claydon Pike's response to the transition of the 1<sup>st</sup> century enabled it to survive the changes of the later periods. In stark contrast, by specialising too much, Somerford Keynes ensured its short term success in the transitional period, but may have set itself up for failure in the long run.

Understanding how each community fundamentally differed in its worldview (where it 'fits' in the grid) can make sense out of the seemingly endless variety of rural responses to Roman influences. The Upper Thames Valley has long been considered a curiosity because of the infrequency of villas, which Hingley (1989:169) suggested had more to do with choice than with affordability; this type of analysis allows us to explore what may have driven those choices.

## CHAPTER 7

## CASE STUDIES: OCK &amp; WINDRUSH CONFLUENCES

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Barton Court Farm and Old Shifford Farm, two rural farmstead sites, still considered in the region of the Upper Thames Valley, but at the confluences of two other substantial rivers, the Ock, and the Windrush, respectively (Figure 7.1). As with the case studies in Chapter 6, these sites are not exceptional to the region, but are rather the ‘pick of the litter’ of a series of (likely) interrelated settlement sites that took advantage of the rich ground, abundant water, and possible route nodes existing at the river confluences.



*Figure 7.1. Chapter 7 sites in their geographical context with some neighbouring sites*

## 7.2 Barton Court Farm

## 7.2.1 Introduction to the site

Barton Court Farm lies in proximity to the confluence of two rivers, the Thames and the Ock, and is approximately 1.5km NE of Abingdon. Although the site revealed a series of Neolithic pits and postholes, as well as nearly 1kg of Grooved Ware pottery from that period, no more will be

said about this phase; there was a long period of disuse at the site throughout the Bronze Age and earlier phases of the Iron Age, eliminating any speculation about longevity of occupation. It is only in the Late Iron Age that settlement activity reappears, and as this is the beginning of the period that concerns us in this study, the Neolithic of Barton Court Farm must be left to others. The site, in contrast to those in the preceding chapter, is situated on the Second Gravel Terrace of the Thames, which terminates at the southern extremity of the site, falling away to the thick surface Kimmeridge clay and thence to the First Terrace and Thames floodplain; it is approximately 700m north of the banks of the Thames, at a point less than 1km upstream from where the Ock joins it.

Although alluded to as a possible Roman settlement by Rolleston in 1865 (162-3), based upon the discovery of skeletal remains and Roman pottery made during gravel quarrying, Barton Court Farm was first positively identified from aerial photographs in 1969 and 1970. Aerial photographs showing overlapping enclosures indicated at least three phases of activity on the site. The characteristics of some of the marks suggested a Late Iron Age settlement and a trackway leading to the east may have connected the settlement to the wider rural community. The field was subsequently walked by members of the Abingdon Archaeological Society, who recovered large quantities of Roman pottery and ceramic building material (CBM). In the late 1960s the field was acquired by the County and sold on for housing development; the danger to the archaeological remains was obvious and so in 1972, the Abingdon Excavation Committee targeted the site for rescue attention. The following year saw the re-drawing of administrative boundaries, which re-allocated the Abingdon area to Oxfordshire and so that county's Excavation Committee took up responsibility for the work (Figure 7.2). Excavations continued until 1976, by which time the Excavation Committee's operational unit had become the Oxford Archaeological Unit (later

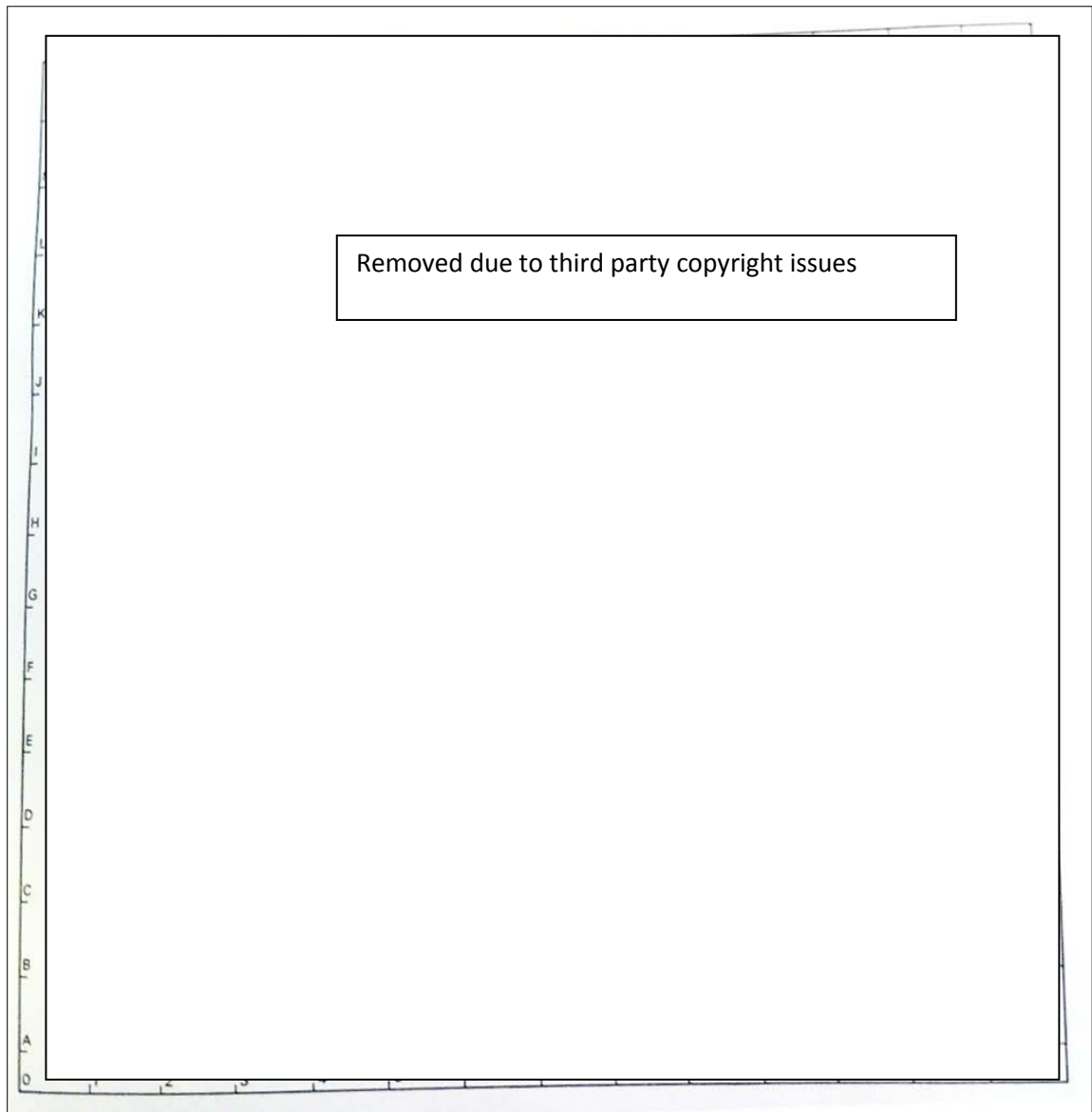


*Figure 7.2. Plan showing location of features and OAU trenches (Miles 1986b:3:A2)*

Oxford Archaeology). Post-excavation work commenced immediately following the excavation and the report was complete by 1980<sup>32</sup>.

Excavation revealed an Iron Age rectilinear enclosure of a type common in this part of the Thames Valley, with two further internal divisions of space. One of these seemed to demarcate a domestic space whilst the other enclosed a space remarkable only for an undated cremation, supposed to be contemporary with the LIA enclosure ditch. Later phases of activity included

<sup>32</sup> Although the report was not published for a further 6 years, it did not undergo any serious alteration in that time, unlike the substantial difficulties created by the delay of the Claydon Pike publication.

Early Roman activity on the same domestic scale as the LIA precursor and a further 3<sup>rd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> century phase which saw the location develop into a substantial villa. 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> century Saxon use of the site was also discovered, but as stated for the Neolithic phase, these later phases will not have any material bearing upon the case study.

The publication contained only 66 pages of text, but was considered unconventional in two respects: firstly, Miles attempted to provide all the post-excavation work and specialist information in an economical format via microfiche and secondly, the finds were grouped by function rather than material. This was not the first time either of these techniques had been applied in British archaeology, and regrettably neither was applied with the utility evident in those other instances of either microfiche (Cunliffe 1984) or functional grouping (Crummy 1983). Miles' presentation of data is both confusing and unhelpful. A contemporary reviewer lamented the waste of effort on the attempts to illustrate the minutiae of individual grains of cereal and draw comparisons with ancient Etruria, whilst completely failing to set the site's role in a local context (Potter 1988:527), or indeed, to present the data in a way that would invite use by others. The decision, for example, to quantify the ceramics only by weight, is particularly inhibiting to anyone wishing to create regional intersite comparisons<sup>33</sup>. Thus, although Barton Court Farm is repeatedly cited in any conversation about this part of the Thames Valley, it is often the simplified and condensed interpretation that is regurgitated, leaving the site narrative trapped in 1986. Possibly there is nothing about it that needs changing, but like a scientific experiment which must invite scrutiny and replication by others, the report should present the data in such a way that subsequent generations can re-examine it without wading through obfuscation.

Despite the limitations of the report as published, the following sections will examine in detail, according to the format laid out in Chapter 6, the structural evidence and the material remains,

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<sup>33</sup> Booth (2004) has done an admirable job of teasing out some meaningful figures from the microfiche in order to add Barton Court Farm to his discussion on rural settlements.

in an attempt to understand how the inhabitants may have responded to the growing influence of Roman authority.

### **7.2.2 Structures**

Three LIA domestic structures are suggested at Barton Court Farm. Structure I is defined by a group of postholes, although several of these postholes had been disturbed by activity in the Early Roman phase. The arrangement of the postholes allows for two possible interpretations – one, a circular hut some 5m in diameter or two structures, one circular, the other rectangular measuring 3m x 4.3m (Figure 7.3). The second scenario, impossible to prove, would indicate two phases of structures of markedly different architectural design on the same spot. However, the first scenario seems the more likely.

The entrance to the structure was problematic in that nothing was obvious, yet as the most common location for a doorway in LIA roundhouses is the SE, and posthole 435 is notably larger, it perhaps makes sense to interpret this as the entrance. The significance of this is enhanced with the discovery of a crouched burial just inside this putative doorway.

The excavators believed that based on the concentrations of domestic detritus and the nature of the partial enclosure ditches they discovered, that there may have been a second structure in the NW of the main enclosure (Figure 7.3), although no number was assigned to it (Miles 1986b:3:C6). A third hut (Structure II) presents more conclusive evidence of its existence and was located 0.5m outside of the main enclosure ditch, to the south. Comprised of twelve postholes, Structure II was more ovate than circular and measured 5.3m x 3.6m. This unusual shape, coupled with its lack of dating evidence, led the excavators to suggest that it might not even belong in the LIA phase, and belonged, rather, with the Neolithic pits and Grooved Ware found nearby (Miles 1986a:6). Even more structural hints were suggested by the ends of a curving gully measuring 11m in diameter and disappearing under the baulk to unexcavated areas. Stratigraphically, this hut would have dated to the LIA and possibly contemporary with Structure I. Thus for the LIA, there are one probable huts, one possible hut and one definite hut

(Figure 7.3). Of the two probable LIA huts, it has been suggested that these roughly contemporary occupation areas may indicate the expansion of a single household over time, separated functional areas, or possibly two households of differing status, each with a related smaller structure nearby – ‘a store, work building, or accommodation’ (Miles 1986a: 28).

The Early Roman structures are rather less speculative, but not without some confusing elements. Structure III could only be seen as a shallow rectilinear slot which had been severely truncated by ploughing. No floor surface remained, and even the beam slots were highly ephemeral and in places only observable after careful spraying with water (Miles 1986b: 3:D9). The structure measured approximately 30m x 8.5m and, from the shape of the slots, appeared to be of a post and beam construction. Wall plaster fragments recovered from nearby ditches point to the rendering of the walls in simple white, rather than an elaborate paint scheme and a complete lack of stone or ceramic tile suggests that the structure was probably roofed in a similar way to the LIA round structures.

The other structural evidence for this ER period is a set of twelve postholes interpreted as a pair of six post granaries or hay ricks (Figure 7.4). However, given the extreme truncation of features from plough damage and the uncertain nature of some of the ‘postholes’ (which the report admits may be the result of rabbit activity), it is possible that a different interpretation may be offered.

If one removes the questionable postholes (not even attributed numbers on the published plans) and concentrates of features 127, 91, 93, and 130 on the west and 85/4, 80, 77, and 111 on the east, then it is possible to see a structure of dimensions 9m x 4.5m. Given that the average depth of these postholes ranges between 10 and 20cm, there clearly has been a lot of soil removed; perhaps even to the extent that related timber footings external to the posts have been lost. Indeed, even the slots for Structure III were barely visible to the excavators. Could we speculate that the postholes represent the internal skeleton of a small aisled building? Figure 7.5 shows a comparison between aisled barn B3 from Claydon Pike and the ‘posthole structures’

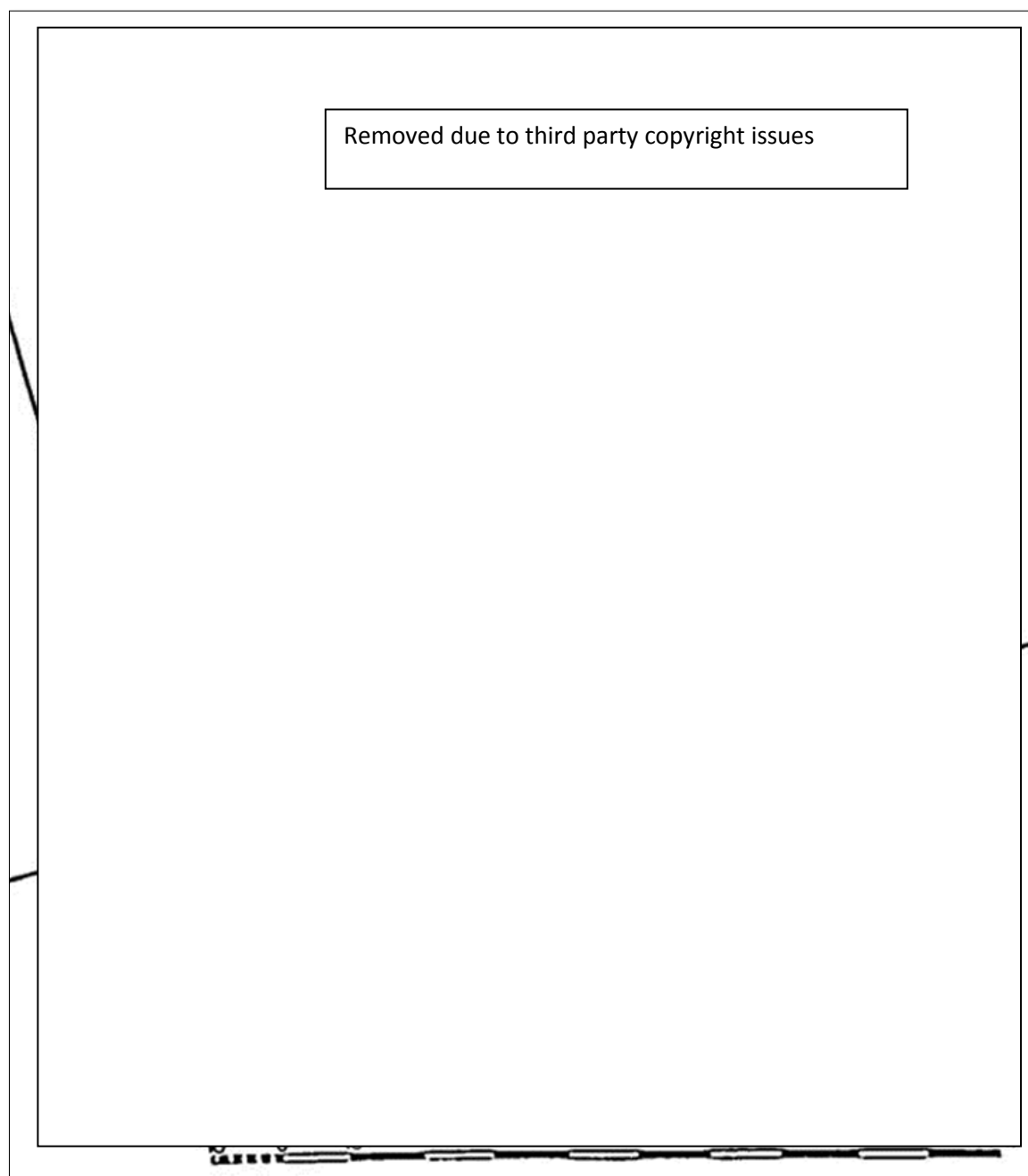


*Figure 7.3. LIA features with structures indicated (after Miles 1986b)*



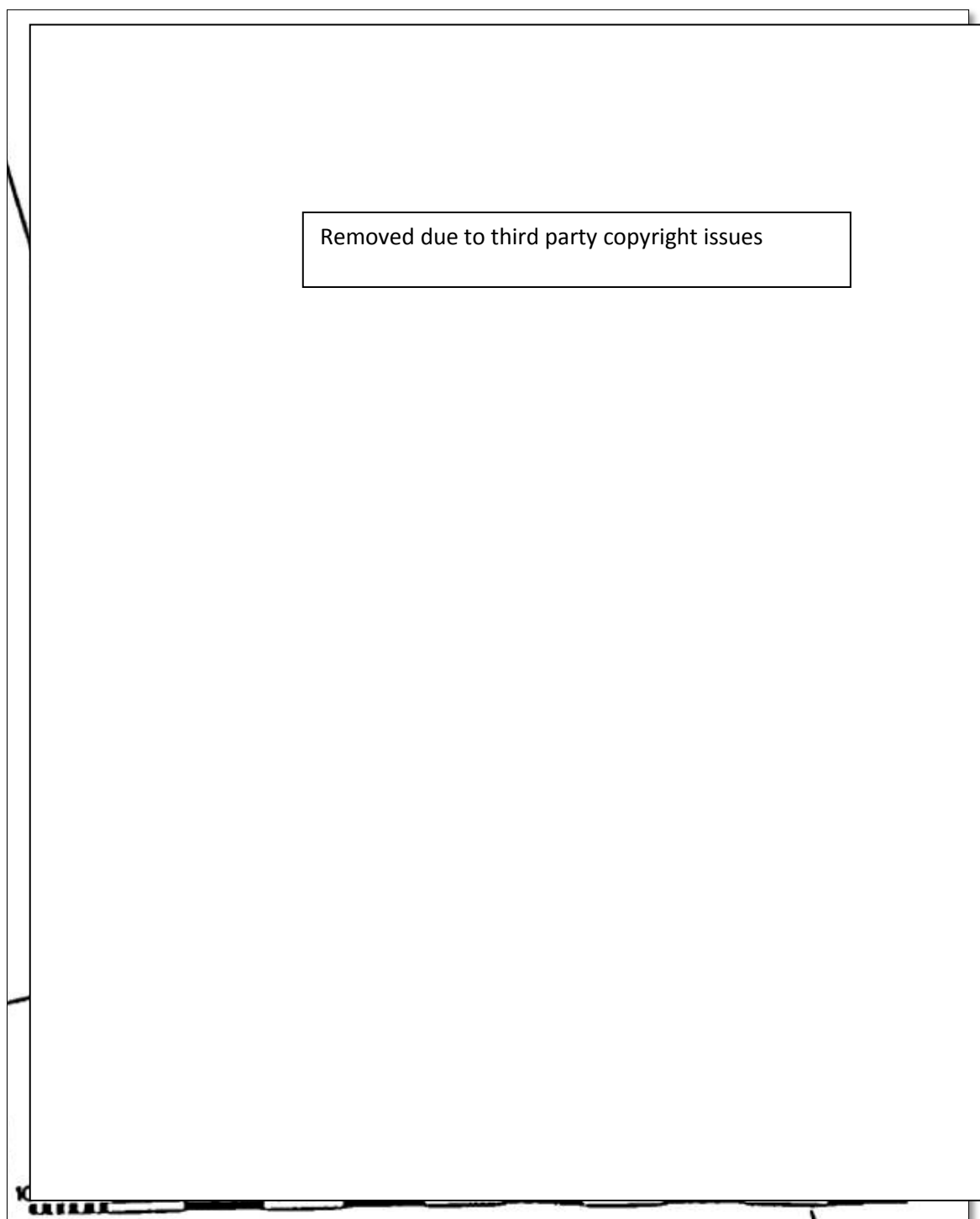


*Figure 7.4. ER features with structure and possible 6-post constructs (after Miles 1986b)*

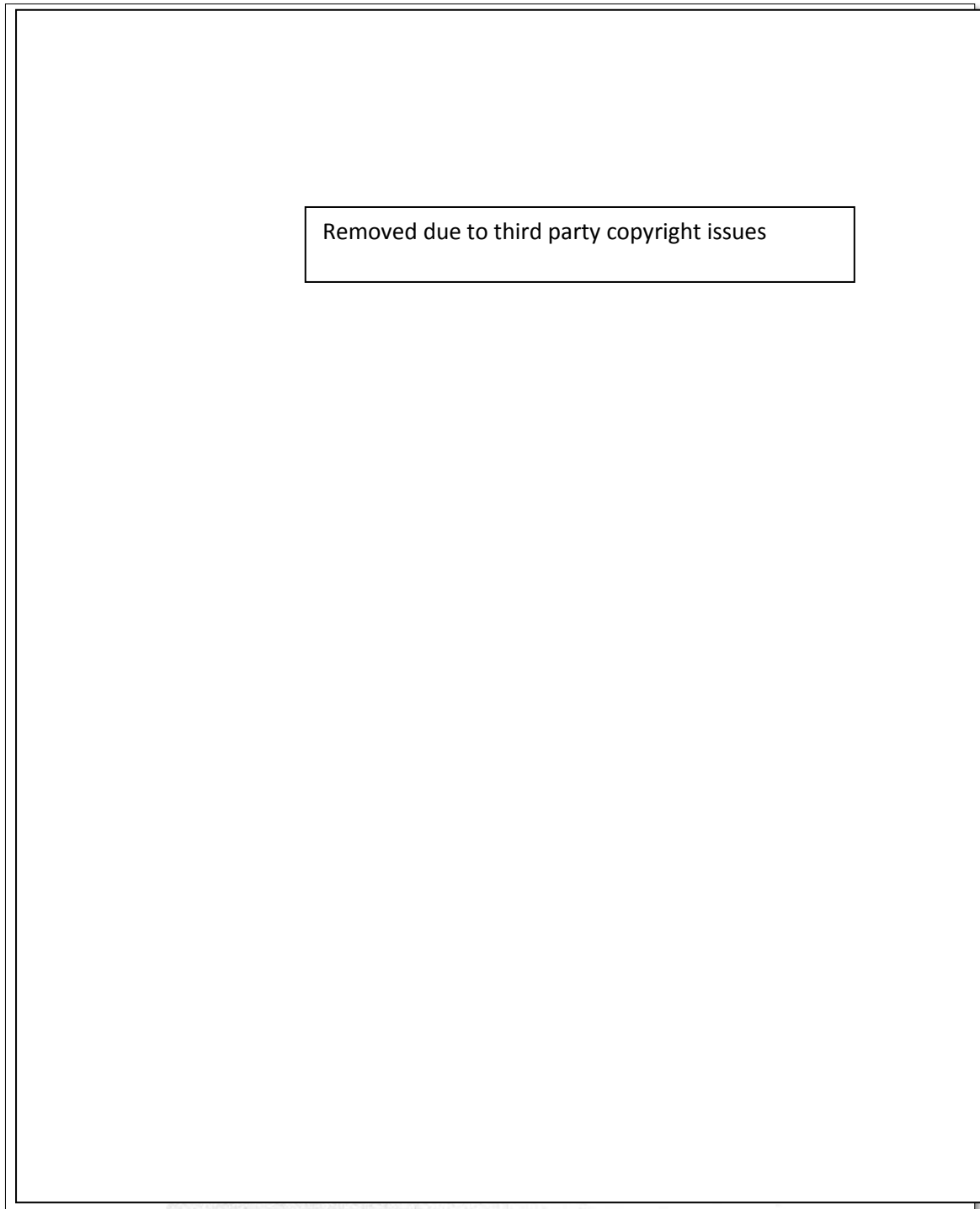


*Figure 7.5. Comparison of ER post structure with Claydon Pike Building B3 (inset). See Chapter 6.2.3 for further description of this structure. (after Miles 1986b; Miles et al. 2007)*

at Barton Court Farm. Such fragile 1<sup>st</sup> century structures are also known from excavations at Dunkirt Barn (Cunliffe 2006:5) where the foundation trenches for an early timber building were very shallow and the rooms of the strip structure were only 3.5-4m wide. Thus these postholes could represent a similar structure to B3 at Claydon Pike, placed closer but still at 90° to the main house (Structure III). Because the postholes only contained a few sherds of LIA and ER pottery, one nail and two bronze as of Domitian (AD96), and the report only records the finds by feature, it is not possible to comment on the material recovered from the area delineated by the postholes and thus is impossible to speculate about the function of the structure(s). Still, it is worth considering that if the posthole cluster does represent a second rectilinear building, it may be that, as at Claydon Pike, traditional use of space (i.e., the main/ancillary structural relationship) is maintained whilst new techniques are incorporated.

### **7.2.3 Ceramic and glass vessels**

#### ***Ceramics***

As mentioned above, the decision to quantify the ceramics only by weight is an unfortunate one; of course, some archaeologists have argued that quantifying pottery by either sherd count or weight is analogous, concluding that 'there do not seem to be good reasons for the concern expressed about comparing quantified data presented by different methods' (Evans 1991: 72). I wholeheartedly reject this; an example of how badly this can skew the results is evident by the figure for ER amphorae. Whilst apparently representing 1.1% of the entire ER assemblage, in reality this weight was comprised of only 2 (albeit largish) sherds. Additionally hampering is the exclusion of material not recovered from discrete features. Although from a commercial point of view, this greatly reduces the amount of material to deal with in post-excavation processes, the practice actually results in a partial view of the material assemblage. Whilst it is true that no recovery system results in a total view, deliberately ignoring a large body of informative and diagnostic material whose presence on site is noteworthy seems a bit like intentionally blinding oneself in one eye. Worryingly, this disclaimer comes from the methodology of the pottery report: 'Shortage of time did not allow for much refinement and

some inconsistencies remain. In particular, not enough attention was paid to the different zones of the pot (e.g. rim form, shoulder, base, and decoration)' (Miles 1986b:7:A2). This explains the large numbers of forms shoved into the ambiguous 'jar/bowl' category and perhaps even the near-absence of dishes which may have been lost in the rapid identification of bowls; it has been found useful at other sites to group bowls and dishes together rather than bowls with jars, since the ubiquity of jars in earlier Iron Age phases is well attested, and the newer forms of bowls and dishes made more common through the advent of the wheel are likely different in function from the all-purpose 'ceramic workhorse', the jar.

Because of the manner in which the LIA fabric series was created and quantified, little of use can be said about it, beyond some generalisations. There was almost no imported material in the LIA phase of the site, barring two sherds of amphora and two sherds of samian, neither decorated. The bulk of the material was either of a calcareous or sandy quartzite fabric associated with (in OA reference parlance) the E80 Early 'Belgic' fabric type. Very few sherds (and this is not quantified with real numbers in the report) seem to be of the finer Colchester type fabric and those are all butt- and girth-beaker forms.

A discrete deposit of bases (and fragmentary bases), 45 in number was recovered from the fill of ditch 312, at the north-western extreme of the excavated area. 21 of these bases showed post-firing perforation, not entirely unlike those recovered from nearby Ashville (#7). These have been interpreted as vessels used for cheese-making, the perforations allowing the whey to drain off during the manufacture of curd cheese (Miles 1986b:7:A14). The deliberate deposition of all the cheese-making bases in one dump may suggest that there were rigid rules in place about the treatment of refuse<sup>34</sup>.

A possible second instance of this type of behaviour may be seen in pit 28, which seemed to contain exclusively 2<sup>nd</sup> -1<sup>st</sup> century BC material, leading to speculation that MIA settlement

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<sup>34</sup> An alternative interpretation has these vessels as part of the making or consumption of alcohol (Meadows 2001: 85), which might perhaps call for special deposition.

might exist nearby outside the area of excavation, although a different interpretation might lie in the continued use of traditional forms further into the LIA than one might expect. This would, however, suggest that the eventual deposition of this material was regulated to a pit that contained no LIA material at all – not an impossible occurrence if there was some significance to removing the traditional materials from use or strict rules about the deposition of certain types of ceramics; perhaps, however, in this instance the simpler answer is the better fit, and a MIA domestic site lay undiscovered but in proximity to the LIA/Roman focus.

Some of the LIA material does seem to be decorated although there is no indication that decoration played a major role in the function of these ceramics. Meadows (2001:82) arrived at the conclusion that 35% of the LIA assemblage could be described as tableware, assigning all cordoned and necked bowls, dishes, decorated vessels, and beakers to that category (although admitting that the designation was problematic for many reasons). If this number is in any way accurate, then there may have been a real distinction between the preparation of food and the consumption of it, with regard to the display of ceramics during mealtimes. Whilst the actual percentage may be inflated, there are some indications from spatial analysis of some tableware suggesting that this kind of display was not uniform across the site. Material recovered from the gully to the north of the site (Figure 7.3, 'possible structure') included several beakers and other fine tablewares; the ring gully to the south displayed a much less varied ceramic assemblage (Meadows 2001:101). If one accepts that the gullies (and their associated domestic detritus) do represent structures, then it is likely that the difference in the tablewares indicates a difference in household practices and even of relative status. From this one can begin to see two households, separated both by the enclosure ditch and by daily habits.

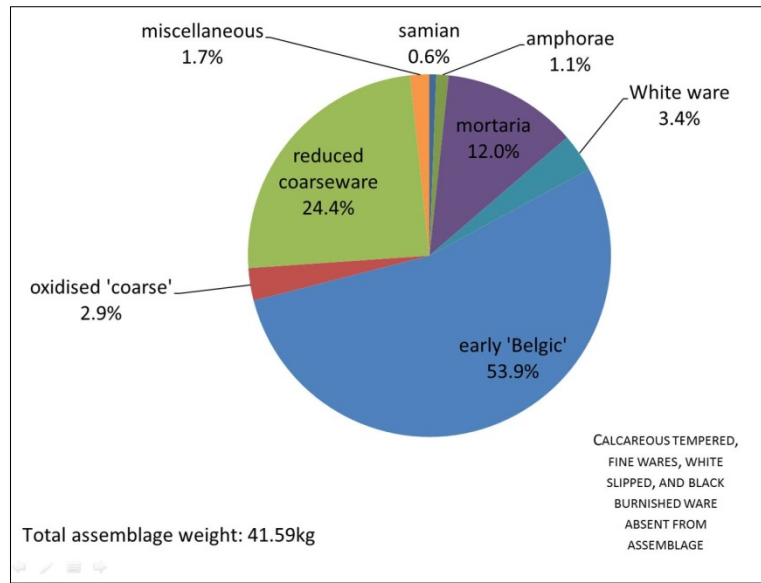


*Figure 7.6. Composition of the ER ceramic assemblage by fabric type*

The ER ceramics are not much more informative, in that over 54% of the assemblage dated to ER features is in fact of LIA fabric (Figure 7.6). Spatially, there seems to be some differentiation in the placement of certain types of vessels as refuse; sherds associated with drinking, as well as amphorae and mortaria, seem to be discarded in contexts further away from the main living space, in opposition to the LIA. This has been seen as a sign of a desire to keep use of Roman goods outside (public) and away from the private interior (Meadows 2001:104). However, as the ER assemblage (by weight) is only two-thirds the size of the LIA weight, it is difficult to judge how statistically viable such a much smaller sample is for understanding depositional practices. One striking difference from the LIA assemblage is the nature of the samian recovered. Of the 27 sherds of the pre-Flavian and Flavian period, six were decorated. This 22% decoration percentage might be seen as a major shift from the LIA lack of interest in decoration; indeed, the proportion is much higher even than the 15% exhibited by Somerford Keynes. Yet this result must be viewed somewhat critically due to the extremely small sample size; Somerford Keynes produced 93 sherds of samian for the same period.

Overall, the ER assemblage does not demonstrate any particular change in the operation of the farm; Meadows (2001:93) saw the drop in vessels with perforated bases as an indication that

cheese-making had come to a stop by this point, but this need not be so, particularly considering the increase in cattle during this time. The farmers may simply have adopted some form of cheese-press, a Roman technique that is much more efficient at expelling whey from the cheese curds. This and other elements of the material suggest that this population was open to such new ideas as would allow them to advance technologically whilst remaining largely unchanged in core of their lifestyle.

### ***Glass***

Most of the glass in the assemblage is of a mid to late 4<sup>th</sup> century date, but there are a five fragments of blue-green bottle glass, all from unstratified contexts, of a similar, if not the same type as found at Claydon Pike (6.2.4). This may indicate that whatever was carried in those bottles held a nearly ubiquitous interest for the rural people of the Thames Valley. What the contents actually were is left to speculation. Although Miles suggests that the relative paucity of the glass suggests that the site was not in much use until after this type of vessel went out of production, it may also be that this type of vessel was simply present but not in high demand.

### **7.2.4 Metalwork**

The report makes it uncertain if all of the metalwork is presented or if it is only a representative sample. One finds it difficult to believe that only 20 nails were found in all phases on a site of this size, but the report is all there is to go on, and this would hardly be the largest obstacle to overcome in dealing with this publication. The excavation recovered a large quantity of decorative pins and beads, but all of these are related to LR contexts and it is difficult to determine if unstratified metalwork was consistently recorded. What can be reliably extracted from the report is that whilst based purely on numbers, there appears to be a paucity of personal adornment items (only 15 from both phases), when compared as a ratio to the other categories of recovered metalwork, they do make up the bulk of the material at comparable levels in either phase (Figure 7.7).

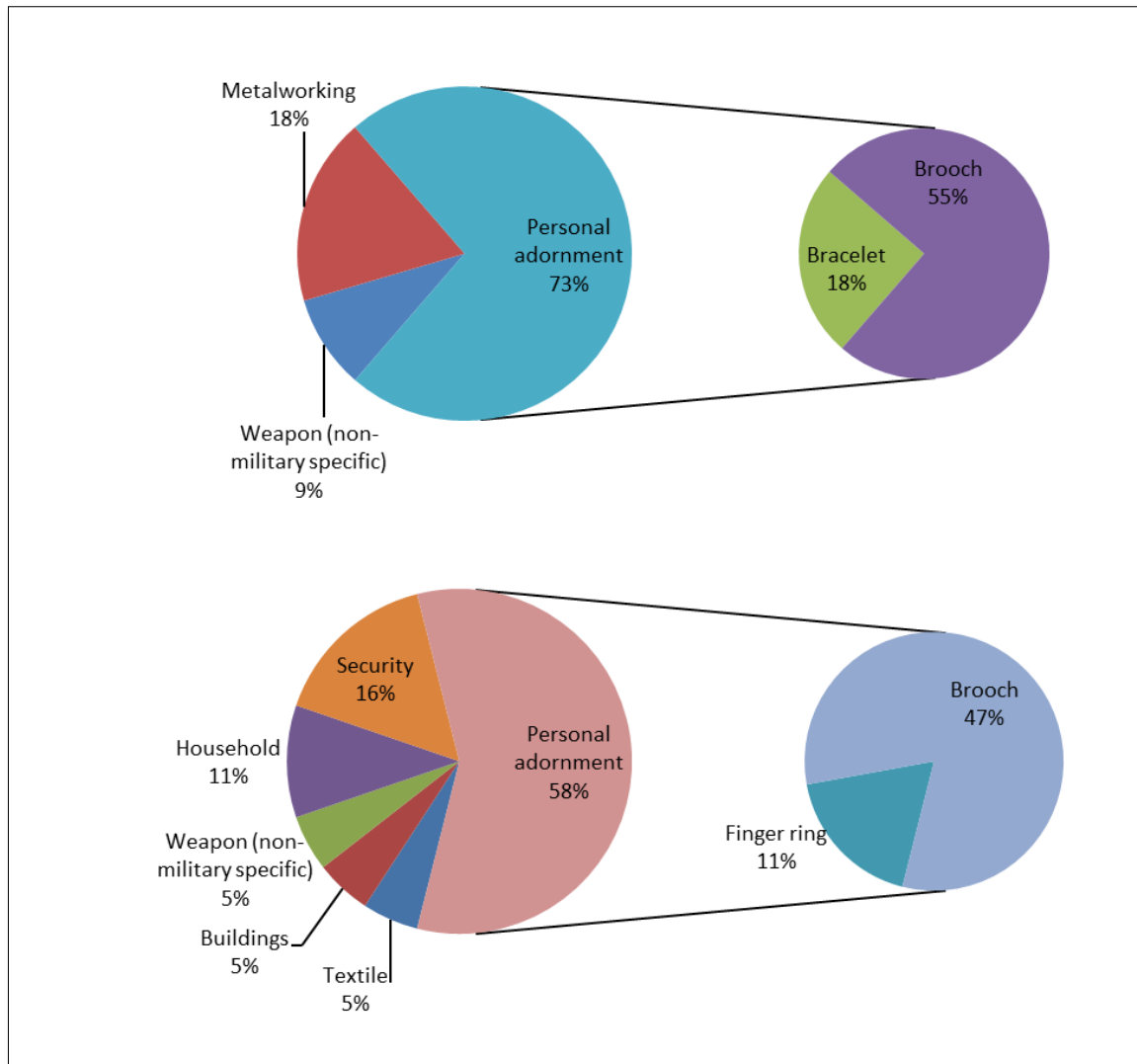


Figure 7.7. Comparison of the breakdowns of metalwork from LIA (upper) and ER (lower) phases

Brooches dominate this assemblage, including a particularly fine mid-1<sup>st</sup> century example of a bronze thistle brooch, a rather ostentatious form of brooch for the period. Interestingly, there is a notable change between the LIA and ER phases at Barton Court Farm is a shift from bracelet wearing to finger rings, a type of adornment more often identified with Roman influence (Johns 1996:41). One of the rings was a snake ring, a common motif although no direct parallel for this piece exists (Miles 1986b:5:D13). The powerful role of the snake within the LIA cosmology has been well documented (Green 1998:224) and its appearance on British coins in lieu of the Roman eagle seems to indicate its particular regional resonance (Creighton 2000:121). Thus the



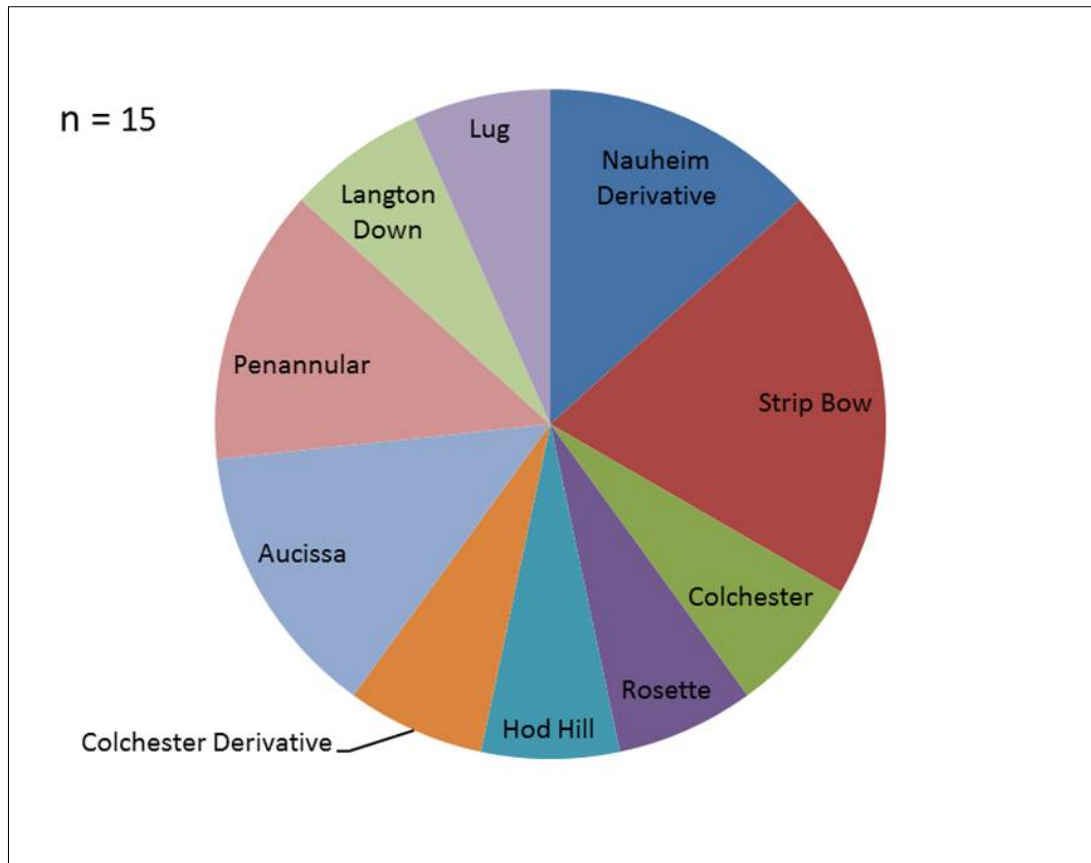


Figure 7.8. Breakdown of brooch types from the relevant period at Barton Court Farm.

blending of the snake with a more Roman medium of display may hint at the desire to use new ways to re-iterate traditional themes.

### 7.2.5 Faunal and organic evidence

The entire assemblage of animal bone and shell at Barton Court Farm contained in excess of 23,000 fragments; although the soils allowed for good bone preservation, excavation techniques resulted in over 50% of the bones showing signs of recent breakage, and in the end, only 37% of the excavated bones could be reliably identified to species type (Miles 1986b:8:A47). However, analysis of that 37% indicates that both the LIA and ER farm relied on a mixture of pastoral, for meat and dairy products, and arable for cereal, although the sample size of plant remains for this period is so very small as to render any interpretation of the level of cereal production (subsistence or export of surplus) highly speculative. Only a lack of quernstones and storage pits may point to a more definite picture of a site which produced simply as much grain as it

needed for itself. Evidence for dairying in both phases is a bit stronger, both from the age of cattle at death and from considerable proportion of male cattle being slaughtered, suggesting a high retention of females for secondary products (Miles 1986b:8:A2). Coupled with the relative frequency of perforated ceramic bases mentioned above (7.2.3), a picture begins to emerge of a thriving farming community generating a range of products.

Within this type of farming economy, very little seemed to have changed between the LIA and ER phases. Figure 7.9 illustrates that although the importance of cattle increases in the ER phases (a nearly ubiquitous occurrence throughout the Thames valley at that time), the shift is not a radical one, and the percentage of pig, potentially a senior-status meal item, remains nearly the same. One oddity that stands out not only in this assemblage but in LIA assemblages across the region is that of 3 deer bones which show butchery marks (Meadows 2001:87). The butchering of deer in the LIA is unusual (Grant 1981:205-6) and may represent an episode of sport hunting and feasting enjoyed by the inhabitants of senior status. There are no obvious butchery marks on the few deer bones recovered from the ER phase, but this need not rule out the continuation of the practice, since the overall sample size of the ER assemblage was much smaller than the LIA material.

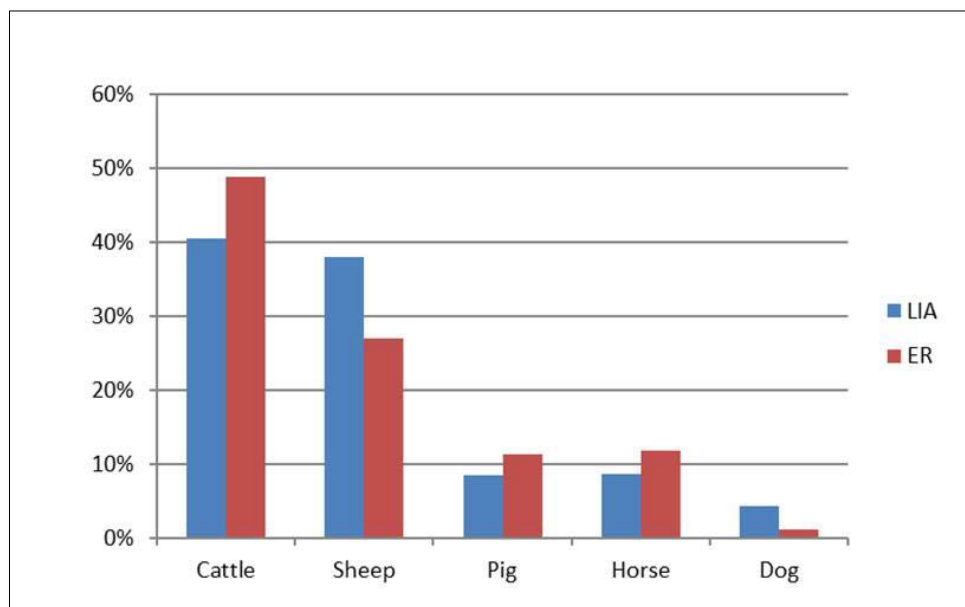


*Figure 7.9. Main food species from faunal remains. LIA n = 951; ER n = 317.*

Despite the decrease in sheep in the animal population on the site in the ER period, there seems to be intensification in the processing of butchered sheep, with far more meat being removed from the bones (Meadows 2001: 94); the use of such 'marginal' cuts, such as the cheeks and tongue may be driven by a decreased supply of lamb/mutton confronted with an unchanging demand. The concentration of resources upon the husbandry of cattle, perhaps a more lucrative investment considering the demands of the Roman market, may have necessitated a reduction in the resources allocated to sheep; the limiting factor could be ameliorated by extracting more meat from each sheep slaughtered.

Although there are slight changes in the composition of the faunal assemblage, the overall stability and continuity of the farm and its population is suggested by the spatial analysis of some bone deposition. Looking at the percentages of animal bones by species deposited within ditches and pits during both the LIA and ER phases indicates a regularity of practice undisturbed by the supposed reorganisation of the settlement (Figure 7.10). This may also be the result of a rigid set of depositional rules guiding the behaviour of the inhabitants, as posited above (7.2.3) with the deposition of the perforated bases.

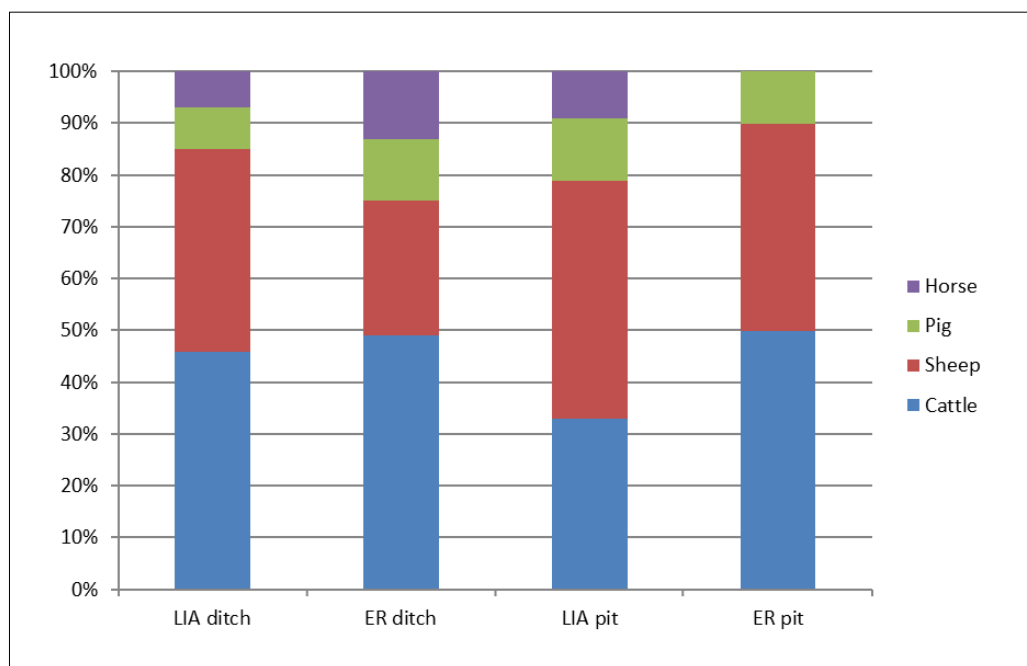


*Figure 7.10. Depositional practice as indicated by percentages of species by phase and feature type*

### **7.2.6 Putting it all together**

Miles wrote that Barton Court Farm should be viewed ‘against a background of changing, but ultimately conservative, regional settlement’ (1986a:3). I would not disagree with this and indeed the application of Cultural Theory in this instance does not offer any particularly exciting new insight beyond what was already considered for the settlement. Miles considered the locations and relative sizes of the LIA buildings to be comparable to the ‘hierarchy of houses’ from the Irish Laws (1996a:28, citing Clarke 1972:845-6). Based not only on the structural evidence but also by polythetic approach to the material, I suggest that Barton Court Farm seems to exhibit the behaviour of an ‘H’ hierarchical community. This view of the world would not have immediately seemed to be at odds with the incoming influence of the Roman power structure. Maintaining the functioning of the group would have been the ultimate concern, even above the desire to preserve traditional ways. Thus the group is able to negotiate its continued hierarchical arrangement by bringing in new ways of expressing status in the Roman cultural milieu. Domestic space is altered adopting new architectural practices, but the actual function and social structure of the farmstead does not change; notwithstanding the new techniques being employed in the construction of the ER domestic focus, the social structure was probably not largely altered; Structure III was built in the same location as the (probably senior status) LIA dwelling and occupation appears to have been more or less continuous (Miles 1986b: 49; Ferrell 1995: 136). Following the example of J T Smith (1978), Miles saw the reorganisation of the living space in the ER period an example of an extended family coming to live under one roof (1986a: 50). This is difficult to prove, and in any case may be irrelevant, as a ‘family group’ may have different levels of meaning. The Latin familia includes all the members of a household, including servants and slaves<sup>35</sup>.

One’s role within the hierarchy was perhaps, in the LIA, dictated by where within the spatial system of boundaries one dwelt, but in the transition to a world organised in Roman terms, new

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<sup>35</sup> The definition of *family* as being restricted to only blood/conjugal relationships is relatively modern, with the first recorded instance of use in such a context in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Oxford English Dictionary).

mechanisms were required. This may have led to the expression of status via the consumption of certain commodities. Whereas in the past decorative tableware was unimportant, since status was conferred by where you dined, in the ER period, with everyone perhaps under the one massive roof of the timber hall, how you dined became more significant in establishing and maintain the social order. Yet despite this willingness to embrace just enough of the new to keep the old system running, ultimately circumspection of the group led to its demise. By the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the site appears to have been completely abandoned (Miles 1986a:10-11) and was not repopulated until the late 3<sup>rd</sup> /early 4<sup>th</sup> century when it became a villa of some importance in the region<sup>36</sup>. A similar scenario may have occurred further upriver at Thornhill Farm (#118); the rigid hierarchy of the community accepts very little in the way of new influences or materials, indeed only enough to continue the delineation of set social roles. Like the oak that breaks rather than the willow which bends, these rigid hierarchical social groups find that they are ill equipped to thrive in a new economic climate. These groups might fade away and the land remains unsettled for long periods. One could speculate that in the interim it is simply annexed by more successful settlements and turned to pasture.

Meadows (2001) saw the separation between the public and private use of materials at Barton Court Farm as an indication of hidden resistance to Roman authority; she compared the private use of LIA-style cookware inside Structure III with the public consumption of food and drink in Roman style vessels discarded in the ditch terminals at the north of the excavated area and interpreted from this that the inhabitants were resisting Roman influence by only pretending with their public face to adopt Roman goods. This created the image of the intentionally duplicitous farmer who says one thing and does another in the attempt to fool the Roman establishment into thinking he is 'on-side', motivated either by fear of reprisal or by intransigence; she writes that the 'apparent adoption of public Roman-like symbols may,

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<sup>36</sup> Although the excavator seems confident about this abandonment phase, there is every reason to suspect that in fact, occupation was largely continuous. The current state of the material archive, coupled with time constraints, prevented a personal re-evaluation of the material. However, given that the original work was done under immense pressures of time and funding, it is very possible that some aspects of the interpretation were hurried. (See Chapter 9.4.2).

therefore, have been integral to the protection of the settlement' (111). Whilst the notion of 'native resistance' has ever proved to be a popular theme for this period (for greater discussion, see Chapter 2.5; 9.2), it may be that the public/private juxtaposition is more a product of the choices driven by the inhabitants' worldview than any active and conscious rebellion. Although the result might appear to be the same, I believe that the distinction is significantly, if subtly, important.

Rigid rules guiding daily practice, as well as firmly established community roles, show a hierarchy that works best by making certain that everyone knows where they stand within the group. These rules can be articulated by ornamental display, conspicuous feasting, or the assertion of privileges. The loss of LIA differentiation of living space by consolidating both 'ranks' under one roof may have meant that communicating these rules was relegated to other means, such as the use (and separate discard) of new Roman products. The strength of the hierarchy, in defining itself as a group, could be maintained by only allowing such outside influences as would help it to keep those rules without losing itself in the fog of transition. By understanding the way these people saw their world, we can begin to think about not only how they responded to the changes swirling around them, but why they responded in such diverse ways.

## **7.3 Old Shifford**

### **7.3.1 Introduction to the site**

Old Shifford Farm lies, like Barton Court Farm, in near association with the confluence of two rivers, in this instance, the Thames and the Windrush; the Windrush valley is well known for its EAI/MIA activity at such sites as Mingies Ditch and Gravelly Guy. Like several other of the case studies, it is situated on the First Gravel Terrace, overlain by alluvial soils. The site, 1.5km west of the village of Standlake and 12km west of Oxford, lies at the edge of the floodplain, 300m from the north bank of the Thames, and 2km downstream from the rivers' joining.

The Standlake area has drawn small-scale gravel extraction from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and copious human remains and other evidence of ancient activity had been noted during such labours (Stone 1857:92-3). Additional information from Major Allen's aerial photographs of 1933 and later cropmark documentation (Benson & Miles 1974:47) indicating a long period of settlement activity, from the prehistoric through to the medieval, guaranteed the area would be a place of interest for archaeologists. Thus when, in 1988, a 15 hectare plot of arable west of the village was designated for commercial gravel extraction, the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of its archaeological potential (Figure 7.11). The plot was located in a 'blank spot' between the denser concentrations of cropmarks, prompting the assessment report to read 'neither its state of preservation nor its character distinguishes this site from other gravel terrace settlements as especially worthy of preservation' (Allen 1988: 5). Nonetheless, the site was recommended for excavation, based upon the environmental potential of a dry site which also contained waterlogged features; excavation was then begun in 1988 under the direction of Dr Gill Hey. Work continued into 1989, with post-excavation work conducted almost immediately following the excavation; the report, synthesising the findings from both the evaluation trenches and the subsequent excavation, was complete by 1993 and published as a journal article in *Oxoniensia* in 1995.

The entire area under threat could neither be evaluated nor excavated, as the northern portion was still under crop and there were no funds to allow for salvage work to be conducted before the gravel extraction began on that area. Figure 7.12 shows the part of the plot that was covered by the initial survey and the location of the two excavation trenches, M and L. Trench L was the location of the LIA/ER activity on the site, whereas Trench M revealed a later 3<sup>rd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> century phase of activity. Therefore, it is primarily the evidence from trench L that will be examined below.

Due to pressures of time and funding, only about 15% of the site was excavated by hand. To increase the amount of finds recovered from features, some 95m of various enclosure ditches

from Trench L were 'emptied' by machine. Unsurprisingly, only groups of larger-sized animal bone were recovered in such exercises; no pottery and only small amounts of fired clay were retrieved. It is to be hoped that such methods were not often employed, as the assemblage formed by combining carefully hand-extracted finds and the random detritus from a JCB bucket will almost certainly skew any meaningful analysis. Indeed, in retrospect, the excavators felt that 'the process may have biased the sample rather than enhanced it' (Hey 1995: 101).

The LIA/ER activity at Old Shifford Farm underwent three distinct phases during about a century of use. Phase 1 appears to have begun in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC with the construction of a series of penannular ditches and gullies. Phase 2, which spans the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, saw the curvilinear and D-shaped features replaced with largely linear enclosures. Phase 3 incorporates the mid- to late 1<sup>st</sup> century activity, which was seen by the enlargement of existing linear ditched enclosures and represents the last stages of the settlement prior to abandonment. A fourth phase was assigned to the trackway ditches at the southwest edge of the settlement, which cut the Phase 3 enclosure ditches; the fill of these produced a very small amount of pottery of late 1<sup>st</sup> -early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date suggesting that these fills represent the detritus of traffic on the trackway route. The trackway continues to the north and in the later 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century a settlement is begun there, as revealed by Trench M.

Lacking a useful vertical stratigraphy for the site, the phases assigned with regard to the relationship amongst particular features and were then supplemented by dating material recovered from those contexts. The boundaries between the two LIA phases and the early Roman phase, rely heavily on the ceramic chronology; it is likely that no sharp transitions between phases occurred but rather that settlement alterations were 'more organic and continuous than a breakdown by phase indicates' (*ibid.*).



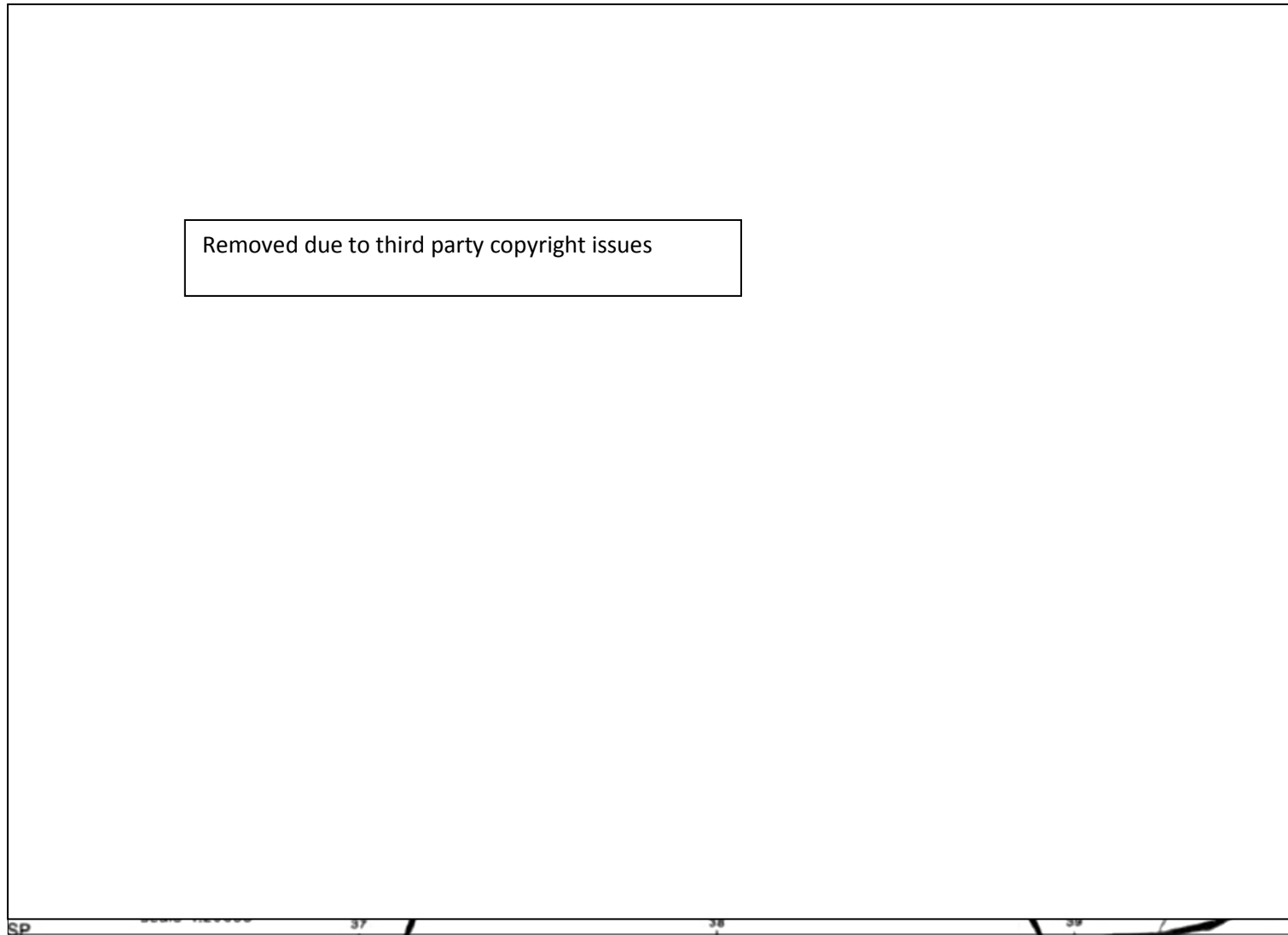


*Figure 7.11. Location of excavation with relation to Standlake village and the river, with threatened area defined. Only a portion was investigated (see Figure 7.12). (after Hey 1995:96)*

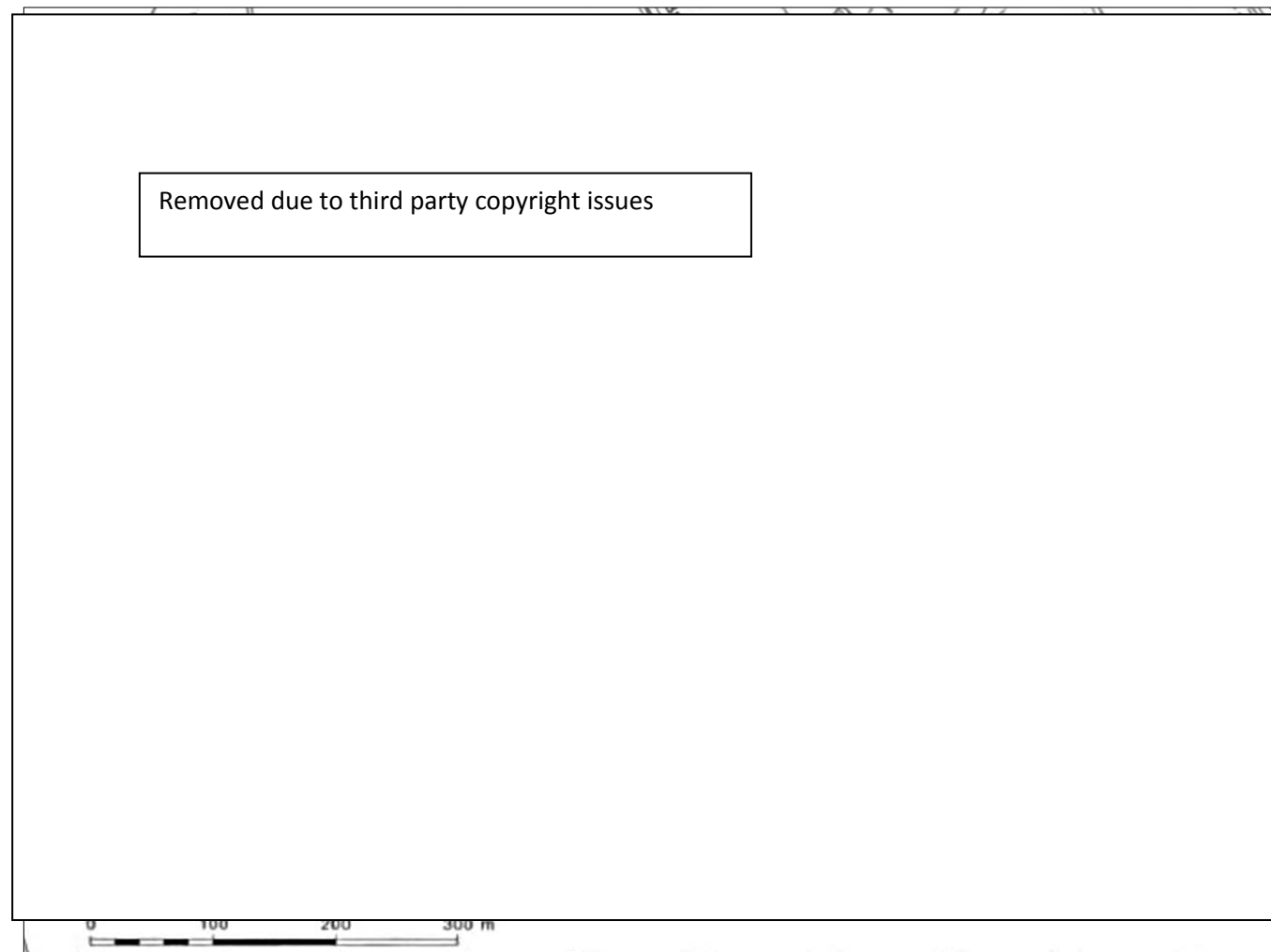


*Figure 7.12. Limits of initial survey (in red), location of known cropmarks, and open area excavation sites (in green). (after Hey 1995: 99)*

### **7.3.2 Structures**

As mentioned frequently elsewhere (2.7; 6.2), structural evidence for the LIA in this region does not seem particularly robust with regard to preservation; this is likely a combination of factors not limited to ancient construction methods and modern agricultural practices (Allen *et al.* 1984: 90-1). Thus, where postholes are scant or apparently non-existent, the presence of domestic structure must be inferred from the surviving materials – charcoal spreads, ceramic debris, personal items, or fired clay. It is upon such evidence that most of the Trench L structures are based.

During Phase 1, there is evidence for two possible structures. At the northern extremity of Trench L, was a semi-circular gully (1056) measuring approximately 6.5m in diameter (Figure 7.13). This gully produced dark fills with charcoal and carbonized plant remains, as well as some LIA pottery. Within the D-shaped enclosure, a ditch divided into three by later truncations and excavated as 1044, 1038 and 1018, there was a cluster of postholes (1078 -1084), also accompanied by dark fills and charred material, which may hint at a domestic structure. The excavator argued that, based on the irregular layout of the postholes, they may rather represent part of a complex of holding pens for animals (Hey 1996:102). Yet the dense distribution of ceramic material, pottery and fired clay, as well as charred plant remains from the associated gullies tends to substantiate the domestic argument. A penannular gully (1020) measuring barely 5m across to the immediate southeast of the D-shaped enclosure also contained charred material in the fill, but this feature may be a predecessor of the comparable ‘stack ring’ (1016) that was constructed during Phase 2, rather than a domestic structure.

Phase 2 activity expanded westward, respecting the western portion of the D-shaped enclosure and incorporating that ditch into the new arrangement, which was notable for its linearity rather than its curves. Although many of the ditches of this new arrangement were subsequently recut, it is possible to suggest that the Phase 2 layout of the site was a series adjacent rectangular enclosure, the largest of which had a southern entrance (in contrast to the

north east entrance of the Phase 1 main enclosure) and may have surrounded three potential buildings<sup>37</sup>.

One such possible house site has been suggested in the southwest corner of the main enclosure near the terminus of ditch 1002; the fill of the terminus contained part of the wall of an oven, charcoal, burnt stone and pottery. Against the northern ditch of the main enclosure (1070), curved gully 1061 contained 'reasonable amounts of pottery' (Hey 1995: 107) and may suggest a second building.

Southeast of the main enclosure, demarcated in large part by ditches 1008 and 1026 lay another rectilinear which contained a number of curvilinear and linear gullies, which may have served to restrict access to parts of the enclosure. Deposits of charcoal, burnt stone, fired clay, as well as the largest deposit of bones for the settlement, and charred plant remains were concentrated in this area of the settlement, suggesting that there may also have been a building nearby. Given that in many cases the dating of these features to phase was very difficult, it may even be possible that this detritus is the product of a building indicated by gully 1020 mentioned above.

In Phase 3, what had been the main rectangular enclosure during Phase 2 was abandoned. The entire settlement was enclosed by a very large rectilinear ditch, which brought even the southeastern features into one unit. The entrance returned to the northeast, almost exactly where the D-shaped enclosure entrance had been in Phase 1. A smaller rectangular enclosure abuts the larger on its northern boundary. Access to the settlement appears to have been controlled by a series of shallow, linear boundary ditches that formed a 'funnel-like entrance into the main enclosure' (Hey 1996: 111).

Within this new arrangement, it is possible to suggest the locations of two structures. Both are visible far more for the large amounts of burnt daub and assemblage of domestic refuse (each

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<sup>37</sup> identified by ditches 1002, 1004, 1062, and 1070

location produced a stratified 1<sup>st</sup> century copper alloy brooch), than for any structural element visible in the soil. The first is located within the smaller 'annex' marked by ditch 1049; a single post hole paired with an abundance of charcoal and domestic detritus suggest this building. The second was located within an interior sub-rectangular enclosure defined by ditch 1035. Whilst no postholes were found, large quantities of domestic debris and charcoal we recovered from the terminals of 1035. Further evidence of a building here can be obtained from the molluscs – burnt snail aquatic snail shells point to the presence of reed thatching (Robinson 1995:166).

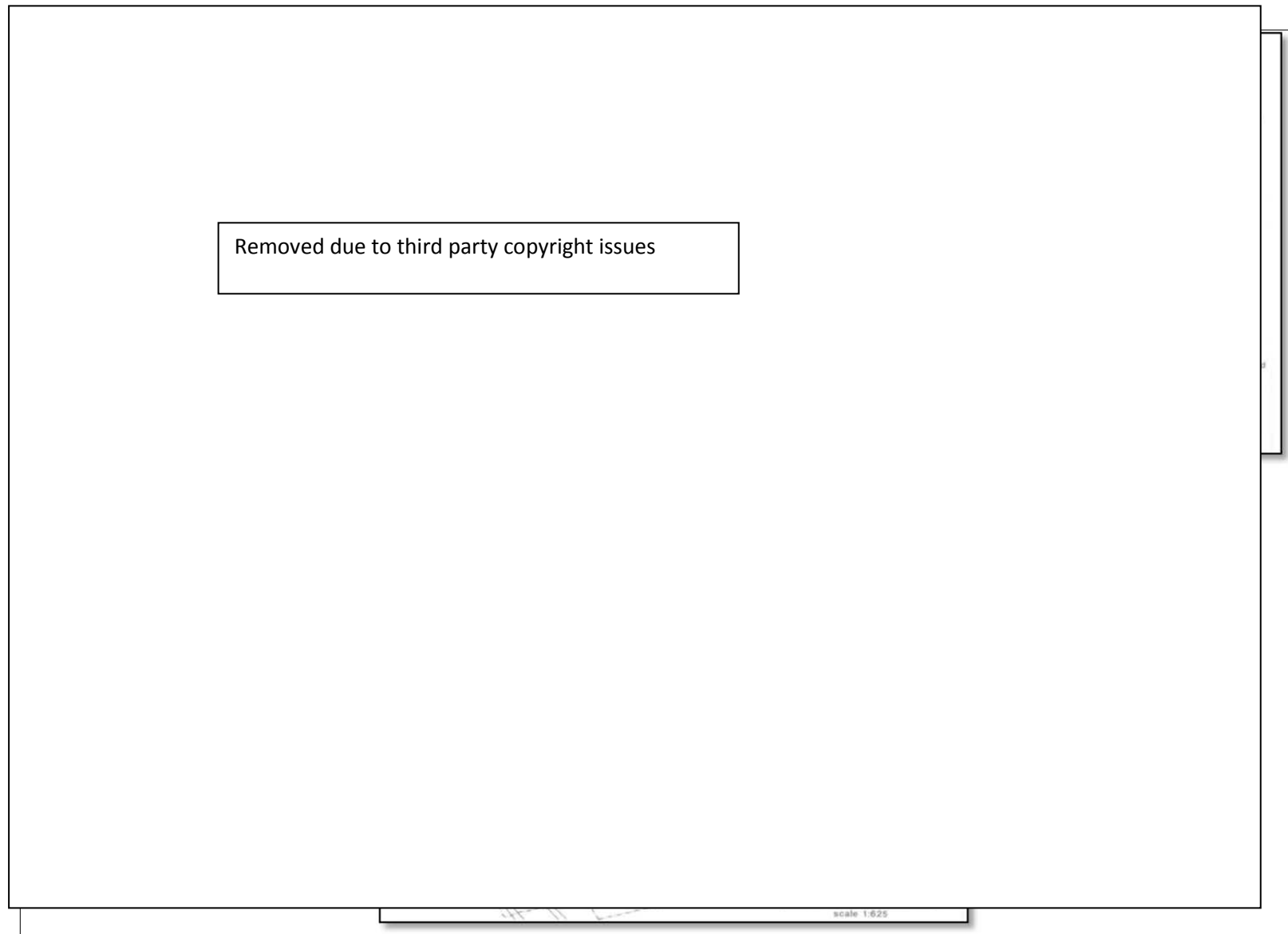


*Figure 7.13. Plans for phases 1-3 showing the placement of ditches and key contexts. (after Hey 1995:104,106,108)*

### 7.3.3 Ceramic and glass vessels

#### *Ceramics*

The pottery from Trench L, from all three phases, was almost completely devoid of specialist wares or imports. A solitary sherd of amphora was recovered from a Phase 2 context and a sherd of whiteware in the ER Phase 3 fill of ditch 1035 <sup>38</sup>but there were no mortaria sherds or samian wares represented. This places the site in sharp contrast to many others in the region, where finewares tend to contribute to at least 1-15% of the total assemblage (Booth 2000:43). Additionally unique about the Old Shifford pottery is the absence of reduced and oxidised fabrics in the ER period (Figure 7.14). 'Belgic' type fabrics were most common from all phases; the assemblage seems to show the waning use of flint and sand tempering over time (Figure 7.15). This has often been assumed but the Trench L assemblage demonstrates it rather well, lending credence to the chronology proposed solely on concentrations of flint- and grog-tempered 'Belgic' type sherds recovered at Southlea Farm (8.3.3).

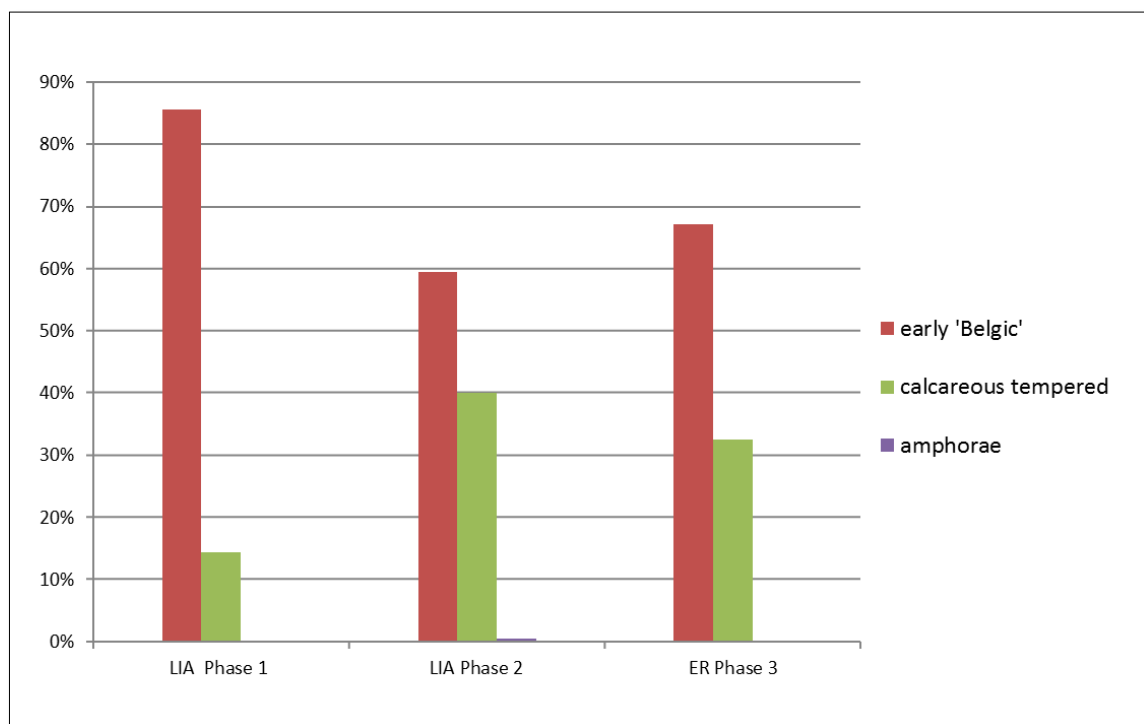


Figure 7.14. Breakdown of pottery fabrics in Phases 1-3 from Trench L.

<sup>38</sup> This sherd may have been intrusive (Timby 1995: 126).

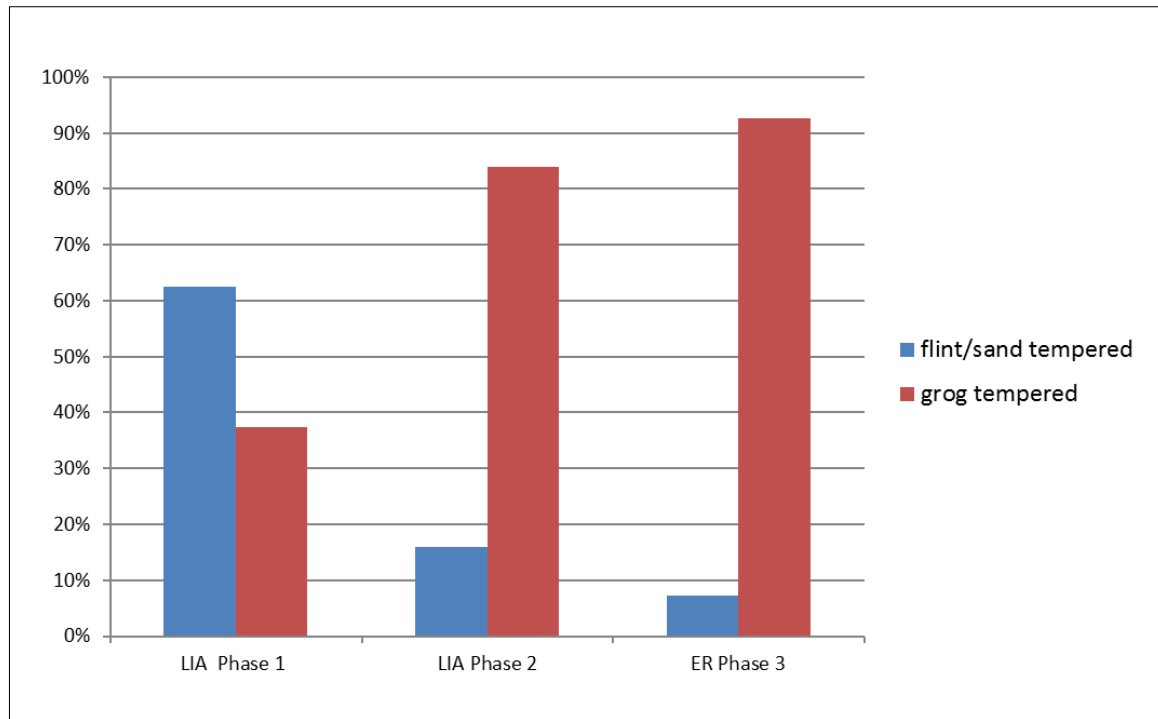


Figure 7.15. Comparison of flint-tempered and grog tempered fabrics by phase in Trench L.

As at many rural settlement sites, at Old Shifford jars were the dominant form (Figure 7.16). In a study of the spatial distribution of ceramic materials at the site, Meadows observed that containers possibly associated with serving, as opposed to cooking, were only identified in the enclosure (1102, 1003, 1004) associated with the probable house in the south-western part of the site and speculated that there may have been a 'demarcation of areas according to the preparation and consumption of food' (2001:181-2). However, there is little in the assemblage to suggest any type of ranking or division by status, as both cooking and serving vessels are undecorated and of local manufacture.

Fired clay was abundant, although briquetage was entirely absent. Many pieces had wattle impressions, supporting the inference of nearby buildings. Several loom weights, both whole and fragmentary were recovered, as well as an unusual disc, 'slightly lipped around the edge and domed in the centre of one face' (Hey 1995: 138); this was probably a lid to a wooden or clay container, which serves as a reminder that much of the implements for eating and drinking would have been made of non-ceramic materials.



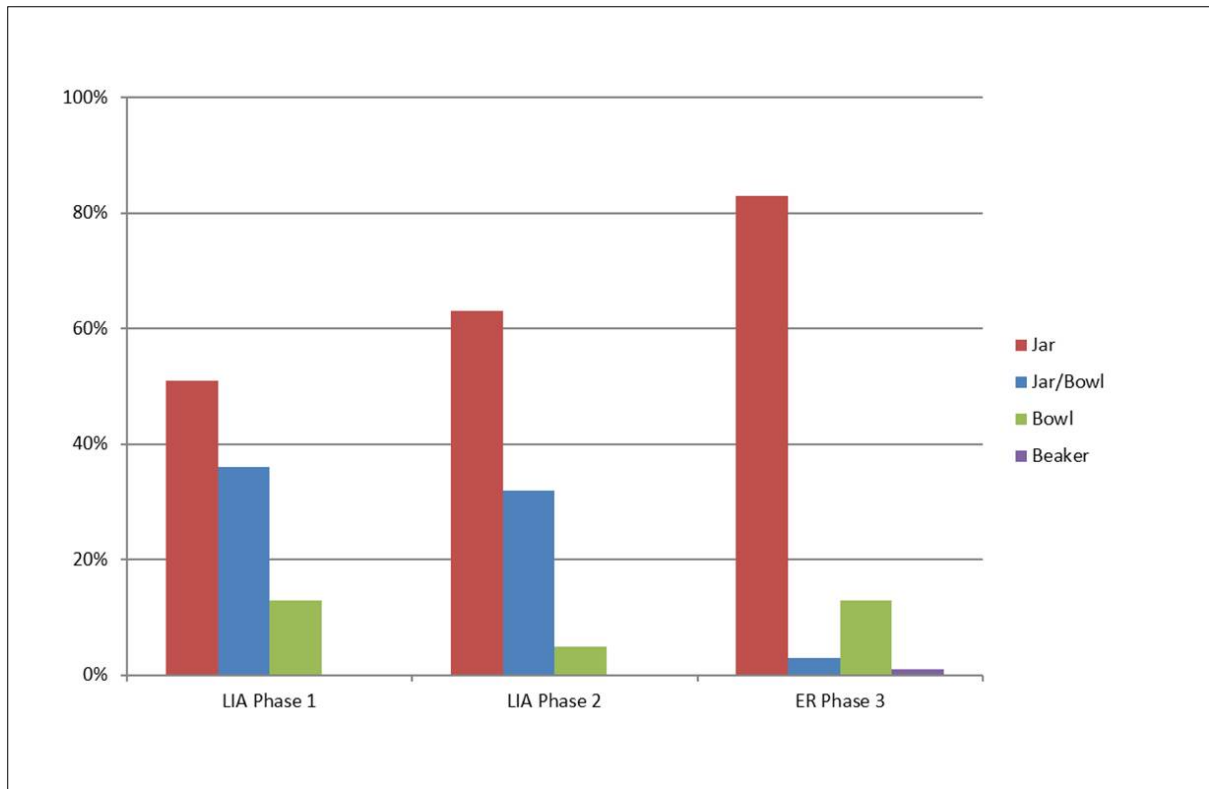


Figure 7.16. Pottery forms by phase, Trench L.

One further item of fired clay was the ingate, or pouring aperture, of a mould, likely to have been used for casting copper alloy. A few tiny fragments more of mould material was recovered, but too few to suggest what object was being cast.

### **Glass**

There were no glass shards recovered from any phase of Trench L; indeed, only one small fragment of glass was recovered from the entire site, and that from a secure Late Roman context, a pit fill in Trench M. Two other Late Roman fills in Trench M produced 1<sup>st</sup> century brooches, so the free-blown vessel fragment may have an earlier origin. However, even if the glass had been curated as an heirloom (as the two brooches most certainly were) there is no suggestion that the population of the early settlement in Trench L would have any connection at all to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century population who settled the Trench M region. There are several ways to interpret the lack of glass on the early site - one might suppose that machining out large volumes of ditch fill would preclude the location of fragile glass finds. Alternatively, it may be

that glass vessels, and the substances that they contained, either held no particular attraction for the people of this settlement or that they were denied access to such commodities either through economic austerity or through other controlling factors. In either case, not much can be made of it; Old Shifford is hardly the only site in the region to present an absence of evidence for glass.

#### **7.3.4 Metalwork**

In total, 60 metal finds were found from the entire site, but almost all were either late Roman or unstratified medieval and post-medieval artefacts (unsurprising, given the proximity of the site to the deserted medieval village of Standlake). The LIA/ER metalwork assemblage is very small for an excavation of this size, given that there are three phases of activity spanning a century. There were no coins, save a battered and unstratified core of a base metal (Hey 1995:139). Six brooches were found during the excavation, but two were unstratified metal detector finds, and two were in secure Late Roman gully fills, likely curated heirlooms. A search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme database indicates that the only metal finds within 1 km of the site are four Iron Age coins. Only two brooches can be securely fitted within the LIA/ER settlement location. One, a Langton Down type, has in place of the usual reeding decoration, a single rib down the centre and plain strip mouldings (Hey 1995:140); the other was a fragment of a Hod Hill variant. Neither of these brooches is particularly showy, and indeed this Langton Down example was even less ostentatious than the 'standard' model. With no other metal jewellery of any type recovered from or near the site, nor any beads or pins of other materials, one may perhaps suggest that bodily adornment as a medium for display was not part of the social habits of the people who lived at this settlement.

#### **7.3.5 Faunal and organic evidence**

Although almost all faunal material from trench L was located in the ditches, there did not appear to be any particular special treatment of any species of animal when it came to discarding waste bones.

Cattle dominated all phases of the assemblages, but given that cattle bones, being larger and more robust, may have been the only items to have been recovered from the 95m of machined ditch fills, then the information is likely skewed to favour the presence of cattle on site, as well as their impact of the settlement economy (Figure 7.17). Yet the presence of some perforated ceramic bases, like those from Barton Court Farm (7.2.3) may indicate cheese making, and thus dependence to some degree on dairy products. There is, however, no reason to rule out the use of sheep milk for cheese making. A single cow metapodial showed suggestions of traumas from use in traction, as did two examples from the horse assemblage. Despite the likely use of secondary animal products, the average ages of most species at death suggested that their primary purpose was for food (Meadows 2001: 165); the notable exception is that of the horse, examples of which all were aged over six years at death. The sample size of identifiable bone fragments recovered from specific feature types was not large enough to run correspondence analysis in order to determine preferential deposition of faunal remains. From the data available, it would seem that nearly all animal bones were destined for disposal in ditches.

The presence of several loom weights and a spindlewhorl (as well as a (likely) residual LIA bone leaze rod from Trench M) points to a diverse set of subsistence skills – weaving, cheese making, arable crops, and animal husbandry along with the capacity for metalworking as needed. With little evidence of trade with parts exotic, perhaps one might infer from this information that the people at the LIA/ER settlement ‘kept themselves to themselves’, acquiring only such basic goods as they could not grow or manufacture on site.

The environmental evidence from Trench L was dominated by cereals, with some small amounts of chaff as well as a variety of weed species that would be expected in open terrain with little woodland vegetation. Flotation produced evidence for wheat, barley, and oats, as well as chaff particles for these plant varieties. The chaff suggests the ‘parching, de-husking, and fine sieving of hulled cereal grain’ (Robinson 1995:166); paired with the presence of several fragments of heavily used quernstones and rubbers (Hey 1995: 145-6), one can infer the

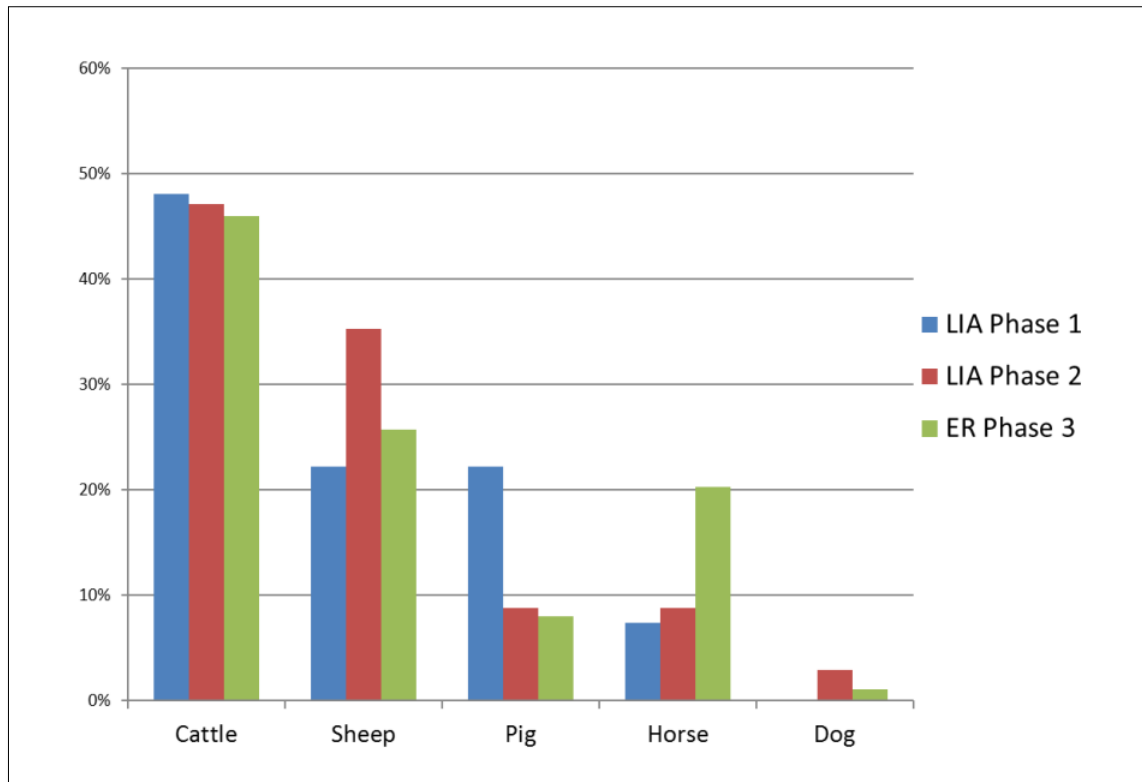


Figure 7.17. Percentages of major animal species represented by phase.

processing of cereal crops on site. Robinson reports that it is difficult to determine from the plant evidence whether the site functioned as an importer or a producer of cereals, suggesting certainly both are possible (*op. cit.*); it may be that the people living at Old Shifford Farm were producing and consuming on a small scale, providing themselves with a secure food supply, but not creating a surplus for economic return (van der Veen 1991: 357). A further speculation might be made when considering the presence of barley crops; the remains of two ovens were recovered from Trench L – drying of barley might be the first stage in making beer (Meadows 2001:169). This product was also suggested at Barton Court Farm, which produced a series of perforated jar bases not unlike those found at this site. Whilst no LIA/ER ceramic evidence for drinking vessels were found, one must not forget that wooden artefacts probably made up the bulk of such objects.

### **7.3.6 Putting it all together**

Old Shifford is strikingly different from the other case study sites. Hey determined that the site was very minimally impacted by 'Romanization' (1995:97), but the emphasis was on the low status of the site, rather than on any other factors that might have contributed to the lack of Roman influence in the material culture. I would argue that whilst an economic inability to acquire new and exotic goods may have been a contributing factor, the other signals implied by an holistic view of the settlement suggest something else was limiting choices. The lack of readily identifiable markers of status or personal identity suggest a low group bias, whereas the importance and re-use of boundaries, the ordered deposition of materials, and the suggestion of ritual activity all point toward the higher end of the grid axis. This indicates a community with in the 'F' quadrant.

A community in the fatalist grid tends to wish (or be forced) to be left alone, without the desire (or ability) to negotiate power (Douglas 1996:114); interaction outside the community occurs only when strictly necessary (or imposed). The difference between whether this is a choice or an imposition depends of where along the axes of grid and group their outlook fits, within the quadrant. Defined by the strength of rules and the lack of a group identity, if a community of isolates had fewer constraints and a slight sense of belonging, they would approach the centre space, the intersection of the axes. This is the area defined as 'reclusivist' worldview. These are the nearly invisible hermits of Cultural Theory. The hermit chooses to drop out of larger cultural interaction whilst the isolate has been forced to. Old Shifford Farm reflects a society that has for the most part 'dropped out'. The changes that were sweeping through the region at this time do not seem to touch upon the settlement and its inhabitants to any great degree. Other sites within a 10 km range such as Barton Court Farm (this chapter), Gravelly Guy (#49), and Calais Farm (#8) each exhibit some form of adaptation to increasing Roman influences, with different results based on the characteristics of the community, but the people at Old Shifford seem largely untouched by the events of their time. Unfortunately, there is no way to know for certain whether this cultural isolation was self-imposed or the result of an external decision to

‘shun’ the community. Interestingly, the trackway that runs past the Trench L settlement site is relegated to Phase 4, a period after the abandonment of the site; there was no need for a trackway to bring the wider world to the LIA/ER inhabitants. One must not, however, fall into the easy habit of blithely ascribing ‘low-status’ to a settlement like this. Douglas wrote that these ‘F’ type communities are:

‘bypassed by authority and power, for whatever reason; they are not in the game...a diverse set could be located in the backwater. They could be rich. Whether rich or not, they are not usually ostentations, their possessions are not for display’ (1996:69).

## **7.4 Discussion**

In these two case studies, we see communities at the high end of the grid axis; the population at Barton Court Farm was bound by rules which determined where people would eat and drink, build their houses and dispose of certain materials. The inhabitants of Old Shifford Farm also were bound by a set of rules that imposed an ordered way of living on at the settlement. yet whilst At Barton Court, display and ornamentation helped identify specific roles within the group, at Old Shifford such display was absent. From the LIA to the ER periods at Barton Court, the emphasis seemed to shift from physical boundaries which demarcated group identity and intercommunal roles, to the use of imported and Roman-influenced materials to articulate those relationships. At Old Shifford, however, there was a nearly seamless continuity of traditional materials at a self-sufficient farmstead which was capable of turning its hand to whatever skills were necessary for survival. The residents of Old Shifford may indeed have chosen to largely abandon their relationship with the wider world, or they may have been excluded from the regional community for unknowable reasons.

The last four case studies have allowed us to explore the types of assemblages that indicate the four types (with hints of the elusive fifth) of cultural bias outlined in Cultural Theory. The next chapter will investigate two more sites outside of the Upper Thames Valley, to illustrate that the utility of the theory’s application is not region-specific.

**CHAPTER 8****CASE STUDIES: MIDDLE THAMES VALLEY****8.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the Middle Thames Valley by looking at the rural farm sites at Eton College Rowing Lake and at Southlea Farm (Figure 8.1), excavated at two very different scales of operation. Their selection as case studies is slightly opportunistic – the as-yet unpublished Eton report was made available and provides a very interesting sequence of LIA/ER activity extracted from a huge site which has seen limited resources poured into its 10 year excavation. Meanwhile, the Southlea Farm site has had minimal excavation and has been conducted over a similar length of time with nearly limitless funding applied to a small dataset. It is thought that the juxtaposition of the two sites would be a good test of the usefulness of applying the grid/group analysis.

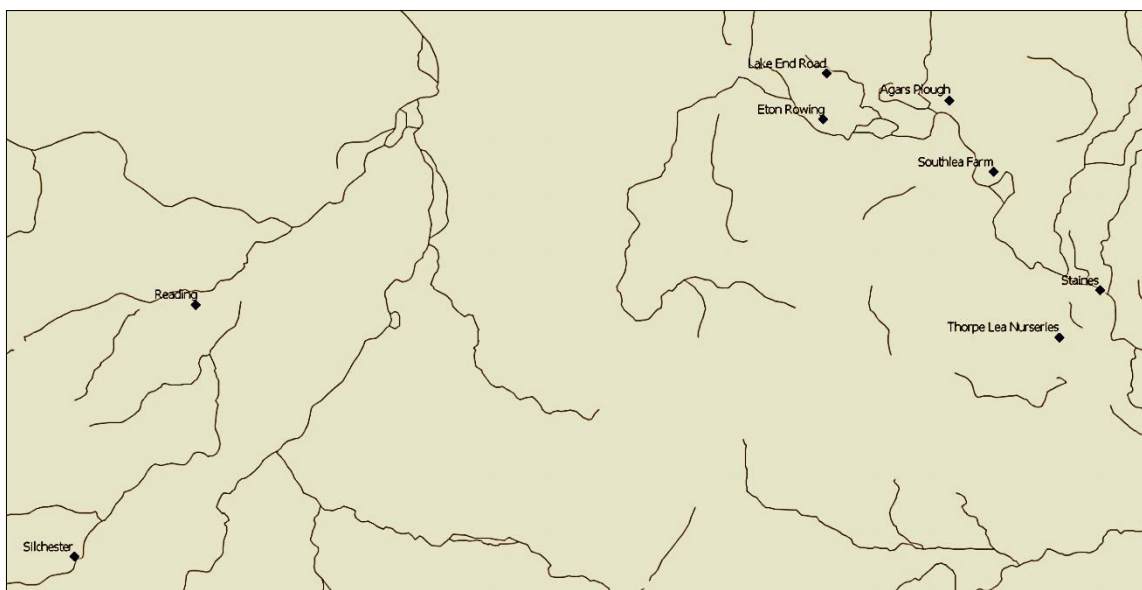


*Figure 8.1. Chapter 8 Sites in their geographical context with some neighbouring sites*

**8.2 Eton Rowing Lake****8.2.1 Introduction**

The site of the excavation at Eton College Rowing Course lies 5km to the southwest of Slough approximately 5km southeast of Maidenhead. It is situated on the north bank of the River

Thames, and is situated on first terrace river gravels, overlain largely with alluvial silt deposits. The entire excavated area was crossed with old watercourses and extinct palaeochannels.

In 1985, Thames Water commissioned a review of the archaeological resources between Maidenhead and Windsor in order to identify the potential impact of an anticipated flood alleviation scheme. The encompassed area was covered 'with a broad range of landscape features, gravel islands, relict water-courses and cropmarks' (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 6). Subsequent fieldwalking indicated that all periods could be represented in the targeted part of the river environs (Carstairs 1986). In addition to the flood alleviation scheme, interest was shown by Eton College, who wished to construct a rowing lake at Dorney. Evaluation trenches were dug for the rowing lake in 1987-88, with a more detailed evaluation conducted by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) in 1994, confirming this potential and showing the first indications of the complex of prehistoric structures that bridged an ancient course of the river (Allen 1995). A full excavation programme followed, opening a series of variably sized trenches for open-area excavation (Allen & Welsh 1996; 1998; Allen 2000; Allen & Mitchell 2001; Allen *et al.* in prep.).

This project combined two major archaeological undertakings – the strategic sampling of a 12km stretch of the Middle Thames as part of a flood alleviation scheme (Foreman 1998; Catherall & Foreman 2000; Allen *et al.* in prep.) and the partial excavation of a 3km<sup>2</sup> area destined for the construction of a rowing course for Eton College. The bulk of the information that is relevant to this case study was retrieved from the rowing course excavation at Dorney (Figure 8.2) and this site will form the basis this section. Complementary information for the period obtained from the various trenches of the alleviation scheme will be brought in as part of the wider discussion of the region in section 8.2.6. The Dorney excavation was a patchwork of trenches, features from which spanned the Neolithic through the medieval. The only trenches to provide secure information about the LIA/ER periods were Area 16 (the core of activity),



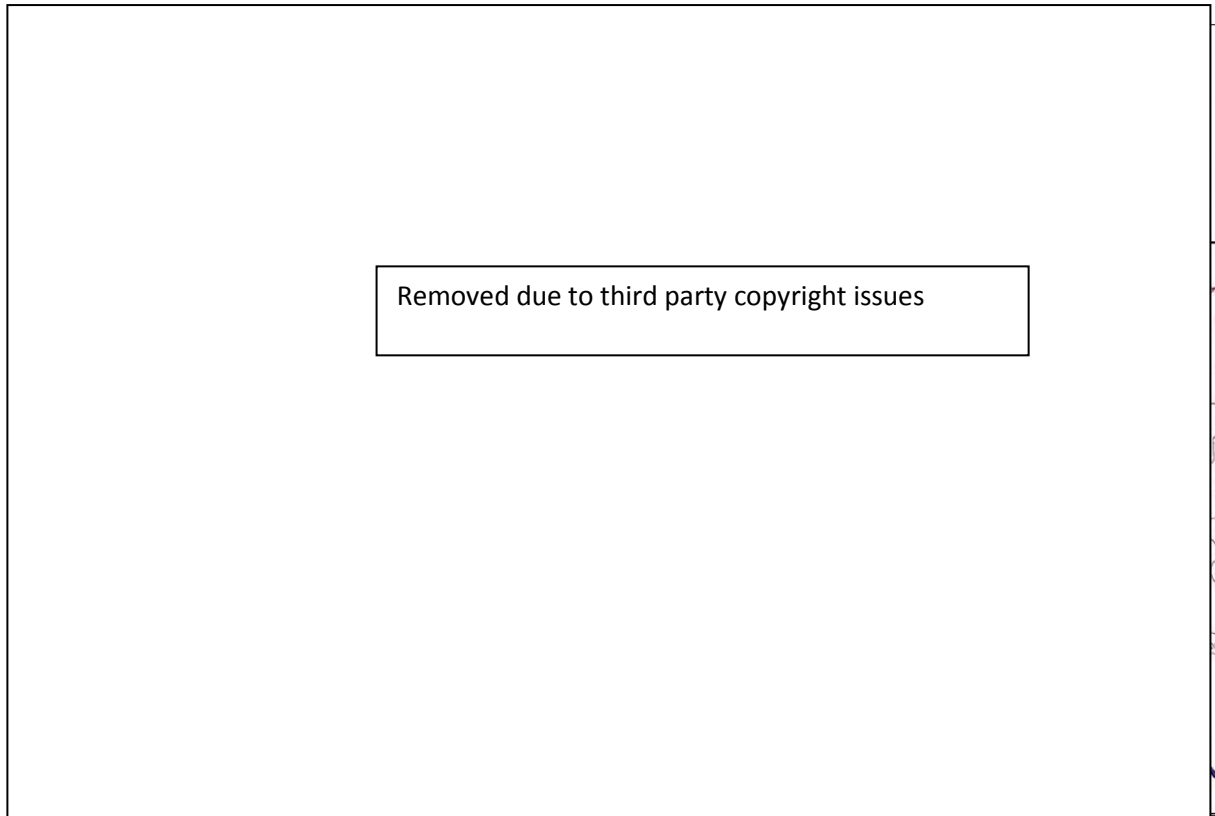


*Figure 8.2. Area encompassed by both Rowing Lake and Flood Alleviation Scheme excavations; box is expanded in Figure 8.3 (after Allen *et al.* in prep.)*

Area 10 (a series of pits and a gully), and a smattering of smaller features in Areas 20 and 24 (Figure 8.3). The main trapezoidal enclosure, thought from cropmarks alone to be Romano-British in date, was revealed to be of Mid-Late Iron Age origin (100BC-50BC). The ditches comprising this feature (12602; 10354; 9548; 10371) had been re-cut multiple times, resulting in mostly residual M-LIA material; some securely datable ceramics, however, were sufficient to propose this early date for the construction of the enclosure. Plough damage had severely truncated the feature, leaving no trace of a bank; yet, inasmuch as nearly all of the internal features were distanced at least 4m away from the inner edges of the ditch, an internal bank erected with the upcast is not entirely unreasonable (Allen *et al.* in prep.:180). The main enclosure remained largely unchanged right the way through to the Early Roman period. Around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the area enclosed was nearly doubled. To the immediate east, smaller trenches 16C and 16D, supplemented by geophysical survey in between, suggested an annexe enclosed with smaller linear ditches (13962;13504), whilst to

the southeast, a further linear ditch (13961) indicated further expansion to the excavators<sup>39</sup>; these ditches also had undergone at least seven phases of re-cutting.

Evidence for structures were revealed within the interior, as well as a number of pits and postholes, largely restricted to the southern half of the enclosure. Several ER wells were also located in this southern half; one may have possibly been dug in the in the Late Iron Age (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 172), and a crouched burial located in the south-east of the four-post structure may also be of this date. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the enclosure ditches had been allowed to silt up completely.

The wider archaeological context of Eton College site indicates a region that was of some significance for a long period of time. A number of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary monuments are known from the immediate area. Furthermore, Bronze Age 'Celtic' field systems were in wide use around the study area (Yates 1999); to the east, settlement evidence of this date have been excavated at Runnymede Bridge (Needham 1991) and are suggested by cropmarks at Southlea Farm (Martin 2010). M-LIA enclosed settlements known at Cippenham (#24) suggest continuing activity through the early Roman period and the Flood Alleviation Scheme excavations both to the north at Lake End Road (#64), and to the east at Agar's Plough (#39) show evidence of LIA and Roman farmstead activity. Whilst there is apparently a fairly dense distribution of LIA/ER farmsteads on the river gravels of the floodplain at this point, there are no large Roman towns in the immediate area; the Roman small town of Staines, however, located 10 km to the east of the rowing lake site, would have been of some importance.

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<sup>39</sup> The shape and location of ditch 13961 is somewhat reminiscent of the 'funnelling' ditch (1052) Hey noted at Old Shifford farm (1995:169; Figure 7.13 above).



*Figure 8.3. Eton College Rowing Lake excavation trenches and surrounding cropmarks; note ancient watercourses. (after Allen & Welsh 1998:76)*

### **8.2.2 Structures**

Within the interior of the main enclosure, the excavators noted that there was 'no clear division' between Phases 1 and 2, and 3, and they supposed that occupation was probably continuous throughout (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 188). Three structures were identified - a possible roundhouse site was located on the south-west, as well as a six-post structure and a four-post structure. Additionally, a cluster of postholes slightly southeast of the ring ditch may have formed a round structure.

The roundhouse was indicated by a 6.3m length of curved gully (9251) as well as a series of small pits which formed an arc opposite (Figure 8.4). A collection of postholes were contained within these two arcs, and the terminus of 9251 contained a concentration of M-LIA pottery, as well as bone, charcoal and burnt flints.

Pits (9140, 9043, 9048, 9129 & 9177) may represent the eastern side of the structure; together they form an arc with a circumference greater than the arc of the gully, but this likely means that the pits were directly outside of the building, which would have measured some 10m in diameter. Pits 9043 and 9048 contained exclusively 1<sup>st</sup> century BC material, whilst 9117 and 9140 to either side contained only LIA pottery, suggesting the longevity of the structure.

The postholes interior to this structure (9004, 9020, 9022, 9089, 9418, 9402, 9052, 9313, 9145, 12562 and 9411) did not describe a regular shape, and were not uniform in size or depth. A rough line dividing the interior laterally might be indicated by postholes 9022, 9418, 9402, 9052 and 9313 (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 188).

North-west and just outside of the curving gully 9251 was a group of other postholes (9441, 9421, 9409, 9216, 9428, 9054, 9030, and 9375), which were roughly linear in their arrangement and on the same alignment as the putative 'dividing wall' in the round structure. Unfortunately, apart from a nail from the fill of 9054, no material was recovered to allow secure dating. The report suggests that without dating, it is possible that the postholes, both inside and outside the 'roundhouse' may be Roman (*ibid.*: 189). Taking conjecture a leap further, one might be tempted to speculate that the round structure of the M-LIA phase is replaced by a timber post rectilinear structure in the ER; yet, without dating, this is purely speculative.

Fifteen metres to the east of the roundhouse, six postholes (13051, 13053, 13055, 13057, 13059 and 13061) were revealed; the postholes were roughly arranged in two rows, 2.5m apart and aligned perpendicular to the edge of the enclosure. Forming a SW-NE line with the central postholes were two additional similar postholes (9006 and 9338) which may have been part of this structure (Figure 8.4). Only M-LIA sherds were associated with this feature.

A second similar structure was inferred from postholes 9014, 9017, 9059 and 10359 located in the centre of ring ditch 9233 (Figure 8.4). A single sherd of M-LIA pottery in the same fabric as those mentioned from the above structure was the only find; this may suggest that these two structures were broadly contemporary.



*Figure 8.4. Structures inside main enclosure; dashed lines indicate suggestion of posthole alignments; pit 9034 marked in green. (after Allen & Welsh 1998:78)*

These post structures need consideration - although these types of 4- and 6 post structures are usually interpreted as granaries, the location of a 4-post structure on what would have likely still been a visible monument is probably indicative of some other function. Allen *et al.* suggest that they may represent a platform 'perhaps for lookout or signalling purposes or even for excarnation' (in prep.: 190). Given the other indicators that tradition and the past were highly prized concepts in this community, it is certainly sensible to think of this structure in these rather than industrial terms.

Other possible structures may have been present within the enclosure, particularly near to the centre, where to the southeast of the ring ditch, where a cluster of postholes (9109, 9065, 9119, 9091, 9833, 9106, and 9470) can be seen to create a rough semi-circular group. It is, however, difficult to identify any obvious structures, and thus impossible to confidently say more than that they were, based on the ceramic material, broadly contemporary with the other M-LIA activity inside the enclosure. The only suggestion otherwise comes from pit 9034 (Figure 8.4), which contained 34 sherds of pottery which suggest a M-LIA date. Also recovered were animal bone, charcoal, and some worked flints. The material from this pit, and its proximity to the posthole cluster may indicate that those postholes did represent a domestic structure (*ibid.*: 191).

The only structure exterior to the main enclosure was a timber building constructed on post-pads (Building 13610 – Figure 8.5). The dating of the structure is difficult, but a late 1<sup>st</sup> –early 2<sup>nd</sup> century origin is suggested. It is thought to have been a barn, albeit an unusual one, given that typical Roman barns of this period are constructed with large deep-set postholes, rather than post-pads. A contemporary barn at Haddon, Peterborough, however, did use post-pads (Hinman 2003, 32-6). Allen raises the possibility that this building might have been an aisled structure, but that all trace of the slighter, exterior walls had been removed (in prep.: 599).



*Figure 8.5. Location of Building 13610 and Trenches 16C and 16D. (after Allen & Mitchell 2001:29)*

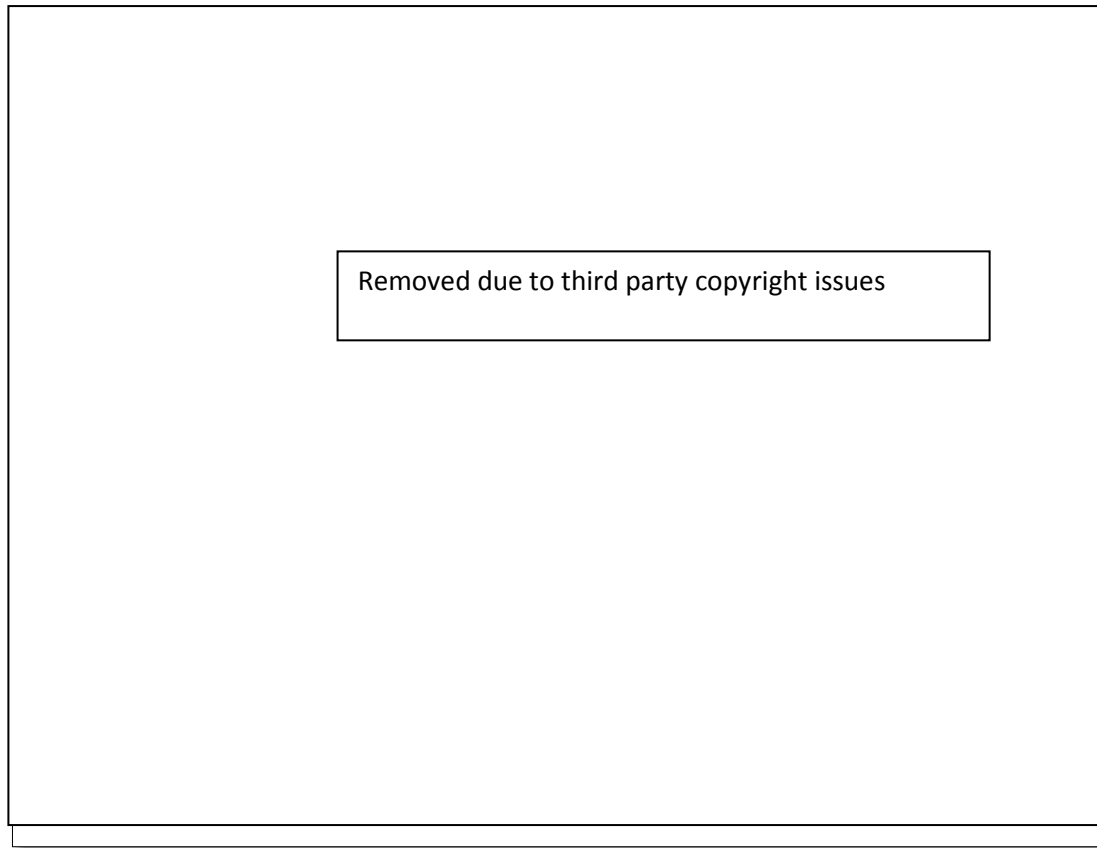


*Figure 8.6. Enlarged plan of Building 13610; excavated postholes in red, conjectured truncated postholes in green. (after Allen & Mitchell 2001:29)*

A Later Roman ditch and corn drier have disturbed what may have been a further two postholes in the northwest corner of the building; Figure 8.6 illustrates that this structure then begins to look very like Miles' two 6-post structures at Barton Court Farm, perhaps strengthening the argument that there, as here, an aisled building exists (see section 7.2.2).

### **8.2.3 Ceramic and glass vessels**

#### ***Ceramics***

Of the 9898 sherds (120kg) of Mid-LIA/ER pottery recovered from the Eton Rowing Course excavation, 97% were from Area 16 and its subsidiary trenches. The remainder, being largely residual in other areas of the project, were not included in the specialist report (Brown in prep.: 262).

The material described as M-LIA in this assemblage can be fairly confidently assigned to the period between 100-50BC, based both upon the paucity of saucepan forms (Cunliffe 1971:152)



and on the high instance of decoration (Allen in prep.: 268). A notable difference between the Upper Thames material of this period and the Eton assemblage is the restriction of this decoration to the upper parts of the vessels; these 'swags' or bands of restricted incisions, grooves or dots are far more limited in placement than in other comparable material from the Upper Thames valley (*ibid.*:266). The Eton material, whilst highly decorated, appears to be subject to strict 'rules' about style and ornamentation.

Although bowls (notably globular) are present in this material, the assemblage is overwhelmingly dominated by jars. This continues into the latter part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, when the 'E-type' series of 'Belgic' wares become the commonest fabric. The proposed chronology from Southlea Farm (8.3.3) based on the use of E60 series flint-tempered fabrics seems to be supported by the evidence from Eton, where the flint tempered fabrics can be seen to be a bit earlier in the sequence than the E80 series grog-tempered wares, although there is certainly overlap; none of the phasing at this site is particularly clear. Although this grog-tempered fabric was in use through to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century in some parts of the region, the later products in this region tend to be found in association with a sand-tempered material from the Highgate kilns in London; the Eton assemblage, however, did not produce these in any quantity, hinting at an earlier date for the grog-tempered vessels (Brown in prep.: 268).

The LIA assemblage of handmade and wheel made vessels in a style spanned the years before and after the arrival of Roman authority. In addition to the usual grog-tempered 'Belgic' wares, examples of sand-tempered material suggest a continuation of the late-middle Iron Age sandy fabric tradition (*ibid.*: 274). The affinity for decoration did not seem to alter in the LIA period, with many of the earlier decorating techniques continuing to be in use; additionally, imported styles appear to be imitated with the use of red slip; a grog tempered imitation of a samian bowl (Dr36) was recovered from a ?pit? (9154). this type of shallow bowl suggests more sophisticated uses of pottery for dining; the fact that it was deliberately made with traditional materials is interesting. Also recorded was a dish loosely copying the style of Gallo-Belgic *terra*

*rubra* in a grog-tempered fabric with the red burnishing characteristic of the London Highgate Wood kilns productions from AD50-100 (Brown and Sheldon 1974: 227). Many aspects of this assemblage represent continuity of tradition with regard to fabric; others suggest if not continuity of form, then acknowledgement of traditional forms. Whilst the typical 'Belgic type' jar forms are universal, some of these could be seen as having developed along the themes of later Middle Iron Age globular jar/bowl forms (Brown in prep.: 274).

The ER phase spans the period AD 50–150 and the assemblage begins to include wheel-thrown sandy grey wares and romanized forms, although it appears that LIA forms and fabrics were still in use at this time also. Many of the Roman fabrics have date ranges that could place them anywhere from AD50 – AD175, but when found in association with the grog-tempered E fabrics, the date is unlikely to be too much later than the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

All the decorative techniques seen in the LIA assemblage continue in use, with the addition of barbotine pellets on some reduced ware beakers (*ibid.*: 274). The range of forms in the sandy fabrics is varied and the origins for some of the sandy fabrics was unclear, although the presence of readily identifiable materials such as Alice Holt products and Dorset black-burnished ware help to separate 2<sup>nd</sup> century activity from earlier Roman phases. Despite the recovery of over 20 sherds of mortaria, only two were of a 1<sup>st</sup> century date.

Of the finewares, 63% are local mica-dusted wares; 31 sherds of South Gaulish samian were recovered, representing mostly dishes, with a few beakers and bowls as well. The imitation of Samian dish forms in E-wares was also present in this phase, hinting at a desire to embrace new dining practices within traditional frameworks. Apart from the samian vessels, the only evidence for imports for this period was a few sherds Dressel 20 amphora.

It would appear that the people at living at the Rowing Lake site had the ability to gain access to the 'finer' things in 1<sup>st</sup> century Britain, but preferred not to import very much. Rather, they allowed the influence of imports to permeate the use of their traditional materials. From the swags of the M-LIA through to the barbotine pellets of the ER period – however much the

meaning of the grooves, dots, and pellets may have transformed for the successive generations of ceramic users here, the practice of decorative display via the medium of ceramic dining ware, the function of the decoration does not really change. Decoration was persistently used to help to illustrate and articulate roles within the community.

### ***Glass***

Of the 39 glass fragments recovered from the entire site, most were post-medieval. Area 16 produced only 4 fragments of Roman date, with a further single shard from Area 10 which could be Roman; none of the fragments were sufficient to be diagnostic of form or to suggest a secure date. It may be that the low number of glass shards is related to the excavation techniques applied. As at Old Shifford Farm, large volumes of ditch fill were machined out and inspected by hand for finds retrieval. The Mitigation Strategy for the Rowing Lake excavation called for only 10% of linear features to be hand excavated; a further 40% was removed by machine (Allen *et al.* in prep.:40). This was unlikely to produce much in the way of fragile glass finds.

All four Area 16 are fragments blue-green glass, of which two have suffered heat-distortion. Heat-distorted fragments are often found in relation to 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century cremations; such glass bottles may have contained scented oils or unguents which were either grave goods, or used in funerary rituals (Price & Cottam 1998, 8). These may either represent a cremation missed in excavation, or the detritus of a domestic fire (Tyson, in prep.: 340); in either case, they provide no information about dating and thus may have no bearing on the LIA/ER phase of activity on this site. Area 10 produced a plain emerald-green fragment, probably part of a glass bead; this bead cannot be securely tied to the ER period, however, as similar beads are common for the entire Roman as well as Anglo-Saxon period (Guido 1999, 42). A second bead, of amber rather than glass, was found during machine excavation of the palaeochannel in Area 4 (Figure 8.3). The bead was unusually large, measuring 3.6 cm in diameter and weighing 18.2g. Based on the size and manner of its shaping, it was dated to the LIA (Wallis in prep.: 321). This bead would have been highly valuable in its time and points to the ability of people here to access rich items.

#### **8.2.4 Metalwork**

Of the 353 metal finds located in Area 16, through both excavation and opportunistic detection of the spoil heaps, 164 were nails and 65 were undiagnostic strips or sheet fragments. Of the remainder, only 35 were identifiable artefacts datable to the LIA/ER period. Of that 35, the proportion of personal adornment is rather high (Figure 8.7). Given, however, that so much other material was fragmentary or appeared to be random strips without obvious function, this might be a largely illusory dominance. Nonetheless, the preference for ornamental display on the body would not be out of keeping with the rest of the materials recovered from the site, which all tend to show a predilection for visual display. It is not only the body, but personal living spaces which are vehicles for this type of display; the next largest category is largely comprised of ornate furniture studs and fittings.

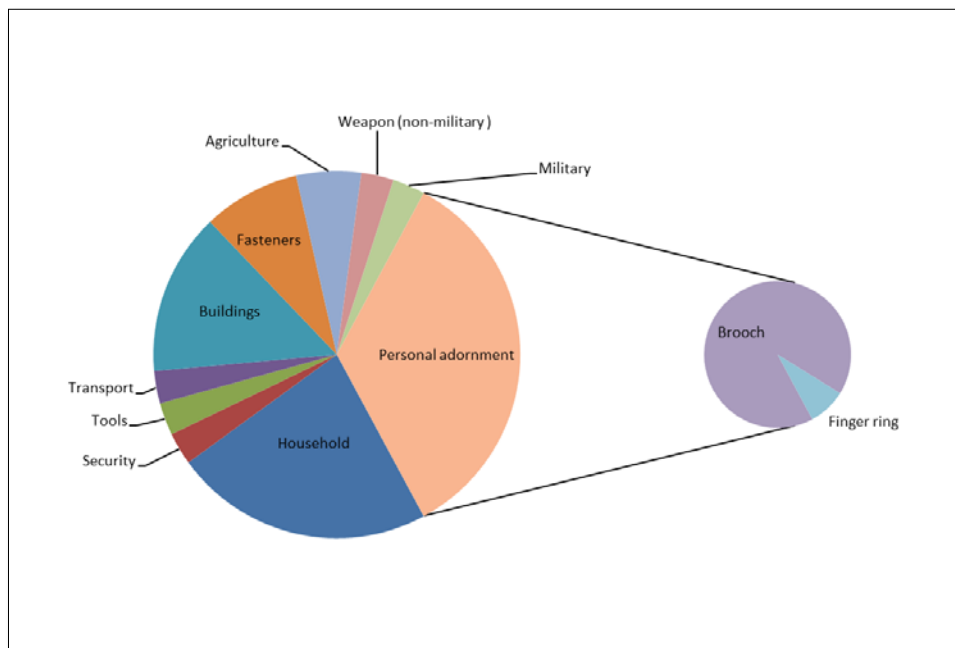


*Figure 8.7. LIA/ER copper alloy and iron objects from Area 16*

The brooches, ten of copper alloy and one of iron, are all of a 1<sup>st</sup> century date, save the one MIA residual piece. The assemblage is dominated by Nauheim derivatives and trumpets (Figure 8.8), one of the latter an enamelled specimen which Martin Henig describes as a ‘very pleasing’ representative of local craftsmanship (in prep.: 326).

Three highly functional artefacts belong to the assemblage and deserve mention; firstly, a Roman military spearhead, identified as either Manning's Group IVB or IVC, datable to 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Manning 1985:160-70). Coupled with the single Hod Hill brooch, one could speculate about the presence of an individual who served the Roman military in some capacity.

The other two objects underline the economic role of this settlement- one is a very well preserved iron scythe blade which was still attached to its broken wooden handle. Radiocarbon dating gave a 95% confidence to the handle being from 150 cal BC – AD cal 80, making this one of the earliest examples of grass mowing tools in Britain (Henig & Scott in prep.:335). Paired with the other find, an iron hipposandal, the suggestion of the farmstead as a central supplier of hay may bear some weight. The later Roman find of an intact and preserved wooden 'greedy board' likely from a hay cart also support the utility of this area for such a crop and hint at a certain continuity of land use (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 131; 355).

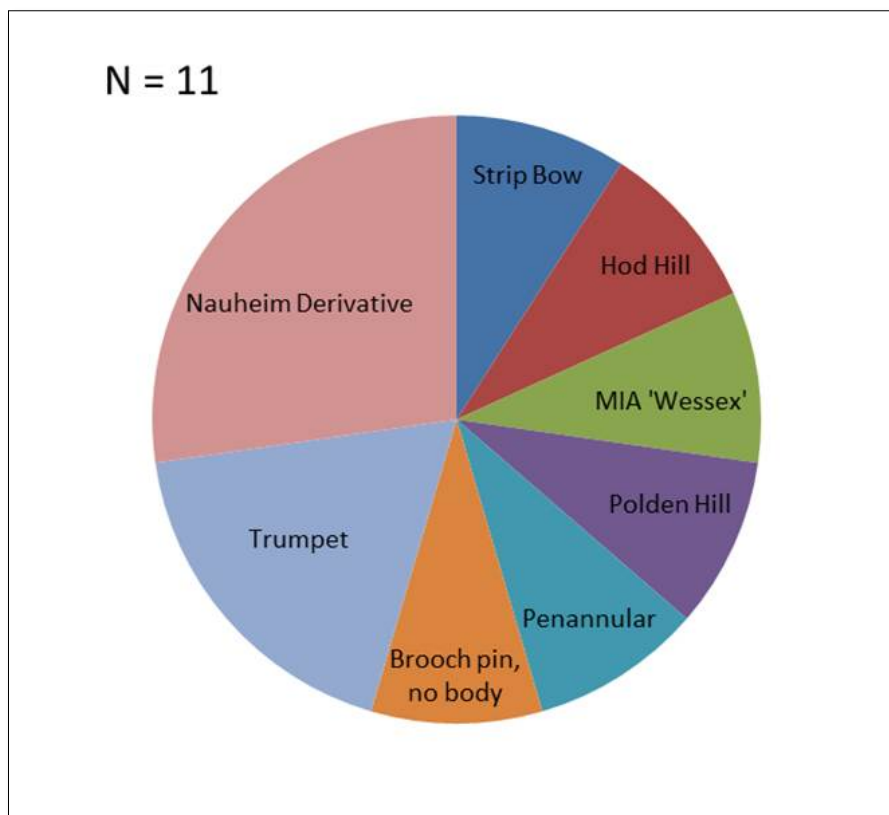


Figure 8.8. Breakdown of brooches in the assemblage by type

### 8.2.5 Faunal and organic evidence

The animal and bird bone assemblage from Eton College Rowing Lake is remarkably like that at Barton Court Farm in the Upper Thames (7.2.5). Whilst there is some degree of fluctuation between the M-LIA and ER assemblages with regard to the represented numbers of cattle and sheep, the overall figures are relatively stable across both periods, particularly the presence of the potentially 'high-status' eating of pig (Figure 8.9). The only stark difference is that in the M-LIA bone assemblage there are no domesticated fowl, but some ducks; whereas in the early Roman period, there are no domesticated ducks but fowl. The sample numbers, however, are so minute (less than 5 bones each) that the difference may be largely illusory. Nonetheless, it is reported in the classical sources that the pre-Roman peoples of Britain did not eat fowl, but kept geese (and perhaps ducks?) for pets (De Bellico Gallo V:12), so perhaps this faint trace of fowl in the ER assemblage suggests the adoption of new eating habits.

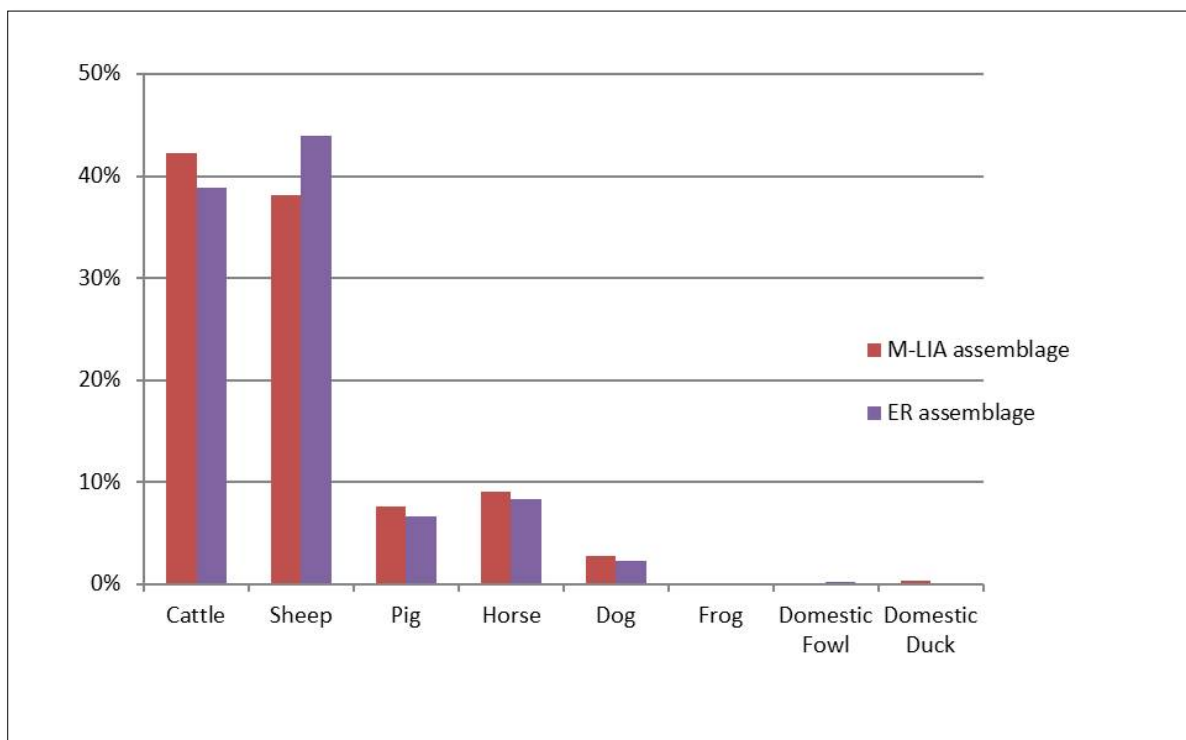


Figure 8.9. Comparison of identifiable species from LIA and ER faunal assemblages for Area 16

Of the bone fragments that could be aged, roughly 70% of the cattle from both the LIA and ER periods were over 3 years old. It is supposed that in a model where dairy is the primary

product, the male half of the population will be culled at an earlier age (Bates, in prep.: 388). Therefore, the greater age of the population might suggest that meat and/or hides were the greater priority.

Sheep, conversely, appeared to be mostly culled before reaching 3 years of age, with the bulk of the animals dead at very early ages. This would be again more in keeping with a focus on meat production rather than the retention of animals for milk or wool. It would appear from the dental and epiphyseal evidence that both cattle and sheep were primarily valued for their meat, but it should be noted that of the 1900 sheep and cattle bone fragments, the numbers of each that provided any useful aging data was in the single digits.

Unlike any of the other sites in these case studies, the settlement at Eton exhibits several human burials. The severely plough damaged remains of an adult male around age 40 were recovered from a truncated grave pit (9943) just south of the ring ditches. Although his crouched position was reminiscent of the Bronze Age burial (10400) found elsewhere during the excavation, the skeleton was accompanied by 24 sherds of M-LIA pottery. LIA/ER fills of the southern main enclosure ditches yielded fragments of several infants (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 191), whilst a contemporary cremation was found just outside the main enclosure in a small pit (9597). The cremation contained a single nail and was apparently unurned, although LIA/ER pottery fragments were found in association with the remains (*ibid.*: 195). Even with so few individuals, one can see that the dead are buried in very different traditions.

#### **8.2.6 Putting it all together**

The LIA/ER settlement at Eton appears to be a place where there was great respect for orderliness and rules; the interior space reveals no casual placements of pits and a clear zonation of use. There appear to be rules for everything – where rubbish is discarded, where wells may be dug, who gets buried where, and in which manner. The very fact that the ditched enclosures are recut along the exact same lines at least on seven different occasions suggests that deviation from the standard would not be appreciated. Reverence for the past traditions is

carried out also in the inclusion of the Bronze Age burial mounds within the enclosure and the placement of burial pit 9943 into its limits. Based on these observations of tradition and constraint, this could not be a community that was any higher grid. As there is no suggestion from the material evidence that this is a settlement of oppressed or subservient people with limited options, one must lean to the right side of the matrix, placing this settlement comfortably in the 'H' designation. This society offered plenty of scope for display and in the assemblage; ornate tableware and jewellery are common enough. Communication and exchange seem to have enabled trade, although the incoming products may have been selected with the traditional kept in mind. There is much about the site which appears philosophically, if not materially, like Barton Court Farm, although the success of that hierarchical farmstead relied on the cattle trade, whereas Eton appears to have concentrated more on the production and export of surplus hay.

Division of space within the enclosure might suggest the importance of living next to the ancestors; a similar arrangement exists at Barcombe in Sussex (Rudling 2004). After the increase in Roman influence, traditions are maintained but the new focus is alliance to external, not ancestral power. Perhaps the construction of the post-pad aisled building outside the trapezoidal main enclosure shows a willingness to shift that focus to the trackways that connect the settlement to the wider world?

In their publication, the excavators asked 'Where were the Roman fields?' (Allen *et al.* in prep.: 601). The absence of field systems for this complex, coupled with the corndrier and querns, point to the Eton college settlement as a hub for grain processing, relying on the outlying smaller farmsteads of Agar's Plough (#39) and Lake End Road (#64) to supply it with the raw materials. What those smaller farm holders received in return is unknown, but one may speculate that pasturing rights, winter hay provision, and possibly even protection may have been part of the relationship.



The site was apparently abandoned by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but this may have had more to do with the broader changes affecting the region than any singular response by the settlement; nearly all of the known Romano-British settlements in this region seem to go out of use around that time (Foreman *et al.* 2002:15). The ability of the community at Eton to map their ordered worldview onto the hierarchical order of the Roman world was probably the reason for their nearly seamless transition. New technologies may have allowed them to articulate this order, but within a framework that had been in place since the M-LIA.

### **8.3 Southlea Farm**

#### **8.3.1 Introduction**

Southlea Farm lies to the southwest of the small Berkshire village of Datchet and approximately 2km east of Windsor. It is situated on the north bank of the River Thames, in the curve of a meander. The site is situated on floodplain gravels, overlain largely with alluvial deposits. The area was brought to the attention of the local amateur archaeological society as a series of cropmarks taken by Professor St Joseph in the late 1950s. In spite of calls for its further investigation based upon its potential (Gates 1975:48-9), little archaeological exploration had been conducted in the Datchet area; therefore the Datchet Village Society decided to conduct, over a period of five years, an extensive program of survey, by means of both magnetometry and fieldwalking. The land at Southlea farm was divided up into several discrete parcels, and whilst all were investigated, only three were productive enough to merit detailed inclusion into the project's publication (Figure 8.10). The findings were presented in two volumes; the first deals with Field 2 whilst the second reports on Field A and Field 4. Regrettably, the reports do not make much attempt to integrate the findings from these neighbouring fields to form a site synthesis.

The main features revealed at Southlea Farm were chiefly field systems of a likely Bronze Age date, and a series of ring ditches in both Fields A and 2 that suggest contemporary funerary monuments in the landscape; the presence of Bronze Age pottery would seem to confirm this

reading of the landscape. 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century finds of Bronze Age metalwork, as well as Early Iron Age pieces from the river at Southlea Farm (Lawrence 1929: 74; Piggott 1950:26; Denington & Morgan 1966:26) would further support some sort of ritual focus. The Early Iron Age seems to be represented in Fields 2 and 4 by a series of pit alignments which are later incorporated into a sub- rectangular enclosure. This enclosure subsequently gained an annex to the south and a second enclosure was constructed to the east (also in Field 2). By the Late Iron Age, Field A appeared to become the focus for activity, with the highlight being a large double ditched rectangular enclosure nearly 100m across. This enclosure had been bisected by a major roadway in 1850, and so any evidence of interior activity has been lost. However, the volunteers located where the road's storm ditch truncated the enclosure ditches and carried out a small excavation to produce a clear section of both the inner and outer ditches, as well as a third ditch that appeared to predate the enclosure.

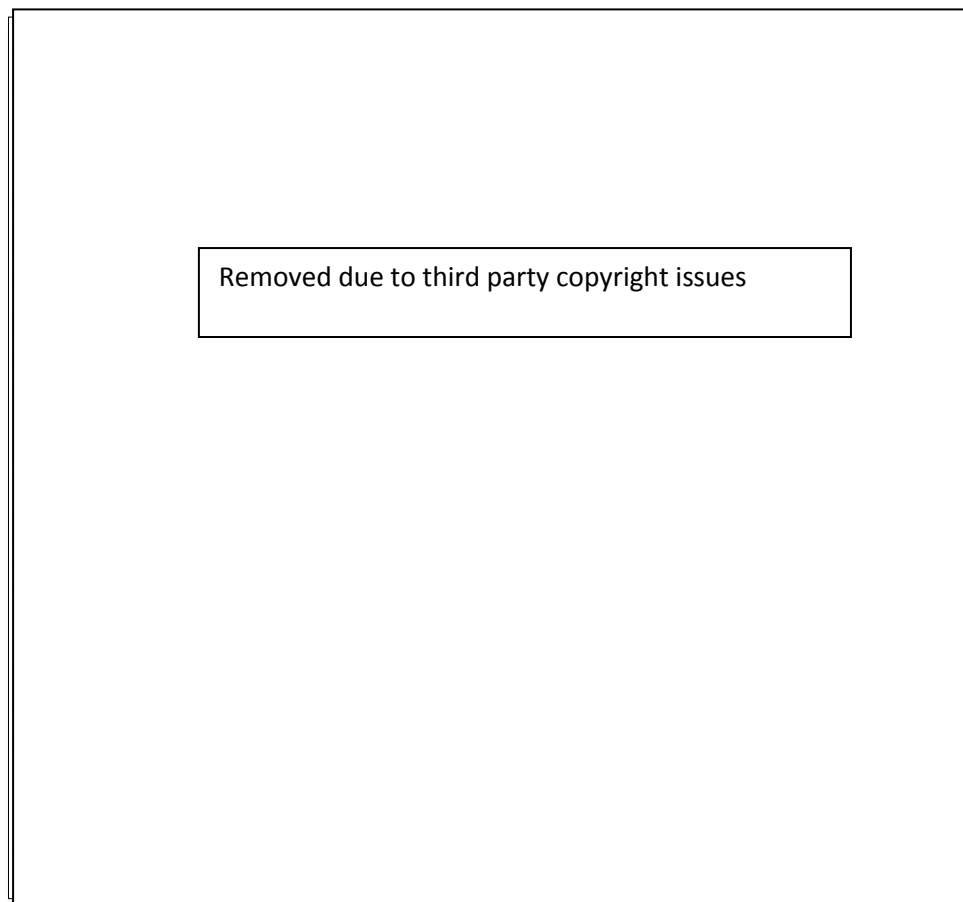


*Figure 8.10. Location of Southlea farm and the separate fields mentioned in the report. Fields in which significant survey was conducted are outlined in red. (after Martin 2008)*

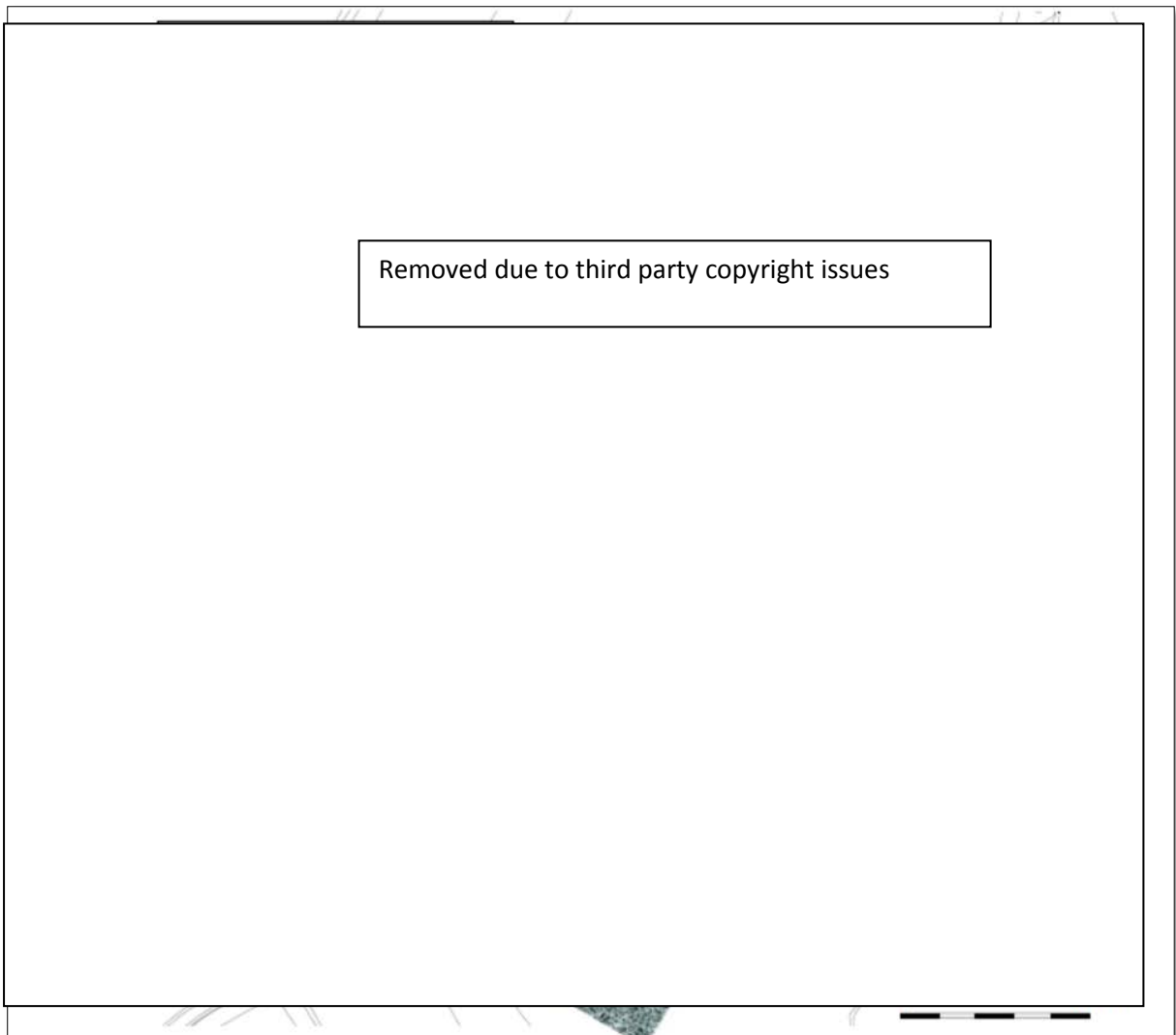


*Figure 8.11. Magnetometry results in Fields A and 7 showing the large LIA enclosure ditches.  
(after Martin 2008b)*

The activity noted at Southlea Farm, expressed as unique and great importance by the enthusiastic amateurs who collated the final report (Martin 2010:4), marks a site which is, in fact, one of a number of comparable sites visible from aerial photography and from past excavations in this part of the Middle Thames Valley (Gates 1975:46-50; Yates 2007: 152-3). What makes Southlea a stronger choice for inclusion as a case study is the accumulation of information gathered over a decade by the Datchet Village Society. Their presentation of nearly every tiny sherd, whilst arguably over-the-top, allowed for a deeper examination and interpretation of the activity only visible in two dimensions in many of the other nearby sites.

Indeed, despite the fact that in places the quality of the report may exceed the quality of the fieldwork, sufficient information is presented to make the site of interest to this study.

### **8.3.2 Structures**

Although there was not sufficient excavation carried out on this site to confirm structural remains, the extensive geophysical survey, coupled with the spatial analysis of domestic detritus, was sufficient to posit the existence of at least two possible house locations. The enclosure in Field A (Figure 8.11) may well have contained a domestic focus; more substantial evidence comes from Field 2 (Figure 8.12) where the concentrations of LIA and Roman pottery appear to relate to the pair of enclosures. Alternatively, the distribution of this ceramic material, encompassing as it does both the LIA and entire Roman assemblage, could be the result of manuring practices. Naturally, without proper excavation, the very existence of these structures must be pure speculation, to say nothing of any construction techniques or influences.

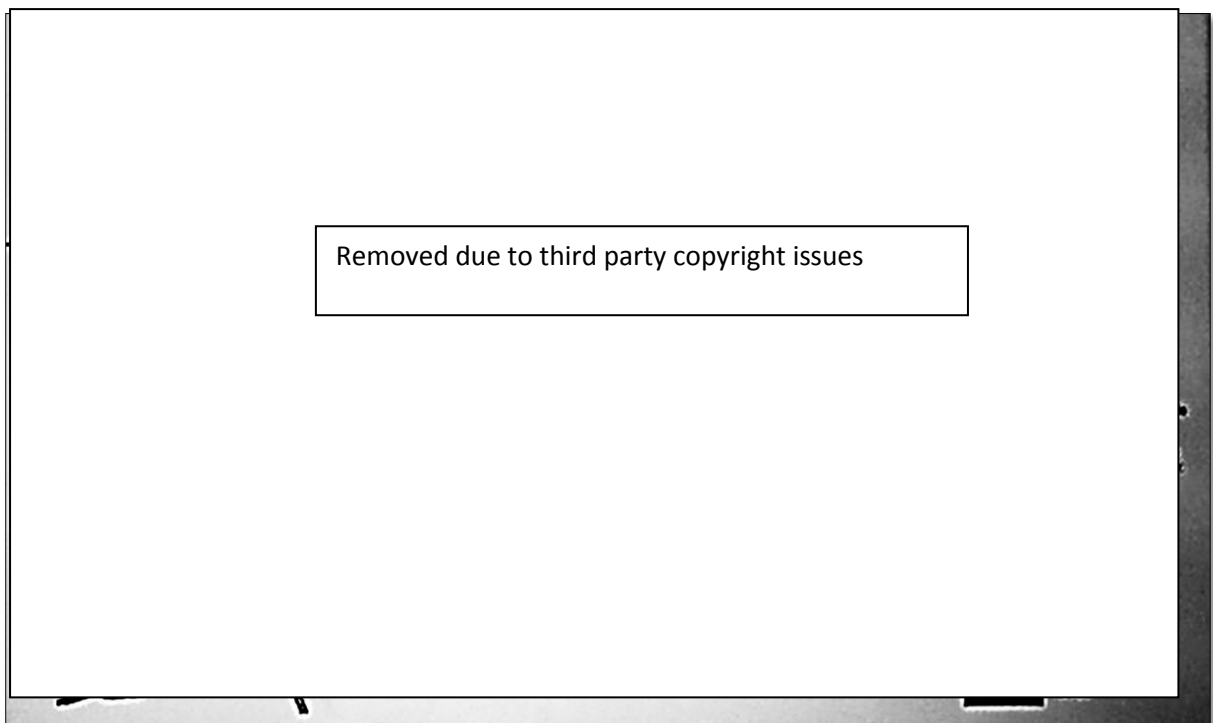


*Figure 8.12. Distribution of LIA and Roman (all dates) pottery recovered from fieldwalking in Field 2 (Martin 2008a:14).*

### **8.3.3 Ceramic and glass vessels**

#### ***Ceramics***

The ceramics report is divided between specialists, so that Alastair Barclay was given the prehistoric pottery to examine, whilst the Roman assemblage was made available to Edward Biddulph. Barclay accounted for 112 sherds of grog-tempered LIA/ER (E80) wares in the assemblage he was sent to evaluate; these never appeared in Biddulph's quantification of fabrics, suggesting that the partitioning of the finds was conducted by a non-specialist, and that the two specialists did not have the opportunity to compare information. For the sake of thoroughness, the 112 sherds have been added to Biddulph's E80 totals. This has the knock on effect of greatly lessening the impact of the grey ware on the assemblage, dropping it from Biddulph's 77% to 56%. Such grey wares typically run the gamut from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the heavily abraded condition of many of the sherds recovered from this site made any accurate dating impossible. Given that this material was nearly all from unstratified contexts, and that a percentage of the reduced grey wares included are likely from the later 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century, then impact of grey ware on the LIA/ER assemblage is lessened even more. From this it becomes clear that the grog tempered coarsewares are in far more use on this site than any romanized fabrics.

In Field A, the aerial photographs and survey suggested that some LIA features were succeeded by 1<sup>st</sup> century AD LIA/ER features, and this appears to be confirmed by the limited material which was excavated from the ditch fills exposed in the modern storm drain. The presence of LIA ceramics from the ditch shown in yellow (F4) in Figure 8.11 indicate that F4 was truncated by the construction of the double ditched enclosure (F3/F3A), which contained almost exclusively material dated c. AD40-80, whilst the uppermost fill of F3A contained material dating c. AD 70-100. The chronological support given by the ceramic evidence would suggest that whatever the use of the land was in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century, it was made over in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century. This two- phase LIA/ER activity may also be seen in the differing ratios of flint- to grog-tempered 'E' type fabrics recovered from the site (Figure 8.13). Field 4 showed a much higher

presence of the flint-tempered wares associated with the LIA/ER date from other regional sites (Booth 1995: 108-9). The separation of tempered vessels over a distance of 500m could suggest some sort of enforced sumptuary code, but it is more likely that it represents an earlier phase of activity on a site which seems to support a form of 'wandering settlement', particularly in light of sympathetic chronological use of the flint- and grog-tempered distribution at Old Shifford Farm (7.3.3).

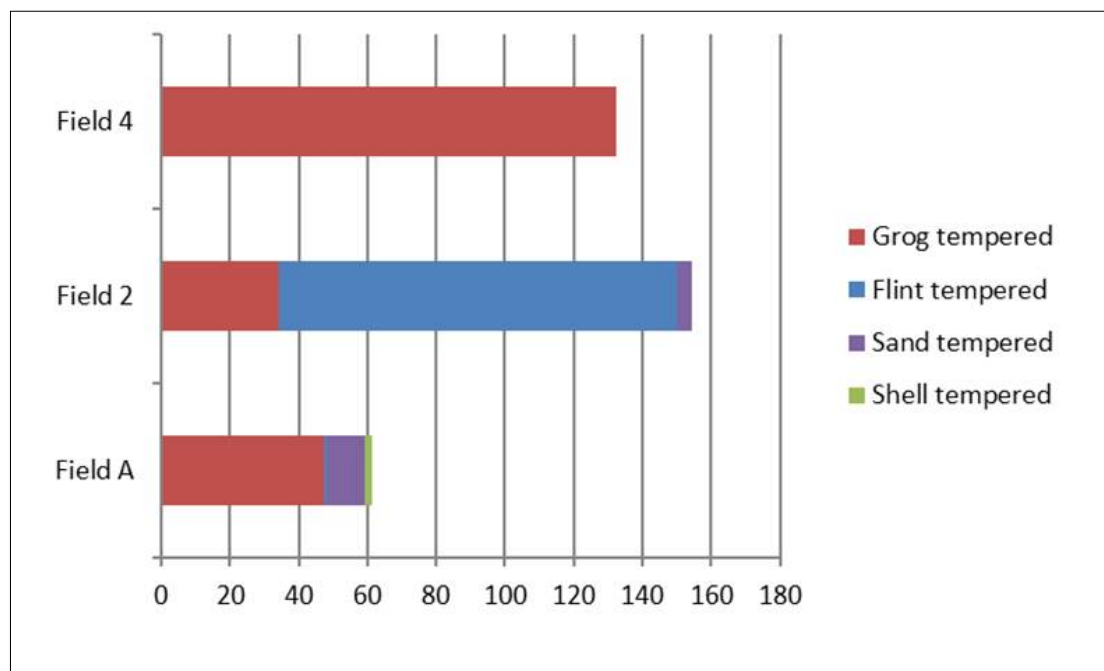


*Figure 8.13. Grog tempered and flint tempered 'Belgic' wares recovered from Fields A, 2, and 4*

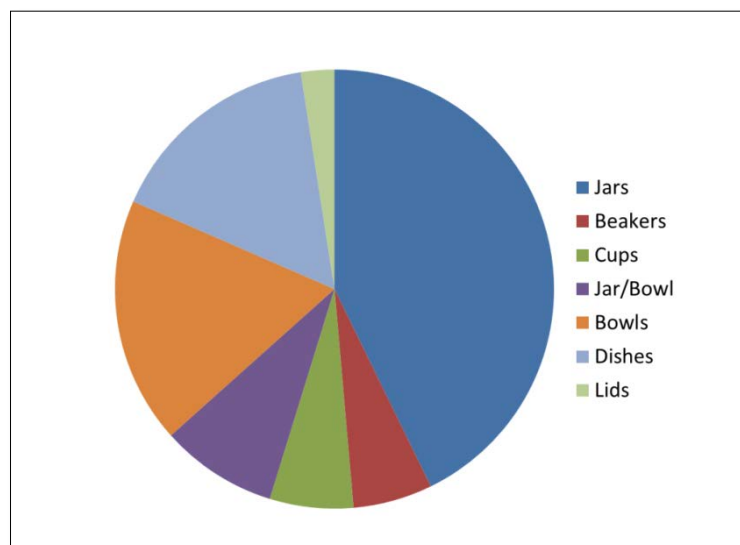


*Figure 8.14. Breakdown of identifiable forms from total assemblage of recovered pottery sherds*

Apart from the scant help with the chronology, what else can the ceramic information at Southlea tell us? The preferred form type is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the jar (Figure 8.14). Biddulph writes that the ceramics suggest a LIA/ER settlement largely focussed upon local connections with scant notice or interest in the wider Roman world (2008a:4). There are only 3 sherds of samian, no mortaria, and a predilection for traditional form and fabric – even the romanized oxidised wares which are eventually adopted are closely allied with earlier grog-tempered fabrics (O80). If the later Roman fabrics are discounted, then the ratio of jar to bowl is closer to 2-1 rather than the 1-1 total Biddulph cites as reason to believe that the Datchet residents had more sophisticated pottery usage (*ibid.*). It would seem that by the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Southlea Farm was home to a group of people who were fiercely traditional and lived according to simple means. This contrasts with what might be seen as an earlier phase of prosperity, with high status quernstones and perhaps a thriving trade in livestock, suggested by the droveway and possible animal enclosures. All this abruptly seems to change around the time of the conquest, and the site appears to be largely cut off from wider trade networks; whether by choice or by force is subject to debate and will be considered further section 8.3.6.

### ***Glass***

There were no glass objects recorded for any of the fields in this investigation. There are several ways to interpret this; one might suppose that glass shards, difficult to see in the best of conditions, were not easily spotted by field walkers in fresh ploughsoil. One might also suppose that inexperienced field walkers might assume glass to be modern detritus and neglect to collect it. Alternatively, it may be that glass vessels, and the substances that they contained, either held no particular attraction for the people of this settlement or that they were denied access to such commodities either through economic austerity or through other controlling factors. (See 7.3.3 for discussion of absent glass at Old Shifford Farm).

#### **8.3.4 Metalwork**

The paucity of metalwork from Southlea Farm; only 117 objects were recovered, of which only 1 iron object was from the stratified context of the outer enclosure ditch from the Field A excavations. The bulk of the assemblage was either structural (nails) or agricultural and much of that of a likely post-medieval date. Despite the x-raying of all of the pieces, none of the recovered metal was in the least diagnostic. What can be made of this hole in the data?

One simple explanation may be that, unbeknownst to the dedicated volunteers, Southlea Farm was the victim of intensive 'night-hawking' – the illegal removal of artefacts by metal-detectorists. These unscrupulous individuals may have removed all of the informative ancient metalwork, leaving only agricultural debris and a few nails in their wake. They would, however, have had to operate without anyone noticing over a period of five years and comprehensively covered all the fields in the survey. Since the property is owned by Crown Estates and the tenant farmer was very supportive of the project, it is unlikely that such illicit activity would go unnoticed or unreported. A search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme database shows only two entries for a 2km region around Southlea Farm – an Iron Age coin from the Celtic Coin Index and a 4<sup>th</sup> century radiate. Crown Estates take great pains to regulate metal detecting on their properties, and have been great supporters of the PAS, so lack or reporting finds doesn't seem to account for the low numbers. It is possible that Crown Estates has simply been denying all permission to detect on their lands in this area, leading to an artificial hole in the distribution map.

Let us suppose, however, that there are no such simple explanations involving detectorists; let us look solely at the material that we know to have been recovered from this location. From the riverbed at the Datchet meander, an earlier Iron Age sword and scabbard were recovered, as well as a brooch that was dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Hull & Hawkes 1987:147-8). Nothing has been recovered from the LIA/ER period. Although it is impossible to be fully confident about the reality of this absence of ornamental metal, it is possible to conjecture that however the people



at this settlement were using metal, it didn't seem to factor in to the more demonstrative aspects of their society.

### **8.3.5 Faunal and organic evidence**

Only 140 bone fragments were recovered from the entire exercise and of these only 34 came from the securely dated LIA/ER contexts of F3/3A. Of these 34, only 11 could be confidently identified to species. Of the other 106 fragments, only 41 were identifiable. The sample size is far too small to say anything particularly definitive about animal husbandry on this site. Many of the unstratified bones may represent other periods or be modern intrusions. Comparison by species (Figure 8.15) does, however, even with this minuscule sample, conform to known ratios for the period in question. This is likely to be largely illusory for the reasons stated above, but it allows us to speculate that Southlea Farm consumed and used animals in a way that was not too different from its neighbours.

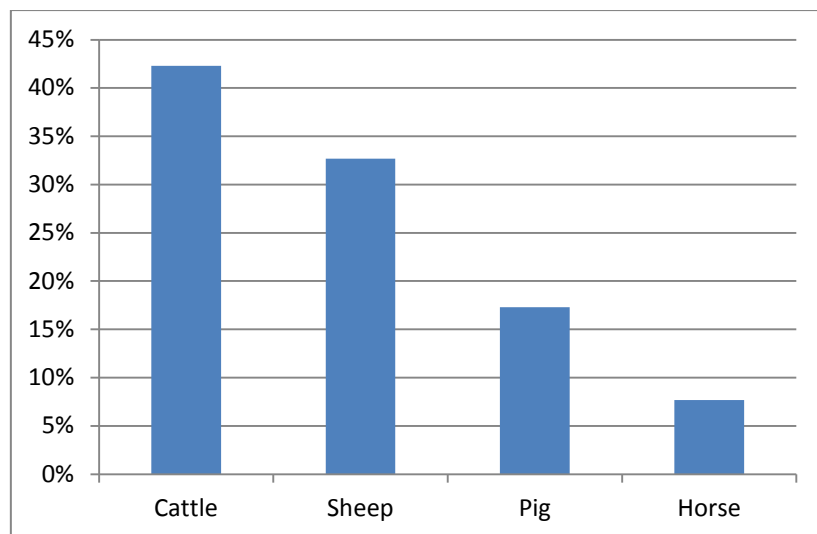


*Figure 8.15. Breakdown of identifiable animal remains gathered from walking survey of fields A, 2, and 4.*

Whilst no useful environmental data was obtained from the 10 years of work conducted at Southlea, and thus no pollen or charred plant remains can inform about the cereal economy of the settlement, the presence of 4 quernstones (1 complete, 3 partial) can perhaps help suggest that cereal processing was occurring here. This perhaps places the site in sharp contrast to its upriver counterpart, Claydon Pike, another community on gravel islands with roots reaching

back in to the MIA. At Southlea Farm, cereal was being processed whereas at Claydon Pike, the final products were being imported, with the focus instead on animal husbandry.

Two of the better preserved quernstones were identified as Lodsworth querns, at the easternmost extremity of their distribution area (Peacock 1987:74). Other types of stone being far more readily obtainable (sarsen and greensand), Shaffrey was led to surmise that perhaps this implied something about the status of the site (2010:21). Given that the ceramic assemblage is seen as indicating a low status site in the LIA/ER periods, then the suggestion that the querns may indicate higher status is a contradiction worth exploration.

### **8.3.6 Putting it all together**

Of all six case studies, Southlea Farm presents the biggest challenge; little excavated material exists, and the nature of much of the information revealed by geophysical survey is unknown. This represents the extreme edge of the application of Cultural Theory to a complex assemblage. If one finds the application overly speculative in the other case studies, then here it must seem nearly fanciful; however, let us see what manner of picture can be drawn of the people who lived here. Earlier settlement activity here seems to have been well regulated, with linear field systems and the use of pit alignments to demarcate space. The scant material from the LBA/EIA period for this site (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC ornate brooch, decorated sword, and scabbard) suggest a greater taste for the finer things than their successors; the presence of the Lodsworth quernstones also suggest such a 'high status' consumption pattern. One might conjecture that this community with strong rules (high grid) and access to 'high-status' goods to help articulate roles within the group (high group) fell into the hierarchical category, although much more data would be needed to increase confidence in this. Compared to the LIA/ER settlement, the apparent contrast, then, is rather striking. These people seemed to care little for decorative display, either in clothing fasteners or jewellery. Their tableware and cooking implements were similarly without ornament. No set roles seem apparent. One could suggest that this community was low grid. Inasmuch as a low grid/ low group community might be expected to exhibit an

opportunistic exploitation of the new materials, the nearly complete lack of these objects suggests a location to the higher group end. Therefore one might suggest the egalitarian 'E' social structure for Southlea Farm. A targeted campaign of excavation might provide enough materials to offer a completely different interpretation, but based upon the data available, there is no reason to not suppose that social interactions at LIA/ER settlement at Southlea Farm were very much unlike those at Claydon Pike (6.2).

## **8.4 Discussion**

In these two case studies, we see communities which can be described by the right side of the grid/group matrix; the people at the Eton College settlement were bound by tradition (the recut ditches and ancestor burials) and rules dictated where certain activities could occur (zonation of space within the enclosure) and even how ceramics should be decorated. Boundaries affirmed the identity of the group and inclusion of the dead into ancient funerary monuments sealed that group identity. In contrast to the high grid/high group hierarchical community, the inhabitants of Southlea Farm appeared to dismiss any semblance of visual rank or display. Neither personal dress nor tableware appeared to be a medium for ornamentation and imported or Roman-influenced materials were largely unnecessary to maintain social relationships. Nonetheless, strong enclosure ditches clearly marked off the group from the outside world, suggesting a solid community identity. Without evidence of rules and constraints on behaviour, however, one is left to assume that Southlea Farm lies lower on the grid axis than Eton College Rowing Lake.

One might question why the site at Southlea Farm merited inclusion in the select group of more closely examined case studies. It is true that there was not much in the way of confirmed archaeological features or indeed, artefacts. It was felt, however, that the site nicely juxtaposed the other Middle Thames case study at Eton College. In archaeology, most projects suffer from a wealth of data and too little funding to analyse and process it all; perversely, the Southlea project, backed by both an Heritage Lottery Fund grant and financial support from the Prince

Phillip Trust and Crown Estates, was in the unusual position of having a wealth of funds to lavish on a relative few recovered finds. As such, the report in some places seems to treat the material as a millionaire would their pet – expensive treatments when simple remedies would suffice. Conversely, as a commercial project that had to subject itself to the competitive tendering process, the work at Eton College Rowing Lake was constantly under the pressure of having too much archaeology for limited finds. Sadly, the majority of the sites in the gazetteer will have been excavated under these conditions; yet even this is preferred to them not having been excavated at all!

Chapters 4 and 5 explored the dataset and offered some interpretations of the inter-site comparisons of the rural settlements in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley landscape and postulated ways in which viewing social structure through the lens of Cultural Theory can help us think about transition responses. The six case studies have allowed the application of ‘grid/group analysis’ on a more detailed scale and to explore the types of assemblages that suggest the four idealistic types (always remembering that they represent extreme ideals) of cultural bias outlined in Cultural Theory. In the next and final chapter, I will consider further the wider implications of using Cultural Theory and point out some areas for future work.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS

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### 9.1 Introduction

It is accepted from the beginning that the interpretations offered in this thesis are heavily dependent upon the quality of the excavations and of the publications and availability of related data. Admittedly, the idea may be fragile in the face of new excavations – if the area sampled at Eton College Rowing Lake had been 50% larger, perhaps the entire classification of the site would be different. Yet in archaeology, we must ever deal with the ‘what ifs’ of practice in the field; we cannot allow that ambiguity to keep us from making informed speculations about the organisation of the past. In this chapter, I will offer some final thoughts about the importance of the worldview to choices made by the rural Thames Valley consumer, followed by discussion of how communities with different perceptions of the world may have managed to organise themselves into larger groups. Finally, some suggestions for future work are put forth.

### 9.2 Choice versus emulation

*‘The overall picture is of a conservative settlement gradually adopting Romano-British technology and practices during the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Roman occupation.’*

*(Allen et al. 1993:181)*

This statement is symptomatic of the inescapable ‘romanization-as-uniform-process’ problem. This sentence, or those phrased very like it, is repeated over and over again in the literature, numbing the reader into a sense of complacency. Despite acknowledging that the ‘native’ is a participant in the process, it still seems that the rural Briton is swept away on the tide of consumption, and the individual responses to the changes of the time are largely undermined. Emulation is seen to be the governing instinct of the humble farmer. Miller (1985:18-7) illustrates this point of view with this idealised ‘happiness principle’ (Figure 9.1). In this scenario, despite the fact that no amount of emulation seems to be able to satisfy the very poor,

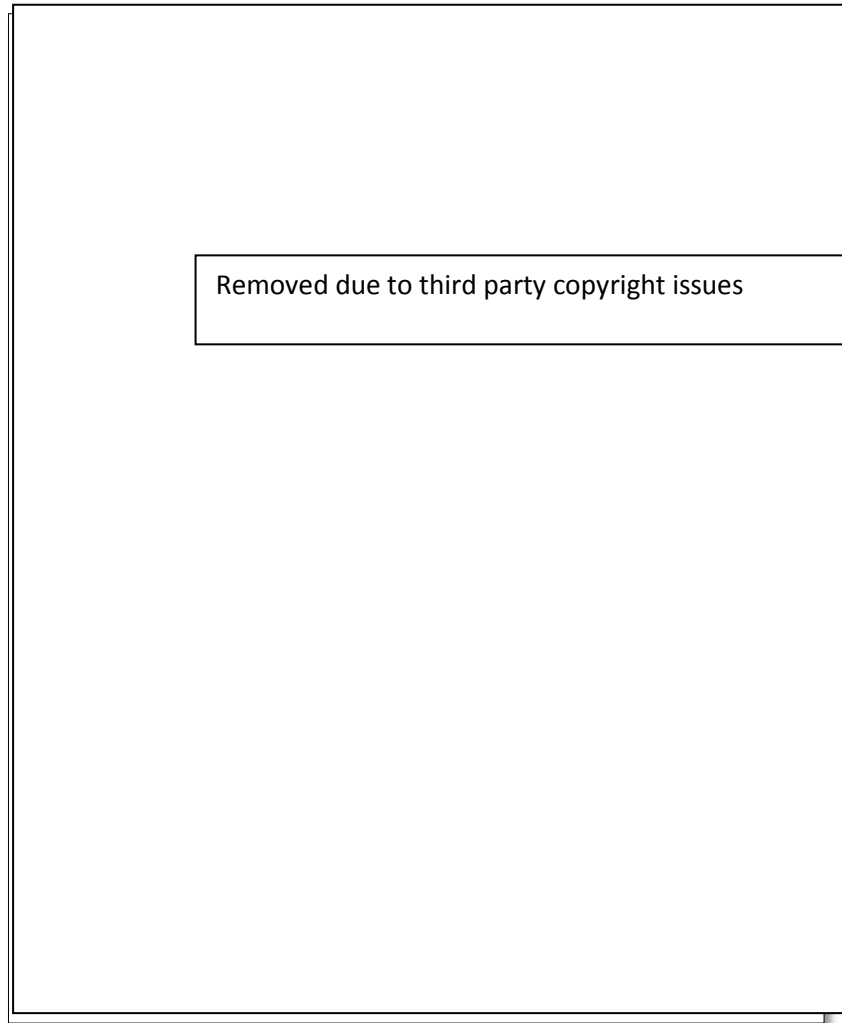


*Figure 9.1. Miller's happiness principle, in which the acquisition of a lug handle brings social respectability. (1985:186)*

consumer choices are solely driven by the need to 'keep up with the Joneses'. Sites without a certain percentage of finewares and romanized imports are dismissed as poor sites - low status, with no real wealth or trade connections (Booth 2004a). Yet in many cases there is evidence of thriving interaction with other communities. Salt, animals, crops, and metal products and ore were all brought into and exported from these 'conservative settlements' and the inhabitants may have indeed experienced both wealth and status. Yet measured by our (or what we imagine to be a Roman) standard of success, then they may have seemed poor indeed. This concept of the 'romanized good life' is both our inheritance and our taint – we must shed ourselves of this notion that access to goods equals desire for goods. We should, for example, consider the 'missing persons' of the artefactual assemblage. The vast quantities of perishable objects and

artefacts that filled the LIA/ER world are lost to us by the forces of decomposition. The intensity of wood cutting and forest management that was occurring over these centuries surely points to a substantial amount of wood in the resource pool. This wood was not all reduce to charcoal to stoke the smelting fires and feed kilns; many fine and beautifully crafted objects would have been wrought from ash and oak, hazel and buckthorn. Wooden bowls from Farmoor (#42) and Perry Oaks (#92) only hint at the wealth of now-invisible artefacts. A community's or individual's deliberate rejection of brash red samian tableware might not stem from its Roman origin or imply any agenda of resistance, but rather might be rooted in a matter of taste sees a plainer object to be preferable than 'vulgar display'.

Although mimicry is offered as a reason for the 'natives' wanting Roman style products, can we really believe that there was, for the rural farmer, a sense of obligation or external pressure to 'romanize' his personal possessions and everyday consumables? Certainly the number of representations in the material evidence indicate that functional(i.e. reduced and oxidised coarse ware jars) Roman ware was preferential to the finer eating and drinking ware, which although present, is in such a minority as to suggest that a few items were akin to one fulfilling social convention by having a nice tea-set to, but rarely using it (Cooper 1996:89). Perhaps in former times, the 'special occasion' objects for feasting and drinking were constructed from wood, making high occasions largely aceramic.

Douglas writes that "hostility is a more interesting basis for theories of taste than some universal principle of envy" (1996:54). We must be careful about our perception that the rural majority of Britain wanted to emulate or adopt Roman traits and practices. Just because Tacitus paints a picture of noble savages handing over their freedom for the trappings of *romanitas*, we should not apply this image indiscriminately. Similarly, Douglas' use of hostility here is not so much indicative of hostility toward the origins of the goods, but rather the implicit meanings

which produce the reaction of the consumer towards the goods<sup>40</sup>. To reduce all individual choice of the LIA/ER consumer to terms of emulation or poverty by assigning labels of high-status, low-status, and elite robs these people of their personhood.

It has been argued that material culture can inform us 'directly about domination, power, and resistance' (Rippengal 1996:233) with the implication that 'persistence equals resistance' (Carr 2002:53, contra Woolf 1998:23). I would largely reject this as it neglects the consumer's potential indifference. Within one's worldview some things do not require change or 'upgrading'; other things are seen as undesirable. One could argue that persistence could be construed as resistance only in instances where the perceived benefits of change outweighed the effort involved, but change was still rejected.

This is the path dependent/punctuated equilibrium model, as well as the 'surprise' model of Complexity Theory, in which only a major shock or trauma can drive people from their path, or 'set ways'. It might have been thought that this event was the 'coming of Rome', but in many instances people stayed in the same places despite Rome and the grid/group classification remained unchanged. In other places, settlements are either abandoned or grid/group shifts, which allows us to postulate one of two theories:

- A new population has moved in following the shock which removed the original. They bring with them their own worldview and apply it to the community they build.
- The shock of something greater than Roman administration had forced a sea change in the world views of the occupants. Many of the settlements which appear to have a major grid/group shift are in areas with a propensity for flooding events; perhaps we can infer that the shock of a changing environment forced a re-alignment of their worldview <sup>41</sup>(see Barrett *et al.* 2012; Meyer & Crumley 2012).

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<sup>40</sup> Douglas describes this matter of taste as the 'I wouldn't be seen dead in it' reaction of the garment shopper. (1996:82)

<sup>41</sup> One could hope that modern man might learn from this and change the views *before* the crisis.



Clearly in the minds of the LIA/ER consumer in the Thames Valley there was a lot more going on than just a desire to eat from the same plates as those we are meant to believe they saw as their betters.

### **9.3 Heterarchy and identity**

Crumley (2005) has drawn attention to the potential application of Complexity Theory in archaeology. Indeed some aspects of Complexity Theory (holistic datasets, the concept of surprise/chaos as motivators for change) are compatible with Cultural Theory. One aspect of Complexity Theory, heterarchy, may help to explain how disparate communities with wide ranging perceptions of the world around them might have functioned within an interconnected landscape. Heterarchies are collaborative endeavours whereby organizations are networked together, but they may not necessarily overlap in all areas of social or cultural attitudes. The term has had a variety of definitions, as it is applied widely across many disciplines. However, the definition that seems to work best for archaeology is the following:

‘Heterarchy may be defined as the relation of elements to one another when they are unranked or when they possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways’ (Crumley 1987:158; Crumley 2005:39).

Hill offers a similar view with his description of the ‘segmentary society’, which lacked central authority and rank and in which power was held by heads of households. These in turn forged and maintained various relationships and with their neighbouring counterparts. (Hill 2012:243). The heterarchy has been considered for the LIA of Devon and Cornwall (Cripps 2007) as well as Ireland (Armit 2007:137).

In this thesis, it has been suggested that the Type-E egalitarian communities in the majority of instances either shifted towards the hierarchical end of the continuum or became extinct. Heterarchical organisations can, over time, move to hierarchies and vice versa without collapsing (Crumley 1987: 164-65), in a way that a completely egalitarian enclave cannot. The

concept of heterarchy offers a degree of flexibility of the formal relationships between varying spatial scales of interaction (see Figure 9.2). Overlap between some spheres may require heterarchical relationships whilst elements of other spatial scales adopt less flexibility and adhere to their own worldview which may not be in complete accord with the wider spheres. An example of this might be a person who lives in shared egalitarian accommodation but works at an hierarchical corporation. Indeed, just such a scenario is posited for the prehistoric 'tribes' of south-eastern North America (Rogers 1995) where the social organisation of settlements is seen as an egalitarian heterarchy – that is, egalitarian communities capable of embracing some degree of interconnected ranking under certain conditions. It may be that in this way we can better understand the regional affiliations that Thames Valley inhabitants participated in.



*Figure 9.2. Overlapping spheres of spatial scale (after Darvill 2001:40)*

We should be aware of the dangers of conflating regional affiliation with ethnicity. I concur with Brather who avers that the observation of ethnic identity is beyond the reach of archaeology: 'The search for ethnic identity follows the national(istic) imagination of the past several centuries and does not meet the expressiveness of archaeological sources' (2002:174). Canham proposed a 'linear zone of farming communities established along the entire length of the

terrace system, linking population of East Anglia and the Lower Thames with the Upper Thames settlements' (1978:19). This gels with the idea of a 'river valley' people, whose relation to the river and flooding cycles might shape their relations with each other, more than their relation with dwellers of the uplands. In the modern American Midwest state of South Dakota, rural inhabitants have a multiplicity of identities: they are Americans, South Dakotans, members of a political party, and followers of religious denomination; these identities are perhaps simple for the outsider to identify. However, another dimension of identity, no less important to these individuals than the others, is the designation of "West-river or East-river folk". The river in question is the Missouri, which divides the state roughly in half from north to south as it drains into the Mississippi River. The difference, apart from geographic location, would not be visible in the archaeological record; West-river folk tend to consume the same types of materials as East-river folk. Yet there is a real sense of difference when speaking to locals about "travelling east-river" or describing interactions with "West-river folk". In this same way, we must consider that the people of the Thames Valley may have seen themselves as different from upland-folk; one might even speculate that there were separate identities for north-bank and south-bank folk.

The definition of a 'river identity' might have come about as a shared experience of life on and along the river, which may have allowed communities to "perceive themselves as part of a shared, broader identity beyond the local community – even if that perception varied from household to household and did not translate itself to any bounded social group on the ground" (Moore 2007:95). This is not to say that self-perception and identity are completely formed by the geography; however, it must be acknowledged that characteristics of the landscape, its arability, and its proximity to waterways helped to determined settlement patterns according to people's agricultural and economic requirements. Over time, these people will have developed a connection with their landscape and that relationship may have facilitated the definition of their sense of identity. The nature of that relationship may have varied dependent upon worldview, but the various settlements may have still felt connected to each other based upon the existence

of a relationship with the landscape. Previous scholarship has interpreted this connection between LIA communities as amalgamation into tribal entities, but there is a growing resistance to the concept.

### **9.3.1. The trials of tribalisation**

*'What's the use of their having names,' the Gnat said, 'if they won't answer to them?'*

*'No use to them,' said Alice; 'but it's useful to the people who name them, I suppose.'*

*(Carroll 1871:11)*

If we can suppose that settlements may have had their own unique view of the world, how might they have viewed each other and themselves? Traditionally, it has been supposed that, having organised themselves into tribes, they would have a shared tribal identity. There is a "long and stable tradition in prehistoric research which identifies archaeological material with 'tribes' mentioned in ancient sources" (Brather 2002:149). Fried (1968:4-5) describes the word tribe as one of the most egregious cases of meaninglessness in the vocabulary of anthropology, (save perhaps the term race), but more than four decades on, the term is still commonly used with regard to the pre-Roman inhabitants of Britain. For a tribe to be a group, all members would have to participate theoretically within an interacting structure, although as offered in the previous section, the Thames Valley groups may be better described as participating in flexible heterarchies or aggregates rather than a tribe. There were 'fuzzy boundaries' and communal land use was not a universal practice; although a common language may be in use, many communities don't appear to need to cooperate in common enterprise nor be united in a consolidated hierarchy. Communication and contact were clearly important, based upon trackways and the river itself, but this mobility has led some to question the utility of these boundaries; if people are regularly moving between territories, then there isn't really that much to a territorial identity (Hill 2007:22-24). Leins (2008:103-4) has shown that making a distinction between inscribed and un-inscribed Iron Age coinage in the Oxfordshire region

highlighted the fluid nature of these supposed boundaries, as opposed to the static lines suggested by gross-plot distribution maps. Figure 9.3 suggests that although there are approximate groupings of the three major ‘tribal’ designations, the distinctions are far from sharp.

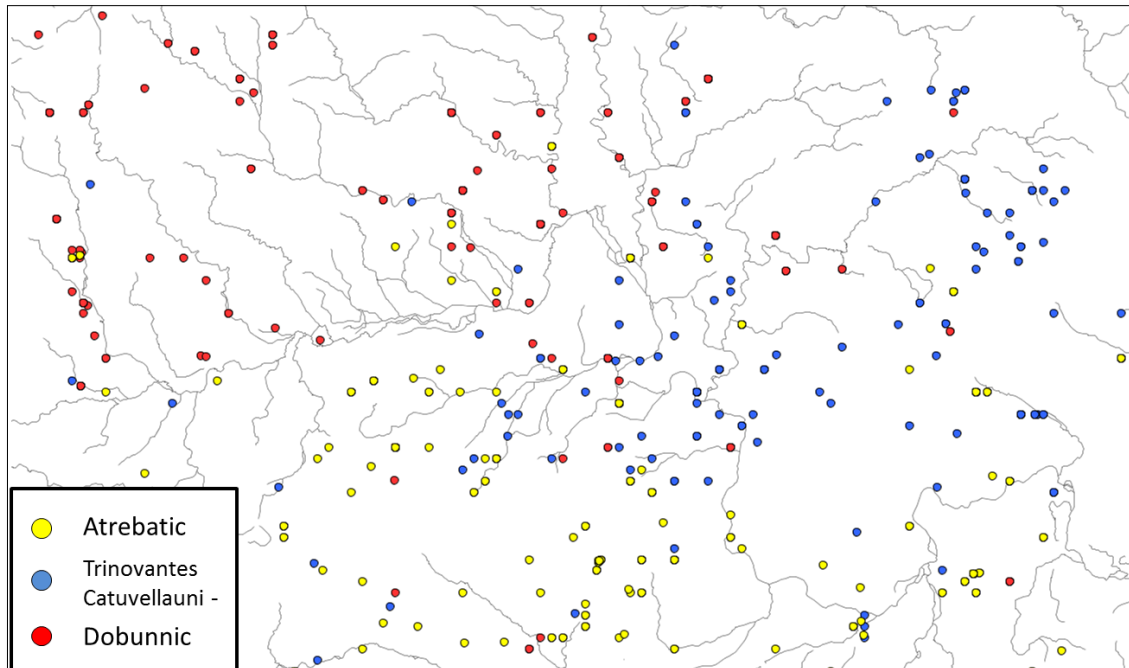


*Figure 9.3. Distribution of LIA coins from the PAS and Celtic Coin Index, with ‘tribes’ indicated.*

We have now reached the point where most scholars realise that the collective ‘ethnic’ terminology used by ancient ethnographers and geographers “described geographical entities, not ethnic realities” (Brather 2002:150). Historically, tribes have at times been consciously and artificially synthesised to advance a scheme of external political control (Fried 1968:18), and the use of the Roman administrative labelling, whilst making tidy maps, hides just how complex the motivations for the distribution of material might have been (Moore 2007:42-3). Hill summarises the current trend as ‘questioning the existence of neatly bounded “tribes” and social units, emphasising how messy, intertwined, and fluid social entities were’ (2012:246).

This thesis is hardly being original in its suggestion that there is a better way to think about LIA societal structure than tribes; clans based on the Irish model have been proposed by some (Haselgrove 1987; Woolf 1998) although others have offered that perhaps we don’t need the

‘geographical boxes’ for the LIA people at all (Carr 2002:24-5). Rodwell (1976) argued that any idea of socio-political divisions in Britain was antiquarian tradition, rooted in flawed thinking. Leins (2008) and Moore (2011) have been exploring numismatically-based arguments for shedding the tribal framework. What this study desires is to provide a way to think about the fundamental social structures at the settlement level, in the hope that it will suggest indications as to why Roman-influenced lifestyles became more acceptable in some locations than at others, and sooner rather than later at different sites. With the tribal affiliations peeled away, perhaps we can begin to avoid the kind of generalisations encompassed by Shawyer’s summation of Swalcliffe Lea villa: ‘The site was romanized early in its history, which is not surprising since the Dobunni were pro-Roman and quickly adopted Roman ways’ (1999:59). We can no longer dismiss the late arrival of Roman-inspired materials as simple tribe-wide regional hostility to Rome, nor early adoption as expected in light of a tribe’s supposed political alliances.

## **9.4 Future work**

### **9.4.1 Wider considerations for Cultural Theory**

Although it might be put forth that Cultural Theory permits too much subjectivity, the polythetic use of defined criteria for grid/group classification is actually a method for summarising objective data in a similar manner to cluster analysis. With large and complex assemblages, grid/group allows us to summarise under an interpretive heading. Moore (2006:86) observed that there was no room for the ‘current relativist approach’ to social organisation; that is, if every individual had his or her own perception of space and its use, then there would be no common ground in settlement structure for comparison at all and every site would look completely different. Of course this is extreme; Cultural Theory proposes that perceptions are diverse but fall within broader classifications. This helps explain both the similarity and the variations.

There are many areas which would benefit from the further application of grid/group. Hey (2007:169) rightly pointed out that the Iron Age of the Upper Thames Valley has been skewed

to the gravel terraces by the exigencies of developer led archaeological investigation; this thesis has not gone a long way to correcting that, by staying largely on the gravels. However, a good future use for the grid/group framework would be to investigate the uplands of the Cotswolds, building on Moore's (2006) study of the area, but using Cultural Theory to help understand the variation and responses of the rural communities.

The model could also be used to attempt to compare dominant worldviews in other times of transition; rural settlement assemblages from the conversion period of Anglo-Saxon Britain or from the time of the Norman Conquest would be of much interest, particularly with regard to how a powerful hierarchy (the Church) affects cultural biases.

#### **9.4.2 Excavation and post-excavation recommendations**

The observations and recommendations which comprise this subsection are based upon some of the frustrations that were experienced during the course of the research for this thesis. Whilst constantly reminding oneself that something is better than nothing, one nevertheless is forced to admit that a lot of archaeological work conducted over the past thirty years has not been reported to a standard which meets the excavators 'moral obligations' (Cunliffe 1990:667). Fulford and Holbrook recently assessed the impact of developer led archaeology with regard to the Roman material, and expressed a similar call for more timely publication, citing the Danebury Environs (Cunliffe 2008) timetable as the exemplar (2011:334); if this were adhered to, then the decades-long gaps between the end of digging and the dissemination of information might be avoided.

Another area for concern is practice in the field. Feature fills are machined away with no finds recovered, features are over-machining (Booth & Edgely-Long 2003: 221), or worse, machined away completely unwatched (Allen *et al.* forthcoming). Recognised features are left unrecorded (Booth & Edgely-Long 2003: 240) and non-rimsherd pottery discarded without recording or archiving (Allen *et al.* 1993:51). Although it is laudable that some excavators offer full disclosure about on-site failures, it only makes one worry more about those who have such calamities and

worse, but do not address them in the publications. The creation of the first professional archaeological unit was hailed with great optimism and expectations (Cunliffe *et al.* 1974) but one worries that they have become in many respects a great disappointment.

I do not mean to suggest that even such poorly handled excavations are less desirable than wholesale unobserved destruction by developers, but how many of our carefully held interpretations and the intellectual frameworks built upon them might be wrong simply because the time and money wasn't available to do a proper job? Lambrick admitted this aspect of rescue archaeology: 'although the results of the salvage excavations...at Farmoor are very widely quoted, it is seldom appreciated how extremely limited they were....much more probably existed at Farmoor but was destroyed without record' (2009:4).

One partial solution to this would be to re-assess some of the key sites which are, even several decades after excavation was completed, not presented in any readily accessible format for researchers. Chief among these would be the Barton Court Farm ceramic assemblage, which should be taken from the archives and re-quantified, beyond weight, but to include sherd counts. Additionally, our understanding of the relationship between the unexcavated Dyke Hills oppidum and the Roman town of Dorchester on Thames would be greatly enhanced by the re-assessment of the material excavated half a century ago.

An improvement could also be made in presentation of site reports, by ceramicists breaking down their tables by phase. This is already done (one hopes!) during the post-excavation process but there is rarely a presentation of form by phase, although fabric by phase is more frequent. Unless phasing is more clearly pronounced in the final reports, it will be impossible to get a clear picture of contemporaneous activity. Even in very recent years, some commercial excavators are producing watching briefs and evaluation reports which are almost unbelievable in their lack of information presented. In 2001, Jeremy Evans called for publications to stop editing out the data (Evans 2001:34-5), yet over a decade on, the data is still being edited out. Whilst the LIA/ER transitional period may be a temporally short one and perhaps that will



forever limit our abilities, reports should make every reasonable attempt to help further contemporary synthesis.

It (nearly) goes without saying that all the chronologies used for this research (and that of many others as well) are crippled by lack of precision in the ceramic and radiocarbon sequences; it is an oft-lamented situation (Cunliffe 1995:59-63; Haselgrove 1986b:365; Collis 2008:86; Moore & Armada 2012:19). A comprehensive set of radiocarbon dates from sealed contexts over a widespread region needs to be undertaken. However, based on both the monumental scale of the task and the expense it would incur, this is likely something that will just have to remain a frustration.

## **9.5 Final thoughts**

*'Dr Johnson was a wise man, and he said History was a foolish study; for it tells said he of Consternation filling the towns and people, when in truth no one was consternated, but men minded their shops and counted their money, and women looked to their crockery ware & minded their mops, whether under one form of government or another.'*

*(Clifford 1941:449)*

Meadows (2001:22) wrote that the Roman conquest of Britain had 'an impact on the daily lives of the people who lived there', yet I do not believe this to be the case. For the rural farmer in the Thames valley, life did not revolve around tribal or governmental boundaries. The boundaries that mattered to him were the enclosures he dug and the hedges he planted to demarcate his parcel of land. The peripheries of the larger Roman centres were not nearly as crucial to his success as were the encroaching periphery of floodwaters from the pernicious and temperamental Thames or Windrush. Rome ruled through people; the changes we see in the archaeological record document the social politics of Roman Britain and cannot be seen as simply the result of Roman domination or of native resistance (Grahame 1998:8).

Providing a full account of social structure and change in LIA/ER southern Britain or indeed even the Thames Valley is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the intent has been to highlight the use of Cultural Theory as a model for considering the social structure of this period in new ways. Grid/group classification is a tool which creates the conditions for a rough-hewn

image to be created, not intending to provide pinpoint accuracy but rather to help see the big picture. When we begin to think about how people perceived the world around them, we may be advancing towards understanding what drove their actions and shaped their material culture.

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## **APPENDIX: GAZETTEER OF SITES**