

Regional Research Framework – Late Iron Age & Roman

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The last decade has seen an explosion of relevant, regionally specific book publications. These are wide-ranging, from major ‘old’ excavations at, for example, Elms’ Farm, Heybridge and Mucking (Atkinson & Preston 2015; Evans *et al.* 2016; Lucy & Evans 2016) – a category that also includes earlier era fieldwork in the Roman towns of Great Chesterford and Godmanchester (Medlycott 2011a; Green 2018) – to more recent landscape-scale campaigns at Biddenham Loop and Marsh Leys, Bedford (Luke 2008 and 2016; Luke & Preece 2011) or the fen-edge at Colne Fen (Evans *et al.* 2013). To this must also be added synthetic studies, particularly Perring and Pitts’ *Alien Cities ...* (2013) and Jeremy Evans’ Horningsea volume (*et al.* 2017). Equally, the region’s Roman archaeology has featured in a number of national period-overview studies, including Rippon’s *Fields of Britannia* (*et al.* 2015), Fulford and Holbrook’s *Small Towns of Roman Britain* (2015) and *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain* (Millett *et al.* 2016). Foremost amongst these must be Reading University’s Roman Countryside series. Their first two volumes have recently been published, the Settlement Overview (Smith *et al.* 2016) and Economy (Allen *et al.* 2017), with the third on ‘Life and Death’ just issued (Smith *et al.* 2018). Together with Oxford’s Englad Project (see e.g. Ten Harkel, *et al.* 2017), whose main volume is expected shortly, these are ‘big data’ studies. They arise from the fruits of almost three decades of developer-funded fieldwork in England and which, for obvious reasons, has been most intense in the southeast of the country.

If added to all this are variously topical PhDs (e.g. Parks 2012; Albone 2016; Harlow 2017; Sutton 2017), the many regional-period shorter excavation volumes, amassed ‘grey literature’ and papers that have appeared over the last decade – amounting to many thousands of pages – within the set-format, the task at hand is simply impossible and the days of easy ‘pocket-size’ regional research frameworks must now be considered over. Indeed, this situation is only compounded in the knowledge that a number of truly vast multiple-site excavation programmes are currently on-going in the region (e.g. A14 and Longstanton/Northstowe), with others set to commence soon (e.g. Cambourne Phase 2 and Waterbeach). There is also the fact that, in the next few years, a series of crucial excavations will appear in print, including Oxford Archaeology East’s (OAE) Love’s Farm, Cambs. and the Cambridge Archaeological Unit’s (CAU) Cambridge *Hinterlands* volumes. Short of instigating still another ‘big data’ overview, there is simply no practical means to adequately synthesise so much here and anything that is offered only amounts to interim remarks.

That so much relevant literature is currently appearing can, of course, only be applauded and, particularly, the Reading Project volumes provide a solid basis by which to progress future fieldwork. Informing this should be Fulford and Holbrook’s recent paper, ‘Relevant Beyond the Roman Period ...’ (2018) and its series of underpinning practice, methodology and data-category articles issued on-line (see also Holbrook 2010). Arising from this is a need for *methodological innovation*. By no means is this restricted to Late Iron Age and Romano-British archaeology. Yet, it becomes particularly pressing for those periods, due to what is known to be the high density of their settlements throughout much of the eastern counties and, too, the scale of construction and excavation within the region. Given this, and the character of the periods’ settlements, there may soon well be a risk of *information redundancy* of some site-type categories. Accordingly, further methodological experimentation – and ‘science’ – will be required to tease out new facets of the sites’ data and to counteract what could soon verge into ‘same-ness’. Equally, there is pressing *need for far greater statistical control of site artefact densities*, so that depositional levels can be readily compared against a range of settlement types (Evans 2012).

While providing a set (and useable) settlement-type nomenclature, for our purposes the Reading Project studies do not offer an easy 'fix'. Their study's zones cross-cut and sub-divide the eastern counties into three: The South, The East and The Central Belt (Smith *et al.* 2016, fig. 1.5). Consequently, the region's results are not there presented as a unified analytical 'block' (nor by county). Working on a national scale, they had to draw their study-boundaries somewhere. But, for us, the greatest problem with their analyses (based on Natural England's 'Natural Areas') is that 'The East', rather than being confined to Norfolk and Suffolk – and what was arguably Icenic lands – extends west as a tongue into South Cambs., North Essex and the northeast quarter of Herts.. This greatly complicates the use of the project's data for such issues as the northward expansion of Aylesford-Swarling traits.¹

At a regional level, for the immediate future an abiding research concern must, therefore, be to interrogate the validity of these sub-divisions. Indeed, this can even potentially lead us to question whether the eastern region, as a whole, is any longer a valid framework of study and if, instead, *sub-regionalities* should be a main thrust. The nature of the region's regionality – in relationship to both landscape character and early socio-political territories – are squarely addressed in Rippons' recent volume, *Kingdom, Civitas and County ...* (2018).

Dynamic Pasts

Mucking's protracted post-excavation/publication uniquely reflects upon broader changes in interpretation within British archaeology and, in some respects, it is now a matter of it (re-)turning full-circle. When fieldwork commenced there in the 1960s, the Joneses approached its sequence in terms of the day's abiding historical-cultural paradigm, with incursions of 'Beaker Folk' and, later, the arrival of Saxon *foederati*. With Grahame Clark's Invasion Hypothesis paper of 1966 – and then the impact of 'new archaeologies' by the day's young turks – such approaches were rejected out-of-hand and *de facto* 'indigenous' continuity became the rule (see Evans *et al.* 2016, 525–6). Yet, now propelled by 'science', far more *dynamic pasts* – especially within the Thames Gateway-area – are once more being admitted.

In the case of Mucking, its later Iron Age occupation was focused on three enclosures/areas: the Northern Enclosure, RBI and the 'Belgic Banjo' (*ibid.*, 284–360 & 464–73). Most significant, however, was the development of its central 'Plaza', with two sides consisting of interconnecting square barrows and its northern aspect framed by a dense array of raised granaries. Clearly a major ceremonial 'ground' and a very formal space, in the Conquest Period/Early Roman times it was delineated by fence-lines. While none of the burials were particularly rich, the layout-arrangement of the barrows shows strong affinities with France's Champagne District interments. Add to this the occurrence of both *Terra Rubra* and *Nigra* within its assemblages – plus also the enormous 'display' storage-capacity of its granaries – this surely suggests a community exporting grain and one with close contacts to Gaul. In short, it is a highly dynamic picture that is presented and one very much relating to Mucking's strategic locale. Perched on a raised terrace at the last bend of the Thames, its downstream viewshed would, in effect, have had nothing between the viewer/'you' and the Continent (*ibid.*, 479–82 & fig. 6.3).

This 'dynamism', though, is not just a matter of direct cross-channel contacts, but also of potential population/settlement shifts within the region. This sense of 'focal-shifts' underpinned JD Hill's 2007 paper, 'The dynamics of social change in Later Iron Age eastern and south-eastern England'. This now requires reappraisal in the light of Sealey's recent study

of Essex's Late Iron Age, whose theme is summed up by its title, 'Where have all the people gone' (2016). There is no easy resolution to this at this time. Archaic pottery traditions might have contributed (i.e. the continuation of handmade alongside wheelmade wares) and to resolve such issues will demand far greater statistical control of period-specific settlement densities to demonstrate such 'flux' than is currently the norm in our practice.

The Reading Project volumes do, though, provide a basis to begin to address such themes. The Late Iron Age clearly saw an expansion of settlement, with between 60 and 85% of its settlements as newly established (i.e. without 'Middle'-period origins). Of this range, the latter figure is from 'The East', whereas the 60% value is from their broad 'Central Belt', but with its eastern portion having a higher percentage of new foundations (Smith *et al.* 2016, 83, 149–52, 206 & 214). Generally, only some 20% of these settlements were abandoned with the Conquest, with the second century AD marking the full impact of Romanisation.

Consisting of an 18ha excavation along an inland gravel ridge (amid claylands) on the city's west side, North West Cambridge's sequence well-expresses this sense of flux. As opposed to its ridge-long distribution of 'open' Early Iron Age settlements, there was only one substantial Middle Iron Age settlement; thereafter, there were three Late Iron Age farmsteads (just one having direct 'Middle'-period continuity; Evans & Cessford 2015; Smith *et al.* 2016, 197–8, fig 5.56).²

In a belief that 'borders are good to think with (too)' (after Levi-Strauss 1962) – if only to dispute and test – the overarching framework of the region's Late Iron Age remains that of the extent of the Aylesford-Swarling zone and the penetration of its hallmark traits, north from the Thames Gateway-area into the eastern 'Central Belt' (e.g. Hill *et al.* 1999; Smith & Fulford 2018, 350. That said, there remains the question whether there was a second, eastern axis in Norfolk and North Suffolk – the Iceni lands (e.g. Davis 2009, 2011 & 2014)³ – and the degree to which they varied. Relating both to issues of identity and 'sponsored power', to this must be added the questions of emergent 'tribes' and the South's 'kingdoms', their varying contact with the Roman Empire, and how this variously influenced the region's 'Romanisation' (e.g. Millett 1990, Creighton 2006 and Rippon 2018; see also, e.g., Gardner 2013 on post-colonial perspectives of these processes). As outlined below, recent years have seen this expressed in the occurrence of near-matching square shrine complexes in both Kent and Bedford. By way of further example, there is the recovery of coin moulds at Braughing (see e.g. Landon 2017) – plus, there, a Morini gold slater (a Gaulish tribe in the Boulogne-Calais district; Anderson *et al.* 2014) – or even that, dating to October AD 62 (and likely relating to post-Boudican reconstruction), one of the Bloomberg tablets describes the transportation of '30 loads of provisions' from Verulamium to London (Tomlin 2016, 156–9; Thompson forthcoming).

The need to appreciate 'active' social dynamics is, if anything, even greater in Roman times and, for which, the identification of 'foreigners' – both through the scientific analysis of human remains and artefact studies (e.g. Cool 2010; Eckardt *et al.* 2014; Smith & Fulford 2018, 352–3) – is becoming a major theme. By the same token, this sense of 'admixture' will surely also extend to social stratification and, for example, the potential identification of slaves/serfs (*ibid.*, 352–6). The application of scientific analyses is, moreover, surely destined to distinguish a wide range of imported goods/produce. Such instances now include the dates within one of Mucking's graves (Lucy & Evans 2016, 322), stone pine cone remains within of Great Holt Farm's wells (alongside rare bird species; Lodwick 2015, 62–3), imported Mediterranean timber at North West Cambridge (Cessford & Evans 2014) or the use of exotic imported resin

in the Arrington child's burial and the evidence of frankincense within the West Mersea Island barrow (respectively, Brettell *et al.* 2014 & 2013)

Harvard is currently undertaking a major aDNA study of first millennium BC burials in Britain, in which samples from the region will feature highly. Their studies will also extend to Early Roman remains, and other aDNA programmes have and are being conducted including the region's Romano-British populations (e.g. Voong *et al.* 2017). Yet, when compared to the 1970s archaeology, it is striking that – bulk environmental sampling aside – how much more emphasis was then generally paid to site-specific scientific techniques. Given the vast sums that now go into the region's fieldwork in contrast to that era, if wishing to seriously explore more dynamic and widely connected pasts then further resources should regularly be directed towards 'hard science'.

Major Projects and Themes

Having outlined why, in the face of 'so much', the task at hand is essentially impossible, what features here is inherently selective. There is, moreover, a degree of bias towards the Cambridge Region. Admittedly this is influenced by its author's familiarity, but is justified given the scale of the area's recent construction and, with it, the arising quantity of fieldwork, much of it involving enormous investigation programmes. Indeed, reflecting this, the first of the Reading Project volumes includes a specific settlement case-study of Cambridgeshire Fen-edge. This encompasses a c. 1200sqkm land-block extending west from the fen-edge across the West Anglian Plain to just east of Bedford. Including both Godmanchester and Cambridge, it involves more than 100 site entries; whereas prior to PPG16 (1990) just one non-urban site had been published from the area, 80% of the subsequent sites date between 2006 and 2014 (Smith *et al.* 2016, 192–206; see, also, *Economic Matters ...* below)

Towns, 'Centres' and Villages

Since 2007 the University of Nottingham have conducted research investigations at the 'green-field' Roman town of *Venta Incenorum* at Caistor St Edmund in Norfolk. Building upon Atkinson's 1929–35 campaigns, the current programme's massive 30ha geophysical mapping has informed its excavations (by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust and volunteer groups; Bowden & Bescoby 2008; Bowden 2012). While the fieldwork has focused upon the area within the enormous triple-ditch enclosure that encompasses a larger swathe than the town's later circuit, there have also been trench-investigations of, for example, its streets and forum.

Vast-scale high resolution geophysical surveys have also been conducted on other of the region's Roman towns, including large transects at Durobrivae and where, bordering Ermine Street, a major public building and a conjoining shrine/temple complex has been plotted (Lockyear & Halliwell 2017; see also Hale 2016 concerning the 21ha survey undertaken at Orton Waterville). With other such surveys having occurred on a range of sites in Hertfordshire, most notable amongst these has been the mapping of Verulamium. Not only is this a matter of its scale (c. 65ha), but also for the remarkable detail in which individual buildings have been revealed (Lockyear & Shlasko 2017).⁴

Since 2008, Colchester has seen a number of major excavations, and understanding of its sequence and layout has greatly benefitted through the issuing of its Urban Archaeological Assessment volume, *Colchester: Fortress of the War God* (Gascoyne & Radford 2013; see also Fulford 2015, 60–1, 68 & 73–4). Of the recent 'red-letter' sites within the Roman town proper, that at Fenwick on the High Street must be prominent (Wightman & Crummy 2017). Having evidence of a very early military building, whose replacement after AD 49 was burnt down in the Boudican Rebellion, an extraordinary array of domestic debris occurred within its fire horizons; apart from human remains, also recovered was a bag

of precious jewellery and coins (i.e. the 'Fenwick Treasure'). Equally, there was the 2015 excavation at Castle House in the Bailey. This unearthened robust, and much altered, Roman masonry remains relating to the arcade of the town's temple precinct (Shimmin 2018).

Excavations have continued within the former Garrison lands on Colchester's southern extra-mural surround (e.g. Brooks 2016). Aside from further exposing the circus' masonry (Gascoyne & Radford 2013, 116–19, figs. 7.9 & 7.23; Fulford 2015, figs. 9 & 14), these have further added to the area's enormous cemetery findings and where now, in total, over 800 burials have there been recovered. These include both inhumations and cremations, with some occurring within small ring-ditches/barrows, a mausoleum was also associated (there have also been major Roman-period cemetery investigations on the town's northern side; Fulford 2015, 73-5; Peece 2015, 143 & 155, figs 3, 4 & 12).

Of the region's small towns, the final publication of the joint Norfolk and Suffolk Units' 1993-94 excavation at Scole, where there was a major Roman road-crossing of the River Waveney, marks a major achievement (Ashwin & Tester 2014; see also Smith *et al.* 2016, fig. 2.28). While lying peripheral to Scole's main 'small town' settlement (excavated in the 1970s), from the early second century AD it saw ribbon development involving a number of post- and slot-built structures. There was evidence of both ironworking and tanning, plus also probable brewing and malting activity, with a corndryer and ovens recovered.

The volume has detailed studies of the sites' dark earth deposits, including distributional analyses and soil chemistry. With the environmental sequence of a river palaeochannel recorded, arguably of greatest importance are the excavation's waterlogged structural timbers. These not only occurred in a series of plank-revetted wells (one barrel stave-lined), but also large, leat-fed, steeping tanks. The latter included reused roof rafters, and there were also furniture pieces – a bench-end and what was probably a moulded table base – and other wooden objects (maple bowl blanks).⁶ While at 4000 identified specimens, the sites' faunal assemblage was not massive, over 75,000 sherds and 2000 coins were forthcoming.

Although there have been further excavations within Godmanchester's roadside suburbs (e.g. Rees 2014), and as outlined below a large tract of the town's southern hinterland fringe has now been investigated (Patten 2016), in recent years there has been little excavation within the town proper (e.g. Crummy & Phillips 2008). Augmented with original archival material, Tim Malim has collected and edited Michael Green's various Godmanchester papers into a volume (Green 2018). Now with Michael's passing, the County Council has acquired his archive and hopes to instigate a publication-review project.

Roman Cambridge proper, at least within Castle Hill's walled circuit, has also only seen limited-scale fieldwork. In addition to the excavation of a small lift shaft-cutting within Shire Hall itself – but which yielded a significant mid-first century AD sequence and assemblages (Rees 2016) – the expansion of Kettle's Yard Gallery allowed for investigation of the Roman defences (also excavated there were a series of wells backfilled with pargetted wall-render that evidently derived from a 'quality' building nearby; Brittain & Evans 2016, see also Evans & Ten Harkel 2010). There has, however, been substantial excavations within Cambridge's immediate extra-mural 'surround'. East of the river this includes the WYNG Site and the 'Triangle' in front of St. John's College (Cessford 2017; Newman 2008). Also, just outside Cambridge's southern walled perimeter, Roman occupation was revealed at Westminster College (Graham 2016) and nearby, down by the river, a later Roman inhumation cemetery was excavated at the School of Pythagoras (Newman 2013).

In their study of the local Horningsea pottery industry, Jeremy Evans (*et al.* 2017) also appraised a number of the town's earlier recovered assemblages. They pronounced that the character of Roman Cambridge's pottery assemblage would not be of a typical 'urban-type'. This, though, is qualified, largely in the light of its amphora: "Overall the site [Castle Hill] has some urban characteristics and some rural ones and perhaps ought to be regarded as something between a village and a small town" (*ibid.*, 122–23).

The evidence of Cambridge's Roman settlement is further reviewed in the first of CAU's *Hinterlands* books (Evans & Lucas forthcoming). Unfortunately, this has demonstrated that significant quantities of relevant archaeology was, inexplicably, excluded from Alexander and Pullinger's *Roman Cambridge* (2000) and, clearly, their records now warrant a major reassessment. It is equally apparent that, in order to understand Cambridge's Roman hinterland, the earlier King's Hedges, Arbury and Teversham villa findings require review and publication.

With Great Chesterford's results discussed in this contribution's various sections (see Medlycott 2011a), since its publication, aside from a small-scale excavation of the town's wall's location (Miciak 2013), on its southwestern extra-mural side a small cemetery – exclusively of teenagers and children – has been dug (Newton *et al.* in prep.) and, on its southeast perimeter, the road to Radwinter has been traced (with a small cremation cemetery also excavated; Moan 2018; see also Smith *et al.* 2016, 237, fig. 6.25). Further investigations of the region's 'small towns' and their immediate environs includes those at Wixoe, Suffolk (Atkins & Clarke 2018), Billingford, Norfolk (Wallis 2011) and Great Dunmow, Essex (e.g. Atkinson 2015; Adams & Atkinson 2016).⁵

Often of rather ambiguous status has been the excavation and/or publication of various forms of 'centres'. Within the current nomenclature, these generally fall under the umbrella of 'nucleated' or 'roadside settlements', but this really does little justice to their variability and, especially, their overlap with 'villages'. In Essex's Blackwater Valley, Elm's Farm, Heybridge would fall into this category and, having major assemblages – including more than six tonnes of Late Iron Age/Roman pottery and 2,900 Roman coins – its long-anticipated publication is of major importance for regional studies (Atkinson & Preston 2015). Its burial evidence and temple complex are outlined in other sections herein. At its maximum extending over some 24ha, the settlement's origins dated back to the mid-first century BC. Although the evidence is rather fragmentary, this involved a central shrine and possible strip-plots. It was remodelled in the mid-first century AD when its metalled roads and temple precinct were laid-out. The earlier strip-plots were then formalised as enclosures, and its occupation was dense. Its development thereafter was essentially one of continuity and, while lasting until the fourth century AD, its later Roman manifestation saw a marked contraction of settlement. While the economy was primarily agricultural – with textile manufacture having some prominence – metal- and bone-working were practiced and there was pottery production. Also, relating to its estuarine location, there was inshore marine fishing and oyster harvesting.

In total, extending over more than 8ha, Roman Mucking is another settlement that has proven difficult to 'label' (Lucy & Evans 2016). Its later Iron Age antecedents, the scale of its pottery production and its five separate cemeteries are all outlined elsewhere herein. As attested by its many cemeteries, it would certainly seem a 'componented' place and one of distinct parts. These encompassed an early industrial foci (the former 'Belgic Banjo'-area), but with such activity also later occurring within its more village-like southern sector. Yet, what seems to most characterise it was the north-central Central Enclosure. Coinciding in part with the Late Iron Age 'Plaza's' ceremonial space, this included a rebuilt aisled building, a granary and, arguably, what was the 'overseers' house' (whose demolition resulted in a wealth of material backfilled into an enormous well nearby). In the end it has been termed an estate centre, with additional 'village' components; the ambiguity of its appellation being intentional.

Lying on the opposite, west bank of the River Great Ouse from the Biddenham Loop's excavations (with its many Roman-period farmsteads; see below), within the generic 'roadside settlement' category would also be Kempston Church End (Luke 2016, 208–42; see also Dawson 2004). Long-known, this settlement extended over 17ha and, just 125–175m wide, it continued for more than a kilometre along the riverside, where it was arranged around two main roads. Eventually having two main inhumation cemeteries (see below) and with many buildings present – some with stone footings – its Roman settlement foundations apparently grew out of a Late Iron Age farmstead; though whether this was a directly ancestral/causal relationship (*vs.* incidental) is questionable.

The canal-side 'port-village' of Colne Fen's Camp Ground has previously been reported (Medlycott 2011b, 36; see now Evans *et al.* 2013, chaps 3 & 4). What warrants mention here is that its polygonal layout and, specifically, what was evidently its double-ditched embanked eastern circuit (*ibid.*, 216–20, fig. 3.26) has recently been paralleled with the multiple-ditched perimeter of the two main settlements

excavated at Northstowe/Longstanton (see Evans *et al.* 2008,174–81; Collin 2017). Located on an inland gravel rise (amid claylands), these lay just c. 700m apart. The one settlement, extending over 9ha, straddled a roadway (itself also embanked) and, at one end, lay at a 'Y'-shaped junction of routes (marked by a small shrine; Collins 2017). The other settlement, to the southwest, and whose excavation is currently still on-going, is even more extensive (20ha+). It lay at a crossroads and involved various distinct parts: a roadway-parallel strip-settlement quarter and, in the north, a polygonal arrangement coming off one side of the road. Between them was evidently a more 'official' quarter, with evidence of a cistern water-supply system and a 'stone-featured' building; with tiles, a stone column shaft and an altar recovered, the latter may have been either an official's residence or a mansio.

The crucial issue is, along with that at Colne Fen's Camp Ground, what was the reason for their embanked perimeters? Having general affinities to that at Caistor St Edmund/*Venta Icenorium*, it has to be suspected that they relate to perceived defensive needs, perhaps even in relationship to the Fenland and Icen territory in the aftermath of the Boudican rebellion. Among the 12 LIA/R-B settlements investigated in the course of the A14's works in Cambs., said to relate to 'official' supply/redistribution, a major 'centre' has also been excavated at Fenstanton. Equally, another of that programme's major Roman sites – at Offord Hill (TEA 20) – involved a double-ditched enclosure circuit and, having an impressive gateway, appears distinctly military (Douthwaite 2018; CA May 2018).

With other possible 'centre' settlements investigated at Addenbrooke's in Cambridge (Tabor 2015) and Great Walsingham, Norfolk (Smith *et al.* 2016, 40), these clearly evade ready categorization. By their size alone, they could potentially even suggest overlap with 'small towns'; equally, though, their differentiation from 'villages' is not straightforward (*ibid.*, 37–42). A crucial issue will be the degree to which they attest to either specialised craft/industrial activities and/or market functions – or alternatively, in some cases, even state/estate supply – as opposed to a nucleated amalgamation of farming households. Within the mosaic of the countryside communities, such 'centres' are evidently not easily pigeonholed into neat hierarchies.

Rural Settlement – Farmsteads and Villas

As a formal 'type', villas are one category that have seen relatively little recent fieldwork. With so many investigated pre-PPG 16, and largely without modern-standard analyses and 'science', further 'set-piece' excavations of them are required by which to address issues of rural settlement hierarchy and their interrelationship with farmsteads (see Smith *et al.* 2016, 71–4; Rippon 2018, 138–67 reviews the region's villas).

Dug by Central Unit in the 1970s, OAE's publication of the Godmanchester's Rectory Farm villa should appear shortly (Fairburn 2015; Lyons forthcoming). Other villa excavations in recent years include that at Itter Crescent in Walton, Peterborough (Lyons *et al.* forthcoming), with others associated with that near Hemel in Hertfordshire (e.g. Gleason 2015).⁷

Further to this, there have been publications whose findings highlight issues of just how villas are differentiated from 'estate centres' and higher status settlement generally. Previously widely portrayed as a villa – but lacking any hallmark architectural footprint – Mucking would serve as a case in point (Lucy & Evans 2016). There is also the bathhouse complex excavated at Newnham, alongside the Ouse near Bedford, in the 1970s. As documented in Albion Archaeology's recent publication (Ingham *et al.* 2016), there a masonry building range (G39) was established in the early second century AD, which replaced the roundhouses and post-built rectangular structures of its primary, Late Iron Age-Early Roman farmstead. While that range was retained within the site's Phase 3 manifestation (early third to late third/early fourth century AD), then set north of it was an impressive, masonry-built apsidal-ended bathhouse complex, including a three-room hypocaust system (Building G65). Whereas the Building G39 range was demolished in the Late Roman period (Phase 4), the bathhouse saw usage into the mid-fourth century AD. Although little of the complex's associated enclosure system was investigated, there was evidence of both pottery production and ironworking. Given this, and the quality of its buildings,

from the second century AD the farmstead is held to have developed into a high status agricultural estate.

The large-scale excavations undertaken by Archaeological Solutions at Cedars Park, Stowmarket between 1999 and 2011 charts a similar trajectory. Achieving substantial assemblages (e.g. 75 Roman coins, 13,000 animal bones and almost 15,500 sherds), its publication is significant (Nicholson & Woolhouse 2016). There, lying just c. 150m apart, two sub-square Late Iron Age farmstead enclosures, with associated roundhouses (but not Middle Iron Age antecedents), were excavated in their near-entirety (Areas D & F). Intriguingly, nearby the one (c. 200m distant), was a comparable-size arrangement of two parallel boundary ditches, but aside from a few pits, this only had four-poster granaries associated (Area A).

The one farmstead enclosure (Area F) saw direct continuity throughout Roman times and was occupied until the mid-fourth century AD. Covering c. 110 x 60m, its Early Romano-British form (Phase 2) included a series of roundhouses and just one, fairly modest, post-built rectangular structure. In the subsequent phase (No. 3; mid-second to mid-third century AD) this underwent considerable expansion and elaboration – with both ditched and fence-line sub-divisions – becoming a major farmstead complex. Arguably, it was one of relative high status. Aside from two round buildings and at least two rectangular post and beam-slot structures, there was a major multiple-room building range (Building 25). This was flint rubble-footed, with a tiled roof and had interior wall plaster. Lying separate, associated with it were two, small flint- and brick-built bathhouses. A series of possible kilns were recovered and, altogether, there were seven infant burials (just two adult inhumations). The main building range and its bathhouses evidently remained in use until the late third/early fourth century AD, but otherwise there was little ‘Late’-period usage (Phase 4).

Of Cedar Park’s other main excavation exposures’ Roman sequences, two just saw lazy-bed trench systems (Areas C & F). While in Area A – in Phase 3 – a minor enclosure system ‘framed’ the earlier, Late Iron Age boundaries. This, though, was relatively ‘open’ and apparently largely agricultural. The one post-built structure there being associated with a droveway, ‘drafting races’ and a stock-fold.

Related issues arise in relationship to the series of enormous aisled buildings investigated at Wooditton (Mustchin *et al.* 2016). It broaches the entire question of whether aisled structures should be termed ‘barns’ or ‘halls’ (e.g. Taylor 2013), and if the smaller ones (i.e. less than c. 20m in length) had a specific agricultural function, as opposed to the larger, more grandiose aisled halls that often accompany and/or anticipated villas (Rippon 2018, 150–6, fig. 5.7).

Consisting of six paired post-lines (13.5 x 6m), the aisled building excavated at Brandon Road, Thetford’s third century AD farmstead (Phase 3) would relate to the former ‘barn’ category (Atkins & Connor 2010). Reworking that settlement’s quite ‘open’ Early Roman layout (Phase 2), with trackways and partial enclosure boundaries (with no definite buildings apart from two possible roundhouses), the Mid-Roman, Phase 3 arrangement was considerably more regular/rectilinear, with four ditched fields running off of the southern side of a major northwest–southeast oriented boundary. The aisled building was located north of its line, where another post-built barn and two other possible rectangular structures were located. The farmstead was held to be of lowly status. By the fourth century AD (Phase 4), the timber buildings no longer stood and there was a major rearrangement of its boundaries, with separate more ‘organic’-form/curvilinear enclosures lying at either end of the site; thereafter, in the fifth century AD, there was extensive Early Anglo-Saxon settlement. What is interesting in this case is that the ‘formality’ of the Romano-British system only seems to have been realised in the third century AD and appears to have been relatively short-lived.

One of the major outcomes of the Reading Project (Smith *et al.* 2016, 20–3) and remarked upon by others (e.g. Millet 2016) is – as opposed to earlier fixations with villas – that various forms of farmstead were the dominant settlement-type of the Romano-British countryside.⁸ In recent years a number of relatively simple square/rectangular-plan ‘Early’ farmstead enclosures have been excavated in the region. This would now also include, for example, those at Bearscroft on the south side of Godmanchester and, nearby and adjacent to Ermine Street, at Papworth Everard (Patten 2012 and 2016).

Amongst the most significant investigations of the period's farmsteads is that by Albion Archaeology at Marsh Leys, alongside the River Great Ouse's Elstow Brook tributary south of Bedford (Luke & Preece 2011). Located just c. 400m apart, both were preceded by largely open, Late Iron Age settlements (Phase 3). Linked to a boundary system, one had a small trapezoidal-plan enclosure with a 'square' ditch setting within its interior (c. 6 x 7m); held to be a shrine, this is further discussed below.

With Farmstead 4 in the east, laid-out alongside a trackway that probably also accessed the western farmstead (No. 5), involving rectangular paddocks and fields, the two Romano-British farmsteads were only established in the second century AD (Phase 4); the western (No. 5) continued until Late Roman times (Phase 5). Both lack evidence of any kind of formal cemeteries – only scattered inhumations – and their structural remains were relatively slight, generally just consisting of shallow, variously parallel slots. These were certainly not high status settlements and the importance of the Marsh Leys investigations does not so much relate to the detailing of their farmsteads' operations, but in the volume's comparative plan analyses with other farmstead layouts (*ibid.*, 142–52) and the larger landscape-distribution perspective the investigations provide (for which they incorporated the Biddenham Loop and Kempton Church End findings: Luke 2016). Based variously on cropmark, surface collection and excavation evidence, their mapping of the area's farmsteads is remarkable. They not only indicate the settlements' core-paddocks, but also the extent of their arable fields (*ibid.*, fig. 9.17). Certainly, they well-convey just how densely packed such farmsteads were along waterways (*ibid.* fig. 9.18).⁹

In the mapping of the Bedford-area farmsteads, close-trench lazy-beds are, following earlier work in Northamptonshire (Brown *et al.* 2001), designated as vineyards. Such raised-bed fields are, however, now widespread, especially in the northern, (east) Central Belt-area (Smith *et al.* 2016, 183). Aside from those featuring in the Reading Project volumes, this now includes numerous exposures within the A14 sites, as well as, for example, Addenbrooke's (Phillips 2015), Godmanchester (Patten 2016), Papworth Everard (Patten 2012) and North West Cambridge's Sites VI and V (Cessford & Evans 2014; Brittain 2014). The latter of these is particularly relevant as, situated on that area's ridge-side gravels – and which saw a dramatically fluctuating watertable – its parallel field-trenches were linked by a ditch running downslope from wells in order to water crops during dry months and, effectively, this amounted to a crude irrigation system.

Given what is proving to be the frequency of such raised-bed plots, it is simply inconceivable that these all related to viticulture and, rather, more general horticultural production seems likely.¹⁰ Alternatively, in low-lying situations their beds may have simply been raised to avoid the rotting of cereal-crop roots. As demonstrated in the Reading Project's studies, the frequency of such bedding plots within the West Anglian Plain clearly correlates with the fact that, within their Central Belt zone, that area also shows the greatest representation of horticultural crops (Smith *et al.* 2016, 191–2; Lodwick 2017a, 73–80). Whatever their agricultural purpose, the mobilisation of labour represented by such large-scale intensive field-plots would clearly have had significant social implications.

With, for example, the publication of the first phase of Cambourne's excavation (Wright *et al.* 2009) or those sites nearby along the route of the A428 (Abrams & Ingham 2008), and in the light of the number of the period's farmsteads this now entails, it is necessary that we recognise just how few include the main 'hallmarks' of the period's agriculture: aisled buildings and/or corndryers.¹¹ Yes, these have been recorded on a number of sites, but they are certainly not universal and there is a pressing need to account for their presence/absence.

Many designated 'farmstead' sites actually do little to elucidate their distinctly agricultural activity. In some contrast, Colne Fen's Langdale Hale's state-supply farm had a wide range of agricultural facilities: traction mills, a threshing circle and a series of grain-parching flues. Linked by a road, its exported crops would have been stored within the Camp Ground's canal-side granary. Also evidently exporting meat and hides, its distinct 'state' status could be further reflected in its all male burial populace (Evans *et al.* 2013, chap. 2).

At West/North West Cambridge, thus far four of the six settlements excavated would fall into the category of farmsteads (Cessford & Evans 2014; Evans & Lucas forthcoming). Having an aisled barn and, arguably, hosting a market, that at Vicars Farm was without any corndryer (Smith *et al.* 2016, fig. 5.63). Yet, with high levels of animal bone – including infant livestock remains attesting to immediate-site breeding – does this imply more specialised pastoral production? Conversely, nearby, North West Cambridge's Site II 'model farm' had a corndryer, but otherwise its facilities (and animal bones) were only modest (*ibid.*, fig. 5.56). Perhaps suggesting more specialised arable production, in that case it is argued that it may have had a tenanted relationship to a nearby high status settlement. As opposed to Site II's 'simple' plan-layout, in Reading's nomenclature Vicars Farm ranks as a 'complex farmstead', with its larger size and paddock sub-divided plan arguably reflecting more intense livestock management (*ibid.*, 189). The point being that, given the density of farmsteads now known in parts of the region, in light of their varying topographic/environmental conditions, there is no reason to suppose that uniformly mixed economies were practised and their variability requires nuancing.

Shrines and Temples - Religious Structures and Finds

An 'enigmatic' palisaded enclosure was excavated at Flixton Quarry in Suffolk's Waveney Valley. While vaguely reminiscent of Early Bronze Age post settings, its 27m-diameter circle was accompanied by a transitional pottery assemblage indicating a Conquest Period date (Boulter & Walton Rogers 2012, 53–71, figs 4.1 & 4.2).

Lacking ritual deposition, unto itself the above-mentioned small square-ditched LIA 'shrine' setting at Marsh Leys, Bedford is not particularly convincing (Luke & Preece 2011, 16–19). Its interpretation, though, gains credence in the context of the Biddenham Loop's 'squares' (Luke 2008 & 2016). In that project's first phase a directly comparable square-ditch setting was recovered, whose interior was marked by a seven-posthole setting (4.25m square; L79, Luke 2008, 227–31). With very few sherds recovered – plus some iron nails and a handful of animal bones – this was considered to be a possible LIA/ER-B shrine. Thereafter, separated by just a 14m-wide corridor, two very similar square-ditch settings were recovered that had small pits within their interiors (and not postholes). They lay within a rectangular enclosure (its northern side was not exposed, but it could not have encompassed the original L79 square). Again, despite the setting's 100% excavation, aside from sparse flints and animal bones (and nails), it yielded just a few LIA/ER-B sherds; the transitional attribution of the setting being confirmed by a radiocarbon date (10–130 cal. AD; Luke 2016, 295–301). This was interpreted as a ritual complex, with the square settings as shrines.

Within Cambridgeshire a broadly comparable three-square cropmark group is known at Hemingford Grey (and a comparable 'square' was excavated beside a cremation cemetery at North West Cambridge; Cessford & Evans 2014; see also Maynard *et al.* 1997, 24–6, figs 10 & 12). Yet, what is extraordinary in this regard is that, in 2015, at Orbital Park, Kent, a three 'square'-setting was excavated (Clarke 2016) that provides a close-match for the Biddenham Loop complex. The total excavation of their ditches only yielded minor quantities of Late Iron Age pottery. The 'squares' were interpreted as possibly being mortuary enclosures relating to an as yet unidentified burial ground.

Without obvious ritual deposits or human remains, there is ambiguity concerning the role of such settings. With its internal postholes, the northernmost at Biddenham Loop is certainly suggestive of some kind of shrine arrangement (plus the frequency of nails there). Yet, by the same token, there is no escaping their affinity to the region's Late Iron Age square barrows, such as at Mucking (Evans *et al.* 2016, 336–44 & 467–73) or at Brisley Farm, Ashford in Kent (Stevenson 2013). If the latter, then their interments must have lain on the ground surface and been ploughed-out; some resolution to this could be forthcoming if the opportunity arose to hand-excavate their overburden cover. Whatever their actual function, these LIA settings must directly reflect the Aylesford-Swarling zone/'province', with the Bedford-area findings apparently marking its northern extent.

Beam-slot constructed, small rectangular shrine structures, variously of LIA and ER-B date, continue to be forthcoming. While also lacking obvious votive finds deposits *per se*, one of Late Iron Age date at Duxford was associated with a cemetery (Structure 2; Lyons 2011, 36–8). That at Colne Fen's Camp

Ground was of Conquest Period/ Early Roman date (Str. 4; Evans *et al.* 2013, 238–9) and, of sub-square plan (c. 7m across), had opposed entranceways on its northwestern and southeastern aspects. Also at that port-village settlement, set centrally within a prominent roadside enclosure, was a still smaller ‘square’ (2.5 x 3m) that simply consisted of two parallel slots (Str. 6, *ibid.*). While its slight traces means that any certainty of its attribution is impossible, given its location/setting it was speculated that it could have marked a small roadside shrine. Indeed, it is even conceivable that it might have related to the monumental stone Jupiter bust – with the front paws of a feline (lion, sphinx or griffin) surviving above – but which had been redeposited elsewhere on the site (*ibid.*, 228–30).

Albeit of quite modest build (i.e. non-masonry) and having only a few obviously votive finds, the Scole excavations included part of a small rectangular temple or shrine (Shelley 2014). Archaeology South-East’s excavation near Kings Warren, Red Lodge in Suffolk (ASE 2018) revealed that an Early Bronze Age ring-ditch had both been recut and had a rectangular enclosure constructed around it in Roman times. Just east of the earlier monument, there was a small rectangular structure evidently having painted plastered walls and a tiled roof. Interpreted as a shrine, this had ‘structured’ animal deposits (including a pig’s head-and-hoof setting) and other votive artefact settings associated. Similarly, ‘special’ deposits were associated with the more recently recovered coin moulds at Braughing (e.g. Hunn 2017).

Elm’s Farm, Heybridge’s ‘formal’ temple complex was certainly amongst the most elaborate within the region (Atkinson & Preston 2015, 87–104). It was preceded by a pair of small LIA shrines (Buildings 7 & 8), one circular and, the other, a small square-setting reminiscent of those discussed above. In Early Roman times (Phase 2B), two short-lived ‘square-ish’ beam-slot structures (Nos 27 & 28) were replaced with a massive temple complex. In the main, this involved a 11m-diameter *cella* set within a porticoed trapezoidal enclosure (Buildings 34 & 35), conjoined on its southern side by a square building (No. 33) with concentric internal sub-division ‘passages’. This, thereafter, was expanded with the addition of new buildings and ranges (Phase 3A). In the mid-second century AD it was radically altered. The existing buildings were levelled, with the *cella* rebuilt in the same position, but which now had an altar supported on a masonry plinth within its interior. What had been the larger complex’s area was then delineated by posts to form an open precinct (Open Area 23). While undergoing minor modifications in later Roman times, the complex apparently continued to function throughout the fourth century AD.

Relating to this theme, noteworthy is Albion Archaeology’s excavation of a seemingly ‘classical’ temple-like *cella/temenos* enclosure at the NIAB Lands/Darwin Close on the west side of Cambridge (Barker & Meckseper 2015; Smith *et al.* 2016, fig. 5.37). Lying at a slight remove from settlement in open-ground, the ‘formality’ of its layout is striking. Although having no ritual deposition associated (and negligible finds generally), by its plan its religious affiliation seems without question, and certainly it contrasts with the more ‘native’ ritual practices/architectures of the Vicars Farm settlement nearby (Evans & Lucas forthcoming).

Medlycott’s Great Chesterford survey-publication not only includes the Late Iron Age rectangular shrine and Roman temple (with fine mosaics) located east, outside its circuit, and by the River Slade (2011a, 75–85), but also religious findings in and around the town itself. Amongst the latter are a possible octagonal temple, a beehive shrine and the recovery of a Jupiter column base (*ibid.*, 85–9). Also reported is an apsidal building – possibly a shrine or, even, an early church – plus the town’s various votive finds and a series of ritual shafts/pits (*ibid.* 89–93); the latter possibly having affinities to Cambridge’s Ridgeons Gardens Site’s shaft deposits (Alexander and Pullinger 2000, 53–7).

An overview of Harlow’s Stanegrove temple complex is provided in Rippon’s recent volume, which also reviews other religious sites in the region (2018, 127–37).¹² Certainly, the paucity of explicitly ritual deposition on many of these ‘formal’ religious sites stands in some contrast to what is held to be widespread ‘placed’ deposition in domestic contexts (see Smith 2016 for overview). In this capacity, Marsden’s 2014 study, ‘Satyrs, leopards, riders and ravens ...’ represents an important contribution to the understanding of Norfolk’s Roman votive metalwork and its ‘religious landscape’.

Cemeteries

Over the last decade substantial Late Iron Age cremation cemeteries have been excavated at and/or published from Stansted (Cooke *et al.* 2008), Mucking (Evans *et al.* 2016), and Bedford's Biddenham Loop. Of late first century BC to late first century AD date, and involving 16 interments (Luke 2008, 213–26), the occurrence at the latter site is particularly significant. Coinciding with the area's square 'shrine' settings (see above), they represent distinctly Aylesford-Swarling traits. Pyre-related features were also recovered in association there and – arranged linearly – many such features were excavated in Elm Farm's 'pyre field' (Atkinson & Preston 2015, 117–25; see Harding 2016, 145–62 concerning the South-East's Late Iron Age cremation practices generally).

Of the periods' burial practices, amongst the most important excavations published in recent years is OAE's excavations at Duxford (Lyons 2011). Amidst Iron Age and Roman-period settlement features, in total 27 burials were recovered (excluding the three of Early–Middle Iron Age date). These were assigned to four burial groupings (*ibid.*, 38–49 & 118–9, fig. 24). Of Late Iron to Early Roman attribution (based on grave goods and an extensive radiocarbon dating programme), aside from two cremations – one specifically Late Iron Age; the other, mid-first century AD – these were all inhumations and nearly all were supine. A number were associated with a rectangular-plan shrine structure and at least seven would seem to be of Late Iron Age date. Yet, only a few of the latter had any grave goods, with just two accompanied with pots (one also having a pig skeleton).

This distinction of a Late Iron Age inhumation rite relates to just how widely Early and Middle Iron Age inhumations are currently recovered and are now firmly established as those periods' main burial tradition (Harding 2016). Within the region, the occurrence of 'Late'-period inhumations was, in fact, first recognised by Fox (1923, 97) and is also, for example, a feature of Kent's Late Iron Age cemeteries (e.g. Biddulph 2006; Booth 2017). This was an issue raised in relationship to the Hinxtion Rings cemetery's interments (Hill *et al.* 1999) and, since, later Iron Age inhumations have been recovered on a number of sites, including the Biddenham Loop (Luke 2008, 201–2 & 212) and the Babraham Institute (see Evans *et al.* 2008, 12, fig. 1.10; see, also, Smith 2018b, 218–22). The latter deserves notice as, occurring near an unaccompanied male, an adult female there had a Colchester-type brooch and, by her head, a beaker and a pedestal tazza. Yet, most of these Late Iron Age/first century AD inhumations are without grave goods and this – especially the lack of accompanying brooches – seems in contrast to contemporary cremation burials. Accordingly, the implications of these 'mixed' rites are potentially great: was it a matter of status, different beliefs and/or populations?

Relevant here, but rather suggesting some manner of Late Iron Age sub-regional grouping – one thus far seemingly focussed on the Cambridge Region – are a series of small, 3–7m diameter, individual cremation-ring settings. First found at Hinxtion (Hill *et al.* 1999), three recently occurred together in an Addenbrooke's landscape investigation (Tabor 2018), with still another at North West Cambridge's Site IV (Cessford & Evans 2014), and two more have just been excavated at Northstowe (Collins and Aldred in prep.).

Aside from those cemeteries cited elsewhere in this contribution, particularly those in town suburbs (see e.g. Medlycott 2011a, 95–102 concerning Great Chesterford's some 80 cremations and 200 inhumations), substantial Roman-period inhumation cemeteries have been investigated at, for example, Biddenham Loop and Mentley Lane/Wallace Lands at Skeleton Green. Of the latter, expanding upon earlier excavations there, and near to the settlement of Braughing, further excavations occurred in 2011 and 2013 (Anderson *et al.* 2014). This entailed more than 200 cremations (most urned) and almost 100 inhumations. The latter variously dated from the Late Iron Age to Late Roman times. Eight, generally rectangular, shallow-ditch mortuary enclosures delineated individual inhumations; whereas a more robustly ditched, circular 'ring-ditch' setting – having cremated bone recovered from its centre (and both Late Iron Age and later Roman pottery within the ditch's fills) – had six mid–later Roman inhumations within its interior.**13**

With only one exception, fewer than four burials were associated with each of Biddenham Loop's farmsteads. However, further suggesting that some later Roman cemeteries may have involved larger-scale burial communities (i.e. non-individual settlement-specific), a more substantial cemetery – with 32 inhumations – was associated with one of its farmsteads (SL544). This was sub-divided into two distinct sectors (with one having two further sub-groupings separate from the main burial plot). Of

these, six had grave goods, with just one being decapitated (Luke 2016, 315–21). The two inhumation cemeteries associated with Kempston Church End's adjacent roadside settlement, on the opposite side of the river, each contained c. 100 graves (Boylston *et al.* 2000; Dawson 2004, 48, 55–7; Luke and Preece 2017).

Occurring within five separate cemeteries, the publication of Mucking's some 185 Romano-British burials attests to the 'componented' nature of its Roman-phase settlement's layout (Lucy & Evans 2016, chap. 4; Smith *et al.* 2018, fig. 6.27). Reflective of its 'many parts', there was wide variability in the frequency/quantity of their accompanying grave goods, with some being very well-furnished and one occurring within a stone coffin. While many sand-stain inhumation plans were forthcoming, it is unfortunate that the site's acid-soil conditions did not allow for the survival of their bone. In most instances, therefore, they lack basic 'bio-data' information (e.g. sexing).

The geophysical surveys and targeted trial trenching undertaken at Bartlow, Cambs. – in the immediate environs of Britain's largest Roman barrows – provided crucial context to their earlier antiquarian findings. Not only was its associated settlement identified, but also an enclosing linear earthwork (Eckardt *et al.* 2009a & b).¹⁴

Somewhat surprisingly, in Cambridge's Castle Hill extra-mural 'surround' the recovery of burial activity has largely been restricted to its riverside swathe. This includes water-disturbed remains at the WYNG Site (Cessford 2017) and, nearby, inhumations at the School of Pythagoras (Mecksper *et al.* 2011; Newman 2013). Further afield in its hinterland, Oxford Archaeology East have excavated cemeteries in the course of both their Clay Farm investigations, south by Addenbrooke's (Phillips & Mortimer 2012; see also Tabor 2015) and, to the east, at Hatherdene Close, Cherry Hinton (Ladd & Mortimer 2017). The latter involved a cremation set within a square-ditch setting, a disturbed double inhumation within a larger ditched square barrow and another inhumation within a separate funerary enclosure, with six other cremation burials also present (two of Late Roman date); the mortuary complex subsequently became the focus of a major Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery.

A number of cemeteries have now been investigated within Roman Cambridge's western hinterland. Including those earlier dug at Vicar's Farm (x2) and New Hall, the University's North West campus development and the adjacent, Albion Archaeology's NIAB Lands/Darwin Close excavations, they now amount to nine in total (five cremation and four inhumation cemeteries). There, each hinterland settlement apparently had its cemetery and, often, two. Remarkably, orientation patterning seems apparent within their respective locations, with the 5–14-interment cremation cemeteries occurring on the north side of their early settlement cores and, then, their later inhumations situated on their southern flanks (13–51 burials each). Significantly, the inhumation cemeteries can lie at a considerable distance from their settlements: c. 75m in the case of Vicars Farm's developed farmstead (Smith *et al.* 2018, 243–4 & fig. 6.30) and, at Foxton in Duxford, the distance was even greater (c. 200m; Maynard *et al.* 1997, 32–6, figs 15 & 16). Such 'outlying' locations might, in part, explain why contemporary burial plots are often not found in the period's settlement excavations.

With there having been so many Roman-period burials excavated within the region, it becomes difficult to single out any. Accompanied with dog on the pyre, and with the deceased apparently burnt on some manner of wooden couch, one would have to be the fourth century AD Bustam cremation at the Biddenham Loop (Luke 2016, 310). Another Bustam cremation in Colchester's Garrison cemetery also deserves mention, as does that site's individual 'ring-fenced' interment settings (*Current Archaeology/CA* March 2013). The flint nodule-packed burials amongst the 85 Late Roman inhumations at Great Ellingham, Norfolk are certainly noteworthy (*CA* July 2012) and, of recently published findings, the surviving timber coffin burial of a two to three year-old infant – itself set within a timber chamber – at Scole's excavations alongside the River Waveney should also be highlighted (Ashwin and Tester 2014, 35, fig. 2.11 & pl. 2.4).

The frequency of deviant burials within their 'Central Belt' was stressed in the Reading Project review (Smith *et al.* 2018, 226–31 & fig. 6.16). In this context, Crerar's detailed case-study of Cambridgeshire's decapitation burials within *The Oxford Handbook ...* is pertinent (2016, 389–400); there being 59 such interments out of the 628 inhumations from the 30 later Roman inhumation sites considered.

Amounting to 9% overall, in some cemetery-sectors, such as at Knobbs Farm, Somersham, this rises to 46% (see Evans *et al.* 2013, 464–73; subsequent excavations there post-dated Crerar’s analysis). At these kind of levels – plus the fact that some are associated with distinct grave goods (Nene Valley face-urns) – decapitation burials clearly cannot just be attributed to ‘deviancy’/‘illness’ and, rather, they must reflect a distinct cult-based practice. Its spread was evidently far from uniform and, in the light of its ‘Late’ dating, documenting its source-impetus and relationship to Christianity will surely be a significant field of study.¹⁵

Similarly, neonate burials also display wide variability in their frequency, with some settlements – such as the Itter Crescent villa (Lyons forthcoming) and Colne Fen’s Camp Ground (Dodwell 2013, 235–6, fig. 3.34 & table 3.10) – having very high numbers. Resonating with the occurrence of child burials in Cambridge’s Castle Hill ‘shafts’, at such levels this could suggest something other than just infant mortality (cf. Millett and Gowland 2015).

Economic Matters – Food Stuffs

In part overlapping with the area of the Reading Project’s first volume’s Cambridgeshire Fen-edge case-study, their second volume develops upon this with a detailed study of the West Anglian Plain’s agricultural economy (Lodwick 2017a, 26–8 and Allen & Lodwick 2017, 147–54). Of its crop remains, while glume wheats dominate most of the Late Iron Age assemblages, the representation of barley is nonetheless substantial. Thereafter, in Early Roman assemblages, the latter’s values drop markedly and the ‘Middle/Late’-period’s are entirely dominated by glume wheats, particularly spelt (at the expense of emmer). This is thought to attest to agricultural ‘extensification’ and an expansion of cultivation but without an increased manuring input (*ibid.*, figs 4.2–4.4). Equally, while during the Late Iron Age sheep/goat and cattle remains generally occur in comparable proportions,¹⁶ from the second century AD there was a distinct increase in cattle (especially on complex farmsteads) and, by mid–later Roman times – with the exception of some roadside settlements – cattle clearly dominate. Occurring at levels of 50% (NISP) and more, the concurrent increase in the maturity of cattle on many rural settlements is understood to indicate an investment in tillage and transport. Along with the establishment of the area’s extensive transportation network, taken together all this may reflect the external export of the area’s agricultural produce.

While the basic picture presented – the dominance of spelt wheat and cattle – is true of the region as a whole, and generally the assemblages show relatively little variability, there are exceptions. This largely occurs in the representation of pigs and horse, with the latter evidently seeing specialised breeding in some Roman-period settlements. Very occasionally, a few sites, such as that at Edix Hill and in one of Godmanchester’s farmsteads – as well as some in the Fenland, and more widely in urban and shrine/temple contexts – sheep/goat values exceed those of cattle (Smith *et al.* 2016, 239).

The periods’ assemblages usually only evince very limited/negligible ‘wild’ exploitation. Unsurprisingly, the main exceptions to this occur in the Fens; for example, it constituted c. 5% of The Camp Ground’s assemblage and there, aside from 12 avian species (plus deer and fox), otter occurred in sufficient numbers to suggest a degree of dedicated hunting (Higbee 2013, 383). At that site and the neighbouring Langdale Hale farmstead, substantial assemblages of freshwater fish bone were also recovered. In some contexts, such as in a well at the latter where more than 11,000 specimens were present, this presumably related to the production of *garum*.

As outlined elsewhere in this contribution, urban contexts aside, the exploitation/consumption of marine fish species seems restricted to (near-)coastal settlements, such as Elm’s Farm, Heybridge or Stanford Wharf. That said, the consumption of oysters was clearly much more widespread and, requiring ‘fresh’ transport, the determination of what type of settlements received regular supplies could prove an important indicator of status.

It is thought that the cultivation of flax was almost exclusive to the Fens and major river valleys. Otherwise, of the non-cereal plant foods – pulses, fruits and horticultural produce – many of these were

amongst the 50 plant foods that van der Veen identified as being introduced in the Roman period (2008). These ‘elite’ foods appear soon after the Conquest on military sites and in major urban centres, only occurring on higher status rural settlements in ‘later’ times, when the inhabitants of roadside settlements, villas and some complex farmsteads evidently had access to a wider variety of food stuffs than other rural settlements (Smith *et al.* 2016, 191–2). Many of these more exotic plants are only recovered from waterlogged contexts, and – including grape, marigold, fig, fennel and opium poppy, along with other plants and trees – those from a pond associated with Godmanchester’s Rectory Farm villa are said to be reminiscent of a ‘Mediterranean-style’ garden (Smith *et al.* 2016; 205 and Lyons forthcoming; see Note 10 for grape cultivation).

Pottery and Industry

Jeremy Evans and colleagues’ 2017 Horningsea Industry volume represents a major synthetic overview of the pottery’s production and distribution, and it also analyses a number of the Cambridge-north Roman assemblages. The volume arose as a result of the 1993 and 1997 excavations near the southern end of the Car Dyke/Old Tillage canal and close to its junction with the River Cam. Amongst the fieldwork’s components was a mid-second century AD kiln and, in 2010, two Horningsea Ware kilns were excavated nearby in Waterbeach (Newton & Peachey 2012).

The publication of Mucking’s 23 pottery kilns has been long-awaited (Lucy & Evans 2016). Analysis shows that the grey and black burnished wares produced in its seven mid–later Roman up-draught kilns was being exported to Hadrian’s Wall. Pre-Conquest kilns also occurred at Mucking (Evans *et al.* 2016, 450–1) and Oxford Archaeology have apparently excavated a (imitation) *Terra Rubra* kiln at Bricket Wood, Herts., south of St Albans (Poole *et al.* 2014).

Early Roman kilns are now, otherwise, being widely encountered (e.g. Lyons & Blackbourn 2017, 43–6, fig. 13).¹⁷ Usually this only amounts to one or two within any settlement and they attest to just how local was the region’s pottery production prior to the second/third century. Of significant note are the six kilns at a riverside settlement at Duxford, and it is argued that their production may have been by non-local potters, possibly Continental (Anderson & Woolhouse 2016). Also, in 2016, eight kilns were excavated at Brampton (Lyons & Blackbourn 2017). It is posited that their design and furnishings are unusual when compared to others in Cambridgeshire and might reflect the influence of Upper Nene Valley/Northamptonshire communities. Equally, it is suggested that, for a generation after the Conquest, the work of the local potters might reflect links with nearby Godmanchester and its fort.¹⁸

Pottery is only one component of Perring and Pitts’ *Alien Cities ...* volume studies (2013). Its multivariate analysis of Essex and broader Colchester environs’ assemblages provides major insights into Conquest Period/Early Roman pottery usage, as well as urban *and* rural patterns of supply and consumption generally.¹⁹

Alongside a consideration of the representation of samian and amphorae in the countryside as a whole (Brindle 2017a), the second Reading Project volume includes Rippon’s study of the Eastern Region’s coarse wares (2017, see also 2018, 172–98), and his analyses and mapping are of tremendous research value. Referring to earlier-era ‘distance-decay’ models (*ibid.*, 340–1, fig. 7.39), while some of these take into account ‘pulled distortions’ along transport networks, the impact of the region’s coastal supply needs also to be acknowledged. In this regard, The Camp Grounds’ more than 73,000-sherd assemblage provides insights, particularly its ‘Late’ wares (Evans *et al.* 2013, 451, figs 4.62 & 4.63). With both East Anglian Mortaria and Portchester Ware occurring – the latter as an isolated outlier and some 50km north of its previous distributional range – these were held to reflect coastal trade; their inland penetration to that port-village being via The Wash and the Fenland’s waterways.

With its revetted channels and probable boathouse (plus extensive scientific and environmental studies), Oxford Archaeology’s large-scale excavations at Stanford Wharf, beside the Thames and just below Mucking, highlighted both the importance of Roman-period coastal trade and estuarine resources (Biddulph *et al.* 2012; see, also, Biddulph 2017 and Ennis 2014).²⁰ Thought likely to relate to *garum* production, great quantities of small fish bones – most juvenile herrings or sprats and juvenile

smelts – were recovered in some contexts. While also seeing evidence of Early Roman salt production, this industry evidently expanded in later-period times, with five salterns of that date excavated. More than 170kg of Roman briquetage and fired clay was recovered in total and, together, the excavations greatly detail the operation of the period's salt manufacture. Of much smaller scale, later Iron Age and Roman salt production sites continue to be excavated in the Fenlands (Lane *et al.* forthcoming; see also Lane *et al.* 2008).

Evidence of low-level ironworking has been found on a wide range of rural sites throughout the region (e.g. Wilson *et al.* 2012; Luke & Preece 2011, 163–5) and, in this capacity, the dynamics of scrap-metal recycling – particularly of military-source material on domestic settlements – warrants study. Not surprisingly, evidence of more intensive industrial activity comes from the northern, Peterborough-area due to its proximity to Midlands' iron sources (e.g. Francis & Richmond 2017 and Knight & Gibson 2002; see also Smith in Allen *et al.* 2017, 179–88, fig. 5.1). That said, other sources may also have been exploited. Thought to derive from the thick iron pan beds exposed through the contemporary drainage of an adjacent marsh embayment, what appears to be bog iron nodules were recovered at Langdale Hale's settlement (Salter 2013).

In support of the period's dense farmsteads and intense agricultural production, the scale of Roman quern manufacture and trade is a crucial topic, to which Chris Green's Gaddesden, Herts., investigations represents a major contribution (see Green *et al.* 2016 and Hugget 2016; see also Green 2017).

Infrastructure and Transport

Aside from sondages taken across the Roman canal itself, the focus of 1990's Car Dyke/Old Tillage excavations was a large beam-raised warehouse (J. Evans *et al.* 2017, 25–31, figs 2.2 & 2.4). Employing a comparable raised-floor construction technique, both a warehouse and large granary range lay along the roadway at Colne Fen's Camp Ground port-village, which was directly associated to the same canal system (Evans *et al.* 2013, chap. 3). Nearby, a further beam-raised granary was present at Knobb's Farm, Somersham's settlement, with still another canal-adjacent 'granary-candidate' known at Bullock's Haste (*ibid.*, 464–78). Given that, otherwise, such granaries do not occur in Cambridgeshire's Roman sites, the evidence suggests that there may well have been a direct connection between them and the canal system. Accordingly, they could then have related to centralised grain storage (and transport), perhaps for official/military supply.

At Kelvedon, Essex, the route of the Roman road has been traced to the east of the modern High Street (Ennis 2017). It has been argued that a number of major Roman road routes had later prehistoric precursors (Malim 2001; see also Moan 2014). Given the density of the region's Late Iron Age settlements, it would only be logically that the landscape was then 'organised' and that its settlements were connected by 'ways'. Yet, the degree to which this involved any longer distance routes has yet to be established.

The scale of the University's West/North West Cambridge developments and related excavations have demonstrated just what a lattice-like network of roads and trackways knitted together its Roman hinterland (Cessford & Evans 2014). Three tiers of routeway have been distinguished. At its top end were long-distance routes (Tier 1) and, finally, in 2009 in front of New Hall/Murray Edwards College, the full 9m-width of the *Via Devana's* metalling was exposed, with its projected line running south of Huntingdon Road. Large-scale quarries relating to its construction had been excavated in the College's grounds in 1994. Tellingly, the road itself was not ditch-flanked and this might account for why none of the current A14 improvement excavations have exposed its line (though, based on its current projection, most of their exposures would likely have lain too far to the east).

Of the West/North West Cambridge route hierarchy, the lowest tier (No. 3) has been assigned to a series of irregular/'sinuous' trackways and, clearly, each farmstead-settlement would have had some such access. Between these extremes were basically straight/regular roads (Tier 2). Evidently reflecting a degree of survey-planning, these effectively determined the orientation of settlements within larger landscape 'blocks'. An issue in this regard, and one concerning the distinction of routeways generally,

is that in many instances their ditch demarcation only occurred within settlements themselves: once passing out of their limits, so unmarked, their routes can easily evade detection.

The question arises whether the degree to which the sequence-development of some farmstead-settlements related to their routeway situation and if they lay at nodal points. Arguably also having a distinct local market function, West Cambridge's Vicars Farm settlement, with its three-routeway access, would be a case in point (Evans & Lucas forthcoming; Smith *et al.* 2016, 198, fig. 5.63). By the same measure, so too would be the nearby NIAB Lands/Darwin Close southern settlement; clearly also a significant settlement (having a substantial inhumation cemetery; see above), it also lay at a hub-point of three routes (*ibid.*, fig. 5.37).²¹

One of North West Cambridge's sites (No. IV) was found to have a pair of parallel ditches (c. 30m apart) run down across the area's low ground from its side. Appearing almost like a cursus monument, there can be no doubt whatsoever of their Roman-period attribution. They must relate to some manner of large-scale 'land-blocking', with the only known vague parallel being the series of boundaries radiating from Stansted's MTCP Site (Cooke *et al.* 2008; Smith *et al.* 2016, 233, fig. 6.28; see e.g. Rippon 2012 on 'planned' landscapes).

Finally, in this context, involving up to four ditch-lines, there is the multiple parallel delineation of Longstanton/Northstowe's routeways (Collins 2017). While having some affinities to later Iron Age multiple ditch route/dyke systems, here they rather relate to the settlements' multiple-perimeter embankments (see above), suggesting that the routes/roads were actually embanked. At the time of writing their purpose can only be speculated upon: did it relate to the enclosure of estate/pasture lands and/or, even, the defence of the routes themselves?

Mapping Landscape and Finds

With Essex's cropmark published by Ingle and Saunders in 2011, the National Mapping Programme's results from Norfolk – particularly from The Broads and the adjacent length of the coast (e.g. Caister-on-Sea and Burgh Castle) – have yielded dramatic results. An area having seen relatively little excavation, there dense Roman-attributed fieldsystems and settlements have now been cropmark-plotted across enormous tracts (Albone *et al.* 2008; see also Smith *et al.* 2016, 212, 233-4, figs 6.4 & 6.29 and, for Suffolk, Good *et al.* 2007).

Extending as a great transect south from the fen-edge at Fenstanton, across the western claylands and to Royston's chalkland, Historic England's South West Cambridgeshire aerial mapping programme has discovered both new, and otherwise greatly detailed many known, probable Iron Age and Romano-British settlements (Knight *et al.* forthcoming). Particularly noteworthy is the mapping of the dense Roman-period landscape south of the River Rhee. There linked by droveway-/road-lines (and with many Iron Age settlements also identified), major settlements have been mapped around Foxton, Shepreth, Littleton and Ashwell, with the latter including a villa complex and there likely being another at Hoffer Bridge. A very 'complete picture' of the periods' landscape has been achieved, which also includes an extraordinary scale of lazy-bed cultivation trenches at Shepreth.

Vast quantities of the periods' metalwork continue to be recorded and mapped through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS; e.g. Garrow 2010; Brindle 2014) and, contributing to a variety of studies, are resulting in remarkable distributions (see, e.g., in Millett *et al.* 2016, figs 28.1 & 40.1).²²

The Omitted – Other Projects

With hundreds of period-relevant excavations/interventions occurring within the five countries over the last decade (plus the number of related publications), it has proven impossible to provide anything like comprehensive coverage here and many substantial projects have not been accommodated. In Herts. this would, for example, include a number of sites at Buntingford arising from housing developments close to the A10. These have revealed a well preserved landscape of Late Iron Age and

Roman settlement, with accompanying fieldsystems and including evidence of intensive infield cultivation (e.g. Clarke 2016; Jones 2015). Equally, there have been excavations in the vicinity of Bishops Stortford, exposing fields and farms associated with roadside settlement there (e.g. Bush 2013), and Iron Age and Roman-period settlement have been investigated at Wallingford, Norfolk (Whitmore & Watkins 2016). Also, there would be the sites published in MOLA's *Archaeological Landscapes of East London* volume (Howell *et al.* 2011; now within the Borough of Havering, but formerly in Essex). Amongst its series of later Iron Age and Roman-period settlements, singularly noteworthy is the triple-circuit fortified enclosure at Moor Hill. Originating in the mid-first century AD and showing a two-staged development (first single-, then, double-circuited; *ibid.*, 59–71), its similarity to Orsett Cock's enclosure in Essex is striking (Carter 1998).

The excavations at Lancaster Way on the Isle of Ely could also be cited (e.g. Patten 2015; Wright 2018). Situated on the island's central ridge and beside the 'hollow'/channel-course linking The Cove and Grunty Fen marsh embayments, this involved a series of interlinked Roman-period farmsteads – arranged around a central road/trackway, and having a small inhumation cemetery – that was directly preceded by two later/Late Iron Age settlement clusters; set at a remove was a separate 'banjo-type' enclosure with a large central roundhouse. Further out in the Fens, the recent excavation by Pre-Construct Archaeology of enclosures arguably relating to a *villa rustica* at March could be cited (Jones 2018) and, in South Cambs., there have been further exposures of Roman riverside complex at the Babraham Institute (Collins 2012; Lucy forthcoming).

This contribution should, furthermore, have been sufficient to somehow also include Val Rigby's study of the Late Iron Age horse harness-fitting moulds from Waldringfield, Suffolk (2013), the Elsenham Quarry's Roman landscape in Essex (Hammond & Preston 2010), Little Paxton's Ouse Valley campaigns (Jones 2011), the extensive LIA/Roman-period evidenced from Oxford's M1 widening investigations in Herts. (Stansbie *et al.* 2012), Time Team's geophysical survey and trill trenching at Brancaster (Brennan 2016) and, even, that – based on the occurrence of very late Roman wares almost exclusively in its SFBs – it now appears that Mucking's Anglo-Saxon occupation may have actually started in the last decades of the fourth century AD (Lucy & Evans 2016, 227–40 and 436–9). Yes, if this was enough of an overview it would have all these and much more ...

Research Directives and Initiatives

The many long-standing generic themes of the periods' archaeology, such as town, hinterland and countryside interrelationships (i.e. the 'hierarchy of settlement'), the role of trade/redistribution and transportation – plus, for example, the impact of taxation, literacy and coinage, the role of the army or the expression of Romanisation in patterns of land-holding and tenancy – that usually feature in both the region's and national research agendas (e.g. James & Millett 2001; Medlycott 2011b), will never have final resolution. Accordingly, while they should be understood as underpinning what is here presented, the focus will instead be upon more immediate matters.

Equally, with so much relevant excavation having been undertaken in the region over the last 20 years, in the face of the amassed data the days of 'check-list-type' research issues are behind us. With the basic parameters of the periods' main settlement-types and their sequence-chronologies now essentially established (e.g. Smith *et al.* 2016), the progression of knowledge can no longer be a matter of 'one-linear' directives but, rather, detailing and propensity in the light of larger scale patterning. Achieving this will require other approaches to excavation and co-ordinated programmes of research.

One theme that emerges out of this is what information is now being obtained through various scientific analyses. Directly telling of 'foreignness'/mobility and distant 'connectivity' – matters of pressing relevance – these studies are now providing significant insights into the

periods' archaeology. Given this, the argument could now be mounted whether there should be a percentage-based science levy implemented on major excavation projects.

Also to be highlighted is the lack of regional/county site-by-period (and key artefact) distribution mapping. This, for example, proved a significant hindrance in the course of Mucking's post-excavation (Evans *et al.* 2016, figs 1.22 & 2.49) and, increasingly, it is impacting upon what dissertation topics students can now reasonably undertake. There clearly is a need to have readily available 'authoritative' maps of the kind that accompanied Thompson's 2015 Hertfordshire Iron Age paper. In the case of the specific periods that concern us here, we are fortunate that the Reading Project's data-bases includes just such mapping. How, however, are these now to be updated and maintained? As things stand, one can only see this being conducted by the County Council Heritage/Environment sections. Yes, it will have to involve additional curatorial input (and fees), but it would surely result in massive research dividends.

Towns

As noted in a recent paper (Smith forthcoming), recent developer-funded fieldwork has afforded relatively few opportunities to investigate, at least at any scale, the 'core-areas' of the region's Roman towns and where, instead, most recent excavation has occurred in their suburbs and hinterlands. While the latter are seeing various degree of environmental sampling programmes, with the town-core investigations having been undertaken to 'pre-modern' standards, much of this work was then conducted without much archaeological science and offers little statistical control of their recovered finds (e.g. Alexander and Pullinger 2000; Medlycott 2011a; Green 2018). This means that it can be difficult to directly compare town results proper with those from their suburbs and hinterland settlements. When opportunities arise within the 'cores', these should be intensively excavated to a high standard to maximise recovery and be accompanied by intense environmental sampling.

Farmsteads

In recent years many sites of this type have now been excavated within the region and this is to the point that they soon risk becoming repetitive. In this regard, a number of points warrant notice. First, that too much excavation is strictly focused on their core-area paddocks, with insufficient attention given to their fields, which after all was the basis of their production. Not only is this true as regards environmental study (e.g. soil micromorphology and pollen), concerning what was actually growing where, but also what processing and stock facilities actually occurred out in the fields. In this, further testing of whether fields were manured is needed (especially lazy-bed plots), as is determining the location of woodlots (see Lodwick 2017b). With some landscapes so packed with farmsteads, to what degree was the land 'managed' and their practices sustainable? In short, *the operation of the period's farmsteads will not be understood by only investigating their settlement-area cores*, and their fields – and the holdings' 'interfaces' – require investigation (see Smith *et al.* 2016, 182–3 on the region's fieldsystems).

As is apparent in the Reading volumes, emphasis should be given to the recovery and analyses of waterlogged plant remains, as they generally contain a far greater range of fruits and horticultural crops than bulk charred remains' samples (Smith *et al.* 2016, 240). Equally, insect remains can elucidate what grain pests were introduced in Roman times and, too, where livestock were concentrated (e.g. Smith & Kenward 2011). In this capacity, the further application of 'hard science' will prove insightful. Human isotopic analyses have, for example, shown dietary differences relating to Romanisation and, arguably, rural and urban consumption patterns (e.g. Cummings 2009; Cheung *et al.* 2012; Müldner 2013). Moreover, aDNA and isotopic analyses have the potential to inform us of animal management and, as demonstrated through aDNA in the case of Colne Fen's Langdale Hale's horses (Bower *et al.* 2013), whether improved stock were imported from the Continent.

Second, it is settlements of this type in which variable methodologies should be applied. Rather than continuing to dig them by just 'standard rote', in the light of their frequency, some could see more minimal recording (e.g. just establishing their plan layout and broad sequence-chronology). In balance, though, others warrant being excavated (and sampled) to a much higher intensity, so that the dynamics of their operation – variously the foci of processing, storage, consumption and middening – can be interrogated and detailed.

Assemblage size is also relevant. With so much excavation of such sites being undertaken, and with their 'norms' now being established (Smith *et al.* 2016; Allen *et al.* 2017), with few exceptions aside, to make any serious contribution to knowledge and robust statements about the past requires *substantial assemblages*. If attempting to benchmark this, then levels in range of the 5,000 or more sherds or animal bones could, perhaps, be posited. The same is obviously also true of the quantity of bulk environmental sampling undertaken and just how many litres needs to be processed to actually say something meaningful. Coupled together with dry-sieving programmes, the small finds-fractions retrieved from such sampling also has – as demonstrated by Ballantyne's analyses of the Colne Fen sites (2013, 410–13) – the potential to provide insights into micro-level depositional patterning.²³

Excavation Sample, Finds Densities and Distribution Analyses

The distinction between Late Iron Age and Early Roman-period pottery assemblages can be difficult. One result of this is that there has been something of a trend to group together the first century AD 'transition' into one broad phase. While in some cases this cannot be avoided, every effort should be made to disentangle and articulate their respective settlement layouts when possible. The actual impact of the Conquest, after all, has to be one of the key horizons in land-use/cultural sequences that require understanding. Accordingly, attempting to achieve this, a greater intensity of excavation sampling of these horizons' features may be necessary. Further to calls for greater methodological innovation, it may well be necessary to not just excavate site sequences by just uniform rote, but vary the sampling intensity (especially of linear features) according to the needs/questions being asked of specific phases and their articulation.

As would be expected, it appears that the 'higher level' Roman-period settlements – variously towns/nucleated/roadside, and some complex farmsteads and villas – generally evince a wider range of craft/industrial activities, coinage and, too, a greater variety of plant foods (Smith *et al.* 2016, 185–8, 192 & 241 & table 5.5). Roadside settlements/'centres' (and towns), clearly were places where a wide range of peoples/influences intermixed and 'connected' (Smith & Fulford 2018). Accordingly, a greater sampling intensity may also then generally be required on these more 'complicated' sites if the full range of their functions and their loci are to be distinguished and detailed.

There have been recent calls for greater statistical control of site finds densities (Evans 2012; Fulford & Holbrook 2018), so that the quantities achieved from one type of settlement can truly be compared to others. Of course, this by no means is exclusive to Romano-British sites, but the need is all the more acute for the period due to the sheer number of sites dug *per annum* of that attribution, the size of its assemblages and, too, because of its greater range of settlement types – its established 'hierarchy' – than in later prehistory. Such measures would allow us to firmly explore whether there were depositional threshold-levels between town, suburban and hinterland/countryside settlements.

While per hectare finds densities (by category/type) have already been employed as a means of comparison (Taylor 2013, fig. 1; Evans *et al.* 2013, tables 2.54 & 4.46; Smith *et al.* 2016, table 5.51), it is recognised that this can only provide a crude rule-of-thumb measure and one ultimately dependent on the intensity of a site's sampling. Far better would be if finds densities could be expressed by feature cubic-capacity and, then, the range and average densities per phase and period from sites as a whole. Thus far, these techniques have only been used in a few cases (Millett & Woodhouse 2015; Evans *et al.* 2018, tables 4.57, 4.58, 5.25 & fig. 6.3), but with digital recording techniques they should not prove too onerous to implement.

Together with this, there clearly is a pressing need for site publications to more widely present artefact-category distributional analyses. Given that almost all major sites are now digitally recorded and computerised finds data-bases are employed, it is remarkable how few of their publications actually include specific artefact-type distributions. Without this, it is difficult to appreciate, for example, a settlement's middening patterns or whether finewares clustering occurred adjacent to house compounds, as opposed to animal paddocks. Indeed, not undertaking this kind analysis and visualisation, is to miss one of the main strengths of large-scale/total settlement investigations.

Surface Collection and Metal-detecting

Overview studies have variously called for surface collection and the consistent application of metal-detecting on Roman settlements (Fulford & Holbrook 2018). Certainly, as regards issues of identity, settlement status and the distinction of their inhabitants' 'roles', *the maximization of metalwork assemblages must be considered a major directive*. True of the periods' coins, personal ornaments and tools, the quantity of finds caught up in surface deposits on ploughed-out sites has been shown to be considerable (at, for example, the Camp Ground, some 700 coins and 8000 sherds were thus retrieved across its c. 5.5ha; Evans *et al.* 2013, 182–200). Accordingly, even if intensive fieldwalking-collection is often unpractical, every attempt needs to be made to metal-detect these horizons. Experimental trials at both the Camp Ground and North West Cambridge have shown that it is most appropriately done at the level of the lower sub-soil. Accordingly, during the course of machine-stripping the main Roman settlements at Longstanton/Northstowe (Collins 2017), following the stripping of the topsoil, the lower soil horizon was systematically metal-detected with finds plotted by hand-held GPS units. This has proven a quick and efficient technique. If properly co-ordinated, it need not result in any delay or interruption to a site's stripping programme, and can result in a massive increase in metalwork finds.

Building Recovery

Reviewing recent site publications, it is clear that many of the periods' settlements result in the recovery of a very few, if any, definite building remains. This is largely the product of intense plough-damage, that many of the periods' structures were evidently not deeply footed and just involved sill-beam construction, plus also the impact of 'hard' excavation machine-stripping. The latter was evident when, in 1999, the CAU excavated Colne Fen's Langdale Hale 'state farm'. Despite that a number of 'shallow' structures were then forthcoming, comparison could be made to where part of the settlement had been dug during a student training excavation in the 1970s. Then, using just a JCB to remove topsoil, but leaving its interface with underlying gravel geology in, this was subject to 'trowel-/hoe-line' exposure and cleaning, with the result that more shallow building components were recovered than during the main site's stripping done decades later (Mytum 2013).

It is obviously unfeasible to so carefully expose strata in such a manner given the large-scale excavation programmes now regularly undertaken. Nevertheless when, for example, evaluation-phase geophysical surveys indicate the location of buildings, then greater care should be taken in their exposure and to allow greater finds retrieval and sampling (e.g. metal-detecting and phosphate/magnetic susceptibility) of their overlying 'interface'. Put simply, to keep on excavating so many settlements of the period as is now happening, but with so little recovery of convincing building plans, does seem rather pointless and, at least in some instances, doing less – but better – might provide 'more'.

Cemetery Recovery and Human Remains

Reviewing the site literature, it is revealing how many Roman settlements are being excavated in their near-entirety, but without cemeteries identified. In recognition that accompanying cemeteries may lie at a distance to their settlements' compounds, the argument could be made that, in the course of evaluation fieldwork, a higher intensity of trench sampling-interval may be necessary in their surrounding area.

With the distinction of ‘mixed’ burial rites within both LIA and Roman-period cemeteries, the need to absolutely date key burials – and not just rely of ‘typological’ criteria – is becoming evermore apparent.²⁴ This is not just true of ‘Early’ cemeteries having both cremations and inhumations (Lyons 2011), but, as emphasised by Gerrard (2015), ‘Late’ inhumation burials. With so few of the latter having dateable grave goods, not only is this crucial as regards Late Roman/Early Anglo-Saxon traditions, but also to establish the advent and spread of such practices as decapitation.

The application of ‘science’, furthermore – both aDNA and isotopic – is where great advances are currently being made and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future (e.g. Shaw *et al.* 2016). Not only does this have the potential to identify whom were ‘foreigners’ within burial communities but also familial groupings within cemeteries. In this regard, Harvard’s mass-scale first millennium BC aDNA sample (also including Conquest Period/Early Roman burials) is likely to produce groundbreaking results and, with experimental trials currently in hand, it can only be hoped that this could soon be extended to cremated remains.

The application of scientific techniques to the periods’ human remains also relates to matters of health (see e.g. Rohnbogner 2018). Beyond just standard measures of trauma and pathology, advances in the study of bodily parasites means that bulk soil samples should now be routinely taken from the stomach-area of inhumations (Mitchell 2016) and, arguably, also animal-carcass burials.

Pottery Studies

As highlighted in the Reading Project studies (Fulford & Holbrook 2018; Rippon 2017, 337–9), as issues of ceramic trade/supply are coming to the fore it is imperative that relevant specialists are familiar with the full range of major pottery industries so that the scale of their regional distributions can be mapped. Conversely, with ‘Early’ kilns now being widely found on settlements the context of their production needs to be explored: were they strictly local settlement related or were some more widely traded? To this end, programmes of thin-sectioning will need to be regularly implemented.

Of Late Iron Age ceramic assemblages, the idea that these involve archaic/conservative communities is now widely cited and, with it, that handmade pottery continued to be made alongside wheelmade vessels. This is certainly true and in some cases where clear Late Iron Age to Roman continuity can be demonstrated, in their Late Iron Age assemblages some apparently had only a limited wheelmade component. Equally, there are other sites where a settlement’s entire pottery repertoire almost seems to have been wheelmade. The problem is that the notion of ‘archaic’ pottery traditions is becoming something of a convenient catch-phrase. If a community did practice wheelmade manufacture, then it is difficult to understand why, given its much greater technological efficiency, they would continue to also produce handmade forms (unless involving vessels of a certain type; e.g. large storage pots). Rather, if the overall percentage of a site’s wheelmade wares were low, then the question becomes whether they represent local imports and if only certain forms (e.g. serving vessels) were being obtained. Conversely, if an assemblage’s frequency of handmade wares was low, then greater effort needs to be made to determine if this material was actually residual through the analysis of their fabrics and mean sherd weights. The idea that only some settlements may have actually practiced wheelmade production, and that such technological knowledge may not then have been universal, has tremendous potential concerning notions of ‘mixed’/multiple Late Iron Age communities.²⁵

We have come to think of the Aylesford-Swarling zone in terms of standard core-periphery models and where its defining traits would regularly fall-off or ‘decay’ with distance from their ‘core’. Given the evidence from the Bedford- and the Cambridge-area’s – respectively their small square shrines and cremation rings – this may not be what happened. Almost as if marking the border, the ‘zone’s northern limits maybe seeing stronger trait-expression than anticipated; whereas there seems something of a patchwork, both behind and beyond it, in which individual communities variously interacted with and uptook these Gaulish influences. If so, this is surely a theme warranting broader study and much more detailed pottery analysis. After all, on this hang a great deal. The issue being to what degree, across the region, this change was a matter of any population influx, as opposed to varying responses to, and the complicated dynamics of, *acculturation*.

Material Technology and Sourcing

The scientific sourcing of materials is clearly crucial to the study of trade and long-distance contact. This does not just apply to ceramic thin-sectioning but also the chemical composition of glass (e.g. Jackson & Paynter 2016) and various resins (e.g. Brettell *et al.* 2014 and 2015). In this capacity, the employment of portable XRF units can also be recommended and recent trials have been done in deep Roman town suburban sequences to test whether the impact of the period's industrial pollution registers (Cessford 2017).

Omitted Issues

There are, of course, a myriad of arising topics that could fall under this headline, which fieldwork is now in a position to seriously address. One, for example, concerning matters of 'mixed/expressed' identities, is whether brooch-use was greater in 'higher level' settlement contexts (towns, roadside settlements/'centres'). Again, statistical area-/cubic-measure control will be crucial here. Relating to the dynamics of Conquest Period acculturation and literacy, another is *Terra Nigra* stamps (see Rigby 1973); particularly, that the imported vessel ones involved 'real/named' stamps, while their local imitation equivalents usually just involve symbols: variously circle- and triangle-arrangements (see Evans & Lucas forthcoming).

Given the scale of the now-massed regional data-set, these are only a few issues of many and their listing could go on ...

The Challenge of Numbers

This is *the* issue that we must now contend with. On the one hand, it relates to the sheer quantity of fieldwork now undertaken *per annum* within the region. Thinking of it as an unparalleled, mass 'digging everything' experiment, it is imperative that greater statistical means are employed to mobilise and allow for sound comparative artefact density measures between sites. Equally, with 'solid' settlement densities estimates now forthcoming from certain portions of the region (e.g. Bedford-area and Cambridge's hinterland), we need to achieve comparative distributional data from other areas (e.g. Norfolk) to know just how widespread these dense settlement levels were. Also relevant for the region's Late Iron Age centres, to what degree did Roman town and hinterland densities vary from the countryside at large? What, moreover, was the impact of immediate access to road and river transportation links? Did these promote higher settlement levels as opposed to the 'land behind'?

The recognition of such settlement densities is nothing short of 'game-changing'. Occurring at levels as high as anywhere known within the greater Roman Empire (e.g. Jeneson 2011), it should recast the agenda of the region's archaeology. When it comes to the periods' farmsteads, if not making their excavation a 'repeatable experiment' (Evans 2012), faced with their numbers, this squarely demands that they are approached with much greater methodological innovation; otherwise, they risk becoming little more than 'by-rote' exercises, potentially leading to information redundancy.

Certainly, the socio-cultural implications of such high settlement densities must be more widely acknowledged. Now knowing that 'they', in effect, could have waved to their neighbours from their front doors is a very different 'past world' than was envisaged 20 to 30 years ago, when migrant potters or itinerate metalsmiths were needed to account for

distantly shared material culture traits. The past was evidently much more densely settled than earlier researchers could ever have imagined. Thus far, however, our interpretative frameworks have yet to fully take account of this.

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Endnotes

- 1) It is equally difficult to draw upon the specifics of their South Essex data as its Thames-side swathe constitutes such a minor proportion of their South zone (Smith *et al.* 2016, chap 4).
- 2) See Thompson 2015, 118–22, figs 6.1 & 6.2 concerning the massive expansion of the number of ‘Late’ – vs. ‘Middle’ – Iron Age settlements in Herts. (see also Smith *et al.* 2016, 214).
- 3) See also, e.g. Harlow 2016 and 2018, and Talbot 2017.
- 4) While Verulamium has seen relatively little excavation in recent years (e.g. Hood 2015), its first century AD development has been charted in studies by Thompson (2105, 128–31 and forthcoming) and West (2015); see, also, Burliegh 2015 concerning Baldock and, for work at Welwyn, Hunn 2009.
- 5) Medycott and Atkinson 2012 paper provides then ‘state-of-the-art’ summaries of Essex’s Roman towns and its settlement generally.
- 6) See also Geary *et al.* 2016 concerning the later Iron Age timber alignments excavated at Beccles, Barham and Geldeston in the lower Waveney Valley.
- 7) Other ‘villa-candidate’ investigations include those at Bottisham, Cambridge (Newton 2016), Manton Lane, Bedford (Luke *et al.* 2017) and, on the River Great Ouse, Fen Drayton (Robinson-Leki 2016).
- 8) Within the Reading Project’s The East, Central Belt and The South’s entries, the frequency of farmstead investigations respectively varied from 78 to 70.6%; whereas the percentage of their villa investigations was, respectively, from 7.7 to 18 (Central Belt, 14%; Smith *et al.* 2016).
- 9) Located within just a few hundred metres of their ‘neighbours’, the cropmark plots alongside the Ouse’s River Ivel tributary at Broom, Bedford (with on-going excavations occurring ‘behind’; see Evans *et al.* 2018, 440, fig. 6.30) indicates an even closer riverside ‘packing’, with an interval of just 200–450m between the farmstead-settlements. See, also, Meade 2010 on Ouse Valley’s settlement patterns.
- 10) Evidence for grapes have been found in at least seven sites in the region, with vine pollen registering at Scole (Wiltshire 2014, 416; Smith *et al.* 2016, 240).
- 11) Other recent aisled building findings include at Yaxley, in Peterborough (Phillips 2014), Shefford in Beds. (Luke *et al.* 2010), the Babraham Institute in South Cambs. (Collins 2012) and Longstanton/Northstowe (Collins 2017; see Smith *et al.* 2016, 66–9, fig. 3.18 for overview). A corndryer was also present in one of the latter project’s sites, with others, for example, excavated at Duxford (Lyons 2011, 83–9) and, probably, Bottisham (Newton 2016, 50–2; see Smith *et al.* 2016, 57, fig. 3.11 for overview).
- 12) See Black’s 2015 survey of Late Iron Age and Roman ‘sacred sites’, as well as Curteis 2015 on Harlow and other Essex temple sites’ coinage (also, Curteis 2010); Smith 2018a discussed ‘sacred space’ within the West Anglian Plain-area (202–3, fig. 5.65)
- 13) See Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2010 on Baldock’s burials, and Thompson forthcoming compares the development of Baldock, Braughing, Welwyn and Verulamium’s early cemeteries (see, also, Atkinson 2015 for Great Dunmow).
- 14) First dug in the mid-nineteenth century by Henslow (Darwin’s mentor), there have also been further investigation of the Eastlow Hill tumulus in Rougham, Suffolk (Boyles forthcoming); see also Benfield and Black (2013) concerning the excavation of the Mersea Mount Barrow on Mersea Island, Essex.
- 15) Previously, other high decapitation-frequency cemeteries have been excavated in the region: Kempston (13%, 12 out of 92; Boylston *et al.* 2000) and Melford Meadows (38%, 10 out of 26; Mudd 2002). Of the 52 skeletons recently excavated within the cemetery at Fentons Farm, Great Whelnetham, 17 were decapitated (A. Peachy pers comm.).
- 16) Some Late Iron Age assemblages have, however, very high pig values; for example, 49% at Braughing oppidum/Skeleton Green and more than 20% at Stansted’s MTCP settlement (Smith *et al.* 2016, 238).
- 17) See Atkinson and Preston 2015, 51–2 concerning Elm’s Farm, Heybridge’s pottery kilns, with Luke 2008, 201–5, Biddulph *et al.* 2010, and Ladd and Mortimer 2017 providing other examples.

18) With the recent recognition of the scale of its production in the Godmanchester-area, the recovery of its namesake type-ware south at Longstanton/Northstowe's settlements is significant (Collins 2017). It implies that, with the various A14 investigations providing, in effect, a transect running from Cambridge's hinterland to Godmanchester, the supply-range of their respective 'home' wares – Horningsea and Godmanchester – should soon be able to be detailed.

19) With birch tar having evidently been used to repair samian vessels at both North West Cambridge and Longstanton/Northstowe (Stacey *et al.* forthcoming), 'science' is also contributing to pottery studies. Indeed, contrasting with the lead-bracketed 'fixing' of samian in both Godmanchester and Cambridge's assemblages – that would have both been unsightly and not allowed for the retention of liquids – this could potentially suggest different rural/urban vessel-repair techniques.

20) See also, more generally, Kinory 2012 and Smith *et al.* 2017 (212–16 & figs 5.21–.22). With Stanford Wharf and Scole's riverside facilities outlined above, Boreham has identified a probable Roman wharf at The Hythe, Reach, Cambs. (*et al.* 2016) and Fairclough (2011) argues for the existence of a Roman port at Felixstowe. See, also, Jones 2012 on Roman Britain's water-borne transportation and Murphy 2009 concerning the periods' coastal exploitation and trade.

21) Although only dealing with Roman Britain's highest order roadways, Orengo and Livarda's 2015 network analysis of its transportation network is particularly insightful for the penetration and spread of 'exotics' – especially introduced plant foods – into the province.

22) See Brindle's Reading volume case-study of 'The East's coinage (which extends north beyond the project's namesake-designated zone to include the Fens up to Lincoln, but excludes The South and Central Belt's West Anglian Plain; 2017b, 264–72, figs 6.27 & 6.30), which employs the PAS data and compares phased coin-loss rates in the east and west of the country.

23) Such methods proving particularly crucial to the recovery of bird bone, which it has been shown occurs in a ratio of one to seven between hand- and sieved-recovered techniques (Higbee 2013, 370).

24) See Hamilton *et al.* 2015 on the need to radiocarbon date and Bayesian model Iron Age cemeteries and settlements generally.

25) See Sutton's 2017 analysis of Late Iron Age pottery, his 'Region 2' study-area being centred upon St Albans and Baldock/Braughing.

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