The Roman Period

Neil Holbrook

The Roman period was well covered in *Archaeology of Gloucestershire* (Saville 1984), with papers on the Cotswolds (Richard Reece), the Thames Valley (David Miles) and cities and large rural settlements (Alan McWhirr). McWhirr's *Roman Gloucestershire* published in 1981 remains the best general account, and there is much still to be gained from reading it. In some areas, however, new discoveries and approaches to Romano-British archaeology now point to somewhat different conclusions to those presented more than two decades ago. It is these topics that form the subject of this paper. Inevitably the pace of progress has not been even. While major advances have been made in our understanding of rural settlement, and this will be discussed in some detail, elsewhere we are little further forward in our knowledge of, for example, the Roman military conquest. No new military sites have been recognised and the conclusion that the territory of the Dobunni was not intensively garrisoned in the aftermath of the Roman invasion is inescapable. The fort at Cirencester now appears anomalous, and I favour the view that it was established as a demonstration of support for a pro-Roman Dobunnic leader based at Bagendon during the unsettled period of the early Welsh campaigns, rather than as part of a scheme of territorial subjugation (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 53–5).

Figure 1 presents my version of a map of Roman Gloucestershire. All such exercises are necessarily selective and dependent upon the scale of study. The elements common to almost all maps which seek to depict our area on a single page (e.g. McWhirr 1981; Fulford 2003, fig. 2) are the towns (Gloucester and Cirencester as well as the smaller centres) and roads. It is rural settlement which causes the most problems simply because the large number of sites, combined with difficulties in classification, does not lend itself to mapping at this scale.

ROADS AND SETTLEMENTS

Roads

The relationship of Cirencester to its surrounding road system is a puzzle that has taxed several generations of scholars, although significant progress has been made in the last decade. Gerald Hargreaves' (1998) detailed survey work led him to propose that the Fosse Way was originally conceived as a through route to which the siting of the fort at Cirencester and the subsequent town was irrelevant. Developing the theme, Richard Reece (2003) has observed the irrationality of the course adopted by Ermin Street in the vicinity of the town. The strategic objective of Ermin Street was to achieve the easiest route to the edge of the Cotswold escarpment and thereafter down to the crossing of the Severn at Kingsholm. But the road did not follow the logical course to achieve this aim in the vicinity of Cirencester where it adopted a marked deviation to the south-west to enter the Churn valley on the site later adopted for the Roman town. This must have been a conscious decision by the surveyors which Reece suggests was prompted by a desire to avoid an existing ceremonial area associated with Tar Barrows. This is an intriguing theory that could easily be tested by fieldwork. Subsequent reorganisation of the road system around Cirencester was doubtless prompted by the process of laying out the new town of *Corinium Dobunnorum*. This involved the diversion of both the Fosse Way and Akeman Street to provide a new joint route that fixed the approximate line of the *decumanus maximus* of the town.[1] The Whiteway (Margary

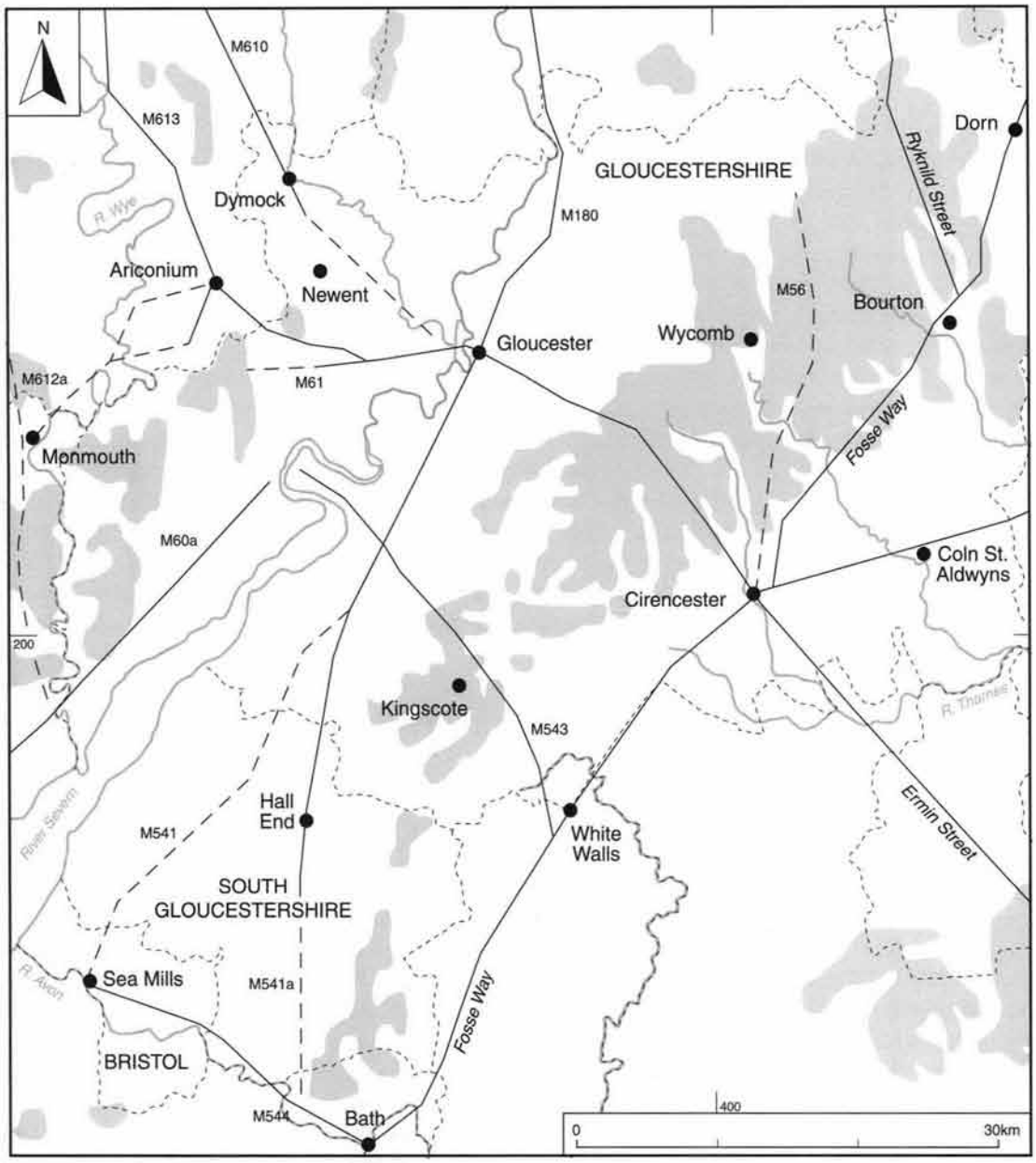

Fig. 1: Roads and Major Settlements. The roads are numbered according to I.V. Margary, Roman Roads in Britain *(1967).*

route 56) is another road whose Roman origin has been disputed, but the case for its existence is strong, even if the details of its final approach into Cirencester remain to be determined.[2]

At other locations in the county confirmatory evidence has been recovered in recent years for some other long suspected routes. Examples include Margary route 543 that branched off from

the Fosse Way at Easton Grey and crossed the southern Cotswolds as it made for a ferry crossing of the Severn at Arlingham. This road is surprisingly omitted from a number of maps, but cropmarks which are likely to mark its roadside ditches have been observed at Kingscote and possible traces of metalling have been excavated at Frocester (Timby 1998, 7–8; Price and Price 1992). The existence of the road which departed from the Gloucester to Sea Mills road to head for a crossing of the Avon at Bitton (Margary 541a) has been confirmed by the discovery of a substantial roadside settlement at Hall End, Wickwar (see below). A 1st- or early 2nd-century AD date for the piles of a timber bridge across the Wye at Chepstow on the Newnham to Caerleon road (Margary 60a) was determined by radiocarbon dating in 2003.[3] While these various strands of evidence confirm the existence of some routes, the so-called Dean Road (Margary 614) should be removed from the map until evidence is produced to counter the serious doubt that has been cast upon its Roman origin (Standing 1988).

Cirencester and Gloucester

The last intensive campaign of urban excavation had ceased in Cirencester by 1979, and the great achievement of the last 25 years has been the publication of four substantial monographs on various aspects of the Roman town (Wacher and McWhirr 1982; McWhirr *et al.* 1982; McWhirr 1986; Holbrook 1998). Work in Cirencester over the last couple of decades has tended to be on a fairly small scale in advance of individual developments. It has, however, incrementally added new data and thrown up the occasional surprise. The instigation of extensive geophysical survey has produced stunning results at a number of Romano-British urban sites (Wroxeter in particular stands out: Gaffney *et al.* 2000; White and Gaffney 2003). It might be expected that similar results would be achieved in the undeveloped parts of Cirencester but such surveys have been somewhat less successful as work in St Michael's Field (*insula* IX: GSB 1999) and to the rear of Querns Lane (*insula* III: Barker 1998) demonstrates. While major long-lived elements of the town plan such as streets can be detected, the complex palimpsest of structures in the centre of the town, further complicated by differential patterns of post-Roman stone robbing, does not lend itself to the production of readily understandable plots comparable to those at Wroxeter. Perhaps greater success would be achieved on the periphery of the town (such as the playing fields of Victoria Road School and parts of the Abbey Grounds) where a shallower stratigraphic sequence might be expected.

The pattern of archaeological work in Gloucester has been somewhat different. Like Cirencester considerable excavation occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, some of which has been published (Heighway 1983; Heighway and Garrod 1980; Garrod and Heighway 1984; Hurst 1985 and 1986). Unlike Cirencester, however, excavation continued on a sizeable scale after 1979, much of it utilising labour from the Manpower Services Commission. Gloucester is by no means alone in that the considerable amount of effort put into these excavations has not resulted in publications of appropriate detail. To understand what has gone on in the last decades one is reliant upon the interim accounts in the *Transactions* and *Glevensis*. These are sufficient to demonstrate that the excavations were of good quality and yielded significant results, especially concerning the extramural areas. As Carolyn Heighway reviews what has been learnt about the archaeology of Gloucester in all periods elsewhere in this volume, I will concentrate on one aspect of new thinking rather than new discoveries.

Rebuilding of the fortress defences and internal buildings in stone at Gloucester in the Flavian period had originally been interpreted as works associated with the construction of the *colonia*.

In 1988 Hurst revised his earlier interpretation and proposed that these developments related to a reoccupation of the fortress by a new legionary garrison. This reinterpretation has not met with general acceptance, however, and most commentators prefer the sequence as originally proposed. Doubt has also now been cast on the traditional date for the foundation of the *colonia* during the reign of Nerva (AD 96–8). This is based upon the evidence of a tombstone of a veteran born in Gloucester which gives the *colonia* the title of *Ner(via* or *viana*). Hassall (1999, 183–4) has suggested that it is more likely on general grounds that the *colonia* would have been founded in the late 80s during the reign of Domitian and that it was granted the emperor's title of *Domitiana*. Upon the death of Domitian, and the damning of his memory by Nerva, *Nerviana* would have been substituted for its original name.

Smaller Towns

Nomenclature and classification of the nucleated settlements of Roman Britain have been a major theme of the last couple of decades, with terms such as small town, roadside community, village, and market centre variously invoked. This approach has had the tendency to group seemingly heterogeneous settlements into one category or another simply because they do not fit into other easily defined groups (Millett 1995). More recent discussions have focused on defining site function and economy ahead of a classification based solely upon morphology. In a local context the publication in 1998 of a report on excavations at Kingscote (1973–80) and Wycomb (1973–7) provided an opportunity to review what was also known of the other Cotswold small towns of Bourton-on-the-Water and Dorn (Timby 1998). A wealth of data was presented in this volume, and the heterogeneous nature of the sites is apparent. For instance Kingscote is reasonably interpreted as a rural estate centre, while Dorn appears to be a late Roman official installation. All of these sites have been known for some decades, but an important new discovery has been recently made at Hall End, Wickwar, on the road to Bitton. Geophysical survey and trial excavation have revealed a settlement covering 10 ha which contained a variety of stone-built structures (Young 2003).[4] Hall End is the largest known settlement in the Vale of Berkeley, lying 34 km south-west of Gloucester and 20 km north-east of Sea Mills. It is likely that other roadside settlements would produce similarly exciting results to those recovered from Hall End if they too were subjected to detailed geophysical survey. Coln St Aldwyns/Quenington, on Akeman Street 12 km to the east of Cirencester, would be a good candidate for study; surface scatters extend for almost one kilometre along the road (RCHME 1976, 36, 96–7). Elsewhere we need to be careful not to assume that all settlements which lay on roads were 'small towns' of one kind or another rather than just rural settlements which happen to lie close to a passing road. Settlement remains have been found at Hanham on the anticipated line of the Bath to Sea Mills road, but on current evidence there is nothing to suggest that this is anything other than a rural farmstead and iron-making site. A similar interpretation is also favoured for the site at Birdlip Quarry on Ermin Street. Both of these sites are discussed further below. Elsewhere too little is known of some settlements to say much of their character, as for example in the west of the county at Dymock on the road from Gloucester to Stretton Grandison (Gethyn-Jones 1991) and at The Moat to the south of Newent. At the latter iron-making slag and pottery have been recovered over an area of 47 ha, although the actual area of settlement and industry may have been much smaller than this. The site lies off the known road network and it is most likely to be a large rural settlement (Walters 1999, 81–4). Some previously postulated 'small towns' have not so far lived up to their billing. A settlement near Bitton, close to a road crossing of the Avon and junction with the Bath–Sea Mills road has been

supposed, although remains of it are proving elusive.[5] At Birdlip there was clearly a well-appointed building (a *mansio* where horses could be changed after the gruelling climb up the Cotswold escarpment is an attractive interpretation) but a series of evaluations demonstrates that there was no extensive settlement there.[6]

THE COUNTRYSIDE

In this section I discuss advances in our understanding of the agricultural landscape, and in particular the distribution, sequence and economy of rural settlements. There will be frequent references to villas. By this I mean a rural establishment, independent of settlement, normally of stone-built rectangular plan. Hypocausts, mosaics, baths and architectural ornamentation are characteristic. For structures that do not display any of these attributes I have generally adopted the term farmstead. Previous studies have tended to focus on villas to the detriment of farmsteads, but work over the last 25 years has gone some way to redressing the balance. Recent estimates suggest that between 50–70,000 late Iron-Age and Romano-British rural sites are known in England, compared to somewhere between 500 and 2,500 villas. Thus villas represent only about 3–4% of known rural settlements in the country (Mattingly 2004, 14).

The Upper Thames Valley

There is little value in studying the Upper Thames Valley in Gloucestershire as an entity. The vagaries of medieval and later political geography divide between Gloucestershire and Wiltshire an area of common landscape character on either bank of the Thames, while work further downstream as far as Reading has much to contribute to the understanding of our area. In 1984 David Miles reported upon the recently completed excavations at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm near Lechade. The results were exciting and fresh, and by combining this new evidence with that recovered from investigations undertaken in the preceding decade in Oxfordshire he was able to sketch a preliminary model of Romano-British settlement and agriculture in the Upper Thames Valley of Gloucestershire (Miles 1984). Twenty years on Thornhill Farm has just been published (Jennings *et al.* 2004), and Claydon Pike will shortly follow in a volume also covering excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at Kempsford and Somerford Keynes (Miles *et al.* forthcoming). Margaret Jones' excavation at Roughground Farm, Lechlade, has also been reported (Allen *et al.* 1993). In the last 20 years excavation on a truly extensive scale in advance of gravel extraction has occurred in two principal zones, one continuing previous work in the parishes of Lechlade, Fairford and Kempsford, the other in the heart of the Cotswold Water Park around Latton (Wiltshire), Somerford Keynes and Ashton Keynes (Wiltshire). To what degree has the full analysis of the older sites, combined with new discoveries, affected the picture sketched by Miles?

In many respects Miles' model still has currency, although some of his ideas have been significantly developed by George Lambrick in an important paper (1992) covering the whole of the Upper Thames Valley. Lambrick suggests that the increase in floodplain alluvium visible on a number of sites was the result of an intensification of arable agriculture on the valley sides in the late Iron-Age and Romano-British periods. He sees this expansion of arable onto traditional grazing lands on the Cotswold slopes leading to pressure on pasture that resulted in the creation of intensive cattle ranching sites. The type-site in Gloucestershire is Thornhill Farm where numerous ditched enclosures which do not seem to be domestic in character are interpreted as cattle breeding pens. Environmental evidence suggests that the site was surrounded by grassland, with no evidence

of arable production at this time (Jennings *et al.* 2004). Continuity of settlement and agricultural practice either side of AD 43 is evident in the Upper Thames Valley, a major episode of settlement dislocation not occurring, as with so much of Britain, until the early 2nd century. In Oxfordshire for instance sites terminating in the first half of the 2nd century are more numerous than those occupied throughout the Roman period in the Valley (Henig and Booth 2000, 106).

In Gloucestershire the pattern is equally clear. At Claydon Pike a centralised agricultural estate concerned with the production of animal fodder developed, while at Thornhill Farm the ranching settlement was replaced by trackways and hay meadows (Jennings *et al.* 2004, 158). Other 2nd-century developments include the construction of a villa at Roughground Farm and farmsteads at Whelford Bowmoor and Kempsford Stubbs Farm. Perhaps the aspect of this sequence that has come into clearest relief in the last 20 years is the sheer extent of Romano-British land management. Cropmarks and excavations show that vast expanses of the flat gravel terraces were turned over to a managed agricultural landscape. In virtually every case where excavation has occurred on any scale ditched trackways and field systems have come to light, and where these can be traced over a distance they may have linked settlements, as with the track between Claydon Pike and Kempsford Bowmoor (ibid. 159). The persistent discovery at various sites of evidence for the reorganisation of the agricultural landscape in the 2nd century points to the operation of an external political, economic or cultural force that entailed considerable capital investment (Lambrick 1992, 105). Miles (1984, 208) originally sought an explanation involving state (army) intervention, although in line with contemporary fashion it would appear that the forthcoming report on Claydon Pike will not stress this as a factor. That villas are much less prevalent in the Upper Thames Valley than the Cotswolds has led some commentators to interpret the field archaeology as evidence of multiple estates centred on Cotswold villas, tenants working the agriculturally productive farms on the river gravels (eg. Salway 1993, 420). It is important to remember, however, that these agricultural developments in the valley pre-date the heyday of Cotswold villas by at least a century. One could just as easily argue for the opposite interpretation that agricultural intensification in the Upper Thames Valley in the later 2nd and early 3rd century created the wealth to finance the construction of Cotswold villas from the mid 3rd century onwards. In either case the question of where the capital came from lies beyond the reach of archaeology.

In the later Roman period differing site histories have been revealed through excavation. At Claydon Pike a modest 4th-century villa was involved in mixed agriculture (the extensive trackways seem no longer to have been in use). Elsewhere some settlements were abandoned completely, such as Whelford Bowmoor and Kempsford Stubbs Farm where flooding occurred, while others such as Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes, reveal occupation into the 5th century or later to judge from the recovery of grass-tempered pottery (Jennings *et al.* 2004, 159; Coe *et al.* 1991, 47). Whatever the sequence at individual sites the persistent influence that the system of Romano-British fields and tracks had on the later landscape can be gauged by the fact that some of them have survived as land boundaries into modern times.[7]

The basis of the agricultural economy of the Upper Thames Valley is still not fully understood, and the evidence from the Lechlade area suggests that it was not constant throughout the Roman period. Claydon Pike demonstrates the importance of haymaking, while the tracks testify to the need to move large herds of cattle and sheep around the countryside to exploit grazing. Flax has been found at a number of sites in the Valley, including Claydon Pike, as well as in an old ground surface underlying the later town of Cirencester (Wild 2002, 6–7; Wacher and McWhirr 1982, 228). Horse breeding has sometime been evoked as a significant activity, but the evidence remains inconclusive. Animal bones from Horcott near Fairford have been used to suggest specialist horse

rearing (Reilly 2004), while at Thornhill Farm the horse remains are interpreted as those of work animals for the farm (Charles 2004, 132–3).

The Cotswolds

We still do not possess the complete plan of a rural settlement in the Cotswolds that did not develop into a villa. The best evidence we have is that recovered from the settlement next to Ermin Street at Birdlip Quarry, Cowley (Mudd *et al.* 1999). Surface remains suggest a settlement covering *c.*1 ha, of which a fair sample was excavated in advance of improvements to the A417 road. While it would be perverse to argue that the existence of Ermin Street did not have a significant effect on the daily life of the settlement, Birdlip Quarry is clearly not a typical roadside community with strip buildings fronting the road. Rather it appears to be a farmstead formed from a series of rectangular, partly ditched, enclosures containing one or more scattered buildings. Occupation commenced *c.*AD 160/80 and included a stake-built timber roundhouse (the entrance faced away from the road) alongside probable rectangular structures. The roundhouse was rebuilt in the later 3rd century with a timber or cob superstructure resting upon a 12-sided dry-stone foundation.[8] Further timber and stone-founded round and rectangular houses were built before the settlement was abandoned *c.*AD 370/80. The picture gained from Birdlip Quarry is of a farm composed of a number of different social (most probably family) groups involved in mixed agriculture. Wheat was cultivated and cattle, sheep and horses reared. Another unpretentious farmstead has been partially examined at Haymes near Southam on the lower slopes of Cleeve Hill (Rawes 1986). The presence there of an altar is no more than a reflection of everyday religious observance in what was surely an essentially secular farming settlement.

While these sites did not subsequently develop into villas, we can trace the sequence of pre-villa occupation at two other Cotswold sites. Excavation at Barnsley Park came to an end in 1979, but J.T. Smith (1985) has since published a telling re-interpretation of the findings (Fig. 2). Smith is surely correct in believing that the numerous circular structures described in the reports as animal pens were in fact roundhouses. He accordingly considers Barnsley Park as a settlement composed of three farmyards, each with its own house or houses of either circular and rectangular plan, the three families working the surrounding land in joint proprietorship. The farm was occupied from the mid 2nd century AD until *c.*360 when the first villa house was constructed. Smith detects evidence in the plan of the villa house for the persistence of a social structure based around multiple family units. At Marshfield occupation commenced in the late Iron Age with one or more timber roundhouses (Blockley 1985). The roundhouse was rebuilt with stone foundations in the second half of the 1st century AD (it is surely a house rather than a shrine as Blockley maintained), and a villa house was added in the last quarter of the 3rd century. Once again Smith (1987) has attempted a reinterpretation of the published evidence. He believes that analysis of the villa plan indicates that it was initially designed to house two or, more likely, four households, and that this is evidence for the growth and transformation of a social organisation which dates back to the late Iron-Age settlement.

These last two sites bring us neatly to a consideration of Cotswold villas. There are clearly a number of large well-appointed villas that still await discovery. While it might be thought that the visibility of these structures, both through cropmarks and an abundance of artefacts, combined with the systematic survey work of the former Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England would tend towards a reasonably complete set of data, recent discoveries suggest otherwise. Large previously unknown villas have been found at Turkdean and Badminton,

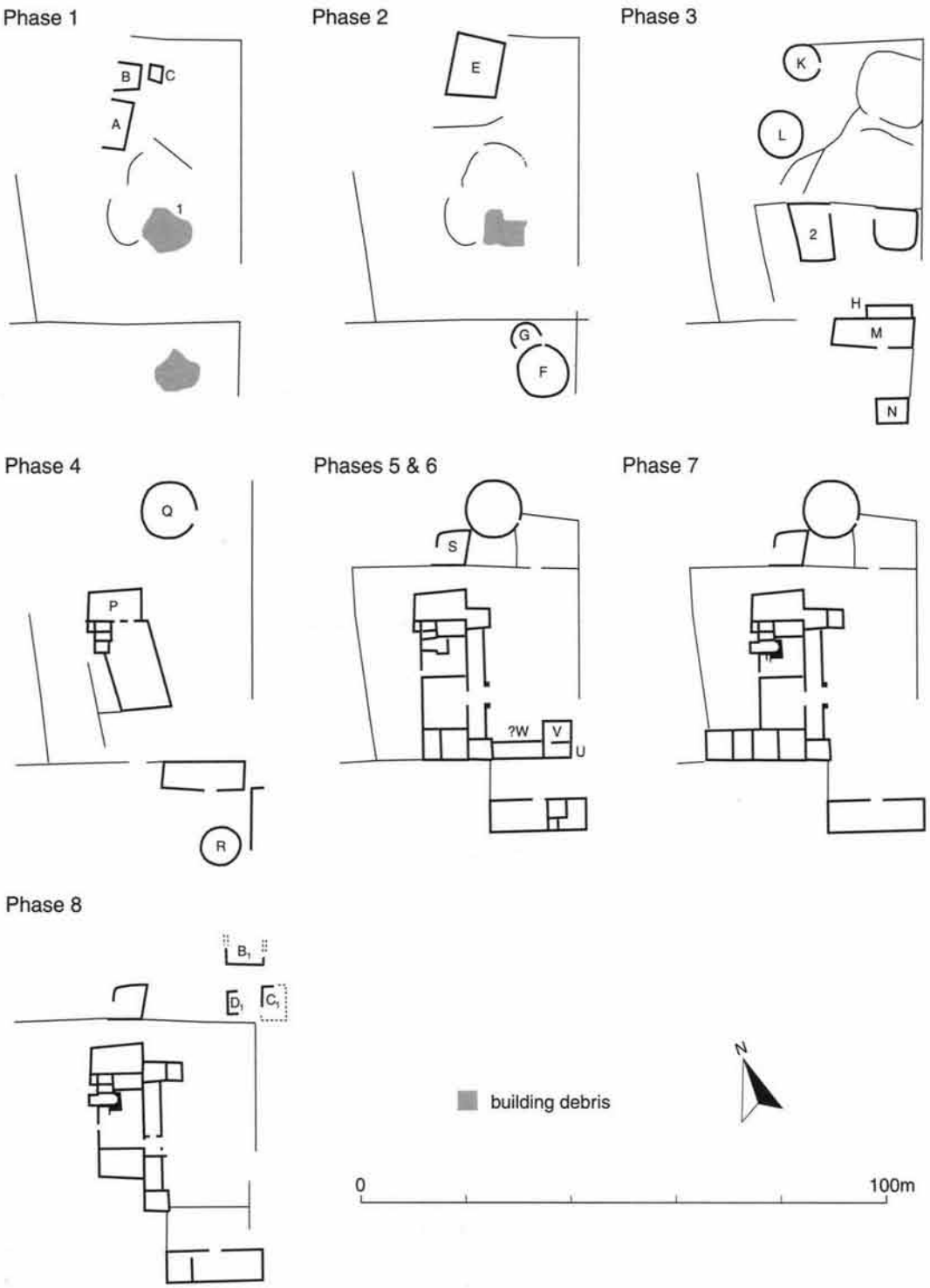

Fig. 2: The development of Barnsley Park according to J.T. Smith (1985).

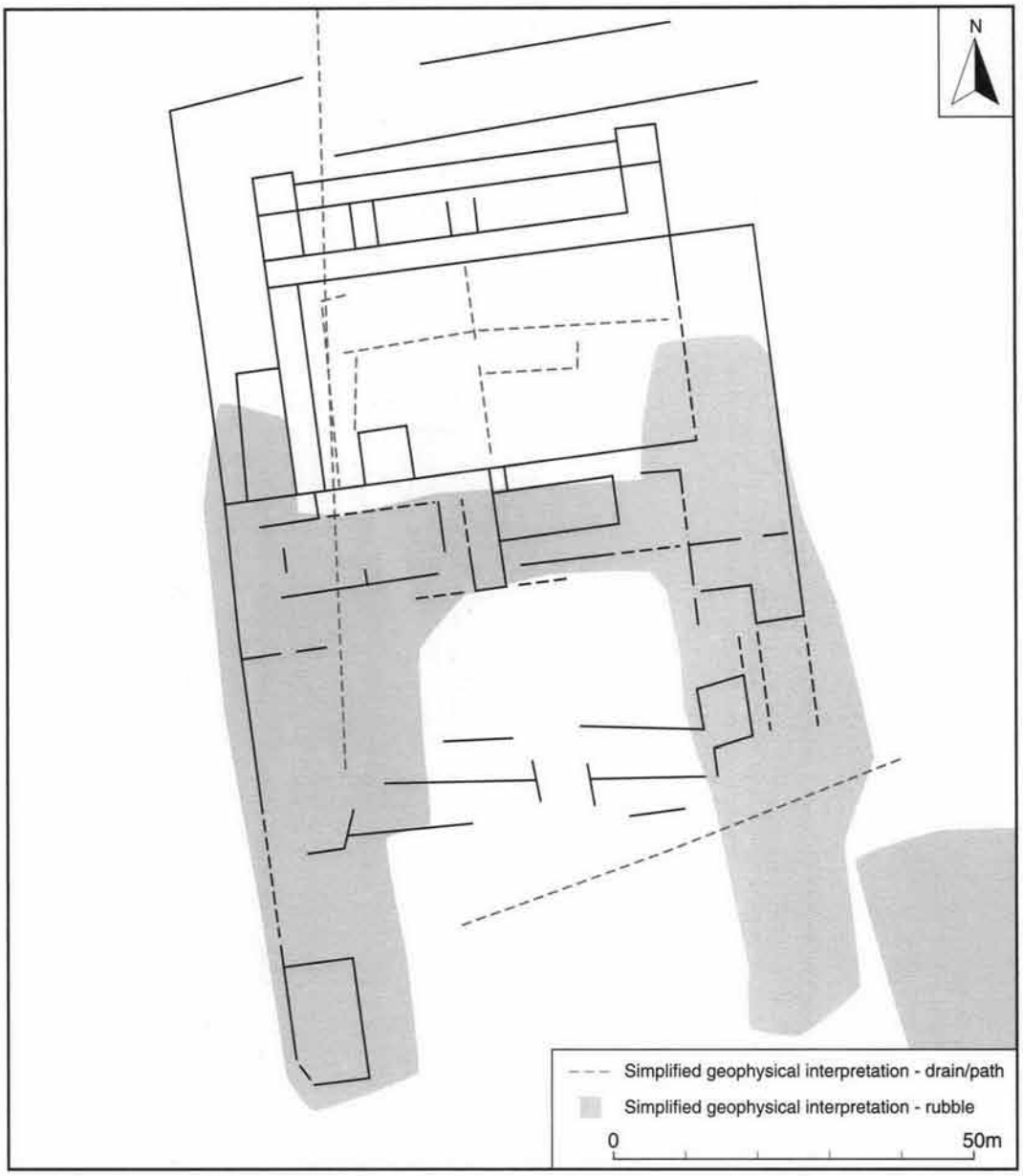

Fig. 3: Turkdean villa: composite plan of parchmarks and geophysical survey results for the main courtyard house.

the latter complete with a fine mosaic (Holbrook 2004a; Osgood 2004) (Figs. 3–5). Smaller villas have come to light at The Ditches near Cirencester; Vineyards Farm in Charlton Kings; and Marshfield and Wortley in the southern Cotswolds, with another just over the Wiltshire border near Malmesbury (Trow and James 1988; Rawes 1991a; Blockley 1985; Wilson 1996; Hart *et al.*

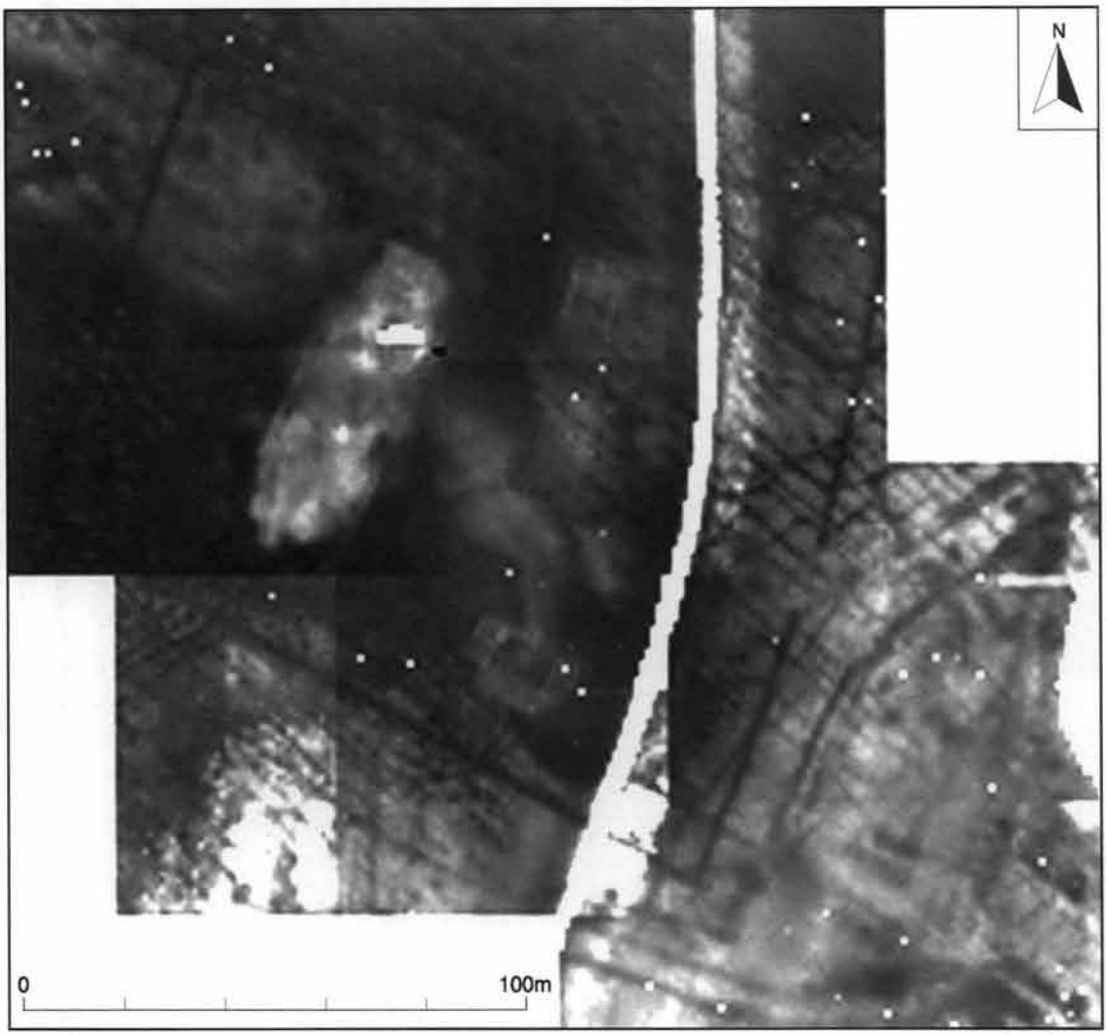

Fig. 4: Badminton villa: resistance survey results (© Sagascan, M.H. Martin, J. Martin and A.W. Jackson). The main villa building lies to the left of centre, with the apse containing the mosaic visible at the north-east end of the building. Two subsidiary buildings lie to the east of the main building, the whole complex being contained within a trapezoidal enclosure.

2005). Some villas known only from antiquarian investigations were also undoubtedly larger than the often incomplete plans indicate, as has been shown at Great Witcombe (Holbrook 2003a).

It is orthodoxy that the floruit of Cotswold villas occurred in the late Roman period, but recent investigations have shown that some villas were constructed in the 1st or early 2nd century. A small corridor villa was built in the pre-Flavian period at The Ditches within an Iron-Age enclosure which lay just to the north of the main Bagendon complex. The location and early date of this villa strongly suggest that it was the residence of a member of the native aristocracy who quickly assimilated Roman fashions. The villa was abandoned before the end of the 3rd century

Fig. 5: Badminton villa: mosaic excavated in 2003 (photograph © Richard Osgood). The scales measure two metres. This exceptionally large and well-preserved mosaic has an unusual geometric design and probably dates to the mid 4th century.

(Trow and James 1988). In Waltham Field, Whittington, a site discovered by Wilfred Cox (1979) was further examined for the *Time Team* television programme in 2000 (Hirst no date). The earliest feature examined was a ditch defining a rectilinear enclosure. This probably dates to the late Iron Age as the site produced pottery that can be dated to the period from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD. The enclosure probably went out of use in the 1st century AD when at least three stone buildings were constructed just outside the ditch. One contained *opus signinum* floors, and demolition material included painted wall plaster, tesserae and hypocaust tile. Occupation of the buildings had ceased by the end of the 3rd century at latest.[9] The similarity with The Ditches is readily apparent. Another possible example is the villa at Rodmarton examined by Samuel Lysons in 1800 (RCHME 1976, 98). The villa has produced pottery and stamped tiles dating from the 2nd century onwards, while aerial photography has detected a polygonal ditched enclosure 200 m to the north (Darvill and Locke 1988, 192). The enclosure is undated but a later prehistoric date is most likely. Wortley is another villa where early activity is suggested by pottery, although fuller publication is required before we can determine whether the villa house itself dates from the 1st century (Wilson 1996, 7). It would be wrong, however, to assume that most Cotswold villas

had early origins as it has been shown at other sites which have been investigated to modern standards that the late date traditionally applied is correct. Examples include Barnsley Park (*c.*360), Farmington (early 4th century), Marshfield (late 3rd century) and probably Turkdean (Webster and Smith 1982, 65–7; Gascoigne 1969; Blockley 1985; Holbrook 2004a, 54–5). Arguments that the late date applied to many villas is simply a product of a failure to adequately investigate the earliest levels cannot be maintained in these cases.

It has long been recognised that the Cotswolds in the density and wealth of its villas is at odds with neighbouring areas, although explanations for this phenomenon differ. It is possible to regard the burgeoning of these sites in the 3rd and 4th centuries as a reflection of the intrinsic vitality of the Cotswold economy in the 1st and 2nd centuries. Accumulated profits provided the capital, and the social system the desire, to express status through domestic architecture. Sites with a long history of pre-villa activity such as Barnsley Park and Frocester Court might lend some weight to this idea, although other explanations are possible (new owners buying existing farms and building villas on them). Elsewhere villas, sometimes of considerable scale, appear to have been built on virgin sites. On sites such as Turkdean deep accumulations of stratigraphy or plentiful artefactual evidence of late Iron-Age occupation, so apparent in the Upper Thames Valley, simply do not occur. The counter argument to the creation of indigenous wealth in the Cotswolds is the belief that there was a 'flight of capital' from the areas of Gaul and Germany troubled by barbarian invasions to the relative security of the west country of England in the late 3rd century. Various strands of evidence have been advanced as support for this theory, such as alleged similarities in the plans of villas in western Britain and the north-west provinces, most of which has been dismissed by J.T. Smith in a powerful critique (Branigan 1973; Smith 1983). Whilst it is conceivable that investment did move into western Britain from elsewhere in the province, or indeed the empire, there is no evidence. Indeed it is difficult to see what evidence could be found as the origin and extent of land tenure cannot be determined by archaeology alone.[10]

Other explanations are equally difficult to test, such as the supposition that the pleasing upland valleys of the Cotswolds, combined with good hunting, made this an attractive place to live, then as now (Salway 1993, 419–20). Instead it will be better to concentrate on those areas where archaeology can make a contribution: what was being grown, made, and eaten at these sites? Some commentators have considered that the late Roman agricultural economy of the Cotswolds was founded predominately on sheep or horse rearing. To judge from animal bones recovered some farms doubtless had specialised economies. Barnsley Park, for instance, seems to have been heavily involved in wool production (Noddle 1985; King 1988, 58–9). Elsewhere cattle and sheep often seem to have been kept in roughly equal numbers, pigs to a lesser extent, while horse bones are rarely abundant as site finds (Ayres and Clark 1999, 460–2). Few assemblages of charred or waterlogged plant remains have been published from rural sites in the Cotswolds. One exception is Birdlip Quarry where the cereal assemblage was dominated by spelt wheat as at most Romano-British sites in southern England (Pelling 1999, 479–90). Mixed farming must have been the norm.

The Severn Vale

In reviewing the work done in Gloucestershire in advance of the construction of the M5 motorway Peter Fowler boldly stated that 'Between the early months of 1969 and the end of 1970 the field archaeology of lowland Gloucestershire was more or less created'. Some 24 Romano-British sites were found along the 41 miles of motorway, a surprisingly high tally which led Fowler to wonder whether the density was influenced by the presence of the Roman road from Sea Mills to

Gloucester which ran parallel to the line of the later motorway. Given the absence of late Iron-Age sites he suggested that some form of plantation of settlement may have occurred in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Fowler 1977, 40–1). This picture has changed dramatically over the last 25 years due to the expansion of archaeological work in advance of major housing developments and to the landmark publication in 2000 of the results of 40 years of work at Frocester Court (Price 2000). That report allows us to understand in telling detail a continuum of occupation that stretched from the late Iron Age to the post-Roman period. The late Iron-Age farmstead continued little altered until the 2nd century when rectangular wooden structures replaced roundhouses. The ditched enclosure that had been a common aspect of the site since the middle Iron Age was swept away *c.* AD 275 for the construction of a masonry villa.

Another important facet of Frocester is its location on a spread of fan gravel surrounded by the heavy damp lias clays typical of much of the Severn Vale. It is now apparent that villas, while by no means as numerous as those on the limestone of the Cotswolds, tend to cluster on these intermittent islands of sand and gravel in the Vale, as at Whitminster/Eastington; Cheltenham (where the main settlement awaits discovery); and Bishop's Cleeve (Holbrook 2004b, 87–8).[11] Bishop's Cleeve is a triumph of development-led archaeology. Numerous evaluations and excavations have taken place since 1989 in response to the rapid expansion of the village, if such it can still be called. Remains of virtually all periods between the Bronze Age and the 18th century AD have been revealed (Parry 1999, 99–102). Yet Bishop's Cleeve also exemplifies some of the problems inherent in the post-1990 world of PPG 16. Investigations have been conducted by at least five different organisations on adjacent sites, which exacerbates further an already fragmented picture. Despite these constraints enough is known to suggest that Bishop's Cleeve was surely of similar character to Frocester, with a late Iron-Age and early Roman farmstead receiving a masonry villa in the 3rd or 4th century. Sadly the villa house itself remains unexamined.

It would be incorrect to believe that Romano-British settlement was largely restricted to the gravel spreads of the Vale for many farmsteads are recorded on the lias clays. This was one of the main findings of the work for the M5, yet the salvage conditions under which that project was conducted prevented a clear understanding of the form and development of the identified settlements. This is a deficiency that has been remedied by more recent work.

Romano-British sites can be hard to detect on lias clay as this geology does not lend itself to the production of cropmarks, in contrast to the gravels of the Upper Thames Valley. Fieldwalking and geophysics have, however, proved successful prospecting techniques, the latter yielding particularly good results. A good case study is the investigations undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology to the south-east of Tewkesbury since 1991 (Walker *et al.* 2004). Two settlements, less than 400 m apart, were sited on a low ridge between the Tirle Brook and river Swilgate, a good location to exploit seasonally flooded pasture. One farmstead (Site II) displays a very complex sequence of development involving numerous alterations to compounds and closes (Fig. 6C). The farm was established in the late Iron Age or early Roman period and continued in use until the first half of the 4th century. Pottery and other finds suggest that people lived there with their animals although no trace of any domestic structure could be found. Houses must have been built from cob or turf that leaves few sub-surface remains. Ephemeral traces of such structures have been found elsewhere in the Vale (Holbrook 2003b, 63). The second Tewkesbury site (Site I) comprised an almost square enclosure containing pits and other traces of occupation, but once again no structures could be made out (Fig. 6A). It dates to the 2nd–early 3rd centuries and bears comparison with the farmstead excavated by Bernard Rawes (1981) at Brockworth, where a similar-sized ditched enclosure contained roundhouses (Fig. 6B).

The initial campaign, associated with the construction of the Tewkesbury Eastern Relief Road, has been supplemented by further work in 2004 and 2005 at Walton Cardiff. There a similar rectilinear enclosure (Fig. 6D) appears to have been occupied from the later Iron Age until the 4th century. Closes for the herding of stock were found, and a corn drier testifies to the processing of crops. These sites are the basic farmsteads from which the Vale was farmed, and the work around Tewkesbury and to the east of Gloucester clearly shows that at least some areas of the Vale were intensively exploited (Thomas *et al.* 2003, 67, fig. 1). Artefacts are not particularly common at these enclosures, especially compared to Cotswold sites such as Birdlip Quarry and Haymes. Whether these small farms were owner-occupied or were the residences for workers on larger estates can only be guessed. They do, however, have the potential to tell us how the Vale was farmed in Roman times.

Recent work in the Vale of Berkeley and the Bristol conurbation has greatly expanded our understanding of rural settlement in those areas. There it seems to have been of a somewhat different character to that around Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Villas were traditionally thought to be rare in this area, but new work is finding more examples to add to the three long-known sites of Kingsweston, Cromhall and Tockington Park. At Lower Woods, Hawkesbury, geophysics and excavation have revealed two rectangular buildings either side of a courtyard (Fig. 7). To judge from the plentiful smelting and smithing slag recovered, the establishment was involved in iron making. One room in the southern range was furnished with painted wall plaster and a 2nd-century mosaic that bears a rare, but sadly incomplete, inscription in the border reading REG[. In the late Roman period the room was given over to iron smithing (Ireland 2005). A second villa has been found 3 km to the south at Springfield Farm, Horton, while architectural fragments suggest another building of status, probably a villa, in Pucklechurch (*South Gloucestershire Archaeology* 4 (2002), 5; Samuel 2000, 12–14).

Aside from these individual sites an area of landscape covering several square kilometres at Bradley Stoke has been examined from the late 1980s onwards by a combination of salvage recording, stray finds and PPG 16-prompted fieldwork. Much of this work has not been adequately published, but a few conclusions are possible from what is so far available (Samuel 2003, 45). Several foci of activity have been located. At Savage's Wood Road a possible stone building of probable 2nd- to 4th-century date is known. One kilometre to the south-east there was another farmstead at Bailey's Court Farm/Webbs Farm where dry-stone walls demarcated fields and paddocks either side of a trackway, and a rectangular building with rounded corners had dry-stone footings.[12] The absence of tiles or slates suggests a thatch or shingle roof. A pottery flagon set into the floor of the building as a foundation deposit contained an unworn coin of AD 305 while pottery suggests occupation on the site from the 2nd until at least the mid 4th century (Russell 1989). A third site is known 1.4 km to the south-west at Stoke Gifford. This was examined under salvage conditions, and only interim notes have so far been published (Parker 1978; Grew 1980, 385; Rankov 1982, 381). A circular stone-built structure, 5.7 m in external diameter with a pitched stone floor, was found. It may be a house, although it is very small.[13] Further rectangular structures were exposed in building work. Numerous hearths and ovens were found, and iron ore, iron slag and evidence for the casting of bronze from scrap were recovered. It is regrettable that we can't currently say much more about the Romano-British settlement of this area, other than to observe the existence of three sites within 1.0–1.5 km of each other and traces of field systems between. The greater use of dry-stone construction than at sites further north in the Vale can be noted, and the presence of occasional inhumation burials seems typical.

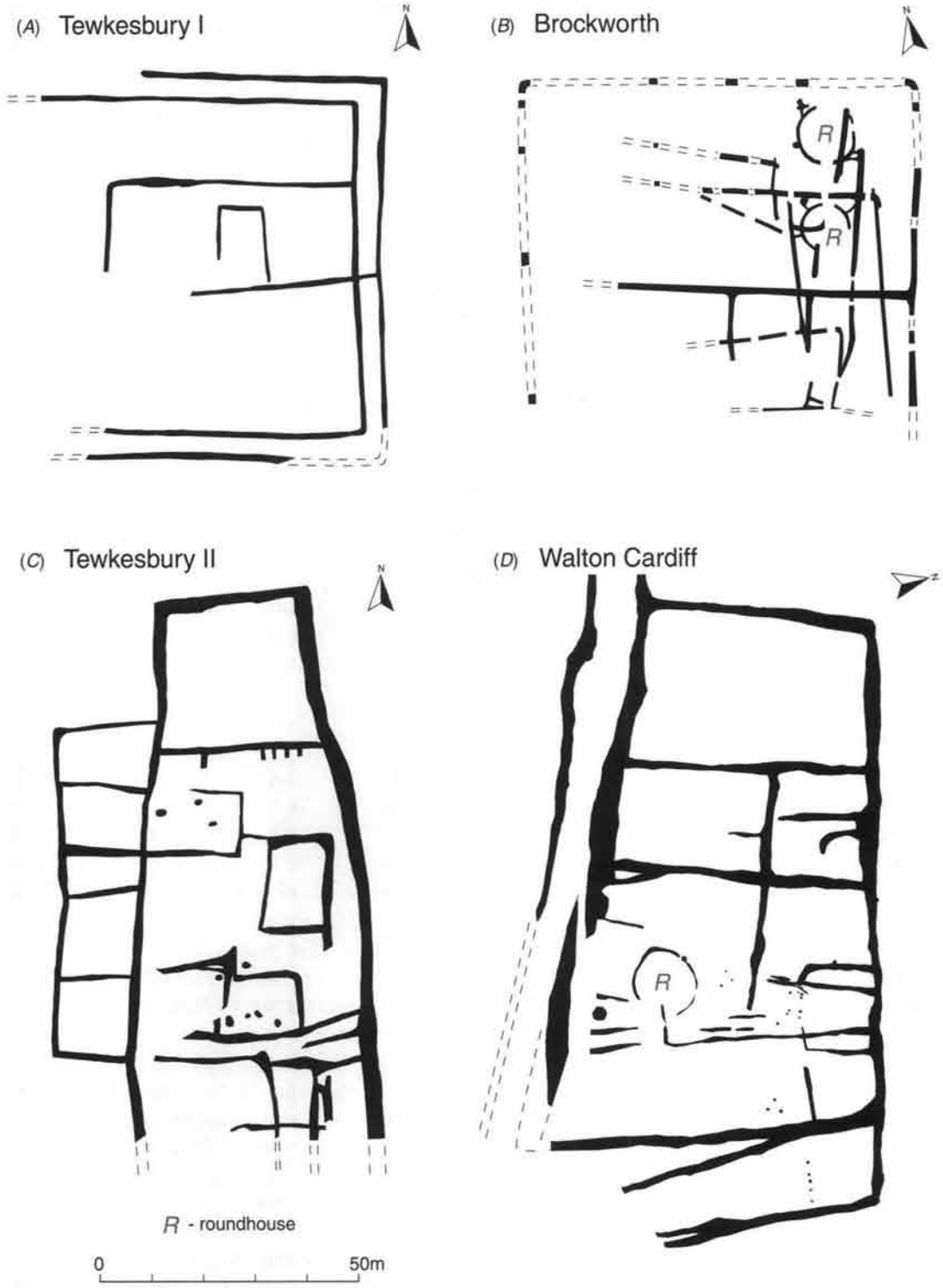

Fig. 6: Farmstead enclosures in the Severn valley. A: Tewkesbury I (after Walker et al. *2004); B: Brockworth (after Rawes 1981); C: Tewkesbury II, sub-phase 3c (after Walker* et al. *2004); D: Walton Cardiff (plan supplied by Cotswold Archaeology).*

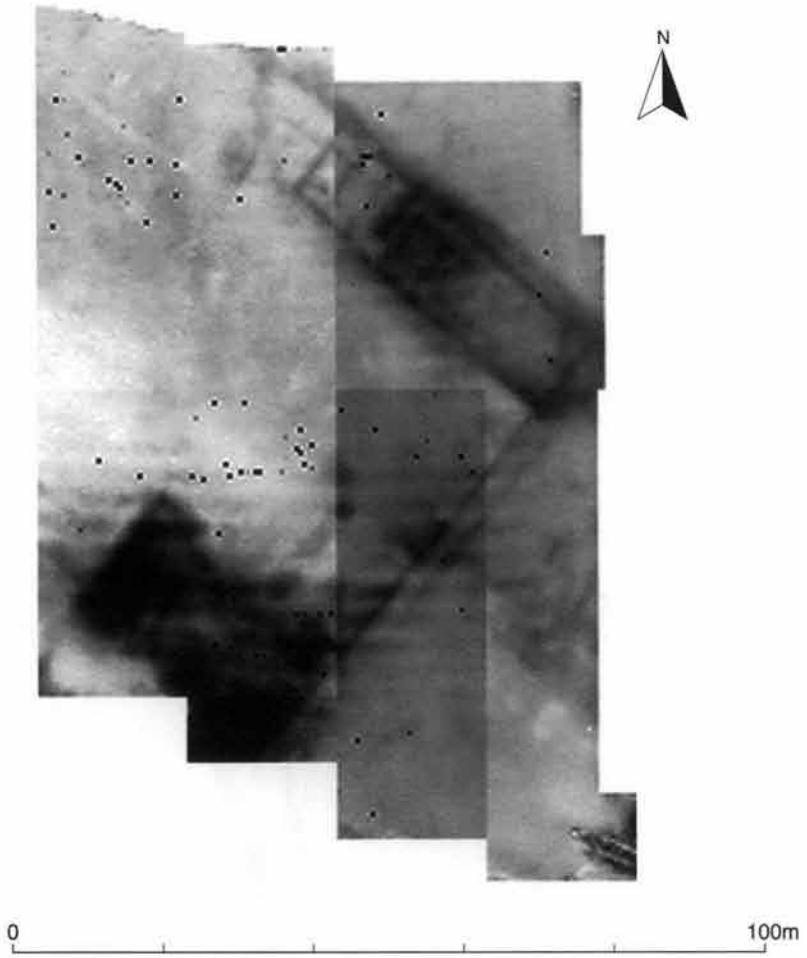

Fig. 7: Lower Woods, Hawkesbury: resistance survey results (© Sagascan, M.H. Martin, J. Martin and A.W. Jackson). The wing to the left was a residential building that contained the mosaic with the inscription REG. The wing to the right appears to have been of a more industrial or agricultural character. The two buildings were joined by a compound wall in which a possible entrance structure can be seen.

The exploitation of iron-ore deposits which occur within the coal measures of the north Bristol coalfield and the contribution of iron making to the rural economy of the Vale of Berkeley are themes which recent work has elucidated. Seams of iron ore occur alongside outcrops of coal around Kingswood and Mangotsfield where sites have been investigated at Stonehill, Hanham, and Rodway Hill, Mangotsfield, in advance of the construction of the Avon Ring Road. Hanham lies on the supposed course of the Roman road from Bath to Sea Mills, and it is possible that we are dealing with a roadside settlement although nothing in the evidence so far suggests typical ribbon development. A horseshoe-shaped structure with a heavily burnt internal surface which seems to have been used in iron making was partially enclosed within a semi-circular ditch. It dated to the early 4th century, and was replaced by a stone-built aisled building with an internal drain against one wall (Fig. 8). An agricultural function is likely for this building, although

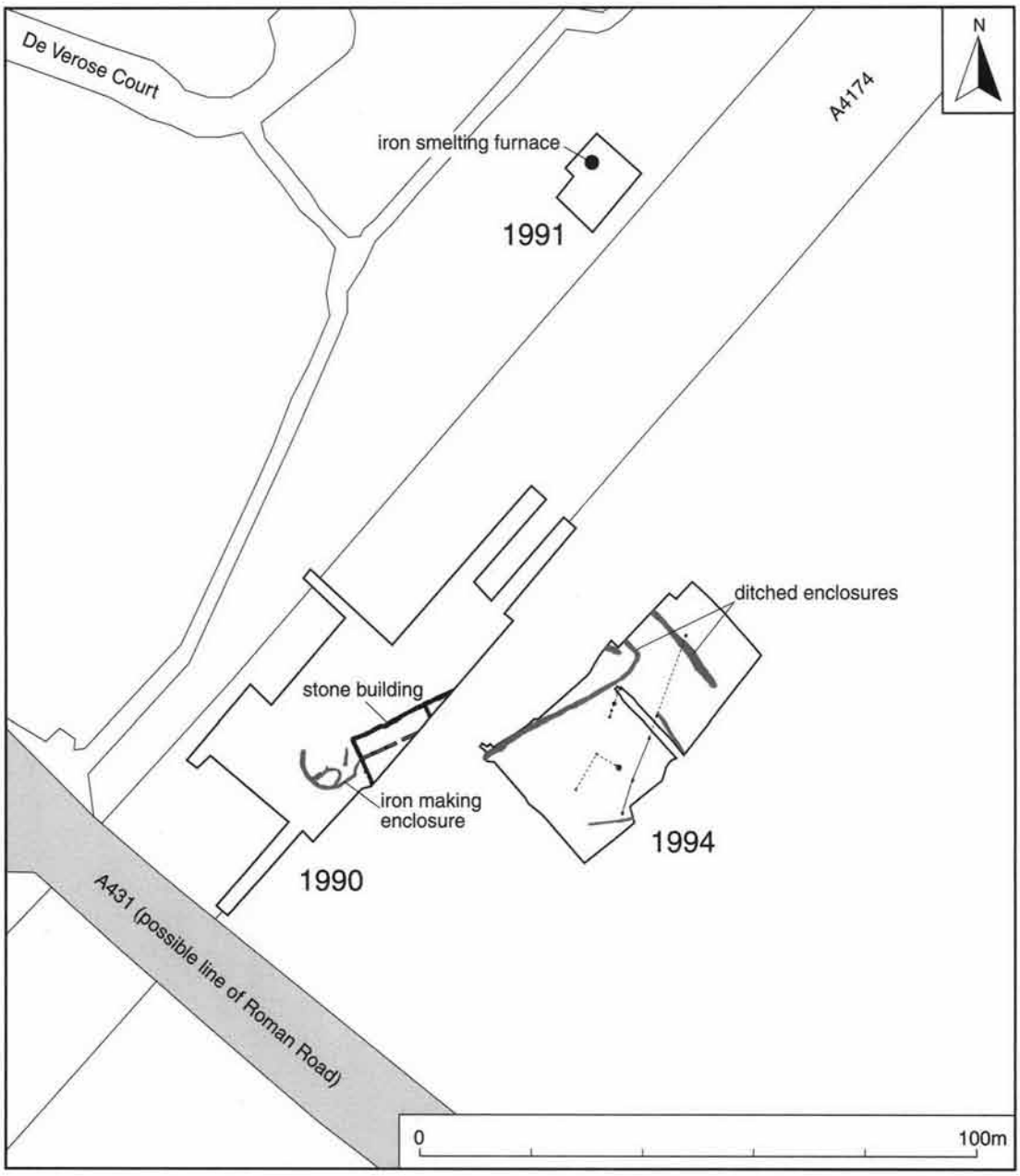

Fig. 8: Hanham: plan of the agricultural and iron-making settlement (after Stiles et al. *1992; Russett 1993; and Yorkston and Piper 1994/5).*

domestic rooms may have lain within an area that was largely unexcavated (Russett 1993).[14] An iron-smelting shaft-furnace with associated cobbled yard was found 70 m to north-east (Stiles *et al.* 1992), while further excavations to the east of the structures revealed a series of ditched enclosures which date from the later 2nd century. In the late 3rd or early 4th century the ditches were

backfilled with large quantities of iron-smelting slag, and it is likely that small post-pad structures were associated with iron making. New enclosures were dug in the 4th century, one of which may have contained the aisled building, and, to judge from the absence of slag, iron smelting may have ceased by this date (Yorkston and Piper 1994/5). At Rodway Hill, 4 km north of Hanham, an agricultural and iron-making settlement was discovered during archaeological work covering 150 ha associated with the Emerson's Green urban development. Timber and stone structures involved in iron smelting and smithing and accompanied by field systems and scattered burials have been found. Locally won coal from exposed seams and charcoal fuelled the iron making, while lead-working residues and crucibles are suggestive of the extraction of silver from lead through cupellation (Parry 1998; Erskine 2001).

The Forest of Dean

Previous accounts of the Romano-British archaeology of the Forest of Dean have largely concentrated on the evidence for iron production. A discussion of rural settlement is pertinent, however, as by a quirk of geography the main urban centres involved in iron making lie beyond the border of the modern county (*Ariconium* in Weston-under-Penyard, Monmouth and Worcester). Only Dymock might fall into the category of a roadside settlement involved in iron making (see above). Twenty-five years ago discussions of the Dean iron industry still relied heavily on the work at Lydney Park in 1928–9 (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932). Significant excavations of the last two decades include The Chesters villa in Woolaston (Fulford and Allen 1992), *Ariconium* (Jackson forthcoming) and Worcester (Dalwood and Edwards 2004), and a wealth of information is contained in Bryan Walters' thesis on the Roman iron industry (Walters 1999; see also Walters 1992, 62–108). A major archaeological survey of Dean by Gloucestershire County Council is currently under way; the results are eagerly awaited. These publications allow us to sketch the development of the iron industry and assess how it influenced the economy and settlement pattern of Dean. In the late Iron Age and 1st century AD iron making may have been on a relatively small scale, and there is no good evidence for a military involvement at this, or indeed a later, date.[15] To judge from excavations at *Ariconium*, Monmouth and Worcester production increased in the late 1st and 2nd centuries. Pottery recovered in association with iron-smelting debris at The Moat, Newent, also dates to this period (Walters 1999, 81–4). Production continued at the major centres through the 3rd century, sometimes involving a slight shift in focus (at *Ariconium* the northern industrial area fell into disuse *c.*AD 230/50, while at Monmouth production moved to Overmonnow on the opposite bank of the Monnow). In this period we can detect the growth of a number of villas whose economies were based on iron making as well as agriculture. A similar story is doubtless true at the still poorly known farmsteads. The number of sites producing iron seems to increase in the 3rd century. Whether this was a cause or effect of the collapse of the Wealden industry around the middle of the century is unclear, although this is another example of the shift to the west of economic activity and prosperity in the later Roman period. Dean was probably the pre-eminent supplier of British iron between the mid 3rd and mid 4th century.[16] Production at *Ariconium* and Overmonnow went into decline in the 4th century, and production may have ceased by the middle of the century. Whether rural production continued after this is unclear.

Much iron making occurred in small rural settlements, but our knowledge of their form, chronology and economy is still very limited. Few farmsteads have been investigated, and we do not have a clear picture of the full layout and economy of a single one of these sites. In some cases

continuity of settlement from the late Iron Age can be demonstrated. A series of small rectilinear ditched enclosures (*c.*50–70 m across) are known at The Great Woulding, 1 km to the north of the centre of *Ariconium*. Some date to the late Iron Age and were associated with iron working, while a later enclosure involved in the same activity was not abandoned until the end of the 1st century AD (Jackson forthcoming; *contra* Walters 1992, 69–72). Similar late Iron-Age and Romano-British ditched enclosures are common in Herefordshire and Wales but were not, as we have seen, a major component of rural settlement east of the Severn. At the southern end of Dean a late prehistoric and Romano-British farm was excavated in 1992 at Thornwell Farm near Chepstow (Monmouthshire). There occupation seems to have spanned from the late Bronze Age to the later Roman period. The late Iron-Age and Romano-British settlement consisted of a series of timber roundhouses set within closes and discontinuous enclosures defined by dry-stone walls and rubble banks. The settlement practised mixed agriculture (sheep/goat outnumbered cattle), while iron smelting and smithing took place on a small scale (Hughes 1996).

Activity at other sites seems to have begun in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, although few are known in any detail. Excavation by the Dean Archaeological Group since 1993 at Rodmore Farm near St Briavels has revealed a stone-built rectangular building, 17.0 m long by 6.4 m wide, with flagged and cobble floors (Fig. 9C). Some 60 m distant lay a trapezoidal enclosure defined by lines of slag *c.*2 m wide, on one side infilling a ditch but elsewhere lying on natural clay. These might be foundations for cob walls. Within the enclosure there was at least one iron-smelting shaft furnace, with associated waste pits and dumps of charcoal. Pottery recovered is largely of 2nd–3rd-century date (James 1997; Blake 2003). Elsewhere such sites are poorly known. At Lydney Park the original interpretation of a 3rd-century iron-workers' settlement has not withstood re-examination in 1980–1; the rectangular dry-stone structure under the tail of the rampart may have been accommodation for people making a living from the shrine (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932, 17–18; Casey and Hoffmann 1999, 114). The potential for the discovery of new settlements in Dean has been recently demonstrated by archaeological evaluation of almost 120 ha on the eastern side of Lydney. Trial trenching there has defined two previously unrecorded sites, one seemingly not associated with iron making, the other (1 km distant) yielding plentiful iron-smelting slag associated with later 3rd- and 4th-century pottery (Wessex Archaeology 2003; Cotswold Archaeology 2004).

From the 2nd century stone-built villas are known in Dean, although they were never plentiful and were of modest proportions compared to Cotswold buildings (Fig. 9). Too little work has occurred to chart their origins accurately, although some form of continuity is suggested at Huntsham (Herefordshire), where the villa stood in close juxtaposition to a late Iron-Age enclosure (Taylor 1995). Where examined many of the villas proved to be involved with iron making, the evidence being best explored at The Chesters, Woolaston (Fulford and Allen 1992). The location of villas within Dean is also instructive as they cluster on the banks of the Severn and Wye, doubtless testimony to the importance of these rivers in the distribution of iron.[17] No major iron-making sites are known on or close to the sources of ore, and Stock Farm is the only villa situated on the outcrops (Atkinson 1986). It is thus clear that the ore was mined and then transported to secondary centres where it was smelted into blooms and bars. This has led Fulford and Allen (1992, 204) to wonder whether the temple of Nodens at Lydney Park may have exercised some form of control over the extraction and distribution of iron ore from central Dean as a means of providing revenues for the sanctuary.

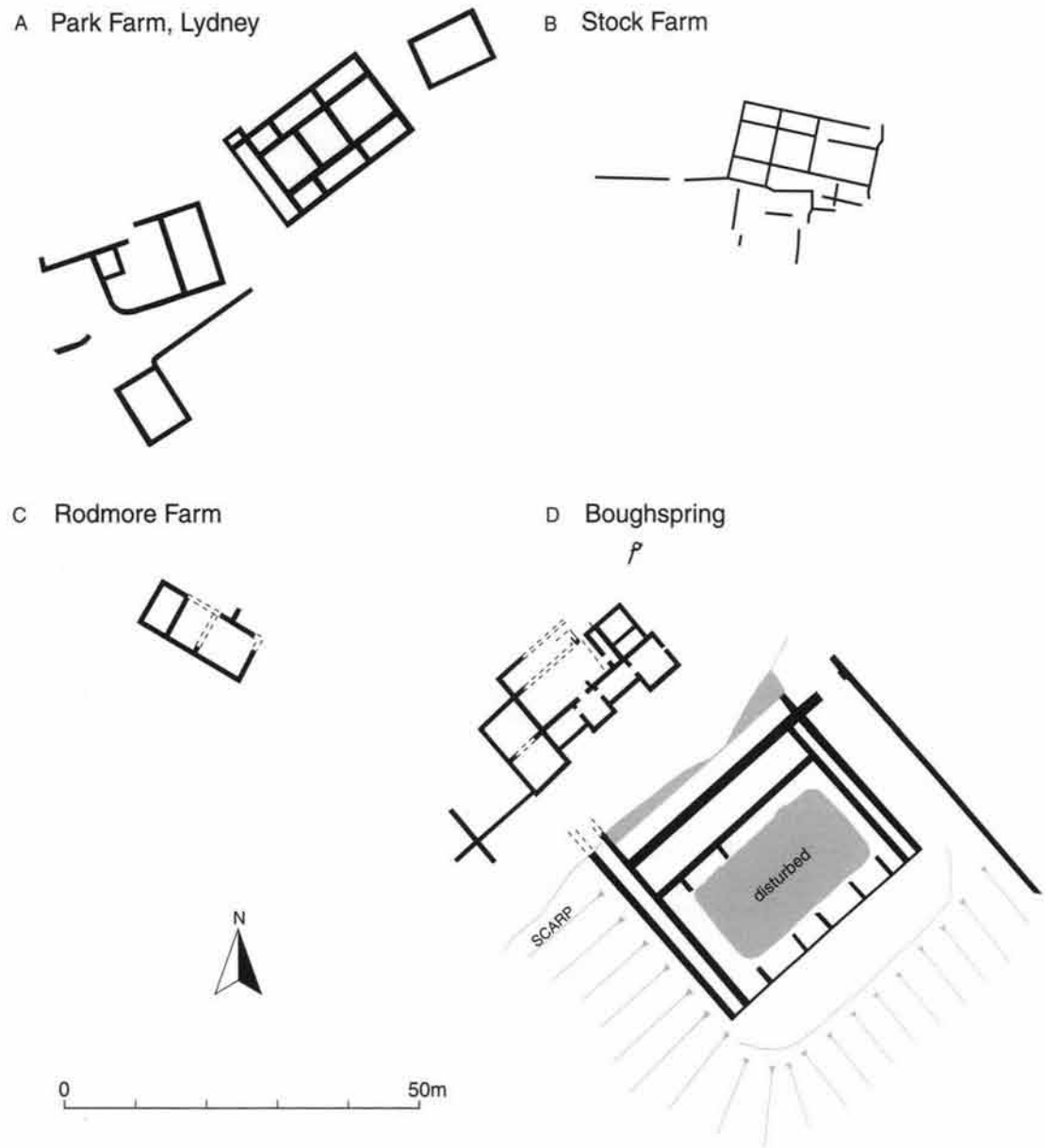

Fig. 9: Villa and building plans from the Forest of Dean. A: Park Farm, Lydney (after Fitchett 1986); B: Stock Farm, Clearwell (from parchmarks after Atkinson 1986 and Blake 2004); C: Rodmore Farm, St Briavels (after Blake 2003); D: Boughspring, Tidenham (after Pullinger 1990 and Neal and Walker 1988).

WETLAND RECLAMATION

One of the great achievements of the last 25 years has been the recognition that the tidal mudflats on both sides of the Severn estuary north of Bristol were deliberately reclaimed in the Roman

period. This idea simply did not figure in mainstream archaeological consciousness 25 years ago, and there is not a single mention of wetland reclamation in either of the main texts on Roman Gloucestershire. Romano-British reclamation of the north Somerset Levels and the Wentlooge and Caldicot Levels of South Wales had received periodic airings in the archaeological literature of the 1960s and 70s, but little systematic attention had been given to the inner estuary north of Bristol until the work of Allen and Fulford in the 1980s.

On the Avonmouth Levels a number of farmsteads are now known. Some start in the 1st or 2nd century and were abandoned by the later 3rd century. A few others have yielded later Roman material. At Crook's Marsh snails recovered from a ditch were typical of an open dryland environment, and artefacts indicate one or more substantive buildings occupied into the late Roman period. Rippon (1997, 109) uses this evidence to suggest that some 45 km^2 of salt-marsh were reclaimed by the construction of 15 km of sea defences. Gardiner *et al.* (2002, 31–2) have more recently stressed the evidence for the abandonment of Romano-British field systems by the early 3rd century, presumably due to the rising groundwater levels, and suggest that there was retreat to fen-edge locations in the later Roman period. They are unconvinced that there is sufficient evidence for organised widespread reclamation in the Roman period, although their model does not adequately explain the evidence from Crook's Marsh which sits well out in the Levels. Greater understanding of this important site is a priority.

Higher up the estuary our knowledge of the process of reclamation is dependent upon the work of Allen and Fulford. While their pioneering study urgently needs to be expanded and refined, its broad conclusions are likely to be correct. In one case study they identified Romano-British sites through fieldwalking on alluvium near Elmore, thus indicating that reclamation had occurred by this date. An earthen bank with flanking ditch known locally as the Great Wall extends out across the alluvium and this impressive monument can reasonably be claimed to be a surviving example of a Romano-British flood defence (Allen and Fulford 1990a) (Fig. 10). The long-term trend in relative sea levels in the South-West has been upward, although not at a constant rate or without short-term reversions. Allen and Fulford (1990b) accordingly argue that the lower the height of a reclamation above Ordnance Datum, the earlier the process is likely to have occurred. Application of this model suggests that the pattern of reclamation was not consistent on either side of the inner estuary. On the left Cotswold bank 80% of extant reclaimed wetlands seem to date to the Romano-British period, an area of some 1400 ha. Surprisingly there is little or no evidence for reclamation at this date in the immediate hinterland of Gloucester. It is conceivable that some reclamation may have started in the late prehistoric period, and that around Whitminster is possibly of early Roman date. The bulk of reclamation, however, apparently occurred in the 3rd and 4th centuries. In contrast, on the Dean bank 80% of visible reclamations appear to be of medieval or later date.

It may be telling that no villas are known from the reclaimed areas, unless Oldbury is one. Rather, to judge from the few sites examined, the Levels were populated by farmsteads. On the Avonmouth Levels these seem to have been devoted solely to farming, probably pastoralism, while in the inner estuary the presence of smelting slag in surface scatters indicates that they were also engaged in iron making.[18] Oldbury is the only site that has been examined on any scale, and it is unfortunate that it remains unpublished in detail save for a summary account (Allen and Rippon 1997). The settlement was adjacent to a former tidal stream channel and surface debris spreads over an area of at least 20 ha. Excavation has revealed ditched paddocks and field systems, an area given over to iron making (non-ferrous metal working also took place), timber and stone structures (finds of box tile suggest at least one building of status), and a small cemetery containing

Fig. 10: Elmore: the Great Wall, a probable Romano-British flood defence bank (photograph © Cotswold Archaeology).

at least six burials. Pottery suggests that the settlement expanded in the later Roman period from a 1st- or 2nd-century core on the banks of the stream channel. Plant macrofossils testify to the processing of arable crops, and bones to the presence of cattle (Rippon 1997, 118). A remarkable dressed sandstone pillar found on the river bank has been interpreted as an architectural feature from a building, although James Russell (pers. comm.) pertinently suggests that it may have served as a boundary marker on a sea defence, perhaps in the manner of the famous Goldcliff inscription from South Wales.

The lack of 1st- or 2nd-century reclamation around the *colonia* of Gloucester, where it might be supposed that this would have been a convenient method of making land available to veterans, strongly suggests that there was little or no official involvement in the process. In this case what was the motive behind the reclamations further down the estuary, especially on the Cotswold bank? While the physical environment of the estuary made reclamation possible, the incentive presumably lay in a vibrant late Roman rural economy that generated a rising rural population and a consequent pressure on land. It is also conceivable that over-intensive farming led to soil degeneration further stimulating the desire to create new fertile pastures. The availability of capital and labour provided the means to construct ditches and sea banks several kilometres long in places

such as Elmore and Longney. Allen and Fulford (1990b) suggest that the work was funded and organised from the villa estates that lay under the Cotswold scarp (such as Frocester Court) to supplement their land holdings. On the Dean bank a different process was at work. Perhaps the relative lack of reclamation there can be related to the growing importance of the iron industry and the need to maintain large expanses of coppiced woodland to provide the charcoal essential for smelting?

It is important to observe that while expanses of estuarine alluvium are not exclusive to the Severn, there is little evidence at present for reclamation of (for instance) the Thames marshes of Kent and Essex. Even in the Fens, where there was extensive local enclosure and drainage, sea walls do not occur (Rippon 2000, 136–7). There cannot have been the pressure on land to justify the investment of resources in reclamation in the South-East of England, unlike the Severn estuary. Reclamation in this form seems unique in Roman Britain, and is testimony to the economic vitality of this part of Gloucestershire in the later Roman period.[19]

Much is still to be learnt about wetland reclamation along the Severn estuary. The proposed chronology needs to be tested by further fieldwork for it is likely to be an oversimplification of a complex, piecemeal, process. The dichotomy between wet salt-marsh and reclaimed dry land is also perhaps too stark. Palaeoenvironmental analyses could determine whether sites lay on a high tidal salt-marsh or in a fresh-water reclaimed environment. The form, history and economy of sites on the alluvium are also poorly understood. Geophysical survey and sample excavation of sites in the inner estuary which were not subsequently covered by alluvium from post-Roman inundation could tell us much.

PATTERNS OF TRADE AND CONSUMPTION

It has long been recognised that the archaeological study of artefacts and materials permits the reconstruction of the dynamics of trade and patterns of consumption. Alan McWhirr outlined much of the available evidence in 1981, since when further advances have been made, especially concerning products of the Forest of Dean (Reece 1999). The difficulty in determining whether iron objects and waste slags derive from Dean ores or some other source has already been mentioned (see note 16). Greater success has been obtained with coal which is found on many Romano-British sites and can be identified as to source through chemical and/or microscopical methods (Smith 1996; 1997).[20] Coal seams are exposed in several places in the Forest and that between Coleford and English Bicknor on the eastern bank of the Wye appears to have been exploited in the Roman period. While Dean coal was transported as far as Caerwent and possibly Llantwit Major in South Wales (a distance of up to 80 km), it has mostly been found to the east. It is known from sites in the Cotswolds as far eastwards as Chedworth and possibly Roughground Farm, Lechlade. This may be close to the eastern limit of the distribution as coal from Shakenoak villa in western Oxfordshire came from the nearer Warwickshire coalfield (Smith 1996, 383–4; 1997, site no. 39). Coal was also collected from the Bristol (Coalpit Heath) coalfield and samples that are likely to derive from this source have been found at Frocester and Chedworth. Whilst Dean coal seems not to have been traded much beyond 50 km from its source, other Dean products such as Old Red Sandstone roofing slates, flagstones and quernstones travelled much further (Shaffrey 2003, who cites an unpublished 1998 doctoral thesis by Ruth Saunders). Roofing slates and quernstones occur widely in Gloucestershire and neighbouring counties, the distribution extending as far eastwards as Berkshire from the 2nd century onwards. Fulford (2003) notes the economic irrationality of this distribution as Dean products displaced more local ones, and

concludes that non-market forces must have operated. He suggests State involvement, perhaps through contracts, in the market.

Detailed study of the sources of coarse pottery found in our area, combined with widespread quantification of the products of each source from a variety of sites, has been one of the major developments of the last couple of decades.[21] These painstaking studies provide us with insights into local trading networks that were simply not available 25 years ago. Work to date serves to highlight once again the heterogeneous character of Gloucestershire. Initially a simple pattern seemed evident with the Cotswold escarpment serving as a 'ceramic watershed'. The North Wiltshire industries based around Swindon were a major source of pottery and ceramic tiles to Cirencester and other Cotswold sites in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, while sites in the Vale were characterised by an abundance of Severn Valley ware. Recent work now suggests a more complex pattern, with interesting differences that cannot be explained solely by geography. For instance Uley temple has more Severn Valley ware than neighbouring Kingscote, and the same fabric is also better represented at Birdlip Quarry on top of the escarpment than might be expected if the ceramic watershed was dominant.[22] Reece (1999, 83) believes that when a distribution cannot be explained by natural boundaries some form of human, political, social or cultural constraint must be at work and in this case may assist in defining the boundary between the political spheres of Cirencester and Gloucester. There is less published data from sites in the Forest of Dean, although both Severn Valley ware and micaceous greyware occur and black-burnished ware from South-East Dorset appears more prevalent than at sites on the Cotswold bank (Allen and Fulford 1996, 245). The importance of coastal trade in the distribution of black-burnished ware is now well understood, and the quantities found in the Forest might be a reflection of cargoes riding on the back of the distribution of iron.[23] The Fosse Way was also an important route in the distribution of black-burnished ware, thus accounting for its greater abundance at Cirencester than Gloucester.

Study of the production and distribution of metalwork has been another area of fruitful research, although the patterning is on a broader geographical scale than the fine grain often detectable in pottery.[24] The distribution of one class of dress accessory can be picked out as being of more than specialist interest. The identification of a class of late 4th-century bronze belt buckle decorated with outward-facing horse-heads was first made by Hawkes and Dunning in 1961. They christened it type IB, and showed that the buckle was worn with long thin belt plates and similarly decorated strap-ends (of the so-called Tortworth type). They showed that this material was undoubtedly of British manufacture, noted that most examples came from the South-West and Midlands, and proposed that they were items of military dress (Hawkes and Dunning 1961, 27–33). This much has long been known, but recently Mark Corney and Nicholas Griffiths have been working on a new study of the distribution of type IB metalwork. The results of this important research are not as yet fully published, although Swift (2000, 2, 185) has summarised some of its key conclusions. Corney and Griffiths have considerably enhanced the original distribution map and show that over 70% of all finds are from the Cotswolds and Wessex, a distribution seemingly centred upon Cirencester. They suggest that production was limited to the province of *Britannia Prima*, of which Cirencester was probably the capital, and that there was military or official regulation of production and distribution. Whether such accoutrements were solely the preserve of soldiers is open to debate, but if so Swift (2000, 213) believes that they must be considered the dress of a provincial rather than specifically Roman army as they do not occur outside Britain. The fresh study of these outwardly familiar artefacts is providing valuable new insights on the nature of State control in the latter half of the 4th century in our area.

BURIAL AND RELIGION

There was a distinctive burial tradition in the Severn Valley in the early Roman period. Excavations in 1998 in advance of the construction of a new road in Hucclecote examined a farmstead which originated in the 1st century AD – whether just before or after the Roman invasion cannot be determined (Thomas *et al.* 2003). Amongst the paddocks and enclosures typical of this kind of site was a small cemetery containing 12 burials dating to the first half of the 2nd century. This cemetery is noteworthy in a number of respects, its association with a rural farmstead, its composition of adults over the age of 15 who were predominately female, and the 2nd-century date for the burial rite of inhumation, in some cases accompanied by grave goods. The burials can confidently be termed a cemetery as they occupy a discrete area and show evidence for organisation. Rural cemeteries are comparatively rare in Britain, if a distinction is drawn with individual or small groups of burials scattered across settlement sites, often within or close to features such as ditches or corn driers (Pearce 1999). The Hucclecote cemetery is clearly unusual. One possibility is that landowners might maintain a cemetery as a statement of their right to a property, while tenant workers and slaves would not have been buried on land to which they had no lasting attachment (Philpott and Reece 1993, 422). If that were so it raises the question of the curious demographic composition of the Hucclecote cemetery (nine females, two males, two unsexed, no children). This suggests that it was not a family group, but rather that the burial population was selected. It is conceivable that there were other cemeteries, or scattered burials, within the unexcavated parts of the settlement containing the missing males, but equally they could have been disposed of in the archaeologically invisible way that was the norm before the advent of widespread inhumation in the 3rd century.

In the late Iron Age there was a localised tradition of burial by inhumation, often crouched, in the Cotswold area. The Birdlip burial is the richest and best known example, and there are also examples in the Severn Valley (Holbrook 2003b, 65). Crouched inhumation burials occur sporadically in the urban cemeteries of Gloucester, which Heighway (1980, 57) considered to represent a survival of native tradition, whilst extended burial is more typical of later Roman practice. Some burials at Hucclecote were accompanied by grave goods (for instance one had a brooch, another a casket, a third an uncooked leg of lamb), a tradition mirrored in other burials in the Gloucester area.

At Frocester Court 60 burials have been found, of which 37 were young infants and 23 children or adults (Price 2000). There were two or three possible late Iron-Age or early Roman crouched inhumations, three mid 3rd-century cremations, the remaining inhumations dating to the late Roman period. Reece (2000) suggests that the burial of infants at Frocester was a constant custom, with adults being disposed of in a way that left no trace until the mid 3rd century when the burial custom changed and adults enter the archaeological record. That the tradition of early inhumation detected at Hucclecote extended southwards down the Severn Valley is demonstrated by work at Henbury on the north-west outskirts of Bristol. Six burials were recorded under salvage conditions in 1982 (Russell 1983), but more extensive excavation in 2004 has uncovered a further 18 crouched inhumations adjacent to an enclosure that dates to the 1st century AD. One of the burials possessed a 1st-century finger ring (Cotswold Archaeology 2005) (Fig. 11). Henbury demonstrates continuity of late Iron-Age traditions of settlement and burial, and the continued use of this burial rite helps to define the distinctiveness of the Severn Valley in the early Roman period.

Fig. 11: Henbury, Bristol: a crouched inhumation burial (photograph © Cotswold Archaeology).

Turning to the world of religion more generally, most of the advances over the last 25 years have been in the publication of earlier discoveries rather than new finds.[25] Henig's (1993) corpus of sculpture from the Cotswold region, much of it religious, now provides a firm basis for future discussion, while the publication of the excavations undertaken at Uley temple between 1977 and 1979 was an important event (Woodward and Leach 1993).[26] Special note should be made of Roger Tomlin's careful (and on-going) decipherment of the 87 lead curse tablets from Uley that cast a light onto the everyday religious thoughts of worshippers at the shrine to Mercury. Many of the curse tablets are complaints of theft addressed to a god, an epigraphic obsession peculiar to Britain (Tomlin 1993; Mattingly 2004, 19–20). At another great Gloucestershire temple, Lydney Park, excavations in 1980 and 1981 have revised Wheeler's 'late' chronology. Casey and Hoffmann (1999) now show that the complex was constructed in the second half of the 3rd century, and was in serious decline after the middle of the 4th century. Also of significance has been the reinterpretation of the famous inscription on the mosaic pavement from the temple (*RIB* 2448.3), which had been considered by Mommsen and Collingwood to be a dedication by an officer in charge of the supply depot of the fleet (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932, 102–4). Mark Hassall's (1980, 82) more plausible restoration 'To the god Mars Nodens, Titus Flavius Senilis, superintendent of the cult, from the offerings had this laid, with the assistance of Victorinus, interpreter (of dreams)' is now commonly accepted. Boon (1989, 212–15) also commented perceptively on the nature of Nodens and his cult. While this multi-faceted god had hunting and healing aspects, Boon saw him as essentially the god of the estuary who rode the Severn Bore in his horse-drawn chariot.

THE FIFTH CENTURY

The preceding pages have highlighted many areas of progress in the last 25 years, but it is pertinent to conclude with some comments on the 5th century. Despite all efforts our knowledge of this period in Gloucestershire is still very weak, and few startling discoveries have been made in recent years. Sub-Roman activity remains elusive, although the number of Roman sites that have yielded grass-tempered pottery from their uppermost levels has grown.[27] We are little further forward, however, in refining the date of this pottery, although it is surely significant that despite frequent, careful, examination of dark earth deposits in Cirencester, not a single sherd has been recovered from within the walls of the Roman town. The two sites most often quoted as examples of 'continuity' in our area are now fully published, although a third crucial one is not.

At Frocester Court the villa house was destroyed by fire. Subsequent occupation within the former courtyard and the shell of the ruined house was associated with grass-tempered pottery, and an animal bone found on the floor of a timber building yielded a calibrated radiocarbon date of 430–660 cal AD.[28] As the excavator is at pains at point out, the occupation that followed the fire need not represent immediate continuity (Price 2000, vol. 1, 111–18). At Uley there was a sequence of buildings on the site of the demolished temple to Mercury that might be Christian churches, although this interpretation is not assured (Woodward and Leach 1993, 66–79; Heighway 2003, 59). Sadly the evidence for the re-use of Crickley Hill Iron-Age hillfort in the late Roman/sub-Roman period remains unpublished in detail (Salway 1993, 330 provides a plan). There a palisaded enclosure that contained substantial timber buildings including a granary was constructed within the defences of the former hillfort. To the east stood an apparently contemporary collection of timber houses. The re-use of hillforts in the early post-Roman period can be demonstrated at a number of sites in Somerset, the implication being that these once again became 'central places' (Burrow 1981; Rahtz 2003). Crickley Hill currently stands alone in Gloucestershire, although Blaise Castle may be another example (Rahtz and Clevedon-Brown 1959).

As more sites are excavated new sequences which clearly stretch into the 5th century and beyond will doubtless be found. However the problems of dating structures and artefacts in the 5th and 6th centuries, and then defining what continuity actually means, will not be easily overcome. If we can at least make some advances in the next 25 years on this topic, that really will be progress.

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NOTES

1. Akeman Street must have been in existence earlier as further east in Oxfordshire sites such as the Alchester fortress and roadside settlement at Wilcote originated in the Claudian period (Sauer 2000, 14). It is conceivable, however, that the road may not have been metalled until the last quarter of the

1st century AD, or even later, as there are now clear indications from excavation that metalling could lag several decades behind the laying out of a route in the wake of military advance (for examples see Holbrook 1996, 121).

2. Excavations preceding the construction of the Cirencester bypass road found no trace of Roman road metalling on either the modern course of the road or an alternative alignment (Mudd *et al.* 1999, vol. 1, 142–3, 280–1).
3. The investigation was carried out as part of the Channel 4 television programme *Extreme Archaeology*. The piles appear to be part of a wooden pier *c.*9 m long and 3 m wide with cutwaters at either end first uncovered in 1911 (Walters 1971, 89; Hart 1967, 37, pl. 17). A sample from one of the piles yielded a date (Wk-14039) of 1981±37 BP which calibrates at 2 sigma (95.4% probability) using the Oxcal version 3.9 programme to 60 cal BC–90 cal AD, 100 cal AD–130 cal AD. The bridge was therefore in existence before 130 cal AD (data from www.channel4.com/history/microsites/E/extremearchaeology).
4. Limited evidence of structures and ditches was found at this site in 1984, but the scale of the settlement was not apparent (Iles and White 1985, 60). A report in *The Times* on 17 August 2004 suggests that the site was defended by a ditch and contained public buildings. Further detail is required before these statements can be accepted uncritically.
5. The evidence is briefly discussed by Russell (1997, 17). Whether the suspected settlement is *Traiectus* listed in *iter* XIV of the Antonine Itinerary is open to question as that name may be the product of an erroneous transcription (Rivet and Smith 1979, 177–8).
6. For the possible *mansio* see RCHME 1976, 40 where it is suggested that the building lay to the west of the Royal George Hotel. Cobbled surfaces and walls dating to the 4th century have been found near the hotel buildings themselves (Guy 1986; Hemingway 1991) while evaluations to the north and east have produced negative results.
7. As at Manor Farm, Kempsford (Miles 1992, 224).
8. At Portway, near Upton St Leonards, Rawes (1984) interpreted a wooden octagonal structure as a shrine, but as polygonal domestic structures existed at Birdlip Quarry there seems no reason why Portway should not be considered a farmstead.
9. Details of this site derive from the televison programme itself, the associated web site (www.channel4.com/history/timeteam/archive/2001wal.htm#stumble) and an archive report (Hirst no date).
10. Richard Reece reminds me that of all the places from which investment could have come, North Gaul and Germany are amongst the least likely. Rural land values there in the aftermath of the barbarian invasions of the AD 250s and after are likely to have been decimated, thus seriously reducing the capital available for investment.
11. Another villa has recently been found at Childswickham near Broadway in the Vale of Evesham, just over the border in Worcestershire. It too lies on a small island of sand and gravel (*Worcestershire Archaeol.* 5 (March 2002); Fitzpatrick 2002, 311).
12. Similar buildings have been excavated at Kingscote (Timby 1998, 68). The rounded corners suggest a turf or cob superstructure above dry-stone foundations.
13. A survey of Romano-British stone-built roundhouses in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire showed the buildings to range in external diameter from 6 to *c.*16 m (Keevill and Booth 1997, 37).
14. The building is similar to one excavated at Kingscote (building VIII, phase 4.1–4.3: Timby 1998).
15. Jackson (forthcoming) is at pains to stress the late Iron-Age origins of *Ariconium* and the evidence for continuity of occupation and iron making. The supposed fortlets at The Great Woulding are now better interpreted as farmsteads. Manning's (1981, 37–8) belief that a pre-Flavian military base existed around *Ariconium* still awaits confirmation. There is no need to invoke a direct military or imperial involvement in the Dean iron industry as rights to extract and work minerals were granted by the State to private entrepreneurs (Davies 1935). The high-status, late 1st-century stone building at Blakeney is unusual, and may have been the residence of either a State official or licensee concerned with the industry (Walters 1991; 1993; Barber and Holbrook 2000, 57). The reinterpretation of the mosaic inscription from Lydney Park temple (see above) has removed the evidence sometimes advanced for the involvement of the Roman navy in the Forest.

16. Iron-making sites are known on the banks of the Severn from Cardiff to Worcester. It is a vexed question whether all these sites utilized Dean ore. Metallurgical analysis of slags from Worcester was not able to demonstrate this point conclusively, and it is conceivable that the ore derived from now totally exhausted outcrops of a narrow band of iron bearing rock that ran from Kidderminster southwards towards Gloucester (McDonnell and Swiss 2004, 376–8). Indeed these same analyses cast doubt on whether Dean ore was the source of iron represented by smelting slags at some sites on the Cotswold bank of the Severn estuary (cf. Allen and Fulford 1987). Some support for an origin outside the Forest of Dean for the ore smelted in Worcester is suggested by the observation that if Dean ore was transported up the Severn, it is surprising that no evidence of extensive iron making has come from either the suburbs of Gloucester or the settlement at Tewkesbury. Artefacts from Beckford, Worcestershire, also demonstrated an increasing use of non-Dean phosphoritic ores (Salter 2000, 56).
17. A new villa, or just possibly a temple, was discovered in 1996 at Porthcasseg on the west bank of the Wye in Monmouthshire (*Archaeol. in Wales* **36** (1996), 77–8).
18. Allen and Fulford (1987) considered, not unnaturally, that they utilized Dean ore that had been transported across the river, although see above, note 16.
19. Evidence for the economic vitality of the Gloucestershire region in the late Roman period is supported by the numismatic evidence. Ryan (1988, 88–93) has examined finds of 4th-century coins in southern Britain and has shown that, amongst rural sites, coinage of the second half of the 4th century is particularly concentrated on sites in the Gloucestershire–Oxfordshire area. Reece (1993) has demonstrated that Cirencester, Gloucester and Caerwent have an unusually high proportion of coinage of the later 4th century compared to towns further east.
20. Dearne and Branigan (1995) record coal from 20 sites in our area, some 10% of the total from the whole country. More recent finds include Bishop's Cleeve (Barber and Walker 1998, 132); Haymes (Rawes 1986, 90); Lower Woods, Hawkesbury (Ireland 2005); and Rodway Hill, Mangotsfield (Erskine 2001).
21. There have been many useful reports examining patterns of pottery supply. Cooper (1998) and Timby (1999a) chart the changing patterns of supply to Cirencester and Gloucester respectively. Timby (1999b, 353–7) usefully compares the supply to Birdlip, Kingscote, Uley and Frocester Court. Much of Timby's research in and around Gloucester is as yet unpublished. Work in the Forest has been less prevalent, but the main reports are Fulford and Allen 1992; Allen and Fulford 1996; and Timby 2000.
22. Sites on the Cotswolds to the south-west of Cirencester also drew heavily upon micaceous greywares, hardly known at Gloucester, Birdlip and Cirencester (Timby 1999b, 357). The source of the ware is unknown, although the petrography may indicate an origin in the southern Forest of Dean or around Tortworth (Allen and Fulford 1996, 262). Timby (1999b, 357) suggests production in the vicinity of Kingscote. She also believes that the micaceous greyware found in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean, although visually similar, seems to be of later (3rd- to 4th-century) date and may represent a separate industry. The only Severn Valley ware kiln known in the county is at Alkington, although others are to be expected in the vicinity of Gloucester (Timby 1996, 9).
23. An example of the maritime links of the area is provided by the Cornish stone bowl from Lydney Park temple (Casey and Hoffman 1999, 131, no. 43; Holbrook 2001, 154–5).
24. Swift (2000, 129, fig. 174) has identified a type of 4th-century strip bracelet with a clear distribution focused on the Severn estuary.
25. Newly discovered temple sites have been conjectured at High Nash, Coleford, and Littledean Hall, both in the Forest of Dean, but further details of the relevant excavations are required to confirm this interpretation (Walters 1992, 93–4 and 102–3).
26. Sculptures from Bristol and South Gloucestershire are included in Cunliffe and Fulford 1982.
27. Timby (1995) has added a number of new occurrences to the list of grass-tempered pottery produced by Alan Vince in 1984. Other later findspots include Bishop's Cleeve (Timby in Barber and Walker 1998, 124), Cheltenham (Timby 2002, 93); Chedworth (Holbrook 2004a, 66): and Turkdean (Timby in Holbrook 2004a, 59).
28. The sample is CAR–1475 which produced a date of 1490±60 BP which has been calibrated at 2 sigma (95.4% probability) using the Oxcal version 3.9 programme (Price 2000, vol. 1, 185).

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