The Roman Rural Settlement Project

Romano-British ritual practices in the East Midlands

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Religious sites in the East Midlands

- 3 Romano-Celtic temples/derivatives
- 21 other sites interpreted as shrines
- Eastern distribution
- Potentially c 30% with late Iron Age origins
- 40% from villages/ unwalled small towns
- 35% ‘isolated’
- 25% from farms/villas
Religious structures from East Midlands

Characteristics of shrines and temples in the East Midlands dataset

- Rectangular building
- Circular building
- Polygonal building
- Defined by enclosure
- Defined by finds alone
Religious objects

- 29 sites produced 131 objects of a specifically religious nature
Distribution of religious objects

- Over 80% of all religious objects from temple/shrine sites
Evidence for Christianity from rural sites

- Evidence for eight sites on the East Midlands dataset
- 3 lead tanks, 2 Christian imagery and 3 cemeteries
- Mostly from villas and small towns
‘Special’ or structured deposits

- Specified on 57 sites
- 50% of religious sites, 30% of nucleated settlements & 10% of farms & villas
Burial practice

- 910 burials from 111 sites
- 90% inhumation burial
- Cremation burial more common on farms (10%) than nucleated settlement (2%)

![Map showing burial sites with pie chart indicating percentages by site type]
Burials: chronology

Relative proportions of cremation and inhumation burial rites over time

Total number of burials over time

Average number of burials per site over time
Cemeteries

- Defined as groups of 10 or more burials
- 18 rural cemeteries in the East Midlands containing 68% of all burials
- Most cemeteries in nucleated or industrial sites
Decapitation burials

- 20 burials from 10 sites
- 2.5% of total inhumations
• 34 burials from 11 sites
• 4.3% of total inhumations
• 40 burials from 23 sites
• 5% of total inhumations
Grave goods

- 83 graves (on 37 sites) with evidence for grave goods (9.1% of total graves)
Population statistics: gender

- 246 burials assigned to gender (27% of total burials): male 61%, female 38%
Population statistics: age

- 681 burials assigned to age group (75% of total burials): 70% adult, 7.6% child/adolescent, 22.4% neonate/infant
Ritual and Religion: Summary

• Relatively few specialised constructed sacred sites, dominated by circular/ polygonal shrines
• Special/structured deposits far more widespread across the region
• No of burials increased substantially over time but always dominated by inhumation
• Much of the region is characterised by smaller number of dispersed burials
• Great intra-regional and wider variability in matters of religious expression and burial practice