Settlement morphology and regional diversity: establishing a new model

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Aims of Project Phase 1

To gain a more nuanced understanding of Romano-British regionalism, on the basis of rural settlement characteristics

– Create/enhance a model of morphological classification based only upon analysis of excavated settlements

– Create new geographic zones which will form the basis for regional characterisation

– Test the model against associated settlement architecture, material culture, and environmental signatures to try and understand more the economic and social relations of people within different settlement types
Study of Romano-British rural settlement

- Major studies by Hingley (1989) and Taylor (2007)
- Taylor’s survey recorded 28,000 rural settlements from HER data, including cropmarks, earthworks, finds scatters and excavations
The impact of developer-funded archaeology: quantity and distribution of reported Roman rural sites to date

Pre-1950

Up to 1989

Up to 2014
All excavated and recorded Roman rural settlements up to end 2014

2523 individual settlements
Relative density of Roman rural settlement
Main database settlement site types:

1920 Farms

Defined as small agricultural based settlements without villa architecture

- Huge increase in excavation since 1990 but still poorly understood
Main database settlement site types:

314 villas

Defined as mostly agricultural based settlements with architectural characteristics associated with prominent display, e.g. tiled roofs, painted plaster, mosaic floors and often associated baths.
Main database settlement site types:

56 villages

Defined as larger nucleated rural settlements (usually) over 3ha with multiple areas of occupation and not directly associated with the main Roman road network.
Main database settlement site types:

175 roadside settlements

Defined as nucleated rural settlements directly associated with the main Roman road network.
Classification of farming settlements
Classification of farming settlements

- Based upon Taylor’s tripartite broad divisions of morphological types (gained from HER descriptions) but used more selectively just for excavated smaller farming settlements
- Classification by subjective visual analysis of the site plan
- Overall, 1719 of 2188 farming settlements within the database had plans (78%)
- From this 742 (34% of all farming settlements) could be placed into a broad morphological category

(Taylor 2007, Fig. 3.6)
Farming settlements – issues with classification

Farming settlements that cannot be classified:

• lack of excavation (including wall chasing of villa buildings)
• lack of understanding/definition of the phasing
• truncation of archaeological features
• no site plan

Land off Greet Road, Winchcombe, Glos

RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

Irby, Wirral, Merseyside
Classification of farming settlements by type of investigation

- Evaluation (n=467)
- Watching Brief (n=90)
- Excavation (n=1605)

- Unclassified
- Classified

Classification of farming settlements by area of excavation

- <0.1 (n=693)
- 0.1-0.5 (n=590)
- 0.5-1 (n=216)
- 1-2 (n=151)
- 2+ (n=212)

Percentage (%)
Evidence for occupation not obviously contained within a system of enclosure

Enclosures and field system ditches may still be present on site, but do not bound primary areas of domestic activity

Few identified and well dispersed
Enclosed settlement

Penhale Round, Fraddon, Cornwall

• All or majority of domestic activity contained within 1 or 2 enclosures
• Internal space not sub-divided to a significant degree
• Dominant form across most areas especially in upland zones, but significant variety in size and form
Complex farming settlement

- A complex of conjoined enclosures or major enclosure extensively sub-divided
- Multiple activity zones
- Trackways and field-systems tend to be incorporated within settlement system
- Restricted distribution

Strood Hall, Essex
Variation in complex settlement forms

Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leics: agglomeration of multiple enclosures

Wavendon Gate, Buckinghamshire: major internal divisions of space
Farm enclosure complexes

- Often regular system of ‘paddocks’ observed on periphery of settlements
- Minimal material culture when excavated
- Association with waterholes & trackways/droveways
- Relating to stock movement?
‘Paddock’ enclosure complexes from nucleated settlements – large scale stock movement?
Plan of all phases (1\textsuperscript{st}-4\textsuperscript{th} C AD) from Longdoles field, Claydon Pike, Glos: unclassified, complex & enclosed settlement
Creation of regional landscapes for analysis

Data collection from eight English administrative regions and Wales
Creation of regional landscapes for analysis

New regions ‘created’ using project data, Natural England regions & Welsh topography
Creation of regional landscapes for analysis

Eight new regions created for the purposes of broadly assessing rural settlement regionality
Regional characteristics: farming settlement morphology

North-East (n=94)
- Enclosed: 12%
- Complex: 36%
- Open: 52%

Central belt (n=280)
- Enclosed: 3%
- Complex: 48%
- Open: 49%

East (n=51)
- Enclosed: 6%
- Complex: 39%
- Open: 55%

South (n=167)
- Enclosed: 6%
- Complex: 26%
- Open: 68%
Regional characteristics: farming settlement morphology

- **Northern England (n=55)**:
  - Enclosed: 84%
  - Complex: 14%
  - Open: 2%

- **West Midlands (n=43)**:
  - Enclosed: 88%
  - Complex: 7%
  - Open: 5%

- **Upland Wales & West (n=45)**:
  - Enclosed: 93%
  - Complex: 7%
  - Open: 10%

- **South-West (n=40)**:
  - Enclosed: 87%
  - Complex: 3%
  - Open: 10%
Central belt case study

The Central Belt Region

- 'primary towns$' Events
- Final_settlement_data
- Major_rivers
- Roman_roads

Locations:
- Lincoln
- Leicester
- Gloucester
- Caerwent
- Cirencester
- Verulamium

Map credit: Copyright © 2014 ESRI
The Central Belt Region

- 'primary towns'$ Events
- central_belt_complexfarms
- central_belt_enclosedfarms
- All_farms1
- Major_rivers
- Roman_roads

Central belt case study

Lincoln
Leicester
Gloucester
Caerwent
Verulamium

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Geological and topographical context

- Complex farms more prevalent on lower lying superficial geologies (sand & gravel terraces of major river valleys)
- Enclosed farms more varied locations but prevalent on higher chalk and limestone areas
Central belt
Later 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD

Lincoln
Leicester
Verulamium
Cirencester
Gloucester
Caerwent
• 1626 buildings recorded on 542 rural farming settlements

• Increase from 39% to 53% of farming settlements in use with evidence for architecture from late Iron Age to 4th century AD

• Includes c 500 buildings from 153 villa complexes
Changes in architectural style

718 circular buildings
908 rectangular buildings

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http://www.strollingguides.co.uk/scripts/pushers/photo.php?refNo=1100885&z=660_500
• Rectangular architecture becomes dominant earlier in the SW
• The north-east (fens, Ouse & Nene Valleys) has a much greater circular building tradition which lasts longer
• No significant correlation between architecture & morphology
Villas

- Most villa morphology = unclassified
- Classified villas conform to regional ‘norms’ for farmstead types

Central belt: villa farm morphology (n=151)

- Complex: 10%
- Enclosed: 7%
- Unclassified: 83%

South: villa farm morphology (n=113)

- Complex: 2%
- Enclosed: 9%
- Unclassified: 89%
Villa types

- Wide variety in villa types
- ‘Lower order’ villas widespread
- Courtyard & palatial villas very specific geographical & chronological patterns
Architectural continuum

Masonry 'domestic' building types in Central Belt

No. of sites

- single room building
- multi-room building
- cottage villa
- corridor villa
- winged corridor villa
- courtyard villa
- palatial villa
- unknown/other villa
An integrative approach to rural settlement