The Roman Rural Settlement Project

Preliminary results from the east of England

The dataset so far...

1390 sites across three regions:

- East (624)
- South-East (342)
- East Midlands (424)
Source of records for Roman Rural Settlement Project: Eastern Region (%)

- Grey Lit Reports from Cotswold Archaeology
- Grey Lit reports from other sources
- Published Reports in county Journals
- Published Reports in other Journals
- East Anglian Archaeology
- Other publications

The nature of the eastern dataset

- 624 records of Roman sites

Number of records by county
Main types of site in the east of England dataset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site type*</th>
<th>Bedfordshire</th>
<th>Cambridgeshire</th>
<th>Essex</th>
<th>Hertfordshire</th>
<th>Norfolk</th>
<th>Suffolk</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>farm</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field system</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funerary site</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron production</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other metal production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pottery production</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quarry</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC temple</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt production</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tile production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unwalled 'small town'**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>villa</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village**</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Record may have more than one site type
** Consolidated record data
Research theme 1: Chronology

All sites occupied in the Late Iron Age

- 280 sites (46% of total) were occupied in the Late Iron Age

Late Iron Age activity as % of site type

- 159 sites (c. 25% of total) were established during mid-late 1st century AD
- 40% of sites with late Iron Age activity were either abandoned or ‘transformed’
Roman sites with evidence for early Saxon activity

- 89 Roman sites have evidence for early Saxon activity (c 15% of total)
- 20% of total sites with late Roman activity

Site types with evidence for early Saxon activity (% of site type)

Distribution of all villas (in relation to NMR ‘villas’)

- 56 villas within the dataset
- 171 possible villas within the NMR dataset for the east region
Chronology of villas in the East of England

Date of establishment of eastern villas

Number of eastern villas in use
Distribution of villas in use over time

Up to end 1st century AD

Up to mid 2nd century AD

Distribution of all farms

- 325 farms within the dataset
- Period of greatest extent in later 2nd C AD

Farmsteads in use in eastern region

No. sites
Farms established mid-late 1st C AD

Farms established early-mid 2nd C AD

Farms established mid-late 2nd C AD

Distribution of all nucleated settlement ('villages' and unwalled 'small towns') in relation to major urban centres

- 53 nucleated settlements within the dataset

Nucleated settlements in use in eastern region

Legend:
- Un nucleated
- Walled
- Un nucleated
- Walled
- Site

Bar chart:
- No. sites

Date: 21/08/2013
Chronology summary

- Significant continuity of occupation/activity from late Iron Age
- Major changes occurring in the countryside during the early Roman period
- Most villas established later 1st/early 2nd C AD
- Significant expansion of rural settlement in the NW (fen/fen-edge) from mid/later 2nd C AD
- Nucleated sites show greatest evidence for longevity, from LIA to 5th C AD

Research theme 2: Rural settlement morphology and architecture

- Site plans for 70% of records
- c 30% of records contain site plans useful for characterising settlement morphology
- Less than 5% ‘complete’ site plans

Number of records by county with site plans useful for rural settlement morphology

- Cambs
- Essex
- Beds
- Norfolk
- Herts
- Suffolk
Enclosed farmsteads

Linear/developed farmsteads
‘Open’ farmsteads

Farmstead morphology in eastern region
Chronology of morphology of eastern region farmsteads

Distribution of (A) linear/developed and (B) enclosed farms
Distribution of sites with circular and rectangular buildings

Domestic architectural forms and types

Occurrence of building form by site type (as % of site type)

Chronology of farmsteads containing certain building forms
Morphology/architecture summary

- 30% of records contain site plans useful for characterising rural settlement morphology
- Basic breakdown of farmsteads into linear and enclosed types
- Clear chronological trend from LIA to late Roman period for increasing numbers of linear farms and decreasing numbers of enclosed farms
- Circular and/or rectangular buildings recognised in 66% of rural settlement sites with clear differentiation in density across region
- Association of rectangular buildings with villas and nucleated sites and circular buildings with enclosed farms
- Increase in use of rectangular buildings and decrease in use of circular buildings over time

Research theme 3: Relationships of rural to urban centres

- 3 major towns (Verulamium, Colchester and Caistor St Edmund)
- 6 defended towns
- 33 minor ‘urban’ centres
- Closer affinity of villas than farms to major urban centres (40% of villas within 10km compared with 24% of farms)
- Very uneven degree of association of rural sites with different urban centres
- Little apparent change in density of settlement around urban centres over time
Research theme 4: Rural industry

- 74 sites with pottery production
  - 10% of farms and villas
  - 27% of nucleated settlement
  - Widespread distribution but with certain ‘industry’ concentrations
- 28 sites with iron smelting
  - 5% of farms and villas
  - 15% of nucleated settlement
  - Main concentration in the west
- 12 sites/areas with salt production
  - 3 main areas: Fens, Blackwater estuary and Thames estuary

Research theme 5: Religion

- 11 Romano-Celtic type temples
  - Most in nucleated settlements or on periphery of major urban centres
  - Where known, all established c later 1st/early 2nd CAD
- 38 sites with interpretations of shrines
  - 40% located in or near fenland zone
  - Wide variety in chronology and form
Research theme 6: Burial

- 253 sites (40%) produced some evidence for funerary activity
- 3927 burials (1806 cremation and 2122 inhumation)

Burials by site type (as % of total burials)

- Nucleated settlement
- Linear farms
- Enclosed farms
- Villas
- Isolated rural burial sites
Cremation burials

Inhumation burials

Relative proportions of cremation and inhumation burial rites over time

Distribution of prone burials

- 95 prone burials
- 4.7% of total inhumation burials

Percentage of prone burials by site type
Distribution of decapitation burials

- 144 decapitation burials
- 7.2% of total inhumation burials

Distribution of flexed burials

- 156 flexed burials
- 7.8% of total inhumation burials
Where do we go from here?

- Finish preliminary analysis of eastern data and writing up by end of April 2013
- Further data collection, regional analyses and seminars until early summer 2014
- Final analysis leading to website launch and national conference in Reading in March 2015
- Final publication by August 2015