Chapter 17
The Late Roman Landscape

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INTRODUCTION

Developments in late and sub Roman Britain are among the most widely discussed aspects of Romano-British archaeology, and there have been a number of different views expressed over the fate of the land (eg Casey 1979; Esmonde Cleary 1989; Reece 1992; Faulkner 2000; K Dark 2000). It is generally accepted that in the later 3rd century under Diocletian, the two provinces of Britannia Superior in the south and Britannia Inferior in the north (divided under Severus in the early 3rd century AD) were further divided into four or possibly five provinces. These provinces formed the Diocese of Britain and the area of the Upper Thames Valley (including the CWP sites) and surrounding regions have generally been regarded as belonging to the province of Britannia Prima, with Corinium being the capital (but see Urban Centres below). The orthodox view, as expressed by Esmonde Cleary (1989, 131), is still that this was a 'golden era' within most parts of Roman Britain, especially the West Country, at least up until the end of the 4th century AD, after which there was a sudden and dramatic collapse with most traces of Romano-British culture quickly disappearing. Others such as Reece (1992) and more recently Faulkner (2000) have argued that Romano-British institutions – especially urban centres – were in decline long before this, from as far back as the early-mid 3rd century AD, and that most of the old towns were little more than 'administrative villages' in the 4th century. Faulkner does reiterate however that towns were still important to the late Roman state, as they were centres of an increasingly centralised and militaristic administration without which the countryside could not be controlled (2000, 126; see below). Ken Dark (2000, 15) has recently argued that late and post-Roman Britain had far more similarities with other parts of the western Empire than has previously been thought, with towns retaining political, economic, administrative and high status domestic functions even at the start of the 5th century. Furthermore, he suggests that most aspects of Romano-British culture did not dramatically stop at AD 400 but gradually wound down over centuries (Dark 2000, 228).

The late Roman landscape of the Upper Thames and surrounding areas needs to be looked at in relation to the views of Britain expressed above. However, the evidence suggests that no single viewpoint can be established as 'correct', as with increased archaeological data there is greater evidence for wide heterogeneity in the development of settlement and landscape.

THE LATE ROMAN SETTLEMENT PATTERN

In parts of the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds, the organisation and structure of many settlements changed quite significantly in the space of *c* 50-70 years, from the middle of the 3rd to the early 4th century AD. The late 3rd century in particular can be seen as a time of widespread transformation within the region, with changes affecting urban and non-urban and high and low status settlements alike. Of the sites in this volume for example it appears that only at Claydon Pike did sustained activity continue on into the 4th century (see Chapter 6). Although environmental evidence is quite patchy, there are some indications of major changes in land use as well, although in most cases it is unlikely that the overall character of the landscape was altered too radically (see below and Chapter 14). Within the later Roman period itself, there is less evidence for any widespread changes, and despite the well documented problems of dating in the very late Roman period (Henig and Booth 2000, 178-9), it does seem that the general settlement pattern was not too dissimilar towards the end from what it was at the beginning of the 4th century. However, the nature of occupation at each site could still vary substantially.

Urban centres

The late Roman landscape of the region must have been dominated to a large extent by the city of Corinium. The main period of civil construction work in the city dates from the late 1st century to *c* AD 170 (Holbrook 1998; see Chapter 16), and although there were relatively few indications of extensive activity during the 3rd century compared to periods before and after (Holbrook 1998, 121), it is suggested from construction work on town

houses that occupation levels reached their peak in *c* AD 250 (Faulkner 1998, 378). In *c* AD 240-70 a masonry wall was inserted in front of the existing earthwork defensive circuit (Wacher and Salvatore 1998, 98). Faulkner (1998, 379-83) has suggested that Corinium was being fortified at this time by the military-bureaucratic administration which was dominating the empire, as a result of the late Roman countryside being beset with barbarian incursions, brigandage and other strife. However, as illustrated below, the late Roman countryside of the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds does certainly not appear to have been under particular stress and indeed the construction of lavish undefended villa estates hardly suggests that brigandage or barbarian incursions were rife in the region. The need for improved urban defences must have been at the core of the new building works – possibly due to the longstanding period of unrest within the empire as a whole – but there is no evidence to suggest any substantial direct threat to the city. Faulkner furthermore suggested that such urban defences corresponded with the decline of the municipal gentry (Faulkner 1998, 379), although there is no real evidence for a decline in the élite urban class of Corinium at this time.

The province of Britannia Prima was probably created towards the end of the 3rd century AD (see above) and is traditionally thought to have encompassed most of southern Britain from Dobunnic territory westwards. Despite some views to the contrary (eg Birley 1981, who though that the province lay entirely west of the River Severn) this remains the orthodoxy, and as the largest city in this region, Corinium is generally regarded as the provincial capital (Darvill and Gerard 1994, 74; Faulkner 1998, 379). This idea is furthered by the finding of a Jupiter column in the town, with a dedication by L. Sep[timis..], governor of Britannia [..Prima?] to Jupiter. The exact interpretation of this is still debated (Holbrook 1994, 74), and Reece (1999, 78) has recently emphasised the need to keep an open mind as to whether Corinium or Glevum (Gloucester) was the provincial capital.

If Corinium was made capital of the new province at the end of the 3rd century AD – as would still seem most likely – it is probable that significant changes may have taken place within the city and surrounding region, and there is considerable evidence that this was indeed the case. Certainly the program of public building work appears to have been approached with renewed vigour, with for example the forum-basilica complex having large scale reconstruction work in the late 3rd/early 4th century (Holbrook 1998, 385). In fact this complex appears to have functioned as a civic structure throughout the 4th century and probably into the early 5th century, with a number of late modifications (Holbrook 1998, 121). This is quite different from many other Romano-British cities such as Verulamium and Silchester, where the forum-basilica complexes generally fell into terminal decline in the early-mid 4th century, and as such could well be related to Corinium's elevated position as a provincial capital (Faulkner 1998, 379). Some other public buildings, such as a possible temple in *insula* VI, were also occupied throughout the late Roman period and probably some way beyond (Holbrook 1998, 139), while the amphitheatre was radically changed in *c* AD 350/60. This structure seems to have fallen out of use by the late 3rd-early 4th century, and the later modifications – which included widening the entrance to admit wheeled vehicles – indicate a change in use, perhaps as an extra-mural market (Holbrook 1998, 174). Further modifications indicate its use well into the post-Roman period (see below).

Elsewhere in Corinium the evidence for late Roman activity is quite variable. A building in *insula* II was abandoned and partly demolished in AD 350-60, but the side ditch by the property was maintained until the end of the 4th century AD (Holbrook 1998, 186). In *insula* VI shops and houses were abandoned and demolished by the mid 3rd century and the site was vacant for over a century until the construction of a large domestic town house (Holbrook 1998, 244). Many other large houses appear to have been built in the latter half of the 4th century, and altogether the evidence points to a fully functioning and vibrant urban society at this time, albeit operating within quite different a political climate from that of two centuries earlier (see below).

Finds of late Roman military equipment are especially plentiful in Corinium – more so than any other urban site in Britain other than London (Holbook 1998, 306). This surely must reflect its position as a provincial capital, and it has been suggested (Holbrook 1998) that these object probably represent part of the field army (*comitatenses*) stationed in the city. Whether or not this was the case, the finds indicate that there was still a significant military presence within the town at the very end of the 4th century, and it is quite possible that not all of the soldiers would have left for the continent with Constantius III in AD 407 (see below).

So how does the situation at Corinium compare with other urban centres in the region? To the north at Glevum (Gloucester), the evidence is more patchy, but it appears that the city wall was strengthened in the later 3rd/early 4th century, and mosaic floors were still being laid in the last quarter of the 4th century (Heighway and Garrod 1980, 84). There is also evidence for timber buildings being constructed in the later 4th century and probably into the 5th century as a radiocarbon date of around AD 430 came from one structure (Heighway and Garrod 1980). One of the latest phases of construction found in the centre of Gloucester was the laying of an extensive well-metalled area, which levelled at least part of the forum and extended it northwards, at the end of the 4th or early 5th century AD (Heighway and Garrod 1980). This large open space

was bounded on at least one side by still standing columns and may have acted as a market place, continuing well into the post-Roman period. There are strong hints of a military presence in late Roman Gloucester (Hurst 1999, 130), and the relatively high percentage of late Roman coins (Reece 1999, 79) may also point to a garrison being stationed there.

Further east at Alchester the evidence from within the walled area itself is very limited, but excavations within the northern extramural settlement indicated continuing agricultural activity throughout the late Roman period and new timber buildings were certainly constructed after AD 350 (Booth 2001, 178). Late Roman activity at Dorchester-on-Thames is far more pronounced, with a number of buildings dating not before the last decade of the 4th century, and with a comparatively very high percentage of Theodosian (AD 388-402) coins. Continuation of activity within this town into the post-Roman period is also far clearer than most (see below).

Most of the 'small towns' within the region appear to have been at their most prosperous in the 4th century, as is quite typical of many parts of the country, especially in the Midlands and West Country (Burnham and Wacher 1990). Bourton seemed to continue as a market centre into the late and post-Roman period (Timby 1998, 383), while Wycomb also appeared to continue into the 5th-6th century, on the evidence of grass tempered pottery and a 5th-century belt buckle (Timby 1998, 351). The settlement at Dorn on the Fosse Way was defended in the late 3rd/4th century, possibly because it had some official or military function (see below), although the chronological evidence for activity at this site is very poor (Timby 1998, 339). At Asthall along Akeman Street there is evidence that the settlement decreased in size towards the end of the 4th century AD, although there is nothing to suggest that the core of the settlement did not continue into the very late or post-Roman period, as Theodosian coins were present in quantity (Booth 1997, 152). Further east at Wilcote there is less evidence for late Roman activity, although this may in part be due to the effects of subsequent plough damage (Hands 1998).

There is little evidence for the nature of 4th-century occupation at Cricklade within the Thames Valley, although activity is said to have spanned the whole of the Roman period (Haslam 2003). Further south at the 'small town' of Wanborough there is quite good evidence for the nature of late Roman activity, which seems to have been at its most extensive, covering some 25 ha (Anderson *et al.* 2001, 347-50). The *mansio* was probably still functioning, and there is evidence for a well-developed street system, possible commercial outlets, numerous craft-working activities and a possible religious focus (Anderson *et al.* 2001).

The overall evidence for large and small scale urban settlement within the region during the late Roman period is quite mixed – as would be expected given the huge variety in form and function – but nevertheless the general impression is one of relative prosperity and stability until at least the end of the 4th century AD. It is quite likely that all would have continued to function as local – and in some cases regional – market centres at this time, although this is likely to have changed fairly rapidly upon the collapse of the monetary market economy in the early 5th century, even if many of the settlements themselves continued in some form or another (see below).

The Cotswold 'villa landscape'

During the late Roman period, the settlement pattern of the Cotswolds continued to be quite divergent from that of the Thames valley (see Chapter 16), and perhaps became even more so. By far the greatest quantity of information we have for this period in the region is concerned with villas and their associated agricultural holdings, and although there is thus a bias against lower status settlements, it remains the case that this area had one of the highest concentrations of villas in the country.

The early villas (*c* late 1st century AD), based in the area of Grim's Ditch and at The Ditches north of Corinium, have already been discussed in Chapter 16, and would seem to represent the continuance of power in some form from the late Iron Age. More villas appear to have become established during the 2nd century AD, such as Chedworth (Goodburn 1972), Whittington (O'Neil 1952a), Duntisbourne Abbots (Baddeley 1923, 295) and possibly Woodchester (Clarke 1982). These villas were spread over a large area and may have become established through specific grants of land control given to individuals at this time by the official administration (see Chapter 16). Although some villas such as Great Witcombe (Leach 1998; Pl.17.1) were established in the early 3rd century AD, the most significant changes with regard to villa construction came in the later 3rd and early 4th century. New villas were established at places such as Farmington (Chapman 1963) and Spoonley Wood (O'Neil 1952b), while at other sites such as Frocester Court (Price 2000) previous non-villa settlements were transformed by the construction of large stone-built villa buildings. Also at this time there is evidence for substantial embellishment of existing villas such as Great Witcombe (Pl.17.1), Woodchester and North Leigh (Ellis 1999). These three courtyard villas were particularly extensive and lavish with large mosaics and a number of bathhouses, and were probably the residences of very high ranking officials (see below).

Although some of these late 3rd-century villa developments may have occurred before the establishment of *Britannia Prima*, it is quite likely that the creation of this province acted as a stimulus for change within the region, creating new impetus and opportunities for wealth creation and display.

Plate 17.1 Great Witcombe Roman villa, Gloucestershire

This seems to have continued into the 4th century, with further villas being built and/or embellished. At Barnsley Park, about 6 km east of Corinium, a winged corridor villa was built *c* AD 360 on a site that had (previously) been occupied by a more modest farmstead for about 200 years (Webster 1981, 27). The villa was enlarged with the addition of a new wing with two hypocaust rooms in *c* AD 375, but by AD 380 there were drastic alterations which suggested that all high status occupation had ceased and it had largely become an agricultural building (Webster and Smith 1982, 93). Although the site continued to be occupied and the surrounding land farmed well into the 5th century (see below), it would seem that the personal circumstances of those who lived at the site had changed considerably. A similar situation existed at Great Witcombe when at some point after AD 380 there was a marked change in continuity and use, which led the excavator to suggest that the estate owner was no longer in residence, with instead the estate being run by subordinates (Leach 1998, 129). At many other villa sites, there is evidence for high status occupation continuing right up until at least the end of the 4th century, with a number of improvements being made to the complexes. At Frocester, a new wing incorporating a workshop and bathhouse was added *c* AD 360, and it was only at the start of the 5th century that there appears to have begun a long period of decline in living standards. A Theodosian coin (AD 395) found underneath the latest mosaic floor at Hucclecote, 4 km south of Gloucester, also points to very late embellishments within some villas (Clifford 1961b).

Many Cotswold villa sites do not have the necessary chronological information to suggest anything other than a general late 3rd/4th-century date. However, of those with more refined chronologies there is evidence at some sites (eg Frocester and Hucclecote) for continuing opulence until at least the end of the 4th century, while at others (eg Barnsley Park and Great Witcombe) there were radical changes resulting in more low status occupation within the late 4th century. Such differentiation may reflect the changing financial and political circumstances of the time, with power being channelled through smaller numbers of higher status élite, occupying more centralised estates (see below).

Overall, the rise in villa numbers in the later 3rd and 4th century AD is often taken to imply a significant shift in power from urban to rural areas – a 'retreat to the countryside' (Faulkner 2000, 132). However, this does not appear the case in this region, as the increasing number of villas is largely matched by an increase in town houses within Corinium, although the situation in Gloucester is less clear (see above). It is likely that most landowning élite owned both urban and rural properties, with perhaps the greater amount of time spent at the villa estates.

As with the earlier Roman period, there is very little detailed evidence for non-villa sites in the Cotswolds during the 3rd-4th centuries AD, with the exception of a small number of major settlements (see above). A small agricultural settlement was excavated at Lower Slaughter alongside the Fosse Way, with an emphasis on later Roman activity, especially the second half of the 4th century

(Timby 1998, 389). However, by the start of the 5th century, it appears the site was abandoned, with the wells filled in with household debris (Timby 1998, 389). A small settlement at Birdlip Quarry on Ermin Street was established *c* AD 160-80 but was partially abandoned in the mid 3rd century (Mudd 1999, 239). There was a revival of occupation in the later 3rd century – at the same time as many of the surrounding villas – and there is also some evidence for the widespread development of Ermin Street road itself at this time, or possibly in the early 4th century AD (Mudd 1999, 241). Post-pad and timber sill-beam houses were constructed at Birdlip Quarry in the mid to late 4th century, although occupation does not seem to have lasted beyond *c* AD 400 (Mudd 1999, 241).

Of the other known or suggested low status Roman sites in the Cotswolds region, very little information is available and so any relationships between villa and non-villa sites are quite poorly understood.

Late Roman settlement in the Upper Thames Valley (Fig. 16.1)

When compared with the Cotswolds there is far better evidence for lower status settlement development in the Upper Thames Valley during the late Roman period, and despite the variety there are a number of significant patterns that emerge. In particular is the evidence for quite widespread landscape changes in the late 3rd – early 4th century AD, which mirrors in many ways the situation in the Cotswolds. Of the key sites in this volume, only Claydon Pike has evidence for a late Roman structural sequence (Chapter 6), although the finds from Somerford Keynes indicate late Roman activity of some kind in the vicinity of the site (Chapter 9). At Claydon Pike the site was radically altered in the late 3rd century with the demolition of the aisled building complex, which eventually led to the establishment of a modest villa in the early 4th century. Far less substantial changes occurred at the nearby Roughground Farm villa, but there were a number of significant embellishments made at this time, suggesting an increase in the centralisation of the villa's estate management (Allen *et al.* 1993, 81).

Further east at Barton Court Farm a modest villa with associated corn-drier and well was probably constructed in the late 3rd century, on a site that had lain unoccupied for *c* 150 years (Miles 1986, 12). This new estate had expanded to incorporate low-lying land by the river which was presumably used for pasture, and included a series of well-ordered enclosures (Miles 1986, 46). At Old Shifford Farm also there was a small settlement established at the end of the 3rd century, on land that had been manured for most of the 2nd and 3rd centuries following the abandonment of the earlier site (Hey 1995, 170). The settlement was connected to an extensive late Roman drove and trackway system linking a number of sites along the north bank of the Thames, with associated paddocks and field ditches (Hey 1995, 170). The settlement at Farmoor which was established in the early 2nd century AD was further reorganised in the late 3rd century AD, although the extent and nature of this is not too clear (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 72), As with Old Shifford Farm, it would seem that the surrounding landscape was still primarily grassland used for grazing animals, but that ditched and hedged field systems (paddocks), droveways and horticultural plots created a more defined and controlled landscape (see below). Even within sites that do show evidence of continued occupation throughout the Roman period, such as Yarnton (Hey and Timby forthcoming), there is evidence for comprehensive reorganisation at the start of the later Roman period, which in this case included the redevelopment of trackways, enclosures and field boundaries. An extensive Roman settlement at Cotswold Community south of Cirencester also demonstrates significant alterations at this time (OA 2004).

In addition to newly established and reorganised settlement during the late 3rd century AD, there are a number of sites which appeared to have been abandoned during or just prior to this period. All occupation had ceased at Watkins Farm before the late 3rd century AD, suggesting the land was now being managed from elsewhere (Allen, 1990, 83). A very similar situation existed at Whelford Bowmoor, Stubbs Farm, Kempsford and possibly Kempsford Multi-Agg Quarry (see Chapters 10 and 11 and Digital section 8.4). All of these sites were on low-lying ground, and the progressively wetter environment throughout the Roman period probably resulted in an increased flood risk, which may have been one factor in leading to their abandonment (see Chapter 14).

All of the evidence from the Upper Thames Valley is quite consistent in suggesting that there were widespread changes occurring in the landscape at the start of the late Roman period. A series of newly constructed agricultural settlements joined existing sites, many of which were remodelled, and formed part of a well-organised landscape with pastureland and areas of arable crops linked by trackways and field ditches lined by hedges. A combination of increasing flood risk and the centralisation of larger estates probably led to other settlements being abandoned. In nearly all cases the developments seem to have taken place over a period of about 30 to 40 years from the late 3rd to early 4th century, and thus appear strikingly consistent with changes in the Cotswold 'villa landscape' further north. It is difficult not to see many of these changes as being at least partly associated with the establishment of *Britannia Prima*, and possible accompanying developments in the system of land control (see below).

As with settlements in the Cotswolds, the late Roman sites within the Upper Thames Valley exhibited a wide variety of developmental trajectories

with some continuing well into the post-Roman period, and others being abandoned prior to the end of the 4th century. Late activity at Barton Court Farm is particularly pronounced, with a large group of Theodosian coins (most admittedly from a dispersed hoard), and occupation of some sort clearly continued into the 5th and 6th centuries, albeit with major changes (Miles 1986, 47; see below). At Old Shifford Farm occupation also continued until at least the end of the 4th century, although there is no evidence of significant post-Roman activity (Hey 1995, 174). The villa complex at Roughground Farm had a number of modifications and additions during the 4th century, but occupation is thought to have rapidly declined after AD 370 (Allen *et al.* 1993, 199). However, many of the latest villa deposits had been ploughed away and a clipped *siliqua* coin dating to at least AD 410 (King 1993, 142) suggests that occupation of some nature continued into the 5th century.

Many settlements, like Claydon Pike, have no clear evidence for the exact length of occupation, but in most cases it is unlikely that they would have been completely abandoned prior to the end of the 4th century AD (see Chapter 6). Much of the land probably continued to be farmed as before into the 5th century and later, although there would undoubtedly have been huge changes in most aspects of society (see below).

THE LATE ROMAN ECONOMY

The evidence from the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds suggests a vibrant and expanding economy in the region throughout much of the later Roman period. The wealth and resources required for the mass of villa constructions and renovations, urban regeneration, expansion of the 'small towns' and at least partial reorganisation of the Thames Valley settlement and landscape would have been quite considerable. This apparent general prosperity came despite the increasingly harsh burden of state taxes, specifically the *annona* (tax on land) which was usually paid in agricultural produce rather than coin. Substantial agricultural surpluses must have been generated in many settlements in order to pay taxes and generate enough wealth to invest in property construction and embellishment and land reorganisation. Even a modest villa such as at Claydon Pike for example would have required a not inconsiderable level of investment (see Chapter 6). It is quite possible that increased centralisation in the control of land (see below) led to more substantial agricultural estates with grand centres and numerous smaller satellite settlements, which could generate larger surpluses than had previously been the case.

Most if not all of the large number of late Roman villas in the region would have been centres of agricultural estates, although probably operating within a hierarchical system of land tenure (see above). The villa at Frocester Court seems to have been part of a chain of similar agriculturally based sites on the south-eastern escarpment of the Severn Valley, connected with a broad band of arable along the upper part of the terrace (Price 2000, 241). The higher ground above was probably used for sheep grazing and timber, while the lower valley and floodplain is likely to have been pastoral, possibly with some hay meadow (Price 2000, 242-5). This situation is quite similar to that of the Upper Thames Valley and appears to have been a continuation of the earlier Roman situation, albeit probably more intensified. Agricultural activity at Barnsley Park is particularly demonstrable, with over 40 ha of fields surrounding the site, most of those away from the main complex being enclosed by narrow earth banks (Webster and Smith 1982, 67). This points to a well organised agricultural estate, which was suggested as being possibly part of a larger holding (Webster and Smith 1982, 67). The number of ox-goads along with walled enclosures and stockades at this site has led to the suggestion that it was at least partially a stock collecting depot, for shearing and/or branding and preparation for market (Webster and Smith 1982, 68). This may be quite likely considering that the major urban market at Corinium was only *c* 6 km distant.

On the whole, the more detailed environmental evidence from late Roman sites in the Upper Thames Valley does not generally indicate radical changes in land use at this time, although there were a number of significant developments. The same general range of arable crops continue, with spelt wheat being the most common, although there are some indications that the cultivation of bread wheat – while still very limited – was increasing (Lambrick 1992, 97). Flax, which was primarily used for textiles, was also increasingly cultivated at a number of sites including Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986). Agricultural innovations such as the iron ploughshare and coulter appear to have been adopted at different times in different places (Henig and Booth 2000, 156), reflecting the general settlement diversity of the region (see Robinson, Chapter 14 for wider discussion).

The Claydon Pike villa complex appears to have developed a more mixed agricultural economy, with far less evidence for hay meadows (see Chapter 6). However, the discovery of late Roman scythes at Farmoor and Hardwick (Rees 1979) together with others at Barnsley Park (Webster 1981, 59) suggests hay was still an important commodity. Indeed, the continuation of on-site animal husbandry techniques and intensification of pastoral activity during the late Roman period (see Ingrem, Chapter 14) would have ensured that the need for hay fodder was greater than ever.

A number of settlements in the Upper Thames and Cotswold region exhibit greater economic diversity in the later Roman period, which was probably crucial to their success. At Claydon Pike there is not only evidence for pastoral (including horse breeding) and probably arable activity, but

also for bee keeping and possibly the production of cured beef and/or fish (see Chapter 6). The presence of three substantial fish ponds at Shakenoak villa (Brodribb *et al.* 1978) suggests that commercial fish-farming occurred at the site, and would have provided very useful additional income beyond the arable and pastoral activities. Despite the concentration on cereals at Barton Court Farm there is also evidence for considerable diversity, with production of domestic animal meat, dairy products, hides and wool, in addition to exploitation of game and fish (Miles 1986). The broadening of the dietary spectrum as shown in the faunal remains (eg range of domestic and wild fowl, fish etc) was also demonstrated by the increased cultivation and diversity of horticultural (coriander, fennel etc) crops at a number of sites such as Barton Court Farm and Farmoor. Robinson has indicated that the diet of the inhabitants of this region had become increasingly Romanised with the consumption of oily and spicy foods no later than the 3rd century AD (1992a, 58).

Faulkner has suggested that during the mid 4th century there was a widespread agricultural depression within Roman Britain, with abandoned settlements and large areas of disused land (2000, 144-7). In the Upper Thames and Cotswolds region studied here there is certainly no evidence for any depression at this time, and indeed it seems that more land than ever before was being exploited for its economic potential. Possible signs of insecurity could be inferred by the mid 4th-century enclosure ditches around Claydon Pike and Barton Court Farm (see below), but there is no reason to suppose that agricultural production was in decline at these sites.

As far as industrial economic activities are concerned, the Oxfordshire potteries were at their height of production in the 4th century, with products such as mortaria, parchment ware and red-brown colour-coated ware being distributed all across southern Britain and even on the continent (see Booth, Chapter 13). A 'semi-industrial' landscape existed in parts of the region between Dorchester and Woodeaton, and may been under a measure of centralised control by a small number of villa-based landowners (Henig and Booth 2000, 166-70). The industry certainly continued right up until the end of the Roman period, although the range of products appears much reduced towards the end of the 4th century. As the Oxford pottery industry must have been closely linked to the monetary economy it cannot have lasted much beyond the early 5th century.

The production of ceramic building material at kilns such as Minety in Wiltshire appears to have declined drastically by the later Roman period, with stone slates becoming more common as roofing materials (McWhirr 1981, 113). At Claydon Pike for instance, there is evidence that the tiles from the earlier building were reused, but supplemented (probably for the later extensions) by limestone roof slates (see Chapter 6). This period may have been expected to coincide with increased quarrying of Stonefield slate, a well-known roofing material, but unfortunately the extent of its use in the Roman period is unknown, and it was probably not well exploited until much later. The Cotswold limestone quarries must have continued into the later Roman period, as vast quantities of stone would have been needed for urban and rural building projects. The construction of lavish villas and townhouses in the later 3rd and 4th century AD ensured that mosaic making reached its height at this time, with products of the 'Corinium School' (workshops assumed to be based in Corinium) being found in houses throughout Dobunnic territory. Other skilled workers such as wall painters and furniture makers would also have been in high demand at this time, although they still represent a very small percentage of the active workforce. Metalworking was increasingly widespread, especially in 'small towns' such as Wanborough, and there is some evidence that it had a much more direct significance to the late Roman state, as at least some rooms within the basilica at Corinium were used for iron and bronze working in the later 4th century AD (Holbrook 1998, 121). Such a pattern can also be seen in other Romano-British cities such as Silchester and Caerwent.

Most of the above industries relied upon the success of the monetary economy to survive and thrive. The dramatic increase in coin circulation during the later 3rd and 4th century is well known (See King, Chapter 13), and the fact that this low value coinage was finding its way even to low status sites – often for the first time – is indicative that the use of money for everyday transactions had filtered through all levels of society. It is likely that markets using both coins and barter would have been thriving in the late Roman period, with most of the 'small towns' being at their most expansive at this time (see above). There is also evidence that at least some of the main roads were being improved, as most stretches of Ermin Street show evidence for systematic rebuilding, probably in the early 4th century (Mudd and Mortimer 1999, 267).

Of course most structural and fiscal developments in the region would have relied heavily on the continuation of central administration and in particular the supply of coins, which were not minted officially in Britain after AD 326 (and rarely before this). When both of these collapsed in the early 5th century, the general economy of the region must have declined rapidly.

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Late Romano-British politics and society has been the subject of much contentious academic debate, as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter. Certainly the political environment of this period was quite different from that of earlier Roman times, with a marked increase in imperial bureau-

cracy within a wider system of increased regionality. Thus it would appear that the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds region lay within the province of Britannia Prima, which was part of the Diocese of Britain, which in turn was part of the Prefecture of the Gauls. The huge increase in administration led to the formation of a civil service and a division of power between the existing provincial governors, who now had a purely civil role, and new military commanders responsible for the army. The inscription on the Jupiter column at Corinium seems to record such a provincial civil governor, and although there is no epigraphic evidence for a high ranking late Roman military official in the region, the quantity of military finds at Corinium suggests that such a person may have resided there.

The division between the traditional civil senatorial families, who were the main land-owning class, and the new Imperial administrators, who were centred upon the army, the emperor and the court, seems to have become quite pronounced in the 4th century (Salway 1981, 347; Faulkner 2000). The power of the latter group was particularly strong in the eastern empire (Dodgeon and Lieu 1994), and such 'grandees' have been suggested by Faulkner as also occupying an increasingly isolated position at top end of late Romano-British society (2000, 135-7). The small number of exceptional villas in the region such as Woodchester and North Leigh may well be seen as the residences of such elite. However, both of these sites seemed to have developed from the earlier Roman period (their structural sequences are not well understood; see Ellis 1999), and are perhaps more likely to have been the residences of powerful traditional land-owning families rather than the new imperial aristocracy, who tended to be replaced regularly. In some past studies, the construction and/or embellishment of villas in the late Roman period has been linked with the arrival of Gallic landowners (Branigan 1976, 47; Webster and Smith 1982, 65). However, there is certainly no reason to suspect that this was the case, as the villas were part of wider developments in the region which included urban centres and lower status settlements.

In reality there is no way of knowing for sure who these villas may have belonged to, although in most cases a complete change in site ownership is perhaps unlikely. What the evidence does suggest is that most land was increasingly defined and controlled by the élite, operating from their villa estates. Furthermore, there was perhaps increasing centralisation with larger estates incorporating a number of smaller holdings, as has been suggested at Kingscote (Timby 1998, 288). It has also been suggested that the villas at Ditchley and Shakenoak were incorporated into the North Leigh estate in the middle of the Roman period (Booth 2000, 44). The comparative lack of villas in much of the Upper Thames Valley need not preclude at least parts of this region from being incorporated into larger agricultural estates, even if the main estate centre lay some distance away. By the later Roman period it appears that most of the workers on villa agricultural estates were *coloni*, rather than slaves, which were essentially subsistence farmers who lived on and managed their own small plots of land, as sharecroppers. Although there is no direct evidence from the region, it may have been the case that the people who lived and worked at sites such as Farmoor and Old Shifford Farm were *coloni*, half-free workers who were tied to the land, operating within the wider estates of certain villa owners. This is not to say that there would not have been any surpluses produced at these sites for use by the occupants, as the imported goods and coins indicate at least local trading. There could also have remained wholly independent agricultural communities within the Valley, although defining the difference between such sites in the archaeological record would be very difficult.

TEMPLES AND BURIAL IN THE LATER ROMAN PERIOD

In line with other parts of the north-western empire (Pearce 2000, 3), inhumation rites became firmly established in the region in the 4th century AD, and all of the known Roman cemeteries belong to this period. Booth (2001) has recently analysed the 18 known late Roman cemeteries in Oxfordshire (and one in Berkshire), and while it is beyond the scope of this work to conduct such an analysis of Gloucestershire sites, it is quite likely that many of the conclusions would be similar, especially in the Upper Thames Valley area. The first point of note is that inhumation was not the sole rite to be practised at this time, as some cremation also occurs, undoubtedly along with less visible means of disposal (Booth 2001, 37). Even within the inhumation rite there was much variety, including the treatment of the body, the amount and types of grave goods and the layout of the cemetery.

Extramural urban cemeteries have been located around Alchester, Dorchester, Corinium and Gloucester, all of which would seem to continue into the post-Roman period. At Corinium, three cemeteries have so far been discovered, with the largest and best known outside Bath Gate to the west, where 453 burials were recorded (McWhirr *et al.* 1982). These burials date from the early 4th century and a *siliqua* of Honorius from beneath one burial points to the cemetery continuing in use into the 5th century. Many burials were north-south and later graves inter-cut, which may suggests that there was no large Christian population in the town, although this must be regarded as a very small sample of the total burials. A Christian presence is suggested for some of the burials around Dorchester-on-Thames (see below).

Most rural cemeteries contained higher proportions of decapitations and grave goods than those in urban contexts and had no evidence for formal defined enclosures (Booth 2001, 38). Many are what

have been termed 'backland burials' (Esmonde Cleary 2000), in that they are positioned in relation to existing boundary alignments on the peripheries of settlements, rather than in specifically designed cemetery enclosures such at Asthall (Booth 1997). However, some rural sites like Claydon Pike did contain enclosures around certain burials (see Chapter 6, Fig. 6.13). Prehistoric monuments were often utilised as foci for Roman burials (Williams 1998), and the cemeteries at White Horse Hill (Miles *et al.* 2003) and Cotswold Community (OA 2004) clearly demonstrate this.

As far as age structure is concerned, the status of neonatal and infant burials ensures that they are often buried within the settlement, with the best example of this being at Barton Court Farm, where there is an infant cemetery *c* 50 m east of the villa building (Miles 1986, 15). It was suggested that the adult cemetery lay 800 m away at Barrow Hills, Radley (Miles 1986, 16). With a number of exceptions such as at another cemetery discovered at Radley (Radley II: Boyle and Chambers in prep.), child burials within rural cemeteries are in a small minority. Grave orientation is usually dictated by existing boundaries, although in some of the larger cemeteries such as Frilford there is a change noted from north-south to east-west burial, which is presumably related to ritual and belief, though not necessarily to conversion to Christianity (Booth 2001, 39).

It is highly likely that there was a growing Christian population in the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds region during the late Roman period, although the difficulties of differentiating between Christian and pagan burials are well understood (eg Watts 1991; 1998; Booth 2001; Petts 2003). This is made worse by the fact that they were not generally separated in exclusive areas. The best examples of probable Christian elements within cemeteries have been given as Radley II near Barton Court Farm (Watts 1998, 22) and Queenford Farm on the outskirts of Dorchester-on-Thames (Chambers 1987), and even these are quite tentative. The Dorchester cemetery appears to have continued well into the post-Roman period (see below).

Other signs of Christianity in the region are scarce. At Chedworth villa there was a possible Christianised nymphaeum (Pl. 17.2) along with *chi-rho* symbols on a small number of objects (Petts, 2003, 95), while at Bourton there is a lead tank which may have been a baptismal font (Herdman 1933). Perhaps the most famous object was a copper alloy plaque from a bucket in child's grave at Long Wittenham, upon which were depicted biblical scenes. This may have been produced for the probable Christian community in nearby Dorchester-on-Thames (Henig and Booth 2000, 185-6 fig. 7.4; Petts 2003, 17).

The Christian Church was closely bound up with the late Roman state and as a probable provincial capital, Corinium is bound to have had a Church building of some kind, along with a resident Bishop. Urban centres were traditionally the primary hotbeds of Christianity across the late Roman empire, although the evidence from the major Romano-British towns is generally quite poor (Petts

Plate 17.2 Nymphaeum at Chedworth Roman villa

2003, 162). It has been suggested that it was in the small towns and among rural communities that Christianity was strongest (Petts 2003, 170), although there is little evidence for this in our region except perhaps for the Dorchester cemetery. The strength of Christianity among the élite classes is difficult to assess, although the evidence from Chedworth and a few other villas further away in the south-west would indicate that it was certainly practised amongst some. As the imperial 'grandees' were so closely tied with the Roman state, it is natural to assume that similar close ties existed with the Christian Church. However, these would have formed only a very small though undoubtedly influential group, and it is quite likely that the majority of the élite remained pagan. If it is accepted as belonging to the later Roman period, which seems most likely, the dedication by the Provincial governor to Jupiter at Corinium clearly demonstrates the strength of paganism among the élite, even in urban society.

The construction and/or embellishment of Roman temples in the West Country during the later Roman period has been well documented, as has been their close connection with villas (Lewis 1966; Woodward 1992; Smith 2001). It is clear that temples and villas were part of the same trend of regional landscape reorganisation in the late 3rd and 4th century AD, and it implies that pagan belief and practice, albeit in many different forms, continued to be dominant within the countryside. The temple at Frilford underwent significant alterations in the early 4th century AD, with the addition of annexes (Harding 1987, 14), and the coin series went on until the end of the 4th century, suggesting activity continued into the post-Roman period. A late Roman and early Saxon cemetery to the north also indicates the site's longevity, although the relationship between the two remains uncertain (Blair 1994, 194). At Woodeaton the temple was also flourishing in the 4th century, with activity certainly continuing into at least the early post-Roman period (Milne 1931, 108). In the Cotswolds, the temple complex at Uley was extensively modified in the early 4th century, with the temple itself having a large entrance portico added in the mid 4th century, making it appear more classical in appearance (Woodward and Leach 1993, 39). The final structural phase, dating *c* AD 380, came in response to the collapse of the cella and south-eastern ambulatory, and resulted in an L-shaped structure. The fact that the temple was not restored to its former state may say more about the financial situation of the surrounding villa patrons than a change in religious beliefs, as the temple deity clearly continued to be venerated into the early 5th century (Woodward and Leach 1993, 60). Further north-east, dating of the temple at Chedworth is very insecure, but it seems that there were few coins after the early 4th century (Baddeley 1930), which may correspond with the appearance of Christian symbolism within the main Chedworth site (see above).

New pagan temples were also being constructed in the later Roman period, with the circular shrine at Claydon Pike a prime example. This structure, which was probably built after AD 364, may have been patronised by the villa retainers and perhaps the local population into the early 5th century judging from the coin series (see Chapter 6).

In total the evidence from across the region suggests that while Christianity was certainly practised in the region, it is unlikely to have been anything more than a relatively minor religion in the later Roman period. Most of the major pagan temples continued to thrive while new smaller shrines were constructed. Although the Chedworth temple may well have declined in response to the changing beliefs of the nearby élite patrons, it would seem that the increased economic stresses of the very late 4th and early 5th century were more to blame for the eventual decline of most temple structures. The cults themselves of course could well have continued in one form or another for some time.

THE POST-ROMAN LANDSCAPE

Analysis of late Roman landscape and settlement patterns in the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds has indicated that no widespread changes of any real magnitude took place within the 4th century. Although some settlements were showing signs of physical decline during the late 4th century, most it seems continued until the end, with the land continuing to be farmed. So was there a total and utter collapse at the start of the 5th century as some such as Blair (1994, 3) have proposed? Certainly the coin supply to Britain completely ceases after AD 402, and the ending of the monetary economy must have had widespread and terminal effects upon centralised industries such as the Oxford potteries. There is no doubt that such changes must have resulted in a deep economic crisis, especially among the élite classes, who would no longer have been able to maintain the buildings and lifestyles of the previous centuries. However, there is no sign of any sudden and dramatic decline in population or lifestyle at this time, and even when the final vestiges of direct imperial control were lost in *c* AD 410 there is no reason to suspect that the majority of the population did not believe that Britain would eventually be subsumed back into the empire, as had been the case on many occasions before. All freeborn had been Roman citizens since the 3rd century, and it is quite likely that many local and regional Roman polities continued in some form well into the 5th century and probably longer, as has recently been argued by Ken Dark (2000).

It is the lack of coins and diagnostic pottery that has caused the great problems of dating this 'sub-Roman' period, and this has led Faulkner for instance to state that the '*Roman town of Cirencester had completely collapsed by the early-fifth century AD*' (1998, 285). However, when settlements such as

Corinium have demonstrable evidence for continued – and in this case relatively thriving – occupation right up until the end of the period for which there is reliable dating evidence, great caution must be used when suggesting subsequent total collapse based upon lack of evidence. Theodosian coins (AD 388-402) on the latest floor surfaces of the Basilica suggest activity into the 5th century (Holbrook 1998, 121), and it is quite possible the élite classes continued to govern the surrounding region from here for some time. Evidence for timber buildings very late in the structural sequences within parts of the town may point to further buildings being erected in the 5th century, and the probable extra-mural market place in the amphitheatre certainly seems to have continued to function (Holbrook 1998, 140, 174). A substantial post-built structure within the arena could belong to the post-Roman period, but dating is uncertain (Holbrook 1998). The overall evidence from Corinium is slight, but does suggest that not inconsiderable levels of occupation may have continued well into the post-Roman period, although how far any final urban civic functions remained is debatable. The town certainly seems to have been a base for the late Roman military, and it is possible that elements of the army remained into the post-Roman period under the rulers based at Corinium, although how they would have been supported in a non-monetary economy is uncertain. The town at Gloucester may also have had a late Roman military presence (see Urban centres above), and occupation of some kind certainly seems to have continued well into the post-Roman period (Heighway and Garrod 1980, 84).

Perhaps the best evidence for post-Roman activity come from another much smaller urban centre, at Dorchester-on-Thames. Very late 4th-century buildings are known, and there are some of the highest proportions of Theodosian coins in Roman Britain. Two well ordered late Roman cemeteries are associated with the town, and a series of radiocarbon dates from one indicated that it was used throughout the 5th and probably well into the 6th century, thereby providing clear evidence for the continuation of the late Roman population of the town (Chambers 1987, 58). Also of great importance were three inhumation burials near to the town, which had evidence for early 5th-century continental military belt fittings, Germanic brooches and iron weapons (Kirk and Leeds 1953). It has been suggested that they may have been associated initially with the late Roman army, and either have remained at Dorchester after the end of 'official' Roman involvement, or else actually arrived there at that point (Henig and Booth 2000, 192). In either case it points to the probable use of military personnel by the 5th-century élite at or near Dorchester, possibly in an effort to maintain their security, position and lifestyle.

Other objects of very late Roman (up to first half of 5th century) military metalwork have been found across the region in a number of rural sites, such as Shakenoak, Woodeaton, Frocester and Somerford Keynes (see Henig and Booth 2000, fig 7.1 for distribution of such metalwork in Oxfordshire). Although such objects do not automatically indicate a late Roman military presence in these places (Swift 2000, 213), they at least indicate the presence of an élite who may have taken on late military trappings as part of their costume (see Cool, Chapter 13).

The spread of early Anglo-Saxon culture is indicated by number of cemeteries and small settlements within the Oxfordshire Upper Thames Valley, some of which, such as Saxton Road, Abingdon, began in the early 5th century (Hawkes 1986). Many others, such as Frilford start from the mid to late 5th century (Dickinson 1976). The close proximity of such sites to the known 5th-century settlement at Dorchester suggests that Germanic groups may have been established at the behest of the British authorities, at least for a short while, although the numbers of people involved are unlikely to have been very large at this time (Hawkes 1986, 58; Henig and Booth 2000, 193).

Throughout most of the 5th and early 6th centuries at least, it is likely there were communities of Britons and small localised groups of Saxons in this eastern part of the Upper Thames Valley, with varying levels of interaction (Blair 1994, 6). Therefore although some British communities may have continued largely unchanged for a time, others such as Barton Court Farm underwent dramatic transformation (Miles 1986, 51). The main farmhouse/villa building at this site seems to have been abandoned in the early 5th century, and it seems that an Anglo-Saxon settlement was established soon after, with a number of sunken featured buildings, and pottery dating from the early 5th century in the still open Roman ditches (Miles 1986, 17). Interestingly the surrounding landscape does not seem to have changed so dramatically, with an open environment containing arable and pastoral land still predominating, and flax continuing to be cultivated. A group of burials cut the late Roman villa building and was tentatively dated to the 6th century (Miles 1986, 19), although they could be later (see Chapter 7). Another Saxon settlement lay 400 m to the north-east at Barrow Hills, Radley dating from 5th to 7th century (Avery and Brown 1972).

Further west in Gloucestershire there was little evidence for any Anglo-Saxon occupation until the later 5th century AD, when cemeteries were established at Butler's Field, Lechlade and Fairford. At Claydon Pike itself, late Roman occupation cannot be pushed far beyond the end of the 4th century and the burials cutting through the villa – originally believed to be 'sub-Roman' – have now proven to be mid-late Saxon in date (see Chapter 7). Many sites in this region, however, such as Frocester do show evidence for continuity of occupation well into the 5th and 6th centuries (Price 2000, 111). At Barnsley Park, despite the site being supposedly abandoned

in about the mid 5th century, the fields continued to be cultivated long afterwards as indicated by scatters of grass-tempered pottery (Webster and Smith 1982, 93). Grass-tempered pottery has also been found at other villa sites in Gloucestershire, including Chedworth, and the overriding impression is one of general continuity of occupation.

During the 6th century there is evidence for increasing Anglo-Saxon settlement up the Thames valley and into the Cotswolds (Heighway 1987, 18), and there may well have been conflicts with regional British authorities, some of whom may still have been operating from Corinium (see above). Corinium is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles for the year AD 577 as one of the three British cities captured by Cuthwine and Caewlin of Wessex, and although there is much academic controversy surrounding the reliability of the Chronicles (see Blair 1994, 37), an episode of this nature must remain a distinct possibility.

CONCLUSION

Certain aspects of the late Roman landscape in the Upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds had changed significantly from that of earlier periods, although in most cases the general character of the land remained quite similar. The probable establishment of *Britannia Prima* with Corinium as its capital towards the end of the 3rd century AD must have been associated in some way with the large-scale construction and/or embellishment of villas at this time, in addition to the widespread changes in lower status sites witnessed within the Upper Thames Valley. Corinium itself exhibited signs of renewed growth in public and private buildings within the 4th century, which continued right until the end of the Roman period. A significant late Roman military presence is suggested within the town, as was also the case at Gloucester further north. In fact the presence of late Roman military metalwork from many urban and rural sites in Gloucestershire – while not all necessarily demonstrating a direct military presence – points to a strong official administrative structure in this region at the very end of the 4th century AD. The other large walled towns in the region, Alchester and especially Dorchester, also have evidence for continued activity during the very latest Roman period, while many of the smaller 'urban' settlements in the region such as Wanborough were at their height in the 4th century.

The growth of villas in the late 3rd and 4th century ensured that the Cotswolds had one of the highest concentrations of such buildings in the country. Although many Cotswold villa sites can only be ascribed a general late Roman date, some have evidence for continuing high status living until at least the end of the 4th century, while at others there were radical changes resulting in more low status occupation within the late 4th century. Such differentiation probably reflect the changing financial and political circumstances of the time, with power being channelled through smaller numbers of higher status élite, occupying more centralised estates. Such estates probably had grand villas at their centre and numerous smaller satellite settlements, and would have been capable of generating large economic surpluses. Overall, there is little evidence for widespread decline in the region during the later 4th century, only further reorganisation of land on a largely piecemeal basis.

The late Roman settlement pattern of the Upper Thames Valley was altered significantly with the establishment of a number of new low status agricultural sites and modest villas (eg Claydon Pike), and the redevelopment or abandonment of existing sites. These formed part of a well-organised and increasingly controlled landscape with pastureland and areas of arable crops linked by trackways and field ditches lined by hedges. As with settlements in the Cotswolds, the late Roman sites within the Upper Thames Valley exhibited a wide variety of developmental trajectories with some continuing well into the post-Roman period, and others being abandoned prior to the end of the 4th century.

The general economic environment of the region would appear to have been very strong, with agricultural intensification and increased diversity, and a thriving pottery industry in Oxfordshire. Other industries relating to the large increase in high status building construction (stone quarrying/ masonry, mosaic making, wall painting etc) would also have been flourishing at this time. Most of these activities would have relied heavily on the continuation of the monetary economy, and when this collapsed in the early 5th century through lack of newly imported coinage, many industries in the region must have declined quite rapidly.

The landscape and economic changes of the later Roman period, were matched – and surely dictated by – changes in official administration, such as the division between the traditional civil curial families, who were the main land-owning class, and the new Imperial administrators, who were centred upon the army, the emperor and the court. Although the new 'grandees' are likely to have exerted considerable influence beyond their numbers, there is no reason to suppose they had total power in this region. Instead, it is likely that the traditional land-owning élite still maintained considerable power, probably into the post-Roman period.

Other 4th-century changes in the region include the widespread adoption of inhumation burial rites, although other practices were still used. There were only a few well organised and defined cemeteries, some of which provide a certain amount of evidence for Christian elements in the population. The strength of Christianity in the region is difficult to assess, although evidence from certain villas suggests that it was practised by some of the élite. However, Christianity is unlikely to have been anything more than a relatively minor religion in the later Roman period, as most of the major pagan

temples continued to thrive while new smaller shrines were constructed, such as that seen at Claydon Pike. The ultimate decline of the pagan temple structures themselves is linked to that of other Roman style buildings, and there is evidence that the cults themselves may have continued long after the physical remains of the sanctuaries had deteriorated.

During the early years of the 5th century, the collapse of the monetary economy and eventual breakdown of centralised authority would have created a deep economic crisis, especially among the élite classes, who would no longer have been able to maintain the buildings and lifestyles of the previous centuries. However, there is no sign of any sudden and dramatic collapse in settlement occupation at this time, and many probably continued in some nature well into the 5th century and sometimes beyond. The land also appears to have continued to be farmed much as before. Early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the east of the region may have been under some kind of treaty arrangement with local British rulers but they eventually spread further west up the Thames Valley and into the Cotswolds by the later 5th and 6th centuries. The British rulers of this region are likely to have been direct descendants of the later Roman-British elite, and probably maintained some level of Romanitas, even to the point of continued administrative functions, although by this time most aspects of late Roman society are unlikely to have survived except in a very altered state.