

# Chapter 1 The Cotswold Water Park Project

by Alex Smith

## INTRODUCTION

The Cotswold Water Park Project is a landscape study centred on parts of the Upper Thames Valley in the southern and eastern hinterland of the Roman town of Cirencester (Fig. 1.1). Over the past 50 years, much of this area has been subject to gravel extraction in order to cater for the boom in the construction industry. The resultant flooded gravel quarries saw the creation of the Cotswold Water Park, an area of nature reserves, country parks and recreational zones spreading over 40 square miles (Fig. 1.2, Pl. 1.1). The large-scale quarrying along these gravel terraces has led to numerous extensive archaeological investigations which have highlighted dense areas of settlement, ranging from early Neolithic to the post-medieval period.

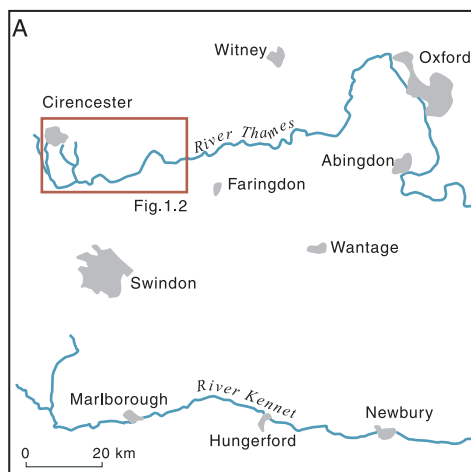


Fig. 1.1 Location of project area

The current project has incorporated a number of key Iron Age and Roman archaeological sites within this region (Fig. 1.2), of which the most extensive is that of Claydon Pike near Lechlade excavated during the late 1970s and early 1980s (see below). Two other sites, Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes and Whelford Bowmoor, were also excavated in the 1980s, while the smallest site at Stubbs Farm, Kempsford was investigated between 1991 and 1995. The overall aim of the project has been to examine the socio-political and economic development of the region from the middle Iron Age to the end of the Roman period, with a particular emphasis on social processes and settlement development and hierarchy.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Most of the key sites within the current study were the subject of archaeological investigation in the late 1970s and 1980s as part of a co-ordinated programme of research carried out by Oxford Archaeology (OA, formerly Oxford Archaeological Unit, OAU) in the Gloucestershire Upper Thames Valley (see Preface). Aerial surveys in the 1970s revealed as cropmarks a continuous zone of prehistoric and Roman settlement positioned on the low-lying gravel terraces from Lechlade to Cirencester (the Cotswold Water Park; see Chapter 2 for more information on aerial photographs). As these were fast disappearing into the expanding gravel quarries, OA proposed to undertake large-scale investigations within a part of this landscape – mainly within a block of land between Fairford and Lechlade – and extensive areas of complex archaeology were revealed and comprehensively excavated. The project was not just a series of rescue excavations but a co-ordinated programme of intensive aerial photography combined with targeted evaluation, open area excavation and salvage operations. The primary aim of this work was to identify any sub-regions and site types within the area of investigation, and then pursue environmental, structural and inter-site relational objectives (see below).

The most extensive and archaeologically significant of the key project sites is that at Claydon Pike, which was thoroughly investigated in a series of excavations under the direction of Simon Palmer and David Miles from 1979 to 1983. The investigations examined an area in total of around 40 ha, with archaeological activity ranging from the middle Iron Age to post Roman period. Trackways visible on aerial photographs linked Claydon Pike to another



*Plate 1.1 The Cotswold Water Park today*

extensive Iron Age and Romano-British site – excavated under Simon Palmer and Gill Hey in the mid to late 1980s – at Thornhill Farm, less than 1 km further west (Jennings *et al.* 2004). Its material culture and developmental trajectory are quite different to that of Claydon Pike, and so has provided the ideal opportunity for examining the relationships between different landscape components.

On a much reduced scale, but still of great significance in terms of understanding landscape development, are the excavations of the nearby Romano-British sites at Whelford Bowmoor, investigated prior to gravel extraction between 1983 and 1985, and Kempford, Stubbs Farm, a developer-funded site investigated in the early to mid 1990s. The most westerly of the key Cotswold Water Park sites, lying *c.* 18 km to the west of Claydon Pike, is the Iron Age and Roman site at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, which was subject to a salvage excavation by the OAU between 1986 and 1988, and produced a range of important finds. Finally, a number of fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys were conducted in a private capacity by Mike Maillard in the Lechlade-Fairford area during the period of the 1980s excavations. These produced Roman material, which in the case of Leaze Farm was of considerable quantity, and serve to highlight the density of Roman activity in the region. The results of excavations at another site within the CWP, Multi-Agg quarry, Kempford may be found on section 8 of the CD ROM.

#### **Original aims of the Claydon Pike Landscape Research Project**

The Cotswold Water Park excavations and surveys were seen as part of a wider landscape project from the outset (see Preface). The investigations were focused upon the large area excavations at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm, but also included smaller sites like Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes and Whelford Bowmoor, along with a number of survey sites. It was proposed to investigate the use of the gravel terraces from prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon times, with special emphasis on Roman and native interaction and the concept of Romanisation, which was – and indeed still is – a major component of the Romano-British research agenda.

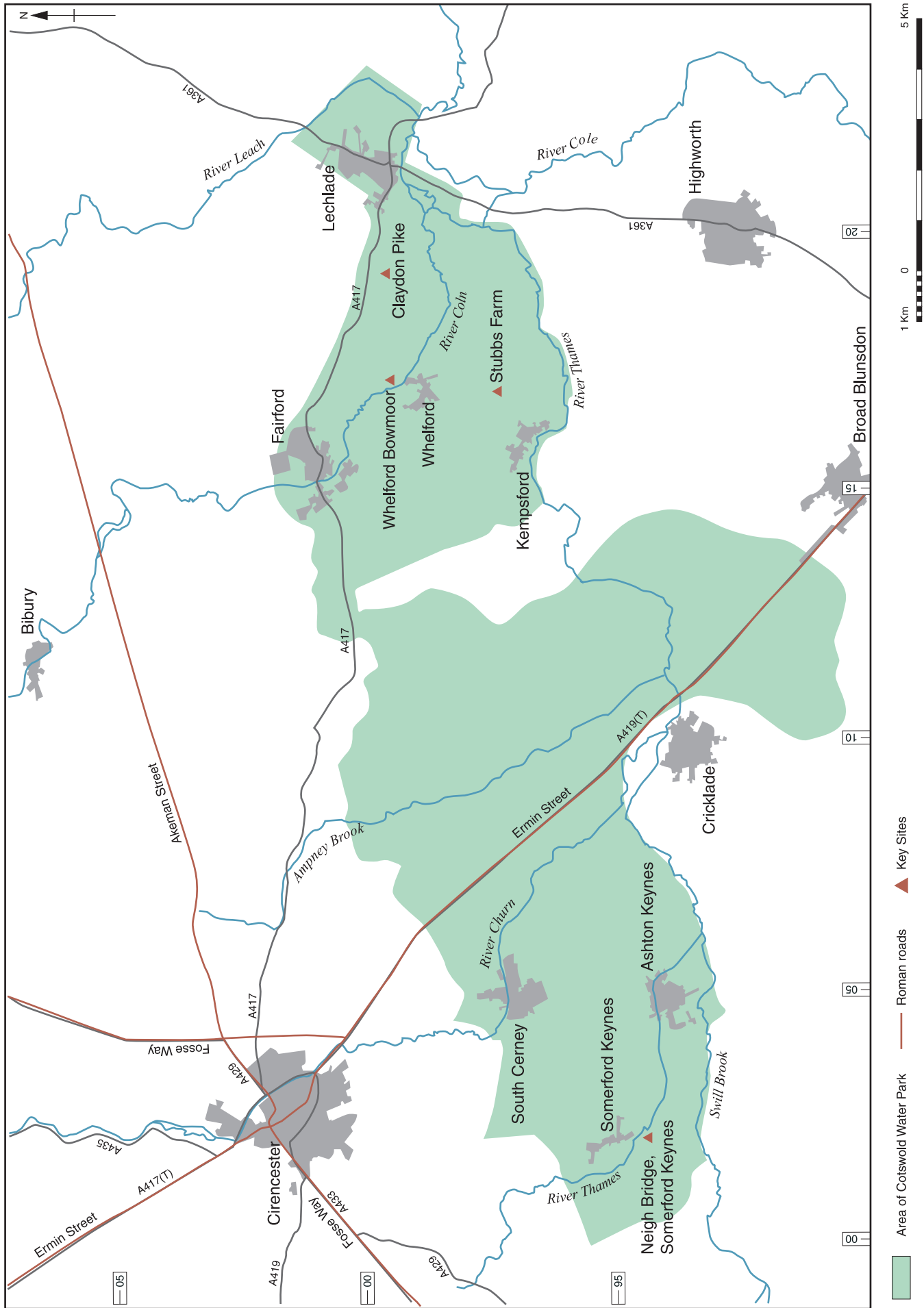
There were two initial questions that the excavations sought to answer:

#### *What was the nature of intra-regional patterns?*

Specifically, it was hoped to compare and contrast the settlement character of the Cotswolds (the ‘villa landscape’) with that of the Upper Thames Valley in the Roman period.

#### *How far can different types of site be recognised?*

At the time, very little work had been carried out on the Cirencester hinterland, and so the investigations hoped to be able shed light on settlement characteristics in this region.



From these questions, a series of specific excavation objectives were set:

- To assess the environmental evidence with a view to understanding the history of land exploitation and adaptation within this marginal geographical area (ie low-lying gravel terrace prone to flooding).
- To elucidate the structural history of the individual sites, in order to shed light upon internal economic, social and religious development and intensity of activity.
- To examine the inter-site relationships and therefore gain an understanding of social and economic development on a regional basis. Particular attention was paid to late Iron Age and early Roman development patterns, especially at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm, where crop marks had previously shown what looked to be 'Roman' and 'native' settlements in close proximity.

### **The post-excavation process**

The post-excavation programmes of Claydon Pike, Somerford Keynes and Whelford Bowmoor followed on from the fieldwork and continued up until the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this phase of post-excavation work, substantial progress was made particularly in stratigraphic phasing and on the analysis of finds assemblages and environmental data for Claydon Pike. Matrices were produced and a phasing scheme for the site was developed. Digital archives for contexts and finds data were created and specialist reports were produced. Interim reports were also published for Claydon Pike (Miles and Palmer 1983; 1984; 1990).

Little substantive work was undertaken on the stratigraphic data or finds for Somerford Keynes, but the site at Whelford Bowmoor was phased and a draft publication text produced, including site description and finds reports. A draft report was also written in the late 1990s for Stubbs Farm, Kempsford, while the finds from the survey sites were catalogued and a brief report made in the 1980s.

With the exception of Stubbs Farm, most of the post-excavation work for the Cotswold water Park sites was carried out in the 1980s, and an assessment of this data indicated that many significant revisions were needed. Therefore, all of the original finds and stratigraphic reports have been fully revised and updated, and much additional work has been carried out, leading to the publication of four complete site reports. The original emphasis on landscape interpretation has been maintained, so that the sites are viewed as components within their local and regional context. Thornhill Farm has been the subject of a separate post-excavation programme that has now been completed (Jennings *et al.* 2004),

although the wider landscape aspects of this site still form a prominent part of the current volume.

### **Revised research aims and objectives**

The following are the revised research aims and objectives for the current publication, based upon an assessment of the archive and also the need to address contemporary research agendas in British Iron Age and Roman studies.

#### ***Aim 1 Settlement landscapes and people: the landscape as social expression***

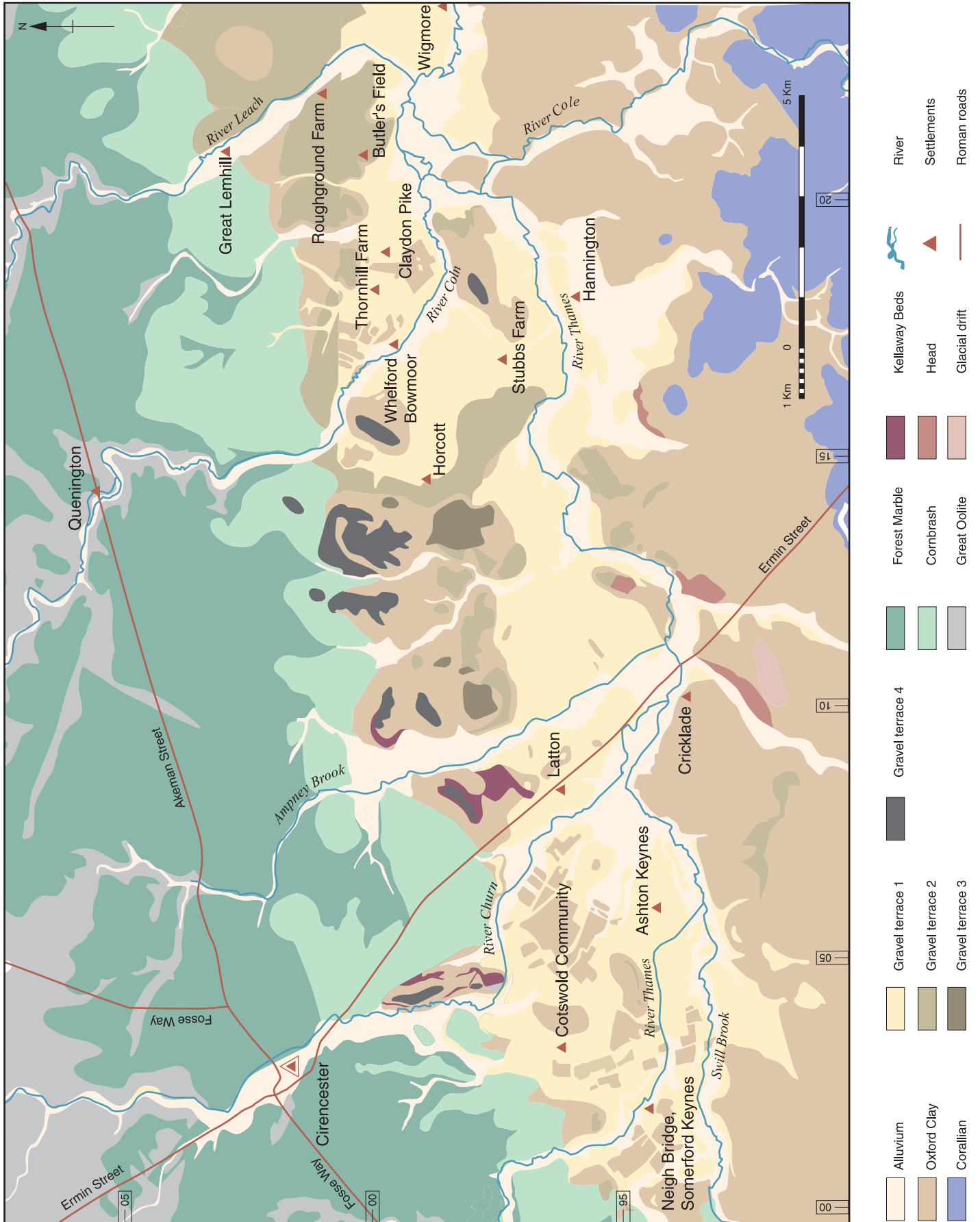
- Settlement development and building forms: what light do the Cotswold Water Park sites throw on later Iron Age and Romano-British settlement development?
- Power: What light can study of the late Iron Age and Romano-British artefact assemblages from the Cotswold Water Park sites throw on our understanding of social structure and power within settlements and between settlements?
- Resources and their control: can we observe regional settlement hierarchies that can be related to the control and exploitation of resources?
- Religion: how does the evidence from the Cotswold Water Park sites throw light on religion and beliefs in the later Iron Age and Romano-British periods?
- Identity: how does the data from the Cotswold Water Park sites provide direct evidence for how people's identities were expressed?

#### ***Aim 2 Regionality: Dobunni: the Cotswolds and the Thames Valley; Atrebatas: Berkshire Downs; Catuvellauni: Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire.***

What light do the Cotswold Water Park sites throw on the question of the regional variations in the material culture and agricultural practice of Iron Age and Roman Britain?

#### ***Aim 3 Chronologies, and agencies and processes of change, including the dynamics of Romanisation***

- How far can the Cotswold Water Park sites throw light on the processes of change – settlement development, agricultural intensification and increasing craft specialisation during the middle and late Iron Age?
- What evidence is provided by the Cotswold Water Park sites for the transition from Iron Age to Roman and for the role of the Roman military?
- How does the data from the Cotswold Water Park sites contribute to our understanding of local, regional and provincial patterns of development in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD?



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What evidence is there for the changes in occupation and material culture in the late and sub-Roman period?

### LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

Most of the key Cotswold Water Park Project sites lie within the triangular area between the modern settlements of Lechlade, Fairford and Kempsford, and centre on the confluence of the rivers Coln, Leach and Thames (Fig. 1.2). The main group lay in a west to east line from Whelford Bowmoor, by the River Coln in Kempsford Parish, via Thornhill Farm and Longdoles Field, Claydon Pike in Fairford Parish to Warrens Field, Claydon Pike in Lechlade Parish. These sites all lay within a block defined by the River Coln to the west and south, and the River Leach to the east. The Stubbs Farm, Kempsford site lies about 2 km south of Whelford Bowmoor, south-west of the River Coln and about 1 km north of the Thames. The 'Survey' sites were mainly concentrated to the east in Lechlade Parish, to south-east of the Leach and north of the Thames. Other survey sites lay between the Coln and Leach and one lay to the south of Thames in Buscot Parish, Oxfordshire. In addition to this main concentration of sites was Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, which lies about 17 km WSW of Claydon Pike. It was located adjacent to the Thames, 6 km due south of Cirencester and just south of the village of Somerford Keynes.

Geologically, all of these sites lay on the First Gravel Terrace of the River Thames, with Whelford Bowmoor being sited upon the immediate floodplain of the river Coln (Fig. 1.3). To the south, past the main low-lying areas of alluvium on the Thames floodplain lie areas of Oxford clay. The ground then rises significantly towards the sands and clays of the Corallian Ridge, which also includes significant outcrops of Coral Rag. To the north of the sites lie higher gravel terraces, then in some cases further areas of Oxford clay. Bands of Cornbrash, Forest Marble and Great Oolite limestone then mark the rise into the Cotswolds.

More specific details of the location, geology and topography of the sites can be found in Parts 1 and 2.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The general archaeological background of this part of the Upper Thames Valley has already been explored in a number of individual sites reports (eg Boyle *et al.* 1998; Mudd *et al.* 1999; Jennings *et al.* 2004) and wider landscape studies (eg Young 1986; Fulford and Nichols 1992; Miles 1997). Furthermore, Part 3 of this volume draws together data from many different sources to present a detailed account of this region from the middle Iron Age to the early post-Roman period. Therefore only a brief summary account of the archaeology of the region is presented here.

### Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age

The earliest period of occupation in this part of the Upper Thames region comprises scatters of Mesolithic flint (9th to 5th millennium BC), which is mainly concentrated along the length of the Corallian Ridge (Case 1986). Early Neolithic settlement (early to mid 4th millennium BC) also appears to have been largely concentrated on the higher calcareous bedrocks of the Cotswolds, Corallian Ridge and Berkshire Downs (Holgate 1988, 150), while middle Neolithic activity (mid 4th to late 3rd millennium BC), although still rare, has been found on a number of lower gravel terrace sites such as Cotswold Community (OA 2003) and Horcott Pit (Lamdin-Whymark *et al.* in prep; Pine and Preston 2004). Just to the north of Lechlade lies a hengiform monument and a cursus monument, while further features of a similar nature are located about 1 km to the south-east of the town (Barclay *et al.* 2003). This all suggests that this area was a major focus for ritual activity during the Neolithic period.

Evidence for later Neolithic and early Bronze Age settlement (3rd to 2nd millennium BC) is slightly more widespread, with an increasing number of excavations on the lower gravel terraces uncovering features of these dates. Late Neolithic settlement evidence in the form of pit clusters has been located at a number of Second Gravel Terrace sites in the Lechlade area, including the Loders (Darvill *et al.* 1986), Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993, 9-15), Butler's Field (Boyle *et al.* 1998) and Gassons Road in Lechlade itself (King 1998, 269-71). Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity on the First Gravel Terrace have been located further west at Horcott Pit and Cotswold Community, while just to the north-west of the latter site at Shorcote Quarry lay three late Neolithic/early Bronze Age ring ditches and discrete burials (Barclay and Glass 1995). Part of an extensive late Bronze Age settlement was also excavated at this site (Hearne and Adam 1999), with further Bronze Age roundhouses being uncovered at Cotswold Community to the south (OA 2003). Nevertheless, despite these recent excavations, Bronze Age settlement on the gravel terraces of the Upper Thames Valley remains relatively rare.

### Iron Age

Iron Age activity in the Upper Thames Valley is far more widespread, with increasing evidence for large-scale landscape divisions in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (1000-600 BC). Features of this period have been found in many excavations in and around Lechlade, including large linear ditched boundaries at Roughground Farm, Butler's Field, Gassons Road and Allcourt Farm (OAU 2001). Most of these sites have also produced associated pits or pit alignments, roundhouses and other postholes. Part of a Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement was revealed at Horcott Pit (Lamdin-Whymark *et al.* in prep), while a substantial early Iron Age settlement was excavated at Cotswold Community,

comprising 13 circular and 22 rectangular post-built structures with associated pits and waterholes (OA 2003).

Middle Iron Age settlement (c 400-100 BC) is more concentrated upon much of the Upper Thames river gravels, with known sites to the west at Cotswold Community, Shorncombe Quarry, Latton Lands, and Cleveland Farm near Ashton Keynes (Coe *et al.* 1991). Further east, middle Iron Age settlements have been excavated at Horcott (Pine and Preston 2004), Thornhill Farm, and within Lechlade itself (CAT 1996; OA 2001). Further down the Thames Valley in Oxfordshire is a particular concentration of middle Iron Age settlement, including the temporary encampment of transhumant pastoralists at Farmoor (Lambrick and Robinson 1979), a number of nucleated mixed farming settlements at Abingdon (Allen 1991; 1997) and the enclosed specialist pastoral settlements at Watkins Farm (Allen 1990) and Mingies Ditch (Allen & Robinson 1993).

There is evidence for relatively widespread settlement disruption during the later part of the late Iron Age (c 100 BC–AD 43), with some of the sites listed above being abandoned and others shifting in location and form. At Thornhill Farm there was a radical change in the early 1st century AD from the dispersed deposits and ephemeral occupation of the earlier period to an organised system of enclosures, seemingly associated with specialist pastoral activity. Such increase in site specialism, along with other developments such as changes in house types and the abandonment of storage pits, was characteristic of the region during the late Iron Age (Allen 2000, 21). Other nearby later Iron Age settlements appear at Roughground Farm and Totterdown Lane, Horcott (Pine and Preston 2004), while further west were settlements at Ashton Keynes and Shorncombe Quarry. These settlements appear to have been part of an organised agricultural landscape, with the higher terraces being used for arable and the floodplain and part of the First Terrace being primary open pasture (Robinson 1992a, 56).

The changes occurring during the later Iron Age may have been at least partly associated with wider socio-political changes, in particular the increasing control exerted over the landscape by the native elite. The emergence of sites such as the extensive dyke complex at Bagendon, north of Cirencester, can probably also be seen in this light although the status and function of this site in late Iron Age society is still little understood (Clifford 1961a; Darvill 1987, 166-68; see Chapter 16).

### Roman

Roman settlement was densely spread along the Upper Thames Valley, with estimations of one site per kilometre (Miles 1989). Throughout this period there were a number of quite widespread changes in the settlement pattern, some of which may have

been related to changes in landscape control. After the conquest there was little noticeable difference in settlement form or location, with sites like Thornhill Farm and Roughground Farm continuing as before. However, the establishment of a cavalry fort at Leaholm near Bagendon in c AD 50, and in particular a town at Cirencester (*Corinium Dobunnorum*) in AD 65-70, must have had a growing impact on the surrounding region. The town of Cirencester came to eventually dominate the Roman archaeology of the region, probably becoming the provincial capital in the 4th century (Holbrook 1994). In the early 2nd century AD, there is evidence for widespread settlement disruption across the region, with many sites either being abandoned, such as at Thornhill Farm, or spatially transformed, as at Roughground Farm and Totterdown Lane, Horcott. This must have been the result of large-scale landscape reorganisation, which included the apparent introduction of a system of defined trackways linking settlements along the gravel terraces and beyond (see Chapter 16).

Although nearly all of the settlements in the region would have served in an agricultural capacity in some way, there was a variety of different site types operating a number of different economic regimes. Recognisable villas were generally quite scarce on the lower gravel terraces, with Roughground Farm and Hannington (Goddard 1890) providing some of the few known examples. Most settlement structures appear to have been of a more modest nature, although not all were necessarily of low status, as sites such as Cotswold Community have produced an extensive collection of finds, including imported material. Aside from Cirencester, there were no major urban centres in this vicinity, although a small town existed at Cricklade along side Ermin Street (Haslam 2003) and another lay further to the east at Asthall (Booth 1997) along Akeman Street towards Alchester. The nearest major pottery industries to the area lay in north Wiltshire to the south and the Oxford potteries to the east, although an important regional ceramic tile production centre is known at Minety, about 4 km south of Somerford Keynes (McWhirr and Viner 1978, 368).

Further settlement and economic changes occurred in the later Roman period, although this generally seems to have been a period of great prosperity in at least part of the region, with a marked increase in villa building and expansion, seen most vividly to the north and west of Cirencester in the Cotswolds. Nevertheless, even in the Thames Valley itself there is some evidence for increasingly centralised control of the land, probably from a smaller number of rural villa estates.

### Saxon

Nearly all of the evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in the region comes from cemeteries, with very few settlements from this period being located. One

of the wealthiest cemeteries was excavated at Butler's Field just north of Lechlade, dating from between the mid/late 5th century to the late 7th century. The settlement associated with these burials appears to lie in an arc to the north-west of the current town, with possible sunken featured buildings (SFBs) being located in cropmarks, and 6th- to 8th-century pottery being recovered (Boyle *et al.* 1998, 5). A group of six SFBs, a four-post structure and associated pits and ditches were revealed in excavations behind Sherbourne House just to the south of the cemetery (Bateman *et al.* 2003), while Anglo-Saxon pottery has been found in another nearby excavation at the Lodgers (Darvill *et al.* 1986). Another Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found in the 1850s at Fairford to the west, probably dating from the mid 5th to 6th century. Further to the west at Cotswold Community, a number of Saxon post-built structures, waterholes and fencelines have been revealed in recent excavations, which will increase our understanding of this period in the region.

There is little evidence for continuity of settlement from the late Roman to the Anglo-Saxon period, although it is generally thought that many estates would have continued largely unaltered (Heighway 1987, 13). An episode of stone robbing probably occurred at the Roughground Farm villa at some point in the 5th or 6th century by Saxon settlers associated within the nearby Butler's Field site, but there is nothing to suggest continuity of occupation here. At Cirencester, there is some evidence for Saxon occupation in the 6th century, but it does not appear to have regained any important status until the medieval period. There have been suggestions that the Roman settlement at Cricklade became a high-status middle Saxon settlement with special royal connections, although the evidence of a small number of middle Saxon pottery sherds is probably insufficient for this hypothesis to stand (Haslam 2003). The establishment of the walled town can be dated to the 9th century, perhaps designed to act as a defence of Wessex against Viking armies stationed during these years in both Cirencester and Fulham (Haslam 2003).

### **Medieval**

In general, the later medieval settlement pattern in the Upper Thames Valley was not so much different from that of today, with many of the towns and villages on the gravel terraces originating at this time. The earliest documentary reference to Fairford is dated to AD 850, when two hides of land were transferred to the Abbess of the Church of Gloucester. At Lechlade, the earliest reference comes from 1066, when the 15-hide manor of Lechlade was probably held by Siward Barn, a great nephew of Edward the Confessor (VCH VII 1981, 111). During the early 13th century, both towns were granted markets, though neither developed at great pace, probably due to their close proximity.

Nevertheless, Lechlade grew in importance because of its position at the head of the navigable section of the Thames, which ensured a significant amount of water-borne trade and traffic (Finberg 1975, 73). The Manor of Fairford was certainly flourishing by the 15th century, when it was held by the Earls of Warwick. Further to the west, Cirencester entered a great period of prosperity in the 13th and 14th centuries, when it became one of the largest wool markets in England.

### **SITE SUMMARIES**

#### **Claydon Pike, Fairford**

Excavations on the First Gravel Terrace at Claydon Pike between 1979 and 1983 revealed two areas of settlement, ranging from the middle Iron Age to the medieval period. Middle Iron Age activity at the Warrens Field site (Lechlade Parish) was recorded over three gravel islands, and probably represents the settlement of one or two families, that shifted eastwards over time. A maximum of four round-house structures were in use on an island at any one time, and the structures contained varying quantities of occupation refuse in their surrounding drip gullies and associated enclosure ditches. The inhabitants were pastoralists with a subsistence led mixed animal economy.

In the early 1st century AD a nucleated settlement was established about 120 m to the south at Longdoles Field (Fairford Parish), characterised by a series of large and intensively recut enclosures, gullies, pits and substantial boundary ditches. Within the site was identified a number of activity areas associated with domestic habitation, small-scale metalworking, and stock management. It appears to have operated a largely subsistence economy associated with cattle ranching, and in this respect was very similar to the nearby site at Thornhill Farm (Jennings *et al.* 2004). However, there were noticeable differences between these sites, with Claydon Pike having an increased emphasis upon the settlement boundary, along with larger numbers of imported goods associated with eating and to a lesser extent drinking.

The early 2nd century saw dramatic changes, with the enclosures, gullies and ditches of the earlier phase being replaced by two large rectangular enclosures, a substantial aisled barn and an aisled house with a tiled roof and painted plaster interior. This was probably the residence of an extended family group, and there is evidence to suggest that they utilised elements of Roman style dress as well as new eating/drinking habits. The economic basis of the site incorporated the management of hay-meadows, probably on a commercial basis to sustain the needs of growing local population centres such as Cirencester. By the mid 2nd century AD the settlement expanded onto adjacent gravel platforms which seem to accommodate the lower status estate workers, as well as providing



small stock enclosures and industrial areas. What appears to have been a possible religious precinct was also established at the heart of the settlement, overlooking a central open space. At some point during the early 4th century AD, there appears to have been deliberate and widespread clearing of the site with much domestic and structural material being deposited within pits and ditches. This was undoubtedly connected with the establishment of a modest masonry footed villa on the site comprising two separate structures, the southern of which incorporated a hypocaust room. The villa was substantially modified during the 4th century, and had two successive enclosures built around it, probably signalling a shift in emphasis towards greater perceived security needs.

A small inhumation cemetery lay 100 m to the west of the villa and a well built masonry footed shrine was constructed to the east. The surrounding gravel terrace and floodplain were no longer used for haymaking but instead had reverted to grassland used for grazing animals. It is possible however that some arable production may have occurred on certain gravel islands within the villa estate. Other economic activities may have included bee keeping and fishing, while salting and/or curing of meat and fish could also have occurred. The final abandonment of the villa at Claydon Pike is unclear, but there is some evidence to indicate activity of some kind until the start of the 5th century.

A small group of inhumation burials cut through the villa building, three of which were radiocarbon dated to the middle-late Saxon period. Further intermittent activity took place on site in the medieval period.

### **Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes**

A series of salvage excavations between 1986 and 1988 at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes revealed part of a late Iron Age and Roman settlement. The earliest features comprised a series of curvilinear enclosures dating from the early/mid 1st century AD to the early 2nd century AD, although middle Iron Age occupation is hinted at in the vicinity. This may have been part of a farmstead, although a late Iron Age/early Roman religious focus is also suggested by an unusually large number of coins and brooches. A system of trackways and ditched enclosures and a large aisled building replaced the earlier features in the early 2nd century AD. The building was associated with a large quantity and variety of tile, and there are some indications that it may have been at least in part a tile depot, associated with wider changes in landscape organisation during this period. Sculptural fragments of the Capitoline triad point to an official religious presence. No features can be securely dated much beyond the end of the 2nd century AD, although a substantial number of late 3rd and 4th-century coins and small finds suggests late Roman activity

of some kind. An official or military presence is hinted at during this late phase.

### **Whelford Bowmoor**

Three archaeological investigations were undertaken at Whelford Bowmoor in 1983, 1985 and 1988. The earliest features revealed during excavations comprised a regular system of sub-rectangular enclosures, dating to the early/mid 2nd century AD. The enclosures were probably used for livestock management. Another group of smaller enclosures lay further to the west, which were probably a later development, but still possibly used in some aspect of livestock management. It seems likely that many of these enclosure ditches went out of use by the latter part of the 2nd century AD, and it was during this period that there was the only convincing evidence for domestic activity within the site, in the form of a rubble building platform and associated 'midden' deposits, dating from the later 2nd to early/mid 3rd century AD. The finds assemblage on the whole suggests that the later phase of the site was of higher status, with relatively high quantities of imported fine and specialist wares in addition to finger rings, bracelets and evidence for hobnail shoes.

The site lies upon the immediate floodplain of the River Coln, and there is some reason to believe that incidences of flooding were slowly increasing throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. In response to this, there is a possibility that the site became occupied only on a seasonal basis, and if such was the case, then the quantities of fine ceramics associated with eating and drinking, together with the much higher number of animal bones from the later phase, may be explained in terms of seasonal feasting associated with the re-occupation of the site. The general absence of later 3rd- or 4th-century AD material from the site suggests that settlement and structurally defined agricultural activity may have shifted from the area entirely, towards drier locations further up the gravel terrace, which were less prone to flooding and waterlogging.

### **Stubbs Farm, Kempford**

Archaeological evaluation and excavation took place at Stubbs Farm from 1991 to 1995, specifically targeting a multi-ditched circular and rectangular enclosure known from cropmark evidence (Boyle *et al.* 1998, 5, pl 1.2; Leech 1977, 17). The two enclosures would seem to relate to separate phases of activity, with the circular feature having a very tentative Iron Age/early Roman date. The scarcity of finds associated with the use of the feature suggests a non-domestic function, possibly the corralling of animals. The rectangular enclosure clearly belongs to a later phase of activity, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The overall character of this phase is indicative of a low status rural farmstead

operating a largely pastoral economic regime amidst the grasslands of the lower gravel terrace and floodplain. Despite the paucity of what may be termed high status material culture, the rectangular enclosure itself represents a considerable investment of labour. The site clearly relates to a wider system of field boundaries, trackways and settlements in the local area, with the rectangular enclosure being linked with the 2nd-century settlement just to the west at the Multi-Agg Quarry site (see Digital section 8; Booth and Stansbie forthcoming). Both the Stubbs Farm and Multi-Agg settlements appear to have gone out of use by the second half of the 3rd century, with the latter probably lasting slightly longer.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

### **Printed volume**

The printed report is structured into three major parts. The first section presents the results of excavations at Claydon Pike, Fairford, by far the most extensive of the Cotswold Water Park sites included in this volume. The sheer quantity of data from this site alone ensures that no attempt is made to include all detail recovered, but more comprehensive accounts may be found within the digital volume (see below). The archaeological description, finds and environmental data have been described on a phase by phase basis (Chapters 2 to 7), with specific discussions at the end of each chapter. Chapter 8 presents an overall summary account of the settlement, together with analysis of its relationship to other sites within the local landscape.

Part 2 of the report presents the excavation results of the smaller Cotswold Water Park sites, comprising Somerford Keynes (Chapter 9), Whelford Bowmoor (Chapter 10), Stubbs Farm

(Chapter 11) and the survey sites (Chapter 12). As with Part 1, the overall quantity of data has meant that it is not possible to include all information in depth, but again there is a higher level of detail within the digital report.

The final part of the printed report comprises an overall landscape study of the Gloucestershire Upper Thames Valley from the middle Iron Age to the early post-Roman period. The section incorporates overviews of the pottery, small finds, animal bone and environmental evidence for this region.

### **Digital volume**

The CD accompanying this volume ('The Eagle in the Landscape') is intended to provide more detailed information on the stratigraphy, finds and environmental evidence for all of the key Cotswold Water Park sites. Digital sections 2 to 4 contain archive reports for Claydon Pike, along with full context and finds tables for this site. The remaining sections (5 to 8) contain the archive reports and supporting material for the remaining Cotswold Water Park sites. Digital section 8 also contains the full excavation report for another site lying within the Cotswold Water Park, at the Multi-Agg Quarry, Kempsford.

## **LOCATION OF THE ARCHIVES**

All of the original records for each site, including the finds and material generated during post-excavation analysis, have been deposited at the Corinium Museum, Cirencester. A copy of the paper archive is also held on microfilm by the National Monuments Record, RCHM(E), Swindon. In addition, a digital record of the site plans is held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford.