

## Chapter 9: Discussion

### THE EARLY PREHISTORIC PERIOD

*By Alistair Barclay and Alan Lupton*

#### Palaeolithic and Mesolithic

During the course of the road scheme excavations, the only evidence for Palaeolithic activity recovered was a handaxe of uncertain provenience. Mesolithic activity was restricted to stray finds of lithic material from a small number of sites. The near absence of Mesolithic material fits the present pattern of settlement activity as recorded within this area (Darvill 1987, 25 and 28; Holgate 1988, map 9). Since the evidence for early Mesolithic activity is very rare the microlith from Cherry Tree Lane is an important addition. In contrast the numerous later Mesolithic sites identified by Holgate are distributed on the higher ground of the Cotswolds and the Corallian Ridge to the south (1988, map 9). Later Mesolithic sites near the road corridor and within the Churn valley include Bagendon, Southmoor Grove, Birdlip and Coates (Holgate 1988, table 1). In addition, a number of important mesolithic scatters have been preserved on relic ground surfaces beneath both Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows in the Cotswolds (Lambrick 1988; Saville 1990; Marshall 1997).

#### The earlier Neolithic

The evidence for the earlier Neolithic recovered from the excavations is slight and can generally be interpreted as belonging to small-scale domestic activity. However, the corridor of the road scheme passes through an area of important monuments and the evidence it has produced greatly adds to the understanding of how the surrounding landscape was inhabited and utilised during this period.

Earlier Neolithic activity is represented by a group of pits containing pottery and flint at Duntisbourne Grove and collections of lithic material in tree-throw holes, later features, or in the ploughsoil. This range of evidence is typical for the Upper Thames region and for southern England in general (Holgate 1988). The evidence for settlement in this period is scarce all over the country and earlier Neolithic occupation sites in particular are notoriously ephemeral (Hodder 1990, 244). Our present understanding of early Neolithic settlement is that it is not permanent, and the general picture we have is one of small-scale mobile communities that left little or no trace in the archaeological record (see Thomas 1991). A number of houses or structures have been identified in the Cotswolds, preserved beneath barrows. These tend to be associated with surface scatters of cultural material, some of which is concentrated in midden-like deposits, along with hearths and occasional pits. Only at Sale's Lot is it possible to recognise a definite rectilinear house, while at Hazleton North

and somewhat further to the east at Ascott-under-Wychwood the structures were perhaps more flimsy and maybe little more than screens or windbreaks (Saville 1990; unpublished info.).

Our knowledge of the period is very much biased towards the well-known monuments, which around the route include long cairns and causewayed enclosures (Holgate 1988, fig. 6.2). For the area around the Churn Valley Holgate has collated all of the settlement evidence and has identified a small number of probable and possible domestic sites recorded as lithic scatters (1988). These sites are generally located on higher land and on the edge of the Cotswolds and a number cluster in the Bagendon area close to the causewayed enclosure at Southmoor Grove, Rendcomb (Trow 1985). A slight concentration of sites in the area of the Churn valley (Holgate 1988, map 14) coincides with the occurrence of early Neolithic monuments, but it also reflects an area of concentrated fieldwork. Holgate has suggested that the majority of earlier Neolithic activity appears to have concentrated on the central uplands of the Cotswolds, with some evidence for expansion over the Cotswolds and into the lower lying areas of the Severn and Upper Thames valleys as the period progressed.

Two causewayed enclosures are known from cropmarks near the route, one at Down Ampney near Latton and the other at Southmoor Grove just north of Bagendon (Trow 1985; Darvill 1987). Fieldwalking over the enclosure at Southmoor Grove produced a concentration of Mesolithic as well as early-mid Neolithic flints (Saville 1985, 19). Near to the enclosure at Down Ampney is the cropmark of a possible oval barrow (Leech 1977, map 3). Just north of Bagendon and beyond the area of the road scheme are the excavated enclosures known as Crickley Hill (Dixon 1979, 147) and Peak Camp (Darvill 1982), both of which it is suggested took on a more domestic role during a late stage of their history.

Pottery is particularly rare in non-funerary contexts, so the finds at Duntisbourne Grove are of considerable significance. Comparative material is limited with most material coming from the excavations of monuments in the Cotswolds. Traces of early Neolithic occupation prior to the construction of the tombs were sealed beneath the long barrows of Hazleton North (Saville 1990, 240) and Sale's Lot (O' Neil 1966), and consisted of postholes and stakeholes, pottery, flint, hearth areas, saddle querns and rubbers, animal bone and hazelnut shells. On the lowlands in the Severn Valley and just north of the road scheme, a pit containing flint and approximately one third of an early Neolithic pottery bowl was found in Berkeley Street, Gloucester (Hurst 1972, 38). However, in the Upper Thames such pit deposits are extremely rare (Holgate 1988, maps 16-7). This might be because the practice of pit digging in this region became more common towards the end of the



4th millennium cal BC. Other settlement areas may be represented by flint scatters located during field surveys of the north Cotswolds (Marshall 1985; Holgate 1988). Mention has already been made of domestic sites preserved under long cairns, but other features have also been found beneath round barrows. At Guiting Power recent investigations identified a scatter of early Neolithic flintwork along with charcoal from which a radiocarbon determination of 3786–3644 cal BC ( $4929 \pm 78$ BP) has been obtained (Marshall 1997, 286).

The environment at this time is likely to have consisted of small cleared areas within woodland, which would have been used for habitation or small-scale cultivation. There is some evidence for the cultivation of cereals, for example at Hazleton North (Saville 1990, 240), alongside the exploitation of wild foods. As such, the plant remains found in the pits at Duntisbourne Grove would confirm this pattern of reliance on a mixture of wild and domesticated resources.

### The later Neolithic

Changes in artefacts, settlement patterns and monument types are evident from the middle through to the later Neolithic. Most apparent is the abandonment of long cairns and causewayed enclosures before the end of the 4th millennium cal BC. There is evidence that certain of the long cairns were deliberately blocked and some of this activity is associated with the deposition of Peterborough Ware (Darvill 1987, 66–7). There is evidence for considerable social change, instability and even conflict. At Crickley Hill on the Cotswold escarpment, the defended middle Neolithic hilltop settlement was violently destroyed (Dixon 1979, 147), while arrowheads were also a prominent feature of the flint assemblage at the nearby site of Peak Camp (Darvill 1981; 1982).

Perhaps as a result of this activity, the later Neolithic is less visible in the landscape than the preceding phase and evidence for settlement of this date is scarce in the region.

In contrast to the early Neolithic very few monuments appear to have been built in the later 4th millennium BC. In the Cotswold uplands a possible long mound was built across the enclosure at Crickley Hill, while at Signet Hill, Burford, a possible bank barrow was laid out across the enclosure (Darvill 1987, 77; Barclay and Hey in press). Another possible monument of this date could be the Soldier's Grave, Frocester (Darvill 1987, 74). On the gravel terraces the cursuses at Lechlade and Buscot are likely to belong to the middle Neolithic. These new monument types are likely to have been constructed at a time when Peterborough Ware was in use. This type of pottery is rare in the area and most of the findspots are located on higher ground and from the blocking of long cairns or from pit deposits. Some pottery of this date was found in a pit at Duntisbourne Grove (see Chapter 2). Elsewhere Peterborough Ware associated deposits have come from pits at Salmonsbury Camp and

Bourton-on-the-Water, and from just beyond the Cotswolds at Cam near Dursley in the Severn Valley (Darvill 1987, 68–9). To the south of the region at Home Farm, Blunsdon a single pit containing Peterborough Ware and flint was found (Phillips 1971). From the gravels the only recorded finds are the few possible sherds from the top of the cursus ditch (Barclay in prep. b), while Peterborough Ware associated pit deposits are far more common in the east part of the Upper Thames Valley (Thomas 1991, fig. 7.4).

In contrast, Grooved Ware, which is thought to overlap with the final use of Peterborough Ware, is almost absent from the Cotswold uplands, but is generally more common on the gravel terraces around Lechlade (Thomas 1991, fig. 7.4; Barclay in prep. b). Again it must be emphasised that although the density of findspots is far less than that of the Oxford region, this difference is partly a factor of the scale of fieldwork that is associated with mineral extraction and development. To the south of the road scheme an isolated Grooved Ware pit was found at Tower Hill, Ashbury just on the edge of the Downs (Barclay in prep. c), while Grooved Ware associated deposits are very common in the adjacent areas of the eastern part of the Upper Thames Valley and from the Avebury area (Thomas 1991, fig. 7.8).

By the late Neolithic the Cotswold uplands may have been largely abandoned, with the river valleys, notably the Upper Thames and the Severn, becoming the focus for both domestic and ritual activity. Two cursus monuments, located at Buscot and Lechlade in the Upper Thames Valley, may have developed into monument complexes during this phase and suggest a concentration of ritual activity in this area (Barclay *et al.* forthcoming). During this time there is evidence for increasing levels of long-distance exchange and contacts with other parts of the country; the concentration of sites in river valleys may, therefore, be no coincidence, as communities on the Cotswolds became more outward-looking. Pits containing Grooved Ware and other artefacts have been found around the Lechlade cursus and from the upper fill of its ditch (Barclay *et al.* in prep.), The Lodgers, Lechlade (Darvill *et al.* 1986), Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Darvill 1993, 9–15) and possibly Saintbridge, Gloucester (Garrod and Heighway 1984, 22–5).

Late Neolithic monuments are again rare, although two possible massive henges are known from Westwell near Burford and from Condicote near Stow, both of which are within 25 km of the road scheme (Atkinson 1951, 101; Saville 1983b). A number of smaller henges and hengiform ring ditches are known from the Lechlade area, one of which occurs just outside the cursus. Two radiocarbon dates obtained from charcoal recovered from the middle fill of the inner henge ditch at Condicote indicate a probable mid-late 3rd millennium date ( $2500-1750$  cal BC  $3670 \pm 100$ bp 95.4%;  $2500-1900$  cal BC  $3720 \pm 80$ bp 95.4%). Some 53 sherds of probable Beaker pottery representing at least three vessels was recovered from the same level (Saville 1983b, 35, fig. 7), although both this material and the



radiocarbon dates are likely to belong to secondary activity and not to the construction of the monument. These sites are likely to have been constructed either during the currency of Grooved Ware or during a phase when both Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery were being used during the later 3rd millennium BC.

An isolated Neolithic pit containing flint and antler fragments was found north of Court Farm, Latton, in the lower lying Churn/Upper Thames Valley (SMR No. SU09NE100). Other sites have produced additional late Neolithic artefacts, but these have not been associated with domestic structural evidence. There appears to have been some later Neolithic activity at Duntisbourne Grove, which is situated in the Churn Valley, as pit 94 contained Peterborough Ware and some later Neolithic flintwork, as well as earlier Neolithic material. This is of interest as it indicates some continuity of use of certain occupation areas, rather than the complete dislocation between the earlier and later Neolithic, which is often assumed. As discussed above, the pits may represent some form of structured, ritual activity as well as forming part of a possible settlement. It may be that certain sites retained their significance into the later Neolithic, perhaps referring to ancestors or traditional practices as a source of influence (eg. Bradley 1984, 78–79). The deposit of flintwork and a pebble hammer in a tree-throw hole at Hare Bushes North may also represent domestic activity or a similar structured deposit.

The discovery of the flint and worked stone artefacts in the Duntisbourne Grove pits also attests to contact between the Neolithic inhabitants of the road scheme area and surrounding regions. Flint does not naturally occur in the area, the nearest sources being the Marlborough Downs c. 25 km to the south-west, and in the river gravels of the Middle Thames valley. The sandstone saddle quern rubbers were probably derived from the May Hill area c. 40 km to the north-west, and saddle quern fragments of the same material have also been found in the spread of domestic rubbish over which the Hazleton North long cairn was constructed (Saville 1990). The presence of a piece of worked chert from Norcote Farm could also indicate exchange from the Thames Valley or as far afield as Portland in Dorset. Three pieces of worked chert were also recovered from the pre-long barrow occupation level at Hazleton North (Saville 1990, 154). Links with the Dorset coast may already be evident, as the raw material (if not the finished objects) for shale beads from the Notgrove and Eyford Hill long barrows and a shale pendant from Peak Camp would probably have been obtained from Kimmeridge (Darvill 1987, 64).

### The Beaker period

The Beaker period spans the final part of the Neolithic and the start of the early Bronze Age (2500–1700 cal BC), and so the pattern of settlement is much like that for the later Neolithic described above. Beaker associated activity is perhaps more widespread than that associated with either Peterborough Ware or Grooved Ware. Darvill suggests that this represents a phase of

expansion and re-colonisation with settlement occurring in both upland and lowland areas (Darvill 1987, 92). The road scheme investigations have significantly added to the number of sites, although the actual quantity of related material and the scale of activity appears to be small.

Beaker burials are also found in both upland and lowland areas, and may be found as flat burials, in cists, or insertions into earlier long mounds (as at Sale's Lot), or under round barrows. Round barrows and flat graves of Beaker date are also uncommon and there are only a few with dating evidence, for example those from Shorncote, Somerford Keynes (Barclay *et al.* 1995); Ivy Lodge Farm, Kings Stanley (Clifford 1950); Lechlade (Thomas and Holbrook 1998) and Lechmore, Horsley and Frampton on Severn (O'Neil and Grinsell 1960). However, just south of the road scheme is the major barrow cemetery at Lambourn, which contained a number of important Beaker burials (Case 1956–7; Richards 1986–90), while somewhat further south is the Avebury monument complex which has a wealth of Beaker associated material (Thomas 1991, 174–5).

There is a marked contrast between the high concentration of Beaker associated grave deposits found in the Oxford region of the Upper Thames with the low number found in the area of the road scheme. Although this is partly a result of less fieldwork, it none the less seems to support the view that this area of the Upper Thames was more of a backwater and somewhat marginal to the social developments occurring in Wessex and the Oxford region of the Upper Thames Valley, where more ostentatious burials and monuments were in evidence (see Thomas 1991). Bradley (1984, 90) has noted that burials are often less elaborate and the range of contemporary artefacts is more limited in these marginal areas. This is also evident in the type, quality and quantity of Beakers found in the region. However, there is another point worth making. The type of elaborate grave goods found in this area (flint dagger, bronze bracelet and probable copper earring) are different from those found in the Oxford region (Barclay 1999, 324). This regionalisation of certain grave goods could also suggest that the area had different social and economic links to those of the Oxford region.

What are traditionally termed Early style Beakers (see Case 1977) are very rare in Gloucestershire, either in burial or domestic contexts, and are mostly confined to Wessex and the south-east of England. In contrast, what are termed Middle and Late style Beakers are better represented. Research by the British Museum, however, indicates that the accepted Beaker typology and chronology is in doubt and in need of revision (Kinnes *et al.* 1991). There is some evidence to suggest that certain Middle style Beakers are amongst the earliest forms and this may be true for the Upper Thames region. The radiocarbon determinations of 2476–2142 cal BC (95% 3876±57bp NZA-8673) and 2462–2047 cal BC (95% 3836±58bp NZA-8674) obtained for the Beaker pits at Trinity Farm would certainly support this view. A somewhat similar date

of 2500–1850 cal BC (95% 3710±100bp HAR-5499) was obtained from animal bone for a Beaker pit at Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Darvill 1993, 21).

Of the small number of burials recorded from this area three have radiocarbon dates. Two burials from Lechlade have dates of 2030–1740 cal BC (95% 3530±50bp BM-2980) and 1920–1760 cal BC (95% 3460±50bp BM-2981), respectively (Thomas and Holbrook 1998, 282) and the third is from Shorncote and has a date of 1980–1670 cal BC (95% 3480±60bp BM-2892) (Barclay *et al.* 1995). All three are late within the Beaker sequence and fall within the start of the 2nd millennium cal BC and within the early Bronze Age.

The evidence for Beaker associated activity in this area has been discussed by Darvill (1987), and includes a trough-shaped feature containing flintwork and Beaker sherds from Burnwood, east of Gloucester (Clifford 1964) and pits with Beaker sherds, flint and animal bone from Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Allen *et al.* 1993), pits containing Beaker sherds from The Warren, Toddington and a shallow ditch containing sherds near Oxpens Farm, Yanworth (Smith and Cox 1985). The assemblage from Trinity Farm is, therefore, of considerable significance as it contains finely made early style Beaker sherds, possibly the first Wessex/Middle Rhine sherds in a non-funerary context in this region.

As most of the Beaker 'settlement' sites that have been identified in the region are small, consisting of scattered pits and ditches, they contain little or no evidence for the subsistence activities that were being practised (Darvill 1987, 81–4). Roughground Farm, Lechlade provided evidence for the presence of domestic cattle and pigs, and although no cereal remains were recovered fragments of worked stone might have been used for crop processing. The absence of cereal remains might suggest an emphasis on a pastoral economy, if only locally, although it is unclear whether the feature was ever sampled for carbonised remains (Tim Allen pers. comm.). The samples from Trinity Farm present different evidence, indicating the presence of cereals (wheat and barley), but also the continued exploitation of wild resources (hazelnuts). This also suggests that economic strategies may have varied widely from settlement to settlement. As discussed above in the site description, however, it is possible that the contents of these pits may be some sort of special, structured deposit, so it is difficult to judge how representative they are of everyday activity or of the local or regional economy.

### The early Bronze Age

There is very little evidence for post-Beaker early Bronze Age settlements (Darvill 1987, 111); flint scatters and stray sherds of pottery would appear to be the only indicators of their location. Nevertheless, the presence of numerous round barrows and stray finds suggest there was no lack of activity in this period. In this area the barrows are often found in pairs or groups of three such as those found at Shorncote approximately 5 km to the south (Barclay *et al.* 1995)

and occasionally are seen clustered together in small cemeteries. Within this region, barrow cemeteries are found particularly in the Cotswolds uplands, although they are much more common in parts of Wessex (eg. around Avebury) and in the Oxford Region of the Upper Thames Valley (Case 1963; Drinkwater and Saville 1984; Lambrick 1988). Near the road corridor the largest cemeteries occur at Hull Plantations, Longborough and Cow Common, Swell, with nine and ten barrows respectively (Darvill 1987, 99). Both these cemeteries are located within 3 km of the henge monument at Condicote (Saville 1979a, 119, fig. 1), while other relatively large cemeteries occur within the cursus monument complexes at Lechlade and Buscot (Barclay *et al.* forthcoming.).

Contiguous ring ditches, such as those seen at St Augustine's Farm South, are relatively uncommon, though comparable examples have been found at Dorchester-on-Thames (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 193–4, fig. 30) and Gravelly Guy, near Stanton Harcourt (Barclay *et al.* 1996, fig. 3). Inhumation under a burial mound was largely replaced by cremation as the dominant funerary rite as the period progressed.

In addition to the ring ditches excavated at St Augustine's Farm South, a number were noted on aerial photographs close to the route. Some of these were single, isolated examples; near Highgate House (NGR index no. SO 9512/3), east of Ermin Farm (SU 0699/1), west of Latton (SU 0895/35) and Court Farm (SU 0995/56). Others appeared to be located in pairs; Eysey, Latton (SU 1194/8), south of Driffield (SU 0798/1), St Augustine's Farm, Preston (SP 0500/9) and north of High Tun Farm, Duntisbourne Grove (SO 9906/4). No clearly contiguous ring ditches like those excavated were noted on the aerial photographs, though a crop mark south of Village Farm, Preston appears to represent a ring ditch with a smaller, sub-circular feature attached to it (SP 0400/4). In terms of location, the ring ditches excavated at St Augustine's Farm South add to the distinctive concentration of barrows along the lower part of the Churn Valley (cf. Darvill 1987, 95).

Although a wide variety of grave goods may be found with burials of this date, the particularly rich graves of the early Bronze Age 'Wessex Culture' (Piggott 1938), which are accompanied by bronze weaponry and other artefacts, are uncommon in the region. The most well-known example of this type is from Snowhill on the north Cotswolds, a burial under a large barrow which was accompanied by several pieces of bronzework and a polished stone battle axe (Greenwell 1890; Kinnes and Longworth 1985). However, like the example from the southern ring ditch at St Augustine's Farm South, many of the ring ditches that have been excavated in the region were found to contain a central cremation set in a simple pit, with few or no grave goods. It seems possible then, that although the central cremation deposit had been affected by ploughing, there may never have been any accompanying grave goods. The early Bronze Age urn sherd found in the ditch fill of the northern ring ditch is also of interest, as burials accompanied by Collared



or Biconical Urns are not particularly common in Gloucestershire (Darvill 1987), although more recently Collared Urns have been found from funerary deposits at Guiting Power and Rollright both in the central Cotswolds (Lambrick 1988; Marshall 1997, 286). The sherd was, however, recovered from an upper fill of the ditch and given that the covering mound no longer survived could have derived from a destroyed secondary burial deposit.

### The later Bronze Age

The excavations produced very little evidence for activity of this date. Apart from a small quantity of pottery no features or sites were identified. A number of linear ditches of uncertain prehistoric date were found at Norcote Farm and St Augustine's Farm South. No dating evidence was recovered, but as there was no apparent relationship to the Iron Age ditches found at St Augustine's Farm South and St Augustine's Lane, it is safer to assume that they are not necessarily of the same date, although a later Bronze Age date cannot be discounted.

The division of land using linear ditches and pit alignments is first apparent in the later Bronze Age, although there is little evidence for this in the area of the Upper Thames around the road scheme. At this time the evidence for conspicuous burial and the use of other ritual monuments disappears. The density of barrows and ring ditches dating to the earlier Bronze Age period recorded from this area contrasts with the low number of later Bronze Age settlements. Relatively little metalwork has been recorded in this area, although a hoard comprising two side-looped spearheads came from Down Ampney and a number of objects have been found as stray finds along the Churn Valley (Darvill 1987, 114–9).

Settlements are generally rare in this region. Later Bronze Age activity is recorded around Lechlade and a possible field system is known from Buscot Wick (Yates 1997). The most substantial settlement has, however, been found at Shorncote Quarry near Somerford Keynes. Excavation has revealed an enclosed cemetery of middle Bronze Age date and a major open settlement of mid to late Bronze Age date (Hearne and Heaton 1994; Barclay *et al.* 1995). The settlement is characterised by small post-built round houses, structures such as granaries, large pits some of which are waterholes and fencelines and is spread over an area of several hectares (Hearne and Heaton 1994; Carrie Hearne pers. comm.). It may not all be of one phase but rather represents the result of settlement shift.

In this region there is so far little evidence for the reorganisation of land into recognisable field systems. However, the discovery of the extensive late Bronze Age settlement at Shorncote Quarry indicates that permanently settled farmsteads or hamlets were indeed a feature of the later Bronze Age landscape in this region. Comparable permanently occupied settlements, such as the series of enclosures and possible roundhouse discovered at Corporation Farm

near Abingdon (Barrett and Bradley 1980, 251 and 258), have been discovered in adjacent areas (Yates 1997). However, the pattern of pit clusters, devoid of any traces of more permanent occupation or arable agriculture, revealed at Roughground Farm, near Lechlade (Allen *et al.* 1993, 27–35), albeit of middle Bronze Age date, suggests that other forms of settlement pattern and land-use also existed in the area.

## THE LATER PREHISTORIC PERIOD (Fig. 9.1)

By Andrew Mudd

### Early Iron Age

Little early Iron Age material was recovered from the excavations on this project and our understanding of this period remains poor. Sites yielding early Iron Age pottery include Lynches Trackway, Cherry Tree Lane and (probably) St Augustine's Lane (Chapter 3), all on the lower slopes of the Cotswolds. Some early elements were present among the predominantly middle Iron Age assemblages from Preston Enclosure and Court Farm, although there was no definable earlier activity associated with these sherds. The quantity of Iron Age pottery from colluvial and Roman deposits at Lynches Trackway strongly suggests that a site lies somewhere in the vicinity. It may lie completely outside the road corridor, but alternatively, the lack of any associated features from the road corridor here may be related to the relative 'invisibility' of this site, particularly under watching brief conditions. At Cherry Tree Lane, a pit contained material characteristic of later prehistoric 'burnt mound' deposits. It may have been part of a more extensive site of this type (whatever sort of activity it might represent) although it was not particularly close to an identifiable water supply which is sometimes seen as a feature of such sites. The probable early Iron Age pottery from the segmented ditches at St Augustine's Farm suggests some concern with boundary demarcation in this period, although the radiocarbon dates from St Augustine's Farm South were later and the complex as a whole is discussed with the middle Iron Age sites.

This sparse evidence for early Iron Age occupation conforms to the regional picture in the Cotswolds where known early Iron Age sites are mainly hillforts. These appear to fall into two groups (Darvill 1987, 126): the massive hilltop enclosures of Nottingham Hill (Gotherington) and Norbury Camp (Northleach with Eastington), and a large number of smaller, highly defended settlements such as Crickley Hill, Leckhampton Hill, and Chastleton. While this may be an oversimplification, it is probable that settlement had a strongly defensive element, with a greater intensity of occupation on the higher ground, and that non-hillfort settlement was genuinely sparse. The morphologically late hillforts, eg. Painswick Beacon, are far smaller than eg. Norbury, while such as Crickley Hill are distinctive scarp edge promontory

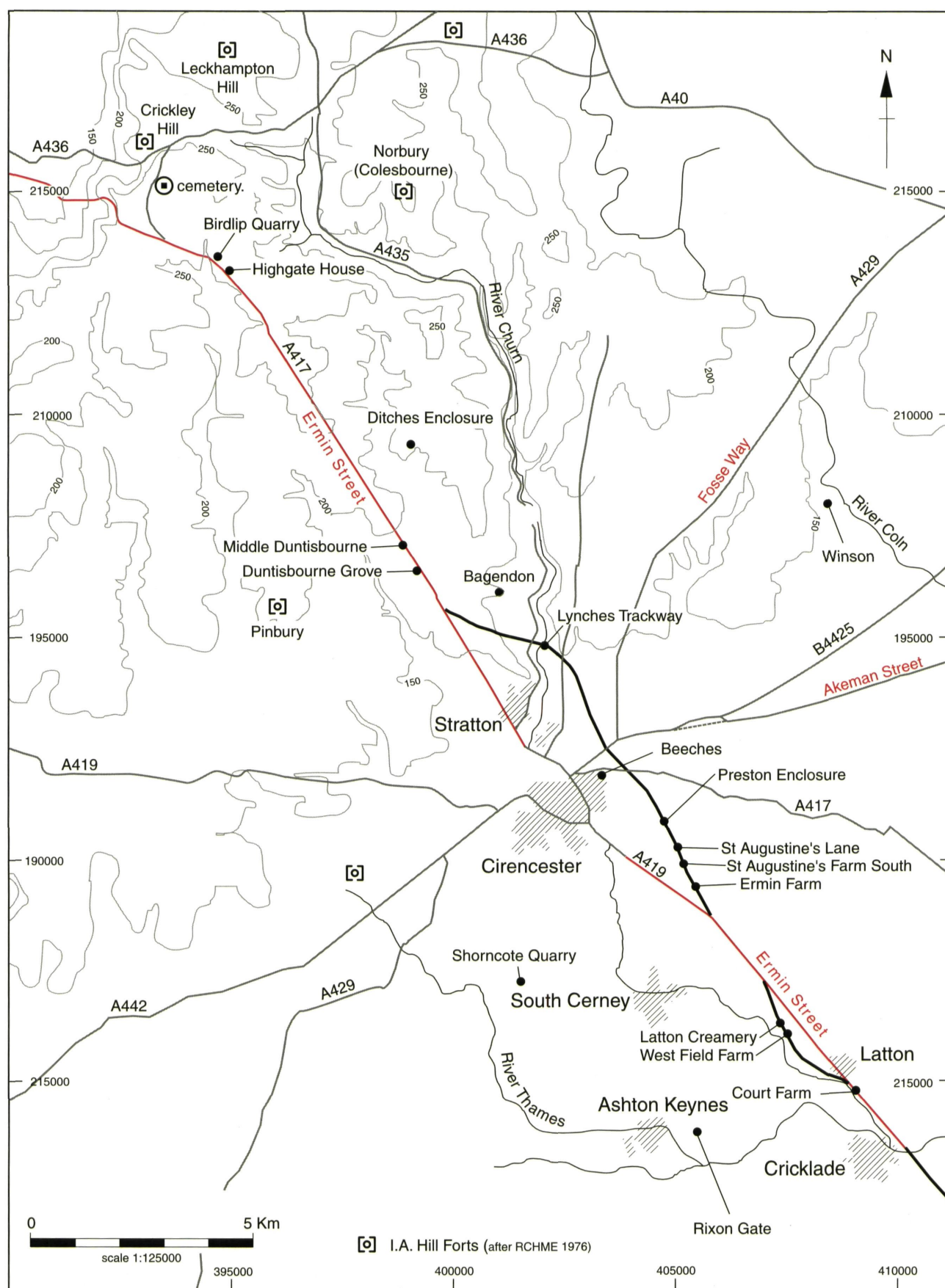


Figure 9.1 Distribution of later prehistoric sites.



sites. It seems that these sites existed in a politically unsettled climate, and, if the key site of Crickley Hill can be taken as representative of the smaller hillforts rather than a special case (something which only excavations on similar sites will be able to confirm), were periodically subject to destruction. It is tempting to see the final destruction of the Crickley Hill hillfort around 400 BC (Darvill 1987, 133–4) as reflecting a decisive change in settlement pattern which saw fewer but larger hillforts (such as Uley Bury and Salmonsbury), a greater density of non-hillfort settlement, and a regional shift towards the lower slopes and river valleys.

The early Iron Age in the Upper Thames region is characterised by sparse occupation, or at least occupation which is not easily detectable, and sites which are not tightly defined. Darvill (1987, 132–3) noted only two sites in Gloucestershire, the Lodors and Roughground Farm, Lechlade. The former consisted of just a few pits while the latter had a wider scatter of pits and postholes with extensive linear boundary ditches (Allen *et al.* 1993, 36–47). Evidence of large-scale land division, probably a continuation of the same ditches, also comes from Butler's Field, Lechlade (Jennings 1998, 31–34). It has been suggested that this land division was part of a series of extensive territorial markers on the Upper Thames gravels which may have been related to the control of grazing rights (Darvill 1987 133). Possibly similar indications of land boundaries were found further up river in an evaluation near Lady Lamb Farm, Marston Meysey (WANHM 1995, 150). More settlement sites are known in the Oxford region where there is an indication of the intensification of arable farming particularly on the higher gravel terraces (Lambrick 1992, 90). Closer to Cirencester, evidence for early Iron Age occupation has proved elusive. At Latton Lands, west of the Creamery, two ditches forming part of an enclosure of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date were evaluated (CAT 1995b). It is probable that these belonged to a settlement of some kind which at present lacks clear definition. The extensive (9 ha) settlement at Shorncliffe Quarry, Somerford Keynes, while dating to the 9th/8th centuries BC rather than any later, has been seen as evidence for non-intensive, shifting occupation at this time (Hearne and Heaton 1994, 17; Rawes and Wills 1996). Recent excavations adjacent to this site have corroborated this interpretation, indicating a pastoral emphasis to the occupation (Brossler *et al.* forthcoming). A continuation of this type of land use into the middle Iron Age can now be suggested for Shorncliffe, although a definition of the early Iron Age phases has proved difficult both in relation to the settlement structure and the associated pottery, and continuity of land use has yet to be demonstrated.

### Middle Iron Age

The current project identified middle Iron Age settlement at Highgate House, Preston Enclosure and Ermin Farm, and evidence of probable settlement near Court Farm, Latton. In addition, radiocarbon dating

suggests that the segmented boundary ditches at St Augustine's Farm South/St Augustine's Lane are likely to have been of this date. The ditches at Norcote Farm and Lower Street Furlong, probably representing boundaries at some distance from settlement, are less securely dated, although a middle Iron Age origin appears most likely given the dating from the similar features at St Augustine's Farm South. This proliferation of activity lies in sharp contrast to the situation in the early Iron Age and is made more striking by the fact that, before excavation began, Highgate House was the only site of this date known from within the development corridor. Little new information came from the Upper Thames Valley. This is one of the most intensively studied archaeological landscapes in Britain (Fulford and Nichols 1992; Lambrick 1992), but it should be noted that most of the evidence for middle Iron Age settlement comes from below Fairford/Lechlade with the area south of Cirencester remaining comparatively unknown (Darvill and Gerrard 1994, 49).

Comparatively few settlement sites of middle Iron Age date in the Cotswold region have been examined by excavation and then only on a small scale (Darvill 1987, 140–2; Lambrick 1988, 125–127; Parry 1998). The evidence for the Gloucestershire Cotswolds has recently been reviewed by Parry (*op. cit.*), drawing largely from the Upper Windrush Valley and other Cotswold sites north of Cirencester. Darvill (1987, 140) identified more than 30 middle Iron Age sites in Gloucestershire as a whole although many more may be indicated by cropmarks. The road scheme excavations do indicate that any reasonably large-scale investigation in the Cotswolds is likely to discover hitherto unknown sites. This has already been intimated by the unexpected discovery of a settlement at Winson within the corridor of the Esso Oil Pipeline (Smith 1986). Systematic fieldwork has led Marshall to estimate a spacing of Iron Age settlements every 1–2 km around Guiting (Marshall 1991, 22), although these may not be expected to be strictly contemporary. At the same time, the examination of the three middle Iron Age sites on the current project (Highgate House, Preston Enclosure, Ermin Farm), each of different form but almost identical date, underlines the hazard of attempting to date sites purely on the basis of cropmark morphology, let alone engage in any deeper economic or social analysis on that basis.

### Settlement

Highgate House, Preston Enclosure and Ermin Farm have provided important new evidence for settlement in the region during the middle Iron Age. In the Cirencester area the only other securely dated settlement is at The Beeches, Nursery Field (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 49) although here excavations have been limited. On the gravels a settlement within a rectangular enclosure is known at Westfield Farm, Latton within the scheduled area (Wilts. SMR SU09NE201), and further south-west settlements have been investigated at Shorncliffe Quarry



(Brossler *et al.* forthcoming) and Spratsgate Lane, Somerford Keynes (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 49; Rawes and Wills 1997). In the Cotswolds the site at Birdlip Bypass has been partly examined (Parry 1998), but there is virtually nothing else assuredly of this date within a kilometre or so of Ermin Street (information from Glos. SMR). This paucity of information in the vicinity of the current project undoubtedly reflects a lack of archaeological investigation rather than the true picture of settlement at this time.

There is insufficient information from the region to attempt a synthesis of settlement or economic patterns. Iron Age sites in the Cotswolds which have undergone any sort of investigation by excavation tend to indicate far more complexity to their spatial organisation and development than is suggested by cropmark evidence (Lambrick 1988, 125–9; Parry 1998). The economic orientation of sites on the current project remains unclear given the limited areas excavated and the small quantity of material recovered. The lack of features for grain storage at the Preston sites may be significant and contrasts with some of the evidence from the Cotswolds such as that from Birdlip Bypass (Parry 1998), Guiting Manor Farm (Saville 1979b) and The Park, Guiting Power (Marshall 1990) where storage pits are common. This may suggest that grain production was more significant at these sites, although the suggestion must remain tentative. Further lines of evidence are required in order to attempt to establish the relative importance of one or other aspect of the economy of these sites, including the complete site layout and chronological range as well as more artefactual and palaeoenvironmental material. Probable grain storage pits were present at Highgate House but the numbers were small and do not, on present evidence, suggest a dominant arable component to the economy. As a point of contrast, at The Park, Guiting Power the size of some storage pits, with a capacity well in excess of what it is estimated that the relatively small farmstead could have produced, has led to the suggestion that the site had some kind of central storage and redistributive function (Marshall 1991, 22–23).

Preston Enclosure and Ermin Farm had simple layouts comprising one main phase. A consideration of the silting sequences in the enclosure ditches, as well as the pottery, suggests that occupation may have been relatively short-lived. The evidence from Highgate House is more difficult to interpret but may suggest a longer period of occupation. However, the radiocarbon dates from all these sites are very similar and indicate that they were occupied in the 4th–3rd centuries BC, with a slightly later end-date possible for Highgate House on the stratigraphic evidence. The radiocarbon dates are similar to those from Birdlip Bypass (Parry 1998, table 5) and compatible with those presented from The Park (Marshall 1991, table 3). At face value the dating fits in with the regional settlement pattern, identified principally from sites in the Upper Thames Valley, where middle Iron Age settlements do not continue into the late Iron Age

and Roman periods (Fulford and Nichols 1992, 27; Lambrick 1992b, fig. 27). This also appears to hold true for sites in the Cotswolds (Parry 1998, 55–56) although the evidence is still comparatively slight.

The shift in settlement, which appears to have taken place in the 2nd–1st centuries BC at the sites on the current project, leads to an archaeological enigma since no sites securely of this date were located and it is therefore unclear where the earlier settlements shifted to. The terminal occupation at Highgate House remains ill-defined and does not contribute to a resolution of the problem. The fragmentary remains at Court Farm, Latton, may be relevant, but the date and character of the Iron Age occupation here is too uncertain to be meaningfully discussed. The apparent gap between the middle Iron Age and 1st-century AD deposits at Birdlip Bypass has been examined (Parry 1998, 55) and, on the evidence of the admittedly limited excavations, seems to be genuine. At Guiting Power there seems to have been a local shift from a small settlement at The Park to a larger trapezoidal enclosure at The Bowsings in the later or late-middle Iron Age (Marshall 1991). The ditch here has been interpreted as defensive and the settlement seen as a local stronghold. If this is correct and the pattern applicable more widely, it is possible that there was a change to fewer but larger and more defensible sites in the later Iron Age. This is not a pattern which has been recognised generally (cf. Darvill 1987, 159), but with the notable exception of Claydon Pike in the Thames Valley, so few sites of this period have been defined it is certain that any new excavations will add substantially to, and perhaps radically alter, our understanding of the period.

#### *Land boundaries*

The segmented ditch complex at St Augustine's Farm South/St Augustine's Lane appears to be broadly middle Iron Age with possible earlier origins. This is unexpectedly late for this type of land division which is frequently found to date to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. The complex has been compared to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age boundary ditches at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Jennings 1998), although in some respects there are notable contrasts. The Lechlade ditches comprised a sequence of recut ditches and regular pit alignments, the major element of which can be traced, fairly directly, for over 1 km. They may have demarcated a parcel of land of up to 250 ha within the confluence of the rivers Thames and Leach (*ibid.*, 33). The boundary may have been the axis of an extensive field system, or a land division relating to the control of grazing. It can be seen as an expression of unitary authority, or at least an action sanctioned by a large, united social group. It is also significant that the boundary cut an earlier Bronze Age ring ditch, indicating a lack of interest in maintaining the monument. The ditches at St Augustine's Farm/St Augustine's Lane may be interpreted differently. Although the full extent of this system remains unknown, its meandering and intermittent course



suggests a more piecemeal scale of activity. Its respect for the earlier ring ditches is evidence that land use in the intervening period had not obliterated the burial monument, and the ditches may be seen as evidence of either a continuity of earlier land demarcation, or a reaffirmation of traditional boundaries with respect to the monument. A curious and possibly similar act of reaffirmation may be interpreted from the site at Birdlip Bypass, where a middle Iron Age rectangular enclosure was established concentrically around a Bronze Age ring ditch (Parry 1998).

The irregular, and intermittent character of the boundary ditches at St Augustine's Farm has similarities with those recently excavated at Shorncliffe Quarry (Brossler *et al.* forthcoming). These were not closely dated but appear to be largely middle Iron Age. They were characterised by lines of pits and irregular short lengths of ditch joined to form meandering boundaries and partial enclosures. The excavated part of the complex covered about 3 ha. Settlement appeared to be sparse but the ditches were associated with occasional isolated or small groups of buildings. The complex appears to represent incoherent and unplanned boundary definition undertaken on a small scale.

The recognition of this type of irregular field pattern may have important implications for an understanding of Iron Age settlement and land use in the region. On the gravels south of Cirencester an irregular pattern of ditches can be seen from cropmarks in the Latton area, at Westfield Farm (Scheduled Ancient Monument 899) and west of Street Farm (Scheduled Ancient Monument 899). These were largely unexamined in the current project and remain to be analysed in detail. Most have not been included in the Royal Commission's cropmark survey of the area, although some of those at Westfield Farm have and exhibit a similar alignment to the known Iron Age enclosure in this field (Wilts. SMR SU09NE201). Here the boundaries are not dated by archaeological investigation but they are clearly distinct from the rectilinear ditches of the Roman settlement and a later prehistoric date seems highly likely. East of Latton 'Roman Pond' a number of ditches were examined during the watching brief. Prehistoric pottery has been recovered from a ditch in this field (Wilts. SMR SU09NE525) (CAT 1997). However, the current project recovered only Roman sherds from some of the ditches and it remains unclear whether distinct prehistoric and Roman systems existed here or can be recognised from the cropmarks. One of the dominant east-west cropmarks has been identified as a palaeochannel. Others also appear to be natural drainage features, although it is possible that they were redug as ditches. The irregular linear features at Court Farm (Plate 4.3) appear more likely to be natural gullies or ice-wedge casts.

The present lines of evidence discussed suggest that the land around Cirencester, both on the gravels and on the Cotswold margins, may not have been intensively settled until the middle Iron Age, with a concomitant need for boundary definition coming

rather later to this area than further down river. The nature of the boundaries requires much more investigation, particularly in the Latton area, but it can be suggested that colonisation (which probably took the form of the intensification of existing practices rather than the exploitation of new ground) generally took place on a smaller scale than it did further down the Thames Valley at Lechlade where there is evidence for land division on a much larger scale in the early Iron Age, and tightly defined areas of settlement and land use by the middle Iron Age at Claydon Pike (Hingley and Miles 1984, fig. 4.4).

The pollen sequence from Latton 'Roman Pond' provides some corroboration of relatively late woodland clearance in this region. Although the sequence cannot be dated precisely, it suggests that the later Holocene dominant lime woodland (Pollen Zone 1) persisted beyond the later Bronze Age (2943 $\pm$ 63 BP; 1258–1020 cal BC) and that clearance which is represented by the 'lime decline' therefore probably took place in the early Iron Age. A second decline in tree pollen occurred later on, probably in the middle Iron Age although an even later date cannot be ruled out (Pollen Zones 2/3). This led to the establishment of a predominantly agricultural landscape of pasture and arable. The relatively late clearance of woodland in the region with the establishment of a predominantly pastoral land use in the Iron Age is a model which has already been arrived at independently from the study of hydrological changes on the Thames floodplain further down river (Robinson and Lambrick 1984; Lambrick and Robinson 1988; Robinson 1992b). Overbank alluviation here has been seen to relate to a later phase of arable expansion which took place from the middle to late Iron Age onward and was probably related to the cultivation of winter-sown cereals in the valley catchment. The current project offers general confirmation of this model, but the development of settlement and land use in the region is still imperfectly understood. It is possible, for instance, that in the Iron Age the Upper Thames Valley in the Cirencester region had more in common with the Cotswold uplands than with the valley further down river.

### Late Iron Age

Late Iron Age sites were investigated at Duntisbourne Grove and Middle Duntisbourne. Each comprised a large enclosure or partial enclosure lacking any evidence of internal features or a focus of occupation. The character of these sites is therefore uncertain, but the nature and quantity of finds from the ditches would suggest that they can be regarded as settlements and probably of high status. Both sites were occupied at the same time and their use was restricted to a few decades around the middle of the 1st century AD. An earlier phase of site layout was detected at Middle Duntisbourne, but this remains undated and it is unclear whether or not the 1st-century AD occupation represents a continuation, an expansion, or a re-founding. There is certainly nothing to indicate



occupation in the 2nd–1st centuries BC at either of the sites and with the possible exception of Highgate House, this period appears to remain genuinely unrepresented on the current project.

The dating of the Duntisbourne sites is particularly interesting in view of their relationship to the 'Bagendon complex' whose status as a Dobunnic political centre is unchallenged, but whose precise nature and date remain controversial (Darvill 1987, 164–7; Trow 1988; 1990). Excavations at Ditches hillfort have revived the debate as to whether the occupation at both this site and Bagendon itself were pre- or post-conquest (Rigby 1988; Trow 1988, 73–76). Only tiny proportions of these sites have been excavated and the dating will certainly be subjected to further revision in the future. The same applies to the Duntisbourne sites. Furthermore, the nature of archaeological evidence means that it is not usually amenable to such precise discrimination, and the material from the Duntisbourne sites suffers many of the limitations which apply to the dating of Bagendon and Ditches. However, the singular characteristic of the Duntisbourne sites is that they were crossed by Roman Ermin Street which, at face value, was later than those occupations. The sequence of ditch deposits at both these sites has been presented in some detail (Chapter 3) to elucidate the development of each site and to try to establish whether the assemblages of material can be shown to be contemporary with the use of the ditches (and therefore pre-dating the road), rather than being incorporated at a later date. The balance of evidence suggests that accumulations of primary deposits almost certainly relate directly to the occupations on those sites, rather than being later backfills. It is reasonable to assume that similar deposits are sealed by the road, although of course, this relationship could not be investigated. The molluscan evidence from Middle Duntisbourne is particularly important since there is a strong indication that woodland was regenerating over the ditches while they were silting up, indicating a long-term natural process of infilling (see Robinson, Chapter 8). Furthermore, the distribution and size of pottery sherds suggests that the occupation was continuing while the ditches were silting up and woodland overtaking them, contradicting any suggestion that this associated material could have been re-deposited through later activity. The clearance of the woodland took place near the top of the fill sequence, and probably related to Roman road construction, as supported by the woodland mollusca from beneath Ermin Street at Dartley Bottom. An extrapolation of the Middle Duntisbourne sequence to the ditches at Duntisbourne Grove is not unreasonable, although the stratigraphy here is more ambiguous and the molluscan evidence less complete. The pattern of infilling at Duntisbourne Grove also appears to have been different and the site may have been abandoned earlier while the ditches were still largely open. Later, the sides of the partly infilled ditches were quarried. To judge by the pottery from the backfilled quarry this activity dated to after the conquest, and on

circumstantial grounds may be linked to the construction of the Roman road. The conclusion from the foregoing is that Iron Age deposits with significant assemblages of 1st-century pottery predate the construction of Roman Ermin Street, and by implication the conquest itself. The pottery assemblages include imported Gallo-Belgic wares, whiteware butt beakers, Savernake Ware and early Severn Valley wares along with Malvernian limestone-tempered jars and bowls of the Iron Age tradition.

As yet the regional late Iron Age/early Roman settlement pattern remains undefined, with sites such as Bagendon, Ditches hillfort and now the Duntisbournes yielding little more than site-specific interpretations and further questions. The topic has wide implications for the nature of the native Dobunnic polity and its interaction with the Roman invaders in the Cirencester area (Trow 1990; Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 49–56). It is worth noting, however, that the short-lived occupations at the Duntisbourne sites are untypical of the pattern established from excavations in the Thames valley and elsewhere, where sites which commence in the late Iron Age normally show evidence of continuity on the same site until well into the Roman period (Fulford and Nicholls 1992, 27). This may well relate to considerations of status, with exclusively farming settlements receiving a stimulus to production, but the fortunes of politically significant sites more dependent upon relations with the new centres of power. The decline of Bagendon, for instance, was probably related to the development of the civilian settlement at Cirencester by the 60s AD, while the early Roman villa at Ditches developed from a centre of the native tribal autocracy (Trow 1990, 113). It has been suggested that the Duntisbourne sites were part of the 'Bagendon complex' and their woodland/woodland margin location may have been important in their economic orientation, which would have been relatively specialised within the local settlement system. Their rather specialised nature and connection with the centre of a potentially volatile political system may explain why the settlements failed to survive into the Roman period, although it should be emphasised that there is no indication that they were physically destroyed by the Romans and may, indeed, have been abandoned before the conquest. The impression that the enclosures were deliberately slighted by the construction of Ermin Street needs to be resisted since it is clear that the Roman road was constructed with the single-minded objective of linking the forts at Cirencester and Gloucester (Chapter 5). It does not betray any deviation from this course, certainly not in the vicinity of the Duntisbourne enclosures, and the fact that it crossed them can only be a coincidence.

The distribution of other late Iron Age sites in the region is difficult to ascertain. A large number of cropmark enclosures are known although none are assuredly of this period. Two possibilities lie within about a kilometre of Ermin Street. One is part of a rectangular enclosure visible south of Blacklains



Farm, Brimpsfield. This lies near a linear ditch running for about 350 m between Gowanlea and Sidelands (Glos. SMR 7214) which is similarly undated. The other is a very clear subrectangular enclosure covering about 2 ha at The Ash, Watercombe Farm, Elkstone (Glos. SMR 4701; RCHME 1976, 54) which has superficial similarities to Duntisbourne Grove. However, the form of Ditches hillfort should warn against attempting to date sites from cropmark evidence alone since this site is similar to middle Iron Age hillforts (RCHME 1976, fig. opp. xxvi) and may in fact be middle Iron Age in origin (Darvill 1987, 163). South of Cirencester, Iron Age occupation is known from both Westfield Farm and Court Farm, Latton near to the Scheduled Roman settlements. At present it is unclear whether final Iron Age settlement is represented and therefore whether continuity into the Roman period is likely. Certainly the trackway at Court Farm appears to be early Roman (Chapter 4) and would suggest that a settlement pre-dating Ermin Street already existed at Field Barn (Wilts. SMR SU09NE303), becoming connected to the Roman road at the earliest opportunity. At Westfield Farm, the hexagonal ditched enclosure which later formed the focus of the Roman farmstead, appears Iron Age and, if continuity of occupation could be demonstrated, a similar trajectory of development can be envisaged. Further south at Rixon Gate, Ashton Keynes, there appears to be a continuity from the late Iron Age into the Roman period (Newman 1994, 83–4). This rather superficial interpretation of the evidence from sites south of Cirencester would suggest a marked contrast to the fortune of the Duntisbourne sites. However, the current project has indicated the need for detailed research on Iron Age settlement and landuse in the Cirencester area and a more precise chronological definition. The difficulty of establishing the presence of occupation in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC in the region has been mentioned and distinction between continuity and the re-occupation of sites needs careful consideration in any future research in this area. The label 'Iron Age' on the basis of (often limited) pottery, is clearly inadequate. Judicious radiocarbon dating has been shown to be an effective supporting technique, and mollusc evidence occasionally invaluable for site-specific and wider interpretations.

### THE ROMAN PERIOD (Fig. 9.2)

*By Andrew Mudd*

A number of sites of the Roman period were examined on the project. These included, at Field's Farm, an early roadside funerary monument, together with adjacent trackway ditches on both sides of Ermin Street; and a later Roman roadside settlement at Birdlip Quarry. Other sites yielded more peripheral features, such as quarry pits and boundary ditches at Court Farm and Westfield Farm, Latton; and field boundaries at Latton 'Roman Pond' and land to the east, as well as at Exhibition Barn, Baunton. A late Roman midden, almost certainly related to a nearby settlement, was

examined at Weavers Bridge. In addition to these sites, Ermin Street was investigated with seven cross-sections north of Cirencester and several other partial excavations. The Fosse Way/Akeman Street (Burford Road) was sectioned with less useful results. The Lynches Trackway and a probable ditched trackway at Norcote Farm, Preston, were unexpected Roman discoveries.

With minor exceptions the current project has not added to the number of known sites in the region. This, in itself, is of some interest in the vicinity of a major Roman town (and dyke system of arguably comparable importance) and contradicts the expectations expressed in the initial desk-based assessment of the Cirencester-Stratton section of the route, which effectively predicted the discovery of hitherto unknown sites in the hinterland of Roman Cirencester (CAT 1990a, 36). However, the subsequent trial trench evaluation here also revealed little of note (CAT 1991a, 136), and the excavations have largely confirmed this picture. South of Cirencester the route bypassed several known sites, but with the possible exception of Weavers Bridge (where finds were made in the evaluation but the site was not identified as a possible settlement), there were no totally new discoveries. The same is true of the northern section of the route where the site at Birdlip Quarry, identified at the Stage 2 survey, was the only other settlement investigated. It is worth noting, therefore, that the number of sites examined by excavation was unaffected by any redesign or realignment of the route undertaken as impact mitigation after Stage 2 (the mitigation measures on Scheduled Ancient Monument 899 at Latton being to reduce the impact on known sites rather than a response to new information), and to that extent the results reflect the real distribution of Roman sites within this transect of landscape.

The pattern of Roman settlement around Cirencester has been discussed briefly by Holbrook (1994, 85–86), who has overturned earlier suggestions, derived almost exclusively from the distribution of villas, of a lack of settlement close to the Roman town. The results of the present project do not directly contradict his assertion, for, despite the observations presented above, it is clear from cropmarks and surface finds that occupation of the Roman period is both dense and widespread in this area. A large number of sites are known to lie close to the course of the new route corridor and it may be regarded as fortuitous that more Roman sites were not encountered within it. The lack of substantial new sites within the road transect may, however, suggest that the known distribution of Roman sites is not radically different from the true pattern in this area. This is in direct contrast to conclusions (above) on the distribution of later prehistoric sites.

The sites examined on the current project provide little basis for an overall assessment of the development of settlement and landscape in the Roman period. However there are a few interpretations whose implications are worth pursuing in this discussion.



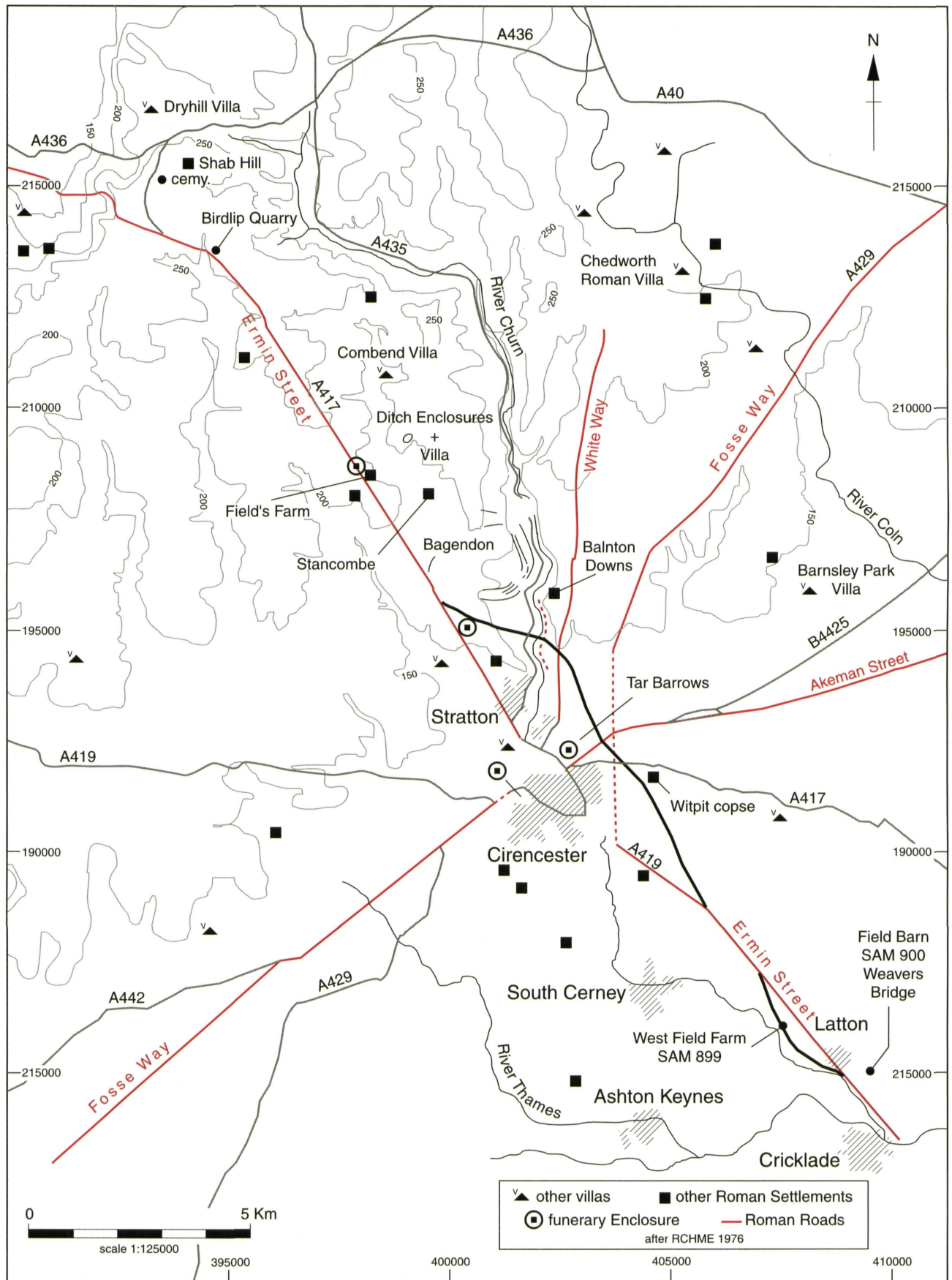


Figure 9.2 Distribution of Roman sites.



## Ermin Street

The earliest activity identified in the Roman period was probably the construction of Ermin Street. While there is little direct evidence of the date of its initial construction from anywhere along its length and no further information on the matter from the current project, the position of the Leaholme fort (occupied c. AD 50–70) on the same alignment as the road, has been used to suggest that the road was constructed very shortly after the conquest of the region (Darvill and Holbrook 1994, 52). This view is not contradicted by any evidence from the current project. None of the sections through the road offered a straightforward interpretation and dating evidence was limited. Notwithstanding this, the stratigraphic sequences from the deeper trenches (particularly Trenches 6 and 8) indicate that the road was regularly repaired, at least throughout the 1st and 2nd centuries, and possibly into the 3rd century. It remains uncertain whether these were local repairs undertaken in response to particular difficulties in negotiating the major dry valleys which the road crossed, or whether they reflect something more systematic. In either case it appears that the route between Cirencester and Gloucester was sufficiently important to warrant maintenance throughout, at least, the early Roman period. At Birdlip Quarry there was clear evidence for a widening of Ermin Street in the early 4th century. In contrast to the earlier constructions this was a very rudimentary surfacing which appears to owe nothing to military engineering practice. The surfacing appears to have been too extensive to have exclusively served the settlement at Birdlip Quarry (although this must remain a possibility) and may rather imply a more extensive redesign of the road. There was no direct support for this interpretation from elsewhere, except perhaps at Field's Farm where part of a late surface adjacent to Ermin Street was exposed. An undated cobbled surface was also found at Daglingworth in a similar position. The later surfaces in the sections through Ermin Street were either truncated, or proved impossible to date with any confidence. Despite these various uncertainties, a widespread remodelling of Ermin Street in the early 4th century should be considered as a serious proposition and one which would carry implications for changes in the region at this time, adding to a picture of widespread development which has emerged from a number of villa excavations.

A discussion of the political/administrative context for the maintenance of this section of Ermin Street lies outside the scope of this report. However, it can be noted that while a number of sites elsewhere in Britain show roads remodelled throughout the Roman period, these are normally considered in terms of the local development of a settlement, rather than as a strategic undertaking demanded or sanctioned at a higher level of authority. On the current project, where a major Roman road was examined independent of nearby settlement, there are indications that a regional explanation may be appropriate, although the spatial

and chronological patterns of the road system and its development require much more research.

## Settlement and land-use

At Field's Farm, the square funerary enclosure was undoubtedly an early monument. There are grounds for considering it to be the earliest of the group of features on this site, almost certainly pre-dating the trackway and roadside ditches, and possibly pre-dating the roadside quarry pits (although these need not have been related to the first construction of Ermin Street). A 1st-century date for the funerary monument receives some support from the limited pottery present in the ditch silts and, in view of the stratigraphic interpretation, appears highly likely. The discussion of this monument has emphasised its probable role as an overt symbol of Roman affinity positioned for maximum public visibility. That it was associated with the settlement at Field's Farm is plausible in view of the interpretation of the site sequence which indicates that the roadside and trackway ditches were positioned in relation to the funerary monument, rather than vice versa, thereby forming the link between the monument and the settlement. The site can therefore be seen as an early statement of Roman allegiance by inhabitants of the settlement. Whether this represents Romanization is a question which can only be addressed by an examination of the settlement itself. Possible similar monuments in the region have been discussed (Chapter 4). Neither the cropmark south of Daglingworth Quarry (Glos. SMR 4783) nor the Tar Barrows appear to be very close to contemporary settlement although both may have been sited adjacent to roads.

At Court Farm the trackway which served the Roman settlement at Field Barn was also shown to be early, although precise dating was not possible. The trackway ditches were respected by the dense quarry pitting which ran in a corridor on this side of Ermin Street and which the pottery evidence suggests to have been largely of 1st-century date. This line of evidence has been used to suggest that a settlement at Field Barn existed in the pre-Conquest period and became linked to Ermin Street early on (see late Iron Age discussion, above). Rather like Field's Farm this may be seen as an example of a landowner taking advantage of Ermin Street at an early opportunity, although again this idea requires further substantiation.

Features within the Scheduled Ancient Monument 899, roughly between Westfield Farm and Street Farm, comprised mainly field boundaries peripheral to the known Roman settlement. This cropmark complex, which shows superimposed Iron Age and Roman features, has been identified as a key site for the understanding of Iron Age settlement and land use in the Cirencester area (see middle Iron Age discussion, above), and may be equally important in understanding the Roman transition. The mitigation strategy within the Scheduled area was designed to minimise

disturbance to archaeological deposits, and it is not surprising that few conclusions can be reached regarding the Roman occupation here. The chief value of the excavations at Latton 'Roman Pond' lay in the pre-Roman environmental sequence from the peat deposits. The Roman ditches examined were less informative, although the tentative identification of the ditch in the centre of the 'pond' with an extensive rectilinear system of land division suggests further complexities to the site which require investigation. At Westfield Farm a Roman ditch could be seen to correspond to a major land boundary which was respected by a zone of quarrying alongside the present Cerney Wick Road. This is not a known Roman road and an interpretation of this evidence remains problematic. The field boundaries east of Latton 'Roman Pond' received some attention during the watching brief. A Roman date is likely for some of them although their correlation with the cropmarks is not straightforward. There is at present insufficient evidence for interpreting the pattern of activity in this field, and the discovery of a small quantity of early to middle Saxon pottery on the eastern side of the field suggests that the cropmarks and the limited interventions by excavation are an insufficient basis for understanding activity in this area. Early Saxon pottery has already come from a pit in this field (Wilts. SMR SU09NE400).

Another Roman field boundary was investigated at Exhibition Barn. This lay among a series of intercutting boundary ditches which appear to show a continuous development from Roman times through to the modern era. The suggestion of a continuity of administrative frameworks and boundaries from the late Roman through to the medieval period has been an abiding theme in studies of the region (Gerrard 1994a, 95–7) although this can rarely be demonstrated with physical evidence. Exhibition Barn was the only site where there was reasonable evidence for the continuous evolution of a field boundary across this period, but the alignment of the primary Roman ditch was different from the later ditches and any suggestion of administrative significance can probably be ruled out.

### Settlement pattern

There are a large number of Roman settlements known from the region, both in the Cotswolds and in the Thames Valley. Very few have been excavated in the Cotswolds and there is an assumption that many are villas without good evidence (Jan Wills pers. comm.). The contrasting distributions of settlement types – with the abundance of villas in the Cotswolds and apparently lower status sites more common in the Thames Valley – has been remarked upon on a number of occasions and explanations have taken account of various possible social, historical and environmental factors (Miles and Hingley 1984; Hingley 1984; Miles 1988). On a more specific level, the Roman occupation in the eastern Cotswolds, and its links with the more intensively studied Upper Thames Valley

region around Oxford, has recently been reviewed (Booth 1998). This review need not be repeated here but it is worth re-iterating the point that the view of a villa-dominated Cotswolds is largely based on superficial evidence and there has been very little opportunity to understand the rural settlement pattern as a whole (ibid., 13). In the western Cotswolds there has been a recent synthesis of the Roman 'small towns' of Gloucestershire (Bourton-on-the-Water, Wycomb, Coln St Aldwyns and Dorn) and their role in the regional pattern of settlement and communications (Timby 1998a). Timby largely concerns her discussion with the origin and functions of the 'small towns', although, following from a discussion of the villa at Kingscote, there is also some consideration of rural settlement distributions and hierarchies. Both these themes are of some relevance to the nature and function of the Roman roadside settlements at Weavers Bridge and Birdlip Quarry examined on the current project, and are explored here.

The spacing of the 'small towns' along the Fosse Way and Akeman Street (at every 20–35 km – about a day's journey) suggests that they had a function in relation to the *cursus publicus* and, although definitive evidence is lacking, would probably have been provided with posting stations. There are also some intermediate settlements (including perhaps Bourton) which may or may not have had this role (Timby 1998a, 430–1). Along Ermin Street, the spacing between Gloucester, Cirencester and Wanborough is approximately regular and about the same distance. It is possible that intermediate posting stations were not required on this route, although Timby (among other authors) suggests Birdlip would have been a logical place to site one in response to the difficulty of ascending the scarp. In terms of the buildings excavated, the settlement at Birdlip Quarry lacks an indication of any kind of official involvement and a far more likely location for a *mansio* is at Birdlip itself, where a 'villa type' building was discovered near the present Royal George Hotel (RCHME 1976, 40). However, it should be noted that relay stations (*mutationes*) and the lower classes of resthouse, the *praetoria* and *tabernae*, have not been defined archaeologically and may correspond to the more informal kind of waystation suggested for Birdlip Quarry. Indeed, it has been suggested that a change of animals may have been provided at minor intermediate points between *mansiones* (Black 1995, 89). There is certainly evidence from Birdlip Quarry that cattle, and the unusually high number of horses, were overworked and there is the suggestion of an occasional official presence from the small collection of military metalwork. Taken together, these strands of evidence may point to the settlement's role in providing transport for the *cursus publicus*. South of Cirencester, Smith has cited Latton as a 'roadside settlement' (1987, 247, fig. 1) although the site at Latton Lands (Wilts. SMR SU09NE316) can be discounted as a settlement on the evidence of an evaluation by Wessex Archaeology in 1996, while both known settlements (Westfield Farm and Field Barn) are at



a distance from Ermin Street. The value of this classification must therefore be doubted. Timby mentions Cricklade as a settlement with a possible official role although this site is also a slight distance from Ermin Street and is at present too ill-defined to be meaningfully discussed. The midden investigated on the current project at Weavers Bridge lay close to the assumed crossing point of the Thames and within about 10 m of Ermin Street, but, while the character of any associated settlement remains unknown, a function in relation to the road is improbable on current evidence. Of more interest is a Roman settlement, about 400 m further south-east, known from surface finds and the record of a Roman building (Wilts. SMR SU19SW309 and 310). This lies on the line of Ermin Street between Weavers Bridge and Calcutt and must be a candidate for a posting-station of some kind. It lies in a similar relation to Cirencester as Birdlip does, about half way to the next town.

Timby has also discussed settlement patterns in relation to rural estates and the possibility of defining two- or three-tier settlement hierarchies of 'estate centres', more modest villas and non-villa establishments within individual large estates. The question of tenurial arrangements is, however, difficult to recognise from the archaeological record and has largely been left unresolved for Birdlip Quarry (Chapter 4). It is therefore unknown whether this settlement was dependent upon a nearby villa (or indeed a non-villa centre) or operated independently. There are no known villas particularly close to Birdlip Quarry whose elevated position appears to have been typically avoided by villas. The nearest villa (or estate centre?) to Birdlip Quarry may have been Great Witcombe, lying at the foot of the scarp, about 5 km to the west in a direct line. The villa at Combend (RCHME 1976, 35) lies equidistant to the south-east. The status and date of the much closer sites at Birdlip/Birdlip Bypass are still unclear. It is worth noting, therefore, that Birdlip Quarry does not easily fit within either of the models of tenurial organisation proposed by Applebaum (cited in Hingley 1989, 100-110). The site certainly does not appear to come into the category of an estate workers' settlement adjacent to a villa. It is more likely to fall into Applebaum's second category, that of a 'peripheral holding', although its distance from the most likely estate centres means that it may have been the most peripheral of dependent settlements. In view of this it is possible that it was tenurially independent. Esmonde Cleary has discussed the possible existence of a class of *coloni* who, despite being legally free men, may have owed rents and labour service to an estate owner (1989, 114).

The problem of defining settlement relationships and hierarchies is bound in with the debate (discussed by Timby, *op. cit.*, 432-3) as to whether villas were in essence economic units functioning within the wider rural economy, or whether they were primarily elite residences, and whether they need have been situated within (or anywhere near) their putative estates. The debate cannot be pursued with much profit in

this report. However, it is interesting to note from Timby's statistics on the number of settlements within a 12 km orbit of Cirencester (coincidentally, covering the length of this road project almost exactly), the ratio of villas (11) to non-villa settlements/probable settlements (52) is the same or slightly lower than that around Bourton (6 villas to 24 non-villas – *ibid.*, table 20). This tends to suggest that the oft-remarked high density of villas near Cirencester is matched by a high density of non-villa settlements, showing, even at this crude level of analysis, that the region was settled by a wide social range and with the possible further implication that one required the other. This may be taken to support the idea of a pattern of villa distribution based in the rural economy, rather than one which reflected the favoured retreats of the urban elite. However, the proposal essentially suffers, like other analyses of settlement patterns, from a suspect database and, despite the valuable inventory of sites compiled by the Royal Commission (RCHME 1976), much more work is required to identify the distribution, nature and development of settlements in the region before the social and economic landscape can be examined with any confidence.

### Birdlip Quarry

The excavations at Birdlip Quarry have contributed modestly to an understanding of settlement form and development in the Cotswolds. The importance of this settlement lies in the recognition of a farming community of strongly native character which persisted and developed from the later 2nd century through to the later 4th century. While the continuity of native forms of settlement is well documented from other parts of Roman Britain, and were undoubtedly the vast majority in the northern and western regions (Hingley 1989, 31), the Cotswolds are commonly regarded as an area where Roman influence was strong and where pre-Roman traditions might not have been expected to last long. The settlement was certainly not located in a peripheral or 'backward' region beyond Roman influence and its existence cannot be explained in such terms. On the contrary, its founding beside one of the most highly visible monuments of the Roman conquest, namely the Roman military road between the *civitas* capital at Cirencester and the *colonia* at Gloucester, and well within a day's travel of either city, indicates that the symbols of Roman power and civilisation would have been pervasive. The indifference to this influence is striking and seems only explicable if it is assumed that the inhabitants were wedded to a social and economic way of life which was deep-rooted and at the same time highly viable.

In the analysis and discussion of the Birdlip Quarry settlement (Chapter 4) certain aspects of the Iron Age tradition have been explored. This discussion has been aided by some of the unusually well-preserved evidence of structural detail, development and finds distribution from the site. It has been suggested that there were fundamental structuring principles to



Iron Age settlement which were adhered to, at least during Period 1 (up to the mid 3rd century). The circular stake-walled structures of the later 2nd to early 3rd centuries are not only of native form, but archaeologically indistinguishable from houses built 500 years or more earlier, except perhaps in their larger size. It is suggested that the circular form was integral to the social life of the inhabitants, although this need not imply (and would seem inherently unlikely) that all aspects of social life remained unchanged over this period. The orientation of the doorway to the south-east is also an Iron Age tradition, one which is held to have been related to the position of sunrise, perhaps particularly at the winter solstice. That this orientation was important is emphasised by the fact that it resulted in the roundhouse facing away from Ermin Street. The tradition appears to have been further emphasised by the fact that the first roundhouse (structure 1463) was replaced in exactly the same position by the second roundhouse (structure 1464). This may have been because the house had become dilapidated, but the fact that the earlier drainage gully was deliberately filled in and then redug suggests that the process was a formal refounding, perhaps related to the death of the house owner or some other event which needed commemoration. The distribution of finds in relation to the roundhouse indicates that midden material was deposited at the front of the building and on the left hand side (looking towards the building). There is some indication that this was a standard practice in the Iron Age, although this subject requires more research. There has also been some discussion of the distribution of finds within the roundhouses and the later structures in this area as well as over the site in general. Although no clear patterns were identified it is felt that the presentation of this data is useful for exploring some ideas about the way material culture was used.

The change of site organisation in the mid to later 3rd century (Period 2A) corresponds to a clear change in vernacular architecture. A stone-founded circular or polygonal building (structure 1452) replaced the stake-walled roundhouses. This was of a very similar size to the earlier buildings and in an almost identical position. It is unclear whether this reflected any changes in the nature or social organisation of the settlement. There are a number of late 3rd-century stone-founded circular buildings known from southern Britain and possible parallels have been sought. However, on present evidence they do not appear to represent a distinct vernacular type and may have incorporated a variety of structural techniques and have had a variety of uses. The changes in the early to mid 4th century were the most radical in the settlement's history and may reflect a fundamental break with the pre-Roman past. The buildings are difficult to interpret but it appears that large circular structures (and therefore the earlier forms of social organisation) were abandoned in favour of rectangular buildings. There also appears to have been a change in the pattern of rubbish disposal with material now deposited both next to the structures and in a more

distant midden. The reasons for the abandonment of the settlement in the later 4th century are also obscure, although it is possible that this was part of a regional reorganisation of the settlement pattern which resulted in fewer but larger settlements.

Although the position of the Birdlip Quarry settlement in the regional pattern is not known it was probably not a particularly rare type. A comparison with the settlement at Barnsley Park suggests that Birdlip Quarry may have been similar, or have had similar elements, up until the mid 4th century (Fig. 4.110). At Barnsley Park the villa then developed, while Birdlip Quarry was abandoned. Up until that point there are observable similarities between the excavated (ie. southern) part of Birdlip Quarry and the southern compound at Barnsley Park, both in the type of buildings present and their sequence and date of construction. It is possible that this represents the development of a particular kind of farming group in the region. The evidence from Birdlip Quarry would suggest that within the mixed farming settlement this group had a particular role which was concerned with tending cattle and horses. Their position beside Ermin Street suggests that the provision of transport may have been an aspect of this specialism. Although there is nothing from the archaeological evidence to suggest a formal role as a posting-station, there is a suggestion that it may have served as a relay-station (*mutatio*) as well as a waystation for low-ranking or unofficial travellers.

#### THE POST-ROMAN PERIOD by Andrew Mudd

There was very little evidence of post-Roman occupation from the excavations on the project. The only buildings excavated were the medieval kitchen block and overlying agricultural buildings at Street Farm, Latton. On a number of sites the turnpike and other roads and trackways were examined. Most of the other sites revealed disparate evidence of post-Roman activity, consisting of miscellaneous finds, quarries, ditches and features relating to agricultural land use.

#### Settlement

The lack of evidence for post-Roman occupation may be considered unsurprising since the new road avoided existing settlements many of which are likely to have been the focus of occupation from at least the later Saxon period. There is evidence of this from a number of the nearby churches which have been shown to have pre-Conquest origins. These include Duntisbourne Abbots, Duntisbourne Rouse, Daglingworth and Preston (Heighway 1984, 230; Gerrard 1994a, 95). The dearth of evidence of rural occupation in the 5th–7th centuries (and the ambiguity of much of the urban evidence) is a regional phenomenon (Heighway op. cit., 227). It is possible that these sites also lie under later settlements, but such continuity is not documented nationally and appears to be unlikely in the Cirencester region.



The shortage of evidence at this time is probably attributable to the poverty of material culture and the deficiency of archaeological features, perhaps combined with a decreased population after the Roman period.

In view of the regional background, the presence of early Saxon pottery north-west of the present village of Latton attains a significance well beyond the meagre quantity of material recovered. Early Saxon pottery has already come from a pit in this field (Wilts. SMR SU09NE400), and the current evidence re-inforces a suggestion of a settlement here. No features of this date were recognised in the watching brief and there is no clear indication of settlement from the cropmarks, although, since features from this period can be notoriously difficult to recognise unless large areas are stripped archaeologically, this absence is not altogether surprising. The location of this site between the Roman settlement and the medieval village at Latton may suggest a gradual shift of settlement focus.

The excavations at Street Farm demonstrated the presence of occupation on the western side of Ermin Street, away from the centre of the village, from the 13th or 14th century. Although only a kitchen block was defined, this would almost certainly have been associated with a dwelling lying closer to the road. It must be considered a possibility that this was one of a row of houses here whose croft boundaries endured until the modern period, although this has not been shown to be the case since the surviving property boundaries examined proved to be post-medieval or not closely datable. The presence of a focus of medieval settlement away from the village core would have implications for the nature of village development. It remains unclear whether this offshoot might have had functions relating to the road, as well as, presumably, an agricultural basis.

The status of the 12th–14th century finds from south of Witpit Lane is unclear. It may be the site of a ploughed-out medieval settlement, although more field work would be required to substantiate this. Deserted settlements of various types and dates are suggested to be quite common in Gloucestershire (Aston and Viner 1984, 282), and in particular there is the expectation that farms deserted at the time of enclosure ought to be identifiable (Gerrard and Viner 1994, 135). There appears to have been little recent work on medieval and later settlement dynamics, although it is interesting to note that at Frocester it was suggested that a number of small settlements existed until the 12th century, after which there appears to have been a nucleation in the present village (Aston and Viner 1984, fig. 10). The present project contributes little to the theme of deserted settlements although some speculation about the demise of the post-medieval buildings at Street Farm after Inclosure has been offered.

### Cultivation

The evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation was almost continuous through the parishes of Preston

and Latton, and less common, or entirely absent, elsewhere. This confirms, but does not substantially add to, the picture of ridge and furrow distribution in the vicinity of Cirencester (Gerrard 1994b, fig. 41), which has been shown to lie predominantly on the eastern and southern sides of the town (the parishes of Preston and Siddington). The shortage of evidence for cultivation in the northern section of the project, which closely followed Ermin Street, is to be expected. However, its absence in the parishes of Baunton and Bagendon in the Cirencester and Stratton Bypass section is noteworthy and, particularly when considered in the light of the lynchets found at Birdlip Quarry, Cowley, this contrast does not seem explicable in terms of geology. It may well rather reflect a difference in the history of land use between these areas. As noted by Gerrard (1994b, 118) very little excavation has been carried out on medieval agricultural remains around Cirencester, however, there is good documentary evidence for a number of parishes such as Cowley, (eg. VCH). This discussion therefore comprises little more than a few comments and observations, although the evidence, as far as it goes, does support the general trends.

In the main, medieval ridge and furrow comprised long narrow strips with a reversed S-shaped plan, whereas the post-medieval furrows tended to be straighter and more widely spaced. Both types of ridge and furrow were found on the current project. In the Latton area, most of the ridge and furrow recorded and visible as cropmarks was broad and widely spaced (about 15–16 m apart), and respected the post-Inclosure field boundaries. At Westfield Farm, two distinct patterns of ridge and furrow existed. The earlier phase of ploughing comprised narrow furrows, spaced at about 7-m intervals, which ran parallel to a Roman field boundary. These were replaced by post-medieval 'broad rig' furrows which ran in a different direction. The earlier furrows were uncommonly narrow and in that respect were similar to examples at Gwithian in Cornwall which were dated to the 9th or 10th century (Taylor 1975). There is, however, absolutely no evidence for such an early chronology for any of the furrows examined during the course of these excavations, and it is furthermore unclear to what extent the narrowness of furrows can be attributed to an accident of survival rather than a direct outcome of early agricultural practice. Regardless of absolute date, the fact that the early furrows at Westfield Farm respected the alignment of the Roman field boundary can be taken as evidence that the Roman features were still visible during the medieval period and were incorporated into the new landscape.

In the parish of Preston, two patterns of ridge and furrow were evident at St Augustine's Farm South, Site Na. In this case both patterns were quite narrowly spaced. The broader north-east – south-west furrows, which were also found at Site O, correspond to the direction of the pre-Inclosure strip fields mapped in 1770. The narrower furrows at Site Na, running east-west, are presumably earlier although this cannot be demonstrated. If this assumption is correct it implies



a change in cultivation practice which was earlier than, and unrelated to, Inclosure. Just south of St Augustine's Lane the single furrow in Site Nb running east-west corresponds to the alignment of the strip fields here in 1770. The field north of St Augustine's Lane with the narrow east-west furrows had been enclosed by 1770 and there is no record of the strip field system. This absence applies to much of the land between St Augustine's Lane and Witpit Lane, which had been enclosed by 1687 (the first cartographic record of the parish). It is therefore unclear whether the extensive ridge and furrow here is derived from the pre-Inclosure layout or not. The irregularly-spaced, post-medieval ridge and furrow at Preston Enclosure may pre- or post-date the Inclosure of these fields, or it may represent traces of two systems on the same alignment. There is a suggestion that the 'narrow rig' at the Witpit Lane site was medieval rather than later, but the pottery evidence, abundant though it is, is not conclusive since it may all have been residual. At Norcote Farm the broad but narrowly-spaced furrows contained post-medieval finds. From this latter site it appears that, while closely-spaced furrows can often be shown, or reasonably assumed to be medieval rather than later, this is not an invariable rule.

The cultivation lynchets at Birdlip Quarry, Cowley, were unique on this project. They suggest quite intensive arable cultivation here in the medieval period, which was presumably undertaken from the shrunken village at Stockwell, the nearest contemporaneous settlement in the parish, which lay a little over 1 km to the north-west (Glos. SMR 5758). This settlement is documented from the 13th century and was evidently depopulated during the late 18th century following the enclosure of the open field. It is not known when the lynchets themselves fell out of use. The field was known simply as South Field by the time of the 1847 tithe survey, suggesting that the lynchets may not have been visible by then. Cultivation terraces have also been recorded just south of Stockwell (Glos. SMR 6710) and ridge and furrow a little further south still (Glos. SMR 14858). Arable cultivation here appears to have been quite extensive in the medieval period, contrary to any implication from the place-name that the settlement may have had a pastoral specialism.

### **Boundaries**

Post-Roman boundary ditches and walls were recorded at a number of sites. In general these scattered features contributed little to an understanding of the pattern and development of physical land units. Some aspects of the apparent continuity of boundary ditches from the Roman period has been mentioned in Chapters 4 and 6. In some cases, such as Latton 'Roman Pond', the continuity of boundary definition can be related to physical factors – in this case the division between well-drained terrace soils and the wetter peat – which remained a governing factor in land use. The persistence of boundaries alongside

Ermin Street can be attributed to the continued presence and use of the road, although it is possible that the quite precise coincidence of Roman and post-Roman ditches at Birdlip Quarry might reflect active maintenance of the boundary rather than merely the existence of the road as a topographic determiner. At Exhibition Barn, Baunton (Chapter 4) it has been suggested that an addition to a Roman boundary system was made during the initial post-Roman re-organisation of the landscape. This would seem to point to the evolution of boundary ditches from the Roman to medieval and, in this instance, the modern period, although this site stands as a somewhat isolated example and the wider implications for landscape development are unclear.

The proposition that Roman boundaries and administrative units in this region continued into the medieval period was raised many years ago (Finberg 1955) and has been revisited periodically since then (Reece and Catling 1975; Slater 1976; Reece 1984). One aspect of this topic is the suggestion that parish boundaries may represent the fossilization of Anglo-Saxon and perhaps earlier estates (Gerrard 1994a, 95). However, archaeological evidence has been able to contribute relatively little to this line of enquiry. At the evaluation stage of the current project the parish boundaries between Daglingworth-Baunton, Daglingworth-Bagendon, Baunton-Cirencester and Preston-Driffild were singled out as being of particular research interest (CAT 1991a, 135–6), although such boundaries need not have been defined by man-made, nor any kind of archaeologically recognisable feature. The Preston-Driffild (formerly Harnhill) boundary at Harnhill Road was targeted with two evaluation trenches to either side of it (CAT 1991a, 106–112), but failed to find any boundary-related features. The only parish boundaries specifically targeted at Stage 3 was the junction of Daglingworth, Baunton and Bagendon at Warren Gorse House Area 2. Extant drystone walls were recorded, as well as the probable foundation of an earlier wall, but although these were undated they seem unlikely to be very ancient, and there were no underlying boundary features.

### **Water management**

Relict river channels and later drainage ditches were revealed at Weavers Bridge. The complex of inter-cutting features gave some indication of the dynamic nature of the Churn river system between the Roman and early modern period, although no firm conclusions could be drawn concerning the overall pattern or chronology of its development.

Of some interest were the results of investigations of the Churn Valley sediments north of Trinity Mill, Baunton (Chapter 8). Here a pollen sequence from waterlogged sediments in the former river channel yielded evidence of viticulture in the valley. Two radiocarbon dates, from levels in the profile similar to those yielding the pollen, produced dates within the 15th century (Appendix 1, samples 21 and 22). There appears to be no reason to doubt these dates



except that they are rather later than most dated evidence for viticulture in this country (see Scaife, Chapter 8). It is conventionally thought that climatic deterioration from the end of the 13th century was responsible for the abandonment of vine cultivation (Platt 1978, 94-95), and there appears to be little documentary evidence for its continuation after this (Dyer 1989, 62). However, the current evidence would suggest that it did continue albeit, perhaps, on a small scale. It can be noted that the south-east-facing slope of the Churn valley here may have been an exceptionally favourable site for grape cultivation. Much of the parish of Baunton was an estate of Cirencester Abbey before the Dissolution (L Viner, pers. comm.) which offers a possible tenurial context for this practice.

The radiocarbon dates also appear to have implications for the date at which the river channel was put out of use. Survey by RCHME (McOmish and Lewis 1991) has indicated that the channel formed an integral part of the operation of the water-meadows in this part of the Churn Valley, providing a source for feeder channels which supplied drains running

south and east. The water-meadows were used as specialised pasturage for sheep and are thought to have been constructed between *c.* 1600 and *c.* 1750. However, this dating is only an approximation, based on examples drawn from Wessex, and the Churn Valley water-meadows themselves do not appear to be closely documented. It is possible that the operation of the water-meadows, which essentially involved channelling water from the northern and western sides of the floodplain into the carriers and drains on the southern and eastern side, while at the same time still needing to maintain the flow to the stream for Trinity Mill, was instrumental in the demise of the original channel. The current dating suggests that the channel suffered a loss of flow and was becoming choked in the 15th century, although it presumably still functioned for several centuries after that. This somewhat indirect reasoning may suggest that the water-meadows were actually a 15th-century rather than later construction, although clearly there may have been other reasons for the silting up of the river channel, including perhaps the enlargement of the mill stream.

