Chapter VI

Discussion of the Romano-British occupation

VI.1 The Early Roman occupation

Evidence of 1st century and early to mid 2nd century occupation was found over a large area west of the Lechlade-Burford road (Fig. 33). The settlement lay a little way north-west of the junction of two droveways between 20 m and 30 m wide. These droveways were probably first defined by ditches in the 2nd century AD, but appear to be of much greater antiquity (see Ch. III.B.1.a and Ch. III.B.8). One ran south-east parallel to the river Leach down to the floodplain just above its junction with the river Thames, the other headed south towards the low-lying first terrace and the floodplain of the Thames (Fig. 4; Fig. 110).

Only a part of this settlement was investigated, but occupation seems to have been entirely native in character. The only probable domestic structure excavated was that within enclosure 56 (Fig. 34). In contrast to the circular gullies of the Iron Age, house sites of this period are characterised by oval or sub-rectangular ditched enclosures with occupation debris in their terminals, as at Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon (Case & Whittle 1982, 104 Fig. 59 and 115–6) and Smithsfield, Hardwick, Oxon (Allen 1981, 30–31). Circular enclosures are found, but no longer appear to represent house-sites (see also below). Enclosure 56 appears to show the transition from a circular to a sub-rectangular enclosure, although the progression cannot be closely dated. Traces of the houses themselves rarely survive, perhaps indicating a mass-wall construction like that of the conquest period houses at Hod Hill (Richmond 1968, 19–23 and Figs. 10b, 12 and 13), where oval and horseshoe-shaped buildings were excavated.

Related to the house was a cluster of pits. As at other sites of the 1st century AD these were of very varied shape and size; none were as regular as Iron Age storage pits and few of classic U or beehive shape. Nevertheless some of those at the 1st century AD settlement at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon (Miles 1986, 8, Fig. 5) had apparently been used for grain-storage, and this was also possibly true at Roughground Farm. Pit-storage is abandoned by the end of the 1st century at Barton Court, but may have persisted until the mid-2nd century here.

Adjacent to 56 were short lengths of slot enclosing an area *c* 14 m square (internal area *c* 190 sq. m), dating to the late 1st century or early 2nd century. This was more likely a fenced pen than the outline of a building. Rectangular pens of similar size are a common element of contemporary settlements, for instance Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon (Lambrick 1986, 113) and Barton Court Farm (see below).

The house, pits and pen were at one stage contained within a ditched compound *c* 40 m square. In this phase the arrangement was very similar to that of the Late Iron Age enclosure at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon (Miles 1986, 5–8 and Fig. 5), which had a cluster of pits and a rectangular enclosure (internal area 180 sq. m) adjacent to the house. Apart from open areas for livestock, these three elements constituted virtually all of the farmstead of this phase at Barton Court Farm, suggesting that the compound at Roughground Farm should be seen as one complete farming unit within the settlement.

The compound ditches are dated to the end of the 1st century, and are clearly a secondary development of what was previously a more 'open' settlement similar to the earliest phase at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm (S. Palmer pers. comm.), where functional areas are less rigidly defined and individual stock and occupation enclosures are protected by deep ditches to keep animals in or out. Ditches 42, 65, 68 etc (Fig. 34) and 456/457 (Fiche 4#62) indicate that there was at least one further compound adjacent on the south.

Other features were scattered larger storage pits and several sizeable ditches recut on numerous occasions, some of which may have formed stock enclosures; heavily recut enclosures 12–20 m across with equally few finds have been excavated at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm, Fairford nearby (Miles 1984, 199). There they belonged to 1st century AD Late Iron Age and Early Roman settlements that were superseded before the 2nd century. The smaller circular gullies 66 and 67 (Fig. 34) are of more typically Iron Age form, but can also be paralleled with Early Roman circular enclosures at Eagle Farm, Standlake, Oxon (Allen & Moore 1987, 96–7) and at Smithsfield, Hardwick, Oxon (Allen 1981, 29). At these sites they were shallow and contained few finds, and were not apparently domestic; similar circular enclosures at Claydon Pike have been interpreted as surrounding hayricks (Miles pers. comm).

Lines of postholes, one of which lay beneath the floor of Building I, may indicate an early timber building

Figure 110 Vertical aerial view of Roughground Farm and the area to the south, showing the continuations of the Early Iron Age boundary ditches and the Romano-British trackways, the Bronze Age ring-ditches and the settlement to the south-west of the villa (Fairey Survey 1961 No. 11 023)

beneath the villa, but in the absence of occupation layers have plausibly been interpreted as scaffolding holes (see Ch. IV.C.2). Margaret Jones has suggested that the so-called 'early house' at Ditchley (Ralegh Radford 1936, 19–23) might be similarly re-interpreted.

The Early Roman settlement covered an area of at least 80 m by 140 m, most of which was probably occupied contemporaneously. At Claydon Pike the settlement nucleus was *c* 60 m square, but was surrounded by stock enclosures and other features (S. Palmer pers. comm.). Roughground Farm may originally have been similarly organised, as the features at the south end mostly contained few finds and were probably peripheral. Nevertheless the occupation area suggests that there was more than one domestic focus like 56, and the settlement probably consisted of a hamlet of several such farming units (see also below).

The pottery of this phase included very few fine wares, showing little evidence of wealth and only gradual Roman influence. The assemblage is in this respect comparable to such sites as Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon or Smithsfield, Hardwick, Oxon, where native fabrics and forms continued until the end of the 1st century (Green in Lambrick and Allen in prep; Allen in prep). Other finds include saddle and rotary querns, triangular loomweights and spindlewhorls, fired clay from ovens and possibly bone-working debris. A possible tuyere may also indicate metalworking, but there is no other evidence to support this (Ch. V.11) These are the activities typical of a largely self-sufficient farm of the Late Iron Age and early Romano-British period, comparable to the sites at Langford Downs (Williams 1947, 44–59) and the first phase at Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, 6–8). The discovery of triangular loomweights, which are not generally considered to continue into the Roman period, perhaps demonstrates the conservatism of the settlement.

The evidence suggests that mixed farming was practised. Storage pits and querns suggest arable, while the droveways, the layout of the settlement and the deep-ditched enclosures imply pastoral farming. The bone sample represents a typically Late Iron Age/Early Roman mixture of livestock comparable to those of the sites already mentioned. Overall the picture is of a conservative settlement gradually adopting Romano-British technology and practices during the first century of the Roman occupation.

A dump of pottery of the 1st half of the 2nd century came from pit 320 beneath Building III (Fig. 53; Fig. 130 on Fiche 1#34). This includes fineware imports and is of higher quality than pottery associated with 56. This assemblage may predate the construction of the villa, in which case it hints at another domestic building in the Early Roman settlement, and one of higher status than that within 56. On the analogy of other villas such as Latimer (Branigan 1971, 81–2) and Park Street (O'Neil 1947, 24–5) there may have been an earlier house below the west end of villa building I in the area destroyed without record. This would clearly have important implications for the general conclusions offered about the wealth and status of the site.

VI.2 The villa buildings

VI.2.a The aisled buildings

This class of building is well-known from Roman Britain, and examples are most commonly found on villa sites. The date and area of origin of this form of construction have been much discussed (JT Smith 1963; Stead 1976, 94; Morris 1979, 55–6); excavations at Gorhambury (Neal *et al* 1990, 32–5 and 91–2) have recently revealed a sequence of these buildings starting at least as early as the mid-1st century AD, showing that the design was either already familiar to the Romans at the conquest or more likely was developed in Late Iron Age Britain.

In the Upper Thames valley the earliest examples, two at Claydon Pike, Fairford, Glos. (buildings B1 and B3, Miles 1984, 199–201) one at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, Glos. (Palmer 1988a), have all been dated to the end of the 1st century AD. The larger two of these were purely of timber construction, the aisle posts surrounded by outer walls bedded on timber sills, the third had outer walls of stone. All these buildings remained in use until the later 2nd century.

Two aisled buildings were identified at Roughground Farm, Building IV within the main villa-building complex, Building VI further east at the junction of the south and south-east droveways (Fig. 42 and Fig. 78).

Building VI, which was represented only by postholes and a length of slot, appears to have been constructed entirely of timber like the larger aisled building at Claydon Pike or that at Wakerley, Northants (Jackson & Ambrose 1978, 138–140). In the Wakerley report the excavators suggested that the ratio of overall length to width (including aisles) is usually about 2:1, and Building VI also fits this specification. At both sites the aisle is narrow when compared to the average ratio between nave and aisle width in such buildings.

Dating evidence from the postholes is very slight, but suggests 2nd century construction at the earliest. A 2nd century or later date is also implied by its position alongside the droveway ditches, which were probably not dug before the early 2nd century (see Ch. IV.F.5.a). The change in width between the lines of postholes halfway along may indicate that two buildings are involved, or that an originally shorter structure was later extended. In its situation Building VI is similar to aisled buildings P and Q at Winterton (Goodburn 1978, 95–100); building Q in particular offers parallels for the less regular construction and possible stock function of Building VI.

Building IV has a more complex history. It was constructed in the first half of the 2nd century AD in the south-

east corner of the villa enclosure, adjacent to a trackway. The aisles consisted of rows of posts; it is suggested (see Fig. 43) that the outside walls were originally stone sills supporting a timber superstructure, similar to the smaller aisled building at Claydon Pike nearby. There is little information about the overall dimensions of this building or of its internal arrangements, but it can be inferred that the surviving part was not subdivided to a significant degree. Hadman (1978, 189–190) states that the simple timber examples without elaboration are usually twice as long as wide, which would indicate a length of around 23 m externally, but the proportions of nave to aisles, which he also claims is usually 2:1, is not found in either of the Roughground Farm examples.

It is possible that a timber structure (directly overlain by the later Room 5) was attached to the N side, similar to building B2 added to the larger aisled building B1 at Claydon Pike (Miles 1984, 199–201). At Claydon Pike B2 was interpreted as domestic accommodation, the aisled building reserved for storage. Miles has argued that the finds at Claydon Pike (and at Neigh Bridge) demonstrate links with the military, the sites perhaps acting as official storage depots, and the size and construction of B2 has been compared with military buildings of the period. No such evidence has been found at Roughground Farm, and it seems possible that this is an example of the copying of military construction by a civilian settlement nearby. This arrangement is otherwise also found at Great Casterton (Morris 1979, Fig. 37 g and h).

The outer walls were soon rebuilt in masonry, slightly enlarging the building. Fig. 43 suggests that the aisle posts were replaced by continuous slots at the same time, but since few of the postholes were excavated and the slots were completely robbed their construction date is uncertain. It is possible that the aisle posts continued in use contemporary with the masonry walls, as for instance in building D at Winterton in the late 2nd century (Stead 1976, 39–49), but the fact that the westernmost pair of aisle posts lie immediately adjacent to a stone wall makes this unlikely.

Aisled buildings are commonly subdivided into an upper and lower end, the west end of an east-west building generally being preferred (Morris 1979, 56). Subdivision usually occurs along the length of the nave and aisles, creating large central rooms and smaller side chambers and maintaining the structural continuity of the building. It is much less common to have a narrow central room and wide side rooms as at the west end in Building IV; where this arrangement is found elsewhere, principally at Norton Disney and Mansfield Woodhouse, it occurs at the lower end of the building and the narrow area between the side rooms is seen as a passage giving access to the outside. A passageway is also the preferred interpretation for Room 2 in Building IV, but here it leads into the apsidal room on the west end of the building. In size this room compares favourably with the principal room found within the nave of most other aisled buildings, and is architecturally rather more sophisticated. Its width is very slightly greater than that of the nave, but the similarity to these central rooms in other aisled buildings seems clear.

One function performed by an external end room may have been to buttress the gable end of the aisled building against linear instability; at Winterton aisled buildings B and D both had one end wall significantly more massive than the side walls, and this was also the case at Denton (Stead 1976, 88). Having a principal room outside the west end of the main structure is a rare feature paralleled at Landwade, near Exning, Suffolk and at Castlefield, Andover, Hants. (JT Smith 1963, 5–8), both second century examples. Other possible examples are Clanville and Carisbrooke in their first phases (Morris 1979, Fig. 35), both without evidence of other subdivisions, but the excavations are 19th century, and at Clanville in particular the principal rooms may in fact have been internal.

Large apsidal rooms are found in only a few Romano-British villas (for instance see Eagleton, Staffs; DJ Smith 1978, 124–5 for Lullingstone, Kent and Neal 1978, 45 for Gorhambury, Herts), and are usually of high status, containing mosaic floors as at Frampton, Dorset and Littlecote Park, Wilts (illustrated by DJ Smith 1978, 132–3) or occupying a focal position in the domestic range as in Building G, Winterton, Lincs (Stead 1976, 83). They are sometimes interpreted as triclinia, sometimes simply as the principal reception room. The large apsed room recently discovered at Bulls Lodge Quarry, Boreham, Essex, is compared to the *principia* at Stonea in Cambridgeshire and interpreted as the headquarters building of an Imperial estate (Frere 1991)! Floors in the apsidal room of Building IV were largely destroyed, but there was no indication in the surrounding features or overlying ploughsoil that this room had ever had more than a mortar floor surface. In view of the proximity of the ovens and hearths in the aisled hall it is tempting to interpret the apsidal room as a triclinium, and this might perhaps have been the function of the principal rooms in other aisled buildings, but this close association of ?kitchen and dining room is not usual in the main domestic ranges on other villa sites.

The apsidal room was apparently later surrounded by a parallel wall 2452=2454, probably creating a peristyle or ambulatory around it. The foundation trench was of similar dimensions to those of the main walls, but unlike that of the inner apse was separate from those of the main building, and presumably this wall buttressed the original apse; it may only have been a dwarf verandah wall, but the foundations suggest not. This ambulatory is an unique feature in Romano-British architecture, and it is alternatively possible that 2452=2452 replaced 2420. This would, however, be a very large room indeed by the standards of Romano-British villas, and the scale of the foundations are not commensurate with this.

Professor Frere has suggested that this might have been a 'sun-parlour' or 'view-room', and that possibly the addition of a peristyle was to compensate for the loss of the view when Building III was erected, replacing the 'view' with a series of sunlit arches or trabeated openings. Certainly there would have been an unrestricted view to the west when Building IV phase 2 was in use, but whether Building III can be dated early enough to support his suggestion is uncertain. Building III phase 1 may predate Building IV phase 4, but is dated to the 2nd quarter of the 3rd century, while the addition of the peristyle to Building IV is tentatively dated to the late 2nd century. The dating evidence for the peristyle is, however, indirect, and could accommodate this later date.

Nothing of the superstructure of Building IV remains, but some tentative suggestions as to the missing third dimension are offered based upon the plan. There has been some debate as to whether these aisled buildings were covered by a single roof and lit only through the outer walls, or whether the central area was higher than the aisles and was lit by a clerestory. Smith (1963, 26–7) supported the former interpretation, but the recent excavation of the fallen south-eastern gable end of the aisled building at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke, Hants (King & Potter 1990, 196–204) has proven that at least some buildings of this type had a clerestory. For the suggested reconstructions (Fig. 111) the minimum height of the outer aisle walls has been taken to be *c* 1.8 m, sufficient for an adult to stand upright just inside the building. The height of the clerestory is taken to be 1.5 m, similar to that calculated from the fallen wall of the Meonstoke building.

Tile roofs, which are usually simply held in place by the weight of the tiles, require a shallow roof pitch; recent excavation of the fallen gable of a villa building at Redlands Farm, Stanwick, Northants (Keevill 1990, 7; Keevill pers. comm.), has indicated a pitch between 20 and 25 degrees. Slate roofs, which are pegged in place, can have a pitch of 35 degrees or more; at Meonstoke the roof pitch was apparently 47.5 degrees (King & Potter 1990, 200–202 Figs. 4–6). The roof of Building IV was probably of slate, or possibly thatch, which also requires a pitch of 45–50 degrees, and a pitch of 45 degrees has been adopted in the reconstructions.

The simplest reconstruction of Building IV involves a single roof covering both nave and aisles (Fig. 111 A); the aisle slots will presumably have supported a series of arches, and the amount of light will have been governed by the height of the side walls. If a clerestory is adopted then Rooms 1–3 at the west end, whose walls do not correspond to those of the aisles, have to be treated as a separate structural unit. These can then be roofed as a continuation of the pitch of the aisles (Fig. 111 B). In this case the addition of a peristyle to the apse in phase 3 simply extends the sweep of the aisle roof around the west end of the building (Fig. 111 C). This, however, will have meant that Room 4 was only lit indirectly through the outer walls of the peristyle, and alternatively this may have had its own clerestory. It is then possible that a single roof was employed as in A, but that the aisles, and hence the height of the whole building, was higher (Fig. 111 D). The main aisled block might also have had a clerestory as in B, but this would have made the building 11 m high.

It is alternatively possible that the pitch of aisle and peristyle roofs was lower than that of the main building, allowing for a clerestory without the need of additional height. However, since the rooms of the central block (Rooms 1–3) do not correspond to the breadth of the nave and aisles, this block has to be roofed in a single pitch, and may thus have protruded above the line of the apse and main aisled block (Fig. 111 E), providing a high gable wall for the apse. It may even have been roofed at a gentler pitch, and have stood up like a tower or transept (Fig. 111 F).

Because the foundations of the outer apsidal wall were dug separately, whereas those of the inner apse were integral with the main building, it is believed that the outer apse was secondary, and the incorporation of the eastern parts of this outer apse wall into the two rooms that replace the apse suggests that this was not simply a dwarf-wall for a verandah. It remains possible, however, that the two walls were after all contemporary, and that the outer wall was simply for a peristyle, and this is also shown on the last reconstruction (Fig. 111 F).

At Denton the presence of both ceramic tiles and stone slates in the backfilled postholes of the aisled building led to the suggestion that the nave had a steeply pitched roof of slates, the aisles tiled roofs of a shallower pitch (JT Smith 1963, 25). Excavation at Meonstoke demonstrated that the pitch of the central nave and of the aisles was different, and that the aisles were less steeply pitched than the nave (King & Potter 1990, 202 Fig. 6), and this is the preferred interpretation here.

VI.2.b Dating of the villa buildings

The earliest securely dated building is Building IV, which overlies contexts of the late 1st and early 2nd centuries, and is respected by ditches containing mid-2nd century assemblages. A construction date of 130–150 AD best fits this evidence. Aisled farmhouses do occur as the only building on some villa sites (eg Stroud), or at least predate the emergence of other domestic buildings as at Sparsholt (DJ Smith 1978, 126), but in view of the slight evidence of domestic occupation from Building IV it seems likely that Building I, which also overlies early 2nd century features, was also erected at the same time. A dump of high-quality glassware and large parts of several Samian vessels in ditch 132 adjacent, which very probably derived from the building, is dated to 150–165 AD (see Ch. V.2.b and Ch. V.7).

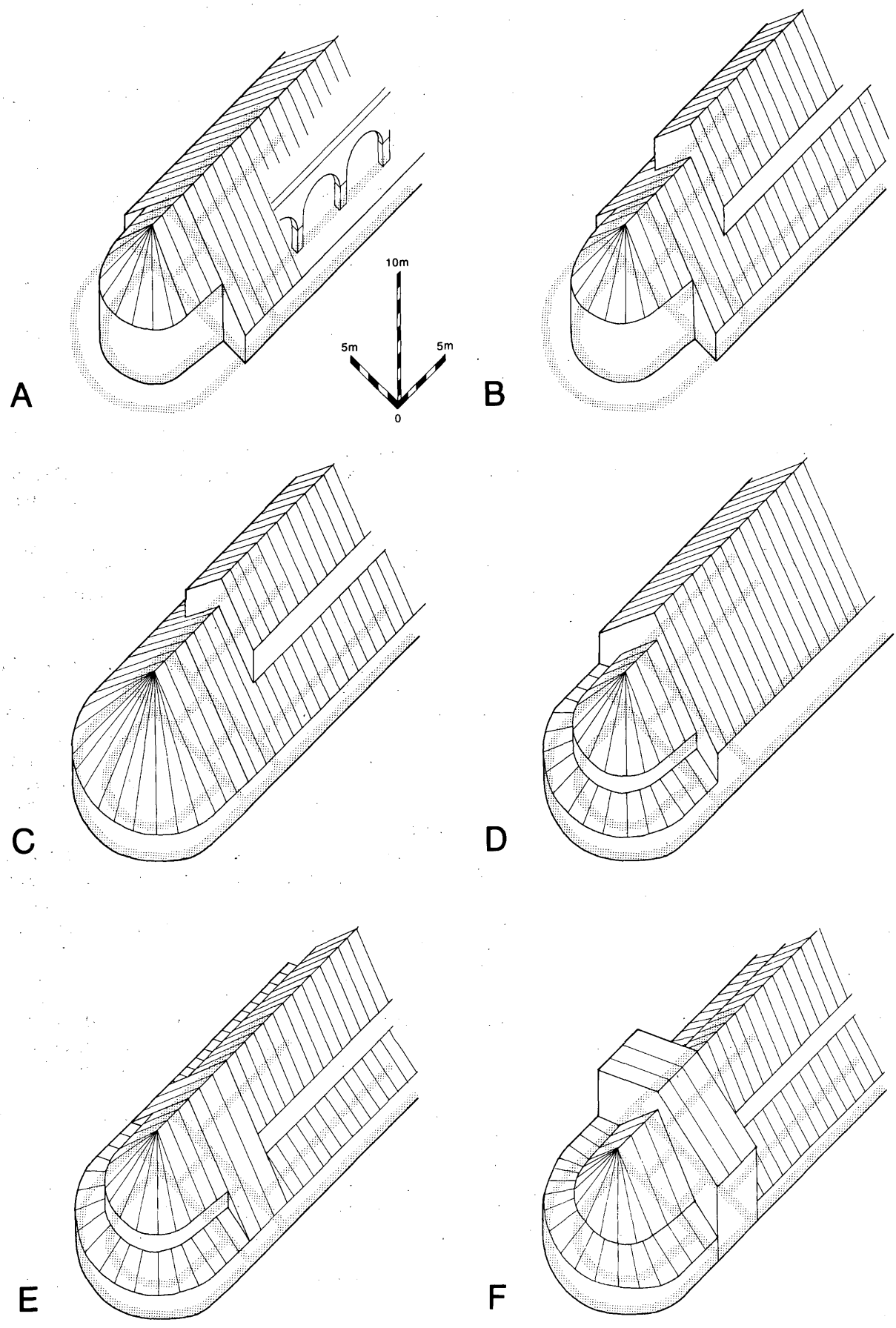

Figure 111 Possible reconstructions of Building IV

The full extent of Building I was not established, but fieldwalking in 1957 established that a slight mound extended north-west for some distance, and a dark rectangular cropmark in line with the east end of Building I is very possibly a hypocaust at its west end (see Frontispiece, Fig. 3, and Fig. 115).

The putative Building V, of which only a small length of wall was found, probably also belongs in the 2nd century.

Adjacent to Building I on the east was ditch 132, which contained a large assemblage of glass and finewares dating to the Antonine period. This ditch apparently curved NW and may have joined one of the broad soilmark ditches seen from the air just N of Building I (Fig. 3), in effect forming an enclosure around the north-east and north sides of the villa (Fig. 114). 132 is very similar in proportions and date to ditch 2429 south of Building IV (Figs. 42 and 55), which ends almost opposite it and appears to have performed a similar function on the south-east and south sides of the villa. It therefore seems possible that these may be the north and south terminals of a single villa enclosure ditch.

The wide gap between these terminals and the position of Building IV straddling their line would suggest that there was no physical barrier between the villa enclosure and the area to the east, which may also have been enclosed by continuations of the north and south boundary ditches (see Ch. IV.C.6). The terminals may, however, delineate a social or functional barrier between the domestic and agricultural buildings; the apsed room and adjoining rooms in Building IV lay west of the ditch terminals with Building I, while the aisled hall and the ovens lay to the east. In support of this hypothesis, the much later eastern villa boundary wall, 153=2496=2517, followed this same line across Building IV, incorporating the former rooms at the west end but excluding the aisled area.

Access to the villa courtyard was probably on the east side, facing onto the open area upon which the estate was focussed. Ditches and later enclosure walls on the south were continuous, and the soilmark ditches visible north of Building I appear to be similarly unbroken, though these are undated. A succession of large ditches are visible as cropmarks to the west, though these cannot be traced as far as the point where they might have met the excavated ditches on the south. During the second century there may have been gaps for access on this side, and for a brief period in the 3rd century there seems to have been direct access to the small ditched enclosures on the north-west (see Ch. IV.D.2 and Fig. 59).

In the courtyard no obvious access roads like those at Frocester Court (Branigan 1977, 75 Fig. 33) were identified, but varying surfaces of stone, gravel and loamy soil perhaps suggest garden beds and hard standings. Close-packed stone areas in the yard at Claydon Pike nearby were usually without covering structures, but at Barnsley Park such areas lay inside drystone-walled buildings (Webster & Smith 1982, 80 and 89) Possibly layers of clay and stones outside Buildings II and IV (Fig. 37), which would have been treacherous in wet weather, were covered by lean-tos of slight construction.

The area south of Building I was not investigated, but where Building III was later to be built the subsoil was disturbed by pits and hollows. An extensive black layer here, 299, may indicate use of an hypocaust nearby, presumably in the unexcavated area beneath the north part of Building III, but could alternatively represent charcoal-burning or some other semi-industrial activity. Local reports have spoken of another hypocausted building south of this, found on the edge of the quarry in the 1930s (A J Baxter pers. comm.), but in view of the presence of the villa enclosure ditch along this side this is unlikely. It is, however, possible that this report refers to the southern continuation of Building V.

In the first half of the 3rd century Building III was constructed south of I and west of IV. This building was over 15 m wide. Domestic buildings are commonly of this order of width; most are rectangular blocks three rooms deep, with a wide central range of rooms flanked on either side by narrower corridors or ranges, and the surviving part of Building III would fit such a plan. The east wall of Building III was, however, slight in its first phase, and the main structure may only have been two rooms deep (between 240 and 295), with an internal corridor on the east and passage on the west.

In this early phase the building seems to have had slight mortar floors and little decoration; there was very little destruction material when it was rebuilt in the later 3rd century, and it was probably a plain thatched building ancillary to buildings I and IV. Part of it was divided up into small rooms some of which were also unchanged in the 2nd phase. These rooms were clearly domestic in the later phase, so were probably also domestic in the first phase.

Building III was rebuilt later in the 3rd century. The east wall was made more substantial and the eastern rooms wider, so that the main structure was now fully 3 rooms deep, over 16 m wide and at least 33 m long, with the passage in addition on the west side. Containing a range of hypocausted rooms, a tessellated floor and a wide range of painted designs it is comparable to the principal residences at Ditchley (Ralegh Radford 1936, 29–44 and Fig. 9), Shakenoak (Brodribb *et al* 1971, Building B) or Barnsley Park (Webster & Smith 1982, 97–103). Only part of the plan of Building III was recovered, but its width combined with the modest nature of the original floor and wall-decoration may indicate that it too began as an aisled basilican building (from which in general the rectangular block plan described above probably developed). The conversion of basilican buildings from an ancillary role to domestic residence is common on Romano-British villas (see for example Shakenoak Farm (Brodribb *et al* 1971, 14–27) and

Sparsholt, Hants (Johnston in Todd 1978, 80–81 and Fig. 25).

There is no clear evidence that Building I had gone out of use by this time. Plaster and tesserae were found in ditches west of Building I dating to the late 3rd or early 4th century. They probably came from Building I, and may imply demolition, but charcoal, coal and ash in the long hollow 409 show that an hypocaust, most likely at the west end of Building I, was still in use into the 4th century. The plaster and tesserae need only represent alterations.

It thus appears that in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries there were domestic ranges on the south-west and north and a large aisled building on the south-east with rooms at the west end and to the north, grouped around a villa courtyard bounded by a wall on the south side (Figs. 113, 114 and 115). If Building III did originate as an aisled building, the arrangement is particularly reminiscent of that at Winterton in the 3rd century (Stead 1976, 82). Large deep ditches 416, 419 and 1604=2008 formed a ditched enclosure around the villa buildings, as was the case at Claydon Pike (Miles 1984, 200–202) and at Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, 11–12) in the later 3rd and 4th centuries.

Construction mortar from the second phase of Building III extended some 7 m east into the courtyard, as happened adjacent to Building A at Shakenoak (Brodribb *et al* 1973, Fig. 7). At Roughground Farm this was levelled off and covered with stone paving, and was possibly enclosed by a wall. Also in the 3rd century an extension was built on the west side of Building IV Room 5 out into the courtyard. This was without foundations and of fairly short duration, being overlaid by further courtyard surfaces in the 4th century.

During the 4th century, if not before, Building II was constructed in the north-east part of the villa courtyard, and the south and east sides of the yard were enclosed by a further wall. Some of the rooms at the west end of Building IV may have been retained, and were probably linked to Building III by a portico along the south side. Access to the villa courtyard on the east side was maintained through a gap just north of Building II. Hypocausted Building B was probably in use at this time, to judge from the charcoal in the top of ditch 132. At least two domestic ranges, Buildings II and III, were in use, and possibly Building I as well. The gradual appearance of an enclosure wall seems to reflect a greater division between the domestic and agricultural functions of the villa, and the development of a true courtyard rather than farmyard (see also Morris 1979, 53–4).

A bath-house would be expected on the site, but none was positively identified. No obvious stream-course has been found closer than the river Leach, and there is no low-lying area close to the centre of the villa. Water may have been channelled via a leat from the river, or the baths may have been supplied by an internal well as at Shakenoak Farm (Brodribb *et al* 1973, 23). It has also been suggested (Miles pers. comm.) that an hypocaust at Claydon Pike functioned as a bath-house without a large water-supply, providing dry-heat sauna of the 'Spartan' type (Johnston 1979, 17).

Some of the rooms in Building III could perhaps have been part of a bath-suite, but the plan was not sufficiently clear to clarify this. Another possibility is the hypocausted Building B, whose charcoal rake-out overlay ditch 132 between Buildings I and II (Figs. 36 and 37). It was favourably situated close to two of the domestic buildings, and was active in the 4th century, but the fills of 132 from the late 2nd century do not include hypocaust ash, so this building was presumably constructed after this, and the bath-house must have been elsewhere in the 2nd century.

It is possible that a bath-suite was incorporated in the missing east end of Building IV, indeed 'Building V' may have been part of this, if the reports of an hypocausted building destroyed by quarrying in the 1930s are correct. Bath-suites are commonly found in aisled buildings, usually at the 'lower' end opposite to the domestic rooms (Morris 1979, 56), and at Sparsholt, Brading and Clanville there were never any baths in the main dwelling house, only in the aisled building (DJ Smith 1978, 126–7). In the 2nd and early 3rd centuries this may also have been the arrangement at Roughground Farm, and Building 'B' may then have been a 4th century replacement.

Other stone buildings include the rectangle at C and the 'subterranean' building at A (Fig. 1; RCHM(E) Glos. 1976, 73). There are no details for either, but the building at C was not apparently ornate and was presumably ancillary, perhaps a workshop. Agricultural buildings are commonly found outside the domestic courtyard, for instance the hall and possible barn at Sparsholt (Johnston 1978, 80–81) or the workers hall and other buildings in the outer courtyard at Gorhambury (Neal 1983, 116). The building at A presumably had hypocausts, and may have been a detached bath-house for the use of the farm-labourers, as has been suggested at Gorhambury. There is no dating evidence for either building.

The overall impression is that the villa was of middle size and status, more extensive than Shakenoak but not as prestigious as such villas as Winterton, Lincs (Stead 1979) or true courtyard villas as defined by Branigan (Branigan 1977, 52–3). No stone architectural fragments like the columns from Ditchley (Ralegh Radford 1936, 42) or Claydon Pike (Miles and Palmer in prep) were recovered, but the unstratified sculpture in the round (Fig. 105.121) and the altar and other stones from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Butler's Field 500 m to the south suggest that their absence is due to thorough robbing and only partial excavation.

VI.3 The field system and enclosures around the villa

Fig. 110, Fig. 112, Fig. 115

An interim plan of this was published by Margaret Jones (Jones in Bowen & Fowler 1978, 171–2).

The fields consisted of several elements covering at least 15 hectares. These were:

1. Wide droveways and large open fields of at least 2 hectares on the south-east.
2. Narrower trackways and rectilinear fields of between 0.5 and 1 hectare on the north-west, also incorporating some small enclosures or pens.
3. A grid of rectangular enclosures immediately north and east of the villa, based upon a unit size of 17 m by 27 m.
4. Longer strips of the same width (17 m) south and north of the southern and northern enclosure groups (see 5 below) respectively.
5. Two lines of sub-rectangular enclosures (the northern and southern enclosure groups) *c* 150 m apart facing one another across the open area east of the villa, and containing a 'corndrier', ovens, pits, burials and hollows.

1. The droveways were 20–30 m wide, and are distinguished from other trackways on account of their greater width (Hinchcliffe & Thomas 1980, 68–9). They were first defined by ditches in the 2nd century AD, but appear to have been of much greater antiquity (see Ch. III.B.8), and form the pre-existing landscape into which the villa was fitted. The early Roman settlement was set a little way back from the junction of the droveways leaving a wide-open space between the outer droveway boundaries, originally 2–3 hectares in extent. Settlements at the confluence of trackways incorporating a 'green'-like area are common in the region; another possible such site lay only 1 km south-west at Butler's Field (Fig. 4) and a closely parallel layout was excavated at Appleford (Hinchcliffe & Thomas 1980, 12–16), where the droveways were also between 20 and 30 m wide and the 'green' just under 2 hectares in area. As at Roughground Farm there were few gaps in the droveway ditches, which were interpreted as channeling stock through rather than into the settlement, with the 'green' acting as a collecting area for livestock and the areas either side of the droveways as arable (Hinchcliffe & Thomas 1980, 68–9). This was possibly also the original arrangement at Roughground Farm, though no boundary such as existed at Appleford was seen dividing the open area off from the early Roman settlement.

There may also have been a trackway running in from the south-west, as a cropmark shows a trackway leading from the nearby 'green' site towards Roughground Farm. These trackway ditches were sectioned some way from the enclosure at Butler's Field (Fig. 4; Miles & Palmer 1986, 5), but did not produce any clear dating evidence.

The subsequent uses of the 'green' at Roughground Farm seem to have been varied. At Appleford the flanking enclosures were added behind the droveway boundaries and respected them, without apparent access to the droveways, but at Roughground Farm groups of smaller enclosures (see 5 above) straddled the linear boundaries and opened onto the 'green', while gravel pits also encroached upon it (Fig. 66; Fig. 115). Nevertheless an area of just over 1 hectare was left untouched until well into the 4th century, and the circular mound occupying the middle of this open area may well have been an elevated platform from which stock-collecting or even a market was overseen.

2. and 3. These enclosures and fields were probably all laid out in the later 2nd century, and shared both a common alignment and the basic unit of measurement (Fig. 112). The smallest enclosures, 17 m by 27 m, are too small to have been anything but paddocks or garden plots, and even the multiples twice or four times that size are not as large as the majority of 'Celtic' fields, which range from 0.33 of an acre (roughly 2,000 sq m) to 1.5 acres (roughly 9,500 sq m) (Rivet 1969, 26–27). The length of these small enclosures, approximately 27 m, is a standard found at other Romano-British villas (McWhirr 1981, 99–101), apparently including enclosures at Barnsley Park, although this is not mentioned in the final excavation report (Webster *et al* 1985, 73–82). A regular grid of similar-sized enclosures surrounded the villa at Maddle Farm on the Berkshire Downs (S Ford pers. comm.).

Small ditched enclosures laid out on a regular grid and associated with 2nd century occupation were excavated at Brockworth, Glos. (Rawes 1981, 45–77). A number of sizes of enclosure were represented, most of which did not correspond to the measurements at Roughground Farm, but the earliest parallel ditches were 27 m apart. The excavator suggested that the grid there was associated with centuriation, but the context of this relatively small excavation was not established. There is no indication that the layout at Roughground Farm was part of a larger grid.

Similar-sized enclosures at Barnsley Park are interpreted as paddocks (Webster *et al* 1985, 73–77), and the limited excavation of the small enclosure ditches at Roughground Farm showed that they were filled with fine silt, which does not suggest that their interiors were ploughed or dug over, and they were most likely under grass. If the suggestion that the 'green' east of the villa was used for collecting livestock is correct, it would also make sense to have paddocks and pens alongside it. Two of these enclosures had a circular dark cropmark inside them, possibly a well for watering animals (Fig. 2).

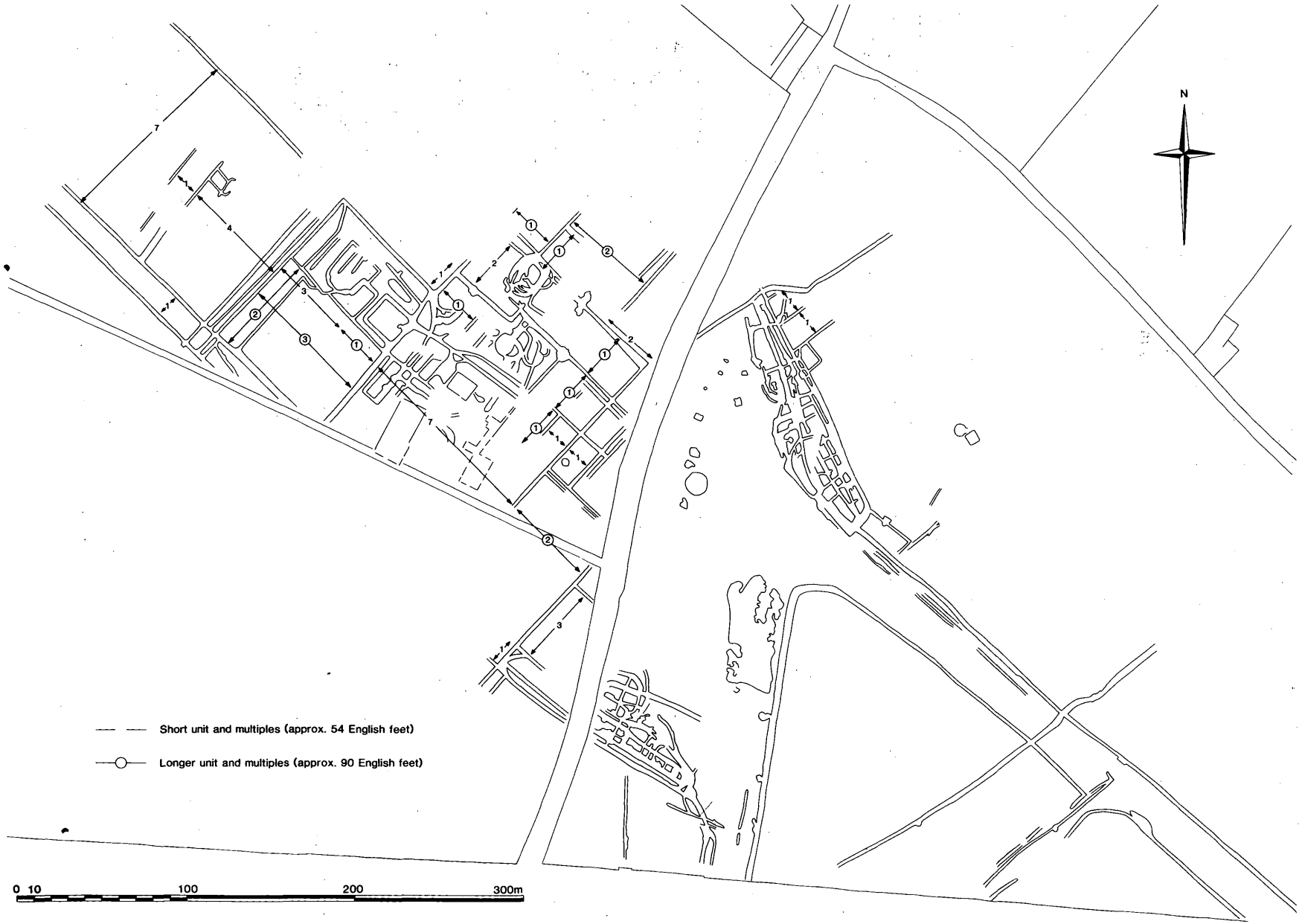

Figure 112 Roman field system showing standard measurements of layout

The larger enclosures west of the villa with their adjoining narrow trackways reveal a no less organised layout. Comparable trackways and fields have been excavated at Winterton (Goodburn 1978, 98–9) and are visible as cropmarks around other villas such as Cromwell, Northants (Frere & St. Joseph 1983, 199–200 and Fig. 121). Their use is not known, but many of their surrounding ditches had fairly homogeneous clay loam and gravel fills, in contrast to the silting of the paddock ditches east of the villa. Such an even mix of soil and gravel is characteristic of ploughsoils, and at 0.5–1.0 hectares (5,000–10,000 sq m) in extent these fields are of the same order of size as 'Celtic' fields (see above). They may, therefore, have been for arable. The very small pens or enclosures along the north side of the field nearest to the villa may have been used seasonally for animals, or alternatively may have been haystack enclosures or fodder stores for the winter.

One problem that has not been answered is why the villa buildings and their enclosure ditches are not on the same alignment as the surrounding field system. The first villa buildings, Buildings I and IV, were erected between AD 130 and 150, and appear to have a common orientation. The dating evidence for the field-system west of the villa, though limited, indicates that the system was laid out soon after, in the later 2nd century. Few of the small enclosures north of the villa buildings were investigated, and excavation only demonstrated that one phase of these is later than the early Roman house-enclosure 56, that is, after the mid-2nd century. Their orientation is, however, the same as that of the fields west of the villa, and they were probably contemporary. Even allowing for slight inaccuracy in plotting the cropmarks north and east of the villa, there is a difference of around 10 degrees between the buildings and their enclosing ditches and the excavated fields west of the villa.

Aerial photographs of the cropmarks and stripped soilmarks (see Figs. 2 and 3) show that there were two distinct alignments for the small enclosures on the north and east, one of which corresponds much more closely to the orientation of the early Roman ditches such as 40 and to that of Buildings I and IV. None of the ditches of this system were excavated, and it is possible that this was the original field layout, restricted to a group of small enclosures on the north and east sides of the villa enclosure.

Despite the limited scale of excavation of the early Roman settlement, it is evident that the villa buildings directly overlay its core, and that the boundaries of the earlier settlement were very closely mirrored by those of the villa, at least on the west and the south. There is some evidence that the alignment of boundary ditches belonging to the early Roman settlement such as 40 and 42 was followed when laying out the later field systems. Possibly the later orientation, which extended west of the villa as well, was based upon different pre-existing boundaries on the west side of the villa, or other features in the wider landscape that are no longer visible. The villa building area was incorporated within this layout, but was not the controlling factor in its orientation.

The orientation of the later Building III, which is close to that of I and IV, reflects the greater influence of the villa courtyard itself than of the surrounding landscape, but the 4th century enclosure wall and the plan of Building II appears to represent an attempt to correct the orientation to match that of the field system (see Figs. 36 and 115).

4. East of the villa and attached to the north side of the northern group of irregular enclosures were two strips delineated by ditches a standard 17 m apart but at least 70 m long. These were contemporary with the latest phases of the enclosure group, demonstrating that this unit of measurement was in use from the late 2nd until the 4th century AD. The northern limits of these strips was not established, and it is possible that these represent long strips of the sort suggested at Lye Hole (Fowler 1975, 127). South of the southern enclosures a series of soilmarks which were parallel to the enclosure boundaries and were also roughly 17 m apart are suggested to have been others, and were at least 70 m long. The only one of these sectioned had a silt fill, which does not suggest that these strips were ploughed; despite their similar width to the medieval strips in the same area their use appears to have been different.

5. Overlying the northern and southern boundaries to the 'green' there grew up strings of small enclosures facing inwards and opening onto it, often with a common boundary at the back. The earliest of the northern group were of regular rectangular shape, and included both 825 which contained a four-post structure and 535 etc enclosing the 'corndrier'. The regular shape of these suggests that they too were part of an organised villa layout.

Since 825 lay behind the droveway boundary and was possibly approached by a separate trackway running down its north side its use was perhaps unconnected with that of the green. The four-post structure within 825 may imply a connection with grain storage or haystacks (Gent 1983, 249–252; Reynolds 1979), so possibly this enclosure indicates that there was arable north of the droveway.

The 'T-shaped corndrier' is the common type in the south-west of Britain (Morris 1979, 20), and this example can be closely paralleled at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxon (Miles 1986, 15–16) and Farmoor, Oxon (Lambrick & Robinson 1979, 32–34). Experiments to test the hypothesis that 'corndriers' were used to dry grain for storage have demonstrated that only small quantities can be processed at one time (Reynolds 1981, 37–43) and other interpretations such as parching grain stored in the husk or ear prior to threshing (Jones in Lambrick & Robinson 1979, 104) or to malt soaked grain for brewing (Reynolds 1981, 41–43) seem more plausible. In view of the numerous

Figure 113 Phase plan of the late 2nd/early 3rd century villa

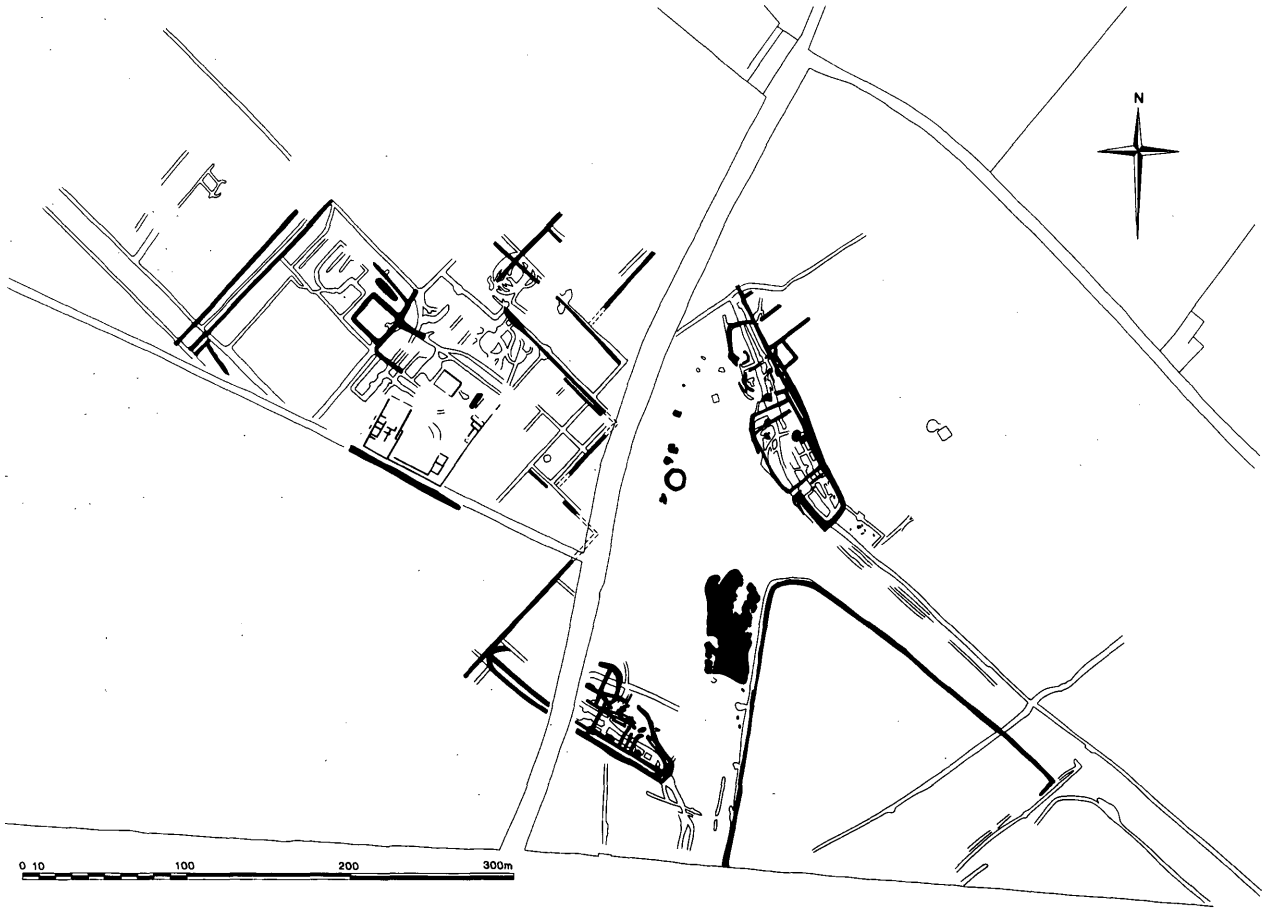

Figure 114 Phase plan of the late 3rd/4th century villa

ovens around the 'corndrier' its use to help threshing as part of a bakery is very attractive, providing sufficient grain for the day-to-day needs of a small community. Whether bakery or brewery it was probably the first structure built upon the green to serve the community that used it, and perhaps encouraged the growth of settlement in enclosures around it.

It has been suggested that parallel lines of postholes adjacent to ditch 959/960 where the more northerly droveway enters the green formed a timber building, Building VI (Figs. 66 and 78). The staggered eastern line of postholes is, however, not matched among Romano-British aisled buildings, and architecturally would necessitate fitting together two wall-plates of different height under one roof. Alternatively two roof-pitches may have been employed, and the posthole lines have represented the walls of less ambitious structures. While large aisled barns are often characterised by accurately-spaced postholes, as at Claydon Pike and Somerford Keynes (Miles and Palmer in prep), the postholes of Building IV on this site were not, and few lesser agricultural buildings have been excavated in the fields around villas (pace Winterton). It must also be remembered that not all the features of the structure at Roughground Farm were fully cleared or excavated. The use of this building, situated at the edge of the 'green', is likely to have been as a cattle-shed and hay-barn.

The subsequent expansion of both the northern and southern enclosure groups in the 3rd century may have involved an influx of population. While no buildings were identified in either set of enclosures, the profuse pottery, the glass vessels and the groups of burials scattered throughout imply that the occupation was domestic. Houses may have been of timber ground-sill construction, examples of which have been found locally at Claydon Pike (Miles & Palmer 1983, 94). The plentiful hand-operated querns also suggest activity on the household scale, and these, unlike the ovens, were equally represented in both enclosure groups. The concentration of ovens in one set of enclosures suggests that the two groups were interdependent, not entirely separate units. There is no excavated evidence of the whereabouts of the workforce that served the villa before the mid-3rd century, and they may have lived in settlements roundabout before these enclosures developed. Alternatively, however, the uninvestigated areas south and north of the villa buildings may have contained evidence of this.

There is, however, no doubt that a range of agricultural and semi-industrial activities such as smithing, sheep-shearing and bucket-making or coopering were carried out within these enclosures. Moreover their positions and their proximity to the villa suggests that they were directly involved in the villa's agricultural functions rather than simply housing part of its labour force.

Similar relationships between groups of enclosures and adjacent villas have been proposed at other sites. At Appleford the enclosures around the green were seen as largely agricultural, but large deposits of pottery were taken to imply some domestic occupation within them, and a close relationship between this 'native' settlement and a probable Roman villa at Penn Copse some 400 m away was suggested. Excavations of enclosures at Wakerley, Northants recovered a range of structures similar to that in the enclosure groups at Roughground Farm, for instance a 'corndrier', numerous ovens, a small cemetery and plenty of pottery, and the excavators suggested a link with stone-built buildings of a possible villa some 600 m distant (Jackson & Ambrose 1978, 172–3). The small quantities of animal bone, however, led them to believe that the enclosures had not been lived-in.

At Roughground Farm the enclosure groups are much closer to the villa buildings, an integrated part of the 'villa rustica'. The distinction between the 'pars urbana' and 'pars agraria' drawn by Agache (Agache 1978, 320) is clearly illustrated in the great Gallic villas such as Anthee, Namur, Belgium or Warfusee-Abancourt (Nord) (Percival 1976, 78–81), where the owner's house (the pars or villa urbana) lay within an inner court some 150 m by 100 m, separate from the vast farmyard and industrial enclosure (the pars agraria or villa rustica) beyond. Within the latter parallel rows of agricultural and industrial buildings, some of them also occupied by estate workers, faced each other across a courtyard over 100 m wide. The two roughly parallel enclosure groups at Roughground Farm are reminiscent of this arrangement. It is obviously not suggested that a comparable range of activities was carried out here, but that a similar centralisation of estate management may have been practised, with the distinction between 'pars urbana' and 'pars agraria' adapted to the pre-existing landscape.

VI.4 The villa economy

The villa economy appears, like its predecessor, to have been mixed farming, on the basis on the one hand of the droveways and paddocks, the mammal and bird bones, the shears and ox-goads and on the other of the carbonised remains, the fields, the 'corndrier', ovens and querns. This is the usual picture, the ditch-digging and settlement reorganisation of the Roman period representing labour investment in technical improvements rather than a radical change in the basic agricultural system. One innovation was the use of bread wheat as well as spelt wheat, oats and barley, and it is suggested in the environmental report that this was a specialised crop grown only on the wealthier villa sites (Ch. V.18.c). Charcoal from probable hypocaust debris and from ovens in Building IV suggests that hazel was being coppiced in the Later Roman period, but the low incidence of deer probably implies that there was scant unmanaged woodland near to the site.

Domestic fowl were kept (a relatively recent introduction to Britain) and probably also domestic duck. Horses

were probably reared; horses may have been reared on specialised low-lying pastoral sites in the Middle Iron Age (Allen and Robinson forthcoming), and the droveways at Roughground Farm leading down onto the floodplains of the rivers Leach and Thames suggest a continuing emphasis upon grazing in the Roman period.

There was an increase in the importance of cattle in the Later Roman period, which is common over much of Southern Britain, but as is usual there was no evidence of large-scale butchery or of secondary processing such as tanning at the site; recent butchery deposits from the suburbs of towns such as York and Exeter suggests that cattle were driven to towns for butchery, thus avoiding the problems of transporting processed carcasses and other animal products. There are no large towns close to the Roughground Farm villa, but livestock was possibly taken to Wanborough (near Swindon) or Cricklade, or even possibly to Cirencester.

VI.5 Burials

VI.5.a Early Roman burials

The only early burial was 1140, a cremation within a square-ditched enclosure (Fig. 30; Fig. 35), of a type rare in Britain. Very close parallels come from the Champagne region of France, where several 1st century AD cemeteries have been excavated (Brisson & Hatt 1955). Along the east coast of Britain examples of this type of burial are growing, from the square barrows of East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (Whimster 1981, 122–6) to the enclosures with single cremations excavated at Mucking (Jones pers. comm.), all indicating continental influence in the Iron Age.

In the Upper Thames there are no other square-ditched enclosure burials; the only possible links with this tradition are a four-post structure within a small circular enclosure at Appleford, dated to the later Iron Age (Hinchcliffe & Thomas 1980, 41–5 and Fig. 25), and a four-post structure within a rectangular enclosure at Smithsfield, Hardwick, dated to the mid-1st century AD (Allen in prep.). There are no parallels for the Appleford structure in the Marnian Region, and its attribution to this tradition is tenuous; the Hardwick example can be closely paralleled, but no human burials were found.

The postholes inside the ditch at Roughground Farm are similarly not matched on other sites, except for a square of four over the central burial, the sides of which were, however, normally oriented parallel to the surrounding ditch. Brisson and Hatt consider that there was a four-post roofed shrine of the dead person, a sort of heroon, upstanding over such burials. Possibly there was an oval fence around such a four-post structure here. Alternatively the oval of posts may have revetted a mound. Since the enclosure was eroded by ploughing it is possible that there were other shallower burials in this area, but the absence of other enclosures as well as of other burials suggests that it was an isolated occurrence, reflecting the preferred burial rite of one individual rather than the whole community.

The association with the circular post-setting 1100 is unparalleled, but seems hardly likely to have been coincidental, as no other circular post settings were found in the large area examined around it. There was a little abraded Early Iron Age pottery in one or two of these postholes, but little surrounding evidence of Iron Age settlement, and it is uncertain whether this was an Iron Age roundhouse. If the sherds were not residual, it may have been a funerary structure rather than a roundhouse, perhaps associated with an upstanding mound, which would account for the close proximity of an early Roman burial enclosure. Alternatively it may have been contemporary with the burial. No associations of roundhouses and such burial enclosures in the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period are known to the writer from French or British excavations.

Four thin iron nails in the burial pit may indicate that the cremation urn was placed within a box of some sort. It is also possible, but less likely, that the nails came from a structure upon the surrounding postholes. The nails were, however, too slight for any substantial structure, and nails are not known from any of the Marnian burials.

The Roughground Farm cremation may be rare evidence of a Gallic immigrant in the early Roman period.

VI.5.b Later Roman burials

Fig. 69

Excluding infants 24 inhumations probably of the later Roman period were found around the settlement. It appears that burials were grouped rather than deposited at random, and this impression is supported by the occurrence of stray human bones on the site. There were few of these, but over half of the instances were in graves with other burials, suggesting that further burials had been concentrated in these same areas. Several of the recorded burials were only seen during machine scraping in the tops of ditches, or hardly penetrated the gravel; others must have been destroyed by medieval ploughing or during scraping. The extra fragments increase the number to 26, and this is probably well below the original total. In addition the cattle market group continued north and west beyond the stripped area, and this group was clearly part of a larger number.

There was a tendency to bury people at the periphery of the settlement. This was the common practice in Roman towns, where the Laws of the Twelve Tables forbade burial within the urban area, and cemeteries lined the roads outside. Nevertheless in both northern and southern enclosure groups there were burials in the middle of the enclosures as well. It may be that these were dug only when the enclosures had been abandoned, but more likely

reflect the more varied practises of the later Roman period in Britain.

The parallel alignment of the graves in several of the groups suggests that the burials took place within generations rather than centuries of one another, though it is conceivable that graves were marked and venerated for very long periods. Possibly each group of burials represents the cemetery of a specific family or other unit within the farmstead, and was used for several generations, though family links have only been even tentatively suggested between two burials (see Table 64 on Fiche 2#84).

It was suggested in the RCHM volume for Gloucestershire (1976, 75) that the group of six at the south-east end of the northern enclosures constituted an enclosed cemetery. The burials, however, were not aligned upon the surrounding enclosure nor were they contemporary with its construction. It has been argued that Enclosure 825 was dug in the late 2nd century, and although the bodies were unaccompanied one was decapitated which is characteristically later Roman. The enclosure may still have been extant when the burials were made, but was most likely not dug as a cemetery enclosure. The many other burials in other parts of the site do not support the idea of a specific cemetery. Small ditched enclosures around burials are also known locally at Claydon Pike, Fairford (Miles 1984, 202), but there the burials were aligned upon the ditches of the enclosure.

The single burial found within the villa yard was probably very late in the occupation. Burials in and around villa buildings are common in the latest periods of villa life; these have been found in the area at Claydon Pike, Fairford, and Keynsham, near Bristol, to name but two. A disturbed skull fragment found in the backfill of a pit cut into the corridor of Building IV probably came from another such burial, as the corridor floor itself dated well into the 4th century.

No similar burials were found either for the pre-villa occupation or the earlier part of the villa's life; possibly burials of this date existed in the areas quarried away north and south of the villa buildings. It is unlikely that these modest later Roman burials were those of the owners of the villa; only the single earlier enclosed cremation may have been one of these. The later burials were more likely those of retainers who worked, and probably lived in, the adjacent enclosures. In the 2nd century and early 3rd century before these enclosure groups developed farmhands may not have lived close to the villa but have come in from surrounding hamlets where they were also buried. In that case the appearance of burials may reflect an influx of population to the villa environs, in effect centralisation of the work of the estate. The villa owners were probably buried in a more impressive cemetery somewhere close to the villa, as in the 3rd century at the Lower Warbank villa, Keston, Kent (Philp 1976, 11) or not on the site at all, but in a family burial enclosure in one of the neighbouring towns.