

Chapter 8

Claydon Pike: The Development of a Settlement on the Gravel Terraces

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INTRODUCTION

The settlements at Claydon Pike have proved to be of fundamental importance in most discussions of the Upper Thames Valley during the Iron Age and Roman periods (eg Hingley 1984, 1988; Miles 1982, 1984; Lambrick 1992; Meadows 1999). These discussions have focused upon aspects such as social structure, settlement form, consumption habits, Romanisation and the nature of change. The current revised and updated analysis of the two sites has suggested significant changes in aspects of chronology and the interpretation of material culture, which considerably alters some of the conclusions from this earlier work. Specific discussions of the different phases can be found in Chapters 3 to 7, while an overall account is presented here. The site is discussed within its wider regional context – including finds and environmental evidence – in Chapters 13 to 17.

Middle Iron Age settlement at Warrens Field

Middle Iron Age activity at Warrens Field was recorded over three gravel islands on the first terrace of the River Thames (Fig. 3.1). It probably represents the settlement of one or two families, or one extended family. The settlement shifted eastwards over time, and a number of different phases of activity could be recognised on each island. A maximum of four roundhouse structures were in use on an island at any one time. The method of construction is unknown as little trace has survived in the archaeological record, however the use of mass wall techniques, perhaps with internal timber supports, appears to be the most likely. The majority of the structures were orientated towards the south-east, as is common on so many Iron Age sites in England and Wales (see Chapter 15). This may be a result of environmental factors but may also indicate cosmological concerns or belief systems. The structures contained varying quantities of occupation refuse in their surrounding drip gullies. Large quantities of domestic debris were also identified within associated enclosure ditches, although with the exception of Enclosure 4 and Enclosure 2, they are not thought to have surrounded roundhouse structures. The deposition of refuse appeared to be structured in a number of examples, with concentrations appearing in ditch

and gully terminals, including the deliberate placement of large ceramic vessels which may have been used in communal feasts.

The inhabitants were pastoralists with a subsistence led mixed animal economy. Paddocks integrated into the settlement plan, and enclosures on the gravel islands suggest areas set aside for pastoral related activity. The extent of interaction between the inhabitants of Claydon Pike and other neighbouring groups is uncertain, however a close association with the nearby Thornhill Farm settlement may be suggested. The lower terrace or flood-plain sites in the Upper Thames Valley do not appear to have been producing grain, although this would have formed part of their stable diet (see Robinson, Chapter 14 and Chapter 15). Grain may have been brought in from producer sites on the higher gravel terraces (see below). Quernstones, salt and Malvernian pottery were brought to the site from further afield and indicates an established region wide exchange system. This system may have been maintained through acts such as the giving of feasts.

The settlement at Longdoles Field

The Longdoles Field settlement has been subjected to much re-analysis, in order to achieve a more refined and accurate chronology and to further assess the nature of change within the main phases (see Post-excavation methodology, Chapter 2).

The late Iron Age to early Roman settlement

The establishment of a nucleated settlement upon a raised gravel island in the Longdoles Field in the early 1st century AD was part of a regional pattern of settlement expansion at this time (see Chapter 16). The settlement was characterised by a series of large and intensively recut enclosures, gullies, pits and substantial boundary ditches (Fig. 4.1). Within the site was identified a number of activity areas associated with domestic habitation, small-scale metalworking, and stock management. It appears to have operated a largely subsistence economy associated with cattle ranching, and in this respect was very similar to the nearby site at Thornhill Farm. However, there were noticeable differences between these sites, with Claydon Pike having an

increased emphasis upon the settlement boundary, along with larger numbers of imported goods associated with eating and to a lesser extent drinking. This may well be an indication of the growing status of the inhabitants at Claydon Pike in a period of general socio-political turmoil. Nevertheless, it must be seen within a regional context of socio-political change and does certainly not suggest that the inhabitants were consciously adopting strategies to become 'more Roman' (see below and Chapter 16). Indeed, there is nothing in matters of personal appearance to suggest any deep founded changes associated with Roman lifestyles, and the general economy of the site appears to have been largely unchanged by the conquest. It is not until 70 to 80 years after this event that we seen any radical changes in the settlement of Claydon Pike, and in the lifestyles of the people who lived there.

The 2nd to early 4th-century AD Roman complex

The early 2nd century saw dramatic changes in the settlement structure, spatial organisation, economy and personal lifestyles of the inhabitants at Claydon Pike. The enclosures, gullies and ditches of the earlier phase were replaced by two large rectangular enclosures, the northern of which contained a substantial aisled barn used for storage and an aisled house with a tiled roof and painted plaster interior (Fig. 5.1). This was probably the residence of an extended family group who were estate owners, and there is evidence to suggest that they utilised elements of Roman style dress as well as new eating/drinking habits. The economic basis of the site seemed to change from largely subsistence level pastoralism to a more mixed economy, incorporating the management of hay-meadows. This was probably on a commercial basis to sustain the needs of growing local population centres such as Cirencester (see Chapter 16). By the mid 2nd century AD the settlement expanded onto adjacent gravel platforms which seem to accommodate the lower status estate workers, as well as providing small stock enclosures and industrial areas. What appears to have been a possible religious precinct was also established at the heart of the settlement, overlooking a central open space. There were clear physical and social divisions between the aisled building compound and the 'working' areas to the west, with the point of access between the two possibly having social restrictions attached to it. A second possible entrance to the east of the main compound may have been used for wheeled agricultural traffic, and is possibly linked to a trackway seen on aerial photographs leading south-east towards another known settlement (SMR 3191; see below).

During the later 3rd century AD, the aisled house was dismantled and replaced with a small well built square building, while another stone founded structure was built to the west in Trench 17, possibly associated with an assemblage of Oxford fineware

pottery. At the same time, the boundaries and gateway between the two zones appear to have been dismantled, which may signify that the strict social divide was no longer present. It is uncertain if such transformations in the spatial and social organisation of the site were linked to changes in site economy, but this does seem the most likely explanation. At some point during the end of this phase, there appears to have been deliberate and widespread clearing of the site with much domestic and structural material being deposited within pits and ditches. This probably marks the final stage of transition from the aisled building compound to the small late Roman villa estate

The late Roman villa complex

In the early 4th century AD a modest-masonry footed villa, comprising two separate structures, was built in the same area and upon the same alignment as the earlier domestic buildings (Fig. 6.1). The southern structure contained a hypocaust, seemingly used at least initially as a winter dining area. The villa was probably home to a nuclear family group who continued at least in part to adopt Roman style dress and culinary habits, as was typical for many rural settlements in the region during the late Roman period (Lambrick 1992, 103; see Chapter 17). A small inhumation cemetery plot c 100 m to the west is undoubtedly associated with the villa inhabitants. The surrounding gravel terrace and floodplain were no longer used for haymaking but instead had reverted to grassland used for grazing animals. It is possible however that some arable production may have occurred on certain gravel islands within the villa estate. Other economic activities may have included bee keeping and fishing, while salting and/or curing of meat and fish could also have occurred.

At some point after the middle of the 4th century quite drastic structural alterations occurred, including the imposition of an enclosure around the main building. This probably signalled a shift in emphasis towards greater perceived security needs, which is also stressed by the increase in higher security locking mechanisms amongst the small finds assemblage. The enclosure was later replaced by another on a much more substantial scale, comprising a ditch and masonry wall. A well built masonry footed shrine was also built around this time to the east, with a pathway heading out from the structure into the northern marshy area. It was probably an estate cult centre used by those in the local vicinity, and may have helped to increase the social standing of the villa inhabitants.

The final abandonment of the villa at Claydon Pike is unclear. The pottery indicates use into the latter half of the 4th century, but there is little to suggest occupation at the very end of this century. There are however, limited numbers of coins (AD 388-402) and small finds that do indicate activity of some kind until the start of the 5th century. The

general lack of clearly definable dating material of this period is well documented, although it is thought that farming in the region probably continued as it had done up until at least the very end of the 4th century (Henig and Booth 2000, 180; see Chapter 17). At Claydon Pike, despite the ambiguities, there is no reason to believe that this was not also the case, although the economic resources for the general upkeep of the buildings would undoubtedly have become increasingly insufficient.

Saxon and medieval activity

After the villa complex fell into disuse at the end of the 4th or early 5th century AD renewed activity is indicated by a number of finds and features, which included a group of six burials, three of which were radiocarbon dated to the mid-late Saxon period (Fig. 7.1; see Bayliss, Chapter 7). The four adult burials cut through the eastern walls of Building 8, while an infant burial lay to the east (possibly late Roman), and a sub-adult burial cut through Building 9 to the south. Parallels for the Claydon Pike burials may be found across the Upper Thames Valley region, and probably represent small dispersed family cemeteries, at a period before burials were formally organised in minster churchyards.

Two distinct medieval ceramic phases were identified, dating broadly from the 11th to 15th century. A stone-lined box well and section of walling were the only structural features to be associated with the medieval phase, although the later Roman outer boundary was clearly still a visible feature, despite it gradually filling up with alluvium. The surrounding gravel terrace and floodplain appear to have been used for hay meadows in the medieval period, and activity at Claydon Pike during this period was of very low intensity.

The nature of development

The widespread changes in the settlement pattern of the Upper Thames Valley during the later part of the late Iron Age are well documented (Fulford 1992, 27), and have been linked to innovations in agricultural practices (Lambrick 1992; see Chapter 16). Such agrarian developments included the significant expansion of arable production, primarily on the higher gravel terraces and the slopes and uplands of the Cotswolds. Pastoral intensification also occurred, utilising systems of paddocks and small enclosures, together with artificial waterholes. The pastoral settlements at Claydon Pike, Thornhill Farm and certain other sites on the lower gravel terraces are undoubtedly part of this intensification, with the environmental evidence suggesting that the surrounding grassland was heavily grazed at this time (see Robinson, Chapters 4 and 14). Such changes in settlement and agricul-

tural patterns must have been at least partly as a result of increased population pressure. However, although seemingly quite widespread, they were probably occurring in quite a piecemeal fashion across the region, with individual sites reacting differently to new circumstances (Moore and Reece 2001, 22). The changes must also have been accompanied or indeed been stimulated by the significant socio-political developments of the late Iron Age, which probably resulted in increasingly centralised control of resources by certain factions of the native elite (see Chapter 16).

The Roman conquest had no direct archaeologically perceptible influence on settlement structure or agricultural regime at Claydon Pike. The only noticeable post-conquest difference was an increase in artefacts associated with Roman style culinary habits (amphorae, mortaria etc), which was quite pronounced when compared with other local sites such as Thornhill Farm. It has been reiterated many times (Millett 1990; S Clarke 1996) that the adoption of such 'Romanised' ceramic markers is certainly not directly indicative of Roman values and lifestyles. However, the very fact that the material culture was changing does imply that there were also changes in social practices, as the two were deeply integrated (Grahame 1998; Greene 2002). It is therefore possible that the adoption of Roman style eating habits was used by the inhabitants as one way of socially differentiating and elevating themselves within the local and possibly regional community. There is nothing within the material culture assemblage to suggest that personal appearance was also locally differentiated at this time, with for example the number and type of brooches being quite similar to that at Thornhill Farm. However, when compared to many other rural settlements across the region, such artefacts do seem quite prolific (see Cool, Chapter 13), which may suggest a stronger emphasis on individual identity.

The major changes in settlement structure, agricultural regime and material culture at Claydon Pike were originally thought to have occurred in the 2nd half of the 1st century AD, at about the same time as the new city of Corinium was being established to the west (Miles and Palmer 1990, 22). Furthermore, it was suggested that the site became under official control, with direct – if small-scale – military involvement, due to the presence of military metalwork, glass vessels and amphorae (Miles and Palmer 1990, 22-3). These finds included an amphora sherd, upon the inside of which was inscribed the letters LEG II (see Pl. 8.1). This graffito could not be convincingly authenticated, however, and so while its existence must be acknowledged, it cannot be used as evidence for a military presence at the site.

Re-analysis of the phasing (see Chapter 2) has indicated that the substantial changes are far more likely to have occurred in the early 2nd century AD, and there is nothing in the small finds assemblage which suggests a military presence at this time (see



Plate 8.1 LEG II graffito

Cool, Chapter 5). Indeed, the only notable presence of military equipment belongs to the later Antonine/Severan period (late 2nd/early 3rd century AD), possibly where soldiers were involved in policing duties to ensure the steady supply of needed materials (see Chapter 16). This does certainly not imply that there was any direct official involvement at the site, and indeed Hingley (1989, 181) has cited numerous examples of civilian sites which contained military objects. Black (1994, 108) has suggested that the military equipment at Claydon Pike may be explained if the British landowner had served in the Roman army and come home with ideas derived from that experience. Although he was referring to the supposed 1st-century military objects (of which there is now only believed to be one), it is possible that this could account for the later equipment.

If the nature of settlement change cannot be associated with any direct official or military control, then it is likely the main inhabitants of the site were of native origin, albeit expressing certain aspects of their lifestyle in terms of Roman-style structures and material culture. They were certainly not being wholly emulative of Roman habits, but were clearly people of reasonable wealth and social standing who were now operating within a new socio-political system and were adapting accordingly. They may therefore have utilised Roman trappings to help maintain and/or increase their social standing within the local and regional community. Such social change was no doubt operating through a complex system of personal

power negotiation between communities and individuals, which would account for the variability of settlement development and material culture throughout the region (see Chapter 16). Nevertheless there is also evidence for a more widespread pattern of landscape reorganisation in the Upper Thames Valley during the early 2nd century AD, which suggests that certain conditions now existed which must have facilitated such fundamental change.

The subsequent developments at Claydon Pike throughout most of Phase 3 seem comparatively minor, although the quantities of artefacts and environmental samples from individual sub-phase groups are generally too small to note any meaningful changes. Nevertheless, it does appear that the settlement continued to operate on a modestly successful basis until the start of the 4th century AD when it likely that hay meadows were no longer grown and radical structural alterations occurred, with most of the earlier site being systematically demolished. This change from the aisled building complex to the small villa estate operating a mixed agricultural economy probably took place over one or two generations and may be linked in some way to wider regional developments, such as the establishment of the new province of *Britannia Prima* (see Chapter 17). Nevertheless, as with the earlier periods, the development of the site is also likely to have been guided by the specific responses of the inhabitants to the circumstances of the period.

The settlement in the local landscape

Claydon Pike was part of a well-populated Upper Thames Valley landscape, both in the Iron Age and Roman periods, with a large number of settlement sites, field ditches, trackways and isolated finds being recorded in the immediate vicinity (see Chapter 2 and Fig. 2.1). However, aside from the adjacent Thornhill Farm which was less than 1 km distant, there are very few middle Iron Age sites in the near locality that have been comprehensively excavated. Parts of what would appear to have been quite an extensive middle Iron Age settlement have been discovered during archaeological investigations at Lechlade just 1.5 km to the east of Claydon Pike Warrens Field, as indicated by a number of boundary ditches, ring gullies and storage pits (Bateman *et al.* 2003; OA 2001). Further east at Hatford Down near Faringdon was a further middle Iron Age settlement (Bourn 2000). Lying 4 km to the west of Claydon Pike was a middle Iron Age site at Totterdown Lane, Horcott, which included ten ring gullies with an enclosure and associated field system (Pine and Preston 2004).

The relationship between the Warrens Field settlement at Claydon Pike and its local neighbours is of paramount importance in understanding the wider middle Iron Age landscape (see Chapter 15). The inhabitants appear to have been pastoralists with a subsistence led mixed animal economy, as is

the case for most other sites on the lower gravel terraces. Crop processing waste and the presence of quern stones across the site indicates that grain also played an important part in their diet, although it does not appear to have been grown in the immediate vicinity of the site. It must therefore have been brought in from elsewhere, potentially one of the sites located on the higher gravel terraces such as at Lechlade, or further afield like Gravelly Guy. Certain resources such as quernstones, Malvernian pottery and salt had also been brought to the site, but probably from much greater distances than the grain (see Chapter 15).

The local landscape of the Roman period appears to have been much more intensively settled, although it is still the case that many of the sites have not been comprehensively excavated to the same level as Claydon Pike. Furthermore, it appears that the majority of the sites where specific dating evidence is available did not start before the early 2nd century, while others, notably Thornhill Farm, were abandoned at this time. This period clearly saw major landscape redevelopment (see Chapter 16), and by examining the distribution and types of settlement around Claydon Pike, it is possible to start to gain some understanding of how the landscape was organised. The aisled building complex at Claydon Pike was clearly the centre of a larger agricultural estate, which appears to have specialised at least partially in the management of hay meadows. It is uncertain as to whether the nearby settlement at Thornhill Farm was deliberately abandoned at this point, but the overlying trackways and field ditches, together with evidence for hay fields, suggests that the area was subsumed into the Claydon Pike estate. The main east-west trackway in the Longdoles Field site probably continued westwards to become the NE-SW trackway running through Thornhill Farm. The track appears to have continued through a small Roman settlement at Kempford Bowmoor, immediately south of Thornhill Farm, and is lost into a palaeochannel at some distance after this (OAU 1989a; Fig. 2.1). The site was badly disturbed, but appeared to consist of a series of enclosures with smaller areas of scattered rubble, spread over an area of *c* 1 ha. The pottery and coin evidence indicated occupation from the 2nd to early 4th century AD, thereby correlating with the Claydon Pike Phase 3 settlement. It is possible that this was a subsidiary domestic foci within the larger estate. Just to the south-west of this site at Whelford Mill was a small concentration of Roman pottery, rivets, weights and other metalwork, along with a small late 3rd-century coin hoard (see Chapter 12). As the finds were from surface collection there are no details on site context, although they presumably lie within the Claydon Pike estate, and would have been deposited during the transitional period at the end of Phase 3. Less than 1 km further west was the 2nd- to 3rd-century settlement at Whelford Bowmoor, which shows no environmental evidence

for haymaking, and may have been part of a separate agricultural complex associated with the cropmark settlement on the opposite side of the river (see Chapter 10).

Trackways were seen leading north of Thornhill Farm to an unknown destination, while the northern trackway ditches at the Claydon Pike Longdoles Field site led towards extensive ditched field systems cutting the middle Iron Age settlement in the Warrens Field site. Running south from Longdoles Field, a trackway was traced as a cropmark for over 500 m, possibly heading towards an area of cropmarks just to the south of the River Coln, while to the east, at least another two trackways were traced running towards a known settlement at Green Farm, just 800 m distant (SMR 3191; Fig. 2.1). Although very poorly understood, this site comprised a 2nd-century well (0.68 m deep) and masonry building foundations, with finds including sandstone roofing tile, pottery and vessel glass. Fragments of parchment with writing, part of a wooden writing tablet and part of a leather shoe, all came from the well, associated with 2nd-century pottery (see Chapter 12). The finds and structures suggest this site to be of some importance, and was presumably related to the Phase 3 settlement at Claydon Pike in some way. Further Roman material, comprising tile fragments (including box flue), 2nd to 4th-century pottery, a fragment of tufa and a scattering of limestone slabs and iron slag, was recovered *c* 200 m to the east.

The major Roman site to the east of Claydon Pike was Roughground Farm, just to the north of Lechlade, which was established in the mid 1st century AD (Allen *et al.* 1993; Fig. 2.1). Only a small part of this settlement was excavated, although the sub-rectangular enclosures, ditches and pits were quite similar in nature to other sites in the region of this period, including Barton Court Farm and Claydon Pike. A number of droveways and an early 2nd-century cremation burial were also probably part of this phase, which has been interpreted as a group of several farming units operating a mixed agricultural regime (Allen *et al.* 1993, 181). There are no indications of any real high status activity on site prior to the early 2nd century AD, when a dump of imported fineware pottery was found beneath the later aisled building. It seems that this phase of the settlement continued until the early to mid 2nd century AD, when a timber aisled building and possibly another masonry structure were built, within a rectangular courtyard. This was probably slightly later than the major changes at Claydon Pike. The site was expanded and modified from the 2nd to 4th centuries, and has been classified as a 'middle size and status villa', with systems of droveways, trackways, enclosures and field systems spreading over large areas (*ibid.* 186). Excavations in and around Lechlade (eg Bateman *et al.* 2003) have revealed a number of Roman ditches which seem to have been part of field systems and trackways, probably associated with the Roughground

Farm villa. A substantial Roman ditch was excavated at Butler's Field, which appears to have been part of a wide trackway leading south from the area of Roughground Farm to a large (c 120 x 65 m) D-shaped enclosure revealed by cropmarks (SMR 592; Boyle *et al.* 1998). To the north of Roughground Farm, lying approximately half way between this site and Great Lemhill 'villa', was what appears to have been a minor settlement at Great Lemhill Farm, dating from the 2nd to 4th century comprising ditches and a small amount of occupation debris (OAU 1990). As with the Kempsford Bowmoor site, this is likely to have been part of a larger agricultural estate.

In all, the excavators suggested that the Roughground Farm estate may have covered an area of 600-800 hectares incorporating the 1st and second gravel terraces together with the floodplains of the rivers Leach and Thames, and being bounded by the villa estate at Great Lemhill, 1.7 km to the north and the Claydon Pike complex 2.5 km to the west (Allen *et al.* 1993 196). The mixed arable and pastoral regime would seem well suited to such a variety of landscapes, and in this we see what would appear to be one of the major economic differences between this site and Claydon Pike. The apparent specialised nature of the latter settlement may have ensured that its territory was limited to the lower gravel terraces and probably the floodplain, although this could have still encompassed a substantial area. The relationship between this 'non-villa' settlement and the villa at Roughground farm is one of substantial interest. Traditionally, the relationship between villa and non-villas is thought to have been tenurial, with the villas always being at the centre of agricultural estates, and other sites acting in a subsidiary role for such functions as worker's accommodation. However in this instance there is no reason to suppose that Claydon Pike was in any way subsidiary to Roughground Farm, and there are in fact very blurred boundaries between the two sites. Both redeveloped in the early to mid

2nd century into aisled building complexes (Claydon Pike probably the earlier), but the main structures at Roughground Farm soon expanded to become what could architecturally be termed a villa complex. However, this does not necessarily imply that the settlement had become of much higher social status, as it is just another example of the way in which sites could develop in quite individual ways within the overall circumstances of the period.

Further changes in the local settlement pattern are apparent during the later Roman period, with a number of sites such as Kempsford Bowmoor and Whelford Bowmoor being abandoned. The early to mid 4th century at least is generally seen as a time of great prosperity in this region, and so it is unlikely that this represents a decline in population. Instead it is likely to indicate increasing centralisation, with a smaller number of settlements (villas) controlling larger amounts of territory, as has been suggested for Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993, xxi; see Chapter 17).

Overall, the landscape around Claydon Pike throughout the Roman period was probably quite densely settled, with a few larger agricultural estates (eg Claydon Pike and Roughground Farm) encompassing smaller settlements, at least from the early 2nd century onwards. A system of trackways appears to have provided local transport links and was probably connected to major arterial roadways such as Akeman Street 5-6 km to the north. The rivers themselves also may have been instrumental in encouraging trade and development, although it is uncertain as to how far they were navigable and indeed any evidence for river transport is strangely lacking. The final phase of occupation in sites like Claydon Pike and Roughground Farm appear to belong to the latter part of the 4th century AD, with continued maintenance beyond this being limited by the final collapse of the economic and administrative systems of the province (discussed in Chapter 17).