

Solent- Thames Research Framework

Roman Berkshire

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In the Roman period, the area that is now Berkshire was part of the civitas of the Atrebates whose administrative centre lay at Calleva, the Roman town near Silchester in Hampshire. This civitas was a Roman creation. The modern county boundary between Berkshire and Hampshire kinks around the Silchester area and it would be interesting to investigate whether this preserves an ancient land boundary. Roman Berkshire is therefore part of an entity that includes Hampshire, which lies within the Solent-Thames study area, but also east Wiltshire and west Surrey which lie outside it. Berkshire in the Roman period cannot be fully understood without reference to the whole of the civitas, particularly when looking at hierarchical settlement patterns. Most of the Roman small towns, for example Mildenhall (Cunetio), Wanborough (Durocornovium), Dorchester and Staines (Pontes), are outside the modern county boundary but must have influenced the area that is now Berkshire.

Today the area is a mix of urban and rural settlements and many sites have been damaged both through urban development and intensive farming. Clay pits, gravel pits and road building have added to the destruction of the historic environment the pace of which has increased during the last fifty years. Recording of the sites so destroyed was somewhat piecemeal until the advent of PPG16 and developer funded archaeology but even with a more planned approach to investigation and recording, the resulting distribution has reflected areas of development and to some extent has followed the pattern of previously known sites.

Although somewhat in the shadow of studies of Calleva, the county has been of interest to antiquaries for centuries. Newspaper reports, accounts of excursions to sites and exhibitions indicate that excavations took place and that some exciting discoveries were made particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. There are a number of published reports of these excavations and collections, (Roach Smith 1840, Neville 1849, Palmer in the 1870s, Roberts and Leese 1933 and Seaby and Pollen 1934, for example). Unfortunately some of these records are cursory, lacking detailed contexts, but they are indicative of the status and extent of the sites examined. A proportion of the material produced cannot be easily traced, having been dispersed from private collections, but much is available for reassessment in museum collections. The locations of these sites, like those being recorded today, are not a reflection of Roman settlement patterns, but rather of the activities and interests of local landowners, antiquaries, societies and interested individuals who identified and investigated them. There are also a number of published studies of specific areas which preserve information, often uncorroborated, about sites, current at the time of publication (Hewitt 1844, Money 1887). Again these studies depended on the presence of local antiquaries with the time and inclination for research.

Today, sites which are likely to be Roman, with the potential presence of metalwork, coins, jewellery etc, are a prime target for metal detecting activities. This situation can lead to further loss of Roman contextual evidence and the dispersal and potential long-term disappearance from the public domain of objects which form the foundation for studies of Roman material culture. The finds evidence presented on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website, like other sources cited above, is biased and reflects the activities of individual detectorists and clubs.

Evidence indicates that the landscape of Roman Berkshire was as varied as today's, populated by towns, villages, hamlets, isolated farms both big and small, small industrial sites, religious areas, all linked by a network of major and minor roads and paths, The known distribution of these sites, as indicated above, is often the result of chance, reflecting the activities of a particular individual, group, development or project. The current state of knowledge as presented here must be regarded as incomplete and should act as a catalyst for fieldwork and

research to correct the biased distribution currently available,

There have been some earlier attempts to collate information about the Roman archaeology of Berkshire. In 1906 the Victoria County History of Berkshire presented a summary of the major known sites and finds (Ditchfield and Page 1906). In 1931 Harold Peake's *Archaeology of Berkshire* (Peake 1931) included chapters summarising Roman Berkshire as well as a parish-by-parish gazetteer with evidence of individual sites and finds and their then location. Both these publications looked at pre 1974 Berkshire. In the 1970s a study of settlement in the civitas of the Atrebates resulted in an index of sites culled from publications, museum collections and air photographs (Greenaway 1980). It did not include follow-up fieldwork on the sites of cropmarks of potential Roman date. It located and reassessed material published as Roman, some of which on examination proved to be early medieval or prehistoric. It did not look at material of other periods, reassessment of which might lead to reallocation as Roman. Most recently a brief overview of the character of Roman Berkshire was produced by Babbie as part of a series of booklets on the history of Berkshire (Babbie undated)

The formulation and implementation of a Solent-Thames research strategy offers a unique opportunity to build on the information already available and to transform the distribution maps and the data held in museum collections and in the SMR and HER records. These would then reflect a more nearly Roman pattern rather than representing the results of modern ground disturbance, both commercial and archaeological. Information from the grey literature and from the reassessment of old sites, data from the SMR and HER records; information from museum databases and collections, data from air photographs, information from the PAS records should be collated, unified and reassessed and the information channelled back into the SMRs and HERs. Fieldwork projects should be organised to look at blank and questionable areas including areas of woodland where ancient landscape patterns are often preserved. The Maddle Farm project (Gaffney and Tingle 1989), the East Berkshire archaeological survey (Ford

1987), the survey of the Lower Kennet valley (Lobb and Rose 1996) and the Loddon valley survey (Ford 1994-7) all demonstrate how our understanding of an area can be enhanced by a targeted survey, whether of a geographical area or of a specific site. Kilns and evidence of pottery production particularly need to be identified both on the ground and by a study of pottery types in museum collections. Reinterpretation is necessary even with recent excavations where assumptions have been made based on erroneous data. By putting much needed resources into non-invasive archaeology and into a strategy aimed at reassessing, collating and analysing the huge amount of scattered information available, the Solent-Thames project could contribute to a broader and less biased understanding of the archaeology of the region. This would be more beneficial to our understanding of economic and landscape history than concentrating on detailed intrusive examination of a small number of single sites, however significant each might be individually. Since the Solent-Thames research framework is multiperiod it presents the opportunity for a broader overview than a specialist single period study. Sites whose traditional attribution to a particular era is rejected on re-assessment can seamlessly be re-allocated and included in the appropriate section of the study.

Inheritance

The organisation of Britain as a Roman province had a profound long-term effect on life in the area. The building of roads and the development of the towns changed the landscape. The new administrative system, monetary system and increasing markets available led to economic expansion and political change. However the effect on daily life in the countryside was not immediately cataclysmic and on many sites there is evidence of Roman objects and coins appearing on sites which were otherwise continuing to function traditionally.

At the time of the conquest there was already trade between this part of Britain and continental Europe and imported goods appear on higher status sites such

as Calleva. A study of the distribution of imported goods on late pre-Roman Iron Age sites would reveal how far into the countryside this trade penetrated - whether it was widespread or confined to the large tribal centres. The political exchanges with and influence of the Roman world is reflected in later Iron Age coinage which increasingly used Roman symbolism and motifs. Hillforts, of which there are a handful in the county, and oppida, indicate a hierarchical society and this is reinforced by the evidence for a planned and organised settlement at Calleva, probably the pre-Roman tribal capital which later became the administrative centre for the Roman civitas. The last known Atrebatian ruler, Verica, fled to Rome after being driven from his territories by the Catuvellauni. We have a name for a post conquest king and legate who may or may not be Verica's heir (Frere 1967, 68) but we have no concrete evidence for the extent of his realm and whether Berkshire formed part of it. Thus the county lies in an area of major political events, but seems strangely remote from them. The extant material evidence should be re-examined for evidence of continuity and change both on sites of Roman date and those of pre-Roman Iron Age date. Study of Iron Age coin finds in relation to Roman sites could also be an illuminating field of research. Some Iron Age coins occur on or near Roman sites at Hampstead Norreys (Higgott 1998) and Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284) for example. Such a study could contribute to the evidence for the status and economic position of the relevant sites both before and after AD 43.

Warfare and defence

As yet no forts have been clearly identified in Berkshire. In view of the political situation in AD43 there must have been a military presence, however short-lived in the area. One of the justifications given by Claudius for the invasion was to restore Verica to his Atrebatian territories and to do this he had to oust the Catuvellauni from Calleva and its tribal area. There is certainly evidence at Calleva for imperial support in its earliest Roman phases (Greenaway 1981). Construction of the roads would have demanded an organised workforce and

undoubtedly the major roads would have been constructed early to maintain good communications in the new province. Major east-west and south-north roads pass through Berkshire and it is on their routes that evidence of early military activity should be sought.

Calleva, the civitas capital, conformed to the norm of other major towns and received a succession of defences until the fourth century. Then it digressed from the standard and did not enhance the surrounding circuit of walls with bastions. However coin evidence indicates that economic life continued there well into the fifth century and the later abandonment of the town is unusual. A detailed study of linear earthworks in Berkshire is long overdue to establish whether any of them could be sub Roman territorial boundaries or defensive barriers as the orderly system slowly fragmented in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Transport and communication

As stated above, major south-north and east-west roads pass through Berkshire, connecting Calleva to the road network linking the pre-eminent towns of southern Britain (Margary 1967). The detailed routes of these roads are not all known. The general corridor through which the Calleva-Dorchester and Calleva-Verulamium roads ran is well established but the roads themselves are elusive in places. Presumably they continued to be used in the early medieval period, but without a central authority to maintain them they gradually became eroded and diverted as happened to the minor road near Ufton Nervet (Manning 1973-4). Only one certain Roman milestone is known in the county, that at Finchampstead (Kempthorne, 12), but others must have originally existed.

These major roads were only a small part of the transport and communication system. To facilitate trade and to enable agricultural produce to reach its market, other minor roads existed and these are sectioned from time to time, particularly

where large linear works such as gas pipeline trenches are observed. Minor roads linked smaller settlements to each other and to the major roads and many prehistoric trackways remained in existence, for as long as the settlements they served survived.

River transport was also significant, Finds from the Rivers Thames and Kennet include Roman material, particularly pottery, and the Thames is likely to have been navigable, at least seasonally, for much of its length between Sunbury and Oxford. There are probably a number of small river ports waiting to be found. A prime candidate is Reading at the confluence of these two rivers.

The efficient and safe system of transport encouraged trade, and, reinforced by a common monetary system throughout the empire, opened up markets which had previously been restricted

Settlement (including land use)

The settlement pattern and land use as indicated by known Roman material and sites are less clear than one would expect. There is a fairly generalised spread of finds of Roman pottery and coins throughout the area. Many prehistoric sites produce Roman material in later layers, prolific in some cases and sparse in others. Earlier ditches usually include some Roman pottery in their upper fills. Many early medieval excavations offer evidence of some residual Roman material, though the type of settlement from which the latter came is often indefinable. Most fieldwalking projects produce Roman pottery, and often the record of material dug up in gardens and reported to museums includes a selection of Roman material. Many modern developments produce a scatter of Roman pottery. This underlying spread is difficult to represent in settlement terms, but its presence indicates the ubiquity of activity in the Roman period in the area.

All identified towns of the Roman Atrebates lie outside Berkshire but probably further small towns are awaiting discovery. The names of two of these survive. Spinis, listed in the Antonine Itinerary (Rivet 1970), lies without doubt within West Berkshire and on place name evidence has usually been located in the area of Speen. However its precise position has yet to be established. The only archaeological evidence for a large community in the area indicated by the Itinerary is the presence of the large Roman cemetery at nearby Newbury (Palmer 1872-5). Landini, meaning 'the small enclosures', is mentioned in the seventh century Ravenna Cosmography, the original source for which was a Roman itinerary, and must lie between Calleva and the Thames (Richmond and Crawford 1949). Both Basildon (Roach Smith 1840 and 1848) and Ufton Nervet (Manning 1973-4) from location alone could be candidates for this settlement of small enclosures, but neither is entirely convincing. The Reading/Caversham area is another possible candidate for small town status. It has been suggested that it might have acted as a river port for Calleva (Rivet 1964, p.140) and there is considerable evidence of Roman activity in and around the modern town.

It would be useful to look at the post conquest development of the countryside in the hinterland of the known towns - not just around Calleva, the tribal capital, but around the other towns as well - to see whether Romanisation was filtering through from the towns to the countryside and whether this is a factor in the apparent initial slow change in Roman Berkshire. A comparison between rural sites in the immediate hinterland of the towns and those in selected areas of Berkshire could indicate how important the presence of a nearby town was for the increase of wealth in a rural community.

Berkshire appears to have been a prosperous farming area in the Roman period with a hierarchical settlement pattern as yet imperfectly understood. Certainly a network of sites inhabited the landscape ranging from wealthy estates down to subsistence farms. Cropmarks on the river gravels and field systems on the open downland have been widely studied, but the detailed information about the

habitations, their fields and economy is still lacking, both in these areas and across the county. Further research is needed before we can compare settlement types on the different geological strata which occur in Berkshire. Our knowledge of sites on the gravels and the field systems on the downland has biased our view of the Roman pattern of land use. More settlements are being discovered on the clay soils of East Berkshire and the current picture of low density, low status settlement in that area must be revised (Pine 1998-2003, Ford 1987).

Most 'villa' sites seem to owe their prosperity to farming, whether arable or pastoral. However it is often difficult to analyse the significance of individual sites. Certainly the available evidence indicates that crop production and animal husbandry were practised, but rarely do we know in what proportion. Some buildings may well be the centres of large estates but others are likely to have been wealthy individual farms. We have evidence of a number of well built 'villa' type buildings with flint walls, tile roofs and occasionally underfloor heating systems and mosaic pavements – Basildon (Roach Smith 1840 and 1948), Maidenhead (Rutland 1890-91), Hampstead Norreys (Palmer 1870-1 208, Anon 1886-95, 183-4), Hermitage (Palmer 1863) and Maddle Farm (Gaffney and Tingle 1989), to name but a few. Some of these sites comprise a single building. Others like Hampstead Norreys include several buildings, either indicating a larger estate or, as at Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284), a succession of buildings on a prosperous site. Only rarely do we have evidence of ancillary farm buildings and fields associated with the houses. The enclosure around the building at Cox Green (Bennet 1962) may well have contained evidence of outbuildings, as might that at Hampstead Norreys.

In addition to sites with clearly defined buildings there are several examples of isolated specialist buildings which must be part of a bigger complex the evidence for which has not yet been found. The single identified building at Canhurst Farm may have been one of several buildings on the site (Seaby 1932, Seaby and

Pollen 1934). The bathhouses at Kintbury (Connah undated) and Aldermaston (Cowell *et al* 1977-78) must have been ancillary to larger establishments. Similarly, isolated features must indicate the presence of a significant building. The single wells at Cookham (Anon 1959, 123), which produced a writing tablet (Anon 1960, 60), and at Caversham, which produced a lead baptismal font (Frere 1989, Hassall and Tomlin 1989), signify the presence of an associated site of some sophistication. The pewter from a well at Thatcham (Harris 1930-33) implies a wealthy household in the vicinity. At Maddie Farm (Richards 1978, Gaffney and Tingle 1989) there is considerable evidence of a flourishing estate, mainly pastoral but with some arable, which continued into the fifth century. Re-examination of the surviving material from these prosperous establishments could clarify their dates and the fluctuations in their fortunes. This would enable us to begin to build an economic history of Roman Berkshire which might then relate to the province wide political events.

Apart from the evidence of large establishments, whether single wealthy farms or larger estates, there is other evidence for settlements which do not have a large building complex as a focus. It is often hard to be certain whether considerable evidence of a settlement in the form of field boundaries, postholes and finds represents a village community working together or whether it is part of a farm complex whose focal building is undiscovered. Many sites are so spread that they could represent two or three farmsteads or small communities whose boundaries are not clearly visible to us today. Others may be single units. Intensive fieldwork on these sites could help establish their character. When Roman field boundaries such as those at Reading Business Park are identified in isolation it is impossible to classify the status of the settlement, even when the economic activity is identifiable - in this case the number of quern fragments found indicating grain processing (Moore and Jennings 1992).

There is certainly some evidence that change in the style of living in the countryside was fairly slow. A few late pre-Roman iron age sites, such as Binfield

(Barnes *et al* 1995) appear to have continued relatively unchanged for 100 years or so after the conquest and then abruptly ended, perhaps as a result of a move to a new site. It would be useful to re-examine the material from the late pre-Roman Iron Age sites to see if there is a widespread trend for the closing of these sites at a similar date. It would also be enlightening simultaneously to analyse material from the villa sites to establish at what date their construction began and to try to link the prosperous villa site to its predecessor. This dual approach would establish whether there was a period of rural economic regeneration in the late second century, whether sites migrated and for how long this prosperity lasted. The Roman buildings at Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284) were built in the middle of an earlier field system whose associated settlement must lie nearby. Similarly the Roman driers and well at Cookham (Anon 1959, 123, Anon 1960, 60) overlay earlier ditches. It makes more practical sense to build your new house to one side of the old rather than on top of it, but the economic development would be clearer if we could associate the old with the new in many cases. Occupation at Ufton Nervet (Manning 1973-4) does not appear to have continued beyond the second century although the site may still have been farmed. At Aldermaston Wharf (Cowell *et al* 1977-78) there is evidence for first to fourth century continuity but although many of the fields continued in use the living quarters may have migrated. Certainly the bathhouse overlay an earlier field system

Other sites seem to represent lower status single establishments, many of which continued throughout the Roman period. The ballast hole at Theale (Piggott 1934) yielded Bronze Age to Anglo Saxon pottery and there was possibly a sequence of small farmsteads there. At the Thames Valley Park too (Hawkes and Jenkins 1989, Barnes *et al* 1997) there is evidence of continuity from the Iron Age throughout the Roman period, including three cremation burials. The site at Whitehall, Arborfield seems to have continued from the Iron Age to the third century AD (Pine 1998-2003). More detailed fieldwork combined with analysis of extant material and air photographs would help to establish land use and a

chronology for these sites.

There are a number of questions which need to be answered in order to understand their economic and social position. Did the more successful farms migrate to a grander house whilst the less successful stayed in situ? Why and when were some of these lower grade farmsteads abandoned – was it due to individual circumstances or can a regional pattern be detected? Did some field systems support a number of farms and if so were these in a formal economic relationship? Did the layout of new field systems in the first century imply a change in social organisation? Enwick Shaw pit site (Timby *et al* 2005) is a fairly low status site with evidence of a planned landscape of field boundaries and tracks, reorganised three times between the first and third centuries. The sites near North Street (Raymond 1994-7) and at Pingewood (Johnston 1983-5) also seem to represent a number of small field plots whose ditched boundaries were redefined or altered on a number of occasions. Many small enclosures on rural sites produce occupation debris but no building remains. There are certain styles of timber building that leave no trace in the soil. Their presence can only be detected by the plotting of the objects that were used in daily life within and around them. Indeed the East Berkshire Archaeological Survey has clearly demonstrated at Castle End Farm and Ashridge Wood that scatters of material can not only identify the foci sites but can also indicate their function (Ford 1987, 86-89). Much more fieldwork of this nature is essential if we are to understand the social and economic life of the vast majority of the population of Roman Berkshire.

The latest levels of sites are susceptible to damage by the plough, by later use and by redevelopment. It is therefore important to look at the objects found on these sites to establish how prosperous they were in the fourth century and for how long sites continued to survive into the fifth century. Evidence from Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284) indicates a decline

in the living conditions in the farmhouse but the production of a large hoard of counterfeit fourth century coins (Butcher 1992) points to continuing economic activity.

As well as agricultural communities there is evidence for a number of sites and settlements growing up alongside roads. Those at Wickham Bushes (Corney and Gaffney 1983, Roberts and Leese 1933 and various ms reports) and Thatcham Newtown (Harris, various) seem to be elongated settlements beside roads whereas that at Finchampstead appears to be compact and perhaps more specialised. Ufton Nervet (Manning 1973-4), near a major road and alongside a minor road, might have owed its continued existence to its proximity to a road junction. Fieldwork alongside the known Roman roads and watching briefs and excavations where development will cut across Roman roads could reveal more settlements of this nature.

Ceremony, ritual and religion

Significant evidence for ceremony, ritual and religion is sparse and scattered in Berkshire. Roman objects dredged from the Thames in the Thames Water Collection in the Museum of Reading do not have the characteristics of ritual offerings or deposits. This is in contrast to both earlier and later traditions.

Weycock Hill is probably the most significant Roman religious site (Neville 1849, Cotton 1956-7). It has been incompletely examined but certainly seem to have been a very important religious centre in the Roman period. It had an octagonal temple with an oblong temenos. The surrounding area boasts a number of Roman buildings, burials and other evidence of a thriving and extensive settlement around the religious complex. If the evidence of the Waltham St Lawrence coin hoard is included (Burnett 1990, Bean 2000, 253-262) then this suggests an element of special status for the temple's Iron Age predecessor.

Another site that may have considerable religious significance is that north of Compton, though the evidence here is less clear. So many Roman coins were found during ploughing in the area that they were known as Slad farthings after the valley above the modern village. Considering that many religious centres may have had a market as well as a ceremonial function it is possible that here a settlement or market centre was related to the enclosure on Lowbury Hill which seems to have had ceremonial or ritual significance even if it did not contain a temple *per se* (Atkinson 1916, Fulford and Rippon 1994). Reinterpretation and re-examination of the evidence relating to the intriguing and misunderstood important site on Roden Down (Hood and Walton 1948) would form an essential part of research into the significance of this area.

Other evidence of religious beliefs and traditions can be gathered from study of burials – both individual burials and cemetery groups. Re-analysis of large groups, particularly in mixed inhumation and cremation cemeteries, could confirm when cremation and inhumation rites were dominant and detect a pattern in their use. Unfortunately in Berkshire very few large burial groups are known in spite of the considerable evidence for widespread settlement. There are significant cremation burials at Roden Down (Hood and Walton 1948), Rapley's Farm (Handasyd 1785, Cotton 1961), Newbury (Palmer 1872-5) and Newbury, Enbourn road (Money 1895-1911), the latter possibly associated with a settlement. Groups of inhumations occur at Pangbourne (Allnatt 1838), Newbury (Palmer 1872-5), Bray, Weycock Hill (Neville 1849, 121) and Stancombe Down (Palmer 1870-1, 207), but many more await discovery. This situation mirrors that at Calleva where our knowledge of cemeteries and burial rites around the Roman town is minimal. Undertaking research to locate and identify Berkshire Roman cemetery groups including examination of air photographs, fieldwork, study of museum collections and geophysical examination of likely sites near known settlements has enormous potential to contribute to a more comprehensive and meaningful view of Roman communities. Conversely the cemetery at Newbury (Palmer 1872-5) provides significant information about the rituals and

possessions of a large group of people but we have no evidence to indicate where they lived. Study of burial groups can also throw light on economic activities, for instance in the use of kiln wasters as cremation urns - a no doubt useful trade in 'seconds'. It is crucial to re-examine the material evidence and consult original sources. The two Reading Roman cemeteries on record do not in fact exist. One is actually the Newbury cemetery, mistakenly attributed to Reading because of the misallocation in a scrap book of a newspaper cutting describing the Newbury cemetery; the other, the Jack of Both Sides cemetery (Stevens 1895), is exclusively medieval - the Roman pottery in the earliest levels being in fact Norman. The latter cemetery has often been cited as evidence for Roman to early medieval continuity, but sadly has no Roman or Saxon levels.

Individual burials or small groups also have significant information to offer. Two burials at Stancombe Down (Rutland and Thomas 1967-8, 70) belong to the tradition of burying the head of a corpse at its feet or knees, a custom also seen in at least one burial in the cemetery discovered at Stancombe Down almost a century before (Palmer 1870-1). The crouched burial accompanied by a Roman urn at Longparish, found in June 1879 in neighbouring Hampshire (Stevens undated, 82), is a reminder to avoid the assumption that all contracted burials are prehistoric. Flexed burials also occur at Maddie Farm and Upper Lambourn (Richards 1976), one of the latter accompanied by hobnails. The burial of a woman in a roughly hollowed out log as a coffin at Smallmead, Reading (Reading Museum Service accession number 1962.40.1), initially thought to be Prehistoric or Viking, must also have a religious or social significance, perhaps a stylistically different equivalent of the lead coffin burial at Roden Down (Hood and Walton 1948). The two Roman tile tombs from Windsor indicate a sophisticated burial rite (Rawlins 1866), as do the tombs at Welford (Wilson 1856) and Hampstead Norreys (Money 1879).

Isolated finds also have a part to play in identifying religious beliefs.

Comprehensive research about objects with a religious connotation, their context

and date, would expand our knowledge considerably. However not all classes of objects can be confidently included. The Romano-Celtic stone head from Caversham (Reading Museum Service accession number 1974.262.1) has such affinity with medieval Church carvings that, lacking a context, its identification as a Roman cult object is suspect. The altar dedicated to Jupiter found in Frilsham in 1730 (Anon 1886-95) and recorded by Stukeley, has disappeared and no detailed information about it survives

Historically the official recognition of Christianity in the late Roman empire is well attested. However the material evidence of Christian objects and buildings in the area has been steadily eroded. The Christian seal from Silchester is merely the official seal of London and even the identity of the 'Christian Church' at Silchester is problematical. However the lead container, probably a baptismal font, from a wood lined well at Caversham is undoubtedly Christian although the reason and manner for its deposition in the well is still a matter of debate (Frere 1989, Hassall and Tomlin 1989)..

Crafts, trades and industry

Berkshire appears to have been predominantly concerned with the agricultural industry. There are a number of structures which point to grain production. Corn driers at Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284), Cookham (Anon 1960, 60) and Hampstead Marshall (Connah 1964) among others are evidence for the crop produced whilst those at Maddie Farm (Richards 1978) indicate production on a larger scale, associated with a villa estate (Gaffney and Tingey). The number of animal bones from domestic sites indicates rearing of sheep, cattle and pigs. Analysis of these deposits, particularly complete deposits from sites currently being excavated, could reveal changes in animal husbandry with implications both for production, trade in surplus and diet. Bone weaving combs, loom weights and spindle whorls from many sites are evidence of cloth production and research on these elements of material culture in the county

could identify centres of production on a scale greater than domestic production would merit.

There is evidence from Hamstead Marshall (Connah 1964) that the driers might also have been used in the course of tile production. The number of substantial buildings identified, particularly from the second century on, would have required tiles for roofs, floors and as bonding courses in walls. It is logical to assume that these large, breakable items were not transported long distances but were made as close to the building site as possible, in some cases actually on the site itself.. This was still the case in the late nineteenth century when bricks for Alfred Waterhouse's Yattendon Court were fired on site. Brick and tile clamps leave little trace once they have been dismantled. Any new excavation of a Roman building and any re-examination of data from old excavations should be sensitive to the likelihood of such evidence waiting to be recognised. Similarly any excavator working in a clay rich area should be alerted to the possibility that ephemeral traces of tile working might survive. It should be emphasised that large spreads of tile may not necessarily indicate a building, but could be dumps from a tile industry. The considerable evidence of tile working in Newbury (Ford 1974, Wilson 1974, 457) consisted of large areas of burnt clay, a large quantity of tiles, some of which were incompletely fired, but no structures other than the associated pottery kilns.

Every Roman site produces pottery. Pottery vessels were used as utensils in daily life, for storage and as receptacles for the ashes of the dead. They therefore appear in the archaeological record of settlement sites, in cemeteries, on industrial sites and as casual deposits in rubbish pits and rivers. They occur in all sorts of forms and fabrics and though they might accidentally break, well fired Roman pottery does not readily disintegrate. Although large scale pottery industries traded their wares widely, there were many smaller kiln sites which may have had a more local market. A number of these are already known in Berkshire. There were kilns at Dark Lane (Greenaway 1971, 7, Wilson 1971,

284), Maidenhatch Farm (Greenaway 1971, 7-8, Wilson 1971, 284), Newbury (Ford 1974, Wilson 1974, 457), Compton (Harris 1935, Hardy 1937) and Hamstead Marshall (Connah 1964). There is also evidence of pottery production at Arborfield (Pine 1998-2003), although the kiln structures have not been located. Analysis of the distribution of the pottery from such kilns would clarify how widely they marketed their products.

There must have been other craftsmen working in the area - shoemakers, dyers, woodworkers, stonemasons, smiths - but there is little evidence of their presence except on a small scale. Evidence for iron working is sparse and seems to have been for a local market. Evidence from Thames Valley Business Park (Hawkes and Jenkins 1989) implies iron working on a very small scale; whilst that from Arborfield (Pine 1998-2003) points to a slightly larger scale activity. The occasional intriguing discoveries hint at a more complex situation. The later building at Maidenhatch Farm produced a large hoard of 4th century counterfeit coins (Butcher 1992) from an area of the building where bronze working was taking place. Perhaps one should remember that enterprising merchants who were involved in the trade in oil, glass, pottery, wine etc from elsewhere in the empire may not all have lived in the towns. The Magnesian hoard from Wokingham (Greenaway and Boon 1992), 25% of which were again counterfeit, also proffers evidence of metal working in the vicinity, another minor piece of evidence for local entrepreneurial activity..

Material culture

Berkshire has no large scale industry in the Roman period to rival the Oxford kilns or the Wealden iron. So study of its material culture would not throw light on the distribution of the products of a major industry. However study of its material culture would contribute to a fuller interpretation of the social and economic realities of Roman Berkshire and how they changed and developed through time. This is a research field with enormous potential that has been somewhat

neglected to date.

It has already been mentioned above how comparison between settlements around towns and those in Roman Berkshire could clarify the extent to which the presence of a town influenced the wealth and development of the area around it. Similarly the extant objects from Roman Berkshire offer many useful areas of study which could help to illuminate the history and reality of life in the Roman period. Many questions could be answered and theoretical models created by re-examining extensive collections from Berkshire in museum collections, in private collections and in publications, provided that the objects have a reliable site location. Clearly more precision would be possible where the material has a detailed context within those sites.

Many coin hoards are known from the county (Boon 1954 and Higgott 1998 list some). These should be re-examined to establish whether they are likely to represent 'working capital', savings, or hoarding against devaluation, particularly when they are associated with known settlement sites. It would also be useful to examine their distribution in time and space to detect their pattern and significance. It would then be possible to determine whether there a distinction between hoards of different periods, in size, content and deposition. This would be further evidence for the prosperity of sites and settlements that enabled the accumulation of wealth. The quantity and date of non-hoard coinage from individual sites can also be significant in this respect. Therefore accurate and reliable find spots for newly discovered coins are essential because incomplete or misleading data will lead to distorted conclusions which in turn will weaken future research.

Excavation material from sites across Berkshire provides data which can indicate land use. The presence of large quernstones and millstones on a site is evidence for grain production and processing. In the same way the occurrence of loom weights, weaving combs, spindle whorls in quantity points to cloth production and

therefore sheep rearing. The evidence from the material remains can be suggestive but cannot be proven without supporting osteological evidence. Unfortunately complete animal bone assemblages rarely survive from old excavations and even modern excavators sometimes randomly retain selections for analysis and research. Reliable animal bone data could confirm the predominance of sheep in areas where it is surmised from other evidence that sheep and cloth production were the focus of the local economy. Any research framework should emphasise the importance of relating the evidence from material culture with that of osteo-archaeology and stress the importance of retaining complete animal bone assemblages from current and future excavations

Bone assemblages on their own have considerable potential for highlighting changes in lifestyle, emphasising differences between settlements, and indicating the predominant activity. The quantity of bone on a site can indicate whether the animals were being reared on a large scale or at the level of a subsistence economy. The variety of bones can also offer evidence of diet - for example whether certain foods were luxury items only available to richer households and to what extent hunted or trapped food still featured. Dated assemblages can cumulatively show us whether and how diet changed through time. A study of this nature is long overdue for Roman Berkshire and specialist study might well reveal previously unrecognised animals in the assemblages - maybe Berkshire too has unrecognised Roman rabbits.

There are many other topics within the realm of material culture that would repay detailed study in a research framework. The quantity, quality and variety of objects of personal adornment demonstrate the wealth and importance of their owners, and sometimes their religious beliefs. Similarly the presence of imported luxury items, such as glassware and amphorae, is evidence both of widespread trade and of the status of the sites on which they occur. There are occasional single finds whose significance goes beyond their physical presence. The

discovery of a Roman writing tablet in a well at Cookham (Anon 1960, 60) for example has considerable implications for the level of rural literacy.

Roman Berkshire lacks a ceramic study collection both for building material and local pottery types and this should be addressed. A type series from known Roman kilns in Berkshire, combined with study of pottery from the county, would determine how far this local pottery was traded. Comprehensive research on the Roman pottery in the county could well identify other groups with a local distribution which must therefore be from local production centres yet to be identified in the archaeological record.

Legacy

The landscape of early medieval Berkshire is completely different from the preceding Roman landscape and we have practically no information about the transition. Dorchester continued but Calleva, a focus for the Roman road system, was abandoned. This change in emphasis must have affected the rural economy. Without a strong central administration to maintain an efficient road system, without a currency recognised and accepted throughout the area, and without the confidence that products would safely reach their destination, there must have been a decline into economic stagnation and an increase in local self sufficiency. The organisation of society slowly disintegrated and then re-emerged in a different form. The resulting change is clear, but the process is difficult to detect.

There is evidence of continued economic life well into the fifth century with fourth century coins remaining in circulation for a considerable time. However the villa estates do not survive and many early Saxon cemeteries and sites do not seem to have had Roman predecessors. This may of course just represent a cultural shift and settlement migration similar to that in the early Roman period. The population could not have physically disappeared. It may be that the high status sites with their dependence on a large market and specialist materials did not

survive but that some settlements lower down the social and economic hierarchy were less affected. Patterns of life probably continued for a considerable time, with some aspects of the new cultural tradition being slowly absorbed. Perhaps eventually replacement houses in the new style were built slightly away from the old. This mirrors what appears to have happened at the beginning of the Roman period in Berkshire and would represent a slow natural progression from one way of life to another. At the end of Roman Berkshire, as at its beginning, there is the same research requirement to detect the archaeological evidence for the new and the old and to relate them to each other chronologically, in order to track and understand the historical, social and economic transition..

There is some evidence to support this conjecture of an underlying continuity and gradual change. Roman material from the Saxon site at Old Windsor, for example, indicates a nearby Roman settlement (Hope-Taylor, Astill 1978). At Wickhams Field (Crockett 1996) there was Roman occupation from the first to the fourth centuries with a shift in focus on the site in the later period, which may have been associated with increased status. The three pits and two timber lined wells here, which appear to be part of a dispersed middle Saxon settlement, are perhaps just the latest manifestation of movement on a continuously occupied settlement. The Saxon hut at Ufton Nervet (Manning 1973-4) may be another example of the same phenomenon. It is likely that evidence for Saxon presence or influence has yet to be identified in some excavation archives. Laidlow's pottery report on the Wickhams Field material emphasises how difficult it is to distinguish between organic tempered sandy fabrics of later prehistoric and Saxon date. Only the radiocarbon date from the well timbers allow the features to be confidently assigned to a post- rather than a pre-Roman phase. Some late Roman sites do offer clear evidence for continuity into the immediate post-Roman period - the Bray settlement, for instance, appears to have survived into the sixth century. At Waylands Nursery, Wraysbury (Pine 2003) a late third to fourth century occupation site with at least three phases of remodelling was overlain by two pits and a single sunken featured building with no evidence of a

hiatus between the Roman and the Saxon.

The data from burial sites should be re-examined to establish whether any pattern emerges in relation to the late Roman-early Saxon transition. Burials whose description sounds Saxon occur close to the villas at Basildon (Roach Smith 1840) and Hermitage (Palmer 1863), implying the presence of nearby post Roman occupation. Later burials on Roman villa sites are known elsewhere and it is tempting to surmise whether these represent a return in death to the long abandoned ancestral home. The unsatisfactory reports about the mixed cremation and inhumation cemetery discovered at Shooter's Hill, Pangbourne (Allnatt 1838), describes burials, some of which were Roman but others appear to be Saxon. Is this evidence for a community continuing and changing? Do mixed cemeteries imply shared , successive or contiguous communities?

This period of transition needs to be examined both from the late Roman and early Medieval perspective to attempt to record how one way of life was completely replaced by another and the process by which it happened. Certainly Saxon Berkshire was a very different place from Roman Berkshire but we cannot as yet clearly trace the social, economic and political changes in the archaeological record. The Solent-Thames research framework should encourage analysis of the surviving evidence and highlight areas where research is needed to establish what survived, for how long and why. Only then will it be possible to begin to understand the impact of change on the people living in the various parts of Berkshire

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