

ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF COMMERCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY TO THE STUDY OF THE ROMAN PERIOD IN ENGLAND, 1990–2004

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This paper identifies the ways in which the enormous upsurge in the volume of commercial archaeology in England since the introduction of PPG 16 in 1990 has affected our knowledge and understanding of Roman Britain. The difficulties in establishing a comprehensive database of interventions are discussed, but overall it is estimated that around 6,600 separate interventions sampled Roman deposits between 1990 and 2004. While many important excavations have been published in conventional formats, a considerable amount of information resides only in grey literature. Commercial work has generated major advances in our understanding of non-villa rural settlement and its associated land use, while analyses of material culture and, to a lesser extent, biological remains have considerable potential for wider synthesis and inter-site comparison. Improvements in collection methodology and reporting standards are suggested, and the need to integrate the results of commercial investigations with data derived from other sources is stressed.

In November 1990 the mechanism for recording archaeological sites in advance of their destruction by development, a process commonly called rescue archaeology in the 1970s and 1980s, underwent a fundamental change in England with the introduction of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16). This set out a clear presumption in favour of the physical preservation of archaeological remains but, where this was not possible, it required developers, rather than the state, to pay for archaeological investigations associated with developments that required planning permission. In some respects, PPG 16 was a consolidation of best practice that had already been adopted in parts of England during the 1980s, but in other areas it represented a radical change in approach.¹ PPG 16 has proved to be a highly successful and remarkably long-lived piece of planning guidance, so much so that it was not until March 2010 that it was superseded by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

In the decade following the introduction of PPG 16, investigations prompted by the planning process accounted for 89 per cent of all archaeological interventions in England.² In examining this evidence in more detail, it is useful to differentiate between those fieldwork

1. Darvill and Fulton 1998, 58–64.

2. Darvill and Russell 2002, 52.

investigations that normally occur prior to the determination of a planning application ('evaluations') and those secured as a condition of consent ('post-determination' work: so-called because it occurs after the determination of planning applications). The former aim to characterize the archaeological deposits present and inform decisions on their management; they use techniques such as surface collection, geophysical survey and trial trenching. The latter are designed to make a record of deposits prior to destruction and involve methods such as open-area excavation, strip-and-record sample excavation and the watching brief. The outcomes of evaluations and small-scale post-determination works, such as watching briefs, are unpublished reports produced in very small numbers, normally deposited in the local Historic Environment Record (HER). It is usually envisaged that the results of more substantial pieces of post-determination work to mitigate the effects of development will be published in conventional ways, although sometimes little more than a note in the county journal appears (see further below). For larger excavations, it is commonplace to compile a post-excavation assessment report, which seeks to summarize what has been found (features, finds and environmental evidence), assess the potential of these data to address specific research questions and propose an appropriate level of further analysis to be contained in the final published report.

The reports that document the results of the various investigations described above have been termed 'grey literature', which we can characterize as unpublished reports produced in very small numbers and with very limited distribution. While these documents are, in theory, publicly available as products of the planning process, there has been a perception that the information contained in them is largely hidden from local communities and academic researchers alike, because of the difficulties of finding out what is available and of knowing how to work with this evidence. The need to make the results of developer-funded work more readily available has been recognized as a priority by English Heritage and others in the archaeological community for some years now, and the increasing number of electronic reports accessible via the OASIS website has been a positive development.³ Richard Bradley has recently demonstrated the research potential of these often poorly visible products of commercial archaeology in a study of prehistoric Britain and Ireland. He concluded that syntheses based purely upon conventionally published data contain serious lacunae in a number of important areas.⁴

In order further to address the hidden value of much commercial work and complement Bradley's study, in 2007 English Heritage commissioned Cotswold Archaeology and the University of Reading to examine the research dividend that could be gained from a study of grey literature relating to investigations that have discovered Roman remains in England and to investigate ways of bridging the gap between individual typescript reports in a HER and overarching regional or national syntheses. The project was conceived from the outset as a partnership between academia and the commercial sector and draws upon the authors' slightly differing professional perspectives of the Roman period (as, respectively, an academic and a manager of a large commercial organisation which undertakes fieldwork projects). We do, however, share direct experience of managing major excavations of complex Roman sites, albeit in somewhat different environments.

The project was designed to have three stages. Stage 1 was concerned with a rapid national overview of how much work had been done between 1990 and 2004; where it was

3. See, for instance, Thomas 1991; for the OASIS website, see <<http://www.oasis.ac.uk>>.

4. Phillips and Bradley 2005; Bradley 2006 and 2007.

located; and an assessment of what proportion of grey literature had reached conventional publication.⁵ Stage 2 targeted four pilot areas (Essex; Somerset; South and West Yorkshire combined; and Warwickshire) for a more detailed assessment of the research potential of the grey literature. Essex was chosen as an example of a county which has experienced a high proportion of development over the last two decades; Somerset as a largely rural area which has had less development than parts of the south east, yet where the number of interventions was sufficient to make analysis worthwhile; Warwickshire because there appeared to be a large quantity of investigations reported only in grey literature; and South and West Yorkshire as this is a heavily developed metropolitan area where archaeological investigation, prior to the introduction of PPG 16, had been focused on a restricted number of sites. Assessments of the contribution of commercial archaeology to our knowledge of the Romano-British archaeology of these four areas have been published elsewhere.⁶ In Stage 3, it is hoped to expand the project to cover the whole of England and Wales.

METHOD

The starting point for the project was to create a national database of archaeological investigations, undertaken between 1990 and 2004, that had encountered Roman remains. The Stage 1 database was formed from data derived from the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) database, hosted by Bournemouth University, and the Archives and Monuments Information England (AMIE) database, maintained by English Heritage. The AIP consists of short summaries of interventions drawn from a review of the grey-literature reports themselves. In the four pilot areas, these listings were subjected to a further stage of data cleaning and enhancement so that they constituted as complete a record of relevant activity in each county as possible. Interventions documented in the annual round-ups of fieldwork published in county or regional journals, and the 'Roman Britain in [calendar year]' section of the journal *Britannia*, were added where these were not listed by the AIP or AMIE. Articles within the relevant county and national journals, and monographs where their existence became known, were also consulted, as some interventions had proceeded straight to formal publication without any intervening grey literature.

The next stage of data collection involved visiting the HERs covering the pilot areas to review the grey-literature reports. The project database was used as a guide. Those reports that had been identified during the preparation stages as appearing to have the most potential were rapidly reviewed, rated against twelve broad research themes and selectively copied, if deemed of significant value. Some reports identified in the preparatory work could not be located in the HERs. In almost all cases, these were reports listed by the AIP but which, for a variety of reasons, had not so far been deposited with the HER by the originating organization. Finally, a rapid, non-exhaustive search of the remaining grey literature in the HER was undertaken. All interventions listed were added to a Microsoft Access database, with the GIS elements being processed in MapInfo. The Stage 1 national database and the enhanced databases for the four pilot areas are available for consultation and interrogation through the Archaeology Data Service.⁷

5. Cotswold Archaeology 2008.

6. Hodgson forthcoming a and b; Holbrook forthcoming a and b.

7. Holbrook and Morton 2010.

DEFINING WHAT CONSTITUTES ROMAN

This project is concerned with a chronological period, rather than solely with sites that have yielded evidence of Romano-British culture (the AIP categorizes 'Roman' as the years AD 43–410). Sites in those areas of England that display comparatively little evidence of integration with the Roman provincial administration and economy, such as parts of the north and the south-western peninsula, therefore fall within our remit. The attribution of archaeological sites to the Roman period has usually been made on the basis of associated artefacts. One of the great strengths of Romano-British archaeology is the ubiquity of material culture that permits a chronological precision not available for the preceding or succeeding periods. However, the quality of this evidence is regionally biased, and across much of the north, and parts of the Midlands, diagnostic Romano-British artefacts are much rarer as site finds than in parts of the south and east. This is particularly true of non-villa rural settlement, one of the most common site types investigated by developer archaeology. For example, the Wroxeter Hinterland Project has demonstrated that, in the Shropshire plain, rural sites of fully Roman date were virtually aceramic; and the villa at Whitley Grange, near Wroxeter, yielded fewer than seventy sherds of pottery from several seasons of excavation.⁸ In contrast, the non-villa settlement at Birdlip Quarry, in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, produced in excess of 16,000 sherds from a single campaign of excavation in advance of road construction.⁹

In areas where Romano-British artefacts are scarce, it is also unusual for rural settlements to undergo distinctive morphological changes at the outset of the Roman period, and with sites known from aerial photography and geophysical survey, but lacking associated artefacts, a broad attribution to the late prehistoric or Romano-British period is usually the best that can be achieved. Absolute dating techniques, such as radiocarbon assay, might be able to demonstrate that a site was occupied during the Roman period, but these methods are rarely employed at the evaluation stage. The conservative nature of some ceramic traditions also militates against precise chronological attributions. It is, therefore, possible that some rural sites that are categorized as Iron Age or later prehistoric in grey-literature reports may, in fact, have persisted into the Roman period or indeed have been occupied fully within this period. The converse is also likely to be true, with some sites classified as Roman in fact having been abandoned before the mid-first century AD.

ASSESSING THE VOLUME OF WORK ON ROMAN SITES

In Stage 1, the AIP database was queried through various fields in order to extract investigations that had encountered Roman remains. The AIP classified fieldwork investigations by the categories of evaluation, geophysical survey and post-determination/research (the latter includes both excavation and watching briefs, or 'archaeological monitoring'). This initially suggested that 9,428 fieldwork projects undertaken between 1990 and 2004 had identified Roman remains (table 1). A keyword search of the summary text field of the post-determination or research projects found that 2,323 projects included the term 'watching brief' and 2,751 'excavation'. These figures should be treated with

8. Gaffney *et al* 2007.

9. Timby 1999, 339 and table 7.14.

Table 1. The number and type of archaeological projects finding Roman remains, as suggested by the Stage 1 data

Fieldwork type	Number of projects	percentage
Evaluation	4,995	53
Post-determination/ 'research'	4,310: of which 2,323 include 'watching brief' and 2,751 include 'excavation'	46
Geophysics	123	1
Total	9,428 investigations	100

a fair degree of caution, however, as the summary field was not designed for detailed querying and the combined total varies from the total for post-determination/research as a whole (some interventions include both terms). Overall, it appears that around half of the investigations in which Roman remains were encountered were evaluations, with the remainder divided broadly between excavations and watching briefs/archaeological monitoring. The low number of geophysical surveys recorded is undoubtedly not an accurate reflection of work done, but rather a result of the low representation of geophysical surveys within the AIP as a whole. The AIP only recorded such surveys where they were embedded in fieldwork reports (mostly evaluations), so as not to overlap with the English Heritage database of geophysical surveys, which itself seems to be far from complete.

These statistics are heavily dependent upon the AIP, as this is the only readily accessible data set that aims to be comprehensive across England and that has collected information in a systematic way. While some professionals have cast doubt on the comprehensiveness of the AIP, most accept its achievement as the start of a national record of archaeological interventions.¹⁰ Of course the AIP is not, and cannot be, complete, as it relies upon the thoroughness of records kept by others (principally HERs and contracting organizations) and their willingness to co-operate and facilitate data collection. It is also axiomatic that, for an intervention to be included in the AIP, it has to be documented in a report that can be identified and referenced. A number of investigations, however, are not documented in any kind of report, either shortly after the completion of fieldwork or, indeed, in some cases at all. The most significant of these are excavations undertaken as a condition of planning permission or else for purposes outside the planning process. As interim reports are rarely produced for these pieces of work and final reports may only be published many years later, or not at all, knowledge of such investigations normally flows from the county or regional fieldwork 'round-ups' (where these exist). The AIP now treats listing within a county round-up as sufficient documentation to warrant inclusion, although this was not always the case within the study period of this project. The lack of a structured documentation system for post-determination interventions is a significant hindrance to the creation of a comprehensive database of archaeological interventions and the AIP has amended its collection criteria in the last few years in an attempt to capture interventions that do not have a formal report. The nature of grey literature itself is also evolving and it is an increasing challenge to capture interventions that are documented electronically (such as short-lived website accounts).

The difficulty in capturing records of excavations is demonstrated by a comparison of AIP data with the annual 'Roman Britain in [year]' sections of *Britannia*, although this is

10. Darvill and Russell 2002, 6 n 4.

Table 2. Correlation of entries in the 'Roman Britain in [year]' section of *Britannia* with the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) database

'Roman Britain in' years	Total number of entries	Entries also in AIP		Entries not in AIP	
1990-4	958	451		507	
1995-9	1,167	531		636	
2000-4	1,183	470		713	
Total	3,308	1,452	(44%)	1,856	(56%)

Table 3. The results of the cleaning of the Stage 1 data for the four pilot areas

Pilot area	Stage 1 AIP entries	Removed		Retained	
Essex	440	222	50%	218	50%
Somerset	271	137	51%	134	49%
Warwickshire	271	169	62%	102	38%
South and West Yorkshire	179	64	36%	115	64%
Total	1,161	592	51%	569	49%

not strictly equating like with like. The AIP is a database of grey-literature reports and will frequently include more than one entry relating to a single archaeological site. 'Roman Britain in [year]', on the other hand, is structured around sites and calendar years and a single entry may relate to several separate interventions (and thus grey-literature reports). Sites excavated over many years, such as large quarries where extraction is phased, will also have multiple entries in 'Roman Britain in [year]', each reflecting the results of the previous year's work. Despite these caveats, it would appear that the 'Roman Britain in [year]' reports are capturing the results of a significant proportion of investigations not recorded by the AIP and rapid review suggests that these are mostly work by universities and local groups undertaken outside the planning system (table 2).

The Stage 2 pilot studies provided an important opportunity to test the reliability of the statistics generated in Stage 1 and cross-checking of that database with the local HER quickly revealed that a number of investigations, identified as potentially relevant in Stage 1, had in fact found no Roman deposits. This is because the Stage 1 AIP data had been sorted using a search for the keyword 'Roman'. Upon review, it became apparent that this search had captured interventions containing phrasing such as 'no Roman archaeology was found', usually where the intervention had been expected to encounter such features, owing to proximity to other known remains. A significant number of interventions had also recovered only residual Roman artefacts. These were deemed to be of little use to this project, as at best they indicated only the possibility of Roman-period activity in the vicinity. Lastly, the use of multiple data sources in the creation of the Stage 1 database resulted in a number of duplicate entries (the same intervention could appear twice with different site names and/or co-ordinates). The proportion of irrelevant entries varied between the pilot areas but overall only 49 per cent of the interventions included in the Stage 1 database proved to have encountered Romano-British stratigraphy (table 3). Removing these entries and adding the ones not captured in Stage 1 allowed enhanced databases to be created for the four test areas (table 4).

Table 4. Data sources for the enhanced Stage 2 database

Pilot area	A	B	C	D	E	F
Essex	218	35	74	44	371	31
Somerset	134	8	21	0	163	22
Warwickshire	102	8	10	8	128	5
South and West Yorkshire	115	16	17	27	175	7
Total	569	67	122	55	837	65

A = Stage 1 data after cleaning (see table 3)

B = new entries added from 'Roman Britain in [year]'

C = new entries added from annual fieldwork round-ups in county or regional journals

D = new entries found whilst visiting the HER

E = final total number of entries in the Stage 2 database

F = non-commercial projects

The total in column D for Essex reflects the addition of 24 reports produced by Colchester Archaeological Trust that had not been notified to the AIP

Table 5. The number of archaeological investigations finding Roman remains in each English region recorded in the Stage 1 database, and corrected by extrapolation from the results of the data cleaning applied in the pilot areas

Region	Stage 1 totals	Corrected Stage 1 (x 0.7)
South East	1,890	1,323
Eastern	1,818	1,273
South West	1,490	1,043
East Midlands	1,097	768
London	1,022	715
Yorkshire	830	581
West Midlands	670	469
North West	395	277
North East	182	127
Multi-regional	34	24
Total	9,428	6,600

While there are obvious dangers in extrapolating from a small regional sample to a national level, we can observe that, for the four pilot areas, the final Stage 2 total of interventions represented 72 per cent of the Stage 1 total. If we assume that a figure of 70 per cent is common across England, we can estimate that around 6,600 interventions encountered Roman remains between 1990 and 2004 and that around 30 per cent of these (almost 2,000) involved the technique of excavation (table 5). In comparison, the 'Roman Britain in [year]' sections of *Britannia* for the fifteen years between 1973 and 1987 recorded 2,260 sites explored, although the actual number of individual sites is less, as the total includes multiple entries for the same site explored over a number of seasons.¹¹ Clearly, the scale of archaeological work in England since 1990 has greatly exceeded anything that had gone before, although these investigations have been far from evenly

11. Wilkes 1989.

spread across the country. London with the South East, Eastern and South West regions comprise 48 per cent of England's total area, yet 66 per cent of the investigations that found Roman remains took place here. There were ten times more investigations in the South East region than the North East, which equates to more than four times more investigations per square kilometre.

This regional variation is related to a number of factors, such as the intensity and extent of development across England, differences in the ease with which sites can be ascribed to the Roman period (especially those sampled by small-scale investigations) and underlying differences in the density of Roman activity, especially rural settlement. The distribution of archaeological investigations is influenced by the geography of modern economic behaviour, so that, on distribution maps, the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link through Kent is just as visible as that of Hadrian's Wall. Likewise, a concentration of investigations along the line of Roman Ermine Street between London and York is due in no small measure to archaeological works associated with improvements to sections of the A1 trunk road, which largely follow the same course. Patterns on distribution maps cannot result entirely from modern factors, however, and must surely reflect some of the underlying patterning in Roman-period settlement. The lower density of Roman sites in the north and Midlands compared to the south and east is widely recognized and, as a general observation, we can note the proportionally greater number of sites explored on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in Kent compared with the M6 toll road in the West Midlands.¹²

At the outset of Stage 1, it was hoped that it would be possible to provide some basic assessment of the types of site most commonly being investigated by commercial archaeology. We have concluded, however, that it is very difficult, if not indeed currently impossible, to obtain a rapid national quantification of site types investigated. This objective was therefore further addressed during Stage 2, through the direct review and interrogation of grey-literature reports relating to the pilot areas. In all, 558 reports were reviewed, 69 per cent of which were rated as being able to make some form of contribution of definable value against one or more of the twelve research themes (table 6). A basic three-fold scoring system was instigated: substantial (the highest contribution); major; and significant. Many sites rate against multiple themes, the average being 1.85 ratings per report. However, only 23 per cent of these ratings are at the substantial/major level, most sites scoring only against one theme and at the lowest (significant) level. In part, this may reflect the fact that some of the more important investigations, which would have scored highly, have proceeded straight to publication, with no grey-literature account.

It is little surprise that excavations are more likely than other types of investigation both to be rated and for that contribution to be at the substantial or major level. Certain research themes score more frequently than others: rural settlement and land use received the most ratings (31 per cent), while religion had the fewest (2 per cent). Contributions to knowledge regarding the palaeo-environment and practices of agriculture are not common but, when they do occur, they are often of major or substantial importance. There are important variations between the pilot areas. Warwickshire and Essex have a great many more ratings concerning urbanism, which, in the case of Essex, reflects the numerous interventions in and around Colchester and, in Warwickshire's case, at 'small'

12. Williams 2003; Powell *et al* 2008.

Table 6. Ratings of the grey-literature reports against twelve research themes in each pilot area (some investigations contribute to multiple research themes)

Research themes	Essex	Somerset	Warwickshire	South and West Yorkshire	Total	Percentage
Iron Age/Roman interface	32	14	4	19	69	11
Communications and infrastructure	8	5	2	5	20	3
Military activity	6	1	4	8	19	3
Urbanism	48	17	27	10	102	16
Agriculture	18	10	7	12	47	7
Rural settlement and land use	68	37	36	55	196	31
Religion	7	4	1	1	13	2
Trade, industry and economy	16	10	2	6	34	5
Material culture	1	6	5	0	12	2
Environment	17	9	4	10	40	6
Continuity and discontinuity of settlement	17	8	1	1	27	4
Burial practices	34	16	7	7	64	10
Total	272	137	100	134	643	100

towns such as Alcester and Tiddington. The regional context for the scoring is also significant, with information relating to urban sites in the north of England more likely to score as having substantial or major potential compared with otherwise similarly sized and productive interventions in the south. Similarly, the greater incidence of contributions to the theme of burial practices for Somerset and Essex, compared with Warwickshire and South and West Yorkshire, clearly relates to regional differences in the archaeological visibility of funerary customs. Variation in the survival of human bone alone cannot account for the differences evident in the figures. The picture represented in the pilot areas is likely to hold true nationally. Redevelopment within England's historic towns and cities has continued apace over the last thirty years and, while preservation *in situ* is a well-established policy in local development plans, major investigations have taken place in cities such as London, Canterbury and Leicester. In the countryside, knowledge of non-villa rural settlements and associated field systems has increased dramatically and now forms a highly valuable data set to compare against the long-established focus of attention on villas.

To date, the project has concentrated almost exclusively on grey literature produced as part of the planning process. Of course, work instigated for other reasons continues to take place. This includes training excavations and research projects by universities and colleges, fieldwork by groups and societies to gather information about the archaeology of their local areas, and investigations commissioned by English Heritage or local authorities to facilitate monument management or in response to the chance discovery of significant remains or artefacts, or for media purposes (most commonly the *Time Team* television programme). Work by local groups, in particular, is often directed towards traditional site types, especially villas. In many cases, the work is being done to a good standard and full publication is doubtless envisaged, and sometimes achieved.¹³ However, in most cases, the only information currently available for these investigations consists of summary accounts in national or county journals and the full research value of these investigations will remain largely hidden until full publication occurs. In Somerset, for example, six separate villas were investigated during the time period of this project, but in all cases there is currently little available information, either published or in grey-literature form.¹⁴ Fieldwork initiated for research purposes often has especial value when it is directed at regions where there is comparatively little development and, hence, fewer developer-sponsored investigations. In Somerset, much commercial work has been concentrated in the M5 corridor, so such survey and excavation projects as the Exmoor Iron Project, the South Cadbury Environs Project and the South Quantock Survey will make significant contributions to knowledge of those areas, and not only for the Roman period. Outside the four pilot studies, the Danebury Environs Roman Programme 1997–2006, in Hampshire, represents an outstanding example of a fully published, university-based research project.¹⁵ Without further research, it is not possible to estimate what proportion of fieldwork undertaken outside developer-funded archaeology reaches full publication, but publication has undoubtedly suffered from the fact that resources for amateur, county archaeological society and university research projects have become increasingly hard to obtain.

13. The excellent publications of work between 1961 and 2009 at Frocester Court villa, Glos, serve as exemplars of what can be achieved by local groups: Price 2000 and 2010.

14. Holbrook forthcoming a.

15. For project overview, see Cunliffe 2008.

COMMERCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND CONVENTIONAL PUBLICATION

The number of reports detailing the results of major fieldwork investigations published in monographs or county journals has been a notable feature of the PPG 16 world, and another objective of this project was to assess the proportion of commercial investigations that reach formal publication. It was originally intended to correlate only post-determination investigations listed in the AIP with publications contained within the British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography (BIAB), as the results of evaluations rarely warrant formal publication. It was realized at an early stage, however, that over a third of investigations with publications listed in the BIAB (177 out of 453) were designated as evaluations by the AIP. In most cases, it is likely that the publications relate to a phase of excavation not documented in grey literature and thus not recorded by the AIP. The decision was therefore taken to include all categories of fieldwork investigations. BIAB entries up to and including 2006 were reviewed in an attempt to catch fieldwork investigations undertaken up to 2004 but published in the two years following this date. A total of 316 final publications were identified in the BIAB, which can be compared with the estimate of c 2,000 excavations undertaken during the study period (table 7). Even where publication has occurred, there is an inevitable time-lag between the end of fieldwork and publication and the results seem to suggest that this is commonly in excess of five years.

In the four pilot areas, out of a total of 228 excavations, 142 (62 per cent) were unpublished at the end of 2008. Even allowing for those of limited research value not deserving of publication, it is clear that the results of a number of potentially significant investigations have not been widely disseminated. While seventy-three (51 per cent) of unpublished excavations were carried out between 2000 and the end of 2004, and thus it might be argued are still within a reasonable preparation time, the other sixty-nine were completed seven or more years previously and it is unlikely that a significant proportion of these reports are still being actively worked on. In fifty-four cases, including a number of apparently significant excavations, no report at all seems ever to have been produced and the county fieldwork 'round-up' is often the only record that it took place. It is clearly worrying if potentially significant results are effectively hidden from view and are not brought forward to inform synthesis and future work.

What are the reasons behind this variable approach to conventional publication? On the one hand, it is tempting to draw the conclusion that many fieldwork exercises do not produce results of sufficient value to warrant this treatment. This is undoubtedly true of many small pieces of work, yet we suspect that this simply cannot be the case with all of the c 1,700 unpublished excavations. There seems to be a lack of consensus within the curatorial and contracting communities on what should be published, and opinions and

Table 7. Analysis by five-year period of archaeological investigations finding Roman remains that had reached conventional publication by the end of 2006

Period	AIP investigations reaching final publication listed in BIAB 1990–2006	AIP investigations reaching interim publication listed in BIAB 1990–2006
1990–4	159	48
1995–9	121	68
2000–4	36	21
Total	316	137

requirements clearly vary considerably across the country. Another important factor is the differing level of resource and expertise within local authorities to ensure that reports of an appropriate quality are published, where this has been specified as a condition of planning consent. It is also hard to escape the conclusion that the identity of the contracting organization responsible for the fieldwork is frequently a significant factor in determining whether or not an investigation is published. Some contractors devote considerable resources to bring their projects to publication; others seemingly have less success. Some projects also fail to reach publication owing to the financial failure of the commissioning body – frequently a commercial developer – during the post-excavation phase; and without funding archaeological contractors cannot hope to complete these projects. Discussions with the curatorial archaeologists suggest that there is often little by way of sanction that can be imposed on defaulters, either professionally or through the planning process.

Even when a report is prepared for publication, it is by no means straightforward to secure a suitable vehicle for its dissemination. The editorial policies of county societies, traditionally the principal vehicle for the publication of excavation reports, vary considerably and their journals certainly do not exist simply to provide an outlet for reports generated by contract archaeology. Many journals select articles to provide an even spread between disciplines, geographical coverage and chronological period. There is no guarantee that a specific report will fit these criteria, even if the results are inherently interesting. An increasing reluctance amongst some editors to publish 'long' excavation reports with detailed specialist reports can also be noted. Substantial backlogs of material waiting for publication (three years from submission to publication is not uncommon) and the absence in some areas of a regularly issued journal add to the complications.

Overall, the delays in getting reports published within a reasonable time-frame must be viewed as an impediment to the development of the discipline. Almost twenty-five years ago, before the introduction of PPG 16, Barry Cunliffe considered that 'a four-year period of research and preparation is adequate for the majority of excavations'.¹⁶ Cunliffe's extraordinarily efficient productivity is, of course, exceptional but, even with the greater resources available after the introduction of PPG 16, few contractors, managing multiple projects simultaneously, have been able to meet this exacting standard. Five to ten years from the end of fieldwork is the current norm.

METHODOLOGICAL AND RESEARCH THEMES

The quality and quantity of information in the grey literature and published accounts is generally closely correlated with both the nature of the report and the capability of the reporting organization. Grey literature contains examples of all kinds of report: evaluation, watching brief, post-fieldwork assessments of the results of an excavation and the full description and analysis of an excavation and its finds. By far the greatest number of such reports concern evaluations. The published record in county and national journals and in monographs is, however, mainly of excavation reports. It is no surprise that excavations usually provide the most intelligible data and there can be little to distinguish between the quality of a published and an unpublished excavation report and the scope of its potential contribution to knowledge. Indeed, post-excavation assessments undertaken to inform

16. Cunliffe 1986, 32.

the scope and scale of full publication themselves contain information of invaluable research value. Trench evaluation evidence is more difficult to assess and we have frequently found it difficult to synthesize, especially where the trenching results cannot be tied to a plot derived from either cropmarks or geophysical survey that permits some appreciation of the spatial layout. For instance, where an evaluation reveals a field system made up of ditches from which second- to fourth-century AD pottery was retrieved, this is useful in establishing the existence of Romano-British agriculture in the locality; but the results are rarely sufficiently clear-cut to establish the precise chronology or layout of the field system. Open-area excavation is almost always required for this level of discrimination.

Excavations, when commissioned as a condition of planning, are seldom 'complete' or 'total', and generally only represent a sample of the potential archaeological resource of the site in question. While reports should (and very many do) describe the sampling strategy of the excavation, few summarize the number of square metres excavated or the volume of sampled negative features, particularly the more significant ones, such as ditches, pits and wells, from which many of the finds data, whether artefactual or biological, have been recovered and subsequently reported on. The sheer quantity of unpublished and published reports raises the question of the appropriate scale of reporting in relation to different levels of investigation, when the working assumption is that everything that has been discovered or collected should be reported on to some extent, or at least assessed at the post-excavation assessment stage, an idea that corresponds with the aim on the part of some excavators to attempt to recover all categories of artefactual and environmental information, irrespective of the cost benefit and potential gain in information (what one might characterize as a 'preservation by record' approach). A greater willingness to review, and if necessary revise, sampling, collection and retention policies while on site could save much unnecessary effort later on.

Developer-funded, PPG 16-led Roman archaeology has, without question, contributed most, in terms of the volume of work and of resulting reports, to our knowledge and understanding of the countryside and rural settlement, followed by urban archaeology ('large' and 'small' towns), including suburbs and their associated cemeteries. With the exception of London, where interventions continue to shed important light on the occupation of the core built-up areas north of the Thames (defined by the Roman city wall of the early third century) and south of the river (Southwark), there have been few major interventions in town centres compared with pre-PPG 16 rescue excavation in the period of the 1960s to 1980s – recent, but not yet published, work in Canterbury and Leicester being notable exceptions. This is probably a reflection of both the implementation of preservation *in situ* policies by planning authorities and of economic considerations, urban excavation being extremely costly. In the case of London, the excavation and publication of the amphitheatre represents a major contribution to our knowledge of this type of monument and the uses to which it was put, not just for Roman Britain but for Roman provincial archaeology in general.¹⁷ Equally, the knowledge gained of Roman Southwark as a result of excavation undertaken in advance of the construction of the Jubilee Line Extension in the 1990s, and subsequent reporting of both structures and associated finds, provides an invaluable contribution to the ongoing debate about the role of this settlement in relation to its counterpart on the north bank of the Thames.¹⁸

17. Bateman *et al* 2008.

18. Drummond-Murray *et al* 2002.

The Southwark work can very reasonably also be regarded as a contribution to our knowledge of Roman suburban archaeology; and it is in this area that there have been major advances. This is reflected in both the grey literature and publications of our sample counties and it relates to our knowledge of the use of suburban space of both large and small towns, where there are fewer constraints on development. For example, and spectacularly, work to the south of Colchester has revealed convincing evidence of Britain's first circus. More generally, knowledge of cemeteries and mortuary practice has increased significantly.¹⁹ Recent published examples include cemeteries in Gloucester and Winchester (Lankhills), and there is important ongoing work at York.²⁰ Such projects have coincided with new approaches to the analysis of accompanying grave goods in relation to ethnic origin, combined with research on bone chemistry, undertaken with the aim of advancing knowledge of both the diet and the provenance of urban populations.²¹ This is an excellent example of a propitious conjunction of well-contextualized samples of human populations and the systematic application of new scientific methodologies, the first funded by developers and the second by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the University of Reading's 'Diasporas, migrations and identities' programme.

Just as planning and preservation policies have influenced the nature of urban research, the same is true in the countryside where, *inter alia*, scheduled ancient monuments have tended to be excluded from development at the expense of undesignated sites. Historically, scheduling has favoured substantial remains, generally of masonry, such as villas and temples, in preference to less substantial, non-villa settlements. These, ranging from single farmsteads through to nucleated villages, have seen very little systematic investigation.²² Thanks to large-scale developments, such as extensive quarrying or the provision or improvement of major infrastructure, such as at Heathrow and Stansted airports, where very extensive landscapes have been explored, there has been a paradigm shift in our perceptions of the Roman-period exploitation of the landscape. With these projects, it has been possible to gain an understanding of the development of Roman fields, field systems and trackways, as well as of the settlements themselves, their cemeteries and their associated material and biological remains.²³ The value of linear schemes (roads and pipelines) is also evident from the pilot studies, with those in areas where there has been relatively little previous work of especial value (such as the M1–A1 Link in West Yorkshire, the A120 in Essex and the M6 Toll in the West Midlands) giving valuable insights, not only into settlements and field systems, but also their changing spatial relationships over time.²⁴ The data derived from these kinds of linear project are, without doubt, capable of greater analysis and synthesis, although once again methodological considerations have a direct bearing on their wider utility. Roads frequently investigate a broad enough corridor to facilitate understanding of what has been found. On pipelines this can also be the case where the full working width is explored (often around 30m), but when investigation is restricted purely to the width of the pipe trench, sometimes in the

19. Crummy 2008.

20. Simmonds *et al* 2008; Booth *et al* 2010.

21. See, for example, Cool 2010 on artefacts and Eckardt *et al* 2010 for an overview of the bone-chemistry evidence.

22. The work of General Pitt Rivers at Rotherley and Woodcuts in Cranborne Chase in the 19th century still remains a notable and important contribution: Pitt Rivers 1887 and 1888.

23. Framework Archaeology 2006, 2008 and 2010.

24. Roberts *et al* 2001; Timby *et al* 2007; Powell *et al* 2008.

hope that preservation *in situ* can be achieved, interpretation is commensurately much more difficult and the value is reduced.²⁵

An important feature of both major mineral extraction programmes and infrastructure projects is that they tend to include land at a distance from modern settlements. In the south, south east and Midlands of England this has particular importance, in that it reveals the road networks and the late prehistoric and Roman landscapes away from Roman urban centres, large and small. Roads can be seen as a major influence on the spread of new 'Roman' ideas, whether these are technological, agricultural or cultural, as might be reflected in the archaeological record in changes of diet, adoption of new types of material culture, or new burial customs.

The quality of preservation in the rural context is seldom good, the majority of investigations having taken place across agricultural landscapes that have been intensively cultivated, destroying all but negative features such as ditches, pits and post-holes. Here, the most commonly recurring features are the ditches that bound settlements, fields and trackways. Generally broad dating can be provided for these features, such that it is possible to draw conclusions about the history of the settlement in question and of the larger landscape of major land divisions, enclosures and fields in which it was set. There is a great deal of variation across the landscape of Roman England, but our sample showed a greater tendency towards repeated modification of the landscape through the Roman period in the eastern region, as in our Essex sample, than elsewhere. As more data accumulate, it will be possible to map more precisely across Britain the differing intensities of the management of the Roman countryside, as expressed through the cutting of ditches, and different approaches to animal and crop husbandry, through the analysis of enclosure and field sizes, the presence and absence of droveways and the distribution of wells.²⁶

Next, there is the question of structures, which are not always visible in the archaeological landscape, but whose former presence is indicated by concentrations of negative features, such as gullies, pits, wells and post-holes. Even if building plans cannot be discerned, it is often possible to infer the character of the likely structures from patterns of gully digging. This has led to the increased recognition from the late 1980s onwards of round houses in the countryside, possibly becoming the dominant building type among non-villa settlements, and a resulting re-evaluation of social structures in rural areas.²⁷ Though there is undoubtedly a trend towards rectangularity in building plan, with evidence of proportionally fewer circular buildings in the third and fourth centuries, round buildings persist through the late Roman period into the fifth century. Among other key features are corn-drying or malting ovens and kilns or furnaces, which can be better preserved than buildings, and that help to characterize the nature of the occupation and activities associated with a rural settlement.

Integral with the settlements are their cemeteries, as well as individual burials and cremations, with their associated human remains and material culture. The pilot studies demonstrate that there is an impressive amount of funerary data, offering scope for fresh research approaches, including the application of isotopic analysis, that could result in a

25. For example, work on the Polden villages water pipeline in Somerset: Hollinrake and Hollinrake 1995.

26. Cf Taylor 2007.

27. Hingley 1989 was the first general survey to highlight the prevalence of round houses in rural settlements. For more recent accounts of these structures, see Friendship-Taylor and Friendship-Taylor 1997 and Mattingly 2006, 367–78.

paradigm shift in our knowledge and understanding of dietary and demographic trends, comparable to the research that has, so far, only been applied to urban populations.

If the quality of the reported archaeology in terms of recovered plan is often variable, the survey of the grey literature reveals a much more systematic approach to finds reporting than was the case before 1990. For the Roman period, the artefactual record is dominated by building materials and pottery, and these are increasingly reported using standard terminology – notably, in the case of pottery, the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection.²⁸ This provides a common standard for the reporting of ceramics, whether imported wares, the products of major local industries distributed over the whole province, or of selectively distributed regional wares; this in turn facilitates systematic, comparative research, and there is no excuse for not using it in present-day reporting.

Quantitative approaches, which record absolute quantities by sherd count and/or weight and an estimate of the number of different forms and vessels represented, have become more routine and allow for the possibility of quantitatively based mapping of the distributions of individual wares, as well as of the relationships between different wares and forms. This information can provide insight into, for example, the chronology and status of the settlement and the nature of its access to markets; but without calibration against another data set, questions relating to the intensity of the supply and consumption of pottery over time cannot be addressed. One approach could be to relate the ceramic data to other categories of material culture, such as metalwork; another would be to relate the volume of ceramics to the volume of the features, or their sub-sample, from which they were excavated.

This is standard practice in relation to the recovery of seeds and plant remains from standardized units of soil, but is very rarely applied to other categories of finds. However, Eckardt and Millett, for example, have shown how this approach adds significantly to interpretation.²⁹ Thus a few kilogrammes of pottery from a rural settlement in Warwickshire or South or West Yorkshire may not have the same significance in terms of the occupational history and status of the settlement as the same quantities from a minor farmstead in Essex. Above all, general questions about the nature of supply and consumption over time cannot be addressed without a knowledge of the context, including the volume of the parent deposits.

Equally, in studying the distribution of individual wares, neither the proportion of a particular type in an assemblage (especially of widely traded imported or regional wares) nor its absolute quantity make much sense without a knowledge of the contexts from which they were derived and their volume. For example, fifty sherds of pottery type *x*, representing 5 per cent of the reported pottery assemblage and derived from 50m³ of ditch fill from site A, is not the same as fifty sherds of the same pottery type *x*, representing 5 per cent of the reported assemblage but derived from only 5m³ of ditch fill from site B. Since pottery is almost invariably the most abundant artefact type from Romano-British sites, other than building materials, collections of a few hundred sherds can provide basic information concerning chronology or the representation of different wares on the site.

With minor interventions, such as the reporting of evaluations and watching briefs, these, as with other artefacts, may be the only data with a potentially wider application.³⁰ Other finds – in particular, faunal remains – may be too limited in quantity and character

28. Tomber and Dore 1998, and shortly to be available online at the Museum of London website.

29. Eckardt 2006; Millett 2007.

30. For example, Hollinrake and Hollinrake 1995.

to provide useful information. The same is generally true in the case of the records of the presence of walls or ditches, which only serve to prove the existence of a settlement and to inform the design for a more extensive excavation, should circumstances allow. If there is a risk of an evaluation or watching brief overstating its findings, the same is seldom true of post-excavation assessments, which often provide an abundance of data that stand scrutiny on their own merits.³¹ Material culture finds are identified by type and material and quantified by number and weight. Metalwork and other portable finds are described and quantified and the pottery, too, is characterized by ware and also quantified. Such (unpublished) assessments give enormously valuable information on what is present (and, by inference, what is absent): data that can be fed into regional and national studies of distributions. In theory, these assessments are just steps on the path to full publication but, as discussed above, our survey shows that final reports can be delayed for many years after the production of the assessment, if they appear at all.

Where they are present, artefacts such as pottery and coins contribute significantly to site dating with a reliability that is proportionate to their abundance. For example, where the published and unpublished literature reveals patchy or slight representation of Roman pottery and other artefacts, as in the pilot studies of Warwickshire and South and West Yorkshire, the inferences to be drawn from them may relate more to the period(s) when the material was supplied to the site than about the overall chronology of the occupation.³² This suggests that, for all sites with limited material culture assemblages, independent chronologies should be established using techniques such as radiocarbon and/or dendrochronology, wherever possible. This approach should be directed not only at individual settlements but also their associated field systems, in order to gain a better understanding of the development of extensive systems, such as those of the 'brickfield' pattern in the north Midlands and beyond. Even in the relatively material-rich south and south east, independent dating techniques can also resolve similar questions of the origins and early development of settlements and field systems in the late Iron Age/early Roman period, just as they can for the period after the beginning of the fifth century. It has also become clear that Roman material culture remains very prominent in finds assemblages in the sub-Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods, such that independent dating techniques have a major role to play in establishing chronologies, including the extent and duration of occupation after the beginning of the fifth century.³³

If there is a sense that the PPG 16 published and unpublished grey literature privileges material culture over biological remains, it is generally the case that this reflects the better durability and, hence, preservation of the former. Bone may have decayed completely or been too badly eroded to make detailed identification possible, and the survival of plant remains is even more contingent on environmental conditions. For the most part, only the remains of carbonized seeds of cereals and their associated weeds are recovered, this usually arising from the drying of the crop. Waterlogged and mineralized seeds and plant remains, which can shed a completely different light on diet and economic plants, are relatively rare. With poor or rare survival, such as through carbonization of selected crops, inference can only be derived from 'presence' data. The question needs to be asked, in the light of the results of the past decades of sampling and analysis, whether it is helpful to

31. For example, Gardner 2004.

32. Examples include the sites at Ling Hall Quarry, Warks (Palmer 2002), and High Street, Shafton, South Yorks (WYAS 2002).

33. As, for example, at Mucking, Essex: Lucy *et al* forthcoming.

document yet another site which can only demonstrate the presence of certain cereals, notably spelt wheat and barley, and not the entire scope of the settlement's grown crops. If it is clear that spelt wheat was widely grown in lowland Britain during the Roman period, is it worth the cost of trying to add further instances to the map?³⁴ Perhaps such painstaking (and, thereby, expensive) retrieval and analysis of carbonized cereal remains from rural sites cannot take us much further beyond confirming what we know already, especially in reasonably well-studied regions.

The same is true of faunal remains. If an assemblage is small and/or poorly preserved, it is unlikely to add much to knowledge and understanding of animal husbandry or of the diet of the occupants of the settlement in question. Again, without insight into the nature and volume of the deposits from which the bone was derived, the potential of comparative analysis is also limited. Even more so than with material culture, it is possible to have identical assemblages of faunal remains in terms of size and composition, and from different parts of England, which can provide the basis for radically different interpretations, depending on the context of the material and the volume of the deposits from which it is derived.

If we are to draw out some key conclusions relating to the direction of future research that draws on the published and unpublished literature stemming from the implementation of PPG 16 relating to the (non-villa) rural settlement of England in the Roman period, it would be to emphasize the great number of reports that provide valuable plan and finds-assemblage data with which to begin a re-examination of settlement morphologies across the country; this is especially true in the regions that have seen the greatest investment: the East, East Midlands, South East and South West. In other parts of the country, the evidence base was frequently so low that even a small number of new sites adds enormously to our knowledge. Equally, the systematic reporting of associated finds assemblages where common methodologies employing quantitative approaches have almost become routine allows for the possibility of addressing questions around acculturation, trading and marketing. With the combination of settlement and building morphologies and the associated material-culture data, future research may allow us to identify new regional or sub-regional identities. This will also facilitate investigation into the existence (or not) of *civitas* or tribal identities and allow us to explore beyond a human geography of Roman Britain dominated by such broad characteristics as highland and lowland, wetland, forest, or the concept of the *civitas*.³⁵

On a negative note, developer archaeology, by its very nature, has an inevitable focus on single sites or, in the case of infrastructure projects, groups of sites. Opportunities for synthesis have been rare.³⁶ This has led to the neglect of key questions concerning the nature of the agricultural economy of Roman Britain. While it is valuable to have confirmed the widespread presence of the principal cereals (spelt wheat and barley) and of the three main domesticates (cattle, sheep and pig), we have not progressed very far in our understanding of how the agricultural economy worked. This is in part a reflection of the lack of an integrative approach, modern research having turned away from villa settlements and the determination of their role in the agricultural economy towards other forms of rural settlement.

34. Cf van der Veen *et al* 2007; University of York 2004.

35. Cf Mattingly 2006, chs 12–15.

36. A number of published regional syntheses are too high-level to address the Roman evidence in detail, although a notable exception is Booth *et al* 2007, which reviews work in the Thames Valley.

In part, too, it is a reflection of our failure to develop methodologies to address questions concerning the nature of the agricultural economy of the province compared with the success with which we have addressed the characterization and quantification of material culture. We are not helped by issues of preservation and the limited interpretive value of our main archaeological sources of evidence for animal and crop husbandry (pollen, plant and faunal remains), especially given that we know from written sources (such as the Vindolanda tablets, Tacitus' *Agricola* and Diocletian's Price Edict) that there was a market, both within and beyond the island (mainly in the provinces of Gaul and Germany), for, principally, cereals, meat, horses, hides and wool. All of these commodities could be sourced in Britain. On the assumption that the differential wealth displayed through the settlement hierarchy, broadly divided between the headline categories of villa and non-villa rural settlements, relates in some measure at least to a differential ability to profit from the market in these commodities, the question is how this can be further explored, if not demonstrated? Ironically, we now have, thanks to the rescue archaeology of the 1970s and 1980s and the implementation of PPG 16, a respectable sample of rural settlements, albeit with a bias towards the south east of England, where we have the benefit of detailed analysis and reporting of the environmental evidence; but we have far fewer examples of villa excavations that have benefited from the modern approaches by which we might better understand their role in crop and animal husbandry.³⁷

At the same time, the approach of fieldwalking, which was developed and extensively deployed in the last quarter of the twentieth century, principally as a means of discovering new sites, has almost disappeared with the widespread adoption of geophysical techniques of site prospection. However, it was through programmes of systematic surface collection that significant insights were gained into the relationship between animal and crop husbandry and the varying intensities of regimes in different parts of Britain. On the assumption that the explanation for the presence of sherd scatters across Romano-British field systems was that they had derived from manure from byres and middens at the 'home' farm, spread across the arable landscape, models were developed to extrapolate the associated agricultural regimes. So the results of the Maddle Farm survey, centred around a middle-range villa on the chalk of the Berkshire Downs, seemed to indicate intensive cattle rearing in tandem with intensive cereal cultivation.³⁸ In contrast, the East Berkshire field survey produced very little on- or off-site Romano-British material and such settlement excavation as has taken place subsequently reveals continuity from the late Iron Age, with irregular enclosures and round-house architecture and a comparatively poor material culture.³⁹ In order to understand better the scale of engagement in crop and animal husbandry, we do need to renew the practice of systematic surface collection surveys to help contextualize settlement and agricultural regimes in their wider landscape.

On the basis of what has been achieved to date, we are left with an imbalance towards research in the countryside on settlements (other than villas), rather than on settlements and their articulation with the landscape. Given the issues affecting the preservation and interpretation of biological remains, our finds record is biased towards material culture. This therefore remains the most abundant and available proxy for gauging a settlement's interaction with the market which, in turn, provides an oblique insight into the nature and intensity of its agricultural economy. It is also our principal source of evidence for

37. Within our pilot areas, Great Holts, Essex, stands out as a modern villa excavation with good-quality environmental remains: Germany *et al* 2004.

38. Gaffney and Tingle 1989.

39. Ford 1987. See Simmonds *et al* 2009 for a recent settlement report in this area.

addressing questions of regional and sub-regional identity. After the first decade of the twenty-first century, our most recent survey of rural settlement in England interrogates the evidence through aerial and landscape surveys, not through analysis of the individual settlements, to produce national distributions of broad categories of settlement, field system, pottery kilns and so on.⁴⁰ In the twenty-two years since the publication of Richard Hingley's *Rural Settlement in Roman Britain* there has been an increase in knowledge of several orders of magnitude.⁴¹ This is almost entirely due to the impact of the implementation of PPG 16 which, after twenty-one years, has not only produced an enormous and challenging quantity of settlement and landscape data to synthesize but, at the same time, has also engendered an urgent need to review our research aims in relation to the agricultural economy of Roman Britain and how we might achieve them. It is clearly also incumbent on us to review and improve methodologies, both on-site, to provide a better contextualization of all categories of finds assemblages, where measuring and recording the volume of the excavated context is critical (and relatively easy to achieve with digital survey technology), and off-site, to improve knowledge of the landscape context and the degree of integration into the agricultural economy.

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40. Taylor 2007.

41. Hingley 1989.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette communication identifie comment la prodigieuse recrudescence du volume de l'archéologie commerciale en Angleterre depuis l'introduction de PPG 16 en 1990 a eu un effet sur nos connaissances et sur notre conception de la Grande-Bretagne romaine. Les difficultés liées à l'établissement d'une base de données complète des interventions sont discutées mais, dans l'ensemble, on estime qu'environ 6,600 interventions séparées ont échantillonné des dépôts romains entre 1990 et 2004. Bien que nombre d'importantes fouilles aient été publiées dans des formats traditionnels, une très grande quantité d'informations se trouve uniquement dans la littérature grise. Le travail commercial a engendré de grands progrès au niveau de notre conception du peuplement rural hors des villas et de l'utilisation des sols qui lui est associée, alors que les analyses de la culture matérielle et, à un moindre degré, des vestiges biologiques, offrent un grand potentiel pour une synthèse plus large et une comparaison entre les sites. Des améliorations au niveau de la méthodologie de recueil et des normes de consigne sont suggérées, et on souligne le besoin d'intégrer les résultats des investigations commerciales et les données provenant d'autres sources.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Abhandlung identifiziert die Auswirkungen, des enormen Aufschwungs der kommerziellen Archäologie in England seit der Einführung von PPG 16 (Regierungsrichtlinie 16) im Jahr 1990 auf unser Wissen über und Verständnis von Großbritannien in der Römerzeit. Die Schwierigkeiten einer umfassenden Datensammlung von Einschreitungen werden diskutiert, aber generell wird geschätzt, daß es im Zeitraum von 1990 bis 2004 ungefähr 6,600 separate Einschreitungen bei römischen Ablagerungen gegeben haben muss. Obwohl viele Ausgrabungen in konventionellem Format veröffentlicht wurden, gibt es seine beachtliche Menge von Informationen, die sich nur innerhalb der grauen Literatur befinden. Kommerzielle Arbeit hat zu einschneidenden Fortschritten im Verständnis von ländlichen, nicht einer Villa angehörenden, Siedlungen und deren Landnutzung geführt, wohingegen die Analyse von materieller Kultur und, in geringerem Ausmaß, die der umfangreichen biologischen Überreste noch beachtliches Potential zur weitergreifenden Synthese und standortübergreifenden Vergleichen haben. Verbesserungen in den Methoden der Fundbergung und Berichterstattung werden empfohlen und der Bedarf der Integration von Ergebnissen von kommerziellen Untersuchungen und anderen Quellen wird hervorgehoben.