The Roman Rural Settlement Project

Romano-British ritual practices in the East Midlands

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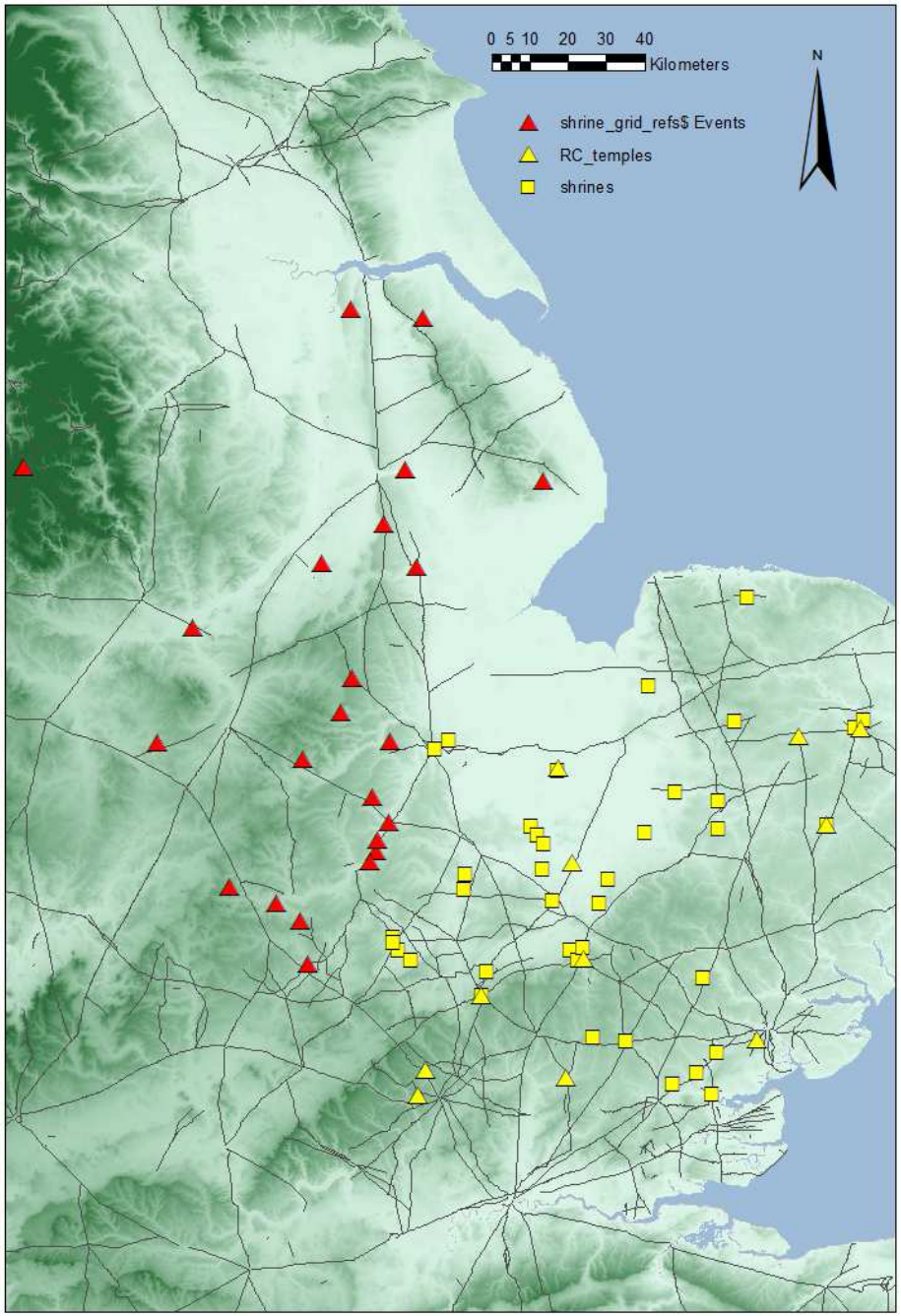
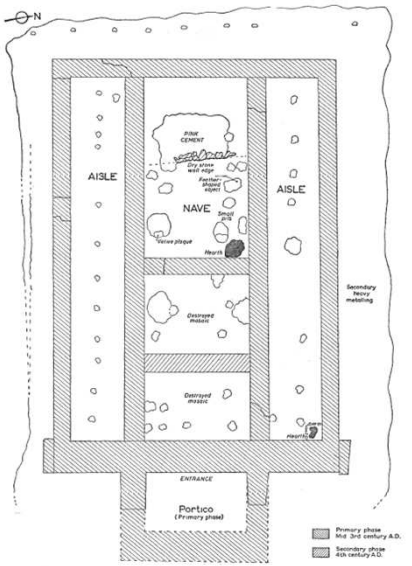
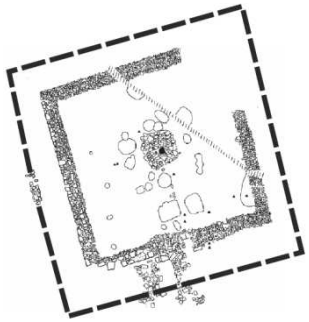


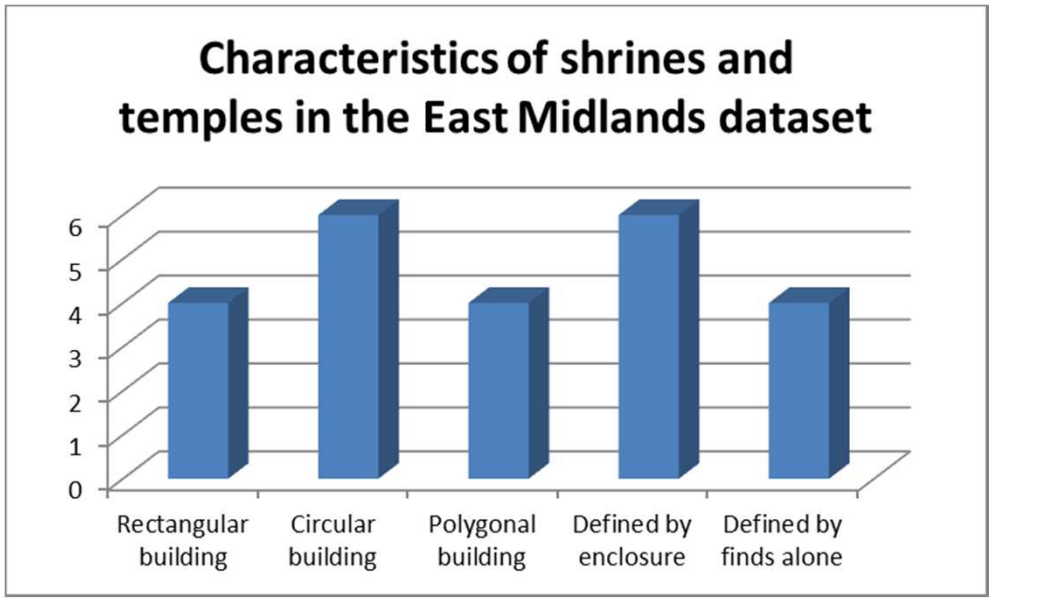
Religious sites in the East Midlands

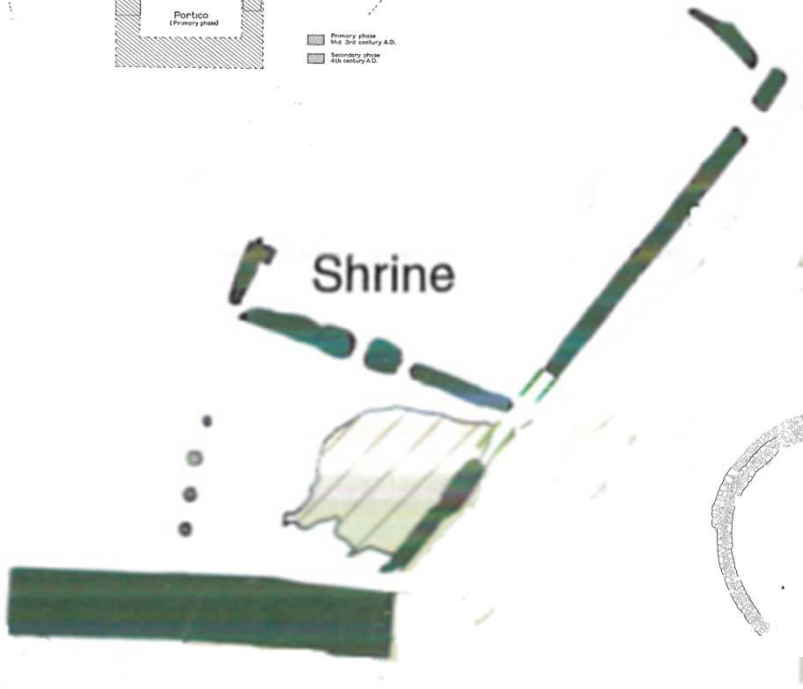
- 3 Romano-Celtic temples/derivatives
- 21 other sites interpreted as shrines
- Eastern distribution
- Potentially *c* 30% with late Iron Age origins
- 40% from villages/ unwalled small towns
- 35% 'isolated'
- 25% from farms/villas

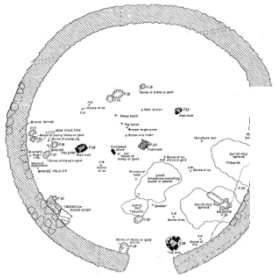
Religious structures from East Midlands

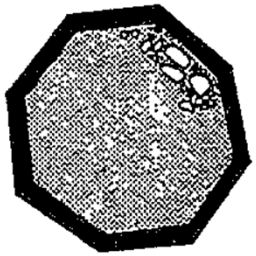


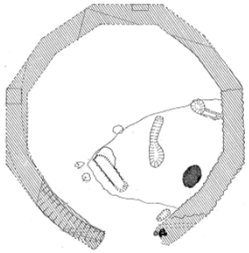


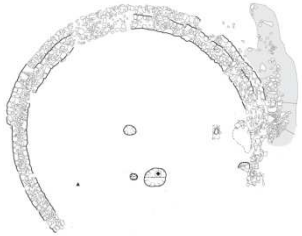


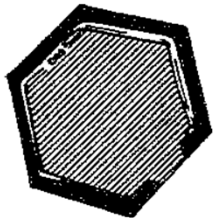


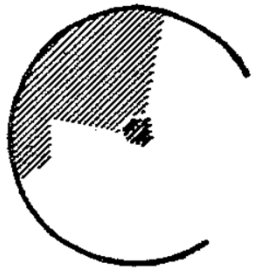






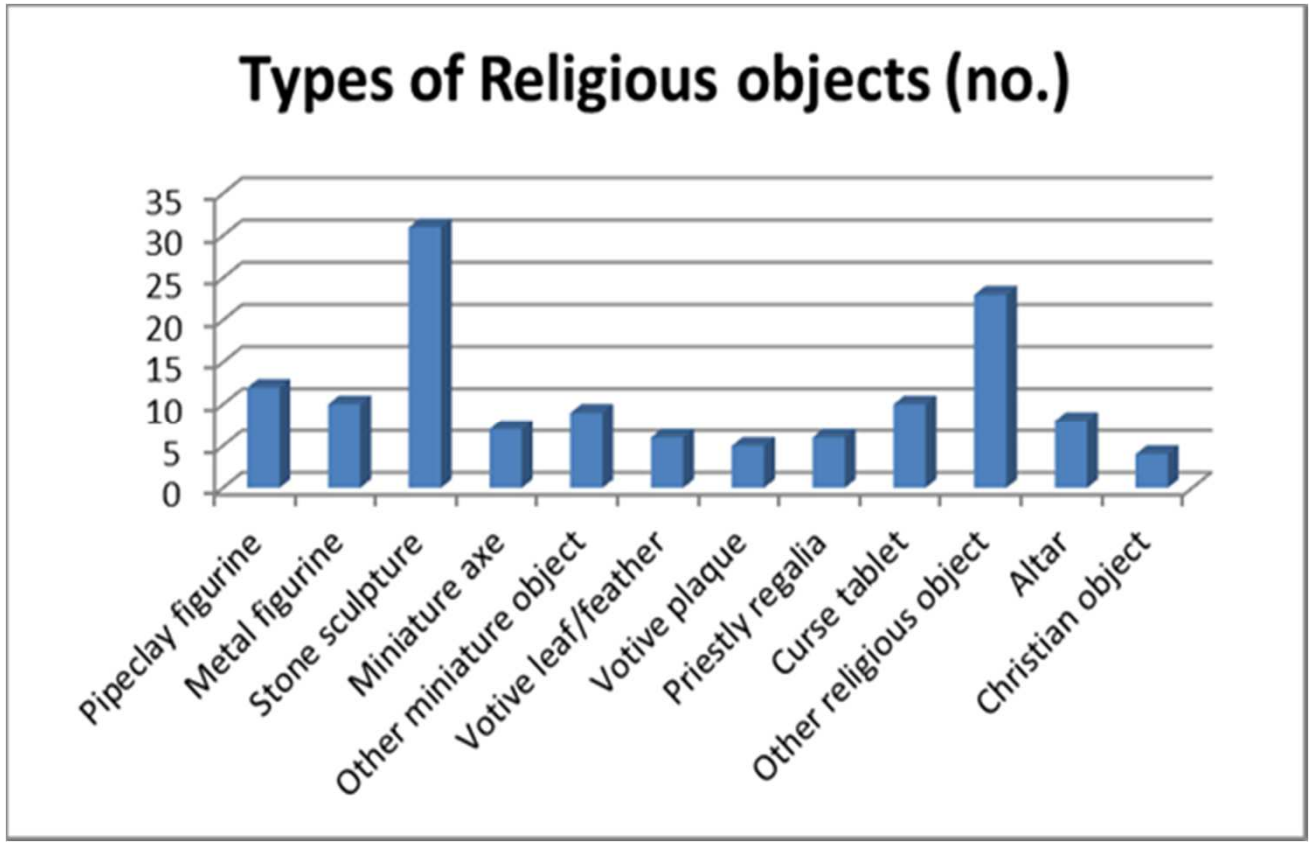


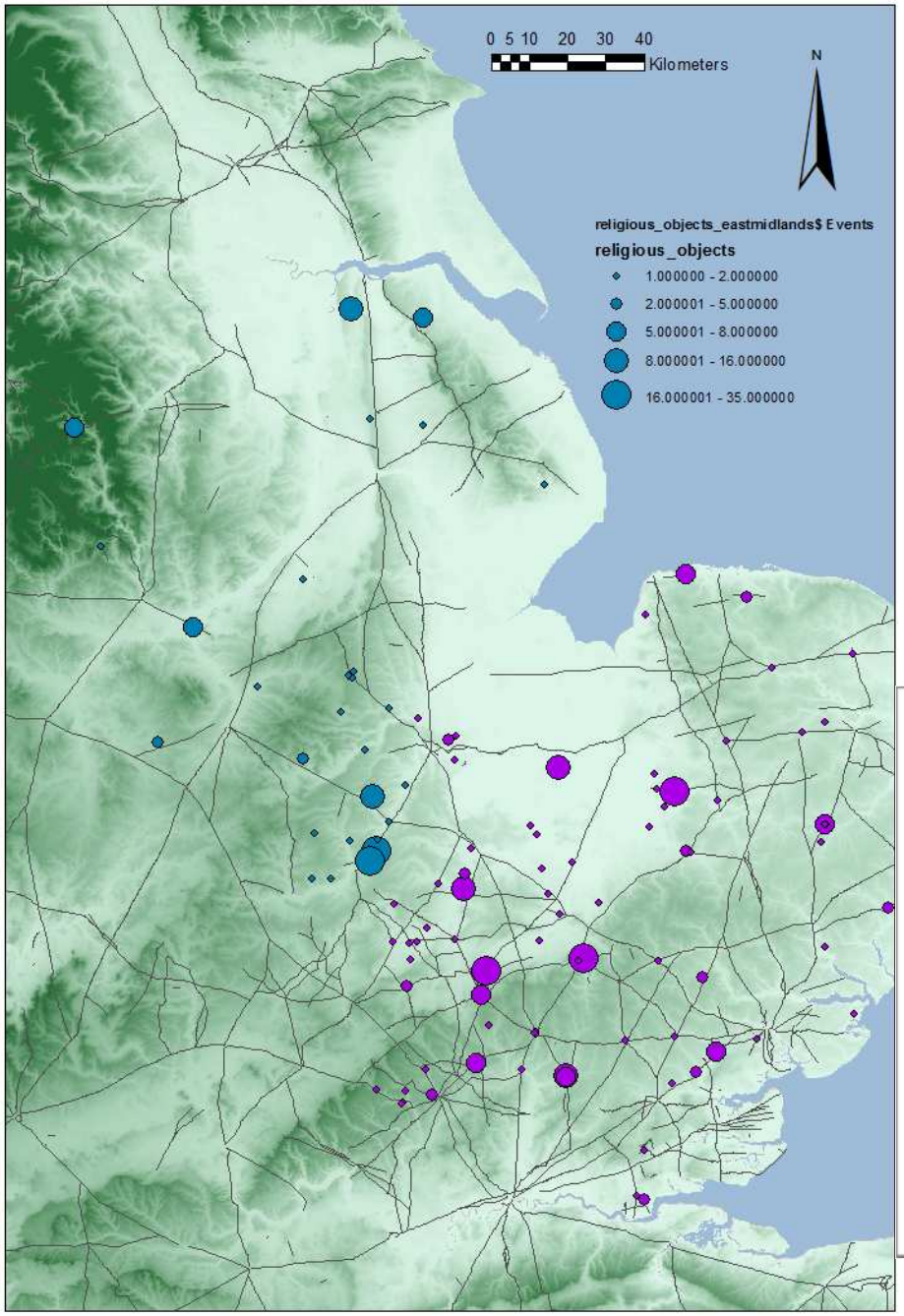




Religious objects

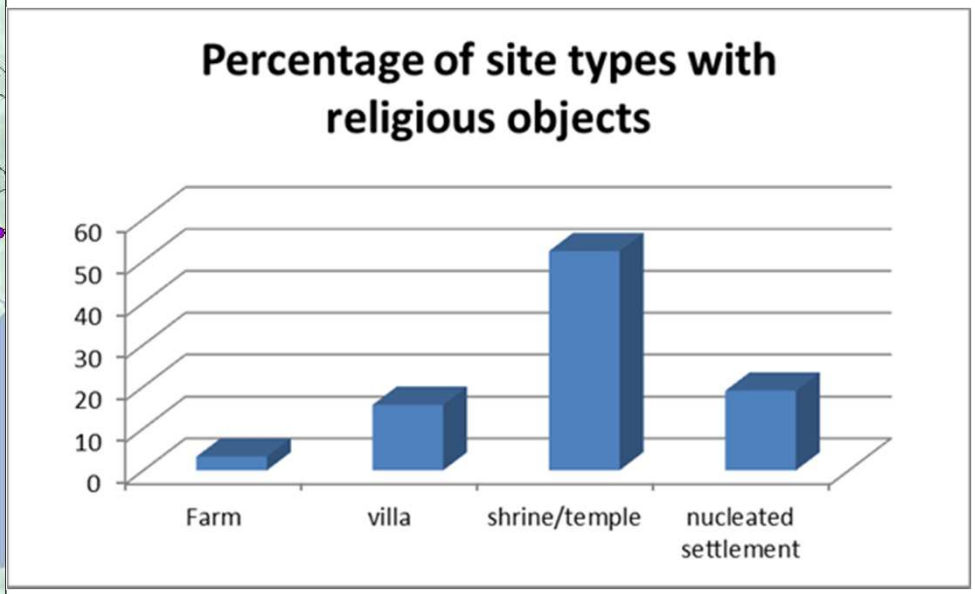
- **29 sites produced 131 object of a specifically religious nature**

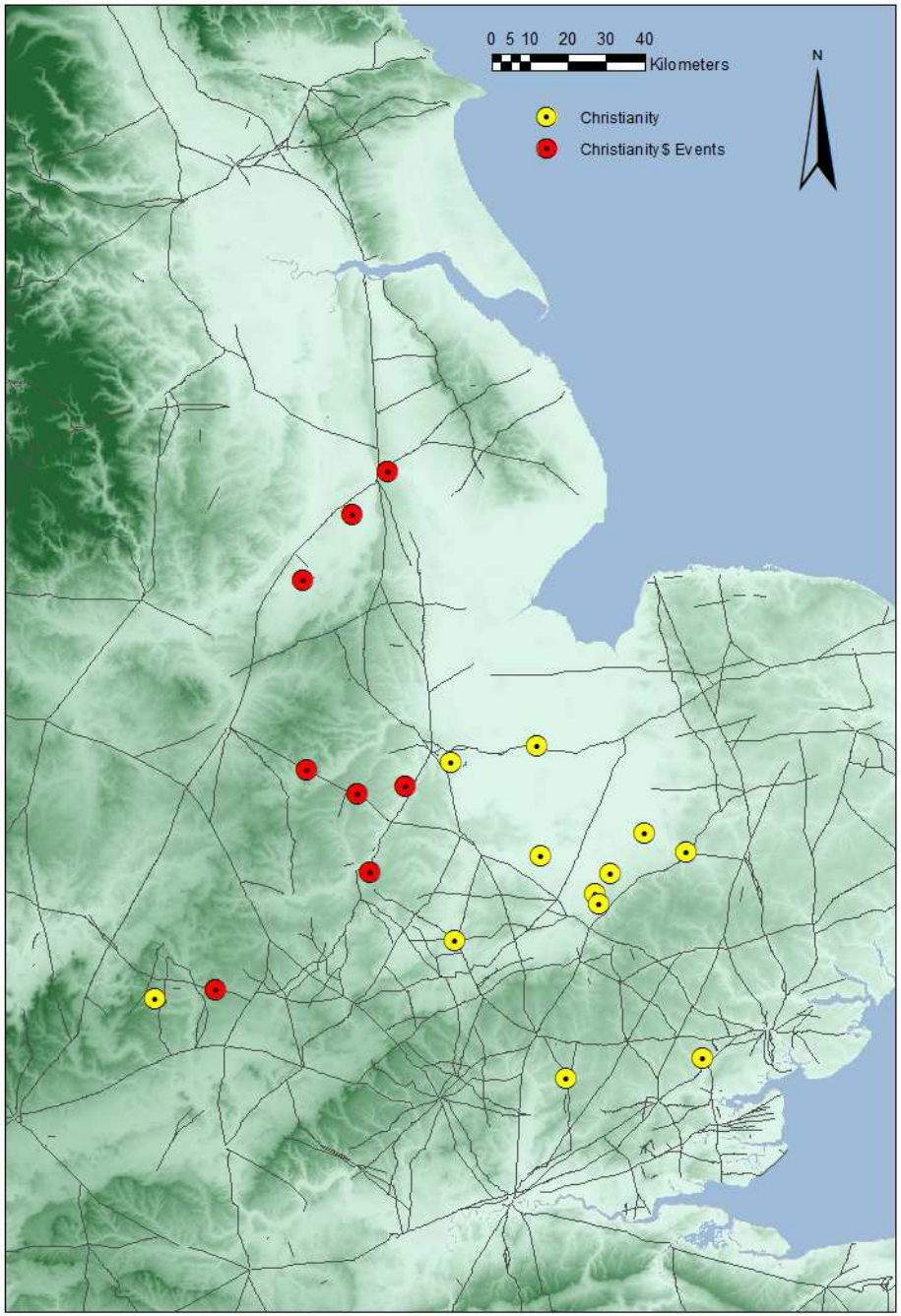




Distribution of religious objects

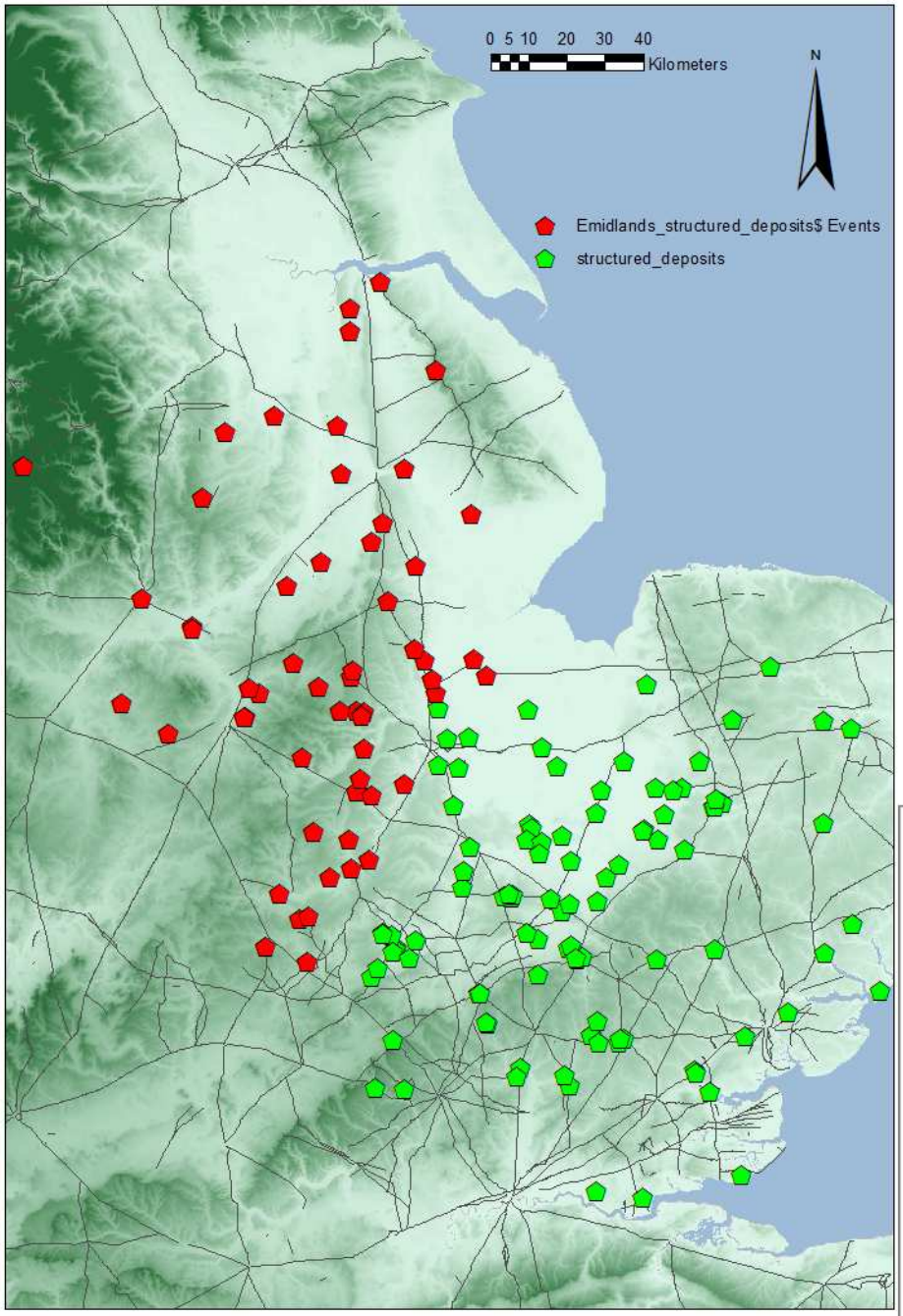
- Over 80% of all religious objects from temple /shrine sites





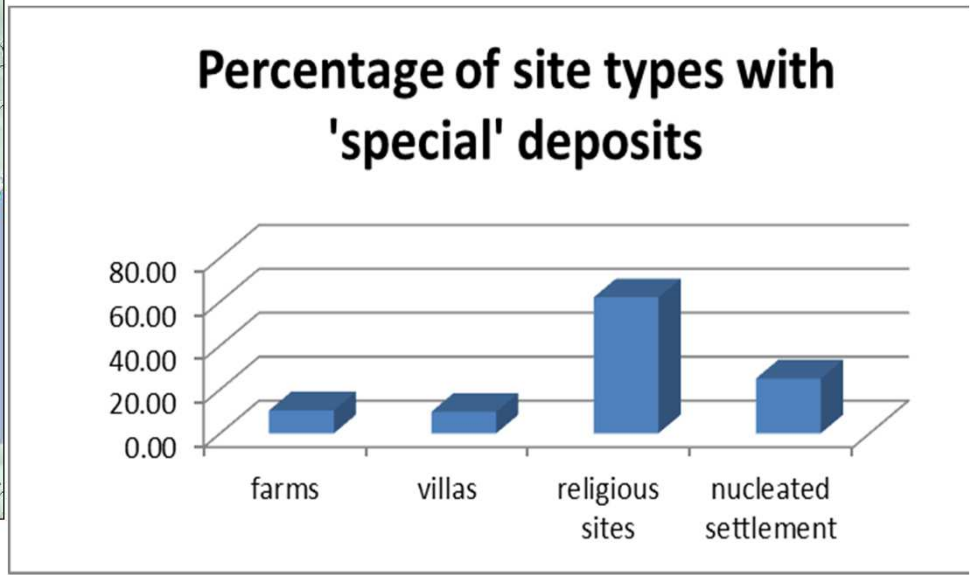
Evidence for Christianity from rural sites

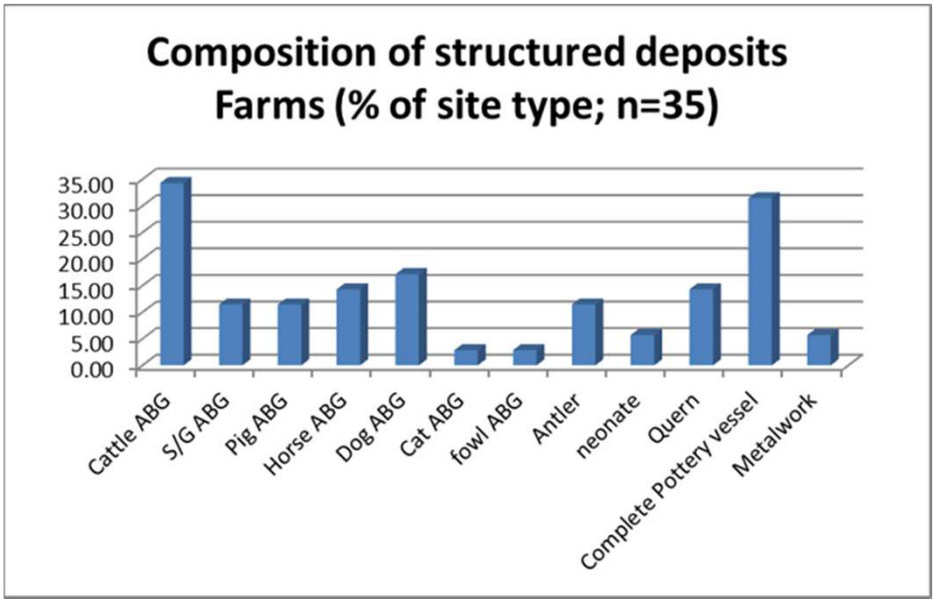
- Evidence for eight sites on the East Midlands dataset
- 3 lead tanks, 2 Christian imagery and 3 cemeteries
- Mostly from villas and small towns

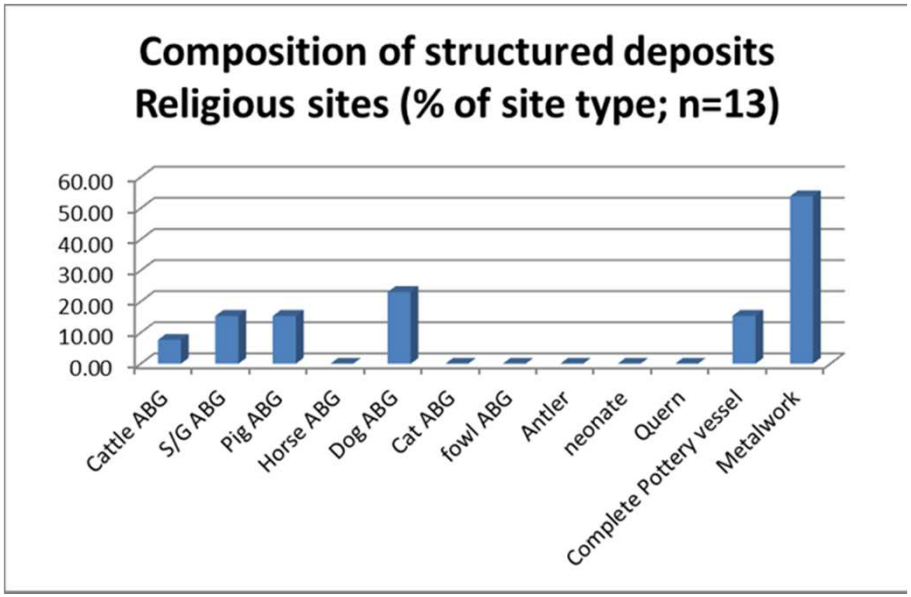


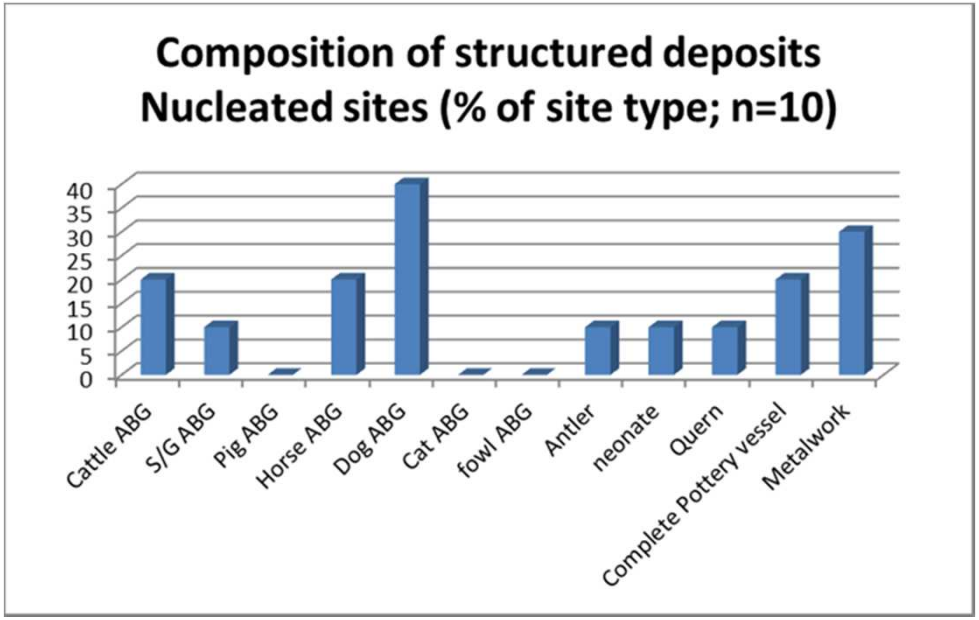
‘Special’ or structured deposits

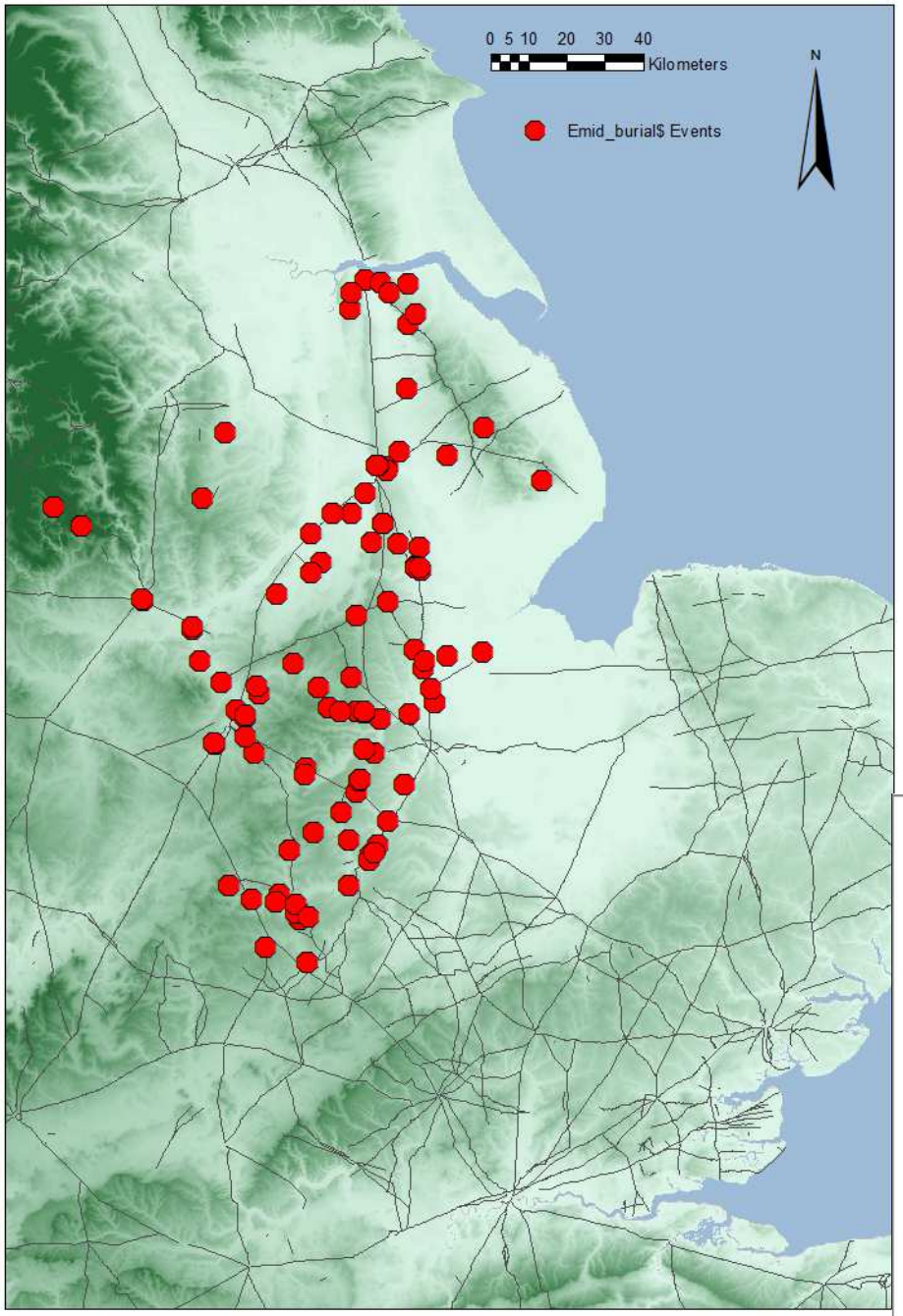
- Specified on 57 sites
- 50% of religious sites, 30% of nucleated settlements & 10% of farms & villas




Composition of structured deposits
Farms (% of site type; n=35)
35.00
30.00
25.00
20.00
15.00
10.00
5.00
0.00
Cattle ABG
S/G ABG
Pig ABG
Horse ABG
Dog ABG
Cat ABG
fowl ABG
Antler
neonate
Quern
Complete Pottery vessel
Metalwork

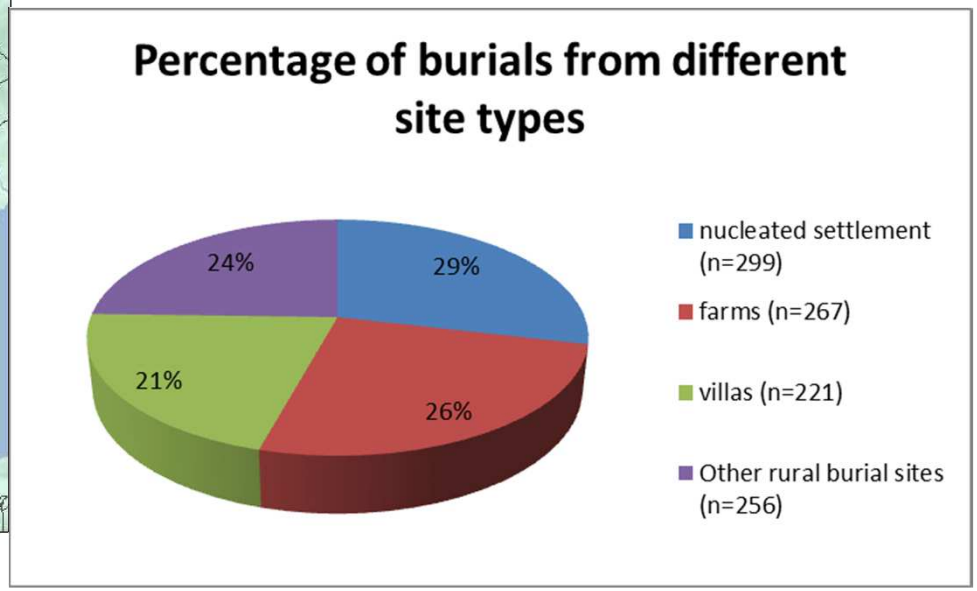

Composition of structured deposits
Religious sites (% of site type; n=13)
60.00
50.00
40.00
30.00
20.00
10.00
0.00
Cattle ABG
S/G ABG
Pig ABG
Horse ABG
Dog ABG
Cat ABG
fowl ABG
Antler
neonate
Quern
Complete Pottery vessel
Metalwork


Composition of structured deposits
Nucleated sites (% of site type; n=10)
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Cattle ABG
S/G ABG
Pig ABG
Horse ABG
Dog ABG
Cat ABG
fowl ABG
Antler
neonate
Quern
Complete Pottery vessel
Metalwork

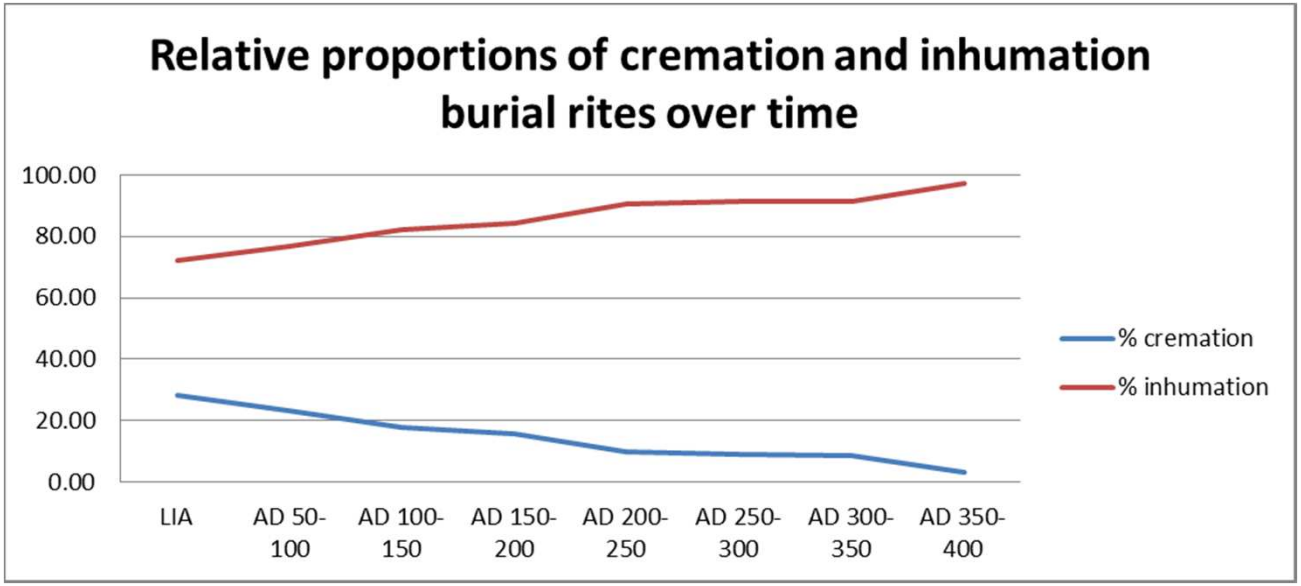


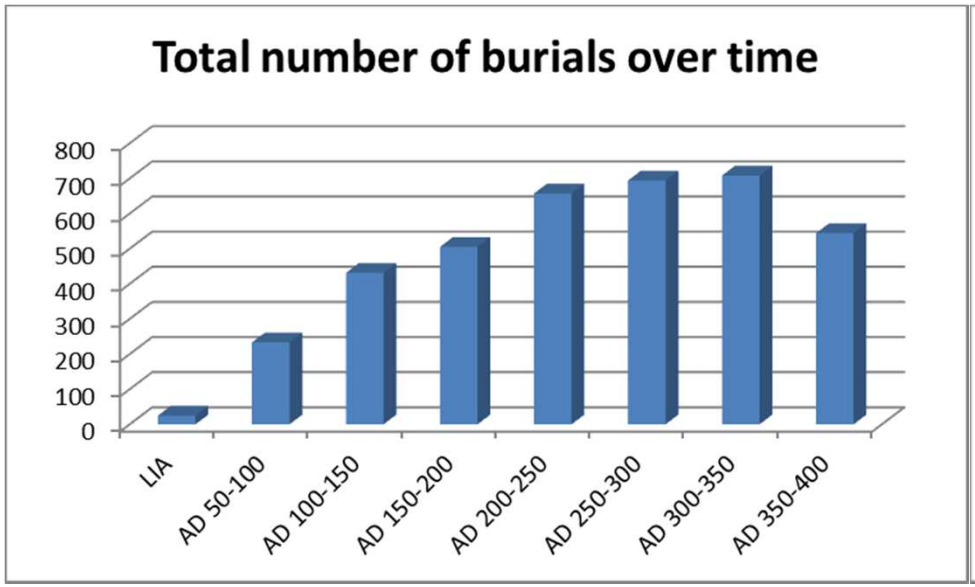
Burial practice

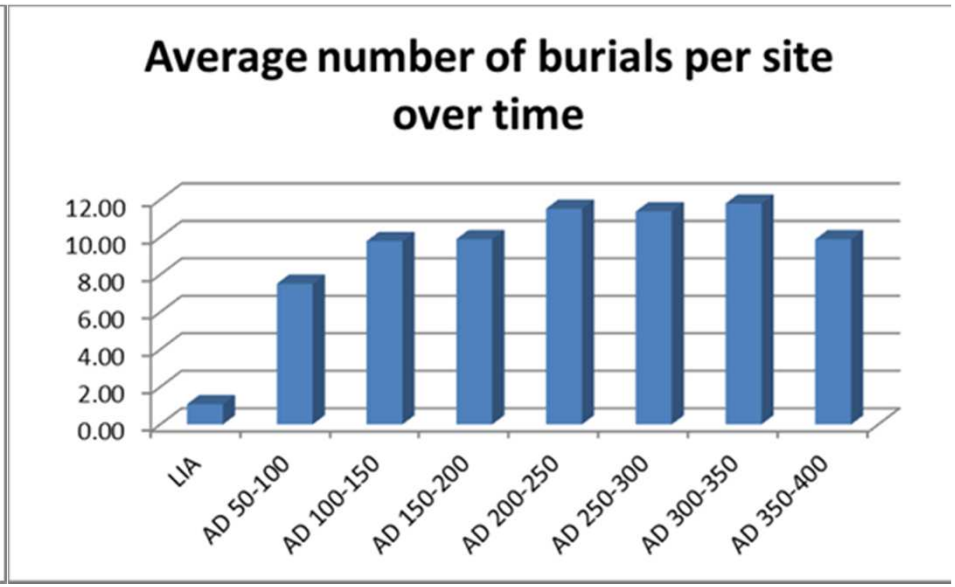
- 910 burials from 111 sites
- 90% inhumation burial
- Cremation burial more common on farms (10%) than nucleated settlement (2%)



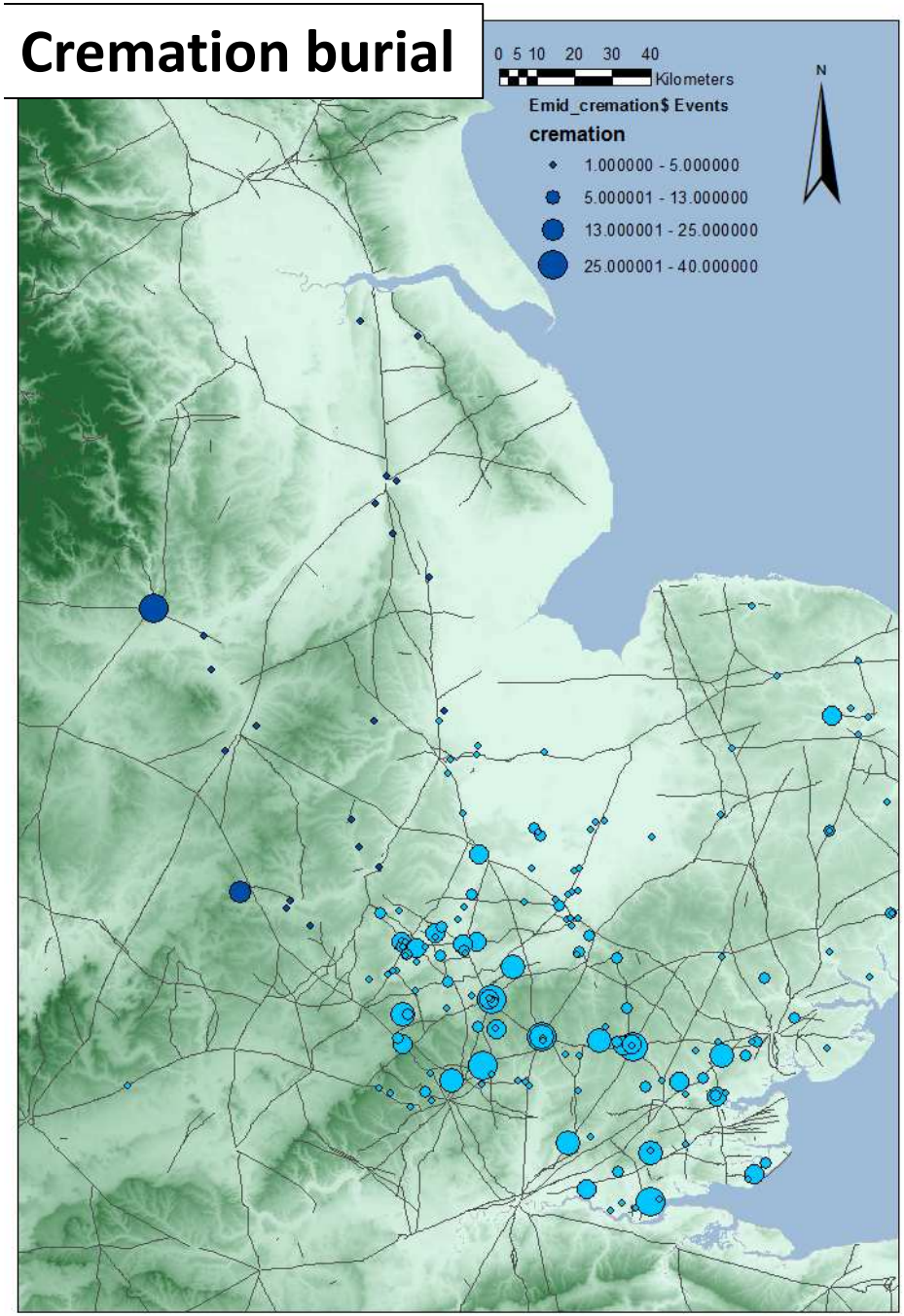
Burials: chronology



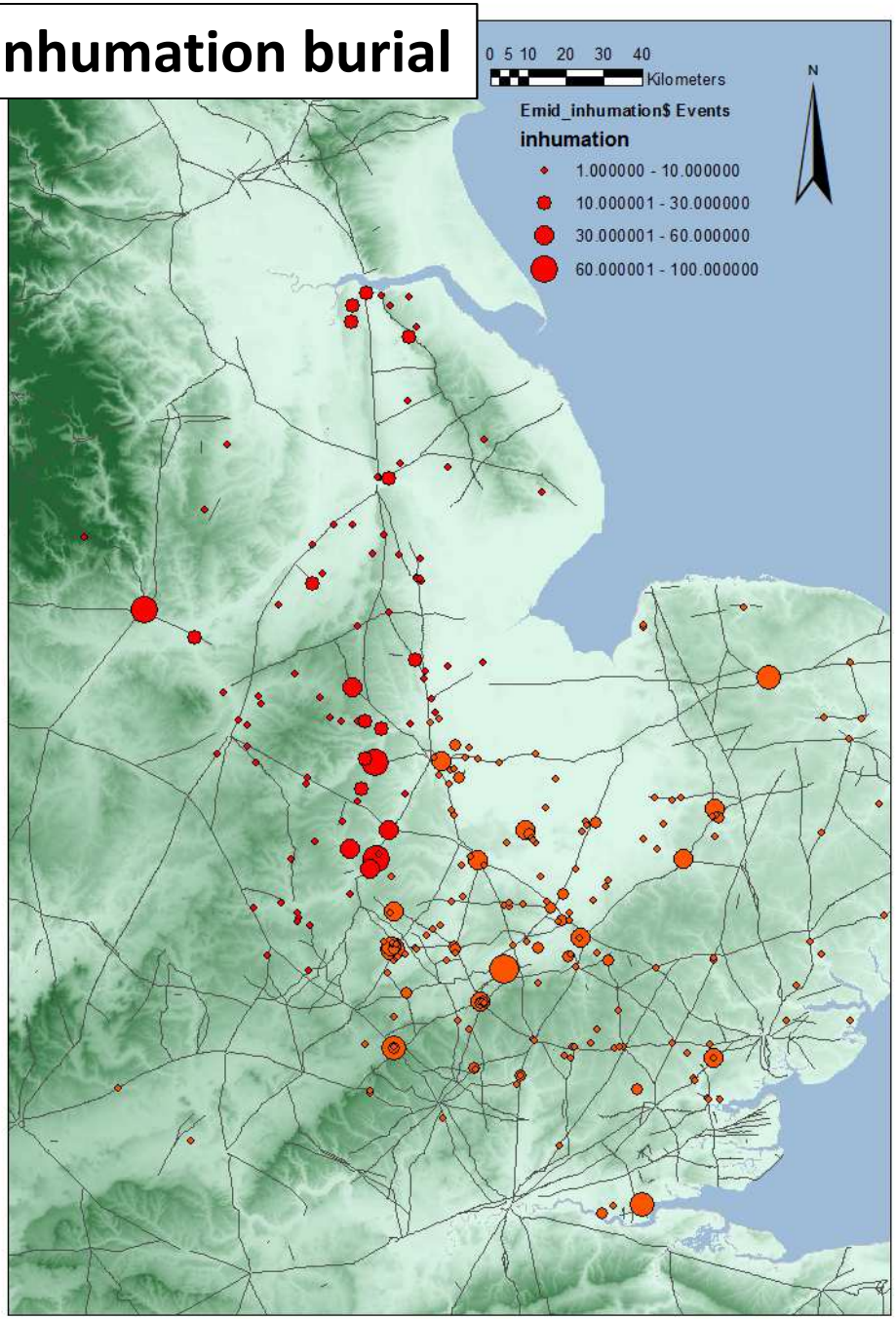


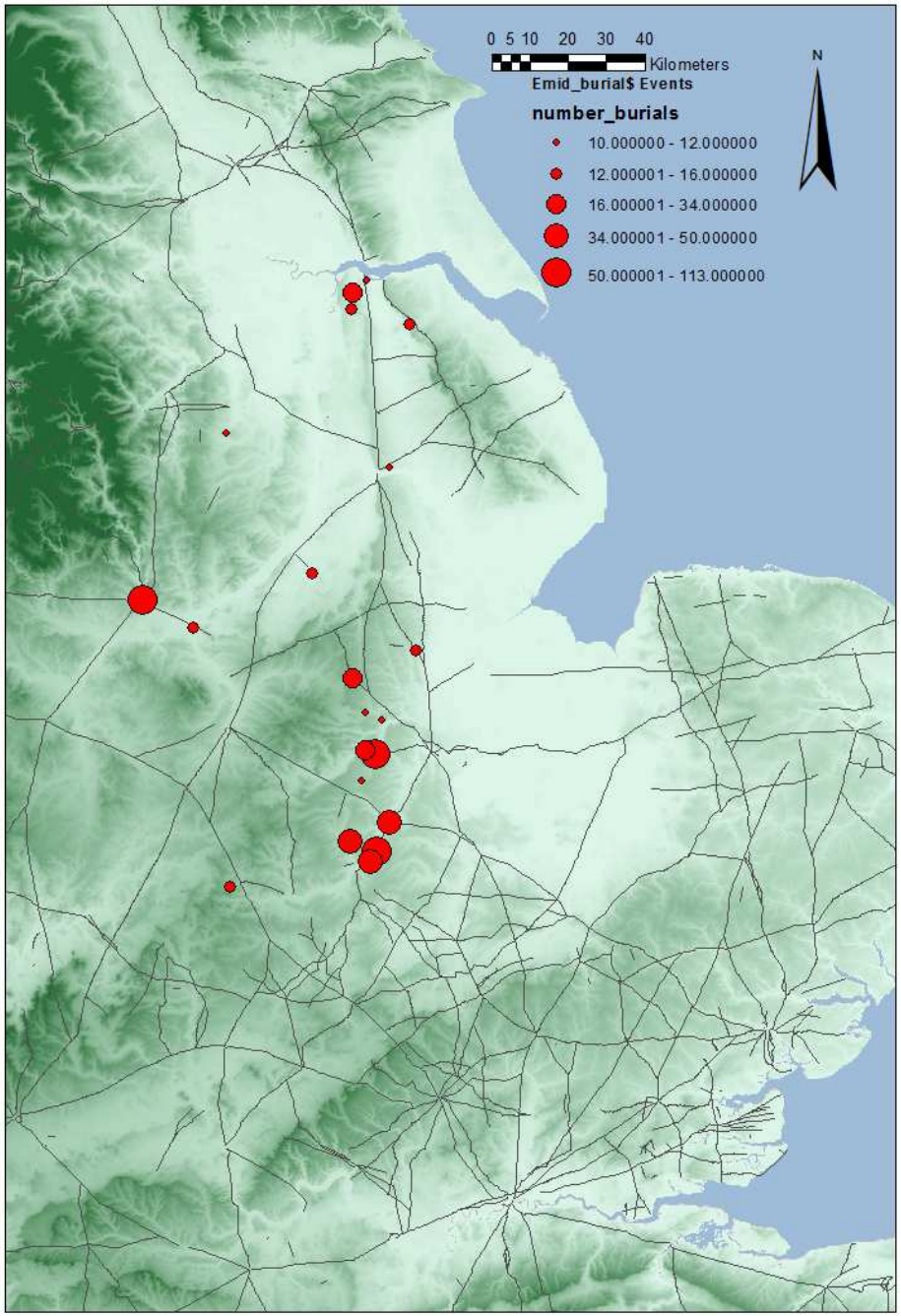


Cremation burial



Inhumation burial

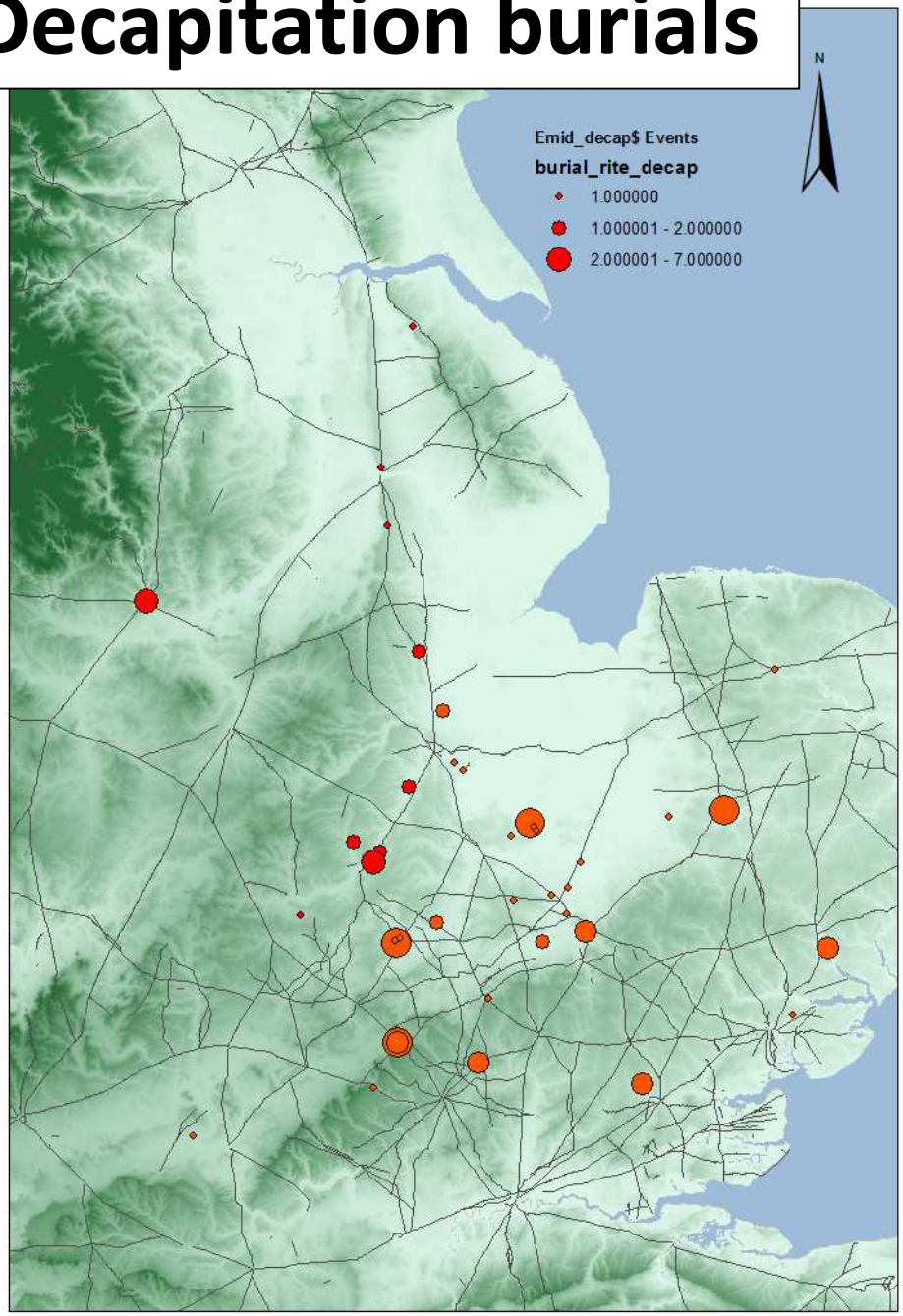




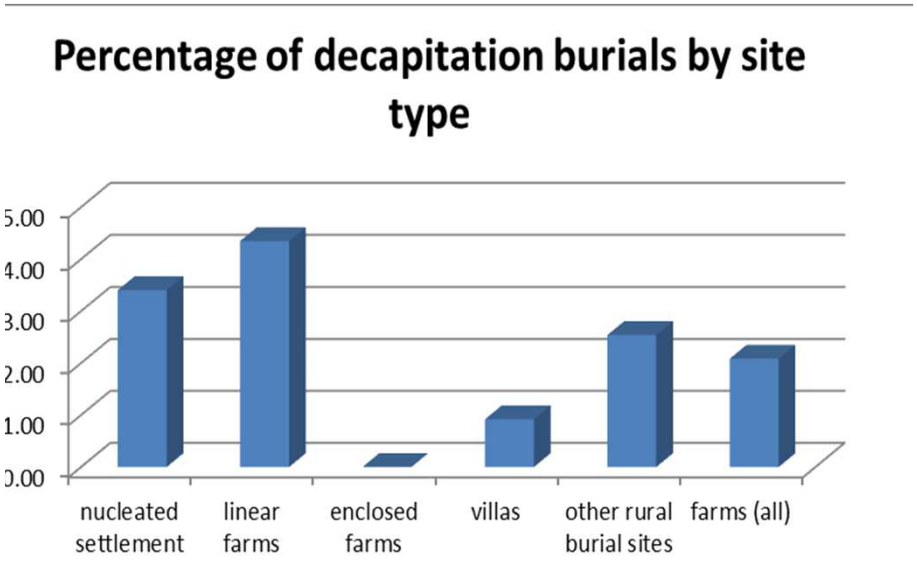
Cemeteries

- Defined as groups of 10 or more burials
- 18 rural cemeteries in the East Midlands containing 68% of all burials
- Most cemeteries in nucleated or industrial sites

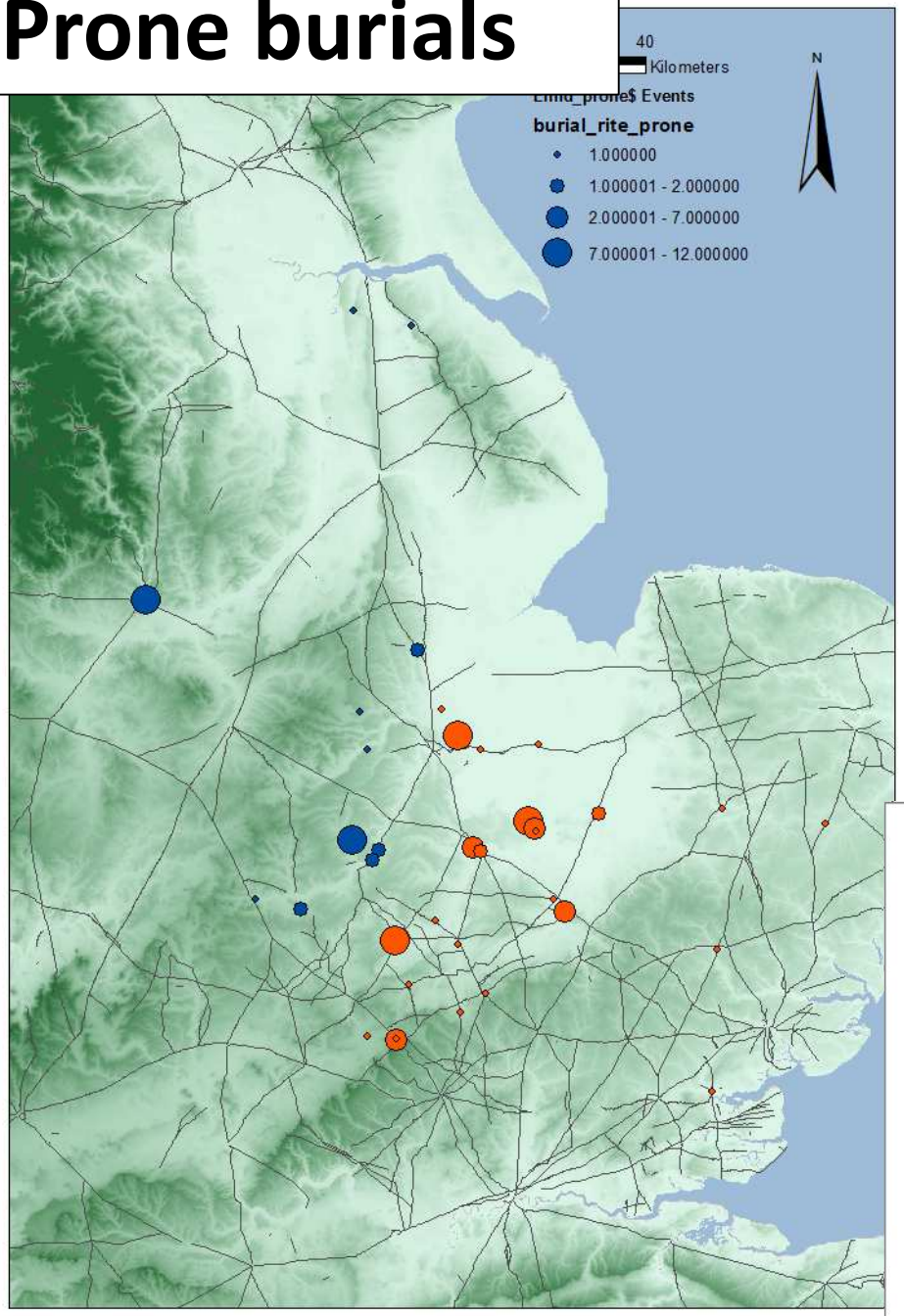
Decapitation burials



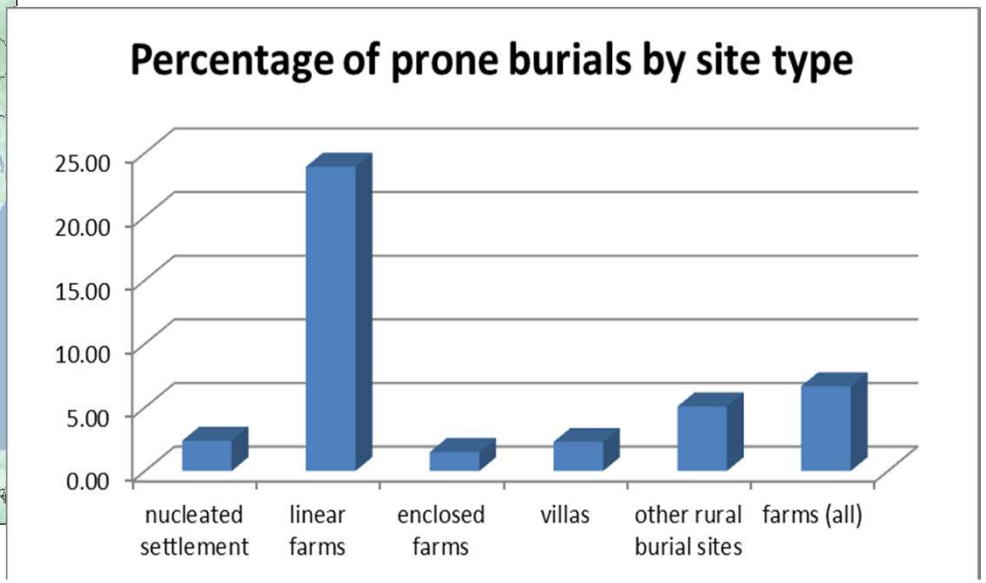
- 20 burials from 10 sites
- 2.5% of total inhumations



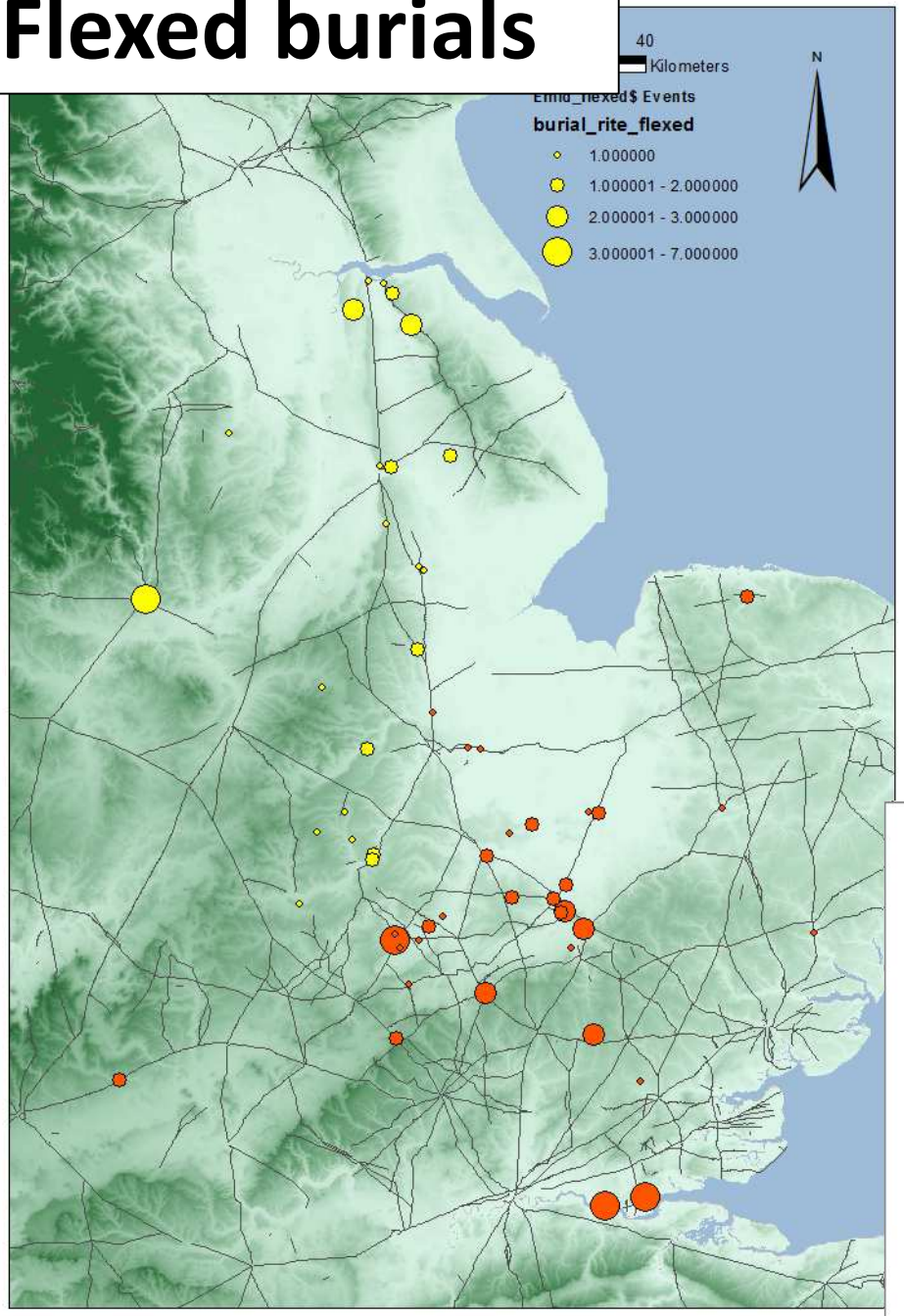
Prone burials



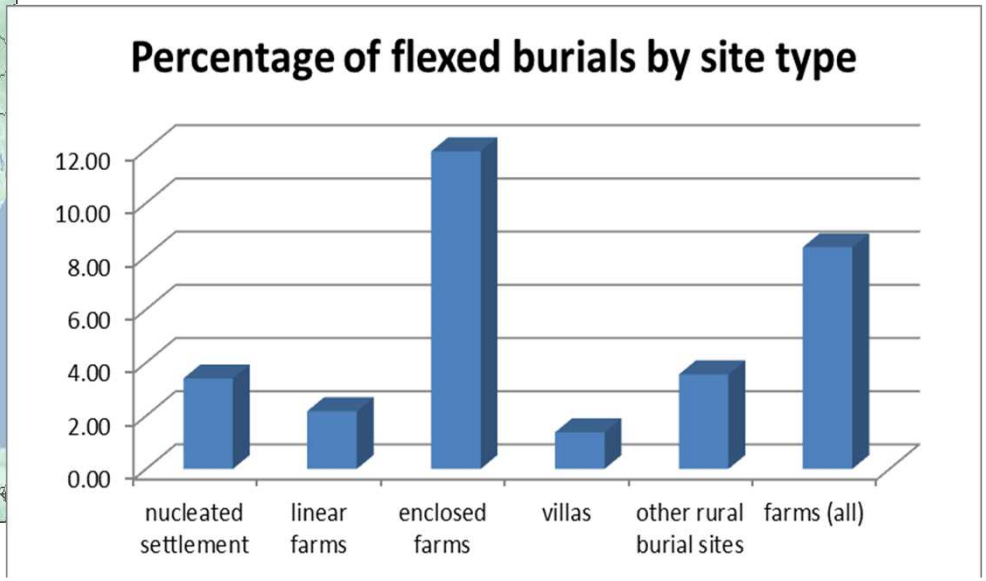
- 34 burials from 11 sites
- 4.3% of total inhumations



Flexed burials

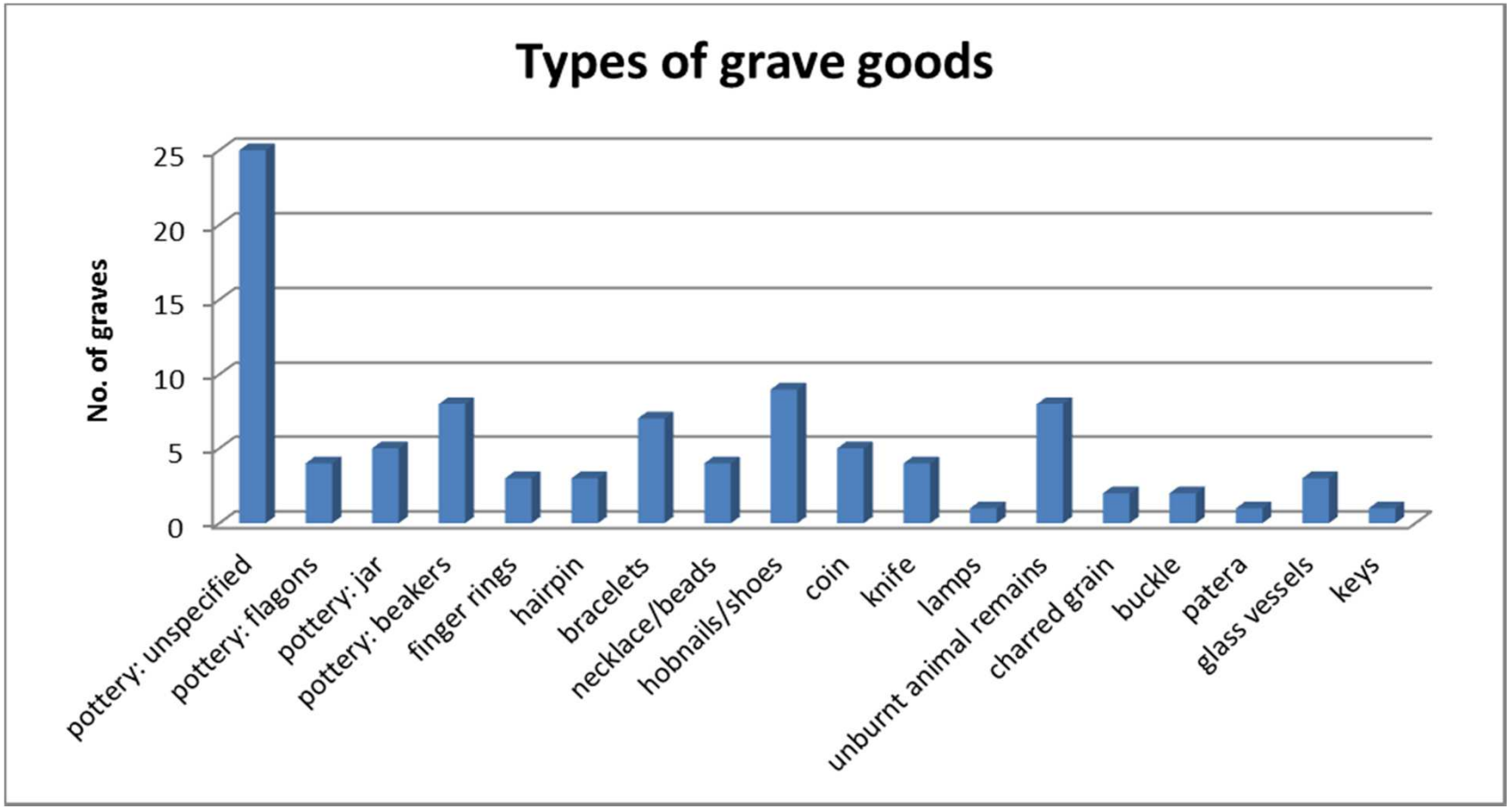


- 40 burials from 23 sites
- 5% of total inhumations



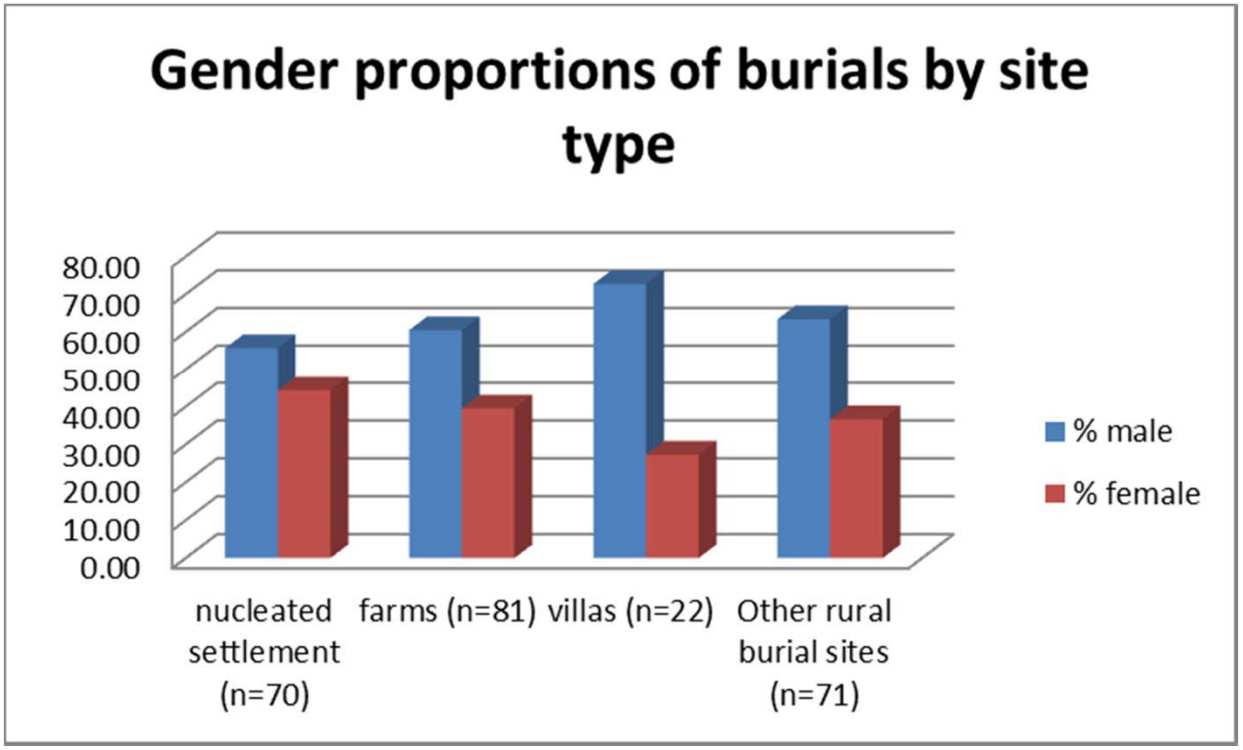
Grave goods

- 83 graves (on 37 sites) with evidence for grave goods (9.1% of total graves)



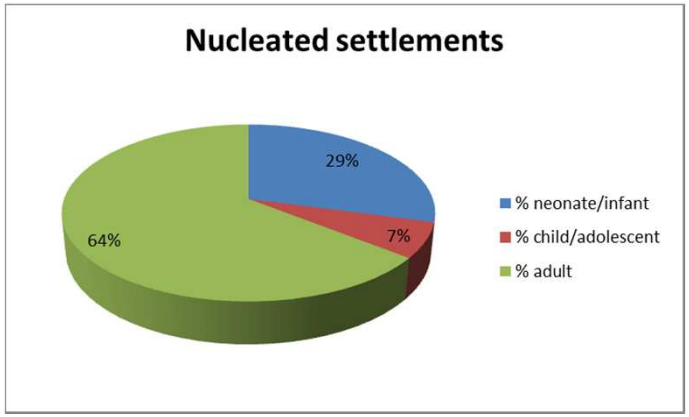
Population statistics: gender

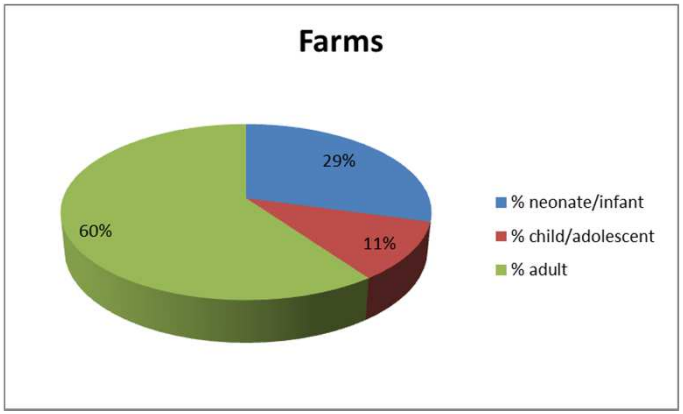
- 246 burials assigned to gender (27% of total burials): male 61%, female 38%

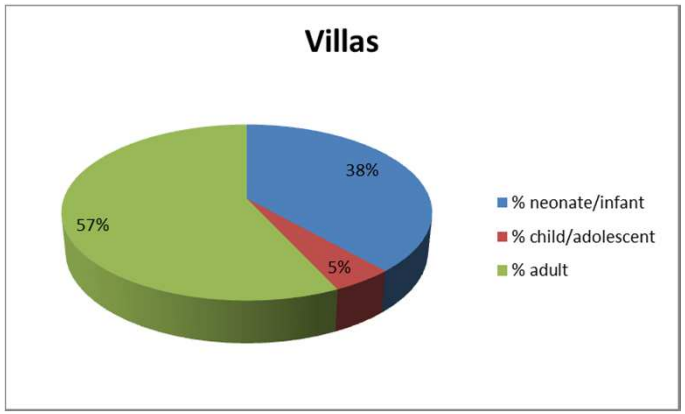


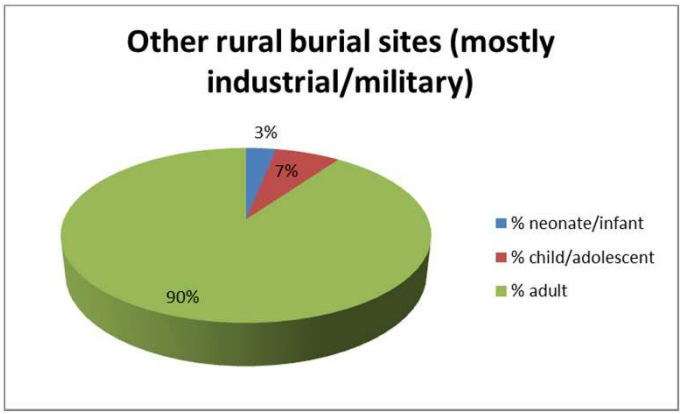
Population statistics: age

- 681 burials assigned to age group (75% of total burials): 70% adult, 7.6% child/adolescent , 22.4% neonate/infant









Ritual and Religion: Summary

- Relatively few specialised constructed sacred sites, dominated by circular/ polygonal shrines
- Special/structured deposits far more widespread across the region
- No of burials increased substantially over time but always dominated by inhumation
- Much of the region is characterised by smaller number of dispersed burials
- Great intra-regional and wider variability in matters of religious expression and burial practice