The Roman Rural Settlement Project

Preliminary results from the North-East and North-West: Regional patterns in rural settlement & landscape

Dr Alex Smith

Artist’s reconstruction of Riding Wood Settlement, Bellingham, Northumberland
Geographic context of the North-West and North-East Regions
Research frameworks and syntheses

Philpot in Brennand 2006/2007

Petts & Gerrard 2006
Prehistoric, Romano-British and Medieval Settlement in Lowland North West England
Archaeological excavations along the A5300 road corridor in Merseyside
R.W. Cowell and R.A. Philpon

PCA MONOGRAPH 11

Pegswood Moor, Morpeth
A Later Iron Age and Romano-British Farmstead Settlement
by Jennifer Proctor

Faverdale, Darlington
Excavations at a major settlement in the northern frontier zone of Roman Britain
Jennifer Proctor

Roman Nunwich: A Salt-Making Settlement
Excavations at Kingsley Fields 2002
Peter Arrowsmith
David Power
BAR British Series 557
2012

The Iron Age on the Northumberland Coastal Plain
Excavations in advance of development 2002-2010
Nich Hodgson, Jonathan McElwee
and Stephen Mycock

Late Prehistoric Settlement in the Tees Valley and North East England
Stephan J. Shipton

Hillforts
Prehistoric strongholds of Northumberland National Park
Al D'Arcy, Andrew Ayres and Trevor Parfitt

A Roman Villa at the Edge of Empire
Excavations at Haggs Farm, near Hexham, Northumberland 1999
EMH Archaeology and the Arts Society
The military dilemma...
The impact of developer-funded archaeology: distribution of reported Roman rural sites in the North-West and North-East

Pre-1950

1950-1989

1990-2013
The Dataset

Number of records by county

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<th>County</th>
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<td>Merseyside</td>
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Total area of excavation

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<th>County</th>
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<td>Durham</td>
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<td>Lancashire</td>
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The Dataset

Roman Rural Settlement records v’s PAS Roman records
## The Settlement evidence

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site type</th>
<th>North-east</th>
<th>North-west</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Total NE</th>
<th>% Total NW</th>
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<tr>
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<td>roadside</td>
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<tr>
<td>settlement/vicus*</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>village</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>port*</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>villa</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>field-system</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.79</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
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</table>
Distribution of farming settlements

Geographic patterns in:

• Settlement morphology
• Surrounding landscape infrastructure
• Chronology
Farmstead morphology

- 83% of farms with site plans (n=97)
- 74% of farms able to be broadly classified (n=87)
Unenclosed ‘open’ farmsteads

- Evidence for occupation not obviously contained within a system of enclosure
- Enclosures and field system ditches may still be present on site, but do not bound primary areas of domestic activity
- Large area of excavation generally needed to demonstrate open settlement

Blagdon Park 1 (Hodgson et al. 2012)
Enclosed farmsteads

Tower Knowe, Wellhaugh, Northumberland (Jobey 1973)

- All or majority of domestic activity contained within 1 or 2 enclosures
- Internal space not sub-divided to a significant degree
- Dominant form across most areas but significant variety in size and form
Variation within enclosed farmsteads

Size of enclosed farms (ha)

No. of sites

- up to 0.25
- 0.25-0.5
- 0.5-1.0
- 1.0-2.0
- 2.0-3.0

Hartburn (Jobey 1973)

East of Bowburn (Graham 2009)

Hetha Burn (Burgess 1970)

Ewanrigg, Solway Plain (Bewley 1992)
Variation within enclosed farmsteads

Middle Gunnar Peak, Barrasford (I Jobey 1981)

Glencoyne Park, Ullswater (Hoaen & Loney 2010)
Enclosed farmsteads and field systems

- c 14% of enclosed farms had explicitly related field systems
- Most appear quite irregular and piecemeal though potentially covering large areas
- All poorly dated

Forcegarth Pasture, Co. Durham (Fairless & Goggins 1986)

Tower Knowe, Wellhaugh, Northumberland (Jobey 1973)

Yanwath Wood, Cumbria (Higham 1983)
Complex farmsteads

- A complex of conjoined enclosures or major enclosure extensively sub-divided
- Multiple areas used for domestic activity
- Trackways and field-systems tend to be incorporated within settlement system
- Most over 1ha in size
- Restricted numbers & distribution

Ewe Close, Cumbria (Collingwood 1909)
Variation within complex farmsteads

Enclosure complexes vs complex enclosures

Faverdale, Darlington (Proctor 2012)

Blagdon Park 2, Northumberland (Hodgson et al. 2012)
Regional variety in rural settlement

- Tees Lowland, Durham Magnesian Limestone plateau & Northumberland coastal Plain have greatest variety in rural settlement form
- Also location of two northernmost villas (Old Durham & Ingleby Barwick)
...and the location of the northernmost civilian roadside settlement at East Park, Sedgefield.
Emerging national settlement patterns

Complex Farms
Primary central band in river valleys

Enclosed Farms
Clusters, predominantly in upland zones

Villa Farms
Primary central band and South-East in elevated locations
Chronology and dating

- Ceramic dating very poor in most areas
- Wider use of radiocarbon needed to refine chronologies e.g. Blagdon Park and Newcastle Great Park
**Chronological patterns**

**Total number of farming settlements in use over time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of Settlements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIA (n=54)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later 1st C (n=55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early 2nd C (n=67)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later 2nd C (n=67)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early 3rd C (n=40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later 3rd C (n=40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early 4th C (n=32)</td>
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<td>Later 4th C (n=21)</td>
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</table>

**Farmstead types: proportions in use over time (%)**

- Unclassified
- Villa
- Complex
- Enclosed
- Unenclosed
Chronology maps

Later Iron Age

54 settlements
Chronology maps

Later 1st Century AD

55 settlements

- 10 settlements ‘abandoned’
- 11 ‘new’ settlements
- 3 shifts in settlement form
Chronology maps

Early 2\textsuperscript{nd} Century AD

67 settlements

- 14 settlements ‘abandoned’
- 26 ‘new’ settlements
- 3 shifts in settlement form
Chronology maps

Later 2nd Century AD

67 settlements

- 8 settlements ‘abandoned’
- 7 ‘new’ settlements
- 1 shift in settlement form
Chronology maps

3rd Century AD

40 settlements

- 42 settlements ‘abandoned’
- 15 ‘new’ settlements
- 0 shifts in settlement form
Chronology maps

4th Century AD

32 settlements

• 22 settlements abandoned
• 3 ‘new’ settlements
• 0 shifts in settlement form
'Archaeological research across much of the North-East has been dominated by the military, civilian remains have not been studied in anything like the same detail and significant variations in regional patterns are still to be accounted for.'

(North East Regional Research Framework 2006, p. 52)

‘There are still major gaps in our understanding of Romano-British rural settlement, and how the native populations interacted with the Roman authorities. Current evidence suggests considerable differences within the region.’

(An Archaeological Research Framework for North West England 2007, p.64)

www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/discover-the-past/

www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/roman-rural-settlement/
Extra: Organisations working within the North-East and North-West

- Oxford Archaeology North/Lancaster University Archaeological Unit
- Manchester University Archaeological Unit
- University of Newcastle (George Jobey)
- Pre-Construct Archaeology
- Archaeological Services Durham University
- Northern Archaeological Associates
- TWN Archaeology
- Field Archaeology Section Liverpool Museum
- Carlisle Archaeology
- Earthworks Archaeology
- County Archaeological Units
- CFA Archaeology
- Network Archaeology
- Other units/consultants
- Other universities
- English Heritage/Government organisation
- Other museums
- Local societies/groups
- Individuals/no organisation stated

Number of records
Extra: The Dataset

Roman Rural Settlement records v’s AMIE Roman records