TITCHMARSH
ROMAN TOWN

Jeremy Taylor

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1   Location of Titchmarsh

Figure 2   Titchmarsh Monuments

Figure 3   Titchmarsh Archaeological Interventions

Figure 4   Titchmarsh Survival

Figure 5   Titchmarsh Hinterland Survival

Figure 6   Titchmarsh Strategy

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This is one of a series of reports compiled by Northamptonshire Heritage as part of the English Heritage funded Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Northamptonshire, which is intended to provide an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's urban archaeological resource. The survey encompasses all urban settlements and others that may have had some urban attributes, from the Roman period to the 1930s. The only exception is Northampton, which is the subject of an Intensive Urban Survey in its own right.

Each report comprises three distinct sections: a detailed description of the town in each major period; an assessment of potential and definition of a research agenda; and a strategy for future management. A consistent approach has been taken in the presentation of the description in each report with detail being presented under each standard category even where this has no director obvious relevance to the urban aspects. This section has however been presented in the form of a gazetteer with standard headings so enabling the reader to identify those sections of particular interest. The Titchmarsh report by Jeremy Taylor covers just the Roman settlement as it lies in isolation from any later settlement. Other contributions to the EUS on digital mapping, database input and related work for the EUS have been made by various individuals including Christine Addison, Chris Jones, Paul Thompson, Rob Atkins, Phil Markham and especially Tracey Britnell and Abi Kennedy.

The first objective of the report is to determine layout, character and chronology of development of the Roman town. An attempt has been made to identify the various components of the town which are likely to have left identifiable archaeological remains and, as far as practicable, to define the exact location and extent of these buried or upstanding 'monuments'. They have also all been assessed for likely current survival and their potential to contribute to research objectives. The relationship of the town to its hinterland has also been considered and the potential for study of that interaction has been assessed. In this way the report aims to provide a well founded research framework, establishing the current state of knowledge of Titchmarsh Roman town and defining a research agenda which can guide future archaeological investigation within the town. Conservation objectives have also been defined. This report should be viewed as a starting point rather than a definitive study, which it certainly is not. If this report serves its purpose then it will need to be regularly reviewed and substantially revised in future years as archaeological investigations are undertaken.

Given the limitations of time, which inevitably must guide the conduct of a countywide project, it has been necessary to limit the depth of investigation. No original archaeological earthwork or other such field survey has been conducted, but all available existing archaeological data has been consulted. Mapping from aerial photographic sources in the Northamptonshire SMR, CUCAP and the NMR has been completed. Each town has been visited to examine the topography of the town and an assessment attempted as to the general state of archaeological survival.

The maps in this report are reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's

SUMMARY

Located midway between Irchester and Ashton, Titchmarsh is one of a group of substantial nucleated settlements (Irchester, Ashton, Durobrivae) located at intervals along the Nene Valley that acted as local centres for the extensive agricultural communities in its hinterland. One of the larger small towns (c.15-16ha) Titchmarsh probably acted as a local market, administrative focus and religious centre and lay at a key nodal point in the regions communication network. It does not appear to survive as an important settlement focus into the Early and Middle Saxon periods when occupation probably shifted to nearby Thrapston. Like a number of the Nene valley towns Titchmarsh probably owed its existence to the strategic significance of its location at the junction of two major roads close to a river crossing and at the confluence of the Nene with one of its more significant tributary valleys. As with Ashton and Irchester it appears to have largely developed around a dendritic network of roads and track ways of uncertain date largely to one side of a main road.

Little can be said about the town's historical development in the absence of any significant excavation or systematic survey of its core. The lower terraces on both sides of the river were foci for occupation during the Late Iron Age, while a late Bronze Age defended enclosure has been excavated less than 1km to the south, suggesting that central place functions may have a pre-Roman origin. However the evidence from close by the town for late Iron Age activity is either too insubstantial or poorly recorded to confidently be seen as a precursor to the town's subsequent development. The construction of the Gartree Road and its river crossing in the first century AD probably marked the most significant event behind the settlement's subsequent location.

Titchmarsh's layout seems to be based around local considerations of access to areas away from a single looping road off Gartree road and focused on a central religious or official compound. Extensively occupied by the second century, the main frontages occupied by strip buildings may have been located along Gartree road and its looping off shoot to the west. Side roads at the western and southwestern end of the settlement may have largely provided access to two separate shrines and a cemetery on the edge of the floodplain. The religious and official features of the town may have provided a significant impetus to Titchmarsh's function as a local centre.

I   DESCRIPTION

1.0   TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

The Roman town at Titchmarsh lies between the A605 Oundle to Thrapston road and the River Nene.   The combined evidence from survey and excavation currently suggest the settlement stretched from the upper parts of the river terrace some 200m east of the modern road to the floodplain and covers approximately 15 ha. The area is geologically and pedologically complex with alluvium to the northwest and sands and ironstone, alongside estuarine clays and limestone, on moving eastward across the site.

2.0   HISTORICAL & TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

Prehistoric
Lying in the Nene valley, which contains some of the most extensive areas of permeable geology in the county, it is inevitable that the Thrapston area saw intensive occupation during the prehistoric and Roman periods. There are a number of settlement and other sites from the Neolithic and Bronze Age through to the Roman period in the immediate environs of Thrapston. The area may have had a significance over a long time period, for there is limited evidence for some form of central place function in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, with the possible 'ring fort' recently recognised on the higher ground just to the east of Thrapston.[1]

There is however as yet no evidence for any Iron Age central place functions in the Titchmarsh area. Evidence for Iron Age occupation, which may have acted as a precursor to the town, has so far been limited to the areas of salvage and rescue excavation either side of the river. Across the river rescue excavations in Henslow Meadow (Aldwincle) recorded a late Iron Age enclosed settlement with extensive surrounding field ditches continuing into the early Roman period (Jackson 1977). This was perhaps replaced in the early Roman period by a small settlement alongside the newly created Gartree road close to its crossing point over the river in a little studied part of the quarry. These sites, however, appear to have been far too small and too far away from the small town to have any particular significance in relation to the origin of the latter.

Salvage work in 1962-3 in the quarries just to the west of the railway embankment on the eastern side of the river recorded a number of ditches and pits containing Late Iron Age 'Belgic' type pottery such as carinated bowls (smr1621/0/17), though no report or plan of their layout survives. Combined with the recent analysis of 27 Iron Age coins and 6 Colchester brooches (Curteis et al 2000) this evidence suggests the presence of a significant pre-Conquest political and/or religious focus at Titchmarsh. Until further Belgic or Iron Age tradition material is recorded, however, the precise location of this focus remains uncertain as does the degree to which the Roman settlement was its direct successor.

Roman

---

[1] SMR site events 0078017 & 0078012; monument 8060 and 8061.

Webster has suggested that Titchmarsh may have originally been founded on the site of a Roman fort but as yet there is little or no evidence to support this. The recent plotting of air photographic information does suggest that a possible rectilinear enclosure existed towards the eastern end of the town but its plan seems too irregular to have been that of a fort. Given the evidence of excavated examples from other towns (e.g. Irchester) it is just as likely that it is either part of an Iron Age enclosure or part of the property divisions of the Roman settlement either side of one of its main roads.

The limited chronological evidence currently available from the excavations around the periphery of the town and field walking and metal detecting within it, suggest that much of the site was occupied from the first century AD onwards. This and the layout of the settlement currently suggest that its origins probably lay in the strategic location it occupied at the junction of two major roads in the region at a crossing of the Nene close its confluence with Harpers Brook that was linked to a significant Late Iron Age site.

Saxon
There is little evidence of any early/middle Saxon occupation within the town despite finds from field walking and metal detecting that suggest that activity continued into the later fourth century. Rescue work in the quarries across the river, however, recorded a group of four burials post dating Gartree road and the Roman bridges, one of which contained a knife said to date to the seventh century AD. 300m further north, a scatter of Early to Middle Saxon pottery and a well indicate the presence of a small settlement. None of these discoveries, however, suggests any degree of continued urban or local market functions for the area around the Roman town and the absence of significant early medieval discoveries in Thrapston suggests a marked break in local urban settlement.

3.0   THEMATIC ANALYSIS

3.1   COMMUNICATIONS
Titchmarsh has an extensive, complex and relatively well-defined network of roads, similar in overall conception to those at Irchester and Ashton. Essentially they can be divided into two; first two main regional routes running northeast to southwest along the Nene (Margary 1973, route 570) and south east to north west across it (the Gartree Road 57a); second, the sinuous dendritic network of shorter roads or track ways that provided access through the core of the settlement and presumably to the neighbouring landscape. The Gartree road was a primary long distance route from Godmanchester to Leicester, which changed alignment from the eastern to western sides of the Nene somewhere close to Titchmarsh. Rescue excavations on three phases of Roman bridge carrying the Gartree road across the river (smr 11896/1/7) date the original construction to the first century AD. This clearly suggests the significance attached to this route from early in the Roman period. Air photographic evidence defines the course of Gartree road immediately to the east of the settlement and shows its junction with route 570 running northeast towards Ashton and Durobrivae. The latter route, however, does not appear to have continued south of

this junction along the south eastern side of the Nene and it seems probable that if it continued towards Irchester it did so along the north western side of the valley.

To the south west of Gartree road, west of its junction with route 570, an irregular road system is known from cropmarks; the main road forming a loop from Gartree road off which ran a number of side roads. The central series of junctions here created a polygonal space in which lay an important building complex that seemingly formed a core part of the town. To the north of Gartree road two areas of permanent pasture obscure any evidence for similar secondary roads though field walking and air photographic evidence from neighbouring fields clearly indicate that the settlement did not extend more than 300m in this direction.

3.2   DEFENCES
There is no evidence that the town was ever enclosed within a defensive circuit.

3.3   BUILDINGS
Excavation at Titchmarsh has largely been limited to trial trenching or small-scale rescue work around the fringes of the settlement and thus limits what can be said about its architecture. The good quality and quantity of air photographic evidence, however, in part compensates for this and the lack of modern geophysical survey within the main part of the town. To date, the cropmarks indicate that the southern side of Gartree road at least, and both sides of the looping road through the settlement, appear to have been lined to varying degrees by probable stone foundation strip buildings. In general, this pattern is confirmed by the reports of stone recovered through field walking and perhaps suggests that the smaller side roads were either primarily for access to the surrounding landscape or lined by timber structures less likely to be identifiable as cropmarks.

3.3.1
The polygonal area defined by the main junction within the settlement contained a rectilinear stone founded enclosure within which stood an important group of stone buildings whose interpretation is problematic. It is possible that they formed a religious complex around a square Romano-Celtic temple at the heart of the town but there is little visible in their current plan to suggest this is necessarily the case. An equally plausible alternative is that the buildings comprise a small official administrative complex for the town or acted as a wayside station (a *mansio* or *mutatio*) along the two main roads. Either way it probably marks the source of an elaborately decorated stone capital found on the field surface (1621/0/11).

3.3.2
Set back from the main frontages to the south and southwest lie two stone buildings that are probably also shrines.

3.3.3
Limited trial excavations in 1988 in the north western part of the town mostly to the north of Gartree road, identified a possible timber structure alongside further ditches and gullies in trenches 1 and 2, and an indeterminate stone feature in trench 4 (1621/0/10). This activity does not appear to have extended any distance away from the road frontage to the north and would seem to indicate that settlement this close to the floodplain was largely restricted to ribbon development. The results of this work

confirm the impression gained from earlier observation during quarrying further to the west, in which further building frontages were noted close to the likely course of Gartree road.

3.3.4
A small area excavation to the immediate east of the A605 astride the course of Gartree road in 1986 did identify a small rectangular stone foundation strip building (11 x 7m in size) but it remains unpublished (Boyce 1986; smr 7426/0/8). Evaluation of the plans and notes, however, indicates that this building was probably occupied in the second and third centuries and overlay a curving timber slot that may be the remains of a round house to the south of the road.

3.3.5
North of the road a network of rectilinear gullies and ditches demarcated two small compounds or yards that contained little architectural evidence. A small group of postholes covering an area of 6 x 4m, however, may have been part of a small timber ancillary building associated with a large pit or well.

3.4 COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
The absence of modern published excavation anywhere near the town means that at present little can be said about manufacture or trade. A group of lead weights recorded by metal detectorists close to the course of Gartree road and molten copper alloy fragments from field walking suggest that the strip buildings along its frontage may well have been a primary focus for workshops or shops within the town. Such meagre evidence, however, can do little but suggest the presence of such activities and significant analyses of artefactual and ecofactual assemblages from the few excavations do not seem to have been carried out. In common with a number of the larger settlements considered in this study, however, the large numbers of coins recovered do imply that Titchmarsh acted as a significant local focus for trade and possibly taxation in the later Roman period.

3.5 RELIGIOUS, RITUAL & FUNERARY

3.5.1 Temples and Shrines
Evidence for these is based largely on aerial photography though recent analysis of artefacts discovered through metal detecting now provides additional support (Curteis *et al*. 2000). In addition to the possibility noted above that the central compound within the settlement is a temple precinct, there are two other probable shrines to the south and west of the town. The first is a large (c.12m diameter) round building lying immediately to the south of the polygonal compound with an entrance on its southwestern side. The second is visible as four sides of a hexagonal building some 10m across lying to the south of a side road running towards the cemetery noted in earlier quarrying to the west.

3.5.2 Cemetery
Only one major cemetery has been recorded at Titchmarsh during earlier quarrying to the west of the town and south of the likely course of Gartree Road. There are few records of the discoveries and they are poorly located but they appear to have been part of a fairly substantial inhumation cemetery overlying late Iron Age and Early Roman ditches and pits. Although the original number of burials excavated is not not

known work by Odell (1996) notes that approximately 50 inhumations were recovered of which only 18 could be studied for age and sex.

The presence of a substantial cemetery in this area is not surprising but its extent is little known and may continue outside the quarried area under the former railway embankment to the east as burials were known to erode from this quarry face after extraction had ended in the 1970s. Its probable size suggests it may have been the major place of burial for the town in the later Roman period, augmented by 'back plot' burials of the kind found at Ashton and recorded as isolated examples in the 1988 evaluation to the western end of the town north of Gartree Road and to the east of the A605. No early cemetery is known and the lack of systematic work to the north and east of Titchmarsh in particular, raises the possibility that additional cemeteries may exist.

3.6   LAND USE
Evidence about the immediate landscape environment of the town and evidence for agricultural practice is equally scarce. Limited molluscan and pedological analysis from the excavations on the Roman bridge at Aldwincle (Jackson 1976) along with surface indications suggest that the lowest reaches of Harpers Brook today may have been the main channel for the Nene in the Roman period. Evidence that the channel was clear flowing might indicate that the river's course was partly managed and some of the molluscan remains indicated that some land on the floodplain in the vicinity was used as pasture.

II   ASSESSMENT

<u>ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE AND SURVIVAL</u>

Titchmarsh is one of a small but significant group of reasonably intact medium sized Roman small towns within the region. Unenclosed, the site bears closest comparison with one of its nearest neighbours, Ashton, and is primarily of value as a relatively well preserved example of a type of small town whose primary significance lay in it strategic location within the regional communications network and that probably acted as a local religious, administrative and market focus for the neighbouring agricultural communities. In common with a number of the Nene valley towns (such as Irchester, Ashton and Durobrivae) but unlike others within the county (e.g. Duston, Towcester and Kettering) it has largely contiguous or previously well recorded hinterlands which could form the basis of very useful comparative regional work on the nature of Romano-British urbanism in the future. Though currently little studied, the core of the settlement is clearly of interest for studies of religious and official centres within smaller nucleated settlements and is of national importance.

1.0   DOCUMENTARY
Literary and epigraphic information is almost entirely absent from Titchmarsh although a probable boundary stone inscribed PP was recovered in 1965 adjacent to the likely course of Gartree road immediately to the west of the town. This is thought to have been a boundary stone.

2.0   ARCHAEOLOGICAL
Much of the overall morphology of the settlement is reasonably well understood thanks to the quality and quantity of air photographic evidence. There are, however, several areas of uncertainty critical to developing a better understanding of the settlement as a whole (see Communications below). There are no apparent earthwork remains but the level of preservation under the medieval furlongs still visible in pasture to the north of Gartree road is not known but it is likely that the degree of disturbance at least on the ridges is far less than seen on land where there has been modern cultivation. In additon it may be expected that the headland along the side of the Gartree Road will have buried the archaeological remains far deeper than elsewhere and thus there may be exceptional preservation of archaeology along this frontage.

Overall, our detailed knowledge of the archaeology of the town is relatively poor but we have a reasonable understanding of the extent of quarrying to the west and a generalised knowledge of the likely impact of ploughing. Evidence from the trial trenching to the west and small area excavation to the east of the town demonstrate that superficial deposits and stone structures have suffered significant damage but that the outline of former buildings is still identifiable. The topsoil stripping in advance of dumping on land to the west of the town has damaged stone structures and is likely to have markedly denuded later deposits but is now, paradoxically well buried. The state of archaeological deposits underneath the railway embankment is unknown but

may include part of the late Iron age ditch system and cemetery recorded in the neighbouring quarry

2.1   Settlement Morphology and Communications
The road layout through the town is relatively well understood but at present little is known of the organisation of property boundaries. Potential for their study through geophysical survey or excavation is likely to be good where defined by ditches but gradual erosion through cultivation may have already removed later walled boundaries and metalled surfaces. The main gaps in understanding currently lie to the east and north of the town where air photography has not elucidated the road layouts for the junction of Gartree road and route 570, and the street layout north of Gartree road.

2.2   Buildings
Little is known about the form and function of buildings within the settlement though the aerial photographic evidence and trial excavations suggest a number of strip buildings fronted on to Gartree road and the main looping road to the west. Most of these frontages should still be intact though denuded by ploughing and have moderate to high potential for study of their origins, layout and function, though it is not clear whether similar buildings on the north side of Gartree road still survive under the ridge and furrow. The nature of buildings in the central compound and the two probable shrines is still little studied and their function open to question. The potential for their study is good though the long term affects of cultivation on the stone structures is not well known. Given that they are likely to be key to the origins and function of the settlement as a whole a better understanding of their origin, purpose and survival is a priority. Given the likely impact of ploughing any surface collected artefactual material should be provenanced as accurately as possible to determine if it is likely to have come from this compound or surrounding parts of the settlement. Little is also known about the presence and nature of any buildings along the network of track ways running south from the town and their extent.

2.3   Commerce & Industry
There is little evidence to suggest that Titchmarsh acted as a major centre for the production of durable artefactual materials but the lack of any systematic appraisal of either the field walked or excavated data makes any assessment of the potential for this problematic. Extensive cultivation across much of the settlement core is likely to have damaged surface built structures related to craft or agricultural production. The potential for sizeable artefactual and ecofactual assemblages in soil cut features across the settlement, however, provides an ideal opportunity to assess the varied craft and trade roles that the town may have had. The sizeable extant metal detected record already demonstrates the town's likely role as a market centre in the later Roman period. Curteis (Curteis *et al* 2000, 174) in summarising the metal detected material notes the large number of lead and copper alloy weights from Titchmarsh in comparison to other sites. Locating these activities within the settlement and their relationship to agricultural and ritual practice is worth pursuing in any future work on the site.

2.4   Religious, Ritual & Funerary
The destruction of much of the only identified cemetery to the west of the town limits the potential for further work. It is possible, however, that a significant part of the

cemetery survives under the railway embankment and along the western fringe of the main field (Springfield). The lack of work to the east of the A605 along the likely course of Gartree road outside the settlement area, suggests that the absence of a further cemetery here should not be taken for granted in any future evaluation or development. The two likely shrines are both intact if denuded and are clearly of importance in any future study of the town. Any archaeological intervention should take into account the significance of any earlier timber phase structures on the site and the important metal detected groups of late Iron Age and Roman artefacts with likely ritual associations recorded by Curteis.

2.5   Landscape & Environment
The absence of palaeoenvironmental and ecofactual studies in relation to much of the damaging developments to the west and south of the town limits the potential to understand the immediate environmental and agricultural context of the town. It is likely, however, that most of the settlement itself still lies within surviving agricultural land and thus any potential intervention still has the possibility to study storage, processing or agricultural areas at the periphery of the town. Any such work can then at least be compared with the existing detailed datasets available from parts of the town's rural hinterland to the south around Stanwick.

3.0   Hinterland
The immediate hinterland of the Titchmarsh settlement has been badly affected by quarrying and urban development. To the west gravel extraction has clearly destroyed significant areas of Late Iron Age occupation, part of the Gartree road frontages of the town and a sizeable part of a later Roman cemetery. Little of this evidence was recorded to any useful degree. A broadly similar situation can be seen under Thrapston to the southwest. However note should be taken of the presence of the Late Bronze Age defended site within 1km of the Roman Town and the potential for some continuity of central place functions should be considered.

Further afield the situation is somewhat more promising. Unlike Irchester, damage through quarrying has not been extensive further downstream where the possibility still exists for further research on the floodplain and lower terrace landscapes within 3-10km of the town. To the east lies an extensive largely undeveloped agricultural landscape crossing into Cambridgeshire with reasonably good potential for study. Only moderately susceptible to crop mark formation and without a history of intensive field survey, this area is still relatively poorly known but earlier extensive survey demonstrates the presence of significant numbers of smaller agricultural settlements on the boulder clays. Beyond Thrapston to the southwest, mineral extraction and housing development significantly reduced the area of land available for study but was subject to intensive survey and excavation as part of the Raunds Area Project. This study provides an extremely valuable landscape based resource for the study of the Nene Valley and its flanking hills, and the potential town and country relationships for Titchmarsh and the nucleated settlements at Higham Ferrers and Stanwick. Across the Nene to the southwest mineral extraction has caused significant destruction with far less attendant archaeological intervention. Within this area, however, sizeable tracts of land survive and incorporate important but as yet little studied high status settlements such as the probable large villa some 3km away in Woodford parish and the Iron Age and later enclosure at Crow Hill, Irthlingborough. Further round to the northwest, the Harper Brook valley has seen far less destruction

and large tracts of land on its eastern side are still wooded. Towards the northern end of the valley an important survey of former parkland in Brigstock provides a second valuable source of information on the development of the later Iron Age and Roman landscape some 6-10km from Titchmarsh (Foster 1994)

On present evidence the landscapes immediately around Titchmarsh do not show high archaeological potential for future study but the presence of three large blocks of land within 10km of the town (two of which have been subject to modern surveys) does provide an opportunity for comparative studies. In particular the two surveyed areas provide the opportunity for comparison of the development of agricultural landscapes in very different topographical, pedological and geographical locations at similar distances from the town. Both areas could be extended towards Titchmarsh in order to better understand any changes in the nature of rural land use and agricultural practice with distance from the Roman town.

III   RESEARCH AGENDA

The following topics for research are only those related to Titchmarsh; others relating to the wider development of urbanism and town and country relations in the region are described in the Roman period summary of the Extensive Urban Survey.

Origins
What is the evidence for a significant for pre-Roman Iron Age centre under the town? Mark Curteis' work on the metal detected assemblages and the brief early reports from the quarry to the west of the railway embankment suggest there may have been an important political or religious focus in this area from the first century BC. Alternatively, is the early development of the town focused around an early Roman official or religious complex constructed to one side of a key junction and river crossing in the region's communications network?

Communications
What is the nature and exact location of the junction of Gartree road and Margary's route 570 from Ashton? Early accounts (e.g. RCHME 1975) and unpublished documentation show the junction immediately east of the modern A605, but each is subtly and significantly different. The recent digital plotting of the air photographic information carried out as part of the National Mapping Programme, however, does not show the roads at all. Consequently, it is currently impossible to be sure of the nature of the road layout here or to assess whether there is any evidence for route 570 continuing southwest towards Irchester. Likewise, what is the relationship between the main looping road through the town and Gartree road at its eastern end? Within the town the pasture and medieval furlongs in two of the fields mask any evidence for the road layout north of Gartree road. Is the town's layout essentially asymmetrical around a main road as seems to be the case at Irchester and Ashton?

Urban Topography and Zonation
Critical to the investigation of the purpose and functioning of a small, nucleated settlement such as Titchmarsh is an understanding of the central complex of buildings to the south of Gartree Road. Is this some form of administrative or official focus or a religious centre providing a draw to an essentially rural population? Is it simply a large private house? The aerial photographic evidence points to two major frontages

of strip buildings. Is this a fair reflection of the actual situation? If so, is there architectural zonation between these frontages and the lanes or track ways running out towards the periphery of the town, and does this reflect significant functional or social differentiation? The cemetery and two likely shrines all lie to the south and west of the town. Is this a specialised religious and burial zone with other ritual foci that may have acted as an original focus for the town's foundation or coincidental to other aspects of the layout of the settlement? What is the layout of the town north of Gartree road? Is there little development in this direction? If so, why?

Landscape and Environment
What was the nature of the pre-town landscape south of the river? Was it part of an already intensely occupied site located on the edge of the floodplain in the late Iron Age? What was the nature of the environment to the immediate fringes of the town? Is there clear evidence for differentiation between densely occupied domestic zones and back plots for storage and waste disposal?

Craft and Agricultural Practice
In the absence of any notable work on these issues there are many questions to be answered about Titchmarsh. Is there any evidence, for example, of market gardening or other cash crop orientated production in the immediate vicinity of the town? Is there evidence that the supply, butchery and consumption or trade of animal products was a significant part of the settlement's economy? Were secondary products (such as cloth) a significant part of the settlement's economy? What can macrobotanical and zoological studies tell us about the nature of food supply and consumption? Does any of this relate to the shrines or central compound rather than the wider settlement?

Religious, Ritual & Funerary
What was the nature and wider significance of the shrines in the town? Did they replace an existing focus? Did they provide and early or important impetus to the town's location and development? Which deities were favoured in the shrines and do those have any links with possible burial traditions or structured deposits in other parts of the settlement? What is the nature of the evidence for burial within the settlement? Is there an early cemetery? Is there an additional cemetery to the east of the town? If so does it differ in date or religious practice?

The Later Roman Town
What happened to settlement in the core of the town after the mid-fourth century? Does this occupation still differ from essentially rural settlement? Is there any surviving evidence for Late Roman or early-middle Saxon settlement immediately to the east of the river north of Gartree road that mirrors the evidence across the valley? Is there any evidence of gradual settlement shift to the south towards the medieval centre at Thrapston?

IV STRATEGY

The assessment of the management and conservation priorities within the Extensive Urban Survey have been based around an assessment of levels of importance previously applied elsewhere in the county for management purposes. The grading falls into five categories:

Scheduled: nationally important remains that have statutory protection.

Unscheduled national importance: in some cases statutory protection is suggested while in others recording action may prove to be the appropriate response to threats.

County importance: Where significant archaeology is known or where it is likely but confirmation is required. Normally recording rather than preservation would be the appropriate mitigation strategy.

Local importance: where archaeology may survive but where, on present evidence investigation does not appear appropriate.

Destroyed: where the archaeology has been wholly destroyed.

White Land: Archaeology not assessed for this report.

1.0   EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

1.1   Scheduled Ancient Monuments
None.

1.2   Listed Buildings
None.

1.3   Conservation Area
None.

1.4   Registered Parks
None.

2.0   MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

2.1   Evaluation and Recording Priorities
On present evidence the archaeology of the whole of the surviving area of the Roman town is likely to be of national importance. The presumption should be against development in the area likely to be of national importance. However, if necessary, then evaluation should be considered on any developments proposed within the demonstrated or suspected areas of Roman activity, defined as of national or of county importance.

2.2   Conservation Priorities
The exact extent of Roman activity cannot be determined without substantial evaluation work involving fieldwalking, geophysics and trial trenching. However an extensive area of Roman occupation has been demonstrated and an equally large area has been defined where there is a very high probability that Roman activity exists. It is recommended that the whole of the area defined here as of national importance be Scheduled. Special note should be made of the exceptional potential of the area under ridge and furrow on the north side of the Gartree Road, which would appear to be the

only area of any of the Roman small towns in the county where there has been no cultivation since enclosure of an area of settlement frontage onto a major road. Exceptional archaeological preservation might be expected in this area and so scheduling is a very high priority.

Almost the whole of the core area of the settlement is currently under cultivation and an assessment of its current and likely future impact on the archaeological resource should be a critical concern in future conservation of the monument. Options should be urgently sought to achieve the removal of the areas from cultivation.

The settlement is of very limited visual value and, given the degree to which most of the important archaeological structures have been levelled by subsequent activity, are unlikely to be of great amenity value. However the potential for well preserved structures which could be excavated and displayed, in the long term, should not be dismissed, although at present no evidence as to the state of preservation of the deposits across the vast majority of the site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boyce, P. (1986) Titchmarsh Roman Town: Excavations in 1986. Northamptonshire Archaeology.

Curteis, M., Jackson, D. & Markham, P. (2000) Titchmarsh Late Iron Age and Roman Settlement. *Northamptonshire Archaeology 28 (1998-9)*, 164-75.

Foster, P.J. (1994) The Brigstock Survey, in M. Parker-Pearson & T. Schadla-Hall (eds.) *Looking at the Land*. Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service, 46-50.

Jackson, D. (1976) A Roman timber bridge at Aldwincle, Northants. *Britannia 7*, 39-72.

Jackson D. (1977) Further excavations at Aldwincle, *Northamptonshire. Northamptonshire Archaeology 12*, 9-54.

Margary, I.D. (1973) *Roman Roads in Britain*. London, Baker.

RCHME (1975) *An Inventory of Archaeological Sites in north-east Northamptonshire*. HMSO, London.