The Upland Wales and Marches region incorporates an area of 20,466 km², making it one of the largest areas of study (FIG. 11.1). It includes much of Wales, though in the south-east of the country much of Gwent and Glamorgan fall within the Central Belt region (Ch. 5) and in the north-east the eastern part of Powys is within the Central West (Ch. 8). The region extends into England in the Marches area, incorporating parts of the Shropshire and Herefordshire Hills, as well as the small section of the Black Mountains that lies within Herefordshire. As most of the region is in Wales, Natural England landscape zones are not of use for regional sub-division, and the lack of a convenient equivalent for Wales has resulted in the division of the region into three sub-regions, covering the north, the south-west and the east of the region respectively (FIG. 11.2). Modern Welsh administrative boundaries form the basis for these sub-divisions: South-West Wales includes Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion; North Wales includes the Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire and the western parts of Flintshire and Wrexham; East Wales and the Marches includes Powys, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, most of Neath Port-Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly and Torfaen, along with a small part of Monmouthshire, and, in England, parts of Herefordshire and Shropshire.
THE NATURE OF THE LANDSCAPE

Topographically, the region is principally of upland character with the major Welsh mountain ranges occupying most of the area; lowlands are limited to coastal zones, predominantly in the south-west and north-west of the region, especially Anglesey. Modern land use is overwhelmingly rural, and the present-day settlement pattern is one of dispersed villages and farmsteads, with few extensively built-up areas outside Swansea on the south coast. This has resulted in a marked lack of development associated with urban expansion and, consequently, fewer development-led excavations have taken place compared with neighbouring regions. The rugged terrain coupled with highly acidic soils results in a landscape that is poorly suited to arable farming, and the agricultural focus has historically been pastoral, with an especial focus on sheep farming. The region’s acidic soils mean that environmental data, especially faunal remains, are rarely recovered from excavated sites, and this has a profound impact on our understanding of the economic basis of settlements within the region, although pollen evidence can provide important information about the wider landscape (e.g. Caseldine 2010).

THE UPLAND WALES AND MARCHES DATASET

Although it is a very large region, the Upland Wales and Marches dataset is relatively small, including 121 records for 115 distinct sites (the extra records relating to sites with multiple records). Ninety-four of these sites have been identified as settlements of various types, with the additional 21 including funerary sites, industrial sites, caves and field systems.

The region’s excavated Romano-British sites are very unevenly distributed (FIG. 11.3; TABLE 11.1), with far more from the north and the south-west than the east, and the scarcity of excavated data from some areas has long been recognised (e.g. Davies and Burnham 2012, 12). Insights from aerial photography indicate that even areas with few excavated sites are likely to have been considerably more densely settled than the limited evidence suggests, although the problems associated with dating sites represented by earthworks, cropmarks and soilmarks, in a region where settlement morphology was often very conservative, mean that many unexcavated sites remain of uncertain date.
The imbalanced geographical distribution of excavated sites is not, however, the same for all classes of site (Table 11.2). Whereas the east of the region is very poorly represented by sites characterised as farmsteads, with only ten excavated examples, it has the greatest number of excavated military vici, with eight sites represented. In some cases vici in this part of the region have seen exploration as a result of development, as at Neath and Caersws, yet because vici are by their nature associated with forts, some also saw early interventions by research-driven archaeologists principally concerned with the military sites (e.g. Pen-y-gaer). Several have been subject to small-scale investigation as part of a research-focused CADW-funded study of vici in mid-Wales, including the vici at Hindwell (N.W. Jones 2012; Hankinson 2011a), Caerw (Hankinson 2012) and Brecon Gaer (Hankinson 2011b); this project partially accounts for the disproportionate number of this type of site investigated in this part of the region. The few farmsteads in the east of the region that have seen excavation were mainly investigated in response to development-related threats, such as pipeline (e.g. Brecon to Tirley gas pipeline plot 271: Cruse 2009), road (Arddleen, Llandrinio: Britnell and Musson 1984) or building construction (e.g. Craven Arms, Shropshire: Ferris 1991), and the small numbers probably reflect the slow rate of development in this area. Development-led excavations have also contributed to the number of sites in the north and south-west of the region.
TABLE 11.2: NUMBER OF SETTLEMENT TYPES BY SUB-REGION IN UPLAND WALES AND THE MARCHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-region</th>
<th>Farmstead</th>
<th>Vicus</th>
<th>Hillfort</th>
<th>Villa</th>
<th>Roadside settlements</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Other site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Wales and the Marches</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West Wales</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Wales</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIG. 11.4. Plan of the nucleated settlement at Tai Cochion, Anglesey (Hopewell and Smith 2012)
region, although in these areas, particularly in the north-west, stronger traditions of research-focused archaeological fieldwork have made a significant contribution (Davies and Burnham 2012, 13).

The northern and western emphasis on farmsteads may partly be a result of better visibility of sites and increased archaeological endeavour in these parts of the region, yet it is also likely to reflect a greater focus of settlement on the more hospitable, low-lying, fertile landscapes contained within these regions, mainly in coastal areas. Certainly, farmsteads across the region as a whole have a tendency to favour low-lying fertile landscapes, and the dearth of Romano-British sites identified during major pipeline development between Milford Haven and Brecon, overall the biggest development-led project yet undertaken in Wales (Holbrook pers. comm.), suggests that some areas may genuinely have been sparsely populated.

ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The study of the Roman period in Wales and the Marches has traditionally emphasised the military remains to the detriment of our understanding of the rural settlement pattern. However, outside the forts and *vici* the settlement pattern of the region during the period was, as today, principally of rural character, and, although sparse in numbers compared to other regions, dispersed sites defined as farmsteads represent the majority (65 per cent) of domestic sites in the project database. Villas are uncommon in the region, although a number are known and six have seen some excavation. Hillforts are widely distributed, yet, while these sites number in their hundreds (e.g. Davies and Lynch 2000, fig. 4.1), they are not all closely dated and only a small number of excavated examples have yielded late Iron Age or Roman-period dates. In several cases sites that originated as hillforts during the Iron Age saw reuse as farmsteads or for other purposes during the Roman period (for examples see the settlement hierarchies section below).

Urban settlements are rare, and the only town in the region is Carmarthen (*Moridunum*), believed to have been the *civitas* capital of the Demetae. The other nucleated sites of the region are primarily *vici* (given considerable attention recently by Burnham and Davies 2010, 103–34), the civilian settlements associated with many of the forts, although a small number of other nucleated sites have been characterised as roadside settlements or villages, and some of the region’s hillforts appear to have accommodated substantial populations during the Roman period, for instance at Braich y Dinas, Penmaenmawr (Hughes 1923) and Tre'r Creiri (Hogg 1960; Hughes 1907), both in north-west Wales.

Of the two roadside settlements the site at Tai Cochion on Anglesey is the better understood (fig. 11.4). Here, extensive geophysical survey revealed a settlement occupying a coastal location opposite *Segontium* fort (at Caernarfon) on the opposite side of the Menai Strait. The site occupied either side of what appears to have been a major road with several lanes, flanked by a series of small enclosures, many of which probably contained rectangular structures. Limited excavation showed that at least some of the buildings were of stone (Hopewell and Smith 2012). The other example, at Ffrith, in north-east Wales, is much less well understood and its character remains uncertain. Roman material recovered since the sixteenth century includes a significant quantity of Roman artefacts, and excavations have revealed multiple masonry buildings that replaced timber predecessors. The site is usually regarded as a civilian settlement, but the presence of a number of XX legion tiles suggests a connection with the legionary fortress at Chester (Blockley 1989a; Room 1968). The only site in the project database classified as a ‘village’ is the unusual, poorly understood and poorly dated site at Gateholm, on the Pembrokeshire Coast, where approximately 110 rectangular structures have been recognised as earthworks, occupying long rows, between ‘streets’ (Davies 1971; fig. 11.5). A recently identified settlement at Wiston, Pembrokeshire, which appears to have developed following the abandonment of a fort during the second century A.D., is a strong candidate for another village-type settlement (Meek 2015; see below, p. 367), although the site has not been included in the database as no report was available at the time of data collection.

![Fig. 11.5. Plan of the ‘village’ at Gateholm, Pembrokeshire (Davies 1971)](image-url)
RURAL SETTLEMENT CHRONOLOGY

As with the other western and northerly regions, our understanding of the chronology of sites is hindered by the limited availability of good dating evidence. Whereas sites occupied during the Roman period are often represented by a range of Romano-British and sometimes imported pottery, the lack of a strong regional tradition of pottery production during the late prehistoric period makes sites that were occupied during the late Iron Age difficult to recognise. Much of the region appears to have been largely aceramic during the Iron Age, and in such cases it is often only through radiocarbon dating that pre-Romano-British phases are dated as, for example, at Woodside Camp and Dan-y-Coed (Williams and Mytum 1988). At some sites, for example Ty Mawr, Holyhead (C. Smith 1987), late Iron Age phases are strongly suspected but remain unproven. The Holyhead (C. Smith 1987), late Iron Age phases are dated as, for example, at Woodside Camp and Dan-y-Coed (Williams and Mytum 1988). At some sites, for example Ty Mawr, Holyhead (C. Smith 1987), late Iron Age phases are strongly suspected but remain unproven. The same is true at the end of the Roman period, when ceramics again become scarce, and the extent to which settlements continued into the fifth century A.D. and beyond, as evidenced by a radiocarbon date from Drim (Williams and Mytum 1988) and imported pottery from Coygan Camp (Wainright 1967), is still uncertain. Our understanding of settlement chronology in the region therefore remains in need of considerable refinement and the following presentation and discussion of the data, based on present evidence, must be read with this caveat in mind.

Nucleated settlements, villas and hillforts

Several of the region’s military vici have witnessed only limited interventions, with greater archaeological effort concentrated on their associated forts. For this reason our understanding of the date of origin and duration of occupation at some of these civilian settlements is sometimes derived, perhaps erroneously, from the dates of occupation of the forts themselves. Very little dating evidence was recovered from the vicus at Caerau, for instance, and the suggested date range for the site, c. A.D. 75–120, is based solely on the evidence for activity at the adjacent fort (Hankinson 2012). Similarly, at Brecon Gaer, the dating of the vicus is very poorly understood, though the fort itself was occupied between c. A.D. 75/80 until the fourth century A.D. (Hankinson 2011b). Many of the region’s military sites were relatively short-lived, often only occupied into the early to mid-second century (Burnham and Davies 2010, 48–60), and it is possible that in some cases the associated vici also had brief periods of occupation. Certainly, some of the more extensively investigated vici appear to have been of short duration. At Caersws, one of the most extensively excavated and best understood examples from the region, the vicus witnessed considerable decay or demolition of buildings from c. A.D. 130, at which point it may have been deserted or its population significantly reduced (J.L. Britnell 1989). At Dolaucothi-Pumsaint, where a fort was placed to control production at the important gold mines, the vicus may have continued for a time beyond the life of the fort, although both appear to have been abandoned by the mid-second century A.D. (Burnham and Burnham 2004). In some cases, however, occupation at vici may have continued for a considerable period beyond the abandonment of their associated forts, with limited evidence from Cefn Caer, Pennal, suggesting some sort of continuity of the vicus into the third century A.D., well after the suggested date for the abandonment of the fort in c. A.D. 160 (Hopewell and Burman 2007). At Penrethling, in Shropshire, recently published excavations provided evidence for a first century fort and vicus (Allen et al. 2013). The fort appears to have been abandoned by the end of the first century, after which the vicus was extended into the fort. The vicus may subsequently have been abandoned in the Hadrianic period, but reoccupied in the mid-fourth century. The early phases of the vicus produced important evidence for lead smelting and ironworking, suggesting it was closely linked to the military exploitation of the mineral wealth of the southwest Shropshire ore field (White 2013, 142–3). Overall then, whereas it is possible to suggest that in most cases vici are likely to have been established quickly after the foundation of forts, mostly during the later first or early second centuries A.D., we cannot assume that they were all entirely abandoned at the same time as their associated forts, even if this was the case at many.

Of the two ‘roadside settlements’ in the region, small-scale excavations at Tai Cochion, Anglesey, suggest that the site may have been occupied between the second and mid-fourth century A.D. (Hopewell and Smith 2012). At Frith the site appears to have been occupied principally between the late first and late second centuries A.D., with more restricted evidence for activity in the later Roman period (Blockley 1989a; Room 1968). The dating evidence for the village at Gateholm, albeit limited, suggested activity in the late Roman period, perhaps extending into the early medieval period (Davies 1971).

The region’s villas range in the dates of their occupation, although, again, the quality of the dating evidence varies and none of the excavated examples can be regarded as well understood. The examples at Acton Scott, Shropshire (Hannaford 2009; 2010), Llys Brychan, Bethlehem (Jarrett 1962; Meek 2010) and Abermagwr (Davies and
Driver 2012) appear on the basis of ceramics and other finds to have been late foundations, with origins in the third century A.D. The ceramic evidence from Maesderwen, Llanfrynach, in the Brecon Beacons, was also predominantly of third to fourth century date, although the presence of some second-century vessels hints at earlier activity (Jones and Owen 1999). Excavation of the villa building at Cwmbrwyn in the early twentieth century produced material ranging from the second to mid-fourth centuries (Ward 1907), and at Glasfryn, Tremadoc, ceramic evidence and a radiocarbon date indicated a relatively early foundation in the second century, with continuation until the fourth century (Kenney 2006; Breese and Anwyl 1909).

The hillforts typically have very different chronologies to the other classes of settlements previously discussed. Most examples appear to have originated in the mid-Iron Age, tending to fall out of use in the late Iron Age or the early Roman period. Some, however, saw renewed activity in the Roman period after periods of disuse, as at Dinorben (Gardner and Savory 1964; Savory 1971) and the Breiddin, Powys (Musson 1991). The site at Braich y Dinas, Penmaenmawr, is somewhat unusual in that the most intensive period of occupation appears to have been during the second century A.D., although earlier finds indicate activity at least as early as the mid-first century A.D., and perhaps earlier (Hughes 1923). The hillfort at Tre’r Creiri may also have had relatively late origins, apparently originating shortly prior to the Roman Conquest, with continued activity into the third or fourth centuries A.D. (Hogg 1960; Hughes 1907), although we must remember the difficulties associated with dating Iron Age sites in the region.

**Farmsteads**

The broad chronological settlement pattern for the region’s farmsteads is presented in FIG. 11.6. The general trend is for a gradual increase in the number of settlements occupied during the late Iron Age, and this trend continues into the second century A.D., when the number of settlements in use seems to have peaked. There is then something of a decline in the number of farmsteads occupied during the early third century, followed by a slight rise in the later third century, and subsequently increasing abandonment of settlements throughout the fourth century. As noted above, our imperfect dating evidence may perhaps over-emphasise the apparent late fourth-century decline in farmsteads, since activity becomes less visible as ceramics became much less widely used during the fifth century. We must not lose sight of the evidence, albeit limited, from the small number of sites that do suggest some continuity into the fifth century and beyond, such as Drim (Williams and Mytum 1988) and Coygan Camp (Wainright 1967).

Deconstruction of the regional chronological pattern is hindered by the limited number of excavated sites, with 27 from north Wales, 24 from South-west Wales and just ten from East Wales and the Marches, and we must be cautious of patterns derived from such small numbers of sites, especially in the east. It is also important to note that as sites are unevenly distributed, even within each sub-region, the following discussion of the settlement pattern is unlikely to do justice to the variation within each of them. In North Wales, for instance, the majority of excavated sites are located in the north-west, which, as we shall see, has a very distinctive settlement pattern. The Romano-British archaeology of this area as currently understood may not, therefore, be representative.

![FIG. 11.6. Number of farmsteads in use over time in Upland Wales and the Marches (NB: the M–LIA data only include sites that continued into the late Iron Age)](image-url)
of the situation in the north-east, where very few rural sites have been excavated.

Nevertheless, the sub-division of the region into these three broad (and geographically arbitrary) units does demonstrate some important intra-regional temporal distinctions in the settlement pattern (FIG. 11.7). A greater number of farmsteads in South-West Wales have produced evidence for occupation in the Iron Age than in either the north or the east of the region. Indeed, in the south-west the late Iron Age and the later first century A.D. seem to have been the periods when the greatest numbers of farmsteads were occupied, with the number in use declining gradually from the beginning of the second century onwards. This is in stark contrast to the pattern in both North and East Wales and the Marches, where fewer farmsteads produced evidence for Iron Age activity; in these sub-regions the second century seems to have represented a period of settlement expansion as opposed to decline.

This pattern is most apparent when the ‘establishment dates’ for farmsteads in the sub-regions are explored. FIGURE 11.8 presents broad dating information for the start dates of farmsteads in North Wales and South-West Wales (the eastern sub-region has been omitted because of the very small number of farmsteads excavated here). The chart reveals how considerably more sites appear to have been established during the later first and particularly the second century in the north of the region. In North Wales four sites have start dates
in the second half of the first century A.D., compared to just one in South-West Wales, whereas in the second century North Wales saw the emergence of ten farmsteads, compared, once again, to a single example from South-West Wales.

The reasons for this striking pattern require some consideration. Do they, for instance, represent genuine sub-regional distinctions in the development of the settlement pattern, or artificial differences created by our imperfect dating evidence from the region? This question rests largely on the evidence for Iron Age occupation from the two sub-regions. Whereas South-West Wales appears to stand out as being far better represented by farmsteads occupied during the late Iron Age, the quality of evidence varies, and some sites have been assigned Iron Age phases of activity with a greater degree of confidence than others. Compare, for instance, the site at Stackpole Warren, Dyfed, where both pottery and a group of radiocarbon results date occupation from the late Iron Age into the second and third centuries A.D. (Benson et al. 1990), with the site at Church Hill, Penmaen, where no Iron Age pottery was recovered and the possibility of Iron Age activity is raised only by a radiocarbon date with a range of A.D. 20–120 (Evans 2010). The latter site could therefore very well be exclusively of Roman-period date. In all, at least seven of the seventeen sites from South-West Wales with potential Iron Age origins have Iron Age dating that may be regarded as tenuous, and were these to be reassigned Roman-period dates of origin the difference between the north and south-west would be somewhat less clear-cut.

What is more, Iron Age pottery, scarce in the region generally, is even less widespread in the north than the south-west, and only one of the eleven sites identified as having a late Iron Age phase in North Wales clearly produced Iron Age pottery, with the others principally dated through radiocarbon dating. Eight of the eighteen potential Iron Age sites in the south-west of the region were dated, at least partly, by Iron Age ceramics. It is therefore possible that some of the many northern sites that appear to have emerged in the later first or second century A.D., after the Roman conquest of the region, may have had unrecognised earlier phases (cf. Kelly 1990).

It is clearly important to take the above factors into consideration, but if we accept that the apparent, sub-regional, chronological differences may well be genuine then historical reasons need also to be considered. It may be of significance, for instance, that many of the farmsteads in North-West Wales that apparently emerged in the late first and second centuries A.D. are in the vicinity of the long-lived Roman auxiliary fort at Segontium (Caernarfon), itself established c. A.D. 77 (Fig. 11.9). No civitas capital is known from North Wales, and Mattingly is among the most recent to suggest that much of Wales may have been under military control (Mattingly 2006, 262, fig. 10). The extreme south-west of Wales, however, is an area believed likely to have been under the tribal control of the Demetae, with their centre perhaps at Carmarthen (James 2003; Wacher 1995, 391–4). This proposed territory corresponds very closely to the area in which our farmsteads with Iron Age origins are concentrated.

Assuming the dating evidence is correct, there appears to have been a substantial increase in the number of farmsteads established in the wake of the Roman occupation of North Wales, some perhaps linked to the supply of the fort at Segontium, and also possibly with a wider network of military supply. Such a link between the establishment of forts and a local increase in rural settlement is supported by parallels from other regions (Ch. 8), although in the case of North-West Wales it remains doubtful whether agricultural production was ever at a scale to supply more than a small proportion of the military’s needs – most produce was undoubtedly still transported from further afield, namely the Central Belt region (see Ch. 12 and vol. 2). There does not appear to have been a similar level of settlement expansion in South-West Wales during the early Roman period, possibly in part because there was a reduced requirement to meet the dietary and other needs of a large military population and its followers in this area. The presumed civitas capital at Carmarthen is unlikely to have been large enough to have required significant resources from anywhere other than its very immediate hinterland (James 2003, 22).

However, the lack of evidence for increased numbers of sites during the late first and second century in South-West Wales cannot be entirely explained by an absence of military sites. While military sites have never previously been firmly identified from this part of the region, recent geophysical survey and evaluation trenching at Wiston, Pembrokeshire, have confirmed the presence of a fort occupied during the final quarter of the first century A.D. (Meek 2015), and it is thought likely that there are other unidentified examples, especially at Whitland (ibid., 41). However, the short lifespan of the fort at Wiston, and indeed military sites across much of Wales, may suggest that South-West Wales was not occupied by the military long enough for there to have been a perceptible impact on the rural settlement pattern of the wider area.

The site at Wiston has further important implications for our understanding of Romano-British settlement in South-West Wales. The recent
excavations produced evidence for reoccupation of the area of the fort following its abandonment, probably between the mid-second and mid-fourth century, when a trapezoidal enclosure was placed within the interior of the abandoned fort. Importantly, to the south of the fort an area of enclosures covering over 10 ha was identified, suggesting the presence of an extensive, possibly unenclosed, nucleated settlement, perhaps a village, also dating to between the mid-second and mid-fourth century (Meek 2013; 2015). This newly identified nucleated site is of a type previously unrecognised in South-West Wales, and its establishment, at broadly the same time that settlements in the area were being abandoned, may help to answer questions about where people moved to when farmsteads fell into disuse. Such unenclosed sites are far less easily recognised than the defended settlements, which are often visible as earthworks and cropmarks, and it is likely that other examples await discovery. It is therefore possible that the reduction in numbers of farmsteads occupied during the mid- to late Roman period in South-West Wales reflects movement by people from small defended farmsteads towards a smaller number of larger sites, of the type evidenced at Wiston. If so, this would indicate a significant level of social change, and the full results of the investigations at Wiston, along with the potential discovery of similar sites in the future, may be the key to our understanding of the settlement pattern in the later Roman period in South-West Wales.

**RURAL SETTLEMENT MORPHOLOGY**

The settlement pattern for the Upland Wales and Marches region is overwhelmingly dominated by enclosed sites. Of the 61 farmsteads from the region in the project database, the large majority (77 per cent) could be classified based upon their site plans and of these, 44 (94 per cent) were of enclosed form, along with a further two possible enclosed examples.

Identified examples of complex farmsteads are entirely absent from the region, yet a small number of open settlements were recorded, including six that were identified as being of open form at some stage during their development. As elsewhere, open sites in the region must be under-represented owing to the difficulty of recognising them during
excavation, and two sites, which remain unclassified, at Bush Farm, Llanfairisgaer (Longley et al. 1998) and Cefn Du, Gaerwen (Cuttler et al. 2012), are regarded as potential examples. In some cases enclosed sites developed out of settlements that had earlier, open, phases, as at the neighbouring settlements at Cefn Graeanog I (Hogg 1969), Cefn Graeanog II (Fasham et al. 1998), and Graeanog, Clynnog (ibid.). Chronologically, most of the open settlements appear to have been of early Roman date, although two examples, Stackpole Warren in Dyfed (Benson et al. 1990) and Melin y Plas, Bryngwran (Cuttler et al. 2012) had Iron Age origins. In terms of their geographical distribution, five of the six open settlements are in North-West Wales, suggesting that they may be a sub-regional type, although the difficulty of recognising such sites and the small numbers involved may mean that more await identification elsewhere within the region.

Although the rural settlement pattern of the region is in general characterised by enclosed farmsteads, just as we have seen with the chronological data, there are some important sub-regional distinctions in terms of the form these enclosures took. Again, the lack of sites from the east of the region make it difficult to establish a clear pattern for this area, but of the eight enclosed sites where the shape of the enclosure could be established, most (five examples) were...
single-ditched enclosures of rectilinear form. Enclosed farmsteads in North Wales include a range of enclosure shapes, including small numbers of irregular, curvilinear and D-shaped examples, although, as in the east, rectilinear enclosures were by far the most common settlement form in this part of the region. This is in direct contrast to the situation in South-West Wales, where enclosures of curvilinear form are the predominant type (FIG. 11.10). Again, the similarity between the north and east, which differ so markedly from the settlement pattern in the south-west of the region, is striking.

There are also some clear patterns in terms of the chronology of the different forms of settlement enclosure within the region (FIG. 11.11), reflecting the previously discussed sub-regional chronological differences. In South-West Wales the curvilinear enclosures that make up the major element of the settlement pattern are overwhelmingly of Iron Age and early Roman date, and few continued into the late Roman period. In the east of the region the single curvilinear enclosure appears to have had Iron Age origins, yet in North Wales none of the small number of enclosures of this type has produced evidence for Iron Age activity.

In South-West Wales the single enclosed farmstead of rectilinear form, at Troedywrhiw, Ceredigion, produced later first to fourth century A.D. ceramics, yet the excavators tentatively suggested a possible late Iron Age origin based on the absence of ceramics from the lower fills of the enclosure ditch (Murphy and Mytum 2013). In North Wales, one of the rectilinear enclosures produced evidence for occupation during the Iron Age, yet otherwise they appear principally to be a Roman phenomenon, and their numbers increased, particularly during the second century A.D.

![Diagram of settlement enclosures from South-West Wales](Murphy 1985; Williams and Mytum 1998)

**FIG. 11.12.** Plans of settlement enclosures from South-West Wales (Murphy 1985; Williams and Mytum 1998)
Although based on a smaller sample, this pattern is repeated in the east of the region, with most rectilinear enclosures occupied during the second and third centuries A.D.

Irregularly shaped enclosures display a somewhat less clear chronological pattern. Some span the Iron Age and Roman periods, whereas others have produced evidence for occupation only in the Roman period. It is, however, notable that in South-West Wales, where irregular enclosures are concentrated, these settlements tend to produce better evidence for continued occupation into the late Roman period than is the case for farmsteads with curvilinear enclosures, though the reasons for this are currently obscure.

Enclosed farmsteads differ across the region in other ways besides their basic shape, and there are some important differences in terms of their method of construction. Once again, the sub-regional differences are most clear when comparing settlements from the south-west with those from the north. The enclosures of the south-west principally comprise large earthwork banks and ditches, enclosing areas ranging from between around 0.2 and 0.8 ha. Several of the south-west curvilinear enclosures are of ‘banjo’ form (Fig. 11.12), incorporating long trackways defined by earthwork banks on each side that lead to the settlement, these features perhaps relating to livestock management (Mattingly 2006, 411).

The construction methods of settlements in North Wales are very different from those in the south-west and east. In this part of the region, although earthwork enclosures are known, settlements are more typically enclosed by drystone walls, sometimes with internal masonry structures built into the enclosures (fig. 11.13). This method of construction is typical for all forms of enclosure in North Wales, and, while rectilinear sites are most common here, drystone walls were used to enclose curvilinear, irregular and D-shaped settlements. These drystone-walled settlements are typically somewhat smaller than the defended earthwork enclosures of the south-west of the region, ranging from tiny enclosures of less than 0.05 ha, sometimes containing single buildings (e.g. Hafotty-wern-las, Rhostryfan: Williams 1923) to larger ‘hut-group’ settlements of up to 0.5 ha, as at Cae Metta, Llanddeiniolen (Fairburn 1999).

Whereas settlements in the east of the region appear typically to have been more similar to those in the north than the south-west in terms of their basic form, they are clearly different in terms of their methods of construction; none appears to have incorporated drystone walling, rather, most appear to have been of ditch and bank construction.

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**FIG. 11.13.** Plans of settlement enclosures in North Wales (Fasham et al. 1998; Griffiths 1959; Hogg 1975; Williams 1923)
and they are often larger than enclosures in North Wales, ranging from around 0.15 ha to over a hectare in size (fig. 11.14). Some sites were enclosed by multiple banks and ditches, as at Arddleen, Llandrinio (I. Grant 2004) and Colffryn, Llansantffraid Deudwr (W. Britnell 1989); the latter site is similar in some ways to the ‘banjo-enclosures’ of the south-west of the region. Whereas there appear to be some similarities between the north and east of the region in terms of the chronology of sites and their basic shape, the rural settlement patterns of these two sub-regions nonetheless clearly had distinctive and distinguishing characteristics.

BUILDINGS

As one might expect given the clear evidence for intra-regional variability in rural settlement chronology and form already discussed, the domestic settlements of Upland Wales and the Marches encompass a range of building styles, and there are distinct differences between settlements of different types and dates. Our dataset for the region includes evidence for 464 buildings from 71 sites. In terms of their basic shape the region’s buildings are divided almost evenly between those of circular and rectangular form, with 235 examples of the former and 229 of the latter. These two broad classes of building are very unevenly distributed across the region’s sites, with the vast majority (86 per cent) of rectilinear buildings associated with the region’s nucleated settlements (the military vicus, roadside settlements and village) and villas. Relatively few rectangular buildings, just 33 examples, were recorded from hillforts or farmsteads. Correspondingly, buildings of circular form are largely restricted to the latter class of site, and there are currently no examples recorded from the nucleated sites or villas of the region (although given that in other regions villa buildings frequently replace circular structures, and sometimes existed contemporaneously with them, this picture might change as more villas in the region are excavated). There is therefore a clear distinction in terms of architectural styles between sites occupying the wider countryside and sites that were, or appear to be, either high status or in some way associated with the Roman military.

BUILDINGS AT FARMSTEADS AND HILLFORTS

Although rectangular buildings form only a minor component of architecture at farmsteads and hillforts there is nonetheless a clear increase in the gradual adoption of rectangular building styles over time at sites in the countryside, and this corresponds with a gradual decrease in the proportion of sites incorporating circular architectural forms (fig. 11.15). Nevertheless, rectangular buildings seemingly never become the predominant architectural form at rural sites across the region, as they eventually did in some other areas (see for example Chs 8 and 9).

As we have seen, there are some clear intra-regional differences in the chronology, shape and construction methods of rural settlement enclosures. Although the three sub-regions share a commonality in their favouring of circular over rectangular forms, just as with the settlement enclosures, there are very distinctive sub-regional traditions in terms of the materials used in their construction (fig. 11.16). In South-West Wales, almost all roundhouses were of timber (or mass-walling; see Ch. 3) construction, with only one example constructed from stone. Traditions were very different in North Wales, however, and, while timber-built roundhouses occurred, drystone,
Fig. 11.16. Distribution of sites in Upland Wales and the Marches with timber circular buildings, and stone circular buildings.
Fig. 11.17. Distribution of site types in Upland Wales and the Marches with timber rectangular buildings, and masonry rectangular buildings.
masonry roundhouses were overwhelmingly more common, accounting for 164 of the 175 circular buildings recorded. Ninety-five of these were from a single site, the hillfort at Braich y Dinas, Penmaenmawr (Hughes 1923), yet even discounting these, nearly 90 per cent of the northern circular buildings were of masonry construction, and stone-built ‘hut-groups’ have long been recognised as a distinctive element of the settlement pattern in this part of the region.

The inadequacies of our dating evidence from the region make it difficult to establish the point at which masonry roundhouses became common in the north. These structures occur at sites that saw occupation in the Iron Age, but all such sites continued into the Roman period, and, as detailed phasing is unavailable for most settlements in the region, some examples may have been constructed relatively late in the developmental sequences. At Bryn Eryr, Llansadwrn, for instance, a bank-and-ditch enclosure of mid-Iron Age date contained two contiguous roundhouses of timber construction, yet during the Roman period, perhaps during the second century a.d., a third, structurally distinct, building was constructed that had faced-stone walls with a rubble core (Longley et al. 1998). The hillfort settlement at Braich y Dinas, Penmaenmawr, which enclosed at least 95 stone-built roundhouses, also seems to have witnessed its most intensive activity during the second century a.d. (Hughes 1923), although it has been suggested that many of the stone roundhouses are of Iron Age origin (Hopewell pers. comm.). In general, however, along with the widespread introduction of drystone (principally rectilinear) enclosures, such buildings appear to have been of Romano-British rather than Iron Age date, becoming increasingly common from the late first to second century onwards, forming a further component of the very distinctive Roman-period settlement pattern in the north-west of the region. A temporal shift towards the construction of enclosures and buildings in stone was also noted in the North region during the second century a.d. (Ch. 9). Here it was suggested that this may have been associated with the pressure placed upon woodland resources by the requirements of the Roman army, and, given that North Wales may also have been under military control, it is possible that this was the case in this part of the region as well. Certainly, pollen evidence from several parts of North Wales suggests that areas had begun to be extensively cleared during the late Iron Age, and at Llyn Corolon, near Caernarfon, there was a major decline in trees that may reflect increased pressure on resources during the Roman period (Caseldine 2010, 148).

Although rectangular buildings are scarce at farmsteads and hillforts across the region in general, there are again some differences between North Wales and South-West Wales (fig. 11.17). Rectangular buildings occur more widely across farmsteads in North Wales, and, where they do occur in the north, they are typically in greater numbers than in the south-west. In South-West Wales both timber-built and masonry rectangular buildings have been identified in small numbers, and at the few sites where such buildings occur they appear to be of Roman date, sometimes representing relatively late developments at sites with long histories of occupation where circular buildings had previously been favoured. At Walesland Rath, for instance, a rectangular building with walls of faced, limestone blocks and an unmortared rubble core appears to have been constructed in the second century a.d. This followed a lengthy period of occupation at the site when the main domestic buildings were timber roundhouses, extending back to the second or third centuries B.C. (Wainwright 1971).

In North Wales rectangular buildings at farmsteads and hillforts are almost all of masonry construction and, as with circular buildings, timber structures are rare. While dating of individual buildings is often unavailable, rectangular and circular structures often appear to have been broadly contemporaneous, standing side by side, occasionally replacing earlier buildings of timber. At Cefn Graenog I, for example, a probable unenclosed settlement containing a timber-built roundhouse was destroyed by fire towards the end of the second century a.d. The settlement was subsequently rebuilt and provided with a drystone, rectilinear enclosure with a central, circular, stone roundhouse, and two internal, rectangular buildings with walls that were incorporated into the walled enclosure. This structural incorporation of internal buildings (both circular and rectangular) into the walls of enclosures is a common feature of the drystone enclosure settlements that emerged in the Roman period in north-west Wales (see fig. 11.13). The distinctive forms of building present at these settlements appear often to have had different functions. The presence of hearths at many of the circular buildings suggests that most were domestic houses, whereas evidence for metalworking in several of the rectangular structures, as at Hafotty-wern-las, Rhostryfan (Williams 1923), indicates that some of these buildings may have been workshops, or supported a range of functions, possibly including domestic occupation.

BUILDINGS AT OTHER SETTLEMENTS
The buildings at military vicus and the small number of other nucleated sites, almost always of rectangular shape, included structures of both timber and
masonry construction (cf. Burnham and Davies 2010 for a recent detailed account of buildings and other aspects of *vici* in Wales and the Marches). At the roadside settlement at Tai Cochion, Anglesey, two excavated buildings incorporated stone foundations and superstructures of wattle-and-daub, whereas another appears to have had a grand entrance and may have been of relatively high status (Hopewell and Smith 2012). In some cases, as at nucleated settlements in other regions, buildings entirely of timber construction were eventually superseded by structures incorporating stone, as appears to have been the case at Ffrith (Blockley 1989a; Room 1968), although the small-scale nature of much of the work at the region’s nucleated sites means that the developmental sequence for buildings at such settlements is often very poorly understood. The structures at nucleated sites served a range of functions, including domestic dwellings (as evidenced by features such as domestic hearths and ovens) as well as workshops and other non-domestic buildings. At the *vicus* at Caersws, one of the most extensively excavated examples, identified buildings included shops, workshops involved in the manufacture of iron, bronze and leather objects and a possible tavern (J. Britnell 1989). Most, if not all, *vici* would have included at least one stone-built bathhouse, probably used both by soldiers stationed at the fort and the civilian population, and these have been identified at Castell Collen, Brecon Gaer, Caersws and Dolaucothi-Pumsaint.

The region’s villas, where their form is well enough understood, are all of fairly modest type (fig. 11.18). The examples at Cwmbrwyn, Dyfyd (Ward 1907), and Acton Scott, Shropshire (Hannaford 2009; 2010) were both simple masonry ‘cottage-style’ buildings, although it is suggested that the latter example may be an ancillary building associated with a wider villa estate. At Llys Brychan, Bethlehem (Meek 2010; Jarrett 1962) and the recently identified building at Abermagwr (Davies and Driver 2012) the buildings were of winged-corridor type. Bathhouses were identified at four of

**FIG. 11.18.** Plans of villa buildings at Abermagwr (Davies and Driver 2012) and Cwmbrwyn, Dyfed (Ward 1907)
the villas, and at Abermagwr a pit extension in the form of a rectangle was added, seemingly for provision of a hypocausted room, although this appears never to have been completed (Davies and Driver 2012). None of the villas in the region display the level of opulence seen at villas in some other parts of the province. Painted wall-plaster was recovered from the buildings at Acton Scott, Llys Brychan, Bethlehem and Glasfryn, Tremadoc, yet only one, Maesderwen, Llanfrynach, appears to have had mosaic pavements.

As with the region’s farmsteads, where sufficiently extensive work has been undertaken, villas appear to have been enclosed by ditches and banks, although the three examples with identified enclosures are all located within South-West Wales, where farmsteads are also typically enclosed in such a way. There are differences in the form of enclosures at the three south-western villas, however, with Abermagwr (Davies and Driver 2012) and Llys Brychan, Bethlehem (Meek 2010; Jarrett 1962) both represented by multiple-ditched enclosures of rectilinear form. The enclosure at Cwmbrwyn (Ward 1907), on the other hand, was more curvilinear in plan, reminiscent of the farmsteads of South-West Wales, and it is, perhaps, no coincidence that this villa is situated in closer proximity to the concentration of farmsteads with curvilinear enclosures than either Abermagwr, situated in the north of the sub-region, or Llys Brychan, further to the east. More data are needed on farmsteads in the vicinity of these other villas, but it seems likely that, although a small number of sites were furnished with relatively high-status villa buildings, these ‘rich’ sites otherwise subscribed to many of the broader characteristics of their local settlement pattern.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

TOPOGRAPHY

As previously noted, much of the region is of upland, mountainous character, and settlement appears largely to have concentrated on the low-lying coastal zones of the north and west as well as the fertile river valleys of the east. However, within these broad lowland zones farming settlements occupied a range of locations within the landscape (Fig. 11.19), from very low-lying coastal sites situated at just a few metres above sea level, as at Porth Dafarch, Holyhead, on Anglesey (O’Neil 1940), to sites on considerably higher terrain such as Rhigogoch, Harlech (Kenney 2012), situated over 200 m above sea level.

Some classes of settlements occupied a more restricted range of locations. Hillforts, by their very nature, typically occupied elevated positions, and four of the region’s hillforts occupied defensible positions in excess of 200 m above sea level. As all vici developed in association with forts they occupy a range of locations determined by the strategic value of the land on which the forts were positioned, ranging from low-lying sites commanding important coastal locations (e.g. Segontium) or navigable rivers and their bridging points (e.g. Neath, Cefn Caer, Caerhun (Canovium), to elevated positions controlling the junctions of major roads (e.g. Tomen-y-Mur). The region’s villas occupy a range of locations, some occupying low-lying land adjacent to estuaries (e.g. Glasfryn, Tremadoc) or in river valleys (e.g. Abermagwr). Others show a preference for upper valley slopes (Llys Brychan, Bethlehem; Maesderwen, Llanfrynach; Acton Scott), whereas the example at Cwmbrwyn occupies an area of upland to the north of Carmarthen Bay.

ROADS AND TRACKWAYS

The current understanding of the road network in the region is poor compared to other parts of Britain, and many maps of Roman roads in Wales (including those presented in this volume) are based largely on assumed rather than proven routes (Silvester and Toller 2010). The widespread mountainous terrain means that many potential routes are controversial, however, and this makes it difficult to assess the impact that major communication routes had on the rural settlement pattern. All military sites must have been situated on the road network, and traces of metalled roads have been identified at several vici. At the villa at Acton Scott, Shropshire, geophysical survey of a cropmark enclosure located the line of a former
road that linked the site to Watling Street (Hannaford 2009; 2010). Until recently no roads had been identified on Anglesey, yet at Tai Cochion a linear feature, initially identified through geophysical survey, was shown under excavation to have been a metalled road running through the centre of the nucleated settlement (Hopewell and Smith 2012), comparable in width and method of construction to confirmed Roman roads found elsewhere in the province (Hopewell pers. comm.). The relationship between roads and most sites in the region is, however, uncertain.

Aside from major Roman roads, several sites have produced evidence of minor trackways. In South-West Wales, some of the ‘banjo-type’ enclosed farmsteads had trackways defined by banks and ditches. At Woodside Camp, Llawhaden, Dyfed, a defended cobbled trackway at least 70 m in length led towards the gated entrance of the enclosure, with a second gate lying midway along the track (Williams and Mytum 1998). There were similar arrangements at the neighbouring settlement at Dan-y-Coed (Williams and Mytum 1998) and at Penycoed, Llangynog (Murphy 1985). At the drystone enclosed farmsteads in the north of the region trackways leading to the settlement enclosures were often cobbled, and at Coed-y-Brain, Rhostryfan, such a track branched into several paths leading to the individual roundhouses within the enclosure (Williams 1923).

FIELD SYSTEMS

Given that the majority of excavated sites within the region have been defined as farmsteads of some sort, the number with associated field systems is rather low. Only eight produced evidence of associated fields, and there are a further four sites with features interpreted as elements of field systems with no evidence for associated domestic activity. Although there are few excavated examples, the distribution of field systems is striking, favouring the north and east of the region, with only a single example excavated from South-West Wales, at Stackpole Warren (Benson et al. 1990; FIG. 11.20). It is difficult to discern how much this reflects variation in the visibility of field systems in different parts of the region, as in North Wales fields were often defined by drystone walls, allowing relatively easy identification. Some, however, were identified by lynchets formed by arable agriculture; the neighbouring settlements at

FIG. 11.20. Distribution of excavated sites in Upland Wales and the Marches with associated field systems
Caerau I and Caerau II, for instance, were situated within the same lynchet field system (O’Neil 1936). Other excavated sites in the north have been recognised as being part of networks of (often unexcavated) farmsteads linked by contemporary fields, as at Caer Mynydd, Rhiwlas (Griffiths 1959). The suggested bias towards North Wales, and to a slightly lesser extent East Wales and the Marches, suggests that arable farming may have been concentrated in these areas, and given the apparent increase in the number of farmsteads following the Roman conquest in these parts of the region, particularly the north, this may well have been a response to the requirement (or opportunity) to supply the military sites and their vicus with grain. However, at Stackpole Warren in South-West Wales one of a group of fields established during the Iron Age produced evidence for cultivation in the form of plough marks, indicating that arable agriculture played a part in the economy of at least some farmsteads in this part of the region, perhaps just at a smaller scale than in the north and east (see also discussion of the finds from Coygan Camp below). Palaeoenvironmental studies provide us with some complementary evidence regarding the wider environment, and at two sites west of Carmarthen in South-West Wales pollen evidence indicated a predominantly pastoral landscape (Caseldine 2010, 149), supporting the general lack of evidence for arable agriculture from excavated sites in this part of the region.

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHIES: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BASIS OF SETTLEMENTS

ANIMAL AND PLANT REMAINS

Excavated environmental evidence for the economic basis of rural settlements in Upland Wales and the Marches is in short supply, and the acidic soils of the region mean that animal-bone data in particular are rarely available. Only seventeen (14 per cent) of the region’s sites produced bone at all, and only three sites produced assemblages with more than 100 NISP. The farmstead at Coygan Camp in South-West Wales produced late Iron Age and late Roman assemblages that were dominated by cattle, although a range of other species including sheep, pig, red and roe deer, horse, dog, hare, fish and domestic fowl, were present (Wainwright 1967). The Iron Age farmstead and Roman-period industrial site at Prestatyn also produced a range of species. Here, the bone assemblage was slightly weighted towards cattle in the Iron Age, with a possible shift towards sheep in the early Roman period, followed by a return to greater numbers of cattle bones in the third to fourth centuries A.D. (Blockley 1989b). At Minchin Hole, a late Roman cave site, possibly only seasonally occupied, the assemblage was dominated by sheep, with cattle and pig also present in low numbers (Branigan et al. 1994). The assemblages from these few sites are unfortunately insufficient to contribute to our understanding of any meaningful, broader, regional or sub-regional trends.

The region is somewhat better represented by archaeobotanical remains, available from 28 sites. A large proportion of settlements (fourteen sites) that produced cereal remains were in North Wales, with seven sites in South-West Wales and East Wales and the Marches respectively. Given the similar bias in the distribution of sites with field systems this imbalanced distribution may perhaps be of significance, and, where present, cereal remains also usually occurred in greater abundance at sites in North Wales than elsewhere in the region, perhaps reflecting the above suggested emphasis on arable production here. In the southwest and the east of the region the presence of cereal grains and chaff at sites were predominantly seen as evidence for crop processing (e.g. Porth y Rhaw, Solva (Crane and Murphy 2010); Colffryn, (W. Britnell 1989)), and the occurrence of chaff and grain need not necessarily indicate on-site cultivation. Only at sites in North Wales has the composition of plant assemblages been considered to reflect direct evidence for site-based cultivation, as, for example, at Bryn Eryr Farm, Llansadwrn (Longley al. 1998). In addition, corndryers, rare throughout the region in general, occur at two sites in North Wales (the roadside settlement at Tai Cochion: Hopewell and Smith 2012, and the villa at Glasfryn, Tremadoc: Kenney 2006), with only single examples in the south-west (the villa at Cwmbrwyn: Ward 1907) and the east (at Pen-y-gaer vicus: Jones and Hankinson 2012).

Despite the sub-regional differences hinted at by the distribution of sites with plant remains, there appears to be little discernible distinction between the species present at sites in the three sub-regions, with spelt wheat widely favoured, followed by barley, emmer and oats, and bread wheat only occasionally present. Some of the latter may have been present as weed contaminants of the principal spelt crops. The meagre evidence from the region provides no indication of a temporal shift in favoured crops.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Although plant remains and particularly animal-bone data are largely lacking compared with other parts of Britain, it is possible to supplement the limited information we have with evidence from
A further set of objects that may offer insights into broad, sub-regional economic trends are those associated with textile processing, principally spindles and spindle whorls, and it is notable that, whereas farms in North Wales are better represented by most types of artefact than those in South-West Wales, more farms in the south-west have produced textile equipment (fig. 11.21). The widespread occurrence of spindle whorls and occasional other types of textile equipment at sites in the south-west of the region suggests that sheep or goat were common, and that the spinning of cloth was widely practised at the household level. At Walesland Rath, Dyfed, waterlogged wood included two fragments of possible loom-frames (Wainwright 1971). The presence of textile equipment at nearly half of the farmsteads in North Wales indicates that sheep/goat were also an important aspect of the economies of some sites in this part of the region, and farmsteads here may therefore have operated more mixed agricultural regimes.

The artefact profiles presented in fig. 11.21 indicate that the differences between farmsteads in North and South-West Wales may have gone beyond differing economic emphases. Farms in the south-west are poorly represented by all objects other than textile-processing equipment (chiefly spindle whorls), yet other types of finds occur more widely, and in greater numbers, at farmsteads in the north. North Wales is also represented by substantially more objects recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme than South-West Wales, with 184 and 49 objects from the two respective sub-regions (figures correct as of August 2015). PAS data from the south-west incorporate a very limited range of finds indeed, with all but four of the objects being coins and brooches. While the majority (84 per cent) of objects recorded by PAS from North Wales are also coins and brooches, as
with the excavated sites, a greater range of objects is present. This trend is also evident in the pottery recovered at farmsteads from the two regions. Whereas more farmsteads in South-West Wales yielded pottery, sherds from imported vessels, amphorae and samian, were present at substantially more sites in North Wales (Fig. 11.22).

In contrast with this pattern, a major survey of all coins discovered in Wales by Guest (2008; Guest and Wells 2007) indicated that coins were widespread across lowland areas, demonstrating little discernible difference between the north and the south-west, at least in terms of their broad distribution (Guest 2008, fig. 3). However, Guest was able to demonstrate a distinctive pattern in South-West Wales, showing how most of the coins from the interior of the Pembrokeshire peninsula were intrinsically valuable silver denarii deposited as hoards, usually found away from the main areas of settlement, often on hills or prominent places (ibid., 56). The different recovery rates of coins from excavated rural settlements in North and South-West may therefore reflect varying attitudes towards coinage and differing ways in which coins were used (or not used) during daily life in the two areas. The increased presence of coins at farmsteads in the north may suggest that coins were used in more regular transactions than at farmsteads in South-West Wales, and the occupants of farmsteads in this area may have recognised silver coins as a convenient way of storing wealth, depositing them in special places in the countryside, yet not using them frequently as currency (ibid.).

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

As we have seen, there are several strands of evidence that suggest the establishment of a permanent military presence in North Wales may have been at least one factor leading to change in the rural landscape here, with an increase in the number of farmsteads and a possible shift towards a preference for rectilinear enclosures and masonry architecture (although the preference for buildings of traditional, circular form remained). Given the evidence for an increased emphasis on arable farming in this part of the region, it seems reasonable to suggest that the evidence for wider coin use at farmsteads, as well as the trend towards greater levels of material culture more generally, reflects interaction between farmsteads and military sites, which was linked to the supply of grain and other resources to the forts and vici. That such a relationship existed between Segontium and the sites within its immediate landscape is suggested by the presence of weed seeds in archaeobotanical cereal assemblages from Caernarfon, seen as indicating the sourcing of grain from local settlements (Caseldine 2010, 154). This suggests that the occupants of some farmsteads in the north had opportunities to acquire objects through the military supply network that were less widely available in the south-west. The varying distribution and patterns of use of artefacts of different types also suggests that there are likely to have been important cultural differences between the occupants of North and South-West Wales. Guest’s work on coins illustrates how a lack of objects at rural sites need not necessarily mean they were never acquired or used, and people with different cultural traditions may have chosen to engage with objects in different ways and in different places. The occupants of some farmsteads in South-West Wales do appear to have interacted with material culture in similar ways to those in the north, however, and a small number of sites have produced unusually rich finds assemblages. The farmstead at Coygan Camp in particular produced a range of later Roman artefacts, some suggestive of high status, including a large hoard of late third-century coins. The site was one of the few in the
south-west of the region to have produced rectangular buildings, and although the buildings did not display the same level of affluence as sites classified as villas in the region, the presence of window glass (and glass objects in general) suggests a reasonable degree of wealth. As discussed above, this site was the only farmstead in the south-west to have produced agricultural equipment and a large number of quernstones, and this, alongside evidence for metal and bone working, suggests that this wealth was derived from the supply of agricultural goods and other products. The position of the site, occupying a fertile promontory near to the estuary of the River Taf at Carmarthen Bay, may have facilitated transport of these commodities, quite possibly to the civitas capital at Carmarthen (Moridunum).

It is also of note that three of the six sites in the region classified as villas are in South-West Wales, and whereas none of these approach any of the extremely rich villas seen in some other regions in terms of scale or opulence, they nevertheless demonstrate both the acquisition of wealth and the decision to display it through particular architectural means. In most cases it is, on current evidence, impossible to establish the mechanisms through which this wealth was generated. The simple ‘cottage-style’ villa at Cwmbrwyn, located just 4 km north-west of Coygan Camp, perhaps also derived its wealth from supplying agricultural products to the civitas capital – the only corn dryer from this part of the region was found here (Ward 1907). Given the close proximity of these two sites, a tenurial association is possible, as they were certainly occupied at the same time. The presence of a corn dryer at the poorly understood but probable villa at Glasfryn, Tremadoc, in North Wales, suggests that this site may also have been involved in agricultural production. The winged-corridor villa at Llys Brychan, Bethlehem, occupies a position in a fertile valley, and may perhaps also have generated its wealth from agriculture, although direct evidence for this is lacking.

Mineral resources perhaps provided the focus for the wealth displayed at the villa at Abermagwr, in the Ystwyth Valley, and this site may have been a residence of a government or other official involved in the administration of mining the local lead/silver resources, for which there is increasing evidence from geochemical peat bog studies (Mighall et al. 2002; Armfield 1989). An association with the control of mineral resources is also possible for the villa at Acton Scott, Shropshire (Hannaforth 2009; 2010), in the east of the region, perhaps connected in some way with the poorly understood Roman lead-mining complex situated 11 km to the west at Linley Hall (Page 1908), although there is no direct evidence for a connection (and the site at Linley Hall is itself thought possibly to have been a villa; Wigley pers. comm.). The Roman-period industrial site at Prestatyn on the North Welsh coast, which replaced a farmstead occupied in the Iron Age, is also considered likely to have been in some way connected with lead mining, perhaps developing around a harbour associated with the export of lead (Blockley 1989b).

A further group of sites that are often regarded as representing the upper echelons of the social hierarchy, at least during the Iron Age, are the region’s hillforts. The status of these sites is not always clear, but some have yielded rich finds assemblages, and the investment in the construction of large and elaborate multivallate ramparts at sites such as Dinorben (North Wales), Great Castle Head, Dale (Crane 2002) and Porth y Rhaw, Solva (Crane and Murphy 2010) indicates control of considerable labour forces, at least when they were initially constructed. Whatever their status during the Iron Age, where these sites saw occupation in the Roman period, they sometimes appear to have been viewed and used differently, although at many the nature of activity in either the Iron Age or Roman periods is poorly understood. At Croft Ambrey, Aymestrey (East Wales and the Marches) a probable early Roman-period shrine was placed in an annexe of the abandoned hillfort (Stanford 1974). At Dinorben, after a century-long hiatus following its abandonment in the early Roman period, the hillfort saw significant renewed occupation in the later third to fourth century, but no refortification of its defences (Gardner and Savory 1964; Savory 1971). The substantial hillfort at the Breiddin, Powys (East Wales and the Marches) appears to have been abandoned by the late Iron Age, yet it witnessed renewed, small-scale, principally agricultural, occupation in the Roman period (Musson 1991). At least two hillforts in North Wales witnessed significant Romano-British occupation however, and many stone-built roundhouses of possible Roman date were identified at Braich y Dinas, Penmaenmawr (Hughes 1923) and Tre’r Creiri (Hogg 1960; Hughes 1907). The presence of Bronze Age cairns at both of the latter may have been of ritual significance for communities occupying the hillforts during later periods, particularly at Braich y Dinas where these were contained within an inner enclosure at the summit of the hill, in which no buildings were constructed.

REGION SUMMARY

Studies of Roman archaeology within upland Wales and the Marches have traditionally focused upon military sites, with a network of forts known
throughout much of the region. Rural settlement has generally received less attention, yet there are now some areas at least where we have a growing body of excavated evidence for ‘native’ farmsteads, as well as the occasional villa and larger nucleated site. Most of this evidence is confined to parts of North-West and South-West Wales, with a smaller scatter in East Wales and the Marches; the higher upland parts of Central Wales remain largely devoid of rural settlement in our dataset, with some indication from pipeline excavations that this area may have been genuinely sparsely populated.

As with parts of the South-West and, to a lesser extent, the North regions, the general pattern of dispersed enclosed farmsteads in Upland Wales and the Marches belies significant differences between sub-regions. In particular, the two relatively ‘data-rich’ sub-regions of South-West Wales and North Wales display markedly different characteristics in most facets of the evidence, including settlement form, chronology, architecture, social practices and the agricultural economy.

Notwithstanding the significant issues with dating sites, many of the farmsteads in North Wales appear to have emerged in the late first and second centuries A.D., probably established in the wake of the Roman occupation of the area. These settlements are typically fairly small in size, with rectilinear drystone enclosure walls, sometimes with internal masonry structures built into them. In South-West Wales the farmsteads are mostly curvilinear in form, enclosed by large earthwork banks and ditches, in some ways similar to the ‘rounds’ of west Cornwall (Ch. 10), albeit generally containing circular buildings of timber or mass-walled construction. Like the Cornish rounds, these South-West Wales farmsteads also appear most prevalent during the late Iron Age and early Roman period, with a steady decrease in the numbers of sites in use during the mid- to late Roman period. The much smaller numbers of excavated farmsteads from East Wales and the Marches generally have more in common with those in North Wales, at least in terms of chronology and morphology, though none appears to have incorporated drystone walling.

The differences in settlement form, chronology and architecture are matched by marked apparent differences in farming practices. Individually, the different aspects of evidence from field systems, plant remains, artefacts and excavated features hint subtly at varying economic emphases in the region, at least between the north and the southwest, but, collectively, the various strands of evidence allow this suggestion to be made with a greater degree of confidence. In particular the combined evidence indicates an emphasis on arable production in North Wales (albeit still at a relatively low intensity), whereas much of South-West Wales appears largely pastoral in character. The divergent agrarian emphases apparent within the two sub-regions are undoubtedly part of wider cultural differences, also seen, for example in the patterns of coin usage.

If it can then be demonstrated that communities living in these different parts of Wales developed in quite distinct ways, can we go any further in explaining this? As in most other parts of the province, many of the differences noted in the Roman-period settlement patterns probably relate to pre-existing cultural distinctions. However, some of the post-conquest changes are likely to have been a direct result of incorporation into the Roman province. In North Wales there was a long-lived Roman auxiliary fort at Segontium (Caernarfon), established in c. AD 77, which is likely to have had some impact on the surrounding countryside, where there is evidence for an increase in the number of farmsteads, possible shift towards a preference for rectilinear enclosures and masonry architecture and an increasing emphasis on arable production. Not all of these changes are likely to be linked directly to Segontium, although it is probable that there was some level of interaction between the local population and the military, conceivably linked to the supply of at least part of the grain and other resources required at this and other nearby forts and vici. A similar stimulus to rural settlement and agricultural production has been suggested in Chapter 8 for the landscape around the fortress at Chester, but the levels to which this may also have occurred around other long-lived forts in Wales (e.g. Brecon Gaer, Forden gaer, Castel Collen etc.) remains uncertain, as compared to Segontium we have very few rural excavated rural sites in their vicinities to draw data from.

The post-conquest context of South-West Wales appears to have been quite different to the north, with a relative lack of military sites and a small civitas capital developing at Carmarthen (Moridunum). The general decline in numbers of farmsteads in use in this sub-region may reflect this lack of any major urban or military stimulus. However, a newly identified site at Wiston in Pembrokeshire, where an early Roman fort was succeeded by a ‘village’ settlement during the second century A.D., could suggest an element of settlement nucleation in this area rather than an overall decline in population. It is with the discovery of sites like Wiston that we are continuing to alter our perception and understanding of Roman rural settlement patterns, both in South-West Wales and further afield.