I: The Iron Age of North-West England

A Socio-Economic Model1

by K J Matthews BA

This paper reviews the evidence for Iron Age settlement and society in north-west England as far north as the Ribble. Models based on south-eastern England are explicitly rejected, as is the view that the region was populated by an egalitarian farming society. Rather there seems to have been a politico-economic elite who based their wealth on salt and engaged in trade with the continent *via* an *emporium* at Meols.

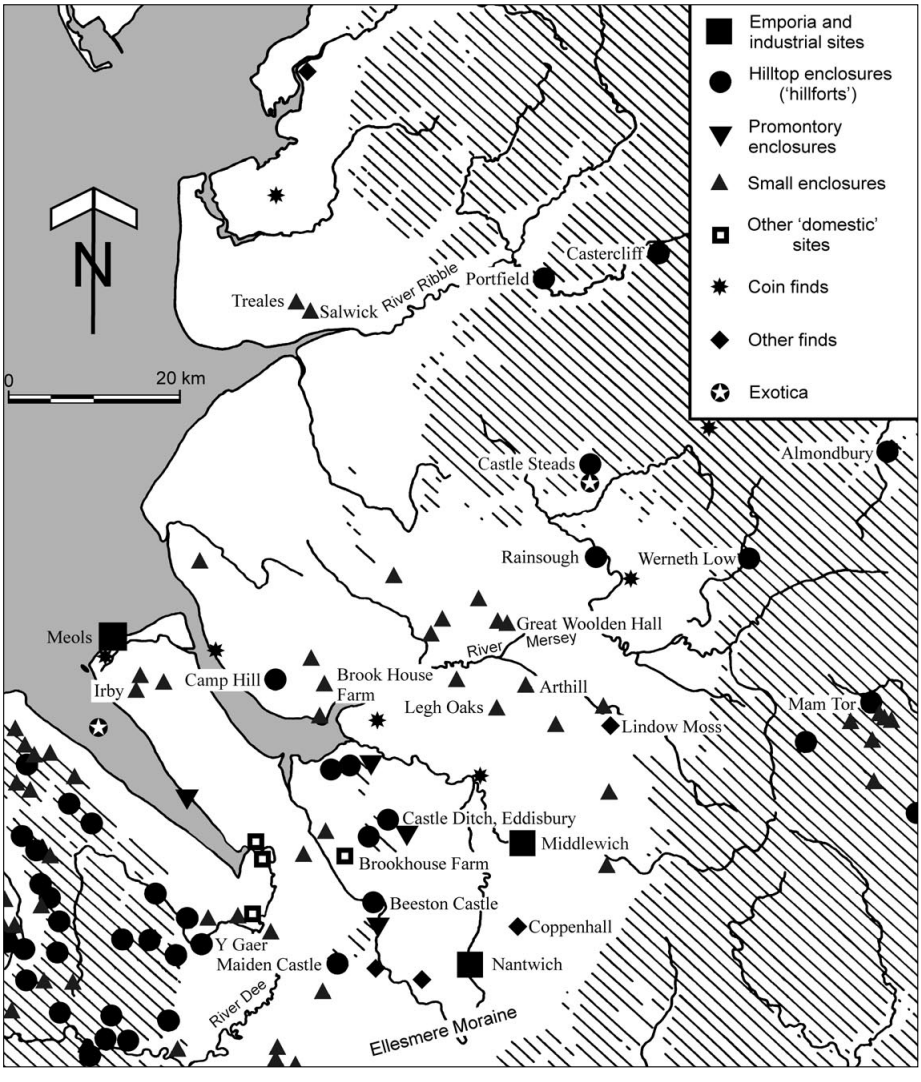
Introduction

It is easy to assume that nothing happened and nobody lived in north-west England during the first millennium BC. In fact, this is because the period has all but been ignored by local archaeologists and rarely appears in national overviews. Explanations for this neglect are simple to find: the populations had all but given up using domestic pottery by the end of the second millennium BC and no longer built or (apparently) used ritual monuments. Archaeological evidence for people during the first millennium BC is almost confined to their construction of hilltop enclosures on the Pennine fringes and the Mid-Cheshire Ridge. Consequently, our understanding of the regional Iron Age is all too frequently based on inappropriate models imported from outside (eg Varley 1964, 84 ff). Just as in many other places, though, the patterns of settlement, trade and social organisation that the population of north-west England established in the first millennium BC endured. Their social practices were effectively masked by the swamping effect of the Roman imperial power's consumption of durable material culture, diverting the attention of archaeologists towards quite anomalous sites such as Chester or Ribchester, but they can be glimpsed again in the sub-Roman period in the middle of the first millennium AD (Matthews 1997, 130).

This paper will review the evidence for Iron Age activity in north-west England, setting up a chronological framework based, it must be admitted, on only a handful of radiocarbon dates. It will then question the core–periphery model that has dominated interpretations of the Iron Age since the late 1970s and propose an alternative model, considering how the consumption of material culture worked to create distinctive identities for the people of the Iron Age North-West. Finally, I will construct a social model for settlement patterns based on the available evidence but using models drawn from anthropology, geography and history.

The 'new' Iron Age

The 1990s were an exciting time in Iron Age studies. At the start of the decade, the study of the Iron Age seemed to have been all but exhausted as an academic enterprise (Hill 1989, 19). However, developments in cognitive archaeology and the introduction of concepts of agency began to change the established model of Celtic warrior society. There was also a recognition that the 'Celtic' model was less than helpful as it masked the considerable regional differences visible throughout Britain (Matthews 1999a, 19). Post-processual approaches have stressed the importance of studying individual sites rather than forcing them into Europe-wide normative models. Interpretative approaches have also sought to bring in new levels of hypothesis testing. By the end of the decade, the Iron Age had once



Ill I.1 North-west England: sites and findspots: map. (Not to scale). Land above 100m O D hatched.

again become an area of uncertainty, populated by people with strange and often incomprehensible attitudes to the world around them (Gwilt & Haselgrove 1997, 7).

Where does this leave the Iron Age of north-west England? It might be argued that the data set is too poor to allow us to indulge in what might be dismissed as 'high theory', that the best we can hope for at the moment is to synthesise the data and attempt to put it into some sort of historical perspective. This is wrong for a number of reasons. Firstly, the historical framework has to come from within the data set: it can be disastrous, as we shall see, to import frameworks from outside and try to fit our data to them. Secondly, some good data does exist. How representative it is, we do not yet know (Nevell 1999b, 63 concludes that Great Woolden Hall — the best known of the excavated enclosures in the region — cannot be used as a type site), but we can at least attempt to build on it. Thirdly, archaeology has moved away from a purely descriptive mode and now aims to explain the patterns of the past in increasingly sophisticated ways. Not to make the attempt, however provisional, would be a dereliction of our duties as archaeologists.

The first millennium BC in regional context

Definition of the region

The definition of north-west England used here differs considerably from that formulated by modern geographers. For a start, it is confessedly Cheshire-centred. The area that the Domesday survey of 1086 included within the returns for Cheshire (pre-1974 Cheshire, Flintshire, much of Wrexham Borough and Lancashire south of the Ribble) corresponds surprisingly well to cultural patterns that are visible throughout prehistory. Indeed, this remains a coherent region during the first millennium AD and into the second (as recognised, for instance, by Phillips & Smith 1994, 5). The identifiable patterns include settlement morphology, subsistence strategies and, in the later first millennium AD, when the evidence is first available, territorial organisation.

The region defined in this way has a topographic coherence that is masked to some extent by modern boundaries (Ill I.1). To the west, the Clwydian mountains form an obvious barrier and themselves contain a quite distinct settlement pattern, dominated by numerous hillforts. To the south and south-east, the Ellesmere moraine is an important watershed both hydrologically and culturally, including settlement patterns, material culture traditions and distribution, and monument types: Bronze Age burnt mounds, for instance, are common to the south, but only one (at Hampton Green, Cheshire) has been found to its north. To the east, the Pennines form a clearly separate region, with very different settlement patterns and a typically upland agricultural régime. The north of the region is more difficult to define, but beyond Lancaster there are none of the lowland plains with occasional hills, marshy estuaries and numerous mosses that are characteristic of the area to the south, while settlement patterns and subsistence economy are more typical of upland regions.

Historians have generally assumed that the region remained thinly populated and economically backward until the industrial revolution. The *aestuaria ac siluae* (estuaries and forests) mentioned by Tacitus (*Agricola* 20, 2), which are usually — and no doubt correctly — located here, have been used as evidence to demonstrate that the region was

inhospitable and virtually uninhabited, with vast tracts of uncleared natural forest. This reads too much into three bland words used by a writer whose knowledge of the region was, at best, second-hand through his father-in-law. Instead, palaeoenvironmental evidence suggests that the Roman army passed through an open landscape with areas of light woodland and arable fields. Arable fields presuppose farmers and light woodland implies a population widely dispersed throughout the landscape.

The state of current knowledge

Hillforts

In terms of settlement sites, the first millennium BC is known primarily from the hillforts situated on the Pennine fringes and Mid-Cheshire Ridge. They have been subject to a number of excavations during the twentieth century, although large-scale work has been uncommon. The only recent large-scale work to take place on the Mid-Cheshire Ridge was at Beeston during the 1980s. When work began, the existence of the prehistoric site was not even suspected. It was soon found that the outer bailey wall of the medieval castle sits on a Late Bronze Age rampart, which originated as a palisade before 1000 Cal BC[2] (Ellis 1993, 21). It was later strengthened to create a formidable box rampart and ditch in Period 2 (Ill I.2). Occupation continued through to the Middle Iron Age, with a range of dates centring on 500 Cal BC. Although grains of bread wheat and other cereals from the site have been dated to the Iron Age, the nature of the stratigraphy made it impossible to assign structures to this period with any certainty, although two postholes belong to the Middle Iron Age. Consequently, it is the Late Bronze Age occupation of the site that is better understood.

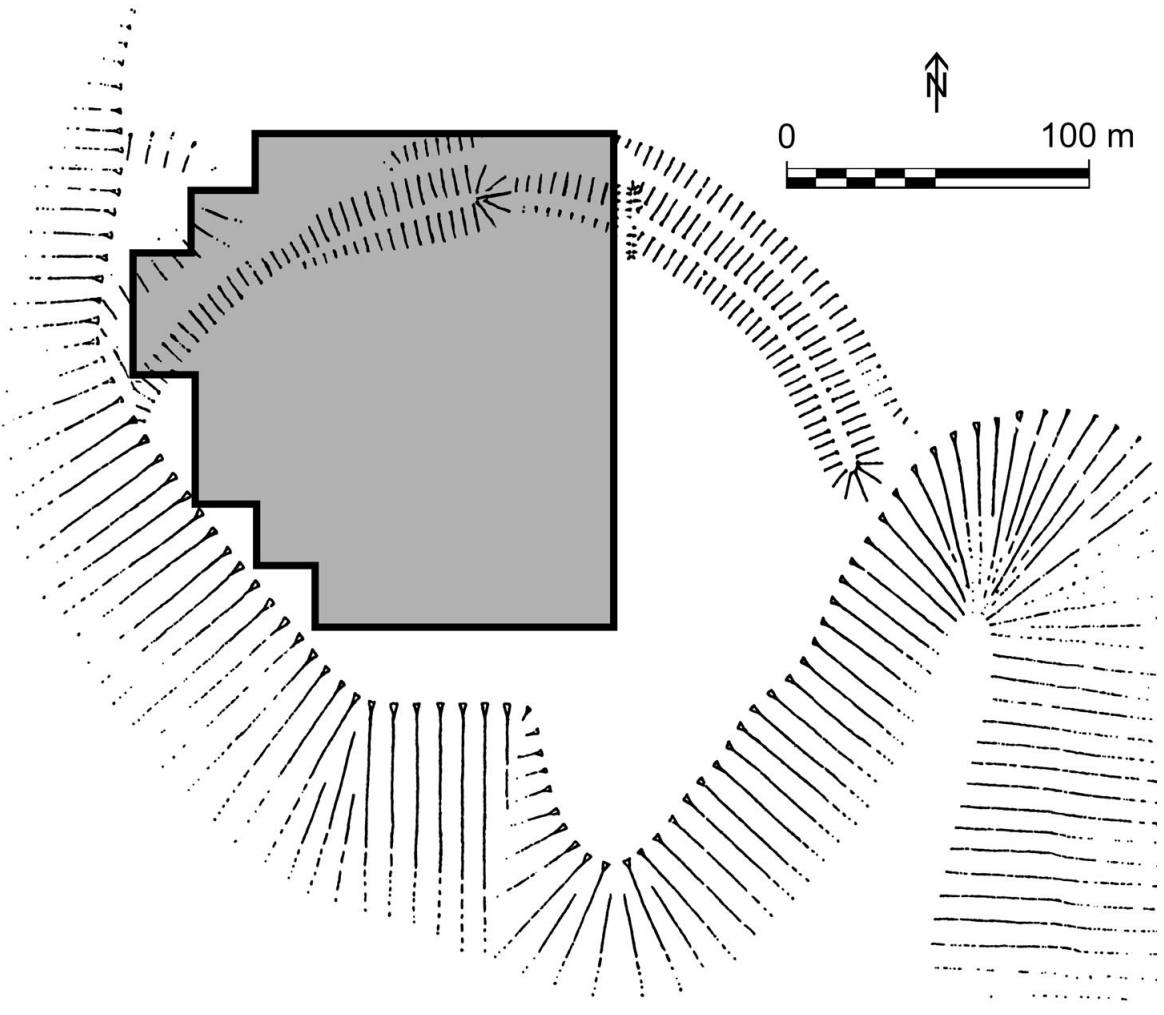
Ill I.2 The Period 2 rampart at Beeston, with the ruins of the medieval castle sitting on it

The form of the rampart at Helsby on the northern end of the ridge also suggests an early date (Bu'Lock 1956, 110), although this is not confirmed by artefacts or radiocarbon dates. An excavation by Graham Webster and T G E Powell at the apparently 'unfinished' site at Woodhouses, Frodsham, took place in 1951, but was never published (Longley 1987, 114); unfinished, in this context, means merely that the rampart was never completed, but says nothing about occupation of the site. Similarly, an excavation at Kelsborrow Castle, Kelsall, in 1973 and a geophysical survey in the 1990s remain only partly published (Williams 1997, 19; Quarterman 1997, chapter iv; Ill I.3); however, the box rampart is once again of an early type. No datable material appears to have been recovered from either site. Castle Ditch, Eddisbury, also lacks radiocarbon dates, but again the form of the rampart is typologically early and is preceded by a pre-rampart palisade (Varley 1950, 51), as at Beeston. The material culture of the inhabitants belongs best in the Early Iron Age, something which puzzled earlier prehistorians (Varley & Jackson 1940, 73), who were accustomed to thinking of multivallate hillforts as belonging to the Middle Iron Age. Maiden Castle, Bickerton, further south, was subject to small-scale excavation in 1980 (Taylor 1981, 34), following more extensive campaigns in 1934/5 (Varley 1936b, 113). The inner rampart has a series of three radiocarbon dates centring on 470 bc[3] (*c* 860–330 Cal BC at 2σ). The outer rampart at the south entrance has two dates of 485 ± 70 bc and 280 ± 70 bc (*c* 770–400 and *c*380–10 Cal BC at 2σ). As a series, the dates are largely consistent and centre on the sixth century BC, with the single exception of one late date from the south entrance.

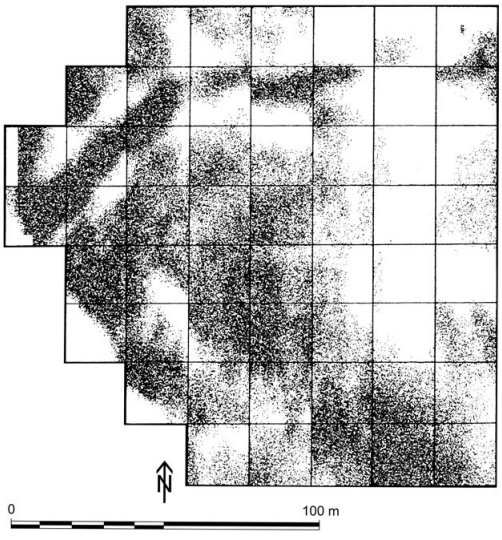
The hillforts of the Pennine fringe are also early. Mam Tor has produced two very early dates of 1180 ± 132 bc and 1130 ± 115 bc (*c* 1750–1000 Cal BC and 1650–950 Cal BC at 2σ). It is thought to have been abandoned by the eighth century BC (Coombs & Thompson 1979, 47), although this is far from certain. Castercliff has two virtually identical dates: 510 ± 70 BC (780–400 Cal BC at 2σ) and 510 ± 60 bc (770–400 Cal BC at 2σ) (Coombs 1982, 127). Both it and Almondbury were abandoned in the fifth century (Nevell 1992a, 50). Almondbury produced a series of radiocarbon dates centred on 520 bc (825–290 Cal BC at 2σ). The rampart at Almondbury has a vitrified rubble core, a suggestion that has also been made for Maiden Castle, Bickerton (Varley 1964, 95). The latest material from Portfield dates from the seventh century BC (Kenyon 1991, 36), while Castle Steads, 2km north of Bury, is a small site that has been interpreted as a hillfort (Fletcher 1986, 39), although it is more of an enclosed promontory.

The resistivity survey at Kelsborrow Castle

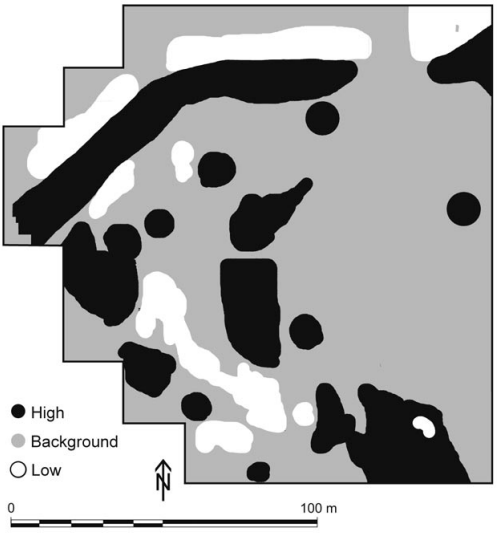
A resistivity survey was undertaken at Kelsborrow by Alistair Quarterman in March 1996 as part of the research for his undergraduate dissertation submitted to the University of Durham (Quarterman 1997). Approximately 2160m^2 were surveyed, covering the western part of the site, using a Geoscan RM-15 resistivity meter and processed using Geoplot 2.01. The results are shown here as a dot-density plot (Ill I.4) and as an interpreted plan (Ill I.5).[4] The most striking features are the western rampart and external ditch. Internally, the resolution is poor, but an area of low resistivity close to the edge of the scarp possibly represents a cluster of pits, as does a similar area to the south of the rampart. Several roughly circular areas of high resistivity may be the foundations of houses in view of their rough diameters of around 15m; the high resistance may be caused by the presence of trampled clay floors.



Ill I.3 The hillfort at Kelsborrow Castle: plan showing the area of the 1996 geophysical survey (after Quarterman 1997). (Scale 1/2500)



Ill I.4 Dot density plot of the resistivity survey at Kelsborrow Castle (after Quarterman 1997). (scale 1/2500)



Ill I.5 Interpretation of the resistivity data from Kelsborrow Castle. (scale 1/2500)

Possible hillforts

A number of other sites have been suggested as hillforts. Eddisbury in Rainow, on the Pennine fringes of east Cheshire, is the only potential hillfort site so far identified in this part of the region. Finness Hill, a lost site in Delamere (Ormerod 1882, **2**, 11), appears on an early map in a form that suggests it was an Iron Age enclosure, but it cannot now be recognised as such on the ground. Camp Hill, Liverpool, was recorded as a circular enclosure in 1835 but was later built over. A small excavation in 1963 confirmed the presence of a site, but its character could not be determined (Forde-Johnston 1962, 13). The Cloud, near Congleton, has been considered a hillfort (Varley & Jackson 1940, schedule vi), but its form — a straight-sided trapeze — and situation away from the edge of the scarp suggest that it is not an Iron Age enclosure (Forde-Johnston 1962, 10). A similar site, Toothill in Macclesfield Forest, is probably of medieval origin (Thomas 1960, 86).

Dates

The pattern of dates for hillforts is consistent throughout the region, belonging to the Late Bronze Age to the end of the Middle Iron Age. This stands in contrast to the better known model of hillfort development in the south, where some sites continued in use through to the Roman conquest. Maiden Castle appears anomalous because of the late date of one of the radiocarbon samples (although even here, there is no suggestion of occupation after the Middle Iron Age and the single inconsistent date may be an error). The widespread view that the North-West was a hillfort-dominated region at the time of the Roman conquest (eg Shotter 1997, 6) is therefore false. The hillforts were built early and were abandoned in the Middle Iron Age, if not earlier.

Little is known about the interiors of the hillforts, as the defences have been the main focus of investigation. The circular buildings that were constructed over the demolished defences of Eddisbury, probably during the Middle Iron Age, are typical of those observed in other parts of Britain. On the other hand, we do not know if the four-posters that are characteristic of other areas were common in the Iron Age of the North-West.

Smaller enclosures

A number of smaller enclosures have been known for some years, often close to hillfort sites. Bradley can be considered a promontory site as its northern edge is formed by the steep valley of a small stream. Burton Point was formerly a coastal promontory site overlooking the Dee estuary, but following the establishment of the New Cut in the eighteenth century and reclamation of land on the north side of the estuary, it is now inland. The site appears to have suffered considerably from erosion (Longley 1987, 109), so its original extent is unclear. Despite rumours of an excavation in the early 1960s, there is no evidence for archaeological work on the site. The bank at Oakmere, a promontory site on the edge of the mere, was sectioned in 1960 and found to consist of a simple dump of soil (Forde-Johnston 1962, 22), contrasting with the structured defences of the hillforts proper. Peckforton Mere consists of a small, subrectangular ditched enclosure sitting on a low hill. Although undated, it is likely to be of Iron Age origin (Longley 1987, 109).

Oldcastle Hill, south-west of Malpas, was investigated in August 1957 following the destruction of woodland on the site during a severe storm. The site consists of a defended

spur overlooking the steep-sided valley of the Wych Brook, currently the border between England and Wales. The southernmost of the two ditches across the neck of the spur was sectioned and found to be filled with a clean, undifferentiated clay that produced no finds (Thompson 1967, 5). Eight trenches were dug on the top of the platform that occupies the main part of the spur. Some six inches (0.15m) below the surface, a cobble spread was identified across the southern end of the platform. A smaller patch of cobbles including a possible hearth was found north-east of the centre (archive notes in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester). There were no finds whatsoever. Although Thompson discounted an Iron Age date for the site on the grounds that the triple ditch system at the southern end of the spur is not a characteristically prehistoric feature, the lack of finds rules out his explanation of the site as an eleventh- or twelfth-century motte. There is no indication that the central platform is artificial at all. The other possibility is that it belongs to the early medieval period, inviting comparisons with Buckton Castle, which has occasionally been seen as a hillfort (Forde-Johnston 1962, 11). A recent radiocarbon determination places the rampart at Buckton in the early medieval period (*pers comm* M Nevell, 22 May 1999).

Five trenches were excavated in 1961 at the small enclosure of Y Gaer at Llay, near Rossett (Wrexham Borough) and failed to reveal any finds that would enable the site to be dated with accuracy. The recent history of the site had included its use as a plantation, resulting in the heavy disturbance of the interior, but the only traces of pre-modern activity consisted of an undated, irregular pit and several stakeholes (Bevan-Evans & Hayes 1963–4, 27–8). The ditch was found to be 3.96m wide and only 0.99m deep on the west side of the enclosure (Bevan-Evans & Hayes 1963–4, 28), while on the south side no ditch could be located. The form of the enclosure suggests a late prehistoric origin and an Iron Age date appears likely, especially in view of the lack of datable finds.

Aerial survey work by Mike Nevell, Rob Philpott and others has begun to identify enclosed lowland sites that appear to belong to the first millennium BC. Most of the sites are curvilinear and, although there are few whose complete plans are known, those not sited on promontories appear to be oval. Some subrectangular enclosures may also belong to the first millennium BC rather than AD, although typically the evidence is not clear cut. Excavated enclosures at Arthill (Nevell 1989a, 33), Great Woolden Hall (Nevell 1999b) and Rainsough (Nevell 1994, 14) have all produced evidence for Iron Age activity. Radiocarbon dates from Great Woolden Hall place its origins in the Late Iron Age, with determinations of 40 ± 25 bc (40 Cal BC–Cal AD 80) for Phase II and 60 ± 100 bc (200 Cal BC–Cal AD 350) for Phase III. In form, it closely resembles Bradley, Frodsham.

The distribution of oval enclosures extends outside the region into north-east Wales (Manley 1991, 97), Shropshire, south Yorkshire and north Derbyshire (Hart 1981, 77); there are two possible enclosures on the Fylde, at Salwick and Treales (Welsh 1992, 16), which are currently the northernmost known examples of the type. This form is quite different from the curvilinear enclosures of upland areas, such as the Lune Valley, which tend to be circular and whose economy appears to have been largely pastoral (Haselgrove 1996a, 64).

These lowland enclosed sites appear to have had diverse economies, with evidence for mixed farming and small-scale metalworking. Some sites, such as Werneth Low (Nevell

1992b, 21) or Legh Oaks enclosure A (Nevell *forthcoming*), can be dated to the later prehistoric period by analogy, while others that have produced only Roman material, such as Halton Brow (Newstead & Droop 1937; Brown *et al* 1975), may also have earlier origins. At Irby, an oval enclosure lies only a few hundred metres from the excavated open settlement at Mill Hill Road.

Open sites

The open site at Mill Hill Road, Irby, is perhaps the best known such site in the region. Apart from some very early activity, belonging to the fifth and third millennia respectively, the earliest occupation (Phase 3) is associated with VCP (Very Coarse Pottery) and other coarse, handmade pottery (Philpott & Adams 1999, 66). Radiocarbon determinations have not yet been carried out on material from this site, but there can be little doubt that two probable structures (S1 and S2) belong to this phase. In the succeeding phase, three roundhouses (S3, S4 and S5) were built successively on the same spot. As these types of building seem to last a generation at least, Phase 4 ought to have lasted around 75 years. It is at this time that there is some evidence for an enclosure (although not of the types described above: the domestic space at Mill Hill Road appears to occupy an area between enclosures, probably fields and paddocks). In view of the dating of Phase 5 to the second century, it is possible that Phase 4 begins before the Roman conquest in the middle of the first century AD, so that Phase 3 should be earlier still.

Meols, on the northern tip of the Wirral peninsula, is best known as a source of unstratified material. All that remains of the site today is a series of sandbanks and mudflats close to Dove Point, as the settlement discovered there early in the nineteenth century has now been largely washed away by the sea (Cowell & Innes 1994, 26). The Iron Age material from Meols is small in quantity, but its significance is potentially huge. It is one of only a handful of sites in the North-West to have produced pre-Roman coins and other Iron Age metalwork. This material needs to be set alongside the other exotic objects from the region to provide a context for its deposition. Timber structures were reported during the nineteenth century as having been preserved in the peat and uncovered by marine erosion; they included both rectangular and circular forms, of which some may well have dated from the Iron Age. It is now impossible, however, to recognise any spatial pattern to the finds that might shed light on the morphology of the settlement. At best, we can suggest that it was an open form.

The Lousher's Lane site at Wilderspool (Hinchliffe & Williams 1992, 100) is best known for the Romano-British enclosures that produced evidence for circular, oval and rectangular buildings. These were interpreted as ribbon development along a track parallel to a major road leading east towards Manchester from the focus of the 'small town' on the brewery site to the west. However, the earliest enclosure cut the top of a small pit, 2267, which contained one coarse gritty potsherd, interpreted as being of Iron Age date. As with some of the other enclosures discussed here, it is possible that the Phase 1 enclosure originated in the Iron Age and that Lousher's Lane, not the brewery site (which is of overwhelmingly industrial character), was the original focus of the settlement. As the alleged Iron Age pottery has not been published, it is not clear if it is of VCP or one of the other types found on Early Iron Age sites in the region (*see below*).

The recently excavated site at Manchester Airport, initially thought to be of Bronze Age date, has yielded a number of surprises, not least the radiocarbon dates, which run in a series from the Neolithic through to the sub-Roman period, with all intervening periods represented (pers comm Dan Garner 22 May 1999). Phasing the site has not yet been completed, but it is clear that some of the structures, including possible four-posters, belong to the Iron Age. This is the first site at which such structures — usually interpreted as granaries — have been identified in the region. There is also a large assemblage of pottery, some of which belongs to the Iron Age phases, although no metalwork was found, despite the use of metal detectors.

Two of the radiocarbon dates from the site at Tatton Park suggest occupation during the first millennium BC (Higham & Cane 1996–7, 39). Pit 7 is dated 390 ± 120 bc (HAR-5147; 800–100 Cal BC at 2σ), while the range of dates for Building J includes one dated 80 + 120 bc (HAR-4496; 400 Cal BC–Cal AD 250 at 2σ) and another of AD 40 ± 110 bc (HAR-5111, 200 Cal BC–Cal AD 400 at 2σ), suggesting a possible pre-Roman origin, rather than the sub-Roman date suggested. The published plan (Higham & Cane 1996–7, 46) also shows a circular feature of evident Iron Age form that is not discussed in the text (*see below*).

Other sites

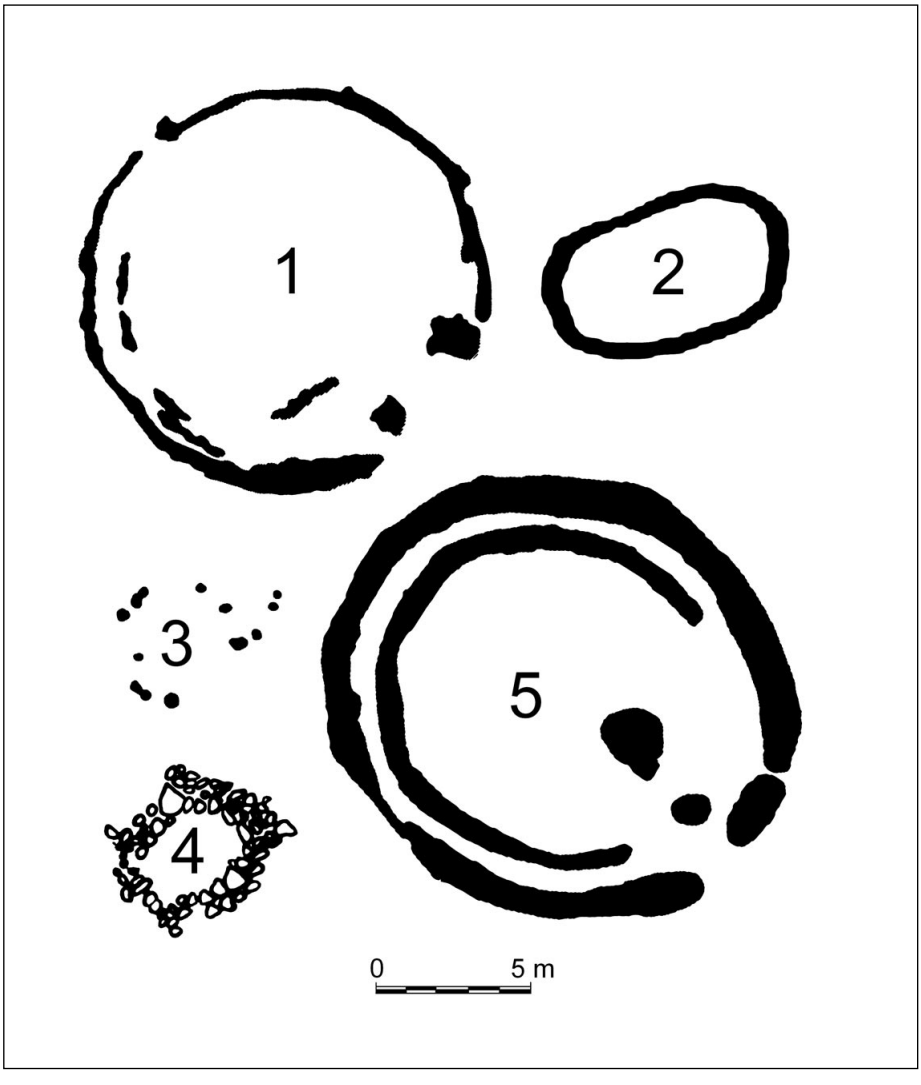
A number other sites can be dated to the Iron Age. The earthworks of 'Celtic' fields (now usually referred to as 'regular aggregate field systems') on Longley Hill, Kelsall (Bu'Lock 1955, 26), are undatable, but their form may belong anywhere between the Late Bronze Age and the early medieval period. Kirkby Vicarage has produced material of Iron Age date, but its character is uncertain, while a supposed prehistoric site near Raw Head, Bickerton, was observed only as parch marks and remains unconfirmed. Nevertheless, the observation of circular structures some nine metres in diameter suggests that an Iron Age or Romano-British site awaits discovery here (Robinson 1978–9, 58).

The salt towns of the first and second millennia AD are likely to occupy sites that were the centres of production during the Iron Age. Indeed, the source of clays used in the manufacture of Cheshire VCP is the Middlewich/Nantwich area of the Cheshire plain. Nothing certain is known of these sites, however. It is very unlikely that salt production was centralised in the way it was during the Roman period, when there was intense state interest in mineral extraction and exploitation. Nevertheless, the distribution of Cheshire salt (as shown by the distribution of VCP) and the exchange networks it helped maintain must have involved some form of élite control, direct or otherwise.

Structures

The diagnostic late prehistoric architectural form is the round house (often, and quite unfairly, referred to as a 'hut'). A number of such buildings have been excavated in the region, mostly showing a great uniformity of design, in common with those known from other regions of Britain (Ill I.6). Examples range from 11m and above in diameter (as at Great Woolden Hall Farm and Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford) to 4m at Tatton Park. One peculiarity of the region is the occurrence of oval (or bow-sided) structures. Found elsewhere in Britain, they have been interpreted as a Romano-British innovation in north-

west England (Cowell & Philpott 2000, 198), but the occurrence of examples in an Iron Age phase at Mill Hill Road, Irby, and in a purely Iron Age context at Brookhouse Farm, places their origin in the first millennium BC. Most of the examples of architecture known so far from the region are timber, but it is notable that the roundhouses overlying the infilled ditches at Eddisbury had stone floors and stone foundations. Varley (1950, 57) believed them to be of sub-Roman date, but their association with VCP places them firmly in the Iron Age.



Ill I.6 Building plans from north-west England. 1: Great Woolden Hall Phase II (after Nevell 1999b, 52); 2: Mill Hill Road, Irby, Phase 3 (after Philpott & Adams 1999, 65); 3: Tatton Park building B (after Higham & Cane 1996–7, 46); 4: Castle Ditch, Eddisbury (after Varley 1950, 12); 5: Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford (after Fairburn 2002). (Scale 1/250)

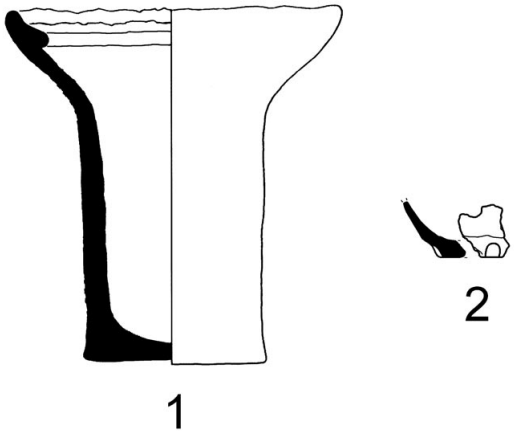
Finds

Ceramics

Late prehistoric pottery is extremely uncommon in the region, the only widely represented locally made form being so-called VCP. It is thought to have been a form of briquetage used in salt production; it has a sandy fabric with inclusions that form a temper designed to resist thermal shock. The form is handmade with a flat base and a truncated, flared cone profile with a widely flared rim (Ill I.7) and its date range runs from about 1000 BC at Beeston Castle to the early Roman period (sherds were found in a Roman roadside ditch at Tarvin). One sherd among the residual prehistoric pottery from Abbey Green, Chester, was of VCP. Several large pieces, including part of the flared rim, have been found at Handbridge, south of the River Dee at Chester. At Beeston, excavation revealed substantial quantities of VCP, while at Eddisbury, where W J Varley (1950, 58) incorrectly surmised that it was of 'Dark Age' (ie sub-Roman) date, it was associated with structures built over the slighted ramparts.

VCP has been associated with salt production in Cheshire, although no single site has yet been established for the activity in the county (Morris 1985, 352). Recent observations at Coppenhall (now a suburb of Crewe) found VCP close to Romano-British salt production (Price 1994, 4). It is probable that the industry was as widespread in the Iron Age as in later periods. At this early date, it was probably based on the natural brine springs found predominantly in the south of the county. The Droitwich salt industry provided a focus for ceramic exchange (Hurst 1992, 132) and it is likely that the exchange included other types of goods. This was probably also the case in Cheshire and the pre-Roman coins occasionally found in the region are evidence for external contacts (Matthews 1996, 21).

A growing number of sites have produced a variety of pot forms of uncertain affinity. Pottery with finger-tip impressions was found at Eddisbury (Varley 1964, 90 describes it as of 'Wessex first A' type, now more generally called All Cannings Cross type); the form, although not the fabric, has parallels in the West Harling–Staple Howe group of eastern England. A high-shouldered, flat-rimmed jar from Maiden Castle, Bickerton (Varley 1964,



Ill I.7 Cheshire VCP forms. 1: 'Classic' Cheshire stony VCP (after Morris 1985); 2: variant ('sandy') VCP (after Ellis 1993, 75). (Scale 1/4)

101), is of the same general type (Varley 1936a, 105 adds that it was found in 'association with a small piece of iron', although he does not expand on the point). These vessels have clear affinities with the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery from Mam Tor. The one sherd from Wilderspool (Hinchliffe & Williams 1992, 100) has not been published and is of uncertain type.

The largest assemblages from the region are from Beeston Castle, Irby and Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford. The former is dominated by Late Bronze Age types (accounting for 92.7% of the assemblage by weight), suggesting a considerable reduction in the use of pottery during the Early Iron Age. Of the remainder, 86.3% consists of stony VCP, although a small group of material classed as Fabric 19 (Ellis 1993, 71) with small bases and an outward flare appears to belong to another VCP tradition, perhaps more akin to Droitwich VCP types in shape, although they are of local manufacture. This second VCP type is also found at Irby and Brookhouse Farm, although only body sherds were represented. A large quantity of prehistoric material in seven or eight different fabrics has been recovered from Mill Hill Road, Irby, with 590 sherds weighing over 3.5 kg (Philpott & Adams 1999, 69). As well as two types of VCP, there are barrel-shaped jars and vessels with widely flared rims, again similar to the early material from Mam Tor. The assemblage from Brookhouse Farm consisted of 289 sherds with a total weight of 1363 g. Here, though, classic Cheshire stony VCP accounted for only 40% of the assemblage by weight, whilst all three fabrics of VCP made up less than half the total. The most common fabric was a domestic type, evidently belonging to a single barrel-shaped jar.

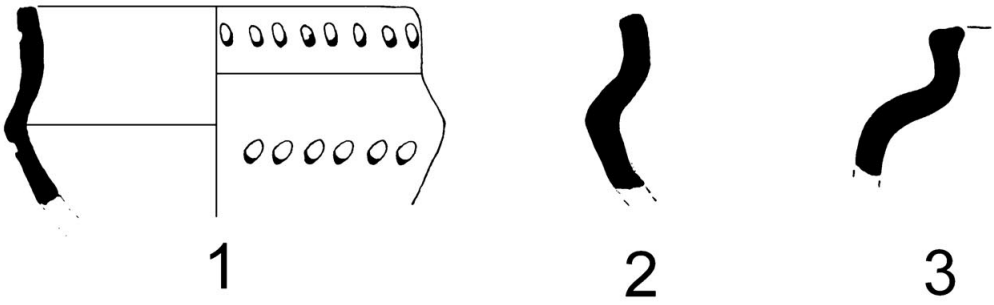
Some of the residual prehistoric pottery from Abbey Green, Chester, although of undiagnostic form, consists of fabrics of similar type, as does material from Poulton, southwest of Chester. Pottery from excavations at Middlewich in 2001 includes an almost complete plain jar; although found in a Roman period context, the material is clearly of Iron Age date. The excavators have compared it with Malvernian Ware of the mid-first century AD, but the fabrics do not match and one of the vessels from Brookhouse Farm is more closely comparable. The large assemblage of material from Manchester Airport has not yet been published, but appears to contain some material of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age affinities. There is also unpublished material from Hessle Drive, Heswall (Wirral), of Iron Age type. All the closely dated pot forms — apart from VCP — belong to the Early Iron Age and have close similarities with the more plentiful material from Mam Tor.

As well as the locally made pottery, there are two very unusual ceramic items from the region. One is a fifth-century BC Massaliote amphora in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, said to have been dredged from the River Dee around 1900 (Ill I.8). It was presented to the museum some seventy years after its discovery, raising suspicions about its alleged provenance, and it has been thought to be an illegal import of recent date. However, the encrustations on the vessel, consisting of small oysters and marine worms, are more consistent with its having lain in the Dee estuary than the Mediterranean Sea. The principal distribution of these amphorae is along the southern coast of Gaul and the Rhône–Saône valley, although examples have been found in the upper Seine and upper Danube valleys. The example from the Dee estuary may have reached north-west England by way of the Seine or, in view of some of the other imports discussed below, along the

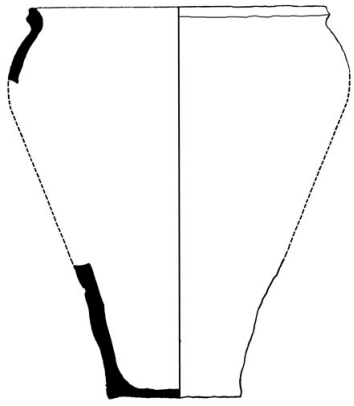
Atlantic seaboard. A contemporary Greco-Roman earthenware pot from Bury, found in 1903 (Nevell 1993, 48), is usually seen as problematical for the same reasons. At first sight, these exotic finds appear entirely anomalous, but there are other objects from the region that are no less unusual and whose presence adds weight to a model of Iron Age exchange that will be developed below; they need not therefore be discounted as evidence for the Iron Age archaeology of the region, as some have done.

Ill I.8 Massaliote amphora dredged from the River Dee *c*1900, now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. (Reproduced by permission of Chester City Council, Grosvenor Museum)

It is now evident that the Early Iron Age was not completely aceramic and that the material has affinities with Yorkshire and the east Midlands, although there are sufficient differences from these areas to recognise a separate tradition. We are perhaps now in a position to propose a 'Bickerton–Mam Tor jar continuum' (Ill I.9) for the north-western Early Iron Age (using the convention of naming it after early excavations on sites where this material was found). It is in the Middle Iron Age that domestic pottery types become more uncommon. In view of the chronological evidence, we need to re-examine some of the Mersey valley types defined by Mike Nevell (1993, 44). In particular, his association of Type 4 from Great Woolden Hall (Nevell 1999b, 58; Ill I.10) with the very early material from Mam Tor is highly problematical in view of the radiocarbon dates that place the occupation at Great Woolden Hall in the Late Iron Age.



Ill I.9 Bickerton–Mam Tor jars. 1: Eddisbury (after Varley 1964, 101; NB the diameter shown is highly conjectural); 2: Maiden Castle, Bickerton (after Varley 1964, 101); 3: Beeston Castle (after Ellis 1993, 72). (Scale 1/4)



Ill.I.10 Late Iron Age jar from Great Woolden Hall (after Nevell 1994, 35). (Scale 1/4)

Coins

Although the population of north-west England in the Iron Age is not known to have minted coins, some minted elsewhere have nevertheless been found. They are uncommon and it is therefore difficult to comment on their distribution, but they include some very surprising exotics. Even the more banal British types raise interesting questions about how and why people brought them to the region. Steven Willis (1994, 144) has rightly pointed to the way in which exchange studies have treated deposition as a simple phenomenon, whereas recent examinations of Iron Age structured deposition demonstrate that many complex factors affect the deposition of objects, be they exchanged items or otherwise.

The most extensive identifiable collection comes from Meols. The pre-Roman assemblage (Hume 1863, 292; 290) consists of three Carthaginian half-shekels, two silver coins of the Coriosolites (a tribe of northern Brittany), one very worn gold coin of uncertain origin, although of British Late Iron Age type, and a Syrian coin of the first century BC. Of the nineteenth-century finds, only the Coriosolite coins can now be located in Liverpool Museum, as it suffered bomb damage during the Second World War and its collections were badly affected, perhaps by looting. A silver tetradrachm of Tigranes II of Armenia (20 BC–*c* 6 BC) was found about 1987 at Leasowe Common, to the south-east of Dove Point.

The Coriosolite coins are of billon, a type of base silver, and date from the early first century BC, well before any direct Roman interest in Britain or even northern Gaul. Margaret Warhurst thought it unlikely that they 'could have reached the North-West at or soon after their date of issue' (Chitty & Warhurst 1979, 35) and suggested that they were lost by an antiquarian collector during the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This is typical of the prevailing discourse of Iron Age studies according to which all the interesting developments were confined to England south of the Thames. In fact, coins of the Coriosolites have also been found at Hexham (Northumberland) and Lesmahago (Lanarkshire) (Allen 1960, 273). These coins do not appear to be recent losses, so we can probably accept the examples from Meols as prehistoric imports, as Margaret Warhurst now does.

Detailed descriptions of the lost coins allow their types to be identified, and these types contribute to the acceptability of the Coriosolite material. The Carthaginian half-shekels were minted in the third and second centuries BC (Watkin 1886, 284 gives a good description of them). Another Carthaginian coin was found in the nineteenth century together with a coin of Pyrrhus (King of Epiros 295–275 BC) on the bed of the River Irk at Cheetham Hill, Manchester (Nevell 1993, 49). Other finds of Carthaginian coins cluster predominantly along the south and west coasts, with a few in the Home Counties (Laing & Laing 1983, 6). The gold coin from Meols was similar to British L or M type, Mack (1975, 73) 138A or Mack (1975, 75) 148, dating from the last half of the first century BC. This makes it the latest of the Iron Age coins from the site. The low weight recorded ($7^1/_4$ grains or about 0.47 g) suggests a quarter stater type.

Coins of the Corieltauvi (the people of the north-east Midlands attested in the Roman period, formerly known incorrectly as Coritani) have been found at Halton Castle in Runcorn (Allen 1963, 18) and at Brindley, near Nantwich (Tindall 1993, 3). This is much

further west than usual, as the main distribution is to the south and east of the Pennines, although there are further finds from the Great Orme (Llandudno, north Wales) and Cardiganshire (Allen 1963, 14). The distribution of these coins in the region is interesting in view of the recently discovered VCP from east of the Pennines (pers comm J Evans 15 May 1999). There is also a poorly recorded hoard of Iron Age coins from Liverpool, containing at least one Gallo-Belgic bronze piece (Allen 1960, 277).

Coins began to be exchanged in Britain during the second century BC, initially as imported pieces, usually of high value, but by the end of the first century BC also as potin coins of low value. The distribution of most pre-Roman coins in Britain is strongly weighted to the south and east coasts, whether they are imports from continental Europe or of British origin. These were the areas that minted coins themselves in the later centuries BC. However, they are not the only areas where such coins are found, and isolated examples have been retrieved from as far north as the Scottish lowlands.

The purpose of Iron Age coinage is disputed. Ethnographic parallels make it clear that coinage circulates as payment for a wide variety of goods and services (Orme 1981, 179), and in a recent overview Colin Haselgrove (1996b, 67) suggests that early, high-value issues served as payment for social and political obligations. By contrast, the later bronze issues were designed for exchange transactions. However, symbolic currency (in the form of coins) is almost uniquely associated with commercial exchange and there is little anthropological justification for regarding coinage as part of a gift-exchange system, as many have done. It remains possible, if unlikely, though, that the historically specific context of the late first millennium BC could have created a system not found in any contemporary societies.

Other metalwork

There are a few pieces of metalwork that can be dated to the first millennium BC in addition to coins. The best assemblage of material comes from Beeston Castle, where there are both copper alloy and iron objects (effectively disproving Nick Higham's (1993, 28) unsupported suggestion that iron did not reach the region until the Roman conquest). There is a clearly high-status leather drinking vessel with copper alloy fittings (J Foster *in* Ellis 1993, 50) together with other material that appears to date largely from the first half of the millennium. The ironwork includes a La Tène I (conventionally dated *c* 450–325 BC) dagger and a La Tène II (*c* 325–150 BC) spearhead together with a swan's neck pin, an Early Iron Age type (Dunning 1934, 269).

The excavations at Eddisbury produced evidence for iron gate-post shoes (Varley & Jackson 1940, 74), but the nature of the excavation makes it very unclear if these belong to the prehistoric or tenth-century phase of occupation on the site. The roundhouses dated by Varley (1950, 75) to the sub-Roman period, but which clearly belong to the Iron Age in view of their association with VCP, were also related to spreads of iron slag, demonstrating the ubiquity of smithing on this part of the site.

A number of bronze pins from Meols appear to be of Early Iron Age date rather than Early Medieval, the period to which they have usually been assigned (Griffiths 1991, 303–4), although David Longley (1987, 104) mentions two swan's neck pins without further

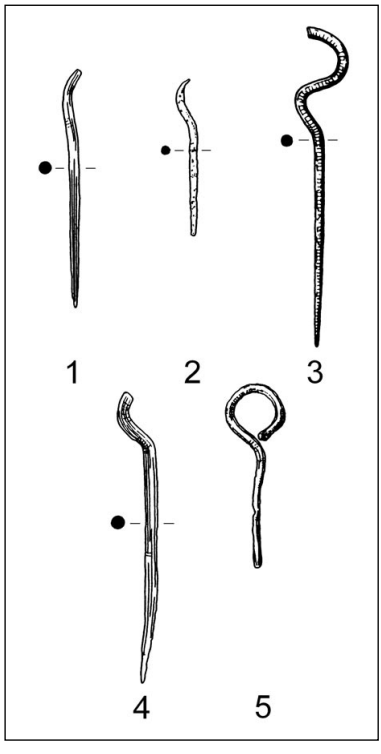
reference. Three of the pins in the Potter Collection at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester do not conform to the Early Medieval type of ring-headed pin, which has a separate ring and shaft; although broken, they are single pieces of early Iron Age form. In addition, Hume (1863, pl xxii.7) illustrates a clearly Early Iron Age ring-headed pin which is now in Warrington Museum (pers comm Rob Philpott, 24 September 2001).

Elsewhere, the discoveries are generally without context, having been discovered either residually or as metal detector finds. Varley & Jackson (1940, 73) refer to an iron billhook without giving a provenance; Ormerod (1882, **2**, 3) mentions a fragment of iron sword from Kelsborrow Castle, Kelsall. Most spectacular is a La Tène bull's head escutcheon from Crewe, belonging to the Late Iron Age. A terret ring from Stamford Bridge, although published as Roman (Robinson & Lloyd-Morgan 1984–5, 95), is a La Tène type of the first half of the first century AD and is therefore a very Late Iron Age product. The two iron wedges from Maiden Castle, Bickerton (Varley 1935, 107), are probably of post-medieval date.

Other objects

There are several loomweights from Mill Hill Road, Irby, that are similar to Late Bronze and Early Iron Age types in Britain (Philpott & Adams 1999, 70). There is also a steatite bead with La Tène decoration that enables it to be dated to the second century BC. As the nearest source of steatite is Anglesey, the object must be regarded as a further import to the region. It was found embedded in a Roman wall; it is not clear if it was simply residual and incorporated as general, undifferentiated rubble, or if it were part of a structured and symbolic deposit placed there purposefully. Spindle whorls and whetstones are relatively common finds but very difficult to date. A number of supposedly later prehistoric spindle whorls from Cheshire have been shown to be post-medieval in date, so it is difficult to accept stray finds of this character as evidence for Iron Age activity in an area.

Objects from stratified contexts show the difficulty of recognising specifically later prehistoric artefacts, as with a pounder from Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford. Some are completely unexpected, such



Ill I.11 Iron Age pins from Cheshire. 1: copper alloy swan's neck pin from Meols (Grosvenor Museum CHEGM: 1999.86); 2: iron swan's neck pin from Meols (Grosvenor Museum CHEGM: 1999.87); 3 iron swan's neck pin from Beeston (after Ellis 1993, 54); 4: copper alloy ring headed pin from Meols (Grosvenor Museum CHEGM: 1999.85); 5: iron ring headed pin from Meols (after Hume 1863, pl xxiii.7; now in Warrington Museum). (Scale 1/2)

as the wooden base from Brook House Farm, Halewood, with its radiocarbon date of 2720 ± 50 bp (980–790 cal BC at 2σ), which appears to have been at least five centuries old when discarded (Cowell & Philpott 2000, 46).

Bog bodies

The bodies that have been found in lowland peat bogs, particularly in the Mersey Basin, are the best known Iron Age finds from the region. They have been reported from at least ten sites, most famously Lindow Moss, but also including Meols (Turner 1995, 110). Recent analyses have suggested that we are wrong to treat them as a single phenomenon and that different explanations can be adduced for individual bodies (Turner 1995, 122; Briggs 1995, 181). They certainly belong to very different periods. Although they remain a fascinating source of information about individual people, whose remains have not otherwise been identified, they should not be allowed to dominate our accounts. In particular, attributions of 'Celtic' religious practice need critical examination in view of current debates about Celticity (James 1999, 94).

Environment and subsistence economy

Palynological evidence shows that major woodland clearance began throughout the region late in the second millennium BC, probably for cereal cultivation (Schoenwetter 1982, 11; Leah *et al* 1997, 152). The North-West Wetlands Survey identified increasing intensification of landscape use during the first millennium, becoming particularly marked after 500 BC, so that by the time of the Roman invasion in the first century AD there was little wildwood left. Even so, Mike Nevell (1999a, 17) suggests that there was a period of woodland regeneration during the early first millennium, which brings the subsistence role of hillforts into question.

Evidence for agricultural practices in the form of plant or animal remains has been very difficult to identify. Cereal grains from Beeston (G Jones & R Moss *in* Ellis 1993, 80) can now be matched by others from Mill Hill Road, Irby (Philpott & Adams 1999, 70); while they demonstrate that arable farming was practised, it remains impossible without further evidence to determine if this was anomalous or characteristic. Several species are represented, including bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), emmer (*T dicoccum*), spelt (*T spelta*), barley (*Hordeum sp*), oats (*Avena sp*) and possibly rye (*Secale cereale*). In upland areas, stock rearing may have been more common, although it has been suggested (Hall *et al* 1995, 119) that conditions at this time were too wet for settlement above the 200m contour. No Iron Age plant remains or animal bone assemblages have been recovered from sites north of the Mersey (Huntley 1995, 41; Stallibrass 1995, 128), with the exception of the small assemblage from Brook House Farm, Halewood (M Robinson *in* Cowell & Philpott 2000, 49). This group is dominated by cattle mandible fragments, with some frog and the fragment of a tooth from a sub-adult pig. The cattle bone shows good evidence for butchery practice, including the likely removal of the tongue and the extraction of marrow, while charring is indicative of cooking. The animals all appear to have been fully adult at the time of their death (presumably by slaughtering). How representative this small assemblage is of the pattern throughout the region is unknown and the recovery of more environmental remains is an important research priority (Stallibrass & Huntley 1995, 201).

Exchange

Salt

Cheshire salt was exchanged over a wide region during the first millennium BC. It is impossible for obvious reasons to detect the salt itself, but the VCP containers mentioned above are distributed throughout north-west England, the north Midlands and Wales. Elaine Morris (1985, 355) was the first to characterise the material as a type of Iron Age briquetage, and she was able to distinguish early and late patterns by comparing distributions of stratified sherds from sites with secure radiocarbon dates. Larger quantities of material have become available since she published her work, largely confirming her analysis and extending the distribution east of the Pennines. In the early phase, covering the Early Iron Age, Cheshire VCP is the only type found in the area north of the River Severn (Ill I.12). Sites in the middle reaches of the Severn valley contain a roughly equal mixture of Cheshire VCP and Droitwich salt containers. Further south, Droitwich salt containers are the only forms to be found. This is exactly what would be expected from an overland or riverine distribution. The pattern shows this to have been a very simple form of exchange, belonging to the period in which the hillforts were in use.

The later distribution pattern — covering the Middle and Late Iron Age — shows that Cheshire salt was exchanged throughout north Wales, the north Midlands and the Marches (Ill I.13). Sites in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire that had only Droitwich salt containers in the Early Iron Age now have some Cheshire VCP, although it is never the dominant form. The south-western distribution of Cheshire material is separated from the northern by an area in northern Worcestershire where only Droitwich material is found. This clearly indicates a more complex distribution mechanism than in the earlier period, presumably with a redistribution centre somewhere on the lower Severn and the existence of maritime exchange routes. This has important social implications.

Trade and Emporia

The term 'trade' has value-laden implications of profit as a motive for exchange and other reasons can be more important. It can be suggested that the main reason for using this term is that it fits the evolutionary scheme of Polanyi (1944), who associated redistributive trade with centralised polities. Other models of exchange may be suggested, including models of reciprocity, social embeddedness and so on. Nevertheless, Barry Cunliffe's (1978, 67) model of redistributive trade through *emporia* continues to dominate our understanding of long-distance exchange during the Iron Age.

Cunliffe defines *emporia* as trading settlements with good harbours, forming points of contact between traders and the populations in their hinterlands. There were essentially redistribution centres in what Thomas Beale (1973, 142) defines as 'regional organised trade'. The Coriosolites were evidently an important link in exchange in western Britain. Cunliffe presents the major *emporium* at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, as the sole aim of the Coriosolite traders. In Cunliffe's model, the distribution patterns outside Hengistbury are explained as a result of trade by locals into a 'hinterland' (Cunliffe 1988, 103). He completely disregards the admittedly limited Irish Sea evidence, but further trading posts can be identified along the western coast of Britain, that may have been served either by local traders or by Coriosolite merchants. The Rumps, a cliff-top defended site in north

Ill I.12 Distribution of Cheshire and Droitwich VCP before 300 BC (*c* 300 Cal BC) (after Morris 1985, with additions): map. (Not to scale) • = Cheshire (stony) VCP; 1= Droitwich VCP; ⌿ = both types.

Cornwall, has produced imported pottery. Coastal sites at St David's Head and Merthyr Mawr in south Wales are similar in character but have not so far produced exotic material. Meols is the next identifiable site to the north. Beyond it lies a major site at Whithorn (Cowley 2000) and, beyond this, Stevenston Sands near Ayr is the most northerly of these coastal *emporia* so far to have been identified; there may be others in the Western Isles and north-west Scotland.

Cunliffe's model is entirely Mediterranean-based: the classical Greco-Roman cities comprise his core area and reduce the north to a periphery useful only for the procurement of raw materials. This is particularly evident in the subtitle of his recent book, casting Pytheas as 'the man who discovered Britain' (Cunliffe 2001), when it had been continuously settled for almost eleven thousand years in Pytheas's day! However, viewed from the so-called 'periphery', imports of any kind from distant centres of production would have been exotic and rare, items traded in stages on the back of the more important exchanges of everyday

Ill I.13 Distribution of Cheshire and Droitwich VCP after 300 BC (*c* 300 Cal BC) (after Morris 1985, with additions): map. (Not to scale) • = Cheshire (stony) VCP; ⊥= Droitwich VCP; ⌿ = both types.

local produce. Moreover, such trade need not be restricted to purely local populations trading within a small hinterland, as the distribution of Coriosolite and other exotic coins hints that an international merchant class was operating by this date.

For a number of reasons, the exotic items from the region are difficult to explain in terms of down-the-line exchange, in which goods are passed from community to community or individual to individual, involving many separate exchanges (Renfrew 1973, 207; Beale 1973, 141). The fall-off in numbers of exotica in Britain to the west and north of Mount Batten at first sight suggests that this was the westernmost point at which they were an important component of exchange, and it could be that beyond Mount Batten they ceased to have commercial or symbolic value (the two are linked anyway) and were exchanged only as curios. (Incidentally, Barry Cunliffe has recently shown (2001, 79) that there is good evidence for activity at Mount Batten throughout the first millennium BC, a situation remarkably similar to Meols). However, in north-west England these exotica — metalwork,

ceramics (the pots from Longdendale, Great Woolden Hall and, less certainly, Bury) and, possibly wine (as evidenced by the drinking vessel from Beeston and the amphora from the Dee estuary) — can be seen to have been elements in a trade which involved the exportation of salt to south Wales and the southern Marches but which probably included other products as well. Much of the trade remains invisible: it presumably concentrated on perishables but with a small amount of durable material culture.

The pattern of exchange that is visible, with the export of a locally produced rural resource and the importation of high-status exotica, has been characterised as 'upwardly mobile' and requires the presence of social stratification, with class unequals within the system of production and exchange at the local level (Gregory 1994, 932, 935). Greg Woolf (1998, 180) has pointed out that in Gaul 'before the conquest, Iron Age populations did purchase Mediterranean goods, but for their own ends, not in order to reproduce classical cultural processes'. These practices, as is well known, included feasting and drinking, with the consumption of imported wine by the elites, a feature remarked on by Roman writers (Woolf 1998, 184).

The six exotic coins from Meols, which is the only one of the *emporia* beyond Mount Batten with any coins whatsoever, are further indication that the exchange was more complex than has hitherto been appreciated. These coins will only have had symbolic value in coin-using societies, which north-west England's population was not. This is a strong indication that the coins were being used by people who were not local, presumably Coriosolite and perhaps even Carthaginian merchants living in distinct communities where they retained their own social practices. Ethnographic parallels for *emporia* (Macknight 1973, 201) indicate that multicultural communities of this type are common features of such places. The loss of a Massaliote amphora in the Dee estuary hints strongly at long-distance maritime exchange. These facts indicate that some form of organised exchange was taking place at Meols. Moreover, it is likely that it was carried out between local élites and foreign traders, the only two groups of people to value the imports. This kind of exchange requires a society with a much more complex economic organisation than we are accustomed to attributing to the Iron Age peoples of the region and a degree of social differentiation that has hitherto been difficult to perceive.

Consumption

Economic archaeology generally concentrates on cataloguing and classifying materials and establishing the processes of their production and distribution, as in classical economics generally (Fine 1995, 27). It is only in recent years that the effects of consumption have been studied (Miller 1994; Ferris 1995), but it is clearly an important factor in determining the cultural identities of groups at any period. In the light of the small quantities of such material in the region, it seems that the Iron Age populations of north-west England did not take part in the conspicuous consumption of durable material culture. However, the occasional finds of exotica show that there was access to international exchange. The common assumption that north-western populations were too 'poor' to acquire such goods through exchange begs a number of questions and is not an adequate explanation (Haselgrove 1996a, 69). Rather, by and large, the north-western élites chose not to procure the materials that, in the south-east, would have marked them

out as members of the international set, probably because it had no meaning to their social inferiors. It may be hypothesised that they concentrated their acquisition of status from invisible social networks and practices, perhaps *via* systems of patronage, livestock accumulation, mineral control and so on. A lack of material 'wealth' is therefore not necessarily proof of a lack of economic dominance by an élite. In other words, the northern élites may have been seen as wealthy not through the consumption of continental material culture, for which they had little use, but through their archaeologically invisible social practices. The small quantities of exotic goods may be interpreted as items used by resident aliens (such as the Coriosolite coins) or as items used in peer interactions (such as the drinking-vessel from Beeston, which would have been used in situations such as feasting, where it could display signals that need not be interpreted by social inferiors).

Nevertheless, something was being exchanged for the exported salt and, like the salt, it seems to be archaeologically invisible. It may be that the north-western élites acquired exotic forms of livestock from further south, even the continent; on the other hand, the Massaliote amphora from the Dee estuary and the drinking-vessel from Beeston are suggestive of the importation of completely invisible materials such as wine.

A model of settlement

The study of rural settlement — whether by archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers or historians — is very much seen as the poor cousin of the study of urbanisation. Towns and cities are privileged in our accounts by virtue of their identification with 'civilisation', especially the civilisation which has produced the academic tradition within which archaeological researchers operate; the rural settings of the towns are in turn denigrated by being presented as 'hinterlands'. This attitude informs and reinforces the Roman specialist's view of the Iron Age as mere preface and the popular conception of pre-Roman 'Celtic' warriors. The Iron Age cannot, by definition, be 'civilised', except perhaps in south-east Britain during the century or so before the Roman invasion. There are nevertheless suggestions of hierarchies of settlement type in pre-urban settings, and the identification of possible patterns will enable predictions to be made about the types of society that produced them.

The model that will be proposed for the patterning of Iron Age settlement in north-west England will draw heavily on work in three non-archaeological disciplines: anthropology, geography and history. While the geographical and historical models — central place theory and multiple estates — ought to be familiar to archaeologists, the anthropological model is sufficiently new for its impact not yet to have been felt. However, it is a model with good claims to operate cross-culturally and ahistorically. It is this model that will be described first.

The population density model

Anthropologists working on the size and organisation of human groups began to recognise in the 1970s and 80s that there are cross-cultural thresholds of group size on either side of which different forms of social organisation and settlement are found (Kosse 1990, 287). This approach allows us to view social identity as a series of nested identities, beginning with the individual's sense of person, up through what we might care to think of as

'kinship' groups, 'friendship' groups, 'settlement' groups, 'regional' groups and finally 'ethnic' groups. These different scales of identity can be correlated with the thresholds suggested by Kosse as defining different forms of social organisation. She identifies specific organisational thresholds at populations of 150±25, 500±100 and 2500±500. The 500 threshold marks the upper limit of a gathering that does not need to be organised, while the 2500 threshold marks the difference between politically simple and politically complex settlements. The lower threshold is subtler in its effects, but can be linked with disaggregated and aggregated settlement patterns. The thresholds and their links with social formations and settlement patterns are summarised in Table I.1.

The model derives from both the anthropological data about social formation (notably drawn from Sahlins (1963)) and settlement size, and neurological tests of memory capacity. Six levels have been established for amounts of data which can be utilised and stored together by the human brain (which, owing to the binary nature of information storage and processing in the brain, are in powers of two: 2^0, $2^3\pm2^1$, $2^7\pm2^5$, $2^9\pm2^7$, $2^{10}\pm2^8$ and $2^{11}\pm2^9$). The third, fourth and sixth of these levels correspond closely to the anthropologically derived thresholds for settlement size, which strongly implies a pan-cultural nature to the phenomenon and suggests that it is rooted in the structure of the human brain. It also suggests the existence of other thresholds of group size (at around $2^3\pm2^1$ and $2^{10}\pm2^8$) whose effects have not yet been identified, although they may be relevant to small-scale societies such as those believed to be prevalent in Iron Age Britain. Importantly, the model is not deterministic: with increasing threshold size, more choices exist for social development, allowing each individual social group to have its own unique historical trajectory.

There is considerable debate within anthropology about the appropriateness of typologies of social formation and cultural evolution (Earle 1994, 941), although it is possible to

Table 1 Classificatory scheme for levels of social integration and settlement size (after Kosse 1990, 295)

Social formation	*Population of largest settlement*	*Settlement hierarchy*	*Size of regional network*
State	> 2500	five-tier hierarchy	-
Complex chiefdom	> 2500	four-tier hierarchy	*c* 1500km^2
Simple chiefdom	> 2500	three-tier hierarchy	-
Peer polity type II	*c* 2500	minimal hierarchy	*c* 1500km^2
'Big Man' society	< 2500	two-tier hierarchy	*c* 2500 people
Peer polity type I	> 500	minimal hierarchy	-
Acephalous group	500	Aggregated	*c* 2500 people
Family level (public)	150	Disaggregated	*c* 500 people
Family level (hamlet)	< 25	-	*c* 500 people
Family level (family)	6–8	-	*c* 500 people

reconcile the most popular. This is possibly because they share many features in common, particularly a broadly tripartite division (from egalitarian through ranked to stratified societies) and an origin in broadly Marxist theory. Within these broad divisions, there are nevertheless numerous variations on precise definitions. Table I. 2 summarises four such schemes together with popular (if approximate) archaeological correlates from European prehistory.

Table I. 2 Definitions of social organisation (adapted from Earle 1994, 941)

<table>
<tr><th>Childe (1964)</th><th>Service (1962)
Johnson &
Earle (1987)</th><th>Sahlins (1963)
Earle (1978)</th><th>Fried (1967)</th><th>Archaeological
correlates
Renfrew (1973)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Savagery</td><td>Band (family level)</td><td rowspan="2">Head man</td><td rowspan="2">Egalitarian
society</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Barbarism</td><td rowspan="2">Tribe (local group)</td><td>Megaliths</td></tr>
<tr><td>Big man</td><td rowspan="2">Ranked
society</td><td rowspan="2">Maltese
temples</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Civilisation</td><td rowspan="2">Chiefdom</td><td>Simple chiefdom</td></tr>
<tr><td>Complex
chiefdom</td><td>Stratified
society</td><td>Metallurgy</td></tr>
<tr><td>State</td><td>State</td><td>State</td><td>Civilisation</td></tr>
</table>

These models of organisation are underpinned by an assumption that social differentiation has its origins in inequalities in access to power. The term ‘power’ is deliberately vague, because it derives from a wide variety of sources: social, military, ideological and economic. Social change and evolution are believed to occur because of the competitive nature of those who wield power, rendering societies with any form of ranking inherently unstable unless the élite is able to centralise and institutionalise its control of the sources of power (Earle 1994, 957). Of particular interest to the archaeologist are those symbols in which power is encoded: prestige artefacts, settlements and storage.

This model can be applied to the archaeologically attested settlement pattern of the north-western Iron Age. None of the sites so far identified is likely to have exceeded the 500±100 threshold, except perhaps Meols and the salt-producing area in the Nantwich region, which may have reached the $2^{10}\pm2^{8}$ level. This can be taken to indicate that the social structure conformed to the ‘Peer Polity’ or ‘Big Man’ type. In either case, the existence of a well stratified society is unlikely. However, in the model proposed above for exchange, the presence of an élite is virtually a prerequisite; perhaps we can infer that there is a ‘missing’ threshold of information processing, of 1000±250 and that this is a threshold at which an economic élite becomes viable, but without producing a strongly hierarchical settlement pattern.

The multiple estate model

Since its publication in 1976, G R J Jones’s exposition of the historical evidence for multiple estates in medieval Wales has been enormously influential in discussions of early medieval estate organisation throughout Britain generally. Although it was without political unity, there was a basic cultural tradition of settlement organisation within early medieval Wales which suggests a common origin in the sub-Roman, Romano-British or

earlier periods. Individual principalities (*gwladau*) have frequently been seen as the successors of the Roman *civitates*, at least in south and east Wales, which in turn developed from pre-Roman polities. The most important subdivision of the *gwlad* was the *cantref* (etymologically, 'hundred *trefi* ('vills')'). These were in turn subdivided into two *cymydau* ('commotes'), which notionally each contained twelve *maenolau* (multiple estates). A *maenol* comprised four *trefi* ('vills'), so that an individual *cymyd* would have had forty-eight *trefi*; the two additional *trefi* to bring the total up to fifty were royal demesne, the *maerdref* (effectively the *caput*, or chief place, of the *cymyd*) and a *tref* consisting of waste and summer pasture.

Table I.3 Hierarchical structure of the multiple estate (after Jones 1976, 15)

		Maenol (estate)	
Tref (vill)	*Tref*	*Tref*	*Tref*
4 holdings	4 holdings	4 holdings	4 holdings
16 sharelands	16 sharelands	16 sharelands	16 sharelands
64 homesteads	64 homesteads	64 homesteads	64 homesteads

This numerical precision is a reflection of the nature of the evidence: in its fullest form it is preserved in Welsh legal texts of the thirteenth century. However, the concept was already ancient, and the system was clearly more flexible than the legal texts imply. As with the anthropological model, there is a five-tier hierarchy. However, this is based on territorial organisation in a society without significant concentrations of population. In the legal texts, four homesteads are defined as the constituent parts of a shareland; four sharelands form a holding, four holdings a *tref* or *villa* (vill) and four *trefi* a *maenol* (estate). Although medieval Wales has often been characterised as a land without towns or villages (even by contemporaries, such as Giraldus Cambrensis), there is evidence to show that there were a few nucleated settlements (Davies 1982, 20). Nevertheless, the terms used in the hierarchical structure refer not to settlement size but to settlement status: in early medieval Britain the administrative centres were not necessarily the largest settlements.

Central Place theory

Although much in vogue among archaeologists in the 1970s, Central Place theory became unfashionable during the 1980s, arguably because of the inappropriate uses to which it had been put (Collis 1986, 38). However, the theory, developed by Walter Christaller in the 1930s, is based on a number of commonsense hypotheses with cross-cultural applicability. Firstly, that a non-agricultural settlement needs a rural hinterland (best thought of in terms of a provisioning area) to support it; secondly, that the bigger the settlement, the bigger its hinterland; thirdly, that tributary areas focused on small settlements will be found in the hinterlands of large settlements. Early applications of the theory in archaeology simply followed Christaller's models and were not found to be useful except in rare specific cases because they ignored the historically specific nature of the original data set and often failed to apply relevant historically specific models to the archaeological data.

The basic premise of the theory is that the locations of settlements of different rank can be predicted according to the nature of the ranking system. Christaller proposed three basic rank

types: one based on market activity, one based on transport and one based on administration. In the first type, second-order places are situated in the best location to be accessible to three first-order places, maximising access to markets. In the second, second-order places are located on the communications routes between two first-order places, minimising travel costs. In both these instances, the second-order places are to be found on the borders between the territories of first-order places. In the last, second-order places lie entirely within the territory of the first-order place on which they are dependent. Third, fourth-, fifth-, sixth- and seventh-order places also exist in this scheme, nesting within the larger patterns but conforming to one of the three organisational patterns discussed. The nature of the rank types is historically specific: other situations, for instance settlement location according to 'irrational' or symbolic principles (such as Feng Shui), are historically attested.

It has been possible to characterise the functions of different sizes of settlement and to correlate these with their market functions, their average spacing and their relative administrative importance. This is summarised in Table I.4. It is possible to spot the seven-kilometre spacing which is the ideal distance between places of specialised activity — in this instance the lowest rank of market. Clearly, we cannot take this model wholesale and apply it to the Iron Age, based as it is on nineteenth-century south Germany. The types of market product, administrative level and population size are undoubtedly historically constituted and have no claim to universality of application. However, the distances proposed between settlements are based on the ease of movement of human beings through a landscape. The modelling of hierarchies in Christaller's hypothesis does not depend on changes brought about by the transport revolution of the nineteenth century, as they apply to an earlier period.

Table I.4 Correlation between consumer products, settlement hierarchy, spacing and size (after Jones 1966, 86 and 88)

Product	*Settlement rank*	*Distance*	*Population*
Expensive jewellery	Regional capital city	186km	300,000
Display clothing	Provincial centre	108km	90,000
	Small state capital	62km	27,000
Quality clothing	District city	36km	9,000
Children's clothing	County town	21km	3,500
Work clothing	Small town	12km	1,500
Food necessities	Village	7km	800

Christaller's model must be regarded as incomplete, largely because of his assumption of a capitalist market economy (Wagstaff 1986, 121). This led him to presuppose the primacy of the market principle in the distribution of places and the subordination of the transport and administrative organising principles. Clearly, in a society where the free market system is unknown, the marketing principle may be subordinate to one or both of the other principles. If, for instance, the Iron Age settlement pattern were dictated by the needs of a dominant élite, then we might expect the administrative principle to be fundamental. Had it grown up as a result of exchange networks in a socially embedded economy, we might expect it to conform most closely to the transport principle. Had it been designed to serve the needs of maintaining a symbolic landscape, we might find the hierarchy more difficult

to model. In practice, we might find that it corresponds not to one system alone, but to a combination, varying over time and distance.

The spacing of settlements is relevant to the interpretation of their hierarchy. Seven kilometres is the distance accepted by anthropologists as an average day's return journey by foot to a location at which a specialised activity will take place. In the geographical model used here, it is the average spacing of village-type settlements whose principal economic function is the provision of food necessities. It can be recognised, for instance, in the sub-Roman settlement patterns of south-western England as the spacing of estate centres located in re-used hillforts (Dark 1994, 162). I have suggested elsewhere (Matthews 1994, 53) that the eight-kilometre spacing of hillforts in Cheshire reflects this type of administrative arrangement in the early first millennium BC. In a subsistence economy of Early Iron Age type, it is unlikely that hillforts were centres for the acquisition of food necessities and it may be suggested that they were centres for the distribution of other necessities, such as livestock, everyday metalwork and salt. This suggests the gradual development of specialisation during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, which may form the background to the growth of an economic élite.

Synthesis of the models

It will be obvious that these three models are mutually compatible as they deal with essentially exclusive aspects of settlement. The first is concerned with the organisational abilities of the human mind and the numbers of people that can be encompassed within social transactions. The second examines a historically specific form of territorial organisation that is probably much earlier than its first documentation The third attempts to explain settlement location within networks of supply, communications and political control. In each of the three models there is a hierarchical view of settlement and comparisons can be made between the models, allowing the partial data of the archaeological record to be examined as if it were more complete.

Discussion

The nature of the data

The data are more incomplete than is usual in archaeological data sets as a result of a number of factors. These include the nature of the region's soils and agricultural practices, neither of which is conducive to the formation of the crop marks that would enable the easy detection of sites, and a chronic lack of interest in the regional Iron Age until the 1980s. Even so, there is a considerable if disparate body of data: it has been the lack of a theoretical framework for interpreting it which has rendered it so intractable. Models for understanding the period are now starting to be proposed (Nevell 1999a, 23; Matthews 1999b, 33; Cowell & Philpott 2000, 169). The data have a real existence and properties that can be quantified; frameworks can be proposed for giving these data structure and meaning without making claims for their 'truth'. The results of these readings can then be tested against different models and *vice versa*, establishing a dialectic. Whilst remaining in the realms of theory, it is possible to set up hypotheses capable of testing by fieldwork. Two apparently rival theories have emerged in recent years, based on the same data set. One, that the regional Iron Age was essentially egalitarian, with subsistence farmers nevertheless engaging in salt production and exchange, perhaps organised by outsiders. The

second, that an economic élite emerged during the Early and Middle Iron Age, basing its wealth on developing and organising the long-distance exchange of salt and other products, and with direct continental contacts.

The distribution of the material

It is necessary to construct models of the relative values of different classes of data before hypotheses about settlement patterns can be tested. If the data were complete or rich, this would present few problems. However, it has been suggested that we are not yet in a position to accept our data as anything like a representative sample because there is not enough (Nevell 1999b, 63). Nevertheless, the attempt is worthwhile and has the potential to open up new areas for research. The models presented here will be at best provisional. A sustained research programme of investigation into sites of first millennium BC date must be a priority for the immediate future.

Early Iron Age settlement sites cluster on higher ground and include both hillforts and promontory enclosures. The two forms appear to be closely linked within the social landscape, being under an hour's walk apart. Given the climatic deterioration of the Late Bronze Age, it appears curious that the visible elements of the settlement pattern are concentrated on higher ground, especially on the Pennine fringes, where it has been suggested that conditions were too wet for arable farming (Nevell 1999a, 17).

The sole *emporium* identified in the region — Meols — is likely to have been the only one. The distribution of these sites across western Britain strongly suggests that they served hinterlands of many hundreds of square kilometres. If, as suggested here, these regions had a socio-political as well as economic coherence, these types of site would necessarily have been closely supervised by local élites (although this need not imply actual control).

The lowland sites so far investigated appear to belong to the Late Iron Age, although there are hints (as at Legh Oaks and Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford) that some have earlier origins. It is evident that they became more numerous at this time. This may point to a movement away from concentrations of population on the higher ground to a more dispersed settlement pattern during the later centuries BC; on the other hand, it also coincides with a period of huge population growth across Britain generally. This occurred at a time when the climate was becoming noticeably drier. It may not reflect a newly acquired ability to work the dominant clay soils (whether through improved technology or as a result of their drying out), as these sites tend to cluster on well drained soils. On the other hand, that may be a reflection of our ability to discover sites in these places through aerial photography and their virtual invisibility in other locations. Nevertheless, the shift away from occupation of the higher ground towards the lowland plains during the latter part of the Middle Iron Age is very marked.

Explanations of the patterning

What might the changing nature of population distribution tell us about social developments at this time? During the initial seminar from which this paper derives, joking reference was made to the emergence two rival hypotheses for Iron Age and Romano-British society in north-west England: the 'Nevell–Evans' hypothesis of egalitarian farmers

with no complex political structure and the 'Matthews–Philpott' hypothesis of a politico-economic élite. Although the individuals concerned expressed surprise that their models could be interpreted as radically different, there are differences between them that deserve exploration. Each has it merits and problems, so they will be examined here in some detail.

Technology and the economy

The Iron Age of north-west England has traditionally been seen as economically backward and peripheral to the main social developments of southern Britain. The main reason given for this is the alleged paucity of archaeological evidence (Higham 1993, 29). This privileges durable material culture as the only type of wealth available to a population, a peculiarly modern Western perspective. We can but hope that the days are long gone when the lack of pottery could be explained as 'the movement of military pioneering groups travelling without their womenfolk, with whom the finer aspects of material culture were associated' (Varley 1936b, 120). There are plentiful ethnographic examples of very different types of wealth accumulation. Wealth may be expressed by numbers of wives, sons, goats, slaves, quantities of grain, access to mineral resources or almost any item over which the 'wealthy' individual has control; in south Yorkshire, for instance, it has been suggested that cattle were the indicators of wealth (Chadwick 1997). Unfortunately, we cannot yet see the hypothesised élites of north-west England in the archaeological record through their stored wealth.

The local population did not produce large quantities of durable material culture products such as pottery, and their acquisition and display — in other words, their consumption — does not seem to have been of any social or economic value. That such material did exist can be amply demonstrated, but it remains uncommon. The Iron Age of north-west England must be evaluated on its own terms and the terms of its contemporary neighbours, not ours. These terms allow us to see a development of international exchange at a surprisingly early date, some time around the middle of the first millennium BC. This exchange seems to have been based, insofar as it is visible, on the export of salt. Mediterranean contacts, which, by the third century, were probably direct, were part of the exchange network, although they were probably always of minor importance; they are visible because of the exotic durable material culture they occasionally brought to the region. In contrast to the south-east, long-distance trade in the west began in the Early Iron Age, was maintained until its end and implies that the social developments in the region were developed around exchange networks operating through Liverpool Bay.

Society

The egalitarian hypothesis

There is little doubt that, by the end of the Middle Iron Age, the hillforts that dominate the record of the regional Early Iron Age had fallen out of use. While some have seen hillforts as central places in a society with hierarchical ranking — whether as the residences of an élite or as symbolic centres — it remains the case that the hypothesised lower ranked settlement sites have not yet been located. If these enclosures are the sole settlement type of the Early Iron Age, as the model that sees the small enclosures as a development of the Late Iron Age would suggest, then the population density model discussed above suggests that society corresponded to either a peer polity or acephalous group type. These would

allow concentrations of population of up to 500 individuals (which is presumably above the maximum size of population for the hillforts). If this were the case, each hillfort will have formed the core of a single small socio-political unit (Matthews 1994, 53).

According to this model, the changes that occurred during the Middle Iron Age took the population away from the uplands onto river terraces, which became the favoured location for a new style of settlement, the small curvilinear enclosure (Nevell 1997, 20). Again, there was little sign of differentiation, if the size of enclosure is taken as a criterion for ranking (Nevell 1999a, 23). The relative lack of social competition would have created an environment in which conspicuous consumption of display goods was irrelevant, so the acquisition of these objects would not be a priority. In this model, the small numbers of exotic items that are found must be explained as little more than curios, presumably reaching north-west England by down-the-line (or trickle-) trade, with goods changing hands many times before arriving at Meols.

The élite dominance hypothesis

Although it is possible to interpret the settlement data as indicative of a society with little or no social stratification, it is also possible to suggest the development of élites from the Early Iron Age though to the Middle Iron Age. Evidence for these élites comes principally from the evidence for long-distance trade provided by the distribution of VCP and the exotic imports that began to reach the region by the fifth century, but there may also be hints in the settlement pattern. The chronological distribution of the imports — from the fifth through to the first century BC and possibly into the first century AD — suggests sustained contact with the outside world. Indeed, the increasingly widespread export market for Cheshire salt may be taken to indicate the continuing development of these economic links. As argued above, these links suggest a degree of organisational complexity that cannot be encompassed within the acephalous groups or minimally hierarchical peer polity groups implied by an Early Iron Age settlement pattern consisting largely of hillforts.

For the Early Iron Age it is possible to suggest that the smaller lowland promontory enclosures, such as Peckforton Mere or Oakmere, were closely connected with nearby hillforts (Matthews 1994, 53). Although there is little information about the interior of any of these sites, it is likely that the hillforts were home to rather larger populations than the lowland promontory enclosures. Indeed, given the close association between the two types, the latter may have been the residences of the élites who were beginning to control the resources on which the developing exchange networks depended. Only excavation of the interior of one of these lesser sites will clarify such questions as date, density of occupation and economic status. There are also hints that some of the single-ditched curvilinear enclosures (such as Legh Oaks I) belong to this early period, while some open sites such as Manchester Airport or Brookhouse Farm, Bruen Stapleford, are certainly Early Iron Age.

We thus have suggestions of an Early Iron Age three-tier settlement hierarchy, suggestive of a simple chiefdom, according to Kristina Kosse's model. This model predicts that the largest settlement ought to have a population of between 500 and 2500; perhaps the hillforts were of the 500–1000 size. It was suggested above that the effect of one of the thresholds missing from the anthropological data about social formation (around 1000±250) would be

to allow the formation of an economically dominant élite. Is there therefore evidence that the populations of hillforts grew during the Early Iron Age? At Eddisbury, round houses were built on the slighted ramparts (Varley 1950, 57) at an unknown date, although they were associated with VCP. Rather than viewing the demolition of the ramparts as a work with military or at least defensive meaning (Varley (1950, 57) saw it as the work of the Roman army, but it is clearly much earlier), might it be suggested that the population of Eddisbury simply grew too large to live inside the enclosed area?

We might therefore argue that the Middle Iron Age was a period when localised chiefdoms developed into a more complex system in this region. Increasingly large settlements required a stronger political authority than earlier in the Iron Age and, in the model proposed here, the emergent rulers based their power primarily on economic control. There is a difficulty in viewing these élites as chiefdoms, whether simple or complex. Timothy Earle (1994, 957) has pointed to the cyclical nature of chiefdoms and their inherent instability. Yet we have seen how north-west England remained socially stable for an immensely long time, resisting the incursion of Roman cultural practices and retaining its coherence for more than a millennium. How do we resolve this contradiction? The easiest way is to suggest that the social formation of the region moved from a chiefdom into a more complex, state system during the Middle Iron Age. As with the economic model, this is considerably earlier than is usually suggested in the South.

The complexity of the way in which this exchange was organised indicates that the evolutionist models that makes the earliest state development in Britain a phenomenon of the Late Iron Age in south-east England are wrong. By the Middle Iron Age, communities in western Britain were able to organise long-distance trade, with what were evidently multicultural coastal *emporia*, which reverse the accepted geography of development. The North-West was sufficiently complex in economic and political terms to engage in this sort of trade perhaps three centuries before the South. Nevertheless, the pattern that was established did not lead to the type of acculturation seen in the South-East. After an early development, society in north-west England remained stable and probably conservative for centuries (if not a millennium or more). It has a close parallel in Iron Age developments in Galloway, where the pre-Roman cultural patterns remained intact until the thirteenth century, when it was finally incorporated into the Scottish state (Cowley 2000).

The Late Iron Age, on the other hand, appears more as a period of consolidation, even retrenchment. Socially, the construction of small enclosures represents private investment in monumental construction for the first time: the earlier hilltop enclosures were public works. This is a significant change that can be compared with the construction of homestead moats in medieval England: in both instances, non-élites were engaged in building small 'defensive' earthwork enclosures containing farmsteads in areas that had previously not been cultivated. In the case of medieval moats, they are associated with an emergent class of small landowners seeking independence from aristocratic landlords. A similar phenomenon may account for the Iron Age 'private fortifications' of north-west England, but we would be wrong to discount other explanations. While the proliferation of such enclosures during the Late Iron Age may represent the opening up of the landscape by a new class of entrepreneurial, independent landowners, they also demonstrate an inward

focusing of competition. What form this competition took cannot be determined on the evidence currently available. The effort put into the enclosures was clearly one expression of that competition, while the lack of interest in prestige durable material culture suggests some other form of wealth accumulation and display.

The Cornovii and Brigantes

Little more than a decade ago, it would have been considered appropriate to begin or end any account of Iron Age Cheshire with an exposition of the Cornovii, their territory and their material culture. Lancashire, by contrast, would be dealt with under the rubric 'Brigantes'. Recent developments in archaeological theory, especially with regard to ethnicity and group identity, have meant that such issues are now seen as more contentious than they would once have been.

The late Graham Webster's (1991) book *The Cornovii*, an account of the Romano-British *civitas*, begins with the inevitable Iron Age 'background' that all culture historical approaches to Roman Britain seem to find so necessary. Having defined his geographical area (Shropshire, much of Cheshire and part of north-east Wales), Webster surveyed the Iron Age remains and concluded that the characterisation of the people was a near impossibility. This is unsurprising. The evidence we possess for the extent of Cornovian territory is late (second century AD) and refers to Romano-British, not Iron Age, administrative arrangements. All we know is that Οὐιροκόνιον (*Viroconium*, Wroxeter) and Δηοῦα (Deva, Chester) were within the *Civitas Cornoviorum* according to the (probably late first-century) source used by the Alexandrian mathematician Claudius Ptolemaeus in compiling his *Geography*.

We cannot know whether this territorial arrangement was ancient or an innovation of Roman provincial government. Evidence that the Ellesmere moraine marked a major prehistoric cultural boundary would suggest that, if Cheshire had been part of Cornovian territory in the Iron Age, then we cannot define the people according to their material culture. On the other hand, it might suggest that the Romano-British *civitas* absorbed part of an entirely different people.

There is, of course, no evidence that a people known as the Cornovii even existed during the Iron Age. The experience of British colonial administrators in southern Africa during the nineteenth century provides an interesting analogue for the development of Romano-British political structures during the first century AD. The earliest Europeans in south Africa reported a wide diversity of 'peoples': political groupings that did not correspond to the ethnic groups they were defining on the basis of language, customs, dress and so on. By the end of the nineteenth century, though, the groups defined by the colonisers had begun to develop identities that correspond much more closely to their ethnic definitions. Patrick Harries (1989, 82) has proposed that these identities formed as a direct response to contact with the outsiders, and that self-awareness did not occur until a local bourgeoisie had developed under the influence of missionaries. He argues that the formation of ethnic identity is dependent on the differentiation of class interests and the consumption of cultural symbols. A similar situation could have obtained in first-century Britain and it is easy to see how a Cornovian identity might have been forged under these

circumstances. The origins of the Cornovii might then be seen to be based more on economic opportunities and colonial administrative practices than on a shared history.

The situation is even clearer with the Brigantes. Claudius Ptolemaeus treats them as a single people occupying the land between the Mersey and Humber to the south and Hadrian's Wall to the north, with the exception of the Parisi of east Yorkshire. Modern writers have seen them as a confederacy, perhaps with its origins in the century or so before the Roman conquest (eg Kenyon 1991, 41). There is certainly strong evidence to suggest that Roman writers used the term as a catch-all for those peoples in the militarised zone of northern *Britannia*. Moreover, Claudius Ptolemaeus mentions a Σεταντιων Λιμην ('harbour of the Setantii') on the Lancashire coast, whilst there is epigraphic evidence for a *Civitas Carvetiorum* in Cumbria by the third century (Rivet & Smith 1979, 301) and a people known as the Tectoverdi (more usually given as Textoverdi, with a Greek -χ-) in the central part of Hadrian's Wall (Rivet & Smith 1979, 470). The Brigantes' core territory seems to have lain to the east of the Pennines, in the Vale of York.

What of the name Setantii, then? The location of their harbour is unknown, although some interpretations have favoured Fleetwood (Kenyon 1991, 40) and others Morecambe Bay (Strang 1997, 25). Accepting the latter identification suggests that the Setantii were the people of the Lune valley in the later first century AD, which conflicts with epigraphic evidence that this area was known as *Contrebis*. On the other hand, an identification with Fleetwood leaves open a connection between the ethnic name Setantii and Seteia, the name of the River Mersey (Rivet & Smith 1979, 457). The ethnic name would then mean something like 'people of the Mersey basin'. This intriguing suggestion raises the possibility that the name of the people considered in this paper, at least at the time of the Roman conquest, was *Setantii*. However, it would be dangerous to press the argument too far or to suggest that it could have been used to refer to the people of five centuries earlier.

The cognitive arena: beliefs and identities

Temporality

Although archaeology is directly connected with time — through the age of the material it studies — until recently, it has rarely considered the experience of time by the peoples it deals with. The anthropologist Tim Ingold's concept of 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993, 158), the space within which people do things, offers us a way of examining the rhythms of life in ancient societies. The time it takes people to perform a task will vary according to the space in which it has to be performed. For instance, the experience of walking across medieval Lancaster in less than ten minutes and of living and working in the same city-centre property will be have been very different from the experience of walking through the city in 1900, taking half an hour or more, and of travelling a mile or more to work. In the same way, if we can understand the temporal relationships between Iron Age farmsteads, their fields, the central places where people exchanged goods, paid tribute and worshipped their gods, and the places where they disposed of their dead, we will gain insights into the taskscapes of these people.

So far, the evidence we possess is limited. The spacing of hillforts on the Mid-Cheshire Ridge has previously been commented upon as apparently indicating that they were a

single day's walk apart and could thus form the basis of a redistributive system for agricultural goods (Matthews 1994, 53).

Conclusions

It is abundantly clear that the first millennium BC and the first millennium AD in north-west England can only be understood through structures of the *longue durée*:[5] an enduring pattern of consumption and cultural affinity which was established in the Early Iron Age continued into the sub-Roman period. The hypothesis of an early development of long-distance exchange controlled by an emerging economic élite during the Early Iron Age may at first sight appear eccentric, but the evidence virtually forces it upon us unless we are to dismiss the data completely. It makes the distribution of a wide variety of anomalous finds from the Iron Age of north-west England much easier to explain and it places the region into an international context without making any claims for a dominance or importance it clearly did not possess. It also harks back to the economic vitality of the region as a supplier of copper during the earlier Bronze Age: Roman interest in the region may have been prompted by Clwydian silver, which was perhaps being exploited at this early date. We can now see that the region is peripheral only in terms of the lack of durable material culture; in other words, it is peripheral only in archaeologists' perceptions. By refocusing our attention on the local data rather than comparing it unfavourably with southern Britain, we can assess it without preconceived notions of 'failure' or 'backwardness'.

The hillforts that have dominated our accounts of the Iron Age belong to an early period of unsophisticated exchange in north-west England. Unlike the role Barry Cunliffe has proposed for Danebury, they were clearly not sub-regional storage or redistributive centres; their role as economic or administrative central places must be questioned and was probably negligible. Nevertheless, they were perhaps associated with political organisation at the level of the simple chiefdom from the Late Bronze Age onwards. By the time that exchange had developed a degree of complexity that appears to have involved foreign merchants residing at least semi-permanently at Meols and interacting with an economic élite around 300 BC, the hillforts were an anachronism as central places. The new élites were living in enlarged hillforts with slighted ramparts or double-ditched enclosures, their subordinates in single-ditched enclosures and open settlements; wealth was being expressed in ways that are not currently visible to our archaeological techniques; economically specialised settlements were developing at Meols and, perhaps, Nantwich and Middlewich. Central places and the conspicuous consumption of durable material culture were not important to the Iron Age élites of north-west England: how can we begin to assess the economy of the region in the first millennium BC if we do not appreciate this?

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1

Radiocarbon dates for first-millennium sites in north-west England

Site name	*Sample number*	*Date bp*	*Date Cal BC*[c]	*Reference*
Mam Tor	Birm-202	3130 ± 132	1700–1000	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 44
Mam Tor	Birm-192	3080 ± 115	1650–950	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 44
Beeston Castle: period 2B rampart	HAR-4405	2860 ± 80	1260–830	Ellis 1993, 85
Kate's Pad, Pilling Moss	Q-68	2760 ± 120	1350–750, 700–550	Middleton *et al* 1995, 61
Brook House Farm, wooden artefact	Beta-117717	2720 ± 50	980–790	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Beeston Castle: period 3 posthole	HAR-4401	2620 ± 90	950–400	Ellis 1993, 85
Maiden Castle, Bickerton: inner rampart north	UB-2619	2620 ± 95	1000–400	Cheshire SMR341/1
Brook House Farm, silting of gully associated with VCP	Beta-118138	2560 ± 60	830–510, 470–410	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Almondbury	I-5931	2540 ± 95	830–400	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 50
Almondbury: uppermost rampart	I-4542	2505 ± 100	820–390	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 50
Almondbury	HAR-183	2480 ± 110	850–350	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 50
Beeston Castle: period 3A ditch	HAR-8102	2480 ± 70	780–400	Ellis 1993, 85
Almondbury	HAR-84	2470 ± 130	850–200	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 50
Castercliff: rampart 2	S-287	2460 ± 60	770–400	Coombs 1982, 127
Castercliff: rampart 1	S-286	2460 ± 70	780–400	Coombs 1982, 127
Maiden Castle, Bickerton: south entrance outer rampart strapping	UB-2615	2435 ± 70	770–400	Cheshire SMR 341/1
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-6465	2430 ± 70	770–390	Ellis 1993, 85
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	HAR-6224	2420 ± 100	800–350, 300–200	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Almondbury	HAR-83	2410 ± 110	800–200	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 50
Almondbury	HAR-135	2400 ± 110	800–200	Coombs & Thompson 1979, 5

Site name	*Sample number*	*Date bp*	*Date Cal BC*[7]	*Reference*
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-5609	2400 ± 70	780–360	Ellis 1993, 85
Beeston Castle: period 3B posthole	HAR-4402	2380 ± 100	800–200	Ellis 1993, 85
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-6469	2370 ± 80	800–200	Ellis 1993, 85
Maiden Castle, Bickerton: inner rampart north	UB-2618	2360 ± 100	800–200	Cheshire SMR 341/1
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-6503	2350 ± 70	800–200	Ellis 1993, 85
Maiden Castle, Bickerton: inner rampart north	UB-2617	2350 ± 60	800–350 300–200	Cheshire SMR 341/1
Tatton Park: Pit 7	HAR-5147	2340 ± 120	800–100	Higham & Cane 1996–7, 57
Beeston Castle: period 4	HAR-6504	2310 ± 70	800–650 550–150	Ellis 1993, 85
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-6464	2300 ± 80	800–650 550–150	Ellis 1993, 85
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-6468	2290 ± 70	550–100	Ellis 1993, 85
Beeston Castle: period 3 posthole	HAR-4406	2280 ± 80	800–700 550–50	Ellis 1993, 85
Brook House Farm, secondary ditch silting	Beta-117711	2260 ± 50	400–200	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-1041	2210 ± 60	400–100	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-789	2190 ± 100	410–AD 30	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Ditton Brook, pit fill	OxA-3678	2170 ± 70	400–10	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 19
Brook House Farm, secondary ditch silting	Beta- 117716	2150 ± 60	380–40	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Castlesteads	Beta-58077	2140 ± 70	370–AD 1	Nevell 1999b, 60
Brook House Farm, final silting of gully, associated with VCP	Beta-117712	2140 ± 40	360–280 260–40	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Brook House Farm, stone-packed posthole	Beta-118139	2140 ± 40	360–280 260–40	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Maiden Castle, Bickerton: south entrance outer rampart strapping	UB-2614	2130 ± 70	380–10	Cheshire SMR 341/1
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-605	2125 ± 80	380–AD 30	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow III	OxA-1524	2040 ± 90	400–AD 200	Housley *et al* 1995, 41
Tatton Park: structure	JHAR-4496	2030 ± 120	400–AD 250	Higham & Cane 1996–7, 57
Lindow III	HAR-9094	2010 ± 80	200–AD 150 AD 160–220	Housley *et al* 1995, 41
Lindow III	OxA-1523	2000 ± 100	400–300 250–AD 250	Housley *et al* 1995, 41
Great Woolden Hall: phase II	GrN-16849	1990 ± 25	40–AD 80	Nevell 1999b, 49

Site name	*Sample number*	*Date bp*	*Date Cal BC*[@]	*Reference*
Great Woolden Hall: phase III	GrN-16850	1970 ± 100	200–AD 350	Nevell 1999b, 49
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-790	1970 ± 80	170–AD 240	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Brook House Farm, early disuse of ditch	Beta-117715	1970 ± 70	170–130 120–AD 220	Cowell & Philpott 2000, 58
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-782	1950 ± 80	160–AD 250	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-781	1940 ± 80	120–AD 260 AD 290–320	Housley et al 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-783	1920 ± 80	100–AD 260 AD 280–330	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-531	1920 ± 75	70–AD 260, AD 280–330	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Tatton Park: structure J	HAR-5111	1910 ± 110	200–AD 400	Higham & Cane 1996-7, 57
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-1040	1910 ± 60	40–AD 250	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-784	1900 ± 80	60–AD 340	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Lindow II (Lindow Man)	OxA-785	1900 ± 80	60–AD 340	Housley *et al* 1995, 45
Beeston Castle: period 3B rampart	HAR-5610	1890 ± 120	200–AD 450	Ellis 1993, 85
Lindow III	OxA-1521	1890 ± 100	100–AD 400	Housley e*t al* 1995, 41

Appendix 2

Sites and finds of the Iron Age of north-west England

Name	*Description*	*NGR*			*References*
Abbey Green, Chester	Plough marks and pottery	SJ	4048	6667	Cheshire SMR 3015
Arthill Heath farm	Subrectangular enclosure complex	SJ	7279	8586	Cheshire SMR 2061/1/0
Baddiley Mere	Logboat	SJ	5971	5039	Cheshire SMR 363
Beeston Castle	Hillfort	SJ	5380	5920	Cheshire SMR 1732/1
Bickerton	Possible farmstead	SJ	5125	5463	Cheshire SMR 330/1
Billington	Burial mound containing iron spearheads	SD	6990	3750	Lancashire SMR
Blatchinrod	Lenticular quern	SD	9550	1730	G Manchester SMR 2715/1
Bradley	Univallate promontory fort	SJ	5394	7679	Cheshire SMR 971/1
Brereton	Bull's-head escutcheon	SJ	7650	6259	Cheshire SMR 2502
Bruen Stapleford, Brookhouse Farm	Farmstead	SJ	4975	6398	Fairburn 2002
Burton Point	Univallate promontory fort	SJ	3033	7356	Cheshire SMR 9/1
Bury, Calrow Lane	Greco-Roman earthenware pot	SD	7976	1145	G Manchester SMR 162
Camp Hill, Liverpool	Hillfort?	SJ	4241	8583	Merseyside SMR 4285-001
Castercliff	Univallate hillfort	SD	8848	3839	Lancashire SMR 224
Castle Ditch, Eddisbury	Bivallate hillfort	SJ	5530	6930	Cheshire SMR 866/1
Castleshaw	Stone spindlewhorl	SD	9980	0960	G Manchester SMR 1191/2
Castle Hill, Heywood	Possible hillfort	SD	8273	1248	G Manchester SMR 2498/1
Castle Hill, Oldcastle	Possible bivallate promontory fort	SJ	4681	4414	Cheshire SMR 1667/1
Castleshaw	Spindlewhorl	SD	0000	0970	G Manchester SMR 5931/1
Castlesteads, Walmersley	Promontory fort	SD	7969	1298	G Manchester SMR 78/1/2
Chapelhouse Poulton	Farmstead	SJ	4024	5845	Unpublished
Cheetham Hill	Coins (Epirote, Carthaginian & Roman)	SJ	8430	9920	G Manchester SMR 1393/1
Chester	Glass bead	SJ	3940	6540	Cheshire SMR 2007
Cholmondeley Castle	Dugout canoe	SJ	5300	5100	Cheshire SMR 325
Congleton Edge	Three millstone grit querns	SJ	8700	6000	Cheshire SMR 157

Name	*Description*	*NGR*			*References*
Deneshay Slipway	Coin	SJ	2289	0150	Merseyside SMR 2289-015
Ditton Brook, Ditton	Pit	SJ	4750	8540	Cowell & Philpott 2000
Finness Hill	Possible enclosure (now destroyed)	SJ	5350	7410	Cheshire SMR 995/1
Gawsworth	Disc-quern and fragment	SJ	9113	7094	Cheshire SMR 1538
Great Low	Possible hillfort (now destroyed)	SJ	9568	7703	Cheshire SMR 1602/1
Giant's Seat, Bolton	Univallate promontory fort	SD	7747	0484	G Manchester SMR 1461/1
Great Meols	Emporium	SJ	2310	9060	Merseyside SMR 2390-009
Great Woolden Hall	Oval enclosure	SJ	6980	9290	G Manchester SMR 1783/1
Great Woolden Hall Farm	Bivallate promontory fort	SJ	6910	9355	G Manchester SMR 1907/1
Grimsditch	Placename possibly indicating earthwork	SJ	7050	8210	Cheshire SMR 1263
Halewood, Brook House Farm	Bivallate enclosure	SJ	4730	8500	Cowell & Philpott 2000
Hangingbank, Werneth Low	Double-ditched enclosure	SJ	9650	9350	G Manchester SMR
Helsby Hill	Bivallate promontory fort	SJ	4927	7539	Cheshire SMR 1007/1
Heswall, Hessle Drive	Pottery	SJ	2690	8105	Merseyside SMR 2681-027
Irby	Oval enclosure	SJ	2544	8375	Merseyside SMR 2583-001
Irby, Mill Hill Road	Farmstead and enclosures	SJ	2520	8520	Merseyside SMR 2585-044
Kate's Pad	Wooden trackway, Pilling Moss	SD	4099	4460	Lancashire SMR 84
Kelsborrow	Univallate promontory fort	SJ	5316	6752	Cheshire SMR 833/1
Kirkby Vicarage	Excavated site	SJ	4090	9890	Merseyside SMR 4098-017
Leasowe Common	Tetradrachm of Tigranes II of Armenia	SJ	2578	9162	Merseyside SMR 2591-006
Legh Oaks Farm enclosure A	Oval ditched enclosure	SJ	6902	8318	Cheshire SMR 2062/1
Legh Oaks Farm enclosure B	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	6898	8325	Cheshire SMR 2062/2
Lindow III	Bog body	SJ	8219	8073	Cheshire SMR 1473/0/3
Lindow Man	Bog body	SJ	8202	8057	Cheshire SMR 1473/0/2
Lindow Moss	Animal jawbone (*Bos taurus*)	SJ	8183	8059	Cheshire SMR 1472/0/1

Name	*Description*	*NGR*			*References*
Longdendale	La Tène pot	SK	0550	9880	
Longley Hill field system	Regular aggregate field system	SJ	5294	7008	Cheshire SMR 1984
Longton Marshes	Pin	SD	4500	2600	Lancashire SMR 1692
Macclesfield	Disc- or quoit-shaped loomweight	SJ	9115	7460	Cheshire SMR 1559
Maiden Castle hillfort	Bivallate hillfort	SJ	4977	5289	Cheshire SMR 341/1
Manchester	Bronze ox-head ornament	SJ	8300	9700	G Manchester SMR 2008/1
Middlewich	Terret ring	SJ	7070	6670	Cheshire SMR 1080/0/32
Newbold Astbury	Dugout canoe	SJ	8489	6054	Cheshire SMR 1160
Oakmere	Univallate promontory fort	SJ	5760	6780	Cheshire SMR 848/1
Peckforton Mere	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	5430	5767	Cheshire SMR 314
Pilling Moss	Dagger scabbard				Lancashire SMR
Portfield (Planeswood Camp)	Bivallate promontory fort	SD	7459	3551	Lancashire SMR 181
Radcliffe	Possible univallate promontory fort	SD	7670	0700	G Manchester 3829/1
Rainow	Part of saddle quern	SJ	9527	7627	Cheshire SMR 1598
Rainsough	Farmstead	SD	8105	0213	G Manchester SMR 346/1
Rawhead Farm	Cropmarks of possible farm	SJ	5150	5490	Cheshire SMR 329
Red House Farm, Dunham Massey	Subrectangular enclosure	SJ	7736	8977	G Manchester SMR 1488/1
Red Moss, Rossendale	Gold torc	SD	8400	2700	Lancashire SMR 206
Ribchester	Pot	SD	6509	3513	Lancashire SMR 4215
River Ribble	Triple-headed bucket mount				Lancashire SMR
Calderbrook	Beaded torc	SD	9447	1839	G Manchester SMR 2702/1
Rochdale, Blackstone Edge	Iron spearhead	SD	9730	1680	Lancashire SMR
Roe Cross	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	9863	9670	G Manchester SMR
Rossett, Town Ditch	Upper half of beehive quernstone	SJ	3289	5887	CPAT SMR 100350
Shaw Brows	Enclosure	SJ	8280	9885	G Manchester SMR 1584/1
Snow Hill, Nantwich	Brine pit	SJ	6496	5243	Cheshire SMR 178/1
Tarvin	Lower half of rotary quern	SJ	4857	6705	Cheshire SMR 1894

Name	*Description*	*NGR*			*References*
Tatton Park	Roundhouse and yard	SJ	7570	8140	Cheshire SMR 1297
Twemlow	Lower half of rotary quern	SJ	7836	6829	Cheshire SMR 1055
Walmersley, Bury	Univallate promontory fort	SD	7970	1300	Fletcher 1986
Warrington	'Celtic' vase	SJ			Cheshire SMR 499
Warrington	Fragments of quern	SJ	6200	8752	Cheshire SMR 442
Warrington crannog 1	Timber structure supported on oak piles	SJ	6110	8821	Cheshire SMR 498/1
Warrington crannog 2	Timber piling	SJ	6070	8640	Cheshire SMR 477/1
Wepre promontory fort	Bivallate promontory fort	SJ	2888	6769	CPAT SMR 100053
Werneth Low	Ditched enclosure	SJ	9700	9320	G Manchester SMR
Wildboarclough	Subcircular enclosure	SJ	9900	6930	Cheshire SMR 2154
Winwick enclosure	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	6120	9260	Cheshire SMR 2411
Winwick enclosure	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	5940	9310	Cheshire SMR 2121
Winwick enclosure	Subrectangular ditched enclosure	SJ	6225	9418	Cheshire SMR 2410
Woodhouses hillfort	Univallate hillfort	SJ	5107	7573	Cheshire SMR 970/1
Worsley Man	Male human head from Astley Moss	SJ	7100	9700	G Manchester SMR 1961/1
Y Gaer, Llay	Oval enclosure	SJ	3555	5608	CPAT SMR 100351

Notes

[1] This paper has its origins in a conference called 'Let There Be Light!' organised jointly by the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, Gifford and Partners and National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside and held in Liverpool and Lancaster on successive Saturdays 15 and 22 May 1999. Despite the original intention to publish the proceedings of the conferences rapidly, this has not happened and a revised and expanded version of the paper presented is published here.

[2] Details of all radiocarbon dates, including laboratory number and published source, are presented in Appendix 1.

[3] The lower-case bc convention used here indicates an uncalibrated radiocarbon date; for clarity, calibrated dates are recorded as Cal BC.

[4] It should be noted that the interpretations given here are mine, not Alistair Quarterman's, so any errors of interpretation are mine alone.

[5] The underlying structures of civilisation, according to Fernand Braudel (1993, 27), which change so slowly as to be almost imperceptible.

[6] The range is given at two standard deviations (95.4% confidence) and was calculated using the Oxford Calibration Program OxCal, version 3.5 2000, available from http://www.rlaha.ox.ac.uk/orau/06_01.htm. All dates are years BC, unless otherwise stated

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