CHAPTER 9

THE NORTH

By Tom Brindle

The North region is large, extending over an area of 19,818 km². Its northern boundary is formed by the English/Scottish border and it contains the entirety of the modern administrative counties of Cumbria and Northumberland, the unitary authorities of Tyne and Wear, most of County Durham and Lancashire and the westernmost third of North Yorkshire (FIG. 9.1). Hadrian's Wall, which extends east from the Solway Plain in Cumbria to Wallsend, North Tyneside, is of course one of the most notable aspects of the Roman archaeology of the North. Its presence, alongside a large number of Roman forts, has resulted in a traditional emphasis on the archaeology of the Roman military in the region; the difficulty of recognising and dating Romano-British rural sites in the area has meant that in the past these sites attracted less attention (Philpott 2006, 62; Hingley 2004, 343). However, our understanding of the region's character during the Roman period has improved considerably as a result of more recent efforts to integrate aspects of the military and rural archaeology (e.g. Hodgson *et al.* 2013; Proctor 2009).

THE NATURE OF THE LANDSCAPE

The North incorporates a diverse range of landscapes, with some extreme topographical differences. These include low-lying areas such as the Lancashire Plain and Valleys, the West Cumbria Coastal Plain, the Solway Basin and the Eden Valley in the west, and the North Northumberland

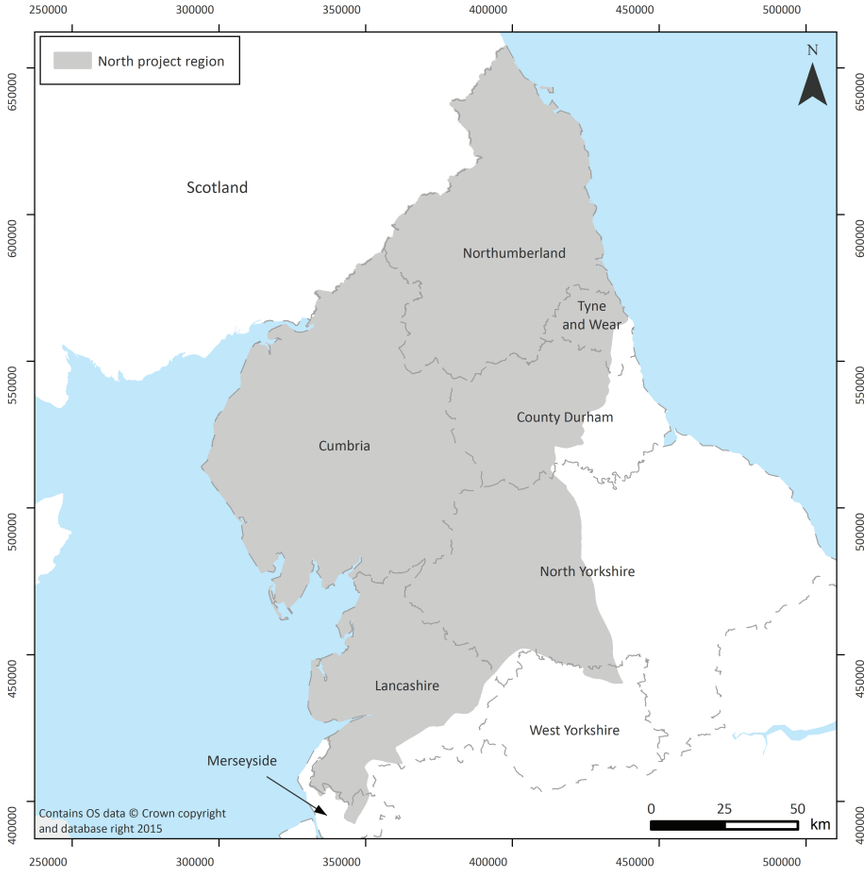

FIG. 9.1. The North region in relation to modern county boundaries

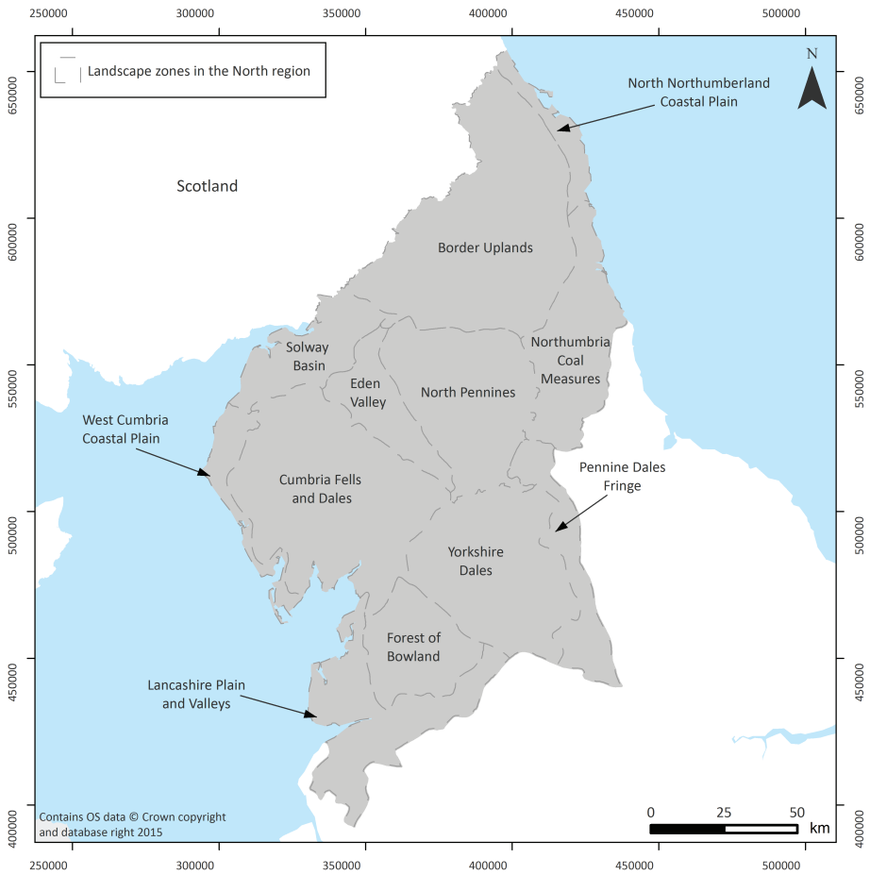

FIG. 9.2. Constituent landscape zones of the North region

Coastal Plain and Northumbria Coal Measures in the east (FIG. 9.2). Much of the region is also of upland character, including the Border Uplands of Northumberland as well as the rugged mountains of the Cumbria Fells and Dales and the North Pennines and the Yorkshire Dales. The soils of the region are principally acidic, particularly in low-lying areas where the excavated evidence is concentrated, and this restricts the amount of faunal and archaeobotanical remains available from the region, although pollen evidence provides some information about the ancient environment.

THE NORTH DATASET

The North dataset includes 138 records for 123 distinct sites (15 records relate to sites with multiple records). These include 99 settlements and 24 non-domestic sites, most comprising those associated with burial and industry, along with field systems. The geographical distribution of sites is far from even, with much of the region being very poorly represented by excavated data (FIG. 9.3; TABLE 9.1). There are very few sites from some parts of the region characterised by upland landscapes such as the North Pennines, the Yorkshire Dales, the Forest of Bowland or the Cumbria Fells and Dales. The areas best represented by data are the low-lying Solway Basin, the Eden Valley and the Northumbria Coal Measures. The distribution of excavated rural sites mapped in FIG. 9.3 (top) is, however, a poor guide to the true distribution of Romano-British settlement in the region, primarily reflecting the areas in which excavation has been focused. FIGURE 9.3 reveals how excavations of all periods have focused principally on the region's lowlands, as well as the area around Hadrian's Wall. The Northumbria Coal Measures, for example, have seen a number of excavations, particularly to the north of Newcastle, often as a result of residential development and mineral extraction. In the Solway Basin in Cumbria a number of sites have been excavated in advance of residential development around Carlisle, but the susceptibility of the sand and gravel geology of the area to form cropmarks has also resulted in a number of excavations targeting sites initially identified through aerial photography. The relatively high frequency of excavated Iron Age and Romano-British sites in the Border Uplands largely reflects the particular

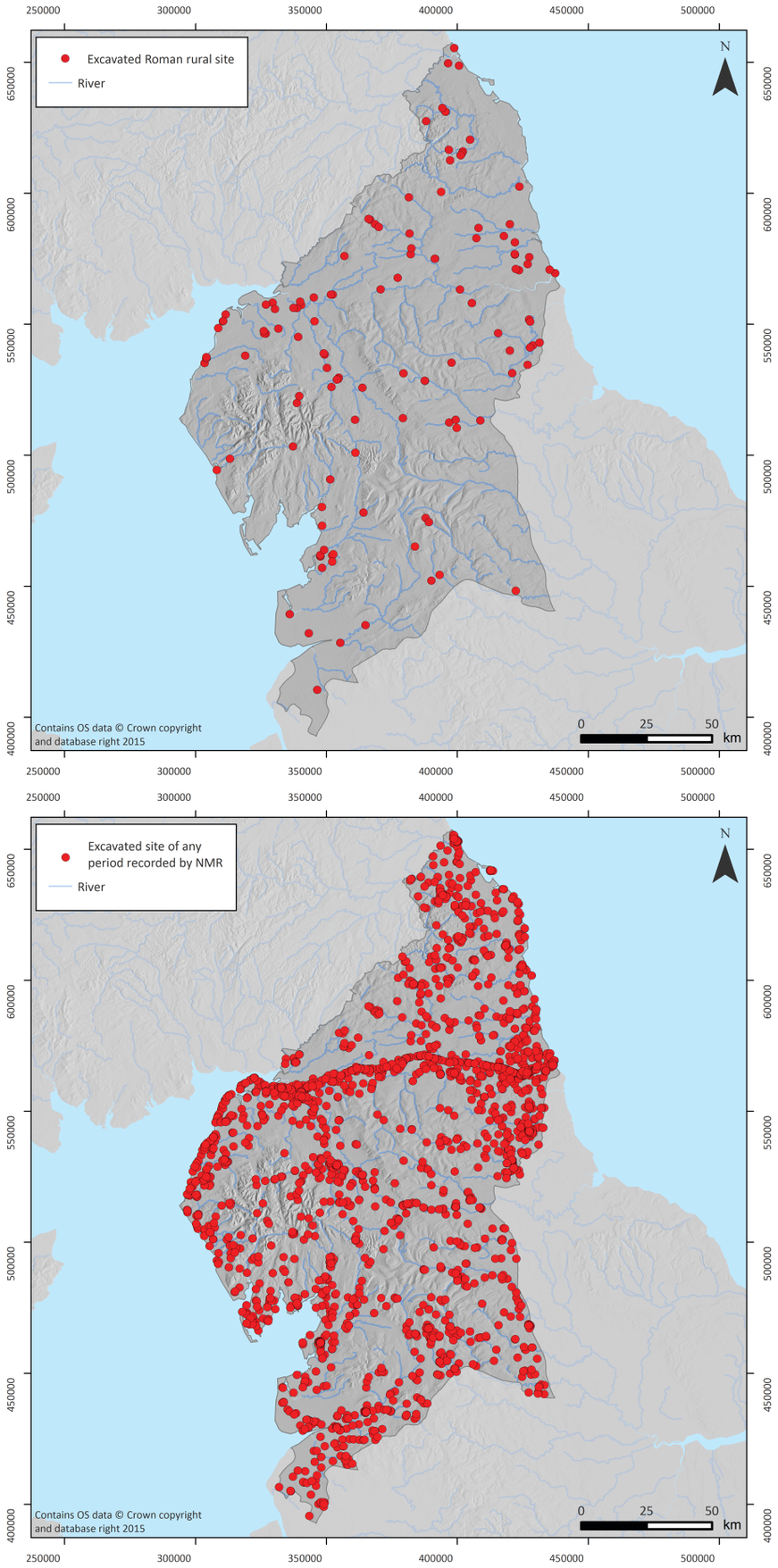

FIG. 9.3. Distribution of excavated Roman rural sites (n=123) and all excavation records (1910–2010) from National Monument Records (NMR) Index (n=2908) in the North region

TABLE 9.1: NUMBER OF SITES AND DENSITY (PER KM²) BY LANDSCAPE ZONE IN THE NORTH REGION

Landscape zone	*Area (km²)*	*No. of sites*	*Density of sites per km²*
Solway Basin	978.13	21	0.0215
Eden Valley	809.56	11	0.0136
Northumbria Coal Measures	1565.92	20	0.0128
North Northumberland Coastal Plain	377.58	3	0.0079
Border Uplands	3950.80	28	0.0071
Lancashire Plain and Valleys	1642.24	11	0.0067
West Cumbria Coastal Plain	499.74	2	0.0040
Pennine Dales Fringe	873.03	3	0.0034
Cumbria Fells and Dales	3461.12	10	0.0029
North Pennines	2145.63	6	0.0028
Forest of Bowland	1114.85	3	0.0027
Yorkshire Dales	2399.84	5	0.0021

research interests of George Jobey who, during the second half of the twentieth century, excavated a number of Iron Age and Romano-British rural sites in this part of the region.

Whereas the general trend towards a greater density of sites in the valley systems and low-lying areas may reflect genuine concentrations of settlement in these fertile areas (cf. Mattingly 2006, 418) the uplands were certainly by no means as sparsely populated as the excavated evidence suggests. Taylor (2007, 12) has shown how the North-West and the North-East are, by far, the two regions of England best represented by upstanding earthworks, with good preservation of these in the region's uplands, which have seen less destruction through arable farming or housing development. Although usually undated, sites represented by earthworks and cropmarks together made up 85 per cent of the potential evidence for Romano-British settlement within Taylor's dataset for the North-East and North-West (Taylor 2007, 12), and the excavated evidence formed only a minor component. While the excavated data provide little information about the density of settlement in the North, however, they do provide contextual and chronological information that is rarely available from sites recognised primarily through aerial photography or field survey. This is particularly the case in an area in which finds scatters form a minor component of the evidence, because of a general scarcity of artefacts at rural settlements in the Iron Age and Roman periods (*ibid.*, 41–3).

ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The Roman archaeology of the North is dominated by military sites, notably the forts associated with Hadrian's Wall and the major communication routes of the region (FIG. 9.4). Villas are almost completely absent from the region, although sites characterised as farmsteads at Old Brampton (Blake 1960) and Old Durham (Richmond *et al.* 1944; Wright and Gillam 1951; 1953) are contenders. Indeed, the latter may relate to a known distribution of villas in south-east County Durham in the North-East region (Ch. 7), and may therefore be regarded as a northern outlier of this group, rather than an entirely isolated occurrence. The civilian towns and villages that are a feature of the settlement pattern further south in the province are absent, although large nucleated civilian settlements, *vici*, were associated with almost all of the permanent forts (see Sommer 2006 for an up-to-date assessment of this settlement type). At least two of these, Carlisle in Cumbria, and Corbridge in Northumberland, may eventually have had civic functions as tribal capitals (Mattingly 2006, 261).

In terms of the rural settlement pattern, farmsteads, as elsewhere, represent by far the most common type of settlement recorded from the region; the 81 excavated farmsteads account for 82 per cent of settlements (TABLE 9.2; FIG. 9.4). It is important to note here that military *vici* are falsely under-represented in the dataset, as for reasons of pragmatism (i.e. numbers of archaeological interventions are too large) *vici* associated with forts along Hadrian's Wall and the Stanegate (e.g. Vindolanda) were excluded from data collection. The Border Uplands and the Solway Basin, through which the route of Hadrian's Wall runs, therefore include greater numbers of *vici* than TABLE 9.2 and FIG. 9.4 suggest. Aside from farmsteads and *vici,* other types of settlement are very scarce indeed. A single site has been classified as a roadside nucleated settlement, at Walton-le-Dale, Lancashire (Gibbons and

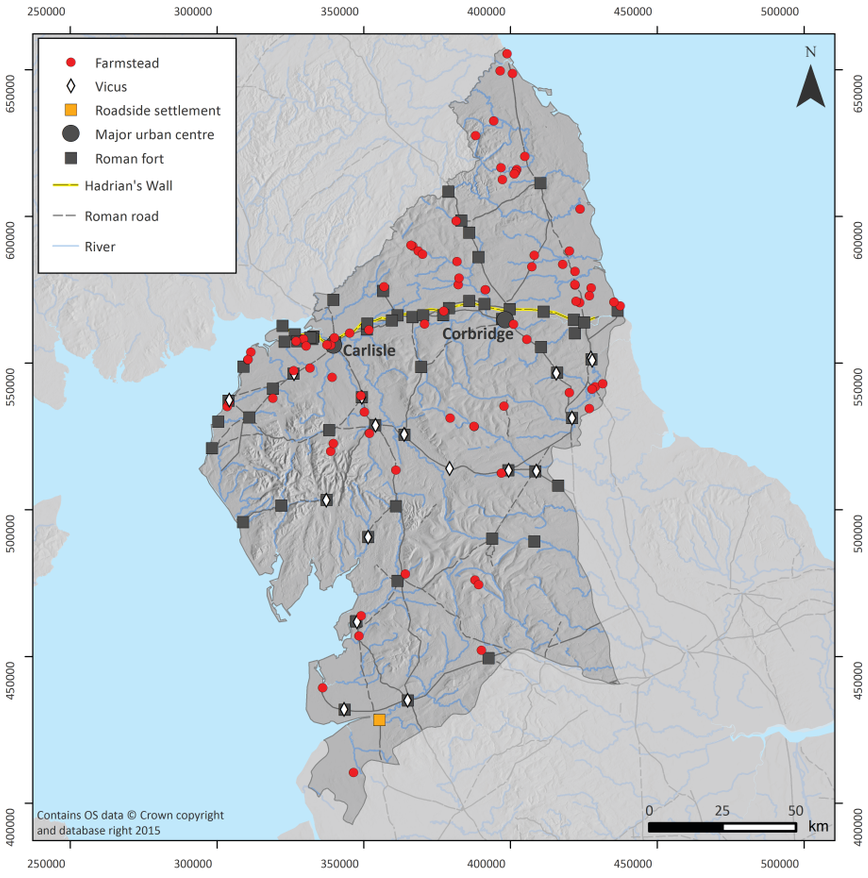

FIG. 9.4. Distribution of excavated late Iron Age/Roman rural settlements in the North region in relation to Roman roads and urban military sites (excluding excavated *vici* associated with forts on Hadrian's Wall and the Stanegate)

TABLE 9.2: NUMBER OF SITES BY TYPE IN EACH LANDSCAPE ZONE IN THE NORTH REGION

Landscape zone	*Farmstead*	*Roadside settlement*	*Vicus*	*Other site*	*Total*	*% of total settlement*
Border Uplands	26	0	0	2	28	23%
Northumbria Coal Measures	16	0	4	0	20	16%
Solway Basin	14	0	2	5	21	17%
North Pennines	5	0	0	1	6	5%
Lancashire Plain and Valleys	5	1	3	2	11	9%
Eden Valley	4	0	4	3	11	9%
Cumbria Fells and Dales	4	0	2	4	10	8%
North Northumberland Coastal Plain	3	0	0	0	3	2%
Yorkshire Dales	3	0	0	2	5	4%
West Cumbria Coastal Plain	1	0	0	1	2	2%
Pennine Dales Fringe	0	0	2	1	3	2%
Forest of Bowland	0	0	0	3	3	2%
Total	**81**	**1**	**17**	**24**	**123**	**100%**

Howard-Davis 2001; Pickering 1957), although the importance of this site may have been as a harbour with likely military connections (Gibbons and Howard-Davis 2001). The remaining 24 non-domestic sites comprised six industrial sites, mostly with military associations, eight funerary sites, primarily associated with *vici*, five field systems, three caves and two shrines.

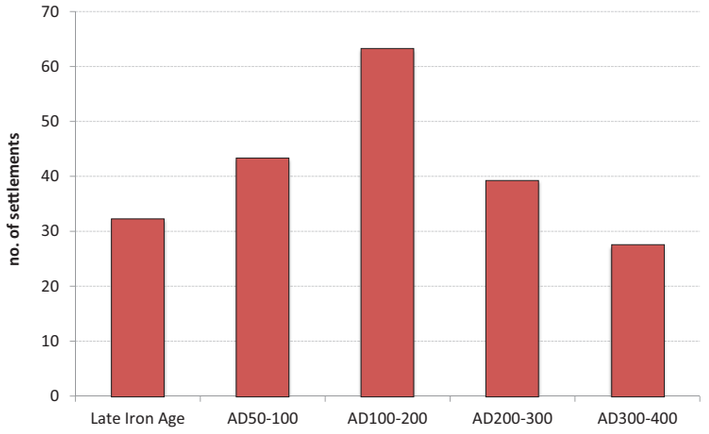

FIG. 9.5. Number of settlements in use over time in the North region

REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY

It is necessary to preface any discussion of the chronological development of Romano-British settlement in the North with a caveat regarding the quality of dating evidence for rural settlements in the region. Whereas there has been a marked increase in the adoption of absolute dating techniques in recent years, particularly radiocarbon dating, many of the sites excavated prior to the end of the twentieth century are dated based exclusively on ceramic evidence. Unfortunately, ceramics are a poor dating tool for late Iron Age and Romano-British rural sites in the north. Much of the region appears to have been aceramic during the Iron Age, and most rural sites produce little pottery, even when occupied during the Roman period. Where Iron Age pottery does occur it is often imprecisely dated, and very long-lived pottery traditions mean that it is usually impossible on the basis of pottery form or fabric to identify the point within the Iron Age when vessels were in use (Sherlock 2012; Cunliffe 2005, 212; Hodgson pers. comm.). These issues clearly limit the confidence with which many farmsteads in the region can be dated, and it is likely that many sites occupied during the late Iron Age and Roman periods have gone unrecognised due to a lack of dating evidence. For other settlement types, even those without radiocarbon dates, the basis for our understanding of site chronologies is on a sounder footing, as most have a Roman military connection and therefore had access to a range of more closely datable material culture. This lack of precision for the region's sites means that the chronological patterns shown in FIGS 9.5–9.8 are presented here by century, rather than by half-century as in some chapters in this volume. The variable quality of dating evidence also means that the discussion of settlement chronology that follows must be regarded as tentative.

The above caveats noted, the broad chronological pattern for settlement within the region, incorporating all types of domestic site, is for a steady rise in the number of settlements occupied between the late Iron Age and the end of the second century A.D. It is somewhat unclear whether the apparent peak in sites occupied during the second century A.D. reflects a genuine increase in settlement numbers, or whether the pattern represents an increased number of sites receiving Roman pottery at this time, perhaps misleadingly suggesting a second-century origin for some. Whatever the reality, the increase in settlement seems to have been relatively short lived, and there appears to have been a dramatic reduction in the number of sites occupied during the third century A.D., followed by continued settlement abandonment during the fourth century (FIG. 9.5).

This broad trend of course masks important differences in the chronologies of the two main classes of site within the region, with the chronological development of military *vici* and farmsteads being quite different for the most part (FIGS 9.6 and 9.7). *Vici* grew up adjacent to forts and their fortunes were therefore inextricably linked to the Roman military situation in the north; they therefore tend to emerge during the late first to early second century A.D., during the various phases of military consolidation of this period. The decline of military *vici* in this region during the second half of the third century is a well-recognised phenomenon (Bidwell and Hodgson 2009, 33–4). The region's farmsteads, on the other hand, have more varied chronologies. Some produce evidence suggesting continuity between the Iron Age and Roman periods (e.g. Baldhowend, Matterdale, Cumbria: Loney and Hoaen 2005; Kennel Hall Knowe, North Tynedale, Northumberland: Jobey 1978), whereas others, as far as we can tell from the abovementioned limited

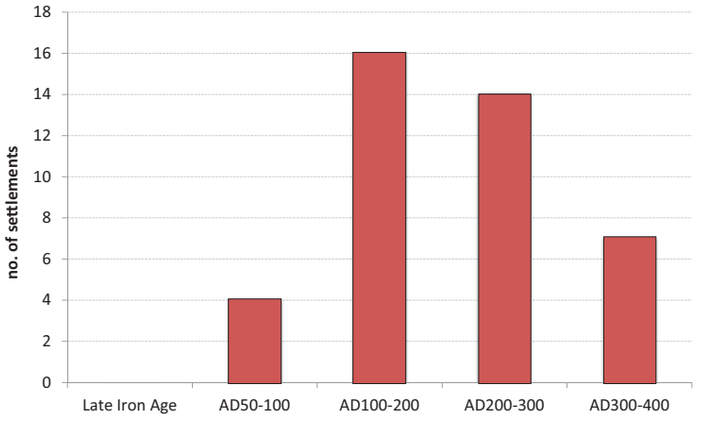

FIG. 9.6. Number of *vici* in use over time in the North region

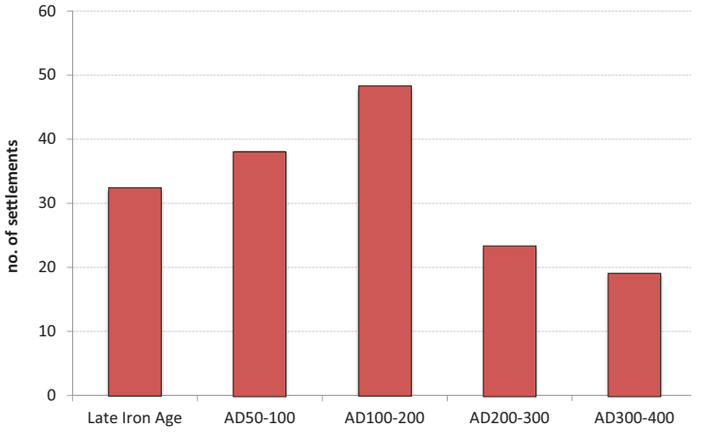

FIG. 9.7. Number of farmsteads in use over time in the North region

dating evidence, emerged only after the conquest, in some cases perhaps as late as the late third century (e.g. Fingland: Richardson 1977; Old Brampton: Blake 1960; Wolsty Hall: Blake 1960, all Cumbria).

There are also some important sub-regional differences in the chronology of farmsteads. The relatively sparse data from the region as a whole means that comparing the chronology of farmsteads by dividing them according to the region's landscape zones, as undertaken in some of the other chapters, is of limited value, and so here the data have been divided by using the line of Hadrian's Wall as a boundary, creating two groups of settlements, those to the north of the Wall and those to the south (FIG. 9.8). While Hadrian's Wall forms a convenient boundary to separate the settlements into two more or less numerically equal groups (37 farmsteads north of Hadrian's Wall, 44 to the south), it must be remembered that construction of the Wall did not begin until *c.* A.D. 122, and even after this point the frontier was extended to the Antonine Wall in Scotland at the Forth-Clyde isthmus, only reverting back to Hadrian's Wall permanently in *c.* A.D. 160. We must therefore be careful not to assume that all differences in the settlement pattern relate to the presence of a static and permanent political boundary, as up to a point the line of the frontier was dynamic. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there are apparent differences in the chronology of farming settlements north and south of the line of Hadrian's Wall that perhaps do reflect the changing political geography.

Examination of the chronological trajectory of farming settlements north and south of Hadrian's Wall (FIG. 9.8) shows that both groups of sites initially behave similarly, and in both areas there appears to have been an increase in the number of farmsteads between the late Iron Age and the end of the second century A.D. However, the second century A.D. appears to have seen the emergence of a substantially greater number of farmsteads to the south of the Wall. Again, caution is required; it is unclear whether some of the farmsteads south of the Wall may have been in existence prior to the Roman conquest, and generally low levels of visible material culture in the west of the region

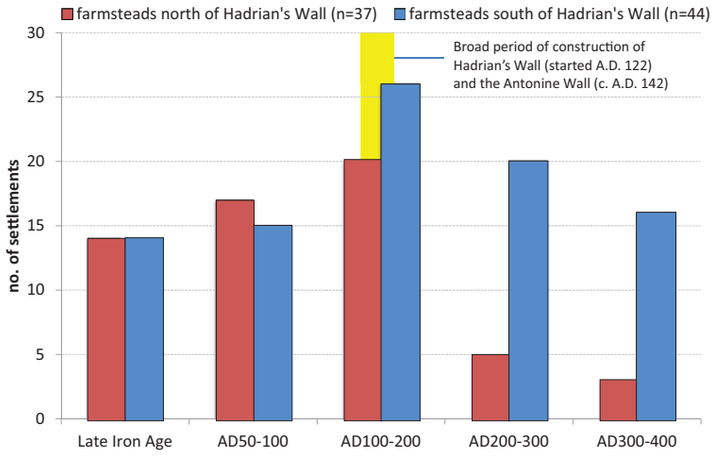

FIG. 9.8. Number of farmsteads in use over time in the North region, north and south of Hadrian's Wall

may mean that early phases have gone unrecognised at some sites (Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 52; Bewley 1994, 35). Nevertheless, differences in settlement density north and south of the Wall have long been recognised (e.g. Jones and Mattingly 1990, 260), and it seems likely that the establishment of the new frontier, which followed the Roman military withdrawal from Scotland, provided a level of security south of the Wall that afforded rural settlement expansion.

The differences in settlement chronology continue into the third century, and by the end of the second century A.D. sites to the north and south of the Wall appear to have experienced strikingly different fortunes. By the third century A.D. the number of sites occupied in both areas had reduced from their second-century peak; yet whereas the south saw a reduction of 30 per cent, the north saw the number of farmsteads occupied reduce by a much greater 75 per cent. The apparent widespread abandonment of settlements in England north of Hadrian's Wall has previously been noted (Hodgson *et al.* 2013), and similar evidence has also been recognised in parts of Scotland. Macinnes (1984), for instance, has suggested that the abandonment of brochs in lowland Scotland occurred following the abandonment of the Antonine Wall, pointing to widespread social upheaval at this time. In Fife and Perthshire, Armit (1999) has noted similar large-scale settlement desertion in the late second or early third century A.D., represented by a 'souterrain abandonment horizon'. Hodgson has discussed several potential reasons for the phenomenon, including a possible deliberate depopulation or movement of communities to territories further south (Hodgson *et al.* 2013). Given the inherent problems with the dating of sites in the north it would be dangerous to associate the decline in the number of farmsteads in the late second/early third century A.D. too closely with specific historical events, yet the description by Dio Cassius of major incursions from beyond the frontier in around A.D. 180 (Dio Cassius LXXII, 8, in Ireland 1996, 96) is testimony to the instability of this zone, and this part of the region may have begun to be regarded by some of the local inhabitants as an undesirable place to stay. There is, however, no evidence from any of the excavated sites north of the wall that they came to a violent end, and other possibilities exist. A period of climatic instability is now recognised, which is thought to have begun at around the start of the third century (McCormick *et al.* 2012, 185–6), and it is possible that occupation of farmsteads in the upland, agriculturally marginal, landscapes that characterise the area north of the Wall proved unsustainable. Whether a response to climatic instability, or to changes in the social and political situation, or a mixture of the two, the frontier zone during the late second and early third century A.D. was a dynamic place, and the rural population of the area north of the border at Hadrian's Wall appear to have witnessed profound changes.

FARMSTEADS: MORPHOLOGY, CHRONOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION

The broad pattern for the form of rural settlement in the North is well recognised, and has previously been characterised as being represented by dispersed, small enclosed settlements, with few open sites and complex farmsteads rarely seen north of the Tees Valley (Taylor 2007, 42–3; Mattingly 2006, 421). A high proportion, 73 per cent, of the excavated farmsteads from the region have sufficiently complete plans to allow classification by form, and the regional pattern for rural settlement morphology broadly reflects that

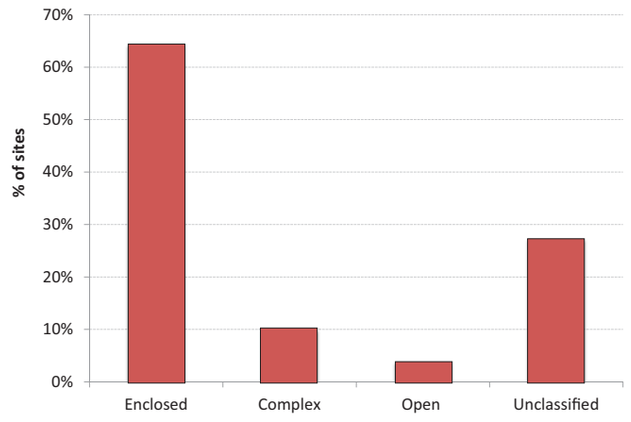

FIG. 9.9. Farmstead morphology in the North region

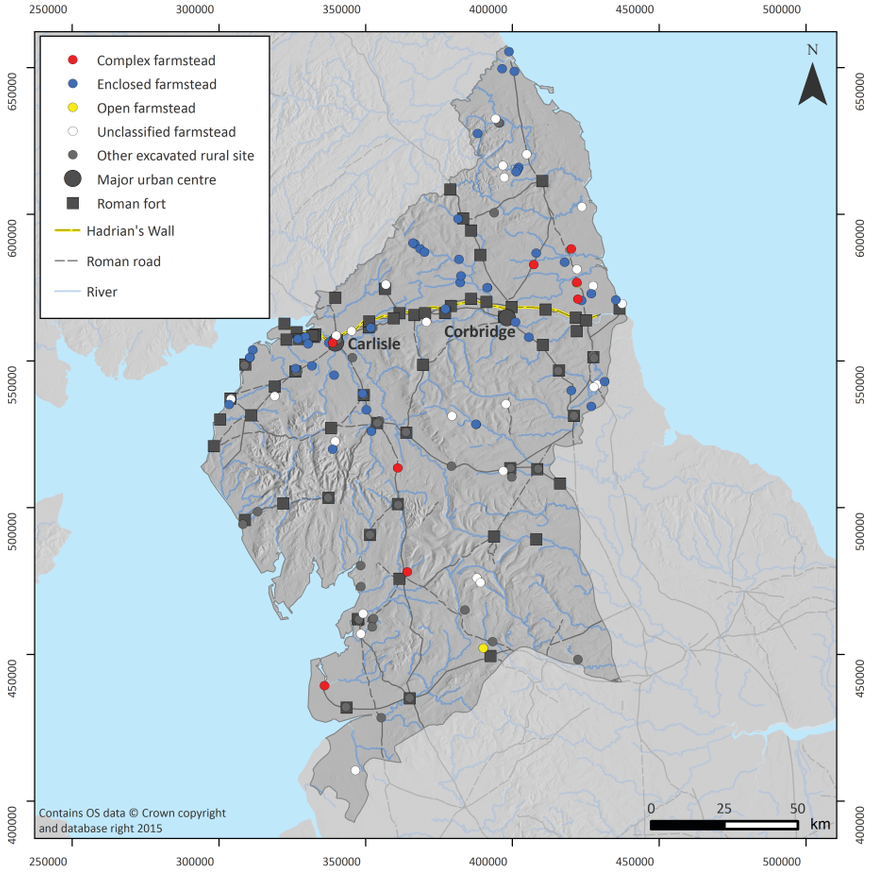

FIG. 9.10. Distribution of all excavated farmsteads (open, enclosed, complex and unclassified) in the North region

identified by Taylor, with the vast majority of classified farmsteads being of enclosed form (FIGS 9.9 and 9.10). Only three farmsteads (four per cent) produced clear evidence for ever having been open settlements, although two unclassified farmsteads were regarded as potential examples. The small number of open settlements are widely distributed across the region, yet this almost certainly reflects the difficulty with identifying these types of site and they must have been more widespread than the excavated evidence indicates, as suggested by the survival of unenclosed sites as earthworks in the uplands of Cumbria (Taylor 2007, 43). Many sites also had complex sequences of development; at Murton High Crags, Northumberland, an unenclosed late Bronze Age or early Iron Age settlement was replaced by an enclosed settlement in the mid-Iron Age, with a final enclosure reconstructed in stone in the late Iron Age (Jobey and Jobey 1987). Indeed, in the

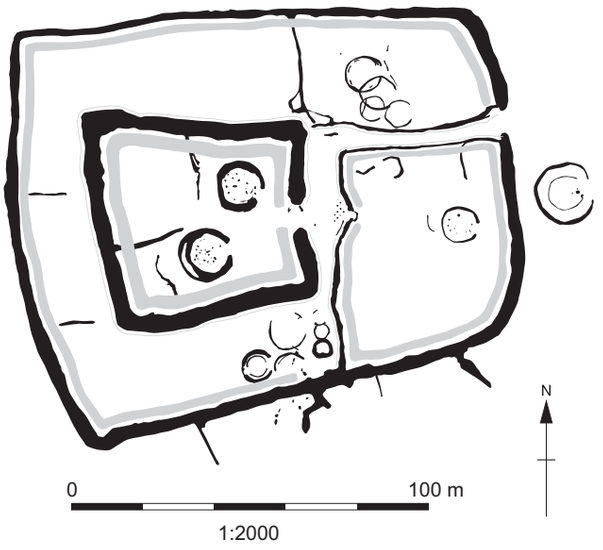

FIG. 9.11. Plan of complex farmstead at Blagdon Park 2, Northumberland (Hodgson *et al.* 2013)

Northumberland Coastal Plain this type of sequence of development, from open to enclosed settlement (though without the stone construction), is now regarded as the standard pattern (Hodgson *et al.* 2013, 186).

Eight farmsteads (10 per cent) have been defined as being of complex form, along with an additional possible example that remains unclassified. However, most of the region's complex farmsteads differ quite considerably from the types of site classified as complex farmsteads elsewhere in the province, tending towards single, large enclosures with multiple sub-divisions (e.g. Blagdon Park 2 (Hodgson *et al.* 2013); FIG. 9.11), rather than the sprawling linear complexes that are more typical of the south. Blagdon Park 2, for instance, may be regarded as a variant of the more typical enclosed farmsteads of the region, and it is only the provision of additional internal enclosures that marks it out as different.

The small number of complex farmsteads from the North region are quite widely distributed, although four occur in a relatively tight cluster to the north-east, in the Border Uplands and Northumbria Coal Measures. Chronologically, these four examples are somewhat different to the other examples; all of the north-east examples appear to have had origins in the mid- to late Iron Age, and with the exception of Huckhoe (Jobey 1959), seem not to have continued far beyond the start of the second century A.D., reflecting the previously discussed impact of the developments on the military frontier. The more widely distributed farmsteads of complex type, on the other hand, tend to emerge later, and only the example from Carlisle Infirmary (Reeves and Zant 2001) appears to have had Iron Age origins, at which point it was one of the few examples of an open settlement recorded from the region, only developing into a farmstead of complex form during the later first century A.D. The others appear to have emerged during the second century A.D. Although superficially similar in terms of their broad morphology, the complex farmsteads of the region are therefore clearly diverse, and the function of the settlement at Blagdon Park 2 and the social status and life experience of its occupants may well have differed considerably from the site excavated at Poulton-le-Fylde (Oxford Archaeology North 2014; FIG. 9.12), situated over 100 km south of the military frontier, and perhaps established several generations after Blagdon Park 2 went out of use. In many ways these seemingly similar rural sites may be incomparable.

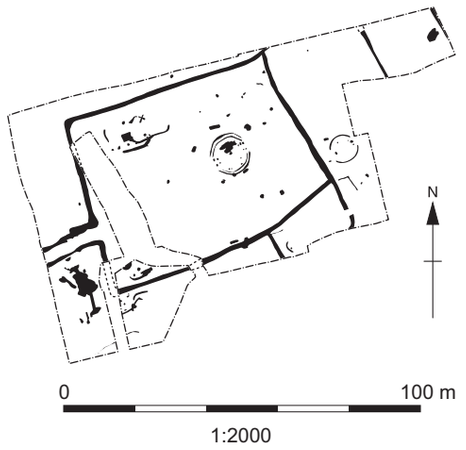

FIG. 9.12. Plan of complex farmstead at Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (Oxford Archaeology North 2014)

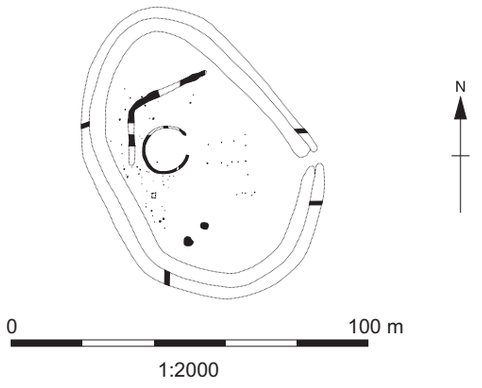

FIG. 9.13. Plan of a single-ditched curvilinear enclosed farmstead at Crosshill, Penrith, Cumbria (Higham and Jones 1983)

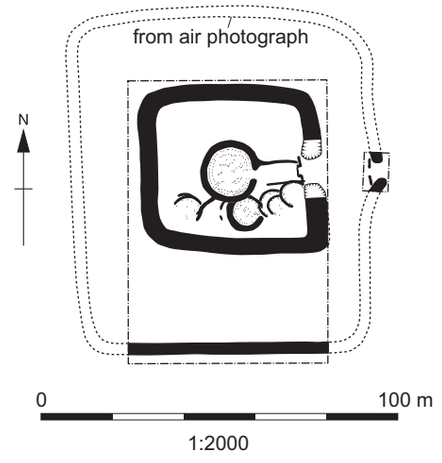

FIG. 9.14. Plan of a double-ditched rectilinear enclosed farmstead at Burradon, Northumberland (Jobey 1970)

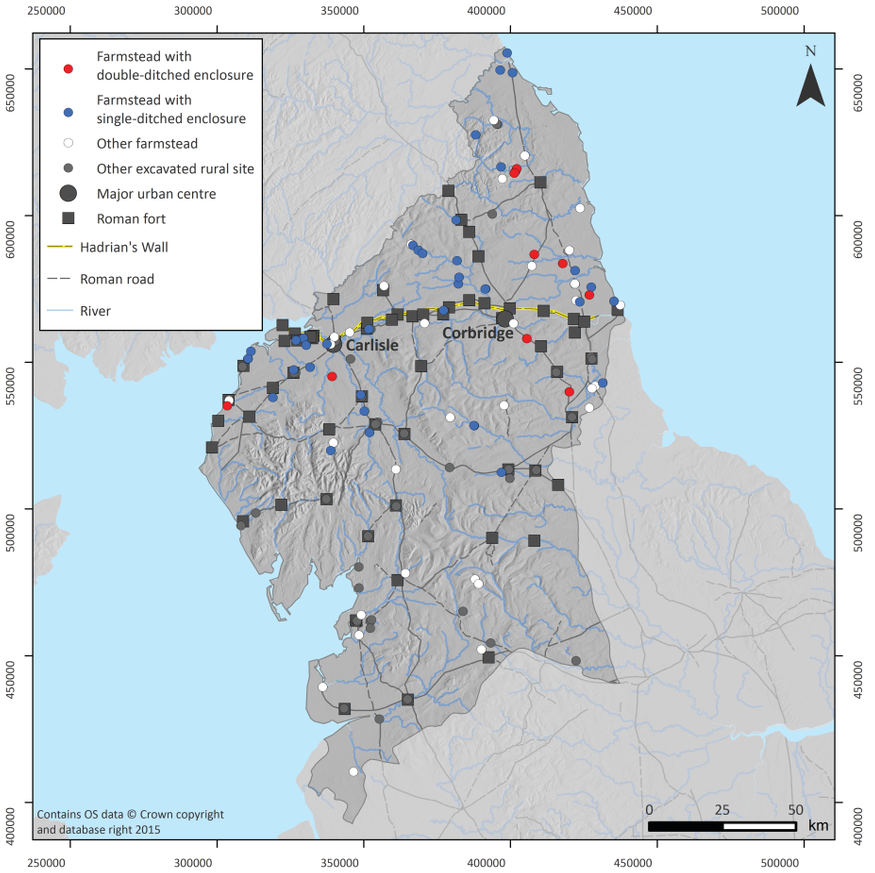

FIG. 9.15. Distribution of farmsteads with single and double-ditched enclosures in the North region

As we have seen, the majority of farmsteads in the region are of the enclosed type, although there are considerable variations within this broad class of rural settlement. Across the region as a whole they tend to be relatively small and of single-ditch-and-bank construction (e.g. Crosshill, Penrith, Cumbria (Higham and Jones 1983); FIG. 9.13), though a small number (nine examples) have larger double-ditched circuits (e.g. Burradon, Northumberland (Jobey 1970); FIG. 9.14), and these are chiefly located in the north-east of the region, in the Border Uplands and the Northumbria Coal Measures (FIG. 9.15). In terms of shape, enclosures of broadly rectilinear form are most

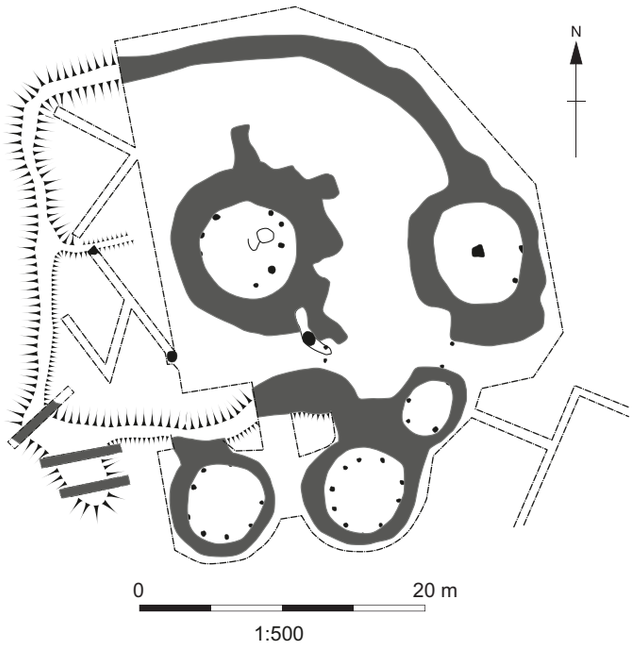

FIG. 9.16. Plan of an irregularly shaped enclosed farmstead at Milking Gap, Northumberland (Kilbride-Jones 1938)

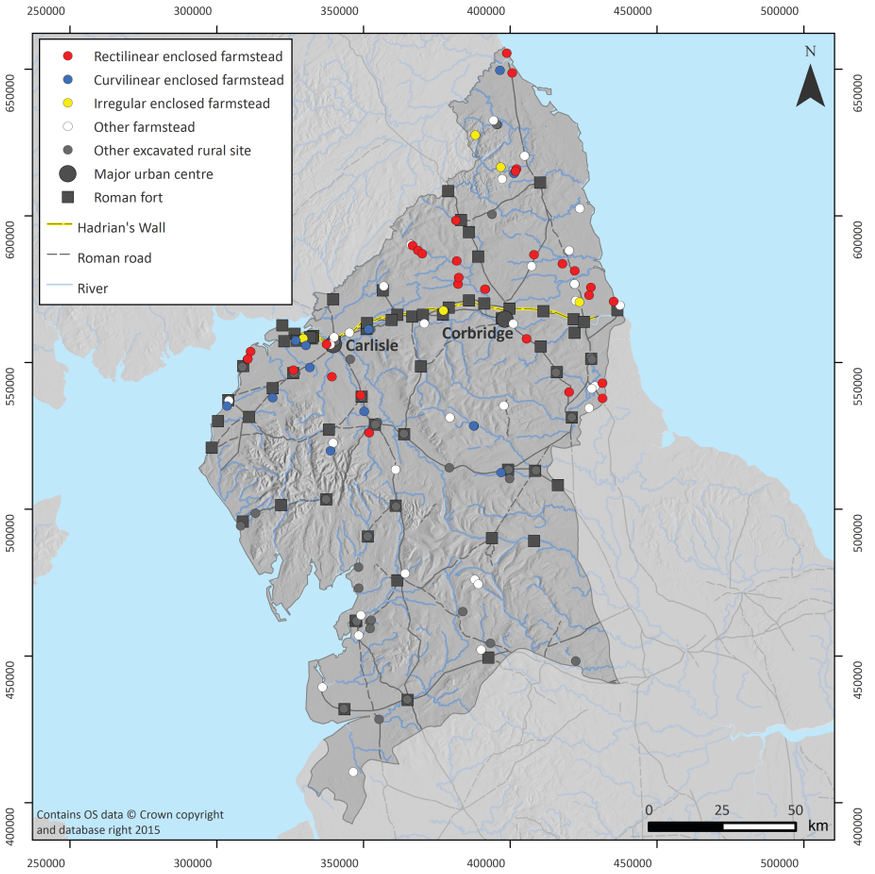

FIG. 9.17. Distribution of farmsteads with rectilinear, curvilinear and irregular shaped enclosures in the North region

common (e.g. Burradon; FIG. 9.14), although curvilinear (e.g. Crosshill, Penrith; FIG. 9.13) and more irregularly shaped (e.g. Milking Gap, Northumberland (Kilbride-Jones 1938); FIG. 9.16) enclosures also occur. There are insufficient numbers to undertake meaningful analysis at the level of individual landscape zones, but there are some apparent sub-regional differences in the distribution of enclosures of different shapes (FIG. 9.17). Whereas farmsteads with broadly rectilinear or sub-square enclosures are widespread, occurring across the region, those with enclosures of more curvilinear form are focused predominantly in the west, principally in Cumbria.

There is also considerable variation in terms of the method of construction of enclosures. Some comprise ditches and earthwork banks (e.g. Gubeon Cottage, Northumberland: Jobey 1957), while others, principally in upland areas where stone is readily available, were constructed using drystone walling (e.g. Milking Gap, Northumberland: Kilbride-Jones 1938; see FIG. 9.16; Glencoyne Park, Ullswater, Cumbria: Hoaen and Loney 2010). At some sites stone enclosures of Roman date were preceded by pre-Roman enclosures of timber, as at Belling Law (Jobey 1977) and Kennel Hall Knowe (Jobey 1978), both in Northumberland.

BUILDINGS

Our evidence for rural buildings in the North region amounts to 407 individual buildings from 78 sites (TABLE 9.3). In total, 60 per cent of these structures were of circular form, though of course, as in other regions, the distribution of circular and rectangular building forms is very uneven, with a stark contrast between the nucleated military *vici* and roadside settlements on the one hand and the farmsteads on the other. Of the buildings from farmsteads and other (non-nucleated) rural sites, 95 per cent were of circular plan, yet these are almost absent from nucleated sites, amounting to just three per cent of the buildings from *vici* and the single roadside settlement. Rectangular buildings do appear slightly more prevalent at non-nucleated rural settlements in the third century, but it is not until the fourth century that they emerge as the predominant architectural component (FIG. 9.18). At *vici* and other nucleated sites in the north rectangular-shaped buildings were always dominant.

While buildings of circular form are far more common on farmsteads across the region as a whole, there are apparently some intra-regional differences. Again, the limited number of sites makes detailed sub-regional analysis problematic, but using Hadrian's Wall as an arbitrary line to separate those to the north from those to the south, there seem to be some subtle differences in the architectural forms adopted at rural sites in the two areas. Rectangular buildings did not become common at farmsteads anywhere in the region until at least the third century, but where relatively early buildings of this type do occur they are exclusively from the area to the south of the Wall, at sites such as Eller Beck (Lowndes 1964), Dobcross Hall, Dalston (Higham 1981), Carlisle Infirmary (Reeves and Zant 2001), and Old Durham (Richmond *et al.* 1944; Wright and Gillam 1951; 1953), all of which seem to have had rectangular buildings by the second century A.D. What is notable about these sites south of the Wall with early rectangular buildings is that most are atypical farmsteads for the region. The site at Old Durham includes a bathhouse, which is thought likely to have been associated with a nearby villa, although no such villa building has yet been found. At Carlisle Infirmary the site transformed into a complex farmstead at the same time as the rectangular structures were constructed, and at Eller Beck the site was also morphologically complex. Similarly, at Faverdale, just outside the border of the region, in Darlington, County Durham, an unenclosed settlement of roundhouses was transformed in the early second century A.D. into a complex farmstead with masonry rectangular buildings, including a small bathhouse (Proctor 2012; see Ch. 7). The early adoption of rectangular buildings in the North, in the few instances where early buildings of this type have been found at farmsteads, seems therefore in most cases to be associated with the emergence of new types of site

TABLE 9.3: BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH REGION

Site type	*Total no. buildings*	*No. circular buildings*	*No. rectangular buildings*
Farmstead/other rural site	255	241	14
Roadside settlement	21	1	20
Vicus	129	3	126
Other site	2	1	1
Total	**407**	**246**	**161**

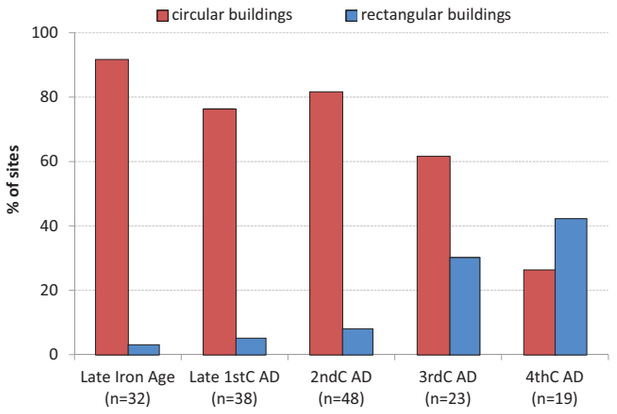

FIG. 9.18. Use of circular and rectangular buildings on farmsteads and other (non-nucleated) rural sites in the North region over time

that differ from the region's traditional enclosed settlements, and the use of non-traditional architectural forms raises questions concerning the identity of the occupants of these farmsteads.

In terms of the materials used in the construction of buildings at farmsteads in the North, masonry circular buildings are marginally more common than those of timber construction (TABLE 9.4). This partially reflects the widespread availability of stone in the upland areas of the region, although, as timber buildings are more difficult to identify during excavation, these are certainly likely to be under-represented. Where stone structures were built at farmsteads in the north they were typically of unmortared, drystone construction, reflecting a very different tradition to the types of rectangular, mortared stone buildings erected at many of the region's military *vici* (discussed in further detail below). Several sites produced both timber and stone buildings. Precise dating of structures is often unavailable, but in some cases timber and stone buildings seem to have been in use contemporaneously, as at Bank Newton, North Yorkshire (Casswell and Daniel 2010), where a stone roundhouse sat next to two smaller timber buildings, perhaps huts or byres, all dating to the third century A.D. At other sites, however, curvilinear drystone buildings occur relatively late in the development of sites, often replacing earlier timber buildings, for instance at Forcegarth Pasture South, Durham (Fairless and Coggins 1986), Kennel Hall Knowe, North Tynedale (Jobey 1978), and Tower Knowe, Wellhaugh (Jobey 1973). Where dating evidence is available, stone-built circular roundhouses have proven to be of a range of dates, although most appear to emerge in the second century A.D., sometimes representing the final phase in a series of developments. Drystone masonry buildings often occur at sites with drystone-walled enclosures, with the construction of both sometimes a contemporary culmination of longer term processes in settlement development (e.g. Murton High Crags: Jobey and Jobey 1987; Tower Knowe, Wellhaugh: Jobey 1973). In terms of their geographical distribution, there appears to be a slightly greater tendency for sites with circular masonry buildings to be situated to the north of Hadrian's Wall, again, likely reflecting the availability of stone in this predominantly upland area. However, the reason for the *temporal* shift towards building in stone rather than timber is uncertain as rural settlements of the north otherwise typically display conservatism, especially with the continuation of the roundhouse as the principal architectural form. Given the largely second-century date for most of the masonry roundhouses and stone-built enclosures, however, it is possible that the shift towards stone reflects increasing pressure on woodland resources, perhaps with official restrictions being placed on the use of timber for civilian purposes. Wood was an important resource, not only for major building projects such as the construction of the two Walls, but also as fuel for daily life and the various industries associated with the military occupation, including ironworking and pottery production. While pollen evidence suggests that much

TABLE 9.4: BUILDING MATERIAL AT FARMSTEADS IN THE NORTH REGION

	Circular masonry buildings	*Circular timber buildings*
No. of sites with buildings	30	27
Total no. of buildings	131	110

woodland in the North had already been cleared during the Iron Age, there was certainly a major episode of deforestation during the late Iron Age and early Roman periods, which suggests that wood may have become a scarce resource by the second century A.D. (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 290; Dark 2000, 108).

At most military *vici* masonry buildings outnumber those of timber construction, although buildings of both materials are usually present, and again timber buildings must certainly be under-represented. Sometimes a succession of timber buildings culminated in the construction of a building in stone, as at the *vicus* at Old Penrith, Cumbria (Austen 1991). Buildings in *vici* typically take the form of 'strip-buildings', sometimes of aisled construction, fronting the roads running through the settlement to the fort, though at sites where the layout of the *vicus* is well understood, usually where there has been extensive geophysical survey as at Maryport (Biggins and Taylor 2004), there is good evidence for the presence of smaller structures behind those fronting the main road. The purpose of buildings recorded from *vici* are often unknown, but they must have had a variety of functions, including domestic accommodation, temples, as at Maryport, possible *mansiones*, as at Lancaster, industrial workshops and/or shops at Ribchester and Lanchester, and possible stables at Watercrook (cf. Sommer 2006). Most *vici* would also have had bathhouses, which may have served the fort and the civilian settlements, and these were identified at several *vici* included in the database. Buildings at the region's single roadside settlement are very similar to those from the *vici*, although as the site at Walton-le-Dale is likely to have had military associations it should not be regarded as a type of settlement dissimilar to the *vici*.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Considering sites in the North as a whole, their topographical distribution differs somewhat from other regions, with a tendency for excavated sites to occupy more elevated positions. This partially reflects the predominantly upland character of the region, and also the focus by some archaeologists such as George Jobey on well-preserved and visible sites in the region's uplands. The research-focused excavation of such sites provides a useful contrast to the sites excavated as a result of development, principally concentrated in lowland areas such as the Solway Basin and the Northumbria Coal Measures, indicating that settlement in the region was widely distributed across different types of terrain.

There are, however, some clear and important distinctions between the major settlement types. Around a quarter of all farmsteads in the region occupy low-lying positions, and whereas some occupy the zones between 50 and 100 m, the majority occupy positions over 100 m above sea level (FIG. 9.19). Several of the region's military *vici* also occupy elevated locations, although as these settlements were dependent on forts, the position of these sites was dictated by strategic reasons for the siting of forts. *Vici* occupying low-lying areas in some cases were clearly situated alongside forts that took advantage of natural communication routes, including Ribchester on the River Ribble and Lancaster on the River Lune. The region's only roadside settlement at Walton-le-Dale occupies a low-lying position, again reflecting its situation on land adjacent to the navigable River Ribble, and indeed the site may have acted as a harbour servicing the military. Aside from this roadside settlement and some of the *vici*, there is little evidence to suggest that access to navigable waterways affected the location of most of the region's settlements, and while access to water is of course a basic necessity, few farmsteads appear to have been positioned with access to waterborne transport in mind.

Whereas rivers appear to have been important transport routes for some nucleated settlements and military *vici*, roads formed the principal means for communication and every known *vicus* and roadside settlement was integrated into the road network. The widespread network of Roman roads meant that few other excavated sites were far from the nearest major land route, and a large majority (75 per cent) of farmsteads are located within 5 km of the nearest known road. There is a difference, however, between the farmsteads north and south of Hadrian's Wall, with a greater proportion situated within 5 km of roads south of the Wall – 84 per cent (37 of 44 sites) as opposed to 65 per cent (24 of 37 sites) of farmsteads to the north – suggesting an unsurprising greater level of integration into the Roman communications network for those occupying sites within the borders of the empire, which, in turn, reflects a greater investment in infrastructure to the south of the Wall. While the major Roman roads are the most easily recognised elements of the transportation network in the region, settlements were also linked through systems of smaller trackways. Few sites with trackways have been excavated in the North, although this no doubt primarily reflects a relative lack of large-scale open-area excavations. No site could have existed in isolation without communication routes, however, and several sites have produced evidence for the way in which they were linked to their wider

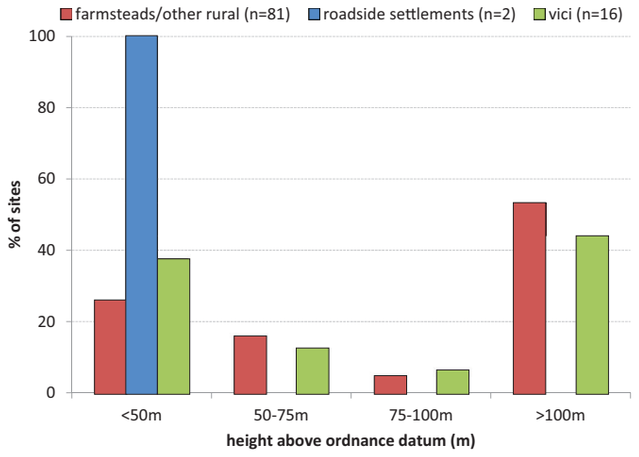

FIG. 9.19 Spot height analysis on major settlement types within the North region

landscapes. At Pegswood Moor, Morpeth (Proctor 2009), on the Northumberland Coastal Plain, a track or droveway led from the settlement towards the coast, whereas at Yanwath Wood, near Penrith, Cumbria, a track led towards the River Lowther (Higham 1983). At Crosshill, Penrith, a cobbled path led into the enclosed farmstead (Higham and Jones 1983), and at Dutton's Farm, Lathom, in West Lancashire, landscape features included field boundaries and trackways; a small group of coins, perhaps a purse loss, were recovered from a ditch associated with one of the tracks (Cowell 2003).

Trackways were only one element of the landscapes occupied by rural sites, and settlements were also often surrounded by boundaries defining field systems. Compared with some other parts of the country our evidence for fields in the North is comparatively meagre, with only eighteen records. This may partly reflect the limited amount of archaeological investigation in the region, but perhaps is also a result of a greater emphasis on land used for grazing, particularly as much of the landscape is marginal upland (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 290–1). Nonetheless, several examples are known, and in some cases settlements clearly sat beside or within complexes of fields, as at Ewe Close, Cumbria (Collingwood 1933; Collingwood 1909), and Halton Gill, Littondale, North Yorkshire (Maude 1999).

The distribution of field systems within the region is worthy of note, as, of the eighteen field systems recorded, fourteen (78 per cent) were from the area south of Hadrian's Wall, and just four were recorded north of the Wall. This uneven distribution has previously been noted (e.g. Jones and Mattingly 1990, 260–1) and may be associated with an intensification of agricultural production in the area south of the Wall, possibly connected with the need to supply the requirements of both the army and an expanding local population. However, the generally poor dating evidence available for most of the region's field systems means that it is difficult to ascertain whether increased numbers to the south of the Wall correlates closely with the military developments. Pollen evidence suggests that agriculture was widespread in parts of the North well before the Roman conquest (Huntley 2013a, 46; Turner 1979), as do the presence of plough marks excavated from beneath Roman period contexts (Zant and Town 2013; Huntley 2009, 113), discussed in more detail below. A number of the excavated field systems do, however, appear to have had close associations with military sites, with field systems thought to be broadly contemporary with the *vici* at Brougham (Zant 2010), Maryport (Biggins and Taylor 2004) and Old Carlisle (Kirby 2009), suggesting that some of the inhabitants of *vici* may have been involved in food production; not all the food consumed by the army and its dependants need necessarily have been produced by farmsteads in the wider countryside or been transported from further afield.

There is some excavated evidence for the disruption that the Roman military installations must have had on the pre-existing agricultural landscape. At the Cumbria Institute of the Arts Campus, Carlisle, features including plough marks and a buried turf line were part of an extensive system of arable fields that were undated but sealed by a thick deposit, possibly associated with the construction of Hadrian's Wall (Zant and Town 2013). The reorganisation of the settlement and creation of a new field system at around the turn of the second century A.D. at Pegswood Moor, Morpeth, was also perhaps associated with changing patterns of land ownership and a reordering of the wider agricultural landscape in the wake of the developments on the military frontier at around this time (Proctor 2009).

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHIES: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BASIS OF SETTLEMENTS

Whereas some of the preceding chapters have incorporated sub-regional case studies in order to address questions concerning the social and economic complexities of Romano-British rural settlement, the relatively small number of excavated rural sites, as well as a general scarcity of both finds and environmental data from sites in the North region prohibits a comparable approach. For this chapter these questions are therefore explored at a broad regional level incorporating the sum of data from the North, in order to maximise the potential of the fairly limited evidence available.

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Evidence for a rural settlement hierarchy in the North region is far from clear. Civilian nucleated settlements occur only as extra-mural *vici* or as other sites with probable military connections. Positively identified villas are absent though, as we have seen, there are two sites with some 'villa characteristics'. A high-status settlement was probably associated with a bathhouse excavated in the 1950s at Old Durham (Richmond *et al.* 1944; Wright and Gillam 1951; 1953), while a domestic multi-roomed masonry building was revealed at Old Brampton, Cumbria (Blake 1960), though thought to be relatively crude with a thatched roof. However, earlier finds of a possible hypocaust from this site and a comparatively rich finds assemblage, including a crossbow brooch, lamp, figurine of Mercury and a hoard of third-century coins, indicate that it was an unusual settlement, and of comparatively high status for the region. Its location, just 2.5 km south of Hadrian's Wall, strongly suggests a military connection, perhaps being the residence of someone associated with the nearby fort at Castlesteads.

Elsewhere, the farmsteads of the region typically produce very little in the way of material culture, and the rural sites of Northumberland, for example, have been described as 'clichéd for the almost ubiquitous assemblage of a (broken) quernstone, a small handful of recognisably Roman sherds of pottery and a fragmentary glass bangle' (Collins 2014, 166). Military *vici* and roadside settlements, on the other hand, are typically well represented by a wide range of artefacts, reflecting the varied activities that went on at these centres and the diverse social mix that made up their populations. Large numbers of coins recovered from many *vici* indicate that they were foci for financial transactions that sometimes involved coins, although other mechanisms for the exchange of goods and services may also have been widely practised. A diverse range of brooches and other dress accessories attest to the myriad of identities that must have made up the population of these sites, which are likely to have comprised the families of soldiers, veterans, artisans, merchants, prostitutes, servants and slaves and anyone else who had a connection to the army or saw an opportunity to profit by providing a required service.

As we have seen, in some parts of the country there tend to be striking differences in the finds assemblages between enclosed and complex farmsteads, which suggest that these types of rural sites differed functionally, economically and/or socially. There is a much less clear distinction between the small number of settlements classified as complex farmsteads in the north and those classified as enclosed farmsteads in terms of their material culture; all are poorly represented by finds, which, when they do occur, tend to be of a similar nature. As we have seen, however, the sites characterised as complex farmsteads in the north tend to be somewhat different to those in the south, and in some cases are essentially a variant of more typical enclosed settlements.

Whereas artefacts from farmsteads in the region contribute relatively little to our understanding of the hierarchical relationship between classes of rural settlement outside the nucleated sites, recent work has suggested that there are morphological differences between some enclosed farmsteads in the region that reflect a degree of social stratification which has hitherto gone unrecognised. Exploring Iron Age and Roman settlement patterns in the Northumberland Coastal Plain, Hodgson *et al.* (2013, 193) have drawn attention to the monumentality of some enclosed settlements in this area, showing that sites such as West Brunton and Blagdon Park 2, were exceptionally large, of comparable size to a typical auxiliary fort containing 500 soldiers, and the earthwork enclosures at these sites must have given them a striking and formidable appearance, especially when compared to the smaller enclosed sites more typical of the North Tyne and Redesdale Valleys. The scale of these earthworks may have been intended to express the status and power of their occupants, and what is more, their construction must have required the mobilisation of considerable labour (*ibid.*, 194). Whereas the differences in social status that characterise the late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement patterns in some other parts of the province are largely absent from the rural settlements of the north, including rich and varied assemblages of material culture and the construction of luxurious Roman-style stone villas, this does not necessarily equate to a society

without social stratification. Traditional concepts of elite display may have taken different forms, with the construction of large monumental settlement enclosures, and possibly also the ownership of livestock, perhaps being the principal methods of expressing social status, in at least some parts of the north. Such large and impressive sites do not, however, appear to have survived for long into the Roman period, and West Brunton and Blagdon Park 2 may both have gone out of use by the turn of the second century A.D. (*ibid.*). These monumental sites therefore reflect pre-Roman Iron Age concepts of displaying status, and the lack of such sites from the second century onwards suggests that the arrival of Rome may have had a profound impact on the way social differentiation was manifested, at least in some areas.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MILITARY

As we have seen throughout the course of this chapter, the rural settlement pattern in the Roman North cannot be considered without regard to the presence of the Roman military. After the conquest of the north tens of thousands of people lived in the forts and their associated *vici*, and this new population must have had a profound effect on the surrounding countryside. The impact on the landscape surrounding military installations has been given recent attention by Huntley (2013a, 44, fig. 3.1a, 48), who emphasised how important the landscapes surrounding forts must have been for military production, calculating that the Batavian cavalry unit stationed at Vindolanda may have required an area of over 1000 ha of dedicated land (10 km^2), in order to feed its soldiers and horses. The substantial fort and *vicus* populations must have required the support of people living in the countryside to help produce food and other products (Stallibrass 2009), and there is now a widely held assumption that rural sites must have been supplying the military population and its dependents, whether this involved the purchase by the army of food and other supplies, or, as suggested by Shotter (2004), among others, the provision of grain or animals took the form of a payment of rent or tax in kind. So to what extent can such a relationship between rural sites in the north and the military be recognised?

Unfortunately, the lack of data available from excavated sites in the North makes it very difficult to identify clear relationships between military and rural sites. The acidic soils of the region mean that animal bones do not survive at most rural sites, and whereas a greater number of sites produce archaeobotanical evidence, these are also few in number, making it impossible in most cases to establish the types of produce that farmsteads generated and, potentially, supplied to the military. Given the lack of direct environmental evidence and the relatively small size of farmsteads in the north, there is little to suggest that most farmsteads in the region had the capacity to supply the vast quantities of grain, cattle and other produce required by the military. Whereas the occupants of farmsteads were almost certainly required to pay tax, and this may well have taken the form of cattle or other produce, it seems very unlikely that this alone would have provided the volume of food and other goods necessary to sustain the military machine and its dependants. The distribution of Dorset Black-Burnished wares (BB1) pottery, which occurs extensively at military sites in the north (but seldom at rural settlements), has been suggested as evidence for well-established long-distance military supply networks (Allen and Fulford 1996), which are also likely to have included archaeologically invisible products including salt, (perhaps, as suggested by Gerrard (2008), contained in the pots), grain, livestock, and other goods, suggesting that supplies were transported over considerable differences. Stallibrass (2009) has also raised the suggestion that the supply of livestock to military sites may have involved long-distance droving. The general lack of finds and the almost complete absence of coins, luxury goods and high-status buildings in the countryside of the North provides little evidence for the accumulation of personal wealth that might have resulted from mutually beneficial supply contracts with the military (though as suggested above, wealth and status could be displayed in ways that did not necessarily involve the use of archaeologically visible material culture), and the relationship between most of the region's farmsteads and the military may only have been a marginal one.

FARMING PRACTICES

The upland character of most of the North is often regarded as being more suitable for pastoral farming than arable cultivation (Rippon *et al.* 2015, 290–1; Stallibrass 2009, 103), yet pollen evidence indicates that by the late Iron Age much of the region had been cleared of woodland, and arable cultivation from this time is suggested by cereal pollen, even at some sites within parts of the region's uplands (Symonds 2009, 9; Philpott 2006, 61). As discussed above, direct evidence for pre-Roman (or at least pre-Hadrianic) cultivation has also been recovered in the form of plough marks and a buried turf line that pre-dated Hadrian's Wall at the Cumbria Institute of the Arts Campus, Carlisle (Zant and Town 2013). Similar evidence has been recovered from Rudchester, Denton and South Shields (Huntley

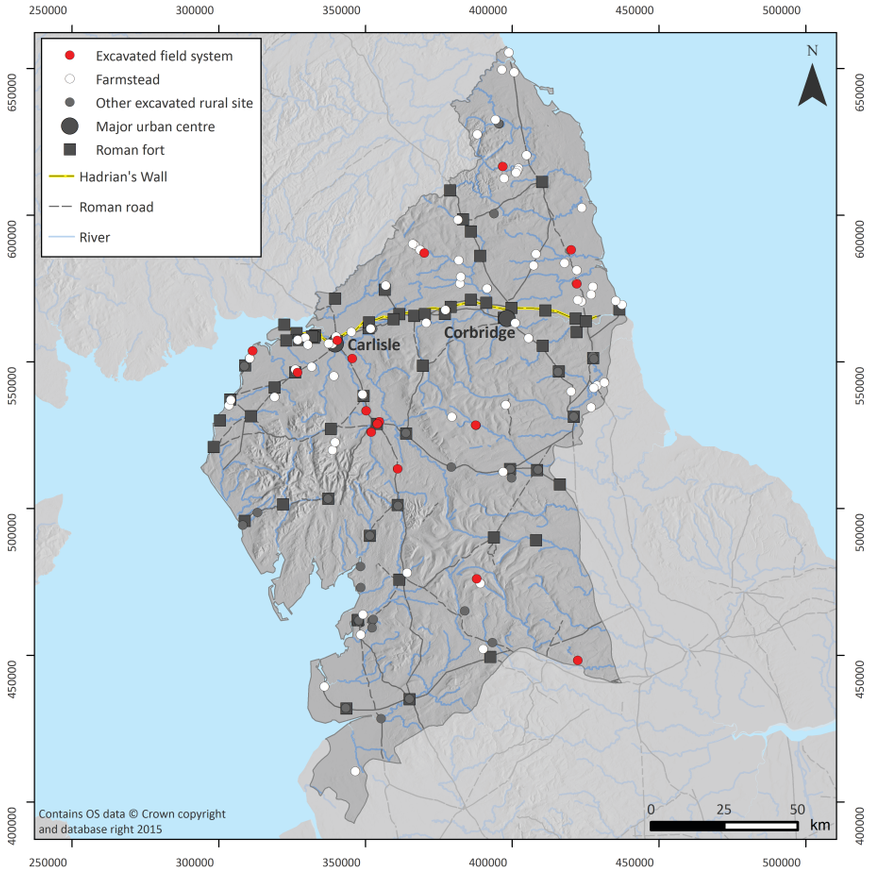

FIG. 9.20. Distribution of excavated field systems in the North region

TABLE 9.5: PRESENCE OF ARCHAEOBOTANICAL EVIDENCE AT RURAL SITES IN THE NORTH REGION

Site type	*Barley*	*Spelt wheat*	*Oats*	*Emmer wheat*	*Free-threshing wheat*	*Rye*	*Fruits*	*Pulses*
Farmstead/village (81 sites)	19	13	9	4	1	1	1	0
Vicus and roadside settlement (18 sites)	8	9	9	2	3	**2**	**2**	**2**

2009, 113), as well as from beneath numerous Wall forts and the Wall itself, especially along the first 25 km from the east coast, indicating an intensity of cultivation on the north side of the Tyne Valley at this time (Bidwell pers. comm.).

While scarce compared with elsewhere in the country, there is nevertheless some evidence for plant remains from excavated rural sites in the north (TABLE 9.5). The dominant crops appear to have been spelt and barley, and the limited evidence we have from the region does not suggest that there was any major change in the use of these primary crops during the period of study. Some sites produced plant assemblages that were suggestive of production rather than just consumption. West Brunton, for instance, on the Northumberland Coastal Plain, produced high proportions of chaff indicative of crop processing (Hodgson *et al.* 2013, 176), although it is still difficult to establish whether such sites were producing surpluses or operating at a subsistence level. While finds are poorly represented from rural sites in the north generally, quernstones were the single most common find after pottery sherds, present at more than half of the region's farmsteads, and although these objects do not necessarily represent evidence for arable production at the sites where they occur, they indicate that most farmsteads had access to grain, whether they grew it themselves or not.

The evidence for field systems in the region has been discussed briefly above, and these features represent an additional strand of evidence for arable cultivation. We of course need to be wary of

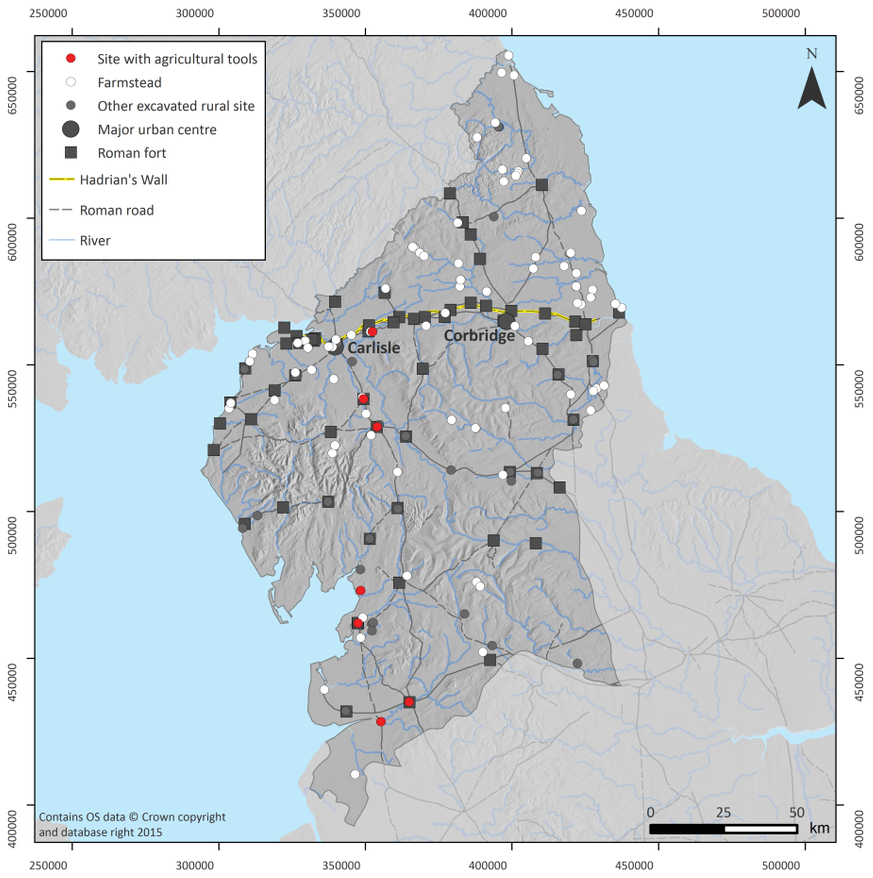

FIG. 9.21. Distribution of sites with agricultural tools in the North region

relying on excavated evidence, but FIG. 9.20 shows that field systems may not be evenly distributed, with a particular concentration of excavated examples in Cumbria in the Eden Valley and Solway Plain; perhaps arable farming may have been focused in these lowland areas. Aerial photography has provided evidence for fields in other parts of the region, and in the Northumberland Uplands in particular; cord rig (a series of ridges formed as a result of cultivation that survive as earthworks) is well recognised, although it is rarely well dated (Petts and Gerrard 2006, 35; Huntley 2009, 110). However, the distribution of cord rig has been seen as suggestive of a dispersed pattern of limited cultivation of small fields, with farming at a subsistence level rather than for the production of surplus (Huntley 2009, 110). It is therefore possible that the emphasis on the Cumbrian lowlands in the excavated evidence reflects variation in the scale of agricultural production in the region.

Given the distribution of the excavated fields, it is perhaps of significance that the distribution of agricultural tools from excavated sites is also confined to the western lowlands (FIG. 9.21). All but one of the sites that produced agricultural tools are military *vici* or otherwise have strong military connections (the exception being an unusual collection of artefacts from a cave at Dog Holes Cave, Warton Crag: Jackson 1910; 1912), suggesting that these sites had a direct role in agricultural production, or at least the distribution of agricultural tools. Of particular note are a group of tools, including a plough share, a hoe, a rake prong, scythes, an axe and an adze fragment, which were part of a hoard of ironwork recovered from a possible well at an early second-century military tile/pottery production site at Brampton (Hogg 1965). It is unclear whether these objects were deposited for safe keeping or as part of a ritual deposit, perhaps a closure deposit associated with the end of the tilery (the two possibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Regardless of the motive, the deposition of these objects indicates that they were considered to be of value, and the absence of agricultural tools from farmsteads in the region may therefore reflect careful curation of such valuable objects where they did occur, and repair or recycling of material when they were damaged.

The combined evidence indicates that arable cultivation comprised part of the economies of

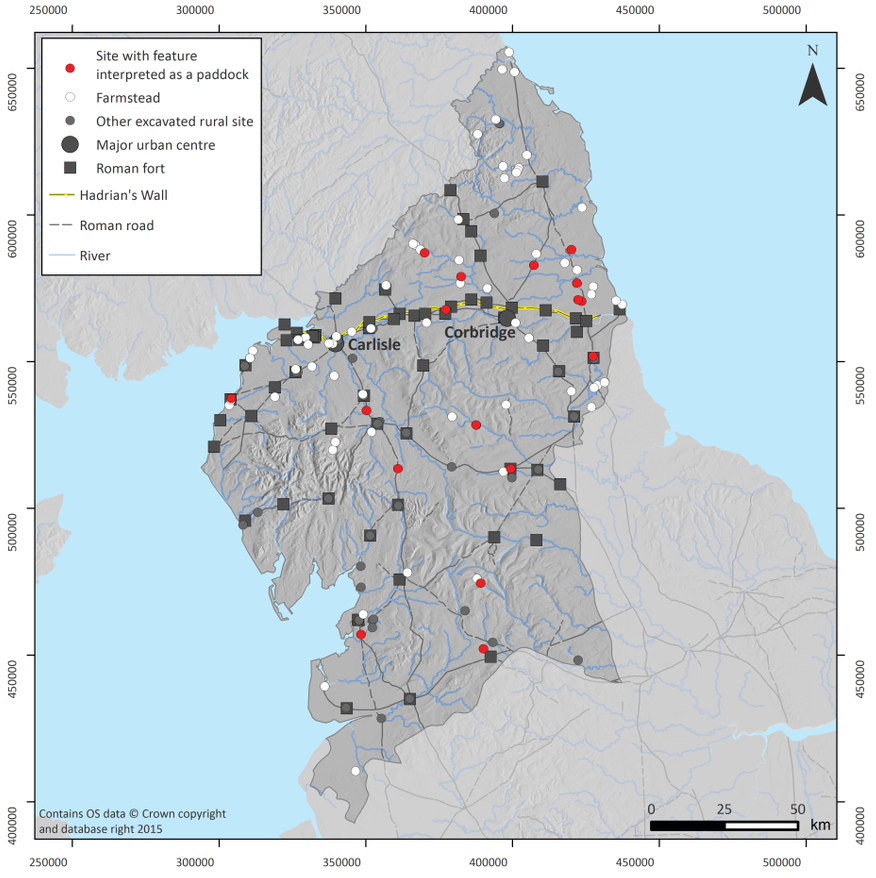

FIG. 9.22. Distribution of excavated sites with features interpreted as paddocks/stock enclosures

some sites within the region, although the scale at which it was practised is likely to have varied, and is usually difficult to assess based on the excavated data alone. Corndryers are very infrequent features at sites in the north, although they are not entirely unknown, and putative examples were identified at Crosshill, Penrith, Cumbria (Higham and Jones 1983), and Wooperton Quarry, Northumberland (Ansell 2004). The latter site is notable for having produced an unusual late first/early second century pottery assemblage for the region with strong military associations and the site is situated adjacent to the Devil's Causeway Roman road, suggesting that this site may in fact be military (Hodgson pers. comm.). Together, the rarity of corndryers, the typically dispersed distribution and the small size of fields, as well as the restricted distribution of agricultural tools in the North suggests that, in general, sites in the countryside were not involved in intensive cereal production in the same way as in some parts of the Central Belt, the South, the East and the North-East.

Of animals at rural sites in the North we are able to say very little owing to the poor survival of faunal remains, although the deeper stratigraphy and greater prevalence of waterlogged features such as wells at nucleated settlements means that military *vici* and roadside settlements are considerably better represented than farmsteads. Large assemblages of well-preserved environmental remains have also been recovered from urban and military sites in the North that fall outside the remit of this project, including from sites in Carlisle and Birdoswald, in Cumbria, and Vindolanda in Northumberland. At all of the recorded nucleated sites with reasonably large samples of faunal remains cattle were by far the most well represented species, followed by sheep/goat and then pig. Domestic fowl was also present at a number of the sites. There are insufficient numbers of sites with large samples of well-phased faunal assemblages to comment on whether this pattern varied over time. Wild animals were rare but present at a number of *vici*; at Watercrook a considerable assemblage of red deer antler with saw or cut marks indicated an industry incorporating antler-working (Potter 1979), and similar evidence was retrieved from Lancaster.

Only eighteen farmsteads produced animal bones at all, with just one producing a sample of over 100 NISP. It is therefore difficult to comment on the role animals played in the economies of

farmsteads in the north, other than to note the presence of the principal domesticates, cattle, sheep/goat and pig, listed here in order of their apparent importance. A small number of farmsteads produced domestic fowl, horse and dog, while red and roe deer were very occasionally recovered. At a number of sites features have been interpreted as paddocks or stock enclosures, suggesting the keeping of livestock. The distribution of excavated sites with such features shows a focus on the north and east of the region, in contrast with the distribution of sites with field systems, which have a greater emphasis on the Solway Plain and Eden Valley in Cumbria (see FIGS 9.20 and 9.22). Caution is required, however, as there is clearly some overlap in the distributions, and the distinction between a field and a paddock or stock enclosure is a subjective interpretation made by the excavator. Based on the limited evidence available it seems likely that across the region in general many sites would have had mixed economies that included both small-scale horticulture and pastoralism.

REGION SUMMARY

The North region contains a range of landscapes, including rugged, mountainous uplands as well as major river valleys and low-lying coastal plains. The predominantly rural character of the modern settlement pattern has meant that the region has seen far fewer sites excavated through development than most other regions, and where development has occurred, this has predominantly been in lowland areas such as the Solway Basin and the Northumbria Coal Measures. However, some upland landscapes have seen significant work, and the Border Uplands of Northumberland have been particularly well served by the research-focused excavations of George Jobey. Such excavated sites, alongside evidence from cropmarks and upstanding earthworks, indicate that rural settlement was widespread across the region.

Whereas settlement appears to have been widespread, the Romano-British settlement pattern was in many ways considerably less diverse than in some other regions. Farmsteads were by far the most common type of site, and the villas, villages, towns and major religious complexes, common in southern and eastern parts of the province, were all but absent in the north. Aside from farmsteads, the only other major type of domestic sites were military *vici*, and these sites, with distinctive types of rectangular buildings and rich finds assemblages, were settlements of a profoundly different nature to those in the wider countryside. The farmsteads themselves also exhibit less variation in terms of their form than in some areas; enclosed settlements dominated, and complex farmsteads with multiple enclosures occurred only rarely. There was, however, considerable variation in the form and method of construction of enclosures in different parts of the region. Rectilinear enclosures are most common across the region as a whole, although in the west, in Cumbria, farmsteads with curvilinear enclosures were also widespread. Many enclosures were of ditched-and-banked construction, whereas others, principally in the uplands where stone is widely available, were constructed using drystone walling. The construction of such drystone enclosures seems often to have been a Roman-period phenomenon, and sites that had previously been timber constructions during the Iron Age were sometimes later remodelled in stone. Some farmsteads, especially those occupying the Northumberland Coastal Plain during the late Iron Age, were large and impressive, and their construction must have required the mobilisation of substantial labour forces, indicating degrees of social stratification in at least parts of the region prior to the Roman occupation.

Our understanding of the chronology of rural settlement in the north is limited by the typically poor dating evidence from the region's rural sites, yet in broad terms there appears to have been an increase in settlement numbers during the late Iron Age and early Roman periods, peaking during the second century A.D. The activity of the Roman military in the north seems to have had a dramatic influence on rural settlement in different areas, and the construction of Hadrian's Wall during the second century A.D. appears to have afforded rural settlement expansion to the south of the border it created, along with what seems to have been a dramatic episode of abandonment to the north.

Roman military sites, particularly those associated with Hadrian's Wall, are of course a characteristic feature of the North, and as we have seen throughout the course of this chapter, it is impossible to discuss rural settlement in the region without considering the impact that long-lived military installations had on the countryside in the North. Indeed, the south-east border of the region serves to distinguish its mainly upland character from the lowlands of the North-East region, and this border corresponds broadly with the limit of the upland distribution of long-lived Roman military sites (e.g. Bidwell and Hodgson 2009, 20–24, figs 8–10). Given the distinctive character of the settlement pattern of the region, with its emphasis on dispersed enclosed farmsteads, with little evidence for settlement nucleation away from the military sites, it seems likely that the corresponding distribution of long-lived military

sites in the region may be connected with the difficulties associated with controlling populations in such a marginal society, which apparently differed so considerably from the types of society that dominated areas of the province to the south. That rural society in the north remained 'marginal' throughout the Roman period is suggested by the general lack of evidence for integration with military sites and their networks of supply. In contrast to many rural settlements in areas such as the Central Belt, the East, the North-East and the South, very few pots, coins or other artefacts appear to have reached the region's rural settlements, indicating only limited interaction between the occupants of most farmsteads and the military. It is unlikely that the rural population were entirely ignored by the Roman army, and they almost certainly would have been required to pay taxes, yet it seems probable that agricultural goods, livestock or other non-monetary resources formed the principal methods of payment of tax for those occupying the countryside in the north. However, sustaining the Roman military occupation of the north must have required a vast quantity of resources. Together, the soldiers in the forts as well as their dependants and followers in the *vici*, would have numbered in their tens of thousands, and this population required a constant supply of food, clothes and other provisions. Although some of these resources may have been met by taxes exacted from the local population, there is little to suggest that farmsteads in the North had the capacity to produce and supply the substantial quantities needed to supply the Roman army, and it seems likely that much of the surplus produce so evidently being generated in other parts of the province further south was destined for the forts and *vici* of the North. The rural settlement pattern of the North, then, is defined in large part by its marginal relationship with the military and the wider Roman world. Nevertheless, the subtle intra-regional variation that exists between farmsteads in terms of their chronology, form and size, as well as the materials used in their construction, are testament to the existence of a plurality of rural identities, and it would be a mistake to see the Romano-British rural settlement pattern of the North as monolithic.