CHAPTER 3

LIFESTYLE AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural identities and social strategies could be manipulated not only through personal appearance, but also through a wide variety of lifestyle choices and the active creation and control of the surrounding physical environment. These may relate to differences in eating and drinking habits, leisure pursuits, forms of communication, levels of education, and a host of other variables, alongside variations in architectural form and embellishment, and outside space (cf. Gardner 2007, 99). This chapter will explore some of these themes as they relate to the peoples of rural Roman Britain, highlighting their regional and social diversity. Given the lack of contemporary written accounts relating to most of these aspects in Roman Britain, especially outside of urban and military contexts, the evidence typically takes the form of portable material culture, environmental remains and the archaeological remains of buildings and other features, all of which inevitably present a very incomplete picture. Nevertheless, they do conclusively demonstrate that many of the existing accounts of 'life in Roman Britain' (e.g. Alcock 2006) are only relevant to a relatively small proportion of the population, a fact that has on occasion been duly acknowledged (cf. de la Bédoyère 2015, xiv).

RURAL HOMES AND GARDENS

The artificially constructed environment, particularly as expressed through architecture, has long been viewed as a microcosm of society and therefore a tool in understanding social structure (e.g. Rapoport 1969, 50; S. Foster 1989; Reid 1989; Hingley 1990; Sanders 1990, 43; Grahame 2000). Furthermore, recent work has highlighted that architecture is not only reflective of the social, political and economic realities, but can also be an active agent in enabling these realities (Taylor 2013; Bille and Sørensen 2016, 3). The wide variety of excavated buildings within the countryside of Roman Britain has already been discussed at length in Volume 1 (Smith 2016b), where a complex continuum of architectural expression was revealed (FIG. 3.1). This work will be drawn upon and combined with selected elements of portable material culture to assess the heterogeneous domestic environment of peoples across the rural landscapes of the Roman province.

First and foremost, it must be reiterated that those rural settlements classed architecturally as villas would have formed only a very small percentage of overall settlement in the Romano-British countryside, and yet, alongside urban houses, they continue to dominate in many discussions of domestic life in Roman Britain (e.g. Perring 2002; Allason-Jones 2005, 78–103; Alcock 2006, 115–25). Despite the considerable variety in form and scale (cf. Smith 2016b, 71–4), villa buildings can be regarded as representing a particular form of cultural aspiration and would have required considerable expenditure (Millett 2016, 703). At the uppermost end of the scale were the lavish courtyard-villa complexes, mostly dating to the later Roman period, such as at Woodchester in Gloucestershire, which have been viewed as the centres of social exhibitionism for the 'super-elite' of Roman Britain, providing stages for the competitive display of wealth and culture (Scott 2004, 43). However, villas at all levels could have fulfilled such roles within their contemporary social groups, and would have been strikingly different architectural settings to the 'typical', modest, rural farmhouse buildings. They have, by their very definition, relatively high levels of investment in architectural elaboration such as painted plaster walls, tiled roofs, window glass, hypocaust heating systems and mosaic floors, while there is also much greater evidence from portable material culture for internal furnishings, lighting, security and the like. With all these highly visible forms of evidence, it is hardly surprising that they have formed the dominant backdrop for pictures of 'typical' Roman rural lifestyles over many years. That is not to say that other lifestyles within different architectural settings have not been acknowledged, but this often comprises little more than a brief discussion of social activities within roundhouses, thus perpetuating the simple Roman–native dichotomy. Yet, it is now abundantly clear that from the most palatial of villas to the simplest of single-roomed dwellings, there is a very broad spectrum of domestic architecture, representing a mix of cultural traditions, socio-economic aspirations and individual choice, with clear geographic and chronological variation.
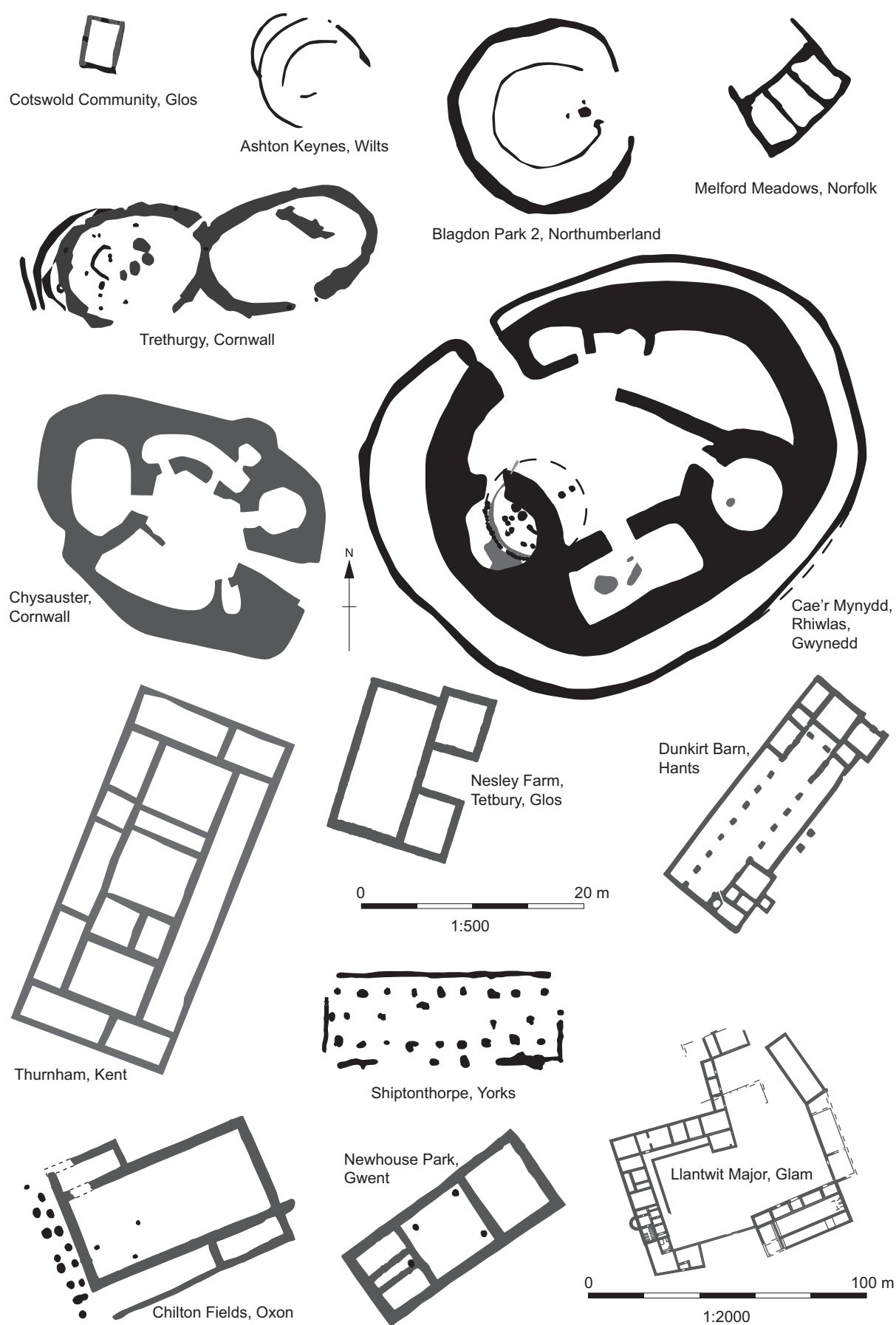
FIG. 3.1. Selection of domestic building plans from across rural Roman Britain (all 1:500 except Llantwit Major at 1:2000)

The excavated evidence suggests that the majority of vernacular architecture in the countryside of Roman Britain probably comprised relatively simple single-roomed buildings, of circular and/or rectangular form (Smith 2016b, 64–5). Nevertheless, these could still house quite complex divisions of internal space, as demonstrated by Taylor (2001) for open aisled buildings in the East Midlands, where various parts of the structure were consistently used for cooking and eating, agricultural processing and/or craft activities, storage and possible areas of assembly. These were, however, usually quite large buildings and probably associated with those of relatively high status, many of them developing into more complex architectural forms with 'villa' attributes such as mosaic floors, hypocausts and bath suites. Yet, even within smaller buildings, it is likely that there was often a mix of 'domestic' (cooking, eating, sleeping) and 'non-domestic' (storage, craftworking, agricultural processing, livestock shelter) practices operating within a singular or minimally divided space (e.g. Nesley Farm, Glos.; see below p. 54, FIG. 3.6), even if some of the latter was on a temporary basis, perhaps structured by the agricultural year.

The scale, form, materials and construction techniques of rural domestic housing exhibit great variation across different parts of England and Wales, even beyond those classified as villas, and there are certain distinctive regional architectural traditions, noted in Chapters 4 to 11 of Volume 1 (Smith *et al.* 2016). Most of the 'non-villa' domestic buildings in all areas have no evidence for any elaboration, though 12 per cent of 881 farmsteads with structural evidence appear to have had at least one building with a tiled (as opposed to, for example, thatch, turf or shingle) roof, while 7 per cent had indications of painted plaster walls, though sometimes this only comprised whitewash. Although it is generally acknowledged that painted plaster was mainly found in urban and villa buildings, there is still a tendency for analyses of Romano-British domestic environments to focus almost exclusively upon these site types, and it is clear that the interiors of most houses would have been far less colourful than those belonging to the upper end of the social spectrum. Glazed windows seem equally rare outside of villa contexts, with window glass being recovered at 38 per cent of roadside settlements (but by no means in every building) and just 6 per cent of farmsteads. It is not possible to ascertain just how common windows would have been in domestic buildings, though it is generally thought that, where they existed, most would have been shuttered (Mould 2011, 156). Evidence for flooring of any form is also rare within 'non-villa'

domestic buildings, with assumptions based upon a few survivals that most must have comprised mortar, timber planks or just beaten earth, such as the chalk and clay floors defining buildings within the roadside settlement at Scole, Norfolk (Ashwin and Tester 2014, 219).

The farmsteads that do exhibit more of the elaborate structural elements tend to lie in the Central Belt region, where the architectural boundary between villas and other buildings is at its most blurred (Smith 2016d, 171–2), possibly reflecting, and in turn helping to create, a more complex social stratification. A suite of architectural embellishments may have been actively used to help elevate and maintain social standing in local society, and seems to have been particularly important in this part of the province during the mid- to late Roman period. One example is that at Stonebridge Cross near Droitwich in Worcestershire, where a series of mid- to late Roman, stone-footed, multi-roomed buildings were identified within enclosures, at least one of which was thought to be domestic, with fragmentary evidence for a stone-tiled floor, tiled roof, glazed windows and at least one painted wall (Miller *et al.* 2004). Although not categorised in this project as a villa, the building would have appeared strikingly different from those on most other farmsteads in the local area, many of which have left little archaeological trace other than the occasional post pad (e.g. Areley Kings; Buteux and Hemmingway 1992) or cobbled surface (e.g. Hindlip; Wainwright 2010).

The variation apparent in architectural form, material and elaboration within rural homes is matched by the mixed evidence for internal furnishings and fixtures. A full consideration of the wide range of household object types is beyond the scope of the current project (see Cool 2006, Mould 2011, Eckardt 2014 and Swift 2017 for recent works on this subject), but the social and geographic variation is demonstrated through brief analyses of objects and features associated with security, lighting and heating.

SECURITY

Locks and keys are persistent, if uncommon, finds from excavated Roman sites across much of the province, though they were not always associated with domestic contexts. A few were clearly part of what are termed 'structured deposits', such as the key found within an early Roman 'votive' pit near to the river at Billingford in Norfolk, alongside a copper-alloy torque, glass beads and a ring (Wallis 2011; see Ch. 5 for definition and discussion of structured deposits). They have also been recorded as grave goods at a number of sites, for instance at Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire, where one

adult inhumation burial had a group of three keys placed on the chest (Lawrence and Smith 2009; see Ch. 6). These examples suggest that such objects may have held some symbolic value, though it is obviously as functional objects relating to security where their importance mostly lies.

There were two major types of lock – mounted locks and padlocks – and four main types of key – latch-lifters, lift-keys, slide keys and rotary keys – in use during the Roman period (Mould 2011, 176; Swift 2017, 114). They would have been used on a variety of doors, furniture and other contexts, including slave manacles, and had differing levels of security, with latch-lifters just being used to raise unspecific single bolts or tumblers. The prevalence of such security devices within the Roman period has been well noted, with suggestions that it related to the increased affluence of a section of society – those with more materials to protect – as well as to increasing concerns about personal security, particularly within urban environments that had a more transient population (Mould 2011, 177). Such insecurity correlates with the increased incidence of lead tablets from temples such as Bath, north-east Somerset, and Uley, Gloucestershire, cursing the theft of objects (e.g. clothing) or animals (see Ch. 5, p. 178). Swift (2017, 120) has also argued that as certain types of keys and locks were relatively new introductions, and implied the possession of wealth, they may have been seen as potent status symbols, possibly accounting for the number of finger rings with keys attached.

A total of 438 different sites included in the current project had some evidence for security objects, including at least 101 with simple latch-lifters and 284 with more complex keys. As can be seen from FIG. 3.2, they are more likely to be found within nucleated settlements and villas, correlating with the above-suggested associations with wealth, status and increased insecurities of larger population centres. The pattern is repeated in terms of the average numbers of objects found at sites where they do occur, which ranges from over eight at defended 'small towns' to under two at farmsteads, though this presumably relates to differences in population size. Villas, though, have almost as many security objects per site as nucleated settlements, these also comprising the broadest mix of key and lock types, suggesting either a particular concern with security at many of these sites, or else, as just stated, a greater emphasis on locks and keys as objects of status.

The distribution of the site types with security objects is shown in FIG. 3.3, overall being far more common in the Central Belt and parts of the South region. Farmsteads in particular are more likely to have security objects within the Central Belt landscapes, most of these being the complex farmsteads of the major river valleys, which have been shown to be more integrated into the socio-economic networks of the province than smaller, enclosed farmsteads (Smith 2016d, 186–7; see also Ch. 2 and below, p. 74). Some farmsteads display an increasing preoccupation with security objects over time, which is clearly seen at Claydon Pike in the Upper Thames Valley. Major changes occurred at this site during the fourth century A.D., including the creation of a substantial ditched and walled enclosure around the multi-roomed farmstead building, while at the same time there was a much higher number of tumbler and lever
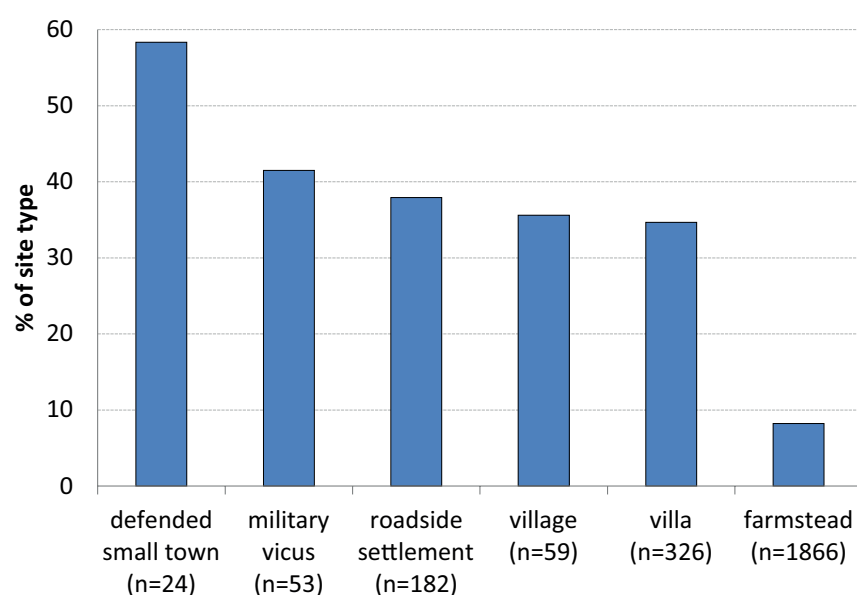

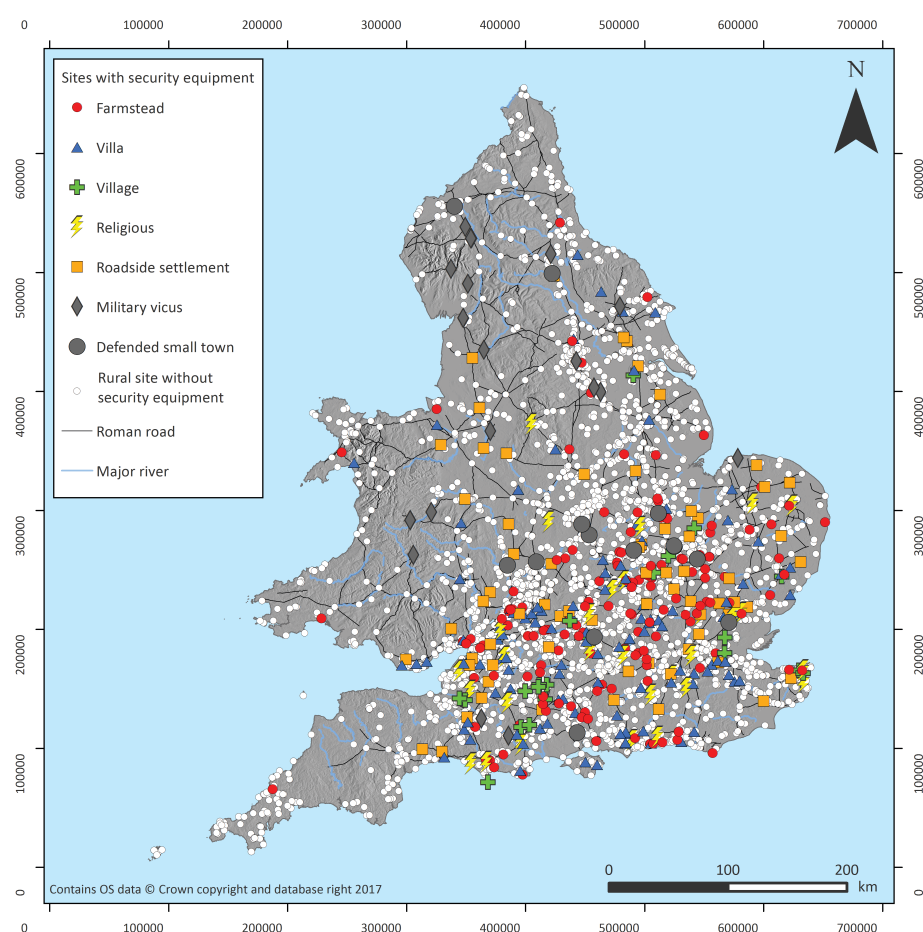FIG. 3.2. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for security objects (n=no. sites)

FIG. 3.3. Distribution of site types with evidence for security objects

locks and padlocks, compared with the few lower security latch-lifters of the previous phase (Cool 2007, 190). Ultimately, whether this represented a genuinely increased threat to security, an increased paranoia or a shift towards greater use of security measures as status symbols remains uncertain.

LIGHTING AND HEATING

Artificial lighting of some sort would have been required in most homes in Roman Britain, and yet evidence for associated material culture is very scarce, particularly outside of certain major urban centres and large military sites (Eckardt 2002; 2011, 192). Just 149 sites in the current project had evidence for lighting equipment, these mostly comprising ceramic and metal oil lamps, of open and closed types, and candlesticks. Such lighting equipment was introduced to Britain after the Roman conquest, with lamps only being prevalent at certain sites during the first century, and candlesticks becoming more common during the later Roman period (Eckardt 2011, 187). FIGURE 3.4 shows the social distribution of all lighting equipment by site type, with much higher proportions of defended 'small towns' and military *vici* being equipped with such items than other

settlements. They are found in only *c.* 1 per cent of farmsteads, almost all of complex type, and these are far more dispersed across the province than was the case with those farmsteads associated with security items, which, as noted above, were more concentrated in the Central Belt region (FIG. 3.5). Most of the 22 farmsteads just have the odd fragment of an iron tripod candlestick or ceramic lamp, though a copper-alloy vine leaf-shaped lamp reflector from the complex farmstead at Claydon Pike in Gloucestershire suggests a higher degree of affluence (Cool 2007, 134). An unparalleled seven ceramic lamps were recovered during excavations of a complex farmstead at Langdale Hale on the Cambridgeshire Fen edge, though this site is thought to have been associated with state supply networks (Evans 2013a, 169), and so the presence of the lamps may result from possible military connections.

Villas may be expected to have considerably more evidence for lighting equipment, yet it was only found on 11 per cent of those included in this project, mostly, like farmsteads, in very small numbers. Just five villas had five or more items of lighting equipment, and most of these had some possible 'official' connection, such as the early to
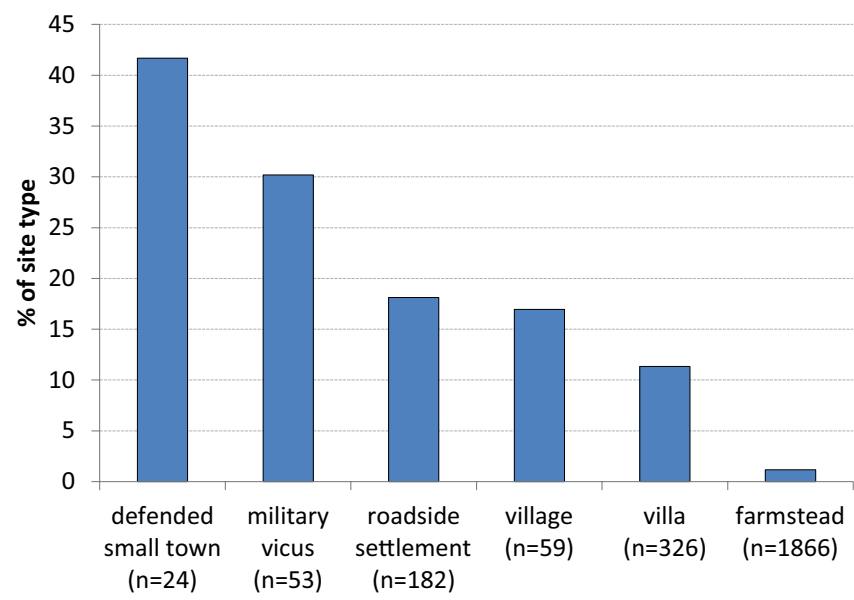
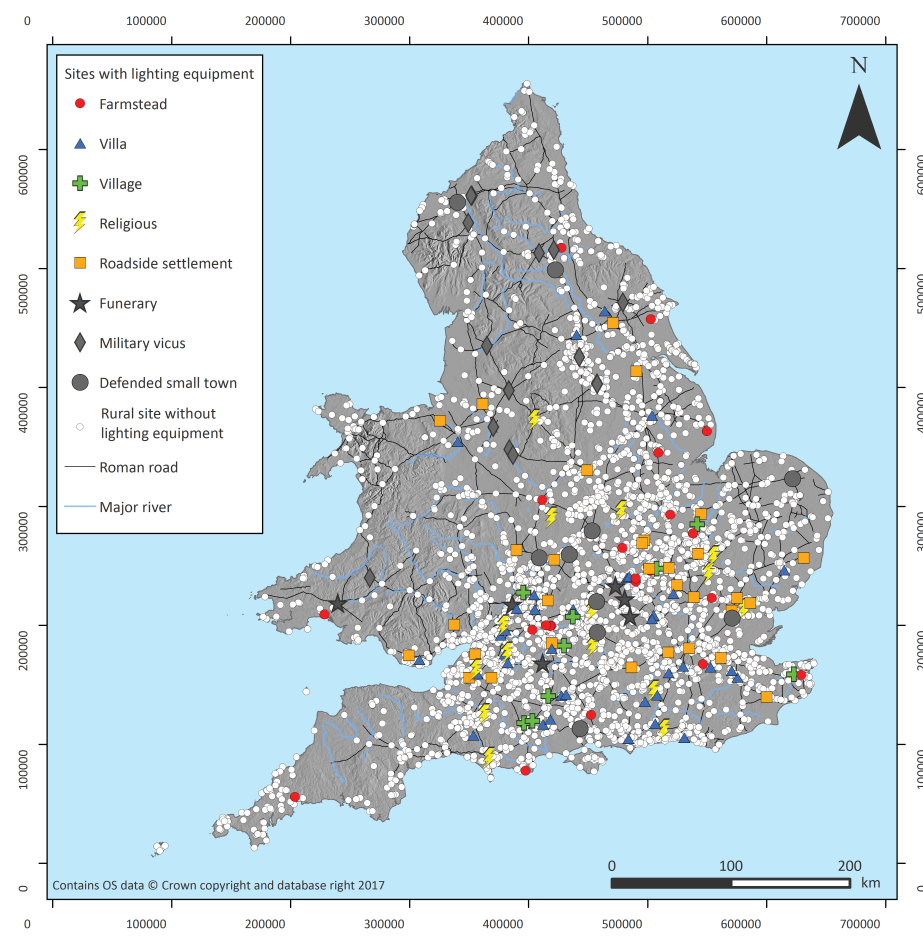FIG. 3.4. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for lighting objects (n=no. sites)

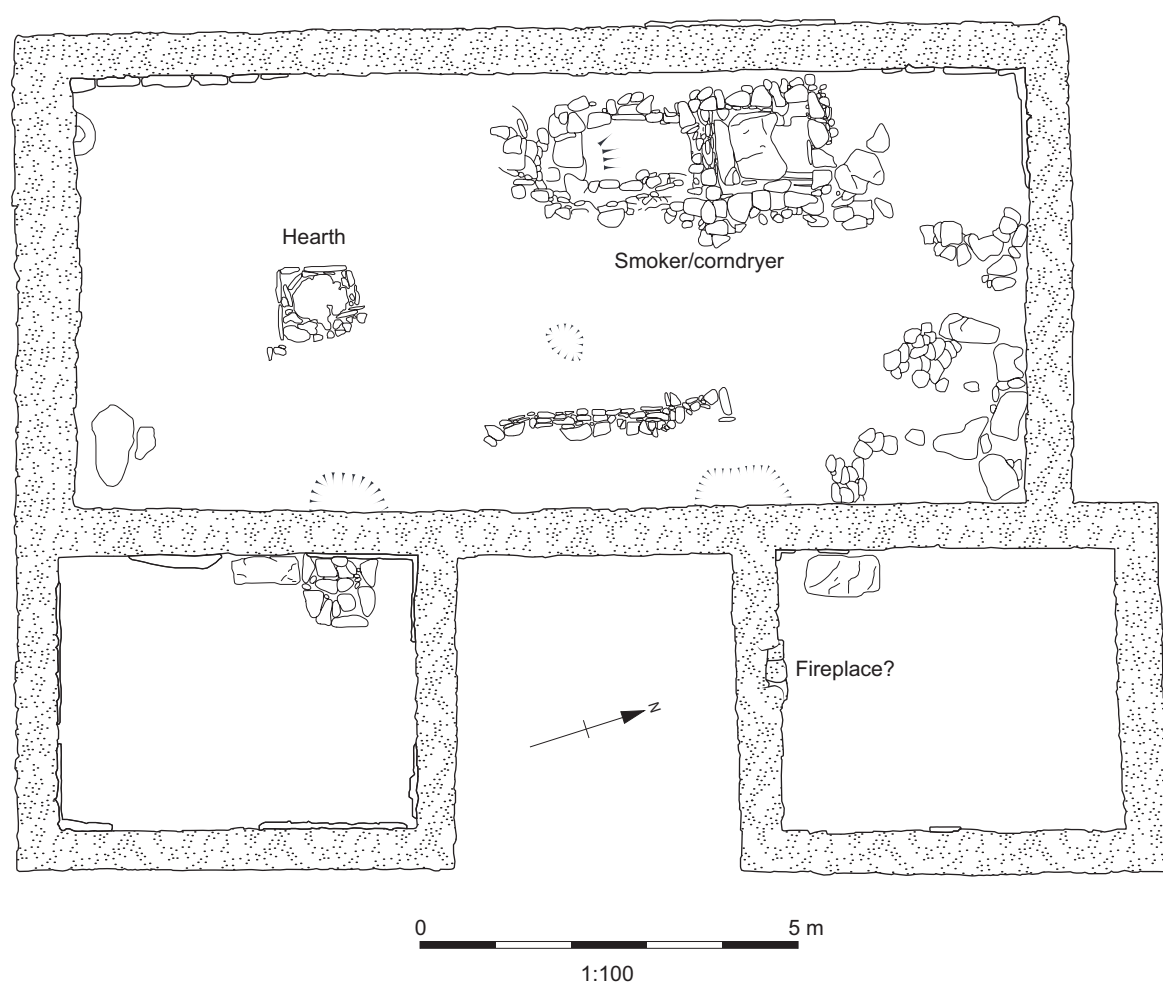FIG. 3.5. Distribution of site types with evidence for lighting objects

FIG. 3.6. Masonry building at Nesley Farm, Gloucestershire, showing central hearth in main room and possible fireplace in northern annexe (Roberts 2013)
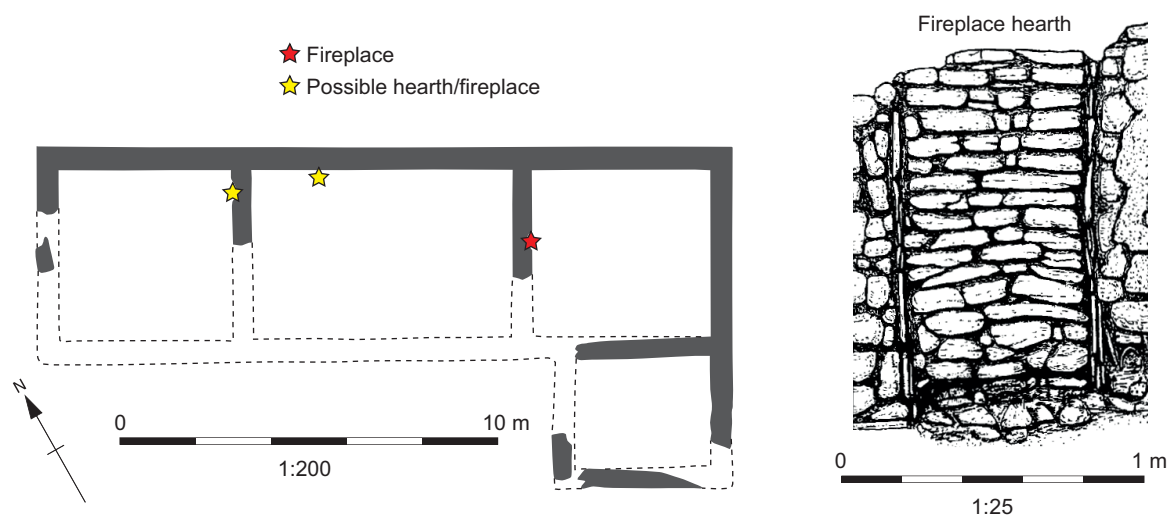

FIG. 3.7. Masonry building at Vineyards Farm, Charlton Kings, Gloucestershire, with example of recessed fireplace (after Rawes 1991, fig. 8)

mid-Roman palatial villa at Fishbourne in West Sussex (Cunliffe 1971) and the villa lying very close to the nucleated settlements at Bays Meadow Villa, Droitwich in Worcestershire, which has been suggested as the official residence of a 'junior procurator' responsible for managing the local salt industry (Shotter 2005, 43; Barfield 2006).

Some of the lamps from farmsteads and villas were found as grave goods within burials, and there are a further six 'isolated' funerary sites with burials being accompanied by lamps, mostly iron types of open form (cf. Eckardt 2011, 190). Previous research by Eckardt (2002, 154) has shown that the use of lamps as grave goods generally follows that of the overall consumption of these items, in being far more common within burials at military and urban sites. However, it is clear that they were not always simply selected for interment due to their availability, as Cool has pointed out that at Chichester in West Sussex, lamps are relatively common finds in graves, yet extremely rare discoveries from excavations within the Roman town itself, with implications that they were seen as more suitable for the dead than the living (Cool 2011, 307). The ritual significance of lamps and other lighting equipment can also be seen with their occurrence on fifteen rural religious sites, including two parts of a candlestick and a ceramic 'votive lamp' from the temple complex at Nettleton Scrubb in Wiltshire (Wedlake 1982). The manipulation of lighting, as well as sounds and smells, was probably an important part of the 'religious experience' at these sites (see Ch. 5).

Ritual associations aside, the question arises as to why did apparently so few rural settlements take up the use of lamps and candles? Eckardt (2011, 192) has suggested that the adoption of lamps was closely related to an urban and Mediterranean lifestyle, and their use never spread far beyond the larger towns and forts because most people in the countryside had no need or desire for them. They would have been relatively labour-intensive to use, requiring constant trimming of the wick and filling with oil, as well as creating a great deal of soot. For the majority of the rural population, especially those living in single-roomed dwellings, lighting provision probably consisted of nothing more than the focal hearth, which would also have acted as the major source of heat, and, in what were predominantly illiterate societies, probably the focus for important cultural and social activities such as storytelling (see below, p. 69). The possible cultural associations of the hearth fire may have been another reason why other lighting equipment was not adopted more widely.

Hearths have been noted at 346 sites in the project database, mostly lying within the centre of rooms or buildings. A later Roman masonry farmhouse building at Nesley Farm in Gloucestershire, for example, had clear evidence for a substantial, long-lived hearth in the centre of the southern half of the main room, constructed of layers of sandstone roofing tiles and kerbed by upright stones (Roberts 2013; FIG. 3.6). This was probably the main domestic zone of the house, with the northern half being used for agricultural purposes, as indicated by the presence of a substantial smoker or corndryer. The two small annexes were later additions and may have been bedchambers, with painted plaster walls and a possible fireplace in the wall of the northern annexe, though there was no evidence of associated burning (*ibid.*, 21). Fireplaces recessed into walls are occasionally attested elsewhere, usually in villas or 'upmarket' farmhouses of the later Roman period such as at Vineyards Farm, Gloucestershire (Rawes 1991, 36–9; FIG. 3.7). In addition, it is likely that torches and iron braziers with wood, coal or charcoal were used in some of the larger houses, though there is little direct evidence for this in Britain.

Of course the best-known form of Roman domestic heating is the hypocaust system, where hot air from a furnace, usually stoked from the exterior of the building, passes under the floor in open channels and up through hollow (box) tiles in the walls. In terms of domestic housing, such heating systems are largely unknown except within villas and high-status urban dwellings, and, even with these, examples are often found in just one or two rooms at most, with the likelihood that many were fired up only on occasion (Eckardt 2011, 180). Nevertheless, the provision of such heating would undoubtedly have been expected within the houses of the upper echelons of society, alongside the package of other decorative elements noted above, such as painted plaster walls and mosaic floors. Although the evidence is not always as clear, such elements were probably also to be found outside such high-status dwellings, in the form of formal gardens.

ORNAMENTAL GARDENS AND PLANTS

By Lisa Lodwick

Across the Roman world, there is abundant evidence for the creation of ornamental gardens featuring fish ponds, swimming pools, hedges, pathways and trees, based on literary and artistic evidence, as well as exceptionally well-preserved garden layouts in Pompeii (Jashemski 1981; Farrar 2011). Ornamental plant layouts were a feature of public gardens, funerary gardens, public parks and villa portico gardens (Farrar 2011). Literary evidence describes the translocation of new plant
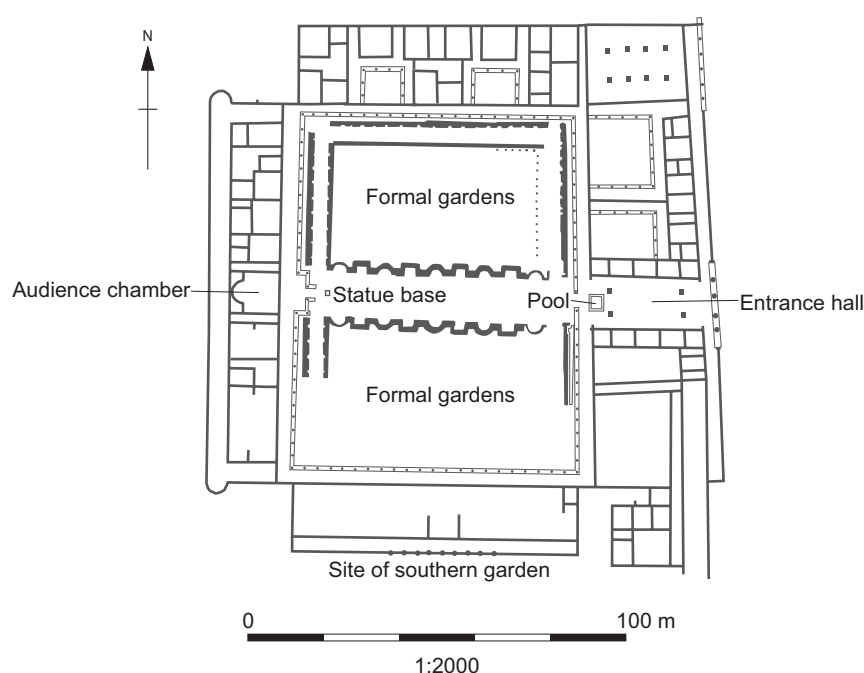
FIG. 3.8. Plan of Fishbourne Palace, West Sussex, showing details of formal gardens (Cunliffe 1981)

species from the Middle East to Italy and beyond, including balsam, citrus and cherry, for use in military triumphs, private housing and dining (Macaulay-Lewis 2008; Marzano 2014). However, in Britain literary and artistic evidence for ornamental gardens is largely lacking, with the stylised flowers, plants and trees featuring on mosaics not as yet having been approached from a botanical perspective. Instead, the study of ornamental gardens and plants relies on the exceptional preservation of garden layouts, or on archaeobotanical samples, as outlined in previous reviews (Cunliffe 1981; Zeepvat 1991).

Formal garden layouts have been recorded at six villas in southern Britain, in both the South and Central Belt regions, but are, as yet, unknown outside such high-status rural dwellings. At Frocester Court, Gloucestershire, a walled front courtyard and fourth-century A.D. formal garden were recorded including a gravel path and planting beds containing midden material (Price 2000, 105–9). Antiquarian excavations at Darenth villa, Kent, revealed walled gardens with a swimming pool and ornamental fish pool (Philp 1973). Similarly, at Bancroft villa, Milton Keynes, a large walled formal garden contained a fishpond and an artificial pond or lake to supply a mill (Williams and Zeepvat 1994). The most detailed villa-garden plan derives from Fishbourne, where four areas of ornamental gardens were recorded attached to the Flavian palace; the peristyle gardens, the central formal garden (FIG. 3.8), the kitchen garden in the north-west, and a possible 'natural' area on the southern terrace. Alongside tree-planting holes

and ceramic water pipes, distinctive bedding trenches were recorded around the perimeter of the central courtyard and adjacent to the main pathway. The trenches were cut into the gravel and clay soil, and filled with calcareous loam, interpreted as an indicator that a shrub, such as box, was grown in them (Cunliffe 1981). Areas of ornamental gardens have also been postulated at Keynsham villa, Somerset, on the basis of an extensive cultivation layer (Cox 1998) and, at Dunkirt Barn, Hampshire, a garden enclosure was identified by the villa building, within which was a hexagonal structure thought to have been a shrine (Cunliffe and Poole 2008b).

Alternative evidence for the creation of new landscapes derives from the plants themselves. However, the preservation of garden plants relies largely on the presence of waterlogged conditions (Murphy and Scaife 1991), which is mostly limited to the major river valleys and urban areas. A range of plants is attested to have been used in Roman gardens in Italy, including acanthus, bay-laurel and myrtle (Farrar 2011), primarily evidenced by literary and artistic sources. Of course any plant can be used ornamentally, but definitive evidence for the use of plants to create managed gardens comes from the presence of introduced plant species, such as *Buxus sempervirens* (box), *Pinus pinea* (stone pine) and *Picea abies* (Norway spruce). Box was favoured in Roman gardens for its use in topiary (Lodwick 2017b). There was a small-scale presence of this evergreen shrub before the Roman period, but leaves have been recovered from numerous Roman settlement

sites, as well as in association with burials (see Ch. 6, p. 271). Box leaves have been recovered from many sites in London, but in rural Roman Britain it is primarily at villas where box appears to have been grown. These include Rectory Field, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire (Murphy 1998), Chew Park, Somerset (Stant and Metcalfe 1977), Winterton villa, North Lincolnshire (Dimbleby 1978), and Stanwick villa, Northamptonshire (Campbell pers. comm.). However, box leaves have also been recorded at farmsteads, including at late third/fourth century A.D. Marsh Leys, Kempston, Bedfordshire (Robinson 2011a), a fourth-century farmstead at Farmoor, Oxfordshire (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 127) and at a mid- to late Roman farmstead at Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire (Robinson 2007). The majority of sites are not in calcareous regions, the natural habitat of box, and therefore suggest the purposeful cultivation of box plants. The burial evidence shows that box leaves may have been used partly for wreaths, while the wood also provides a raw material for combs and writing tablets (Pugsley 2003). However, the strong association with villas suggests that these plants were being purposefully grown for their ornamental value, inducing different sensory experiences and temporalities (Lodwick 2017b; see also Ch. 4, p. 98 for introduction of 'exotic' animal species).

Norway spruce is a much less common occurrence in rural Roman Britain. Definitive evidence for a nearby tree was recorded from several ponds associated with a villa at Rectory Field, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire, in the form of wood, leaves, twigs, cones and seeds (Murphy 1998). The ponds and wells at Godmanchester also produced evidence for yew, opium poppy, fennel, fig, marigold and beet, suggesting the presence of a Mediterranean-style garden. A *Picea abies* cone has also been confirmed from the nucleated settlement at Stonea Grange in the Cambridgeshire Fens (Murphy 2001, 17). Stone pine has been recorded from numerous rural settlements, albeit only as cones and nutshells, and not leaves or wood. Given the evidence for the widespread trade in stone-pine cones across the Roman world (Lodwick 2015), it is likely that these finds all derive from trade. At Bancroft villa, a stone-pine cone, which was recorded from a ditch fill to the south of an enclosure and rectangular structure (Pearson and Robinson 1994), provides the closest indication of a growing stone pine.

There is very limited archaeobotanical evidence for other ornamental plants. Dickson (1994) highlighted records of *Aquilegia* cf. *vulgaris* (cf. columbine) at Alcester, *Lavatera* cf. *arborea* (tree mallow) at Caerwent, *Rosa* sp. (rose) at Farmoor and Nantwich, and *Aegopodium podagraria* (ground elder) at York, but it cannot be proven that these were grown ornamentally. A record of *Prunus lusitanica* (Portuguese laurel) at Silchester has been identified as *Prunus* sp. (Lodwick 2017a), and no other occurrence of *P. lusitanica* has been recorded. Native plants may also have been grown ornamentally, such as *Ilex aquifolium* – holly, which has been recorded alongside box leaves at York (Hall and Kenward 1990, 359) and Silchester, Insula IX (Robinson 2011b).

Overall, the evidence suggests that the creation of ornamental gardens and landscapes did occur at certain higher status rural sites in Roman Britain, but definitive evidence for the character of these is limited. The only sites where archaeobotanical evidence for ornamental plants co-occurs with a garden layout are at Frocester and Bancroft villas. At the former, boxwood charcoal was identified, and at the latter was a single stone-pine cone, which may well have been imported. The reliance on waterlogged preservation for any garden plants being preserved means it is very difficult to evaluate the extent of ornamental plant landscapes in rural Roman Britain, with the only definitive archaeobotanical evidence for a range of Mediterranean trees limited to the villa at Rectory Farm, Godmanchester, which is awaiting full publication. As imported plants were used to articulate elite status in the Mediterranean (Marzano 2014), a smaller range of plants was probably used similarly in Roman Britain. These areas of vegetation would have been just as important for the creation of the lived environment and articulation of elite status as built architecture, perhaps being used for occasional dining, recreational pursuits and other types of social interaction. This review thus firmly highlights the importance of future investigation of open areas associated with villa buildings, using a suite of palaeoenvironmental techniques. The widespread presence of box also indicates that these plants were being cultivated at a range of settlement types (Lodwick 2017b), though whether primarily as a strategy to articulate social status, or to provide raw materials for wood-working, remains uncertain.

FOOD AND DRINK

By Michael Fulford

The consumption of food and drink was clearly an important element in the construction and maintenance of social identities (Twiss 2007; 2012; Van der Veen 2007b). Variations in the types of food and drink, the methods of preparation, and the etiquette and context of consumption can all contribute towards social and cultural differentiation.

The evidence for eating and drinking in Roman Britain, including its social context, has recently been well and extensively treated by Hilary Cool (2006). She used material from a select range of rural sites, including a limited number of case studies that exploited data from three settlements with comparatively good environmental data (Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire, Orton Hall Farm, Cambridgeshire and Parlington Hollins, West Yorkshire) (*ibid.*, 189–92, 203–7), from the temple at Uley, Gloucestershire (*ibid.*, 210–13), and from burials at Foxton and Bartlow Hills, both Cambridgeshire, as well as Stansted, Essex (*ibid.*, 101–2, 193–6). Since 2006 there have been important reviews of fish, seed and plant remains from Roman Britain (Locker 2007; Van der Veen *et al.* 2007; 2008). There have also been important contributions to our understanding of diet in the province from the analysis of stable isotopes both from human remains, which concluded, albeit from a predominantly urban sample, that diet had improved for the better compared with the Iron Age (Müldner 2013), and from the lipids preserved in pottery vessels, notably mortaria and cooking pots, which showed a strong presence of animal (ruminant) adipose as well as plant-derived fats (Cramp *et al.* 2011).

In this section we have the opportunity to look across the whole of rural Roman Britain and assess variation in patterns of consumption, both regionally and across the settlement hierarchy, drawing on the evidence from the *c.* 2500 sites that form the basis of the Roman Rural Settlement Project. Nevertheless, given the importance of subsistence to everyday life, even taking account of the increased amount of data since the publication of *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain* (Cool 2006), it is perhaps surprising how little can yet be said about what the rural population of Britain actually ate and drank, as opposed to the plants and animals that they exploited and the wild resources potentially at their disposal. Although the countryside produced the great majority of the food and drink consumed in Roman Britain, it should not be assumed that all its inhabitants had equal and unfettered access to it.

A starting point for considering what was eaten and drunk is very much the corollary of what was set out in *The Rural Economy of Roman Britain*, namely the products of arable farming, horticulture and viticulture, and of pastoral farming (Allen 2017; Lodwick 2017c). In addition, in the next chapter of this volume Martyn Allen sets out the evidence for the exploitation of wild animals, including fish and shellfish. Importantly, some of the impacts on health of what was or was not eaten and drunk can be seen in Rohnbogner's study of the skeletal evidence from rural settlements in Chapter 7 of this volume.

Although the Romans regarded cereals as their staple, or the most important part of their diet (Cool 2006, 69), it is animal bone that figures most prominently in the archaeological record. It has previously been observed that, where soil conditions allow for their preservation (cf. Allen 2017, fig. 3.1), the great majority of rural settlements were engaged to some degree in raising the principal domesticates, cattle, sheep and pig, and that a proportion of the animals that died or were slaughtered were consumed on site. Indeed, the sampling of the organic residues from a sizeable sample of cooking vessels from two sites, the farmstead at Faverdale, County Durham, and the villa and nucleated settlement at Stanwick, Northamptonshire, showed a consistent presence of ruminant, i.e. cattle and sheep/goat, adipose animal fats (Cramp *et al.* 2011).

While we can see regional patterning, such as the increased presence of cattle on northern settlements, or the greater occurrence of sheep on chalkland settlements in the South region, what the evidence does not allow is any estimation of how frequently meat, from whatever type of animal, was eaten, and thus how important it was in rural diets. However, the implication of the greater frequency of cattle at villa sites in the Central Belt and South regions is that villa owners had greater access to beef, and of better-quality meat, than other people in the countryside, where the mortality profiles show animals being kept longer to meet the demands of traction rather than to provide prime beef (Allen 2017, 112–13, figs 3.5, 3.10, 3.15, 3.34–6). The situation with sheep is a little different, with a tendency for slaughter at sub-adult ages, thus emphasising meat production (*ibid.*, 114–16, figs 3.39–41). In the future, one way by which we might gain further insight into the contribution of meat to the diet is to assess, where conditions of preservation allow, the results of estimating the quantities of the meat potentially consumed relative to the different species and the parts of the animal skeleton recovered in relation to the amount of soil excavated and the length of occupation of the site in question. This would then provide the basis for comparing the incidence of meat consumption by type of site and by region. Such a task will become easier when volumes of excavated soil are systematically recorded.

In the case of milk and cheese, while there is some evidence from the mortality profiles to support dairying in the countryside associated with sheep, this is not so with cattle, except perhaps on a very small-scale basis, and in proximity to some towns and military *vici* (Allen 2017, 113–14). Analysis of the lipids preserved in the cooking vessels analysed at the villa and nucleated settlement at Stanwick, Northamptonshire, showed a

significant presence (<40 per cent) of dairy fats (Cramp *et al*. 2011, 1347).

Even if we cannot easily estimate the importance of different animal and plant foods in the diet of the rural population, we can see a greater variety of food types over the Roman period and, to differing degrees, at all types of settlement, particularly in the Central Belt and South regions. Although never forming more than a very small percentage (<5 per cent) of the animal and bird bone recovered from different types of settlement, chicken becomes more prevalent over time, its presence recorded at over 60 per cent of rural settlements by the fourth century. However, although the proportions are small, chicken is relatively more abundant at defended small towns, villas, military *vici* and roadside settlements than it is at villages and all other types of farmstead (Allen 2017, 134–8, figs 3.54–8). Differential access to certain food types can also be seen with wild animals, fish and shellfish (see Ch. 4, pp. 103–18). It is notable, for example, that, although the bones of wild mammal species are present across the spectrum of rural settlements, if only to a very small extent, never exceeding 2 per cent of total mammal assemblages, there is an appreciably higher representation of the post-cranial, meat-bearing bones of red and roe deer at villas than at other rural settlements, where these animals are better represented by their shed antler than their meat-bearing bones. Differential access is also a feature of wildfowl which, like wild mammals, are slightly more common in the late Roman period. While these are documented in almost two-thirds of villa assemblages, elsewhere, in all other types of farmstead and in villages, the proportion of assemblages where they are found hovers around 40 per cent (see Ch. 4, FIGS 4.20–21). A very similar pattern of differential access occurs with fish, also more commonly found in the later Roman period, and with the largest assemblages from villas (see Ch. 4, FIGS 4.22–25) (cf. Müldner 2013). Greater popularity in the third and fourth centuries also appears to be the case with marine molluscs, particularly oyster, though detailed analysis has so far been confined to the south-west counties of England (see Ch. 4, FIGS 4.26–30). Although they probably only made a very minor contribution to the diet, oysters and other marine molluscs are widely distributed across the Central Belt, North-East and South Regions, as FIG. 4.26 shows, distance from the coast being no barrier to where they were consumed. The detailed study of the incidence of oyster in the south-west shows a wide distribution across rural settlements in Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, but an almost complete absence in Cornwall and Devon. In those counties, however, it is clear that marine resources in general contributed more to the diet of coastal communities than that of settlements inland. Although the data have not been analysed for all the regions, we can predict that the same, or a similar, pattern to that of fish of differential access will be presented by the consumption of marine shellfish, particularly the most abundant, oyster.

Whereas cost, including of transport, will have been a factor in the consumption of marine fish and molluscs away from the coast, this need not have been the case for chicken or wild animals, all of which *could* have been available on the farm or in the local environment. There could be a variety of explanations to explain their rarity on farmsteads other than villas, ranging from cultural choice or a lack of resources to establishing viable, breeding flocks in the case of chicken, to estate owners prohibiting access to the game on their estates by the peasantry. It is clear from the above that, even if we do not know how frequently or in what quantities meat, fish and shellfish were eaten, villas in particular had access to a greater variety of these foods than other rural settlements. In times of poor harvests or famine the estate owners had more to fall back on than other country dwellers.

As the incidence of burial of their articulated remains suggests, dog and horse meat were not particularly favoured by the people of Roman Britain, but in both cases there is more evidence for their butchery and consumption among the rural than the urban population. This may have been a response to shortages of food more generally, but, as the example of mortality profiles from certain sites suggests, horse may have partly been raised for eating (Ch. 4, p. 90; Allen 2017, 127–8).

Turning to the staple crops we can also see that, where the evidence survives, principally in the form of cereals and cereal by-products charred in the course of being processed, the incidence of the different types of wheat, barley and other cereals has been recorded (Lodwick 2017c). Other crops or plant foods that were consumed, but which did not require charring to process them, may only be preserved in waterlogged or mineralising conditions. Even so, as with the animals, what we do not know is the relative importance of cereals and other plant foods in rural diets. Nor do we know much about how cereals were consumed, whether as porridge or bread, although the presence of querns and mills indicates the processing of some of the harvest into flour, presumably for local consumption. As the principal crops of Roman Britain, it is reasonable to assume that wheat and barley did form a staple part of the diet, but hard evidence is lacking. In addition two pulse crops, pea and Celtic bean, under-represented in charred assemblages as they do not

require direct heating as part of food preparation, are also widely recorded, but with a lower incidence or absence in the North and Upland Wales and the Marches (Lodwick 2017c, 33–6, figs 2.22–23).

It is only with the recovery of deposits of mineralised cereals and other plant foods that we have direct evidence of the food that has passed through the human gut, but such deposits are extraordinarily rare on rural settlements. However, they do broaden the range of foods that we know were eaten to include fruits, pulses and vegetables and flavourings. Although mineralised pulses (pea and Celtic bean) have only been recorded from a single site, the late Roman roadside settlement of Baldock in Hertfordshire (Rackham 1998), the picture is better for horticultural crops. From the twenty assemblages with mineralised or waterlogged deposits containing three or more horticultural crops (Lodwick 2017c, 78–9, table 2.23) we can see that damson/plum has the highest incidence among the fruits recorded, which also include apple/pear, cherry, grape and walnut. In addition, mulberry has been recorded at the temple at Uley, Gloucestershire, and blackberry, sloe and sweet cherry at the late Roman villa at Monk Sherborne, Hampshire (Girling and Straker 1993; Higgins 2005). Among the flavourings coriander is the most common, followed by celery and dill, then fennel and summer savory, while there are single records of beet and lentil. The types of sites where these assemblages have been found range from military *vici* to roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads. In addition, there are two examples of enclosed settlement, Farmoor, Oxfordshire, and the late Roman phase at Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire, but no records from any village. Exotic foods, such as imported or potentially imported plant foods are generally confined to military *vici* and roadside settlements, but fig, grape, and olive have been reported from villas, such as Bucknowle, Dorset, and Castle Copse, Wiltshire (Green *et al.* 2009, 168; Clapham and Gleason 1997, 351), but not from farmsteads (cf. Lodwick 2017c, 77; Van der Veen *et al.* 2007; 2008).

As with plant foods, meat, fish, etc., similar issues prevail with understanding the role of liquid foods in rural diets. It is likely that brewed beverages, such as ale, were frequently consumed and archaeobotanical records suggestive of malting, as well as the recognition of cisterns and ovens used in this process rather than for corndrying, show a distribution concentrated in the Central Belt, where they have been found in <20 per cent of settlements, in the East, and in the South Region, where they have been noted in over 40 per cent of villas. However, there is a steep decline in incidence to a representation of less than 5 per cent

among enclosed and complex farmsteads in the South (Lodwick 2017c, 64, fig. 2.49). Drinking vessels, such as pottery beakers and tankards, are consistently present in small percentages, commonly about 5–6 per cent, among rural settlements through the Roman period in the west of the Central Belt (Timby 2017, figs 7.34–36).

Although wine was imported in wooden barrels, these do not survive well in the archaeological record (cf. Boon 1975) and ceramic evidence in the form of amphorae remains our best proxy for wine consumption, particularly in the early Roman period, but it is rare in the countryside. Timby notes that in her study area of the western Central Belt (Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol) amphorae account for less than 5 per cent of pottery assemblages at most rural sites, but, of these, the great majority were Baetican Dressel 20 vessels used to transport olive oil. Gallic wine amphorae are the second most frequent but have been recorded in only about one-third of the rural assemblages (Timby 2017, 332, table 7.11). These observations chime with Brindle's survey where he noted that amphora sherds were recorded from only about one-third of rural sites overall (Brindle 2017b). Individual types were not recorded in the database, but, as in Timby's study area, the likelihood is that the majority are Baetican olive oil amphorae. Apart from military *vici*, sherds of such vessels accounted for less than 2 per cent of the assemblages in question (*ibid.*, figs 7.2–4). When such data are conceived in terms of the possible volume of wine or olive oil consumed per annum, the likely quantities are minute – this also assumes that such vessels reached their final destination carrying their original contents, and not some other commodity, or even as empty containers to be used for storage. However, the data do allow us to see differential access, with significantly greater representation at military *vici*, and very slightly more at roadside settlements compared with other rural settlements, including villas.

The preference for olive oil, almost certainly driven by its supply to the military, which had uses in the bathhouse and as a fuel for lighting as well as for cooking, raises the question how far approaches to the preparation and cooking of food changed during the Roman period in the countryside. We have noted above that flavourings such as coriander and dill became more common in rural contexts and this, with the evidence of the residue analysis of the distinctive, specialised vessel, the mortarium, suggests a degree of change in the preparation of food, but not one that maps on to perceptions of Mediterranean-based practices (Cramp *et al.* 2011). In any case mortaria are not very common, though more so in the late period, as Timby's case study of assemblages in

the west of the Central Belt region has shown (2017, figs 7.31–2). Overall, the question is difficult to answer without more analysis of organic residues in rural pottery assemblages, but recent analysis of a large sample of late Iron Age and early Roman cooking vessels from Silchester provides further evidence of a move to a more meat-based diet compared with the earlier Iron Age (Colonese *et al.* in press). Whether this trend extended to the countryside, particularly to the non-elite, remains to be determined.

The overall lack of evidence for wine consumption in rural settlements seems surprising, not least among the late Roman villas of the elite. Mid- and late Roman wine amphorae are rare and none is recorded in Timby's (2017) study area (cf. Bidwell 2017, fig. 7.13, for third-century Campanian amphorae in the north of Britain). The failure of wooden barrels to survive in the archaeological record is a likely explanation for the lack of evidence for wine consumption, otherwise what were those delicate, late Roman, glass drinking vessels for (Cool 2006, 224–6)? Definite evidence for wine production in Britain is so far limited to one site at Wollaston in the Nene Valley, but bedding trenches appropriate for the planting of vineyards have been recognised more widely, particularly in the east of the Central Belt (Lodwick 2017c, 73–7, fig. 2.51).

To conclude, the majority of the rural population had access to a limited range of food types with a comparatively poorer nutritional value compared with the Roman army, town dwellers and the rural, estate-owning elite. This is further supported by Rohnbogner's study of the skeletal evidence from predominantly non-villa settlements in the countryside, which shows widespread, direct and indirect evidence of malnutrition through all age groups across the Central Belt, East and South regions (below, Chapter 7).

RECREATION

In most contemporary western societies, leisure time is viewed as an essential part of existence, ensuring what is typically described as *quality of life* (Henderson 2010, 12), while at the same time having the potential to significantly advance cultural development (cf. Pieper 2009). The societies of ancient Greece and Rome are thought to have been crucial in the nascent development of many different forms of recreation, leisure and sport, which have influenced modern understanding of social entertainment in many parts of the world (El-Harami 2015, 168). Most accounts of Mediterranean Roman society include discussions of well-known, public, leisure activities such as gladiatorial games in the amphitheatre,

horse racing at the circus and social interactions at urban bathhouses (e.g. Coleman 2011; Fagan 2011). These are not only evidenced by significant extant monuments, such as the Colosseum in Rome, the circus at Merida in Spain and the public bathhouses of Pompeii, but also by graphic contemporary accounts by the likes of Juvenal, Pliny, Ovid and Horace writing in the early imperial period. Pliny the Younger, for example, displayed his incredulity that 'so many thousands of grown men should be possessed again and again with a childish passion to look at galloping horses, and men standing upright in their chariots' (*Ep.* 9.6; Toner 2009, 115), while Ovid portrayed the public baths as meeting places for furtive lovers (*Ars am.* 3.638–40; Fagan 1999, 51).

The evidence from Britain is far patchier, though there is no doubt that its incorporation into the Roman Empire brought with it gradual, piecemeal, but fundamental changes to many of the indigenous societies, and these included increasing opportunities for some to dedicate time to leisure and recreation. However, for the most part these are likely to have been restricted to elements of the military and urban populations, alongside higher status rural dwellers in central, southern and eastern parts of the province, i.e. those who also had a stake in urban society. For rural peoples living in much of the north and west, and at the lower end of the social scale across the province, it is doubtful whether there was ever much 'free' time to devote to recreation, at least not of the 'Roman' types noted above.

PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT

Public recreational activities in particular were very much an urban and military phenomenon. The only definite circus for horse and chariot racing lies outside Colchester (Crummy 2008), though a series of parallel lines revealed by geophysical survey on the edge of the gravel terrace outside Silchester have also been tentatively suggested as such a feature (Creighton with Fry 2016, 424–30). In addition, the well-known but fragmentary inscription from Chedworth villa in Gloucestershire translated as 'The green (company)' (*RIB* 127), is usually taken as referring to a chariot team (cf. Allason-Jones 2011b, 225), suggesting that at least some elite folk with rural residences were versed in the public recreational activities that could be found across the Roman Empire. Amphitheatres have been located outside of at least nine towns in Roman Britain to date, including the legionary fortresses at Chester and Caerleon (Wilmott 2008). Rural amphitheatres are rare, these comprising a possible example from the nucleated lead-mining settlement at Charterhouse-on-Mendip in Somerset, revealed by earthwork survey, aerial

photographs and LiDAR analysis (Fradley 2009; Smith 2017, 193–4) and another possible example defined by earthworks at Winterslow, Wiltshire (Vatcher 1963; cf. Deniger 1997, 150–73). In addition, what has been termed a 'semi-amphitheatre' has been excavated within the religious complex at Marcham/Frilford in Oxfordshire, somewhat analogous with structures in northern and central Gaul, often located within large rural sanctuaries (Kamash *et al.* 2010, 115; see Ch. 5, p. 165). Such 'semi-amphitheatres' have some design elements of theatres and serve to highlight the close associations between aspects of what we may regard as recreation and the religious experience. This is seen even more explicitly with 'true' theatres.

Just four definite theatres are known from Roman Britain, three within urban contexts, located next to temples at Canterbury, Colchester and Verulamium, with the fourth being part of a rural religious complex at Gosbecks, near Colchester. In addition, a monumental structure near to the temple/baths complex at Bath has also been suggested as a theatre (Cunliffe 1969, 149; La Trobe-Bateman and Niblett 2016, 101), while another theatre has been postulated recently at 'Blacklands', Faversham, in Kent (11 km from Canterbury), landscaped out of a hillside, within what was thought to have been an extensive religious site, dating from the second to early fourth century A.D. (Wilkinson 2013; see Ch. 5, p. 165). Further investigation is required to substantiate the nature of this site. Such theatrical settings, linked as they were to sanctuaries, may have staged regular public performances at specific festival times, when large numbers of people may have attended, drawn from the urban and rural populace. However, the evidence suggests that such large theatres were very rare, and are as yet unknown beyond south-east England (with the possible exception noted at Bath), with the vast majority of the rural population probably never experiencing them. This is not to say that drama on a smaller scale would not have occurred, though this would leave no tangible archaeological evidence, except, perhaps, in the form of the occasional ceramic or metal face mask used for performances, as has been noted on eleven sites in the current dataset, all of them villas, military *vici* and other nucleated settlement.

BATHING

Public bathing was another very important social and recreational activity throughout much of the Roman Empire (Fagan 2011), though again it is doubtful how much, if at all, it would have figured in the lives of the vast majority of the rural population in Britain, with most of the excavated settlements included in this study having no obvious provision for bathing (FIG. 3.9). Bathhouses were revealed within 7 of the 24 defended 'small towns' (*c.* 30 per cent) and 18 of the 182 roadside settlements (*c.* 10 per cent) included in the project, although some of these only appeared to have operated for relatively brief periods, such as that at Braughing in Hertfordshire, which was established by the River Rib in the later first century and abandoned by the mid-second century (Partridge 1977). The bathhouse within the roadside settlement at Cowbridge in South Wales only seems to have been used during the early second century, possibly associated with the site's postulated military origins (Parkhouse and Evans 1996), suggesting that provision for public bathing was no longer required after the cessation of military use. There is doubt over whether some of the bath buildings at nucleated sites were ever intended to be used as public bathing facilities, as opposed to more restricted use by private individuals or groups. At Bitterne in Hampshire, for example, a small bathhouse or sauna (see below, p. 66), 5.2 m square with four rooms, was built in the later second century, and then re-modelled into a two-roomed building during the early third century, the function of which is not entirely clear (Cotton and Gathercole 1958).

Baths attached to *mansiones*, official resting places on the Roman road network, are known at a number of nucleated settlements, and some of these could be quite extensive, such as at Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire, where a large (*c.* 37 × 15 m) bathhouse was located to the south of the *mansio* (Green 1975; FIG. 3.10). This building had a colonnaded portico with numerous rooms, and evidence for glazed windows, tessellated floors, mosaics, marble and painted wall plaster, potentially accommodating reasonable numbers of people, though how restrictive access would have been remains uncertain. Recent excavations of a large bathhouse by the River Thames in an extensive late Roman settlement just 1.2 km to the east of the walls of London at Shadwell produced a rich finds assemblage, including a gold earring and necklace, suggesting a wealthy, possibly official clientele, and there were perhaps limited or no opportunities, at Shadwell and possibly at bathhouses more generally, for other sections of society (Douglas *et al.* 2011).

It would seem standard practice for Roman forts to have been provisioned with bathhouses outside of the defences (Johnson 1983, 220), and many of the military *vici* included in this project have evidence for such buildings. Excavations of well-preserved military bathhouses, such as the legionary baths at Caerleon in South Wales, have indicated that they would have been 'public' to
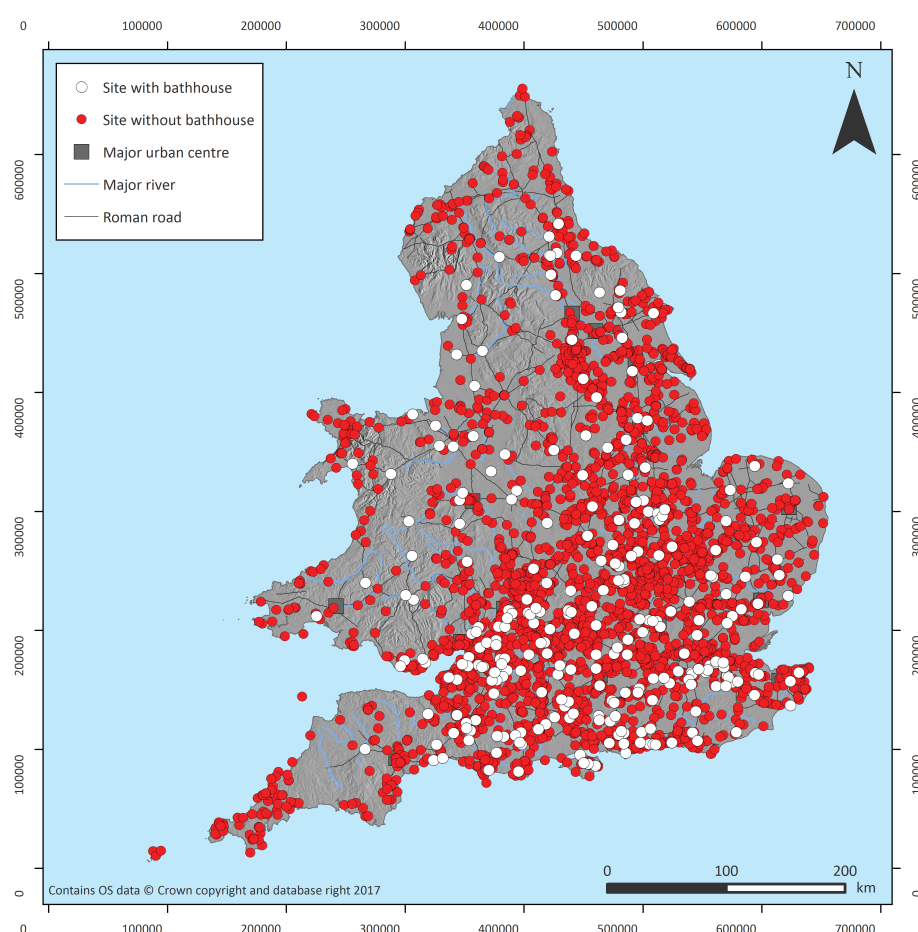
FIG. 3.9. Map showing the restricted distribution of bathhouses within the countryside of Roman Britain

some extent, with objects suggesting men, women and children used the facilities (Zienkiewicz 1986; Allason-Jones 2011b, 240). These are, however, likely to have been limited to the inhabitants of the *canabae* or *vicus*, rather than the surrounding rural populations, which generally display little obvious interaction with the military communities (e.g. Brindle 2016a, 330; but see below, p. 68).

Away from nucleated centres on the road network, there is limited evidence for public bathing, with, as yet, no bathhouses from settlements defined as 'villages'. At least six religious sites are thought to have contained bathhouses (Wood End Lane, Herts; Lydney Park, Glos; Coleshill, Warks; Bath, north-east Somerset; Gosbecks, Essex; Springhead, Kent), though aside from the great temple-spa complex at Bath (and possibly at Buxton in Derbyshire, recorded as *Aquae Arnemetiae* on the Ravenna Cosmology; see Ch. 5, p. 165), these were mostly quite small, and it remains uncertain if they were for public use or perhaps, as suggested by Derks for Ribemont-sur-Ancre in Gaul, restricted for use by cult officials and/or wealthy patrons (Derks 1998, 194). Six primarily industrial sites had evidence for bathing establishments, with notable

examples in north Wales, primarily associated with tile production and the lead industry, and in Sussex (East and West), associated with the iron industry. The sites in Wales at Holt, Wrexham (tile-production), Pentre Farm, Flintshire (lead industry) and Prestatyn, Denbighshire (metal-working), would all appear to have developed into nucleated settlements with official military involvement, while another likely bathhouse associated with official mineral extraction was found at Risca in South Wales (cf. Burnham and Davies 2010, 309). At the Sussex sites of Wiggonholt (pottery production and metal-working), Beauport Park and Hartfield (both iron industry), activity was more dispersed, though Beauport Park at least would appear to have been closely connected with the Roman military in the form of the *Classis Britannica* (Brodribb and Cleere 1988). This bathhouse developed to a substantial size with ten rooms, and was thought to have been used by the military unit, at least until abandonment of the site in the third century A.D. (*ibid.*, 242–4).

The occasional, 'isolated' rural bathhouse has also been excavated and usually assumed, quite reasonably, to belong to a villa estate. These are
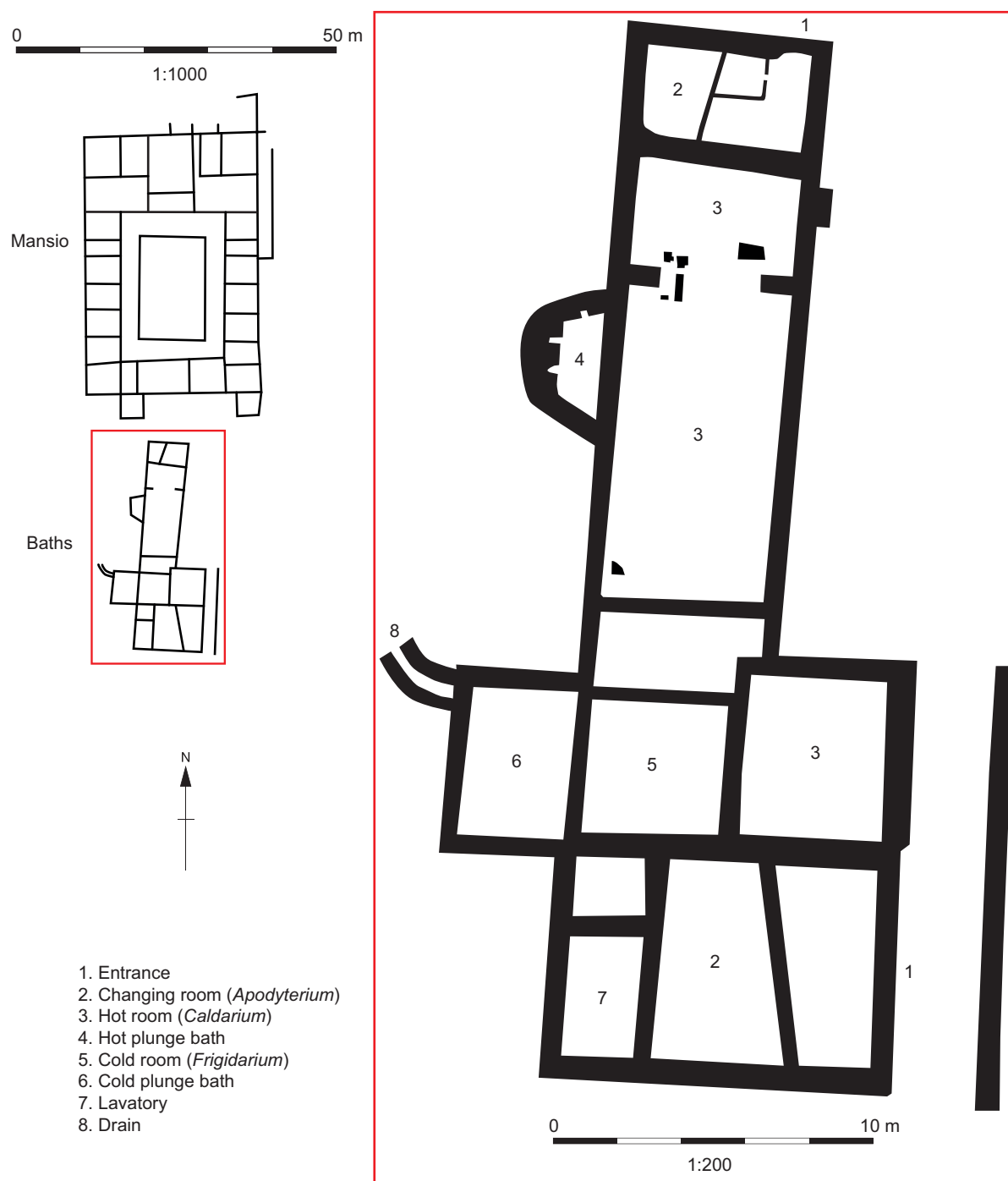
FIG. 3.10. Plan of the *mansio* and bathhouse at Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire (Green 1975)

largely restricted to eastern and south-eastern parts of England, although such bathhouses have occasionally been found much further north, such as that at Old Durham in County Durham, which is thought to be associated with an as yet undiscovered villa (Wright and Gillam 1953). Most of these bathhouses are not of a size that suggests use by large numbers of estate workers, as for example at Haddon, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, where a small (6 × 3 m) late Roman two-roomed bathhouse with painted plaster walls was excavated *c*. 700 m south of two

aisled buildings interpreted as a working farmyard within a wider estate (Upex 1994; Hinman 2003; see below, p. 66). The occasional larger and more elaborate 'isolated' rural bathhouse is encountered, including the remarkable late Roman octagonal building (*c*. 14.5 m across) at Bax Farm in North Kent, located on a raised area surrounded by intertidal marsh and 2–3 km from a number of known villas, though this example may have had specific religious associations, and further investigation of its immediate context is required to establish its precise nature (Wilkinson 2009).

'Estate' bathhouse

Stream

1. Entrance
2. Changing room (*Apodyterium*)
3. Hot room (*Caldarium*)
4. Cold room (*Frigidarium*)
5. Cold plunge bath
6. Warm room (*Tepidarium*)
7. Later insertion of corndryer

N

Bath suite

Villa complex

0   100 m

1:2000

5

5

4

2

7

1
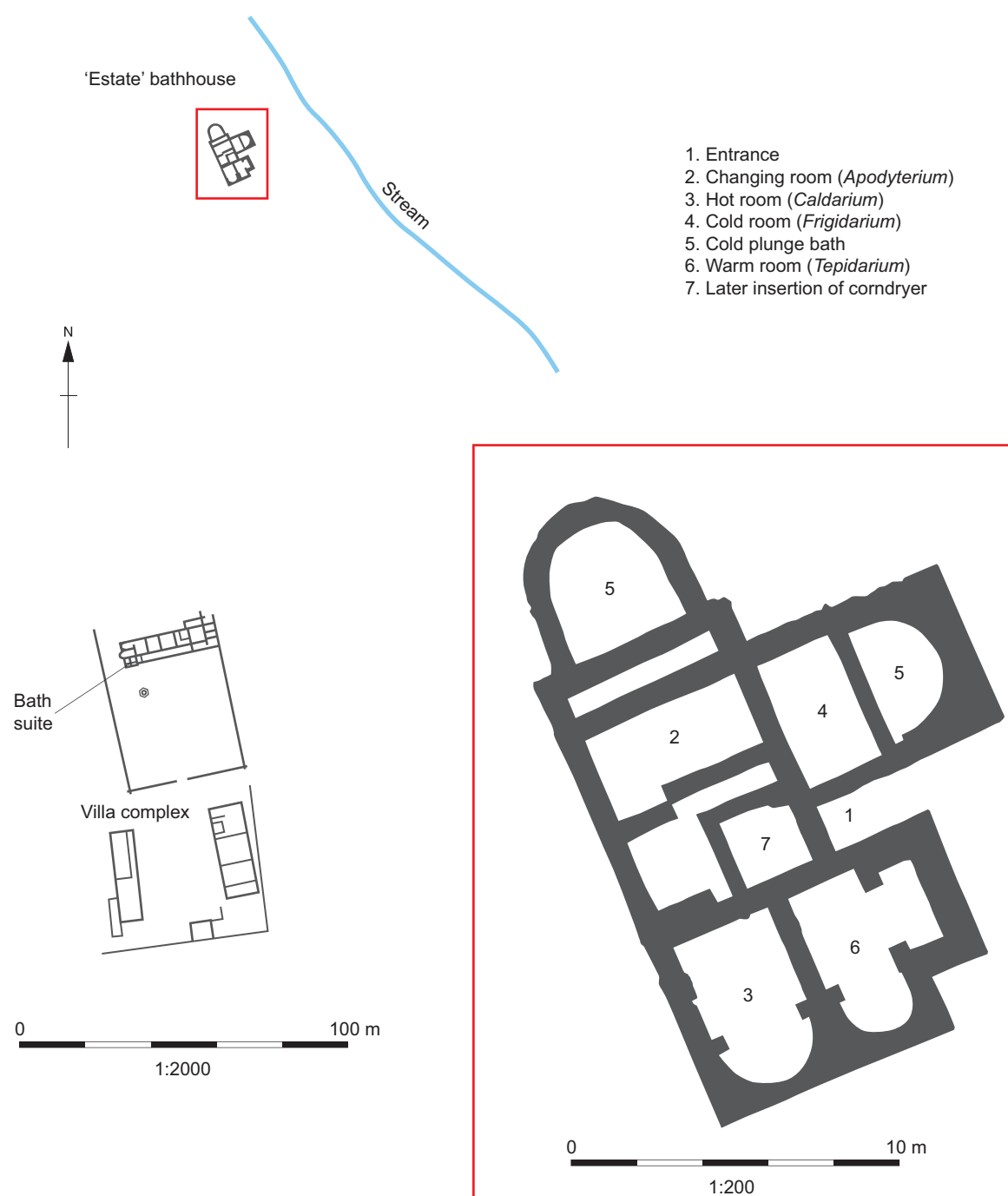
6

3

0   10 m

1:200

FIG. 3.11. Plan of the villa and bathhouse at North Wraxall, Wilts (Andrews 2009a)

Perhaps a more likely example of a possible villa estate bathhouse is the large building found at Truckle Hill, North Wraxall, Wiltshire, 150 m north of a courtyard villa, probably part of a complex of buildings and other features thought to be associated with the estate (Andrews 2009a; FIG. 3.11). The main villa contained a substantial integrated bath suite, presumably for use by the villa's occupants, and there is every chance that the detached bathhouse, which was situated closer to a main water source, was utilised by at least elements of the estate's workforce, at least until

the fourth century when it was robbed and a corndryer then inserted into the abandoned shell (*ibid.*).

While much of the rural population probably had little or no access to 'Roman' bathing facilities, the same was not true for most people of higher social status, at least in the southern and eastern parts of the province. Bathing facilities were noted in 201 of the 326 villas recorded in the project, while their absence in many others is probably due to the lack of extensive excavation. Bath suites were often integrated within the main villa

building, as at Truckle Hill noted above, but in many cases were later structural additions, such as at Little Oakley in Essex, where a stone-founded corridor villa built in the mid-second century, was altered 100 years later with baths inserted (Barford 2002). While these would have been expensive additions, they would have surely have added a degree of social prestige to the inhabitants of the villa. Some of the larger villas developed two or more bathing establishments, as at North Leigh in Oxfordshire, where three bath suites were identified in different wings of the courtyard complex, though not all strictly contemporary (Wilson 2004). As with public bathhouses, it is likely that such bath suites were not just a means of personal cleanliness and relaxation, but were important social settings for business and pleasure among social contemporaries, and were thus also markers of status.

It is the very presence of bathhouses within smaller rural settlements that is a major factor in our definition of them as villas (cf. Allen and Smith 2016, 17), and yet there are also a few sites where 'bathing' facilities existed, but where other architectural aspects fall short of this categorisation. A recently published example comes from Newnham in Bedfordshire, where part of an elaborate stone-founded bathhouse dating to the third century A.D. was revealed within what otherwise is interpreted as a modestly wealthy farmstead, without the more luxurious domestic elements of a villa (Ingham *et al.* 2016). The settlement appears to occupy the increasingly blurred boundary between what may be classified as 'villa' and 'non-villa', which is particularly marked in the Central Belt region (cf. Smith 2016b, 69–70). A more unusual discovery of bathing facilities within what appears to be a 'typical' farmstead is at Cedars Park, Stowmarket, Suffolk, where what has been suggested as two bathhouses were built between the mid-second and mid-third century A.D., alongside a rectangular stone-founded building, rectangular timber structures and two roundhouses (Nicholson and Woolhouse 2016). The buildings were clearly part of an agricultural set-up, being surrounded by paddocks, droveways and fields, indicating that at least some farming communities thought it pertinent to invest in bathing establishments, perhaps in order raise their social standing.

As may be expected, most of the bathhouses within these smaller rural settlements were relatively modest structures. One example from a complex farmstead at Faverdale, County Durham, comprised a small two-roomed stone building (6 × 3.5 m) with a hypocaust system and painted-plaster walls, considered as a small bathhouse or *caldarium* (hot room), though there were no other obvious masonry buildings within the main enclosure (Proctor 2012). Another settlement at Chilton Fields, Oxfordshire, had a small two-room hypocausted structure lying over 25 m from a relatively simple rectangular masonry building with a tiled roof and at least one painted plaster wall (Pine and Preston 2015; see FIG. 3.1). It was suggested to have contained a heated pool, though it was probably another *caldarium*. To these buildings could be added other small 'bathhouses', such as the two-roomed example at Haddon, Peterborough, in Cambridgeshire noted above, which did not necessarily utilise heated water, but instead acted as saunas. Some could have even ended up having more prosaic functions such as smokeries, as has been suggested for the two-roomed heated building within the farmstead at Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007, 173–5; see Allen 2017, 123). However, the painted plaster walls of most of these structures suggest the occupants of these sites had the resources and cultural and social aspirations to create small 'heated' establishments for leisure purposes. Such 'leisure' environments would not have been experienced by the vast majority of the rural population of Roman Britain.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

If the physical infrastructure of social and recreational space (e.g. theatres, baths etc.) can be seen to have been quite limited in a rural context, then what of other evidence for leisure activities? Here, material culture and to a certain extent environmental remains come to the fore, with the recovery of objects relating to hunting, gaming and music providing some measure as to how certain people in society may have spent their leisure time (cf. Allason-Jones 2011b). The importance of hunting is explored in Chapter 4, while the social and geographic distribution of certain other types of artefact associated with recreation will be addressed here.

There are a total of 2634 objects recorded under the category of 'recreation' in the project database, 90 per cent of these coming from 306 settlements, with the remainder from cemeteries, religious sites, industrial sites and field systems. The vast majority of these comprise gaming counters, usually made of pottery, bone, glass and/or stone, and sometimes other materials such as the jet counters recovered from the small town of Baldock in Hertfordshire (Stead and Rigby 1986). Although far less numerous, dice were recorded at 50 sites and were nearly always made of bone, though the occasional ivory example was noted, such as at Claydon Pike in Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007). Swift's recent study of bone dice has highlighted their varied use, being linked not only

with gaming and gambling but also divination – interpreting the will of the gods (Swift 2017, 123). Gambling was certainly linked with divine fate and fortune and had a long tradition in the Roman world, probably being widespread in public and private areas, though seemingly with more of an urban emphasis (*ibid.*, 126; Toner 1995, 90–5).

Although there is no way of knowing for certain, most of the gaming counters and many of the dice found in excavations of Romano-British sites would probably have been used to play board games. Some of these are well known through contemporary Roman literature and the occasional recovery of a gaming board, including backgammon-like games played with dice such as *XII Scripta (Ludus Duodecim Scriptorum)* and *Alea/Tabula*, and games of skill such as *Ludus Latrunculorum (latrones)*, a game of military strategy (Allason-Jones 2011b, 235). Such board games were played throughout the Roman world and their enduring appeal in some areas is illustrated by two examples from North Kent.

At Northumberland Bottom on the North Kent Plain, a high-status early Roman cremation burial was interred with 23 gaming pieces, a gaming board and two bone dice (Allen *et al.* 2012). Meanwhile, over 200 years later at Lullingstone, *c.* 20 km to the south-west, a late Roman inhumation burial of a young adult male in the villa mausoleum was also buried with what must have been one of his favourite possessions – a complete set of 30 glass counters and a probable folded wooden gaming board, which had been placed upon the coffin (Meates 1987). The association of gaming boards with high-status burials is also seen within two of the remarkable conquest-period cremation graves at Stanway, Colchester, one where the board had been laid out with thirteen white glass counters on one side and thirteen blue glass counters on the other, arranged in what may have been the first stages of play (Schädler 2007).

The social distribution of objects associated with recreation is shown in FIG. 3.12. Unsurprisingly, nucleated settlements are most
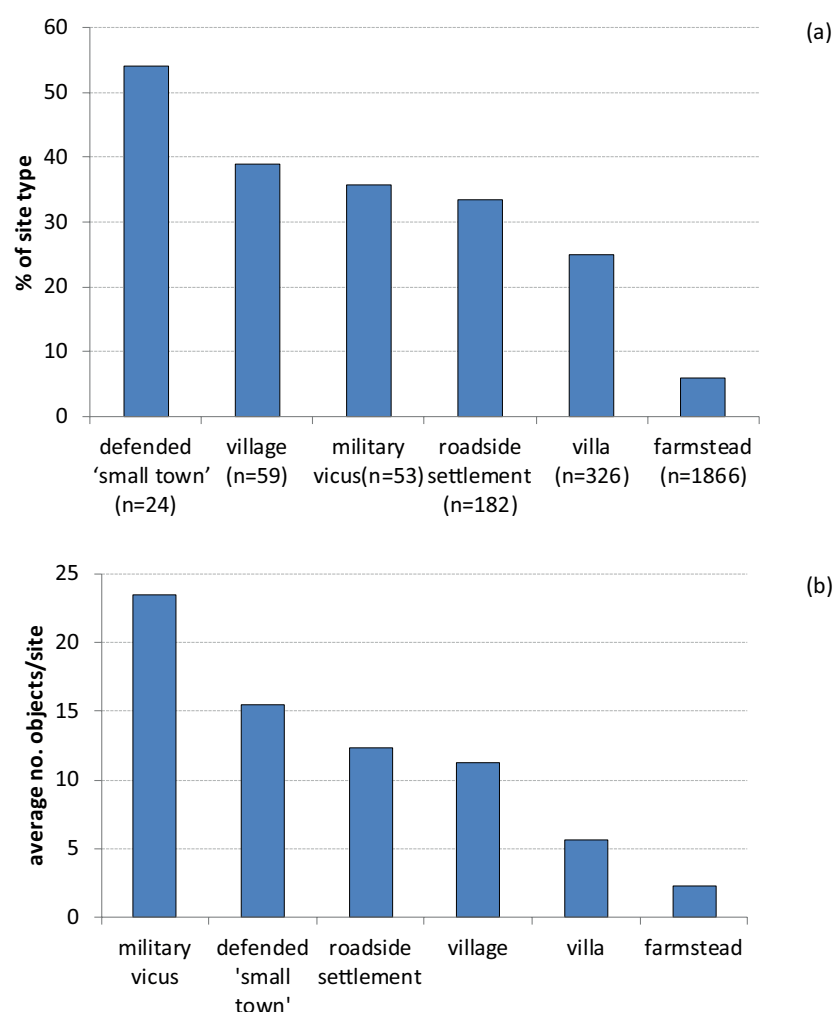

FIG. 3.12. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for recreation objects (n=no. sites) (a) and average number of recreation objects per site type (b)

likely to have evidence for such artefacts, and they are particularly plentiful within certain military *vici*, such as Piercebridge in County Durham, Castleford in West Yorkshire, Old Penrith in Cumbria, and Caersws in Powys. These would have been used not just by the soldiers, but also the wider military community (cf. Haynes 2014), though for the most part their use does not seem to have spread into the surrounding rural settlements. One possible exception is in north-west Wales (Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey), where alongside the fort at Caernarfon (*Segontium*), eleven rural settlements had some evidence for objects associated with gaming or gambling (FIG. 3.13). One of these was the villa at Glasfryn, Tremadoc, where stone gaming counters were found within the bathhouse (Breese and Anwyl 1909), while the others were all farmsteads or industrial sites, with a particular concentration in Anglesey. Most of these objects were gaming counters, though the remains of two gaming boards and stone pieces were recovered from the ironworking site at Bryn y Castell (Mighall and Chambers 1989), and pieces of patterned tufa, suggested to be part of a gaming board, were found in the farmstead at Graeanog (Fasham *et al.* 1998). It was argued in Volume 1 that the military presence in this area appears to have had more of an impact on the local rural settlement pattern compared with many other parts of the north and west (Brindle 2016c, 384), perhaps because of this region's mineral resources (cf. Smith 2017, 191), and this may account for the increase in such objects associated with recreation. However, this impact was clearly not uniform across all aspects of lifestyle, as these gaming counters and boards appear far more widespread here than other items such as security and lighting equipment, or artefacts associated with literacy (see below, p. 69).

Elsewhere, only a very small proportion of farmsteads has any evidence for recreation-associated objects, suggesting that most of the rural population were not spending any leisure time that they may have had playing games like *XII Scripta* or *latrones*, though of course there could have been plenty of other games and social activities that leave no recognisable trace in the archaeological record. Very little is known about music in Roman Britain, aside from occasional representations of musicians in mosaics and other
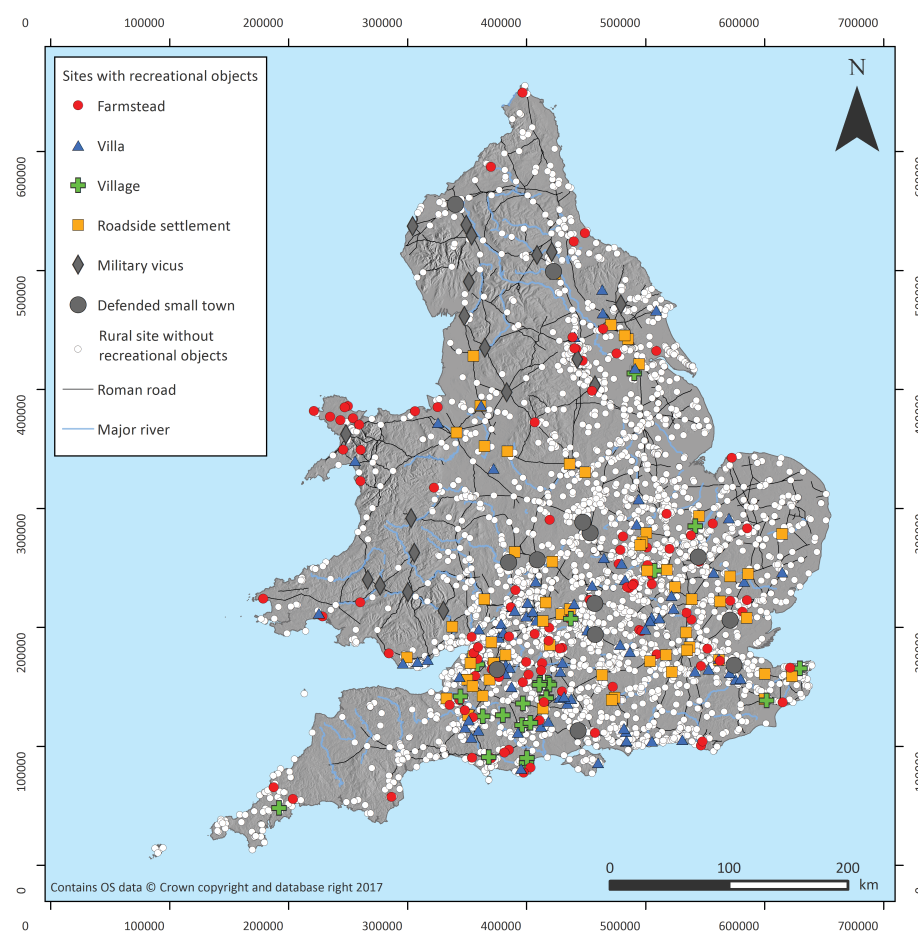

FIG. 3.13. Distribution of site types with recreational objects

art forms, and the rare recovery of what are interpreted as instrument parts (Liversidge 1968, 352–63; Allason-Jones 2011b, 236). Much of our information for musicians in the Roman world comes from military contexts, with several military musicians represented on funerary monuments, and fragments of wind instruments such as the *tuba* (signal trumpet) and *cornu* (horn) being recovered, including one from a military camp at Strageath in eastern Scotland (Summer and D'Amato 2009, 175). Probable instrument parts have been recorded at just twelve sites in the current database, these a mixture of farmsteads, villas, nucleated settlements and shrines/temples. Most of these comprise parts of wind instruments, often mouthpieces such as the metal examples from the religious sites at Muntham Court in West Sussex (Burstow and Hollyman 1957) and Lydney Park in Gloucestershire (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932, 81), though what are thought to be tuning pegs for a stringed music instrument were found in the *vicus* at Piercebridge, County Durham (Cool and Mason 2008) and bone mounts from the yoke of a lyre were found in a fifth-century grave in the nucleated settlement at Abingdon, Oxfordshire (Bruce-Mitford and Bruce-Mitford 1970, 8).

Ultimately, what was regarded as entertainment within most rural communities of Roman Britain may have had little to do with mainstream perceptions of recreation in the Roman period, but instead been rooted in long-standing traditions perhaps including song, dance and story-telling (see above discussion of social activities around hearth fires, p. 55). The oral telling of 'histories' in particular would probably have been an important social practice within communities of pre-Roman Britain, helping to create and maintain perceptions of their past (cf. Bradley 2002, 8). Maintaining these traditions was arguably even more crucial in the turbulent post-conquest period, though without being written down these 'histories' or 'stories' are unlikely to have remained static (*ibid.*). Of course, one of the major changes within certain parts of society over the course of the Roman period is the development of literacy, and it is to this that we now turn.

LITERACY AND LATIN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OF ROMAN BRITAIN

By Tom Brindle

The issue of how widespread literacy was in Britain during the Roman period has received a considerable amount of recent attention (e.g. Hanson and Conolly 2002; Pearce 2004; Tomlin 2011; Ferris 2012, 100–8; Eckardt 2014, 177–207; Mullen 2016). Our body of evidence for

reading and writing in the province has increased substantially, especially through the discovery of the now well-known collections of lead curse tablets from major religious sites such as Uley and Bath (Tomlin 1988; 1993; 2002), and from the survival of groups of wooden writing tablets at Vindolanda, Carlisle and London (Bowman 1994; Pearce 2004); London has very recently produced a large number of well-preserved texts (Tomlin 2016). These survivals not only provide us with valuable insights into the lives of the inhabitants of military and urban sites, as well as information on the daily concerns of those who visited temples to seek divine intervention (see Ch. 5, 178), but also give indications as to the adoption of Latin as a spoken language, and the development of the skills of reading and writing (cf. Mullen 2016). Ultimately, however, what this evidence really tells us is that some people at urban and military sites spoke Latin and could read and write the language (soldiers in particular would have needed to understand, if not write it), and that some of the people who visited major religious sites were similarly literate. The finds from these sites provide us with little information regarding levels of literacy or spoken Latin among the wider rural populations of Roman Britain; this section will consider the archaeological evidence for Latin and literacy in the Romano-British countryside.

It is widely accepted that there was very little tradition of writing in Britain prior to the Roman conquest, and although occasional finds of writing equipment are found in late Iron Age contexts, the evidence suggests that literacy was restricted to a select elite in the south-east of Britain (Hanson and Conolly 2002, 156, 159; Tomlin 2011, 133; Eckardt 2014, 178; Mullen 2016, 576). Even when reading and writing appear to have become more commonplace after the Roman conquest, it would not seem to have been widespread everywhere. Furthermore, as most inscriptions are in Latin (though see Hope 2016, 297, for inscriptions in Greek and Mullen 2016, 580–1, for the evidence for some Celtic writing), and not the indigenous Celtic languages, it has been taken to indicate that Latin itself was spoken (alongside Celtic) only among the elite, the army and by some of those occupying towns (Jackson 1953, 105).

Nevertheless, analysis of the growing body of archaeological finds associated with literacy (Hanson and Conolly 2002; Pearce 2004), as well as recent research in sociolinguistics (e.g. Mullen 2016), suggests that bilingualism may have been more widespread within the province than hitherto presumed. While Latin is unlikely to have ever replaced the native British Celtic as the primary spoken language (cf. Parsons 2011), it has become

increasingly clear that it would have been spoken by people occupying many different levels of society though at widely varying levels of competence, depending on a range of factors including social background and status, occupation, education, geographical location, age and gender (J. Adams 2007; 2013; Mullen 2016, 577). Similarly, where people could read and write at all, their ability will have been very variable, ranging from being able to mark one's own name to writing fluent Latin (Eckardt 2014, 177; Tomlin 2011, 134). Yet, even if Latin was more widespread as a spoken language than has previously been recognised, it seems likely that high-level literacy was not widespread among the rural population.

EVIDENCE FOR LITERACY

The archaeological evidence for literacy is available to us in several forms. Tomlin (2011), Ferris (2012, 100–8) and Eckardt (2014, 177–202) have recently presented useful overviews of this evidence, although a brief summary of the main types is presented here. Epigraphy – inscriptions on stone and other materials – represents our largest and most important body of data for the province, with tombstones and altars forming the bulk of this evidence. However, they are considerably less common in Britain than in many other parts of the Roman Empire (Blagg 1990, 28; Hope 2016, 288), and they tend to be recovered mainly from military, and, to a lesser extent, urban and religious sites (Raybould 1999; Tomlin 2011, 140; Ferris 2012, 101; Eckardt 2014, 179; Hope 2016). Wooden leaf-tablets, written on in ink, are rare survivals, but have been found in numbers at some, again predominantly military, sites (Bowman 1994; Pearce 2004). Inkwells, used to contain the ink for writing on wooden tablets, occur in a range of forms and materials, and these are the focus of ongoing work by Eckardt (2014, 177–207; 2017). Other artefactual evidence for writing include spatulae and styli, mainly of iron or copper alloy though occasionally in bone, used respectively for applying wax (and deleting text) to wooden tablets prior to inscription, and then inscribing the wax. Styli are fairly widespread at some types of site, though iron examples in particular are often difficult to recognise, especially without the metalwork being X-rayed (see below, p. 72). Very occasionally the wooden wax tablets themselves are found, where waterlogged conditions allow. Seal boxes, traditionally believed to have been used for protecting seals on private documents, are often found, and, being predominantly of copper alloy, are common finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. However, recent work has suggested that they may have been used to protect the contents of important consignments other than documents, such as bags of valuables (Andrews 2012, 80–92), and need not always be associated with literacy. There is also evidence from many sites for graffiti; words, names or letters inscribed onto pots, which presumably in most cases were intended to denote ownership. Not all graffiti are literate, however, and there are examples from many sites where symbols and not letters were used, which may indicate that the owner was illiterate (Tomlin 2011, 144; Ferris 2012, 103). Furthermore, graffiti appear to be far less common on rural than urban or military sites (cf. Evans 1987 and analysis in Frere and Tomlin 1995b, 16–29; *RIB* II.8).

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LITERACY

Previous work into the social distribution of writing equipment (Hanson and Conolly 2002; Mattingly 2006, 461; Eckardt 2014, 177–207) in Roman Britain has suggested that the extent and levels of literacy probably varied considerably, both geographically and over time. The large body of data collected by the Rural Settlement Project allows us to explore this in a little more detail.

It is, of course, important to recognise the limitations of our data. It was not possible to verify every artefact, and, for instance, it is possible that some objects identified as styli are misidentifications. It is, however, also likely that some iron styli have gone unrecognised due to corrosion, and may have been misidentified and recorded as nails or unidentified iron objects (Tomlin 2011, 149). Nevertheless, given the large sample of sites in the database, the broad patterns in the social and geographical distribution of these objects are likely to be meaningful. Given the generally low quantities of writing equipment recovered from rural sites, the approach adopted here, as with objects associated with lighting, security and recreation discussed above, has been to consider their distribution (and other proxy indicators of literacy) at different classes of rural settlements by a simple assessment of presence versus absence.

Before going into detail, it is worth noting that potential evidence for literacy was found at just 490 sites on the project database. While this seems like a reasonably large number, it only represents around 13 per cent of all recorded sites. By comparison, some form of evidence for literacy was recovered at 15 of the 24 sites (63 per cent) recorded on the supplementary database of defended 'small towns', indicating a focus, perhaps unsurprising, on the larger nucleated settlements on the road network. Similarly, of the sites in the main database that have produced such evidence, the undefended nucleated roadside settlements are by far the best represented site type, with nearly 50 per cent having produced objects

suggestive of some literacy among the inhabitants. This reduces to 26 per cent for villas and just 6 per cent of farmsteads. This resonates with observations by Tomlin (2011, 144) and Wilkes (2005), that the imperial road network was of critical importance for the spread of literacy and, we can assume, bilingualism, discussed further below.

Given that there have been several recent suggestions that bilingualism and literacy may have been more widespread among the population of Roman Britain than had hitherto been recognised, it is worth considering the distribution of the various types of evidence in slightly more detail. The charts in FIGS 3.14 to 3.18 respectively present the distribution of graffiti on ceramics, inscriptions, styli and wax spatulae, seal boxes, and inkwells across the main domestic settlement types recorded by the project.

The social distribution of all forms of evidence for literacy is for the most part quite similar; the defended 'small towns', roadside settlements and military *vici* consistently stand out as being the best represented for most classes of object. This is particularly the case with the evidence for graffiti on ceramics (FIG. 3.14), which is indicative of several things. First, it suggests a higher degree of literacy at these site types; while not all graffiti are literate, the widespread use of personal names indicates some reading and writing ability, although whether, for many people, this went beyond being able to mark their own name is a question difficult to answer. Second, the higher incidences of graffiti at nucleated settlements are also likely to be reflective of their relatively large population sizes, and the need to mark ownership

on one's possessions within environments where some people were strangers and not everyone could necessarily be trusted. This correlates with the social distribution of objects associated with security, discussed above (p. 50). Furthermore, Evans (1987, 202) has illustrated a preference for inscribing marks of ownership on finewares, especially samian, and as samian vessels are substantially more common at military sites, defended 'small towns' and roadside settlements than other rural site types (Frere and Tomlin 1995a, 1–14 (*RIB* II.7); Willis 1998; 2011; 2013a; Brindle 2017a), this also reflects the social distribution of these desirable forms of material culture. While the relative dearth of graffiti at other site types is likely to reflect in part lower levels of literacy in the wider countryside, the occupants of these sites may also have had a relatively higher degree of perceived security and many (except the occupants of some villas) are also likely to have had fewer highly desirable objects, which appear to have been less widely accessible for most people in rural communities.

In terms of the social distribution of inscriptions, military *vici* are substantially better represented than any of the other settlement types (FIG. 3.15). This reflects the aforementioned military focus for inscriptions on stone, with soldiers and their associates being the most likely to erect tombstones and dedicate altars; this 'epigraphic habit' was not one that was widely adopted among most other sectors of society in Britain (Eckardt 2014, 169; Hope 2016). While inscriptions (of a range of types, not necessarily 'monumental') have been identified at a reasonably high proportion of
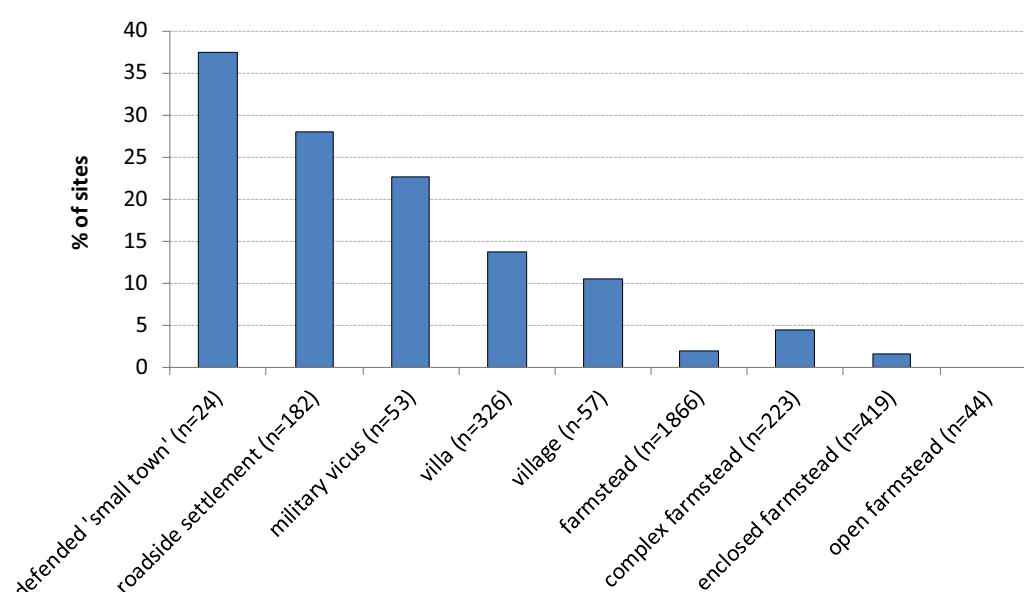

FIG. 3.14. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for graffiti on ceramics (n=no. sites)

defended 'small towns' and roadside settlements, they are exceptionally rare at all other settlements in the wider countryside.

The social distribution of styli and wax spatulae (and seal boxes, if we are to associate them with seals attached to written correspondence) generally follows that of graffiti, in being similarly present at a reasonably high proportion of defended 'small towns' and roadside settlements (FIGS 3.16 and 3.17), furthering suggestions that literacy was relatively widespread at settlements on the road

network. This does appear to be at odds with the traditional, minimalist, interpretation of the spread of bilingualism and literacy, which was seen as restricted to the elite, the army and urban dwellers (Jackson 1953, 105). Although most nucleated settlements along the main road network should not be regarded as urban centres, usually lacking the sorts of monumental buildings and street grids that characterise larger towns, the new road network appears to have been vitally important for the transmission of ideas regarding new ways of
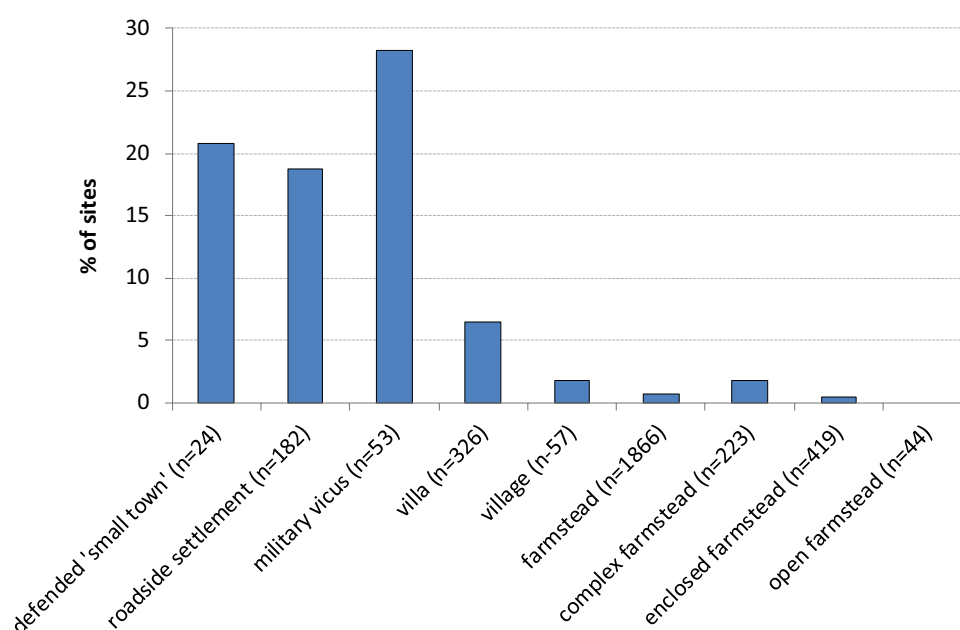
FIG. 3.15. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for inscriptions (n=no. sites)
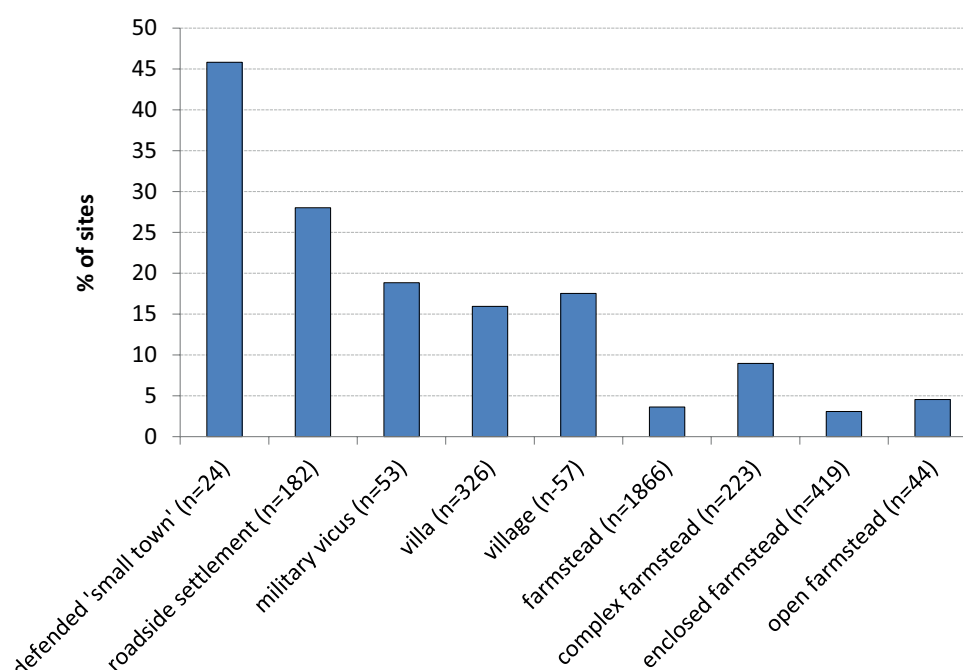
FIG. 3.16. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for styli and wax spatulae (n=no. sites)

doing things. Settlements that developed alongside the roads were places where, for instance, new forms of personal display were being adopted most widely (see Ch. 2). Many roadside settlements are also likely to have performed local administrative and small-scale market functions, suggested by the distribution of objects such as coins and weighing equipment (Brindle 2017b). If many of these settlements increasingly acted as markets for traded goods, including imports, this may have facilitated both the spread of Latin and the writing equipment

needed to record transactions. After major urban centres and military sites, this category of roadside nucleated settlements is also the type of site at which we might expect to see incomers to the province settling most widely; not all of those using writing equipment at these ostensibly 'native' sites need necessarily have been Britons.

Inkwells, one of the rarer types of artefact associated with literacy, have recently been given attention by Willis (2005) and Eckardt (2014, 193–207; 2017). Ceramic inkwells of samian are
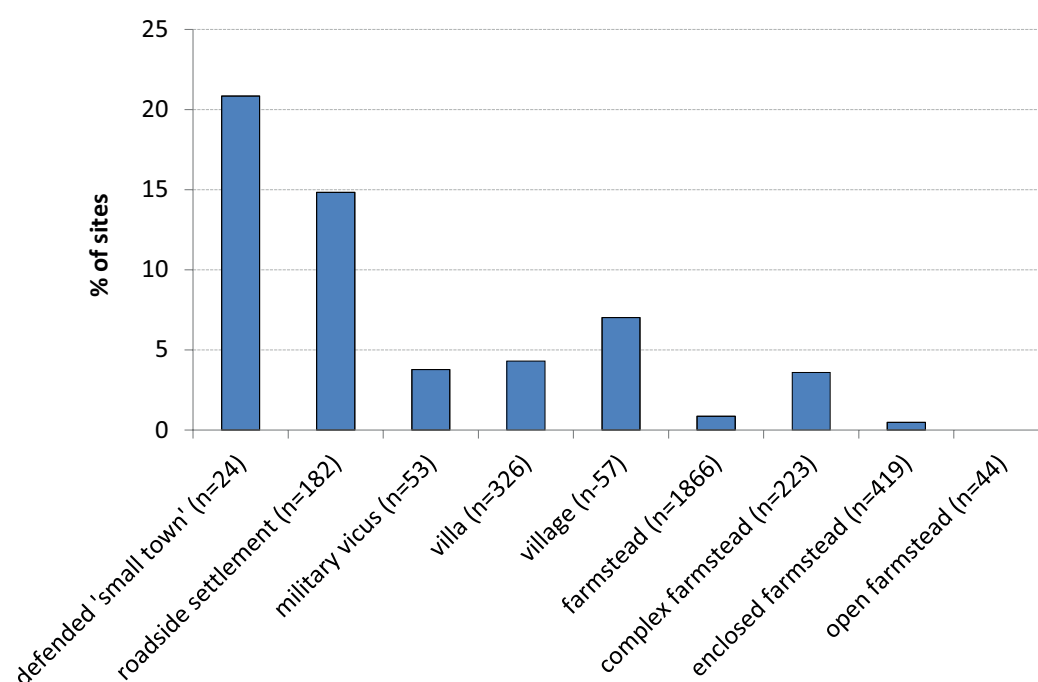

FIG. 3.17. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for seal boxes (n=no. sites)
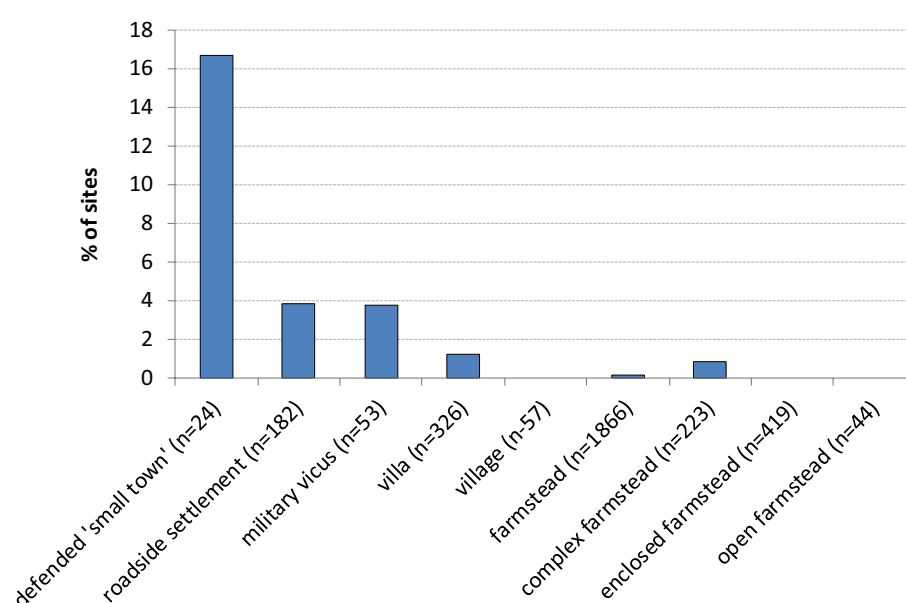

FIG. 3.18. Proportion of settlement types with evidence for inkwells (n=no. sites)

the most commonly found, although their social distribution is overwhelmingly biased towards military sites and major urban centres, with far fewer recovered from smaller nucleated sites and rural settlements (Willis 2005, 103–7). Non-ceramic inkwells are very rare even at urban sites in Britain (and indeed, across the empire generally; Eckardt 2014, 195–6), although London stands out as being fairly well represented. Inkwells are very rare at all sites in the project database, and are only really significant at the defended 'small towns', although they have been identified at a very small number of roadside settlements, military *vici*, villas and complex farmsteads (FIG. 3.18).

The broad hierarchical distribution of the objects discussed above is repeated across almost all types of artefacts associated with literacy, including the small number of writing tablets and curse tablets, and is a continuation of the social hierarchy presented for writing tablets by Pearce (2004, 48, table II), where there is an emphasis on military and urban sites. It is possible that the apparent distinction between the defended 'small towns' and other nucleated roadside settlements might tell us something about differences in terms of the status and function of some of these sites on the road network; for instance, writing in ink has been recognised as being most closely associated with official business and administration (e.g. Willis 2005, 113). Our sample of defended 'small towns' is very small, and we are discussing only four sites with inkwells and two with writing tablets, yet the apparently greater prevalence of evidence for writing at these sites might support the suggestion that some of these settlements became important economic and/or administrative centres; indeed this may be part of the reason that they were provided with defences in the mid- and late Roman periods, while others on the road network were not (cf. Burnham and Wacher 1990, 315).

While the evidence for literacy at settlements in the wider countryside is extremely limited, it is worth considering some of the settlements that have produced archaeological evidence for reading and writing in a little detail, in order for us to consider why these sites might have such evidence while most others do not. As the charts in FIGS 3.14 to 3.18 show, apart from the sites on the road network, settlements characterised as villas tend to be those best represented by evidence for literacy. Indeed, of the 120 sites classified as farmsteads with some form of writing evidence, 12 per cent had features that led to them being regarded as of possible 'villa status' for the purposes of the project database; this emphasises the association between high-status rural sites and evidence for literacy. Sites classified as villas (or possible villas) are not considered in any further detail here; these sites, although immensely variable in terms of their form, scale and levels of opulence (see Smith 2016b, 71–4), may be regarded for the most part as the settlements of the elite, and therefore those that might reasonably be expected to have occupants who were bilingual and could read and write.

Of the remaining 105 farmsteads with evidence for literacy, there is a strong emphasis on those of complex form; these account for 32 per cent of the sites, enclosed farmsteads 16 per cent, open farmsteads 2 per cent, while the remaining 50 per cent were unclassified morphologically. The most widespread form of evidence at complex farmsteads was the stylus, identified at 19 sites. The settlements with such evidence are sometimes unusual, often appearing to be of relatively high status, and therefore potentially not that different from many villas. Others seem to have been particularly geared up for production, with a number having corndryers. The highly unusual site at Orton Hall Farm, in Cambridgeshire (Mackreth 1996), for instance, had a number of corndryers as well as evidence for large-scale brewing, and this site is notable for having produced not only styli but also a samian inkwell. Some other complex farmsteads with styli have finds assemblages that are unusually large and varied with certain objects suggestive of a religious emphasis, for example at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007).

Of the five farmsteads where writing tablets have been recognised, four were morphologically of complex form, while one was unclassified. While the recovery of most tablets from wells/shafts may simply reflect there being a considerably better chance of wood surviving in waterlogged well-deposits, Pearce (2004, 50) has noted how several of these contexts contained other material, such as complete pots and skeletal remains which, together, might indicate votive activity. We may be seeing, at some of these rural settlements, the power of the written word used for ritual purposes at what were ostensibly domestic settlements. Several farmsteads, particularly those of complex form, have also produced possible curse tablets. However, these finds are rare outside religious contexts (see Ch. 5) and many of those identified at farmsteads are tentative identifications, with few containing clear text.

As with complex farmsteads, several of the enclosed farmsteads that have produced objects associated with literacy may also be regarded as unusual in some way, often with features or finds assemblages that distinguish them from other, usually low-status, sites in the same broad morphological class. Plas Coch, Wrexham (Jones 2011), which produced two styli, has already been referred to in Chapter 2 (p. 37) as being unusually

well represented by brooches as well as other finds, and there are a number of indications that the settlement was of atypically high status for the region, with rectangular masonry buildings and evidence for a tiled roof. Likewise at Coygan Camp, Carmarthenshire (Wainwright 1967), a stylus was part of a rich finds assemblage that included objects associated with personal display, which were regionally very unusual, and again this coincided with the presence of a masonry building. At Boxfield Farm in Hertfordshire (Going and Hunn 1999), a site characterised by the project as an enclosed farmstead, a stylus was found, and this was part of a rich finds assemblage that included many coins, brooches and other personal equipment, including mirror fragments, which are exceptionally rare finds at rural settlements. At Ochre Brook, Merseyside (Philpott 2000; Cowell 2009), an iron stylus was recovered from a site that produced evidence for tile production, with tile stamps indicating that they were being produced for the twentieth legion at Chester. In all these instances (and further examples could be listed), styli were elements of generally rich or atypical finds assemblages that mark the sites out as different; the association such finds have with

rich groups of personal dress accessories or other material correlates with wealth/status or links with the military, and is compelling evidence for a strong connection between literacy and the elite in the countryside, even at sites that, morphologically speaking, would not appear to be of especially high status.

The geographical distribution of settlements with archaeological evidence for literacy is shown in FIG. 3.19, with a firm focus on the south and east of the province, generally reflecting the known spread of non-military 'small towns', roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads (see Allen and Smith 2016). It is perhaps an obvious point, although one worth making explicitly, that the areas where bilingualism and literacy appear to have become most widespread are also the areas where we witness the greatest evidence for engagement with new ways of dressing following the Roman conquest (see Ch. 2). In parts of the north and the west of the province especially, where there is considerably less evidence for classically influenced ways of dressing, it seems very unlikely that Latin would have been spoken very widely at all except within the forts and their associated extramural settlements.
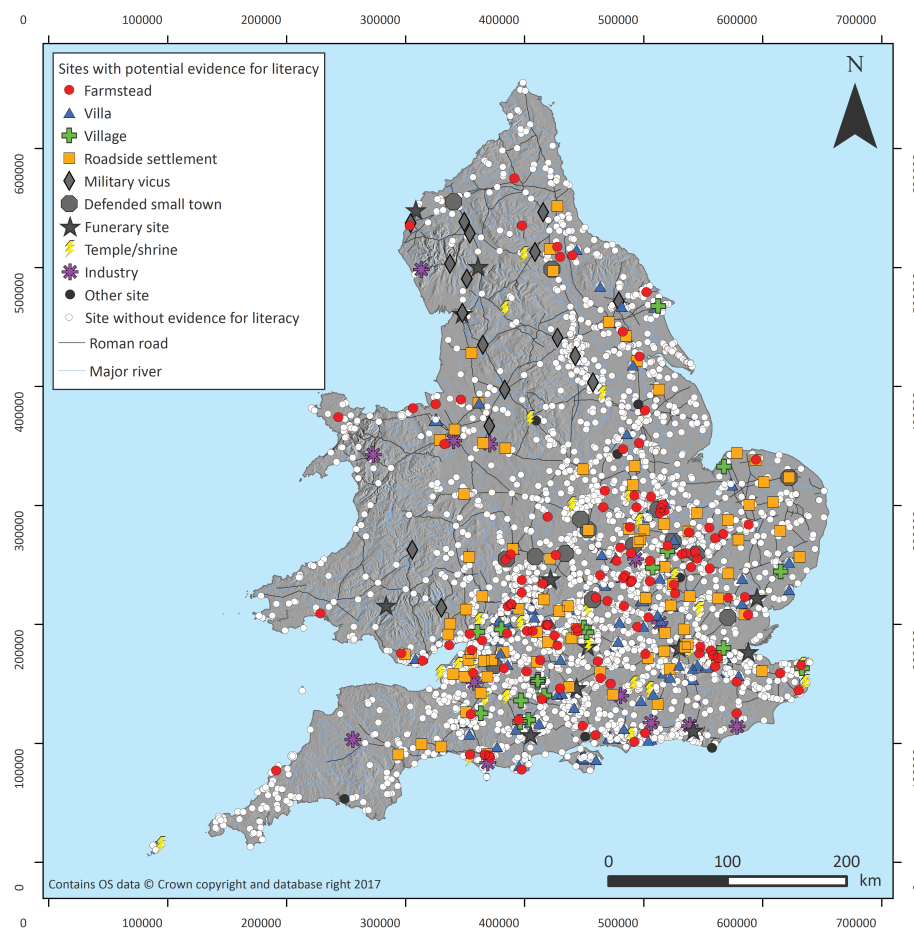

FIG. 3.19. Distribution of sites with possible evidence for literacy

Given the lack of evidence for literacy at the vast majority of rural settlements across the province as a whole, we need to reconsider some of the recently published evidence that suggests literacy may have been reasonably widespread in some areas. For example, analysis of the handwriting on lead curse tablets from the sacred sites at Bath and Uley has indicated that the tablets were inscribed by many different people, and not professional scribes, suggesting that those depositing the curses were largely responsible for writing their own texts (Tomlin 2002). Given the very restricted evidence for literacy in the wider countryside, we might surmise that those who deposited curses at these sites were not in general the typical inhabitants of low-status rural settlements, but rather those who occupied surrounding villas and particularly nucleated settlements on the road network, where the evidence for reading and writing is most concentrated. The fact that most curse tablets are primarily concerned with requesting divine retribution for a theft (*ibid.*) might also suggest that those leaving the curses were from settlements with reasonably large populations, where, as suggested above (p. 71), people's personal possessions may have been at increased risk from the attentions of nimble-fingered individuals. Even at Bath and Uley, however, not all curse tablets are necessarily evidence for literacy; some bear illiterate marks, intended to look like writing (Tomlin 1988, 84–94; 2011, 134), and some from Uley are blank (Tomlin 2011, 134). We should not assume, by any stretch, that even in roadside settlements all of the occupants were literate individuals.

Overall, given the evidence available to us, it seems likely that both the speaking of Latin and the ability to read and write it were in the main confined to military sites, urban centres and the larger nucleated settlements on the major communications routes. While some villas have produced objects that suggest the presence of educated elites, who were perhaps engaged in administration at some of the roadside centres we have discussed, the evidence from other probable agricultural sites in the wider countryside is restricted to an extremely small number of farmsteads, primarily those that appear to be of particularly high status, or of unusual function. The ability to speak, read and write Latin at rural settlements away from the main communications routes, was probably for the most part restricted to a few rural elite. For these members of society, reading and writing Latin was one element of a broader engagement with and connection to what may be regarded as an elite 'pan-Roman' culture, also expressed through factors such as personal appearances, architectural settings and demonstrations of 'classical' knowledge through the display of mythological scenes on mosaics and wall paintings (e.g. Scott 2000, 168; 2004, 51; Mattingly 2006, 463–9). The distribution of the evidence for literacy suggests two things. Firstly, in agreement with general current academic opinion, speaking Latin and the ability to read and write (at varying degrees of competency) were probably more widespread in Roman Britain than has traditionally been allowed for. Secondly, however, the spread of Latin and literacy appears to have been largely dictated by the presence of the road network, along with access to elite education. The vast majority of those who lived in the countryside are unlikely to have spoken any Latin, and almost certainly could not read or write the language.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no single concept of a 'rural Romano-British lifestyle'. Yet many previous syntheses have equated 'country dwellers' with 'villa owners' (e.g. Birley 1979, 137), which is rather like assessing the lives of nineteenth-century rural folk across England and Wales through the lens of those inhabiting grand country houses in the Cotswolds. There are of course many examples of large, elaborate country villas, where the lifestyles of the elite could be played out against a backdrop of brightly painted rooms with mosaic floors depicting classical scenes, perhaps surrounded by formal gardens. In some landscapes, such environments may even have been commonplace and closely interconnected, as seen for example with the two probably inter-visible courtyard villas at Spoonley Wood and Wadfield, lying 2 km apart on either side of a valley to the south of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire. But, even within the upper echelons of society, there was still considerable heterogeneity, with 'elite' families operating within a wide social hierarchy. When all social, cultural and economic variables are taken into account, we can start to appreciate the great diversity of life in the countryside of Roman Britain. This chapter has highlighted just a few selective aspects of lifestyle in order to appreciate some of this diversity.

The many different domestic environments of rural Roman Britain have been assessed previously in Volume 1 (Smith 2016b), though it is fair to say that most people continued to live in fairly simple, but probably multi-functional, dwellings with minimal architectural embellishment. In fact, although there were certainly significant developments in people's domestic arrangements in large areas of the country during the course of the Roman period, including a greater tendency

for rectangular buildings, it would seem that many aspects of lifestyle remained largely unaltered, at least as far as can be discerned in the archaeological record. Aside from villas and some of the more atypical farmsteads, it was principally in the newly developing nucleated roadside settlements that the extent and pace of lifestyle change can best be observed. Here, for example, there is evidence for the greatest use of locks and keys, suggesting both greater affluence and also a greater need for security, perhaps linked to the transient element of the population. Likewise, it is such sites and particularly the defended 'small towns' that tend to produce more evidence for lighting equipment, perhaps impacting upon aspects such as the length of the working day and social activities like reading and dining (Eckardt 2011, 182). Eating and drinking are perhaps the most important social activities at all levels of society, though we have surprisingly little direct evidence for the diets of rural inhabitants of Roman Britain. Nevertheless, there would appear to have been differential access to certain foods across different site types, with sections of the populations of roadside settlements and villas in particular seeming to have much broader diets than those living in most farmsteads. This fits in with palaeopathological observations of restricted rural diets outlined by Rohnbogner in Chapter 7.

The social disparity in diet is matched in other areas of lifestyle, such as bathing. While the majority of villas would appear to have had bathing establishments for the principal residents, public bathing facilities are rare except in military and larger urban centres, and, where they did exist, were perhaps restricted to certain elements of the population. Large-scale public entertainment was probably almost entirely lacking in rural areas, except in the hinterlands of cities and a few of the larger rural religious complexes. Nevertheless, there is better evidence for personal leisure activities in the form of gaming counters, dice and gaming boards, though again mostly recovered from nucleated settlements on the road system, military sites and villas. The relative paucity of such objects from most farmsteads need not imply a lack of provision for any entertainment, though presumably there would not have been much in the way of 'leisure' time, but perhaps more of an emphasis on traditional activities such as music and story-telling rather than 'Roman' games.

The extent of Latin and literacy in the countryside of Roman Britain was the final aspect to be considered in this chapter, and perhaps more than any other highlights the influence of the road system and its associated settlements on the extent of lifestyle innovation. Many of these settlements were clearly dynamic places with flows of people from the local countryside, other parts of the province and from across the empire, and where the use of Latin in some form was probably expected to a certain degree. Of course there was still a great deal of variation in the scale and form of these types of site, and no doubt in the lifestyles of the people who inhabited them. But at the same time this high degree of connectivity appears to have enabled a greater propensity for social and cultural change.