

# Sites on the North Bedfordshire and South Northamptonshire border

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THIS PAPER is the result of some spare time field work over the last five years. It is intended mainly to give an idea of the distribution of sites for a group of parishes around the north-west Beds. border. Little will be said here about such things as folk movements and interactions.

Not a lot of detailed field work is going on elsewhere; where it does, as for example west of Grendon, sites are being found in about the same number as here—about ten per parish.

North-west Harrold, Bozeat, Strixton, Wollaston, Easton Maudit, Grendon, Farndish, Lavendon, and Warrington, have been surveyed field by field both on the ground and by aerial photography. Also all building sites, quarries, and gravel pits being worked on are visited regularly. Thus there are probably not many more sites to be found in these parishes.

After a summary of the main periods that are represented by all the sites, an appendix is given which lists concisely all that is known about each site. Medieval sites are not listed unless they are away from the modern village.

Our thanks are due to our friends E. Corby and R. Thomas, for much help in the field; also to all farmers and farm workers who have been of assistance to us.

## *Method of coding sites*

Code numbers are made up of letters from the parish name, followed by a number. Thus the third site found in Harrold is coded Hd.3; the first in Wollaston W.1, etc.

An isolated site is given a single code even if it stretches across more than one field. Complex sites, probably of several periods and stretching over many fields, have a separate code number for each field involved. As a result, a different number of sites than has been coded, may be proved in these cases by future excavation.

## SUMMARY OF THE PERIODS

The sites are grouped and summarised here into the main periods that they represent, beginning with the late Ice Age and working up to and including medieval.

### *Immediate post-Ice Age*

On top of the gravel and underneath the flood plain

alluvium at Higham Ferrers (H.2), and Harrold (Hd.1), remains of the flora and fauna from just after the Ice Age hereabout have been found. At the Higham site, a human skull vault of this period was discovered.

This topic has only just been begun, so no details can be given yet.

### *Pre-Iron Age (Bronze Age?)*

Barrows have only been found on the river gravel so far, mainly by aerial photography, as at Grendon (G.1 and G.3). These sites are cemeteries rather than single tumuli, and most barrow types are to be found. The round barrows are almost certainly Bronze Age, and others may be older or younger.

There may be more barrows to be found on the claylands, a type of soil where aerial photography does not give good results. As will be seen no other period limits itself to a particular soil.

### *Iron Age*

This is divided into three stages as is usual. It is hoped to publish details of Iron Age pottery in the next issue of this JOURNAL.

*Iron Age A.* Remains of this period have been found at Irthlingborough (Ib.1) on a hilltop on the limestone. Like all Iron Age village type sites it is a complex of ditches. The period has also been recognised at Irchester (I.1), under the Belgic and Roman levels there (ref 1). These are the only two sites at present known in the area.

*Iron Age B.* This period is well represented. Most of the parishes which have been thoroughly surveyed have each several Iron Age B village type settlements. They can be found on all kinds of soil, and usually take the form of a ditched enclosure. Examples are at Irchester (I.1), Strixton (S.1), Easton Maudit (E.10) and Bozeat (E.2).

*Iron Age C (Belgic).* At Irchester (I.1) is a rich Belgic settlement underneath the Roman levels. We have put forward elsewhere (ref 1) that the site of the Roman town was formerly a defended Belgic town. Another large site is at Harrold (Hd.1).

Belgic pottery is found only twice in the plough-soil, at Strixton (S.8), and Wollaston (W.16). But some Roman sites excavated (see refs 1 and 2) have produced Belgic under them.

### *Romano-British*

Roman settlement was fairly early according to

finds at Irchester (ref 1), this being the largest of the areas occupied by the Romano-British.

Villa sites are at Podington (P.1), Wollaston (W.1 and W.3), and Easton Maudit (E.6). Other sites with building stone present are at Grendon (G.1), Harrold (Hd.5), and Wollaston (W.5). Larger complexes are at Grendon (G.2), Irchester (I.2), and Lavendon (L.7).

The site at Bozeat (B.12) is a circular stone building having four central pier bases (ref 2). Only two or three similar buildings are known in this country.

#### *Anglo-Saxon*

The only site of this period has been found at Wollaston within the modern village. Surface scatter of pottery in a back garden led to excavation and proof of Saxon occupation.

#### *Medieval*

All the modern villages in the area were flourishing by medieval times, and have around them in *all* cases some fields containing medieval earthworks. These have been left as a result of shrinkage or displacement of the village, and correspond with the earthworks to be found on the sites of lost villages. Lost villages in this area have been found at Santon (Hd.2), Cotton (G.9), Akeley (L.9), and Olney Hyde (Wn.4).

#### NOTES ON FEATURES OF UNCERTAIN DATE

*Iron slag, and charcoal patches.* These patches are found on the claylands about 275 ft above sea level; all are about thirty to sixty feet across. The slag patches have a black part with a lot of dense slag and charcoal, and a red part stained by iron oxide; these are places where smelting furnaces stood. Charcoal patches occur close by the former, being places where charcoal was made.

The patches when plotted probably represent an area of ancient woodland. Their period is not yet known, but they are pre- or early medieval as is shown by the ridge and furrow that runs over them.

*Celtic field systems.* Aerial photography shows on gravel soils traces of fields delineated by their ditch boundaries. The period of these is not known yet, but by analogy with those from other parts, they are most likely to be Celtic.

#### CONCLUSION

The survey has shown that the area around the north Beds. and south Northants. border is rich in sites from pre-Iron Age times onwards. At Higham Ferrers there is perhaps a unique site in this area where human remains of the immediate post-Ice Age have been found.

Of the seven periods discussed from Bronze Age

to medieval, it can be seen that Iron B, Romano-British, and medieval settlements are the most numerous found. The in-between periods of Iron A, Iron C, and Saxon, are however not common surface finds. Thus the periods can be grouped off into pairs of: not numerous sites, with numerous ones. Arranged chronologically in a table they are as follows:

<i>Not numerous</i>		<i>Numerous</i>
pre-Bronze Age	:	Bronze Age
Iron Age A	:	Iron Age B
Iron Age C	:	Romano-British
Anglo-Saxon	:	Medieval

From this it can be concluded that there was a break in continuity of settlement, at a particular site, after each of the periods in the second column of the table. Otherwise these periods would have been buried by the succeeding ones, and no pottery scatter, etc., seen in the top soil.

Conversely, it is likely that at the end of each of the periods in the first column, there was no break in continuity of settlement and the succeeding period therefore buried it. Thus although their sites may have been as numerous as those in the second column, they cannot be seen on the surface. This is confirmed by excavation at several sites; e.g. Belgic under Roman at Bozeat (B.12; ref 2), and Irchester (I.1; ref 1); Saxon under medieval at Wollaston village.

The result of this may be stated as follows: that generally

- Iron A people *did not* settle on pre-Iron Age sites;
- Iron B people *did* settle on Iron A sites;
- Iron C people *did not* settle on Iron B sites;
- Romano-British people *did* settle on Iron C sites;
- Anglo-Saxon people *did not* settle on Romano-British sites;
- Medieval people *did* settle on Anglo-Saxon sites.

Of the two techniques used in this survey, *i.e.* field work on the ground, and aerial photography, the latter has serious limitations in that it is only really effective on light gravelly soils. For example, some 29 sites have been found by field work on the clay soils at the south end of Bozeat and Easton Maudit parishes, which did not show up on aerial photos, as opposed to one site which the photography detected (B.2).

Although barrows and Celtic fields are more suited for detection by aerial photography than by ground work (being represented by crop marks rather than by earthworks or pot scatter, etc.), there is no reason to believe that they lay on gravel soils only. This is particularly true for Celtic fields, since Iron Age occupation on the claylands is extensive,

and some field ditches may have already been excavated on clay soils without quite realising what they were.

Nothing has been said about sites of a particular period being in any alignments or grouping; e.g. Roman sites which may have been thought to lay in certain places suggesting the line of a road or roads. On the scale of the present work the distribution of sites appears almost entirely ran-

dom, and therefore such conclusions must be left until others have done this type of field-by-field work in many more districts.

*References*

(1) Irchester 1962-63, D. N. Hall and N. Nickerson, *Archaeological Journal*, Vol CXXII, forthcoming.  
 (2) Bozeat 1964, D. N. Hall and N. Nickerson, *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol LV, (1965), 210.

APPENDIX

THIS GIVES a brief description of each site in turn, including its soil type and grid reference (these all being in the Ordnance SP grid). Symbols in brackets concluding an entry are explained in the key below:

- (\*) sites found by J. K. St Joseph, by aerial photography. \*
- (P) sites excavated and published by the present authors.
- (X) sites where preliminary excavation has taken place by the authors.
- (B) sites found during modern building site operations.
- (Q) sites found at modern gravel pits.

A mention of 'cropmarks' in an entry means that the site was found by aerial photography. All other sites without any concluding symbol were found by normal field work.

A few of the sites listed are not on the map (fig 1) but have been included on account of general interest e.g. the Iron Age A remains at Irthlingborough (1b1).

*Earls Barton*

- Bt.1 Roman and Iron B pottery, found in various pits and ditches. Soil type, Ironstone. Grid ref 856635. (B).
- Bt.2 As above, but on clay and sand-ironstone. Also medieval road and ford. Grid ref 853634. (B).

*Bozeat*

- B.1 Romano-British pottery found. Soil, glacial sand. 895602.
- B.2 Three enclosures (\*). Iron B sherds, and an iron slag patch. Glacial Clay. 900566. (X).
- B.3 Ramparts of medieval deer park. Glacial gravel and clay. 917554.
- B.4 Three patches of iron slag. Glacial clay. 904563.
- B.5 Part of site B.2, iron slag patches and Iron B pottery. Glacial clay. 900565. (X).
- B.6 Charcoal patch on glacial clay. 900570.
- B.7 Romano-British sherds, pebbles, limestone, and a quern-stone. Glacial clay. 928601.
- B.8 Iron B sherds and blackened pebbles. Glacial clay. 911579.

- B.9 Iron B. sherds found. Glacial clay. 909575.
- B.10 Charcoal patch on glacial clay. 907562.
- B.11 Iron slag patch and charcoal patch. Glacial clay. 900575.
- B.12 Late Iron C ditches under a third century circular Roman building. Glacial sand. 896600. (P; ref 2).
- B.13 Iron Age pottery, ironstone lumps. Glacial clay. 906576.
- B.14 Charcoal patch on glacial clay. 901568.
- B.15 Romano-British sherds and building stone. Glacial clay. 910604.

*Chellington*

- Ch.1 Two slag patches on glacial clay. 973559 and 975558.

*Easton Maudit*

- E.1 Earthworks, probably part of E.10. Medieval road. Glacial clay. 894570.
- E.2 Road, building rubble, and pottery of the twelfth-fourteenth centuries A.D., part of medieval Easton. Soil, limestone. 892577.
- E.3 Three iron slag patches. Glacial clay. 895563.(X).
- E.4 Charcoal patches, on the glacial clay. 898564.
- E.5 Charcoal patches and Iron B pottery; patches of blackened pebbles. Glacial clay. 897566.
- E.6 Roman villa; a lot of sherds and building stone, one brooch found. Soil, limestone. 895582.
- E.7 Iron Age sherds, Glacial clay. 894567.
- E.8 Romano-British sherds, quernstone, tile, and dark patches. Glacial clay. 892568.
- E.9 Two iron slag patches on the glacial clay. 895575.
- E.10 Two slag patches, charcoal patches, enclosure earthworks, and Iron B pottery. Glacial clay. 897571.
- E.11 Dark areas and channels, charcoal and burnt pebbles. Glacial clay. 881570.

*Grendon*

- G.1 Ring ditches and other enclosures (\*). Roman pottery and building stone. Soil, river gravel. 873617.
- G.2 Small Roman settlement, about two acres

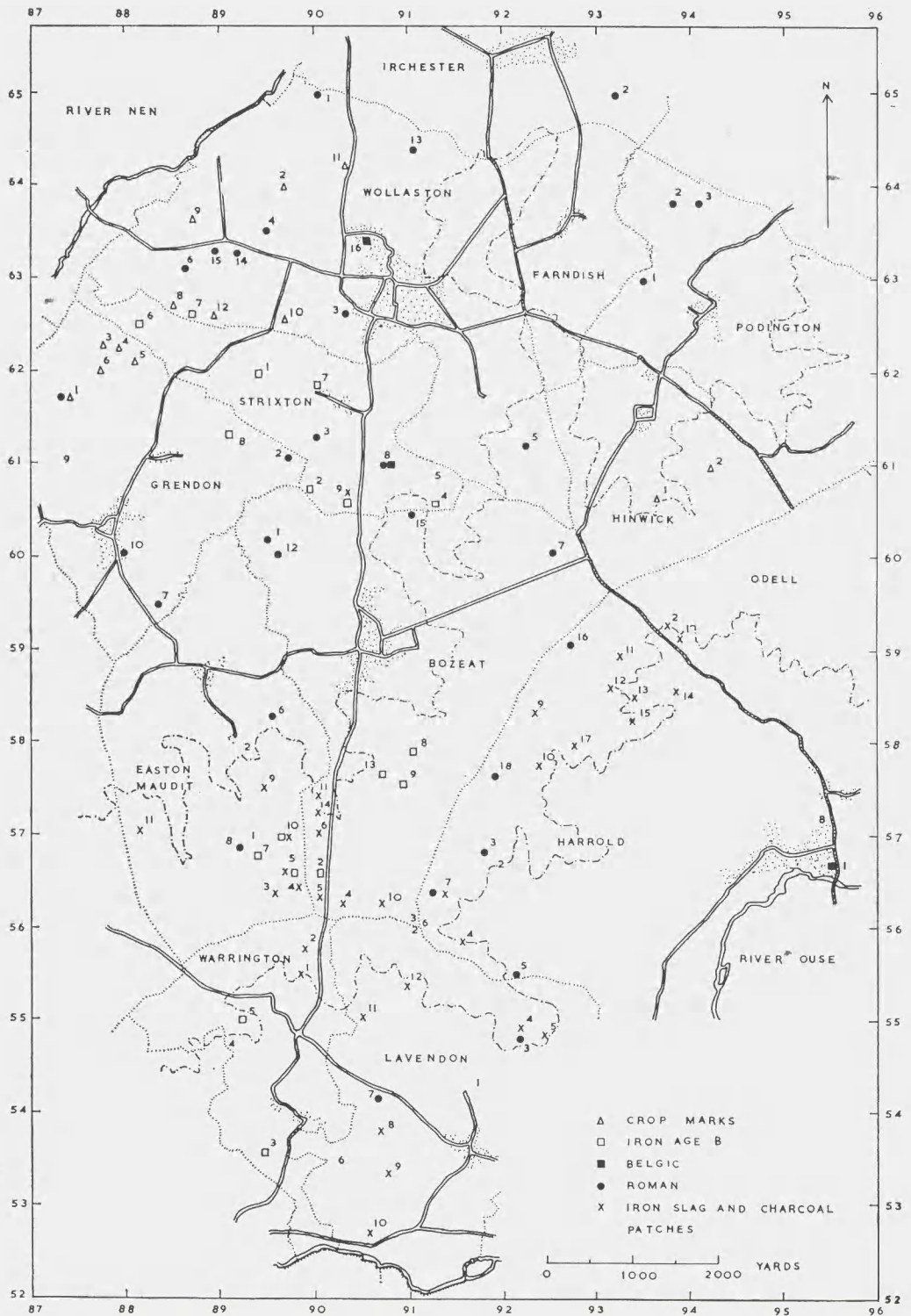


Fig 1. Distribution of sites in north Beds. and south Northants.

- of building stone and sherds. Soil, limestone. 898611.
- G.3 Ring ditches and other enclosures (\*). River gravel. 878623.
- G.4 Cropmarks (\*). Ditches and parallel lines of pits. River gravel. 580623.
- G.5 Alignment of pits (cropmarks). Double ditched enclosure. River gravel. 881621.
- G.6 Cropmarks, lines of pits. River gravel. 878620.
- G.7 Romano-British pottery, a little building stone. Soil, limestone. 883594.
- G.8 Iron B sherds. Soil, limestone and clay. 891613.
- G.9 Earthworks, sunken roads, and building stone of the lost village of Cotton. Clay and river gravel. 875610.
- G.10 Iron B pottery and fourth century Roman wood and plaster building. Soil, limestone. 880600. (B).
- Harrold*
- Hd.1 Belgic pits and ditches, etc., with pottery and bronze fragments; Roman sherds; remains of medieval Nunnery. Post-Ice Age flora and fauna. River gravel. 956566. (Q and B).
- Hd.2 Lost medieval village of Santon; ponds, earthworks and building stone. Limestone. 920567.
- Hd.3 Romano - British pottery. Glacial clay. 917568.
- Hd.4 Two charcoal patches, one mixed with pieces of burnt pebbles. Glacial clay. 915558.
- Hd.5 Roman sherds, stone and tile. Glacial clay. 922544.
- Hd.6 Part of B.3 (*q.v.*).
- Hd.7 Roman pottery, dark patches and pebbles; two iron slag patches. Glacial clay. 913564.
- Hd.8 Iron Age, excavated *c.* 1952 for Ministry of Works by Miss Bennet-Clarke. River gravel. 954573.
- Hd.9 Two slag patches on the glacial clay. 923584 and 924583.
- Hd.10 One slag and five charcoal patches. An Iron Age sherd with the slag. Glacial clay. 925578.
- Hd.11 Slag patch on the glacial clay. 933589.
- Hd.12 Seven charcoal patches. Bulldozed medieval(?) rampart. Glacial clay. 930586.
- Hd.13 Two charcoal patches on the clay. 934585.
- Hd.14 Slag patch on the clay. 939585.
- Hd.15 Two slag heaps in the woods. Glacial clay. 938585.
- Hd.16 Romano-British sherds on dark occupation area. Glacial clay. 927591.
- Hd.17 Slag patch on the glacial clay. 928581.
- Hd.18 Romano-British pottery, dark areas and pebbles. In Templegrove spinney, the medieval road from Santon (Hd.2). Glacial clay. 920577.
- Higham Ferrers*
- H.1 Roman building area found over several acres. Soil, ironstone. 955690. Excavated by the Ministry of Works 1961. (B).
- H.2 Post-Ice Age flora and fauna. Vault of human skull. (Gravel pits). 949687. (Q).
- Hinwick*
- Hk.1 Cropmarks of pits. Glacial clay. 936605.
- Hk.2 Cropmarks of pits and ditches. Glacial clay. 942609.
- Irchester*
- I.1 Iron A, B, and C, and Roman settlement. Belgic defended site. Soil, ironstone and clay. 917666. (P ref 1).
- I.2 Several acres of Romano-British building stone, sherds, etc. Soil, limestone. 933561.
- Irthlingborough*
- Ib.1 Iron Age A, B, and C ditches. Soil, limestone and clay. 946712. (B).
- Lavendon*
- L.1 The medieval castle site. Limestone. 917544.
- L.2 Part of B.3 (*q.v.*).
- L.3 Roman sherds and tiles. Glacial clay. 922548.
- L.4 Charcoal patch on glacial clay. 923548.
- L.5 Two iron slag patches. Glacial clay. 925548.
- L.6 Lavendon Abbey site. Limestone. 903535.
- L.7 Several acres of Romano-British building stone with hypocaust tile, etc. Limestone. 906542.
- L.8 Slag patch. Soil, limestone and clay. 906538.
- L.9 Two slag patches: the lost medieval village of Akeley. Limestone. 906533.
- L.10 Slag patch on the limestone. 905527.
- L.11 Two slag patches on the glacial clay. 905551.
- L.12 Seven slag patches. Glacial clay. 910554.
- Odell*
- O.1 Iron slag patch. Glacial clay. 938592.
- O.2 Charcoal patch on the glacial clay. 937593.
- Podington*
- P.1 Roman villa; tile, stone and sherds. Limestone. 935629.
- P.2 Romano - British pottery, Glacial clay. 938638.
- P.3 Romano - British pottery, on the glacial clay. 942638.
- Strixton*
- S.1 Cropmarks, enclosure (\*). Iron B hill fort? Limestone/clay. 894618. (X).
- S.2 Iron B pits. Glacial sand. 898607. (X).
- S.3 Roman sherds. Limestone. 900614. (X).

- S.4 Iron B sherds. Glacial clay. 913605.  
 S.5 Patch of burnt daub. Glacial clay. 913608.  
 S.6 Iron B sherds. River gravel. 882625.  
 S.7 Iron B ditches with pottery, antler, etc. Limestone/clay. 900618. (X).  
 S.8 Belgic and Roman pottery scatter. Glacial clay. 907610.  
 S.9 Charcoal patch and Iron Age pottery. Glacial clay. 903605.

*Warrington*

- Wn.1 Two iron slag patches. Glacial clay. 898555.  
 Wn.2 Five slag patches on the glacial clay. 898557.  
 Wn.3 Iron age pottery. Limestone. 895535.  
 Wn.4 Lost medieval village (part of Olney Hyde). Glacial clay. 890545.  
 Wn.5 Iron B and Roman sherds, pebbles and limestone. Two slag patches. Glacial clay. 892550.

*Wollaston*

- W.1 Roman villa, sherds, building stone, etc. Cropmarks (\*). Soil, ironstone. 900650.  
 W.2 Cropmarks, enclosures, pits. Gravel/clay. 896620.  
 W.3 Roman sherds, stone and tile (villa?). Limestone. 904625.  
 W.4 Romano-British pottery. River gravel. 894635.  
 W.5 Romano-British pottery; one small area of building stone; quernstone. Glacial gravel. 922613.  
 W.6 Romano-British pottery. River gravel. 886630.  
 W.7 Iron B pottery, dark areas. River gravel. 887626.  
 W.8 Cropmarks (\*); various enclosures; two parallel lines of pits. River gravel. 885627.  
 W.9 Cropmarks (\*); a double ditched enclosure. River gravel. 887635.  
 W.10 Cropmarks (\*); enclosure. Soil, limestone. 897625.  
 W.11 Cropmarks (\*); enclosure. Ironstone. 904645.  
 W.12 Cropmarks, ditches and pits. River gravel. 889626.  
 W.13 Romano-British sherds; patch of charcoal with burnt pebbles. Soil, limestone. 911644.  
 W.14 Romano-British sherds, some building stone. River gravel. 894632.  
 W.15 Roman pottery and building stone. River gravel. 889633.  
 W.16 Late Belgic sherds and ditches. Ironstone and clay. 905634. (B).