CHAPTER 11

Deposition, 'Ritual' and Mortuary Practices

In Chapter 10 I explored the evidence for artefact production and exchange, and for consumption practices including the use of ceramics. I discussed changes in these practices from the late Iron Age into the Romano-British period. In this chapter, I examine the evidence for the discard of artefacts and animal remains, including debates over 'structured deposition', and I also consider animal and human burials.

Theories of 'ritual'

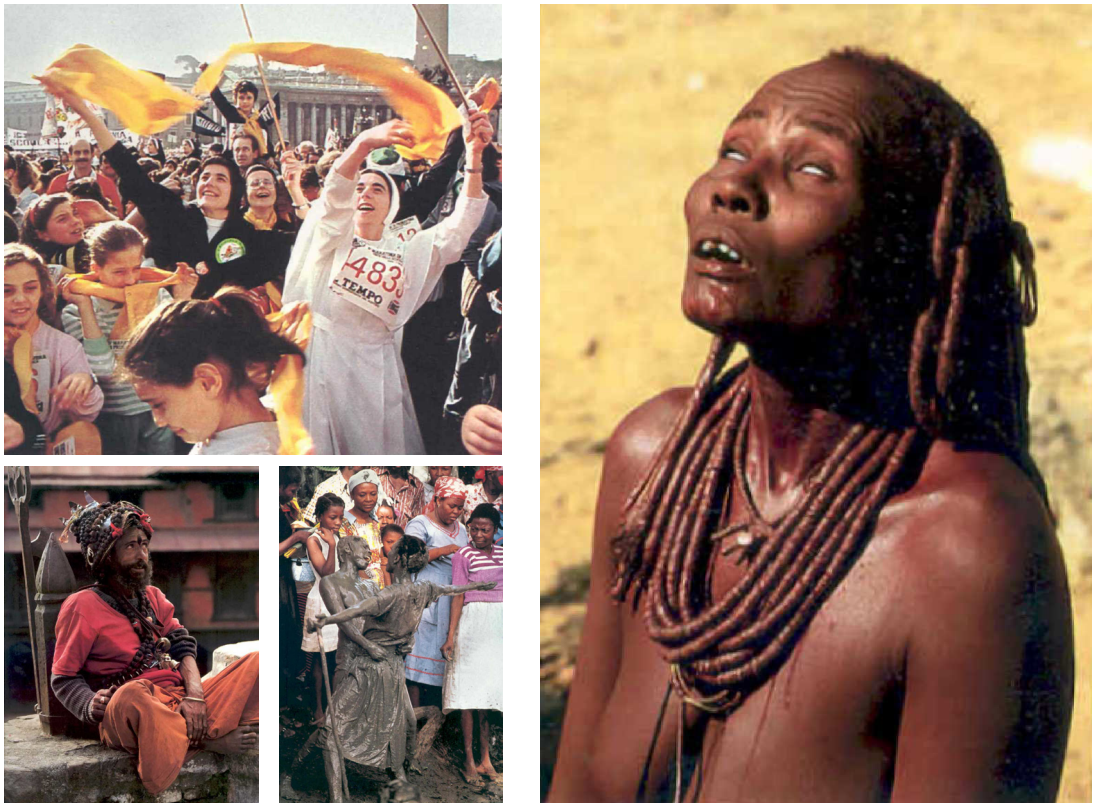
Space precludes me from detailing what has been an extensive and complex subject within cognitive psychology, archaeology, and particularly anthropology and ethnography (Douglas 1960; Durkheim 1965 [1912]; Durkheim and Mauss 1963 [1903]; Eliade 1957; Evans-Pritchard 1965; Geertz 1973; Goody 1961; Turner 1966), which has re-emerged as a matter of intense recent debate (Ahern 1979; Barth 1987; Bell 1992; Bowie 2000; Lewis 1980; Rappaport 1984, 1999; Tambiah 1979). There are conflicting elements to these different discussions, but useful common themes too.

Emile Durkheim proposed that religion is a bridge between the sacred and profane, the world of everyday experience and an extraordinary, often unknown world outside of that experience, a series of collective beliefs and ideals generated, experienced and affirmed by individuals and communities (Durkheim 1965: 51). It is a dialectical exchange (Bell 1992: 23). Rituals reflect a society's moral, spiritual and aesthetic beliefs or worldview (Geertz 1973: 95-97, 143-144), and thus often reproduce dominant social discourses by manipulating symbols and ideology, but conversely may be the basis of ideological arguments or deliberate subversions of social norms (Bell 1992; Braithwaite 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1982).

Many researchers have seen rituals as a highly formalised 'performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances' (Rappaport 1999: 24). There is often an order and sequence to ritual acts (Lewis 1980: 7), and this formulaic nature may help transmit lore through time, as social memory often depends on repetition inculcated through embodied movements (see Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Smith 1987; Werbner 1989). Rituals may be *perceived* as synchronic, continuous and traditional or timeless, as opposed to diachronic, changing and historical (Tambiah 1970). Many rituals may include deliberate inversions of 'normal' social behaviour through comic, violent or obscene words, gestures and acts, elaborate or strange postures and utterances that help to distinguish them from everyday 'technical' actions (Rappaport 1999: 50-51; Tambiah 1968). Ritual behaviour may involve ecstatic states, trances or other altered forms of consciousness (Figs. 11.01-11.04). Some objects, structures and spaces associated with rituals may be regarded as outside normal experience (Bell 1992: 91-92; Eliade 1959: 20-22; Turner 1975: 69; Smith 1987: 74-96). The processes of ritualising may emphasise particular activities or areas of the landscape through embodied practices.

Ritual can thus be considered a staged experience, a literal acting out of beliefs (Tambiah 1979: 119-121), and a few researchers have explored connections between ritual and drama as metaphors, or equivalent psychosocial processes (see, for example, discussions in Geertz 1977, 1983; Schechner 1985; Turner 1982). In such accounts, ritual specialists are often regarded as manipulating and/or deliberately misleading their audience. For Marxists and cultural ecologists, ideology and ritual mask social inequalities and may be deliberately used by secular or religious elites to reinforce their hegemony, legitimise inequalities and control surplus resources and labour (e.g. Hayden 2004: 268; Marx and Engels 1972; Shanks and Tilley 1982). Bell (1992: 41-42) argues that it may thus be difficult to distinguish ritual from drama at all, although Rappaport does so (Rappaport 1999: 134-137). The idea of ritual as performance and staged theatre has been criticised, however, for denying indigenous people's beliefs that ritual actions have very real outcomes (Ahern 1979: 12-15).

During the 1960s there was a loss in confidence in ritual as a formal category of experience and analysis (e.g. Goody 1961; Leach 1968). Some authors stressed the ritualistic aspects of repetitive or routinised everyday washing, dressing and social



Ecstatic or altered states of consciousness. **(Clockwise from upper left). Figure 11.01.** *Christian worshippers in ecstatic states whilst witnessing and hearing the Pope preaching in St. Peter's Square, Rome. (Source: unknown National geographic image).* **Fig. 11.02.** *A Himba healer entering a trance, prior to her exorcising evil spirits from another woman, Namibia. (Source: (Beckwith and Fisher 2002: 331).* **Fig. 11.03.** *Voudoun celebrants ridden by the loa of a particular spirit, Haiti. (Source: unknown National Geographic image).* **Fig. 11.04.** *Nepalese holy man in a trance. (Source: Mendell 2000: 78).*

meetings, and of secular public or civic ceremonies (e.g. Goffman 1967, 1969; Moore and Myerhoff 1977). Others have argued that this approach devalues ritual as an analytical concept – all that is formal is not ritual (Rappaport 1999: 37). For example, Rappaport asserts that although in some Christian traditions the act of crossing oneself is a component of ritual; it does not itself constitute a ritual act. Ritual may employ the same categories and generative principles used in everyday life, but in more potent and affecting ways (Traube 1984; J. Turner 1992; Lewis 1980).

I discussed in Chapter 3 how the human body may form a locus for cosmological beliefs (q.v. Bourdieu 1977; Tuan 1977; Turner 1966). Bell suggests that there is a 'natural logic of ritual', unconsciously embodied in the physical movements and orientations of the body (Bell 1992: 99), and the phenomenological aspects of ritual

are also important. The form or colour of ritual paraphernalia, the sound of ritual words, incantations and music, the smell of special herbs or incense, the sight and smell of blood or even the smell of rotting or burning animal and human flesh – all these differentiate rituals from more prosaic practices, and create powerful, heightened aesthetic and sensual effects for participants (see the many examples discussed in Gell 1977; Howes 1987; Lewis 1980; Siegel 1983). There may be fear, awe, excitement and ecstasy, but also exhaustion and boredom; and individual, embodied experiences of rituals ensure that there are multiple interpretations of events (Asad 1979; Barrett 1991, 1997a, 1997b). There are always ambiguities, equivocations, misunderstandings and imperfect renditions of words and acts. Rituals are contingent, creative and provisional, although they may be perceived as traditional and timeless (Barth 1987: 78-81; Bell 1992: 91). It is more productive to examine strategies of ritualisation – ways of acting that differentiate 'ritual' acts from others. These are context specific, and often remain as rudimentary and implicit as possible (Bell 1992: 90). The difference between a ritual and an everyday act depend on what practices are employed to mark the latter as special and render it symbolically dominant to its prosaic counterpart.

> People engage in ritualisation as a practical way of dealing with specific circumstances, and it is never simply or solely a matter of routine, habit, or the 'dead weight of tradition'. (Bell 1992: 92).

The distinctions often drawn between ritual and everyday practical activities, between religious and secular ritual and between private and communal ritual may ignore, undermine or alienate indigenous understandings (Bell 1992: 69-72). In many non-Western, small-scale societies *all* activities, both ritual and secular, may be intended to have practical outcomes (Barrett 1989a: 115; Brück 1999: 320-322). Magic, ritual and religion are all attempts like science or philosophy to make sense of the world, and to establish a framework of explanation as reassurance or protection from the random, chaotic and often frightening character of existence – 'life lived towards death' (q.v. Heidegger 1962). Furthermore, the same people who undertake everyday activities are also usually those who carry out or at least participate in rituals (Barrett 1991: 6). Indeed, ritual emerges out of these same social structures.

Defining what is ritual or mundane has proven problematic for archaeologists, and has often been influenced by post-Enlightenment logical positivism. Some have criticised the tendency for ritual to be relegated to an extraneous, non-utilitarian category regarded as ultimately unknowable (Barrett 1989a: 115; Brück 1999: 323; Hill 1995a: 97). Furthermore, certain periods are seen as more ritualised than others and whilst post-processual accounts of the Neolithic and Bronze Age have stressed the importance of ideology and ritual (e.g. Barrett 1989a, 1989b, 1994; Thomas 1991b, 1999), until relatively recently discussions of the Iron Age and Romano-British periods have been dominated by considerations of agricultural production and technological progress (e.g. Bradley 1984; Dark and Dark 1997; Drewett 1982; Fowler 1983, 2002). This is most apparent in accounts of Roman Britain, where ritual is discussed in the context of temples and shrines but has rarely been acknowledged in terms of rural settlements and routine existence. This may be partly explained by the ways in which Roman archaeology developed within wider nineteenth and twentieth century social discourses (q.v. Hingley 2000).

Ritualisation is a dynamic social practice rather than a prescribed, unvarying series of highly formalised acts. Informal embodied actions, gestures and invocations and small-scale deposits may be as much a part of ritual behaviour as more organised rites controlled and led by ritual specialists. Furthermore, in many instances 'sacred spaces' are rarely completely removed from the profane realm. Instead, ritualisation emphasises certain locales over others – 'natural' places such as springs, boundaries; or areas in and around fields, settlements and dwellings. These might form part of people's subconscious routine experiences but continue in memories and can re-assert themselves at particular times or be drawn upon in creative ways (see discussions of this in Fentress and Wickham 1992).

Archaeologists can *never* know the meanings of past ritualised practices. Through examining material patterns of inhabitation and deposition, however, we can begin to understand how such practices were structured in time and space. It might be apposite to abandon the term 'ritual' altogether, and instead to talk of 'social practice'. Some social practices would have been almost entirely 'technical' in nature, and some almost completely ritualistic, but any distinctions between the two would often have been blurred. In both the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, we must thus try to

envisage the possibility of very different rationalities, whereby invoking the help of spirits, gods or ancestors may have been as important as 'functional' acts such as correctly planting and tending crops.

> The rituals of daily life exist always, they cannot be simply accepted when lived out in relation to ancestors and gods, and rejected when lived out in relation to agriculture and fertility. (Barrett 1989a: 115).

Mundane magic

> In Kachin customary procedure the routines of clearing the ground, planting the seed, fencing the plot and weeding the growing crop are all patterned according to formal convention and interspersed with all kinds of technologically superfluous *frills and decorations* which make the performance a Kachin performance and not just a simple functional act. (Leach 1954: 12, my emphasis).

Here, Edmund Leach was trying (albeit rather patronisingly) to explain how non-technical but everyday practices may also define ritual. For the Kachin and many societies around the world such conventions are not mere 'frills', and they do not make distinctions between the efficacy of so-called technical and magical or ritual acts (see examples in Descola 1994; Fortune 1932; Goody 1961; Hviding 1996; Leach 1968; Te Awekotuku 1996). These are informal practices that do not take place at special structures such as temples, and are part of routine, everyday activities rather than more organised occasions such as calendrical festivals. At certain points during cultivation the Swahili of East Africa make offerings or plant 'medicine' in the ground to ensure the fertility of the land (Caplan 1997: 71-72), including meat and blood from sacrificed cattle. The Gawa of Papua New Guinea bury bespelled stones and leaves prior to clearing and planting (Munn 1986: 81), and the Baruya bury sow uteri in earth-dug ovens in order to satisfy the earth (Godelier 1986: 182). The Angkaiyakmin of New Guinea have numerous spells, invocations and ritualised practices surrounding taro cultivation (Crook 1999: 231-232), whilst the Kiwai added male semen and female vaginal secretions to taro palms to promote growth (Landtman 1927: 350-352). The Wixárika or Huichol of the Mexican Sierra Madre mountains sacrifice wild deer and sprinkle the blood on their maize crops to ensure

growth (Allen 2000: 196). For the Inca, before planting a new crop of maize the best seeds from the previous year's crop were chewed by the women in order to produce fermented *chicha* beer (Hemming 1970: 60). Men drank this and uttered prayers to the gods, prior to hoeing and planting. This practice is still carried out today by modern Peruvian peasant farmers. A second group of ritual practices may be identified in the ethnographic literature that take place at longer intervals and are more often communal rites, such as the Female Spirit rite at Mount Hagen in Papua New Guinea (Strathern and Stewart 1998: 241-242), or the eight to twenty year ritual cycle of the Maring of New Guinea, which includes the ritualised planting of *rumbim* plants around boundaries (Rappaport 1984).

On the island of Hirta (St Kilda) off the north-west coast of Scotland, there was a 'stone of knowledge' near the centre of the settled area, a translucent rock valued for its supernatural properties; whilst at the end of the valley where cattle were grazed in summer there was the Well of Virtues where various offerings were made (Fleming 2001: 7-9). Cattle were 'sained' with salt, water and fire when they were moved from one pasture to another; and milk from the first spring milking was poured onto the 'milking stone' for the *gruagach* or brownies. These supernatural powers and other worldly beings were everywhere, though often associated with particular natural features, and 'had to be constantly engaged with' (ibid.: 14). This is similar to some medieval and early modern Icelandic beliefs (e.g. Wyatt 2004).

Certain key themes emerge from these examples. Individuals or families often undertake these practices, which do not necessarily require the presence of ritual specialists, although older men and women with the most knowledge are often turned to on such occasions. There are usually spoken prayers, invocations or blessings; sometimes accompanied by small offerings of food and/or particular plants, libations, and/or the consumption of particular drinks or foods. Such deposits would leave few tangible archaeological remains except in exceptional circumstances. These practices are normally associated with specific points in the agrarian cycle such as planting, and/or with particular places in the landscape intrinsic to these activities. They are regular practices occurring every year, and woven into the fabric of everyday life. They are special and ritualised, yet are also familiar and routine.

Mundane magic. **Figure 11.05. (top left).** *An Ainu man making an offering to the tree he is about to cut down, Hokkaido, Japan. (Source: Oda 1998: 124).* **Fig. 11.06. (top middle).** *Apa Tani shamans making offerings of eggs and chicks prior to planting, northern India. (Source: Stirn and van Ham 2000: 102).* **Fig. 11.07. (top right).** *Gawa man burying bespelled leaves next to a house post to bring good luck, Papua New Guinea. (Source: Munn 1986: 93).* **Fig. 11.08. (bottom left).** *A Chukchi boy with a fireboard, Siberia. Fire and fireboards are sacred guardians of the household. (Source: Serov 1988: 244).* **Fig. 11.09. (bottom middle).** *Gimi men and boys making a doll of leaves and twigs, to be used in a story about the transformation of a child into a wood spirit, New Guinea. (Source: Gillison 2002: 86).* **Fig. 11.10. (bottom right).** *Ainu boy making an offering to the influenza god using a carved tree stump and inaw or shaved sticks, Sakhalin. (Source: Walker 1999: 104).* **Fig. 11.11. (centre).** *Rengma Naga offerings of roasted pork and rice beer to spirits of the harvest and gods of fertility, north India. (Source: Stirn and van Ham 2003: 92).*

There are Classical references to similar acts. Ovid's poem *Fasti* describes offerings of flowers, grain and salt before sowing (Ovid 1989 1: 337-353). Cato mentioned offerings of wine and meat to Jupiter and Vesta (Grant 1957: 34). In the Republican period, agricultural rituals marked the lustration of the fields (Ambarvalia), sowing of seed (Sementivae) and protection of crops (Robigalia); and there was a festival of Ceres, the goddess of corn (Beard, North and Price 1998: 45, 50). Some of these rites were very formal, but others probably undertaken at a local and more informal level.

Boundaries

Boundaries, whether physical constructions or social and symbolic in nature, play a key role in the construction of individual and communal identities, and are also heavily implicated in people's understandings of tenure and ownership (e.g. Barth 1969, 2000; Phillips 1984; Sillitoe 1999). They may be a source of considerable anxiety, and can become surrounded with a variety of cosmological meanings. The boundaries of Roma Gypsy campsites, and to a lesser extent their caravans, demarcate their social space from the polluting, corrupting *Gorgio* or non-Gypsy world (Okely 1983: 76). For the Akha of northern Burma, spirit gates erected at the entrances to their villages formed symbolic boundaries between the human world and that of the spirits (Diran 1997: 92) (Fig. 9.103). For the Maring, the ritualised planting of *rumbim* defines their territory and identity (Rappaport 1984: 148, 150).

Around the world, boundaries may be associated with ritual practices designed to assuage these social tensions and anxieties, and to protect the people, animals and crops dwelling within. There are Classical examples too. Roman processions including the Lupercalia, a form of 'beating of the bounds' (Beard, North and Price 1998: 261). Cato noted in his treatise *On Agriculture* that farmers seeking the favour of Mars led sacrificial animals around their estates to ward off disease, disasters and infertility (Derks 1999: 356-357). Mars was associated with the arable land and property of the *fundus*, whereas Hercules was more closely linked to animal husbandry, herds and flocks. Many Roman military sites in Britain have also produced evidence for unusual deposits in or near their ditches and ramparts (e.g. Hingley 2006). 'Romans' as well as indigenous peoples in northern England would thus have had a variety of socially inculcated beliefs about boundaries.

Theoretical approaches to discard and deposition

Until the 1960s many archaeologists regarded broken pottery sherds, animal bone, quern fragments and other such material as rubbish – the unwanted debris and detritus from 'domestic' occupation, disposed of through processes of unstructured dumping.

Some aspects of refuse disposal are undoubtedly determined by economy of effort, the minimisation of hindrance, the retention of recyclable materials, and taphonomic factors. Processual archaeology investigated such processes in detail during the 1970s and 1980s, often through ethnoarchaeological research (e.g. Binford 1980, 1981a, 1981b; Hayden and Cannon 1983; Schiffer 1987). But ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological work also suggests that 'ordinary' household waste and its disposal may be subject to complex cultural rules and proscriptions. All cultures have imbedded notions concerning what is dirty and clean, right or wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, but these ideas change and develop over time. Such studies were pursued by archaeologists in the 1980s and early 1990s interested in more symbolic and structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to the past.

The Mesakin Nuba in Sudan will cook and eat surrounded by their own refuse (Hodder 1982: 157-163), whilst the Akan of Ghana often tolerate a wide distribution of human faeces around living areas (Van der Geest 1998). Roma Gypsies draw clear distinctions between areas, utensils and substances used to wash the outer body and clothes, and those used for food preparation and consumption (Okely 1983: 76-78). Rubbish and faeces are dumped outside their trailers and around the margins of their campsites, areas regarded as *mochadi* or polluted by *Gorgio* or non-Gypsies. Many of these practices bring them into conflict with non-Gypsy communities (ibid.: 79).

For the Endo Marakwet of Kenya, different waste materials are deposited in different places in the landscape determined by age and gender groupings (Moore 1986: 108-110). Ash is thrown behind houses, but the ash from different houses must not mix. Chaff accumulates near compound edges where women have been winnowing, whilst animal dung is swept away from livestock pens. Ash and dung are not mixed, and only women remove the ash from their hearths. A variety of symbolic meanings may be attached to different waste substances. Dung represents male fecundity and livestock, whereas ash may be associated with the hearth and female nurturing, but is also a potentially destructive substance linked to female sexuality. Women have a strong association with chaff, and are often buried near where winnowing takes place (ibid.: 110). These social 'rules' may be flouted or ignored, however, and so the actual situation is far more complex. For the Ilchamus of Kenya, ash from domestic hearths is associated with compounds and with the colour white; and also with

women, milk and healing. Unlike general rubbish disposed outside compounds, women usually discard ash behind their dwellings (Hodder 1987). But if taken outside compounds by men, ash may become associated with cursing and death, and the bone ash from ceremonial feasting and other rites is discarded with animal dung in the area where cattle are kept (Fig. 11.12).

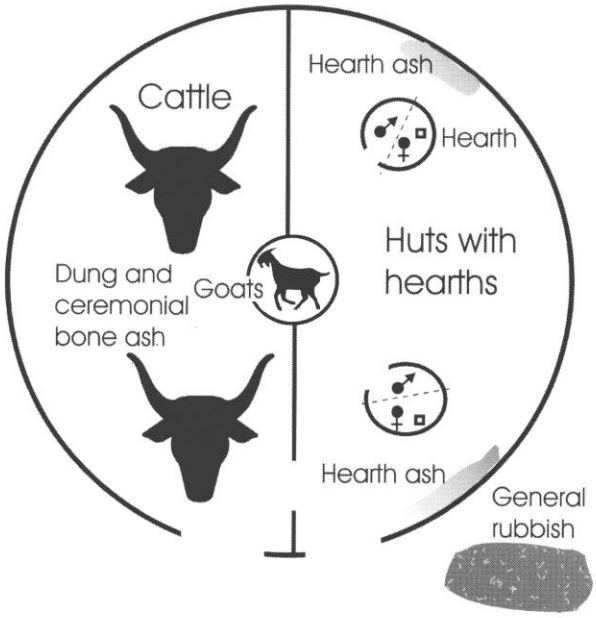


Figure 11.12. *Spatial model of Ilchamus discard practices, Kenya. (Source: David and Kramer 2001: 109, after Hodder 1987 fig. 9.1).*

Without proposing simplistic binary symbolism or structuralist divisions, such evidence demonstrates that even mundane activities such as refuse disposal can be influenced by wider ideas of cosmology, class or status, gender or age (e.g. Cumberpatch 1997b; Miller 1985; Yates 1989). Since the late 1980s there has been considerable discussion of depositional practices within earlier prehistory (e.g. Pollard 2001; Richards and Thomas 1984; Thomas 1991b). The idea of 'special' deposits has been discussed within Romano-British studies (e.g. Aitchison 1987; Clarke 2000; Fulford 2001; Merrifield 1987; Millett 1994; Reece 1988a; Woodward and Woodward 2004), mainly focused on coin or metalwork hoards and ritual deposits in urban contexts, although some critical analyses of depositional patterns in and around settlements have drawn upon these ideas (Evans 1995a, 2001a; Willis 1997b). Parallel to this have been books on so-called 'Celtic' ritual practices, often conflating the earliest Iron Age through to the early medieval periods[1].

J.D. Hill's study of depositional practices on Iron Age sites in central southern England has been highly influential (Hill 1995a). Unusual features of Iron Age deposits of artefacts and human and animal remains had been noted and discussed before (e.g. Cunliffe 1984, 1992; Grant 1984b, 1991; Wilson 1992), but using detailed statistical analyses of different classes of archaeological material Hill suggested that much if not all material on Iron Age sites resulted from 'structured deposition', a term originally coined for Neolithic practices (Richards and Thomas 1984). Hill defined structured deposition as purposeful and symbolically ordered (Hill 1995a: 96), but drawing on the same technologies and social structures as more mundane activities. He proposed that ritual formed part of 'discursive consciousness', an overtly symbolic but irregular series of practices that he distinguished from everyday activities (Hill 1995a: 98-100; q.v. Bell 1992; Giddens 1984). He concluded that deposition in pits was not part of everyday refuse disposal, although some of this material was likely to have been 'rubbish'. Rather, these were a series of intentional practices that took place episodically and according to culturally and cosmologically predetermined sequences, as components of Iron Age rituals.

Hill's study has been misunderstood and misrepresented. As he himself noted (Hill 1995a: 95), structured deposits and rituals are not necessarily the same thing, and demonstrating the existence of the former does not assume the latter. He was *not* suggesting that every pot sherd or animal bone on an Iron Age site was the result of ritual activity, nor was he suggesting that only structured deposits were the result of cosmological beliefs. In effect though, he suggested that *all* deposition was structured to an extent, as it was all selected and deposited according to certain social rules.

In my study region, such detailed comparative studies can never be possible, as bone often does not survive. There are also some theoretical and methodological problems with Hill's ideas. Although he found associations between different classes of finds, Hill claimed that "…such deposits, often separated by many years, were not a result of the daily disposal of refuse, but were made during irregular rituals which engraved a cosmology into the physical setting and daily lives of Iron Age people" (Hill 1995a: 126). Whilst he admitted that the distinction between prosaic and ritual practices may often have been blurred, I feel that he still erects an unhelpful division between the two. Many depositional practices might not have been irregular, but would have taken

place at specific, reoccurring times such as sowing and harvesting. I also do not accept that there would have been no 'refuse' at all in the past.

Hill focused on pit deposits, yet with notable exceptions these were not a feature of many Iron Age and Romano-British settlements in the study region, and unlike southern England everyday and religious practices do not seem to have been clearly spatially separated (*contra* Hill 1995a: 124, fig. 12.1). Although there were possible temple and shrine structures (see below), most 'ritual' activities took place within the same places as more mundane practices. Instead of transposing Wessex evidence and models directly to my study region, thereby replacing culture-history caricatures of Iron Age and Romano-British communities with new generalisations (q.v. Cumberpatch, Walster and Vince 2007: 234), I wish to study the regional evidence on its own terms (q.v. Brudenell and Cooper 2008: 20; Robbins 1999: 46).

Placed deposits

I prefer the term 'placed deposits' instead of 'structured deposition' (*pace* Hill 1995a), to refer to materials that were more carefully selected and deposited in particular contexts (Chadwick 2004: 98). The term 'structured deposition' implies (no matter how unintentionally) a far too rigid set of beliefs. There might not have been formal cosmological rules governing how material should be deposited, but rather a suite or palette of conventions that could be drawn upon in a strategic manner depending on context, a more fluid tradition that allowed variations over time and space. These differences resulted from imperfect memories of previous rites, from improvisation, and deliberate manipulations of tradition to meet specific social circumstances or novel materialities. These practices were not part of a separate 'ritual' sphere of practice, separate to the discard of domestic refuse, but all were linked by the same underpinning logic. I have used the following criteria to identify possible placed deposits within my study region, based on those used in post-excavation analysis of a Bronze Age settlement and cemetery site at Westhampnett in West Sussex (Chadwick 2006), in consultation with Lorraine Mepham, the finds manager of Wessex Archaeology. Placed deposits may consist of:

- The burial of whole, substantially whole or articulated animal remains in contexts near dwellings, within enclosures or in the ditches surrounding them that suggests the disposal of diseased animals was not the priority;

- Complete or substantially complete pottery vessels;

- Substantial pieces of single vessels, where these fragments appear to have been deliberately selected;

- Whole quernstones, or fragments of querns, where these occurred in or near dwellings, or within ditches, gullies, palisade slots and postholes associated with enclosure and sub-enclosure entrances;

- Personal items such as brooches and bracelets where associated with dwellings, enclosure ditches, or enclosure entrances;

- The burial of whole or substantially whole human remains, remains that were probably once articulated, or selected remains, in specific non-grave contexts such as the terminals of ditches by entrances.

The relationships that were drawn between the objects may have been important to these deposits; in addition to the social practices they were part of and the contexts in which they were used prior to deposition.

The evidence for depositional practices within the study region

Due to the nature of the regional evidence and the relatively small number of excavations, it is not possible to undertake the detailed statistical analyses of artefact and faunal assemblages undertaken by Hill and others. I have summarised some of the evidence in tables, but inevitably I have required a more discursive approach in order to develop contextual interpretations. Much of the evidence is therefore outlined in more detail in Appendix F. What follows in this chapter are more general

discussions of different depositional practices and the different categories of materials incorporated within them, illustrated with some specific examples.

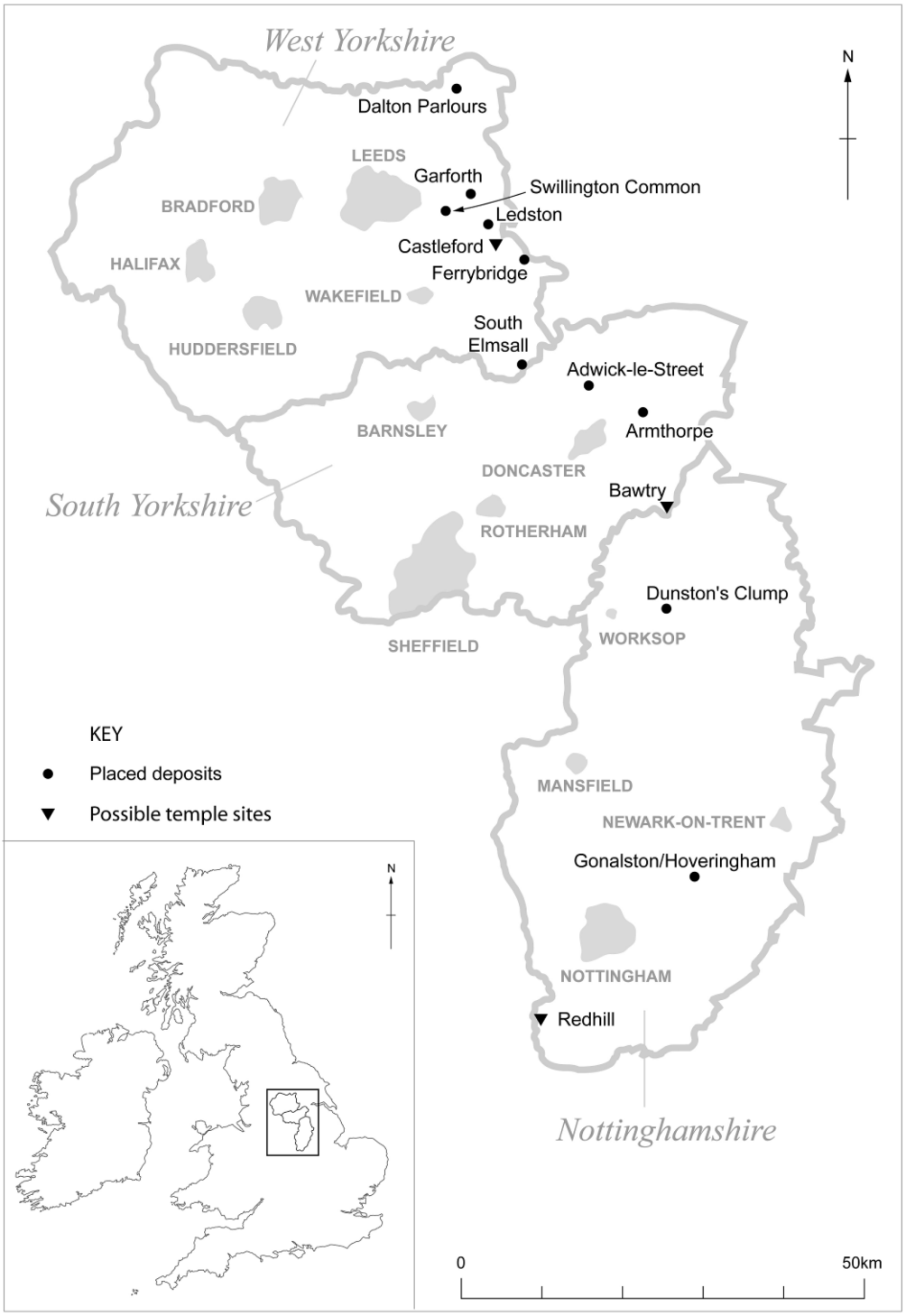


Figure 11.13. *Map of the study region showing some of the sites discussed in this chapter, including the locations of possible Classical-style or 'formal' temples or shrines; and also some of the rural sites discussed in the text with possible evidence for placed deposits. (Drawn by A. Leaver).*

'Non-placed' deposits?

In recent years, several studies have examined the spatial and temporal distribution of artefacts across excavated Iron Age enclosure sites, and more rarely, Romano-British examples. This work has shown that there were patterns to this discard (e.g. Hingley 2006; Willis 1997; Woodward 2002). At Scrooby Top, Graham Robbins noted:

> The distribution patterns shown by the various ceramics suggest that the spatial location of activities within the enclosure, and around the vicinity, were structured by common understandings of appropriate use of domestic space and the division of the domestic sphere from the wider agricultural landscape. What is *not* being proposed…is either that the deposition pattern is somehow tied to a spurious 'ritual' sphere of social life, or that the communities which inhabited this enclosure were rule-bound. The proposition is rather that the everyday activities of people, their organisation of space, their association of tasks, [were] prefaced upon culturally-specific understandings of the way-to-do-things, what is appropriate, where and when… (Robbins 2000: 87, his emphasis, my addition in parentheses).

People were exercising distinct choices about where to deposit artefacts, and there is a marked tendency on excavations for even neighbouring features to produce very different amounts of material (q.v. Cumberpatch 1993; Cumberpatch and Robbins n.d.). The evidence for this is presented in Appendix F. Although less structured than 'placed' deposits, these patterns nevertheless reflect some of the beliefs concerning boundaries, cleanliness and pollution, and what were considered the appropriate places to dispose of this material. It is in such utilitarian and implicit, unconscious practices that some of the social structures of a society may be apparent and most archaeologically visible (q.v. Cumberpatch 1997a).

Animal burials and animal remains

It has become a truism amongst anthropologists and archaeologists that animals 'are good to think with and good to prohibit' (q.v. Tambiah 1969). Animals may form part of elaborate schemes of categorising the world and of classifying different foods and ways of preparing them (e.g. Descola 1994; Douglas 1960; Ingold 2005; Lévi-Strauss 1969; Shanklin 1985; Tambiah 1969; Turner 1966). As I outlined in Chapter 3, animals may be important components of totemic beliefs, and individuals, lineages, clans, age grades or other social groups may identify themselves with particular

animals, and/or the perceived positive and negative attributes of particular species. In addition to their economic and subsistence value, livestock may be indicators of wealth, prestige and status (Parker Pearson 2000) and many small-scale societies maintain intimate relationships with animals that are seen in terms of mutualism rather than simply economic exploitation (Ingold 2000; Pálsson 1996).

Around the world, animals are an integral part of 'ritual' activities. These practices may involve the killing of livestock as offerings to gods, spirits or ancestors in order to bring fertility and good luck (Figs. 11.14-11.22). Animals might also be sacrificed to accompany human dead into the afterlife, as part of funeral feasts and marriage ceremonies, seasonal celebrations, rites of passage, blood payments for compensation, or following violent and/or inauspicious deaths. The animals might be chosen on the basis of their sex, colour, age or other perceived auspicious qualities. Sometimes the act of killing may be highly ritualised, even deliberately violent (e.g. Abbink 2000: 87; Mawson 2006: 349), and might take place in particular places and involve special artefacts. The death throes or the entrails of animals may be examined for divinatory purposes, and their flayed hides worn by those involved in the rites, or used to bind structures. The meat from sacrificed animals is often distributed amongst the wider community. The possible symbolic meanings of animals in Iron Age and Romano-British societies have been explored elsewhere (Grant 1984a, 1991; Green 1992; Hill 1995a, 1996b; Smith 2005), but it is worth noting some salient points.

In Iron Age Britain and Europe, iconography suggests a particular regard for wild boar, deer, and more rarely, horses and domestic cattle, especially bulls (Green 1992); yet deer and wild boar bones are rare on Iron Age settlements (Grant 1981; Hambleton 1999). Where deer remains have been found, these are sometimes curated antler frontlets, or decorated antler weaving combs, perhaps indicating ambiguous beliefs (Aldhouse-Green 2004: 41; Hill 1995a: 108). The domestic pig and dog would have had still extant wild counterparts in wild boar and wolves, adding further ambiguities, whilst feral horses *may* have existed in the Pennine uplands, and there might have been myths and legends about the last wild cattle. Some animals might therefore have been placed under taboos, and even for common domesticated animals there may have been restrictions on when they could be killed. In parts of post-medieval England, animals were rarely slaughtered when the moon was waning as it

Sacrificing animals. **Figure 11.14. (top left).** *Nuer sacrifice of an auspicious white bull, Sudan. (Source: www.dlib.indiana.edu).* **Fig. 11.15. (top middle).** *Goat sacrificed to ensure the safe passage into the afterlife of a dead man's spirit, Togo, West Africa. (Source: Beckwith and Fisher 2002: 390).* **Fig. 11.16. (top right).** *Nuer sacrifice of an auspicious white bull, Sudan. (Source: www.dlib.indiana.edu).* **Fig. 11.17. (middle left).** *Hupa White Deerskin ceremony, Pacific North-west coast, North America. (Source: Richardson, Fleming and Luskey 1986: 209).* **Fig. 11.18. (centre).** *The host of a Bedouin wedding proudly brandishing the heads of two goats to show the abundance of meat and his largesse, Jordon. (Source: Keohane 1994: 45).* **Fig. 11.19. (middle right).** *Ainu bear sending ceremony, Hokkaido, Japan. (Source: Akino 1999: 251).* **Fig. 11.20. (bottom left).** *Goat sacrificed on a Dogon village altar, Mali, West Africa. (Source: Gordon 1997: 81).* **Fig. 11.21. (bottom middle).** *Water buffalo sacrificed in a ritual enclosure as part of Toroja funeral rites, Sulawesi, Indonesia. (Source: www.trekearth.com).* **Fig. 11.22.** *Cattle sacrificed during a Mahafaly ceremony to initiate a new headman, Madagascar. (Source: Jolly 1987: 178).*

was believed the meat would shrink during cooking (Baker 1974: 68-74). Cattle may have been perceived as sharing many social attributes with humans (see Appendix B), in addition to which the strength and fecundity of bulls would have been highly admired, and the productivity and importance of milk cows. Horses might have had connotations of long-distance movement, speed and hunting, and along with the time and resources needed to breed, train and maintain them, together with their comparative rarity, this would probably have given them high status associations too.

Certain Classical gods and demi-gods were associated with particular animals – Mercury with cockerels, Diana with deer and hunting dogs, and Hercules with cattle (Derks 1997; Green 1992). In Republican times, the Fordicidia ritual needed the sacrifice of a pregnant cow to Earth (Tellus), and to make crops prosper the festival of the October Horse required a horse sacrificed to Mars (Beard, North and Price 1998: 45, 47). The *suovitaurilia* ritual involved the sacrifice of equal numbers of cattle, sheep and pigs, and took place in both official public and private contexts to commemorate the dead and to purify fields (Toynbee 1996: 134; Wilkens 2004: 73). Marcus Porcius Cato (*On Agriculture* CL) describes how prior to harvests pigs were sacrificed (Cato 1957) – this *porca praecidanea*, with cakes and wine, was offered to Ceres, Janus, Jupiter and Juno (Grant 1957: 34-35). Cato also mentions that before sowing, wine and roasted meat was offered to Jupiter and Vesta, and that a *suovitaurilia* was necessary to purify land, usually involving suckling animals. The physical appearance and sex of the sacrificed animals was often important (Lauwerier 2004; Toynbee 1996) – the Iguvium Tables from one area of pre-Imperial Italy detail some of these (Brunaux 1988; Poultenay 1959). Different parts of carcasses were treated differently, and there were complex rules for the deposition of animal remains depending on the species and the deities involved (Beard, North and Price 1998: 36). In the Mithraic religion animal sacrifices were important too, especially domestic fowl (mainly cockerels), and the meat was eaten in communal feasts afterwards (Beck 2000; Lentacker, Ervynck and Van Neer 2004; Ulansey 1989).

Cato wrote around 160 BC, and some of these customs were archaic even then, but this shows that the occupiers of Britain ('Romans' from Italy and peoples from all over the Empire) would have brought with them their own cosmological beliefs regarding fertility, crops and livestock, to add to and mingle with existing native ideas. In Classical religious traditions cattle were considered pleasing to the gods (Jameson 1998: 93-8). Cattle are the most numerous animals thought to derive from ritual or sacrificial activity in Iron Age faunal assemblages (Woodward 1992: 80), and they featured more often as animal burials within my study region (see Appendix F). Campbell proposed a cosmology for the treatment of animal remains from the Iron Age wheelhouse at Sollas on North Uist in the Hebrides. Although many aspects of his evidence are particular to Atlantic Scotland, he made the interesting suggestion

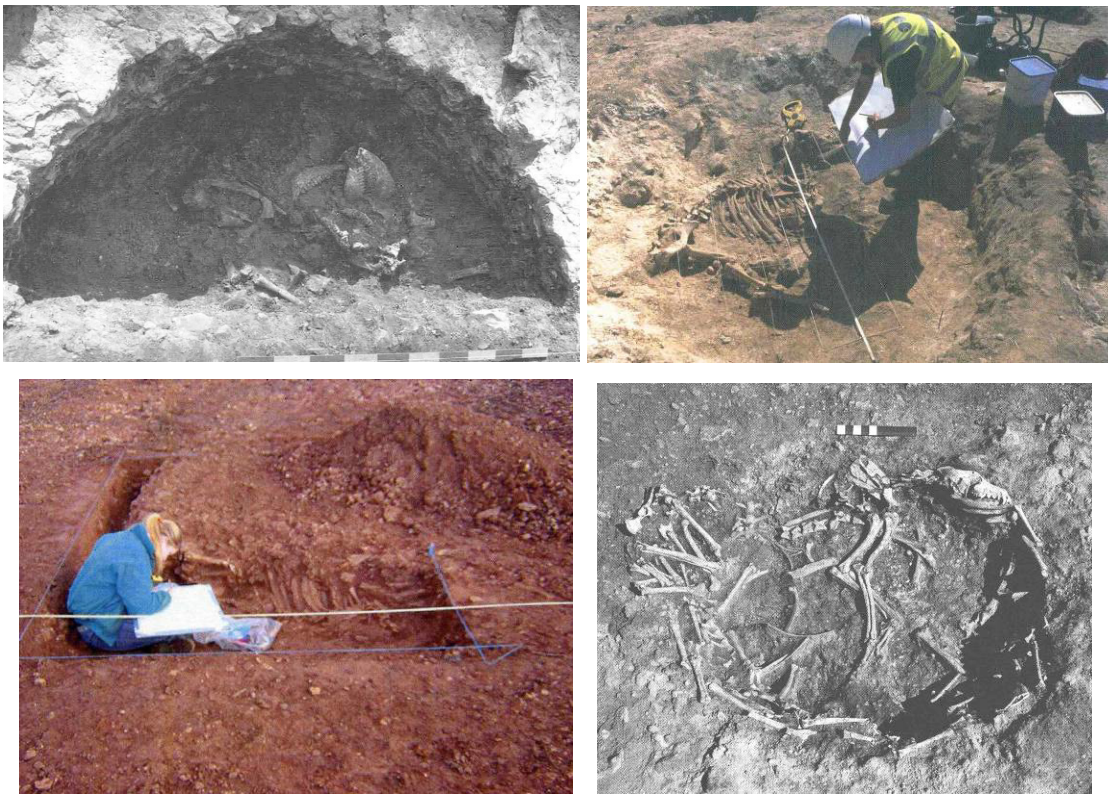


Figure 11.23. (top left). *Partially articulated cattle bones from at least two animals in a pit at Parlington Hollins, W. Yorks., dated to between 400 BC–AD 52. (Source: Holbrey and Burgess 2001: 90).* **Fig. 11.24. (top right).** *Planning an Iron Age cow and calf burial, Site M, Darrington to Dishforth A1 (M) project, W. Yorks. (Source: Howard-Davis, Lupton and Boyle 2005: 11).* **Fig. 11.25. (bottom left).** *Recording a Romano-British cow burial from a ditch at Enclosure 8, Redhouse Farm, Adwick-le-Street, S. Yorks. (Source: Upson-Smith 2006: 5).* **Fig. 11.26. (bottom right).** *Iron Age pit from Dalton Parlours, W. Yorks., with an articulated dog skeleton surrounded by sheep and pig limb and foot bones. (Source: Berg 1990a: 177).*

that mature cattle were treated differently to younger animals (Campbell 2000: 195). Most of the cattle burials in the study region were of mature animals. Elsewhere in Britain, sheep too (both lambs and mature animals) seem to have been important components of late Iron Age and Romano-British rituals (Beech 2006; Levitan 1993). Animal burials associated with boundaries, entrances and buildings have now been found at many Roman period sites in Britain and the continent (Brunaux 1988: 116-117; Lauwerier 2004; Scott 1991: 117-118). As in many pastoral or herding communities today, it is possible that animals were not usually eaten on a daily basis (see Chapter 5), but were consumed mostly during particular feasts or following sacrifices, as in Classical Greece (Detienne and Vernant 1989) and modern Nepal (Pettigrew and Tamu 2006).

Perhaps the most spectacular sequence of animal deposits in the study region has been discovered during recent excavations at Wattle Syke near Wetherby, W. Yorks., where a fully articulated adult sheep was found in the upper fill of a ditch, minus its skull which had been truncated by ploughing, although the lower mandibles survived. It may have been associated with lamb bones, and lay on top of an earlier mass of butchered cattle bone. Extension of the section to the south-east revealed two complete, articulated pig skeletons, one crouched and the other supine, with a crushed cattle skull and neck vertebrae and other disarticulated skeletal elements nearby. These remains too were all above butchered cattle bones – as yet, it is not clear if the latter were all from one individual animal. Underneath the cattle bone was a near complete and sooted pottery vessel, broken in situ. At a later date, a human infant was buried in a small pit cut into the side and the fills of the ditch next to the large stones adjacent to the cattle skull. Approximately 0.5m north-west of the sheep burial, the base of the ditch had evidence for a large posthole cut into it, perhaps for a marker post. To my knowledge, this deposit is without precedent in northern England. **Figure 11.27. (top left).** *Oblique view of the two pig skeletons and the cattle skull, looking south-west.* **Fig. 11.28. (top right).** *The two pigs and cow skull looking south-east along the line of the ditch.* **Fig. 11.29. (middle left).** *The articulated sheep burial.* **Fig. 11.30. (middle right).** *The complete but crushed cattle skull with neck vertebrae, and other cattle bone.* **Fig. 11.31. (bottom left).** *The crouched pig looking south-east. It may have been carefully tucked around the heat-shattered cobbles.* **Fig. 11.32. (bottom right).** *The supine pig looking north-west, with its head on the ditch edge. (All images source: © AS WYAS).*

In many cultures dogs have a socially ambiguous status, being valued aids to hunting and herding and trusted companions to people, or an admired food. In tandem with these beliefs, however, they may be seen as dirty and polluting due to their indiscriminate dietary and toilet habits (e.g. Akino 1999; Olowo Ojoade 1990; Serpell 1995; Tambiah 1969). In some societies they are regarded as links between the human realm and the spirit world, and during the Roman period in lower Germany dogs were attributes of the goddess Nehalenia, in addition to being associated with hunting and healing (Lauwerier 2004: 66). The Ainu of northern Japan used to honour sacrificed dogs in 'sending' ceremonies or *iwakte*, and these were deified and treated with respect. Dogs were also sacrificed when people were seriously ill, to avert epidemic diseases, or when a new house was built (Akino 1999: 252-253; Wada 1999: 263, fig. 37.3) (Fig. 11.27). The Koryak of Siberia used to surround their villages with sacrificed dogs displayed on poles with grass collars (Serov 1988: 250-252, fig. 342). Whilst they needed live dogs to guard against wolves, bears and human enemies, they also required spirit dogs as protection from malevolent spirit entities (Fig. 11.34). Dogs were also sacrificed during funeral rites, and at the burial places of the deceased. As a healing cure, the Itelmen of Siberia used to suspend dog entrails between poles, through which the sick person walked or was carried (ibid.).

Figure 11.33. (left). *Ainu dog sending ceremony, Sakhalin. (Source: Wada 1999: 263).* **Fig. 11.34. (right).** *Koryak dogs sacrificed in order to protect a village against evil spirits, Siberia. (Source: Serov 1988: 252).*

Some Iron Age and Romano-British dog burials may represent respect and affection for honoured hounds; others the remains of animals sacrificed to accompany people into the afterlife, as offerings to gods and spirits, or to prevent or cure diseases. The association of dogs with healing in some cultures may be significant (Green 1992:

198), given the dog remains and representations of dogs excavated at Romano-British temple complexes such as Lydney and Springhead. Associated with the god Nodens, the lick of temple dogs may have been believed to have healing, protective or good luck properties. Occurrences of Iron Age and Romano-British dog burials across Britain and their associations with other animal remains and artefacts have been outlined elsewhere (Black 1983; Hill 1995a, 1996b; Merrifield 1987; Smith 2005).

Corvid bones from ravens, crows and jackdaws have been regarded in Britain as possible Iron Age and Romano-British placed deposits, especially in wells, shafts and pits (Coy 1984; Grant 1984b; Ross 1968; Woodward and Woodward 2004). Their association with death, carrion and as defleshing agents of exposed human corpses may be significant, and amongst Native Americans, Ainu, indigenous Siberian groups and medieval Scandinavians, they were seen as messengers, agents or even extensions of gods, able to pass between the everyday and the supernatural realms (e.g. Hawthorn 1994: 29; Oginaka 1999: 281; Price 2000: 70; Serov 1988: 242-243; F. Turner 1977: 89). In the Roman period ravens were thought to have oracular powers (Green 1992: 177-180); and were sacrificed during some divination practices.

Animals as people?

It is impossible to prove whether or not people in these later Iron Age and Romano-British rural communities had any sense of animals as fellow cognitive beings. The special treatment of some animal remains could suggest that these were favoured beasts honoured after their deaths, messengers or offerings to gods or ancestors, or 'stand-ins' for people. The latter might imply some recognition of equivalence. The cremated animal remains from Iron Age burials at Sutton Common (Chapman 2003) could have been food offerings for the funeral pyre or travelling companions for the afterlife (q.v. Pettigrew and Tamu 2006: 395), but might have represented the formal cremation of other cognate beings (Van de Noort 2007a: 164). The ethnographic literature summarised in Chapter 3 suggests that in many small-scale societies where animal herding is practised, animals might not be regarded as exact equivalent to humans but as dependants or children, and are respected and cared for accordingly. Given the evidence for the extent of animal husbandry outlined in Chapter 6 and the

special treatment of some animal remains outlined in Appendix F, it is possible that similar beliefs existed in the Iron Age and persisted into the Romano-British period.

Pottery

Across the study region, Iron Age pottery was relatively scarce, and where it is found this is often in specific contexts (q.v. Cumberpatch and Robbins n.d.). It is extremely rare to have a 'background' scatter of Iron Age sherds near settlements. At Pickburn Leys no pottery was associated with the roundhouses (Sydes and Symonds 1993), and at Site M, very little pottery was recovered from around the structures, where it might be supposed that it would be discarded (Brown, Howard-Davis and Brenand 2007: 90). Iron Age pottery either consists of a few worn and abraded sherds, or large numbers of sherds forming complete or substantial portions of vessels found in pits, ditch terminals and roundhouse gullies. Ceramic consumption and discard within the study region also seems to have differed from practices elsewhere in Britain. Iron Age pottery was uncommon as everyday domestic vessels; and where present ceramics often occurred as placed deposits linked to the individual biographies of the pottery vessels and those who had made or used them, and/or perhaps also revealing symbolic ideas linking pots to the human body (q.v. Gosselain 1999: 32-33; Hoskins 1998).

Although Romano-British pottery was more common across settlements and fields, especially during the third and fourth centuries AD, there were major variations in how and where it was deposited too. There were often larger quantities in eastern, south-eastern or southern enclosure ditches, and an emphasis on ditch intersections, terminals and entrances. In some places Romano-British pottery was spread across the landscape in small quantities through manuring practices, but this often does not seem to have taken place. At South Muskham, fieldwalking of 209ha of ploughed fields across a dense cropmark landscape found less than 100 Romano-British sherds (Garton, Leary and Naylor 2002: 27). Only one of the four scatters of material coincided with an enclosure (Fig. 4.15), different from areas of 'brickwork' field systems in north Nottinghamshire, where scatters of Romano-British pottery and fire-cracked stones were focused upon enclosures (ibid.: 35; Garton and Leary 2008). At West Moor Park, Armthorpe, a small and otherwise unremarkable length of field ditch distant from domestic occupation contained one or more large dumps of pottery,

including several near complete vessels (Evans 2001c). The varied date of the sherds indicated that many had lain or been curated elsewhere prior to their deposition. Elsewhere at Armthorpe, substantial portions of pottery bases or rims were found as isolated deposits in ditches, in some instances 'nested' within piles of burnt stones[2] (Figs. 11.35.-11.36). Such patterns clearly represented differences in artefact deposition, but do not easily fit functional, 'common-sense' explanations of refuse disposal and casual discard, or ideas of very formally structured ritual deposits either.

Figure 11.35. (left) *and* **Fig. 11.36. (right).** *Possible placed deposits or localised but structured dumps of Romano-British pottery, excavated at West Moor Park II, Armthorpe, S. Yorks. (Source: Chadwick, Powell and Richardson 2007, plates 1-2).*

Pottery may have signified a human presence within the landscape, and this may account for the importance sometimes afforded it within depositional practices, but perhaps within people's subconscious ideas too. There have been attempts to model practices of material disposal and manure incorporation (e.g. Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988; Gaffney and Tingle 1991; Schiffer 1987), but these do not explain all aspects of these activities. It is possible, for example, that this mixing of materials from the household with the wider landscape may have conveyed a series of implicit and subconscious statements about ties to the land, and perhaps identity (Evans 2003: 141-143), and pottery's associations with food preparation, storage and consumption might have been significant too. This form of dispersed deposition may have been a deliberate 'entexturing of the ground' (ibid.: 126) or of 'signing the land', and the occasional concentrated dumps of material found in field ditches may have been linked to notions of boundaries, tenure and identity. Such dumps could also have

marked changes in household occupancy or rights of access and tenure, and might therefore have added meaning and historicity to people's everyday activities in the landscape. People at work in fields, taking animals along trackways or digging ditches would have come across these traces of past occupation, events and individuals; re-encountering these past fragments of everyday life (Giles 2000: 194).

There has been a recent cogent critique of the criteria by which structured or placed deposits of prehistoric material including pottery are defined and identified (Brudenell and Cooper 2008). This study has also highlighted the potential complexities of the processes by which sherds from different vessels in different states of wear and fragmentation may have been accumulated and discarded within features in or around settlement sites. I accept the main point made by the authors that it is not necessarily helpful to define placed deposits according to specific or rigid criteria, and that it is more productive to analyse assemblages from individual features in their entirety to generate contextually specific histories of depositional practice (ibid.: 33). As noted in Chapter 12, the detailed quantified analysis of pottery assemblages recovered from excavated Iron Age and Romano-British sites in the study region was not possible partly due to considerations of time, but also the quality of the recorded information from those excavations. Only a few developer-funded projects within the study region have been used as the basis for such studies (e.g. Brown, Howard-Davis and Brennand 2007: 93-97; Cumberpatch, Walster and Vince 2007; Robbins 2000). In future, however, such detailed spatial, statistical and contextual consideration of depositional practices should become a routine part of post-excavation analyses.

Weapons, torcs and other metalwork, brooches and bracelets

The detailed contextual evidence for metalwork finds from within the study region is presented in Appendix F. Much of the late Bronze Age metalwork from Nottinghamshire consists of finds from the River Trent, a pattern repeated across Britain (e.g. Bradley 1990). Many Iron Age metalwork finds in the region were also associated with rivers and watery places. Ritual deposition in rivers continued in the Iron Age, though with a more restricted range of artefacts than during the later Bronze Age (Fitzpatrick 1984), and this is reflected in other concentrations of Iron Age metalwork across the wider region, as in the River Witham (Davey 1973; Field and

Parker Pearson 2003; Hawkes 1946). Some of the regional evidence, however, consists of deposition in or near earlier monuments within the landscape, and in ditches and wells. The deliberate destruction and/or watery deposition of much metalwork may have reflected offerings to gods or ancestors for their intercession, but might also have been a means of reinforcing or acquiring individual status.

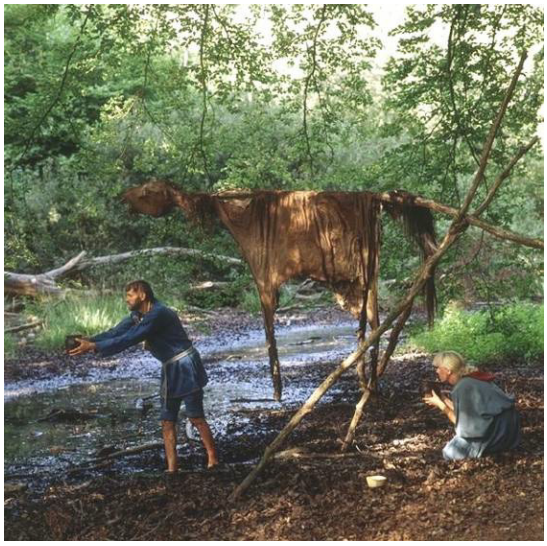


Figure 11.37. (left) *and* **Fig. 11.38. (right).** *'Reconstructions' of prehistoric depositional practices in watery places. (Source: © Lejre Experimental Centre).*

The deposition of torcs in Britain has also been seen in ritual terms (Davies 1996: 72; Fitzpatrick 1992; Stead 1991), and some torcs would have been objects associated with status or with particular individuals, which may have given them additional meanings. The association of brooches with late Iron Age and Romano-British ritual sites and deposits has been noted (Simpson and Blance 1998). Certain types of brooches were particularly associated with temples and shrines, human and animal burials, pit deposits and occasionally, with wells (e.g. Allason-Jones and McKay 1985; Casey, Hoffman and Dore 1999; Harker 1980; King and Soffe 1998; Wickenden 1992; Woodward and Leach 1993). Snake jewellery also seems to have had some votive connotations during the Romano-British period (Cool 2000b). Although these more specific associations and acts of deposition have been commented upon, there has been a lack of discussion of their occurrence in other contexts. The implicit assumption often seems to be that when brooches are found in enclosure or field ditches, roundhouse ring gullies or postholes, and other mundane domestic or agricultural contexts; then was the result of chance loss. In addition,

broken and/or worn brooches are seen as rubbish, thrown away once their functional usefulness had ended. This assumption should be questioned.

Figure 11.39. (top left). *Romano-British enamelled 'chicken' brooch found in Castleford, W. Yorks.; found in a modern context but probably of second century AD date. (Source: © AS WYAS).* **Fig. 11.40. (top centre).** *Romano-British brooch found near Egmanton, Notts. (Source: PAS).* **Fig. 11.41. (top right).** *Unstratified enamelled bird brooch, probably also of second century date, found by metal detecting during salvage excavations at Chainbridge Lane, Notts. (Source: © Jen Eccles).* **Fig. 11.42. (middle left).** *Enamelled dragonesque brooch recovered during excavations at Holme Hall Quarry, Stainton, S. Yorks. (Source: Bevan 2006: 31).* **Fig. 11.43. (middle centre).** *Brooches recovered as metal detecting finds within S. Yorks. (Source: Dearne and Parsons 1997: 47, fig. 3).* **Fig. 11.44. (middle left).** *Romano-British trumpet brooch found near Barnsley, S. Yorks. (Source: PAS).* **Fig. 11.45. (bottom left).** *Enamelled Romano-British headstud brooch found near Darrington, W. Yorks. (Source: PAS).* **Fig. 11.46. (bottom centre).** *Enamelled Romano-British trumpet brooch found at Norwell, Notts. (Source: PAS).* **Fig. 11.47. (bottom left).** *Romano-British trumpet brooch found at South Elsmsall, W. Yorks. (Source: PAS).*

Most brooches were worn externally as fastenings, and were thus liable to becoming accidentally detached when pins broke or sprang open, but were accidental losses always the case? It is notable that very few metalwork objects, including brooches, are recovered from excavations. When they are found in such contexts it is usually in specific parts of ditches or in other occupation contexts. It thus seems unlikely that they would have been overlooked and missed unless they were buried very quickly. Brooches retrieved by fieldwalkers and metal detectorists also seem to occur in distinct clusters within the region, as for example with a series of late Iron Age and Romano-British brooches found on Magnesian Limestone areas of South Yorkshire, and another group found at Rossington Bridge (Dearne and Parsons 1997; O'Connor 2001). Many have been found away from known enclosure sites[3]. This suggests that most brooches were not lost or discarded in the areas where people actually lived, and this may suggest previously unknown depositional practices.

In the late Iron Age and early Roman period, there was a significant increase in the styles and numbers of brooches worn and deposited across Britain, perhaps reflecting changes in how people expressed their Selves (Hill 1997; Jundi and Hill 1998). Individual rather than communal identities may have become more important for some people by the first century AD, signified through brooches and other personal ornamentation, toilet sets, and a growing trend in some regions for more visible burials (q.v. Jundi and Hill 1998: 129-130; see below). Dragonesque brooches and some other forms may have even been a means of expressing non-military allegiance during the years immediately following the Roman conquest. Native people would have exercised choices as to which brooch forms to adopt, but in general many Roman-style brooches might have had resonance with existing traditions of personal ornamentation. If brooches were important as expressions of people's identities, then their deposition might have sometimes been for propitiary or apotropaic purposes.

> The brooch, an article of personal adornment directly associated with individuals, had been given the right to be placed in ritual contexts. Assuming that artefacts offered for ritual must be of importance to the donor, the conscious act of choosing particular brooches *must* show their increased importance. (Jundi and Hill 1998: 130, original emphasis).

The apparent association of glass and shale bracelets with roundhouses within the study region also seems significant (see Appendix F). Again, it could be argued that such personal items were more likely to have been lost in or around dwellings, but conversely they were also more likely to have been found and retrieved in such contexts. When excavated, bracelets are normally fragmentary, but the fragmentation process is poorly understood, and may not have been due to taphonomic factors alone. For instance, it is rare that more than one fragment from each single bracelet is found. It is possible that the fragments themselves may have been valued (Cool 2003). Bracelets were also personal items worn by specific individuals. Perhaps different pieces from individual bracelets were allotted to different people following the death of the owner of the bracelet; or when people married into other clans and communities and moved away; or to symbolise other close links between people. Rachel Pope has suggested that jewellery associated with abandonment or decommissioning acts might have directly linked personal identities with houses (Pope 2005).

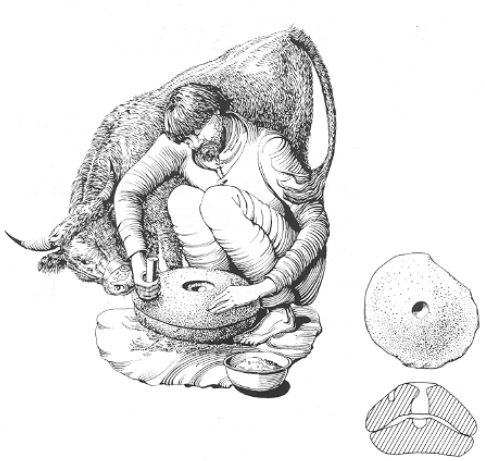
Querns

> Logan shook the girl. "What's this place? Why come here for rocks?"…" What's so special about Mow Cop?" Logan shouted.
> "It's the netherstone of the world," she said. "The skymill turns on it to grind stars...The rock is sacred to the flour of heaven." (Garner 1973: 103).

There is growing evidence from across Britain that querns often formed part of placed deposits during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods (e.g. Brown 1994; Buckley 1979, 1991; Hill 1995a; Hingley 1992; Willis 1999). Sometimes whole querns were apparently discarded despite little evidence for use and wear. Others were highly fragmented and many of the fragments are not recovered, so it is unclear where the other fragments were deposited[4]. Some may have been broken up and used as temper in ceramic fabrics (Woodward 2002: 111). Querns may have served as metaphors for the agricultural cycle, and might even have been considered as 'teeth' in some way[5]. Turning querns and grinding grain might have had associations with cycles of the sun and moon, and although I am *not* suggesting continuities of belief, in post-medieval and early modern Britain it was considered unlucky to grind grain in a widdershins manner. Jams, sauces and soups were also stirred *deseal* or sunwards, lest the food

spoil or become poisonous (Harman 1997: 242; Hole 1940: 65). This may indicate some of the potential beliefs regarding rotary movement. In the study region, some quern fragments were buried in pits or postholes within structures. This might simply reflect the use of stone fragments as pads or packing for upright timbers, but they seem to have been used mainly for entrance posts or prominent internal supports.

> Although quernstone fragments could have been used merely as packing, it is equally possible that there is a deliberate choice involved in the reuse of an artefact that could have been a symbol of re-creation or transformation. (Downes 1997: 150).



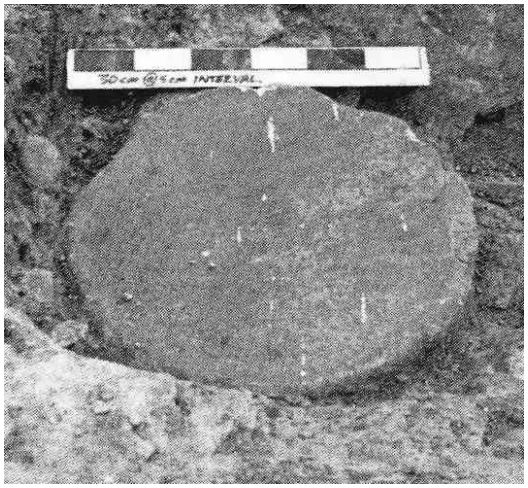


Figure 11.48. (top left). *Reconstruction of grinding grain using a beehive quern. (Source: Adkins and Adkins 1989: 138).* **Fig. 11.49. (top right).** *Complete base stone of a beehive quern found in the ring gully of Structure 5 Enclosure B, Moss Carr, Methley, W. Yorks. (Source: Roberts and Richardson 2002: 10).* **Fig. 11.50. (bottom left).** *Complete beehive quern base stone buried in a gully next to a Romano-British inhumation in a stone cist (behind) at Wattle Syke, W. Yorks. (Source: © AS WYAS).*

In other cases, whole querns or quern fragments were deposited in the ring gullies of roundhouses, or were associated with pits, postholes and slots that were near or part of enclosure and sub-enclosure entrances and entrance structures (see Appendix F). They were also components of placed deposits in pits and wells. They are often found in topsoil or the uppermost fills of cut features, suggesting that they were sometimes tertiary or closure deposits. Many querns have been found with heat reddening and/or iron deposits on their surfaces, indicating their possible re-use as anvils. A purely

functional explanation is that large, hard stones with flat surfaces were ideal for smithing, but it is also possible that quern stones, once no longer suitable for grinding, may have still lent any tools or weapons forged on them a variety of efficacious and symbolic qualities, especially if these were objects linked to agricultural production such as sickles or shears (q.v. Hingley 1997b, 2006). This may have also been linked to ideas concerning transformation through fire (q.v. Aldhouse-Green 2002; Herbert 1993; Hill 1995a: 108), which both flour and iron share. At Manor Farm, a large stone mortar recovered from a late Iron Age pit had apparently been used for the crushing of iron ore to produce a ferruginous powder, possibly as a pigment to be used as decoration for people, animals or structures (Cowgill and Heslop 2001: 201-202). This iron pigment could have had perceived beneficial medicinal, symbolic or spiritual properties.

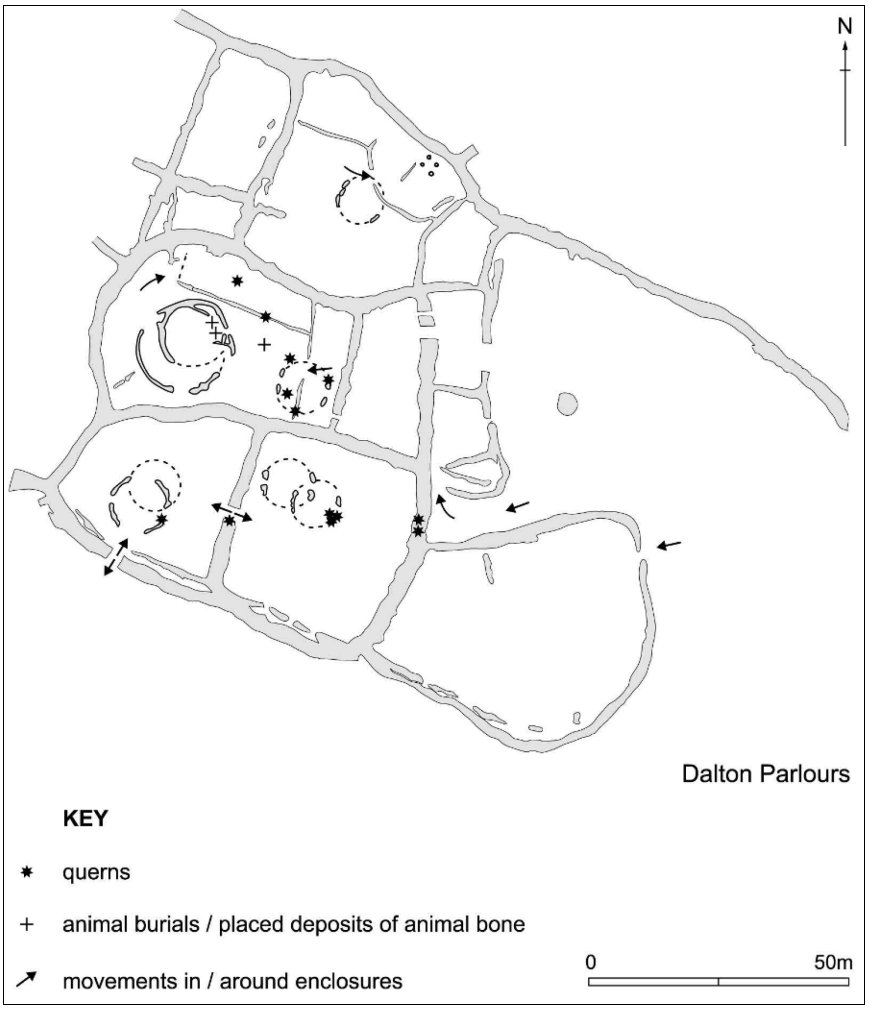


Figure 11.51. *Possible placed deposits associated with the Iron Age phases of the Dalton Parlours enclosure complex, including the locations of quernstones. (Source: Chadwick 2004a: 100, drawing by A. Leaver).*

Querns might have been linked with households, and their deposition in and around dwellings may have reflected and reinforced such beliefs, making querns visible around enclosures and placing humans at the symbolic centre of the agricultural cycle (Williams 2003: 242). The decision to bury querns as whole objects or as fragments must have been important. One possibility is that querns were deposited whole when they were foundation or closure deposits for particular dwellings, or used in offerings designed to bring fertility and providence; but when worn out, they had to be fragmented. This fragmentation may have been symbolic destruction, to demonstrate to others the seriousness of the offering and to take these objects out of commission, or it might have been undertaken to release some perceived force from within them. It may reflect the 'killing' of objects that held great power and value.

Shoes

Leather shoes have been recovered from several wells within the study region (see Appendix F and Gazetteer). This association is intriguing, and reflects similar evidence elsewhere in Britain, including the 2005 find of a waterlogged Iron Age shoe at Whitehall Quarry near Wellington in Somerset (BBC News 2005), which was recovered from a hollowed tree trunk placed in a natural spring to form a 'well' shaft. Carol van Driel-Murray (1999) has examined the symbolism of feet and shoes during the Roman period, and has suggested that footwear was used in rites of commencement and termination. It was more often left shoes that were used, and footwear would have quite literally born the imprint of the wearer, a highly personal feature perhaps considered equivalent to a signature (van Driel-Murray 2006: 244). If some of these deposits were associated with rites of closure or departure, then this disposal of footwear might have been a material metaphor for a journey about to be undertaken, either physical movement or the journey into the afterlife. If only one half of a pair of shoes was represented, then perhaps this may have meant that part of the wearer was staying behind in spirit with the settlement that was being departed.

Alternatively, the shoes may have had apotropaic properties – in the post-medieval and early modern periods for example, in many parts of Britain shoes were sometimes hidden in rafters or under floorboards within people's houses to act as personal 'decoys' for any malign spirits and acts of witchcraft (Baker 1974; Hole 1940). This

does not of course reflect direct continuities of belief, but may show continued tensions regarding such highly personal artefacts. During recent excavations at Mill Mount in York, a short ditch or gully was found to contain a pair of hobnailed boots, a third hobnailed boot and a cattle humerus (Spall and Toop 2005: 17), possibly all part of a placed deposit, and a total of nine boots were recovered in total. This ditch was open and next to a small Romano-British cemetery, and its later backfill contained disarticulated human bone. This might indicate further shoe symbolism, linked to the death of the wearers.

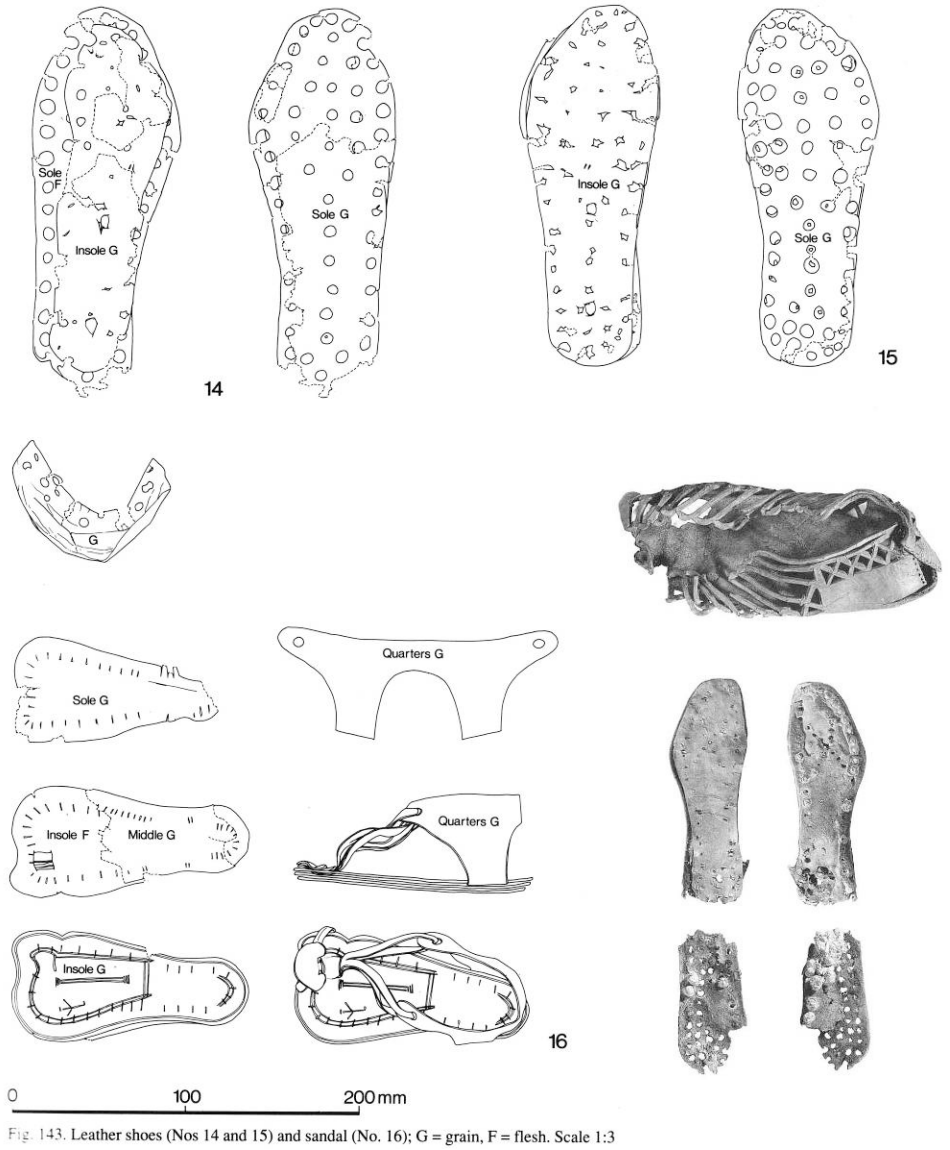


Fig. 143. Leather shoes (Nos 14 and 15) and sandal (No. 16); G = grain, F = flesh. Scale 1:3

Figure 11.52. *Romano-British leather shoes found in the well excavated at Dalton Parlours (line drawings); and from waterlogged contexts at Castleford (photographs), W. Yorks. (Sources: © AS WYAS; Mould 2001: 234).*

Plant deposits

The evidence for poisonous and/or medicinal plants from wells and pits is presented below and in Appendix F. The postpipes of twenty-five of the four-post structures at Sutton Common contained charred spelt and emmer wheat grains. As the upright posts had themselves survived as a consequence of the waterlogged conditions, the cereals could not have been the result of accidental fires, and are now interpreted as handfuls of grain placed in the postholes during the construction of the elevated granaries (Van de Noort and Chapman 2007: 38) (Fig. 11.53). These are crucial evidence of the small-scale and informal ritual practices discussed above.

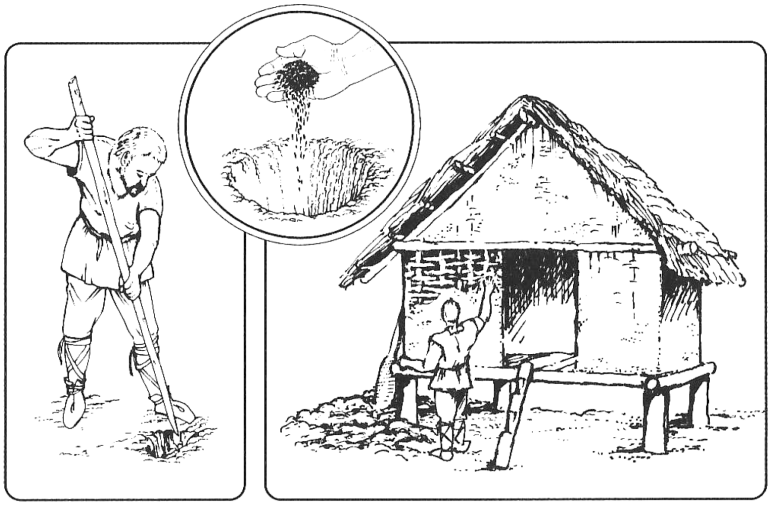


Figure 11.53. (left). *Mundane magic at Sutton Common, South Yorkshire. Handfuls of charred cereal grains were added to the postholes of four-post granaries during their construction. (Source: Van de Noort and Chapman 2007: 39).*

Pits and pit alignments

In general, the pit groups and complex pit deposits of south-central England (Hill 1995a) were not usually a feature of the region, with the exception of some isolated pits. These examples are presented in Appendix F. At a few sites in West Yorkshire however such as Ledston, Ferrybridge, and Site M near Micklefield, large complexes of pits formed the focus for some placed deposits of artefacts and animal and human remains (Brown, Howard-Davis and Brennand 2007: 93-97; Richardson 2005a: 54-70; Roberts 2005b: 32-33). People were returning to these pits, in some cases disturbing earlier material and then re-depositing other materials. This implies knowledge of the position of the pits, perhaps indicated by wooden markers, shallow depressions or more lush vegetation, and at Ferrybridge the pit boundary that itself

referenced earlier monuments was later recognised for many centuries (Richardson 2005a: 70; Roberts 2005a: 210). This conscious respect by late Iron Age and Romano-British communities of earlier features has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Ellis 2004; Maloney et al. 2003; Meade 2004; John Thomas 2008; Williams 1998a).

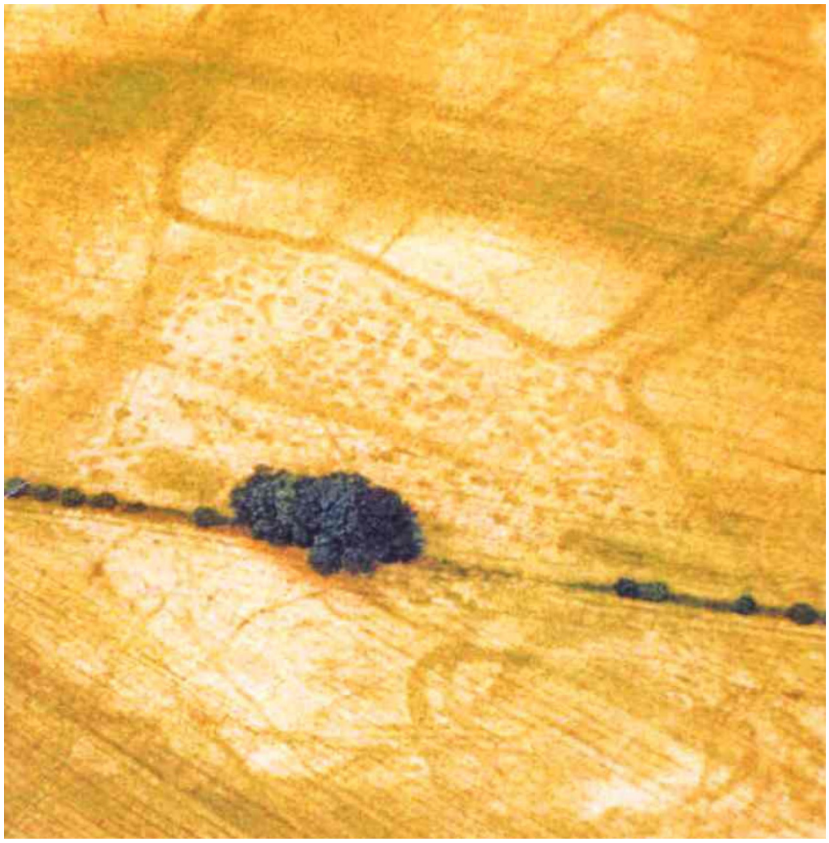


Figure 11.54. *Cropmarks at Ledston, W. Yorks., showing several trackways running from the top of the photograph towards a dense concentration of pits (centre) and a double-ditched enclosure (bottom right). (Source: Roberts 2005b: front cover).*

There is no conclusive evidence that these pit groups were used as storage pits, unlike in southern England. Although some were a focus for placed deposits and/or animal and human burials, this does not 'explain' the majority where little or nothing is found. It is possible that some were extraction pits for the production of lime, spread on to fields to enrich the soil. The link between some being used for placed deposits and their role in agriculture could thus be appropriate. The care that was often taken over their form and the lack of inter-cutting suggests that they were not quarry pits. Most were probably not originally 'rubbish pits', though refuse was later discarded in some. Many of the Ferrybridge examples formed boundaries, but here too there were also clusters of pits. It is possible that each pit may have represented the embodied

actions of particular individuals or households. If so, then each pit might have signified a particular feast, calendrical festival or other ritual, in which the very act of digging or inscribing the landscape may have been important. Some pits were selected to be receptacles for offerings of food, discard from feasts, and placed deposits of metalwork, pottery and animal and human remains. Pit clusters may represent the same practices carried out again and again, on a seasonal, annual or intermittent basis. Locales such as Ledston and Ferrybridge may have served as communal foci for different households or lineages, or wider social groupings.

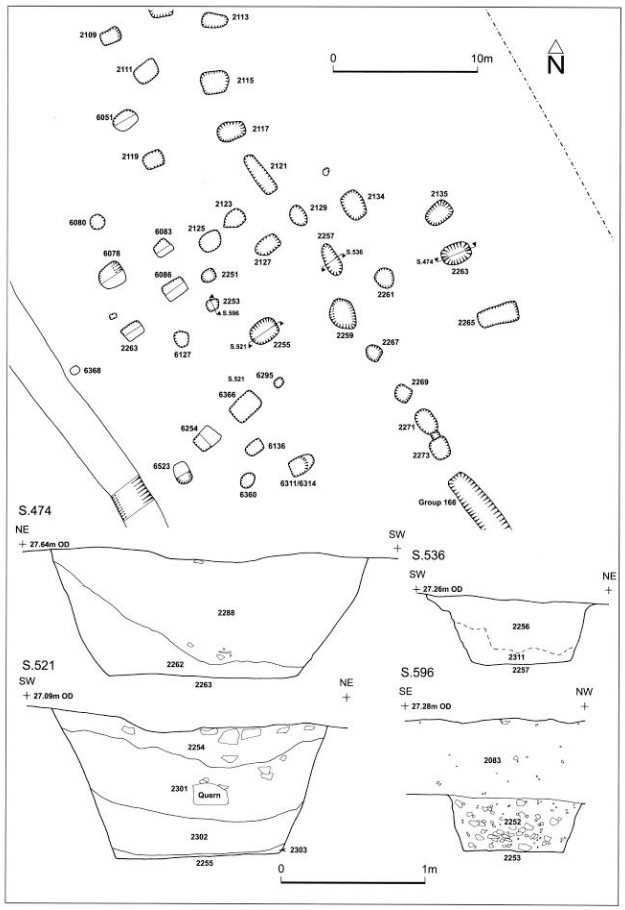


Figure 11.55. *One of the most notable concentrations of pits excavated at Ferrybridge, located close to the henge and with pit alignments running off to the north-west and south-east. The Ferrybridge pits contained late Iron Age and Romano-British artefacts; but also human burials of Iron Age, Romano-British and early medieval date. (Source: Richardson 2005a: 57).*

The post-Roman burials in the Ferrybridge pit alignments might have simply made pragmatic re-use of partially open pits, but the significance of the pits and earlier monuments was probably important. This could indicate memories and meanings persisting for 1600-2000 years, an incredible length of time, although there is

evidence from the River Witham for the deposition of metalwork and other objects from the late Bronze Age through into the medieval period (Field and Parker Pearson 2003). This also has some parallels with the burial of a ninth century AD woman in a Romano-British trackway ditch near Adwick-le-Street (Speed and Rogers 2004). Perhaps this merely reflects later reworking and reinterpretation of the meanings of these features, however, in the same way that early medieval people based stories and myths on prehistoric barrows and other monuments, and re-used them as burial and execution sites (e.g. Fenton Thomas 2005; Reynolds 1997; Williams 1998b).

Wells and waterholes

Wells and waterholes in the region often had complex depositional sequences and contained large quantities of animal bone and artefacts, some the result of everyday prosaic activities, others dumps from demolition and abandonment; but also some derived from more ritualised practices possibly marking rites of closure and termination. Detailed data concerning well deposits from the study region are outlined in Appendix F. Many Romano-British wells across Britain have contained deposits of whole animals or selected remains such as heads/skulls, human remains, complete ceramic vessels and metal objects, in addition to poisonous and/or medicinal plants (e.g. Fulford 2001; Poulton and Scott 1993; Woodward and Woodward 2004). Dog remains were particularly common, sometimes perhaps a reference to Cerberus, guardian of the underworld (Woodward and Woodward 2004: 78).

In East Yorkshire, a waterhole excavated at Shiptonthorpe contained partially articulated animal remains and skulls (Halkon and Millett 2003: 306; Millett and Taylor 2006: 56-57, figs. 15.4-15.6). There were also quern fragments, most of the decorated samian sherds found at the site, leather shoes, an iron knife blade, a copper alloy lion-shaped handle, and the remains of wooden writing tablets (Allason-Jones 2006; King, Millett and Dickinson 2006; van Driel-Murray 2006). The latter may have originally had votive dedications (q.v. Derks 1995). After the pond was backfilled it still formed a focus for human and animal burials (Millett and Taylor 2006: 314-316). There was pollen evidence for the presence of holly and mistletoe. These ‘evergreen’ species may have had special importance – mistletoe was found in

the stomach of Lindow Man (Scaife 1986: 132). Many of the plant species found in wells such as Dalton Parlours have ambiguous qualities – in small amounts they may have been effective as painkillers or other remedies, but were deadly poisonous in larger quantities. Why they were deposited in wells and pits is not clear.

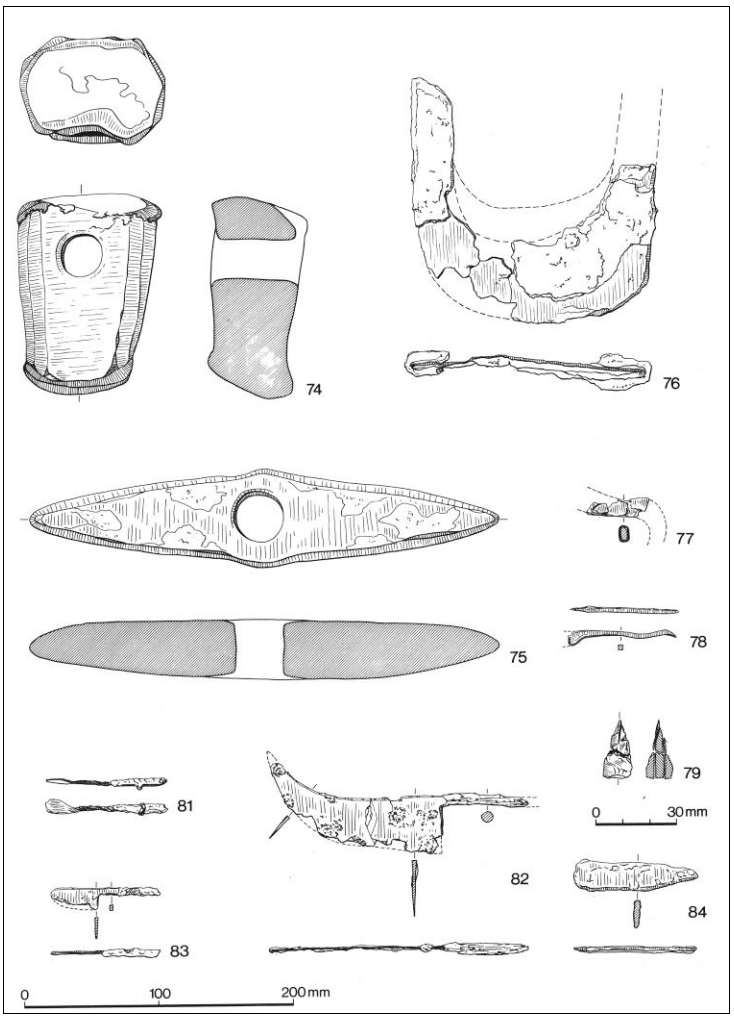


Figure 11.56. *Some of the Romano-British iron objects recovered from the excavated well at Dalton Parlours, including a sledgehammer or block anvil (no. 74), a mason's pick (75), a spade shoe (76), part of a reaping hook (77), an ox-goad (79) and knives (82-84). Hingley (2006) has highlighted the possible symbolism of iron objects associated with agricultural and household activities. (Source: I.R. Scott 1990: 204).*

In Graeco-Roman rituals, shafts were considered to be links to the underworld and the dead, and were used for the disposal of sacrificial animal remains, vessels used for offerings and libations and special votive objects (Merrifield 1987: 44; Webster 1997a: 139). Some researchers have argued that similar deposits date back to the Iron Age, equating them with ritual pits and 'shafts' (e.g. Ross 1968: 255-285; Wait 1985: 51-82). These interpretations have been challenged, however, partly because there are

few securely dated Iron Age well deposits, but also because of the biases of culture-history expectations of 'Celtic' practices and an over reliance on early medieval literary sources (Webster 1997a: 136-137). Placed deposits in wells might have been a novel post-conquest phenomenon, in which native beliefs concerning water, pits and deposits were combined with, transformed by and themselves transformed existing Roman traditions of chthonic rites and deposition. Hingley (2006: 238) has proposed that iron objects were mainly placed within boundaries in later prehistory, but that during the Romano-British period the focus switched to wells and deep pits.

Feasting residues

In Chapter 10 I outlined the likely social importance of feasts to Iron Age and Romano-British communities, but also the limited evidence on most sites within the study region for such large-scale consumption. Nevertheless, even relatively small-scale feasts would have resulted in residues such as ash and charcoal, burnt or heat-shattered stones, butchered and/or burnt animal bone, broken ceramics and other materials, which might have been dumped relatively unceremoniously in ditches or pits. Such remnants may have marked these events and household and communal boundaries. Sometimes particular objects and materials might have been selected for inclusion to commemorate specific events, and such subtle depositional distinctions may be very hard to identify archaeologically (q.v. Brudenell and Cooper 2008).

Middens

Spreads of midden material have been identified on several sites including Scrooby Top, Dunston's Clump; and perhaps at Lingwell Gate (Davies et al. 2000: 34-35, 47; Garton 1987: 33; Roberts and Johnston 2001: 291). As well as producing organic material for enriching soils, middens might also have been symbolic resources. In the later Bronze Age and early Iron Age, extensive middens were created at sites as All Cannings Cross, East Chisenbury and Potterne in southern England (Cunnington 1923; Lawson 2000; McOmish 1996), Llanmaes in South Wales (Lodwick and Gwilt

Feasting practices, forging relations. **Figure 11.57. (top left).** *Young Samburu men roast an ox as part of rites prior to their circumcision ceremony, Kenya. (Source: Pavitt 1991: 82).* **Fig. 11.58. (top middle).** *Three fowl roasting in a Puya-kira'go earth oven for a farewell feast, Papua New Guinea. (Source: Steensberg 1980: 201).* **Fig. 11.59. (top right).** *Distributing pork amongst a Tifalmin village, New Guinea. (Source: Wheatcroft 1973: 71).* **Fig. 11.60. (bottom left).** *Naga sacrifice of mithun or wild cattle, as part of a feast of merit, Burma. (Source: Stirn and Van Ham 2003: 98).* **Fig. 11.61. (bottom right).** *Samburu boy sucking marrow from the leg bone of a freshly slaughtered ox. (Source: Pavitt 1991: 123).*

2004), Whitchurch in Warwickshire (Waddington and Sharples 2007) and Girton in Nottinghamshire (Kinsley 1998). At such sites very complex taphonomic processes and stratigraphic sequences suggest discard from extensive feasting events, interdigitated with human bone and placed deposits of pottery, metal objects and items associated with weaving and metalworking. Material from earlier deposits was itself reworked and redeposited. Together with smaller middens, such deposits could be understood in terms of regeneration and control over fertility (Hill 1995a, 1995b; Parker Pearson 1996), links between soil, blood and identity (q.v. Bauman 1992), and settings for the negotiation of personal, communal and inter-communal identities and social memories (Waddington 2008: 178-179). Middens may even have had connotations of wealth and status.

At Scrooby Top, people entering the enclosure would have had to tread through a churned up layer of broken pottery, heat-shattered stones and ripe smelling organic detritus, the odour occasionally neutralised to some extent by ejections of ash and charcoal from hearths (see Fig. 11.81 below). People not only lived in this settlement but were apparently relatively well off. Here were very different ways of being-in-the-world than that normally depicted in conventional reconstructions of 'improved' Romano-British life. Recent excavations at Wattle Syke near Wetherby in West Yorkshire found interesting evidence for such depositional practices. A natural hollow where metalworking activities were being carried out was subsequently filled with dumps of material including large quantities of burnt stone, animal bone, quern fragments and pottery. In addition, however, a Romano-British copper-alloy bow brooch, three silver coins and several copper-alloy coins were also found in a relatively small area within this series of deposits, and it seems unlikely that these all resulted from accidental loss or casual discard.

Temples and shrines, gods and goddesses

Only a few probable Romano-British temples are known from the study region, all closely associated with rivers – at Redhill in Nottinghamshire, close to the confluence of the Rivers Soar and Trent, and at Castleford at the confluence of the Rivers Aire and Calder (Cool 1999; Elsdon 1983; Palfreyman and Ebbins 2003). Another possible site has recently been identified at Bawtry, next to the River Idle (Berg and Major 2006). There have also been isolated finds of altars and statues (Bishop 2001; Buckland 1986; Faull 1981). This data is outlined in Appendix F. There are also a series of small Iron Age timber structures or ditched enclosures that might have been shrines, again described in Appendix F. There are considerable theoretical and methodological problems in distinguishing small structures of unknown, possibly utilitarian function from small, informal shrines; but these very ambiguities suggest that some shrines drew on existing architectural traditions and social beliefs. They were part of everyday life and practices, not rigidly separated sacred spaces, although through processes of ritualisation they could become imbued with enhanced meanings at particular times.

Figure 11.62. (left) *and* **Fig. 11.63. (right).** *Inscribed stone tablet excavated in Castleford, W. Yorks. There are two female heads depicted with trees and combs, and below them the writing in crude capitals reads: NYMPIS, a vulgar Latin form of "To the nymphs". (Sources: © AS WYAS; Tomlin 1998: 353).*

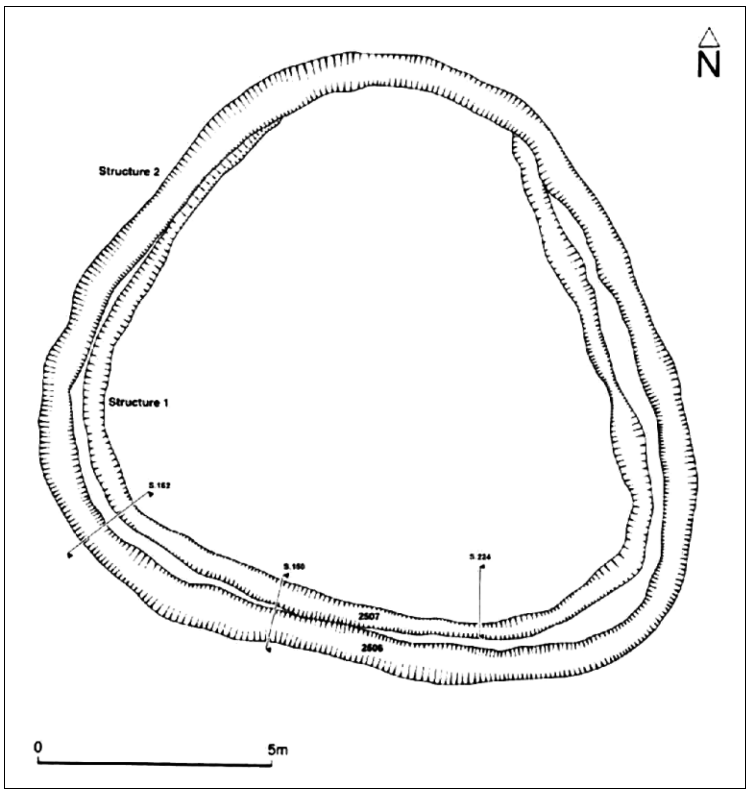


Figure 11.64. *The unusual subtriangular features excavated at Manor Farm, W. Yorks. They were constructed on top of six small pits and postholes containing cremated bone of early to middle Iron Age date, and a ^{14}C date of 380 BC – AD 20 was obtained from the second phase gully. (Source: Burgess 2001a: 80).*

Across central and northern England there are further examples of such ambiguous structures, some associated with unusual deposits. John Thomas (2005: 69-70) has outlined some of these, but they include a small enclosure at the agglomerated late Iron Age settlement at Humberstone in Leicestershire (Charles, Parkinson and Foreman 2000), and a likely shrine within the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow close to the agglomerated settlement at Stanwick in Northamptonshire (Crosby and Muldowney forthcoming). A 'hengiform' feature recently excavated in Lancaster did not seem to be Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date, but produced Iron Age and Romano-British pottery from its multiply-recut ditches (OA North 2006). Its hilltop situation may have been significant. In the future, it is likely that more of these unusual, small-scale structures will be encountered and recognised.

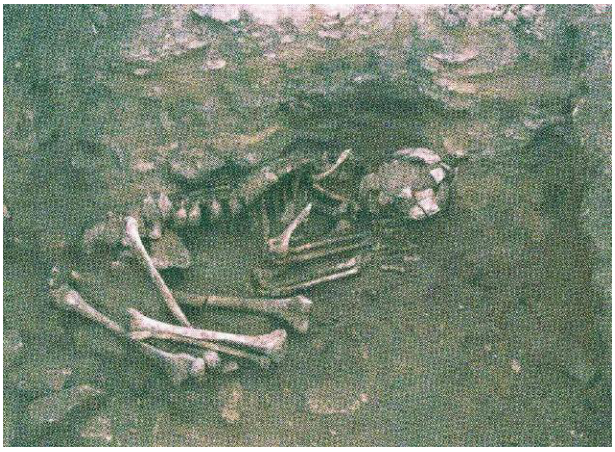
Human burials and human remains

It may reflect post-Enlightenment thinking to treat human remains separately from other objects that formed part of depositional practices, especially animal remains. In the past, combinations of human and animal remains with other materials might have been important aspects of many practices. As I outlined above, there are indications that animals were treated as non-human persons or as stand-ins for people. Nevertheless, as the treatment of human remains included formal burial rites, as well as other perhaps more informal practices, I have treated them separately.

The Iron Age

Until recently, there was little evidence for Iron Age burial practices within the study region, due to the lack of excavated sites and problems with bone preservation. Elsewhere in Britain, from the late Bronze Age onwards most people 'disappear' from the archaeological record (Brück 1995), and the majority of people were possibly excarnated, exposed on timber platforms or on the ground surface (Carr and Knüsel 1997: 170-171). Disarticulated human remains are found on many Iron Age settlement sites, and some at least seem to have been selected and circulated amongst the living. In the middle Iron Age southern England had inhumation burials within storage pits and other contexts such as ditches, but these were still only a handful of

the living populations. East Yorkshire had the square barrow rite. Only in the later Iron Age did cremation and inhumation rites become more visible again, predominantly in southern England (Pearce 1997). Much of northern England was once regarded as having isolated pit or cist burials (Whimster 1981). As elsewhere in Britain though (Haselgrove et al. 2001: 12), further evidence of Iron Age burials has emerged within the region through recent developer-funded excavations and the routine radiocarbon dating of human remains.



Recently excavated Iron Age crouched burials from W. Yorks. **Figure 11.65. (left).** *In a field ditch at Site Q, and* **Fig. 11.66. (right)** *in a pit at Site M. (Source: Howard-Davis, Lupton and Boyle 2005: 10-11).*

The main Iron Age burial tradition within West Yorkshire (though still rare) seems to have been crouched or flexed inhumations within individual pits in corners of enclosures, or isolated graves just outside of them. Some had simple artefacts such as iron rings associated with the bodies. This data is outlined in Appendix F. This burial rite persisted right through the Romano-British period. At Manor Farm the cremated remains of early to middle Iron Age individuals were also recovered, and at Sutton Common a previously unknown middle to late Iron Age cremation burial rite was also identified (Burgess 2001a: 78; Chapman and Fletcher 2007: 151-156). No Iron Age burials have been identified in Nottinghamshire though (Bishop 2001: 5).

The Ferry Fryston carriage burial in West Yorkshire was a spectacular and unique find, but was widely reported as an example of the East Yorkshire rite, and even English Heritage suggested it might have marked a hitherto unknown expansion of the Parisi (e.g. N. Redfern in Wainwright 2003). This glossed over the significant

differences between it and the Wolds carriage burials, where the carriages were disassembled for example, and where cattle bones were not so closely associated with burials. This may reflect a slightly imperfect local rendition of an East Yorkshire ritual, but this argument has clear core : periphery and culture-history connotations. There are associations between the sword scabbard deposited in the Ferrybridge henge ditch and some of the pottery from Ferrybridge and Site M with East Yorkshire material (see Chapter 10). Given the variations in the rite and the equivocal isotope results, however, it is equally likely that the man himself was from North Yorkshire or Scotland. Despite this, the idea that he came from East Yorkshire persists:

> The high levels of strontium might indicate an origin in Scotland, or even Scandinavia, but at present there are insufficient data on the influence of drift of Scandinavian origin to biosphere values in East Yorkshire, and it is not possible to rule out that the man spent his early childhood in East Yorkshire. (Boyle et al. forthcoming).

Figure 11.67. (left). *The Ferry Fryston Iron Age carriage or cart burial, showing the skeleton of the man placed across the yoke, probably in the carriage 'box'.* **Fig. 11.68. (right).** *Excavating some of the cattle bone deposited in the square ditch surrounding the burial. (Source: © Oxford Archaeology North).*

There was a considerable period of 200-400 years between the primary carriage inhumation and initial deposition of cattle bone, and the recommencement of feasting

episodes focused on the burial (Boyle et al. 2007: 158). By this date, the mound and ditch would not have been obvious landscape features, and so it is possible that local communities must have retained some persistent memory of the original unique burial. Stories or myths were undoubtedly implicated in the subsequent events, which took place many human generations after the burial itself. The life and deeds of this man must have been recalled in some way, no matter how distorted this genealogical history eventually became.

Stories, songs and epic poems can certainly be powerful media for the transmission of such histories (Vansina 1965). The man may have held great political and/or spiritual status, and his death may have been especially unlucky or tragic (Chadwick 2007: 142). The gap of many centuries between his death and later feasting episodes may suggest that honouring an ancestor and re-establishing a link to the past was linked to issues of communal identity, perhaps at a time of social crisis such as the Roman invasion of the north or the troubled late Roman period. This harked back to an idealised past and to a founding ancestor[6]. These feasts would have been powerful phenomenological experiences – the death bellows of animals, the sight and smell of blood and guts, the smell of charred flesh and the consumption of large quantities of meat and perhaps alcohol, the gathering together of kinfolk. Through the repetition of such events within the landscape, people's memories and identities were actively maintained and re-created (q.v. Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992).

Whitehouse (1992) has discussed 'incorporating' mnemonic practices, whose efficacy depends on infrequent (though perhaps still regular) rites involving dramatic sensual impacts upon participants. Zerubavel (2003) examined the structure of collective memories in many modern and historical societies, and found that commemorative rituals and festivals cluster in two temporal nodes – one associated with dramatic social and political events within or just outside 'living' memory, or well attested by written histories (such as wars, revolutions and the founding of states), and much more distant events that many centuries or millennia ago, and which assume mythical status, such as the births and deaths of religious leaders (Zerubavel 2003: 31-33). This seems to be an innate way in which human memories operate, and 'memory work' such as this may offer some explanation for the close connections drawn over such extensive time spans across the Ferrybridge landscape. Creighton (2006) has argued

that the Folly Lane burial influenced the subsequent layout of the Roman town of Verulamium. This was the deliberate creation and structuring of genealogical time, and illustrates the continued power and agency of the ancestral dead amongst the living (q.v. Bauman 1992; Gosden and Lock 1998; Lehmann and Myers 1993).

Mention must also be made of the square enclosure 30m to the south-west of the carriage burial, defined by a shallow ditch and lines of postholes with possible entrances on the west and east sides. This was probably an unroofed, palisaded structure. Although no dating evidence was found, this was possibly either a mortuary enclosure to lay out the body for public display, conduct the necessary rites, and prepare the body through washing, anointing and dressing; or a slightly later shrine (Boyle et al. 2007: 158-159). Smaller square and rectangular structures were excavated at Westhampnett in West Sussex, associated with an Iron Age cremation cemetery (Fitzpatrick 1997b: 12-18, figs. 6-10). A similar sized square enclosure was found at Kirkburn in East Yorkshire, close to square barrow burials, but like Ferry Fryston also referencing nearby earlier monuments (Stead 1992: 25-28, fig. 24).

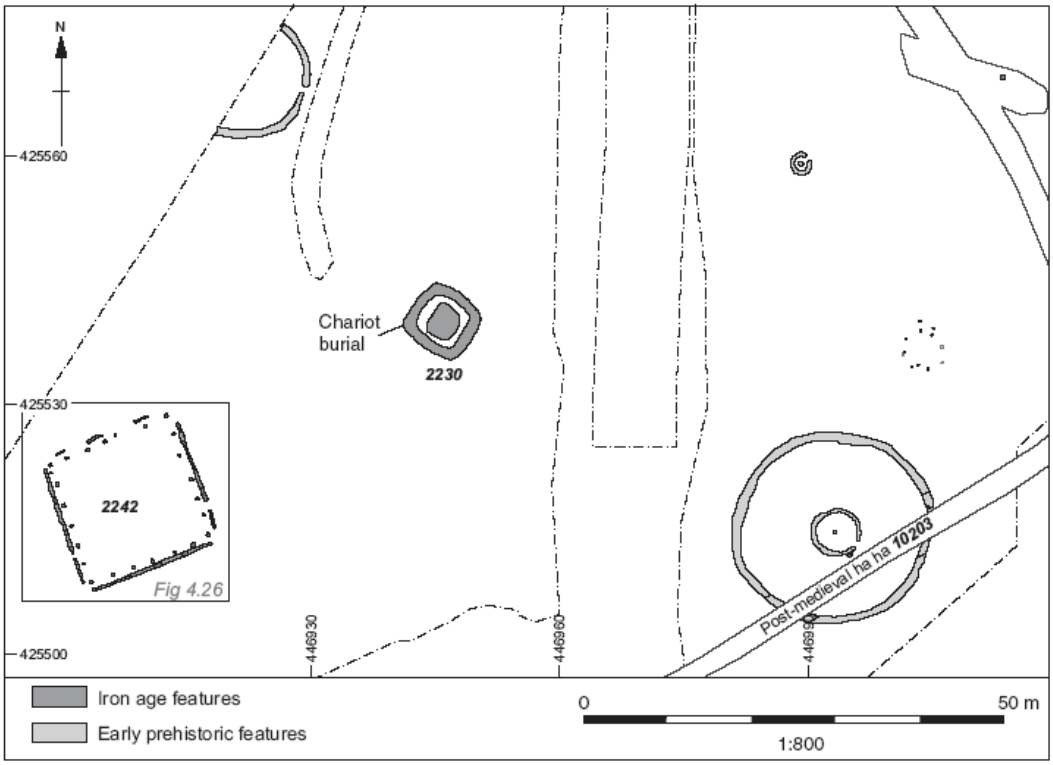
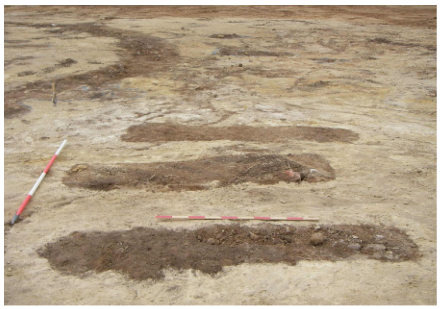


Figure 11.69. *The immediate landscape context of the Ferry Fryston carriage burial, showing its close relationship to the square palisaded enclosure and Bronze Age ring ditches. (Source: Boyle et al. 2007: 121, fig. 83).*

Romano-British burials

Few cemeteries have been excavated within the region, and on rural settlements small groups of burials were the norm. Romano-British inhumations were often within enclosures, with graves located in corners or parallel with boundaries, and occasionally lined with stone slabs. They occurred singly or in small groups, and although the crouched rite sometimes persisted, most bodies were flexed or extended. Most inhumations also did not have artefacts, although sometimes brooches, partial pottery vessels and possibly associated animal remains have been found. Though relatively more frequent, it is still clear that many dead people are still missing from the archaeological record. Taphonomic factors may have sometimes play a part – at Billingley Drive, Thurnscoe, seven rectangular pits were identified, one of which produced a complete third century red-slipped imitation samian bowl, but otherwise they contained no artefacts or bone. Nevertheless, the location of the pits and their regular shape suggested that they were possible grave cuts, but human bone had simply not survived (Neal and Fraser 2004: 88). Similar regular but 'empty' pits have been excavated at other sites, including Methley (MAP 1996: 19-20, fig. 10).

Some Romano-British burials continued Iron Age traditions such as the crouched position of bodies and the location of some in or next to ditches, consistent with practices elsewhere in Britain, and there were also many infant burials in ditches (Esmond Cleary 2000; Philpott 1991). The graves cut into ditches suggest that, despite silting up, enclosure boundaries were liminal zones that remained symbolically potent after they had ceased to be functional barriers (Esmonde Cleary 2000: 138). It might have reflected the use of the dead to protect the living, and to reiterate notions of tenure and ownership through ancestral legitimation. The preponderance of infant burials may be further evidence of this liminality – infants may not have been fully socialised members of Iron Age communities, and in Roman legal codes neonates and infants were not regarded as individuals like older children and adults (Scott 1991). Placing neonates and infants in the base or upper fills of ditches may reflect this ambiguous social status, but this need not suggest infanticide or a lack of care for the deceased. On the contrary, it might actually have demonstrated great love and affection, whilst at the same time reinforcing the notion of enclosure ditches as communal boundaries.







Inhumations of probable Romano-British or post-Roman date from Wattle Syke, W. Yorks. **Figure 11.70. (top left).** *A group of three burials, probably of related or closely linked individuals.* **Fig. 11.71. (top right).** *One of the inhumations in this group of three. This person was buried with an iron brooch.* **Fig. 11.72. (second row).** *Another person in the group of three inhumations was buried with the base of a greyware pot near the feet. Other sherds of this pot in the grave fill might indicate that the vessel was broken by the graveside.* **Fig. 11.73. (second row right).** *Excavating a stone-lined grave.* **Fig. 11.74. (third row left).** *A cattle astralagus near the feet of one person. Post-excavation analyses will have to determine if such deposits were deliberate small-scale rites.* **Fig. 11.75. (third row right)** *and* **Fig. 11.76. (bottom left).** *Stone-lined graves. (All images source: © AS WYAS).*

Figure 11.77. (left). *Two neonates buried on top of secondary deposits at the side of an enclosure ditch in Area E, Wattle Syke, W. Yorks. These babies may have been twins who had died during or soon after birth, or who might have been abandoned exposed if twins were regarded as an ill omen. Archaeologists must never lose sight of the tragedy of past events represented by such remains.* **Fig. 11.78. (right).** *Another neonate or infant buried under a small informal 'cairn' of stones within a ditch in Area A, Wattle Syke. A flint blade found nearby may have been a curated item placed close to this burial. (Images source: © AS WYAS).*

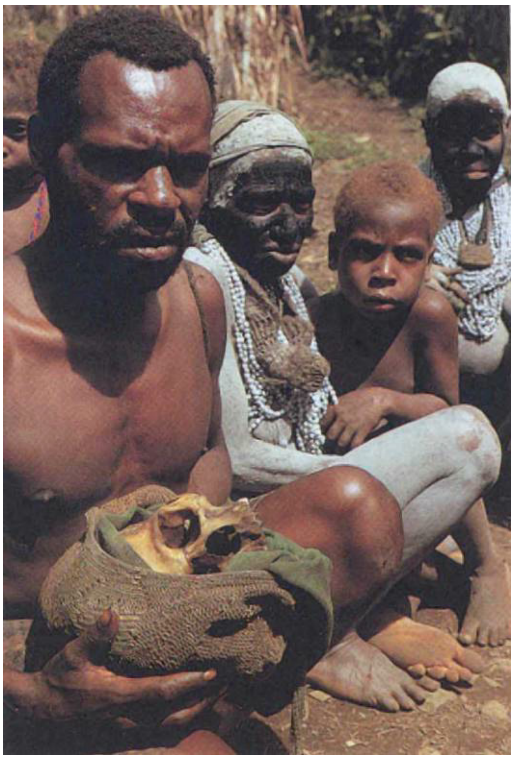
At Wattle Syke near Wetherby, recent excavations found infant burials carefully tucked against the sides of ditches, within small pits cut into ditch fills and sides, or placed underneath small stone cairns within ditches (Figs. 11.77-11.78; Appendix F). Here, the infant burials were marking the edges of domestic space, defining the boundary between the familial world and that outside, and reinforcing communal identity. People cared about these dead babies. At Raymoth Lane, one pit within the enclosure contained five partial neonate skeletons (Palmer-Brown and Munford 2004: 30), and this seems to have been a special place set aside for the very young.

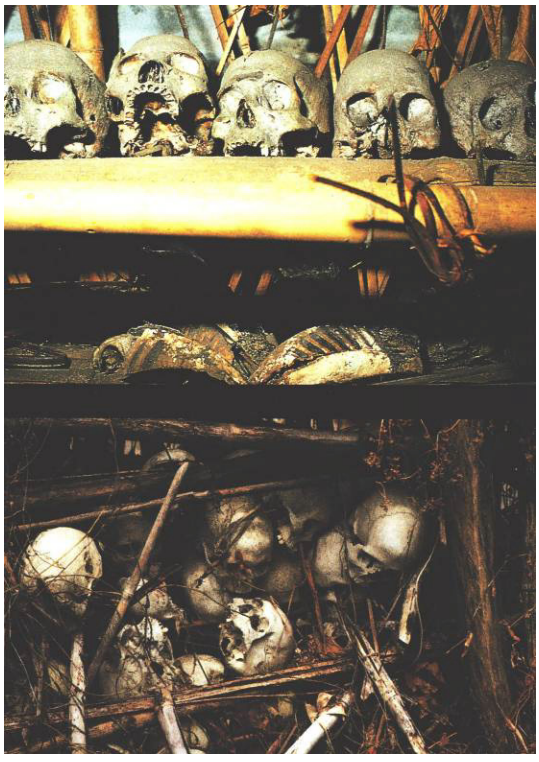
Cremation became a more common rite in the study region during the Romano-British period, with some human remains buried in pottery vessels, usually jars. It has been suggested that there were metaphorical links between ceramics associated with food and drink consumption, and their use as containers for the bodies of people 'consumed' by the fires of the pyres (Philpott 1991: 35; H. Williams 2004: 419). The vivid visual, auditory and olfactory experiences of cremation and the stages of preparing the pyre and the body, the cremation and the retrieval of some or all of the bone, ash and artefacts may have intensified processes of remembering and forgetting the dead (q.v. Downes 1999; Fitzpatrick 1997b; McKinley 2000; Pearce 1998). It is

not clear, however, why some individuals were cremated and others buried. This may reflect individual, family or community preferences, or varied religious beliefs.

Disarticulated remains

During the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, fragmentary remains of the dead were sometimes dispersed across settlements or incorporated into pits and boundary ditches, or underneath buildings (Esmonde Cleary 2000: 136; Philpott 1991: 97-102; Scott 1991; Wait 1985). Many bones may have been residual remains, but a few might have been deliberately collected and curated as mementos of the deceased, or as more general ancestral relics (Figs. 11.79-11.80). Sometimes the dead may have been used to assert claims of tenure, or to intercede with the living in other ways. As there are still far too few recorded Romano-British burials for the likely population, it may be that on rural settlements some people continued to be exposed as a funerary rite.





Keeping the dead close. **Figure 11.79. (left).** *For the Gimi people of Papua New Guinea, after a young man dies some of his bones are kept close to his family and his old haunts for a time. (Source: Gillison 2002: 67).* **Fig. 11.80. (right).** *Human skulls and other human and animal skeletal remains associated with Naga fertility beliefs, exhibited in central places within their villages in northern India and Burma. (Source: Stirn and van Ham 2003: 130).*

There have also been finds of disarticulated human remains on sites within the study region, and this data is presented in Appendix F. As noted in Chapter 10, at Rossington Bridge some human bones showed evidence of cut marks from defleshing (Buckland, Hartley and Rigby 2001: 82), and one modified bone may have been used to decorate pottery. It might also be significant that the pottery kiln at Raymoth Lane was backfilled during the late second century AD with disarticulated human remains (Palmer-Brown and Munford 2004: 40).

Conclusions

From the middle Iron Age through into the fourth century AD, enclosures, ditches and some pits were the focus for acts of patterned deposition. In most instances, these were everyday episodes of refuse disposal, but still influenced by ideas concerning cleanliness and pollution, identity and the social and symbolic importance of boundaries and thresholds. Many deposits marked the limits of household space, the edges of fields, or the entrances of enclosures and dwellings. These acts may have been undertaken with little conscious thought, as part of the everyday embodied lifeworld of the *habitus*. Other deposits were the result of informal small-scale acts by individuals, intended to bring good luck to themselves or their households, ward off evil, or ensure that crops and animals grew strong. The deposition of brooches, coins and perhaps quern stones might have been linked to many of these concerns.

There were also more specific, perhaps more formalised ceremonies and propitiations, sometimes involving entire households, lineages and clans. These ensured the continuing fertility of crops and animals, the favour of the gods and the helpful intercession of ancestors, and marked important events such as human births, marriages and deaths, spring livestock births or the autumn culling of animals, and sowing and harvesting. They reinforced the ties between people, place, land and soil, and between people and animals. At different times, these acts involved animal burials, or the placed deposition of human and animal bone, metalwork including coins and brooches, quern stones or quern fragments, and whole or substantially complete pottery vessels, or specific pottery sherds. Most of the artefacts were objects

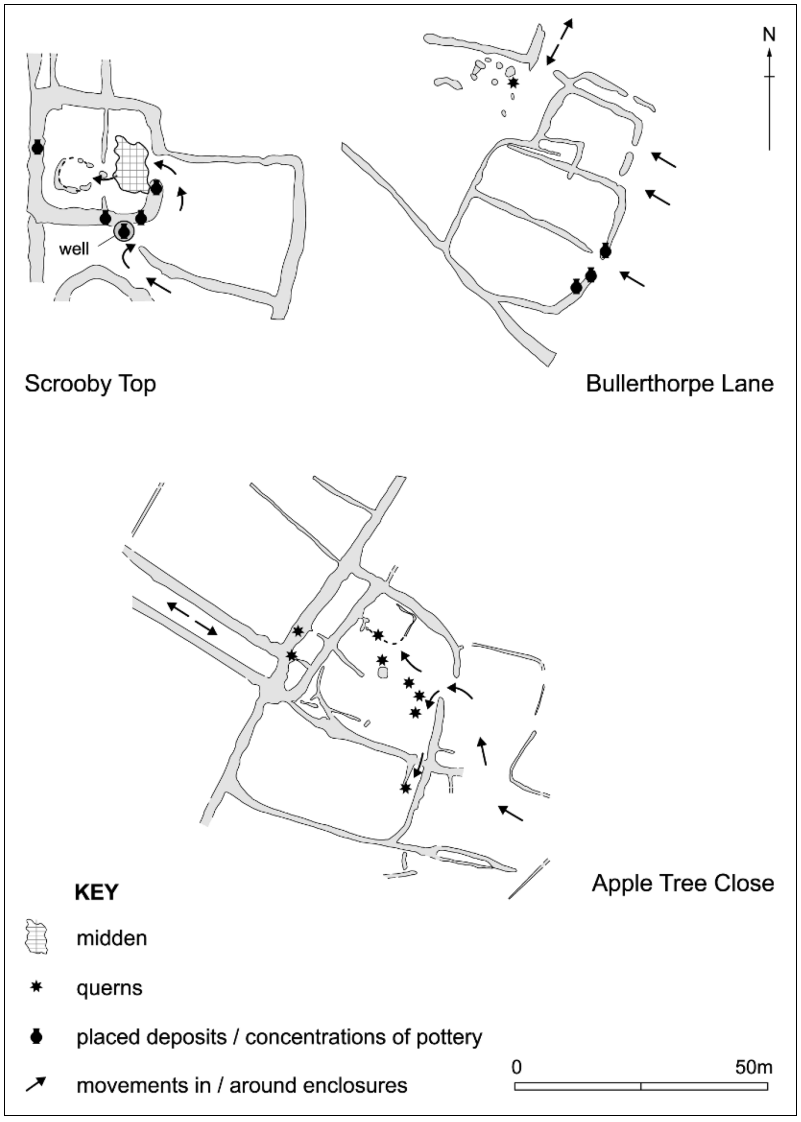


Figure 11.81. *Movements in and around the enclosures at Scrooby Top, Notts., and Bullerthorpe Lane and Apple Tree Close, W. Yorks., showing the locations of possible placed deposits. (Source: Chadwick 2004a: 97, drawn by A. Leaver).*

that had already seen use in a variety of practices, and which might have had their own histories and biographies (q.v. Hill 1995a: 109). Through the process of ritualisation, these everyday associations could nevertheless be incorporated with more structured actions of heightened cosmological and spiritual meaning.

Many depositional episodes represented direct continuities of pre-existing Iron Age 'native' practices, though the substance of the deposits themselves may have changed (Fulford 2001: 214), expressed through new materialities such as more ubiquitous pottery, and perhaps in new contexts such as wells. Others resulted from newer

'Roman' beliefs, such as those regarding the doorways of buildings (Mac Mahon 2003). Many were complex fusions between old and new, and it is most unlikely that this was simply a process of diffusion from a core to a periphery (*contra* King 1990). These practices were not part of a separate 'ritual' sphere of activity, separate to the discard of everyday domestic refuse, but were different points on a rich continuum of belief. Both 'ritual' and everyday refuse deposits were linked to ideas concerning boundaries, pollution, fertility, seasonality, regeneration and the agricultural cycle (q.v. Isserlin 1994; Parker Pearson 1996; Williams 2003), and were perhaps attempts to create 'timeless' practices. Such deposits maintained the productivity of land and livestock through offerings to spirits, ancestors or deities (Brück 1999: 336). There were countless overlaps and interdigitations – refuse from a midden collected up and reused as part of a placed deposit, or a single coin or brooch tossed into a field ditch terminal, which then became incorporated into a dump of household refuse, placed here because of the social distinctions between the household and the potentially threatening world outside.

These beliefs and practices were part of a 'native epistemology' (Barth 1987: 79); a social structure that created powerful traditions of practice but at the same time allowed for active local reinterpretations of them – a "…condensed accumulation of beliefs handed down from various past time horizons, scrambled by the free play of metaphor, distortion and misunderstanding" (Fleming 2001: 18). It is most unlikely that a single overarching cosmology was in place throughout the later Iron Age and Romano-British periods across Britain (*pace* Parker Pearson 1999). There were many variations in these practices, and these differences occurred at inter-regional and intra-regional scales, and across time. Beliefs were constantly reworked and rediscovered, part-forgotten, and then half-remembered or reinterpreted once more.

Although there would have been many direct continuities of belief amongst these small-scale rural communities following the Roman conquest, the occupiers would have brought their own ideas regarding fertility, crops and livestock, gods, thresholds and foundation offerings. As these 'Romans' themselves hailed from Italy, Spain, North Africa, Gaul, Germany and other parts of the Empire, such beliefs were highly diverse, and these would have been creatively combined with native ideas (q.v.

Webster 1997b). These dynamic processes permitted existing cosmological ideas to be expressed in novel ways, and created the potential for different understandings.

Notes

1. These range from the supposedly scholarly but rather uncritical (e.g. N. Chadwick 1971; J. Davies 2000) to the mystical and 'fringe' (e.g. Fries 2003; Matthews and Matthews 1996).

2. On many Iron Age and Romano-British settlements, burnt stone is ubiquitous, especially heat-shattered pebbles and cobbles. Sometimes referred to as 'pot boilers', these are popularly believed to have been used to heat liquids after being placed in fires, but many cobbles were far too big for this. Perhaps these were used for cooking in pits, or for brewing beer. Burnt stones are rarely quantified, yet as Graham Robbins demonstrated at Scrooby Top, recording their distribution according to weight and context can highlight areas of settlements where cooking or heating activity was most pronounced (Robbins 1997, 2000).

   The recent excavations at Wattle Syke near Wetherby recorded burnt stone by context and weight, and prodigious quantities of burnt stone were discovered – one 4m wide enclosure ditch section alone produced nearly 115kg of this material, deposited at the top of secondary deposits as a series of discrete dumps (from baskets?). Very large-scale heating events must have been taking place, and if this was not for 'saunas' (cf. Barfield and Hodder 1987; Buckley 1990; Ó Drisceoil 1988), then it could have been for substantial feasting episodes. Although apparently dumped into ditches, gullies and pits, onto middens and used as packing within postholes, sometimes burnt stones seem to have formed part of placed deposits of artefacts and/or animal remains. In such instances, these materials were all possibly residues of particular feasts.

3. Chris Cumberpatch first drew my attention to this intriguing phenomenon.

4. I am indebted to John Chapman for this valuable observation.

5. Miranda Aldhouse-Green made this interesting suggestion in a research seminar.

6. I am very grateful to Melanie Giles for our discussions of this. Interestingly, at the very end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries AD there seems to have been a trend in Britain for the manufacture and use of superficially similar ceramic and brooch forms to those used a few decades earlier, but in a more restricted range of colours and decorative forms (Cool 2000a; K. Dark 2004: 287). These widespread trends may not only reflect the beginnings of a shared Late Antique British identity, but might also show a conscious desire to hark back to the past. Perhaps the later feasting episodes at Ferry Fryston can be viewed in a similar light.