

Settlement and Landscape in the Late Iron Age of  
Hertfordshire and the Northern Chilterns

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# CHAPTER 6: CHARACTERISING THE LATE IRON AGE SITE EVIDENCE

## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the identified Late Iron Age sites will be evaluated in terms of evidence activities carried out on the site, or from other evidence of a defined role or function. The aim will be to assess the extent to which patterns in such information can provide insights into the reasons for the number and distribution of sites, and social and economic processes in the Late Iron Age.

The general limitations of the available evidence, which has been detailed in Chapter 4 above, imposes a significant constraint upon the ability to ask questions concerning evidence of specialised or other defined activities. The categories of activities assessed are therefore broad in scope and are those which are relatively easy to define from archaeological evidence. The evidence of agriculture has been considered separately as part of the assessment of agriculture and environment in Chapter 3. It is also important to emphasise that the evidence of activities does not, in most cases, imply an exclusive function for a site and for those sites which have produced evidence of more than one category of activity, dual entries are given in the gazetteer.

Table 6.1 lists the number of Late Iron Age sites within each of the categories which have been used to define function.

**Table 6.1, categories of activity**

Category	Number
Occupation	133
Habitation	21
Industrial	18
Burial	45
Ritual and Ceremonial	11
Agriculture	15

## *Evidence of Occupation Only*

133 sites fall within this category, which represents (58%) of the total number of identified Late Iron Age sites. For those sites, it has not been possible to characterise the evidence from available information other than to say that it represents human activity of an undefined type.

## **6.2 Evidence of Habitation**

### **6.2.1 Introduction**

This section will assess the evidence for structures which have been interpreted as dwellings. The aim is to identify and critically examine the direct evidence for human habitation, whether permanent or temporary, in the Late Iron Age. This simple and admittedly limited definition of habitation (dwelling=habitation) has been chosen because the evidence and its interpretation is relatively unambiguous and is accessible from reports of varying standards.

Table 6.2 lists the twenty two sites that have produced evidence for habitation in some form. Even by using the above broad definition of habitation, this still represents less than 10% of the total number of identified Late Iron Age sites. The reasons for the low proportion are likely to be due partly to the small excavated sample size and poor preservation of many sites as detailed in chapter 4 above. The latter point, which will be explored below, may be a particularly significant factor for the Late Iron Age of the Study Area as there is likely to be a bias against the survival and identification of some types of structures.

### *Analysis*

The following is a summary analysis of the identified dwelling structures. The aim is to examine general patterns in the evidence related to the characterisation of settlement. As such, the small proportion of the total number of sites examined meant that detailed metrical analysis of structural evidence and/or extensive comparative studies would not

be worthwhile in terms of the question asked, and has therefore not been undertaken as part of the study.

A general distinction can be made in the evidence between circular and rectangular structures.

**Table 6.2, evidence of habitation**

Rt = rectilinear structure  
 ph = circular post-hole structure  
 rg = circular ring-gully structure

No.	Site	Type	
7	Norton Road, Stotfold	1 rg	Ring gully located within sub-square enclosure (Steadman 1995)
16	Park Street 1	1 Rt	Two phases of chalk-floored rectilinear buildings with internal hearths underlying Roman villa (O'Neil 1945). Late Iron Age date of buildings is uncertain (Thompson 1982:795-7)
24	Hadham Hall	1 ph 1 rg	Enclosed settlement with numerous pits, a probable eaves-drip gully for a circular house and a circular post-hole structure. (Walker 1994)
34	Wendens Ambo	4 rg 9-12m	Group of circular 'hut' ditches, pits, 4 posters, and enclosure (Hodder 1982)
37	Puddlehill	2 ph	At least two post-built circular buildings and a small cremation cemetery (Matthews 1976)
59	Thremfall Avenue, Stansted	1 rg	A probable roundhouse (Havis and Brooks forthcoming)
60	Airport Catering Site, Stansted	10 + rg	Enclosed settlement with seven roundhouses and a possible shrine (Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989).
79	Gorhambury	Rt 2 rg	Large rectangular enclosure containing nine structures interpreted as dwellings including a range of circular and rectangular buildings (Neal et al. 1990)
103	Lockleys, Welwyn	1 ? rg	Circular enclosure of a probable hut with associated pits and occupation levels (Ward-Perkins 1937). Late Iron Age date has been disputed (Branigan 1973:21-2; Thompson 1982:769-70)
109	Braughing Bath House	2 rg	Chalk floors of one - possibly two - circular buildings with <i>in situ</i> wood and daub remains of walls. (Partridge 1978:25-6)
110	Ralph Sadler School, Puckeridge	?	A double-ditched oval enclosure with evidence for a flint causeway and a central structure, possibly a dwelling. Inner ditch 30 metres x 20 metres supported a timber palisade (Partridge 1978:87-90)
111	Wickham Hill Nursery, Braughing	?	A ditch, 2 metres wide and the remains of a clay and flint floor and an area of burnt clay (Partridge 1978:91)
114	Gatesbury Track 1979, Braughing	?	A large ditch, nine pits, cobble and gravel spreads, an oven and a line of post-holes (Partridge 1980a:97-130)
115	Skeleton Green, Braughing	9 + Rt	Excavation of c150 square metres revealed two Late Iron Age periods of occupation: 1. Intensive occupation represented by at least nine post-built rectangular buildings dating to the period 15 BC - AD 25. Floors and hearths were preserved within the buildings and a numbers of pits, wells and ditches were also excavated. 2. At least seven rectangular buildings of sill-beam

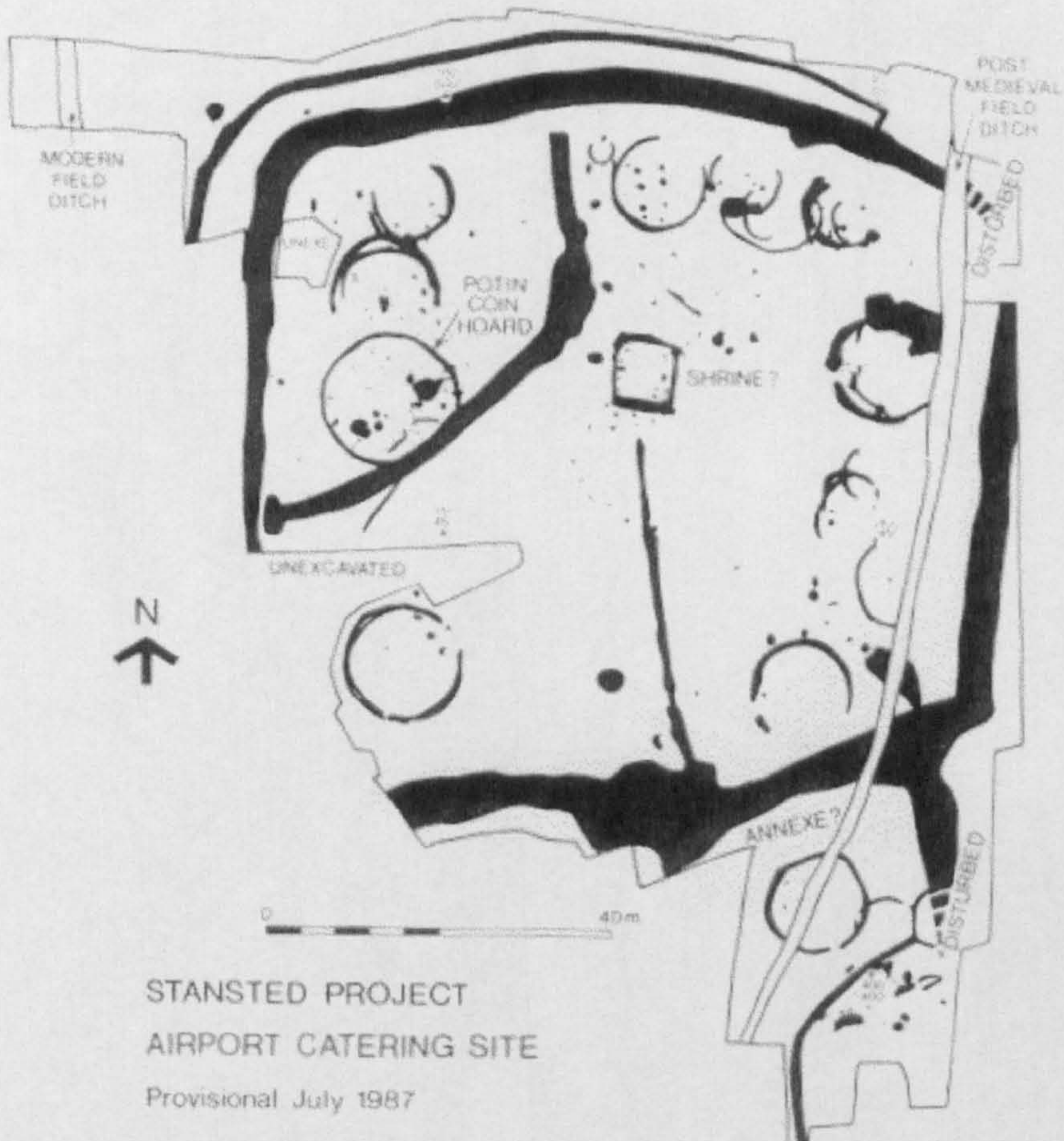
			construction dated to AD 43-AD 60. The buildings, like those of period 1, were well preserved and were comparable in terms of their size and shape, although constructed on a more regular layout which included drainage ditches, paths, and two cobble roads. No pits could be definitely ascribed to this period. Artifacts recovered included a large quantity of imported pottery, over 70 brooches, and over 50 coins. These together with the high density of occupation indicate that activities of a urban type, with the exchange and/or consumption of commodities being the primary activity (Partridge 1981)
117	Wickham Kennels 1989, Braughing	Rt 1 ph	A series of large linear ditches aligned north-south probably constructed as drainage features from nearby river and later used for rubbish disposal. Other features included a number of pits and two post-hole structures, one circular and one rectangular. The rectangular structure is similar to the rectangular phase 1 structures found at Skeleton Green. (Cooper-Read 1990b)
120	Braughing Station 1949	ph ?	Several post-holes, a timber slot and flint surface sealed beneath Early Roman levels. Interpreted by excavator as part of a 'Belgic hut' (Holmes 1953:fig. 3 & 102)
132	Hartsfield School 1987, Baldock	1 rg	An eaves-drip gully for a roundhouse c13m in diameter and several pits and small ditches. (Burleigh 1995b:20-1). Dated as Late Iron Age but evidence not provided
133	Baldock: Stead Areas A & B	Rt 1 rg	Two buildings: a circular post-hole and eavesdrip gully structure and an unusual square structure, both of mid first century date (Stead & Rigby 1986). Proximity to burials suggests that they are unlikely to be domestic structures
143	Verulamium Insula XVII	Rt	Partial remains of a rectilinear wooden building of sill-beam construction with chalk floor. Also nearby evidence of coin flan production (Frere 1983:103-5)
154	Lobbs Hole, Stevenage	?	Circular post-hole structure, pits and gullies within enclosure c50 metres square (Hunn 1997)
155	Old Parkbury, Radlett	?	A square ditched enclosure c75 metres square within which were numerous post holes represented timber uprights of circular buildings (Niblett 1990)
205	Birchanger	1 rg	Pits, ditch, penannular gully probably eavesdrip for roundhouse (Medlycott 1994)

### 6.2.2 Circular Structures (Figure 6.1)

Fifteen of the twenty two sites have produced evidence of circular structures, of which most (c22 examples) are defined by foundation trenches or eavesdrip gullies. However, 14 of the 22 have been found at only two sites, Wendens Ambo and the Airport Catering Site at Stansted (ACS). Of the remaining sites, three have buildings defined by rings of post-holes only, and for four sites the plan of the dwelling is not known.

Similar buildings are known on a number of earlier Iron Age settlements within the region including many from within the Study Area and they are a widespread and long-

## Circular Structures



(after Brooks & Bedwin 1989)

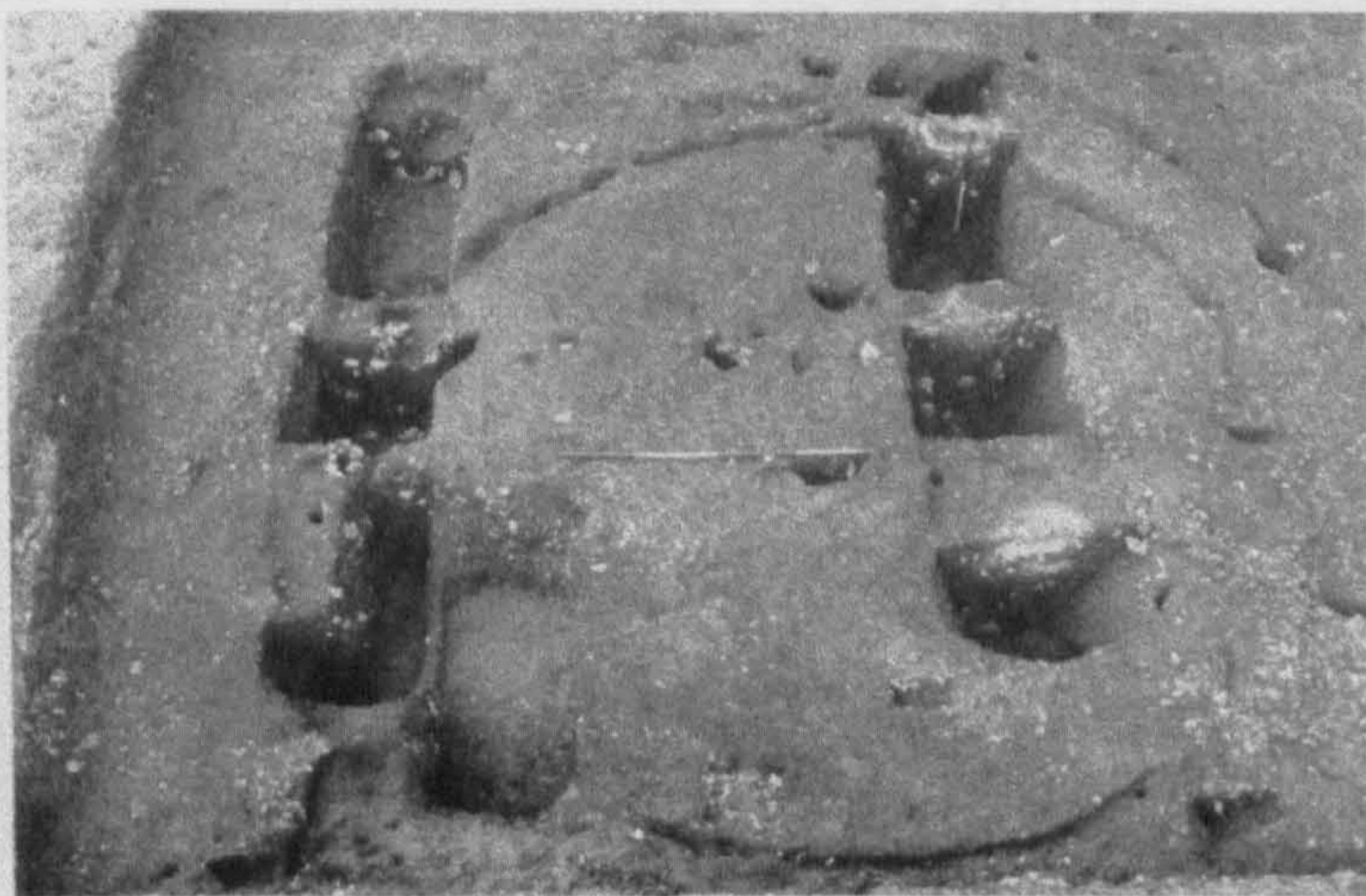


Fig 29. View north of Buildings 5 and 6, Periods 3-5

Gorhambury Building 6 (after Neal et al 1990:Fig. 29)

**Figure 6.1**

lived building type (see Bryant 1995; Sealey 1996). The discussion by Drury of the numerous circular structures at the Middle Iron Age site at Little Waltham, 15 kilometres to the east of the Study Area, provides an analysis of the structural evidence for circular ring-gully structures, including architectural reconstruction, which is generally applicable to the Late Iron Age structures (Drury 1978). Drury provides two main types of reconstruction profile bases on the evidence at Little Waltham (Drury 1978:fig. 67);

1. a foundation trench supporting a low outer wall of posts with internal posts supporting the roof,
2. turf or mud outer wall with external eavesdrip gully, with the main structural support provided by internal posts.

Distinguishing between the two types of construction technique for the sites which have produced evidence for ring-gully foundations within the Study Area is, however, made difficult by the fact that only five of the fifteen sites have published structural details. The evidence from Wendens Ambo which is the most extensively analysed of these is also ambiguous in terms of distinguishing between the two techniques (Hodder 1982:8). Nonetheless, most of the examples appear to be of the foundation-trench type including most of the remaining examples which are from the Airport Catering Site at Stansted (Brooks and Bedwin 1989:9).

Of the other published examples, an important example of a variation of the Drury type 1 reconstruction of a ring-gully building has been found at Gorhambury where *in situ* evidence of construction material survived for building 6. It comprised remains of cob infill set between wooden hurdles located in two ring-gullies, the outer of which was 7.3 metres in diameter. It also has an internal hearth (Neal et.al. 1990:26). A significant feature of the structure is that the two ring-gullies were very shallow and were the only surviving evidence of the building below ground surface. The ring-gullies would therefore have been easily removed by even a very slight disturbance of the ground surface.

Well preserved remains of probable circular structures also occurred beneath Braughing Bathhouse. Remains of a circular chalk floor with charred wood and daub around the edges suggested that these formed part of a circular 'native' house. A second house was indicated by a rammed gravel floor (Partridge 1978:25-6). In neither case is the presence of a ring-gully foundation indicated.

The only example of a complete plan of an eavesdrip (Drury type 2) structure is building IV from Stead and Rigby site B at Baldock, although in this instance the structural support appears to have been from a ring of internal posts, 7.5 metres in diameter, rather than a cob wall. The eaves-drip gully, which was 9-9.5 metres in diameter, only survived to a maximum of 0.15 metres deep (Stead & Rigby 1986:38-9). Part of the gully produced mid first century AD pottery and it is dated to this period by Stead, but the filling of the gully seems to have occurred after the building went out of use, indicating a probable pre-AD 50 construction date. However, there is no evidence that this building functioned as a dwelling and its location close to burial enclosures make a ritual interpretation also possible.

The interpretation of semi-circular gullies as eavesdrips has been made for several Late Iron Age sites, but all instances the evidence is either not published (Hartsfield, Baldock, Hadham Hall, Norton Road, Stotfold, Thorley) or is not supported from the evidence of internal supporting timbers (Birchanger). The interpretation of these semi-circular gullies as evidence for dwellings should therefore be treated with caution, and it is possible that the gullies could have functioned as structural supports and the buildings functioned as open workshops or sheds.

Interpretation of three further examples of post-hole structures as dwellings is also problematic. The structure at Hadham Hall is 5 metres in diameter (Walker 1994) and that at Wickham Kennels 1989 is only 2.5m in diameter (Cooper-Read 1990b). The structure at Puddlehill is also small and irregular in form (Matthews 1976:174). The structure at Hadham Hall is convincing as a circular building, although it is significantly smaller than the size range of the ring gully buildings at Little Waltham, Wendens Ambo and Stansted, which are all greater than 9 metres in diameter. It may therefore have a non-habitive function. The other two post-hole structures may represent internal post



supports for massive turf wall structures although in the absence of corroborative evidence of associated eavesdrip gullies, their interpretation as dwellings is unproven.

### ***Discussion***

There are generally too few examples of circular structures to draw any firm conclusions concerning construction methods and geographical distribution – a fact which is probably significant in itself. It is however possible, considering the evidence from Wendens Ambo, Stansted, ACS and Little Waltham, that buildings with substantial ring gullies continued to be used in the eastern edge of the Study Area during the Late Iron Age. The most significant feature of the few other remaining examples is that the surviving below-ground foundations are very slight and are only clearly apparent where the remains are particularly well-preserved, such as at Gorhambury, building 6. It is therefore highly probable that the known sample of such structures considerably under-represents their true number.

The absence of evidence for Late Iron Age circular structures at sites which have also produced evidence for earlier Iron Age structures, is also worthy of note. Excavations at Puddlehill, Dunstable; Blackhorse Road, Letchworth; Foxholes, Hertford; Leavesden, Watford and Holwell have produced earlier Iron Age round houses and Late Iron Age evidence including enclosures, but have not produced evidence for Late Iron Age circular structures that could be interpreted as dwellings (information from unpublished reports and Bryant 1995). This might be because the function of these sites had changed from a domestic/habitation focus in the earlier Iron Age to a non-domestic function in the Late Iron Age. However, significantly, all of these sites were heavily eroded by ploughing which would have removed traces of any slight structures. The possibility that Late Iron Age circular structures may have been less substantial than those of the earlier Iron Age is supported from the evidence at Danebury, Hampshire, which is one of the most extensively excavated Iron Age sites (Cunliffe and Poole 1991). Lightly built houses constructed with thin stakes and wattle were widespread on the site by c100 BC although few complete plans were recovered, and it is assumed that most of the evidence had been destroyed by ploughing of the site. It is suggested that the stakes were probably coppiced poles and the structures themselves may have been designed to be easily moveable (Cunliffe and Poole 1991:48). It is possible to speculate

that any change in construction method in the later Iron Age may have been partly related to changes in woodland management as the overall extent of woodland diminished in the Iron Age, resulting perhaps in a greater emphasis in the Late Iron Age on smaller, more intensively managed coppiced woodlands.

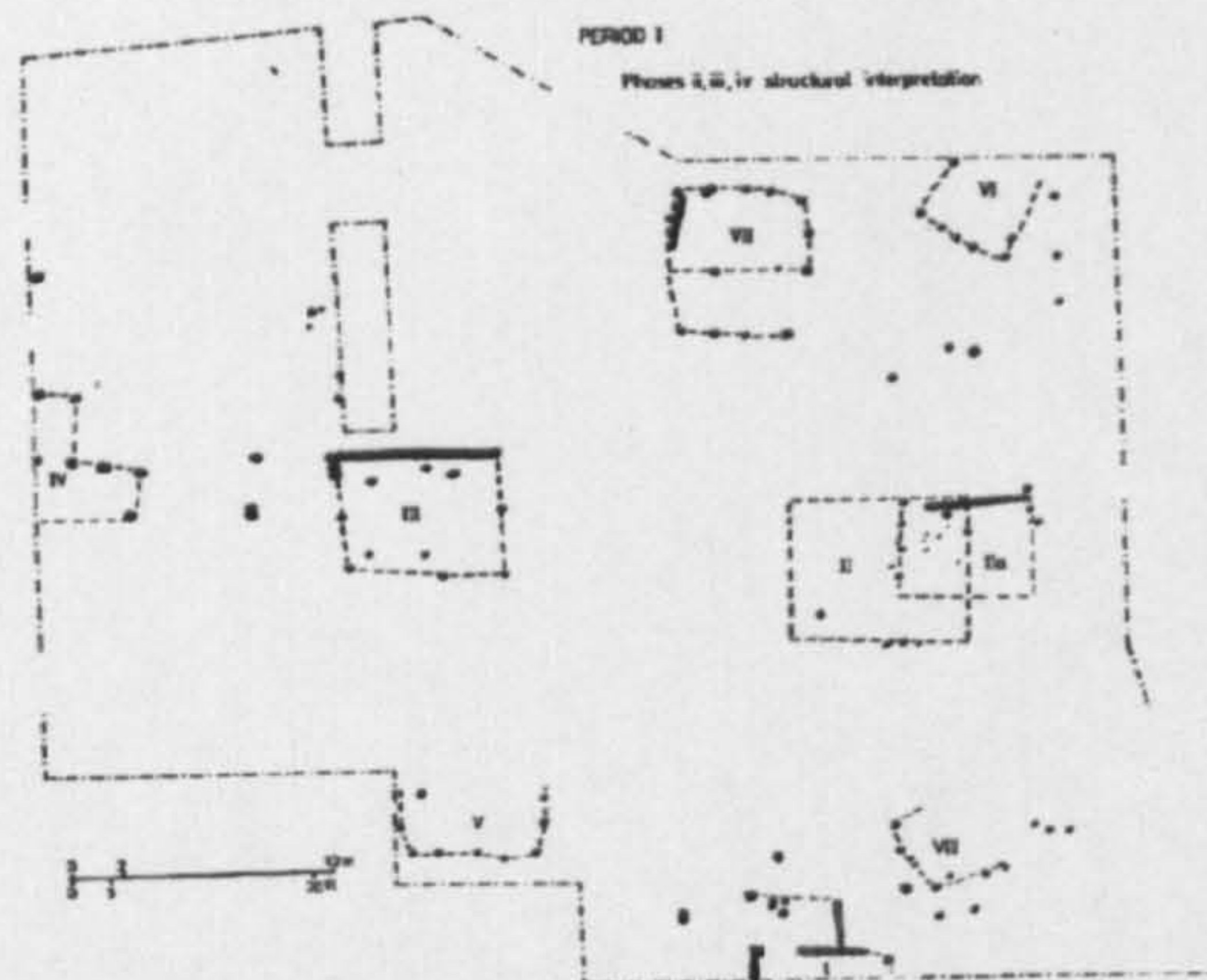
### 6.2.3 Rectangular Structures (Figure 6.2)

Seven sites have produced evidence for rectangular or sub-rectangular buildings (Gorhambury, Skeleton Green, Wickham Kennels 1989, Verulamium Insula X, Park Street, Folly Lane & Baldock).

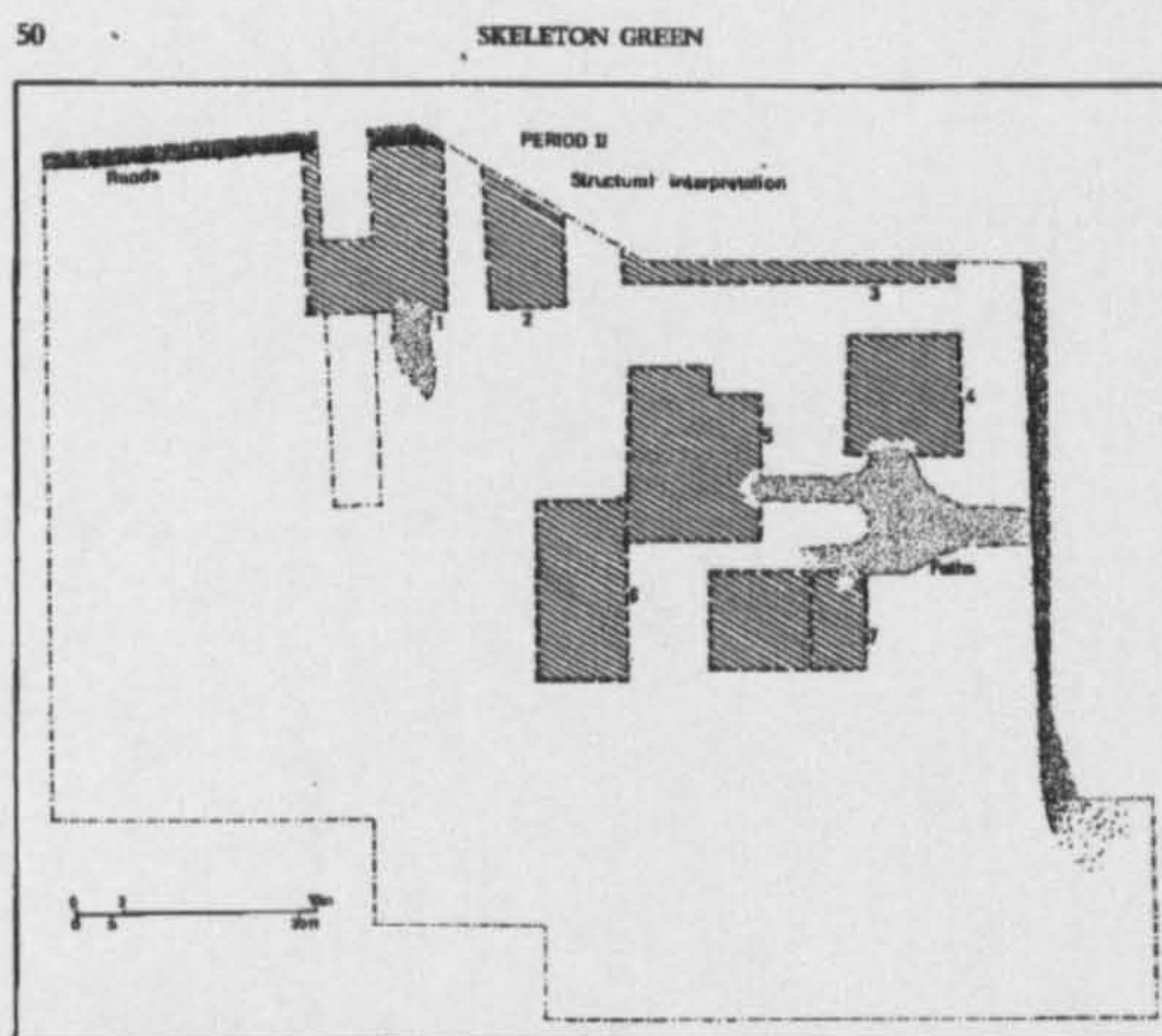
Post-hole structures are known from Gorhambury (1), Wickham Kennels (1) and Period 1 at Skeleton Green (9). The best preserved are those at Skeleton Green (see Figure 6.2, No.1) where eight buildings were recorded within the 150 square metre excavation area, although more detailed phasing suggests that not more than four were standing at any one time. (Partridge 1981:40). The average size of the buildings was 4 x 6 metres, which is also the size of the other two post-hole buildings at Gorhambury (Figure 6.2, No. 4) and Wickham Kennels, although the latter was incomplete ((Neal et al. 1990:25 & fig. 27; Cooper-Reade 1990b). The structural evidence for all of the post-holes for these buildings was relatively slight with those at Skeleton Green, for example, varying between 0.3 and 0.5 metres deep.

In terms of direct evidence for habitation, all of the buildings at Skeleton Green had floors and four of the nine contained hearths. Other laid surfaces including paths with evidence of wear were also present outside the buildings. A number of pits and ditches produced evidence of domestic refuse including a complete storage vessel containing refuse which had been let into the floor of building II and the remains of a charred bread meal in the demolition debris of building VII. It is therefore likely that these buildings were being lived in, although other activities such as industrial manufacturing were also probably taking place (Partridge 1981:37-48).

# Rectilinear Structures



1. Skeleton Green period I structures (after Partridge 1981:fig. 7)



2. Skeleton Green period II structures (after Partridge 1981:fig.18)

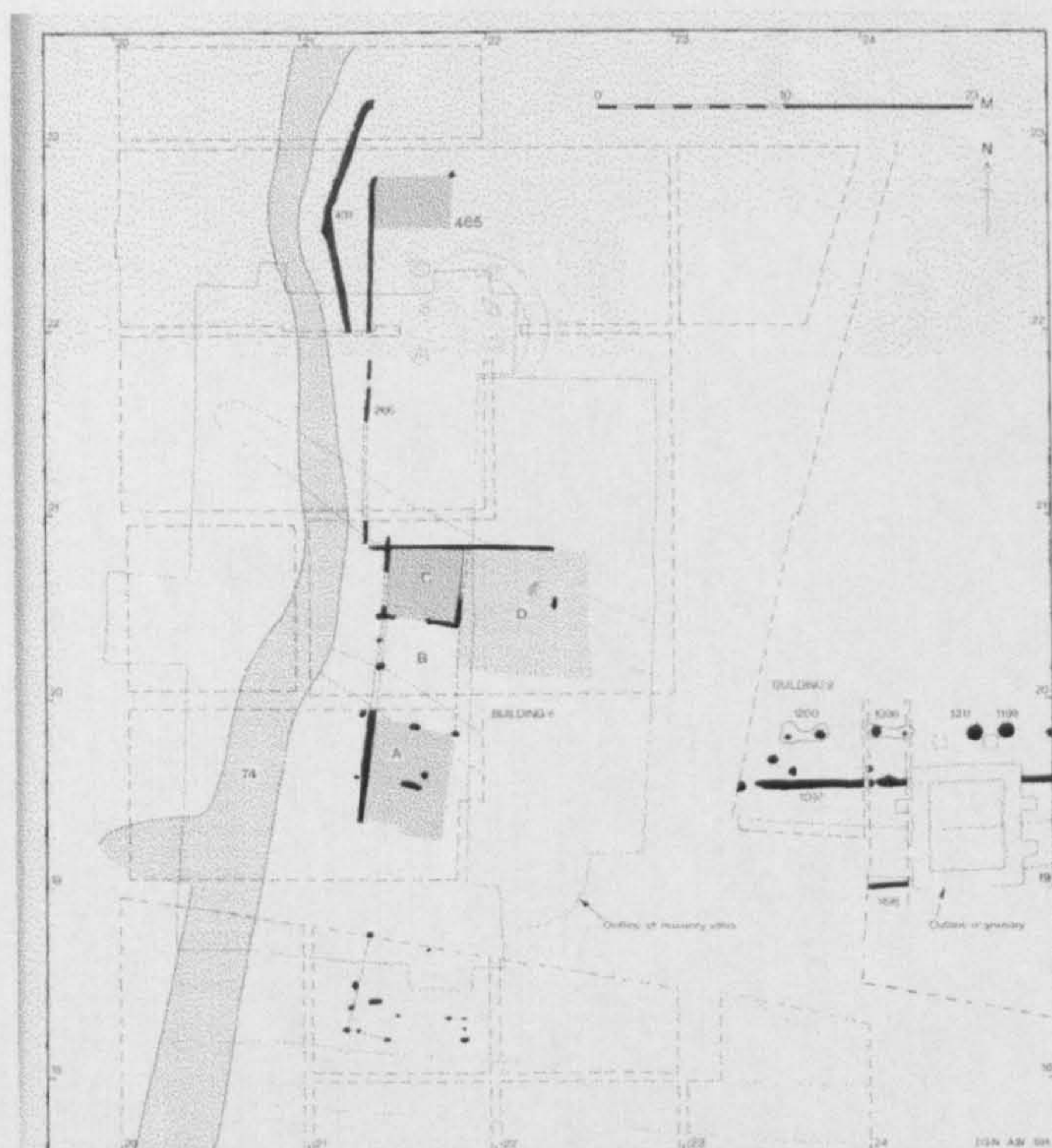
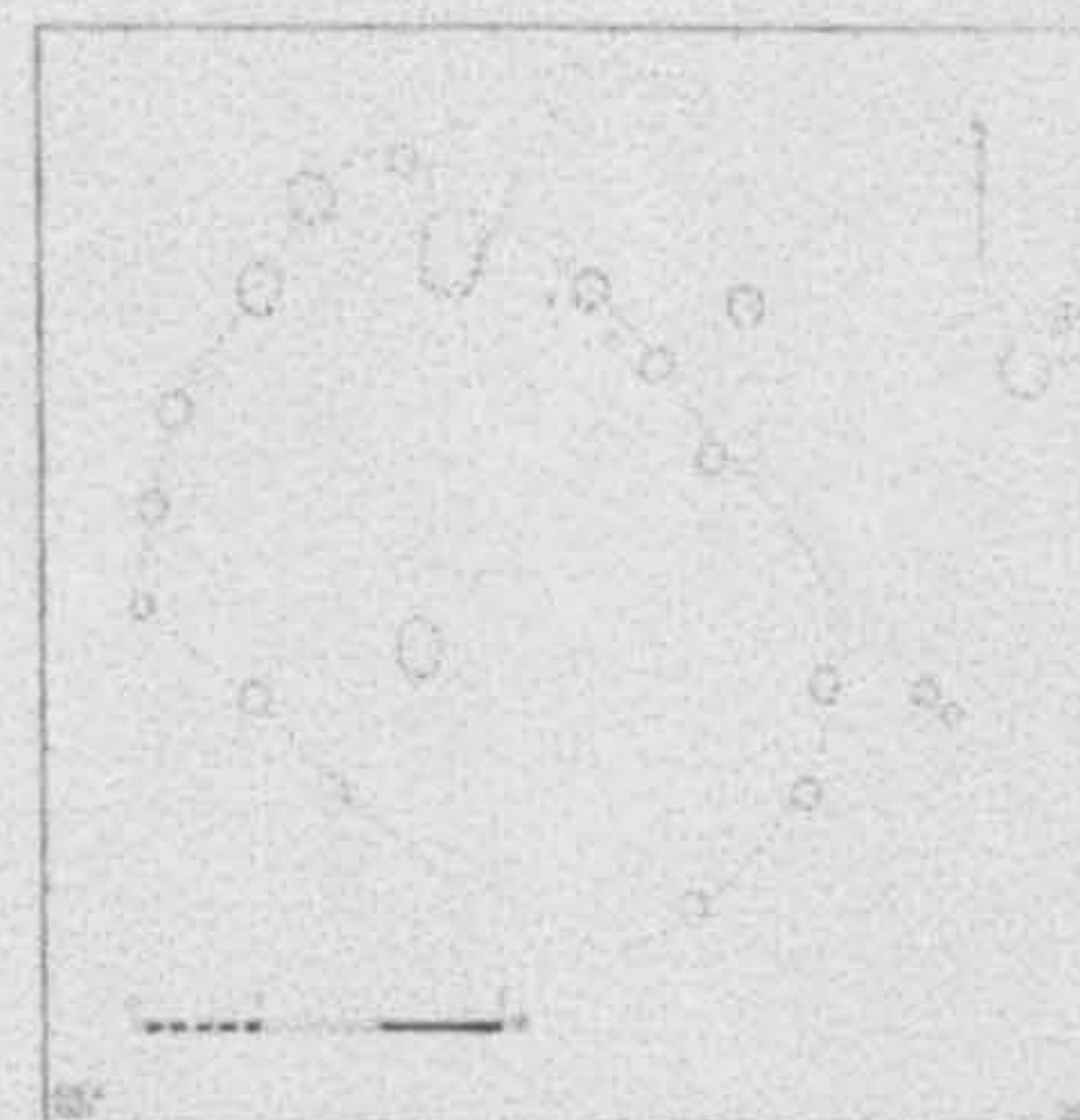


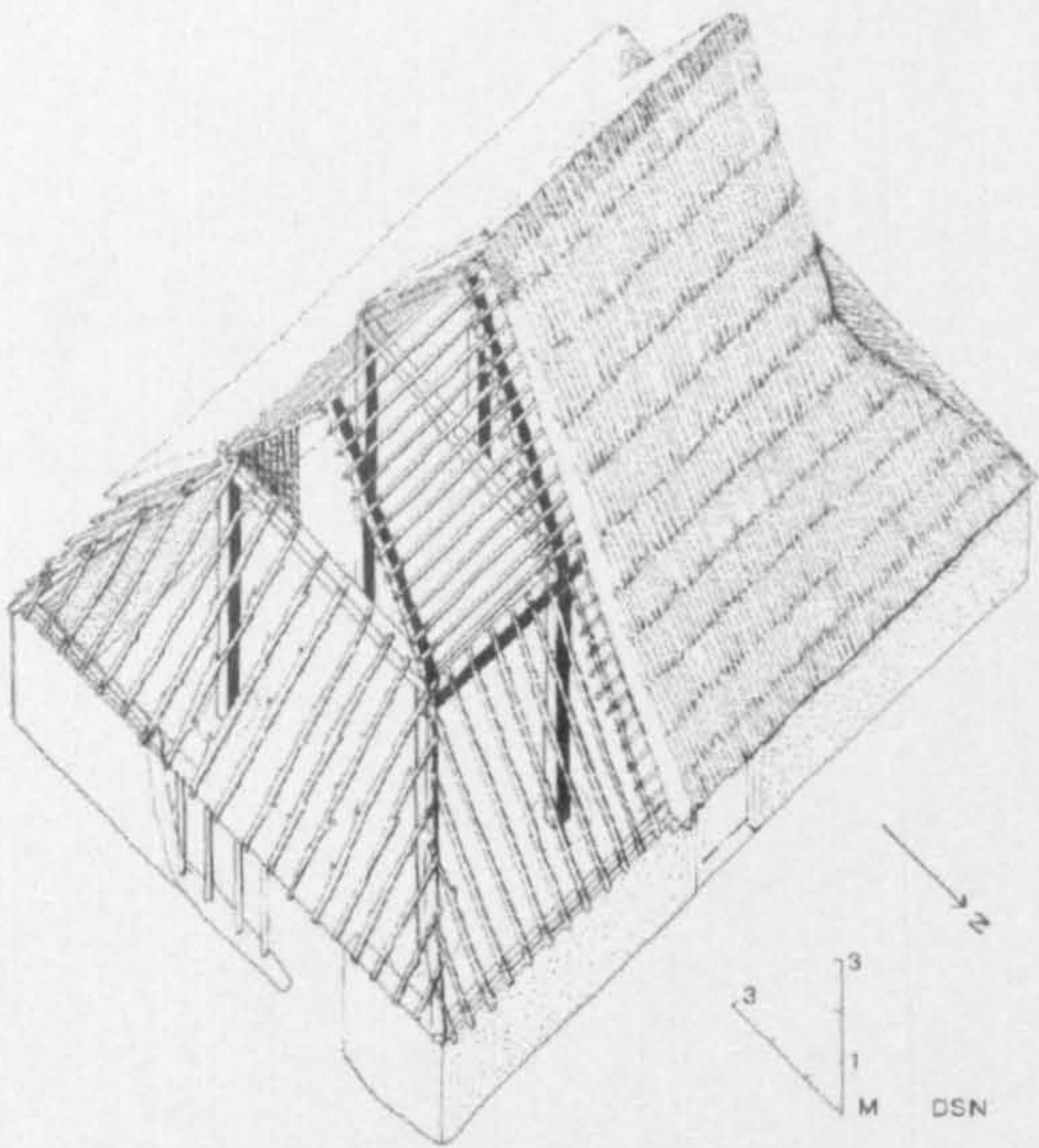
Fig 33 Block plan of Buildings 8 and 9, Period 5

3. Gorhambury Buildings 7-9 (after Neal et al. 1990: fig. 33)



4. Gorhambury Building 4 (after Neal et al. 1990: fig. 27 )

Figure 6.2

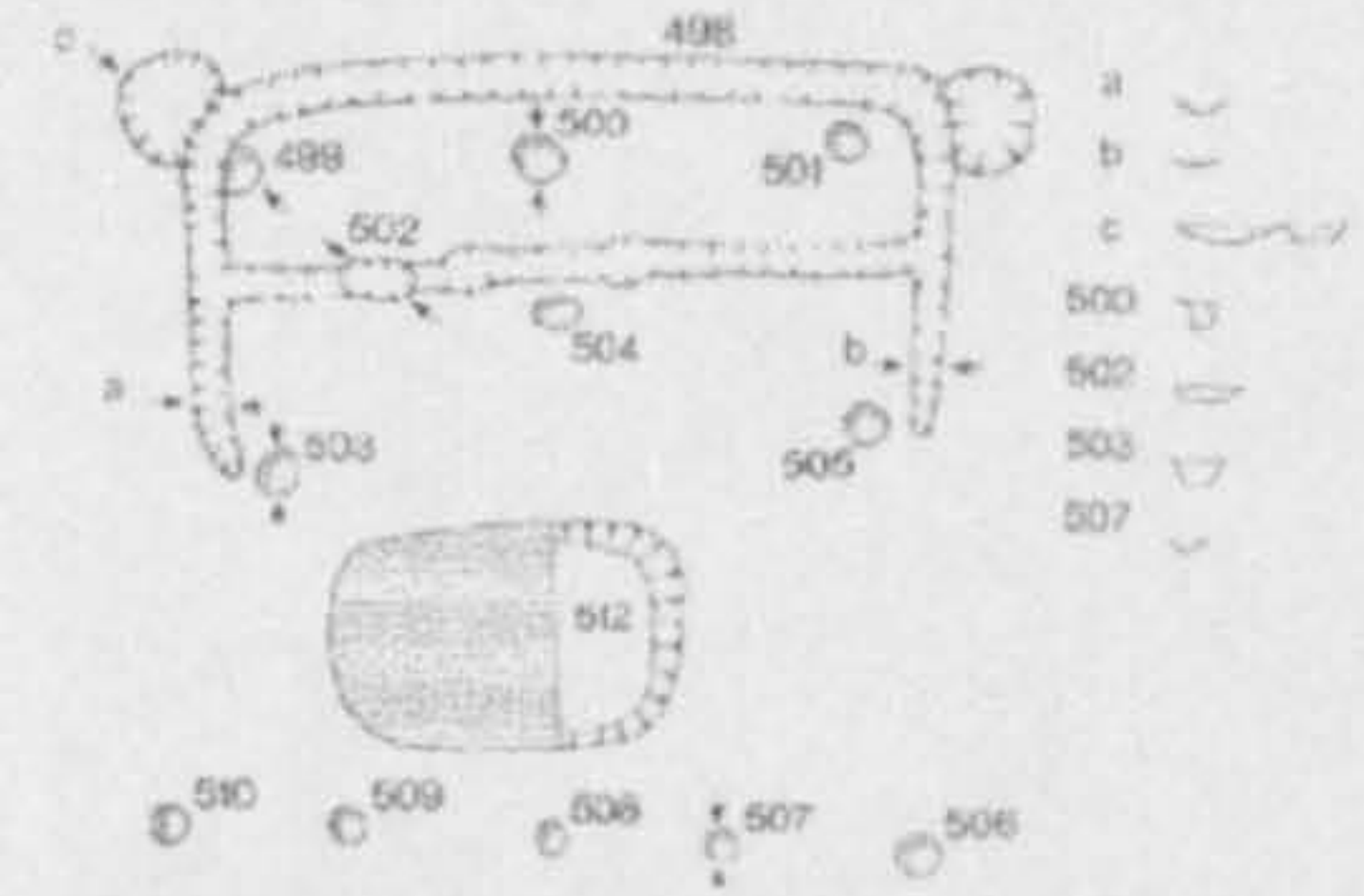


44 Reconstruction drawing of Building 15, Period 5

5. Reconstruction of Building 15 (after Neal et al 1990:fig. 44)

BALDOCK

BALDOCK 1970-71  
BUILDING VIII



6. Building VII at Baldock  
(after Stead & Rigby  
1986,fig.13 )

Figure 6. 2

Examples of structures for which the foundations comprised sill-beams and post-holes are known from six sites. At Park Street the partial remains of a building including sill-beam gullies, post-hole alignments and an internal clay floor was located beneath a Roman villa (O'Neil 1945:fig 2). Similar structural evidence of sill-beams and a chalk floor was discovered in Insula XVII at Verulamium close to evidence of non-ferrous metalworking (Frere 1983:103-5). At Skeleton Green evidence of eight buildings of entirely sill-beam foundations survived in Period II (Figure 6.2, No. 2). Only very faint traces of the sill-beams survived but floor levels were well-preserved and some evidence of wooden floor planks was present. In terms of size, the period II buildings are generally larger than the period I post-hole structures, with one building at least 10 x 8 metres and the partial remains of another with a long axis of 20 metres. With respect to evidence of habitation, none of the buildings had evidence for internal hearths, but all had laid floors and most were connected by worn paths and deposits of domestic refuse were found between the buildings (Partridge 1981:50). Evidence for three/four rectangular dwellings were found at Gorhambury which exhibited greater variability in terms of size and construction techniques than the period II buildings at Skeleton Green (Figure 6.2, No. 3). The partial remains of a large building (buildings 7 and 8) survived beneath the main Roman villa building. Its total size and form are unclear from the surviving evidence, although it appears to be at least 30 metres long and 10 metres wide, with several internal divisions. Part of another very large structure (building 9) also at least 30 metres long by 10 metres wide was located 10 metres to the east on a similar alignment and 100 metres further to the east the complete plan of sill-beam building (building 15) 16.5 x 15 metres with two rows of large internal post-holes which probably supported aisle posts (Figure 6.2, No. 5) (Neal et al 1990:32-3).

Partial remains of two buildings were found at Folly Lane. There was no direct evidence for habitation, although the presence of domestic refuse in the vicinity makes a such an interpretation likely (Niblett 1999).

An unusual square structure at Baldock (Figure 6,2, No. 6) comprised a mixture of post-holes and foundation trenches (Stead & Rigby 1986:fig. 13). There was no evidence of habitation and a ritual function seems likely.

## ***Discussion***

The following aspects of the evidence for rectangular structures are worthy of note.

### **Poor Survival of Evidence**

The structural evidence is generally even less substantial than the evidence for circular buildings of either post-hole or ring-trench construction. This means that evidence for them would have been easily removed by later activity or erosion, especially general erosion such as plough damage. It is not surprising therefore that the few examples of this type of structure have occurred in situations where the preservation of Late Iron Age deposits was exceptionally good. Two of the five sites (Park Street and Gorhambury) are situated on the sites of Roman villa where the substantial structural remains of the villa, although partially removing the Late Iron Age structural evidence, have protected it from plough damage. The other two sites (Skeleton Green and Wickham Kennels 1989) are situated in the flood plain of the River Rib at Braughing/Puckeridge where the deposits have been protected by alluvium from plough damage and disturbance from later Roman occupation.

Although some of the buildings contain deep features, it would not be possible to reconstruct the plan of these buildings from just these features alone. In particular, those buildings where the sill beams rest on floor surfaces, such as the period II structures at Skeleton Green, would leave no trace of evidence below sub-soil level. It is therefore significant that Skeleton Green has probably the best preserved Late Iron Age deposits within the Study Area and is the only site where such structures have been recognised.

It can therefore be concluded that rectangular structures are likely to have been much more extensive than the small known sample implies and that there is a relative bias against the discovery of rectangular buildings in comparison with circular buildings.

### Variability of Size

The few known examples of rectangular buildings are much more variable in terms of their size than circular buildings. The smaller rectangular buildings, such as the period I post-hole buildings at Skeleton Green and building 4 at Gorhambury, are considerably smaller in area than the largest examples of rectangular buildings and are smaller than the smallest circular buildings of earlier or Late Iron Age date. The average area of the smaller rectangular buildings is 25 square metres which compares with a potential living area of 300 square metres for building 8 and 250 square metres for building 15 at Gorhambury. This is comparable with an internal area of 78 square metres for the smallest Late Iron Age circular building at Wickham Kennels 1989 and 300 square metres for the average circular building diameter of 10 metres.

### Construction Technique

The plan-form and construction techniques of the few known examples of rectangular structures are also much more variable than for circular structures. Although no examples of timber joints have survived, the evidence from sill-beams implies that timber-framed construction techniques were used for these structures. The chronological differences at Skeleton Green between the period I mainly post-hole structures and period II wholly sill-beam structures could indicate that techniques for timber-framing were becoming more sophisticated through time. One of the advantages of the rectilinear plan-form is that it enables sophisticated timber framing techniques to be used and it is possible that the change from post-hole to sill-beam foundations at Skeleton Green shows such a development. However, the absence of internal hearths within any of the period II structures could indicate a functional difference between the two types of structures.

### Internal Divisions

A feature of rectilinear structures is the ability to clearly differentiate space by creating internal divisions which form visual barriers and add to the strength of the structure. It is also easier to divide and add to rectilinear structures than circular structures. This development also has important implications for social relations. Two of the three larger sill-beam buildings (buildings 8 at 15 Gorhambury) have evidence of internal divisions in the form of post-hole or sill-beam partitions and even several of the small

structures at Skeleton Green have evidence for partitions (Partridge 1981:figs 7 & 18). Internal partitions are also apparent within most of the few other examples of rectilinear structures in England at Silchester (Fulford 1987:fig 3) and Kelvedon (Rodwell and Rodwell 1993).

### *The Aisled Building*

A significant variation of the rectangular plan-form is provided by the massive internal posts within the large rectangular building 15 at Gorhambury which have been interpreted as aisles by Neal. The relatively small size of the construction trench for the outer wall of the building has also led Neal to suggest that it was relatively low and insubstantial and that the weight of a large roof was supported by the aisle posts (Neal et al. 1990:32-3). This logical and convincing reconstruction of the structure is, therefore, as a large barn-like structure with large open internal area (Figure 6.2, No. 5). Simple aisled buildings of this type are known in the Roman period, although they are rare (Smith 1964; Hadman 1978) and the Gorhambury building appears to be the only known Late Iron Age example. The Roman aisled buildings have usually been interpreted as having an agricultural or industrial function (Hadman 1978) although Hingley has suggested that they could have been domestic structures (Hingley 1989). The Gorhambury building, with its low external walls, open interior space and steeply pitched roof is reminiscent of the ubiquitous circular structures of the earlier Iron Age. It may therefore represent an attempt to apply traditional techniques and arrangements of space to the new rectilinear plan form, or visa versa. The functional interpretation of the building as a dwelling for agricultural workers and their stock (based on its peripheral location to the villa and other rectilinear structures within a probable stock compound and its replacement by a building of the same type in the early Roman period) also has important social connotations for the building in its relations with the other rectilinear buildings at Gorhambury. It is possible to speculate that the occupants of buildings 8 and 9 were adopting building techniques, and by implication, new social forms including the creation of physical barriers between functionally separate areas of space. In comparison, the occupants of building 15 may have attempted to adapt traditional social divisions of space to the new plan form.



### Function

A domestic function seems likely for building 8 at Gorhambury. It underlay a Roman villa and several rooms has rammed chalk floors. It has also been interpreted by Neal as “L-shaped living quarters with subsidiary outhouses” (Neal et al. 1990:28). A similar function also seems likely for the rectangular building at which underlay the Roman villa at Park Street and the case for a domestic/agricultural function for the aisled building 15 has been referred to above.

There are also no close parallels to building 9 at Gorhambury, although it is comparable to the long buildings at Manching which have been interpreted as warehouses (Collis 1984a:11). A wholly domestic function for the smaller rectangular buildings at Skeleton Green is also uncertain. All of the period I post-hole buildings contained hearths, but several appear to have been open (Partridge 1981:fig 9) and they are small even compared with the smallest circular buildings. The high density of the buildings and the evidence of floors, paths and refuse deposits containing a range of ‘luxury’ artifacts suggest that an agricultural context is unlikely. A number of small rectangular buildings have been found at the European *Oppida* sites of Manching in Germany and Mont Beuvray in France. In both these sites the buildings are comparable in size, form and density to Skeleton Green. They are associated with industrial activities, especially bronze and ironworking and enamelling, and have been interpreted as dwellings for artisans (Collis 1984:113). Although direct evidence of industrial production has not been found at Skeleton Green it is possible that both the period I and II buildings were associated with some kind of industrial production.

### ***Summary and Conclusions***

Rectangular structures with slight foundations are known from a few Late Iron Age sites. However, all of the examples are from well-preserved sites which are also high-status Early Roman sites (villas and towns). Such structures may have been much more widespread, but the context of the known examples suggests that they were probably largely confined to the higher status sites.

The number of Late Iron Age sites with evidence of circular structures is much greater than the evidence of rectilinear structures but is still very small, at 12 or 5% of the total,

and of these, there are only four sites and less than ten circular structures for which the evidence is published, that can reasonably be interpreted as dwellings.

Seventy-five percent of the circular structures are known from two sites; Wendens Ambo and the Stansted Airport Catering Site, and the dating of those at Wendens Ambo to the Late Iron Age is uncertain. Although the sample is very small, it is possible to speculate that ring-gully round houses with reasonably substantial foundations persisted into the Late Iron Age in the eastern edge of the Study Area, continuing the tradition which is exemplified by the nearby Middle Iron Age site at Little Waltham

Within the small sample of structures examined, only a few have produced evidence which could be interpreted as domestic or habitation.

## ***6.3 Evidence of Industry***

### **6.3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this section is to consider the evidence for industrial processing and manufacturing within the Study Area.

#### ***Modes of production***

Cumberpatch has identified three Iron Age modes for the production and circulation of goods (Cumberpatch 1995:83).

1. Household production - production of goods from locally available raw materials for local consumption
2. Workshop production - production requiring specialised knowledge and/or the use of scarce raw materials. This includes non-ferrous metalworking and fine pottery.

### 6.3.2 Pottery

The evidence for Late Iron Age pottery production has been summarised by Thompson (Thompson 1982:22-5) and Swan (Swan 1984:53-67). Generally there are very few sites nationally which have produced *in situ* evidence. This is probably due to the following reasons:

1. Wheel-thrown grog-tempered pottery, although technically (compared with earlier hand-made forms) advanced in terms of manufacture was not fired particularly hard, requiring a temperature not higher than 750-800 degrees Centigrade. Before the mid first century AD therefore most kilns were probably of the simple clamp type, which consisted of combustible fuel piled on top of the pots (Thompson 1982:23; Swan 1984:53). Most of the *in situ* kiln evidence is from the single-flue up-draught type which were probably not introduced until the mid first century AD (Thompson 1982:23). Even under favourable conditions, the only evidence of clamp kilns would therefore be areas of burning and possibly fired clay bars on which the pots were placed.
2. The fact that grog (small particles of fired clay) was used as the tempering material for the pottery meant that 'seconds' and 'wasters' would have been recycled to provide the temper, leaving no evidence of manufacturing activity apart from the burning.

Much of the evidence for pottery production in the Study Area, therefore, comprises either fragmentary early up-draught kilns or various types of evidence for the controlled use of high temperature fires together with portable kiln furniture such as fired clay bars or bricks. Swan has argued that some types of these were used as kiln furniture and therefore can provide evidence of pottery production, especially when found in association with evidence of controlled burning (Swan 1984:53-67).

#### ***Raw Materials***

In terms of the relationship between the manufacturing sites and potential resources of good quality potting clay, all parts of the Study Area are within the 10 kilometres which

### 6.3.2 Pottery

The evidence for Late Iron Age pottery production has been summarised by Thompson (Thompson 1982:22-5) and Swan (Swan 1984:53-67). Generally there are very few sites nationally which have produced *in situ* evidence. This is probably due to the following reasons:

1. Wheel-thrown grog-tempered pottery, although technically (compared with earlier hand-made forms) advanced in terms of manufacture was not fired particularly hard, requiring a temperature not higher than 750-800 degrees Centigrade. Before the mid first century AD therefore most kilns were probably of the simple clamp type, which consisted of combustible fuel piled on top of the pots (Thompson 1982:23; Swan 1984:53). Most of the *in situ* kiln evidence is from the single-flue up-draught type which were probably not introduced until the mid first century AD (Thompson 1982:23). Even under favourable conditions, the only evidence of clamp kilns would therefore be areas of burning and possibly fired clay bars on which the pots were placed.
2. The fact that grog (small particles of fired clay) was used as the tempering material for the pottery meant that 'seconds' and 'wasters' would have been recycled to provide the temper, leaving no evidence of manufacturing activity apart from the burning.

Much of the evidence for pottery production in the Study Area, therefore, comprises either fragmentary early up-draught kilns or various types of evidence for the controlled use of high temperature fires together with portable kiln furniture such as fired clay bars or bricks. Swan has argued that some types of these were used as kiln furniture and therefore can provide evidence of pottery production, especially when found in association with evidence of controlled burning (Swan 1984:53-67).

#### ***Raw Materials***

In terms of the relationship between the manufacturing sites and potential resources of good quality potting clay, all parts of the Study Area are within the 10 kilometres which

has been estimated as the maximum practical travelling distance to obtain clay (Morris 1994:26; 1995:41) and almost all of the Study Area is within five kilometers of such a source. An indication of the general potential of the Study Area for sources of potting clay is provided by the distribution of Roman and medieval manufacturing sites, which are distributed widely across the south and east of the area. Two major Roman pottery industries are known from the Study Area: the Brockley Hill/Verulamium region industry located between St. Albans and Elstree and the Hadham industry, located between Braughing and Bishops Stortford in eastern Hertfordshire (Swan 1984). Both began in the first century AD and there is evidence that some parts of the Hadham industry may have started in the Late Iron Age (C. Going pers. comm.).

**Table 6.3, evidence of pottery manufacturing**

No.	Site	Evidence
60	Airport Catering Site, Stansted	300 piece of fired clay bricks indicates possible evidence of pottery production. (Havis forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989).
88	Panshanger school, Welwyn Garden City (Grub's Barn)	Ditch and hearths (Rook 1970b). The hearths have been interpreted as probable pottery kilns (Swan 1984:Hertfordshire gazetteer)
89	Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City	Two probable hearths and an oven (Rook 1968a). The oven has been interpreted as probable pottery kiln (Swan 1984:Hertfordshire gazetteer)
123	Wilbury Hill, Letchworth	Clay brick associated with 'Belgic' pottery indicating possible evidence of pottery manufacturing (Applebaum 1949:44)
133	Stead Areas A & B, Baldock	A small number of fired clay bricks suggests possible evidence for pottery manufacturing (Rigby & Forster 1989:187-8)
145	St. Albans Abbey	Probable late pre-Conquest/Early Roman pottery kiln, other probable kilns in vicinity (Swan 1984:Hertfordshire gazetteer; Saunders & Havercroft 1978:16-35)
146	Prae Wood 1933	Two 'cooking ovens' described by the excavator were probable pottery kilns of late pre-Conquest or Early Roman date (Swan 1984:Hertfordshire gazetteer; Wheeler & Wheeler 1936:44)
147	Prae Wood 1931	Extensive complex of earthwork banks and ditches. Also trackways and ovens (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936:44);
163	Pond Field, St. Albans	Probable pottery kiln dated cAD 50-100 (Swan 1984:Hertfordshire gazetteer)
204	Cholesbury	Base and wall of a small horseshoe-shaped oven overlain by hearth which contained Belgic pottery (Kimbell 1933:202; Thompson 1982:24)

### *Analysis*

Table 6.3 lists all of the possible and probable pottery manufacturing sites based on the published or readily available evidence. Ten sites have been identified in total. In terms of the geographical distribution of the sites, a majority are situated in two areas: four in

St. Albans and two in Welwyn Garden City. In both these areas the scale of the investigation was small, and, in the case of the Welwyn sites, the work was undertaken under salvage conditions. It is, therefore likely that further evidence of a similar nature was present in these two areas. The concentration of evidence at St. Albans is also significant in terms of the importance of the later first and second century Verulamium Region pottery industry, several manufacturing sites of which are known from St. Albans. It is therefore possible that the industry developed from a Late Iron Age pottery manufacturing centre at St. Albans.

The other four sites do not show any geographical; patterns and are widely spaced within the Study Area, nor do they demonstrate any other readily identifiable patterns and include a small hamlet (Stansted), two hillfort sites (Cholesbury and Wilbury) and a large site complex (Baldock).

### ***Conclusions***

The direct evidence for Late Iron Age pottery manufacturing is sparse within the Study Area, as it is for most areas of southern England (Swan 1984:53). However, very large quantities of Late Iron Age pottery were discarded in deposits within the Study Area and much of this was almost certainly locally manufactured (Thompson 1982). In addition, there is evidence of the relatively early development of wheel-thrown, grog-tempered pottery at sites such as Gatesbury Track (Hill forthcoming b) and one of the earliest examples of local copies of imported pottery from the Welwyn Garden City burial (Stead 1967). It can therefore be reasonably concluded that Late Iron Age pottery production must have been widespread within the Study Area.

The extent to which pottery manufacturing was organised at the household, workshop or centralised workshop level is, however, difficult to determine from the available evidence although it is possible that all three types of production were practiced. The specialised technology of the potting wheel and the clearly accomplished nature of the design and finish of some of the pottery (especially the pedestal urns and import copies), implies that production was undertaken at a specialist workshop, and the high-quality pottery used for the feasting and grave offerings of the social elite may well have been produced in socially controlled centralised workshops. The clustering of probable

production sites at St. Albans suggests workshop type production, and it is possible that this level of production was also occurring in the Panshanger areas of Welwyn Garden City.

Nonetheless, it is also likely that much of the everyday coarse ware pottery was produced at the household level of production. The large number of fired clay bars found at the first century BC site at Stansted provides good circumstantial evidence for pottery production at what was a small community based on pastoral agriculture (Havis and Brooks forthcoming). The presence of clay bars and 'ovens' at Foxholes and Cholesbury also provides possible evidence of smaller scale production, and although the evidence is currently meagre, it would seem probable that household production of 'Belgic' pottery was responsible for much of the everyday coarse wares throughout the area in which such pottery was used and discarded in large quantities.

### **6.3.3 Cloth Manufacturing**

The presence of baked clay artifacts (spindle whorls and loom weights) have been used as indirect evidence for two stages in the manufacturing of woollen cloth. Spindle whorls are perforated disks, usually made of baked or fired clay, which are part of equipment used in the Iron Age for the spinning of raw wool into yarn. Loom weights are perforated fired clay bricks, usually triangular in shape, that are used to weight the yarn which is woven on a cloth weaving loom. The apparatus used for spinning and weaving itself was constructed mainly of wood, thus remains rarely survive. It can be assumed that spindle-whorls and loom-weights are the relatively low-value parts of the cloth manufacturing machinery which were discarded along with other refuse when no longer of use. All of the examples from the Study Area are from such refuse deposits, and it can therefore be assumed that they provide indirect evidence for cloth manufacturing on the site.

**Table 6.4, evidence of cloth manufacturing**

W = weaving

S = spinning

No	Site	Evidence
28	Foxholes, Hertford	W S Five large loom/thatch weights and several spindle whorls from the oven and pit (Partridge 1989:152)
34	Wendens Ambo	W Loom weights (Hodder 1982:64)
60	Airport Catering Site, Stanstead	W S 22 spindle whorls and 88 fragments of loom weights (Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989).
79	Gorhambury	W S Two spindle whorls and one fragment of a loom weight in Late Iron Age contexts (Neal et al. 1990:162).
109	Braughing Bath House	S Two spindle whorls in two large pits (Partridge 1978:25-6)
113	Station Road, Puckeridge	S Five spindle whorls indicate cloth spinning (Partridge 1980a:42-3)
115	Skeleton Green, Braughing	S W Numerous spindle whorls/loom weights (Partridge 1981:111)
130	1980-1 Site, Baldock	W Loom weights indicate evidence for cloth weaving (Burleigh 1982; 1995:105)
133	Stead Areas A & B, Baldock	W Fragments of at least two Late Iron Age triangular loom weights ((Forster 1989:168)
146-7	Prae Wood, St. Albans	W Loom weights and spindle whorls (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936)
140	Folly Lane	W Loom weights (Niblett 1999)
87	Stanborough 2, Welwyn Garden City	W Loom weights (Hunn 1999)
152	Wheathampstead	W Loom weights (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936:19)

Thirteen Late Iron Age sites have published evidence for cloth manufacturing in the form of spindle whorls or loom-weights. Ten have produced loom-weights, six have produced spindle whorls, and four have produced both. All the sites have been excavated to a 'medium' or 'high' level (see Table 2.3) and seven of these have been published. This suggests that as artifacts, spindle whorls and loom weights are either often not identified or overlooked on the many older and less well resourced excavations in the Study Area, and/or they are rare as discarded artifacts and are only observed in large pottery assemblages.

Analysis of the geographical distribution of the nine sites reveals several significant patterns. There are two small clusters of sites at Braughing (3) and Baldock (2). In the case of the Braughing sites, all three have produced spindle whorls and one has produced loom-weights, and at Baldock both sites have produced loom-weights.



Gregory has suggested that cloth weaving at Fisons Way, Thetford, as evidenced by large numbers of loom-weights, may be a specialised activity associated with a high-status or ritual function (Gregory 1992). Burleigh has suggested that loom-weights associated with the large burial enclosure at Baldock may have a similar function (Burleigh 1995a). At these sites the loom-weights were not found within deposits which could be interpreted as normal domestic refuse and they formed a relatively high proportion of the fired clay artifacts. It is therefore possible that cloth was being woven at these sites for a specialised function. Two fragments of loom-weights dated to pre-AD 43 were also found at Baldock adjacent to the burial enclosure (Forster 1986:168) indicating that the cloth production may have been more widespread. Lastly, fragments of loomweights were found in several contexts at the Folly Lane burial site (Adamson 1999) which have been interpreted as possible evidence of specialist cloth manufacturing (Niblett 1999). It is therefore possible that some types of cloth production may have been organised in centralised workshops which were under direct social control by the religious or secular elite.

A similar concentration of evidence for cloth manufacturing at Braughing would also be interpreted as a centralised workshop, although at two of the three sites there, it is not associated with ritual or burial activity. The evidence is also predominantly for spinning, in the form of spindle whorls. Spinning, although a skilled activity, is likely to have required less skill than the weaving of the more complex coloured cloths. It may therefore have been primarily organised at the household or workshop level.

The evidence from three other sites (Foxholes, Stanstead and Wendens Ambo) is more indicative of cloth manufacturing at the household level. At Stansted, a large number of spindle whorl and loom-weight fragments were found within a settlement which was based on a pastoral agricultural economy. Even though the quantity of evidence was as great as the other eight sites put together, it is therefore likely that cloth was being manufactured by the same agricultural community that produced the wool. The same is also probably true for Foxholes and Wendens Ambo, which were both primarily agricultural settlements.

## ***Conclusion***

The evidence for cloth manufacturing in the Late Iron Age of the Study Area is very sparse. It does however, indicate that more than one mode of production may have been practiced, particularly with respect to weaving, which was the potentially more technically demanding aspect of cloth production. Spinning and weaving may have been undertaken on the majority of agricultural settlements for which wool production was a significant activity, although at present the evidence does not support this assumption. However, if it is assumed that most of the evidence for cloth manufacturing probably comprised bone (e.g. for weaving combs) and wood, then the high proportion of acid soils within the Study Area and the low incidence of the survival of organic artifacts, is likely to mean that the evidence is under-represented. In addition to household production, the spinning, and especially the weaving, of either more technically demanding or culturally prescribed woollen cloth may have taken place at important ritual/burial sites under social control.

### **6.3.4 Ironworking**

#### ***Introduction***

The production of finished iron artifacts involves at least six separate processes by which large quantities of two naturally occurring materials (wood and ore) are reduced to the finish iron product. The stages are summarised in Table 6.5 which is adapted from Ehrenreich 1985 fig. 2.1.

**Table 6.5, iron production stages**

1	Ore and fuel collection
2	Production of charcoal
3	Ore roasting
4	Smelting
5.	Bloom smithing
6.	Smithing

All of the six stages can leave archaeological traces. The main types of evidence are listed in Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6, type of archaeological evidence of ironworking**

1.	Evidence of extraction (pits, mines, ore, etc.)
2.	Evidence of <i>in situ</i> burning (hearths, roasting pits, furnaces, charcoal)
3.	Waste products (slag, bloom)
4.	Ironworking tools
5.	Partly finished products (strips, bars, etc.)

An important aspect of ironworking is that large quantities of fuel are needed to produce finished iron. At least 420 kilogrammes of wood is required to produce the 90 kilogrammes of charcoal that is needed to produce one kilogramme of iron (Cleere 1976:240) and Ehrenreich has pointed out that the preparation of fuel is likely to have been more time-consuming than collection of the iron ore (Ehrenreich 1985:23).

Substantial areas of managed woodland are therefore necessary to produce the regular supply of suitable wood. Large quantities of clay are also required for the construction of furnaces and hearths.

### *The evidence*

The sites which have produced some evidence of iron production are listed in Table 6.7. A total of ten sites are known, although at two sites (Balsoms, Standon and Wickham Kennels) the evidence is for non-specific metalworking which could therefore be for iron or non-ferrous production. However, the presence of Early Roman ironworking at Braughing together with an identified source of bog iron ore (Tribick 1974), suggests that Late Iron Age ironworking of some form is likely there. The remaining eight sites are located within, or adjacent to, the Bulbourne Valley at the south west corner of the Study Area and all have produced evidence of types 2 and 3 of the list in Table 6.6. No sites from the Study Area have produced published evidence of types 4 and 5 (tools or partly finished products). However an important votive hoard of ironwork is known from Waltham Abbey on the river Lea, three kilometres to the south of the Study Area. The hoard, which is dated to c.25 BC to AD 43, included a unique collection of blacksmithing tools comprising tongs, anvils, hammers and a poker (Manning 1980).

**Table 6.7, evidence of ironworking**

No.	Site	Evidence
53	Balsoms, Standon	'Belgic' sherds, a possible hearth, an area of blackened and fused gravel suggestive of iron-working (Herts. SMR:150)
72	Dellfield	Four ironworking shaft furnaces containing tapslag. Late Iron

		Age pottery found in the tapping pit of three furnaces (Thompson & Holland 1982:138-42)
73	Tring	Bases of two ironworking shaft furnaces with tapping pits and tapped slag in. Shafts of red/orange burned clay (Herts. SMR:6069)
75	Ashridge Site 3	Surface finds of ironworking slag found with Late Iron Age pottery (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Wainwright pers. comm.)
115	Skeleton Green, Braughing	Iron metalworkers punch and iron strip fragments, possibly smithing waste, provide evidence of possible iron smithing (Partridge 1981; Barford 1982)
121	Wickham Kennels 1982, Braughing	A number of pits and ditches, one of which produced industrial waste referred to as 'from bronze and possibly other metal working' (Partridge 1982:41)
195	Ashridge Site 10	Surface finds of ironworking slag found with Late Iron Age pottery (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Wainwright pers. comm.)
196	Hudnall Common	Surface finds of ironworking slag found with Late Iron Age pottery (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Wainwright pers. comm. )
197	Ashridge Site 9	Surface finds of ironworking slag found with Late Iron Age pottery (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Wainwright pers. comm.)
204	Cholesbury	Base and wall of a small horseshoe-shaped oven overlain by heath which contained 'Belgic' pottery (Kimbell 1933:202; Thompson 1982:24)

### ***Ironworking in the Bulbourne Valley***

The sites within the Bulbourne Valley can be divided into two in terms of the evidence they have produced. Four sites have been found in the Ashridge Survey at the top end of the valley, which was primarily an earthwork and surface collection field survey. The evidence, which is briefly discussed by Morris and Wainwright, comprises surface scatters of smelting slag found in association with Late Iron Age pottery (Morris and Wainwright 1995:72).

The evidence at the remaining sites comprised smelting furnaces. At Dellfield, Berkhamsted, four shaft furnaces for manufacturing iron slag were found during the construction of houses in 1970 (Thompson & Holland 1974:138-42) and at Tring, 15 kilometres further up the valley, another two shaft furnaces were found during the construction of the A41 Tring Bypass in 1974 (Herts. SMR:6069).

The evidence of Late Iron Age ironworking in the Bulbourne Valley, although it is dispersed along fifteen kilometres and is represented only by surface scatters and salvage recording of furnaces, does nonetheless amount to the largest body of ironworking evidence in southern England (Northover pers. comm.). The reason for this concentration of evidence for iron production is probably due to a combination of

favourable factors, particularly the availability of the key natural resources (iron ore, wood and clay) and the easy communications offered by the valley, both overland to the Midlands, the Thames Valley and eastern England, and by river to the Thames valley river system. The importance of both the east-west overland route and river communications in the Late Iron Age has been emphasised above. In respect of iron manufacturing, the River Bulbourne would have provided a means of transporting finished products (whether bloom - the product of smelting - or finished iron artifacts) to areas of exchange and consumption within the Thames Valley system.

Bog ore is likely to have been the source of iron ore used for smelting (Morris and Wainwright 1995:72). It is a very thick iron pan caused by percolating iron salts that accumulate between layers of soil, usually between peat and alluvium in valley flood-plains (Halton, pers comm.). The potential of the Bulbourne Valley as a source of bog ore has not been investigated, but it does contain extensive areas of alluvium and peat which could have provided the right condition for bog ore creation. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that bog ore was present in the valley although its location, extent and quantity are not known.

The presence of shaft furnaces at Dellfield and Tring may also indicate that low grade bog ores were being exploited. The shaft furnace is a more efficient and technologically advanced type than the simple bowl furnace used during the earlier Iron Age as it enables slag to be tapped and removed, thereby increasing the amount of iron produced from each firing (Salter & Ehrenreich 1985:146). However, Salter has also pointed out that slag-tapping furnaces do not have a simple chronological relationship with bowl furnaces and the distribution of the two types may be partly related to the quality of ores available, because the greater efficiency of the tapping furnaces can enable the economic exploitation of lower-grade ores (Salter 1987:194). The shaft furnaces at Dellfield and Tring could, therefore, be related to the possible exploitation of bog ore in the Bulbourne Valley.

The plateau areas to the north and south of the valley would have provided an ample supply of the wood necessary for roasting ore and the production of charcoal. The Ashridge Estate to the north of the valley (within which the Ashridge Survey was

undertaken) is mostly ancient woodland which has been wooded since the Middle Ages. Approximately five square kilometres of the woodland was devoid of evidence of Late Iron Age or Roman occupation, ironworking or field systems (Wainwright pers comm.). This area is therefore a likely candidate as a source of the large quantities of wood required for the Late Iron Age iron industry, although, in the absence of information on the size of the industry in terms of potential iron output, it is not possible to calculate the size of woodland needed to sustain it.

Whether or not this wooded area was used to support the iron industry, it can reasonably be assumed that the areas exploited for wood are likely to have been managed in a sustainable manner by the regular cutting of coppiced wood on a rotational basis. The practice of obtaining fuel by simply clearing woodland would have necessitated chopping down large mature trees and cutting them up into manageable lumps of wood, both very labour intensive tasks. By adopting this method large areas of woodland would also be needed to maintain even a small wood-hungry iron industry. The alternative of using managed woodland coppice in rotation (which formed the basis of the post-medieval charcoal industry in the Study Area) would have provided a regular supply of easily cut timber poles from a much smaller area of woodland. In addition, the existence of a mosaic of areas of coppiced woodland at Ashridge in the Iron Age and Roman periods might provide an explanation for the current presence of woodland on the areas of the Late Iron Age occupation sites and field systems. If such managed coppiced woodlands were present in the area devoid of settlement evidence in the Late Iron Age, these could have formed the basis - by colonisation - of the now much more extensive wooded landscape of the area once the industry fell into decline in the later Roman period.

### ***Conclusions***

Evidence for iron production within the Study Area is not extensive but is currently greater than any other comparably sized area in southern England. This is probably partly a reflection of the extent of fieldwork activity, especially the Ashridge Survey, but it does nonetheless indicate that iron production was a significant economic activity in the Late Iron Age.

Some small-scale Late Iron Age ironworking at Braughing seems likely, but by far the largest industry was within the Bulbourne Valley. Although the nature, size and extent of the industry is not known, its wide geographical extent and the known presence of furnaces and extensive spreads of slag, indicate that it was large and may have specialised in the roasting and smelting of iron ore into ‘blooms’ possibly for transport by river to areas where ‘smithing’ of the bloom into finished iron product was carried out. The specialist nature of iron manufacturing would probably have meant that much of it took place at the workshop level of production. However, the presence of probably contemporary agricultural field systems close to evidence of iron production indicates that it may have been combined with agricultural production. The fact that the fields are located on heavy and stony clay-with-flints soils means that they are unlikely to have been productive in terms of crop or stock yields. A regime which combined ironworking and marginal agriculture is therefore possible.

### 6.3.5 Non-Ferrous Metalworking

No *in situ* evidence of Late Iron Age non-ferrous metalworking (copper, silver, zinc and gold alloys) in the form of furnaces or hearths, together with associated furniture and waste materials has been identified from the Study Area. Nine probable or possible manufacturing sites are listed in Table 6.8. These are based on the evidence of finished or part-finished manufactured products, evidence of the manufacturing process which are either *in situ* but ambiguous in terms of function, or evidence of furniture or waste products which has been removed from their original manufacturing context.

**Table 6.8, evidence of non-ferrous metalworking**

No.	Site	Evidence
53	Balsoms, Standon	Belgic sherds, a possible hearth, an area of blackened and fused gravel suggestive of metalworking (Herts SMR:150)
79	Gorhambury	Evidence of small-scale non-ferrous metalworking (including gold) and crucible fragments, possibly dating to the Late Iron Age (Bayley 1990:164)
115	Skeleton Green, Braughing	Bellows nessel (tuyère) found in association with folded copper alloy sheet and spillage from copper alloy casting provide evidence of bronze casting (Partridge 1981; Barford 1982)
121	Wickham Kennels 1982,	A number of pits and ditches, one of which produced industrial waste referred to as ‘from bronze and possibly other metal working’. Also clay

	Braughing	pellet moulds with evidence for silver, copper, gold and lead metalworking, probably for coin flans (Partridge 1982, 41).
133	Stead Areas A & B, Baldock	Evidence of Colchester brooch manufacturing, probably dating to the Late Iron Age (Stead & Rigby 1986:122,143)
143	Verulamium Insula XVII	Finds of clay pellet moulds and fragments of crucibles with evidence for bronze, silver and gold metalworking, probably for coin flan production (Frere 1983:30-2,103-5)
172	Leavesden Aerodrome	Possible remains of metalworking (Herts. SMR:10048)
191	Verulamium Insula XIX	Early ditch containing clay pellet moulds, probably for coin flan production (Frere 1983:31,126-7)
193	Verulamium Insula XXVIII	A ditch 2.4m wide by 1.2 m deep produced pottery and clay pellet mould with evidence for silver and gold metalworking, probably for coin flan manufacturing (Frere 1983:30-2, 273)
114	Gatesbury Track, Braughing	Fragments of clay pellet moulds indicate probable coin flan production (Partridge 1980a)

The most obvious pattern in the evidence is that seven of the nine sites, which constitute all of the 'probable' sites, are from the three areas of Late Iron Age site clusters at Baldock, Braughing and St. Albans. The other feature of the evidence is that, apart from Skeleton Green, it is for relatively specialised metalworking. The clay pellet moulds such as have been found at Verulamium Insula XVII, XIX & XXVIII, Wickham Kennels and Gatesbury Track have been interpreted as reasonably unambiguous evidence for coin production (Partridge 1982:40; Frere 1983:30-2). Although alternative functions have been suggested for the moulds (Sellwood 1980), a probable association with the production of coin blanks still seems likely (Haselgrove 1996:72) and they undoubtedly provide unequivocal evidence for the alloying and casting of precious metals which must have been both restricted and specialised work.

The evidence of brooch manufacturing at Baldock comprised three partially finished brass Colchester brooches of first century AD date, although only one (No. 161) is probably of the early first century AD (Stead & Rigby 1986:122-3). The extent to which copper alloy brooch manufacturing took place at the household, workshop or specialist workshop mode of production is unclear, although the complexity of the design of most forms would tend to imply that it was organised at the workshop level. In the case of Baldock, the evidence for the relatively innovative alloying of copper and zinc to produce brass, which is rare in a pre-Roman context, (Northover 1984:134-5) provides fairly conclusive evidence of specialist workshop level production, although its size is not known.



## ***Conclusions***

The meagre evidence for non-ferrous metalworking in the Study Area is mostly highly specialised in nature and is likely to have been undertaken at the workshop or centralised workshop mode of production. However, this is almost certainly partly at least due to the biases caused by the ephemeral nature of the evidence and the concentration of archaeological fieldwork in particular areas. In this respect, the ambiguous nature of the evidence at Balsoms, Standon and Leavesdon may be more typical of the bulk of copper alloy manufacturing organised at the household level.

### **6.3.6 Other Evidence of Manufacturing**

With respect to the evidence from published excavation reports, there appears to be virtually no evidence of other types of manufacturing, (e.g. shale, bone, glass, wood and leather) such as is found at continental Late Iron Age *Oppida* or the important mid/Late Iron Age exchange and manufacturing site at Hengistbury Head in Dorset (Collis 1984a; Cunliffe 1987). As is the case with evidence of cloth manufacturing, the acid clay and gravel soils which predominate within the Study Area are likely to have destroyed much of the evidence for manufacturing processes which used bone or antler. The only published example is from the large and well-preserved assemblage of Late Iron Age finds from Skeleton Green which includes a single example of a probably partly-finished shale bracelet which was found in a pit together with a perforated sheep bone (Partridge 1981:Fig.33,15,16). The bracelet suggests that the working of shale could have been taking place on the site, but a single probable example is insufficient to draw any conclusion.

## ***6.4 Evidence of Ritual and Burial***

### **6.4.1 Background**

The aim of this section is to assess the evidence for burial and ritual activities from the Late Iron Age sites. The evidence is presented in summary form in Table 6.9. For the

purposes of the assessment, the distinction has been made between evidence of burial (B) and evidence for ritual/ceremonial activities (RC). Burial is therefore defined by evidence of human remains and/or the structures and processes associated with burial. ritual/ceremonial is defined by evidence of such activities which are not associated with burial. This is, however, a purely artificial and typological distinction which is adopted for this study because of its use with respect to almost all of the evidence which has been identified from the Study Area. It is therefore not intended as a functional categorisation. In reality, there is considerable evidence that burial and ritual within the Study Area were interconnected to a significant degree (Forcey 1998). Moreover, this may be a particular characteristic of the evidence, and this will be explored in more detail below.

The following is a summary of the background to ritual and burial in the Late Iron Age which will provide a wider context for the discussion of the evidence for the Study Area.

### ***Aylesford Burials***

The Study Area falls within the distribution of Aylesford Swarling burials (named after two types sites and latterly known simply as Aylesford burials) which are confined within Britain to Southern England, and the majority of the Late Iron Age burial evidence from the Study Area can be classified as Aylesford burials. The distribution of Aylesford burials is shown in Figure 1.2 (above, page 6)

A recent synthesis by Fitzpatrick (1997:208-13) provides a succinct explanation of the history and current status of Aylesford burials in England. The following is a brief summary of the main points of that article.

Aylesford burials are defined as cremations, usually urned in pots, which are buried in small graves. Most are single burials or small groups in flat cemeteries, although several much larger cemeteries are known. Burial within large ditched square or rectangular enclosures is also a common feature. The burial type was first defined and characterised in the 19th century by Evans (Evans 1890) and was fully reviewed by Birchall in the 1960s (Birchall 1965).

The Aylesford burials include a small (but growing) number of richly furnished cremation burials which are usually un-urned and accompanied by grave goods that include a range of pottery vessels, metalwork items and other artifacts associated with drinking and feasting. These 'Welwyn Type' burials (also named after the type site) are buried in pits or chambers.

The range of closely datable objects associated with the Welwyn Type burials has meant that they have been used to provide the chronological framework of Aylesford burials in general. Ian Stead divided them into two chronological groups: the Welwyn phase, dating from 50-1 BC (with early metalwork but no imported Gallo-Belgic pottery) and the Lexden phase, with imported Gallo-Belgic pottery, dating from AD 1-50. The slightly earlier revision of these phases by Fitzpatrick dates the Welwyn phase from 70 BC (or slightly earlier) to 20 BC and the Lexden phase from 20 BC onwards (Fitzpatrick 1997:208). The only 'Welwyn' phase Aylesford burial which may be earlier than the c70 BC date is The Tene burial from Baldock which contains a Dressel 1A amphorae (Stead and Rigby 1986).

Similarities between the Aylesford burials and the widespread rite of cremation practiced throughout much of northern Europe in Late La Tène has led to the suggestion that many of the elements of the Aylesford burial, including cremation itself, were probably introduced from northern France in the Late Iron Age. This process has in the past been connected (along with a number of other innovations apparently introduced from the same area) with a literary reference to a folk movement of people from Belgic Gaul (modern Belgium and Picardy and Luxembourg) to southern England mentioned in Julius Caesar's commentaries (BG V,12). However, the varying chronologies of the introduction of cremation and the other innovations (especially coinage and new styles of pottery) has effectively broken the conceptual link between innovations and a single folk movement. Nonetheless, the connection between, and possible introduction of, Aylesford burials from northern France is widely accepted. In particular, the significance of the links between Aylesford burials in southeast England and four key areas of Gallia-Belgica (Mosel, Aisne, Arras and the lower Seine) is clearly demonstrated by the common association of artifact of burials of the four areas and the southeast England (Haselgrove 1987b:116-7).

There are, however, regional differences within the large area of northern Europe which practiced cremation burial in the Late La Tène and also differences within the English evidence. Although the pattern of influences is not known with any certainty, Fitzpatrick suggest that southern and central England were mainly influenced by Normandy, and southeast England by northern France (especially Picardy), Luxembourg and northern Germany (Fitzpatrick 1992; 1997:208-9).

Fitzpatrick has pointed out that until recently, analysis and interpretation of Aylesford burials has concentrated upon the grave goods accompanying the burials, particularly as evidence of the social status, date and ethnic origins of the deceased. He advocates that the evidence of the processes from death to cremation and burial should also be emphasised, and his analysis of the Westhampnett cemetery, together with several other recent studies (e.g. Niblett 1999) have marked a substantial shift in the mode of analysis and the questions asked of the data from Aylesford burials.

A feature of some of the Aylesford cemeteries is the presence of rectangular or square-plan ditched enclosures which delimitate the cremation burials. They appear to be a relatively rare feature and are known from three sites and probably from two other sites within the Study Area; certainly for King Harry Lane, Baldock, 1980 and Folly Lane; and probably for Stead Area A, Baldock and Verulam Hills Field; and also at several sites in east Essex; Stanway (Crummy 1993), Malden Hill Farm (Lavender 1991) and Mucking (Going 1993).

### ***Other Burials***

A significant number of complete Late Iron Age inhumation burials and incomplete or disarticulated human remains are known from sites within the Study Area.

The inhumations, which will be considered in more detail below, are typically unaccompanied by grave goods and are associated with Aylesford cemeteries or burials, or other Late Iron Age ritual sites. The rite has received much less attention than Aylesford burials, mainly because of the difficulty of their recognition as being Late Iron Age and the related aspect of the lack of accompanying grave goods.

## ***Cults and Ritual Activity***

There are few detailed assessments or syntheses of the evidence for Late Iron Age ritual sites in southern England. Wait (1985) has considered the Iron Age evidence in general but did not look at the Late Iron Age in detail and Webster has provided a brief synthesis of the Late Iron Age evidence from Britain and northern Europe (Webster 1995). Particular artifact or site types, especially, shrines have been considered, most recently by Woodward (1992) and Fitzpatrick (1997) and votive deposition of metalwork by Fitzpatrick (1984), but in-depth surveys of the Late Iron Age evidence are generally lacking.

That the separation of the sacred and profane in the Late Iron Age was probably not a simple matter of defining ritual and non-ritual sites has recently been pointed out by Haselgrove and by Hill who have suggested that the artifact rich deposits which occur on European *Oppida* as well as many sites in southern England (including those from the Study Area) are likely to have a ritual context (Haselgrove 1995b; Hill forthcoming b). Although this is a developing area of study which is likely to have significant implications for the understanding of ritual in Late Iron Age society, it has not been included as part of this study, as few such ritual deposits have been identified by excavators and no reinterpretation of deposits has been undertaken. The definition of 'ritual' used for this study is therefore restricted to sites for which the primary function has been interpreted as ritual or ceremonial.

### ***The English Evidence for Late Iron Age Ritual***

#### **Ritual Structures: Shrines and Temples**

A small group of structures which are present on Iron Age sites in southern England from about 400 BC have been interpreted as having a specifically ritual function. The evidence for these 'shrines' has recently been considered by Wait (1985), Woodward (1992) and Fitzpatrick (1997).

As with Iron Age structures in general, there is a basic distinction in terms of plan between circular and rectilinear structures which have been interpreted as shrines.

The majority of the known examples of rectilinear shrines are located within nucleated settlements, usually in a central location. They include structures within settlements at Danebury hillfort (Cunliffe 1984:81-7), South Cadbury hillfort (Alcock 1972), Stansted (Brooks & Bedwin 1989) and Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993). The buildings are defined as shrines primarily by their rectilinear form which sets them apart from other Iron Age circular structures within the settlements. Indeed, Wait has pointed out that most of the known examples of Iron Age rectilinear shrines have been identified solely from their non-domestic form (Wait 1985:156). Fitzpatrick also notes that construction method of these buildings contrasts with the posthole or mass wall construction of domestic circular structures, (at Danebury it consisted of close-set planks set in continuous bedding trenches) although in other respects, including associated finds assemblages, they do not tend to be distinguished from domestic structures (Fitzpatrick 1997:231). All of the above rectilinear structures apart from Stanstead (which is first century BC in date ) appear to date from the second or third century BC.

Also included by Wait, Woodward and Fitzpatrick as shrines are a smaller group of circular structures comprising Hayling Island (King and Soffe 1994), Harlow (France & Goble 1985) and Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943). To these can probably be added the Iron Age circular buildings found under a Romano-Celtic temple at Ivy Chimneys, Essex (Turner 1982:5) and buildings within the enclosure found at Fison's Way, Thetford (Gregory 1992). However, the fact that so few circular shrines are known is likely to be due in part to the potential difficulties of identifying the function of such structures. Wait has pointed out that four of the circular shrines have only been discovered as a result of the excavation of Roman temples, underneath which they were located. This indicates that such circular religious buildings, which have the same structural form as the majority of domestic Iron Age structures, are likely to be underrepresented in comparison to rectangular structures especially in situations where evidence of any associated ritual deposits is not present (Wait 1985:171).

In summary, there are only a few known ritual structures which can be dated to the Late Iron Age. These are currently Harlow, Stansted, Ivy Chimneys, Uley and Hayling

Island, to which can probably now be added Fison's Way. They are all associated with votive offerings which in the cases of Harlow and Hayling Island included large numbers of coins.

### Other Ritual Evidence

Late Iron Age weapons and other martial metalwork from rivers have been interpreted as votive (Fitzpatrick 1984; Roymans 1990:84-90) and a convincing case has been made by Haselgrove that many Late Iron Age finds of gold coins in England were deposited as votive offerings (Haselgrove 1987a). No riverine Late Iron Age metalwork is known from the Study Area, but over 50 find sites of gold coins are present. However, these sites have not been classified as ritual cult sites on the grounds that the status of these finds as votive is unclear. There are several multiple gold coin finds from within the Study Area and these have been interpreted as 'probably votive' on the basis that such deposits are inherently less likely to be the result of accidental loss.

### Sanctuaries and Cult sites in Northern Gaul

The significance of Late La Tène and Roman ritual sites in northern Gaul (northern France, Belgium, Luxembourg, south Holland and parts of western Germany) has been recognised as the result of surveys (especially aerial photography) and several important excavations. The Late La Tène evidence has been reviewed in two recent studies: Brunaux (1988) considered the evidence for ritual sites in France and Germany, focusing upon northern Gaul and Roymans (1990) provides a general study of the archaeological and literary evidence for tribal society in northern Gaul which also focuses upon the ritual sites. The following is a summary of the main points which they cover.

Defined areas of ritual space in Gaul are collectively defined by Brunaux as 'sanctuaries' which he has classified into four types (Belgic, Celto-Ligurian, Viereckschanzen and Spring sites). The 'Belgic' type, which are the main subject of Brunaux's study, are defined by a rectilinear ditched enclosure, an entrance, a central ritual structure and evidence of votive offerings, which tend to be concentrated in the central ritual area and within the enclosure ditch, close to the entrance. Buildings (referred to as temples or shrines) were often constructed over the central ritual area. Brunaux also suggests that the Belgic type may be more widespread than northern Gaul (Brunaux 1988:11-13).

Roymans uses the general term of 'cult place' for ritual sites but he also focuses upon the evidence for the enclosed 'sanctuary' sites of Northern Gaul (Roymans 1990). Almost all of the identified Belgic type sanctuaries developed into Gallo-Roman monumental sanctuary complexes and all of the major excavated Late La Tène sites are also Roman sites (Roymans 1990:63-7). Other features of Belgic sanctuaries are that they are invariably in dominant topographical locations which tend to be either at the centre or at edge of a tribal territory. They are also either within settlements or are in remote locations and they are not associated with cemeteries (Brunaux 1988:12).

The constituent elements of Belgic sanctuaries and their locational preferences are explained by Brunaux in terms of the ways in which sacred and profane areas were conceptualised and demarcated in Late La Tène 'Celtic' society. Thus the enclosure bank and ditch was intended as a barrier between the sacred space within and the profane world outside. The fact that many sanctuaries were sited in topographically dominant locations, with the banks topped with palisades, would also have prevented observation of the sacred space from outside. The significance of the entrance and the central area arises from the former being perceived to be the point of transfer from the profane world to the sacred area and the latter being perceived as the place furthest from the profane world and closest to the gods (Brunaux 1988:27).

One of the best understood Belgic sanctuaries, and which has become the type site, is Gournay-sur-Aronde, at which the sanctuary comprised a rectangular enclosure 45x38 metres, within which was a central ritual structure of pits and a succession of rectilinear post-hole structures dating from the second century BC to the beginning of the first century AD. The ditch contained a sequence of votive deposits which included over 2000 broken weapons, 3000 animal bones and 80 human bones, arranged in a structured manner with cattle skulls at the entrance and human remains concentrated at the enclosure corners. The site was located within a Late La Tène *Oppidum*, 100 metres from the river and close to an area of standing water next to the river (Brunaux et al. 1985)



## *The Irish Royal Sites*

The significance of the Irish Iron Age ritual sites, including a background summary of the evidence, is considered in Chapter 7 below.

### **6.4.2 The Burial Evidence**

The following analysis will briefly consider some patterns in the burial evidence in relation to its location. However, the variability of the evidence across the Study Area is such that some factors such as those related to evidence of social patterning and mortuary rituals, within and between cemeteries (as has been done for the large cemetery at Westhamplett (Fitzpatrick 1997), or for the Folly Lane burial within the Study Area Niblett 1999), would be unlikely to provide any meaningful results. Analysis has therefore been confined to examination of patterns for which the evidence is considered to be reasonably reliable for at least the majority of sites across the Study Area. These are:

1. the burial rite (cremation or inhumation)
2. the number of burials identified at the site, in three categories (1;2-10; more than 10)
3. the spatial relationship between burial, habitation and topography
4. the spatial relationship between burial and communication routes

### ***The Burial Rite***

For the purposes of this assessment, a simple two-fold distinction has been made between cremation burial and inhumation.

**Table 6.9, number of sites by burial rite**

Rite	Number of sites
Cremation	34
Cremation & Inhumation	8
Inhumation	3
Other and cremation	1

Tables 6.9 and 6.10 show that the vast majority of the 45 sites with burial evidence are in the form of cremation or predominantly cremation, all of which are of the Aylesford Type (flat graves mostly with urned cremation and all accompanied by grave goods). This is not surprising since the practice of urned burial with accompanied grave goods makes such burials easy to identify and ascribe to the Late Iron Age. In comparison, all of the inhumation burials have been dated, either stratigraphically from dated deposits, or by association with dated burials and none of published inhumation burials can be definitely said to have been buried with datable accompanying grave goods. There is, consequently, a significant bias against the discovery of Late Iron Age inhumation burials that are not located within dated cremation cemeteries or are associated with datable deposits. It can therefore not be assumed on the basis of the small numbers of sites and burials alone that inhumation was a minority rite in the Late Iron Age. Inhumation is nevertheless an uncommon rite nationally in the Late Iron Age and within the distribution area of Aylesford Type cremation burials in southern England is only known to occur on a one site outside of the Study Area – Mill Hill, Deal (Parfitt 1993:47) – in association with cremation cemetery. A brief analysis of the context of the inhumation burials from within the Study Area is therefore desirable, and it does reveal a clear pattern which may indicate that such burial was a restricted rite associated with some cremation cemeteries.

**Table 6.10, evidence of Late Iron Age burial**

No	Site	No.	Evidence
3	Purwell, Hitchin	1	Cremation with butt beaker and two amphorae (Herts. SMR:6085)
7	Norton Road, Stotfold	1 + 4	Two penannular ring-gully houses located within a rectilinear enclosure. Two animal skeletons together with near complete pots found in internal boundary ditch. Urned cremation in a circular pit within a rectilinear enclosure found c60 metres to the north. Cremation accompanied by 4 pots, iron disc, perforated whetstone and pig. Several inhumations, aligned north-south found in the cremation enclosure ditches. Also, a crouched inhumation in a pit at the eastern entrance and second crouched inhumation with coiled bronze ring, located in a pit within a circular enclosure (Steadman 1995; Beds.SMR: 74)
8	Pegston Common	?	'Belgic' and Roman cemetery (Beds SMR:413)
11	Galley Hill	1	Belgic pottery, assumed to be from a cremation, from an Early Bronze Age burial mound (Beds. SMR:116)
26	Old Copse, Aldbury	6	Cemetery comprising six burial groups with cremations, urns and brooches (Herts. SMR:1051)
37	Puddlehill, Dunstable	9+1	Cemetery of nine cremations and a child inhumation buried in a ditch. A spread of probable feasting activity over a 3 hectare area, comprising <i>in situ</i> burning and large quantities of animal bone in Late Iron Age ditches and upper fills of earlier Iron Age

			ditches, including 2 ox burials. One of the areas of burning produced an iron knife, brooch and bronze tweezers. Other possible related features include a large pit and a cluster of post-holes. Probable habitation area 500 metres to the west (Matthews 1976:163-98)
40	Luton, Rosslyn Crescent	9?	Five cremation pots found during development; four more burial groups subsequently found during the development (Thompson 1982:776-8)
44	Hertford Heath	few	Richly furnished un-urned cremation burial accompanied by amphorae, a ribbed glass bowl of east Mediterranean origin, iron and bronze objects. Several Late Iron Age and Early Roman cremations nearby. Located on the site of earlier Iron Age occupation (Homes & Friend 1959; Hussen 1983)
45	Grove Mill, Hitchin	4	13 pots, 4 of which contain cremated bone found in circular pits (Herts.SMR:107 Birchall 1965:fig.13, 1140; Thompson 1982:733-5)
46	Harpenden	1	Find reported as a burial. Artifacts comprised two tall lathe-turned shale vases in the shape of pedestal urns; a large circular bronze bowl; two bronze bucket-escutcheons in the form of ram's heads, which had been attached to a wooden bucket; two bronze ring-handles adapted to the escutcheons; and a bronze chest handle. No direct evidence of burial but the finds almost certainly were associated with a rich cremation (Bagshaw 1928:520-2; Herts. SMR:123)
52	Millbridge, Hertford	1	Part of a circular enclosure approx. 15 metres in diameter and an urned cremation accompanied by two pots and platter. Dated AD 40-65. (Herts SMR:9881)
55	Panshanger Burial, Welwyn Garden City	7	Richly furnished un-urned cremation burial in rectangular pit. Grave goods included 36 pots, five amphorae, an Italian silver cup, bronze bowl and strainer, iron knife, gaming set and assorted bronze artifacts, all laid on a straw mat. Dated to c10 BC. Cemetery of six simple urned cremations 5-10 metres from the grave pit (Stead 1967). Late Iron Age occupation c20-50 years later than the burial, located 100 metres to the east (Rook 1970b)
57	Thorley, Herts.	3+3	Two rectangular enclosures both c17 by 90 metres, within which were contained three cremation burials and three inhumations. Also a circular structure, and a pit containing a cattle skull (McDonald 1995b;Herts. SMR:9275)
61	Long Border A, Stanstead	3	Three cremations of Late Iron Age/Early Roman date, a pond-like feature and a series of ditches and pits (Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989)
62	Duckend Car Park, Stansted	7	Seven cremations, ditches and post-holes and a curved ditch. Cremations from part of a large dispersed burial area of c3 hectares including site No. 63 (Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989:15)
63	Duckend Farm, Stanstead	6	Six cremations, one with ten pots and three brooches. Part of a large burial area c3 hectares (Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989:15)
64	Ward's Coomb, Ivinghoe, Bucks	3	Three cremations, one of which is probably early first century AD date, found in a penannular enclosure 30mx30 metres in size. Cremation accompanied by four pots and an iron knife was found in a pit covered with burnt planks. Late Iron Age pottery also found in upper fill of enclosure ditch (Dunnnett 1973)
69	Tea Green, Offley	1	A single urned cremation, with possible accompanying vessels (Herts SMR:7359)
71	Orchard Site, Cow Roast	1	Two ditches and a single urned cremation. (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Zeepvat 1995:21-2)
72	Dellfield,	4	Four urned cremation burials with accompanying pottery and

	Berkhamsted		brooches located adjacent to an ironworking site (Thompson & Holland 1982)
74	Aldbury	1	Burial group comprising two urns containing cremated remains in association a butt beaker, a carinated beaker, a grey-ware urn and many associated potsherds (Herts. SMR:4242)
77	New Inn Hinxbworth	1?	Cinerary urn fragments, a bronze earring, a fragment of a square belt ornament and thin bronze plate. Late Iron Age date uncertain (Herts. SMR:2078)
78	Social Club, Stansted	2	Two groups of cremations of Late Iron Age/Early Roman date (R.Havis forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989)
89	Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City	1	A probable cremation (Rook 1968a)
98	Prospect Place, Welwyn	2	Two richly furnished burials, including amphorae and Italian silver cups (Hughes 1938:142; Stead 1967:44-60)
107	Raffin Green	1	Cremation in a shallow pit with two pots and a bronze mirror. 100 metres to the west of the burial, an enclosure ditch c500m long and 2.5 m deep with 'Belgic' pottery in lower fill (Herts.SMR:6309; Rook et al. 1982)
113	Station Road, Puckeridge	2+ 14	A linear ditch, 2.5 metres wide by 0.6 metres deep which was observed for 75 metres, of which 30 metres was excavated. The ditch filling contained large quantities of pottery and animal bone and a number of disarticulated human bones representing at least 14 individuals. Two cremations - separated by 3 metres - were located 10 metres to the north of the linear ditch. They were situated in shallow pits and were accompanied by brooches and a range imported Gallo-Belgic pots. Both are dated to after AD 45 (Partridge 1980a:28-97)
128	Icknield Way E, Baldock	12	12 cremation burials excavated in a ditched enclosure c20 metres square (Burleigh 1995a:105)
129	Royston Road, Baldock	many	Extensive cremation cemetery (Burleigh 1995a:105)
130	1980-1 Site, Baldock	7 + 2	<p>Richly furnish cremation burial within 33 metre square enclosure with south-east facing entrance. Primary burial in central pit accompanied by a wooden bucket with bronze fittings, the base of a pedestal urn and three animal burials, two of which were pigs. Adjacent to the central pit was a second pit probably containing pyre remains, which included burnt metalwork objects, such as jewellery and part of a chain-mail shirt. Six satellite urned cremation burials were also located within the enclosure.</p> <p>An unusual circular depression located immediately outside the enclosure with two inhumations at it base, above which a chalk-floored structure 4 metres by 3 metres was built. This contained burnt pottery, glass, bronze and human bone, and may have been a mortuary enclosure Burleigh 1982; 1995a:105) Also an extensive cremation cemetery and an inhumation cemetery to the north of the enclosure (Burleigh 1995a:105).</p>
133	Baldock: Stead Areas A & B	3	Three cremations, two of which were in square enclosures. An unusual square building was located between the two enclosures (Stead & Rigby 1986:38-40). The filling of the construction trench contained pottery dated later than the enclosures but the buildings may be contemporary. As such it may be a mortuary or other ritual structure. Also, three sides of an enclosure c20 metres square with two large pits at the entrance containing coins which is possibly a ritual/cult enclosure (Curties 1997; Stead & Rigby 1986:fig. 4).
136	Wallington Rd,	?	An inhumation cemetery which was succeeded by a cremation

	Baldock		cemetery (Burleigh 1995a:105-6).
139	The Tene, Baldock	1	Richly furnished un-urned cremation burial in pit. Grave goods included a wooden and bronze bucket, iron firedog, an amphora and a bronze and iron cauldron (Stead & Rigby 1986:51-61)
140	Folly Lane, St. Albans	1+3	Large rectangular enclosure with a central pit containing a wooden mortuary structure, and remains of a cremation funeral pyre. The chamber, which was covered with a turf mound, contained four amphorae and remains of a couch. Three inhumation burials were found in the enclosure ditch adjacent to the south-west facing entrance (Niblett 1993 & 1999)
141	King Harry Lane, St. Albans	400+	Extensive cemetery of 475 cremation burials and 17 inhumations dated from AD 1 to cAD 60 (Stead & Rigby 1989). Fitzpatrick has argued that only the 75 phase 1 burials are Late Iron Age (Fitzpatrick 1991 & 1997). However, all fall within the Late Iron Age definition used in this thesis. Haselgrove and Millett (1997) suggest a slightly earlier start date of c10 BC
159	Verulam Hill Fields, St. Albans	21+9	21 cremation burials enclosed on two sides by ditches 4-5 metres wide and 0.5-2.5 metres deep with an external bank. Also nine inhumations and 30 bronze coins were found in the enclosure ditch
162	Aston	+2	Two human infant burials (Herts.SMR:7971)
164	Area 2, Baldock,	few?	Two parallel ditches 120 metres long and 20 metres apart, with cremation burials and a circular timber structure (probably a shrine or mortuary house) the at east end. The ditches also contained well-stratified groups of Late Iron Age pottery and several bronze coins (Burleigh 1982, 14; 1995:106)
168	Cremation, Letchworth	1	Pedestal urn containing a cremation and bronze belt connecting link (Westell 1926:276)
181	Wick Avenue, Wheathampsted	+1	The skeleton of a young woman was found face down in a large ditch. It was covered by a deposit of Late Iron Age pottery of first century AD date (Herts.SMR:9795)
184	Mardleybury	1?	Amphora found in a pit which almost certainly represents the remains of a richly furnished cremation burial (Stead 1967:60)
193	Verulamium Insula XXVIII	3	Three un-urned cremations in the upper filling of ditch. (Frere 1983:273)
205	Birchanger, Bishop's Stortford	1	A single cremation dated cAD 43-54 (Medlycott 1994)
207	Slip End, Ashwell	?	Inhumation cemetery (Burleigh 1995a:108)
212	Wallbury Hillfort	?	Cemetery of Aylesford Swarling type (Essex SMR:3592)
213	St. Stephen's, St Albans	?	Cremation cemetery. Also two enclosures with inhumations in ditch (Niblett pers. comm.)

### ***Inhumation burials***

Of the eleven sites which have produced Late Iron Age inhumation burials, six have all of the inhumations buried in enclosure ditches – most without any sign of a formal grave – and at a further site (1980-1 site, Baldock) two inhumations were buried in hollow pit adjacent to a cremation enclosure (Burleigh 1995:105). Of the other four sites: at King Harry Lane, the seventeen inhumations occurred in four spatial clusters and only four were situated within cremation enclosure ditches (Stead & Rigby 1989); at Thorley

three probable Late Iron Age inhumations were buried in graves close to three cremations (McDonald 1995b), and the context of the Wallington road and Slip End Ashwell inhumation is unclear..

The largest single group of inhumations is at Verulam Hill Field where nine were buried in an enclosure ditch surrounding a cremation cemetery (Anthony 1968). Inhumations within cremation burial enclosure ditches are also known from Folly Lane (3), St. Stephen's (2) and Puddlehill (1) although the latter was a single child inhumation buried in a grave (Matthews 1976:172). The function of the ditch in which the inhumations at Wick Avenue and Aston were placed is not known, but it is possible that they too were enclosures surrounding cremation burials. This evidence therefore suggests the existence of a distinctive minority burial rite within the Study Area which consists of inhumation, usually without a formal grave, within large enclosure ditches, and where the role of the enclosure is known, it encloses cremation burials.

The single site represented by the 'other' category (Station Road, Braughing) is also worthy of note. The burial evidence comprised two Aylesford type cremations and the disarticulated remains of the at least 14 individuals from a large ditch which were mixed with a rich deposit of pottery and animal bone (Partridge 1980a).

### ***The Numbers of Burials (Figure 6.3)***

Table 6.11 lists the number of site within each of the three numerical categories of burials. The geographical distribution is also shown in Figure 6.3. The three categories have been chosen so as to provide the simplest grouping of the sites other than the basic 'one or many' and does not in itself have any archaeological foundation. A more detailed analysis with more categories was not considered to have any merit in view of the fact that for many sites, especially those in categories 1 and 2, the total number of burials is not known. There are, nonetheless, patterns apparent in the evidence which may be significant.

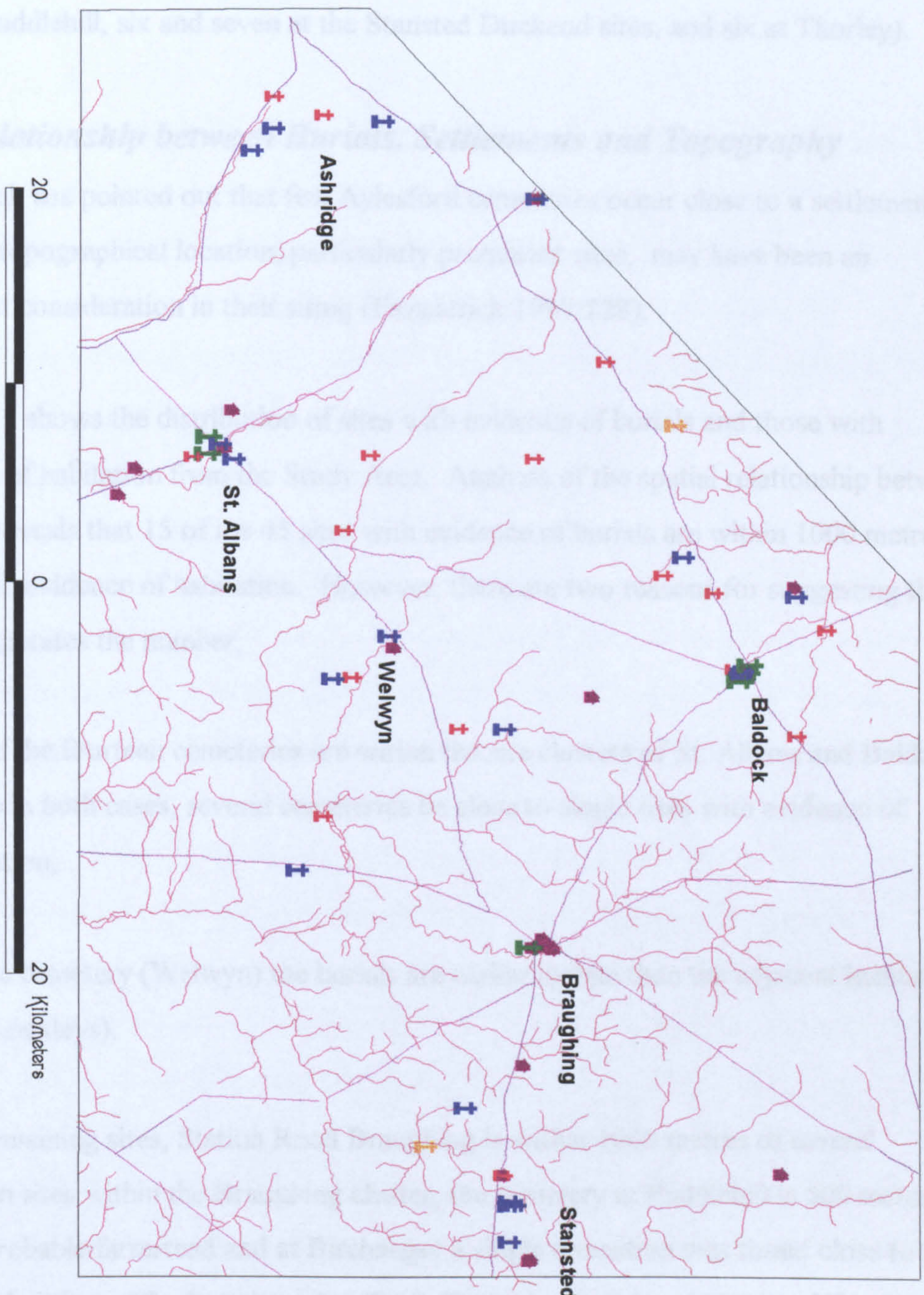
**Table 6.11, the number of burials**

Number of Burials	Number of sites
1	16
2-10	20
10+	6
?	2

The most significant geographical pattern is that all of the six sites with more than ten burials are located within the three statistically significant clusters of Late Iron Age sites at St. Albans (2), Braughing (1) and Baldock (3). To these can probably be added two adjacent sites at Stansted (Duckend Farm, Car Park) which together form a further slightly larger dispersed cemetery of fifteen cremation burials. However, the size of the Baldock and St. Albans cemeteries, in particular, is considerably larger than the break point for the category of 10+ and the size of one cemetery (King Harry Lane) – even if only phase 1 is accepted as Late Iron Age in date – is as great as all of the other 36 sites with less than 10 burials put together (Fitzpatrick 1992; Haselgrove & Millet 1997). Although a figure for the total number of Late Iron Age burials at Baldock is not available, at least 100 cremations and inhumations are known from the six cemeteries. Depending upon how many Late Iron Age burials are ascribed to the cemeteries at St. Albans and Baldock, the total number within the two site cluster areas varies between 218 and 618 representing between 71% and 90% of the total. Even if the distorting figures from the large cemetery at King Harry Lane are removed, over 55% of the total are within these two areas. Finally, the proportion from these two areas of the total number of cremations and inhumations from the distribution area of Aylesford burials is significant; at between 20% and 50%. It can therefore be concluded that Baldock and St. Albans were important foci for cremation and inhumation burial in the Late Iron Age.

Nonetheless, the most common size of cemetery within the Study Area appears to be between 2 and 10 burials, supporting the observation by Whimster that the majority of Iron Age burials occur singly or in small groups (Whimster 1981:155-6). Fitzpatrick has also pointed out that most fully excavated cemeteries within the Aylesford burial area have less than 30 burials (Fitzpatrick 1997). This is also supported by those sites within

**Distribution of Burial Evidence**



**Figure 6.3**

- Roman Roads
- Rivers
- Study Area
- Numbers of Cremation Burials**
  - 1
  - 10+
  - 2-10
  - ?
- Habitation sites



the Study Area where it seems probable that complete cemeteries have been excavated (ten at Puddlehill, six and seven at the Stansted Duckend sites, and six at Thorley).

### ***The Relationship between Burials, Settlements and Topography***

Fitzpatrick has pointed out that few Aylesford cemeteries occur close to a settlement and that topographical location, particularly prominent sites, may have been an important consideration in their siting (Fitzpatrick 1997:228).

Figure 6.3 shows the distribution of sites with evidence of burials and those with evidence of habitation from the Study Area. Analysis of the spatial relationship between the two reveals that 15 of the 45 sites with evidence of burials are within 1000 metres of a site with evidence of habitation. However, there are two reasons for suggesting that this exaggerates the number;

1. nine of the fourteen cemeteries are within the site clusters of St. Albans and Baldock where in both cases, several cemeteries lie close to single sites with evidence of habitation,
2. for one cemetery (Welwyn) the burials are earlier in date than the adjacent habitation site (Lockleys).

Of the remaining sites, Station Road Braughing is within 1000 metres of several habitation sites within the Braughing cluster, the cemetery at Puddlehill is 500 metres from a probable farmstead and at Birchanger a single cremation was found close to a probable building. The Late Iron Age/Early Roman cemeteries at Duckend Farm and Car Park at Stansted are also 500 metres from an Early Roman settlement and it is likely that a Late Iron Age settlement also lies in the vicinity (Brooks and Bedwin 1989; Havis forthcoming). The evidence from the Study Area, therefore, seems to confirm the view that Aylesford cemeteries are not generally located adjacent to habitation sites.

In terms of topographical location local visibility does appear to be an important factor in the siting of Late Iron Age burial sites, with 28 of the 44 sites in locations which are locally prominent and many of these are on the edge of higher ground overlooking

valleys. This raises the possibility that the burials were marked in some way, possibly by posts.

However, there are a number of exceptions. The five sites at Baldock with evidence of burials, some of which are large cemeteries, cluster around the 70 metre contour which is only 10 metres above the level of the nearby River Ivel. The Western Hills which form one of the most prominent landscape features in the area, overlooking the entire Baldock area, lie less than one kilometre to the south of the cluster of burial sites and would have provided a natural location if the visibility of the sites was a primary consideration.

The other large cluster of burial sites at St. Albans is more varied with respect to topography. Folly Lane and King Harry Lane are both situated on prominent hills on opposite sides of the Ver Valley, and St. Stephen's is also in a prominent location to the south. The other two sites (Verulam Hills Field and Insula XXXVII at Verulamium) are however located within the valley and although they would both have been clearly visible from the valley sides, do not appear to have been sited with visibility as the main consideration. Other burial sites which are not in prominent locations include: Millbridge, Hertford; Station Road, Braughing; Prospect Place, Welwyn; and a group of five sites along the Ickniel Belt (Cadwell Lane, Hitchin; Letchworth; Norton Road, Stotfold; Hinxworth; and Slip End, Ashwell).

It can therefore be concluded that visibility was probably an important factor in the location of the majority of burial sites, particularly smaller cemeteries, but that other factors were more important for a significant minority of sites. An assessment of some of the other possible influences on location is undertaken below.

### ***Burials and Communication Routes***

The assessment of the relationship between Late Iron Age sites and communication routes in Chapter 5 concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between sites and the two major east-west communication routes: the Ickniel Way and Stane Street/Akeman Street.

A similar assessment of the evidence for a spatial relationship between the two routes and burial evidence reveals an even more marked, and potentially significant relationship. Of the 45 burial sites, 30 (66%) lie within 1000 metres of the supposed line of the routes which includes only 5% of the Study Area. Although 11 of the 30 are located within the two site clusters at St. Albans and Baldock which are both situated on the routes, the spatial relationship is still significant.

It is therefore possible that the two routes which have been identified as the most important for overland communication also had a ritual or religious significance in the Late Iron Age. The importance of this will be considered in further detail in Chapter 7 below.

### ***Conclusions***

The evidence of Aylesford cremation burial is by far the most common defining characteristic of Late Iron Age sites within the Study Area, and although they form only 20% of the total number of identified sites, this represents 47% of the sites with evidence of a defined function or activity. Moreover, the Study Area contains a much higher proportion of its burial evidence from the richly furnished 'Welwyn Type' burials and the much larger cemeteries (which have formed much of the basis of interpretation Late Iron Age social structure) than any other comparable area. It can therefore be concluded that the introduction of the minority Aylesford, cremation burial rite into the Study Area, probably in the later second or early first century BC, has been a significant factor influencing the high recorded density of Late Iron Age sites in the Study Area.

#### **6.4.3 The Evidence for Ritual Sites**

Table 6.12 lists the sites which have produced probable and possible ritual evidence. The aim is to identify all of the possible sites with evidence of ritual and ceremonial activity in addition to the burial sites listed above in Table 11. However, defining 'ritual' in an archaeological Late Iron Age context for the Study Area is much less easy than the

other functional categories such as habitation, industry and burial as it represents the fragmentary evidence of what were complex religious belief systems. Raftery has recently pointed out with regard to the archaeological reconstruction of Irish Iron Age religion that:

“archaeology tends to uncover only the end-products of what were probably elaborate and long-drawn out ritual activities” (Raftery 1994:179).

Roymans has also shown with reference to the Irish and classical literary sources that Iron Age/Celtic religion was highly complex in terms of its structure and the range of deities worshipped (Roymans 1990) .

For the purposes of this assessment, the definition of ‘ritual’ includes evidence of activity which does not appear to be domestic in nature and which is the most prominent activity on the site. It therefore includes: votive deposits including animal burials disarticulated human remains; the enclosure of space for non-domestic purposes and the construction of buildings or other structures which do not appear to have a domestic function.

In view of difficulties of adequately defining ritual sites it has been decided to include all of the possible ritual sites including three sites which do not fall within the criteria for inclusion in the main gazetteer in Chapter 2 (Table 2.3), i.e. they do not have evidence for provenanced Late Iron Age occupation. They have been included on the grounds that spatial or temporal associations of evidence make a Late Iron Age ritual context possible. The rationale for including some of these sites is detailed below in Table 6.12.

**Table 6.12, evidence for ritual sites**

No	Site		Evidence
33/2 27	Harlow & Hollbrooks	RC	Roundhouse 13 metres in diameter and large number of associated Late Iron Age coins (France and Gobel 1985; Bartlett 1987). Also a pit containing the skull of a young adult, an iron spear blade, bronze ring and a British QC coin (France & Gobel 1985:23). Coin deposition started before the Roman conquest but most Late Iron Age coins found were probably deposited in the Early Roman period. The association of coin deposition with brooches and sheep bones suggests deliberate deposition on a sacred site (Haselgrove 1987:383). There is also second possible ritual site nearby at Holbrooks (Fitzpatrick 1985:52)
60	Airport Catering	RC	Enclosed settlement with seven roundhouses and a possible

	Site, Stansted		shrine Havis and Brooks forthcoming; Brooks & Bedwin 1989)
68	Essenden	RC	Metalwork and other finds including 1 gold torc, 7 gold pieces, 6 gold & silver ingots, at least 200 gold coins; also a separate hoard of iron weapons: swords (in scabbards), spearheads, a shield boss, & horse bits, found in a former pool. Other finds are probably not associated. Finds distribution suggests 2 or 3 hoards. 3 ditches & occupation evidence were also excavated (Herts SMR: 6821). Multiple linear ditches are located 1000 metres north of the site (Herts SMR)
107	Raffin Green	?RC B	Enclosure ditch c500 metres long and 2.5 metres deep with 'Belgic' pottery in the lower fill and Roman infant inhumations in the upper fill. Late Iron Age cremation in a shallow pit with two pots and a bronze mirror 100 metres to the east of the enclosure (Herts.SMR:6309; Rook et al. 1982). Two gold Iron Age staters, one of Cunobelin have been found on the site (Herts. SMR:9983). Evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation is also known from the site
133	Baldock: Stead Area A	B ? RC	Probably votive deposits, including coins, at the entrance of a Late Iron Age enclosure suggests probable ritual activity (Stead & Rigby 1986:417 nos 63,69,96; Curtess 1997)
159	Verulam Hill Fields, St. Albans	B ? RC	21 cremation burials enclosed on two sides by ditches, presumably forming part of a square enclosure. Also nine inhumations in the enclosure ditch (Anthony 1968). A probable ritual deposit of a quartered Roman legionary plate armour shirt (lorica) was also found in a pit at the corner of the enclosure (Niblett pers. comm.). Inhumations and a ritual pit suggest a possible ritual function for the site
162	Aston	B ? RC	Three concentric rectangular enclosures c0.7 hectares in area identified from aerial photographs and geophysical survey. Geophysical survey suggests internal area is devoid of major features. A small excavation of the ditch revealed Late Iron Age pottery including an imported flagon and two complete cow burials which covered two human infant burials (Herts.SMR:7971)
164	Baldock Area 2,	RC B	Parallel ditches 120 metres long and 20 metres apart with cremation burials and possible shrine or mortuary house at the east end (Burleigh 1995:106)
203	Datchworth	RC?	Polygonal, 'trapezoidal' enclosure 0.9 hectares in area with north-west facing entrance. Investigation of the enclosure ditch in 1997 produced Late Iron Age pottery and other 'lovely Belgic rubbish' but no Roman finds. A deep pit, possibly a shaft, was found along the line of the enclosure ditch. It contained Roman tile in its upper fill The pit/shaft appears to be at the site of the entrance, as shown on the cropmark plot. (Herts SMR:1898)
213	Wood Lane End	? RC	Late Iron Age pottery found in Early Roman deposits of an extensive sanctuary complex (Neal 1984)
	Pegston	RC ?	Two Early Roman coin hoards dated to cAD 80, (one of 123 gold aurei) and several bronze coins of Cunobelin, located 600 metres from a Neolithic long barrow (Beds. SMR:1814). Also, a Late Iron Age/ Roman cemetery in the vicinity (Beds SMR:413) and Late Iron Age pottery scatter adjacent to the long barrow (Huspith 1999:9). The coin hoards are also situated long the line of the axis of the barrow
	St. Michaels, St. Albans	? RC	Large enclosure located beneath the Roman Forum at Verulamium Cremation burials in a probable ritual pit. Also, evidence for the working of precious metals is known from several locations within 100 metres of the enclosure (Frere 1983).
	Folly Lane	B	Large enclosure with a central richly furnish cremation burial in

		RC?	a sunken pit. A probable ritual pit is located within burial enclosure. Extensive evidence of Roman ritual activity, including a Romano-Celtic temple on the site (Niblett 1999)
	Broadway Farm, Berkhamsted	? RC	Multiple finds of Late Iron Age gold coins of late first century BC date probably representing one of more hoards (Herts. SMR:7320). It has been assumed that the collection of coins is possibly votive in nature, although an alternative explanation of wealth storage is also possible.
	Annabells Farm, Rebourn	? RC	Multiple ditch systems of probable later prehistoric date adjacent to cropmarks of two Romano-Celtic temples (Havercroft 1977). The ditches, by analogy with similar examples along the Icknield Way, are likely to be multifunctional and later prehistoric in date (Bryant & Burleigh 1995). The apparent juxtaposition of Roman and later prehistoric monuments suggests that some Late Iron Age ritual activity is possibly present at the site.

### ***Analysis of Structural Evidence and Associations***

The variability in terms of the certainty of interpretation (from highly tenuous to almost certain) within the small group of fifteen sites means that the potential for analysis of the evidence for the Study Area is strictly limited. There are nonetheless several key criteria of the sites from which comparisons can be made. Table 6.13 lists the evidence for presence or absence of four characteristics. The significance of the location and spatial distribution of ritual sites will be considered in Chapter 7 below.

**Table 6.13, components and associations of ritual sites**

\* = evidence present

? = uncertain

blank = not present or considered unlikely

Site	Inhumation	Cremation	Associated Burial	Enclosure	Shrine	Votive Deposit
Pegston		?	*	?	?	*
Harlow	* ?			?	*	*
Stanstead			*		*	*
Essenden						*
Raffin Green			*	*	?	?
Baldock A			*	*	?	*
Verulam Hills Field	*	*		*	?	*
Folly Lane	*	*		*		*
Aston	*	?		*	?	*
Site 2, Baldock		*		*	*	*
Datchworth		?		*	?	?
Wood Lane End	?	?		?	?	?
Broadway Farm						*
Annabells Farm		?		?	?	?
St Michael's/Forum enclosure, Verulamium		?	*	*	?	?

Analysis of the table reveals that there are few common characteristics amongst the 15 sites, based on the four selected criteria, and that the presence or absence of the four criteria can not be stated for most of the sites with any degree of confidence. There are, however, several broad statements and conclusions that can be made of the evidence:

Sites with Evidence of Human Remains

Twelve of the 15 sites have produced evidence for human remains, whether in the form of formal cremation (as at Folly Lane and Verulam Hills Field) less formal inhumations, disarticulated remains or nearby burials. This fact does, however, serve to highlight the lack of a clear distinction between sites associated with burial and its associated rituals, and other ritual sites. In particular, the presence of Aylesford type cremations within enclosures which are comparable to Gallic sanctuaries and *Viereckschanzen* is a feature which appears to be unusual.

### Sites Associated with Water

In terms of topographical location, it is notable that only one site (Essenden) is definitely associated with water, although it is probable that three others (Pegston, Verulam Hills Field and the St. Michael's/Forum enclosure) were probably located in or close to a wet place. The wet context of the Essenden weapon hoard would appear to place it within the group of Late Iron Age weapon finds from the River Thames. Fitzpatrick has shown that the large quantities of metalwork deposited in the River Thames in the second and first centuries BC were martial in nature (predominantly swords and spears) and probably votive in context (Fitzpatrick 1984). No such riverine Late Iron Age finds are known from the Study Area although the Enfield hoard, which included a sword, is located five kilometres to the south (Sealey 1996) and Essenden itself is only 1.2 kilometres from the river Lea. The absence of any Late Iron Age metalwork finds from the river Lea within the Study Area is slightly surprising as a number of Late Bronze Age and medieval metalwork finds are known from the river (information from Herts. SMR). It may be that standing water within a ? sacred grove was preferred to rivers as a votive setting in the Lea Valley area, although on the basis of one example, this hypothesis is speculative. In terms of the wet place context and the large number of weapons, the closest parallels are with the sanctuary site at Gourney-sur-Aronde in France and the earlier site of La Tène itself (Brunaux 1988).

### Shrines/Temples

There is no clear pattern in the evidence for ritual buildings or 'shrines' with respect to their form and associations. The building at Harlow is circular and is associated with multiple votive deposits; the building at Stansted is rectangular has a probable votive deposit and is located within a domestic settlement enclosure; and the building at Baldock is circular and associated with votive deposits and burials. The evidence from the Study Area therefore conforms with the apparent diversity of the small group of known Late Iron Age shrines/temples in England.

### The Significance of Enclosures (Figures 6.4 and 6.5)

Seven of the sites are delimited by rectilinear enclosures which have been interpreted as probably or possibly ritual in function, of which six are larger than 0.5 hectares. The



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sites do not however appear to form a coherent class in terms of their function apart from their general interpretation as ritual/burial sites. Folly Lane (Figure 6.6, No.3) which is the most intensively archaeologically investigated site of the seven, has a probable royal burial at its centre and inhumations buried in the enclosure ditch and is most closely comparable with the group of richly furnished burial enclosures at Stanway in Essex (Niblett 1999; Crummy 1993) and the first century BC enclosed bucket burial from Baldock (Burleigh 1982). In this respect the Verulam Hills Field site is comparable to Folly Lane in that it has cremations and inhumations in the enclosure ditch in addition to other evidence of ritual activity (Anthony 1968).

Of the four other sites, the Aston enclosure (Figure 6.6, No.1) is most closely paralleled in term of its plan with the phase II ritual enclosure at Fison's Way, Thetford (Gregory 1992) and several other probable ritual sites in Norfolk (Gregory 1986; Davies 1996) which are shown in Figure 6.7. The trapezoidal form of the Datchworth enclosure (Figure 6.6, No. 2) has similarities with the larger multi-ditched enclosure at Gosbecks (Crummy 1980:9) although this is larger and is multi-ditched. The common features of these enclosures, including the Norfolk examples, is their rectilinear form, evidence of ritual activity and hill-top location. These invite comparisons with the 'Belgic' sanctuaries of northern Gaul which were probably located on elevated positions both to impress visually and to prevent observation of the interior sacred space (Brunaux 1988). However, internal structures have so far only been found at Fison's Way and no evidence of structures or votive deposition was found at Thornham, Norfolk (Gregory 1986).

The St. Michael's/Forum enclosure also has some functional similarities with Fisons Way, Thetford in that, like it, there is evidence of burials and precious metalworking occurring in the vicinity of a large rectilinear enclosure. The replacement of the enclosure by a substantial masonry building early in the Roman period, followed by the Forum of the Roman city also suggests that the function of the site may not have been simply domestic.

## ***Conclusions***

The group of large rectilinear Late Iron Age enclosures of probable ritual function which have been identified are diverse in terms of their ritual and burial evidence. In addition, such sites are as yet not clearly recognised as a class of Late Iron Age site and there are few direct parallels outside of the Study Area. The only two extensively investigated sites, at Folly Lane and Fison's Way, Thetford, have important differences (internal cremation, and ditched inhumations at Folly Lane; internal shrine and external burials and high-status manufacturing at Fison's Way). The association of Aylesford type cremation burials with large ritual enclosures appears to be unknown outside of the Study Area and Essex. It is possible that in terms of size and status, Folly Lane is at the apex of a pyramid of rectilinear burial enclosures which include the cremation enclosures at King Harry Lane, Verulam Hills Field, and Baldock. The practice of burying inhumations within the enclosure ditch also seems to be a common feature of these sites, and includes sites outside the Study Area at Stanway and Mucking in Essex (Crummy 1993; Going 1993). The St. Michaels/Forum enclosure may, therefore represent a functionally different class of ritual site, comparable perhaps to Fison's Way. However, this explanation is likely to be too simplistic and until more sites are found and further information is forthcoming from Aston and Datchworth, it is highly speculative.

## ***6.5 Chapter 6: Conclusions***

In terms of the key questions of the thesis, outlined in section 1.4, few concrete answers or conclusions have been obtained from the above assessment.

Evidence for Late Iron Age habitation and industry is relatively slight, even compared with that of the earlier Iron Age, but particularly in comparison with that of the succeeding Roman period. These aspects of the evidence have therefore not been a significant factor in explaining the high concentration of Late Iron Age evidence within the Study Area. It can also be concluded that apart from perhaps the ironworking industry in the Bulbourne Valley, the evidence of industry and habitation in the Study Area currently has limited potential to elucidate the nature of social and economic development in the Late Iron Age.

The evidence of cremation has been a significant contributory factor in causing the high concentration of Late Iron Age evidence in the Study Area. This evidence has been examined in some depth but the published evidence itself is not generally of high quality and as such also has limited potential to address the key questions relating to the Late Iron Age. Spatial and simple numerical analysis of the burial site evidence has revealed that most cemeteries are small and located in prominent locations at some distance from known habitation sites. The exceptions are the two geographical concentrations of particularly large cremation cemeteries at St. Albans and Baldock.

A few major Late Iron Age ritual sites are known from the Study Area. Most have been only relatively recently discovered and information about them is consequently sparse. They also appear to be a diverse class of site a few of which may have parallels with 'Belgic' sanctuaries and also possibly with Irish royal sites (see Chapter 7 below). However, from what information is known of the few investigated sites, they can be extremely rich in the artifactual and structural evidence of ritual and burial (especially Harlow and Folly Lane) and have considerable potential for addressing the key questions concerning social developments in the Late Iron Age.

# CHAPTER 7: PLACE AND LANDSCAPE IN THE LATE IRON AGE

In this chapter, the clusters of Late Iron Age sites will be characterised in terms of their origins and function. The spatial relationships between the site clusters, ritual sites and evidence for social boundaries will also be considered with a view to addressing the key questions of the thesis regarding the background to the number and distribution of sites and social and economic developments in the Late Iron Age.

## *7.1 The Influence of Earlier Prehistoric Ritual and Burial Sites and Landscapes on Late Iron Age Ritual*

### **7.1.1 Introduction**

Several recent studies of ritual and burial sites have indicated an association between early prehistoric monuments and Iron Age and Roman ritual and burial. Woodward has noted the fact that many Roman shrines and temples are located close to Bronze Age burial mounds (Woodward 1992). Williams has also provided evidence for the widespread reuse of early Prehistoric monuments in the Roman period which he suggests were related to the special ritual significance of the ancient monuments, possibly related to the reproduction of ancestral histories and mythologies (Williams 1998). In addition, a similar phenomenon has also been recognised for the Neolithic chambered tombs of Orkney, some of which were reused in the Iron Age (Hingley 1996), and Lynn has suggested that early prehistoric mounds in Ireland were widely venerated in the Iron Age (Lynn 1992).

It is possible that an assessment of the evidence for association between the identified Late Iron Age ritual and burial sites and Neolithic and Bronze ceremonial

and burial sites may therefore provide some clues their location and spatial distribution.

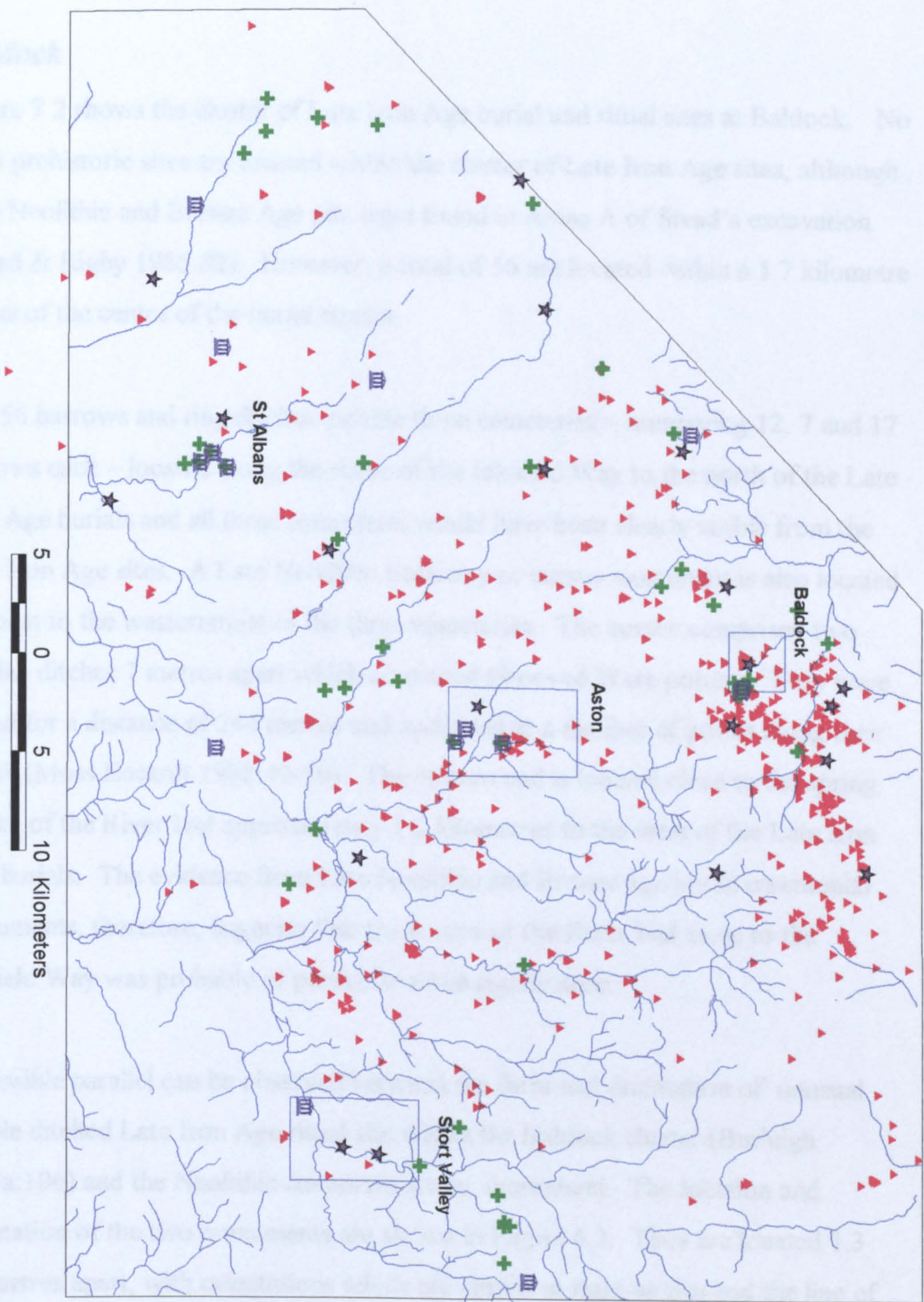
### **7.1.2 Spatial Associations between Late Iron Age Ritual Sites and Early Prehistoric Monuments**

Figure 7.1 shows the distribution of Neolithic and Bronze Age burial and ceremonial monuments taken from the respective Sites and Monuments Records of the counties. In terms of the spatial distribution of sites, two clear patterns are discernible.

1. A major clustering of sites along the Icknield Belt at the north of the Study Area, with a particular concentration of sites between Hitchin and Royston, where 330 are located within a 100 square kilometres area. This represents (50%) of the total of 658 sites for the Study Area and is one of the densest concentration of such sites in the eastern region (Lawson et al. 1981)
2. A tendency for sites to cluster long the edges of river valleys, especially the Lea, Rib and Beane Valleys. Two clusters of more than ten ring ditches, which probably represent ploughed-down barrow cemeteries, are located at Aston adjacent to the Beane Valley in the centre of the Study Area and at Hunsdon adjacent to the Rib Valley.

Figure 7.1 also shows the distribution of Late Iron Age ritual and burial sites superimposed on the distribution of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites. Several, possibly significant, spatial relationships are apparent between the two distributions and each of these will be considered.

# Neolithic and Bronze Age Ritual and Burial Sites









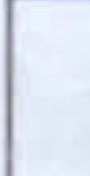
-  Late Iron Age Ritual Sites
-  Late Iron Age Burial Sites
-  Neolithic Ritual Sites
-  Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows
-  Rivers.shp
-  Insets
-  Study Area

Figure 7.1

## ***Baldock***

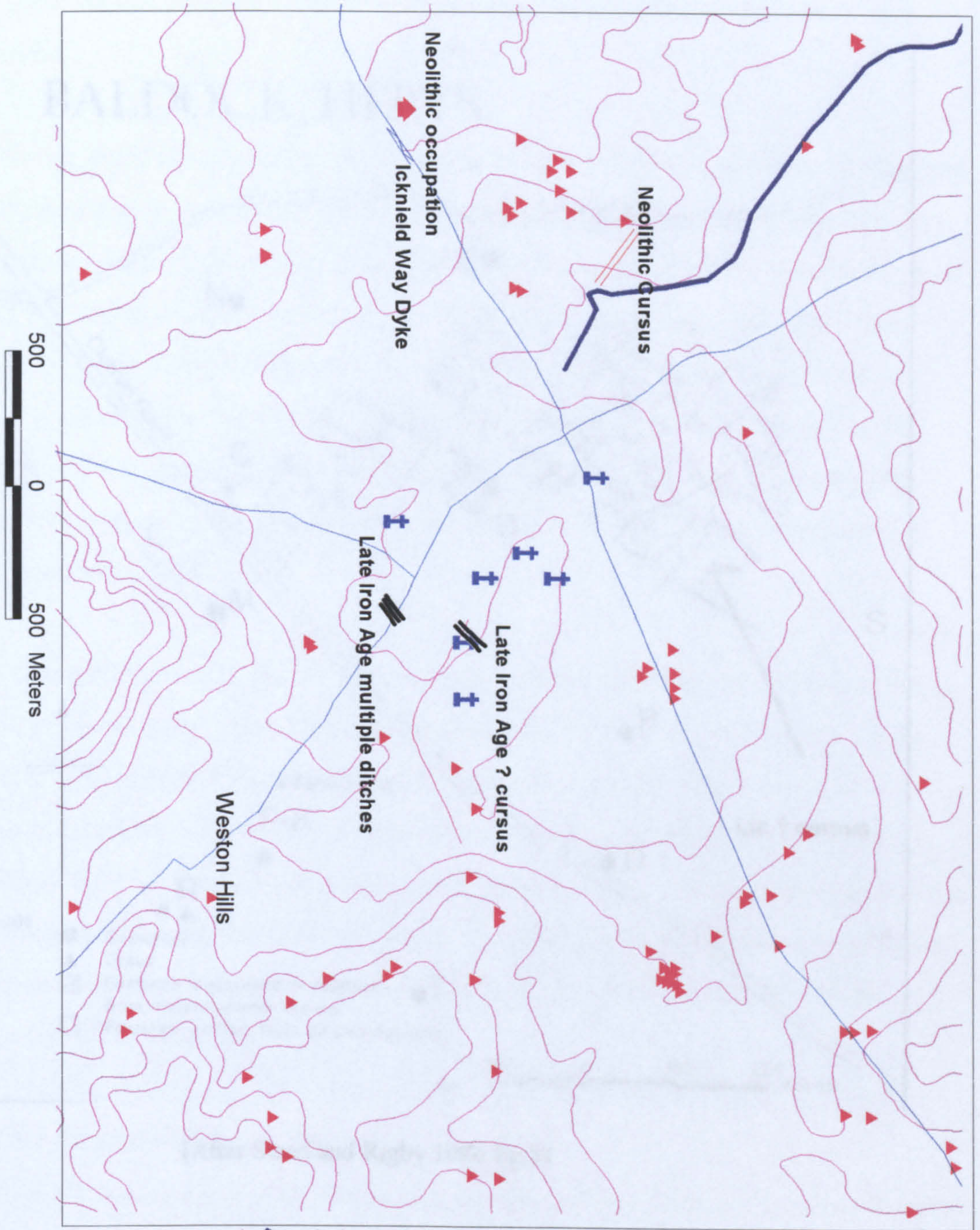
Figure 7.2 shows the cluster of Late Iron Age burial and ritual sites at Baldock. No early prehistoric sites are located within the cluster of Late Iron Age sites, although Late Neolithic and Bronze Age pits were found in Areas A of Stead's excavation (Stead & Rigby 1986:82). However, a total of 56 are located within a 1.7 kilometre radius of the centre of the burial cluster.

The 56 barrows and ring ditches include three cemeteries – numbering 12, 7 and 17 barrows each – located along the route of the Icknield Way to the north of the Late Iron Age burials and all three cemeteries would have been clearly visible from the Late Iron Age sites. A Late Neolithic trackway or cursus monument is also located adjacent to the westernmost of the three cemeteries. The cursus comprised two parallel ditches 7 metres apart which contained Grooved Ware pottery. They were traced for a distance of 244 metres and sectioned at a number of points along their length (Moss Eccardt 1988:49-50). The eastern end is located close to the spring source of the River Ivel approximately 1.2 kilometres to the west of the Late Iron Age burials. The evidence from Late Neolithic and Bronze age burial ceremonial monuments, therefore, suggests that the source of the River Ivel close to the Icknield Way was probably of particular ritual significance.

A possible parallel can be observed between the form and orientation of unusual double ditched Late Iron Age ritual site within the Baldock cluster (Burleigh 1995a:106) and the Neolithic cursus/trackway monument. The location and orientation of the two monuments are shown in Figure 6.2. They are located 1.3 kilometres apart, with orientations which are almost at right-angles and the line of the axis of the Neolithic cursus passes approximately 200 metres to the south-west of the Late Iron Age monument. It is also worthy of note that all of the Late Iron Age enclosures at Baldock, including the large enclosure surrounding the bucket burial (Burleigh 1982) and the enclosures in Stead Area A (Stead & Rigby 1986) are also on the same general alignment (see Figure 7.3). In terms of direct comparisons between the two monuments, the spacing of the Late Iron Age ditches is significantly wider at 20 metres than the 7 metres of the Neolithic cursus and the



Baldock Inset





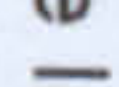



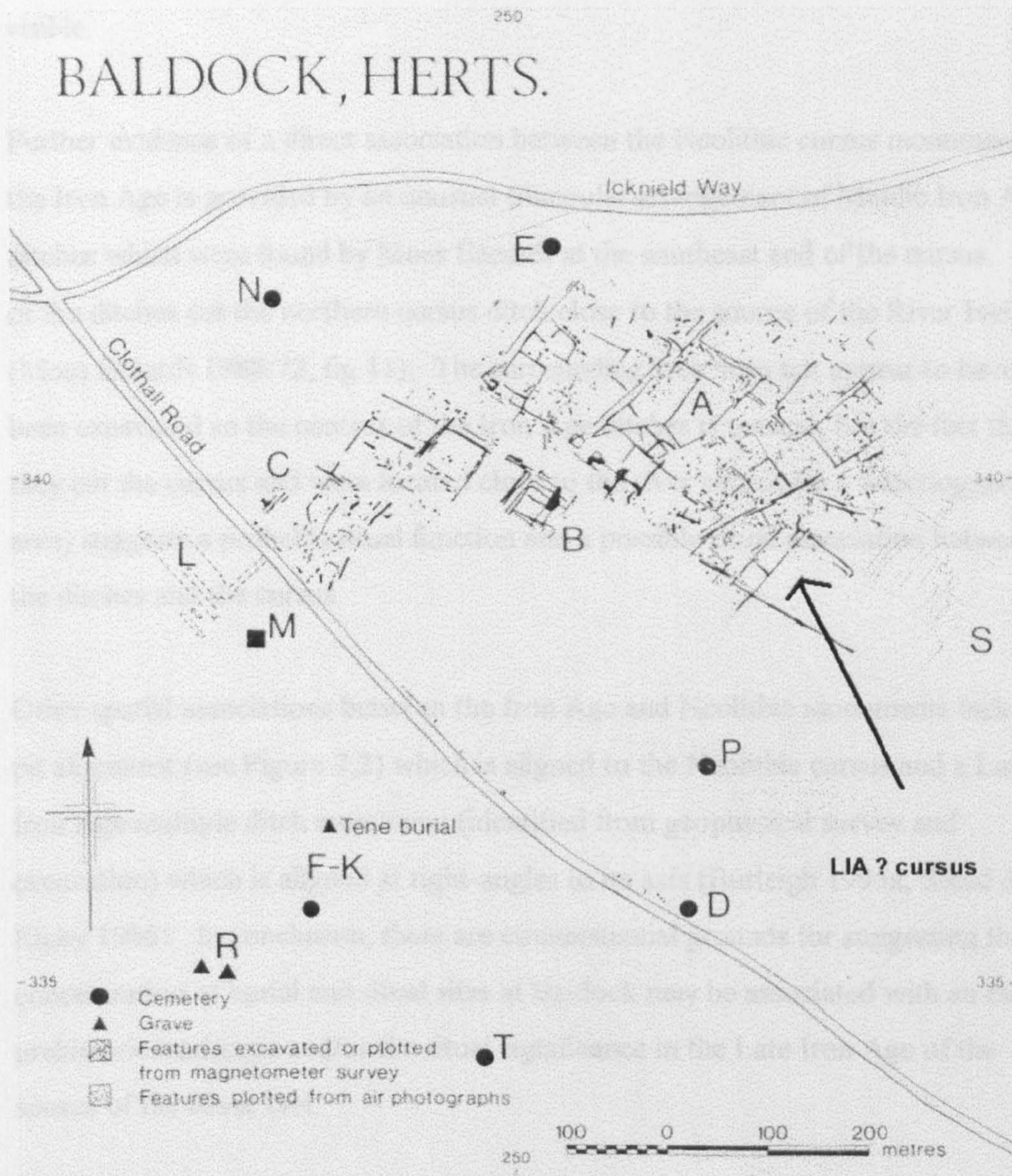
-  Late Iron Age Cemeteries
-  Pit alignment
-  Roads
-  Barrows and Ring Ditches
-  River level
-  Contours

Figure 7.2

# Baldock: Orientation of Enclosures and Linear Features



(After Stead and Rigby 1986:fig.3)

**Figure 7.3**

Late Iron Age monument is shorter (at 150 metres) than the c250 metre length of the cursus. Nonetheless, the form of the Late Iron Age monument does appear to 'echo' that of the cursus. The two monuments are also likely to have been inter-visible.

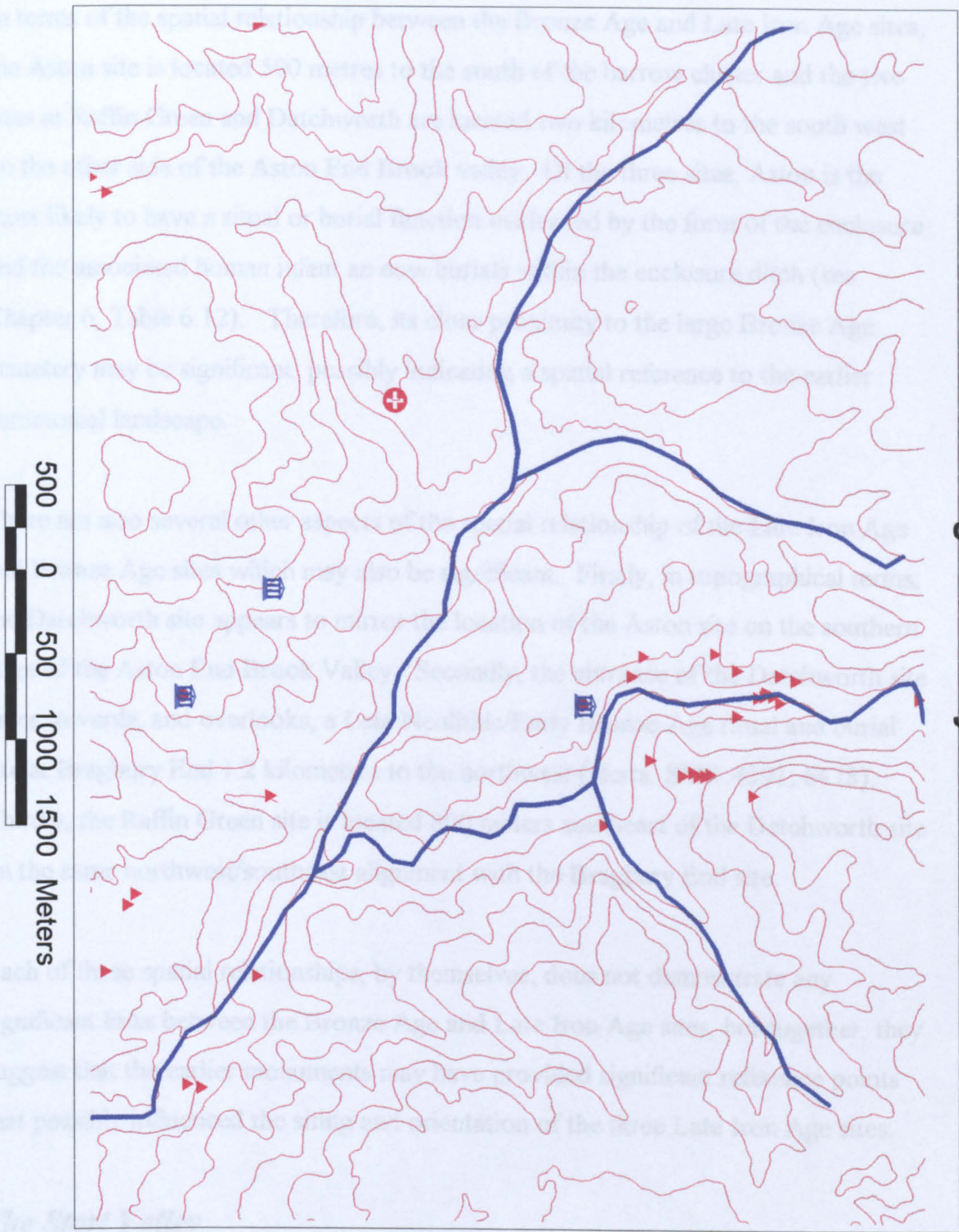
Further evidence of a direct association between the Neolithic cursus monument and the Iron Age is provided by an unusual triangular arrangement of Middle Iron Age ditches which were found by Moss Eccardt at the southeast end of the cursus. Two of the ditches cut the northern cursus ditch close to the source of the River Ivel (Moss Eccardt 1988:72, fig.11). The surrounding area does not appear to have been excavated so the context of the Iron Age ditches is unclear, but the fact that they cut the cursus and were located close to the river source (in a waterlogged area) suggests a probable ritual function and a possible ritual association between the ditches and the cursus.

Other spatial associations between the Iron Age and Neolithic monuments include a pit alignment (see Figure 7.2) which is aligned to the Neolithic cursus and a Late Iron Age multiple ditch monument (identified from geophysical survey and excavation) which is aligned at right-angles to its axis (Burleigh 1995a; Stead & Rigby 1986). In conclusion, there are circumstantial grounds for suggesting that the concentration of burial and ritual sites at Baldock may be associated with an earlier prehistoric landscape and/or the ritual significance in the Late Iron Age of the source of the River Ivel.







### ***The Beane Valley at Aston***

Figure 7.4 shows part of the Beane River valley and its tributary Aston End Brook. It includes the cluster of 21 Bronze Age burial mounds at Aston, which is the second largest known concentration of such sites in the Study Area. It also includes three possible Late Iron Age ritual sites at Aston, Datchwoth and Raffin Green (gazetteer Nos.162,203,107). The prominent topographical situation of all the three sites is notable and is comparable with many of the ritual 'sanctuary' sites from northern Gaul (Brunaux 1988).

**Aston: Late Iron Age and Early Prehistoric Sites**



**Figure 7.4**

-  Contours
-  Bragbury End Beaker Ritual & Burial Site
-  Late Iron Age ? Ritual Enclosures
-  Barrows and Ring Ditches
-  Rivers
-  Burial site

In terms of the spatial relationship between the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age sites, the Aston site is located 500 metres to the south of the barrow cluster and the two sites at Raffin Green and Datchworth are located two kilometres to the south west on the other side of the Aston End Brook valley. Of the three sites, Aston is the most likely to have a ritual or burial function evidenced by the form of the enclosure and the associated human infant and cow burials within the enclosure ditch (see Chapter 6, Table 6.12). Therefore, its close proximity to the large Bronze Age cemetery may be significant, possibly indicating a spatial reference to the earlier ceremonial landscape.

There are also several other aspects of the spatial relationship of the Late Iron Age and Bronze Age sites which may also be significant. Firstly, in topographical terms, the Datchworth site appears to mirror the location of the Aston site on the southern edge of the Aston End Brook Valley. Secondly, the entrance of the Datchworth site faces towards, and overlooks, a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age ritual and burial site at Bragbury End 1.2 kilometres to the northwest (Herts. SMR:4391; 6478). Thirdly, the Raffin Green site is located 800 meters southeast of the Datchworth site on the same northwest/southeast alignment with the Bragbury End site.

Each of these spatial relationships, by themselves, does not demonstrate any significant links between the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age sites, but together, they suggest that the earlier monuments may have provided significant reference points that possibly influenced the siting and orientation of the three Late Iron Age sites.

### ***The Stort Valley***

Figure 7.5 shows the valley of the River Stort between Harlow and Sawbridgeworth. The river forms the modern boundary between Essex and Hertfordshire. Also shown is the Late Iron Age ritual site at Harlow and Neolithic monuments situated along the valley. An association between the Iron Age and earlier prehistoric ritual is provided by the recent reinterpretation of a cremation

# Stort Valley

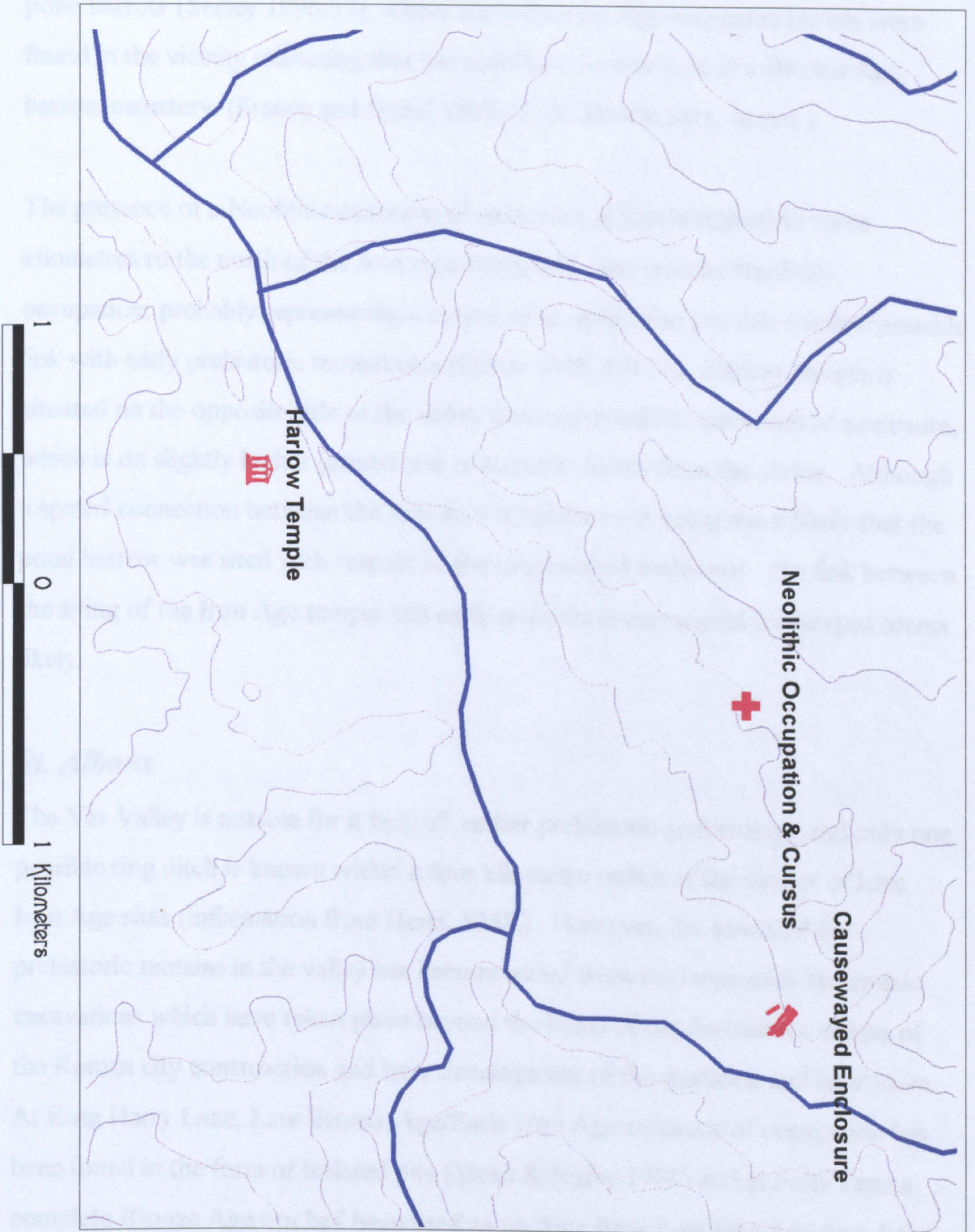


Figure 7.5

burial found in Pit H, adjacent to the Mid/Late Iron Age shrine at Harlow. The burial was initially assigned to the Early Iron Age (France and Gobel 1985), but on subsequent excavation was revealed to be the central burial of an Early Bronze Age pond barrow (Seeley 1996:57). Other Early Bronze Age cremation burials were found in the vicinity indicating that the pond barrow was part of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery (France and Gobel 1985:21; N. Brown pers. comm.).

The presence of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Sawbridgeworth three kilometres to the north of the Iron Age shrine and other nearby Neolithic occupation, probably representing a cursus monument, also provide another possible link with early prehistoric monuments (Herts. SMR:10173). Harlow temple is situated on the opposite side of the valley from the Neolithic causewayed enclosure, which is on slightly higher ground and is distantly visible from the shrine. Although a spatial connection between the two sites is tenuous – it being more likely that the pond barrow was sited with respect to the causewayed enclosure – the link between the siting of the Iron Age temple and early prehistoric ceremonial landscapes seems likely.

### ***St. Albans***

The Ver Valley is notable for its lack of earlier prehistoric archaeology and only one possible ring ditch is known within a four kilometre radius of the cluster of Late Iron Age sites (information from Herts. SMR). However, the potential for prehistoric remains in the valley has been revealed from the large scale systematic excavations which have taken place beyond the limits of the destructive effects of the Roman city construction and later development of the medieval and later town. At King Harry Lane, Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age evidence of occupation has been found in the form of isolated pits (Stead & Rigby 1989) and at Folly Lane a complete Bronze Age urn had been used as packing for a Late Iron Age post-hole (Niblett 1999). A Hallstatt C razor was also found in the vicinity of the Folly Lane site (Saunders 1982b) suggesting – with the urn – the presence of possible ritual activity in the area. The most significant early Prehistoric find has, however, come from Gorhambury, two kilometres to the north-west of the Late Iron Age sites,

where extensive Bronze Age and Neolithic activity has been found including the only known example from the region of a early Neolithic rectilinear structure, 7 metres by 9 metres in size and dated by radiocarbon to 3513-3389 Cal. BC (Neal et al. 1990:8-9). A number of other earlier Prehistoric features were also identified at Gorhambury but not excavated or reported in the excavation report (J. Hunn pers comm.). It is therefore probable that the house forms only part of a more extensive Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement or ritual site. It may also be indicative of more extensive earlier Prehistoric occupation in the Ver Valley. It is consequently possible that the Late Iron Age sites at St. Albans could have been located with reference to earlier Prehistoric monuments, although in the absence of further evidence this hypothesis is tentative.

### **7.1.3 Late Iron Age Evidence from Earlier Prehistoric Monuments**

Several early prehistoric monuments which have produced Late Iron Age evidence are known from to the north west of the Study Area around Luton. Late Iron Age pottery is known from Wauld's Bank Neolithic henge at Luton (Beds. SMR:820); a scatter of Late Iron Age pottery has recently been found at Knocking Knoll Neolithic long barrow, Pegston (Hudspith 1999) and a Late Iron Age cremation was found inserted into the mound of a Bronze Age barrow at Galley Hill, Luton (Beds. SMR:116). In addition, two recent excavations just beyond the north west boundary of the Study Area in Bedfordshire have revealed evidence of Iron Age occupation associated with early Prehistoric monuments. At Bedford, Iron Age occupation including a probable ritual well was found 50 metres to the north of a Late Neolithic oval barrow: Iron Age pottery was also found in the upper filling of the Early Bronze Age hengiform monument which succeeded the barrow (Steadman 1999). Also, at Willington in the Ouse Valley clear evidence has been found for Iron Age reuse, probably for ritual purposes, of a Bronze Age ring ditch. A Middle Iron Age rectilinear enclosure 40 by 26 metres in size was found adjacent to a Bronze Age ring ditch, with part of the Iron Age enclosure ditch cutting the ring



ditch and the Iron Age enclosure appeared to be focused on an Iron Age pit located within the ring ditch (Dawson 1992).

#### **7.1.4 Other Evidence**

A possible Late Iron Age reference to early prehistoric burial sites is provided by the circular turf mound constructed over the vault burial at Folly Lane (which is reminiscent of a Bronze Age barrow mound) and the find of a late Neolithic knife with the burial (Niblett 1999). A similar association of richly furnished Late Iron Age burial placed under a round mound and curated artifact (in this case a Late Bronze Age palstave) is also known at Lexden, Essex (Forster 1986).

#### **7.1.5 Conclusions**

There is good circumstantial evidence that earlier prehistoric ceremonial features and landscapes were influential in the location of some Late Iron Age ritual and burial sites. At most of the cited examples, the earlier prehistoric sites are located at a distance (within a range of 0.5-3 kilometres) from the Late Iron Age sites and the evidence is therefore reliant upon spatial relationships alone. However, the coincidence at Baldock of a major early Prehistoric landscape and probably the most significant cluster of Late Iron Age burial sites in the Study Area, is surely significant. The juxtaposition at Harlow of one of the most important Late Iron Age ritual sites in England with an early prehistoric site also supports this analysis. Of the two other examples, at Aston in the Bean Valley the spatial associations are likely to be significant, but the ritual interpretation of the Late Iron Age sites is not certain; and in the Ver Valley there is no direct evidence of any associations between earlier prehistoric and Late Iron Age sites.

An association between earlier prehistoric monuments and possible Late Iron Age ritual activity is known from three sites in the Luton area. Similar earlier Iron Age

activity is known from two nearby sites in Bedfordshire and also from Baldock. This may represent a local phenomenon, restricted to the Icknield Belt and Upper Ouse Valley areas, but in the absence of a national or regional review of the evidence such as been carried out by Williams (1998), its significance is unclear.

In summary, the evidence from the Study Area suggests that early prehistoric monuments played an important role in Late Iron Age ritual including spatial referencing of some Late Iron Age ritual sites to earlier prehistoric monuments, the copying of some early prehistoric features such as barrow mounds and grave goods and the possible reuse/reinterpretation of some early prehistoric monuments. A significant feature of the evidence is that the clearest associations with early prehistoric monuments are with what appear to be the most important Late Iron Age ritual and burial sites (i.e. Folly Lane, Harlow and Baldock).

## 7.2 *The Late Iron Age Site Clusters*

The assessment of the significance of Late Iron Age site density (see above 4.3.2) has concluded that the density in three areas, Baldock, Braughing and St. Albans, is significantly higher than the postulated average. The following descriptions include a summary of the evidence from these three sites clusters and a consideration of their origins and function.

### 7.2.1 Braughing (Figure 7.6)

#### *Summary Description*

##### *Extent and Survival of Evidence*

A brief summary of the earlier background to the original identification of Braughing as an important Late Iron Age and Roman settlement has been provided in Chapter 4 above. The cluster of evidence for Late Iron Age occupation including several sites with good evidence for habitation indicates that a large settlement was present at Braughing. The area encompassing the sixteen sites is approximately 1.4 square kilometres and is shown on Figure 7.6. The broad limits of the area of Late Iron Age occupation can be reasonably well defined. Watching briefs on various developments sites to the south of Station Road, Puckeridge (the most southerly site) have not produced any evidence of Late Iron Age occupation. Likewise, no evidence has been forthcoming north of the River Quinn in Braughing village.

There is, however, evidence that not all of the area indicated was occupied during the Late Iron Age. Geophysical survey and trial trenching of the area between the Station Road and Ralph Sadlier School sites did not produce any evidence of Late Iron Age occupation (Partridge 1980a:33). This provides reasonably conclusive negative evidence that this part of the settlement area was not occupied. Other negative areas may also exist within the Braughing settlement. The presence or

# Braughing

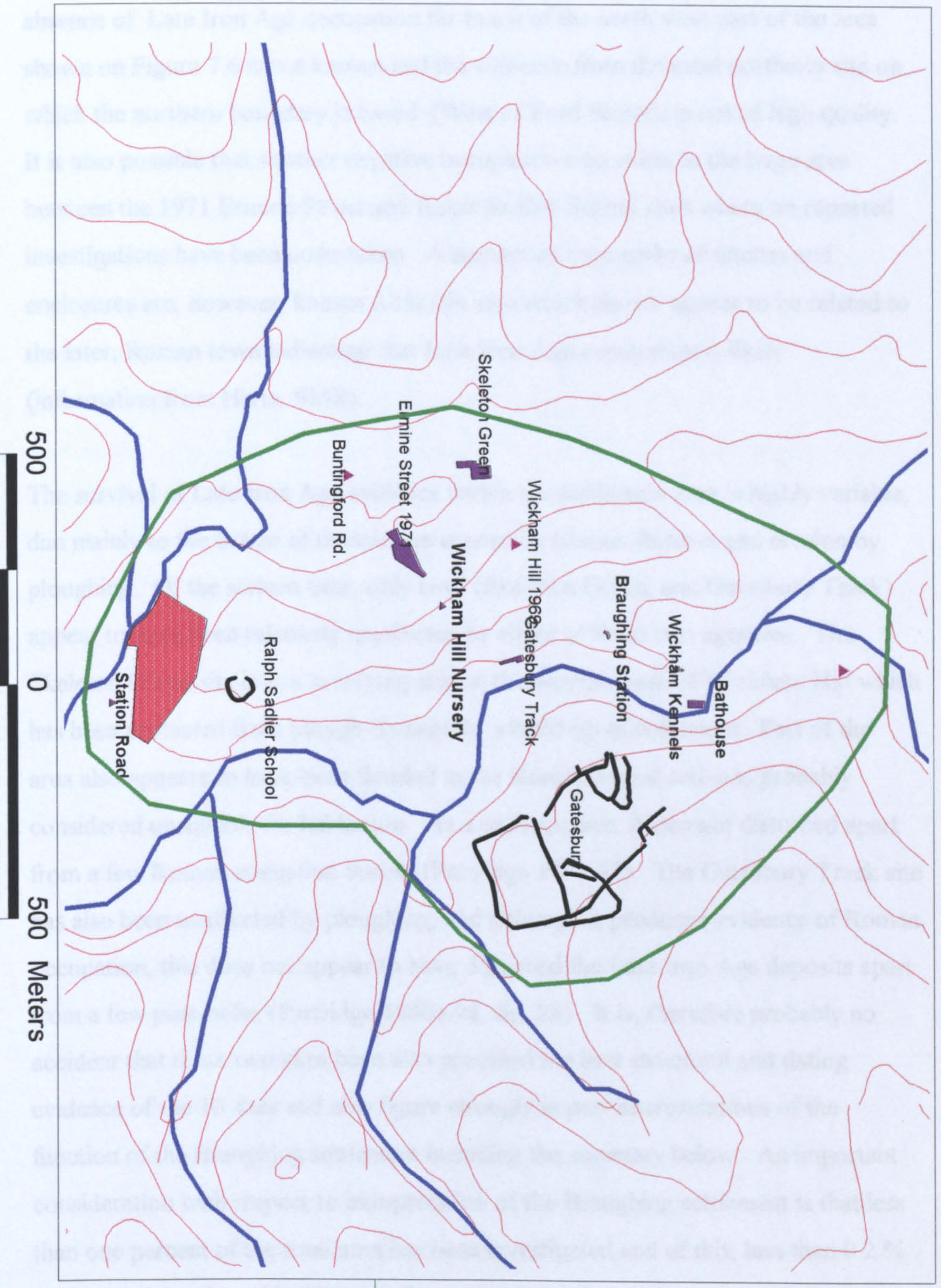


Figure 7.6

- Cropmarks & Earthworks
- Settlement Boundary
- Geophysics
- Excavation Areas
- ~ Contours
- ~ Rivers

absence of Late Iron Age occupation for much of the north west part of the area shown on Figure 7.6 is not known and the evidence from the most northerly site on which the northern boundary is based (West of Ford Street), is not of high quality. It is also possible that another negative occupation area exists in the large area between the 1971 Ermine Street and Ralph Sadlier School sites where no reported investigations have been undertaken. A number of cropmarks of ditches and enclosures are, however, known from this area which do not appear to be related to the later, Roman town indicating that Late Iron Age occupation is likely (information from Herts. SMR).

The survival of Late Iron Age evidence within the settlement area is highly variable, due mainly to the extent of destruction caused by Roman features and erosion by ploughing. Of the sixteen sites, only two (Skeleton Green, and Gatesbury Track) appear to have been relatively unaffected by either of these two agencies. The Skeleton Green site is in a low-lying area at the western base of Wickham Hill which has been protected from plough-damage by a build-up of colluvium. Part of the area also appears to have been flooded in the Roman period and was probably considered unsuitable for habitation. As a consequence, it was not disturbed apart from a few Roman cremation burials (Partridge 1981:42). The Gatesbury Track site has also been unaffected by ploughing, and although it produced evidence of Roman occupation, this does not appear to have disturbed the Late Iron Age deposits apart from a few post-holes (Partridge 1980a:98, fig. 28). It is, therefore probably no accident that these two sites have also provided the best structural and dating evidence of the 16 sites and also figure strongly in past interpretations of the function of the Braughing settlement including the summary below. An important consideration with respect to interpretation of the Braughing settlement is that less than one percent of the total area has been investigated and of this, less than 0.2 % of the total area has either been well-preserved or adequately excavated.

### Chronology

Imported pottery from Italy and Gaul has been found on many of the sites at Braughing, and at several sites, notably at the Skeleton Green, Station Road and Ermine Street excavations, in large quantities (Partridge 1980a; 1981; Potter & Trow 1988). Much of this pottery can be relatively accurately dated, and other datable artifacts, especially brooches and coins are relatively abundant finds at Braughing. The evidence from the Late Iron Age coins at Braughing has also been used as an indicator of the relative intensity of occupation (Haselgrove 1987a). The picture that has emerged from analysis of these artifacts is, however, with a few exceptions both complex and confusing, indicating a situation in which the focus of occupation and artifact deposition was relatively fluid between c30 BC and AD 40 (see Partridge 1975:fig 4).

### The Possible Pre-Caesarean Phase

The only reasonably clear pattern which have been identified by Haselgrove (Haselgrove 1988) and Partridge (Partridge 1975) is the clear early focus at Braughing to the east of the settlement area and to the east and north of the Gatesbury earthwork.

Typologically early artifacts are known from the Gatesbury collection (Partridge 1981:323-56) but the earliest archaeologically stratified dating evidence at Braughing is from the small excavation at Gatesbury Track (Partridge 1980a). The earliest deposits from the excavation were dated to c25-30 BC by Partridge (Partridge 1980a) but there are reasons for supposing they could be significantly earlier. Quantities of imported Italian Dressel 1 wine amphora were recovered from the excavation including the earlier 1A form, whose production is dated to c150 BC to c70 BC (Peacock 1980; Haselgrove 1996). This suggests that the deposits, which are stratigraphically not the earliest, probably date to somewhere between c125 and 25 BC.

Another indication of a probable early date for this phase, including further possible evidence of links with Europe, is the presence of tall hand-made jars within the

Gatesbury Track assemblage. These pots, which are replaced by the earliest wheel-made cordoned jars in the later first century BC, suggest the early adoption of new specialised drinking forms from Gaul. (Hill forthcoming b). The variability of construction method and tempering used for the pottery at Gatesbury Track also suggests experimentation at an early phase in the development of Belgic pottery. The earliest deposits contained hand-made forms and wheel-turned pottery which was tempered with sand, a material more characteristic of earlier Iron Age pottery (Bryant 1995: Hill forthcoming b). Hand-made, grog-tempered pottery was also found alongside early standard forms of grog-tempered, wheel-made 'Belgic' pottery in stratigraphically later deposits (Partridge 1980a:130; Thompson 1982:644). A date for the start of Gatesbury Track could therefore be conservatively placed within the bracket (c120-70 BC).

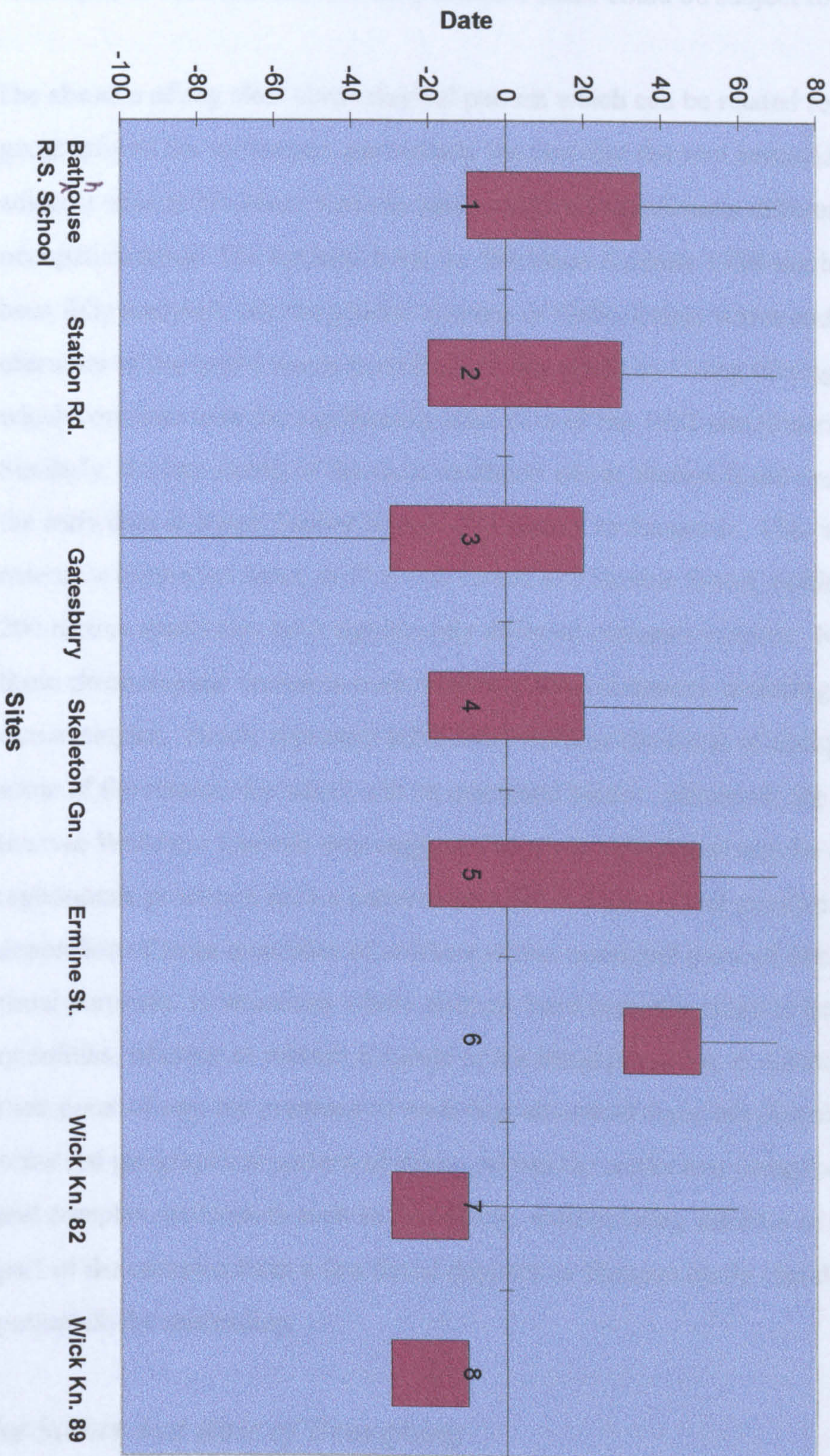
### The Post-Caesarean Phase

Figure 7.7 provides a summary of the occupied periods at the eight sites for which close dating has been possible. The dates for seven of the sites are taken from published reports, and the eighth is based on a preliminary assessment of the pottery (Going 1980). The thick bars on the table represent the estimated period of most intensive occupation and deposition and the thinner lines represent the estimated total period of occupation of the site. The dates are approximated from the published reports, some of which may need to be revision in the light of the general revision of Late La Tène dating particularly due to dendrochronology (Haselgrove 1996), but there are nonetheless some clear observations can be made.

1. It confirms the general chronological trends noted by Partridge and Haselgrove and others, that the settlement was most active between c10 BC and AD 25 in terms of the quantity of imports arriving and the extent of occupation, with both tailing off significantly after cAD 30. Five of the eight sites have evidence of being fairly intensively occupied during that period. A gradual decline in activity between AD 20 and 60 is indicated by the number of sites intensively occupied, with just two sites occupied by cAD 60. It should, however, be

**Braughing: comparative dating**

**Figure 7.7**





emphasised that the dates are approximate and specialist nature of the dating techniques is such that most of the published dates could be subject to revision.

2. The absence of any clear chronological pattern which can be related to the geography of the settlement, particularly the fact that the two immediately adjacent sites at Wickham Kennels have produced significantly different occupation dates. The artifacts from the Wickham Kennels 1989 site have not been fully analysed, but the general absence of Gallo-Belgic wares and the early character of the native wares from the site was noted by Going (Going 1990), which contrasts with the significantly later date of the 1982 site (Partridge 1982). Similarly, the late dating of the most southerly site at Station Road contrasts with the early date at Ralph Sadlier School 200 metres to the north. The two most extensive excavated areas, at Skeleton Green and Ermine Street, (which are also 200 metres apart) also have significantly different occupation dates. Most of these chronological variances over relatively short distances, including the latter two examples, clearly represent substantial shifts in the focus of occupation, some of the reasons for which will be examined below. However, the dates of the two Wickham Kennels sites suggest that some differences may be due to taphonomic processes such as patterns of rubbish disposal and possible deliberate deposition of large quantities of artifacts within restricted parts of ditches for ritual purposes. In situations where artifacts have been deposited in large quantities, whether as rubbish disposal or for ritual purposes, at a distance from their point of use, the presence of such deposits could therefore distort the observed geographical pattern of dating across the settlement complex. For large and complex settlements such as Braughing, extrapolating the date of a site or a part of the complex from a few dated deposits or features could therefore potentially be misleading.

### ***The Status and Role of Braughing***

A reasonably comprehensive assessment of the role of Braughing in the Late Iron Age has been provide by Trow (Potter & Trow 1988:158-61) and Haselgrove (Haselgrove 1987a). Trow considers the evidence for Braughing as a royal centre,

a port of trade and as a market. He cites evidence for each of these roles but does not reach any definitive conclusions as to which was most the important. There are however several reasons for considering that the role of Braughing as a political and administrative centre is the strongest and most consistent theme in the evidence.

#### *A Locally Important Political/Administrative Centre*

The combination of finds of imported Dressel 1A amphora and possible early use of the potters' wheel at Gatesbury Track is strongly suggestive of European contacts in the early first century BC. The probability that Braughing was receiving such contacts is significant in indicating that it was an important political centre at this time.

The status of Braughing as a tribal centre has been suggested by Rodwell who has argued that it was the probable location for Addedomarus, who is named on coins which are dated to the later first century BC, and who is considered to be a the leader of the Catuvellauni (Rodwell 1976:149-65). The status of Addedomarus and the dating of his coins in relation to two other leaders named on coins of the same period –Tasciovanus and Dubnovellaunus – has however been the subject of some debate. Van Ardsell concludes that the coinages of the two Iron Age tribes of the area – the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni – should be considered as a single series with the three named individuals as tribal leaders ruling in sequence (Van Ardsell 1989:349-62). However, Haselgrove has recently said that that it is probable that all three leaders ruled separate areas simultaneously (Haselgrove 1993:54-5). A recent reassessment of the site finds of the coins of Dubnovellaunus and Addedomarus has also suggested that they have complementary but different distributions indicating contemporary minting. It has also shown that, of the two, Dubnovellaunus is the more likely to have been associated with Braughing (Curteis 1997). In addition, a similar assessment of the distributions of three slightly later (c10 BC) coin issues of the named leaders Dais, Andocca and Rues has shown clustered distributions centred on Braughing, St. Albans and Baldock suggesting contemporary but separate minting and political centres based at these three sites (Curteis 1997 & pers. comm.). The coin evidence therefore indicates that

Braughing was probably a locally important political centre (and possibly the residence of a tribal leader) during the later first century BC.

#### *Evidence for a Ritual and Burial Zone*

Evidence of possible area of ritual activity has also come from excavations at Station Road, which is at the southern end of the Braughing complex. Here, the excavation of a small sample of a linear ditch revealed a substantial deposit of discarded pottery, food refuse and human bone representing a minimum of 14 individuals (Partridge 1980a:28-97). The excavations also produced the only *in situ* Late Iron Age burials from Braughing (ibid. 32-47). Geophysical survey and trial-trenching was carried out over a large area to the north of the Station Road site, but this failed to discover any further burials or occupation. Therefore, it is possible that the Station Road site was separated from the rest of the complex by an area devoid of occupation (ibid. 33).

The location of the Station Road at the periphery of the Braughing settlement, together with the absence of any other known ritual activity, also adds weight to the argument that its location was determined by political or administrative factors rather than cult or religious factors and/or in relation to earlier prehistoric sites or landscapes, as has been argued for Baldock.

#### *A Politically Controlled Centre for Exchange*

Evidence that Braughing was an important centre for long-distance exchange is indicated by the large quantities of imported pottery arriving during its main period of activity (c20 BC to AD 25) which forms one of the largest collections of Augustan and early Tiberian imports from Gaul and Italy found in Britain (Rigby 1981).

A high proportion of the imported pottery at Braughing appears to be in the form of containers including amphorae and jars from Central Gaul in fabrics containing mica, or which were dusted with mica on the rim or shoulder (Tyers 1981; Rigby 1989). No comparable early imports of these mica vessels or other imported pottery from

Italy are known from other Late Iron Age sites in the Study Area apart from a few sherds of Dressel 1B amphora and a few mica vessels from Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986). In addition, a recently excavated Late Iron Age site at Hadham Hall six kilometres east of Braughing did not produce any imports, although it was almost certainly occupied during the later first century BC and first century AD (Walker 1994). This suggests that most of the contents of the containers is likely to have been consumed within the Braughing settlement area. The high proportion of imported tablewares and the dominance of pig bones from the excavated sites at Braughing is also indicative of high-status consumption (Fifield & King 1988); as is the presence of exotic species such as chicken and white-tailed eagle from Station Road (Ashdown 1980) and Spanish mackerel from Skeleton Green (Wheeler 1981). Access to the products of the high volume of exchange which the imports represent is, therefore, likely to have been under strong political control.

### *A Proto-Urban Centre*

The high concentration of imported artifacts and buildings within the relatively small (150 square metres) excavation at the Skeleton Green site is suggestive of dense urban or proto-urban status for this part of the settlement. Little information is available from the surrounding area to indicate the size of any proto-urban element or zone of settlement, but the later emphasis of the Ermine Street site 200 metres to the south, the Wickham Kennels site 400 metres to the east and the earlier emphasis of the Gatesbury Track site also 400 metres to the east, would indicate a maximum size of c10 hectares.

The contrast between the dense structural evidence of buildings and trackways at Skeleton Green and the lack of such evidence from the other sites within the settlement means that it is difficult to adequately place the site within a functional context. However, an interpretation of the Braughing settlement complex as a centre of politically controlled exchange (in which raw materials were brought to the settlement and almost all of the imports were consumed within it) could explain the character of the Skeleton Green site and the apparently fluid nature of occupation.

The nature of the social and economic relations which governed the way in which the settlement operated can only be guessed at, but it is likely that such a settlement would have served as a magnet for the local population; both to bring to the settlement the products which were exchanged for imports and to take advantage of the opportunities offered from access to the imports and other products manufactured on the site. Artisans and retainers are also likely to have been attracted to the settlement. The dominant role of imports as an economic basis for the maintenance of the extensive settlement complex at Braughing (artisans, retainers, opportunists and the local population) would have resulted in ebbs and flows in the physical extent of occupation dependent upon the quantity and nature of the imported products. Thus, any lengthy interruption in the flow of imports would have quickly reduced the economic activity within the settlement, especially if access by the elite to wealth from other sources was limited. The differences within the Braughing settlement complex, in the nature and chronology of occupation may therefore be a consequence of variations in the quantity of imports over time. A marked and final decline in imports after AD 25 would have rapidly resulted in a reduction in the population of the settlement and the area occupied.

### **A Market**

A concentration of bronze coins is known from Braughing, both from stray finds and from archaeological contexts (Haselgrove 1987a) and it has been argued that these provide evidence for early/primitive market activity (Haselgrove 1993). The lack of evidence for bronze coins and imports from Braughing on other sites within the Study Area would, however, suggest that any market activity is likely to have been in the form of payment to artisans, retainers or other social or economic groupings residing within Braughing for their services rather than for the trading of commodities within the local area.

### ***Conclusions***

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above assessment.

1. Braughing was probably a locally important political and administrative centre before the mid first century BC, possibly for a tribe or *pagus* social grouping.

The presence of Dressel 1A amphora and probable early evidence for the use of the potter's wheel at the settlement are however suggestive of significant contacts with Gaul/Italy in the early first century BC, or possibly the later second century BC.

2. By the later first century BC Braughing had become a regionally important centre for imports from Gaul and Italy, possibly due to the development of these contacts. However the exchange/market activity was probably under strong political control with few of the products being redistributed beyond the confines of the settlement.
3. By the mid first century AD the quantity of imports had greatly declined and Braughing had reverted to the locally important settlement that it was in the earlier Iron Age. The reasons for this decline are unclear but may have been related to the limited potential of the settlement and its hinterland to meet the economic and political aspirations of the merchants and political contacts with the Roman Empire.
4. Braughing continued as a small native town throughout the Roman period. Significantly, there is also place-name and documentary evidence that Braughing continued to be a locally important centre until the later Anglo-Saxon period. The two place names of 'Braughing' itself (tribes of the Brehas) and 'wickham' are early and significant names which imply continuity of status from the Roman to the mid Anglo-Saxon period (Gover et al. 1938; Bassett 1989; Gelling 1988). Braughing was also the name of the hundred and had a church in the 9th century (Gelling 1975) which was a Domesday Minster (Morris 1976). The continuity of Braughing's status over such a long period would imply that it was the centre of a stable and coherent administrative unit.

## 7.2.2 Baldock (Figure 7.2)

### *Summary Description*

#### *The Evidence: Significant Biases*

The statistically significant cluster of Late Iron Age sites at Baldock has been noted in Chapter 4, and it can be reasonably be described as a large settlement. However, there are several aspects of the interpretation of the published evidence from Baldock which are likely to be a consequence of sampling biases;

1. most of the modern development which has led to archaeological excavation has been concentrated in areas, which on Burleigh's interpretation of the spatial organisation of the settlement (Burleigh 1995a) were set aside for burial,
2. the generally poor survival of the Late Iron Age structural evidence is due to the combination of damage from urban development (Roman to modern) and ploughing,
3. Late Iron Age Aylesford type cremation burial evidence is inherently easier to characterise than evidence of manufacturing and domestic habitation, particularly on sites such as Baldock which have been subject to extensive plough-damage.

#### *The Burial Evidence*

Some aspects of the cluster of Late Iron Age sites at Baldock have been discussed above, the most notable of which is the high proportion of burial and ritual evidence. This is concentrated in an area approximately six hectares in size lying mainly to the south of the Ickniel Way and to the north of the Western Hills, which are the most prominent topographical feature in the Baldock area. Nine of the ten burial sites lie on the ridge which Burleigh has identified as a burial area (Burleigh 1995a:105). The tenth is the richly furnished 'Welwyn Type' burial from The Tene, 400 metres to the south-west of the low ridge (Stead & Rigby 1986).

Another notable aspect of the Late Iron Age burial evidence is the number and extent of the cemeteries, and the size of burial area as a whole, which appears to be

particularly large. Other large Aylesford type cemeteries are known at King Harry Lane which is approximately two hectares in area (Stead & Rigby 1989), and Westhampnett in West Sussex which is approximately one hectare in area (Fitzpatrick 1997), but both are substantially smaller than the estimated six hectares at Baldock. Several large Late La Tène cremation cemeteries are known from northern France and Belgium (Collis 1977; Roymans 1990:223-239) but these too are smaller than Baldock in area. Several features of the burial evidence at Baldock, which would have a large bearing on its significance are, however, unclear from the available evidence. These include the total number of known burials, whether the cemeteries and enclosures form a defined functional burial and ritual zone or if they are interspersed with areas which were either left unoccupied or contained domestic occupation. Lastly, the presence of significant numbers of Late Iron Age inhumation burials, including two cemeteries, is a notable feature of the Baldock evidence.

#### *Evidence of Manufacturing*

The evidence of manufacturing from Baldock is slight and small in scale, but is suggestive of the workshop or specialist workshop mode of production. The evidence comprises brooch manufacturing (Stead 1986:122-3), cloth spinning (Forster 1986b:170), cloth weaving (Burleigh 1995a; Foster 1986b:168) and possible pottery production (Rigby & Foster 1989:187-8). However, unlike the two other major settlements within the Study Area (Braughing and St. Albans), Baldock has not produced evidence for the working of precious metals in the form of clay pellet moulds.

#### *Evidence of Habitation*

A problematic aspect of the Baldock settlement is the lack of unambiguous evidence for habitation from published sources. Several structures of Late Iron Age or probable Late Iron Age date are known. Two structures (one circular and one rectilinear) were found in Stead Area A (Stead & Rigby 1986:figs.12-13) but the lack of domestic occupation evidence and the proximity of the two structures to burial enclosures suggests a possible ritual function. The rectangular structure, in



particular, was situated between two Late Iron Age burial enclosures (Stead & Rigby 1986:fig.4). Part of a ring gully was found at Hartsfield School (Burleigh 1995b) but the lack of domestic occupation in the form of surfaces, pits and ditches means that a domestic function unproved.

The presence of domestic occupation at Baldock is likely given the size of the settlement and the quantities of Late Iron Age features and finds, including ditch systems and trackways (Stead & Rigby 1986; Burleigh 1995a), and the lack of evidence is probably due in the main to the sampling biases referred to above. However, the size of any domestic settlement may not have been large. A probable focus of settlement close to the Romano-Celtic temple site at Baker's Close (east of the burial cluster and 200 metres to the north of The Tene burial) seems to be the best candidate (Burleigh 1995a:109). The presence of cemeteries to the east of this area and the series of multiple ditches to the south would have restricted the size of any domestic area unless such occupation was interspersed with the cemeteries and ditches. Haselgrove has recently suggested that a small elite focus may explain the concentration of Late Iron Age coin evidence at Baldock, particularly the relatively large number of first century AD low-denomination bronze coins (Haselgrove 1995a:81). The status of any domestic settlement in the Baker's Close area is, therefore, likely to be high, based of the quality of the burial and artifact evidence.

### Chronology

Earlier Iron Age occupation at Baldock is indicated by the presence of hand made pottery with sand and shell temper (Stead & Rigby 1986), and the high proportion of hand-made forms generally in the earliest deposits might indicate earlier Iron Age occupation. Recent excavation of the Late Iron Age cremation cemetery at Hinxton 25 kilometres east of Baldock has however suggested that the adoption of the potters' wheel may have been a complex process in the north Hertfordshire/south Cambridgeshire area, with many settlements possibly not using wheel-thrown pottery during the Late Iron Age (Hill forthcoming b). The nature and extent of any earlier Iron Age presence at Baldock is therefore uncertain based on the published evidence.

A significant presence at Baldock in the early first century BC is however clear from the inclusion of Dressel 1A amphorae with The Tene burial and the presence of two probable La Tène D1a brooches from Stead Area A (Stead & Rigby 1986; Haselgrove 1997:69). The large number of coins recovered from Baldock also indicates occupation from second half of the first century BC; probably beginning in to the south west of the ridge on which the cemeteries are situated (Walls Field) and subsequently moving onto the ridge (Upper Walls Common) (Haselgrove 1987a:178). The most intensive period of occupation indicated by the artifacts is during the first half of the first century AD when large quantities of Gallo-Belgic pottery were arriving at the settlement. The evidence from coins also indicates a general expansion of the occupied area during this period (Haselgrove 1993:54).

### ***The Role of Late Iron Age Baldock***

#### ***A Religious/Cult Centre***

The evidence from the cluster of Late Iron Age sites at Baldock is dominated by the evidence of burial. It is likely that that evidence has been significantly biased in favour of the discovery of burials and against buildings and other evidence of domestic occupation, but the number and extent of the cemeteries and ritual evidence strongly suggests that Baldock's role was primarily as a centre in which burial and various associated funerary rituals were undertaken.

The relationship between the ritual and burial evidence at Baldock and the Bronze Age and Neolithic evidence within 1.5 kilometres has been discussed above. It is argued that aspects of the cemeteries including their orientation are referenced to the earlier prehistoric features which are located close to the source of the River Ivel. This evidence, together with the concentration of earlier and later prehistoric monuments within the area provides a basis for suggesting that Baldock was of particular significance for burial and ritual in the Neolithic and Bronze Age and also in the Late Iron Age, especially the source of the River Ivel which is close to the route of the Icknield Way.

From the early first century BC Baldock may therefore have functioned primarily as a religious/cult centre in which burial and associated rituals took place. However, this does not necessarily explain why Baldock developed into an unprecedentedly large burial and ritual complex from c50 BC. A possible explanation for this is provided by a forthcoming reassessment of the Aylesford burials of the North Hertfordshire/south Cambridgeshire area by J.D. Hill, C. Evans and M Alexander (Hill et al. forthcoming). Hill considers that the absence of Aylesford burials from the large number of excavations undertaken to the north of this area confirms the reality of a northern boundary to the Aylesford burial complex in southern Cambridgeshire. He also suggests that the unusual form of the Hinxton burials (which were demarcated and placed in grave pits within small round barrows ) could possibly be due to their location at the northern periphery of the Aylesford burial distribution. Hodder argues that enhanced symbolic display can be a feature of social group boundaries (Hodder 1982) and Hill considers that this could be the case for the Hinxton burials (Hill et al. forthcoming). The same phenomenon may therefore explain the large size of Baldock and the number of its burials. The situation of Baldock on the Icknield Way, which was also an important long-distance communication route, would also have served to maximise its impact. In this respect, the evidence for the elaboration of the Icknield Way immediately to the west of Baldock by the building of a substantial bank and ditch and road surface (Moss Eccardt 1988) is significant, as is the large number of routes into the Baldock settlement from the south (Burleigh 1995a:103).

### *An Administrative/Elite Centre*

The suggested function of Baldock as cult and burial complex does not however adequately explain some significant aspects of its Late Iron Age evidence, especially that for specialised manufacturing and for the expansion of occupation activity in the first half of the first century AD. The large collection of Gallo-Begic tableware at Baldock is indicative of high status 'Romanised' consumption and the large number of coins, although some have been found in possible ritual contexts (Curteis 1997), are likely to represent some form of primitive market activity. These hint that

Baldock was also a central place and possible elite residence as well as a centre for burial by the first century AD.

In summary, Baldock was a major centre for Aylesford burials as well as the increasingly recognised Late Iron Age rite of inhumation burial. It was also probably a political/administrative centre within elite residence. Baldock lay within an extensive complex of early and later prehistoric monuments and it is suggested that the ritual/burial cult centre may have been located at the source of the River Ivel close to the route of the Icknield Way because of its ritual significance in earlier prehistory.

### 7.2.3 St. Albans (Figure 7.8)

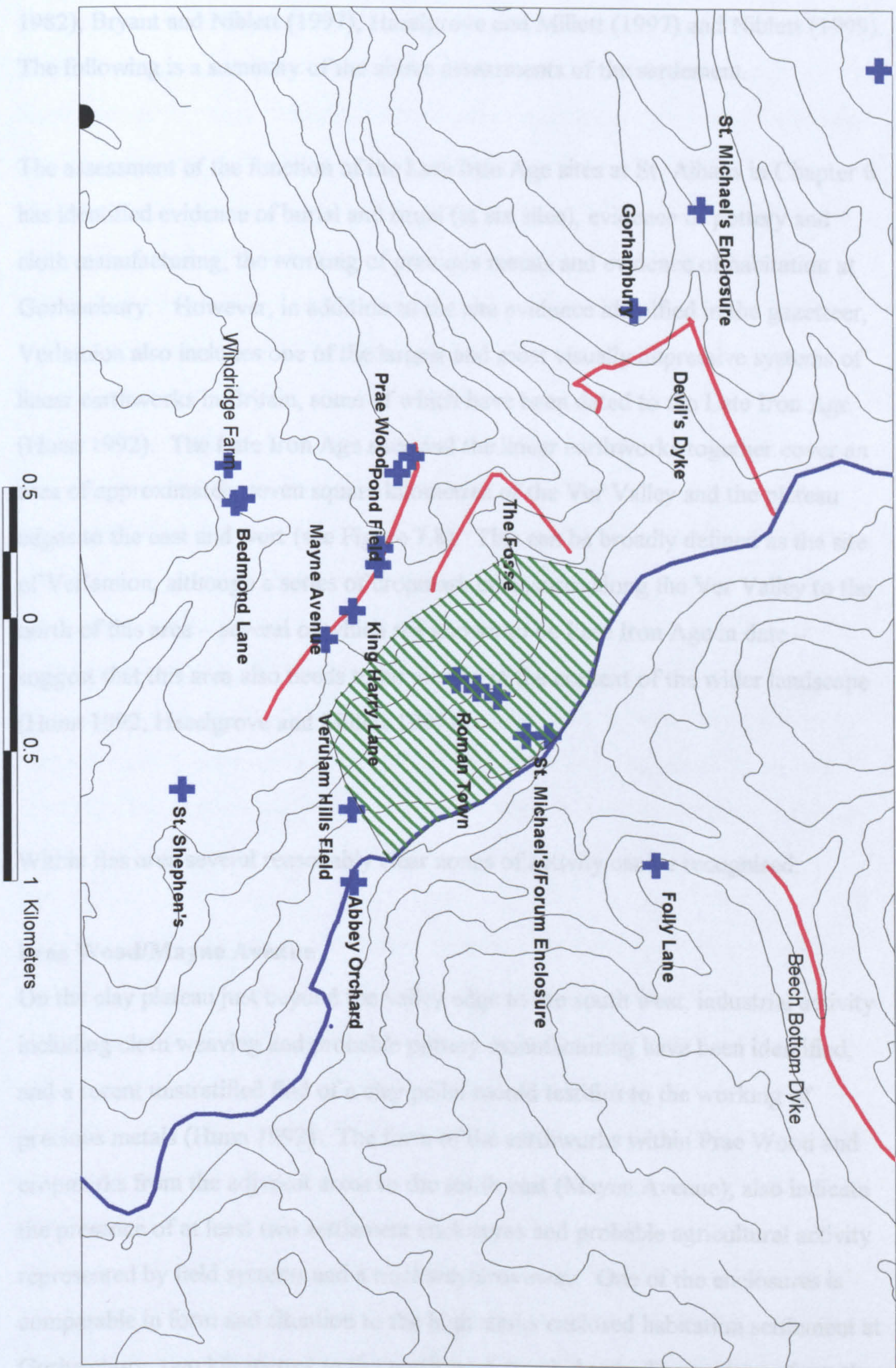
#### *A Summary Description*

##### *The Evidence*

The assessment of site density in Chapter 4 has shown that the largest statistically significant cluster of sites in the Study Area is at St. Albans. The cluster of sites is located in and close to the Roman city of Verulamium in the valley of the River Ver. It can be identified as the site of Verlamion, the Late Iron Age precursor of Verulamium Roman City which is named on coins minted by Tasciovanus and Cunobelin. Verlamion is probably the most intensively studied Late Iron Age settlement in England. It has been subject of several major excavation campaigns: the most notable of which were those of R.E.M. and T. Wheeler in the 1930s (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936); S.S. Frere in the 1950s (Frere 1972; 1983; 1984) and recently by R. Niblett (Niblett 1999), in addition to many smaller scale investigations. A number of surveys, synthesis of the evidence, and re-examinations of earlier material have also been produced; most notably Thompson's assessment of the pottery (Thompson 1982); Hunn's assessments of the landscape, especially the earthworks (Hunn 1992; 1994; 1996); and the syntheses of Saunders (Saunders

# St. Albans

Figure 7.8



1982), Bryant and Niblett (1997), Haselgrove and Millett (1997) and Niblett (1999). The following is a summary of the above assessments of the settlement.

The assessment of the function of the Late Iron Age sites at St. Albans in Chapter 6 has identified evidence of burial and ritual (at six sites), evidence of pottery and cloth manufacturing; the working of precious metals and evidence of habitation at Gorhambury. However, in addition to the site evidence identified in the gazetteer, Verlamion also includes one of the largest and most visually impressive systems of linear earthworks in Britain, some of which have been dated to the Late Iron Age (Hunn 1992). The Late Iron Age sites and the linear earthworks together cover an area of approximately seven square kilometres of the Ver Valley and the plateau edges to the east and west (see Figure 7.8). This can be broadly defined as the site of Verlamion, although a series of cropmark enclosures along the Ver Valley to the north of this area – several of which are known to be Late Iron Age in date – suggest that this area also needs to be viewed in the context of the wider landscape (Hunn 1992; Haselgrove and Millett 1997).

Within this area several reasonably clear zones of activity can be recognised:

#### **Prae Wood/Mayne Avenue**

On the clay plateau just beyond the valley edge to the south west, industrial activity including cloth weaving and probable pottery manufacturing have been identified, and a recent unstratified find of a clay pellet mould testifies to the working of precious metals (Hunn 1992). The form of the earthworks within Prae Wood and cropmarks from the adjacent areas to the south east (Mayne Avenue), also indicate the presence of at least two settlement enclosures and probable agricultural activity represented by field systems and a trackway/droeway. One of the enclosures is comparable in form and situation to the high status enclosed habitation settlement at Gorhambury, two kilometres to the north west (see below). The evidence from the Prae Wood/Mayne Avenue area therefore suggests that two or three rectilinear settlement compounds were interspersed with agricultural and industrial activity

covering an area of approximately three to four square kilometres (Hunn 1992, 1994; Haselgrove and Millett 1997:284). The area is bounded to the north east by a linear boundary feature (Wheeler's Ditch) which runs along the edge of the plateau parallel to the Ver Valley for approximately 1450 metres, falling gently from northwest to southeast by twenty metres over its length. The boundary comprises a bank and ditch six metres wide at the north west end which diminishes to three metres approximately half way along its length: the largest of the rectilinear enclosures appears to abut the ditch (Niblett 1999).

### **Devils Ditch, New Ditch, White Ditch and Gorhambury**

A kilometre to the north west of the Prae Wood/Mayne Avenue area is a dyke system including the Devil's Dyke, New Dyke and White Dyke, with a rectilinear settlement enclosure to the west at Gorhambury. The dyke system appears to enclose two sides of an area of the south western side of the Ver Valley. The dykes have a total length of 1850 metres and are generally larger than the boundary ditch (Wheeler's Ditch) at Prae Wood. An excavated section of New Dyke adjacent to the Gorhambury enclosure had a width of 23 metres, and a height of 10 metres from bank top to ditch bottom (Neal et al. 1990: fig 21). All of the dykes have the quarry ditch downhill of the bank (Hunn 1992; 1994).

The enclosure at Gorhambury abuts the western arm of the dyke system, and was provided with an entrance through the dyke (Neal et al. 1990:13-22). The enclosure has at least three Late Iron Age periods. In the earliest phase (period 3), it comprised a single rectangular enclosure with a ditched trackway entrance to the west (Neal et al. 1990:13,fig.12). The trackway is 100 metres in length and has the form of a droveway suggesting that one of the functions of the enclosure may have been as a cattle compound. By the latest period (period 5) the trackway/droveway entrance had been replaced by a second square enclosure and the main entrance to the now double enclosure was on the east side through the dyke system. Within the enclosure was a number of structures including an aisled barn, probably for agricultural workers, a large granary, several large rectilinear sillbeam structures and

a round house. Finds include 14 Late Iron Age coins and imported Gallo-Belgic pottery (Neal et al. 1990).

It is clear from the size of the enclosure, the number and size of its internal structures, and the quality of its artifacts, that Gorhambury was a high status settlement (Millett 1991; Haselgrove & Millett 1997). The variety of building forms within the enclosure indicate that different techniques of construction were being used (either contemporary, or were developing rapidly), and also that the use of internal space within buildings varied. In particular, a large rectilinear structure beneath the Roman villa (building 8) consisted of a Romanised/Gaulish plan with internal divisions and timber-framed construction and was constructed close to a roundhouse (building 6) of traditional Iron Age type. In addition, the large aisled structure (building 15, which lies at the opposite end of the enclosure) combines a rectilinear plan-form with the open internal space and steeply pitched roof of the traditional round house form (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2 above).

### **The Valley and Roman Town Area**

The fragmentary evidence from the area of the later Roman Town includes the working of precious metals, probably for coin blank manufacturing, associated with a rectilinear structure; some ritual and burial activity in the form of cremations; a probable ritual pit; a possible ritual focus in the marshy area next to the river and a large rectangular enclosure beneath the Roman forum (Niblett 1999). The central location of the large enclosure and its spatial relationship to the Roman forum has led to its interpretation as the political centre of Verlamion, possibly a royal enclosure or palace site (Frere 1983; Hunn 1992, 1994). The fragmentary nature of the evidence makes interpretation of the evidence problematic, but there are a number of functional similarities with the extensively excavated, and much better understood site at Fison's Way, Norfolk. This comprised a large rectangular enclosure within which was evidence for ritual activity including two phases of large circular structures interpreted as shrines/temples (Gregory 1992). Outside of the enclosure were several subsidiary enclosures within which the working of precious metals and cloth weaving took place. Inhumation burials were also located close to



the enclosure (Gregory 1992). The juxtaposition of a large enclosure, burial and precious metalworking at Fison's Way are all comparable to the evidence from the Roman town area at Verulamium. Therefore, Fison's Way appears to be the best parallel currently for the forum enclosure, given the rarity of excavated examples with which to compare it.

Three further cemeteries are located within the Ver Valley. The Verulam Hills Field enclosed cremation cemetery lies immediately to the southeast of the Roman town and the St. Stephen's cemetery lies a further 700 metres to the south east along Roman Watling Street (Anthony 1968; Niblett 1999). The large cemetery at King Harry Lane is situated on the northeastern side of the linear boundary at the Prae Wood/Mayne Avenue site (Stead & Rigby 1989), and scattered inhumation and cremation burials are known from the river flood plain and valley sides (Bryant & Niblett 1997:273). Another large linear ditch feature known as 'The Fosse' which is located within the Ver Valley to the west of the Roman Town, has also recently been interpreted as Late Iron Age (Niblett 1993). This follows the alignment of the Prae Wood ditch and turns at right angles and heads towards the river running parallel with Devil's Ditch 500 metres to the north west.

### **Folly Lane**

A richly furnished cremation burial was placed centrally within a large rectilinear enclosure on a hill at the north east edge of the Ver Valley in cAD 50. The burial was preceded by Late Iron Age occupation including a probable dwelling on the eastern side of linear ditch which was traced for a distance of c200 metres along the valley side. (Niblett 1999). The presence of a linear ditch with occupation evidence on the plateau side, in the pre-burial phase has some similarities with the Prae Wood site on the other side of the Ver Valley, which it mirrors.

### **St. Albans Abbey Orchard**

Redeposited Late Iron Age pottery and a coin pellet mould fragments have been found in the valley bottom (Saunders and Havercroft 1982:34, note 3).

## ***The Role of Verlamion***

### **A Ritual Cult Centre**

Haselgrove and Millett have argued that Verlamion may have developed as a ritual complex, possibly originating at the meeting place at a boundary of territories (Haselgrove & Millett 1997:285-6). This interpretation is further developed by Niblett who suggests that the area including Folly Lane, the Roman Town and the Ver Valley was probably a large religious cult complex, comparable in spatial organisation to the Gallo-Roman sanctuary complexes of northern Gaul such as Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Niblett 1999). The following evidence has been used as the basis for this interpretation.

1. The apparent zoning of activity areas, with ritual and burial activity occurring within the Ver Valley, bounded to the south and west by the dyke complexes of Prae Wood and Gorhambury, beyond which settlement and agricultural activity was concentrated.
2. The cluster of Late Iron Age coins on the site of the Roman theatre, which by analogy with the Gallo-Roman sanctuaries, may have been an ceremonial assembly area in the Late Iron Age (Haselgrove & Millett 1997; Niblett 1999).
3. The visibility of the cemeteries and the dyke system. The dykes face towards the valley area. If therefore the St. Michael's/Forum enclosure is assumed to be the centre of the ritual/cult complex, the other main features of the complex including the dykes and the King Harry Lane and St. Stephen's cemeteries and the Folly Lane site would have all appeared as impressive skyline features.
4. The valley bottom area close to the river was probably a wet, marshy area in the Late Iron Age which would probably have been unsuitable for habitation but could have been a possible context for ritual activity including votive deposition (Haselgrove & Millett 1997:284; Niblett 1999)

5. The spatial arrangement of the Folly Lane Romano-Celtic temple, the Roman Theatre and Forum resembles that of a Gallo-Roman sanctuary: many of which are known to have Late La Tène origins (Roymans 1990; Niblett 1999).

*The Significance of Beech Bottom Dyke* (Figures 7.9 and 7.10)

Beech Bottom Dyke is a massive ditch located on the Stane Street route between St. Albans and Wheathampstead. It is up to ten metres deep and thirty metres wide and is traceable for a distance of just under two kilometres. The upcast from the ditch appears on both sides although it is slightly higher on the south eastern side. Topographically, Beech Bottom is situated within a slight valley in the plateau between the Ver and Lea River Valleys, and at its southwestern end close to the Verlamion complex, appears to run into a steep re-entrant dry valley (Saunders 1982:36-7). It is morphologically similar to the shorter Devil's Dyke at Wheathampstead, 4.5 kilometres to the north east. The precise date of the dyke is unclear. The only reasonably good piece of dating evidence is a hoard of Roman coins (dated to AD 120-140) found in the ditch filling of the north end in 1932 (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936:18). This would suggest a Late Iron Age or early Roman date, with a probably filling of the north end before AD 120. The dyke lies outside of the nominal area of Verlamion, but there are reasons for suggesting a connection with the settlement and ritual complex.

Beech Bottom Dyke has traditionally been interpreted as a boundary feature. Wheeler suggested that it formed the boundary between open country to the south-east and more wooded claylands to the north west (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936:18). A possible relationship between the Dyke and the boundaries of first century BC coin distributions is hinted at by Haselgrove, suggesting that it could have marked a territorial boundary (Haselgrove 1987a:187; Haselgrove & Millett 1997:283). There are, however, reasons for suggesting an alternative hypothesis which connects the construction of the dyke to the ritual complex at Verlamion with the Dyke possibly functioning as a route rather than as a boundary feature.

# St Albans: The Ritual Landscape

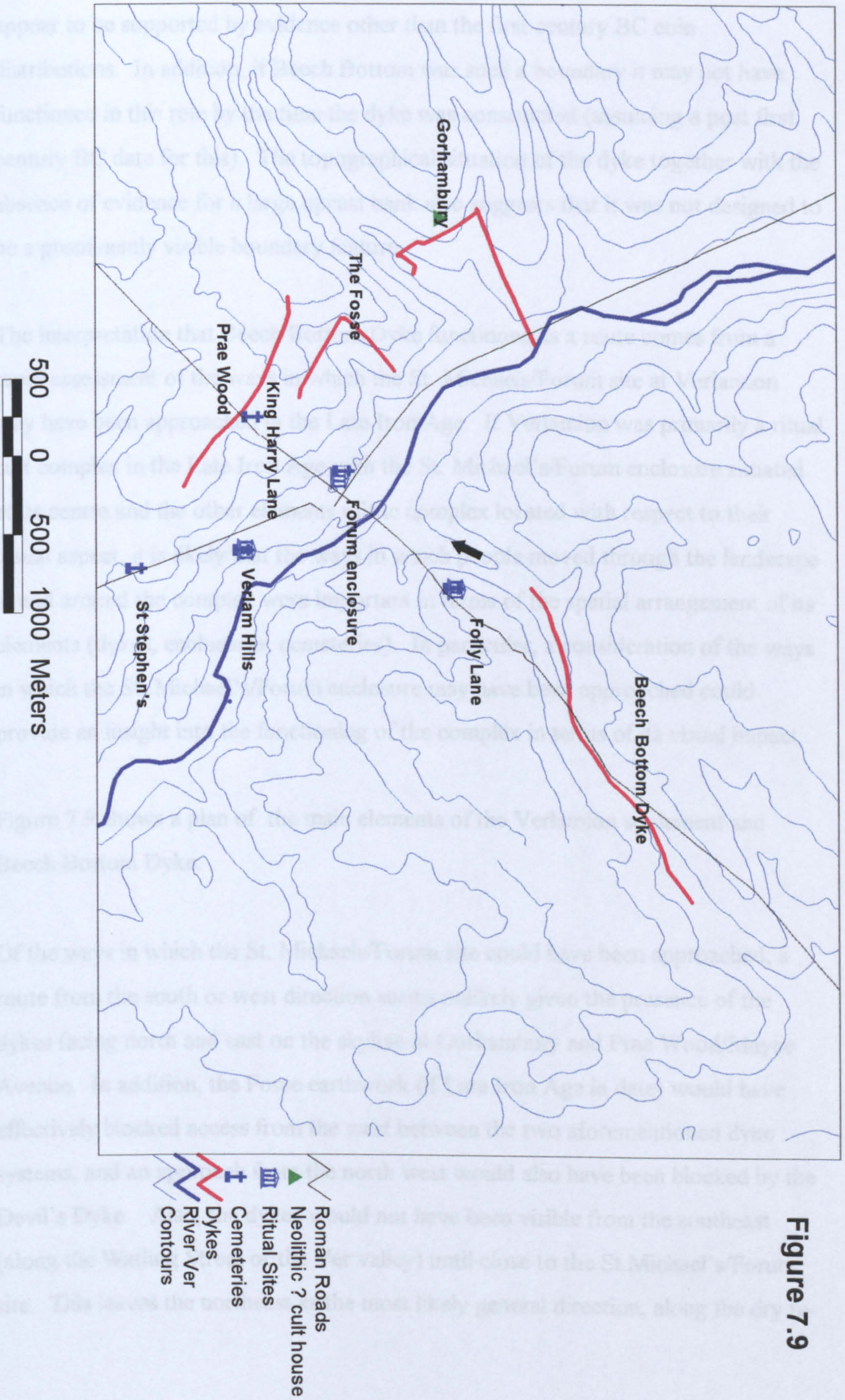


Figure 7.9

The evidence for the line of the dyke being an important boundary feature does not appear to be supported by evidence other than the first century BC coin distributions. In addition, if Beech Bottom was such a boundary it may not have functioned in this role by the time the dyke was constructed (assuming a post first century BC date for this). The topographical situation of the dyke together with the absence of evidence for a large upcast bank also suggests that it was not designed to be a prominently visible boundary feature.

The interpretation that Beech Bottom Dyke functioned as a route comes from a rapid assessment of the ways in which the St. Michaels/Forum site at Verlamion may have been approached in the Late Iron Age. If Verlamion was primarily a ritual cult complex in the Late Iron Age with the St. Michael's/Forum enclosure situated at its centre and the other elements of the complex located with respect to their visual aspect, it is likely that the ways in which people moved through the landscape in and around the complex were important in terms of the spatial arrangement of its elements (dykes, enclosures, cemeteries). In particular, a consideration of the ways in which the St. Michael's/Forum enclosure may have been approached could provide an insight into the functioning of the complex in terms of its visual impact.

Figure 7.9 shows a plan of the main elements of the Verlamion settlement and Beech Bottom Dyke.

Of the ways in which the St. Michaels/Forum site could have been approached, a route from the south or west direction seems unlikely given the presence of the dykes facing north and east on the skyline at Gorhambury and Prae Wood/Mayne Avenue. In addition, the Fosse earthwork (if Late Iron Age in date) would have effectively blocked access from the west between the two aforementioned dyke systems, and an approach from the north west would also have been blocked by the Devil's Dyke. Also, the dykes would not have been visible from the southeast (along the Watling Street or the Ver valley) until close to the St. Michael's/Forum site. This leaves the northeast as the most likely general direction, along the dry re-

? Ceremonial Route into Verlamion

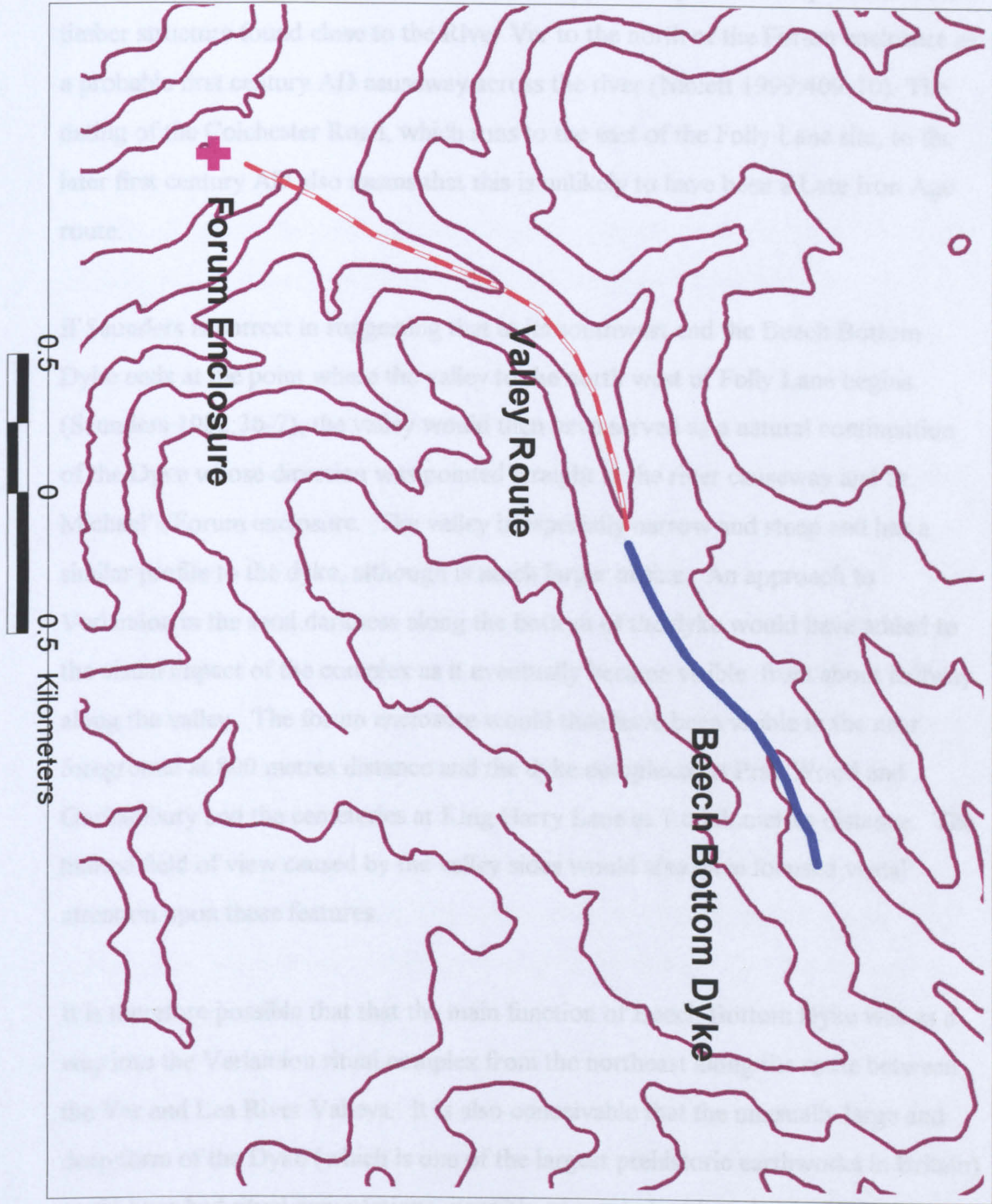


Figure 7.10

entrant valley leading on from the southern end of Beech Bottom Dyke. That the northeast direction was a major route is also supported by the reinterpretation of the timber structure found close to the River Ver to the north of the Forum enclosure as a probable first century AD causeway across the river (Niblett 1999:409-10). The dating of the Colchester Road, which runs to the east of the Folly Lane site, to the later first century AD also means that this is unlikely to have been a Late Iron Age route.

If Saunders is correct in suggesting that at its southwest end the Beech Bottom Dyke ends at the point where the valley to the north west of Folly Lane begins (Saunders 1982:36-7), the valley would then have served as a natural continuation of the Dyke whose direction was pointed straight at the river causeway and St. Michael's/Forum enclosure. The valley is especially narrow and steep and has a similar profile to the dyke, although is much larger in size. An approach to Verlamion in the semi darkness along the bottom of the dyke would have added to the visual impact of the complex as it eventually became visible from about halfway along the valley. The forum enclosure would then have been visible in the near foreground at 800 metres distance and the dyke complexes at Prae Wood and Gorhambury and the cemeteries at King Harry Lane at 1.6 kilometres distance. The limited field of view caused by the valley sides would also have focused visual attention upon these features.

It is therefore possible that that the main function of Beech Bottom Dyke was as a way into the Verlamion ritual complex from the northeast along the route between the Ver and Lea River Valleys. It is also conceivable that the unusually large and deep form of the Dyke (which is one of the largest prehistoric earthworks in Britain) could have had ritual connotations, possibly connected with underworld deities. Evidence for Roman underworld ritual at St. Albans has been recently suggested by Forcey, based on the evidence for a head cult at Folly Lane which was associated with ritual shafts. Forcey also argues that underworld cults, associated with the dead and the Roman God Mercury, were widespread in the Early Roman period (Forcey 1998). Evidence for the ritual importance of Mercury at St. Albans is also

forthcoming from the find of a statue of Mercury in an Early Roman pit at the Mayne Avenue site in the 1970s (I. Thompson pers. comm.). The Late Iron Age ritual shafts and sunken features at Folly Lane could, therefore, be interpreted in a similar fashion and, on this basis the deep, subterranean Beech Bottom Dyke could also be associated with cults of the dead and the underworld.

The similar form of the Devil's Dyke at Wheathampsted to Beech Bottom Dyke also provides some support for this suggestion. Although at 430 metres it is considerably shorter than Beech Bottom, it also lies on the route between the Ver and Lea Rivers and is located in a natural dip in the land. The ends of the dyke, which appear to be original, also both terminate in gradual inclines which would have facilitated relatively easy access by foot. Although the profiles of the two ends of Beech Bottom are not known, the southern end, as has been suggested above, probably linked with a natural valley and it possible that the northern end could have been of a similar gradual incline as Devils' Dyke. Certainly, the surviving profile is less wide and deep at the north end suggesting that this could be the case. In addition, the presence of a hearth found by Wheeler at the base of the deepest part of the Dyke could also be interpreted as ritual (see below 7.3.1).

Although this is a highly tentative hypothesis, it does provide an explanation for the unusually large size of both Beech Bottom and Devil's Dykes, together with their lack of defensive banks and unusual topographical location. Also, it is in keeping with the suggested importance of the Stane Street route which links St. Albans, Braughing and Colchester, although if Devil's Dyke were part of a ceremonial route, it may be that the route between Baldock and St. Albans (the two identified ritual major complexes in the Study Area) was considered more important in a ritual context. Lastly, whether or not this hypothesis is correct, in the light of the likely ritual importance of Verlamion, it does point to the need for a consideration of the evidence for ceremonial routes leading to and from ritual sites and also possibly between ritual sites.



Other parallels for the suggested interpretation for Beech Bottom and Devil's Dyke are hard to find. Heath Farm Dyke at Colchester, which leads to the Gosbecks ritual complex, may have had a similar function as it does not have any evidence for a significant bank, but it is much smaller in scale and does not lead directly to the heart of the complex as does Beech Bottom Dyke (Hawkes & Crummy 1995).

### ***Conclusions: the Origins of Verlamion***

The evidence from artifacts, especially coins and brooches, provides a date-range for the beginning of the Verlamion complex of c10 BC to cAD 5 (Haselgrove and Millett 1997). The assessment of earlier Iron Age origins for the sites in the settlement complex has concluded that there is currently little evidence of significant occupation before that date, although a 'background noise' scatter of earlier Iron Age pottery occurs across the settlement complex, with occasional suggestions of more extensive activity such as Folly Lane (Niblett 1999) and Mayne Avenue. Most significantly however, there is little evidence of earlier first century BC occupation apart from perhaps at the Mayne Avenue site (I. Thompson pers. comm.). It is, nonetheless, likely that a substantial proportion of the Ver Valley was intensively exploited for agriculture prior to the transformation of the area at the end of the first century BC. The assessment evidence from pollen and the terrain analysis undertaken by Hunn (Hunn 1994) (see Chapter 3 above) has suggested that most of the valley sides were suitable for arable agriculture and the wetter flood plain would have provided good cattle pasture. In addition, the clay-with-flints plateau areas to the south west of the valley, although less suitable for arable agriculture, would could have been used as cattle pasture. The soils are fairly acidic, but are comparatively well-drained for clays and supported extensive cattle farms until the nineteenth century. The presence of ditched trackways attached to the period 3 enclosure at Gorhambury and adjacent to the large rectilinear enclosure at Mayne Avenue also suggests that cattle may have been herded into the Verlamion complex from the clay areas to the south west.

This assessment of the agricultural landscape of Verlamion prior to the later first century BC therefore indicates that earlier Iron Age settlement is likely to have been

present within the Ver Valley and the current absence of sites is probably due at least partly to the lack of development related archaeological excavation in the valley. A number of later prehistoric settlements have recently been discovered as a result of excavation in advance of housing and road construction in the adjacent and comparable Bulbourne and Gade Valleys to the west (see Bryant 1995 for a list of sites), and it is likely that a similar concentration exists within the Ver Valley, particularly along the edges of the plateau. Given the high agricultural potential of the valley, the absence of earlier Iron Age evidence at Verlamion may therefore be due to chance, as only a relatively small proportion of the area has been investigated under controlled conditions, and by analogy with other similar areas, only three or four farmstead sized sites might be expected within the area. The scale of activity at Verlamion in the early first century AD does nonetheless suggest a substantial increase in population, which the statistical analysis undertaken in Chapter 4 has indicated is likely to be significant above the average for the local area.

The suggestion has been made by Haselgrove & Millett (1997) and Niblett (1999) that the area, particularly the marshy valley bottom, probably had a ritual significance in the Late Iron Age. Apart from the Hallstatt C razor found in the Folly Lane area, no significant earlier Iron Age or Bronze Age artifacts, which might be interpreted as votive deposits, are known from the valley bottom, although several Late Iron Age/Early Roman metalwork finds from the river area have been interpreted as possibly votive (Niblett 1999). However, until significant evidence of ritual activity prior to c10 BC is forthcoming, the theory of a ritual origin for Verlamion is unproven although the most likely explanation.

An alternative, but related hypothesis, which has been referred to above is that the Verlamion area was an earlier Prehistoric ritual and burial focus that was specifically chosen as a Late Iron Age ritual focus because of its ancestral associations. However, at present, the only evidence for earlier prehistoric ritual activity is the Neolithic rectilinear structure found at Gorhambury which may be a cult house (Neal et al. 1990).

## 7.3 The Smaller Site Clusters

Several smaller clusters of Late Iron Age sites were identified from the spatial analysis undertaken in Chapter 4. Although not statistically significant in terms of the calculated average density of sites, the clusters represent important concentrations of Late Iron Age evidence. An assessment of the status and role of these site clusters in the same format as for the three major statistically significant site clusters is therefore desirable.

### 7.3.1 Wheathampstead (Figure 7.11)

#### *Summary Description*

Four sites have been identified at Wheathampstead.

1. Devil's Dyke, the large earthwork to the east of the village and on the southern edge of the River Lea Valley, was sectioned in the 1930s and was found to contain a hearth at its base dated to the Late Iron Age. (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936:20). Two nearby smaller ditches were also found to contain a range of Late Iron Age artifacts which were dated to the first century BC (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936:16-22; Thompson 1979; Haselgrove & Millett 1997).
- 2/3. Excavations in advance of the Wheathampstead Bypass in 1974 and 1977 found considerable scattered evidence of Late Iron Age occupation at two sites in the River Lea Valley dating to the first half of the first century AD (Saunders & Havercroft 1982).
4. A ditch containing a female inhumation and pottery dated to cAD 60-70 was found at Wick Avenue within Wheathampstead village on the southern edge of the river valley (Herts SMR:9795).

## Wheathampstead

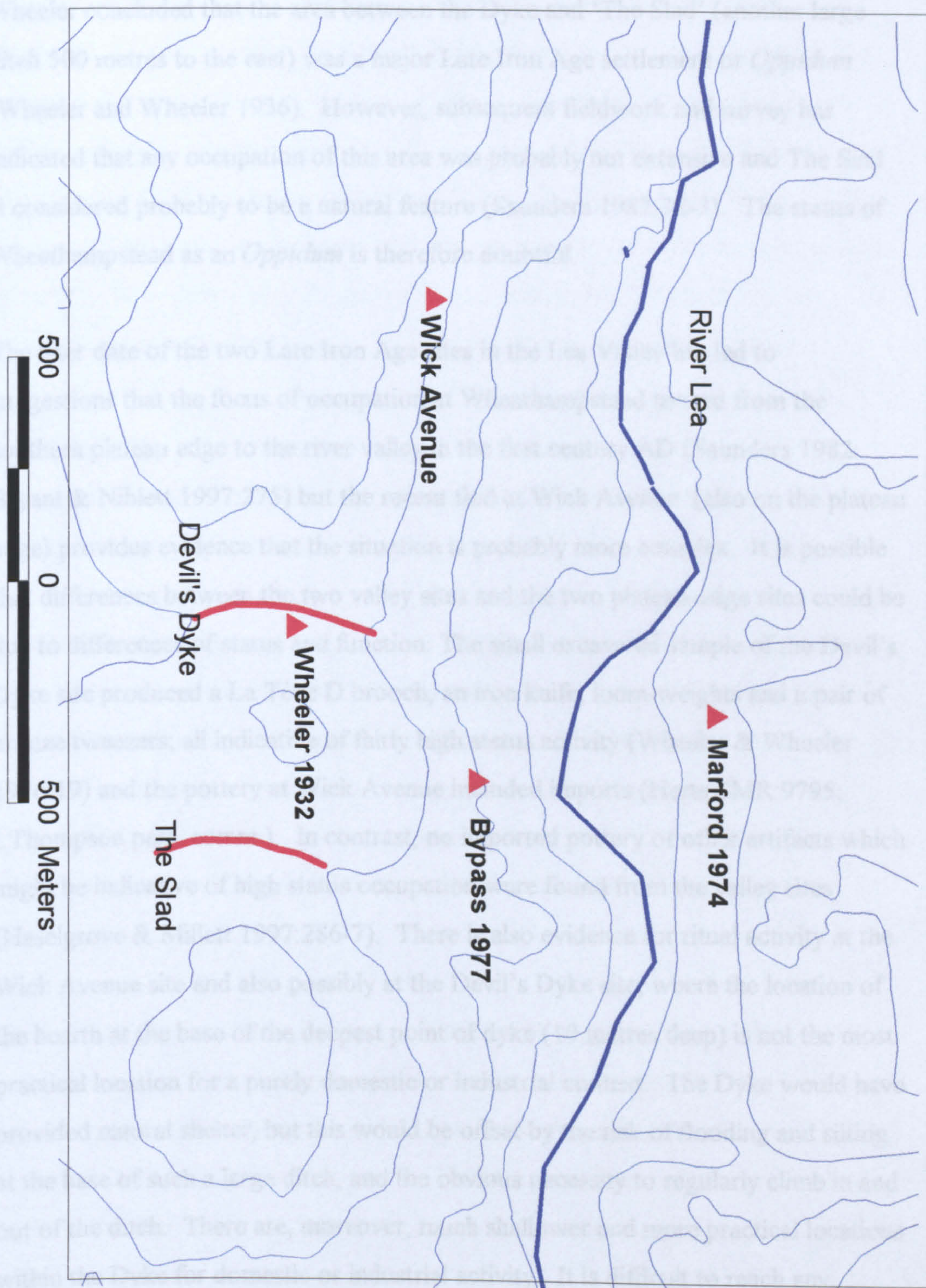


Figure 7.11

### Role and Status

On the basis of the evidence from Devil's Dyke and the other adjacent ditches,

Wheeler (1936) concluded that the site was a Late Iron Age settlement. This view was supported by the discovery of a hoard of Late Iron Age coins (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936). However, subsequent fieldwork has indicated that any occupation of the area was probably later than the Iron Age and probably to be a natural feature (Coles and Wheeler 1977). The status of Wheeler's Dyke as an Oppidan is therefore uncertain.

The site of the two Late Iron Age coins is the focus of occupation. Wheeler (1936) proposed a Late Iron Age site at Wheeler 1932 but the remains of the site are now obscured by the Bypass 1977. Wheeler (1936) also proposed a Late Iron Age site at Wheeler 1932 and the pottery at Wick Avenue (Wheeler 1936) and the pottery at Wheeler 1932 (Wheeler 1936) are considered to be of the same date. Wheeler (1936) also proposed a Late Iron Age site at Wheeler 1932 and the pottery at Wick Avenue (Wheeler 1936) and the pottery at Wheeler 1932 (Wheeler 1936) are considered to be of the same date. Wheeler (1936) also proposed a Late Iron Age site at Wheeler 1932 and the pottery at Wick Avenue (Wheeler 1936) and the pottery at Wheeler 1932 (Wheeler 1936) are considered to be of the same date.

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## ***Role and Status***

On the basis of the evidence from Devil's Dyke and the other adjacent ditches, Wheeler concluded that the area between the Dyke and 'The Slad' (another large ditch 500 metres to the east) was a major Late Iron Age settlement or *Oppidum* (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936). However, subsequent fieldwork and survey has indicated that any occupation of this area was probably not extensive and The Slad is considered probably to be a natural feature (Saunders 1982:32-3). The status of Wheathampstead as an *Oppidum* is therefore doubtful.

The later date of the two Late Iron Age sites in the Lea Valley has led to suggestions that the focus of occupation at Wheathampstead moved from the southern plateau edge to the river valley in the first century AD (Saunders 1982: Bryant & Niblett 1997:275) but the recent find at Wick Avenue (also on the plateau edge) provides evidence that the situation is probably more complex. It is possible that differences between the two valley sites and the two plateau-edge sites could be due to differences of status and function. The small excavated sample of the Devil's Dyke site produced a La Tène D brooch, an iron knife, loom-weights and a pair of bronze tweezers; all indicative of fairly high status activity (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936:19) and the pottery at Wick Avenue included imports (Herts SMR:9795; I.Thompson pers. comm.). In contrast, no imported pottery or other artifacts which might be indicative of high status occupation were found from the valley sites (Haselgrove & Millett 1997:286-7). There is also evidence for ritual activity at the Wick Avenue site and also possibly at the Devil's Dyke site, where the location of the hearth at the base of the deepest point of dyke (10 metres deep) is not the most practical location for a purely domestic or industrial context. The Dyke would have provided natural shelter, but this would be offset by the risk of flooding and silting at the base of such a large ditch, and the obvious necessity to regularly climb in and out of the ditch. There are, moreover, much shallower and more practical locations within the Dyke for domestic or industrial activity. It is difficult to reach any definitive conclusions based on the single narrow section by Wheeler, but it is possible to speculate that the deeper part of the Dyke was chosen for the construction of the hearth for ritual purposes.

The suggestion has been made above that the similarly constructed Beech Bottom Dyke may have served as a sunken, ceremonial route, between the Ver and Lea rivers and it is also possible that Devil's Dyke formed part of the same route. The gradual inclines at both ends (if original) would have enabled easy access in and out of the dyke if this were the case. The deeper parts of the Dyke may also have been the focus for ritual activity, as possibly evidenced by the hearth. In addition, the absence of Late Iron Age evidence to the east of the Devil's Dyke together with that from Wheeler's ditches only 50 metres from it, may indicate that activity was concentrated close to the Dyke, possibly associated with its ritual function.

### ***Conclusions***

Although the evidence from Wheathampstead is very small in scale, several tentative conclusions can be drawn from it.

1. The several small-scale excavations at Wheathampstead do not provide evidence for an extensive area of Late Iron Age settlement or 'central place' functions in the form of burials or domestic/industrial occupation comparable to the other five major settlements. Based on the excavated evidence, any occupation focus probably lay mainly to the west and north of the Devil's Dyke within an area of approximately one square kilometre, including the Lea Valley and southern plateau-edge.
2. The location of the Late Iron Age evidence at Wheathampstead is likely to be due to its position where the routes between Verlamion and Baldock and Verlamion and Braughing/Colchester cross the River Lea. Wheathampstead may therefore have had a ritual/ceremonial function possibly associated with the role of the Devil's Dyke as a ceremonial route.

### 7.3.2 Welwyn (Figure 7.12)

#### *Summary Description*

A cluster of 30 sites are located within a 46 square kilometre area which includes Welwyn Garden City. Although this does not represent a statistically significant cluster in terms of the suggested average density of sites for the area, there are nonetheless several patterns which are apparent.

#### *The Welwyn Garden City Plateau*

Sixteen sites are known from the area of the Welwyn Garden City Plateau between the Lea and Mimram River Valleys. These include the 'Welwyn Type' burial and associated cemetery at Panshanger (Stead 1967), probable evidence of pottery manufacturing near to the Panshanger burial at Grub's Barn and Crookhams (Rook 1968a; 1970a) and enclosures at Panshanger Golf Course (Rook 1968b) and Stanborough School (Arnold 1954; Hunn 1999). However, the evidence from most of the sites is of low quality and is not easily characterised. The concentration of sites does, nonetheless, indicate that the plateau was a favoured area for settlement in the Late Iron Age and the absence of significant earlier Iron Age evidence (see above Chapter 5) would also suggest a likely expansion of activity in the Late Iron Age.

#### *Welches Farm*

A major Late Iron Age focus is also indicated to the north of the Mimram valley at Welches Farm, where observation during the construction of a gas pipeline in the 1970s revealed continuous Late Iron Age occupation extending for over a kilometre of the pipeline route (Rook 1974; Rodwell 1976:337). This information has since been supplemented with evidence from fieldwalking and aerial photography, which has revealed evidence of extensive Late Iron Age occupation (Herts SMR:2739). In addition to this evidence, a large linear bank and ditch is known at 'Perry's Grove' 200 metres to the south of Welches Farm, which is 120 metres long and is aligned at right-angles to the route of Stane Street 500 metres to the north. There is

# Welwyn

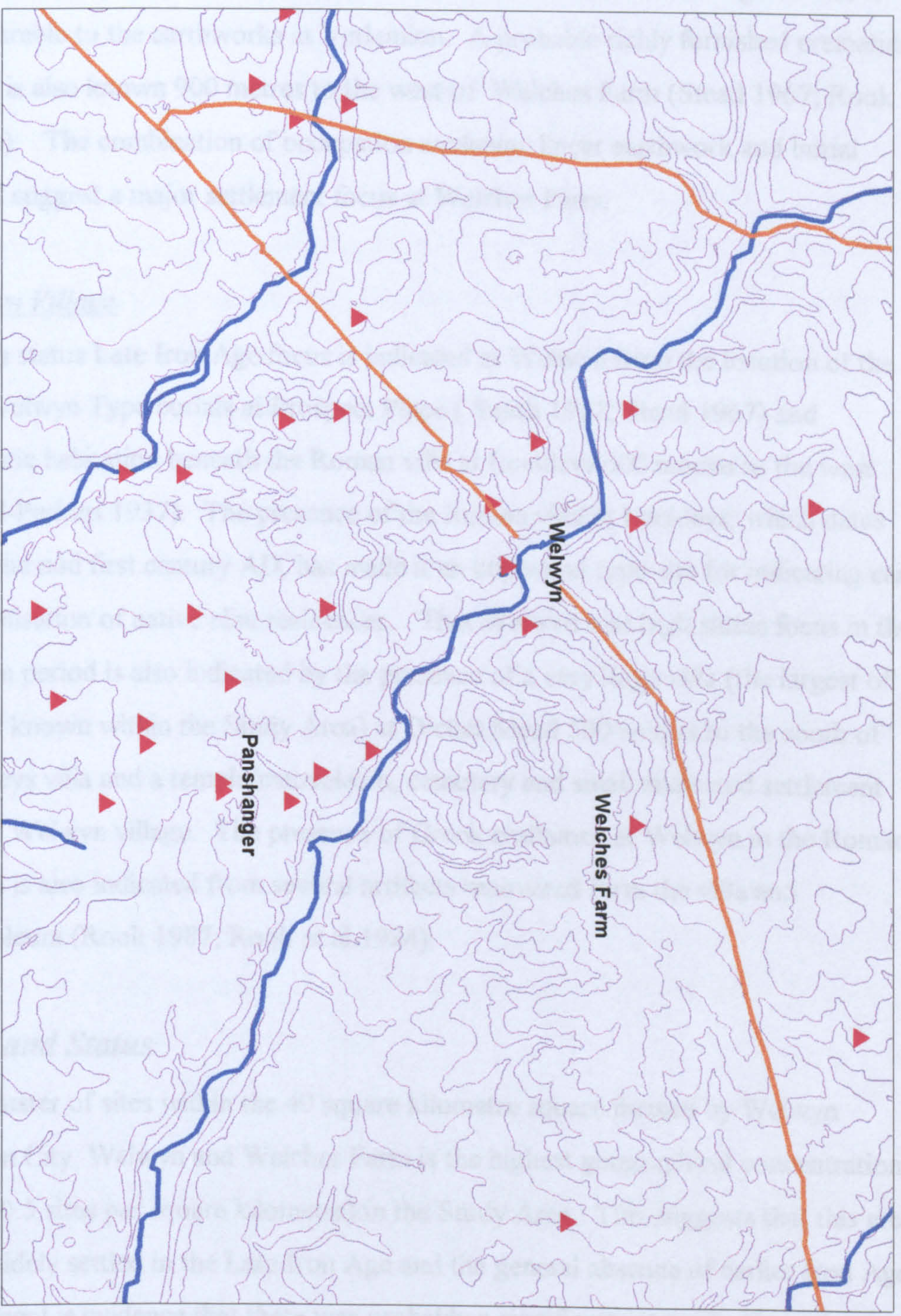






Figure 7.12

-  Roman Roads
-  Late Iron Age Sites
-  Contours
-  Lea and Mimram Rivers



no direct evidence for a Late Iron Age date for the earthwork although its size is comparable to the earthworks at Verlamion. A probable richly furnished cremation burial is also known 900 metres to the west of Welches Farm (Stead 1967; Rook 1968c). The combination of occupation evidence, linear earthwork and burial would suggest a major settlement focus at Welches Farm.

### Welwyn Village

A high status Late Iron Age focus is indicated at Welwyn from the location of the two Welwyn Type burials at Prospect Place (Smith 1912; Stead 1967) and domestic habitation beneath the Roman villa at Lockleys 600 metres to the west (Ward-Perkins 1937). The presence of the Roman villa at Lockleys, which dates from the mid first century AD, has made it an important type-site for indicating early Romanisation of native elite residences. That Welwyn was high status focus in the Roman period is also indicated by the presence of a very large villa (the largest of the 40 known within the Study Area) at Dicket Mead 500 metres to the south of Lockleys villa and a temple/mausoleum, cemetery and small nucleated settlement within Welwyn village. The presence of Greek craftsmen at Welwyn in the Roman period is also indicated from several artifacts recovered from the villa and mausoleum (Rook 1987; Rook et al. 1984).

### *Role and Status*

The cluster of sites within the 40 square kilometre square formed by Welwyn Garden City, Welwyn and Welches Farm is the highest geographical concentration (over 0.5 sites per square kilometre) in the Study Area. This suggests that this area was widely settled in the Late Iron Age and the general absence of earlier Iron Age settlement is evidence that there was probably a significant intensification of occupation in the Late Iron Age.

Although the density of sites at Welwyn is much lower than the three statistically significant site clusters at Baldock, Braughing and St. Albans, there are aspects of the evidence such as the expansion of settlement; the richly furnished 'Welwyn Type' burials; a linear dyke and the presence of imports from several sites, which

make it comparable to them. It is possible that a similar phenomenon to that suggested for Braughing occurred in the Late Iron Age, with an elite focus acting as a magnet for settlement. Although, in the case of the Welwyn area, it may be that there were at least three separate foci represented by Welwyn, Panshanger and Welches Farm. Welches Farm has the evidence for extensive occupation, a probable Welwyn Type burial nearby and a linear dyke; Panshanger has a Welwyn Type burial and has evidence for extensive nearby occupation, and Welwyn itself has the two Welwyn Type burials and the evidence of an important Roman focus. The latter evidence may also indicate that Welwyn eventually became the single most important focus of the settlement complex. However, in addition to the evidence that Welwyn was an important Roman focus, the fact that it had a Minster church at Domesday also suggests that Welwyn was a locally important administrative centre in the Late Saxon period (Morris 1976). Like Braughing, therefore, the evidence for a Late Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon elite/administrative focus at Welwyn suggests that it may have controlled a relatively stable administrative area from the Late Iron Age possibly until the Late Saxon period.

The reasons for the location of the cluster of sites in the Welwyn area are unclear, but are likely to be partly connected with the importance of the Stane Street overland communication route in the Late Iron Age and the communications also offered by the Lea and Mimram Rivers.

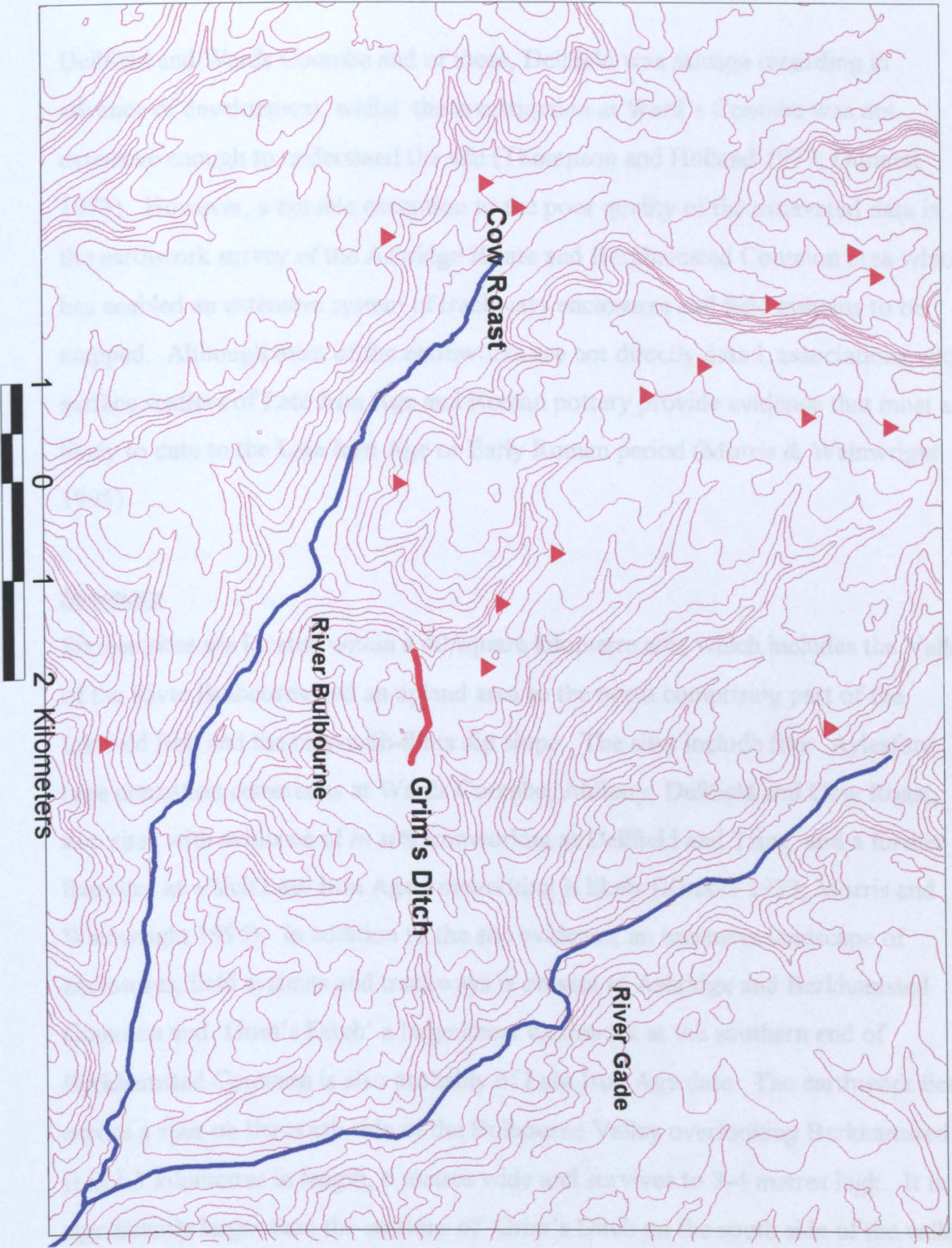
### **7.3.3 Cow Roast/Ashridge (Figure 7.13)**

#### ***Summary Description***

##### *The Quality of Evidence*

The quality of the available evidence is low in comparison with the other site clusters which have been examined. All of the excavations have been either small in scale and/or have not been fully analysed. The only fully published sites are

**Cow Roast/Ashridge**



**Figure 7.13**

- ▲ Late Iron Age Sites
- Contours

Dellfield and Wards Coombe and of these, Dellfield was salvage recording in advance of development, whilst the investigation at Ward's Coombe was not extensive enough to understand the site (Thompson and Holland 1977; Dunnett 1973). However, a notable exception to the poor quality of the excavated data is the earthwork survey of the Ashridge Estate and Berkhamsted Common area which has enabled an extensive system of trackways enclosures and field systems to be mapped. Although most of the earthworks are not directly dated, associations with surface scatters of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery provide evidence that most are likely to date to the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period (Morris & Wainwright 1995).

### Summary

Sixteen sites are located within a 40 square kilometre area which includes the Valley of the River Bulbourne and an upland area to the north comprising part of the Icknield Belt and the clay-with-flints dip slope. The sites include four Aylesford type cremation cemeteries at Wards Coombe, Aldbury, Dellfield and Cow Roast; two sites with evidence of *in situ* ironworking at Dellfield and Tring, and a further five sites at which Late Iron Age ironworking is likely (Kimble 1933; Morris and Wainwright 1995). In addition to the site evidence, an extensive landscape of enclosures, field systems and trackways is present at Ashridge and Berkhamsted Common and 'Grim's Ditch' a large linear earthwork at the southern end of Berkhamsted Common is also probably of Late Iron Age date. The earthwork lies across a spur on the north side of the Bulbourne Valley overlooking Berkhamsted. It is 1.3 kilometres in length, 6 metres wide and survives to 3-4 metres high. It is significantly larger than the sections of Grim's Ditch on the south side of the valley which date to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, and unlike them it does not follow the contours of the valley. The Dyke overlooks the southern end of the Bulbourne Valley close to its confluence with the Gade Valley and would, therefore, have been an impressive feature on the skyline to anyone travelling up the valley from the south.

### ***Role and Status***

The significance and possible reasons for the ironworking evidence at Ashridge Cow Roast has been mentioned above as part of the assessment of ironworking (6.3.4). This concluded that the available natural resources of woodland, clay and bog-ore, and the good overland and river communications were likely to have been the most important determining factors for the location of the sites. In this respect, the relative importance of ironworking has probably meant that the location of the sites at Cow Roast/Ashridge is the most environmentally determined of the Late Iron Age sites clusters within the Study Area.

In the absence of data comparable to the other site clusters, it is not possible to reach any firm conclusions concerning the status of the sites other than from the negative evidence of the absence of richly furnished Aylesford burials and imported artifacts, which suggest that the area is less important in this respect than the other sites clusters. However, this is counted to some extent by the evidence of Late Iron Age bronze coins at the Cow Roast site, which suggest the presence of an important Late Iron Age focus (Haselgrove 1987a:181). The other two comparable concentrations of such evidence within the Study Area, at Baldock and Braughing, are also associated with evidence of imports and probable administrative/political foci, and this may therefore also be the case with the Cow Roast site. Certainly, the evidence from coins, and the fact that the Cow Roast site continued as a Roman roadside urban settlement with at least one masonry building suggests that any major Late Iron Age focus is likely to lie there.

Another possible Late Iron Age focus which may be an elite and/or ritual area, is on Berkhamsted Golf Course where there is a probable Romano-Celtic temple and a Roman villa/temple site and a large rectilinear enclosure which has evidence for Late Iron Age occupation (Morris and Wainwright 1995). The large Grim's Ditch earthwork lies 500 metres to the south and it is possible that the earthwork served to mark the entrance to the site from the Bulbourne Valley to the south.

## 7.4 The Major Late Iron Age Settlements: Discussion

### 7.4.1 Environmental and Economic Factors Affecting Settlement Location

The following is an assessment of some of the major environmental and economic factors which are likely to have influenced the location of the five major settlements.

#### *Agricultural Wealth (Figure 7.14)*

Figure 7.14 shows the distribution of the five sites against the map of agricultural types for the Study Area, and Table 7.1 provides a break-down of the main types of agricultural regimes within a ten kilometre radius of the sites, taken from the analysis of agriculture in section 3.8.3, above. The figures are expressed as percentages because several of the ten kilometre circles extend beyond the boundaries of the Study Area. The assessment of agricultural potential in Chapter 3 has concluded that Types I, II and III (River Valleys, Chalk Downland and Clay Plateau), represent a wide range of potential which is significantly higher than Type IV (Acid Clays and Gravel). Table 3.5, above, has also concluded that arable agriculture was probably most common in Type I areas; a combination of sheep pasture and arable in Type II areas; intensive cattle pasture; and arable in Type III areas; and extensive cattle pasture in Type IV areas. The assessment in Table 7.1 is based on this conclusion, although it is acknowledged to be relatively crude and is intended to provide only a rough indication of the agricultural wealth within the hinterland of the five settlements.

Table 7.1 reveals that the proportion of land available which is suitable for arable agriculture is relative consistent at between 22% and 36% for four of the five settlements, with Braughing the highest. Baldock has a much lower proportion of arable land than the rest, although a significant proportion of types II and II land was also probably arable. Verlamion and Cow Roast have a much higher

# Agricultural Wealth

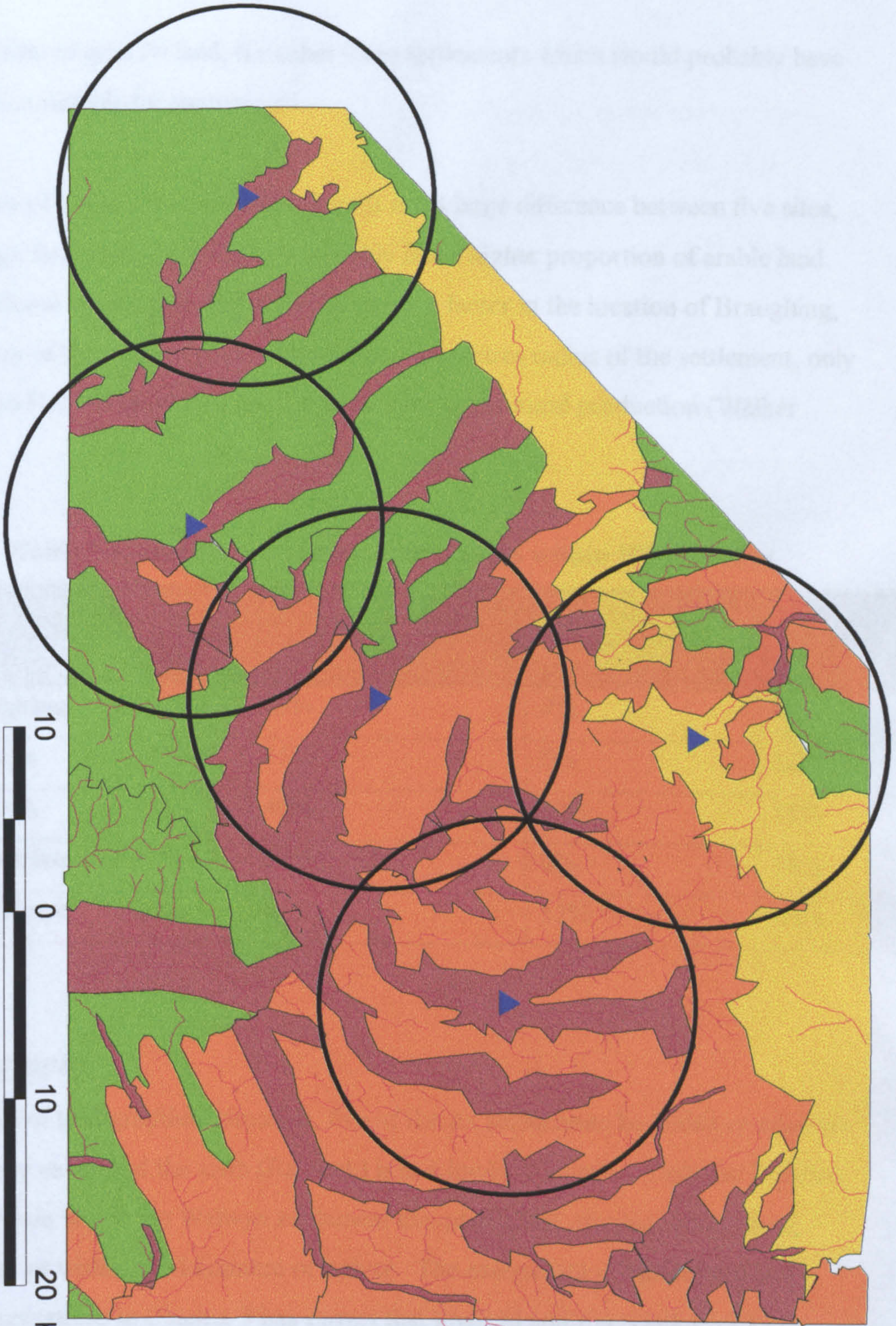


Figure 7.14

proportion of type IV land; the other three settlements which would probably have only been suitable for pasture.

Analysis of Table 7.1 reveals that there is not a large difference between five sites, although Braughing and Welwyn probably had a higher proportion of arable land. Agricultural wealth may therefore have been a factor in the location of Braughing, although of the thirteen sites within the ten kilometres radius of the settlement, only Hadham Hall has produced good evidence for agricultural production (Walker 1994).

**Table 7.1, proportions of agricultural types within 10 kilometres**

Settlement	I Arable	II Arable & cattle pasture	III Arable and sheep	IV Pasture
<b>Braughing</b>	36 %	63%	0%	0%
<b>Welwyn</b>	34%	35%	0%	31%
<b>Baldock</b>	3%	46%	30%	18%
<b>Verlamion</b>	32%	10%	0%	58%
<b>Cow Roast</b>	22%	0 %	12%	66%

### ***Topography***

In terms of topographical situation, five of the six settlements lie within or adjacent to a river valley and the sixth (Baldock) is in a lowland location. Only the Welches Farm focus within the Welwyn settlement complex is not situated in a lowland location or within one kilometre of a river. The assessment of agriculture and communications in Chapter 3 has shown that lowland and river-valley locations within the Study Area provide the best agricultural land and good communications. River valleys are therefore logical in economic terms and the large number of rivers within the Study Area means that there is no shortage of such locations.



### ***Communications Routes***

All of the six settlements are situated on the two identified major Late Iron Age overland communication routes of Stane Street/Akeman Street and the Icknield Way. The ability to communicate with the other major settlement is, therefore, likely to have been a factor in their location.

The fact that the settlements, apart from Baldock, are also situated on or close to a river also has implications for communications, especially the transport of heavy commodities. In the case of the settlement at Braughing, which has provided evidence for large quantities of imported pottery, much of it originally containing perishable and heavy liquid foodstuff, the river would probably have been the favoured mode of transport. The River Rib at Braughing whilst not a major river, could have enabled the transport of commodities using the Hasholme type logboat (Millett & McGrail 1988; and see above 5.4.1, Figure 5.4). In addition, other aspects of the archaeological evidence from Braughing also point to the importance of the River Rib. Seven of the sixteen sites are located within 100 metres of the river in areas which would have been prone to seasonal flooding. It is also reasonable to assume that the substantial ditches which are present at several of these sites, including Gatesbury Track and the Wickham Kennels sites, were constructed primarily for drainage. The important role of the river as a means of transport for commodities may, therefore, have led to it being a focus for occupation.

With respect to the relation of Braughing in to river communications, it may also be significant that it lies close to the northern limit of the Thames Basin. If river transport was the primary means of transporting goods from Italy and Central Gaul to southern England and the intention was also to have easy access to the Midlands and River Ouse basin, Braughing would be in an ideal location to exploit these areas. However, there is currently little evidence that any of the imports arriving at Braughing were finding their way to the Midlands.

River transport of bulk commodities is also likely to have been an important factor for the Cow Roast/Ashridge settlement, where ironworking appears to have been a major role of the settlement. The River Bulbourne, like the Rib, is relatively narrow and shallow but would probably have been deep enough to float a heavily laden Hasholme type logboat which would have been considerably easier as a mode of transport for iron products than overland routes.

### ***Industrial Raw Materials***

The above analysis of Late Iron Age industry has concluded that iron and pottery manufacturing are likely to have been the most widespread industries. However, the lack of evidence for large-scale pottery production at the five settlements and the widespread availability of good quality potting clay in the Study Area means it is unlikely that the location of any of the settlements was influenced by the presence of raw materials for pottery manufacturing.

The evidence of ironworking from the Bulbourne Valley has shown that the three necessary raw materials: wood, a probable source of iron ore, and clay, were present locally, and the valley also provided good communications. It can therefore be concluded that the location of natural resources for iron manufacturing was probably a major factor in the location of the Cow Roast/Ashridge settlement. The only other settlement with evidence for ironworking is Braughing, where there is evidence of Early Roman ironworking and the presence of a possible locally-available iron ore source at Braughing (Tribbick 1974) suggesting that some Late Iron Age ironworking was probably taking place. However, the absence of *in situ* evidence of production and large quantities of surface slag such as are present at Ashridge indicates that any manufacturing is likely to have been small-scale, and is unlikely to have been a significant factor in the location of the settlement.

## 7.4.2 The Site Clusters as *Oppida*

### *Definitions*

*Oppida* are a class of major settlement which first appear in the Late La Tène of central and western Europe and which are characterised by the presence of defences enclosing very large areas (over 25 hectares) and finds of wheel turned pottery and Italian imports. Evidence of a market and/or proto urban function and industrial manufacturing is also known on many sites (Collis 1984a:6-8).

In England there are few sites which fulfill these criteria and the term '*Oppidum*' has traditionally been used for settlements which are associated with large linear ditches or 'dykes' and evidence for industry, exchange, burial/ritual or other high status activity (Cunliffe 1976; 1978), although Collis has pointed out that the use of the term in England has in the past been confused (Collis 1984a:6). Attempts have been made to classify English *Oppida* by the morphology of the dykes into enclosed, territorial and multiple dyke complexes (Edmonds 1989a-c; Cunliffe 1976). The territorial *Oppida* have also been further subdivided into (A) incomplete or 'unfinished' dyke systems and (B) rectilinear dykes systems (Edmonds 1989a). However, the dykes by which most of the *Oppida* are defined can occur in situations which are not associated with evidence for industry or high status activity (e.g. Wheathampstead) or with little evidence of nearby settlement activity (e.g. Chichester, Stanwick). The definition also excludes some clearly major settlements without dykes such as Braughing (see below). In focusing upon the morphology of dykes, the English definition of *Oppida* has therefore been of little use for understanding some of the key aspects of most of these settlements including their origins and role within Late Iron Age social and economic systems. Woolf has also recently argued that the current definition is too general to be archaeologically useful (Woolf 1993).

Three of the clusters of Late Iron Age sites (Baldock, St. Albans and Wheathampstead) have variously been described as *Oppida* using the English definition. The case of has been made for Baldock being an *Oppidum* based on the

evidence of linear ditches, 'Welwyn Type' burials, imports and other evidence of high status activities (Burleigh 1995a). The evidence of extensive dyke systems and high status settlements and cemeteries at Verlamion has also made it widely accepted as an *Oppidum* (Hunn 1992; Haselgrove and Millett 1997).

Wheathampstead was originally described as an *Oppidum* (and the possible site of Cassivellanunus' last battle with Caesar) by Wheeler (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936), but its lack of internal occupation and unusual dyke morphology has thrown doubt upon its status as an *Oppidum* (Saunders 1982).

### ***Continental Oppida: Locational Criteria***

Collis has reviewed the major factors which have influenced the location of the *Oppida* (Collis 1984a:167-76). From this, he concludes that the control of long-distance trade routes was the most important factor in siting, evidenced particularly by proximity to important communication routes along major river valleys followed by the proximity to raw materials such as iron ore. Locally, a defensive situation was also a prime consideration, but access to centres of population and agricultural wealth were considered to be much less important (Collis 1984a:176).

The above assessment of factors affecting the location of the five major Late Iron Age settlements in the Study Area has concluded that communication was an important factor, although none of the settlements appear to have been located with respect to the control of long-distance exchange. The best geographical location for the control of long-distance exchange within the Study Area is probably in the Lea Valley – in the Hertford/Ware area – which lies at the confluence of several rivers, and was chosen as the site of the strategic military and trading centre at Hertford by Edward the Elder in 912-3 (Kiln and Partridge 1995). However, although several Late Iron Age sites are known from this area, there is no evidence for a major Late Iron Age focus.

The relationship to agriculture and industrial raw materials is also at variance to that of *Oppida*, with only Cow Roast/Ashridge probably being influenced by the location of industrial raw materials and the likelihood that Braughing and Welwyn at least

were located to take advantage of locally available agricultural wealth. Lastly, none of the five settlements appears to have been located with respect to defensive considerations. Only the Gatesbury earthwork within the Braughing settlement complex can be considered as probably defensive, and it only enclosed a very small proportion of the estimated area of the settlement.

In conclusion, none of the major Late Iron Age settlements within the Study Area which might be classified as *Oppida* fulfill the locational criteria defined by Collis.

### ***Continental Oppida: Functional Criteria***

Of the settlements within the study area, Braughing with its evidence for exchange, nucleation and industry is probably the closest in functional terms to the continental *Oppida*, although its absence of defences and location away from a major trade route is at variance with typical *Oppida* (Collis 1984a). The likelihood that the most important role for Verlamion and Baldock was as burial and ritual foci is also in contrast with the evidence of exchange and industry and general absence of evidence for cemeteries within continental *Oppida*. Ritual sites are found within some *Oppida* (Collis 1984b:106) and Haselgrove has pointed out that ditch deposits in many *Oppida* may have a ritual context (Haselgrove 1996). In addition, a ritual function has been tentatively suggested for *Oppida* in Moravia and Bohemia by Cumberpatch (1995), but a dominant role for ritual has not been suggested for any Continental *Oppida* sites (Collis 1984a). Parts of the Cow Roast/Ashridge and Welwyn settlement complexes may prove to fall within the more general English *Oppidum* definition, and certainly both have evidence for dykes, industry, with market activity in the case of Cow Roast and high status burial and imports in the case of Welwyn. However, although both may contain central place functions, the nature of the evidence from the two settlements is different enough to suggest significantly varying origins and roles.

In summary, a central place role has been suggested for all of the six settlement complexes except for Wheathampstead, and at least two, and possibly up to four, of the six could be classified as *Oppida* (under the English definition). However, the

suggested origins and function of the six are sufficiently different to conclude that they do not fall within a single settlement class, and as such, the *Oppida* classification is not a useful functional label for these sites.

### 7.4.3 Comparisons with other Late Iron Age Settlements

#### *The Quality of the Evidence*

The significant problem in drawing conclusions concerning the six site clusters is the wide variability between them in terms of the quality of evidence. The three major sites – Baldock, Verlamion and Braughing – have been extensively investigated, and Braughing and Verlamion both have a corpus of published data, although few of the artifacts have been quantified. Therefore, some conclusions can be made for these settlements even though Braughing appears to be a particularly complex settlement. One of the larger excavations at Baldock has been published (Stead and Rigby 1986), but this represents less than 10% of the excavated area of the settlement and few definitive conclusions can be drawn from the evidence of this site in what is an unusual and probably unique settlement. Considerably less is known of the three other sites clusters (Wheathampstead, Cow Roast/Ashridge and Welwyn) for which only a very small proportion has been investigated and none of which has a substantial published excavation. Comparisons between these settlements and other Late Iron Age settlements, therefore, have to be based in the main on fragmentary evidence which is not supported by secure stratification or dating.

#### *Other Major English Sites: Summary Descriptions (Figure 7.15)*

Figure 7.15 shows the distribution of the small group of major Late Iron Age sites known from England outside of the Study Area which can be compared with the site clusters. These include, Silchester, Hants. (Fulford 1987), Bagendon, Gloucestershire. (Clifford 1961), Canterbury, Kent (Lyle 1994; Haselgrove 1987a),

# Location of Major Late Iron Age Sites In Southern England

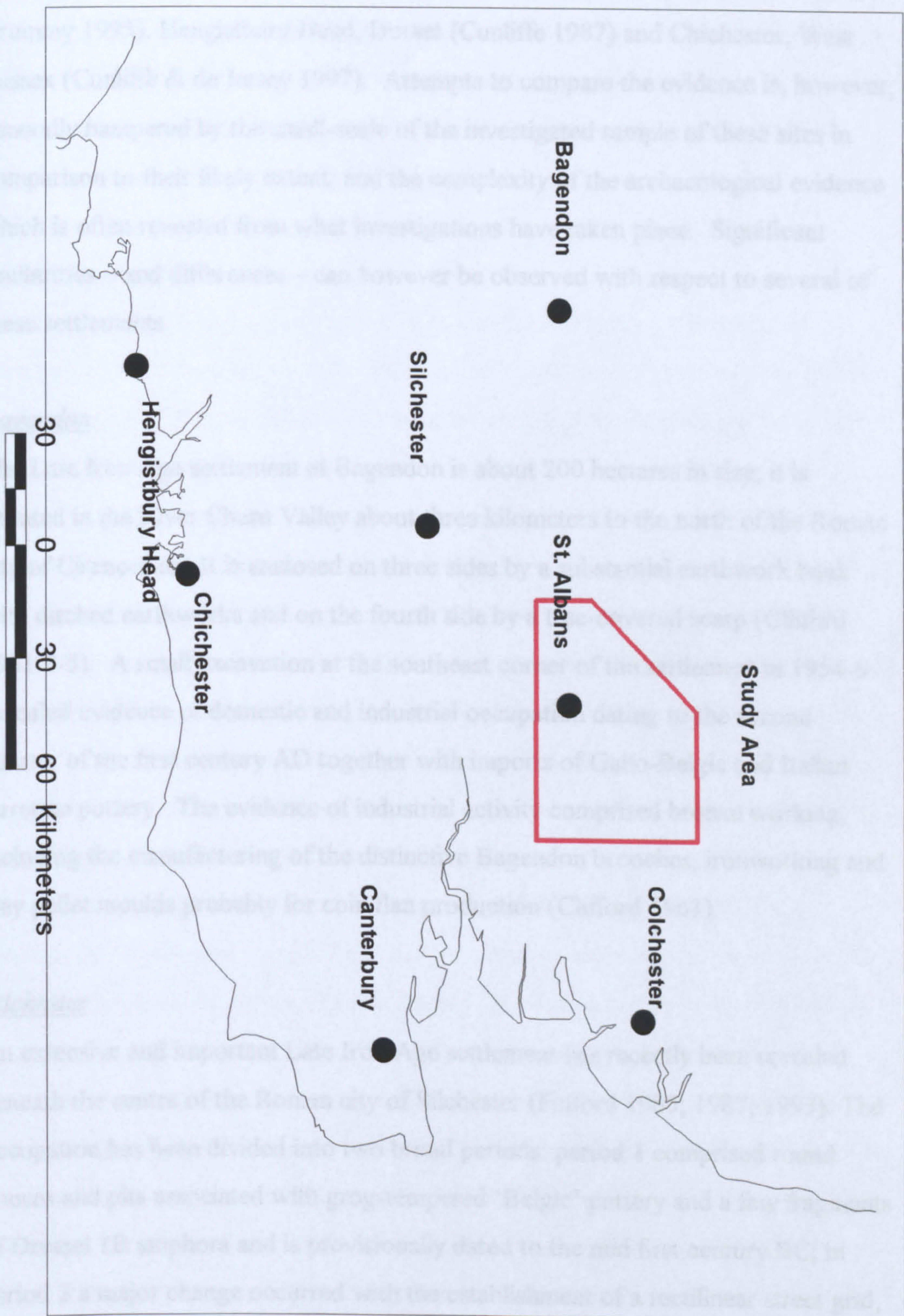


Figure 7.15

Colchester, Essex (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985; Crummy 1980; Hawkes and Crummy 1995), Hengistbury Head, Dorset (Cunliffe 1987) and Chichester, West Sussex (Cunliffe & de Jersey 1997). Attempts to compare the evidence is, however, generally hampered by the small-scale of the investigated sample of these sites in comparison to their likely extent, and the complexity of the archaeological evidence which is often revealed from what investigations have taken place. Significant similarities – and differences – can however be observed with respect to several of these settlements.

### *Bagendon*

The Late Iron Age settlement at Bagendon is about 200 hectares in size; it is situated in the River Churn Valley about three kilometers to the north of the Roman city of Cirencester. It is enclosed on three sides by a substantial earthwork bank with ditched earthworks and on the fourth side by a tree-covered scarp (Clifford 1961:2-5). A small excavation at the southeast corner of the settlement in 1954-6 revealed evidence of domestic and industrial occupation dating to the second quarter of the first century AD together with imports of Gallo-Belgic and Italian Arretine pottery. The evidence of industrial activity comprised bronze working, including the manufacturing of the distinctive Bagendon brooches, ironworking and clay pellet moulds probably for coin flan production (Clifford 1961).

### *Silchester*

An extensive and important Late Iron Age settlement has recently been revealed beneath the centre of the Roman city of Silchester (Fulford 1985; 1987; 1993). The occupation has been divided into two broad periods: period 1 comprised round houses and pits associated with grog-tempered 'Belgic' pottery and a few fragments of Dressel 1B amphora and is provisionally dated to the mid first century BC; in period 2 a major change occurred with the establishment of a rectilinear street grid, palisade enclosures and at least two rectilinear buildings aligned to the street grid. Also found was evidence for metalworking including clay pellet moulds, crucibles, glass/enamel working and a small quantity of imports including Central Gaulish micaceous finewares dated to the Augustan/Tiberian period and a few sherds of



Gallo-Belgic pottery in stratigraphically later contexts (Fulford 1987:273). The Late Iron Age settlement probably lay within a system of defensive earthworks. The quality of the agricultural land in the immediate vicinity of the settlement is not of the highest quality indicating that the hinterland of Silchester probably extended beyond the local area (Fulford 1987:277).

### Hengistbury Head

Hengistbury Head is a promontory which lies at the entrance to Christchurch Harbour in Dorset and has been the focus of habitation from the Paleolithic until the medieval period. A series of earthwork defences, probably dated to the Early Iron Age, cut off the promontory. Settlement of the site appears to have been most extensive in the first century BC when occupation covered an area of c10 hectares on the northern side of the promontory (Cunliffe 1987:74). Evidence from a series of small excavations and surveys between 1907 and 1984 revealed evidence for widespread and varied industrial manufacturing including bronze, salt, shale, glass and textiles, and imports of pottery from Italy and Amorica (Cunliffe 1987). The pottery included the remains of at least 30 Dressel 1A amphora, which forms the largest collection in southern England. These, together with the Amorican pottery, suggest that Hengistbury was the primary point of entry of these artifacts into southern England in the late second/early first century BC. The pottery was presumably transported directly from Amorica and the stimulus for the contacts is likely to have been the creation of the Roman province of Gallia Transalpina in southern France c120 BC. This provided a base in southern France for Italian merchants, and easier and more direct access to the French interior via the Rh6ne and Garronne-Gironde Valleys (Collis 1984a:166; Cunliffe 1987:340). Dressel 1A amphora occurs on several settlements within a 40 kilometre radius of Hengistbury including several inland sites, indicating that some redistribution was occurring, although the distribution of Amorican pottery is less widespread (Cunliffe 1987:312-6, 342).

The qualities of imports, however, decline sharply after c50 BC, evidenced by the virtually complete absence of the later Dressel 1B amphorae and other characteristic

later imports such as Gallo-Belgic wares, although the settlement appears to have remained a regionally important centre for manufacturing and exchange (Cunliffe:1987:345).

### Colchester

Colchester is located on the River Colne 10 kilometres inland from the east coast. It is by far the largest and most complex Late Iron Age settlement in southern England and has been the subject of several major campaigns of published investigation (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985; Hawkes & Crummy 1995). The settlement complex can be divided into several broad functional areas; with an industrial and exchange/port area at Sheepen next to the River Colne (at which large quantities of Gallic and Italian imported pottery have been found); a ceremonial/cult complex at Gosbecks three kilometres to the southwest; and cemeteries including richly furnished burials at Lexden (Foster 1986a) and Stanway (Crummy 1980; 1993). The complex is also marked by an extensive dyke system and is identified as a coin mint, and probable principal settlement in the first century AD of Cunobelin paramount ruler in southeast England. A Roman colonia was founded to the east of the Sheepen site overlooking the River Colne soon after the Roman conquest in AD 43.

### Other sites

Of the other major Late Iron Age sites, Dragonby in Lincolnshire, at approximately eight hectares in size, is much smaller than Braughing and its imports are of first century AD date (May 1991); Stanwick (Yorkshire) is also later in date and defined by extensive earthworks (Haselgrove et al. 1990). Canterbury has produced a large number of Late Iron Age coins and was clearly a major settlement, but the extent and character are both unclear (Haselgrove 1987a). Lastly, a cluster of sites in Oxfordshire along the Upper Thames Valley at Dyke Hills; Dorchester and Abingdon, appear to be major Late Iron Age settlements, possibly indicating an important regional focus similar to that of the Study Area, but there is at present little information available from these sites (Cunliffe 1991:132; Allen 1997)

## ***The Irish Royal Sites***

Ireland has long been viewed as one of the most important areas for the study of Iron Age society, including ritual and ceremony, because of its unique literary sources, the relative stability of its society from the later Bronze Age to the medieval period and the nature of its archaeological remains, particularly the so-called royal sites which can be identified from archaeological evidence and the literary sources. This evidence has recently been reviewed by Raftery (1994).

Three of the royal sites: Tara in Co. Meath; Dun Ailinne, Co. Kildare; and Navan in Armagh; have Late Iron Age evidence. Tara consists of a complex of 40 burial and ritual monuments, most of which are undated, but which include a Late Neolithic passage grave and a Late Iron Age ritual, burial and occupation site (the Rath of Synods). 75 metres from the Rath of Synods and aligned to it is a cursus-like monument with two parallel ditches 180 metres long and 30 metres apart, linked at the end closest to the Rath and which enclose a sunken area (Raftery 1994:65-70). Dun Ailinne consists of a massive hilltop oval enclosure 700 metres by 500 metres in area with a bank 4 metres high and a ditch equally large. Excavation at the centre of the enclosure revealed complex circular palisade structures, the largest of which was 37 metres in diameter, and a circular arrangement of pits. Evidence of large-scale open-air feasting was also found in the enclosure in the form of food refuse and areas of burning. The site is dated by C14 to the period 390 BC to AD 320 (Raftery 1994:71-4).

Lastly, Navan is also a hilltop enclosure 4.9 ha in size dated from the later Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age. The Late Iron Age phases consisted of a massive timber structure 37 metres in diameter, dated by dendrochronology 95/94 BC, which probably had a ritual function. The building did not have a long life and appears to have been transformed in a ritual fashion by the filling of its interior with stone to a height of 2.8 metres, and then burning the outer retaining timber wall, and finally covering the stone cairn with a mound of turf (Lynn 1992).

In considering the likely function of these sites, Raftery concludes that on the basis of their impressive scale, their clear identification with sites named in literary

sources and their association with kinship and tribal identity, they were most probably for the enactment of fertility ceremonies associated with the initiation of kings. As such, they were probably the most important ritual site for the tribe.

## ***Conclusions***

### ***Braughing***

There are aspects of the evidence from Braughing which are comparable with Colchester, Hengistbury Head and Silchester.

### **Silchester**

There are a number of parallels between the Late Iron Age evidence at Silchester and Braughing, of which the presence of Central Gaulish imports is probably the most significant. Silchester is the only major settlement apart from Braughing and Colchester to have produced this distinctive pottery, and it suggests that the exchange network which was bringing the large quantities of such pottery to Braughing via the Thames, was also taking pottery to Silchester, probably via the Thames and its tributaries. In this respect there are also parallels in terms of the topography between Braughing and Silchester in relation to river communications, with both settlements located at the periphery of the Thames Valley river system.

There are however significant differences between Braughing and Silchester, especially with regard to the way in which Silchester develops in period 2. The large-scale arrangement of rectilinear streets and palisaded enclosures is unlike anything found at Braughing. A system of pathways and rectilinear structures was found at Skeleton Green, but this did not indicate evidence for large scale planning of the settlement (Partridge 1981) and the evidence from sites such as Ermine Street (Potter & Trow 1988) suggests that the proto-urban occupation at Skeleton Green was limited in extent. The presence of probable defensive earthworks at Silchester and the fact that it was succeeded by a Roman cantonal capital also sets it apart from Braughing

## **Hengistbury Head**

In comparing Braughing with Hengistbury, the main similarity is with the importance and uniquely large quantities of imports of their respective periods, with the main period of Hengistbury's imports dating to the later second early first century BC and Braughing's to the later first century BC and early first century AD. However, other aspects of Hengistbury Head such its coastal location, presence of defences and extensive evidence of industrial activity contrasts with that of Braughing.

## **Colchester**

The Sheepen site at Colchester is the part of the complex which is most comparable with Braughing. However, Sheepen developed into an industrial complex serving the Roman colonia immediately following the conquest and the Roman occupation appear to have disturbed much of the Late Iron Age evidence (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985). Nonetheless, the quantity and range of Late Iron Age imports at Sheepen, even though much is from Roman contexts, is comparable with Braughing, including Central and North Gaulish fine-ware pottery and Dressel 1B amphorae, although the chronological emphasis is consistently later than Braughing suggesting a daterange between cAD 1 and 40 for the site (Rigby 1981; Niblett 1985).

## **Conclusion**

The chronological profile of the imports at Hengistbury Head and Colchester are earlier and later respectively than Braughing. Silchester (based on the interim report) with a similar profile of imports as Braughing is therefore the most directly comparable. The evidence of formal planning at Silchester and its subsequent history as a cantonal capital are however at variance with that of Braughing.

The diagrammatic model of the changing relationship between Britain and the Roman Empire represented by Collis (Collis 1984b:fig. 50) appears to represent the best description of the chronological sequence of the imports at the four sites at Hengistbury Head, Braughing, Silchester and Colchester. Under the Collis model

contact between the Roman Empire and Britain developed in three stages and were determined primarily by the fortunes of the Roman army;

1. contacts with Hengistbury Head were stimulated by the conquest of Transalpine Gaul in c120 BC'
2. contacts via the shorter channel crossing and the Thames became possible after the conquest of Gaul in the 50s BC'
3. the focus of trade moved to Colchester following the army relocation to Germany after AD 15.

It is possible that the settlement at Silchester could now probably be added to Braughing in phase two of the model, when contacts were via the Thames, although more evidence of imports dated to c25 BC to AD 15 would be needed to support this hypothesis. Other factors, including the complex regional political development and changing alliances with Rome in southern England, no doubt also influenced the scale of contacts, but the Collis model provides a simple and convincing explanation and the recent evidence from Silchester appears to give it additional support.

### Verlamion

#### **Colchester**

The combination of evidence for dykes and ritual/burial activity which characterise Verlamion has the closest parallel with Colchester. The proposed area of the Colchester *Oppidum* is considerably larger than that of Verlamion and its foci are more widely dispersed (Hawkes and Crummy 1995; Niblett 1999), but there are several significant similarities. Both settlements have a similar date-range, with main occupation periods beginning cAD 10 and continuing into the Roman period, although Verlamion may begin slightly earlier (Haselgrove and Millett 1997). In terms of the burial evidence, features of the Lexden burial at Colchester including the circular mound covering the burial and the iron mail shirt, are paralleled at Folly Lane, and apart from Baldock (Burleigh 1982) have not been found elsewhere in England (Foster 1986a; Niblett 1999). The rectilinear enclosures and shafts

associated with the burials at Stanway, although smaller in scale, are also comparable with Folly Lane (Crummy 1996; Niblett 1999). The elements of the Gosbecks site at Colchester, which include a Romano-Celtic temple, Roman theatre and probable royal settlement enclosure are also paralleled at Verlamion, and both settlements have been interpreted as Gallo-Roman sanctuary complexes with Late Iron Age origins (Crummy 1980; Niblett 1999). Lastly, the political and administrative evidence of the two settlements in respect of coinage and the high status of Roman settlements is comparable, and with the burial evidence suggests that both were the residences of aristocratic families.

There are, however, several important differences between Verlamion and Colchester the most important of which is probably the greater emphasis on burial at Verlamion, which has three large Aylesford cemeteries situated within the settlement complex. In comparison, only a few burials, most of which are relatively wealthy, have so far been found at Colchester. In addition, there is relative lack of imports at Verlamion compared with Colchester, and the morphology and topography of the dykes are different in a number of respects. In summary, the Colchester settlement complex is much larger and has a greater range of 'central place' functions than Verlamion including a greater emphasis on industrial manufacturing and consumption of imports.

### **Tara**

Direct comparisons between Verlamion and other English settlements are few in terms of its evidence for ritual and burial although the arrangement of the dyke system at Stanwick around a possible ritual focus, may prove to be comparable (Haselgrove et al. 1990). The evidence for aristocratic burial and ritual at the *pagus* or *civitas* social level at Verlamion does, however, invite comparisons in terms of function with Irish royal sites, especially Tara. The Rath of Synods within the Tara complex has evidence of Late Iron Age occupation, as well as ritual and burial activity, and it is assumed to be a site of major ritual significance at the tribal level, possibly connected with initiation rituals for Irish high-kings (Raftery 1994:56-70). On the basis of the evidence for royal burial and ritual, it could be speculated that

Verlamion and Tara are generically similar in terms of function. It is also possible that the evidence of dykes and Gaulish/Romanised artifacts and burial practices at Verlamion, by inviting comparisons with Continental sites, may only serve to obscure the dominant ritual and burial function of the site. Certainly, on the basis of current evidence, apart from Colchester, the Irish Royal sites appear to offer the best parallels for Verlamion.

### Baldock

The nature of Late Iron Age Baldock, in which evidence of high status consumption, manufacturing and possible market function is combined with a large number of burial remains, including richly furnished cremations, does not have any close parallels with other major Late Iron Age settlements in England. The most comparable settlement is probably Verlamion, at which burial and ritual evidence occurs with evidence of manufacturing and other high status activities. However, in many other respects, including the presence of large dykes and domestic occupation at Verlamion, the two settlements are significantly different. The extensive Iron Age remains at Gussage on Cranbourne Chase, Dorset, in which multiple linear ditches (which are also a feature of the Baldock settlement; see Burleigh 1995a) occur with evidence of cremation burials and a range of artifacts including coins and brooches (Corney 1991) seem to offer the greatest potential for parallels, but at present these settlements are relatively poorly understood. As with Verlamion, the emphasis of burial and ritual at Baldock invites comparisons with the Irish site of Tara. The possible spatial reference of the Baldock settlement to earlier prehistoric ritual and burial monuments also has parallels in Tara where a Neolithic burial mound occurs within the complex at Tara (Raftery 1994:67).



## 7.5 *Ritual, Boundary and Territory in the Late Iron Age*

### 7.5.1 Introduction

This section will consider the relationship between the location and character of Late Iron Age sites, particularly ritual and burial sites, and the evidence for social boundaries and territories. The following is a brief summary of the background to previous studies of zones, boundaries and territories, focusing upon the evidence which relates to the Study Area.

#### *Coins*

There is a long history of attempts to identify social and political boundaries in the Late Iron Age of southern England including the pioneering work of Evans in the nineteenth century (Evans 1896), and more recently that of Allen (Allen 1944), Rodwell and Cunliffe (Rodwell 1976; Cunliffe 1991), van Arsdell (1989) and Sealey (Sealey 1996). These have mainly used the evidence of coins, especially inscribed coins that have legends with named individuals and mint sites, together with Roman historical sources which name Late Iron Age tribes and their leaders, most notably the commentaries of Caesar's and Cassius Dio.

These studies have focused largely upon the political history of tribal dynasties from the period when inscribed coins first appear in the later first century BC (Haselgrove's period 7) until the Roman conquest. Some of the proposed scenarios for the development of polities are complex (e.g. Rodwell 1976). More recent studies have concentrated on the archaeological evidence of coins including spatial and chronological circulation patterns and the use of coins recovered from archaeological contexts (Kimes et al. 1982; Haselgrove 1987a; 1993). This approach has a greater potential to help identify social groupings (i.e. those who used and discarded coins of particular types) as well as political histories (those who minted the coins), especially if used in conjunction with other archaeological evidence such as pottery.

Quantitative analysis of the inscribed coinage has identified five notional 'territories' in central and southern England, the boundaries of most of which broadly correspond to major rivers. The Study Area falls within a large area between the Thames and Ouse Rivers (Kimes et al. 1982; Haselgrove 1987a). Analysis of chronological circulation patterns of site finds has also identified several areas of differential circulation within this area, the most significant of which is the East Hertfordshire/Middle Ouse Basin, which includes a substantial part of the Study Area (Haselgrove 1993:53-7). Coin use on the major settlements (Braughing, Harlow and Baldock within the Study Area) is significantly earlier than that of Chilterns/Upper Thames Valley area to the west (including St. Albans and Cow Roast within the Study Area). In addition, more recent and ongoing analysis of named coin types has identified differential clusters based on some of the major settlements, including several within the Study Area (Curteis 1997 & pers. comm.). Quantitative analysis of the archaeological evidence of coins is, therefore, beginning to bring together the social and the political aspects of the minting and circulation of coins which provide important evidence for the identification of social boundaries and territories. Some of this will be considered below.

### ***Pottery***

Nine regional zones have been identified within the distribution area of 'Belgic' pottery based on the styles of pottery in use and the distributions of fabrics other than grog which are used for wheel-turned pottery (Thompson 1982:8-17). The Study Area falls almost wholly within zone 7 (Hertfordshire and the Chilterns) which has an eastern boundary roughly on the River Stort and a northern boundary roughly on the River Ouse which is also the approximate northern limit of the distribution of 'Belgic' pottery. The zone is the largest and has the most pottery of the nine zones.

## *Aylesford Burials*

The recent analysis of the distribution of Aylesford burials by Hill has been briefly referred to above (Hill et al. forthcoming). This confirms that the northern limit of the distribution of the distinctive cremation burial rite lies along a boundary zone extending through Bedfordshire, southern Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

## *Ritual Sites*

The location of ritual sites at boundaries between social and political groupings is a long established theme of Iron Age studies which has recently been emphasised by Wait's analysis of shrines (Wait 1985) as well as that of Bradley (1987) and Hingley's study of iron currency bars (Hingley 1990). The tendency of hoards of gold to be deposited in river boundary locations has been noted by Haselgrove (Haselgrove 1987a:119) and the clustering of iron Age metalwork (which Fitzpatrick [1984] has shown are likely to be ritual offerings) in watery contexts in boundary locations has also been pointed out by Creighton (Creighton 1995:298-9). Creighton has also restated the link between Late Iron Age temples and boundary locations including the Harlow temple, together with the intriguing idea that the historically recorded Late Iron Age religious caste of druids may themselves have dwelt in the boundary zones between social groups (ibid.). In addition, in northern Gaul, Brunaux has shown a relationship between ritual sanctuary sites and the probable boundaries between tribes (Brunaux 1988:3). Ritual sites therefore appear to have the greatest potential within the Study Area for examining the relationship between settlement territories and boundaries in the Late Iron Age.

## **7.5.2 Evidence for Territorial Boundaries in the Study Area**

### *Introduction*

This section will comprise the following;

1. an assessment of the evidence for Late Iron Age social and political boundaries within the Study Area,

2. an assessment of the spatial relationship between a number of hypothetical social boundaries and Late Iron Age ritual sites, (for the purposes of this assessment it will be assumed that a spatial relationship exists between social boundaries and ritual sites, similar to that shown by Brunaux for Northern Gaul [Brunaux 1988]. The aim will be to assess which boundaries have the closest spatial relationship to ritual sites),
3. a system of suggested social and political boundaries will then be developed from these assessments and from a consideration of natural features.

### ***Evidence from Artifact and Settlement Distributions***

There is no clear artifactual and settlement evidence for a major Late Iron Age social boundary within the Study Area such as has recently been shown for the Icenii/Trinovantiae tribal boundary in Suffolk, based on the evidence of coins, metalwork and burials (Martin 1988). There is, however, some evidence for some significant contrasts in the archaeological evidence between the Study Area and other adjacent areas which may be due to social differences.

The River Stort has traditionally been regarded as the boundary between the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes (Dunnett 1975; Branigan 1985). The boundary between Thompson's pottery zones 1 and 7 runs approximately along the River Stort but this does not appear to be a firm dividing line (Thompson 1982). Creighton has also recently suggested that the siting of Harlow temple on the river could mark the boundary between the two tribes (Creighton 1995:298 & see below).

The Study Area falls wholly within the large Eastern coin circulation area (Haselgrove 1987a). Within this area, the East Herts./River Ouse coin circulation area lies partly within the Study Area although this does not appear to have a hard boundary line (Haselgrove 1993).

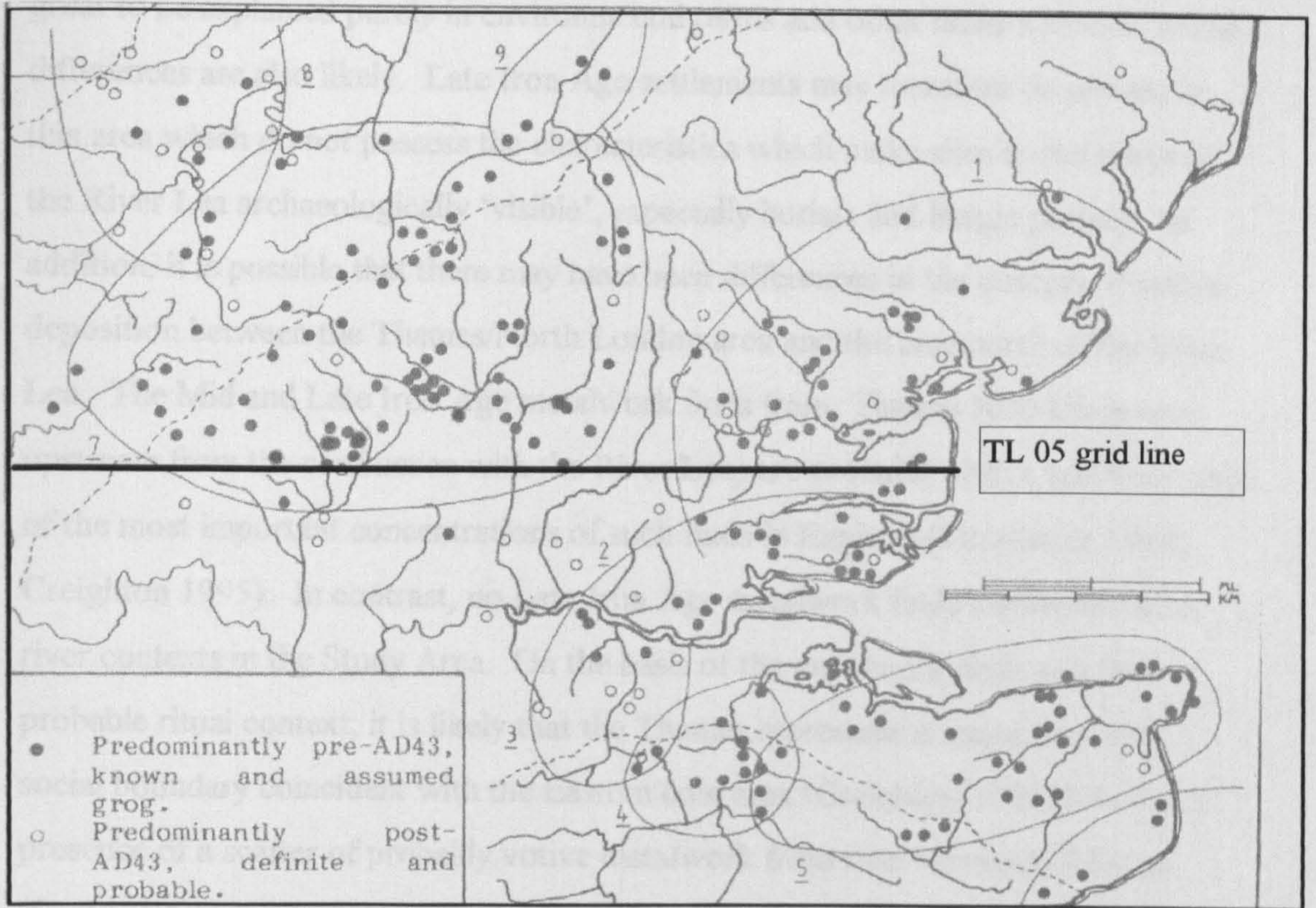
The assessment of the Baldock settlement has suggested that there is some evidence from the distribution of imported Gallo-Belgic coins and that the Icknield Way may have been a boundary in terms of coin use before the mid first century BC, with use and deposition of early coins (series A-D) being concentrated to the south of the route (Curteis 1997). However, the extent to which this might represent social differences is unclear and the more general distribution of coins to the north of the Icknield Way from the mid first century BC indicates that any such differences had probably disappeared by then.

It is possible that a social boundary may exist within the Study Area running east-west to the south of the River Lea on approximately on TL 05 grid line (see Figure 7.16). There is a marked contrast between the density of known Late Iron Age sites either side of the line. Nine sites are known within the Study Area in the c500 square kilometres to the south of the line (a density of 0.018 per square kilometre), compared with 200 from the remaining 1800 square kilometres (0.11 per square kilometre). Fewer than a dozen sites are known from the c1500 square kilometres between the southern boundary of the Study Area and the Thames (Thompson 1982 & information from Greater London SMR). Few Late Iron Age coin finds are known from this area and Haselgrove notes that there is void in terms of period II gold coins (c80-20 BC) (Haselgrove 1987a:113).

There is likely to be some preferential biases against the discovery of Late Iron Age sites in this area, as it is dominated by the heavy London Clays, which are not conducive to the discovery of archaeological remains from field or aerial survey techniques. However, the extensive development of the Greater London area over the past century would be expected to have revealed the presence of any major coin-producing sites if they were present, and a proportion at least of any more minor Late Iron Age 'Belgic' sites.

The assessment of the Late Iron Age agricultural potential of the soils of the Study Area in Chapter 3 has demonstrated that the London Clays would have been the least productive soils, mainly because of their very poor drainage. It is therefore

## Distribution of 'Belgic' Pottery and TL 05 Grid Line



(After Thompson 1982:Map1)

**Figure 7.16**

likely that the real density of settlement in the Late Iron Age would have been lower in the area to the south of the line. However, the contrast - of an order of magnitude - between the two areas in terms of known settlements is probably too great to be explained purely in environmental terms and other factors such as social differences are also likely. Late Iron Age settlements may therefore be present in this area which do not possess the characteristics which make sites to the north of the River Lea archaeologically 'visible', especially burials and Belgic pottery. In addition, it is possible that there may have been differences in the context of votive deposition between the Thames/North London area and the area north of the River Lea. The Mid and Late Iron Age metalwork finds from Thames (c30 kilometres upstream from the confluence with the River Lea) are probably votive and form one of the most important concentrations of such finds in England (Fitzpatrick 1984; Creighton 1995). In contrast, no Late Iron Age metalwork finds are known from river contexts in the Study Area. On the basis of the metalwork finds and their probable ritual context, it is likely that the Thames represents a major, regional social boundary coincident with the Eastern coin area (Creighton 1995:298-9); the presence of a scatter of probably votive metalwork from river contexts in Essex (Seeley 1996) suggests that the absence of such finds from the Study Area is either a factor of sampling/recovery bias or is due to differences in votive deposition. Lastly, the fact that the distribution map of 'Belgic' pottery does not extend along the Thames west of the River Lea may also indicate social differences between this area and the North Kent/South Essex area (Thompson zones 2-5) (Thompson 1982:6).

In summary, the evidence of differential distributions of pottery, settlements, riverine metalwork finds and some coin types suggest possible social differences between north London and the Study Area.

### ***Estimating Territorial Boundaries Around Major Settlements***

Territories can be calculated by drawing lines equidistant between settlements, creating Thiessen polygons where networks of settlements exist (Haggart 1965). The polygon lines can therefore be used to estimate the boundary lines between

territories especially where they coincide with topographical features such as rivers or archaeological data such as artifact distributions. This has been attempted for hillfort territories in southern England (Cunliffe 1971; Hogg 1971) and the Late Iron Age of southern England (Cunliffe 1991:fig.7.2) although, as Collis has pointed out, the value of such analysis is limited if the settlements can't be demonstrated to have been occupied contemporaneously or have different functions (Collis 1986:37).

The above assessment of the clusters of Late Iron Age sites has identified five major settlements within the Study Area (Braughing, Baldock, Welwyn, Cow Roast and Verlamion) which might be used as the basis for creating territorial boundaries. In terms of contemporary dating, it can be assumed that three (Baldock, Braughing and Welwyn) were occupied during the period c50 BC-AD 50, although estimating the extent and status of the occupation at any particular date is less secure. Dating the occupation of the Cow Roast site is more problematic due to the lack of dating evidence but the presence of a cremation dated c30-10 BC and bronze coins dated to the early first century AD (Haselgrove 1987a) suggests that occupation c30 BC - AD 50 may be assumed. The beginning of the Verlamion complex has been estimated at c10 BC-AD 15, continuing thereafter into the Early Roman period (Haselgrove and Millett 1997). Therefore, for the purposes of comparing contemporary settlements, it can be assumed that three – and possibly four – of the settlements were occupied between c30 BC and AD 50 and all five were probably occupied between cAD 15 and AD 50.

In terms of function, the above assessment has shown that there is evidence for all five of the sites having a 'central place' function in respect of evidence for high status elite presence (Braughing, Welwyn, Verlamion, Baldock), primitive market activity (Cow-Roast, Braughing, Baldock) and a probable local administrative function (Braughing, Welwyn). However, it also been suggested that an important - and possibly dominant - function of Baldock and Verlamion was burial and ritual, and that the existence of a pre-existing ritual focus may have been the reason for the location of these sites. These two sites may not, therefore, have been 'central



places' before the main phase of occupation (c10 BC for Verlamion and c50 BC for Baldock).

On order to take account of the potential differences and uncertainties in the occupation date and function of the five sites, three separate models of territories have been calculated, each of which has been compared with the distribution of ritual sites. For the purposes of this assessment, two other settlements (Great Chesterford and Sandy) which probably had central place functions (one of which, Sandy, is outside of the Study Area) have also been included in all three models. Great Chesterford lies on the north east boundary of the Study Area and is known mainly for the remains of a small Roman town (Brinston 1963). In terms of occupation evidence it has only produced evidence for a Late Iron Age Aylesford cemetery (Crossen et al. 1990). Late Iron Age coin finds dating from the first century BC and early first century AD from the general area of the Roman town do however suggest a significant Late Iron Age presence (Haselgrove 1987a:181). Sandy lies seven kilometres to the north of the Study Area and also known mainly for its Roman remains and like Great Chesterford has produced Late Iron Age coins finds suggesting significant Late Iron Age occupation - in this case from the later first century BC until the Roman period (ibid).

### **1. Baldock, Braughing and Verlamion as Central Places**

Figure 7.17 shows the boundaries between three major and statistically significant Late Iron Age site clusters at Baldock, Verlamion and Braughing. The boundaries assume that all three sites were the central administrative and political settlements within a territory, and all three were contemporary. Welwyn and Cow Roast are assumed to be lower-order settlements with territories within those of the three major settlements. The date for the boundary lines is, therefore, notionally cAD 15-30, which is the period when there is dating evidence for all three settlements.

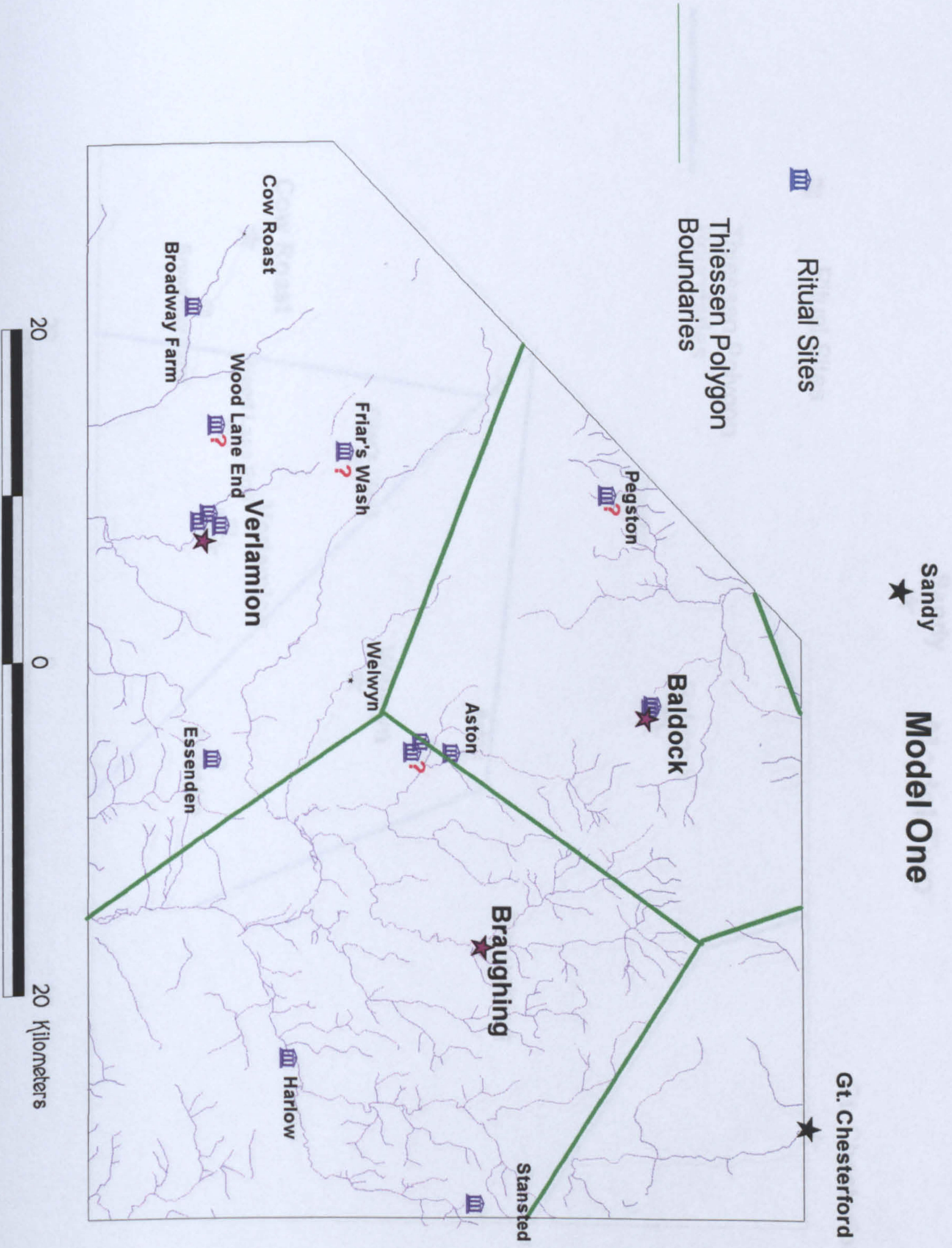
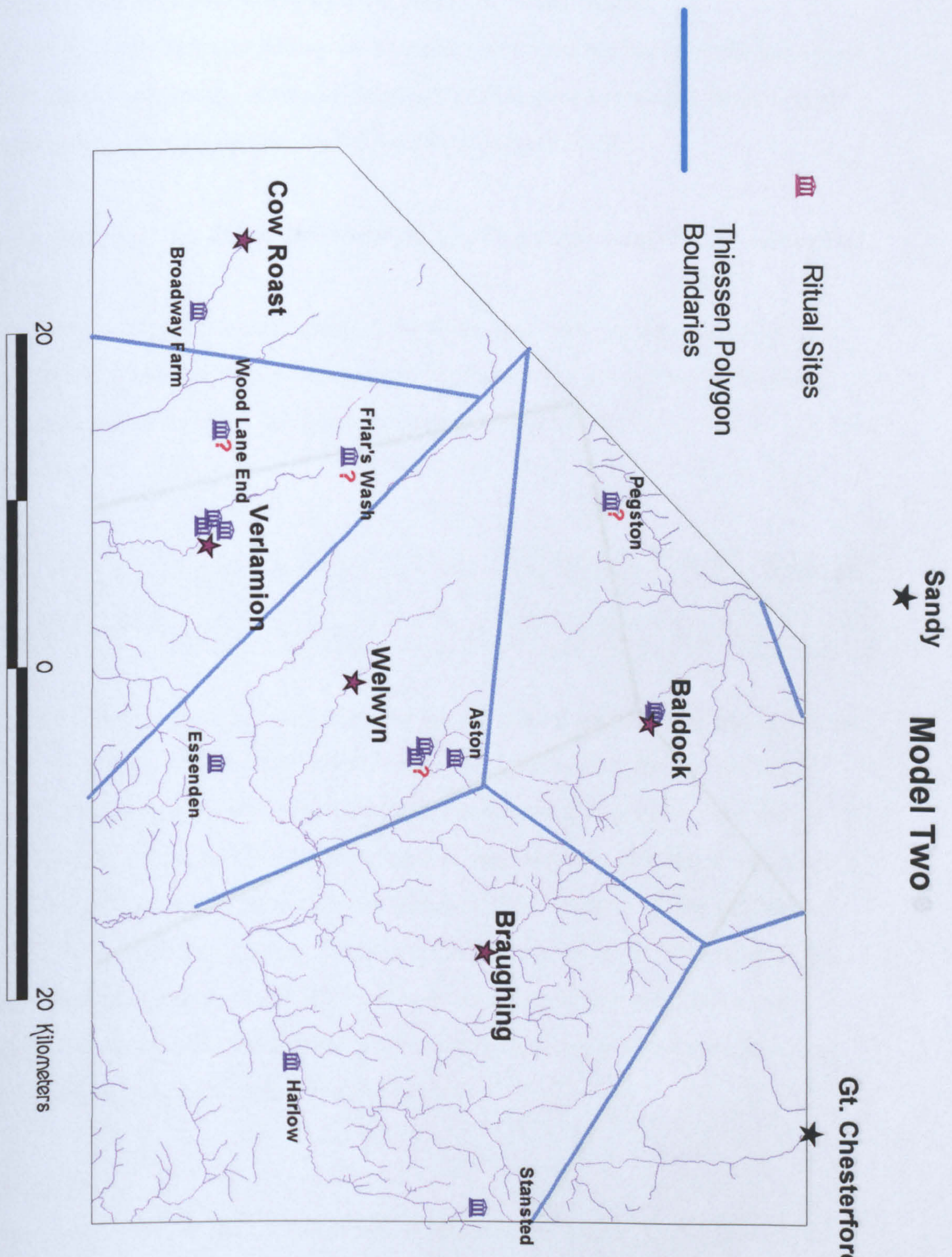
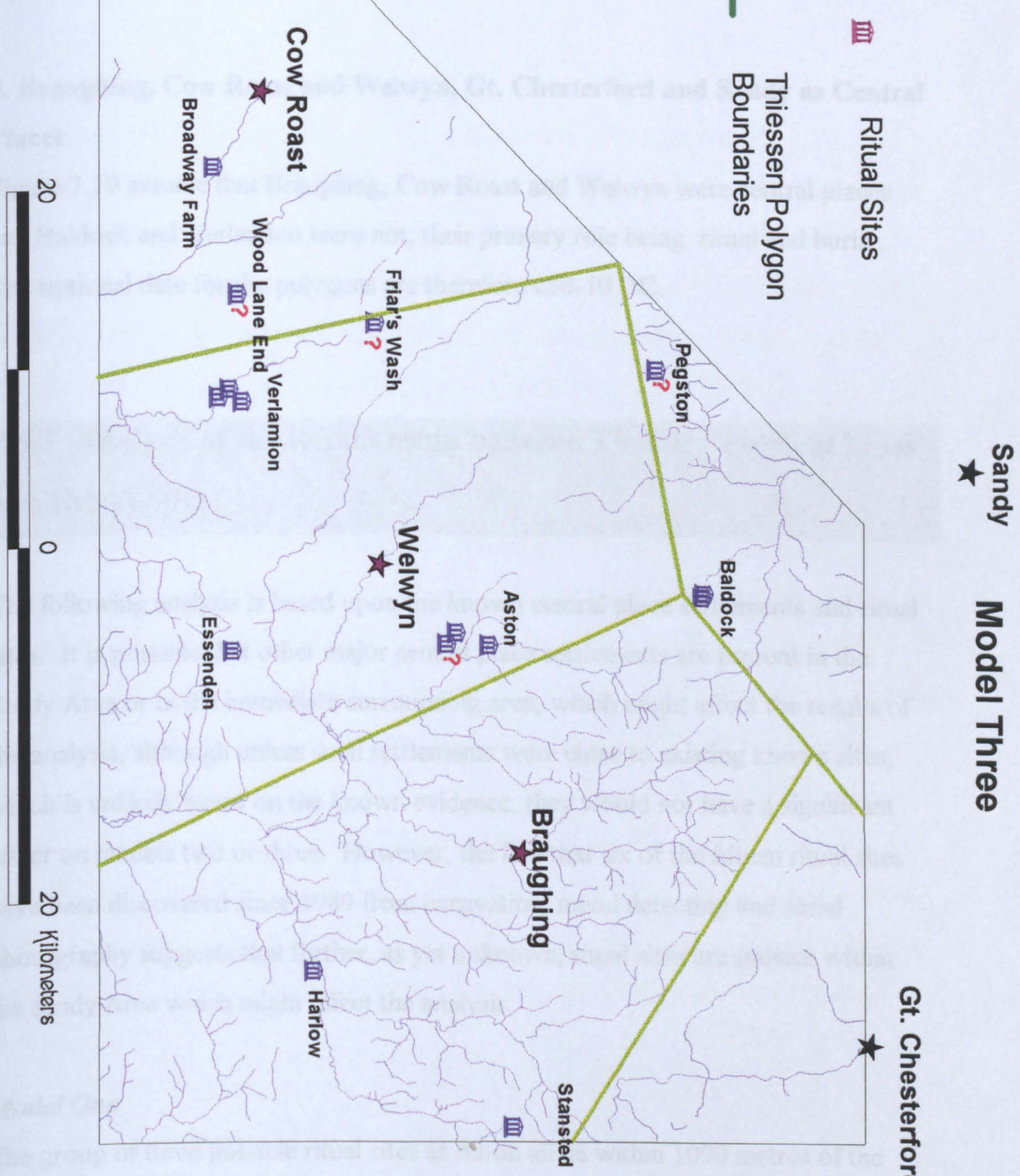


Figure 7.17



Gt. Chesterford Figure 7.18

2. All Seven Settlements are Central Places of Equal Status  
 Figure 7.16 assumes that all five major settlements within the Study Area, and Great Chesterford and Sandy, were contemporary central places of similar function and equal status. A possible date for this period is therefore c. AD 15-50.



Gt. Chesterford  
 Figure 7.19

## **2. All Seven Settlements are Central Places of Equal Status**

Figure 7.18 assumes that all five major settlement within the Study Area, and Great Chesterford and Sandy, were contemporary central places of similar function and equal status. A notional date would therefore be cAD 15-50.

## **3. Braughing, Cow Roast and Welwyn, Gt. Chesterford and Sandy as Central Places**

Figure 7.19 assume that Braughing, Cow Roast and Welwyn were central places and Baldock and Verlamion were not; their primary role being ritual and burial. The notional date for the polygons are therefore c50-10 BC.

### **7.5.3 Analysis of the Relationship between Thessien Polygon Lines and Ritual Sites**

The following analysis is based upon the known central place settlements and ritual sites. It is possible that other major central place settlements are present in the Study Area or in the immediate surrounding area, which might affect the results of the analysis, although unless such settlements were close to existing known sites, which is unlikely based on the known evidence, they would not have a significant affect on models two or three. However, the fact that six of the fifteen ritual sites have been discovered since 1989 from excavation, metal detecting and aerial photography suggests that further, as yet unknown, ritual sites are present within the Study Area which might affect the analysis.

#### ***Model One***

The group of three possible ritual sites at Aston all lie within 1000 metres of the boundary line between Baldock and Braughing. Essenden is 3.7 kilometres from the Verlamion/Braughing line and Stanstead is 3.5 kilometres from the Braughing/Great Chesterford line.

### ***Model two***

Broadway Farm is 2.5 kilometres from the line between Verlamion and Cow Roast and the Aston site is 2.5 kilometres from the lines between Baldock and Welwyn and Braughing and Welwyn.

### ***Model Three***

The Friar's Wash site lies 280 metres and the Wood Lane End site lies 2.8 Kilometres from Welwyn/Cow Roast boundary. The Aston site lies 1.7 kilometres from the Welwyn/Braughing boundary and Pegston lies 600 metres from the Sandy/Welwyn boundary. Baldock lies within one kilometre of the Welwyn/Sandy, Braughing/Sandy and Welwyn/Braughing boundaries boundary. The three ritual sites at Verlamion lie 2.1 kilometres from the Welwyn/Cow Roast line.

### ***Discussion***

Of the three models, the closest spatial relationship between the ritual sites and the Thiessen polygon lines is in model three, in which six ritual sites are within three kilometres of a line. The ritual status of the three sites on the River Beane Valley is however uncertain, with Aston being the only 'probable' ritual site of the three. The relationship with Pegston is also dependent upon the presence of the settlement at Sandy to the north. However, even if this line is removed, and two of the three Beane Valley sites are not included, model three still has the closest spatial relationship. In addition, if Baldock and Verlamion are also included as ritual sites (both are central places in models 1 and 2) all of the ritual sites apart from Stansted, Essenden, Broadway Farm and Harlow are within three kilometres of a Thiessen polygon line.

In model one, the three ritual sites on the River Beane Valley all lie very close to the boundary between Braughing and Baldock, although, as discussed, the ritual status of at least two of the three sites is uncertain. The distance between Essenden and the Verlamion/Baldock line at 3.5 kilometres is also relatively large in comparison to the distance of 30 kilometres between Verlamion and Braughing which the line divides. The significance of the relationship is therefore uncertain.

Model two has the fewest ritual sites close to a Thiessen polygon line. The relatively short distance between the polygon lines in this model (average 15-20 kilometres) also reduces the potential significance of the two sites, which are between two and three kilometres from a line.

#### **7.5.4 Other Spatial Patterning in Ritual Sites**

A notable spatial patterning of the ritual sites is the line of seven (including three at Verlamion) running in an east-west direction across the Study Area between Berkhamsted in the west and Harlow 46 kilometres to the east. In addition to Harlow and Verlamion, the line of sites also includes the Essenden, Wood Lane End and Broadway Farm. The sites are spaced at intervals of between five and eighteen kilometres and there is a gradual rise in latitude from west to east with Harlow five kilometres to the north of Broadway Farm.

It is possible to speculate that the line of ritual sites may be related to the possible social boundary at grid latitude TL 05, which has been postulated on the basis of differential settlement densities and possible differences in ritual deposition. However, on the basis of existing evidence any relationship between the two is hypothetical.

#### **7.5.5 A Model of Tribal Territories within the Study Area (Figure 7.20)**

##### ***Methodology***

Figure 7.20 shows a model of Late Iron Age territorial boundaries dated to c100-50 BC. The model is an interpretation, based on the above assessment of boundaries. All of the boundaries are based upon the distribution of ritual sites, although for each boundary line there is additional evidence for its boundary status; either

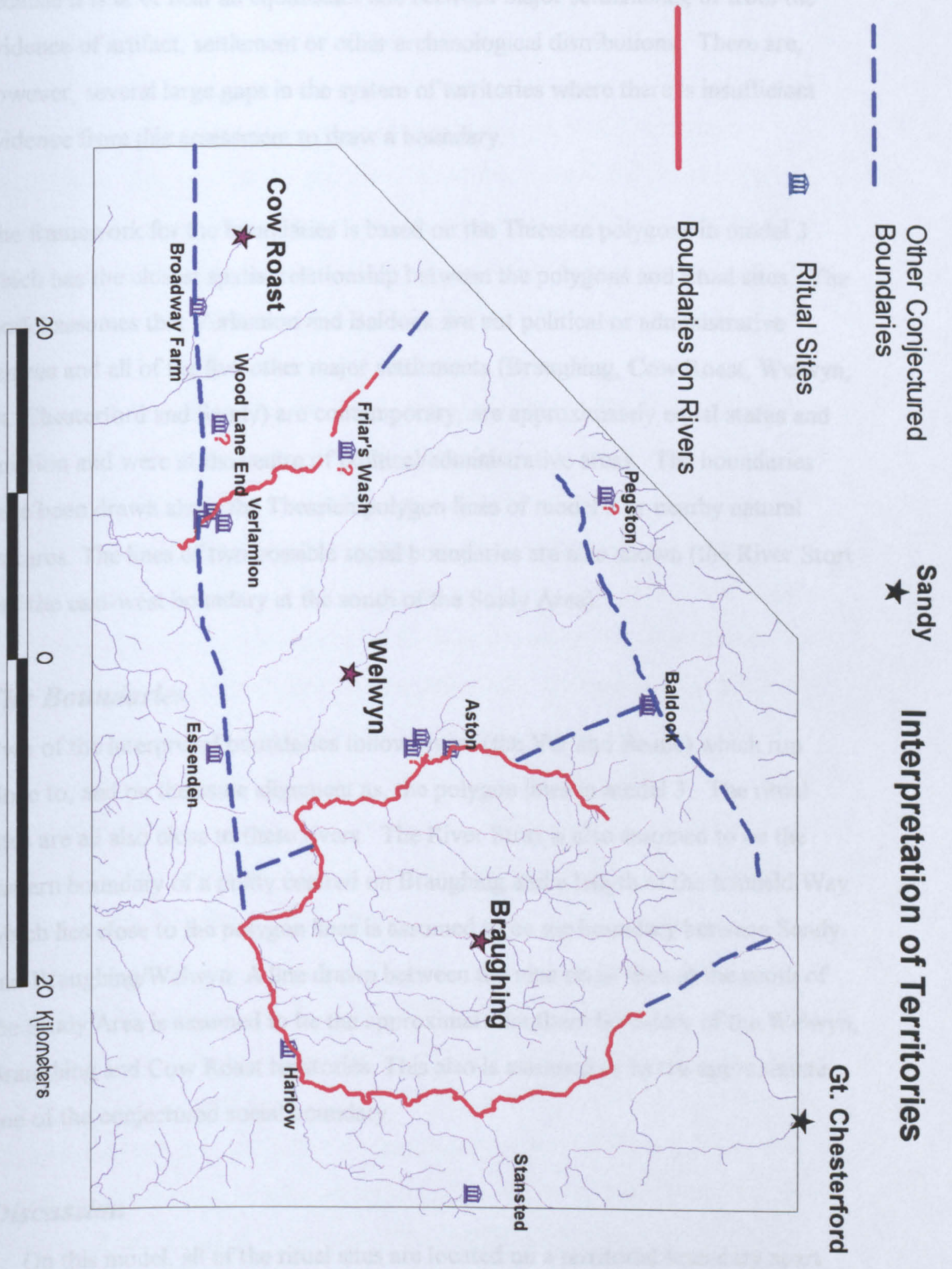


Figure 7.20



because it is at or near an equidistant line between major settlements, or from the evidence of artifact, settlement or other archaeological distributions. There are, however, several large gaps in the system of territories where there is insufficient evidence from this assessment to draw a boundary.

The framework for the boundaries is based on the Thiessen polygons in model 3 which has the closest spatial relationship between the polygons and ritual sites. The model assumes that Verlamion and Baldock are not political or administrative centres and all of the five other major settlements (Braughing, Cow Roast, Welwyn, Gt. Chesterford and Sandy) are contemporary, are approximately equal status and function and were at the centre of political/administrative areas. The boundaries have been drawn along the Thiessen polygon lines of model 3 or nearby natural features. The lines of two possible social boundaries are also shown (the River Stort and the east-west boundary at the south of the Study Area).

### ***The Boundaries***

Two of the interpreted boundaries follow rivers (the Ver and Beane) which run close to, and on the same alignment as, the polygon lines in model 3. The ritual sites are all also close to these rivers. The River Stort is also assumed to be the eastern boundary of a polity centred on Braughing and a length of the Icknield Way which lies close to the polygon lines is assumed to be the boundary between Sandy and Braughing/Welwyn. A line drawn between the nine ritual sites at the south of the Study Area is assumed to be the approximate southern boundary of the Welwyn, Braughing and Cow Roast territories. This also is assumed to be the approximate line of the conjectured social boundary.

### ***Discussion***

1. On this model, all of the ritual sites are located on a territorial boundary apart from Stanstead, although the boundary on which Essenden, Broadway Farm and Wood Lane End are situated is based only upon their linear alignment and the geographically non-specific social boundary. The Stanstead site is different from the other suggested ritual sites in that it is situated within a nucleated settlement.

Therefore, it is likely to be only locally significant, serving the inhabitants of the settlement rather than the wider tribe or *pagus*.

2. Verlamion and Baldock are both situated at the junction of more than one boundary. This could be a reason for the important ritual and burial status of these settlements. In the case of Verlamion, however, there is a stronger case for the River Ver serving as a boundary feature than the east-west line of ritual sites which is itself partly determined by the location of Verlamion.
3. The three territories which are based around the settlements of Braughing, Cow Roast and Welwyn have several common geographical features. The three river boundaries follow the natural southeast/northwest orientation of the landscape and the primary settlements themselves are also located on rivers on the same alignment. To the north and west, the natural prominence of the Chiltern hills also probably formed a boundary for all three territories, but there is at present insufficient evidence to draw a firm boundary line. Likewise, to the south, the less agriculturally productive and more wooded London Clay area probably formed a southern boundary for the three territories. The approximate size of the three territories is: 500 square kilometres for Braughing, 540 for Welwyn and 210 for Cow Roast, although the western boundary of Cow Roast probably extended to the west of the Study Area.
4. It can be conjectured that the three territories represent the areas of tribal or *pagi* social groups. The territories range in size from c200 to c550 square kilometres which is smaller than the suggested size range of 600-2000 for the north Gaulish *pagi*, although they do fulfill the other characteristics of being small natural regions which could be crossed on foot and which had a major settlement focus within it (an *Oppidum* in the case of the Gaulish *pagi*) (Brunaux 1988:4-6). Roymans has also pointed out that the *pagus* was the most stable, and probably most influential, social grouping in the Late La Tène of Northern Gaul and that many of the archaeologically visible ritual sites were probably *pagus* cult sites (Roymans 1990). The apparently long duration of the central

political/administrative centres at Welwyn, Braughing and Cow Roast would therefore tend to strengthen the argument that they were *pagus* social groupings.

### 7.5.6 Conclusion: Ritual Sites and Developing Polities

In summary, the above analysis has suggested that there is reasonable circumstantial evidence that Late Iron Age ritual sites were located on social/territorial boundaries. It is also likely that the location of some of the ritual sites on the suggested boundaries may have been influenced by earlier Prehistoric ritual and burial landscapes. This is probably the case with Baldock, Harlow and Aston, and may also have occurred with Verlamion. Locations in which the mythical ancestors are thought to have been buried may, therefore, have been preferred locations for ritual activity in the Late Iron Age.

It is suggested that the social boundaries formed a system of territories from c50 BC which were based around the major settlements of Braughing, Cow Roast, Welwyn and possibly Gt. Chesterford and Sandy.

The role of Baldock and Verlamion as the two largest centres for ritual and burial in the Study Area, may have developed because they were located on social/territorial boundaries. For both sites, their ritual and burial role is likely to have been influential in their developing central place functions in the later first century BC and early first century AD. In the case of Baldock, it is possible that a similar sized political territory to those at Braughing and Welwyn may have developed around the settlement from the later first century BC. However the relationship between evidence for possible central place function at Baldock in the form of manufacturing and high status consumption, and ritual and burial at Baldock from the later first century BC is unclear and the settlement certainly appears to have continued to be a centre for burial in the Roman period (Burleigh 1995b)

With respect to Verlamion, the large scale and importance of the Late Iron Age ritual and burial activity, and the subsequent status of the settlement as a *municipium* and cantonal capital of the Catuvellauni civitas in the Roman period suggests that its development in the later first century and early first century AD is likely to be associated with the *civitas* social group which represented the grouping together of tribes and *pagi* into ‘peoples’. If it is assumed that Verlamion was the political centre of Tasciovanus who minted coins from c30 to 10 BC, many of which have ‘Ver’ inscribed on them, the distribution of his coins indicates that the territory which he controlled was much larger than the three *pagi* territories suggested in Figure 7.19, and would have extended significantly beyond the confines of the Study Area. It is, therefore, possible that the site of Verlamion was transformed from a site at a ritually significant boundary to the political and ritual centre of a much larger area.

## **7.6 Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The existence of a spatial relationship between Late Iron Age sites and evidence of ritual and burial is a key and recurrent theme which has emerged from the above assessments.

The assessment of the relationship between Late Iron Age sites and evidence of earlier prehistoric ritual and burial has revealed that for two of the most important Late Iron Age ritual/burial sites (Baldock and Harlow), earlier prehistoric ritual and burial monuments were probably influential in their location. A spatial relationship is also likely between a group of probable Late Iron Age ritual sites and earlier prehistoric barrows in the Bean Valley at Aston.

The assessment of the three largest and statistically significant Late Iron Age site clusters (Baldock, St. Albans and Braughing) has suggested that the most important function of two (St. Albans and Baldock) was as centres for funerary and ritual activity. The assessment has also concluded that Braughing, and Welwyn (another

Late Iron Age site cluster) are likely to have been important local administrative centres in the first century BC, and possibly earlier.

The presence of a possible ceremonial route into the St. Albans (Verlamion) site complex has also been suggested on the basis of a summary assessment of the visual aspects of some of the key elements of the complex, and it is considered that a more detailed analysis of this and other ritual/burial sites has a high potential to explain the location and spatial arrangement of such sites.

A comparison of the evidence for Baldock and St. Albans with of other Late Iron Age settlements in Britain and Ireland has also concluded that the Irish Royal sites probably provide the closest parallel and have the greatest potential to understand the role of these two settlements.

The assessment of possible social and political boundaries has revealed that the closest spatial relationship between Late Iron Age ritual sites and boundaries is if three of the site clusters (Braughing, Cow Roast and Welwyn) are assumed to be political and administrative centres in the first century BC. From this assessment; a consideration of other evidence for social boundaries; and the above conclusion that St. Albans (Verlamion) and Baldock were burial/ritual centres; a system of territorial boundaries is proposed. It is considered that, based on the currently available evidence, this system of boundaries provides the best explanation for the spatial relationship between the site clusters and ritual sites, especially if Verlamion and Baldock are also interpreted as ritual/burial sites.

## CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The thesis has considered a body of Late Iron Age evidence from a geographical area which represents a significant proportion (c5%) of the area of southern England that includes the distribution of the three most characteristic Late Iron Age cultural artifact types; inscribed coinage, 'Belgic' pottery and Aylesford cremation. The Study Area was chosen because it contains the highest geographical concentration of Late Iron Age evidence in southern England, with the objectives of addressing the questions of why such a concentration of evidence exists within this area and also whether an assessment of the body of evidence can provide further understanding of social and political developments

Because the Study Area contains a large body of Late Iron Age evidence, the assessment, has by necessity, been an overview and has considered only the evidence which is readily available from published sources or within county Sites and Monuments records. A broad definition of Late Iron Age 'sites' has also been used

### 8.1 The poor quality of the evidence

A total of 226 Late Iron Age sites have been identified using the above criteria. The evidence from these sites was assessed using five criteria in Chapter 4. This has revealed that for two of the criteria (standard of excavation and the survival of the evidence) most sites fell within the 'high' or 'medium' categories. Although the assessment was partly subjective, these results are probably comparable with excavations in other geographical areas. The same is also probably the case for the assessment of the scale or 'proportion' of the total site excavated, which revealed that few (20%) have covered more than 20% of the total estimated area. The assessment with respect to the data collection and analysis of the excavated evidence of pottery and environmental data has, however, revealed that the small proportion (less than 5%) which are of 'high' or 'medium' imposes severe limitations upon the questions which can be realistically asked of the site evidence. Moreover, this is a much lower figure in

**terms of relative and absolute numbers than most other comparable geographical areas in southern England.**

**An assessment of the evidence for dating Late Iron Age sites in Chapter 5 has revealed that for only 38% can a date other than the general term 'Late Iron Age' be assigned. The analysis of intra-site chronological patterns of site location and development is, therefore, restricted to a small and not necessary representative sample of sites**

**An analysis of the evidence for the function of Late Iron Age sites in Chapter 6 has revealed that for the majority of sites (58%), there is no evidence of a defined function or activity, and of the 42% of sites where there is such evidence; the majority (60%) of the evidence is for ritual or burial. The number of Late Iron Age sites with evidence for agriculture, industry or habitation is therefore low, amounting to only 46 (21%) sites.**

**The conclusion which can be drawn from these assessments is that, although, there is high density of Late Iron Age sites within the Study Area, only a small proportion have the potential to make a significant contribution to the type of regional analysis which the thesis aims to undertake. Moreover, the evidence has probably been significantly biased by taphonomic factors (e.g. poor survival of bone and the archaeological visibility of 'urned' cremation burials). The sites for which the evidence can be used to reconstruct patterns of economic and social behaviour at the site or intra-site level, are therefore very few in number, and are invariably restricted to those for which the evidence is from burial or ritual activity.**

**An assessment of geographical distortions in the Late Iron Age site evidence has revealed that the distribution of sites is largely a factor of the biases in archaeological fieldwork. The concentration of fieldwork in and around the Roman towns of Verulamium, Baldock and Braughing, and the archaeological observation of the construction of Welwyn Garden City has resulted in a bias in favour of these areas with 33% of the total number of sites known from these four areas which include only 2% of the Study Area. In contrast, almost no archaeological fieldwork has been**

undertaken within the boulder clay and clay-with-flints areas which make up the majority of the Study Area. The systematic research which has been undertaken within the boulder clay areas at Stansted and northwest Essex has also demonstrated that they have a high potential for later prehistoric settlement including the Late Iron Age. The high degree of geographical distortion in the evidence for Late Iron Age sites greatly restricts the validity of conclusion which might be drawn from spatial analysis. An attempt to account to some extent for these distortions has been made by the development of a model of expected average site densities, based on the few systematic fields surveys which have been undertaken. This has enabled some tentative conclusion to be made about the densities of observed Late Iron Age site clusters, including the higher than expected densities at Baldock Braughing and St Albans.

In summary, there are aspects of archaeological fieldwork undertaken in the Study Area since the 1920s, particularly the recovery and analysis of artifacts and the concentration of activity in Roman towns, which has influenced the available evidence in such a way as to greatly limit its usefulness to address current archaeological issues. It is, however, considered that some aspects of the evidence, including the burial and ritual evidence and its relationship of the Late Iron Age sites to earlier and later evidence, had the potential to address some of these issues.

## **8.2 The Importance of Agriculture**

The significance of agriculture as a driving factor behind social and economic developments in the Iron Age is widely recognised (e.g. Pryor 1998). However, few Late Iron Age sites within the Study Area (less than 5%) have significant evidence for agriculture or the environmental background. An assessment of developments in agriculture for the Study Area has therefore been made by also using evidence relating to the theoretical potential of its natural resources, as well as Bronze Age and earlier Iron Age evidence from the wider region. From this, a model of agricultural development from the earlier Bronze Age to the Early Roman period is proposed. The key features of this model are that;



1. an increase in agricultural production and population was achieved during the Middle and Late Bronze Age by the clearing of woodland from the extensive areas of clay soils within the Study Area for the intensive rearing of cattle,
2. a further increase in production was achieved during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age by the conversion of pasture to extensive, low input, arable agricultur,.

These two processes, both of which required significant investment in labour, enabled a steady increase in agricultural production and population levels during the Bronze Age and Iron Age. By the Late Iron Age, it is argued that the Study Area was able to support a relatively high level of population and was also able to generate substantial agricultural surpluses.

Agricultural production, although not well represented in terms of Late Iron Age evidence, is therefore considered to be probably the most important single factor in explaining the high number of Late Iron Age sites within the Study Area as well as forming the background to social and political developments.

### **8.3 The Significance of Earlier Iron Age settlement**

An analysis of the evidence for Late Bronze Age and earlier Iron Age settlement, including that on and in the vicinity of Late Iron Age sites, has concluded that earlier Iron Age settlement was generally not an overriding influence on the location of Late Iron Age sites. However, several distinctive, localised patterns can be tentatively identified in the relationship between earlier and Late Iron Age sites.

1. No significant increase in Late Iron Age settlement on the extensive boulder clay areas.
2. A substantial increase in sites situated within, and close to, the middle reaches of the group of river valleys which occur across the centre of the Study Area (the Bulbourne, Ver, Mimram, Lea and Rib). In several areas, high densities of sites occur which do not appear to be related to preexisting earlier Iron Age settlement.

3. There is currently no evidence for an increase in Late Iron Age settlement in the lower Lea Valley and there is, moreover, likely to have been a significant reduction in the numbers of sites. The Late Bronze Age evidence from the Lea Valley is scattered and is mostly of poor quality, but it suggests that the area was settled and may have been an important focus for metalworking (Bryant 1995 )
4. The evidence from the Icknield Belt of the Chilterns suggests a significant degree of earlier Iron Age settlement which increased during the Late Iron Age, but to a much lesser degree than in the river valleys.

In summary, the evidence suggests a substantial increase in settlement occurred within some river valleys during the Late Iron Age; settlement on the boulder clay and chalk downland areas remained broadly static or increased slightly; and settlement numbers probably decreased in the Lower Lea Valley. A possible shift in the focus of settlement from the Lower Lea to the middle reaches of river valleys from the earlier to the Late Iron Age can therefore be suggested, although based on current evidence this theory is conjectural.

## **8. 4 The Relationship Between Late Iron Age and Early Roman Sites**

The brief assessment of Late Iron Age sites with the evidence for Roman occupation has concluded that there is a significant degree of continuity of site location with 50% of sites having some evidence and 20% having probable evidence of continuity of occupation. A comparison of the distribution of Late Iron Age sites, with and without evidence of Roman occupation, and other Roman sites also reveals that all of the major areas of Late Iron Age occupation continued to be settled in the Roman period, although the extent of settlement along the Icknield belt of the Chilterns may have declined.

## **8.5 The Importance of Overland and River Communications Routes**

**The analysis of the location of Late Iron Age sites in Chapter 5 has concluded that there is a significant spatial relationship between Late Iron Age sites and the two long-distance overland communication routes, The Ickniel Way and Stane Street, suggesting that these two routes may have served as a foci for Late Iron Age settlement. It is suggested that these were probably the most important overland routes in the Late Iron Age, whose role was primarily as means of transporting cattle and sheep locally between settlements and also to the major settlements. The fact that four of the five identified major Late Iron Age settlements (Cow Roast/Ashridge, Verlamion, Welwyn, Braughing) lie on the Stane Street route, which eventually links with Colchester, also suggests that it served an important social role in terms of contact between the social elite residing in these settlements. In addition, it is possible that Stane Street and the Ickniel Way may have had an a role as a important ceremonial routes leading to the ritual sites at Verlamion and Baldock.**

**The assessment of Late Iron Age site location in relation to rivers, together with a review of the importance of river communications, has concluded that the rivers of the Study Area were a key resource. It is argued that almost all bulk commodities in the Late Iron Age were transported for most of their route by river, and that this was probably a significant influence upon the location of Late Iron Age sites. It was also an important factor in the development of trading contacts with Gaul and Italy in the first century BC.**

## **8.6 The Role of Ritual and Religion**

**Although the evidence of ritual and religion can be, by its nature, much more difficult to define and interpret than other forms of evidence, there are reasons for suggesting that development in the fields of ritual, religion and burial were an important aspect of Late Iron Age society which was also influential in both the large number of sites and their location. The following conclusions are made from the assessment of ritual sites in Chapters 6 and 7.**

- 1. Several rectilinear enclosures which may have a ritual function have been identified within the Study Area (Aston, Datchworth, Raffin Green, Verulam Hills Field, St. Michaels/Forum and Folly Lane). A group of these (Aston, Datchworth and Raffin Green) have affinities in terms of form and location with 'Belgic' sanctuaries, which are characterised by the practice of defining sacred ritual areas within the landscape by the construction of monumental barriers between sacred and profane space. However, there is at present insufficient evidence to definitely ascribe a ritual function to these sites.**

**These rectilinear enclosures may also be related to a group of rectangular enclosures which have been identified in Norfolk, including the ritual site at Fison's Way, Thetford (Gregory 1988). In addition, a possible parallel between the Fison's Way site and the St. Michael's/Forum sites at St. Albans is tentatively suggested.**

- 2. The distinction between the rituals associated with cremation burial and other rituals appears to be less clear from the evidence of the Study Area than the evidence from other regions, especially that from northern France. This is particularly marked within the two most significant ritual settlements within the Study Area at Verlamion and Baldock. At Verlamion, two large excavated ritual enclosures (Folly Lane and Verulam Hills Field) have produced evidence for cremation and inhumation burial as well as other ritual activity.**
- 3. It is possible that many of the artifact rich Late Iron Age deposits identified from the Study Area are related to rituals concerned with the abandonment or 'closing' of settlements or parts of settlements. The small group of deposits dating to cAD 60-70, may (identified in table 5.2\* ) fall within this category, as may some of the deposits from the Braughing complex (e.g. the Wickham Kennels sites). At present there is insufficient evidence to reach any conclusions, but this could be a reason for the large number of identified sites within the Study Area and may be a priority for future research.**

**4. There are strong circumstantial grounds for suggesting a link between the location of ritual sites and social boundaries in the Late Iron Age. An analysis of hypothetical boundaries based on the location of Late Iron Age ritual sites and the identified major Late Iron Age settlements has suggested that a relationship exist in the first century BC, especially if the Verlamion and Baldock are not assumed to be central places. From this and other evidence, it is suggested that the most important role of Verlamion and Baldock in the first century BC was as ritual sites, but that both developed into central places with political and administrative functions in the first century AD. There is also evidence for an association between some Late Iron Age ritual sites and earlier prehistoric ritual sites and landscapes and also for a possible reference to earlier prehistoric burial forms, especially for the wealthy burials at Folly Land and Lexden, both of which were associated with individual earlier prehistoric artifacts and were covered in circular mounds.**

**This evidence, therefore, indicates that early prehistoric ritual sites and natural boundary features such as rivers are likely to have been influential in the location of Late Iron Age ritual sites.**

**5. There are few known sites which can be compared with the two most important last Iron Age ritual sites of Verlamion and Baldock, but it is argued that closest parallels for the rituals carried out at these sites may lie with the Irish Royal sites, especially Navan and Tara where rituals of initiation of kings are thought to have taken place.**

**6. In terms of religious beliefs, there is evidence from the association with earlier prehistoric ritual sites and the later treatment of the Folly Lane site (at which a Romano-Celtic temple was constructed adjacent to the burial site) that the veneration of ancestors may have been a significant aspect of Late Iron Age religious beliefs. A highly tentative hypothesis of the suggested of the role of the Folly lane burial could be as the symbolic transformation of the Verlamion complex from a 'king making' site of ritual importance to a site of the ritual veneration of the last king to be 'made' at Verlamion.**

**7. A summary assessment of the ways in which the Verlamion ritual complex may have been approached and moved through in the Late Iron Age has indicated that the visual aspects of the dykes and burial sites were important in relation to the suggested focus of the complex at the St. Michael's/Forum site. It is also suggested that the Beech Bottom Dyke may have functioned as the main ceremonial route into the ritual complex. It is argued that a more detailed assessment of the Verlamion complex as well as other identified ritual sites, possibly using digital terrain models, is likely to be a potential fruitful area for future analysis.**

**In conclusion, it is suggested that ritual and burial is a significant, if not the dominant, aspect of the archaeological evidence the Late Iron Age in the Study Area. This is manifest particularly from the evidence of cremation burial, for which the Study Area contains the highest concentration of sites and two unprecedentedly large concentrations of burials at Verlamion and Baldock. The deposition of artifacts at 'cult' ritual sites and the enclosure of some ritual sites is also a feature of the evidence within the Study Area which makes it particularly archaeologically 'visible'. Lastly, many deposits of Late Iron Age artifacts contained within ditches, which are a feature of many sites, may prove to be ritual in origin.**

## **8.7 The Significance of Contacts with northern France**

**The importance of links between the Study Area and northern Gaul is a well established theme which clearly forms the background to much of the Late Iron Age evidence for Study Area. The introduction of the burial rite of urned cremation in flat graves probably came from northern Gaul, and the archaeological 'visibility' of this rite has been influential in the high recorded density of Late Iron Age sites within the Study Area. Likewise, the introduction of coinage and new types of pottery styles and forms, including 'Belgic' pottery and the later Gallo-belgic wares, has also been a feature of the high number of recorded sites. However, the details of these links in terms of their origins and the specific nature of the regional contacts, and how they developed during the Late Iron Age are much less clear. The simple model of links following the movement of the Roman Army northwards from southern Gaul to the Rhine provides a possible explanation for the dynamics of exchange links between the Roman Empire**

**and the major settlements at Hengistbury Head, Braughing, Colchester and possibly Silchester. The developing analysis of the pottery evidence, including the introduction of the fast potter's wheel and new forms of drinking, is also demonstrating potential for understanding the background to these developments early in the Late Iron Age and in the Middle Iron Age. In this respect, the evidence for links between the northern Chilterns and the northern France in the earlier Iron Age from the distinctive 'Chinnor/Wandlebury' pottery and occasional examples of hand-made pedestal urns suggest that links between the two regions may have been long-standing. It may also be significant that the earliest examples of high-status imports from 'The Tene' burial comes from the same general area. However, although this could form a promising area of future research, the evidence is at present insufficient to draw any significant conclusions.**

## **8.8 Summary**

**In addressing to two key questions of the thesis the following conclusions can be made.**

- 1. The high concentration of Late Iron Age evidence has been influenced to a substantial degree by a combination of the high archaeological visibility of the evidence, and the fact that the major Roman settlements upon which most archaeological fieldwork has been concentrated, were also occupied in the Late Iron Age. Also, of significance, were innovations in burial and ritual including the introduction of cremation, ritual/votive deposition of artifacts in large quantities and the monumental enclosure of ritual space. The developing links with Gaul and the Roman Empire, the former of which may have been a continuation of earlier links, has also influenced the recorded number of sites, especially the early introduction of the potter's wheel and 'Belgic' pottery. However, the high productivity of the agricultural economy is considered to be the most important underlying reason for the large number of Late Iron Age sites.**
- 2. A critical examination of the Late Iron Age evidence has shown that it is of limited value for explaining the nature of Late iron Age society. Analysis of several broad**

**spatial patterns including the relationship with communications routes, earlier and later settlement, and the relationship between ritual sites and boundaries between major settlements has, however, revealed several patterns and aspects of the evidence which may have more general social implications:**

- **the importance of the Stane Street and Icknield Way overland communication routes,**
- **the significance of earlier prehistoric monuments in late Iron Age religious beliefs,**
- **the importance of rivers as a means of transport and communications,**
- **the possible existence of social territories based around settlements at Welwyn and Braughing which may also have persisted into the Anglo-Saxon period,**
- **the development of the two ritual and burial foci at Verlamion and Baldock during the later 1st century BC and 1st century AD.**



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