OXONIENSIA

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Enquiries about the association should be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz Woolley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford, OX1 4LS (membership@olha.org.uk).

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Abbreviations

Abbreviated titles are used in each article after the first full citation. In addition, the following are used throughout the volume or in particular articles:

BAR	British Archaeological Reports (Oxford, 1974–)
BAR BS	British Archaeological Reports, British Series
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CA	Cotswold Archaeology
CBM	ceramic building material
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
EVE	estimated vessel equivalent
Fig./Figs.	figure/figures
f./ff.	folio/folios
FLO	Finds Liaison Officer
HER	Historic Environment Record
JMHS	John Moore Heritage Services
MedArch	*Medieval Archaeology* (London, 1958–)
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
MS	manuscript
n.	note
n.d.	no date
ns	new series
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OBR	Oxfordshire Buildings Record
OD	Ordnance Datum
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
os	old/original series
OXCMS	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
r.	recto
SMidlA	*South Midlands Archaeology* (Oxford, 1983–) [formerly CBA Group 9 Newsletter]
TS	typescript
TVAS	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
v.	verso
VCH	*Victoria History of the Counties of England* (London, 1900–) [*Victoria County History*]
vol.	volume

Status or What? Aspects of Broad Characterisation of Roman Pottery Assemblages in the Oxford Region

Paul Booth

SUMMARY

A review of nearly one hundred pottery assemblages from sites across the Oxford region considers aspects of evolution in their character through three broad periods, late Iron Age/early Roman, middle Roman and late Roman. Subjects examined are the proportion of each assemblage consisting of non-essential 'fine and specialist' wares and changes in assemblage composition in terms of three major groupings of vessel classes. Proportions of fine and specialist wares increased steadily through time, with a particular boost resulting from developments in the Oxford pottery industry in the mid third century. Variability in fine and specialist ware levels within each major period group was closely linked to site character, such wares being consistently less common at rural farmstead sites, particularly in the early Roman period. Similar conservatism in relation to the range of vessel types in use was seen in early Roman rural assemblages, which were very heavily dominated by jars – multipurpose vessels originating in later-prehistoric traditions – while other types of site showed greater diversity of vessel types. The proportion of jars declined on sites of all kinds through the middle Roman period, but in the late Roman period this trend only continued in some cases, while stabilising elsewhere and even reversing slightly in a few instances. Nevertheless, jars always constituted the most numerous of the three vessel class groupings, only very rarely amounting to less than half of all vessels. The second vessel class grouping, related to liquid storage and consumption, was prominent at many sites in the middle Roman period before declining in the late Roman. The third grouping, consisting of bowls and dishes – vessels mainly associated with food preparation and serving – became particularly important in the late Roman period. These general trends, like evolution in the representation of fine and specialist wares, can again be associated broadly with aspects of site character, the latter reflected in differences in social practice particularly concerning food preparation and presentation.

Pottery is usually much the most abundant artefact type recovered from sites of Roman date in lowland Britain and as such has enormous value as a tool to assist interpretation of many aspects of these sites, far beyond the obvious function of providing a chronological framework for their development. One of the commonest applications of pottery evidence is in relation to what is sometimes loosely referred to as 'status'. This can be expressed in terms of a broad reference to the presence of items such as samian ware, but is frequently not developed beyond uncritical observations of this kind. For pottery evidence to be used to inform debates about site status in a meaningful way a more systematic approach to the data is needed, as well as a clearer understanding of the nature of the questions that might be addressed with those data. Recent analysis of a large assemblage (a little over 60,000 sherds weighing just more than 1 tonne) from Gill Mill, a Roman settlement in the lower Windrush Valley some 15 km west of Oxford,[1] has prompted reconsideration of some of these issues based on data from the Oxford region, using

[1] P. Booth and A. Simmonds, *Gill Mill: Later Prehistoric Landscape and a Roman Nucleated Settlement in the Lower Windrush Valley near Witney, Oxfordshire*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 42 (2018).

a very loose definition of that term taking in selected sites in eastern Gloucestershire as far as the vicinity of Cirencester.

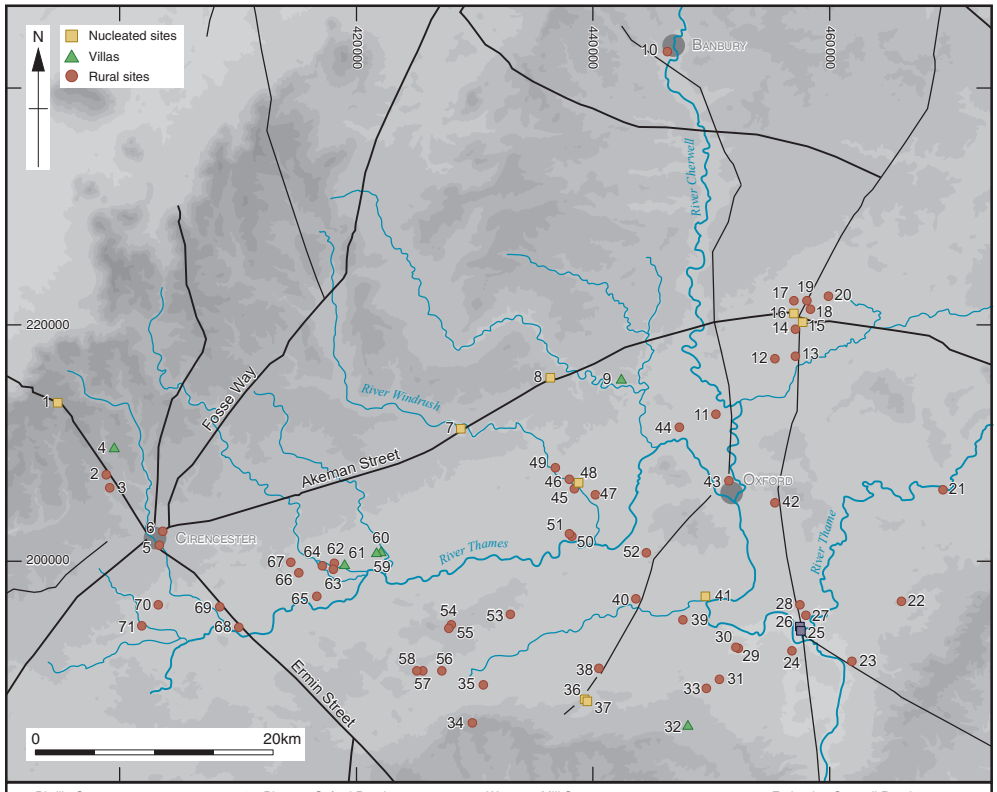
The simple (and unoriginal) premise underlying this work is that the status – here specifically social/economic status – of individual sites will be reflected in the pottery assemblages that derive from them; in broad terms sites of higher status might produce more fine wares, or more exotic imports, and so on. It may be possible to correlate particular types of site (defined on the basis of characteristics of morphology and structure types, for example) with particular types of pottery assemblage. Conversely, if such correlations can be established as a general principle it may then be possible to use the pottery data to inform assessments of site type even when closely identifiable morphological and structural characteristics are lacking. The specific potential of samian ware in this regard has been demonstrated by the work of Steven Willis, who has assembled data indicating the nature of correlations between certain aspects of samian ware assemblages (for example, particular fabric/form combinations or the incidence of decorated forms) with sites of particular types.[2] Many sites, however, particularly rural settlements, will not produce sufficient samian ware to sustain robust analysis of this sort, and in any case these analyses would only be relevant for the first and second centuries, but previous work suggests that such conclusions can be supported by use of complete (non-selective) site assemblages, although in every case interpretation has to be considered carefully. 'Status' in our sense can be regarded as a key component of identity, the complexity of which, both as a concept and in terms of its numerous potential archaeological manifestations, is well known.[3] A less loaded term is perhaps 'character'. The recent Roman Rural Settlement Project has routinely used a simple categorisation of broadly-defined settlement types as the basis for a number of systematic analyses,[4] and a similar approach is followed here, partly for ease of presentation. We can describe (on the basis of physical characteristics) and perhaps identify ceramically, an individual settlement as a 'basic rural site' (in the terminology of Evans),[5] for example, without having to elaborate on the specific 'status' of its occupants, who might have been independent peasant farmers, or tenants or even slaves of a large estate, amongst other possibilities. Such variations in status, while very important for the individuals concerned, or in terms of the economic structures involved, will only rarely be identifiable from archaeological evidence – their detailed correlates in terms of pottery assemblages might be very far from self-evident. In essence, therefore, the sorts of simple analyses discussed below are aimed at clarification of the general character of a site and its occupants, though on occasion it may be possible to suggest more specific interpretations of the status of these people. For our purposes rural settlements are only divided between villa/proto-villa sites and others, accepting that both categories encompass considerable variations of size and complexity. Also relatively common are minor nucleated settlements, a broad term used here for a variety of settlements, including some examples that would be considered 'small towns' in traditional terminology but all characterised by a roadside setting. The 'small town' label is reserved for the walled examples, which here only applies to

[2] S.H. Willis, *Samian Pottery, A Resource for the Study of Roman Britain and Beyond: The Results of the English Heritage Funded Samian Project, an E-Monograph*, Internet Archaeology, 17:1 (2004), http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.17.1; 'Samian Ware and Society in Britain and Beyond', *Britannia*, 42, pp. 167–242.

[3] For example, S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (1997); A. Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity: Soldiers and Society in Late Roman Britain* (2007); numerous contributions in M. Millett et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain* (2016); H. Eckardt, *Objects and Identities in Roman Britain and the North-Western Provinces* (2014), for extended discussion with specific relation to material culture.

[4] A. Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain: New Visions of the Countryside in Roman Britain, Volume 1*, Britannia Monograph, 29 (2016), pp. 17–43, and pp. 183–192 for the region covered by the present paper.

[5] J. Evans, 'Material Approaches to the Identification of Different Romano-British Site Types', in S. James and M. Millett (eds.), *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, CBA Research Report, 125 (2001), p. 28.



1. Birdlip Quarry
2. Middle Duntisbourne
3. Duntisbourne Grove
4. North Cerney Ditches
5. Cirencester Kingshill South
6. Cirencester Kingshill North
7. Asthall
8. Wilcote (CA)
9. Combe
10. Banbury Flood Alleviation
11. North of Oxford Parkway
12. Holts Farm Crossing
13. South of Merton
14. Alchester Langford Lane South
15. Alchester Langford Lane East
16. Alchester
17. Bicester Whitelands Farm
18. Bicester Langford Park Farm
19. Bicester Oxford Road
20. Bicester Bicester Park
21. Thame Site F
22. Chalgrove (east of)
23. Benson The Moorlands
24. Little Wittenham Castle Hill
25. Dorchester Allotments
26. Dorchester Beech House
27. Berinsfield Wally Corner
28. Berinsfield Mount Farm
29. Appleford Sidings 1997-1999
30. Appleford Sidings 1993 & 2000
31. Didcot Great Western Park
32. Chilton
33. Harwell Blenheim Hill
34. Uffington Castle
35. Uffington Station Road
36. Wantage Denchworth Road
37. Wantage Mill Street
38. Grove (Wantage)
39. Drayton Abingdon Road
40. Frilford Millets Farm
41. Abingdon Cinema
42. Oxford Brasenose Driftway
43. Oxford Mansfield College, New Chemistry & Love Lane
44. Yarnton
45. Stanton Harcourt Gravelly Guy
46. Hardwick/Yelford Smiths Field
47. Gill Mill Area 6
48. Gill Mill
49. Gill Mill Area 13
50. Standlake Old Shifford Farm
51. Standlake Old Shifford Farm, late settlement
52. Tubney Wood
53. Hatford 1991
54. Faringdon Coxwell Road 1999
55. Faringdon Coxwell Road 2017
56. Longcot Shrivenham Road
57. Watchfield 1998
58. Watchfield Triangle
59. Lechlade Roughground Farm East
60. Lechlade Roughground Farm 1990
61. Fairford Claydon Pike
62. Fairford Thornhill Farm
63. Kempsford Arkells Land
64. Whelford Bowmore
65. Kempsford Stubbs Farm
66. Horcott Totterdown Lane
67. Horcott Quarry
68. Cricklade Weavers Bridge
69. Latton Latton Lands
70. Cotswold Community
71. Somerford Keynes Neigh Bridge

Fig. 1. Map showing location of sites.

Dorchester, while the roadside extramural settlements around Alchester are included in the minor nucleated settlement category.

Site characterisation on ceramic criteria is here approached through consideration of the two fundamental features of pottery – its fabric and form. Use of fabric data builds on work initially undertaken on a small number of assemblages in Warwickshire,[6] developed in a paper based

[6] P. Booth, 'Inter Site Comparisons between Pottery Assemblages in Roman Warwickshire: Ceramic Indicators of Social Status', *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 4 (1991), pp. 1–10.

on the upper Thames valley,[7] and subsequently partly expanded in consideration of the context of sites in the Cotswold Water Park,[8] and more recently in relation to sites in the Bicester area[9] and Gill Mill,[10] as mentioned above. In this approach a number of the principal ware groups defined in the Oxford Archaeology (South) Roman pottery recording system are grouped together under the heading of 'fine and specialist wares' (hereafter F&S wares) – material that was not essential to perform the most basic functions for which pottery could be used, and thereby providing a complete contrast with the range of material found in most later-prehistoric pottery assemblages in this region. The ware groups in question, with their identifying letter code in the Oxford system, are samian ware (S), fine wares (F), amphorae (A), mortaria (M), white wares (W) and white-slipped wares (Q).[11]

The primary assumption is that assemblages from higher status sites will contain larger proportions of F&S wares and that sites can be ranked and their potential character suggested based on the F&S percentage in their assemblages. The wares in question form about half of the major ware groups defined in the Oxford Archaeology pottery recording system; the remaining ware groups are late Iron Age/early Roman 'Belgic type' wares (E), oxidised and reduced coarse wares (O and R respectively), black-burnished wares (B), calcareous-tempered wares (C), and selected coarse-tempered (particularly Malvernian) fabrics (G), only used occasionally. These together form the coarse ware component (and therefore usually the majority of the pottery) in assemblages in the region. The F&S ware categories used here are not completely unproblematic, and it is important to note that they would not necessarily serve as a suitable basis for comparative analysis in some other regions of Roman Britain, where different characterisations of 'fine and specialist' wares might be more appropriate,[12] but in the Oxford region, at least, analysis based on these ware groups does seem to produce patterns of data that have some validity for discussion of site character. Recent broadly complementary analyses of Gloucestershire assemblages by Jane Timby are discussed further below, where appropriate.[13]

A key but unsurprising conclusion from the earlier Oxford region work was that chronological factors were very important when comparing assemblages. Most obviously, the introduction of the late Roman range of Oxford industry products, particularly the very common red-brown colour-coated ware (OA fabric F51, OXF RS in the National Roman Pottery Reference Collection),[14] around the middle of the third century[15] substantially boosted the baseline level of F&S wares across the board – for convenience this is termed the 'Oxford effect'. Direct comparison between fine and specialist ware levels in early Roman and late Roman assemblages was therefore recognised to be invalid and assemblages were consequently divided between early and late Roman period groups. Additionally, a number of sites, particularly in the Gloucestershire stretch of the upper Thames valley, had occupation ranges focused on

[7] P. Booth, 'Quantifying Status: Some Pottery Data from the Upper Thames Valley', *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 11 (2004), pp. 39–52.

[8] P. Booth, 'Cotswold Water Park Roman Ceramic Assemblages in their Regional Context', in D. Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement in the Upper Thames Valley: Excavations at Claydon Pike and Other Sites within the Cotswold Water Park*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 26 (2007), pp. 319–35.

[9] P. Booth, 'Pottery', in A. Simmonds and S. Lawrence, *Footprints from the Past: The South-Eastern Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester and Rural Occupation in its Hinterland: The Archaeology of East West Rail Phase 1*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 28 (2018), pp. 81–138.

[10] P. Booth, 'Pottery', in Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, pp. 259–395.

[11] For details of these categories see, for example, ibid. pp. 270–324.

[12] For example, P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Section 1, Kent: A Summary Overview', *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 14 (2009), pp. 16–18.

[13] J. Timby, 'What's on the Table? A Review of Roman Pottery in the Western Central Belt', in M. Allen et al., *The Rural Economy of Roman Britain, New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain Volume 2*, Britannia Monograph, 30 (2017), pp. 305–36.

[14] R. Tomber and J. Dore, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: a Handbook*, Museum of London Archaeological Services Monograph, 2 (1998).

[15] C.J. Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, BAR BS, 43 (1977), p. 238.

the second and third centuries and did not fit easily within the simple early and late Roman scheme.[16] To address this the breakdown given here not only incorporates new and in some cases revised data analysis (as a result of which there are slight differences between some of the figures given in the 2004 paper and those presented here; some further differences between figures presented here and in some other recent discussions result from careful reassessment of the original data in relation to period definitions) but presents the assemblages in terms of a three period analysis – early, middle and late Roman, with approximate date ranges of late Iron Age to *c.* AD 120, 120–250 and 250–400(+). The 'early Roman' period category typically includes sites active before the Roman Conquest and occupied throughout the first century AD – for the most part the events of the AD 40s are archaeologically (and certainly ceramically) invisible in this region. The occurrence of a substantial, and often dominant, component of 'Belgic type' (E) wares is characteristic of these assemblages; but the date of their first appearance in this region, whether in the first century BC or AD, remains debateable.

The sites considered here inevitably have activity with differing date ranges; some sites are only represented in one period (in some cases because only one period group has enough pottery to support meaningful analysis), some in two and a smaller number in all three. Division into three broad periods allows a more nuanced understanding of assemblage development through time. These period divisions are not, of course, followed uniformly across all the sites studied, since phasing schemes and the exact length of occupation spans (often not precisely identifiable) varied considerably from one site to another. For the most part, however, the phasing of pottery assemblages, where it was presented at all in published accounts,[17] or the presentation of assemblages that were predominantly of a single period, even if not explicitly specified as such, allow the data to be grouped at least broadly in terms of the chronological scheme set out above. It should be noted that the data presented for both fabrics and vessel classes almost invariably involve complete site/period assemblages without further temporal or spatial subdivision. The assemblages are rarely large enough to sustain such subdivision in a meaningful way (see further below). The rare exceptions, such as at Gill Mill, where the different settlement areas distinguished in the early Roman period are all spatially quite discrete, are explained below.

The broad-brush approach to the data analyses offered here is unavoidable. A recent study focused on Essex divided the period from the late Iron Age up to AD 250 into a series of 11 ceramic phases, but it was then admitted that many of these were 'too narrow and groups often ended up being assigned to a range of ceramic phases'.[18] The nature of the pottery on most sites in our region, and particularly the rural ones, is that close dating is rarely realistic, and the view taken here is that analysis at the level of general site phases is not only the best that can be achieved in most cases, but also that this is the level at which we want to consider changes both in the character of the pottery and the sites from which it derives, at least for the present. Regional analysis considering detailed nuances of the development sequence of individual sites, and at the level of individual context groups – which occur very rarely in a size likely to give such analysis any statistical validity (the Bowling Green Farm group mentioned below is a rare example) – would result in a very different (and vastly larger) presentation which would serve a very different purpose. Since the aim here is to establish the extent to which there was recognisable development in the general character of assemblages through time and in relation to broad settlement type, analysis is not usually even at the level of specific ware groups, much less that of individual fabrics or vessel types.

[16] See also Booth, 'Cotswold Water Park Roman Ceramic Assemblages', p. 327.

[17] E. Brook, with A.J. Barclay and R. Seager Smith, 'The Pottery', in S. Thompson, 'Early to Middle Iron-Age and Later Settlement at Grove Road, Harwell', *Oxoniensia*, 83 (2018), pp. 155–71, is amongst recent examples of assemblages where this was unfortunately not done.

[18] A. Doherty, 'Pottery: Site Assemblages', in D. Perring and M. Pitts, *Alien Cities Consumption and the Origins of Urbanism in Roman Britain*, Spoilheap Publications Monograph, 7 (2013), p. 93.

The figures on which the comparisons of F&S wares are based are derived from sherd counts. Quantification of fabrics is presented in many ways in the datasets used, though sherd count is typically the most common.[19] Another reason for favouring sherd count is that comparative quantification suggests that fabric proportions derived from sherd count and REs are often relatively close (as opposed to comparison of fabric quantification by sherd count and weight, which can show rather greater variation in the percentages of different fabrics – the issues raised are well known),[20] and since the second stage of analysis presented below is inevitably based on RE data it seemed desirable to use measures which have the best chance of being broadly comparable in the picture that they present. For the present analysis a period total of about 500 sherds was regarded as the minimum for valid analysis – ideally analysis would be confined to larger groups, but it was considered that this would unduly restrict the number of assemblages that could contribute to the study.[21] Nevertheless, the groups included have been reviewed to assess, as far as possible, the extent to which they are likely to be representative of the sites from which they derive. For this and other reasons six of the sites included in the 2004 study have been omitted here.[22] A further departure from the earlier work has been to discount, in most cases, the generic coarse sandy white ware subgroup (ware subgroup W20) from the fine and specialist ware grouping, as pottery in these fabrics, commonly used for jars in the Oxford region, had already been identified as contributing to potentially anomalously high F&S values from a few sites where there was no evidence, either in the site sequence itself or in other aspects of the ceramics, to suggest that such high values provided a realistic reflection of the particular character of the sites in question.[23] In Tables 1–3 significant quantities of sherds assigned to W20 are excluded from the F&S ware percentage figures where the identification is specific or where a fabric description makes the attribution very likely.[24] Some assemblage totals include small quantities of (presumably usually residual) late prehistoric pottery, particularly where the late Iron Age to early Roman period grouping clearly includes pre-Conquest material, in which case later-prehistoric pottery might still have formed part of the assemblage alongside the E wares discussed above.

The data are drawn mostly from published sources, although in some cases unpublished or archive material has been used. The data presented rarely constitute the whole of the pottery from a given site because of issues such as uncertainties about phasing, and as indicated above material from small phase groups is omitted unless it can be meaningfully combined with that

[19] OA South datasets usually include quantification by sherd count, weight, and EVEs or rim equivalents (REs) for quantification of vessel types plus a count of vessels based on rims; see *A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology*, Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group, Study Group for Roman Pottery and Medieval Pottery Research Group for Historic England (2016) for standardisation of recording methodologies. The reports drawn on for this study, derived from a variety of sources, do not all offer a full range of quantitative measures. For methodological issues see, for example, Doherty 'Pottery: Site Assemblages', pp. 93–4; Timby, 'What's on the Table?', p. 307; S. Rippon, 'Romano-British Coarseware Industries and Socio-Economic Interaction in Eastern England', in Allen et al., *The Rural Economy of Roman Britain* (2017), pp. 337–9 also addresses similar problems, and while some of his specific observations relate to the incorrect identification of individual pottery fabrics, a matter that is of relatively minor significance for the present study, his more general (trenchant) remarks are entirely pertinent.

[20] For example, C. Orton et al., *Pottery in Archaeology* (1993), pp. 168–9.

[21] See also Timby, 'What's on the Table?', p. 310.

[22] These sites are: Barton Court Farm because the published fabric quantification is based on weight, Hadden Hill because of its small size and rather broad chronological range, Watkins Farm because on reconsideration the quantification of fabric groups was insufficiently clear, Middleton Stoney and the fieldwalking collection Dorchester CD92 because they cannot be assigned clearly to periods within the present three-period scheme, and Bowling Green Farm, reluctantly, because that very good group derived from a single pit feature, and it is impossible on present evidence to demonstrate if it was representative of the site overall. Booth, 'Quantifying Status', pp. 48–9, with references to the relevant sites.

[23] Ibid. p. 44.

[24] As for example at Watchfield, M. Laidlaw, 'Pottery', in V. Birbeck, 'Excavations at Watchfield, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire, 1998', *Oxoniensia*, 66 (2001), pp. 260–1, fabric Q104.

from larger groups within the same broad period in the present scheme. Every assemblage has its complexities which there is not space to address here, and questions concerning the quantification of some of the separate ware groups, including, in some cases, uncertainties about the identity of individual fabrics, are not discussed. While they are very real it is believed that the negotiation of these issues here has not resulted in misrepresentation of the basic evidence.

FINE AND SPECIALIST WARES BY PERIOD

Tables 1–3 and Figs. 2–4 show the percentage of F&S wares at a variety of sites from the region in the three period groupings defined above, with an indication of the total period assemblage size and references to the sources from which the data are derived. The site names and qualifying information in relation to site areas and specific phases are given in their fullest form in Tables 1–3 and are abbreviated in other tables and figures.[25] The definition of site types is based as far as possible on the excavated evidence for site morphology, structures and other characteristics as mentioned above, independent of indications offered by the pottery. In addition to the F&S ware percentage totals Tables 1–3 and Figs. 2–4 also show the total percentage of imported sherds. In the majority of cases these comprise entirely samian ware and amphora fabrics and are all components of the F&S ware element of the assemblage; instances of imported coarse wares, such as a fragment of Mayen ware and a possible North African vessel from Gill Mill are so rare as to make no difference here.[26] The figures show that imported fabrics form a variable, but often high, proportion of F&S ware totals in the early and middle Roman periods but, as expected, are usually significantly reduced in quantity in the late Roman period, when they consist largely of samian ware, some of which, though already old, may have still been in use at this time (see further below).

Early Roman

The anticipated correlation between apparent site character based on the excavated evidence and on the pottery data is seen to varying degrees in the three periods, but most clearly in the early Roman period. There is a decline over time in the overall number of assemblages from sites that can be classified straightforwardly as rural settlements (essentially farmsteads) which would generally be considered lower status sites. Rural (non-villa) settlements dominate the early Roman graph (28 out of 37 assemblages) and account for all assemblages in the lowest two thirds of the range of F&S values. Moreover, the rural settlement assemblages that appear in the upper part of the range are from Middle Duntisbourne, associated with the oppidum at Bagendon, from Claydon Pike and from Didcot Great Western Park where there is reason to believe that the rural settlement designation is not entirely straightforward (see further below).

Three separate figures are presented for Gill Mill (South Leigh) in this period. This extensive site had several distinct foci, of which that in Area 13, more than 1 km distant from other areas, was a fairly straightforward lower status rural settlement.[27] Other parts of the site were to develop as a minor nucleated settlement in the middle Roman period, but in the early period this character was not yet defined. While ostensibly unremarkable, the F&S value of 3.8 per cent for the Phase 3a Gill Mill assemblage is of some interest.[28] It derives from an area of the site (Tar Farm 6) again spatially distinct from the main settlement from which the bulk of the pottery of later phases was recovered. The Phase 3a Tar Farm 6 assemblage was from features largely if not entirely of pre-Flavian date – in effect solely from the first half of the date range

[25] All the references in Tables 1–3 can be found in footnotes elsewhere in the paper.
[26] Booth, 'Pottery', in Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, p. 336.
[27] K. Hopkin and P. Booth, 'Pottery' [from DUGM Area 13], in Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, pp. 728–36.
[28] P. Booth, 'Pottery', in ibid. p. 324.

Table 1. Proportions of fine and specialist wares in Oxford region sites by period: early Roman sites

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
Standlake, Old Shifford, early settlement (50)	RS	1C	893	0.2	0.1		Timby 1995, table 1
Cirencester, Kingshill North (6)	RS	LIA–100	1901	0.3	<0.1		Biddulph 2011; OA archive
Hardwick/Yelford, Smiths Field (46)	RS	1C–early/ mid 2C	3850	0.4	0.2		Booth 2004, table 2
Fairford, Thornhill Farm (62)	RS	1C–early 2C	11450	0.5	0.3	Excludes 'Group 1' fabrics	Timby 2004a, table 4.4
Stanton Harcourt, Gravelly Guy (45)	RS	1C–early 2C	9444	0.6	0.1		Green et al. 2004, tables 7.21 & 7.22
Bicester, Langford Park Farm (18)	RS	LIA–ERB	605	0.8	0.7		Timby 2018, table 1
Cotswold Community, early Roman (70)	RS	LIA–120/130	1577	1.1	*c.*1.1		Biddulph 2010, table 3.5 phase 7
Bicester, Whitelands Farm (17)	RS	Most LIA–2C	2973	1.1	0.4	F&S excludes 2.2% obvious late Roman fabrics	Brown 2011, table 3
Chalgrove (22)	RS	LIA–ERB	553	1.3	0.0	F&S excludes 6.9% W20	OA archive data
Benson, The Moorlands (23)	RS	LIA–early 2C	680	1.5	0.3	Occasional later sherds	Timby 2005b, table 1
Faringdon, Coxwell Road 1999 (54)	RS	1C–2C	2932	1.5	*c.*0.6	Excludes obvious middle and late Roman fabrics; F&S excludes 1.7% W20	Bryan & Brown 2004; OA archive
Somerford Keynes, Neigh Bridge, Phase 1 (71)	RS/shrine	1C–2C	1549	1.5	1.3		Brown 2007a, table 9.2
Berinsfield, Mount Farm (28)	RS	1C–2C	2815	2.0	0.4		Brown 2010

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
Watchfield, Triangle (58)	RS	Most 1C–2C	1840	2.4	0.9		Biddulph 2004, table 1
Hatford 1991 (53)	RS	1C–early/ mid 2C	1756	2.5	0.0	F&S excludes F51 & 2.2% W20	Booth 2000b, table 3
South Leigh, Gill Mill, all Period 3b (48)	RS	70–120	2201	2.5	1.7	F&S excludes 3.3% W20	Booth 2018b, table 7.26
Appleford Sidings, 1997–1999 (29)	RS	Mid 1C– early 2C	1130	2.5	0.4	F&S excludes 4.4% W20	Booth 2009b, table 7
Yarnton, LIR and ERB (44)	RS	LIA–2C	4240	2.8	0.4	Includes some intrusive fine wares	Booth 2011a, table 14.20
Thame Site F, Phase 3a (21)	RS	LIA–100	1545	3.0	0.3		Booth forthcoming b
South Leigh, Gill Mill Area 13 (49)	RS	LIA–early/ mid 2C	1906	3.3	0.6	F&S excludes 1.6% W20	Hopkin & Booth 2018, table 12.3
Watchfield 1998 (57)	RS	Most 1C–2C	2954	3.5	3.2	Samian ware highly fragmented	Laidlaw 2001, table 5
Banbury Flood Alleviation, Periods 3–4b (10)	RS	1C–early/ mid 2C	595	3.7	1.0	F&S excludes 2% coarse W50	Booth 2014, table 4.22
South Leigh, Gill Mill SLGM Area 6, Period 3a (47)	RS	LIA–AD 70	526	3.8	3.5	F&S excludes 1.7% W20	Booth 2018b, table 7.27
Duntisbourne Grove (3)	RS	1C	1807	3.8	3.8		Timby 1999, table 7.24
Bicester, Oxford Road (19)	RS	1C–early 2C	1124	3.9	1.2		Booth 1996, table 1
Drayton, Abingdon Road (39)	RS	LIA–?mid 2C	618	4.2	0.5	Occasional later sherds	McSloy & Somerville 2017, table 2

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
Alchester, Langford Lane East, Phases 3–5 (15)	Military hinterland	LIA–early 2C	2511	5.2	4.3	F&S excludes 4.6% W20	Booth 2018a, table 3.13
Appleford Sidings, 1993 & 2000 (30)	Proto-villa?	Mid 1C–early 2C	1732	5.7	2.8	F&S excludes 1.7% W20	Booth 2009b, table 7
Alchester, Langford Lane South, Phases 3–5 (14)	MNS?	Mid 1C–early 2C	776	6.4	4.0	F&S excludes 1.3% W20	Booth 2018a, table 3.14
Middle Duntisbourne (2)	RS	1C	879	6.5	6.4		Timby 1999, table 7.24
Asthall, Phases 2 and 3 (7)	MNS	Mid 1C–mid 2C	1049	6.5	2.1		Booth 1997, tables 5.16 & 5.17
Cirencester, Kingshill South, Phases 3 and 4 (5)	RS	LIA–100/120	2507	*c*.7.0	6.5	Excludes obvious later fabrics	Biddulph 2018; OA archive data
Alchester, A421, Periods 1–4 (16)	MNS	1C–early 2C	1673	7.5	1.4		Evans 2001a; OA archive
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	RS	1C–early 2C	3001	8.2	0.4	F&S excludes 1.8% W20	Booth forthcoming a
Fairford, Claydon Pike, Phase 2 (61)	RS	1C–early 2C	4971	8.7	2.4		Green & Booth 2007: Miles et al. 2007, table 4.1
Combe (9)	Villa	1–2C	3082	10.7	7.2		Booth 2012b, table 2
North Cerney, Ditches (4)	Villa	1C	2746	11.4	7.8	A little later material	Moore 2009, table 18 less ceramic groups C1, C2 & D

MNS – minor nucleated settlement; RS – rural settlement

of the early Roman period, a time when F&S wares would have been very uncommon indeed at most rural sites.

Six more of the early Roman period assemblages considered here have date ranges that do not appear to extend into the early second century. They include the early villa at Ditches (North Cerney, see below) and the nearby Duntisbournes.[29] These three sites are linked not only by similar chronological ranges, but also by their proximity (and probable relation) to the oppidum complex at Bagendon. Amphorae and imported fine wares in addition to samian ware (and an Arretine sherd from Middle Duntisbourne) indicate links between the Duntisbourne sites and the nearby high status centre, while perhaps leaving their own exact status an open question. The other sites with early Roman phases confined to the first century are Thame, where Phase 3a (with 3 per cent F&S wares)[30] may only have extended up to about AD 100, an early settlement at Cirencester Kingshill North where occupation probably ceased rather before the end of the first century, and the first phase settlement at Old Shifford, where only 0.2 per cent of sherds were in F&S wares. While the latter may not have been typical of all the farmsteads in the region in the first century, the contrast with the contemporary and closely adjacent (barely 5 km distant) Gill Mill Phase 3a assemblage is nonetheless striking. It is also notable that the components of the latter include a small but significant group of pre-Flavian samian ware. Other striking early Roman elements of the Tar Farm 6 assemblage, albeit not all stratified in contexts of Phase 3a (and therefore not all contributing to the F&S value of 3.8 per cent recorded here) include a Lyon ware beaker, a Pompeian red ware dish and lid, a white slipped 'honey jar' and a few other unusual pieces,[31] not least of which is an inkwell fragment in South Gaulish samian ware. Together these may be considered elements of an early military assemblage,[32] but it is clear from the site sequence that there are no features (or other aspects of the record) of military character. The anomalous ceramics have been tentatively interpreted as the property of a retired auxiliary soldier, perhaps of local origin, resident in or closely adjacent to the site.[33] In this exceptional case, therefore, the pottery may suggest a very specific character for one individual site occupant, but the extent to which his status impacted on the other inhabitants of the site remains uncertain. It can be speculated that the local importance of this individual, if correctly identified, was a significant factor in the subsequent development of the site as a minor nucleated settlement probably associated with an estate centred elsewhere, but that is to go well beyond the available evidence. It is worth mentioning in passing that there are other indications of slightly atypical connections at Gill Mill – excavation in 2018 of an area of late Iron Age and early Roman settlement to the north-west of the sites covered by the 2018 publication produced unusual material in the form of a sherd of a Rhodian amphora and, most notably, an Arretine ware sherd – both unparalleled in rural assemblages in Oxfordshire.[34]

As with Gill Mill, both Claydon Pike[35] and Didcot Great Western Park, the two highest

[29] J. Timby, 'Later Prehistoric and Roman Pottery', in A. Mudd et al., *Excavations Alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: The Archaeology of the A419/A417 Swindon to Gloucester Road Scheme, Volume 2: Medieval and Post-Medieval Activity, Finds and Environmental Evidence*, Oxford Archaeological Unit (1999), pp. 329–35.

[30] P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery', in C. Ellis et al., *Early Thame: Archaeological Investigations at Site F1, Thame, Oxfordshire, 2015*, Cotswold Archaeology–Oxford Archaeology Monograph (forthcoming).

[31] Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, p. 793, fig. 13.14.

[32] Compare, for example, M.J. Darling, 'Pottery from Early Military Sites in Western Britain', in J. Dore and K. Greene (eds.), *Roman Pottery Studies in Britain and Beyond*, BAR SS, 30 (1977), pp. 57–100, for a comparative overview; and *contra* I. Haynes, 'Identity and the Military Community in Roman Britain', in Millett et al. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, p. 451, who in questioning the extent to which 'military assemblages' can be identified does not consider pottery evidence, whereas L. Allason-Jones, in the next chapter of the same volume ('Roman Military Culture', p. 472), does accept the concept of military and non-military ceramic distinctions.

[33] Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, pp. 792–3.

[34] For an outline plan of the site see ibid. p. 755, fig. 13.4 top left.

[35] For Claydon Pike pottery generally: S. Green and P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery', in Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement*, CD ROM Section 3.2.

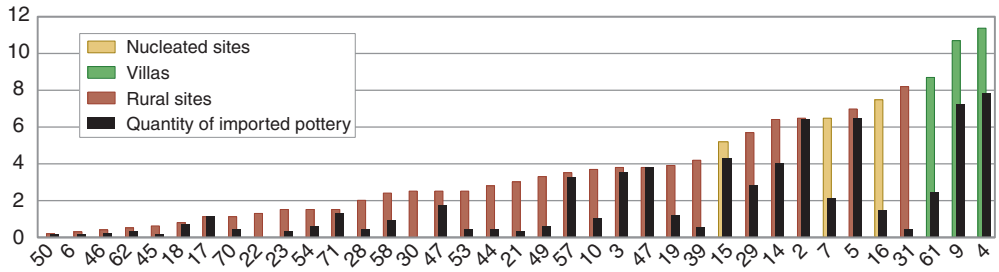


Fig. 2. Percentages of fine and specialist wares and the proportion of imported pottery in the late Iron Age/early Roman period. Site numbers as Fig. 1.

ranking 'rural settlement' F&S ware assemblages in the early Roman period, are from sites that saw significant development in the following period. Claydon Pike, with a F&S ware value that contrasted markedly with that from closely adjacent Thornhill Farm,[36] became a probable estate centre in the early second century and Didcot formed part of a settlement within which a villa (excluded from the recently-examined excavation area) was built in the second century, and associated with a remarkable hoard of aurei dated to the AD 160s.[37] In both cases, therefore, it is likely that there were aspects of these sites that were not clearly evident in the excavated features but which nevertheless indicated potential for development in social and economic terms.

Other sites towards the top of the early Roman range of F&S ware values include, as might be expected, examples of the minor nucleated settlement category. The Asthall assemblage, for example, came from a fairly central location within that settlement.[38] Alchester presents a more complicated situation. There are as yet no detailed pottery data from the military sites examined on the west side of the later walled town and to the south-east,[39] so the precise character of those assemblages is unclear, though they appear to lack indications of dedicated military related production.[40] The site at Langford Lane East is situated just about 400 metres east of the later east wall of the Roman town, just to the south of the line of Akeman Street as it heads towards the east gate of the probable fortress and later town, and partly fronting onto an early version of the south–north road from Dorchester that skirted the east side of Otmoor, subsequently replaced by the direct south–north road that cut straight across the low-lying terrain south of Alchester. The site also partly intersected the north-north-west to south-south-east aligned track running towards the parade ground to the south-east.[41] With an apparently uninterrupted sequence of occupation from the late Iron Age through at least to the early third century, this site must have been directly affected by the immediately adjacent military activity, but the exact nature of the

[36] J. Timby, 'The Pottery', in D. Jennings et al., *Thornhill Farm, Fairford, Gloucestershire. An Iron Age and Roman Pastoral Site in the Upper Thames Valley*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 23 (2004), pp. 90–108.

[37] R. Bland and J. Orna-Ornstein, 'Didcot, Oxfordshire', in R. Bland and J. Orna-Ornstein (eds.), *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain Volume X* (1997), pp. 91–100. For the pottery, P. Booth, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in C. Hayden et al., *Great Western Park, Didcot, Oxon: Excavations 2010–2012*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph (forthcoming).

[38] P. Booth, 'The Pottery', in P. Booth, *Asthall, Oxfordshire, Excavations in a Roman 'Small Town', 1992*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 9 (1997), pp. 104–34.

[39] For example, E. Sauer, 'Alchester, a Claudian "Vexillation Fortress", near the Western Boundary of the Catuvellauni: New Light on the Roman Invasion of Britain', *Archaeological Journal*, 157 (2000), pp. 1–78; 'Alchester: Origins and Destiny of Oxfordshire's Earliest Roman Site', *Oxoniensia*, 71 (2006), pp. 1–29; for a short summary of the pottery see N. Cooper. 'Preliminary Observations on the Pottery from the Excavations', in Sauer, 'Alchester, a Claudian "Vexillation Fortress"', pp. 57–8.

[40] Personal communication from Nick Cooper.

[41] E. Sauer, 'The Military Origins of the Roman Town of Alchester, Oxfordshire', *Britannia*, 30 (1999), pp. 289–97.

impact is difficult to assess. The early Roman period assemblage certainly has a well above average F&S ware component, but overall it is still dominated by grog-tempered fabrics in the late Iron Age 'Belgic' tradition. The F&S wares that might have derived from a 'military' ceramic pool include modest quantities of South Spanish Dressel 20 amphora sherds and South Gaulish samian ware, but the other components of the F&S group, white wares, are the ones most commonly found across sites of all types in the region in the first century. While the Phase 4 (*c.*AD 40–70) assemblage (with a total F&S ware component of 7.5 per cent of sherds) is therefore clearly different from what would be expected in a contemporary rural context, it does not carry hallmarks which necessarily identify military rather than generally higher status associations, though the latter would be an expected direct consequence of the former. The overall impression of a group not very different from those of the higher status rural settlements in this period is also presented by the assemblage from the A421 site 500 metres north of Alchester, again in a roadside location.[42] The intensive pre-Flavian occupation seen at Langford Lane East was not matched at this site, so the bulk of the pottery from the early Roman occupation here will have post-dated the military phase at Alchester. The F&S ware elements of this assemblage presumably therefore reflect the range of material available in the developing civilian settlement of the Flavian-Trajanic period. By contrast, rural settlements just a little further distant in the Alchester hinterland have modest F&S values that do not reflect the character of the adjacent centre.[43] Berinsfield Mount Farm, in a similar relationship to Dorchester, has an equally low F&S value of 2 per cent.[44]

Cirencester requires further comment, although the small late Iron Age–early Roman farmstead site at Kingshill North just east of the Roman town is unproblematic.[45] Systematically quantified data from the Roman town are scarce and the most useful review of changes in the nature of supply and use in the town remains that of Cooper,[46] in which fabric information is presented in terms of percentages of vessel type quantification, based on rim count or on REs. The latter measure has been used in the recent report on a site at Kingshill South, a rural complex lying immediately outside the walls of Cirencester on the south-east side.[47] For purposes of compatibility with the present study sherd count data have been extracted from the archive dataset for this site. It is recognised that some aspects of the site phasing are problematic, which is why the published pottery report draws on a selected subset of the data,[48] but here the complete phase groups have been used, with all the difficulties involved. The Kingshill South early Roman period assemblage F&S value, its main component consisting of South Gaulish samian ware, sits neatly between those for Asthall and Alchester A421 (the northern extramural area). There is no indication of a distinction based on the different 'parent' site types, but this is understandable, despite the presence of substantial structures in the middle Roman period, in view of the rural nature of Kingshill South, as will be discussed further below.

[42] J. Evans, 'Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Pottery', in P. Booth et al., *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester, Oxfordshire, 1991*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 1 (2001), pp. 263–383.

[43] For example, K. Brown, 'Late Prehistoric and Romano-British Pottery', in J. Martin, 'Prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Activity at Whitelands Farm, Bicester', *Oxoniensia*, 76 (2011), pp. 201–10; P. Booth, 'Pottery and Other Ceramic Finds', in C. Mould, 'An Archaeological Excavation at Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 61 (1996), pp. 75–89.

[44] L. Brown, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', Digital Appendix 6 to G. Lambrick, *Neolithic to Saxon Social and Environmental Change at Mount Farm Berinsfield, Dorchester-on-Thames*, Oxford Archaeology Occasional Paper, 19 (2010).

[45] E. Biddulph, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in E. Biddulph and K. Welsh, *Cirencester Before Corinium Excavations at Kingshill North, Cirencester, Gloucestershire*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 34 (2011), pp. 51–9.

[46] N.J. Cooper, 'The Supply of Pottery to Roman Cirencester', in N. Holbrook (ed.), *Cirencester: The Roman Town Defences, Public Buildings and Shops*, Cirencester Excavations, V (1998), pp. 324–50.

[47] E. Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in A. Simmonds et al., *In the Shadow of Corinium Prehistoric and Roman Occupation at Kingshill South, Cirencester, Gloucestershire*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 41 (2018), pp. 61–83.

[48] Personal communication from Edward Biddulph.

The two sites with the highest F&S representations are both villas, Ditches (North Cerney) and Combe.[49] Both are essentially early Roman sites, where later activity is of a different character. This distinction is particularly important at Ditches where later pottery has been discounted as far as possible (the early Roman figure for samian ware may still be a little exaggerated owing to the quantification method used for this material; only the data for the 1984 excavation have been used;[50] figures for the 1982–3 excavation[51] suggest a minimum F&S value of 6.2 percent, but these probably do not include all F&S wares). The 1993 and 2000 site at Appleford Sidings, interpreted as a proto-villa, does not group with these sites, but its F&S value, 5.7 per cent, places it well above the range of most 'ordinary' rural settlements. The contrast is clear since the closely adjacent but distinct 1997–1999 excavation area produced an assemblage with an F&S value of 2.5 per cent. While there may be subtle differences in the chronology of the two sites (see further below) they are both essentially of early Roman date and the difference in their F&S values is significant.[52] A fairly closely adjacent rural settlement at Drayton Abingdon Road had an F&S value between those of the two Appleford sites.[53]

Middle Roman

The middle Roman assemblages show a range of F&S ware values not dissimilar from the early Roman one, but starting from a slightly higher base level. The lowest values for F&S wares (only below 3 per cent of sherds in three cases) fall comfortably in the middle of the range seen in early Roman rural settlements, while the highest levels are above those of the early Roman period, although not remarkably so. Three sites, Faringdon, Cotswold Community, and Somerford Keynes Neigh Bridge,[54] appear in the lower part of the range of F&S levels in both early and middle Roman periods. The early and middle Roman Faringdon assemblages are from separate but quite closely adjacent excavations and they may represent parts of the same settlement, but with an interesting shift of chronological emphasis, the significant 'middle Roman' assemblage including only a very small component of clearly early Roman material.[55] Like Faringdon, other sites on the Corallian Ridge have fairly low F&S values in both early and middle Roman periods: Watchfield[56] and Hatford[57] in the early period, for example, and Tubney Wood in the middle Roman.[58]

Most interesting of the middle Roman sites with very low F&S percentages is Neigh Bridge,

[49] P. Booth, 'The Pottery', in G. Speake, 'An Early Romano-British Villa at Combe East End', *Oxoniensia*, 77 (2012), pp. 49–75.

[50] T. Moore, 'The Coarseware Pottery', in S. Trow et al., *Becoming Roman, Being Gallic, Staying British. Research and Excavations at Ditches 'Hillfort' and Villa 1984–2006* (2009), pp. 96–131.

[51] S. Trow, 'Excavations at Ditches Hillfort, North Cerney, Gloucestershire, 1982–3', *Transactions of Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 106 (1988), microfiche A1.11.

[52] P. Booth, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in P. Booth and A. Simmonds, *Appleford's Earliest Farmers: Archaeological Work at Appleford Sidings, Oxfordshire, 1993–2000*, Oxford Archaeology Occasional Paper, 17 (2009), pp. 64–85.

[53] E.R. McSloy and J. Somerville, 'The Pottery', in R. Kennedy and R. Massey, 'Bronze-Age Activity and Roman Settlement at Abingdon Road, Drayton, *Oxoniensia*, 82 (2017), pp. 284–90.

[54] K. Brown, 'Pottery', in A. Smith, 'Excavations at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes', in Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement*, pp. 243–7.

[55] For the early Roman site, E. Bryan and K. Brown, 'Roman Pottery (Ceramic Phase 3)', in J. Cook et al., 'Excavations of an Iron Age site at Coxwell Road, Faringdon', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2004), pp. 229–31; for unpublished Oxford Archaeology data from the middle Roman site I am indebted to Kate Brady.

[56] M. Laidlaw, 'Pottery', in V. Birbeck, 'Excavations at Watchfield, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire, 1998', *Oxoniensia*, 66 (2001), pp. 250–65; E. Biddulph, 'The Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in R. Heawood, 'Iron Age and Roman Activity at Watchfield Triangle', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2004), pp. 298–309.

[57] P. Booth, 'The Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in R. Bourn, 'Manorhouse Farm, Hatford, Oxfordshire', in R.J. Zeepvat (ed.), *Three Iron Age and Romano-British Rural Settlements on English Gravels*, BAR BS, 312 (2000), pp. 25–45.

[58] P. Booth, 'Iron-Age and Roman Pottery', in A. Simmonds et al., 'Excavations at Tubney Wood Quarry, Oxfordshire, 2001–2009', *Oxoniensia*, 76 (2011), pp. 148–64.

a rural settlement site with a probable shrine component, or at least a locus of significant votive deposition, albeit apparently not reflected in the pottery assemblage in any way. In the second century the site was completely reconfigured and a substantial aisled building was constructed,[59] but while this might have been expected to carry connotations of status change it is notable that there was no change in the character of the ceramic assemblage. Several of the middle Roman rural settlements with very low F&S percentages were, like Somerford Keynes, located in the western part of the region. In addition to those mentioned above they include Latton Lands,[60] Kempsford Stubbs Farm,[61] and Longcot Shrivenham Road.[62]

An increase in the number of assemblages from minor nucleated settlements is notable, but caution is necessary in the case of Birdlip (F&S 6.9 per cent), which might be better characterised as a rural settlement coincidentally located beside a major road, rather than a roadside settlement as such.[63] The pottery evidence could support such a view. Nevertheless, the assemblage from Cotswold Archaeology excavations at Wilcote, with a very similar F&S figure (5.3 per cent),[64] is unequivocally from a roadside settlement (it is unfortunate that the much larger assemblages from Anthony Hands' Wilcote excavations were never systematically quantified, as was also the case at the nearby villa of Shakenoak).[65] Another site of ambiguous character in this period is Langford Lane East, already discussed for its uncertain relationship with the military occupation at Alchester in the early Roman period and remarkable as the only site of all those discussed where the F&S level fell from one period to the next. This supports the view that the early Roman F&S value here was indeed enhanced during the phase of contact with the Roman army and reverted to a level comparable with that of other suburban areas of Alchester (such as the A421 site to the north) in the post-military period. With these exceptions, the lowest F&S ware percentage from any site other than an 'ordinary' rural settlement is 7.5 per cent from the villa at Roughground Farm – not very different from the corresponding point in the early Roman period – and while this value derives from a very small assemblage (only just above the minimum size considered viable for this analysis) it is not necessarily unrealistic.[66] The closely similar value for Cirencester Kingshill South again emphasis the essentially rural character of this site, though it is in this period that the substantial main building was constructed here and the F&S assemblage, again dominated by samian ware, included a significant proportion of amphora sherds, atypical in rural contexts but reflecting the proximity of the town. F&S ware values above this level occur mostly at a similar variety of minor nucleated and villa sites. Amongst the rural settlement assemblages in this range Didcot has already been mentioned. More notable is the distinction at Gill Mill between the F&S value for the minor nucleated

[59] Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement*, pp. 233–9.

[60] D. Stansbie, 'The Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in K. Powell et al., 'A Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Enclosure and Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement at Latton Lands, Wiltshire, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 102 (2009), pp. 69–75.

[61] P. Booth, 'Pottery', in A.M. Cromarty et al., 'Archaeological Investigations at Stubbs Farm, Kempsford, Gloucestershire, 1991–1995', in Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement*, pp. 301–4.

[62] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in J. Pine, 'Early Roman and Medieval Occupation at Shrivenham Road, Longcot, Oxfordshire', in J. Pine et al., *Archaeological Excavations on Roman, Saxon and Medieval Sites in Harwell and Longcot, Oxfordshire*, TVAS Occasional Paper, 26 (2017), pp. 97–9.

[63] N. Holbrook, 'The Roman Period', in N. Holbrook and J. Jurica (eds.), *Twenty-Five Years of Archaeology in Gloucestershire: A Review of New Discoveries and New Thinking in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol 1979–2004*, Cotswold Archaeology, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Report, 3 (1996), pp. 97–131. For the pottery, J. Timby, 'Roman Pottery from Birdlip Quarry, Cowley', in Mudd et al., *Excavations Alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire*, pp. 339–65.

[64] J. Timby, 'The Pottery, Coarsewares', in A. Barber et al., 'Excavations in 2000 on the Line of the Thames Water North-West Oxfordshire Supply Improvement Pipeline', in A.R. Hands, *The Romano-British Roadside Settlement at Wilcote, Oxfordshire III. Excavations 1997–2000*, BAR BS, 370 (2004), pp. 295–310.

[65] A.C.C. Brodribb et al., *The Roman Villa at Shakenoak Farm, Oxfordshire, Excavations 1960–1976*, BAR BS 395 (2005) (composite reprint).

[66] S. Green and P. Booth, 'The Roman Pottery', in T.G. Allen et al., *Roughground Farm, Lechlade, Glos.: A Prehistoric and Roman Landscape*, Thames Valley Landscapes: The Cotswold Water Park, 1 (1993), pp. 113–42.

Table 2. Proportions of fine and specialist wares in Oxford region sites by period: middle Roman sites

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
Somerford Keynes, Neigh Bridge, Phases 2 & 3 (71)	RS	2C	4657	2.5	*c.*1.8		Brown 2007a, table 9.2
Faringdon, Coxwell Road 2017 Period 3 (55)	RS	2C–early 3C	6203	2.6	1.3	F&S excludes 3.8% W20	OA archive data
Latton, Latton Lands (69)	RS	Most 2C–early 3C	3716	2.8	1.6		Stansbie 2009; OA archive data
Kempsford, Stubbs Farm (65)	RS	Most 2C	906	3.3	2.2		Booth 2007a; OA archive data
Cotswold Community, middle Roman (70)	RS	120/130–250/260	3777	3.3	*c.*2.6		Biddulph 2010, table 3.5 phase 8
Longcot, Shrivenham Road (56)	RS	Most 2C	517	4.3	2.5	A few later sherds	Timby 2017a, table 3.2
Charlton-on-Otmoor, Holts Farm Crossing, Phase 6 (12)	RS	Early 2C–early 3C	433	4.4	1.6		Booth 2018a, table 3.15
Gosford & Water Eaton, North of Oxford Parkway, Phase 6 (11)	RS	Early 2C–early 3C	454	5.1	2.0	F&S excludes 5.1% W20	Booth 2018a, table 3.17
Wilcote (CA), Period 2 (8)	MNS	2C–mid/late 3C	10442	5.3	3.5		Timby 2004b, table 9
Horcott, Totterdown Lane, Phases 4 & 5 (66)	RS	2C–3C	6608	5.5	5.0		Timby & Harrison 2004, tables 4.5 & 4.6
Tubney Wood (52)	RS	2C	2117	6.3	0.6	F&S excludes 10.3% W20	Booth 2011b, table 6
Alchester, Langford Lane East, Phase 6 (15)	MNS	Early 2C–early 3C	1339	6.5	3.1		Booth 2018a, table 3.13
Horcott Quarry (67)	RS	Most 2C–3C	2825	6.7	3.1		Booth 2017a, table 10.8
Birdlip Quarry, Period 1 (1)	MNS?	Late 2C–mid 3C	1098	6.9	3.9		Timby 1999, table 7.16 phases 1 & 2
Bicester, Bicester Park (20)	RS	Most mid/late 2C–3C	2081	6.9	1.9	F&S excludes 4.6% F51 (mostly from 1 vessel)	Timby 2008, table 1

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
South of Merton, Phase 6 (13)	RS	Early 2C–early 3C	637	7.2	0.8		Booth 2018a, table 3.4
Banbury Flood Alleviation, Periods 4c–4d (10)	RS	Early/mid 2C–early 3C	1131	7.3	1.9		Booth 2014, table 4.22
Lechlade, Roughground Farm 1990 (60)	Villa	Early 2C–early 3C	517	7.5	4.6	MIA sherds excluded	Green & Booth 1993; OA archive data
Thame Site F, Phase 3b (21)	RS	100–150	2222	7.5	1.1	F&S excludes 3.7% W20	Booth forthcoming b
Alchester A421, Periods 5–6 (16)	MNS	Early 2C–mid 3C	8386	7.5	3.4		Evans 2001a; OA archive data
Cirencester, Kingshill South, Phases 5 and 6a (5)	RS	100/120–250	7025	7.6	5.4		Biddulph 2018; OA archive data
South Leigh, Gill Mill, Period 4a (48)	MNS	120–250	9334	8.1	6.1	Excludes SLGM Area 6; F&S excludes 0.5% W20	Booth 2018b, table 7.26
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	RS	120–250	1918	8.3	2.4	F&S excludes 3% W20	Booth forthcoming a
Kempsford, Arkells Land (63)	RS	2C–3C	2535	9.4	7.5		Booth 2017b, table 16.3
Wantage, Mill Street, Period 2 (37)	MNS	Most mid 2C–mid 3C	660	12.3	2.9		Timby 1996, table 3
South Leigh, Gill Mill SLGM Area 6, Period 4a (47)	RS	120–250	1327	13.3	8.1		Booth 2018b, table 7.26; OA archive data
Asthall, Phases 3/5, 4, 4/5 and 5 (7)	MNS	Mid 2C–3C	5028	13.7	10.6	High (fragmented) samian ware sherd count	Booth 1997, tables 5.16 & 5.17
Fairford, Claydon Pike, Phase 3 (61)	Estate centre	Early 2C–early 4C	12984	15.2	6.6		Green & Booth 2007, Miles et al. 2007, table 5.1
Whelford Bowmore (64)	RS?	Most 2C	3551	16.1	14.6	Some samian & amphora sherds very small	Brown 2007b, table 10.1
Alchester Langford Lane South (14)	MNS?	Early 2C–early 3C	2158	19.7	7.8		Booth 2018a, table 3.14

MNS – minor nucleated settlement; RS – rural settlement

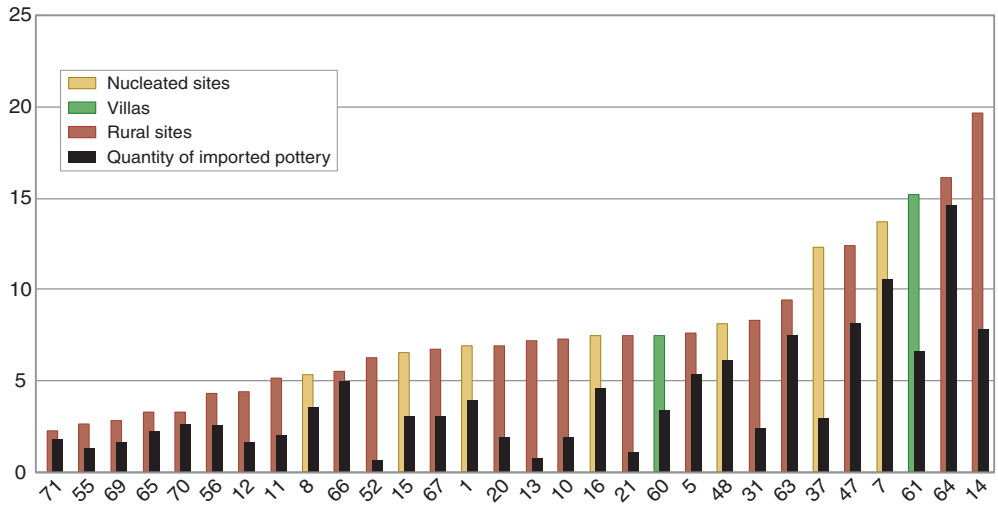


Fig. 3. Percentages of fine and specialist wares and the proportion of imported pottery in the middle Roman period. Site numbers as Fig. 1.

settlement and the distinct rural settlement in Tar Farm Area 6. As discussed above this site was notable for a relatively high F&S value in the first century and the value here (13.3 per cent) suggests that the distinctive, if somewhat elusive, character of this component of the Gill Mill landscape was maintained in the second century.

Issues of period definition may affect the assemblage from Claydon Pike. The small late Roman villa at this site is entirely of fourth-century date so the middle Roman 'estate centre' phase of the site's use, which seems to be functionally quite distinct from the late Roman villa, extends to the end of the third century. This assemblage therefore has a slightly enhanced F&S ware level because of the influence of the 'Oxford effect' in the later third century, though it is likely enough that the early second-mid third-century component of the assemblage would still have lain in the upper end of the F&S ware range for this period. Another notable site in this group is Whelford Bowmoor, which lies 2 km west of Claydon Pike and is very difficult to categorise on the basis of the excavated features.[67] The pottery from this site, which includes a distinctively large group of samian ware, suggests that this is not a typical rural settlement, but does not allow us to advance much beyond this point. Some of the samian ware and most of the amphora sherds are heavily fragmented, a situation also observed at Asthall which has a similarly high samian ware sherd count, but if allowance is made for this characteristic the F&S figure for Whelford Bowmoor will still have been in excess of ten per cent indicating a highly atypical rural settlement.

The most striking assemblage in this period group is from another site just outside Alchester, Langford Lane South, which lies 500 metres south of the walled town alongside the Dorchester to Alchester road and therefore in a very closely comparable setting to, and at an identical distance from the walls as, the A421 site alongside Akeman Street to the north of the town already mentioned. Despite these similarities, the F&S ware figure for the A421 was much less than half that for Langford Lane South. The components of the exceptional F&S element of the latter assemblage were small quantities of fine (colour-coated) wares (always scarce in the period

[67] A. Smith, 'Discussion', in A. Marshall et al., 'Archaeological Investigations at Whelford Bowmoor, Gloucestershire, 1983, 1985 and 1988', in Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement*, pp. 293–4; K. Brown, 'Pottery', in ibid. pp. 284–8.

in this region), amphorae and mortaria, and much more significant amounts of samian ware, white wares and white-slipped wares. It is unclear why this assemblage is so different from others of this date. There is little that is remarkable about the excavated features at this site, though it is possible that more distinctive elements lay closely adjacent outside the area examined.

Late Roman

The late Roman pattern represents a significant development from the middle Roman one, though it is similar in showing F&S values at the top of the range roughly five times those at the bottom. As previously noted, however, the base line of F&S ware representation has moved significantly – values are more than doubled across the board compared to the middle Roman picture. That this increase is at least in part a reflection of the impact of the late Roman Oxford industry is seen most obviously at Oxford Brasenose Driftway, a site lying within the core area of the industry. There is no indication of a direct connection with production (for example in the form of wasters or seconds), but the high F&S total consists almost entirely of Oxford products: colour-coated ware, mortaria and other white wares.[68] A number of the top sites in the range lie in, around and to the south-west of Dorchester, itself located at the south end of the zone occupied by the Oxford industry and likely to have been a significant location for the distribution of Oxford products. The sites include two from Dorchester itself,[69] and one just 2 km to the south. The significance of this last is debatable although the location, within the Iron Age hillfort of Castle Hill, Little Wittenham, and the exclusively fourth-century date range, suggest a rather unusual settlement form, but the extent of excavation is very limited so site type cannot be assessed except on the basis of the pottery assemblage; superficially this indicates a high status site, an interpretation that clearly has to be treated with considerable caution.[70] The nature of late Roman activity within hillforts in the Oxford region is a question that merits further work. The data used here, for example, indicate a significant difference between the assemblages from Castle Hill and White Horse Hill, Uffington, to the west.[71] The apparently unusual assemblage from Alfred's Castle in south-west Oxfordshire appears to span (at least) the middle Roman and part of the late Roman periods.[72] It is insufficiently clearly defined in those terms for the data to be used here, but the chronology of this site appears very different from that of other hillfort sites in the region. There are no quantified data at all for the interesting material from Madmarston Camp in the north of the county.[73] Reverting to the issue of proximity to the late Roman Oxford industry, however, it is clear that not all sites within easy range of that industry had uniformly high F&S ware levels; Berinsfield (Wally Corner),[74] a site closely adjacent to the Oxford industry production centre at Allen's Pit[75] and to the other Dorchester area sites just discussed, is a case in point. By contrast, to the north, Alchester was only about 8 km distant

[68] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in C. Challis, 'Iron Age and Roman features at Eastfield House, Brasenose Driftway, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), pp. 105–109.

[69] T. Rowley and L. Brown, 'Excavations at Beech House Hotel, Dorchester-on-Thames 1972', *Oxoniensia*, 46 1981), pp. 25–39; unpublished preliminary data from excavations in the Dorchester allotments, 2008–18.

[70] P. Booth, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery' [from Castle Hill], in T.G. Allen et al., *Castle Hill and its Landscape; Archaeological Investigations at the Wittenhams, Oxfordshire*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 9 (2010), pp. 56–65.

[71] K. Brown, 'Roman Pottery', in D. Miles et al., *Uffington White Horse and its Landscape: Investigations at White Horse Hill, Uffington, 1989–95, and Tower Hill, Ashbury, 1993–4*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 18 (2003), pp. 175–8.

[72] K. Brown, 'The Romano-British Pottery', in C. Gosden and G. Lock, *Histories in the Making: Excavations at Alfred's Castle 1998–2000*, Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph, 79 (2013), pp. 95–100; P. Booth, 'Comparing the [Pottery] Assemblage', in idem. pp. 100–102.

[73] P.J. Fowler, 'Excavations at Madmarston Camp, Swalcliffe, 1957–8', *Oxoniensia*, 25 (1960), pp. 3–48.

[74] P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery', in A. Boyle et al., *Two Oxfordshire Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries: Berinsfield and Didcot*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 8 (1995), pp. 16–26.

[75] D.B. Harden, 'Two Romano-British Potters'-Fields near Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), pp. 81–102.

Table 3. Proportions of fine and specialist wares in Oxford region sites by period: late Roman sites

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
Yarnton, LRB (44)	RS	3C–4C	3090	7.2	1.2	'Unphased' material would boost F&S value	Booth 2011a, table 14.20
Kempsford, Arkells Land, middle-late & late Roman (63)	RS	Late 3–4C	4567	8.4	4.4		Booth 2017b, table 16.3
Cirencester, Kingshill South, Phases 6b–6d (5)	RS	250–*c.*375	4146	8.9	6.6	Much residual	Biddulph 2018; OA archive data
Uffington Castle (34)	RS	2C–4C	2658	9.5	0.2		Brown 2003; OA archive data
Cotswold Community, late Roman (70)	RS	250/260–400	3326	11.0	*c.*1.5		Biddulph 2010, table 3.5 phase 9
Lechlade, Roughground Farm 1990 (60)	Villa	Mid 3C–4C	1641	11.0	*c.*4.2		Green & Booth 1993; OA archive data
Uffington, Station Road Period 4 (35)	RS	Most late Roman	2255	13.3	2.0		Sommerville & McSloy 2018, table 3 corrected
Birdlip Quarry, Periods 2 and 3 (1)	MNS	250–400	4053	14.9	3.3	'crumbs' discounted	Timby 1999b, table 7.16 phases 3–6
Chilton (32)	Villa	250–400	6319	15.4	2.3		Timby 2015, table 7
Charlton-on-Otmoor, Holts Farm Crossing, Phase 7 (12)	RS	Mid 3C–?early 4C	527	15.4	3.8		Booth 2018a, table 3.15
Berinsfield, Wally Corner (27)	RS	Mid/late 2C–4C	2319	15.4	1.6		Booth 1995, table 2
Asthall, Phases 6 and 6/7 (7)	MNS	4C	4720	15.9	5.4		Booth 1997, tables 5.16 & 5.17
Thame Site F, Phase 3c (21)	RS	250–400	2436	18.3	1.3		Booth forthcoming b
Standlake, Old Shifford, late settlement (51)	RS	Most 4C	2719	18.3	0.8		Timby 1995, table 2
Fairford, Claydon Pike, Phase 4 (61)	Villa	Early–late 4C	15425	18.5	4.8		Green & Booth 2007; Miles et al. 2007, table 6.1

Site (number as Figure 1)	Site type	Date range	Total sherds	% F&S	% Imports	Comment	Reference
South Leigh, Gill Mill, Period 4b (48)	MNS	250–370	44784	19.0	3.9		Booth 2018b, table 7.26
Frilford, Millets Farm (40)	RS	2C–4C	1000	19.1	1.5	Some early Roman	McSloy 2012, table 4
Wantage, Mill Street, Period 3 (37)	MNS	Mid 3C–4C	477	20.8	3.1		Timby 1996, table 3
Alchester A421, Periods 7–9 (16)	MNS	Mid 3C–4C	20175	20.8	5.5		Evans 2001a; OA archive data
Oxford, Mansfield College, New Chemistry & Love Lane (43)	RS	Most late 2C–4C	2534	22.2	0.9		Booth 2000a; Biddulph 2005; 2017
Wantage, Denchworth Road, Periods 3 and 4 (36)	MNS?	Mid 3C–4C	670	23.9	4.9	Earlier period groups very small	Timby 2001, table 4
Lechlade, Roughground Farm East (59)	RS/villa	Late 2C–4C	5599	24.6	4.8		Green & Booth 1993; OA archive data
Cricklade, Weaver's Bridge (68)	RS	Late 2C–4C	781	25.2	1.3	'All the pottery dates to the later Roman period'	Timby 1999, table 7.13
Harwell, Blenheim Hill, Phases 3–5 (33)	RS	Mid 3C–4C+	732	25.7	1.6	Small earlier phase group not included	Lyne 2017 tables A2.1 and A2.2
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	RS/villa	Mid 3C–4C	9390	26.4	2.5		Booth forthcoming a
Grove, WHG17 (38)	RS	Mid 3C–4C	1249	29.6	1.9		OA archive data
Dorchester, Allotments (25)	'Small town'	Most late 3C–4C	38410	30.2	3.3	Provisional figures from recent excavation	Unpublished OA data
Dorchester, Beech House (26)	'Small town'	Mid 2C–4C	?	30.3+	?	Report gives some percentages (of sherd count) but no total. Samian ware and amphorae not included	Rowley & Brown 1981
Little Wittenham, Castle Hill (24)	RS	Most 4C	2532	35.8	0.4	Small LIA-early Roman component	Booth 2010, table 3.8
Oxford, Brasenose Driftway (42)	RS	Most later Roman	2032	36.7	0.1	Some LIA/ERB material present	Timby 2005a, table 1

MNS – minor nucleated settlement; RS – rural settlement

from the nearest known components of the Oxford industry at Noke,[76] and late Roman sites here clearly benefited from this proximity.

An obvious characteristic of the late Roman period is the further decline in the number of simple rural settlement (that is, broadly farmstead type) sites, now accounting for just over half (perhaps only 16) of the 30 assemblages. This is probably not accidental; sites of this type form a smaller proportion of the overall number of later Roman settlements encountered in the region. The late Roman landscape in this region may have contained fewer individual sites, but they were on average larger, even if in some cases this may just mean that they consisted of more extensive concatenations of enclosures. It is much harder to judge if the rural population of the region was larger in the late Roman period than earlier, but this was not necessarily the case. A key conclusion of the Roman Rural Settlement project is that in the fourth century overall numbers of occupied sites declined from a mid Roman maximum, and that this probably meant a reduction in population as well.[77] Simple numerical decline is not seen in the present sample, but it is not yet clear of this is significant. This study does not identify, for example, the number of sites that were still occupied in the second half of the fourth century rather than earlier.

The 'minor nucleated settlement' category used here includes roadside settlements and elements of 'small towns', such as Asthall, as well as the key site of Gill Mill. It can be argued that the Oxford (Mansfield College and New Chemistry)[78] sites also form part of a larger agglomeration that could be characterised as a minor nucleated settlement (and would have included the area north of South Parks Road),[79] but as at Castle Hill the excavated areas are quite small and confident identification on typological criteria is not possible, so a 'rural settlement' label has been retained. The pottery data alone could suggest an alternative characterisation, but as at Dorchester, proximity to the principal regional F&S source might have skewed the figures. Another minor nucleated settlement with closely comparable F&S ware levels is Wantage,[80] while it may not be coincidental that another site with a very similar F&S value (though classified here as a rural settlement) was at Millets Farm, Frilford, close to the line of the Roman road running NNE from Wantage, and also fairly close to the temple complex at Marcham/Frilford which lay on the other side of the same road.[81]

It is notable that Cirencester Kingshill South features almost at the bottom of the range of F&S values in this period. It is now that the phase data for this site are most problematic, as will be seen also in relation to vessel classes (below). It is clear that the late Roman period group presented here contained a large proportion of residual pottery; for example, 45 per cent of the F&S sherds in this group are of samian ware, but if all the residual pottery in this period group, both F&S and coarse wares (if it was possible to identify the latter) were to be discounted it is doubtful if the resulting F&S percentage would be greatly different from the current figure. Cooper's comparative figures for Cirencester indicate some notable contrasts. Cirencester

[76] J. Pine, 'Ashgrove, RSPB Otmoor, Noke, Oxon; an Archaeological Evaluation', unpublished TVAS report, 0565.

[77] Smith et al., *Rural Settlement of Roman Britain*, pp. 404–17.

[78] P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery', in P. Booth and C. Hayden, 'A Roman Settlement at Mansfield College, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 65 (2000), pp. 307–17; E. Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in P. Bradley et al., 'Prehistoric and Roman Activity and a Civil War Ditch: Excavations at the Chemistry Research Laboratory, 2–4 South Parks Road, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), pp. 155–67; E. Biddulph, 'Appendix A 1: Roman Pottery', in A. Simmonds and T. Martin, 'Love Lane Building, Mansfield College, Oxford, Archaeological Excavation Report' (2017), https://library.thehumanjourney.net/4634/.

[79] T.G. Hassall, 'Roman Finds from the Radcliffe Science Library Extension, Oxford, 1970–71', *Oxoniensia*, 37 (1972), pp. 38–50.

[80] J. Timby, 'The Pottery', in N. Holbrook and A. Thomas, 'The Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Wantage, Oxfordshire, Excavations at Mill Street, 1993–4', *Oxoniensia*, 61 (1996), pp. 131–47; 'Pottery', in A. Barber and N. Holbrook, 'A Romano-British Settlement to the Rear of Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Evaluation and Excavation in 1996 and 1998', *Oxoniensia*, 66 (2001), pp. 306–15.

[81] E. McSloy, 'The Pottery, in J.R. Hart et al., 'The Archaeology of the Cleeve to Fyfield Water Main, South Oxfordshire: Excavations in 2006–7', *Oxoniensia*, 77 (2012), pp. 227–47.

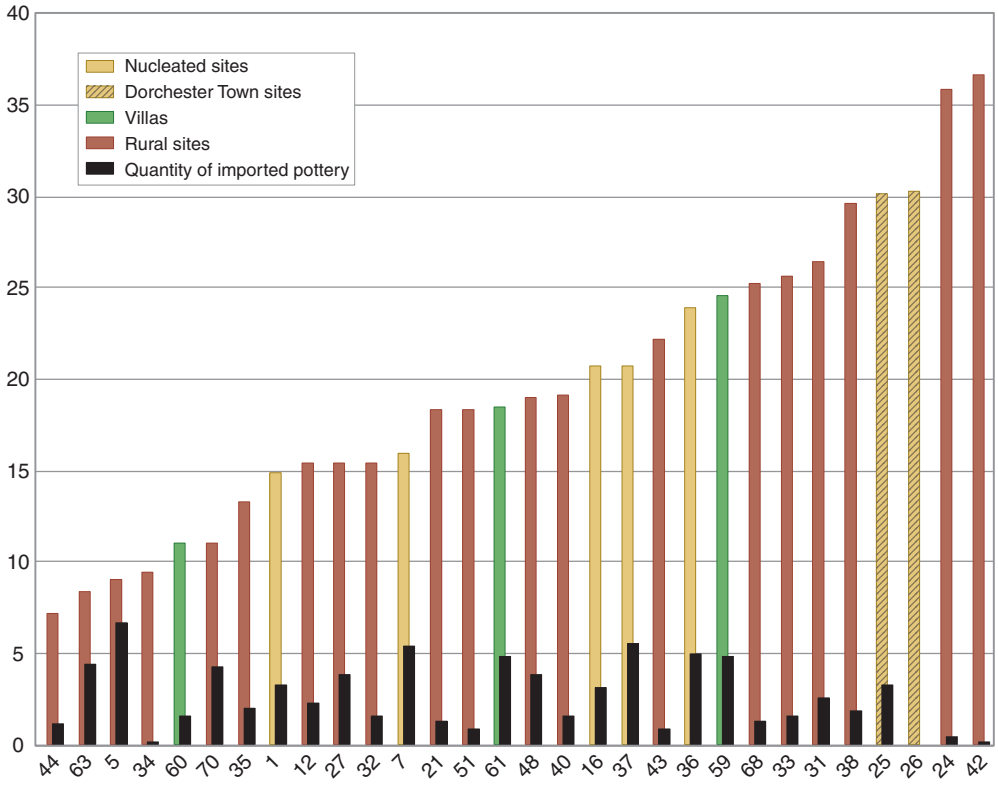


Fig. 4. Percentages of fine and specialist wares and the proportion of imported pottery in the late Roman period. Site numbers as Fig. 1. Note that quantities of imported pottery at site 26 are not known.

ceramic phase 6 (AD 250–300) shows minimal quantities of Oxford products,[82] while two ceramic phase 7 (AD 300–350) assemblages have completely contrasting Oxford (including colour-coated, mortaria and parchment ware) representations, less than 0.5 per cent (of REs) in one case and over 30 per cent (of vessel count) in another, though Cooper characterises this ceramic phase in terms of domination by Oxfordshire 'which collectively provides … probably about 35 per cent [of all pottery] … and almost the entire fine and specialist repertoire.'[83] This domination continued in the second half of the fourth century, though it possibly decreased in the final decades of the century.[84] The F&S figure for the largest ceramic phase 8 (AD 350–400)[85] assemblage, consisting mainly of Oxford products, was just over 25 per cent (of 70.52 REs), and came from The Beeches, within the walls of Cirencester but barely 500 metres north-west of Kingshill South. It is unlikely that there was significant activity at Kingshill South right up to the end of the fourth century, and although the coins certainly show that it extended into the third quarter of the century ceramic correlates of this are scarce.[86] Despite its proximity to Cirencester

[82] Cooper, 'The Supply of Pottery', pp. 335–6.
[83] Ibid. p. 338.
[84] Ibid. p. 339.
[85] Ibid. p. 338.
[86] Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in Simmonds et al., *In the Shadow of Corinium*, p. 74, for an example of Young (*The Roman Pottery Industry*) type C52, dated after AD 350.

the rural character of the site seems to be the dominating factor in its pottery assemblage, and the Cirencester ceramic phase 7 assemblage from St Michael's Field,[87] may offer a parallel for a local absence of Oxford products in the first half of the fourth century and thus an explanation for the appearance of Kingshill South in an unexpected place in the late Roman F&S spectrum.

The other rural settlements represented here are a diverse group, with Yarnton,[88] Cotswold Community, Berinsfield and Old Shifford all certainly or probably straightforward farmstead sites, albeit with significant differences between them and all more extensive than typical early Roman farmsteads. The form of settlement at Uffington Castle, by contrast, is quite unclear and in that respect is comparable to the other reoccupied hillfort site at Little Wittenham, already mentioned (though their F&S values could hardly be more different); again the relatively small scale of excavation may be a constraint on assessment of site character. Below the scarp of the Berkshire Downs the site at Uffington Station Road has a rather higher F&S percentage (13.5) but is not many places removed from the hillfort in the late Roman table.[89]

Two of the 'rural settlements' with F&S ware percentages towards the top of the range (Roughground Farm East and Didcot) are of very similar character, both being closely adjacent to and fairly certainly intimately connected with villa sites – in each case the settlement can be plausibly interpreted as accommodating some of the dependent workers of the villa estate. What is particularly striking here is that the Roughground Farm assemblage contained more than twice as many F&S wares as a smaller assemblage from within the villa complex itself. This remarkable anomaly is not easily explained, though the relatively small size of the villa assemblage may have played a part. It is perhaps more likely, however, that the location of the excavation area, albeit involving part of one of the principal buildings of the villa complex, resulted in generation of an assemblage with specific functional characteristics which are not apparent from the material itself. Such explanations are, however, highly speculative and a real distinction is apparent between these two assemblages, with slightly different chronologies perhaps a contributory factor, but not one that could account for it fully. A third rural settlement site with a similarly high late Roman F&S value is Blenheim Hill, Harwell.[90] The site plan does not suggest a site of special character, but the F&S value contrasts markedly with that for the nearby villa at Chilton.[91] For the purposes of Table 3 the late Roman phases at Harwell have been grouped together, but the chronological scheme allows a later fourth- to ?fifth-century phase to be distinguished. While the latter group is small (only 269 sherds) the F&S value rises to 33.1 per cent, consisting almost entirely of Oxford products. This is a pattern that would be expected in very late Roman assemblages,[92] but is rarely clearly quantified. The period 9 (AD 350+) assemblage from Alchester A421 provides a modest parallel – here the F&S total is 22.1 per cent, while at Gill Mill in the latest identified (small) sub-phase group the F&S percentage is 22.3 per cent, compared to the overall Phase 4b figure of 19 per cent.[93] The notably high F&S value at Grove[94] is also comparable to that at Harwell in that it includes a later fourth-century component. One other late Roman 'rural' site with a significant F&S representation, Cricklade

[87] Cooper, 'The Supply of Pottery', p. 337.

[88] P. Booth, 'The Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in G. Hey et al., *Yarnton: Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement and Landscape: Results of Excavations 1990–98*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 35 (2011), pp. 345–411.

[89] J. Sommerville and E.R. McSloy, 'The Pottery', in C. Ellis and R. Massey, 'Iron-Age and Roman Settlement at Station Road, Uffington', *Oxoniensia*, 82 (2017), pp. 319–28.

[90] M. Lyne, 'Pottery', in A. Taylor and S. Preston, 'Roman Enclosures at Blenheim Hill, Harwell, Oxfordshire', in J. Pine et al., *Archaeological Excavations on Roman, Saxon and Medieval Sites in Harwell and Longcot, Oxfordshire*, TVAS Occasional Paper, 26 (2017), pp. 12–14.

[91] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in J. Pine and S. Preston, *An Iron Age Round House and Roman Villa at Chilton Fields, Oxfordshire*, TVAS Monograph, 21 (2015), pp. 39–45.

[92] For example, C.J. Going, 'Economic 'Long Waves' in the Roman Period? A Reconnaissance of the Romano-British Ceramic Evidence', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 11:1 (1992), pp. 101–2.

[93] Booth, 'Pottery', in Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, p. 341.

[94] Unpublished Oxford Archaeology data provided by Kate Brady.

Weaver's Bridge, is of uncertain character. The pottery comes from a midden deposit close to Ermin Street,[95] and its settlement associations are unclear.

VESSEL TYPES

A complementary analysis is concerned with vessel types, but at the broad level of vessel classes; the focus of interest is not on individual vessel types in themselves but on their potential uses in wider terms, albeit that identification of these is not straightforward. Variations in the assemblage composition in terms of vessel types can be informative about differences in approach to food preparation and presentation amongst other things,[96] and these differences may be linked in turn to social variability and thus to the broader question of status.

A key characteristic of Roman pottery assemblages in southern Britain that has been identified for a long time is a trend for those from rural settlement sites to be distinguished from others in having higher proportions of jars vis-à-vis bowls and dishes.[97] Furthermore, it is also well recognised that, as with the representation of F&S wares, there was chronological change in the ratio of jars to bowls and dishes, jars becoming less prominent though still generally remaining dominant in rural settlement assemblages. Plotting of these trends in relation to broad site type is well known from the work of Jeremy Evans in particular.[98] Evans characterised the distinction between jars and bowls/dishes as that between cooking wares and table wares, though this characterisation is over-simplified. He also considered some examples of the contrasting ratios of jars and drinking vessels and dishes/bowls and drinking vessels. It is perhaps surprising that in view of its evident potential analysis of this type does not seem to have been pursued more widely. As Evans suggested,[99] there are hints that the southern British pattern was not universal, and examination of assemblages at a regional level to assess the extent and nature of this variation should therefore be of considerable interest.

In the present analysis assemblages from the Oxford region have been considered in terms of a three way vessel-class-based split: plotting jars against bowls and dishes, and both against a third grouping of vessels related (loosely) to the storage and consumption of liquids – amphorae, flagons, beakers, cups and tankards (of these five classes, however, the first and last are usually numerically of minimal importance in our region).[100] The data are presented in terms of the three main periods within the Roman period used for the F&S ware analysis above, and in terms of similar broad site types. Quantification is based on what are often termed estimated vessel equivalents (EVEs), but are more strictly rim equivalents (REs), a method which should be standard,[101] but has not always been routinely applied in this region (or elsewhere; the measure is based on recording the percentage of the circumference of the vessel rim represented by each rim sherd, a complete rim equals one RE). The number of assemblages that can be used in this analysis is therefore considerably smaller than is available for comparisons based on sherd count. Percentages are expressed in terms of the total RE values for the three class groupings, excluding the values for minor groupings. Vessel classes not included in this analysis (principally lids, mortaria, miscellaneous and uncertain types) typically account for little more than five per

[95] H. Drake and A. Mudd, 'Weavers Bridge', in A. Mudd et al., *Excavations Alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: The Archaeology of the A419/A417 Swindon to Gloucester Road Scheme, Volume 1: Prehistoric and Roman Activity*, Oxford Archaeological Unit (1999), pp. 148–53. For the pottery, J. Timby, 'Weavers Bridge' in ibid. *Volume 2*, pp. 337–9.

[96] For example, H.E.M. Cool, *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain* (2006), pp. 37–50.

[97] M. Millett, 'An Approach to the Functional Interpretation of Pottery', in M. Millett (ed.), *Pottery and the Archaeologist*, University of London Institute of Archaeology Occasional Publication, 4 (1979), pp. 35–48.

[98] Evans, 'Material Approaches'.

[99] Ibid. pp. 30–1.

[100] See, for example, Booth, 'Cotswold Water Park Roman Ceramic Assemblages', pp. 331–4, fig. 13.1, as opposed to Evans' analyses, which only use two axes.

[101] See note 19.

Table 4. Breakdown of Oxford region pottery assemblages by major vessel class groupings

	Three way RE percentages			
Early Roman Assemblages (site number)	Liquid related	Jars	Bowls/ dishes	Three way RE total
Stanton Harcourt, Gravelly Guy (45)	1.8	93.0	5.2	115.57
Hatford (53)	4.9	91.5	3.6	17.39
Cotswold Community (70)	4.0	88.5	7.5	11.83
South Leigh, Gill Mill Area 13 (49)	1.4	88.2	9.9	21.20
Fairford, Thornhill Farm (62)	6.7	87.1	6.2	72.73
Cirencester, Kingshill North (6)	10.0	86.2	3.8	9.56
Bicester, Oxford Road (19)	5.4	85.2	9.4	15.05
Yarnton (44)	4.0	84.6	11.5	66.80
Thame Site F (21)	4.1	84.6	11.3	24.54
Banbury Flood Alleviation (10)	6.3	83.7	10.0	7.68
Fairford, Claydon Pike (61)	4.9	82.9	12.1	43.77
Asthall (7)	5.8	82.4	11.8	15.12
Cirencester, Kingshill South (5)	17.7	76.2	6.2	27.90
South Leigh, Gill Mill, Period 3 (47)	13.2	75.4	11.4	50.29
Alchester Langford Lane South (14)	7.8	75.0	17.2	9.07
Abingdon Cinema (41)	14.5	74.1	11.3	7.15
Appleford Sidings 1993 & 2000 (30)	14.5	71.3	14.2	21.60
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	14.1	70.4	15.5	37.68
Alchester, Langford Lane East (15)	15.3	69.2	15.5	25.76
Combe (9)	16.8	66.7	16.5	42.09
Appleford Sidings 1997–1999 (29)	16.6	64.7	18.7	16.61
Alchester A421 (16)	20.4	63.1	16.6	14.24
Benson, The Moorlands (23)	19.9	54.1	26.0	5.95
Middle Roman Assemblages				
Tubney Wood (52)	8.7	77.4	13.9	32.07
Charlton-on-Otmoor, Holts Farm Crossing (12)	14.8	75.3	9.9	4.74
Thame Site F (21)	11.3	74.7	14.1	47.72
Kempsford, Stubbs Farm (65)	13.0	73.7	13.3	8.40
Fairford, Claydon Pike (61)	11.2	72.5	16.3	152.14
Latton, Latton Lands (69)	13.5	72.3	14.1	37.35
Faringdon, Coxwell Road, 2017 (55)	14.2	70.5	15.3	39.71
Asthall (7)	7.6	68.7	23.6	59.60
Cotswold Community (70)	11.5	67.6	20.9	40.86
Horcott Quarry (67)	8.3	66.7	25.0	30.99

	Three way RE percentages			
Early Roman Assemblages (site number)	Liquid related	Jars	Bowls/ dishes	Three way RE total
Whelford Bowmore (64)	12.3	66.3	21.4	26.25
Kempsford, Arkells Land (63)	18.7	65.7	15.6	32.88
South Leigh, Gill Mill, Period 4a (48)	15.1	65.0	19.8	175.23
Gosford & Water Eaton, North of Oxford Parkway (11)	16.7	64.1	19.1	9.92
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	21.2	60.3	18.4	32.63
Cirencester, Kingshill South (5)	25.4	60.3	14.3	66.77
Banbury Flood Alleviation (10)	18.0	52.6	29.4	15.54
Alchester, Langford Lane East (15)	21.3	51.7	27.1	14.01
Alchester, A421 (16)	28.7	51.4	19.8	185.65
South of Merton (13)	26.8	47.7	25.5	8.87
Alchester, Langford Lane South (14)	30.0	38.8	31.2	34.62
Late Roman Assemblages				
Yarnton (44)	5.0	78.5	16.5	48.39
Charlton-on-Otmoor, Holts Farm Crossing (12)	6.3	74.7	19.0	5.53
Kempsford, Arkells Land (63)	12.5	71.2	16.2	51.85
Grove WHG17 (38)	9.7	68.2	22.1	39.99
Fairford, Claydon Pike (61)	11.7	68.1	20.2	164.44
Asthall (7)	10.3	68.0	21.7	56.15
Cirencester, Kingshill South, Phases 6b–6d (5)	14.0	64.9	21.2	53.43
Thame Site F (21)	7.0	64.7	28.4	37.65
Cotswold Community (70)	7.7	64.1	28.1	36.32
Little Wittenham, Castle Hill (24)	11.0	62.6	26.4	20.08
Uffington, Station Road (35)	10.7	62.4	26.9	25.38
Oxford, Mansfield College etc (43)	6.4	60.4	33.2	21.72
Chilton villa (32)	16.0	58.1	25.9	65.65
Didcot, Great Western Park (31)	13.4	57.0	29.5	163.92
Oxford, Brasenose Driftway (42)	15.3	55.9	28.9	12.96
South Leigh, Gill Mill (48)	16.9	54.8	28.3	637.94
Cirencester, Kingshill South (Biddulph 2018, 73, table 3.8) (5)	17.8	54.3	27.9	17.84
Alchester, A421 (16)	24.2	43.4	32.4	361.92

cent of all vessels from these sites, and in some cases rather less. The chronological aspect, not always distinguished in Evans' work,[102] is considered vital to this analysis.

Early Roman

In broad terms the plots present a similar picture to that derived from the F&S data, which is to say a series of overlapping patterns showing sites with varying proportions of the three vessel class groupings. As with the F&S ware comparisons, the anticipated correlation of assemblage character and site character based on non-ceramic criteria seems to be clearest in the early Roman period, although there are many fewer assemblages of this period with RE data to complement the sherd counts used in the analysis of F&S wares. In this period 12 of the 23 sites have jar levels above 80 per cent (over 90 per cent in two cases). The 11 sites with the highest representation of jars are all farmsteads of various types and the roadside settlement/'small town' of Asthall groups closely with these. There is a small but distinct gap between the jar percentage at Asthall and the other 11 sites which have typologically more diverse assemblages. This group includes Cirencester Kingshill South, on the cusp between rural farmsteads and more complex sites. Amongst the latter are Didcot and Gill Mill (Period 3), both of which, as already seen, are sites which are not necessarily straightforward rural settlements, though in this period they would be considered with such sites on the basis of their plans. Also in this group are two of the proto-villa/villa sites, and the two Langford Lane sites from the fringes of Alchester discussed above. For the villas, it is notable that while the proto-villa site at Appleford is clearly distinguished from its close neighbour in terms of F&S values, the latter has a more diverse (less jar-based) typological breakdown. This is unexpected, but might be explained in part by slight differences in the chronology of the two sites, the proto-villa element starting and finishing slightly earlier than the adjacent rural settlement, but this may be a case of special pleading and the two sites were perhaps more closely similar than the F&S differences might suggest. It is unfortunate that published vessel type data for Ditches (North Cerney) cannot be sufficiently closely correlated with the codes used here to ensure close comparison, though superficially they suggest a jar percentage in the range of *c.*75–80 per cent.[103] As for the Alchester sites in this group, Langford Lane East has rather uncertain associations with the early military activity at Alchester, while Langford Lane South and the A421 settlement to the north have roadside contexts; a small group from the probable minor nucleated settlement at Abingdon is also comparable.[104] It is noticeable that with the exception of Langford Lane South these sites are all characterised by a proportion of liquid-related vessels significantly different from that seen in the other rural settlements – why the Asthall assemblage should group with the rural sites in this respect is unclear. A further, but smaller, step change in respect of the representation of liquid-related drinking vessels is seen at the Alchester A421 site.

Most notable is a small assemblage from Benson in which the representation of drinking vessels (mainly butt beakers) is comparable with that of the group of sites just discussed, but bowls and dishes form a particularly significant element, at 26 per cent of the total. These unusual features contrast completely with the character of the assemblage as seen in its ware group composition, in which F&S wares total 1.5 per cent. This dichotomy is partly explained by the fact that most of the beakers occur in 'fine' oxidised fabrics[105] which are classified as O rather than F wares, although the bowls and dishes are not explained in this way. The small size of the assemblage may have resulted in distorted figures, but it is worth noting that high status

[102] Evans, 'Material Approaches'.

[103] Moore, 'The Coarseware Pottery', p. 129, table 21.

[104] E. Biddulph, 'Appendix 2: Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in K. Brady et al., 'Excavations at Abingdon West Central Redevelopment: Iron Age, Roman, Medieval, and Post-Medieval activity in Abingdon', *Oxoniensia*, 72 (2007), pp. 143–50.

[105] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in J. Pine, 'Early Roman Occupation at Jubilee Villa, 21 The Moorlands, Benson, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), pp. 122–3.

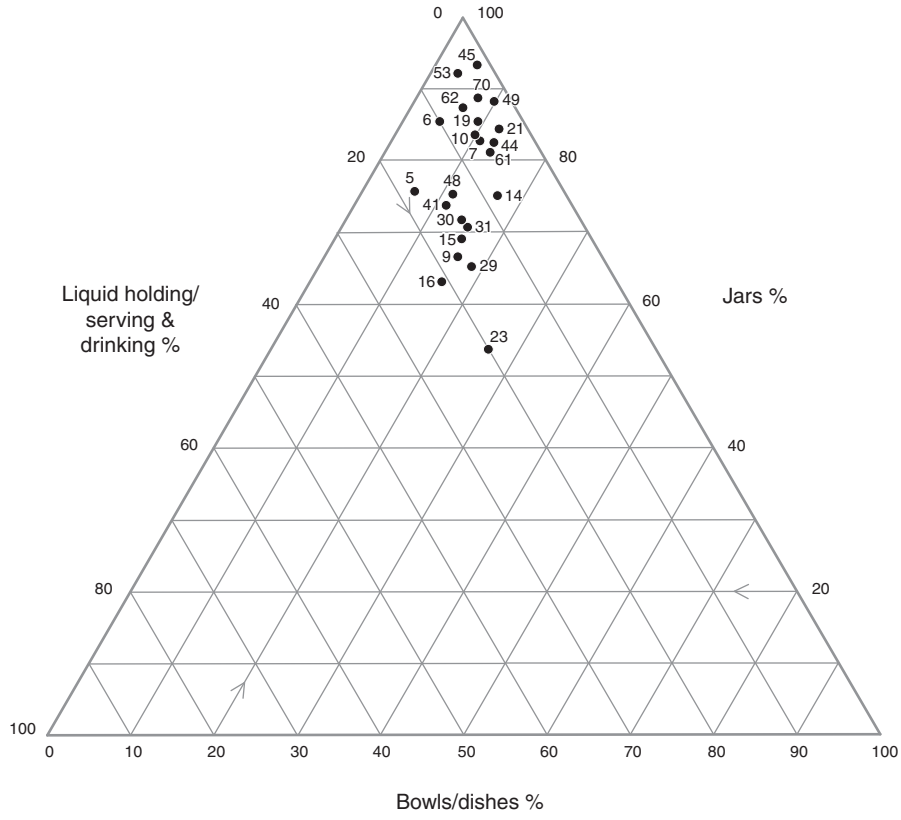


Fig. 5. Three-way distribution of late Iron Age/early Roman major vessel class groupings. Site numbers as Fig. 1.

late Iron Age activity at Benson is indicated by the presence of a cremation burial containing a range of Gallo-Belgic ware vessels, an extremely unusual occurrence for Oxfordshire, at a site some 750 metres north-west of The Moorlands.[106]

Middle Roman

The middle Roman period group shows a wide spread of vessel class breakdowns comparable to that in the early Roman period, though by now the highest percentage figure for jars has dropped from about 93 per cent to 77.4 per cent and in the most extreme group, at Alchester, falls to less than 40 per cent. The pattern of representation of liquid-related vessels, quite clear in the early Roman period, is now much more variable. At Asthall, for example, the low level of these vessels (now 7.6 per cent) seen previously was maintained, and comparable levels were seen in rural sites at Tubney Wood[107] and Horcott.[108] Elsewhere, however, these vessels were more common both at farmsteads and minor nucleated settlements such as Gill Mill. The site most closely similar in assemblage proportions to Gill Mill, North of Oxford Parkway Station, still

[106] A. Taylor, *Earlier Neolithic Pits and Late Iron Age Settlement at Littleworth Road, Benson, Oxfordshire*, TVAS Occasional Paper, 29 (2018), pp. 10–11; M. Lyne, 'Later Pottery', in ibid. pp. 16–23.

[107] Booth, 'Iron-Age and Roman pottery', in Simmonds et al., 'Excavations at Tubney Wood', pp. 148–64.

[108] P. Booth, 'Roman Pottery', in Hayden et al., *Horcott Quarry, Fairford and Arkell's Land, Kempsford*, pp. 281–94.

falls into the farmstead category and lies at the head of the group of sites with jar representation down to about 65 per cent. As before, a step change in liquid-related vessel percentages seems to apply to the top seven sites, which with one exception have liquid related vessels in a range from *c.*20–30 per cent. The exception is Banbury,[109] where the relevant figure was only 18 per cent, but this was complemented by an unusually high proportion of bowls and dishes, almost at the top end of representation of these classes, which overall ranged from just under 10 per cent to just over 31 per cent. The high percentage of bowls and dishes at Banbury helps limit jars to 52.6 per cent of vessels, another step change to a group of five sites with significantly smaller quantities of jars than the rest. An intermediate position between the assemblages from North of Oxford Parkway Station and Banbury is occupied by Didcot and Cirencester. As in the previous period the Didcot assemblage is again quite diverse, with roughly equal quantities of bowls/dishes and liquid related vessels, whereas at Cirencester liquid related vessels, particularly flagons, were significantly better represented than the bowl/dish group.

Most striking is the concentration at the top end of the spectrum of assemblage diversity of sites in the vicinity of Alchester, including North of Oxford Parkway Station, mentioned above. None of the contemporary assemblages with percentages of jars lower than at that site are straightforward rural settlements. The site at Didcot Great Western Park, for example, is closely associated with a villa, while the Banbury Flood Alleviation site might, like Gill Mill, best be seen as a minor nucleated settlement at this time – at the very least it is a 'complex farm' in the terminology of the Roman Rural Settlement project.[110] The four most distinctive sites in this period lie immediately adjacent to, and at most 2 km from, the town of Alchester (though the contemporary Holts Farm Crossing assemblage, almost in the same radius, is markedly different, almost at the bottom of the scale of diversity with 75.3 per cent jars). Of these groups, that from South of Merton is quite small but its consistency with the neighbouring assemblages suggests that the figures are reliable. The other three sites are all located roughly 500 metres from the walls of Alchester, to the north (A421), east (Langford Lane East) and south (Langford Lane South), and all lie on or close to roads leading out of the town in these directions. Clearly the last of these sites stands out against all of its contemporaries, both local and from the wider region, in terms of vessel composition, as it did also in terms of F&S wares, with a percentage of jars (38.8 per cent) lower than at any other site in the region in any period. The much smaller early Roman group from this site, with 75 per cent jars, is relatively varied for that period (but with rather atypical under representation of liquid related vessels and a corresponding heavy emphasis on bowls and dishes), but does not prefigure the very particular character of the middle Roman assemblage. It is unfortunate that occupation of this site effectively ceased in this period so there are no comparative data for the late Roman period here. The excavated features, while indicating fairly intensive activity, do not suggest specific characteristics of the occupation here that might be readily reflected in the occurrence of a highly atypical collection of pottery. Two of the most prominent features in this period at Langford Lane South were pits which together contained very roughly one third of the middle Roman pottery from this site (31.5 per cent of sherd count, 28.7 per cent of weight and 36.5 per cent of REs), but while they provided a very significant proportion of all the liquid containing/serving vessels from this site/phase assemblage (about two thirds, with a particularly high proportion of flagons), the converse was true in relation to bowls and dishes, so, although containing interesting groups, these pits on their own do not account for all the distinctive features of this assemblage. Their location to the west of the roadside plots suggests, however, that while the source(s) of the material with which the pits were filled could have lain within those plots (or ones adjacent to them outwith the excavated area), it is less likely that the pottery and other material simply arrived as part of a process of roadside disposal of

[109] P. Booth, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in A. Simmonds, *The Archaeology of Banbury Flood Alleviation Scheme, Oxfordshire; Neolithic and Roman Occupation in the Cherwell Valley*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 21 (2014), pp. 93–107.

[110] Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain*, pp. 28–33.

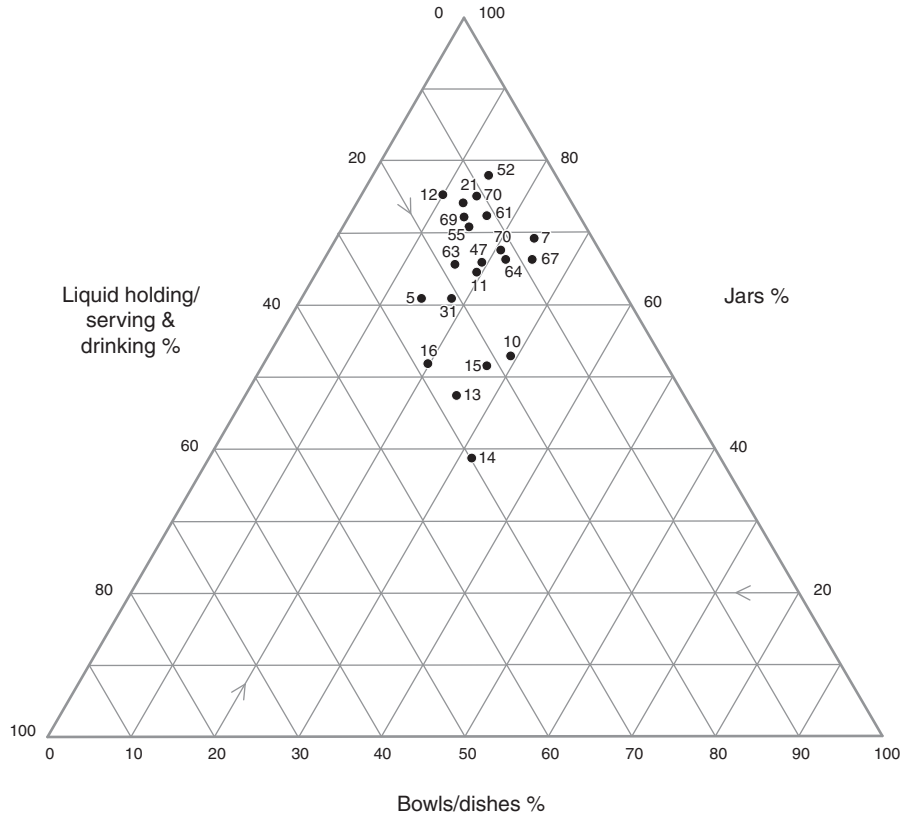


Fig. 6. Three-way distribution of middle Roman major vessel class groupings. Site numbers as Fig. 1.

rubbish, derived for example from locations closer to Alchester to the north. The exact nature of those sources remains unclear: quite high status domestic activity is one possibility, though conceivably provision of roadside eating and drinking facilities is another.

The concentration of the most typologically diverse middle Roman assemblages at Alchester raises interesting questions. First, does the diversity of these assemblages simply reflect a more 'urban' pottery consumption pattern directly reflecting the character and the market capacity of Alchester? If this is so, why is the evidence from Asthall, the only other 'small town' assemblage in this dataset (it is unfortunate that there are not yet any comparable data from Dorchester), so different? Were there status and market character distinctions between the unwalled and walled sites of this general type (given that the earthwork and stone wall defences of Alchester are thought to be contemporary and probably to belong to the later second century)? Alternatively, are we seeing a distinct sub-regional pattern regarding the supply and use of vessel types? This might explain why the group from North of Oxford Parkway Station is so relatively highly placed in terms of assemblage diversity in this period, but unfortunately there is a dearth of other data from this part of the region. Bicester Park might be another site that fits this pattern, with jars reported as comprising only 52.3 per cent of REs (total 21.33) from this site.[111] However, this

[111] J. Timby, 'The Roman Pottery', in A. Westgarth and S. Carlyle, 'A Roman Settlement at Bicester Park, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 73 (2008), pp. 136–41.

assemblage includes both early and, particularly, some late Roman material as well as pottery of primarily middle Roman date. It is not possible to define the middle Roman group there with certainty (although this has been attempted above in terms of an F&S ware value) and the site has consequently been omitted from the vessel class analysis.

Late Roman

The late Roman period group has a similar spread of variety in vessel class representation to that seen in the middle Roman period, but overall average figures for all sites in each period group show a slight but significant increase in the percentage of bowls/dishes in this period compared to the middle Roman (from just under 20 per cent to just over 25 per cent), and a corresponding slight reduction in the proportion of liquid-related vessels and an even slighter one (*c.*1 per cent) in the representation of jars – which is effectively unchanged. The two extremes of the late Roman range, which involves only 17 sites, are quite distinct from most of the other sites in this group. At Yarnton jars amount to 78.5 per cent – a marginally higher figure than in any of the middle Roman groups, but (because of the nature of the phasing at Yarnton, mentioned above) perhaps including some vessels from contexts of middle Roman date. The later Roman Holts Farm Crossing assemblage is quite similar in composition to the Yarnton one. In contrast, however, while Yarnton continued to be occupied up to the end of the Roman period, at Holts Farm Crossing the date range of the late Roman pottery, which derived from a relatively small number of contexts including a large deposit in the upper fill of a waterhole, may not have extended much if at all beyond the first quarter of the fourth century. At the other end of the spectrum the most diverse group was again from the Alchester hinterland sites, but only one of these sites (A421) saw intensive activity in this period. An emphasis on liquid-related vessels, established in the previous period, was maintained. In general, however, although there was considerable variety in the representation of liquid-related vessels across sites in this period, ranging (except at Alchester) from 16.9 per cent down to as little as 5 per cent at Yarnton, the trend was for the proportion of these vessels to decrease compared to the middle Roman period while on average the representation of bowls and dishes increased, with only the three most 'jar heavy' assemblages, Yarnton and Holts Farm Crossing, having less than 20 per cent bowls and dishes. This change might in part reflect the nature of the sites forming the late Roman group, with relatively few categorised as straightforward farmsteads – on one reading only Yarnton, Holts Farm Crossing, Arkells Land (which shows a notable increase in the percentage of jars compared to the previous period) and Cotswold Community might be considered to belong to that category.

It is noticeable that Asthall continues to fall towards the higher end of the range of jar percentages, maintaining similarities with some rural settlement assemblages (though also with the small late villa phase at Claydon Pike), while the minor nucleated settlement at Gill Mill, a little to the south of Asthall and at some distance from the major road network, had a significantly less 'rural' assemblage than seen there. The position of Cirencester Kingshill South is ambiguous, to the extent that two alternative sets of figures are given here. The data selected by Biddulph place Kingshill South close to the top of the range of typological diversity with a breakdown almost identical to that of late Roman Gill Mill.[112] The archive data set for this period, three times as large, gives a more conservative impression, exemplified by a slight increase in the proportion of jars compared to the previous period (for the early and middle Roman periods the differences between the two sets of figures for this assemblage are minor and only those based on the archive dataset are given). This might simply be explained in terms of the effect of the residual material discussed above, but the other characteristics of this period breakdown – a reduction in the proportion of liquid related vessels and an increase in representation of bowls and dishes – accurately reflect an identified late Roman pattern, so the breakdown suggested by the larger dataset is not at all implausible and is consistent with other characterisations of the

[112] Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in Simmonds et al., *In the Shadow of Corinium*, p. 73, table 3.8.

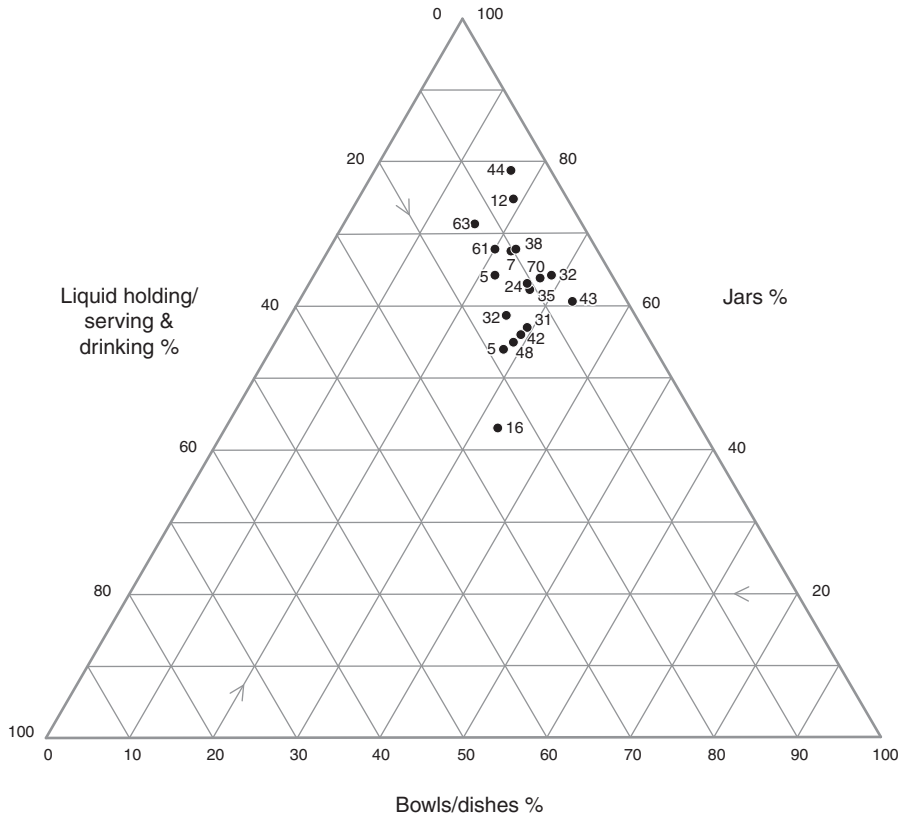


Fig. 7. Three-way distribution of late Roman major vessel class groupings. Site numbers as Fig. 1.

pottery from this site given above. The discrepancy in the figures resulting from two different approaches to the data raises important questions about these analyses. Despite what has just been suggested it can be argued that a more selective approach has generated an assemblage that is more representative of the contemporary reality of an evolving trend by discounting potentially residual material. In this instance the different results of the two approaches have both been presented to underline the point about careful handling of data and the need to be clear about interpretative decisions. Fortunately, few assemblages present the challenges of Kingshill South, and generally in terms of the site-based definitions the villas and complex or minor nucleated settlements are distinguished from the farmstead types by slightly lower percentages of jars and slightly higher percentages of liquid-related vessels and (in some cases) bowls and dishes.

This significant distinction is demonstrated by Timby's graphical depiction of percentages of vessel types from a small number of Gloucestershire assemblages (including Claydon Pike and Cotswold Community, covered here), using the three-period breakdown followed in the present study.[113] In particular it is useful to see the late Roman villa sites of Frocester and Great Witcombe represented. Both have jars at about 53 per cent (of the whole assemblage, rather than a percentage of the three-way split used here) and bowls and dishes at about 37–38 per cent. These assemblages, unsurprisingly, would sit at the top end of the range of vessel class diversity

[113] Timby, 'What's on the Table?', p. 334, fig. 7.36.

for the late Roman period shown in Table 4 and underline the fact that the most diverse (that is, least jar-dependent) assemblages are those with the highest status settlement associations.

DISCUSSION

The Romano-British settlement pattern of this region, as of most others, can be expected to show significant and at the same time potentially subtle variation in terms of the social and economic standing of the occupants of each site (and for any site above the level of individual farmstead, probable status variation *within* the settlement population, distinct from the internal hierarchy of the nuclear family) and an equally wide range of manifestations of this variation in terms of the physical characteristics of the site, whether expressed in terms of settlement form, architecture or material culture or, more likely, a complex blend of all of these characteristics. As (usually) the dominant component in the material culture range routinely recovered in our region, pottery potentially takes a leading role in consideration of these issues, albeit that only the most distinctive aspects of social and economic variability are likely to have any chance of being identifiably reflected in the pottery. For inter-site comparison to have any validity the data sets being compared must be as closely equivalent as possible in terms of chronological range and approach to recording (see above). The nuances of individual site development sequences inevitably mean that exact chronological comparability is not possible, but in most cases the phasing schemes of the sites examined in the present study are sufficiently close for there to be substantial confidence in the validity of the comparisons at the level of the broad three-period framework used here, and the possibly problematic exceptions have been mentioned above.

The developing settlement pattern seems to be characterised by increasing complexity of individual sites – a reduction in the proportion, if not the absolute number, of simple farmstead sites appears to be a genuine trend, which in this region may begin from the early second century if not earlier,[114] and a key phase of transition seems to fall around AD 120 (see below). A significant decline in the absolute numbers of occupied rural settlements can be seen in the course of the fourth century,[115] although this is not clearly reflected in our sample. The trend towards the dominance of complex farmsteads, regardless of absolute numbers, is correlated quite clearly with the evidence for the incidence of F&S wares. The inhabitants of the simpler settlement sites in all periods made less use of vessels in F&S wares. Samian, the most obviously important of these wares in the early Roman period was, however, almost ubiquitous, even if only in small quantities.[116] In these settlement contexts, however, it is perhaps unlikely that samian ware was in daily rather than special occasion use, and its preferential long-term preservation is shown in the widespread trend for evidence of repair to be concentrated on these vessels (to take but one example, at Gill Mill, 63 per cent of all repaired sherds were in samian ware fabrics).[117] As noted previously, amphorae were amongst the more elusive F&S wares and were absent in ten of the early Roman farmstead assemblages considered here. Even when occasional sherds are present their significance is uncertain – they may not have derived from vessels brought with their contents directly to the consumer site, but could represent material recycled for secondary use, an interpretation which also seems to account for the appearance of ceramic building material on some rural settlements.[118] It is notable, however, that fine (F)

[114] Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain*, p. 153, fig. 5.14.
[115] Ibid. pp. 149–150.
[116] P. Booth, 'The Occurrence and Use of Samian Ware in Rural Settlements in the Upper Thames Valley', in D.G. Bird (ed.), *Dating and Interpreting the Past in the Western Roman Empire: Essays in Honour of Brenda Dickinson* (2012), pp. 254–65.
[117] Booth, 'Pottery', in Booth and Simmonds, *Gill Mill*, p. 313.
[118] For example, C. Poole, 'Ceramic Building Material' [from Arkell's Land], in C. Hayden et al., *Horcott Quarry, Fairford and Arkell's Land, Kempsford: Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Burial in the Upper Thames Valley in Gloucestershire*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 40 (2017), pp. 477–82.

wares were even less common on early Roman sites, being absent in 13 of the 37 assemblages of this period, including the nine rural settlements with the lowest F&S values, whereas all but four sites (two with quite small assemblages) produced samian ware. The F&S component of the early Roman rural sites, in particular, tended to consist principally of samian and white wares.

In broad terms the data presented here show two clear chronological trends, a general increase in the level of fine and specialist wares through time, and a reduction, much more marked from the early to the middle Roman period than later, in the extent to which vessel type assemblages were dominated by jars. In both cases a range of values for fine and specialist wares and vessel class proportions is observed within each of the three main periods defined in the study. In general, the differences in these values seem to correlate with aspects of site character based on other evidence – particularly that of settlement form and structural types, though there is significant variation of detail within any of the site type categories at any one time. It is notable that the most consistent picture was seen in the early Roman period, when a relatively large number of farmstead sites had F&S ware levels and broad vessel class compositions within well-defined ranges. Aspects of diversity were already present, however, and became more apparent with the passage of time. In some cases their interpretation may be less straightforward in relation to the general trends, though this may sometimes relate to issues of sample size – concerning both the scale of excavation and the quantity of pottery recovered. It seems easiest to interpret the early Roman patterns broadly in terms of site type, linking this fairly closely to socio-economic status, though Cirencester Kingshill South assemblages may exemplify contrasting characteristics – a rural aspect on the one hand and the effects of immediate proximity to a major market centre on the other. For most early Roman farmstead sites, however, the implication is that while pottery from new sources and produced using developed technologies was widely available by the Flavian period, at the latest, the mechanisms by which this material was distributed, and particularly the ways in which vessels were used, were not greatly different from patterns prevailing at the time of the Roman conquest and reflecting socially embedded practice.

Diversity in all aspects of pottery assemblages, already apparent, as would be expected, in key nucleated settlements by the later first century, increased for almost all sites with the passage of time. Inevitably some assemblages appear more 'conservative' than others, and some of the variations surely represent circumstances that were specific to the occupants of particular sites and were only partly a consequence of the more general trends observed. The origin of the individuals forming particular communities will have been one factor that influenced assemblage composition, particularly in the early Roman period. Differences between assemblages from nucleated sites as opposed to those from rural farmsteads might be explained in terms of access to a wider range of material as a result of closer integration within trade networks, but could equally indicate the presence of incomers with different traditions of pottery use, in turn reflecting basic differences in the storage, preparation and consumption of food compared to the traditional practices of the native population of the region. Such differences would be starkly apparent in relation to early Roman military assemblages; sites around Alchester, for example, may contain slight hints of such connections but nothing more. Obvious 'alien' communities and associated ceramics, with the possible exception of a small first-century element at Gill Mill, mentioned above, are not identified.

Throughout the analysis, and in assessments of site status or character in other regions or based on other types of data, there is a danger of assuming that the observed trends are 'natural' and inevitable. There are several aspects to this problem. First, the question of the extent to which a single aspect of the record for an individual site – in this case the pottery evidence – can be considered representative of the whole spectrum of material culture and related social practices at that site? The correlation of pottery evidence with the broad characteristics of settlement morphology and building form has been considered here, but other aspects of the archaeological record have not. However, such questions have been addressed in the analyses of the Roman Rural Settlement project, and the results, showing both a greater diversity and

higher levels of incidence of a range of object types at sites at the upper end of a range of complexity, are not only what might be expected, but are consistent with the patterns observed in the pottery data considered here.[119]

A second question, however, concerns the extent to which appearance of a more 'Romanised' range of pottery was a matter of specific choice. This is more difficult to address, as the question of the nature of changes in pottery production remains debatable.[120] How far were the changing pottery styles observed on settlement sites driven by internal developments within industries rather than by consumer demand, particularly in the light of the broad trend for substantial industries to take the place of small-scale individual producers as the Roman period progressed? The major developments of the Oxford industry in the middle of the third century perhaps illustrate both aspects of this question. As has been known for a long time, the appearance in this industry of a new range of vessels in a new red-brown colour-coated fabric appears to have corresponded quite closely with the cessation of importation of East Gaulish samian ware into Britain. The fact that the new products included a number of forms that directly reflected East Gaulish samian ware forms (including several of the most common Oxford colour-coated ware types such as Young C45, C48 and C51 amongst many others)[121] strongly suggests that the producers of these vessels were providing for a clearly perceived need, indicating a demand-led development, although comparison between Oxford and samian ware repertoires shows distinct differences in emphasis on certain types.[122] On the other hand, the production of white ware mortaria, which had been practised in this industry for a century and a half by the middle of the third century, also underwent radical change, and there are no obvious models from elsewhere for the new vessel forms. These changes appear to have been (as far as the dating evidence will allow certainty) contemporaneous across the industry (although since the chronology of many production sites is almost entirely dependent upon the pottery, there is a consequent risk of circularity of argument). The changes in the mortarium repertoire were not necessary from a consumer point of view, yet they appear to have been universal across the industry, leaving the key (and unanswered) question of who was making these major decisions, why, and based on what criteria? (The important issue of the organisation of the industry and the structure which ensured (at least approximate) synchronous stylistic conformity across the numerous production locations lies outside the scope of this paper). Development of the mortarium repertoire, unlike that of the colour-coated ware, thus appears to have been driven from within the industry itself, rather than by consumer demand.

Whatever the case, there seems to have been no difficulty in persuading consumers across southern Britain to adopt the new mortarium forms, and in quantity. Their distribution expanded,[123] in some cases at the expense of other well-established producers, as for example in Warwickshire.[124] This point reintroduces the matter of choice, which is directly relevant to questions of status and involves the relationship between status and resources. There can be little doubt that in many of the activities for which ceramics were routinely used in Roman

[119] See, for example, Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain*, pp. 183–8 for the region including the present study area.

[120] For consideration of some aspects of the development of pottery assemblages: E. Biddulph, 'On Cultural Selection: Examining the Process of Cultural Evolution through Funerary Evidence', in M. Duggan et al. (eds.), *TRAC 2011 Proceedings of the Twenty First Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Newcastle 2011* (2012), pp. 76–90.

[121] Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry*.

[122] E. Biddulph, 'The Blind Potter: The Evolution of Samian Ware and its Imitations', in M. Fulford and E. Durham (eds.), *Seeing Red: New Economic and Social Perspectives on Gallo-Roman Terra Sigillata*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement, 102 (2013), pp. 378–9, fig. 25.8.

[123] Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry*, pp. 65–7, figs. 15–17, distributions now, of course, greatly intensified and broadened since the original publication.

[124] P. Booth, 'Mortaria', in S. Cracknell and C. Mahany (eds.), *Roman Alcester: Southern Extramural Area 1964–1966 Excavations, Part 2*, CBA Research Report, 97 (1994), pp. 132–43.

Britain, such as food preparation and serving, the high status options would have involved the use of vessels of metal and glass, materials relatively rare in the archaeological record (inter alia because they were subject to recycling) – clearly the highest status activity, for example in the context of dining, is not represented in the ceramic record (surely the vessels on the scene from the Igel column illustrated by Timby are mostly if not all of glass and metal?).[125] Even when the necessary resources were available the ways in which they were deployed were not necessarily consistent, though in cases (perhaps a majority) where ceramics were fundamental to matters of food storage, preparation and serving a concern to use vessels of the best quality that could be reasonably obtained might have been important. The assumption here is that from the middle Roman period onwards, and probably earlier in some cases, the relevant mechanisms involved market processes of one kind and another, though the ways in which these might have been operated and controlled could have been very variable.

A further point in relation to choice is that it can be active or passive. It can involve embracing of new commodities, whether because of a perception of superior or new qualities, or a socially-driven desire to emulate other users, concepts underlying the Romanization paradigm, or it can involve equally active rejection of new materials and new practices, particularly when they involve such fundamental tradition-driven matters as food preparation and presentation. Alternatively, however, the adoption of new materials (such as particular pottery vessel types) could result in their use in ways quite unintended by their makers – aspects of the use of mortaria in Roman Britain being a probable example of this.[126] Passive reactions are also possible, and can range from indifference[127] to acceptance of a new commodity on the basis that it is to hand and will do the job, and previous options are simply no longer available. All the above reactions to the broadening of the ceramic repertoire of the region from the middle of the first century AD are possible and need to be taken into account in interpreting the assemblages considered here, even though the thought processes and actions of the individuals involved in their composition and use are not reconstructable from the archaeological evidence.

The number of assemblages now available for comparative analysis gives assurance that they are revealing real trends, and moreover that there is potential for identification of some sub-regional patterns. Such patterns can take several forms. In the early Roman period it is notable that the five sites with the lowest F&S ware levels are all found in the western part of the upper Thames valley: the closely adjacent Smiths Field and Gravelly Guy sites,[128] both just east of the lower Windrush, and the others further west – the slightly 'richer' Cotswold Community assemblage also belonging to this western group. The pattern is fairly clear; interpretation is less obvious, though it may be relevant that apart from Totterdown Lane[129] and Cotswold Community these sites saw no significant occupation after the early Roman period. This area was particularly affected by widespread reconfiguration of the settlement pattern in the early second century,[130] and as already mentioned (and probably as a consequence of the

[125] Timby, 'What's on the Table?', p. 306, fig. 7.15.

[126] For example, E. Biddulph, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in A. Smith et al. (eds.), *Evolution of a Farming Community in the Upper Thames Valley. Excavation of a Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Landscape at Cotswold Community, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Volume 2: The Finds and Environmental Reports*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 31 (2010), p. 45; J. Evans et al., 'The Horningsea Roman Pottery Industry in Context', *East Anglian Archaeology*, 162 (2017), p. 108; but see also Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in Simmonds et al., *In the Shadow of Corinium*, pp. 77–8.

[127] W.A. Morrison, *Complex Assemblages, Complex Social Structures: Rural Settlements in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley 100BC to AD100* (2015), p. 242.

[128] S. Green et al., 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in G. Lambrick and T. Allen, *Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt: The Development of a Prehistoric and Romano-British Community*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 21 (2004), pp. 303–34.

[129] J. Timby and E. Harrison, 'Pottery', in J. Pine and S. Preston, *Iron Age and Roman Settlement and Landscape at Totterdown Lane, Horcott near Fairford, Gloucestershire*, TVAS Monograph, 6 (2004), pp. 55–67.

[130] P. Booth et al., *The Thames Through Time; the Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames. The Early Historical Period: AD 1–1000*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 27 (2007), pp. 43, 50–3.

reconfiguration) several sites here were most intensively occupied only in the middle Roman period. A number of the least typologically varied middle Roman assemblages come from this part of the region. Conversely the more diverse assemblages, except Cirencester Kingshill South, are all from eastern parts of the region – in the vicinity of Alchester, as noted above, but including complex sites at Abingdon and Didcot. The contrast is therefore partly related to the types of sites represented, but this is not the whole story as the Alchester area sites include probable farmsteads as well as those directly associated with the town and with other complex settlements. Just one of these farmsteads, Langford Park Farm, Bicester, falls into the group of early sites with very low F&S ware representation.[131]

In the late Roman period the 'Oxford effect' is universal across the region but, unsurprisingly, is most pronounced in the near vicinity of the production centres, exemplified by the Oxford Brasenose Driftway assemblage, but also in and around Dorchester, which was probably an important centre for the distribution of Oxford products. It is unfortunate that there are no data for sites within the walls at Alchester for comparison. The high (above 20 per cent) middle Roman representation of drinking and related vessels, such a notable feature of sites around Alchester in particular, was maintained at one of these sites but was not seen elsewhere. It is debateable if this represents another sub-regional pattern, or if the particular features of assemblages in the vicinity of Alchester simply reflect the specific character of that settlement as a distribution centre for a wide range of ceramics, although such a relationship is only very partially evident in the case of Kingshill South and Cirencester. Nevertheless, in view of their relative proximity a close connection can be suggested between the Oxford industry and intensive consumption and distribution roles at Alchester and Dorchester. That 'small towns' would not automatically register particularly high levels of Oxford products, however, is shown at Asthall where, for reasons that are unclear, fine and specialist wares were rather less common than at the minor nucleated settlement of Gill Mill, the latter a site rather less well integrated into the main road network that is presumed to have formed the basis of Oxford distribution. Such variations can suggest a variety of interpretations – including the possibility that as Gill Mill was perhaps linked in to a wider villa estate structure this might have been a factor in patterns of pottery supply, as also appears further west at Roughground Farm East (although, as noted above, the smaller Roughground Farm 1990 assemblage is quite notably, anomalously, and inexplicably, different – unless it is simply sample size that is the problem there). Consideration of the distribution of Dorset black-burnished ware at upper Thames valley sites such as Arkell's Land, Kempsford has led to the suggestion that this distribution was not necessarily uniform with distance from a major regional market centre such as Cirencester as argued by Allen and Fulford,[132] but might have been controlled through more local sites leading to significant disparities in its occurrence within a single area.[133] The possibility that aspects of distribution of Oxford products might have been similarly controlled could merit further examination.

SUMMARY AND WIDER MATTERS

The pottery data assembled here demonstrate an important general point about the chronology of settlement patterns across the region in the Roman period. That some 98 assemblages derive from 71 different (albeit some closely adjacent and probably successive) sites indicates a broad lack of continuity of occupation on many sites through the three main periods examined here.

[131] J. Timby, 'Pottery', in J. Pine and A. Mundin, 'Early Roman and late Anglo-Saxon Occupation at Langford Park Farm, London Road, Bicester', *Oxoniensia*, 83 (2018), pp. 212–17.

[132] J.R.L. Allen and M.G. Fulford, 'The Distribution of South-East Dorset Black Burnished Category 1 Pottery in South-West Britain', *Britannia*, 27 (1996), pp. 244, 258, 266.

[133] Booth, 'Pottery' [from Arkells Land], in Hayden et al., *Horcott Quarry, Fairford and Arkell's Land, Kempsford*, p. 469.

The situation is of course not as straightforward as the simple numbers might suggest; activity might well have occurred on any given site in periods other than those represented in the tables above, but just not in a form which generated sufficient excavated material to meet the criteria for inclusion here. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that many rural settlements, in particular, did not see continuous activity throughout the Roman period, a distinct episode of dislocation of the settlement pattern in the early second century, particularly in the upper Thames valley, being just the most striking point of change. Variety in individual settlement chronologies, not necessarily easily identified in the associated pottery, will tend to be masked by the broad nature of the three-period scheme used here, but was undoubtedly present and will have been one factor contributing to the differences seen in the range of F&S ware values for each period.

In the early Roman period pottery assemblages in the region were typically characterised by very low levels of fine and specialist wares and a correspondingly heavy typological dominance of jars which, as in the Iron Age, were presumably multifunctional vessels. Such assemblages, widely found on farmstead sites, which dominated the settlement pattern, may have been assembled mainly using established local networks. Different mechanisms of pottery supply will have complemented local networks in newly established nucleated settlements associated with the developing road system, particularly at those places where there was direct military influence, and pottery assemblages were correspondingly more diverse.

One consequence of the partial dislocation of settlement patterns at the beginning of the middle Roman period was a reduction in the proportion of sites consisting of simple farmsteads. Pottery assemblages across the settlement spectrum showed increasing diversity of fabrics and vessel types – an increase in fine and specialist ware levels and a reduction in the importance of jars – though farmstead assemblages usually remained less varied than those of more complex sites. In the late Roman period significant increases in the level of fine and specialist wares reflected major changes in the Oxford industry from the mid third century. The relative proportions of the three groupings of vessel classes showed interesting changes; the trend of a decline in the frequency of jars continued in some cases but more or less halted elsewhere and even reversed in others, most notably at Kempsford Arkells Land, where it is possible to argue for a change in site status at this time.[134] The most notable, if relatively modest, development, was an increase in numbers of bowls and dishes which can be correlated with the appearance of the new Oxford colour-coated ware range, in which these vessels dominated in terms of quantity of output. The reduction in liquid-related vessels might reflect several trends: pottery cups were always more or less confined to samian ware and were therefore not seen in the late Roman period.[135] More important in numerical terms was a decline in beakers, and it is possible that in this period these were increasingly replaced by glass vessels, though how far this might have been the case in lower status sites is quite unknown. More generally, the relatively small number of late Roman groups available for analysis may mean that the picture of vessel class groupings is still to be clarified fully.

Throughout the three periods there is a broad but evolving correlation between the principal characteristics of pottery assemblages and the perceived nature of the sites from which they derived, based on considerations of plan form and building types, though the correlation is seen more clearly in some cases than in others. In the case of the immediate Alchester environs, for example, the correlation must be with the 'small town', despite the lack of corresponding

[134] Ibid. pp. 471–2.

[135] The traditional interpretation of samian ware forms such as Dragendorff 27 and 33 as drinking vessels is retained here, though there is increasing evidence that at least some of these vessels might have contained condiments. See, for example, E. Biddulph, 'Form and Function: The Experimental Use of Roman Samian Ware Cups', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 27 (2008), pp. 91–100; G.B. Dannell, 'The Uses of South Gaulish *Terra Sigillata* on the Roman Table: A Study of Nomenclature and Vessel Function', *Internet Archaeology*, 50 (2018), https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.50.5. Nevertheless, these vessels form only a small part of our assemblages and their removal from the RE totals for liquid-related vessels would make little difference to the present argument.

intramural assemblages noted above. Overall, the premise that pottery assemblages can provide a general guide to site character when other aspects of the record are unclear seems to be supported, although nuance of interpretation with regard to aspects of site individuality remains critical.

The larger the comparative dataset the more reliable such estimations should be, and the more easily exceptional assemblages might be identified, but this raises an important question about the limits of the areas covered by surveys of this kind, which could be expanded indefinitely to the extent that understanding of the meaning of assemblage comparisons and differences is completely lost. As noted above, the concept and definition of fine and specialist wares employed here will not necessarily have the same validity in other regions, but even where they do the baseline against which these characteristics can be measured will vary considerably depending on the location of regional sources of these wares. It is relatively easily to assess homogeneity and variation within assemblages in the Oxford region because of the prominence of the eponymous industry in site supply patterns. Even here, however, pottery from other industries made its way to Oxford region sites, and not just in the early period when supply was apparently dominated by local small-scale producers. A 'west Oxfordshire' industry was a major supplier in that area in the second and third centuries, for example. In the south-western part of the upper Thames valley important industries in the Savernake Forest and particularly 'north Wiltshire' were dominant, while further west again the Severn Valley industry was dominant in that area, its distribution extending (just) into west Oxfordshire. Black-burnished ware from Dorset, almost ubiquitous in middle and later Roman assemblages incorporated in the present study, was a major component at a significant number of them. The changing proportions of black-burnished and Severn Valley wares across Gloucestershire are shown clearly by Timby.[136] F&S percentages presented for a wide range of sites in Gloucestershire, however, are not distinguished chronologically, presumably because many of the published assemblages from rural sites were not divided by phase.[137] As shown above it is clear, for the Upper Thames region at least, that chronological factors are critically important in understanding variation in these values. While this may be less the case in the Gloucester region, with variation influenced more by site character than by chronology, the latter must still have been a relevant factor, perhaps particularly in the fourth century rather than earlier, as seen for example further north in the Severn Valley at Bredon's Norton, just in Worcestershire.[138]

To the north the significance of industries in Warwickshire for supply to the northern part of Oxfordshire is unclear, but perhaps fairly limited. The major Warwickshire industry, in the north of the county at Mancetter-Hartshill, while very important regionally, also had limited impact in Oxfordshire. To the east and south-east, Stowe (pink grogged ware) and Alice Holt on the Hampshire/Surrey border were both major coarse ware industries, the former more important for the Oxford region than the latter, whose products are only identified in small quantities in the fourth century. Of all these industries only Mancetter-Hartshill had a significant F&S ware output (consisting almost entirely of white wares and mortaria) and while more local F&S ware productions are known in Gloucestershire/Wiltshire (but unsourced) their contributions appear to be quite limited. For the late Roman period, in particular, the Oxford industry was therefore a principal, if not the principal, supplier of F&S wares for a very substantial area, particularly west and north-west of the production sites and of the Oxford region as defined here. Consequently, in those areas middle and, particularly, late Roman F&S ware levels for any given site will have been lower than in their equivalents much closer to the source, so this has to be factored in to any comparative study that moves beyond a defined heartland of Oxford distribution. Detailed

[136] Timby, 'What's on the Table?', p. 321, fig. 7.24.
[137] Ibid. p. 332, fig. 7.33.
[138] P. Booth, 'The Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in T. Allen et al., *A Roman Villa and Other Iron Age and Roman Discoveries at Bredon's Norton, Fiddington and Pamington along the Gloucester Security of Supply Pipeline*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 25 (2016), pp. 106–8.

definition of the boundary between that heartland and wider areas supplied by the Oxford industry, which will have changed through time, requires much further work.

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