

Notes on the South-East Research Framework public seminar on the Roman period (27/10/07)

Chair: David Bird

Speakers: David Rudling, Jake Weekes, Mark Houliston, David Bird, Paul Booth, Jane Timby and Andrew Gardner

Notes: Jake Weekes

Introduction

David Bird (DB)

DB introduced the meeting by noting recent county based frameworks that had been completed, some of which (like that for Surrey) are available on-line. The priority of this meeting would be on highlighting the gaps in the archaeological resource and ways forward: and particularly gaps that seldom, if ever get talked about. It cannot be denied that researchers looking at different periods tend to focus on different aspect of the society they are studying because different types of evidence tend to be prevalent for different periods (Anglo-Saxon archaeology, for example, has historically been dominated by burial evidence, which is noticeably less often covered for the Roman period). It would be impossible to cover everything in the SERF Resource Assessment list of topics in one day, and anyway this could be considered indulgent when there are more pressing topics to be discussed. DB was keen to emphasise what he perceived as a need to re-think ideas based on post-colonial guilt, and to deal with the problems that remain in terms of accumulating and understanding a detailed dataset. In the latter regard researchers for the Roman period should think more often about geology as a determinant of settlement and activity. Villas, for example, seem on current evidence to surround the Weald, rather than ever being located within it (with perhaps one or two rare exceptions). Woodland is another major factor that tends to get ignored. The long linear parishes in parts of the South-East may have Roman origins. It also makes a refreshing change to be studying the Roman period in the South-East for its own sake, rather than as an appendage to broader syntheses on Roman Britain as a whole; by the same token, we are faced with the challenge to putting things into the wider context, both within the province, and more generally in terms of 'The Romans'.

Romano-British religion in the South-East

David Rudling (DR)

DR drew attention to a new collection of papers on Romano-British religion in South-East England (to be published soon by Heritage Books), and discussed a number of issues that had arisen while editing this volume.

After considering the late Iron Age background, the new book deals with significant series of mainly geographical and topographical subject areas, including London, the

client kingdom of *Togidubnus* in Sussex, the *civitas* capitals, other nucleated settlements, rural temples, shrines, and settlements generally, and at industrial sites etc. This has entailed looking for distinctive elements of belief at different sites; finally evidence of Romano-British Christianity in the region is considered.

Overall, several targets for new research can be delineated:

- Continuity of religious ritual and belief in transitional phases (from the Iron Age to the Roman period, and also from the Roman to the Anglo-Saxon periods)
- Areas around temples, which are potentially just as important as the temple sites themselves, need to be examined systematically
- Native beliefs generally need to be better understood and accounted for, particularly with respect to structured deposits
- Most of the evidence suggests that there are relatively few imported religious ideas and material; has there been too much of an obsession with linking native with Roman patterns in the past?

Most of the known temples have now been drawn to scale in Sussex and Surrey, and depictions of various anthropomorphic native deities, such as the antler god sometimes identified as *Cernunnos*, are known from the region. There is also significant evidence of continuity of religious ideas and practice from the late Iron Age. Hayling Island in Hampshire provides a classic example, and also the temple site at Lancing Down, West Sussex. However, understanding of these sites, particularly with respect to temple complexes and their hinterlands, needs to be moved forward. Association of temples or shrines with burials could also be an important topic of new research (the site at Westhampnett in Sussex provides an interesting example).

There is a wide variety of good evidence of Roman and exotic imports of gods into London, Kent (for example a statuette of Minerva in Maidstone Museum), and Sussex, which of course boasts a famous dedicatory stone from the client king *Togidubnus* to Neptune & Minerva. The latter is not necessarily from a Classical form of temple, as some have assumed: Black has suggested that the temple could be of Romano-Celtic type. We also have much evidence of household deities (particularly in the form of pipe clay figurines) from Canterbury and Chichester, for example. Baby burials are another interesting category suggesting cult practice, which can be compared with other forms of special deposit, urban and rural.

Securely ritual objects are quite rare in the region, however. The latter category would include priestly regalia like headdresses, or the Farley Heath sceptre. Other evidence of ritual comes from specialised deposition. At Chanctonbury Ring and Lancing in Sussex for example, there is evidence of 'zonal deposition', denoting the particular location of offerings in specific areas of the site. This will only be picked up if a wider area is analysed, a method more often deployed on prehistoric sites, where a temple focus is less likely translated into an excavation focus. Further specialisations of deposits include, 'ritual killing' of objects, small votive pots, etc. More excavation in

the areas around temples (for example within *temenos* enclosure ditches) might help to explain what is going on.

The broader picture, considering the wider distribution of temples and associated ritual in South-East England as a whole should also be taken into account; there is a contrast in terms of the relatively few examples of inscribed altars in the extreme South-East, for example, as compared with other areas. Again, there seems to be a variety of emphases with temples, with some sites, for example, being more associated with healing cults linked with a pre-Roman focus on springs (such as the complex at Springhead in Kent).

Moreover, respect of pre-existing monuments in the landscape, such as the use of Bronze Age round barrows for special deposits, is an under-explored area. Ritual shafts, pits and wells are also well known contexts for special deposits beyond the temple sphere. The nature of deposits in such contexts is the main clue to their having an overtly symbolic function, as well as the inclusion of apparently special types of material, such as whole pots and animal carcasses, and even human body parts: in-filling can often be demonstrated to have taken place in a short time period, and conjoining pot sherds can be found in the earliest and latest deposits. DR is able to report from personal experience of excavating a deep shaft in Sussex that being at the bottom evokes ideas of links with the underworld!

Religion and associated ritual in the domestic sphere is also in need of more research attention. In this category we know of villa sites with special 'chapel' areas, and often see mosaics with mythic imagery (which may or may not have been of a 'religious' significance, a matter for further debate). Beddingham Villa in East Sussex has also produced a number of special deposits (of types not uncommon on villa sites generally), including baby burials and animal deposits under floors and corridors etc. There are also examples of whole pots buried in such contexts. DR argued that Merrifield's categories of ritual deposits are still extremely useful in analysing ritualised deposits such as these. Barcombe Villa also produced such evidence, in the form of a pit containing two dog deposits, as well as deposition of complete pots.

Further areas for consideration include coin hoards and bronze objects, which may often be votive. Portable Antiquities Scheme data have been of great importance in recent years in significantly adding to this dataset. Data provided for this meeting by Sally Worrell indicated just how much material of this kind is now known, and large numbers of the objects seem to have an intrinsic ritual or religious significance, quite apart from any indicators given by depositional factors. The Finds Liaison Scheme continues to provide an important new source of information that needs to be integrated into the regional research agenda, and indeed protected in the future.

Finally more work is needed in characterising Romano-British Christianity in the region. Evidence is scarce, generally relying on identification of the Chi-Rho monogram. Some evidence gives a clue to early Christian ritual, such as the 'font' found at Wiggonholt in Sussex.

Discussion:

DB reiterated that, in relation to the PAS data, it was not just the objects that are more obviously symbolic which could be construed as ritualised: depositional context might also be an important clue. It was noted in this respect that the difference between ‘rubbish’ and ‘ritual’ (one which has tended to have more currency among prehistorians) is an interpretive problem requiring much more thought. DB drew attention to the fact that large numbers of apparently religious objects are known to exist beyond temple sites; non-temple sites for ritual deposition might actually have been the norm. Springhead in Kent is an important temple complex around which a town developed, in line with north Gaulish equivalents: the origins of Canterbury can be seen in this way, with an initial ritual focus associated with water. How these sites actually worked in the landscape and whether their function had a bearing on their distribution is also an important area for study. Location of temples may show that they are particularly related to territories, and travel. There was some discussion as to whether some putative ‘special deposits’ might have more prosaic explanations. For example, a preponderance of dogs in pits at a certain date might result from administrative edicts calling for their destruction *en masse* because they were thought to be carriers of a plague epidemic (there is some textual evidence of this type of event from Eusebius). Equally, societies with a high infant mortality rate might sadly have a ready supply of infants for burial. This was countered on the basis of specialised context, once again; however sourced (which is a very interesting question in itself) such burials were clearly being placed in a specialised way.

DB raised the question of the scale of distribution of certain religious ideas, arguing that local deities were perhaps the most significant to many people, there not necessarily being an overall distribution of gods on a regional level. In this regard the extent to which indigenous religion merged with Roman ideas was also raised. It was postulated that while ‘Romanised centres’ might have a more recognisably Classical suite of gods and associated ritual, rural areas were likely to be more conservative. On the other hand, it is important to try to understand the polytheistic mind. After all, fluidity of the identity of gods and of the ritual they were offered was clearly an important factor in the development of ‘*interpretatio Romana*’, and the name/identity/function of a god should probably be considered as being more situational and circumstantial, depending on the particular devotee/celebrant/worshipper, rather than being fixed.

Romano-British burials and funerals in South-East England

Jake Weekes (JW)

The primary point JW was keen to make was that researchers are now interested in going much further than merely comparing Romano-British burials, as these represent but one aspect of funerary rites. This emphasis on reconstructing more of the entire ‘funerary sequence’ from archaeological evidence should be reflected in future research in the region. JW would discuss the regional evidence for various types of funerary ritual, from laying out procedures to so-called ‘secondary rites’, referring to case studies throughout.

Certain types of archaeological context are key to reconstruction of ritual actions at each stage of the funerary sequence:

- Pre-pyre and pyre: prior to burial reconstruction of ritual is mainly possible with cremation funerals, preserved evidence being derived from pyre features, features containing 'redeposited' pyre material, and cremation deposits from burials themselves
- Initial deposition (of inhumation or cremated bone): evidence derived from Burials (combined contents, positioning of objects, modification of objects etc)
- Further actions (revisiting of burials, 'secondary rites', disturbance etc): continued ceremonial focus on the burial and/or cemetery area, evidence being derived from burials (upper contexts, backfill, markers, etc) and other features and contexts (including 'structured deposits', and cemetery surfaces).

The work of Jacqueline McKinley has been very important in raising awareness of and devising analyses for the reconstruction of pyre conditions and ritual. We especially need to find more pyre sites in the archaeological record and subject them to state of the art analyses in order to understand this facet of ancient ritual more fully. The only evidence remaining for the pyre sites themselves is generally the remnant of an under pyre pit. A combination of pyre fuel residues, cremated human bone and localised scorching of the rim and sides of the pit is generally to be sought for a secure identification of such features (although, as McKinley has pointed out, newly dug pits into which hot pyre residues have been deposited might share the same or a very similar profile).

Pyre sites and other features containing cremation material (including burials) potentially provide evidence of rituals that might be thought of as 'pre-pyre'. The small decorated bone and antler objects sometimes found in cremation deposits (as at Crundale Limeworks near Canterbury [Bennett 1982], and Cramner House in Canterbury itself [Bennett 1987]) have recently been ingeniously re-interpreted by Hilary Cool (in dealing with the Roman cemetery at Brougham, in Cumbria). Cool suggests that these objects are the remnants of decorative inlays of wooden biers on which the deceased were carried to and laid on the pyre. Actually, perhaps we could go further and suggest that these 'biers' might simply have been furniture 'in life', given a final change of use in much the same way as accessory vessels and other grave goods in burials?

Some more recent finds of pyre sites in the region give a hint at the kinds of things we might be able to reconstruct in terms of pyre ritual itself, and would hope to analyse and compare on a regional scale, should more data become available. Material from a pyre site at Southwark (Mackinder 2000), from pyre related material in the Eastern Cemetery of London (Barber and Bowsher 2000), and more recently from pyre sites in the Pepper Hill cemetery in north Kent (Angela Boyle, *pers. comm.*) were each subjected to flotation analyses, and found to contain small food items which had apparently been thrown into the pyre. The material also varied interestingly from site to site: the Southwark Pyre contained large numbers of pine nut shells in predominance, while the London material was characterised by the inclusion of

pulses, and the Pepper Hill deposits produced large numbers of grape seeds. The Southwark pyre also contained a large number of ceramic incense burners (*Tazze*) and ceramic lamps, suggestive of gifts from various mourners. Similarly, pottery and various other objects were recovered via bulk sampling of the large spreads of pyre material from east London cemetery (whether the latter represents discarded debris or the build up of deliberate ritual deposits is another interesting question).

Turning to burials, JW first noted the exciting recent find (2007) of very early Roman burials near Springhead in Kent (Paul Booth *pers. comm.*). One of the burials, which were set within a large enclosure, contained a rich selection of grave goods, including a gaming board, a *patera*, wine flagons, dishes etc, and is perhaps Kent's first example comparable with the high status early Roman burials at Stanway near Colchester and Folly Lane, St. Albans. Such apparently elite funerals are obviously not the norm, however, and JW was concerned to move on to the development of what he sees as more of a 'middle class' funerary culture of the Romano-British period: the sorts of burials we more often find on a regular basis on the outskirts of towns and rural settlements.

As a case study of the quantity and quality of the archaeological resource for reconstructing these more common burial rites, JW had conducted a brief survey of the Romano-British burials of Surrey, as recorded in the Surrey Historic Environment Records (with due thanks to Emily Brant at Surrey County Council who had provided the data at short notice). The inherent problems of HER databases for researchers are well known; variable data input criteria and other human error in the past mean that any inferences are likely to be based on a highly skewed dataset. JW said that the results of his pilot survey nonetheless broadly concurred with previous research of Kent records, for example, and analysis of the Canterbury Urban Archaeological Database as part of his Canterbury's Roman Cemeteries project (funded by the Roman Research Trust).

Unfortunately, while the quantity of sites is significant, the general picture of the quality of evidence for detailed analysis of funerary rites is actually quite depressing. Data from the Surrey database are typical in this regard. Of a total of over 50 sites, approximately 85% were discovered and recorded prior to 1990 and (PPG16), and, in the main, this has had an impact on the level of detail recorded and the quality and availability of the record in other ways. Much of the earlier material was found accidentally and only partially recorded *after* being taken out of context by agricultural, horticultural, quarrying and other groundwork associated with development. JW had developed a cursory checklist for the quality of the data:

A = detailed recording of entire burials of known extent, including bone analysis, object typology, dating and condition, spatial arrangement of objects in burial, environmental analyses

B = as above, but lacking bone and environmental analyses

C = secure analysis of entire object assemblage but little or no detail of spatial arrangement in original context and no bone and environmental analyses

D = 'Disaster' (!), there being little or no chance of reconstructing entire burial groups, and sometimes whether burials were cremation burials or inhumations, or indeed whether they were burials at all...

JW had found that the vast majority of sites before 1981 (and therefore the vast majority of the sites) was characterised by 'D' and 'C'- graded data, with the former being sadly prevalent. Between 1981 and the present things have improved (with PPG16), but it is still to be noted that the majority of these sites (often because they were evaluations and watching briefs?) could only be 'B' graded, and that two recent sites were within the 'disastrous' bracket, a reminder that the system is not working as well as we might hope in all cases (this is a general observation and not restricted to Surrey by any means).

Despite such drawbacks in the data, we can begin (as the quality of data improve) to consider in more detail the diversity of Romano-British burials in the region. Surrey seems at first glance to be characterised mainly by cremation burials, perhaps as a function of a lack of large urban centres in the county; the fewer inhumations in Surrey seem to cluster around some of the larger nucleated settlements. Of course, this may be a function of archaeological visibility, both in terms of bone survival (cremated bone survives in acidic soils), and expectations; archaeologists, and indeed untrained excavators in the majority of earlier finds, might not have recognised more ephemeral traces of inhumations unless they were within known cemetery areas, (the latter being more likely in more 'urban' settings).

JW argued that burial diversity in terms of grave goods is an area that needs to be more readily recognised and explored, rather than only looking for broad patterns and equating them with fixed traditions. While providing a very generalised view of the types of objects traditionally viewed as appropriate to the burial context, predictive models of what we might expect to find in burials of a certain date simply do not account for the real patterns of homogeneity and diversity from burial to burial. In fact, an interesting overall pattern of combinations of contents within cremation burials had emerged from JW's doctoral research (2005). Case studies of cremation burials from Kent, London and Essex show various traditions in certain types and placements of grave goods at regional and more local scales, but also diversity from burial to burial in terms of combinations of objects. The latter can be divided into two main groups, both rising in numbers in tandem with the increase in burials overall in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

One overall class, of relatively 'simple' burials, contained the cremated bone in a ceramic container and no other grave goods, ceramic or otherwise. Another group, increasing over time, included a complex variety of cremated bone containers, secondary containers (boxes, *amphorae*, tile cists etc), accessory vessels and other accessories. While there are caveats here over the relative difficulties of understanding the chronology of burials with single or multiple objects, we can tentatively suggest cremation burial in the early Roman period as being a context for diverse social display and even personalisation of burials, perhaps within the context of a growing 'middle class'. It would be interesting to define how this diversity (or lack of it) relates to the cultural construction of other social aspects, such as the gender of the deceased. However, in the latter case, there simply aren't enough

primary data relating to the sex of the deceased, as a result both of the destructive process of cremation, but also of a lack of such analyses in the past.

Of course, the funerary context does not end with burial (in whatever form). Researchers are beginning to look much more at the ongoing rituals that seem to have maintained an ongoing focus on burials and cemetery areas. Evidence of burial markers and tombstones have long been acknowledged, but there would appear to be potential for more ephemeral evidence in this area, which needs to be recognised and analysed. The St Dunstan's cemetery area in Canterbury potentially provides an important case study. Certainly more recent excavations have clearly indicated that the cemetery was divided into different plots: we might wonder what social mechanisms created such a complex, and whether controls applied on who was buried where, or governed access, to certain areas, for example. The Cramner House excavation in the 1980s, despite being a difficult rescue operation (and therefore disastrous for the archaeology in a number of ways) actually preserved, in the sections of foundation trenches, evidence of a probable cemetery surface into which burials had been cut and apparently onto which secondary deposits had been placed. This material included fragments of burnt bone, broken pottery and charcoal. Had the site been open area excavated this fragile evidence may have been missed.

The work of Professor Jacopo Ortalli of the University of Ferrara on Roman period cemetery surfaces in Italy (as demonstrated at the Roman Archaeology Conference 2007) has produced some very exciting results. The microscopic stratigraphy of cemetery surfaces might survive more often than we think (the assumption tends to be that they will have long since been truncated by ploughing), so we need to test the potential for the survival of such evidence. JW has recently received some funding from the Canterbury Archaeological Society for a small test excavation in the St. Dunstan's cemetery area. It should also be remembered that many cremation burials at least have lids for the containers of the remains; where such lids survive, they might also indicate a desire to revisit the burial and perhaps continue to add and remove contents over time, leave food offerings etc. Lids might also give further clues as to the approximate level at which a cemetery surface might survive, even if only as small 'islands' of stratigraphy amid truncated areas.

Romano-British cemeteries, perhaps particularly those located in association with the Roman period 'urban centres' in the region, are potentially full of very complex archaeology, more like that commonly expected in an urban setting; we should re-think assumptions about methodology here. It is vital that we excavate these sites with this in mind, and only deploy machine stripping, for example, where it is guaranteed that complete truncation beyond the upper deposits of burials has taken place. It might be possible to reconstruct much more of these sites on vertical as well as horizontal axes, more of their chronology, and changing activity over time, and, as a consequence, much more of the funerary culture of the Roman period in the region.

Discussion:

Brief discussion centred on points about crossover between funerary evidence and other types of ritual and site, the relative survival of cremations and inhumations in

acidic soil conditions, and the need to recognise multivocality and polysemy in funerary and other rituals.

The Urban Evidence

Mark Houlston (MH)

Considering the urban evidence, MH first reflected in particular on the findings of recent extensive excavations at the Whitefriars, Canterbury, and highlighted two key points:

- These large-scale excavations showed that there is still a lot we don't know about the Roman period urban centres of the region
- Such large-scale excavations are soon likely to be a thing of the past, given pressure for what are seen as cheaper solutions, such as boreholes and piling strategies.

There is a real need therefore to have much more targeted and specific research strategies.

Both Canterbury and Chichester have demonstrable late Iron Age precedents, in the form of nearby trading stations, at Fordwich and Fishbourne respectively. Canterbury was also the centre for a significant late Iron Age settlement either side of the Stour, in the Whitehall Road area, to the north west of the current town centre. Future research will need to look more closely at the early deposits of Canterbury and Chichester to see if there is better evidence of pre-conquest settlement and the relative extent and nature of the early Roman military presence. At both sites (if Fishbourne is included) some of the earliest evidence is high status and apparently religious in nature, so perhaps the religious aspect was significant in the initial formation of these *civitas* capitals.

Canterbury's earliest known developments are around the theatre and temple precinct areas, and of Flavian date, perhaps again supporting the idea that such centres were not (at least initially) capitals or centres of administration, but started as more religious centres (and a meeting place for local elites). This brings us to ongoing debates over native/elite or 'imperial project' mechanisms for urbanisation. Chichester and Canterbury are quite similar in overall design and character, although it has to be said that there has been a tendency in reconstructions to fill spaces and unknown areas with important buildings; actually the more recent (and indeed deliberate) excavations show much more timber than masonry in these areas, and that masonry structures are actually rare within a large intra-mural site. It is also important to understand the development of the road systems of the towns, which sometimes seem to be thought of as having been fixed rather than constantly evolving. The cemeteries surrounding the town were also undergoing change throughout the period, and early cemeteries, such as that to the south west of Canterbury, were encroached upon by urban space in the later period with the building of walled defences. We have the same sort of date for Chichester and Canterbury defensive circuits. The local elite would probably have paid for their construction. The defences are different from those more generally found on the continent, which tended to be much more of a reaction to potential threats than works of public munificence *per se*, and built around

a relatively small intramural area, apparently to be used as a stronghold in times of threat. The immediate intramural area investigated in the Whitefriars excavations at Canterbury was found to have had an agricultural soil prior to the defences being erected, indicating that the land enclosed was well outside the strictly urban area.

After AD 300, there is typically evidence of a contraction of these large towns (for instance, a carriageway of the Riding Gate at Canterbury went out of use at this time. We should however avoid generalised and deterministic ideas of 'decline and fall', as the evidence seems rather to point to periods of both instability and stability between AD 350 and 450. It would seem that the nature of the use of town is simply *different* during this period, in fact tying in with the start of late Antique period generally. Private houses rather than public spaces seem to have become centres of government, and there are other signs of the advent of a different way of living, more comparable with the early medieval period. The laying of a new road in the Canterbury Whitefriars area, and the burning down of the apsidal building near St George's clock tower (first encountered by Frere in the 1950s and recently re-excavated by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust) are in fact typical of what we get in both Canterbury and Chichester in the late Antique phase, although there is now much more evidence from Canterbury. The new road referred to above had been resurfaced a number of times, and an Anglo-Saxon disc brooch was in fact recovered from its latest surface. Similarly, there are well ordered late cemeteries outside Canterbury and Chichester, but also evidence of an apparent lack of special funerary consideration in some cases, such as the 11 skeletons found tipped into a ditch in the Whitefriars excavation, and the burial of the Adelaide Place 'family': partial decomposition had occurred prior to the latter group being fully buried (intriguingly, the body of a dog was also found, 'curled up', in this context). Such finds do not signify the end of towns, as might be postulated if a general 'decline' is projected onto the evidence, and there is good evidence for Canterbury and Chichester's survival well into fifth century.

Turning to so-called 'small towns', MH wondered if 'agglomerations' might be a better word to use? Rochester (*Durobrivae*) in Kent, with its walled defences and possible associations with a concentration of villas along the Medway, was perhaps an administrative centre of some sort. But a variety of other examples known or postulated within the region at Alfoldean, Bardown, Bodiam, Crayford and/or Dartford (*Noviomagus?*), Croydon(?), Dorking, Dover (*Dubris*), Ewell, Faversham (*Durolevum*), Fordwich/Sturry(?), Hardham, Hassocks, Hastings(?), Hersden, Lickford(?), Maidstone (?), Pulborough, Richborough (*Rutupiae*), Springhead (*Vagniacis?*), Staines (*Portibus*), and Westhawk Farm, Ashford, present a wide range of potential functions and origins. These would include *vici* associated with longer term military presence, posting stations, settlement at a road junction, and industrial and religious foundations. Moreover, these settlements, many of which are perhaps best thought of as an extension/cross-over with rural settlement, are still being found (for example that at Westhawk Farm, Ashford). Also in this category belongs the extensive ribbon development recently found under constraining developer-funded conditions at Island Road, Hersden, near Canterbury.

Discussion:

It is important not to assume that timber buildings are not high status. Ongoing excavations at Silchester are also showing that timber buildings are the norm between the better known masonry structures (South-East examples might be more difficult to find because of local building methods). More research excavations are needed, but it was also pointed out that the distinction between development led archaeology and 'research' archaeology should no longer be considered tenable; we must not continue to compartmentalise approaches, and need to talk about relationship between archaeological research and the threat to evidence posed by development.

Defence

David Bird (DB)

DB proceeded to present some thoughts on defence aspects, starting with a reminder that there is a debate about what went on between Caesar's visits and the Claudian invasion of AD 43. There is also an ongoing invasion route debate, with much evidence against connecting the words of Cassius Dio with a 'battle of the Medway'. DB argued that it was time to forget the generalised Webster model of forts and start thinking more about garrisons: there is too much thinking still in terms of 'occupation' in the region, which is not borne out by the literary or archaeological evidence.

On the other hand, re-casting the Saxon shore forts as simple fortified ports with a military presence is again problematic. Perhaps researchers need to think again about the late Roman period generally in this regard: it has been suggested for example that the ring of early Saxon cemeteries from Essex, Kent and Surrey represent sub-Roman period mercenaries? It would also seem to have taken a lot longer for the Roman system to change, than has previously been thought on the basis of historical projections.

Discussion

It was pointed out that 'Saxon shore fort' was the designation in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, although this is admittedly a late source: it is perhaps more difficult to know what this source is telling us than has been assumed. Forts, and the defensive system generally, would have undergone much development over time. As with 'urban' sites, there might well still be new military sites waiting to be found. The following paper is adapted from a text supplied by the speaker.

Rural Settlement

Paul Booth (PB)

PB first pointed out that he had only a small amount of time to deal with a subject area which, by virtue of its size alone, is completely central to understanding the

Roman archaeology of the region – and at a broader level, encompasses a very large part of what Roman Britain is about. He would therefore offer a brief and inevitably rather simplistic characterisation of some of the main aspects of the record as he saw it at present, before moving on to consider what seem to be some of the most important questions relating to rural settlement in the region.

Leaving aside resource assessment at the level of the primary record, we do at least have access to synthesised presentations of data in the form of a number of recent summaries of the Roman period for all counties in the region, albeit at a fairly broad level and not in any way prepared with the intention of serving as detailed summaries in the English Heritage sense. For Kent we have the recent Historical Atlas and the imminent new County History, with a chapter on the Roman period by Martin Millett. For Surrey and Sussex there are both recent edited volumes on wide ranging aspects of their archaeology, published in 2004 and 2003 respectively and, in addition, books devoted specifically to the Roman archaeology of each county, published by Tempus. Behind these, of course, lie the contents of the various county Historic Environment Records – representing a level of detail that could not be explored here. In terms of unpublished material, however, this paper would take particular account of work carried out on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) in Kent, and PB hoped to be forgiven for making disproportionate reference to this project in attempting to illustrate more general points.

So what do the existing syntheses and new data suggest about the rural settlement of the region? First, there is still a fundamental need for improved chronological definition for most of the sites. In particular it would be desirable to move, wherever possible, away from purely ceramic based chronological schemes to those in which this evidence is integrated with that of other artefact types (where present, and of course for many of our sites coins are effectively absent) as well as evidence from radiocarbon – still an underexploited resource in the Roman period.

Moving on to the chronological patterns that can be observed, PB observed first of all that, where the evidence exists it seems that a significant proportion of early Roman farmsteads were already occupied in the late Iron Age, if not earlier. This is no surprise, but is extremely important for our understanding of the basic character of Romano-British society. This pattern may be widespread, but it may also be variable within the region, so that it may be significant to distinguish between areas where Roman period settlement develops straight out of long term settlement patterns, on the one hand, and those areas, for example parts of Kent, where such continuity is notable by its absence and numbers of settlements apparently expand very substantially in, but not before, the late Iron Age. For example, JD Hill has recently suggested that parts of Kent should be included in those areas of South-East England that had been of relatively marginal importance for settlement in the middle Iron Age and saw significant expansion of settlement only in the late Iron Age. This idea certainly fits the evidence from the CTRL.

Not only lower status farmsteads, but also some sites that developed into villas in the later 1st century show continuous occupation sequences from the late Iron Age. There are potentially a number of examples of this in Kent, and amongst them one could name Keston and Thurnham, but at the Sussex sites of Barcombe and Beddingham, for example, it has been suggested that the occupation sequences, while starting very

early in the Roman period with native style features, need not extend back before AD43. At Beddington in Surrey, late Iron Age settlement activity seems to have been succeeded by part of a field system over which the villa was later built. There are therefore, as we might expect, different developmental sequences, but in choosing these particular examples we should not imply that these different sequences were associated with particular parts of the region. This seems most unlikely, and in any case a great deal more work would be required to demonstrate such a case.

Post-conquest development is, of course, the scenario at almost all the larger nucleated settlements. Most of these develop in the aftermath of the imposition of the major road network – for example the sites of Alfoldean and Hardham, probably being based around posting stations. One exception to this is Springhead, where the significant pre-Roman religious focus developed through the early Roman period, stimulated, but probably not initiated, by the siting of Watling Street. Not all the roadside settlements necessarily had the official function of sites such as Alfoldean, but they presumably potentially combined local administrative, religious and market centre roles. In the case of sites such as Westhawk Farm, Ashford, their development was well under way in the pre-Flavian period. Overall, however, most sites in this category are poorly understood in detail. The discovery of Westhawk Farm underlines, if this were necessary, that the known distribution of such sites is clearly incomplete, and better understanding of it is arguably of considerable significance for the understanding of local settlement hierarchies, many of which are likely to have been headed by these sites.

Moving outside these centres, the most obvious features of the countryside as presently conceived are villas. As is well known, these vary enormously in size, architectural complexity and manifestation of material wealth. Their importance in some parts of the rural landscape is undeniable, but unfortunately even some recent publications give the impression that these are the only significant component of rural settlement. This is manifestly not the case, but there is a huge imbalance in our evidence base. With regard to basic numbers, and allowing some flexibility in our definition of what constitutes a villa site, recent figures are approximately 50 for Sussex, 30–40 for Surrey and some 65 for Kent. In all cases, it is clear that the spread of villas is not even across the landscape. At least some of the reasons for this are well known and relate to topography and the location of better quality agricultural soils, but there are likely to be other factors as well. Leaving aside the effects of bias in the location of fieldwork, the concentration of villas in the Faversham/Sittingbourne area is notable, and may reflect important characteristics of society as well as the environmentally determined aspects. In Surrey, David Bird has presented us with a more overtly environmentally deterministic view in relation to the distribution of both villas and other settlement types. He has rightly stressed the potential correlation between the heavily wooded aspect of the county even today and its likely nature in the Roman period – an aspect that could benefit from targeted environmental analysis.

At a gross level we are familiar with the effect of the Weald on broad settlement character – villas are effectively absent here, though other settlement forms of course are not. A more nuanced approach, however, is needed to those areas where the likely environmental contrasts are less stark than, say, that between the Weald and the gravel terraces of the Thames around Staines, although in almost all parts of our

region we need more detailed understanding of the non-villa components of the settlement pattern.

Apart from variations in size, and important differences in chronology – with a well known group of early sites in the Sussex coastal zone, for example – the villas are broadly of well recognised forms, and many show characteristic development sequences, demonstrated by the more recent excavations to be complex, as one might expect. In fewer cases is the range of associated or ancillary structures well known, though there are exceptions. Clear definition of the function of these buildings is frequently more problematic than that of their plans, however, and in very few cases has examination extended significantly beyond enclosure features, whether walls or ditches.

Non-villa settlements show great diversity, as we would expect in view of their potential numbers. It is worth considering the latter in a little more detail. A crude impression of relative numbers may be gained from looking at the general maps of Sussex and Kent. As an attempt to put some flesh on these impressionistic views the number of sites per 1km length of CTRL Section 1 have been plotted in relation to the geographical zones that make up the route. It is evident that there is considerable variation, with no sites recorded in Zone 2 (surprisingly, as this stretch is located each side of the Medway valley). In contrast, in Zone 6, (the 8.5 km length just north-west of Ashford) there is an average of 0.9 sites per km. Given that the average width of the CTRL transect is roughly 200m (probably a generous figure in this area), the value of 0.9 sites per km can be factored up to a potential density of 4.5 sites per square km. Clearly such a figure, while perfectly plausible, may be exceptional in this region and, as already indicated, the CTRL figures show much variation in settlement numbers in relation to topography (and other factors). Even localised densities of 4 or more settlements per square km would place the numbers of known villas in a more realistic framework.

Reverting to the question of non-villa settlement form, complex arrangements of enclosures and trackways are characteristic of the Thames gravels in Surrey, for example, though these can vary considerably in their apparent degree of organisation. Enclosures are a consistent feature of the late Iron Age to early Roman settlements of the CTRL sites, but again there is considerable variation in the extent of regularity of layout. The use of enclosure as a form of property definition is almost universal and while such boundaries can have different meanings their increasing presence presumably reflects the intensification of settlement patterns across this region as well as many others.

Enclosure ditches are more easily defined than structures and other features within them. A characteristic of several parts of the region is the absence of clear evidence for buildings. This problem certainly applies in the two areas referred to above (the Middle Thames Valley and the CTRL transect through Kent). In the latter sites only four-post structures were routinely identified. The use of above ground construction techniques, probably including mass wall construction, may be implied for structures of other functions. At Westhawk Farm, the presence of circular buildings is indicated by gullies, but with one exception these contained no internal structural features. The circular building tradition survived throughout the life of the excavated part of the settlement (that is to say into the early–mid 3rd century) alongside a variety of simple

rectilinear structures, all in timber. The most ambitious of these, if the term is appropriate at all, was one of a distinct group of buildings having some affinity with (but in PB's view distinct from) aisled structures found in Kent. Two such buildings were revealed in CTRL work, one at Thurnham and one at Bower Road near Ashford, where it possibly formed part of a higher status settlement complex, perhaps a villa. Other examples occur in a known villa context at Keston. Buildings of such a distinctive type remain the exception rather than the rule. Kent has produced other unusual structures, such as the sunken featured buildings of Monkton - and a possible example of similar type at one of the CTRL sites at Northumberland Bottom. Again they are rare and their wider significance is uncertain. Such a structure type may have been considered particularly appropriate on chalk subsoils. Elsewhere on chalk, for example on the Sussex Downs, building locations may be indicated by platforms or shallow hollows.

Other traces of non-villa rural structures are exiguous and their location in archaeological work largely fortuitous. We are left with the difficulty that while we may be able to identify the locations where the majority of the population lived (even relatively small quantities of finds with no information on feature associations may provide such information), we know almost nothing of the houses in which they lived and of the other structures that formed their farmyards and homesteads.

Moreover, we still don't know what all these people were doing. This again is a key area where we have far too little evidence. Leaving aside those Wealden settlements with a specialist involvement in iron production, the rest were presumably engaged in agriculture of one sort or another, yet we are very poorly informed about its nature, particularly in terms of adequate quantified studies. There are extenuating circumstances: especially with regard to the pastoral economy. The acidic soils of the Wealden clays and the greensands, for example, play havoc with animal bone preservation. On the CTRL sites, for instance, barely adequate animal bone samples were recovered from Thurnham, but from none of the other sites in the Vale of Holmesdale/Chart Hills greensand zone. The animal bone report for the 6 hectare excavation at Westhawk Farm occupies a page of the forthcoming report, devoted entirely to a small group of material recovered from a well: waterlogged preservation will potentially give good results even in otherwise unfavourable settings, but by their nature wells and comparable features often contain special deposits – the well at Thurnham being a case in point – and reconstruction of the pastoral economy from such deposits may be very risky. Elsewhere, of course, preservation conditions are vastly different, yet the number of reports with really useful quantified data seems still to be extremely small – particularly from the point of view of the producer sites rather than the major consumers.

The situation with regard to arable agriculture is a little better, but not much. Preservation issues again play a part, though charred plant remains can be more resistant to poor soil conditions. We have the advantage that there are artefacts and structures to help us in our assessment of arable production. At a superficial level, querns tell us no more than that grain was being ground for flour and meal, but the quantities and types of stones can be very informative, and it is likely that a current review of quernstones in Kent will produce very interesting results. Obviously, identification of milling (as opposed to hand grinding) provides a particular perspective on scales of production and consumption. Further evidence for these

aspects comes from larger scale installations – the so-called corn drying ovens and buildings that might have been used for storage of grain. The association of the former can be with sites of all types, though a relatively high proportion is associated with villas. As to their precise function, we rely on the associated plant remains themselves to provide evidence. In the more immediate domestic context these remains may be all that we have to work with. They will tell us about the main cereal grains in use – principally spelt and barley, though emmer was still grown in some areas - and other components of the samples can inform us, for example, if crop processing was taking place on site or if cereals were apparently imported in an already refined state – not, it may be said, a common state of affairs. How widespread was malting, for example? The CTRL Section 1 sites, including Thurnham, have produced almost no evidence for malting, while at Northfleet, in contrast, evidence is substantial and long-lived. The number of sites that have produced good quality data of this type is still small, however, and while the situation is gradually improving, too few reports of material systematically sampled on a large scale and analysed accordingly have made it through to publication. There are good data from a number of sites in the Staines area, for example, which await publication and would form a useful complement to material that is now in print from sites such as Staines itself and the villa at Beddington. Not all modern analyses are as useful as they might be, however.

Returning to the physical installations, it is notable that all the structures identified specifically as granaries (above the level of the widespread four-posters mentioned earlier – assuming that grain storage is their primary function) are associated specifically with villa complexes, as for example perhaps at Beddington. A simple explanation of this phenomenon may be that it was only the villa estates that were accumulating grain surpluses on a large scale with a view either to payment of taxes in kind or to marketing them in the towns. Such an interpretation suggests a very centralised view of production, in which the only way for smaller farmers to dispose of their surplus was through the framework of substantial estates, an argument that in turn carries potential implications about land tenure. It may be that such a view underestimates the numbers of independent smaller-scale producers, and their potential both to generate and store their own surpluses, but in structures that were not necessarily of a single distinctive type, or built in ways that lend themselves to easy archaeological recovery: but this is speculative.

The apparently timeless rhythms of the agricultural cycle were, of course, not static at all, and we should return briefly to the question of chronology with which we started. We generally lack much sense of evolution in the countryside through the Roman period although, as already mentioned, a number of excavated sites, most obviously villas, have complex structural sequences that indicate ongoing programmes of development. It is likely that at least some of these developments had correlates in the associated farmyards and fields, even if such correlates are not readily identified in the archaeological record. As with early development sequences, it is likely that there was considerable sub-regional variation in patterns of change, but the appearance by the 4th century of a relatively small number of very substantial villas, of which Bignor is probably the best example, suggests some radical changes, succinctly defined as reflecting ‘the emergence of a small number of super-rich landlords who lived in luxurious villas surrounded by larger households.’

That such a development was possible is not in doubt, the question is to what extent it formed part of a pattern that might be recognisable across the region, as opposed to sporadic occurrence in individual areas – although in those areas the consequences of such a development might have been very significant in terms of adjustments to the settlement pattern. Is it in such a context that we should see the changes at Thurnham, where the main house ceased to be occupied soon after the mid 3rd century? One room was converted into a smithy and the rest apparently mostly abandoned, while agricultural functions were mainly carried on around an outlying building. Whatever the explanation, in this part of Kent there are widespread parallels for radical change in the settlement pattern. A great majority of the CTRL sites had ceased to be occupied by the middle of the 3rd century, and those that survived, like Thurnham, mostly saw activity at a reduced level compared with earlier. Moreover, the pattern does not apply only to the Thurnham villa and to farmsteads; there is marked contraction in the extent of settlement at Westhawk Farm and at Springhead, the latter reflected not only in the town but also in the associated cemetery of Pepper Hill. Something fairly major is going on, but what, and how far afield does this particular pattern extend?

Elsewhere there are well known variations in the chronology of some rural settlement in Sussex, for example, with some of the villas on the coastal plain abandoned by the 4th century and others further inland thriving at this time, a pattern sometimes suggested as being associated with the threat of pirate raids along the coast. Meanwhile some of the smaller settlements in the same general area survived right through the end of the Roman period and beyond. However, there does not seem to be any significant evidence for settlement decline and abandonment in the 3rd century to compare with that from parts of Kent. A decline (or perhaps better, a change) in rural settlement is characteristic of some parts of Surrey, but again in the 4th century rather than earlier. Overall then, there are contrasting patterns of settlement development trajectory to be teased out across the region.

PB then summarised some major issues and potential areas for further research: it might be argued that little has changed since, some twenty years ago, David Rudling wrote that:

‘The majority of the farming settlements in the Roman countryside ... were the less wealthy and less sophisticated native ‘peasant’ settlements. Despite their vast numerical superiority, and the fact that many of these sites span the entire period of the Roman occupation (many sites originating in the late Iron Age and some perhaps continuing into the fifth century), they have received remarkably little attention. This situation is especially disappointing in the areas containing villas, and the relationship between the two types of settlement in these areas is unclear. Much remains to be learnt about peasant settlement and though it is rare to find traces of houses, the sites and surrounding landscapes can provide much useful information about settlement patterns and history, farming practices, and the effects of Romanization on basically traditional ‘Iron Age’ communities. Surely this important topic deserves considerably more than the odd page or paragraph.’

However it is fair to say that many (but not all) archaeologists would now be more cautious in use of the concept of Romanisation. Indeed, one could argue that it is the dominant effect of the work of two and a half if not three generations of Roman

archaeologists since Haverfield of the Romanisation paradigm, with its essentially top down approach and therefore (in rural archaeological terms) an obsession with villas, that has resulted in the huge imbalance in understanding of rural settlement patterns that confronts us today. Obviously we have more evidence for most parts of the region, but how much has our understanding really advanced? The feeling that in some subject areas there has certainly been less progress than we would like informs at least part of the following list of some key issues and questions that might be considered in future work in rural settlement in the region:

- 1) Clarification of the characteristics of the lesser nucleated settlements, and hence of their role in relationship to surrounding rural settlements
- 2) Characterisation of non-villa settlement: in terms of:
 - Chronological range – particularly ‘continuity’ from the Late Iron Age
 - Real numbers and densities
 - Overall morphology – enclosed and non-enclosed – is this a critical distinction?
 - Structures – what are the structural traditions and how can we improve understanding and recognition of them?
 - Agricultural economy - systematic examination not only of ‘structural’ aspects, but also particularly of animal and plant remains, where extant
 - In view of the importance of woodland resources more work on charcoal, as well as pollen and other off-site aspects of the wider rural environment. The document relating to the ‘Five acre wood in Kent’ (or perhaps in Surrey) reminds us that woodland was not only a resource, it was a valuable commodity to be bought and sold like any other piece of estate. Given the extent of this commodity in our region it should be treated as a mainstream rather than a marginal component of the range of practice in the rural economy
- 3) Broad chronological patterns: East/West, North/South and sub-regional divisions. The 3rd century sees drastic changes in settlement pattern in Kent – but how extensive is this? The picture in Sussex appears to be quite different. Are there cross regional trends that transcend apparent local variations – are the latter really important or are they just a distraction?
- 4) The relationship of villa and non-villa settlements to each other and to the landscape, in a number of ways:
 - The physical layout of the landscape – how is it articulated (consider for example the trackways at Saltwood near Folkestone [CTRL]), Where are the settlement sites? Are villas surrounded by groups of smaller farmsteads? Are there landscapes dominated solely by villas or are settlements of all types typically integrated in areas where villas occur?
 - Is the absence of villas in particular areas always (or at least typically) a consequence of poor soil types? What sorts of settlements and agricultural practices are characteristic of these areas? Are there genuine empty spaces in the distribution map of settlements?

- Land tenure. A problem not readily addressed with archaeological evidence, but arguably the biggest single problem that confronts us in attempting to understand how the Romano-British countryside of our region operated. The challenge is to move beyond the speculative assumptions about the relationship of villas and non villa settlements and to use *all* our evidence, and perhaps particularly the environmental components that characterise and define agricultural production, to refine understanding of the complex interrelationships of our varied rural communities
- Other social characteristics. Apart from architecture, what does our other evidence tell us about the differences between the people of the villas and those of other settlement types? Considered use of the full range of artefactual material is required, and again quantified data are the key, and can surely yield insights into this question and allow us better to people the landscape
- What is the relationship between society and environment? Can we suggest that the radically different settlement patterns that we observe across parts of the region and correlate with particular topographies and environments (and in particular, the extent of woodland) also reflect distinct differences in local social arrangements – reflected in settlement type, economy and (less tangible archaeologically) patterns of landholding?

Discussion:

Reference was made to the recent CBA Weald conference and its significance for the SERF project. This suggested that the Weald had acted as something of a barrier to trade and that the distribution of villas suggested it really was less occupied. Others felt that the question of an absence of evidence in the Weald should probably still be related to the fact that it is not in an area of intensive modern development as compared with other areas. There are sites ‘out there’ and we perhaps need to think more of exploitation of woodland resources (iron working is only part of that pattern, which would also include transhumance, for example). Field walking in the Weald, as well as LIDAR survey are to be encouraged. The Portable Antiquities Scheme is another important new source of information across the area. It was pointed out that there appear to be no villas on the gravels either. DB argued that the pattern we have is likely to be genuine; villas have tended to be found where they exist. However, it was also argued that factors other than wealth or geology have to be considered in terms of villa distributions: what constitutes the human decision to build a villa? Discussion also reverted to the perceived problems of characterising late Antiquity in the region. Is relative archaeological invisibility at this time reflecting a change of use and of artefact types? In terms of the Downland sites in Sussex, there are fluctuating periods of considerably less or more intensive use, and also much variability between sites. It can be argued that in late Antiquity the rich get richer and poor poorer, so the poor might become more archaeologically invisible. As well as considering these problems in very broad terms, there is a need to look at regional differences as well as sub-regional and even more localised patterns, and also to compare with the near continent.

Pottery: the need for a regional research framework

Jane Timby (JT)

JT drew attention to the current lack of a regional scope for analysis and interpretation of Roman pottery production and distribution. JT argued that, despite a huge diversity of sites, much of our understanding of pottery has not really advanced much in 20–30 years. Kent benefits from work in Canterbury, and the published PhD theses of Pollard and Monaghan. There have also been some major new sites and a lot of reports are pending. Surrey could be described as a relative ‘black hole’ in this area of study, which is especially unfortunate given important production sites such as Alice Holt, Staines etc. Surrey has largely adopted Museum of London Archaeology Service typologies. Sussex entirely lacks a complete form and fabric series. Work by Fulford and Huddleston for the 1991 English Heritage review dealt with Canterbury and Chichester, but not county or indeed regional level. The Study Group for Roman Pottery have drawn up some priorities for future work, including, in terms of industries and kilns:

- Alice Holt/Farnham
- Ashtead, Surrey
- Eccles, Kent
- New Forest industry
- Overwey, Surrey
- Patch-grove
- Rowlands Castle
- Shedfield industry
- Upchurch wares
- Verulamium and North Kent
- Wickham Barns, Lewes
- Wiggonholt /Pulborough,

And site and area studies:

- Chichester
- Ewell
- Fishbourne
- Parnham/Wiggonholt/Pulborough/Storrington
- Pevensey
- Reculver
- Richborough
- Selsey peninsula
- Wealden /East Sussex
- Worthing

But these lists are not exhaustive, and of course this work is yet to be carried out.

In general, the limited state of our knowledge in this area has come about for the following, interrelated, reasons:

- Developer based funding

- Decline of pottery specialists
- Lack of training
- Inconsistent methodologies
- Unpublished reports and grey literature
- Changes in publication format.

All of the above prevent the development of mechanisms and personnel for looking at wider surveys, trends etc, on a regional scale. JT suggested some ways forward:

- Use of minimum standards
- Large-scale and systematic use of quantification
- Development and expansion of a regional fabric and form series
- Reassessment of museum collections
- Electronic publishing for ease of dissemination
- Development of projects in association with universities (including post-graduate training etc).

Discussion:

It was argued that the lack of even simple quantification on many sites was a function of cost cutting associated with the developer funded system. Such post-excavation analyses should be costed in as a matter of course, but it seemed to many that this is an area where corners were being cut, particularly when it comes to inter-site comparison at more than a very local level, let alone a regional perspective. Moreover, there is a danger of a skills base being lost in all the artefacts studies, because of the divisive way in which the current funding system works. The competitive nature of the developer funded system makes for division of datasets and knowledge, rather than a concerted research effort.

A TRAC perspective?

Andrew Gardner (AG)

AG had been invited to discuss the proceedings of the meeting from a Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC) perspective. AG explained the origins of TRAC in an academic context some years ago now. TRAC is an annual conference organised by post-graduates and early career academics that encourages thinking about the Roman period in different ways, bringing in approaches from other areas, such as prehistoric studies, and other disciplines entirely.

Central themes of interest in the TRAC setting can be discerned, such as cultural identity, gender, and especially an extended critique of the concept of Romanisation from a post-colonial perspective. Indeed, early TRACs were dominated by the Romanisation debate; more recently there has been an increase in anthropological and philosophically inspired approaches to agency, experience, landscape, ritual, etc.

The question arises as to the relevance of such discussions to the South-East Research Framework. AG argued that these types of approach are plainly relevant, although

apparently not fully recognised or realised. Aspects central to the TRAC agenda had already been present in the meeting, such as ritual action, structured deposition, regionality, urbanism, change within the Roman period, plus the usual discussions of transitions to and from the period. All these subjects relate to 'TRAC' schemes of thought.

However, TRAC discussions would often go on to ask in more detail what it all means at various scales. How does the evidence relate to the overall process of Roman imperialism? Why did Roman imperialism work in the South-East region in a way it apparently did not in other regions? How well did the Roman Empire 'fit' in Britain: are there patterns of resistance that we don't find elsewhere? Also, the Roman period should not be seen as a single grand narrative; this is neither a good analytical nor good descriptive concept. Britain was a frontier province, and so culturally dynamic, in good ways and bad ways depending on your particular experience. Why did people who apparently changed in one aspect not change in another? Who were the agents of change? We should recognise more often that we are dealing with real people making real decisions, rather than passive actors in processes bigger than themselves.

Discussion:

New theories don't necessarily entail new fieldwork techniques, but demand high-resolution data. As well as dealing with outmoded interpretive concepts there is a need to cope with the surge of new data that are being collected, particularly in the development led context. It was noted that the same problems of data volume and dissemination were highlighted at the recent conference on 'grey literature': and the collection, quality and sharing of small finds and environmental evidence remain equally problematic. DB thanked all the speakers, and added that the meeting had given much food for thought to take forward into the SERF Research Agenda.