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Iron Age Surrey

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Since 1984, when Hanworth compiled her survey, a considerable body of excavated evidence for the Iron Age has emerged. This suggests that although fields and farms dominated the landscape of the Thames valley by the Middle Bronze Age, it was only during the Iron Age that they emerged elsewhere in Surrey. River valleys were the core areas for such development, and beyond their confines the resources of much of the county were exploited without the need for permanent settlement.

Introduction

The review of the Iron Age in Surrey prepared in the mid-1980s by Hanworth and published in *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540* (Bird & Bird 1987) provided a lively and comprehensive summary of knowledge to that time. A rapid expansion in the scale and quantity of archaeological excavation began shortly after her survey was published, was accelerated by the introduction of Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16) in 1991, and continues to the present day. It is this new fieldwork, especially the larger-scale investigations, which provides the focus for the present paper.

The distribution of the recent work is a reflection of development pressures, the impact of which across the county has been very uneven (eg SCAU 1997; 1998; Poulton 1999a; 2000; SCAU 2001; 2002). The archaeological work has, therefore, occurred almost entirely independently of any research strategy, at least in terms of its initial siting. There have, as a result, been many field interventions of which the results have been wholly or largely negative. These and, paradoxically, the quasi-random approach, are one of the particular strengths of the data that have emerged from the last fifteen years, since they provide, at least partially, a test of the validity of interpreting distribution maps of positive results as a reflection of the nature of Iron Age society.

It is partly for this reason that the present survey reviews the Iron Age in terms of the different scale and character of settlement across the varied physiographic zones (fig 4.1) which make up Surrey (here taken to cover the whole area included within the historic and administrative counties). Part of the reason also is that Hanworth (1987) adopted a thematic approach for her review, and a contrasting method allows a fresh look at the earlier evidence, although the emphasis is on the results of recent archaeological work.

The Annexe includes a full list of Iron Age sites and finds from the administrative county since 1984, and this also provides useful additional references to a number of the sites discussed in the main body of the text.

The Thames valley

It is convenient to treat the Thames and its extensive associated terraces as a unit, although they offer considerable landscape variety, with a wide flood plain dotted with small gravel islands, below the flat brickearth-covered terraces. It is the latter, just outside the modern Surrey boundary, which have seen what may be the most comprehensive examination by excavation of a landscape (some 21ha) in Britain, at the Perry Oaks site, near Heathrow Airport (Barrett *et al* 2000; 2001). This has led to the development of an important interpretative framework for the later prehistoric period, building on a number of recent studies. Merriman (2000, esp 41–3) provides an excellent review of these; see also Yates (2001).

The key development (from the present perspective) at Perry Oaks seems to be the emergence in the Middle Bronze Age of a developed field system, defined by ditches in its early stages, but maintained by hedges through the Iron Age period. Small middle and later Bronze Age settlements are closely associated with the fields, but the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age see an apparent reduction in the quantity of settlement evidence (Barrett *et al* 2001, 223–4).

A similar sequence had earlier been indicated just south of Perry Oaks at Stanwell (O'Connell 1990) through a combination of analysis of aerial photographs and selective excavation. There, scattered evidence for later Bronze Age occupation seemed to be in locations near to the edges of the field system, suggesting that the latter was created first. No evidence was found of Iron Age occupation, although the possibility that such existed within the unexcavated portions of the field cannot be dismissed. This pattern is, however, closely followed at another nearby site, Home Farm Laleham (Hayman 1991b; 1997; 1998a; 2002). An area of about a square kilometre has been examined by a combination of trial trenching, selective excavation and watching brief.

It is clear that a field system and small-scale settlement sites emerged and flourished during the mid–Late Bronze Age, but Iron Age settlement

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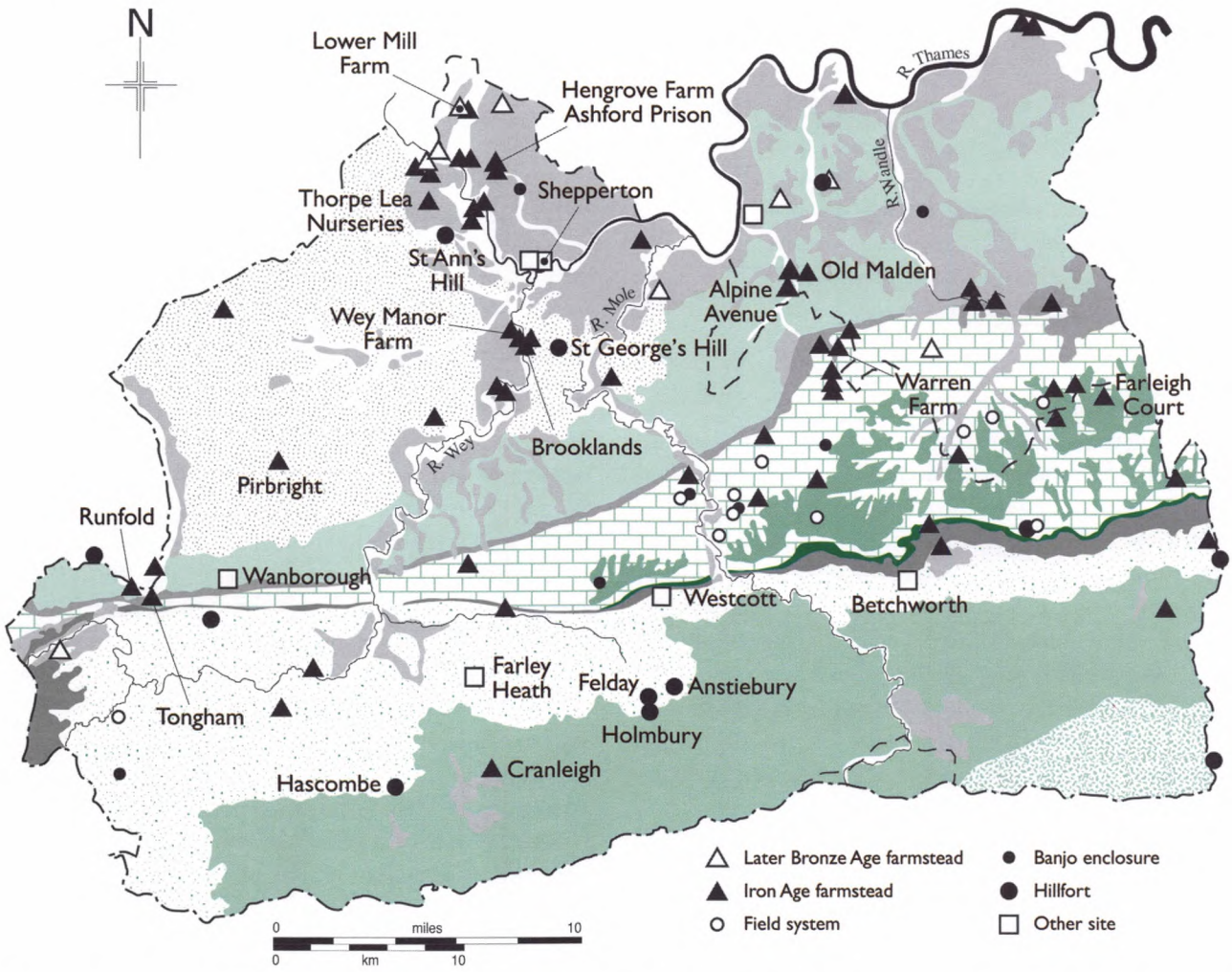

Fig 4.1 The distribution of Iron Age settlement (based on Hanworth 1987, fig 6.1). For key to geological background see map on page x.

evidence (apart, probably, from a single ditch) was conspicuous by its absence. A different pattern is emerging from work (recent and in progress) at contiguous sites at Ashford Prison (by Pre-Construct Archaeology: T Carew, pers comm) (fig 4.2) and at Hengrove Farm, Staines (by SCAU). An extensive area of Bronze Age field systems is apparent, with scattered occupation evidence of similar date, and two distinct areas of Iron Age settlement, only 0.4km apart. In both cases it seems probable that the fields established in the Bronze Age were maintained in use, demarcated by hedgerows adjacent to the silted-up ditches used to create them.

It is generally agreed that the primary purpose of the new field systems was to allow more intensive exploitation of cattle, although arable farming must also have been taking place (Yates 2001, 65–6). At Perry Oaks (Barrett *et al* 2001, 224) evidence has emerged to suggest a loss of fertility, presumably due to over grazing, by the end of the Bronze Age. It would seem that this pattern was widespread across the gravel terraces and that less intense exploitation of the land helped create conditions in which more concentrated settlement foci emerged. It may also be that these foci tended to be sited on the flood plain, where, presumably, a wider resource base could be exploited. At Ashford Prison, for example, the ten ring gullies (not all of one phase) are close to the river Ash and adjacent to a silted up, but still wet and marshy, palaeochannel. Similarly, part of a mid–Late Iron Age settlement at Laleham lay in the angle between the Thames and one of its tributaries, Sweep's Ditch. It produced evidence for a ring gully and pits and part of an enclosure (Taylor-Wilson 2002).

A further example is the farmstead identified at Lower Mill Farm (Jones & Poulton 1987) within Stanwell parish, but right next to the river Colne. At Thorpe Lea Nurseries, in a low-lying position, two substantial Iron Age enclosures were identified, with occupation beginning in the earlier Iron Age and extending through into the Roman period. The enclosures were associated with field boundaries and trackways, and had been preceded by more scattered mid–Late Bronze Age occupation.

The finds from the settlement sites are, generally, unexceptional in character. In this respect they contrast sharply with the high-quality metalwork

which has been recovered from the Thames in this area. Hanworth (1987, 151) noted the fact that metalwork with riverine association in Britain often has funerary associations in central and eastern Europe. The ritual character of such deposition and its frequent (possibly exclusive) connection with death have now become widely accepted (Bradley 1990). Two sites in Surrey provide important confirmatory evidence for this view.

The Chertsey shield, a mid-Iron Age shield made entirely of bronze, generally regarded as 'parade-ground' armour (Stead 1987), has become well known since its discovery in 1985 at Abbey Meads, near Chertsey, but less well appreciated is its findspot, from a buried former channel of the Thames, and the recovery of a series of other artefacts from nearby in the same channel. These include a Neolithic stone axe and pestle, a Late Bronze Age sword and a complete Late Iron Age or Early Roman beaker (Jones forthcoming, a). There are strong parallels with a site at Shepperton Ranges, where a buried river channel also yielded a rich variety of prestige artefacts of various dates (Poulton & Scott 1992; Poulton forthcoming). These included a Mesolithic antler macehead, a later Bronze Age axe with its haft (Hunt *et al* 2002, 48) and three Iron Age swords, one with a bronze scabbard mount (fig 4.3), as well as human skulls. Two features deserve particular note. First, the occurrence of artefacts of all periods was confined to a limited area of the river channel, suggesting that a particular spot acquired and retained sanctity over a very long period of time. Secondly, the skulls confirm that for some or all of the time that sanctity is associated with burial rites. This view is surely strengthened in respect of the Iron Age by the fact that only one definite cremation or inhumation burial of the period has yet been identified in the area. The single example is an inhumation, placed in a square pit, of a female in her 40s, found near Shepperton (Howe *et al* 2000, 192 & fig 3).

It seems reasonable to assume that the deposition of such prestige items was associated with an élite. It is more difficult to be sure what might distinguish the living places of such an élite, although it has been suggested (Barrett *et al* 2001, 224) that 'as the Late Bronze Age progresses [...] social stratification began to be expressed architecturally. This trend increased during the Iron Age, with rectangular buildings at the centre of settlements, enclosures with complex buildings, such as Caesar's Camp [Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993)], and hill-forts'.

There is nothing at Thorpe Lea Nurseries (fig 4.4), near to the Abbey Meads site, to place it obviously within this category, although the crucial evidence of building plans did not survive owing to truncation. A more obvious candidate is St Ann's Hill, near Chertsey. A thorough survey (McOmish & Field 1994) has provided detailed confirmation of its univallate defences, and small-scale excavation revealed intensive activity extending through the Iron Age (Jones forthcoming, b).

It is tempting, despite the limited evidence, to try and fit St Ann's into the classic model of the Iron Age hillfort as a central place within a relatively complex settlement hierarchy (cf Hanworth 1987, fig 6.2; Hunt *et al* 2002, 50). Some further discussion of the

Fig 4.2 Ashford Prison site: a Neolithic ring ditch (centre foreground) remained sufficiently visible to influence the location of the Iron Age roundhouses visible behind it. Photograph by Pre-Construct Archaeology)

function of hillforts is given below but the important issue to consider now is what the nature of the hinterland of the hillfort was. It could, clearly, have encompassed the Thames flood plain and terraces below it, including the settlement at Thorpe Lea Nurseries. These terraces, however, are not very extensive on the Surrey side of the Thames. The feeling is that, as later, the river is likely to have been a border between groups or tribes, although it need not necessarily have been so. On balance, though, it seems probable that a major part of the hinterland of St Ann's would have been the north-west Surrey heathlands of which it is, geologically, a part.

The north-west Surrey heathlands and the Wey valley

Distribution maps of prehistoric discoveries invariably show few within the heathlands (Bird & Bird 1987, *passim*). In the years since the publication of *Surrey to 1540*, there have been very few additional findspots identified. A rapid identification survey of the area by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) concluded that, had prehistoric monuments or settlements of any significant scale existed, they could normally be expected to survive as landscape features, and their paucity demonstrated that the area probably became heathland as early as the Mesolithic, rather than in the Bronze Age as is more commonly assumed (cf Macphail & Scaife 1987, 36; Needham 1987, 130–2). Evaluations and other fieldwork on the heathland proper have also failed to reveal anything of note, although it needs to be remembered that the maintenance of the area as heathland is itself evidence of continuous human interest through culling/grazing/burning (cf Bannister in this volume).

In these circumstances it is probably enlightening to look at the economy of such areas as they emerge into history. When the Domesday survey was undertaken in 1086, settlement outside the river valleys was minimal and this was probably the most lightly settled area, with the lowest proportion of arable, in Surrey. The 'ancient rhythm of seasonal grazing' by large swineherds remained of key importance (Blair 1991, 40–2). It seems reasonable to suppose that the area had a similar economy in the prehistoric period, and that its resources were exploited from permanent settlements in the river valleys associated with it. Iron Age occupation has been identified at Lightwater (G Cole, pers comm) associated with the river. At Pirbright (Hayman forthcoming, a), a mid–Late Iron Age site was identified, near to a small stream, with a ditch re-cut on several occasions on a similar alignment, probably representing part of an enclosure.

The most important Iron Age sites in this area have, however, been identified in the Wey valley, which divides the larger mass of Chobham Heath from the smaller expanse of Bagshot Beds to its east. The site excavated by Hanworth at Brooklands (fig 4.5) is well known, with its roundhouse associated with specialist areas for iron smelting and smithing (Hanworth & Tomalin 1977). Subsequent discoveries of several sites in the local area with no obvious specialist function suggest that it may have provided a local service, rather than being a component of a regionally important specialization. Two further sites have been excavated within the central area at the Brooklands motor-racing circuit (Hayman 1991a). Both seem to have been farmsteads, with the more interesting of the two including a small circular enclosure (fig 4.6), pits, four-post structures (probably granaries) and other ditches. Some of these seem likely to be field boundaries, but their extent and form is not clear, although an Iron Age origin is apparent.

Nearby, but on the other side of the Wey, at Wey Manor Farm (work in progress, Hayman in prep), a similar pattern is apparent, although here it is clear than an extensive field system developed during the Iron Age. There is scattered evidence of Bronze Age activity (principally in the form of cremation burials), but the Iron Age settlement, including roundhouses and enclosures, is more substantial and seems to be part of a more developed exploitation of the landscape.

The presence of a substantial hillfort at St George's Hill (Poulton & O'Connell 1984) overlooking these sites in the Wey valley invites a comparison with St Ann's Hill. A few finds of earlier and later Iron Age pottery were made around 1910 (Lowther 1949), but extensive investigation in more recent years (eg Stevenson 1999) has failed to identify a single Iron Age find or feature. Settlement within the ramparts must have been confined to a small area, or may never have happened, and the two hillforts would seem to have served very different functions. It is becoming increasingly clear that the uses to which hillforts were put were very diverse, with warfare, perhaps, one of the rarest. St George's hillfort may be best seen as a status symbol, but it may also have been a refuge in times of crisis, or even a periodic meeting place for sacred or profane purposes.

The Weald and the greensand hills

This interpretation of St George's hillfort has some similarities with that advanced for the group of forts in the greensand hills, at the edge of the Weald (Hanworth 1987, 157–61). These hillforts have generally strong defensive positions, occupying promontory sites overlooking the Weald. Noting their apparent isolation from other evidence, Hanworth saw them as central places playing a role in exchange and trade mechanisms, including, for example, quernstones, and (more speculatively) as summer residences for communities centred on the

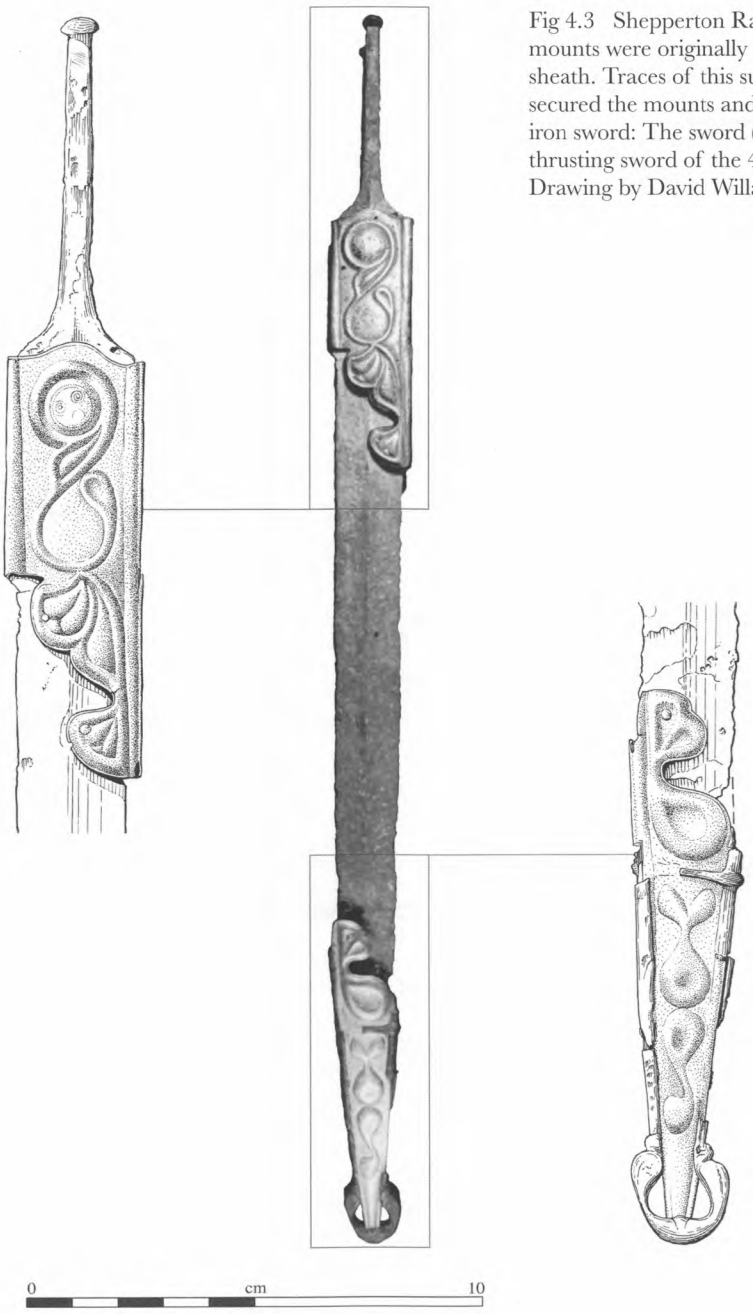

Fig 4.3 Shepperton Ranges: the Bronze scabbard mounts were originally attached to a calf-leather sheath. Traces of this survived where iron clasps secured the mounts and had become fused to the iron sword: The sword (length: 705mm) is a thrusting sword of the 4th–2nd century BC. Drawing by David Willams

North Downs engaged in transhumance of pigs to the summer grazing grounds of the Weald.

An excavation at Anstiebury hillfort (Hayman forthcoming, b) has provided some clarification of these issues. It suggested that occupation of the fort may have been more widespread than Thompson (1979) believed, and that it extended from the Late Bronze Age through to the Late Iron Age, although it is possible that the earliest site activity preceded the creation of the defences. More recently, a regular rectangular enclosure has been identified at Westcott, near Dorking, by aerial photography followed by small-scale excavations (Rapson 2003). It seems to have been constructed around 50 BC and may have effectively replaced the hillfort at Anstiebury (*ibid*, 7). It is, in fact, slightly misleading to include Westcott in this section of the report since it is actually sited on river terrace gravels near the junction of the Gault clay and Folkestone Beds sand. Several other Iron Age sites have recently been identified near this junction including a D-shaped enclosure, perhaps connected to ritual activity at Betchworth (Williams 1996–7); an enclosed farmstead with a roundhouse at Merstham (Saunders & Weaver 2000); pits and pottery near Gatton (Robertson 1994); and similar evidence from work near Bletchingley (G Hayman, pers comm). The evidence at all these sites is predominantly Late Iron Age, extending into the Roman period. It suggests that by then, if not earlier, the narrower strips of greensand in the central and eastern parts of the county were developing in a different way from the wider expanse in the west.

In contrast, the general lack of positive evidence for Iron Age settlement from trial trench evaluations on either the western greensand or the Weald tends to confirm that the main uses of such areas were for

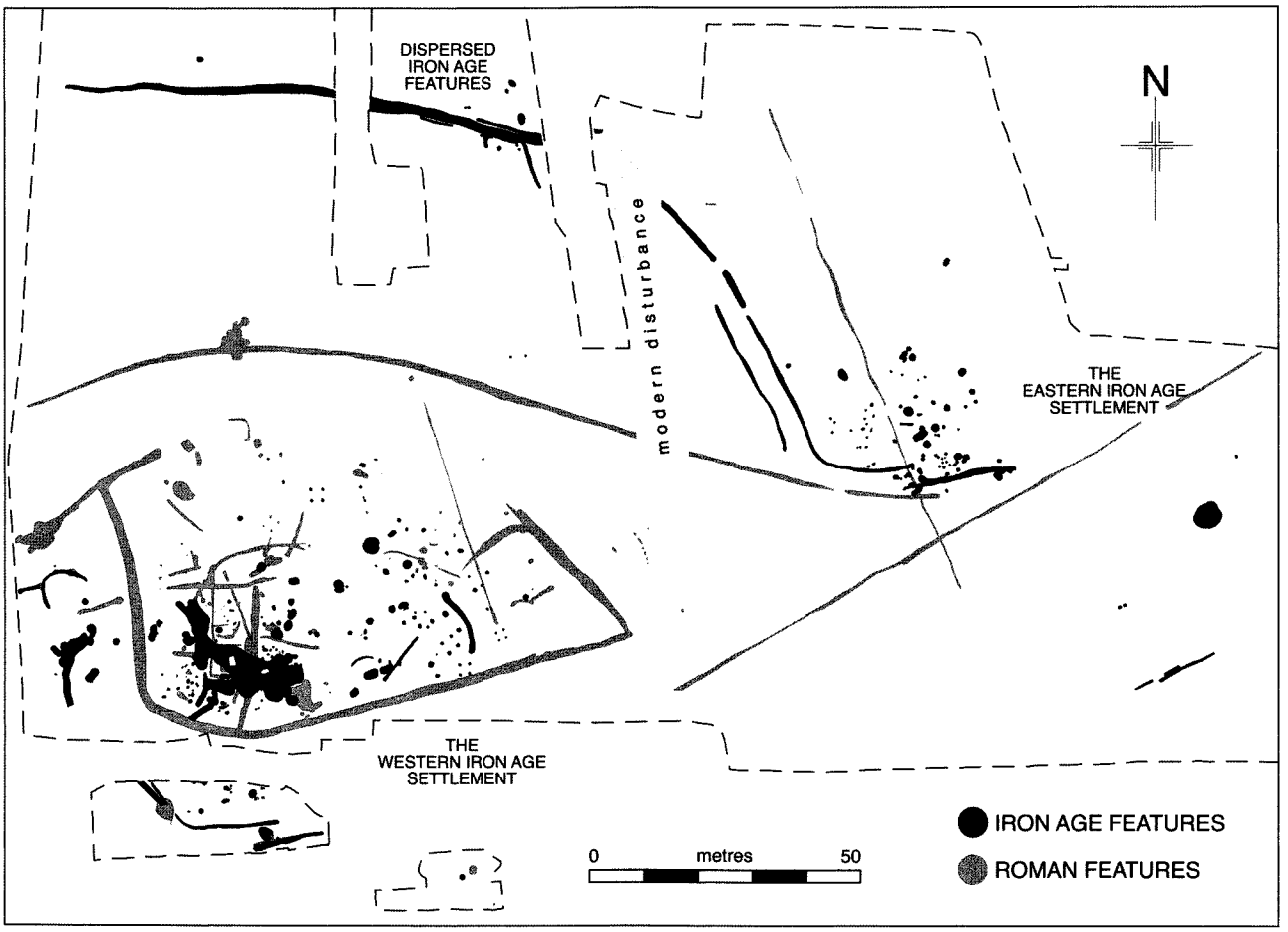

Fig 4.4 Thorpe Lea Nurseries: Iron Age and Roman settlement. Drawing by Giles Pattison

extensive grazing and exploitation of woodland, activities which did not give rise to the type of occupation that leaves much trace for the archaeologist to discover. One of the few new sites to emerge in this area is the promontory enclosure at Felday, near Holmbury St Mary (Field 1989). The evidence suggests that it was built in the Late Iron Age, and it probably performed a similar role to the other hillforts in this area, perhaps as a replacement for Holmbury hillfort (Thompson 1979). Settlement sites may nevertheless remain to be discovered within this large area, but they will almost certainly be associated with locally favourable topographic conditions. A recent example is the discovery of evidence for Late Iron Age activity, preceding more intensive Roman settlement, on a site near Cranleigh (Dover 2002), within the Weald Clay area, but actually with superficial head deposits and on a south-facing slope.

In the Iron Age the Weald Clay was largely occupied by ancient woodland but the widespread discovery of Mesolithic (Ellaby 1987), Neolithic (Cotton & Field 1987) and Bronze Age (Needham 1987) flintwork and other evidence on the greensand indicates that it had been more systematically exploited. It has been suggested (Ellaby 1987, 58) that this had already led to the creation of heathland by about 6000 BC. The overall picture remains unclear, however, and it may also be that shifting agriculture at later dates, leading to soil exhaustion, helped form heathland, substantial areas of which still survive. A very high proportion of the archaeological evidence has been recovered from fieldwalking, an activity which is relatively unlikely to recover evidence for short-term or low-intensity Iron Age activity, since the debris likely to result from such activities lacks the durable and highly recognizable character of flintwork from earlier periods. It would, therefore, be unwise to assume from negative evidence that there was a complete cessation of such activities.

One other site needs to be mentioned, and gives a rather different perspective. At Farley Heath (Lowther & Goodchild 1942–3) recent excavations (Poulton in prep, a) have confirmed that there was pre-Roman activity at the Roman temple site, perhaps extending as far back as the Neolithic period. It seems all but certain that the Romano-Celtic temple (see also Bird in this volume) was built on the site of an Iron Age sanctuary.

The North Downs and the London Clay

These two topographic zones are very distinct in appearance, but share the characteristic of having produced relatively little new Iron Age information in recent years.

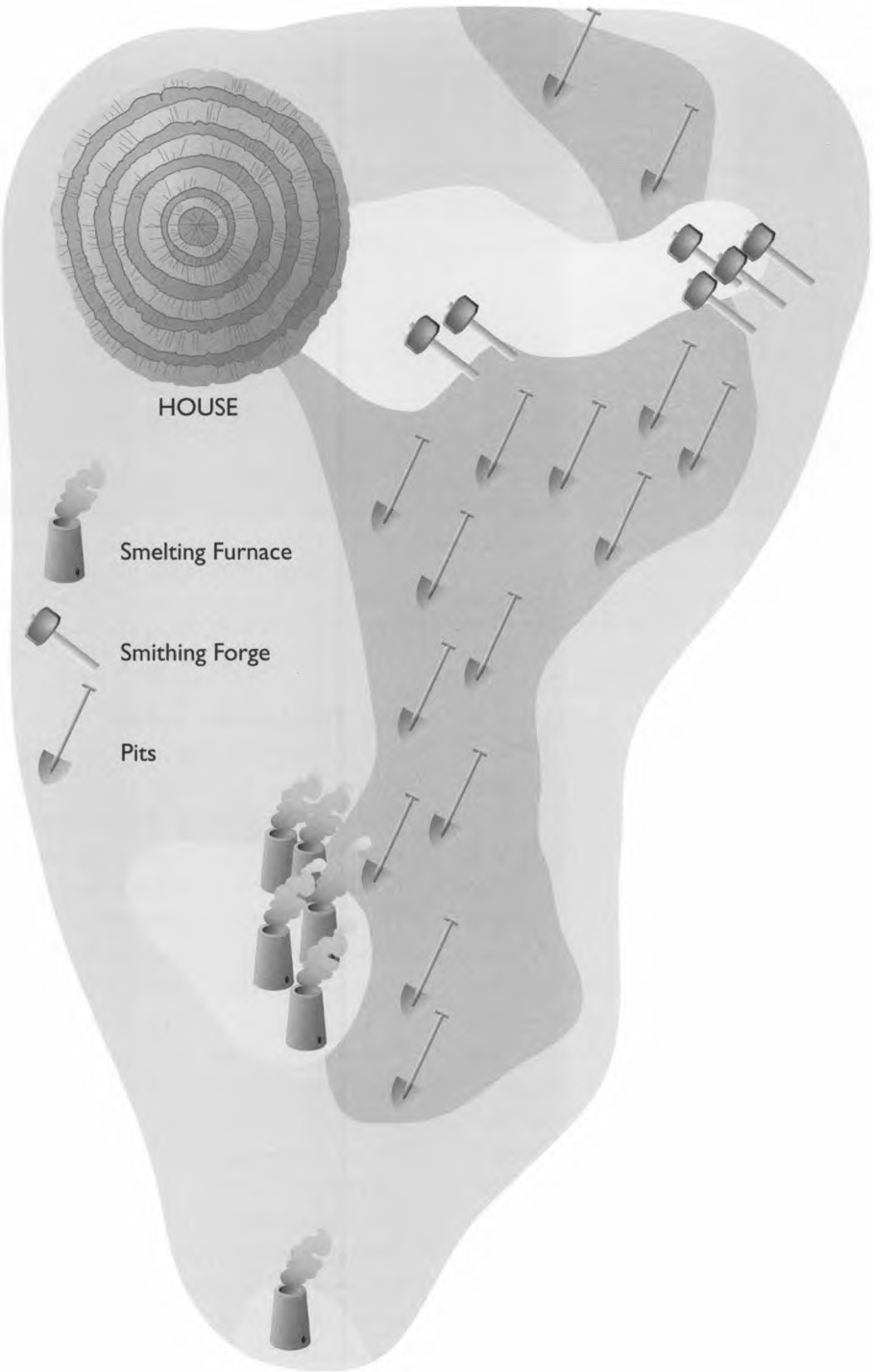

Fig 4.5
Brooklands, Weybridge: A diagrammatic plan of the iron working site (based on Hanworth & Tomalin 1977, fig 8). Drawing by Giles Pattison

The North Downs has previously produced an interesting range of Iron Age evidence, although not really comparable to the South Downs in its intensity, perhaps owing to the extensive tracts of Clay-with-Flints superficial soil cover. The sparsity of evidence between the Mole and the Wey (Hanworth 1987, 142) is also unaltered by recent work. In part this may reflect the limited opportunities which arise in an area largely protected from development by its Green Belt status.

That status is, though, shared by the North Downs east of the Mole, where some new evidence has emerged to join the already more dense distribution. Golf course construction at Farleigh Court (Hayman 1996) did not allow comprehensive investigation of the scattered evidence (pits and pottery) which was revealed. At Warren Farm, near Ewell (Hayman 1995), rather better evidence for an Iron Age farmstead was uncovered. It is noteworthy that this site lies near the edge of the dip slope, a position it shares with a good proportion of other sites in this zone (Hanworth 1987, fig 6.1). In part this may reflect the practical advantage of being on or near the spring line, but it may also suggest the importance of a position with ready access to the resources of more than one physiographic zone. The earliest unequivocal evidence of how land tenure was organized, that of the estate system of the Saxon period (eg Poulton 1987, 217–8; Blair 1991, 12–34), shows the care that was taken to ensure that each estate shared in the

Fig 4.6 Brooklands, Weybridge: the site lay within the central area of the motor racing circuit. The late Iron Age ring ditch has a concentric palisade trench (foreground). The 23m diameter of the ring ditch suggests it might have contained only a single large roundhouse (truncation had removed the evidence), and it seems likely to have been a high-status residence. Features cutting through the ditch are of Roman date. Photograph by Graham Hayman

varied resources offered by the Surrey landscape. It seems entirely reasonable to suppose that the Iron Age settlement pattern reflects a similar distribution of resources.

The major zone to which these North Downs communities looked was the London Clay, offering opportunities for both the extensive pasture of herds and the exploitation of woodland resources. Neither older nor more recent work has produced evidence to suggest the existence of settled communities within this area. This is equally true of the Bronze Age (Needham 1987, 130) and implies that little clearance of the ancient woodland had occurred. It is true that an enclosed settlement at Old Malden (Hanworth 1987, 142–3, 146) and a recently identified settlement, with evidence for roundhouses and pits, at Alpine Avenue, Tolworth (Hawkins & Leaver 1999) are both on the London Clay (and only 1km apart). They are, however near to the edge of the London Clay, 'close to water courses and outcrops of lighter soil' (Hawkins & Leaver 1999, 149), and thus occupy a key position with ready access to the resources and markets of more than one zone.

Elsewhere, where new work has occurred on the London Clay, positive results have tended to confirm that permanent settlements begin in the Roman period (Bird 1987, 178). At Barnwood, (Poulton 1999b), near Worplesdon, a thorough excavation of nearly 1ha revealed a complex of buildings and other settlement features, beginning in the late 1st century AD, but not a single sherd or artefact to suggest earlier prehistoric activity. The Wanborough temple site (Bird in this volume) is in a class apart, like the Farley Heath site (above), since the pre-Roman activity (if it really happened) must relate to the development of a religious site.

The Blackwater valley

It is arguable that the most important development in Surrey Iron Age studies in the past generation has been the excavation of a series of major sites in the Blackwater valley, in the area around Tongham and Runfold. The amount and intensity of fieldwork, in advance of road building and mineral extraction, is impressive by any standards: around 15km of trial trenches and 8ha of formal excavation.

The sites, owing to a peculiarity of the geology of Surrey, lie in close proximity to almost all the principal physiographic zones that have been mentioned, although the North Downs are only represented by the narrow ridge of the Hog's Back. The Blackwater valley itself forms a broad plain, in this area, rather disproportionate to the small river which flows in close proximity to the main Iron Age settlement sites. The explanation is that the valley was created by the river some 50,000 years ago, prior to the capture of its headwaters by the Wey (Wymer 1987, 17). As a consequence, the reduced water flow means that the valley is not subject to flooding.

Trial trench evaluation of the 13ha of Tongham Nurseries (Bird *et al* 1996, 189, figs 1–3) revealed five concentrations of occupation evidence although the ditches of field boundaries were identified in many of the other trial trenches. Three of these areas produced evidence of typical Iron Age roundhouses, associated with enclosures, set within more extensive field systems. The roundhouses may have all conformed to a standard pattern, although not all elements survived in each case, probably owing to variable truncation by ploughing, although it is also possible that some of the variation is due to different construction techniques. The basic form of each house (assuming they were all of one structural type)

consisted of a narrow penannular wall trench of *c* 10–12m diameter. At each end was a substantial posthole, framing the entrance, which faced east to south-east. This last is an almost invariable characteristic of Iron Age houses, and is generally accepted as intended to face the rising sun (eg Hill 1996). A penannular gully running parallel to and about a metre distant from the wall trench was clearly designed to catch water running off the roof of the hut and prevent it from soaking the walls.

The houses were grouped together and set within ditched enclosures. There was clear evidence that houses had both been rebuilt on the same spot and replaced in new locations, implying the existence of such enclosures over a generation or two, or more. The pottery indicates that the earliest occupation began in the early Iron Age, but that Middle-to-Late Iron Age occupation is predominant. Most features produced few finds, hence the contemporaneity of different elements within enclosures is difficult to prove.

The features which were most productive of finds were the water-holes, or wells, identified in three of the enclosures (fig 4.7a). Waterlogged conditions at the bottom of these features led to the preservation of wood, the most important item of which was a log ladder. Finds from the same feature also included complete pots (fig 4.7b) and loomweights. The disposal of items which still had a value and/or function suggests that they were deposited as part of ritual activity – a feature identified as central to the functioning of Iron Age society (eg Hill 1995). It seems probable that this involved (wholly or partially) rites of termination (Merrifield 1987) since some of the material was derived from the dismantling of a building, possibly the one adjacent to the water-hole. This material included cleft oak planks from a timber floor. Dendrochronology has not, as yet, provided an absolute date for any of the features, because the sequence cannot yet be linked to the existing dated sequences, which have a gap in the Iron Age. On the other hand, matching tree ring sequences demonstrated that sites 2 and 4 were in use at the same time.

The water-holes were also the main contributors to a variety of environmental evidence, study of which has shown that the immediate setting of these communities was one of open grassland, with some waste ground, and that they were engaged in both arable and livestock farming with access to extensive mixed woodland nearby.

There are few other clear-cut indications of how these settlements functioned. A number of four-post structures are probably granaries (cf Hanworth 1987, 144–5), but of greatest interest is the open-fronted building identified in site 5. This does not look like a normal dwelling and analysis of a crucible discovered in it suggests that it was a workshop for bronze working. The only other building in this location was of similar type, suggesting an industrial area separate from settlement enclosures.

A second area of intensive Iron Age settlement was identified, only 0.3km from the Tongham Nurseries site, at Farnham Quarry (Runfold Farm: Hayman 2002b). The Iron Age settlement has a similar date range, with an emphasis on the Middle to later Iron Age, to Tongham Nurseries, but seems to show a more complex development sequence than any of the individual sites at Tongham, not least because it continued to develop into the Roman period.

It is, nevertheless, the similarities which are most striking, with some twenty roundhouses associated with ditched enclosures, which contain pits, and other features. What stands out, more clearly even than at Tongham, is the way in which these are set within regular, rectangular fields and trackways defined by ditches (fig 4.8).

There seems little doubt that this regular, organized landscape was created over a short period of time. It is difficult to be precise, but the main development of the enclosed settlements appears to belong to the Middle Iron Age, and this seems most likely to be when the bulk of the fields and trackways were laid out. It would seem reasonable to assume that this represented a more intensive exploitation of the resources of this part of the Blackwater valley than that which preceded it. The exact density of settlement at any one time is, as already discussed, hard to define, but the impression is certainly that it was greater than could readily be supported from the produce of the valley. The excavated evidence hints at the use of mixed woodland resources nearby, and the area, close to a variety of physiographic zones, would have been well placed to exploit a diverse economic base. Beyond this, interpretation has to become increasingly speculative, but should not be avoided. One possibility is that the close proximity of all the settlement sites to the river is significant and that trade, via the Blackwater and possibly the Thames, was important to the prosperity of these communities.

Certainly, there is very little evidence that there was any great density of population in the near vicinity. Very little is known about either Caesar's Camp (Riall 1983), a definite hillfort, or the Soldier's Ring (Graham & Graham 2001), a more dubious example; even if contemporary, their significance is very uncertain as the earlier discussion of hillforts has made clear. The architectural distinction and elevation of a hillfort was not the only way to emphasize status. It has been claimed (Hunt *et al* 2002, 24) that site 4 at Tongham has a plan which strongly suggests that a chief's residence was separated from the rest of the community by a substantial enclosure bank and ditch, although the excavator (G Hayman, pers

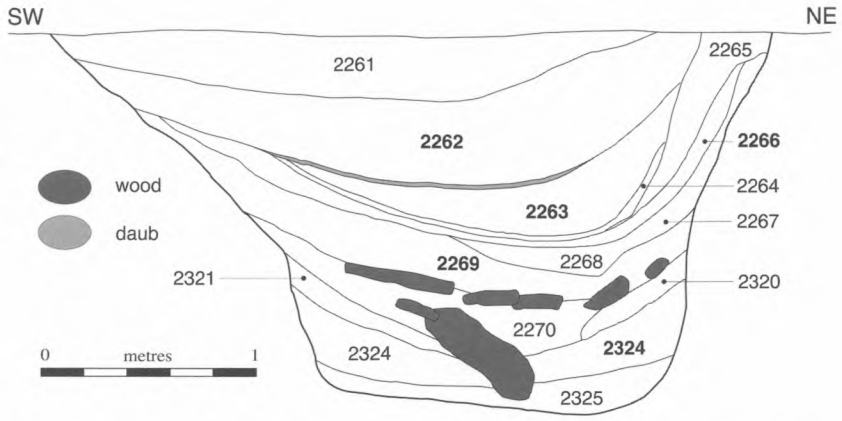

Fig 4.7a Tongham Nurseries: a water-hole revealed a fine collection of Late Iron Age pottery (see fig 4.7b). Bold context numbers indicate those contexts which produced the illustrated pots. Drawing by Giles Pattison

comm) believes that the enclosure could pre-date the more extended settlement. It is worth emphasizing how difficult it is, even on such a thoroughly excavated site, to be sure of which elements are contemporary.

The Iron Age–Roman transition

The South East, including Surrey, was rapidly and largely peacefully brought under Roman control after AD 43. Almost immediately (Bird 1987, 166–8) a new framework of administration was put in place, secured by a network of roads linking major centres. No reputable author has ever suggested that the conquest and its aftermath was accompanied by a major change in population, but a simple reading of the contrasting evidence for the two periods (cf Hanworth 1987 with Bird 1987) would suggest that there was an almost total and immediate economic dislocation.

It is not the least of the successes of recent archaeological fieldwork that it has demonstrated that the truth is far more subtle. In general terms, it should be remembered that archaeological evidence for activity on a site ending at or near the conquest does not in itself imply that the two are linked since it is clear that, looked at in the longer term, settlement shift was a common phenomenon in prehistory. At Tongham Nurseries (fig 4.7) several settlement sites come to an end in the later Iron Age. It is, however, unlikely, given the complete absence of any Roman period artefacts, that this desertion relates to the Roman conquest. The point is emphasized by the clear evidence for continuity of activity at the Farnham Quarry (Runfold Farm) site (fig 4.8). The occupation there ends, however, at around AD 100. A very similar end date is also likely for the Brooklands Central (South) site (fig 4.6), which again demonstrated a clear continuity of occupation from the Iron Age. It may be suggested that this desertion reflects the gradual working through of the effects of the Roman remodelling of the economic system.

Not all sites which exhibit continuity cease to function at the same time. The settlement at Thorpe Lea Nurseries (fig 4.4) continued into the late 3rd or 4th century AD. It is interesting, however, that field boundaries associated with it were re-modelled, probably in the 2nd century. Elsewhere in the Thames gravels, at Perry Oaks (Barrett *et al* 2001, 227) and Hengrove Farm (G Hayman, pers comm: excavation in progress 2002), for example, there is evidence that the field systems established in the Bronze Age were finally superseded in the Roman period. The effects of the conquest, rapidly obvious in the new roads, towns and villas, were eventually felt in every aspect of society.

Conclusions

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the introduction of domestic animals and cultivated cereals did not transform the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to a sedentary farming existence in such an immediate and dramatic manner as earlier generations supposed. Neither, in turn, should we too readily adopt a new orthodoxy in which the transformation into a settled agricultural landscape of the gravel terraces of the Thames valley in the Middle Bronze Age, which has now been so cogently demonstrated, is regarded as a pattern for the development of the whole region. The evidence presented above makes it clear that semi-nomadic communities continued to be dominant over much of Surrey down to the Late Bronze Age, or even the Middle Iron Age, as in the Blackwater valley.

In some areas this mode of life did not come to an end until well into the Saxon period, in the earlier part of which transhumance is clearly fundamental to a great deal of the economy (Poulton 1987, 215, 218). Viewed from this perspective, there is nothing surprising in the realization that Iron Age settlements were located to allow the exploitation of the diverse resources which Surrey's varied physiographic zones offer. Indeed, the question might reasonably be asked whether the structure of the agricultural estates which emerged in the early Saxon period did not owe much to prehistoric developments, despite the transformation of the macro-economy in the Roman period. In a similar vein, Blair (1991, 22–3) has

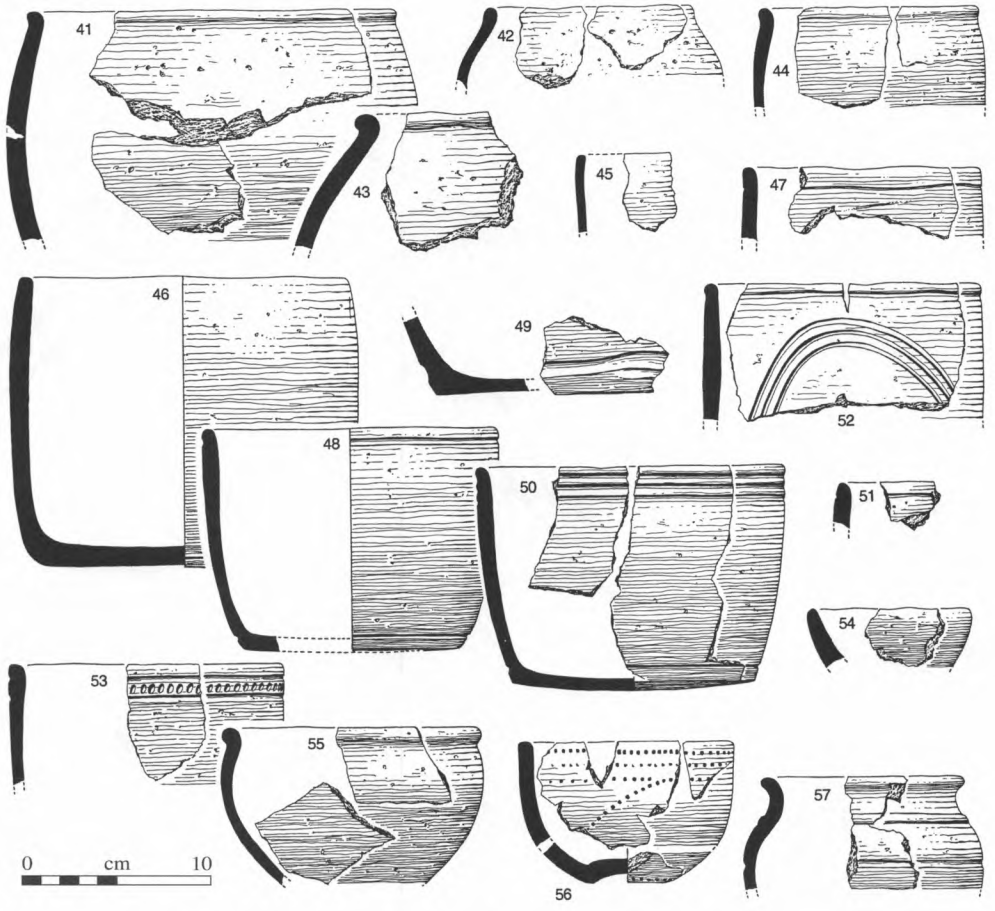

Fig 4.7b Tongham Nurseries: Late Iron Age pottery, including bead-rimmed jars, bowls, and saucepan pots, from the water-hole (fig 4.7a). Pot numbers 41, 43–6, 50, 52, and 56 are warped and may be wasters. The decorated cup with an omphaloid base (56) and the cordon neck jar (57), an antecedent of the early Roman form, are of particular interest. Scale 1:4. Drawing by Phil Jones

wondered how far the territorial geography of early Saxon Surrey derives from that of Iron Age and Roman times.

This, of course, is only one way of looking at the Iron Age evidence and some might argue is a view that, in particular, fails to engage with the people behind the economic developments. Its strength, however, is that it focuses upon what is peculiarly characteristic of Surrey about the evidence. The same evidence undoubtedly has much to contribute to discussion of the structure of society, religion and ritual, and industry, among other topics. Hanworth (1987) addressed some of these but further understanding must await deeper and wider studies than the present essay.

The future

There can be no doubt that the most important advances in our understanding of the Iron Age over the last twenty years have been due to development-led archaeological excavation, and it is certain that this will continue to be the case for some years to come.

The Colne, Thames, and Upper Wey valleys have seen the greatest concentration of work (see also Cotton in this volume). It was such areas that John Barrett was thinking of when in a recent lecture (IFA conference, April 2003) he suggested that further meticulous excavation of individual sites was at risk of accumulating data without necessarily advancing knowledge. The short-term implication, for individual sites, is that effort and resources should be concentrated towards elements which are different from the norm, and into features which will produce the environmental and dating evidence which remains comparatively weak. More generally, there is an urgent need for synthetic studies, at a regional level, of aspects such as Iron Age pottery, or placed deposits, to guide and inform future work.

The remainder of the county has, apart from the Blackwater valley, produced far less new material. In part this may be attributed to less intense development pressures, but it also reflects fundamental differences in archaeological potential between different physiographic zones. This is not to suggest that archaeological evaluation of, for example, developments sited on Weald Clay should be abandoned. It is clear that very localized conditions within such areas can produce an environment much more attractive to settlement, and that these circumstances are not always obvious from surface examination. In addition further negative evidence is still needed to support this hypothesis, while positive evidence is potentially of exceptional importance.

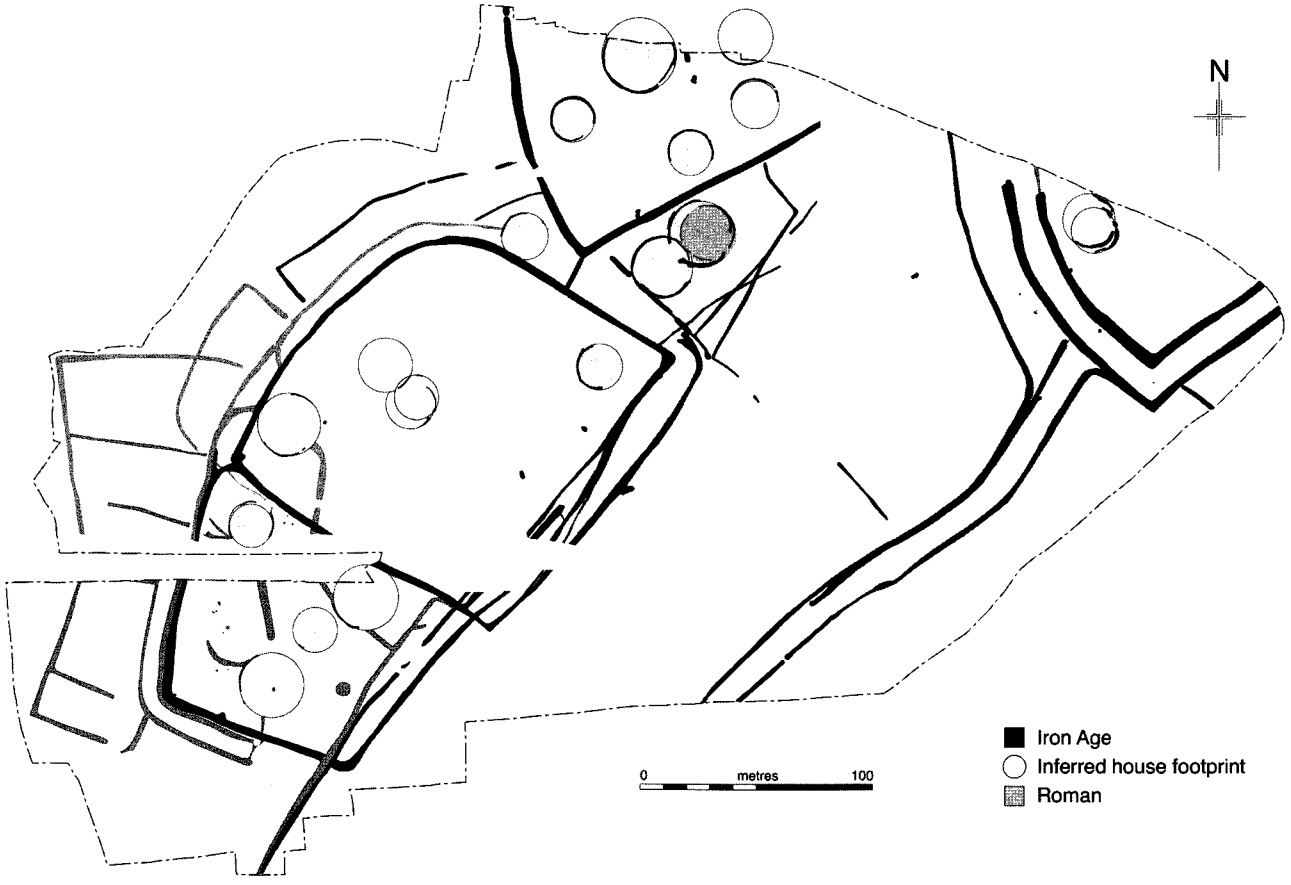

Fig 4.8 Runfold Farm (Farnham Quarry): Iron Age and Roman settlement. Drawing by Giles Pattison

There is, at present, a renewed drive towards the development of research agendas at various levels. Most of those produced in recent years have remained scarcely more than wish lists, with little discernible direct effect on the work carried out. It is probable that this will happen again, unless agendas are explicitly connected to what is practical.

All this presupposes, as Barrett did, that the proper context for archaeological work to be viewed in is that of broad historical themes and enquiry. There is, however, another historical tradition – and one of far greater relevance to the general practice of archaeology – that of local history. Viewed in this way, it is not 'yet another Iron Age roundhouse', but 'Springfield's Iron Age roundhouse', and no more to be regarded as superfluous than one of its 16th century timber-framed buildings. The most important issue from this perspective is one of accessibility, of how to make archaeological information readily available to the public. Local history has always been well served by record offices (and now excellently in Surrey by the Surrey History Centre) and it is their standard of resource provision and informed advice to which archaeology should aspire.

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ANNEXE

Reported discoveries of Iron Age date since 1987

This list was prepared by Jon Cotton and is arranged in the same way as the Annexe to his chapter in this volume. The following abbreviations are used: IA: Iron Age; RB: Romano-British; M, L: Middle, Late. Bold numbers in parentheses refer to issue numbers of the Surrey Archaeological Society *Bulletin*.

THE WEALD

Cranleigh, Wyphurst Road, LIA/RB activity (Dover 2002; Poulton, this paper, 56)

Outwood area, LIA/RB iron smelting (Robin Tanner, pers comm)

Oxted, Hurst Green, E/MIA bronze brooch (Williams 1996, 167)

THE GREENSAND HILLS

Anstiebury hillfort, LIA internal features (**247**; **259**) (Bird *et al* 1990, 206; Bird *et al* 1994, 206)

Betchworth, Franks' Sandpit, LIA/RB enclosure with apsidal end (**307**) (Jackson *et al* 1999, 225)

Bletchingley, LIA bronze strap-union (Williams 1999, 172); LIA bronze brooch of Aylesford type and silver unit of Amminus (Williams 2001, 309)
Farley Heath, temple site, IA activity (Jackson *et al* 1997; Poulton, this paper, 56)
Gatton Bottom, Whitehall Farm, IA pits containing traces of iron processing (Jackson *et al* 1997, 209)
Godstone, LIA bronze baldric- or belt-hook (Williams 1999, 171–2)
Holmbury St Mary, Felday, LIA/RB univallate enclosure (Field 1989)
Merstham, Battlebridge Lane, LIA/RB rectilinear enclosure with roundhouse (**340**) (Howe *et al* 2000, 191)
Puttenham, Hillbury Camp, topographic survey (**346**) (Howe *et al* 2001, 350; Howe *et al* 2002, 269 & fig 5)
South Godstone, LIA gold quarter stater of Tasciovanus (Williams 2001, 309)
Westcott, M–LIA rectilinear enclosure with single east-facing entrance (**354**)

THE NORTH DOWNS

Caterham, Gravelly Hill, possible field system close to the War Coppice hillfort (**268**) (Bird *et al* 1996, 202)
Effingham Upper Common, possible banjo enclosure and associated field system (Bird *et al* 1990, 205)
Ewell, The Looe, Reigate Road, M–LIA/RB settlement (Cotton 2001)
Ewell, Warren Farm, M–LIA pits and ditches with quernstones (Jackson *et al* 1997, 199)
Leatherhead, Bockett's Farm, possible field system (**249**; **252**) (Bird *et al* 1991–2, 150)
Mickleham and Leatherhead Downs, field system (**345**)
Shere, Colekitchen Lane, IA sword scabbard mount of cast bronze (**330**) (Howe *et al* 2000, 188)
Warlingham, Farleigh Court, LIA/RB settlement, cremations (**299**) (Jackson *et al* 1997, 214–15)
Woodmansterne, Merrymeet, IA silver coin (Harp 2002; Howe *et al* 2002, 263)

THE BAGSHOT TABLE

Bagshot, 42 London Road, LIA/RB settlement and possibly related iron working (**279**) (Bird *et al* 1996, 201–2)
Pirbright, Manor House, M–LIA ditches and finds of this and earlier date (**300**) (Jackson *et al* 1999, 222)

THE THAMES VALLEY AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

Addlestone, Wey Manor Farm, MIA settlement and field system (**321**; **326**) (Jackson *et al* 1997, 210; Jackson *et al* 1999, 229 & fig 2; 2000)
Ashford, Woodthorpe Road, M–LIA settlement of nine roundhouses with 4-post structures (Tim Carew, pers comm; Howe *et al* 2002, 267 & fig 4)
Egham, 64–65 High Street, LIA features including a possible circular stake-built structure (Howe *et al* 2000, 192)
Egham, Thorpe Lea Nurseries, M–LIA/RB enclosures and several settlement foci including field system and trackways (Bird *et al* 1991–2, 153 & figs 5 & 6; Bird *et al* 1996, 199; Jackson *et al* 1997, 209)
Laleham, Fairylands Caravan Park, M–LIA/RB settlement (**315**) (Jackson *et al* 1999, 230 & fig 3; Taylor-Wilson 2002)
Runfold, Farnham Quarry (Runfold Farm), M–LIA/RB settlement with twenty roundhouses, field systems and ditched enclosures containing pits and water-holes (**321**; **348**) (Jackson *et al* 1999, 238 & fig 6; Howe *et al* 2000, 199 & fig 6; Howe *et al* 2001, 350 & fig 5)
Shepperton, Chertsey Road, former Anchor Garage, LIA female inhumation in pit (Howe *et al* 2002, 265 & fig 3)
Shepperton Ranges, three iron swords, one with decorative scabbard fittings, and human skulls recovered from a buried river channel (Bird *et al* 1989, 182; Bird *et al* 1990, 211; Poulton, this paper, 53 & fig 4.3)
Staines, 2–8 High Street, LIA/RB activity (Jackson *et al* 1997, 212)
Staines, Matthew Arnold School, possible banjo enclosure (Howe *et al* 2001, 348)
Stanwell, Lower Mill Farm, MIA roundhouses (Jones & Poulton 1987; Bird *et al* 1989, 182)
Tongham, Grange Road, settlement features (**273**) (Bird *et al* 1996, 189)
Tongham, Tongham Nurseries, five M–LIA settlement areas with roundhouses, pits and water-holes set within field systems (**281**) (Bird *et al* 1996, 189 & figs 1–3)
Weybridge, Brooklands Race Track, two M–LIA settlements, one including a small circular enclosure (?surrounding a roundhouse), pits and 4-post structures (**258**) (Bird *et al* 1991–2, 147 & fig 1)
Wisley, archaeomagnetic dating of hearth to 1st century BC (Bird *et al* 1990, 205)

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