RITUAL AND RELIGIOUS SITES IN LATER IRON AGE BRITAIN WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO EASTERN ENGLAND

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Abstract

Arguably two parallel paradigms exist in the study of Iron Age religion in Britain. The one, viewed through a Roman lens, sees a pan-European pantheon being worshipped at sanctuaries in a manner distinctly classical in style. The other imagines a world in which the sacred and the profane is interwoven and specific sites of 'worship' are less prominent. The reports of field archaeologists draw inconclusively from both paradigms creating an incoherent sense of ritual and religion in the British Iron Age.

Drawing upon anthropological and sociological thought in regards ritual and religion, this thesis establishes a definition for ritual and seeks to explain the role of ritual within religion and the pertinence of differentiating between them. The subsequent framework is applied to a systematic study of sites across the East of England, specifically, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Leicestershire and Rutland, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk and then related to a wider study. With the grounding in anthropological thought, the thesis shows how rituals are unlikely to reflect belief or homogeneity of beliefs between Iron Age societies but the manner of their practice can give valuable insights into their social role and the nature of religion during the period.

The thesis also explores the 'evolution' of Iron Age rituals and religion from the late Bronze Age through to the Roman period.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Iron Age Britain and Iron Age East of England

The British Iron Age, classified by the supposed introduction of the use of Iron in the material culture of its peoples, is variously described to start between c.800 BC and 600 BC, ending with the Roman conquest from AD 43. Typically the British societies are considered to have been non-literate, living in settlements of limited development, lacking the 'city-like' oppida of the continent but investing in the Early and Middle Iron Age in major fortifications across large parts of the Isles. Successful farmers and skilled metalworkers, historically they have been both romanticised and patronised as patriarchal tribal societies of raiding warriors, little prepared for the Roman onslaught. The East of England particularly falls into this simple paradigm by virtue of the schoolboy tales of Boudicca and the savage but noble tales of Roman resistance.

The truth is of course far more nuanced but popular modern conceptions of 'Celticity' are intertwined in our own sense of place and identity as well as the historic narrative. This identity has proven difficult to unravel despite growing consensus amongst academics that a homogenous Celtic culture never existed in the British Isles, let alone Europe (James 1999). Studies of religion in the Iron Age have endured not only these presumptions of homogeneity but also the imposition of a complicated patchwork of influences from Roman perception, to Irish history and enthusiastic 19th century invention.

Fortunately, the difficulties presented by the historical records and underlying bias feature far less in the ever-growing evidence from archaeological fieldwork which is providing a far more balanced picture of Iron Age societies in Britain.

1.2 Religion in Iron Age Britain – the current paradigm

Many aspects of the British Iron Age are inscrutable to us today and religion is amongst the most enigmatic. Where the preceding Neolithic and Bronze Age offers substantial funerary and ritual monuments, the Iron Age boasts far fewer overt symbols of religious beliefs within the landscape. The period is also notable for a lesser coherence within practices, particularly funerary activity, across wide geographic areas. It is a dearth evident in the archaeological record but rarely influences those historiographic accounts of Iron Age religion that rely on the Roman and Greek literature that supports the traditional understanding of a widespread homogeneous Celtic culture. This was the theory that there was a central origin of a Celtic culture in the archaeological guise of the Hallstatt and La Téne complexes that gradually spread across much of Europe. It is a theory largely discredited but that still influences debate (James 1999, Moore 2007 *et al.*).

The concept has been updated more recently by Koch and Cunliffe (2011) drawing upon studies in linguistics and to a lesser extent, genetics, placing the origins of the Celts along the Atlantic 'fringe' of the continent. This new model proposes that the language emerged along the well-connected Atlantic coasts before spreading east (Cunliffe 2009, 293). The theory has however received similar criticisms to the model it was designed to replace. For many, the search for a Celtic origin is meaningless and unhelpful even if an idea of what we mean by 'Celt' could ever be defined (Pauli 1980; 2007).

Regardless of this debate, a number of interesting parallels can be extrapolated from this discussion to studies of ritual behaviour. The use of language to determine origin is one such model that draws comparison with other non-tangible subjects such as religion. According to Karl, modern studies of wave models of language families show how innovations 'rippled' through systems resulting in new structures which can only be understood if the associations and the process of how these innovations came about are taken into account (Karl 2010, 55). This process, he argues, means that it is impossible to establish an origin because, quite simply, there is none. Karl's argument is compelling and if parallels are legitimate, may help to indicate the challenges; even the futility of

attempting to find the origins of ritual behaviours in particular. It may also aid the understanding the manner in which such practices spread.

Although the pan-Celtic theories are generally discredited, Moore (2012) notes that the scholars who focus on ritual and religion (e.g. Aldhouse-Green 2001, 2004) and art (e.g. Megaw and Megaw 2001) are often still comfortable with them. The observation is not wholly correct – a number of authors, most notably Bradley (1998, 2010) - have explored ritual and religion in Bronze Age and Iron Age societies without reference to Celtic identities yet there is a striking difference in their approaches. Bradley's studies are archaeologically-led whilst those of Aldhouse-Green and the Megaws are grounded more in artefact analyses and classical literature. Moore and Armada see this latter approach as potentially over-emphasising characteristics such as imagery and symbology in order to support the traditional views of the 'Celts' (Moore and Armada 2011).

The pan-Celtic theories are typically viewed through a Roman lens, seeing a pan-European pantheon being worshipped at sanctuaries and shrines in a manner distinctly classical in style. The more archaeological approach imagines a world in which the sacred and the profane are interwoven and specific sites of 'worship' are less prominent. Both approaches can be utilised but a heavy emphasis on either has a distorting affect and has arguable created an incoherent sense of ritual and religion in the British Iron Age. Likewise, forms of sanctuaries identified prior to the pan-Celtic critiques have not always been scrutinised adequately and are still used as blueprints in the identification of new sites. Smith's re-evaluation of British sanctuaries (2001) challenged a number of identifications, but accepted many of the underlying presumptions of sanctuaries and ritual life in the Iron Age. No further holistic challenges have been made in the 15 years since, although Bradley, Sharples and others have all developed new ways of looking at ritual activity in prehistory and Hutcheson's work in East Anglia (2004) demonstrated the value of looking at Iron Age ritual landscapes rather than focusing on individual sites. Such an approach is particularly important as it encourages a holistic view that potentially encompasses the wider religious sphere. The attempt to identify sanctuaries and shrines to the exclusion of other foci of religious activity is perhaps a symptom of the traditional view of Celtic religion - shrines,

sanctuaries and sacred groves. Instead, domestic associated rituals, landscape and riverine votive deposition, causeways and platforms over fens and rivers, together with burial and pit alignments should all be considered within the wider context of Iron Age religion and cosmology.

An incoherent approach to the study of religion is not unique to the British Iron Age. In the late 1990's and early 2000's, Bradley and Insoll significantly challenged traditional archaeological approaches to religion. They used the more mature anthropological tools and terminology which they believed were lacking in archaeology. Despite their progress however Insoll (2004,1) argued that archaeological approaches were still remarkably naïve, with archaeologists assuming that religion is a relatively simple area of investigation, an assumption he believed to be entirely incorrect.

The coexistence of the two paradigms discussed above is perhaps the result of this naivety or a lack of will to attempt to understand the nature of religion or religions during the Iron Age. Regardless, without an established framework and a consensus between the two approaches archaeologists will continue to flounder in the void between them.

1.3 Developing a framework; objectives of this thesis

This thesis aims to draw together the two paradigms and attempt to develop a coherent view of ritual and religion in the British Iron Age. It will do this by providing definitions from anthropological as well as archaeological theories. The resultant framework will then be applied to previously identified sites nationally, and to a particular test region, in this case the East of England. This study will determine the coherence of the framework and help identify the religious landscape of the region. Should this framework prove coherent, it can be extended to other parts of Britain or Europe. The regional study will help to determine whether there were structured places of worship[1] in this part of

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[1] The word, 'worship' is used here to differentiate between places of everyday ritual and places that may have seen a greater degree of religious focus and activity. It is a problematic and potentially anachronistic word so is generally avoided in this thesis.

England, and if so, what their characteristics were. It may also be possible to determine their roles in Iron Age society and even a little about the religion in which they fitted. The study will also explore their origin and the wider context of ritual activity of which they were a part.

The results of the regional study will be compared with the picture presented by the sites previously identified nationally. Lacking the detail of the regional investigation and in the absence of sites identified independently through use of the framework, the subsequent observations will not be definitive but it may be possible to recognise shared practices or regional variations from across Britain. Complementing these studies will be artefactual analyses. Many of the same theories of ritualisation will be applied to Iron Age art and architecture helping to offer a holistic picture of religion and ritual practice in the British Iron Age.

Ultimately, the ambition of this thesis is to offer a picture of religion in the British Iron Age that encompasses the evidence from archaeological sites, drawing in artefactual and symbological evidence where it is applicable. In doing so it will attempt to draw together the apparently irreconcilable vision of a pan-Celtic religion of sanctuaries, shrines and temples with more contemporary ideas of the intermarriage between the sacred and the profane.

Achieving this reconciliation should result in a more holistic understanding of the nature of religious activity in Late Iron Age Britain and how it changed as a result of internal and external pressures.

1.4 Methodology

As there is currently little consensus as to the nature of Iron Age religion in the British Iron Age due to the issues explored above, it will be necessary first to define the lexicon and develop a framework that can be applied to sites of Iron Age ritual activity. Advances in anthropological theory as well as archaeological will be adopted in this development.

Having established the definitions, the sites of specific ritual interest identified nationally will be reviewed, looking at repeating characteristics or patterns and challenging identifications that have been made in the absence of established frameworks.

This approach will allow for the consistent application of definitions necessary to identify shared characteristics and patterns of behaviour. The conclusions should assist in the development of a wider understanding of religion and ritual life in the British Iron Age.

Evidently this approach relies on the identification of sites by other authors whose criteria for recognising ritual behaviours may have been very different. There is also no reason to assume that the rituals were shared over large areas meaning that national comparisons may be meaningless. Nevertheless, prior to a focused study of a more manageable area, it is necessary to first develop a substantial control; a number of sites against which new identifications can be compared. It also provides an opportunity to explore the theories of archaeologists in the field whose contributions will no doubt be invaluable.

Chiefly the national review will be undertaken through the collation and evaluation of anthologies and gazetteers by other authors, notably Wait, Smith, Curteis and Cunliffe with in-depth analyses of these previously identified sites from the relevant site reports and associated publications. Although this approach will identify few new sites of ritual interest, by applying a coherent method of analysis a more reliable dataset will be created with which to create a framework for more detailed investigations. One of the key approaches will be to look for repeated patterns of behaviour rather than succumb to the temptation to see the unique, the bizarre and unusual cases as 'special' and therefore of ritual significance. The study will also challenge preconceptions regarding typically anticipated characteristics of Iron Age shrines and sanctuaries; for example the act of enclosure, votive deposition and feasting where those activities are not repeated consistently, or where evidence is poor. Reading widely around the subject and incorporating analyses of landscape and riverine deposition as well as funerary activity and ritual activity within settlements, the study will also be a comparative study of wider practices in the

event that Iron Age religions were not faiths largely reliant on places of specific ritual activity.

The conclusions of the theoretical study together with its application in the analysis of national sites will be used to develop a framework with which to apply to a more detailed examination of the East of England.

1.5 Methodology for the regional study

There are two purposes of the regional study. First, the regional focus means that the new framework can be applied to raw data rather than to pre-identified sites. This should result in the identification of previously unrecognised sites as well as providing an in-depth holistic picture of ritual life in East Anglian Iron Age communities. Secondly, it will provide the means to test the extent to which the overarching research questions are pertinent on a wider scale. Specifically it will consider the extent to which it is possible to meaningfully talk about British Iron Age religion(s), or shared rituals over as wide an area as Britain. It is possible, even likely, that significant variation existed between the different areas of eastern England encompassed within this single regional study.
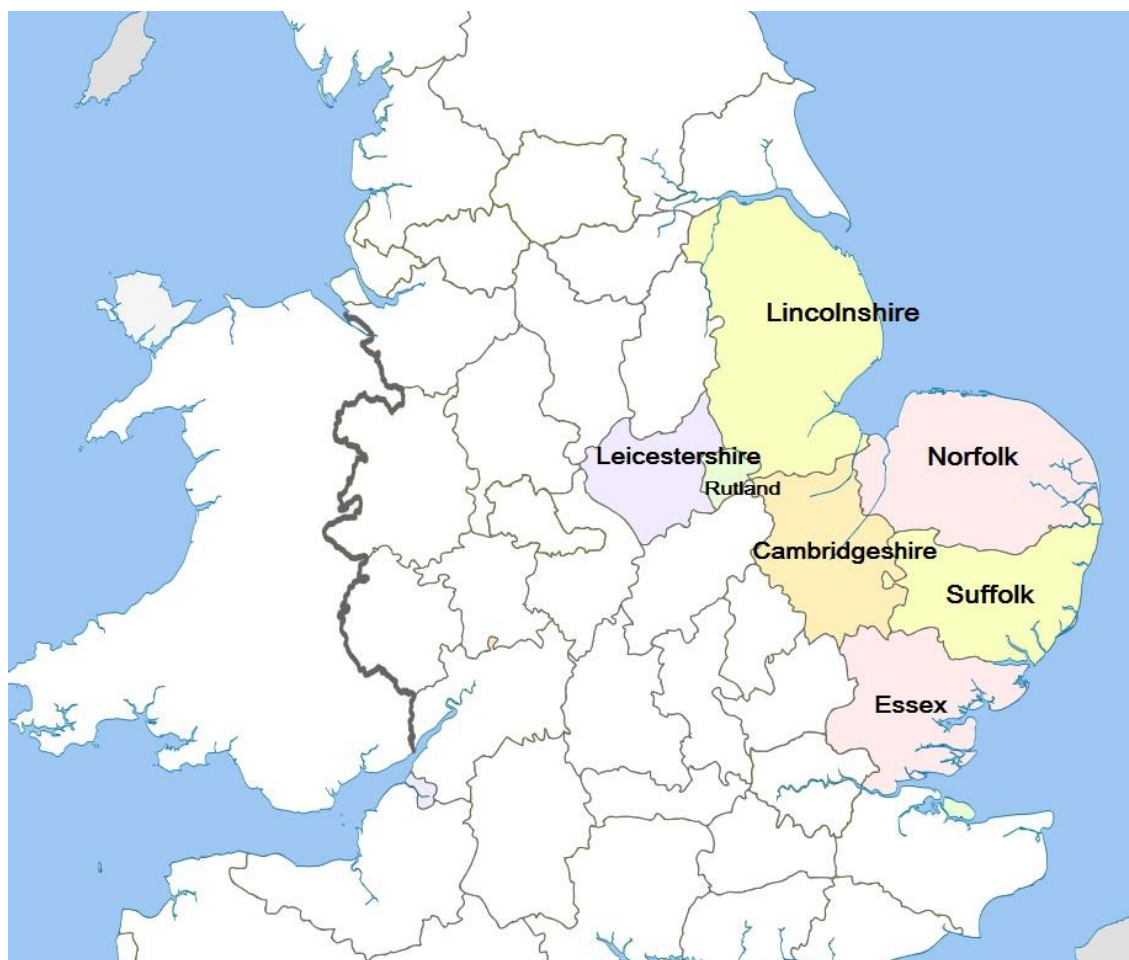
Figure 1 Map showing counties in study region

The East of England is defined in this thesis as the modern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire (including the separate unitary authority of North Lincolnshire), Leicestershire, Rutland and Essex. Whilst following the modern county boundaries is convenient (if largely arbitrary), the selection of these areas is not random. Firstly, avoiding the often-quoted 'southern bias' in Iron Age studies in both excavation and interpretation is important. East Anglia was also coin producing but on the periphery of the so-called core area of late Iron Age Britain (Cunliffe 2010, 178) and superficially appears not to have had the structured sanctuaries of the south and southeast. Nevertheless with the rich finds and suggestion of a ritualised landscape at Snettisham (Hutcheson 2004) it is likely that evidence exists for structured religious behaviour that may not be paralleled elsewhere. Investigation of the individual East Anglian sites may provide site specific evidence of sanctuaries that are uncontaminated by

continental influences prior to the Roman period and can be viewed without the preconceptions posed by a universal sanctuary checklist.

Leicestershire and Rutland, more typically identified as counties within the East Midlands rather than the East of England, have been included for a number of reasons;

i)   their topography is quite different to the counties further east

ii)   they sit on the fringe of coin distribution which may illustrate different depositional practices of metalwork.

iii)   they have been researched less than most of the other counties in the study region

Evidently other counties in the East Midlands deserve exploring but their inclusion here would have made the study region too great for the scope of this thesis. Of the East Midlands counties, Leicestershire (and its modest adjunct, Rutland) was chosen due to the suspected religious site of Hallaton, near Leicester. The regional study will help to determine whether there were structured places of worship in the East of England, and if so, what their characteristics were. It may also be possible to determine their roles in Iron Age society and even a little about the religion in which they fitted. The study will also explore their origin and the wider context of ritual activity of which they were a part.

In addition to the county Historic Environment Record (HER) databases, the analysis will utilise the Celtic Coin index (CCI) and the Portable Antiquity Scheme (PAS) together with the relevant literature and site reports. The HER will principally highlight sites of potential interest, with the PAS and CCI used to ensure sites of potential votive metal deposition are not overlooked. Differentiation between votive and non-votive deposition is made on a case by case basis with the challenges in so doing discussed below. A list of all the identified sites will then be compiled and their respective site reports and associated literature reviewed. Their grid references will also be used for further independent analyses of factors such as their proximity to water, to each other and to known route ways. Their locations within the landscape, such as their orientation and elevation, will also be pertinent to this investigation.

The study of these databases will be complimented by the comprehensive evaluation of the literature pertinent to the study of religion in the Iron Age. This will include previous national studies such as Wait (1985) and Smith (2001) as well as regional works such as Hutcheson (2004) and Ralph (2007), extending into regional reviews such as East Anglian Archaeology Reports (EAA). It is anticipated that this literature review, together with speaking to archaeologists active in the field will ensure that the lists and the associated information is comprehensive and up to date.

The East of England has enjoyed a number of recent noteworthy studies that have successfully highlighted a rich material culture from the Late Iron Age. Hutcheson (2004) has studied Norfolk's metalwork and Chadburn (2006) its coinage. Farley (2012) has looked at the East Midlands with a particular focus on coinage and hoard deposition. Likewise, Medlycott (forthcoming) and Moore (2011) have provided significant insights into the ritual landscapes of Essex during the Late Iron Age and Roman transition. Over the last four years, an AHRC funded research project, 'Hoarding in Iron Age and Roman Britain', led by the British Museum and University of Leicester has been compiling and mapping coin and metalwork hoards in different parts of Britain, including eastern England, but at the time of writing, the two principal project monographs are still forthcoming and little published data is available for independent use and analysis. Some preliminary observations from the researchers have been provided and will feature in discussion below and we can anticipate that the databases and results generated by the British Museum-Leicester project to add some further elements to the meta-data and statistical approach in my own study.

There are 18,069 Historic Environment Records for the study area that reference the Iron Age. The Roman invasion of AD 43 did not mark the immediate end of the Iron Age and there was therefore the danger that the database searches would exclude relevant sites that were later than this arbitrary date. Fortunately the configuration of the database is such that Iron Age 'tags' ensure these records are included even where the site itself is categorised in the database as Roman. This is particularly important

considering that there appears to have been an intensification of indigenous ritual activity occurring prior to, during and in the aftermath of the invasion.

These records will be sifted individually, on a case by case basis. Metalwork deposits and other features associated with ritual activity will undoubtedly help identify sites but a checklist approach will be avoided even at such a time recognisable patterns emerge. Instead identification will utilise anthropological theory and example (e.g. Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; 2007 and Rappaport 1999) (see 2.3 below) as well as archaeological precedence. A dependence on metalwork finds will be avoided as far as is possible. Here too, there is precedent. Past studies have looked at other dimensions of potential ritual behaviour independent of metalwork hoarding, notably Ralph's (2007) work on feasting in East Anglia.

Each site identified through the initial sifts will be assessed individually with recurring features noted in the reports where they meet the rules of ritual as they are defined in chapter 2. The reports and associated literature of the sites selected will be used to further understand each site. Grid references will also be compiled to allow for the analysis of location and landscape contexts.

This work will be complemented by thorough examination of other works on the area, of studies of the Celtic Coin Index, Celtic Art database and Portable Antiquities Scheme. Due to the nature of ritual, one of the key approaches will be to look for repeated patterns of behaviour with little, if any, deviation.

The process outlined here is deliberately broad and thus far from infallible. The dataset may be too broad to competently identify patterns. Similarly, the absence of a checklist of criteria may detrimentally affect the consistency of identification and threaten the reliability of identified patterns. These issues are necessary evils however due to the false impositions of checklists and the existing biases that arguably plague the current paradigm.

Other problems relate to the region itself. In part due to the categorisation necessary for any database, forms of bias appear in the HER record where the recording officer has to commit to an interpretation to satisfy the forms and provide a means of searching the data. Despite their close proximity each county HER can appear quite different relying on the accuracy and the time

invested by the recording officer as well as on their own prejudices and specialisms as to what they selected as important to record within the databases. A certain reliance on these selections is necessary as it would be impossible to locate and study every individual site without first narrowing down the search from the HER records.

While initially the broad approach means that no preconceptions of what a 'sanctuary' should look like is empowering, prejudices quickly emerge, most notably the deposition of metalwork creating a bias and hiding more subtle indicators. This bias was further exaggerated by the different recording of the counties making it difficult to differentiate between real behavioural patterns and the lack or abundance of recorded evidence. Figure 8 for example shows an overwhelming prevalence of quern stone finds in the East Midlands compared to other counties and Norfolk in particular.

Is this a real pattern? Are they simply over looked in the Norfolk HER or are they representative of something else, such as a greater degree of excavation in the areas in which they are found? Quern stones found without accompanying contexts present other problems. Beehive and saddle types appear in both Late Iron Age and Roman contexts and so can represent a considerable chronology skewing the perception of the regularity of their deposition, if indeed they should be considered votive at all. Likewise, in an effort not to allow coinage to completely dominate the study because of the very large number of finds, and to recognise the potential for accidental loss, this study has ignored single coin finds. Farley notes a remarkable similarity in profile between Iron Age single coin loss and Roman with the latter typically seen as casual loss, a similarity not shared with hoard deposition (2012, 239).

However, Haselgrove (e.g. 1993; 2005a) and Bradley et al. (e.g. 2003; 2005), have suggested single coin deposition may have been deliberate votive offerings in many contexts such as on field boundaries. It is not impossible to imagine that quern stones and single coin deposits found in isolation had similar votive roles dependent merely on their availability and perceived value by the depositor. As will be seen in chapter 2, although different material types can be associated with important ritualistic rules, often availability is the

determining factor in votive deposition practices. A prejudice toward metalwork deposits may be furthered by the use of the CCI and PAS data to supplement that of the HERs. There are no such equivalents for non-metalwork finds that may also be votive in nature so care will need to be taken to compensate for this with particular attention to the data compiled by authors such as Davies, Ralph and Hutcheson.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Establishing a lexicon

Debate about religion in the British Iron Age is further confused by the lack of a consistent lexicon. Words such as 'shrines', 'sanctuaries' and 'temples' are often used interchangeably when discussing features within a site or for the site as a whole. For some, the words mean the same, for others they imply different types of site. In this study 'sanctuaries' will refer specifically to sites of specific ritualistic activity and 'shrines' to buildings believed to have been used directly in relation to religious rites. This means that a sanctuary can contain a shrine but is not reliant upon the presence of a shrine to be identified as a sanctuary. The word, 'temple' is used primarily to describe Romano-British sanctuaries in the interests of aligning definitions with the more established lexicon for the Roman period. Applications of this word to Iron Age sites are likely to be anachronistic and loaded.

2.2 Historic definitions of religion and ritual

In any debate regarding ritual and religion it is natural to seek a starting point in the definitions of these very culturally loaded words and to try and express exactly what we mean when we use them. Such an approach leads the author down a well-worn path arguing over the semantics of meaning. Despite much debate, no consensus has been reached (Bell 2007, 279). Rappaport's definition of religion: 'the domain of the Holy, the constituents of which include the sacred, the numinous, the occult and the divine, and also ritual, the form of

action in which those constituents are generated' (Rappaport 1999, 23) is an example of the complexity of attempting to define religion. Not only does he use words that require their own explanation, but he admits that the definition is deliberately 'indefinite and hazy' (*ibid.*, 23). It is perhaps this 'haziness' that makes definitions so challenging.

A further problem in defining ritual and religion lies in the differentiation between the sacred and the profane. Indeed some attempts forgo any mention of the supernatural at all. One example is Geertz who argued that religion is 'a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.' (Geertz 1966, 4). It is a definition discounted by some, as it is argued that it can apply to a number of 'institutional facts' such as money (Searle 1995, 94).

On the other hand, for Renfrew it is a mistake to avoid some kind of supernatural element in the definition of religion (Renfrew 1994, 113). For his own study of sanctuaries in Minoan Crete, he started with Spiro's definition: 'an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings' (Spiro 1966, 96). By looking at the role of religion and ritual in society, i.e. through its function rather than through a precise definition it may be possible to recognise it when it occurs and potentially even its cause and effect. Therefore Geertz's definition may be valid whether or not it can apply as equally to something as mundane as money – what the practitioners of a religion actually believe in is, to some extent, immaterial to the archaeologist.

The archaeologist trying to identify the religion, regardless of definition, of a non-literate past society will be limited largely to the interpretation of observable and classifiable evidence of rituals, perhaps aided by non-contemporary literature or bias observations from people outside of that culture. This is certainly the case in terms of Iron Age religion. It is logical to first look at the definition of ritual and analyse the extent to which it reflects the religion from which it is supposedly derived.

2.3 The meaningless ritual: Towards a new definition of ritual utilising anthropological and sociological theory

Within Anthropology it has been long argued that too many assumptions exist about the meaning of ritual. Chief amongst these presumptions are that rituals are deliberate and that they communicate the beliefs of the practitioner, either actively or indirectly. As Humphrey and Laidlaw point out (1974, 73), it is an 'easy but fallacious step from observing rituals to suppose that the purpose of ritual is to communicate or express ideas to other people who already know them'. Nevertheless, it would still seem logical for rituals to express the beliefs of the practitioner even if the function is not one of communication. However Goody (1977, 32), later cited by Humphrey and Laidlaw, questioned even this assumption arguing that rituals in fact may be misleading due to their formality, their anachronistic 'culture lag' and the likelihood that the public performance subverts the 'true self'. Whilst the exact, repeated and formal performance of a ritual helps solidarity between participants it may lead to loss of meaning (*ibid.*, 31). It is easy to think of examples of rituals in the West today – in courts, state ceremony as well as more mundane events where rituals are carried out that are out of date, no longer represent current culture and often lack discursive meaning to many of the practitioners. It is likely that they have a function distinct from and not reliant upon specific meaning.

Recognising that it is possible for rituals to occur which no longer represent a society and that practitioners of these rituals may not understand their meaning, is it therefore logical to question whether rituals ever require meaning or ever express the beliefs of the society to which they belong?

The process of repeating an action very specifically ultimately allows for the performance of that action to be undertaken subconsciously (Goody 1997, 31). It is at that point the performer stops challenging the reason or meaning of the action. This is the process of ritualisation and is evident not only in religious or ceremonial circumstances but in the everyday. It is also at this point of subconscious action that the meaning becomes largely irrelevant and is in danger of being forgotten.

Anthropologists have demonstrated the process through observing the performance of rituals for which the meaning is either not known by the participants or for which it has changed. Humphrey and Laidlaw (2007, 267) give the example of the Mongolian sacrifice ritual known as the 'Taxilag', a ritual of animal sacrifice requiring a specific set of actions to be performed. When questioned, the participants provided remarkable conformity as to the individual actions required to properly complete the ritual, but gave a range of different explanations as to the meaning of the ritual. What is left in these kinds of rituals is likely to be a broadly understood but ambiguous sense of purpose, such as good-luck or a blessing.

Bloch (1986, 133) draws upon the example of the circumcision rituals of the Merina people of Madagascar observing that the complicated rituals remained consistent over successive periods of dramatic social and political change but that the 'meaning' of the ritual altered several times. He goes on to argue that ritual is used to legitimate the social order in such a fundamental way that it is beyond question (*ibid*., 189-190). This example not only alludes to the changing (and therefore the flexibility) of the precise meaning of the rituals but also to the longevity and conservatism of the practitioners in ensuring correct performance of the rituals. This durability, even in the face of social and political change also has implications for prehistoric studies. Where ancient rituals occur in later contexts, as they frequently do, it is tempting to assume this demonstrates a continuity of belief. Instead, only the most basic level of belief or meaning may be represented even where rituals spanning hundreds, even thousands, of years are identical with striking attention paid to specific details.

Depending on the extent to which the definition of 'ritual' can stretch, this observation may apply to ancient religious places or symbols, respected or used by later societies when their original meaning is likely to have been long forgotten. Sharples (2010) notes the temptation to look for signs of continuity or a surrounding 'sacred landscape' where Neolithic or Bronze Age monuments are present. The anthropological observations suggests that continuation of beliefs is not necessary but that their presence could empower sites, secular or sacred without any implied specific meaning. As with the largely outdated and therefore increasingly meaningless rituals seen in modern court proceedings,

their presence serves to provide authority, tradition and an indefinable ancient power without requiring comprehension of their original meanings. Evidently, this is likely to be the power that sites such as Stonehenge still hold over their visitors. All that is required is for the visitor to be aware that the site is 'ancient' and in some way 'mystical'. Its actual original purpose or meaning is not required and indeed ambiguity probably adds to its authority.

Having established that specific meaning can change and is not innate within ritual, it is tempting to suppose that religious doctrine, where it exists, should help protect from this abstraction. Again, anthropological studies suggest this need not always be the case. Even where a ritual explicitly uses spoken or sung religious texts, accuracy is often not essential. Staal gives the example of Vedic mantras in which verses from the Vedas are sung ritually, in a manner that distorts the words and in some cases makes them unintelligible (Staal 1984, 101). It would appear, as Goody (1997) argued, that the process of ritualisation, i.e. 'the formalisation and repetition' of behaviour itself abstracts meaning. It is not a new observation. This phenomenon, observed in the repetitive nature of rituals in the Catholic Mass was amongst the incitements that led to Martin Luther's catechisms of 1529 that sought to provide the basics of Christian faith so that they would not just be learned by habit, 'the way monkeys do it', but understood (Luther 1529).

Similar observations can be made regarding written observations of rituals. In the case of Iron Age ritual practice, Roman literature is frequently used to explore the meaning of rituals in the archaeological record. It has also been taken at face value and in the absence of archaeological evidence. Already there exists significant scepticism due to the clear bias of Roman sources but to that should now be added these observations of the nature of ritual; the anachronisms and shifting meaning. Early medieval Irish literature, already of dubious value as a result of their non-contemporaneous, foreign nature (Webster 2015) have also been used in this way but the time elapsed is likely to make comparisons of meaning impossible. Authenticity has often been cited where descriptions of rituals correlate strikingly with archaeological evidence – for example the portioning of meat for feasting in both the Roman and Irish sources. However, regardless of the accuracy of descriptions of the ritual itself,

as the meanings of rituals change over time and from individual to individual, explanations can only offer the perspective of one person in one moment in time. The same can be assumed for geographical location; should the same ritual occur in two different places around the same period, we cannot just assume that the participants had the same beliefs or shared the same religion, although it is likely that at a basic level the purpose and meaning of the ritual was the same.

If rituals do not reflect belief beyond a basic level, their interpretation is always likely to prove challenging. However, it is potentially possible to identify their purpose, a characteristic which is likely to remain constant over time and which may ultimately be even more useful to interpret.

2.4 The purpose of ritual

Identifying and interpreting ritual through function is not new. For Kapferer, functionalist arguments that reduce ritual to 'action which is markedly formalised, stereotypical and repititious' are 'narrow, obscurantist, often misleading and beg the nature of analysis...' (Kapferer 1983, 193). Rappaport is also dismissive of functionalism within ritual and religion, arguing that formality, stereotypy and repetitiveness do not imply function (Rappaport 1999, 28). Neither author explains why seeking function within ritual and religion is inherently wrong but there are undoubtedly dangers in the outlook where potentially patronising perceptions and modern preconceptions may be misleading. Nevertheless to claim, as Rappaport, other anthropologists and archaeologists do, that rituals and religion do not have function is arguably erroneous even considering that function might not be intentional.

Some function may occur without the conscious knowledge of the religious practitioner involved – the sense of community and togetherness invoked by shared rituals is one such example. Some rituals may have specific purposes that may or may not have any real bearing in the world but in the minds of the practitioners or at least the creators of the ritual achieve something – for example a ritual that expels evil spirits has a clear purpose. Efficacy of the ritual

is, in this case, proven as a matter of individual faith. Purpose may also manifest itself in practical outcomes that is perhaps more objectively observed. Budd and Taylor argued that complex procedures were ritualised in non-literate societies as the process helped commit the vital steps to memory in the form of a 'formulaic spell' (1995, 139).

Hingley (1997) takes this thinking a step further by arguing that the study of technology in the past needs to address the symbolic significance of the production of materials such as metals and pottery. This observation is supported by anthropology. An example is Highland Burma, where farming methods were enacted according to formal conventions but interspersed with 'superfluous frills and decorations' (Leach 1954, 12). Arguably the practitioners need not be aware of which steps are necessary to achieve their goals and it is likely that both the supernatural and physical steps were considered essential and efficacious in different ways. The intermarriage between the sacred and the profane could therefore have been deeply rooted in many practices. As we shall see below, this may well be the case in the British Iron Age where examples of ritual, supernatural activity within secular contexts are abundant; it is possible that ritualistic behaviour and the sacred coloured almost every facet of everyday life (Hill 1995).

For the practitioner, the ritual elements would be every bit as essential to the process. In the Iron Age this is exemplified in numerous ways, such as the frequent discovery of apparent scrap metal and items either deliberately damaged or half completed. Found in both supposedly secular and sacred contexts, such deposits may be evidential of metalwork rituals. Anthropological studies suggest that the transformative process of metalworking is often intertwined with rituals and that the deposition of scrap may also be considered an important aspect in the successful production of the metal (Brück 2001, 1570). In the archaeological record, it may well be impossible to differentiate the ritual and functional aspects of metal deposition as it appears through broken objects (Bradley 2005, 164). It was probably ritualised in the same way as many other day to day activities such as farming (*ibid.*).

The practical association with rituals as memory aids is only half the picture. Long a proponent of the 'ritualisation' of prehistoric society, Bradley (2001, 2005) provides numerous examples of ritual in the everyday. The intermarriage of sacred and the profane as well as the similarity in social function that can be witnessed between a sacred ritual and mere secular ceremony questions the ability and possibly even the need for the archaeologist to differentiate between them. While it might be assumed that the difference between ceremony and ritual is likely to be 'otherworldliness', the function is likely to be the same. In many cases, the power invested by age and ambiguity is likely to be just as indefinable within apparently secular ceremony as it is in religious. Even participants of these rituals may not be able to tell the difference between religious elements of ceremonies that are both religious and secular, such as weddings and evidently the two are not mutually exclusive.

Differentiating secular and religious rituals is not the only challenge. There is also a grey area between 'ritualisation' and 'routinisation'. The latter is the development of a habit or automatic procedure that people do naturally to improve efficacy (Hobsbawm 2000, 3). Typically, routines lack symbolism but it is not always clear-cut (*ibid.*). Everyday greetings, farewells and other social interactions would typically be termed as routines but in cultures such as that of Japan such interactions can be much more significantly charged with the potential to cause great offence if improperly performed. These interactions are seen by some as power and status accord rituals (Goffman 1981, 17).

A potential 'Iron Age' example of ritualistic status accord can perhaps be seen in the 8th century AD Irish story of Mac Dathó's pig in which the warrior, Conall carved the meat at a feast for an assembly of other warriors. He kept the best part for himself and gave only the forelegs to his enemies, an act that insulted them enough to provoke a fight (Thurneysen 1935). The reason why forelegs might be so provocative is largely irrelevant (although we could surmise their significance from their appearance in Iron Age burials and other associations with the dead), but the deliberate challenge to the conventions that had probably become ritualised resulted in an extreme response. The purpose of these ritualised social interactions is to provide a framework from which status

accord and status power can be attributed. They can also help 'oil the gears of social interaction' (Goffman 1981, 17).

Expanding upon the work of Durkheim and Goffman, Collins (1975) offered a set of ritual activities further exploring the idea of status power interaction. The list included rites of passage, collective deference and celebration rituals with their purpose relating to status accord between individuals and social groups. It is a list that has since been refined (Kemper 2011) but according to this theory their purpose is largely the same; 'they are designed to express and enact the relationship between the ritual practitioner and another party' (*ibid.*, 152).Rituals are enduring, resilient to cultural change and even changing religious beliefs probably due to the non-discursive and ambiguous meanings that are typically associated with them. Bloch's example of the Merina demonstrates the fluidity of meaning that can be transposed upon them and their importance relates more to their function than their association with secular or religious belief systems.

The idea of sanctioning and the investiture of an otherworldly power lies at the heart of the purpose, intentional or otherwise of rituals and it is a power that is far from exclusive to religious rituals. Bell describes the inauguration of a Cambridge don where a host of 'rituals' give the occasion gravitas – a simple email informing the new don of their elevation would not hold the appropriate weight (Bell 2007, 204). The example alludes to the powers of tradition and of ceremony. The rituals are largely secular but like many secular ceremonies mimic religious activity perhaps because a suggested link to the supernatural, however abstracted, provides an indefinable and therefore an incontestable power. In fact, where tradition plays a role in secular ceremonies, it could be argued that the authority the tradition invests into the proceedings (and generally the longer the tradition, the more powerful the investiture) is not dissimilar to ancestor worship. In archaeological terms, with no written supporting evidence, it would be very difficult if not impossible to differentiate between secular and religious ceremony.

Regardless of any difference between secular and religious rituals, it appears that they perform the same role within a ceremony or activity. They invest

solidarity, authority and Rappaport's 'sanctioned outlandish behaviour'. An example of such a ritual is the planting of the *rumbin* by the Maring tribe (Rappaport 1999, 102). Here, the men of the tribe give a declaration of peace in which they are, without exception, obliged to perform certain rituals said to be symbolic of their return to farming. The rituals both add to the formalisation and gravitas of the declaration and require their acquiescence to peace, enforcing their social commitment. Rappaport and members of the Maring tribe would probably have disagreed but the actual meaning of the rituals or what they involve is arguably largely irrelevant as long as they serve to ensure the warriors' coherence to peace through the demonstration of their commitment and add sufficiently to the potency of the ceremony to convince the individual of the importance of that commitment. Perhaps an Iron Age equivalent is a practice described by Tacitus whereby before a battle, warriors would dedicate the enemy and their possessions to the gods in the event of victory (Grane 2003, 146). This is described by Tacitus as a 'vow which consigns horses, men and everything on the defeated side to destruction (.Tacitus 109).

As discussed, the ambiguity of meaning in rituals may add to their potency; as does the passage of time. The ambiguity and lack of a need for practitioners to understand the meaning of the rituals they are performing, perhaps gives the rituals the flexibility with which to survive long periods of time and, as Bloch's (1986) example of the Merina circumcision rituals suggests, significant cultural change. Against this is the seemingly peculiar conservatism of the accuracy of the performance of the ritual itself. Accuracy of the performance seems to be largely rigid and clearly contributes to their longevity. The accuracy is also paramount where rituals aid the performance of technological processes.

2.5 The creation and success of rituals

Many rituals recognisable to the archaeologist appear ancient, their origins forever lost to antiquity. As we saw, it is their age and custom that invests their power in them (Rappaport 1999, 32), tapping into their performers' shared cultural and historical traditions. However, they can be invented. As Hobsbawm

notes, the invented rituals of the Nazis helped legitimise and augment the party as they rose to and consolidated power (2000, 9) [2]. The key in that case, as elsewhere, was constant reference to a historic past and the reinforcement of real or invented precedence (*ibid.*). These practices were then formalised and repeated in the highly regulated manner characteristic of a ritual. The success of an invented ritual is not guaranteed and some commentators claim that they frequently appear 'false or forced' (Rappaport 1999, 32), but logic would dictate an origin and there are numerous recent examples of invented ritual. They can be cynically created, as in Hobsbawm's example, or introduced deliberately or potentially evolved from pre-existing rites in response to circumstance.

Success therefore relies on an historical narrative that does not strike the performer as 'false or forced' and probably also on practical relevance to changing circumstances. There are some modern examples of the deliberate manipulation and suppression of rituals that illustrate how this works in practice. In a study of two North Vietnamese villages, Ljunggren observed the re-adoption of pre-communist rituals as the prohibition of religious activity was relaxed in the 1980s. Interestingly, some but not all rituals did return with relatively little deliberate reintroduction (1993, 259). Perhaps most illuminatingly he discovered that the rituals that did resume were generally related to life-cycle events. More tangential rituals tended to fail. One example related to the rituals associated with the villages' communal houses, the former centres for decision making. As the male-centred seat of power had shifted from a communal house to the Communist party and remained there, the related rituals of the former ceased to have any relevance and did not resume or at least never reclaimed their former significance (*ibid.*, 289). Equally, other rituals grew in importance, in some cases far exceeding their pre-communist elaboration. Often this seemed to be linked to a growing economic surplus and a greater need, where the state no longer provided centralised support, for villagers to reinforce social relationships, notably during reciprocal feasting (*ibid.*, 259). The changing economic environment and processes, specifically the movement from communal agriculture to individualised, family led

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[2] Hobsbawm actually refers to the invention of 'tradition' but does not define the word and a similar meaning as 'ritual' can be inferred.

production gave certain, relevant rituals a significant boost (*ibid.*, 259). These observations, particularly those linking economic surplus with the increase in elaborate ceremonies adds credence to claims made by Bradley (1997) and others that changes in votive deposition related to available resources rather than always to specifically selected items. The economic connection suggests that there is likely to be a correlation between surplus and availability and the generosity of, for example, votive deposition. People's gifts to the gods may represent what they can afford.

Anthropological studies such as this illustrate that economics and social function potentially drive the popularity of rituals and the zeal to which they are executed. Had the communist prohibition on religion remained in place over several generations, it might be surmised that the pre-communist rituals would have disappeared entirely although this is purely supposition. In fact the example once again shows the durability of rituals. Profound change in ritual activity might therefore indicate an even more demanding environment than that of religious prohibition.

2.6 A new definition of ritual

To recap, rituals – secular and religious – provide a number of functions. They invest authority in an occasion, sanction 'outlandish' behaviours and in non-literate societies in particular, provide patterns of controlled behaviour that aid technological processes. In certain ceremonies and in everyday life they can also aid social relationships, providing status accord and oiling the gears of social interaction which can reduce the potential for accidental conflict. The act of ritualisation, i.e. the formalisation and repetition of a pattern of actions can abstract pre-existing meanings and that this abstraction manifests itself through the ritual's durability through time, even in the face of social and cultural change. In the case of religions, the same rituals occur even where a religion may have changed, their relevance often relating more to practical societal relevance than to the religious. It is possible for rituals to change or even to be broken entirely as we will see, but there is generally a natural conservatism to them requiring relatively significant pressure, either as a result of a changing

practical context or due to their deliberate challenge. In light of this recognition and for the purposes of this thesis a definition of ritual might therefore be:

'The deliberate, accurate repetition of unchallenged, automatic behaviour'.

2.7 Ritual and religion and rituals within religion

This discussion has in some regards distilled ritual from religion. Although meaning is not required to be understood in the performance of a ritual, this is another thing from saying that it is not required to be understood within a religion. It does however show that rituals are distinct from religious practice, that they can survive outside the framework of a religion and that older rituals might still be performed within the context of a new religion. It helps explain the often paradoxical elements not only of past religions but also of many modern world religions today in which indigenous rituals are practiced that seem contrary to the religion in which they are later performed. This is likely to have consequences in the study of past societies. In Roman Britain for example, evidence of Iron Age ritual practice is often cited as a survival of indigenous religion, even deliberate insurrection (Mattingly 2006). The survival of the ritual itself is not however necessarily indicative of religion, as participants could happily continue to perform Iron Age rituals without any understanding of or affinity to its ancient meaning due to the fluidity of meaning of rituals.

This separation of ritual and religion means that identifying specific beliefs from ritual evidence is likely to be impossible beyond the most basic interpretations due to the dangers of Goody's 'cultural time lag'. As rituals may often not represent current culture their presence need not be indicative of any specific religion. Religion may well often be something else, perhaps something more structured and more consciously constructed. The history of this debate usefully starts with Durkheim's definition, 'a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relating to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which write into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.' (Durkheim 1915, 47). This definition was

later updated by Geertz's discussed above but for whom the spiritual element was not essential (Geertz 1966, 4).

Many of the definitions proposed necessitate 'a system of beliefs', yet few beliefs held by a group of people actually form a system, instead being built up with historical layers and cultural borrowings resulting in an inconsistent 'system' only credible to its proponents (Bell 2007, 279). It is important to clarify what is meant by this system of beliefs. Rituals are not part of a belief system – or at least are not required to be – so their inconsistencies are largely irrelevant. Bell's points are pertinent but potentially paradoxical; inconsistent behaviour is likely to be far more associated with ritual than conscious activity and the two should not be confused. That said, the level at which a form of ritual pervades into doctrine, art and architecture is relevant – i.e. where symbolism, repetitively themed myths or stories are unthinkingly applied is a form of ritual. Likewise, symbolism and rituals can themselves influence new myths, circularly fuelling the evolution of religion and ritual in unpredictable and abstract ways.

As early as 1954, Hawkes offered a hierarchy of what could reasonably be interpreted in the absence of written sources. Socio-political institutions, he argued, are hard to infer but hardest of all are religious institutions and spiritual life (Hawkes 1954, 161). Interestingly he puts these two on the same scale, implying that the archaeologist must be satisfied recognising socio-political institutions. Renfrew disagrees although he acknowledges that Processual Archaeology reflected an optimism that means 'every fantasy of the modern commentator is all too readily foisted upon the early community in question' (Renfrew 1985, 2). What he claims is the problem is not the lack of evidence but the lack of structure and systematic approach to analysing the evidence (*ibid.*). It is this structure that he offered as part of his study of Minoan sanctuaries, providing a four point list with a further 18 correlates of common features that might be expected in places of worship. It is not a checklist, he argues, but a way of recognising coherence and structure (*ibid.*, 17). This approach has been taken up with some enthusiasm in Iron Age archaeology both in Britain and on the continent, notably by Brunaux (1998), Roymans (1990), Smith (2001), and others. For these authors, reaching a consensus has been challenging.

In attempting to reach some kind of correlates or universal checklist for non-literate cultures the vast potential variability of human societies greatly inhibits generalisation (James, 2017 pers. com). Ethnographic examples of ritual frequently illustrate the challenge this poses in regards the interpretation of rituals within religion. In some cases there are examples of very specific rituals that occur in remarkably different contexts. The orientation of buildings, burials, the choice of sacrificial items and even the apportioning of meat in numerous cases indicate ritualistic 'rules'. In the past these have been interpreted as evidence for structured religion, equally indicative of social cohesion and communication, but it appears that rituals (even ones that could be considered religious in nature) can become widespread and understood in numerous ways without any consensus as to their meaning or any conscious adoption into a structured framework that might be considered a religion.

The late Iron Age site of Hallaton in Leicestershire offers one such example. Here, there was a marked lack of right forelimbs amongst an enormous assemblage of pig bones (representing an estimated 300 animals (Browning 2012, 131). The abundance of right forelimbs at an early Iron Age midden site in Llanmaes, south Wales is perhaps demonstrative of the same ritualistic apportionment of pork (Gwilt 2016, 34). The right forequarters of pigs were being disposed at Llanmaes, avoided in the feasting at Hallaton and appear in graves in northern England (Dent 1984). We may therefore surmise that this part of the pig was taboo – perhaps due to an ambiguous association with the dead. If so, this might perhaps explain the violent reaction of the warriors at Conall's feast (above). It is highly unlikely that the butchers at Llanmaes, the feasters at Hallaton half a millennium later and Conall's guests in Ireland far later still would have had a shared system of beliefs. These examples demonstrate the widespread nature of rituals, their potential durability and multiplicity of effects on behaviour. However they should not be used to demonstrate parallels in meanings and religious faith.

The implications of this observation and of the automatic, non-communicative nature of rituals may be wider still. As Humphrey and Laidlaw argued (2007), it is easy to assume that specific acts of ritual communicate ideas and beliefs and archaeologists have made this step as frequently as any anthropologist.

Funerary rituals are an example often cited as communicative devices, and evidently it is fair to assume that factors such as high-status grave goods or the size of a tumulus are indicative of social status and hierarchy. However, with the potential lack of discursive meaning of ritual, any further interpretation should be more rigorously questioned particularly where it is assumed that the people performing the burial rituals were trying to communicate meaning. It is unlikely that they were. One example is the interpretation of the change in emphasis from metalwork to more agricultural votives from the late Bronze Age into the Iron Age. It is suggested that this is demonstrative of a greater concern with fertility (Barrett 1984, Parker Pearson 1984; Lund 2000) but such a hypothesis may mistake the nature of ritual, suggesting a greater degree of deliberation than the repetitive nature of ritual typically allows for.

Instead the change in emphasis may be an economic one with the participants unconsciously and gradually changing the emphasis on the votive deposits as a result of changing uses of metal objects in society with the advent of iron and changing trade exchanges. The nature of the ritual and the importance of the act itself had not changed - it is the function of the act, not its meaning that is important. Citing Gent (1983), Bradley comes to the same conclusion from a different path. He argues that the Iron Age saw the centralised storage of food assuming a new and important role in the political economy (Bradley 2005, 168). Together with his observation that there is a danger in taking the changed emphasis in isolation, this led Bradley to argue that the ritual practice itself may have remained much the same and the change in votives was based more upon availability than meaning.

As we have seen, it is possible for many forms of activity to become 'routinised' or 'ritualised'. This being so, there are some clear areas in which this might manifest itself within the archaeological record – notably art and architecture. If this is the case, then it might also be possible to assume that the other elements of ritualisation observed above, might apply equally here as well; the longevity and conservatism of ritual and their non-communicative nature.

In many of the historic debates regarding definitions, one of the stumbling blocks has been confusion over the role of ritual within religion. Rituals can be

confused with beliefs. Therefore the cultural borrowings and inconsistencies that Bell notes may in fact largely be associated with ritual and not with the belief system itself. That said, the belief system is unlikely to be impervious to change as a result of the rituals themselves in ways that are impossible to predict. Inspiration for new doctrine or thought within a religion may draw upon its own ritualised practice and art which may or may not originate within that culture. In theory this may therefore have a corrupting effect.

Generally however, from the perspective of the archaeologist it is important that ritual is separated as far as is possible from religion. Likewise, as there is a danger in assuming rituals are communicative, they should rarely be used to interpret the religions in which they may only loosely be connected. Instead, it is the function and impact upon societies that archaeologists can identify.

2.8 Ritualisation

Ritualisation, a term coined by Bradley (2003) is the process by which a ritual is formed, typically the formalisation and repetition of a set of procedures. Although a grey area is likely to persist, it can perhaps be differentiated from routinisation which lacks symbolism although this may subsequently be acquired incidentally (Hobsbawm 2000, 3). The process of ritualisation is not restricted to ritualistic action and the manner in which it is manifest in art and architecture deserves investigation.

2.8.1 The ritualisation of art

Art is often seen as a window into the beliefs of cultures. For Iron Age Britain, a rich and varied artistic tradition is seen as a life-line in the interpretation of religion in the absence of reliable literature to supplement the archaeology. For example, Megaw and Megaw (2001, 11) argue that, 'however ambiguous, Celtic art is one of the few certain if obscured, windows on the Celtic spirit, reflecting the fears and aspirations of a troubled age'. Observing the pot from St-Pol-de-Léon (Finistère, Brittany), Cunliffe (1997, 111–12) contends that, 'it is

totally beyond the abilities of the art historian or archaeologist to say what the owner of the… pot was attempting to communicate. All that we can be tolerably sure about is that communication was intended. If then we reject 'art for art's sake', it is pertinent to ask how readily understood was the symbolism at the time?'

Cunliffe's observation reflects a generally held assumption that prehistoric art is communicative in nature. This assumption needs questioning particularly where images and symbols are used to interpret religion. In many ways art, and particularly symbols, conform to a limited range of accepted motifs, subjects and techniques. The latter may represent the available technologies of the period but the choice of subject is generally seen as the will of the craftsman to express or communicate ideas or beliefs. However, as with Humphrey and Laidlaw's (1994, 73) comment of anthropologists observing rituals, it is 'an easy but potentially fallacious step' to suppose that the purpose of art is to communicate or express ideas to other people who already know them. Indeed it can be argued that art shares many of the characteristics of rituals. Applying the definition proposed in Section 2.5 it is apparent that art can be ritualised – deliberate, unthinking repetition only partially or not at all practical in nature. That Celtic[3] art showed repetition (and arguably unthinking repetition) is evident. Furthermore, it demonstrates the same level of specific conformity and conservatism that is evident in ritual behaviour. Macdonald (2007, 334) asks why the design on the Llyn Cerrig Bach crescentic plaque is repeated on the diaphragm of the so-called horn cap from Saxthorpe, Norfolk, and an unprovenanced openwork mount from the Ashmolean Museum. He cites other examples and asks what the significance might be of different types of artefacts being found on opposite sides of Britain bearing the same design. Megaw and Megaw (2001, 16) make a similar observation comparing the designs on the so-called 'hanging bowl', more probably a head-dress found at Cerrig-y-Druidon near Conwy with the decoration on incised pottery in Brittany.

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[3] Debate in the use of the word 'Celtic' in terms of art is generally considered less controversial than its use in defining peoples as styles can be recognised without prescriptively trying to identify a homogenous society

The repeated use of a limited range of motifs led Megaw and Megaw (1989, 19) to argue that they represent a form of symbolic visual communication, now only partially accessible. If there is evidence of ritualisation, however i.e. in the form of formalisation and repetition (particularly where the repetition is probably unthinking) and the above arguments are to be accepted, is it more likely that meaning is not transferrable and is out of date (Goody's 'culture lag')? Cunliffe's question, 'how readily understood was the symbolism at the time?' alludes to this. This is pertinent if we consider that Celtic art drew much of its inspiration from the Mediterranean, even if only those elements of Etruscan or Greek art which 'fitted Celtic artistic styles and predilections' (Megaw and Megaw 2001, 11) were borrowed. In questioning this, Macdonald (2007, 335) cites the swastika symbol with its probable Etruscan origins, arguing that it 'does not follow that the classical meaning of the symbol was maintained by the La Tène communities that adopted it'. Even in Etruscan society, the meaning might well have changed through time, irrelevant beyond an ambiguous generality of fortuity or blessing that might encourage its continued use. It certainly means something very different today. This change probably applies equally to the use of Celtic designs in later Christian contexts.

Much has been made of the bird like designs on this plaque from the Llyn Cerrig Bach hoard but similar designs appear in much later contexts. Birdlike Celtic patterns can be seen below in the middle of the Chi-Ro in the Lindisfarne gospels. Either there was never any specific or important meaning intrinsic to the design or it became ritualised and had lost that meaning by AD 700.
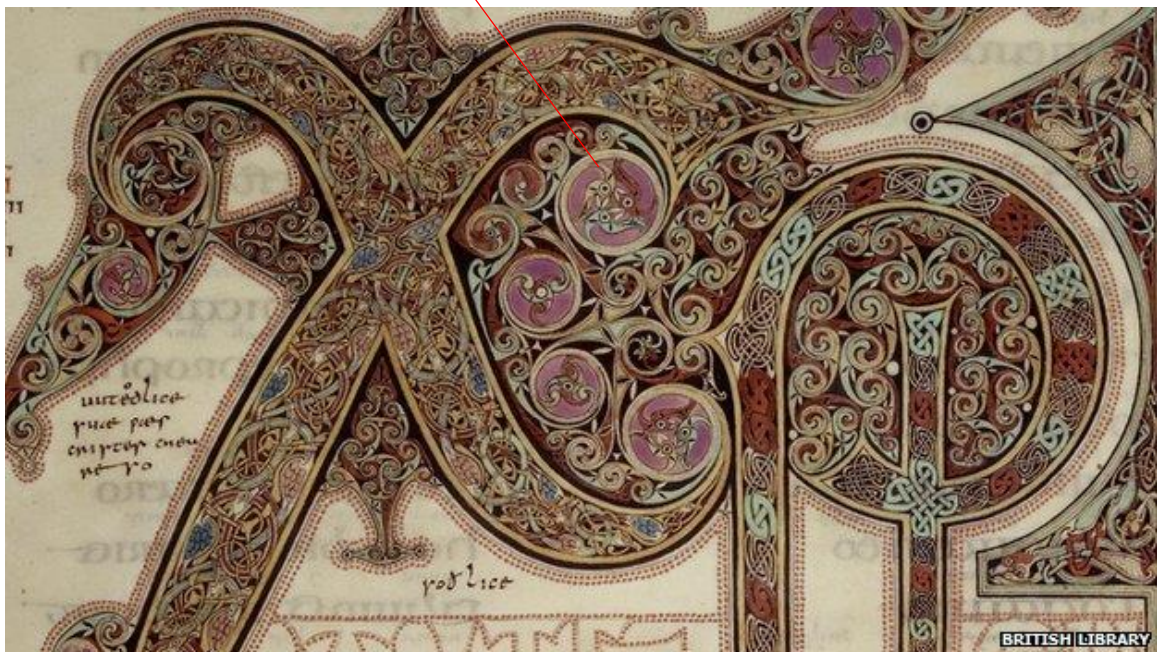
Figure 2 Comparison between Christian and Iron Age art: A Plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach and an illustration in the Lindisfarne Gospels

Many of the same observations can be made with designs on coins. Interestingly, Iron Age coins are frequently treated separately in discussions relating to Iron Age art, perhaps because of the lateness at which they appear on the scene, or due to modern perceptions of coins as money with all that can imply. Regardless, coins potentially offer something that most Iron Age art does not. Together with the letters that adorn them, they *may* offer narrative. The symbols and figures adorned on the coins are believed to reflect a supposed 'pan-Celtic pantheon' (Aldhouse-Green 1995, *et al.*) while others potentially boast symbolism as a means of expressing and legitimising power.

The majority of coins from north-west Europe derived from the gold staters of Philip II of Macedon (359-336 BC), with the head of Apollo on one side and a horse-led chariot on the other becoming increasingly abstracted as the idea and the imagery spread west (Creighton 2000, 26). Again however, it is likely to be a false assumption that the image was used to communicate ideas or ideals. Instead, use of the designs may be an example of unchallenged repetition. Arguably this theory is strengthened by the evidence of abstraction, as it suggests accuracy of communication was not a purpose.

Creighton comments upon the striking 'dominance of this family of imagery on the gold coin of northern Europe for several centuries', arguing that this longevity was the result of continuing cultural significance and taboos protecting the images (2000, 28). However, accepting that the reproduction of imagery can become ritualised, as we have seen more generally, rituals can survive remarkably intact over long periods of time without reflecting the beliefs of the culture in which it is observed. As has been seen with Vedic mantras, the act of ritualisation can abstract even the most literal of messages. Indeed in the case of British coinage, there are examples of incorrect or inverted letters that were distributed despite the errors, suggesting that their meaning was relatively immaterial. So profound was the abstraction of many British coins from their Macedonian origins it is highly unlikely that the original meaning bore much relationship with its final incarnation in Britain. Like any ritual, coins may not have possessed any meaning to their creators or owners but this would not have stopped them implying authority and solidarity on an ambiguous level. Again, the ambiguity may even have protected its power and added mystique.

A limited range of subjects, designs and symbols are also apparent in other forms of Iron Age art. The prominence of boars and wading birds in Iron Age art is well attested and links have been made, with good reason, between these animals and religious beliefs. However, it may be that these links have been overstated. As with the Apollo image on gold coins, Iron Age craftworkers frequently allowed depictions of these creatures to be abstracted – often almost beyond recognition. In many startlingly technical pieces, this abstraction is clearly not due to the inability of the craftsman to depict a more accurate likeness but it is evident that accuracy was not important. Nor should it be

assumed that the craftsmen would be communicating something in the choice of imagery beyond relatively notional and vague ideas from which the observer could take from it what they would.

As anthropologists have shown - the same rituals and arguably the same art can be repeated with surprising conformity while the meaning can be largely irrelevant and the purpose would not have been one of specific communication. Ritualisation of art served to authenticate and empower an item in the same way that rituals empower ceremony and other activity. The sociological theories of status and power accord are also likely to be relevant here along with similar archaeological and anthropological thought. For Gell (1992, 43), art should be considered a special form of 'securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed – the technology works because it is both enchanted and enchanting'. Gell uses the example of the highly decorative canoe prows of the Trobriand Islands where it is not the actual designs that are efficacious or meaningful, but the access of the canoe's owner to the carver whose artistic prowess demonstrates superior carving magic (*ibid.*, 44-6). As well as echoing status and power accord, it is further sanctioned by the strength of ritualisation to add power and authenticity even in the absence of meaning.

This might suggest that the images depicted on Iron Age coinage were merely abstracted copies of Greek and Roman designs and were applied relatively unthinkingly. However, there clearly was both selection and innovation. Scheers notes types of imagery originating in the Greek world – leaves, grain-ears and boar-heads and suggests that their adoption in Celtic art was due to their cultural relevance to the 'Celts' (Scheers 1992, 43).

It is a view shared by many. None of the commonest Roman coins circulating north of the Alps were copied by British craftsmen, indicating that selection was not haphazard or based upon chance (Creighton 2000, 84). Of course, for ritualisation to occur, an initial basis of innovation is required to which repetition is then applied. To a certain extent, the Gallo-Belgic staters flooding into Britain in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC were coming 'pre-sanctioned' by time and custom perhaps further empowered by their exoticness. As British coin makers

started to look more widely for inspiration they apparently still sought 'pre-sanctioned' designs but chose those that reflected their own cultural ideals. The dominance of 'the family of imagery' noted by Creighton is likely to have been the result of their ritualisation where their repetition continues without being challenged. Once again, care must be taken in assuming that at any point specific communication is intended beyond over-arching statements of power and identity. The boar design for instance may be less a reflection of a religious statement than a totemic value associated with the characteristics of boars. Like on our modern British coinage, totems such as lions bear only the broadest of messages and certainly do not reflect British religious beliefs[4]. As ritualisation took hold, the repetition of images might well suffer from Goody's cultural time-lag and not therefore represent the later societies in which they appear. Likewise, there appears a natural futility in the seeking of the origin of a ritual, be it artistic or performed. Nevertheless, where there is obvious divergence from patterned behaviours, it is worthy of greater note. Relevant to the study of the East of Anglia, coins bearing the image of the wolf appears only in Iceni designs, a selection that may reflect an affinity to a totemic animal and representational of a 'tribal' identity or shared symbology (Davies 2014, 31).

This theory regarding the ritualisation of art is not all-encompassing. As in any period and culture, we might expect certain characteristics of the art to be repeated almost without thinking but also to find innovation within these artworks. Thus, while the repetition of characteristics may be symptomatic of ritualisation and may have lost their original meaning, innovation should be all the more significant and meaningful. Where the design is changed significantly, such a change should be seen as a very deliberate, even startling innovation of some significance. Thus Tincomarus' first issues follow the tradition set by his predecessor, Commius, before dramatically changing to display classical imagery. This potentially marks a radical, intentional shift with a purpose we can at least attempt to identify (Creighton 2000, 80).

While Tincomarus' abrupt change potentially draws upon a tradition - albeit an alien one, sanctioned by time and custom – and may relate to power politics

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[4] Although evidently the appropriateness of this comparison can be questioned in light of the likely difference in use of modern and Iron Age coinage as well as their relative rarity

with the increasing influence of the Romans, other innovations are perhaps more indigenous. Solar wheels for example borrow nothing from Mediterranean iconography and are well attested in other forms of art, including votive offerings. Associated with the pan-Celtic god, Taranis and the solar symbol, wheels appear distinct as their own form of votives in Gaul, on coins from Britain through to Croatia and feature in the famous Romano-British headdresses discovered at the Wanborough temple. A wooden wheel from Wavendon Gate (Buckinghamshire) is also believed to have been used in processions or in a 'solar shrine' (Aldhouse-Green 1995, 158).

Figure 3 'Solar' wheel votives excavated from Gaulish sanctuaries (Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, France)

Like any other form of art or artefact, their use may well have become ritualised. However, their appearance on coins and artefacts such as statuettes (e.g. figure 4) is clearly very deliberate and representative of the divine.

Figure 4 Taranis figurine, Le Chatelet, Gourzon, Haute-Marne, France

Meaning and the expression of belief should nevertheless be seen as fluid and interchangeable in art as it is in ritual. Intriguingly, Clark (2004, 221) argues that representations of kings and gods in Mesoamerican societies shows an evolution that may have drawn upon itself – that material objects are cause and effect. Applied to Iron Age Britain, this adds to the sense of a lack of control and deliberation: that ritual and ritualisation is an organic, unintentional creation capable of organically and unpredictably growing, repeating and surviving for which meaning and belief is fleeting and immaterial in all but the most explicit of cases such as the rare depictions of deities. This may help to explain inconsistencies and misleading and ultimately fallacious continuity as well as helping archaeologists to identify deliberate, non-repetitive, and therefore non-ritual activity seen in the archaeological record.

2.8.2 The ritualisation of architecture

The British Museum, like many other neoclassical buildings, resembles a Roman temple. Of course it is not, so what differentiates it from one? Evidently its use – the sacrifice of a bull in the Great Court would, for example, be frowned upon. It also merely shows the façade of a portico and lacks the internal plan – in particular the *cella*, vital for the function of the temple. Nevertheless, the façade of a classical temple is more than whimsy. It evokes a tradition and the older a tradition is, the more powerful the evocation. That people will not be aware of its ancient meaning, perhaps even that it specifically reflects a Roman temple is unimportant – the ambiguous sense of age and tradition is enough.

Christian Churches, as with ancient Roman temples, have followed a well-known template for centuries. They might have ancillary buildings and an array of conjoining chapels and similar variations but the core is the same in most cases, and the adherence to an East West alignment is equally sacrosanct. As no universally accepted Christian holy text specifies the architecture of churches or dictates architectural taboos, the uniformity of the vast majority of churches is perhaps surprising. Evidently Christians should wish that churches were recognisable as such but the specificity of the layout and alignments transcend function and identity.

Arguably this conformity, linked to use and technology, is just as evident in municipal and military structures. However, the uniformity of such buildings is generally more transitory and lack taboo. Churches on the other hand have met the guiding principles of design over a millennium. It is the length of time, together with the specificity of the elements in the design that echo ritualistic behaviour -. 'The deliberate, accurate repetition of unchallenged, automatic behaviour'.

The principal of ritualised architecture need not be solely religious and indeed buildings might display ritualised characteristics but be secular in nature. Bradley draws upon the example of Spanish *hórreos* (raised granaries) that have a strong structural resemblance to their prehistoric predecessors. These buildings often command central or prominent locations within farms and

villages, often more so than churches in the same regions. Sometimes even decorated with crosses, they are often mistaken for religious buildings (Bradley 2005, 6). He argues that their monumental construction, location in the landscape and the decoration that adorns them elevates them to quasi-religious status. They are clearly more than mere functional buildings for the storage of grain, thereby further challenging the idea of the segregation of the ritual and profane (*ibid.,* 8).

Translating ritualised architecture to the religious buildings of the British Iron Age appears, at first glance, to be impossible. Roundhouses were the archetypal domicile since the Bronze Age, sporting all of the ritualistic characteristics observed above – specific conformity and repetition surviving over long periods of time. It is tempting to ascribe this to the oft-remarked interconnected nature of ritual and religion during the Iron Age. As Chadwick notes, 'Traditions of architectural techniques, cosmology and inhabitation were passed down the generations through everyday, embodied movements. Trying to separate functional and cosmological concerns may therefore not be appropriate when studying Iron Age and Romano-British communities' (2009, 67). The everyday, embodied movements can, if this model is correct, be interpreted as rituals much as Budd and Taylor (1995, 139) contend that 'a scientific manual must be committed to memory as a formulaic spell.' While the interwoven nature of ritual and profane in the Iron Age seems to be apparent, it is sometimes easy to overstate the case.

The recurrent tendency for roundhouse entrances to face east or south-east (Oswald 1991, 1997 *et al.*) has led archaeologists, often using anthropological evidence, to seek cosmological or ritual interpretations (Fitzpatrick 1994, 1997; Parker Pearson 1999; Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999) while others have suggested more mundane, practical interpretations regarding maximising daylight and protection against prevailing winds (e.g. Cunliffe 1978). However, Pope's study of over 1200 roundhouses from central and northern England, (Pope 2003, 2007) indicated a less clear-cut pattern of orientation.

Chadwick's study of 38 roundhouses in Northern England (2008) likewise indicated a prevalence but not absolute conformity in orientation. Accepting that

conformity is a the key factor in identifying ritual, this might suggest that the orientation of entrances is not ritualistic and that the builders were making conscious decisions rather than following unchallenged patterns of behaviour. This implies that the builder's actions were primarily practical in nature (although this would not preclude the ritualisation of other facets of roundhouse construction). Interestingly, the unparalleled evidence from the fire-devastated Bronze Age roundhouses of Must Farm show zones of industries focused around the entrances due, presumably, to the access to daylight (Knight 2016).

The truth is likely to be complex. The development of roundhouses, potentially linked to the religious architecture of the Neolithic and Bronze Age and its later extraordinary and unique predominance in the British Isles perhaps suggests ritualisation (Taylor 2014, pers. com) although ritualisation need not be religious. Over time, as with any ritual, the original meanings were lost or abstracted and in some regions consistency waned and ritual actions were challenged in the face of practical considerations.

Regardless of the consistency of certain features of roundhouses, structural conformity of Iron Age sanctuaries across Western Europe is difficult, if impossible to identify. Venclová (1993; 1998) and Brunaux (1986) attempted to define the characteristics of sanctuaries but in the face of the ambiguity of many sites, which satisfy only one or two of their criteria, identification is rarely clear cut. There are sites in Europe that were almost without question religious centres by the late Iron Age – Hayling Island, Harlow and Gournay-sur-Aronde to name but a few. However, far more numerous are enclosures or buildings that suggest a ritual purpose but which are populated by domestic assemblages or ordinary buildings and enclosures in which ritual practise occurred with varying degrees in between.

2.9 Breaking rituals

Once created, rituals of all types can survive vast lengths of time until either they are intellectually challenged or they fall out of use due to a lack of societal relevance. They also typically remain remarkably consistent in form. Adaptation

is possible, usually in conscious response to changing circumstance and need rather than accident, although they are likely to be confined by their own use of precedent (Hobsbawm 2000, 2). The rituals and ritualistic architecture of the early British Iron Age however, appears so different that the continuity that might be typically anticipated is difficult to recognise suggesting a more dramatic scenario.

Bradley (1998), Brophy (2007), focusing specifically on Eastern Scotland and Wright (1994) on Mycenean Greece have all tracked coherent ritualised architectural planning in the monuments of the respective cultures. They note the gradual changes over time as well as the associated cultural time lags such as the similarity between long mounds and the first enclosures with the ground plans of domestic longhouses that had ceased to be the domestic norm (Bradley 1998, 69). However, religious monument building under any guise is not apparent in the Iron Age at all suggesting a more fundamental shift. The period also sees a rapid change from widespread funerary rites to much more disparate and varied practices in Britain.

Potentially, the study of change in ritual and religion in world cultures is understudied as it is assumed that religious behaviour will inevitably alter over time regardless of momentous events like natural disaster or invasion. However, a possible parallel of a civilisation in which ritual behaviour changed radically and suddenly has been identified in Minoan Crete, following the Santorini eruption that is believed to have occurred in the middle of the second millennium BC. Referring to La Barre's (1971) 'crisis cults', Driessen highlights a number changes in Minoan ritual practice as a result of 'influence of stress situations' (1997, 361) and cites examples of cannibalism and human sacrifice as forms of extreme and unprecedented ritual activities which are the reactions of what La Barre (1971, 11), 'a basic problem with which routine methods, secular or sacred, cannot cope'. Driessen (1997, 362) offers another overt parallel from an excavation at Cholula in Mexico where clay effigies of volcanoes were found in ritual contexts following the first of several nearby eruptions. Essentially new rituals were being invented where the existing rituals were perceived to have failed. Returning to Minoan Crete, the change in ritual practice that resulted from an economic and social breakdown following the

Santorini eruption is noteworthy. Of 24 sacred mountain sites, only one (Luktas near Knossos) continued to attract minor use, while major monumental rural sanctuaries were modified and lost their grandeur (Driessen 1997, 16). This was a result of social and political instability outside the towns and a greater resulting focus on defence (*ibid.*). Logically, we might add that the deteriorating social and economic conditions would have had an impact on the mobilisation of workforces for monument building.

It is tempting to parallel these observations with potentially similar stresses that occurred in the British late Bronze Age. There is little consensus as to the cause or the scale of the 'catastrophe' that affected the societies of the time, but a new social dynamic seems to have appeared in response to climatic deterioration and the reduced availability of resources (Burgess 1989). Unstable social conditions subsequently led to severe population loss towards the end of the Bronze Age (Armit 2014) and the sudden appearance of significant numbers of bronze hoards is also evidence of economic collapse and either the deliberate dumping of a redundant metal or an intensification of the existing practice of ritual deposition (Cunliffe 2013, 291). Driessen and others have also observed the intensification of rituals during crisis as well as the development of new rituals and 'crisis cults' when those rituals are perceived to have failed. It is similar to soaring attendance to ritual assemblies in times of danger, known to sociologists as the 'no atheists in foxholes syndrome' (Kemper 2011, 159). Driessen argues that natural disaster, war, famine and other 'helter skelter' events often provoke religious responses and official cults within society respond by means of an intensification of normal ritual behaviour (Driessen 1997, 361). Only when this increase in ritualisation fails to restore normality is blame apportioned (*ibid.* 361). Various studies also indicate a rise in aggressive behaviours in in more modern societies following catastrophes (Adams and Adams 1984). These observations are useful for understanding the confused and disparate religious picture at the beginning of the Iron Age in Britain as well as the intensification of ritual practices seen during the Roman conquest.

Whether or not metalwork deposition in the Late Bronze Age relates to a mass 'religious' response to attempt to normalise the spiralling situation, it is plausible

to suggest that many established rituals, usually so durable, were discontinued as they were perceived to have failed tests posed by the external pressures. As La Barre puts it, the problems had grown to the point 'which routine methods, secular or sacred, could not cope' (1971, 11). Ritual continuity, to a lesser or greater extent can be observed in the 'sacred' architecture and behaviour from the Neolithic until the middle of the Bronze Age. It evolved in response to changes in economy, society and population but never entirely beyond recognition. Finally, many of the rituals were tested beyond breaking point in the face of the apparent crisis of the Late Bronze Age. What followed was a period of uncertainty and insecurity.

Controversy remains as to the reasons for the development and the purpose of hillforts but it is interesting that a potentially similar attention to security arose in Minoan Crete following and during the crisis wrought by the Santorini volcanic eruption (Driessen 1997, 15). The uncertainty in Britain seems to have also led to a challenge to the established rituals with the ritual landscape of early Iron Age Britain looking different to the preceding centuries. It may be that population loss and changes in socio-politics also played a role, with the focus of communal effort on security and the development of hillforts in some areas. The rituals and ritual architecture of the past were deemed to have failed leaving a vacuum to be filled by the innovation of new rituals, some successful, others less so, with enormous regional variation prior to their spread and adoption elsewhere. It is perhaps this picture of confusion and variation that greets the archaeologist interested in the ritual practices of the British Iron Age.

2.10 Research questions

The definition and characteristics of ritual that I offer above are unlikely to close a debate that has raged for decades. They do however draw upon consensus where consensus has been reached and supplements that with anthropological and sociological theory. Most crucial of all will be the consistent application of the characteristics where, as will be noted in chapter 3, consistency has perhaps been lacking. Within these contexts therefore, and accepting the

limitations also identified above, the following research questions can be asked;

1)   What was the nature of religious activity in Late Iron Age Britain; was it a religion of everyday rituals, individual connection with the divine through votive deposition or did it demand the regular or occasional assembly of devotees? What did Iron Age religion look like?

2)   Were there sites of specific ritual focus – places that might be identified as 'sanctuaries' or 'shrines'? What, if any, structures were associated with such sites and can their design be recognised as distinctive to religious sites.

3)   Having developed an understanding of the principal features of Late Iron Age religion manifested within the archaeological record, be it sanctuaries and shrines or landscape and riverine deposition, what was its chronology in relation to older practices and how did it change prior to and during the Roman conquest?

The best place to start answering these questions is self-evidently to review the current understanding of ritual and religion in the British Iron Age within the context of the definitions and theories detailed above.

3. A brave new world: the current paradigm

3.1 The Archaeological evidence; review of sites of ritual focus commonly identified nationally

The challenge to Neolithic and Bronze Age rituals was not total. Many personal rituals remained constant: votive deposits near watery places remained doggedly familiar in form if not in content, and roundhouses peculiar to the British Isles with perhaps their own ritual elements continued with near total uniformity. Even where ritual activity, notably burial and monument building seem to be entirely abandoned, the rejection is not entirely clear-cut. As Woodward (2000, 122) notes, relic monuments of the past were still respected and even honoured, adopted into new enclosures or included in new 'ritual

landscapes'. Activity such as the burial of pottery within Bronze Age barrows[5] can be seen as a continuation of a ritual or even a confused and individual ritual response, honouring the ambiguous power of monuments not specifically related to new religious frameworks.

Nevertheless, this activity may be interpreted as individual and personal while many rituals requiring communal organisation do seem to have been challenged and abandoned. The reasons may relate to socio-politics and economy, rather than a purely haphazard challenging of some rituals and not others. In this regard, the parallel with Ljunggren's (1993) Vietnamese villages and the survival of those rituals relevant to the secular power structures may be pertinent.

Regardless, the Iron Age ritual landscape is very different. Burial practices vary regionally and even locally with a baffling array of different treatments of the dead while crucially, the monuments either to the dead or to the living vanish almost completely. Votive deposition, perhaps now limited to personal 'gifts to the gods' continue but the loci for these practices conform to Lewis' observation that 'Celtic religion was essentially aniconic and atectonic.' (1966).

Of course, it is overly simplistic to accept the idea that religion and ritual in the Iron Age was so disrupted as to leave the peoples of Britain trying to invent an entirely new system of beliefs while only a few prevailing rituals survive, their meaning perhaps unchallenged or changed. The function of hillforts is seen by many to be at least semi-ritualistic; structured pit deposits, middens and other semi-domestic features are for others an indication of the intermarriage of the sacred and the profane in everyday life during the Iron Age with a continuity from preceding periods.

The intermarriage of the sacred and the profane in Iron Age sites, together with the idea of ritual landscapes fits well with the archaeological evidence if not the associated classical literature. However, in some respects, the theories do not adequately explain the later appearance of spaces apparently dedicated to ritual activity; notably Hayling Island, Harlow, Wanborough and Hallaton. These

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[5] At Cossington the burial of pottery continued into the Romano-British period (Woodward 2000, 122)

sites stand out due largely to the vast quantities of metalwork that each boasts but also other characteristics – enclosure, evidence of feasting, Romano-British continuity and a lack of domesticity. Sites of rich metalwork deposition are known elsewhere, notably at Snettisham, but here as elsewhere, the lack of other characteristics has meant that their interpretation as 'sanctuaries' is more controversial.

The less well-known site of Essendon in Hertfordshire should perhaps be added to these sites. Here, 257 Iron Age coins, predominantly gold staters and quarter staters from at least three deposits as well as a hoard of iron swords, a fragmented torc, seven pieces of gold and 6 gold ingots were all discovered in what is likely to be an enclosure (De Jersey 2014, 257). Cremated animal bone and charcoal was also found, indicative of feasting. The site is important due to the long period represented by the coinage (*ibid.*), particularly so considering the sites it is compared to here. Unfortunately, due to the disturbed nature of the deposits, we cannot be certain how or when the coins were buried so the chronology is only assumed. Regardless, it is further demonstrative of a form of site of which there may be many more within the landscape all over Britain, as observed by excavators in the case of Hallaton (Score 2012).

Table 1 shows Iron Age sites across Britain that have been widely identified by archaeologists as sanctuaries and shrines[6]. They represent the traditional, classical viewpoint that assumes Iron Age peoples had such focal points at which they worshipped and many represent a foundation from which new sites are judged.

Sanctuary	Date	Structural evidence/ type
Baldock, Hertfordshire	1st C AD	Ritual structures and finds associated with elite complex
Bath, Somerset	?	Pre-Roman sanctuary assumed due to Roman dedication to 'Sulis'
Danebury, Hampshire	300 BC onwards but likely to be later	Four possible Hillfort shrines identified by rectangular structure and associated pits
Elms Farm, Norfolk	1st C AD	2 possible IA sanctuaries with possible votive pot in central pit. Also connected to funerary practice
Farley Heath, Surrey	Late 1st C AD	RB temple but IA origins suspected due to coin votives

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[6] Essendon has been excluded as it is both unpublished and rarely referred to

Fison Way, Norfolk	1st C AD	Major 'royal' ceremonial and/or religious site with associated burials
Frilford, Oxfordshire	1st C BC - Roman period	Pre Roman ritual finds (inc. miniature weapons) and sub-rectangular ditch prior to RB temple built c.90 AD. Postholes also suggest previous structure
Great Chesterford, Essex	1st C BC - Roman	Three sided temple beneath RB temple
Gosbecks, Essex	1st C BC – Roman	Square, multiple ditched with pre-Roman coins. Later site of Forum Basilica
Hallaton, Leicestershire	Late 1st C BC – 1st C AD	Open air sanctuary with major coin hoard deposits and feasting evidence
Harlow, Essex	Late 1st C BC – 1st C AD	Temple with open air origin with major coin deposits and feasting evidence
Harrow Hill, West Sussex	6th C BC	Uncertain identification. Small hillfort-like enclosure with no internal structures found but 50 ox heads suggesting ritual practice
Hayling Island, Hampshire	Late 1st C BC - RB temple	Temple with open air origin and major coin, weapons and feasting deposits
Heathrow, Middlesex	3rd C BC	Temple in settlement – dating uncertain and no find evidence
Ivy Chimneys, Essex	Uncertain	3rd century AD RB temple believed to have been built in area of previous IA ritual activity
Lancing Ring, Sussex	1st C BC	Identified by 2m square rectangular structure (bedding trench construction) and '*ambulatory*' and later RB temple (1st C AD)
Little Waltham, Essex	Uncertain date	Uncertain identification of 'temple' – structural only
Maiden Castle, Dorset	4th C BC (structural only) and 1st C BC – 1st C AD finds	Hillfort temple. 4th C AD RB temple
Muntham Court, Sussex	Uncertain date	Rectangular pre-Roman building – identified as temple due to later RB temple replacement. No pre-Roman finds
Pagan's Hill, Somerset	3rd C AD Roman temple	Iron Age origins indicated by pottery finds and ditches – unclear as to whether these origins are ritual in nature
Snettisham, Norfolk	2nd C BC to 1st C AD	Repeated rich deposition of gold and electrum torcs, coins and other metalwork, including scrap. Enclosed in 1st C AD
South Cadbury, Somerset	2nd or 1st C BC – 1st C AD	Hillfort temples – small rectangular buildings (bedding trench construction) directly associated with calf bone deposits and metalwork deposits from nearby industrial area
Stansted, Essex	1st C AD	Settlement temple, rectangular build (of bedding trench construction) with associated pit deposits
Stanwick, Yorkshire	1st C BC – 1st C AD	Ritual activity associated with oppida. There are cattle skulls from stream valley but they are undated. The monumental circular buildings likely to be non-domestic with possible parallels to Fison Way
St Michael's Enclosure, St. Albans	1st C AD	Ritual focus of pre-Roman town with associated high status settlement
Thistleton, Rutland	Likely 1st C AD	Circular gully and paved area with some coins/brooch votives. Identified by a later RB temple
Uley, Gloucestershire	Early 1st C AD onwards	Two rectangular structures, one of bedding trench construction and possible '*temenos*'. Iron spearheads, infant burials. RB temple built over second structure in 2nd C AD
Wanborough, Surrey	Late 1st C BC – RB temple	RB Temple with open air Iron Age origin and thousands of coins from votive deposits
Westhampnett, Sussex	1st C BC	Uncertain identification of rectangular shrines associated with cemetery
Wickham Market, Suffolk	1st C AD	Nominal excavation shows contemporary earthworks close to hoard of 840 gold staters

| Woodeaton, Oxfordshire | Likely 1st C BC | Pre-Roman enclosure – poss. Open air origin. Votive miniature weapons and IA coins. RB temple built later |
| Worth, Kent | 1st C BC – 1st AD – RB temple | 4 post holes underlying RB temple and pre-Roman finds inc. votive shields |

Table 1 British sites by type and date (after Wait, Smith, Curteis and Cunliffe)

Many of these identifications are controversial but even so, two points are immediately obvious. Firstly, many sites are inferred from modest Iron Age finds in the context of a Romano-British temple. At sites such as Frilford, where miniature weapons and other Iron Age finds of suspected ritual character were found, the association is not unreasonable. At sites such as Maiden Castle and Pagan's Hill where temples were built hundreds of years after any Iron Age activity, the connections can be tenuous particularly where Iron Age finds or architecture are not clearly indicative of ritual. Often, evidence of Iron Age activity of any description is enough to identify a pre-Roman shrine or sanctuary.

The second point is that the majority of proposed sanctuaries are limited to the 2nd century BC onwards, most dating from the 1st century BC until the Roman period. The exceptions are the hillfort shrines of Danebury and Maiden Castle together with Harrow Hill and Heathrow.

The table reflects the inconsistent approach taken to the identification of sanctuaries and shrines. 'Shrines' have been obliquely recognised at other sites of ritual interest such as along the river Witham, relating to the causeways believed to have been used for votive deposition. However, the 'shrines' identified within the Westhampnett cemetery (Fitzpatrick 1997, 229) are equally incidental but feature more prominently in discussion of sanctuaries and shrines. Indeed, it appears that votive deposition within the landscape is typically seen as different from a sanctuary despite anthropological evidence to the contrary. Places of riverine deposition, even in the vicinity of causeways, burials or other contemporary religious foci are also rarely identified as sanctuaries.

The reason for this disparity is likely to be associated with the definitions of 'sanctuary', 'shrine' and 'temple'. Despite the lack of agreed definitions, it is typically assumed that a structure is required – at the very least, enclosure.

Without such structure, sites even as significant as Snettisham are frequently relegated.

The prerequisite for structure may perversely originate with the archetypal but late sanctuaries of Harlow, Hayling Island and Wanborough that fit comfortably into a classical image of a stereotypical temple. Ambiguity and a lack of evidence in some other historically identified sanctuaries is potentially ignored as attempts are made to find prototypes of these later sanctuaries. The assumption that sanctuaries had a prototype may be incorrect; as a result, attempts to develop systems of criteria for sanctuaries may be baseless. Indeed, even on the continent where sanctuaries such as Gournay-sur-Aronde appear earlier than in Britain, Venclová (1993; 1998) and Brunaux's (1986) attempts to define their characteristics faltered in the face of ambiguity and a lack of consistency between the sites. In Britain, Smith's (2001) revision of known sanctuaries successfully questioned some long-standing conventions. He noted that many comparisons between buildings were superficial, citing the oft-quoted comparison of a trapezoidal structure at Little Waltham with Heathrow and Danebury, despite being structurally quite different (Smith 2001, 15). This means that the construction of rectangular buildings in these contexts had yet to be ritualised, suggesting that they either represent innovations prior to repetition and formalisation, or that their role should be considered more ambiguous than their identifications as shrines would suggest.

Smith's observation is critical in unpicking wider trends that have entrenched themselves as the cornerstone to the historic understanding of religious sites during the British Iron Age. Wait's study revealed that 70% of the known shrines in southern Britain were rectangular (Wait 1985, 171). A closer examination of some of the buildings that have been compared reveals limited coherence. For example, excavators have compared the structures seen at Heathrow with the two simple rectangular structures at South Cadbury; that of Lancing Ring and Stansted and the smaller of the Danebury shrines; and finally Maiden Castle and Frilford (Cunliffe 2010 et al.).
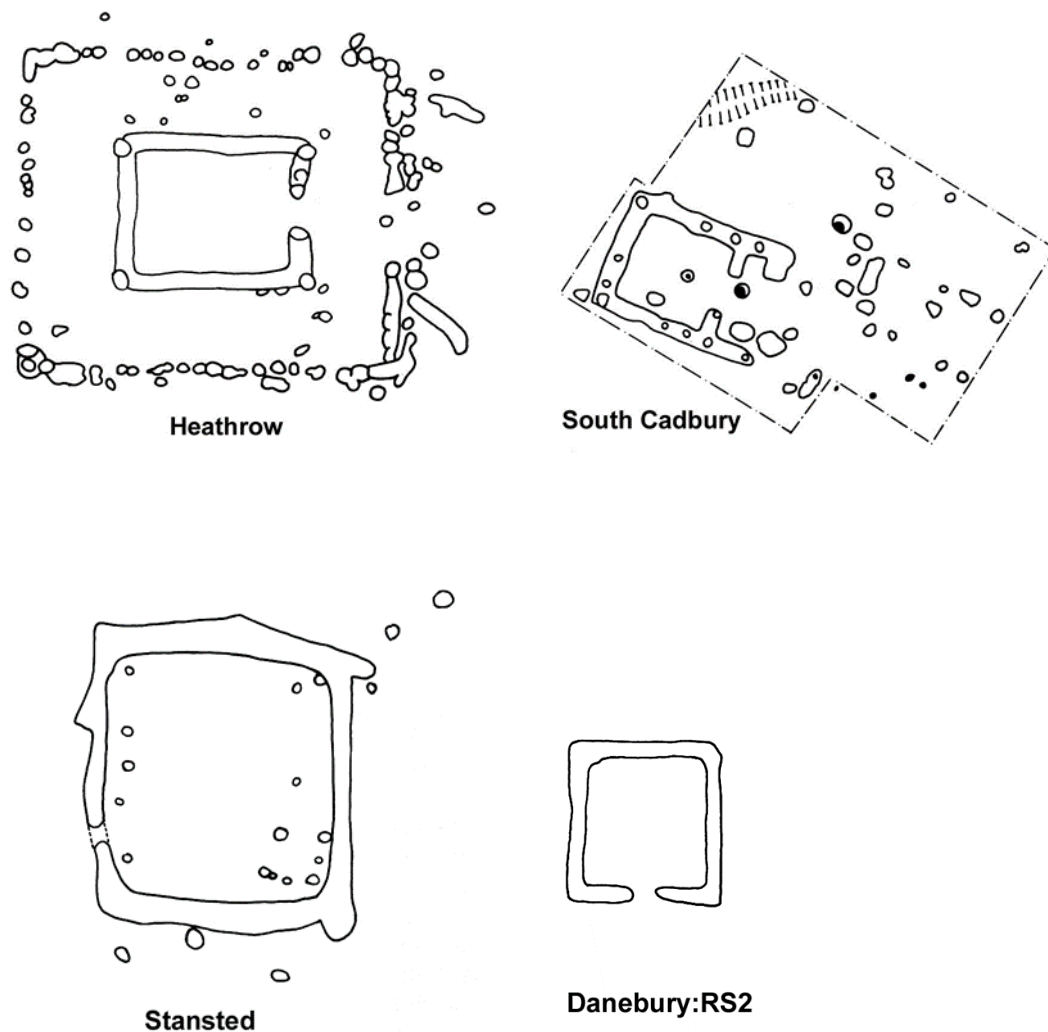
Figure 5 Structural similarities between settlement and hillfort shrines (Cunliffe 2010)

Not only can it be argued that these comparisons are tenuous, but there is little consistency regarding their context and other characteristics of a shrine that these theories suggest should accompany them. Smith has also queried the early date given to the 'sanctuary' at Heathrow - an identification that relies on its similarity with Romano-British temples – given that the rectangular structure appears not to be contemporary to the surrounding *temenos* (Grimes and Close-Brooks 1993). There are also no associated finds. Nor on closer examination are similarities between methods of construction of rectangular

buildings as coherent as often argued. Although the 'shrines' at Heathrow, Danebury, Lancing Down and South Cadbury were all constructed with trench bedding, thick timbers were used at Heathrow rather than the planking suspected at Danebury, whilst at Lancing Down, corner posts were uniquely utilised. Nor were these buildings of particularly uniform size. These divergences go against the uniformity that might perhaps be expected under ritual conditions.

Also potentially owing much to a preconception of what a sanctuary should look like, is the identification of a *temenos* within sites where this is highly likely to be anachronistic. Whilst enclosure is frequently cited as vital in bounding sacred spaces, no sites in table 1 include a *temenos* that can be dated to the Iron Age with the likely exception of Hayling Island which appears as a poor copy of a Gaulish temple archetype and later sees an improved and formalised structure. Its location in Southern Britain, with the growing continental influence suggests it may be a Gaulish import (King and Soffe 2013, 15) although similarities in terms of votive artefacts with other British sites suggest an amalgamation of cultures rather than a direct imposition.

Rectangular shrines have been identified in other contexts as well. The rectangular buildings at the Iron Age cemetery of Westhampnett in Sussex were interpreted as shrines (Fitzpatrick 1997, 229) despite their modest size and insubstantial construction. Elsewhere, where no obvious ritual indicators exist, similar structures have been given far more mundane interpretations such as at little Waltham where they were identified as granaries in the absence of food storing pits and scant cereal remains (Drury 1978, 24). It is perhaps quite plausible that, in earlier periods at least, rectangular buildings were generic constructs used for various functions such as funerary preparation (Smith 2001), storage and food preparation and their appearance at sites of ritual significance should not draw undue interest and certainly should not be considered as indicative of ritual significance in of themselves. In the case of the buildings at Westhampnett for example, they might have been little more than storage sheds albeit for material relating to the burial rites.

The lack of coherence in the construction of rectangular buildings does not preclude their later ritualisation, aggrandisement and the innovation of new features and associated rituals and traditions. However, their modest size and variable quality of construction suggests that their role at their inception should not be exaggerated. It should also not be assumed that the later rectangular Romano-British temples evolved from these buildings. Compared to many more imposing roundhouses and the paucity of associated finds compared to contemporary landscape hoards it is peculiar that such significance has been attributed to rectangular structures. If these buildings were religious in nature, it is fair to assume that they were ancillary, functional and their form was initially unimportant, a point also noted by Drury (1985, 57) but coming from a different perspective. This would indicate they should not be called sanctuaries or shrines although it is possible that they may have been associated with religious activity. This is equally applicable where rectangular buildings appear within the vicinity of other ritually charged locations but lack the conformity that can be observed within the shrines of the 1st centuries BC and AD. On the continent, considering the abilities the Gaulish peoples had in building complex structures the relatively simple 'temple' structures may have merely been a practical development to combat bad weather (Brunaux 1996). Such a view challenges the assumption that, because a building is set within a 'special' place, it is special itself. Interestingly no structures have been found at Hallaton and the earlier phases of Harlow and Hayling Island likewise appear to have been open air with circular structures – not rectangular - being constructed later.

Having challenged the presumption towards religious interpretations of rectangular buildings, many of those identified in figure 5 are less tenable. These include the shrines identified within hillforts leaving just Harrow Hill as a possible earlier sanctuary.

Harrow Hill is a sub-rectangular hill-top enclosure in Sussex dated most recently to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age (Hamilton and Gregory 2000, 66). Variously interpreted as a hillfort or a sanctuary, a lack of evidence for occupation has furthered its ritual claim. Teeth and mandibles representing between 50 and 100 oxen (as well as a limited number of other domestic

animals) were excavated from just one modest trench from within the enclosure.
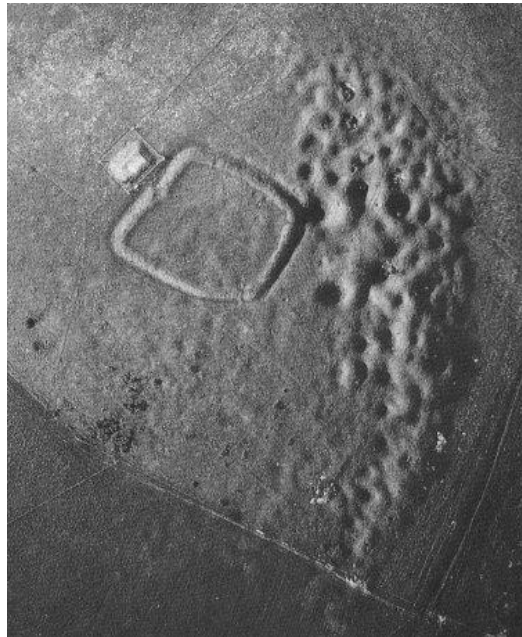
Figure 6 Aerial photography of Harrow Hill (Barber et al. 1999, 5)

Due to the limited archaeological investigation, the site has attracted tentative, comparisons with sites such as Gournay-sur-Aronde (Smith 2001), although the association with Neolithic flint mining and prominent hilltop location do perhaps elevate it above more mundane explanations such as the useless detritus from slaughtered cattle stock (Cunliffe 2005, 31). The truth, as Cunliffe suggests, may well be something in between; the sacred and profane not mutually exclusive.

Regardless of Harrow Hill, the sanctuaries identified in table 1 lack consistency suggesting that if these sites are religious by nature ritualisation was yet to occur and that they may represent new innovations perhaps driven by societal changes. By the same token, the strength of the frequent identification of rectangular buildings as shrines is lesser when the degree of similarity between them is observed, particularly when there are few other characteristics indicative of religious ritual. Indeed they compare just as loosely with contemporary granaries. It is not impossible that they were frequently used in ritual contexts but it would appear that in of themselves they were merely

functional and lacked the ritual focus that might be associated with temples, at least until the 1st century BC.

Even as sites that do demonstrate structure and a dedicated ritual focus start appearing very late on in the Iron Age, they differ substantially from each other. These sites are too few and too divergent to recognise a widespread movement toward structured places of worship, potentially instead demonstrating a fledgling practice structurally independent from any native traditions. They may represent instead direct innovation or continental influence. Nor should we assume that these sites represent sanctuaries of the everyday. The feasting evidence from Harlow, Hayling Island and Hallaton is suggestive of places of occasional, seasonal assembly with large votive metalwork deposits perhaps representative of the gathering of precious metals rather than regular but more modest votive offerings all year around.

It is therefore perhaps natural that some sanctuaries will be far more modest in terms of architecture and votive deposition than others. It is tempting to view sites such as Stansted, Elms Farm and Heathrow as sites indicative of normal Iron Age settlements with centrally located sanctuaries with modest, functional buildings serving largely open-air rituals for normal people with materially poor resources for votive deposition. These areas then became the precincts of the Romano-British temples with perhaps new rituals as well as old. As Drury says, it 'becomes attractive to see the idea of a religious building developing from the provision in a nucleated settlement of a building ancillary to an open space' (Drury 1985, 57). Such a theory would demonstrate that comparisons between them and sites of the form of Harlow or Hayling Island are inappropriate. Instead, temples such as those suggested at Stansted, Heathrow and Elms Farm represent the settlement sanctuaries of the everyday. They would show the level of votive deposition that most Iron Age people would have been wealthy enough to offer.

The theory is logical and neat but evidence does not support it. At Elms Farm, many more of the religious finds were made outside of the temple precinct than within (Atkinson and Preston 2015) while at Stansted, but also at Heathrow, Danebury, South Cadbury and Maiden Castle, the settlements around them

had been abandoned when the so-called Iron Age shrines were built. Interestingly modest coin hoards were found on the east facing slopes of Maiden Castle and Danebury (De Jersey 2014, 163) in locations suggestive of votive motivation. Potentially these hillforts had taken on a new ritual significance, or rather their location had and at Maiden Castle the later Romano-British temple reflected that change. The distinction here is that this is not continuity from an Iron Age sacred space.

At Stansted, a potin coin hoard was found not within the 'sanctuary' but in a roundhouse gully. Instead, ritual practice in settlements appears to follow the status quo of Iron Age debate – an intermix of the sacred and the profane with ritually structured pit deposits common place. Likewise, the relative richness of votive deposition within the landscape and the complexity of domestic roundhouse construction are both at odds with the paucity of settlement votive deposition and supposed temple architecture respectively.

Instead it is perhaps prudent to reimagine the ritual context for Iron Age societies. The assumption that structure – be it enclosure or temple – is necessary for an identifiable place of worship in the Iron Age should evidently be discounted. Fewer than half of all Iron Age gold finds are from known sites – settlements or sanctuaries. De Jersey (2010) sees this as the product of ritual deposition within the landscape, particularly at springs, bogs and boundaries. Likewise, where the statistics could equally indicate hoarding in times of trouble, the relative frequency of gold objects deposited is much higher than in the Roman and medieval periods when gold was more plentiful and times could be just as turbulent (Haselgrove 2005a, 10). Votive deposition in the landscape as well as rivers and bogs, should be seen as an important ritualistic activity that, anthropologically speaking, could have taken place at rural sites recognised by local people as sanctified in some way. In many ways this should come as no surprise to archaeologists. Anthropological studies in Australia, New Zealand and the Arctic show a reverence of natural sites completely untouched by human construction or activity (Ucko 1994, xix). In short, there will always be a missing 'dimension' as Ucko calls it, within the archaeological record of the Iron Age peoples of north-western Europe. Places of greater structure, if and when they existed in the Iron Age, may have had other

functions less associated with the everyday. The evidence from feasting suggests a more intermittent communal role perhaps associated with seasonal festivals. Certainly it is likely that Iron Age cultures would have needed such sites for political and societal purposes such as marriage making and alliance building.

3.2 The temple 'event horizon'

The noted prevalence of sites currently identified as relating to the 1st century BC in Table 1 may mirror a noted mass increase in the deposition of metalwork in all contexts, particularly fibulae during this period, a phenomenon referred to by Hill (1995, 21) as the 'fibulae event horizon'. For many, the observations are no coincidence considering the social and political changes that are suspected to have been occurring during this period.

Until relatively recently, the Roman expeditions to Britain in 55 BC and 54 BC have been dismissed as Caesar's tokenistic vanity projects with little long standing impact (Creighton 2006, 1). However, the period is now under greater scrutiny as to the effects of these incursions and more generally of the effects direct and indirect contact with the Roman Empire was having in Britain before, during and immediately after the 1st century conquest which itself was far from instant. The 'fibulae event horizon' and the speculative appearance of sanctuaries indicated by Table 1 is indicative of changes occurring long before AD 43. Creighton suggests that the scale of change was accelerated not immediately after Caesar's attacks, but a generation or so later (2006, 19). This, he argues was the result of hostages taken by Caesar – typically elites and even the sons of 'kings', returning from Rome (*ibid.*, 20). This is marked by a sudden change in the symbology of British coinage, featuring for the first time the inscriptions of named rulers (*ibid.*). Applying narrative to history is often problematic but irrespective of the exact chronology, Roman influence would almost inevitably have had significant effects. In the context of the 'Celticity' debate one such influence could have been the polarising effect of war and empire having an impact on identity. War can crystalise opposition separating peoples into clearly identifiable groups (Ferguson and Whitehead 2000, 14).

War with the Roman empire in Britain and in Gaul may have had such a polarising effect, helping to create a shared identity between 'tribes' on either side of the channel where no such identity existed before. The spirit of this new-found, or pre-existing but strengthened kinship as well as payment may have encouraged the mercenary action by British fighters that Caesar famously complained about during his wars in Gaul.

The effects on societies on the borders of empires are difficult to untangle and ethnographic observation is inevitably complicated by the dangers of post-colonial bias. Nevertheless, we know that in Gaul native antipathies and power dynamics were manipulated by the Romans and Gaulish troops used to fight proxy wars or in direct support of their own campaigns. These kinds of activities have been observed by anthropologists studying 'tribal' societies on the borders of expanding states and demonstrate the complexity of responses to direct and indirect contact with great powers (Ferguson and Whitehead 2000, 23). The apparent expansion of the Catuvellauni and supposed merger with the neighbouring Trinovantes under Cunobelin can all potentially be seen in light of the catalysing effect of Roman influence upsetting the long-standing balance of power between societal groups. Evidence of direct Roman support and how it may have effected elite identity and aggrandisement can be found in the introduction of new traditions of high status cremation burials in areas such as Hertfordshire and Essex (Creighton 2006). Specifically, Creighton notes the discovery of what may have been a folded chair at the Lexden tumulus at Colchester, amongst other objects including a medallion of Augustus (Foster 1986, 61). Folded chairs are symbolic of Roman authority and this find at Lexden together with coins showing Cunobelin seated and mirroring Roman types suggest the deliberate investment by this Iron Age leader in the symbology of the Roman state helping to legitimise and aggrandise his own rule (Creighton 2006, 39).

The potentially dramatic shifting of power dynamics in the southeast of Britain from the late 1st century BC onwards presumably gradually rippled out to affect the rest of Britain. This may have had a similar impact in regards the polarisation and consolidation of power and the need for leaders to legitimise their control. It is perhaps this, and the need to provide ever richer feasts,

demonstrate power through conspicuous consumption and secure alliances or agreements through gifts that is evidenced in the construction of sites such as Fison Way, Thetford and the significant increase in votive deposition seen across Britain.

3.2 Contemporary Literature

An element of Ucko's 'missing dimension' might in some way be found in the modicum of contemporary Classical texts that have survived. Inevitably their authors wrote from very Roman or Greek-centric perspectives. Not only do the texts betray assumptions and prejudices, the lexicon too may be misleading with words such as 'temple' used inappropriately to describe very different places of ritual activity. Some commentators are more optimistic, arguing that the terminology chosen by the writers might be indicative of the structural composition of the sanctuaries (Webster 1995, 446). This terminology may have been deliberate and shows that the authors saw structural similarities between the 'Celtic' types and the temples of their homelands (*ibid.*, 446). This argument carries some weight in the case of Gaul, particularly with sites such as Roquepertuse in the Roman-influenced south. Webster observes a deliberate selectivity of terminology regarding roofed structures (*ibid.,* 447). Examples in Britain are far less compelling and it is doubtful that Roman visitors, prior to the conquest, would have seen much, if anything that they would recognise as a temple.

Despite a lack of written evidence specific to British sites, contemporary literature reflecting the wider 'Celtic world' has left an indelible, if increasingly controversial, mark on discussions regarding the character of religious places. They are for example responsible for the enduring image that, 'the sacred places favoured by the Celts were woodland groves' (Webster1986, 106) and remote mountain summits. Whilst there is evidence for ritual deposition near hilltops, the remoteness of the locations can now be questioned. The idea of sacred groves has potentially influenced interpretations of sites where tree-holes have been interpreted as artificially developed notably at Fison Way (Gregory 1991) and Great Chesterford (Medlycott, forthcoming). Likewise, it

may have exaggerated the significance of 'ritualistic' finds around Europe – notably part of a golden 'cult tree' found at Manching in Bavaria (Maier, 1991, 241 - 249), the iron leaves from Villeneuve-St-Germain, and bronze leaves from St. Maur, both in Picardy (Debord 1982, 213, 245; Maier 1991, 249) and a bronze leaf from Fison Way.

As Webster points out, these finds are rare, their origins are not necessarily religious in nature and the 'cult tree' in particular was apparently made by a Greek craftsman. The natural locus is a concept not alluded to in Greek or Roman texts before the 1st Century AD other than a reference to the use of lakes, written by Poseidonius (Strabo IV.1.13), an assertion well attested to in the archaeological record (Webster J. 1995, 448). That the prevailing image of the druidic grove may in fact reflect a change in practice brought about by Roman persecution, driving druids into remote places. Alternatively, it could be due to etymological confusion, based upon the premise that the name, 'druid' derives from the Greek for 'oak' (Chadwick1966, 38) or associated with place-names such as 'drunemeton', which means 'oak sanctuary (James 2017, pers com).

As a result, the pervading influence of what is likely to be a misleading representation of sanctuaries must be taken into account in any discussion of British Iron Age ritual sites. Often quoted representations of 'remoteness' and natural foci – particularly 'sacred groves' - will be re-evaluated during the course of the regional study below.

On firmer ground are contemporary accounts of ritualistic practice where the detritus from those activities appear to feature in the archaeological record. As discussed above, interpreting meaning from these activities is unlikely to be useful due to the nature of ritual; in fact it is even less likely to prove fruitful where an interpretation is drawn from a Roman source. Also noteworthy is a surprising lack of discussion of the practice of votive deposition in watery contexts (Bradley 2017, 17); an activity that is more prevalent in the archaeological record than any of the ritual practices that are described.

There are nevertheless a number of specific descriptions of practices that are likely to prove useful in the chapters below but care will always be taken due to the challenges discussed here.

3.3 Summary of observations from national review

The foregoing analysis leaves a significant degree of ambiguity. Whilst it is reasonable to accept the anthropological observations of sanctuaries and reject preconceptions of what places of worship or devotion 'should' look like, the alternative may be archaeologically invisible. Nevertheless, De Jersey and Haselgrove's observations above are indicative of a ritual life worthy of further investigation regardless of the challenges, but such an investigation needs to start afresh with a new framework. However, with the anticipated opacity of the types of sites to be explored it is important that this new framework does not impose a similar straightjacket to the ones it attempts to replace.

In addition to rejecting the preconceptions surrounding traditional or classically influenced views of sanctuaries, the characteristic of accurate repetition inherent to ritual will help identify ritualised behaviours within sites. This will not preclude rarely performed rituals or genuine innovations but will identify genuine patterns in Iron Age religious practices.

The repeated characteristics are likely to include:

1) Votive deposition. There may be selection of types and quantities of votive but this should not be assumed. The anthropological studies discussed in chapter 2 demonstrated that votives are more often selected on the basis of personal wealth and availability of resources than on a prescribed selection. A strong indication of votive behaviour will be context within the landscape, a statistically higher number of deposits than should be the case and evidence of repeated deposition.

2) An association with landscape markers – hilltops, caves and critically, water. However, locations may have been selected for their views of the sacred – a river for example - rather than being considered sacred in of themselves.

3) Association with each other. Deposition may reflect a 'sacred landscape' rather than specific sacred locations. Places of repeated deposition are more likely to be indicative of deliberate votive acts rather than flight hoarding.

4) An association with Romano-British temples. Many Iron Age sanctuaries are identified on this basis despite tenuous evidence of continuity, but compelling examples such as Hayling Island do exist. Later temples can mark earlier ritualistic activity and continuity, but care needs to be taken not to overstate the case.

5) Architecture and structure. Although the evidence from the national review (above) appears to contradict the idea that sanctuaries had to be enclosed or be populated by shrines, these characteristics do appear, particularly in the 1st century AD when they were ritualised into the archetypal Romano-British temple. Likewise, enclosure, although not sacrosanct to a sanctuary often includes ritual deposition when it does appear. Thus, whilst the act of enclosure (like the rectangular buildings discussed above) may have been for practical purposes and not ritualised, it can identify sanctuaries and their function.

6) Feasting and animal sacrifice. Like votive deposition, the animals eaten may not have been selected under ritual conditions and instead reflect availability and relative wealth. However, the national review suggests a degree of selectivity most notably in terms of the age of the animals slaughtered, the time of year and a deliberate apportioning of meat. The apportioning of meat is a phenomenon also seen in contemporary burials and later documentary evidence.

How commonly feasting should be associated with ritual activity is unclear from the national review, and, at least until the first century BC, there are few ritualistic sites where feasting is clearly demonstrable. This is contrary to a generally accepted view that it was widespread from the Bronze Age onwards. Its significance in the later sanctuaries may represent a change in function of the ritual sites themselves or reflective of the crises of the Roman conquest.

7) Funerary activity. The relationship, if any, between sanctuaries and burial is very unclear from the national review and needs far greater exploration.

This framework will provide the basis for a more in-depth analysis of all forms of sites with suspected ritualistic focus. To make the study manageable, this will have to be a smaller region – in this case the East of England.

4. Regional Study – The East of England

The transition between the Iron Age and Roman period in East Anglia and beyond is best known in popular culture through the story of Boudicca. Truth and myth are frequently intertwined and even the archaeological discipline has not been immune to the temptations of seeing its history within the charcoal deposits and coin hoards of East Anglia. Romanticised ideas of the Iceni 'tribe' and of Boudicca have led to a historical led approach with the associated inherent dangers that that approach implies (Hutcheson 2004, 10). With limited excavation in the region, analyses of its many metalwork hoards is often tainted by a desire to link events such as the Boudiccan revolt to, for example, coin hoards, layers of burning and cessation of site activity (Hingley and Unwin 2005, 63). This means that coin hoards are frequently interpreted as emergency or flight hoards, with site and depositional chronology squeezed to short timelines. Fortunately, over the last decade or more, archaeologists have reversed much of this historical bias with Hutcheson (2004, 2011), Creighton (2000) and Davies (1996, 1999, 2011) leading to new, more archaeologically focused approaches. This study will follow their lead, utilising the framework developed in the previous chapters and applying them to identify sites of a ritual nature to a fresh study of all of the discernible sites within the study area.

Although the change to a more archaeological approach is proving invaluable, the effects of events such as the Boudiccan revolt, a further period of potential stress around AD 20 identified by Leins and Talbot (2010) and the more profound and wider impact of the Roman invasion should not be discounted. In East Anglia, as elsewhere in Britain around this time, a cursory glance at the

data shows the vast majority of metalwork deposition occurring in the 1st century BC to 1st century AD, in what Hill (1995, 21) termed his 'fibulae event horizon'.

Comparison between the HERs of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire indicates further anomalies that present challenges to determining the extent, if any, of a shared religious culture between the communities of the area. These anomalies may be due to recording bias or genuine regional variances. Finds Liaison Officers follow different criteria and the specialisms and archaeological prejudices are readily evident in the reporting of sites. In Cambridgeshire for example there is a readiness to identify sanctuaries or shrines, particularly relating to mortuary practices, which is not apparent elsewhere. On the other hand burial practice here may have been different to the rest of East Anglia. Cambridgeshire boasts 17 funerary sites to Norfolk's five and Suffolk's five.

Figure 7 shows the study region along with a broad overview of the distribution of sites identified from the HER records and other sources. In addition to findspots of various descriptions it includes sites of specific ritual focus as identified by HER recording officers, field archaeologists and general authors. They have not been identified using the same criteria and the interpretations can be questioned. Most of these sites are Romano-British temples with evidence of earlier Iron Age activity. Arguably this is sometimes phrased as 'pre-Roman origins' suggestive that the temple itself had an Iron Age predecessor when in fact that activity may not have been ritual in nature or pre-Conquest in date. It is worth noting however that the Conquest is an artificial chronological delineation as Roman influence, either direct or indirect, was likely to have been building for some time prior to AD 43 and nor was the conquest instant (James 2017, pers com). Nevertheless, even accepting these identifications, the map shows how few such dedicated ritual sites have thus far been identified through any means, let alone a single framework.

More promising are the number of coin and metalwork hoards, causeways and unusual funerary contexts. It is evident that the East of England during the Iron Age was far from devoid of ritual activity and landscape features, albeit not of the monumental scale of preceding and subsequent periods. Also worthy of

comment is the number of quern stone finds outside of domestic contexts and generally in isolation, within Leicestershire. In all other respects – coin hoards, metalwork and individual deposits of 'high art'[7], the spread is relatively balanced with a void around the Wash which was predominantly fenland during the Iron Age and a significant source for salt (Morris 2007, 430). The wealth represented by salt production in this area may explain the richness of the hoards in northwest Norfolk.

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[7] Defined as items of a decorative nature including weapons

Coin hoard

Causeway

Sanctuary*

Quernstone out of settlement context

Single 'high art' deposit

Study region boundary

Human remains in non-funerary context

Stone idol

Mixed metalwork hoard

Funerary context

Boat deposition

Significant animal deposition in isolation
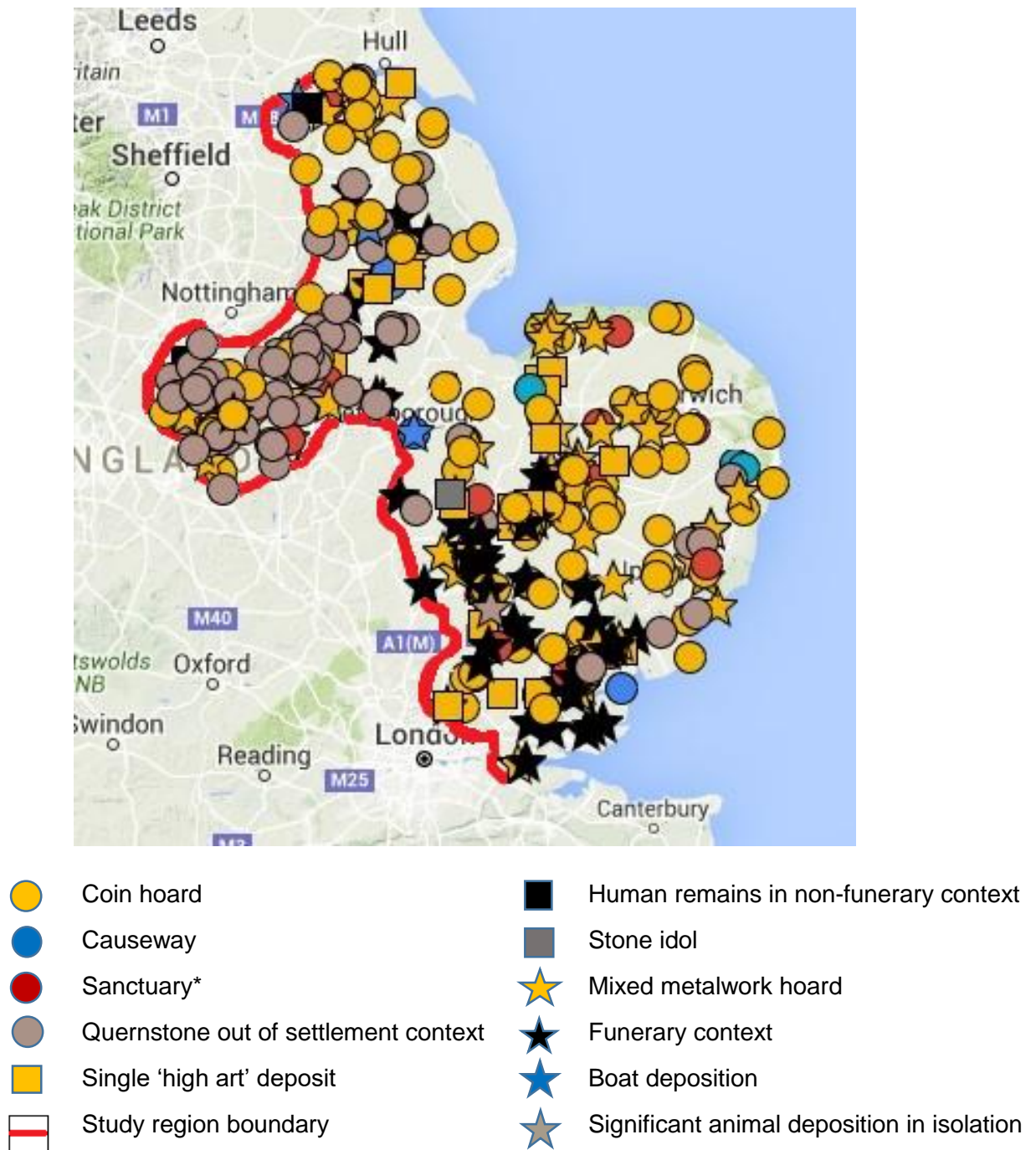
*The sanctuaries have been identified by other authors and will be subjected to greater scrutiny in 4.1

Figure 7 Distribution map of study area

4.1 Summary of pre-identified Iron Age sanctuaries in the East of England

Place	Structural Evidence	Artefactual and Ecofactual evidence	Interpretation	Ritual focus?
Norfolk				
Ashill	Double ditched enclosure and 40 ft deep 'ritual' shaft	Part of an equine statue, potentially that of the pillaged Claudius statue from Colchester. Also complete pots deliberately placed in shaft	Ramparts appear Roman military. No evidence for IA occupation. Likely marching camp with well, later the site of ritual activity perhaps as an act of native rebellion	No
Caistor St Edmund	No evidence beneath Romano British temples for earlier structure	Some IA metalwork and coins but not in extraordinary number	Shrines assumed as a result of pre-Roman activity beneath Temples but little sound evidence	Uncertain
Fison Way	Extraordinary, large and elaborate earthworks from different phases and possible two storey roundhouse	Metalwork and suspected burials	Likely ceremonial centre although metalwork surprisingly scarce considering finds made in 15km radius	Yes
Great Walsingham	Nominal evidence for structure beneath Romano-British temple	IA metalwork found likely to be votive but no more than in surrounding landscape	Later RB temple likely to be associated in some way with IA ritual practices but little evidence of a preceding sanctuary	No
Snettisham	An enclosure demarcating the Ken Hill but believed to be later in date than many of the hoards. An RB temple has also been located nearby	Torcs, coins and other metalwork in numerous deposits	A site of extraordinary deposits, believed to have been votive. Interpreted here as an open air sanctuary despite lack of structure and early demarcation although water may have bounded the site at its conception.	Yes
Suffolk				
Wickham Market	A ditch, believed to be contemporary to hoard and a further ditch believed to be from 2nd C AD	840 gold staters dated to 20 BC to AD 10	Likely votive in nature due to size and deliberate selection of gold, but appears a 'one-off' event so probably shouldn't be considered a sanctuary. Due to scale of excavation, it is unclear whether the associated ditches enclosed the site.	Uncertain due to short term activity
Cambridgeshire				
Cambridge	Enclosures around later RB temple	None	IA enclosure and presence of RB temple does not provide enough evidence	No
Colne Fen	Rectangular building	No votive finds	Identification made solely on apparent similarities with Stansted sanctuary	No
Duxford	Rectangular building within funerary context	Little metalwork	Identification made on rectangular building	No
Earith Camp	Small rectangular building	No votive finds	Identification made on apparent similarity to Stansted sanctuary. Dating also uncertain and now thought to be later than settlement	No
Godwin Ridge	Earth built platform on water's edge of	Human remains, animal bones, both	Relationship between funerary sites and shrines is at present	

	apparent animal sacrifice, feasting and funerary activity. Associated roundhouse near by	articulated 'votives' and feasting remains	unclear. Nevertheless, the ritual and funerary activity on the platform could be deemed an open air ritual space, or sanctuary	Yes, although funerary related
Haddenham	HAD IV roundhouse structure interpreted as a shrine due to proximity of RB temple	Few IA finds apparently votive. However early RB animal bone deposits rich and include head and hooves deposits	As the excavator acknowledges, the interpretation of HAD IV as a shrine would not have been suggested were it not for the proximity of the RB temple	Uncertain
Trumpington	Earthworks and potential excarnation and cremation platforms	Few metalwork finds (copper alloy and iron brooches) but significant funerary activity and ritual pits	The interpretation of specific 'sanctuaries' within the area is unnecessary and probably unjustified. Ritual activity associated with the funerary activity occurred throughout	Funerary site without a sanctuary focus
Witchford	Structure identified through crop marks	Not excavated	No date known. Not enough evidence	Uncertain
Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire				
Dragonby	None identified in range of significant pre and post Roman settlement	Coinage more than might be anticipated at such a site	A high proportion of coins discovered has led to a ritual explanation. However, coin hoards located within the broad surrounding area are rich but have not been given the same interpretation. No evidence of a specific IA sanctuary in Dragonby although deposited coins may be relevant in wider landscape context	No evidence
Fiskerton	One of a dozen wooden causeways along the river Witham associated with BA and IA barrows and possible 'shrines'	Significant metalwork votive deposits – weapons and tools made into the river Witham from BA through to Medieval period	Not a sanctuary in the traditional meaning of the word but nevertheless one of a number of places along the river of significant votive deposition, the importance of which appears to still have been realised in the medieval period	Causeway – place of votive deposition in river
Nettleton Top	A large piece of dressed stone found nearby interpreted as coming from a classical Roman temple. No evidence of IA sanctuary	At least 50 silver and gold IA coins, 30 miniature weapons and 3 'Vulcan' rings from the Roman period found in East Field	East Field, a few hundred metres from the summit of the highest hill in Lincolnshire is undoubtedly the site of open air votive deposition, probably over an extended period of time during the LIA and early RB period. Evidence of sanctuaries are not compelling.	Likely open air sanctuary but no structure obvious
Partney	Described in HER as 'a late Iron Age temple consisting of an enclosure ditch and internal shrine'	Normal settlement scatter	Grey literature not found. HER record does not explain temple interpretation. Likely to have been identified by structure only.	Uncertain
Leicestershire and Rutland				
Hallaton	Enclosure, facing east on false crest of hill. Palisade believed. No internal features found	More than 5000 silver and gold coins found in 14 hoards. Silver ingots, silver cup and Roman cavalry helmet also found in different deposits.	Clear example of an open air sanctuary	Yes

		Outside 'entrance', thousands of pig bones from feasting		
Thistleton	A 3rd Century AD rectangular temple preceded by earlier circular phases although excavation only revealed 1st C origin although a LIA gully also found	13 Corieltauvian coins found within 'temple' area	A place of LIA votive deposition suspected.	Likely, although evidence is far from conclusive
Essex				
Chelmsford	Possible votive activity beneath 4th century polygonal temple and postholes arguably similar in shape to Heathrow temple	Few finds from the IA found	Evidence very limited, particularly with regard to continuity considering late date of RB temple. Heathrow comparison seems flawed	Not enough evidence
Colchester – Gosbecks/ Sheepen	Little structural evidence for IA sanctuaries has been found but extensive earthworks/ dykes and numerous later RB temples and a theatre indicate likely importance	Coins and other metalwork. Excavation not extensive and focused on RB period	Gosbecks has been the subject of significant debate but while comparisons can be made with high status, contemporary sites like Gorhambury and Baldock, the exact nature of the site can not be known without further archaeological investigations	Highly likely, but specific evidence lacking
Elms Farm	No structural evidence for Iron Age predecessor to later RB temple in Roman Town	155 IA coins found, 92% bronze and potin suggesting casual loss. 3 miniature weapons/tools may be IA votive.	The interpretation of pre-Roman evidence for an Iron Age sanctuary is not compelling	Not enough evidence
Great Chesterford	A three sided rectangular building under the RB temple interpreted as IA forerunner	No IA finds	Not enough evidence. Rectangular building compared to Danebury shrines.	Not enough evidence
Great Dunmow	Little or no evidence. Assumed due to presence of later RB temple	No IA finds in immediate vicinity but 17 IA coins believed to have been found near by	Not enough evidence	Not enough evidence
Great Leighs	None?	40 Gold Gallo-Belgic staters	Metaldetected find.	No
Harlow	Pre-Roman circular 'temple' within enclosure on hill, 10m south of Roman temple. A cicular gully directly below Roman temple also suggestive of pre-Roman temple	787 coins excavated dating from 50 BC to AD 40. Large quantities of animal bones, predominantly lamb and showing evidence for both seasonal feasting and votive deposition	Unquestionably a site of votive deposition, feasting and with a pre-Roman 'temple' of some description	Yes
Kelvedon	Simple circular 'temple' beneath Roman	Iron Age 'votive' pot depicting what is believed to be a cockerel associated with Mercury. 11 Iron Age coins, brooches believed to have been votive deposits and fragments from a bowl with the	The number of IA coins would fit with the number expected for casual loss but taken on balance with other finds throughout settlement and the Roman evidence, a 'poor' sanctuary might be suspected	Suspected but far from proven

		stamped impression of a warrior bearing 'lituus'		
Stansted	Much cited rectangular temple within settlement.	Fragmentary 1st C AD brooches, poss. Sandstone figurine, onyx intaglio. 2258 fragments of animal bones with cattle skull propensity	Rectangular building – 50 BC to 25 BC (?). Ritual deposition evidence appears later – c. AD 40 -60. Unclear continuity	Likely LIA sanctuary but dating of rectangular building unknown

Table 2 Corpus of historically identified sanctuaries by region, assembled through the available literature and HERs

Table 2 details places of identified ritual focus within the study region by HER recording officers, field archaeologists and other academics. It stems from a more detailed review of the literature than the national overview and includes sites that are frequently overlooked in wider debates of ritual and religion during the Iron Age. It includes sites relating to funerary activity, causeways and areas of repeated and rich votive deposition irrespective of enclosure. Observations and potential patterns will be discussed for each of these 'types' below.

4.1.1 Archetypal sanctuaries of the East of England

As figure 9 shows, the precursor of the Romano-British Temple or continental style sanctuary are no more abundant in the East of England than anywhere else in Britain. The identified sites rely too heavily on tenuous associations with Romano-British temples, a bias toward enclosure and the presence of rectangular buildings. Nevertheless, there are sites that do feature in the national debates and that invite comparisons with Gournay-sur-Aronde and other famous sanctuaries in Gaul. Harlow and Hallaton, together with Hayling Island and Wanborough in the south of England at least boast some degree of conformity in terms of ritual deposition and feasting.

Harlow in Essex is probably the least controversially identified sanctuary within the region (Rodwell 1975; Smith 2001; Haselgrove 2005b). The 787 Iron Age coins from the sanctuary of Stanegrove at Harlow make it hard to see any explanation but a ritual one (Haselgrove 2005b, 410). A pre-Roman shrine was assumed but only a gully, possibly indicative of a round temple not dissimilar to

the predecessor for Hayling Island was initially found, along with significant associated votive deposits (Fitzpatrick 1985, 57). Further excavations in the 1980s revealed a circular ditched feature resembling a round house some 10m to the south of the later temple, as well as numerous coins and brooches (Bartlett 1988, 165). An archetypal masonry Romano-British temple was built between AD 60 and 80 with subsequent incarnations surviving until the late 4th century. Also associated with the sanctuary were large quantities of animal bones, predominantly lamb and showing evidence for both seasonal feasting and votive deposition (*ibid.*, 412). The Iron Age coins date from 50 BC to AD 40.

The case for Harlow's interpretation as a sanctuary is strong, but the evidence for a structure of any significance in its early phases is unimpressive. Comparisons with continental sites such as Gournay-sur-Aronde may therefore exaggerate the significance of the roundhouses that appear to be associated with the votive deposition and feasting. Like Hallaton, it is also relatively short-lived while the number of coins, although significant, are comparable to landscape hoards located throughout the East of England. Of perhaps greater importance is the additional evidence of feasting.

Also relatively late and extraordinary for its metalwork and feasting evidence if not architecture, is Hallaton in Leicestershire (Score 2012). More than 5000 silver and gold coins, silver ingots, extensive feasting evidence and an ornate Roman cavalry parade helmet were found on the false crest of a hill facing east over a valley. The east facing part of an enclosure was found in which very rich deposits of silver ingots, a bowl and more coins were located, particularly around the entrance way terminals. Immediately outside the entrance were the remains of thousands of pig bones, some evidently the remains of feasting while much of it was deliberately deposited as uneaten votive gifts to the gods (Browning 2012). The presence of the presumed enclosure, the feasting, as well as the deposited metalwork together with the absence of domestic activity has led to the interpretation of this site as an open air sanctuary (Score 2012, 152).

Its interpretation as a sanctuary is hard to contest and the wealth represented by the metalwork and the pig bones is suggestive of its importance. Evidence for the melting down of metal, feasting and the selection of the pigs with a prevalence of juvenile animals is all suggestive of the gathering of people from a large area. Utilising the same methodology to estimate the number of people engaged in feasting from the deposition of animal bones at Baldock (Ralph 2007) we can calculate that even if half of the animals at Hallaton were not eaten but sacrificed, there would have been 4400 lbs of meat; enough food to feed 4000 people. Feasting at Hallaton is thought to have occurred annually in autumn for around a decade (Browning 2012) but even by conservative estimates it is likely that several hundred people were gathering at any one time. What role this place had outside of these 'festivals' is unclear, but the sacrifice of metalwork and animals suggests a religious function. Of course there is no reason to suppose this activity was to the complete exclusion of secular activities.

Hallaton bears out the arguments of the previous chapter. There is no evidence that the site was fully enclosed, the ditch and suspected palisade both appear relatively unimpressive and excavators failed to identify internal structures. The ditch was no more than 60cm deep and for the most part less than a metre wide. The palisade is suspected from the steep profile of the ditch but was not substantial enough to leave a trace (Score 2012, 18). In contrast to contemporary dykes it is unlikely that these features were anything more than a means of channelling people's (or animals') movements or screening off views. If hundreds of people were periodically gathering there it is perhaps surprising that it was physically uninspiring, although the gathering of crowds creates its own atmosphere and impact. Archaeologically invisible structures or natural boundaries may also have existed. Nevertheless, it is worth questioning whether the site was sacred in the way that we tend to think of sanctuaries and that the importance was more associated with the activity; the rituals and feasting with what was perhaps of greater emphasis - the views of the Welland valley. Against this, significant ritual deposits were made in the boundary ditches, and at the terminals of the east facing entrance in a fashion often seen in many Iron Age contexts.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 8 Religious festival of Gadhimai, Nepal. This photograph is demonstrative of the impressive effect the gathering of large number of people and animals can have, without requiring significant structure. © Getty Images[8]

Similar observations can be made of Snettisham, the site of the largest Iron Age deposition of silver and gold in Britain (Joy 2015). Six hoards have been discovered at Ken Hill in what is now known as Gold Field although one, consisting of more than 6000 silver and gold coins in a silver bowl is believed to have been lost to nighthawkers (Joy 2015, 19). The rest of the hoards consist of torcs, armlets, bracelets, coins and finger rings with some of the metalwork in various stages of completeness. The hoards were buried in the late Iron Age but predominantly in the decades before 60 BC, with the oldest made in the mid second century (*ibid.*), a timeframe perhaps unusual when compared to the vast majority of comparable deposits made in Britain in the early to late first century AD. The construction of a Romano-British temple and an associated enclosure around the older hoards has solidified a ritual interpretation but it is nevertheless remarkable that there is no evidence for an enclosure prior to c.AD 100 (Joy 2015, 21). That said, the higher water level in the late Iron Age, could have made Ken Hill an island and it would therefore have had its own natural barrier and demarcation signifying its sanctity (Hutcheson 2015).

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[8] This festival was highlighted as a possible parallel by Vicky Score, the site director for excavations of Hallaton (2012, pers com).

Snettisham is also important due to its relative antiquity. A second century BC origin is significantly older than other sites to which it might be compared. Not only is Hallaton's origin much later, it is much more short-lived with its core activity restricted to little more than 50 years. Like Fison Way, without the intense activity representative of comparatively short periods such sites would excite little comment.

Fison Way is often referred to as a ceremonial or ritual centre but appears distinct from sites like Hallaton and Harlow. Its elaborate multi-ditched enclosure boasted a likely two storied building, variously interpreted as a temple or as a palace (Gregory 1991). Through various phases and almost 'frenzied' activity in a space of twenty or thirty years, the consensus is that it was in some respects a tribal centre with a ceremonial or religious focus (Henig 1984; Gregory 1991), issues of tribal identity notwithstanding. The interpretation is convincing but the challenge is finding its place in the context of Iron Age ritual practice. The suspected two-storied building (building 2 in phase II) has been compared to later Romano-British temples but its characteristics are significantly variant to question such a comparison. Likewise, its layout has been related to Hayling Island but the association can be questioned considering Fison Way's far greater size.

Fison Way appears in many ways to be an anomaly. While the full peak of its sophistication and of the internal buildings themselves occur in the 1st century AD, large enclosures were being constructed here and elsewhere within the nearby landscape from the middle Iron Age. If enclosure was not necessary for a ritual site, why go to the extraordinary efforts witnessed at Fison Way? There are suggestions that the enclosures were originally domestic (Cunliffe 2010, 565) but there is little evidence of activity, domestic or ritual, until around AD 40. Amongst this scant evidence is detritus from copper metallurgy, perhaps a forerunner to the pellet moulds found in the latter phase. Metal working does not preclude ritual activity but it is puzzling as to why there appears to be a general lack of votive metalwork across the site. Broken brooches – many of them from the topsoil – are presumed to have been 'ritually killed' but could have been merely trampled accidentally, and the numbers pales in comparison with hoards found relatively locally.

The function of Fison Way is therefore far from clear. Around 60 burials, dating from AD 40 - 50 have been identified in associated enclosures in close proximity although none have been found within the main enclosure itself. These have been paralleled with that of medieval cathedrals with people, perhaps high-status elites, wishing to be buried in the sanctity of a ritual site (Healey 1986, 199). Such comparisons have been made at other ritual sites where human remains have been found but typically they are fragmentary and scattered in a manner not dissimilar to many domestic sites. At Fison Way the idea has more credence, as the burials are formalised in a manner unusual for the region. Although lacking Fison Way's elaboration, similarly large enclosures associated with funerary activity are evident elsewhere, notably in Essex and Hertfordshire.

In the absence of closer parallels it is hard to see the place of Fison Way in the wider religious context of Iron Age Britain. The nearby rectangular enclosures of Ashill and Barnham have attracted comparison due to their morphological parallels with continental sites referred to as *Viereckschanzen* (Martin 1992, 22). These were long interpreted as being ritual in nature but this is now considered unlikely (Von Nicolai 2009). With ritual evidence at Barnham restricted to a human leg and a water trough, comparisons are perhaps premature. Likewise at Ashill a 40 foot timber lined shaft undoubtedly boasts ritual deposition but is arguably more likely to have occurred after its use as a well (Gregory 1977, 13), potentially marking the end of the site's use. Also of interest there is part of a Roman equine statue that could have come from the same famous sculpture of Claudius as the head dredged from the River Alde and believed to have been from Boudicca's sack of Colchester (Hingley 2005, 83). Potentially the probably ritualistic native activity is demonstrative of a single event rather than of a site of special religious status, perhaps rituals associated with thanking the gods for military victory or the ritual cleansing of an enemy fortification.

Charcoal from the base of one of Barnham's ditches have provided a radiocarbon date of 1080 ca., BC – AD 20 (2050 +/- 80 BP; Martin 1993; 1994, 48) giving it a likely pre-Roman date and potentially marking it as a forerunner to Fison Way (Martin 1993). However, the strength of a solely ritual

interpretation relies on comparisons with *Viereckschanzen* and the human leg. Indeed the latter, believed to represent a whole inhumation (*ibid.*) is more indicative of a foundation deposit for a hillfort fortification, further suggestive of a military purpose. Potentially these, and other rectangular enclosures in the region were a chain of either native or Roman fortifications. They may indicate a defensive element to Fison Way which more typically attracts a wholly ceremonial interpretation.

Better known but only partially understood is the sanctuary at Great Chesterford. A pre-Roman rectangular building there has been identified as an Iron Age shrine on the basis of similarities to the Danebury and Heathrow 'shrines' (Medlycott, forthcoming). As discussed in this thesis, such identifications can be questioned although the proximity to the later Romano-British temple is compelling, as is its siting - a hillside adjacent to a stream (*ibid.*, 10) - although suggestions that excavated 'tree-holes' may have been a sacred grove are perhaps a little fanciful despite a possible precedent at Fison.

The unimpressive nature of the building, which was apparently three sided with its opening facing north (Medlycott, forthcoming., 2) and lack of votives prior to the later 1st century AD means that we should not assume an Iron Age origin for ritual activity. As with Harlow, metalworking and buildings for other ancillary activity associated with the temple may be found in the nearby Roman town. Brooches that could not have functioned and were perhaps created for votive deposition were found within the ritual pits and shafts along with the skeletal remains of more than 1000 sheep boasting a less marked but similar selectivity as at Harlow (*ibid.,* 11 and Wickenden 1992).

Of similar ambiguity, is Elms Farm, Heybridge. Here, late Iron Age settlement evidence has been found beneath a Roman town centred upon a Romano-British temple (Atkinson and Preston 2015). Interestingly, the excavators noted that only four of 28 overt religious artefacts were from the temple precinct; the rest were scattered throughout the settlement with only marginal grouping (*ibid.*). Why the fragmentary Iron Age remains should indicate an Iron Age forerunner to the Romano-British temple is unclear from the report. Of the 28 religious artefacts, only three miniature weapons and a tool are likely to date

before the Roman invasion, and then not necessarily, whilst 92% of the 155 Iron Age coins were low value copper-alloy or potin coins, which Guest interprets as indicative of casual loss (2015).

4.1.2 Settlement sanctuaries

As nationally, there are a number of sites of ambiguous identification related to settlements. In all, 13 have historically been identified in the East of England but can be challenged due to an over-reliance on comparisons with 'sanctuaries' elsewhere and presumed Iron Age activity below or near Romano-British Temples. Poor and chronologically misleading evidence at Stansted has been discussed above and other sites offer similar ambiguous evidence.

At Thistleton (Rutland), excavations in the 1950's revealed two groups of Romano-British buildings 450 metres apart and an inhumation cemetery. Around 111 Roman coins were excavated as well as 31 brooches and some weapons. A 3rd Century AD rectangular temple was preceded by earlier circular phases. Excavators indicated a 1st century AD origin (Greenfield 1963) but pre-Roman activity is inferred from a Late Iron Age gully beneath the temple and the presence of 13 Corieltavian coins (Smith 2001). This evidence is a little more compelling than sites that lack signs of ritual deposition, but it is possible that the Iron Age coins were heirlooms, recycled metal, or were still in circulation when the Romans were established in the area. From an indigenous perspective, availability was the main prerogative for an acceptable ritual offering. A further 38 Iron Age coins were also metal-detected within the locality further questioning the significance of this single deposit, whilst several thousand Roman coins were found throughout what appears to have been a busy market town.

The presence of Iron Age coins and potential ritual deposition outside supposed sacred areas is evidenced elsewhere in the East of England. 40km to the east of Harlow, is Kelvedon, another settlement that grew into a small town in the Roman period. Here, the pre-Roman origins of a simple circular temple are suggested only by a late Iron Age 'votive' pot depicting what is believed to be a cockerel associated with Mercury (Rodwell 1988, 136). Elsewhere within the

settlement, however, 11 Iron Age coins and several brooches might be votive deposits, along with fragments from a bowl found in a well bearing the stamped impression of a warrior with what Creighton tentatively described as a *lituus* (2000, 211). Reports of a gold torc in the area are unconfirmed.

The round temple at Kelvedon appears anachronistic and has been likened to the circular temple at Hayling Island (Rodwell 1988, 136) whilst a central 21m long rectangular structure in an enclosure has been compared with late Iron Age funerary enclosures in northern France (Haselgrove 1997a: 66). A later Roman inhumation cemetery was extensively excavated. There is no evidence of it having had an Iron Age origin, but the discovery of a 1st century BC warrior inhumation with rich grave goods on a hillside overlooking the settlement is worth noting (HER). Kelvedon is significant in that finds are not restricted to the area identified as the temple and its immediate compound in either the Iron Age or Roman period.

At Haddenham, Cambridgeshire, the HAD IV enclosure and roundhouse was originally identified as a Late Iron Age sanctuary due to its proximity to a Romano-British Temple. This later temple respected and even utilised a Bronze Age barrow contained within its *temenos* and this, together with the nearby pennanular Iron Age ditched enclosure has been interpreted as ritual continuity from the Bronze Age through to the end of the Roman period (Aldhouse-Green 2010, 142). However, as has been discussed, Sharples and other authors have regularly shown how ancient monuments can be respected and may even add to the sanctity of the site, but that no continuity should be expected. Indeed, Evans and Hodder acknowledge that the Romano-British temple may have been sited on the barrow simply to elevate it from the very real threat of flood waters (2006, 470). As the excavators admitted, 'if excavating that (sic. HAD IV) in isolation the question would probably not have been asked. It is only by its proximity to the incontestable Roman shrine that the question becomes pertinent…' (Evans and Hodder 2006, 327). Evans has since re-interpreted HAD IV as a 'robustly ditched' roundhouse (2013, 71).

In some respects the location of Haddenham is of greater relevance than its roundhouses. Figure 9 shows the area around Haddenham, focusing on Earith

at the lower reaches of the River Ouse. During the Iron Age, the sites shown in the map would have been located either on the Fen edge or within Fen islands. Of seven sites historically proffered as sanctuaries within Cambridgeshire, four come from this area of no greater than seven square kilometres; Earith Camp, Godwin Ridge, Haddenham and Colne Fen.

	Coin hoard		Mixed metalwork hoard
	Historically identified sanctuary		Funerary context
	Single 'high art' deposit		Stone 'idol'
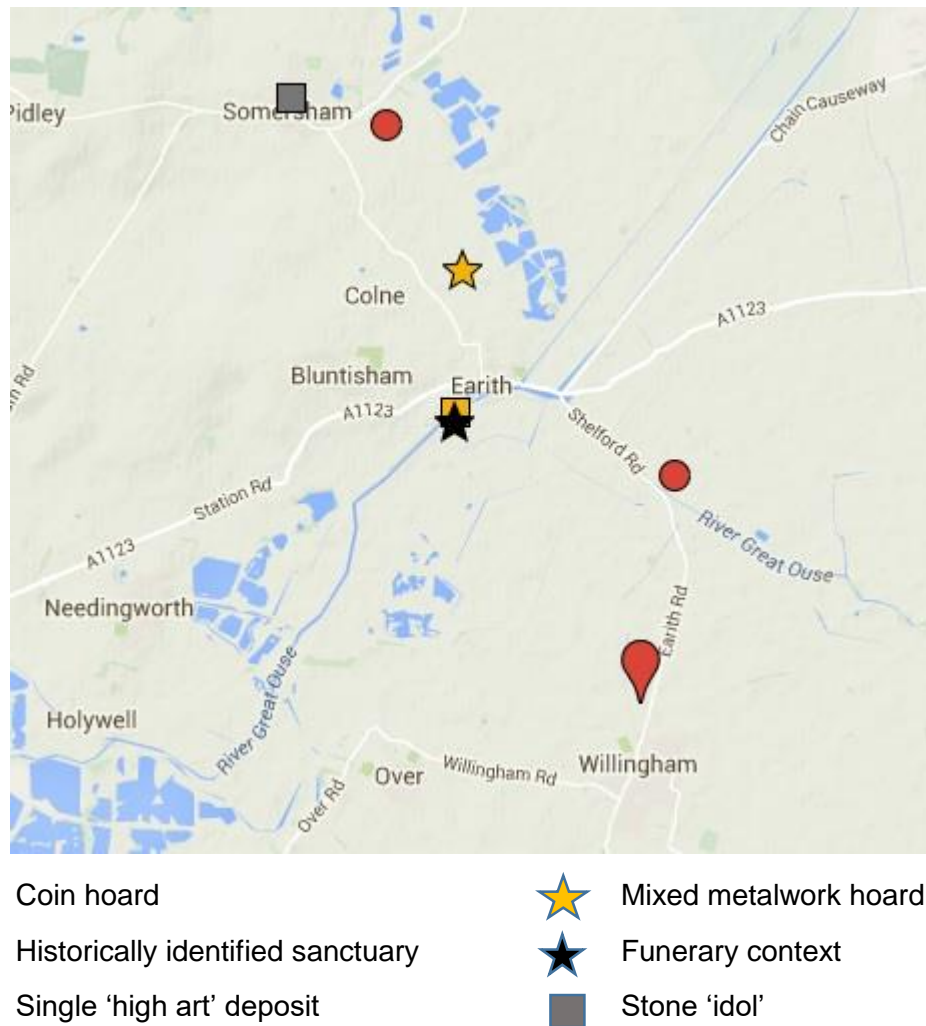
Figure 9 Map showing Earith and nearby sites of Earith Camp, Haddenham, Colne Fen and Godwin Ridge

The region boasts ritual activity from the Early Bronze Age through to the late Roman period with a landscape littered with Bronze Age barrows and, at times, intense settlement. As a result it is tempting for archaeologists to seek ritual continuity and, as at Haddenham, the identification of Iron Age sanctuaries in this area can owe much to the proximity of earlier or later ritual activity. At

Camp Ground, near Somersham - a site of significance in the Late Iron Age and potentially a centre for Imperial administration in the Roman period (Regan *et al* 2004, 60) - a square building within an enclosure has been interpreted as a shrine. In fact, the identification made in the site report is very tentative, based solely on the similarity of its form with that of Stansted (Havis and Brooks 2004). The dating is far from certain and in the words of the excavators, it 'sits uncomfortably close to the eaves-gully of an Iron Age building lying to the west' (Regan et al. 2004, 74). The legitimacy of the identification of square and rectangular 'shrines' in the late Iron Age and the comparisons made to identify others has already been heavily critiqued within this thesis. Here, the comparison is equally questionable as it does not follow an east west alignment, is not segregated from other buildings as at Stansted and Danebury, and is not the centre for votive offerings. Equally suspect is the interpretation of a sanctuary at nearby Colne Fen, also identified due to its rectangular shape. Like Earith Camp, its date is uncertain, there is no east west alignment and has no associated ritual deposits.

Also worthy of note is Nettleton Top, in Lincolnshire. Here, more than 30 miniature weapons were discovered on a hillside within an area that was interpreted by its excavators as an important ceremonial or religious centre (Willis and Dungworth 1999). The miniatures, likely to be votive in nature, were discovered by metal detectorists prior to the excavations and their context is not well understood although it has been suggested that they may have been located in a ditch for an enclosure demarcating a sacred space (Daubney 2011). The excavations uncovered Late Iron Age and early Romano-British enclosures with five Bronze Age barrows located close to the site. In the Roman period it was an important roadside settlement on the line of a former prehistoric trackway (Willis and Dungworth 1999). As well as its communication links, the hilltop is the highest in the Wolds and East Field, the location for most of the coin deposits, is a few hundred metres away from the crest of the hill and in a typical location for votive deposition. There was a time when significant contemporary settlement evidence might call into question a ritual interpretation for a hilltop site, seen as 'rural', isolated sanctuaries but it is becoming apparent

that hilltop sanctuaries such as Hallaton and Harlow were located in close proximity to settlements of varying descriptions.

The excavators found no more miniatures and, although they interpreted three brooches found in unusual gully ditches as votive, metalwork deposits were scant outside of the East Field area. Their tentative comparison with these gullies with potential 'artificial groves' at Thetford (Willis and Dungworth 1999, 34) is speculative and they acknowledge their identification of the whole site as a sanctuary is in danger of being circular in argument. A large piece of architectural stone was cited as evidence of a Romano-British temple (Willis 2013, 387) due to a tentative identification by Bidwell (2013) although Sparey-Green parallels it to pieces found in archways along Hadrian's Wall (*ibid.*). Neither interpretation suits the area in which it is found while Bidwell stated that if it did come from a temple, it would have been a temple of 'classical form'. It seems highly unlikely, in light of the character of the rest of the Roman roadside settlement that such a temple would be in that location.

More than 120 silver and gold Iron Age coins have been found in East Field by metal detectorists, and many more are suspected (de Jersey 2014). The miniatures and later deposits such as three silver and gold rings depicting Vulcan, a Roman deity apparently popular in Lincolnshire (Marshman 2013, 284) all suggest them to be votive in nature. However, although it is natural to seek a structural locus within the vicinity, only the large piece of dressed stone hints of such a structure. Based upon current evidence, East Field seems to have attracted votive deposition in the Late Iron Age, a practice continuing into the Roman period in much the same manner. However, there is little evidence of any associated religious structure within the vicinity with the surrounding earthworks and buildings in both periods domestic in nature or associated with the adjacent route-way. It is also worth noting the presence of a hoard of 10 gold staters located less than 2km away, potentially also votive in nature due to its riverine focused context.

The interpretation of Nettleton Top as a 'multi-period ritual complex' (Willis 2013) owes as much to alleged Bronze Age continuity as it does to votive deposition. I have argued against the over-emphasis on earlier, particularly

Bronze Age, monuments as evidence for later ritual practice, yet the miniatures may provide some support. Miniatures, generally relatively rare in Britain, are generally thought to appear no earlier than around 100 BC, yet Farley observes that many of the Nettleton Top examples mirror Bronze Age and Early to Mid-Iron Age style weapons, although others appear contemporary (Farley 2011a, 98). She also notes that an Early Bronze Age flat axe from the site was re-deposited in the Iron Age context (*ibid.*, 100). 'Curated' Bronze Age weapons and even Neolithic axes have been found in a number of Iron Age ritual contexts but their deliberate imitation in a product believed to have been created purely as a votive, is more deliberate and meaningful.

In the interests of fulfilling the long-accepted theory that a delineated sacred space is necessary in denoting a site of special ritual focus, potential votive deposition nearby is generally ignored. Even with a site such as Harlow, one of the few that sits comfortably within the idea of delineation, its wider context is worth considering. According to the HER, further hoards have been located around Harlow (although of little consequence compared to the coin numbers in the Stanegrove area). 55 Iron Age coins were supposedly found during the development of a new car park in 1969 in Old Harlow, approximately 2km from Stanegrove but the report is viewed with suspicion (Fitzpatrick 1985, 52). A hoard is recorded as having been found 200 metres away in the Harlow Mill area, also close to the river, but this too is debatable.

On firmer ground are the finds from the Holbrooks rescue excavations. Located around 500m to the northeast of the Roman temple, 37 Iron Age coins were recorded over an area of 14 acres but focused in a small area containing Roman masonry buildings and numerous brooches, coins and other votive objects from that later period (*ibid.*). Conlon (1973, 37) suggested that the buildings may have been workshops producing votives for the temple or served as accommodation for priests and pilgrims. Their apparent opulence and that the masonry construction is believed to have been largely limited to official or communal purposes (Rodwell 1975) suggests a more significant function and as a result, the area has been interpreted as another temple complex (Fitzpatrick 1985, 57). More recently Havis and Medlycott have queried this identification arguing that the building designs appear more domestic in nature

(2013, 7). Regardless of the interpretation of these buildings there is evidence that in the Iron Age, coins continued to be deposited within the locality rather than being restricted to bounded enclosures.

The idea of settlement sanctuaries offering a sacred space within a community is currently very poorly evidenced with votive deposition rarely occurring within a bounded space or associated with a temple. Only at Harlow is such a theory tenable but deposition even here was not restricted to the immediate vicinity of the temple. More typically, votive deposition occurred in and around settlements only very broadly confined to specific areas and rarely within a delineated zone. Evidently the relationship between this deposition and the settlement needs more investigation.

4.1.3 Places of power; *oppida,* proto-*oppida* and 'hillforts'

It is natural to seek foci for religious worship in settlements, particularly where the settlement is suspected of providing some form of centralisation or government. This is likely to be the reason that hillfort shrines have been long suspected, interwoven with the debate regarding the function of hillforts more generally. It is therefore likely that the same preconceptions exist with the development of oppida. Early artificially structured sanctuaries have been identified on the continent at Zavist, Milan and Gournay-sur-Aronde, all dating to the 4th century BC. An association of most Gaulish *oppida* with cult centres has been made and occasionally these centres have outlasted the oppida themselves (Nash 1976, 115).

Brunaux (1986, 8) has also suggested that many of the sanctuaries pre-dated the oppida of which they were part; that the new urban centres grew up around enclosed sanctuaries he calls '*Mediolanum*'. To Brunaux, this is hardly surprising as *oppida* were, after all, similar to sanctuaries as enclosed places of 'assembly, passage and encounter... and sanctuaries would have found a natural place inside them, sometimes as at Zavist or Gournay in defensive positions close to the gate' (Brunaux 1986, 7). This observation, if correct, suggests that sanctuaries started out life as rural open-air places of worship but

as meeting places they would naturally have had secular roles later attracting organised settlement around them (for example at Milan and Gournay-Moyenneville). Their purpose may have changed to accommodate new secular roles whilst remaining important religious centres.

In theory, a similar phenomenon may have started in Britain several centuries later without the time to develop before the arrival of Roman urban structuring. Perhaps better described as polyfocal settlements (Woolf 1993; Haselgrove, Millet 1997), most British *oppida,* whilst lacking other urban characteristics, probably incorporated religious or ceremonial centres (Haselgrove 2000, 205). At St. Albans, the complex was focused around a marshy area of probable ritual significance (Bryant 2007; Bryant and Niblett 1997). A large earthwork enclosure known as the Fosse in the valley bottom, has been interpreted as a ruler's palace but Haselgrove argues that it may form part of a more extensive ceremonial complex, the importance of which may be further evidenced by the Roman forum and basilica which later replaced it (Curteis 2004, 212).

In the East of England polyfocal settlements or *oppida* are not readily apparent; the few examples that come close include Stonea Grange in Cambridgeshire, Caistor St Edmund, Thetford and Saham Toney (Cunliffe 2010, 198). To these can perhaps be added Ingoldisthorpe on the northwest coast of Norfolk. Here, the National Mapping Program has identified a significant settlement and important finds from the area are indicative of its prominence.

The identification of many of these sites is controversial, as is their possible role in the ritual lives of the local communities. As well as a polyfocal settlement, Stonea Grange has been interpreted as a port of trade due to the diversity of coinage (Jackson and Potter 1996); the two terms not being mutually exclusive. A ritual focus has been identified at the associated enclosure of Stonea Camp which may have served a number of religious and commercial functions (*ibid*., 1996, 43). Unfortunately the Camp has yielded little by way of artefactual or ecofactual evidence through excavation, and only incidental evidence from metal-detected coin hoards said to have been discovered within the enclosure. Ritualistic continuity is cited due to the construction of a Romano-British temple but this was located northwest of the Grange and not directly near the Camp.

Postholes sealed beneath the temple's forecourt have been identified as an earlier Iron Age temple (Jackson and Potter 1996, 219) but with no datable evidence this is purely speculative whilst the temple and its finds suggest a mid-2nd to early 3rd century AD date. With the frequent occurrence of Iron Age coinage elsewhere in Stonea Grange it is perhaps surprising that there should be a lack of them here.

Stonea is located within the Cambridgeshire Fens and it is likely that it was a settlement within a wider area of ritualistic behaviour. Its later Romano-British temple may have either been unrelated to the Iron Age activity or acted to 'formalise' a ritual landscape as will be discussed below. The Camp itself could have been the site of occasional ritual activity as Jackson suggests (1996) but associated not with the settlement in the way of Gosbecks at Colchester or the Fosse at St. Albans but part of the ritual landscape of the Fens. Perhaps exemplifying this practice, the Field Baulk (March) coin hoard that yielded 872 Iceni coins was discovered on another island in the Fens, less than 5km away.

Saham Toney in Norfolk offers equally ambiguous evidence. Metal-detected finds have led to its identification by Davies as a settlement of some size, well established by the first quarter of the first century AD (1999, 34) although this has not been confirmed by excavation. Bounded by rivers on either side, Brown (1986) suggested a natural crossing point beside Woodcock Hall. The fields in the immediate vicinity yielded 82 Iron Age coins, pre-Conquest brooches and a coin hoard with a clear concentration of finds by the presumed crossing. It is possible that Woodcock Hall was a cult site of some significance (Davies 1999, 35). Alternatively, the finds that include apparently deliberately broken brooches in an area probably waterlogged may point to a ritual interpretation for the whole of the Saham Toney site rather than a bounded area or liminal zones within a settlement (Hutcheson 2004, 7).

Seen in the wider context, particularly with sites like Harlow and Kelvedon in mind, scattered pockets of ritual activity within high status settlements should perhaps be anticipated. Potentially the ritually charged, dual purpose elite sites recognised at Gorhambury, Gosbecks and Bagendon could offer parallels but it is evident that further investigation is needed to better define Saham Toney.

Caistor St Edmund is another site long assumed to have been a substantial Iron Age settlement, largely due to its adoption by the Romans as a *civitas* capital, *Venta Icenorum*. A small excavation did not reveal Iron Age structures but Iron Age brooches and gold and silver coins have been recovered across the site and beyond the late Roman walled area (Gregory and Gurney 1986, 58; Gregory 1991). A possible ritual focus has been identified in the form of two Romano-British temples, which are assumed to have Iron Age predecessors but the physical evidence is very limited (Gregory 1991). One of the temples, which was partially excavated (Gurney 1986), revealed an off-centre shrine which Creighton parallels with a temple at Folly Lane, St Albans (Creighton 2006, 144). He suggests the shrine respected an Iron Age burial of great significance although lacking the riches of the example at St Albans (*ibid.*). The idea is interesting but clearly supposition without further excavation. It is also worth noting that a total of 38 silver and gold Iron Age coins have been found via metal-detecting within the settlement which pales into insignificance when compared to more than 1570 Roman and Iron Age coins dredged from the nearby River Tas (HER), presumably from riverine deposition. Likewise, at Forncett, 12km to the southwest of Caistor more than 300 Iron Age and 40 Roman coins were found during a metal-detecting rally.

While the presence of coins attracts ritual interpretations, by demonstrating the different composition of assemblages from suspected settlements and hoards, Davies (1999, 37) compellingly argued that those from Caistor, Saham Toney and also Great Walsingham and Ditchingham are likely to represent casual loss rather than votive deposition. Likewise, the few numbers associated with sites (Saham Toney boasts the largest figure of 90 coins) contrast sharply with landscape and riverine hoards that can often yield several hundred coins, further accentuating the likelihood of both the different use of the coins and that they were lost accidentally. The prejudice is seen throughout the East of England such as at Partney in Lincolnshire where an Iron Age temple has been identified (Lincolnshire HER) despite a paucity of finds and yet a hoard of 82 coins two kilometres to the east has escaped significant comment.

This is not to say that ritual activity occurred only in isolation from settlements. It is very likely that the Woodcock Hall crossing attracted votive deposition and it

is plausible that ritual foci in settlements like Caistor were later formalised as Romano-British temples. However, there is no evidence to suggest that ritual places attracted urbanisation in the manner proposed on the Continent. A possible exception is Harlow which does seem to become a place of special religious importance in the Roman period. Rituals, in the manner of all Iron Age settlements, certainly occurred hand-in-hand with secular activities, but the contrast between landscape and riverine deposition with that seen in the larger polyfocal settlements suggests that its significance should not be overstated.

The same can be said for hillforts in the East of England. In East Anglia 'forts' have been identified that potentially had a similar function as those elsewhere in Britain, despite the lack of hills. Hutcheson identifies five; Warham, Narborough, Holkham, Thetford and South Creake (Hutcheson 2004, 6) to which Arbury Camp may be added. These seem to have protected rivers and crossing points in particular (*ibid.*, 6) and are perhaps likely to have been more plentiful than the record suggests as without the natural contours of significant hills, many will have been ploughed to invisibility. They are not limited to the East of England with an example at Sutton Common in South Yorkshire where fortifications straddle water courses, with structured deposits that include human skulls (Van Der Noort 2007). Like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, the function of these 'forts' is not entirely understood although the later appearance of rectangular enclosures, restricted to the north and west of Norfolk are believed to have had a similar purpose (Gregory and Gurney 1986). Earlier suggestions of a ritual function due to parallels with continental *Viereckschanzen* are now rarely touted.

Elsewhere, these fortifications appear relatively uncommon and unimpressive which has drawn comment on what this absence means to the social and political life of the local communities. It is suggested that hillforts acted as centres for the social and religious needs of the local people (Haselgrove 1994,1) which has implications for the nature of the societies that did not construct them (Martin 1999, 63). None of the sites that have been identified offer any substantial evidence of religious function although they have not been excavated to any significant degree. Perhaps unsurprisingly they do however feature in areas that have been identified within theoretical power networks.

Specifically, Davies (1999) and Chadburn (1999) note the relationship between the Icknield Way, a ridgeway that provided a dry route from East Anglia to Wessex and sites like Thetford Castle (Davies and Gregory 1992) and Saham Toney. Thetford also lies on the Little Ouse, likely to have been an important route way itself. Within the area from Thetford through to Lakenheath to the west are significant votive deposits and funerary activity in addition to the important sites themselves. As anthropological evidence suggests, sites of religious focus were probably more influenced by the local geopolitics and resources than important centres in of themselves. The richness of, for example, votive deposition at a site or within an area should be seen as indicative of the wealth of the local populations and in the case of apparent exaggerated ritual behaviours, societal stress such as the Roman invasion.

4.1.4 Discussion

In the theoretical framework developed in chapter 1, repetition and conformity were identified as the key characteristics of ritual in terms both of action and architecture. Therefore, if by the Late Iron Age there were an established package of ritual and ritualistic architecture associated with sites across a region of any size in Britain, conformity might be anticipated. No such conformity appears to exist, suggesting that religious sites were either non-existent or in their infancy with established traditions yet to be formalised and repeated. Sites such as Harlow, Snettisham, Hallaton and Fison Way stand out as sites of ritual activity suggesting that it is the latter. Lacking the shared ritualisation, comparisons should be made with care, with the strong possibility that they are developments independent of each other and of different function. Fison Way is a good example bearing little resemblance to other sites referred to here but often reasonably described as a sanctuary. Indeed, of all of them it appears the most physically developed and is quite exceptional for this reason.

These sites have arguably attracted interpretation that transposes expectations of what a sanctuary should be, or comparisons the basis of which, when examined closer, may be misleading. For example, a stereotype exists purporting to enclosure, feasting and a central focus – generally a shrine as

well as votive deposition. However, often many of these features do not exist either in the sites' earlier phases or at all, and in the case of votive deposition may be no more marked than deposition elsewhere in the landscape. It may be that some of these features that are typically anticipated did not acquire significance until later periods. As seen nationally, the significance of enclosure and demarcation has been exaggerated even in the cases where there is some evidence; at Harlow votive deposition is not confined within its limits; Hallaton, enjoying significant activity for a period little more than 50 years, saw varying degrees of relatively light structure and unproven enclosure; whilst Snettisham offered a long period of activity but very little structure. Interestingly, votive deposition during the Roman phases at Harlow continued to be made outside of the confines of the temple suggesting that the significance of enclosure was less than has been supposed even during this period. The question is, at what point should a ritual focus be considered a sanctuary as opposed to the common practice of landscape deposition apparently rarely, if ever in enclosed spaces? Is it a distinction that would have been recognised by the people depositing votives

There seems to be a direct correlation between sites with a developing ritual focus and the power structures and movements of people around them. In many cases their nature seems to be largely transitory, both in terms of chronology and physical structure, suggesting that the locations selected were not necessarily considered intrinsically charged but were places of convenience that may later have acquired a ritual significance.

A better understanding of ritual and religion in the late Iron Age will almost certainly come not from the handful of sites of limited physical structure, but from a wider investigation of the far more numerous examples of votive deposition within the landscape and directly into water; from the study of funerary sites and crucially from an analysis of their relationship to each other and to settlements within their broad vicinity.

5. Re-evaluating religion and ritual in the East of England

It is hard to see a coherent pattern of structured sanctuaries in the East of England that fits with the traditional, potentially Romanist view of sanctuaries as places of defined boundary, regular worship and 'centres' in of themselves. The expected characteristics - enclosure, repeated ritual deposition and feasting - exist variously across the region but seldom together and not in a manner that can be recognised as a single coherent 'tradition'. Far more common are landscape hoards whose ritual credentials are limited to topographical observations and characteristics that can be identified in their composition. However, these hoards are not well understood in terms of their contexts. As we saw in chapter 4, although it is accepted that many landscape hoards may be ritual in nature, they are not considered sanctuaries due to a lack of associated physical structures. This is potentially misleading considering these hoards are often materially very rich whilst the sites that traditionally attract labels like temples, shrines or sanctuaries rarely boast significant votive deposition.

Having challenged the idea of structured religious sites, this chapter will examine different aspects of ritual practice and consider them within the wider contexts of Iron Age settlements and landscape, before drawing them together to frame a better understanding of religion or religions in the East of England.

5.1   Metalwork and coin deposition in the East of England

Figures 11 to 16 present a corpus of coins and metalwork from the East of England. They exclude single coin finds but include coin and object scatters and single objects of likely significance; typically sophisticated pieces of metalwork. Where possible the tables include contextual information; whether there is evidence of repeated deposition, and the relationship of finds with water, settlements and funerary activity. Due to the difficulties outlined above, contextual information is rare. It is presumably thanks to this and our relative ignorance of regional settlement patterns that archaeologists have tended to restrict themselves to the study of excavated sites or to the composition of the

hoards themselves. It is also for these reasons that I have erred on the side of caution and assumed that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

The degree to which landscape metalwork deposition was ritualistic in nature during the Iron Age (and other periods) is a topic of ongoing debate, particularly where there are no related features or finds. Observations from studies, including those made below, are increasingly drawing up a picture of predictable behaviours in the positioning of the majority of hoards with these characteristics recognisable as ritualistic according to the definition provided in this thesis. It is possible that burial for safekeeping might have occurred under ritualistic conditions and therefore protected by them to the extent that they could be 'hidden in plain sight' in the safe knowledge that people sharing similar beliefs would not disturb them (Bradley 2017, 27). As can be seen in 5.2 below, the prevalence of hoards to be located in sight of settlements seems deliberate with no attempt to hide them suggesting they were spiritually protected in some way. The evidence of recovery is entirely lacking, even in places where there were multiple deposits made over several years. The possibility of looting by Romans who did not respect the ritualistic protection is discussed in 5.1.2.

As more evidence emerges, notably from research by De Jersey (2014) and the ongoing British Museum - Leicester project, the likelihood that the majority of these deposits were ritualistic seems to increase although, in the absence of contextual information in many cases, there cannot be certainty. Nor should it be assumed that ritualistic characteristics, including spiritual protection, infer a religious motivation for the burial itself.

Despite the challenges, the information compiled here provides a platform from which it may be possible to explore patterns in distribution. In Norfolk, the spatial mapping of the finds has led to a number of interesting observations that may help determine motivation (Hutcheson 2004, Chadburn 2006) and a similar approach for the rest of the East of England is likely to prove fruitful. Likewise, although limited, the contextual information may reveal patterns that can then be explored in more detailed analyses of the areas concerned.

The data is listed by county and the contextual information, where possible, examines links to settlement, funerary activity, water and questions whether there is evidence for structure or for repeated deposition.

Site	Norfolk Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Bawsey	One complete electrum torc and more than 130 fragments of others	Y	N	Y?
2.Boughton	A large number of Icenian silver coins were found in a pot along with three gold and silver objects, perhaps horse harness or brooches	?	N	N
3.Bradwell	12 gold Norfolk staters	Likely view of water	N	N?
4.Brettenham	Poorly recorded silver coin hoards found by metal detectorists. There is a suggestion that they may be settlement related (de Jersey 2014)	Probably related to River Thet	N	N?
5.Buxton with Lammas, Broadland	Hoard of 17 IA gold coins	Probably related to River Bure	N	N?
6.Caistor St Edmunds	More than 1250 IA and Roman coins dredged form river Tas	River deposit	N	Y
7.Congham	Rare, elaborate decorative copper alloy scabbard, deliberately bent. Decorative style similar to Snettisham torcs. Scattered coin finds relating to settlement	River deposit	N	N
8.Dereham	Hoard of 8 Icenian silver units and 4 Roman denarii (89 BC - AD 37).	?	N	N
9. Easton	Unclear (19th C find) – may be associated with or even confused with RB coins hoard	?	?	?
10.East Winch	Complete gold torc found with associated ironworking evidence and pottery	?	N	N?
11.Fincham	13 'batches' of probable single IA coin hoard - (334 silver coins) as well as scattered Roman coins, bracelets and brooches.	?	Y	Y
12.Fison Way	Important enclosed ritual site with possible two storey 'temples' and associated burials.	Y	N	Y
13.Forncett	A metal detecting rally revealed a 1st century AD coin hoard and multi-period finds. The hoard included over 300+ Iceni coins and 40+ Roman coins	?	?	?
14.Fring	173 IA coins and numerous Roman coins and other finds. RB temple identified convincingly by crop marks. Likely to be related to villa rather than 'temple complex'? Another hoard of 201 IA coins also recorded in a pot with cloth fragments. Also: Reports suggest a large number of finds including an Iron Age coin hoard of approximately 2000 silver units, a bronze plate, a bronze bust, three gold vessels and twelve finger rings were found here. Inspection showed no disturbance in reported area	?	RB	Y
15.Great Walsingham	Hundreds of Roman coins and metalwork associated with ritual practice including three statuettes of Mercury. Two IA coin hoards and other metalwork indicates an IA foundation	?	RB	Y
16.Heacham	28 uninscribed IA gold coins found. A Roman brooch, a fragment of a nude Roman statue have also been found. NMP also revealed an enclosed settlement nearby	Y - Coastal	N	Y
17.Hockham	Electrum torc found on field surface	?	N	?
18.Honingham	Single coin hoard (344 silver units) buried after c. AD 40 - 65, found in pot	?	N	?
19.Lynford	Hoard of metalwork including smiths' tools, scrap metal, offcuts and unfinished new and renovated articles including ten brooches. Amongst the pieces are three fragments of Roman armour	?	N	?
20.Mattishall	Multi-period finds including Roman/Iceni coin hoard - 16 IA coins and 26 Roman.	?	N	?

21.North Creake	Torc fragment. Roman coins (300+) and IA pottery sherds recovered from nearby. Also associated with ritual practice a mask of sol. Limited IA metalwork: Also: groups of coins and metalwork, including more than 20 IA silver coins, IA tankard handle, and a hoard of 16 Roman and IA coins	?	RB	Y
22.Old Buckenham	Two Iron Age and thirty-eight Roman coins; two Iron Age/Romano-British brooches and three Roman brooches	?	N	?
23.Ringstead	Hoard of horse trappings and ingots/ metalwork fragments	Y – view of coast	N	N
24.Saham Toney	Coins and metalwork finds of number that might be expected of settlement of this size	N/A	Y	Not votive?
25.Sedgeford	Torc, Roman coins, brooches and votive miniature axe as well as prehistoric and medieval material	N/A	Y	Y
26.Sheringham	5 coins found	Y - Beach finds	N	?
27.Shouldham	2 discrete LIA coin hoards totalling 41 coins. Brooches, LIA and RB also located. Located near 'Spring Lane'	?	N	Y?
28.Snettisham	Torcs, coins, helmet and other metalwork including broken and incomplete items	?	Limited	Y
29.Stoke Ferry	IA sword and three bronze age spear heads dredged from the river	River deposit	N	Y
30.Sustead	9+ uninscribed staters, probably from a hoard (de Jersey 2014)	?	?	?
31.Swatham	Unreported find of c. 53 gold staters although other reports suggest it could be more than 130 (de Jersey 2014)	?	?	?
32.Welney	13 uninscribed gold staters and 6 further inscribed staters found in area	?	?	Y?
33.Weston Longville	200 to 300 silver Icenian coins were found in an urn together with three Roman denarii no later than 30 AD.	Edge of Fen	N	N
34.West Runton	62+ uninscribed gold staters from cliff fall	Y - coast	N?	?
35.Weybourne	225+ IA coins and sheet bronze found. Predominantly Gallo-Belgic. Could be dispersed from single hoard or several – found over a period of 150 years on beach/ cliff (de Jersey 2014)	Beach finds	N	Y
36.Whinburgh and Westfield	A Late Bronze Age socketed spearhead and a hoard of Iron Age objects comprising two terrets and a bull's head mount	?	N	N?
37.Wicklewood and Wymondham	Hundreds of Roman and IA coins as well as metalworking evidence, including scrap metal. Highly ornate brooches interpreted as potentially votive although seen use. Bronze Age metalwork also abundant.	?	?	Y?
38.Wormegay	7 Gallo-Belgic gold staters dispersed from one hoard (de Jersey 2014)	?	?	N?

Table 3 Sites of metalwork deposition and their context in Norfolk

Site	**Suffolk** Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Badingham	Two fragments of (same) LIA mirror handle found metal detecting. Also separate finds – coin and terret	Beach finds	N	Y?
2.Barnham	6 iron age Iceni silver coins, Bury tribe type and a toggle found metal detecting over some years. Other coin finds made in this area		N	Y
3.Boxted	200 Cunobelin staters found by detectorist whilst within walking distance of Glemsford - not said to be a single hoard but suggested as mainly separate finds	?	N	Y
4.Brandon	2x pins found near Little Ouse River. LBA swords and metalwork close by. Also LIA coins and weaving comb. Another ring headed pin and an IA sword or dagger blade found to west at Wilton Bridge, from dredgings of the Little Ouse, with a metal detector. Settlement may also be nearby	Directly deposited in river.	N	Y

	Iceni coins & Rom pottery, tile etc, on field surface (& metal detected?) possibly from spread dredgings from adjoining river			
5.Bromeswell	Tankard handle fragment, Belgic pottery and Roman coin	Beach finds	N	Y
6.Coddenham	Large group of coins (circa 65) including Norfolk Wolf type, various Iceni, Cunobelin, potin, Atrebatic. Found metal detecting ploughed fields to E and SE of CDD 003 large Rom settlement.Also Nauheim derivative brooch, Terra Nigra, handmade & Belgic pottery (S2).	Y – in close proximity to River Gipping	N	Y
7.Charsfield	1991: Small `wheel shaped' mount with two strap loops on back, possibly LIA. Found metal detecting in mainly Rom scatter (S1). 1992: Further detector finds of a bracelet(?) with serpent head terminal with prominent eyebrows and large oval eyes of Celtic style (S2). 1994: Also a small cheekpiece and a silver Iceni Boar-Horse coin and a potin coin of Belgic type (S3)(S4). And Iceni coin	N	?	Y
8.Elvedon	About 12 'Bury tribe' coins seen over a number of years, metal detected from site at Elveden. Believed to have been found on principally Rom site - same as ELV 013?	Related visually to sea?	?	N/A
9.Eriswell	Iron-Age artefact scatter of pottery and coins. 255 uninscribed and inscribed silver units and 72 Roman coins. Found in area 2mx2m with evidence of IA structures, rubbish pits, ditches and poss. Burial (de Jersey)	?	?	Y
10.Euston	Ten silver Iceni coins found in field	Y - 200m from Black Bourn	N	N
11. Eye	65+ silver (inc. 2 gold) units and two Roman coins			
12.Fakenham	Three silver Iceni coins within area of Rom finds. Found by metal detector users. Circa 1987: over 200 sherds pottery and spindle whorl found fieldwalking	N	N	N/A
13. Freckenham	1885 find of small urn containing c. 90 gold coins. Find kept secret and dispersed although some secured by the British Museum. Barrow site reputedly heavily nighthawked - finds said to include 'loads Celtic [presumably coins], LIA coins, bronze brooch fragment with inlay of coral or pink enamel, c.400-300 BC; bronze toggle, ?IA	?	N	Y
14.Gisleham	Metal detector find of 4 Roman coins, gold quarter stater of Iceni found on beach at Pakefield as a result of a cliff fall. Also bronze coin of Greek emperor, minted in Pergamum, Mysia (2nd C AD).	Coastal	N	Y
15.Great Blakenham	Two bronze coins, probably Trinovantian and a bronze object, circular with enamelling (R1)(S1), found metal detecting	?	N	?
16.Kessingland	3 LIA coins found separately	?	N	?
17.Haverhill	About 50 gold coins, Gallo-Belgic C found on Place Farm in 1788 during land draining. Piece of clay may have been a coin mould. – Land-draining nr Stour Brook if findspot correct	Y	N	N
18.Icklingham	Various metal detected coin finds and other IA metalwork in vicinity of significant Roman votive material and possible temple – associated with pond	Y	N	Y
19.Ipswich	6 gold torcs found during construction of housing – likely association with nearby brook	Y	N	N?
20.Ixworth	Various metal detected coin finds and other IA metalwork	?	?	?
21.Lackford	Circa 1978: Quite a few celtic coins metal detected probably mainly Iceni silver. Also lots of Rom coins, brooches	?	?	?
22.Lakenheath	Coin hoard in butt beaker from small hole in natural chalk. 67 (Republican and Imperial) silver denarii and 415 native coins date up to AD 34. Joist Fen coin hoard. Total of circa 186 coins found up to 1980. IA or Roman skull believed to be from a decapitation victim - discovered on sandy island in fen	? Y Y Y	? N N N	? ? N Y?

Site	Features or finds			
	Iron-Age enamelled bronze terret ring, brooch, bronze object, described as a hook and link. Iron-Age bronze chape. an Iron-Age iron sword in a bronze scabbard. Findspot of a Prehistoric stone mace– Direct riverine deposition			
23.Little Saxham	9 IA coins – 7 from hoard and 2 separate	?	N	Y?
24.Mildenhall	Iron Age coins and pottery. Also quern and rubber. In vicinity of Roman silver hoard	?	?	Y
25.Newmarket	2 silver and 1 gold coins metaldetected	?	?	?
26.Santon Downham	Bronze hoard found 1897. Horse harness, enamelled bronze lynch pin, 6 bronze nave bands, 10 brooches of circa mid C1 AD types. Roman jug (bronze) with trefoil spout, handle of bronze skillet (S1). Coin hoard: 109 Icenian silver coins, with two Claudian coins		Y Y	N N
27.Shotley	6 or so gold staters metaldetected and probably from a dispersed hoard	?	?	?
28.Somerton	31 gold staters of Cunobelin, mint CAMV, found metal detecting. Said to be very widely scattered over		N	?
29.Ufford	LIA coins found metal detecting and bronze slag		?	?
30.Wettheringsett-cum-Brockford	LIA coins found from separate metal detectoring		N	?
31.Westhall	8 enamelled bronze terret rings, 2 strap-unions, a plain bronze terret, 6 bronze heads of iron lynch pins, disc with an animal figure, bronze and iron fragments, including part of a socketed spearhead, 4 highly burnished flint pebbles, fragments of bronze vessels. The hoard was packed on a circular bronze dish and covered by a circular bronze plate embossed with cruciform and palm-branch pattern, (with the backward looking animal motif in the centre?) upon which was placed a large flint. Found circa 1854, at a depth of circa 2 feet, by a farmer making drains through the lowest part of the field (Millpost Field).		N	N
32.Wixoe	Five metal detected Iron Age coins from mainly Roman site		N	N/A
33.Wenhaston-with-Mells Hamlet	Metal detected coins and a La Tene I style brooch		N	N/A
34.Wickham Market	840 IA gold coins with possible association with ditches – see discussion	Y	Y	N
35. Woodbridge	20 Gallo-Belgic and uninscribed staters found – dispersed hoard	?	?	?

Table 4 Sites of metalwork deposition and their context in Suffolk

Site	**Cambridgeshire** Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Bourn Brook	Hoard of 8 Iron Age currency bars of bay leaf type, similar to single finds at Ely and Barrington. Find spot unknown but from dredging of Bourn Brook between Grantchester and Haslingfield	Y - Direct riverine depositi on	N	?

2.Burwell	Iron Age tankard handle found in 1846 in Burwell Fen. Has animal's head (boar or horse) carved on the handle. Probably belongs to the second quarter of the C1 AD	Y - Fen deposition	N	N
3.Bury	6 Gallo-Belgic staters	?	?	?
4.Chatteris	255 coins over an area of 35 acres on Langwood Farm, Chatteris. The coins occurred as surface finds or were discovered with the aid of a metal detector in fields which have produced large quantities of Roman sherds and Roman bronze objects. 31 are IA coins	N	N	N/A
5.Chippenham Chippenham/ Snailwell	Hoard of 200 to 300 Iron Age coins reported to have been found as a result of metal detecting De Jersey does not refer to this hoard. Does include a largely Roman hoard of 41 coins with c.6 plastic series Cunobelin coins but reports are poor. (de Jersey 2014). 5 gold staters of Cunobelin. 1 Icenian silver. 4 early Iron Age sherds. 3 Belgic. 1 bronze of Tasciovanus.	? ?	? ?	? Y
6.Guilden Morden	bronze flattened pig 2,5in long. Found in subsoil with other objects in what was thought to be a grave,	N	N	N
7.Ickleton	Gold torc Various IA coins and metalwork discovered during metal detecting rally	? ?	? ?	? ?
8.Isleham	Sword in scabbard	?	N	N
9.Kimbolton	67 gold staters and a quarter stater, in circulation c. 40 – 30 BC	?	N	N
10.Littleport	Undeclared hoard of c.86 coins potentially including settlement finds. Includes 17 worn Republican coins (c.AD 35) (de Jersey 2014)	?	?	?
11.March, Field Baulk March	872 silver Icenian coins buried in pot. A small excavation revealed 40 to 50 silver Iceni coins found in a pot	Y – Fenland Y?	Y ?	N N
12.Ouse, river – near Earith	Iron Age bronze bull's head found on the banks of the river Ouse, following dredging	Y - Direct riverine deposition	N	?
13.Soham	Gold four flanged torc 238 staters illegally detected and sold	? ?	? ?	? ?
14.Stonea Wimblington, Stonea	Hoard (?) of 38 IA coins Several hoards if c.50+ IA coins are believed to come from this area (de Jersey 2014) 300 – 350 silver Iceni coins found near Wimblington	Likely ?	N ?	N ?
15.Trumpington	Gold torcs? No contextual information given	?	?	?

Table 5 Sites of metalwork deposition and their contexts in Cambridgeshire

Site	**Leicestershire and Rutland** Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Burrough Hill	Hoard of chariot fittings believed to have been placed in a box and deliberately burnt (Found in hillfort)	N	N	N

Site	Features or finds			
	Agricultural tools in pit (Found in hillfort)	N	N	N
2.Breeden Hill	Miniature shield found with skeleton	N	N	N
3.Congham	Rare, elaborate decorative copper alloy scabbard, deliberately bent. Decorative style similar to Snettisham torcs. Scattered coin finds relating to settlement	Y - Direct riverine deposition	N	?
4.Elms Farm, Huncote	3 Corieltavian coins found metaldetecting	?	?	?
5.Glenfield, Glebe Farm	Metalworking evidence in enclosure with possible roundhouses. Pits, crucible and 2 v. rare cauldrons	N	Y	Y
6.Hallaton	More than 5000 silver and gold IA coins, a Roman parade helmet, silver ingots and thousands of pig bones from feasting. Finds inside and immediately outside a polygonal enclosure	N	Y	Y
7.Leicester	Limited number of coins, quernstones and shield boss	Y?	N	N/A
8.Little Twycross	2 Republican Roman coins	?	?	?
9.Lubbesthorpe	2 Corieltavi staters found by metaldetecting	?	?	?
10.Peatling	Hoard of 10 Belgic gold coins	Y	?	N
11.Thistleton	13 IA coins likely to represent settlement scatter	N	Y? See 5___	N/A
12.Whitwell	Corieltavi coin and terret found by metal detecting	?	?	?

Table 6 Sites of metalwork deposition and their contexts in Leicestershire and Rutland

Site	**Lincolnshire** Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Bardney	2 swords in similar scabbards – related to causeways?	Y – riverine deposit	Y –	Y
2.Bigby	Bronze bridle bits found with 3 gold torcs and part of bracelet - confused with Brigg find?	?	N	N?
3.Billinghay	Iron Age carnyx and Roman skillet – related to causeways	Y – riverine deposit	Y	Y
4.Bonby	17 IA coins (poor record)	?	N	N
6.Brauncewell Quarry	Sword found in unusual context. Also, many querns but probably associated with crop processing	N	N	Y?
7.Brondholme	4 IA coins	?	N	?
9.Dogdyke (Tatteshall)	Carnyx found dredging – related to causeway	Y	Y	Y
10.Dragonby	Coins likely to reflect settlements scatter	N	N	N/A
11.East Halton Skitter	A small Iron Age pendant figurine, East Halton Skitter found by detectorist on the foreshore. It is in the form of a deer, with herringbone and geometric reliefs.	?	N	N
12.Fillingham	63 IA coins (not hoard) and other metalwork	N	N	N/A
13.Fiskerton	Tool hoard and other metalwork finds including dagger with humanoid hilt of a type seen on continent – related to causeways	Y – riverine deposit	Y	Y
14.Frodingham	1st C BC - four iron sword-shaped currency bars	?	?	?
15.Grimsby	Hoard - 6 gold coins	?	?	?
16.Kirmington	Hoard – 8 gold coins	?	?	?

		Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
17.Kirmond-le Mire	43 silver units (de Jersey 2014)			
18.Langworth	1 gold and 4 silver IA coins	?	?	?
19.Ludford	IA brooches and RB coins	Y – Close to River	?	?
20.Manton	2 silver Corieltavian coins	?	?	?
21.Nettleton Top	De Jersey notes 'far more than 200 IA coins from field (2014). Also 30 miniature weapons and 3 'Vulcan' rings from the Roman period found in East Field – see 4.1.2 above	N	N?	Y
22.Partney	7 gold and 75 silver IA coins. Place names suggest once marshy area. De Jersey notes at least 122 coins (2014)	N	N	?
23.Scartho (Grimsby)	6 IA gold coins	?	?	?
24.Sibsey	130 gold and 1 silver IA coins. Believed to consist of a hoard of c.118 coins in a 'box' and another hoard of 12 nearby (de Jersey 2014).	?	N	N
25.South Carlton	Hoard of 39 gold IA coins	N?	N	N
26.South Ferriby	Iron Age Objects 'from the Humber shore at South Ferriby'	Y – Humber shore	N	N
27.South Ferriby	283 silver and gold coins believed to be from three hoards. Located on the south bank of the Humber, probably discovered in material eroded from cliff near spring and settlement (de Jersey 2014).	Y – Humber shore	N	Y –
28.Spilsby	38 IA coins scattered in field – interpreted as evidence of settlement rather than votive deposition	N	N	Settlement scatter?
29. Stixwould and Woodhall	14 gold and 2 silver IA coins	Y	N	N
30.Tatteshall	Pair of lynch pins and terret ring – related in some way to Dogdyke causeway deposition?	Y?	N	N
31.Thonock golf cours	8 coins found metal detecting Iron Age and Republican Roman. There are also very worn coins of Mark Antony	N	N	N
32.Ulceby	Suspected chariot burials? - No evidence for burial - could be just metalwork hoard. Torcs etc also interpreted as metalworker's hoard but as seen elsewhere, broken and incomplete material need not lead to this assumption	?	?	?
32. Washingborough	Highly decorative Witham shield found in river	Y	N	N
33.Westborough and Doddington	7 Roman and 1 IA coin	?	?	?
34.Whaplode Drive	19 Corieltavian gold staters (metal detector find) scattered over an area 20m x 60m	?	?	?

Table 7 Sites of metalwork deposition and their contexts in Lincolnshire

Site	**Essex** Features or finds	Related to water?	Structure (enclosure, building or sim.)	Repeated Deposition?
1.Ambresbury Banks (also referred to as Epping Upland)	Scattered hoard of iron age gold coins found by metal detector 1971-2 near Ambresbury Banks. 4 of Tasciovanus and 8 of Cunobelin	N	N	N?
2.Billercay	Settlement and cremation urn burials, including 2 mirrors	N	N	N
3.Chelmsford	2 gold IA coins found in river, close to Chelmsford	Y –	N	?

		riverine deposit		
4.Clacton	Clacton I – 128+ gold Gallo-Belgic staters and uninscribed gold staters found in 19th C apparently on beach (de Jersey 2014) Clacton II – 7+ gold coins – later than Clacton I found on beach			
5.Colchester	Many Iron Age coins have come from Colchester and district, including over 20 gold coins. Torc Bowl with lid plus bronze and iron rings inside	N N N	N N N	N/A
6.Elms Farm	155 IA coins found, 92% bronze and potin suggesting casual loss. 3 miniature weapons/tools may be IA votive.	N	RB	Y
7.Fyfield	Small bronze bulls head, probably an Iron Age bucket mount	?	N	N
8.Gosbecks	LIA Temple with possible elite residences and enclosed by dykes. Finds include coins and other high status objects. Believed to be a civitas capital with a major focus in the decades prior to the Roman invasion	N	Y	Y
9.Great Chesterford	In 1869 an Aylesford type burial was found, with Kimmeridge shale vessels. A bucket with bronze bands and swing handles was presented to the Cambridge AE Museum, presumably from the same group. A mirror was found close by. An Iron Age precursor to an RB temple is also suspected at Great Chesterford in the form of a three sided rectangular structure	N	N	Y?
10.Great Dunmow	Gold quarter stater. Possible findspot for group of 17 gold and silver late Iron Age coins (reported in press as coming from Selsey Bill). Detector user known to visit Church End frequently	?	?	?
11.Great Waltham	40 Gold Gallo-Belgic coins found at Great Leighs, near Chelmsford Hoard: 10 Gold staters found by metal detectorists Hoard: 21 Gold staters, including 18 coins of Cunobelin found apparently associated with settlement where other Iron Age and RB finds have been made.	Y?	N N ?	N? N N
12.Harlow	IA sanctuary and RB temple site. See 4.1.1	N	Y	Y
13.Heath Place	Large quantities of very high status Celtic material, including very well preserved gold staters and jewellery, has been found by metal detectorists in a potato field	Y?	N	?
14.Kelvedon	Possible IA shrine although coins and other finds could be casual loss. See 5.2.6.	N	Y?	Y
15.Little Bromley	27 (?) widely scattered gold staters of Addedomaros (de Jersey 2014)			
16.Lofts Farm	Well, tunnel and pond features toward centre of settlement. Small bronze hoard and possible cremations. Excavator does not offer a ritual interpretation	Y – related to mere ?	N	Y?
17.Maldon (also referred to as Heybridge)	Five early British gold coins from Maldon	Y	N	Y?
18.Marks Tey	Marks Tey I – one or two hoards – one dominated by Gallo-Belgic staters and the other by later Addedomaros. 38 coins + (de Jersey 2014) Marks II – 9+ coins	Y?	N	?
19.Southend on Sea	33 Gallo-Belgic staters in pottery container found at Temple Farm Industrial estate			
20.Stansted	Potin hoard found in gully of roundhouse. Doubt on nature of sanctuary – see 4.1.1	N	Y	N
21.The Fountain, Braintree	Roundhouse excavated with three IA coins found	N	Y	N
22.Thurrock	Stater and gold ring - possibly a decorative fitting. 2150 cast bronze potins found on edge of quarry hollow at Corringham (de Jersey 2014). Not associated with gold ring (?)	?	?	?

23.Townmead	Blacksmith's hoard apparently buried in wooden box. Deliberately broken tools. In 1967 the Digging of a gravel pit in Town Mead by workmen revealed a hoard of 23 metalwork tools, the remainder a mixture of cart fittings and miscellaneous tools, together with a sword.	?	?	?
24.Walthan on the Naze	6 IA coins discovered in 19th century	?	?	?

*Table 8 Sites of metalwork deposition and their contexts in Essex*

Evidently the individual finds identified here could represent casual loss, flight hoards or other possibilities besides votive deposition. Votive deposition may itself be characterised by just a few coins or a single object of high art through to sites of repeated deposition on a huge scale. As discussed, differentiating between such deposition is often difficult. This, and the vagaries of chance, poor reporting and illegal detecting make attempts to identify patterns in the distribution of these finds challenging. Furthermore, the challenges posed by regionally specific gaps in knowledge of settlement and burial makes holistic approaches to understanding distributions and how they might relate difficult. Nevertheless, Davies, Hutcheson and others have successfully identified convincing patterns suggesting that it is worth exploring similar configurations.

5.1.1 Direct and indirect contexts of deposition

The quality of some of the data in the tables above is such that it may skew attempts to collate the information. They therefore presents those sites that can be utilised, together with direct contextual information to further identify patterns. Specifically, a search has been conducted within 2km of each site to identify settlement and funerary evidence within their localities.

Naturally there is ambiguity with regards to settlement evidence within the 2km areas and associations have been made on the basis of this distance rather than any evidence directly linking the places of deposition and the settlements. However, for the most part the analysis is pertinent where it relates to the debate regarding the isolation, or otherwise, of sites of suspected votive deposition. The relationships between sites of deposition and settlements will be explored in greater depth in 5.3.2.

For the purposes of this study, funerary activity refers to 'normative' treatment of the dead. This is subjective but, as will be discussed in 5.4, it is my opinion that the use of human remains to spiritually augment enclosures, pits and the foundations of buildings, as well as their deposition in fen or rivers should be considered as non-normative treatment of the dead. Instead, I believe that in such contexts they should be considered as religious offerings or even sacrificial victims. To group them with burials and cemeteries would be misleading in this context. Instead, they have been included as a separate study to explore the contexts in which they are found.
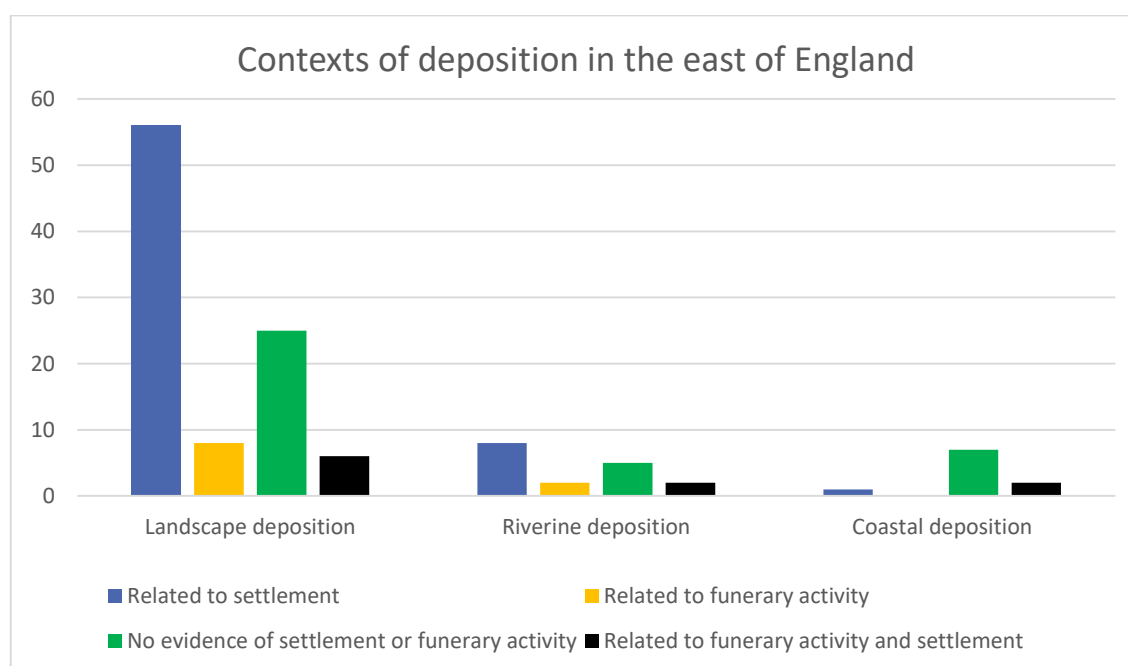
Figure 10 The numbers of site associated with settlements and funerary activity in the East of England

There are a number of points to note with figure 17. Chiefly, the links between sites are purely geographical. It does not represent an analysis of the nature of any association, so proximity may be coincidental. Also an issue is the way in which 'sites' are identified, particularly in terms of riverine deposition. Represented in figure 17 for example, are more than 1200 coins deposited in the river Tas near Caistor. Unlike intact hoards in the ground, it is impossible to tell how many deposits these coins represent but they are grouped here as just one deposit. A study of the numbers of the finds has therefore been made in 5.1.2 below.

Despite the challenges, a number of observations can be made. First, irrespective of the quantity of finds, the number of landscape hoards is far greater than those made directly into water or on the coast. Comparing these contexts is also problematic due to the nature of loss and recovery in water, particularly the sea. More informative are the comparisons between the related contexts, particular in regards to landscape deposition. Here, the vast majority are related either to settlement or to both settlements and funerary activity. In regards to the latter category, it can be argued that the funerary link is coincidental due to the likelihood that settlements typically necessitate places for the disposal of the dead even if, in the case of the British Iron Age, they are not always overt.

Irrespective of the nature of the associations, that most landscape deposition was conducted within 2km of settlements suggests either that many of these were emergency hoards or that places of ritual deposition were typically near to settlements. Given that settlement patterns are poorly understood in parts of East Anglia (Davies 1999), the true figure of sites located nearby is likely to be higher. Similarly, the well investigated places of major deposition such as Hallaton and Harlow are known to have direct links with settlements. Together, this suggests that far from being the norm, votive deposition within the landscape was rarely conducted in places of isolation. Additionally, as we will see in the county specific data, some sites of deposition inputted in figure 17 as unrelated to settlements, were located near to causeways and roads.

The numbers recorded here for deposition in rivers and on the coast are not significant enough to confidently identify patterns. However, in the case of riverine deposition it can be said that remote locations do not appear to have been the norm whilst on the coast deposition may have been more remote, perhaps as a result of the practical siting of settlements.

5.1.2 Relative distribution of deposition between contexts

Figures 18 and 19 illustrate the quantity of material found in dryland hoards, on the coast and in rivers and fens within the East of England. Apparent in the

collation of the data for figure 18 was the impact of Hallaton, Snettisham and, to a lesser extent, Harlow. In fact the full impact of these sites is only partially represented as only complete torcs have been included. The hundreds of melted down coins which the ingots discovered at Hallaton are believed to represent are likewise excluded. Also left out is the lost Snettisham 'bowl hoard'. Irrespective of these items, the scale of the Hallaton and Snettisham finds, replicated elsewhere in the country such as at Wanborough is no revelation but its visual representation here is stark.

Excluding these sites it might be anticipated that there would be less disparity between contexts. Yet, as figure 19 shows, dryland hoards still account for a far higher proportion of metalwork than the coast, rivers and fens. Before drawing any firm conclusions however, there are additional considerations to take into account.

The challenges in regards assuming a religious motivation for deposition has been discussed at the beginning of chapter 5. In addition, it is frequently assumed that direct riverine, fen or coastal deposition is ritualistic as it precludes recovery. However in collating these data it transpired that the differentiation between water and dryland contexts were in many cases indefinite and arbitrary. Some coastal finds for instance, are known from cliff falls rather than having been deposited directly into the sea. Elsewhere, such as at Lakenheath in Suffolk, significant hoards were located on sandy 'islands' within the fens and here, as elsewhere, ambiguities in changing topographies makes it difficult to ascertain the closeness of their relationship to the surrounding water or fen.

Finally, there is no way of knowing the scale of loss within wet contexts, but it is likely that the metalwork recovered from rivers and fen represents a significantly smaller proportion of deposits than on dryland. You cannot, after all, metal detect in rivers. So profound is the likely scale of loss, this makes comparison between contexts very problematic. It is however, all the more noteworthy in the case of finds that *do* appear in greater numbers within rivers and fen, notably weapons.

Votive deposition of weapons in dryland contexts are extremely rare – only one sword believed to have been votive has been found in the East of England – from Brauncewell Quarry in Lincolnshire. Here, a sword of similar design to those found in the river Witham was found in a pit within what may have been an entrance to a round house dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age (Farley 2011a). This compares to eleven swords, shields, scabbards and daggers from water, the majority of which demonstrate a high level of ornamentation. This suggests that direct riverine deposition was favoured, unless perhaps they were associated with riverine funerals (e.g. Cunliffe 2010). How representative this figure is of the true total of riverine weapon deposition is impossible to say. Estimates of more than half a million Iron Age swords in circulation at any one time have been made (Hill and Gosden 2008), so their poor representation in dryland and burial contexts suggests either a great efficiency in recycling or hints at the scale of possible deposition in riverine contexts and the subsequent disproportionate survival in the archaeological record.

Although full scale weapons are rarely found, miniature weapons (and tools) are known in more significant numbers from dryland sites, notably at Nettleton Top (above) but also at Elms Farm (Essex), Sedgeford (Norfolk) and Breedon Hill (Leicestershire).

In the East of England torcs have only been found in dryland hoards although a relationship with water is apparent in all of the cases and in some examples there is some ambiguity as to exactly how close that relationship might have been making such a distinction questionable.
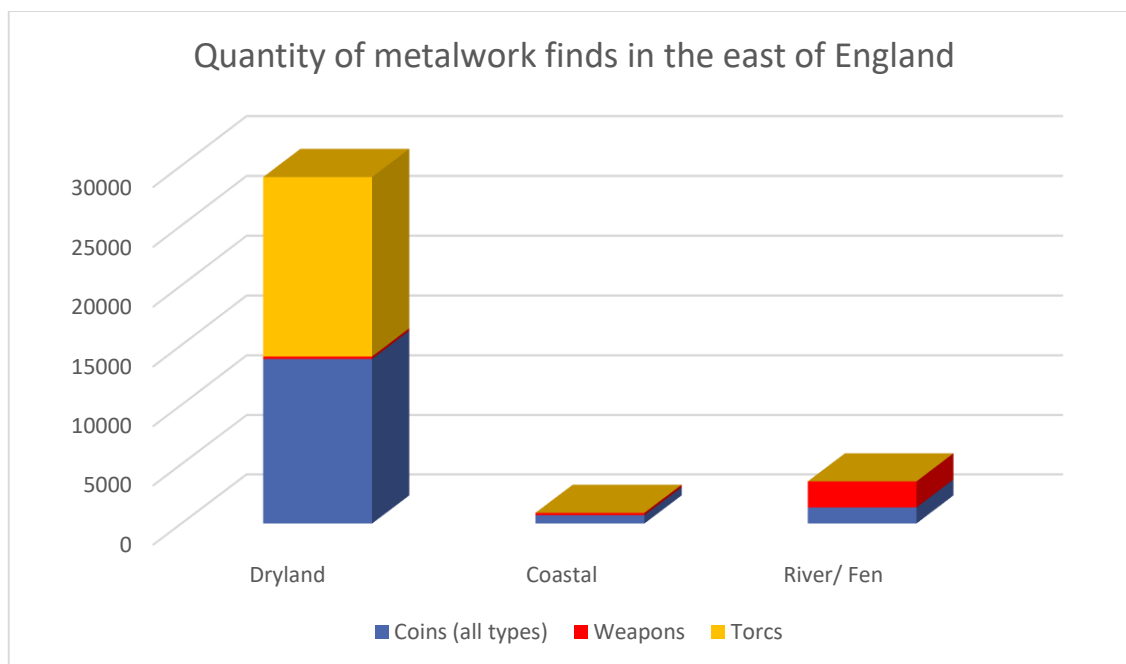
Figure 11 The quantity of metalwork finds in different contexts. Non-coin finds are numerically quantified as '200' to represent the greater size of object
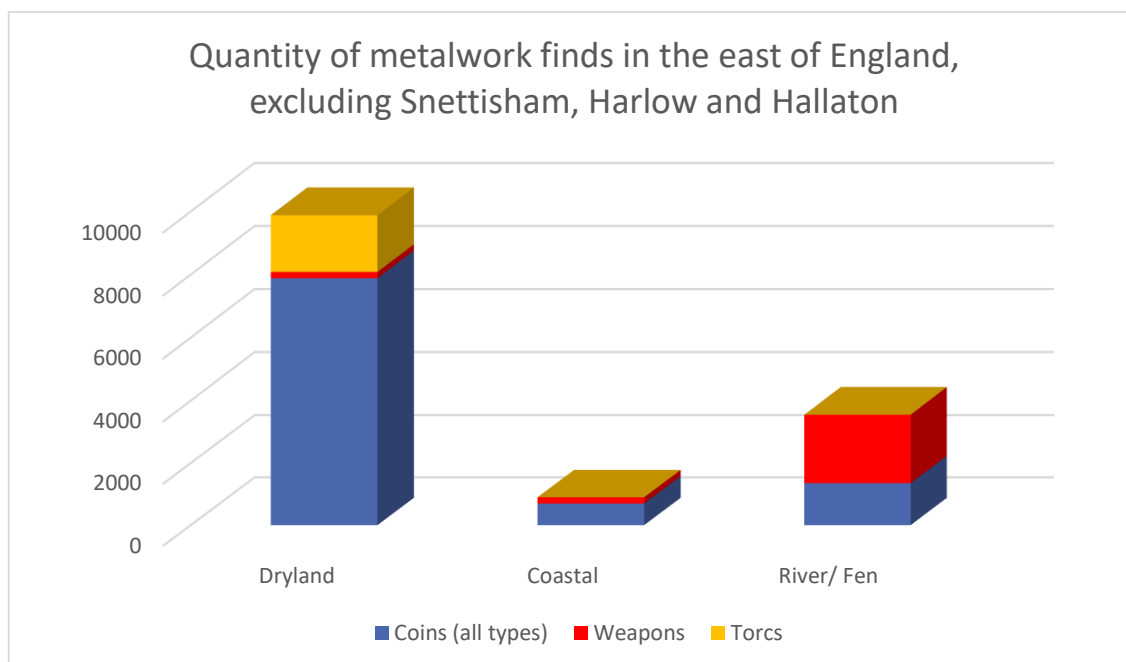
Figure 12 The quantity of metalwork finds in different contexts excluding Snettisham, Harlow and Hallaton. Non-coins finds are numerically quantified as '200'.

Potentially, the proportion of material recovered from watery contexts may be far smaller than that recovered from dry land, masking the focus of ritual deposition during the Iron Age. The lack of weaponry from dryland hoards certainly suggests that this is the case for martial items. Chronologically speaking it is difficult to identify changes in deposition patterns although commentators have noted a shift from water to dryland deposition in the Bronze Age (e.g. Bradley 2007), while the 'fibulae event horizon' of the 1st centuries BC and AD (Hill 1995, 21) is evidenced in the metalwork assemblages represented in these charts. The distribution of torcs on dryland sites, apparently absent from watery contexts, is of greater antiquity than the coins and some of the other metalwork deposits and may have been contemporary to some of the ornate metalwork placed into the rivers during the Middle Iron Age although in both cases it is difficult to prove the period of deposition.

The proportion of metalwork recovered from dryland sites is plausibly similarly misrepresentational. Ingots, currency bars and scrap metal are not infrequent votive artefacts and a banking or recycling role for some sites of deposition has been suggested as a possibility by a number of academics (e.g. Cunliffe 2010). Also possible is their plundering by the Romans who may not have respected the sanctity of the votive deposition. As has been noted, the vast majority of these deposits were not hidden, conforming to ritualistic 'rules' that would have been well known, were deposited in plain sight of a settlement and in rare cases, demarcated by enclosure. It would seem that while many ritualistic sites retained their spiritual significance during the Roman period, votive deposition of metalwork features far less (Bradley 2017, 18). A 'sacred lake' at Toulouse was famous in antiquity for the richness of its votive deposition following a raid on Delphi (Boulestin 2012). However, the deposition represented a local ritual and the material, which included ingots, was removed and sold during the Roman period (Bradley 2017, 18). It is impossible to disentangle the complex new societies that were being formed during the 1st century AD in the East of England; plundering Roman soldiers or allied troops not respecting local traditions and the rise of a predominantly native population conforming to new traditions. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that at various points, local Roman officials did see the opportunity to plunder some, if not many of these sites. It

may be that Snettisham and Hallaton were not the extraordinary places they appear today but were more common during the late Iron Age, either respected by or protected from Roman authorities. A further suggestion that we are seeing just a tiny fraction of the extent of the Iron Age material culture is evident in calculations of the numbers of coins that were produced during the period. 32,000 kg of silver and 1828 kg of gold is estimated to have been used in the production of coins in East Anglia from the dies identified from known coin series (Talbot 2015, 150). The real figure could be significantly higher although, as discussed below, it is likely significant recycling occurred.

An indication of the potential recovery of metalwork may be garnered from looking at continuity of ritualistic sites from the Iron Age into the Roman period. There is a surprising mismatch between metalwork-rich sites of poor structure and little continuity, and places of significant construction and attention but poor metalwork deposition. This also applies to sites that could hardly have escaped the notice of any avaricious Roman eyes such as Fison Way for which there is some evidence, if not of looting, of deliberate dismantlement by the Roman military (Gregory 1991). This might explain the surprising absence of substantial metalwork deposition at this site of apparent ritualistic focus, although Fison Way remains an enigma on many levels. It might also explain why Harlow does not boast the same Iron Age riches as Snettisham or Hallaton despite its greater longevity. The coins that were found may be those that 'looters' failed to find. Also evident at Snettisham and Hallaton is a sudden cessation of significant votive activity with only very modest deposits made in subsequent centuries.
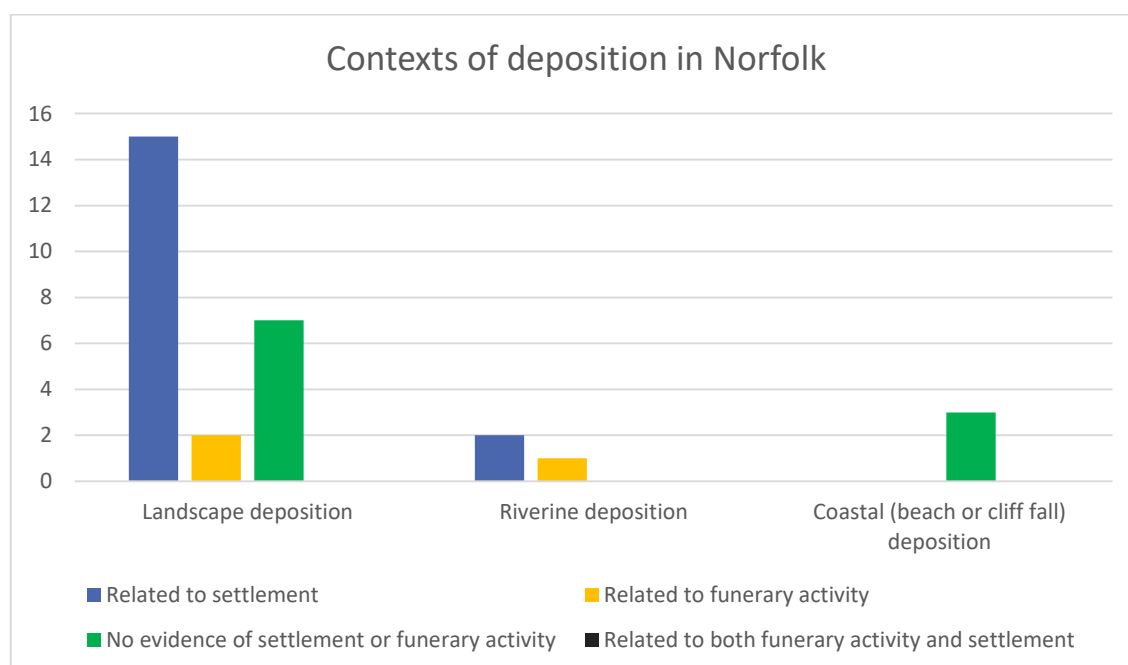
5.2 Contexts of deposition

5.2.1 Norfolk

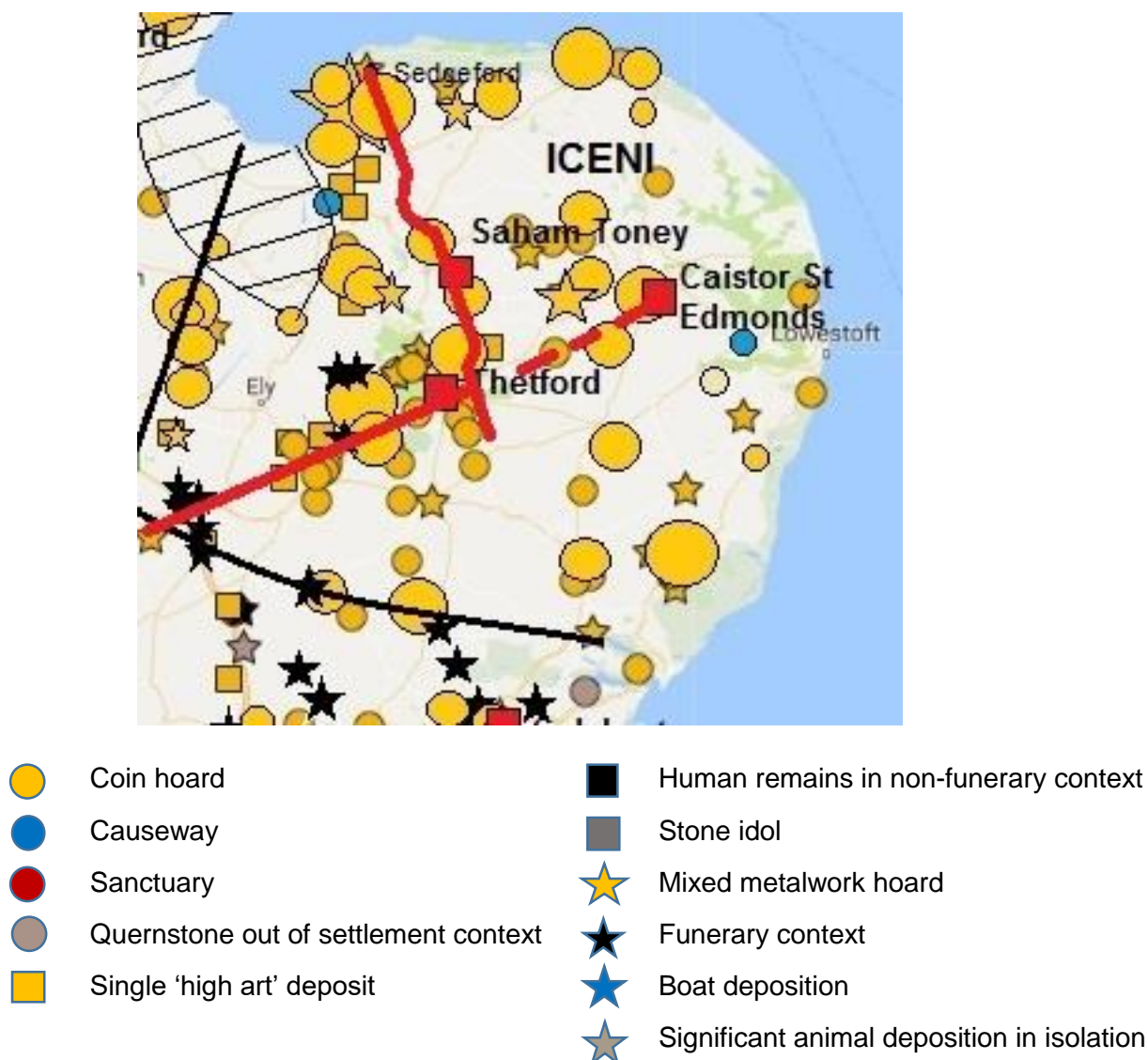| Norfolk				
Site	Features or finds within 2km	Funerary	Settlement	Size of deposit/s
1.Bawsey	Settlement finds in direct area both at Bawsey and East Winch	N	Y	1 torc and 130 fragments
2.Boughton	Stoke Ferry finds, dredged from river	N	N?	100+?
3.Bradwell	Possible contemporary enclosures in area	N	Y?	12 gold staters
4.Brettenham	Area of apparent cultivation and enclosure	N	Y	29 coins
5.Buxton with Lammas	Many enclosures and field systems from BA though IA	N	Y	17 gold coins
6.Caistor St Edmunds	Within easy reach of significant settlement of Caistor	N	Y	1250 coins +
7.Congham	RB temple linked to Caistor via a road. Coins in field relating to settlement	N	Y	Copper alloy decorative scabbard (riverine)
8.Dereham	Roman period quernstone found in area, but no other indication of settlement	N	N?	8 silver IA coins
10.East Winch	Roman(?) quernstones found in area as well as ironworking evidence and pottery	N	Y	Gold torc
11.Fincham	Roman coins in area includes a hoard of 200. Also associated with the fen causeway road	N	Y	334 silver coins
12.Fison Way	Close to Thetford where substantial settlement evidence has been found	Y	Y	30+ brooches. IA coins now losr
14.Fring	Roman quernstones found in area. Also associated with Peddars Way. RB temple in vicinity	N	Y	At least 374 coins
15.Great Walsingham	Pre-Roman settlement evidence	N	Y	Two IA hoards of unspecified numbers
16.Heacham	Settlement located nearby as well as roman finds	N	Y	28 IA gold coins
19.Lynford	Just 3km north of Santon Downham	N	N	10 brooches and some tools
20.Mattishall	Roman settlement evidence. Quern stone found in locality	N	N?	16 IA coins and 26 Roman
21.North Creake		N	Y	20 IA coins, tankard handle and finds of mixed IA and Roman material
23.Ringstead	Associated with Peddars Way?	N	N?	Hoard of horse trappings
25.Sedgeford	Associated with Peddars Way. Modest contemporary settlement evidence in vicinity	N	Y?	Torc, 39 gold IA coins and Roman material found nearby
26.Sheringham	Coastal finds	N	N?	5 coins
27.Shouldham	Near Fincham	N	N	41 IA coins and brooches

28.Snettisham	RB temple in vicinity. 1.5km from Ingoldisthorpe	N	Y	Torcs, ingots and reputedly thousands of coins
29.Stoke Ferry	Nr Roman marching camp. Burials in area from BA and Neolithic. Other burials undated. Near to Boughton land hoard	Y?	N	IA sword (riverine)
33.Weston Longville		N	N	200+ IA coins
34.West Runton	Coastal finds	N	N	62+ gold IA coins
35.Weybourne	Coastal finds	N	N	225+ IA coins
36.Whinburgh and Westfield		N?	N?	Two terrets and a bull's head mount
37.Wicklewood and Wymondham	Associated with Crowthorpe RB temple and road to Caistor	N	Y	Unspecified number of IA coins intermixed with Roman

Table 9 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Norfolk

Figure 13 Bar chart showing depositional contexts in Norfolk

Deposition in Norfolk follows the wider trend of the East of England with most metalwork deposition within 2km of a settlement. On closer examination, this trend is even more marked from a detailed study of settlements and route ways of the region. For example, the pattern of settlements and 'hillforts' including Thetford and Saham Toney have been identified as being related to the Icknield Way (Chadburn 1999; Davies 1999). A similar correlation, probably in part at least due to these important settlements, can be made with votive deposition.

● Coin hoard	■ Human remains in non-funerary context
● Causeway	■ Stone idol
● Sanctuary	☆ Mixed metalwork hoard
● Quernstone out of settlement context	★ Funerary context
■ Single 'high art' deposit	★ Boat deposition
	☆ Significant animal deposition in isolation

Figure 14 Finds map showing settlements and major findspots as they relate to the Icknield Way (west/east) and Peddars Way (north/south)

As can be seen in Figure 14 there are significant finds running the length of the Icknield Way and Peddars Way, routes believed to have pre-Roman origins and later adopted and turned into fully fledged Roman roads. The route between Caistor and Thetford is unproven but can plausibly be made. The Peddars Way that meets the Icknield near Thetford, links Fring, Ringstead and Saham Toney. Evidence for a route way also appears to link the settlements of Ingoldisthorpe, close to Snettisham, with Fring, intersecting the Peddars Way by doing so. Taken together these routes link many of the major sites of deposition in Norfolk and hint at the power structures facilitated by these communication networks.

5.2.2 Suffolk

Suffolk					
Site	**Features or finds within 2km**	**Funerary**	**Settlement**	**Size of deposit/s**	
1.Badingham	Coastal – beach finds, no settlement evidence found nearby	N	N	LIA mirror handle	
2.Barnham		N	N	6 IA silver coins	
4.Brandon	River finds but contemporary settlement finds nearby	N	Y	IA sword, 2 pins, weaving comb and unspecified number of coins	
5.Bromeswell	Coastal – beach finds	N	N	Tankard handle	
6.Coddenham	Significant Roman settlement nearby with IA pottery suggesting pre-Roman origins	N	Y	c.65 IA coins	
9.Eriswell	IA structures, pits etc. Poss. burial	N	Y	255 silver IA coins	
10.Euston	4km from Thetford but little evidence within 2km.	N	N	10 silver IA coins	
14.Gisleham	Coastal – beach finds	N	N	1 gold IA stater and 4 Roman coins. Also some gold foil	
17.Haverhill	Settlement finds from MIA to Roman period found in vicinity	N	Y	c.50 gold coins	
18.Icklingham	Roman temple and RB votive material in locality	N	Y	Unspecified number of coins	
19.Ipswich	Settlement finds in locality	N	Y	6 gold torcs	
20.Ixworth	Significant Roman settlement and likely IA forerunner. IA metalwork may represent settlement scatter	N/A	N/A	Unspecified coin and metalwork finds	
21.Lackford	Near Icklingham. Area well populated with settlement evidence over wide area. The Lackford finds may represent settlement scatter	N/A	N/A	Unspecified number of coins	
22.Lakenheath	Coin hoard in beaker	Y	N	415 IA coins and 67 Roman	
	Joist Fen	Y	N	c.186 IA coins	
	Skull (in fen)	Y	N		
	Metalwork deposited in water	Y	N	Sword and scabbard, Chape, terret	
23.Little Saxham		N	N	9 IA coins	
24.Mildenhall	4th C AD hoard in locality. Also quern. No evidence of settlement within 2km	N	N	Unspecified number of IA coins	
26.Santon Downham	Limited contemporary evidence although significant BA activity, including a number of socketed axes. Limited RB pottery in area	N	N	109 silver coins and 2 Roman Bronze hoard – horse trappings and brooches	
28.Somerton	Significant settlement finds, contemporary to coins. However, the limited date range of coins suggests they are not settlement scatter	N	Y	31 gold staters	

29.Ufford	Settlement finds in area. Also, part of IA tankard handle. Hard to determine if coins relate to settlement scatter. Upper part of quern also found in area	N	Y	Unspecified number of coins
34.Wickham Market	Little direct settlement evidence although it is located 1.5km from the Roman Coddenham – Dunwich road	N	N	840 gold staters
35.Woodbridge	Significant IA and RB settlement evidence. Although apparently not found as a hoard, nature of coins suggest votive or flight hoard deposition. Roman hoard also found in area	N	Y	20 Gallo-Belgic gold staters

Table 10 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Suffolk
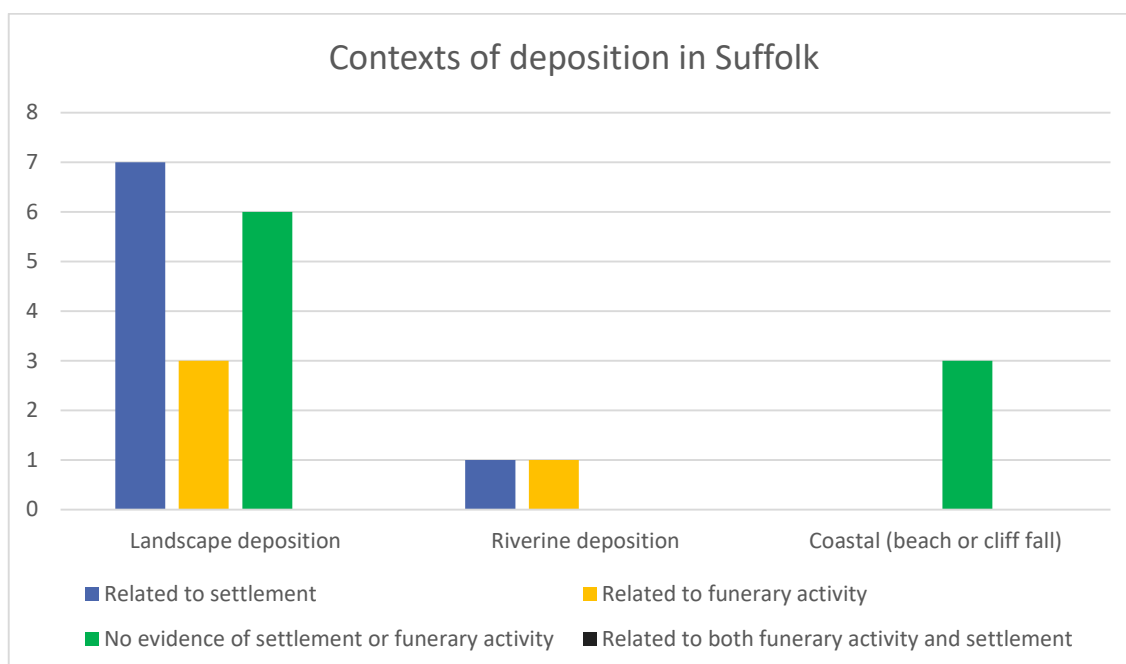
Figure 15 Bar chart showing contexts of deposition in Suffolk

The number of finds isolated from settlements and funerary activity is higher in Suffolk than elsewhere in the East of England. Nevertheless, the spread of sites in the Thetford region; notably Barnham, Euston and Brandon, of which there is only settlement evidence near Brandon, suggests a degree of association. There is a high degree of votive deposition in this area, that continues up to the 4th century AD with the Mildenhall Treasure whilst Fison Way and Thetford appears to have been well positioned on the Icknield Way. A high population density can therefore be reasonably surmised, potentially spread out through the dispersed settlement patterns evident elsewhere in East Anglia. This would explain the deposition spread centred only very loosely around Thetford.

Certainly skewed as a result of the low numbers in the dataset are the hoards associated with funerary activity and all of which relate to the hoards found at Lakenheath including one hoard made directly into the fen itself. They have been associated with funerary activity here, not because of the skulls deposited in the fen, but because of the cremation urns located on the fen edge.

5.2.3 Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire				
Site	Features or finds within 2km	Funerary	Settlement	Size of deposit/s
1.Bourn Brook	Ditched enclosure on Claypit Hill	N	Y	8 currency bars – riverine deposit
2.Burwell	Other metalwork found in fen from BA – RB period. Metalworking evidence at nearby MIA site. LBA hoard also in locality.	N	Y	Late 1st century AD tankard handle – fen deposit
4.Chatteris	IA settlement and burials in locality. Area of intense BA activity – barrows, metalwork deposition in Langwood Fen. Also BA canoe with rapier.	Y	Y	31 IA coins and 200+ Roman
5.Chippenham	Settlement, including metalworking evidence at Low Park Corner. Near Snailwell warrior burial. BA barrows in area	Y	Y	200+ IA coins 6 gold staters
6.Guilden Morden		Y	N	Bronze pig miniature
8.Isleham	Largest BA hoard in Europe found near here. Also, 'Roman' quernstone, Roman pewter hoard and 4 gold coins.	Y	Y	Sword in scabbard found on dryland
9.Kimbolton		N	N	67 gold staters and a quarter stater
10.Littleport	Settlement finds suspected	N	Y	c.86 IA coins
11.March, Field Baulk March	1st C BC settlement nearby Fen causeway associated?	N N	Y Y	872 silver IA coins 40 to 50 silver coins
12.Earith – River Ouse		N	N	Bull head figurine
13.Soham	EIA burial nearby but not contemporary? Exact location of hoard not known but likely vicinity of settlement	N N	Y Y	Torc 238 staters
14.Stonea	Hoard of 38 IA coins Several hoards Hoard of 300 – 350 silver coins	N N N	Y Y Y	38 IA coins 50+ IA coins uspected 300+ IA coins
15.Trumpington	Within 2km of significant site of funerary activity	Y	N	Gold torcs? Also reputedly found in area

Table 11 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Cambridgeshire
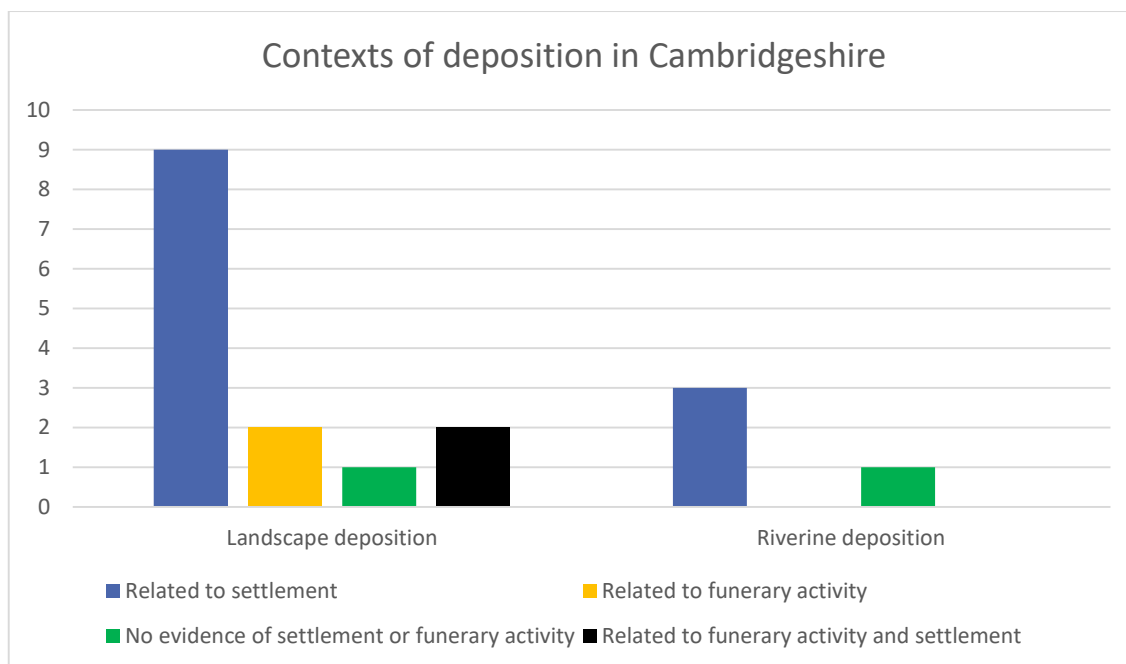
Figure 16 Bar chart showing contexts of deposition in Cambridgeshire

Featuring significant fenland Cambridgeshire, like Suffolk, boasts sites of both metalwork deposition and human remains interred into the water and bog. Interestingly riverine deposition is more clearly associated with settlements in the county, although this may reflect the relative wetness of the landscape.

Whether a quirk of the results or a true reflection of the county, there is a high proportion (5 of 13) of examples of Bronze Age activity within 2km of Iron Age metalwork deposition. At Trumpington, there appears to have been direct continuity (Hinman 2004) whilst the likely continued habitation from the Bronze Age through to at least the late Iron Age within Chatteris is marked by intensive Bronze Age funerary activity as well as continued deposition within Langwood Fen. At Isleham, continuation of some kind is implied by the largest Bronze Age hoard discovered in Britain (Malim *et al.* 2010), through to modest Iron Age deposition and finally, a Roman pewter hoard from the 4th century AD. The context of the Bronze Age hoard is of particular interest. It was buried in a pit cut into a ditch terminal, itself located beside a palaeochannel that was drying out (Bradley 2017, 25). The context is demonstrative not only of a major Bronze Age hoard directly associated with some form of structure, potentially a settlement, but also serves to illustrate the indivisibility of some sites between identifying riverine deposition and landscape (*ibid.*).

5.2.4 Leicestershire and Rutland

Leicestershire and Rutland				
Site	Features or finds within 2km	Funerary	Settlement	Size of deposit/s
1.Burrough Hill	Chariot fittings found in hillfort	N	Y	Bronze terrets and other chariot trappings
	Tools found in hillfort	N	Y	Unspecified
2.Breeden Hill		Y	Y	1 miniature shield and a skeleton
3.Congham		Y	Y	Copper alloy scabbard (riverine)
5.Glenfield		N	Y	2 cauldrons
6.Hallaton	Settlement immediately adjacent to 'sanctuary'. RB temple also approx. 1km away	N	Y	5000+ silver and gold coins, Roman helmet, ingots and other metalwork
7.Leicester	Settlement scatter?	N/A	N/A	N/A
10.Peatling		N	N	10 Belgic gold coins

Table 12 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Leicestershire and Rutland
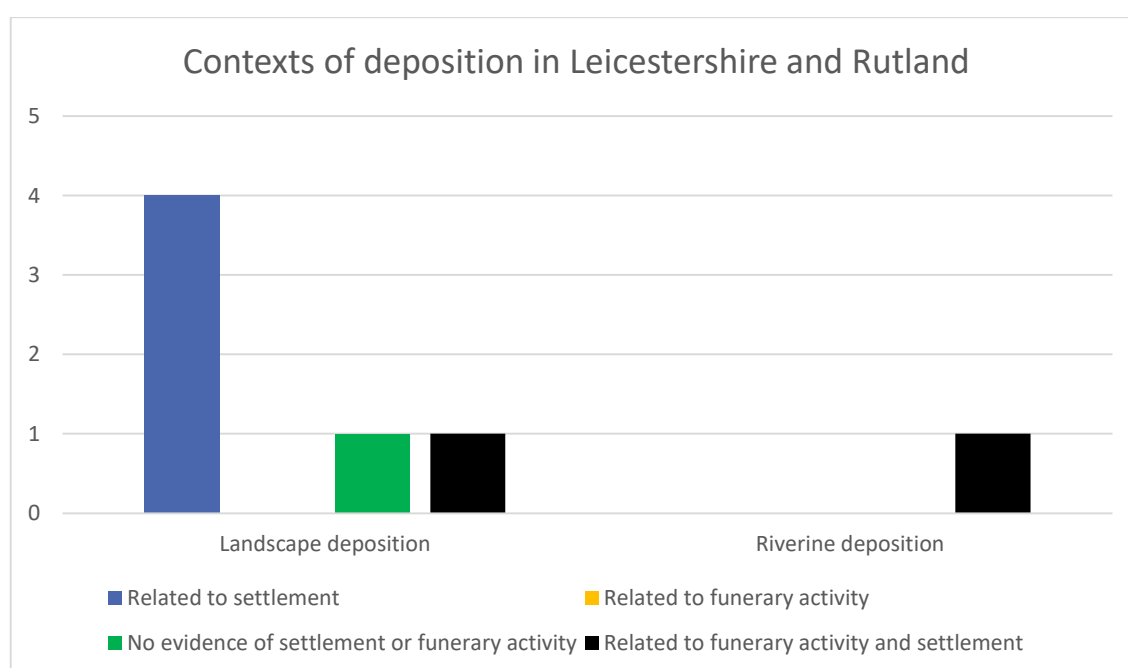
Figure 17 Contexts of deposition in Leicestershire and Rutland

The paucity of hoard finds in Leicestershire has already been noted. Of interest here however are the deposits found directly within the Burrough Hill hillfort as

such associations within hillforts are uncommon. Evidence of burning has been
interpreted as the ritualistic killing of the objects but the evidence is not strong
and the two hoards may represent something else.

5.2.5 Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire				
Site	Features or finds within 2km	Funerary	Settlement	Size of deposit/s
1.Bardney	Fragments of skull dredged from nearby dyke. Contemporary causeway, RB settlement scatter and IA suspected in locality. Bardney Abbey shows ritualistic continuity?	N – see above	Y	2 swords in scabbards – causeway riverine
3.Billinghay	Causeway. Quernstone also deposited in dyke. 10 RB inhumations in area	Y	Y	Carnyx – causeway riverine
4.Bonby	Enclosure and other features in area	N	Y	17 IA coins
6.Brauncewell Quarry	Quernstones found in area	N	Y	Sword
10.Dragonby	Settlement scatter?	N/A	N/A	N/A
11.East Halton Skitter		N	N	Pendent figurine on coast
12.Fillingham	Limited settlement evidence	N	Y	63 IA coins
13.Fiskerton	RB skillet also deposited in river and RB coin hoard found nearby	N	N	Tools Dagger RB skillet -Causeway riverine
14.Frodingham	Settlement in area	N	Y	4 currency bars
17.Kirmington		N	N	8 gold coins
19.Ludford		N	Y	IA brooches and unspecified number of coins
22.Nettleton Top		N	Y	200+ IA coins, 30 miniature weapons and Roman finds
23.Partney	Sanctuary reputedly in area associated with IA settlement	N	Y	7 gold and 75 silver IA coins. More suspected
25.Sibsey		N	N	130 gold coins and 1 silver.
26.South Carlton	Significant RB settlement finds in area – including fragments from a life-size statue of an emperor. IA pottery sherds suggest IA precursor	N	Y	39 gold coins
27.South Ferriby	Sword also found in area	N	Y	Metalwork and sword - coast
28.South Ferriby	3 hoards from coast	N	Y	283 silver and gold coins – coast (found from a cliff fall)
29.Spilsby		N	Y	38 IA coins
30.Stixwould and Woodhall		N	N	14 gold and 2 silver IA coins
31.Tatteshall	Related to Dogdyke causeway finds?	N	N	Pair of lynchpins and terret

32.Thonock Golf Course		N	N	8 IA and Republican coins
34.Washingborough		N	N	Witham shield

Table 13 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Lincolnshire
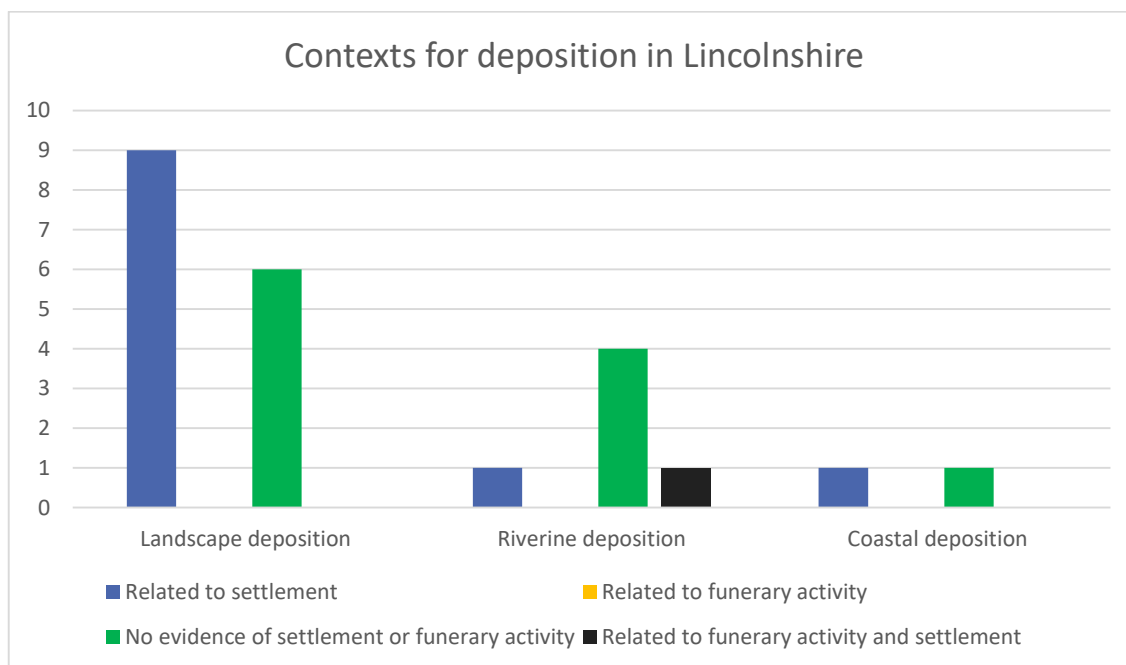
Figure 18 Bar chart showing contexts for deposition in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire is notable for the finds from the river Witham. These range from the highly decorative Middle Iron Age shield found at Washingborough to the hoard of tools discovered associated with a causeway at Fiskerton. Bronze Age barrows feature along the river which may be contemporary with the earliest phases of the causeways. Romano-British coin hoards, quern stones and paterae have also been found in and around the river in a manner highly likely to indicate direct continuity. Continuity of sorts is also apparent in the adoption of some of the sites of votive deposition from causeways by medieval abbeys (Carver, 2005) and a limited number of votive swords from that period. Paterae feature in a number of ritualistic contexts, particularly funerary so their presence here is interesting.

What connection the causeways had with nearby settlements is unclear but from sites like Bardney it seems unlikely that many were not in convenient

reach. At the very least it can be said that isolation was not a prerequisite of the siting of causeways.

5.2.6 Essex

Essex				
Site	Features or finds within 2km	Funerary	Settlement	Size of deposit/s
1.Ambresbury Banks	Associated with hillfort?	N	Y	12 IA coins
2.Billercray		Y	N	2 mirrors (funerary)
3.Chelmsford		N	Y	2 gold IA coins-riverine
4.Clacton	Clacton I – Iron Age burial and limited pottery finds in area. But details are scant	Y?	Y?	128+ IA coins beach finds
	Clacton II – Iron Age burial and limited pottery finds in area. But details are scant	Y?	Y?	7+ IA coins
5.Colchester	Suspected settlement scatter	N/A	N/A	20+gold coins
	Not enough information	N/A	N/A	Torc
	Suspected settlement scatter	N/A	N/A	N/A
6.Elms Farm		N	Y	155+ IA coins (92% potin and bronze) and 3 miniature weapons/tools
7.Fyfield	Roman inhumations suspected in area. BA hoard also in vicinity	N (not proven)	N	Bronze bull head – bucket mount?
8.Gosbecks		Y	Y	Unspecified number of coins and other metalwork inc. brooches
9.Great Chesterford		Y	Y	Bucket. Also a mirror found nearby
10.Great Dunmow	RB town in vicinity but apparently no sign of IA precursor	N	N	17+ gold and silver IA coins
11.Great Waltham	Great Leighs hoard: IA settlement with around 15 roundhouses in vicinity	N	Y	40 gold staters
	Hoard I – as above	N	Y	10 gold staters
	Hoard II – as above	N	Y	21 gold staters
12.Harlow		N	Y	787 IA coins
13.Heath Place		N	N	Unspecified number of coins and other metalwork
14.Kelvedon		N	Y	Modest number of coins and other metalwork. Tankard handle found nearby.
16.Lofts Farm		Y	Y	Small bronze hoard
17.Maldon		N	N	5 early IA coins
18.Marks Tey	I	N?	Y	38+ Gallo-Belgic staters and other IA coins
	II	N	Y	9+ IA coins

19.Southend on Sea	Associated with hillfort?	N	Y	33 Gallo-Belgic staters
20.Stansted		N	Y	Potin coin hoard in roundhouse gully
22.Thurrock	RB settlement evidence and undated enclosures and ditches. On balance of probability, modest IA settlement likely	N	Y	2150 potin coins. Also stater and gold ring.

Table 14 The features and finds located within 2km of sites of suspected votive deposition - Essex
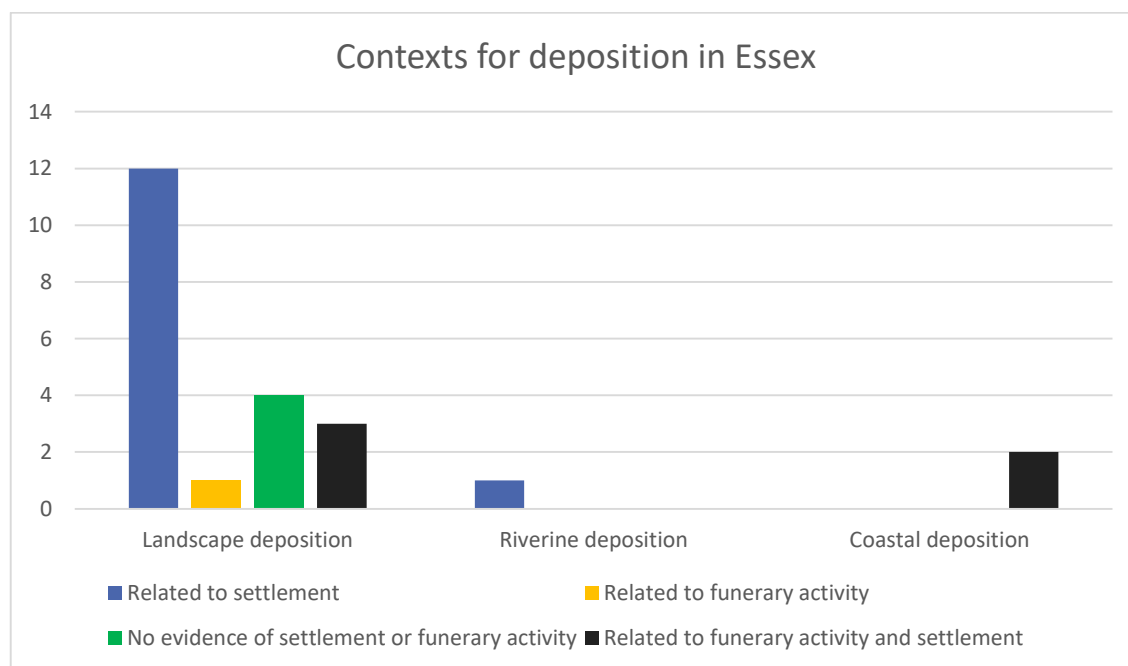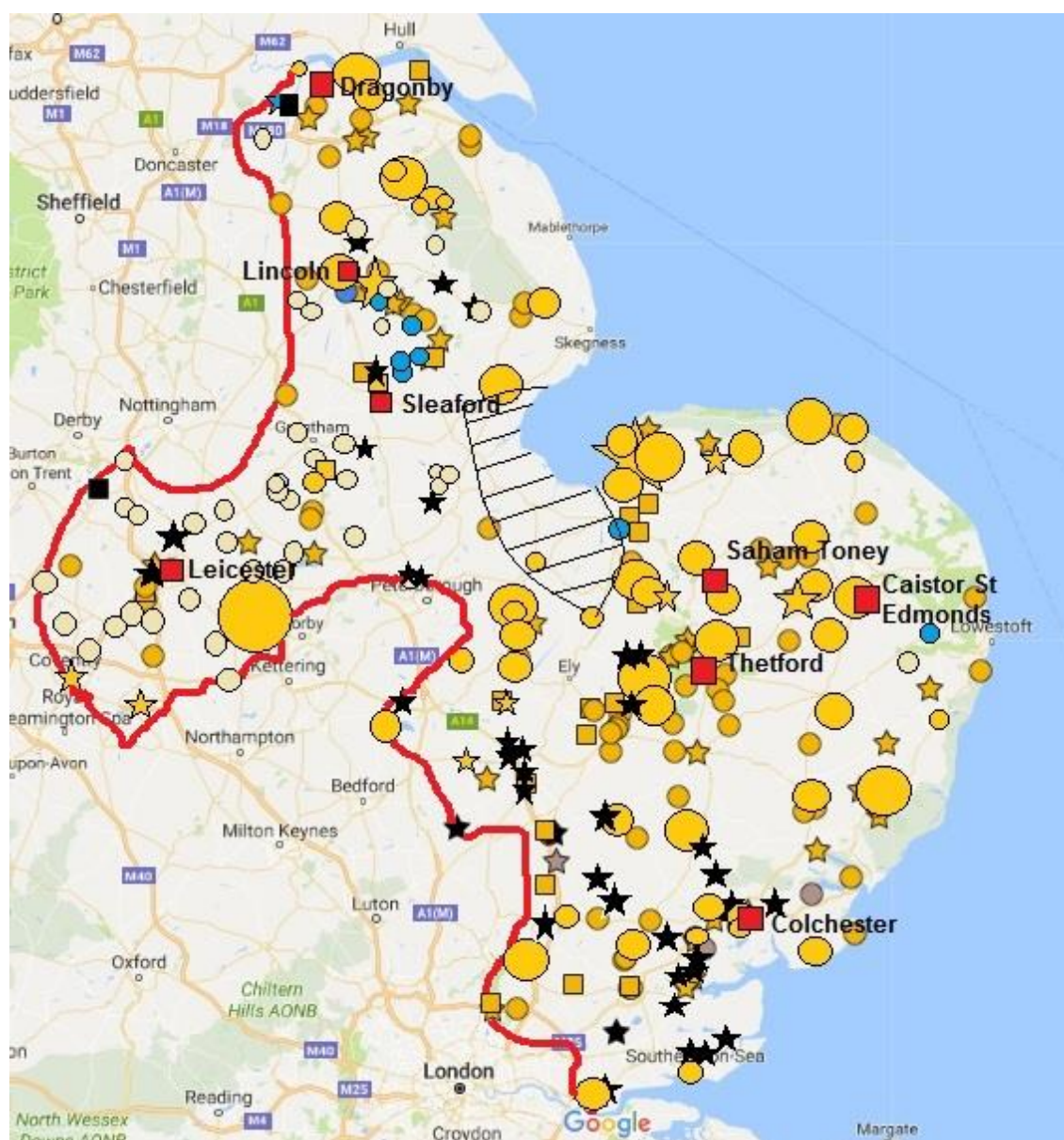

Figure 19 Bar chart showing contexts for deposition in Essex

Essex displays a high level of association between hoards and settlements, perhaps due to a better modern understanding of Iron Age settlements than elsewhere in the East of England. It may be no coincidence that Stansted, Kelvedon, Harlow, Gosbecks and Great Chesterford are all within this region where direct associations have been made potentially indicating an even closer connection than that seen in the other counties.

Irrespective of this, the Marks Tey and Great Waltham hoards are indicative of landscape hoarding near to, rather than directly within settlements. Of less prominence are riverine finds – just two gold coins near Chelmsford - which is surprising but the modest size of the dataset precludes supposition.

5.3 Challenges and the wider context

Although the tables and figures in section 5.2 are concerned with metalwork, the distribution maps below include non-metal finds that are suspected of being votive in nature and burials. Major settlements are also included but both they and the burials are problematic owing to being poorly understood in many areas. The size of the known settlements, particularly those that developed as Romano-British centres is rarely easy to quantify particularly in Norfolk and Suffolk which are characterised by elongated settlement patterns. Historically, settlements have been aggrandised by archaeologists where they relate to important sites. There is little evidence to compare Thetford with, for example, the more significant Caistor St Edmunds or Colchester. Yet it is often referenced due presumably, to an assumed relationship with Fison Way. It may therefore not deserve its place in figure 20. Other important sites remain unidentified or have been incorrectly dismissed as insignificant. Similarly, projects such as the NMP are indicating a higher prevalence of cemeteries than previously suspected or represented in the distribution maps below. This means that attempting to establish correlations between votive deposition and settlements or burials is problematic particularly considering the lack of certainty with regard to the nature of the deposits themselves.

Figure 20 Distribution map of study region by size of metalwork deposit, Together with major contemporary settlements

Despite the challenges presented by these ambiguities some observations can be made. Hutcheson and others have noted the relative richness of Norfolk, with a particular focus on northwest Norfolk, arguing that this clustering is genuine and not just a result of good working relationships between detectorists and Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (Hutcheson 2004). The Snettisham area certainly stands out on this map, its scale perhaps diminished visually by the overlap of major finds. Nevertheless, finds along the coast to the north and around Thetford, Caistor and Saham Toney indicate a wider distribution of wealth within and outside of Hutcheson and Davies' 'gold zone'[9]. It is tempting to see clusters around important settlements as well as an apparent absence of such settlements in northwest Norfolk in the midst of the vast, undoubtedly ritualistic deposition. Perhaps with this in mind, the status of Ingoldisthorpe should be considered; it would find itself well positioned within this area of wealth distribution. In fact, the NMP has identified a complex of cropmarks over a wide area and an extensive Late Iron Age to Roman settlement and field system in the Ingol Valley is becoming increasingly conspicuous (HER 2017). Ingoldisthorpe is located about 1.5km to the south of Snettisham and as we have seen, is likely to have been linked to it and other sites such as Fring to the east which in turn was well connected to settlements and hillforts to the south.

The significant settlements on the map are located in the proximity of areas of major and repeated deposition but generally feature modest direct deposition themselves. Significant wealth is prevalent around Thetford, but also in the wider region associated with Saham Toney and Caistor St Edmunds. The large symbol close to Caistor represents the 1200 silver coins dredged from the river Tas. Like Saham Toney, Ingoldisthorpe and the other larger settlements, coin finds from the settlements are limited to numbers that might reasonably be interpreted as casual loss. Irrespective of the manner of deposition, this region

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[9] A 'gold zone' has been observed around Snettisham beginning during the 2nd century BC (Hutcheson 2007, 362; Chadburn 2004, 337). Here, Hutcheson identifies a concentration of gold, first in the form of torcs and later of coins before a shift in focus in the 1st century BC with deposits of Gallo-Belgic and British gold coins appearing elsewhere (ibid.)

of rich finds is potentially representative of the power base identified by Chadburn (1999) and Davies (1999).

Despite an apparent correlation with this possible power base, it is interesting to note that the deposition occurred not within the settlements or hillforts, but within the landscape nearby. Nor are the most significant finds the closest to the settlements although the majority appear to be within relatively easy reach.
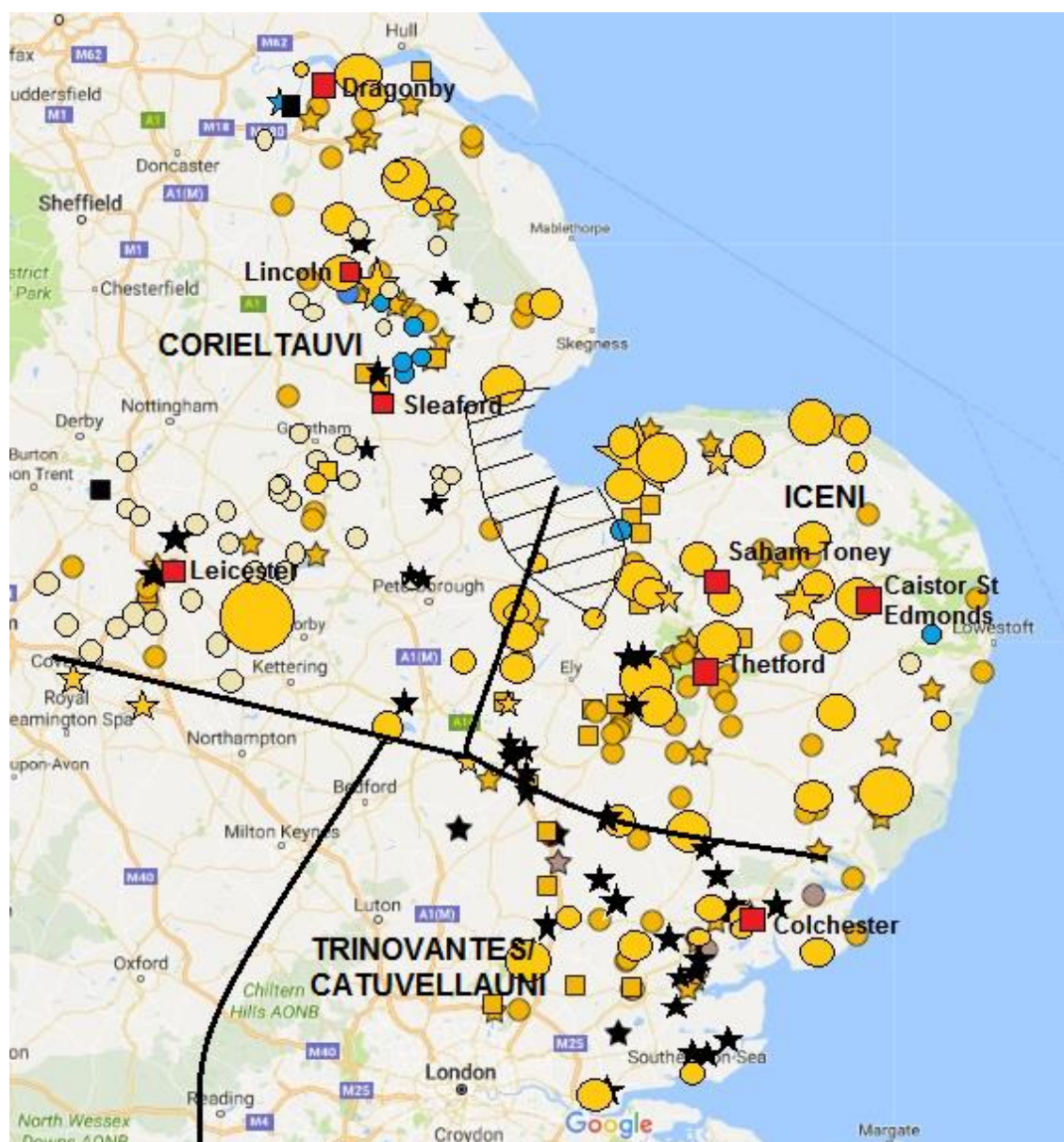
In Lincolnshire, deposition may also follow navigable routes, with a potential link between Lincoln and Old Sleaford, marked by causeways, riverine and landscape deposition. In The Wash, which during the Iron Age would have extended out approximately within the hatched area marked in figure 20 (from Cunliffe 2010, 194), few finds have been found presumably due both to a lack of modern disturbance but also a lack of population at that time. It is interesting however that this absence extends some distance from The Wash to the west – beyond Peterborough – whereas to the south there are substantial deposits. In fact Leicestershire is bare of significant metalwork deposition with the major exception of Hallaton which is itself 15km from the presumed nearest significant centre at Leicester. The contrast between the depositional practices of coins between Leicestershire and East and Southeast England has attracted some debate (for example Leins, Haselgrove and Farley) in terms of usage of coins; discussions that relate to the Core and Periphery model (Cunliffe 2010). Lincolnshire, which might be assumed to feature in the periphery of coin usage boasts a similar pattern of deposition to East Anglia and Essex. Furthermore, deposition on, or near to the coast in Lincolnshire and Norfolk is possibly indicative of coastal trade and greater cultural interchange, as well as – or instead of – ritual deposition at the land-sea interface.

Alongside the scarcity of regular metalwork deposition in Leicestershire, the deposition of quern stones appears as a distinct practice here and in southern Lincolnshire. Much discussed in this thesis is the propensity for religious practitioners to deposit what is both important to them and readily available. Coinage either had a limited circulation or was deposited less frequently in Leicestershire and quern stones may have provided a more accessible material for deposition. Alternatively, they may represent deliberate selection. Bradley

(1990) and others note an older tradition of deposition focused on agriculture for which this Leicestershire practice may be a part having never been replaced by metalwork and coinage. A more prosaic interpretation relates to the recording practices of the various county officers. Indeed, on close examination it appears that quern stones are found in contexts that might be associated with ritual deposition in other counties but are more typically hidden within other records. Likewise, in Essex they are more readily ascribed a specifically Roman date whilst in Leicestershire date ranges are broader and appear in wider searches. Nevertheless, the frequent appearance of quern stones in Leicestershire and southern Lincolnshire seems to be a genuine trend.

5.3.1 Distribution and territorial boundaries

Territorial boundaries and cultural interchanges between 'tribes' have often been viewed as potential grounds for ritual activity. Defining Iron Age territorial groupings has however proven controversial with the idea of named tribes considered by many as looking at a complicated society through the over-simplification of their later, Roman governors for the purposes of administrative convenience. Nevertheless, the distribution of 'tribal' coinage, together with natural barriers have in the past been used to identify territories (see figure 21), the borders of which present potential liminal zones.

Figure 21 Distribution map showing historically identified 'tribal' territories

Even were it possible to overlook the challenges in attempting to identify Iron Age kingdoms or tribes – even for a short moment in time – the borders might have followed convenient natural barriers; rivers, fen, sea and mountains. These are locations that attract ritual deposition and it would be difficult to differentiate tribal boundaries as opposed to places of ritualistic interest. Figure 21 shows the distribution map with historically identified tribal boundaries for the study area (from Cunliffe 2010). It is hard to see a direct correlation, particularly considering the Cambridgeshire fens around Ely would undoubtedly have been an area of ritual deposition and as a natural barrier would probably have been a territorial boundary as well. The border of the Iceni and Trinovantes is perhaps represented by deposition, but in fact it is a far weaker correlation than that of northwest Norfolk or Thetford and Saham Toney. On this basis it is impossible to either corroborate or discount theories of ritual activity on territorial boundaries. Far more compelling is an apparent practice of deposition near to route ways and significant settlements although, as we have seen, this correlation is not without its own challenges.

5.3.2 Settlement association

The difficulty in making direct links between landscape deposits and settlements has already been explored but close geographical associations apparent from the maps suggest that further analysis is warranted. To the existing challenges however, should be added the degree of subjectivity in such an investigation and also traits unique to the sprawling East Anglian settlements. Specifically, dispersed settlement patterns makes defining their limits very difficult and 'villages' can appear to cover large tracts of land – Wymondham in Norfolk is an example of an unremarkable settlement covering 25,000 square metres (Ashwin 1996, 274). One reason for this sprawling nature is that structures generally were rebuilt nearby rather than on top of the preceding buildings (Hill 1999, 190).

Despite the challenges, an attempt to determine the relationships is necessary. As many landscape hoards seem to have been deposited away from known settlements, it is often further assumed that the isolation is deliberate and even

a ritualistic characteristic. This assumption can now be challenged both by recent discoveries of settlements near hoards previously assumed to be in remote areas, and by more systematic analysis of the tabulated data. The range of hoard provenances is particularly wide, of which many are likely to be ritualistic. They range from rare, rich sanctuaries apparently interwoven into the fabric of a settlement, such as Harlow and Gosbecks to sites where roundhouses are believed to have been ancillary and supportive such as at Hallaton (Taylor, pers com 2014). These contrast with the metalwork hoards found at Burrough Hill and those in the vicinity of the polyfocal settlements discussed above.

Whilst deposition did perhaps occur in remote places as well, the growing evidence of settlement association, albeit poorly understood, precludes isolation as a ritualistic characteristic. Anthropological examples indicate a certain pragmatism of rituals representing the active political lives of societies; while not impossible, it is less likely that remote places of deposition would have been practical or desirable unless it was a ritualistic 'rule'.

A sense of the way in which ritual activity may have been tied into the fortunes of nearby settlements, trade-routes and powerbases can be witnessed at a number of locations in the East of England. At Snettisham where although a Romano-British temple is demonstrative of ritual or religious continuity, the paucity of associated metalwork deposition is in stark contrast both to the preceding periods and to those made at nearby Great Walsingham which Marsden suggests 'took over' from Snettisham during the Roman period as the area's most prominent religious centre (2011, 50). Rather than reflecting a deliberate Roman policy of shifting native places of worship, as has been suggested, Great Walsingham was probably more conveniently located in terms of political centres, trade routes or population concentrations. Elsewhere, Davies (1999, 40) argues that the absence of Iron Age gold coins and presence of later silver coin hoards and artefacts at Thetford and Saham Toney suggest a shift, or an emergence of a new power in the Breckland.

The relationships between hoards and settlements are not well understood, with no obvious similarities and lacking the specific nature required to qualify for

evidence of ritualistic characteristics. This theme is investigated further in chapter 6.

5.3.3 Relationships with water

It is no secret that Iron Age ritual life held an affinity to water. A cursory glance at these tables give an indication of the level of direct votive deposition in major rivers and water sources. In Norfolk, metal-detecting of dredging from the River Thet near Caistor has resulted in the discovery of more than 1570 Iron Age and Roman coins, and other metalwork, with a further 340 coins found elsewhere along river banks. A copper alloy scabbard, perhaps deliberately bent found in water contexts at Congham and an Iron Age sword and three Bronze Age spear heads from Stoke Ferry in western Norfolk attest to the age of the practice. The extent of infrastructure related to the waterways is exemplified by wooden causeways of mid to late Iron Age date at Geldeston and North Runcton in Norfolk (HER). Unlike at Fiskerton or Flag Fen, these discoveries offer little evidence of being associated with votive deposition. However, finds made in dredging the region's rivers – the Thet, Bure and Yare – and their parallels in Lincolnshire and elsewhere make it very likely, although not exclusively so.

Riverine deposition is also indicative of earlier traditions and ritual deposition not limited to metalwork. Finds like the auroch horn, dredged from the River Lark in Suffolk and a polished bow from the Ely fenland, offer tantalising hints of an organic material depositional practice otherwise lost to the archaeological record. A particularly enigmatic discovery at Saffron Walden, Essex suggests the potential scale of deposition. At the site, 'an astonishing quantity of mammalian bones' were excavated from an area of peat believed in antiquity to have been the bed of the river Cam. According to the HER, these bones had markings 'probably of flint implements'. It is possible to suggest that this was a riverine organic votive deposition made at any point between the Mesolithic and the Iron Age and the sheer quantity of bones suggests a concentrated effort of disposal indicative of rituals potentially associated with feasting. Pieces of worked wood were also found associated with the deposit which, like the worked flint, suggest an earlier date.

The change in votive deposition from largely agricultural to metalwork (Barrett 1984, Parker Pearson 1984 and Lund 2000) perhaps reflect availability rather than suitability, a characteristic supported by anthropological parallels. A slow change in depositional practice, from predominantly riverine to predominantly landscape metalwork deposition, is conceivable although an earlier martial character was not maintained. Unfortunately like-for-like comparisons of the scale of these depositional practices are impossible due to the nature of riverine deposition and the manner of its reclamation. Nevertheless, the number of quern stones, notably in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, found in contexts not directly domestic and associated with water are also indicative of a ritual practice not exclusive to metalwork.

Direct votive riverine deposition is well attested across Britain and is less controversially identified as ritualistic as it is evident that this manner of disposal makes retrieval impossible. However, a relationship with water is also apparent for landscape deposition. Chadburn (2006, 330) notes that most Norfolk coin hoards are within a kilometre or two of rivers or fen, although this could reflect the topography rather than rituals. Likewise, it may be associated with local populations as a similar observation has been made in Suffolk in regards to settlement location for the more prosaic reason of watering animals (Martin 1999, 51). In fact, in compiling the tables, it was hard not to find some relationship, either visually or more directly with water, particularly in the consideration of an even wetter landscape in the Late Iron Age. Care must be taken not to over emphasise this relationship; other factors should be considered.

The relationship between hoarding and water typically refers to rivers, lakes and bogs. Occasionally overlooked is a similar relationship with the sea. May's review of Iron Age coinage from East Yorkshire revealed a striking number of coin finds from the beach and coastal margins of Holderness. May attributes the higher prevalence of shoreline finds compared to inland to votive deposition linked to the sea (May 1992). The same propensity occurs in south-eastern England where Haselgrove (1987, 115) notes a high propensity for gold coin finds within one kilometre of the coast.He cites Selsey Bill in Sussex, where numerous coins were (presumably) intentionally deposited at the coastal

margin, at separate locations and at different times (*ibid.*, 119). In Norfolk, several small hoards were found at Heacham, within 100 metres of the coast while a number of coins, some of which are likely to represent scattered hoards, have been found between Sheringham and Weybourne and suggest similar practices. More than 225 gold coins found in the vicinity of a beach cliff-face at Weybourne over a 150 year period may represent a single or a number of hoards (de Jersey 2014). At Ringstead 3km north of Sedgeford, itself just 2km from Snettisham, a hoard of horse trappings has been largely dismissed as a founder's hoard. Yet it too was located on the slope above the coastal plane and the singularity of the items - bridle-bits, bronze plates, rivets, a clasp and a strap union imply deliberate selection. This, the hoard's location and its relative position to other deposition in the area is indicative of a pattern of votive deposition. The same relationship is apparent in Lincolnshire with rich finds at South Ferriby where 81 gold and 86 silver Iron Age coins as well as numerous brooches and other metalwork was deposited in a position of command over the Humber. Likewise in Essex, a significant coin hoard or several smaller hoards were found along the beach at Clacton as well as other, modest hoards located elsewhere such as at West Hanningfield (de Jersey 2014).

5.3.4 Structure

Unsurprisingly, structure - be it enclosure or evidence of buildings - is rare. There are few additional examples to add to those already identified and discussed previously in this thesis. At Lofts Farm, a small hoard of bronze metalwork of a suspected militaristic nature was buried toward the end of, or after, the abandonment of the settlement (Brown 1984). The settlement also features an unusual pond and tunnel associated with rectangular structures which, together with limited evidence of cremated bone is indicative of funerary activity.

At Wickham Market, a suspected association between the hoard and at least one of two ditches is indicative that it was not buried in a remote place and may even have been enclosed. Even were this the case, demarcation could be relatively unimpressive, here and elsewhere. I have generally interpreted this

lack of monumentalism as a lack of care by the builders and at odds with constructions in other contexts such as dykes and hillforts, which often had highly elaborate entrances. Contrary to this apparent lack of concern is the special attention paid even to unimpressive banks and ditches in the Iron Age. At Hallaton, the bank and ditch may not have been a complete enclosure but its 50m length is not insubstantial. Of greater significance was the obvious focus within the ditches and around the entrance. Foundation deposits and votive deposition around entrances is well known in the Iron Age, but this nevertheless implies that the earthwork was important in some way, a conclusion that runs counter to the general practice of unenclosed, unprotected deposition more generally seen in the East of England.

Finally, as a form of structured ritual space, causeways over rivers and fens are underemphasised. Their remains are well represented in the East of England; those of the River Witham are particularly well known, although others such as Geldeston in South Norfolk and North Runcton in west Norfolk appear to have had their heyday in the late Bronze Age and fell out of use in the middle Iron Age. Yet important finds at Fiskerton continued to be deposited throughout the late Iron Age, with its 'sacred power' still recognised and exploited during the Middle Ages (Stocker and Everson 2003, 276). It is hard to know whether there was a genuine shift from the use of such causeways to deposition in the landscape, as suggested by Bradley (2005) or whether they were vulnerable to the changes in power politics - as appears to have been the case with other forms of ritual activity. Where the deposition from causeways waned and disappeared in some areas, it may have been refreshed elsewhere but to a certain extent dictated to by the geography of the new foci. In County Durham, metalwork mainly dating from the late 1st to 4th centuries AD from the river Tees at Piercebridge are likely to represent the same votive practice of riverine deposition from a bridge, but in a Roman context (Walton 2015). Again, it appears that aspects of ritual activity shifted as a result of changes in socio-economic factors; the nearby Roman fort introduced new populations into the area and re-aligned routeways, likely to also have affected the native ritual landscape. Across Britain, similar displacements simply meant that ritual sites moved to best accommodate the new population centres and roads.

The apparent decline in causeways by the late Iron Age is nevertheless significant and may not be down entirely to chance archaeological finds.

Structures of any kind at sites of ritual deposition appear to have been rare in the East of England and almost non-existent prior to the 1st century BC with the few famous examples that appear toward the end of the period inconsistent and largely insubstantial. The exception to this are causeways that appear to follow a much older tradition, but one that may have been petering out by the Middle Iron Age in favour of landscape deposition. This lack of structure and enclosure is at odds with an emerging picture of deposition in relative close proximity to settlements and hillforts where more definite delineation might be anticipated.

5.3.5 Composition of hoards and evidence of repeated deposition

Not all of the hoards listed in tables, 20 to 32 were votive. Those suspected of being casual losses in settlements have been noted but some might be 'flight' hoards that appear in the archaeological record as virtually indistinct from votive hoards, particularly in the absence of temples or structures. Fortunately, there are traits indicative of ritual practice which may help establish which applies, such as deliberate selection of metal, deliberate breaking of objects (their ritual 'killing'), repeated deposition, associated finds such as animal bones and the locations within the landscape that point to ritual. These elements will be explored below:

    i)   Deliberate selection of metal

63 (64%) of at least 98 coin hoards in the East of England, numbering from just four coins to many hundreds, consist of a single metal type. The true number of ritually deposited hoards of a single metal type is likely to be higher, potentially significantly, as the overall figure will include flight hoards, while several records express doubt as to whether a hoard was one deposit, or several. The problem is compounded by inaccurate recording and hearsay, either by finds made in the 19th century or through rumour and poor reporting by detectorists. Nevertheless, even with these inaccuracies, the deliberate selection of one type of metal in the majority of cases is clear. It is more debatable, and potentially

impossible to determine without knowing the true percentage, whether the prevalence is high enough to indicate the extremely conformist ritualistic 'rules' or whether it is demonstrable of something else. Certainly there are mixed metalwork deposits in ritual contexts, notably at Hallaton and Snettisham which suggests that no 'taboo' existed as to the mixing of the metals although a degree of selection was still evident. A ritual interpretation, or at least a wholly ritual interpretation may not be the only possibility.

Often the selectivity of metals at these sites applies to artefacts as well as coins, ingots and 'scrap'. In one of the two large silver ingots at Hallaton, half melted coins are still visible, a feature also apparent from an ingot from the Isle of Wight hoard (Rudd 2006, 33). This may indicate the gathering of materials for recycling. Towards the end of the Iron Age, one obvious purpose would be for minting new coins, perhaps after the death of a ruler rendered coins in circulation obsolete. Likewise, it is not uncommon to find torcs with coins suggesting that these were collected to melt down to make more coins (Fitzpatrick 2007, 170). Were this the case, the obvious question would be why they were buried if the purpose was of redistribution.

The answer to this question may be found as a parallel to animal sacrifices made during feasting. At Hallaton and Harlow as elsewhere, deposits of articulated animal bones were demonstrative of how whole sections of meat were deliberately left uneaten as sacrifices to the gods, a practice well attested to in later Irish Celtic texts. It is possible that the hoards are representative of much larger volumes of metal for which these places played a part in the gathering and recycling of metals. In fact, although occasional coin flans and other detritus suggestive of metalworking have been found at ritual sites, they are not common and more direct evidence such as charcoal is even less so.

Such a practice would naturally encourage the practical gathering of specific metal types but not necessarily under ritualistic conditions. It could also be a potentially ad-hoc phenomenon, a characteristic that is suggested by the one-off or short-lived nature of many sites. Conceivably, they instead reflect the gathering of people bringing metals for recycling elsewhere, presumably a nearby settlement. This could have been a largely secular affair for which a

blessing might then be bestowed which would involve votive deposition in a location deemed appropriate but not necessarily intrinsically sacred in the way we tend to think of 'sanctuaries'. Only later, perhaps under a formalising landscape, were some of these sites selected on multiple occasions, thereby attracted the spiritual power and structure more recognisable to us as sanctuaries and shrines.

This may explain their haphazard, sporadic and even one-off nature rather than the regular 'worship' that potentially one might expect. It may also explain a paradox. A relationship between metalworking and sites of ritual deposition is evidenced through waste and supply materials – scrap and ingots, but is far more poorly represented in terms of process; this despite anthropological parallels that emphasise the 'magic' of metalworking. Similarly, at certain settlement sites, where metalworking is apparent and where you might therefore expect ritual activity, the evidence is unremarkable. A case in point is in Essex which boasts well excavated sites of significant industry, reflected in red hills (for salt) and metalworking debris with little by way of ritual evidence. Likewise at Elms Farm finds linked to metalworking and pottery production were discovered but, despite claims of a pre-Roman temple, there appears to have been a paucity of ritual deposition. 92% of 155 Iron Age coins found in the settlement were bronze and potin suggesting casual loss while three miniature weapons or tools are not comparable to the thirty found at Nettleton Top, Lincolnshire - a site without any significant industry at all.

The problem with the theory is that some one-off deposits were made on an enormous scale. At Wickham Market 840 gold staters were found at Dallinghoo, the largest hoard of Iron Age gold coins found in the last 150 years (Talbot and Leins 2010, 1). That they were all gold demonstrates deliberate selection and the hoard might represent a communal effort of gathering of wealth (*ibid.*). Were this to be the ritualistic after-thought of the recycling and production of new coins, the total figure produced would be vast. Likewise, although there were fewer gold coins, and the silver hoards were probably deposited over a number of years, the 5000 coins discovered at Hallaton represent over 50% of total coin finds from Leicestershire (Leins 2012). This makes it hard to believe that this reflects more than a small proportion of circulating wealth.

The overall scale of loss of coins and objects is unknown but the theory does help to explain selectivity and sorting of metals. That there is a predominance of such selection, but some inconsistency is at odds with the absolute conformist nature of ritual suggesting that the phenomenon is not subject to ritual rules but is incidental and a result of something else. One possibility is that the practice was linked directly to the distribution of new coinage types. Interestingly, Talbot notes that the closure of Iceni coin hoards often coincides with a change of coinage type (2015, 276). Whilst this might indicate the dumping of a redundant issue, the frequent inclusion of a few coins struck from the subsequent issue suggests otherwise (*ibid.*). Common sense supported by direct evidence of recycling in the form of ingots and half melted coins would suggest that the hoards were not useless to their depositors.

In the case of larger metalwork assemblages it is not unreasonable to assume that their collection was orchestrated by the elites of society and the gathered material reflects both the resources available to them and their wider support networks. As a result it may be possible to identify some of these power bases from distributions. For example, Davies notes that in addition to the prevalence of torcs in west and North West Norfolk, gold coin hoards are largely restricted to the north, whereas terrets have a regional distribution and silver coin hoards are more numerous in the south and southeast (Davies 1999, 39). As the last gold coins were struck around 40 BC and the first silver from around 35 BC, Davies goes on to argue that the pattern of coin deposition may indicate of a change in power structure to the south of Norfolk (*ibid.*, 40).

Attempting to identify power bases in this manner is problematic, although the observations do recognise the likely significance of the location of places of ritual interest within socio-politics. However, anthropological analogies indicate that religious sites should be seen as weathervanes for power structures rather than directly of influence in themselves; their fortunes relied on the power structures, trade routes and movements of peoples around them.

ii)   The 'ritual killing' of objects

The deliberate destruction of objects within ritual contexts is well attested throughout the British Isles, recognised through archaeological contexts, later

classical and Celtic literature as well as in anthropological examples. It includes the melting down, fragmentation and bending of metalwork prior to deposition. At Burrough Hill it is suggested that the hoard of chariot fittings placed in a box were deliberately burnt and may represent a form of ritual killing (Thomas and Taylor 2015). Despite the widespread practice of ritual killing, the proportion of deliberately damaged metalwork is low, suggesting that either it was not a ritualistic condition or that the deposit was not in itself votive in nature. Current understanding of votive deposition would indicate the former.

The practice is also likely to be exaggerated, evidenced in examples of accidental damage or natural wear and tear. Certainly there is substantial evidence that swords deposited in rivers had seen significant combat (York 2002) whilst melted metalwork could be seen from the perspective of manufacturing and production.

The deliberate defacement and damage of objects is indicative of ritualistic behaviours. However whilst by no means a rare occurrence, it represents a low proportion of objects and neither its absence nor presence should be overstated.

iii)   Repeated deposition

In the absence of characteristics such as structure, feasting evidence and enclosure, it is difficult to prove ritualistic interpretations of landscape hoards. However, deposition made on several occasions implies that people were returning to an area for that purpose. Unfortunately, the manner of discovery or recording often means that repeated deposition is hard if not impossible to determine. The Snettisham hoards demonstrate hundreds of years of repeated deposition, the longest known continuity at a ritualistic, landscape site in Britain. Nevertheless, many landscape deposits believed to have been ritualistic in nature appear as 'one-offs' making interpretation less certain and reliant on other characteristics such as orientation and locations within the landscape.

Whilst this uncertainty can be problematic the likelihood that individual one-off votive deposits were regularly made within the landscape is important. These finds could be rich and might represent individual acts of devotion or represent the wealth of communities or groups of affluent individuals. Many such deposits

were far greater than those made in supposedly sanctified, enclosed areas elsewhere suggesting that while modern preconceptions of value need to be acknowledged, the significance of specific areas as well as enclosure once again needs to be questioned. Why these places of one-off acts of devotion in some, relatively rare cases became more established areas of repeated deposition deserves further investigation.

iv)   Associated finds

Thus far, the types of artefactual analyses has largely been restricted to a broad ranging exploration of the ritualisation of art. Whilst I suggested that the artefactual evidence is indicative of rituals associated with the output of resource management and manufacturing, the iconography and typology of artefacts found in ritual contexts requires further investigation. The meaning of objects deserves its own section and will be explored in 5.6 below. However for the purposes of identifying and understanding ritual deposition, the types of objects will be investigated here.

Much has been made regarding the deliberate selection of the type of artefacts deposited as well as their materials. Patterns of deposition; for instance, hoards of horse trappings have been identified in different regions and meanings extrapolated as to why people deliberately selected these items to the apparent exclusion of others. At sites of multiple deposition, the selection of material and types are also frequently identified and interpreted as ritually significant and evidence of 'zoning' within sites. Conversely, the selection of artefacts that accompany votive deposits have been interpreted as meaningful.

As discussed above, the oft-cited prevalence of selection of particular metals may be more to do with industrial processes and the collection of metals than to do with ritualistic rules. The same applies to the type of objects and the deposits may reflect secular organisation or the detritus from rituals rather than rituals themselves. If votive deposition accompanied the periodic gathering of materials it may be that they were first collected and sorted before a proportion of each material or type was given in honour of the gods. This may help to explain why although selection does seem to occur, it is not so exclusive as to indicate ritual.

Accepting this, artefacts appear in ritual contexts that seem to transcend mere functionality. While it is likely that there were objects considered acceptable for votive deposition, it may not have been a prescriptive list. The items discovered through the archaeological record, apparently from ritual contexts tell a story of a broad range of material types buried in varying states of repair. Some of the more damaged examples are frequently cited as 'ritual killing' but there are examples at most sites of repeated ritual deposition of scrap metal, objects broken long before deposition, ingots and objects such as iron bars and other half-processed materials.

v)   Landscape locations

A comprehensive investigation of deposition will be completed in chapter 6 but some general observations can be made here. Due to the reporting issues, accurate identification of most location types is not possible for the East of England although where the findspots are known, they support prevailing understandings of suitable loci for ritual deposition within the landscape. De Jersey's analysis of 140 well located hoards showed a strong preference for east facing slopes (2014, 38). Where no such preference is evident, in many cases this may be due to topographical constraints (*ibid*.). Chadwick notes that what may be a reverence for the sun could potentially be superseded where hills faced west, overlooking the sea (Chadwick, pers com. 2016). An east facing preference is a noted ritualistic characteristic of Iron Age ritual and domestic sites.

Also apparent from de Jersey's work is a preference for hilltop or hillside locations. This is less prominent with 87 of 140 hoards located on a hillside, although never on the summit (*ibid*.). This preference, albeit less distinct due to East Anglia's topography, has been noted for Norfolk (Hutcheson 2007, 365) and is also apparent in the data below.

The significance of height within the landscape is likely to be relative not only to the size of local hills but also to views that locations afford over water. Ritual necessitates a degree of conformity which, in its absence, questions the legitimacy of its identification as ritual or, in this case, as a ritualistic 'rule'. Although high spots are favoured (62% nationally – de Jersey 2014), the

percentage arguably does not suggest ritualistic conditions, unlike the absolute avoidance of summits which appears sacrosanct. Instead, the proximity of the deposits to water or the views afforded by a location over water (views that a summit location might inhibit) appears to be of greater significance. Equally, as a summit location hides a site from below, a factor often quoted for hillside positioning of monuments in preceding periods (Sharples 2010), the locations may have been selected for their visibility from below. Including valley bottom and direct/near direct river, bog or sea deposition, few sites are unrepresented, particularly in the wet East of England. Perhaps such a waterworld was different to drier areas of Britain where the interface between water and the everyday would have been much closer creating a different and unique dynamic.

In fact the evidence for ritual behaviour in the earlier Iron Age appears similar to other regions, with activity perhaps only altered on a practical day to day basis by the abundance of water. Like the Thames, the Witham and elsewhere in Britain, rivers, lakes and the meres of Suffolk were all apparently considered liminal zones attracting the construction of causeways and the deposition of votive material as gifts to the gods. These areas were further supplemented by associated burials and possibly sanctuaries along the waters' edges.

5.4   Sites of funerary rituals

The relationship between Iron Age ritual sites and the treatment of the dead in Britain is poorly understood. In contrast to preceding periods, the treatment of the dead in the British Iron Age is hugely divergent. In some areas, burial practices allowed for extraordinary demonstrations of power and status while elsewhere the dead are nowhere apparent (e.g. Cunliffe 2005; Haselgrove/Moore 2007).

Perhaps as a result of the incoherence of burial practices, the significance of human remains found, even in very limited quantities, may often be overstated particularly in the identification of sanctuaries. Human remains, in the form of whole inhumations or scattered body parts found as pit or enclosure ditch deposits are not unusual in either settlements or, according to conventional

wisdom, sites of apparent ritual focus. Whilst in many of these cases a ritual interpretation for their presence is quite probable, it need not follow that their presence, particularly in low numbers, is indicative of a 'special' site.

The challenge to the study of mortuary practices in Iron Age Britain is their apparent diversity. This thesis has highlighted the repetitive and conformist nature of ritual, neither of which has been comprehensively recognised outside specific cultures such as the so-called Arras burials of Yorkshire. Instead it is assumed that the dead were treated in a variety of ways even at a sub-regional level (Whimster 1981). Wait (1985, 90) estimated that only approximately 6% of the population is represented in the archaeological record. Much of this is regularly interpreted as non-normative treatment, demonstrated by – at least to modern eyes – the disrespectful treatment of bodies and body parts. In particular, the presence of human remains in storage pits, enclosure ditches or defences is regularly seen as 'ritual charging' and it is assumed that the individuals in these cases were either outcasts or enemy (*ibid.* 120). Wait also suggests that the association with refuse disposal might be to further degrade the individual being 'punished', an interpretation with a degree of anthropological precedent with examples of this kind of treatment of outcast groups deliberately disposed of in locations associated with social refuse and 'dirt' (*ibid.*). Equally plausible is the possibility that they represent a social elite, either sacrificed for a perceived failure to successfully lead their communities or who had died of natural causes but whose bodies were deemed as of particular spiritual power due to their status in life. The first possibility is supported circumstantially by later Irish records of the practice of the human sacrifice of failed kings (Kelly 2006) and also by the apparent manicured hands of the sacrificial victim, Lindow Man (Aldhouse-Green 1997). Comparisons between these bog bodies and those placed in pits and defences is debatable but it is highly unlikely that either practice represented the normative treatment of the dead whilst the structured deposition represented in the latter is likely to be indicative of the spiritual augmentation of those features of settlements and hillforts (Hill 1995).

Although this treatment of the dead is highly unlikely to be representative of a significant proportion of the dead it is a consistent practice across Britain. As a

result it should be recognised as the spiritual charging of a pit, enclosure ditch or defence irrespective of context. Nor is it necessarily unique to the Iron Age. Disarticulated human remains also feature in preceding periods when wider, normative burial practices are far more recognisable. Skulls in particular also still, on occasion feature as deposits well into the Romano-British period in areas where burial customs are well developed and appear to reflect both Roman and native practices.

It is important to apply consistency in recognising this specific treatment for a number of reasons. First, disarticulated remains are often seen as evidence for excarnation, a practice that many believe may explain the apparent lack of burial evidence. However, accepting that the disarticulated remains are more likely representational of non-normative practice, excarnation appears less likely to have been the majority rite. Second, disarticulated remains and whole bodies are found in pits in all contexts but sometimes they misleadingly acquire extra significance with sites of particular ritual interest. At Hayling Island for example, a scatter of bones that would not be out of place at a 'normal' settlement has been associated with 'king' Commius or a descendant (Creighton 2000, 192)[10].

Consistency is also a hallmark of ritualistic behaviour and it may be possible to identify the consistent and specific rites associated with this form of mortuary treatment that conforms to ritualistic rules. Twenty bones from Danebury hillfort and the nearby cemetery of Suddern Farm were examined using section light microscopy combined with the Oxford Histological Index (OHI). Only one bone offered potential evidence of excarnation (Booth and Madgwick 2016). On the balance of probability, the study challenges the theory that the disarticulated remains common on Iron Age sites are representative of excarnation although as the authors concede, the dataset is small *(ibid.*, 17). Also significant is the identification of taphonomic processes that indicate the bones at Danebury were immediately inhumed in pits and allowed to decompose for several years before, in some cases, being extracted for secondary burial (*ibid..* 19). It was

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[10] More compellingly, Creighton cites numismatic evidence as indicative of ancestor cults (2000, 192), a narrative that certainly fits with classical descriptions of Iron Age people.

during this secondary rite that some remains may have been exposed to scavengers and weathering (*ibid.*). This same practice has been proposed for disarticulated remains at Gussage-all-Saints and Maiden Castle (Redfern 2008).

Although this study challenges theories regarding excarnation, it does not explain the apparent absence of burial traditions that appear to be more fully representative of Iron Age societies. The alternative explanation for this absence is that the dead were placed in watery locations; rivers, lakes and bogs. Cunliffe notes the difference between the disposal of swords in British and continental contexts. On the continent, the swords largely come from burials but in Britain they come almost exclusively from rivers. Cunliffe suggests that the reason might be that the dead were cremated and disposed of with their 'burial goods' in the rivers (2003, 544). In the East of England a funerary function has been proposed for well-known wetland sites with platforms believed to have been used for votive deposition, notably Flag Fen (Prior 2007). A 19th century report of a whole skeleton found at Stamp End, on the river Witham, complete with a dagger and helmet hints at a similar function for causeways. Deliberately sunk Bronze Age boats, such as those recently discovered at Must Farm have likewise been interpreted as funerary in nature, labelled as riverine 'hearses' (Prior 2007). Their Iron Age descendants such as that at Hasholme may have had a similar function.

Typically however, where human remains have been found in water or fen they generally demonstrate ritual characteristics such as a prevalence of skulls and absence of other body parts. Some of these skulls show drilled holes suggestive of former display as well as inflicted wounds presumably from battle or even sacrifice, as at Lakenheath, Suffolk. That skulls have been found with drilled holes, believed to have been used for their mounting and display also demonstrates the curation of bodies, potentially echoing the examples at Danebury.

The above observations are particularly pertinent to the East of England. Until recently, the East of England was so poor in Iron Age burials that excarnation was commonly believed to have been the prevailing mortuary rite as this would

explain the absence of human remains (Gurney 1998, 1-2: Hill 2007, 28). Whilst few would claim that this view has been wholly reversed, the picture is beginning to change thanks to recent excavations and analyses of cropmarks identified by the NMP (Tremlett 2011, 34). Specifically, small square and circular ditched enclosures have been identified that are believed to have had a funerary function (*ibid.*).

On a much grander scale and potentially a rare example of a site of ceremony and burial, is Fison Way. Its structures have already been described above but excavators also noted a potential funerary role. Due probably to soil conditions, no skeletal evidence survives but apparent grave cuts feature prominently in the latter phases of the site. In view of the anomalous status of Fison Way, such an interpretation is difficult to corroborate but equally difficult to dismiss in the absence of evidence to the contrary. The apparent grave cuts are unusual in that the nearby buildings and enclosures are grand enough to attract labels like ' 'shrines'. Typically structures within cemeteries are less conspicuous, but attract similar identifications despite little or no supporting evidence.

Comparisons made between Fison Way and other sites in the locality and also elsewhere in the East of England suggest that it was not an aberration and that such enclosures, linked to normative burial rites were relatively widespread in the region. Enclosures at Caistor St Edmund, Trowse and Longham occupying elevated positions within the landscape are believed to date to the late Iron Age or early Roman period although the dating is not secure (Ashwin and Bates 2000a). Like the 'graves' at Fison Way, no central inhumations were located but the Caistor St Edmund enclosures are thought to have contained shallow cremation deposits (Tremlett 2011, 35). Tremlett notes the similarity between this characteristic and that of the earlier phases of Arras burials which featured shallow grave cuts within cemeteries that were also relatively sparse (*ibid.*). From these excavated examples, many similarly shaped cropmarks have since been identified through the NMP and are far more frequent than had been supposed. They typically feature square, rectangular or on occasion trapezoidal enclosures of approximately 7m to 16m across and unlike the excavated examples do often boast central pits (*ibid.*). Further examples occur in Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. The rite appears to be widespread but not in the

numbers to suppose that it formed a typical treatment of the dead. More probably, the burials represent higher status individuals and their existence strengthens Gregory's interpretation of the Fison Way 'burials'.

Whilst a coherent rite spread across the East of England and representative of its populations would be convenient, the recent discoveries probably belie a more complicated reality. Nor do they assist understanding of the relationship between ritual sites and treatment of the dead. As might be expected, the region boasts numerous contemporary rites potentially representative of all elements of the societies. Presumed high status burials include the 19th century discovery of an apparently rogue Arras style chariot burial at Mildenhall and rich burials at Great Chesterford and Kelvedon, both in Essex (Medleycott, forthcoming and Rodwell 1988). Grave goods also feature alongside numerous cremations at Stanway and also with cremations at Elvedon near Thetford and Snailwell, an area suspected of significant coin deposition. Alongside these finds should be considered the ambiguous evidence from the East of England's many wetland sites.

With alternative theories of normative burial rites such as excarnation largely reliant on a diminishing absence of evidence, an analysis of human remains in the contexts of likely liminal areas or sites of other ritual activity is timely.

5.4.1 Sites of non-normative burial rites in the East of England

The purpose of this sub-section is to identify non-normative treatments of the dead and examine their relationship with other forms of ritualistic behaviour and architecture. Figure 22 demonstrates the sites from the collated data-set for the East of England where metalwork deposition, human remains and structure are evident and the number of occurrences in which they feature together.
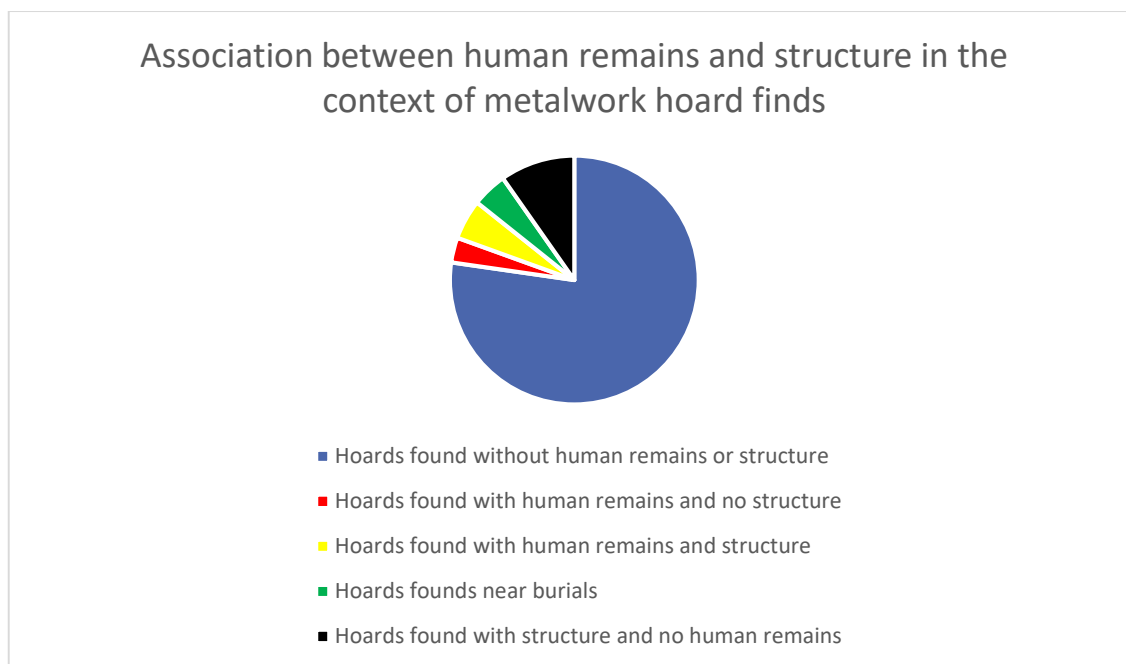
Figure 22 Pie chart showing association between human remains and structure in the context of metalwork hoard finds

Immediately apparent is the large number of hoards found without human remains or structure. The chart draws upon the full data set which, as discussed, suffers from a lack of contextual information due to their discovery by metal detecting – both legal and illegal. Also problematic in parts of the East of England are acidic soils which destroy bone, further masking potential survival. Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that human remains are rarely found within the contexts of metalwork deposition. Of 156 sites in the East of England, only 13 have any association with human remains. Of these, seven are in Lincolnshire and represent human remains associated with causeways that seem to have witnessed votive deposition of both human remains and metalwork. In water there are some examples where the deposition of human remains and metalwork might conceivably have occurred at the same time, such as the Stamp End skeleton. Generally however, although human remains and metalwork appear in the same places in water, indications that deposition occurred at the same time are limited although the context would naturally make these largely impossible to prove. The proportion of skulls in these contexts is also indicative of ritual deposition of a different kind, reflecting a 'cult of the head' (Whimster 1981; Wait 1985 *et al.*). Skulls also occur, as well as

whole inhumations on land at sites throughout Britain such as hillforts but also domestic sites, notably at Glastonbury Lake Village (Armit 2012, 8). These skulls and the inhumations in ditches or as separate pit burials are likely to be special deposits, sacrifices or enemy trophies buried as part of ritual defence (Cunliffe 2003, 554). Discoveries of perforated crania and skulls located near gateways has led to interpretations of their display (e.g. Wheeler 1954) but their burial in ditches and pits appears more commonly but attracts less comment (Armit 2012, 7). In the context of wetland finds, display was evidently not their purpose and a relationship with votive deposition can be supposed. This would not however preclude their use for secondary burial.

Probably the most compelling evidence of non-normative mortuary rites in the East of England can be found at Trumpington and Godwin Ridge, both in Cambridgeshire. Located on a flat plateau on slightly elevated land, the site of Trumpington, outside Cambridge looks west across to the river Cam some 300m away. Activity from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages has been identified but its most intense phases occur from the Late Bronze Age through to the Late Iron Age. The remains of more than 60 people are represented within the excavated assemblages, the majority neonates or disarticulated bones. However, the site is no cemetery. Hundreds of pits were discovered, many with human and animal bone structured deposits (Hinman 2004). Hinman noted a repeated pattern of deposition, arguing that the structured repetition, selection and placement of objects suggests they were chosen for their symbolic value and that the pit contents stem from ceremonial activity taking place throughout the Iron Age (*ibid.*, 22). Four post structures, which mostly conform to an east-west alignment, have been identified as excarnation platforms with the remaining human remains buried in pits around the area, in various states of decomposition and disarticulation (*ibid.*).

Also in the excavated area were two zones of activity interpreted as important foci and possible sanctuaries (Hinman 2004, 34). In both cases, identification was based on the artefactual assemblages in the surrounding curvilinear ditches. 'Shrine 2' in particular is compelling due to a quantity of copper alloy and iron brooches and pins recovered from the ditches of both the 'shrine' and

a larger enclosure surrounding it. A single Kentish potin coin was recovered, dated to the 1st century BC.

The 'excarnation platforms' could however easily be interpreted as granaries, and indeed at least five of the structures contained cereal grains within the posthole assemblages. Also, Trumpington represents more than a thousand years of activity so the significance of disarticulated fragments of 60 individuals should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, in the absence of roundhouses, the site seems to represent mortuary treatment potentially of a subset of society. It is tempting to see it as a place where bodies – perhaps of enemy or outcasts - were sent for particular rites that involved burying bodies in pits, before reopening and gathering the decomposing remains, either whole or in part for secondary burial elsewhere. What appears uncivilised to us today has some logic if we are right to assume that human remains were used to spiritually empower locations such as enclosure ditches or fortifications. That is, without immediately killing someone, a body would not be available for this purpose unless there were places where bodies were being kept and curated for such an occasion.

Direct evidence of secondary burials is not proven at Trumpington, but the Danebury examples discussed above demonstrate its occurrence elsewhere in Britain. Trumpington and the other evidence of curated human remains discussed below suggest it occurred in the East of England as well.

Also compelling in terms of the ritual use of human remains, but of a different nature is Godwin Ridge. Here, a small earth made platform was constructed projecting into a fen from a sand ridge; one of a number of thin islands within the fen. On this platform were hundreds of animal bones, apparently the remains from feasting together with disarticulated human remains. Nearby, a modest roundhouse has been variously interpreted as a shrine and as the home of the site's 'guardian' (Evans 2013, 17). There is nothing extraordinary about the roundhouse and it may be another example of a functional requirement for a covered space, either for storage or for a 'guardian' as Evans suggests (*ibid.*). Like Trumpington however, the ridge is unlikely to have represented the typical treatment of the dead. Human remains consisted of 89

pieces of bone, including skull fragments from at least five individuals (Evans et al., 2016). Many of these bones demonstrate defleshing or dismemberment and one of the skull fragments was perforated, presumably for the skull's former display (*ibid.*). The evidence is far more indicative of sacrifice and feasting although earlier nearby barrows link past funerary activity. Typical of ritual sites, there is little evidence of a crossover of funerary activity and metalwork deposition at either Trumpington or Godwin Ridge. A report of a gold torc in the wider vicinity of Trumpington is uncorroborated.

Sites where some of the curated human remains feature in a similar manner to votive deposition include the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fens. At Lakenheath - just 12km to the west of Fison Way – there is compelling evidence of ritual activity on a significant scale as well as ritualistic treatment of human remains. Two coins hoards - the Joist Fen hoard; 186 coins discovered on an 'island' within the fens and another hoard of 482 coins in a pedestal jar on the outskirts of a Roman settlement (but believed to have been buried c. AD 34 - 50) were located in different contexts. The larger hoard was probably associated with a modest 1st century settlement and bears a striking resemblance to Honingham in Norfolk. Of the 482 coins, 67 are Republican and Imperial coins whilst the rest are Icenian silver coins together with three gold. It is one of the few mixed silver and gold hoards in the county (Briscoe, Carson and Dolley 1958, 219) but as the hoard was recovered by several metal detectorists over a number of years, it could represent repeated deposition.

The Joist Fen hoard was located in an area of significant votive and potential funerary activity. In the surrounding fen there is modest evidence of metalwork and human remains, presumably ritual deposition, into the fen itself from the Bronze Age through to the Iron Age. A mace head and worked flint may indicate an even longer history of 'gifts to the gods'. At Furthest Drove, close to Joist Fen, two human skulls were discovered in different deposits, believed to date to the Iron Age. One of these bore probable sword cut marks and the other has been associated with a silver Icenian coin, one of the few examples of a direct link between the deposition of human remains and metalwork despite the number of finds of both. Elsewhere in the fens, at least one other skull has been found as well as a skeleton in a likely early Roman context. Interestingly more

conventional funerary activity from the Roman period is represented by cremation urns, a connection further muddying the waters of normative and non-normative treatments of the dead in these contexts.

Taken together, Lakenheath, Trumpington and Godwin Ridge suggest a similar treatment of the dead limited presumably to specific sectors of the society - perhaps outcasts and/or enemies but certainly not representative of the dead. It is worth noting that the body 'slung' into a pit at Trumpington was female (Hinman 2004) and at least two of the five skull fragments from Godwin Ridge were from women so should not be supposed to represent the beheading and sacrifices of enemy male warriors. Feasting evidence at Trumpington and Godwin Ridge is also potentially indicative of gathering of people from wide areas, ritual and behaviours. This does not seem to be paralleled in rites associated with the normative treatments of the dead where there is little evidence of feasting and metalwork deposition within the vicinity of the burials themselves. This appears to have been the case even where high status burials, such as those of Colchester, contained feasting paraphernalia. In the East of England, feasting does not appear to have occurred as part of normative burial rites.

These three sites are all associated with the Cambridgeshire fens, lying within 30 km each other. However, parallels can be made with sites further afield with the peculiar platform at Godwin Ridge reminiscent of more typical wooden platforms that projected across water and directly associated with votive deposition along the river Witham.

The age and longevity of these sites is also worthy of note, spanning between 400 and 1500 years, whereas the better known sanctuaries of the 1st centuries BC and AD represent a mere blip in time unless their Romano-British phases are considered. This consistency also adds weight to their legitimacy as forms of ritual activity.

In the same way that sites of non-normative mortuary rites rarely feature directly associated metalwork, sites of significant votive deposition also rarely feature directly associated human remains. Hallaton is included in Figure 35 above but only yielded a single humerus bone. This was a stray find rather than

part of a structured deposit and contrasts with, for example, the deliberate placement of two complete dogs in the entranceway of the enclosure (Browning and Score 2012). Its presence here, and elsewhere such as Hayling Island, suggests that human bones were not 'taboo' in these places, merely that they did not form a significant part in the rituals.

The lack of human remains associated with metalwork deposition is surprising considering its prevalence in settlements and hillforts. Also, where I have demonstrated a closer association between metalwork deposition and settlements than previously assumed, votive metalwork deposits more typically occurred outside, but within easy reach of, settlements and generally enjoyed views from hillside locations. Human remains on the other hand were buried directly within settlements – in pits or defensive enclosures.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that there is little evidence of a direct link between the ritual deposition of metalwork and human remains, although there were places of crossover – liminal zones where both types of deposition occurred. Some of these places also saw more conventional burials; the cremation urns around Joist Fen for example and Bronze Age barrows along the river Witham, boasting potential continuity with the causeways. However, only Fison Way is demonstrative of a structured, overt link between a site of apparent ritual focus and burial, likely to be representative of more normative treatments of the dead.

The differences in depositional practices of metalwork and human remains suggests that these two traditions had different functions. Perhaps bodies and body parts within settlements were used to spiritually empower defences and pits whilst metalwork deposition was less rooted to specific features instead being responses to the landscape around them. The implication, from evidence of secondary burials and sites such as Trumpington, that bodies were curated, suggests that they were brought some distance for this purpose. Metalwork deposition on the other hand, like the deposition of articulated animal bones from feasting may have been bi-products of other activity – perhaps confirming trades, marriages and alliances on varying scales. Votive deposition in fenland and rivers was an older tradition than that made in the landscape and it was in

these contexts that this and the deposition of human remains occurred side by side in the late Iron Age. A differing purpose here is harder to determine and is potentially confused by occurrences of suspected ritual sacrifice. Clear evidence, such as that seen widely in Scandinavia and Ireland is less forthcoming in England with only the bodies and body parts in the fen of Lindow Moss, Cheshire highly likely to represent human sacrifice. In the East of England there are reports of similar bog bodies, now lost, from Broughton in Lincolnshire.

5.5 Feasting

In any literature, be it contemporary Roman, later Irish or modern academic papers the apparent fondness Iron Age people of northern Europe had for feasting is well recorded. Many of these sources provide details of behaviours that are clearly ritualised and can, with a degree of interpretation, be attested to in the archaeological record. We have already discussed the story of Mac Dathó's pig in which the warrior, Conall deliberately provoked a fight at a feast by allocating himself the choicest cuts of a pig and the forelegs to his enemies (Thurneysen 1935). A more contemporary example of the importance of the selectivity of apportioning meat is provided by Poseidonius who, writing in the 1st century BC, asserted that the misallocation of 'the champion's portion' could provoke violence amongst the Celts (Webster 1995). This again alludes to the warrior connection to feasting and pork in particular the 'meat of champions' (*ibid.*). The appearance of right forelimbs of pigs (and occasionally other animals) in burials in Yorkshire but also in the study region – such as at Stansted, and their deliberate avoidance in the animal bone assemblages at Hallaton suggests a stigma or taboo associated with the dead, hence the provocation in Conall's story. Further ritualistic elements in Celtic feasting are evoked by Athenaeus, quoting Poseidonius, who describes a clear hierarchy:

'When a large number dine together they sit in a circle with the most influential man in the centre, like the leader of the chorus, whether he surpasses the others in warlike skill, or lineage, or wealth. Besides him sits the host and next on either side the others in order of distinction.' (Athenaeus IV. 151e – 152f).

There are clear dangers in using classical and Irish literature in this way. Had the authors conjectured any meaning from what they described, it would have to be taken in the manner of all rituals: that they would not have been designed to communicate, were probably anachronistic and that the meanings could well have changed. Likewise, references to a shared Celtic narrative should be queried. By the same token however, the durability and conformity of rituals, as well as their ability to transcend cultures and chronologies mean that it is not impossible that the descriptions are relevant and accurate.

The archaeological record paints a confusing and inconsistent picture of feasting, not least due to the varying survival of faunal material in different soil types. Nevertheless, the works of Ralph (2005; 2007) are comprehensive for East Anglia, whilst significant analyses of central southern England give a sense of the diversity of sites there (e.g. Waddington and Sharples 2011; Needham and Spence 1997). These studies have been complemented by substantial theoretical works (e.g. Dietler 2005; Hill 1995 and many others).

Due to the ritualised elements that were seemingly inherent in Iron Age feasting and its prominence at late Iron Age sanctuaries in Britain and on the Continent, feasting is regularly seen as a marker for special activity, and therefore special places. Chief amongst the preconceptions is that by the end of the Iron Age, the funeral rites of the burials of apparent 'aggrandisers' such as those at Stanway and Lexden at Colchester included feasting. The problem is, there is little evidence directly to link feasting, which occurred some distance away, with the burials themselves. Within the larger tombs are feasting paraphernalia which has further been used to evidence the link (Ralph 2007) but this only proves that feasting was important to the incumbent, not that their burial rites included it. From anthropological research too, preconceptions have potentially arisen. 'Work-party feasts' have been associated with the building of hillforts and dykes (Dietler 2005) but direct evidence is again lacking, and in the latter case could be mistaken for feasts relating to the high status burials in the same regions and *vice versa*.

Instead, feasting is more directly in evidence within settlements and, more rarely but much more dramatically, in late Iron Age sanctuaries. At Hallaton and

Harlow feasting is highly distinctive, on a large scale and demonstrative of the deliberate selection of the age and type of animal chosen. At Hallaton 97% of a huge assembly of bones were from pigs – in sharp contrast to normal domestic sites where pig bones usually account for between 5 and 10% (Alberella and Serjeantson 2002, 18). The majority of pigs were slaughtered between 7 and 10 months old suggesting that the feasts were occurring during the winter months (Browning 2012). At Hayling Island, lambs were killed in the autumn and the activity might be related to seasonal festivals at which feasting probably occurred in Iron Age society (King and Soffe 1988). From Irish sources we know of Samhain in November, a timing that might be reflected in the feasting at Hallaton. November has long been a traditional time for the slaughter of animals and these kinds of festivals were heavily linked with the agricultural calendar.

From the ages of the animals, the number of deposits and the sheer quantity, feasting might have been an annual occurrence over a number of years at sites like Harlow, Hayling Island and Hallaton. Whilst it might be tempting to deduce that one of the roles of these sites was to help manage the agricultural workings of the communities around them, the short period over which these feasts occurred suggests no such tradition. Considering the anthropological and archaeological parallels discussed above, it seems more likely that the vast scale of the bone assemblages represents a response to crisis, notably the threat of Roman invasion and associated turmoil in Britain prior to AD 43. It is likely that this response was set within the framework of existing traditions; the unusually large feasts may simply be extraordinary versions of a less archaeologically visible tradition. Regardless, the scale of consumption suggests the assembly of large numbers of people presumably necessitating a new, temporary political will of relatively centralised organisation.

Few sites have been discovered with feasting of the scale and selectivity seen at Hallaton and Harlow. In fact, despite its apparent prominence in traditional representations of Iron Age peoples, feasting does not feature overtly in the archaeological record, although whether this is genuine rarity or due to poor survival of animal bones is more difficult to determine. Of hundreds of sites analysed in East Anglia, Ralph identifies just 76 with evidence (2007, 105). Of

62 feasting sites identified in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, 40 are settlements (*ibid.*, 114–29), and another 10 are burials/cemeteries (*ibid.*) in which the evidence is secondary; the evidence of 'aggrandisers' for whom feasting was important, rather than direct evidence of feasting itself. Unlike the Harlow and Hallaton assemblages, they mostly suggest one-off, relatively modest gatherings where the settings may have been largely circumstantial, based on convenience; directly within a settlement where the necessary infrastructure for preparing for feasts would have been located, rather than 'special', inaccessible places within the landscape. Contrary to assumptions that feasting occurred in centres or seats of power which might be expected, it has been noted that there are relatively few examples of feasting within the proto-oppida or other sites of apparent significance – at least in the East of England (Ralph 2004). The traditional archaeological vision of large scale feasting is of the legitimisation of rulers or war-leaders to establish their right to lead (Cunliffe, 2000), a vision stemming from Roman sources, later Irish texts and the burials of the 'aggrandisers'. It is possible that feasting was occurring elsewhere, perhaps on boundary locations that may have offered neutral or convenient places for inter-tribal negotiations (James 2017 pers com).

Outside the study region but pertinent here are the large assemblages at Baldock in Hertfordshire. There, it is believed that 96 sheep were slaughtered, probably all at once for a feast held in the winter and it has been estimated that the meat that would have been available would have exceeded 4400lbs (Ralph 2007), enough to feed several thousand people. Ralph differentiates between these types of feast describing Baldock as 'diacritical', a term coined by Dietler (2005) to describe more formalised power-status feasts. Again, this feasting at Baldock has been associated with the rich graves nearby but it is just as likely that it was related to the settlement itself[11]. Another type of feast identified by Ralph is evidenced at Woodham Walter, Essex, where 80 late Belgic- Roman vessels were excavated from a section of an enclosure ditch. The vessels date to around AD 50 and have been interpreted as representing a 'closure feast' (Ralph 2007, 91). Modest feasts have also been identified at settlements with

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[11] Although the nearby burials may well have been of the 'aggrandisers' who, in life, instigated the feasting even if the feasts were unrelated to their internment

extensive trading networks such as Silchester and Skeleton Green (Ashdown and Evans 1981).

Commensurate with feasting are middens, a type of site that also regularly attracts both ritual and prosaic interpretations. They are large organic mounds of debris from feasting (Gwilt et al 2016, 30), so large in some cases – such as at East Chisenbury, Wessex - that they have been described as monuments (Waddington and Sharples 2011, 57). More than 30 are known in Britain but only one, Welland Bank in Lincolnshire, from this study region (*ibid.*). A second might be reasonably inferred at Grandcourt Farm, Norfolk, although the manner of deposition appears different. Most of these midden sites seem to date to the Late Bronze Age and/or Earliest Iron Age and it is tempting to associate them with the suspected intensification of ritual activity of this period of apparent crisis.

Welland Bank is marked by a substantial Late Bronze Age ditch and bank, and associated with a Bronze Age settlement and field systems (Evans and Serjeantson, 1988). Its faunal assemblage survived due to excellent conditions and its proximity to Haddenham suggests some continuation of practices as well as the evolution of new ones.

Grandcourt Farm's location has likewise attracted attention. This middle Iron Age site may represent a forerunner to Snettisham, 20km to the north. Although there is evidence for earlier phases, the main activity at Grandcourt occurred in the Middle Iron Age, represented by a large and rich ecofactual and artefactual assemblage (Malone, forthcoming). A large number of pits running along the contour of a hillside appear to be contemporary to a settlement to the west and further to the south a further area of deposition containing a spread of pottery, copper-alloy and iron brooches and beads of amber, glass and shale (*ibid.*). The scale of deposition is far greater than might be anticipated from a comparable settlement and is on a scale of Southern-Central British middens of an earlier date. The amber and glass is demonstrable of high status activity and wide range trade (*ibid.*). The manner of deposition differs however, potentially indicative of structured, votive deposition, repeated over many years. The site may be illustrative of the transition from the rich metalwork votives of the

Bronze Age to an agricultural focus during the early to middle Iron Age. Interestingly, whilst an association with Snettisham is impossible to identify, finds in the more immediate vicinity include a gold torc at East Winch and more than 120 torc fragments at Bawsey. The area appears to have been well populated and rich in votive deposition during the late Iron Age and it is tempting to see Grandcourt as a precursor to the general resurgence of metalwork deposition in the area, rather than specifically as a forerunner of Snettisham.

Grandcourt Farm, but also middens more generally are worthy of consideration in terms of the evolution of sanctuaries where feasting occurs such as Harlow and Hallaton. Parallels between Llanmaes, South Wales and Hallaton in regards to the selection of cuts of meat, specifically of pork, have already been made above but further comparison is useful. At Llanmaes, a pre-existing settlement appears to have been abandoned with the midden accumulated directly above it. Rich deposits of cauldron and bowl fragments as well as broken Armorican axeheads suggest deliberate breaking and selection that potentially mirrors the careful dismemberment of pigs, the bones from which represent over 70% of the animal bone assemblage of 73,000 fragments (Gwilt et al 2016, 34). Its scale, supported by isotopic analyses of the pig bones which show a wide origin of the animals suggest that people and their livestock were coming from far and wide (*ibid.*).

Whilst parallels are interesting, there are many differences. By the late Iron Age direct associations between feasting and metalwork deposition are rare, the former occurring within settlements, the latter just outside, usually in deference to the landscape, be it on a hillside or in sight of water. Even at Hallaton and Harlow, the deposits are generally, although not exclusively, separate within the site. They are practices with only a passing association, probably linked to the gathering of people that appears at its most overt towards the end of the Iron Age when it is likely crisis exaggerated behaviours. The lack of evidence suggests that they were not typically associated with one another but on rare occasions, perhaps during crisis or as a result of a developing 'aggrandising elite' from the 1st century BC, feasting and deposition started to become more synonymous. That said, the modest direct evidence of feasting is surprising,

given the prevalence of feasting paraphernalia in burial chambers of the 1st century BC in southern Britain. This absence is particularly stark in and around the burials of such individuals themselves where there is only limited evidence of funerary feasts.

5.5.1 Feasting evidence from metalwork

Feasting appears to have been well represented in the material culture of the Bronze and Iron Ages with artefacts recovered from settlements, burials and from water. They range from cauldrons and firedogs that appear across Western Europe from the Bronze Age through to the Roman period to decorative tankards and continental imports of amphorae and wine-strainers adopted by a developing elite toward the end of the Iron Age.

Cauldrons and bowls appear as fragments in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age middens, whole as votive deposits in water and, less frequently, in settlements. Cauldrons dating from the Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period have been found in rivers or fens, although they are less common in these latter phases, with only around 67 known examples (Joy 2015). Other contexts are also apparent. Seventeen were famously discovered at Chiseldon, Wiltshire in one large pit alongside two cattle skulls and are believed to have been associated with a small settlement nearby. They are widely interpreted as a ritual deposit (Baldwin and Joy 2016). Other examples include one of the cremation burials at Baldock, Hertfordshire alongside other material associated with feasting such as two firedogs. In the East of England, there are a number of examples; eleven from Glenfield, Leicestershire believed to be from a settlement; one deposited in fen at Lound Run, Suffolk; one from Santon, Norfolk, believed to have been from a settlement and containing more than 100 local and Roman objects; and more cauldrons at Sedgeford and Wormegay in Norfolk. A cauldron found in the bank of Old Croft River at Upwell, also in Norfolk, is suspected of being a later example (Joy 2016). Finally, at Fison Way, four sheets of folded copper-alloy were found, one of which was decorated by repousse bosses which may have been from a cauldron (*Ibid.).*

Cauldrons are relatively rare finds although sheets of copper may reflect further unidentified examples. The majority have been found in watery contexts and are likely to represent votive deposition. However, the limited number associated with settlements is interesting and the seventeen cauldrons at Chiseldon are evidently of particular significance. Joy estimated that even the smallest ones could comfortably hold 20 litres of food or drink (2016). Analysis of surviving organic material within the cauldrons indicates consumption of meat, presumably meat stews and alcoholic drink on a vast scale (*ibid.*). That they are not more closely associated with sanctuaries where feasting is evident is perhaps not surprising given that the detritus associated with preparation of food and drink are typically absent from these sites; indeed, a link must have existed between places of ceremony and settlements; logistically if food was not prepared at the place of feasting, this must have happened nearby where there were people and facilities to do it.

As suggested by their ritualistic disposal in rivers and fen, it is unlikely that cauldrons were seen as entirely secular, practical items of the everyday. Later, vernacular references to a link with the sacred, and continental examples such as the Gundestrup cauldron with its obvious religious[12] iconography, make it tempting to see cauldrons as integral parts of ritualised feasts.

Another indication of the importance, if not the ritualised elements of Iron Age feasting is the resources expended in its execution. Decorative bronze tankard handles are occasionally found and their elaboration attests to the significance of the activity itself. Poseidonius is also quoted by Athenaeus in his description of ale being passed around the feasters, always to the right. At least 139 examples of tankards - their handles or fragments from the bronze bands that held the wooden staves together - are known from the Late Iron Age and Roman period (Horn 2015, 2). They survive in a number of different contexts including in graves. At Seven Sisters, South Wales, five decorative tankard handles were found in what is believed to have been a ritual context. At least eight are known in the East of England, one at North Creake, Norfolk in a ritual

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[12] There is a case to argue that the iconography on the Gundestrup cauldron is not ritualised and therefore offers a rare opportunity to interpret apparently religious scenes. Of course the extent to which it is representative of wider cultures than that of its immediate locale is of course debatable.

deposit of Late Iron Age and early Roman metalwork, one from a beach at Bromeswell, Suffolk, two believed to have been placed in the fen at Burwell and at Colne Fen, in Cambridgeshire, and others from Kelvedon, Essex, Elvedon, Suffolk, Colchester and Hallaton, the latter fragment associated directly with animal bone. In light of the classical and later references to feasting, the eight examples from the East of England is relatively few, suggesting that they were not every day, common objects or that their metal was regularly recycled (Haselgrove, pers. com). That they first appear in this region in the first century BC suggests that they were not longstanding features of Iron Age feasting here (although they continue in use throughout Roman Britain). However, it is believed that they originate in Britain (Horn 2015, 3) indicating they replaced or complemented an earlier tradition of communal drinking. Similarly, the decline in use but not the disappearance of cauldrons may be another sign of changing customs and tastes.

Of eleven examples where wood has survived, all were yew which is a peculiar material to choose considering its toxic properties – a characteristic apparently well known in antiquity (Horn 2015, 5). Yew trees are frequently associated with ancient religious belief (Bevan-Jones 2002, 29) whilst the exclusive selection of this wood, admittedly from a relatively small sample, is consistent with ritualistic principles. Euphoria is listed as a side-effect of yew poisoning and potentially its mixture with alcohol may be an association of that. Mind-altering effects may have helped augment feasting with additional spiritual potency.

Regardless of the reason for the use of yew, the wood features in contemporary stave-built buckets and in artefacts of more overt ritual significance such as the Bronze Age Roos Carr figurines and boat (Coles 1990).

Considering the reputation of Iron Age peoples for feasting, the amount of surviving cauldrons and tankard handles appears low, even allowing for the recycling of metals, which applies equally to other categories of metalwork.

This poor survival is at odds with evidence from the late Iron Age burials of so-called 'aggrandizers' for whom feasting appears to have been an important element in alliance building and self-empowerment (Ralph 2007). In Britain, ostentatious burials appear later and less spectacularly than in northern France

and Germany but feasting material and wine amphorae are still prevalent in high status burials. The drinking of ale, and later, wine is synonymous with power – the rights of giving a feast. Drinking regalia, notably horns and tankards would have been symbolic of this right (Arnold 2001, 27). Creighton (2000; 2006), Cunliffe (2011) and others have argued that the 1st centuries BC and AD saw the development and increasing sophistication of kingship and elite control, perhaps as a result of Roman contacts. The threat of invasion or general strife is often seen as a catalyst for greater social cohesion and leadership during the late Iron Age. It is surprising therefore that despite the increasing association between elite burials and feasting paraphernalia, a correlating link with feasting sites and elite patronage is not clear-cut and is arguably limited to just a handful of sites.

As with sanctuaries and places of votive deposition the idea that locations of feasting were isolated and inhospitable seems increasingly unlikely. It appears that many of the foodstuffs were prepared offsite and the logistical implication of transporting it long distances from a place of preparation to the feasting site seems an unnecessary and improbable chore. However, many authors have noted the location of sanctuaries, and in this case, ceremony and feasting, near to tribal boundaries. Whilst settlement of some kind would be required for the logistical organisation and the cooks for the feast itself, it need not be a 'special' settlement or seat of power. Indeed, a politically unimportant settlement on a tribal boundary might well provide a more suitably neutral and convenient meeting place between allies and enemies. The identification of tribal boundaries is not without its controversy and this thesis is not the place to explore it.

Feasting in the vicinity of sites of ritual focus is not common in the East of England and where it does occur, although the scale can be very significant, it is often limited to a relatively short time frame. It is perhaps surprising that more evidence does not survive from other sites on varying degrees of scale and longevity. A study of feasting material over time might lead to a similar observation to Hill's 'fibulae event horizon'. Yet as Ralph points out (and particularly relevant to East Anglia) animal bones may not survive in many locations and the burial, or the lack of the burial of associated pottery and

cooking material, might not be representative. This may be the case at Fison Way, where the soil conditions preclude bone survival. Here, Ralph interprets the proportion of fine ware to coarse ware as evidence for feasting, adding to the limited evidence represented by possible cauldron fragments (Joy 2016). Feasting may not have been a regular occurrence but work-party feasts, incentives for the workers who redeveloped the earthworks of the site in its final Iron Age phase (Ralph 2007). However if, as is often assumed, Fison Way was the centre for ceremony and feasting, it might be more fruitful to look in nearby Thetford for the material associated with food preparation.

The scale of feasting in the late Iron Age in the East of England is impossible to determine. Burial evidence from Colchester implies a growing elite for whom feasting was important, whilst the bone assemblages from Hallaton and Harlow demonstrate it to a significant degree within ritual contexts. From the estimated volume of meat consumed at these sites, hundreds of people were probably attending assemblies, potentially associated with festivals linked to the agricultural calendar. The large scale however seems to be more closely associated with the suspected turmoil of the period reflected in the metalwork deposits.

5.6 The ritual artefacts of the East of England

As with the rest of Iron Age Britain, the ritual sites of the East of England are anomalous for their ambiguity. It might be hoped that objects of art found in the region might offer insights into their mysteries and represent the societies that made and chose to ritually deposit them. However, as we have seen, care need to be taken on both accounts.

Art can become ritualised and its meaning distorted, forgotten and repeated without conscious thought with a subsequent 'cultural time lag'. However, where there is no evidence for ritualisation and where we can reasonably surmise a deliberate choice of motifs, the interpretation of iconography and art may prove valuable. In theory, such an occurrence should stand out from the repetition and anachronisms of ritualised art. Evidencing this can be complex

however. The selection of miniature weapons mimicking Bronze Age styles noted by Farley (2011a) at Nettleton Top is likely to be deliberate, as miniatures were uncommon in Britain before 100 BC, but the meaning is not clear. It could be as vague as a simple reverence for ancestors, however poorly understood that they might have been. Alternatively, the miniatures may represent an evolution of the older practice of depositing prestigious weapons, for which the miniatures were acceptable substitutes. This martial deposition typically occurred in rivers, before becoming more prevalent on land (with riverine deposition resuming in the Middle Ages). An anthropological example of the substitution of artefacts is evident in Chinese funerary practices, ancient and modern, whereby a special form of cheaply produced paper currency is burnt as offerings for the dead, representative of real wealth. This 'ghost' or 'joss' cash is ritualised with different types dependent upon, for example, the status of the deceased. More recently this practice has grown to include credit cards and even papier-mâché houses and cars.

In the Roman period, miniature weapons appear more frequently, notably in Norfolk and Essex, and in sites of known ritual activity. Whilst it is likely that they represent an Iron Age practice, this may have been a substitution driven by de-militarisation and thus the unavailability of actual weapons for deposition.

We can reasonably presume that artefacts deposited within ritual contexts are representative of the very best of the material available to its donor – that he or she would want to honour the gods or at least show off their wealth to the best of their ability. In fact anthropological studies suggest that the truth is more complex, and that ritual deposition often, but not always, represents what the individual or community could *comfortably* afford to sacrifice. Again, it demonstrates a sense of an everyday pragmatism which arguably pervades much of Iron Age religious practice; at least until the rituals were challenged in the face of extraordinary upheavals such as the Roman invasion.

The possibility that ritual deposits could be a poor representation of the wealth of the donor may help to explain the presence of sometimes unimpressive or damaged items within hoards. Often, as at Snettisham, ritual interpretations have been challenged where hoards include scrap metal. In fact under closer

analysis, Snettisham potentially offers more precise, deliberate selection of lower quality artefacts. Marsden (2011, 54) notes that a high number of the coins from the site were plated and suggests that they were deliberately chosen as votive offerings because they were base. Likewise, at Hayling Island, 78% of the gold coins and 46% of the silver were plated (King and Soffe 2013, 9).

The possible deliberate selection of poor quality votive offerings is perhaps not surprising considering that the practice was already evident in other ritualised activity such as feasting. Ritual deposits such as the head and hooves found at Haddenham and the choice of 'sacrificed' portions of meat found at Hallaton and Harlow were not by any means the prime cuts, although they seem to be of better quality at Hayling Island (King and Soffe 2013, 13).

Generally there is evidence to suggest that votive offerings included objects at the end of their life. Fragments from torcs at Snettisham, a worn, broken silver mount at Hallaton and numerous examples of damaged brooches and dented or bent swords have been found in numerous ritual contexts. Often these are interpreted as the 'ritual killing' of objects but it is not impossible that they are simply objects that had come to the end of their workable lives, that they were items their former owners could comfortably dispose of. In fact the irregularity at which objects were supposedly being deliberately broken suggests that it was not being done under ritualistic conditions.

If votive offerings were of lesser quality, this suggests they were only partially representative of the wealth of the communities burying them. It is possible, even likely, that we underestimate the quantity and quality of artefacts circulating in the late Iron Age. This is a possibility noted above and considered by Gosden and Hill (2008). It can also be inferred for coins from the large number of identified dies and the vast number of pieces likely to have been struck with them (Talbot 2015) as compared with those found in both secular and ritual contexts. Only in times of crisis, most notably the Roman invasion, did votive deposition temporarily increase significantly. During such periods, it is

possible that the quality of offering also improved as devotees wished to improve the efficacy of the rituals[13].

Not only might the number and material quality of objects not be entirely representative of a community's wealth but care also needs to be taken in analysing their iconography. In the East of England an affinity with the image of the wolf is frequently observed although there is some controversy over the interpretation. Also prominent is the boar, appearing on coinage and on a small number of artefacts found in the East of England. The small Ashmanaugh (Norfolk) bronze boar is believed to have been used on the crest of a helmet (Davies 2011, 59), while one from Cranwich, also in Norfolk, sits on a base and is believed to be Romano-British. Another boar figurine has been found at Rothwell Top in Lincolnshire and one of undoubted Roman manufacture in the Lexden tumulus outside Colchester alongside bull and cupid figurines. Particularly compelling is the elongated boar that decorated the Witham shield, itself a likely riverine votive offering dated to the Middle Iron Age and the only example of these four from a suspected ritual context. Boar figurines became increasingly widespread during the Roman period, presumably due to the affinity the native population had for the animal.

Much has also been made of an affinity with horses, largely as a result of its dominance, alongside boars on coinage. In the East of England the prevalence is noteworthy, and as with other regions, hoards of horse trappings attest to their practical importance and likely links to an elite (Creighton 2000). However, as argued in 2.7.1 above, further interpretation of this iconography is unlikely to prove fruitful. Instead, all that can be argued is that the horse and boar appear to have had a totemic role probably broadly associated with the characteristics of those animals. As the role of ritual is generally not one of communication, it can be surmised that the repeated use of the images need not be deliberately

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[13] Due to the ambiguities associated with dates and limited knowledge of crises other than the Roman invasion this would be difficult to prove, particularly as anthropological parallels would indicate that the quality of votive would also depend upon availability which may also vary during the time frame. Anecdotally, there does not appear to be a shift in quality at the time of the Roman invasion despite the significant jump in the number of votive deposits and their contents.

or specifically communicative. Interestingly, horses do not appear on any other forms of native art in the East of England (Davies 2011, 67).

Generally, except for coinage, there is limited evidence for iconography within ritual contexts. The discovery at Hallaton of two glass 'eyes' in a patch of darkened soil may evidence organic decomposition potentially indicative of a wooden statuette of some kind (Score 2011). The glass is likely to be Roman (Hockey 2011, 87) however, so may not reflect a native tradition even if the eyes could be proven to be from an idol. It is the only such find from the East of England, but various examples from elsewhere in Britain – notably the boat and figurines from Roos Carr, Holderness, Kingsteignton, Devon and Ballachulish, Argyllshire – hint at a wider tradition lost to the archaeological record (Cunliffe 2010, 574). A small copper-alloy head (fig. 36) apparently of native craftsmanship has been metal-detected from Sedgeford, in an area where Roman coins have also been recovered. The head, although likely to have been buried or lost in the early Roman period, represents a rare survival, although it is not believed to come from a figurine as there is no evidence of fixings (Gregory 1987). Along with a torc and cauldron, these finds are indicative of votive deposition in a location only three kilometres to the northeast of Snettisham. The unusual hairstyle on the head is not unique. A druidic 'tonsure' has been identified on stone heads such as that at Mšecké Žehrovice (Venclova 2002) to which there is a passing resemblance to the Sedgeford example.

Figure 23 Copper alloy head from Sedgeford, Norfolk (Source: Norfolk Heritage Explorer online)

Figure 24 A stone head from Mšecké Zehrovice said to represent the tonsured hairstyle of a druid

With a lack of surviving Iron Age iconography and ritual paraphernalia, parallels are often sought from Roman contexts where continuity is suspected. Examples include nine bronze headdresses from temples at Hockwold-cum-Wilton in Norfolk and Cavenham in Suffolk which are believed to have been used by priests of the Romano-British religion (Aldhouse-Green 1997, 60). One of the Hockwold-cum-Wilton examples in particular bears a resemblance to a 'crown' from a 2nd century BC burial in Deal, Kent of a man interpreted as a 'warrior priest' (*ibid.*). Wheels mounted on the crests of headdresses elsewhere at Wanborough, Surrey, reflect the solar symbol that appears frequently on Iron Age coinage suggesting that as well as being an Iron Age icon, such headdresses were a native development. Sceptres also found at Wanborough have been tentatively compared to copper alloy tubes found at Hallaton (Score 2012) and amongst burnt offerings at Folly Lane (Niblett 1999) although neither comparison is strong.

These finds offer slight evidence of continuity but may be supported by imagery on coins. Ritual 'sets' – paterae or bowls for libations and altars occur as well as sceptres and headdresses that pertain to the use of paraphernalia and dress

in rituals during the Iron Age (Williams 2005, 35). Undoubtedly the coin imagery should be seen through a Roman lens but examples of a coin showing the solar symbol on a headdress shows specific continuity. Likewise, some bowls are known from Britain from sites of ritual interest. In the subject area, two are known, one now lost from Snettisham and a silver bowl from Hallaton which is not dissimilar in design and size to the bronze bowl from Lochar Broth, Scotland. The speed at which the similarly shaped paterae were adopted for cremation burials and as votive objects by Britons when they arrived in large numbers with the Roman army suggests a native antecedent. Paterae have also been found at Fiskerton and Dogdyke on the river Witham, presumably demonstrative of continued votive deposition associated with the causeways there.

The evidence from the ritual paraphernalia and iconography from the Iron Age East of England is not strong. A totemic, but abstract affinity to boars, horses and probably wolves can be assumed but specific worship of deities or even the manner of worship is not in evidence beyond the solar symbol (and not represented in the East of England). It is possible that a form of religious activity that utilised bowls and paterae for libations or similar preceded the Roman invasion although a continental influence is nevertheless likely. A priestly class is also only ambiguously in evidence. Regardless, unlike other aspects of the Iron Age material culture of the East of England, if religious artefacts and icons did exist, they were restricted to perishable materials or they featured only very rarely or appeared very late in the period.

Figure 26 Bronze cup found in a peat bog from Lochar Moss, SW Scotland AD 50 - 200 (c) Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 25 Silver cup from Hallaton, buried c. AD 1-30 (c) Leicestershire County Council

6 The ritual landscape of the East of England

In chapter 5, we explored the potential links between routes and sites of ritual significance. Many places of votive deposition also lie within 2km of known settlements – often in their direct vicinity. The challenge is that in many cases contemporaneity is not clear and the relationships might be circumstantial. This chapter will explore the different types of ritual sites, their relationships with settlements and their role within Iron Age societies and ritual landscapes.

The idea of ritual landscapes in the Iron Age is not new. In Norfolk, Hutcheson established some convincing associations between metalwork hoards in the northwest of the county (2004, 91); noting a possible relationship to hoards at Snettisham, Fring, Wicklewood, Crowthorpe and North Creake, she suggests that they may have formed such a spiritually charged landscape. She goes on to argue that Romano-British temples may have been deliberately placed to formalise and bind these landscapes, with one at Fring centred in a region with several hoards (*ibid.*). Her 2004 discovery of a Romano-British temple at Snettisham strengthens the theory, although sites such as Harlow and Kelvedon suggest that Romano-British religion may have been less formal and restricted to distinct areas of sanctity. Further potentially related locations in northwest Norfolk can be identified at Ringstead, Sedgeford and Heacham, all within 10km of Snettisham. The Thetford area appears similarly 'charged', with sites that include funerary activity, domesticity and rich landscape deposition potentially associated with the enigmatic site of Fison Way.

Whilst compelling, there are other possible explanations for the location of these deposits as well as the later Romano-British Temples. At the time of writing, less was known about East Anglian settlement patterns. Thanks to the new evidence, I have been able to show that remoteness of landscape deposition is neither a ritualistic prerequisite nor even common. It is likely that the associations will only appear closer as we expand our knowledge of settlements and their environs. That said, there is still ignorance of the archaeological context for a great many hoards (de Jersey 2014, 40) and this study moreover focuses on the late Iron Age when practices may have been changing in favour of closer relationships to settlements (Hutcheson 2007).

Thus far, I have looked at proximity in general terms, focusing on the better known places such as Thetford. However, a closer look at sites of more modest ritual evidence suggests similar correlations. At Heacham for example, a rectangular enclosure and roundhouses have been identified from aerial photography in the direct vicinity of a hoard of 11 gold coins (Tremlett 2011, 30). Likewise Hutcheson notes activity near the East Winch torc findspot and in the later sites of Scole and North Creake (2007, 366).

Of course, there is no way to judge from aerial photography as to whether deposition and settlement are contemporary, but it is hard to see where the supposition, first made by Lewis (1966), that ritual deposition typically occurs in isolation originates. At a number of sites, notably Hallaton and Harlow, contemporary domestic activity in direct proximity of significant ritual practice cannot be doubted. While these 'settlements' should not necessarily be assumed to represent typical domesticity, the finds associated with the buildings adjacent to the contemporary Hallaton sanctuary are extraordinary for their normality considering the wealth deposited a stone's throw away (J. Taylor, pers. comm.).

In 4.1.3, I argued that the 'polyfocal' settlements or 'proto-oppida' of the East of England do not centre on religious foci. However, as evidence for associations between landscape deposition and settlement grows, the idea of the isolated landscape 'sanctuary' appears less coherent. Indeed, anthropological evidence indicates a pragmatism to ritual activity connected to social power structures for which a purpose of isolation seems hard to rationalise[14]. Instead of the continental model of settlements growing around a sacred centre, in Britain – or at least the East of England - it may be that sanctuaries were a later feature following sustained ritual activity in and around the settlements or established meeting places.

More fundamentally, any distinction between structured 'sanctuaries' within settlements and remote places of ritual deposition should perhaps be challenged. Such distinctions may be false with practices falling far more

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[14] Although ideas such as using politically neutral places, or territorial boundaries in the landscape as meeting points for ceremonies are valid in this debate

closely with the accepted paradigm of the intermarriage of the sacred and profane during the Iron Age. Whether a hoard was buried for safekeeping or was in some way ritualistic may also be too binary an approach (Bradley 2017, 28) and the fact that they may often have been deposited in sight of settlements means that their location was plausibly always known. It is likely that the deposit was ritually protected, irrespective of whether the purpose was votive or for safekeeping (ibid.).

A similar fusion of ritual and profane is seen in areas previously considered 'liminal zones', for example the fenland prevalent in the East of England. The discovery of domestic Bronze Age finds at Must Farm attests to communities living within 'ritual zones'. This implies that the causeway sites such as Flag Fen and Fiskerton with dimensions of ritual and mortuary rites may also have been associated with domesticity had conditions allowed its survival, providing another warning of the danger of assuming ritual in the absence of domesticity. As with many Bronze Age and Iron Age contexts, it is likely that ritual, death and domesticity went hand in hand.

In addition to a relationship with settlements, an association with local power structures is likely. In contrast to the continent, they do not often feature directly in the centre of settlements. Nevertheless it may be possible to investigate the relationships between sanctuary and/or votive deposition and settlement through topographical modelling. Such an approach is challenging as there are few sites where the findspot is known accurately and already in the public domain, since otherwise its inclusion in a thesis may put it at risk of illicit metal detecting. Nevertheless, the four well excavated sites of Hallaton, Snettisham, Fison Way and Harlow can all be explored in this way.
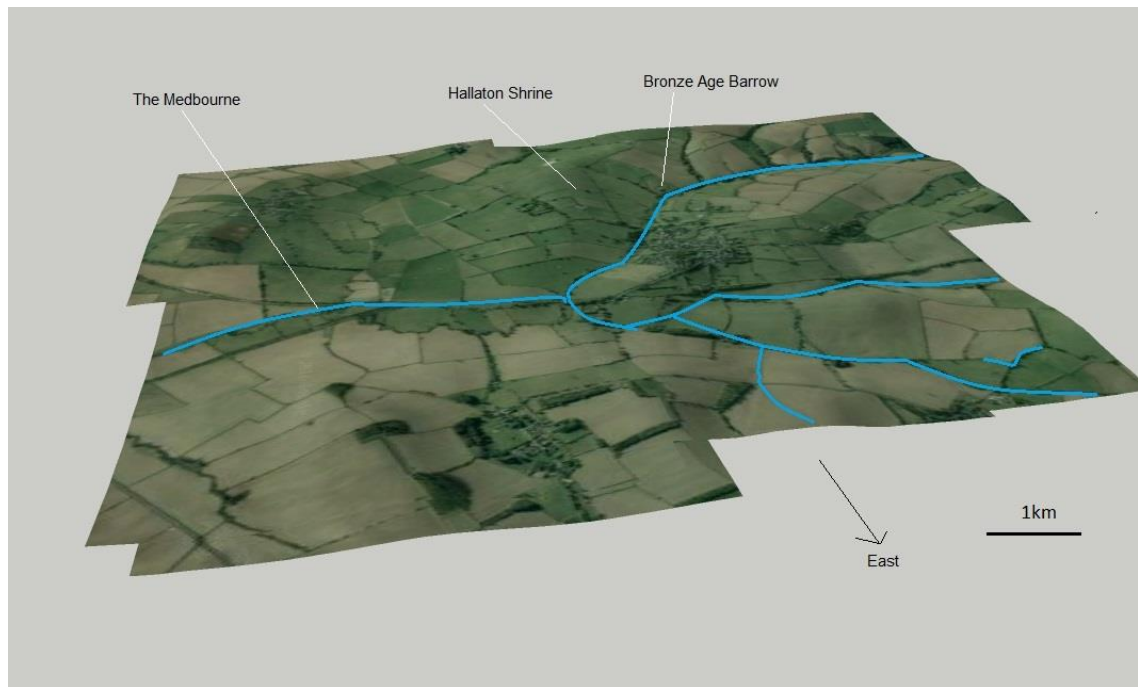
Figure 27 A 3D model of the area around the Hallaton sanctuary (the contours have been scaled up to demonstrate the hillsides more dramatically).

Figure 27 shows the Hallaton sanctuary within the landscape. It follows many of the characteristics that might be anticipated; it is located on an east facing hillside, not on its summit, from which the Medbourne is clearly visible. It also overlooks the modern village of Hallaton which is at the confluence of multiple water courses (James 2018, pers comm)

Figure 28 Gold Field, Snettisham as it sits within the landscape (the contours have been scaled up to demonstrate the hillsides more dramatically)

Gold Field, Snettisham, shares these traits. Although its relationship with the sea has been remarked upon, its placing favours views to the east, across the modern village, where Iron Age settlement remains has been noted. Significant finds occur at Ingoldisthorpe a little further to the south, including cropmarks of expansive field systems (HER 2017). Specialised metal working is also in evidence. Crop marks of linear, undated ditches also extend from Snettisham to the northeast. 4km away is Sedgeford where a torc, a cauldron and a hoard of 32 gold Gallo-Belgic E coins have been recovered in three unrelated finds, all from landscape contexts.

These finds, and those further east (Ringstead, North Creake, Fring) make Hutcheson's (2014) theory of a ritualised landscape compelling. However, we should also consider route ways within the area. As noted in 5.2.1, a Roman road, with a probable Iron Age precursor links Fring and Ingoldisthorpe. This road appears to cross the Peddars Way, which itself connects Fring, Ringstead and Saham Toney. Of course a ritualised landscape and these routeways need not be mutually exclusive and the Roman mythology around, for example, crossroads, is illustrative of the way in which even roads might develop their

own spiritual significance. Nevertheless, convenience and socio-economic associations are likely to have been influential in the siting of votive deposition.
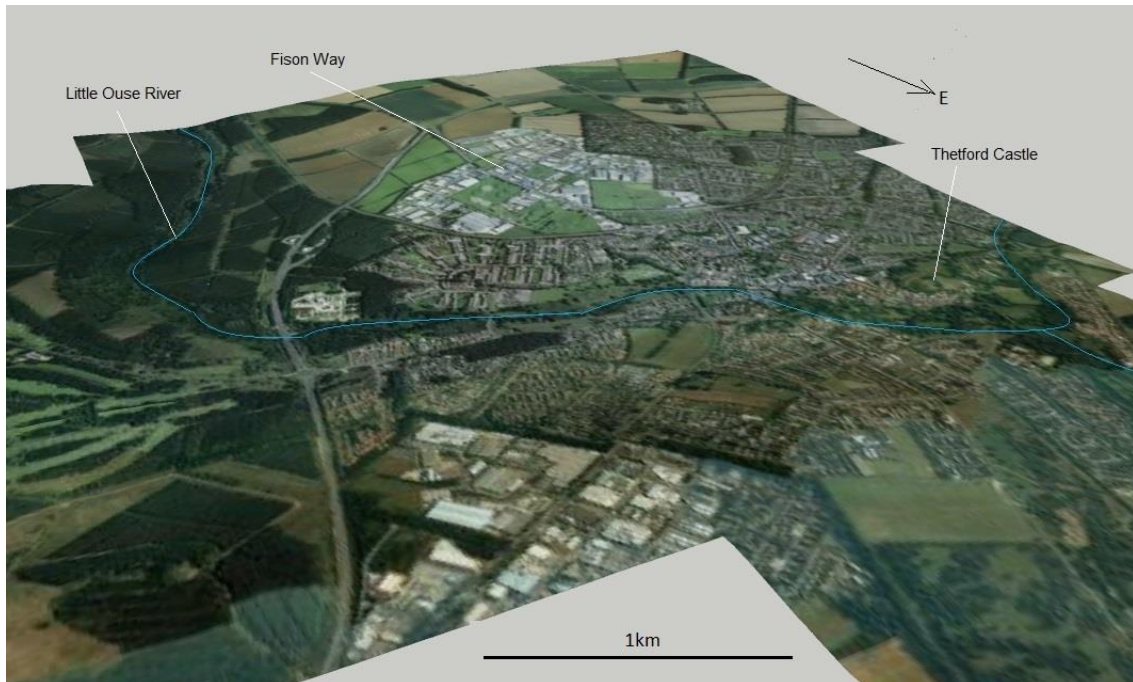
Figure 29 Fison Way as it sits within Thetford (the contours have been scaled up to demonstrate the hillsides more dramatically)

In Thetford too, Fison Way appears on an east facing slope, with a view over the modern town as well as over Thetford Castle, previously an Iron Age fort (Davies and Gregory 1992).

Proximity to settlement is even more pronounced at Harlow where the temple is located close to the river in an area symbiotic to the domiciles surrounding it.
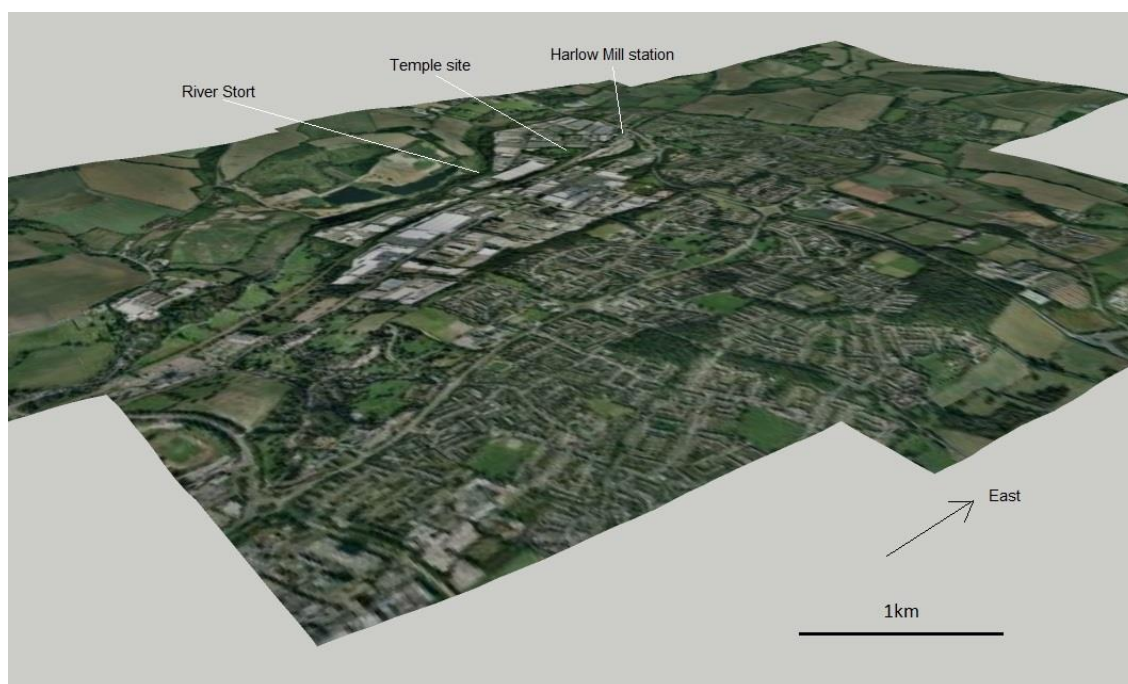
Figure 30 The temple at Harlow (the contours have been scaled up to demonstrate the hillsides more dramatically). Limited votive deposition has also been located in the area of Harlow Mill

All four sites offer views over sites of likely contemporary occupation. Significant evidence of Iron Age settlement has been unearthed at Thetford, Snettisham and Harlow. At Hallaton, roundhouses were excavated next to the sanctuary rather than in the valley. Nevertheless, considering the observation that settlements in Suffolk are typically near water and that later construction has wiped away Iron Age evidence (Martin 1999), it is possible that Hallaton village also had Iron Age origins.

For these sites 'better' positions within the landscape have arguably been neglected in favour of views across settlements. This is particularly the case at Harlow where the temple is located to the east of the river, instead of the west. A more obvious location is a couple of kilometres to the west as the hillside there is more pronounced and would offer a view to the east over the river. This suggests that the location of these sites relates as much to their relationship with settlements as to the landscape. Together with the apparently limited investment into their appearance, this may indicate that their fortunes were

reliant on these nearby settlements, rather than due to any inherent sanctity in their landscape setting.

Often (but not always) apparent in anthropological parallels of ritual activity is a prevailing sense of pragmatism. It should therefore come as no surprise that sites of significant votive deposition, which on occasion attracted large groups of people, should have been located in accessible places near to well-travelled route ways. The lack of evidence for the physical protection of ritual sites, for instance by enclosure, may be explained by their apparent visibility from nearby settlements. Anyone approaching would have been clearly visible from below.

Although this discussion has centred on the relationship of landscape, ritual deposition and settlements, a distinction has perhaps subconsciously been applied between sanctuary and settlement. However, this too may be false. As discussed above, although there were undoubtedly favoured areas for votive deposition, these areas could be large with little obvious natural or man-made delineation. Only later, and in a limited number of circumstances, did these areas become more formalised (Hutcheson 2004). Prior to this formalisation, places for deposition may have been chosen due to their proximity to settlements, roads or rivers, the views they afforded (potentially including the sun) and the visibility of the locations themselves. As 'special places', locations may initially not have been that important, their sacred power coming later, through the processes of formalisation and repetition.

6.1 Landscape deposition, 'sanctuaries' and relationships of power

As noted above, anthropological parallels indicate that convenience and practicality are often important parameters in the selection of sites. Also significant is the local socio-political and social-economic landscape, including factors such as route ways and transport links.

The adoption or even monopolisation of ritual by Iron Age elites has been observed at a number of sites in Britain particularly in polyfocal settlements where ritual centres have been identified. Within the study region a 'temple precinct' has been identified at Gosbecks, Colchester (Hawkes and Crummy

1995) paralleled with the St.Michael's enclosure at St. Albans (Curteis 2005, 212), just outside the region. These examples as well as other evidence such as monumentalisation at Stanwick, North Yorkshire has led to the hypothesis that religion and secular power were increasingly intertwined at the end of the Iron Age. Where settlements with delineated specialist 'zones' or ostentatious earthworks and buildings developed around them, deliberate participation or control by the Iron Age elite can be assumed. Coinage reinforces the connection; Silchester, Colchester and St. Albans are associated with coin legends attributable to powerful individuals bearing the new title of 'rex' (Williams 2005, 36). It has been postulated that these were ritualised areas with high status residences and monumentalized landscapes but that show little longevity of elite occupation (Haselgrove and Millet 1997) and some emerged in previously only sparsely populated areas (Moore 2011, 352). As Moore notes, power seems to have been expressed by an elite 'developing new locales' in the decades before and after the Roman invasion (*ibid*.). The interpretations of the enclosures at St. Michael's and Gosbecks owe much to this narrative but also the later development of Roman temples and theatres apparently within their locality However, excavation has been modest and Iron Age evidence of direct continuation limited to a reasonable number of coin finds, but none on the scale evident at, for example, Harlow. Nor is there feasting evidence and again, little conformity with other behaviours typically identified as ritualistic. Whilst this should not preclude religious interpretations and rituals were certainly occurring here, there is not the evidence to describe these sites as ritual complexes until well into the Roman period.

The paucity of finds around Gosbecks contrasts with other areas around Colchester. At least two distinct hoards of gold coins have been found at Marks Tey (de Jersey 2014). The group includes Gallo-Belgic staters representing a wide chronological spread, distributed over a relatively large area. Of greater ambiguity are more than 50 coins recorded in a 19th century newspaper report; silver and gold coins believed to include Gallo-Belgic coins but probably largely of Cunobelin were found 'in a field near Colchester' (de Jersey 2014). The combination of gold, silver and bronze coins has led to speculation that they represent temple deposits, potentially connected to the Balkerne Hill Romano-

British temple (Haselgrove 1987, 272). Indeed, the Balkerne Hill temple is perhaps a stronger contender than Gosbecks for a spiritual centre given its proximity to the Sheepen settlement but little direct evidence of a preceding sanctuary or shrine has been identified.

More convincing than a generic 'ritual centre' is evidence of funerary rituals associated with high status burials from the first century BC through to the first century AD. First at Lexden and then Stanway, three cremation burial traditions have been identified potentially reflective of the treatment of different societal strata rather than different traditions (Haselgrove 1984; Gascoyne and Radford 2013). The most significant is a barrow burial at Lexden, 30m in diameter and containing at least one and possibly two rectangular chambers dated to c.15 - 10 BC (Foster 1986). The grave goods include broken Roman pottery sherds, cast copper alloy figurines, chainmail, furniture and a Bronze Age axe head. Cremated bone was found in small heaps within the chamber. A silver medallion of Augustus provided a TAQ of 17 BC (*ibid.*).

For Creighton, the singular significant feature to which the Romano-British settlement became physically and visually aligned was the Folly Lane burial complex (Creighton 2006, 125). He argues compellingly that the towns at St Albans and also Silchester, Colchester and Caistor St Edmund developed in commemoration of important people, potentially kings and settlement founders (*ibid.*, 124). Rather than the continental *Mediolanum* paradigm of oppida developing around sanctuaries, the focus on the veneration of a king or founding dynasty is modestly different. The burial complexes may have been places of ceremony but if they were, they represent rituals very different to those associated with the places of votive deposition previously discussed. In fact, although Creighton suggests there were regular ritual ceremonies of veneration of these ancestors, there is relatively little evidence although excavation in these areas has been far from extensive. At Folly Lane however, the rites may have included a period of excarnation prior to cremation and a Romano-British temple was constructed directly over the pyre and sited adjacent to the shaft that by then had been destroyed and recreated as a mound (Niblett 1999, 65). Dating to the later 1st century AD, the temple is

demonstrative of direct continuity (*ibid.*) potentially commemorating the founding father or past king (Creighton 2006, 132).

Not far removed from the theories proposed by Creighton is the idea that the high status burials were constructed in a similar manner to those immediately outside Roman towns. Creighton (2006) notes how roads were aligned to the tombs at each of the settlements but it may be the other way around with elites taking advantage of the positions for their own aggrandisement. This is supported by the likely identification of different societal strata (Haselgrove 1984; Gascoyne and Radford 2013). The importance of making this subtle distinction is the parallel that can be made with the Roman world, already in evidence from many of the grave-goods such as the medallion of Augustus found at the Lexden tumulus. The difference might be that – rather than a complex and longstanding aristocracy competing for position as evidenced along the Appian Way – fewer, but for the most part, particularly wealthy elites and their kin, monopolised these coveted positions. Irrespective of the exact reasons for their presence in these important settlements, it is highly likely that the burial rites do not represent native innovation but were imported from Gaul and the Rhineland (Stead and Rigby 1989, 86). The subsequent building of a temple at Folly Lane in direct association with the preceding cremation may have been a later innovation and divergent to the Roman practice. Although the same behaviour has been postulated at Gosbecks (Creighton 2006, 132), there is little evidence and the high status Stanway and Lexden burials are located 1km and 3km away respectively. Further excavation would likely benefit the debate but currently the evidence indicates high status burial in prominent positions in the vicinity of the newly created settlements, which, as Creighton suggests, remained relevant and sources of veneration for the Romano-British people for centuries afterwards.

The catalysing effects of social upheaval or direct aristocratic manipulation is likely to be evident elsewhere as well. As the sudden decline in votive deposition at Snettisham in favour of Great Walsingham indicates, ritual sites could be vulnerable to the whims of political change. Similarly, they can reflect a sudden jump in fortunes perhaps with as a result of elite patronisation. In the

East of England, this may be apparent at Hallaton, Harlow and potentially at Fison Way.

It is worth exploring the landscape a little more widely than focusing on the immediate context of ritual sites. Given the amount of wealth deposited in the vicinity, the Fison Way-Thetford area should be amongst the first to be investigated.

Figure 31 Topographical map of the area to the west of Fison Way

Around Thetford are a wealth of hoards, settlements and funerary sites within just twelve kilometres of each other. Of particular interest is the way in which the sites potentially follow the local topography and relate to each other.

The area is relatively flat but there are higher points that appear to have been exploited and that relate to the Little Ouse and the fenland. Today the RAF base at Lakenheath exists on flat, reclaimed land but just visible in Figure 31 is the change in landscape reflecting the lower contour to the west that was probably fenland in the Iron Age. Plausibly the fen and its important sites of votive deposition would have been accessible by river from the settlement of Thetford, the host for the enigmatic Fison Way on elevated ground.

Also noted on the contoured map are sites of ritual deposition, all of which are located along the river. At Santon Downham, a hoard of 109 Icenian silver and two Claudian coins was found as well as a broadly contemporary deposit of bronze metalwork (horse harness, enamelled lynch pin, brooches, Roman jug and skillet handle). Again, the location utilises the higher ground and seems to be associated with views over the river. Further along the Little Ouse to the west, there is evidence of riverine deposition near the modern village of Brandon in the form of Late Bronze Age swords as well as Iron Age coins, sword and dagger blades, whilst finds of Iceni coins, Roman pottery and tile on nearby fields suggest an association with domestic activity. The famous pewter hoard from Hockwold-cum-Wilton hoard is also noted on the map although it is late Roman in date.

Lakenheath and Fison Way appear on one level to be irreconcilable. In some respects they represent the dichotomy evident in late Iron Age funerary activity. At Fison Way, there are likely inhumation burials associated with the high status site itself, whereas treatment of the dead at Lakenheath appears entirely different. Rather than representing two divergent traditions however, they could instead indicate different treatment of people from particular sectors of society. This treatment may have begun within the settlements at Thetford or Brandon before their disposal at either Fison Way or Lakenheath.

The Little Ouse was undoubtedly a critical transport link, connecting Thetford, Brandon and the Lakenheath settlement, and the funerary and ritual zones

around it. Conceivably this link included transport of the dead of these settlements, their destination determined by their status in life. Given the tentative association between funerary activity and log boats, the idea of riverine hearses is interesting in this context if highly conjectural in the absence of physical remains. What the topographical map of Thetford suggests is unsurprising. The Little Ouse would obviously have been essential for everyday life but also revered. The votives made along its banks, leading to Lakenheath perhaps represent this, acknowledging a funerary journey. This may not be a new connection. As early as the Neolithic cremated remains of the dead may have been brought to Salisbury Plain and ritually deposited in the river Avon to be carried down to the 'realms of immortals' (Parker Pearson 1999). The intermarriage between the sacred and profane is just as apparent in this context as it is in others.
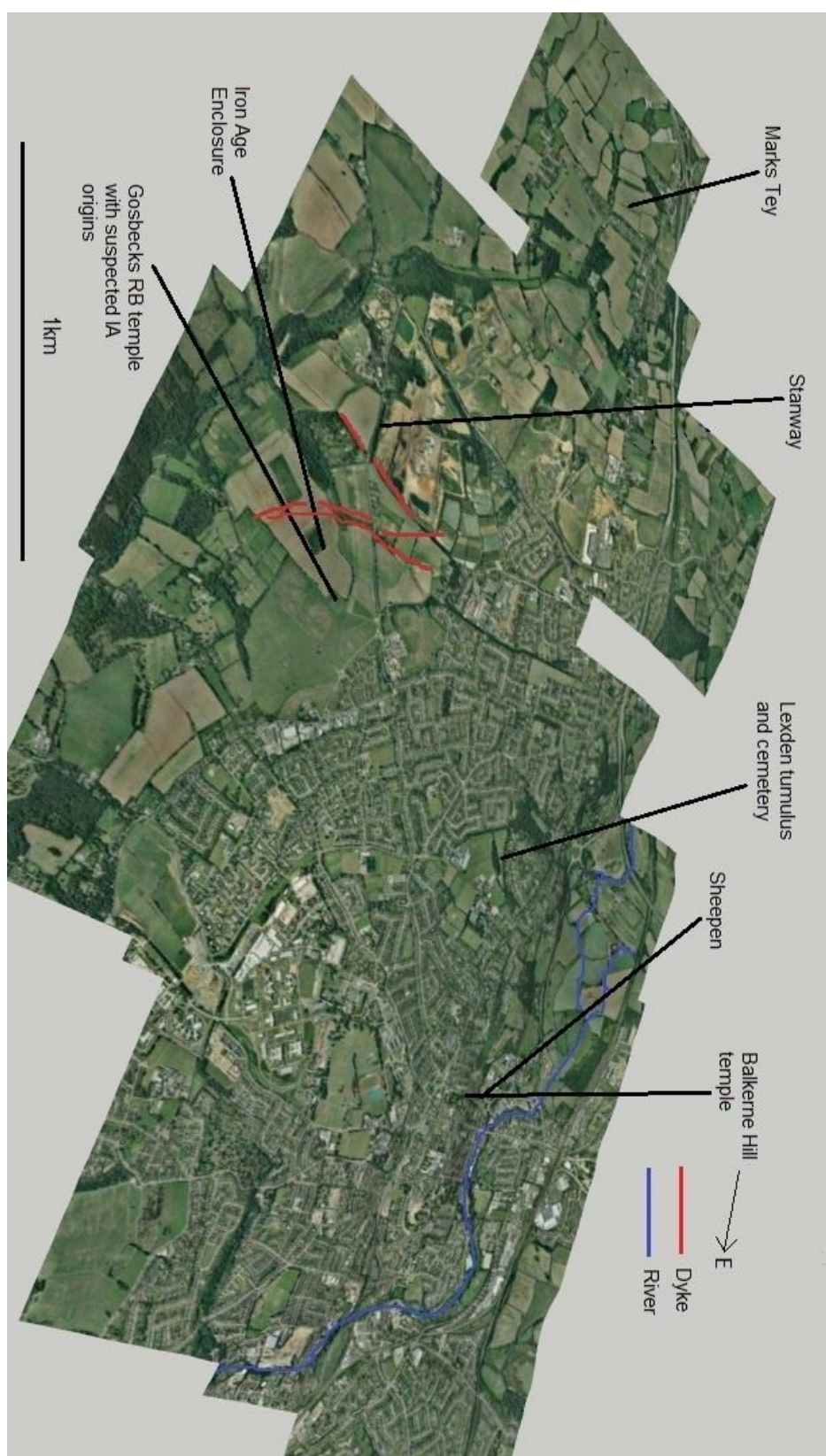
Marks Tey

Iron Age
Enclosure

Gosbecks RB temple
with suspected IA
origins

1km

Stanway

Lexden tumulus
and cemetery

Sheepen

Balkerne Hill
temple

E

Dyke
River

Figure 32 Topographical map of Colchester and its environs

Although characteristically very different, the same motivations by a societal elite may lie behind the development of Fison Way, with a relationship to Thetford similar to Lexden and Stanway with Colchester, and Folly Lane with Verulamium. At Fison Way, the association with burials is not proven and the rich grave goods so prevalent at Colchester are not in evidence. This difference is potentially attributable to weaker continental influences. The picture here is also further confused by higher status contemporary cremation burials at Elvedon and the Arras style burial at Mildenhall..

The idea of *Mediolanum* style ritual centres within the newly developing polyfocal settlements of St Albans, Colchester and Caistor St Edmund currently lacks evidence but the veneration of elites at these sites is compelling, potentially replicated but with regional differences elsewhere, as at Fison Way. Potentially this practice may not have been restricted to the larger or more prestigious settlements given the rich warrior burial on a hill overlooking the smaller settlement of Kelvedon 16km to the southwest of Colchester. Given the lack of weapons at Folly Lane and Lexden, it is worth noting that the Kelvedon burial included a sword, spear and shield.

The nature of the enclosures within these polyfocal settlements is not clear. Coin finds, metalworking evidence and fragments of clay pellet trays (also discovered at Fison Way) have been cited as indicative of both administrative and religious activity (the pair not being mutually exclusive) but the evidence is limited; if they are religious, their nature appears quite different from the sites of greater deposition, some of which are relatively close by within the landscape. More excavation of these sites is needed to understand their place in Late Iron Age religion but what can be said is that the new funerary monuments are a continental import driven by a newly emerged, or newly enriched elite. The enclosures with evidence of metalwork were likely to have had a role in the administration of the new political powers, the nature of the industry itself attracting ritualization, but of a different, perhaps new type to that more commonly evidenced within the landscape.

6.2 Discussion and conclusions – East of England

Over the years, authors have tended to label any sites of ritual activity, be it votive deposition, feasting or funerary activity with catch-all terms such as 'sanctuary' or 'cult centre'. Ambiguous terms such as these perhaps presume that Iron Age religion focused upon structured sites similar to Christian churches, that everyday individualistic worship featured in such places as well as funerals and festivals, with their own sets of rituals dependent upon the occasion. The archaeological evidence of the East of England indicates a range of sites with different functions and few with the shared characteristics readily identifiable as multifocal 'centres'. The developing funerary sites evident at Colchester for example do not boast the metalwork deposition evident at Snettisham or Hallaton, which in turn lack evidence of funerary activity or elaborate enclosure. Indeed, structure itself is rare and almost invisible prior to the 1st century BC.

Equally, there is a tendency to assume that sites of ritual activity were significant by virtue of having been chosen for that purpose. However, most sites of metalwork deposition in the study area saw one-off or short-lived repeated deposition at sites with little or no structure or elaboration. Given the mass investment in large dykes and hillforts in other areas, this implies a lack of interest in the display or physical protection of these places. We should not therefore assume that places of ritual deposition were important 'sacred spaces' and they should certainly not attract the label of sanctuaries, shrines or ritual centres – at least until some of them had potentially evolved into these at the very end of the Iron Age and into the Roman period.

Instead a range of sites can be described:

i) Funerary sites

The treatment of the dead during the Iron Age is complicated and regionally specific. However, as illustrated in 5.4 above, the region saw increasing coherence of burial rites that once appeared almost invisible to us and the National Mapping Project in particular is starting to uncover barrows throughout the East of England. Although far from representative of the Iron Age

population, this suggests an element of structure in a ritual world otherwise largely devoid of it. In Essex, elaborate cremation burials most famously at Lexden/Stanway, but also at Kelvedon and elsewhere may reflect a tradition imported from Gaul. The funerary enclosures at Colchester, St. Albans and Baldock, represent a structure and formality of ritual activity that is not apparent further north, with the possible exception of Fison Way and the Arras burials of Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire.

At Colchester, large enclosures built over successive periods covering several centuries and containing burials demonstrable of funerary rituals are significant. Likewise, the associated dykes, representative of huge efforts of labour and also constructed over a long period should all be considered in the light of the aggrandisement of the Iron Age settlement. Specific mortuary rites associated with the area have been identified (Foster 1986; Niblett 1999; Gascoyne and Radford 2013) but on current evidence it is an exaggeration to describe them as ritual centres. Instead, either the settlements' founders or elites in the service of the new rulers associated themselves with them to further establish their power. The prominent display of burials appears to have been a very successful attempt to aggrandise and legitimise individuals or family dynasties. Authors note votive deposition around the funerary enclosures but metalwork in particular is not prevalent compared to sites of deposition elsewhere. Colchester is a case in point with a mere scatter of coins from the funerary enclosures, whereas a couple of kilometres to the west there are two or more substantial coin hoards from Marks Tey. Coins and brooches found in and around the funerary sites themselves arguably reflect accidental loss by high status individuals gathered during the mortuary rites rather than deliberate gifts to the gods. The distinction is important as votive deposition of metalwork appears to have been a different tradition, unrelated to funerary rituals. Fison Way is also not well endowed with metalwork and there broken fibulae too can be interpreted as casual losses in the course of assemblies to witness or participate in mortuary rituals. Fison Way was apparently swiftly and systematically demolished – the presence of Roman armour suggests at their hands although elsewhere there have been similar finds in native contexts

without demolition (Hingley and Unwin 2005, 105). Nevertheless, during the demolition, metalwork may have been removed.

The comparison between Fison Way and Colchester is not direct. Evidently burial culture was different between the two regions. However, the similarities are judged on function; the structure available to aggrandize the occasion of the funerary rites and their locations relative to settlements, helping to empower elites and their descendants with potential seats of power. However, without actual human remains as well as more elaborate burials evident nearby, Fison Way's identification remains unclear.

Also ambiguous are the funerary sites of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk; notably Trumpington, Lakenheath and to a lesser extent, Godwin Ridge. At these sites, mortuary rites of a quite different nature can be identified. It is hard to decide how they fit regarding wider disposal of the dead, but they must certainly be seen in relation to their surrounding landscape and settlements. All three are on the edge of fen or in river-lands. Trumpington and Lakenheath are accessible by river to neighbouring settlements of importance. Trumpington provides the most substantial evidence of mortuary rites whereas Lakenheath only attests the disposal of human remains in a manner unlikely to represent the normative treatment of the dead. That rich coin and metalwork deposition also occurred in this area suggests that the skulls and other remains were a form of votive as well, but one specific to fen and riverine contexts. It is tempting, if fanciful, to see a navigable and potentially spiritual link between Thetford and Lakenheath, with the votive deposition at sites above and along the banks of the river evidential of a relationship with a 'sacred' river.

A similar navigable link between Trumpington and Cambridge can be argued. Unlike Folly Lane, there is limited evidence of on-site cremation within cemeteries. Even in the more elaborate burial enclosures of Stanway and Lexden, no remains of excarnation platforms or pyres have been located. The Folly Lane evidence demonstrates that, there at least, the mortuary rites were undertaken at the site of internment but this may not have been the case for the lower status individuals and may only reflect the burial traditions of this region. Instead, sites like Trumpington may have been centres for processing the dead

before their transport elsewhere by river; indeed the number of skeletons discovered could hardly represent the dead of the entire community over a significant period of time. They were also treated in a manner seen throughout Iron Age Britain in contexts strongly indicative of their use as ritual deposits rather than burial. Accepting the recent re-analyses of the taphonomy of the Danebury skeletons where secondary burial appears evident (Booth and Madgwick 2016), it could be concluded that Trumpington was a site of curation. Individuals who died naturally or were deliberately killed were first interred at Trumpington before being exhumed to be 'used' to empower new building projects or as votive deposition to bless new ventures.

Although human remains are less prevalent at Lakenheath than Trumpington, a focus on the head and metalwork deposition around the fen 'islands' shows a stronger link between ritual deposition and this abnormal treatment of the dead. Likewise at Godwin Ridge, the intermixing of animal bones, indicative of feasting and votive deposition and human remains is potentially demonstrative of the same link.
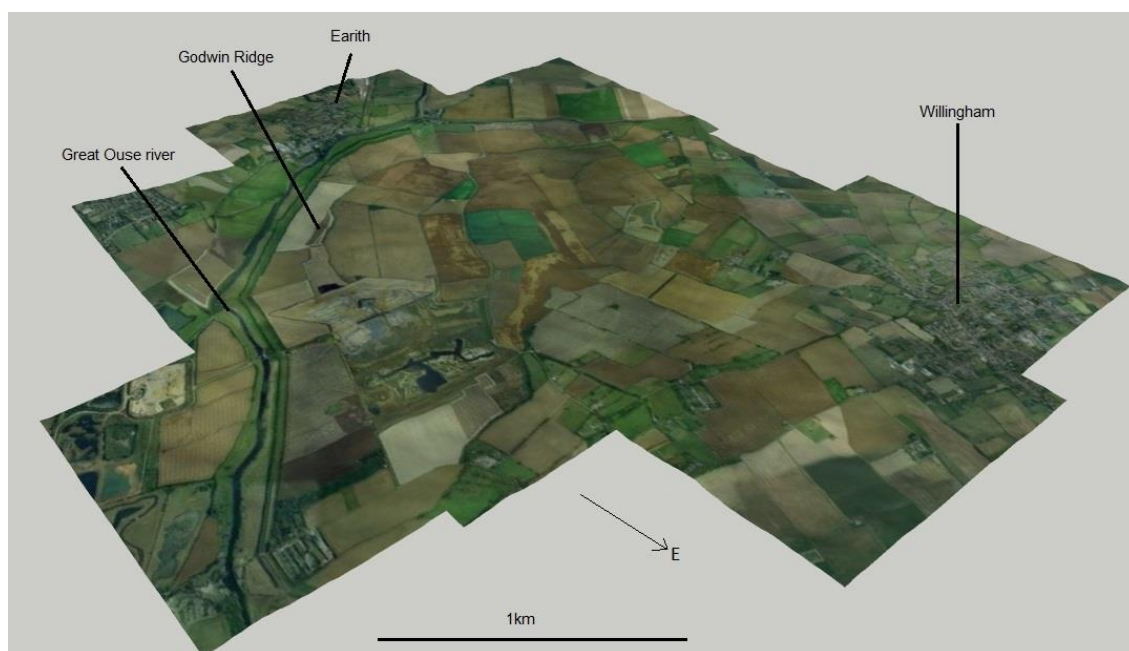
Figure 33 Topographical map of Godwin Ridge within the fenland landscape

Like Lakenheath and Trumpington, Godwin Ridge is not isolated. Less than a kilometre away is Earith where several enclosures and structures have been identified via aerial photography. 2km to the southeast at Willingham, square barrows appear to have been associated with an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement perhaps demonstrative of the normative treatment of the dead.

Godwin Ridge can therefore potentially be differentiated from cemeteries and other forms of burial. It arguably reflects the same tradition as other forms of votive deposition and, as at Lakenheath, is directly associated. Boundaries, notably enclosure, demarcating sacred spaces do not appear to have been important, but natural demarcation in terms of the sand islands within the fens may have been utilised. Where they differ from places of votive deposition of metalwork alone is that these sites with human remains boast far longer pedigrees with repeated deposition over hundreds of years. A degree of structure is also apparent, perhaps emulating causeways elsewhere in the East of England including nearby Flag Fen and Stamp End on the river Witham in Lincolnshire. Human remains have been found in both of those areas as well.

Causeways, including humanly-made earth platforms and direct riverine or fen deposition reflect traditions that date from the Bronze Age to the Roman period. With repeated deposition and the ritualistic treatment of the dead, including a focus on the head, these sites in many ways boast a stronger case to be called sanctuaries than many of those traditionally identified. Nor should they be confused with cemeteries. Conversely, elite burials and their associated enclosures in the proximity of major settlements should not be considered ritual centres as their role is likely to have been limited exclusively to funerary activity and the long-term aggrandisement of powerful individuals or dynasties.

ii)   Structured sanctuaries and shrines

There is little, if any evidence of a type of site that could safely be identified as a structured sanctuary or shrine prior to the first century BC, and probably the first century AD in the East of England with the possible exception of Snettisham. Even here, however, the lack of structure would, for many, preclude such categorisation at least until the polygonal enclosure was constructed in the 1st century AD (Joy 2016). Even following this development, it is not structurally

recognisable as a forerunner to the Romano-British temple. If the inspiration for the ubiquitous double square Roman temple did come from a native source it is unlikely to have been from the East of England. Here, even in the surest of contexts at Harlow, the first building within the so called sacred space was a roundhouse. So too are the mysterious buildings at Fison Way. Only at Great Chesterford is there a rectangular structure beneath the Roman temple but both the date and the nature of the three sided construction are unclear.

Although there are dangers in allowing modern preconceptions of wealth to affect the interpretation of ancient societies there is a vast gulf between the metalwork deposition within the majority of sites identified as Iron Age sanctuaries and riverine deposition. Accepting the longevity and durability of ritual, this should come as no surprise as this ancient rite saw rich deposition for over two thousand years.

Often cited as integral to Iron Age sacred sites, enclosure does not seem to be relevant to votive deposition prior to the 1st century AD. Even during the Roman period, deposition associated with sanctuaries could occur outside the enclosed spaces suggesting that sanctity could extend beyond liminal zones. This laxity may reflect a pervading Iron Age practice which had few such restrictions.

The most significant votive deposition occurred in water and as the Iron Age progressed, increasingly in the landscape as well. A potentially agricultural practice also may have shifted to one more predominantly based on metalwork and coinage. From anthropological parallels and potential evidence in the archaeological record, we can suggest that this deposition reflected the affordable, disposable wealth of the communities in the area. Analysis of power structures based upon the patterns and quantities of deposition such as that conducted by Davies and Hutcheson therefore may be of great value.

Sites of significant repeated deposition, such as Hallaton and Snettisham appear to have been rare. Instead, the bulk of votive deposition probably occurred in one-off events, although in riverine contexts this is difficult to ascertain. The idea that isolated, even inhospitable places were deliberately selected, is continually being eroded by the discovery of new settlements and it is clear that locations in close proximity to settlement were frequently favoured.

These places do not appear to have been chosen for their own intrinsic spiritual properties but due to a mixture of convenience and the views they afforded to places of apparent spiritual interest – i.e. water and/or in relation to settlement. There may have been a wish to be seen conducting the ritual either for reasons of conspicuous consumption or for the security of the interred metalwork. Alternatively the deposits, not unlike the burials of the elite in similar areas added to the spiritual charging of the settlement or the memory landscape.

Both agricultural and metalwork deposition may be related to the mechanisms inherent in feasting; for example, was a proportion of a consumed resource ritually given to the gods for good fortune or as an obligation owed? Consumption in this case perhaps related to trade or other forms of agreement. Very significant deposition may have been related to much larger 'state' sponsored collection of resources potentially for redistribution, a form of taxation, alliance building or for the melting down of metals for the purposes of coin minting potentially following changes in power. Ritual deposition may have had a similar role to examples seen in anthropological contexts cited in this thesis. Like the planting of the *rubin* by the Maring tribe, the act and practice of wealth sacrifice may have been a visible commitment and declaration of some kind (Rappaport 1999, 102). Perhaps contrary to this theory is a lack of association with feasting which might logically be associated with alliance building and social commitment. Potentially this occurred elsewhere and later examples, notably at Hallaton and Harlow, do evidence this dramatically. In these cases it appears that feasts were prepared offsite (but nearby) and the more durable detritus was deposited elsewhere.

Similarly absent is metalworking. Links between ritual places and metalworking are frequently made but there is little direct evidence other than burial of objects associated with processing such as ingots and scrap. Again, if there was a link, the metalworking was possibly occurring elsewhere although probably not far away – potentially in the settlements to which many of these sites were related. Evidently feasting and metalworking, or the collection of metal for this production would be better facilitated were the place of ritual activity located close to settlement as appears to have been the case.

Why this practice of casual deposition in places of little demarcation became more formalised in a few places is not clear. In the East of England, only at Snettisham did repeated deposition on a significant scale occur regularly prior to the 1st century BC.

7 Conclusions – Ritual and religion in the late Iron Age

The objectives of this thesis are reiterated below, together with the results of the regional and national studies. It is useful, however, first to summarise the theories and definitions on which these new understandings are founded.

7.1 Redefining ritual

Inhibiting coherent approaches to understanding Iron Age religion has been an inconsistent use of the word, 'ritual'. Here, I have tried to pin down a definition and its associated characteristics to provide a framework with which to identify rituals as they appear in the confusing archaeology of the British Iron Age. The definition adopted owes much to the work of Humphrey and Laidlaw (1974) but has been expanded to incorporate ideas of ritualisation and ritualisation of art and architecture. Crucially, it has been consistently applied to the data.

I have defined ritual as, '*The deliberate, accurate repetition of unchallenged, automatic behaviour'.* On an archaeological site, this means that the key attribute for recognising a ritual is its accurate repetition..

Associated with this definition are a number of characteristics; chiefly:

1) A consistent, inherent meaning is not a prerequisite of a ritual. A ritual can be performed without any understanding of its meaning, or a new meaning can be developed different from its origin. This new meaning can be deliberate or unintentional. It is this lack of inherent meaning that allows a ritual to exist outside of its secular or religious origin and outlive religions and cultures.

2) Although meaning is not a prerequisite, the accurate performance of a ritual is paramount. Rituals can survive in recognisable forms for extraordinarily long periods.

3) Their longevity and often unchanging nature means they frequently represent a cultural time-lag (Goody 1977), with sometimes outlandish behaviour 'sanctioned by time and custom' (Rappaport 1999)

4) They are non-communicative, although it is likely that conspicuous consumption of, for example votive deposition or feast giving, has a communicative aspect associated with status-accord.

These observations should help identify established rituals from innovation or one-off events and also provide caution in the manner in which interpretations can meaningful be made.

Although an intrinsic, discursive meaning can be relatively immaterial, ritual seems to serve the following purposes:

1) First and foremost rituals augment an occasion – either a religious or secular ceremony. This augmentation, sanctioned by time and custom, also applies to ritualised architecture and art.

2) They can invest solidarity and identity within social groups although their characteristics detailed above means that they frequently transcend cultures and religions.

On occasion, 'outlandish behaviour' can be sanctioned by ritual, either as a coincidental oddity or on a scale that can have greater and unforeseen impacts on the society itself. For example, the Mesoamerican sacrifices of prisoners of war meant cultures such as the Aztecs propagated more warfare to fuel the rituals (Clark 2004). In the British Iron Age, this propensity for an evolution of religious practice through rituals drawing upon themselves – a cause and effect – may have impacted upon the economies as a result of generous votive deposition, particularly if and when the practice was exaggerated by crisis.

Although rituals can normalise outlandish behaviour, practical concerns are important. Anthropology indicates that rituals that have little relevance to power politics or status accord are unlikely to survive. The example of rituals returning to Vietnamese villages following their repression under Communism showed

how only the rituals that could relate to and augment activity surrounding the new power structures, returned (Ljunggren 1993). This does not appear to have represented overtly conscious decisions on the part of any participants, but were intuitively self-selected based on an unconscious pragmatism.

The Aztec example of the proliferation of human sacrifice is demonstrative of the way in which a ritual can be absorbed within social structures and in turn shape them itself. Whilst many rituals are superfluous and incidental, some can have more profound and unforeseen effects, perpetuated due to their symbiotic relationship with the society. Generally speaking, practical concerns shape the ritual rather than the other way around. Of particular relevance to the British Iron Age, anthropology suggests that votive deposition typically (but not always) represents acts that the donor can comfortably afford. Where votive deposition significantly escalates, as at the end of the Bronze Age and again at the end of the Iron Age, it is likely that the ritual was under pressure.

Archaeological studies of civilisations impacted upon by, for example natural disasters, demonstrate the exaggeration of ritual behaviours. Sometimes this exaggeration can be tested to breaking point when rituals are considered to be no longer efficacious and abandoned in favour of new ones. Although rituals can slowly evolve, their abandonment is typically a result of major stress or of a deliberate scrutiny of rituals to which they rarely stand up. These re-evaluations include religious or social reforms including the adoption of Communism and Protestantism. One of the architects of the latter, Martin Luther identified the effect of ritualisation on belief – that the act of repetition and formalisation strips conscious thought from an act, thereby removing meaning.

Rituals can be associated with secular or religious activity. The lack of inherent meaning, longevity and frequent appearance in contexts unrelated to their origin devolves them from representing a contemporary culture or religion. They are often more representative of a past culture. Religions have been described as a 'system of beliefs' (Bell 2007), but rituals should not be considered a part of this system although they are often mistaken for being so.

7.2 Research Objectives

From the data assembled during the course of this study it seems highly likely that the material identified as being from ritual contexts represents only a small proportion of what was poured into the ground and into riverine contexts during the Iron Age. This applies to all material types and both detritus and associated 'gifts to the gods' from feasting.

Anthropology suggests that, outside periods of crisis or rituals spiralling out of control for other reasons such as competitive conspicuous consumption, votive donors typically offer material that they, or the communities that they represent, could afford. This is supported by a seeming lack of ostentation associated with acts of deposition; a near absence of structure or demarcation and infrequent feasting evidence. However, the rare exceptions of Hallaton and Snettisham point to riches not replicated in the archaeological record elsewhere and indicating votive deposition on an unaffordable scale. The possibility of Roman looting (based upon limited evidence from the continent) and efficient recycling of metalwork associated with these sites may suggest that they are representative of far wealthier societies than currently supposed.

A similar disparity is suspected in the lack of identified feasting sites despite the rare occasions of very significant feasting and the obvious importance assigned to it by so-called 'aggrandisers' whose burials are resplendent with artefacts relating to feasting. The disparities are exacerbated by the different contexts they are associated with, the various material types and their respective decomposition. In 5.1.2, above, the data suggests that dryland hoarding was far more significant than riverine deposition but corroborating this is difficult, since the proportion of recovery in watery contexts is very probably much lower than on dryland.

As a result, the conclusions are subject to the inaccuracies of the surviving record, no doubt skewed still further by the propensity of metal detecting.

Also worthy of caution are conclusions drawn from the iconography from the period. The ritualisation of art affects meaning as it does any other form of ritual so symbols and images may suffer from the same culture lag and be equally

unrepresentative. Only where art offers narrative and is not regularly and automatically repeated, can it be considered a 'window' into the beliefs of a culture and even then its purpose should not necessarily be considered as communicative.

7.3 Religion in the British Iron Age

Religious foci in the Early to Middle Iron Age

If we exclude rivers, fens and lakes where platforms or causeways were created from which to offer deposits into the water or bogs, there is little evidence to identify Iron Age religions centred around constructed places of 'worship' or ceremony before the 1st century BC. In this context, the ubiquitous practice of votive deposition should probably not be seen as an indicator of a place seen as overtly special. They may instead represent locations initially convenient to a ritualistic bi-product of secular activities such as trade. They reveal deference to natural locations – usually associated with water – revered by Iron Age societies, and their placement conformed to consistent ritual 'rules', such as hillsides facing east. However, they do not appear to have been bounded, sacred locations, perhaps suggesting a greater significance relating to the *act* of offering. Some sites, such as Snettisham, saw repeated deposition and probably acquired a new status and significance but most represent one-off occasions, even after the establishment of sanctuaries in the Roman period. Even causeways and platforms which may have been relatively common in certain areas of Britain during the early to middle Iron Age should be seen merely as vehicles for deposition into the natural places of veneration.

Feasting should also perhaps be seen in this light. Depositing cuts of meat was not the primary purpose of religious feasts; rather these were bi-products from secular feasting imbued with ritual and religious overtones. It is a fine distinction, and the later appearance of feasting at places more clearly defined as sanctuaries blurs the line still further.

That votive deposition was a widespread bi-product from secular activity rather than the focus of 'worship' at specific places can be seen in its presence in

most Iron Age contexts to varying degrees. Significant hoards have been found nearby to settlements but often lack features in their direct vicinity. This is contrary to lesser finds made in places of apparent greater social investment such as enclosures at the centre of important settlements. Nevertheless, in the East of England and probably throughout Britain, the idea of a preference for isolated places seems unfounded.

The treatment of the dead

In the past, writers have grouped burial rites with the rituals associated with sanctuaries in a way perhaps reminiscent of all-purpose Christian churches. It seems necessary to differentiate the rituals and ceremony around burial from activities like votive deposition. Human remains feature surprisingly little in places where votive deposition is apparent, and, where there is an association, the nature of the human remains is rarely suggestive of normative burial rites. Indeed the lack of votive deposition in the vicinity of burial sites, and that this is one of the few contexts in which it does not feature, is suggestive. Instead, human remains appear to spiritually charge zones, pits or defences in all contexts but only occasionally in the case of sanctuaries. They are far more common in settlements and in hillforts. More compelling is their presence in fenland and other liminal zones where they appear to conform to ideas of sacrifice, graphically evident in the few bog bodies that have been found in Britain. Reports of other bodies found and now lost, together with human remains, particularly skulls bearing signs of violence and holes pertaining to their display discovered in rivers and fens suggest a role as votive deposition but limited to these wet places. It is tempting to see the bog bodies in particular as a more focused rite, limited to times of particular hardship for a community.

The skulls found in wetlands bearing evidence of previous display point to a particular treatment of the dead, presumably a social subset – either enemy, outcasts or even royalty deemed to have failed the society. Taphonomic studies of bodies from Danebury provide evidence for the movement and reuse of human remains, as if they were a commodity shipped in for the ritual charging of its defences. In the East of England, Trumpington, Cambridgeshire may be a

specialised site where a subset was treated to this unusual form of burial. The bodies may have been 'stored' in similar sites in preparation for building projects or occasions. as and when required. Likewise, with the changing use of spaces, bodies or body parts no longer required for the protection of a place might be reused elsewhere. or deposited as a votive in a watery location for some other purpose such as giving thanks to the gods.

The rites associated with normative burial are even less well understood. The burials are chronologically and geographically divergent with many areas lacking any recognisable traditions, leading to the suggestion that excarnation or river burials were the normative practices. In the East of England, recent work is beginning to uncover what is likely to be a number of traditions but we are no closer to understanding the rites that surrounded them and the way in which societies participated in the burial of their dead. What can be said, however, is that votive deposition did not seem to feature – at least in or around their final resting places – and feasting is likewise not in evidence even in the later burials of an elite whose burial goods emphasise the importance to them of that activity in life.

By the end of the Iron Age, elite burials, influenced by their contemporaries on the continent, seem to have taken on a new significance, appearing in conspicuous places within the landscape and in view of settlements. How widespread this practice was is hard to say, but it was significant in Essex (not only at major settlements) and potentially in Norfolk, as at Caistor St Edmund and perhaps, in a slightly different way, at Fison Way. Their siting appears to be linked to the veneration and memory of ancestors. At places such as St Albans and Colchester, these burials were perhaps associated with the formation of the towns themselves and remembered as such for centuries (Creighton 2006). However, it is debatable that they functioned as sanctuaries and their position in postulated 'religious centres' is unclear. Instead, a role more akin to the tombs of the elite along the Appian Way outside Rome may be more likely.

Changing ritual practice

Changes to religious behaviour, particularly the rites associated with burial at the end of the Bronze Age seem dramatic. However, votive deposition continued throughout the Iron Age in places that were previously favoured, but with an ever increasing focus on landscape locations, perhaps as a result of the patronisation of elites whose power was more closely associated with emerging centres of population. This shift may be the reason why causeways, a focus for ritual deposition from the Late Bronze Age begin to fall out of favour from the Middle Iron Age onwards, although some sites continued in use until the Roman period and beyond. Irrespective of this movement, the key factor – a reverence for water – remains consistent even if, presumably for the sake of convenience and/ or conspicuous consumption, new locations are selected.

Deposition also appears to change, perhaps – if we accept anthropological evidence – owing to the changing wealth, values and demographics of the communities. After the Bronze Age 'collapse' and the cessation of metalwork hoarding, it seems that agricultural produce was favoured perhaps as a result of a lack of available metal following a suspected breakup of trade routes and greater propensity of warfare (Harding 2000, 7). In the middle Iron Age, high status, often martial, artefacts were deposited directly in water. This perhaps represents a still violent period but one where a new, but relatively small elite had risen. By the Late Iron Age, this elite may have grown, trade routes and prosperity expanded, so that deposition represented a much wealthier society. This period may have been more settled, as hillforts were abandoned in favour of proto-oppida with a greater concern with trade. Finally, the uncertainty of the decades around Caesar's invasions and the conquest of AD 43 led to Hill's 'fibulae event horizon' (1991), represented in terms of coins, fibulae, horse and chariot fittings and other metalwork.

The emergence of religious architecture can be seen in this context. It seems unlikely that there was a native culture of sanctuaries in a way recognisable to us now, with defined boundaries and shrines. Sites such as Snettisham were possibly approaching something akin to a sanctuary from the 3rd century BC, with a demonstrable evolution from one-off landscape offerings to repeated

deposition, but lack significant evidence of people gathering for ceremonies and feasting. Similarly, although I have largely dismissed the rectangular buildings identified as shrines in hillforts and cemeteries, it is possible that from a largely functional origin, they became associated with rituals, were repeated and their design formalised. This process of ritualisation may have led to the adoption of square and rectangular shaped temples that became so ubiquitous in the Roman period. Before that happened however, something changed in Iron Age religious practice. A number of scenarios present themselves; perhaps influences from Gaul accelerated and shaped a native formalisation of places of ritual that was already happening; or sanctuaries were directly imported; or finally, that the period happened to coincide with native innovations.

There are relatively few sites against which to evaluate these scenarios and those like Hayling Island and Fison Way are clearly very different from each other. However, there are shared characteristics that appear to owe little to preceding periods. At Harlow, Hayling Island and Fison Way, round buildings were used, which may have been shrines. The two-storey round buildings at Fison Way are reminiscent of constructions such as the Tour de Versone, Périgueux and La Rigale, Velletoureix. The Roman period temple at Hayling Island appears to have been a two-storey round building of similar design to these examples in Gaul (King and Soffe 2013, 25). It is almost as if people who had seen those temples in Gaul were recreating them in Britain, but in the context of native practices that were divergent from continental religious traditions. While Creighton offers compelling possible examples of pre-conquest Roman construction in the southeast of Britain (2006), no sanctuary yet discovered appears to show direct Roman or Gaulish construction – indeed the first temples at Hayling Island and Harlow are round. Yet the construction of pre-conquest *temenoi* at these sites suggests the import of design/knowledge (but probably not labour). Like the high-status burials of Colchester, St Albans and Caistor St Edmund, ideas appear to have been swiftly adopted by British elites in their appropriation of ritual practices as a means of aggrandising and confirming their positions in their societies. The speed at which some aspects of these appropriations appear across Britain should not be surprising given the significant interconnectivity between communities.

Importation of continental ideas is apparent in various aspects of Late Iron Age, reflecting both Gaulish and Roman cultures, themselves often intertwined. The adoption of architectural forms has less frequently been cited, but evidence of continental-style buildings predating AD 43 has been identified at Fishbourne along with the construction of a new road (Creighton 2006, 57). The early sanctuaries do not appear to have been built by Romans, instead reflecting continental ideas – most notably the *temenos* - but were presumably broadly able to facilitate native practices. The few examples in Britain may represent individual interpretation and innovation with the closest parallel in the south, notably Hayling Island. Creighton's (2006, 24) model of British hostages, the sons of the native aristocracy, returning from Rome and even Roman military service fits well with the presence of a Roman cavalry parade helmet at Hallaton (*ibid.*). Equally possible is the importation of ideas arising via 'tribal' links, notably the Atrebates, evidenced in both northern Gaul and south-eastern Britain, with the ideas becoming abstracted as they travelled north.

Anthropological examples suggest that rituals (and presumably ritual architecture etc.) are successful where they accommodate secular practicalities and power structures. We have already seen the propensity for this of new burial rites associated with the elites, to which we can the greater emphasis on landscape deposition and the sheer scale of the hoards. Whilst there are anthropological examples of exaggerated rituals in the face of societal crisis and spiralling conspicuous consumption, the selection of material in deposits suggest that they are residual bi-products from secular activity such as trade and exchange, whilst the very large coin hoards (and in some cases, melted down ingots) may relate to events of centralised recycling. Perhaps, the death of a king or general transfer of power necessitated the recall of coins to be recycled, melted down and re-issued, bearing the identity of the new ruler. The deposited hoards represented a proportion of large scale recycling. This may explain the very high incidence of plated coins and scrap. Smaller hoards may represent the proportional votives from smaller, more day-to-day transactions.

What did religion look like by the end of the Iron Age?

It is tempting to imagine Iron Age religions prior to the influence of greater continental orthodoxy as indefinable and lacking doctrine or narrative or even a pantheon. This is not to say that rituals were unimportant – indeed the archaeological record attests to their significance, often quite dramatically by the end of the Iron Age. A potential parallel can be drawn with belief systems such as Japanese Shintoism or its affiliated Chinese Shendaoism. Shintoism in particular refers to collections of indigenous myths and its highly proscribed rituals service as a link to the past, including ancestors and to indefinable spirits living within landscape features, animals and even people (Teeuwen 2002, 234). Today, the majority of Japanese people typically participate in Shinto rituals in the forms of blessings such as ceremonies associated with the laying of building foundations, to funerals or prayers to ancestors. There are also everyday rituals that are frequently respected but often the practitioners would not declare themselves religious or believe in spirits or gods.

Iron Age religions perhaps operated in a similar way. Their practitioners followed everyday rituals carefully perhaps to improve their relationships with ancestors or to bestow blessings from indefinable spirits or gods, but they need not have understood the meaning of the rituals or identified individual gods. Like the Mongolian practitioners of the '*Taxilag*' (chapter 2), were they asked, each individual might give a different meaning, but the purpose would have been the same; perhaps to protect them, secure favour with indefinable gods or spirits or to bless their activities. Shendaoism in particular and to a certain extent, Shintoism, were influenced and ultimately absorbed by foreign Buddhism. Iron Age religions may have been similarly shaped by continental religions with clearer, doctrinal belief systems. Ancient, ill-defined spirits or gods may later have been given shape by, or identified with, Roman or Gaulish gods, themselves a complex mix of cultural appropriation and myths of unknown origin.

Regardless of the beliefs themselves, the social and political changes affecting Iron Age societies in southeast and eastern Britain had a catalysing effect on existing rituals. Developing, politicised settlements probably attracted votive

deposition around them due to the association with secular activities such as trade and the conspicuous consumption of an emerging elite. A new form of rich burials imported from Gaul may have extended, at least in function, as far as Caistor St Edmund. However, it does not appear to have been widespread in the east of England and should not be confused with the Arras culture to the north, itself a likely but earlier import. The rituals of burial, both of the elite and the general populace are largely archaeologically invisible although the former's association with later settlements is likely to be demonstrative of an important link with their formative rulers. We have also seen how a subset of society; perhaps high status sacrificial victims, enemies or outcasts were used as spiritual guardians or to empower boundaries and pits, the bodies potentially stored at specialist sites for that purpose.

Centres for religious practice appear largely anachronistic with the exceptions, Hayling Island, Harlow and Fison Way unusual and ambiguous innovations or, in the case of Hayling Island a likely, indirect import amidst a steady increase in continental links following the invasions of Caesar. Currently, the evidence for religious centres in the enclosed areas around settlements like Colchester were is limited to the development of theatres and basilicas in the Roman period. Until further excavation reveals otherwise, this lack of evidence suggests that comparisons with the religious origins of continental *oppida* are unfounded. Similarly, it should not be assumed that the nearby high status burials facilitated regular ceremony.

Instead, the places that featured most in the religious lives of Iron Age peoples were located in and around their own domiciles. Pits were often imbued with votive deposition or empowered or protected with the inclusion of human remains. Roundhouses and enclosures would have been blessed by foundation deposits on creation and destruction. Votives may likewise have been offered to the gods on the edges of fields to attract good harvests and trade and metalworking marked by a proportional divine gift to provide good fortune.

Indistinct in the archaeological record – but present enough to be assumed to have been widespread – was the occasional gathering of people for feasting. Faunal remains from ritual sites suggest a seasonal link, perhaps associated

with the celebrations of festivals related to the agricultural calendar. Middens in the Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age and the apparent appropriation of feasting at ritual sites toward the end of the Iron Age suggest large numbers of people gathering. In these cases, it is likely that animals, often of a type suitable for feasts, such as pigs, were driven relatively long distances. This should come as no surprise. Isotope analysis on 95 cattle teeth from the Iron Age and Roman site of Owslebury in Hampshire shows a marked increase in the distance cows were being driven in the Late Iron Age - in some cases at least 70km (Minniti *et al.* 2014).

The impact of these gatherings would presumably have been significant in terms of trade, marriage and diplomacy. Unfortunately, due presumably to the nature of the deposition, the picture of this type of feasting is very unclear and it is impossible to estimate its scale although later elite burials hint at its significance to these societies. What can be said, is that until the end of the Iron Age, feasting does not appear to have been closely associated with votive deposition. Feasting also does not appear to have taken place in a bounded sanctuary until it was appropriated later as part of the growing sophistication influenced by the continent and an elite eager to legitimise their power. It is tempting to assume that feasts also occurred near to, but outside settlements and, without finds or features identifiable from earthworks or metaldetecting, are rarely discovered.

Having identified a sense of the likely injection of continental ideas readily adopted by an emerging elite, it is worth noting the concepts that were not adopted and the indigenous practices that remained constant after an apparent orthodoxy became established. Specifically, the act of enclosure took time to become part of this orthodoxy with examples such as that at Hallaton likely to have been more about the control of movement than about binding a sacred space. Even after the establishment of Romano-British temples and the very clear boundaries within them, deposition still frequently failed to respect them and unenclosed landscape and riverine deposition continued. This landscape and riverine deposition included human remains, contrary to Roman practices such as the skulls found in the Walbrook, London. Three or potentially four bog bodies found at Lindow Moss, Cheshire have dates that suggest ritual sacrifice

well into the Roman period (Joy 2009).These bodies – and the skulls that evidence display, sacrifice and votive deposition – would have been alien and probably abhorrent practices to the Romans. Also in contrast to their continental counterparts, is a lack of an overt martial element to the newly emerging sanctuaries of the 1st centuries BC and AD. These sites are not devoid of weapons but only Hayling Island shows significant weapon deposits and even there, they are not overt. Instead, rivers, as they were in the Middle Iron Age, remained the main repository of votive weapons. Likewise, the martial character of Gaulish sanctuaries is further frequently exemplified by significant human remains generally associated with victims of warfare. As has been noted, no British sites appear to share this trait suggesting quite different purposes.

The significance of the sanctuaries that appear at the end of the Iron Age should not be exaggerated. Their number is small and, as might be expected during a period of change, cultural appropriation and innovation, there is little consistency between them. Indeed many comparisons that have been made between these and other sites of apparent religious interest rely on potentially exaggerated associations. The speed at which the Romano-British temple spreads across Britain following the Conquest and the apparent continuity from older sites suggest that their structures readily accommodated Iron Age ritual practices, but their representation of them was limited. Nor does it replace the practices occurring in the rivers and landscape. Until Romano-British orthodoxy was established, sanctuaries would have been places of rare encounter for the average Briton. However, where they did appear, probably as a result of significant contact with the continent, they perhaps served initially as places of modest embellishment to existing practices of votive deposition and feasting, before becoming important visual statements within the landscapes.

The development of these temples probably not only formalised ritual spaces, but also the religious lives of British peoples. Prior to the invasion, there was a very limited material culture of iconography, few incontestable places of 'worship' and no indication of household shrines, whilst personal idols – which were ubiquitous in Roman Britain – are restricted to two or three examples of crude wooden and clay/chalk figurines which are as likely to have represented warriors as gods. Even with the introduction of coinage, a medium through

which the display of gods and goddesses could have been easily conveyed, there are few designs that obviously lend themselves to interpretations of portraying the divine.

Romano-British culture introduced a world of new iconography, in which the ambiguity of Iron Age beliefs was absorbed into a confusing array of direct and indirect interpretations intertwined with the Roman pantheon, already groaning under the weight of deities of conquered and admired cultures. However, whilst the appearance and meanings behind Iron Age religious practice may have changed insurmountably, many of its rituals remained doggedly constant.

7.4 Iron Age religions – future research

This thesis has touched upon continental influences toward the end of the Iron Age and the possibility of Romano-British adoption and continuation of Iron Age practices. Logically a more focused study on both Romano-British religion and those of Roman Gaul, directly compared with contemporary, 'orthodox' Roman religion in Italy would help to identify indigenous beliefs and practices. The propensity to infer ritual continuity at Roman religious centres would benefit from critical review. Sites such as Gosbecks, for example, are regularly referred to as Iron Age religious centres despite limited pre-Roman evidence, but more excavation is required to test this.

In Britain, ongoing projects such as the British Museum–Leicester University project, 'Hoarding in Iron Age and Roman Britain' together with the National Mapping Project and fieldwork in general will all contribute to the growing understanding of Iron Age hoarding and their contexts. Large scale metal detecting will continue to unearth new hoards so it is vital that the PAS scheme is adequately funded to continue to document and log them. However, as has been noted above, considerable contextual information is routinely lost despite the hard work of PAS officers, local authorities and Historic England so greater training and potentially restrictions on metal detecting would be welcomed. In an ideal world, excavation needs more routinely to follow substantial finds, the value of which was seen spectacularly at Hallaton thanks to the Hallaton Field

Work Group and subsequently, the University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

Finally, an exploration of non-coin producing areas, although challenging, might both fill a gap in our regional understanding and identify other forms of ritual deposition and practices replaced or overwhelmed elsewhere by coin hoards. Recent publications of sites such as Stanwick are already starting to demonstrate the potential of such a study. Many of these projects and publications already in progress promise an exciting future for our understanding of Iron Age Britain and its religions in particular.

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