Iron Age Hillforts Survey (Northamptonshire): Analysis of the Individual Hillfort Reports

Synopsis:

In the autumn of 2013, CLASP undertook to assist national teams working to compile an "Atlas of British Iron Age Hillforts" (jointly led by focus groups of senior archaeologists at the universities of Oxford and Edinburgh), by carrying out surveys of all known prehistoric hillforts in Northamptonshire.

The results of these Northamptonshire surveys naturally feed forward into the national hillforts survey – but in addition, the CLASP team has recognised that the results for Northamptonshire are themselves capable of interpretation and analysis on a local basis.

Resulting from this detailed research on each of the individual sites, it gradually became clear that it would be instructive to carry out further analytical investigations. This paper therefore aims to explore, analyse and summarise such of these investigations as could be carried out by desktop analysis and study of the individual survey reports.

Five 'metrics' are first identified, by which the hillforts can be assessed; and case-study analysis is then applied to selected groups of the hilforts, incorporating a great deal of further data drawn from the wider landscape area around the hillforts, in order to study the ways in which the five metrics apply to each of the selected groups of forts. As a result, it has been possible to form certain conclusions, and to advance some theories about the site groupings and their functions and possible interactions.

The CLASP team involved in this study is as follows:

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This report was written by G.W. Hatton, with significant input from D. Hayward who provided most of the information and references relating to early routes and paths for trading and communication, and the discussion in Appendix 1 to the report.

(G.W. Hatton, March 2016)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and preparation

In 2013, CLASP undertook to assist national teams working to compile an "Atlas of British Iron Age Hillforts" (jointly led by groups at the universities of Oxford and Edinburgh), by carrying out surveys of all known prehistoric hillforts in Northamptonshire. A team of six CLASP members was assembled, co-ordinated for CLASP by G.W. Hatton.

It was clear from the outset that this project would include both fieldwork and desktop research, and extensive use was made of the documentary and digital resources of Northamptonshire Heritage Environment Record (HER) including the MapInfo database of known heritage locations and artefacts, together with the geological map of Northamptonshire made available in MapInfo-compliant digital format by the kind offices of NCC). Regular liaison was also made with MOLA(N) [Museum of London Archaeology (Northampton), formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology] to consult their documentary archives and benefit from their practical experience and advice. Finally, the Northamptonshire Mapping Project proved an invaluable reference source, as did the Wessex Hillforts Project (both sets of detailed documentary files were made freely available in digital format). Other source material is listed in the Bibliography in section 6.

Having obtained as much background data as possible on the various sites in Northamptonshire and held teach-in sessions with the team members to disseminate this data, initial surveys of the main hillfort sites were carried out by members of the CLASP team during 2014 and 2015. An individual detailed report was submitted for each site – and in some cases, new data was uncovered which led to partial or even total re-interpretation of previous reports by others.

In some cases, the initial surveys themselves involved carrying out further detailed research – for instance, into the wording of Saxon charters, the routes of known ancient trade paths and Roman road networks, etc.

1.2 Evolution of metrics for use in analysis

Resulting from this detailed research on the individual sites, it gradually became clear that it would be instructive to carry out further investigations (not confined to single sites) to assess some specific aspects that had become apparent to the CLASP team during their survey work, including:

- **The non-defensive layout and location of some of the forts**, which suggests that a key aspect of their purpose and function may have been connected with trading rather than defence or territorial governance.
- **The relevance and importance of long-distance prehistoric trade routes** to some of these forts.
- **The significance of the underlying geology of each site**, which can be seen to have been very relevant to the purpose and function of some of the forts.
- **The significance of viewshed analysis** as a means of assessing the possible purpose and functionality of forts. A specific case of this occurs along the line of Iron Age forts bordering the River Nene, which may have a bearing on the interpretation of tribal boundaries on either side of the Nene during the Iron Age.
- **The significance of the so-called 'Wootton Hill type' Late Iron Age enclosures,** with specific reference to their possible role in containing/preserving tribal boundaries during the period 50BC-50AD.

Virtually all of the above investigations involve desktop studies (both documentary studies and map-based work), some of which may well point the way to a need for further ongoing fieldwork in the wider landscape around specific hillfort sites. This report will explore and analyse the Northamptonshire hillforts in the light of the above five criteria (or 'metrics'), aiming to provide a basis for possible future work.

2. Pre-Roman Celtic Tribes

In order to understand and interpret tribal activity during the Middle and Late Iron Ages, it is essential to understand the activities of the three principal Celtic tribes – Corieltavi, Dobunni and Catuvellauni -- that occupied the lands now known as Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

From the scant available evidence, it would appear that the Dobunni and Corieltavi were both relatively peaceable tribes – and also that they were rather fragmented and loose-knit, each consisting of relatively loose (and perhaps fluctuating) alliances of federated smaller tribes with no single overall ruler, rather than of a tribe with a strongly defined and coherent identity, a single acknowledged 'high-king' ruler, and a well-defined territorial limit. Moreover, although it is very clear that the warlike Catuvellauni advanced through Cambridgeshire and into Northamptonshire (and, to judge by the map below, apparently also northern Warwickshire) during the approximate period 54-25BC, until the present time it has been by no means clear who inhabited the areas of present-day Northamptonshire and northern Warwickshire prior to their arrival.

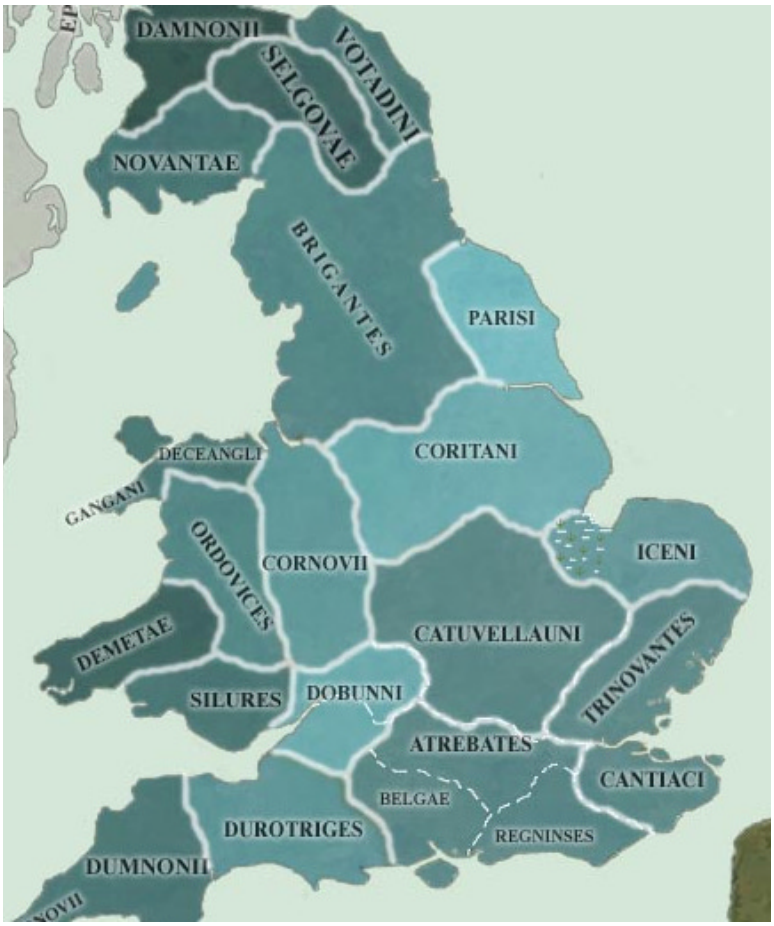


Fig.1: British tribal boundaries around 43AD, compared with modern county boundaries.

This hillfort survey exercise, and the analyses carried out in this document, will shed further light upon this topic, suggesting that present-day Northamptonshire (and perhaps also north Warwickshire) had been territories affiliated to the Corieltavi prior to the advance of the Catuvellauni. This hypothesis will be explored in more detail in Section 3.

This, in turn, raises a much larger but very significant question in terms of how we interpret the construction of hillforts – namely, exactly when did tribal identities begin to emerge in Britain? Thanks to the Roman conquest of much of the western European mainland, significant amounts of documentation exist about the prehistoric tribes in those areas – and by analogy this can provide some broad guidance

on the emergence of British tribal identities. It is clear, for instance, that tribal identities and territories were firmly established in Gaul during Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars – and from this it may be argued that these tribal identities must have formed at the very least 150-200 years earlier, in order to have become so well established by Caesar's time; thus we may infer that the emergence of tribal identities must have occurred by the third century BC at the latest.

As a complementary line of reasoning, Cunliffe has argued persuasively ("*Iron Age Communities in Britain, 4th edition*", p124 and Chapter 21) that, in the distinctive style-zones for pottery that began to crystallise in Britain in the sixth century BC, we may be seeing the emergence of British tribal groupings.

This appears to be more definitive evidence – and if Cunliffe's hypothesis is valid, it would cast a new and important light upon the many Iron Age hillforts that also appear to have first appeared around the sixth century BC, suggesting that these strongholds may perhaps have been constructed – a task requiring a huge amount of organised manpower and labour – as accepted centres of local governance, for relatively localised population agglomerations of a recently emerged and newly recognised proto-tribal nature.

2.1. Catuvellauni (Britons), incorporating the Cassi and Segontiaci

The Celtic tribe of the Catuvellauni emerged in the late first century BC to become one of the most powerful tribes in southern Britain. They were bordered to the north by the Corieltavi, to the east by the Iceni and Trinovantes, to the south by the Atrebates, and to the west by the Dobunni and Cornovii. Like many of their neighbours in the south-east, they were probably a Belgic tribe from the North Sea or Baltics, part of the third wave of Celtic settlers in Britain. They may have been related to the Catalauni, a Belgic tribe of Gaul.

The main territory of the Catuvellauni lay on the northern bank of the Thamesis (River Thames), and northwards from there (in modern Hertfordshire). This is the area of their original power base, and also where Julius Caesar places a tribe he named as the Cassi in 54 BC. The tribe's early capital was at Wheathampstead, and under Cassivellaunus they expanded outwards to dominate Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, **Oxfordshire east of the Cherwell**, Middlesex and north-east Surrey. The Segontiaci may have been a neighbouring tribe that was swallowed up by the expansion of the Catuvellauni.

They were one of the most prominent Celtic tribes of their time, and also one of the richest. They were good agriculturalists and had some of the best soil in the country on which to farm. Nevertheless, as with all the pre-Roman Celts, they left no written records. Their rulers are only noted after they began issuing coinage or came into contact with the Romans.

c.60 - c.30 BC	**Cassivellaunus (Vellaunus?)**	**High King of Britain. Fought Julius Caesar.**
55 BC	Cassivellaunus is the leader of the resistance to the first expedition of Julius Caesar to Britain, showing that he already holds a position of seniority amongst other tribal kings. This time, the resistance amounts to little more than regular skirmishes and a few minor battles in the territory of the Cantii.	
54 BC	Cassivellaunus kills Imanuentius, king of the Trinovantes, but the dead king's son, Mandubracius, flees to the Romans in Gaul. He wins the support of Julius Caesar and the Roman general makes the second of his exploratory forays into Britain. Cassivellaunus organises and leads the coalition army against him but is defeated by Caesar's expeditionary force south of Thamesis, near modern Brentford. The Catuvellauni and their allies fall back to the tribal capital at Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire (a little way north of St Albans) where the final battle is probably fought on 5 August. One Lugotorix, a Briton of noble birth, is captured by Caesar and Cassivellaunus subsequently sues for peace. Mandubracius is reinstated as king of the Trinovantes. Intriguingly, Caesar fails to mention the Catuvellauni by name in his memoirs, but his description of them and their territories clearly tallies with later information. The fact that their king is the person who takes charge of the defence of the country clearly shows that he already holds precedence over the other tribal kings. Caesar does give an alternate name for the Iceni which is either a mishearing or an earlier version of the name. Similarly, he may refer to the Catuvellauni as the Cassi in 54 BC (see the introduction for an examination of the tribe's name).	

54 - c.30 BC	Following his defeat by Julius Caesar and the subsequent withdrawal of the Roman expeditionary force, Cassivellaunus begins to expand his tribe's territory from its core heartland north of the Thames in all directions, building up the larger kingdom that will dominate south-eastern Britain for the next century and the one which adopts the Catuvellauni name. Territory is subjugated in the modern counties of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire east of the Cherwell, Middlesex and north-east Surrey. Just who occupies these newly conquered territories beforehand is largely unknown, whether they are lesser tribes whose names have been lost or neighbouring tribes such as the Corieltavi. Three tribes of the five mentioned by Caesar as those who had surrendered to him in 54 BC are the Ancalites, Bibroci, and Segontiaci, who are otherwise unknown, perhaps making them ideal candidates for tribes that are subsumed within the Catuvellauni in this period. The king also founds a new, hopefully more defendable, capital at Verulamium (just outside modern St Albans and later possibly known as Caer Colun).	

c.30 - c.20 BC	**?**	Name unknown. Possibly a son of Cassivellaunus**.**
c.20s BC	The unnamed successor to Cassivellaunus probably cements the conquests of the previous two and-a-half decades. He also marries a daughter of Mandubracius of the Trinovantes.	
c.20 BC – AD 10	Tasciovanus / Tasciovantus	Son? Geoffrey of Monmouth's Tenvantius.
c.20 BC	The Catuvellauni issue their first coins under Tasciovanus with a stamp that shows the capital is now firmly set at Verulamium. Tasciovanus is also the first of the Catuvellauni kings to renew hostilities against the Trinovantes, despite the fact that his mother or aunt (depending on his relationship to his predecessor) comes from that tribe.	
c.15 – 10 BC	A series of coins are issued by Tasciovanus with a mint mark that shows they are produced in Camulodunum, the Trinovante capital. Tasciovanus later claims to be the rightful heir of the kingship of the Trinovantes, perhaps confirming a family connection to the earlier ruler there, Mandubracius. For this period, the Trinovantes would appear to be occupied by the Catuvellauni. Tasciovanus is soon forced to withdraw, perhaps by pressure from Rome, restoring the Trinovantes to full independence.	
c.15 BC - AD 10	Andocomius / Andocos / Andocoveros	Sub-king. Known only from inscriptions on coins.
c.15 BC	Andocomius issues coins over the space of about twenty-five years, either with his name inscribed alone or shown with the name of his overlord, Tasciovanus. The distribution of the coins suggests that he is a sub-king of what is perhaps a recently conquered territory on the western flank of the Catuvellauni territory. Other possible sub-kings are known only from individual coins, but all belong to the same period.	
c.15 BC - AD 10	Dias-	Sub-king. Incomplete name known only from coin inscriptions.
c.15 BC - AD 10	Rues-	Sub-king? Incomplete name known only from a coin inscription.
c.15 BC - AD 10	Sego-	Sub-king. Incomplete name known only from a coin inscription.
c.AD 5 – 9	At a point between these dates the Catuvellauni appear to conquer the Trinovantes again, taking their capital at Camulodunum and installing Cunobelinus to rule the territory as a sub-kingdom. When he accedes to the Catuvellauni throne, Cunobelinus retains his capital at Camulodunum. His name means 'dog' or follower of the god, Belinus.	
c.10 – 41	**Cunobelinus / Cunobelin / Cymbeline**	**Son of Tasciovanus. High King. Also king of the Trinovantes (AD 5).**

2.2. Corieltavi / Coritani (Britons)

The Celtic tribe of the Corieltavi were, like their Brigantes neighbours to the north, a collection of smaller tribes, mostly agricultural and fairly unwarlike. Their name supports this, as it seems to be formed of two words which amount to something like the 'joined tribes'. They were centred on a swathe of territory stretching from modern Leicestershire, through Nottinghamshire to Lincolnshire (where they may have had a capital at Lindum) and perhaps including lower South Yorkshire, with Leicester and Old Sleaford their main bases. They built very few hill forts, perhaps only three or four in the entire territory.

An interesting feature of Corieltavi coinage in the first century AD is that it was regularly struck by two rulers at once, and at one time by three, apparently colleagues. This suggests that the 'joined tribes' still had their own kings who worked together for the good of their combined peoples.

c.440 - 390 BC	An archaeological discovery in 2011 at a hill fort in Derbyshire suggests warfare in the area. Derbyshire is on the northern edges of Corieltavi territory, bordering the Brigantes, although it unlikely that these tribal associates even exist in this form at this time. The hill fort at Fin Cop in the Peak District is apparently under construction in this period as a response to a very real local threat. The fort has not been completed when it is attacked and destroyed and its inhabitants massacred. The bodies of the women and children are buried in the fort's ditch which is then filled with the rubble from a stone wall. Animal bones also found in the ditch include horses, which suggests some high status inhabitants in the fort.
c.100 BC	Although the site has been occupied since the fifth millennium BC, the hill fort of Burrough Hill begins its most intensive phase of occupation around this time, which lasts until around the time of the Roman invasion of AD 43. Burrough Hill is eleven kilometres (seven miles) to the south of Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, in the East Midlands, well inside Corieltavi territory at this time. In 2014, the University of Leicestershire announces that it has uncovered the remains of a chariot burial on the hill, an extremely rare find outside of the territory of the Parisi in East Yorkshire. The burial dates from the third or second century BC and the chariot is either dismantled, or has never been assembled. It most likely signifies the passing of a high-status individual, and seems to suggest a level of influence from the culturally equal Parisi – possibly intermarriage and a mixing of customs, to expound just one theory.
80 BC – AD 44	The only information regarding the rulers of the Corieltavi comes from coin discoveries. Between 80-50 BC the earliest coins are produced, based on Gallo-Belgic staters that have been in circulation for a while. They have equestrian designs on them (the horse is a valuable commodity), but no inscriptions. Silver coins first appear in 50 BC, also with horse designs on the rear, or reverse, no inscriptions, and with a boar on the obverse. Another, chance find of coins is made in 2013/2014 and is confirmed by archaeologists as being significant. The twenty-six coins include gold and silver British examples alongside three Romans coins, the first time a mixed horde of this nature has been discovered. The Roman coins are dated to a time shortly before their invasion of Britain, but the entire horde seems to have been buried around the time of the invasion. The find is made at Reynard's Kitchen Cave in Dovedale, in the Peak District, which is right on the very edge of presumed Corieltavi territory. The first inscriptions appear at the start of the first century AD, but the names are so abbreviated as to be indecipherable. These are shown in capitals, with no attempt being made to turn the inscription into a possible name. The earliest names are paired, suggesting a dual kingship, or two kings ruling equally and united.

2.3. Dobunni (Britons)

The territory of the Celtic Dobunni lay to the west of the Catuvellauni. To the north they were bordered by the Cornovii, to the west by the Silures, to the south by the Durotriges, and to the south-east by the Atrebates and Belgae. Their territory initially comprised northern Wiltshire and southern Gloucestershire, the locations of the earliest coin distributions. **The tribe later expanded into western Oxfordshire**, northern Gloucestershire, north-eastern Somerset, Avon, parts of Hereford and Worcester, **and also South Warwickshire**. They were a non-Belgic people who were organised around an impressive series of hill forts, mostly overlooking the Avon Gorge, but who were showing considerable signs of Belgic influence. Generally the people lived in small villages and farmed the fertile land.

It has been suggested that they were little more than a division of the Atrebates, and only gained independence during the reign of the pro-Roman Tincommius in the late first century BC. If this was the case then the Dobunni were probably an earlier people who had been pushed out of their territory by the arrival of the Atrebates, and subjugated along the way. The tribe's name is obscure, but a possible explanation also suggests an identity problem - either two tribes that formed a minor confederation or perhaps two halves of a single tribe. In the Dobunni name, 'do-' may be equivalent to 'du-' and would mean 'two', while 'bun' appears to be proto-Celtic for 'origin'. So, taking a rather large leap, the name might just indicate a tribe that was formed from two smaller ones.

By the first century (*circa* 35 BC) the Dobunni borders abutted those of the Atrebates, and the coinage of both tribes seems to be found in parallel, although the Dobunni ejected the Romanised Atrebatean coins which appeared from 30/20 BC. By AD 20/25, the Dobunni also found themselves bordering the powerful Catuvellauni, although they seem to have been on friendly terms with this powerful tribe. Part of their number may have been formed by a speculated 'raven clan' on the northern edges of their territory. This group gave their name to the Roman settlement at Worcester - Branogena - which breaks down into 'raven clan' (discussed in greater detail under the later rulers of this area, the Hwicce). They were also the

guardians of the sacred hot wells at Bath, a site of some reverence which people would visit, trying to get as close as possible to the spring at the centre of the marsh which was where the hot water emerged from below the earth, a path to another world.

c.300 BC	The region around the River Avon in the modern city of Bath is occupied by an unknown people at this time. They could be the ancestors of at least part of the later Dobunni tribe, but no details are known about them. A lucky find of an ancient coin near Bath in 2012 is due to extensive flooding in the region. The coin is dated between 300-264 BC and is most likely to be produced in the Carthaginian colonies on Sardinia. Several similar examples have been found, but only along Britain's coastline, not along a river that is certainly used for trading purposes during the second millennium AD, a use that would seem to date back at least to this period. While Sardinia is favoured as the coin's place of manufacture, almost any of the Punic empire's colonies could be responsible, including Carthage itself. Clearly trading links exist at this time between the Phoenician colonies and the British Isles, mainly for Britain's tin which is found in large deposits in Devon and Cornwall. Buried in the silt and mud of the Avon's banks for 2,300 years, the coin is generally in poor condition, but its comparative rarity makes it important.	
1st century BC	Throughout the course of the century there is evidence in the region of a new wave of settlements. Some earlier hill forts appear to fall out of use while others continue to be occupied. Some new settlements are enclosed, replacing older, open settlements, while other settlements remain unaltered. The pattern of change is uneven and occurs at different times across the century. The building of the grand enclosure settlement of The Bowsings which replaces The Park open settlement occurs at the start of the century, while the Duntisbourne enclosed settlement appears to be created towards the end of the century. The inference is that one of two causes are responsible. Either it is due to the slow in-filtering of a new people, probably Belgic people from the Atrebates or Belgae regions to the east, or non-Belgic Celts who had earlier occupied territory to the east being pushed westwards by the arrival of the aforementioned Atrebates. This raises the question of who originally occupies these regions before the migration or formation of the Dobunni (possibly from two smaller groups - see introduction, above, for details). The northern Somerset area could be Durotriges or Dumnonii territory, although this is farther north than either tribe is usually thought to bear any influence. Alternatively, the inhabitants could be integrated into the Dobunni.	
c.5 BC - AD 7	If the Dobunni are indeed vassals of the Atrebates, or a constituent part of the tribe as is sometimes suggested, then it is in this period that they declare their independence. Atrebatean nobles, angered by the pro-Roman stance of Tincommius in direct opposition to the policy of his father and grandfather, seem either found the tribe of the Dobunni from an earlier subjugated people or liberate the westernmost Atrebateans (or possibly a combination of both). Coinage exists in this period, which is issued from several sites up until the Roman invasion. There is no certainty that all (or any) of the issuers are overall kings of the Dobunni tribe. Instead, the tribe may regularly enjoy dual kingship, and perhaps even that level of unity may be beyond them. There is evidence of coinage being issued from Bagendon, Ditches, and possibly Salmonsbury during this period.	
fl c.10 - c.30	**Anted-**	Name found on coinage only. King of north & south Dobunni.
fl c.30	**Eisu-**	Son? Name found on coinage only. King of north & south Dobunni.
	Inam- / Inara-	Name found on coinage only. King of north & south Dobunni.
c.35 – 40	The Dobunni appear to fracture into northern and southern divisions, or else they are simply returning to the order that may have existed before possible unification under Anted.	
	Catti-	Name found on coinage only. King of the north.
	Comux-	Name found on coinage only. King of the south.
43	By now the tribe has certainly divided in two. The north-eastern part, stretching from the southern side of the Stroud Valley to north-eastern Gloucestershire and western Oxfordshire, is issuing Romanised coinage. In Avon and southern Gloucestershire, the remnant is issuing coins of a native type. There are also two distinctive pottery styles in use which show a north-south split. The suggestion is that the Catuvellauni have gained some sort of control over the north-eastern section of the Dobunni by this stage. This would certainly be in line with their policy of subjugating neighbouring kingdoms.	

3. Case Studies on Northamptonshire Hillforts

It is not practical to examine or explore the five 'metrics' identified in Section 1 above one at a time in isolation, since for most hillforts several of the factors are involved together. Therefore, a 'case study' approach will be adopted, in which groups of several broadly similar hillforts are considered together. Such an approach allows a close examination of:

- the ways in which the five metrics apply to them,
- any deductions that may be made from this, and
- any overall conclusions that may be drawn.

3.1. The Nene Valley Hillforts

This section will consider three hillfort sites located along the course of the River Nene, respectively at Hunsbury Hill (Northampton), Crow Hill (Irthlingborough), and Thrapston.

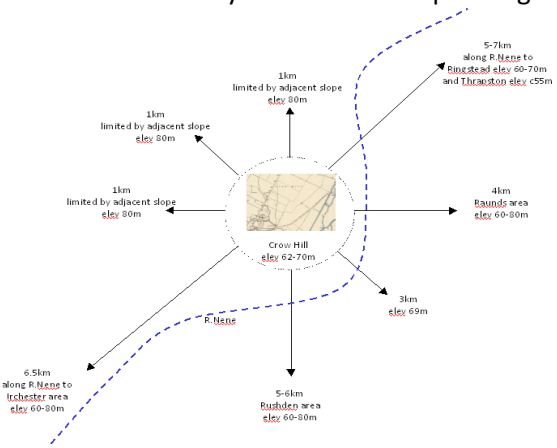
Location	Period(s) of use
Hunsbury Hill:	EIA>MIA>LIA
Irthlingborough:	MIA>LIA
Thrapston:	LBA>IA

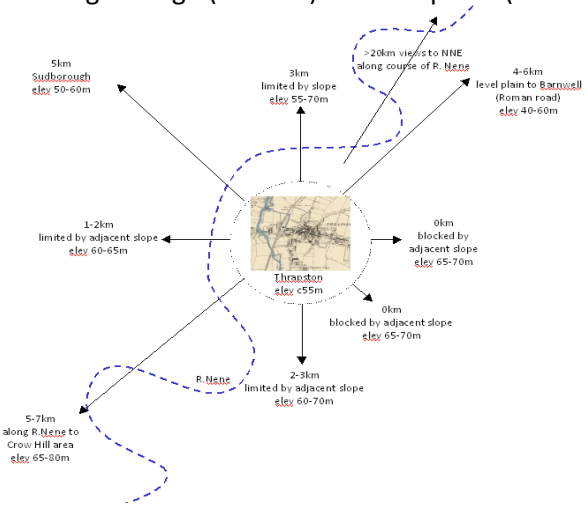
Any consideration of these forts should commence with an appreciation of the tribal groups in whose territory they were erected. As noted in 2.2 above, the Corieltavi were a collection of smaller tribes, mostly agricultural and fairly peaceable. Their name supports this, as it seems to be formed of two words which amount to something like the 'joined tribes'.

> (NB: The concept of a single overall tribal leader or "high king" [Cassivellaunus led both the Catuvellauni and their allies in the battles against Julius Caesar in 54BC, though he seems to have already had precedence among other tribal leaders before that date], seems to have emerged during the middle of the first century BC, at a time when (as other sources have demonstrated) Iron Age populations were becoming gradually more hierarchical, with the emergence of castes of priests, local and regional leaders etc.)

The relative ease of the Catuvellaunian victories in the late first century BC, and their successive advances into Middlesex, Surrey, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire suggests that the inhabitants of these territories, like the Corieltavi, had no equivalent single overall leaders at this time, but were all still composed of loose/fluctuating alliances of federated smaller tribes (NB: even by 45AD, the Corieltavi appear to have been issuing coinage still showing twin joint leaders, which tends to confirm this supposition regarding their earlier loose federated composition).

Given that neither the inhabitants of Leicestershire nor those of Northamptonshire appear to have had any strong overall leadership prior to the Roman period, it seems relatively unlikely that any large-scale co-ordinated tribal warfare would have taken place between them – and this supposition is borne out by the viewshed analyses for the hilltop strongholds at Irthlingborough (L below) and Thrapston (R below):

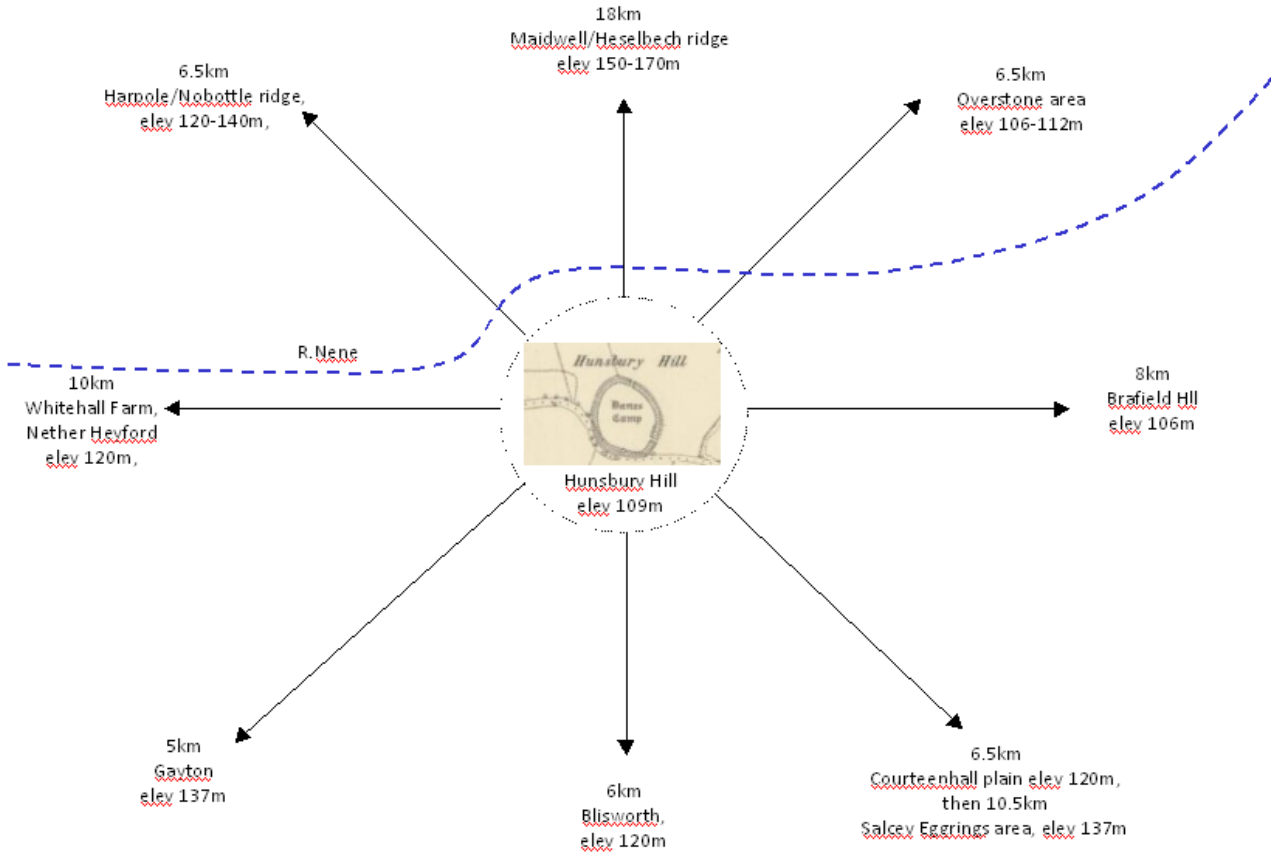




Between them, the two forts can monitor about 32km along the course of the Nene. However, neither of them has any appreciable view across the land on either side of the river, rendering both sites relatively open to attack by land. The obvious conclusion is that the main (if not the sole) function of these sites was to monitor river traffic along the Nene, through a territory that was relatively "friendly" on both sides of the river.

The major site at Hunsbury Hill (Northampton) requires separate consideration, for three main reasons:

- Geology: The sites at Irthlingborough and Thrapston are both located on relatively slender outcrops of Northants Sand and Ironstone, bordered by Lias Clay. By comparison, the Hunsbury Hill site is located on a significant mass of Northants Sand and Ironstone, and it is known that this rich source was extensively mined during the Iron Age. From the nature and quantity of the remains discovered during quarrying operations in the 1800s, it seems likely that the Hunsbury site was a significant source of smelted iron and other iron products.
- Viewshed: The site has good views both across the land in all directions, and also along the river Nene (see diagram below).



- Defences: The defences of this site were significantly greater in scale than the defences at either Crow Hill or Thrapston. The earliest defences at Hunsbury Hill were probably constructed between the 7th and 4th centuries BC, consisting of the deep surrounding ditch that still exists today, as well as an internal bank or rampart. The earliest rampart was a box structure, revetted and supported by timberwork. At some stage this structure was set on fire and burnt down. Probably in the later Iron Age period (around the 3rd or 2nd Century BC) the internal bank was rebuilt in a more simple form (glacis style). The site was abandoned shortly before the Roman occupation.

The compact internal area of the Hunsbury Hill site (1.6ha, sufficient to house a population of no more than about 50-70 individuals), together with the huge number of large pits within the site (about 300), and the extremely deep and wide protective ditches (which are typically still 20m wide from bank-top to

bank-top, and about 5-8m in depth), all combine to suggest that this site may have housed a relatively small but highly specialised community, whose activities probably included ore extraction, smelting of iron, and trading along the river. The strong defences perhaps imply that this site may at one time have served as a form of "protected storehouse" for valuable metal trade goods – and such an explanation might also help to explain the burning of the defences somewhere in the Middle Iron Age and their subsequent reconstruction around the 3C/2C BC.

The three main Nene Valley Iron Age forts considered in this section would have exercised close monitoring of more than 40km of the river Nene, which would almost certainly have served as the major trading route in the area.

It is tempting to view the Hunsbury Hill site as both a collecting point for iron goods being traded across country (this cross-country aspect will be explored in more detail in Sections 3.2 and 3.3), as a manufacturing base in its own right, and as a well-defended 'warehouse' site for goods being shipped along the river.

3.2. Iron Production

Long-distance trade is based upon surplus in one place and deficiency elsewhere. The prevalence of iron-bearing rocks in the surface geology of the county would have meant that **Northamptonshire was a net exporter of iron and iron products during the Iron Age**. Outcrops of iron ores within 3m of the surface follow the Jurassic/Liassic ridge that runs from Oxfordshire to Lincolnshire (the evidence from Romano-British quarry pits in Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire indicates that quarrying sank no deeper than 3m at most, and this would doubtless have been equally true of Iron Age quarrying). Moreover, large-scale production was limited by the quality of ironstone, which declines as the ridge progresses northwards, the best ores being found in Northamptonshire and southern Leicestershire. Iron-bearing sites heavily exploited in Northamptonshire during the Roman period include Bulwick, Byfield, Collyweston, Corby, Gretton, Harringworth, Higham Ferrers, King's Cliffe, Kettering and Wakerley.

In specific relation to hillfort sites, this section will consider chiefly those at Castle Yard (Farthingstone) and Hunsbury Hill (Northampton) in western and central Northamptonshire respectively.

Location	**Period(s) of use**
Hunsbury Hill:	EIA>MIA>LIA
Castle Yard:	MIA>LIA

The two above Iron Age hillfort sites in western and central Northamptonshire are those most clearly identified with iron production on a large scale; however, there may also have been additional production at the hillfort sites at Borough Hill Daventry, Guilsborough, and perhaps also at Thenford and at Crow Hill (Irthlingborough).

Meanwhile, eastern Northamptonshire must not be overlooked in this survey. Although modern industry has obliterated any earlier traces at Corby, a Roman road leading directly from Ratae (Leicester) to Corby – perhaps based on an earlier Iron Age trackway? – indicates the importance of the Corby/Gretton area to the Romans, and iron workings are recorded in the Roman period both at Corby and Gretton, whilst by the 1500s the Rockingham Forest area around Corby was one of the biggest iron producing areas in the country (the industry died out in this area by the 1700s, before being revived in the 20th century).

It seems certain that iron extraction would have taken place in the Corby/Gretton area during the Iron Age, perhaps utilising the Gretton site overlooking the river Welland as a focus for onward shipment.

This hypothesis is supported by evidence from the RCHME, whose report for Gretton includes the following comments:

- Northampton Museum holds a gold coin of Cunobelinus, found before 1892 'between Gretton and Corby'.

- Iron Age Settlement(?) (about SP 908946), N.E. of the village, on limestone at 112m above OD. A ditch, visible for 70m, was revealed during removal of topsoil prior to ironstone-mining in 1968. It was just over 2m deep and contained late Iron Age pottery.
- Ditch, Pit Alignment and **Iron Age Hoard of Currency Bars** (SP 910946), 100m N.W. of the above Iron Age features, in a similar position. During ironstone mining in 1970 a linear ditch of unknown length was revealed. At right-angles from this a pit alignment ran N.E. and was traced for some 140m. Most of the pits in the alignment were investigated and proved to be square or rectangular with flat bottoms. They appeared to have been filled deliberately, soon after construction, and contained fragments of early Iron Age pottery. Between two of these pits, and just overlying one of them, **a hoard of not less than 48 sword-shaped currency bars** was discovered in a shallow pit. The bars were neatly stacked with 'handles' all to one end.
- The RCHME also reports multiple instances of Roman buildings and pottery at Gretton, and of a Roman settlement, together with evidence of Roman iron-working there.

The RCHME entry for Corby contains some equally relevant statements:

- An Iron Age gold stater of the Brigantes was found between Kettering and Corby before 1900.
- Iron Age Settlement (SP 863896), S. of Old Kings Wood, on Boulder Clay at 114m above OD. Limited excavation of shallow ditches and pits revealed by building work has led to the discovery of pottery dating from the 7th to the 4th century BC.
- Iron Age Settlement (SP 861873), in the west of the parish, on Boulder Clay at 122m above OD. Construction work in 1973 revealed an extensive area of pits, gullies and ditches, containing Iron Age pottery.
- Iron Age and Roman Settlement (SP 856868), in a situation similar to (3). Half a circular ditched enclosure, 19m by 17m internally, was excavated. No interior features were noted. The surrounding ditch was 1.4m deep and was dated to around the 2nd century BC. A series of later ditches, of which one was certainly of Roman date, was also recorded.
- Iron Age and Roman Settlement (SP 872900), on the N. side of the town, on Boulder Clay at 128m above OD. Ditches and pits containing probable Iron. Age pottery, animal bones and burnt clay have been found. In the same area Roman pottery and burnt timber have also been discovered.
- Iron Age and Roman Settlement (SP 867897), on Boulder Clay at 132m above OD. Pits, a ditch 100m long, and an almost complete ring of burnt stone and timber 2m in diam., as well as lines of burning, are recorded. A lump of iron from a crucible, a Roman axe, part of a quern, animal bones and Iron Age pottery were recovered.
- No fewer than 7 further Roman settlements are reported within the parish of Corby.

Of the known hilltop sites in Northamptonshire that were developed during the Iron Age (including sites that were re-established on a previous Bronze Age base, but ignoring the dozen or so 'Wootton Hill type' enclosures, and discounting Arbury Hill Badby as being probably unoccupied save for ritual or similar purposes), it is instructive to consider their underlying geology:

Site	Underlying Geology
Hunsbury Hill	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Castle Yard	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Borough Hill	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Thenford	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Guilsborough	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Crow Hill	Lying on Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent
Thrapston	Lying on Glacial Sand & Gravel, with Cornbrash closely adjacent
Whittlebury	Lying on Glacial Sand & Gravel, with Boulder Clay adjacent
Chipping Warden	Lying on Marlstone Rock Bed, with Middle Lias Silt and Clays adjacent
Rainsborough	Lying on Great Oolite Limestone, with Upper Lias Clay closely adjacent
Hartwell	Lying on Boulder Clay, and surrounded by Boulder Clay

It is immediately evident that more than half of these Iron Age hillfort sites in Northamptonshire were located upon Northants Sand & Ironstone, with Upper Lias Clay directly adjacent. **This appears to have been a deliberate policy wherever possible, and indeed the siting of these hillforts may perhaps have been associated with the specific intent to exploit the iron content of the surface geology**.

Given that Lias Clays would have been relatively unworkable with the primitive ard ploughs of that period, it seems likely that these clay soils would have been left as timber-land – hence providing a handy and plentiful source of fuel for iron-smelting and iron-working, and further justifying the choice of location.

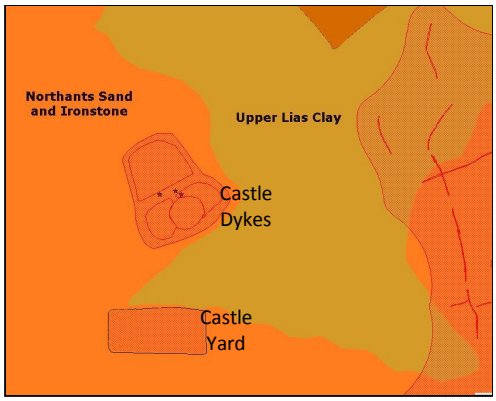
3.2.1 Hunsbury Hill, Northampton

A sufficient description has already been given in Section 3.1 of the significant iron-production capacity of Hunsbury Hill, which probably ranks as one of the major iron production sites in Northamptonshire during the Iron Age.

3.2.2 Castle Yard, near Farthingstone

Regarding another main production site, at Castle Yard (Farthingstone), analysis of slag deposits (Knight, D., "*An Iron Age Hillfort at Castle Yard, Farthingstone, Northamptonshire*") provides evidence for iron smelting as early as c 500BC using a tapped-furnace technique, which, according to Knight, is stated as "**possibly the earliest British evidence for this technique**".

But there is a major question surrounding Castle Yard: if it was such a major and well-developed site of iron production, where was its source of iron ore? After (say) 200-300 years of iron-production at the Castle Yard site, there should be ample evidence of very sizeable quarrying activities adjacent to the hillfort – yet none are visible in the landscape.



However, this report suggests that the answer may be very close at hand, in the enormous ditches that surround the nearby medieval site at Castle Dykes. It is notable, from the geological map (see on right), that Castle Dykes is based upon Northants Sand & Ironstone, and that the site is only about 100m from the site of Castle Yard. It is therefore suggested that the medieval construction may have been located here precisely because there were enormous pre-existing ironstone diggings at this point that had previously served the Castle Yard Iron Age site; and that any signs of Iron Age quarrying were obliterated and overlaid by the subsequent medieval construction.

The proximity of Castle Yard to the Great Way, and the ongoing route of the Great Way toward Northampton (as attested in Anglo-Saxon charters), suggests that there may have been a long-established trade route from the Castle Yard Iron Age hillfort to the Iron Age hillfort at Hunsbury Hill.

It is suggested that these two hillforts may well have operated from about 500BC onward as major centres of iron-production, and also of early technical research and innovation in iron-making (especially at Castle Yard); and a transport route from Castle Yard to Hunsbury would allow access to the river Nene for long distance transport (see also the reports on Thrapston and Crow Hill Irthlingborough in section 3.1, which together with Hunsbury provide control over a 40km section of the Nene).

3.3. Trade and Communication Routes

This section will consider the hillfort sites at Castle Yard (Farthingstone), Hunsbury (Northampton), Thenford, Whittlebury and Chipping Warden.

Location	Period(s) of use
Hunsbury Hill:	EIA>MIA>LIA
Castle Yard:	MIA>LIA
Chipping Warden	MIA>LIA
Thenford	LBA>EIA>LIA
Whittlebury	MIA>RB
Old Tun Copse	MIA?>RB?

It will be self-evident that there must have been many trackways and communication routes across country during the Iron Age, though most of these are probably untraceable today.

Likewise, it requires no stretch of the imagination to realise that at least some of the principal long-term routes in the Iron Age were probably founded upon pre-existing routes that had served in the Bronze Age (and perhaps even earlier). However, it should also be recognised that a 'route' would most likely have meandered and strayed over the years, perhaps by several hundred metres about its nominal line, and that it would almost certainly not have been the kind of narrow and hard-packed cross-country footpath trail with which we are familiar today.

3.3.1 Hunsbury Hill and Castle Yard

The point has already been made in section 3.2 that Northamptonshire was probably a net exporter of iron and iron products during the Iron Age, thanks to the preponderance of iron-bearing rock strata close to the surface over much of the county.

The sites at Hunsbury Hill (Northampton) and Castle Yard (Farthingstone) have already been considered in section 3.2, where mention was made of the so-called 'Great Way' which linked the two sites.

The 'Great Way' is of significant importance, and serves to link sites over a much wider area than western Northamptonshire. The route, which appears to have been multifaceted, can be traced to the west as far as the Welsh Marches and to the South West, and one historian considers it to have been the original 'Jurassic Way' (NB: this term should not be confused with the modern long-distance footpath of the same name, as shown in modern OS maps).

The Appendix to this report contains a detailed discussion of current thinking concerning early routes and trackways linking the hilltop sites at Hunsbury Hill and Castle Yard.

In support of the early origin of the Castle Yard route for the Great Way (which passes directly adjacent to the Castle Yard site), some 400-500m to the east in the parish of Stowe the route passes via a series of early pit alignments, a triple ditch/bank system and an extensive series of prehistoric field systems, hut circles and barrows.

The Hunsbury Hill site also appears to be well served by significant early routes. The well recorded limb of the 'Jurassic Way' from Great-Rollright to the south-west, known locally as Banbury Lane, leads directly to Hunsbury Hill.

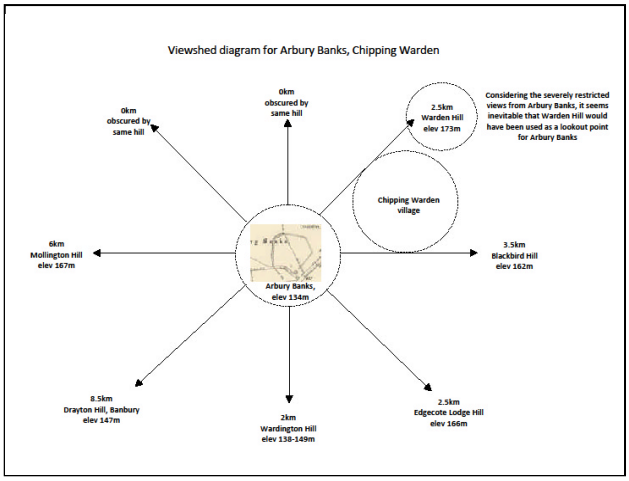
Hunsbury Hill is also directly served from the south by the arm of a route from Haversham (discussed in the paragraphs in the Appendix covering the Salcey Eggrings), which ran to the north-west from Spinney Lodge. The view has been expressed that this route extended to the north-west from Hunsbury to the early settlement at Duston, though this part of the route cannot be proven.

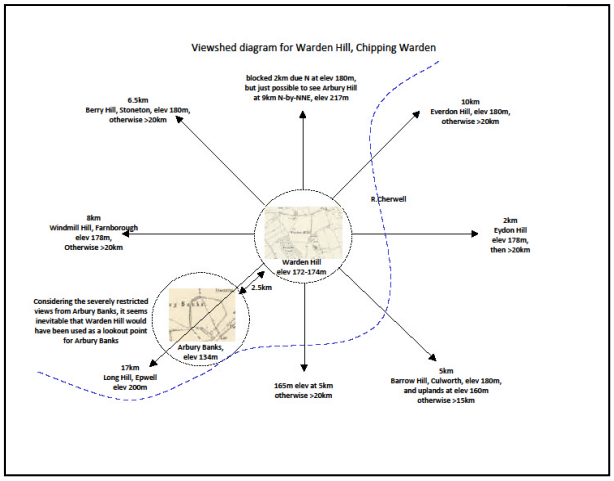
3.3.2 Arbury Banks

Location	Period(s) of use
Arbury Banks	LBA?>MIA

The Arbury Banks site at Chipping Warden is quite distinct among the Northamptonshire hillforts and deserves special treatment.

Arbury Banks stands on the flat summit of a low rounded hill. The river Cherwell flows around the south and east of the hill on which the so-called hillfort stands, but is a mere country stream at this point and offers no serious defensive protection. The relatively low-lying site, added to the lack of riverine or other natural defences, combine to suggest that Arbury Banks probably did not serve a primarily defensive/protective function. The site has a very limited viewshed for an Iron Age defended "hilltop" enclosure – it could not have been adequately defended without the support of a nearby lookout point – and for this reason the adjacent Warden Hill and Jobs Hill were also considered as part of this analysis; the views from Warden Hill and Jobs Hill provide comprehensive visibility for up to 20km or more in virtually all directions.





However, there is more compelling evidence to support the interpretation of this site as a trading site. No fewer than 13 Bronze Age palstaves were found grouped together about 1km north of the hillfort site – see inset examples below – and the unfinished nature of the castings show that this was the stock-in-trade of a resident smith. A further (finished) palstave was found at an adjacent site in Aston-le-Walls.

The route of the Welsh Road runs close to the north of the hillfort site, which also helps to explain the probable existence of a Bronze Age smithy at this location (i.e., well located in order to draw upon the possibilities of trading copper from the prehistoric malachite mines in north Wales, Cheshire and Shropshire) – it seems reasonable to suppose that the route of the Welsh Road in this area may date back far into pre-history. To complete the picture of long-term peaceable occupation, there is a probable Neolithic oval enclosure on the south slope of Jobs Hill, and a Roman villa with bathhouse is located close nearby at Blackgrounds.

This area may also be influenced by other early trade routes. Routes in the neighbourhood include a salt route leading from BA salt pans in the Droitwich area (*pers comm* Beatrice Hopkinson, UCLA, Los Angeles, who carried out the Droitwich excavations), and probably running via the Saxon so-called "Great Way" towards Northampton. It is also relevant to note that the nearby IA hilltop fort at Thenford is located at the junction of Banbury Lane and Welsh Lane.

All in all, the overall impression of Arbury Banks is that of a site within an area that saw use as a trading point over an extended period of at least 1000-1500 years. In this context, it is also highly significant that the Dobunni/Catuvellauni territorial border in Oxfordshire was established during the Late Iron Age along the course of the Cherwell south of Chipping Warden (see 2.1 and 2.3 above). This throws further light upon the Chipping Warden site, and underlines its interpretation as a peaceful "trading site" rather than a "hillfort". Finally, it seems no coincidence that the modern name Chipping Warden would appear to derive from a medieval or earlier reference to "the marketplace by the lookout hill".

3.3.3 Thenford

Location	Period(s) of use
Thenford	LBA>EIA>LIA

The Appendix to this report contains a detailed discussion of a whole series of overland routes and trackways that passed through this area.

This hillfort is served by ancient routes lying directly on what is colloquially known as the Banbury Lane (the branch of the historical Jurassic Way that ran from Great Rollright to Hunsbury hillfort to the south of Northampton and probably beyond along the south of the Nene).

About 300m to the west of this hillfort, the Banbury Lane is intersected by the 'Port-way' (more fully described in the Appendix) that ran from Dorchester-on-Thames.

These two major long-distance routes would have provided access to most points of strategic interest to the occupants of the Thenford hillfort.

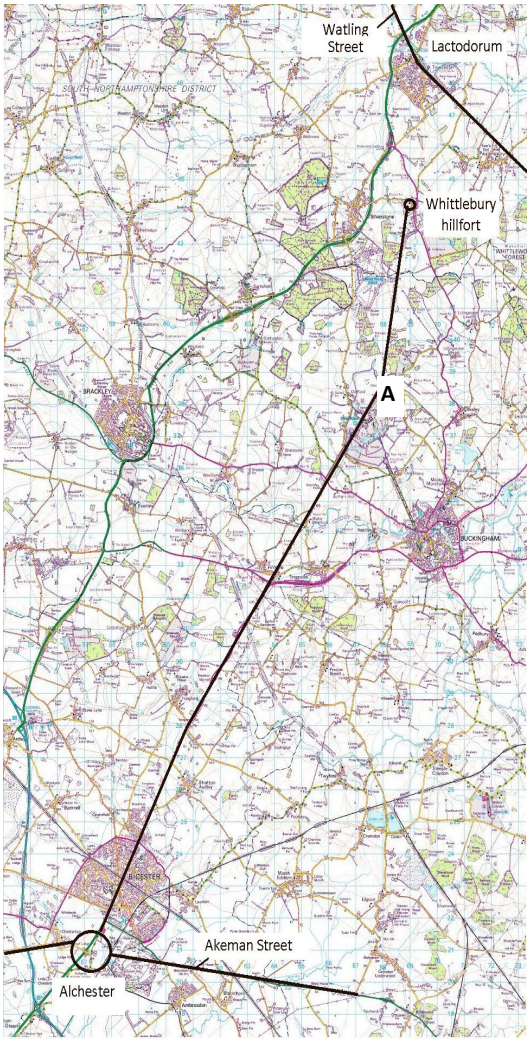
There is also discussion in the related literature of a possible early route from the north-west that may have influenced both the Thenford site and also that of the hillfort at Rainsborough Camp.

Finally, mention should be made of the fact that a Bronze Age hoard was discovered within 200m of the Thenford Iron Age site. The discovery of such hoards at other nearby hillfort sites including Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden) and Rainsborough Camp may perhaps lend further support to the long-term nature of some of these early overland communication routes.

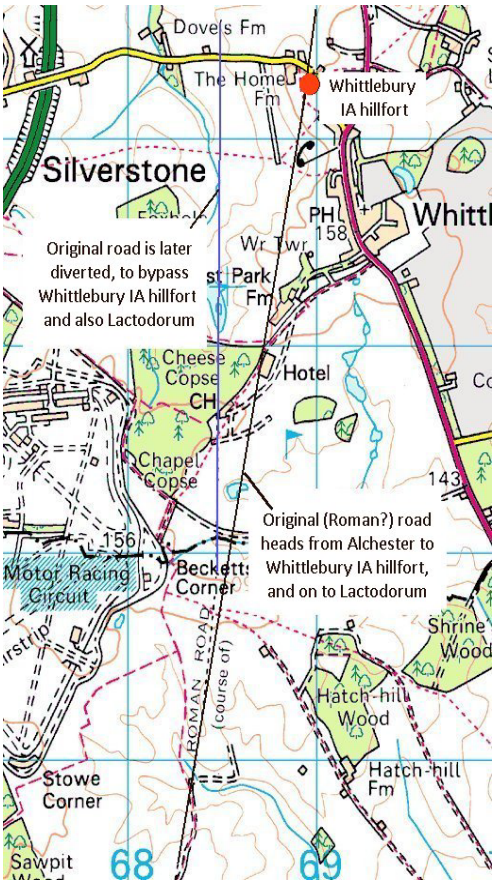
3.3.4 Whittlebury

This site stands on a level small plateau, with good all-round long-distance views, and is very close (2.5km) to a further IA hillfort site at Old Tun Copse, near Paulerspury (see section 2.5.8 below). Both these sites may also relate to long-distance communication routes. The place-name Whittlebury is probably a corruption of "*witlanbyrig*" – the shelter and protection offered by the hillfort defences also point to its use in the tenth century as the location for the royal witan, although little ceramic evidence can added to support this theory.

In order to assess the function and significance of communication routes in this area, it is necessary firstly to examine the wider area, from Alchester (the Roman town just south of modern Bicester) to Lactodorum (Towcester), as shown in the figure on the right.



From Alchester, the Roman road (it is numbered 150a in Margary) runs in linear sections. The road appears to be heading at first toward Paulerspury (NB: a continuation of its alignment would pass directly through the Iron Age hillfort site at Old Tun Copse); but there is a marked detour at point "A", and the new alignment heads directly toward Lactodorum, passing en route directly through the hillfort site at Whittlebury. As a coincidence, this seems unlikely.



Closer examination of the area around Whittlebury (see second map on left) suggests that the Roman road was probably detoured subsequently, to pass to the west of both Whittlebury and Towcester, heading to a new meeting-point with the Watling Street precisely at its main crossing point over the R. Tove.

It seems legitimate to question this apparent detour. One possibility, perhaps, is that the final route would have enabled more rapid transit for military convoys en route from Akeman Street to Watling Street, thus avoiding the delays in passing through the centres of Whittlebury and Lactodorum. However, such comments are no more than speculation.

The main purpose of these comments is merely to draw attention to the initial alignment of the Roman road with Whittlebury hillfort and Lactodorum. It is possible that the Roman engineers may have made use of pre-existing Iron Age roads and trackways. Further investigation is needed, to verify the route of the Roman road northward from Whittlebury towards the Tove crossing at Lactodorum, and to look for evidence of a possible earlier route passing directly through the hillfort towards the centre of Lactodorum.

3.3.5 Old Tun Copse, near Paulerspury

The case for considering Old Tun Copse as a possible Iron Age hillfort rests entirely upon the secondary evidence of potsherd finds, viewshed analysis and a consideration of ancient trackways.

The most plausible explanation for Old Tun Copse, lying as it does only 2km east of a known hillfort site at Whittlebury, is that both sites were simultaneously occupied, and that the Whittlebury site operated as a true "fortified hilltop settlement", with the Old Tun Copse site providing an "auxiliary viewshed point", since the Whittlebury site's vision to the east across the relatively flat Boulder Clay plain is less extensive.

It is therefore recommended that Old Tun Copse should be considered as a "probable Iron Age hilltop site". The existence of possible fortifications at Old Tun Copse, which would transform it specifically into a "hillfort site", remains to be demonstrated.

If the above is a valid explanation, it is an interesting instance of an Iron Age hillfort that makes use of an auxiliary viewpoint in order to achieve its functionality. There seems to be at least one other such site in Northamptonshire – notably, at Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden), where the fortified site is relatively low-lying, and it is necessary to infer a supplementary viewshed from nearby Warden Hill; and a further possible instance occurs at Borough Hill, where there appear to be two possible "satellite" sites on the east side of the hilltop, giving complementary viewsheds across the land to the east of the main hillfort.

3.3.6 Other possible trading sites in Northamptonshire

Before leaving this topic, some further observations should be added about other possible trading sites within Northamptonshire. The point has been made, both by Hodder ("*Pre-Roman and Romano-British tribal economies*", Hodder, 1979, in "*Invasion and response: the case of Roman Britain*", BAR 73 pp189-196) and Cunliffe (op.cit., pp 200, 513-531 etc) that early trading was a means of providing high-status individuals with suitably high-status valuable objects, and that this type of trading was both initiated and encouraged by the high-status individuals within each community.

In central Northamptonshire, Hunsbury Hill (Northampton) and Castle Yard (near Farthingstone) have already been identified above as centres that appear to have specialised in iron production and iron trading – but neither of these sites can really be described as 'potential inter-tribal trading' sites (although Hunsbury Hill lies on the river Nene – and the role of this river in the east of the county, both as a long-distance trading highway and as a potential territorial boundary, has already been considered in earlier sections of this report).

Meanwhile, in the west of the county there are three possible inter-tribal trading sites that are located near long-distance communication routes, and close to the headwaters of a significant watercourse that formed a potential territorial boundary:

- **Evenley**
  Close to the headwaters of the Ouse, near a boundary between the Catuvellauni and the Dobunni; perhaps the early boundary between the Catuvellauni and the Corieltavi. There are significant numbers of early coin finds from all three tribes (and other tribes) in this area. There is also evidence here of long-distance communication routes.
- **Chipping Warden**
  Close to the headwaters of the Cherwell, and close to a boundary between the Dobunni and Catuvellauni (and Corieltavi?). Some probable prehistoric communication routes are also associated with this location, together with more recent (Saxon/medieval) place-name evidence of 'a market-place beside the lookout hill'. There are also a possible Neolithic site and an early RB site close nearby.
- **Lilbourne**
  Close to the headwaters of the Avon, and perhaps forming a boundary between the Catuvellauni and Corieltavi in this area. Also relatively close to Dobunnic territory, with additional possible influence from the Cornovii. At least three Bronze Age burned mounds have been identified in the Lilbourne/Crick area, and there is an early communication route running through the Lilbourne site.

There is later evidence to indicate that this was a trading area, with a record of a medieval 'portmoot' at Lilbourne. There were subsequent medieval castles to guard the Avon crossing point, and Lilbourne became the centre of administration for the surrounding parishes during the 12th-15th centuries – admittedly, not direct evidence of prehistoric trading, but perhaps building upon a much earlier tradition?

3.3.7 Summary of trade and communication routes

Sufficient has been written here in section 3.3 to demonstrate several specific strands in what was clearly a complex web of prehistoric communication routes. It is beyond question that other such strands must have existed during the Iron Age, and it seems likely that some of them may have been based on even earlier Bronze Age routes. It is hoped that that further research into this topic, and into trading networks and the types of goods traded along them, may produce a rigorous basis for identifying other early communication routes.

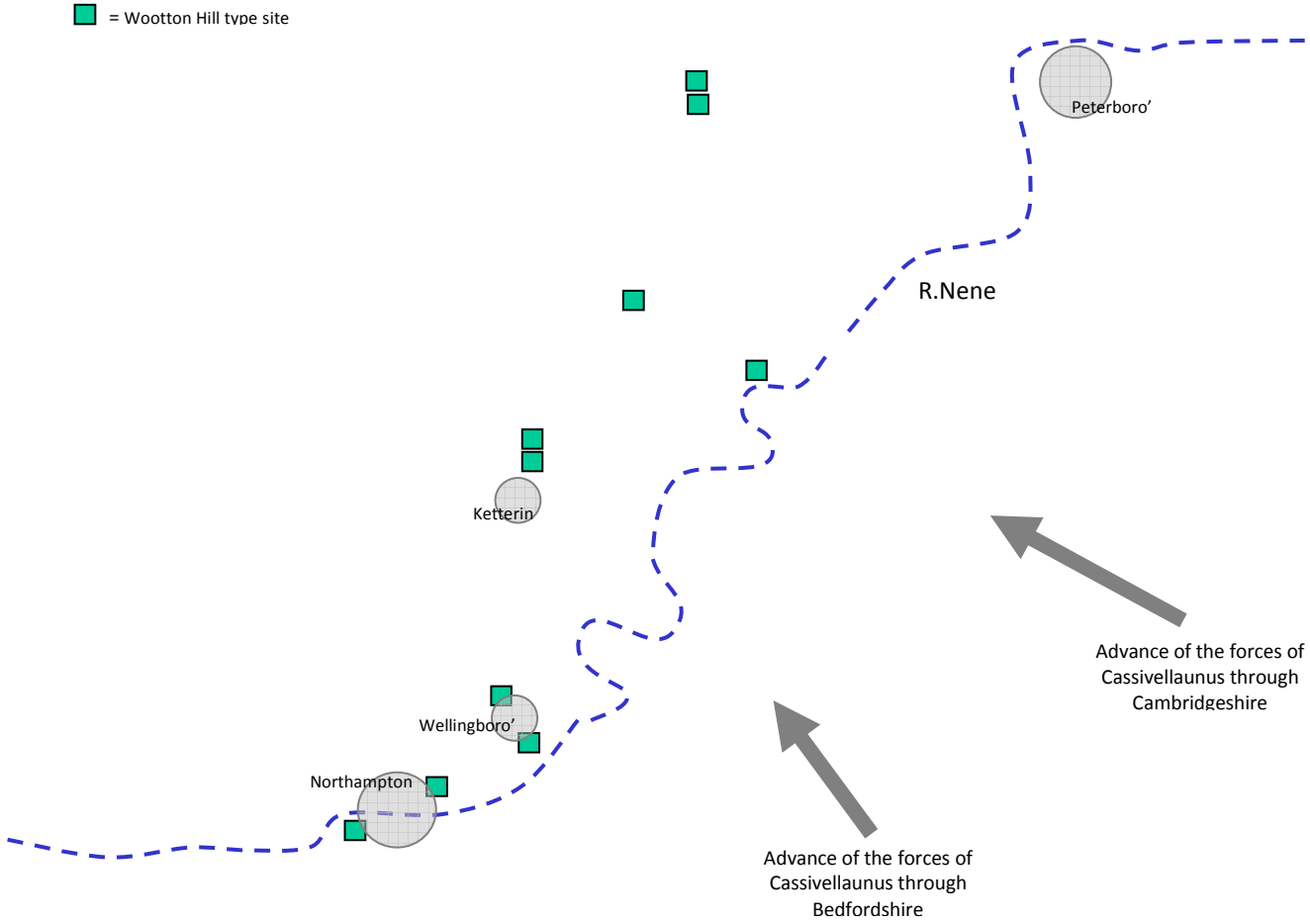
3.4. The Wootton-Hill-type Enclosures

In a paper by D. Jackson and B. Dix (*"Some Late Iron Age Defended Enclosures in Northamptonshire"*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Vol.15, 1989, pp158-166) a total of ten defended hilltop enclosures in Northamptonshire were described (at Wootton Hill [Northampton], Aldwinckle, Stanwell Spinney, Wakerley A and B, Weekley A and B, Great Doddington, Blackthorn [Northampton], and Brigstock).

Each site was characteristically 0.5ha or less in extent, with a deep V-shaped enclosing ditch (and in some cases other defensive elements), an internal bank/stockade, and single gated entrance; it was not possible to form a general opinion of the internal layouts. The enclosure defences were all erected within the period 25BC-50AD – although in each case there was evidence of previous occupation on the site prior to the sudden strengthening of its defences.

In attempting to assess the purpose of these sudden defensive measures in the late first century BC, the paper's authors conjectured that they may have represented a reaction to a sudden perceived threat.

To analyse this conjectured explanation, the first step is to create a map of the locations of the Wootton-Hill-type enclosures. This is shown below:



The earlier work in Section 3.1 supports a general proposal in this paper, that Corieltauvian influence during much of the Iron Age probably extended southward into what is now Northamptonshire and north Warwickshire. The viewshed analyses for the defended sites at Crow Hill and Thrapston show that neither site has any significant line of sight vision across country on either side of the R.Nene, suggesting that:

- both sites were erected in what was, at the time (EIA>MIA) essentially "friendly" territory on both sides of the river, and
- their main purpose was to monitor and control traffic and trade along the Nene.

The Catuvellaunian advance into present-day Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and North Warwickshire, under the leadership of the high king Cassivellaunus, commenced in about 54BC and was completed by about 30BC. Assuming a steady rate of advance, this implies that the more southerly territories would have been subdued and assimilated by about 40BC, and that the Catuvellaunian advance into Northamptonshire and north Warwickshire would have come from the south and east, as indicated on the map above, over the period 40-30BC.

- The Wootton-Hill-type defensive enclosures are said to have been erected between about 25BC and 50AD – and this dating evidence alone would be sufficient to link them to the Catuvellaunian advance; but there are other equally compelling factors:
- Viewshed analysis for the Wootton-Hill-type sites indicates that the vast majority (though not all) of the sites had their best lines of sight towards the east and south-east.
- The above map shows that the line of enclosures is oriented so as face south-east, along the north side of the river Nene – i.e., directly facing twin lines of Catuvellaunian advance from Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

It is tempting to conclude that the line of Wootton-Hill type defences may have been intended by the Corieltavi to signal the message to the Catuvellauni “thus far, but no further!”

At first sight it might seem that the line of Wootton-Hill type enclosures was simply intended as a visible barrier against the threat from the advancing Catuvellauni, and that in the process the Corieltauvi had in effect yielded their major iron-production sites and shipment route along the Nene. However, closer examination reveals a more complex picture:

- The Wootton-Hill type sites all span the upland area between the Nene and Welland valleys.
- Their construction may therefore have been a carefully considered move that, whilst recognising the inevitability of the loss of the Nene Valley iron production route to the Catuvellauni, sought to protect the valuable iron-production area around Corby and Gretton, and the onward shipment routes for iron goods – by river along the Welland, and overland toward the Corieltauvi *civitas* and distribution centre at what later became Roman Ratae (modern Leicester). A subsequent Roman road from Corby to Ratae may perhaps be based on an earlier Iron Age route?

In particular, the sites at Gretton and Wakerley appear to be of special interest:

- There are two Wootton-Hill type enclosures at Wakerley to the east of Gretton – and both have viewsheds overlooking the Welland valley, unlike the rest of the Wootton-Hill type enclosures which all have viewsheds with good views towards the Catuvellaunian advance from south and south-east.
- The site at Gretton, though not previously considered as a potential Iron Age hillfort site, seems nevertheless to be a very likely contender. Situated on a prominent bluff at a bend in the course of the Welland, it also marks the point from which the river can be described as reliably navigable for the type of small coracle-like boats that would probably have been characteristic of the Iron Age.
- The sites at Gretton and Wakerley would have provided both access to the Welland for transport and also a means of monitoring traffic along the river.

Gretton in particular lies close to the rich surface seams of iron-bearing sandstone in the Corby/Gretton region, that were mined both in Roman times, in the medieval period, and again in more recent times via the mining and steelworks sites at Corby. There is good evidence that iron-mining and smelting also formed a significant part of the earlier Iron Age economy, in such finds as 48 sword-shaped iron currency bars that were discovered relatively recently in a shallow pit in the parish of Gretton.

3.5. Other Northamptonshire Hillforts

Location	Period(s) of use
Arbury Hill, Badby	??
Guilsborough	MIA>LIA
Rainsborough	LBA>MIA
Salcey Eggrings	EIA?>RB
Borough Hill, Daventry	BA>MIA>LIA>RB
Buckby Folly	??

It is immediately clear, from viewshed analysis, that most of this group of sites may have been significant in terms of wide-area territorial governance, due to their very extensive viewsheds.

3.5.1 Arbury Hill, Badby

This site should probably be considered as one of special significance within Northamptonshire. The considerations relating to most of the other hillforts do not apply to this site.

On consideration of the geological data (including a recent Northamptonshire County Council report on ground instability which states specifically that “The combination of the Northampton Sand overlaid by Upper Lias Clay can cause the formation of landslides, particularly where slopes have angles greater than 7 degrees”), there can be very little doubt that this site is NOT a hillfort, but a geological formation created by progressive slippage of Upper Lias clay soils down the sides of this steep hill, leaving the crest’s underlying geology of Northamptonshire Sand & Ironstone exposed – and as such, it might be considered irrelevant to include it in this survey. However, a case can and should be made for mentioning this site as part of the section on Northamptonshire. The rationale for this suggestion is as follows:

- Three major rivers rise within a very short distance of this hill (the Nene, less than 1km to the north; the Leam, less than 1km to the west; and the Cherwell, less than 1km to the south-west). This in itself may well have endowed Arbury Hill with mystical significance to early peoples.
- The geomorphology, erosion and weathering of the hilltop, commented upon in some detail in the RCHME survey, and further commented upon in the CLASP survey report, has left the hilltop with the appearance of a summit fortification complete with ramparts, ditches and an entrance. The illusion is quite compelling even today – and according to the historian Baker in the 1820s it was even more pronounced in his time. However, these features would probably have formed initially as a result of post-glacial action, long before this area was inhabited.
- Thus, the first human inhabitants of this area would have seen, on their arrival, what appeared to be a massive ancient fortification, already standing on a hilltop, at the focus of the headwaters of the three major rivers that have had a major influence on prehistoric territorial boundary lines in this area.

Attempting to view the situation through the mind-set of those early peoples – they may have interpreted the hilltop as an object of superstition/veneration, along the lines "this is huge and looks man-made – it must have been built by the giants/gods who were here before us". The close proximity of the three major river sources may have seemed to them extremely significant in this respect.

The hilltop is also a significant high point, suitable to function as a possible "relay station" in a line of hilltops stretching along the eastern side of the Cherwell and the Leam and the southern side of the Nene – many of which also feature on the list of actual or suspected BA/IA hillfort sites in Northamptonshire (eg Rainsborough Camp at Aynho; Arbury Banks at Chipping Warden; Charwelton Hill; Borough Hill Daventry; etc).

In conclusion, this site seems NOT to be a hillfort in the sense of "an occupied and fortified site" – but quite possibly it may have functioned as "a site of spiritual significance from Neolithic times onward", and

also "a convenient station along a line of communication that may have been associated with territorial governance in the Bronze and Iron Ages".

The 944AD Saxon charter wording for the hill, describing it as the "*ealden burh aet baddanbyrig*", appears to lend support to such an interpretation, since:

- *Baddan* may derive from the Saxon "*biodan*" – "offer/offering" (which comes down into modern English as "bid/bidding/bidden/etc")
- *Byrig* clearly derives from the Saxon "*burh*" – a hill or mound, often with the implication that it is fortified. And "*ealden*" states quite clearly that it dated from long before the Saxon era.
- Hence "*baddanbyrig*" would appear to mean "a place for making offerings [to the gods], on top of an ancient fortified hill".
- Such a religious utilisation would not have been relevant to the Roman period that preceded the Saxon period – hence it seems possible that the Saxon wording may refer directly back to a much earlier utilisation of Arbury Hill practised during the Iron Age, which lingered on as a folk-memory.

3.5.2 Guilsborough

Extensive alterations such as additional earthworks, levelling etc. have eroded almost all of the original features of this site. Part of the original SE corner exists and, possibly, some of the NE corner. The site has had a mound and water tower erected on it, together with some domestic dwellings and stables.

The hillfort site sits on an extensive outcrop of Northants Sand & Ironstone, over Upper Lias and Boulder Clays to the east and west respectively.

It seems likely that ore extraction and iron smelting may have formed part of the activities associated with this site, both from its geological location and from the noted similarities to other EIA/MIA hillforts at Hunsbury Hill (Northampton) and Castle Yard (nr Farthingstone). However, to date no evidence has been found to substantiate this suggestion.

The viewshed diagram for this site shows very extensive views to the south and east, and easy visibility between the Iron Age sites at Guilsborough and Hunsbury Hill.

3.5.3 Rainsborough

The fort sits on a promontory of Great Oolite Limestone, with deposits of Northants Sand & Ironstone very nearby to the north and west. The surrounding lower land is chiefly Upper Lias Clay. A nearby tributary of the R. Swere (which runs to the west of this site) has its source nearby and cuts into the underlying Lias Clay, just north-west of the hillfort site, it may have been a reliable source in the Iron Age.

Regarding communication routes, there appears to be no ancient communication routes in direct proximity to the Rainsborough fort.

- The Roman road from Alchester is numbered 150a in Margary, it joins Akeman Street between Bicester and Towcester. There is significant evidence that Evenley was a substantial trading and probable ritual centre, for which evidence comes from both the very large coin hoards discovered there together with the spread of Iron Age coins including Dobunnic (from west of the Cherwell), Catuvellanuni (from the south), Corieltavi (to the north) and Addemaros, the Catuvellanuni ally (to the south east).
- However on examination of the OS Map an interesting footpath network is discernible. From the west side, a footpath leads to the fort from the the deserted settlement of Walton Grounds. The name Walton means 'settlement of the Welsh' aka Celtic British. The current view is that settlements such as this were home to isolated but tolerated groups of Celtic British people. It is therefore of interest that apart from this route, Walton also appears to be served by the N-S Portway and an extension of the route from Rainsborough to the early crossing of The Cherwell at Nell Bridge. To the north-east of the fort a footpath leads to the early west-east route and therefore Evenley.

- NB: In nearby Croughton there is a substantial RB villa, and in Kings Sutton an early, possibly nucleated, small RB settlement.

3.5.4 Salcey Eggrings

This site was included into this report chiefly because David Hall (1996 paper, para 4.1b) examined it physically and identified it as a probable enclosure. His views are corroborated in this report by examination of the magnified Lidar image.

Other relevant factors:

D.N. Hall, in para 4.3 of his 1996 paper, records nearby in the forest at Rush Coppice SP7955 5155 to the north of the Eggrings sites, a slightly marked curving ditch that appears to form three sides of a 40m irregular shaped enclosure, with a 1.5m curving ditch. He suggests that it is "of Iron Age or Roman origins". Nearby there is what seems to be an Iron Age field system. Two kilometres further north of these features is the large Romano-British villa complex at Piddington. The possibility is currently being considered that Piddington may have been a vexillation fortress.

References quoted in the NAS 1980 paper refer to other possibly similar 'hillforts' in the vicinity. The closest site mentioned is a C10 Norman motte 7.2km to the south-west at Alderton, the view being taken that this may have been built upon an earlier IA fort (see Grimes, *"Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain"* ed. Frere, Fig 5 & note). Alderton appears to be situated on a south-facing ridge at an elevation of 105m above OD. A further 4.4km south-west of Alderton, another (now vanished) hillfort is reported at Old Tun Copse near Paulerspury (Wolverton and District Archaeological Society News Letter No.6, p6), situated on a tongue of land protruding to the south, maximum height 137m above OD.

Northamptonshire RCHME, Vol4, Hartwell I, mentions a possible similarity between Salcey Site 1 and a hillfort at Tarrant Gunville in Dorset. The RCHME entry for Tarrant Gunville shows several Iron Age sites in that parish – and the most likely comparator is the hillfort at Bussey Stool Park. However, there are significant differences between the two sites, including configuration, position of entrances, and the fact that Bussey has out-turns whereas Salcey Eggrings Site 1 has in-turns (though Salcey Site 2 does have out-turns). The overall configuration of the Tarrant Gunville site also differs from the characteristic kidney shape of Salcey Site 1. Among the sites described at Tarrant Gunville, interestingly, the Main Down site does appear kidney-shaped. In addition to these specifics, several other features in the archaeological landscapes of both sites tend to corroborate the views taken in the Northamptonshire RCHME.

Brief mention should also be made of what may be an ancient nodal centre just north of Site 2. The centre appears to focus at a forest feature identified in 1790 as 'Nine Oaks Tongue' Quarter. The principal ancient routes involved are:

- A north-south Portway running from a possible Roman-period port on the River Ouse near Haversham (or from further south). This route probably runs to the north, with a NE branch along a documented route known as the Stone-way.
- An ancient Salt-Way from Droitwich enters the forest from the NW.
- Another route enters from the west and may link the Salcey sites to the above-mentioned sites at Alderton and Old Tun Copse. It may be a long-distance route via Alchester to Dorchester-on-Thames.
- A fourth route leads SE from the above-mentioned focus.

CLASP is carrying out long-term research into these and other early communication routes that pass through Northamptonshire, and detailed justification for each route will be provided in a later research paper by CLASP (however, some of the relevant data is also included as an appendix to this report).

3.5.5 Borough Hill Daventry

This contour fort covers an area of some 54ha, and was originally probably bounded by a number of banks and ditches; but as a result of later destruction, the defences do not survive anywhere in their original state – in the south-west they have been entirely flattened (though Baker's map of 1822 showed them as still existing at that time).

This was probably originally a bivallate Early Iron Age contour fort site. In the south-east corner of the golf course, the main contour fort scarp is broken and after a short gap reappears inside the line of the modern hedge, still as a scarp 1-2m high. Below it, on the hedge line, are traces of a much smaller scarp surmounted in places by the hedge bank; this is probably all that remains of the original counterscarp bank. By 1823 Baker indicated that the defences were already in this condition, but in 1712 Morton said that they consisted of "two deep trenches and three banks". Further south, Morton described the defences in 1712 as “three trenches and four banks”.

Within the original Early Iron Age site, there is evidence of later Iron Age re-occupation of the hilltop, and construction of a smaller 5ha fort of roughly triangular shape, bounded by a massive rampart, ditch and counterscarp, possibly with an outer and later bank and ditch beyond cut across the hilltop. On the western side, where it is best preserved, the ditch is steep-sided and flat-bottomed, 3m below the summit of the rampart and 1.5m below the counterscarp.

There is evidence, across the site, of more or less continuous occupation from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age and Iron Age, with a Roman villa built within the former Iron Age fort, and Anglo-Saxon burials on the summit of the hill.

Note also the comments relating to the long-distance overland route “King Street”, see 3.5.7 below.

The Appendix to this report also contains detailed comments relating to the so-called ‘pro-caestra’ construction which appears to form a formal point of entry to the site from the south – it is suggested that this pro-caestra may have been a focus for incoming long-distance routes.

The Appendix also contains comments on a further apparent satellite enclosure, due east of the hill, which was discovered during the survey team’s examination of the hill and the adjacent territory; also, of further possible entrances in the east and north-east parts of the site, and a Romano-British (or earlier) trackway within the hilltop leading south-west from the eastern entrance. It is possible that Borough Hill may have been a more complex and interactive site than was hitherto supposed, and the team hopes to carry out further fieldwork on these adjacent sites in the longer term.

3.5.6 Buckby Folly

Buckby Folly is included in this list strictly under the heading of “possible but unproven” Iron Age hilltop sites. The viewshed and general topography, together with the underlying Northants Sand & Ironstone geology, all combine to suggest that this location ought to have been an occupied and possibly fortified hilltop site during the Iron Age – yet the only evidence to support this hypothesis is a small location on the crest of the ridge, logged in the HER database as a “possible prehistoric hut circle from morphed aerial photography” (MNN130774). It remains a location for further future investigation.

3.5.7 Gretton

Likewise, Harborough Hill Farm at Gretton is also included under the heading of "possible but unproven" Iron Age hilltop sites. Here too, the viewshed and general topography (on a prominent bluff commanding excellent long-distance views of the course of the nearby river Welland), together with huge local deposits of underlying Northants Sand & Ironstone geology in both Gretton and Corby parishes (which are known to have been extensively worked in Roman times), all combine to suggest that this location ought to have been an occupied and fortified hilltop site during the Iron Age, permitting supervision and control of the important shipment route via the Welland. Finds of Iron Age currency bars within Gretton parish, together with evidence of a Roman-period settlement close to Gretton church, provide further supportive evidence for this supposed hillfort site – and the CLASP team plans to carry out further fieldwork to follow up the evidence of the initial desktop study.

The possible strategic function of this supposed site is explored further in Section 3.4 above, associated with a further consideration of the significance of the line of Wootton-Hill type enclosures.

3.5.8 Old Tun Copse, near Paulerspury

This site has already been mentioned in section 3.3.5 above.

Very little remains visible on the ground today to reward the fieldwork researcher – although there are significant scatters of Roman period potsherds in its vicinity – and the possibility that this may have been an early Iron Age hillfort site is largely a matter of inference based on the site's extensive viewshed, together with the indication that it may have been the destination of a possible long-distance Iron Age trackway leading from what later became Roman Alchester (just south of modern Bicester). This route (which is numbered 150a in Margary's catalogue of Roman-period roads) appears to have been later diverted to make for Whittlebury.

The place-name "Old Tun" suggests that this may have been recognised in the Saxon period as "a former place of habitation, though now deserted" – and this appears to distinguish it from Whittlebury (which is probably a corruption of Saxon "*witlanbyrig*", ie, "the place of the King's witan").

3.5.9 Other possible sites

The above list may not be exhaustive, and work continues to identify further possible Iron Age defended hilltop sites. Possible candidates include Desborough (although the evidence for this site has almost certainly been destroyed already by local quarrying) and Wadenhoe (which, however, may merely be a medieval site).

3.5.10 Undefended hilltop sites

The impression may have been given that Iron Age hilltop sites in Northamptonshire are invariably fortified, and it is important to correct such a misapprehension.

In addition to the fortified hilltop sites in Northamptonshire, recent work by CLASP and Cotswold Archaeology at the Barby Hill site (just east of Rugby) has demonstrated the existence of at least one large Middle/Late Iron Age hilltop site (approx 300m x 400m) with no sign of any fortification work.

The Barby Hill site is located on a prominent hilltop, mostly on Upper Lias Clay, with excellent long-distance views around almost 270^{o} of the surrounding landscape. The site lies in close proximity to what might be a long-distance pre-Roman trade route (known and documented in the 1500s as "King Street") which is still traceable for at least 10km between Rugby and Daventry, and which appears to converge gradually with Watling Street, passing directly through the Borough Hill Iron Age hilltop site en route, until the two routes meet precisely at Lactodorum (Towcester). The site's proximity to 'King Street' may be significant in terms of trading and communication; and there is evidence on the site of some limited iron-smelting, in addition to the rearing and management of livestock

There are other similar hilltop locations in the Kilsby/Crick/West Haddon area, and it is possible that some of these may also have been occupied during the Middle and Late Iron Ages. Further work is needed to investigate these sites – and initial geophysics surveys at Watford Road in Crick have already provided some supportive evidence for the existence of an Iron Age community on this hilltop site (a detailed survey report is awaited).

4 Neighbouring Areas

For completeness, this study should also consider the situation in neighbouring areas of the country – for example, the modern counties of Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire. It may even be instructive to look for parallels in more remote areas – and the well-documented Wessex Hillforts Project, for instance, provides a good deal of detailed comparative material.

4.1. Oxfordshire

(NB: This entire sub-section draws heavily upon Sutton's early work in the 1960s – see Bibliography; it should eventually be significantly updated, corrected and revised by the ongoing work in Oxfordshire as part of this National Hillforts Project.)

As a group, Oxfordshire hillforts are poorly preserved: few remain with really impressive defences. But even in the most finely preserved examples the field-archaeologist's contribution to knowledge is necessarily very limited. Ground inspection can normally reveal, in addition to a hillfort's size, shape and situation, the number of its banks and ditches and perhaps the position of the original entrance or entrances. Vague indications of bank construction can sometimes be deduced from the shape as preserved, or from exposures caused by erosion or by human or animal activity, aided by a knowledge of the local geology.

4.1.1 The Dyke Hills (Sutton's 'List A' item 1)

A low-lying promontory fort covering 114 acres. A right-angled bend in the Thames and its confluence with the Thames are cut off on the north side by bivallate defences. These are best preserved in the east-central section, where the inner bank stands some 3m above the interior, and the outer bank about 0.6m. higher. There is a broad intervening ditch and a slight outer one, and clearly the outer bank must have been built with material from both. The other sections of the banks have been lowered or virtually obliterated. Much of this demolition took place in the 19th century. The gaps through the banks are all apparently post Iron Age. The original entrance was presumably at the eastern end, against the Thames, where, though poorly preserved, there is a suggestion of an in-turn or possibly cross-banks, like those of the outer defences of the hillfort on Bredon Hill in Worcestershire. The Dyke Hills are overlooked by Sinodun Camp, another hillfort perched on an isolated chalk eminence above the Berkshire bank of the Thames .

4.1.2 Binditch (Sutton's 'List A' item 2)

This large enclosure of 58 acres, also called Bozedown Camp, is essentially a plateau fort, though its southern side make use of the chalk scarp which fall, towards the Thames. The univallate defences have suffered badly from ploughing, but are best preserved in the woods at the north-east and north-west, where the bank at its highest stands 2m above the interior. Outside the ditch at the northwest there is a possible counterscarp. There is a gap at the sharp north-western corner, but the original entrance may well be in the destroyed section on the eastern side. The interior has been extensively ploughed.

In 1953 a cutting through the north-eastern defences found the ditch to be of a wide V shape about 3m deep. Fragments of Iron Age pottery and part of a shale bracelet were recovered from the lower fill.

4.1.3 Cassington Mill Big Ring (Sutton's 'List A' item 3)

This was a fairly circular example reckoned to have measured about 13 acres, on a light eminence in the Thames gravel plain. It is known from Major Allen's air-photographs, showing the crop-mark of a broad enclosure ditch with the possible trace of a bank on its inner lip. The photographs are not informative about the western edge, and it is likely that the defences made use of the high bank of the Evenlode on this side. The air-photographs show a maze of interior features – pits, ditches, sub-circular and rectilinear enclosures, and ring-ditches. Some of the last have been excavated, both within and without the Big Ring,

and those which produced burials or dating evidence, belong to the Bronze Age. The other features are probably connected with occupation, but whether they are contemporary with the fort is generally uncertain. Some have been sectioned and are Romano-British. Moreover the pottery and other finds from the site range from Neolithic to Anglo-Saxon, though Romano-British predominate.

4.1.4 Idbury Camp (Sutton's 'List A' item 4)

A roughly circular plateau fort with the land falling away to both west and east and good all-round views over the Cotswold limestone country. It has univallate defences enclosing about 9 acres. Both the interior and the defences are regularly ploughed. The bank is now slight and best preserved on the sloping ground at the east, and the ditch is just traceable around the larger part of the perimeter.

At the north there is a possibility of a counterscarp, which Allen's air-photograph perhaps confirms. The entrance was seemingly at the north-west.

4.1.5 Ilbury (Sutton's 'List A' item 5)

A pear-shaped contour fort from which clayey slopes fall away in all directions, most steeply to the west. It measures about 6 acres and has univallate defences, whose eastern half is virtually ploughed out, whereas trees and scrub cover the western half.

4.1.6 Madmarston Camp (Sutton's 'List A' item 6)

A contour-fort of an irregular oval shape covering about 5-1/4 acres on a smooth hilltop in clay and marlstone country. The defences consist to the north and east of a bank, ditch and counterscarp bank, but to the south and west are more truly bivallate, consisting of two banks and ditches and a third bank as a counterscarp. The banks have been very much lowered by cultivation. The entrance is at the south, and appears to be oblique with an outer work

4.1.7 Tadmarton Heath Camp (Sutton's 'List A' item 7)

A roughly circular plateau fort on the north Oxfordshire limestone. Its bivallate defences enclose about 5 acres and command good all-round views. The site is crossed by a metalled road, south-east of which the larger part of the fort is now included in a golf-course. The defences are best preserved on the other side of the road, though part of this section has trees and bushes. At its highest the inner bank rises 1.3m above the interior.

4.1.8 Wyfold Castle (Sutton's 'List A' item 8)

A plateau fort of irregular oval shape, covering about 5 acres in the Chiltern beech-woods. The defences are univallate, consisting of a bank reaching in parts a height of almost 2m, a ditch of equal depth, and a counterscarp bank standing 1m high at its highest point. The banks are apparently built of piled gravel. There is a break in the works at the north, where a pond and swampy land substitute. The entrance, which is at the south-west, is a fine oblique example. Trees and undergrowth cover most of the site.

4.1.9 Lyneham Roundabout (Sutton's 'List A' item 9)

A roughly circular plateau-fort on Cotswold limestone with good all-round views and enclosing 41 acres. Its univallate defences are in parts destroyed or badly lowered by a road, quarrying and a plantation. The bank is best preserved at the north-east where it rises 6 ft. above the interior, but the ditch is only visible in the plantation at the west. The gap at the north may represent the original entrance. The interior has been extensively ploughed.

4.1.10 Chastleton Burrow (Sutton's 'List A' item 10)

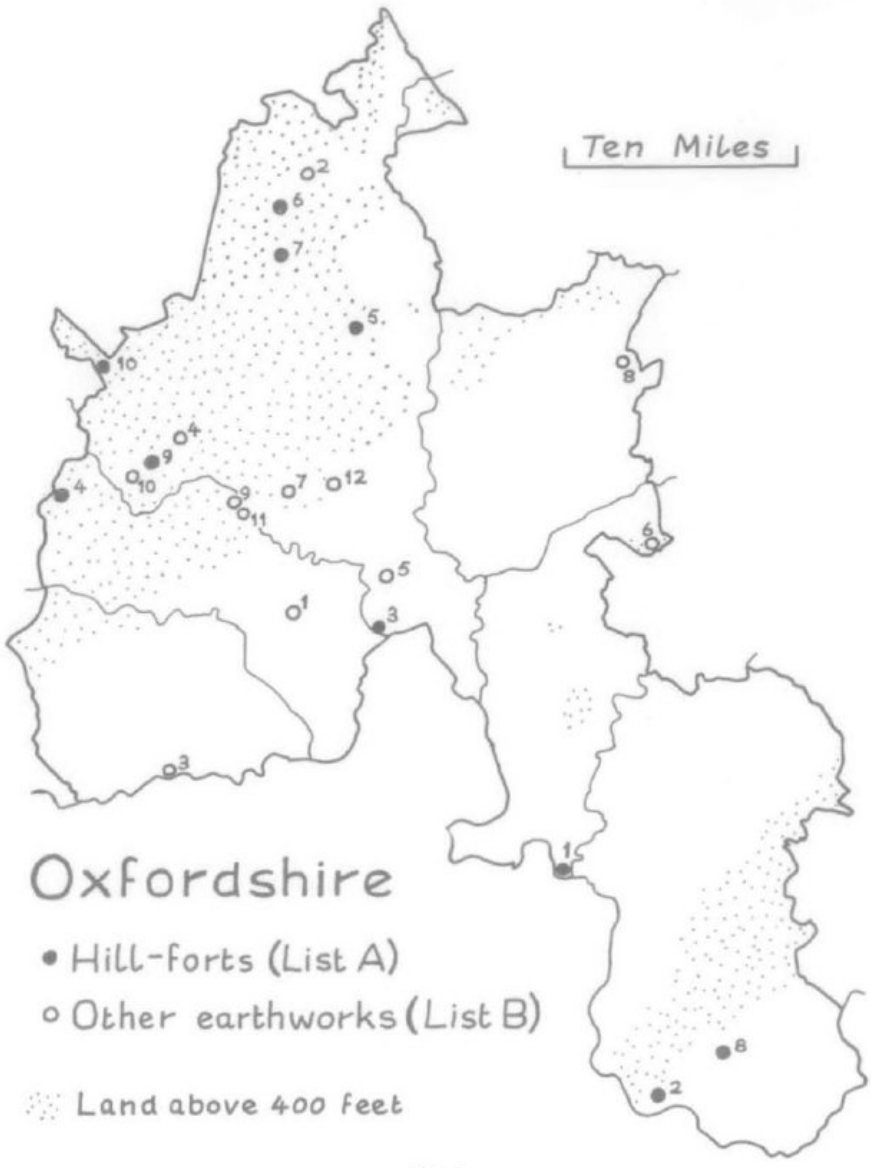
A plateau fort, again in high limestone country, from which the land falls gently in all directions to give good all-round views. Its shape is between square and circular, and it encloses about 31 acres. The defences consist of a single steep-sided bank, now covered with trees and bushes, and standing up to 9 ft. above the interior and 12 ft. above the exterior. There is no definite sign of a ditch. Until recently a

roadway crossed the site, making use of the: two narrow gaps in the bank at the east and north-west. Both of the gaps could be original. The interior has been much ploughed in recent years.

4.1.11 Other possible sites (Sutton's 'List B')

Further possible early sites were identified by Sutton at:

Eynsham Park Camp, Castle Bank, Burroway, Knollbury, Round Castle, The Wilderness (Muswell Hill), Ash Copse Camp, Stuttle's Bank, Cornbury Earthworks I and II, Lyneham Earthwork, and Hark Wood Earthwork.



4.1.12 Oxfordshire Summary

It will be noted that the hillforts of Oxfordshire are chiefly univallate sites, located predominantly on the higher ground in the north-west of the county – ie closely adjacent to the hilltop sites in southern Northamptonshire. Cunliffe has commented on the similarity of the guard-house structures at Rainsborough and further north-west in Cornovian territory – which may imply widespread travel and deliberate copying, or merely a fortuitous simultaneous development of similar solutions – but there is too little data on the Oxfordshire sites to allow very detailed comparison with those in Northamptonshire.

4.2. Warwickshire

Recent work ("*An Archaeological Resource Assessment for the Middle Bronze Age to Iron Age in Warwickshire and Solihull*", Palmer, 2002) admits that "few of the 17 or so hillforts in the region have been examined in much detail and only the defences of Nadbury can be reliably dated at 400 - 600BC", adding that "we know next to nothing about the hillforts of Warwickshire and Solihull, a deficit in understanding that is unlikely to be remedied in the development control process, as nearly all are prominently positioned in the 'green belt'. This is a serious deficit that must be addressed if we are to move forward our understanding of their potentially pivotal relationship to the wider region. Exploration of these sites, located as they are between the hillfort dominated landscapes of the south and west and the 'open country' of the north and east, could make a suitable project for academic research".

Of the known hillforts in Warwickshire, the following are the best known:

4.2.1. Burrow Hill Camp, Corley

This hillfort was excavated 1923 and 1926.

Corley camp is rectangular in plan with external dimensions of approximately 210m north west-south east and 190m north east-south west. The defensive earthworks of the site include intermittent traces of a rampart and ditch and, along the northern edge of the site, traces of a counterscarp bank. At the north east edge of the hillfort the rampart and ditch are visible as earthworks, measuring 10m wide and 6m wide respectively. Quarrying has destroyed the defences at the northern corner of the site and sections of the north east counterscarp bank. There is little surface evidence for defences along the north west edge of the hillfort and the ground surface falls away steeply beyond the edge of the site. The south west rampart is visible as a slight break in slope and is thought to have been been levelled and spread by ploughing. The ditch in the south west part of the site has been infilled but will survive as a buried feature. The best preserved sections of the site's defences are situated along the south east edge of the site, where the rampart measures up to 1.8m high. An excavation at the site has indicated that the rampart was constructed of earth and rubble and revetted with a well-built dry stone wall and wooden tie-beams. The outer edge of the rampart was further strengthened with timbers set at right angles to the face of the wall. An excavation at the north west edge of the hillfort located a possible original causeway entrance into the site's interior. The hillfort earthworks enclose an area of approximately 3ha. The ground surface falls considerably towards the south west and gradually becomes more level. An excavation within the northern part of the interior in 1923 recovered traces of possible hut circles defined by collapsed stone walls. Finds recovered from the site during excavation include large quantities of flint flakes and fragments of pottery dated to the Iron Age and Romano-British period.

4.2.2. Wappenbury

Late Iron Age univallate hillfort; Neolithic artefacts also found.

4.2.3. Barnmoor Wood Camp, Wooton Wawen

Earthwork remains of an Iron Age univallate hillfort with a strongly fortified entrance located at the west.

4.2.4. Meon Hill, Upper Quinton

At an elevation of 194m on the flat top of a hill conspicuous for miles around (and positioned midway between and quite close to both the Fosse Way and Buckle Street, both of Roman date). Originally the hill was encircled by a double (ie multivallate) line of defences. In 1906 these were best preserved on the SW and SE. On the E the rampart had been levelled by ploughing and a gap in the W is probably the result of a landslip. At the SE the ditch/bank is up to 4.6m deep. In 1906 the interior was divided up into a N (ploughed) and a S (unploughed) field. Many artefacts were found in the ploughed interior. These included Neolithic/Bronze Age finds and fragments of 'Neolithic' - probably actually Iron Age - pottery. In 1824 a large hoard of 394 currency bars was found. Romano British finds have also been made along with three ?Iron Age whetstones. An excavation was carried out in 1906. On the summit of the hill in

undisturbed grassland were six or so slightly saucer-shaped depressions 4.3m to 6m in diameter. One of these was excavated and proved to be a hut.

Further excavations were undertaken in 1922. Much Romano British and earlier pottery was found, and one or two pieces of bronze and flint.

This is a major hillfort of impressive proportions. There is a fine entrance in the W face, but a break in the S defences seems quite modern. The ramparts enclose 10.4 ha. Around the S side is a double-ditched rampart with a counterscarp. On the E the ramparts have been completely ploughed away. On the N there is a single bank and ditch. On the NW slope all the defences have been destroyed by landslipping. There are two possible entrances on the E and NW - the latter could be modern. Today the whole of the interior is under plough and there are no traces of the pit dwellings. The finds are in Cheltenham Museum and include Neolithic and Bronze Age material. Iron Age finds include a rotary beehive quern on the surface at the SE corner of the S field. Field walking of the interior produced a sparse scatter of Iron Age pottery, animal bone, fired clay/daub, fire-cracked pebbles and possible sling stones. Pottery is uniformly shell-tempered. A Saxon burial has also been found.

4.2.5. Oldbury Camp, Hartshill

The camp crowns a rocky elevation 180m high. In the centre lay a Georgian mansion. The site has a commanding position, overlooking the vale of Leicestershire. The camp is oblong, enclosing about 3 ha. The ramparts are well preserved on three sides and consist of a single bank about 6.5m broad at base and 2m high. Outside this is a ditch, well-marked to the NW and also evident to the SW. There are now three entrances.

In 1949 trenching was conducted in advance of construction of a reservoir. Trenching to NW of site of Oldbury Hall produced no archaeological traces. To the NE a trench was cut through the rampart revealing construction of diorite rubble held on inside by a line of heavy packing. Also possible internal quarry hollows and a small ditch. A trench was also dug on the SW. One side of the camp is missing. Two mid-side entrances are evident. The NW entrance is not original, but the E may be. In the two cuttings the ditch was steep-sided with a narrow flat bottom. A flint chip came from a ditch near the N corner. Photographs from the excavation are in the FI file.

In 1973, test pits were excavated in advance of further reservoir construction, but produced no features or finds. A deep diorite quarry has been dug to the N and NW of the monument and the NW bank and ditch have been badly damaged.

4.2.6. Nadbury Camp, Ratley and Upton

Nadbury Camp is a seven-hectare multivallate Iron Age hillfort in south Warwickshire. The defences survive on all sides but are in varying states of preservation. A small excavation on the northern defences revealed a glacis type rampart constructed on a stone platform with a rear kerb of large stones, and no evidence for a defensive ditch on this side. The front face of the rampart had been destroyed at this point by quarrying. Pits of both pre- and post-rampart date were also revealed. The assemblages and radiocarbon dates suggest a date of construction for the rampart sometime within the central two centuries of the first millennium BC. Geophysical survey work indicates the survival of considerable occupation evidence in the interior of the site.

4.3. Leicestershire

Only four IA hilltop fort sites are known in the Corieltavi territory (which included modern Leicestershire and parts of southern Derbyshire). Of these, the three most prominent are:

4.3.1 Burrough Hill

Burrough Hill, about five miles south of Melton Mowbray, is Leicestershire's largest hillfort. It is thought by some that this enclosed, 12-acre site was once the ancient capital of the Corieltavi (Coritani). Many of Britain's hillforts were the political, economic and social centres for the surrounding area, and all the indications point to Burrough Hill as having had this sort of prestige in Iron Age Leicestershire.

Situated on an ironstone ridge in the east of the county, Burrough Hill offers commanding panoramic views across both the Wreake and Soar river valleys and right across Charnwood Forest, with a viewshed to other important Iron Age sites such as Breedon.

Burrough Hill has been occupied by humans since the early Bronze Age, approximately 4,000 years ago. However, it was during the Iron Age that the area was at its most powerful and influential. The fort occupied the 690ft-high hill and today the long inturned defensive wall (or rampart) is still visible, circling the perimeter of the site. The original entrance to the fort was in the south, and is seen today as a gap in the defences. Here the ramparts were turned inward, to form a tunnel leading into the centre of the enclosure. Evidence of a huge double-gate has been unearthed along with a guard chamber. Archaeologists have even uncovered a section of the original cobbled roadway which led through the gates.

The current road from Somerby to Burrough Hill runs in a straight line towards the hill-fort's gateway, and so could be a possible Iron Age or Roman road, like the Fosse Way. Archaeologists have found some good examples of Iron Age 'beehive' querns, used in cereal production. Excavations of storage pits have even revealed remnants of Iron Age domestic waste, with a variety of artefacts such as broken pottery and bone fragments. A spectacular find came from a 19th century excavation – a crouched skeleton, dating from the Iron Age and unmoved since death, was found in the fort's perimeter ditch holding a short sword – presumably an attacker who failed to breach the defences. He was joined by a further two skeletons after a dig in 1935. More recently, a rare Iron Age chariot burial was excavated on the site.

4.3.2 Breedon-on-the-Hill

Breedon-on-the-Hill is in north-west Leicestershire, between Coalville and Melbourne, in Derbyshire. The original form of the hill is now almost completely destroyed by the vast amounts of quarrying in the immediate vicinity.

Breedon's oldest relics are several stone axes with a proposed date of about 3,000 BC. With easy access to the river valleys of both the Soar and the Trent, and a 360-degree panoramic view of the neighbouring lands, Breedon was a natural vantage point and a natural obstacle for enemies. The people who occupied this 400ft-hill are likely to have continued into the Bronze Age – there was certainly a structure which stood on the hill before the main hill-fort enclosure. However, Breedon's heyday was the Iron Age at approximately 300 BC. It is around this time that the hillfort seems to have been constructed, to make the hill a strategic, defensive settlement using a combination of ditches and ramparts. There is clear evidence

of localised work on the rampart, implying that the fort was always kept in good repair. Two skeletons were excavated in the boundary trench.

Sadly, quarrying has now removed more than half of the original hillfort structure and excavations have been limited. During the Iron Age Breedon was a major producer of a distinctive pottery type – Ancaster-Breedon Ware. The same type was also found at Burrough Hill, evidence of a possible trading route. Cereal was also produced at Breedon, proved by a find of some 20 corn grinders, an unusually high figure for any Iron Age site. Another unique aspect to Breedon is that the occupants may have also had a system of religion; a rare miniature bronze oval shield has been found which archaeologists often associate with Iron Age religious enclosures.

4.3.3 Beacon Hill

Beacon Hill offers spectacular views over both the river valleys of the Soar and the Trent. Standing at a height of 813ft, this site's history dates back to the late Bronze Age. In 1858 – a Late Bronze Age metalworker's hoard was discovered, including two spearheads, a looped socketed axe and a socketed gouge. A bronze axe mould and a bronze bracelet were also found in a nearby location. Unfortunately no major excavation has ever taken place here, the above finds were all discovered by chance.

The axe mould that was found shows that the hill may have been a bronze production site. Excavations could confirm this and, like the spectacular bronze bracelet, many more artefacts might be brought to light. All the known artefacts are from the same period of time, and it is safe to assume that this hill-fort was first built in the late Bronze Age, predating Leicestershire's two other prime hilltop sites. The defences do appear slighter than the classic Iron Age hill-forts of Burrough Hill and Breedon, but they may perhaps all have been occupied together during the same era.

The bank and ditch of the hillfort is near the top of the hill, and can be easily traced for about two thirds of the perimeter. The remaining third was made up of natural outcrops of rock. Archaeologists admit that although all the finds are from the late Bronze Age, there is no way of knowing when the earthworks were constructed. The actual beacon tower which stood on the highest part of the hill has long since disappeared.

4.4. The Wessex Hillforts Study

It is worth mentioning the fact that the polygonal sites at Thenford and Chipping Warden (and elsewhere in Northamptonshire?) are further examples of a common form of construction seen in many of the forts in the Wessex Hillforts project. (NB: The RCHME report on Chipping Warden incorrectly assigns the polygonal shape of Arbury Banks as being caused by the re-shaping action of medieval ploughing!)

The Wessex Hillforts Project report comments (p112) "It is clearly noticeable that the rampart is constructed in short, straight lengths with markedly angular and abrupt changes in alignment. This feature is widespread and can be seen at many sites in Wessex and beyond; notably Figsbury Rings, Yarnbury, Fosbury and Chiselbury – all in Wiltshire; Segsbury, Oxfordshire, Ladle Hill in Hampshire (an unfinished hill-fort) and Perborough Castle in Berkshire."

A more complete list of Wessex hillforts of marked polygonal construction includes:

Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle, Letcombe Regis; Uffington Castle, Oxfordshire; Perborough Castle, Berkshire; Bury Hill, Upper Clatford; Danebury, Nether Wallop; Ladle Hill, Great Litchfield Down, Litchfield and Woodcott; Norsebury Ring; St Catherine's Hill Camp, Winchester; Woolbury, Little Somborne/ Stockbridge; Alfred's Castle, Ashbury, Oxfordshire; Barbury Castle, Ogbourne St Andrew, Wiltshire; Castle Ditches Camp, Tisbury; Fosbury, Tidcombe and Fosbury; and Liddington Castle, Liddington.

With this background, it becomes clear that the polygonal constructions at Chipping Warden and Thenford are merely following a practice that was well established across a much wider area.

5. Summary

No analysis of the Iron Age hillforts of Northamptonshire can ignore the prior existence of a substantial Bronze Age settlement pattern in the county. The Iron Age hillforts at Thenford and Rainsborough are based on the sites of previous Bronze Age constructions, as evidenced not only by their constructional details but also by the deposits of Bronze Age goods that have been found on these sites – and Borough Hill Daventry also contains evidence of earlier occupation during the Bronze Age. Recent ground-breaking analysis work, especially that by Deegan and Foard in the splendid Northamptonshire Mapping Project, has commented upon the different emphases during that earlier period, in terms of such aspects as local-area territorial governance, population size and community identity (prior to the emergence of the type of 'large-tribal' identity that was encountered later by the Romans).

The subsequent Iron Age re-occupation and re-use of these earlier sites, and the construction of multiple new sites, has been examined as part of the work of this report, and earlier sections of the report comment in detail upon this and offer some suggestions regarding purpose and function. Some rather more generalised comments may also be made, and these are summarised below.

5.1 State of earthwork preservation

Relatively few of the Northamptonshire hillforts have survived in a sufficiently complete state to allow very much to be said about their original construction. In general, therefore, it has not been possible to examine or respond to many of the highly detailed questions posed in the Hillforts Atlas questionnaire with which we were asked to work – for example, the many pages of questions about the number and nature of boundary walls, styles of entrances, hornworks etc.

Detailed excavations of specific areas at Rainsborough and at Hunsbury Hill, trial excavations on what remains of the Guilsborough hillfort, a programme of trial excavations over a wide area at Whittlebury, and the relatively ill-preserved remains at Borough Hill Daventry, probably represent the best of the archaeological evidence for Northamptonshire. At other sites in Northamptonshire, such as Castle Yard (near Farthingstone), Crow Hill (Irthlingborough), Thrapston, Thenford, and Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden), there is comparatively slight evidence from what remains of the hillfort itself, and/or there has never been a detailed programme of archaeological investigation of the site in question – and in these cases, it has been necessary to look at the wider area around the hillfort site in order to elicit clues about the possible nature and function of the site.

Our individual survey reports have included summarised descriptions of whatever 'hard' archaeological evidence has been gathered – but in the event, we feel that our most worthwhile observations have been contained in the final section of the questionnaires, under such headings as 'Other Comments', where we have tended to look at the hillfort within the context of its surrounding topography, underlying geology, proximity to known trade/communication paths, water sources, etc.

5.2 Possible causative factors for the emergence of hillforts

The era in which the majority of Northamptonshire's Iron Age hillforts were first constructed (6^{th}/5^{th} centuries BC) coincides with the appearance of distinctive regional pottery styles in Britain. This seems to be potentially more than mere coincidence – and it has been interpreted by Cunliffe as denoting the time when the major tribal identities probably began to emerge in Britain. If this hypothesis is correct, it must have very significant consequences in terms of how we interpret the origins and purposes of Iron Age hillfort construction. It also seems likely that the apparent steady rate of population increase from Bronze Age to Iron Age may have been a key factor in promoting the emergence of distinct regional identities.

Archaeological evidence has shown that as early as the 5^{th} century BC there was sophisticated iron smelting by tapped-furnace technique at Castle Yard near Farthingstone; and the smelting furnaces at

Hunsbury Hill were also coming into operation at that period. These early dates, soon after the estimated construction dates for these hillforts, suggest that their sites may have been specifically chosen and constructed with the deliberate intent to work the seams of ironstone in those locations. Indeed, the fact that more than half of all Northamptonshire's hillforts are located on easily-mined surface outcrops of Northants Sand and Ironstone is suggestive of a common intent during the 6th/5th centuries BC to extract and work iron.

The creation of a sophisticated production sequence of ancillary technologies (including ore mining, charcoal-burning, preparatory ore-roasting hearths, the development of specialised clay-based refractories capable of withstanding the high temperatures involved in iron smelting, high-draught forced-air smelting furnaces and tapping hearths, etc.) would have required a large dedicated labour force and significant technical specialisation – and this in turn would require a large support community involved in farming and stock-rearing in order to maintain such a labour force. As a consequence, it seems likely that iron production would have developed as a seasonal task whenever there was sufficient leisure from the demands of the farming year. The accelerated population increase during the Iron Age, mentioned above, may also be seen in this context as an enabling factor to support the hierarchy of specialised technology that was developed during the Middle Iron Age – indeed, it is likely that, without such an increase in population, it would not have been possible either to develop or to support such a specialised technological advance.

5.3 Trade and commerce

In purely geological terms Northamptonshire, with its abundance of surface outcrops of iron-bearing rocks, would certainly have been a net exporter of iron products during the Iron Age. The existence of iron-working sites at Castle Yard and Hunsbury Hill, with an early trade-route linking the two sites directly with the river Nene, taken together with the likelihood that there was early iron production at other sites such as Corby and Gretton that would probably have made use of the river Welland as a transport route, all combine to point to the importance of river transport for exporting any serious quantities of these relatively heavy products.

When the overall grouping of hillfort sites is considered, it is clear that the Nene in particular would have been a major transport highway, with the sites at Hunsbury Hill, Crow Hill and Thrapston together providing continuous lookout and monitoring over about 40km of the river's course. However, the river Welland should not be overlooked in this consideration – and it seems likely that it may have been navigable up-river as far as Gretton in the Iron Age (although subsequent extensive silting and recent 20th-century river-diversion work has led to the Welland becoming now little more than a stream at Gretton).

In addition to these river-based transport routes, a number of overland routes are suggested in this report (and particularly in the appendix to the report), which not only linked many of the Northamptonshire hillfort sites but extended over long distances into other tribal territories. In order to be able to function, it is evident that such long-distance trade routes must have enjoyed special significance with, and protection by, all the tribes through whose territories they passed.

5.4 Spiritual and social factors

It may also be relevant to comment here upon the emergence and influence of patterns of spiritual belief and worship. For instance, recent excavation work on many sites in west Northamptonshire indicates the widespread use of eastward-facing doorways in Iron Age roundhouses, which appears to indicate widespread sun-worship across the area – the due-east doorway being positioned specifically so as to view the rising sun; if the objective had been to ensure maximum lighting within the roundhouse, the doorways would have been located facing south-east or south (NB: Cunliffe notes a different tradition in some other regions, such as a south-east facing doorway – presumably to make best use of available daylight rather than as a purely spiritual statement). Additionally, a focus on watercourses is evident, both

as regions of spiritual significance, as transport/trade routes, and in terms of establishing boundaries between adjacent groups – examples of this can be cited at both Arbury Hill (Badby) and Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden), and the Nene Valley forts are a further example.

Archaeological evidence has shown that Iron Age British religion did not need images of their gods in human or animal form. Funeral ritual probably most often involved allowing the body to decay naturally, rather than either burial or cremation. However, at different times a few parts of Britain did break with this tradition, and burial and cremation were practised. Britons did not worship in temples or special religious buildings – instead, the available evidence indicates that they worshipped on the farm or out in the landscape. Rivers, lakes and bogs were the sites of offerings of weapons; animals and everyday objects such as pots, querns and tools were offered at houses and farmyards, while offerings of torcs or chariot harnesses were made at land away from farms.

Despite this, the site at Arbury Hill (Badby) seems to be of special interest among the hilltop sites of Northamptonshire – not only is it the highest point in the county, but three major rivers (Nene, Leam and Cherwell) all have their sources within 1km of the hill; and in addition, the hilltop is crowned with what appears to be a massive prehistoric fortification (though in reality it is highly likely that its shape and form are purely geological in origin, caused by progressive land-slippage); these factors would have combined to make this hilltop an object of awe and reverence to early inhabitants of the area, and this report concludes that it may well have served a ritual/spiritual function during the Iron Age.

It may also be relevant to comment here on the stratification of Iron Age society during the two centuries prior to the Roman invasion (as a result of increasing population density across the entire country, and the steadily increasing size of individual settlements), with the emergence of local chieftains, spiritual leaders or priests, and the warrior-cult, as essential components of the social structure of each Middle/Late Iron Age community. It also seems inevitable that the technological advances in the various techniques associated with production of iron, as referred to above, would have created a caste of workers endowed with secret and 'magical' powers, which would have been not only a source of awe but also something to be jealously guarded by each tribal group.

5.5 Aspects of viewshed analysis

One factor that emerged, when comparisons were made between the various individual hillfort reports, was that some of the hillfort sites appear to have been developed even though they did not possess a complete viewshed – and in fact, they were vulnerable to attack from those points of the compass where their viewshed was limited.

There are two obvious examples of this type of hillfort in Northamptonshire – namely, at Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden) and at Whittlebury.

At both of these sites, it would have been necessary to establish a secondary adjacent site from which an adequate viewshed could be obtained over those points of the compass where the view from the 'main' hillfort site was inadequate. At Arbury Banks, the auxiliary viewpoint would have been from nearby Warden Hill (NB: the place-name evidence seems supportive of this interpretation). At Whittlebury, the auxiliary viewpoint would have been at nearby Old Tun Copse (and here too, the place-name evidence encourages such an interpretation).

A third possible instance of this use of supplementary viewsheds may be seen at Borough Hill Daventry, where the survey team has identified two possible 'satellite' sites close to the main hillfort site, which provide complementary line-of-sight vision over stretches of the adjacent countryside that are not clearly visible from within the main hillfort.

It would be interesting to know whether this concept of 'complementary viewsheds' has been noted in the reports for any other counties in this hillfort survey.

5.6 Some developments in the Late Iron Age

This study has also considered the disruptive effect of the Catuvellaunian advances of the mid- and late-1st century BC, which included the annexation of most of Northamptonshire. Particular aspects of this advance, in terms of its effect upon Northamptonshire's hillforts, include:

Construction of the dozen or so 'Wootton-Hill type' defended hilltop enclosures in the period 30BC-25AD, which this report suggests was an essentially defensive response from the Corieltauvi to the continued Catuvellaunian advance. The fact that all but one of these enclosures were on the north side of the river Nene also suggests that the Corieltauvi were forced to relinquish control of the important river traffic on the river Nene to the Catuvellauni, along with the best sources of iron ore; however, the Wootton-Hill type line of enclosures may perhaps have been part of an attempt to preserve Corieltauvian control of the remaining iron ore sources in the Corby/Gretton area, along with a route for river transport of finished iron goods via the Welland.

By the first century BC, the most easily accessible deposits of iron ore at Castle Yard may have been worked out, but the fact that the Romans subsequently focused heavily on iron working in the Corby/Gretton area implies that the iron workings there were far from exhausted – and the same can be said of Hunsbury Hill, where iron-ore quarrying resumed in the 1800s.

Agreement upon a newly-defined border, stretching southwards from Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden) along the course of the Cherwell, which can be seen in the light of this report as a more open and pragmatic response from the Dobunni to the Catuvellauni (and later evidence during the Roman period indicates that the Dobunni and Catuvellauni went on to develop strong trading relationships with each other).

This latter point also serves to emphasise the long-term nature of the trading point at Arbury Banks, with its proximity to the Welsh Lane and evidence (cited earlier in this report) that this area had probably served as a trading/communication point more or less continuously from the Neolithic period right through to the Roman period. It also underlines the importance that was accorded to long-distance overland trading/communication routes, and the special protection that may perhaps have been granted, by common agreement, to trade paths.

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Appendix 1: Notes on Early Trade Paths and Communication Routes (D. Hayward)

The main text of the Hillforts report refers in several places to the suggested existence of prehistoric routes and trackways linking the various sites.

Any attempt at detailed research into this topic is obviously fraught with difficulties and uncertainty, owing to the lack of any contemporary records and the extremely ephemeral nature of any such early pathways. All that we have to guide us is a collection of disparate documentary accounts created by historians and antiquarians (mostly dating from the early-modern period), plus early maps from the 1600s and 1700s, the work of more recent Romano-British trackway specialists such as Margary, evidence derived from placename study and 9th century Saxon charters, first-edition Ordnance Survey 6" early maps for Northamptonshire and the neighbouring counties dating mostly from the 1880s, and of course the modern highly detailed OS map, and not forgetting Google Earth and its valuable archive of historical overhead photographs dating back to 1945.

However, with such aids, plus outdoor fieldwork to survey possible speculative routes, and backed by a knowledge of the locations and natures of relevant prehistoric monuments (thanks to the excellent MapInfo databases maintained by each county HER department), a surprising amount of detail can be revealed, allowing suggested routes to be proposed on the basis of viable evidence.

This appendix (which is part of a larger ongoing research project by CLASP into early routes and trackways) indicates some suggested prehistoric routes that appear to link many of the hilltop fort sites covered in the main body of this hillforts analytical report.

Rainsborough Camp, nr Aynho

This site appears to be well connected to ancient routes, being directly served by an ancient footpath from a settlement named Walton (i.e. "the settlement of the Welsh [British] people") some 3km to the west.[i] At Walton this footpath intersects with an ancient Port-way that leads from the south, probably from Oxford and with connections to Dorchester via Akeman Street, thence to Dorchester on Thames, and probably beyond to Silchester, and the routes from there that connect to other ancient sites in the southern region.[ii iii iv]

It is appropriate to note that the above-mentioned Port-way appears to link a series of hillforts and other prehistoric and early Romano-British features both in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire, and that it is noted by various early antiquarians including Camden in his map of Oxfordshire and Bridges, Baker and Morton in their various histories of Northamptonshire.[v] Where relevant, this connection will be shown against each hillfort mentioned in the ensuing list. It also appears that this route maintained its significance into the post Romano-British era (as evidenced, among other items, by a series of C5/C6 burial sites along its length in Northamptonshire at Marston St Lawrence, Newnham and Welton).[vi]

It should also be noted that the footpath from Walton to Rainsborough Camp may perhaps be projected through the site to the north-east, to join the road from Kings Sutton to Evenley. In the opposite direction, there is some evidence that this road may connect in the west to Great Rollright. At Great Rollright the prehistoric route from the south-west to the north-east (commonly referred to by historians and antiquarians as the 'Jurassic Way', and not to be confused with the more modern Ordnance Survey long-distance footpath of the same name) splits into (a) a north-easterly route towards Edgehill, Wormleighton and the north side of the River Nene, and (b) a second route heading through Banbury towards Hunsbury and the south side of the Nene. The relevance of these routes to hillforts will be discussed later.

A third route appears to have diverged at Great Rollright and headed in an easterly direction [vii] to cross the Cherwell at Kings Sutton before heading towards Evenley and possibly further to the east (however, the documentary reference source only projects this route as far east as Adderbury). Between Great Rollright

and Adderbury it should be noted that this route passes the hillfort at Tadmarston.[viii] The writer considers however that this route continues to cross the Cherwell Valley at what is now Twyford, then heading through or just to the north of Kings Sutton and on to Evenley. Extensive Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British activity is recorded in the area to the North of Kings Sutton.[ix] Whilst there is not conclusive evidence that this road is a traditionally constructed 'Roman' road[x], it is probably a Romano-British vicinial way with probable prehistoric origins; it proceeds through Dubonnic territory and passes further to the south-west to arrive at a probable inter-tribal ritual trading site at the head of the Ouse at Evenley.

Evenley is discussed in the main report, as one of three probable inter-tribal trading sites. This location has significant coin deposits from at least four Iron Age tribes, the Trinovantes, Dobunni, Corieltauvi and Catuvellauni. This grouping of coins, coupled with other factors (including Evenley's location at the edge of the River Ouse, close to its headwaters and at the interface of three of these tribes), would make it an ideal 'neutral' zone for high status inter-tribal trading together with ritual feasting or similar activity.[xi] [xii] [xiii] [xiv] [xv]

In turn, this would surely have required the existence of significant early trade communication routes to this site, the route from Great Rollright being one such.

Thenford

This hillfort is served by ancient routes lying directly on what is colloquially known as the Banbury Lane (the branch of the historical Jurassic Way that ran from Great Rollright to Hunsbury hillfort to the south of Northampton and probably beyond along the south of the Nene).[xvi]

About 300m to the west of this hillfort, the Banbury Lane is intersected by the previously discussed Port-way that ran from Dorchester-on-Thames. These two major long-distance routes would have provided access to most points of strategic interest to the occupants of the Thenford hillfort.

There is also documentary discussion of a possible early route from the north-west that may have had influence both on the Thenford site and also that of the previously discussed site at Rainsborough Camp.

Arbury Banks, Chipping Warden

Whilst there is no direct evidence of prehistoric trading activity at Chipping Warden, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence to indicate that this would be a reasonable assumption. The name 'Chipping Warden' indicates 'the site of an early market, with a nearby lookout hill', and there are also indications of a pre-Roman tribal boundary between Dubonni and Catuvellauni[xvii] along the course of the River Cherwell south of Chipping Warden. Some eight kilometres to the north of Chipping Warden, at Arbury Hill, there is an area containing the sources of three major rivers each with its own distinct watershed. The Leam flows to the west to join the Warwickshire Avon, the Nene flows to the east and the Cherwell to the south to join the Thames. There is also archaeological evidence just north of the Chipping Warden hillfort of the presence of a Bronze Age smithy close to the route of Welsh Lane which passes just 1km north of the hillfort.

There is also an early Romano-British villa-based and possibly nucleated settlement at Blacklands just east of Chipping Warden along the route of Welsh Lane; and finally, there is a possible Neolithic oval enclosure and trackway on Jobs Hill just to the north of Blacklands. All in all, the area shows ample evidence of peaceful trading activity over a very long period of time.

There is no direct evidence that the previously discussed early routes made direct contact with this hillfort; however it does appear that the locality was served by two of them. Firstly, the south to north port-way that emanates from Dorchester passes close beside Blacklands.[xviii] There would probably have been influence from the Jurassic Way at Chipping Warden via this port-way, both routes having crossed to the south at nearby Thenford. Alternative influence from that ancient route may well have come from its arm that led past Nadbury hillfort to Wormleighton and the east. There is a view that this latter route

turned to the south west past Wormleighton to follow the Welsh Lane towards Hunsbury[xix] [xx] — however the writer does not subscribe to that view. This disparity of views will be discussed further in the section on Castle Yard (near Farthingstone) below.

Castle Yard, near Farthingstone

Castle Yard is situated with the southern side of its rectangular shape lying immediately adjacent to the north-eastern arm of the Jurassic Way. This route in this immediate area is recorded in two Anglo-Saxon Charters as the 'Great Way'.[xxi]

The alignment of the Jurassic Way (or as it is described in Northamptonshire the 'Great Way' or 'Great Road') is for much of its course a ridgeway following the course of high ground and in places the watershed.

One opinion is that the Jurassic Way leads from Nadbury Camp in Warwickshire, via Wormleighton, then turns towards Daventry, possibly in the area of Preston Capes where it joined the route of the Port-way from Dorchester-on-Thames and headed north towards Dodford and Borough Hill at Daventry before turning to the north-east.[xxii] Whilst this view is not disputed here, in all probability the Jurassic Way, as with most ancient routes, was multi-faceted and, whilst following a general sense of direction and purpose, followed various routes to serve seasonal variation, local markets and perceived threats.

Comments made in the Anglo-Saxon Charters concerning the Great Way cannot be ignored — and in fact the Jurassic Way, or at least one of its courses locally, ran further to the east forming a crossroads with the Port-way at Preston Capes. (Interestingly, the route from Nadbury is described as the 'Great Road' and is considered by some sources to be a possible medieval shortening of the route[xxiii] — this later dating seems very unlikely however, considering the known confirmed archaeological evidence of construction and iron working at Castle Yard to the early 5th C BC[xxiv].) To have facilitated the construction of the site and provided the iron-smelting activity there with raw materials and trading outlets, a significant communication route would have been required. In support of the early origin of this area and this route for the Great Way, some 400-500m to the east in the parish of Stowe the Great Way passes via a series of pit alignments, a triple ditch/bank system and an extensive series of prehistoric field systems, hut circles and barrows.[xxv]

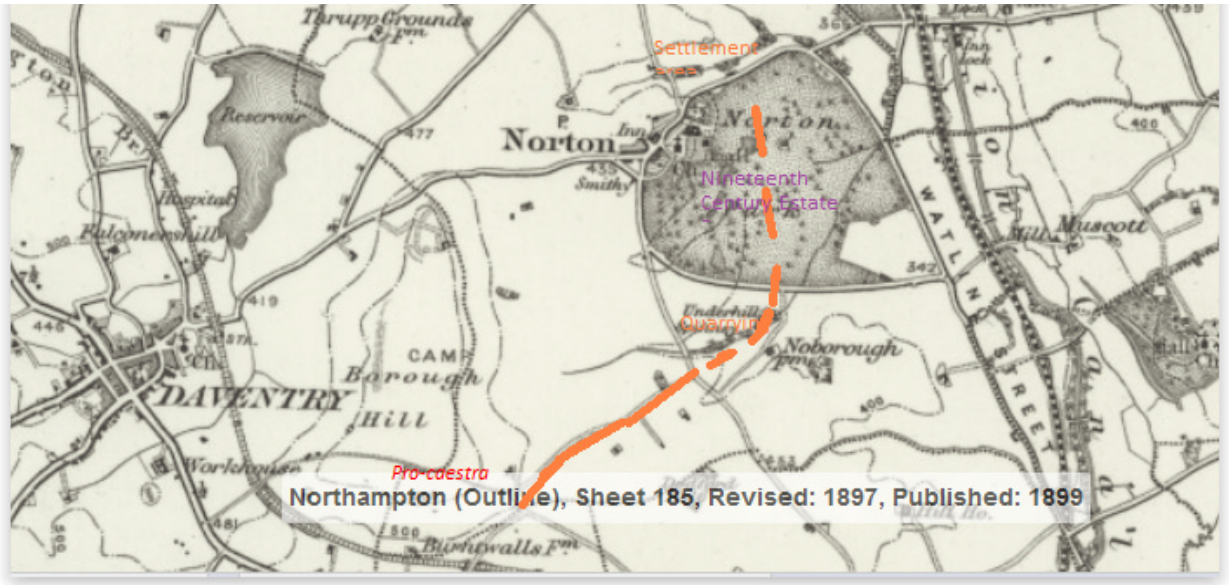
To summarise, it is therefore submitted that Castle Yard is situated on a strategic prehistoric route that facilitated trade over both long and relatively local distances. In the Iron Age, iron and iron products must have formed a significant part of this trade.

Borough Hill, Daventry

The communication routes serving this site appear to focus upon what may have been a 'formal' entrance into the site through the so-called '*pro-caestra*' on its south-east corner.[xxvi] Examination of the early routes onto Borough Hill suggests that there were two other entrance points onto the hill during the prehistoric era – in the north-west corner (possibly linking to 'King Street' – see below), and in the east (possibly serving satellite communities in the near vicinity).

The combined Port-way from Dorchester-on-Thames and a significant element of the Jurassic Way[xxvii] appear to have crossed Newnham Hill, having approached from their point of combination at Preston Capes. As their route continued to Borough Hill they closed to the sole entrance at the *pro-caestra* which provided a closely monitored entrance. As this route leads past the entrance it facilitates approaches to Borough Hill from the north-easterly direction.

There is also evidence of an early route from the north-west (referred to as 'King Street' in documents dating from the 1500s), which probably pre-dated Watling Street.[xxviii] This route would have probably joined the Port-way a short distance to the north of Daventry — it heads directly to the Iron Age hillfort on the north of Borough Hill.



Showing projected route from pre-Romano-British settlement to *pro-caestra* at Borough Hill

Furthermore, there is some evidence of a route from the *pro-caestra* to the nearby Romano-British town of Bannaventa on Watling Street. It is difficult to fully identify this short route because of the effect of early quarrying together with the nineteenth century realignment of local routes by the owner of a large local private estate. By extrapolation of modern footpaths, and with a knowledge of local archaeology, it is conjectured that this route led from the south of the settlement directly to the entrance of the *pro-caestra.*

From the aspect of communication, Borough Hill is well served from all points of the compass with the significance of a single, controlled entrance point from the south, as befits its size and probable significance in the prehistoric landscape.

Whittlebury and Old Tun Copse

These locations appear to be served by an earlier precursor route to the Romano-British road linking Akeman Street with Watling Street (classified as 156a in Margary). This 'Port-way' route starts on the headwaters of the River Thames at what is now known as Dorchester-on-Thames, leading to Alchester near Bicester before heading towards Whittlebury and Lactodorum. As this route turns towards the north-east and Alchester the previously mentioned Port-way leaves Akeman Street and heads towards the north.

Dorchester has several significant pre Romano-British settlements sited within its hinterland and would appear to be the upper limit of navigation for the Thames. There are also early routes heading to the south and south-west.

Whilst there appears to be no direct connection to the Jurassic Way, Whittlebury and Old Tun Copse lies between the courses of its Evenley arm and the arm towards Hunsbury Hill (commonly known as the Banbury Lane). There would have probably been connections to these via now lost footpaths and tracks.

Egg Rings, Salcey

This location is well served by early routes leading to all four points of the compass. Starting with the south there is a documented route from the village of Haversham that appears to have originated from the Watling Street just to the north of Magiovinum near Bletchley. To the north of Haversham this route leads past Hanslope where it divides at Spinney Lodge with the easterly arm heading towards Piddington and beyond, being known as 'The Stone-way'[xxix],[xxx] Before it approaches Piddington it passes within a few metres of the Salcey defended settlements. To strengthen the relevance of this route, consider the role of

an early site at Haversham — situated as it is at the probable limit of navigation on the River Ouse it became an inland port in the Romano-British era. There is significant evidence of Middle and Late Iron Age activity at Haversham, which may indicate some form of port there during the Iron Age, facilitating trade and communication to local settlements including the Eggrings.[xxxi], [xxxii]The indications are that this route ran past Salcey and Piddington to the east, probably towards Irchester, although the earliest documentary dating of this element of the route has not as yet been researched.

The second arm of the route that splits at Spinney Lodge led to Hunsbury and would therefore have provided access to the Eggrings from that direction. As will be seen from the subsequent discussion on Hunsbury Hill, there were other influences from elsewhere that could affect Salcey.

There is a another route (described by an early twentieth century writer), approaching from due west, that extends back to a section of Akeman Street as discussed under the paragraphs relating to Whittlebury. This of course leads back to Dorchester-on-Thames.[xxxiii] In Illustration 1 this route is projected speculatively past the Eggrings towards Irchester. If this supposition is correct, then from Salcey this route would have been identical with that from Haversham, making perhaps a very significant path.

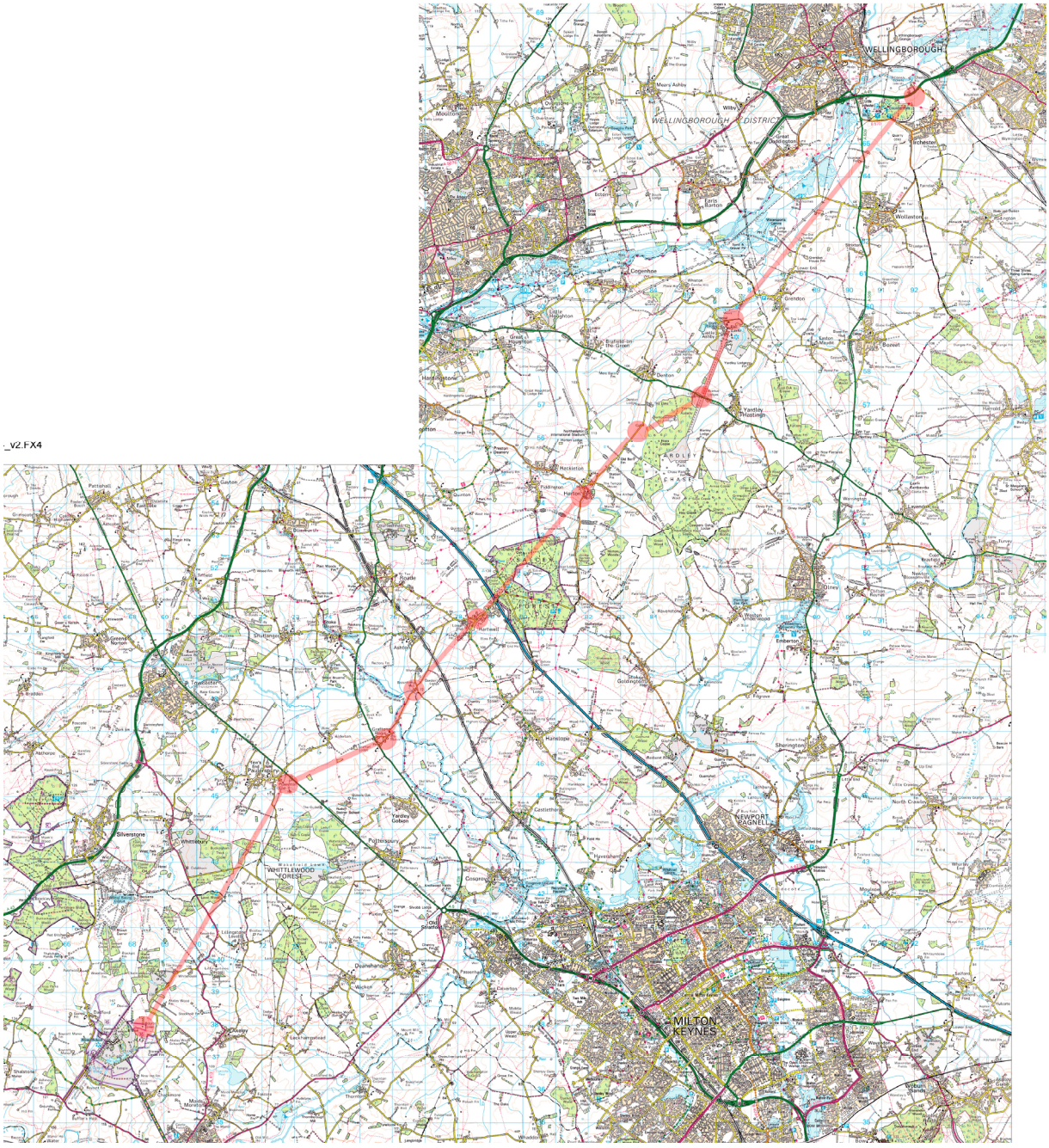


Illustration 1: Showing the suggested route of the Lost Road (A. Marsh)

Another later route has been identified approaching from the north-west, a salt-way from Droitwich. No archaeological work has been done to identify the earliest date of this route but further to the north-west this route is referred to in an Anglo-Saxon Charter and, for part of its route, it is identical with the previously discussed Great Way. It would therefore seem probable that this route has early origins. Stemming from the Great Way, this may have been a route for distribution of iron from known furnaces in the Byfield and Stowe area to the south.

Taken together, these various routes make Salcey and its ditched settlement together with its associated undefended settlement a significant nodal point and a possible trading centre.

Hunsbury Hill, Northampton

Hunsbury would have been a significant point for trading and transport of iron, in all its forms, during the Iron Age.

This site also appears to be well served by significant early routes. The well recorded limb of the 'Jurassic Way' from Great Rollright to the south-west, known locally as Banbury Lane, leads directly to Hunsbury. It seems likely that this route would have continued eastward towards Irchester, however there is no evidence to support this.

There is however a route that may have extended from Hunsbury to the south-east. The route has not been rigorously proved, but from name and direction alone there is good evidence that it may be valid, since the name 'Mere Way' occurs both close to the hillfort and further to the south-east.[xxxiv]

Hunsbury is also directly served from the south by the arm of the route from Haversham, discussed in the paragraphs covering the Salcey Eggrings, which ran to the north-west from Spinney Lodge.[xxxv] There is a view that this route extended to the north-west from Hunsbury to the early settlement at Duston. The latter part of this route would have been difficult to maintain, since this part of the Nene valley was viewed as an obstruction due to regular flooding as late as the nineteenth century.[xxxvi] It would be very surprising if there had not been a direct route to the north from Hunsbury, considering the important early settlement and trading centre two miles to the north-west at Upton/Duston. Additionally this crossing would have provided access to significant lowland settlements at the Bramptons and what subsequently became Bannaventa. In times of flood, access to these locations could have been gained by taking the Great Way to the west and crossing the Nene closer to its source.

To return to the name Mere Way; one possible interpretation is that it may relate to seasonal flooding,[xxxvii] perhaps indicating that it may have led towards the previously discussed flood plain to the north of Hunsbury.

Guilsborough

Of all the locations under consideration this is probably the hardest for which to identify, with any certainty, routes that may have served it in prehistoric times. This may be an example of a site where these ancient routes were in reality nebulous and perhaps varied with season and era. There are strong indications that the historical 'Jurassic Way' ran about 8km to the north-west – might there have been a sub-route that ran much closer to Guilsborough? Currently this cannot be proved or disproved.

Ogilby indicates in his early route maps a nearby route that led from Northampton northwards, but there is no indication that this had prehistoric origins.[xxxviii] However it is interesting to note that archaeologists have noted similarity between the construction of the defences at Hunsbury and Guilsborough.[xxxix]

Conclusion

The hillforts within the western half of Northamptonshire are apparently well served by several ancient routes. What is exciting however is that these routes are linked and seem to indicate a common thrust from the south and south-west into this area. Archaeological evidence is increasingly corroborating this influence at least from as early as the Neolithic period.

A further point that is evident from the examples of Dorchester-on-Thames and Haversham on the Ouse and possibly from the Nene is the possible effect of water-borne communication.

Extensive further research into these and other routes is ongoing and will be reported on in due course.

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Endnotes on the text of the Appendix

[i] OS 1" Seventh Series 1955-61 map
[ii] ibid
[iii] Beesley pp 25-39
[iv] Dryden pp 9
[v] ibid
[vi] Dryden
[vii] Wickham-Steed pp 116
[viii] ibid pp 117
[ix] RCHME Vol 4 pp 92-96
[x] RCHME Vol 4 Appendix pp 177-183
[xi] The significance of Evenley is continued into the Romano-British era as is shown by the finding of very large coin hoards. There are also significant uninvestigated finds of Romano-British building material. It has been suggested that Evenley could be akin to the temple sites of Hayling Island and Heathrow. To strengthen the relevance of Evenley it is considered that these temple sites are situated on or close to inter-tribal boundaries. See endnotes ix, x and xi below.
[xii] Creighton pp 297-300
[xiii] Hodder – in toto
[xiv] Curteis 1996 – in toto
[xv] Curteis 2006 – in toto
[xvi] Hoskins pp 234-5
[xvii] Watts pp650
[xviii] Beesley pp26-27
[xix] Hoskins pp 234-5
[xx] Crawford pp 84
[xxi] Brown and others pp 136
[xxii] Crawford pp 81 - 86
[xxiii] Ibid pp 84
[xxiv] Knight pp 39
[xxv] RCHME Vol. 3 pp 179-182
[xxvi] Scheduling Document
[xxvii] See paragraph on Castle Dykes above
[xxviii] Pers comm G W. Hatton
[xxix] Wolverton 1960 Roman Road Survey Routes 3a and 3b
[xxx] Wetton pp 204
[xxxi] Cotswold Archaeology Report
[xxxii] Archaeology Services Consultancy Report, Section 3
[xxxiii] Green, C .W. in toto
[xxxiv] Wolverton 1960 Roman Road Survey Maps Unconfirmed 'Mere Way'
[xxxv] Ibid – Route 3A
[xxxvi] It has been noted by the writer that proposals to build a railway across this area had warranted the construction of a viaduct from central Northampton to the west of this flood plain owing to the nature of the terrain.
[xxxvii] Cole, pp 40 -Water Supply Along Route-ways (a)
[xxxviii] Ogilby Plate 40
[xxxix] CBA South Midlands pp 37-8