

Interim Report on the Votive Material from Romano-Celtic Temple Sites in Oxfordshire

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SUMMARY

Recent interest in Roman Oxfordshire seems to have concentrated on the pottery industry. Another area worthy of renewed attention is her temple sites, and the votive offerings that have been found there. A number of temples in the modern county of Oxfordshire is known or suspected (Fig. 1). Study of surface finds, aerial photographs and the results of excavation has led to the scheduling of five. At four, Woodeaton, Lowbury, Frilford, and Lees Rest, material that is clearly votive in character has been found. Woodeaton has produced a very large number of finds, mainly of copper alloy: coins, figurines, plaques, bronze letters, miniature weapons, jewellery and much partly worked or waste material. Rather less has come from the probable temple site at Lowbury, but the discovery of coins, a pipeclay cock's head and a series of unusual, probably ceremonial spearheads, together with finds of structural material, indicates its character. The death of the individual whose skeleton was found earlier in the rubble of the robbed-out wall has been given a probable date of between A.D. 591 and 655. Its deposition may now, perhaps, be interpreted as a 'ritual of termination' rather than a 'ritual of commencement'. At Frilford, coins, two possible foundation burials, a sword chape, a model sword and shield, and a ploughshare have been found, and at Lees Rest a small stone head, several pieces of bronze jewellery, some coins and the fragments of the skeleton of a baby. A further site is suspected from finds at Gill Mill, near Ducklington, where a stone relief of a religious character, coins and numerous finds of pottery, bronze and lead have been discovered during recent excavation; a stone relief, set into the wall of a building, which depicts a warrior god on horseback, had been noted at Gill Mill earlier. Many of the finds from the Oxfordshire temple sites are interesting in themselves and their number and character are very varied. Whilst this may reflect differences in the past treatment of the site, and the manner of its discovery and excavation, it also reflects differences in its character, geographical position and importance. There will be no detailed coverage of coins, pottery or bones; all the votive objects are of copper alloy, unless otherwise stated.

Strictly speaking, the term 'votive' means that an object was dedicated as the result of a vow. However, as we have, in most cases, no way of knowing whether a vow had actually been made, all offerings will be considered *ex-voto* here. We know from inscriptions that such offerings were undertaken either as an expression of a vow, desire or wish – or as an offering in gratitude for prayers answered, or vow fulfilled. Votive objects frequently give the earliest indication of a nearby temple or shrine. Often they provide the only indication of possible cult and religious practice, and the extent of the absorption and conflation of classical with native. They also reveal changes in artistic style and contemporary manufacturing techniques. The evidence from coins can suggest current trading practices, and comparison with material from other sites the spread of ideas. Last, but not least, it is frequently votive material that provides vital dating evidence.

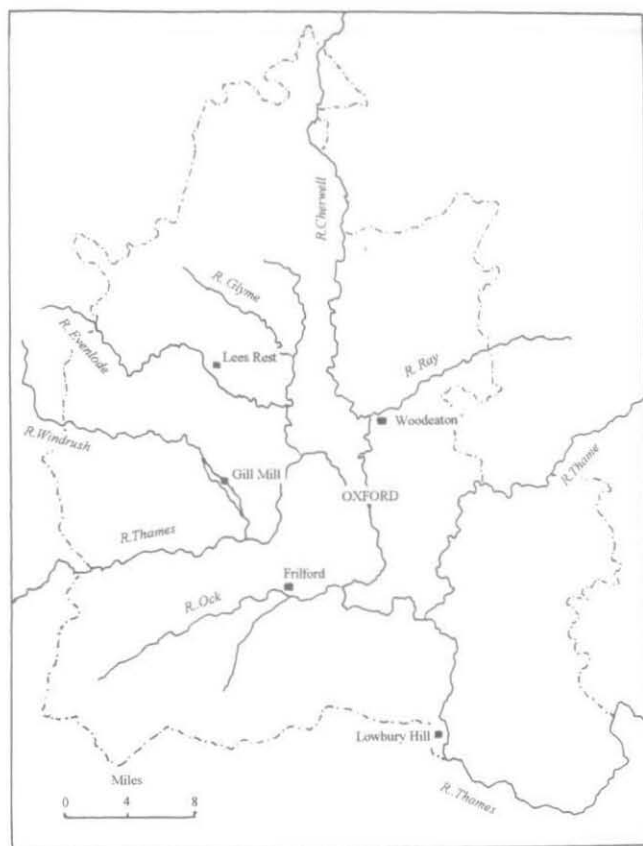


Fig. 1. Sketch map to show sites mentioned in the text.

WOODEATON

Woodeaton is now a small village which lies on the side of a low hill, four miles north-east of Oxford. The temple was of the 'square within a square' type, one of the plans most frequently found in temples of the north-western Roman Empire. It was built on the top of the hill, in the angle now formed by the junction of the road through Woodeaton with the main Wheatley to Islip road. The Saxon charter of Eaton of A.D. 904 refers to a 'coloured floor' (*faga flora*) at Eaton, which may well have been a mosaic, and stray tesserae have, in fact, been recovered as surface finds in the temple area. Unfortunately, it is not certain whether the charter refers to Woodeaton or to Water Eaton, which lies a short distance to the west.¹ Bronze objects and coins have been recovered from Woodeaton from the 17th century. However, the first person to refer to the actual site was Hussey, in 1841. He described how the hilltop had been extensively cleared and levelled when the area was enclosed and brought under cultivation in 1803, and referred to traces of buildings that appeared on the surface, and stone and brick that were constantly turned up by the plough.²

At different times during this century, Woodeaton was believed to have been a centre for bronze

¹ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 299–301.

² R. Hussey, *Roman Road from Dorchester to Allchester* (1841), 37f.

production, a possible villa, the site of a periodic market or fair, a shrine, or a combination of the last two. The large number of coins and small bronze objects discovered as surface finds led to the publication of important articles by Miss M.V. Taylor in 1917, by Mr. J.G. Milne in 1931 and 1933, and by Miss Joan Kirk in 1949.³ Excavation in 1952 revealed the physical plan of a temple of two periods, the earlier of which was dated to the 1st century A.D. by the excavators, Mr. R.G. Goodchild and Miss Kirk. It consisted of a cella 5 m. × 5.8 m. with a clay floor, in the centre of which were three superimposed hearths. Lying on the floor, and sealed by fallen wall-plaster overlaid by the second period make-up, were a coin of Agrippa, struck under Tiberius or Gaius (Caligula), and two fragments of samian ware, one of Vespasianic and the other of Antonine character. Of the second temple, less was visible because of the land clearance of 1803, but the excavators concluded that it probably dated to the mid 2nd century, when the walls of the cella were widened, a stone ambulatory added, and the precincts enclosed by a temenos wall with a gate on the south-eastern side.

Iron Age artefacts, as well as Roman, have been recovered from the hilltop over the years. There was no sign of Iron Age structures under the area of the temple excavated, however, but pits indicating occupation from the Early Iron Age were found close to the east wall of the temenos. This pit area was later re-examined by Professor Dennis Harding, revealing evidence of bronze working and allowing improved dating for occupation – not necessarily continuous – from at least as early as the mid 1st millennium B.C.⁴ Evaluation and trial trenching on Temple Hill by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1992 revealed further evidence of Iron Age features.

The Votive Objects. Images of deities were considered appropriate offerings at temples or shrines and these, and the animals or other attributes associated with them, may give an indication of cult. Two full-length human figurines, two small human busts and five birds were found at Woodeaton. One human figurine in the Museum of London (formerly the Guildhall Museum) is a probability, as is another in the British Museum. This last, and an animal and another bird, form a group of figurines 'found near Oxford' in the 19th century. Few sites in Oxfordshire have produced figurines of their quality, and Woodeaton is considered the likeliest provenance.

The two human figurines that certainly came from Woodeaton are both female, but rather different in style.⁵ One is only 5 cm. high and is naked except for a kilted skirt (Fig. 2). Her head and features are large for her body and short legs, and her hair is strongly waved and drawn back into a ridged bun, showing Celtic love of pattern. On her head is the remains of a crown. She is holding one arm up and the other out to the side and she probably once held something in each of her hands. The style and workmanship of this figure have to be native. A semi-nude figure, with prominent breasts, is likely to have been interpreted as Venus. This was true even when depiction was very different from the classical interpretation seen in the second figure, whom Taylor and Kirk rightly interpreted as Venus (Fig. 3). She is a seated nude, 11 cm. high, with hair that is parted into sections in front and waved and coiled behind. She has a round, flat face with deeply-socketed eyes and a strongly marked dimple on the chin. The base of her nose is broad and flat and both arms are flexed as if to hold objects now lost. The proportions of the body have not been fully understood, but the style here is clearly classical rather than native.

Mention of the figurine which is now in the Museum of London was discovered by Dr. Martin Henig in the printed catalogue of the Guildhall Museum, mistakenly entered as male. She stands 9.5 cm. high. Her head and heavy features are large and a crown secures her hair, which is drawn back into a bun. Her chest is flat and her short legs hidden by a chiton; a himation is draped around her body. Her right hand holds out a patera which suggests she may have been a worshipper or, alternatively, a personal *juno* (the female equivalent to a *genius*).⁶ The patination is similar to that of other bronzes from the site, and the treatment of her features and the folds of her chiton show some similarity with those of the first figurine, of native inspiration, described above. The figurine from the British Museum is a fully classical, 9.1 cm. high figure of Apollo. His body is very beautiful and his wavy hair drawn back into a chignon. He stands in a relaxed pose, with one leg flexed, holding a *plectrum*, or stick for playing on a stringed instrument, in his right hand.⁷

³ M.V. Taylor, *J.R.S.*, vii (1917), 98–119. J.G. Milne, *J.R.S.*, xxi (1931), 101–9 & pl. XIV; *Nimis. Chron.* xiii (1933), Ser. 5, 81–7 & pl. X. J. Kirk, *Oxoniensia*, xiv (1949), 1–45 and pls. I–VI.

⁴ D.W. Harding, *Excavations in Oxfordshire, 1964–6*, i (Univ. of Edinburgh Dept. of Archaeology, Occasional Paper xv, 1987), 1–25.

⁵ Taylor, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 102–3; Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 31, nos. 1–2, pl. IV, A and B.

⁶ M. Henig, 'A Bronze Figurine possibly from Woodeaton in the Guildhall Museum, London', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvi (1971), 106–7 and pl. XIX.

⁷ M. Henig and J. Munby, 'Three Bronze Figurines', *Oxoniensia*, xxxviii (1973), 386–7 and pl. XXX.



Fig. 2. Native Venus Figurine.



Fig. 3. Seated Figurine of Venus.



Fig. 4. 'Corner Fitting' Bird.



Fig. 5. Bird on 'Horse-shoe' Stand.

The two small human busts, each 4.8 cm. long, are both somewhat debased representations of Minerva.⁸ They are handles of razors rather than sceptre heads. One still has the remains of an iron blade fixed inside a notch underneath. It is included in a group of razors illustrated in an article by Mr. George Boon⁹ and is very similar to a razor handle from the Chessalls, Kingscote, in Gloucestershire.¹⁰

The 6.8 cm. high, animal figurine from the British Museum is a very frightening, obviously male, squatting carnivore. He is ithyphallic and large in proportion to the unfortunate man he is in the act of devouring. He is possibly a Celtic wolf-god. The details of his mane, which runs the length of both backbone and tail are exceptionally crisp and the figure is well made.¹¹ Examples depicting a similar creature have been found at Fouqueure, in Charente¹² and at Chartres.¹³

The bird from the British Museum has a strong, curving beak and its wings are held close to its sides. A fanlike tail, similar to the tail of a domestic pigeon, protrudes below the wing-tips, although the bird's beak and stance would be at odds with this interpretation. The five other birds have been well described already.¹⁴ However, there is some doubt as to whether the conventional description of them as eagles is correct. The one which has its wings outspread to encase the corner of a box or piece of furniture is fairly realistic (Fig. 4), but has none of the fierce strength of the Silchester eagle.¹⁵ Likewise the bird whose legs merge into a 'horse-shoe' stand has wings which could never extend to the magnificent wing-span of an eagle (Fig. 5). Kirk's third bird looks more like a beady-eyed pigeon or dove, and may possibly have been intended to be a dove, the bird which is associated with Venus (Fig. 6). Its resemblance to the bird in the British Museum was first noted by Mr. David Sturdy, and Dr. Henig and Mr. Julian Munby noted further similarities between this last and one of the two remaining birds, neither of which has any feet or looks at all like an eagle.

Different ways of treating plumage can be observed; details of the feathers are shown by incisions in the metal. In the bird from the British Museum, small 'C-shapes' indicate body plumage and six rows of stripes, the wings. The bird shown in Fig. 4 has feathers that overlap like scales. The bird in Fig. 5 has breast feathers indicated by a pattern of rhythmic parallel curves and a tail shown by stripes. To indicate its folded wings, the bird in Fig. 6 has a rudimentary criss-cross of incized lines, reminiscent of the tail of a bird from Ramsden near Finstock, which has been described as more like a dove than an eagle.¹⁶ It may well be that some of the Woodeaton birds were intended to be doves.

Birds were very much part of the divine world of the Romans, who were awed by the astonishing ability of migrating birds to navigate to the same places at the appropriate season of each year. They were used in the practice of augury, in the belief that they were agents of the divine and mystical world of the gods. As with the animal kingdom, different species have come to be associated with different Roman deities and are seen to have had significance in the cults of Roman Britain. Bird figurines are known from other temple sites in Britain, where they were used, not only as *ex-votos*, but to ornament sceptres and priestly head-dresses.¹⁷ The absence of feet from two of the Woodeaton examples suggests that they once decorated boxes or fittings, but they could, alternatively, have been attached to head-dresses or sceptres.

Mr. Peter Finch has in his possession a tiny, bronze child's foot from Woodeaton, perhaps broken from a little statue of Cupid, and offered on behalf of a child whose foot had been healed. Fragments from statues used for this purpose have been recognized on many sites.¹⁸ The practice of dedication of models of limbs and other parts of the body still occurs in some churches today. Offerings of parts of the body, both models and fragments, are found throughout the Roman world, but not many have been discovered in England; examples found to date include a

⁸ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 40, B1-2 and pl. IV, E and F.

⁹ G. Boon, 'Tonsor Humanicus: Razor or Toilet Knife in Antiquity', *Britannia*, xxii (1991), 21-32, especially 31-2, and fig. 4, g-j.

¹⁰ M. Henig and J. Paddock, 'Metal Figurines in the Corinium Museum, Cirencester', *Trans. of the Bristol and Glos. Archaeol. Soc.*, cxi (1993), 85-93, particularly p. 89 and p. 92 and fig. 3, no. 9.

¹¹ M. Henig & J. Munby, *Oxoniensia*, xxxviii (1973), 386 and pl. XXX.

¹² S. Reinach, 'Les Carnassiers Androphages dans l'Art Gallo-Romain', *Revue Celtique*, xxv (1904), 208-24.

¹³ M. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (1984), 65 & fig. 22.

¹⁴ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 31 and pl. IV.

¹⁵ M. Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain* (1995), 98, 64. I am very grateful to Mr. Peter Finch for allowing me to see this bird and his other finds from Woodeaton.

¹⁶ M. Henig and R. Chambers, 'Two Bronze Birds from Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, xlix (1984), 19-21.

¹⁷ M. Rostovtseff, 'Commodus-Hercules in Britain', *J.R.S.* xiii (1923), 94, nos. 6 & 7; *V.C.H. Cambs.* vii, 84-5, pl. XIV, G; H.M. Gilbert, 'The Felmingham Hall Hoard, Norfolk', *B.B.C.S.*, xxviii (1978-9), 168-70 and 172; M. Henig & K.A. Leahy, *Antiq. Jnl.*, lxiv (1984), 387-9 for sceptre head portraying a bust of Venus with a dove at each shoulder.

¹⁸ Henig, *op. cit.* note 13, p. 155 and fig. 76.

little ivory breast from Harlow,¹⁹ a bronze breast from Uley,²⁰ a bronze breast and a pair of ivory breasts from Bath,²¹ the golden eyes, together with thirty-five representations cut out of plaster from Wroxeter, bronze arms from Lydney and Springhead, and legs from Uley and Muntham Court.²²

Amulets were important as personal bringers of good luck and warders-off of evil. Several have been recognized in the Woodeaton collection. The most interesting is a tiny naked figure in good condition, which stands 2.4 cm. high, on a square base, the hands clasped under the chin. It has a ring for suspension attached to the back of its neck (Fig. 7). The lack of male genitals and the hair rolled at either temple have suggested that it is female.²³ However, it may have been Harpocrates, the son of the Egyptian deities, Isis and Osiris, who is often portrayed with one finger to his lips to warn initiates to keep the secrets of the cult of Isis. This cult became popular when large numbers of Easterners moved westwards in the late Julio-Claudian and Flavian period. The lack of obvious male genitalia would not be surprising in a figure so small. The best parallel is the tiny, crudely made bronze figure, 3.3 cm. long, that was found during excavation of the Chester amphitheatre, where there was a shrine to Nemesis. This example has one hand covering the genital area and does not hold a finger to his lips.²⁴

A small, solid, bulla-shaped pendant with a sunken centre on both sides and a secure ring for suspension was probably an amulet. It is smooth and neatly made, and fits comfortably between thumb and fingertip.²⁵ A similar artefact and a small, broken, horseshoe-shaped object, both in poor condition, and three rather roughly-made items, all with provision for suspension, may have been amulets. There is also a model shaft-hole axehead in the collection. Its blade, which projects at a right angle to the side of a ring of thick metal, splays outwards.²⁶ The diameter of this ring is too wide to house a shaft in proportion to the blade; at the same time, it is too small for even a little finger and would have been uncomfortable to wear. It seems likely, therefore, that it was an amulet. No exact parallel from Britain has been found. One pre-Roman miniature axehead of the shaft-hole type is known from the Meare Lake Village,²⁷ but shaft-hole axes in general are believed to be part of the classical influence which began to appear in Britain towards the end of the Iron Age.²⁸ Two shaft-hole axeheads in which the hole was made through the blade itself, rather than attached as a ring, were recovered at Wanborough (Surrey), from where at least four more axe-heads are thought to have been removed by treasure hunters.²⁹ Other model axehead amulets have been found, but mainly of the socketed type,³⁰ the side loop acting as a ring for suspension. Axehead brooches are known, for instance, the flat, cast, once-enamelled example from Wanborough,³¹ and the enamelled examples from Camerton, Somerset³² and Wicklewood in Norfolk.³³

The axehead described above as an amulet could also have been classed with the large number of model weapons and two model anchors that have been found at Woodeaton. Miniatures were obviously cheaper to make, took up less space and were more easily portable than the full-sized article. But perhaps the actual miniaturization, a feature of many proto-literate societies, was a significant factor here. Some may have been dedicated as an offering appropriate to a particular god; others may have been offered by those who used the full-sized article: soldiers, sailors, farmers, smiths, carpenters, etc. Although a large number has been found on sites with religious associations and from burials, they are known also from purely secular sites and many were probably carried or worn as amulets, as is suggested by the axehead amulet described above.

¹⁹ Richard Bartlett, publication pending. I am very grateful to him for generous help with comparanda.

²⁰ M. Henig, 'Votive Objects: Images and Inscriptions' in A. Woodward & P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire: 1977-9* (1993), 107, 1 & 108, fig. 94, no. 1.

²¹ M. Henig in B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath (ii): Finds from the Sacred Spring* (1988), 8, nos. 4 & 5 & fig. 4, nos. 4 & 5.

²² M. Henig, op. cit. note 13, p. 152, and figs. 74-6.

²³ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 38, A1 & p. 39, fig. 8, no. 7.

²⁴ Hugh Thompson, *Archaeologia*, cv (1975), no. 41 and p. 196, no. 41.

²⁵ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 38, A2 & p. 29, fig. 7, no. 9.

²⁶ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 40, C, 1 & p. 39, fig. 8, no. 6.

²⁷ A. Bulleid & H. St. G. Gray, *The Meare Lake Village*, ii (1953), 224 and pl. XLIX, E76.

²⁸ W.H. Manning & C. Saunders, *Antiq. Jnl.*, lii (1972), 282.

²⁹ M. O'Connell & J. Bird, 'The Roman Temple at Wanborough, Excavations 1985-86', *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, lxxxii (1994), 123, 54 & 55 and 124, fig. 34, 54 & 55.

³⁰ Paul Robinson, 'Miniature Socketed Bronze Axes from Wiltshire', *Wilt. Archaeol. & Nat. Hist. Mag.*, lxxxviii (1995), 60-8.

³¹ O'Donnell & Bird, op. cit. note 29, p. 123, no. 48 and p. 122, fig. 33, no. 48.

³² W.J. Wedlake, *Excavations at Camerton, Somerset* (Camerton Excavation Club, 1958) 231, no. 55 and 232, no. 55.

³³ John Davies of Norfolk Museums Service, pers. comm.



Fig. 6. 'Pigeon-like' Bird.



Fig. 7. Harpocrates Amulet.

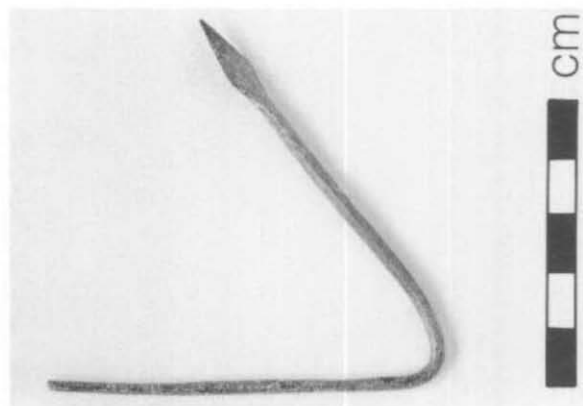


Fig. 8. 'Killed' Model Spear.

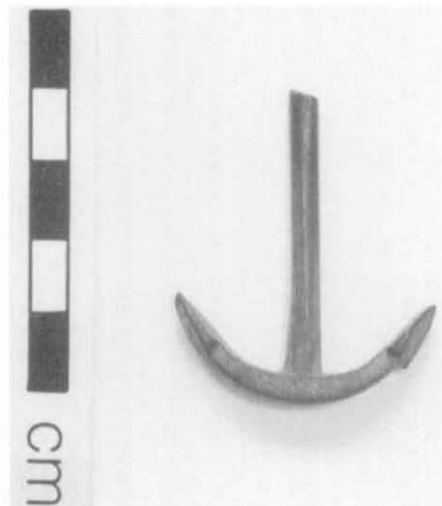


Fig. 9. Model Anchor.

Three models of axes complete with haft have been found at this site.³⁴ Two are of similar form and size, 4.7 and 4.8 cm, their stout hafts of circular section, their ends heavily knobbed and their blades wedge-shaped. Both have incised decoration on either side. One has two incised triangles, point to point, on one side, and zig-zag decoration resembling thonging or stitching on the other. The second axe has, on one side, a swastika, believed to be a solar symbol and, on the other, a vertical line of 'stitching' with a dagger-like cross on the haft, beside it. The third model axe is slightly smaller than the other two, even allowing for a broken haft. It is also a different shape. Both blade and haft are flat and the blade projects some distance behind as well as in front of the haft. This axe has decoration on one side only. Where the blade joins the haft there is a saltire cross formed by several scored lines, again reminiscent of thonging.

Although appearing skeuomorphic, the 'thonging' may be an example of religious symbolism, as the swastika was, and as the saltire cross appears to have been.³⁵ The fact that the actual names of deities were found inscribed on axes from a site in Switzerland³⁶ and that many axes have been found on sites with a religious association suggests that some of the iconography had religious significance. Miniature axes or axehead pins are not all that uncommon: the axe was probably the chief instrument of sacrifice on a sacred site.³⁷ Further examples from religious contexts include an axe from Claydon Pike in Gloucestershire found, unstratified, in topsoil above a circular shrine;³⁸ two from Lamyatt Beacon;³⁹ one from Alchester that may have been purchased at Woodeaton;⁴⁰ one from Brigstock;⁴¹ several from Silchester;⁴² one from one of the temple sites at Wycomb;⁴³ one from Caistor St Edmund;⁴⁴ and the two axehead pins from Lydney.⁴⁵ Many more are known from burials, or from military or civilian secular sites.⁴⁶ A few are known in silver⁴⁷ and bone,⁴⁸ although not from temple sites.

Of the seven model spears from Woodeaton five, including one that is longer than the others, have already been described.⁴⁹ A second long spear, 36.8 cm. in length, with a tip that is formed of crudely flattened wire, has been recognized and another, shorter one with a damaged blade and shaft seen in the collection of Mr. Ron Spice.⁵⁰ Amongst the large quantity of bent pieces of copper alloy wire waste from Woodeaton there are many crude partly-fashioned spears, which suggest that these were made on the spot for sale to visitors to the temple.

Thirteen iron model spears or parts of spears and one of silver were found at Uley.⁵¹ A bronze spear came from the temple site at Harlow⁵² and another from Silchester.⁵³ Four iron ones were found at Lamyatt Beacon.⁵⁴

³⁴ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 39, fig. 8, nos. 3-5 and p. 40, C 2-4.

³⁵ M. Green, 'Model Objects', in 'Excavations at Hill Farm, Gestingthorpe, Essex', *E.A.A.*, xxv (1985), 44.

³⁶ Illust. in H. Wheeler, 'Two Roman Bronzes from Brigstock, Northamptonshire', *Antiq. Jnl.*, lxi (1981), 310 & pl. L.

³⁷ Henig, op. cit. note 13, p. 149.

³⁸ Unpubl. information by courtesy of David Miles and Simon Palmer, of the Oxford Archaeol. Unit.

³⁹ R. Leech, 'The Excavation of a Romano-Celtic Temple and a Later Cemetery at Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset', *Britannia*, xvii (1986), 303, nos. 39 & 40 and 299, fig. 28, 329 & 40.

⁴⁰ M. Green, 'Romano-British Non-Ceramic Model Objects in South-east Britain', *Archaeol. Jnl.*, cxxxii (1975), 62, no. 7 and 67, fig. 2; Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 33 and fig. 8, no. 2.

⁴¹ M.V. Taylor, *Antiq. Jnl.*, xliii (1963), 267, 3b.

⁴² G. Boon, *Silchester: the Roman Town of Calleva*, (2nd. edn., 1974), 156.

⁴³ M.J.T. Lewis, *Temples in Roman Britain* (1966), 47.

⁴⁴ John Davies of Norfolk Museums Service, pers. comm.

⁴⁵ R.E.M. Wheeler & T.V. Wheeler, *Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman, and post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (Res. Rep. Soc. Antiq. of London ix, 1932), 83, nos. 61 & 62; fig. 18, no. 61.

⁴⁶ M. Green, *Small Cult Objects from the Military Areas of Roman Britain* (BAR lii, 1978), 32-3; 'Model Objects from Military Areas of Roman Britain', *Britannia*, xii (1981), 256-8 & fig. 2; *A Corpus of Religious Material from the Civilian Areas of Roman Britain* (BAR xxiv, 1976), 163.

⁴⁷ M. Green, 'Romano-British Non-Ceramic Model Objects in South-East Britain', *Archaeol. Jnl.*, cxxxii (1975), 62-3.

⁴⁸ A.H. Gocks, 'A Romano-British Homestead in the Hambleden Valley, Bucks.', app. VII, *Archaeologia*, lxxi (1921), 196.

⁴⁹ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, pp. 40-1, nos. 6, pp. 8-11 & fig. 8, no. 13; fig. 9, no. 1 and pl. III, D1 (D2 not found).

⁵⁰ I am very grateful to Mr. Spice for allowing me to see his collection.

⁵¹ M. Henig, 'The Votive Objects: Weapons, Miniatures, Tokens, and Fired Clay', in A. Woodward and P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire: 1977-9* (1993), 131 and fig. 110; 132, nos. 1-14.

⁵² N. E. France & B.M. Gobel, *The Romano-British Temple at Harlow* (1985), 87, nos. 62 & 86; fig. 44, no. 62; *Britannia*, ii (1971), 273.

⁵³ G. Boon, *Silchester: the Roman Town of Calleva*, (2nd. edn., 1974), 156.

⁵⁴ R. Leech, 'The Excavation of a Romano-Celtic Temple and Later Cemetery at Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset', *Britannia*, xvii (1986), 303-4, nos. 43-46 and probably nos. 66-73.

Examples from sites of indeterminate character can be seen in bronze at Baldock⁵⁵ and in iron at Camerton.⁵⁶ Miniature spears are known from elsewhere. One (which might, alternatively, be an arrow), was found at Lake Nemi in Italy, where there was a famous cult to the goddess Diana. This example, of course, is more likely to have been for hunting, than for fighting.⁵⁷ Three of the spears from Woodeaton had been deliberately bent or 'killed' to send them through to the other world (Fig. 8).⁵⁸ Another of the spears had a shaft that was distorted, and twisted like that of the 'killed' silver spear from Uley (see above). Curiously, there are in the collection ten pins, of different lengths and with different types of head, which also appear to have been deliberately bent; it may well have been that they were regarded as model spears. Other 'killed' offerings include a bent toilet spoon and an obviously deliberately doubled-over leaf. The presence of so many model spears and pins that have been treated as spears, suggests there was a cult of Mars at Woodeaton. In addition to the spears, there is also a model spearhead, of a type current in the Roman Republic.⁵⁹

Kirk found one model anchor⁶⁰ (Fig. 9) and there is possibly a second (Fig. 10).⁶¹ The top of the shank and the ring bolt of her example are missing, and there is no anchor-stock. The second⁶² has a complete shank and ring bolt but is in less good condition, with part of the anchor-stock and the ends of the flukes missing. A model anchor, with no anchor-stock, was found by the Oxford Archaeological Unit during the excavation of Barton Court Farm, a villa site outside Abingdon.⁶³ Both this and the previous example could have been worn as pendants.

Seven, possibly ten, letters or parts of letters of the alphabet have been found, all except for one fragment with one or more holes pierced for attachment.⁶⁴ Several were discovered during excavation outside the north wall of the ambulatory, suggesting that they had once been attached to the outside wall of the second temple. It is likely that worshippers were able to buy letters to form a dedication to be set up at the temple. The following were seen: an M; two fragments making most of an A; part of two more probable As; a T with a ligatured I and part of another T; an N, a D and several fragments that could be part of the following: a V; an E/F; a T/I; an E/L; an E/F; an L and a T. Most of a dedication to Mars could have been made using the M, one of the As and the ligatured TI (where the T and the I are one letter). Mars is the only god or goddess whose name in the dative would have used an I preceded by a T. Others of the letters may have formed the abbreviation 'V.S.L.M.' for 'Votum Solvit Libens Merito', meaning 'he/she pays (his/her) vow, freely and deservedly'. All but the flat, rather crudely-made D and the short cross-stroke of an E/F appear to have risen to a central ridge and to have had mitred corners. Some are more sharply ridged than others.

Forty-five letters or fragments of bronze letters were found at Lydney. Again, in some, the metal rose to a central ridge, whilst others were crudely cut. At least seven different styles of letter were distinguished.⁶⁵ Other votive letters are known from Holbrooks at Harlow, where part of an A and an L and another broken downstroke were discovered.⁶⁶ Part of an A was found at Springhead⁶⁷ and an L at Hockwold.⁶⁸

There are three votive inscriptions from Woodeaton. One is a prayer inscribed on a small, triangular fragment of gold leaf which, when found, was tightly rolled up, like the lead *defixiones* or 'curses' discovered at the temples of Bath and Uley. It is a lamella on which 'Adona(i)e', the vocative of the Hebrew word for 'Lord', occurs twice, its

⁵⁵ I. Stead & V. Rigby, *Baldock: the Excavation of a Roman and Pre-Roman Settlement, 1968-72* (Britannia Mon. Ser. vii, 1986), 138, no. 380.

⁵⁶ W.J. Wedlake, *Excavations at Camerton*, Somerset (Camerton Excavation Club, 1958), 272, no. 18, fig. 56.

⁵⁷ Nottingham Castle Museum Catalogue: T.F.C. Blagg, *The Mysteries of Diana: the Antiquities from Nemi in Nottingham Museums* (1983), 58, fig. 12, N 707.

⁵⁸ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, 40, nos. 8-10 and fig. 8, no. 13.

⁵⁹ M.C. Bishop & J.C. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment* (1989), 52, fig. 22, no. 3.

⁶⁰ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 39, fig. 8, no. 8 & p. 40, C5.

⁶¹ I am grateful to Dr. Chis Barrett for this suggestion.

⁶² Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 38, A3.

⁶³ M. Green, 'Religious Objects', in D. Miles (ed.), *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxfordshire* (CBA Research Report 1, 1986), 50, 5:F8-5: F13.

⁶⁴ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 45, nos. 30-32; R. Goodchild & J. Kirk, 'The Romano-Celtic Temple at Woodeaton', *Oxonienia*, xix (1954), 28, nos. 1-5, and 29, fig. 10, A-E; R.P. Wright, *J.R.S.*, xliii (1953), 128-129, nos. 3 & 4; *R.I.B.*, pp. 77-8, nos. 238 & 239.

⁶⁵ R.E.M. Wheeler & T.V. Wheeler, op. cit. note 45, p. 102, no. 8 & pl. XXXIV.

⁶⁶ R.P. Wright & M.W.C. Hassall, *Britannia*, ii (1971), 289, Inscriptions, no. 4; R.F.B. Conlon, 'Holbrooks - An Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement', *Essex Jnl.*, viii (1973), 30-50.

⁶⁷ *Britannia*, ii (1971), 289.

⁶⁸ C. Green, 'Leylands Farm, Hockwold-cum-Wilton', *EAA*, xxxi (1986), 70, no. 54 and fig. 43.

magical significance implied by the repetition, up to four times, of certain Greek letters.⁶⁹ A longer, magical inscription on a larger, rectangular lamella of gold leaf was found c. 1828, when digging the foundations for a house outside the south-east angle of the Roman fort at Caernavon.⁷⁰ Another was found at York in 1839 or 1840, on the site of the old railway station.⁷¹

The other two inscriptions were probably dedications. The first, is on the right hand end of a rectangular plaque which is stamped, top left, with the last three letters of a word, . . . EDO. It has been pointed out that this may be the end of a Celtic name in the nominative, and that there would, in fact, have been room for a second line of inscription on the missing piece.⁷² The complete end has a punched, ovolo border, and two holes for attachment.

The second is on a fragment of sheet metal into which, what have been believed, hitherto, to be the following letters have been cut with a narrow punch:⁷³

]XENOV[
]NDVX
.....]IT[

However, following recent re-examination of this piece, Dr. Roger Tomlin has cast doubt about the bottom right arm of the first X, because it occurs where there is a crack. This may have appeared along the line of a punched stroke, but not necessarily. If the latter is the case, it is possible that we have here the slanting stroke of an N or possibly of a V. He also considers that the first I could be an E. Unfortunately, translation remains elusive (Fig. 11). It may even have been a Celtic inscription. A small plaque with Celtic writing inscribed on it was found in 1989 in two rolled-up fragments, at Baudecet, Gembloux, in the province of Namur in Belgium. The plaque was made of gold, and the two pieces were found six months apart, 7 m. away from each other, in a large *favissa*, or special pit for the safe disposal of sacred objects no longer in use, at the back of the temple. The break had occurred along the line of a fold, so it was not clear whether it had been accidental or intentional. The inscription is, unfortunately, incomprehensible.⁷⁴

There is also a fragment of sheet metal with the remains of embossed decoration which has, in the centre, an incised swastika.⁷⁵ There is no way of knowing whether the symbol was added to a prepared metal object, or simply dedicated on a piece of scrap.

Five bronze plaques, or parts of plaques, show figural representation, four of them in low relief. The first depicts Mars,⁷⁶ facing to his right, with an oval shield on his left shoulder and a spear in his raised, reversed right hand (Fig. 12). He wears a plumed helmet, chain mail corselet, short tunic and high boots. Like several of the votive letters, this plaque was found during excavation on an area of gravel surface just outside the north ambulatory wall. Originally, it probably occupied the reserve on a larger plaque, possibly gabled or formed in the shape of leaves or feathers. Professor Toynbee describes other examples of such plaques, including a silver one from Barkway in Hertfordshire, dedicated to Mars Alator, in which the god stands with plumed helmet and spear reversed, in a similar position to the one from Woodeaton, except that his shield rests on the ground.⁷⁷ Similar plaques in gold from a temple to the nymphs in Geoagiu, Romania, have recently been published. One depicts the goddess Diana and another Hygeia. Like the Barkway Mars Alator, both goddesses stand within a little classical shrine or *aedicula*.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ M. Aston & P.D.C. Brown, *Oxoniensia*, xxxv (1970), 105; R.P. Wright, *Britannia*, i (1970), 305 no. 1; *R.I.B.* ii, 3(1991), p. 69, no. 2430.2.

⁷⁰ *R.I.B.*, p. 144, no. 436.

⁷¹ *R.I.B.*, p. 236-7, no. 706.

⁷² Hussey, op. cit. note 2, p. 38; Taylor, op. cit. note 3, p. 102; *EC.H.Oxon.* i, 300, n.11, pl. XVIIA; Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 41, D2 and fig. 9, no. 7; *R.I.B.*, p. 77, no. 236.

⁷³ *J.R.S.*, xlv (1954), 103; *R.I.B.* p. 77, no. 237.

⁷⁴ S. Plumier-Torfs et al., 'La plaquette en or inscrite de Baudecet (Gembloux, Belgique): découvert, édition, commentaire', *Latomus*, lii (1993), 797-825; I. Piso, 'La tablette de Baudecet (Gembloux, Belgique): Éléments d'étude comparative', *Latomus*, lii (1993), 826-841.

⁷⁵ Kirk, op. cit. note 3, p. 43, D6 & pl. VI, C.

⁷⁶ R. Goodchild & J. Kirk, 'The Romano-Celtic Temple at Woodeaton', *Oxoniensia*, xix (1954), 29, no. 6, & pl. III, B.

⁷⁷ J. Toynbee, 'A Londinium Votive Leaf or Feather and its Fellows' in J. Bird, H. Chapman, & J. Clark (eds.), *Collectanea Londinensia* (London & Middlesex Arch. Soc. Spec. Paper ii, 1978), 129-47.

⁷⁸ Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, *Goldhelm, Schwert und Silberschätze, Exhibition Catalogue* (1994), 217-8, nos. 87.1 - 87.8.

Woodeaton's figure of Mars may once also have stood *in aedicula*, like the examples given above and the front-facing, winged Cupid in the second of the figured plaques from Woodeaton. Here, a chubby, winged figure stands with his left leg crossed over his right, his right arm bent across his chest – its hand resting on the base of a torch, which is inverted to rest on a low altar. Examples are known of the use of similar iconography on Roman sarcophagi and coins.⁷⁹ This plaque belongs to Finch, who later found a fragment which exactly fits the pitched roof above the left side of the arch of the shrine (Fig. 13). Both front and back of the extra piece show clearly that the surround to this relief was embossed with leaf or feather decoration.

The third figured plaque is a small fragment, again from the Finch collection, which shows a helmeted rider seated on a horse, both in profile facing to their right (Fig. 14).⁸⁰ The rider carries a shield on his left upper arm and the other is raised. This could, perhaps, be another example of Mars or the rider-god already noted in three reliefs in stone by Henig, two of them in Gloucestershire and one in this county (see below).⁸¹

The fourth is an almost complete, flat, triangular plaque, in the centre of which is a 'matchstick man'.⁸² His round head with its rudimentary features and the outline of his body and his limbs are shown by single punched-stroke treatment. The joints and hands and feet are portrayed by large, punched dots. There is a small, punched dot for his navel. His left hand rests on his hip and the right holds something up to his right jaw. He appears to carry a sword and may, as Dr. Miranda Green suggests, be ithyphallic.⁸³ Henig considers that he could well be intended to be Mars. The treatment of this figure has been compared with that of one of the figures depicted on a coiled strip of bronze binding, found at Farley Heath.⁸⁴

The fifth is a little, leprechaun-like mask of a human face with embossed features.⁸⁵ It has a round head and rudimentary hairline; the round eyes protrude from deep sockets beneath strongly arching eyebrows. He, because it could only be male, has small, jug-handle ears, full cheeks and an indistinct mouth above a receding chin. There is no hole for attachment. Kirk suggested that the mask might have covered a wooden core. Whether he was worshipped, or a worshipper is unclear. The style is clearly local.

In addition to the eight plaques described above, there are many others. Kirk has mentioned nine, one of which has incised concentric circles round an empty circular reserve.⁸⁶ One would have expected this last to have been filled, but restoration of many years ago has hidden any signs that there might, once, have been. There are eight or more fragments of probable plaques in the Ashmolean Museum: three plain with holes for attachment; four with an ovolo border, and one with a pair of jagged holes and the point of an embossed V. There is also a curious plaque, in appearance not unlike the sole of a shoe, with a hole for attachment at the narrower, 'squared-off end'.⁸⁷ Finch has two further fragments of plaques in his collection. One has a triangle of punched dots above a line of crescents and a line of dots, with a palm branch on the left and the beginnings of a palm branch on the right. The other is the end of a rectangular plaque with a punched dot border along one edge, an undecipherable 'finger' of repoussé decoration, and a hole for attachment. He also has another fragment with an ovolo border.

Diagonal ribbing or leaf 'veining' was used to decorate plaques and on individual leaves. It is difficult to tell with some of the fragments whether some of the 'veining' is, in fact, the side-leaves of a palm branch or even the needles of a fir-tree, rather than the lateral veins of a leaf. Individual leaves may have been dedicated as offerings or used for decorating head-dresses. Similar objects were used in a secular context. They can be seen among the *insignia* of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.⁸⁸ The veining is very often embossed but, particularly on individual leaves, may be incised. Five individual leaves are known from Woodeaton⁸⁹ and there are five more: a

⁷⁹ For examples see Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 41, D3 and fig. 9, 2.

⁸⁰ H. Case & R. Kirk, *Oxoniensia*, xvii-xviii (1952/3), 217.

⁸¹ M. Henig, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani: Great Britain*, i. 7, hereafter *C.S.I.R.*, i. 7, 41-42, nos. 123-5 and pls. 31 and 32.

⁸² Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 43, D4 and fig. 9, no. 3.

⁸³ M. Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (1986), 212, fig. 95.

⁸⁴ R.G. Goodchild, 'A Priest's Sceptre from the Romano-Celtic Temple at Farley Heath, Surrey', *Antiq. Jnl.*, xviii (1938), 391-6, & pls. LXXVII & LXXVIII; 'The Celtic Gods of Farley Heath', *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, 1 (1946-7), 150-151; E. Black, 'A Note on the Farley Heath Sceptre-Binding', *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, lxxvi (1985), 140-2; Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 41, D1 and pl. VI, B.

⁸⁶ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 43, no. 14 & pl. VI, A, 8; p. 44, no. 16 & fig. 8, no. 15; p. 43, nos. 5 & 8, pl. VI, A, 2 & 3; p. 43, no. 12 & fig. 9, no. 9; pl. VI, A, 4 & 6.

⁸⁷ Publication forthcoming by R.S.O. Tomlin and present author.

⁸⁸ R.S.O. Tomlin, 'Notitia Dignitatum Omnium; tam Civilium quam Militarium', in R. Goodburn & P. Bartholomew (eds.), *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum* (1974), pls. XXVI & XXVII; Bodl. MS Canon. Misc. 378, f. 142v.

⁸⁹ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 43, no. 7 & fig. 8, no. 12; p. 43, no. 9 & pl. VI, A9; pl. VI, 1.

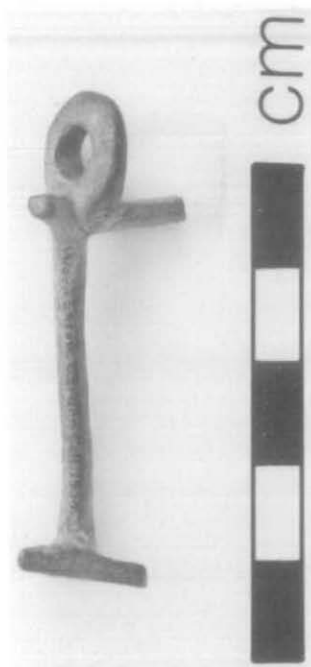


Fig. 10. ? Model Anchor.



Fig. 11. 'Xenovi' Plaque.



Fig. 12. Bronze Plaque with Figure of Mars.



Fig. 13. Bronze Plaque with Figure of Cupid.

fragile fragment bordered by dots which has incized lateral veins; part of a leaf with incized central and lateral veins and a hole for attachment; a tiny, plain leaf with a hole in the middle; the 'killed' leaf, mentioned above, which has an 'S' design border, and one more with the stalk end curled over to make a loop. Finch has another fragment with roughly incized lateral veins, and the central vein pricked out, but not incized.

Several fragments and strips of metal seem more likely to have been the covering for decorated boxes than parts of plaques. Kirk has described some of these fragments and their different types of decoration.⁹⁰ One unusual piece is decorated with a large, embossed circle, with a smaller circle embossed, asymmetrically, inside it which has a punched dot in the middle. The decoration looks decidedly native. Over 200 fragments of thin sheet bronze have been recovered, many of them tiny, and many with repoussé 'leaf' or 'feather' decoration. Some fragments may have been broken from plaques that had been dedicated in the temple, or which were waiting for a purchaser. Others could have come from boxes. Many are likely to have been scrap.

Four fragments of copper alloy sheet bear the impression of coins. Three have already been described by Kirk.⁹¹ Of these, one is of a coin of Constantine I (A.D. 306–337) on a fragment with lines of embossed dots and possible 'leaf' decoration. The second was hammered over a coin of, possibly, Numerian (A.D. 283–4) and appears likewise to have been made on a previously decorated piece of sheet metal. The third had been hammered over a coin of Crispus, son of Constantine, and the fourth has a legend which is difficult to decipher but is of 3rd or 4th-century type.⁹² All these coin impressions were made on thin sheet metal and no-one would confuse them for the real thing. However, this did not matter as much as one might have thought. According to Ralph Merrifield 'substitutes have always been considered legitimate in ritual; for the gods and the dead need only the essence or 'soul' of the offering'.⁹³ The impressions were made to be offered as temple money, probably sold as being more appropriate and having more power, because they were manufactured on the temple site. This was, perhaps, a way of making money for the temple. They may even have been sold for more than the value of the coin they imitated. We are unlikely ever to know!

No examples of freestanding stone statuary were found at Woodeaton. However, there is a fragment of a schist slab which shows the lower part of a human figure carved in low relief: the bottom of a cloak dips behind sturdy legs above plump little feet (Fig. 15).⁹⁴ The lower end of the shaft of a sceptre can be seen to the right of the figure. Henig is certain that this figure is Mars, an interpretation supported by the bronze letters 'MA.TI' described above, the Mars plaque and the presence of so many votive weapons.⁹⁵ It is 5.8 cm. high.

It is tempting to see possible head-dress or regalia material amongst the collection. However, none of the artefacts can be said with certainty to constitute such material. The pieces of chain, formed of 'S' loops of flat bronze wire, are a possibility but they could have come from a variety of other artefacts. In the only piece of any length, 18.6 cm.,⁹⁶ at intervals, 'S' links are linked not through the nearest curve of the adjoining 'S', but through the curve that is further away, presumably to give the chain extra strength. This length of chain has no fastening device, but there is another, short fragment of chain that does. It has a shaped plate with a hole at one end whilst a simple hook at the other slips through the double ring of a linking device of tightly coiled, spring-like wire. Two more 'S'-shaped and a single link are attached to a matching double ring at the other end of this device. There are several more pieces of 'S' links and three further spring-like coils of twisted wire, which may well have had some connection with the above.

Also from Woodeaton is an unusual find which, again, might have been part of priestly regalia: a small quantity of chain, of links 7 mm. in diameter, not joined in one long length, but in different-sized pieces, linked to each other laterally. Two pierced Roman coins hang from two individual links of this chain. One is from the reign of Tetricus I (A.D. 270–274), of the radiate crown type 'VIRTUS AUG'. The legend and design are clear and the coin is in quite good condition. The other, almost illegible, is of the House of Constantine, perhaps Constantius II (A.D. 337–41), the 'Gloria Exercitus' type, with soldiers on either side of a standard. The coins are unlikely to have been used for this purpose before they became demonetised in the mid 4th century and the whole piece, therefore, must be late in date.⁹⁷ There are several more short lengths of chain in the collection with similar-sized

⁹⁰ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 43, no. 10, pl. VI, A, no. 10; p. 44, no. 20, pl. VI, A, no. 11; p. 42, no. 16, fig. 9, no. 6.

⁹¹ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 44, D 21–23, fig. 9, 5 & 8.

⁹² Dr. Cathy King, Coin Dept. Ashmolean Museum, pers. comm.

⁹³ R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1977), 25.

⁹⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 301 & pl. XVIII, D.

⁹⁵ M. Henig, *C.S.I.R.*, i, 7, 22, no. 61, and pl. 19.

⁹⁶ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 28, 4, and pl. III, C, 3.

⁹⁷ Information kindly supplied by Dr. Cathy King of the Ashmolean Museum.



Fig. 14. Fragmentary Bronze Plaque with Horse and Armed Rider.



Fig. 16. Romano-British Imitation of an Engraved Gemstone showing a Figure holding a ?Staff (twice actual size).



Fig. 15. Fragment of Stone Relief of Mars.



Fig. 17. 'Horse and Rider' Brooch.

links. As a cautionary note, it is worth remembering that Roman coins were quite commonly used in this way during the Anglo-Saxon period.

Kirk described and illustrated a broken disc of thin metal embossed with a rosette,⁹⁸ the tips of the petals alternating with punched dots. The whole design lies within a plain, embossed circle, with an outer circle of embossed dots and fragmentary plain metal beyond. One side has been 'squared off'; it appears to have been cut. This piece could have been set into a roundel of a head-dress, as were the silver discs on the head-dress from Stony Stratford.⁹⁹ But if there were holes for attachment in the Woodeaton example they must have been in the missing fragment, as no traces of any method of attachment remain. The rosette was a not uncommon decorative motif.

The other piece thought, possibly, to be a disc from a head-dress,¹⁰⁰ is more likely to have been a patch.¹⁰¹ It is crudely and irregularly cut. The nine holes are irregularly spaced and pierced from the back in the illustration,¹⁰² through two layers of metal. A fragment of the second layer remains under the head of one of the rivets. The edge of one side of the disc had been folded over to give a straight edge, before one of the rivets was punched through.

An unusually large quantity of jewellery was found at Woodeaton, together with a great many toilet articles and instruments of different kinds, all probably dedicated along with the more obviously votive material. Kirk described six pre-Roman types of bracelet, one complete ring with a central groove, two penannular bracelets, five of twisted wire type with wire hook and eye fastening, seven with incized decoration and one with a sliding knot fastening.¹⁰³ In addition to the above, the following, all fragments, have been noted: ten of twisted wire, three plain (one with a large knob finial), and thirty-five with different styles of incized, punched or notched decoration.

Amongst the twenty-three finger rings already described¹⁰⁴ a few are simple twists of wire, several were originally enamelled and one or two still contain imitation gems of coloured glass. An unusual, heavy ring of late Iron Age type, is composed of four twists of unevenly thick wire. Reinterpreted by Henig, a glass, imitation nicolo intaglio depicts Neptune with a trident, one foot resting on the prow of a ship to indicate his dominion over the waters.¹⁰⁵ Two further rings have been published. One, of bronze, is set with another nicolo-glass intaglio depicting a hare, standing on its hind legs, dressed as a human and performing human actions; the hare wears a birrus or cloak, has long ears and, possibly, a broad-brimmed hat and holds a patera in its front paws. Depictions of animals clothed, and behaving like humans, were popular with the Romans, who believed they averted the 'Evil Eye'.¹⁰⁶ The other, of gold, in the British Museum, is very probably from Woodeaton, like the group of figures above. It is set with a nicolo intaglio depicting Minerva, with a belted peplos, crested helmet, spear and shield.¹⁰⁷

Several other rings have been noted. The first is a ring with a deep, empty, hexagonal bezel which has carinated shoulders with a projecting ball finial on each carination. The second is a moulded, green glass, Romano-British imitation of an engraved gemstone. It depicts, rather crudely, a little man, standing with one arm raised and possibly holding a staff, and the opposite knee bent (Fig. 16). Imitation gems of blue, green or yellow glass, moulded in intaglio or in cameo, resembling it in style, have been found mainly south of a line between the Severn and the Trent.¹⁰⁸ The third and fourth are two plain settings for rings, one imitating sardonyx, the other cornelian. There are seven other not very substantial rings with incized decoration and a large number of plain ones, some of flimsy manufacture. They include eleven complete circles, sixteen penannular, two with ends overlapping, and twelve ring fragments. Some of the rings look as though they were made from chopped up bracelets. These include a simple ring, made from a piece of a bracelet with a crenellated edge. Dr. Graham Webster has suggested that bracelets might have been broken to terminate one relationship and refashioned into rings to celebrate a new one.¹⁰⁹

It was the discovery of so many brooches, along with coins, toilet articles and bronze figurines that first aroused

⁹⁸ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 6, and p. 43, fig. 9, no. 9.

⁹⁹ 'Remains of Roman Military Ensigns discovered near Stony Stratford, Bucks. and Barkway, Herts.', in S. Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae*, ii (1817), pt. ii, pl. xxxv.

¹⁰⁰ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 36; p. 44, no. 18 and pl. VI, no. A.5.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Peter Northover, *pers. comm.*

¹⁰² Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, pl. VI, A5.

¹⁰³ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 19-20, C, 1-22; p. 16, fig. 4, 8-15; p. 21, fig. 5, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 20, D, 1-22 and p. 21, fig. 5, 7-14.

¹⁰⁵ This ring was originally described as a barbarian archer in Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 22, no. 16 and fig. 5, no. 13.

¹⁰⁶ M. Henig, 'Woodeaton Intaglios', *Oxoniensia*, xxv (1970), 105-6 and pl. XVII.

¹⁰⁷ M. Henig, 'A Gold Ring Found near Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxxix (1974), 97-8.

¹⁰⁸ M. Henig, 'Intagli', in R. Leech, 'Excavations at Catsgore, 1970-73' (Western Archaeol. Trust Mono. ii, 1982), 134. See also M. Henig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites* (BAR Brit. Ser. viii, 1978, 2nd edn.), 256, nos. 564-6, pl. VIII, & fig. 2.

¹⁰⁹ G. Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome* (1986), 132-3.

serious interest in the site at Woodeaton. Taylor published eighty-three¹¹⁰ and Kirk another thirty-five.¹¹¹ Most date to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., with half a dozen or so that were of Iron Age type. There are fifty-nine further brooches, or parts of brooches, bringing the total to one hundred and seventy-seven.

Of particular interest from the votive point of view are the two identical brooches with a stylized depiction of horse and rider, originally enamelled but with no trace of colour remaining.¹¹² Hair and mane are both depicted by short incisions, giving an *en brosse* effect. The horse is possibly about to rear, as the rider is leaning backwards (Fig. 17). They are of a type that is found frequently on temple sites, sold presumably either for dedication or as a souvenir, inviting comparison with the pilgrim badges of the Middle Ages. On each of them, horse and rider face to the right; all the brooches are very alike, some even identical. The colours used for the enamel were usually red and blue.

Mr. Roger Leech noted signs that these might, originally, have been relief work on one of the 'horse and rider' brooches from Lamyatt Beacon, where five of these brooches were found.¹¹³ Seven, and part of an eighth, brooch of this type were found at Hockwold,¹¹⁴ others at Nor'nour in the Isles of Scilly,¹¹⁵ Cold Kitchen Hill¹¹⁶ and Hayling Island,¹¹⁷ all sites with strong religious associations. Further examples were discovered at Brettenham in Norfolk,¹¹⁸ on the surface of the Roman road at Woodyates in Dorset,¹¹⁹ and at Corbridge.¹²⁰ There is an unprovenanced example in the British Museum¹²¹ which, with the last, is better made than the others.

In addition to the large number of pins already described,¹²² the following have been noted: a ring-headed, swan-necked pin with the lower end missing; a sturdy pin with beginnings of the top curve diagnostic of the ring-headed type and a smaller, similar pin; an almost complete, large, heavy pin with a conical head and a swelling halfway down the shaft, perhaps for the hair; two pin fragments with globular heads; fragments with a baluster head, a roll head, a fosiform head with punched linear decoration and a flat topped, round head with two collars below; a slender, headless pin with a decorated top-band of incized diamond pattern; a fragment of a delicate pin with the beginnings of baluster decoration at the head end, and four bone pins.

In 1936, a slag-like surface find was discovered, on close inspection, to be a mass of iron links, of chain-mail type, with two groups of bronze links embedded in it. It consisted of finely riveted iron links, 7-7.5 mm. in diameter, alternating with closed iron rings. Attached to them were butted bronze links. The mass was thought likely, by Professor E.M. Jope, to have been chain fabric. This find was in a fragile state when found and its whereabouts is now unknown. The deliberate deposit of a jacket of chain mail, superbly made, and enclosed in a bag, was found in the cremation pit of a Celtic prince at Verulamium, dating to the early years of the Roman occupation. Fifty years later, a temple was built over the site of the funerary pyre.¹²³ A weapon find of early date from Woodeaton is the fragmentary remains of a late La Tène scabbard chape, now in the British Museum.¹²⁴ A late Iron Age sword chape was found also at Frilford, see below.

During the excavation of 1952 a curious U-shaped iron object of flat metal with a central prong, which might have supported a torch on its now-flattened spikes, was discovered.¹²⁵ It has a spike beneath to stick into a surface

¹¹⁰ M. Taylor, *J.R.S.*, vii (1917), 103-117 & pls. VI & VII.

¹¹¹ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 9-15, figs. 2 & 3; pl. II, B.

¹¹² Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 14, no. 30, a & b, and fig. 3, no. 6.

¹¹³ R. Leech, 'The Excavation of a Romano-Celtic Temple and a Later Cemetery on Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset', *Britannia*, xvii (1986), 316-19 for discussion of the type and fig. 34, nos. 6-10. The Woodeaton examples, which are identical, are particularly like nos. 7 & 9. See also S.A. Butcher, 'Enamels from Roman Britain', in M.R. Apted, R. Gilyard-Beer & A.D. Saunders (eds.), *Ancient Monuments and their Interpretation* (1977), 41-45, 54-56 & fig. 7.

¹¹⁴ C. Green, 'Leyland's Farm, Hockwold-cum-Wilton', in 'Settlement, Religion and Industry on the Roman Fen-Edge, Norfolk', *E.A.A.*, xxxi (1986), 66, & 65, fig. 41, nos. 17-24.

¹¹⁵ D. Dudley, *Excavations on Nor'nour* (1968), 48, no. 132, & 47, fig. 18, no. 132.

¹¹⁶ R. de C. Nan Kivell, 'Objects found during Excavations on the Romano-British site at Cold Kitchen Hill, Brixton Deverill', *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, xliii (1925-27), 181, D & pl. II, D.

¹¹⁷ M. Henig, *op. cit.* note 13, p. 150, no. 71.

¹¹⁸ R.R. Clarke, *Norfolk Arch.*, xxvi, 1938, 26, fig. 2, 9.

¹¹⁹ British Museum, *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain* (1958), No. 41, fig. 11.

¹²⁰ F. Haverfield, *Archaeol. Ael.* 3 Ser., vii (1911), 186, no. 27.

¹²¹ Museum No: B.M. 1915. 12-8.119.

¹²² Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 15-19, fig. 4 & pl. II, A.

¹²³ E.M. Jope, *Oxoniensia*, xxii (1957), 106-7; A. Selkirk, *Current Archaeol.*, cxxxii, 484-8 (based on a lecture given by Rosalind Niblett of St. Albans Museum to the Society of Antiquaries).

¹²⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 260 and fig. 17, c.

¹²⁵ Goodchild & Kirk, *op. cit.* note 64, p. 29 and pl. III, A.

or, possibly, into a pole. A socketed trident with three prongs was discovered at Brigstock.¹²⁶ The only other evidence of lighting at Woodeaton comes from a fragment of pottery candlestick in Finch's collection. Lighting in temples would have been of the greatest importance, and lighting apparatus is therefore of religious significance.

Almost nothing is known of those who lived in the vicinity of the Woodeaton temple. The only clue, to one of them, is given by the following inscription on a now much-worn, irregularly-shaped slab of oolite, 51 cm. high × 51 wide × 15 deep.¹²⁷ The letters are sloping, roughly executed and largely obscured. They read:

D
DECMUS MALUS

The slab appears to be part of a tombstone with only the left margin complete. It is thought to read:

D(IS) [M(ANIBUS)]
DEC(I)MUS MALUS[IUS]
'To the departed spirits: Decimus Malusius'
(The female cognomen, Malusia, occurs in CIL, iii, 11565).

LOWBURY HILL

The Lowbury site lies on an exposed, flat hilltop at the high eastern edge of the Berkshire Downs, 4.5 miles west-north-west of the Thames-side town of Goring. Although not close to any known Roman road, it is not far from the pre-Roman Ridgeway and to the probable route of the Icknield Way. The main features consist of a low-walled, rectangular enclosure of c. 23 hectares, with a Saxon barrow situated not far from its east-facing entrance.

Excavation was undertaken in 1913 and 1914 by Mr. Donald Atkinson, who cleared the enclosure down to the subsoil and investigated the Saxon barrow and another barrow and circular depression close by. Atkinson discovered no structures and concluded that the enclosure was a Roman farming settlement, with a richly furnished, high status, Saxon burial beside it. A large quantity of Romano-British finds, virtually unstratified, as well as Anglo-Saxon finds from the barrow, was recovered. In his excavation report,¹²⁸ Atkinson published 873 Roman coins, a surprisingly large number for a rural site of this nature. The assemblage, too, was richer than one would have expected, including ten possible spearheads and a considerable amount of jewellery and toilet equipment. Amongst the large number of brooches found, twenty-eight were of late Iron Age—earliest Roman date.

Since then, interpretation has veered between temple and agricultural settlement. Ploughing in 1980, and the discovery of further finds, led to anxiety in archaeological circles. In 1985, John Davies published a re-examination of the coins to re-open discussion.¹²⁹ This report contained the first substantial evidence in favour of a temple site. Following geophysical and earthwork survey by R.C.H.M.(E.), small-scale excavation by Professor M.G. Fulford, Dr. S.J. Rippon and a team from the University of Reading took place in 1992. On the strength of the geophysical evidence, the south-western quarter of the enclosure was selected and part of the western side of the barrow. The site had evidently first been in use in the Bronze Age and the earliest Iron Age, with occupation again towards the end of the Iron Age. The excavators found that Atkinson had mistaken back-filling of robbed-out rubble for the foundations of the wall. The skeleton that he had thought was a foundation burial was now unlikely to have been one. A likely date of death between A.D. 591 and 655 was provided

¹²⁶ E. Greenfield, 'The Romano-British Shrines at Brigstock, Northants', *Antiq. Jnl.*, xliiii (1963), 249, no. 5 and fig. 7, no. 5.

¹²⁷ *R.I.B.* p. 78, no. 240; *J.R.S.*, xxv (1935), 225, *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 301.

¹²⁸ D. Atkinson, *The Romano-British Site on Lowbury Hill in Berkshire* (1916).

¹²⁹ J.A. Davies, 'The Roman Coins from Lowbury Hill', *Oxoniensia*, I (1985), 1-13.

for this individual by accelerator radio-carbon dating, giving a *terminus post quem* for the robbing out of the enclosure wall.¹³⁰ It is worth noting that this body may well have been offered as part of a 'ritual of termination' following the destruction of a sacred place.¹³¹ The corner of a second, possibly earlier, inner enclosure of slight timber construction was discovered, but no structures. However, the quantity and type of building material recovered from the two excavations indicated the presence of a masonry building elsewhere in the enclosure. Dating was difficult, but the coin and artefactual evidence suggested that the main phase of activity was between the mid-late 3rd century and the end of the 4th, with some continuity into the 5th century.

The Votive Objects. The most interesting of the votive objects from Lowbury is the series of iron weapons that was found in Atkinson's excavation. I am very grateful to Professor Fulford, for allowing me to read the proofs of the report of the 1992 excavation, prior to publication. I had, in fact, arrived independently at the same conclusion as Mr. David Richards, who wrote the entry for the ironwork, and agree with him on the probably ritual or ceremonial nature of the unusual spearheads from the earlier excavation.¹³²

Atkinson published five spearheads, a small javelin or arrowhead and the tip of a spearhead.¹³³ He described also three unusual spearheads. One of these is broad and flat, with a hole through one side of the blade which, at one time, contained a loose, iron ring. There is a broken hole in the corresponding place on the other side of the blade. The spear-tip is capped by a small, conical iron knob, believed to have been welded on, presumably to demonstrate that this spear was not intended for normal use. The rings, perhaps, held rattles or bells (Fig. 18).¹³⁴ Of the two other unusual spearheads one is knobbed and bent to one side, possibly 'killed', and the other surmounted by a broken ring or a crescent.¹³⁵ These seem likely to have had a ceremonial use as well. Atkinson also found an unusual iron dagger with a double-edged, leaf-shaped blade and a tang that ends in a lozenge-shaped knob.¹³⁶

One pole-tip with a knob and others with holes in the blades, one with its ring still in place, can be seen among the bronze and iron pole-tips from Brigstock in Northamptonshire, which were found inside one shrine. A ceremonial object with similar holes was found in the River Nene near Peterborough.¹³⁷ Others are known from Richborough¹³⁸ and from near Housesteads.¹³⁹ Three smaller iron rattles or *sistra*, each of which has several holes containing rings, were found in Moorgate Street, in London. An instrument not unlike these last examples was discovered in the catacombs of Rome, with small bells attached to the rings.¹⁴⁰ Amongst the cache of sceptres and priestly gear from Felmingham was found a spearhead with four half-spearhead blades at right angles to each other, with rings through two opposite blades.¹⁴¹ There was also a rattle of the kind that may be found amongst any baby's toys. It was composed of a handle, two flattened, hemispherical bowls, of equal diameter, and fragments of the binding, which would have encircled and concealed the junction of the bowls. One bowl had a little hole, through which small objects could be posted, to make a noise when the rattle was shaken.¹⁴² The only documentary reference to the use of rattles

¹³⁰ J. Firth, 'Human Bone' in M.G. Fulford & S.J. Rippon, 'Lowbury Hill, Oxon: a Re-assessment of the probable Romano-Celtic Temple and the Anglo-Saxon Barrow', *Archaeol. Jnl.*, cli (1995), 189, skeleton 2.

¹³¹ R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1987), 49.

¹³² D. Richards, 'The Objects of Iron', in Fulford & Rippon, *op. cit.* note 130, pp. 77-179.

¹³³ D. Atkinson, *The Romano-British Site on Lowbury Hill in Berkshire* (1916), 47, nos. 1-7 & pl. XIV, nos. 1-7.

¹³⁴ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 133, p. 48, no. 8 & pl. XIV, no. 8.

¹³⁵ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 133, p. 48, nos. 9 & 10 and pl. XIV, 9 & 10.

¹³⁶ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 133, p. 49, no. 19 & pl. XIV, no. 20.

¹³⁷ M. Green, *A Romano-British Bronze Ceremonial Object found near Peterborough* (Peterborough City Museum Mon. i., 1975).

¹³⁸ J.P. Bushe-Fox, *Report on the Excavation of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent* (1949), pl. VIII, no. 279.

¹³⁹ W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of Romano-British Ironwork in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (1976), 46, no. 19.

¹⁴⁰ London Museum Catalogue, iii (1930), *London in Roman Times*, 108, and pl. XLVIII, nos. 1-3; no. 2 is most like the spearhead from Lowbury.

¹⁴¹ H.M. Gilbert, 'The Felmingham Hall Hoard, Norfolk', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, ii (May 1979), 176-80, fig. 7, A, & fig. 3, A.

¹⁴² G. Boon, 'A Priest's Rattle of the Third Century A.D. from the Felmingham, Norfolk, Find', *Antiq. Jnl.*, lxxiii (1983), 363-5 and 389.

in Roman religion is in the worship of Isis,¹⁴³ whose cult was not common in Roman Britain. However, there is no reason why the custom should not have been adopted by the Romano-British, who happily mixed features from different cults.

The head, only, of a white clay statuette of a cock was found (Fig. 19).¹⁴⁴ Atkinson compared it to a similar, but complete, example from Silchester in the Reading Museum. Such figurines were made, mainly, in Gaul in the early Roman period and in the Rhineland in the 2nd century.¹⁴⁵ The cock is the bird associated with the god Mercury. Fulford found the bone assemblage of the 1992 excavation dominated by sheep, as it had been at Harlow. Like the cock, the ram is associated with Mercury.

There was enough jewellery to suggest that this was votive, although nothing like as much as there had been at Woodeaton. An octagonal ring, an incomplete ring formed from a folded sheet, and a bezel, containing a blue glass intaglio depicting what appears to be a standing figure, which were found in the 1992 excavation, bring the total of finger rings found on this site to twenty-three. Nine have bezels for gems, and there is one moulded blue glass gem, impressed in intaglio, that has no ring. The blue glass, imitation gemstones are of the same type as the green glass setting for a ring from Woodeaton. None of the rings has decoration which might indicate cult. There are now fifty-seven brooches, many of them early in date, and twenty-five bronze or bone pins. An eighth bracelet was found in the recent excavation. This was most probably votive, but not as dramatically votive as the 'killed', twisted bracelet discovered by Atkinson (Fig. 20).¹⁴⁶

Possibly from priestly regalia are two small, round discs of bronze with a border of punched dots which have a 'finger' of metal extending from each side which, bent over, form a loop to hold a linking ring of metal. These were described by Atkinson as harness trappings, but could have been part of a head-dress.¹⁴⁷ There is also a length of S-link chain, similar to those found at Woodeaton,¹⁴⁸ but this, too, might well have been from jewellery.

There is a curious, heavy cast disc, 3.6 cm. in diameter, which Atkinson described as a pendant.¹⁴⁹ On one side of it, a cross or four-spoked wheel in relief decorates a circular sunken reserve. A 'tongue' of metal projects at a slight angle from the top of the disc – a piece with a hole in it is said to have been broken off the end of the 'tongue'. It could, perhaps, have been used as an amulet. A stone mould for making a similar article with a similar device was found during the excavation of the temple at Bath. The device may have had a solar connotation; certainly the Bath cult seems to have had a solar aspect, as evidenced by the sun shown on the pediment above the famous gorgon.¹⁵⁰ A possible 'charm bracelet' of fine bronze chain, its links joined together in pairs, had a small bead of pale green glass attached to one of the links.¹⁵¹

Also of votive interest is the bronze crescent, 5.2 cm. wide, with the remains of a rivet, by which it was attached to something, in the centre of the back.¹⁵² Seven iron ox goads were found. While there may be a commonplace explanation for their presence, they could perhaps have been offered after use on animals brought for sacrifice.

Not votive, but of interest because of the importance of lighting in temples, is a long, straight, iron spike with an off-set at one end and three individual sockets for candles at the other.¹⁵³ The sockets of this portable candle-holder were set at different angles, so that only one candle would have been used at a time. It could have been suspended, stuck into the ground or set into a wall. Atkinson mentioned a similar candle holder from Zugmantel, now in the Saalburg Museum. The only British example that I have been able to find which is at all similar to the Lowbury candle-holder is an iron spike from Camerton, with two candle sockets facing in opposite directions.¹⁵⁴ There are also two fragments of pottery candlesticks.

¹⁴³ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, II (Loeb Transl. ed. A. Hanson, 1989), Bk. xi, p. 297.

¹⁴⁴ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 70, fig. 19.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas May, *The pottery found at Silchester* (1916), 102 and pl. XXXIX, B 15. See also M. Rouvier-Jenlin, 'Les Figurines Gallo-Romaines en Terre Cuite au Musée des Antiquités Nationales', XXIVe supplément à *Gallia*, 381-90 and figs. 1155-1208.

¹⁴⁶ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 44, Bracelets, no. 2 & pl. XII, 35.

¹⁴⁷ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128 p. 45, no. 2, pl. XIII, 2.

¹⁴⁸ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 46, no. 19 and pl. XIII, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Atkinson, *op. cit.* 46, no. 14 and pl. XIII, 14.

¹⁵⁰ M. Henig in B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis and Minerva ii, Finds from the Sacred Spring* (1988), 24 & 25, no. 60.

¹⁵¹ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 47, no. 20 and pl. XIII, no. 20.

¹⁵² Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 46, no. 9 and pl. XIII, 9.

¹⁵³ Atkinson, *op. cit.* note 128, p. 51, no. 30 and pl. XV, 10.

¹⁵⁴ W.J. Wedlake, *Excavations at Camerton, Somerset* (Camerton Excavation Club, 1958), 272, no. 20, pl. XVb (opp. p. 66).



Fig. 18. Ceremonial Spearhead.



Fig. 19. Cock's Head.



Fig. 20. 'Killed' Bracelet.



Fig. 21. Model Sword.



Fig. 22. Model Shield.



Fig. 23. Stone Head of Mercury.



Fig. 25. Stone Relief of Genius.

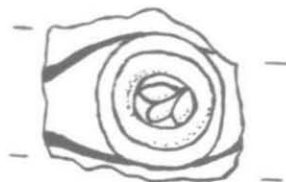


Fig. 24. Romano-British Imitation of an Engraved Gemstone (twice actual size).



Fig. 26. Stone Relief of Warrior God.

FRILFORD

This site lies on the southern edge of a ridge extending from Faringdon to as far as Boar's Hill, just south-west of Oxford. It is situated behind the Noah's Ark Inn, on the Oxford to Wantage road, c. 100 metres to the north of the River Ock and was excavated by J.S.P. Bradford and R.G. Goodchild in 1937 and 1938. They discovered the foundations of two stone buildings with, in the area between them, a large number of pits and the postholes of a round house. One of the stone buildings was circular and the other square, with a later annexe. Each overlay an Iron Age structure both of which were, at one time, thought to be the ritual precursors of the Roman temples.¹⁵⁵

Beneath the circular stone building lay a broad, penannular ditch within which, opposite the entrance, was an irregular double row of three posts. A ploughshare, probably a fertility foundation deposit, was found at the bottom of the deepest posthole, in a thin stratum of Iron Age humus, beneath the clay filling with which the Romans levelled the ditched enclosure before building the round temple.¹⁵⁶ The lower fill of the penannular ditch contained pottery of the mid 1st millennium, the upper ditch-fill wares of the Iron Age. There was nothing of conspicuously late Iron Age date. Within the stone 'rotunda', inside a pit containing the clay filling, was a pit in which, clearly associated with Roman material, a votive deposit of a miniature sword and shield was discovered. These tiny objects may have been placed in the pit either as part of a 'ritual of termination' before the pit was covered over or, possibly, as part of a 'ritual of commencement', before the 'rotunda' was built.¹⁵⁷ Dates for the use of the 'rotunda' were given by a sherd of 2nd-century pottery and a coin of Valentinian, found in a Roman hearth. Harding carried out further excavation at Frilford between 1964 and 1966. In his excavation report of 1987, he included a re-interpretation of this part of the site. He believed that lack of evidence of cult continuity from the late 'pre-Belgic' Iron Age to early Roman meant that interpretation of the penannular ring ditch as an Iron Age shrine, rather than as one of the known forms of contemporary domestic or agricultural structure, must be regarded as largely circumstantial.¹⁵⁸

Under the rectilinear temple, Bradford and Goodchild found postholes which they believed were part of an Iron Age hut. Harding's excavations between 1964 and 1966 showed that these were part of a large, single circle of shallow stake-holes, with evidence of occupation in the late 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. Inside the circle, close to its perimeter, two burials were discovered, neither of which has been dated. In one, the skeleton of a young person was found in a pit, the body deliberately placed in a position so tightly crouched that the excavator suggested that it had either been bound or exposed till dry, before burial. The pit was packed with stones above the body, among which were found two small, undateable Iron Age sherds. The other burial was the fragmentary remains of a new-born baby, buried just below the surface of the ground at the opposite side of the circle. Harding also found a hearth outside the south-west side of the circle, and beside it, a setting of four postholes which straddled the perimeter. His interpretation of this area has undergone modification through the years, but his latest interpretation of this circle is that there is no reliable evidence here for other than secular, probably agricultural, occupation.¹⁵⁹

Recently, Dr. Richard Hingley has completed a survey of the Frilford area. He discovered an amphitheatre which may have been used in conjunction with the temple. Could it have had a stage? He also discovered the three sides of a temenos enclosure and evidence of further buildings. Hingley suggests that further excavation would reveal an extensive religious complex and possibly a surrounding small town, similar to those known in Gaul.¹⁶⁰ It looks as though there may well be more buildings of a religious nature, close by.

¹⁵⁵ J.S.P. Bradford & R.G. Goodchild, 'Excavations at Frilford, Berks., 1937-8', *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 67, for the penannular ditch. D.W. Harding, *The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin* (1972), 61-3, for both structures.

¹⁵⁶ Bradford & Goodchild, *op. cit.* note 155, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1987), 48-57.

¹⁵⁸ D.W. Harding, *Excavations in Oxfordshire*, i (Univ. of Edinburgh Occasional Paper xv, 1987), 16.

¹⁵⁹ Harding, *op. cit.* note 158, pp. 5-9.

¹⁶⁰ R. Hingley, 'Location, Function and Status: a Romano-British Religious Complex' at the Noah's Ark, Inn, Frilford (Oxfordshire)', *Oxf. Jnl. of Archaeol.*, iv (1985), 201-214; 'Frilford', *S. Midland Archaeol.*, xii (1982), 150-3, for the amphitheatre.

The Votive Objects. In comparison with Woodeaton, the votive finds from Frilford are few, but they are all interesting. Probably the best known are the model sword and shield (Figs. 21 & 22). The sword is 7.6 cm. long, but the pointed end has been broken off. It may, even, have been broken deliberately when deposited, and the other piece not recovered. The hilt is formed of three spherical knobs, with a larger spherical pommel above and a sub-spherical knob below them, at the head of the blade. A low mid-rib runs the length of the blade. This is not a *gladius*, the sides of whose full-sized blade were almost parallel, until they converged to form a point, c. 7.5 cm. from the end. The sloping shoulders of this tapering blade with its raised midrib are reminiscent of the iron sword of late La Tène date from Walthamstow in Essex, a comparison noted by the excavators.¹⁶¹ Alternatively, it could be a *spatha* which was akin to the Celtic sword. Not many bronze model swords are known from Britain and none that closely resembles this example. Green has recorded two swords from Castor in Cambridgeshire¹⁶² and another from Chesters in Northumberland¹⁶³ (this last is smaller than the others).

Four iron models, which were either Roman military daggers¹⁶⁴ or swords of the *gladius* type, were discovered during recent excavation at Harlow.¹⁶⁵ The *gladius*, with its shorter, broader blade was more suitable than the longer sword for fighting at close-range.¹⁶⁶ None of the Harlow swords have the knobbed hilt or the midrib of the Frilford example. Two have leaf-shaped blades, one a waisted blade, while the shape of the fourth is unknown, as it is still inside its bronze scabbard.

Three hundred and nine iron model swords were found in 1967 at the site of Le Bois de Flavivier near Mouzon, in the Ardennes region of France, a border sanctuary with structural evidence from c. 56 B.C. to late antiquity. Piles of swords formed foundation deposits at the corners of the walls of the Augustan and 2nd-century temples.¹⁶⁷ Several different types of sword were represented in the figures included with the finds report. However, apart from a group whose blades rise to a midrib, the swords illustrated bear little resemblance to the longer-bladed example from Frilford.

The model shield is oval, with a central oval boss, which is hollow underneath. It is 5.9 cm. long and just over 3.5 cm. wide. The condition of its metal is poor. Many bronze miniature shields are now known from Britain. Dr. Ian Stead drew up a comprehensive list in 1991,¹⁶⁸ when publishing the Chertsey Shield and the Salisbury Collection of mostly hide-shaped, miniature Iron Age shields, which was acquired by the British Museum in 1989. The findspot of this hoard, near Salisbury, is now known by the staff of the British Museum, enabling them to investigate its true nature and date.¹⁶⁹ All except two of the miniatures from Salisbury have a complete handle, mounted horizontally but slightly askew, with a rivet at either end. The handle of the remarkable, restored Chertsey shield is also mounted horizontally, but slightly askew. Stead has pointed out that this would have allowed it to have been gripped from one side only. There is no sign that there ever was a handle on the underside of the Frilford miniature. Several other miniature shields from Stead's list were handleless, also.

Of the seven other oval shields that he described, the best parallel for the Frilford shield is probably the miniature shield from Langley, Oxfordshire, which is not far from Frilford. This little shield is the same length and shape, but its boss is round, within a concentric cordon, and there are signs that it may once have had a soldered handle.¹⁷⁰ The oval shield was a Celtic form which continued into the Roman period, often portrayed in the hands of auxiliaries. Most shields would have been made of leather, wood, or a combination of the two. The offerings of oval shields that were found in Lake Neuchâtel, at La Tène, were made of wooden planks.¹⁷¹ A miniature example, in chalk, with a spine, a round boss and no handle, was found on a settlement site at Garton Slack (Stead's list). There is no reason why there should not have been models of organic materials.

The discovery in 1985 of the Iron Age Chertsey shield, made entirely of bronze, is the best known recent discovery of a full-sized, oval shield (see above); it is also a reminder that prestige weapons such as swords and

¹⁶¹ Bradford & Goodchild, op. cit. note 155, pl. V (facing p. 14).

¹⁶² M. Green, 'Romano-British Non-Ceramic Model Objects in South-East Britain', *Archaeol. Jnl.*, cxxxii (1975), 64.

¹⁶³ M. Green, 'Model Objects from Military Areas of Roman Britain', *Britannia*, xii (1981), 260-2 & fig. 4, no. 4b.

¹⁶⁴ I.R. Scott, 'Daggers', in W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of the Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum* (1985), 152-9 and pls. 73, 74 & 75.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Bartlett, publication pending. I am very grateful to Richard for his generous help.

¹⁶⁶ Manning, op. cit. note 164, pp. 148-152 and pls. 71 & 72.

¹⁶⁷ G. Tisserand, 'Les Ex-Voto du Site de Flavivier à Mouzon' in *Revue Archéologique de l'Est* (1980), 61-73, ref. to foundation depos. p. 62. A copy of this article was kindly sent me by Mademoiselle Marie-Luce Muracciole.

¹⁶⁸ I.M. Stead, 'Many More Iron Age Shields from Britain', *Antiq. Jnl.*, lxxi (1991), 31, G, Miniature Shields.

¹⁶⁹ A.J. Lawson, 'Mixed Hoard near Salisbury', *Brit. Archaeol. News* (December, 1993), 11. (C.B.A.)

¹⁷⁰ M. Green, 'A Votive Model Shield from Langley, Oxfordshire', *Oxf. Jnl. of Archaeol.*, vi (1987), 237-242, and 238, fig 8.

¹⁷¹ A. Vouga, *La Tène* (1923), Leipzig, pls. XVI and XVIII.

shields were symbols of status, particularly in a warrior society; the votive deposition of weapons has a long and complex history. Miniature weapons may have been offerings to a god of war or the offerings of soldiers, but it is possible that they reflected status, like their full-sized prototypes.

The ploughshare buried in an Iron Age context at the bottom of one of the postholes is part of an ancient ritual practice of deliberate burial of a foundation deposit as an offering to the earth before commencement of activity. In an Iron Age farming community, the foremost preoccupation would have been for the fertility of the human and animal population, and of the land. The choice of a ploughshare suggests that this burial, beneath one of the posts set into and therefore disturbing the ground, was a fertility deposit.

During Harding's excavations of 1964-6, an unusual, fragmentary sword-chape was discovered in the same layer as late 'pre-Belgic' Iron Age pottery, at the bottom of a large pit, just within the perimeter of the stake circle. This sword-chape was given a suggested date of later 1st century B.C., by Jope. Unfortunately, the relationship of pit and postholes had been destroyed when the annexe was added to the rectilinear temple.¹⁷² However, whether deposited in the lower filling of a pit or in a post hole, a handsome, technically-complicated chape could well have been a votive deposit. A chape was also found at Wood Eaton. Jope describes how the Frilford example was inlaid with bronze, using a technique known before only in horse-bits.¹⁷³

LEES REST

The fourth scheduled Oxfordshire temple lies at the edge of a field outside Charlbury, about a mile and a half south-west of Ditchley. Very close to it is a spring which feeds a large pond. The site lies on a gently sloping promontory which overlooks the River Evenlode, 2 kms to the south. This triple-ditched, square enclosure was first observed from aerial photographs along with several similar sites in the area; the southern part of it was not visible because of a covering of trees. Recent geophysical survey has confirmed the outline of the walls of the enclosure which are broken by a probable entrance on the south-east side. A small excavation took place in 1960, under the direction of Mr. Richard Linington, who disappeared to Italy and died, without having written more than a short interim report on his excavation.¹⁷⁴ Most of the material discovered could have been found on any small farming site: ironwork - mostly nails, fragments of pottery, tile, and bone. But there were a few artefacts that were unexpected on a site of this kind.¹⁷⁵

The Votive Objects. A small stone head was found, 6 cm. high, 4.8 cm. wide and 4.5 cm. deep. It had been carved in the round from oolithic limestone, and was very worn. There was no sign of any more of the figure, but the remains of a *petasos* or travelling cap and two little stumps of wings on top of the head indicate that this was Mercury, whose cult was popular in Roman Britain (Fig. 23).¹⁷⁶

Several small bronze artefacts were discovered: a brooch which is a variation on the Polden Hill type, with a typical Polden Hill spring and a flat, grooved, sideways extension to the top of its bow, the lower end of which is twisted to one side. It can be compared with Hull type 103, produced mainly in the 1st century and found most commonly in the Lower Severn area.

A T-shaped brooch with a similar spring arrangement. The rounded, tapering bow is decorated in the middle with a wide, grooved, annular band, which is loose and can be removed from the shallow groove in the bow into which it fits. A similar decorative band can be seen on a gold Knotenfibel from Hampshire.¹⁷⁷

A La Tène III type, simple, one-piece brooch, that is sturdy and complete except for the tip of its pin; its parallel sides that taper sharply above the catchplate are bordered by a thin, single groove, across which are little horizontal nicks. The type is a Nauheim derivative and is very common in Britain; the earliest may be found in late 1st-century B.C. contexts, but as it was cheap and easy to make, it continued for the less affluent during the 1st century A.D.

Two penannular brooches, one complete with pin, and the ring of buckle, which is circular except for one side which has a flat edge to be enclosed by the end of a belt. It is flat underneath, with a curving profile. The pin, if

¹⁷² Harding, *op. cit.* note 158, p. 9.

¹⁷³ M. Jope, 'Appendix ii', in Harding, *op. cit.* note 158, p. 19.

¹⁷⁴ R. Linington, 'Excavations at Lees Rest, Charlbury, 1960' *Top. Oxon.* No. 8, Spring 1962 (copy in S.M.R.)

¹⁷⁵ I am most grateful to Major & Mrs. Potter for showing me the site and the finds in their possession.

¹⁷⁶ M. Henig, *C.S.I.R.*, i, 7, p. 23, pl. 20. Not located by Henig or present writer.

¹⁷⁷ R. Hattat, *Brooches of Antiquity* (1987), 28, fig. 11 and no. 749.

there was one, is missing. There are also three brooch fragments and the bezel of a ring, which is set with a pale green glass imitation gemstone, moulded in cameo, which stands high in the bezel (Fig. 24). A design of three raised 'blobs' can be seen, a not uncommon design for a setting of the native type described above. Such settings were degenerate imitations of classical carved gemstones and would have belonged, probably, to those wishing to ape upper class, Roman ways. A seal ring supposes at least a pretence at literacy.¹⁷⁸

Also found were fragments of bones from a very small child. Although the Romans had strict rules about burying their dead away from inhabited areas, this rule did not apply to infants. Nevertheless, it could be of religious significance here. There were a great many pottery and tile fragments. Amongst them, Kirk identified fragments of possible hypocaust tile.

GILL MILL

It is possible that there was a temple at Gill Mill, near Ducklington, on the River Windrush, where sample trenching by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1989 uncovered part of a major, linear Roman settlement laid out on either side of a Roman road. Fuller excavation revealed part of a village. Finds included numerous coins of the 3rd and 4th centuries in particular, tesserae, pottery and glass fragments, bronze and lead objects, and a carved stone relief of a genius in two pieces, the break being ancient.¹⁷⁹ The genius stands, facing frontwards, within an *aedicula*. He has the remains of a patera in his right hand and a cornucopia in his left (Fig. 25).¹⁸⁰ Set into the wall of one of the buildings of the mill, close by, is a relief sculpture of a warrior god on horseback, possibly Mars (Fig. 26).¹⁸¹ A datestone gives a clue as to when it was placed there. The inscription reads 'E B / W S / 1853'. The relief, carved on oolithic limestone, has suffered from long exposure to bad weather. The head and body of the rider are badly abraded and the horse's lower legs are missing. The horse wears a bridle and is shown in profile facing left. Its rider has a shield at his side and holds what appears to be a short sword out in front of him.

DISCUSSION

Consideration of the votive material has led to a number of interesting conclusions for the temples of Oxfordshire. The four sites are clearly different in character. At Woodeaton there was, as we have seen, a very large number of small, copper alloy artefacts. Some had been well-made, but a great many had obviously been put together very quickly, simply and cheaply. Pieces of what was probably scrap sheet metal had been hammered over coins to make 'temple coins'. Some of the plaques and 'feathers' or 'leaves' had been made from partly worked material, possibly scrap. Spears were evidently manufactured on the spot and rings made from 'chopped up' bracelets.

What has not been included in a summary of the votive material is that copper alloy rods have been found, which might have been used for making tiny coins,¹⁸² also partly worked bars of bronze, four possible punches, a sprue,¹⁸³ and a large quantity of what may well have been scrap metal for re-cycling. This knowledge, together with the coin evidence,¹⁸⁴ suggests

¹⁷⁸ M. Henig, 'A Group of Imitation Engraved Gems from Romano-British Sites and its Significance', *Arepo*, 2 (April 1969), pp. 9-13.

¹⁷⁹ P. Booth, *South Midlands Archaeol.*, xxi (1991), 95-6, fig. 10.

¹⁸⁰ M. Henig, *C.S.I.R.* i, 7, 14, no. 36 and pl. 12.

¹⁸¹ M. Henig, *C.S.I.R.* i, 7, 41, no. 124 and pl. 32.

¹⁸² G. Boon, 'Romano-British Counterfeits on Mendip and in South Wales: Two Deposits and a Discussion', *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spel. Soc.* 13.1 (1972), 70-82; Goodchild & Kirk, *op. cit.* note 64, p. 30, no. 9.

¹⁸³ Kirk, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 30, no. 16 and fig. 7, no. 7.

¹⁸⁴ Milne, *op. cit.* note 3, 101-9 and pl. XIV; 'Coins obtained by Sir Arthur Evans', *Numism. Chron.*, xiii (1933), 81-7 & pl. X.

bronze-working and the sale of small bronze goods, possibly controlled by the temple officials. The area round the temple had been occupied from the early Iron Age and Woodeaton may well have been a religious focus before the Roman occupation. Some late Iron Age material has been found among the votive objects and, whilst this may reflect the 'heirloom factor', it may not. Harding believed that bronze was being worked on the site in the Iron Age.¹⁸⁵

Woodeaton lies at the top of a low hill on what may possibly have been the boundary between two Celtic tribes, the Catuvellauni and the Dobunni.¹⁸⁶ The River Cherwell runs N-S to the west of Woodeaton and the marshy and, in those days, inhospitable area of Otmoor lies to the east. Such sites appear frequently to have been chosen for pre-Roman religious centres.¹⁸⁷ The Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester is known to have passed not far from the temple site. There were, doubtless, other roads and tracks leading, for example, to the villa which has been recently discovered at Islip, to a small manufacturing site at Druns Hill at nearby Elsfield, and to the temple. Perhaps Roman troops used the main road in the early push north-west and visited the temple as they passed by. This might have been one reason for the early success of this temple with its cult of Mars. However, Mars appealed not only in his classical warrior role. In fact, he is better known as an agricultural god and as a peaceful protector. As such, he would have appealed to most of the population. The other deity whose cult appears to be demonstrated by the votive material at Woodeaton is Venus. Apart from her more obvious concerns Venus, like other female deities in Romano-Celtic religion, would have had some connection with fertility or prosperity, which would have been of universal appeal. Like the Wheelers at Lydney, Kirk believed that the offering of so much feminine jewellery was associated with women and childbirth, which fits well with the interpretation of Venus. The site was evidently deserted in the 4th century, and only the occasional Saxon surface find has been discovered there.

The temple, which was almost certainly on Lowbury Hill, was a hilltop site, not far from long-distance routes which had been important from pre-Roman times. The only evidence of cult is the pipeclay cock's head and the discovery of many bones from sheep, which are associated with the worship of Mercury. There may well be more evidence of cult, if further excavation of the site is undertaken. The ceremonial spears which appear to have been used as 'rattles' are unlikely to mean a cult of Isis. They are probably an example of the adoption and conflation of Roman religious practice in Romano-Celtic religion. The discovery of an unusually large number of full-sized weapons and of agricultural implements suggests, perhaps, a cult of Mars, in his dual role of god of war and god of agriculture: at Uley, confusion between Mars and Mercury has been noted.¹⁸⁸ Again, there was evidence of earlier occupation here, increasing in the Late Iron Age. Destruction of the temple can be seen from the robbed-out walls, and an idea of the date when this may have happened from the now-dated skeleton. But even after abandonment, the site was evidently still considered 'holy' and suitable for the burial of a clearly important, presumably pagan, British chieftain in the 7th century.

Like Woodeaton, Frilford was possibly a religious boundary site (see above). The Berkshire Downs and the Thames Valley would have provided a natural barrier between the Dobunni

¹⁸⁵ D.W. Harding, *Excavations in Oxfordshire, 1964-6*, ii (Univ. of Edinburgh Dept. of Archaeol. Occasional Paper xv, 1987), 33.

¹⁸⁶ M.J.T. Lewis, *Temples in Roman Britain* (1966), 130.

¹⁸⁷ E. Stevens, 'The Frilford Site - A Postscript', *Oxoniensia*, v, (1940), 166-7.

¹⁸⁸ Woodward & Leach, *op. cit.* note 20, p. 115.

and the Atrebates, and Frilford an ideal crossing place for the River Ock. There was considerable evidence at Frilford for Iron Age occupation. Haematite coated pottery suggests either trade, or exchange of ideas and techniques, with potters on the other side of the territory controlled by the Atrebates. In spite of Harding's latest cautious interpretation of the site, it is difficult to believe that the Iron Age penannular enclosure under the 'rotunda' in particular was not religious in character. The problem he found of lack of continuity of occupation in the final stages of the Iron Age might have meant that ritual activity was now happening elsewhere, or perhaps had changed character leaving no material evidence. However, this sequence of occupation would be difficult to prove. The date for the building of the 'rotunda' remained enigmatic, but Harding was able to re-date the building of the rectilinear temple to the later 2nd century A.D. Further excavation at Frilford would be useful to discover the character and relationship of the buildings known to have existed close by.

Lees Rest is about a mile and a half from the important villa at Ditchley. It seems likely that this small temple was associated with the villa. The character of the site was suggested by the discovery of the little head of Mercury and the pieces of jewellery, which are richer than would have been expected had this been a simple farm. There were also fragments, possibly from the type of tile used in building hypocausts. While this in no way proves that there was a hypocaust, it is interesting. The area around the temple produced pottery and flint evidence of many earlier periods. Perhaps significant is the choice of nearby Charlbury for a minster church.

It seems quite likely that there may have been a small temple at Gill Mill, where a Roman road is known to have crossed the river. The stone reliefs and coins, in particular, suggest the presence of a religious focus of some kind, which would explain why a settlement should have grown up in an out of the way place that was low-lying and liable to flooding.

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