

The Pattern of Settlement in Roman Britain

By S. APPLEBAUM

MR Glanville Jones's article 'Settlement Patterns in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Antiquity* (xxxv, 1961, pp. 221-32) led to a passage of arms between himself and Mr Leslie Alcock in the subsequent number of the same periodical (*ibid.*, xxxvi, 1962, pp. 51-55). Mr Glanville Jones's views on the problem of continuity from pre-Saxon to certain later settlement patterns may be right or may be wrong; but they do not arise from a whim or a sudden flash of insight; they have been evolved during a period of prolonged research. Not less important, they reflect a trend in thinking which is reacting against the Simon-pure school of discontinuity between Roman Britain and what came after it: a school which has held the field till recent years. In consequence, whatever ultimately emerges from Mr Jones's line of thought, it is part of a broader movement and as such is performing the service of provoking new considerations and opening up new horizons.

Mr Jones's contention, if it may be summarized in the briefest possible fashion without danger of distortion, is that Celtic society was in greater part based on the common-field system with its accompaniment of nucleated settlements, whose occupants were bondmen, and that certain tenurial patterns recorded in the Middle Ages, not only in Wales and northern England, but also in southern England, more particularly where they involve the phenomenon of discrete estates, go back to the Celtic—and by implication to the Romano-British—pattern.

In the context of this controversy, it seems important to establish what is known, and what is *not* known, of the Romano-British pattern, and how the controversy bears on the archaeology of Roman Britain. Mr Alcock, in his reply to Mr Jones, states: "The Romano-British pattern of agriculture and settlement is remarkably well known," and "in lowland Britain" (in reference to the Roman period) "nucleated settlement is unknown." I am far from convinced that we know so much about the Romano-British settlement pattern. We certainly ought to know much more than we do after so much work; and two years' concentrated study of the Romano-British lowland zone in 1949-51 did not persuade me that the phenomena had been scrutinized as thoroughly as they should be. Very rarely, for instance, has a thorough study been published of a Roman villa or villa-group in relation to its environment.

The late Mr S. E. Winbolt got near to it at Wiggonholt, Sussex; I made an attempt in the same direction for the Basingstoke district; Dr Finberg's paper on Withington suffered from the incompleteness of Roman evidence round the site investigated.¹ Although Messrs Wooldridge and Linton have made generalizations about the close correlation of Roman settlement with the medium (or intermediate) loams,² nowhere have I found a published soils map on to which Roman sites have been imposed, though something like it must have been prepared in the course of the work that produced the second and third editions of the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain.

In the meantime, however, can we make any statements at all about the Romano-British settlement pattern? Was the distribution of rural settlement in Roman Britain composed of dispersed sites, or of 'nucleated' villages; and whichever was the case, can the pattern be related to subsequent tenurial arrangements in this country?

Now it is a peculiar fact that, if I have understood Mr Jones's contentions aright, their vindication requires a *dispersed peripheral* pattern (i.e. the discrete estates) related to given centres, rather than actual nucleated settlements as we normally understand them. It is also true that these discrete estates are described as hamlets, i.e. presumably nucleated settlements, by Mr Jones; but this is a distinct problem.³ The first question to be answered is: Has Roman Britain any signs of peripheral distributions? It may be useful to preface a rejoinder by referring to a course of research I carried out a few years ago in France, where I attempted to discover what archaeological distribution was reflected in the Carolingian cartularies of Gaul, which described domains, many of which patently perpetuated in numerous respects the tenurial structure and techniques of late Roman estates. The result of this enquiry was to disclose that 'nucleated' villages certainly existed on Carolingian estates, but that some of the component domains appeared on the Roman archaeological map as estate-centres surrounded by rings of peripheral holdings (*mansi*). This discovery establishes at least the possibility

¹ For Wiggonholt, see below, p. 7; the Basingstoke area, *Papers and Proc. Hampshire Field Club*, xviii, 1953, pp. 126-7.—H. P. R. Finberg, *Roman and Saxon Withington*, Leicester Univ. Press, 1955. Mr Raleigh Radford's work on the Ditchley villa, Oxfordshire (*Antiquity*, ix, 1936, pp. 472 sqq.; *Oxoniensia*, I, 1936, pp. 24 sqq.), suggested the probability of the out-settlement of slaves around the villa in the fourth century, but did not test the hypothesis by actual examination of the sites.

² *Antiquity*, vii, 1933, pp. 297 sqq.; cf. Fox, *ibid.*, pp. 473 sqq.

³ See *Antiquity*, xxxv, pp. 221 sqq. 'Die Entwicklung der ländlichen Besiedlung in Wales', *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie*, x, Heft 2, Oct. 1962, pp. 174 sqq.; 'Early Territorial Organization in England and Wales', *Geografiska Annaler*, xliii, 1961, pp. 174 sqq.; 'Some Medieval Rural Settlements in North Wales', *Trans. & Papers of the Inst. of Brit. Geographers*, 1953, no. 19, pp. 51 sqq.

that Roman Britain might present parallel phenomena; it also warns us that whatever they turn out to be, they are likely to be complex rather than uniform.

The appearance of a peripheral distribution, however, is connected with a social system embodying the coexistence of dominants and dependants, whether the latter are bond or nominally free. It should therefore be re-emphasized at the outset that the existence of a *colonate* is known to us in Roman Britain, at least in the fourth century A.D.; British *coloni* are specifically alluded to in the Theodosian Code. This implies one or other of two conclusions, although one does not necessarily exclude the other. Assuming that the villa (i.e. the country house constituting the centre of a large estate) was generally cultivated at least in part by *coloni*, then they must have lived either at or near the villa itself in a group, or dispersed about it. The first picture is presented at the French villas of Anthée and Chiragan, where the numerous dwellings of the cultivators are ranged systematically in the close vicinity of the estate-owner's sumptuous dwelling.¹ The second picture is discernible in the 'peripheral' pattern detected by the writer east of Reims. If the 'peripheral' pattern of (presumably) dispersed farms is not accepted, then the alternative is the concentration of the *coloni* at or near the villa itself—in which case the villa becomes in all essentials a nucleated settlement. This is where Mr Alcock's denial of nucleated settlements in Roman Britain collides with his equally spirited rejection of the existence of dispersed holdings in the neighbourhood of Roman villas.

There is, of course, a way out of the dilemma: you can claim that the Romano-British estates were run predominantly by slave labour. There are several answers to this. (1) The concentration of slaves on the estate itself implies, in effect, a topographically nucleated settlement, since even slaves must be housed and fed. (2) We cannot ignore the evidence of the Theodosian Code on British *coloni*; and (3) In the later Empire, the distinction between slaves and *coloni* had become increasingly obsolete. Saint Melania, who owned lands in Britain, also owned estates in Sicily worked by numerous "servi agricultores," i.e. slaves settled out as tenants (an obviously peripheral pattern); and *serviles* formed at least one of the three categories of tenant on the Carolingian estates.

Having thus projected a picture on the basis of a theory and of analogy, what do we actually find? First, there are a number of villas in Britain which include among their outbuildings aisled 'barn' or 'basilical' structures which

¹ *Annales de la Société des antiquariens de Namur*, XIV, 1877, pp. 165-94; XV, 1881, pp. 1-40; L. Joulin, *Les établissements gallo-romains de Martres-Tolosanes*, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, XI, 1901.

are generally regarded as having housed working hands. It would be of great interest could we decide whether these were occupied by slaves or by *coloni*. The question is more complicated than it may seem, for in some of these buildings what have been thought to be the supports of posts demarcating the aisles may actually have been the supports of raised floors (as at Lullingstone, Kent); in other instances the dimensions of the aisles make it clear that they housed cattle or horses, and the nave may well have been used in such cases for storing fodder and crops.¹ But assuming that workers were housed here, as can indeed be shown in some basilican buildings, our view of the character and class of the inmates is bound to be influenced by the origin of this form of building and by the existence of independent 'basilical' farmhouses which remained the principal buildings of their establishments. The origin of the basilical house is to be found in the prehistoric Early Iron Age cultures of north-west Europe, particularly of Holland, in the combined dwelling-house and byre which was the ancestor of the self-contained medieval Frisian and German farmhouses.² The type figures in Celtic literature, which makes it clear that the kindred and clients of the chief slept in the aisles with the livestock, while the chief slept in the room at the end of the building. It is accordingly evident that in a Celtic context this is the abode of the chief and his kindred, not of bondmen and their families. This has its bearing on the tenurial problem, for it means that in the Roman period such dwellings are not *a priori* likely to have housed slaves,³ and when they occur independently, they would not generally represent the dwellings of bondmen. Exactly why according to present archaeological evidence they appear in Britain only in the second century A.D. is a difficult problem. A recently excavated example at Exning, Suffolk, turned out to be the earliest certain datable instance so far known (early second century).⁴ In the early third century the whole building was rebuilt in stone and a dining room with a mosaic pavement was added at the east end exactly where according to Celtic literature the chief would have had his suite. This particular house also possessed

¹ Cf. the important remarks of Professor Van Giffen on the Frisian and Saxon aisled farmhouses, *Germania*, xxxvi, 1958, pp. 68-71.

² For the literature, see *Agric. Hist. Rev.*, vi, 1958, p. 76, note 1, to which should now be added Van Giffen, *Germania*, xxxvi, 1958, pp. 45 sqq., 'Prähistorische Hausforme auf Sandböden in den Niederlanden'.

³ Belgic chiefs were certainly employing slaves on their farms in the pre-Roman and early Roman periods; cf. slave-irons found at Bigberry hillfort, at Lord's Bridge, and Camulodunum (pre-Roman), and at the early villa at Park Street, Hertfordshire. But such finds are unrecorded in later villas. For a possible *ergastulum* in a British villa, probably of 4th-century date, cf. the long narrow range on the north of the courtyard of Pitney, Somerset, with its immensely thick walls (C. Hoare, *The Pitney Pavement*, 1832). But this is the only example I know in Britain.

⁴ *Journal of Roman Studies*, L, 1960, p. 228.

lateral entrances on the long sides, dividing the hall roughly into two, and providing a through passage from side to side, exactly as occurs in the three-room Pembrokeshire cottages and their Welsh Dark Age predecessors with 'outshuts' studied by Sir Cyril Fox.¹ The Exning house thus not only provides a link with Dark Age Wales, but demonstrates that such buildings reflected a peculiar Celtic social structure even under Roman rule.

Something of the function of the independent basilical house can be ascertained from a study of the example at Stroud near Petersfield, Hampshire.² The distinctive features of this villa were: (a) the large basilical hall, with room for working hands; (b) the granary and three stalls for pairs of oxen situated on the east of the yard; (c) the bath accommodation, which is far in excess of the needs of the inmates of this farm alone; (d) a polygonal temple of typical Celtic plan to the east of the dwelling. The relatively small granary and number of ox-teams clearly bear no relation to the number of people living in the house or to the still larger number using the baths. The shrine, moreover, is of a type normally standing isolated in country districts and serving a series of scattered sites. It may be no coincidence, therefore, that four miles to the north of the villa is the village of Liss, whose name is derived from the Celtic word for a 'palace' in the sense of the centre of a large estate. Stroud is only interpretable as part of a cultivated area larger than its own, subordinated to another centre, and having other smaller points subordinate to itself.

Something more is added to our knowledge by the villa of West Blatchington, Sussex.³ Here an Early Iron Age site was superseded in the first and second centuries by a grain-producing farm of Romano-British native type. In the later second century a straight north-south boundary ditch was dug to the east of the site, cutting through one of the farm's second-century corn-drying kilns. This boundary turned out to be part of a mathematically surveyed 'grid' of chessboard fields, another part of which was detected to northward on an air-photograph. We cannot be completely certain that the 'grid' (which was clearly related to the typically Roman method of land division known as *limitatio*, and popularly as centuriation) and the villa were associated. But the chronology of these features suggests they were; both belonged to the 'new order'. A drastic change of tenure had taken place, and a typically Celtic house-plan had appeared, albeit in a romanized version. *Limitatio*, almost invariably the work of an authority (the government, the

¹ *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond*, ed. Grimes, 1951, pp. 124-43. For a similar 'through' passage cf. the basilical villa of West Meon, Hampshire, *Arch. Jour.*, LXIV, pp. 1 sqq.

² *Arch. Jour.*, LXVI, pp. 33 sqq.

³ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, LXXXIX, 1951, pp. 1-66.

military, a municipality), has no sense unless its purpose is to allot land among cultivators—newcomers or occupants or both; a relationship of tenancy is therefore clear. In some way or other, then, authority was here using a combination of Roman methods and native forms to organize (or reorganize) land-settlement on a tenant basis.

From the above cases it may be deduced that some basilical farm-houses were embodied in large estates comprising a number of dispersed holdings; others were the centres of continuous blocks of land systematically divided up among tenants whose place of residence is at present obscure. My own guess is that in both instances some of the tenants dwelt in the basilical house, because they were kindred or clients of the landlord or lessee. In either event, the first form represents dispersed or peripheral settlement (hamlets or individual farmsteads), the second a species of nucleation. My own study of the Basingstoke district, indeed, was strongly suggestive of 'peripheral' tenures about villa-centres in that area. In the same region, also, the name of Woodgarston (recorded as *Wealagaerstone* in 945), immediately south of the late-occupied villa of Balchester, may well have been derived from a group of *coloni* attached to the villa, who survived the Saxon conquest. Further suggestive of such peripheral tenure are the Roman place-names Sulloniacae (Brockley Hill) and Vagniacae (Springhead), whose terminations carry the meaning 'property of'; the implied first word was *villae*, so that a group of farms in one area is meant.¹

Clearly, we must be ready for considerable variation of pattern. At Great Wymondley, Hertfordshire, the east limit of the medieval field-system surrounding the villa-site coincided with a Roman road, and the fields show plain signs of retaining within them a Roman 'grid' division into squares of 200 *iugera*. Remains of a Romano-British settlement have been found to south-east of the villa.² Hence while it is clear that the villa's land was systematically divided into tenancies, further study is required to ascertain whether the tenants were concentrated in the villa, lived in a hamlet nearby, or were dispersed in individual steadings within the measured area.

If the Cliffe *limitatio* (north-west of Rochester, Kent) is accepted as genuine—and I see no reason to doubt it—its centre appears to have been the villa

¹ See 'A Note on Three Romano-British Placenames', *Journal of the British Arch. Assoc.*, 3rd ser., xvii, 1954, pp. 77–8; the stamps of Sullonius, derived from here, have been found at Corbridge (*Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., xv, p. 280, fig. 12), and several kilns have been excavated on the site of Sulloniacae (Brockley Hill; see *London and Middlesex Arch. Soc. Trans.*, n.s., x, 1951, et seq.). The site may therefore have consisted of a pottery industry with several farms in the vicinity. For 'Celtic' fields in the neighbourhood, see *ibid.*, p. 228, n. 3.

² *Agric. Hist. Rev.*, vi, 1958, p. 73; cf. F. Seebohm, *The English Village Community*, 1896, map facing p. 432; VCH *Herts.*, iv, p. 196; *E. Herts. Arch. Soc. Trans.*, x, pp. 11 sqq.

at Frindsbury at its south-east corner.¹ The comparative rarity of Roman finds over the area of the 'grid' would suggest that here we have a case of the concentration of *coloni* at the villa itself.

As stated, the ecology of the Roman villa in Britain, i.e. its relation to its environment, has been all too little studied, but a word may be said of Bignor, Sussex.² The size of the villa-estate here can be estimated on the basis of its granary-capacity, ox-stalls, and natural boundaries, and it was possible to ascertain what remains, beside the house, were known within these limits. Five or six sites have been identified in the western half of the area, and one, much more doubtful, in the eastern half. In addition, there is a Romano-British 'kite' enclosure on the chalk escarpment to south of the villa, which is likely to have played a part in the economy of the estate, and a much larger enclosure on the Downs to south-westward, though pre-Roman, continued to be used in the Roman period, perhaps by the villa (a rational proportion could be discerned between the size of the villa's sheepfold and the enclosed grazing area), suggesting that its proprietors exercised control over areas of the 'Celtic' cultivation on the chalk.

Interesting from this point of view is the villa at Wiggonholt, Sussex. Its excavator, the late S. E. Winbolt, perspicaciously published the finds in its vicinity, and when superimposed on a local soil map their distribution has something to tell us.³ Four other minor Romano-British homesteads existed near the main house, each commanding a distinctive patch of arable soil, but so close to it as to suggest a relationship of tenancy. This suggestion was reinforced by one interesting detail, namely, that on one of the sites loom-weights were found. Although spindle whorls are frequent on Romano-British sites, loom-weights are much less so, and in two cases where they have been recorded they occurred in association with extensive iron-working.⁴ The conclusion would seem to be that in Roman Britain spinning was a common occupation, but that weaving was carried on at a comparatively few centres, some of which were industrial. (We know that at least one weaving mill was a state concern in the fourth century.) It seems highly probable, therefore, that some of the villas possessed weaving industries, operated by

¹ M. Nightingale, *Arch. Cantiana*, LXV, 1952, pp. 150 sqq.

² The succeeding details are derived from an unpublished study by the writer; for certain information he is glad to acknowledge the assistance of Mr T. Bertram and Mr T. Tupper of Bignor.

³ *Sussex Notes and Queries*, III, 1930, pp. 37-40; for the villa, *Suss. Arch. Collns*, LXXVIII, pp. 13 sqq.; LXXXI, pp. 55 sqq.

⁴ Thealby, Lincolnshire (Dudley, *Early Days in North-West Lincolnshire*, 1939, p. 193, where cf. Professor Hawkes's view that the iron workings were leased to *coloni*); Westbury: *Devizes Museum Catalogue*, II, 1934, p. 180, pl. lvi, 3-5; both were villa-sites.

the tenants. Evidence for such practices in Gaul can be cited from Carolingian estate documents. In Britain the government weaving mill was at Winchester, and it must be presumed that it drew its raw material from the surrounding country. This is not in itself evidence of a tenurial relationship, but it may well suggest the existence of crown domain in the vicinity. The villa-group centred on Andover has been marked by several students as likely to have constituted a single estate, and an imperial inscription has been found at one of its farms (Clanville), set up by the Emperor Carinus (283-4).¹ Carinus' personal administration of Gaul, Germany, and Britain was restricted to the year 283, in the course of which he is known to have taken the title "Britannicus Maximus," and also to have been faced with the revolt of the Gallic Bagaudae, which he fought but did not succeed in suppressing. A milestone of Carinus is known at Bitterne near Southampton, the natural port of entry for the Andover district, and it is attractive to explain this emperor's concern with both points, and his title of Britannicus, by a large imperial estate in central Hampshire and a movement of rebellious peasantry which he suppressed there. In that case, the estates of the Andover district may be assumed to have been run on a colonate basis.

Now the basilical villa of Eastfield, near Thruxton, in this region, is shown by air-photographs to have been associated with 'Celtic' fields. There are other sites of Roman rural buildings at Shoddesden and Warren Hill in western Hampshire which are set in the midst of closely woven webs of similar plots. Another similar case is known at Stancombe Down, Berkshire, and yet another near Kingston, Dorset. Here we may recall that the Fenlands of East Anglia, Cambridgeshire, and south Lincolnshire, with their extensive 'Celtic' field patterns,² are generally regarded as having constituted imperial domain; at least, it can hardly be doubted that they were initially drained and settled by government initiative.³ Such patterns, of course, are not confined to Hampshire or the Fenlands, but extended over much of the chalk uplands and the Thames gravels, and have more recently been disclosed on the gravel areas of the east and western Midlands. It certainly cannot be proved that all such areas were crown estates, though much of them may have been. The *regionarius* who left an inscription at Bath in the later second or third century

¹ J. Liversidge, *Roman Villas in Britain*, 1949 (Cambridge Univ. M.Litt. thesis—unpubl.), p. 331; I. A. Richmond in Council for Brit. Arch., *Research Rpt. I: Romano-British Villas, Some Current Problems*, 1955, p. 34; VCH Hants., 1, p. 297.

² Examination of specimen areas recorded from the air shows that at least two phases supervene one upon another in some localities, and that there recur from place to place patterns which hardly belong to the accepted 'Celtic' types.

³ Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlement*, 1937, p. 233; cf. *Jour. Rom. Stud.*, xxx, 1940, p. 186.

may well have looked after such an estate on Salisbury Plain;¹ a section of the 'Celtic' field-area of the Berkshire Downs is cut off from the lowlands on the north by a travelling dyke (the Grime's Ditch) almost certainly Roman and of administrative character, that suggests state action; and it is tempting to link the peculiar tradition of Abingdon's connection with the Emperor Constantine² with the native field-areas of the Thames gravels in that region.

Conjectures apart, the existence of the 'Celtic' field-areas faces us with the question: What do they represent in the spheres of tenure and agrarian structure?

The detailed study and recording of the so-called 'Celtic' field system of England is in mid-channel, and one hopes that first conclusions are not far off. Of similar traces on the gravel areas an admirable first account has been published by H.M. Ministry of Works.³ Where the Fenland systems are concerned, it is difficult to know how far its students have passed the stage of uttering appropriate sounds of wonder and admiration at the harvest of their own air-cameras; one may hope that the end of this era (long over-due) has arrived. In the meantime, very few scholars have endeavoured to tackle (at least in print) the problem of what the 'Celtic' system meant agriculturally and economically. To the credit of the archaeologists it must be admitted that some of them are still grappling with the complex problem of date (far from solved in the English lowland region, though not existent to the same extent in the Fenlands). A social interpretation of the pattern may possibly come out of Wales and Ireland. Be that as it may, Mr Jones's doctrine has to be adjusted to the existence of these field systems if it is to stand up to the test.

Is this an 'open-field' or an 'enclosed-field' system? The field complex at Cush, Co. Limerick, Ireland, investigated by the late Professor O'Riordáin, which resembles much of the Irish field-divisions still surviving and also the English 'Celtic' patterns, is one of plots enclosed by banks.⁴ Mr C. E. Stevens has pointed out to me that a passage in Caesar (*Bell. Gall.*, II, 17) seems to provide a clue showing that the fields of the Belgic Nervii were enclosed by quick-set hedges. The Belgic farm at Wyboston, Bedfordshire, as excavated, is an isolated steading with distinctly demarcated plots. On the other hand, if my interpretation of the Figchellean Down complex (Wiltshire) is right, it implies that cattle had to be kept off the summer fields by boundary dykes, and that the winter crop was protected by a fence, which would mean that

¹ *CIL*, VII, 45; cf. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Lat. Sel.* (1892), 2768, 2769.

² *VCH Berks.*, I, p. 202.

³ The Royal Commission for Historical Monuments: *A Matter of Time: the Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*. 1960.

⁴ *Proc. Roy. Acad. Ireland*, XLVI, pp. 142-5, 175 sqq.

the stock were then on the summer fields, by implication not effectively enclosed.¹ Yet Celtic fields both in the Vosges and in Yorkshire were enclosed by stone walls, and the boundaries of the Wessex plots must have been effectively marked by mounds, hedges, or fences to have left traces visible in air-photographs.

The second vital problem is whether the settlement pattern of the 'Celtic' field system was—at least in Roman times—dispersed or nucleated. It is surprising that after so many years of work we are still unable to give a clear answer to this question. What is plain is that Little Woodbury was not the last word, and that such a complex as Figcheldean Down represents something more than a single family. From that point of view, the date of this complex is unimportant; it seems to me highly probable that close local investigation will ultimately show that (e.g. in Sussex) some blocks of downland fields were worked not by isolated farmsteads but by hamlets of small adjacent dwellings, of which Park Brow was perhaps an example.² The group recently excavated at Studland, Dorset, is another.³ But this was not, I think, invariable, and other areas characterized by isolated steadings are exemplified by the Cranbourne Chase sites. In relation to the last, a case has been made for identifying the *Anicetis* of Ravennas with the Roman villa of Tarrant Hinton.⁴ This name can be associated with a state contractor leasing to *coloni*, and its plural form suggests a group of farms, likely to be in adjacent Cranbourne Chase, which current doctrine holds to have been state domain.

Bound up with the distribution problem is that of tenure. Mr Jones suggests a connection between peripheral or discrete hamlets and hillforts. British prehistorians do not seem to have finally decided whether hillforts were more than temporary points of concentration in times of war, but at least in the 'B' and Belgic phases agriculture was carried on at Caburn, Maiden Castle, Worlebury, and Bigberry, to cite some well-established cases. Recently, travelling to Cambridge, I was immensely impressed by the fertility of the soil in the immediate vicinity of the Belgic hillfort of Sandy, where heavy iron coulter have been found. Elsewhere I have pointed out the apparent close connection between the associated boundary-dykes and drove-ways on Figcheldean Down and the hillfort of Sidbury; and whether or not the field-complex can really be dated from the Early Iron Age (such dating

¹ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, XX, 1954, pp. 103 sqq.

² *Archaeologia*, LXXVI, 1926, p. 8. This is the Roman settlement found near the Early Iron Age village.

³ *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. & Arch. Soc.*, LXXIV, 1953, p. 92; LXXVI, 1954, pp. 77 sqq.; LXXX, 1959, pp. 105 sqq.

⁴ *Jour. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, 3rd ser., XVII, 1954, pp. 77-8.

was only tentative; a Romano-British date is more likely on general grounds, though not on the evidence of the air-photographs), the building of a hillfort implies authority and an agricultural surplus given up by the cultivators to support the builders. One may also point to Casterley, Wiltshire, which contained a single Belgic farmstead contemporary with it; the building of the fortifications here must have required the participation of the surrounding population, who may be conceived to have stood in a relation of subordination to the owner.¹ The difficulty facing Mr Jones's theory, in this sphere, is chronological. The lowland hillforts were abandoned during the Roman occupation, and such reoccupation as they experienced in the sub-Roman period was crude and short-lived. The tenurial link in Roman times was not between such centres and surrounding settlements, but between the social successor of the hillfort after *deductio in planam*, namely, between the Romano-British tribal centre—the *civitas*—and those settlements. Presumably in many cases the masters of the hillforts² became *decuriones* of the *civitates*, and *ipso facto* villa-owners on lowland soils. Whether they retained control of the downland peasantry in Roman days is a question. But the topographical implication is that in lowland Britain links have to be looked for not between hillforts and Romano-British hamlets but between villas and such hamlets, and this may considerably modify our interpretation of the evidence to hand. It would mean, for instance, that *at least* some of the dependents of the Romano-British centres are to be looked for in the uplands, and the centres in the lowlands, rather than vice versa. Exceptions there may have been. Casterley continued to be occupied by a farmstead in the Roman period, and the presence of a basilical farmhouse in the centre of the hillfort of Tidbury, Hampshire, may be a perpetuation of the old order in extraordinary or new circumstances; so may the remains of a Roman villa within the hillfort of Borough Walls near Daventry. The Tidbury dwelling casts additional light on the social character of the basilical house, and all these instances strengthen the case for seeing in the disputed remains within Castle Dore and Dinorben a Dark Age repetition of the Early Iron Age set-up.

So we return full circle to the subject of the relationship between the villa and its environment. But as we do so, we must make one more general observation concerning the 'Celtic' field system. This is that it represented, immediately before the Roman period, the greater part of the cultivated area of lowland Britain, and under Roman rule a very considerable part of it, prob-

¹ *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, XXXVII, 1912, pp. 57 sqq.

² For *oppida* in the clency of chiefs cf. Caes., *Bell. Gall.*, VIII, 32 (Uxellodunum); Grenier, *Man. d'arch. gall.-rom.*, VI, p. 734; Duroviguto, identified by Richmond and Crawford (*Archaeologia*, XCIII, p. 33) with Sandy, Bedfordshire, means "hillfort of Vigutus."

ably more than was envisaged before the fuller application of archaeological air reconnaissance. Now if Mr Jones is right that the individual homestead cultivated by the kinship group represented an aristocratic minority (a view now gaining ground in Ireland¹), while the greater part of the Celtic countryside was cultivated by bondmen settled in hamlets associated with common fields—then either the ‘square field’ pattern of Roman Britain represents the bondman class, i.e. a common-field system linked with nucleated hamlets, or this pattern is not a common-field system and Mr Jones’s theory cannot apply to the ‘Celtic’ field areas. It is more than likely that the British ‘Celtic’ field system is not homogeneous, but with this reservation, the difficulties of applying his doctrine to the *totality* of the system are such that it is worth considering whether it should not be applied rather to the villa sector of the Romano-British economy.

As we have seen, the two sectors were not mutually exclusive; there were villas with ‘Celtic’ fields and some occur in the heart of ‘square field’ areas, but this does not meet the objection inherent in Mr Jones’s contention that bondmen held holdings in the *open* field. The evidence for the character of the fields of those villas not associated with ‘square’ plots is still far from satisfactory, but it is more substantial than some archaeologists have been prepared to admit.² In so far as it goes, these fields seem to have taken the form of long broadish strips; this is the evidence of Cliffe, Great Wymondley, Bury Lodge near Hambleton (Hampshire), Twyford Down (Hampshire), the Carolingian villas, and the heavy Romano-British coulter.³ Such fields are also found interleaved among normal ‘square’ plots in Dorset, Berkshire, Sussex, and the Fenlands.⁴ Here, if anywhere (and the whole state of the

¹ See V. B. Proudfoot, *The Advancement of Science*, 60, Mar. 1959, pp. 336–8; Estyn Evans, *Geography*, 24, 1939, pp. 24–36.

² As Rivet, *Town and Country in Roman Britain*, 1958, p. 122. Cf. *contra* C. Bowen, *Ancient Fields*, p. 24. For a clear case, O. G. S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field*, 1953, p. 206, fig. 37 (Holbeach Drove, Lincolnshire).

³ It would be well to recall that the Twyford Down coulter (*Pr. Hants. Field Club*, XIII, pp. 188–90) was found in a long lynchet field; it may also be noted that another large coulter comes from the Romano-British village of Abington Piggots, Cambridgeshire (Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology), which showed clear signs of continuous occupation from Roman to Anglo-Saxon times.

⁴ For the Fenlands, see here note 2; for Dorset, Bowen, *ibid.*; in Berkshire cases occur at Stancombe Down (I am indebted for this information to Mr P. Rhodes); in Sussex at Jevington (*Suss. Arch. Collns*, XLIV, p. 49). As regards the Carolingian estates of Gaul, see now Lynn White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, 1962, pp. 38 sqq. and 69 sqq. This scholar believes that the heavy plough cannot be traced in Europe before the 7th century, and came to England with the Danes in the 9th century; the three-field system spread, on the evidence he cites, from the Rhineland in the 8th century. He notes (p. 46) the suggestion of Haudricourt and Delamarre, *L’homme et la charrue*, 1955, pp. 108–10, that the heavy coulter might

evidence is incipient), are the preconditions for continuity between Roman and post-Roman field systems. Yet from Mr Jones's point of view this possibility is hardly encouraging, for the areas where new Roman systems were laid out were presumably often without previous 'Celtic' systems, while considerable areas characterized by the Celtic pattern are excluded from the application of Mr Jones's projected pattern. In this situation, the inference that the formation of the 'bondman' class did not precede the Roman conquest is hardly likely to be admissible. We are, in any case, faced with the question: Did the Roman jurists and administrators distinguish between 'free' and 'subordinate' elements among the Celtic population? Were Belgae treated differently from the people they had dominated? General assumptions and parallels aside, unless we are prepared to accept the phenomenon of the basilical house as producing more than a hypothesis, we just do not know. The Welsh evidence suggests the distinction between freemen and bondmen was allowed to stand, but the greater part of Wales was and remained under military and tribal rule till the end of the occupation, and was not subjected to the far-reaching impact of Roman immigration and economic development. At best, we might adopt the provisional broad hypothesis that "*colonus* = bondman," but as the Roman term connoted in the later Empire several sub-categories, free and unfree, this amounts to a *petitio principii*. All we can say is that a Celtic bondman *might* be a *servus casatus* in the eyes of the late Roman jurist.

As we have seen, some villas appear to have housed their tenants close to them, and others were surrounded by peripheral tenant holdings. Where the latter are concerned, much play has been made with the apparent absence of farm-sites from the neighbourhood of many villas. This, however, may be more apparent than real, and arise from insufficient search for such sites, which need be represented in each case by no more than a little pottery and a scatter of tiles. Secondly, too much can be made of distance. In Italy and Sicily to this day there exist towns of some thousands of inhabitants, many of whom walk from three to ten miles every day to cultivate their holdings in the vicinity.

Finally, a note on the problem of continuity from the archaeological angle. There is possible evidence for a survival of an advanced Romano-British agriculture for some time after it is commonly thought to have vanished, and this evidence needs careful examination by scholars on both sides of the Irish Sea. It consists of a number of iron plough-coulters found in Ireland, which,

have been used separately on a heavy frame that went ahead of the scratch-plough. Yet none of this evidence need contradict the prior existence of strip-fields, perhaps common, on Carolingian estates.

so far as available dating goes, are not before the fifth century and may be a good deal later. Of seven specimens illustrated by Mr M. Duignan, only one does not resemble the Romano-British type; one was found in a site yielding sub-Roman pottery, another at a site yielding Terra Sigillata.¹ Now some of the objects imported from Roman Britain to Ireland appear to date from between about 450 and the early sixth century (e.g. Garranes) and though Garranes had relations with south-western Gaul, it was also in touch with Britain.² Only one of the illustrated coulter, as stated, did not look Romano-British, but resembled the type known in France; none of the Roman coulter I have seen illustrated in reports from Gaul and the Rhineland is of the commoner Irish-Roman form. Literary evidence for the contacts between Irish and British Christianity from the fifth century on is considerable, and these apparently became intensive in the seventh century. In view of all this, the possibility should be examined whether some aspects of villa agriculture were not imported into Ireland by Romano-British refugees between the fifth and the seventh centuries, and whether this does not imply the survival of some Roman estates in Britain for a long time after the fifth century. If I had to guess, I would see the route of transmission from Gloucestershire via the early monasteries of Pembrokeshire.³

To sum up: there are considerable difficulties in seeing in the Romano-British 'Celtic' field areas the seat of Mr Jones's bondmen tenures of nucleated hamlets and common fields. But the Celtic field pattern was probably itself not homogeneous, and further study is needed to establish its settlement patterns and agrarian usages. Secondly, Roman villas represent both nucleations and peripheral patterns, and at least three forms of field system (centuriated, 'Celtic', long-strip). We are not yet in a position to establish whether the peripheral farmsteads were themselves isolated or grouped, or both. Thirdly, if we are looking for continuity between Romano-British and subsequent dependencies in the British lowlands, we have to seek them not in connection with hillforts but in connection with villas, and it is in their context, in two cases, that signs of continuity between Roman and later field systems have been noticed. It is with them that it is natural to connect the plough-coulter whose transmission to Ireland may imply a late survival of Roman methods in the evacuated province.

¹ *Jour. Roy. Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland*, LXXIV, 1944, p. 133 and fig. 4, nos. 2-8.

² *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, XLVII, pp. 126, 142, 143.

³ Cf. K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, 1953, p. 122, on Irish at the monastery of Menevia (Saint David's). Relevant here may be the last phase of occupation at Llantwit Major villa, confined to the basilical outbuilding (*Bull. Bd of Celt. Stud.*, XIII, pp. 163 sqq.). Was it later than the datable material was able to convey?