

The Transformation of Administrative Towns in Roman Britain

by

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BA, Saint Mary's University, 1997

MA, University of Wales Cardiff, 2001

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the Roman administrative towns of Britain continued in their original Romanized form as seen in the second century AD, or were altered in their appearance and function in the fourth and fifth century, with a visible reduction in their urbanization and Romanization. It will be argued that British town life did change significantly. Major components of urbanization were disrupted with the public buildings disused or altered for other purposes, and the reduction or cessation of public services. A reduction in the population of the towns can be perceived in the eventual disuse of the extramural cemeteries and abandonment of substantial areas of settlement or possibly entire towns. The cause of this will be shown to be related to the towns' relationship with the imperial taxation and revenue system, and the accelerating pattern of British involvement in revolts and usurpations.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Allison Bishop.

Prologue

The fate of the towns built early in the Roman occupation of Britain is an issue that has engaged historians and archaeologists over the last century. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to that debate, and to make progress towards determining what happened to the administrative towns in particular, during the later period of Roman occupation and in the fifth century after Roman rule had come to an end. Of particular interest will be the question of whether these towns continued in their original Romanized form as seen particularly in the Hadrianic to Antonine eras of the second century, or were altered in their appearance and function in the late Roman period, with a visible reduction in their urbanization and Romanization. Did town life carry on after the cessation of Roman occupation, in some form, up to the time of the later Anglo-Saxon habitation of the town sites, or did it soon come to an end?

I will argue and demonstrate that town life in Britain changed significantly in the late Roman period, particularly during the last years of the occupation and after it had come to an end. Major components of urbanization in the second century were drastically altered towards the end of Roman rule, and occupation of the towns became minimal within a few decades of the cessation of Roman administration. This transformation will be explored in the changes in form and use of the public buildings, which characterized urban life in the classical world and identified a town as an administrative centre, in the public services and infrastructure that was a usual aspect of Romanized towns, in urban means of disposal of the dead, and particularly in the patterns and density of domestic and commercial settlement.

The changes that occurred can largely be explained in the context of Britain's place within the Roman Empire. It was affected by changes in the economy and administration of the empire, by the organization of it for maximal exploitation of its resources, and its integration with the imperial taxation and revenue system. The towns were likely also affected increasingly in the late period, by the ongoing trend of resistance, rebellion, and usurpation throughout the history of Roman occupation, and particularly notable in the last century and a half. This would probably have had both economic and psychological impacts on the towns. It was the actions of the Roman state, and the British interaction with it, that led to the demise of urban life in the late Roman

and sub-Roman period, not the invasions and settlement of Britain by Germanic peoples, as has often been argued in the past.

To be able to place the changes within their historical context, the thesis will begin with a survey of the main elements of Roman Britain's history, with a particular emphasis on the episodes of revolt and usurpation. Problems with the interpretation of the primary literary sources will be considered, particularly for those especially difficult sources relevant to the events and conditions of the fifth century. This will be followed by a review of the main theories regarding the end of Roman Britain and the fate of its towns. There will be a brief discussion of the main types of archaeological evidence relevant to a dialogue about changes in the towns, and the main problems that may be encountered in using this evidence. An overview of the typical organization and structural components found in Romano-British towns will then be given, followed by a review of the political, economic, and social changes in the later Roman period which impacted the towns' function and appearance. A detailed examination of the evidence for transformation of urban life in Britain will then proceed, with an in-depth look at changes in the main aspects of town life: public buildings, public services and infrastructure, the disposal of the dead, and domestic and commercial settlement. Lastly, there will be a very brief comparative glimpse of aspects of change in urban life on the continent.

Section One: Background: Structures and Narrative, Literary and Archaeological Sources, and Scholarly Debate

Historical Background to Roman Britain and Its Towns

In order to understand the changes that occurred in the administrative towns of Roman Britain, it is necessary to view the historical context in which they developed and were transformed. In this section, the historical background to Roman Britain will be recounted and evaluated. Those instances where the traditional narrative has come to be challenged with alternative interpretations in recent decades, and where the literary sources are no longer viewed by at least some scholars as reliable, will be identified and examined.

Late Iron Age Britain, at the Time of Caesar's Invasions

The different late Iron Age tribes of Britain shared common elements with each other; each also demonstrated notable differences and variety in their settlement and artefact types, cultural practices, and links (or lack of links) to the continent (de la Bédoyère 2006: 11). The tribes spoke an unwritten Celtic language and displayed a “strong cultural affinity” and similarities in “society and political behaviour” with northern Gaul. As in northern Gaul, these were aristocratic societies marked by a warrior elite, strong tribal identity, and intertribal warfare (Salway 1990: 14). Prestige was considered essential for rulers, and for “control of land and resources” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 20). This increasing hierarchy was made possible by the greater yields produced by more efficient agricultural practices in the late Iron Age, which led to population growth and “pressure on available resources”, which resulted in more conflict and instability (ibid.).

The Invasions of Caesar

Between 58 and 51 BC, the Roman army was engaged in fighting in Gaul, with Julius Caesar as its commander. His British expeditions were an extension of these wars in Gaul, and provided a means for Caesar to retain control of an army (Breeze 1990: 24),

to increase his prestige, and to help “justify his position” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 18). The official pretext, however, was that “... Britons had intervened in the Gaulish resistance by offering military assistance” (ibid.).

The invasion of 55 BC was primarily just a small “reconnaissance”, whereas that of 54 was larger and directed towards the goal of conquest (Breeze 1990: 24). Both campaigns ended with somewhat inconclusive results. The British tribes in 54 eventually agreed to Caesar’s terms, which included paying tribute to Rome, and the Roman army returned to Gaul to deal with a rebellion. These invasions did not lead to an occupation, and the Britons soon stopped bothering to pay the tribute (de la Bédoyère 2006: 19-20; Breeze 1990: 24).

Britain between the Invasions

Prior to the invasions, the main trade route between Britain and Gaul had crossed between the coast of Dorset in south-west England and the north-west coast of Gaul. Archaeological evidence indicates that after the invasions, not only was trade between Britain and Gaul greatly increased, but that the main route had relocated to between east and south-east England and the Rhine and Seine areas (Mattingly 2006: 68; Salway 1990: 15).

As Roman goods were becoming increasingly popular, groups with control of this trade grew in power. “Such control ... made the tribes through which they flowed rich and gave their rulers political muscle in relation to other aristocracies that desired them” (Salway 1990: 15). The controlling groups in the south-east were particularly the Catuvellauni, Trinovantes, and Atrebates. These tribes had been using and minting coins since around 80 BC, and this was becoming even more the case with the greater Roman influence via Gaul (ibid., 14; Mattingly 2006: 68). They now used the most Roman goods and had the most developed hierarchies in Britain. The goods were used by them as a means for displaying prestige and status, both within a kingdom and between kingdoms (Mattingly 2006: 82, 84).

Immediately beyond the south-east were neighbouring tribes such as the Iceni, Dobunni, and Durotriges, that now also used coins, as well as Roman goods. They were becoming more hierarchical “in emulation” of the kingdoms that had more direct contact with the Roman world (Mattingly 2006: 82). To the north, west, and far south-west –

northern England and Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Devon – things were different. The tribes in these areas did not use coins and exhibited much less hierarchy, at least in their settlement patterns. They appear to have been less impacted by the south-east's contact and trade with the Roman world (*ibid.*, 83). These areas would remain less Romanized and would experience much less urban development through the period of Roman occupation.

One south-eastern tribe had become particularly powerful in the years since Caesar's expedition: the Catuvellauni, who were located just north of the Thames River and originally were based at Verulamium¹ in Hertfordshire. Under their ruler, Cunobelinus, they had by the late AD 30s annexed territory further east that belonged to the Trinovantes, as well as their capital of Camulodunum². Around AD 42 Cunobelinus died and his sons took control; the confusion during this period of a changeover of power provided the Romans "with a key opportunity to invade" (de la Bédoyère 2006: 26).

The Claudian Invasion and Conquest

The Catuvellauni expansion, as well as their succession dispute, resulted in a king of the Atrebates and one of Cunobelinus' sons each fleeing to Rome to seek assistance, providing Rome with an excuse to invade (Salway 1980: 15-16). However, a more likely reason for the invasion was that the new emperor, Claudius, needed a military victory to gain prestige with his army and the Roman people to help him to hold onto his position (Breeze 1990: 24; de la Bédoyère 2006: 24).

In the summer of AD 43, the Roman fleet landed in south-east Britain, and aimed their attack at the Catuvellauni. Cunobelinus' sons were soon defeated, resulting in tribes that had been subject to them going over to the Roman side. The Britons were defeated in additional battles in the area of the Thames and Medway rivers; one of Cunobelinus' sons was killed in the fighting inside Catuvellauni territory (de la Bédoyère 2006: 28-29). The advance of the Roman army was then stopped until the autumn arrival of Claudius to oversee the army's entry into the current Catuvellauni capital of Camulodunum. Here the Romans would establish their first major military base in Britain from which they would send out the army to continue the conquest (*ibid.*, 30).

¹ St Albans

² Colchester

Once the south-east had been secured, Roman forces moved outward, the future emperor Vespasian taking troops into south-west Britain towards what would become Exeter. Other forces moved north as far as Lincoln, and west towards the Welsh borders, the road networks of Roman Britain developing outward from a geographically convenient location (that later became London) as the army progressed. “By 47, much of southern Britain had technically capitulated” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 31-32).

Consolidation of the Conquest

The conquered area of Britain was swiftly set up as *Britannia*, a province of the Roman Empire. It would be overseen by the governor, a man who would have been a Roman senator and have previously served as a consul of Rome. He was both head of provincial administration and commander of the province’s army, as well as concerned with the giving out of justice (Salway 1990: 16).

The establishment of administrative units also soon followed the conquest of the south-east. Self-administrating and self-financing urban centres with accompanying attached territory were set up at the conquered capitals of the Catuvellauni: a *colonia* at Colchester and a *municipium* at Verulamium. An urban centre also quickly developed at London, which had not previously been a native capital or population centre, but was conveniently located on the Thames at the centre of the new Roman road network. It soon became some sort of administrative centre, and, later in the first century, the provincial capital, but it is not known whether it had the status of a *colonia* or *municipium*. Tribal territories were also set up as self-administering and self-financing units, *civitates*; these would be run from an urban administrative capital that would be established (Higham 1992: 24; Salway 1990: 16). Each of these administrative units was “a local oligarchy run by local men of property” (Salway 1990: 16). In the *civitas* capitals, these men were probably drawn from the aristocracy of the tribes and would develop into the class of councillors and magistrates that would administer the towns during Roman rule (Higham 1992: 24).

The Roman taxation system was also quickly set up in Britain, so that the province might pay for and supply the army that was occupying it. “Under the early Empire, taxes consisted of three elements: tax on the capital value of land (*tributum soli*),

a poll-tax (*tributum capitis*), and various indirect taxes” (Higham 1992: 28). All but the latter were collected by the town magistrates (*ibid.*).

At this time, taxes were paid in coin, while food which the army required, particularly grain, was requisitioned. Farmers had to exchange their produce for coin to pay taxes. “The tax system provided ... an important stimulus for interaction between the peasants, who grew and sold their produce, the urban markets which enabled them to exchange their produce for cash, and the social elite who distributed the burden and had it collected on behalf of the state” (Higham 1992: 28).

The First-Century Revolts

The Romans were faced by ongoing native resistance for much of the first century, as well as outbreaks of revolt, such as that of the Iceni tribe in East Anglia in 47 when the tribesmen’s right to bear arms was taken away (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.31; Salway 1990: 16). Resistance in Wales was being organized by Caratacus, the surviving son of Cunobelinus. The provincial governor Ostorius defeated Caratacus and his allies in battle in Wales, but the Welsh tribes continued “a concerted guerrilla campaign” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 33-34; Tacitus, *Annals* 12.32-39). The next governor, Paullinus, decided to deal a major blow to these tribes by wiping out their druids’ stronghold on the island of Anglesey (de la Bédoyère 2006: 36; Tacitus, *Annals* 14.29-30).

But while Paullinus was occupied in Wales, the Iceni revolted again, AD 60-61 (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.31-37). The Romans had put an end to the client-kingdom status of the Iceni on the death of their king Prasutagus in 59, and in the process caused insult, offence, and injury to his widow Boudicca and their daughters, as well as to other leading members of the kingdom (de la Bédoyère 2006: 36; Salway 1990: 18). More tribal elites joined the cause. Some had been put in the position of having the Roman government demand the repayment of donations from Claudius as well as loans from speculators, which had probably been to help them with paying taxes as well as acquiring the material goods needed for civilized Roman life. “There was, presumably, no chance of any of the Britons being in a position to repay their debts” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 36). Members of the Trinovantes tribe also joined the revolt, in their resentment at having been forced out of their lands which were appropriated as land grants for colonists (*ibid.*, 37; Salway 1990: 18). The British forces, led by Boudicca, attacked and burned the new Roman

towns at Colchester, London, and Verulamium. Eventually, when Paullinus was able to return from Wales, his army faced the British tribes in battle in the English midlands and defeated them (de la Bédoyère 2006: 39).

The Expansion of the Province

Problems with the Brigantes tribe in northern England in the late 60s and early 70s led to fighting and fort-building in the north for the Roman army, and to an advance up to York, where a legionary fortress was established. Campaigns in Wales ended much of the resistance there in the mid-70s. It was likely around this time that a legionary fortress was built in south-east Wales at Caerleon, and one in western England near the north-east Welsh border at Chester, to keep control over these areas (de la Bédoyère 2006: 41-42).

In AD 77/78 Agricola became governor in Britain. After campaigns in Wales and northern England, he would take the army into first lowland Scotland, and finally into north-east Scotland, ending the campaigning with a Roman victory in 83 or 84 over the Caledonian tribe at Mons Graupius (Breeze 1990: 26). Then Agricola was recalled by the emperor Domitian, and many of the forts were dismantled by the Roman army, such as the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil (de la Bédoyère 2006: 44). “Trouble on [the] Danube frontier prevented [a] follow-up to Agricola’s victory” (Breeze 1990: 26). Though the Romans pulled out of northern Scotland, they initially tried to make southern Scotland part of the province (de la Bédoyère 2006: 44).

Roman Britain and Urban Development of the Province

“A variety of incentives and pressures gradually transformed the upper classes of [south-eastern] Britain into solid Roman gentry” (Salway 1990: 18). After the rebellion of Boudicca, a focus for the Roman government on better provincial administration helped to convince the British elites “that they might enjoy those material pleasures of Roman life which they had coveted before the conquest without very serious deprivation other than the freedom to fight one another” (ibid.). The absorption of the aristocracy was aided by the immigration to Britain of people from throughout the empire, providing the new towns with Romanized merchants and traders, artisans, and workers. An emphasis on local recruitment to the Roman army also played an important role in integrating Britons into the Roman system, with the intention of “producing Roman

citizens who [would] subsequently [take] their place in the local community” (ibid.). The large-scale trade of Roman material goods, even to more remote rural regions, likely also contributed to change on a level beyond that of the top elites (de la Bédoyère 2006: 46).

The promotion of urban life was an essential part of the attempt to integrate the new province into the Roman Empire through the adoption of Roman civilization. Urban life was also central to the Roman practice of encouraging local self-administration through the towns, as this saved the imperial government the cost and hassle of having to directly administer these territories. The *coloniae*, which provided models for urban life and Romanization, were “imposed from above” and built “on *territoria* commandeered by the state” for retiring Roman soldiers (Higham 1992: 29). The transformation of the tribes of the south-east into *civitates* which governed themselves from their own urban administrative centres gained momentum in the time of the Flavian emperors, the later first century (ibid.). Agricola may have played a major role in the promotion of this, and particularly of the urban development of these new centres during his time as governor (de la Bédoyère 2006: 46).

The Frontier of Roman Britain in the Second Century

The Roman army began to pull out of southern Scotland very early in the second century, probably *ca.* 105. The need to remove troops to the continent for Trajan’s Dacian invasion may well have been behind this (Breeze 1990: 28; de la Bédoyère 2006: 47). The new frontier became the Tyne-Solway line in northern England. This is where Hadrian’s Wall would be built, likely due to his visit to Britain in 122 (Breeze 1990: 28-29; de la Bédoyère 2006: 50). The wall provided a dividing line between what was Roman and what was barbarian; its purpose was “to control movement across [the] frontier and prevent raids” Breeze 1990: 28; de la Bédoyère 2006: 52).

But after Antoninus Pius became emperor in 138, the Romans looked to southern Scotland again. This was occupied once more, and *ca.* 139-143 another wall was built to make the new frontier the Forth-Clyde line (de la Bédoyère 2006: 56; Breeze 1990: 28). However, within a few years of Marcus Aurelius becoming emperor, the Antonine Wall was abandoned, around 163, and Hadrian’s Wall re-established as the frontier. The

latter's construction was finally completed in the later second century (de la Bédoyère 2006: 57-58; Breeze 1990: 26).

Britain's northern frontier continued to be a concern for the Romans. *Ca.* 180, around the time when Commodus became the emperor, there was warfare again. Apparently tribes had gone over the wall into Roman Britain, supposedly creating a great deal of destruction and significant losses of troops. The governor Ulpius Marcellus was finally able to have a victory over them in 184 (de la Bédoyère 2006: 60).

Septimius Severus and Roman Britain

Not long after the death of Commodus, three separate nominees were proclaimed emperor by their legions, in different parts of the empire: in the west, Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain; on the Danube river, Septimius Severus, governor of Upper Pannonia; and in the east, Pescennius Niger, governor of Syria. Severus took Rome, and allied at first with Albinus while he took on Niger in 194 and defeated him. Then he turned his attentions to Albinus, who "invaded Gaul with British troops [in] 196" (Salway 1990: 20). Severus defeated Albinus at Lyons in 197, becoming the victor in the struggle (de la Bédoyère 2006: 61; Salway 1990: 20).

While Albinus was fighting the civil war, new troubles began on Britain's northern frontier, caused by the joint forces of the Maeatae and Caledonian tribes. Severus' newly appointed governor of Britain, Virius Lupus, "paid the Maeatae a subsidy, buying enough time to repair military installations" (de la Bédoyère 2006: 61-62). This military construction continued till shortly before the arrival of the Severan family in Britain in 208 to embark on a fresh conquest of Scotland. Severus may well have ordered this work to support a campaign long in the planning (*ibid.*, 62-63). Advanced preparations for an extensive campaign can be seen in the large number of imperial seals from the time, which provide evidence of the transportation of large volumes of goods. Also indicative of this planning was the rebuilding of a large coastal fort east of Hadrian's Wall, South Shields, "to accommodate an unusually large number of granaries"³ (*ibid.*, 63).

³ In addition to the four granaries already present at South Shields, twenty new ones were added, "creating a major supply depot" (Pearson 2002: 53).

There were reports of more barbarian trouble, possibly true or simply a pretext for the campaign, which may instead have been planned to provide Severus' sons with military prestige (de la Bédoyère 2006: 63). Severus, his sons Caracalla and Geta, and the imperial household arrived in Britain in 208, where they would reside in York. Their presence there, and the vast funds brought by Severus, may have stimulated public and elite private building in York at this time, as well as its elevation to the status of colony (ibid., 64).

The campaigns in Scotland continued till 211, with the Romans extending into the north-east, but without victory of a set-piece battle (de la Bédoyère 2006: 64). Severus died at York during the winter of the final campaign, in February 211 (Breeze 1990: 29; de la Bédoyère 2006: 64). He was succeeded by his sons as joint emperors, but they had no interest in continuing the campaign and “abandoned the conquest of Britain” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 64). Hadrian's Wall became the frontier once more (Breeze 1990: 29).

The First Division of the Provinces

Sometime during the reigns of Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla, the province of Britannia was “divided into two as part of a general policy of reducing the size of the provinces containing armies that were too large for political comfort” (Salway 1990: 20). According to Herodian (3.8.2), the division was made by Severus in 197, right after his defeat of Albinus (Birley 2005: 334). But Birley thinks the indicators are stronger that the separation was done later, by Caracalla during his own reign (ibid., 333, 335-336).

The southern half of the original province became *Britannia Superior*, Upper Britain. Its capital was probably at London, and it included the legionary bases of Caerleon and Chester. The northern part was *Britannia Inferior*, Lower Britain, with its capital and legionary base at York, which was now a *colonia* (Salway 1990: 20; Birley 2005: 333). It is not known exactly where the boundary between the two provinces was, but Birley (2005: 336) suspects that Lincoln (and thus the east midlands) was in Inferior, and that Chester was located within Superior; the latter probably also included Wales.

Third-Century Crisis

The third century, especially its middle decades, was a time for the empire of severe military, political, and economic crises, as well as growing “insecurity” (de la

Bédoyère 2006: 65; Higham 1992: 43). “There was a partial breakdown of the Principate in the middle of the third century, as a result of disastrous foreign and civil wars, [and] endemic usurpation” (Mattingly 2006: 225). In 238, five different emperors were eliminated over only a few months (Higham 1992: 43). One of the main problems was the growing numbers of barbarian groups pushing on the northern frontiers; their invasions were decimating the economy as well as the towns and countryside of the region; meanwhile, Persian attacks were a concern in the east (*ibid.*; Mattingly 2006: 226). The frontier warfare seemed to encourage the ambition of the military officers with troops willing to help them challenge the emperor for power (de la Bédoyère 2006: 65). “Military usurpations destroyed any hope of peaceful ascension to the leadership of the empire as rival army commanders and armies fought for control of the central system of patronage” (Higham 1992: 43). From AD 235 to 284, there were not only more than twenty recognized emperors, but more junior co-rulers and usurpers besides (Mattingly 2006: 26). In addition to the military and political issues, there were major economic problems of currency devaluation and price inflation, which added another element to the crises (Higham 1992: 43).

There are no inscriptions or literary evidence that would indicate anything other than that this was a generally peaceful time for Britain, which did not suffer from the barbarian invasions of the north-western part of the continent. “There is no direct evidence for campaigning in this period” (Birley 2005: 337). However, the monetary and inflation crises undoubtedly had an impact. As well, the problems on the continent appear to have affected the army in Britain. “Under Valerian and Gallienus troops were sent from Britain to reinforce the Rhine and Danube armies at the time of the barbarian invasions and civil wars”; some were “recorded at Sirmium ... between 260 and 268” (Birley 2005: 364). It is very likely that these units were never returned to Britain, but were eventually incorporated into the forces on the continent (*ibid.*).

The Gallic Empire

Marcus Postumus was the general who had charge of the army of the Lower Rhine under the emperor Gallienus. Around 259 or 260, he promoted himself to emperor of the provinces of the north-west (Mattingly 2006: 226; de la Bédoyère 2003: 127; Birley 2005: 337). This is now referred to as the Gallic Empire; it included the provinces

of Germany, Gaul, Raetia, Spain, and Britain (Mattingly 2006: 226). Postumus realized that he had only regional support, and so he did not try to extend his control beyond this area (de la Bédoyère 2006: 67). “Rather than attacking Gallienus, Postumus effectively created a replica imperial administration and court within a part of the western empire” (Mattingly 2006: 226); he “adopted all the formal trappings of a Roman emperor, claimed imperial virtues on his coinage, and posed as a restorer of traditional Roman qualities” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 67).

Postumus may have not gained formal control over Britain until 261; it is possible that he visited the island at that time to “secure [its] allegiance” (Birley 2005: 264). Some units within the British garrison adopted the title *Postumiana* as part of their names, either through loyalty or command. This can be seen from inscriptions of regiments at Lancaster and Birdoswald (de la Bédoyère 2006: 68; Birley 2005: 364). Postumus’ rule of Britain is also evidenced by the presence of his name on milestones from south-west to north-west England (Birley 2005: 364). Large quantities of the coinage of the Gallic Empire can also be found in Britain (de la Bédoyère 2003: 136).

It is important to note the challenges that must have faced this and future secessionist regimes that had to sustain themselves in Britain and the north-western empire. This area was much less wealthy than Africa, Italy and the east, yet “[t]he large military forces of the north-west now had to be paid for solely by the north-west, not to mention the cost of supporting an imperial administration and an imperial court” (Salway 1993: 199).

Postumus was assassinated in 268 or 269 (de la Bédoyère 2006: 68; Mattingly 2006: 226). His death was followed by a few very brief reigns. Victorinus was in power from 268 to 270. His reign is marked in Britain by six milestones found in eastern to northern England and in south Wales, and the possible incorporation of his name into legionary stamps or tiles at Caerleon and Chester (Birley 2005: 365) But the Gallic Empire was shortly to come apart. Victorinus had to deal with a revolt in Gaul and lost Spain back to the central empire (de la Bédoyère 2003: 130). The last of the Gallic emperors was Tetricus. That Britain was still part of the breakaway empire is indicated by three milestones with his name at Bitterne in southern England and an inscription at Birdoswald on Hadrian’s Wall in which a regiment incorporated the title *Tetriciana* (Birley 2005: 365). In 274, however, Aurelian, emperor of the central empire, “marched

on Tetricus”, who “capitulated without a struggle” (de la Bédoyère 2003: 130; Birley 2005: 365).

Continuing Unrest Under Probus

Though Britain had returned to the empire, continuing instability connected to its provinces or people was still evident in the time of the emperor Probus. Probus had appointed an unnamed individual to be one of the two governors of Britain, on the advice of a certain Victorinus. This governor appears to have revolted sometime around possibly 279 or 280. At Probus’ request, Victorinus took charge of putting down the uprising and swiftly dealt with it (Birley 2005: 377, 366). But around 280, Probus had to suppress yet another revolt, not in Britain but on the Rhine, started by Bonosus, a man who was thought to have been born of British parents (de la Bédoyère 2003: 144).

The Tetrarchy

Diocletian took power in 284, and soon began developing a new system for governing the empire. It would eventually come to significantly affect the British provinces. The intention of Diocletian in developing the Tetrarchy appears to have been to provide an empire worn down from decades of “political and military turmoil” with some stability (de la Bédoyère 2006: 86; Mattingly 2006: 227).

The key to this new system was “power-sharing”, which would reduce the territory for which one emperor was responsible, and provide a predetermined and straight-forward plan for succession (Mattingly 2006: 227; de la Bédoyère 2006: 68). In 285 Diocletian appointed a co-emperor, Maximian, who would be in charge of the western half of the empire, while he himself ruled the east. They would be the senior emperors or *Augusti* (de la Bédoyère 2006: 68). Two junior emperors, or Caesars, were added in 293: Constantius Chlorus to help and succeed Maximian in the west, and Gallienus to be Diocletian’s assistant and successor in the east (ibid.; Birley 2005: 382).

Carausius and Allectus

Mausaeus Carausius, from Menapia in Belgium, distinguished himself in Maximian’s civil war against the Bagaudae, landless brigands in Gaul, in 285 (de la Bédoyère 2006: 68; Mattingly 2006: 230). Because of this, and apparently also due to his earlier experience as a helmsman, according to Aurelius Victor (39.20), in 286 “he had

received, at Bononia⁴, the task of pacifying the sea, which the Franks and Saxons were infesting in the Belgica and Armorica sector⁵” (Eusebius 9.21, in Birley 2005: 371-372).

Carausius did too well and stories were put about, perhaps by Maximian, that Carausius let the raiders through, only setting on them as they staggered home weighed down by loot, which he pocketed for himself. It might have been true, but it is equally likely that Carausius had started to acquire...loyalty ... for producing results. No emperor could afford a general with that sort of popularity (de la Bédoyère 2006: 64).

Maximian put out the order for Carausius’ execution and the latter’s response was to declare himself emperor and take control of Britain, as well the part of Gaul between the channel and Rouen (Birley 2005: 375). His control of Britain extended to its northern frontier as shown by the inscription bearing his name on a milestone from the Carlisle area (ibid., 337). Maximian had plans to try to invade and retake Britain in 289, but it appears that a storm wrecked his ships and put an end to it (ibid., 379; de la Bédoyère 2006: 71). Carausius remained in power for several years more, but in 293 “...Constantius recaptured Boulogne, causing terminal damage to Carausius’ prestige” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 71).

Carausius produced very high-quality silver coinage (*denarii*) as well as radiates (silver-washed bronze) in large quantities (de la Bédoyère 2006: 70).⁶ Carausius minted some of his coins in Rouen, Gaul, but many were minted in Britain. This is suggested by the mint marks indicating the location of the minting: ML (*Moneta Londinii*) and C (probably Camulodunum⁷ but possibly Corinium⁸) (de la Bédoyère 1999L 34, 36; Birley 2005: 32). Carausius appears to have made use of propaganda, particularly as seen on this coinage, to support his regime. He promoted the concept that he was renewing or re-establishing the Roman Empire within his territory. His approach appears to have been effective, as there is no evidence of “popular opposition” to him, only imperial (de la Bédoyère 2003: 144). Not only did his coins commemorate the legions stationed within

⁴ Boulogne

⁵ North-West Gaul

⁶ Such coins have been discovered within a hoard found in April 2010 in Frome, Somerset. Over fifty-two thousand coins from the second half of the third century, primarily base silver radiates, had been buried in a pot. The latest coins, of *ca.* 290, were found halfway down the pot, so it seems likely that the coins were all buried as a single event. Eight hundred base radiates and five silver denarii of Carausius were among the coins of the hoard, which ended in his reign (Reichenburger 2010; Mausaeus 2010).

⁷ Colchester

⁸ Cirencester

his boundaries to help him keep the support of the army, but many issues used “phrases, words and images from Virgilian poetry ... to portray himself as a messianic figure who would restore Rome’s golden age” (ibid., 2006: 70). He even created a glorious (though false) lineage from the respected emperors of the second century by calling himself Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius on the coins (ibid.). Coins issued by Carausius near the end of his reign, in 293, took a different approach by depicting him as, it would seem, a member of the Tetrarchy. In these, he was shown together with Diocletian and Maximian, and the legend *Carausius et fratres sui*, “Carausius and his brothers”, was included (ibid., 71).

But later in 293, Carausius was murdered, and his deputy Allectus became the new ruler of the breakaway empire. Allectus is generally thought to have been Carausius’ finance minister (de la Bédoyère 2006: 71), but Birley (2005: 375) convincingly argues that he is more likely to have been his praetorian prefect⁹. Little is known of Allectus’ short reign. Timbers for an unfinished large building on St Peter’s Hill in London have given a dendrochronological date of 294 for the time of their cutting. It has been speculated that the building might have been ordered by Allectus and intended to be his headquarters or palace, though this remains uncertain (de la Bédoyère 2006: 71; Birley 2005: 387). Coins of Allectus also survive, and show signs of having been minted at the two British mints, but lack the type of propaganda seen in the Carausian issues (Birley 2005: 386).

In 296 the Caesar of the west, Constantius Chlorus, took action to return the breakaway state to the central empire. The rebuilt Roman imperial fleet was separated into two; half left from Boulogne under Constantius’ command, the other from the Seine River farther south under the leadership of Asclepiodotus, his praetorian prefect. Asclepiodotus took Allectus and his forces by surprise by landing on Britain’s south-east coast, as Allectus was only expecting the approach from the east of Constantius. Asclepiodotus marched north to ambush and defeat the usurper’s army; the fleeing Allectus was himself killed. Constantius arrived at the east coast and continued along the Thames to triumphantly arrive in London (de la Bédoyère 2006: 71; Birley 2005: 288-299).

⁹ Commander of the imperial bodyguard.

Constantius would then have had to re-establish the official imperial administration and military command in the provinces. This undoubtedly involved a lot of reorganization, as much had changed since the ascension of Diocletian, as will be discussed below. It appears that before leaving Britain, Constantius also went north to campaign against the tribes¹⁰, and is thought to have in the process restored fortifications near Hadrian's Wall (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 43).

The Shore Forts

Over the course of the third century, a number of fortifications were built along the east and south coasts of England. Rather than an organized programme of building, there appears to have been two main phases of construction, one in the first half of the third century, and the other in the second half, with the construction scattered over the period of the second phase.

The building began “in the early decades of the third century” (Pearson 2002: 65), but this may have been as late as the 230s (de la Bédoyère 2006: 66). Caister-on-Sea, on the east coast in the Norfolk area, and Reculver in the south-east coast in Kent, were definitely constructed at this time; while the fort at Brancaster, also on the Norfolk coast, may have also have been (Pearson 2002: 65; 2005: 75; de la Bédoyère 2006: 66). “These forts may have been intended to operate in conjunction with other defended sites on the east coast of Britain”, such as the installations in the north-east, Brough-on-Humber and South Shields, which had been significantly renovated for the Severan campaigns at (Pearson 2006: 65).

The construction of the second phase of forts appears to have stretched between *ca.* 260 and 300. “New military installations were built in East Anglia and Kent, augmenting those forts constructed in the earlier parts of the century” (Pearson 2002: 56; 2005: 75). Going around the coast from east to south to west these included Burgh Castle, Walton Castle, and Bradwell on the east coast, Richborough and Dover in the south-east, and Lympne, Pevensey, and Portchester on the south coast (ibid., 2002: 56). Some of the forts cannot be dated closer than post-260, such as Walton Castle. Lympne may have been built and used in the 260s, but probably not until the 270s. Portchester

¹⁰ Although there had been no reference to problems with them through most of the third century up to this point.

may also have been constructed during the time of the Gallic Empire, or soon after, as may Bradwell. Evidence suggests that the forts at Richborough and Dover belong to the mid to late 270s. It is not clear when Burgh Castle was constructed, but surface finds indicate use of the site in the later third century. The fort at Pevensey may have been the last one to be constructed. It was originally believed to have been constructed in the 330s, due to the discovery of one coin of Constantine from 330-335. More recent excavations providing dendrochronological evidence and coins of Carausius and Allectus give the fort a date in the mid to late 290s (ibid., 57-60).

Most of the third-century forts¹¹ are listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*¹² as under the command of the *comes litoris Saxonici*, the count of the Saxon Shore, of the late 390s and/or early fifth century (Pearson 2002: 129). This has, in the past, led to the assumption that the forts were built to protect the coasts of Britain from raiders and pirates, particularly of Saxon origin, approaching from the east and southeast. The concept that piracy was a problem in third-century Britain can still be found in very recent books on Roman Britain¹³. However, there is little evidence to support this belief. Literary sources point to the Germanic raiding in northern Gaul late in the century that led to the establishment of Carausius' anti-piracy command, but they only specify attacks on Belgica and Armorica¹⁴. There are no references that specify coastal raiding in Britain (Pearson 2005: 77-78; Cotterill 1993: 229). Even the tribes of northern Britain apparently presented little problem between the time of the Severans and Constantius Chlorus. There is a lack of epigraphic or literary evidence to indicate otherwise. "The impression given is that Britain was relatively protected in this period, spared from the barbarian invasions" (Birley 2005: 237).

It would seem, then, that the shore forts were probably constructed for purposes other than primarily fending off coastal piracy. They may have been intended as fortified ports that would be part of the imperial supply system (Pearson 2005: 137-138; 2005: 82, 85; Cotterill 1993: 837). By the time of the *Notitia* at the end of the fourth century or

¹¹ The identification of some of the Latin names with the actual fort sites has been problematic (Pearson 2002: 130).

¹² This is a document, compiled in the very late fourth century and updated *ca.* 425, which lists imperial civilian and military positions (Merrifield 1983: 239).

¹³ See de la Bédoyère 2006: 66.

¹⁴ Eutropius 9.21

early in the fifth, and the establishment of the command of the count of the Saxon Shore, raiding and piracy had no doubt become a bigger problem, and one clearly associated with Saxons, though there is still minimal evidence for this prior to the early fifth century. By that time, however, several of the shore forts had been allowed to go out of use¹⁵ or were undergoing a very disordered occupation¹⁶ (Pearson 2002: 167-168), which would suggest that the Saxon/coastal raiding issue was not being regarded as a serious problem.

The Elevation of Constantine “the Great”

In May 305, Constantius became Augustus, the senior emperor of the west, and returned to Britain for a new expedition against the tribes of the north. His son Constantine joined him, and would take part in his campaign against the tribes now known as the Picts (Birley 2005: 406). The Roman forces appear to have reached northern Scotland but “without achieving resounding success against elusive enemies”, and the ailing Constantius died in July 306 at York (Mattingly 2006: 233-234).

Though Constantine was not the Caesar of the west and should not have been Constantius’ successor, according to the rule of the Tetrarchy system, nevertheless his father’s troops, who had no doubt developed loyalty to him and bonded with him on the Scottish campaign, declared him the new Augustus. “The presence of Constantine in Britain was no accident” (Mattingly 2006: 233). A series of wars throughout the empire followed, in which Constantine, *Augusti*, Caesars, and would-be candidates for these positions, as well as other usurpers, fought for control of the empire (ibid.; de la Bédoyère 2006: 73). From this struggle, “...Constantine emerged in 324 as the supreme victor” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 73). Unlike the past usurpers to imperial power who had arisen out of Britain or with support of Britain’s troops, and unlike the many more still to come, Constantine alone completely succeeded in his quest, retaining his power, as sole ruler, until his natural death in 337. At that time his three sons, Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II, divided the empire amongst them (ibid.).

Constantine retained connections with Britain, at least in the early years: he may have made a few return trips to Britain. It has been suggested that there was one as early

¹⁵ Lympne, Reculver, Burgh Castle, and Caister.

¹⁶ Portchester

as 307, based on a coin issued by the mint in London (Birley 2005: 411; Mattingly 2006: 234). However, the coin “is a single specimen of dubious authenticity” (Birley 2005: 411). A more likely visit may have occurred *ca.* 310-312, based on the minting of *adventus* coin issues of about this date in London. P. J. Casey connects these coins to references in Eusebius (*De Vita Constantini* 1.8.2; 1.25.2; 4.50) to one or possibly more visits by Constantine to the island (Birley 2005: 411). This visit may have been at least partly to pick up additional troops from Britain for his fight for control of the west against Maximian’s son Maxentius. These troops are noted by the historian Zosimus at 2.15.1 (Mattingly 2006: 231; Birley 2005: 411). “Casey argues further that London *adventus* issues of 311-14 and 314-15 commemorate another visit between April and October 314, as a result of which Constantine assumed the title *Britannicus Maximus*, attested in 315” (Birley 2005: 411). This suggests an expedition with a victorious outcome, and Eusebius (1.8.2) does suggest that Constantine campaigned in Britain. However, it is unknown who he fought, Picts, usurpers, or someone else (Mattingly 2006: 234).

The Rise of Christianity in the Early Fourth Century

One of the most notable changes of the fourth century was “the progressive rise of Christianity” (Mattingly 2006: 228). By the later third century, a number of emperors had realized there would be advantages for governing the empire if there were a state religion. There was an attempt to use the Sun-God, for example, in this role, prior to it being filled by Christianity (Higham 1992: 47).

Christianity was heavily persecuted by the state during the time of the Tetrarchs, until Galerius gave it official recognition in the 311 Edict of Toleration (Mattingly 2006: 228). Constantine showed interest in Christianity, particularly after it was thought to have aided his victory at the Milvian Bridge in 312 (Higham 1992: 47). He legitimized it in 313 with the Edict of Milan. “Constantine recognized that Christianity offered him a tool with which he could recruit men who owed their elevation and power to him, rather than relying on older, established families” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 73).

As this proved to be a successful approach for him, Constantine continued to give increasing support to Christianity, funding the building of churches on a large scale, attending its councils, and making it almost into a state religion, a position it would achieve later in the fourth century (Higham 1992: 47). Christianity had not been an

important religion in the north-western provinces in the third century. After its promotion by Constantine, however, it “spread through the governing classes, within the patronage system, along trade routes and among urban communities” (ibid.). Evidence of the existence of church organization in Britain, and of bishops at most of its provincial capitals very soon after the Edict of Milan, can be seen in the presence at the 314 Council of Arles of bishops representing London, York, and very possibly Lincoln (de la Bédoyère 2006: 73).

Reorganization of the Administration and Military in the British Provinces

The return of Britain to the central empire in 296 was soon followed by the beginning of changes to the government and military systems that would continue through the reign of Constantine (Salway 1990: 20). Provinces outside of the area controlled by Carausius and Allectus had already been divided into a larger number of smaller provinces in 293; it is likely that the further division of Britain’s two provinces into four was carried out soon after the island had been retaken (Birley 2005: 405-406).

Britannia Superior probably became *Maxima Caesariensis* with its capital at London, and *Britannia Prima*, run from Cirencester; while Inferior likely was split into a southern half of *Flavia Caesariensis*, administered out of Lincoln, and *Britannia Secunda* in the north with a capital at York (Salway 1990: 21; Mattingly 2006: 228). These provinces were in existence by the time of the compiling of the *Laterculus Veronensis* (the Verona List) ca. 303-314, in which they were named (Birley 2005: 397).

The provinces of the empire would be grouped together into twelve *dioceses*, each controlled by a *vicarius*, who was a high level civil administrative official. Britain’s provinces by 312 made up the diocese of the Britains, under the government of the *Vicarius Britanniarum*. This element of the reforms was probably carried out during the reign of Constantine (Salway 1990: 21; Mattingly 2006: 227). “The *vicarius* reported to a praetorian prefect¹⁷, whose headquarters was at Trier ... and who was responsible for the *vicarii* of all the dioceses of the north-western part of the empire” (Salway 1990: 20).

¹⁷ Constantine had the Praetorian Guard dismantled in 312, and the prefects then became “civilian officials, chief regional deputies of emperors with major financial functions” (Salway 1990: 21). The empire had four prefectures (ibid.).

Most of the governors of these new provinces would be *praesides*¹⁸, of equestrian rank, though later governors in Maxima Caesariensis would have the senatorial rank of *consularis*¹⁹, as indicated in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Occ.* 23. 9-10; Birley 2005: 397-398; Frere 1987: 199). A major distinction between these and previous provincial governors was that they would no longer have command of the forces located within their province, as these would now be under separate military control. These changes made by Diocletian in province size and command were “aimed fundamentally at restoring the stability of the state” by reducing the potential for revolt (Mattingly 2006: 227-228; Salway 1990: 20). Provincial governors were now responsible for finance, especially tax collection, judicial matters, and other administrative duties such as road maintenance (Birley 2005: 404). The procurators of the early empire²⁰ were gone but part of their responsibilities were taken on now by the governors (Salway 1990: 20).

There were additional officials concerned with finances and other imperial matters operating on the diocesan level, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Three of these were subordinate to the finance minister for the empire, the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, whose department was responsible for “the raising of revenues and their disbursement”, state servants’ salaries, and “the minting of gold and silver coin” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10-11; Birley 2005: 404). These diocesan officials included the *rationalis summarum Britanniarum*, “accountant of the chief accounts of the Britains” (*ND, Occ.* 11.3.20), who was the head of finance for the diocese and concerned with tax collections; the *praepositus thesaurorum Augustensium*, the man “in charge of the treasures of Augusta²¹” (*ND, Occ.* 11.37), the head of the treasury (*thesaurus*); and the *procurator gynaecii in Britannii Ventensis*, “procurator of the women’s (weaving-factory) of Venta in the Britains” (*ND, Occ.* 11.60), director of a state factory making clothing, likely uniforms (Birley 2005: 404; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10, 48). A fourth senior official at the diocesan level reported to a different imperial financial minister, the *comes rerum privatarum*, who was concerned with imperial properties: the *rationalis rei privatae per Britannias*, “accountant of the private account in the Britains” (*ND, Occ.*

¹⁸ Singular, *praeses*

¹⁹ Plural, *consulares*

²⁰ A procurator was the chief provincial financial officer, responsible directly to the emperor.

²¹ The new name for London after perhaps *ca.* 368.

17.3.15), who oversaw the imperial estates and other properties owned by the emperor within Britain (Birley 2005: 404; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 48).

The Roman army had also been reorganized on a large scale. As noted above, military commands had been made separate from civilian posts by Diocletian. Army units would now be led within the provinces by *duces* and *comites*. He also significantly expanded the number of legions and the overall size of the army (Breeze 1990: 30). As well, he created a “professional officer corps” (Salway 1990: 21). As with the administrative reorganization, the purpose behind these changes was to “stabilize and preserve [the] empire” (ibid.). The reorganization was finished by Constantine, during whose reign the army reached the form in which it is known for the fourth century (Breeze 1990: 30).

The roots of the changes were in the mid third century, with Gallienus’ emphasis on smaller mobile units. “The mobile force of the first and second centuries had fossilized into frontier garrisons in the third century. In the fourth century, mobility was restored by the creating of field armies”, inspired by Gallienus’ approach (Breeze 1990: 30). The new elite mobile units were called *comitatenses*, and were billeted in towns along main roads of the empire rather than based at particular forts (Higham 1992: 44). They were led by *comites*²² (“counts”) and travelled with the emperor to the location where the crisis was occurring (Breeze 1990: 30; Mattingly 2006: 228). The troops that remained stationed at forts in the frontier areas²³ were now called *limitanei* (Salway 1993: 241). They were commanded by *duces* (“dukes”, or leaders) (ibid., 1990: 21), and were considered a lower grade of troops than the field armies (Breeze 1990: 30). They received lower status, pay, conditions, and assignments than the elite *comitatenses* (Mattingly 2006: 228; Salway 1993: 241). The *comites* and *duces* were themselves answerable to the *magister equitum* and *magister peditum*, who were the commanders of the cavalry and infantry but could be combined into a single position as the top military official, the *magister militum* (Mattingly 2006: 228; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 5).

The evidence for military commanders and types of units in fourth-century Roman Britain is primarily from late in the century and from two literary sources:

²² The name for the commanders (*comites*) and thus the troops had the original meaning of “companions” of the emperor (Salway 1993: 241).

²³ *limites*

Ammianus Marcellinus' account of the 367 barbarian conspiracy, and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which probably reflects the situation in *ca.* 395 or a few years later.

Ammianus' reference to Fullofaudes in 367 (27.8.1) is the earliest notice of a *dux* in Britain, though it is thought likely that a *dux* would have been leading the British frontier armies from some time during Constantine's reign (Birley 2005: 401). In the *Notitia* the position is listed as *dux Britanniarum*, "of the Britains" (*Occ.* 40), indicating that his forces were located in more than one province (*ibid.*). As well as commanding the forces in northern England in the area of Hadrian's Wall, the *dux* may have been in charge of some of those remaining in Wales, which was still largely under military control.

Ammianus (27.8.1) also provides the earliest reference to a *comes* for Britain, the *comes maritimi tractus*, commander "of the coastal area" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 45; Birley 2005: 402). This may be equivalent to the *comes litoris Saxonici per Britannias*, commander of the Saxon shore, listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Occ.* 5.131) but it is not certain that the two were the same, or that the second post existed before the end of the century (Birley 2005: 402). If they were the same, or at least similar, it would appear from the *Notitia* that this *comes* commanded *limitanei* rather than *comitatenses*, probably stationed at the forts located along Britain's shores, particularly the eastern and southern coasts. The use of the plural *Britannias* suggests these were spread through more than one province; it is possible that the *comes* may have commanded troops stationed on the shores of the Gallic side of the channel as well (*ibid.*; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 50).

It appears very likely that there was no field army posted in Britain until close to the end of the century, and that it was necessary till then to send in units of the Gallic field army when there were crises (Breeze 1990: 30). In the last few years of the fourth century, Britain seems to have acquired a small field army, as one *comitatenses* command is indicated in the *Notitia* (*Occ.* 6.153, 199), that of the *comes Britanniarum* (*ibid.*, Esmonde Cleary 1989: 50; Birley 2005: 403). It is possible, as claimed by J.C. Mann, that the command was created by Stilicho, "who began the practice of creating permanent field-armies, too small to qualify for the appointment of a *magister*" (quoted in Birley 2005: 403). Though again the troops must have been spread between multiple provinces, it is completely unknown where they would have been stationed, though this would normally have been in cities and towns (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 54).

Taxation and Military Supply

The administrative towns in Britain were key centres for tax collection. Due to the instability of the Roman Empire's currency in the mid to late third century, taxes began to be collected in kind by local agents to ensure that needed military and official supplies could be met and the military and bureaucracy paid (Hopkins 1980: 123). "The need to secure such resources may have been a particular concern to the separatist regimes in Britain during the late third century, with sources of income and supply from elsewhere in the Empire being severely restricted" (Pearson 2005: 84). Diocletian in the very late third and early fourth centuries, and Constantine I in the early fourth, "institutionalized ... the predominance of taxation in kind" in the Empire (Hopkins 1980: 123). The large administrative towns of Roman Britain probably became important nodes in the system for collecting, storing, and distributing these supplies, and also, in some cases, for processing them before they were sent on through the system. Aspects of the towns may have been remodelled and transformed in the late third and fourth centuries to maximize these activities.

Taxes were much higher in the late empire because the government's needs were much greater, and because, due to the end of the territorial expansion and profits derived from conquest, taxes provided the primary income for the state (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 8; de la Bédoyère 2006: 95). The majority of state expenditure came in the form of the payment and provisioning of state employees, primarily the military and the bureaucracy, both now significantly expanded (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 8-9; de la Bédoyère 2006: 95; Salway 1993: 240). State servants were paid an annual salary or *stipendia* in base-metal coin, though the third-century inflation had removed most of its value. So in addition to this, the military also received the *donativa*, or donatives, paid in gold and silver on an emperor's accession, five-year anniversaries of that event, and other special occasions. State employees further received yearly rations of food (*annona*) and fodder (*capitis*), which were acquired by the state through tax in kind (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10).

Diocletian introduced a new form of tax-assessment that more thoroughly determined the amount of workable land and of people, yet could be varied according to what the state needed. Censuses and surveys were carried out throughout the empire (Potter and Johns 1992: 191; de la Bédoyère 1999: 58). The land was divided into *iugera*, units of 0.26 hectares, and each unit "assessed for tax according to measures of

agricultural production called *iuga*. The better the land, the more *iuga* it was worth. The population was assessed on a head-count called *capitatio*” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 58). The state would determine what its needs were, and what the current tax rate to be paid “per head and per agricultural productivity unit” would be (ibid., 2006: 100). This amount could be increased, and over the course of the fourth century, it was (ibid.; Faulkner 2000: 43). Based on these assessments, there were two main types of tax to be paid. The *iugum* was the property or land tax, paid in kind, while the *capitatio*, the poll tax, was usually paid in coin, though in some regions that were less integrated into the money economy, it may have been also paid in kind (Potter and Johns 1992: 191; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 8). Tax in coin seems to have become more important again later in the fourth century: “there was a tendency for payments in kind increasingly to be ... paid in coin at a set rate of correspondence with produce in kind” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10).

The most senior imperial officials responsible for the acquisition of state revenue through taxation and for its distribution to state employees were the *comes sacrarum largitionum* and the praetorian prefect. The *comes sacrarum largitionum* was concerned with the collection of tax, particularly in coin, and with payment in coin, which extended to the minting of money in gold and silver. His representatives at the diocesan level were the *praepositus*, who ensured that the taxes were collected and the *rationalis*, who received the taxes from the office of the *praepositus*; they also ensured that state payments were made to state employees in the diocese. At the provincial level, much of the governor’s responsibilities now surrounded taxation, while in the *civitates* this was carried out by appointed town councillors (decurions) (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10, 48; de la Bédoyère 1999: 57; 2006: 100). From about AD 312, the praetorian prefect was responsible for tax and payment in kind and the minting of bronze coins (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 10).

For taxes in coin, the farmer or landowner would bring produce into the administrative town of his *civitas* to convert into coin. This could be done through the sale to merchants who purchased in bulk, or sale to the state, which purchased produce on top of what it received in kind. Bronze coins received in payments, or accumulated in small daily transactions, would be taken to money-changers or *nummularii*. For a profit, they would exchange bronze for gold or silver for the payment of tax in coin, and could

change gold and silver, such as was received by soldiers as payment, for bronze to be used in the markets (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 11, 73-74; Faulkner 2000: 62; de la Bédoyère 1999: 57). “Indirectly ... the state’s fiscal and monetary cycle generated a vast number of transactions in the towns” (Faulkner 2000: 62).

Tax in kind had to be delivered to where it was needed by the military or bureaucracy. This would require the transport of significant quantities of commodities over great distances. The distribution of payment in kind was the responsibility of the office of the praetorian prefect. On the provincial level, its transportation was carried out under the direction of the *primus pilus*, “originally the senior centurion of a legion, but now a provincial official responsible to the praetorian prefect” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 12). There is evidence that the trade of luxury goods intended “for resale at a profit”, such as fine-ware pottery, glass, and metal-work, became attached to the official transport of such goods, and were moved to different centres along with them, further stimulating the economy (ibid.).

As noted above, it is possible that the system of shore forts was not intended solely or even primarily for defensive purposes: they may instead have been organized for the maximum extraction of resources, such as those acquired through taxation, and the transport of these into the imperial supply system. The concept that they were “part of a chain of fortified ports” (Pearson 2005: 82), working with other fortified sites and tax collection centres to transport and distribute supplies for the imperial system, was originally proposed by G. Milne in 1990 (Cotterill 1993: 237), and expanded by Cotterill (1993) and Pearson (2002; 2005). Taxes in kind, products derived from them, and other necessary raw materials and goods which may have been collected in the administrative centres could have been transferred to fortified sites with access to water transport such as the shore forts, and then sent off to army strongholds in Britain, or to the continent for use in Gaul or Germany (Pearson 2002: 137-138; 2005: 82).

Constans’ Winter Visit to Britain

After the death of Constantine I in AD 337, his sons became rulers of the empire: Constantine II in Britain, Gaul, and Spain; Constans in Italy, Africa, and Illyria; and Constantius II in the east. Nothing is known about Britain during the years it was under Constantine II’s control. But in 340, Constans became emperor of all the west, after

Constantine II had attempted to invade his territory in Italy and been killed (Salway 1993: 257).

There are several references to a visit that Constans made to Britain in the winter of 342-343, most likely in January (Birley 2005: 414). Although the trip is mentioned by Libanius (*Oration* 59.126-135), Firmicus Maternus (*De errore profanorum religionem* 28.6), and Ammianus Marcellinus (20.1.1 and 28.3.8), it remains almost a complete mystery; “the purpose of Constans’ sudden winter visit ... is not obvious in the sources” (Birley 2005: 415). The expedition appears to have been kept secret, according to Libanius and Firmicus, and the risk involved in having the emperor crossing the Channel at this time of year, which was supposed to be dangerous, indicates that haste must have been needed to deal with a serious crisis (Thompson 1990: 3; de la Bédoyère 2006: 73; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 44).

In a reference back to a now lost book of his, Ammianus (28.3.8) obscurely links Constans to the *areani* (or *arcani*), men whose duty it was, as he puts it, “to hasten about hither and thither over long spaces, to give information to our generals of the clashes of rebellion among the neighbouring peoples”²⁴. This has been interpreted to mean that they were “frontier scouts based on or near Hadrian’s Wall” (Mattingly 2006: 234-235), and that Constans’ visit must therefore have been connected to barbarian (probably Pictish) problems in the far north of the diocese (Birley 2005: 415).

This is simply speculation, however. Libanius makes no mention of barbarian raiders, nor does Ammianus specifically for AD 342-343 (Thompson 1990: 2). The urgency of the winter trip may suggest a situation more serious than Pictish raids on the frontier. Firmicus states in the above noted passage that “the Briton was terrified at the unexpected face of the emperor” (quoted in Birley 2005: 415). This would only make sense if the Britons had actually been planning a revolt (Thompson 1990: 3). Libanius “stresses that there was no rebellion in progress when Constans set out” (Birley 2005: 414). Perhaps he was able to say that because Constans had left swiftly before the rebellion could get underway.

It is possible that Constans had learned of the plotting of a coup against him in Britain and had rushed to the island to put an end to it before it reached fruition (Thompson 1990: 2; de la Bédoyère 2003: 159; 2006: 73; Mattingly 2006: 235; Salway

²⁴ All translations of Ammianus Marcellinus are from Rolfe 1956a, 1956b, and 1958.

1993: 259). The secrecy would seem more logical if this were the case than if there had been an expedition against a barbarian incursion, in which case it would have made sense for Constans to send word ahead to ensure that supply lines were in place. “That the proposed revolt was extensive and might have been dangerous is shown by the fact that Constans felt himself obliged to cross to Britain in person and to do so in mid-winter” (Thompson 1990: 3).

The Empire of Magnentius

The British provinces found themselves part of another breakaway empire between 350 and 353. This was led by Flavius Magnus Magnentius, who was the general of one of Constans’ field armies in Gaul (Mattingly 2006: 235; Birley 2005: 418). Sources writing in the years soon after the rebellion²⁵ claimed that he was a barbarian of Germanic origins, while later writers²⁶ insisted that his father had been British. “It has been argued²⁷ that this [second] version of his origin was developed from hostile Constantian propaganda and that he was probably just of humble birth and from northern Gaul” (Birley 2005: 418). Clearly it was considered an insult to be called a Briton.

In a coup in January 350 at Autun, in Gaul, “a cabal of military and civil notables” overthrew and killed Constans and then proclaimed Magnentius emperor (Esmonde Cleary: 1989: 44; de la Bédoyère 2006: 74; Birley 2005: 418). By the summer of that year, he had control of the western empire (de la Bédoyère 2003: 163).

Constantius II soon made moves to eliminate Magnentius, who was not able to keep hold of Illyria for long (Birley 2005: 418). The two met in battle at Mursa in Pannonia, in September of 351. This battle “permanently compromised the Roman empire’s military defences due to the scale of the losses”: thirty thousand for Constantius and twenty-four thousand for Magnentius (de la Bédoyère 2003: 165). Despite the losses, it was still a victory for Constantius, who had the larger of the two armies (ibid.). Frere suggests that amongst the troops lost by Magnentius at Mursa may have been forces taken from Britain. “That Britain was drained of troops to support the usurper must be highly

²⁵ Julian, Themistius, and Aurelius Victor

²⁶ Such as Zonaras

²⁷ By J. F. Drinkwater

probable and it would account for the inability of the British army to control its foes which is such a feature of the next fifteen years” (Frere 1987: 338).

Magnentius retreated back to Italy, which Constantius soon invaded, pushing Magnentius further back, into Gaul. He kept control of most of the west, despite further defeats, until the summer of 353. After losing the Rhine and being defeated in Gaul, Magnentius committed suicide (de la Bédoyère 2003: 165; Birley 2005: 418).

Paulus the Chain

Constantius II soon took action after the death of Magnentius to blot out reminders of the usurper and to punish those who had supported him. There is evidence in Britain that Magnentius’ coinage was demonetized “almost immediately”: while his coins comprised the bulk of those found in hoards deposited during his reign, extremely few are contained in hoards of the following years (de la Bédoyère 2003: 169). Perhaps a few months after the defeat and death of Magnentius, Constantius also sent an imperial *notarius* (state secretary) named Paulus to Britain to uncover and punish supporters of the revolt. This is discussed in detail by Ammianus Marcellinus, 14.5.6-9. “Constantius knew, or believed that in Britain Magnentius had enjoyed popular support, what mattered especially was the extent to which the curial class – landowners, councillors and the like – had taken him to their hearts” (de la Bédoyère 2003: 168).

Paulus’ original mandate, according to Ammianus, was “to fetch some officers [*militares*] who had dared to conspire with Magnentius”, but he soon exceeded his instructions and ... suddenly overwhelmed the fortunes of many, making his way amid manifold slaughter and destruction, imprisoning freeborn men and even degrading some with handcuffs; ... he patched together many accusations with utter disregard of the truth ... (14.5.6).

Paulus appears to have gone to such extreme lengths that it is not possible to get a sense of whether most of these people were actual supporters of Magnentius or not (de la Bédoyère 2003: 168).

The extension of the reprisals to civilians led Martinus, Constantius’ new *vicarius* of Britain, to step forward and plead for the innocent to be spared, and then to threaten to resign when his request was ignored (Amm. Marc. 14.5.7; Birley 2005: 419; Mattingly 2006: 235). Ammianus tells his readers that Paulus had been nicknamed “The Chain” because of his great skills “in devising complications” (14.5.8), which he now demonstrated by implicating Martinus himself and demanding that he be taken away in

chains. Martinus then attempted to kill Paulus with his sword, and failing at that, used it to commit suicide (ibid.). “For one senior administrator to try to do away with another must be a measure of the havoc being wreaked on the political classes of Britain” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 44). Ammianus claims that Constantius did not acquit any of the accused. “Many of the prisoners were proscribed, others driven into exile; to some the sword dealt the penalty of death” (14.5.9).

De la Bédoyère (2003: 169; 2006: 74) thinks it is possible that Constantius II’s orders to Paulus may have been to make the investigation into this sort of a witch hunt, either to remind and reinforce to the Britons that the true power lay with him as legitimate emperor, or perhaps as a means for “seizing wealth and land for the state”. He believes that for there to be a pretext for such an investigation, Magnentius must have had notable support among the elites of Britain, for whom this whole episode would have proved “devastating” (ibid., 2003: 170).

Carausius II: Possible Usurpers in the Mid 350s

A small number of unusual coins have been uncovered in some coin hoards buried post-353, bearing the name of Carausius (de la Bédoyère 2003: 169). Around twenty examples have been found, primarily but not exclusively in the south and east, at such locations as Silchester, Richborough, and near Mildenhall in Suffolk (Birley 2005: 420; Thompson 1990: 4). These were struck, between 354 and 358, into copies of the *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* type originally made by the house of Constantine in 348-350, but copied “in abundance in the Britain of the late 350s to make good for a lack of legitimate supplies, and normally bear the name of Constantius II” (de la Bédoyère 2003: 170). The makers of the “Carausius” coins used these copies as “blanks”, and struck onto them the legend DOMNO CARAVSIUS CES, probably intending instead DOMINVS CARAVSIUS CAES(AR), Lord Carausius Caesar (Birley 2005: 420). Some of the coins instead have a name, CENSERIS or GENSERIS (ibid.).

These coins may be evidence of another rebellion or usurpation in Britain *ca.* 354-358, by someone taking on the name of Carausius (Thompson 1990: 4). Ammianus makes no mention of a Carausius or Censeris, or of there being another uprising at this time, and there are no lost sections of his history for this period (ibid.). There is no

reference to either of these individuals outside of the coins, and thus “there is not inconsiderable doubt whether either existed” (de la Bédoyère 2003: 170).

Thompson (1990: 4) points out that if the coins are those of a “usurping emperor” they may help to make sense of Ammianus’ words in 20.1.1. Ammianus says that the “provincials” of Britain were “wearied ... by a mass of past calamities”, but he does not indicate what these were, nor has he discussed them in a previous section. Thompson thinks that these calamities could have been “due to the usurpation and suppression of Carausius II” (1990: 5). He notes that Ammianus claims to include only what he sees as the key events and highlights of Roman history, and that another brief revolt in Britain, a distant region of minimal interest, might not have been considered of sufficient importance to use (*ibid.*, 5-7). It is also possible that these coins may only represent “an indulgence by a small group of protestors” putting out forgeries that looked back nostalgically to the days of the original Carausius (de la Bédoyère 2003: 170).

Julian’s Shipments of British Grain

Whatever the problems of the mid-350s may have been, by 359 Britain was clearly under imperial control and its agricultural potential was being exploited for the benefit of the empire. In 355, Constantius II had made his cousin Julian his Caesar and commander of the army in the north-west (de la Bédoyère 2006: 74). In the late 350s, barbarians had been creating serious difficulties in the Rhineland and Gaul (Salway 1993: 264). Because of this, grain which had normally been shipped from Britain was not getting through to the people and army of the Rhine (de la Bédoyère 2006: 74; Birley 2005: 243). Julian used the army to push the barbarians back out of Gaul, and in 359 he planned and carried out a campaign in the lower Rhine and beyond (Salway 1993: 264; Frere 1987: 339).

Probably as part of this campaign, and to supply it, Julian at this time assembled a fleet of six hundred ships, four hundred of which he had constructed for this purpose. This fleet could bring grain from Britain to the Rhineland, to feed the army and people in the urban centres of the area that had been devastated by the barbarian incursions (Julian, *Letter to the Senate and People of Athens* 279D – 280C; Salway 1993: 264)²⁸. Ammianus adds that Julian had new granaries built in the damaged cities to store the

²⁸ This episode is also mentioned in Zosimus 3.5.2, though he numbers the ships at eight hundred.

grain being shipped over (18.2.3). The sources do not indicate by what means this grain had been acquired from Britain. It could have been purchased from merchants, requisitioned from farmers or big landowners, or grown on imperial estates. It is therefore not clear whether this indicates great prosperity and agricultural abundance for (at least part of) Britain at this time, or the ability of the imperial system to extract vast amounts of wealth from its provinces.

The *Magister Equitum* Lupicinus' Visit to Britain

Ammianus Marcellinus claims that in the winter of 360, Britain suffered from raids by the Picts and also the Scotti of Ireland, in “the regions near the frontiers, so that fear seized the provincials, wearied as they were by a mass of past calamities” (20.1.1). Julian was reluctant to leave Gaul to deal with it because he was afraid of the possibility of Alamanni attacks there. So he sent his *magister equitum*, Lupicinus, to Britain with a small field army (ibid., 20.1.1-3; Birley 2005: 426). To send an officer of such high rank “suggests a very serious situation” (Salway 1993: 265). “The orders that Lupicinus carried out were not, one suspects, just to do with a sudden crisis, but with the combined effects of fresh barbarian troubles and two decades of military and civil decline” (Salway 1993: 271).

It is not clear how long Lupicinus stayed in Britain or what the outcome of his expedition was. Ammianus says only that he crossed from Boulogne to Richborough and then proceeded to London, “intending there to form his plans according to the situation of affairs and hasten quickly to take the field” (20.1.3). There is no indication as to whether he actually left London or where he went.

Meanwhile, Constantius II sent emissaries to Julian with orders for Lupicinus to take part of the army to the east, not knowing that he had gone to Britain. Soon after that, in February, Julian’s troops had proclaimed him Augustus (Birley 2005: 426). Julian was afraid of how Lupicinus would react to the events, and concerned that he would “stir up material for a revolution; accordingly, a secretary was sent to Boulogne, to watch carefully and prevent anyone from crossing the strait. Because of this prohibition Lupicinus returned before hearing of anything that had happened, and so could cause no disturbance” (Amm. Marc. 20.9.9). Julian seems to have feared the possibility of Lupicinus starting a rebellion from Britain.

Barbarian Troubles in 364?

In 364 Valentinian I became the emperor of the west and appointed his brother Valens to rule the east (de la Bédoyère 2006: 75). For the year 364, Ammianus provides a run-down of the military crises encountered during the reign of Valentinian and Valens (Birley 2005: 427).

At this time, as if trumpets were sounding the war-note throughout the whole Roman world, the most savage peoples roused themselves and poured across the nearest frontiers. At the same time, the Alamanni were devastating Gaul and Raetia, the Sarmatae and Quadi Pannonia, while the Picts, Saxons, Scots, and Attacotti²⁹ were harassing the Briton with constant disasters. (Amm. Marc. 26.4.5)

This section has been taken in the past as though it referred to barbarian problems and attacks in 364, but this is not correct. Ammianus would appear in fact to be looking ahead to the events of 367, rather than claiming that anything had happened in 364 (Birley 2005: 427-428; Bartholomew 1984: 174). The inclusion of Saxons in the list would appear to be an error, as in Ammianus' discussion of 367 (27.8.5) he indicates that, along with the Franks, they were attacking the shores of Gaul; he says nothing about Saxon attacks in Britain (Birley 2005: 428).

The 367 “Barbarian Conspiracy”

The accepted narrative of the supposed barbarian conspiracy of 367 in Britain, which has traditionally been seen as the key event of late Roman Britain, can be shown to have a number of major problems, and a very different interpretation of the evidence is possible. The narrative is primarily based on two sections of the work of Ammianus (27.8.1-0 and 28.3.1-8), though there are brief references in some other sources as well.

Ammianus begins by informing the reader that the emperor Valentinian, while travelling in Gaul in 367, received the news that Britain had been “brought into a state of extreme need by a conspiracy of the savages³⁰, that Nectaridus, the commanding general of the sea coast region³¹, had been killed, and that another general³², Fullofaudes, had been ambushed by the enemy” (27.8.1). Valentinian first sent Severus, the general of his

²⁹ The homeland of this tribe is uncertain, but was probably somewhere in Scotland or Ireland.

³⁰ *barbarica conspiratione*

³¹ *comitum maritimi tractus*

³² *ducem*

household troops, then recalled him and sent Jovinus, who also seems to have been recalled (27.8.2). Then, “because of the many alarming things which constant rumours reported” about Britain, the emperor decided that Count Theodosius should be the one sent (27.8.3). Ammianus then claims that it is the Picts, Attacotti, and Scots who have been creating problems, “ranging widely and causing great devastation, while the Gallic regions ... were being harassed by the Franks and their neighbours, the Saxons” (27.8.5).

Count Theodosius travelled to Boulogne and crossed the channel to Richborough, followed by a small field army of four units. They then began the march to London, which appears by Ammianus’ time to have been renamed to Augusta³³ (27.8.6-7). It appears that as they approached London, or just outside of London, they encountered roaming bands of the enemy³⁴ carrying packs of loot and “driving along prisoners and cattle”. These Theodosius’ troops routed, and the booty was returned to the people, except for a small portion that was given to the now “wearied” soldiers (27.8.7-8). Theodosius then entered London, “which had previously been plunged into the greatest difficulties” (27.8.8). While in London, he “carefully considered what plans would be safe” and was uncertain how to proceed, as he had discovered “from the confessions of captives and reports of deserters” that the groups he faced were “widely scattered” and that he would have to follow a course of secrecy and “unforeseen attacks” (27.8.9). He then put out proclamations that he would pardon the deserters who returned to the army and that he was recalling the many soldiers who were apparently on leave. Ammianus claims that “most returned”, and that Theodosius also appointed a new *vicarius* and *dux* (27.8.10).

As Ammianus continues his discussion of the activities of Theodosius in his next book, it would appear that they resumed in 368, following an over-wintering in London. The *comes* and his now larger troops went out from London and gave “aid to the troubled and confused fortunes of the Britons” (28.3.1). He secured locations appropriate for carrying out his ambushes, and then having “routed and put to flight” the attacking tribes,

³³ It is not clear whether Ammianus is implying that the name had changed by 367, or that it was changed as a result of the events of 367-368.

³⁴ *hostium*

he “restored the cities and strongholds”³⁵ which “had suffered repeated misfortunes” (28.3.1).

Apparently while Theodosius was distracted by the campaign and restoration work, a new threat emerged that “would have resulted in grave danger, if it had not been crushed in the very beginning” (28.3.3). A man from Pannonia named Valentinus, whose brother-in-law was Maximinus, a “vice-governor” and future praetorian prefect, was an exile in Britain due to a “serious” but unspecified crime. He began to plot a rebellion and attempted to recruit “exiles and soldiers”, offering them such “enticing rewards as his circumstances at the time permitted” (28.3.4-5). Theodosius learned of the plot shortly before it was to be carried out, and put an end to it. He “resolved...to punish those who were found guilty”, which included Valentinus and “a few of his closet associates”, who were sentenced to death (28.3.6). But foreseeing “future dangers”, he decided not to have the investigation go further, “lest by spreading fear among many the disturbances in the provinces, which had just been lulled to sleep, should be revived” (ibid.).

Then Theodosius returned to his restoration work on the “cities and defenses”, and “protecting the frontiers”³⁶ by sentinels and outposts” (28.3.7). In the course of this campaigning and restoration work he recovered a province “which had passed into the enemy’s”³⁷ hands”, so that it now had “a legitimate governor”. Valentinian decided that it should be renamed *Valentia* and, when he learned of the province’s recovery, “one might almost say” that he “celebrated an ovation”³⁸ in his joy” (ibid.).

Finally, Ammianus notes that Theodosius had removed the *arcani*³⁹ from their duties, which were to “hasten about hither and thither over long spaces, to give information to our generals of the clashes of rebellion among the neighbouring peoples” (28.3.8). Apparently they had been “corrupted” through bribes to give the barbarians information about the Romans (presumably about troop movements or locations) (ibid.).

The traditional interpretation of these two passages from Ammianus has been that the provinces of Britain had suffered from a severe concerted barbarian attack, primarily

³⁵ *civitates et castra*

³⁶ *limites*

³⁷ *hostium*

³⁸ *ovantis*. An *ovans* is a minor triumph

³⁹ Or *areani*

in the areas near Hadrian's Wall, but also extending down into the south, that much of Theodosius' fighting and restoration had been in the north, and that the province of Valentia must have been located or created in the far north (for e.g., see Frere 1987 or Salway 1993). However, on closer examination, Ammianus' narrative is not as straightforward as it appears, and a very different conclusion is possible. Theodosius may well have been dealing primarily with another revolt (in addition to the aborted rebellion of Valentinus) and most, if not all, of his activities may have been in the southeast.

The concept of a formal alliance and conspiracy between the Picts, Scots, Attacotti, Saxons, and Franks seems highly unlikely, especially considering the language differences and distance between the homelands of these groups, not to mention that there were multiple independent tribes and leaders within each of them. The logistics of being able to do such a thing at that time seem incredible (Thompson 1990: 7). This does not mean, however, that there was not some sort of incursion by at least one of these groups.

The level of disorder in the south-east is notable upon Theodosius' arrival when he has to fight his way to and then rescue London from the extreme dangers that were threatening it (Frere 1992: 129, n. 71). It seems odd that large numbers of cattle were in the possession of the enemies that he encountered. If the barbarians were planning to return from the south-east to Scotland or Ireland, with such distances to travel one would think a focus on more easily portable wealth would be more likely. It is also questionable as to whether there could have been Picts or Scots in the south-east in sufficient numbers "as to harass seriously a Roman army" and to occupy the area (Thompson 1990: 10-11).

London appears to have remained as Theodosius' base for his campaigning and restoration work in 368. Ammianus mentions no additional place-names other than Valentia for the remainder of the account. There is no indication that Theodosius or the army travelled to York or farther north to campaign (Frere 1992: 129; Bartholomew 1984: 179). It is possible then, that the campaigning and restoration were done within the region of Britain surrounding London. "In the absence of any further clear reference by Ammianus to the location of the fighting, it must be assumed to be confined to the south-east, that is to say the area of Maxima Caesariensis" (Bartholomew 1984: 179). The killing of the *comes maritimi tractus* would also point to a south-eastern location for the crisis, if this official was in command of the shore forts, which were located in this area.

Ammianus indicates that Theodosius found Britain in a “general state of military indiscipline” (Bartholomew 1984: 180). The large number of deserters and soldiers on leave raises the question of a problem with the military in Britain. It may be that the army was “demoralized”, perhaps due to the loss of the *comes* and the *dux*, perhaps also due to unrest and difficulties in Britain stretching back to at least the 350s and the episode of Paulus, if not earlier (Thompson 1990: 14). Bartholomew (1984: 180) thinks that Theodosius’ initial “efforts in Britain were directed against units of the Roman army”. It is possible that the Roman army in Britain, particularly units stationed in the south-east, probably at the short forts, was itself in a state of unrest or even revolt, and may have been responsible at least in part for the situation in the south-east.

The province recovered by Theodosius, which was renamed Valentia, is usually believed to have been in the north near the wall. But it may well have simply been Maxima Caesariensis. The evidence would suggest that Valentia had not been lost to the barbarians, but to a revolt. Ammianus (28.3.7) “emphasizes that it was recovered after being initially abandoned by Theodosius to the rule of enemies (*in dicionem concesserat hostium*) and makes a special point of the fact that it now had a ‘legitimate governor’” (Salway 1993: 292). It is worth noting Ammianus’ frequent use of *hostes*, enemy/enemies, to refer to Theodosius’ opponents. Though he does also use *gentes*, which can mean tribes, but also peoples, he does not, after the initial identification of the different ethnic groups in 27.8.5, refer to their names again. *Hostes* does not necessarily mean a foreign enemy, but only “enemy of the state”, and was used of Roman traitors such as Cataline (*ibid.*). The occupiers of the province liberated by Theodosius may have been such “traitors” rather than foreign enemies. Valentinian followed a strange “restraint” in his rejoicing over the province’s restoration, as Ammianus tells is that he celebrated “almost” as though it were a minor triumph. Triumphs were to be celebrated over foreign enemies, not Roman citizens. Therefore, his restraint may be explained if the province had been recovered from a rebellion or usurpation (*ibid.*, 291). It is clear that this revolt in “Valentia” could not be the same as the one that Valentinus had attempted to start, as Ammianus indicates that Theodosius was able to put it down before it had gotten underway. It is very possible “that other dissident Romans had taken advantage of the confused situation in 367 to seize power of part of Britain” (*ibid.*, 292-293).

As well as in the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus, the name of Valentia as a province also appears in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Occ.* 1.22, 3.34, 23.4, 23, 11), where it appears to be listed as a fifth province, and in Polemius Silvius (*Laterculus II*), who lists six provinces including the Orcades⁴⁰ (Birley 2005: 399; Bartholomew 1984: 178). The *Notitia* lists Valentia and Maxima Caesariensis as each being governed by a *consularis*, whereas the others were under the administration of a *praeses* (Birley 2005: 399). It is hard to take Polemius' list of provinces, with its inclusion of the Orcades, seriously. C. E. Stevens and J. G. F. Hind have suggested that the Orcades reference was interpolated from Eutropius' claim (7.13.3) that Claudius had conquered Britain up to the Orcades, and from Claudian's poetic assertion (*de IV consulatu Honorii*, 31-32) that, thanks to the efforts of Count Theodosius, the "Orcades ran red with slaughtered Saxons" (in Birley 2005: 399, 438). Hind points out that this spurious addition to the list of provinces raises questions about Polemius' reliability as a source for Valentia as a fifth province (*ibid.*, 399). At two locations in the *Notitia* (*Occ.* 3.33-34 and 23.10-11), Valentia is placed on the line in the text following Maxima Caesariensis. Bartholomew (1984: 178) proposes that the text originally contained a *nunc*⁴¹ between the two: "Maxima Caesariensis, now Valentia". The other references to Valentia in the *Notitia* were probably later additions by medieval scribes (*ibid.*). This theory has received support from some other scholars since its publication (such as Thompson: 1990: 9; Frend 1992: 129; de la Bédoyère 2006: 77).

There is a lack of sufficient physical evidence, however, to support either a northern or southern location for the events of 367-368. "[C]onvincing evidence of wholesale destruction" at this time is lacking for any forts on the south-east shore or Hadrian's Wall, at any of the towns, or even for the villas (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 45). There appears to have been some damage at the wall forts of Birdoswald and Chesters, but "no consistent destruction layer that can be dated securely to 367", while alterations at other wall forts like Housesteads "are not accompanied by evidence of disasters" (Frend 1992: 129). It may be that raiders were focused on obtaining loot, and largely avoided the forts and towns (Thompson 1990: 9). Frend (1992: 130-131, 131 n.90) points to some possible evidence of upheaval and destruction in or near the area of east

⁴⁰ The Orkneys

⁴¹ "now"

England to the north of London. This includes the burial at the Water Newton and Mildenhall of Christian treasure hoards and the damaging or destruction and burial of lead tanks that were probably Christian fonts at Ashton, Icklingham, and Oxborough, all in the approximate area of East Anglia. The burial of these items appears to have perhaps occurred around the right time, and may have been connected to the events of 367-368, but could equally be unrelated to them.

Ironically, in Ammianus' history, "the Picts and Scots are not mentioned as having been defeated" (Frend 1992: 129). In the section where he sums up the accomplishments of Valentinian's reign, he again uses *hostes* for the foes of Britain and makes no reference to the tribes that had supposedly invaded (30.7.9; Bartholomew 1984: 172). Ammianus may have been focusing on "foreign invaders" out of a reluctance to discuss the activities of rebellious Romans, who would not have been glorious to defeat, but rather a source of embarrassment and discomfort (Thompson 1990: 10-12).

Ammianus wrote his history during the reign of Theodosius the Great, son of Count Theodosius. This may well have necessitated flattery of the elder Theodosius and a positive view of his career (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 46). "It was, or might be dangerous to criticize him or to undermine his achievements" (Thompson 1990: 10). This may have led Ammianus to exaggerate how severe the crisis of 367-368 was, or what Theodosius was actually able to accomplish (Esmonde Cleary 1990: 10). Ammianus' description of the count's fighting in Britain is very brief compared to his detailed account of his 373 African campaign. "Can it be that he is so brief and uninformative because he is covering up a partial failure on the part of Theodosius? Were the raiders in fact *not* driven out after all?" (Thompson 1990: 10). Finally, Theodosius left without having fully dealt with the issue of Valentinus' rebellion. He did not investigate far below the surface because "he was afraid that he would frighten the remaining conspirators, drive them to desperation, and so cause an outbreak" in multiple British provinces, perhaps beyond what his armed forces could control (*ibid.*, 12).

Magnus Maximus

Valentinian I died in 375 and was succeeded by his young son Gratian, whose four-year-old brother Valentinian II was also proclaimed emperor by the army. Valens was killed a few years later in 378, at the battle of Adrianople in Thrace, in which two-

thirds of the large army accompanying him also perished while battling the Visigoths. Gratian appointed Theodosius, the son of Count Theodosius, to be in charge of pushing the Goths back, then in 379 made him the emperor of the east (Salway 1993: 296). In 383 Gratian himself was killed in the midst of a revolt and usurpation that left Magnus Maximus in charge of the north-west, and Britain once more within a breakaway regime. Maximus was an army commander in Britain who was proclaimed emperor by his troops, then crossed to the continent to take control of the Gallic prefecture.

Maximus, a Spaniard, had served in the army of Count Theodosius in the 367-368 campaign in Britain, as the Emperor Theodosius may also have done (Zosimus 4.35.5; Birley 2005: 447). He may have been related in some way to Theodosius' family, perhaps as part of a less prestigious branch (Birley 2005: 447). It is possible that he is also to be identified with the army officer named Maximus whom Ammianus Marcellinus notes (29.5.6) as "serving under the elder Theodosius *ca.* 373 in the war against Firmicus in North Africa" (Birley 2005: 447-448). Ammianus also mentions a *dux* Maximus in Moesia or Scythia who was "involved in transferring the Goths across the Danube into Thrace in 376-7", and whom Ammianus calls a *dux ... exitiosus* (a "deadly general", 31.4.9) and accuses of "treacherous greed" (31.4.10; Birley 2005: 448). If this is the same Maximus, Ammianus' comments may have been inspired by the 389 *Panegyric* of Pacatus, who harps about Maximus' "insatiable greed" (24.1 *ff.*) and labels him *homo funebris*, "man of death" (43.4; Birley 2005: 448).

If Maximus had been active in the Danube area in 377 he may have been involved in the post-Adrianople deliberations of 378 that resulted in Gratian selecting Theodosius the Younger as the new Augustus of the east in January 379 (Birley 2005: 448). Zosimus claims (4.35.3-4) that Maximus was resentful that, while Theodosius had been chosen as emperor, he himself had not received a more impressive command, and that this had inspired his rebellion. Given the possibility speculated above that Maximus may have contributed to his kinsman receiving the purple, he may also have expected to himself be given some higher office than a command in Britain (Birley 2005: 448).

An alternative possible motivation for the usurpation has been put forward by J. F. Matthews, who suggests that Maximus and those who supported his bid for power may have thought the west would be better ruled by a mature man "of tried military worth" than by a self-indulgent young man (Gratian) and a child (Valentinian II), an equivalent

to what Theodosius was for the east (Birley 2005: 449). Similarly, Frere (1987: 353) proposes that “his principal motive may have been a desire to re-establish a vigorous military regime in the west”. Theodosius may even have supported the revolt, as Gratian was responsible for the 376 execution of the elder Theodosius (Casey 1979: 67; Birley 2005: 448). “Maximus certainly put out a claim to have Theodosius’ backing, which he was forced by torture⁴² to retract in 388 (Pacatus 43.4)” (Birley 2005: 448).

None of the sources indicate exactly which command Maximus held in Britain. Because the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* claims that he campaigned against the Picts and Scots in 382, it is usually assumed that he would have to have been the *dux Britanniarum*, with control of the frontier troops of northern Britain (Birley 2005: 443). Birley (2005: 448) discounts the possibility that Maximus might have been the *comes Britanniarum*, as the command is thought to have not been established until the 390s by Stilicho. The campaign in the north could have been an opportunity for him to gain the loyalty and devotion of the troops, leading to their proclamation of him as emperor in the same way as the Scottish campaign may have benefitted Constantine I in 306. Another option is that Maximus could have been a *comes rei militaris* commanding “an expeditionary force of Gallic *comitatenses*, like Count Theodosius”, sent with them to Britain to campaign against the Picts and Scots (James 1984: 170).

According to Sulpicius Severus (*Vita Martini* 20.3) and Orosius (7.34.9), it was the army in Britain that insisted on raising Maximus up to imperial power, “almost against his will”, rather than a choice he himself made (Birley 2005: 445). Whether this was true or simply part of Maximus’ propaganda, he appears to soon have crossed with an army to Gaul, and shortly gained control of the provinces in Spain and Gaul (*ibid.*, 449). Gratian fled to Lyon, where he was killed by his *magister equitum*; apparently his *magister peditum* also supported Maximus’ cause (Casey 1979: 67).

Despite his usurpation, Maximus seems to have been accepted as the main emperor in the west. “He was apparently recognized by Theodosius, probably early in 384” (Birley 2005: 449-450). At this time, statues of him begin to be erected in public places in the east, such as Alexandria, according to Zosimus (4.37.3; Casey 1979: 67; Birley 2005: 450). Coinage was struck with his name by Theodosius at the

⁴² Prior to his execution (Casey 1979: 67).

Constantinople mint, and in 386 his nominee, his Praetorian Prefect Evodius, shared a consulship with Honorius, Theodosius' son (Casey 1979: 67, 70; Birley 2005: 450).

Maximus struck his first coins, gold *solidi* and silver *siliquae*, probably as “a proclamation issue” intended “to pay an accession donative to the troops”, in London in 383 (Casey 1979: 68). The mint is identified by its mint mark, AVG for Augusta, the name by which London was now known. Maximus then issued coins from Trier, putting out gold *solidi* depicting two seated emperors of the same size facing each other, a message to signify that the emperors are “of equal imperial seniority” – an indication that Maximus was “proclaiming himself to be on a footing of equality with Theodosius” (ibid.).

Maximus next issued gold and silver coinage once more from the mint at London. From 368, a “certifying mark”, OB(ryzium), had been used to indicate the pure gold content of a coin; the equivalent mark used for silver was P(u)S(ulatum). Coinage with these certification marks was directly connected to the workings of the *comes sacrarum largitionem*, and thus to the imperial court. “It follows from this that the coinage of Maximus from the London mint bearing the mark AVGOB (or in silver AVGPS) must have been struck when the imperial *comitatus* was in Britain” and that the coins, which are more similar to those minted in Trier than to the first issues from London, “represent a visit to Britain by Maximus after the establishment of his court in Trier” (Casey 1979: 68)

Casey (1979: 72) argues that the reason for the court being in Britain was that Maximus was campaigning in the north. Though the *Gallic Chronicle* claims this occurred back in 381, it also places Maximus' accession in 380. It is highly possible that the chronicler had both dates wrong, yet in the right sequence, and that Maximus in fact returned to Britain to carry out this campaign in the first couple years after his usurpation. This would be supported by the numismatic evidence for the presence of his court in London (ibid.).

In late 387 Maximus crossed over the Alps to take Milan, with Valentinian II fleeing his arrival. “Maximus had obviously decided that the time had come to put an end to the rival western government in Italy, which was a permanent threat to his claim to equality with Theodosius (Salway 1993: 299). In 388 Theodosius moved his forces west. His navy was able to get past that of Maximus, while the eastern army moved into and

through Illyricum, dealing two defeats there to the western forces. Magnus Maximus was “trapped” at Aquileia, where he was captured and executed (Birley 2005: 450; Salway 1993: 299).

From the late antiquity onwards, Magnus Maximus has been accused of stripping Britain of its troops to take to the continent to support him in his quest for power, leaving the island vulnerable to attack. Outside of the claims of literary sources such as Gildas, one of the main pieces of evidence is the presence in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Occ.* 5.65), under forces listed in a field army in Illyricum, of the (*pedites*) *Seguntienses*, which had probably been stationed as a garrison unit at the fort of Segontium in Caernarfon, north-west Wales (Birley 2005: 449 n. 107; Salway 1993: 299-302). The assumption is that this was among the forces taken out of Britain by Maximus, and not returned after his defeat.

However, that belief is now being questioned. Apparently a large proportion of Maximus’ army had been recruited from barbarians, thus greatly reducing the number of regular units he would have had to take with him. However, this approach would have been expensive, and “may well have led him to enact unjust confiscations of property as well as high taxation” (Salway 1993: 300). He would also have needed to use the troops from Britain at first, until he had the opportunity on the continent to do the recruiting. It is important to point out that the army in Britain at this time was mostly, or entirely, comprised of *limitanei*, who might have had neither the training nor the equipment to be effective against the elite *comitatenses* on the continent (James 1984: 170; Mattingly 2006: 237). So Maximus may have felt that most of them were better off left where they were. If James’ suggestion that Maximus came to Britain as the general of a small field army is correct, these were probably the same troops that he took back with him (1984: 170). Casey (1979: 76) is also sceptical of the theory that Maximus permanently removed much of Britain’s military. Coins found at the site of Segontium included one of Maximus, as well as six from after Maximus’ reign, possibly extending into the post-395 period. The coin profile “bring[s] Segontium into line with other military sites occupied for as long as new coinage types were introduced into Britain” (*ibid.*). Although it is difficult to distinguish civilian from military occupation of sites in this period, it may be that the *pedites Seguntienses* remained in Wales after the time of Maximus, and that its presence in Illyricum in the *Notitia* would instead be due to “the

removal of units from Britain by Stilicho” (ibid.). Casey suggests that the units listed in the *Notitia* as under the *dux Britanniarum* would not reflect permanent troop removals by Maximus, as those “involved in the usurpation crisis will have been returned in 384”, but rather “Stilicho’s abandonment of the western military command” (ibid.).

The Usurpation of Eugenius and Argobastes

In 392, Valentinian, “who had been left in the care of Flavius Argobastes⁴³, Theodosius’ Frankish general”, either was killed or committed suicide (Salway 1993: 303). Argobastes used this as an opportunity to rebel and choose his own candidate for a puppet emperor, Eugenius, “a learned palace official” (de la Bédoyère 2003: 185). Britain was within the territory under their control, which included the entire west, but the effect of their rule on the island is not known (Salway 1993: 303). Theodosius’ preparations for invading the west took until 394, then he moved his military through Pannonia into northern Italy. The two forces met at the Frigidus River near Aquileia. The outcome was a victory for Theodosius, but there had been a huge loss of life on both sides, and the battle turned out to be yet another costly one for the empire, decimating in particular the army of the west. Eugenius was captured and executed, and Argobastes took his own life (ibid., 304).

Stilicho’s Activities in Britain

Only a few months later, in January 395, Theodosius I died, and the empire was divided between his sons, with Honorius receiving the west and Arcadius the east. This represented the final and permanent separation of the two halves of the empire, and a loss of access for the west to the resources of the east: “the west was chronically impoverished by being cut off from the sources of money, military supplies, and recruits that lay in the provinces under eastern control” (Salway 1993: 309). Honorius was still a child, and the real power of the west lay with his *magister militum* of Vandal birth, Flavius Stilicho (de la Bédoyère 2006: 77).

It is commonly claimed that Stilicho organized campaigns in Britain against the Picts, Scots, and Saxons *ca.* 398-399, either directed by himself or by someone working under his orders (Mattingly 2006: 238; Frere 1987: 355). The only evidence for this is in

⁴³ The *magister militum* and real ruler of the west

a few obscure references in the panegyrics of the court poet Claudian, written in 399 and 400 (Birley 2005: 453; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 46). In these poems, Claudian uses the literary device of having speeches given by a personified Rome and Britain. Rome claims that “with the Saxons subjugated the sea is now more peaceful, with the Picts broken Britain is secure” (Claudian, in *Eutropium* I.392-393, in Ireland 1986: 163).

Britain, depicted as a woman, states that she

found in Stilicho protection, when the Scots roused all Ireland and the sea foamed beneath hostile oars. His care ensured I need not fear the missiles of the Scots nor tremble at the Picts, nor watch on all my shores for Saxons to arrive with every shifting wind. (Claudian, *de Consulatu Stilichonis* II. 247-255, in Ireland 1986: 163).

It is impossible to know whether Claudian is actually referring to a real campaign, as he does elsewhere⁴⁴, describing in vastly more detail Stilicho’s activities along the Rhine in 396 (Birley 2005: 453), or if this is nothing more than courtly flattery of Honorius and Stilicho and poetic license.

It is further theorized that Stilicho a few years later removed troops from Britain, based on a reference from another panegyric of Claudian from 402, concerning Stilicho’s campaigns against the Visigoths:

There also came the legion set to guard the farthest Britons, the legion that curbs the savage Scots and scans the lifeless patterns tattooed on dying Picts (Claudian, *de bello Gothico* 416-418, in Ireland 1986: 165).

From late summer 401 the west came under a severe “Visigothic threat” (Salway 1993: 315). The Visigoths had come through the Alps in winter in northern Italy, and so over the winter Stilicho was engaged in building up his army (ibid.). It is in this context that Stilicho could have withdrawn garrison units from Britain, if this did in fact happen. Attempts have been made to identify the legion in the panegyric as what was left of VI Victrix from York, taken away by Stilicho, but James says this may be simply speculation (1984: 17).

As noted above, the establishment of the command of the *comes Britanniarum* has been linked to these supposed activities of Stilicho. It has been suggested that it could have been created during the hypothetical 398-399 campaign in Britain, but then removed again during Stilicho’s withdrawal of units a few years later (Mattingly 2006: 238). Frere proposes that Stilicho established the command with its small field army as

⁴⁴ In *de consulatu Stilichonis* I. 189-245 and *de IV consulatu Honorii* 439-460

“compensation” for large-scale removal of *limitanei* (1987: 356; James 1984: 170). James thinks that “[i]t might instead have been a net reinforcement in the face of increasing military pressure on the diocese” (1984: 170). Birley believes it likely that the references in the two earlier panegyrics simply indicate the “dispatch” of the units under this command to Britain in 398, rather than any actual campaigning, and that withdrawals probably should instead be connected to Constantine III in 407 (2005: 453).

The Barbarian Crossing of the Rhine

According to Prosper of Aquitaine, whose chronicle was written in Gaul towards the middle of the fifth century, on 31 December 406, a massive horde of Germanic barbarians, particularly Vandals and Alans⁴⁵, crossed the middle Rhine and entered Gaul (Birley 2005: 445). The Roman forces along the Rhine were unable to stop them, as they were depleted by the withdrawal of units in 402 by Stilicho to aid in the fighting in Italy against the Visigoths under Alaric (Kulikowski 2000: 326; Frere 1987: 356-357). The Rhine frontier was lost, and the horde poured far into Gaul (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 136). Strangely, Stilicho does not appear to have responded to the invasion, even though he had taken care of all the previous threats by winter 406-407. “His failure to do anything about the Rhine crossing is inexplicable” (Kulikowski 2000: 326-327).

Kulikowski claims that there may be an error in Prosper’s dating of the Rhine crossing, and that it may instead have occurred on 31 December 405, which would make sense historically (2000: 327). Birley concurs that such an error might be possible: “Prosper was not a very careful writer” (2005: 458). Prosper appears to have been more interested in the story he was telling than in “precise dates”, and “he did not hesitate to deliberately alter chronology where he felt there was reason to do so” (Kulikowski 2000: 329). The framework of his chronicle required “an entry for each of three years”, so he “simply portioned out his sequence of events, one event to the year” (ibid.). In other parts of his chronicle, this practice can be seen to have caused “misrepresentation of detail” (ibid.).

An earlier date for the crossing would explain Stilicho’s lack of response to it, as from 405 to August 406 he was fending off another Gothic invasion of Italy by Radagaisus, which would have taken priority over moving north to deal with the invasion

⁴⁵ Apparently the Sueves were also a major component of the invasion (Kulikowski 2000: 326).

of Gaul (Kulikowski 2000: 327-328). After he was done with Radagaisus in August 406, he may have intended to do something about Gaul, and was perhaps engaged in the process of putting together an army to take there (ibid., 330). But his lack of action up to that time may have led to the 406-407 series of usurpations in Britain.

Zosimus links the impact of the invasion of the Vandals, Sueves, and Alans to the usurpations, claiming that these tribes “became objects of fear to the armies of Britain also, and compelled them, in case the invaders might turn against them too, to hold a rushed election of usurpers” (6.3.1, in Birley 2005: 457). As the proclaiming of the first of the usurpers, Marcus, was probably in the summer of 406⁴⁶, this would make no sense unless the crossing of the Rhine had, in fact, actually taken place the previous winter (Kulikowski 2000: 327).

Proclamations of Usurpers by the British Army

As a result of the Rhine crossing, the Roman army stationed in Britain was extremely concerned, perhaps that it would lose “communications with the central parts of the empire” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 136), and perhaps, as noted above in the quotation from Zosimus 6.3.1, that the invaders might attack Britain as well. In the summer of 406 they proclaimed Marcus as emperor (Olympiodorus, Frag. 12; Zosimus 6.2.11). He was soon deposed, apparently as a result of “not agreeing with their [the army’s] way of thinking” (Zosimus 6.2.1, in Birley 2005: 456). He was replaced by Gratian, who himself lasted only four months before falling into disfavour with the army and being killed as well (Olympiodorus, Frag. 12; Zosimus 6.2.1-2). The third and final usurper raised by the army, probably in February 407, was Constantine, “chosen, solely on account of the hope in his name” (Orosius 7.40.4, in Birley 2005: 455; Birley 2005: 458). The fact that it was the hundredth anniversary of Constantine the Great’s proclamation by the troops in Britain probably further contributed to the appeal of this candidate (de la Bédoyère 2006: 78; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 136).

Next to nothing is known about the background of the usurpers, especially the first two. As “the army was active in proclaiming them, it is most probable that they were all military men or Roman officials – the sort of people who might unite the armies of the western provinces” (Mattingly 2006: 529). It is highly possible that Marcus and

⁴⁶ As has been extrapolated from Olympiodorus, Frag. 12 (Kulikowski 2000: 327; Birley 2005: 457).

Gratian were among the top commanders in Britain, holders of the *comes Britanniarum*, the *comes litoris Saxonici*, or *dux Britanniarum* posts (Birley 2005: 457). Orosius calls Gratian *municeps eiusdem insulae* (7.40.4), which Birley would interpret as generally meaning “a native of Britain” (2005: 457). Orosius goes on to describe Constantine as being *ex infirma militaria* (7.40.4), “from the lowest ranks of the army” (in Birley 2005: 457). But this “need not mean that he was still” a common soldier “when proclaimed”, but “perhaps an officer of more junior standing who had risen from the ranks” Birley 2005: 457).

“Constantine III” would appear to have used propaganda to support his claim, and to have had aspirations to found a dynasty such as the original Constantine had done. This can be seen in his expansion of his name to Flavius Claudius Constantinus, in his renaming of his sons as Constans and Julian, and in his appointment of Constans as Caesar in 408, then as Augustus in 409 or 410 (Birley 2005: 458; Kulikowski 2000: 333). Constantine avoided his predecessors’ fate by quickly assembling an army and taking it with him across the channel to Gaul. That there were still sufficient troops in Britain to consider opposing elite units of the Roman army in Gaul that were loyal to Honorius, or the Germanic invaders themselves, would suggest that Stilicho had not depleted Britain’s garrison as much as has been speculated (Salway 1993: 318).

Constantine III on the Continent

Constantine crossed to Boulogne and “met no resistance from the imperial army and the troops of Gaul”; its provinces went quickly over to his side, as did those of Spain (Kulikowski 2000: 333). He first took Lyon and minted his initial batch of coins there (ibid., 333-334). Constantine had moved into Gaul swiftly enough that he had prevented the barbarians from reaching and occupying the channel coast (Salway 1993: 318). He now focused on extending control over the barbarians within Gaul, largely halting their movements until 409, probably through a “combination of force and treaties” (Kulikowski 2000: 333; Salway 1993: 318). Constantine was eventually able to garrison the Rhine again and in early 408 to begin minting his coins at Trier. By this time he also had control of Arles, which became his base (Kulikowski 2000: 333-334). “In 409, Honorius was obliged to recognize Constantine as a co-ruler”, partly due to the fact that Alaric’s Visigoths were attacking Italy again (Mattingly 2006: 530).

However, soon Constantine's good fortune ran out. Later in 409, one of his commanders, a Briton named Gerontius, revolted in Spain and proclaimed his own client Maximus as emperor. Unaware of the rebellion, Constantine had already sent Constans to Spain with Gerontius' replacement, and so as a diversion, Gerontius "stirred up the barbarians in Gaul against Constantine" (Kulikowski 2000: 337-338). This is thought to have resulted in terrible devastation in Gaul (*ibid.*, 338). Gerontius defeated and killed Constans in battle, and "besieged Constantine himself in Arles" in 411, until Gerontius' own forces turned on him and he committed suicide (Birley 2005: 460). Constantine later the same year found himself again under siege at Arles, on this occasion by Honorius' general, Count Constantius. This time, Constantine was captured and put to death (Mattingly 2006: 530; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 136-137).

The Coin Shortage

On British sites there is a steady decline in the number of finds of coins minted after 379. There appears to have been a reduction in the supply of coinage being sent to Britain, and this was not made up by the production of copies, as it had been during past shortfalls. This lack of copying could suggest a late fourth-century decline in the use of coins and of the coin-based economy in Britain (de la Bédoyère 2003: 180, 192; 2006: 77). The supply of low-value bronze coins stopped after 402: "the last Roman coins to occur in large numbers are those issues that Arcadius and Honorius struck down to AD 402" (Salway 1993: 316).

Constantine minted gold and silver on the continent, but only a very small amount reached Britain; he does not seem to have minted any bronze (de la Bédoyère 2003: 192). The gold and silver were being minted to pay the army and keep the imperial system running on the continent. It is strange, therefore, that few coins reached Britain to pay the military and bureaucracy on the island.

It is possible that "there were no longer enough Roman troops in Britain to be reflected by significant finds of coins" (Salway 1993: 316). Two other, perhaps more likely, possibilities are that the administrations of Honorius and later of Constantine were having a great deal of difficulty raising sufficient funds to pay for the continental armies and wage war against the barbarians, and so had "simply stopped paying the garrison and

civil service in Britain”, or that the shipments of cash could not get through due to the disorder on the continent (ibid.).

The End of Roman Rule in Britain

A year or two after Constantine had left for the continent, Britain is thought to have suffered a barbarian attack. According to Zosimus,

Since Constantine did not offer any resistance, given that most of his forces were in Spain, the barbarians from across the Rhine attacked everywhere with all their might and made it necessary for the inhabitants of Britain and some of the nations among the Celts⁴⁷ to revolt from Roman law and live on their own, no longer obedient to Roman laws (6.5.2, in Birley 2005: 459-460).

The attack is often assumed to have occurred in 408 and to have been carried out by Saxons (Birley 2005: 459; Frere 1987: 359; Mattingly 2006: 530).

This identification of the barbarians as Saxons comes from the entry in the *Gallic Chronicles* of 452: “The Britains were devastated by an incursion of the Saxons” (in Birley 2005: 456). This entry has been dated to 410 or 411. The chronicle was written as a “continuation of the great chronicle set down by St Jerome”, probably in southern Gaul in 452 (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 137-138). A number of possible problems with this entry have been identified. It has been suggested that the entry is a later interpolation by a ninth-century Carolingian editor who had read and been influenced by Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, and so inserted an entry connecting the Saxons to the end of Roman Britain in a convenient spot that would link it in time to the sack of Rome, which Bede had also connected to the end of Roman Britain (Bartholomew 1982: 269-270; Miller 1978: 316).

Muhlberger, on the other hand, does not think that the entry is an interpolation, but would not use it as an accurate source for writing history. The original chronicler had an underlying purpose to his work, “to convey a sense of decline to his readers” and to show “that the empire was disintegrating” (Muhlberger 1983: 30-31). To support that theme he included a “catalogue of disasters accompanying the sack of Rome”⁴⁸ (ibid., 31). This catalogue, he says, will illustrate how the Romans were becoming weaker. This is indicated by the Saxon devastation of the British provinces, Vandal and Alan destruction of part of Gaul, the Sueves’ occupation of much of much of Spain, and the sack of Rome by the Goths. There are historical problems in this list: the Sueves were

⁴⁷ In Gaul

⁴⁸ *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, lines 61-65.

not powerful in Spain until after the Vandals had left it for Africa in 429. The chronicler here “projects the conditions of the mid-century back to Honorius’ time”, and “disregarding strict chronological order, condenses many years of Suevic history into one sentence” (ibid.). It is very likely that the Saxon entry reflects this same process as well. “He mentions Britain only to complete his list to emphasize the decline of the empire in Honorius’ time” (ibid.). Thus there is no real evidence that the barbarians attacking Britain were actually Saxons.

A logical context for the attack would be in 409. As discussed above, when Gerontius revolted against Constantine in this year, he also incited a barbarian uprising in Gaul. As Zosimus does not distinguish the attackers of Britain from the other barbarians “from across the Rhine”, it would seem possible that they were from one of those groups now rampaging in Gaul. Whether or not the attack was the actual cause of the British expulsion of Constantine’s administration, the disruption going on in Gaul and the fact that Constantine’s forces were tied up fighting Gerontius may have provided disgruntled Roman Britons with their opportunity to revolt (Kulikowski 2000: 337-338).

Zosimus also says of the British revolt,

The Britons therefore took up arms, and braving danger for their independence, freed the cities from the barbarians threatening them, and all Armorica and the other provinces of the Gauls copied the Britons and freed themselves in the same way, expelling their Roman governors and establishing their own state as best they could (6.5.3, in Birley 2005: 460).

If in fact it was necessary for the Britons to have to look after their own defence, as they were receiving no assistance from Constantine, they would have been required to break Roman law, in particular the *lex Julia de vi publica*, “the ancient general prohibition on the carrying of arms by civilians” (Salway 1993: 313). The need to break free from such laws may have been a legitimate reason for the revolt, or possibly served as a pretext for the removal of Constantine’s entire administration from the diocese.

The Rescript of Honorius

Amongst a sequence of events dated to 410, Zosimus includes a reference apparently to Britain: “But Honorius, having written a letter to the cities in Britain announcing that they should protect themselves ...” (6.10.2, in Birley 2005: 461). It has been assumed that this was an imperial rescript, a reply to a request sent by Britain’s *civitates* for Honorius’ aid, or for a legitimate administration to be sent to replace the

expelled usurpers; or perhaps represents permission after the fact for the Britons' actions of arming themselves for their defence.

However, all of these interpretations are probably mistaken. Zosimus was excerpting from the history of Olympiodorus for much of this section of his work (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 137; Bartholomew 1982: 261). It has been suggested that Zosimus or someone copying this manuscript made an error with the "rescript". The segment in which it is included is otherwise concerned with matters in Italy and Africa, in the midst of which it appears somewhat random. Zosimus mentions Alaric's capture of cities in Aemilia and Liguria, money which Honorius had received from Count Heraclian in Africa, and the actions of Heraclian in "seizing the harbours [in Africa] and stopping food supplies being shipped from there to Rome", which was out of Honorius' control (Birley 2005: 461). Olympiodorus used *Brettia* to refer to Bruttium in southern Italy (Bartholomew 1982: 261). Zosimus uses *Brettania* for Britain, and it seems very likely that he or a copyist confused the two at this point (ibid.; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 138).

Bartholomew proposes that, in this section, Zosimus meant to indicate that Honorius had written to the cities in southern Italy. The emperor⁴⁹ "had lost control of most of the Italian peninsula", and was only able to get supplies from Heraclian in Africa; therefore "it was essential that Honorius should keep open his lines of communication with Africa (Bartholomew 1982: 262). Keeping the cities of Bruttium in nearby Italy, which he could not personally help militarily, free from barbarian control, would be essential to this (ibid.). Therefore, this section would appear to have no bearing on events in Britain.

The End of the Roman System in Britain

AD 409 would appear to mark the end of the Roman imperial system in Britain. The provinces would never be returned to the Roman empire. In the sixth century, Procopius wrote that after the death of Constantine, "the Romans could no longer regain Britain, but it remained under usurpers from that time" (*de bello vandalico* 3.2.38, in Birley 2005: 463). Because of the "chaotic state of the western empire", there was nothing that Honorius could do at that time to retrieve it. Though he did after a few years regain some control in Gaul, though not in the north till 417-418, there does not appear to

⁴⁹ Who was in northern Italy

have been any attempt made to bring Britain back to the fold (Mattingly 2006: 530; Frere 1987: 357-358). “This is perhaps an indication that Britain was perceived to have changed in the interim in a major and problematic way” (Mattingly 2006: 530).

The most significant effect of the end of Roman administration “was the removal of the revenue/payment cycle and its associated activities”, which can be shown to have occurred by the fact that no new coinage appears to have been shipped to Britain (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 138). No importation of new currency would soon have “totally disrupted the cash-based cycle of wages, trade and taxation, and ended patronage through office” (de la Bédoyère 2006: 257). There would be no payments for military or administrative needs. Aspects of the economy that relied on government purchase would have collapsed. Certain mass-produced industries such as pottery that relied for their distribution of the maintenance of long-distance transportation and a cash economy came to an end. The termination of diocesan and provincial government in 409 no doubt accelerated the running down of the system and the economy (Mattingly 2006: 530). One would presume, however, that some of this decline of the Roman system must already have been underway and changes beginning to occur, due to the reduction of the coin supply over the last two decades of the fourth century, and the almost complete cessation of new coinage in the first decade of the fifth. This must have already had a significant impact.

The Literary Sources for Sub-Roman Britain

In this segment, the literary sources for sub-Roman Britain will be reviewed, as much use has been made of them by historians and archaeologists, to attempt to reconstruct the history, and to understand the scant archaeological remains of this period. Although it has been attempted many times, it is not possible to construct an accurate historical narrative or even framework for fifth-century Britain after the end of Roman rule. This is because there are such serious problems with the documentary evidence, that any attempts to take the sources at face value would only produce a distorted picture that primarily reflects beliefs about fifth-century British history held at the times when the sources were writing, and little about what actually had happened. Most of the sources were separated from fifth-century Britain either by geographical distance or by time, in some cases hundreds of years. Another important point is that the sources were not writing with the purpose of producing history as history would now be viewed. They were instead attempting to promote theological and moral concepts and arguments, philosophical beliefs about the state of the source's world or society, and claims of political sovereignty and ancestry. "They saw the past through the preoccupations of [their own] times, and they used the past for purposes bound up with what they wanted to say to their own generation" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 171-172).

A further problem with the sources for sub-Roman Britain is that almost all relied heavily on oral tradition for their information, having little access to relevant written sources. Dumville (1977: 192) notes that "[w]e cannot accept a text, or an item in a text, simply on the ground that it appears to derive from 'tradition'". Serious questions have been raised about the historical reliability of oral tradition, especially that of the Anglo-Saxons' pre-literate fifth and sixth centuries (Yorke 1993: 45-46). The Anglo-Saxon sources, which rely on tradition for their accounts of this period, are infused with elements of myth which prove next to impossible to separate from fact (ibid., 46). This cannot provide a solid basis for writing history.

Saint Patrick

The writings of Saint Patrick were composed at unknown dates within the fifth century. While not key sources for this century, they may provide a small amount of important data about late or sub-Roman life in part of Britain. The significance of this

potential data, however, is uncertain because of the problems in determining Patrick's dates.

Patrick wrote his *Confessio* and *Epistola* in Latin as an educated church bishop, and because Latin was still the language of literature. Latin does not seem to have been his first language, though, as he admits (*Confessio* 9) that for him Latin "is *lingua aliena*" (Thomas 1981: 310). So his native language must have been Brythonic, the variation of Celtic commonly used by the Britons in the Roman provinces and southern Scotland.

Patrick tells the reader that he grew up at his family's *villula* (*Confessio* 1). This is often translated as "villa-estate" (for e.g., by Dark 2000: 33). But it is not at all certain that Patrick is using *villula* in the sense of a wealthy fourth-century Romano-British villa. He could instead be employing it as "a conventional Latin term for a substantial native farmstead" (Thomas 1981: 310). The *villula* was located close to a "small" town, *vicus Bannavem Taburniae*⁵⁰ (*Confessio* 1; Thomas 1981: 310). It is presumed, because of Patrick's father's position, to have been near to a "large" town, a *civitas* capital (Dark 2000: 33). Patrick's family had Romanized names and positions in the Christian church and town administration: his father Calpornius was a *decurio*⁵¹ and a church *diaconus*, and his grandfather Potitus a church presbyter (*Confessio* 1; *Epistola* 10; Thomas 1981: 307, 310).

At sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped and taken to Ireland along with, as he claims, thousands of others (*Confessio* 1; *Epistola* 10). After a time in slavery as a shepherd, he escaped and travelled by boat to an unnamed location where he was trained as a priest (*Confessio* 16-20). A few years later he went back to his home to see his family again, before returning to Ireland as a bishop (*Confessio* 23, 28).

The only place-name that Patrick provides, that of the "small" town near his home, has not been identified, and it remains uncertain where in Britain it was. Dark (2000: 33) thinks it was somewhere in the west country of England, perhaps close to the Severn estuary, a region of villas and towns of different sizes, which could have been hit by seaborne Irish raiders. If Patrick's early life, as Dark believes, should be placed well into the fifth century, the information he provides could support a theory of continuity of

⁵⁰ Patrick's spelling; Thomas has suggested that perhaps the name of the vicus should be read as Banna venta Berniae (1986: 125).

⁵¹ Town councillor

Romanized life and culture well beyond the legal end of Roman Britain, and of a world Dark envisions (in western England at least), of functioning villas, surviving towns, curial classes and councils, and a strong Christian church. “This is clear evidence that the base rural fabric of late Roman Britain survived well into the fifth century”; “... Patrick had grown up in exactly the sort of ‘settlement pattern’ archaeology tells us characterized the late fourth-century Romano-British landscape, but this is unlikely to be much before 450” (Dark 2000: 33).

However, the dates for Patrick’s life are very problematic. There are no dates contained within his own works (Thomas 1981: 314). According to Irish tradition, Patrick went back to Ireland as a bishop in 432, when he would have been at least thirty. Yet, the traditional date for his death is 492/3, giving him a considerable lifespan (ibid., 315). There is a second traditional date for his death, 461, though it is possible that this was chosen because it was an obit date for Pope Leo I, “a much more widely known fifth-century figure” (ibid.).

A number of different dating schemes were produced over the twentieth century. J. B. Bury interpolated two of the traditional dates, putting Patrick’s birth at 389, kidnapping in 405, return to Ireland in 432, and death in 461 (Thomas 1981: 316). Richard Hanson, in 1978, placed Patrick’s birth roughly at 385-406, his return to Ireland *ca.* 425-435, and his death at *ca.* 460 (ibid., 317). Charles Thomas’ own dating scheme focuses on the later period, like Dark, with Patrick captured *ca.* 430, going back to Ireland in the late 450s, and dying in the 490s (1981: 320, 327, 335, 346). So it cannot be assumed, though some scholars would prefer a later set of dates, that Patrick did not live earlier in the fifth century. Salway (1993: 345) notes that “[t]he whole of his boyhood might well have taken place before 410”. The British part of his life may have overlapped into the sub-Roman collapse in Britain, but may not have continued beyond that period. “It is not seriously suggested that he went to Ireland as a bishop before Palladius did (i.e. before 431), but the truth is that it might not have been much later” (ibid., 345-346). Patrick’s world may well have been that of very late Roman Britain and the first couple decades after the separation from Rome.

St Germanus' Two Visits to Britain

The story of St Germanus of Auxerre's two visits to Britain, as told in Constantius of Lyon's *Vita Germani*, contains details which have often been interpreted as supporting a continuation of Romanized society and town life in sub-Roman Britain, especially in the town of Verulamium. Therefore it is important to understand the purpose of the text and the quality of information on Britain that its author possesses, to be able to properly evaluate such an interpretation.

Pelagius, a Briton, created a variation of Christianity that turned away from St Augustine's theology of predestination to a belief in the free will to do good and improve one's chances of going to heaven (de la Bédoyère 2006: 257). It was declared a heresy by the church in 418. According to Prosper of Aquitaine, in the 429 entry of his chronicle, Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop, had come to Britain⁵² and had "infested the British church with his father's heresy" (Wood 1984: 8).

In his *Vita* of Germanus, Constantius claims that Germanus, along with another bishop, Lupus of Troyes, was sent to Britain to stamp out the heresy, following a request for assistance by unidentified Britons (*Vita* 12; de la Bédoyère 2006: 260; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 162). After crossing the Channel, Germanus and Lupus preached and then, when the finely-dressed Pelagians turned up, became engaged in a debate with them (*Vita* 14; Wood 1984: 10). The Pelagians were defeated in the theological argument, after which the Gallic bishops were approached by a man described as having tribunician power⁵³ who wanted them to cure his blind daughter. Germanus did this, using prayers and relics (*Vita* 15; Wood 1984: 10). The bishops then paid a visit to the shrine of the martyr St Alban (Thompson 1984: 49). Before Germanus and Lupus left for Gaul, the Britons came under attack by Saxons and Picts, and the bishops were asked for assistance. A group was assembled to serve as an army, listened to the bishops preach, and then many were baptized. They were able to proceed to defeat their opponents by following Germanus' instructions, which were to shout "Alleluia" three times. This resulted in the flight of the enemy and victory for the Britons (*Vita* 17-18; Wood 1984: 11).

⁵² Probably not long after 418 (Wood 1984: 8).

⁵³ *Vir tribuniciae potestatis*

Constantius also tells of a second visit by Germanus to Britain (*Vita* 25-27), this time accompanied by bishop Severus of Trier, and once again at the request of Britons worried about Pelagianism (Wood 1984: 16-17). “The heretics were sought out and condemned, when Elafius, the head man of the district, ask[ed] Germanus and Severus to cure his withered son” (Wood 1984: 17). Germanus accomplished this, “confirming the faith of the crowd”, who turned over the Pelagians to the bishops to take into exile in Gaul (*ibid.*).

There are no dates for the visits given by Constantius, but Prosper makes note of the first visit in 429, though he has no reference to the second one (Wood 1984: 6; Thompson 1984: 3). The location of the debate is frequently assumed to have been in Verulamium because of the visit to St Alban’s shrine, which was associated with this area (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166), and it is therefore further assumed that this indicates a vigorous Romanized town life in sub-Roman Verulamium, with the presence of an official with a Roman title, and a wealthy class with time for debate. The 429 date of the first visit also coincides with Sheppard Frere’s late habitation sequence in part of the town.⁵⁴

However, there are major problems with using the British episodes of the *Vita Germani* as a source for history. It is a hagiography, a saint’s life, not a history or even a historical biography. “Its concern was to promote spiritual edification and moral improvement in the reader”, in addition to showcasing the saintly qualities and powers of its hero (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 165; Thompson 1984: 2). This *Vita* in particular seems to have been intended to demonstrate the appropriate role and behaviour for bishops in times of crises, providing almost a later fifth-century handbook on this (Wood 1984: 9). This purpose can be seen at a number of points during Germanus’ visits to Britain through the use of allegory. The girl cured on Germanus’ first visit had been blind for ten years. In serving as an allegory for Britain, her years of blindness may be a reference to the ten years of Pelagianism in Britain. In her return to vision, “the restoration of true doctrine is instantly paralleled by the restoration of sight” (Wood 1984: 10-11). The Alleluia-victory is also an allegory, in this case “about a bishop leading a people to true faith and therefore to physical safety” (*ibid.*, 12). In the second visit, Elafius’ son

⁵⁴ Discussed in the section on Domestic and Commercial Settlement.

provides further allegory of Britain, his withered and disabled condition representing “the weakness of Britain infected by heresy”; his cure is Britain’s cure (ibid., 17).

Constantius, who wrote *ca.* 480 to 490 in central or southern Gaul, probably did not have any first-hand accounts for the visits, and appears to have primarily relied on “secondary oral and documentary sources” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 165). The extreme generality in his British episodes, in comparison to the richly detailed information provided in much of the rest of the *Vita*, makes it appear as though Constantius knew very little about the trips or about Britain (ibid.). He provides no place-names for Britain, though he uses a fair number when discussing Germanus’ activities in Gaul and Italy. In continental episodes he refers to *oppida*, *urbes*, *provinciae*, *civitates*, *territoria*, and *municipia*, but never during the sections on Britain (ibid.). Either these terms were no longer relevant to anything in Britain, or Constantius had no knowledge of what was or was not there (Thompson 1984: 8-9). The location of the debate in either visit is not given, nor is that of the Alleluia-victory (ibid., 9; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166). The first debate and the healing of the blind girl, however, probably did not occur in Verulamium as it is usually assumed. Constantius does not indicate that Germanus and Lupus first visited the shrine of St Alban, as would normally have been done. This only occurs after the debate and the healing, and after what would seem to be travelling some distance (Thompson 1984: 49).

Constantius also does not name any people other than Elafius (Thompson 1984: ix). There are no references to any bishops or priests in Britain (ibid., 19-20). As for the man with tribunician powers, it is not at all clear what Constantius meant by this, whether it was being used as a military title, or political office, or “merely a high-sounding title, redolent of the old days of Imperial rule, which would impress the local people” (ibid., 11). He does not provide enough information to evaluate what he intended here (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166).

It is also not certain whether the second visit even happened, as Nora Chadwick has claimed that it was simply a “doublet” of the 429 visit (Thompson 1984: ix; Wood 1984: 14). Wood thinks if the second mission actually occurred, that it must have been *ca.* 435; Germanus was probably already dead by the more commonly assumed date of the 440s (1984: 16). Thompson believes that the visit was authentic but that Constantius knew very little about it (1984: 4).

“Constantius simply did not know and could not find out about conditions in early fifth-century Britain and cannot therefore be used as a reliable witness of what conditions were like in the first half of the fifth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166). What he includes may more closely parallel what was true of his own time: a wealthy class in his own society and Saxon attacks on Britain (ibid.).

The Gallic Chronicle of 452

The *Gallic Chronicle of 452* comprises the only other relevant fifth-century source for sub-Roman Britain. As noted in the last segment, it was written about 452 in southern Gaul, probably Provence (Burgess 1990: 192). Line 126, dated to 441, contains an entry about Britain: “The Britons, having up to this time suffered various defeats and catastrophes, were reduced to Saxon rule” (in Muhlberger 1983: 31). Similar to the 411 entry of line 62, this is part of a notice or catalogue of similar events, a list of areas of the former western empire that have been given over to or taken over by barbarian groups, starting with Valence being given to the Alans and ending with Carthage and Africa being seized by the Vandals (Wood 1984: 19).

As indicated in the discussion of the *Chronicle's* 411 entry, the purpose of the chronicler in writing this work was to emphasize the disintegration of the empire (Muhlberger 1983: 30-31). This later grouping of events also draws attention to “the further crumbling of Roman power in the early 440s” and “more losses of Roman territory” (ibid., 31). The loss of Britain is used to provide another example of this collapse of the empire (Wood 1984: 19).

It is debatable how much the chronicler actually knew about what was going on in Britain at this time. It is not known what his sources for the mid fifth century were. It appears that he was knowledgeable about events in central and southern Gaul, and northern Italy, but he was “more cursory and less accurate for events elsewhere” (Muhlberger 1983: 24). There are significant problems with dates in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*, which are often wrong (Wood 1984: 17). A good example of this, from the list in which the 441 British notice is included, is the taking of Carthage by the Vandals, which the *Chronicle* dates as occurring in 444, though it in fact happened in 439 (Wood 1984: 19; Muhlberger 1983: 32). It is thus highly unlikely that the chronicler is providing an accurate date for a distant event such as “the fall of Britain” (Muhlberger 1983: 29-30).

The chronicler has little to say about Britain. The only references he makes are several connected to Magnus Maximus in the 380s, and the 411 and 441 entries (Burgess 1994: 242); Muhlberger 1983: 30). It appears that he knew or was able to find out very little about Britain, or was not particularly interested in its affairs. The archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxons in Britain definitely does not support the assertion that they had taken control of it in the 440s (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 165). Though this could not have happened so early, it is possible that people living in southern Gaul, perhaps hearing occasional reports of Saxon attacks on Britain, might have believed that it had (Muhlberger 1983: 32-33; Burgess 1990: 192). But as a means for dating the Saxon settlement and conquest of Britain, the *Gallic Chronicle's* 441 entry can have little historical value. The reference to Britain is only there to further illustrate the *Chronicle's* “moralistic and rhetorical purpose” (Burgess 1994: 242).

The Narrative of the *Adventus Saxonum*

The remaining sources to be discussed have been used by historians and archaeologists over the last couple of centuries to attempt to piece together the story of the settlement and conquest of England by Germanic peoples, particularly the Angles and Saxons. The primary source for this, which heavily influenced all the others, was the Briton Gildas' *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, probably written in the sixth century. The English church historian Bede borrowed from and expanded on Gildas' story in the eighth century, and the late ninth-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* more fully expounded on it. Elements of the narrative, particularly as related to Vortigern and especially Arthur, were also taken from two late British sources, the *Historia Brittonum* of the ninth century and the *Annales Cambriae*, both also influenced by Gildas and the former probably also by Anglo-Saxon traditions.

In the narrative that has developed, the departure of the Roman army was soon followed by attacks by the Picts and a number of wars with them. In the 440s, the Britons became desperate enough to appeal to the Roman *magister militum* Aëtius for aid against their enemies, but to no avail. The leader of the of the Britons, Vortigern, decided that it was necessary to hire a mercenary force to protect Britain, and invited a group of Anglo-Saxons under the leadership of Hengist and Horsa to Britain “as a sort of *foederatus* force” that would live in the east of the island (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 163).

More Anglo-Saxons soon joined them. After success in fighting off the northern enemy they revolted and turned on the Britons, establishing their own kingdom in Kent in the 450s (ibid.).

New Germanic groups arrived and founded additional kingdoms, such as that of Aelle in Sussex in the 470s, and that of Cerdic and Cynric in Wessex in the 490s (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 163). The Britons tried to resist this expansion, and eventually had success near the century's end, led by Ambrosius Aurelianus, who was said to be descended from Britain's Romanized elite. This culminated in a British victory at the battle of Mount Badon (de la Bédoyère 2006: 263; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 163). This was followed by a generation of peace, after which the expansion started again. Eventually the Anglo-Saxons reached the west of England and the Bristol Channel in 577. At this date the king of Wessex defeated and killed three British kings in battle at *Deorham* (Dyrham), and took control of the British towns of Bath, Cirencester, and Gloucester (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 163-164). While the prospect of Roman towns surviving through the third quarter of the sixth century may be enticing, most aspects of this narrative cannot hold up under closer scrutiny of the literary sources.

Gildas

The bulk of the narrative prior to the sixth-century resumption of Anglo-Saxon expansion has been taken from Gildas' *De Excidio*, which is a difficult text to attempt to use for the purpose of writing history. Although it includes an historical prologue, its purpose is not to accurately recount historical events. *De Excidio* is "a work of polemic excoriating the kings and ecclesiastics of Gildas' own day for their manifest sins and imperfections and threatening them with the imminence of divine retribution should they not mend their ways" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166). The prologue's purpose is to provide a warning to the Britons of his own time, through showing how the sins of the past were punished by the Anglo-Saxons as agents of that divine retribution (ibid., 167).

It is not clear how much Gildas actually knew about the first three-quarters of the fifth century. "He clearly had access to a number of late Antique writers down to the early fifth century", such as Orosius, "[b]ut for the events at the mid and late fifth century he seems to have run out of written sources" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 167). Gildas makes no references to the visits by St Germanus (ibid.). There appears to have been much that

he did not know or was confused about. He claims that the Antonine Wall was built sometime after the departure of Magnus Maximus in the 380s as a response to the problems with the Picts, and before the construction of Hadrian's Wall (*DE* 15-18). Some events he either may not have known about, such as the visits by Germanus, or deliberately chose to exclude, such as the usurpation of Constantine III (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 167). It cannot be assumed that Gildas' work was based on earlier works that have since been lost: "No [native] written remains were available in Britain" (Sims-Williams 1983a: 24). For the fifth century, it appears probable that Gildas was primarily making use of oral tradition (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 167). He also used such elements of the archaeological record as were still visible in his time, such as the Roman towns and defences, from which to make "inferences" about what had happened (Sims-Williams 1983a: 24).

Gildas' account of the Anglo-Saxon sack of the towns would appear on first sight to provide information on their fate in approximately the second half of the fifth century:

All the major towns were laid low by the repeated battering of enemy rams; laid low, too, all the inhabitants – church leaders, priests and people alike, as the swords glinted all around and the flames crackled. It was a sad sight. In the middle of the squares the foundation-stones of high walls and towers had been torn from their lofty base, holy alters, fragments of corpses, covered (as it were) with a purple crust of congealed blood, looked as though they had been mixed up in some dreadful wine-press. There was no burial to be had except in the bellies of beasts and birds – saving the reverence due to their holy spirits, if indeed many found at that time to be carried by holy angels to the heights of heaven (*DE* 24.3-4, in Winterbottom 1978: 25-26).

Gildas' description bears a close similarity to those of sacks of regions and cities by fifth-century continental writers, which also concentrated on the violence, death, and burning⁵⁵ (Sims-Williams 1983a: 10-11). Gildas' tale of the sack of Romano-British towns appears to have been inspired by reading such accounts, or by, particularly, Virgil's description of the fall of Troy in *Aeneid*, Book II. Possibly "he saw a parallel between the fall of Troy and the ruin of Britain" (*ibid.*, 12).

There has been little found in the excavation of the towns to support Gildas' picture of their destruction. His vision of an urban cataclysm brought on by the Saxons must be, at the least, a great exaggeration. "It could be almost entirely imaginary,

⁵⁵ Such as Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei* 6.15.83-85, on the sack of Trier, or Sidonius, *Epistulae* 3.3, a letter to Constantius of Lyon about a Visigothic assault in Gaul (Sims-Williams 1983a: 10-11).

inspired by his belief that Romano-British *luxuria* had lasted right up to the time of the Saxon takeover coupled with the comparatively decayed state of the cities in his own day” (Sims-Williams 1983a: 13). For his own times Gildas claims that the towns “are not populated ... as they once were, right to the present they are deserted, in ruins and unkempt” (*DE* 26.2, in Winterbottom 1978: 27). It is probable that he knew little about the fate of the towns; his descriptions are most likely literary creations intended to support his main argument.

Gildas’ story would initially appear to have a “chronological framework of events” in the fifth and early sixth centuries: the appeal to Aëtius, the federate revolt, Ambrosius Aurelianus, Mount Badon, and the period of peace (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 166). But there are major problems in Gildas’ work. There are no dates in the *De Excidio*, other than what can be derived from the known events: Magnus Maximus’ death in 388, Aëtius’ third consulship in 446, and the presumed date of *De Excidio*’s writing, ca. 540 (*ibid.*, 376). Additionally, Gildas’ relative chronology of events may be confused, as seen above with the building of the walls.

The most important dating point is the appeal to Aëtius. According to Gildas, the Britons made an appeal for help against unnamed invading barbarians, generally presumed to be Picts because of where he has placed the appeal in his work. The appeal was to the three-time consul Agitius, identified by Bede and others since him as Aëtius, “the *magister militum* and leading figure in the empire from 433” (Frere 1987: 262-263). Aëtius’ third consulship was in 446, and he died in 454, so the appeal would have been sometime between those two dates (*ibid.*, 263, 363; Sims-Williams 1983: 7).

The wording of the appeal would make more sense if the enemy of the Britons were the Anglo-Saxons attacking from the east to the west, rather than Picts or Scots in the north: “The barbarians push us back to the sea, the sea pushes us back to the barbarians; between these two kinds of death, we are either drowned or slaughtered” (*DE* 20.1, in Winterbottom 1978: 23-24). Gildas does not specify who the barbarians were, and perhaps did not know, simply assuming they were Picts. But if Germanic raiders were in fact implied, this would have major implications for Gildas’ chronology, and would raise questions as to whether his unnamed tyrant’s⁵⁶ invitation to the Saxon

⁵⁶ Identified as Vortigern in later sources

mercenaries is in the right place, and when it should be dated (Sims-Williams 1983b: 8,13).

The other key date in Gildas' work is that of the writing of *De Excidio*, usually assumed to have been in the mid sixth century. This is based on the identification of one of the kings he "attacks" as though still alive, Maglocunus, with Maelgwn of Gwynedd (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 167). Maelgwn is believed to have died in 547, from his obit in the *Annales Cambriae*. This work is "a very doubtful authority", not considered a reliable source for the sixth century (Sims-Williams 1983a: 4). It is not clear if this date is accurate, and it may have come from a fairly late tradition (*ibid.*, 3-4). So the assumption that *De Excidio* was written *ca.* 540 is not secure. Gildas says he was born the year of the battle at Mount Badon, and that forty-four years have passed since then (*DE* 26.1). Scholars have thus counted back forty-four years from *ca.* 540 to arrive at a date of *ca.* 496 for Badon. As the 540 date is itself insecure, this date for Badon can have no historical validity.

The arrangement of events in the historical prologue of *De Excidio* is not intended to provide a historical framework in the fifth and sixth centuries. Its purpose is to support Gildas' thesis that incorrect behaviour will lead to punishment by God. The period of fifth-century material prosperity after the Pictish problem abated for a while (*DE* 21) is not seen in the archaeological record of the fifth century (Sims-Williams 1983a: 19). This phase was probably included to provide a parallel to Gildas' own period, and to alert his contemporaries that a similar fate, perhaps also at the hands of the Saxons, might await them. "The considerable parallelism with his own time is ... a warning against taking him at face value" (*ibid.*).

Bede and the Adventus Saxonum

Bede wrote probably about two centuries after Gildas, but was very heavily dependent on Gildas for his fifth-century source material and chronology, although he also made use of Constantius' *Vita Germani*. However, he seems to have had no other written sources for this period, and appears to have had to rely for the rest of his material on oral tradition (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 170; Sims-Williams 1983b: 5, 24). Bede had no other choice but "to make the sole available insular source", *De Excidio*, "the basis of his

fifth to sixth-century narrative, despite its obvious limitations: its extreme geographical and chronological vagueness” (Sims-Williams 1983b: 5).

For the chronology of the central fifth-century event of his *Ecclesiastical History*⁵⁷, the arrival of the Saxons, Bede had to make use of Gildas’ chronology (Sims-Williams 1983b: 16). The “lynchpin” of this was the letter to “Agitius” quoted by Gildas and dated by Bede to the year when Aëtius had his third consulship (*ibid.*, 19). Allowing a gap of a few years between the appeal and the arrival of the Saxons, he placed the *adventus* as occurring sometime between 449 and 456, perhaps closer to the end of this period (*HE* 1.15; Sims-Williams 1983b: 19-20). Bede then placed Mount Badon at around the *adventus*’ forty-fourth year, probably *ca.* 500 (*HE* 1.16; Sims-Williams 1983b: 20). A historian might be tempted to add another forty-four years to that date in order to arrive at a date for Gildas and the writing of *De Excidio*, but that would be a mistake: “... Bede’s chronology for the *adventus* and *Badonicus Mons* is simply a valiant effort to interpret Gildas and has no independent value whatsoever” (Sims-Williams 1983b: 21).

To Gildas’ tale about the *adventus*, regarding the hiring by the tyrant, now identified as Vortigern⁵⁸, of three boatfuls of Saxons as federates, Bede adds a very small amount of data probably obtained from Anglo-Saxon tradition. He notes that the first leaders of these people “are said” to have been the brothers Hengist and Horsa (*HE* 1.15), his wording indicating “that he is reporting a tradition without endorsing it” (Sims-Williams 1983b: 21). The names Hengist and Horsa are both derived from words for “horse”⁵⁹, making it unlikely that these were real people and more plausible that they were figures of mythology such as the Dioscuri (*ibid.*, 23). It is also possible that they are “thinly disguised equine deities, linked with well-attested horse cults” (Yorke 1993: 47). Bede traces the ancestry of the kings of Kent, from Æthelberht in the early seventh century back to Hengist’s son Oisc, who had accompanied his father to Britain (*HE* 11.5; Sims-Williams 1983b: 21-22). Oisc’s name means “god”; “he too seems to be a thinly disguised divine ancestor rather than a real person” (Yorke 1993: 47; Sims-Williams

⁵⁷ Written in 731

⁵⁸ *HE* 1.14-15

⁵⁹ Respectively, “gelding” and “horse” (Yorke 1993: 47).

1983b: 22-23). Additionally, the genealogy that Bede provides for Hengist and Horsa takes their line back to the Germanic god Woden (*HE* 1.15; Sims-Williams 1983b: 24).

Bede is also able to contribute to the *adventus* narrative the story of the different continental origins of the Germanic settlers of England. The Jutes are said to have settled in Kent, the Isle of Wight, and Wessex; the Saxons in Essex, Sussex, and Wessex, and the Angles in Mercia, Northumbria, and other unnamed regions of England (*HE* 1.15). As Bede's source for this is unknown, it is uncertain how valuable this information actually is (Sims-Williams 1983b: 24). It is probably a significant over-simplification, and may represent the "origins (real or claimed) of [these regions'] royal dynasties rather than those of their Germanic populations as a whole" (ibid.). Unfortunately, Bede was able to add little useful information to what he had cobbled from Gildas and Constantius about the fifth and early sixth centuries, and his reliance on Gildas for his chronology for this period means that he does not provide an independent source for sub-Roman dates, and that those derived from him are of little value.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The earliest known form of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was compiled in Wessex in the very late ninth century, during the reign of Alfred the Great. It made use of various materials, including annalistic entries, dating back to the mid seventh century at the earliest (Sims-Williams 1983b: 26; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 170). However, at some point, probably in the ninth century, annals for the fifth and sixth centuries were written retrospectively, and probably not based on some unknown written sources, as the Anglo-Saxons were not a literate culture during these centuries. Therefore, these entries must be regarded with some suspicion (Sims-Williams 1983b: 26-27; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 170; Yorke 1993: 49).

"The *Chronicle* is the source for most of the history of the origins and expansion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of southern Britain", yet there are signs that much of this was derived from oral tradition and legends (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 170-171). It starts with the same foundation legend of the arrival of Hengist and Horsa on Vortigern's invitation that was recited by Bede, though with some elaboration (Sims-Williams 1983b: 28). The foundation myths of other royal lines are also included, with the later arrival of Aelle, Cerdic and Cynric, and others.

“The accounts given by the Anglo-Saxon of how their kingdoms were founded are scarcely credible because personae are not credible and the stories they tell belong to an established genre” (Yorke 1993: 47). A similar pattern can be seen in the stories of the founding of Kent, Sussex, Wessex, and the Isle of Wight. Kent was founded in 449 by two brothers with three ships. Aelle founded Sussex in 477 with his three sons and three ships, Cerdic founded Wessex with one son and two ships, and in 514 Stuf and Wihtgar came with their three ships. “Clearly we are dealing here not with historical fact but with an origin myth” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 171).

Some of these “... Germanic leaders arrived already bearing Latin-derived names of the areas they were to conquer”, as Wihtgar would the Isle of Wight and Port, Portsmouth (Yorke 1993: 47). These founders and their names appear to have been created to explain the origins of certain place-names (ibid.; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 171). The name of Cerdic, the founder of Wessex, also raises questions, as his name (and likely that of Cynric) is of British origin. Possibly these two also were formed from place-names, or perhaps Britons had intermarried with the early settlers and founders of Wessex. In either case, it is very hard to believe that he arrived from a Germanic land with this name (Sims-Williams 1983b: 30; Yorke 1993: 47).

As with the other sources for sub-Roman Britain, there are serious concerns about the chronology of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The date of the *adventus*, the arrival of Hengist and Horsa, follows the chronology of Bede, locating it “in a seven-year period beginning in 449”, meaning that this date also is dependent on the chronology derived from Gildas and the appeal to Aëtius (Sims-Williams 1983b: 34). The dates for the foundation period “are clearly confused and artificial” (ibid., 35). Kingships are established about six years after the founder’s arrival, and the succession of his son approximately forty years post-arrival, a figure probably influenced by “biblical timespans”. This pattern can be seen, for example, with Hengist and Oisc, and Cerdic and Cynric (ibid.).

An additional problem with the fifth and sixth-century entries in the *Chronicle* is the political goals of the kingdom of Wessex, to which some of them were clearly subordinated in the ninth century. Traditions which had not already been committed to writing could be adapted “to suit current political and social needs” (Yorke 1993: 47-48). Examples of this can be seen in the cases of two battles in which Britons were said to

have been defeated and locations seized from them: *Bedcanford* north of the Thames in 571, and *Deorham* in 577s (Sims-Williams 1983b: 31). There is archaeological evidence that most of the locations captured, in both instances, “were surrounded by Anglo-Saxons long before these dates” (ibid.). It is a strong possibility that the battles had in fact been fought not against Britons, but against other Anglo-Saxons. These areas had been under the control of King Offa at Mercia in the eighth century (ibid., 32-33). It is highly likely that, rather than these being accounts of losses of British territories and towns, with the implication of continuity of towns into the 570s, these are instead the use of battles remembered in oral tradition “to reinforce West Saxon claims against Mercia” (ibid., 33; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 171).

Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae

The *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* are two late (ninth and tenth centuries, respectively) documents of British rather than Anglo-Saxon origin which have been used in the past to create a narrative for the sub-Roman period, particularly as both contain references to Arthur. The late dates make each of these problematic for using as sources for the fifth and sixth centuries.

It used to be believed that there were actually earlier sources contained, largely unaltered, within the *Historia Brittonum*. This work contains a prologue in which a “Nennius”, presumably the author, claims ““I have made a heap of everything I have found”” (quoted by Esmonde Cleary 1989: 168). This led scholars to believe that this approach had enabled the author “to reproduce almost unaltered earlier sources of some value” for the sub-Roman era (Dumville 1977: 177). However, this prologue has since been dismissed as a later⁶⁰ addition to the document (ibid.). In-depth analysis has shown that the *Historia Brittonum* is not a collection of pristine material from different early sources, but instead a history in the known early medieval tradition of synchronizing various sources to provide a narrative of early British history (ibid.; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 168). It would seem that the sources for the *Historia*, in addition to the chronicles by Prosper and Isidore of Seville, primarily included saints’ lives, Welsh poems, and English legendary material. “The mere recital of these sources will suggest their utter flimsiness as records” for the fifth and sixth centuries (Dumville 1977: 177).

⁶⁰ Probably tenth century

The *Historia* includes an expanded and detailed version of the story from Gildas of the proud tyrant and his rebellious Saxon federates, whom Bede had identified as Vortigern, Hengist and Horsa. This was augmented in the *Historia* with the episode of the “night of the long knives”, probably taken from Germanic tradition where it is a theme that appears in other legends (Yorke 1993: 46). The figure of Arthur also appears in the text, where he is said to have fought in twelve battles and to be the British leader at Mount Badon. There is no mention at all of Arthur by Gildas, or Bede for that matter. He first appears in Welsh sources that are centuries after the late fifth/early sixth centuries and which belong to a period in which he was “already an important figure in Welsh lore and genealogy” (Dumville 1977: 168). There does not seem to be any evidence to support the supposition that an historical Arthur existed. He “seems to be essentially a creation of later (eighth/ninth centuries on) Celtic literature and lore” (ibid., 168-169). Arthur’s presence in the *Historia*, therefore, simply reflects the interest in him at that time.

The *Annales Cambriae* are found within the same manuscript as *Historia Brittonum*, but are a century later and a very different kind of document. They are “a set of tables for determining the date of Easter over long periods” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 169). These tables are laid out as columns, with wide margins in which historical items, such as the dates of battles, births and deaths of saints and rulers, and so on, could be added. The *Annales* appear to have been compiled at St David’s in Wales, beginning in the late eighth century.

There are, nevertheless, retrospective entries for the fifth and sixth centuries (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 169; Dumville 1977: 176). These include two entries relevant to Arthur: his participation in the battle of Badon, dated to 518, and his death in battle at Camlann in 539. It is unknown what the source of this data was (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 169) and, as discussed above, material on Arthur appears to have come from the world of Welsh tradition rather than history. Other sub-Roman entries in the *Annales* may be unreliable as well (ibid.). Dumville claims that “[t]here is no question ... of the fifth-and earlier sixth-century entries deriving from a contemporary source” (1977: 176). The data recorded for the later centuries in the *Annales* appear to be trustworthy, but that provided for the sub-Roman era should be regarded with caution (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 164).

The Archaeological Evidence

The purpose of this section is to provide some familiarity with the main types of archaeological evidence that must be assessed in order to evaluate the changing conditions of the administrative towns in Roman Britain. The main form of evidence that will be discussed in this thesis is the remains of various structures. Much of the dating of these structures is dependent on finds of pottery and coins associated with them. These three types of archaeological evidence, their relevance to an investigation of Romano-British towns, and the possible problems that may arise with their use will be discussed in detail. A further type of evidence which would also have been useful is inscriptions in stone. Unfortunately, there is very little in the way of epigraphic evidence in Roman Britain, outside of a military context, and in the late towns it is virtually non-existent.

Structural Evidence

The remains of urban structures provide the primary form of evidence used in this investigation. The remains of a town's buildings provide information about the extent and density of occupation. The different types of buildings can help with understanding the uses of various areas of a town: whether an area was wealthier or lower status, residential or commercial, focused on administrative activities or those of leisure and entertainment. Variations in the types of buildings, and in their condition, can show changes in the nature of the occupation of a region of a town over time; an absence of structures may indicate the presence of areas which had not yet been developed or have been abandoned. The types of materials used, and techniques of constructions and decoration can provide information to indicate the level of wealth, prosperity, and Romanization reflected by individual buildings, and on a larger scale, by a town.

There is one specific problem with structural evidence which is particularly relevant to the very late Roman and sub-Roman periods: actually being able to find it. Some of the lower-status late Roman and sub-Roman structures may prove difficult to recognize, as their remains may be insubstantial. Dwellings and workshops used at the latest stages of occupation in the towns were often constructed out of elements of timber, mud, and wattle, which can decay to leave little evidence of their existence. A structure may be recognizable only as a series of postholes or a floor of stone rubble; very careful and dedicated archaeological work may be required to locate and identify such remains.

Yet it may also be possible for archaeologists who concentrate on such detailed work to read more into the remains than is actually there.

It has also been suggested that the levels that might contain very late or sub-Roman structural evidence may in many cases be lost, due to damage caused by erosion and especially by ploughing in those areas where the remains of towns were not later re-developed⁶¹ (Frere 1987: 248, 370; Niblett 2000: 133-134). The late Roman and sub-Roman deposits are much shallower in depth than those of earlier centuries of Roman occupation in Britain. They are also closer to the surface and are therefore more vulnerable to damage from erosion and ploughing.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that an absence of evidence for late or sub-Roman occupation in a site automatically means that the evidence has been destroyed, rather than considering the possibility that there was minimal or no occupation. Reece stresses that the layers attributed to this period are much thinner, and fewer in number, because the occupation at that time was so much less intense than in the second century or even the third (1980: 81-82). He and Faulkner point out that there are ways to identify whether or not a site has suffered plough damage. A scatter of late Roman debris over roof tiles above Roman structural remains is indicative of the collapse of a decayed structure, and that part has not been lost to a plough. If there is dark earth intact above the remnants of a Roman structure, this is also evidence that the later levels are not lost (Reece 1980: 83). It is unlikely in many cases, unless the structures were extremely ephemeral, that all evidence will have been lost to the plough. Late floor surfaces and earlier levels may be “churned up”, but would not completely disappear (Faulkner 1996: 85-86). There would be evidence of plough damage, and a lot of obvious building rubble would be left behind, particularly in the case of masonry buildings. Walls are even more likely to survive than floors. Roman buildings were frequently robbed for their stone in the centuries after they had gone out of use, yet this too is a detectable event: the robber trench will be discernable and “will cut deeply into the underlying layers” (ibid., 86). Therefore, while remains of scattered, insubstantial dwellings of the final phase of occupation could be lost to these processes, it is very

⁶¹ Obviously the large-scale building projects carried out in British towns and cities since the nineteenth century would cause significant damage to Roman remains.

unlikely that all evidence of the presence of substantial Roman buildings could be removed.

Numismatic Evidence

Coins are one of the most significant types of evidence that can be found on a site, because of their importance for dating, as well as for evaluating the amount of activity on a site. However, Roman coins are associated with numerous complications which make their use for archaeological interpretation less than straight-forward. The Roman imperial government did not have coins struck for the purpose of benefitting economic activities, but “as an instrument of state policy, principally the payment of its servants” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 11). Gold and silver were minted to pay state employees, and for the payment of taxes, through which coins in precious metal were returned to the state. Bronze was struck primarily to assist the empire in recovering the gold and silver, through conversion for tax purposes (*ibid.*). The state did not attempt to recover the bronze coins, which were allowed to remain in circulation for use in daily transactions (*ibid.*, 92).

Coinage is more frequently found on sites in the form of individual coins, or rarely as large groups known as hoards. Because gold and silver coins had an intrinsic value, more care will have been taken not to lose them or to find them if lost; as a result they are much less likely to be site-finds, outside of hoards. The majority of coin finds are therefore of bronze or silver-washed base metal. Coins may have been randomly lost, or deliberately left where they are found by the archaeologist, perhaps as an offering or grave-good at a cemetery or religious site. Some coins were abandoned because they were worthless, as with the burial of demonetized coins, or because they were worth too little to bother recovering. Some small bronze coins were hard to find when lost, and are more likely to turn up as artefacts on sites (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 92).

Coin finds are useful for providing evidence for a wide variety of different sorts of phenomena. They can be used to learn about behaviour of individual sites, and compared with that of other sites to look for patterns between types of sites or over time. Differences can be seen in coin use between urban and rural, and more or less Romanized sites. Bronze coins appear to have been “far more commonly used and available for loss” at urban than rural sites, at villas than less Romanized rural sites, and in the fourth

century than at any other time during the Roman occupation (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 93-94). It could be hypothesized that Roman Britain had by the fourth century become more integrated into a monetary economy, particularly focused on the urban areas (ibid., 94).

Coins also provide evidence or more details for episodes of Romano-British history that figure little in the literary sources. The presence in Britain of coins of the Gallic Empire is one of the main sources of evidence for the British provinces' inclusion within it. The propaganda on the coins of Carausius, as well as the quality of his coins provide a layer of evidence about his rule that is missing from literary sources heavily biased against him. The coins of "Carausius II" hint at a possible usurpation unrecorded by late antique authors with little interest in Britain. Coins also provide evidence of possible return visits to Britain by Constantine I and Magnus Maximus.

By the study of long-term patterns of coin finds and the quality of coin issues, in Britain as a whole and even within the west or entire empire, archaeologists and historians can discern government monetary policies which would have had a major impact on Britain. The visible and increasing devaluation of the silver coinage by the emperors over the course of the third century directly contributed to the inflation of the second half of the century, seen in the need for minting vast numbers of coins because their value was so low. This likely played a significant role in the late third century decay of British towns. The decision to demonetize currency, whether of a defeated usurper or for different reasons, would have had a devastating impact on the wealth of individuals, particularly elites. This policy of demonetization of coins can be seen in hoards found a few years apart: coins of Magnentius were no longer available to hoard soon after his defeat (de la Bédoyère 2003: 169).

The greatest value by far for coins in the study of Roman Britain is for their assistance in assigning dates to stratigraphic layers and therefore enabling a chronological sequence to be developed. "With the exception of a very few military inscriptions coins are the only artefacts commonly excavated on sites of the fourth century which have absolute dates" (Reece 1980: 81). However, while a coin may have an absolute date, the layer it is dating cannot. A coin can only provide a *terminus post quem* for a phenomenon, in other words, the earliest date at which something could have occurred or been deposited at a site; the actual date could well be later.

A particular problem for the use of coins in the study of Romano-British sites from the third to fifth centuries is inherent to striking of currency for official rather than economic use: “the supply ... was not regular either in its frequency or its volume” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 92-93). The minting and shipment of coins at irregular intervals meant that Britain during this period underwent a number of peaks during which more coins were available to be used and lost, and times of shortfall of supply when new coins were not arriving (ibid.; de la Bédoyère 2006: 178-179). This has been known for a long time to have been the case for base-metal coins, but more recently, as a result of the analysis of the approximately 15,000 coins of the early fifth-century Hoxne hoard from Suffolk, it is known to have occurred with silver as well (Guest 2005: 44, 100). A drop in the number of coins on a site during the times of shortfall could be related to that rather than necessarily implying a reduction of activity on the site during this period. These troughs of supply could also affect dating, as older coins could continue to circulate, but unaccompanied by more recent issues.

The coin supply of the first half of the third century is so irregular that it is very difficult to date sites of that period (de la Bédoyère 1999: 24; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 66). Large quantities of the low value silver-washed bronze radiates of the Gallic Empire were available from the 260s, yet another shortfall occurred upon Britain’s return to the central empire under Aurelian (ibid., 25). There were further drops in the official supply of bronze coins in the late 330s to early 340s, in the 350s to early 360s, the late 370s to late 380s, and after 402 (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 93; Arnold 1984: 87). There were peaks and valleys in the fourth and early-fifth century minting and shipping to Britain of silver *siliquae* as well, following a different pattern than that of the bronze coins (Guest 2005: 103-108); however, this pattern is of less significance to the problem of dating sites, as the *siliquae* are a rarer site-find outside of hoards.

These troughs in the supply of available coinage were addressed in Britain by the production of counterfeit coins, in both base metal and silver. Large volumes of copies appear from the later third century onwards, during times of shortages of official coinage (de la Bédoyère 2006: 178). Most scholars believe that the majority of copying was done at least at a semi-official level⁶², or with the government’s permission or toleration (Guest 2005: 44; Arnold 1984: 89; de la Bédoyère 1999: 25; 2006: 179). There does not appear

⁶² Or even possibly by the army (Arnold 1984: 89).

to have been any further copying of bronze after about the 360s (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 95-96); however, the copying of *siliquae* appears to have continued until at least the end of Roman rule (Guest 2005: 114).

Few hoards are found in the former Roman towns, and so are less likely to provide direct evidence or dates for urban sites. Nevertheless, they can provide more general information about conditions in Britain. The burial of hoards of coins and valuables appears to have been a long-standing tradition in Roman Britain, continuing into the sub-Roman era, and not found with nearly the same frequency on the continent. Hoards can be indicative of a disturbed period at the time of their deposition, possibly in the form of invasion, raiding, civil war, and other internal disturbances, including the passing through of Roman army units. To this list for the early fifth-century hoards could be added “the breakdown of Roman rule and the abrupt separation of Britain from the empire” (Guest 2005: 29). Hoards of primarily base-metal coins may have been buried not to protect them, but to simply dispose of them if the coins had been demonetized, as suggested above, or were of so little value as to be almost worthless.

The Hoxne hoard, in combination with the other early fifth-century hoards, has provided a valuable insight about conditions in the last years of Roman Britain. Almost all of these hoards contain *siliquae* that have had some of the silver clipped from their edges, in a minimal to a significant amount; over ninety-eight per cent of *siliquae* in the Hoxne hoard exhibit evidence of clipping (Guest 2005: 44, 110; Burnett 1984: 168). Clipping was prohibited by fourth-century Roman laws and punishable by death; as a result little of it occurs during the Roman period (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 39). It has been suggested that the clipping of coins found in the hoards for their silver must have occurred in the early fifth century, as Romano-British society was beginning to break down, or possibly during the usurpation of Constantine III or after the rejection of his government (ibid.; Burnett 1984: 168). In the study of the coins from Hoxne, Guest has noted that the clipping, like the copying, may have been officially sanctioned or ordered, based on the care taken in the clipping to enable the coin to continue as officially circulating coinage (2005: 113-114). This clipping continued up to the latest silver coins in the hoard: eight issues of 407-408 (ibid., 112). Analysis of the silver indicates that the metal clipped from the coins was used to produce the last group of counterfeit *siliquae* (ibid., 114). Although it is not known for certain who ordered this to be done or why, it

appears probable that it was done to increase the numbers of silver coins available in early fifth-century Britain, perhaps to be able to continue to pay what was left of the army.

Using coins for dating sites in the fifth century is problematic. Bulk shipments of bronze coins to Britain did not occur after 402; a small amount of contemporary silver and gold continues to arrive up to about the time of the separation from the empire. The early fifth-century hoards do not contain issues later than this. There is no evidence that new currency was put out by the government in sub-Roman Britain (Kent 1979: 22). There is a small number of individual finds in Britain, mostly in the south-east, of later Roman gold coins and Visigothic copies of these (White et al 1999: 309). There is a single later fifth-century, perhaps *ca.* 465, hoard from Patching in west Sussex which contains coins more typical of a hoard from near the end of Roman Britain, combined with coins similar to those listed above (*ibid.*, 301-308). These are all isolated finds in Britain and do not appear to represent new regular sources of currency for the island. The dating of sites after the early fifth century must therefore be relative and reliant upon stratigraphic sequences rather than on coins for dating.

Ceramic Evidence

Late Roman pottery has been recovered from Romano-British sites in very large quantities, with the result that it has received significant study over the last century. In the fourth century this was largely wheel-made and mass-produced by a small number of regional industries that dominated the markets of their area, although there were also a few centres of coarser pottery, handmade but also on a large scale, an industry that was expanding later in the century.

Pottery is a very useful find when stratified in the layers of a site, as study of its occurrence in association with coins has enabled “the relative sequence of its typological development to be linked with absolute calendar dates derived from the coins” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 85). The distribution of Roman pottery across Britain can also provide an indication of the spread of Romanized material culture through the island. The analysis of pottery distribution has also been useful in determining patterns that have allowed the suggestion of possible trade routes within Roman Britain and routes of trade with the continent (*ibid.*). As pottery is the best known of the Romano-British industries, it has

been used as a proxy for the others, serving as an indicator of the condition of industry in the diocese as a whole (Arnold 1984: 94).

Pottery also has limitations in its uses for dating. Like coins, it can only provide a *terminus post quem* for a stratigraphic layer on a site, and the real date may be later. Also, the products of some of the big pottery producers became more difficult to date after the mid fourth century: “there seems to have been a reduction in the number of forms and a simultaneous decline in the range and extent of decorative techniques” (Tyers 1996: 77). The pottery industry of the Oxfordshire region does not appear to develop new shapes or decorations after *ca.* 350, while that of the New Forest area after *ca.* 375 not only had few new forms, but a notably reduced range of forms and decoration (Fulford 1979: 121; Tyers 1996: 77; Higham 1992: 54). The similarity of later types of New Forest ware to earlier products was to such a degree that “they could be unrecognized and dismissed as residual on sites with occupations throughout the Roman period” (Fulford 1979: 121). For these main ceramic producers, it is difficult to distinguish the products they were producing in the early fifth century from those of the mid fourth (*ibid.*, 122).

This problem, fortunately, does not extend to all of the late Roman pottery industry. The producers at Much Hadlam expanded their range of forms, as did those at the Nene Valley in eastern England (Tyers 1996: 77-78). Some elements of the pottery industry were able to significantly expand the distribution of their products. Shell-tempered ware had been restricted to a small market in the south-east midlands, but after about 360, it began to be used across most of south Britain, including Wales, and its presence can be a marker of late fourth-century occupation (Tyers 1996: 77). The potteries of east Yorkshire, such as those at Crambeck, also expanded their distribution, becoming the primary type of ceramic found throughout the north and along Hadrian’s wall in the late fourth century (*ibid.*, 78). A further type of pottery that begins to appear and expand late in the century is “hand-formed” (as opposed to wheel-made) wares, such as the grog-tempered wares of Sussex, which, though making use of “simpler technology”, were nevertheless being mass-produced by “potters working well within the norms of standard late Roman pottery” (*ibid.*). These became so popular in the south-east that they were the dominant type of coarse ware there in the final decades of the century (*ibid.*; Higham 1992: 54).

It is generally believed that the pottery industry probably stopped producing wares sometime early in the fifth century, as a result of the collapse of the town-focused economic system with the *ca.* 409 ejection of Roman administration and consequent loss of the taxation/revenue cycle (de la Bédoyère 2006: 263; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 154). “No production site has been found which can be dated after the end of the fourth century, nor has late Roman pottery been found on sites used later in the fifth century in the quantities and fresh condition which suggest that it was still readily available” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 154). It is hard to be certain how far beyond the beginning of the fifth century that new pottery was still being produced, due to the fact that bronze coins minted after 402 are not present in Roman Britain to fine-tune the dating of the industry’s collapse. This loss of pottery, in addition to coins, after the early fifth century, makes the dating of sub-Roman sites difficult and reliant on analysis of stratigraphic development.

If pottery production had continued on a large scale up until near the end, and was not already substantially slowing down, there may have been surplus pottery from the last few years that could have remained in use for a while after the industry’s collapse. However, as pottery is extremely breakable, it does not seem supportable to extend this continued usage very far into the fifth century. Such claims have, however, been made for the ongoing use of Roman artefacts in the sub-Roman period. This has been proposed, for example, at the pre-Roman Iron Age hill-fort site of Cadbury-Congresbury in western England, not far from the “small” town and sanctuary at Bath. Excavators found a notable quantity of Roman pottery there, but argued that it had been brought there by the sub-Roman people who had refortified the site and reoccupied it in the later fifth and sixth centuries, “at a time when such artefacts were scarce” and no longer made (Tyers 1996: 79). However, this site, though abandoned for a couple centuries after having been taken by the Romans in the 70s, has evidence for activity in the late third and fourth centuries. This appears to have been mainly associated with a Romano-Celtic temple and “pilgrimages” to it (Alcock 1971: 200). This activity left behind late Roman pottery and coins, the latest example of the latter being an issue of Honorius of 393-402, indicating that the use of this site continued to the very late fourth and possibly early fifth centuries (*ibid.*). This evidence leaves the theory of the later transport of reused pottery to the hill-fort open to question.

Though there was now little other than a bit of handmade local pottery being produced in a few places, the vacuum was not filled with imported wares. There is very little evidence of imported pottery in eastern, central, or northern Britain, and the few examples of African red-slipped ware and amphorae associated with late levels in London may have been imported during the last decades of Roman occupation rather than in the sub-Roman period. There is a distribution of a small quantity of imported pottery on a few elite sites of the far west of Britain in the late fifth and sixth centuries. This has been found in some of the least Romanized areas of Britain, Wales and Cornwall, with the extension of the later phase of the distribution to sites in Ireland and western Scotland. The pottery appears likely to have actually been imported to only a few of the sites, with the presence of “only a few sherds, perhaps representing a single vessel” at most of the others (Tyers 1996: 80-81), possibly indicating their acquisition through gift exchange.

Most of the pottery of the first phase is found at the site of Tintagel in Cornwall, though the hill-forts of Cadbury-Congresbury and Dinas Powys in south Wales also produced respectable assemblages (ibid., 81), with that at the latter site continuing into the second phase of imports. The first phase, *ca.* 475-550, included red-slipped fine tablewares and olive oil amphorae. Most of these were from the eastern Mediterranean, the tableware being primarily Phocaeen red-slipped ware, but some North African red-slipped ware and Tunisian amphorae were also among the finds. These indicate contact with the Mediterranean and particularly with the Byzantine empire, but the small total amount may only represent a few visits from ships (ibid.). The second phase of imported pottery, occurring in the later sixth and seventh centuries, involved a grey ware with “Gallo-Roman characteristics” that was probably made somewhere “in the basin of the two major rivers of western France, the Gironde and the Loire” (ibid., 82). It is thought likely that this pottery accompanied a more important trade in wine, stored in wooden barrels which would not have survived, and indicates ongoing contact between Gaul and the west of Britain in the post-Roman period (ibid., 82). The trade or contacts with British sites in both phases are those of elite or status centres, primarily defended sites such as promontory forts or hill-forts, with some monasteries included in the second phase. This contact appears to have by-passed the towns, with the exception of evidence of a first-phase amphora found in Gloucester.

Review of the Literature on Late Towns and the End of Roman Britain

In this section, the main academic theories and literature on the condition and fate of the administrative towns of late Roman Britain will be examined, with a focus on general surveys rather than reports on specific sites. Of particular interest will be the question of the state of the towns in the last century or so of Roman rule: did they remain prosperous and for how long? Or, if they went into decline, how early did this begin? Also of interest will be the theories regarding the end of Roman rule and of Romano-British civilization, as these are of relevance to the fate of the towns. Hypotheses about what happened to the towns after this point are especially important. There is much variation among scholars as to the degree of survival postulated for the towns beyond the official end of Roman Britain *ca.* 409. Did life in the towns soon disappear, perhaps due to the collapse of the economy and structures of power, or did it continue until the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons or even later? Was it a prosperous continuation of Romanized life, or a small number of people hanging on at a base level of existence?

This discussion of the fate of Romano-British towns appears to have begun in the early twentieth century with **F. Haverfield's** *The Romanization of Roman Britain* (1912). He noted that there had been a “decline of Roman influence” in the second half of the fourth century (1912: 58), but saw the actual end of urban life as occurring with the mid fifth-century arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and their ensuing attacks on the towns (*ibid.*, 63). Probably inspired by Gildas’ description of the Saxon sack of the towns (Brooks 1986: 77), he declared that the result of the attacks was that “the very centres of Romanized life were extinguished” in the south and the east (Haverfield 1912: 63). He only allowed for a possibility of some continuity of towns in the far west (*ibid.*, 64).

R. G. Collingwood, in his book *Roman Britain* (1923), was the next scholar to tackle the issue of the late Romano-British towns. He believed that many of the towns had come to an end, possibly a violent one, around the beginning of the fifth century, and that when the Anglo-Saxons settled later in the south and the east the Roman towns were largely deserted ruins (1923: 58). In his later article, also called “Roman Britain”, in *An*

Economic Survey of Ancient Rome (1937), he initiated the discussion of the condition of the towns during late Roman rule. Collingwood thought there was evidence for their decay in the fourth century, exhibited in the state of maintenance and repair of the public buildings (1937: 114). He felt that the towns had lost their importance as markets and that the focus of internal trade of goods had moved to smaller centres in the countryside, where the expenditure of wealth had become concentrated with the rise of the villas and relocation of the elite (*ibid.*, 144-115).

The concept of significant continuity for the towns beyond the Roman period, through the fifth century and possibly beyond, was first suggested by **R.E.M. Wheeler**, in his 1935 book *London and the Saxons*. In this he “expressed the opinion that the site of London may have been occupied continuously” (Arnold 1984: 22; Brooks 1986: 77). Wheeler’s theory did not become popular until the 1960s and 1970s, when it gained a number of adherents who had led major urban excavations: Frere, Wachter, and Biddle (Brooks 1986: 77). These archaeologists viewed “the later years of the towns as being ones of vigorous activity” (Arnold 1984: 22-23). The new evidence they were uncovering helped to convince them that the towns could have hung on for at least a while into the fifth century, after the end of Roman rule (*ibid.*, 23).

S. Frere’s theories about the Romano-British towns were largely formulated in the 1960s and 1970s, though the edition of his work cited here, *Britannia. A History of Roman Britain*, was published in 1987. Frere does not believe that the towns were in decay in the fourth century, but were prosperous to the end of the century and beyond. He supports this theory with examples of the construction of a very small number of late buildings in a few towns⁶³, from which he extrapolates a general trend for the diocese (1987: 248-249).

Frere closely follows the literary sources, even the late and very problematic *Historia Brittonum*, to create his picture of what happened to Roman Britain in the fifth century. Soon after the end of Roman administration, power was seized by war-leaders, particularly Vortigern. Frere thinks Vortigern was worried about the Romans making an attempt to return to power, so he hired Saxon federates to defend against this possibility,

⁶³ Canterbury, Silchester, London and Verulamium.

and settled them in Kent and other areas in the east that were advantageously placed for defending the island (1987: 361, 372, 374). He believes that Gildas, and thus Bede, placed the mid fifth-century arrival of the Saxons twenty years too late, and that it was closer to *ca.* 430, supported by evidence in the *Historia Brittonum* and the 441 entry⁶⁴ in the *Gallic Chronicle*, which could refer to the revolt against Vortigern by the Saxons (*ibid.*, 373). The expanse of southern, central, and eastern Britain through which the Saxon settlements were spread meant that upon their rebellion they already had a “stranglehold” over Britain (*ibid.*, 374). “This was the context of the appeal to Aëtius” *ca.* 446 (*ibid.*). In the chaos of the *ca.* 442 rebellion, the Roman system was brought to an end, “the Roman framework and civilization” having somehow been to a degree maintained until 442” (*ibid.*, 375).

Frere admits that this civilization had, in fact, been in at least some difficulty due to the coinage shortage in the late fourth century, and the cessation of coinage in the early fifth, but he seems to see this as primarily affecting the monetary economy (1987: 363-364). He claims that despite the problems, the Roman-style villas remained occupied into the fifth century, with St Patrick’s early life providing evidence that “villa proprietors could continue to inhabit their villas at least until 430” (*ibid.*, 365, 367), though this interpretation of the literature remains open to question. He also holds to the premise that many of the towns have produced evidence of “the survival of active life well into the fifth century”, with some, such as Verulamium, displaying indications that there was “... Romanized life still continuing” into the second half of the fifth century (*ibid.*, 368-370). This survival, he says, was made possible by the fourth-century improvements to the town walls, allowing the towns to retain a function as “strong points”, still “manned by troops in late Roman uniform” (*ibid.*, 368). He makes this latter claim on the basis of the find of a single military-style buckle in Verulamium (*ibid.*, 368). However, this does not seem to be sufficient support, as it could equally have been part of the uniform of a fourth-century imperial civil servant working in or visiting Verulamium. Furthermore, the supposed extended sequence of occupation in Verulamium identified by Frere has recently been re-evaluated and a much earlier date suggested. Frere does not think it likely that town life can be pushed much beyond *ca.* 500, as it would have been too hard by that time to continue to maintain even the late fourth/early fifth-century

⁶⁴ Frere gives the date as 442 (1987: 373).

Roman buildings. There might still have been a few scattered inhabitants, though (ibid., 366).

J. Wachter's theory of the continuity of town life in the fifth century was also developed in the 1960s and 1970s, but here is cited from the 1995 edition of his book, *The Towns of Roman Britain*. His argument is that most of the towns survived the fourth century with their Romanized lifestyle still intact, and that this continued on till the middle of the fifth century, at least at certain towns (1995: 409). The *civitas* was still based out of its town, and still contained an active curial class which “had survived not only to receive the rescript of Honorius in AD 410, but later also to send a request for help to Aëtius in AD 446” (ibid.). However, the town was by now probably ruled by a “tyrant” rather than by magistrates (ibid.).

Wacher differs from Frere in that he does not believe that the towns and town life survived past the middle and into the late part of the fifth century: “there is some reason to believe that by then many towns had already been deserted by the classes which had been foremost in their maintenance” (1995: 409). Romano-British culture of this time almost completely disappeared from the lowland region of Britain (ibid.). Wacher presumes that for the culture and town life to have vanished, the population of the south and the east must also have been gone. He believes that the most likely cause of their disappearance is an epidemic (ibid., 411).

This could possibly have been the plague written of by Hydatius as occurring *ca.* 443, which also appears to have had an outbreak in Constantinople in 445-446, and been found in Italy as well (Wacher 1995: 411). This could correspond with Gildas' references to plague in Britain in the fifth century⁶⁵, and could have caused a major depopulation that left land vacant for Germanic settlers, as well as weakening the Britons' ability to resist their advance (ibid., 413-414). It could have resulted in the towns' “desertion and the failure of the way of life they supported”, and led to “the consequent disintegration of an economic system of which they had been the major prop” (ibid., 416-417). As evidence to support his theory, Wacher points to examples of what have in the past been interpreted as unburied or hastily buried bodies, in ditches in Cirencester, in various places in the center of Wroxeter including the baths, and near the

⁶⁵ *DE* 2 and 22

baths at Caerwent, as well as the mid fifth-century conversion of what had been the forum to a cemetery at Exeter (ibid., 417-418).

After this catastrophe and the collapse of Romanized urban life, the towns were largely empty. There may have been someone still living in Gloucester, and possibly Cirencester. “Some residence must have survived for the ‘town’ to have been captured by the Saxons after the battle of Dyrham”⁶⁶ (Wacher 1995: 419). But most of the towns had stopped functioning as urban centres by the middle of the fifth century at the latest. Wacher suspects that there were still small “pockets” of people inhabiting a few centres up to perhaps the mid sixth-century, but not in sufficient numbers to support a belief that town life and its institutions had continued (ibid., 421).

M. Todd (1977) was highly critical of Wacher’s plague theory after it first appeared in the 1974 edition of *The Towns of Roman Britain*. He pointed out that no sources other than Gildas make any reference to pestilence in Britain⁶⁷, and that Gildas does not give a close date or any indication as to where in Britain this supposedly occurred (1977: 320). Gildas was probably writing somewhere in western Britain and may have known very little about what had happened to the towns in the south-east in the fifth century. He may in any case have not been writing about an historical plague, but rather of “moral confusion and degeneration”, or was simply inspired to add it by the biblical plagues sent by God as punishments (ibid., 320-321). As there is no word about plague in Gaul in the 440s, Todd thought it unlikely that the plague of Hydatius actually reached Britain (ibid., 321-322). Finally, Wacher’s unburied bodies belonged primarily to cemeteries, with no reason to assume that these were hasty interments of plague victims; the couple of bodies buried in ditches at Cirencester are, on their own, insufficient evidence (ibid., 324).

Another variation of the theory of the continuity of the towns up to the mid fifth-century is that of **J. N. L. Myres**, which was particularly influential up to the late 1970s, and probably contributed to Biddle’s theories on the towns. Though Myres’ theory is cited here from the 1986 edition of his book, *The English Settlements*, it was developed in

⁶⁶ As claimed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 577.

⁶⁷ Though in Wacher’s defence, a lack of record in continental sources of plague in Britain may not prove anything, as the continental sources barely mention Britain at all in the fifth century.

the 1950s and 1960s and published in articles and books such as his 1969 *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England*.

Myres claims that there was significant Germanic settlement in Roman Britain in the fourth century, particularly along the east coast and in the south-east, leading to the coining of the term “Saxon Shore”⁶⁸, due to the large number of Saxons living there (1986: 84). These were present in the form of *laeti*⁶⁹ settled by the Roman authorities on specific territories around the towns, as well as “the more spontaneous infiltration of raiders and squatters in coastal areas” (ibid., 85).

As evidence for the early presence of Saxons in these areas, Myres points to the distribution over the same regions of cremation and mixed cemeteries that he says are Germanic in character, and located near towns and main roads (1986: 86-87). Also found over much of the same area is a type of pottery referred to by Myres and others as “Romano-Saxon”. It was wheel-made mass-produced Romano-British pottery that contained decorative elements which scholars believed were Germanic in origin, and made, according to Myres, to cater to the tastes of Saxons living within Britain (ibid., 89, 92-93). This pottery was found in the shore forts, at major eastern Roman-period coastal ports, in the towns of the east, and at the villa sites and similar settlements along the main roads (ibid., 89-91). The third main type of evidence used to support an early Saxon presence in Britain was finds of metal-work in the form of late fourth to early fifth-century types of decorated belt-fittings and buckles, in the shore forts, the Thames valley, and East Anglia. “Such equipment indicates an official presence, whether civilian or military, emanating from the last days of Roman rule” (ibid., 85, 102), but because its distribution generally corresponds to that of early Anglo-Saxon pottery in England, Myres assumes a connection between the two, and that the equipment must have belonged to Saxons settled in Britain to serve as military for the Roman empire (ibid., 102).

Myres envisions prosperity for lowland Britain in the fourth century, which continued into the first part of the fifth (1986: 205). After the end of Roman rule in Britain, local tyrants such as Vortigern soon moved into the power vacuum left by the

⁶⁸ As in the post of the *comes litoris Saxonici*.

⁶⁹ Ethnic groupings of barbarians who had surrendered to the empire and been allowed to settle within it in return for supplying the Roman army with regular recruits (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 6).

departure of the Roman administration (*ibid.*, 206). With the Roman army also gone, the Saxon *laeti* remained as defenders of Britain. Myres thinks, based on evidence of Germanic pottery with continental parallels, found in large cremation cemeteries containing little sign of Roman influence in eastern England from East Anglia up to Yorkshire, further from Roman towns and roads, that there was a movement of Angles as well into Britain over the first half of the fifth century (*ibid.*, 108-111). Many of these may have been hired as federates by a British leader such as Vortigern to help defend Britain, “whether against Picts or Scots or any attempt at re-conquest on the part of the Roman authorities in Gaul” (*ibid.*, 109).

As the economic system broke down over this same period, due to the loss of the Roman administration and its “spending power” and money economy, as well as to a disruption of trade that Myres attributes to fleets of barbarian pirates, the prosperity of lowland Britain disappeared (Myres 1986: 206). Myres follows Gildas’ claim⁷⁰ that when the Britons were unable to provide the various Germanic immigrants with the quantities of supplies upon which they had agreed, relations between the two groups broke down (*ibid.*). The immigrants, resentful that the British upper classes in their villas still appeared to be wealthy, encouraged their relatives and friends from their homelands to join them in Britain, and together they revolted against the Britons (*ibid.*, 207). The *ca.* 450 British appeal to Aëtius would belong to the context of this rebellion. The outcome just after the mid fifth-century of this uprising was “the destruction of the towns” as described by Gildas; urban life came to an end (*ibid.*, 208). The only continuing occupation of the towns would have been merely at the level of “base subsistence”; otherwise, they remained largely deserted (*ibid.*, 13, 208).

Myres’ theory did not survive the critiques of the late 1970s and 1980s. While there is evidence from epigraphic and literary sources that Germanic soldiers did serve in Britain within the regular army units, particularly in the second and third centuries, there does not appear to be evidence to support their presence there in the Roman period as *laeti* or *foederati* (Gilliam 1979: 114-115; Brooks 1986: 95). The “Romano-Saxon” pottery has been determined to be simply generic Roman pottery without Germanic influence, distributed primarily in the eastern part of the diocese, as the kilns in which it was made appear to have been located there, in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire

⁷⁰ *De Excidio* 19

(Gilliam 1979: 113; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 191). The motifs used on this pottery are found on fourth-century Roman continental pottery, glassware, and metal-work, and it would seem that these designs influenced the fifth-century pottery of the northern Germanic regions rather than the reverse (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 191; Gilliam 1979: 108). It would thus appear that the Saxon cemeteries in Britain, dated by their pottery, were also later than Myres presumed. The metal-work can additionally be questioned. It is primarily fourth-century military-belt equipment, and not specific to “Germanic taste”; it was issued to “late Roman civil as well as military officials, no matter what their ethnic origins” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 191; Gilliam 1979: 113). Once more, this is a case of fourth-century Roman motifs inspiring those of fifth-century German metal-work (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 191). There is a substantial lack of evidence to support a theory for the presence of Anglo-Saxon soldier-settlers in Britain in the later Roman period (Gilliam 1979: 115).

M. Biddle is another proponent of urban continuity but, as seen in his article “Towns”, in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976), he differs in the stress he places on the possibility that continuity of occupation in towns might be “non-urban in character” for a long period “before re-emerging as urban places in later centuries” (1976: 103). He also argues that, as, in his view, continued occupation is much more “likely” than a coincidental later reoccupation of the same site, “the absence of settlement must be proved before desertion and re-occupation can be accepted” (ibid.). In other words, continuity is to be assumed, unless a site is abandoned or has documentation that it has been.

What Biddle believes made it possible for the Romano-British towns to last through the fifth century was the mid fourth-century refurbishment of their defences, with the addition of the external towers and the “modification of the ditches” which improved defensive capabilities using projectiles (Biddle 1976: 104). He assumes that the presence of these means that there would have been military units in the towns who had been trained to use these defenses, whether local or comitatensian units. If the towns were able to defend themselves after the 409 departure of the Roman administration and military, as Biddle claims they were, that would have enabled them “to survive long into the fifth century” (ibid.).

Biddle follows Myres in presuming that in the late fourth century the Roman administration had posted military units in the towns, and that local leaders had continued this in the fifth century, in both cases using soldiers of Germanic origin “who had settled within, or in the immediate vicinity of the walled area” (1976: 105). Biddle sees as evidence for this the finds in the towns of late Roman metal-work from military equipment, especially the bronze mounts from official belts, which might have been used by *comitatenses* or by *laeti*, and in the later fourth-century graves of common soldiers in extramural town cemeteries of common soldiers (ibid.). “On the evidence of the metal-work and related material . . . , it must now be clear that the population of the late Roman towns of Britain was already mixed with alien and perhaps specifically German elements before the end of the fourth century” (ibid.). Occasional scattered finds in the towns of early Anglo-Saxon pottery, as well as Anglo-Saxon cemeteries near the town walls and of what Biddle believes to be an early date, are used to further support his theory (ibid.).

Biddle does not believe that there was an actual break between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon towns, claiming that the evidence demonstrates “that the roots of the English settlements were planted while Britain was still part of the empire” (1976: 105). He assumes that the Germanic soldiers had settled inside the towns and around them, and gradually developed a close relationship with them. Supposedly when the economy collapsed and the towns began to decline after the Roman withdrawal, the Germanic soldiers somehow inherited the “political authority” of their former employers who were no longer reimbursing them. “By some such process Romano-British towns might have become Germanic settlements” (ibid.). This continuity of authority within the towns would help to explain the “long-continued use” of certain urban buildings. However, the examples Biddle provides to support this claim are largely not buildings for which there are actual examples to support late use, but rather speculation based on correspondences between locations for Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites. For example, the *principia* from the legionary fortress in York is thought to have remained standing and possibly been in use in an altered form into Anglo-Saxon times⁷¹. The model of continued use of an official building such as that might open possibilities in other towns: the buildings of Cripplegate Fort at London, or the basilica in Winchester, or the site of the old legionary

⁷¹ But see Carver 1995 for an interpretation in which there is a much earlier possible end date for activity there.

fortress at Gloucester might therefore have remained occupied and in use until a later date, when they might have become Anglo-Saxon royal palaces (*ibid.*, 106), though there is no actual evidence to support the hypothesized continued occupation. Biddle reiterates that this continuity may have been fairly small-scale: “there may have been little within the walls of Canterbury except a royal residence during much of the fifth and sixth centuries, but such a residence would express the underlying reason for the continued importance of the site – the existence of an acquired authority in its traditional centre” (*ibid.*, 110). So the towns continued to exist and were employed in this manner, but town life as seen in the Roman period did not (*ibid.*, 112).

Much of Biddle’s theory is derived from his interpretation of the late Roman and sub-Roman archaeology of Winchester, which is discussed in detail in the section on Domestic and Commercial Settlement below. The only extramural cemetery in Roman Britain for which some of the interments have seriously been considered as possibly Anglo-Saxon is at Lankhills, outside of Roman Winchester. However, the evidence for this identification has not been considered particularly strong (Hills 1981: 145-146). The late military equipment, as discussed above, was not specific to Germanic soldiers or a particular indicator of a Germanic ethnicity. Such equipment appears in two of the Lankhills graves, indicating that the individuals may have held significant administrative or military positions, but they may have been of origins other than Germanic. The supposed early Anglo-Saxon artefacts found within the town may not have been nearly as early as Biddle believed, with the pottery probably of at least the late fifth century (Brooks 1986: 87), and the earliest Anglo-Saxon cemeteries outside Winchester appear to be of a similar date (*ibid.*, 1986: 91-92; Biddle 1973: 237). Once again, it does not appear possible to prove a “chronological overlap” between the inhabitants of the late Roman towns and the Germanic incomers (Arnold 1984: 27).

The 1980s and 1990s saw a shift in the approach to the study of the late Roman towns in Britain, towards a perspective of significant urban decline before the end of the Roman period, and a cessation of occupation in the sub-Roman era. This change in the tide of opinion began with **R. Reece’s** 1980 article “Town and Country: the end of Roman Britain”. Reece’s primary argument is that the urban institutions seen in the second-century towns were by the mid third century “no longer recognizable”, and that

the administrative centres could not really be seen as towns any more by the mid fourth century (1980: 77).

Reece claims that Roman Britain's towns "started late" and did not have the opportunity to build up a substantial population base before they were irreparably damaged by the troubles of the third century. The economic problems of this time "unsettled town life in Britain to such an extent that by the end of the century a revival of town life was impossible" (ibid., 78). Major changes occurred in the patterns of trade routes in the Roman empire in the late second and early third centuries, which had a serious impact on trade in Britain, with a significant reduction in the quantities of imports such as Samian pottery. The third-century crisis added additional economic problems to this, leading to very bad times for urban traders, services, and industry; people with resources to invest turned away from the towns to put them instead into the villas in the countryside (ibid., 86-87). The third century saw the "rise of the villa in several areas of Britain" and as a result, "a large re-organization of land use" for the purpose of profiting from land (ibid., 87). This can be seen in the large number of small British villas established on some of the provinces' best farmland (ibid.).

Reece believes that the consequence of this for the towns was that by the start of the fourth century they had been reduced in their population and available services to little more than villages consisting of some newly constructed stone buildings, as well as some older ones of *ca.* 200 (1980: 87-88). There appears to have been an attempt by Constantius to revive town life with a building programme which may have continued on into the reign of Constantine; however, it was not successful beyond the short term (ibid., 78, 88). The Roman taxation system had become more focused on the rural economy by Diocletian's reign, with the focus on tax in kind rather than coin "bypass[ing] the markets, and, perhaps, the town" (ibid., 88).

Reece claims that evidence of the failure of the British towns is recognizable in the archaeological record by the third quarter of the fourth century (1980: 78). He notes that large areas went out of use in the fourth century in Verulamium, the forum in Wroxeter was not rebuilt after a late third-century fire, fourth-century pottery in Cirencester was found more in rubbish dumps than in construction layers, and ditches along Lincoln's main streets were filled with garbage, as well as further examples (ibid.,

78-79). The accumulation of dark earth⁷² in towns is seen as evidence of abandonment, a greatly reduced population, or the conversion of areas of the town to agriculture or horticulture (ibid., 83). Reece believes that there is minimal evidence for late buildings and urban occupation beyond 400 (ibid., 90). What evidence there is, shows sub-Roman town sites with “timber huts and hand-made pottery”, taking the towns closer to the Middle Ages than the Roman empire (ibid., 84). Reece asserts that there was no “sudden, undocumented, inexplicable change between Roman Britain and Saxon England”; rather, the transformation from the classical world to the era of village and estate had already begun in the mid third century (ibid., 90).

Reece’s theory is a valuable contribution and an important alternative to the earlier theories of the 1960s and 1970s that had been so heavily influenced by the post-Roman literary sources. Reece provides a worthwhile redirection towards the significance of the impact of economic changes. However, he probably goes too far in his analysis, beyond what the evidence can support, in his claims of the loss of all the urban characteristics of the Romano-British towns by *ca.* 350. While significant early decline is visible in London and possibly Colchester, with a smaller amount in Verulamium, this is not the case with all the towns. It appears to be at the mid-century mark that much of the decay begins to occur, becoming particularly noticeable in the last quarter of the century. Reece’s theory points the way in the right direction but it cannot be affirmed that the Romano-British towns were little more than administrative villages by the mid fourth century.

Soon after the publication of Reece’s article, **D. A. Brooks** was pursuing a similar, though not identical, approach to the fate of the towns in her M.A. thesis. She surveyed the archaeological evidence to determine whether or not there was evidence to argue for continuous occupation of the Roman town sites in Britain until Anglo-Saxon settlement of these sites. Her conclusions, published in a 1986 article, “A review of the evidence for continuity in British towns in the 5th and 6th centuries”, are that there was no continuity between Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlements (1986: 88).

⁷² This is a deposit of very dark soil, rich in organic matter and sometimes containing artefacts and fragments of building materials, and commonly found in late and sub-Roman urban sites, not exclusively in Britain. For more detailed discussions of dark earth, see the segments on London, Lincoln, and Canterbury in the section on Commercial and Domestic Settlement below.

Brooks makes clear in her article that “[c]ontinuity will be taken to mean unbroken occupation and use of (at least part of) a town site”; this includes evidence of any life, not just of town life (1986: 79). Surveying the archaeological evidence, she notes that there are indications of some construction and renovation of houses in the fourth century, despite an overall reduction of numbers of residences relative to the second century. However, she points out that amongst public buildings, there is evidence that some were out of use even prior to the fourth century, while others suffered decay or were put to new uses during the fourth century. This “may represent decline” or “may mean that the towns were reacting to new pressures” (ibid., 82). There is also evidence of some renovation of public buildings at that time, for instance in Cirencester and Verulamium, yet there is a lack of construction of completely new public structures in this century (ibid.). Public services and infrastructure appear in many towns to have been maintained beyond 350, though there are a number of examples where this was not the case (ibid., 83).

“Though towns may not have declined as early as Reece has suggested, however, the traditional view, that towns remained vigorous throughout the fourth century, may not hold completely either” (Brooks 1986: 83). Brooks suggests that a “change in attitude to public buildings and therefore in the character of the towns” can be seen in the halting of repair work on public buildings in the late fourth century, resulting in the deterioration of many of these structures (ibid.). She concludes that the towns must have continued to function up to *ca.* 375, when decline set in. The result of this may have been that “town life” was “dead by AD 410 or soon thereafter” in most of the towns (ibid., 84).

Brooks indicates that, in order to find at least some minimal evidence for some continuity of life in the Roman towns up to the first signs of an Anglo-Saxon presence, there must be evidence of an overlap between the two, for example, a degree of overlap in the use of a structure, or of a continuing activity, and no gap (ibid., 86). She cites evidence for continuing habitation of some of the towns into the fifth century, such as the late structure blocking a road and the multiple burial on Stour Street in Canterbury, the Lower Thames Street house near Billingsgate in London, and Frere’s late sequence of town houses and barn at Verulamium⁷³, as well as a few others (ibid., 86-89). In most,

⁷³ All of these are discussed below in the Domestic and Commercial Buildings section.

though not all, of the towns in her survey, Brooks found evidence that “activity continued but diminished rapidly and seems to have ceased by *ca.* AD 450” (ibid., 89).

She found no data that could support a hypothesis of “prolongation and overlap” between Roman and Anglo-Saxon habitation. “In all the towns which were re-occupied by the English, there is a gap between the end of Roman life and the earliest English activities” (Brooks 1986: 98). Brooks concludes that the sites of most of the towns must have been abandoned by the middle of the fifth century, and that the Saxon settlements were “new developments” on their ruins (ibid., 99). Her article contributes a very useful overview and evaluation of the archaeological evidence to the discourse on the fate of the towns. What is lacking is an attempt to explain the patterns visible in the data, which would be attempted by scholars who would expand on her work, such as Esmonde Cleary in 1989.

In **C. J. Arnold’s** 1984 book, *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, he makes use of the data on late Roman and sub-Roman British towns assembled in Brooks’ M.A. thesis and takes a similar approach to its evaluation, though with conclusions closer to Reece’s theory than hers are. He also more strongly stresses the distinction “between urban *functions* and activity within the area of the town” (Arnold 1984: 21). Arnold notes that it is important, when there is evidence given of continued late Roman or sub-Roman occupation, to not simply assume that this represents “a continuous thread”, but to also make clear “the character of the settlement” (ibid., 25). His premise is that, regardless of evidence for continuity of settlement, Romanized town life came to an end sometime in the fifth century (ibid.).

Arnold warns of the potential for confusing some late Roman occupation of the towns with sub-Roman settlement: it is important to consider “that the nature of late-Roman use of the towns had changed significantly” (1984: 30). An example of this could be seen in the build-up of some of the dark earth in certain towns prior to the end of Roman rule in Britain. Some of the dark earth appears to have been deliberately dumped, for agricultural and other purposes (ibid., 31). Arnold recites evidence for decay within the fourth-century towns “sometimes quite early” in the century, with buildings going out of use and becoming filled with rubbish (ibid., 33). He notes evidence for decline in the maintenance of the public services in towns of streets and sewers, and points out that this

“breakdown of urban service” can also be seen in the disorder in cemeteries and burials within the town walls (*ibid.*, 38). He does concede that this might be seen as an indication of a move away from the old Roman urban system, and not necessarily the end of town life (*ibid.*, 40).

Arnold is critical of the practice of focusing on isolated examples of buildings to extrapolate the state of an entire town, as has frequently been done to create a theory for continuity, especially of Romanized town life, on a site – or for a trend extending across all of Roman Britain. The numbers of buildings which can be shown to have been built or at least still occupied in the fifth century “is very small and must lead to the conclusion that such activities were rare” (Arnold 1984: 41). It is critical to not look at just the “existence of late construction” of buildings in towns, but also at the character of the occupation in question (*ibid.*). As an example, he gives the construction at Wroxeter of timber buildings over the ruins of the Roman baths basilica. Such instances as this may represent examples of “the peripheral survival of organized communities with some organizational features” of the Roman period; or Wroxeter may simply be an example of a rural site (*ibid.*, 41, 43). Arnold comments that while much has been made of Frere’s late town house building sequence in Verulamium, there has not been evidence found of a similar sequence elsewhere in the town. It is possible that this “sequence might more easily be seen as a farm established within the ruins of the towns” than as a continuation of town life (*ibid.*, 43). The latest known buildings of the Roman occupation of Canterbury were built when the Romanized stone structures of the town “were in an advanced state of decay”, leading to the construction of many “in abandoned courtyards where there would be less debris” or within “derelict Roman buildings that had been levelled” (*ibid.*, 44-45).

Arnold argues for a decline of town life earlier in the fourth century than has been concluded by Brooks (1984: 47, 158).

The abandonment of central facilities and administrative buildings – possibly also religious sites – in towns demonstrates that the number of levels in the settlement hierarchy was much reduced. Public building works gradually declined. The loss of town life must have caused large-scale market exchange to cease (*ibid.*, 47).

He claims that, despite evidence from some towns of building construction or “maintenance of public facilities, well into the fourth century”, the great bulk of the

evidence indicates “a general urban decay with a concomitant decline in population and town life” (ibid., 158). This is visible from about 325, in public services and the cemeteries, as well as the buildings (ibid.).

Arnold follows Reece in claiming that the loss to the towns of their main public buildings and associated facilities would have impacted their “urban or municipal status” and led to their transformation into administrative villages, though after the end of the Roman government, “even this last remaining function may have become redundant” (1984: 158). He would see the towns as ultimately becoming “abandon[ed] and depopulate[ed]” over the course of the fourth and into the fifth centuries (ibid., 159). Arnold’s explanation for these conclusions also mirrors some of Reece’s ideas, in his claim that the origins of the urban decline are in the relocation of the elites from the towns to the countryside, and in the “invest[ment] of their capital in rural production ... at a time when land and estates could be purchased cheaply” (ibid., 47). He views the “collapsing economy” as providing the final blow to the towns (ibid., 159).

Arnold’s combination of Brooks’ data from the different town sites and evaluation of the changing state of the towns, with Reece’s economic approach to understanding the causes of the phenomena, is a valuable step towards comprehending what was happening in the towns. However, his work has some of the same pitfalls that Reece’s does, perhaps due to his close following of the latter’s approach. For most of the towns *ca.* AD 325 is too early to claim that significant decline and a slide into the status of administrative villages were occurring.

A. S. Esmonde Cleary, in his *The Ending of Roman Britain* (1989), builds on this approach to the towns but with a perspective of the state of Romano-British town life in the fourth century closer to that of Brooks than to Reece or Arnold. He does not agree with the theory of major decline in the third century, and although he notes growing decline in the fourth, does not see it as becoming a serious problem until the later part of the century, or believe that the towns were reduced in that century to only “administrative shells” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 68, 71-72, 81, 131-132). He claims that the towns collapsed and were ultimately abandoned during the first third of the fifth century (ibid., 146).

Esmonde Cleary notes a number of early losses of public buildings from British towns, but points out that many continued in use into the fourth century, and that much of the public services and utilities were still being maintained. “Overall there is no evidence for the widespread dereliction or destruction of civic buildings and monuments in the fourth century” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 71-72). He notes, however, that other than the work on the urban defences, there does not appear to have been new construction of public buildings or work on existing ones beyond some renovation in the fourth century. Elite spending was being focused on private display “rather than public maintenance” (ibid., 72).

Esmonde Cleary stresses that the late Roman towns were still population centres, but that their character had changed since the second century. Though there was some neglect of the public buildings, and a decline in the number of strip-buildings housing artisans as well as commercial activities, there were increased numbers of the town houses of the upper classes (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 81). He views most of the towns⁷⁴ as still somewhat healthy at this point, and as having become neither centres merely of “conspicuous consumption and monumental display”, nor declining into administrative villages (ibid.). He does, however, concur with Brooks in the claim that there is significant evidence for urban decline in approximately the final twenty-five years of the fourth century (ibid., 131). This is evident in the “abandonment and non-replacement of buildings” and a “decline in the maintenance and quality of both public amenities and private residences” (ibid.).

Esmonde Cleary places great weight on the role of the imperial government’s taxation and revenue cycle, which he sees as essential to the very existence of the towns, and thus in turn to the continuation of “a Romanized economy and culture” (1989: 72-73). For him, the major turning point for Roman Britain and its towns was the usurpation of Constantine III in 407, followed by the ejection of his administration by the Britons a couple years later, with no return to imperial administration after the death of Constantine in 411. “The most crucial result of this for the question of how and why Roman Britain ceased to exist was the removal of the revenue/payment cycle and its associated activities” (ibid., 138).

⁷⁴ With London as an exception (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 82).

This led to the permanent end of the coin supply, and soon of coin use (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 139). The importation of official bronze coinage had ceased after 402, with none of the counterfeiting occurring that had previously been employed to make up shortfalls in coin supply. This latter indicates that coinage was no longer needed, and therefore “that the town-controlled, coin-using commercial system characteristic of the fourth century was no longer functioning” (ibid., 140). This would have meant a return to a barter system and would have had a serious impact on mass-production industries such as pottery, and on the rural and villa economy. The cessation of coinage meant that any soldiers and administrators still in Britain were not being paid, and in such a case, would probably not have stayed long in their positions. Also implied is the end of taxation (ibid.).

“The effect of the disappearance of the demands for revenue and associated means of meeting these demands will have been profound” for citizens as well (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 141). This meant the “removal of a major stimulus to production, particularly agricultural”, an end to state purchase, and also to the purchases that would have been made by army units as well as individual soldiers (ibid.). Exchange and trade connected to the functioning of the imperial tax and revenue cycle was the largest element driving the late Roman economy. It operated primarily through the towns and was key to their economic structure. “Disrupt it and the towns would be seriously or terminally undermined” (ibid.).

Esmonde Cleary makes it plain that evidence shows substantial decline for the towns occurring prior to the end of Roman rule, placing them in an already-weakened state. This is why the loss of the taxation system “proved fatal” to them (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 144-145). “At the majority of sites which were still occupied at the end of the fourth century there is little stratigraphic build-up after the introduction of the latest coins of the House of Theodosius” (ibid., 146). There is evidence at this time of an end to the maintenance of sewers and drains, of a filling in of wells and pits with no digging of later examples. These latest “deposits” were then covered over by rubble from collapsed structures or by dark earth (ibid.). Esmonde Cleary claims that the evidence indicates that most of the sites were deserted soon after the time of the arrival of the last coinage to be sent to Britain, with few remaining occupied by *ca.* 430 (ibid.). The small

number of sites which do have indications of later occupation are notable by the fact that “their stratigraphy did continue to develop” (ibid.).

Esmonde Cleary’s book is an extremely important addition to the discourse on the late Roman towns of Britain. Of particular significance is his emphasis on the importance to the Romano-British urban economy of the taxation/revenue cycle, and on the catastrophic implications of its loss for Roman Britain and the towns. Where the book does fall a bit short is in Esmonde Cleary’s failure to directly address and attempt to explain the decline that he identifies as already evident in the towns by the late fourth century.

M. Millett’s 1990 *The Romanization of Britain* builds on the work of Esmonde Cleary, Reece, and Brooks, while retaining some elements of the older approaches that made use of the post-Roman literary sources. Millett argues that an elite British revolt against the empire and its crushing taxes in the early fifth century led to a collapse of the economic system. This brought an end to physical manifestations of Romanization such as the towns. At the same time, as suggested by the literary sources, a less tangible element of *Romanitas* remained among the elites, some of whom now ruled tiny territories through individual power in the politically fragmented sub-Roman world of Britain.

Millett claims that “during the third quarter of the fourth century Britain was utterly Roman” (1990: 212). Its elite would have differed little from the inhabitants of other parts of the western empire, apart from having a Celtic rather than Italic element to their culture. He argues that at this time, the elite still retained a drive “to display wealth and power through Roman styles” (ibid.). However, by this point the context in which they did that had changed from an urban to a rural one (ibid.).

Millett follows Reece to a degree in perceiving the larger urban centres as having been transformed in late Roman times from “principally economic foci” to “defended centres for their districts, which contained large private houses but comparatively little productive capacity” (1990: 221). This change is reflected in the archaeology for the towns. The fact that so little evidence remains in the layers from the latest levels in the Roman period “indicates that structures were less substantial than we would expect had the towns continued to thrive” (ibid.). He accepts the premise that the administrative

towns had a “lower level of urban activity” in the later fourth century, and that evidence suggests the decay or abandonment of public buildings prior to the close of the century (ibid.).

The late fourth and early fifth centuries were also a period when military crises occurred on the continent, which increased the amount of money and resources needed by the state. After the AD 395 division of the empire, the west was left as “the weaker half ... with its smaller tax base”, but facing a greater threat and heavier need for expenditure (Millett 1990: 228). Millett thinks it very likely that this resulted in “a major and increasing burden” on Britain (ibid.). He believes that this heavier tax load, combined with the 408 barbarian attack on Britain and then Roman military’s inability to deal with it, may have led Britain’s elites to revolt, “removing first the barbarians and then the Roman government in 409” (ibid.).

As the rebellion was at least partially against the heavy taxes, it is probable that following it, the collection of tax came to an end. This would have led to the collapse of the Romano-British economy (Millett 1990: 228). This was soon followed by the disappearance of the towns. Although there is evidence at some urban sites “for the continuation of individual buildings in use into the fifth century, it is extremely difficult to push the chronology of many as far as 450” (ibid., 221). Only a few exceptions, such as at Wroxeter, have individual structures that could be given a later date. An “hypothesis of continuity of urban functions ... much beyond the first decades of the fifth century” does not have evidence to support it (ibid.).

Millett thinks that another result of the throwing out of the Roman administration was the fragmentation of the British provinces into many small disconnected territories that were led by individuals (*tyranni*) who had emerged out of the elite and maintained control through personal power (Millett 1990: 218, 228). It is possible that the late structural sequences in towns were the residences of such individuals, as Millett suggests for the timber buildings at Wroxeter, rather than representing a continuation of town life (ibid., 221-222). It may have been in this context that there was a continuation of some non-physical manifestations of Romanization up to the middle of the fifth century, as Millett believes is suggested by details from Constantius’ *Vita Germani* and the writings of St Patrick (ibid., 217).

Millett's book is particularly useful for his theory of the elite revolt that may have resulted in the end of Roman rule in Britain, and as a result the consequent economic collapse and end of town life. However, some questions could be raised about the survival of less tangible elements of *Romanitas*, as the details from the youth of St Patrick may belong to the period just before or at the time of the collapse, rather than after it, and as those from Constantius may possibly reflect conditions of late fifth-century Gaul rather than Britain *ca.* 430.

G. de la Bédoyère builds on Millett's theory of elite dissatisfaction and rebellion in *The Golden Age of Britain* (1999). In this book he emphasizes the ongoing pattern of usurpations throughout much of Roman Britain's history, and its ultimate consequences in the decline and then collapse of the Romano-British economy.

De la Bédoyère accepts that there were significant changes to the British towns in the fourth century, with the loss of public buildings and the appearance of areas of abandonment and dark earth (1999: 61-62). He does not see this as evidence of early economic decline, but as connected to changes in the nature of society going back into the late third century. Explanation of the alterations to the towns can be identified particularly in a change in the pattern of elite spending from this time. Elite wealth was reoriented from the towns to the countryside, as the latter, particularly in the form of villas, replaced the towns as the vehicle for the elites to demonstrate their status (*ibid.*, 64-65, 75).

De la Bédoyère follows Millett in his belief in a high level of Romanization in Britain, at least among the elites. The Romano-British aristocracy had embraced classical culture, particularly in the fourth century, and used it as a means to display their status (de la Bédoyère 1999: 139, 163). The first half of the fourth century in particular was a time of landed elite wealth and prosperity, as seen in their countryside villas. Britain was, in this period, still a place of relative safety and security, compared to the rest of the empire (*ibid.*, 139). Therefore, it would appear that the pattern of rebellions and usurpations arising in Britain from the very late second century did not come from resistance to the Roman social and cultural world. Rather, it was driven "by a reluctance [on the part of the British elites] to see wealth being drained away by the ceaseless demand from the empire for men, materials, and money" (*ibid.*).

“The tendency to secessionism was built on security in the geographical fact of Britain being an island, its fertility and temperate climate. It also derived from the sustained failure by the legitimate Roman state to preserve the Roman world in its traditional form” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 164). Furthermore, although the elite had become self-identified with classical culture, they appear to have resented the heavy economic contribution that the empire required. Having a separate army in Britain “provided the practical means for invoking and maintaining rebellion” (ibid.). He feels that a primary motivator for the revolts, particularly in the second half of the fourth century, is that the Romano-British elites wanted to be able to maintain their wealthy villa-oriented lifestyles, but did not want to have to give resources and manpower to the empire for its war against the barbarians on the continent. At the same time, he notes, Britain was prepared to call for military assistance from the continent when its own provinces were under threat (ibid.).

The second half of the fourth century was a very different time for the Romano-British landowning elites than the first half had been. The decay that had been visible in the towns from the late third century was now apparent in the countryside as well, in “a distinct decline in villa development” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 139). There was increased insecurity in Britain over these decades, and rebellion may have been a way to regain some stability. De la Bédoyère argues that this “involvement in insurrections made [the British provinces] increasingly a place the empire could do without” (ibid.).

The cycle of recurring revolts and usurpations appears to have become a self-perpetuating cycle of collapse. The reduced circumstances of the elite led to revolt, which resulted in further economic decline and more rebellion. This is reflected in the late fourth-century evidence for both the towns and the countryside (de la Bédoyère 1999: 148). The villas may still have been occupied at this point, but no longer maintained. “The circumstances which had allowed [the Romano-British elite] to express their wealth this way had evaporated and there is very little evidence at all for the commissioning of mosaics and wall-paintings after about the year 390” (ibid., 149, 151).

De la Bédoyère argues that Britain had become an area “of marginal significance” to the empire, and no longer seen as worth a portion of the increasingly scarce but desperately needed troops; therefore it “sever[ed] official links” with the diocese (1999: 153). He claims that this can be seen in the end of shipment of coins to Britain after 402

(*ibid.*). However, if Britain had by then become a region worth little to the empire, as de la Bédoyère says, it must have undergone very rapid and severe decline over the late fourth century, and no longer been able to supply vast quantities of grain to the continent as it had in 359 at the behest of Julian. The severing of links is also inconsistent with the presence in Britain of the Roman army that elevated the usurpers of 406-407, an event that de la Bédoyère acknowledges occurred. Regardless of what had brought about the end of the supply of bronze coins, the economy began to collapse, as indicated by the end of the pottery industry in the early fifth century: “the economic stability which would sustain the infrastructure of manufacture, marketing and distributing had all disappeared” (*ibid.*, 150, 153).

It is not clear whether the final usurpation, that of Constantine III, was supported by the Romano-British elite or was a scheme solely arising out of the military. De la Bédoyère thinks that the Britons’ later removal of his administration implies that Constantine did not enjoy “wide popular support in Britain” (1999: 147-148). The actions of the British populace, however, solved the problem for the empire of what to do about a diocese it no longer wanted, but for the British elites it meant the end of a system “which had supported the foundations of their classical culture” (*ibid.*, 164). De la Bédoyère’s discussion of the key role of recurrent, probably elite-sponsored rebellion in the declining conditions of the fourth and early fifth centuries provides an important layer to an understanding of both the political and cultural end of Roman Britain.

A very different approach to the question of what caused the Britons to eject the Roman government from their diocese in 409 has been provided by **E. A. Thompson** in *Saint Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain*. Though this book was published in 1984, Thompson’s ideas are very much in the tradition of the theories about the towns that developed in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in his reliance on the sub-Roman literary sources, though he is not a proponent of continuity of towns or town life. His theory is primarily derived from his analysis of Constantius’ *Vita Germani*, and supplemented by Gildas, as well as Zosimus’ comments about the 409 revolt and the rescript of Honorius.

Thompson claims that “[t]he only reasonable explanation of the secession of 409 is that it was carried through by the poorer classes of the countryside. These were the

persons who had every reason to rebel” (1984: 34). He says that these peasant-rebels could be seen as *bacaudae*⁷⁵, though he prefers not to use that term (ibid., 34-35). The heavy weight of the taxes of this time again figures as the stimulus for the rebellion, with the “rural poor” unhappy about “the severity of the taxes and the corrupt methods of the tax-collectors” (ibid., 34). Taking advantage of the reduced number of troops in Britain in the wake of Constantine III’s transfer of much of the army of Britain to the continent, “the revolt of 409 was carried through by slaves, *coloni*, tenant-farmers, peasants, army-deserters”, and others, in the area of south-east Britain (ibid., 34-35). These were probably rural pagans and speakers of the native Celtic language (ibid., 38). Thompson deduces this from Constantius’ accounts of Germanus’ visits to Britain, in which the local government has no interaction with Germanus and plays no role in the Gaulish bishops’ clash with the Pelagians. If the new government consisted of pagans, they would have no concern about Christian heresies, and if they were not Latin-speakers they would not have understood the debates in any case (ibid.).

Based on the words of Zosimus regarding the 409 revolt, Thompson claims that the rebels put an end to the use of Roman law (1984: 35). He accepts that the diocese and provinces were gone, as Honorius in his rescript was writing to the *civitates*. Thompson hypothesises that each *civitas* was independently governed for a period after the rebellion, but over the course of the fifth century these “republican city-states ... were transformed into tyrannies or monarchies” which would eventually “bear no relation to the old *civitates*” (ibid., 37).

As did some of the earlier scholars, Thompson uses Gildas as his guide to the fate of the towns, particularly his description of the storming of the towns and massacre of their inhabitants (1984: 106). However, he does not believe that these were still centres of town life or were “organized hierarchical communit[ies]” by that time, but had dwindled to the point of being merely the habitations of a few families or squatters in some cases, or “places of refuge” in others. Thompson suggests that the small number of inhabitants available to defend the towns may have been what made it possible for barbarians to sack them (ibid.). He assumes that this assault on the towns occurred soon after *ca.* 440 and included most of the towns “throughout the whole of eastern Britain”

⁷⁵ This is not a concept completely original to Thompson, as Collingwood had previously contemplated the concept that Gallic *bacaudae* rebellion had been imported to Britain (Dark 1994: 56).

(*ibid.*, 107). The result of the sack was that the towns were left, as they remained in Gildas' time, "deserted and demolished" (*ibid.*). As support for his theory, Thompson notes the destruction by fire of three basilicas (that of Wroxeter actually having occurred in the third century) and a house, and gives a list of places where unburied bodies have been discovered (*ibid.*, 108), which sounds like a recitation of the locations of Wachter's supposed plague victims.

Although his discussion of the ultimate end of the towns has contributed little that is new to the topic, Thompson's theory of a lower-class or peasant revolt ending the Roman occupation of Britain has proven influential and reappeared later in a modified form in the work of Dark and of Faulkner. The *Vita Germani*, as a hagiography written by someone who may have had very little accurate knowledge about conditions in Britain in the first half of the fifth century, may not be the best source from which to develop a major theory about British life at that time, yet the possibility of a peasant revolt, with its parallels of the *bacaudae* in nearby northern Gaul, has found favour with other, later scholars.

The main late twentieth-century proponent of continuity in the towns, and the inspiration for a new generation of supporters of the continuity theory, emerged in the 1990s in the figure of **K. R. Dark**. The theme of his 1994 book, *Civitas to Kingdom*, is "that Roman Britain ended not in the fifth century, but the seventh, and in a sense, not even then" (Dark 1994: xii). Although in this book he would admit to there having been some loss of physical manifestations of Romanized culture after the end of Roman rule, he envisions a survival of a Roman-derived "political framework" and of "Roman modes of life" (*ibid.*, 2).

Dark builds a picture of growing class and religious conflict in fourth-century Britain, over the course of which time, he claims, a particularly conservative brand of Christianity gained in popularity among the lower classes, while the elites remained largely pagan (1994: 38-39, 49). His argument is that, because these late British Christians were so conservative, "we cannot use the absence of Christian symbolism or church buildings as a guide to the presence or absence of Christians" (*ibid.*, 38). This type of untestable theory is, unfortunately, a favourite technique used by Dark. These lower-class Christians may have worshipped in house churches in very late Roman

Britain, but due to their possible opposition to religious symbols, poverty, and “lack of Romanization”, these house churches would be “unidentifiable in the archaeological record” (ibid.). Based on these determinations, Dark claims that “[t]here is, therefore, strong reason to assume that the number of low-status Christians in Roman Britain may have been underestimated” (ibid.). He concludes that most of the late Romano-British Christians were of the poorer classes, while most of the elites remained pagan (ibid.).

Dark believes that there is evidence of class and religious conflict in these years, and states that there was pagan destruction of Christian artefacts. However, he provides no examples to support this assertion. Though he has added no additional proof, he soon asserts that in the fourth century in Britain, “[c]lass conflict can be recognized, notably a radical contrast between the religious affiliations of the rulers and ruled” (ibid., 49). However, if, as Dark claims, the lower classes could not afford Christian paraphernalia and were against the use of symbols, leaving themselves unrecognizable, then whatever Christian artefacts or sites were being destroyed would probably belong to a more wealthy class of Christians, with the result that this evidence could not support a theory of conflict between lower-class Christians and elite pagans. If it is, in fact, evidence of class and religious conflict, it would then more likely represent destruction by frustrated members of the masses of elite sites or paraphernalia, as Christianity in the fourth century was a means for elite advancement in the imperial system.

Dark believes that these tensions were escalated in the late fourth century by problems with the Romano-British economy and an increase in raiding by barbarians. In other areas of the western empire at this time, “lower class unrest” and “Christian militancy” were also growing. “If these concepts were imported into Britain, they might be expected to destabilize the system still further” (Dark 1994: 49). Dark points to the late fourth-century militant monasticism of St Martin of Tours in Gaul, which held with the need for a quick and forceful elimination of paganism, involving the destruction of cult statues and temples (ibid., 55). He notes another Gallic trend, in the early fifth century, of the *bacaudae*, rebellion by “armed civilians, probably predominantly of the lower classes, who freed themselves from governmental and landlordly exploitation by becoming independent by force of arms” (ibid.). Dark likes Thompson’s theory of a lower-class British rebellion and overthrow of the government in 409, but he believes

that, unlike the Gallic rebels, those in Britain could well have been Christians, and revolting not just against the government but also against the pagan elite (ibid., 56).

Dark sees this theory as supported by evidence of class and religious tensions and conflict in the last decades of Roman Britain (1994: 56). Though there is no specific evidence for *bacaudae* in Britain, *bacaudic* revolt reached its peak in nearby Armorica, which would have had “close contact” with Britain in the late fourth and early fifth centuries (ibid., 57). Dark also points out that the Gallic bishop Victricius, a pupil of Martin, may have made a visit to Britain around the end of the fourth century (ibid., 56); however, there is no evidence to support Dark’s implication that he could have brought Martinian militancy with him. There is some evidence for destruction in late Roman Britain of pagan cult statues and temples. Dark says this is a “widely noted” phenomenon, though it was probably not that extensive. These cases of destruction have been dated by other scholars to the fourth century, but Dark proposes that they “all might equally well belong to the early fifth century” (ibid., 62).

Dark sees this lower-class Christian militancy and unrest as the context for the early fifth-century usurpations in Britain and elevation of Constantine III, who is said in the sources to have had lowly origins in the army, and whose son Constans had been a monk prior to his father attaining the purple. For Dark, this provides a sufficient “link between Britain and the Christian monastic militants of Gaul, and a link between them and low-status Britons” (1994: 57). He also perceives this connection in Zosimus’ comment (6.5.2) that Britain’s 409 revolt had corresponded with a parallel uprising in Armorica (ibid., 58). Dark hypothesizes that the elevation of Constantine III in 407 was the first part of a low-status Christian revolt and a “transition from Roman to British rule” (ibid., 57-57, 63), though there is no evidence that Constantine was himself British or cared anything about Britain. Two years later, while Constantine was in Gaul, the revolt against his administration occurred, which “could be seen as a second phase of the proposed low-status Christian rebellion resulting from the failure to secure satisfaction through the appointing of the rebels’ own emperor” (ibid., 58).

Dark says that evidence of an overthrow of the elite can be seen in the early fifth-century demise of Romano-British villas, which are on some sites replaced with “small farmsteads”, possibly representing “‘takeover’ by lower-status groups, or the symbolic rejection of late Roman elite values”, and “suggest[s] ... replacement of the landowning

elite in the early fifth century” (1994: 59). He claims that those pagan religious sites still functioning also quickly went out of use around the same time, some exhibiting signs of destruction, as mentioned above (*ibid.*, 59-60, 62).

In this process of the transfer of power from the Roman administration and elites to rule by Britons originally of lower status, the *civitates* remained intact⁷⁶. Having been transformed into kingdoms, those *civitates* outside the areas which would later come under Anglo-Saxon control “survived ... for another two centuries as politically independent kingdoms under the rule of what had been provincial citizens” (Dark 1994: 63-64, 69). Dark appears to envision a merging of the lower classes with the surviving elements of the more Romanized elites, who had presumably adopted the values of the new regime, creating the culture typically seen in the post-Roman period, in which “British and Roman elements” are combined (*ibid.*, 64).

Dark turns in more depth to the question of the survival of Roman Britain, in the culture, the provincial structure, and some of the towns, in a later book, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (2000). Here he argues that there was a substantial survival of Romano-British culture and society after 410, into the later fifth and sixth centuries. Despite his assertion of its demise in the 409 rebellion in *Civitas to Kingdom*, he now envisions the survival of the provincial structure and government up to the late fifth century at least, in addition to the survival of some of the towns as administrative, religious, and elite centres, as well as the continued usage of coinage and elements of the Romano-British economy. In many ways, this book represents a return to the approaches to continuity popular in the 1960s and 1970s.

Following the tradition established by earlier archaeologists, Dark uses the small amount of literature written in fifth and sixth-century Britain, particularly the writings of St Patrick and Gildas, to support his argument of cultural and social continuity. Dark sees the information from Patrick as evidence of “a Romanized culture continuing well beyond the end of Roman Britain, of the continuity of towns, curial classes and town councils, villas⁷⁷, and the church to at least the mid fifth century (2000: 33). But Dark

⁷⁶ Like Thompson, Dark appears to accept the validity of Zosimus’ “Rescript of Honorius”, which provides support for a theory of the survival of the *civitates* (1994: 58).

⁷⁷ Abandoning, it would seem, his argument in *Civitas to Kingdom* that the villas came to an end in the early fifth century.

does not indicate why, as he claims, this scenario from Patrick must belong to the second half of the fifth century. He assumes a late date for Patrick, ignoring the entire issue of problems with Patrick's chronology and the possibility that Patrick's youth belongs in a much earlier time.

Dark also uses Gildas as a source showing the continuation of Romanized society and culture into the sixth century. He claims that Gildas' writings present "an essentially late Roman society, in which Latin literacy and extensive libraries of Latin text, manuscript production, Roman terminology and symbolism, Roman higher education and law, and Roman-style bureaucratic government have all survived the formal 'end' of Roman Britain" (Dark 2000: 33). It is not at all clear how Gildas' work shows a continuing Roman-style bureaucratic government, when Gildas speaks of regions ruled by kings and tyrants, unless Dark is referring to the council connected to Gildas' fifth-century "*superbus tyrannus*".

It is also worth pointing out that Gildas was a learned scholar of the church, and his world is not that of the ordinary Briton, probably not even an elite Briton. Many of the "Roman" elements that Dark would see as part of secular elite culture may have been preserved through the church. It seems equally possible that many of these elements, including those which were made use of by the elite, did not represent continuity of Romano-British culture. They may instead have been reintroduced to Britain through renewed late fifth and sixth-century contact between western Britain and Gaul, particularly with the Gallic church, as well as with areas of the Mediterranean and through the bringing of Christianity to areas of western Britain that had remained relatively un-Romanized during the period of Roman rule. These areas, particularly Wales and Cornwall, are the same areas in which Dark's elements are visible in such things as the use of late fifth and sixth-century memorial stones inscribed in Latin.

Dark further pursues his theory of the survival of Roman-style bureaucratic government in his claims that the provincial structure of Roman Britain lasted beyond the end of Roman administration, and at least until the end of the fifth century (2000: 59). He looks briefly at the distribution of what has been identified as the earliest evidence of Germanic burials and perhaps thus also settlement in eastern Britain, and sees it as a major support for his argument (*ibid.*). Dark perceives a pattern in which a distinctive group of cemeteries can be seen in the areas of what had been the fourth-century

provinces of Britain, and in the spirit of the older theories of Romano-British continuity through the assistance of Germanic soldiers, believes that these represented such soldiers hired around the mid fifth century to provide “a provincial level of defence when the diocesan defensive system had ceased to function” (ibid., 50).

Dark states that evidence in the provincial capitals shows that they survived in the fifth century and that the capitals remained centres of administrative and elite residence. This evidence is in the form of late fourth-century work on the town walls, the presence of elite wealthy town houses, the remains of a possible church, and deposits of dark earth (Dark 2000: 50). However, none of this need belong to or be connected to the fifth century. Dark actually has to admit that it is very difficult to find proof of fifth-century occupation in London. Nevertheless, he insists that the dark earth must contain decayed remains of structures made of timber frames or mud walls with wattle and daub elements, evidence of “intensive occupation” at the end of the Roman period (ibid.). But the dark earth, even if containing remains of dwellings, could equally be evidence of abandonment of buildings of the late fourth to early fifth centuries, allowed to collapse and decay after having been deserted (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 147).

What Dark sees as “the most convincing evidence for the continuing significance of London into the fifth century comes from [a] series of cemeteries containing the sort of artefacts associated with sub-Roman Germanic soldiers ... forming an approximate semi-circle around the south of London”, which he dates as beginning in the mid to late fifth century; “... other settlements, as at Mucking, Essex, appear to guard the mouth of the Thames” (2000: 51-52). He thinks these sites represent the deliberate placing of forces around London to fend off possible attack from water or land. Dark wants these to be the cemeteries of hired *foederati* like those mentioned in Gildas’ historical prologue. But they may simply have been Germanic settlers moving onto at what looked like prime agricultural land, especially as some of these cemeteries were associated with sites where there had been late Roman villas (Perring 1991: 129). There is very little in the way of actual Anglo-Saxon artefacts within the city of London, and evidence seems to be lacking that could support the notion of occupation in London to the end of the fifth century (ibid.).

Dark tries to see the pattern he determined for London reflected in the evidence from the other provincial capitals, Lincoln, York, and Cirencester. He sees the pattern as

fitting Lincoln in particular (Dark 200: 52). But again he has to admit that there is not much evidence in the town for the fifth and sixth centuries, particularly for the presence of Anglo-Saxons. In York, as well, little in the way of obvious fifth-century artefacts have been found (*ibid.*). There does seem to be some evidence for the occupation of Cirencester into the early fifth century, but it is not clear that this goes very far into the century or that the occupation was more than sparse.

Dark believes that his interpretation of the evidence fits well with Gildas' account of fifth-century Britain, and he suggests that Gildas is correct in claiming that a "Saxon rebellion" was what brought what was left of Roman Britain to an end, possibly in the 490s (2000: 35). The *foederati*, hired to protect Britain by Gildas' *superbus tyrannus* and the council over which he presided, decided to turn on their employers and take portions of it for themselves. Dark tries to use the *De Excidio Britanniae* to create a relative chronology of events. He would view the appeal to Aëtius as corresponding to the time of the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement, following Gildas' narrative of the British hiring of the *foederati* as a result of the lack of response. According to Dark, they could have come sometime from the appeal in the late 440s up to the late fifth century, with their rebellion occurring around the 490s. This would allow the east of Britain to stay in the control of the Britons to almost the end of the fifth century (*ibid.*). There are serious problems in using Gildas this way as a source for fifth-century history, given the concerns that have been raised concerning his sources, reliability, and chronology.

Dark believes that not only did the provincial capitals survive for most of the fifth century, but that many of the *civitas* capitals did as well, again as administrative, elite, and religious centres (2000: 57). He follows a theory originated by Wheeler that in areas of eastern England where there were gaps in the distribution of Germanic cemeteries there may have been British kingdoms. An example of this would be in the general area of London and the Chilterns, which included the town of Verulamium, with its late sequence (*ibid.*). For some of the other examples of continuing towns that Dark lists, such as Colchester, there seems to be little solid supporting evidence that he can offer. Some, like Chichester, actually show evidence of significant decay at the end of the Roman period, not of continuing town life. Only a small number of sites in a few of the towns have the continuity sequences, but may not have had continuity in other parts of

the same towns. These sites should be seen as exceptions, and not as the rule (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 153). There is little evidence to support continuity at most of the town sites.

Dark has also attempted to extend the time-span of the usage of late Roman pottery and coins into the sixth century, in order to permit some of the sites at which they are found to have a potentially later date than would otherwise have been the case (2000: 54-55). This would provide support for his theory of the continuity of Romanized culture and society far past the termination date of the Roman government of Britain in the early fifth century. Most scholars of this period accept that coins were out of use by *ca.* 420, perhaps 430 at the latest. Stockpiles of the latest pottery may have lasted a bit longer than that, but as a very breakable form of vessel, probably not by much. Dark's arguments for such extended use of coins and pottery, for the continuation of the provincial structure and government, and the continuity of life in many of the towns beyond a meagre level, are flawed. While there is evidence for continued occupation at a small number of towns, the picture that can be seen is not one of a continuation of the Roman system, especially in regards to urban living.

N. Faulkner's *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain* (2000) draws together ideas and influences from a number of different scholars, in particular incorporating theories developed in the 1980s. His book is heavily influenced by Reece, and probably also by Arnold, in his emphasis on an early decline in Roman Britain. He also reflects Esmonde Cleary's stress on the importance of the revenue and taxation cycle as the main element driving the Romano-British economy, and its loss as a major factor in the collapse of the system, though Faulkner adds particular importance to its connection to the needs of the military (2000: 58). Thompson's theory of a peasant revolt turns up here again as well, as an explanation of the end of Roman rule.

Faulkner views the administrative towns of Roman Britain as not only the "principal areas" for the development of *Romanitas* in the first couple centuries of Roman rule, but also as "the essential nodes of an administrative system spread across the empire to manage and exploit the imperial domain" (2000: 25, 27). But, like Reece, Faulkner believes the towns were in trouble by the mid third century, due to the third-century crisis and to the decline of voluntary participation by the elites in municipal life.

The growth of the towns had come to a stop with the halting of both civil and domestic construction and the loss of the forum-basilicas of a number of towns late in the century (ibid., 121-122). Yet the late empire needed towns as centres for the imperial system. From the time of Carausius, there was also ongoing imperial intervention in “a sustained attempt to restore [Britain’s] military and civil infrastructure”; this was continued by Constantius after he had brought Britain back into the empire, and then by his son Constantine up till about 312, while his power still did not extend beyond the north-west of the empire. This involved building programmes in the towns, which briefly helped to restore “[o]fficial and elite urbanism”, but not for long (ibid., 122-123).

Faulkner emphasizes that the character of the Romano-British towns was changing in the fourth century. Many of the poorer residences represented a much poorer quality of housing in the form of “tiny late Roman hovels” or “squatter occupation” in abandoned buildings (2000: 123-124). Also notable was a decline in municipal standards and public services, seen in, for example, the accumulation of rubbish. Faulkner does not agree with the theory that the towns remained prosperous till the late fourth or even fifth century. From his perspective, they were already in a state of decline (ibid., 124). The towns continued as urban centres, however, but were a very different kind of place than previously (ibid., 126).

Imperial intervention does appear to have helped to prop up the towns somewhat in the early fourth century. They were now the new administrative centres of the imperial bureaucrats, and “bear the hallmarks of the militarized command economy and bureaucratized state-apparatus of late antiquity” (Faulkner 2000: 126). The rebuilding was carried out to suit the needs of the state. Some towns received renovations to their forum-basilicas. The provincial capitals were particularly favoured in the receipt of “official patronage” for building projects and upgrades. Meanwhile, many of the other towns continued their decline, some at a faster rate than others (ibid., 127). Another notable change in the towns from the late third century was their new enhanced role in the military-supply system. Towns now also served as the locations for “military workshops”, “store-depots”, and “stock-pens” for the imperial government (ibid., 128, 130).

Faulkner claims that there was a notable decline in the towns from *ca.* 325 of those elements in the towns associated mainly with the curial classes (2000: 130). By the

end of the fourth century, this had resulted in the abandonment of “virtually all” public buildings and amenities, and most houses (*ibid.*). A small number of residences would have remained within a town: smaller houses that may have belonged to more prosperous traders or craftsmen, as well as a large town house or two. Though most of the public buildings were out of use, there would still have been “government offices and a municipal authority”; tax collection and the activities associated with the military-supply system would have continued to be carried out (*ibid.*).

Faulkner argues that Britain was gradually being drained of troops from the mid fourth century, leading to the barbarian invasions (2000: 163). In particular, Magnus Maximus’ “attempt to make good the British elite’s demand for proper attention to its interests had denuded the island of troops” (*ibid.*, 170). The usurpations came out of the Britons’ “resentment” at being neglected by the central government. But in challenging that government, more resources and troops were needed, and usually lost, too (*ibid.*).

Faulkner points to a significant reduction in the coin supply after 378 and continuing on till after 388. The supply increased again after 388, but “never returned to Valentinian’s levels” (Faulkner 2000: 170). He believes that this shortfall meant “a reduced Roman army presence, a breakdown of the tax-collection system, a failure in much of Roman Britain” (*ibid.*). Faulkner claims this can be seen in the archaeology evidence of *ca.* 375 to 425, during which time the towns collapsed. He identifies the revolt of Magnus Maximus as playing a significant part in this process of the Romano-British disintegration. After his revolt, “further decline was rapid and irreversible” (*ibid.*, 170-171).

Faulkner envisions the speed of the collapse as increasing after 402, when coins of the government of Honorius ceased to reach Britain for the payment of soldiers, and there were no local copies produced to make up for this (2000: 172). A lack of coinage would have seriously disrupted the revenue-payment system. “Some interim mechanism for direct provisioning must be assumed, or British officers levying in kind in the countryside around forts” to acquire basic supplies (*ibid.*). The military-supply system, while still functioning, would have ensured the distribution of surpluses in a somewhat “rational” and “sustainable” manner, but with it crippled, “massive burdens would descend on those living within striking distance of army units”, potentially devastating for the local farmers, and within a short time, perhaps, for the military as well (*ibid.*).

Like Thompson, Faulkner believes that the ultimate end of the system was brought about by an early fifth-century peasant uprising in Britain (2000: 177). He points out that Zosimus' account of the 409 overthrow of Roman administration was not "a traditional usurpation", in that it did not result in the elevation of another emperor (ibid.). Roman rule was rejected, its laws discarded, and some sort of different administration was apparently set up, according to Zosimus. Between the late third and mid fifth centuries, peasant or bacaudic revolts had been carried out in north-western Gaul, including *ca.* 407 to 417. Faulkner suggests that since Zosimus claims that the early fifth-century Gallic uprising was "an imitation of earlier events" in Britain, this could be perhaps seen as a "reference to peasant war in Britain" (ibid.). He thinks that the peasants could have managed to bring down the system through a combination of withholding tax, labour, and rent while "organiz[ing] collective resistance" to any force sent against them (ibid.).

This would likely have been followed by a period in the early fifth century of anarchy in some regions. Attempts were probably made to gain control of small areas by landowners, or perhaps some element of the military that remained in Britain, or by "new 'strongmen' who could offer a measure of protection and security" using armed bands of retainers and in return for some payment (Faulkner 2000: 178). Faulkner claims that such men could have moved into the "power vacuum" which the uprising had created and taken power, and tiny new states with "new class divisions" would gradually have begun to develop (ibid.).

Faulkner provides a useful analysis, particularly in his stress on the key role of the military-supply system and activities of the late Roman state in the transformation of the towns of fourth-century Britain, as well as the towns' dependence on these things for their survival. He also better addresses the possible causes of increased late fourth-century decline, which had been neglected by Esmonde Cleary. He may, however, fall into the trap of Reece and Arnold of claiming too much decline too soon. The peasant overthrow of Constantine III's administration, while it makes more sense in the context in which Faulkner has put it, is still not completely convincing. While an uprising seems plausible, a successful overthrow of the government, the remains of the military, and the elite may go too far. Though Faulkner does not address this, however, perhaps sufficient

disturbance and destabilization of one key area, probably of Maxima Caesariensis, would have been enough to bring down an already very weakened system.

An Overview of Roman Towns in Britain

The purpose of this section is to provide general information to help build a picture of the administrative towns of Britain on which this thesis is focused. It is important to distinguish the administrative towns, often called “large” towns, from what is referred to as “small” towns, and to clarify the different types of “large” or administrative towns. A list of these towns will be provided, and there will be a brief survey of the types of buildings and other features typical of the towns. The section will conclude with a synthetic picture of what a typical administrative town would have looked like at different points in Roman Britain’s history: at the peak of Romano-British urbanism in the mid second century, in the early fourth century after the changes made to the imperial system by the Tetrarchy, in the late fourth century when Britain began to clearly be in difficulty, and in *ca.* 425, after the end of Roman administration.

“Large” Towns

“In the early empire the Romans regarded the towns literally as the symbol of civilization, and also as a location through which the local administration of the empire could be carried on”; so they “founded or caused to be founded in Britain a number of towns recognizably constructed to a Mediterranean-derived pattern” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). This pattern included a set of recurring features: “organized planning on a street grid” (Millet 1990: 69), Roman-style public buildings (especially a forum, basilica, public baths, temples, theatre, and amphitheatre), and public services such as a water supply (*ibid.*; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64; Wachter 1995: 20). From town to town there were variations in the plan; these were probably a result of both the wealth available and local preferences in each town (Wachter 1995: 20).

These towns in the first and second centuries became centres of population and “of production and distribution, either of finished goods imported from the continent or of goods manufactured in the town itself or its hinterland” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). Residences and commercial premises were generally combined in the strip-buildings that characterized this phase of Romano-British town development (*ibid.*). However, from the middle of the second century, a new settlement pattern began to emerge: the large stone-built town houses which were the residences of the elite became common and eventually dominant (Millet 1990: 107; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64).

Though these British administrative towns are frequently referred to as the “large” towns, the term is relative and not entirely accurate⁷⁸. They were much smaller than the great cities of the Roman Empire or even than many smaller cities in other provinces. The majority of the British towns had a population of only 3,000-5,000; the largest ones might have reached 15,000, except for London, which may have had a population of around 50,000 at its peak (Potter and Johns 1992: 68; Perring 1991: 16, 70). The city of Rome had a population of around one million, while cities such as Carthage, Alexandria, and Ephesus were in the some hundred thousands range; on the other hand, even the capital of Caesarea Mauretania in north-western Africa, Iol Caesarea, had about 20,000 residents (ibid., 66).

Types of “Large” (or Administrative) Towns

There were three categories of “large” or administrative towns: *coloniae*, *municipia*, and *civitas* capitals⁷⁹. Each type included not just the town itself but also the *territorium* surrounding it; they were considered as one unit (Salway 1993: 416). The primary distinction between the *coloniae/municipia* and the *civitas* capitals was that, for the former two, “all, or most, of their governing class were Roman citizens” (ibid., 411). However, this latter difference became less important over the second century as increasing numbers of people gained citizenship, and vanished in AD 212 with Caracalla’s issuing of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, which bestowed Roman citizenship on practically all of the empire’s free inhabitants (ibid.).

In the first century, the imperial government founded three *coloniae* in the new province of *Britannia* to provide land for retiring legionaries, first in Colchester soon after the conquest, and then in Lincoln and Gloucester near the end of the century. In the early third century, the settlement outside the legionary fortress at York was “promoted” to the rank of *colonia* (Wacher 1995: 16-17). The citizens of a *colonia*, the highest status type of Roman town or city, would be considered Roman citizens (although there could also be other, non-citizen, inhabitants), and the town’s constitution was “based on that of Rome” (ibid., 17). They would have Roman rights and duties, and Roman law. Not long

⁷⁸ It is likely that some of the largest towns deemed “small” towns in Britain (such as Water Newton) were the same size as the smaller of the “large” towns.

⁷⁹ There were also provincial capitals – one during the first and second centuries, two in the third century, and four from the late third century – and a diocesan capital from the late third or early fourth century.

after the conquest, Verulamium was made a *municipium*, the second grade of Roman town or city; it was the only example of one known from Britain. A *municipium*'s citizens were given *ius Latii*, Latin rights, and could become Roman citizens through magisterial service (Salway 1990: 16). They had the duties expected of Roman citizens, but not all of the rights.

The third type of administrative town was the capital of a *civitas peregrina*, a non-citizen district in the province. It was largely formed, for the purpose of self-government, from a tribal grouping of late pre-Roman Iron Age origin, after the area had been released from military rule. The *civitas* capitals were established to serve as local administrative centres working within the framework of the province (Wacher 1995: 20, 22-23). "Each would have been formed by agreement reached between the leaders of the community and the government. In this way the constitution and administration of the *civitas* would have been regulated", and its rights and duties established (ibid., 22-23). In contrast with *municipia*, Roman citizenship was not earned through serving as a magistrate in a *civitas* capital (Salway 1990: 16). There are known to have been at least fourteen *civitas* capitals, with three other possible ones.

The Twenty Known "Large" (Administrative) Towns

Callewa Atrebatum (Silchester) – a *civitas* capital

Colonia Claudia Victricensis Camulodunensium (Colchester) – a *colonia*

Corinium Dobunorum (Cirencester) - a *civitas* capital and capital of the province of *Britannia Prima* from the late third century

Colonia (Domitiana) Lindensium (Lincoln) – a *colonia* and capital of the province of *Flavia Caesariensis* from the late third century

Colonia Nervia Glevensium (Gloucester) – a *colonia*

Durnovaria (Durotrigum) (Dorchester) – a *civitas* capital

Durnovernum Cantiacorum (Canterbury) – a *civitas* capital

Eburacum (York) – a *colonia*, capital of the province *Britannia Inferior* in the third century, and of *Britannia Secunda* from the later third

Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter) – a *civitas* capital

Isurium Brigantum (Aldborough) – a *civitas* capital

Londinium (Augusta for part or most of the fourth century) (London) – capital of the province of *Britannia* in the first and second centuries, of *Britannia Superior* in the third century, and of *Maxima Caesariensis* from the late third century, and of the diocese of *Britannia* from

the late third or early fourth century

Moridunum (Demetarum) (Carmarthen) – a *civitas* capital
 Noviomagus Reg(i)norum (Chichester) – a *civitas* capital
 Petuaria (Parisiorum) (Brough-on-Humber) – a *civitas* capital
 Ratae Corieltavorum (Leicester) – a *civitas* capital
 Venta Belgarum (Winchester) – a *civitas* capital
 Venta Icenorum (Caistor-by-Norwich) – a *civitas* capital
 Venta Silurum (Caerwent) – a *civitas* capital
 Verulamium (St Albans) – a *municipium*
 Viroconium Cornoviorum (Wroxeter) – a *civitas* capital
 (Millett 1990: 70; Wachter 1995: 21)

The Possible *Civitas* Capitals

Caesaromagus (Chelmsford) – may have been a failed *civitas* capital of the Trinovantes
 Lindinis Durotrigum (Ilchester) – may have become a *civitas* capital after a possible splitting off
 of the northern territory of the *civitas* of the Durotriges
 Luguvalium Carvetiorum (Carlisle) – may have been the capital of a late-starting *civitas*
 Carvetiorum
 (Millett 1990: 70; Wachter 1995: 21)

Administration of the “Large” Towns

The “large” towns were run by a Romanized governing class, the *curiales*, drawn from landowners of the tribal aristocracy⁸⁰ of the town’s territory and veterans and their descendants in the *coloniae* (Wachter 1995: 23; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 13). The towns were administered by a combination of a town council modelled after the Roman Senate, the *ordo* (also known as the *curia*, from the council chamber where the members met), and magistrates. The *ordo* was supposed to consist of one hundred councillors or *decuriones* (decurions), though it may sometimes have fallen short of this number (Salway 1990: 17; 1993: 411). The council was concerned with “administrative and fiscal matters” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 13), and especially with the collection of both local and national taxes (Salway 1993: 412-413).

These towns also had at least four magistrates chosen by the *ordo*, two senior and two junior (Salway 1993: 412). The two senior officials were the *duoviri iure dicundo*.

⁸⁰ It is not clear whether this means that the tribal governing class was altered by Romanization.

They presided over minor criminal and civil cases in the local court⁸¹, as well as chairing the council's meetings. They were also involved with "supervision of the imperial cult, public ceremonies, the local militia and supervision of the junior officers" (Wacher 1995: 36). The junior officers were the *aediles*, who were concerned with the maintenance of public buildings and of public services such as the water supply system, sewers, and streets (ibid., 38). *Coloniae* and *municipia* might have two additional magistrates, *quaestores*, who were treasurers (ibid.). In the second century, a new category of magistrate was added, the *curator rei publicae*; initially an occasional post, it became regular by the third century. The curator was initially appointed by the emperor but was locally chosen from the time of Diocletian. The position was concerned especially with financial affairs, but by the fourth century, *curatores* were chairing council meetings, and "the decurions now had to refer all matters relating to public works and buildings to the *curator* before decisions could be reached" (Wacher 1995: 40).

"Small" Towns

There were other nucleated settlements of varying sizes that do not qualify as "large" towns and were apparently not administrative centres. They are, for convenience, lumped together as "small" towns (Millett 1990: 144; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). About eighty sites fall into this category (Potter and Johns 1992: 75). They range in size from agricultural settlements to much larger urban centres such as *Durobrivae* (Water Newton). Most were located along the road system and focused on commercial activities like the production and selling of goods (Millett 1990: 144; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64).

Unlike the administrative towns, these were not formally planned urban centres (Millett 1990: 145; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). They had no formal street grid, but had built up "along the main roads and at road junctions" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). They also lacked the set of public buildings found at the administrative towns, though they might have a *mansio* (inn) and a few temples (Millett 1990: 144-145; Potter and Johns 1992: 75). Also largely absent were the large town houses characteristic of the administrative centres from the mid second century; a "small" town might contain a very few, but no more (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64; Millett 1990: 145). The main building type

⁸¹ More serious cases were sent to the provincial governor's assize courts to be tried (Wacher 1995: 36).

in these settlements was the long rectangular strip-building, employed as shop, workshop, and residence⁸² (Potter and Johns 1992: 75; Millett 1990: 145; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 66).

Public Buildings

The Forum-Basilica Complex

The forum-basilica complex was an administrative town's civic centre. Located on a central *insula* where main streets intersected, its function was "to act as a centre of local government, administration, trade, and commercial activity", as well as serving as "an important expression of civic pride and display" (de la Bédoyère 2001: 86).

The **forum** itself was a large courtyard surfaced with brick, cobbles, or flagstones. This courtyard was left as an open square or rectangle, surrounded along three sides by a (possibly covered) stone portico (Carver 1987: 27; de la Bédoyère 2001: 93). Rooms opened onto the portico which could be used as government offices, shrines, or rented as shops. Space in the court or portico could also be used for the setting up of temporary stalls (Wacher 1995: 63). The basilica occupied the fourth side of the forum courtyard. A forum might also have temples built into it (Carver 1987: 29). The forum was the focus for most of the traders in the town; it was not just used by residents of the town, but also by "country people from the surrounding area who came in to buy and sell goods" (Potter and Johns 1992: 101).

The **basilica** was a huge hall and normally was the largest structure in the town (Carver 1987: 29). Its shape was a long rectangle, and frequently there would be an apse located at one or two ends. There was a central nave, with two side aisles set off from it by columns (Potter and Johns 1992: 100; de la Bédoyère 2001: 90). There would have been a row of rooms on the side of the basilica that faced away from the forum. Some of these would have been used as municipal offices and record rooms. The largest of the rooms was probably the *curia*, the room where the *ordo* met, and a room centrally located may have been a shrine to an important local deity and held imperial statues as well (Wacher 1995: 42; Carver 1987: 29). The hall of the basilica "would ... have been used for public meetings and assemblies and also as a gathering place for litigants and

⁸² See p.133 for a more detailed discussion of this utilitarian yet Romanized building type.

witnesses waiting for cases to be heard”, for the basilica was a law court in addition (Wacher 1995: 42). Magistrates could hear cases at the tribunal located at the end of the nave (*ibid.*).

Public Baths Complex

A town’s public baths, or *thermae*, were among the buildings that most especially “symbolized the adoption of the Roman way of life” (Potter and Johns 1992: 101). A visit to the baths was not just a matter of hygiene and cleanliness, but also an opportunity to engage in sports and fitness activities, relax and receive a massage, and to socialize (*ibid.*; Carver 1987: 29). The baths “were important enough to civic morale to attract public money for their elaborate construction and considerable running costs” Potter and Johns 1992: 101).

Most of the Romano-British public baths buildings were probably large, highly decorated, vaulted structures (de la Bédoyère 2001: 107; Rook 1992: 21). “The degree of luxury provided in baths in the provinces is a measure of the Romanization of their users” (Rook 1992: 21). Although the British baths complexes had differing layouts from town to town, they all followed a basic sequence of room types: cold, warm, and hot (Rook 1992: 22-23).

The *frigidarium* was the unheated or cold room. It was also used as the changing room, unless the establishment had a separate changing room (*apodyterium*). The main purpose of the room was to cool down after leaving the hot room. This was done slowly, or through the use of a small cold bath (*puteus* or *baptisterium*) which was only one metre across and 0.7 metre deep. The bather would stand or sit on a step while water was poured on him or her. The *frigidarium* might also contain a large pool (*piscina* or *natatio*) in which bathers could immerse themselves or swim (Rook 1992: 23).

After changing, the bather proceeded into the *tepidarium* or warm (*ca.* 40 degrees Celsius) room. This “served as an intermediate acclimatizing room”, and the bather would be oiled here before moving to the next room (Rook 1992: 23-24). This would be the *caldarium* or hot (and humid) room. It was kept so hot that the floors and walls could not be touched, and wooden-soled sandals had to be worn for protection. There, the bather would have the oil scraped off by means of a strigil, and then could enter the hot bath (*ibid.*, 24-25) Sometimes a baths complex also included a hot dry room called the

laconicum, with a hotter temperature than that of the *caldarium*, in which the bather would sweat. The bathing cycle ended with a return to the *frigidarium* to cool down (ibid., 25).

The baths were heated using a hypocaust system, one meter below a suspended floor, under which the heated air could pass (Rook 192: 10, 22, 29). The suspended floors were held up by one meter high *pilae*, short columns made from *tegulae* (tiles) (ibid., 29-30).

Latrines, “a series of perforated seats directly over an open gully”, might be attached to the baths, in which case waste water from the baths would probably have been employed to flush them out (Rook 1992: 33). A further component of the baths complex was the *palaestra* or exercise yard, which, in a Mediterranean climate, had traditionally been open to the air. In Britain, from the second century, it was constructed as a basilica-like covered hall (de la Bédoyère 2001: 105; Rook 1992: 25).

Temples and Churches

The classical Roman temple was typically a “building set on a high rectangular podium, its columned entrance reached by a flight of stairs, and behind this, the enclosed *cella*, the room which contained the cult statue of the deity”; the walls of the *cella* might be decorated with engaged half-columns (Potter and Johns 1992: 107). The temple would be set within a paved sacred precinct, the *temenos* (ibid.). However, Roman Britain had few examples of temples built in this classical style, a notable exception being the large temple to the deified emperor Claudius in Colchester (ibid., 107-108; Carver 1987: 30).

What was fairly prolific, however, was the Romano-Celtic form of temple, found not just in Britain but in other north-western provinces in the Roman Empire (Salway 1993: 491; Potter and Johns 1992: 107-108). The Romano-Celtic temple had a “general plan” of two concentric polygons or squares. The inner section was the *cella*, the outer a walkway (Potter and Johns 1992: 108; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 119; Salway 1993: 491). It is generally thought that the *cella* rose above a lower roofed walkway or ambulatory (Potter and Johns 1992: 109). In the simplest variations of the temple, the walkway was absent (Salway 1993: 491). Like the classical temples, the Romano-Celtic version was located within its *temenos* or precinct (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 119; Salway 1993: 422).

Also similar to the classical temples was the *cella* where the image of the deity was kept. The *cella* was fairly small, intended only to hold the statue and priests, not for additional worshippers. Most of the temples did have space in the open *temenos* for crowds on festival days (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 119). For both classical and Romano-Celtic temples, “[p]ublic ceremony and public worship were almost always concentrated on the altar of the god in the forecourt or enclosure of the temple in the open air” (Salway 1993: 492).

Early Christian churches (prior to the early fourth century) did not have a particular architectural form; homes of the faithful may have often served to accommodate the worshippers. But after that time, once churches could legally and openly be constructed, their numbers grew. The form used was not that of the pagan temple but of the basilica. This was not merely because the temples represented a “tradition felt to be evil”, but because a building type was needed that could hold a sizable congregation inside it (Potter and Johns 1992: 109).

Theatre

Theatres were closely associated with pagan religious ceremonies and temples. Most of the known theatres in Roman Britain were associated with or connected to a temple (Millet 1990: 105; de la Bédoyère 2001: 103). Myths were re-enacted in the theatres, and they were used for religious festivals (de la Bédoyère 2001: 103).

Almost all of the very small number of theatres in Roman Britain follow the traditional Roman form of theatre building: “a semi-circular auditorium [and orchestra] facing a stage”, as opposed to the circular Greek style (de la Bédoyère 2001: 103); Potter and Johns 1992: 105). The Roman stage was “larger and more elaborate than that of a Greek theatre: behind it was an imposing architectural backdrop with columns and niches” (Potter and Johns 1992: 105).

Amphitheatre

A much more common and apparently popular place to find entertainment than the theatres in Roman Britain was the amphitheatre (Salway 1993: 415). “In British towns the amphitheatre was the principal place of entertainment” (Wacher 1995: 49). It is worth noting that those found in Britain are much smaller than many of the examples known from the western part of the empire (Potter and Johns 1992: 106), but as the

British towns are themselves mostly smaller in size, larger amphitheatres were probably not needed.

Nevertheless, they were sufficiently large that most in Britain were built on the town's periphery and ended up beyond the town walls. Some of these amphitheatres were, and remained as, "simple earth bank construction with the banks and entrances revetted with wooden walls" (Wacher 1995: 49). In others masonry later replaced the wood. Seating in the amphitheatre was planks which the banks around the arena supported (*ibid.*).

Amphitheatres are most commonly associated with gladiatorial contests and wild animal shows (Potter and Johns 1992: 106; Carver 1987:30; Salway 1993: 415). De la Bédoyère (2001: 99) points out that "they were probably just as important as centres of public ritual and ceremony where the whole community could witness the display." However, there is very little evidence for what sort of activities were actually held in them in Roman Britain, and none at all for any equipment related to gladiatorial or other types of games found linked to a British amphitheatre (*ibid.*, 102). Gladiatorial games and animal shows were extremely expensive (Salway 1993: 415), and for this reason may have been fairly rare in Roman Britain. "The audiences would most likely have had to be content with bear-baiting and cheaper shows", such as criminals "condemned to death '*ad bestias*'" (Wacher 1995: 55).

Other Types of Public Buildings

A separate market-hall, a *macellum*, has been found in a few towns in Britain (de la Bédoyère 2001: 94). This tends to be similar in shape to a basilical hall, but much smaller and lacking a tribunal. Shops could be rented within the hall, and there may also have been space there for temporary stalls (Wacher 1995: 63, 66).

Another type of public building is the *mansio*, and is found in "small" towns, as well as on the boundaries of a few larger ones. These may have an appearance similar to that of a villa, but lack the features that would represent a display of status. These *mansiones* were inns, run largely for the benefit of the *cursus publicus*, the imperial post (Millet 1990: 145).

A final category of structure may be a public or private building, depending on the owner. Structures that appear to be granaries or store-buildings have been found in

some of the towns, attached to town houses located or on their own. Crops would be brought into the towns for tax collection, to directly pay a tax in kind, or to sell for coin with which to pay the tax. These crops, once in the towns, needed to be stored somewhere. The granaries or store-buildings may have been holding quantities of these crops for government officials, or alternatively for the merchants who purchased bulk commodities for gold to resell at profit (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 73-74).

Public Services and Infrastructure

In addition to building and maintaining public buildings, a Roman town (or specifically its council and magistrates) provided a number of public services, including the maintenance of the streets, waste disposal, sewers and drainage, and especially the water supply (Arnold 1984: 38; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 72).

“Many towns had an engineered water supply” (Salway 1993: 414). Public baths required a large quantity of running water, so when baths were constructed, it was likely that an aqueduct would be as well, if that had not previously been done. Although aqueducts are only known at a few of the Romano-British towns, the existence at a number of others is suspected, due to the discovery within the towns of distribution pipes (Wacher 1995: 46).

In addition to serving the public baths, the water supply might go to other parts of the town, such as fountains or public water tanks in the streets. If there was enough flow, individuals could also arrange to receive water for a fee (Wacher 1995: 46; Salway 1993: 414). Excess water was probably used to flush the sewers, which are themselves found in towns with a water supply – likewise, their presence implies that the town would probably have had such a supply (Salway 1993: 414; Wacher 1995: 46). People could also supplement the water supply with water from wells (Wacher 1995: 46).

Cemeteries

Places for the disposal of deceased residents were also an important component of towns. However, “[u]nder Roman law it was illegal to bury the dead within a town” (Salway 1993: 511). This law does not seem to have applied to the burial of infants, as their remains have been found within urban settlements. Cemeteries were therefore located beyond town walls, along the main roads heading away from the town (ibid.). The Roman tradition of cremation of the body was the main burial rite followed in

Roman Britain in the first and second centuries (ibid., 510). During the third, it was gradually replaced by inhumation, burial of the body intact, until, by the end of the century, the majority of burials were inhumations (ibid.; Perring 1991: 121). Inhumation remained the primary rite in the fourth and into the fifth centuries (Salway 1993: 510). Another element of Romano-British burial tradition was the practice of depositing grave-goods along with the deceased, in order to “help the soul on its journey to the otherworld, to comfort the dead in the grave, or as a mark of respect and adornment for the corpse at burial” (ibid.).

The burial practices associated with the British administrative towns changed in the early fourth century, when large new cemeteries were created outside several of the towns. The numbers of dead buried in these appears to have been great, based on the hundreds found in the small excavated samples. “In comparison with the known areas of second-century burials at all these towns, the fourth-century cemeteries are extensive” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 80). But the size of the cemeteries may not accurately reflect the population size of the towns (ibid.). The continuing use of cremation in the third century may give the impression that the cemeteries were smaller prior to the fourth century as inhumed bodies take up more space (Perring 1991: 122). Furthermore, “[t]he later city may have been more important as a place of ceremony than as a place of residence; it is not impossible that the city funerals became important social occasions, and men who had lived much of their lives in the countryside could have been brought to town for burial” (ibid., 123). Perring is speaking largely of London, but it is possible that this could apply to other towns also.

These new extensive cemeteries were part of the fourth-century phenomenon of the “managed cemetery” (Philpott 1991: 226). Such a cemetery was ordered with the graves in rows that had been carefully oriented, usually east-west, with the inhumed bodies extended, normally in coffins and with few or no grave goods. The new graves were carefully placed to avoid intersecting older ones (ibid., 26, 226).

The appearance of these practices was in the past interpreted as indicating the spread of Christianity, but that is no longer seen to be necessarily the case. An east-west alignment could be Christian, or could indicate followers of a sun god such as the unconquered sun (*Sol Invictus*), or could indicate the use of the sunrise for orientation, which was important to avoid disturbing the previous graves. Burials in a cemetery could

also have been oriented to nearby buildings and enclosures with that alignment (Ottoway 1992: 106; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 125). Inhumation was also used by Christians, but certainly no guarantee of Christianity. “While there is no doubt that pagan funerary fashion was moving in the direction of inhumation elsewhere in the Roman world, concurrently with the rise of Christianity, it was already well established in Britain as part of this general trend before the Christian religion had any real hold here” (Salway 1993: 510). Finally, while the occurrence of grave-goods was less common in the fourth century, they did not completely disappear during that time (ibid.). A pagan burial did not necessarily have grave-goods (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 125), and their absence could be simply due to poverty or unavailability of goods. “[T]he earlier cemeteries of this type develop[ed] in the first decades of the fourth century”, soon after the end of the Great Persecution, before Christianity would have been able to exert a great influence on burial practice in general (Philpott 1991: 227).

Philpott (1991: 227) argues that “managed cemeteries” began to be developed and used in the early fourth century as a planned solution to the problem of finding new places outside the towns for interring the dead, in a time when increased organization and management of many aspects of society was becoming the norm in the Roman Empire. The above noted practices were adopted as part of the process of standardization of the burial rite. There is a certain “homogeneity” in these cemeteries not seen prior to this time (ibid., 26). The burials were “organized for efficient use in plots and rows which points ... to a degree of bureaucratic control over the position and layout of graves” (ibid., 227). Moreover,

[t]he chronology would fit with the major reorganization of the provinces of Britain under Diocletian and Constantine I which resulted in the creation of a large administrative machinery ... and it may indicate that from the early fourth century local government exercised closer control over the provision, organization and access to cemeteries than it had previously (ibid.).

Urban Defences

Most of the Romano-British towns were not fortified in the first century. The original three *coloniae* were able to make use of the defences of the legionary fortresses from which they had grown, and the *municipium* at Verulamium and possibly two *civitas* capitals, Winchester and Chichester, had received earthworks by late in the century (Wacher 1995: 71). However after the middle of the second century, many towns would

receive defensive circuits made of earthen banks with timber or stone gates and towers (Millett 1990: 137; Wachter 1995: 71). It was not just “large” towns, but also many “small” ones that were provided with earthwork defenses in the second century (Wachter 1995: 71).

There has been no consensus as to whether these walls “resulted from the initiative of the civic authorities in Britain”, or “of the central authorities of the empire, either in anticipation of ..., or in response to, a military emergency” (Millett 1990: 137); or even as to the dates of the walls. “The difficulties of interpretation are compounded by the notorious job of dating urban defences in Britain where no inscriptions relating to them have survived” (Wachter 1995: 71). Millett (1990: 139) favours local initiative, as the British urban defences are earlier and larger than those built on the continent, despite the fact that the towns in the latter were under threat from external attack and those in Britain were probably not. Moreover, there appears to have been a rather “random chronological and spatial distribution” of town walls in Britain that makes little sense: “the major centres, like London, were not fully defended ... until long after many insignificant roadside settlements ...; and a town vulnerable to coastal incursions like Canterbury remained undefended until the end of the third century” (ibid.). Millett suggests that the motivation was “civic pride” and inter-town competition, and that the inspiration was from the tradition of using earthen ramparts, often much larger than needed, to enhance a settlement’s status in the late pre-Roman Iron Age (ibid.).

The next phase of fortification of Britain’s administrative towns ensued in the third century. Towns which had not previously been walled, as well as those which had already been provided with earthworks, acquired stone curtain walls. The process seems to have begun early in the third century, and continued intermittently over the next five decades; by the arrival of the fourth century, all of the “large” towns had permanent fortifications of some sort (Wachter 1995: 75; Millett 1990: 137). The new defences included a stone wall from over one metre to over three metres thick, “backed by a solid bank of earth which usually, but not always, incorporated any pre-existing earthworks” (Wachter 1995: 75). The rampart was from *ca.* four to six metres up to twelve metres plus in width. One or two ditches (sometimes more) in front of the wall completed the defences. In addition, some of the towns had “square interval towers ... attached to the inner face of the wall” (ibid.). The wall circuits continued to enclose very large areas,

inefficient if their purpose was for defence, and much more than could have been needed for expansion, especially as construction had slowed in the third century (Millett 1990: 140; Wachter 1995: 81).

The stone circuits were further modified in many of the administrative towns around the middle of the fourth century, when external towers (or “bastions”) were added, causing the ditch systems to have to be altered as well (Millett 1990: 137, 140-141). It was once believed that the external towers were the work of Count Theodosius during the restoration of Britain’s defences in the late 360s, after the “barbarian invasion” of 367, based on the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus (28.2 and 28.7) though Ammianus does not talk about the town walls (Millett 1990: 141). Some of the towers, such as those at Cirencester, have been dated to a time too early to be associated with Count Theodosius; *ca.* 350 is probably closer to the date of the construction of many (though perhaps not all) of them (Wachter 1995: 78; Millett 1990: 141). Not all the administrative towns received the towers and though Cirencester was given them around the whole wall circuit, others appear to have them only in certain areas of the walls (Wachter 1995: 78).

It is not clear exactly how the bastions were intended to be used, although they may have “enabled a smaller garrison to defend a city using long-range weapons (bows, slings and catapults) for enfilading fire” (Millett 1990: 141). Wachter (1995: 78) points out however, that nothing is really known about how the walls were manned. The presence of the towers may have been more symbolic than practical: they may have been there more to give the impression of impregnability, in order to deter possible attack. “[A]s such they were status indicators” (Millett 1990: 140-141). London had bastions on the east wall only, where they could be seen by arrivals from the continent travelling towards it on the Thames. Millett suggests that these new symbols of the strength and power of the government may have been constructed on the orders of the provincial governors, rather than on municipal initiative (*ibid.*).

Whatever their purpose, the defences must have been a very great expense for the towns and the provincial governors. The costs of the initial construction of the stone walls must have been significant, as would have been the later modifications. In addition, ongoing wall maintenance “would have caused a considerable drain on the resources” of the towns (Wachter 1995: 81).

Private Urban Buildings

There were two main types of private buildings in Romano-British towns, the strip-building and the town house. There were also “very simple” rectangular buildings which contained evidence such as ovens, hearths, and slag that indicated their use by artisans (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 75). What have not been found so far are indications that the British towns contained any of the four or five storey apartment blocks known from Roman towns such as Ostia (Potter and Johns 1992: 111).

Strip-Buildings

The role of the early towns in the late first to early second centuries as centres of population, production, and trade can be seen in the primary type of structure at this time: the strip-building. This was built of timber and clay and had a long rectangular shape. The short end faced the street, and the different rooms opened off of each other (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64, 75; Millett 1990: 107). The front area on the street may have been the shop, where goods were displayed and sold. The manufacturing facilities, indicated by evidence such as ovens and hearth bases, are found further in the back of the building. The craftsmen and family probably also lived in rear rooms, or in an upper storey, if there was one. “At the ‘small’ towns there is nowhere else where the inhabitants of the town could reasonable have lived” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 75, 78). The early “large” towns had very few alternatives either. This Romanized but utilitarian style of building is found only in urban areas of Roman Britain and does not occur in rural sites (Millett 1990: 107; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 75).

In the first and second centuries, the strip-buildings demonstrate the “commercial character” of the “large” towns, “with the impression of economic vitality given up by their close spacing and in some cases their relatively long plots perpendicular to the street...., which imply that frontage space was at a premium” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 78). During that period, this type of “unpretentious” building was predominant and the presence of large numbers of them, “closely packed” together, indicates the presence of vibrant urban and commercial centres (Millett 1990: 107; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 78).

Town Houses

The character of the administrative towns was changed when large stone or stone-founded residences with no obvious commercial function, and that “displayed a desire for

spacious and comfortable living”, began to be built, particularly from the mid second century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). Evidence suggests that up till this point, the landowning class had been still living in the countryside, for the most part (Millett 1990: 107). The growing presence of the town houses indicates a move by the elites into the towns (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 64). The inhabitants of a town house most likely included its owner, his family, and their servants, and may have housed them seasonally while the owner was involved in municipal concerns and urban social life. It is possible that the “large” towns were not fully occupied over the whole year (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 78, 80).

These sizable dwellings might have one or more corridors “so that the rooms need no longer be intercommunicating”, they might in some cases have an upper storey, there could be projecting wings or even a “completely enclosed central courtyard” (Potter and Johns 1992: 111). The interiors of these houses were decorated with Mediterranean-style wall-paintings and mosaics, and gardens might also be classically inspired (*ibid.*).

From the mid-second century, and particularly in the third and into the fourth centuries, the towns changed. The functional timber strip-buildings of the artisans were disappearing and these large stone houses and the grounds surrounding them took their place. The significance of this loss of the strip-buildings is the “shift in the productive economic basis that had been present” in the towns earlier (Millett 1990: 134-135). The new character of the “large” towns was predominantly residential without much evidence for the continuing of industry. “The major towns show a population who are spending money on themselves and not visibly creating it through trade and manufacture” (*ibid.*, 135).

Building Decoration as a Statement of Roman Values

Romanized wall-plaster and flooring were significant elements of decoration in the towns, not only in wealthy town houses, but also in public buildings, and even, in the most basic forms of decoration, in strip-buildings. These types of decorative enhancement of buildings served as “expressions of Roman aesthetic values” (Potter and Johns 1992: 119).

Painted wall plaster was much more common than mosaic floors and found in many residences and other types of buildings. It was a completely classical approach to

decoration that was not found in Britain prior to the arrival of the Romans, after which it became widespread. The craftsmen who created them used the “true fresco” approach of painting the pigment onto freshly applied plaster (Potter and Johns 1992: 112). Native British elements were not used in the design; these instead included such elements as geometric patterns; architectural motifs; leaf, floral, animal, and bird motifs; theatrical motifs such as masks; and scenes of landscapes or mythological shapes (ibid., 113).

Roman forms of flooring were “expressive of civilized life throughout the Roman Empire” (Potter and Johns 1992: 113). This did not just include intricately patterned mosaics, but also simple surfaces of concrete, stone, or tile. There were plain tessellated floors, made from one colour of mosaic cubes, as well as floors of *opus signinum* made from crushed brick in mortar. Patterned mosaics represented the most luxurious and expensive type of flooring, and served as a powerful statement of “*romanitas*”, through both its luxury and its subject matter (ibid., 116). As late as the fourth century, mosaics used classical themes and motifs. This sort of decoration was used by home owners “to emphasize their pretensions as persons of culture steeped in the traditional mythology and literature of the Mediterranean world” (ibid.).

A Typical Romano-British Administrative Town at Four Different Points in Time

Mid Second Century

A typical administrative town in the mid second century might have an earthen bank defensive circuit, but for most these had not yet been constructed. It would have had a street grid. At the centre of this, on the main street through town, would have been its civic centre, the forum-basilica complex. It is probable that there would also have been a public baths complex in a central area of the town. The town might additionally have had a *macellum*, though many did not. The town would likely have had a number of temples, mainly of the Romano-Celtic variety, though there might also be a classical temple in the central area. The town might possibly have had a theatre, though most did not. It is more likely there would instead have been an amphitheatre on the outskirts of the town. The outskirts might also have contained a *mansio*. London would in addition

have had a *praetorium*, a governor's palace, in a central area, as well as a larger number of monuments and perhaps arches than would be found in a typical town.

The town's main roads would have been lined with the strip-buildings that served as its commercial properties, shops, and homes. This development would probably have extended into lesser streets in the town, and out into the suburbs, where there would be areas of industry and production as well as more residences. By this time there would have been a modest number of town-houses located away from the main roads. The dead were interred in cremation cemeteries outside of the area of habitation, along the main roads leading to the town; those of wealthier residents might be in tombs.

Early Fourth Century

The typical administrative town of this period would still be recognizable as a Roman urban centre, though it was beginning to exhibit significant changes: it would now have a defensive circuit, probably of masonry. The town might well have still had an intact and functional forum-basilica, but it is possible that it would have already gone out of use or been converted to another purpose. If it still had a functioning complex, it might recently have undergone repairs and refurbishment. The three new provincial capitals added in the third century probably received *praetoria* for their governors, though there is not conclusive evidence, and a grand villa near the town might have been used instead. The town's public baths might still be in use, but were likely beginning to deteriorate and could well have been in poor condition, though some received repairs at this time. If the town had a *macellum*, it was probably still in operation. By this time some of the temples had gone out of use, but some would still have been functioning. If there was a theatre it might still be operational, but an amphitheatre would have been abandoned by now or in the very near future.

A lot of the town's commercial area was gone or relegated to the suburbs, though there were still strip-buildings along the main roads. However, in some towns the suburbs themselves were shrunken or even abandoned. Some towns might have other areas of abandonment, but there was not a lot at this point. Much of the town was now filled with large town houses within sizable properties, resulting in a lower population density that would have been with closely-packed strip-buildings. Outside of the towns there were now large, highly organized inhumation cemeteries.

It appears that most roads and sewers were still being maintained and areas of the town probably kept clear of rubbish, though standards may not have quite been at the level they once were. Accumulations of dark earth may have been beginning to appear in the areas where there was abandonment or disuse of buildings.

Late Fourth Century

The typical British administrative town was now becoming visibly transformed and starting to lose some of its characteristics as an urban centre in the classical mould. There was a good chance that its walls had been recently improved and repaired, with the addition of external towers. The forum-basilica complex however, was most likely disused for its original purpose by this time, though it may possibly have been converted to another use, particularly metal-working. The public baths were also probably non-operational, though they too might have been reused as workshops or for squatter occupation. Most of the temples had been closed or demolished, and the theatres out of use. A basilical-style church might have been erected in the central area of town, or possibly near an extramural cemetery, though there is very little evidence for this in any of the towns. The town could now have one or more buildings that were built or reused as granaries or store-buildings for other commodities, or it might have recently created large open floor areas with evidence of discarded animal bones from butchery.

Numbers of town houses were beginning to go out of use – abandoned, demolished or exhibiting signs of degraded or squatter occupation; the same appears also true of the strip-buildings. But there is evidence of lower-status forms of occupation, in the form of small, poor quality structures. Suburbs that had remained occupied might by now have been abandoned. The roads were now in a much poorer state of maintenance. The town might even have buildings that had been allowed to encroach onto the streets, in some cases blocking them. The sewers might have been in need of repair, and even have become blocked and caused flooding. Refuse was beginning to collect in the streets, in ditches, at the sides of roads, and starting to pile up in abandoned public or private buildings. Dark earth was more noticeably accumulating in areas of abandonment, in and around disused buildings, and over disused streets. Outside of the town, the cemeteries were still in use, but becoming disorganized and poorly managed, with intersection of earlier graves and careless burials.

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The town would no longer be recognizable as an urban centre. No further public building work would have been occurring, other than perhaps the demolition of certain buildings to salvage construction materials. There was also no further building of houses being carried out, except possibly some minimal construction of very low quality housing such as rough huts. Occasionally these might be constructed on the surfaces of former roads which provided a stable surface and safer environment than the surrounding decaying buildings. Public buildings and properties were probably all out of use, though within them there might still be some squatter occupation or possibly a low level of use as workshops. The roads and sewers were no longer being maintained, the latter implying that the water supply was not cared for either. Larger quantities of black earth would have been building up throughout the town.

The majority of townhouses and strip-buildings had been abandoned. It is possible that occupation continued in a very few for a short while, but not for much beyond this date. Such minimal continuing occupation as would be occurring would probably have been mainly in the lower-status huts. The very few town houses still in use might well have been the residence of the strong-man, war-leader, or landowner dominating the region; other buildings could have accommodated his associates or retainers. The large extra-mural cemeteries would by now have been largely out of use, though a few further burials without coffins might have been included. Burials might, however, have been appearing within the walls of the town, in former streets or disused buildings. The town might even have had the beginning of an intra-mural cemetery, most probably in the area where the forum-basilica had been. A church might also have continued in use or possibly even been constructed since the end of Roman rule, but this is very uncertain. It is possible that the town retained some sort of significance as a symbolic or religious centre in the sub-Roman period. It would, however, have no longer had the appearance or function of an urban centre.

The Historical, Political, Economic, and Social Background to Change and Decline in the British Towns

In order to fully comprehend the changes and decline that were occurring in the towns of Roman Britain, particularly in their public buildings and infrastructure (as will be demonstrated through the use of archaeological evidence in the following chapters), some further background information will be necessary. Central to what happened to the public towns and services is the question of the financing of their construction and maintenance. The main figures involved in paying for these were the decurions, in addition to other members of the elite. The upper class's ability and willingness to continue to pay for the urban infrastructure will be discussed at length, and the political and economic factors which affected this will be considered, as will the changes over time in the class's attitudes and values. Changes in the elites' financial means and concerns, caused to a large degree by imperial demands and developments, played a major role in the deterioration of the urban public buildings and services.

Financing of the Urban Public Buildings and Municipal Services

Generally, the Roman imperial government did not pay for the construction and maintenance of urban public buildings or for municipal services in the towns. These were provided out of the towns' income and by wealthy individual benefactors (Faulkner 2000: 63; Jones 1964: 737; Duncan-Jones 1985: 31). The bulk of this expenditure came from town funds. The towns derived income from a number of sources: municipal dues and taxes on such things as money-changing and trade, rents and other funds coming in from municipal property or land that a town owned, the *summa honoraria* (a payment which would be made by town magistrates upon assumption of office), fees for entry to the council paid by new town councillors, and *munera* (also known as liturgies), which were expected "gifts" of the town councillors that benefitted the town (Mackreth 1987: 139; Duncan-Jones 1985: 29). The *summa honoraria* was an especially important source of income for many towns, and was frequently spent on public buildings (Duncan-Jones 1985: 29).

Private benefactors were also a major source of funding for public buildings and monuments, in many cases likely spurred on by the desire to add to their social "standing and popularity (... *fama*)" (Faulkner 2000: 63). This was particularly the case in the early

empire. However, there appears, based on the evidence of inscriptions from urban centres in other parts of the empire, such as North Africa, to have been a significant decrease in contributions from private donors by the early third century (Duncan-Jones 1985: 31). It is possible that in some areas, such as Britain, private sponsorship may have been dropping off even sooner, in the later second century.

The responsibility for town buildings and services was primarily that of the town, especially its councillors, who bore “the brunt of the financial burdens of the imperial administration” (Garnsey 1974: 229). This came largely in the form of the *munera* or liturgies paid for or carried out by the town councillors. These included such things as embassies, duty as judge of lawsuits or advocate of the city, preservation of public order, repair of buildings, construction or repair of roads, heating of baths, provision of animals for transport, the sheltering and equipping of troops (ibid., 236 n. 25).

Towns were also responsible for paying the wages of municipal employees (Duncan-Jones 1985: 30). As noted, *munera* were primarily the concern of town councillors, but others perceived to have sufficient wealth were also “eligible” to perform them (Garnsey 1974; 236). Clearly the continued functioning and maintenance of public buildings and services in the towns and cities of the Roman Empire was dependent on the continuance of the urban centres’ own resources and most particularly on the continued prosperity and cooperation of its upper classes.

Decurions and the Curial Class

The *curiales* were the property-owning class from which the members of the *curia* (the town council) and magistrates would be drawn. To qualify for appointment to the *curia*, an individual had to possess property of a certain value or greater. However, not all curials possessed equal wealth: some were quite affluent, while others had just barely enough to qualify for curial status. Decurions (*decuriones*) were those individuals actually appointed as town councillors (de Ste. Croix 1981: 466-467).

At first, it was seen as an honour to be a decurion. “Roman society ... awarded recognition and status not so much to those who amassed wealth as to those who dispensed it in lavish public service. ... The measure of a man was not wealth as such, but the weight of his influence (*auctoritas*) in public affairs (*negotium*)” (Faulkner 2000: 76). To serve as a councillor or magistrate in a town was a way for a member of the elite to improve his status as well as to use it (ibid.). Beginning in the early second century, there

were legal privileges attached to holding curial status, so it was something that qualified individuals would attempt to attain (de Ste. Croix 1981: 466-467). This included protection from punishments which by this time had become acceptable to inflict upon lower class citizens (*humiliores*), such as flogging and torture. The upper classes (*honestiores*), however, would receive lighter punishments (ibid., 458-458, 462). Thus it was desirable to establish oneself clearly as part of that upper class. “In the early Empire service in the local council was both voluntary and sought-after” (Garnsey 1974: 229). Members of the British elite would have been eager and willing to hold these positions and to make the associated contributions to the development and maintenance of the urban centres.

The Provision of Romanized Public Buildings for the British Administrative Towns

The primary era for construction of public buildings in Britain was from about AD 75 to 150. During this period, the towns provided themselves with a set of Romanized structures for civic administrative and legal matters, for religious and ceremonial needs, for trading, selling and shopping, and for purposes of relaxation and entertainment. Equally significant is that these were also built for “the display of status” and “the enjoyment of *Romanitas*” (Faulkner 2000: 29). These buildings were largely financed through the towns’ own funds, and through the *munera* of their decurions and of private donors.

But it appears that the building programmes in many towns in the early empire (not just in Britain) were excessive and overly ambitious:

In the prosperous days of the Principate the cities had indulged in an orgy of building, and had equipped themselves with monumental temples, theatres, amphitheatres, stadia, circuses, baths, markets, colonnaded streets, triumphal arches, aqueducts and ornamental fountains, often on a scale exceeding their real needs (Jones 1964: 736).

Verulamium is one British town that can be pointed to as an example of an urban centre that was provided with a set of extremely lavish and expensive public buildings that greatly exceeded its needs and probably its means. “The public buildings were overblown, their cost disproportionate, and the waste prodigious” (Faulkner 2000: 31-32). In London there is another example of urban architectural excess in Roman Britain. The construction of the town’s initial forum-basilica (in the last quarter of the first century AD) had not long been completed, when work on a new one of massive scale

began in the early second century. The second basilica would be vastly bigger and grander, but in the end it was either not fully completed or utilised. “It was waste expenditure on a colossal scale; a duplication of facilities which strained resources” (ibid., 33). London’s elite had provided the town with a civic centre that was larger than it needed and apparently more costly than it could afford, yet it served them as “an architectural display of grandeur, power and *Romanitas*” (ibid., 78).

This excessive provision of urban public buildings was motivated by upper class rivalries and competition, combined with the need of individuals to achieve greater status and promote themselves within the Roman system that was now imposed on them. Both towns and individuals were likely trying to outdo each other with an even more magnificent and impressive display of Romanized architecture (Faulkner 2000: 33). These monuments also served as a powerful statement of status and dominance over other groups within the society. The native aristocracy was using Romanized public architecture as a means for expressing these things and for establishing their place in the new order and newly Romanizing society of Britain (ibid., 33-34).

The Decline of Town Councils and Decurions in the Later Roman Empire

The Second Century

The position of the decurion began to transform by the later second century, from an honorary and voluntary role to one becoming a burden, especially on the poorer members of the curial order, and increasingly compulsory. The roots of these changes are visible by the earlier second century. There is evidence from this time that men who had voluntarily agreed to take on a liturgy would not be permitted by the emperors to back out (Garnsey 1974: 239). It also appears that an entry-fee for town councillors began to be required in the early second century, probably due to the growth of public building programmes at this time; it would have provided an additional source for funding them. But this entry fee was now in addition to the costs of magistracies, *munera*, and any modest private donations that decurions would already have had to bear. It was starting to become more of a financial burden to be a decurion before the middle of the second century (ibid., 240).

The result of the increased financial burdens and pressure on the decurions was growing apparent in the later second century. There is a reference from a rescript of the

joint emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus to men who were in debt “as a result of the performance of some administrative office” (Garnsey 1974: 233). Another of their rescripts refers to “those who perform a magistracy unwillingly” (ibid.). In a further rescript, the divide between wealthier and less advantaged decurions can be seen. The rich would insist upon the poorer council members holding office because they were supposedly qualified, even though they lacked the financial means for the office. This was further contributing to the impoverishment of the poorer decurions (ibid., 234). “There were members of the Council who simply could not afford to hold a magistracy or perform a liturgy when their turn came to do so” (ibid., 235). But there was no legal way out of liturgies for decurions, except through illness (ibid., 236). It would seem that by the later part of the second century, segments of the propertied elite were already under financial strain, a small number at least to the point of debt or ruin, and that municipal service was beginning to change from an honour into a compulsory burden.

The Third Century

During the reign of the Severan dynasty at the end of the second century and first part of the third, “compulsion was more and more stringently applied to the curial class” (de Ste. Croix 1981: 470). Both personal service and works requiring financial expense were “demanded” from decurions and magistrates (ibid.). There is a reference in a ruling by Septimius Severus to men holding office against their will, as well as references to town councillors’ sons being “nominated” to join the *curia*, to hold magistracies, or to perform liturgies, contrary to what their fathers wanted.⁸³ The order was moving closer to becoming hereditary and compulsory (Garnsey 1974: 229). The consequence of this pressure on the curial order, mounting from the mid second century, now manifested as a significant decrease in voluntary civic spending, such as on public buildings, by “public-spirited (or ambitious and self-advertising) men” (de Ste. Croix 1981: 470). The curial order seemed to be transforming into a class before the mid third century, through this pressure on those of the right financial status to become decurions, and apparently few were able to avoid it (ibid., 467).

⁸³ This would be opposed to the Roman tradition of *patria potestas*, the father’s power over his son.

The Fourth Century

“By the fourth century, if not late third century, ... because of the mounting cost of government, external interference in city administration, and a decline in local prosperity,” holding local office “had lost its appeal [B]y the fourth century it was compulsory, to be evaded if at all possible” (Garnsey 1974: 229). The wealthiest decurions on the fourth century were better positioned to flee the curial order up into “the imperial *honorati*”, or to use bribery or influence to get a place in the imperial civil service, which would give them immunity from civic obligations. But the result was an even heavier load on the remaining decurions of the town, bringing some to ruin and debt, or to lose their property (de Ste Croix. 1981: 471).

A large segment of the Theodosian Code deals with matters pertaining to the decurions, with laws dating from the reign of Constantine in the first part of the fourth century, up to AD 438. The laws particularly address the imperial concern that decurions were finding ways to avoid carrying out their curial duties, by such means as becoming clergy in the church, or joining the army or some part of the imperial civil service. Some were attaining higher rank, or posts which gave them the immunity they desired. The laws were intended to stop this flight from the curial order, but the fact that many similar laws had to be issued repeatedly over this time span demonstrates that the laws were not effective. What they do illustrate is “the extent to which the richer members of the order were able to escape from their obligations to their *curia*”, and how desperately the emperors were trying to stop them (de Ste Croix. 1981: 472).

Furthermore, a privileged inner circle was developing among the *curiales* in the fourth century. Such groups may have existed earlier, but in this century they began to obtain legal recognition and corresponding privileges, particularly connected with the *principales*, who had become the “leading decurions” (de Ste. Croix 1981: 472). Under Valentinian in the later 360s and 370s, distinctions within the curial ranks began to appear in the laws from the Theodosian Code. The *principales* now had “privileges and functions which set them apart from the mere decurion” (Norman 1958: 83). Prior to this, these distinctions were probably already present in practice, though not in law. Although the government was not yet making it legal, by 328 the *principales* had already managed to take over aspects of municipal administration that should have been the domain of the *curia* as a group (ibid.).

From Valentinian's time, the *principales* of the decurions seem to have been determined to increase their privileges and their control of the *curia*. In the later fourth-century city of Antioch, and perhaps in town councils elsewhere, such as in Britain, the "rapacity of the wealthier and more influential *principales* was increasingly directed against the poorer decurions for their own gains" (Norman 1958: 84). It appears that *principales* in various parts of the empire were able to employ their superior position and greater influence to obtain "a monopoly" over what should have been the privileges and concerns of the entire curial order. A *principalis* could now have the right to decide who would have to carry out which *munera* and other municipal duties, while being able to avoid shouldering the financial burden of any himself. Lower level decurions now had all the burden of tax collections, along with the risks associated with any potential shortfall (*ibid.*).

Responsibility for tax collection was a particularly onerous curial burden. If the required amount could not be collected, the councillor was personally responsible for making up the difference which could be taken through "direct levies" on his own estates (Faulkner 2000: 77). This is a prime reason why many decurions were desperate to get out of the curial order, even if the bribe to acquire higher rank or a position bringing immunity cost them a large part of their property. This was done not simple to obtain the "prestige" associated with a higher rank, but motivated by the need "to obtain personal security against the maltreatment which in the fourth century was increasingly meted out to curials by provincial governors and other imperial officials" (de Ste. Croix 1981: 472).

According to laws of the Theodosian Code issued up to the middle of the fourth century, all decurions still had immunity from being flogged. But by 376, imperial constitutions not only permitted flogging of decurions but also the use of "the *plumbata*, the leaded scourge", except for the ten leading decurions of a council (the *decemprimi*). Laws issued in 380 and 381 made it illegal again to use the *plumbata* on a decurion, but an imperial constitution of 387 allowed its use on all decurions, including the *principalis*, "in fiscal cases" (likely related to tax collection) (de Ste. Croix 1981: 472). Apparently floggings in the fourth century could be sufficiently severe as to cause death, even when the *plumbata* was not used. This seems likely to have been the main reason in the late fourth century why decurions were so anxious to get out of the curial order, regardless of the great cost to do so (*ibid.*, 472-473).

The result of this was the emptying of the numbers of the town councillors (de Ste. Croix 1981: 473). At the time of Constantius II in the mid fourth century, curial rank had become an honour only for the rich, but “slavery” for the poorer curials. But by the reign of Theodosius late in the century, “to perform the liturgies [was] sheer ruination” and people were desperately trying to get out (Norman 1958: 84). If the situation for the curial order across the wider empire is an indication of what could have been happening in Roman Britain, it is no wonder that the public buildings and infrastructure in many of the towns were in poor condition by the end of the fourth century. The remaining active decurions would clearly have had other priorities.

The Involvement of Governors in Public Buildings

In the fourth century, provincial governors played a major role in the public works of towns, one that increased as the century progressed. This is indicated by fourth-century laws and particularly by a significant quantity of epigraphic evidence from the eastern provinces, as well as Africa (Lewin 2001: 32-33, 35-36). The governors’ total control over public buildings is visible in the inscriptions by the time of the last decade of Constantine I’s reign; the evidence indicates that by the time his son Constantius II was in power, *vicarii* also had “attained control over the expenditures of city councils” (ibid.).

Lewin argues that this new municipal role for the governors “may have contributed further to the decline of the *curiales* as a class” (2001: 36). Governors’ interference in the public works programmes likely blocked the *curiales*’ development into a “local ruling class” that could effectively run the towns (ibid.). It also appears to have led to a further decline of the voluntary patronage of municipal projects by wealthy citizens (ibid.).

Although there is a lack of relevant inscriptions from Britain, it is probable that this increased involvement of governors played a major role in the course that its administrative towns took in the fourth century. During this time, the provincial capitals appear to have likely received much greater funding, resulting in more building and renovations than is apparent in the other towns. There is legal evidence that indicates that certain urban centres in the empire could be, and were, favoured over others within their province. A law of 365 indicates that some governors were having columns, marble and other items of art or architecture transferred from smaller cities to more important

centres. In 374 another law “authorized” the “transfer of public building material” from one urban centre to another, though this was supposedly intended to help poorer cities (Lewin 2001: 35). However, a law issued in 390 enabled the siphoning of funds for public buildings from lesser urban centres to the major towns or cities of a province (ibid.). These changes collectively would have helped to establish the provincial capitals as centres of much more importance and significance, visually and symbolically, as well as administratively, than the other “large” towns. They would also have helped to ensure the grandeur and maintenance of these capitals closer to the end of Roman rule in Britain than appears to have been the case for other towns.

Imperial Finances and Policies Affecting the Towns

The higher, and continually rising operating costs of the Roman Empire, due to expensive wars, expansion and pay increases of the army, and in the fourth century an expansion of the imperial administration, led the imperial government to enact policies that would prove harmful to the health of its towns, particularly as it affected those elites who were responsible for the costs of maintaining the public buildings and services. During the last century and a half of Roman occupation, Britain was under the rule of breakaway empires and usurpers on multiple occasions. This undoubtedly caused disruption and changes to the functioning of the Romano-British economy, and thus to the state of the towns. Despite what appears to have been a partial comeback in at least some sectors in the very late third and early fourth century, the overall result appears to have been a downward economic slide for Britain, particularly for its administrative towns and its urban elites. This, and the latter’s loss of commitment to the traditional Roman system, is reflected in the decay and abandonment of parts of the towns in the final decades of Roman rule.

The Second Century

The Roman Empire’s money problems may have begun in the later second century. Marcus Aurelius’ wars against the Parthians and the invading barbarian tribes in the 160s and 170s were very costly for the empire, and may well have contributed to the increased pressure that was exerted on the decurions at this time. Suddenly the emperors needed more money than what had been coming in. Apparently after the reigns of Marcus and his son Commodus, only a very small fraction remained (approximately

0.003%) of the huge surplus that had been left in the treasury after Antoninus Pius' reign. The need for more funds did not change after Commodus' reign, as this was followed by civil wars (de Ste. Croix 1941: 486).

The Third Century

In the early third century, under the Severans, military costs were increasing, due to an expansion of the size of the army by around ten percent, and a raise in its pay (de Ste. Croix 1981: 491; Faulkner 2000: 75). But the state was no longer acquiring much plunder from expanding territory with which to subsidize its military endeavours, so it had to devise new methods of extracting - or saving - wealth. One means was through Caracalla's extension of Roman citizenship to all residents of the empire, to increase the numbers paying taxes only levied on citizens; other taxes were increased as well. Another was to save money through the minting of new silver coinage, the double *denarius*, with a reduced silver content (Faulkner 2000: 75). This led to progressive debasing of Rome's silver coinage by emperors over the course of the third century, likely to offset the costs of the ongoing crisis. There was increasing chaos due to wars with external enemies as well as internal disruptions and usurpations, and so "military expenditures ... were heavy and rising" (ibid, 81). By the middle of the century, the coins had fallen to a silver content of only one-third (de la Bédoyère 1999: 24).

Although the worst of the third-century crisis does not seem to have reached Britain, it was probably still greatly affected by the financial problems. Britain was not simply having to cope with the issue of "deteriorating coinage" but also a "shortfall in supply" (de la Bédoyère 1999: 24). This was especially the case in the first part of the century. The numbers of coin finds from this period are low, which may be due to a drop in supply. Finds evidence, especially from third-century hoards, suggests that the problem was acute enough that Britons in some cases were having to make use of much older coins, some from the first century AD (ibid.).

From AD 259-274 Britain was part of the breakaway Gallic Empire, which provided the British provinces with a "miserably degenerate coinage" that would be the main form of money the Britons would have to use up to 286. The poor quality of these coins led to mounting inflation: "As the intrinsic value of each coin issue declined, so more and more of the silver-washed bronze radiate coins were required to pay for

anything” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 25). And prices would have risen further to compensate for the low value (ibid.). This pattern of third-century inflation “destroyed the value of fixed incomes” (Mackreth 1987: 139). These problems may well have contributed to the neglect becoming visible in some of the urban public buildings at this time. To make up for the coin shortages and probably to enable commercial coin transactions to continue in Britain, unofficial copies – the “barbarous radiates” – were produced in large numbers (or perhaps they were semi-official, as some copying seems to have been done at public buildings) (de la Bédoyère 1999: 25).

From 286-296 Britain was again part of a breakaway empire, this time that of the usurpers Carausius and Allectus. By this point, little in the way of bullion coinage was being issued by the Roman state, and Britain was largely still having to use the coinage of the Gallic Empire and the radiate copies (de la Bédoyère 1999: 32). Fortunately for Britain, Carausius set out to repair the currency and inflation problems. He “used his control of the British mines to stop the export of bullion from the region and to create a reformed high-standard coinage (in contrast to the debased and inflationary issues of the central empire)” (Faulkner 2000: 93). Carausius’ silver coins were ninety percent pure, the highest standard for silver coins in more than two hundred years (de la Bédoyère 1999: 33). This no doubt provided Britons with some financial reprieve, and there does seem to have been some new domestic construction in the towns and a growth in the number of villas beginning around this time. However, as Carausius’ territory was cut off from access to supplies from much of the empire outside of Britain and part of Gaul, it is hard to imagine that there could have been much easing of the relentless extraction of wealth and resources.

The Fourth Century

On the return of Britain to the rest of the Roman Empire, after the defeat of Carausius’ successor Allectus in 296, it became part of Diocletian’s reorganization of the empire, which included yet another expansion of the army as well as of the imperial administration, and, of course, of the costs associated. Britain was divided from two provinces into a diocese of four, with, no doubt, an accompanying increase of the bureaucracy, and a diocesan capital and imperial administrative departments at London. To aid in financing this larger government and military, “[t]axation and its ruthless

exaction in coin and kind, was essential” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 57). Beginning particularly in the reign of Diocletian, the Roman imperial system had “vast requirements” to ensure that all essential areas of the system continued to function properly (ibid., 58). This left less in the provinces and in the towns for the maintenance of anything non-essential.

From the later third and early fourth centuries, a large portion of taxes was being collected in kind, because of the variability of prices and of the value of money. This appears to have continued to a substantial degree through the fourth century.

The logistics [of collecting tax in kind] were a nightmare: the variety of goods in which taxes were levied, the need to check both quantity and quality when they were paid, and the sheer bulk of material needing to be transported and stored necessitated a huge interlocking mechanism of officials, clerks, police, drivers, warehousemen, dockers and boatmen. (Faulkner 2000: 112)

This must have resulted in enormous additional costs, requiring even greater taxation.

The “potential for corruption was astronomical”, for the collection of taxes both in kind and in coin in this system, at various levels of the administration, on down to the landlords collecting from tenants (de la Bédoyère 1999: 58). This vast potential for extortion would have further increased the burden and strain on the people of the empire (de Ste. Croix 1981: 492). Taxes were no longer fixed but variable, with the variation in a continually upward direction. During the reign of Constantine, between AD 324 and 326 the amount of taxation is thought to have doubled (ibid.). Constantine also further increased the size of the army, thus needing an even greater and more thorough extraction of resources to pay for it (ibid., 491).

Constantine brought in a new tax which directly affected the towns, the *collatio lustralis*. This was a tax on *negotiatores*, which, for the purposes of this tax, were considered to be those selling something to the public: “not only traders but urban craftsmen who sold their own products, fishermen, moneylenders, brothel-keepers and prostitutes” (de Ste. Croix 1981: 493). Apparently this tax created severe hardships for some of the townspeople and drove some to terrible lengths to raise the money to pay it (ibid., 272).

A decision made by Constantine late in his reign, which would have greatly impacted the towns’ ability to maintain their public buildings and services, was to seize the taxes, dues (such as customs), and rents collected by the towns (Mackreth 1987: 138; Jones 1964: 110, 737). He also confiscated the treasures and estates of the temples, the

latter of which (at least for the urban temples) were up till then probably under town management (Mackreth 1987: 138). Constantius II later took this annexing of town income a step further by taking away estates that the towns had owned (Jones 1964: 415). “The confiscations of the civic lands and taxes certainly put an intolerable strain on the decurions and resulted in a disastrous neglect of public works” (ibid., 737). They left the towns and their decurions “impoverished”, especially as the decurions would be responsible for covering “the deficit in public revenues” (ibid., 110).

Julian in the early 360s returned some of the seized assets to the towns and the temples, but when Valentinian and Valens came to power, they were confiscated once more (Jones 1964: 415). Apparently the towns and their buildings deteriorated to such a poor condition that Valentinian and Valens decided to allow one-third of the municipal taxes and rents to remain with the urban centres (ibid., 736-737). But too much damage may have already been done as far as many towns were concerned (Mackreth 1987: 138).

Britain in the fourth century seems to have once more faced shortages of currency, from perhaps the middle of the century onwards. There was a reforming of the silver-washed bronze coinage by Constans and Constantius II in AD 348, but few of these turn up as finds in Britain. Possibly only “limited supplies” of these coins had been sent (de la Bédoyère 1999: 139). Between 350 and 353 Britain was part of yet another rebellion, as the usurper Magnentius had seized the western provinces of the empire. Magnentius put out coins similar to the silver-washed bronze issues of 348, but it is likely that, after he was defeated in 353, his coins were demonetized and recalled. “This would explain their scarcity and the outburst of Romano-British copying of some of the reformed coins of Constantius II and Constans” (ibid.). The AD 348 type had officially been brought back after Magnentius’ defeat, perhaps for the propaganda message of its legend: “The restoration of happy times” (ibid.). But huge quantities of copies of these coins were produced and used in Britain. They were made between 353 and 364, with production stopping around the time that Valentinian came to the throne (Millet 1990: 226; de la Bédoyère 1999: 139). It is thought that the copies were “produced by state servants in the province[s] when official coinage failed to arrive” (Millet 1990: 226). The vast amount of copying does suggest that there must still have been “coin-based trading” in Britain in the mid fourth century, and therefore a certain amount of economic activity continuing (de la Bédoyère 1999: 139).

Taxation probably continued to increase in the late fourth century. The emperors needed more money to rebuild the army after huge losses of Roman soldiers and sometimes equipment in battles of the second half of the century. These losses started as early as the middle of the century, with the extremely bloody battle at Mursa in 351 between Constantius II and Magnentius, and Julian's Persian expedition in 363. The latter "involved perhaps the largest army ever assembled by a Roman emperor for a campaign across the frontier", and the quantity of soldiers and equipment lost would have been "catastrophic" (de Ste. Croix 1981: 490). From the mid fourth century there were the ongoing costs of fighting back the barbarian invasions on the continent, and further terrible Roman military losses continued later in the century. In the 378 defeat of Valens by the Goths at Adrianople, a large part of the Roman army was lost. After the death of Valentinian II in 393, Britain was again under the rule of a usurper, as the Western Empire had been seized by Eugenius and his general Abrogast. The battle between their forces and those of the ruler of the Eastern Empire, Theodosius, at the Frigidus River in 394, resulted in a further great depletion of the forces of both the eastern and western parts of the empire.

After each of these losses, the pressure of taxation and attempts to extract resources from the provinces must surely have increased, to finance the rebuilding and retraining of the military. In addition, "internal stresses [were] brought about by the fundamental shortage of resources in relation to state expenditure, with a consequent heavy burden on a small number of tax-payers" (Millett 1990: 213). These problems must have been exacerbated in Britain, suffering as it did the additional disruption caused by having been in territory under the rule of usurpers multiple times during the final sixty years of the Roman occupation of the island. As well as those already mentioned, there were two revolts that actually began in Britain, the usurpation of Magnus Maximus in 383-388, and the final usurpation for Britain, that of Constantius III in 407-411 (possibly only lasting to about 409 in Britain). Not only must these rebellions have seriously affected the coin supply, but the usurpers would have needed money and resources to pay and support their military and administration, with a smaller population and restricted portion of the empire from which to draw these resources. This can only have increased the demands of taxation and requisition upon the people of Britain and on those remaining decurions who bore the responsibility for collection.

There is known to have been an acute coin shortage from about 378 to 388 in Britain (Millett 1990: 219). “This time the shortfall was not made good by prolific copying”, though making copies had been the usual answer in Britain to low coin supply since the mid third century (de la Bédoyère 1999: 146). This suggests that during the period since the last major bout of copying in the 350s to mid-360s, money may have become less important for Britons (ibid., 147). Some new supplies arrived after the 388 defeat of Magnus Maximus, but not in quantities even close to those sent earlier in the century. This reduction in supply seems to have led “to a steep decline in low-value cash transactions”, and a drop in demand for coins of lower denominations (ibid.). The smaller number of coin finds and lack of late fourth-century copies could indicate that the Romano-British economy was faltering, perhaps even stumbling (Potter and Johns 1992: 213).

The final low-value (bronze) coins to be shipped to Britain were issues minted between 395 and 402, and these not in large numbers (Millett 1990: 219; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 138-139). No further low-value coinage was sent after that; the bronze coins issued in 404 are not found in Britain, and it seems that Constantine III did not find it necessary to mint any (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 139). This suggests that perhaps the army and imperial administration in Britain were not being paid, at least not in coin (de la Bédoyère 1999: 167). The older bronze coins remaining in Britain may have continued to circulate at least to the end of the occupation, but probably not beyond *ca.* 420 (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 141). As in the late fourth century, there does not appear to have been any copying of bronze coins in the early fifth century to make up for the scarcity (Millett 1990: 226). The latest silver and gold coins to reach Britain were issues from the first decade of the fifth century of Honorius, Arcadius, and Constantine III (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 136). These more valuable coins may also have been arriving in small numbers, even in the late fourth century (Potter and Johns 1992: 213).

The end of the official coin supply provides “[o]ne of the few explicit manifestations of the Roman Empire severing official links with Britain”, and removing from it the protection of (or exploitation by) the Roman army (de la Bédoyère 1999: 153). With the end of Roman coinage and of the presence of the military which that indicates, and the accompanying loss of the taxation/revenue cycle, and of a state-subsidised means

of long-distance transport for goods, the collapse of the Romanized economy in Britain likely soon followed (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 138-141).

Since we know that bullion coinage was principally for the payment of state debts and the bronze was minted and supplied to claw bullion back from circulation ..., we must assume that the final end of bronze coinage and the failure to produce copies indicates the end of this system. (Millett 1990: 226)

This must have signalled the end for the British towns as Roman administrative and economic centres, and led to their depopulation and ultimate abandonment in the first part of the fifth century.

The Romano-British Aristocracy: Changing Attitudes and Values

The Romanization of the British aristocracy, a taking on of elements associated with *Romanitas*, initially provided its members with a means of setting themselves apart from the ordinary people. It was “an active ingredient used by [the elites] to assert, project and maintain their social status” (Millett 1990: 212). To acquire and keep their “social dominance”, they allied themselves to and associated themselves with the power, authority, and status of the Roman Empire. And “as *Romanitas* permeated the whole of society, its different forms and expressions became key to an understanding of the power structures within the province as the aristocracy indulged in various forms of display through their art, buildings and manners” (ibid.).

One of the prime means for the Romano-British elite of expressing *Romanitas* and thus power and status in the first seventy-five to one hundred years of Roman rule was through the provision of monumental Roman-style public buildings for their towns, and in the honour of contributing to civic life in the traditional Roman way. But once civic duty began to become more of a financial burden and less of an honour in the later half of the second century, as shown above, the elites turned their focus somewhat away from public expenditure.

After *ca.* 150, the construction of public buildings in the British towns slowed, coming almost to a halt by the early third century (Faulkner 2000: 63, 77). A different type of building, the substantial town houses of the upper class, began increasingly to be erected in the larger urban centres, particularly between *ca.* 150-225, though their construction continued into the fourth century (ibid., 70). These houses were modelled after Romanized types of architecture with winged-corridor or courtyard-house styles,

and used Mediterranean forms of decoration such as painted wall plaster and mosaic floors (Mattingly 2006: 339). The focus of the aristocracy appears to have now turned more to a personal display of status and power through private/domestic Roman architecture, rather than through contributing to civic architecture and town services. “The ostentatious public display of the second century memorialised in great buildings had given way to the private consumption of wealth” (Esmonde Cleary 1993: 11).

As the third century progressed, and civic duties became a greater burden and fewer surplus resources were available for their performance, the Romano-British elites began to lose their “enthusiasm for urbanism” (Faulkner 2000: 78). It appears that in the later third century those elites who were able to do so began to retreat onto their estates in the countryside and to focus their resources on the construction of villas in Romanized architectural styles. The “villa owners went ... to considerable lengths to display their wealth and sophistication” (Potter and Johns 1992: 201-202). This was done through the size of the villa and its number of rooms (*ibid.*), and through displaying such symbols of Roman-style luxury and status as bath suites, and of course, the painted walls and mosaics. Many of the villas were of modest size, but a small number were of almost palatial size and grandeur. This trend towards villa construction and expansion continued from the late third on into the early fourth century, peaking around AD 325 (Faulkner 2000: 71), though the aristocracy seems to have been able to maintain this lifestyle until the middle of the century.

The growth of the villas seems to represent an elite turning away from urban life. During the period when many of these villas were being constructed or expanded, public buildings in the towns were becoming dilapidated and decayed, going out of use or converted to a different utilitarian purpose. There appears to have been “a sharp drop in private patronage” of public buildings by this time or even earlier (Potter and Johns 1992: 188). For much of the fourth century, it seems, a large part of the landed elite turned its back on Romanized urban life, though not, apparently, on more personal symbols of Romanized material culture.

But by *ca.* 375 the villas were in decline. No new villas were constructed after this point, and there were no significant expansions or renovations either. The main Romanized buildings on some villa estates started being abandoned in the later fourth century. Among some of those still occupied, there was a “decline in the standard of

upkeep of villa buildings”: fewer rooms in the buildings stayed in use, and some luxuriously decorated rooms were used for more utilitarian activities with hearths and dirt floors covering fine mosaics (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 134).

These changes may have been due to late fourth-century economic decline in Roman Britain and increased pressure from imperial taxation. The owners may no longer have been able to afford to keep the villas in their previous condition, or perhaps they were no longer able to find the urban-based specialist craftsmen required for carrying out villas repairs or upgrades, as the towns were emptying out. Some of the owners may have been in such straits that “utilitarian concerns had ousted those of leisure and taste” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 134). Another possible factor could be that the appeal of *Romanitas* was becoming worn thin by the excessive imperial requirements of the later fourth century. “It may be that the demands of maintaining the Roman state were overtaxing the resources of cooperation as much as of grain and corn, of the region” (ibid., 136). *Romanitas* may have also started to lose favour and currency with the British elites as the empire began to appear weaker, due to its inability to halt the continental barbarian incursions and to barbarian victories over Rome, such as at Adrianople. The Roman Empire may gradually have been disappearing as a symbol to emulate for the purpose of emphasizing one’s own status and power. The Roman administrative towns of Britain, which had previously served as such symbols, were gradually becoming irrelevant and unnecessary in this world beyond Rome.

Section Two: Public Buildings in Towns

Roman Britain's public buildings, though central to the traditional Romanized urban administrative centre, especially as seen in the second century AD, changed significantly in the later years of Roman occupation. As shown in the last segment, the primary responsibility for the construction and maintenance of urban public buildings was that of the town, its councillors (decurions), and other elite patrons. The spirit of communal and individual competition amongst the urban elites may have resulted in the creation of monumental civic buildings that exceeded the true needs of the towns and which may have been beyond their means to maintain. Combined with the onerous financial burdens which became compulsory for the shrinking and strained curial class, particularly its members' personal liability for the collection of the continually growing taxes, as well as a general apparent turning away of British elites from urban life, this seems to have led to the neglect of the public buildings.

Attitudes toward the structures seem to have changed: they no longer held the same importance, at least in their original forms. Few of the buildings received substantial renovations in the fourth century, even though the structures were badly aging, and very few new public buildings were constructed in the last century and a half of Roman rule (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 72; de la Bédoyère 1999: 65; Brooks 1986: 82). As the fourth century progressed, even the maintenance of these structures became minimal and then ceased (Brooks 1986: 83). Also common is the change in the use of public buildings from their original purpose. Some buildings were significantly altered for their new function, sometimes even before the structure had gone into serious decline. In particular, industrial activities were introduced into buildings previously intended for civic or leisure concerns. The altered status of the towns' public buildings implies that the towns themselves had greatly changed by the late Roman period and were continuing to be transformed in the fifth century. This chapter will examine changes in use and abandonment of the primary type of public building, the forum-basilica complex, in eight Romano-British towns: Wroxeter, Leicester, London, Exeter, Caerwent, Cirencester, Silchester, and Lincoln. Similar changes and abandonment will also be considered for buildings provided as public amenities for the towns. Much of the discussion will be

focused on the public baths complexes of several towns, but temples, theatres, and amphitheatres will also be included.

Civic Buildings

The Forum-Basilica Complex

A Romanized town's forum-basilica was originally its most important public building, as it was intended to provide a centre for government, administration, and legal matters, as well as a public market. Despite their central role in Roman administrative towns, such as the provincial capitals, *coloniae*, *municipia*, and *civitas* capitals, many of Britain's forum-basilica complexes did not remain in use for civic purposes to the end of the Roman occupation; a large number were thus lost during the late third to early fifth centuries. A few were badly damaged or destroyed in fires and not rebuilt. Some others were simply demolished, perhaps due to an end of their usefulness or to their dilapidated condition. Several, entirely or at least in part, ceased being used for their original administrative function and were converted for other purposes.

It was not uncommon for the forum-basilica to sustain damage from fires, which were a regular hazard in towns. In the late Roman period, however, these complexes were in some cases abandoned after serious fires and not replaced. **Wroxeter** provides an example of a forum-basilica that was abandoned after a fire. It was, in fact, destroyed twice by fires (Atkinson 1942: 104-105). From the coin evidence, the first time was in the third quarter of the second century; the complex was then rebuilt. It is hard to accurately date the second destruction. Found over debris left from the fire damage in the complex's east entrance were coins of Victorinus (late 260s), Tetricus I (early 270s), and counterfeit coins of *ca.* 260-290, none sealed by a later floor (ibid., 106-107). Atkinson (1942: 107) thought it likely therefore that the second fire was not long after 270, perhaps *ca.* 275. There is no evidence that there was any rebuilding after the second fire (Ellis 2000: 341; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 71). The material left from the destruction was not removed, merely covered in one place by rough flooring. This supports the theory that the forum-basilica area was abandoned and left in ruins (Ellis 2000: 345; Atkinson 1942: 106-107). It is possible that the town or its decurions did not have the resources to rebuild it, and that Wroxeter's other town elite, who might have assisted in the financing of a

rebuilding, now preferred to allocate their resources to more personal displays of wealth and status such as their town-houses and villas.

In **Leicester** there is another instance of a forum-basilica being abandoned after a serious fire, though this occurred a century later than the conflagration in Wroxeter. But by the time of Wroxeter's fire in the late third century, Leicester's complex was already poorly maintained and had lost its original function in part of the basilica. The east wing of Leicester's complex was in a deteriorating condition, with sections "falling down" and rubbish from the streets filling up the porticos and "accumulating in the courtyard" (Faulkner 2000: 21). At about this same time, the west wing of the basilica was turned over to industrial activity, with bronze being worked in Room 12 (Hebditch et al 1973: 41). It is possible that in late Roman Britain some of these complexes were no longer needed in the monumental size in which they had been constructed. Thus they may have ceased to be fully utilised for their original administrative purpose, as seems to be the case here. As these were public buildings, surplus areas could have been converted for alternative state uses, such as processing the metal which was one of the most important and imperially-controlled resources extracted from Britain. State employees or private contractors hired by the state could have been making some of the vast quantity of metal items needed for military supply. Alternatively, the metal-workers could have been tenants and the town renting out unused portions of public property to add to badly-needed municipal funds (Mattingly 2006: 337; Mackreth 1987: 139). This bronze-working may have been the cause of an initial fire in Leicester's forum-basilica, in the late third or early fourth century, which was responsible for the destruction of several rooms in the west wing (*ibid.*, 42).

Some attempt at recovery was made, with work being done on the complex in the early fourth century, but there is little evidence for the period up to the second fire. This blaze was more serious, destroying the town centre, including the forum-basilica and adjacent *macellum* (Wacher 1995: 362). A coin of Valens on the floor of Room 2 in the basilica provides a *terminus post quem* of AD 364 for the fire (Cooper and Buckley 2003: 40). A heavy layer of ash and building debris was found over the coin and in the north aisle; in this layer was pottery of the first half of the fourth century. Fire-related damage of a late date was also found in other rooms with fourth-century artefacts, and in the west

and south-west sections of the forum (Hebditch et al 1973: 42; Cooper and Buckley 2003: 40). In the *macellum*'s south-west corner were the remains of "collapsed roofing tile and burnt roof timbers" (Cooper and Buckley 2003: 40).

Much of the devastation seems to have been left as it fell. There does not appear to have been any attempt to clean up the debris or to rebuild other than some reflooring in Room 2 (Cooper and Buckley 2003: 40-41; Hebditch et al 1973: 42). The complex would seem "to have been damaged beyond repair" (Mattingly 2006: 336). It was abandoned and never replaced (Brooks 1986: 83). The town of Leicester and its local elite may by this point have had neither the funds nor the will to rebuild, due to the political troubles and upheavals of late fourth-century Britain, and to the economic slowdown of this period.

The deliberate demolition of a forum-basilica has also been recorded in Romano-British towns, such as the massive second-century complex from London, the capital of the diocese of Britain. **London**'s basilica also suffered from a serious fire in the third century which resulted in some roof collapse (Milne 1995: 81). However, part of the building did continue to be used in some way into the late third century (ibid.; Bringham 1990: 75; Bateman 1998: 51). An *opus signinum* floor was laid at this time in sections of the nave where the older flooring "had subsided" (Bringham 1990: 75).

Around the end of the third century, London's forum-basilica appears to have gone out of use. Layers of lighter and darker grey silts began to accumulate in the building and on the final street surface north of the basilica (Bringham 1990: 75, 92; Bateman 1998: 51 n. 14). In some rooms the silts were mixed with building debris, such as fragments of mortar and wall plaster. "The presence of the silts implies that both the building and the street were either no longer fully maintained or had been largely abandoned" (Bringham 1990: 75, 77). Finally, the roof of the basilica collapsed and the walls also began to do so, accompanied by the depositing of additional dark grey silt (ibid., 77). Apparently such a large civic centre was no longer necessary or relevant for London at this time, or had perhaps "been too large and too expensive to maintain" (Mattingly 2006: 337).

This was followed by the demolition of the basilica's superstructure and removal of most of the rubble for reuse elsewhere (Bringham 1990: 77). Some layers of roof tiles

and mortar have been found in the forum's east wing, apparently forgotten by the demolition workers who had removed them from the building (Ibid.). It appears that "most of the complex was deliberately dismantled, with the site carefully cleared, levelled and covered with dark grey silt in the early fourth century" (ibid., 79). The adjacent street and nearby buildings were then also abandoned and were deliberately or gradually covered with dark earth. The early fourth-century coins and pottery in the dark earth suggest that this occurred soon after the demolition (ibid., 82). "[T]he area was left as a wide, empty space" (Bateman 1998: 51). It is significant that London in the fourth century apparently did not have a forum-basilica complex. This was the largest and most important town in Britain, not only a provincial but also a diocesan capital, and headquarters of the Roman treasury and perhaps also military in Britain. Since London was the British centre for the imperial bureaucracy, it is hard to imagine that funds would not have been found to repair or rebuild this structure unless it was no longer of any importance to imperial or local administrative operations here. As law courts would still have been needed in the diocesan capital, they must have been transferred to some smaller facility in a different part of London (Mattingly 2006: 337).

The dismantling of **Exeter's** forum-basilica complex appears to have occurred later, closer to the end of the century. Substantial repair work was done on the complex in the fourth century; the final renovation involved the laying of a new floor in the basilica's south-west aisle (Bidwell et al 1979: 109; Wachter 1995: 342; Mattingly 2006: 337). A coin of Valens dated to 365-378 was found in the bedding for the floor, a late coin for a town with few extending to that date (Bidwell et al 1979: 109; Wachter 1995: 342).

Sometime after that floor was laid, probably in the late fourth or early fifth century, the structure was no longer needed by Exeter, or the expense and difficulty of continuing to repair it was too great. By this point, as the Roman towns of Britain appear to have been beginning to depopulate, workers skilled in Roman monumental construction and building decoration may have been becoming scarce. Moreover, the materials needed for repair may have now been harder to obtain as the Romano-British economy and trade networks were starting to break down. The entire basilica complex

was demolished and the building debris taken away (Bidwell et al 1979: 104, 110; Wachter 1995: 342).

Subsequent to the demolition, metal-working was done on the site of the former complex. Several pits and stake-holes were dug throughout the site, cutting into the later Roman levels. One large pit, of about three metres diameter, was dug more than two metres into the *curia*'s floor, through the rubble that filled what had been a hypocaust basement. The pit was backfilled with "lumps of burnt clay, charcoal, slag and bronze fragments, mixed with clay and mortar debris", and a piece of possible furnace-lining (Bidwell et al 1979: 111). The sides of the pit had been cut into to get clay from it. The pit was apparently being quarried for clay, which was most likely being used in metal-working "for crucibles and furnace-linings" (ibid.). The bronze-making debris in the pit lends support to this interpretation. Some broken tiles over burned clay near the pit might be left from a hearth (ibid., 110-111). These activities happened prior to *ca.* 450, when the site became a cemetery. This *terminus ante quem* is provided by the radiocarbon dating of three burials "laid out in a line which crosses the south-west nave wall" (ibid., 111). If the pits belong to the last decades of Roman rule in Britain, then the land that the forum-basilica had previously occupied was likely still public property. The bronze-working done on it may have been under state direction, or for municipal funds for rents, as was suggested above for Leicester. However, if the pits were from the early sub-Roman years, perhaps this work was an individual or private initiative to provide remaining inhabitants of the town with metal items no longer available through the trade networks, especially for this more distant and isolated area of the south-west.

Part of **Caerwent**'s forum-basilica complex was also turned over to metal-working, but in this case *prior* to its mid fourth-century demolition. There had been a substantial rebuilding of the basilica in the later third century, and it continued to be used for administrative purposes into the 330s or 340s (Arnold and Davies 2002: 56; Brewer 1997: 52). But its function changed after that. The nave and aisle spaces appear to have been altered for metal-working, with multiple hearths and furnaces constructed in these areas (Mattingly 2006: 336; Brewer 1997: 52). It is possible that this also was being done under state employ, to provide metal for military supply. Around the 360s, much of the basilica was deliberately and systematically dismantled and the area levelled, though

some rooms in the basilica's rear range and surrounding the forum may have been spared and kept in use into the late fourth century, as suggested by finds of coins of the 390s (Arnold and Davies 2002: 56; Brewer 1997: 52; Faulkner 2000: 127). As with some of the other towns' forum-basilica complexes, the structure may have become too dilapidated and repair too expensive or difficult. It may also have perhaps been unnecessary, if most of the building was no longer being used or needed.

Portions of the basilica at **Cirencester**, another provincial capital, were converted for metal-working as well in the fourth century. In the second half of the century, the basilica's portico was demolished and changes were made to offices in the basilica's rear range, altering them for metal-working (Holbrook 1998: 121). In the occupation deposit for this period, Room 3a produced some molten lead fragments. Lead fragments were found from a number of other contexts as well. This lead largely took the form of "solidified spillages of molten and the scrap offcuts of sheet metal". Therefore, these fragments could have resulted from the production and trimming of metal sheets for repairs to the basilica (ibid.).

But Room 2's metal-working, at least, - probably bronze-working - appears unconnected to possible renovations going on in the basilica, as the finds come from multiple floor surfaces. Furthermore, the final floor of Room 3/4 had an oven cut into it, likely after 388. The oven may have been used for small-scale bronze-working. This activity may have continued into the early fifth century, as the presence of coins of the House of Theodosius on these rooms' final floor levels could suggest (Holbrook 1998: 121). Again, it is possible that this was state use of part of Cirencester's basilica to contribute metal needed for military or other official uses.

The largest scale of late metal-working activity in a Romano-British public building comes from **Silchester's** basilica. The stone building was constructed in the early second century, but, by the second half of the third century, it was no longer used for civic administration and was transformed for metal-working (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 71). At that time, pits were dug in the floors which contained evidence of the working of copper alloy, pewter and iron (Fulford and Timby 2000: 72). This activity appears to have been carried out in the main hall (ibid., 577).

One pit contained a large piece from a bronze statue; in another was “a fragment of a limestone mould ... possibly for casting pewter” (Fulford and Timby 2000: 72). Pieces from similar stone moulds, found in late nineteenth-century excavations of the forum-basilica and nearby *insulae*, were probably from the metal-working being done in the basilica (ibid., 72, 577). Coins of the late 260s to early 270s were associated with these pits. Of the same period is an unstratified mould intended for “casting copies of a coin of Tetricus II” (AD 273-274), the mould itself made from a counterfeit (ibid., 72, 577-578). Seven other pits which produced coins dating to 270-280 contained slag for iron-smithing (ibid., 72).

Excavators found a black layer rich in charcoal in the basilica. This layer contained eighteen kilograms of iron slag. Coins found in the layer suggest that it probably began building up in the late third century. It seems that iron-working had begun in the basilica at that time, but it was the main form of industry carried out there in the fourth century. Within the pits was a total of “forty-two kilograms of forging slag” (Fulford and Timby 2000: 72). Excavators also discovered hearth bottoms in some of the pits, and pieces of hearth lining (ibid., 578).

The fourth-century iron-working was on a large scale. The earliest pit to contain a large amount of slag was dated to the mid to late 320s (Fulford and Timby 2000: 72-73). Eleven more pits were found with iron slag and fourth-century coins, going up to the 370s (ibid., 78). Twenty-eight additional pits contained forging slag but no evidence for dating (ibid., 73). The modern excavators think that iron-working was probably carried on from the late third century through the early fourth century, despite the lack of coin evidence, and that pits associated with the metal-working were being periodically dug through these decades (ibid.). The iron-working appears to have continued up to perhaps the beginning of the fourth quarter of the fourth century, based on the inclusion in pits with iron-working evidence, of coins of the House of Valentinian (364-375) (ibid., 578). The excavators believe that the evidence uncovered at Silchester’s basilica indicates that the metal-working was done “under provincial or diocesan control”, and they propose that the basilica was, in fact, being run as a “weapons factory” for the Roman state, though the presence of the coin mould would suggest that other types of items were manufactured here as well (ibid., 579-580).

A coin of the House of Theodosius from the 380s, found in a small pit or posthole in the basilica unconnected to evidence for metal-working, suggests that there may have been some sort of activity in the basilica up to the end of the Roman period (Fulford and Timby 2000: 78, 580). However, the building may have started having serious structural problems and decay around the 330s or later. Only part of the roof may have been repaired after the mid fourth century, and a large pile of broken tiles in the southern part of the basilica may have been left from a partial roof collapse in that area. A coin of 332-333 was found below this debris (ibid., 78). The robbing of stone from the building may have begun around the middle of the century, starting with the colonnade before the 360s, according to the coins (ibid., 581). Perhaps the metal-working came to an end when the building had become too dilapidated and dangerous, and none of Silchester's elites were able to afford the repairs or sufficiently interested in civic glory to carry them out.

Lincoln's forum-basilica complex was also in a state of decay in the mid fourth century. By this time the forum-basilica may have no longer been used as a civic building (Mackreth 1987: 139). The decay can be seen in a building in the forum's east range, Structure 2. The part of the building excavated consisted of several rooms, a portico and a well-head (Steane et al 2006: 144). By the middle of the fourth century, decay and/or abandonment can be seen in Rooms 2B, 2D, 2E and the portico 2C (ibid., 192). There appears to have been a decline in the maintenance of the area west of the well, which was "not kept clean in the later Roman period at a time when the floors were becoming worn and only rudimentary repairs were being carried out" (Jones and Gilmour 1980: 68). Part of Room 2A was reused and subdivided several times in the later part of the fourth century (Steane et al 2006: 188). However, by the end of the century Structure 2 had been at least partly demolished. "Over the ruined remains of Rooms 2A, 2B, 2D and 2E was a spread of debris ..., which probably extended over the portico area 2C"; "there was pitting, demolition debris and evidence for the robbing of Rooms 2A, 2B, 2D and 2E, associated with late fourth-century pottery" (ibid, 192, 272). This indicates the approximate date when the robbing occurred (ibid., 286). That Lincoln's forum-basilica appears to have been largely out of use in the fourth century, a time during which Lincoln was a not only a Roman *colonia* but also a provincial capital, suggests that major changes

must have taken place in both civic attitudes and the manner of carrying out administration.

The use of some other parts of the complex was winding down as well. The east-west road north of the basilica shows no signs of resurfacing or continued use in the later Roman period (Steane et al 2006: 272). There is equally little evidence to date use of the forum courtyard after the mid Roman period (*ibid.*, 144). However, two consecutive structures may represent a radically different use of the late forum courtyard. The dates are uncertain, but it is possible that these buildings were timber churches constructed in the fourth or fifth century (Jones 2002: 127). Slots for the timber Structure 3, possibly a small church, were cut into the surface of the forum. Structure 3 was cut into by what may be scaffolding postholes for the construction of Structure 4, an apsidal church also of timber slot construction. Structure 3 is thought to have been used as a church because of its east-west axis, and a “separate area to the east of it for a small altar” (Steane et al 2006: 153, 155). It also seems to have influenced the location of the later Structure 4, which is more certainly a church. Structure 3 appears to have been dismantled and replaced by Structure 4 (*ibid.*, 155).

A surface found may have been either that of Structure 4, or an earlier surface used as the floor of Structure 4, or simply the final forum surface (Steane et al 2006: 157). A Theodosian coin of AD 388-402 was associated with the surface (*ibid.*, 157, 186). If this were actually the floor of Structure 4, the coin could place this church (and Structure 3) in the late fourth or early fifth century. However, it may have been simply residual (*ibid.*, 157). Debris from metalworking was also found on this surface which, unless also residual, suggests the surface may be more likely to belong to the forum courtyard, near the church (*ibid.*, 186). A Saxon date for the churches is equally possible. Based on the stratigraphy, they could have been built between the date ranges of the late Roman fourth or fifth century and the Saxon seventh century (Steane et al 2006: 153; Jones 2002: 129). Unfortunately, evidence to provide a more specific date is lacking (Steane et al 2006: 155).

If one or both of these churches were late Roman, this would represent a significantly different use for Lincoln’s civic centre. However, the Roman administration may have already been employing it for an alternate purpose, as the metal-working evidence might suggest. A church could possibly be another state-sponsored use for a

public property that had, by the late fourth century, become largely redundant. It may have been an attempt to promote Christianity, as part of state policy, in a part of the Empire where the faith was proving slow to catch on. Additionally, it might have been a more politically advantageous project to which local elites could contribute their resources. If the churches are instead sub-Roman, they and their subsequent burial-ground could represent a new ceremonial and religious use of an unused site that may have retained a symbolic importance for the people residing in what had been Lincoln's territory.

Public Amenities

It was not only the forum-basilica complexes that were going out of use or being altered for a new purpose. Many of the structures provided in the late first and early second centuries AD by the elites of the newly-founded towns as public amenities were dramatically changed in the later centuries of the Roman period. Baths, temples, theatres, and amphitheatres had been constructed to attend to the relaxation, hygienic, entertainment, and religious needs of urban residents, and to bring honour and status upon the wealthy elites and town councillors who financed them. However, the majority of these were decayed, abandoned, or transformed into something else by the end of the Roman occupation. Many may have quickly become too expensive to maintain. It is also possible that in the changing society of late Roman times these structures may have gradually become irrelevant to town residents.

Baths

Many public bathing complexes in Roman Britain's towns had gone out of use, or undergone a major change in function, by the mid fourth century or even earlier (in some cases, significantly so). Potter and Johns (1992: 210) have noted that "public baths...seem to have been in almost universal desuetude by the middle of the fourth century". A study done of fifteen major urban bath complexes showed that only nine of these were still being used by around AD 300, but none were operating by *ca.* 400 (Faulkner 2000: 123; Mattingly 2006: 338). Dating material from **Lincoln's** baths "did not provide any evidence to indicate that they were still a vital part of urban social life after *ca.* 350" (Jones 2002: 121), despite the fact that the town was then a provincial

capital. The large public baths complexes would have been extremely expensive to maintain and to run. This must have been a factor in their neglect, decay, and often early abandonment, particularly during difficult economic times.

Excavations in the *colonia* of **Gloucester** of a public building complex provide an example of a possible baths building that underwent an early change of use, followed by a more radical transformation of the building site. The building complex was excavated at Nos. 1, 3 and 4 Westgate Street and No. 2 Southgate Street – the *Insulae* VII and VIII across the former Roman street from what had been the forum *insulae* (Heighway et al 1979: 161). This complex is thought to possibly have begun as the public baths (Hurst 1972: 63; Heighway et al 1979: 161; Heighway et al 1980: 83).

The latest stone structure built in *Insula* VIII was a monumental building with an apsidal room and a hypocaust. Another part of the baths complex may have been the colonnaded building in *Insula* VII, which could be a portion of the basilical *palaestra* of the baths (Heighway et al 1979: 161; 1980: 83-84). These buildings appear to have gone out of use as public baths in the third century. At this time they were altered, subdivided with walls into smaller rooms for industrial purposes, as is suggested by the addition of a hearth and the presence in the debris (from the later destruction of this building) of limestone pewter moulds and iron objects such as clench-bolts and hinge-fittings (Heighway et al 1979: 161, 163; 1980: 78, 83-83; Mackreth 1987: 139). It is possible that this could be another example of a public building converted into government-run workshops, or of the town renting space for workshops, but the evidence is not clear.

A fire in the late fourth century led to the dismantling of the former baths complex around that time, as the building may have been “rendered ... unusable” (Heighway et al 1980: 84). Perhaps this fire was caused by metal-working, as has been suggested for a fire in Leicester’s forum-basilica. Late Roman pottery such as shell-tempered wares and later fourth-century coins were found in the demolition debris. From the coins, a date just after AD 370 has been suggested for the demolition (ibid., 1979: 163).

The destruction debris was levelled and over it the timber booth B2 was built. “Loam packing around and over the beams of B2 produced nine coins” (the latest from 367-383), late fourth-century pottery, “a steelyard with fittings”, a bronze scale-pan, and

butchers' bones (Heighway et al 1979: 163; 1980: 78). The presence of the bones suggested to the excavators that the timber booth was a "butchers' shop" (ibid., 1980: 84). The bones were primarily of mature cattle, but also included some sheep and pigs, and showed cut marks from butchering. The bones found were mainly pelvis, femur and scapula (ibid., 1979: 182, 185).

Clearly the site was used for the disposal of unwanted portions of cattle carcasses. The good quality meat bones were probably sold, accounting for their low representation in the sample. The proportions of jaw, skull and limb extremity fragments were also small, which suggests that most of the cattle would have been slaughtered elsewhere and their carcasses skinned and trimmed of unwanted skull and limb extremities. The carcasses were then brought to the vicinity of the site, where the meat was cut into joints and various girdle bones discarded (ibid., 182).

There may have been other such booths in this area *ca.* AD 370-390 (ibid., 163).

From the coin evidence, the booth appears to have gone out of use *ca.* 390, as part of the reorganization of the larger area. It was dismantled and the area was metalled with sandstone tiles (Heighway et al 1979 163, 165; 1980: 78). Soon after this the adjacent road, "the main Roman street", was removed. It was first quarried and then infilled with loam till the sunken level of the former street reached the level where the booth had been, as well as that of the forum forecourt and courtyard on the street's other side. This area was covered with a metalling "of pebbles and pounded building materials" (ibid., 1979: 163, 165; 1980: 78).

The Gloucester forum itself appears to have gone out of use before the end of the fourth century, with part dismantled late in the century (Mackreth 1987: 139). In some areas "paving stones had been removed from the piazza" and garbage had piled up over the final courtyard surface; mixed with a bit of mid fourth-century pottery and two fourth-century coins was a large amount of animal bones (Wacher 1995: 164; Hurst 1972: 58). It is possible that the metalling seen in the area of the former baths complex and over the former street between the baths and the forum was extended into the forum area. A fairly large open area may have remained in use as a market and for official purposes (Heighway et al 1979: 165). The combination of opening up the area and of metalling it with the possible ongoing deposition of bones in the forum suggests that the area might have been used for holding animals. "[S]urely open ground with good hardstanding would have been ideal for stock-pens" (Faulkner 2000: 129). Postholes that Hurst (1972: 58) identified as "driven through the courtyard makeup", not associated

with any evidence of an actual structure, may have been connected to such animal pens and the “large-scale movement and storage of government property” in the form of animals “driven in on the hoof” (Faulkner 2000: 129). It is possible that, after the fire, this larger area of public property that had been the baths and the forum was converted for uses connected to the collection of tax in kind in the form of livestock and its processing as meat for military supply. The removal of the booth and the road may have been part of a phase of alterations with the intention of increasing the size of the area where animals could be held. Perhaps the plan was to also increase the amount of such tax in kind being collected.

The public baths complex in **Canterbury** was also converted to industrial and other purposes after it had gone of use by around the mid fourth century. Renovations were made at the baths in the early fourth century; the portico was reconstructed and the *piscina* was filled in and a *laconicum* built over top of it (Blockley et al 1995: 28, 171, 196, 461). But the baths were no longer in use after a *ca.* 360-370 flooding of the complex and the nearby street which left behind a silt deposit. Some parts of the baths may have been out of use or converted to a different purpose even earlier than the flood, perhaps due to a lack of building maintenance, to a loss of public interest, or to a shrinking later fourth-century town population.

The portico had a mid fourth-century change of function, “from a simple covered thoroughfare, to an arcade of shops” (Blockley et al 1995: 199). Evidence for the presence of shops and stalls was in the form of slots in the floor, which likely held timbers for the stalls. This was sealed by the flood silts (*ibid.*, 171, 200-201). After the shops, the portico’s function changed to “semi-industrial use and finally to a rubbish dump” (*ibid.*, 199). Within the flood silts was a substantial volume of cattle metapodials, left over from the butchering of animals (*ibid.*, 171). The bones were “either dumped within the portico or transported there in the flood silt”, or they may have been there as raw material for bone-working (*ibid.*, 201). The latter is supported by finds in the *palaestra* (baths basilica) of metapodials in the flood silt there also, where there was additionally debris from a workshop for making bone pins (*ibid.*, 201,461; Blagg 1995: 17). At some point “cobbler’s waste” was dumped in the portico as well (Blagg 1995: 17). However, the portico remained in use into the very late fourth and possibly early

fifth centuries. A pebble and tile floor was put down over the flood silt and bone debris, and an occupation deposit containing bits of charcoal and fragments of copper alloy and pottery accumulated over top of this. Two further floors, both of *opus signinum*, followed, and were layered with additional occupation debris. Waste from the construction of the portico's second last floor was used to put down a floor in an adjacent timber structure built over the street and against the portico, in the process covering a Theodosian coin of 388-402. This indicates that the penultimate floor of the portico dated to at least 388, probably later, and that the use of the final floor likely extended into the early fifth century (Blockley et al 1995: 201-202).

The *laconicum* was out of use by *ca.* 350. Sometime after that, the hypocaust's upper floor and *pilae* were robbed for building materials, and a mortar floor was put down over the *pilae* scars (Blockley et al 1995: 171). This appears to have occurred prior to the flooding of the baths building, which left behind a layer of silt in the *laconicum* (ibid., 171, 184). A rough floor was put down over part of the flood deposit, with slots for holding timbers cut into it, indicating that a timber structure had been built inside the shell of the building (ibid., 188). An industrial function for the structure was demonstrated by such features as a hearth with a flue and a stoke-hole, and a nearby pit with fired clay, some slag lumps and charcoal in it. The structure was probably being used for metal-working (ibid., 188, 190). Large amounts of rubble consisting of flint and brick were found in this building's occupation levels and also sealing it, a sign of "the continuous decay of the *laconicum*, and ... a somewhat precarious environment for a timber structure" (ibid., 190). This building was replaced by another timber structure with ovens and hearths containing charcoal, apparently also having had an industrial use (ibid., 190-191).

The first structure was built after the 360-370 floods, as it was above the flood silt. It may possibly have stood for up to twenty years – the end of its occupation has been dated by a "coin of Valens (364-78) from the thick charcoal dump ... sealing the occupation deposits" (Blockley et al 1995: 193). The coin indicates that the second structure could not have been built until the third quarter of the fourth century, but the structure's occupation levels lacked any evidence that could verify that date or a later one (ibid.). The next layer above that of the second timber structure was of the abandonment of the *laconicum*. Tiles in this layer probably fell from the roof above it (ibid., 191-192).

In the rubble from the roof collapse there were two coins of the House of Theodosius (388-402), but it is unknown how much time elapsed between the second structure's abandonment and the collapse of the *laconicum* roof. The second structure could be said to have probably been in use to the end of the fourth century and perhaps into the fifth (ibid., 193).

Whether this public building had also been converted for use as government workshops, or its shell rented out or even taken over by squatters is not clear. Whichever was the case, Canterbury's baths had been transformed from a monumental edifice of classical aesthetics and leisure to a damaged and deteriorating shell threatening collapse and containing temporary wooden structures housing workshops. Clearly this part of Canterbury was no longer the town it had once been.

While **London** appears to have had multiple public baths complexes, for the most part they seem to have gone out of use at a fairly early date. Later Roman London may have had no public baths (Milne 1993: 12). In the Flavian era, a very large baths complex was constructed at Huggin Hill, and expanded in the early second century. However, before the end of that century, perhaps even as early as *ca.*150, it had been demolished (Marsden 1985: 99; Bateman 1998: 48). This was "not necessitated by serious structural flaws, nor was the land subsequently abandoned" (Bateman 1998: 49). The site was levelled, and clay and timber structures were erected upon it by the end of the second century, remaining in use till about 300 (ibid.; Perring 1991: 103). Some stone-founded buildings, perhaps constructed at a later date, have also been excavated on the site. Both groups of buildings have evidence of industrial waste and hearths; metal- and glass-working appear to have been carried out here (Perring 1991: 103). There was a smaller baths complex near Cheapside by the early second century, though there is not a consensus as to whether the baths were public (Marsden 1985: 99) or, due to the smaller size, private (Perring 1991: 74). By the third century the baths' heating system was no longer functioning, and the building was demolished sometime in that century, or possible even earlier (Marsden 1985: 100; Perring 1991: 73, 77).

A large public building in the Cannon Street station area, on the Walbrook's east side, may have possibly been a public baths complex. Early Roman London was of sufficient size that it could have had multiple public baths. Some archaeologists, such as

Marsden, believe the building to have been a governor's palace built in the later first century, but Perring (1991: 30-31, 34) points out that this is not the best interpretation. The centre of the complex contained a courtyard with "a sunken apsidal-ended structure ... most probably a pool" of "monumental size" (ibid., 33). The pool was associated with a large hall and a group of other rooms built on a very large scale to the north of the courtyard. There are significant parallels in this complex's "organization and location" to Roman baths constructed in Portugal during Trajan's time (ibid., 33-34). The Cannon Street building's hall may have been one of the baths' main monumental rooms, perhaps a cold room or a sizable changing room, while the rooms to the north may have been the heated rooms (ibid., 34). But this complex probably did not survive the third century. Portions of it were in very poor condition by the end of that century, with "a tile hearth and trampled floors" added to some of the rooms (ibid., 113).

Though London was the largest and most important town in Britain, it seems to have suffered serious decline from the late second/early third century. This was likely due to its loss of significance as a port and trading centre around this time, as Roman Britain became more self-sufficient and required fewer imported goods. London from this time on seems to have faltered in its momentum and appears to have lost a substantial portion of its population as well. The Huggin Hill and Cheapside baths may have been casualties of this decline. While the possible Cannon Street baths may have lasted longer, this complex, like baths in some other towns, ran into difficulties by the late third century. Part, at least, of the problem was lack of maintenance, whether due to expense, elite disinterest (some having their own private bath-suites at their town-houses), or to lack of use or public interest. The evidence at Cannon Street from the late third century could be interpreted as a rough conversion for possible state industrial use, or perhaps occupation of the abandoned building by squatters. Another possibility for the late use of this site, and of the post-demolition Huggin Hill site, is that the town may have been renting out its disused properties to tenants in an attempt to raise additional revenues (Perring 1991: 112-113).

Exeter's public baths were lost before the end of the third century as well (Brooks 1986: 82; Potter and Johns 1992: 198). There had been rebuilding and expansion of the baths around AD 200 (Bidwell et al 1979: 122). But the complex's use does not seem to

have continued to the end of that century. This is indicated by the recovery of a coin in the excavation of the *natatio*, one of Claudius II (268-270), in the fill of the bath (ibid.). The other evidence for late third-century disuse of the baths came from excavations on the side of the street outside the baths. Excavators uncovered “a stone-lined drain”, which “was almost certainly one of the principal outfalls from the baths” (ibid.). Within the upper silting of the drain was third- or fourth-century pottery, amongst which was the rim from a New Forest beaker which was dated to after 270 (ibid.). Due to the paucity of evidence, it is not clear why the baths went out of use, but it does seem to perhaps indicate changing fortunes and priorities for Exeter.

Other public baths complexes were at least partially disused by the early fourth century. This is the case with the public building in the *municipium Verulamium's* *Insula III*, which was most likely the public baths (Niblett et al 2006: 63). Over the latest flooring in Room 1 was a thin burned layer; three stake- or postholes were dug into it, but there was no evidence to date when this occurred. Room 5 had been refloored several times in the third century, but it “fell into disrepair in the early fourth” (ibid., 69). There was dark earth over the latest flooring, the dark earth itself “sealed by a layer of decomposed wall plaster”, with rubble above that (ibid.).

The latest floor level of Room 5 contained a bit of pottery of the later third or early fourth century; this was also found in the overlying dark earth, and there was early fourth-century pottery in the layer of fallen plaster above that (Niblett et al 2006: 71). The pottery included large sherds, so it was probably not residual. The evidence would imply that at least this section, the north-east range of the building, was “crumbling” by the end of the third century and out of use by the early fourth. There is nothing to indicate that occupation of these rooms ever resumed, and robbing for building materials, for example over Room 2's hypocaust, soon ensued. The range was shortly demolished, and the rubble from the demolition was “used as levelling material in the adjacent site in *Insula XIII*” (ibid.). Verulamium had lost at least this portion of its baths, if not the whole complex, by the early fourth century. As with other urban public buildings, especially the baths, the expense of continuing to make repairs must have been becoming too great, perhaps with few prepared or able to contribute to it, and as well there may have been a possible loss of public interest.

Wroxeter's public baths complex also appears to have seriously deteriorated by the later third century and the main rooms may have gone out of use in the early fourth (White and Barker 1998: 112, 114; Brooks 1986: 82; Potter and Johns 1992: 198). Both the heated rooms and the basilica of the late third-century baths were in poor condition. "The floors showed signs of wearing out in places"; mosaics "would have unravelled quickly and in some places localized subsidence into underlying pits had caused the floor to become dangerous" (White and Barker 1998: 112). Resources were found to be able to remedy at least some of the neglect, and large-scale repairs were carried out in the public baths *insula* in the late third or early fourth century. This included the replacement of substantial sections of flooring in parts of the baths basilica, the east baths suite's vestibule and latrine, and the adjoining *macellum*'s courtyard and latrine (ibid., 112, 114). The repairs occurred at some point after AD 270, as a "coin of Tetricus I (270-3) [was] found" in the new floor foundations in the *macellum* (ibid., 114-115).

The evidence that the main heated rooms went out of use by the early fourth century comes from the furnace ashes dumped from their hypocaust. The pottery sherds they contained are of dates not later than the beginning of the fourth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 72; White and Barker 1998: 114). It is possible that these rooms were abandoned either because of being structurally unsound, or simply too expensive to heat due to their size. White and Barker suggest (1998: 114) that the side-suites may have been redone as hot rooms to replace them. "A further stage of deterioration is implied by the blocked doorways ... of the wall between the *frigidarium* and the heated rooms ... after the rooms became unused, or unusable" (ibid.). Limited resources must have meant that some areas of the baths had to be closed down.

The west lateral suite may have been abandoned not far into the last quarter of the fourth century. A coin hoard was found in its hypocaust during a nineteenth-century excavation. "The latest identifiable coin was one of Gratian ... and the hoard is unlikely to have been placed there while the baths were still in use, hence this part could have been abandoned by *ca.* 375" (Mackreth 1987: 139). Parts of Wroxeter's baths *insula* began to be robbed of building materials: "the *suspensura* floor was broken through to remove the *pilae* tiles" (Ellis 2000: 55). Drains from the *macellum*, the latrine, and the inner courtyard were robbed of tile and stone. Some of this was dated by four coins found in

one of the robbing trenches, the latest being dated to 364-378 (ibid., 57-58). It is possible that large segments of the baths were disused by this time, with funding for repairs being spent only on selected parts of the complex.

Some sections of the complex remained in use into the fourth century, as the *ca.* AD 300 reflooring would suggest, and more flooring work appears to have been done in the mid and later fourth century. Late in the century, booths may have been set up in the west portico, and the basilica and *frigidarium* may have continued in use, though for purposes unrelated to bathing or exercise (Ellis 2000: 67, 76-77; White and Barker 1998: 115). White and Barker suggest (1998: 112, 114) that the baths basilica may have been converted for uses similar to those of a forum-basilica, which Wroxeter no longer possessed. They point to the late third/early fourth-century reflooring which, at the nave's east end, was

cheaply finished off with a timber step to mask the abrupt change of level between the original floor and the new patch. The resulting effect, however, was to create a raised area at the east end of the basilica not dissimilar to a tribunal at the south end of the forum basilica (ibid., 114).

However, this may well have been done simply to lessen costs by reducing the size of the area that actually had to be refloored (ibid.), with no implications about the use of the basilica. Perhaps more likely is their proposal for a late reuse of the basilica as a market, possibly continuing beyond the end of the Roman period (ibid., 121). This would fit with the late fourth-century booths in the portico.

There is a possibility that the *frigidarium* was being used as a granary at this time. Nineteenth-century excavators found a room filled with burned wheat, and “the *frigidarium* with its solid floor, thick walls, wide doorway, and vaulted roof would have made an ideal granary” (Barker et al 1997: 236). Unfortunately, no dating evidence remains to determine whether the wheat was from this time or later. If it was from the fourth century, it is possible that the room was being used as an imperial storehouse for collecting taxation in kind. This is supported by the fourth-century blocking of the doorways between the *frigidarium* and *tepidarium*, and “the fact that the main doorway into the *frigidarium* seems to have been kept clear of any buildings” at this time (ibid.).

As with the above late fourth-century phase, the baths complex's next period was associated with very late Roman coins (388-402) and late fourth-century pottery. However, the excavators believe these materials to be residual and that the phase belongs in the fifth century (Ellis 2000: 68). At this time “the porticoes went out of use and their

stylobate walls were removed”, but the *frigidarium* continued in use and may have ultimately been employed as a post-Roman church (ibid., 77). Ellis points out (2000: 77) that though late fourth-century artefacts have been recovered from the baths precinct, these may well relate to the ongoing use of the baths basilica, rather than to the baths themselves. They must have been closed down by that point.

It would seem that there is no evidence to support a continued use into the final third of the fourth century of Wroxeter’s baths for their original function of bathing and exercise. Yet there is evidence of the disrepair, disuse, and robbing of major sections of the building by this time. Again, the abandonment may have been due to the expense of continually repairing the decaying building and running it as public baths. Of interest is the possibility that there may have been a fourth-century conversion of the *frigidarium* to serve as a state storehouse for taxes paid in grain, which could provide yet another example of a reuse of a public building for imperial purposes.

Temples

Urban temples were also among the public buildings that in many instances went out of use in the first part of the fourth century, with a decline beginning in the late third century (Esmonde Cleary 1993: 10). Few temples received renovations in that century (Faulkner 2000: 127), and there was “an overall decrease in the number of temples in Britain” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 119). The numbers of temples of all types, rural and urban, seems to have reached a peak *ca.* 300 (ibid.). But a survey done of twenty-four Romano-British temples found only five of these still being used as temples by the mid fourth century and merely two by *ca.* 375. “Some appear to have been deconsecrated – or desecrated – and converted to other uses” (Faulkner 2000: 127). A portion of the change was in the rural temples, but the decline was much more notable among the urban examples, particularly after around 350 (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 119). The loss of temples in Britain has tended to be attributed to the growth of Christianity “and the consequent closure of pagan places of worship on religious grounds”, but the temples may possibly have been simply another type of structure going out of use along with the other public buildings that were in rapid decline in the fourth century, especially its later half (ibid., 119, 135). No doubt imperial disapproval of pagan worship from the time (c.325) of Constantine I as sole ruler, and particularly the legislation ordering the closing of the

temples located within town and city walls in 341 and of all temples in 391 did play a role in the temples' decline. But “[i]t is unlikely that these edicts were comprehensively enforced in Britain not least because they are known to have been enforced in only a piecemeal fashion in other parts of the empire” (de la Bédoyère 1999: 67).

Over the final years of Constantine's rule, the emperor seized not only the treasures and wealth of the temples, but also their estates of land which would have provided them with additional income (Mackreth 1987: 139-140; Jones 1964: 108, 110, 415). This loss of resources must have been a terrible financial blow to the pagan cults and resulted in a drop-off in the upkeep and rebuilding of the temple buildings. At the same time, the growing financial pressure on town councillors especially from the late third century, and the loss of interest among the elite in contributing to urban public buildings, as seen above, were probably also significant in the neglect of the temples. The early date for the beginning of the decline suggests that there must have been more to the abandonment of the temples than simply the consequences of the rise of Christianity (Esmonde Cleary 1993: 10).

The temples of **Wroxeter** were apparently not only “abandoned” but also “despoiled” in the course of the fourth century (White and Barker 1998: 107). Coins scattered over the final floor surface of a temple in the public baths *insula* of **Leicester** may imply that use of the temple was decreasing after about 360 (Wacher 1995: 359). In **Colchester**, “three of the five extramural Romano-Celtic temples for which we have useful dating evidence had been abandoned by *ca.* 300” (Faulkner 1994: 106), possibly connected to the late third- to early fourth-century depopulation of the suburbs. One Romano-Celtic temple was located just outside the town walls on Balkerne Lane. This temple may have been dedicated to Mercury, based on the find of a fragment from a copper-alloy figurine of the deity “in spoil ... from the Balkerne Lane site” (Crummy et al 1984: 125). At some point around 325-350, the temple's ambulatory was dismantled (*ibid.*, 45, 125; Faulkner 1994: 106; 2000: 127). The *cella*, however, was not removed, and may have remained in use; its walls were likely still standing at the end of the Roman occupation (Crummy et al 1984: 115; Faulkner 2000: 127). Such a substantial change would seem to indicate a new function for this building (Crummy 1997: 120). One possibility is that the temple was converted for use as a church, though evidence to support this is lacking (Crummy et al 1984: 125).

Colchester was also home to the classical, monumental temple of Claudius, originally built in the first century AD. But “[i]t seems unlikely that a temple of the Imperial Cult, within a *colonia*, would survive after the Edict of Milan in 313” (Drury et al 1984: 33). Drury proposed that, during the reign of Constantine, the temple had been substantially altered to create a structure of basilical shape, similar to an audience hall built in the early fourth century in Trier (ibid.). However, an excavation of the site in 1996 disproved this theory (Crummy 1997: 120). There does seem to have been some sort of activity in the temple and precinct up to the end of the fourth century, from finds of evidence that could be interpreted either as “occupation layers or rubbish dumps” with late Roman pottery and coins going up to 379-395 (Faulkner 1994: 105-106; Drury et al 1984: 35-36). It is unclear if the deposits indicate people living within the temple precinct, or using it as a place to dump their rubbish.

In **London**, an octagonal Romano-Celtic temple located just west of the town walls outside Newgate was abandoned in the late third century. Its walls were soon robbed and a large masonry structure with a hypocaust built over the remains (Milne 1995: 82; Perring 1991: 113). Also at the end of the third century, in the south-west part of the town, the only known classical temple precinct in London was demolished to make way for the possible “palace of the usurper Allectus (dated by dendochronology to 293-94)” (Mattingly 2006: 348; Bateman 1998: 49, 57). Another London temple on the Walbrook's east bank, initially a Mithraeum but possibly later dedicated to Bacchus, was abandoned in the mid fourth century (Marsden 1985: 105; Mattingly 2006: 348). Carved blocks from pagan religious monuments and temples from elsewhere in London were reused in the superstructure of the Blackfriars portion of the late Roman riverside wall (ibid., 100, 105-106). Some of these blocks were from temples that had been restored in the mid third century – one a temple of Isis, another probably dedicated to Jupiter (ibid., 100; Fulford 2008: 41). This western part of the riverside wall was built in the mid to late fourth century, according to radiocarbon and dendrochronological dating (Merrifield 1983: 223-224). London, as the diocesan capital and administrative centre of Roman Britain, must have felt particularly strongly the force of anti-pagan imperial policy as the fourth century progressed, which might explain the abandonment or destruction of the temples from which these architectural fragments came.

A public building in **Cirencester**'s *Insula* VI, built in the third quarter of the second century, consisted of a central courtyard with wide ranges around three sides, ambulatories on the north-west and south-west sides of the courtyard and a colonnaded portico with mosaic flooring on the Ermin Street side (Holbrook 1998: 129, 132, 139). The building "may have been ... an ambulatory across a *temenos* with a temple outside the immediate area" (ibid., 139).

The portico was still being refloored till at least the late third century, but some time, possibly in the fourth century, two structures were constructed in the courtyard (Holbrook 1998: 134-135). A probable timber-framed structure (VI. 7) was built on top of a limestone rubble platform, over a midden that had accumulated in the courtyard. Another structure (VI. 8) was also erected in the courtyard over rubble possibly "associated with the demolition of building VI. 1" (the *temenos* ambulatory). Post-holes were cut into the surface of the courtyard, and four post-settings were found (ibid., 135).

The dating evidence for the structures is difficult to interpret. It is possible that the public building was still in use when the timber structures were built. Debris from a roof collapse was found in the portico's corridor, but the collapse may not have happened till the late fourth century. Among coins found in the debris from the demolition of the corridor were several of the House of Theodosius (388-402) (Holbrook 1998: 135-136). But while Structure VI. 8 was still in use, or else very soon after its abandonment, a midden began to accumulate around and ultimately over where it had been (ibid.). Coin dating evidence for the midden did not go later than 350-360, so it may have been constructed prior to the very late fourth/early fifth-century destruction of the *temenos*' portico (ibid., 138). The building of these structures in the courtyard, and the dumping of butchers' waste in the middens there and also in the portico, around the time or shortly after the roof collapse (ibid., 134-136), have serious implications regarding the continuing use of the *temenos* for its original purpose. It is difficult to believe that this property could still have been in use, particularly in the second half of the fourth century, as the sacred precinct of a temple.

Theatres

Few theatres have been discovered so far from Roman Britain, but these also went out of use before the end of the fourth century, or even earlier. **Verulamium**'s theatre,

although rebuilt soon after AD 300, was closed down later in the fourth century and its orchestra turned into a “great dump of rotting vegetables and broken crockery” (Faulkner 2000: 123).⁸⁴ Another Romano-British theatre was that of Gosbecks, not far outside **Colchester**. Excavations here were not able to find any “stratified coins and pottery later than the early third century” (Dunnett 1971: 41). There were no fourth-century finds and little certainly of the third century. This led excavators to the conclusion that the theatre had been shut down by the mid third century or earlier. It was carefully dismantled shortly after its abandonment with the *orchestra* and stage covered over by turf (ibid.). The temple in the Gosbecks complex lasted longer, yet would appear to have been demolished at some point after 337, but prior to the end of the Roman period (Crummy 1997: 120).

Theatres were closely associated with temples in the Roman world, and had pagan religious connotations, particularly in their connection to pagan festivals (Mattingly 2006: 337). This religious aspect of the theatres could be connected to the closing of some theatres in the fourth century. The shutting down of Verulamium’s theatre could have been part of imperial pro-Christian/anti-pagan policy, especially if this closure occurred late in the century. But this cannot explain earlier closures such as the one at Gosbecks. The cost of maintenance may simply have been too much, and perhaps public interest was insufficient to make the care of these buildings a priority.

Amphitheatres

Amphitheatres were much more common in Roman Britain, and were found just outside a number of towns. They form an additional class of public buildings that went into early decline. There is little evidence of the use of amphitheatres for their original purpose in fourth-century Roman Britain. Most show no signs of repair in that century, and the majority were disused by the first part of the fourth century (Holbrook 1998: 174; Potter and Johns 1992: 198). A survey of British amphitheatres’ later history “could provide no definite evidence at all either of fourth-century building or repair, or of their usage” (Potter and Johns 1992: 198). **Chichester**’s amphitheatre was closed early; it was abandoned and filled with soil during the second century (Arnold 1984: 33). The amphitheatre outside **Dorchester** may also have gone out of use in the second century

⁸⁴ Verulamium’s theatre is discussed further in the section on Public Services and Infrastructure.

(Esmonde Cleary 1989: 72). **Silchester**'s amphitheatre was rebuilt in the early third century, but "there is little evidence for its use in the later third and fourth centuries" (Fulford et al 1997: 161). Decline and closure at such early dates cannot be linked to Christian disapproval of the events carried out in amphitheatres and the attached pagan symbolism. "It has been argued that the entertainments of the amphitheatre were unappealing to the largely Celtic population of Roman Britain ...; but it may be more realistic to conclude that pragmatic considerations, especially cost, may have played a greater part" (Potter and Johns 1992: 198). A far larger number of monumental public buildings may have been provided in the late first and early second-century elite burst of enthusiasm for urban construction than the British towns could in fact sustain. Amphitheatres were large and no doubt very expensive to keep in good repair. They also may have been fairly low on the list of town priorities once the upper classes reduced their spending on urban projects.

The final repairs of **London**'s amphitheatre were carried out some time after AD 243 (Bateman 1997: 68). However, coin evidence from the uppermost and latest surfaces of the arena indicate that maintenance of the arena was still continuing post-270. Thus, in the later third century the amphitheatre was likely still being used for its original function. At some point after this, the amphitheatre was abandoned, perhaps due to costs of maintenance and of the entertainments held there, and "deposits of silt containing collapsed building material accumulated over the arena and in the entrance ways" (ibid.; 1998: 53 n. 23). Coins from *ca.* 340-380 were found in these silts, suggesting that there was still some sort of access to the building, though the structure might have been largely out of use (ibid. 1997: 68). It has been suggested that by this time it may have been serving as a market, based on finds of sheep and horse bones in the highest occupation levels (ibid., 1998: 53 n. 23; Milne 1995: 87-88).

The robbing of the amphitheatre's walls may have started by the mid fourth century (Perring 1991: 113). Coins up to as late as 367 were found in the backfill of the robbing trenches for the arena wall and entrance. It is possible that the stone was taken away to be reused in the construction of bastions in the town wall or in finishing the riverside wall in the late fourth century. By the fifth century, the region of London where the amphitheatre had been located was abandoned (Bateman 1997: 68). While London

elites may have been unable or unwilling to continue maintenance of the building as a centre for entertainment, it may still have been able to serve some functional purpose for fourth-century town residents first in the guise of a market, then later as a source of building material for the late defences.

Cirencester may provide another, even more convincing example of a disused and decaying amphitheatre being converted to a market in the fourth century. By the mid fourth century the amphitheatre “was generally in a state of dereliction and may no longer have been used for performances” (Holbrook 1998: 174). Again, this may have been primarily due to a withdrawal of elite patronage of the high costs of maintaining this structure for its original purpose, and by this time, perhaps also to changing societal attitudes towards its kind of entertainments. Around 350-360 it seems to have been renovated for a new function. At this time, the north-east entrance was demolished, as were the “masonry passage walks and covering vaults”, and side chambers at the entrance (ibid., 166, 174). These were levelled and covered with metallised surfaces; the entrance was rebuilt in timber (ibid., 166). Probably contemporary with this was the demolition of the north-west and south-east chambers and the rebuilding of the arena wall. The stone from the demolition was removed to be reused somewhere else (ibid., 174). The mid fourth-century date was derived from coin evidence, and the work was probably all part of a single plan (ibid., 167-169).

The demolition of the north-east entrance seems to have been carried out to create “a metallised wider access into the arena, more suitable for use by wheeled vehicles as ruts worn into the cobbled surfaces testify” (Holbrook 1998: 174). Over time several additional surfaces of stone and gravel had to be put down, due to the heavy wear. These, combined with the ruts, demonstrate “the weight of traffic” entering and leaving the arena (ibid.). The evidence for the changes made to the amphitheatre indicates that it was transformed for a purpose requiring that wheeled vehicles be able to enter (ibid.). Wachter (1995: 322) has proposed that the amphitheatre had become an extra-mural market for Cirencester, a suggestion that seems fairly likely. The latest metallised surface put down in the area was associated with a coin dated 388-402, so its use as a market may have continued into the early fifth century (Holbrook 1998: 174). While Cirencester’s amphitheatre may have continued in use for its original purpose later than those of most

other British towns, it was eventually a casualty of the increasing reluctance of decurions and other elites to spend their resources on urban public projects. Similar to many of the other monumental public buildings discussed above, its original glamour was traded in the late Roman period for a more practical use, in an age that seemed to increasingly prefer or require functionality over classical aesthetics.

The costs of many of the public buildings of the Romano-British administrative towns must have been enormous. They would have included not just the construction of these monumental structures, but also their maintenance and repair, all of which would likely have required specialist craftsmen. There would additionally have been the costs of running the baths, and of putting on entertainments in the theatres and amphitheatres. All these costs would primarily have been the responsibility of the towns and their decurions, as well as other possible elite patrons. From the time these buildings had been constructed, this must have been a strain on the towns. As the costs of being part of the empire increased, with such things as inflation and rising taxes beginning in the third century, at the same time civic duty was becoming less of an honour and more of a burden, and elites began to lose their enthusiasm for contributing to civic life and started trying to avoid municipal service. These changes undoubtedly made it more and more difficult to fund the maintenance of the public buildings and the activities associated with them.

Growing numbers of buildings lost their original purpose, as their associated activities stopped being carried out or the neglected buildings became too dangerous. Buildings that were perhaps too decrepit or were needed for their building materials were demolished. In many vacated sites, or within standing buildings, or sections of ones that were not quite as dilapidated, there is evidence of new activities, particularly of an industrial nature. These were carried out in altered rooms in buildings, or in flimsy timber structures built within the shells or on the empty sites of the former building complexes. In many cases, though not all, metal-working seems to have been involved, and was possibly responsible for the fires that damaged or destroyed a number of the forum-basilica complexes.

These altered buildings may have been rented out by town councils anxious to increase their dwindling funds for maintaining town services. Another possibility is that

the buildings or sites had been completely abandoned and were beyond the control of the towns, and were taken over by squatters, who converted them for workshops. But more likely, at least in some of the examples, is that the state was making use of public property as a place to process raw materials (especially metal) needed for imperial and military supplies. Certain other types of conversions and reuses of public spaces may have also been connected to imperial and military supply, particularly to taxation in kind. This may have been the case with the reuse of the Gloucester forum and former suggested baths building as a possible stockyard for animals collected as tax in kind, and with the possible reuse of the Wroxeter baths cold room as an imperial grain warehouse.

Such utilitarian reuses of public buildings may have been particularly important during the various times from the mid third century when Britain was part of a rebel empire which was cut off from the products and resources of much of the rest of the empire. The usurper administrations would likely have been particularly motivated to increase the extraction of resources and production of needed goods. These reuses also show that while the towns may have been neglected, in poor condition, and in decline in the late Roman period, there was still some activity continuing in them. However, it seems very possible that much of this activity may have been driven by the needs of the state and the imperial economy rather than by the initiative of local elites motivated to voluntarily cooperate and work with the Roman Empire. It represents a significant transformation of the Romano-British administrative towns from their original form of the first and second centuries AD.

Section Three: Public Services and Infrastructure

“The well-being of towns might ... be assessed on the basis of the services that were provided, for instance, water, sewers and roads” (Arnold 1984: 38). One of the major changes visible in later fourth century and early fifth century Roman Britain is a “decline in the maintenance and quality of public amenities” at a number of the towns, *civitas* capitals in particular (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 131-132). The continuation of municipal services, such as waterfront and port facilities, roads, sewers and drainage, water and waste disposal, can be an indication of the health of the towns and the society (Arnold 1984: 38). As discussed in an earlier segment, funding and provision of these services was the responsibility of the town councils, particularly of their magistrates and decurions. Though some services, such as the maintenance of major roads, seem to have continued in certain towns into the late fourth century, many examples can be given to suggest that this was not the case for the entire system (*ibid.*). It will be demonstrated in this chapter that decay can be seen in different areas of urban public order and services, such as the provision and maintenance of waterfront facilities, the maintenance of roads and ensuring clear access across their surfaces, the maintenance of sewers and drains, the provision of a supply of water, and the appropriate disposal of waste.

Waterfronts

Components of the commercial use of waterfronts of late Romano-British towns were in decline. The waterfront and river at **Lincoln**, a provincial capital, “would have been utilised for transporting official goods, and its development, maintenance and control would have involved imperial investment” (Jones 1993: 21). Development of the waterfront continued past the mid fourth century. But based on the coin sequence, after about 375 there was a significant “drop in activity” (*ibid.*, 22). Evidence of the use of the Roman waterfront of **York**’s river, the Ouse, does not go beyond the fourth century (Arnold 1984: 34).

But the process of the decline of **London**’s waterfront began much earlier and was severe. London’s port may have lost much of its importance by the middle of the third century due to the town’s own decline and that of its overseas trade (Brigham 1998:

31). The quays went out of use after this time and the “harbour works were no longer maintained as public facilities beyond the 280s” (Milne 1993: 12; 1995: 79, 87). In fact, around *ca.* 250-270, the wharf was actually “dismantled to or below the high-water mark” (Brigham 1998: 30). There had been a great deal of building activity along London’s waterfront in the town’s early years, but from the 270s, there were no further “large waterfront projects” (Milne 1995: 79). After 270, the building of a riverside defensive wall began, that would separate river and town, ensuring that the waterfront would not make a comeback (Brigham 1998: 31). In the fourth century, the timber quays were no longer maintained, and public warehouses built for port trade in the Pudding Lane area had, by the later part of the century, “been converted into private dwellings” (Milne 1995: 86; Brigham 1998: 33). Even the Roman bridge over the Thames seems to have been gone by *ca.* AD 330, as indicated by the cessation after the 320s of votive coins being dropped from the bridge (Milne 1995: 84).

Roads

Road Maintenance

A decay of road systems can be seen in some towns at an early date. From before *ca.* AD 300, the standards of maintenance of **London**’s streets began to decline (Cowie 2008: 50). By the late third century, streets in the area of the forum-basilica stopped being resurfaced and maintained. They were “increasingly cut by ruts and potholes” (Milne 1995: 82). As noted in the section on public buildings, the adjacent street north of the basilica was abandoned concurrent with the early fourth-century demolition of the basilica, and was soon covered with dark earth (Brigham 1990: 75, 82). Something similar was happening to roads in the western part of Roman London. The ditches alongside the road at Milk Street silted up around the late third century and the road was allowed to decay, though it remained in use for another century. The final surface of the road at King Street became covered with silt around the same time period as the road at Milk Street or a bit later (Milne 1995: 82).

Road maintenance, especially resurfacing, was becoming less frequent in the later fourth century (Mattingly 2006: 341), and some roads were going out of use at this time, as occurred in **Lincoln** (Jones 2002: 125). There was little new street building in fourth-century Lincoln, and evidence for the use of most streets does not go as late as the early

fifth century (ibid., 1993: 17). As noted in the previous section, the east-west road north of the forum-basilica also does not appear to have remained in use to the end of the Roman period (Steane et al 2006: 272). The final resurfacings of the roads in central Winchester were “of markedly inferior quality” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132), while Street 17 in **Verulamium**’s *Insula XII*, which had been resurfaced and used through the fourth century ended up “heavily pot-holed” (Niblett et al 2006: 97). By perhaps the late fourth century, **Leicester**’s “street system was ... decaying” (Wacher 1995: 362). At Red Cross Street, pits and gullies had been dug around this time into the metalling of the main north-south road (ibid.; Cooper and Buckley 2003: 40). In late fourth-century **Chichester**, in the Chapel Street area, the roads were no longer being repaired (Down 1978: 45). In the final resurfacing, sherds of later Roman fine wares, such as New Forest and Oxford types, are not present in the gravel used, suggesting an earlier date for this work (ibid., 81). By the end of the Roman period, these streets were “rutted and pot-holed” (Down 1988: 101). At **Gloucester**’s Westgate Street site, near the Roman forum, the main Roman east-west street was abandoned around 390 and large pits were quarried in its surface (Heighway et al 1979: 163-165; Arnold 1984: 38; Mattingly 2006: 341). Around this same time, minor streets in *insulae* in the centre of the town were rapidly disappearing (Hurst 1972: 66-67).

York’s roads were also deteriorating in the mid to late fourth century, and streets were going out of use. In the fourth century the final surface was laid on a road in the Skeldergate area. “It was the poorest in quality of all the [metallings], possibly representing merely a repair to the underlying surface, using whatever materials were readily available, such as odd sandstone slabs, tiles and cobbles” (Carver et al 1979: 12). This street appears to have been disused by the late fourth century (ibid., 13). The road at Rougier Street went out of use in the mid fourth century, when rubble was dumped over it and an accumulation of dark loam allowed to build up (Ottaway 1984: 32). Evidence for the main road going north-east to south-west was located at Tanner Row. It was discovered that the road became disused around the late fourth century after pits and gullies were cut into it (Andrews 1984: 198; Ottaway 1984: 32). Apparently the “decline of the urban order in York” was “accompanied ... by the decay of the street system” (Ottaway 1984: 33).

Encroachments of Structures onto Roads

Another trend in the later fourth and early fifth centuries, which indicates a lessening of official concern about or control over town streets, is the narrowing or blocking of them through the encroachment of timber buildings onto their surfaces. That such actions would be contrary to traditional Roman values and law is implied by mid first-century BC epigraphic evidence, relevant to colonies in Italy and Spain, “forbidding private enterprise blocking or impeding public streets and porticoes” (Holbrook 1998: 23). It is likely that these structures were built on the roads “to take advantage of a firm, well-drained foundation, and to avoid the surrounding ruins” (Biddle 1964: 206). There is an example of this from fourth-century **York** at Wellington Row, where the main street from the south-west was reduced to half its width by encroaching structures, possibly stalls situated to make sales to people coming across the river (Ottaway 2004: 148). Another instance of street encroachment comes from **Silchester**, in *Insula IX*’s northeast corner. The surface of the east-west street here was cut into by pits or post-holes, which may well have been from “a timber-framed building exploiting the hard and well drained surface of the street” (Clarke and Fulford 2002: 156). Coins of the House of Theodosius suggest that the structure was built in the late fourth or early fifth century (ibid.).

Several instances of buildings encroaching onto the Roman streets have been found in **Winchester**. An east-west street at the Assize Courts South site had a number of post-holes cut into the metalling. The excavator thought these likely had been made for a late Roman timber building a little over five meters wide and over seventeen meters long, “utilizing the road surface as a floor” (Biddle 1966: 313). Post-holes in the surface of the Roman north-west street found at the Wolvesey Palace site, covered by a layer of the black earth which sealed most of the latest Roman remains at Winchester, may indicate that something was also built over this street at the end of the Roman period (Biddle 1964: 214). The presence of a timber building over the Roman east-west street excavated in the Cathedral Green is suggested by a cobbled surface laid over the road with post-holes along the side. This was associated with late Roman pottery and coins, primarily of 365-375, and not dating later than 383 (ibid. 1964: 204; 1970: 312). Another similar surface of cobbling on a Roman road, the north-west street found at the Cathedral Car Park, may also represent the floor of a building encroaching across much of the width of the street. This cobbling was very rough and mixed with large animal bones, a much

poorer quality surfacing than previous Roman metalling had been, and was associated with late Roman pottery only (Biddle and Quirk 1962: 156). The excavators believed that these were being built at a time when there was a “breakdown of Roman civic order” (Biddle 1964: 206) and a cessation of regular street maintenance (Biddle and Quirk 1962: 156).

Similar instances of probable timber buildings blocking late Roman roads are also known from **Canterbury**. Over the intersection of the two Roman streets in the St. George’s Street and Bargate Street region, an irregular oblong 7.6 x 3.7 metre timber structure was suggested by “[t]wo successive floors and a number of slots with post-holes set” directly into the last surface of the street (Frere and Stow 1983: 21, 23, 69, 73). The presence of a coin of Arcadius in one of the timber slots (*ibid.*, 73) could indicate an early fifth century date. Another timber structure was built on top of a Roman street at the Marlowe Car Park site near the public baths. This street was flooded, probably *ca.* 360-370 from the coin evidence, leaving a deposit of silt behind on the street (Blockley et al 1995: 202-203). The timber building’s floor of planks laid down over this silt was indicated by “thin lines of light grey/white micaceous sandy silt running across the width of the street 20 cm apart from each other ..., the fine white sand having washed down between the planks” (*ibid.*, 204). A slot plus a row of post-holes running across the street were also found. The construction date for this structure must have been after the 360-370 flooding mentioned above. Excavators thought it likely that a coin of the House of Theodosius from 388-402, found in the silt under the plank floor, had probably gotten there by falling through a gap in the planks while the structure was in use. At some point after that occurred, “the plank floor was well sealed by an *opus signinum* and pebble floor” (*ibid.*). This second phase of the building would thus seem to have been built in the late fourth or early fifth century and been used into the first quarter of the fifth century (*ibid.*).

Buildings encroached onto the streets in late Roman **Cirencester** as well. A minor road in *Insula III* inside the south-west town wall had a building constructed over it. In other locations, encroaching structures narrowed the streets, “which may indicate some lessening of official control as the streets were presumably in municipal ownership” (Holbrook 1998: 23). Street F behind the basilica was completely blocked by a structure built across its width. A “crudely built drystone wall” was excavated there,

and coins dating to 348-364 and 367-375 were discovered within the wall's core, dating the structure to the later fourth century (*ibid.*).

It appears to have been fairly common in late Roman **Verulamium** for buildings to encroach onto the streets, in some cases fairly severely (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 162; Niblett et al 2006: 105). At *Insula* II on Watling St. and a minor road intersecting with it, the metalling was cut through with slots and post-holes from a late fourth- or early fifth-century building that had encroached four metres onto the main street (Niblett et al 2006: 75, 105). A fourth century building encroached almost five metres into a street in *Insula* XIII. Verulamium's roads "may have become substantially narrower in the late Roman period, and some minor streets may have gone out of use" (*ibid.*, 105).

Sewers and Drainage

There is evidence from several administrative towns of the decay of the sewers and drainage systems at the end of the Roman period. In some smaller towns, drains were becoming clogged with silt, and in **Winchester** there was a decline in the drains' maintenance (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132). In late fourth-century **Gloucester**, drains along the sides of a Roman road at the Westgate Street site, near the forum, may no longer have been in use in the late fourth century (Heighway et al 1979: 163). A sewer found in **York** at the site of the intersection of Church Street and Swinegate, near the legionary headquarters, went out of use at the close of the fourth century (Arnold 1984: 38-39, Addyman et al 1975: 208). It apparently "ceased to be cleared in the late fourth century and gradually clogged up" (Brookes 1986: 83), with the channels ultimately two-thirds or more filled and vegetation beginning to grow inside them (Addyman et al 1974: 209-210). The sewer system of **Chichester** appears to have suffered from "neglect and slow decay" (Down 1978: 45). The box drains from the public sewers in the area of Chapel Street, near the baths, although repaired early in the fourth century, had silted up by the end of the century and the "timber revetment [had] collapsed" (*ibid.*, 45, 152; 1988: 101-102). At **Canterbury**'s Marlowe Car Park sites, there is evidence for a breakdown of what may have been the public sewer system in the third quarter of the fourth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132; Blockley et al 1995: 28). Massive flooding from this breakdown left silt over the north-west/south-east street near the public bath house, and inside the baths' *portico*, *laconicum* and *palaestra* (Blockley et al 1995: 28,

171). Coin evidence would suggest that the flooding may have occurred over a ten year period, from *ca.* AD 360-370 (*ibid.*, 202-203).

Water Supplies

Water supplies, such as wells and streams, may also have been neglected in the late Roman period. At least significant segments, if not all of **Colchester** may have been without a public water supply in the fourth century. Around *ca.* 300 or shortly before that time, the Balcerne gate in the town walls was blocked and the “town ditch extended to cross in front of it”, with the result that the water-mains supplying the western part of the town were literally cut off (Crummy 1984: 16, 117; Faulkner 1994: 105). At approximately the same period, a structure over a spring, believed to be the water source for east Colchester, became disused and filled with refuse (Faulkner 1994: 105). The number of wells in use in **London** seems to have declined over the fourth century, and the elite from areas that no longer had wells or piped water supply appear to have moved to the lower Walbrook region, where a functioning spring was located. “The implication is that with an increasingly less reliable public system of supply, the wealthier inhabitants chose to relocate their houses to areas where they could most easily tap ground water supplies” (Mattingly 2006: 341). But by the end of the fourth century the Walbrook stream itself was showing signs of neglect, as it was “allowed to silt up between its embankments and began flooding the surrounding areas”, even though the area was still occupied, as was shown by the occupation debris on the ground contemporary with the flooding (Marsden 1980: 177). The possibility that the public water supply system also broke down in **Carmarthen** may be implied by the large number of late Roman wells dug into the site at Priory Street (Arnold and Davies 2002: 57). Problems with aqueducts and water supply may have led to the last of Roman Britain’s urban baths going out of use (Mattingly 2006: 341). The loss of much of **Colchester**’s water supply, as indicated above, must have led to the disuse of its “as yet undiscovered” baths complex in the fourth century, at least for its original purpose (Faulkner 1994: 105).

Waste Disposal

“Another clear indicator of the state of urban services concerns rubbish disposal” (Mattingly 2006: 341). According to Faulker (2000: 124), Romano-British towns from the second half of the fourth century were beginning to pile up with waste and rubbish; he

believes that the dark earth deposits characteristically found in or over the ruins of many towns at the end of the Roman period may have been the result of the decay of dumped organic material (combined with collapsing timber and clay buildings). He points out that the removal of waste would have “required consistent, rigorous and expensive municipal action to keep the urban environment clean” (ibid.). In the fourth century carrying out this task and the enforcement of regulations concerning the disposal of garbage may have become beyond the abilities and financial resources of the municipal authorities, with the result that rubbish began to build up within the towns, particularly in empty lots and disused buildings (ibid.).

In late fourth-century **Lincoln**, garbage was being dumped next to the town wall near the lower West Gate, despite the fact that the gate was still in use (Jones 2002: 125), and in ditches along the main streets (Reece 1980: 78-79). A study of **York**’s pottery assemblages has shown that there was an increase in the dumping of refuse inside the town, particularly post *ca.* 360 (Faulkner 2000: 124). Multiple fourth-century dumps of domestic waste inside the walls of **Colchester** have been found (Faulkner 1994: 105). Evidence suggests that in the late fourth and possibly early fifth centuries, rubbish may have been dumped in the classical temple of Claudius and its precinct, by now probably disused as a temple (ibid., 105-106; Drury et al 1984: 35-36). Before the end of the fourth century, in parts of **Gloucester**’s forum where paving stones had taken out of the piazza, garbage had piled up. Other parts of the forum floor were covered by grey loam mixed with a bit of mid fourth-century pottery, building rubble, and a quantity of bones, “suggesting the dumping of rubbish in unoccupied areas” (Wacher 1995: 164; Hurst 1972: 58). In late fourth-century **Chichester**, garbage was accumulating on the streets and in courtyards such as that of House 2 in the Tower Street and Chapel Street region, when the pits there for night soil and domestic food refuse stopped being emptied at some point in the late fourth century (Down 1978: 45; 1981: 134). “[F]ood debris, including thousands of oyster shells ..., had accumulated on top of the gravel surface of the courtyard” (ibid., 1981: 134). Rubbish also piled up in the courtyard of a public building, the possible *temenos*, in **Cirencester**’s *Insula* IV south-east of the forum (Holbrook 1998: 122, 139). Soil mixed with pottery, mid-fourth century coins, and a large quantity of animal bone appears to have been dumped there on multiple occasions. This was

probably the “accumulation of a midden of butchery waste”, with the soil added to reduce the smell from the rotting cattle carcasses (*ibid.*, 135, 136).

The dumping of waste in open spaces inside **Verulamium** seems to have happened throughout the town’s history, but at the end of the Roman period this increased in scale to the point where the “accumulation of large quantities of domestic rubbish” resulted in the formulation of “substantial deposits” (Niblett 2001: 130). Garbage began to be scattered over the grounds of and even within many abandoned large town houses in the second half of the fourth century (Faulker 2000: 126; Mattingly 2006; 342). Most impressive of all, however, was the “massive dump” that built up inside Verulamium’s theatre in the later part of the century (*ibid.*, 124). Kathleen Kenyon, in her excavation of the theatre in the 1930s, discovered that its *orchestra* was filled with more than 1.5 metres of dark earth, which appeared to have been created by the decomposition of vegetable waste (Faulker 1996: 84). “The fill of the theatre very likely represents large-scale rubbish dumping, perhaps from the market hall across the road” (*ibid.*, 90). Based on the latest datable evidence from the dump, coins of Theodosius, Sheppard Frere assumed the theatre must have been abandoned and turned into a rubbish tip around 380-390, though Faulkner (1996: 90) thinks that this may have occurred by as early as the mid fourth century. This build-up of waste in both public and private building sites and other areas of late fourth-century Verulamium points to not only the abandonment of these buildings, but also perhaps to a breakdown of municipal services at this time.

In this chapter, not only has a decline in urban regulation and disposal of rubbish been shown in a number of the towns, but also the decay visible in other areas of town infrastructure. The maintenance and use of the commercial waterfronts of several towns was clearly in decline. The repair and upkeep of roads was much less frequent in the later part of the fourth century, and officials were increasingly unable to prevent or perhaps unconcerned about the narrowing or blocking of town streets by encroaching buildings. The neglect of sewers and drains resulted in their clogging and even flooding in some towns, and the water supply appears to have become a problem, at least in certain towns. This general breakdown of public services suggests that urban administration was

collapsing and reinforces the possibility that the towns of Roman Britain may have been in serious difficulty in the later fourth and fifth centuries.

Section Four: The Disposal of Human Remains

The changes and deterioration witnessed in various areas of town life in Britain during the Roman period and soon after the end of the Roman occupation can also be seen in urban patterns of the disposal of the dead. This chapter will look at the transformation that occurred in the manner of burial in fourth- and fifth-century Romano-British towns. This will include a survey of the evidence for the change and decline of standards and practices in urban extramural cemeteries, such as the inclusion of grave goods and coffins, the management of these cemeteries, and respect for Roman laws and traditions concerning the dead. The late fourth- to early fifth-century disuse of these cemeteries will also be examined. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of late burials inside the walls of the Roman towns, contrary to Roman laws concerning the disposal of the dead. These changes will demonstrate the disruption of Romanized life and of order and Roman law in the towns in the late fourth and fifth centuries.

Changes and Decline in Standards in Urban Cemeteries

A decline is visible particularly after about AD 370 in the extramural cemeteries of the administrative towns of Roman Britain. The changes that occurred reflect the transition happening at this time in other segments of Romanized society in Britain. The slowdown and eventual collapse of the Romano-British economy is visible in the decline in quantity and later almost total cessation of goods used in burials. These items may have become too expensive or difficult to obtain. The “breakdown of urban services” that was occurring (Arnold 1984: 38) can be seen, for example, in the decline of the management of the cemeteries. This change in the way the cemeteries were run could point to a scarcity of skilled workers and specialists, and a collapse of organization within the urban areas, as the towns began to decay and depopulate. A lack of respect for traditional Roman laws and beliefs concerning the dead, demonstrated by the violation and reuse of older burial monuments and sarcophagi, indicates that the changes may have even been affecting the society at a psychological or moral level. The evidence for these changes in the extramural town cemeteries provides a clear demonstration of the late

fourth- and early fifth-century disintegration of Romanized society on economic, organizational, and cultural levels.

Decline and Disappearance of Goods Used in Burials

There was a decline in the number of burials furnished with grave goods over the course of the fourth century, and particularly in the final quarter of the century. “The evidence suggests that in the fourth century, the number of graves provided with objects was falling fast, and that in the fifth century the deposition of grave goods virtually ceased” (Clarke 1979: 357). During the third century and into the early fourth, one-quarter to one-half of all graves contained offerings of some sort (ibid., 371). Pottery vessels had been the most common type of grave good in Roman Britain, and were still fairly common in earlier fourth-century burials. Vessels were practically the only grave furniture provided at the Trentholme Drive cemetery in York up to the beginning of the fourth century, and at Lankhills cemetery in Winchester, they were in “at least nineteen percent of all burials” of the early fourth century (ibid., 359). This pattern was significantly altered in the second half of the century. The initial change was a notable decrease in the deposition of pottery vessels in graves; this was reduced to a minimal level (ibid., 359-360). By the final decades of the fourth century vessels had virtually disappeared from burials (ibid., 371). Other types of grave goods such as personal ornaments were also affected. The end of the Roman period “witnessed the almost total abandonment of grave furniture” (ibid.). At this same time, a decline is also visible, first in the number and size of nails used to build coffins, and then in the coffins themselves, with coffins practically disappearing in the fifth century in Britain (ibid., 346). All of these changes are probably due in large part to the slowing and collapse of the economy, which undoubtedly made goods increasingly scarce.

As one of the most careful, thorough, and systematic excavations of a large Romano-British cemetery, Lankhills outside of the town of **Winchester** provides the most detailed example of the changes in burial practices at the end of Roman Britain. There was a gradual but definite decline in the number of grave goods of all types at Lankhills, but particularly of pottery, after the middle of the fourth century. This drop can also be seen at Victoria Road, another of Winchester’s extramural cemeteries (Clarke 1979: 357). The majority of pottery vessels at Lankhills came from graves that dated to

before the mid fourth century; few were from late in the century (ibid., 1975: 54; 1979: 345). The dramatic drop-off in the late fourth century seems to indicate that around this time “the specialised production and distribution of pottery was in decline” (ibid., 1979: 345). This is, in fact, what has been shown by studies of New Forest pottery (a type of fine-ware made in the same region): that production of New Forest ware had decreased substantially late in the fourth century (ibid.).

A major drop in coffin use can also be seen in the burials at Lankhills. Initially a change appeared in the use of iron nails in coffins, which declined from about 370. Coffins would increasingly be made with fewer nails, or by using wooden pegs or jointing instead (Clarke 1979: 337). The average number of nails being used in coffins dropped in the later fourth century; coffins using ten or more nails decreased by nearly half, and the nails themselves actually became a bit shorter (ibid., 345). Concurrent with this was the reduction of the number of burials using a coffin by almost half of what it had been; this process accelerated after *ca.* 390 (ibid., 144, 345). These changes “probably indicate that the raw materials needed, iron certainly and possibly even coffin-boards, were becoming more difficult and expensive to obtain” (ibid., 346).

These trends have also been observed at the extramural cemeteries of other major Romano-British towns. At the Bath Gate cemetery of **Cirencester**, grave goods were very scarce after the mid fourth century (Clarke 1979: 357). There is no indication that Bath Gate was a predominantly Christian cemetery, so a spiritual rejection of pagan burial offerings cannot be the answer here. **Colchester**'s Butt Road cemetery does seem to have had a Christian focus, which may explain why it had so few grave goods in the later fourth century. However, while prior to that time most of the burials had employed nailed coffins, some of the latest graves have no coffin or made use of hollow tree trunks instead (Watts 1998: 49, 114; Crummy et al 1993: 162; Crummy 1997: 120).

Burials found in the Kingsholm area of **Gloucester** may have belonged to a larger extramural cemetery. Though there have been some finds of lead-lined and stone inhumations in the area, only half of the late graves in a formally excavated group of eight had evidence for coffins (Hurst 1975: 272, 282-283). Furthermore, only two from the eight contained grave goods (ibid., 272). The objects in one of these burials, probably that of “a high-ranking British” male, enabled the grave to be dated to the early fifth

century (*ibid.*, 290). If that date applies generally to this group, it would coincide with the decline of the use of coffins and grave furniture in other cemeteries at around the same time.

The vast cemetery of Poundbury outside of **Dorchester** has been extensively and systematically excavated, making it a valuable resource for information on late Roman urban burial. The burials here display a decline in the number containing offerings or other objects later in the fourth century (Clarke 1979: 359), but this may be partly due to the increasingly Christian character of the main section of the cemetery. Much more significant here is the decrease in the use of coffins. For most of the fourth century, “almost every grave at Poundbury had a coffin” (*ibid.*, 354). However, the largest numbers of graves displaying greater expense, in the use of lead-lined coffins, for example, were interred before the mid fourth century. There were far fewer of these types of burials after that time (Watts 1998: 114). What was probably the latest group of burials at the cemetery was almost entirely uncoffined. Some bodies appear to have been simply placed in a dug grave. Others were given a cist (stone-lined) grave (*ibid.*). These cists were made from “reused masonry or roof tiles”, which may well have come from Roman-period structures on the site (Sparey Green 1982: 64). Once again, this would suggest that the materials needed to make “proper coffins” were either not affordable or easy to acquire any more (*ibid.*, 75).

Decline in Cemetery Management

A decline in the standards of burial can be observed in the changes in the management of the large urban cemeteries in Britain.

[A] major urban cemetery..., serving the population of the [town] and possibly the surrounding *territorium*, would require some degree of centralised administration. Such management would be necessary to ensure that a sufficient area was available for burials, maintain its upkeep, administer the allocation of individual plots, possibly to provide for the proper carrying out of burial rites, and perhaps to ensure that only burials of eligible individuals were allowed within the prescribed area. A professional class of individuals entrusted with the task of burial is known to have existed in Rome (Simmonds et al 2008: 125).

While it is not certain that there were similar professional undertakers in Britain, it can probably be assumed that this was the case, at least for the large highly organized and managed cemeteries such as Lankhills, Poundbury, and Butt Road. Robert Philpott has

seen in these managed cemeteries “the efficient use of land owned and run by the urban administration – merely an extension of late Roman bureaucracy to the management of cemeteries” (Sparey-Green 2003: 98).⁸⁵

Along with other elements of town administration, the management of these urban cemeteries began to break down in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. A uniform standard in burial at a cemetery, such as with body position or orientation, seems to have been increasingly replaced with a significant variation in rites (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 134). After *ca.* 370, the preparation of the graves also became haphazard, with grave-pits shallower and more sloppily dug (*ibid.*; Arnold 1984: 38). Less care was taken to avoid disturbing previous graves. It is likely that these changes point to a scarcity or even disappearance of the professional burial specialists, the undertakers, leaving family members and acquaintances responsible for burial rites (Arnold 1984: 38; Sparey-Green 1982: 75). The scarcity of coffins in the latest phases of these cemeteries may also be related: the decline of professional undertakers may have left few skilled in their construction.

Lankhills (**Winchester**) again provides the best example to illustrate the decline in burial standards and management that was occurring in urban cemeteries at the end of Roman Britain. Lankhills was, for much of the fourth century, the ultimate managed British cemetery: “In terms of organisation, a strictly disciplined approach to cemetery management prevailed, with graves arranged in rows with little intercutting of one by another” (Ottaway 1992: 108). During that time, the burials appear to have been oriented in relation to the Cirencester road (*ibid.*).

However, this discipline began to slacken after around AD 370. The graves were more shallowly dug and “few had squared corners or smoothed sides” (Clarke 1979: 144). The previous standard burial position of extended and supine began to be varied, with fewer bodies being placed in this position (*ibid.*; Arnold 1984: 38).⁸⁶ As noted above, there was also a decline in coffin use at this time, perhaps reflecting a drop in the number of people skilled in their construction. “All of these changes ... were accentuated

⁸⁵ While this claim seems logical, it is not universally accepted. See Sparey-Green 2003: 98ff.

⁸⁶ These changes in body position may possibly represent, rather than simply sloppy burials, a trend toward different types of position that may have been part of a late fourth-century pagan revival. See Watts 1998: 45-46. However, Lankhills was not a Christian cemetery in any case.

after *ca.* 390” (Clarke 1979; 144). From this time, an increasing number of graves were dug ignoring the preferred cemetery orientation (west-east) and layout (*ibid.*, 144, 351). After *ca.* 400, there was a substantial rise in the number of prone or on the side burials and other divergent body positions, and in the quantity of shallow and poorly-dug graves (*ibid.*, 352-353). The “changes show less trouble was taken over burial. ... It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the organisation of burial was breaking down” and that “[w]hatever had passed in the earlier fourth century for an undertaking business may now have been in rapid decline, so causing disorder and irregularity to permeate the whole cemetery” (*ibid.*, 144).

Elements of this pattern can be seen in other extramural cemeteries. The late uncoffined and tree trunk burials at Butt Road (**Colchester**) have already been mentioned above. Earlier burials at this cemetery were also cut into by later graves. As well, some of the graves of the late uncoffined group follow various alignments divergent from the orientation of the earlier burials (Crummy et al 1993: 30). Some of the latest graves at the St Albans Abbey cemetery outside of **Verulamium** also ignore the previous west-east orientation in their “irregular alignment”, suggesting to the excavators that “cemetery order may have been breaking down” (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001: 63). The latest group of eight burials at Kingsholm, **Gloucester**, has half of its graves lacking coffins, three skeletons prone rather than following the supine body position of the majority, and three (not all the same three) following orientations different from the north-south alignment of the rest (Hurst et al 1975; 282-283).

Aspects of these trends suggesting the breakdown of managed cemeteries can also be seen in **York**. Some of the late fourth-century burials from the Castle Yard cemetery were interred in shallow graves (Ramm 1971; 188). At Trentholme Drive, “later graves frequently cut through the earlier ones, often only a short time after burial, which led to half-decomposed limbs, heads and torsos being scattered in all directions” (Wacher 1995; 186). The violation of older burials in York and reuse of their sarcophagi (see below) could also point to a lack of proper management in the town’s cemeteries. Careless burial practices were seen among the later graves of **Cirencester**’s Bath Gate cemetery. The digging of late burials caused much damage to earlier ones, cutting into them and leaving few completely intact, “frequently paying scant attention to earlier [graves], the disturbed

and scattered bones being tossed aside” (McWhirr et al 1973: 198; 1979: 66; Darvill and Gerrard 1994; 81). The fifteen examples of prone inhumations could also “indicate careless burial” (McWhirr 1973; 198).⁸⁷

Changes in cemetery management were clearly also going on at Poundbury (**Dorchester**) in the late fourth and early fifth centuries: “there was a decline in the care taken with the latest burials in the main cemetery” (Watts 1998: 49). Not only were most of the stratigraphically latest graves missing coffins or placed in cists made from reused materials robbed from nearby structures, but the graves themselves were more shallow and “less neatly dug” than previous interments (Esmonde Cleary 1989; 134; Sparey Green 1982: 64). The burials no longer were laid out in ordered rows such as had dominated the cemetery prior to this, and in their irregular distribution overlapped the earlier graves (Sparey Green 1982: 64-65; 1996: 129; 2004: 106). Thus it appears that at Poundbury, too, “the administration of the cemetery was breaking down” (ibid., 1982: 75). Watts (1998: 49) sees it as evidence of “a decline of civic and/or religious order in the last decades of the Roman occupation.”

Lack of Respect for Traditional Roman Laws and Beliefs Concerning the Dead

Perhaps most surprising of the late Roman evidence for changes in the burial rites is the treatment of earlier graves and funeral monuments in the cemeteries of **York**. This lack of respect for Roman laws and traditions is a strong indication that Romanized society in York and Britain in general was in trouble. According to Roman belief, burials were not to be disturbed. “In Roman sepulchral law the dedication *dis manibus* had the effect of making a tomb an inviolable *locus religiosus*” (Ramm 1971: 191). It seems that even in later Roman times – the fourth and fifth centuries – it was assumed that the resting places of the dead should be treated with respect and that their violation was strongly prohibited (Jones 1984: 36; Sparey-Green 2003: 99).

However, in York attitudes had changed. There began to be a reuse of earlier stone coffins for late burials which involved “the wholesale violation of tombs” (Ramm 1971: 191). Two later third-century inscribed stone sarcophagi at the Castle Yard cemetery, which would once have been kept in a monumental tomb or burial vault, were reused and interred in the ground as was usual for burials at the end of the Roman period

⁸⁷ But see note 86 for an alternative interpretation.

(Jones 1984: 36). The inscription on one of the sarcophagi indicated that it had originally been for a centurion from *Legio VI* named Aurelius Super; the inscription on the other was to a different centurion's wife, Julia Victorina. Her coffin, however, was occupied by a man (*ibid.*, 36, 40). This reburial of the sarcophagi is believed to have been done in the late fourth century, based on the graves' stratigraphy and the dating of jewellery finds (Ramm 1971: 187-188; Jones 1984: 36).

The Mount cemetery also contained burials that reused coffins and tombstones. The inscription on one of these was to Aelia Severa, "*honesta femina*", thought to be a decurion's wife or daughter (Ramm 1971: 188). Used as a lid for this coffin was a tombstone originally for Flavia Augustina, the wife of a former *Legio VI* soldier (*ibid.*). The occupant of the reburied sarcophagus was an adult male (Ottaway 2004: 140). There are additional examples from late York of this practice, such as the reuse of the coffin of Simplicia Florentina, the young child of a centurion (Ramm 1971: 188) and that of Julia Fortunata, which also contained male remains (Ottaway 2004: 140). Two others at The Old Railway Station cemetery are also thought to have possibly been reused, the coffin of a sevir's wife, and that of a decurion (Ramm 1971: 188).

This evidence for the late fourth-century reuse of third-century sarcophagi and tombstones suggests that York's residents "no longer felt the need to respect the graves of their predecessors. This change would seem to signify a new outlook, perhaps occasioned by social and economic upheavals, but possibly by a Christian unconcern for the graves of pagans" (Jones 1984: 40). However, it is not certain that the late burials were in fact exclusively Christian graves. It is interesting and may be relevant that the violated graves appear to be primarily ones connected with members of the political and military establishments of York and their families. Perhaps some sort of anti-establishment message was being given in York in the late fourth century. Whether or not this was the case, the evidence demonstrates a weakening of Romanized culture and values, and of traditional Romanized society, in York at this time.

The Disuse of Urban Extramural Cemeteries in Roman Britain

"Cemeteries are potentially an excellent measure of the vitality of urban life" (Mattingly 2006: 343). Evidence suggests that the large extramural cemeteries of fourth-century Britain towns went out of use and were abandoned early in the fifth century

(*ibid.*). Burial does not seem to have moved from these cemeteries to other extramural sites in most cases (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 148). It may, in some of the towns, have been moving inside the walls (Salway 1993: 341), but the intramural cemeteries of the fifth century (to be considered below) seem to have been considerably smaller, with far fewer burials. A general abandonment of the urban cemeteries provides a powerful indication of a significant depopulation of the towns: if “there was no longer a parent population dying”, the cemeteries would obviously not be needed (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 148). This would support the concept that Romanized town life had lost its importance by the early fifth century.

York's cemeteries may have gone out of use a bit sooner than those of some of the other towns. There is evidence for the use of the Castle Yard cemetery and the small Coppergate burial ground into the late fourth century (Jones 1984: 36; Ottaway 2004: 128). The Trentholme Drive cemetery seems to have been used to the end of the fourth century (Wacher 1995: 186). But the archaeologists are neither providing evidence nor arguing for the continuation of the cemeteries into the fifth century.

The number of graves found in the area of Kingsholm in **Gloucester** would suggest that there had been a sizeable cemetery here. One grave, in a group of eight that was carefully excavated, has been dated by its grave goods to the early fifth century. But other burials noted or recovered from the Kingsholm area do not include finds that would point to a similar or later date. No other evidence of later graves was mentioned in the Kingsholm site report (Hurst et al 1975: 272, 294).

The Bath Gate cemetery at **Cirencester** also appears likely to have been abandoned soon after the early fifth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 148; Mattingly 2006: 343; Watts 1998: 26). The latest burial which could be dated contained a coin – a *siliqua* of Honorius (395-406) - under the lumbar vertebrae of the skeleton. The location of the coin under the body enables the excavators to claim that this burial at least, was probably dug after 400 (McWhirr et al 1982: 105, 127; 1973: 199; Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 81). However, they do not provide any evidence to argue that the cemetery remained in use beyond the early fifth century.

The large urban cemeteries of Lankhills and Victoria Road in **Winchester** both appear to have gone out of use early in the fifth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 148;

Mattingly 2006: 343; Salway 1993: 341). The excavator was unable to uncover evidence for Lankhills' use beyond *ca.* 410, so this is the assumed date of its abandonment (Clarke 1975: 53, 44; 1979: 4). Which graves were the latest was determined by their “horizontal and vertical stratigraphy”; some of these graves contained Theodosian coins of the very late fourth to beginning of the fifth century. However, “no recognizable fifth-century objects were found (e.g. metalwork decorated in the Quoit-brooch style)”, therefore, *ca.* 410 was set as the date when burial stopped here (ibid., 1979: 4). The closing of the cemeteries listed above provides strong evidence for the depopulation of the towns they served at the end of the Roman period.

Two sections of the late Roman cemetery at St Albans Abbey (**Verulamium**) have been excavated. The southern section went out of use in the late fourth century, with no additional graves added, when it was covered over with a surface made from gravel (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001: 45, 62). Found on top of this surface was a significant quantity of pottery and glass sherds, and of late Roman coins. Ten of these coins belong to the last decade of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth century: eight of the House of Theodosius (388-402), one of Arcadius (388-402), and one of Honorius (394-402). The amount of glass fragments and pottery sherds is “comparable to the find composition from Romano-British sanctuaries”, and may have come from food and drink stalls set up for feasts at a shrine near St Alban's grave (presuming that it was actually located nearby) (ibid., 62). This gravel surface seems to have remained in use into the early fifth century (ibid.).

The northern area continued in use as a cemetery after the function of the southern part had changed. The excavators claim that the latest graves here were later than those of Lankhills, though they were still “distinctively ‘late Roman’” in character, so they were unlikely to be later than the fifth century (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001: 62). St Albans Abbey's latest graves had fewer grave goods or other finds than the late graves at Lankhills, but the burials were made in coffins with large nails (ibid.). Nails and coffins were quickly going out of use in the early fifth century, and the excavators provide no evidence to support their claim that the St Albans Abbey graves were later than the latest at Lankhills. It seems more likely, then, that the burials from St Albans belongs to the late Roman period, with interment ending not later than at Lankhills, and possibly even

earlier. This site may have retained a ceremonial or religious importance into the fifth century, but its use as a place of burial for the town of Verulamium appears to have ceased.

Dating the end of the use of the Butt Road cemetery of **Colchester** is very problematic, as there were few grave goods to assist with the endeavour. The latest closely datable finds cannot be placed after the 360s to 370s. This makes it “difficult to argue the case for any burials being as late as the 390s or the early fifth century” (Crummy et al 1993: 5). The excavators believe that the cemetery might have extended beyond the excavated area, and that later burials might have been located there (*ibid.*), but they are not able to provide any evidence that this is more than speculation.

The excavators have, however, attempted to demonstrate that some burials which lack finds may be perhaps pushed into the later decades of the fourth century or even the beginning of the fifth, through their stratigraphy. One example of this comes from the *ca.* 350 extension of the cemetery into Plot B. There is a sequence of four graves there; dating evidence indicates that the earliest two in the sequence must be later than *ca.* 360. The fill of these graves “contains late Roman shell-tempered ware which is likely to have reached Colchester in the 360s/70s” (Crummy et al 1993: 160). During the sequence of four graves, the subsequent burials cut into the grave pit but not the coffin, indicating that each successive one was sufficiently recent for undertakers to be able to still know or discern where the previous burial was located. This makes it likely that the sequence took place over a period of forty years or less (*ibid.*). This could potentially take the end point into the beginning of the fifth century, but it may not have been nearly that late.

Some other graves in the cemetery can be suggested to have been interred after AD 360-370. Grave 15, the final one of a sequence of three, “could, in stratigraphic and finds evidence, be as late as 380” (Crummy et al 1993: 160). It is likely that the earliest grave in the sequence dates later than 360. “[S]uspended” from an armband included in Burial 15 were two House of Valentinian coins (364-375), both showing wear (*ibid.*, 162). This means that the earliest possible date for this burial is 364, but a date from the mid 370s or later is more likely (*ibid.*).

There are combs, “deposited or residual”, in eight burials at Butt Road; these may also suggest a very late date (Crummy et al 1993: 162). The style of the combs found in

Grave 109 might place it as late as the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century, but “there are no well-dated parallels to allow this supposition to be confirmed” (ibid.). A grave stratigraphically later than one of those containing the combs is likely to date to *ca.* 380 or later. In an example of a sequence of five graves, there was a residual comb in the second burial of the sequence, Grave 685, which probably dates to later than *ca.* 365. However, as is typical at Butt Road, the stratigraphy indicates that there may not have been a significant stretch of time between the burial with the comb and the last interment of the sequence (ibid.).

As noted in a previous section, the cemetery at Butt Road also included a number of graves with alignments that diverged from the standard one, and others without coffins. It is possible that these were later still than the burials discussed above (Crummy et al 1993: 162). The accompanying probable church on the edge of the cemetery appears to have still been used for a short while after AD 400, so it is possible that despite there being no supporting evidence, the cemetery might also have been still in use then (Crummy et al 1993: 162). However, the church probably did not last much beyond 400. It was “in a dilapidated state” and “a ruin” by the end of the Roman period in the early fifth century (Crummy 1997: 124). Furthermore, evidence for activity on the Butt Road site after this time is lacking (Crummy et al 1993: 178). Thus it would seem that the cemetery was probably out of use early in the fifth century, no longer needed by a depopulated Colchester.

The main burial ground at Poundbury, **Dorchester**, belonged primarily to the fourth century (Wacher 1995: 332). A small proportion of its latest phase of graves may go beyond that into the fifth century. Poundbury seems to have transformed from the large urban cemetery of the fourth century into a small private burial ground in the fifth century for the residents of the sub-Roman settlement there.

The main cemetery, believed to be Christian, continued into the later fourth century. At this time a number of *mausolea* were built; two of these, containing possibly Christian- or Biblical-themed scenes painted on wall plaster, may have been used into the early fifth century, perhaps as cemetery churches (Sparey-Green 2004: 103, 106). The latest graves that can be dated by coins belong to the third quarter of the fourth century (ibid., 1996: 148). This may be the final period of the managed urban cemetery with its

rows of burials in coffins. The latest finds that can be closely dated are three coins of the House of Valentinian (364-375), found in confined graves of the managed cemetery (ibid., 1982: 67). After that point, Poundbury's use as a large urban cemetery serving Dorchester seems to have been winding down.

The stratigraphically latest phase of burials on the site at Poundbury are shallowly dug, lacking coffins and some contained within cists (stone-lined graves), "often overlapping" the older rows of graves (ibid., 2004: 106; 1996: 129). "This series could have co-existed with the pattern of post-Roman activity, most of the graves lying on the open ground" of the south-east, as well as focused around the painted *mausolea* (ibid., 2004: 106; 1996: 129). As indicated in an earlier section, some of the cists reuse paving stones and roof tiles from Roman-period structures (ibid., 1982: 67). This late group does not seem to be so much a part of the urban cemetery as "a late development marking a limited reuse of the ground", and not earlier than the late fourth century (ibid.). Poundbury as a large cemetery must therefore have come to an end by the early fifth century or even the late fourth (Thomas 1981: 238; Mattingly 2006: 343; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 148; Salway 1993: 341). It is likely that as Dorchester was fading as a town, a large managed cemetery was no longer required.

The earliest sub-Roman settlement consisted of a "group of simple, rectangular, post-built structures of a type ... reminiscent of the simplest Roman-period timber structures" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 178). The structures in this phase, such as a number of grain drying ovens, suggest an agricultural character to it. Sparey-Green (2004: 109) sees this as fitting with his interpretation of the site: that Poundbury had become a very early monastic settlement of some sort. The two painted *mausolea* may have been significant to the early sub-Roman settlement, as its structures were oriented with the *mausolea* (ibid., 107-108). If this were a secular settlement, it might be quite unusual for people to be living in the midst of a cemetery, especially one continuing to have some burials, but it would make more sense if this were a monastic site (ibid., 1996: 149).

The late burials had an "unusually high number of women, and particularly elderly women" (Sparey-Green 2004: 106). At Lamyatt Beacon, also in south-west Britain, there was similarly a "Christian style" post-Roman burial ground and small buildings much like "known early Christian oratories" (ibid., 109). Of the thirteen adults interred in that cemetery, ten were women, perhaps forming some sort of group or

element in the Christian community there. Something similar may have been the case for the settlement at Poundbury in the late fourth or early fifth century. This would be considered fairly early for a female monastic house, but Sparey-Green says (2004: 109) that it may simply be that scholars have not yet been able to recognize the evidence. So as Poundbury was declining and going out of use as an urban cemetery, a small Christian, perhaps even monastic, community with a substantial female element may have moved in to occupy a site of Christian significance. The examples provided in this section demonstrate that the large extramural cemeteries of the fourth-century British towns were no longer being used as such by the early fifth century, reflecting the loss of importance and of population that the urban centres appear to have been undergoing at this time.

Burial within the Towns

It was against Roman law to bury the dead within the towns; burial had to be outside the town limits (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151; Mattingly 2006: 347). This was set out in an ancient Roman law from the Twelve Tables, and confirmed in first-century BC laws from Colonia Genetiva Julia (Urso in Spain) (Sparey-Green 2003: 99). This law, which “formalise[d] a natural aversion to the presence of the dead in the midst of a community”, was “rigidly adhered to throughout the Roman period” (Bidwell et al 1979: 112). The only exception to this law appears to concern the burial of infants: “The recovery of neonatal remains in association with domestic buildings and properties is a common feature in the Roman period” (Wessex Archaeology 2009: 18).

So burial inside the walls of a town is a strong indication that the inhabitants, if any remained, were no longer practicing traditional “Roman civic norms” and values (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151). The discovery of such graves and supposed unburied bodies would suggest that these had been deposited near the end of a British community’s existence as a Romanized town (Mattingly 2006: 347), and thus will most likely belong to a time when the towns were running down – the very late fourth century – or later, after the towns had largely been abandoned. Random burials have been found inside the walls of the towns and may be fifth century in date (Bidwell et al 1979: 113; Todd 1977: 323). Archaeologists have also discovered burials on the sites of former urban public buildings, particularly forum-basilica complexes. These burials may even represent actual cemeteries. But such a use of the civic centre of a town implies the cessation of

the traditional functions and institutions that would be expected in a Roman administrative centre (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152). It has been argued that these sites prove the continuity of Roman towns. But while they do demonstrate “continued activity” inside the town walls, they signify “an overwhelming change in attitudes to planning and burial in the Roman town”, and none of them provide “proof of the survival of town life” (Dixon 1992: 147). These graves in fact show a significant break in the manner in which these types of sites had been traditionally used (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152).

Isolated Burials

At least five late graves have been discovered inside the walls of the Roman town at **Colchester**.⁸⁸ Two were in the gardens of East Hill House, those of a middle-aged man and a year and a half old child. They had been decapitated with a scalpel after death, and their heads placed between their knees. This would appear to have been a pagan practice “associated with the Celtic cult of the head” (Crummy 1997: 129). Decapitation burials of the Roman period have been found occasionally in Britain (*ibid.*), but are most common to the later fourth century. This use of a native rite is a significant turning away from the standard urban practice in what had been the earliest founded town and Romanized area in Britain.

Also in the town, in what is now called the Berry Field, a skeleton, possibly of a girl, was discovered on top of a mosaic floor. The fact that the remains were extended makes it likely that this was an actual grave (Crummy 1997: 130). Since this body was found relatively near the decapitation burials, it has been suggested that both sites may have been connected to a single cemetery. But the mosaic had been covered with a significant layer of topsoil before the body was placed there, indicating “a long enough interval of abandonment of the house” containing the mosaic for the soil to build up prior to the burial (*ibid.*). Thus the mosaic burial may have been at a later time than the decapitations (*ibid.*).

There is yet another set of two burials from inside the town, within a fourth-century large aisled building on Culver Street that has been interpreted as a barn

⁸⁸ According to Faulkner (1994: 105), as many as eight late Roman inhumations have been found inside the walls of Colchester, but unfortunately he provides no details of the additional three not discussed here.

(Crummy 1992: 112, 114) or possibly as an imperial warehouse for storing collected tax in kind (Faulkner 1994: 106; 2000: 128-129). It would seem that the burials occurred while the building was actually “still standing”; they also look to be late Roman rather than sub-Roman in appearance (Crummy 1997: 130). One of the burials was almost completely destroyed. The other was again of a pagan type, with the decapitated body placed in the grave on its side, in a flexed position (Crummy et al 1992: 114; Crummy 1997: 130). Both were uncoffined and orientated with the heads to the south.

Radiocarbon dates were obtained from the skeletons, recalibrated to an approximate range of AD 225-375 (Crummy et al 1992: 114-115). These burials must surely belong to the end point of that range. The burial of adults within a standing, possibly government building rather than in a cemetery indicates not only the probably abandonment of this building, but also a swift, radical, and early transformation of urban societal norms in this town. The interment of bodies within the town, using rites that diverged from the more standard approaches of the time, suggests that traditional Roman practices were quickly beginning to disintegrate in late fourth and early fifth century Colchester.

Inside the Roman town limits of **Cirencester**, a couple of bodies have been found separately in a roadside ditch, as reported in 1959 by Graham Webster (Arnold 1984: 38). Wachter (1976: 16) believes that the ditch was dug late in the life of the Roman town, “to contain the silt from the street surface” that would build up as a result of heavy use, and then be washed off by rain. However, the ditch was not filled with silt, but with organic matter possibly from the decay of weeds and dead leaves, suggesting that significant traffic on the road had stopped soon after the ditch was dug (ibid.). The two bodies were discovered at a couple of different points in this ditch. According to Wachter (ibid.), “it would seem that they had either been thrown into the ditch, or that the people had lain down and died”, perhaps due to some epidemic. The abandonment of bodies in ditches “in the centre of the Roman town, ... discarded without proper burial, point[s] to both a breakdown of civil administration and to a decline in the town population” (McWhirr et al 1982: 26). However, that the bodies had just been “left to rot” (Arnold 1984: 38) is unlikely. If this had happened, “the corpses would surely have been dismembered by scavenging animals within the course of a few days” (Bidwell et al 1979: 113). It seems more probable, then, that these bodies were actually given a burial of sorts. This may

have occurred during the fifth century; there are examples from earlier in Roman Britain of “haphazard” and less than careful burials, though outside of the town walls (Todd 1977: 324).⁸⁹ If the fifth century is the correct date, the burial of bodies in a roadside ditch in the middle of Cirencester would indicate that town life here must have been well over.

A grave containing the remains of four individuals was discovered in the town of **Canterbury**, near where the main Roman road and Roman theatre had been (Bennett 1981: 280). The back gardens of several properties on Stour Street contained part of the courtyard of a colonnaded structure that was likely a temple enclosure (ibid., 1980: 406-407; 1981: 280). There had been a shrine and an external portico in this part of the temple precinct until the structures were dismantled in the late third or early fourth century and replaced by a “sequence of courtyards” (ibid., 1980: 407; 1981: 280).

A five to ten centimetre layer of dark loam had built up over the final courtyard, and may represent “an abandonment layer post-dating Roman activities in the city” but prior to Saxon settlement (Bennett 1980: 407). A deep pit was cut through this. Within the pit was a multiple burial, over which there may have been some sort of wooden structure, though this latter part is not certain. The burial contained the bones of two adults (a male and a female), two children, and two dogs, possibly indicating “a family group” (ibid.). The bodies were placed in the pit in a position seated against its side (Arnold 1984: 38). Late Roman jewellery and glass beads were associated with the adult female and the children (Brooks 1986: 87; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151). Based on these grave goods, Catherine Johns dated the burial to the early fifth century (Brooks 1988: 103). M. Guido believes the beads to be of Germanic origin, which could push the burial ahead in time to perhaps the late fifth century; however, the “balance of opinion” of scholars is that the beads were not Germanic (Brooks 1988: 108). This burial, even with the earlier of the two dates, would appear to be later than most of the sites from late Roman Canterbury. The fact that the burial cut into the dark earth suggests that this area of Canterbury may have been largely abandoned for a period (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151). This grave inside the town “confirms other evidence of breakdown of civic

⁸⁹ However, the excavation report notes the one of these bodies was associated with medieval pottery (Todd 1977: 323 n. 18). Even if this pottery were just in the fill of the ditch, it raises the possibility that this particular burial was neither late Roman nor sub-Roman, but perhaps medieval in date (ibid.).

discipline” in late fourth- and early fifth-century Roman Canterbury (Brooks 1998: 103), seen in such things as the sewer flooding, blocked roads, disuse of the public baths, and the building of wooden structures inside the baths’ shell. The burial, combined with the presence of the dark earth beneath it, may suggest that this part of the town was no longer populated.

Possible Intramural Cemeteries

Late burials within **Exeter** may have been part of an actual cemetery in the centre of what had been the Roman town. At some point after the forum-basilica had been dismantled late in the Roman period, and pits dug on the site for bronze-working and possibly other purposes, at least six bodies were inhumed here. The burials were “contained within an area measuring twenty-eight by seventeen metres which extended across the site of the north-east corner of the forum-courtyard and basilica, and over a street running along the south-east of these buildings” (Henderson and Bidwell 1982: 150).

Cut into the forum were the very fragmentary remains of the grave of a woman. Four others were set out “in a line ... across the south-west wall of the basilica nave” (Bidwell et al 1979: 111). There was almost nothing remaining of the burial furthest to the south-east; the other three cut into the floor of the basilica were males. All these were beneath later burials of the seventh to tenth centuries. One further grave had been cut into the adjacent street. None of these early burials had evidence for coffins or grave goods. The three intact burials from the basilica nave were radiocarbon dated. One provided a date of AD 1070 which was likely “anomalous”, but the other two came back as AD 420 and 490, suggesting an average date of *ca.* 450 for the burials (*ibid.*).

There may have been other burials in addition to these six, destroyed by the digging of later graves. In the nave’s south-west wall was a robber trench containing human bones which may have come from disinterred burials in this area. The trench itself was “sealed by five burials of eighth-tenth century date” (Bidwell et al 1979: 111). However, it is not at all clear how numerous the burials in this early cemetery were (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152).

The burials found in the basilica seem to have been set out in a row, and followed a common orientation with the head to the north-west. This might indicate that they were

part of a larger “planned cemetery” (Bidwell et al 1979: 111-112). The graves were probably oriented to a feature beyond the area of the excavation, perhaps adjacent streets or Roman walls still standing at the time, or possibly a late Roman church near the forum, or some combination of these things (Henderson and Bidwell 1982: 150; Bidwell et al 1979: 112).

The cemetery is thought to perhaps have been Christian, though the orientation was not the typical Christian east-west, and the lack of grave goods may simply be a sign of poverty or their unavailability at that time. But this early cemetery was followed by two others, the first one likely associated with a monastery of middle Saxon date, and the second with an apsidal church, the Saxon minster (Henderson and Bidwell 1982: 148; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152). “It may thus be possible to postulate more-or-less continuous activity on this site in the center of Exeter, but the appearance of burials over the site of the forum equally suggests discontinuity of institutions and functions” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152. Not only had traditional Roman civic values and regulations about the disposal of the dead altered, but streets in the centre of the town were clearly being disused, as indicated by the grave cut through the one adjacent to the forum. Exeter was no longer operating as a traditional Romanized town, if indeed it was still populated and a town at all. It may, however, have retained a symbolic importance, with its civic heart transformed into a religious and ceremonial centre

A burial ground with striking similarities to that in Exeter was found in the courtyard of **Lincoln**’s forum. The argument for this one to be Christian is stronger, because of the two structures that may have been early churches which were discovered on the site. But the proximity of the burials to the Roman period is not completely clear, as the date of the churches themselves is uncertain: as noted in the section on public buildings, they may be as early as the late fourth century, or possibly as late as the seventh. Churches or burial grounds on the site of Lincoln’s forum in the late fourth or fifth centuries, if those dates are correct, would represent a dramatic step away from the ideals of a Roman-style town.

Burials on the site of the forum courtyard may have begun during the time when the second possible church, the apsidal Structure 4, was in use, or possibly after the building had been dismantled. Excavators believe that it is unlikely that the burials began

prior to *ca.* 400 because of the Roman prohibition against intramural burial (Steane and Vince 1993: 74), but such graves may have begun to be interred at an earlier date than that in some urban communities.

Structure 4's north-south slot held the posts for the chancel screen which divided the apse and the nave (Steane et al 2006: 194, 280). Two inhumations cut the fill of this slot, either put into the slot at the time of the apsidal church's construction, into the constructed building, or after the structure was dismantled (*ibid.*, 154, 157; Steane and Vince 1993: 74). One of the burials was given a radiocarbon date of AD 250-650, providing an average date of *ca.* 450. The second, however, had a radiocarbon date of 370 BC-AD 220, with an average in this case of *ca.* 25 BC – in the pre-Roman Iron Age (Steane et al 2006: 157). This date could be anomalous, but the excavators think instead that this was a re-interment of a much earlier grave that had been disturbed by the post-Roman burials, and that it might have been placed in the slot “as a foundation deposit” (*ibid.*, 157, 280).

Near the apsidal church was a cist burial, which contained no remains of a body, which seems to have been moved elsewhere, but it did include a hanging bowl of seventh-century date near the grave's edge (Steane et al 2006: 154, 194). This burial may have been put in during Structure 4's lifetime, but did not appear to be stratigraphically connected with the apsidal building, so it may have been later (*ibid.*, 158; Steane and Vince 1993: 74). It “may relate to a graveyard which dated between Structure 4” and the next building in the sequence here, the single-cell, stone-founded Structure 5, a funerary monument or small church of middle or late Saxon date (Steane et al 2006: 192, 194, 280).

The graveyard mentioned above was found in the area around the site of these structures and contained inhumations which cut into the Roman levels below (Steane et al 2006: 154). From the stratigraphy, some of the burials would seem to be older than Structure 5, but probably later than Structure 4. This indicates the presence of a graveyard here in the time between the demolition of the apsidal church and the building of the single-celled structure (*ibid.*, 161). Some of the inhumations provided radiocarbon dates, the three earliest of these being AD 390-680, 420-690, and 450-770, providing an average date for these in the sixth century (*ibid.*).

A consideration of the dates of the burials discussed and their interrelationships with these structures on the forum site makes possible the proposal of a sub-Roman sequence. The two earliest churches may have belonged to the fifth century, perhaps its first half, though a later date remains possible. The burials may have begun by around *ca.* 450, as in Exeter, but seem to have definitely been underway during the sixth century, if not sooner. However, if both the burials in the north-south slot of Structure 4 are re-interments, and the later of the two bodies was the actual foundation deposit, perhaps believed to be the remains of a fifth-century saint or holy person, the dates for the first two churches and the beginning of the burials could be later than what has been proposed here. But if they are late or sub-Roman, the burials, like those from Exeter, show not merely continuity in the site's use, but also significant discontinuity from the original purpose and use of the site as a civic centre in the Roman period (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 152). As was proposed above for Exeter, Lincoln may have gone from being an administrative and population centre to a site which primarily held a ceremonial and religious significance for the surrounding countryside.

A large number of skeletons, especially partial ones, were found in early excavations of the Roman town of **Wroxeter**, particularly in the areas of the forum and public baths. Human remains, largely incomplete, were discovered on various parts of the forum site, such as the east portico, forecourt, courtyard, nave of the basilica, and even "over the north-west drain" (Atkinson 1942: 112). A complete skeleton was found on the main Roman road (Watling Street), and another was west of the boundary wall of the forum. As well, "scattered human bones [were] found west of the forum" (ibid.), in addition to "two burials in stone-lined graves close by above House VI, which were aligned east-west" (Bidwell et al 1979: 113).

These must represent yet another appropriation of a forum area as a cemetery, perhaps of very late Roman or sub-Roman date (Dark 2000: 119-120). But in this case, it may not have been a specifically Christian cemetery, or one that strictly followed practices standard in the late Roman managed cemeteries. The skeleton from west of the boundary wall was found placed "on its side facing west" (Atkinson 1942: 112), rather than the usual Christian supine and extended with the head pointing to the west. Another skeleton found on the forum's east side, and partially on the Roman street, was an

example of a decapitation burial with the head placed by the feet (ibid., 112-113; Bidwell et al 1979: 113; Todd 1977: 323). In both the use of this area of the town and in the styles of some of the burial rites used, Wroxeter was no longer adhering to Roman urban traditions.

Bodies were also discovered in the area of Wroxeter's Roman baths. Thomas Wright's nineteenth-century excavations uncovered about a dozen in the hypocausts and area around the *frigidarium* (White and Barker 1998: 125). In the baths' entrance court, the remains of "at least three or four individuals" were found, plus those of an infant in a corner of that court, "outside the semicircular end of the hypocaust" (Ellis et al 2000: 369; Wright 1863: 364, 366). In a hypocaust "approached from the large inner court of the baths", there were three skeletons in close proximity: those of an elderly male and two females (Wright 1863: 366). The females lay extended by the north wall, while the male's remains were crouched in a corner (Ellis et al 2000: 369). A pile of Roman coins discovered near the male appears to have originally been contained in a small wooden box. Iron nails from this were lying across the coins, and some traces remaining from the wood had adhered to a few of the coins. All the coins were copper except one, and were from the later third century (Tetricus I) to the later fourth (Valens) (ibid.). Another skeleton was found in a different hypocaust east of the one with the coins, and two more bodies in the hypocaust of a small room to the south. Apparently further bodies were located in other parts of the complex, including the adjacent *macellum* (Wright 1863: 366; Ellis et al 2000: 369). By this point, the baths and the *macellum* were certainly no longer being used for their original purposes.

"There would appear to be sufficient burials present on the [baths complex] site for their occurrence to be deliberate" (Ellis et al 2000: 375). White and Barker point out (1998: 125) that it would have been easier and have required less effort to bury a body in the hypocausts by "break[ing] through the raised floor" than by having to dig a hole in the ground. The nature of the ruined buildings may have prevented a planned layout of the interments from developing (Ellis et al 2000: 375).

There is a problem in that the date of these burials is not clear. It is possible that they belong to a fairly late period beyond the late Roman and sub-Roman eras (Frere 1966: 95). However, the box of Roman coins extending to the later fourth century discovered near the elderly male's remains could be used to argue a late Roman or sub-

Roman rather than medieval date (*ibid.*). But there is a possibility that the coins represent a separate hoard left there at a date earlier than that of the burials. If this intramural cemetery does belong to the late Roman or sub-Roman period, then “these burials demonstrate that Roman civic law had to some extent broken down” in Wroxeter (White and Barker 1998: 125). It has been suggested that this was perhaps due to the influence of Christianity and to the presence of churches inside the walls of the (former) towns: Christian “followers increasingly demanded burial near a place of worship” (*ibid.*). These new values may have thus overridden the old Roman laws, beliefs, and traditions, but this may not similarly explain the use of the forum, with its non-Christian and divergent burials, as a cemetery.

Barker and White’s theorized church or “place of worship” in Wroxeter could have been in the *frigidarium* of the baths (White and Barker 1998: 125; Barker et al 1997: 296). Features of this cold room could have contributed to its appeal as a church: an east-west orientation, a vaulted roof, and a plunge pool that could have been employed as a font for baptisms (White and Barker 1998: 125; Barker et al 1997: 236). The original decoration, as it remained, “would have been suitably grand” for a church (White and Barker 1998: 225). And of course, the burials in the hypocausts around the *frigidarium* support its interpretation as a possible church. This “late and post-Roman use of public buildings as the focus for a small church and associated cemetery” seems to parallel what the evidence suggests was also occurring in Lincoln (*ibid.*). Wroxeter may have kept a symbolic importance and continued to be used as a religious centre for the surrounding area. Perhaps this could even have contributed to Wroxeter’s apparent resurgence in the sixth and early seventh century.⁹⁰

These intramural cemeteries, as well as the more isolated examples of burials inside the towns, show that Roman laws and practices were no longer being followed and that the use of the former towns had been significantly altered from the traditional Roman concept of an urban administrative centre. Perhaps a common memory of their former importance was retained, giving them some sort of status in the nearby countryside as a place to be buried. Such burial grounds may have attracted churches in the post-Roman period, where these were not already in place at the end of the Roman period or soon

⁹⁰ See Barker et al 1997, and White and Barker 1998 for discussions of this.

after, increasing their importance and providing continuity of site, though not of Romanized town life.

Section Five: Changes in Domestic and Commercial Settlement

Introduction

There were significant major changes in the occupation, of both a domestic and a commercial/ industrial nature, of the Romano-British administrative towns over the fourth century and into the fifth. These provide a significant contrast with the general pattern of settlement in the late first and second centuries discussed above in the Overview of Roman Towns in Britain. The changes were in the amount of area occupied, and in the character of the occupation, leaving none of these towns recognizable as a Romanized urban centre by the middle of the fifth century or even earlier. Occupation contracted until only a small core area or a sparse sprinkle of sites remained, and the high-status occupation of large stone or stone-founded townhouses, the dominant and most visible type of dwelling at the beginning of the fourth century, almost completely disappeared. These changes occurred earlier in some of the towns than others, but by the early fifth century, all of the provincial and *civitas* capitals had been affected.

An increase in apparent prosperity in the early fourth century can be perceived in many of the towns, at least in the form of some upgrades of public buildings at that time, and an increase in the numbers of luxury townhouses in particular. It is possible that this was connected to the reintegration of Roman Britain, after having been part of the breakaway empire of Carausius and Allectus, back into the central Roman Empire in AD 296 and into the new expanded administration and bureaucracy set up by Diocletian and his Tetrarchy, which increased the number of Britain's provinces to four. The occupants of many of the new luxury residences in the towns, especially the provincial capitals, may have been representatives of this larger bureaucracy and administration. There is also evidence in many of the towns to indicate that these were probably centres of significance to the imperial system of taxation, revenue, and military supply, as a large proportion of taxation was at this time in kind, which would have required greater numbers of officials to oversee what must have been a very complex system. The increased presence of officials in the towns, and the importance of their activities to the urban economy, must have played a major role in the prosperity of the towns early in the century. The imperial system may have been what was propping up the administrative towns in the fourth

century, as once it was gone after the end of Roman rule in the early fifth century, the towns seem to have collapsed fairly quickly.

Despite the urban renewal at the beginning of the fourth century, contraction appears to have begun early in a few of the towns, such as Colchester, London, Canterbury, and Verulamium, with houses and even neighbourhoods going out of use before the middle of the century. During the course of the century, contraction and likely population decline became a noticeable trend in more of the towns (Potter and Johns 1992: 209). It appears that the levels of population in towns, as “measurable rooms occupied” in 1,400 excavated residential structures in Romano-British towns, had dropped nearly 30 % by AD 350 from what they had been at the beginning of the fourth century, were down by 65 % of the original figure by *ca.* 375, and by the first decade of the fifth century were only 10 % of what they had been a century earlier (Faulkner 2000: 123; Mattingly 2006: 338-339)⁹¹. At the same time, few new residential areas were developed as might usually “be expected if there was mobility amongst the residential population as areas became more or less fashionable” (Arnold 1984: 40). This was not due to a lack of space, as undeveloped and vacant lots existed within the walls of many of the towns: when the town wall circuits were constructed in the second and especially the third centuries, large areas that had not been developed were included, for example at Cirencester, Wroxeter, and other towns. These wall circuits were not reduced in size at any point in the fourth or fifth centuries, though vacant areas remained.

Evidence from many of the towns shows the increasing “abandonment and non-replacement of buildings in the second half of the fourth century”, though small numbers of buildings were still being constructed or repaired, as at Winchester or Verulamium (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 131). Most administrative towns during the third quarter of the fourth century had “large areas ... falling into disuse [while] a few large stone buildings continue to flourish” (Reece 1980: 78). The changes became even more noticeable over the final twenty-five years of the century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 131). There is little evidence in the early fifth century and beyond for continuing residential, industrial, or commercial use of the large towns; they may have largely “ceased to be occupied” (*ibid.*, 1993: 11-12).

⁹¹ Unfortunately, neither Faulkner nor Mattingly provides the raw data from which these percentages were derived, references to the original studies, or estimated population sizes of the towns.

It is, however, likely that a very small, struggling, subsistence level of occupation remained in the fifth century in many or most of the former towns, though not as something recognizable as an urban centre. In a few towns, late sequences have been found showing such a continuing presence but it must represent something other than Romanized urban continuity. Such sites are only “a small minority”, both in the large towns in general and of sites within their own towns, and serve as “exceptions” rather than a norm of fifth-century continuity (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 53).

In this chapter, the evidence for the occupation of the large administrative towns in the fourth and fifth centuries will be considered, and the contracting of central and suburban areas of many of the towns will be shown. Where relevant, indications of a town’s late significance to the imperial supply system will also be noted. The transformation of the nature of the occupation will be examined, demonstrating the change, over the fourth century and into the fifth, of the types of occupation and residence found in these towns.

The Romanized town house formed the dominant building type in the late towns, as residences of the elite, until the middle of the fourth century. Some of these, however, may also have had “commercial premises along the main street frontage” of a town (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 68). The other Romanized residence type found in towns was the strip-building. These smaller, rectangular buildings were the shops and workshops of artisans and traders, as well as their homes (ibid., 78). This had been the dominant building type in the early Romano-British towns up to the mid-second century, and remained so in the smaller market towns, but far fewer of these were to be found in the fourth-century administrative centres, having been replaced in many cases by the town houses (ibid., 81). Also found in the fourth- and fifth-century provincial and *civitas* capitals are even lower-status types of dwellings. This might involve the reoccupation of vacated town houses (or a final impoverished owner occupation) in the form of “rough new surfaces” put down over mosaic or tessellated floors, hearths or ovens built over and pits cut into such floors, with dumps of rubbish in other rooms, sometimes referred to as “squatter occupation” (Faulkner 2000: 123, 124). It also appears as “tiny late Roman hovels”: insubstantial timber buildings of one or two rooms (ibid.), possibly built over the debris of a demolished town house, within its ruined shell, or over the surface of a disused street. These types of occupations were likely the homes and workshops of the

poorest residents of the town, and they are what increasingly replaces the more Romanized buildings, particularly the town houses, in the later fourth century. Examples of these in the towns will be noted, especially as they tend to represent the final “urban” occupation. Dark earth deposits, coins, and pottery also provide information for the changes in occupation in the towns, and these will be discussed where relevant.

The towns chosen for this discussion were those with the most complete and useful information. London, Cirencester, and Lincoln provide examples of towns that served as provincial capitals and were of significance to the imperial system in the fourth century. Verulamium, Colchester, Canterbury, Winchester, and Chichester represent administrative towns, *civitas* capitals, of varying importance to that system. The majority of these towns are located in south-east England, which means that the perspective provided is one primarily focused on this region. Only Cirencester, in western England, and Lincoln, farther north and in the English east midlands, are located outside of that area.

Unfortunately, there was not enough evidence available for most of the Roman administrative towns of western and northern Britain to enable a useful discussion of their occupation in the fourth and fifth centuries. The residential areas of some of these towns were excavated at a very early date, and insufficient evidence for dating was collected⁹². In some towns, the still-developing science of archaeology was not sufficiently developed to properly evaluate heavily-damaged remains⁹³. Others have not yet been subjected to extensive excavations⁹⁴, or little in the way of residential areas has been examined⁹⁵. For a number of towns, there was little available evidence⁹⁶. It is unfortunate that the nature of the accessible evidence does not provide a more complete picture of the western and northern towns of the British provinces, but the information that is there is, for the most part, in agreement with that from the towns discussed here. Notable divergences from that will be briefly considered.

⁹² Such as at Silchester

⁹³ At Exeter in particular

⁹⁴ Carmarthen

⁹⁵ Wroxeter

⁹⁶ Aldborough, Brough-on-Humber, Caistor-by-Norwich

London

Though London had suffered economic decline after the mid-second century, and a significant loss of population as a result, it remained in the fourth century the most important administrative centre in Britain. It was notable in the late third and early fourth centuries for its grand town houses, some of which may have been built at this time to accommodate officials of the newly expanded administration. However, many of these were abandoned or demolished by the mid to late fourth century and covered with dark earth, though some renovation and new construction was still ongoing in the south-east corner of the town, into which much of late fourth-century London's occupation seems to have contracted. Evidence suggests that this may have been the heart of the late administration, and it is here that some sites may have remained into the early fifth century. One may have lingered for a short while after the end of Roman rule, but beyond that, there appears to be very minimal evidence for continued occupation in Roman London.

London in the second century was not only the capital of the province of *Britannia*, but was also by far its largest town, as well as its primary port. The latter was “attested by the construction of massive quays and waterfronts, and [by] the quantities of Samian and amphorae traded through its dockyard” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 82). Beyond the waterfront was a densely built-up town of timber-framed strip-buildings occupied by traders and craftsmen who were taking advantage of the port's prosperity and contributing to it. But changes and decline affected the long-distance trade networks of the north-western empire in the later second century, with serious consequences for London as a port (ibid.). “[T]he busy commercial quarters fell silent, the timber buildings were demolished, were not replaced and became covered with ‘dark earth’”; in the fourth century, “the productive and trading capacity of London was a shadow of its former self” (ibid., 83).

A Fourth-Century Diocesan Capital

Despite the economic downturn, London remained a provincial capital and became an administrative centre of even greater significance around the beginning of the fourth century. London was probably the capital for Carausius and Allectus' breakaway empire, and they had a mint in London producing their coinage. Soon after Britain's re-

conquest by Constantius Chlorus and its return to the central empire in 296, it would have been reorganized as part of Diocletian's reforms of the administrative system (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 47). Britain was divided into four provinces, grouped together as a diocese that was governed by a *vicarius*. It is believed that the *vicarius* of Britain would have been based out of London, which was also still a provincial capital, now of the province of *Maxima Caesariensis*. The governor of this province was a *consularis*, and thus of higher rank than the governors of the other British provinces (ibid., 47, 82; Ottaway 1992: 103).

Further information is provided by the *Notitia Dignitatum* about the late fourth-century Roman administration in London, by this time referred to as *Augusta*. It is identified as the location of the diocesan *thesaurus* (treasury) and of its director, the *praepositus thesaurum Augustensium* (Merrifield 1983: 239). London would also have been the residence of the *rationalis* (comptroller) of the diocese's financial administration, and of a bishop, one having been identified as attending the AD 314 Council of Arles (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 47, 82). London's mint appears to have remained in use until *ca.* 325, and later was probably revived briefly by the usurper Magnus Maximus *ca.* 383-388 (de la Bédoyère 1992: 122). Fourth-century London was clearly a place of considerable importance for the imperial government.

The Construction of New Elite Residences in the Very Late Third to Early Fourth Centuries

The third-century slump had led to the abandonment of areas of the town by the end of the century, such as the various industrial sites west of the Walbrook (Milne 1995: 74-75). However, the construction of new elite residences appears to have marked the beginning of an era of London's increased status at the end of the third century and early in the fourth. A number of town houses were built both within the town walls and across the Thames in the suburb of Southwark. A few of these houses were found constructed over the debris of third-century dwellings on Lime Street, east of the Walbrook. One at the Lloyd's building site was a masonry town house with a hypocaust and tessellated floors, built over a coin hoard dated to at least *ca.* 280; another, at 25-30 Lime Street, was a large apsidal structure (Perring 1991: 117). A further building was constructed around this time in a vacant lot at 4-6 Cophall Avenue, also in the Walbrook area (ibid., Milne

1995:74). Probably during this same period, a large building with a hypocaust was built on the site at Newgate where a third-century temple had been. The new structure may have been a luxurious suburban villa (Perring 1991: 113), or possibly a *mansio* (inn), as its location just beyond the town walls might suggest (Milne 1995: 82; Bateman 1998: 57 n.39). New large houses were constructed in Southwark at the Courage Brewery site, which had been an industrial area until the late third century (Milne 1995: 84). Perring suggests that these houses may have been “built for senior bureaucrats brought to London by the reforms of the period” (1991: 118).

Mid to Late Fourth-Century Contraction of Settlement

London’s early fourth-century revival does not appear to have lasted for long. Evidence suggests that some of the town houses were out of use by the middle of the fourth century, with more abandoned during its second half and only a small amount of new building work to counteract this contraction. In the early to mid fourth century, a fire demolished houses at Leadenhall Court, north-east of where the forum-basilica had been. The house at the Lloyd’s building site on Lime Street also burned down around the middle of the century; none of these structures were replaced (Perring 191: 118; Marsden 1980: 169). In Southwark, much of the area where the new houses had been built had become a cemetery by the mid fourth century, indicating that this area may by now have been seen as peripheral and extramural rather than as a core part of the town (Milne 1995: 84). The remains of at least two of these houses had been buried by dark earth even before burials had been cut into them (Perring 1991: 125). A large second-century structure at the Winchester Palace site in Southwark, possibly intended “as a residence for the governor or some of his staff”, was partly torn down in the early fourth century, though some of the rooms may have stayed in use past *ca.* 350 (Milne 1995: 84). The possible *mansio* or residence at Newgate appears to have been disused and demolished, and robbed of stones by around the middle of the century, then ultimately covered with dark earth (*ibid.*, 82; Perring 1991: 125).

In the mid to late fourth century, significant numbers of sites continued to be abandoned, such as the houses at 76-80 Bishopgate and buildings at Harp Lane (Perring 1991: 125). Settlement seems to have largely contracted to the part of town east of the Walbrook, and few late fourth-century coins have been found west of the river: these

coins tend to be discovered in dark earth deposits, as at Friday Street and Aldermanbury. Most of the late coins found in the western part of the town, then, may well have been discarded in rubbish that had been dumped or “lost during the activity that produced the dark earth” (Merrifield 1983: 246). Only in one instance were late coins in the western town associated with a large structure, a town house with a hypocaust and mosaic at St Paul’s Churchyard. As the remains were found in the mid nineteenth century, it is not apparent whether the latest coins, which went up to Valens, were discovered above or below the floor of the hypocaust. Below would mean that the building had been constructed in the late fourth century, but Merrifield thinks the coins were more likely above, and that the house may have been dismantled after 367 to contribute material for the late addition to the riverside wall (1983: 246-247). The same fate may have met one of the houses on Lime Street, east of the Walbrook, which had coins of Valens and Gratian (364-375 and 367-375) in the hypocaust’s fill, and is thought to have been demolished around the same time (*ibid.*, 246). The number of coins in London later than this date is fairly low (*ibid.*; Perring 1991: 125, 127).

Dark Earth

Dark earth covered many of the abandoned areas, up to a thickness of one metre in places (Watson 1998: 101). This was not simply a phenomenon of the very late period: it was present over disused dwellings in some areas of London, from the later second and early third centuries (de la Bédoyère 1992: 76; Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58). It was present by that time at sites from Milk Street, Watling Court, Bow Lane and Newgate Street (Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58; Marsden 1980: 167). Significant quantities of dark earth were also developing over abandoned sites from the mid fourth century, in Southwark as well as London (Marsden 1980: 178). A theory put forward in the 1970s which has gained popularity is that the dark earth of London and Southwark was deliberately developed to provide soil for gardens, which filled the vacant areas of late Roman London (Perring 1991: 79-80; de la Bédoyère 1992: 76; Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58; Marsden 1980: 178). While some think that the dark earth was farmed for subsistence purposes (Marsden 1980: 178; Perring 1991: 79-80), Peter Salway has suggested in personal communication to Merrifield that the vacant dark earth areas west of the Walbrook may have been part of the grounds and gardens of an imperial

palace, similar to what is known from fourth-century Trier and Arles; however, no remains of such a palace have been found (Merrifield 1983: 247).

Furthermore, analysis of pollen in soil samples from London's dark earth has produced "very little evidence for farming or gardening", but instead for "grassland or urban wasteland" (Watson 1998: 103), implying abandonment of sites. Analysis has also suggested that the dark earth may have resulted from the disposal of rubbish (Milne 1995: 72; Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58), waste from livestock (Perring 1991: 79), or the decay of timber structures (Milne 1995: 72). Any of these three explanations would imply some continued occupation in the general area of the black earth in late Roman London. Evidence from dark earth deposits showed that the King Edward Buildings site had been employed off and on over the third and fourth centuries as a rubbish dump, by people possibly living near the main street south of the site (Watson 1998: 106).

Evidence for Lower Population Levels in Later Roman London

The evidence from disused buildings for a major drop in the population of late Roman London has been substantiated by a study carried out by Marsden and West. They looked at changes in relative population levels, based on numbers of rubbish pits, wells, and quantities of food waste from animal bones (Marsden and West 1992: 134). As a result of studying evidence for rubbish disposal in pits at sites across the town, primarily from the records of the Guildhall Museum and the Museum of London, they found that the period *ca.* 280-400 accounted for only 23.1% of rubbish pits recorded by the Guildhall Museum, and *ca.* 250-400 represented just 4.3% of pits in the records at the Museum of London. They determined that this disproportion had not resulted from a greater destruction of the later pits due to either modern or medieval development (*ibid.*, 135, 137). Marsden and West also note that "[e]vidence of the demand for water is likely to reflect the size of the urban population" (1992: 137). They found that the majority of wells, too, belonged to the earliest period of occupation in Roman London and Southwark: only 31.4% of wells within the town walls could be dated to *ca.* 150-400; for Southwark around the same time the proportion was 37% (*ibid.*). Finally, they discovered from studying animal bones from twenty-six sites of Roman London, that only 35% of the total was attributable to *ca.* 150-400 (*ibid.*). The evidence is consistent and implies "a very substantial reduction of the urban population", perhaps "by as much

as two-thirds” (ibid., 139). Unfortunately, the study could not be sufficiently refined to highlight changes within the fourth and early fifth centuries specifically, but evidence does seem to suggest that the population levels remained fairly low at this time.

The Possible Official Presence in Late Fourth- and Early Fifth-Century South-East London

There was new building work and continued occupation in the late fourth century, primarily in the south-eastern corner of the town, and perhaps due to late imperial construction activity in this area. Here, on Pepys Street, at the end of one of the main roads through town and near the current site of London Tower, evidence was uncovered for a small proportion of what must have been a large aisled building with “an external wall foundation two metres thick” (Sankey 1998: 78; Milne 1995: 87). Below the levels of this structure was a large amount of Portchester-D pottery, which indicates that it must have been constructed after *ca.* 350 (Sankey 1998: 78; Milne 1995: 87). A late date is also suggested by the reused tiles in the flooring (Sankey 1998: 80). A few fragments of window glass and marble decorations were found in “secondary contexts” and may have come from the building, but this is not certain. There was a well at the site’s edge which had been backfilled with demolition material from the building (ibid.). Sankey claims that the structure has a notable similarity to St. Tecla, a fourth-century cathedral in Milan, leading to a possible similar interpretation for the London building (1998: 80). However, it is not clear from Sankey’s report that the London example had an apse like St. Tecla, as he reconstructs it without one in his plan of the two structures (1998: 79, fig. 17). Sankey also suggests another potential interpretation: buildings of this type could be “state *horrea* - granaries of the kind used to store the *annona* (tax in kind)” (1998: 81). In the late period, these were commonly “large aisled masonry buildings”; examples have been found in Trier, Milan, and Aquileia (ibid.). Watson suggests that not only could it have been a *horreum* or warehouse, but “could also have served as a treasury” (1998: 101).

Whether or not the Pepys Street building was the treasury, it seems fairly likely that the latter was located in this part of town in the late fourth century. In the third quarter of the century, bastions had been added along the east side of the town’s defensive wall (Watson 1998: 101), and in perhaps the last dozen years of the century work was done on the river defenses in the town’s extreme south-east corner, the area of

the later London Tower (Parnell 1993: 13). “These investments may be linked with London’s important fiscal role” (Watson 1998: 101). A small hoard of a silver ingots plus gold coins of Arcadius and Honorius, likely of the early fifth century, was found during an excavation at London Tower in 1777; up to possibly three further ingots were discovered in the area in 1898 (Parnell 1993: 15). Silver ingots such as these were used by the imperial government in the late fourth and early fifth centuries as payment for officials and soldiers (ibid.; Potter and Johns 1992: 212). This strengthens the argument that official buildings such as the treasury must have been located in the area of London Tower, and that this sector must have been a sort of late imperial stronghold in the final decades of Roman rule in Britain (Parnell 1993: 16).

Settlement in the Final Years of Roman London

There are scraps of evidence suggesting some scattered late fourth and possibly early fifth century occupation in this part of London. Closest to London Tower, a building east of the White Tower was given new floors in the mid fourth century, and may have remained in use for a while into late in the century. Nearby, north-east of Wakefield Tower, a mortared floor was uncovered that was later in date than the very late work on the riverside wall in this area (Parnell 1993: 15). There may also possibly have been some occupation at the junction of Harp Lane with Lower Thames Street into the early fifth century (Hobley et al 1977: 56). At Pudding Lane, not far from London Tower, warehouses of the late first century were rebuilt as residences in the late fourth (Milne 1995: 86; Potter and Johns 1992: 212). One of these, Building 6, was further renovated in the last quarter of the century, as suggested by the 367-375 coin from its construction levels, receiving an *opus signinum* floor, a small bath house, and heated rooms (Perring 1991: 127; Potter and Johns 1992: 212). It is possible that occupation of this building continued into the early fifth century, and may have included a final phase of degraded or “squatter” occupation within the remains of the house (Perring 1991: 128). At Peninsular House, in the same area, another warehouse (Building 4) was converted to a dwelling in the late fourth century, and given a portico and new floors (ibid., 126-127). West of the Walbrook was the site of the very late third-century possible palace of Allectus on St Peter’s Hill. Timber structures of an apparently domestic nature were built

over the ruins and are thought to have been in use during the second half of the fourth century, perhaps until fairly late in the century (Milne 1995: 87; Perring 1991: 127).

Billingsgate

The best-known late structure in the south-eastern area is the building near Billingsgate on Lower Thames Street near the river. It has been suggested that this was originally a small inn, built *ca.* 200, but renovated as a residence in the fourth century (Milne 1995: 86-87; Hobley et al 1977: 54; Marsden 1980: 167; Merrifield 1983: 248). During the late period it was an L-shaped masonry courtyard building, with a wing of rooms off each corridor; those of the east wing were heated by hypocausts. “In the angle between the two wings was a small bath-house, a simple building” (Hobley et al 1977: 54; Perring 1991: 128; Merrifield 1983: 248). The building also had the luxury of green window glass (Marsden 1980: 184).

Below the ash from the last firing of the furnace of one of the rooms in the east wing, was a coin of Theodora (337-341) and sherds from a Palestinian amphora, of a type most likely from Gaza and used during the fourth and fifth centuries for transporting wine (Marsden 1980: 180; Merrifield 1983: 250; Hobley et al 1977: 54). Merrifield thinks that the bath-house might not have been used for bathing “for some time” before the abandonment of the house, perhaps due to a shortage of fuel or a loss of interest in Roman-style bathing in later years, and may instead have been used as a storehouse until at least the late fourth century (1983: 251). Eighteen coins of the fourth century were scattered over the floor of the *frigidarium* and included issues of the House of Theodosius up to Arcadius (*ibid.*, 251, 253; Marsden 1980: 184). A hoard of over 270 small bronze coins was hidden in a high spot in a wall of the house’s east wing and was spread across the floor of a furnace and corridor when the roof collapsed (Marsden 1980: 180). The majority of the coins were “very corroded and illegible”, but most of those that were able to be identified had been minted by the house of Theodosius in 388-402 (Merrifield 1983: 249). Of these, one coin of Honorius and two of Arcadius could not have been earlier than 395, indicating a *terminus post quem* for the hiding of the hoard (*ibid.*, Marsden 1980: 180).

There may have been a final “squalid” phase of degraded occupation or re-occupation of the abandoned house, marked by refuse on the floors, within which were

sherds of late handmade pottery (Marsden 1980: 182, 184; Merrifield 1983: 255), though possibly the building had by this point become simply a convenient place to dump rubbish. An early Anglo-Saxon disc brooch was found over the debris from the collapsed roof of the bath-building. A date of *ca.*440-460 has been suggested for the loss of the brooch, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the abandonment of the building (Merrifield 1983: 253-254; Marsden 1980: 182; Perring 1991: 128). It is thought that the abandonment likely occurred by around the 420s (Merrifield 1983: 254, Parnell 1993: 15). This is the only probable late sequence in London to extend so far into the fifth century.

Other fragments of East Mediterranean amphorae have been found from late sites in London. The Gaza type recovered at the Billingsgate site is found in Palestine in the fourth as well as fifth centuries, so it is not a guarantee of a fifth-century date or of very late trade (Merrifield 1983: 250). A few pieces of North African red-slip ware have also been discovered in London, “but in such small quantities from the period after 360 that they are unlikely to reflect trade with North Africa, being instead the personal possessions of officials who had moved from the continent to London” (Marsden 1980: 178). Something similar to this might also provide an explanation for the few occurrences of late East Mediterranean amphorae in London, which may only represent a few “bottles” of wine brought as personal luxuries or gifts by late Roman officials. Sherds from a further late Roman Palestinian amphora were recovered “around the quay of New Fresh Wharf”, but in late Saxon silting (Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58). Sherds of an East Mediterranean amphora were found in a refuse dump in the former public building/possible public bath complex on Cannon Street, and a piece from another amphora was “an unstratified workman’s find” from Lime Street (Merrifield 1983: 250).

The pottery from the final phase of Billingsgate was a “soft, coarse handmade ware in Roman style”, not Anglo-Saxon, and “evidently a local product of the early fifth century” (Merrifield 1983: 255). Merrifield thinks it was possibly made and supplied in the London area once the mass-produced Romano-British kitchen wares had become difficult or impossible to obtain in the very late fourth and early fifth centuries (1983: 255). This handmade pottery was also present in silt which had washed down the hill from some other site to build up over the remains of the east wing at Billingsgate. It has

additionally been found at St. Dunstan's Hill near the Coal Exchange site, "from the late layers against Bastion 5 north of Aldgate" (on the east portion of the wall circuit), in that same dump at Cannon Street from which the amphora sherds came, beyond the walls in a fourth-century context at Hammersmith, and at Old Ford, a late Roman settlement about four kilometers from the town, in a pot which also held coins of Honorius (*ibid.*; Marsden 1980: 178, 214 n.30).

There is further evidence of possible degraded or low-status, "squatter" occupation in the latest phases of Roman London. It has been suggested that this may be what the late reuse of the public building at Cannon Street represents. The reuse was in the form of an earth floor with a rough hearth on it that had been made from fragments of tiles, and fires burned against a wall that had originally been decorated with painted plaster (Marsden 1980: 184; Merrifield 1983: 250). It is possible that this part of the building had been rented out by the town to craftsmen in the later fourth century, but there is no specific evidence mentioned to indicate that the use was industrial, and the reuse occurred after "a long period of decay during which silt had gradually accumulated over the mortar floor of the room, and pieces of plaster from the walls had fallen into the silt" (Marsden 1980: 184). The hearth was eventually covered by the large heap of late Roman refuse that contained the fragments from the East Mediterranean amphora and the handmade pottery, indicating that the room had become a rubbish dump (*ibid.*; Merrifield 1983: 250).

The End of Roman London

There is very little evidence for occupation in London or Southwark after *ca.* 400. It is likely that by this time, most of the town houses constructed in the third and fourth centuries had been abandoned and there are fewer recovered later fourth-century coins than might be expected (Perring 1991: 125, 127). Even in the south-east corner around London Tower, there is minimal evidence after the very early fifth century, until the eleventh century (Parnell 1993: 15). There are few finds at all that are datable to the fifth and sixth centuries in London after the early fifth century (de la Bédoyère 1992: 126; Marsden 1980: 214 n.30; Hobley and Schofield 1981: 58; Parnell 1993: 15). Moreover, "decades of excavations have failed to uncover any post-Roman features of fifth- or

sixth-century date in the City”, not even “deep rubbish pits and wells”; “[t]he archaeological evidence is entirely consistent with the complete dereliction of the settlement” (Cowie 2008: 50).

There were Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and settlements in the area surrounding Londinium from the mid to late fifth and sixth centuries (Dark 2000: 51-52, 99; Perring 1991: 129; Cowie 2008: 52). However, the only certain stratified fifth-century Saxon artefact from within the Roman town is the mid fifth-century brooch found above the building debris at Billingsgate. “Evidence for sixth-century activity is almost as sparse, and is only indicated by a handful of artefacts, most of which are of uncertain provenance” (Cowie 2008: 50). Lundenwic, the Anglo-Saxon trading settlement that began in the seventh century, was located west of the Roman town, beyond the walls, in Aldwych (de la Bédoyère 1992: 126; Milne 1995: 89; Dark 2000: 99). It would appear that, despite its fourth-century administrative importance for the imperial government, after the early fifth century Roman London and its suburb of Southwark were, for the most part, abandoned. Roman London thus appears to have been largely deserted after the early fifth century, and lacks indications of continuity to the later Saxon settlement, which was a fresh beginning in a new location.

Lincoln

Lincoln serves as an example of a town that became a provincial capital⁹⁷ at the end of the third century as part of the restructuring brought in by Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, and had its prosperity boosted by the investment and activity brought by this and probably by a key role in the imperial supply system. However, Lincoln experienced significant changes and decline after the middle of the fourth century. Town houses went out of use, and the tradesman- and artisan-occupied suburbs went into decline. Lower-status dwellings or industrial workshops that left little trace may have found a temporary place over the ruins of abandoned buildings, but an end of town life probably quickly followed the cessation of Roman rule in Britain.

Elite Occupation in the Very Late Third and First Half of the Fourth Centuries

Lincoln was the site of a number of wealthy homes of the elite from the late third to the mid fourth centuries, located especially on the lower town's hillside. These dwellings began increasing in size and elaboration from the third century, and "must have absorbed substantial resources" (Jones 2002: 75; 1993: 18). There were likely similar buildings in the upper town as well, suggested by finds of mosaics and tessellated floors. The owners of these houses were probably initially local landowners of some wealth; later such buildings may have been the residences of officials of the provincial government as well (ibid., 1993: 18; 2002: 85).

The presence of these officials in the capital may have contributed to the increased spending on town houses in the first half of the fourth century, when the buildings became "their most sumptuous" (Jones 2002: 124). Money was put into residences for the purpose of displaying status, rather than into public buildings, as there may now have been a preference for official meetings in "private reception areas" instead of in the forum-basilica (ibid.). The most luxurious of these dwellings appears to have been the Greetwell Villa, located about two kilometres east of Lincoln's walls. The villa was palatial in its size and in the manner of its decorations, which included very high-quality mosaics and designs painted on wall-plaster. As Greetwell Villa was so wealthy and also one of the few sites in the Lincoln area to contain the latest (Theodosian) coins

⁹⁷ Of *Flavia Caesariensis* (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 47-48).

of the Roman period, it has been suggested that the building may have been “the palace of the fourth-century provincial governor” (ibid., 101-102).

Lincoln, the Shore Forts, and the Imperial Supply System

“Lincoln’s newly-acquired capital status, the arrival of government officials with resources and requirements, and the corruption that went with this power, would have benefitted the city, more than those without an imperial government function” (Jones 2002: 120). The presence of an imperial administration would have required a “secure base”, luxury accommodation, and a functional communication system (ibid.). The government of the late empire was investing significant amounts in “favoured capitals”, to the neglect of other urban centres. “The evidence from elsewhere in the empire suggest that the provincial capital status could attract expenditure by the governors, who might also assume control of the civic administration” (ibid., 123-124).

“The greatest undertaking for the new government was the strengthening of the fortifications⁹⁸, perhaps both as a symbol of its new capital status and as a deterrent” (Jones 2002: 120). In the first half of the fourth century, the north rampart was widened (ibid., 1993: 17). Around the middle of the century, first the walls of the upper circuit were improved, then the walls around the lower town were raised and thickened, and the ditch surrounding the walls was widened (ibid.; 2002: 120). Finally, in the mid to late century, a new gate was added, around one hundred metres to the south of the west gate, in a location where there had previously been an interval tower (ibid., 2002: 80).

Lincoln was likely additionally benefitted by its role as a centre for tax collection (Jones 2002: 120). The Lincolnshire region seems to have been an area of great importance for the late Roman imperial system. It was probably a major source of both grain and animal products needed by the Roman military and acquired through tax in kind, requisition, or purchase. The area may have been seen as particularly vulnerable due to its strategic resources and location, and thus provided with fortifications to defend it (Leahy 1993: 29). Beyond the walls of Lincoln were the forts of Caister⁹⁹ to the north-east and Horncastle to the east. There may also have been installations of the Shore Fort system along the coast, an area now lost to erosion, but then linking the forts of the East

⁹⁸ The wall circuit had already been improved in the third century by the addition of interval towers (Jones 2002: 80).

⁹⁹ Not the same as the Shore Fort Caister-on-Sea.

Anglian coast to those north of the Humber (*ibid.*). Sixteenth-century reports indicate that at Skegness, due east of Lincoln with Horncastle situated between these two locations, there may have been the remains of a Roman fortification that was destroyed by the sea (*ibid.*). A small quantity of remains have survived which support the theory that there had been a Shore Fort at this place, and it is “plausible that this defended site was intended to operate in tandem with [the East Anglian Shore Fort of] Brancaster, which it faced across the Wash” (Pearson 2002: 54-55).

It was discussed in the Historical Background section above that this system of fortified sites may well have not been intended primarily for defence, but rather for the extraction of resources and their transport into the imperial supply system. As noted above, the area around Lincoln may have been a great source of grain for the Romans, as there is evidence of a “large area of land under cultivation” (Leahy 1993: 29), and vast quantities of grain were needed by the military. The army also used a huge volume of animal products, not just meat, but hide, gut, and wool. Leather from hide was required for armour, tents, and other equipment, wool for uniforms, and gut for artillery (Cotterill 1993: 237; Pearson 2002: 161). Lincolnshire, like East Anglia to the south, was probably a significant source of livestock for the imperial system, as is suggested by late fourth-century evidence for large-scale meat processing within Lincoln itself (Jones 2002: 86; Steane and Vince 1993: 77).

Lincoln’s possible Shore Fort at Skegness may have been similar to its nearest known neighbor, the fort across the Wash at Brancaster. Brancaster was originally thought to have been built in the early third century, but a date late in the century is now being considered, as there is little sign of its possible use in the intervening years (Pearson 2002: 54, 65). There is evidence from Brancaster of large scale animal butchering and processing of the meat, which was likely being “salted for consumption elsewhere” (Cotterill 1993: 237). Further processing of animal-derived products may have been occurring there as well, such as the tanning of hides or the preparation of wool for cloth. The data suggests that the fort may have been “a collection and trans-shipment centre for state supplies” (*ibid.*). It is possible that Skegness could have performed a similar role, processing and then transporting onwards the raw materials (especially livestock) and other supplies received from Lincoln where they had been collected as taxes. The town of Lincoln was probably heavily dependent for its prosperity on the

presence of the provincial government and of the tax collection system, not only through the employment that resulted, or the services that were required, but also through its maintenance of the local communications system for its own needs, which additionally assisted the trading and manufacturing segments of Lincoln's economy (Jones 2002: 120).

Mid to Late Fourth-Century Contraction of Occupation

Despite the boost to Lincoln's prosperity which the imperial presence must have provided, particularly in the earlier part of the fourth century, major changes began to transform the town after the middle of the century. Lincoln's masonry town houses started to go out of use, with dark earth covering the remains of some (Selkirk 1992: 366). At Hungate, in the lower town, evidence has been found of a large courtyard house, with painted wall-plaster, window glass, a possible garden, and most notably, water-pipes, which suggests that it had its own water supply (ibid., 337; Jones 2002: 85). The building went out of use some time in the mid to late fourth century, perhaps *ca.* 370, after a "culvert to the building had been blocked and had overflowed" (Steane and Vince 1993: 71; Selkirk 1992: 367). At some point after the site was abandoned, it was leveled with demolition rubble and rubbish which contained coins dating up to 370 (Selkirk 1992: 367).

At Flaxengate, also in the lower town, there had been an apsidal stone town house until some point in the second half of the century (Steane and Vince 1993: 71). Evidence has been found for the luxurious Romanized decoration of this building: tessellated floors, decorated wall-plaster, Italian marble, and a Tuscan capital from a column (Coyler and Jones 1975: 54). The building's abandoned remains were partially robbed out some time between the mid and late fourth century (Steane and Vince 1993: 71).

Another very large town house with a mosaic, hypocaust, and twelve or more rooms was discovered at Spring Hill (Selkirk 1992: 367; Jones 1993: 18). This structure as well appears to have become disused between the mid and later fourth century; after its abandonment it was knocked down and the remains robbed for stone (Steane and Vince 1993: 71).

In Silver Street, within the south-east part of the lower city, another town house was located, embellished with a hypocaust, window glass, and a possible garden. It too

had been abandoned and destroyed by the late fourth century (Steane and Vince 1993: 74; Jones 2002: 84). Though all the wealthy town houses of the late third and early fourth centuries excavated in Lincoln were still occupied in the first half of the fourth century, one by one they went out of use before the century's final quarter (Jones 1993: 19).

There was some additional construction work in Lincoln after the first half of the fourth century, but its quality had declined and more use was being made of "dry-stone walls" and "timber-frame construction" than previously. This is perhaps connected to "the end of the stone-building industry" in Roman Britain (Jones 2002: 126). One such poorer quality building, possibly a commercial establishment, was constructed at Swan Street in the lower city, around the middle of the fourth century and may have remained occupied till the end of the century (ibid., 1993: 20).

The Upper Town

Some buildings in the upper town may have stayed in use till very late in the Roman period, while others were being abandoned. Although the east-west street north of the forum-basilica seems to have gone out of use, a structure east of the north-south street was probably still occupied through the fourth century, as a well and a dump close by contained pottery from very late in the century (Steane et al 2006: 241, 272). A structure in the west part of the upper town, at "the Lawn", reoccupied after a temporary abandonment, was demolished at some point in the course of the century, and its site covered by dumps (ibid., 272). Some parts of the upper town went out of use fairly early, such as the east-west *intervallum* road in the north-east sector, which along with an adjacent structure, was covered by dumps of debris, apparently by the end of the third century or early fourth century (ibid., 72, 272). Another structure had been demolished by the late third century, in the eastern area at Greetwell Gate; a fence or row of pits, soon to be covered by dumps of rubbish, replaced it (ibid., 272). "It is uncertain whether the upper colonnade ceased to be intensively occupied during this period, while occupation continued in the lower *Colonia* and in the suburbs" (ibid., 286).

Decline of the Suburbs

Much of Lincoln's economic activity and the residences of the artisan class were located in suburbs outside of the town walls, perhaps pushed out of the lower town by the

growing presence of elite houses constructed there (Jones 1993: 120). A large number of strip-buildings of traders or craftsmen was located along the main road heading south from Lincoln. In this area, evidence has been found for sixteen of these structures, but it is hard to be certain what activities were carried out at the different buildings. “They were all in occupation in the early fourth century; by mid century some were being abandoned”, though some others, with a “patching-up” or “reduction in size” were able to carry on for a few decades longer (ibid., 21). Dumping of debris on some of these properties also became common in the later fourth century (ibid.).

Some of these strip-buildings were at the site of St Mark’s Church. A row of them was constructed between the late second and early third centuries and later replaced with similar structures in stone. The peak of prosperity for this site, based on its pottery, seems to have been the late third to early fourth centuries (Jones 2002: 91-92). Some of the buildings were abandoned around the mid to late fourth century, possibly around 370. The remains of three were leveled and pits, with late fourth-century pottery in their fill, were dug into them, connected to surfaces and hearths also on the sites, suggesting some level of reuse or reoccupation (ibid., 92; Steane and Vince 1993; 71). Among the remaining houses, there was a “reduction in size and quality” during the final phases, with “habitation confined to the eastern part of the houses” (Jones 2002: 92, 126). These events likely point to some sort of economic decline occurring around this time (ibid., 126).

During the same period, strip-buildings at St Mark’s Station were demolished, robbed of stone, and the ruins leveled. The site in the last years of the fourth century became covered by deposits of dark earth. Similar structures at St Mary’s Guildhall may have lasted into the later fourth century, but were “robbed in the very late Roman period” (Steane and Vince 1993: 72). Timber structures were possibly constructed on the site afterwards, but this may not have occurred until the late Saxon era (ibid.). The abandonment of extramural properties is further underlined by discovery of two late Roman burials at a vacated site at St Mark’s East (Jones 2002: 118).

Late Industry in the Town

Some economic and industrial activity appears to have moved back inside the walls after the middle of the fourth century. “[E]vidence for lead-smelting, iron-working,

and other metallurgical processes suggests a significant change” (Jones 2002: 126). Jones proposes that this may have been caused by “a serious disruption in the Roman supply system from *ca.* 370-80”, which could have made it necessary for residents of the town to use what was more easily available to them and become more self-sufficient (2002: 126). There is evidence from the late fourth century of metal-working in the lower town, such as silver- and gold-working at the Flaxengate site and at Saltergate, and iron-working at Hungate (*ibid.*, 86). Rubbish dumped over the demolition rubble on the remains of the Hungate town house included substantial quantities of iron slag, suggesting the presence of a smithy on the site, “possibly working on a government contract” (*ibid.*, 140; Selkirk 1992: 367).

In very late Roman Lincoln, “organized butchery was being practiced on a large scale” (Jones 2002: 86). It is possible that a significant proportion of the tax in kind, or of requisitions for military supplies, collected here at this time may have been in the form of livestock. Large numbers of cattle, pigs, and sheep were brought to the town, where they are thought to have been butchered, primarily in the south-eastern part of the lower city (Steane and Vince 1993: 77). Significant quantities of animal bones bearing signs of butchery have been found dumped at Flaxengate, at sites at the waterside, and on one of the ramparts (*ibid.*; Jones 2002: 86).

Dark Earth

Dark earth deposits have been found over the remains of abandoned and demolished buildings at a number of sites in the lower city and suburbs, and may, at many of the sites, represent the last three decades of Roman rule (Jones 1993: 24; 2002: 126). In the lower town, there were dark earth layers over the remains of the town houses at Hungate and Flaxengate (Selkirk 1992: 366-367). At the Hungate ruins, the site had been leveled with the demolition rubble and with rubbish containing coins up to *ca.* 370. Above that was dark earth, in which there was “a large number of coins mainly of the House of Theodosius” (*ibid.*, 367). The dark earth over the remains of the apsidal building at Flaxengate contained coins of similar date and pottery of the late fourth century (*ibid.*, 366).

It has been speculated, as discussed above, that dark earth could have been deposited for purposes of horticulture in very late Romano-British towns, and it appears

that in Lincoln, “some occurrences were dumps of material laid deliberately” (Jones 2002: 126). While cultivation of dark earth may have been possible for some sites, that does not seem to have been the case at Hungate and Flaxengate, where the dark earth lacks evidence of “plough marks or spade marks” (Selkirk 1992: 366). Moreover, at Flaxengate some of the very late fourth-century pottery from the dark earth has remained as “large fresh fragments”, which would argue against the deposit having been cultivated, and many of the bones from the butchery waste within it were still in fair condition, not shattered by root growth (ibid.).

The possibility has been considered among Lincoln’s archaeologists that, at least at these sites, and perhaps at St Mark’s Station as well, the dark earth came from material deliberately dumped over the ruins to create level surfaces on which to construct timber buildings in the late fourth century (Selkirk 1992: 366-367; Jones 2002: 126; Steane and Vince 1993: 77). The decay of these buildings could have further contributed to the development of the dark earth (Jones 1993: 24). According to this theory, there would thus have been continuing occupation on these sites towards the end of the Roman period, though in the form of “timber shacks” (ibid., 2002: 126). However, the evidence for the construction of the theoretical timber buildings is “inconclusive”, as they have left no visible features or remains, and their existence is uncertain (Selkirk 1992: 367). Alternatively, the metal-working and butchery evidence could suggest an industrial use of the area. If there were any late timber structures here, it is possible that they could have been workshops related to these activities. The possible keeping of livestock on the Flaxengate site would have produced manure, another possible cause of dark earth (Jones 1993: 24).

The Latest Coins

The number of coins of the third quarter of the fourth century found in Lincoln implies a peak of some sort around the 360s into the early 370s, a later date than what was experienced by some of the other administrative towns, perhaps due to the Lincoln’s importance as a centre of provincial government (Jones 2002: 125; 1993: 22). “The sharp drop which followed might indicate a serious contraction of the money economy from *ca.*

375”¹⁰⁰ (ibid., 2002: 125). The latest coins, of the House of Theodosius, have a more limited distribution within the town, suggesting a contraction of occupation to certain areas (ibid., 1993: 22). The areas with the largest numbers of these were the Hungate and Flaxengate sites on the hillside of the lower town, the riverside area, and the Greetwell Villa (ibid., 2002: 125; 1993: 22). It is interesting that this distribution corresponds with that of evidence for late industrial activity, possibly being done on behalf of the state, as well as the possible governor’s residence.

The End of the Roman System

Lincoln must surely have been affected by the late fourth-century decline of the fort system along Britain’s eastern and north-eastern shores. Two of the three East Anglian forts to the south of Skegness, Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea, appear to have been disused by *ca.* 380, perhaps even as early as sometime in the 370s. To the north, the fortified town of Brough-on-Humber seems to have gone out of use after the late 380s, and the Yorkshire signal stations beyond that were abandoned before the end of the century. Only the occupation of Brancaster appears to have continued till around the end of the Roman period, though not beyond (Pearson 2002: 168, 170). There is not enough evidence to know whether there was still a Shore Fort closer to Lincoln in use in the late fourth century. Perhaps as forts initially began to close and the system started to break down, Lincoln may have had to take on more of the processing of supplies, possibly accounting for the town’s late transformation and increase of industry, particularly within its walls. When the imperial system in Britain collapsed, Lincoln may have been left with little further purpose.

The end of the Roman administration of Britain must have had serious consequences for the continuation of urban life in Lincoln, particularly if it was as dependent on the imperial system as has been proposed here. “After *ca.* 410, and the official Roman withdrawal, a community of urban scale was not sustainable” (Jones 2002: 126). The population is believed to have been greatly reduced by the early fifth century; there is little evidence for economic activity and none that is certain for occupation after that time, though some may have lingered for a short while (ibid., 75,

¹⁰⁰ Though there were also fewer Theodosian coins being shipped to Britain, as noted above in the Background to Change chapter.

125). Practically the only evidence to suggest any sort of presence in Lincoln after the Roman period is the possible churches and cemetery of uncertain date in the forum courtyard, discussed in previous sections. There is little else beyond that.

The likelihood that the Anglo-Saxons arrived in the Lincolnshire region by the mid fifth century is suggested by evidence from their cremation cemeteries in the area (Leahy 1993: 33, 36; Dark 2000: 58). However, none of these are very close to Lincoln itself (Leahy 1993: 36). Moreover, there is an “almost complete absence of early Anglo-Saxon finds from the city” (Jones 2002: 130). Not only has there been little Saxon material found in the suburbs or walled areas from the fifth and sixth centuries (Dark 2000: 52), but there is not much even from the seventh or eighth: there is nothing to support the existence of a town here prior to the middle of the ninth century (Steane and Vince 1993: 78-79). Lincoln seems to have experienced only minimal occupation in the intervening years.

Cirencester

Cirencester is an example of one of the more prosperous administrative towns in fourth-century Roman Britain (Arnold 1984: 33), and was perhaps the most successful of all of them in that time. This new provincial capital may have been a centre of significance for the imperial system in the fourth century and received a substantial boost from that. Despite this, and regardless of some later construction, the town was suffering from slow, gradual contraction over the course of the century, running into particular difficulty at the end of the Roman period. Many buildings appear to have gone out of use at that point and became surrounded and covered by dark earth. There is evidence in Cirencester also for late lower-status occupation, and for some elite residences continuing to the early fifth century. Only one of these latter, however, has a sequence which can be shown to possibly continue further into the fifth century. Otherwise, Cirencester seems to have collapsed fairly quickly at the end of the Roman period.

A region that became of much greater focus and importance in *Britannia* in the early fourth century was the western part of the diocese, where Cirencester was the area's largest town (and the second largest in Roman Britain), as well as the probable capital of the new province of *Britannia Prima* (Faulkner 1998: 379). Cirencester was also located in an area with a large number of extremely wealthy villas, and the centre of a school of mosaicists and likely other services catering to the elites of the area (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 106, 110). Cirencester's enhanced importance as a capital may have resulted in a certain injection of imperial funds into the town's public buildings, enabling some work to be done on the forum-basilica complex in the second half of the fourth century (Holbrook et al 1998: 108, 121). Improvements were also made around this time to Cirencester's defensive circuit. The town wall rampart was heightened in the 350s or early 360s; although it is not certain, the bastions may also have been added at about the same time (ibid., 93-94). But early to mid fourth-century resources seem to have focused mainly on the construction and elaboration of large luxury stone town houses with the usual accoutrements of mosaics, painted wall-plaster, and occasionally private bath suites (Faulkner 1998: 379). The expansion and renovation of some of these buildings carried on into the second half of the century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132). It is possible that some of the wealthiest of these may have belonged to the top imperial officials assigned to the administration of the province.

Cirencester's Possible Role in the Imperial Supply System

Part of Cirencester's importance in this period, which likely contributed to its prosperity and to the number of late town houses, may have been a role as a central point for the collection and storage of taxation, especially in kind, and perhaps for the processing, production and possible distribution of goods necessary to the imperial/military supply system. "The activities of the late Roman state may ... be evidenced in the provision made for the movement and accommodation of bulk commodities" (Faulkner 1998: 383). The mid-fourth century work on the amphitheatre that modified it to accommodate heavy wheeled traffic¹⁰¹ may have been to enable it to be used in these activities. Public building II.1, possibly a meat market (*macellum*), and its associated large gravelled yard, may have been connected to this as well (ibid.). Although the building may have gone out of use by the 360s, the site seems to have remained involved in the processing of animals for meat. Pits of the very late fourth to early fifth centuries containing large amounts of butchered animal bones were found in the remains of the building and the surrounding area, indicating a continuation of "meat processing in the vicinity" (Holbrook et al 1998: 186-187; Faulkner 1998: 383). It is worth noting that the site is not far from the late dumps of additional bones in the possible *temenos* courtyard of Insula VI¹⁰². This and other large open metalled areas in the fourth-century town, in Insula II, in Insula XIII's west corner, and south-west of the Verulamium Gate, at the periphery of the walled area (Faulkner 1998: 383; Holbrook et al 1998: 23), may have been the location of similar activities: the holding and/or processing of animals for the imperial supply system.

It is possible that other types of items were being produced for the imperial government in Cirencester during the fourth century. The town and its immediate surrounding areas have produced a "large assemblage of ... fourth-century military items": seven buckles, three belt-plates, five strap-ends, one belt-end, a "rosette-loop" and ring-fitting, and a portion of a *plumbata* (a lead-weighted dart) (Holbrook et al 1998: 306). "The preponderance of such finds must reflect the status of [Cirencester] as a provincial capital" (ibid.). Some of these items may have come from the uniforms of civil servants, though a number would have to be military equipment, perhaps from a

¹⁰¹ Discussed in the section on Public Buildings.

¹⁰² Discussed in the section on Public Buildings.

garrison. Another possibility is that the town was a centre for the production and/or distribution of equipment, supported by the discovery of an unfinished buckle from the area behind Shop 7 in Insula V (ibid., 229, 306).

Mid to Late Fourth-Century Contraction

Despite the boost from its provincial status and from imperial involvement, there was already contraction and change occurring in Cirencester around the middle of the fourth century. A suburban industrial site went out of use by about that time. This rectangular store structure, erected *ca.* 280 along the Fosse Way road outside the town walls, had a “heavy stone floor” with a furnace, one oven and over 2,000 hob nails on the floor, indicating an industrial use (McWhirr et al 1979: 66). Finds suggest that the building was occupied till *ca.* 330; after that it was demolished and the site became part of a late fourth/early fifth century cemetery (ibid.).

Strip-buildings, likely shops connected to the serving of food and drink, have been excavated in Price’s Row, within what was Insula V. Evidence suggests that Shop V.7, a stone building with a rear courtyard, may by the early fourth century have been “derelict”; it had undergone destruction by the middle of the century and dark earth built up over the debris. Another of the shops, V.2, may not have lasted much past this time. Its latest floor was put in at some point after *ca.* 340, but there was no evidence for its use beyond that point (Holbrook et al 1998: 208-209, 228-230).

Further shops which fronted on Ermin Street (VI.5 and 6) have been excavated in Insula VI in St Michael’s Field. Another building there, VI.4, was either an upgraded strip-building shop or a wing of a sizeable courtyard house, as it possessed a corridor and mosaics. “By the end of the third century all three buildings seem to have been abandoned and demolished, and the site may have lain vacant for a century before the construction of VI.3”¹⁰³ on the sites of VI.5 and 6¹⁰⁴ (Holbrook et al 1998: 230, 232, 240, 244). Shop 5 in the public building II.1 (the possible *macellum*) was probably abandoned and partially demolished *ca.* 350-360 (ibid., 186).

There is also evidence for houses, some of which were probably town houses, going out of use by or shortly after the middle of the fourth century. Building B in Insula

¹⁰³ There are problems with the dating of VI.3, and it is possible that the interval before its construction was shorter (Holbrook et al 1998: 244).

¹⁰⁴ VI.4 was replaced by a metalled yard.

IV/VII at Stepstairs Lane may have been a house or a shop with an oven. It was in disrepair and then out of use by the late third or early fourth century, based on material in the demolition layers over the building's remains, and on the dating of pottery within the oven deposits. However, evidence indicates that activity did continue in the area later in the fourth century, with a coin of the House of Valentinian (367-375) found in a level over the demolition debris, and in "the garden soils" were later fourth-century coins going up to the House of Theodosius and sherds of shell-tempered ware of the second half of the century (Holbrook et al 2008: 75). A building from Insula II in Querns Lane, probably a house, has coin evidence indicating a date of *ca.* 340-350 for the collapse of its roof. Dark earth had piled up immediately above the roof debris (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 76).

A house with a hypocaust in Insula VII may have gone out of use not long after the middle of the fourth century. Ash in the probable stokehole of the hypocaust contained six coins of the fourth century in the ash, dating up to 348. No later datable evidence was recovered (Brown and McWhirr 1969: 231).

Building XX.2 at Ashcroft House may have represented one large house or two smaller ones. A room and a corridor were uncovered in Area 1. There was a small amount of post-270 pottery on the final floor surface of each, though a few sherds from the fourth century were among the pottery from the rest of Area 1 (McWhirr et al 1986: 205-207). Area 2, about thirty metres to the north-west, contained a "range of rooms with a corridor" (*ibid.*, 207). It is not clear whether this belonged to the same building as the one from Area 1. That these rooms had been part of a wealthy town house was indicated by finds of mosaics, painted wall-plaster and "moulded mortar floor edging" (*ibid.*, 208). This building may have lasted until sometime after 350, but it lacks evidence for use much past that (*ibid.*). Area 1 may have gone out of use significantly earlier.

A house at Bingham Hall, King Street, between Insulae VIII and IX, underwent repairs to its portico during the first half and into the middle of the fourth century. Three copies of coins of the House of Constantine and mid fourth-century pottery were found in the portico metalling. There is a lack of evidence from the late fourth century, such as coins of the House of Valentinian and later types of pottery, which could "indicate that Roman activity may have tailed off in the immediate area by the AD 360s" (Holbrook et

al 2008: 37-38). As evidence of this type was not found in either occupation deposits or over the building's rubble, or in the side ditch nearby, the building and adjacent street may well have been abandoned early (*ibid.*, 39).

The numbers of buildings gone out of use had probably increased by *ca.* 375, with many not surviving to the end of the century. It is possible that problems had begun to develop for Cirencester around that time. More of the Insula V shops appear to have closed in the later fourth century. Shop V.1 had coins of Valens (367-375 and 364-378) and Gratian (two from 378-383) in the rubble from the demolition of its walls and roof. Shop V.6 contained pottery which suggested use after the mid-fourth century. But by the century's end the shop had been demolished and a timber structure built on its rubble. It is not clear how far back in the late fourth century the disuse and demolition of the shop had occurred (Holbrook et al 1998: 208, 226, 228, 230). A workshop in the north corner of Insula X at the Cirencester Grammar School site may have been out of use by the very late fourth century, and possibly much earlier. It is not clear from the report whether the structure had been abandoned before the pit was dug into it or if that was part of a later phase of occupation. There was no evidence for the building's use in the very late fourth century, by which time it may well have been knocked down (Holbrook et al 2008: 92).

Building VII.1 at the Watermoor School Site was a town house with a mosaic and a hypocaust system, possibly constructed in the late third century. The hypocaust's stoke-hole contained fourth-century pottery and a coin of Constans (346-348). Coins of Constantine II (330-346) and Valens (364-378), late Roman shell-tempered ware, and late fourth-century Oxfordshire colour-coated ware found in the fill of the hypocaust's channels, take activity in the house into the late fourth century (McWhirr et al 1986: 235, 237-238), but also indicate that these stopped being cleaned after *ca.* 380. The lack of coins of the latest Roman period from the site may mean that it was out of use by the end of the century.

A building at 7 Corinium Gate may have been demolished before *ca.* 375. Two shallow pits dug into the top of the rubble demolition deposits were filled with charcoal and slag. The pits also contained pottery of the later part of the century, so the destruction of the building must have happened before then (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 65).

Settlement in the Final Years of Roman Cirencester

A number of buildings did persist to the end of the fourth century, and a few into the early fifth, but there was little occupation continuing after the Roman withdrawal. The evidence points to the abandonment of buildings in the early fifth century, corresponding with the end of Britain's place in the Roman Empire (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 147; Faulkner 1998: 384). Fourth-century Cirencester's "dependence on the patronage of the state meant that it could not survive" without the imperial system (Faulkner 1998: 384). Of private buildings that had been excavated in Cirencester as of 1998, there were twenty-three dated to *ca.* 375, but only ten by *ca.* 400. Four of these may have lasted into the fifth century, but none beyond *ca.* 425 (*ibid.*). Faulkner emphasizes the lack of evidence with which to argue for urban continuity in the fifth century. "We have possible early fifth-century stratigraphic sequences in only the most exceptional areas" (Building VI.3); "[o]n the vast majority of Roman urban building sites for which we have evidence, the sequences simply do not exist: the later fourth-century construction deposits are overlain by rubbish and garbage" (1998: 384).

The rest of the Insula V shops went out of use around the end of the Roman period. One of the rooms of Shop V.3 was probably already out of use after the late third century, and another after the first quarter of the fourth century. Room 2/3 remained in use until the early fifth century, and the hypocaust of Room 7 had already gone out of use, its flues filled up with rubble and soil, before a Theodosian hoard was buried in it. In Shop V.4, the occupation level overlying the floor surface in places contained coins of the 360s. A demolished wall had a large pit cut into the top of the demolition layer, which was itself sealed by a floor surface of mortar and rubble. Deposits on this surface in one room included Theodosian coins. There was also evidence of late use of Shop V.5. The final surface of Room 1, with fourth-century coins up to four issues of the House of Theodosius (388-402), had five postholes cut into it. A pit containing dog and cat skeletons, a shell-tempered storage jar, and a coin hoard was cut into the mortar floor of Room 3 and filled in *ca.* 340-350. Though Room 4 also did not provide evidence for its use beyond *ca.* 350, a demolished wall in Room 5 was covered by further surfaces, including occupation debris with coins up to the House of Theodosius (388-402) (Holbrook et al 1998: 207-209). This degraded occupation of parts of Shop V.5 must have continued till the early fifth century.

Building XIV.3 on Victoria Road was a wealthy townhouse near the centre of Cirencester, north-east of the forum. It was expanded at the end of the third century and remained in use through the fourth century, with its latest floors put down in the late fourth or early fifth. Within the occupation layers below the final floor were some late coins, including one of Valentinian II and one of the House of Theodosius, suggesting occupation into the late fourth century at least (Brown and McWhirr 1969: 234-235; Faulkner 1998: 384; Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 65). However, there was no evidence to claim for use beyond the early fifth century.

Building XIV.2 was a courtyard house nearby which possessed twelve rooms and corridors, and three mosaics. Though no dating evidence later than a coin of Magnentius (351-353), sealed under an *opus signinum* floor in one of the rooms, is mentioned in the site report (Brown and McWhirr 1969: 234), the building may have continued in use as an elite residence until near the end of the century, at which time “there is evidence of degraded occupation” (Faulkner 1998: 384).

Another late courtyard house (IV.1) was located at Parsonage Field. It was given a major renovation and expansion shortly after 388, receiving new rooms and a new mosaic (dated by a coin of 388-395 under one of the new floors) (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 76; Faulkner 1998: 384). There were no further floors laid and the building soon underwent a phase of degraded occupation, “with evidence for crude modifications”; occupation may have ceased sometime in the early fifth century (Faulkner 1998: 384).

A wealthy masonry house at 56 Chester Street in Insula IX may have had some sort of occupation until the end of the Roman period. Excavators found two panels of high-quality fourth-century mosaic. A drain had cut through this in the north-west corner of the site, and later became clogged with silt deposits which overflowed onto the mosaic. Fourth-century coins, two identifiable to 330-345 and 337-340, were found in the silt fill of the drain, as well as two pieces of late shell-tempered pottery, indicating that the drain went out of use at some time after *ca.*360. Demolition rubble covered the silt on the mosaic, and contained more shell-tempered ware and coins of 364-378, 388-392, and 388-402, as well as rubbish such as bones. There was dark earth immediately above the remainder of the mosaic (Holbrook et al 2008: 84-85). Based on the evidence, the house may have gone out of use in the later fourth century, and the very late coins deposited

with rubbish after the demolition of the building, or it may have been occupied in some fashion till around the end of Roman rule.

Building XXV.1, a winged courtyard house, was completely covered by dark earth. Pottery dating after 350/370 was found in the dark earth and in the fill from robber trenches on the site, as were coins up to Valentinian I, Gratian, Valentinian II, and Arcadius. This evidence indicates that the dark earth levels sealing the occupation layers in the house had started to accumulate in the latter half of the fourth century, and that it is likely that the house had been abandoned before the fifth (McWhirr et al 1986: 222, 226).

Building XXVI.1 may have been another town house, as it contained a tessellated floor and a hypocaust which had become blocked with ash, charcoal, and black earth. A stone drain had been partially robbed; within the drain's fill were pottery from the latter half of the fourth century and coins minted in 388 at the earliest (McWhirr et al 1986: 227-228). It is possible that these coins date the disuse of the drain to the late fourth or early fifth century, or that the coins were introduced from surface rubbish during the robbing of the building, which in that case would have gone out of use at an earlier date.

IX.2, a Romanized building with a tessellated pavement at Stonewalls House, had more convincing evidence of occupation in the last decades of the Roman period: a coin of 388-402 in the occupation deposit on its floor. This was covered by demolition rubble, which included another late coin (388-392), perhaps indicating an early fifth-century demise (Holbrook et al 2008: 85).

Beeches Road

A group of late Roman buildings in Cirencester which has received much discussion is located at Beeches Road near but still within the Roman walls of the town. The dating of these buildings has proved difficult due to the fact that their remains had "relatively little stratification", but "it seems clear that the complex continued to function right until the end of the fourth century" (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 65). Building XII.1 started as a rectangular block, but was expanded with a bath suite added to the west, service rooms to the north, and living rooms with mosaics to the south and east (McWhirr et al 1986: 23). As well as twenty-one rooms and corridors, and five mosaics, the building was provided with hypocausts (Faulkner 1998: 384). A half-timbered outbuilding was associated with this house. Its thick walls and solid foundation suggest

that it may have been a barn intended for the storage of grain (McWhirr et al 1986: 38, 40).

The neighbouring house, XII.2, also began as a small rectangular structure that had additions of rooms and corridors that left it with a total of sixteen, as well as five hypocausts and twelve mosaics (McWhirr et al 1986: 45; Faulkner 1998: 384). XII.2 had two outbuildings associated with it, one a “large rectangular structure ... with no signs of any internal division”, the other also rectangular, but with some division into rooms (McWhirr et al 1986: 65). Found at the latter were part of a plough, bone weaving tablets, and iron-working evidence (*ibid.*, 65, 70).

There is no certainty to whether the third main structure, XII.3, was connected to the other two, or agreement as to the nature of the remains. The remains consisted of walls, wall-plaster, mortar floors, some ovens or furnaces, and iron lumps (not in the ovens or furnaces); all was covered by a deposit of dark earth with a large amount of charcoal in it. The coins found on the site were part of the dark earth, which seem to have accumulated from “domestic rubbish” over a twenty-year period, approximately *ca.* 375-397 (McWhirr et al 1986: 71-72). The excavator of the site, Richard Reece, says that “this is one of the reasons why the interpretation of this structure as being a yard with lean-to sheds is to be preferred, because the accumulation of that uniform muck inside a building would have been unpleasant” (quoted in McWhirr et al 1986: 72). But Alan McWhirr, who published the reports of the excavations at Beeches Road, prefers to see the remains as representing “an aisled building”, at least in its final stage, as the site lacked the drainage it would have needed if it had consisted of lean-to structures with inward sloping roofs (McWhirr et al 1986: 77). The question remains as to whether the buildings at Beeches Road were part of a complex or separately owned. McWhirr believes that they most likely “represent a group of farms with their own smithies” (*ibid.*, 78).

These buildings are thought to have been constructed on land previously vacant, around the middle of the fourth century (McWhirr et al 1986: 78; Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 65). Reece notes that the numbers of coins is highest on sites XII.2 and XII.3 in the 350s and 360s, and on XII.1 *ca.* 364-378, dropping off shortly after that at the latter (1986: 103). The sites thus appear to have had their peak in the mid fourth century and into the beginning of the century’s last quarter. The latest coinage (388-402) is found at

all three sites, so “they must all be dated to after about AD 400”; however, most of the coins came from XII.3’s dark earth (ibid.). This deposit, shown to have been built up so quickly, likely represents “the final years of domestic activity at the Beeches” (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 65).

VI.3, St Michael’s Field

A probable courtyard house in St Michael’s Field, with a sequence that might take its occupation further into the fifth century, is VI.3, the remains of which appear to be one wing of a very large house. The structure was built where, until the late third or early fourth century, the shops VI.5-6 had been located. A mosaic in the corridor has been assigned to the late third or fourth century, but cannot be dated more closely. It was covered by demolition deposits of mortar and wall-plaster, which were “sealed by a patchy well-worn stone surface, possibly representing a very late floor” (Holbrook et al 1998: 241, 243-244, 248). There was a further demolition layer over this surface. Dark earth covered the final surfaces and demolition deposits. Large numbers of late fourth-century coins were discovered in the dark earth deposits, among them numerous coins of the House of Theodosius. This raises the possibility that the site had become a dump, with coins tossed in as part of the garbage.

There are questions regarding the construction date of the building, as the corridor was sealed by a pit with mid third-century pottery, and coins of 350-360 were found in the original floor of Room 3. But the presence of a sherd of late shell-tempered pottery and three coins of the very late fourth century in the construction levels of the house seem to indicate that it was built in 388 or later, though it is strange that there is not more evidence from the fourth century below VI.3. In any case, the building appears to have been occupied at least until the close of the fourth century, and from the sequence of repairs, perhaps beyond the end of Roman rule if it was built in 388 or later (Holbrook et al 1998: 243-245).

Possible Late Lower-Status Occupation

As well as the Romanized town houses and strip-buildings, late Roman Cirencester had cruder structures of probable lower status, contemporary with the wealthier houses (Faulkner 1994: 385). Possible examples of these could be the late fourth-century rubble platforms for the timber buildings on the possible *temenos*

courtyard, or the slots for a timber building cut into the street surface at the Gaumont Cinema site in Insula XIII, which was covered by dark earth containing coins from Constans to Gratian (Holbrook et al 1998: 23). Another timber building was built on a gravel spread over the demolition debris from Shop V.6. In pits dug behind the structure were pottery and coins of the latest types to be found in Cirencester, including three coins of 388-402 (two of Honorius and one of the House of Theodosius). The timber building “should be dated to the second half of the fourth century”, rather than “after *ca.* 400”, as Theodosian coins on the floor of a room in V.6 were probably “introduced from refuse spreading from the timber building and pits” (ibid., 226, 228, 230). The coins may well have been from the latest use of the timber building, as an insubstantial structure would have a more limited lifespan.

The Latest Coins

Unlike some of the other administrative towns of Roman Britain, substantial numbers of the latest issues of coins to reach Britain (those of the House of Theodosius) are found in Cirencester. However, few of these were actually recovered from “construction and occupation levels”; most were excavated “from unsealed deposits and dark earth” (Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 76). Half of the fourth-century coins from dark earth deposits came from Insula VI in St Michael’s Field (particularly VI.3) and the Beeches Road site (specifically XII.3¹⁰⁵) (Guest 1998: 262-268). Reece believes that increasing numbers of sites in fourth-century Cirencester were not cleared of rubbish, which had built up significantly by the end of the Roman period, beginning the process of transformation into dark earth at this time (Reece 1998: 264; Darvill and Gerrard 1994: 76). If Reece is correct in his proposal that the dark earth largely belongs to the last decades of the Roman period, then the presence of most of the later coins in it could mean that they were discarded along with the rubbish in the last years of Roman occupation or soon after the Roman withdrawal. Their distribution could be more relevant to where the garbage was disposed than to where people were living.

There is little to support an argument for continuity of urban life in Cirencester beyond the early fifth century, such as that made by John Wacher. He envisions life

¹⁰⁵ But this site did not have so many of the very latest coins of up to a possible AD 402 date, suggesting that its use as a dump must have declined some time before the end of Roman rule in Cirencester (Guest 1998: 268).

continuing in the town through the fifth century, ending sometime in the sixth century as primarily a post-Roman fortified settlement in the former amphitheatre (1976: 17). At some point after the end of the Roman period, a “substantial post-built structure” was constructed within the remains of the amphitheatre, making use of the metalling from the mid to late fourth-century modifications (Holbrook et al 1998: 174). Wachter associates this structure with four pieces of grass-tempered pottery, which is usually dated from the fifth to eighth centuries, found in the turf which had covered the arena wall and the gate. The presence of these sherds is difficult to interpret, as no others have been found within Cirencester or immediately outside it from which to argue a post-Roman presence. Additionally one of the postholes of the later structure contained a sherd of medieval glazed pottery, which, if not intrusive, could suggest a twelfth-century or later date for its construction, well beyond the immediate post-Roman centuries (ibid., 175). Thus convincing evidence is lacking for urban continuity in Cirencester, and even for occupation beyond the first quarter of the fifth century. Without the imperial system to prop it up, the town seems to have quickly collapsed.

There does not appear to be any evidence for an Anglo-Saxon presence in the Cirencester area in the fifth century. However, the Saxons had arrived before the middle of the sixth. A cemetery beyond the walls, which must indicate settlement somewhere in the vicinity, was discovered at Barton Mills, a few hundred metres north of the town, on the main Roman road heading north-west. Graves for nine individuals, accompanied by Anglo-Saxon grave goods, had been cut through a villa’s mosaic. Finds implied that the use of this cemetery had begun before the middle of the sixth century (Brown 1976: 31-32; Dark 2000: 106). A few apparently sixth-century Anglo-Saxon artefacts discovered within Cirencester, such as a gilt bronze fitting from the scabbard of a sword (Brown 1976: 23), could suggest the presence of scavengers in the deserted town, if not yet of actual occupation.

Verulamium

Change and probably population decline seem to have begun early in fourth-century Verulamium. Nevertheless, the town provides an example of a *civitas* capital which, while losing its function as an urban centre in the fifth century, seems to have retained a small level of occupation, likely operating at a subsistence level. Although there had been significant construction and renovation in the late third and early fourth centuries, much of it shows evidence of a decline in workmanship and the skills needed to produce these Romanized buildings. New work continued sporadically through the fourth century, but the nature of Verulamium was changing. Many of its town houses lack evidence of use far into the century's last quarter. At the same time, there are indications of the town being perhaps of some significance to the imperial taxation and supply system, despite a decline of industry in general in the town. Small numbers of wealthy homes remained in use until late into the fourth or even early in the fifth century. There are also hints of lower-status accommodation in fourth-century Verulamium, some of which may have continued into the fifth. There is little evidence for any other kind of buildings in use beyond *ca.* 430, or for Romanized urban life amongst the very basic settlement that continued.

Decline of the Suburbs

Decline and contraction may have occurred in Verulamium's suburbs first, by the later third century. Occupation came practically to an end at this time in King Harry Lane (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 162). It was also "in terminal decline" at Folly Lane, the suburb on the other side of town. However, based on the coin evidence, the abandonment of this area may not have been until the early fourth century (*ibid.*; Niblett 2001: 126).

Early to Mid Fourth-Century Contraction in Southern Verulamium

The Wheelers' 1930s excavations of Insulae I-X, within the walls in the area south of the forum, demonstrated that there had been rebuilding and renovation of decayed residences at the end of the third and into the early fourth centuries, after Britain had been returned from the usurpers Carausius and Allectus to rule by the central government (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 29). But after this "Constantian renaissance",

there is little evidence for any further construction work in this area in the fourth century, or even for the use of many of these buildings far into the century (*ibid.*), and there is no indication of any replacement of buildings later in the century here (Niblett 2001: 130). The area appears to have begun to decay again fairly quickly.

The cellar of a shop, Building I.1, was out of use and filled with debris by the end of the third century. Rebuilding above the cellar included a new tessellated floor which contained later third-century coins, suggesting a late third or early fourth-century date for the house (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 83). However, the floor was so poorly made that it soon began to subside into pits below it. Repairs simply involved levelling the floor with “wads of clay”. There is no evidence for use of the shop much into the fourth century (*ibid.*, 84).

Building II.1 was also rebuilt at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. Poor workmanship was demonstrated in the construction of the tessellated floor in its largest room, which was “paved very roughly with coarse red tesserae set in inferior mortar” (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 89). A lack of evidence for fourth-century use may also mean an early decline for this building (*ibid.*).

A sizable courtyard house, III.2, may additionally have received poor quality work in its substantial late third or early fourth century renovations, as the floors in two of the rooms soon subsided (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 93-96). No stratified finds beyond the very late third century were found in the house, though unstratified material over the structure’s debris included fourth-century coins, with one each of Crispus and Constans. It does not therefore appear to be possible for any “significant occupation” of the house to “be ascribed to” the second half of the fourth century (*ibid.*, 96).

IV.8 is another example of a house rebuilt *ca.* 300 and given new mosaics, yet lacking evidence later than the end of the third century to date its use after the renovation. Two fourth-century coins, one of Crispus and a later coin of Constantine I, were found on the site’s surface (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 106-107). The building may thus have perhaps lasted till the middle of the century, but not later.

A similar story can be seen with VIII.2, a small two-room building with a cellar, probably a shop. Soon after its late third- or early fourth-century rebuilding, the “whole building collapsed through a subsidence” (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 120-121). Late in the fourth century, the site became a rubbish dump, with a large amount of fourth-century

pottery and coins, some going up to Valentinian I, Valens, Theodosius, and Arcadius. The Wheelers thought that its use as a dump occurred during the 390s (*ibid.*, 121).

Verulamium's Role in the Imperial System

Despite the decline witnessed in the suburbs and the southern part of Verulamium, it appears possible that “the activities of the imperial government sustained some sort of urban life” in the town from around 325 to at least 375 (Faulkner 1996: 99). Verulamium may have retained importance as a key location for the collection and storage of tax in kind or food supplies for the military and bureaucratic system. The evidence which implies this is in the form of possible storage or warehouse buildings, large rectangular aisled stone or timber structures, “too crudely built to be churches or other high-status buildings”, a type new to and typical of the late Roman period (*ibid.*, 97). Verulamium has evidence of at least three of these. Two smaller examples were excavated by the Wheelers, and their construction dated to the very late third or early fourth century (*ibid.*). Each of these had a possible tower granary (Niblett and Thomson 2005: 122). Another, larger, example is XXVII.1, the aisled building excavated by Frere and dated by him to the mid fifth century (1983: 23; Faulkner 1996: 97). However, a reassessment of the dating, discussed below, could move this building back into the later fourth century. Some of the more luxurious town houses could perhaps have been occupied by the imperial officers overseeing the state supplies.

Finds of two pieces of metalwork in the central part of Verulamium in the area around the theatre may be evidence for an official presence in the fourth-century town. These were military-style bronze fittings with zoomorphic decoration, one a buckle and the other a small strap end (Niblett 2001: 135-136; Niblett and Thompson 2005: 176). Equipment of this particular type was manufactured in the late Roman period in factories located in northern Gaul, and worn not only by the military but also by civil servants. These finds in the late centre of Verulamium may possibly indicate “the presence here of late Roman tax assessors” (Niblett 2001: 136).

Contraction of Settlement in the Second Half of the Fourth Century

Even with possible imperial investment and some later renovations and construction, Verulamium continued to contract. After the mid fourth-century, houses began to decay and be abandoned in growing numbers; this was occurring in new areas,

particularly the region excavated by Frere. Building XX.1 was a courtyard house with tessellated and mosaic floors, and a small furnace in one room. No coins later than those of Constans were associated with the site, which Frere estimates was occupied up to *ca.* 360 (1983: 132-134). Adjoining that house and sharing a wall with it was Building XX.3. It was built at about the same time and also possessed a mosaic and a couple of tessellated floors. Its latest coin was Constantine I (Constantinopolis); it, too, probably “stood until *ca.* 360” (*ibid.*, 134, 140-141). It appears that after its abandonment, the ruined building was used as a dump, with a rubbish pit dug through its corridor and containing pottery of the second half of the fourth century (*ibid.*, 140-141).

XXI.1 was an earlier grand masonry town house with a probable second storey, decorated painted wall-plaster, and tessellated floors. It lasted till about 345; “part of it seems to have stood empty for a few years before the whole was demolished” (Frere 1983: 142, 145, 147). Another town house, XXII.1, appears from its pottery remains to have been occupied up to *ca.* 350, but then was torn down around that time (*ibid.*, 186, 189).

The masonry courtyard house XXVIII.1, which fronted a street facing the forum, possessed a hypocaust, tessellated floors and possibly a second storey. However, its cellar was out of use *ca.* 368-370 and was filled in with building rubble from another part of the house that had been demolished (Frere 1983: 244-246, 250). The whole building may well have been out of use by this time. Later coins have been found on the site in very small numbers, up to unstratified single issues of Arcadius and the House of Theodosius (*ibid.*, 252), but these may well have arrived on the site in casual later disposal of rubbish.

In the Wheelers’ area of town, Building III.1 had been built at the end of the third century or beginning of the fourth, but contained no fourth-century coins except in the “unsealed stratum of broken brick and flint above the remains of the floor”, where there was one coin of Licinius I, four of Constantine I, and one of Valens (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 93). It is possible, thus, that the building was not out of use until the end of the third quarter of the fourth century, but its abandonment may well have occurred earlier in the century, and the later coins (or at least that of Valens) not part of the occupation, but a later loss after the building’s demolition.

Outside of Verulamium's walls and "north-east of the river Ver" was a large apsidal building constructed around the early to mid third century, and was possibly an inn rather than a domestic residence (Frere 1983: 282, 287). Pottery from the latest levels of occupation could be dated into the fourth century, with one bowl from perhaps as late as the mid-fourth. There was also fourth-century pottery in the demolition debris filling the building's large cellars, some of the sherds dating from late in the century. This building was probably in use and still standing until *ca.* 350-370 (*ibid.*, 287).

Settlement in the Final Years of Roman Verulamium

Many sites were going out of use and not being replaced. "[B]y *ca.* 380 the number of buildings in the excavated area [as of 1989] was down by at least half compared with the level of fifty years previously" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132). Occupation continued to decline in the last couple decades of the fourth century and into the early fifth (*ibid.*, 146-147). On a plan prepared by Niblett (2001: 129), it looks as though occupation continued in the late fourth century primarily in the north-central area of town around the forum-basilica, while buildings in the south-central (south of the forum) and southern areas of town were being abandoned.

V.1, a large building with painted plaster and a tessellated floor constructed *ca.* 300, may have also possibly served as a cloth-making workshop, if that was the intended use of the large tanks in the three rooms, plus smaller versions in two other rooms (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936: 109-111). A late layer of occupation material over a broken tessellated floor, sealed and levelled with clay, contained coins in good condition of Julian, Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian, suggesting occupation in the 360s or 370s. Occupation seems to have continued at a poorer level up to *ca.* 380, at least in that area of the building (*ibid.*, 111).

In Insula XIV, "[a]t the end of the third quarter of the third century the Watling Street frontage was rebuilt as rows of [masonry] shops" (Frere 1972: 98). Shop XIV.6 contained a coin of Valentinian I (367-375) in its destruction rubble, which could mean that the building was demolished in the late 370s or 380s (*ibid.*, 112). Building XIV.5's cellar had several phases of occupation which left a large amount of metal objects in the first phase, and a quantity of tiles and animal bones in the next, likely representing discarded rubbish. "Above this layer was the filling of the cellar after its abandonment",

dark earth containing a coin sequence ending with thirteen of Carausius and one, probable intrusive, of Constans (ibid., 100, 105-106). Thus the cellar was probably filled at the end of the third century or in the early fourth; Frere favours *ca.* 310-315 for its abandonment (ibid., 106). The rest of the house may have continued later. There is a mosaic in Room 3 that Frere would date to the mid fourth century because of a coin of Constantine (330-335) in the makeup below it (ibid., 102-103). This mosaic eventually became very worn, with a hollow that became filled with debris, suggesting that the house was in use into the later fourth century, but coins in the debris only go up to Constans (ibid.). Later debris added to the cellar contains fourth-century coins up to Arcadius, and possibly came from the house, but the house could have been out of use by this date and the rubbish dumped there from elsewhere (ibid., 108).

At another site, a previous building had been demolished around the middle of the fourth century and replaced at this time by XXII.1, a significantly smaller building. Around *ca.* 370-380, XXII.1's cellar was filled in and another structure was built, only two walls of which were found; "no contemporary coins" were "recovered from layers associated with these alterations" (Frere 1983: 22). Coins on the site went up to two of Constantius II and two *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* copies, but the site's use may have lasted into the last few decades of the fourth century (ibid.; Niblett 2001: 130).

XXVII.2 and .1: A Possible Case of Fifth-Century Continuity

Few buildings, and particularly few Romanized ones, were still in use at the end of the Roman period (Faulkner 2000: 130). However theories of continuity of occupation and of an urban lifestyle well into the fifth century have been proposed by Frere, based on his excavations of two buildings in Verulamium: XXVII.2 and XIV.3.

XXVII.2 was a "large courtyard house of twenty-two ground-floor rooms and the possibility of an upper floor" (Frere 1983: 23). It had clay walls but was stone-founded. There were mosaics in the house's first two phases, which would probably not have been put down post-410, and Frere claims that "the house overlay a slightly worn coin of Valens minted in 375-378" (ibid.). Therefore he proposes that the house was initially built *ca.* 380, on a site supposedly vacant since a large fire in the Antonine period; then it was expanded in the 390s, when more mosaics were put in (ibid.). One mosaic lasted long enough to need "patching" when the tesserae became loose, and later had what Frere

thought was a grain-drying oven inserted through the floor. The oven stayed in use sufficiently long “to require a reconstruction of its stoke-pit” (ibid.). Using “dead reckoning”, as he calls it, Frere placed the grain-dryer at *ca.* 420-430, and he felt that the house could not have been demolished before *ca.* 440, maybe not even until *ca.* 460 (ibid.).

After the demolition, a large rectangular structure built in a Roman style, XXVII.1, was erected on the site, and was possible a barn or granary (ibid., 23-24). As there are indications of structural problems with it, this building may have only lasted for twenty years, up till *ca.* 450-475 by Frere’s dead reckoning (ibid., 24). Around that time, a “trench for a wooden water-main” was “dug through the foundations of the building (destroying all its buttresses, which had been reduced to ground level ...)” and “some of the iron collars used to join the pipes were found *in situ*” (ibid.). According to Frere, this find has “implications ... for the survival of Roman engineering techniques and the continuance of the urban way of life into and beyond the middle of the fifth century”; moreover, “the ability to build in masonry, and the construction of the pipe-line, both support the inference of a reasonable population surviving to *ca.* 450-470” (ibid.).

However, even if Frere’s dating and sequence for this site are correct, no other buildings in Verulamium can be definitively shown to go so late (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151). The site is unique, an anomaly, and should not be used as a “type site” to create a “general model of urban vitality and continuity into the fifth century” (Mattingly 2006: 339; Faulkner 1996: 110). Rather than evidence for ongoing urban life, the site could have been, as has been proposed by Richard Reece, “the centre of an agricultural estate” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151; Reece 1980: 88).

The archaeology of the site also raises a lot of serious questions, and the evidence has more recently been re-examined by David Neal (2003). Different possible dates for the mosaics, combined with a closer look at the positions of the key coin and pottery evidence, can be employed to arrive at earlier dates for the buildings. A coin of Valens from Room 8/9 of XXVII.2’s expansion phase, was not simply in the make-up layer below the house, but came from make-up “directly below the robbed flue”; therefore it is “possible that the coin had found its way into the flue and was trampled into the underlying deposit during the robbery” (Neal 2003: 198). Neal also believes that dating the building to *ca.* 380 from one coin in the make-up is a mistake, when the pottery and

coins from the rest of the make-up are primarily second and third century. The mosaic in the room also lacks fourth-century parallels: it is not similar to other mosaics of the late fourth century, but is stylistically closer to earlier mosaics (ibid.).

The expansion of Room 15/16 was probably around the same time as that of 8/9. This was the room with Frere's grain-dryer. Neal thinks the "grain-dryer" was more likely a hypocaust, put in at the time when the room was expanded. The need for repairs to the mosaic was probably due to heat damage from the hypocaust. "The second phase of construction observed in the furnace is more likely to have been associated with repairs to the hypocaust flues" (2003: 199-200). The pottery found in the stoke-hole was primarily second-century; even Frere admitted that none of it was later than *ca.* 350. Neal suggests that this indicates a similar date for the hypocaust to have gone out of use, and that a date of *ca.* 435 for the event would not be possible (ibid., 200-201). This would obviously mean a much earlier date for Building XXVII.2. Little remained of the mosaic in Room 15/16, but it has stylistic parallels in third-century Trier, as well as to a mosaic from London that was from no later than the beginning of the fourth century, and some similarity to third-century mosaics from London. There was also a parallel to a mosaic from Temple A in the Verulamium forum's south corner, again possibly of the third century. The similarities between the Temple A and the Room 15/16 mosaics were sufficiently strong that they might have been laid by the same mosaicist (ibid., 198, 200, 202).

The mosaic from the first phase of XXVII.2 stretched from Room 5 to Room 3 through a porticus between the two. It was here that a coin of Constantius II (a copy of the *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* type) of *ca.* 360 was found, in an area where "the original floor had been substantially repaired in a later phase", so the coin could have been sealed under the floor during these repairs (Neal 2003: 197). "The latest pottery from the make-up deposits beneath the mosaic is of AD 200-275 so the validity of the coin for dating this content is dubious" (ibid.). Moreover, the mosaic itself was made using Samian tesserae, more common to earlier (third-century) mosaics, and Purbeck marble tesserae, also more common to earlier pavements (ibid.).

The evidence, as laid out by Neal, seems to indicate an earlier date than the end of the fourth century for the construction of XXVII.2 and the laying of its mosaics, perhaps one during the third century (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 170). This would make more

sense of “the lack of late fourth-century pottery from the make-up deposits” (Neal 2003: 201). It does appear, however, that activity continued on the site into the late fourth century and probably early fifth. XXVII.1, the barn or storehouse, could have belonged to the later fourth century, possibly as a government warehouse, and even the water-pipe might fit before the end of the Roman period, especially as the aisled building may not have lasted long.¹⁰⁶ Coins from the trench for the water pipe did not go far beyond the middle of the fourth century: they included one of Constantine II (337-341), two of Constans (341-346), and a *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* copy (Frere 1983: 226).

XIV.3: The Latest Romanized House in Verulamium?

A smaller and simpler masonry house, XIV.3, may provide a more legitimate example of a Romanized house lasting through the first quarter of the fifth century. This structure was built over a slightly worn coin of 367-375 (Valentinian I), so Frere estimates that it was constructed *ca.* 375-380 (1983: 22). Despite not being large, the house nevertheless contained the luxury embellishments of decorated wall-plaster, tessellated floors, and a hypocaust, though the latter does not seem to have been properly constructed (*ibid.*, 93-94). Frere assumes that the initial phase lasted for a considerable time because of the repairs of the building that became necessary (*ibid.*, 96). However, aspects of the building may have required repairs fairly soon, due to being so poorly constructed; these repairs were poorly done as well (*ibid.*).

The next phase involved major renovations and the house was scaled down in size, “to form a rectangular, two-roomed house with a projecting wing at the north-east end” (Niblett 2001: 132). This smaller version of the house received new painted wall-plaster, a mosaic and a hypocaust, so it is likely that this second phase was still prior to *ca.* 400 (Frere 1983: 98, 101). Once again, the workmanship was substandard: “the underlying layers were not properly consolidated and serious subsidence occurred in the floor”; furthermore, the mosaic panel was “completely worn away”, due “to a combination of thin tesserae, poor fixative and the lack of craftsmen to make the repairs” in the early fifth century (*ibid.*, 96). The area that was employed as a kitchen received new floors four times (*ibid.*, 98).

¹⁰⁶ Due to problems with subsidence (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 170).

The coins from this phase were primarily residual, but in the topsoil over the kitchen, there were coins up to issues of Theodosius and Arcadius, and over another room, up to Arcadius (Frere 1983: 99-100). There was no later evidence to assist with dating. Using dead reckoning, Frere allows twenty to forty years for the succession of floors in the kitchen and for the mosaic to wear out, bringing the end of the house to *ca.* 430-440 (*ibid.*, 101). It is worth considering, however, that if the building and its decoration had been so poorly constructed, it may have worn out at a faster rate than that.

Lower-Status Occupation in Late Verulamium

There is also evidence for the accommodation of the less fortunate residents of late Roman Verulamium. Much of this is hard to date, but it should not be assumed that it is all post-Roman. Verulamium's poor may have lived "in either timber cottages and huts, or, more commonly, in parts of dilapidated town houses" (Faulkner 1996: 14). The last phase of XXII.1 after *ca.* 375, discussed above, may be an example of this lower-status housing (Frere 1983: 22).

A further example was found in Insula XIX. Alongside a Roman road north-east of the forum-basilica, there had been an open cobbled area maintained until the late fourth century, as indicated by a coin from 383-388 in its final make-up (Selkirk 1990: 417; Niblett and Thompson 2005: 122). A house platform was built into this, and would have supported a small, one-room rectangular timber structure which may have been a late strip-building (Selkirk 1990: 416-417; Faulkner 1996: 95; Niblett and Thompson 2005: 122). Late Roman material on the floor included a sherd from an East Mediterranean amphora of the late fourth to fifth centuries (Selkirk 1990: 416-417). This house may thus belong to the late fourth or early fifth century (Faulkner 1996: 95; Niblett and Thompson 2005: 122).

Another possible late lower-status building may have been constructed in Insula II near the forum-basilica, encroaching onto Watling Street's edge (Niblett et al 2006: 74-75). A "number of postholes and slots" were "cut into the street metalling, but were not covered by the dark soil", perhaps representing two phases of occupation (*ibid.*, 75). There was no dating evidence from contemporary finds, but the "significant encroachment onto one of the main thoroughfares through the town is suggestive of a late fourth-century or early fifth-century date" (*ibid.*; Faulkner 1996: 95).

An example of late degraded or “squatter” occupation has been discovered at the west corner of Insula XVIII. A possible timber structure was erected inside the remains of the late Roman Building XVIII.1, once the latter had gone out of use (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 172). A small oven and hearth had been built over the mid-fourth century mosaic that had worn away (*ibid.*; Faulkner 1996: 95). There was no dating evidence (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 172), but the remains could have been from the late fourth or early fifth centuries. Niblett and Thompson also refer to undated lower status occupation in the form of masonry, postholes and stake holes cut into the floor of a Roman masonry building in Insula XVIII, with metal-working being carried out in another room (*ibid.*, 170). It is not clear from their description whether this refers to the same or a different site within that insula.

Further occupation of this type has been located in Insula XIII. Here, evidence of a “wattle and daub ‘screen’ round a small hearth [was] found overlaying a fourth-century building” (*ibid.*, 172). In the north-west corner of the site, a different excavation discovered an “open yard”; in the very late fourth or early fifth century a new rammed gravel surface was put down. Built into this surface were four small ovens, and the possible base for a fifth oven. It is not clear how long these were in use (*ibid.*).

The fourth-century rubbish tips may also be evidence for continuing occupation in late Verulamium (Faulkner 1996: 95). As has been noted, rubbish was dumped at the sites of abandoned buildings in the fourth century, particularly late in the century. The dark earth deposits found in Verulamium may be the remains of some of these dumps. Layers of dark earth built up around areas and over buildings that seem to have been abandoned, as with the deposits of dark earth noted by the Wheelers over buildings in Insula I that were out of use by the mid fourth century. But in other areas, such as Insula XVIII, the dark earth layers were over fifth-century remains. Rubbish was dumped in the late Roman and sub-Roman periods in quantities large enough to build into “substantial deposits” (Niblett 2001: 130).

Fourth-Century Industrial Decline

There appears to have been an industrial decline in late Verulamium along with the contraction of settlement and probable population shrinkage, based on Niblett and

Thompson's Table 4.6 (2005: 129-130) of evidence for industry in Verulamium; whether the industrial decline contributed to the other changes or was the result of them is not clear. During the period *ca.* 260-310 there was evidence for industry at nine different sites in Verulamium; the activities included metalworking, grain processing, cloth making, chalk quarrying, and various unidentified uses of ovens. But by *ca.* 310-360, there was industry at only two sites, involving merely butchering and grain processing. After *ca.* 360 there was only metal-working, at one site, the degraded occupation of a late house in Insula XVIII.

Fourth-Century Coin Loss

It is not certain what relationship the changes in availability of currency and in coin loss had to the industrial decline. Verulamium experienced heavier coin loss in the late third century than most other Romano-British towns, but the reverse occurred in the fourth century, with lower than average quantities of coins found (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 1371; Niblett 2001: 128). Private houses in the southern area of town excavated by the Wheelers, as well as in the houses and shops in the area excavated by Frere on the forum-basilica's north-west side, have few finds of coins later than the early fourth century (Niblett 2001: 128; Niblett and Thompson 2005: 138). The majority of later fourth century coins, especially of the period of the House of Constantine (317-367), but also of the very late part of the century, were found in the theatre or temples "from the rubbish deposits adjacent to them", or other rubbish tips such as in disused cellars (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 138; Niblett 2001: 128). It is thus possible that the temples as well as the theatre were being used as dumps by the late fourth century, and that the coins by this time were seen as having little value and were being discarded along with other garbage, though it may also be that some were being left in temples as votive deposits (Niblett and Thompson 2005: 164; Niblett 2001: 128).

It could be possible that Verulamium and its *civitas* were suffering from economic decline, which may be what is represented in the coins and settlement pattern, as well as the industrial decline (Faulkner 1996: 98). Some of the villas in the town's hinterland appear to have gone out of use from the mid fourth century: Gorhambury by mid century; Park Street Villa, four kilometres south-east of Verulamium, possibly by 370; Boxmoor

Villa, also close by, in the mid fourth century; and Gadebridge's occupation was greatly reduced after about mid century, with the main building demolished and the baths out of use (Niblett 2001: 131).

Verulamium after the Roman withdrawal may have "consisted of scattered timber buildings surrounding one or more elite buildings in the core of the Roman town and perhaps adapting the shells of the late Roman buildings" (Niblett et al 2006: 107). The building sequence that does continue beyond the beginning of the fifth century, XIV.3, may "represent a single elite family maintaining their estate, while the surrounding area steadily declined into a mere scattering of peasant hovels" (Niblett 2001: 140). Verulamium was no longer an urban centre (Niblett et al 2006: 107).

Anglo-Saxon settlers did not come to the area around Verulamium until a fairly late date. There is no evidence for a Saxon presence in the region prior to the establishment of a cemetery in the seventh century about two hundred metres south of the town beyond its Silchester Gate, near King Harry Lane. The closest early Anglo-Saxon cemetery prior to this was twenty kilometres north at Luton; there has also been little early Saxon pottery or metalwork found within approximately a twenty-kilometre radius of the town (Niblett 2001: 142, 146). By the time that the Anglo-Saxons finally reached the area near Verulamium, "the town ... had already been long deserted" (Brooks 1986: 90).

Colchester

Colchester provides an example of an administrative town that underwent a contraction of occupation and probable population decline beginning at a fairly early date, first in the suburbs, and then within the town walls, likely leading to a significant change in the character of the town. While there is evidence to suggest that Colchester may have remained a centre of importance for the collection of taxes, particularly in kind, this does not seem to have improved the fortunes of the town or of its elite over the course of the fourth century. There are indications, however, of late lower-status occupation in the core of the town. Occupation seems to have come to an end soon after the Roman withdrawal, with little indication of any urban continuity, despite the early arrival of Anglo-Saxons to the town.

Contraction of the Suburbs

Contraction of the settlement and population appears to have occurred first in the suburbs of Colchester. “From about the late third century, the built-up areas in the town, intramural as well as extramural, seem to have started shrinking” (Crummy et al 1992: 18). Most of the houses in the main suburb of Balkerne Lane, located west of the town, an area that had been “densely packed with buildings”, were torn down by around 300 or soon after, and were not replaced (Crummy et al 1984: 16, 113; Crummy 1997: 115). Coins and pottery found in the layers associated with the demise of Buildings 54-58 and 64-65 indicate that this occurred around the late third to early fourth century. The ditches and drains along the main Roman road were also abandoned at this time, though two nearby temples remained in use (Crummy et al 1984: 18, 113).

Traces of activity of quite a different nature during the rest of the fourth century have been found in the Balkerne Lane area. Pits were dug on both sides of the Roman road; some “were in rough lines and may have been for fence posts” (ibid., 113). Some quarrying may also have been carried out in the area, and a significant amount of dumping of rubbish occurred as well, for example, into the backfilled cellar of Building 65, up to at least the late fourth century (Crummy 1997: 115; Crummy et al 1984: 18, 113; Faulkner 1994: 111).

In the late third century there had been alterations to the defences and gates of Colchester: at around 275 the ditches around the town were widened, and approximately

two decades later, the road to Balkerne Gate was cut off, closing the gate. Duncan's Gate seems to have been blocked perhaps around the same time (Crummy 1997: 114-115, 117). While these changes may have been connected to the contraction of the suburbs shortly after this, there was "no corresponding rise in the number of houses inside the walls at this time – in fact, the reverse seems true" (Crummy et al 1992: 18).

It is possible that the changes made to Colchester's defences towards the end of a century filled with civil war, were for the purpose of "improving the defensive capabilities of the town against the onslaught of Roman soldiers skilled in siege tactics" (Crummy 1997: 117). Colchester, less than sixteen kilometres from the east coast, had been the initial target of the first century AD Roman invasion, and could again have been considered vulnerable. The blocking of the gates may have occurred in the last years of the rule of Carausius and Allectus, as the threat of invasion by the central empire was becoming stronger (*ibid.*). It is therefore possible that the contraction of occupation and population that occurred around this time and shortly afterward could be connected to the events surrounding Constantius' defeat of their regime. Perhaps, though it cannot currently be proven, residents of Colchester had been strong supporters of what proved to be the losing side, and suffered punitive measures as a result.

The other suburb, Middleborough, was located beyond the town's north gate. Occupation here also seems to have come to an end around *ca.* 300, accompanied by the demolition of the buildings. Coin distribution in this area indicates that the site remained vacant over the course of the fourth century: there were ample coins of the late third century up to 296, but very few from the area after the buildings were torn down (Crummy et al 1984: 16-17; Crummy 1997: 115).

Early Contraction inside the Walls of Colchester

Within the walls of the town, occupied areas began to shrink during the first half of the fourth century. At the Lion Walk site, all but one of the buildings were destroyed or out of use by the end of the century (Crummy 1997: 15). The remains of the courtyard house Building 20 contained evidence indicating that it had been demolished *ca.* 300. The occupation and demolition layers of Building 22 contained no coins or pottery datable to the latter half of the century, but there were coins up to 330-335, suggesting to excavators that the destruction of the building had occurred by *ca.* 350. Building 21, a

house with two tessellated pavements, was also demolished in the fourth century, but the exact date is not clear (Crummy et al 1984: 19, 62, 66, 68). The sites of these buildings were left vacant over the remainder of Roman occupation. Buildings 19, 24, and 25, town houses with tessellated floors (plus mosaics and hypocaust in Building 19), were abandoned and allowed to become derelict over the course of the century. Coins from soil on the floors of Buildings 24 and 25 may indicate use into the 340s, and possibly up to the 370s or 380s, but these issues came from contexts that may have been disturbed (ibid., 19, 52, 54, 56, 69-70).

The residential occupation also disappeared from the Culver Street area in the fourth century: “None of the second and third-century houses at Culver Street appear to have survived beyond 275-325, after which time the site seems to have been practically devoid of buildings apart from the large aisled structure (Building 127) at the north-east corner of the site” (Crummy et al 1992: 18). It would seem that over an approximately fifty-year period, the houses were demolished and not replaced, and their sites left empty (Crummy 1997: 115). Substantial buildings had been constructed at Culver Street after the early second century, some with painted wall-plaster, tessellated floors, mosaics, glass windows, and the occasional hypocaust. Building 110 was demolished around 300. Building 113, a town house containing a mosaic and possibly a hypocaust, suffered the same fate by 325. They probably disappeared “in a piecemeal fashion” over this period, but by around 325 all were gone without replacement, and the focus of the area became agriculture (Crummy et al 1992: 31, 33, 116).

The change in use of the Culver Street sites is reflected in the significant drop in the numbers of coins lost or discarded here in the remainder of the fourth century. The street remained in use, and some coins were lost along its edges. There also seems to have been metal-working carried out on part of the site. A substantial number of pits of up to perhaps the early fifth-century date containing bronze-working and iron-smithing waste were found, indicating that there must have been metal-working hearths nearby (Crummy et al: 33-34, 61).

Colchester’s Possible Role in the Imperial Supply System

Despite its contraction of occupation, Colchester may have been a site of importance to the imperial taxation and military supply system. Colchester’s location

and easy access to the east coast via the River Colne, where it was in close proximity to two of the Shore Forts, Bradwell and Walton Castle, were no doubt of great significance. These forts, built in the later third century, may well have been established to serve as fortified ports (Pearson 2002: 65-66; 2005: 82). Tax in kind and supplies from Colchester could have been transferred to these forts and from there, distributed on through the imperial system.

Building 127, the large aisled structure on Culver Street, closely resembles possible warehouses that may have been used to store taxes in kind such as grain or animals and other imperial supplies (Faulkner 1994: 106). Built on the site of one of the demolished town houses, at the end of the third or early in the fourth century, this structure measured at least forty-five by seventeen metres externally. The lack of “proper floors”, hypocausts, or plastered walls suggests that this was “a low-grade structure”, such as a barn, perhaps one that was government-owned (Crummy et al 1992: 34, 42, 114-115; Faulkner 1994: 106; 2000: 429). “It may have had some kind of public status” (Crummy et al 1992: 115). There is little dating evidence to help in determining when the aisled building went out of use, though this must have occurred by the time of the insertion of the two inhumations in the north aisle¹⁰⁷ (ibid., 112, 114).

Settlement in the Final Years of Roman Colchester

The number of building sites going out of use and remaining unoccupied makes it likely that Colchester was indeed suffering from population decline in the fourth century. There was some new construction from the late third into the fourth centuries, but not much. Very few mosaics were laid after the mid third century; the only ones known to have been put in during the fourth were from Lion Walk’s Building 19 (Crummy 1997: 118).

The trend may have been towards smaller houses in fourth-century Colchester. Two sites from the High Street in the central area of the Roman town may provide examples of this: the Cups Hotel and Angel Yard. These sites, though of very limited size and providing only a little evidence, demonstrate a continuation of occupation in the centre of Colchester until late in the century (Crummy 1997: 118; Faulkner 1994: 98). Crummy thinks it is possible that settlement may have been focused on this area in the

¹⁰⁷ As discussed in the section on the Disposal of Human Remains.

last decades of the Roman period, and that there may have been small houses along each side of the High Street (1997: 118).

At the Cups Hotel site, much of the archaeological remains had already been destroyed by the digging of the hotel's cellars, and "only a north-south strip about six metres wide survived intact" in the area excavated (Crummy et al 1992: 328). Among the remains found was Building 154, a small portion of a house with a shallow cellar, built *ca.* 225. The cellar appears to have gone out of use after 350, "and was gradually filled up with an accumulation of sandy clay floors interspersed with layers of occupation and charcoal" (*ibid.*, 333). In this occupation debris were significant amounts of late pottery as well as a possible coin hoard "deposited" around 350-360. Pieces of window glass were also found on the site and thought to have come from Building 154. All of it was blown glass, emphasizing a late date for the use of the structure, which Crummy et al believe may have continued until around the end of the Roman period (1992: 333).

Late Lower-Status Occupation

Another site that may have been in occupation in the late fourth century was Building 148 at 7-15 Long Wye Street at "the intersection of the Roman streets between Insulae 29, 30, 37, and 38a" (Crummy et al 1992: 355). This was another timber-framed structure, built in the late third or beginning of the fourth century. The evidence for this insubstantial building consisted of slots, postholes, and stake holes. A tessellated floor from the house which previously occupied the site was cut by two of the slots. It may also have lasted to perhaps the end of the century (*ibid.*, 361; Faulkner 1994: 107).

At the Gilbert School Site, just within the Roman town walls, Building 138 was a small structure in Insula 17a fronting the north-south street. It appears to have been a two-room half-timbered building, constructed in the latter half of the third century (Crummy et al 1992: 127, 127; Faulkner 1994: 107). A "Romano-Saxon" pottery sherd found on a floor surface suggests that the building survived into the second half of the fourth century. But there is no evidence to suggest very late use, and the coin list from the Gilbert School area comes to an end after the middle century, which implies that there may have been little further activity (Crummy et al 1992: 137, 294).

The late buildings at some sites such as Gilberd School and Long Wyre may have been merely “huts”. Few wealthy town houses were in use after *ca.*350 (Faulkner 1994: 106-107). There appears instead to be evidence for late low-status occupation in Colchester, in some cases in the form of degraded or “squatter” occupation of the remains of earlier houses, such as such as Building 148 on Long Wyre Street. At sites such as North Hill, pits were dug into the floors of abandoned town houses, and filled with rubbish that included late pottery (*ibid.*, 107). Evidence indicates that there was some sort of late activity in the buildings of the *temenos* of the Temple of Claudius. Pottery from after *ca.* 360-370 was contained within material that could represent occupation debris or dumped rubbish. A “worn gravel surface” could possibly have been a late floor, and coins of the area continued up to issues from 382-392 and 379-395. Covering the site was an accumulation of dark earth layers, also containing late Roman pottery (*ibid.*, 105-106).

Only at the centre of the town was there notable evidence for occupation in Colchester into the last years of Roman rule (Crummy 1997: 129). Little has been found to suggest that urban life carried on for long after that. A hoard found near Artillery Folly, around three hundred metres south of the wall circuit and assembled during the reign of Constantine III (407-411) or later, consists of heavily clipped silver coins. As coin-clipping was prohibited under the empire and a capital offence, it was rare until around the end of the Roman period. The clipping suggests to Crummy that the hoard may belong to the time soon after the Roman withdrawal, during which coins may have been, however briefly, still in circulation, but Roman law no longer applied (*ibid.*)¹⁰⁸. There is little else to support an argument for the continuation of Romanized urban life beyond imperial rule into the fifth century. It is possible that the gradual population decline and contraction experienced by Colchester over the fourth century left nothing more than a few small dwellings in the centre of town by the end of the period.

Arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Colchester

Anglo-Saxon settlement may have come early to Colchester, but Romano-British occupation of the former town had probably already largely ceased. Two *grubenhäuser*,

¹⁰⁸ Alternatively, the clipping may have occurred during the reign of Constantine III, as noted above in the Archaeological Evidence segment.

huts with sunken floors, were found during the excavations at Lion Walk. They were constructed inside the ruins of Building 20, which had been demolished around 300, and Building 19, which had been abandoned and allowed to collapse before the end of the Roman period (Crummy et al 1984: 57, 70). The huts were cut through the tessellated floors of the ruined houses, which do not appear to have had standing walls which the huts could have incorporated (Crummy 1997: 135-136). Evidence would seem to indicate a mid to late fifth-century date for these structures (*ibid.*, 134-135; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 193). Anglo-Saxon type burials begin appearing outside the town walls from around this time, as do finds of Saxon pottery and brooches (Crummy 1997: 134).

However, the occupation of Colchester itself may have been intermittent and sporadic at this early date, as there are no further Anglo-Saxon structures prior to the seventh century (Crummy 1997: 134). There are no indications of influence or intermingling between the Roman Britons and Saxons at Colchester, and “thus no convincing case for contact between the two cultures” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 193).

Canterbury

Canterbury provides another example of an administrative town that underwent a significant change of character by the mid fourth century. Primarily an elite residential centre in the third century, it was nevertheless beginning to show some signs of decay by the end of the century. Although a building programme around this time and into the early fourth century brought renewal to limited areas, specifically the sector containing the public baths, the decline continued in other parts of the town. By the middle of the century, buildings, especially town houses, were going out of use, and dark earth was accumulating in some areas of Canterbury. The character of the area which had seen revival also began to change, as the baths were converted for industrial and commercial pursuits. Late fourth-century Canterbury seems from the evidence to have largely been a settlement of scattered timber structures and degraded and “squatter” occupation in the ruins of the earlier masonry buildings. A few of the structures were in use into the early fifth century and may have continued for a short time after the end of Roman rule. Canterbury has evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement as early as the middle of the fifth century, but continuity from the late Roman town cannot be proven. Romano-British occupation of Canterbury would appear to have come to an end *ca.* 425, unable to continue without the stimulus of the Roman imperial system.

During the second and third centuries, Canterbury gradually became a town primarily residential in character and dominated by elite houses. Initially these were timber buildings, but gradually they were replaced by masonry town houses (Blockley et al 1995: 27; Blagg 1995: 16). Local resources do not seem to have been focused on commercial or industrial pursuits; pottery was no longer produced in Canterbury by the late second century (Blagg 1995: 16). This appears to have had some adverse effects: Canterbury’s “industrial suburb ... disappeared in the third century” (Ottaway 1992: 103).

The Late Third- and Early Fourth-Century Renewal

A programme of renewal began in the late third century and continued into the early fourth. This phase of building and renovation was very likely stimulated by the late third-century construction of forts along the shores of south-easternmost Britain (Blockley et al 1995: 258), an area for which Canterbury was the primary town and administrative centre. Between *ca.* 260 and 300, forts were built at Richborough, Dover,

and Lympne; there was a fourth fort nearby at Reculver, which had been installed earlier in the third century (Pearson 2005: 75). This construction work, as well as an increased importance of the south-east coast, and greater level of activity in the area, undoubtedly brought more wealth, commerce, and work to the Canterbury region. Imperial or local administrators may have felt that the town needed greater protection as well as a partial facelift, due to the new focus on the area.

The first part of the building programme was the construction of Canterbury's town walls and rampart *ca.* 270-290 (Blockley et al 1995: 258). The remainder of the public part of the revitalization appears to have concentrated on the street in the centre of town on which the public baths complex was located (in the Marlowe II and III sites). Parts of the baths were rebuilt around the beginning of the fourth century, and a new sewer was installed on one side of the road (*ibid.*, 28). There is also evidence for some residential construction and renovation at this time. In the early fourth century, R26, a large masonry house with its own private bath suite, was built near the public baths (*ibid.*, 258-259). Two timber buildings were also constructed in the early fourth century, R27 and R28, on the opposite side of the street from R26, replacing the buildings previously located on their sites (*ibid.*, 244-245, 248; Blagg 1995: 17). In the northern part of Canterbury a town house in Butchery Lane was expanded and given new mosaics at the end of the third century (Blockley et al 1995: 259).

Contraction in the First Half of the Fourth Century

The building programme did not, however, extend beyond the central area, with the exception of the Butchery Lane house. Excavations in other parts of Canterbury "have failed to locate any further significant late third- or early fourth-century building activity" (Blockley et al 1995: 259). Outside of the central area of the town, change and decline seem to have already begun, with structures abandoned and dark earth accumulating in some places. Masonry town houses were going out of use and no longer being repaired, leading to their gradual collapse (*ibid.*, 265).

This can be seen in the southern part of town, in the area of the Marlowe I site, which includes 16 Watling Street and part of the Marlowe Car Park (Brooks 1988: 101). Masonry houses R17 and R19 were likely unoccupied and in a state of disrepair by the early fourth century, and dark earth was building up in this area by the second quarter of

the century (ibid.; Blockley et al 1995: 265, 709; Blagg 1995: 18). On the Marlowe IV site nearby, located on a different part of the Car Park, another masonry building, R11, was “abandoned” by *ca.* 300 (Brooks 1988: 101). In the early fourth century, a timber structure, R12, was constructed within the ruins of another stone building to the south-west of R11. However, this too seems to have been out of use by the middle of the century, and the dark earth had already started to accumulate in the area over the previous couple of decades (Blockley et al 1995: 171; Brooks 1988: 101; Blagg 1995: 18).

Substantial buildings may also have been out of use and in decay at the Marlowe Theatre site, such as R36, which was in a decayed condition and collapsing by the end of the third century, though it may not have been completely dismantled until the 340s. During the first half of the fourth century, dark earth first appeared on parts of the theatre insula (Blagg 1995: 17; Blockley et al 1995: 171, 253). Building II, a third-century masonry town house at the Simon Langton Yard outside of the Marlowe area, was probably only occupied until the early fourth century, and demolished after a short period of use as a place to dump refuse such as bones and oysters (Blockley et al 1995: 277).

The evidence would seem to indicate that a large area of Canterbury east of the theatre and south of the area of the public baths complex was becoming depopulated and no longer served as a place for housing (ibid., 714). Blagg suggests that these changes in the town might be explained by the theories of Reece (1980) and of Millett (1990), in which the fourth-century Romano-British towns are depicted as having lost their importance as centres for elite social display, as well as losing much of their urban function, while retaining their significance as foci for the imperial administration and communications network, especially for tax collection, and as meeting places and markets (1995: 18).

Transformation of the Public Baths Area to a Place of Commerce and Industry

The area of the public baths underwent a change of character at about the mid fourth century, as noted in the section on public buildings. The baths were no longer used for their original purpose, and the buildings of the complex had been converted for industrial uses. The shell of the *laconicum* housed a succession of three timber structures, R21A-C, in which industrial activity was carried out, probably metal-working, at least in R21B. The earliest of the three structures, R21A, was likely constructed *ca.* 350, prior to

the flooding. R21B was constructed after the flood, and so would be dated to post-360. This structure is thought to have probably been replaced by R21C around the final quarter of the fourth century (Blockley et al 1995: 188, 191-193).

The timber buildings R25A and its successor R25B, constructed across the street and blocking most of it, were probably connected to the baths complex, as they appear to have made use of the portico's south wall. It has been suggested that these buildings may have contained shops. R25A was built over the silts left on the street by the flooding, and thus must date to after 360 at least. It was replaced by R25B after 388, as the latter was built over a Theodosian coin (388-402) (Blockley et al 1995: 204, 206).

Cattle metapodials in the silt layers left behind by the flooding of the 360s in the portico and *palaestra* could be evidence for bone-working in these areas, or possibly for the dumping of rubbish in the portico (Blockley et al 1995: 199-201, 461). A pebble and tile floor was installed in the portico over the flood silt and bone deposit, followed by occupation deposits layered with two additional (*opus signinum*) floors. "Liquid waste" from the construction of the first of the *opus signinum* floors was used to create a floor surface for R25B, over the Theodosian coin. This must mean that the final two floors of the portico date to at least 388 (*ibid.*, 172, 202).

Further Construction in the Second Half of the Fourth Century

There was some renovation and replacement of buildings in Canterbury from the middle into the third quarter of the fourth century. During the 350s, repairs and alterations were made to the bath suite of R26, the town house near the public baths. On the other side of the street, coin evidence suggests that building R27 was replaced by another timber structure, R29, not long after the mid fourth century. Likewise, the nearby R28 may only have lasted till the 340s; before long, R30, also timber, had taken its place (Blockley et al 1995: 244-245, 248, 250, 252). To the west, in the theatre insula, a timber structure, R38, was built over the remains of Building R36 around the mid fourth century. R38 was partially rebuilt with a red and white tessellated floor sometime in the second half of the century. A further timber building in the area, R39, is likely to have been constructed late in the century (*ibid.*, 254-257). On St. George's Street in the east part of town, a bath building thought to be a commercial rather than public or domestic establishment, was renovated in the late 350s (Frere and Stow 1983: 31, 39). On a site

near this, between Iron Bar Lane and Canterbury Lane, was another timber building built over a street late in the Roman period, probably near the end of the fourth century, as a coin of Arcadius was found in one of the slots for the timbers (ibid., 72-73).

Late Fourth-Century Contraction

However, during the second half of the fourth century, increasing numbers of buildings were being abandoned, while in the remains of others there is evidence of degraded occupation and the huts of possible squatters. The bath suite of town house R26 in the centre of town was no longer used for bathing, as silt had built up against the hypocaust in the third quarter of the century, “rendering it useless”; after that the hypocaust itself was robbed of materials (Blockley et al 1995: 210, 222). The building appears to have been transformed into a workshop in its final phase, with the addition of possible industrial furnaces; a crucible was found in the debris of one of the rooms. A large amount of bones, shell, and late fourth-century pottery, in addition to the expected charcoal, could indicate “squatter” occupation or late use of part of the site as a dump. The latter possibility is supported by the fact that after this debris had been covered by rubble from the collapse or demolition of a wall, more rubbish was soon piled over it, and later followed by a layer of oyster shells. Within Room 7 of the bath suite’s ruins, a timber structure with an *opus signinum* floor covered by a layer of debris and charcoal was built in the fourth quarter of the century. The stratigraphy of the site indicated that this (and the rest of the baths building) was “out of use by the end of the fourth century or a little later” (ibid., 222-224, 227).

Structural remains found on two nearby sites were probably further parts of the same masonry town house as R26. Those uncovered in the Rose Hotel Yard seem to have been out of use by the mid fourth century, perhaps as the result of a fire (Blockley et al 1995: 227, 233). The south-east wing of the town house appears to be represented by the structure found on the Barclay’s Bank site. This segment of the house would seem to have burned down by the early 330s. In the second half of the fourth century, a small timber structure with an earth and loam floor was built above the debris of Room 3. This hut appears to have been in use in the later fourth century (ibid., 236, 240).

Neither of the timber buildings on the other side of the street apparently survived into the last quarter of the fourth century. R29 contains little evidence to demonstrate

occupation beyond the 360s, and building R30 may have gone out of use around the same time (Blockley et al 1995: 250, 252). R38, a timber building located near the theatre, seems to have been abandoned by around 375. Another timber structure close by, R39, may have been disused by the end of the Roman period, when it was cut by a pit filled with loam and lumps of *opus signinum* (ibid., 172, 257; Brooks 1988: 101).

In the south-east part of town, the St. George's Street bath building burned down not long after 360 and was not rebuilt. On the south-west side of the street was a large mid third-century masonry town house with an apsidal end. This building was in ruins by the late fourth century (Frere and Stow 1983: 32, 40-41, 43). At the Conservative Club Gardens site, in the north of the town, the remains of a masonry building with tessellated floors was found. This house appears to have gone out of use and begun to be covered with dark earth by the mid fourth century, but not demolished and robbed of stone until perhaps after *ca.* 360. A structure "with rough *opus signinum* and gravel floors" was erected over the site after that, but was itself soon covered with dark earth (Blockley et al 1995: 269, 272-273). Another possible town house, with a tessellated floor and decorated wall-plaster, was Building I at the Simon Langton Yard. It was in use until the mid fourth century, and was demolished before the century's end. Some sort of later fourth-century activity continuing in the area is indicated by the pit dug to the north-east of the building's remains and containing material dating between approximately 360 and 400 (ibid., 276).

It is likely that Canterbury was undergoing some sort of economic decline that was leading to further contraction of settlement, particularly of wealthier inhabitants. As the population shrank, even those with some financial means who remained in the town may have found it increasingly difficult to acquire the building materials or to find the skilled craftsmen necessary for the construction or maintenance of elite Romanized buildings.

An additional possibility is that Canterbury's flagging fortunes may have been partially due to the decay of the Shore Fort system along the nearby coast of Kent. The late third- and early fourth-century boost that the installation of three of the four forts seems to have brought to Canterbury's economy and to its significance as the closest major administrative town to the forts may have been short-lived. The fort at Reculver was already in decline by AD 300, with its *principia* and barracks "in ruins" (Pearson

2002: 164). Fourth-century occupation seems to have been intermittent and disorganized, with one of the main roads covered by rubbish, until Reculver's abandonment *ca.* 360 (*ibid.*, 164, 167; 2005: 80). The fort at Lympne was not in full use after 348 and was abandoned after the third quarter of the century (*ibid.*, 2002: 167; 2005: 80, 85). The character of Dover's occupation changed in the late fourth century, entering a phase of disorganization in which rubbish was dumped on the fort rampart; this continued through the remainder of the Roman period (*ibid.*, 2002: 164, 169). Only the fort at Richborough remained in full use to the beginning of the fifth century (*ibid.*, 169). If in the fourth century Canterbury was dependent on the imperial system for the continuation of urban life, the decline of the forts in this area may have a major impact on the town.

Late Coin Loss in Canterbury

Something of the fortunes of Canterbury can be learned from the evidence of its coins. Canterbury had high coin values (compared to other British towns) for the second half of the third century. This may have been connected to the construction of the town walls around the same time, which may have meant increased numbers of soldiers in Canterbury with money to spend (Blockley et al 1995: 928)¹⁰⁹, and perhaps also to increased prosperity in the area from the building of the shore forts. The numbers of coins for the first half of the fourth century were lower, but dropped significantly around mid century, when they fell below the average for British towns. "This reflects a decline and contraction of the town from the early fourth century onwards, the buildings in Area MI and Area MIV on the edge of town being abandoned at this time" (*ibid.*). The numbers of coins increase in the final Roman (Theodosian) period to "above the mean", giving a false impression of a late rise in prosperity. In fact, a disproportionate quantity was found from the time of the House of Valentinian in the unoccupied Marlowe I (*ibid.*). The numbers of coins from Canterbury's other sites in the late period were actually below the mean. Marlowe I's Theodosian coins may well have been part of a hoard hidden in the area after it became wasteland, and later scattered by the building of Anglo-Saxon structures there (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁹ Blockley et al are assuming that the town walls were built by the army.

Dark Earth

As happens in the other Romano-British towns where dark earth occurs over abandoned areas, Canterbury's archaeologists have pondered its nature and origins. Dark earth is found over most of the excavated areas within the walls of the town, up to 1.5 metres deep in some places (Blockley et al 1995: 261). It did not form in all locations at the same time. Dark earth appeared in some areas of Canterbury, such as Marlowe I and IV by the second quarter of the fourth century, but was not present in the area of the public baths complex (Marlowe II and III) until the first quarter of the fifth century (Blagg 1995: 18). It has also been found outside the area of the Marlowe sites, such as at the Stour Street site in the west of the town. The early fifth-century pit burial there had been cut into a thick layer of dark earth (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 151).

Canterbury's excavators are not yet certain "whether or not the 'dark earth' is a natural, humus-rich soil derived from the decay of organic materials such as thatch, or a growth, nutrient-rich medium for the species that colonise twentieth-century demolition sites or, even indicating intensive cultivation areas around buildings" Blockley et al 1995: 265). That the dark earth was cultivated during the fourth and fifth centuries is unlikely. "Only Marlowe I and IV provided areas large enough for cultivation, and on these sites the soil was not deep enough" (Brooks 1988: 113). The large size of a number of pottery sherds from the different sites also does not support the possibility of cultivation. Furthermore, the coins and pottery from within the dark earth at all of the Marlowe sites come from the sites' "latest periods of Roman structural construction and occupation", and stratigraphy showing the deposits' formation into the Anglo-Saxon period has survived (Blockley et al 1995: 715).

Blockley et al link the development of dark earth to the abandonment of areas such as Marlowe I and IV, but they claim that the pottery sherds in many of the deposits, particularly in open areas outside of the shells of masonry buildings, are too small and too mixed for dumping in middens to be a primary cause of the dark earth's growth (1995: 261). However, they feel that such things as the growth of weeds and "decay of organic building materials" are not sufficient to explain such a thick accumulation of dark earth over a short period of time on some of the sites (*ibid.*, 262). The origins and nature of Canterbury's dark earth thus remain inconclusive for the present.

Settlement and Hoards in the Final Years of Roman Canterbury

By the beginning of the fifth century, only a few of the Roman buildings known from Canterbury were still occupied. Those still in use were primarily in the central area of town where the bath complex had been, but there may still have been thin settlement scattered across other parts of Canterbury. The Stour Street pit burial indicates some sort of activity in the western region. The timber building constructed across a street in the eastern part of town was likely still occupied in the early fifth century (Frere and Stow 1983: 73; Brooks 1988: 103), as was the second phase of the building (R25) that encroached on the street in front of the public baths (Blockley et al 1995: 28, 259; Brooks 1988: 103). It is possible that the final timber workshop (R21C) in the *laconicum* survived into the early fifth century, but this is not certain, as the two corroded coins of the House of Theodosius (388-402) found there were not from occupation levels but in debris from the collapse of the roof. It is thus possible that R21C did not continue beyond the end of the fourth century (Blockley et al 1995: 28, 193). More certainly in use in the fifth century was the portico of the baths complex. Since waste from its second to last floor was used to provide a surface for R25B, sealing a Theodosian coin below it, the portico must have continued well into the first quarter of the century (*ibid.*, 28, 202).

Hoards provide further evidence for continued occupation of Canterbury, possibly by elite individuals or by institutions with some wealth, in the very late fourth to early fifth centuries (Brooks 1988: 101; Blockley et al 1995: 461). One of these is the probable Theodosian hoard hidden in Marlowe I after the area's abandonment, as noted above (Blockley et al 1995: 928). Three other scattered Theodosian hoards have been found in the Marlowe excavations, one from a dark earth accumulation in a central part of town on the Marlowe III site. Another was disturbed when an Anglo-Saxon structure was constructed within the ruins of townhouse R26 on the same site (*ibid.*, 930; Brooks 1988: 101). "The third was from disturbed layers which had been used to backfill [a] medieval pit" on the Marlowe Theatre site (Blockley et al 1995: 930). Based on the dates of the coins in the first two hoards, they may have been deposited in 395 or soon after; but the third hoard contains a 402-408 coin of Honorius, giving it "a deposition date of AD 402 or shortly afterwards" (*ibid.*).

A slightly later hoard of silver and gold objects was deposited just outside one of the gates of the town walls. Among the items eventually determined to belong to this

hoard were four silver ingots of a type “normally manufactured under the form of state control and used as imperial donatives”; these were “equivalent to the same amount of coined bullion” (Johns et al 1985: 312, 328-329; Brooks 1988: 101). The ingots in this hoard may have been cast in the early fifth century from scrap silver such as that known to have been clipped from coins during this time (Johns et al 1985: 329). The bronze coins in the hoard included two of the House of Theodosius (395-402). Among the silver coins were one of Magnus Maximus (383-388) and two of Honorius (395-402); all had been clipped, one of those of Honorius particularly heavily (ibid., 337). Johns et al believe that the clipping of these coins likely occurred during the reign of Constantine III (407-411), and that the hoard was probably deposited in the period immediately following that (1985: 388). There was thus some scattered occupation continuing into the early fifth century in Canterbury, but it may not have lasted much longer, possibly only to *ca.* 425.

The Arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Canterbury

At some point after the end of Roman rule, new dwellings, those of Anglo-Saxons, were constructed within the walls of Canterbury. Evidence for thirty-eight sunken-featured structures or *grubenhäuser* have been found. Most of these (twenty-eight) were in the Marlowe Car Park area sites. Six others were uncovered at Simon Langton Yard, two in the Marlowe Theatre site, one in the north-east of the town at St. George’s Street, and two in the western region (one at Stour Street and one at Adelaide Place) (Brooks 1988: 104). For a time, these structures were believed to date primarily to the late sixth and seventh centuries (Tatton-Brown 1981: 14). However, new dating in the 1980s of continental Germanic pottery, which provides parallels to that associated with the Anglo-Saxon buildings in Canterbury, has led to a re-evaluation of the dating of the structures: some are now believed to belong to the second half of the fifth century (Brooks 1988: 105-106). The excavators of the Marlowe sites think that eleven of the *grubenhäuser* are definitely of that period, four from Marlowe I, six from Marlowe IV, and one from the Marlowe Theatre site. One structure each from Marlowe I and IV are seen as the earliest, definitely dating from *ca.* 450-475/500. The others may have been built before the end of that time frame while continuing on later into the sixth century (ibid., 106).

The gap between the latest Roman buildings, assuming that a few such as R25B and the portico of the public baths may have lingered on till *ca.* 425, and the earliest Anglo-Saxon structures could then “be as little as twenty-five years” (Brooks 1988: 107). While such a small gap could be seen as “fall[ing] within the error of measurement in archaeological dating”, Canterbury’s archaeologists generally do not believe there was an overlap between the Roman and Germanic settlements (*ibid.*). All but one of the earliest *grubenhäuser* were located in Marlowe I and IV, the areas where Romano-British settlement contracted first, in the initial decades of the fourth century (Blagg 1995: 19). But, more importantly, “there seem to be no finds, either Roman or Saxon, other than the pottery, which could even possibly be assigned to the middle of the fifth century”, and “there is nothing to suggest that the Romans who used the shops in the portico (R24) and adjacent building (R25) had any connection with the Anglo-Saxons who used that pottery” (Brooks 1988: 108). None of the Anglo-Saxon pottery has been found associated with the last surviving Roman buildings, nor has it been found with any artefacts of late Roman Britain. No evidence suggests cultural contact or influence between the two groups in Canterbury (*ibid.*; Blagg 1995: 19). For these reasons, it is believed that Romano-British occupation in Canterbury had come to an end before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, probably by *ca.* 425 (Brooks 1988: 108; Blockley et al 1995: 28; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 193; Ottaway 1992: 112).

Winchester

Winchester provides an example of a *civitas* capital that demonstrated typical early fourth-century prosperity and increased density of town houses at that time. Like Canterbury, it appears to have been primarily an elite residential and administrative centre. However, Winchester underwent significant changes by around the middle of the century, similar to Canterbury, with the disappearance of this type of occupation, while at the same time possibly becoming an industrial centre of importance to the imperial system. The late town may have been dependent on such state-sponsored activity, and underwent what seems like a complete collapse after the departure of the Roman administration. There was an Anglo-Saxon presence in Winchester by the end of the fifth century, but there may have been little occupation during the intervening years.

Fourth-Century Contraction of Occupation

Winchester's adherence to the typical administrative town occupation pattern of early fourth-century dominance of town houses changed from around *ca.* 350. Despite a small amount of new construction in the second half of the fourth century, there were also notable "numbers of buildings ... being abandoned and not replaced" (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132). This change seems to have occurred fairly quickly (Biddle 1983: 111). "All of the town houses of which anything is known went out of use and in most cases were demolished" (Ottaway 1992: 114).

One such town house was found at the Cathedral Car Park site, a courtyard building with a mosaic fronting onto a Roman street. Rubble from the house's destruction filled the courtyard and a well. It does not seem that the house was later rebuilt or the site reoccupied. The house's demolition was originally thought to have occurred by AD 300 (Biddle and Quirk 1962: 155), but the event was later re-dated to *ca.* 350 (Biddle 1983: 111 n.4).

A number of other town houses were uncovered at the Wolvesey Palace site, where there had once been a north-south Roman street. Several periods of timber buildings constructed along this densely occupied street were replaced by stone structures from the later second century onwards. These town houses, Buildings West 1, East 1A, 1B and 3C, were no longer in use by the mid fourth century (Biddle 1964: 214; 1965: 258; 1975b: 321; 1983: 111 n.4). Building West 1, on the west side of the street, had a

courtyard and tessellated floors. After it went out of its original form of use and had been partly demolished, it had a phase of degraded or “squatter” occupation in the late fourth century. Some floors had postholes cut through them; pits were also dug into floors, “at a time when the latest types of Roman pottery were in use” (ibid., 1975b: 323). After this phase the remainder of the building was destroyed and the site abandoned (ibid.). Building East 2, on the street’s east side, was also a stone courtyard house, with tessellated corridors and a well. A large quantity of coins and pottery from the mid fourth century was deposited in the well at the time of the house’s demolition (ibid., 234). Town houses went out of use in St. George’s Street and Middle Brook Street as well (ibid., 1983: 111 n.4).

Suburbs had grown beyond the walls from the mid third century, north of the town, where there is some evidence of “deliberate planning”, and to the west, where suburban growth encroached on what had been agricultural land at Crowder Terrace (Wacher 1995: 301; Qualman 1981: 105). However, by the late fourth century these areas appear to have contracted (Biddle 1983: 112).

The Mid Fourth-Century Transformation to a Centre of Possible Significance to the Imperial Supply System

At the same time as the town houses were disappearing, the coin and pottery distribution was expanding to cover the entire walled area, which it had not previously done. Biddle thinks that Winchester was undergoing “a considerable change in the later fourth century” and that much of the town may have been given over to “industrial activity or a kind of domestic use very different from what had gone on before” (1983: 112-113). Sizeable amounts of residues from iron-working, not previously present, were found in deposits of this period. Biddle believes that Winchester transformed fairly swiftly, from being primarily an administrative centre that catered to the elite, to a focus on some important function connected to the military, perhaps “as a defended administrative base and supply centre dealing with the *annona militaris*” (ibid. 112, 114).

Biddle thinks that the third-century stone circuit of Winchester may have been strengthened in the second half of the fourth to protect such a key imperial centre as part of the transformation at this time (1983: 112; 1973: 229). Two walls were discovered at

the South Gate which could have been part of a bastion that had been an addition to the walls. Biddle's dating comes from the possibly contemporary metalling of the street in front of the South Gate, which sealed a coin of Gratian (367-378). Work may also have been done on the ditch system beyond the walls at the same time (ibid., 1975a: 11). Another bastion has been "tentatively identified" south of the West Gate (ibid., 1983: 112). However, apparently the above mentioned structure at the South Gate cannot be definitively said to have been a bastion, nor can it be given a certain date beyond the approximate fourth century (ibid., 1975a: 11), and Esmonde Cleary is not convinced that Winchester had bastions at all (1989: 63). So late work on the defences may not in this case be able to be used as support for the presence of an important imperial centre.

More convincing is a (probably late fourth century) reference in the *Notitia Dignitatum* to a *procurator gynaecii (in Britannis) Ventensis*, the head of a *gynaecium*, a facility to produce textiles, in *Venta*. This may very well refer to Winchester, then known as *Venta Belgarum* (Wacher 1995: 298-299). The creation of such a facility may have even been a primary contributor to the changes which occurred in the town from *ca.* 350 on (Biddle 1983: 114-115), and the cloth it produced was "almost certainly" made "for official use" (Wacher 1995: 299). No structures have been located which could be associated with the *gynaecium*, though a good location for a fullery would have been close to the river in the east part of town (ibid.). The shutting down of such a facility with the end of Roman rule in Britain in the early fifth century "might also account for the sudden collapse of late Roman Winchester seen so vividly in the abandonment of organized burial in the cemeteries" (Biddle 1983: 115).

Late Fourth- and Early Fifth-Century Settlement in Winchester

The new types of accommodation in late fourth-century Winchester included degraded occupation in abandoned town houses such as the one mentioned above at Wolvesey Palace, as well as another building found at the same site, constructed over the north-west corner of the town house Building 2. The new building's foundations of rammed chalk were placed in trenches dug deeply into the street. The two-room building was small but substantial, with strong foundations; no other buildings like it have been found in Winchester. Biddle thinks it may have been an official rather than private

building, perhaps military housing for a garrison at the end of the Roman period, the time at which it was likely built (1975b: 324-326).

The other type of late construction that has been found is in the form of probable timber buildings encroaching on street surfaces. The most likely example comes from the Assize Courts South site, and consisted primarily of two rows of postholes, one along the southern edge of an east-west Roman street, the other on the north side. These may have been all that was left of a timber structure that used the abandoned road for its floor, in the late fourth or early fifth century (Biddle 1964: 195; 1965: 242; 1966: 313). A row of postholes combined with a coarse, poor quality cobbling over the surface of an east-west Roman street from the Cathedral Green site likely also represents the location of a timber building over the street (*ibid.*, 1964: 206; Biddle and Quirk 1962: 156). Two further possible, though less conclusive examples come from the Cathedral Car Park site (Biddle and Quirk 1962: 156) and the Wolvesey Palace site (Biddle 1964: 214).

A dark earth layer has been discovered “all over the walled area on top of the Roman deposits” (Biddle 1983: 112). This may represent the late occupation of Winchester, in the decayed form of its rubbish and/or perhaps of flimsy dwellings made from organic material, after their abandonment. The dark earth layer is very thick in Winchester, especially over certain sites, reaching around thirty centimetres over the surface of the east-west Roman street at the Assize Courts South site, and up to one metre over part of the Cathedral Car Park’s latest Roman layers (Biddle and Quirk 1962: 157; Biddle 1964: 197).

The latest occupation of Roman Winchester does not appear to have lasted much beyond the early fifth century; at that time “urban life came to an end” (Biddle 1973: 234). Despite over two decades of work, Winchester’s excavators were unable to produce any material that could possibly be dated from after *ca.* 450 at the latest, up until the middle of the seventh century¹¹⁰. For example, in Lower Brook Street, which was extensively excavated, “there was no trace of occupation after the early decades of the fifth century” (*ibid.*, 236). One excavator’s conclusion is that the population of Winchester collapsed at this time (*ibid.*). However, it is possible that there may already have been population decline in Winchester. The number of burials in the extra mural

¹¹⁰ Though Anglo-Saxon pottery they attributed to the early fifth century is more likely to belong to the latest part of the century, as discussed below.

cemeteries may be misleading: a significant number of these may have been of people from the nearby countryside (Ottaway 1992: 114-115). Whether the population decline began in the mid-fourth century with the loss of the town houses, or in the early fifth century with the loss of imperial patronage, it would seem that town life in Roman Winchester did not long survive the end of Roman rule.

Anglo-Saxons in Winchester at the End of the Roman Period?

A key topic regarding Winchester has been the question of when the Anglo-Saxons first arrived in the town. There is a theory promoted by Martin Biddle that they were already present by the very late fourth and early fifth centuries, based on possible late fourth-century graves and early fifth-century pottery. A group of six graves with “non Romano-British features” from Lankhills cemetery was dated to 390-410, and seen as “in many respects similar to early Anglo-Saxon inhumations” (Clarke 1979: 389-390, 393). Clarke claims that five of the graves, three in particular, have “Anglo-Saxon affinities”; the sixth contains a triangular bone comb, which Clarke says suggests an Anglo-Saxon burial (1979: 390, 395). Another grave contained only three pendants, two of which were “pierced animal canine teeth”. These had no parallels from Roman Britain, although similar pendants have been found in Anglo-Saxon graves in England as well as Germanic ones on the continent (*ibid.*, 392). Clarke’s conclusion is that all six of the Lankhills graves date to post-390, and must be Anglo-Saxon (1979: 398).

Hills, in a review of Clarke’s report on Lankhills, points out that the actual arguments for this as an early group of Anglo-Saxon graves are not strong (1981: 145-146). What primarily links the graves is that each is distinct somehow from the general population of the Lankhills cemetery, and so “such a group might legitimately be seen as foreigners, though that is not the only possible explanation” (*ibid.*, 146). But in fact each of the graves within the group is fairly different from the others (Ottaway 1992: 108; Clarke 1979: 395). Three of the graves follow Romano-British funerary rites rather than Anglo-Saxon ones in including unworn personal ornaments (Clarke 1979: 393). The graves also follow fourth-century Romano-British burial traditions in that all were inhumations, and all but the one with the pierced teeth “contained only objects of provincial Roman manufacture” (*ibid.*, 399). Though the pierced teeth ornaments are not found at any other Romano-British sites, it is possible that they could have been an

import from the continent (ibid., 393). It is important to note that early pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Britain primarily followed the rite of cremation rather than inhumation, were usually located “on new sites” instead of reusing Roman cemeteries, and the graves “are furnished almost exclusively with Anglo-Saxon objects” (ibid., 401). Thus, there must be serious questions as to whether the Lankhills burials actually represent early Anglo-Saxons (Brooks 1986: 91).

Two of the Lankhills graves contained items of imperial equipment. One had fittings from a two-strap belt, which must have been of official or military origins. The other grave contained a high-quality gilt bronze crossbow brooch; this suggests that in life its owner held an official position and was likely “of comparatively high standing” (Clarke 1979: 399). These two, at least, from the group of graves, may represent individuals, possibly though not definitely of Germanic origin, who had come from the continent to hold significant positions of an administrative or military nature in late fourth-century Winchester (ibid.; Ottaway 1992: 108). Perhaps they were connected to the *gynaeceum*.

Attempts have been made to link the Lankhills burials to early Anglo-Saxon artefacts within Winchester. Excavations at Lower Brook Street have uncovered around twenty sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery, which Biddle sees as belonging to the first half, perhaps even initial decades, of the fifth century (1972: 106; 1973: 233-234). These sherds were found in a residual context, behind a medieval house in a pit filled in the later tenth or eleventh century (ibid., 1972: 101). Two sherds of what has been considered early Anglo-Saxon pottery was also discovered at the South Gate, in the fill of a ditch dug at a sub- or post-Roman date, sometime after the gate had collapsed. Biddle has identified the sherds as fifth-century grass-tempered ware (1973: 233, 240; 1975a: 117). Other artefacts have been thought to be evidence for an early fifth-century Saxon presence in Winchester include a triangular bone comb from near the forum at the Cathedral Green site, and an inlaid knife discovered at the East Gate (ibid., 1970: 313-314; 1973: 33).

However, there is not general agreement that there were early fifth-century Anglo-Saxons in the town. The date of the Lower Brook Street pottery sherds “is disputed”, and Martin Welch believes them “more likely to be late fifth century” (Brooks 1986: 87). Furthermore, some additional Germanic pottery found at this site is considered

sixth century (Biddle 1975b: 303). It should also be pointed out that grass-tempered pottery such as has also been recovered in Winchester, is not usually so early, and can be dated anywhere from the fifth to eighth centuries. Finally, the triangular comb and inlaid knife “are late Roman in style and of provincial Roman manufacture”, not Anglo-Saxon (Clarke 1979: 401).

Therefore, an Anglo-Saxon presence in Winchester may not have begun until very late in the fifth century. The first of a number of early Saxon cemeteries to be established in the immediate area is Kings Worthy, about three to four kilometres north of the town. Most of the graves at Kings Worthy are of the mid sixth to seventh centuries, but some are late fifth, though not earlier than *ca.* 480 (Brooks 1986: 91-92; Biddle 1973: 237). Four other early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were located outside of Winchester, but these are of the sixth and seventh centuries (Biddle 1973: 237). There may have been only occasional and intermittent occupation of Winchester in the late fifth and sixth centuries, until more permanent settlement began in the seventh (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 193; Ottaway 1992: 115). Again, “the evidence for a direct relationship between the [Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon] cultures is thin”, and there does not appear to have been continuing Saxon activity in Winchester through most of the fifth century (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 193). The archaeological evidence supports an argument that the town was for the most part “deserted” from early in the fifth century up to the seventh (*ibid.*; Brooks 1986: 92).

Chichester

Chichester was a *civitas* capital on the south coast of Britain, the health and prosperity of which may in the fourth century have been closely tied to that of the imperial and military supply system and the Shore Forts. It was the nearest administrative town and large urban centre for tax collection to the substantial Shore Forts of Pevensey and Portchester. As with the other towns, late fourth-century economic slowdown and supply problems, probably connected to the decline of the imperial supply system, seems to have resulted in late fourth- and early fifth-century neglect and decay in Chichester, affecting the occupation of its town houses and suburbs.

Chichester and the Imperial Supply System

Chichester had undergone a recession in the second half of the third century, visible in the decay of infrastructure such as sewers; but in the early fourth century the town experienced a “renewal”. This was demonstrated by new construction work in town and in the countryside nearby (Down 1988: 45). At some point in the course of the fourth century, Chichester’s wall circuit was improved by the addition of bastions and further fortified with a new ditch (*ibid.*, 54), suggesting the importance of this town to the imperial system. Roman Chichester was located near the coast with access to a harbour, and situated halfway between Pevensey in the east and Portchester in the west, both installations in the southern stretch of the Shore Fort system (*ibid.*). Each was probably constructed in the very late third century, likely during the rule of Carausius and Allectus (Pearson 2005: 76; Cunliffe 1977: 3).

Part of the significance for the empire of Chichester’s *civitas* was the iron ore contained in its eastern areas, “in the Weald of Sussex”; this region is thought to have been “used primarily as an industrial area devoted to the extraction of iron” (Wacher 1995: 271). Though the imperial iron mines in the more easterly regions in the Weald in Kent appear to have closed in the mid third century, the British iron industry continued until the late fourth (Cleere 1982: 126; Salway 1993: 465). Presumably it was carrying on in the Weald of Sussex, an area which lacked fourth-century villa settlement (Cleere 1982: 131; Wacher 1995: 271). Prior to the late fourth century, Britain’s iron was needed in large quantities by the Roman military, and it is likely that ore from Chichester’s territory was transported to where it was required via the Shore Fort route.

That the southern Shore Forts near Chichester were fortified ports and supply processing centres for the imperial system, as has been suggested for those located to the east, seems very probable. Indications of industrial activities, perhaps involving preparation of raw materials collected as tax in kind or requisitions acquired for the supply system, have been found at Portchester in particular. There is evidence at that fort for the working of iron, copper, and lead, and for large-scale butchering and processing of meat, as well as bone-working (Pearson 2002: 159-160). Portchester even contained a large “open graveled surface, ideal for the corralling of livestock”, which may have been driven there and quartered for periods prior to their butchering, processing, and “onward trans-shipment” (ibid., 161; 2005: 83).

Late Fourth-Century Decline

It seems likely that Chichester suffered from economic and supply problems in the last quarter of the fourth century. The late fourth-century grinding to a near halt of the British iron industry (Salway 1993: 465), must have had an impact on the *civitas* and thus on its administrative town. The Roman army’s numbers in Britain may have become greatly depleted by or during this time, and therefore significantly less iron was needed; furthermore, the administrative system that would have ordering and moving it was beginning to come apart (ibid.).

It is probable that the nearby Shore Forts were in decline by now as well. Portchester underwent a period of “disordered” occupation from *ca.* 365 into the early fifth century, with use of the fort “declining both in intensity and in orderliness” (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 143; Pearson 2002: 163). Cess pits started to be dug throughout the interior of the fort, and “masses of stinking occupation debris [were dumped] against the side of the fort” (Cunliffe 1977: 5). It is not certain whether Portchester was now being occupied by civilians rather than by a garrison or militia (Pearson 2002: 168). The evidence for its use in the early fifth century after *ca.* 400 is minimal (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 143). The breakdown of the Shore Fort and imperial supply system in Britain would likely have had severe repercussions for Chichester. Its continuation as an urban centre may well have been dependent on its role in this system.

Chichester appears to have suffered neglect and decline in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This likely led to gradual population shrinkage and contraction of

occupation. “Within the town the decline seems to start at some time after the third quarter of the fourth century” (Down 1988: 101). There is a pattern beginning at that time of a number of buildings going permanently out of use (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132). It could be said that “the character of the town had changed” in the late fourth century (Cunliffe 1971: 3). This decline appears to have been a process that took place gradually over time (Down 1988: 101). It involved the decay and change of use of town houses in Chichester, the loss of its suburbs, and the early end of its coin supply.

Fourth-Century Decay and Degraded or “Squatter” Occupation of Townhouses

As in most of the other administrative towns, masonry buildings had gradually replaced timber over the third and into the fourth centuries, and Chichester was populated by ample town houses with such Romanized embellishments as mosaics and hypocausts (Cunliffe 1971: 3). However, change and decline can be witnessed in these from the last part of the fourth century, for example in the north-west quadrant of the town (Esmonde Cleary 1988: 132). Two town houses excavated on Chapel Street were beginning to decay late in the century and the adjacent streets were no longer being maintained (Down 1978: 45).

House 1 had a “rectangular courtyard surrounded by an ambulatory” and “ranges of rooms on the west and north sides” (ibid., 76). Changes were made to it, perhaps beginning in the late fourth century, which may indicate degraded or “squatter” occupation of its final phase. Some of the rooms and corridors appear to have been subdivided by means of partitions that may have been wattle (ibid., 82; 1988: 101). This “may suggest a change of use, from that of a town house, the residence of a wealthy family, to a partly derelict building being lived in by a number of separate family units” (ibid., 82). An oven was dug into the floor of one of these rooms. In a room with a tessellated floor were “two flues of an oven set against the wall, partly destroyed by a later pit, with stake-holes belonging to a wattle wind-break across it” (ibid.). This might suggest that perhaps part of the building in this area was now open to the weather. A burned clay layer, which may have been the superstructure of the oven, sealed these features, and above this was a tiled hearth and occupation debris. There were two coins of the mid fourth century in the burned layer (ibid.).

House 2 was rebuilt to its final form after the mid fourth century, perhaps *ca.* 360-370 (ibid., 1981: 121). It was possibly two storeys high and had high-quality mosaics and a hypocaust (ibid., 132; 1988: 36, 38). The house was suffering decline by the late fourth century, its tessellated floors having been patched with tiles (ibid., 1978: 122). A tiled hearth was built on the floor of one room up against a wall; in the hearth was a coin of Valens (ibid., 82; 1988: 101). At some point layers of rubbish along with wall-plaster and daub piled up on the floor of the house, presumably after it had been abandoned (ibid., 1978: 122). Two cess pits in the courtyard had been contemporary with the final rebuilding of House 2. At some point the pits stopped being filled. The final filling included late fourth-century pottery, and coins up to Valens (367-375) (ibid., 1981: 134). Two further late coins came from the house, found in the layers of refuse and collapsed wall material over the floors. In the pits dug into them were “two [issues] of Valens and Valentinian (AD 364-375) and a barbarous minim of the mid to late fourth century” (ibid., 1978: 122).

A coin of Valentinian II (375-392) is the latest coin found in the excavations of the North-West Quadrant (ibid., 1981: 126). Unfortunately, it is not clear from the site report whether this came from one of the houses, from elsewhere on the site, or even if it was a find from a stratified context. Though the coin series from the houses appears to end in the late fourth century, the degraded occupation of them may well have continued on into the early fifth.

Remains of houses elsewhere in Chichester have not proven to be as substantial. At East Pallant House, a tessellated corridor from a second- to third- century house was located; it had been demolished around the early fourth century. Near this were remains of a burned framework of timber, similar in date, and a well with fifteen fourth-century coins (Down and Rule 1971: 12). In Purchase’s Garden and the land behind 16-18 Chapel Street were postholes from a later third- to early fourth-century timber building. Shallow pits had cut through this at some point in the fourth century; these were backfilled with rubbish, pottery, and a large quantity of building debris such as tiles and wall plaster, possibly from the timber building. There was no later activity on the site, and a mid fourth-century coin provided the latest date (Down 1978: 130). There had been a Roman house at the site of a car park north of St Andrew Oxmarket. The

evidence suggests that it had collapsed; this may have been at the end of the Roman period (*ibid.*, 1988: 102).

Contraction of the Suburbs

Chichester had suburbs beyond the town's north, south, and especially east gates. These appear to have probably gone out of use in the late fourth or early fifth centuries. One of these areas was near the Fire Station on St Paul's Road, beyond the north gate. There were slight remnants here of timber and masonry structures with pottery of the fourth century, suggesting the "date when the suburb was last occupied" (Down 1988: 38; Down and Rule 1971: 14). At the Cattlemarket site there was evidence of artisan residences and of iron-working. There also seems to have been residences beyond the south gate, south of the railway station. Occupation in both of these areas may have lasted to the early fifth century (Down 1988: 38). The suburb outside Eastgate, at Needlemakers site, was probably "abandoned in the late fourth century" (*ibid.*, 65). Postholes here were dated up to about this time. A well which had provided water to the houses of the area had been "robbed of stonework and backfilled with a great deal of surface rubbish" (*ibid.*). This included large quantities of late Roman fine wares and coarse wares, including Oxfordshire wares of the very late fourth century, and coins of the late third and fourth centuries, terminating with issues of Valens (364-378) (*ibid.*, 1981: 88). Therefore, the well could have been backfilled and the suburb abandoned at some point from perhaps the 370s. The filling of the well marked the end of domestic occupation in the area, which was then used as a cemetery in the late fourth and early fifth centuries (*ibid.*, 90).

An Early End to the Coin Supply

Chichester's coin series came to an early end with the House of Valentinian. There are almost no Theodosian coins from the general region (Esmonde Cleary 1989: 132), and there are only a very few coins from later than the 370s. One was that of Valentinian II from 375-392 noted above, and there was a bronze coin of Arcadius (AD 408), discovered in the Cathedral topsoil. There was also a gold solidus of Valentinian III (425-455) found outside the walls in St Pancras early in the twentieth century, with no known find spot, in such good condition that it may not have gone into circulation (Down 1988: 103).

It is not certain how long a money economy continued in Chichester after the House of Valentinian issues arrived. It seems likely that, as currency would have been used less after the 370s, “specialists, such as potters, local officialdom and tradesmen would have been squeezed out as people become more and more self-sufficient at a lower level of subsistence” (Down 1988: 103). No Theodosian-period coins are known from villas near Chichester. At two villas from the Chilgrove valley outside Chichester, the coin series came to a close with Magnentius for one, while the other continued till Valentinian I. However, the villas remained in occupation at a lower-status level for a while, despite major fires, with the inhabitants living in the buildings’ shells in lean-to shelters (ibid., 1978: 83). “Late coins of Gratian, Valens and Valentinian I [lay] on the floors and hearths in the houses” and Roman road of the Chapel Street area (ibid.). This may indicate that the nature of the occupation had changed somewhere after the 360s but, as at the villas, it probably continued on for a little while after that (ibid.). The occupation likely ended sometime in the early fifth century, as Chichester appears to lack evidence for occupation beyond that or in the sixth century (Cunliffe 1971:4).

The Arrival of Anglo-Saxons in Sussex

Though there is evidence for the appearance of Anglo-Saxons in Sussex in the fifth century, there is none for that time within Chichester. There are no Anglo-Saxon burials inside Chichester’s walls or in the immediate area around the former town in the fifth or sixth centuries (Dark 2000: 100). There is also no evidence for any Saxon presence within the town in the fifth century, and little in the sixth; Anglo-Saxon residence in Chichester does not seem to have begun until the late seventh century (Down 1988: 105). The nearest Saxon cemetery with fifth-century origins was approximately twenty-five kilometres to the east at Highdown Hill near Worthing (ibid.). The closest of the cemeteries was Mardens, about sixteen kilometres to the north, but this one was later in date (Dark 2000: 100). Chichester appears, then, to have remained largely empty for over two centuries after the end of Roman rule.

Section Six: A Brief Comparison with Evidence from the Continent

In order to understand the evidence for change in the Romano-British towns within the broader context of the late Roman empire, it is useful to look at similar types of evidence from western regions of the European continent – specifically Italy, Spain, and Gaul – and how it is being interpreted. Broad trends seen in these areas can provide a structure with which to compare the general pattern seen in Britain. While many of the same changes can be seen in continental towns and cities, urban life in quite a few of these continued while that in Britain did not. A brief comparison can help to explain such different outcomes.

Chris Wickham has created a list of the different ways in which the physical forms of towns or cities were weakened, though the abandonment of urban areas is the only one he would see as necessarily indicating urban decline; any of the others can be given an alternate explanation (Wickham 2005: 672).

1. loss of monumental appearance or abandonment of forum area
2. general reduction of monumental buildings in the town
3. “fragmentation” of a city and loss of its “spatial coherence”
4. large wealthy dwellings subdivided into smaller units
5. use of “less permanent materials”, reused building materials, and basic construction techniques
6. cessation of maintenance of public infrastructure and services (roads, water supply, sewers)
7. intramural burials
8. areas of the city abandoned or used for agriculture (Wickham 2005: 672)

Loss of Monumental Appearance or Abandonment of Forum Area

There is substantial evidence that in many of the urban centres of the western continent, public buildings, particularly those connected to civic centres, were no longer being built from the third century, or maintained from the fourth. Many of these buildings went out of use in the fourth and fifth centuries, were stripped of valuable

materials, and encroached on by other, lower-quality buildings. The abandonment of these public buildings had already begun in northern Italy during the third century (La Rocca 1992: 164). Some of Tuscany's cities were experiencing the decay of their monumental civic centres by the fourth century, during which time parts of Ostia's were abandoned (Liebeschuetz 2001: 94, 372). Luni's forum was stripped of its marble and that of Brescia in ruins by the fifth century (Wickham 2005: 651; Liebeschuetz 2001: 370).

This pattern can also be seen throughout Spain. At Tarraco, the basilica of the lower forum was destroyed by a fire in the 360s and not rebuilt, while in the late fifth and sixth centuries the old provincial forum "was used as a quarry and most of its paving stones and marble decoration were removed"; its enclosure became a residential area (Keay 1988: 183, 212; 1996: 30, 37). Valentia's forum area was used as a cemetery in the late fourth or early fifth century (Liebeschuetz 2001: 90), while the basilica at Complutum was in the fifth century "reused for smaller residential structures" (Wickham 2005: 662).

Gaul's civic centre buildings were also being pillaged for their building materials or reused for other purposes. Part of Arles' Augustan forum and portico were encroached on during the first half of the fifth century by structures constructed from reused materials, "probably derived from the destruction of the forum colonnade"; around this time the cryptoporticus below the forum may have been used for dumping or as storage (Loseby 1996: 54). Rather than indicating urban decline, this treatment of the civic centres may be connected to the turning away by an increasingly weakened curial class from the earlier practice of competing for status through contributing to construction of public buildings, whether due their loss of economic ability to do so, or through a redirection of their spending to private display, or both (Liebeschuetz 1992: 8; 2001: 3-4, 12, 14, 16; Wickham 2005: 669, 673; Ward-Perkins 1984: 14-15, 17-20).

General Reduction of Monumental Buildings in the Town

The construction and maintenance of other types of monumental buildings came to an end as well in the late Roman and post-Roman periods, with the reuse of the remains or sites of some of these structures. In Italy temples underwent serious decay in the fourth century, not receiving funds for their maintenance, "despite the survival in

Italy of a rich and largely pagan aristocracy until the early fifth century” (Ward-Perkins 1984: 86). From the late fourth century, some were used as quarries for building materials (*ibid.*, 89). The maintenance and use of buildings which held public entertainments also seems to have declined during the fourth century, at which time it is rare to find references to their repair (*ibid.*, 95).

In Spain there are a number of examples of abandonment of theatres. Tarraco’s was already being reused for some other purpose in the third century (Keay 1996: 25). In the fourth century, Baelo’s theatre was abandoned and filled with rubbish, while no restoration was made to Italica’s theatre after it had been flooded (*ibid.*, 1988: 184). Temples, amphitheatres, and baths were being put to new use, as in Tarraco, where a cathedral “was built in the shell of the great temple of Augustus” in the late fifth or sixth century, and a smaller church within the amphitheatre later in the sixth century (Keay 1988: 212), and in Clunia, sometime around the late fourth or fifth century, when the baths complex was subdivided to make small residences (Liebeschuetz 2001: 89).

This pattern can be seen in Gaul as well. In Arles at the end of the fourth century, using materials salvaged from a nearby cemetery, simple dwellings were constructed against the exterior of the circus; there was also some use of the amphitheatre for occupation (Loseby 1996: 52-54). In the late fourth or fifth century, the temple of Augustus and Livia in Vienne was turned into a church (Harries 1992: 86), and in the early fifth century, the church that would serve as Metz’s cathedral was constructed where there had been a baths complex (Halsall 1996: 258). These changes may have been at least partly due to elite preference for spending on private rather than public display, and in some areas a movement of elites and their resources to villas in the countryside (Keay 1988: 191). The growing dominance of Christianity may have also been a significant factor, with elite spending on urban public display going into the construction of new churches. From the second quarter of the fourth century, Christian disapproval of temples as well as of the public entertainment buildings, which were also associated with pagan ritual, plus imperial decrees against pagan worship and temples, contributed to the disappearance of funding for their maintenance, and to their abandonment (Liebeschuetz 2001: 4, 30; Ward-Perkins 1984: 19-20, 86-91).

“Fragmentation” of a City and Loss of its “Spatial Coherence”

The focus of habitation in many continental towns and cities altered significantly in the late Roman and post-Roman periods, resulting in new or circumscribed areas of occupation sometimes away from the original city centres, possibly separated from other parts of the town by areas of reduced occupation or abandonment. This trend is not common to Italian cities, but is seen particularly in Gaul and to a lesser degree in Spain. This spatial fragmentation appears in Gaul at the city of Lyon. As a result of later third-century barbarian attacks, in which the lead pipes of four aqueducts were plundered, leading to a decline of the water supply, the upper city which they served was gradually deserted (Harries 1992: 79). The spatial fragmentation of this city had become even more extreme by the sixth century, with “several separate areas of occupation inside the bounds of the sprawling classical city, ... each associated with late Roman churches” (Wickham 2005: 665: 666). The centre of occupation in sixth-century Cologne had moved from within the city walls, where there was only a little occupational evidence around the cathedral and a couple of Roman churches, to the area beyond the walls where the cemetery basilicas were located (Liebeschuetz 2001: 83-84). In Tarraco, Spain, in the late fifth and sixth centuries, the lower town which had long been the centre of city life, “was virtually abandoned”, with occupation now almost entirely in the upper town (Keay 1988: 212). Wickham would see this trend as perhaps simply due to “a fragmentation in the patterns of urban identity and leadership” (2005: 673). While it is clear that the late antique focus on Christianity drew people away from the increasingly disused old civic centres and to the areas of the churches, it seems likely that decreased urban population and advanced decay of older buildings in certain areas must also have played a role in the abandonment of sectors of a town.

Large Wealthy Dwellings Subdivided into Smaller Units

A sign of substantially decreased elite wealth in cities could be indicated by a trend towards the subdivision of large elite houses into smaller residences, which may have continued to house a less prosperous upper class (Wickham 2005: 673). This shows up particularly in Spain and Italy, where there may have continued to be more elite occupation of the towns. Wealthy fourth- and fifth-century houses in northern Barcelona

in Spain were divided to create additional residences around the sixth and seventh centuries (Wickham 2005: 658). This is also seen in a Roman peristyle house in southwestern Mérida, which was turned into a number of one-room dwellings, each complete with a hearth (ibid., 661). A couple of large Roman houses in Brescia, Italy, were similarly subdivided in the fourth and fifth centuries (Liebeschuetz 2001: 370).

Use of “Less Permanent Materials”, Reused Building Materials, and Basic Construction Techniques

Changes in the forms of habitation are also apparent in the incorporation of more ephemeral materials, along with *spolia* from Roman buildings, with a simpler technique of construction. There is evidence of this particularly from Italy and Spain. In Italy it is visible by the early fifth century, in the building of dwellings from wood and daub, plus reused materials from earlier buildings (Liebeschuetz 2001: 372). Wickham notes the appearance in early medieval Italy of single-roomed dwellings constructed from wood, or wood with reused stone and brick (2005: 648). Evidence from Spain includes “makeshift shelters” with hearths in Italica’s deserted new town in the fourth century, built from recycled old Roman masonry (Keay 1988: 184). Wickham argues that this trend should not be perceived as a decline in “the vitality of urban activities”, but “that there are fewer specialized construction workers”, as well as also possibly a “weakening of aristocratic patronage” (2005: 673). However, it is hard to believe that a significant reduction in wealth and prosperity, as well as a reduction in access to higher-quality building materials, would not also be a major contributor.

Cessation of Maintenance of Public Infrastructure and Services

Along with the end of the maintenance of public buildings, particularly forum-basilica complexes, and probably connected to that pattern, is the trend towards a cessation of maintenance of public services such as the water-supply, sewers, and roads. Again, the examples of this that have been found were primarily from Italy and Spain. In Italy this appears to have happened in the fifth and sixth centuries (Wickham 2005: 647). At this time the high-quality paved streets went out of use, while “sewage systems and urban cleaning collapse[d]” (Wickham 2005: 647). Specific examples can be cited for Spain. In the early fourth century, one of Termes’ main aqueducts went out of use. Baelo’s “main east-west street ... was allowed to silt up”, and to be blocked by a small

structure in the later fourth century (Keay 1988: 184). Encroachment of dwellings onto roads can also be seen from around this time at Barcelona (Liebeschuetz 2001: 90). The loss of public services could again be simply due to a lack of resources or interest in municipal affairs on the part of the urban elite, as discussed for the civic buildings.

Intramural Burials

A significant change that is found throughout the different regions of the continental west is burial within the town walls, a practice forbidden under Roman law. In Florence, Italy, a cemetery appeared in the early sixth century in a previously densely occupied area of the town (Liebeschuetz 2001: 372). Burials have also been found in areas of Arles, in Gaul, that had been occupied (Loseby 1996: 59). There are numerous examples of this trend from Spain. It has been discovered in both forums at Tarraco, where there were burials in the site of the burned basilica in the lower forum, not too long after the fire (Keay 1988: 184). In the old provincial forum, there were burials in the precinct of the temple of Rome and Augustus (*ibid.*, 1996: 184). The theatre in Baelo was used as a cemetery after its fourth-century abandonment (*ibid.*, 1988: 184). Wickham suggests that intramural burial could simply indicate “ideological change” and that people were losing the “Roman fear of the dead in settled areas”, and not that the area of burial was no longer occupied by settlement (2005: 673). It would seem cautious, however, to leave open the possibility that some of these areas where burial was occurring had actually been abandoned.

Areas of the City Abandoned or Used for Agriculture

The abandonment of urban areas or use of some for agriculture or horticulture is the one trend that Wickham admits would imply “urban weakness” (2005: 672). There is no shortage of examples of this from the different regions of the western continent. In Italy, neighbourhoods around the forum of Brescia were deserted in the fifth century, and the city’s “built-up area appears to have been reduced to ... perhaps one-third of its former extant” (Liebeschuetz 2001: 370). A sizeable region in the south-east part of the city was eventually used for farming (*ibid.*). Much of the urban areas that had been heavily developed in Milan was unoccupied in the sixth century (*ibid.*, 371-372). In Spain, towns such as Clunia, Termes, Complutum, and Conimbriga appear to have shrunk till they were reduced to “small fortified nuclei clustering around the churches”

(Keay 1988: 213). In Valentia, the occupied area within the walls diminished until the focus of the town was reduced to “a small community” in the areas where the forum had been, now replaced by the cathedral (*ibid.*, 213).

The abandonment of urban areas in Gaul can be seen to extend as far back as the later third century, when a number of barbarian attacks destroyed the suburban occupation of Arles; it was not rebuilt (Loseby 1996: 47-48). “[D]e-urbanization” appears to have occurred at Tours, where the area within the late Roman walls was only *ca.* nine hectares¹¹¹, yet there is almost no evidence for occupation outside of the walls (Wickham 2005: 676). Its population is thought to have already diminished from about six thousand in the second century to approximately two thousand in the fourth (Harries 1992: 80). Metz was largely abandoned by the end of the fourth century, and remained that way at least until it became one of the Frankish royal residences in the mid sixth century (Halsall 1996: 245-247; Liebeschuetz 2001: 86). It appears to have remained a religious centre during this time, albeit very sparsely inhabited within the walls, with some occupation to the south-east, within the walls as well as outside in the area of the amphitheatre, where most of the fourth-and fifth-century churches were located, with some horticulture possibly being carried out among the ruins (Halsall 1996: 246, 248). The abandonment of significant areas of a town cannot be dismissed as signalling urban decline; the continuation and acceleration of this pattern would have led ultimately to the desertion or near-desertion of the town.

The fact that so many towns and cities did continue to be occupied or even to maintain a vital town life can be attributed to a number of different possible factors. One of these is a continued presence of elite wealth within the urban centre, that of aristocrats, governors, or bishops, which would help to support the presence of a working population, of artisans and traders, as well as of the wealthy individual’s entourage, and to finance what building was still going on in the city (Wickham 2005: 670). Another factor, though perhaps less important, is the continued involvement of an urban centre in long-distance trade, which would not only contribute to urban prosperity but also assist the continuing of a supply of luxury goods for the elites (*ibid.*). The preservation of the

¹¹¹ Compared to *ca.* thirty hectares plus suburbs of twice that size during the early empire (Harries 1992: 29-80).

main elements of the Roman administrative structure by Rome's barbarian successors would have been a major element in the continuity of towns, as imperial administration had both been based out of the towns and provided a major support to them (Keay 1988: 202, 211; Esmonde Cleary 1989: 159). The presence of the church may have made possible the continued existence of many towns, particularly in Gaul, where a number carried on as primarily religious centres that did not have substantial populations. In the north of Gaul, "[c]ontinuity on a site seems to have been best assured by the existence of a church and a bishop, some form of economic base and fortifications" (Harries 1992: 83). The clergy needed other inhabitants to support them and the churches: not just the artisans and craftsmen necessary to build and maintain the church, but those who would create the other material cultural items the clergy needed for worship, as well, of course, as those required to supply the necessities of life (*ibid.*, 89). However, the gradual decay of the Roman fiscal and administrative system in the western empire, beginning in the fifth century when the western empire came apart, and continuing during the years of its use by the "conquering Germanic elites", would have had a negative impact on the remaining urban centres (Wickham 2005: 670). As this system began to change, cities and towns, which had been key to it, became of less importance and in many cases gradually lost their prosperity (*ibid.*).

Britain

Though all of the elements of urban change discussed above are present in the towns of late Roman and sub-Roman Britain, the British towns followed a trajectory very different from the majority of continental towns and cities, coming to a fairly quick end, rather than continuing occupation for several centuries or more, and only gradually losing prosperity and declining. The factors just discussed, which enabled the urban centres of Italy, Spain, and Gaul to remain prosperous or at least simply continue to function, are largely missing from Britain. The British towns, founded in the first and second centuries AD, were younger, and their urbanism more recent and perhaps ephemeral, than many of the towns and cities on the continent. Most were also much smaller than many of the continental cities discussed above.

The Roman fiscal and administrative system was lost to the Britons when they seceded from the empire in the early fifth century, and there appears to have been nothing

of it left to be preserved by the Anglo-Saxon incomers. There is no evidence that the Anglo-Saxons incorporated or continued any remnants of the Roman administration. There is little evidence of elite wealth in the towns in the fifth century; what little remained seems to have been mostly transferred to the countryside. There is no evidence that the towns continued to be involved in long-distance trade.

Finally, the church does not appear to have been enough of a presence in late Roman Britain to have aided in the survival of the towns. There is very little evidence of urban churches. The main candidate was a building in Silchester, thought from its shape to be a church, despite the lack of Christian artefacts associated with its site, and believed to have been built in the fourth century. However, a recent study has suggested that a late second-century date is more likely (Cosh 2004: 233), bringing into question the building's identification as a church, which had already previously been questioned (King 1983: 236). The possible extramural church at Colchester does not appear to have continued in use beyond the early fifth century. The two successive churches in the forum courtyard at Lincoln have not been closely dated; they may belong to the fourth or fifth centuries, but with a later date equally likely. This leaves only the large late fourth-century building in London that may have been a church or simply a storehouse. There is, therefore, no certain evidence to support the continued use of late Roman churches in British towns into the sub-Roman period or of continuity of bishoprics, especially as continuing to play key roles in towns.

There is, however, evidence in British towns for all the elements of urban change and decay listed by Wickham. Evidence for the decline and abandonment of the forum-basilica complex, as well as the other types of public buildings has been demonstrated for many of the British administrative towns, as has the neglect of public services in various towns. The fragmentation of urban settlement and loss of spatial coherence can be seen in some of the towns, such as the retreat of occupation in Lincoln to the lower town, and in London to the corner of the town near the later London Tower. The subdivision of town houses into smaller residences may have been less common, but does appear in Chichester at the end of the Roman period. The use of organic materials and simpler technology for building dwellings is found in many towns in the last years of Roman rule and probably into the sub-Roman period, and is particularly notable at Verulamium. Intramural burial is also found in a number of towns, in the forms of isolated burials at

Colchester, Cirencester, and Canterbury, and possible cemeteries at Wroxeter, Exeter, and Lincoln. The abandonment of significant areas of many of the towns has also been demonstrated, as well as the lack of evidence for anything but minimal occupation continuing.

This later is probably the strongest argument that the towns of Roman Britain did not continue as towns. As seen with the continental cities, the evidence for the decay and even loss of monumental public buildings and of public services did not necessarily spell the end, either as a town or as a religious or administrative shell. However, for an urban centre to continue there needed to be a certain level of occupation. This is what is missing after the early fifth century from the old Romano-British towns.

After this time, the towns in Britain appear to have no longer remained centers of Romanization or of urban population. Most were not occupied at more than the most minimal subsistence level. A few may have retained some sort of ceremonial or symbolic significance as a place for burial, such as Exeter, Lincoln, and Wroxeter. It is possible that the continuing occupation into the fifth century, of a limited number of buildings at a few of the towns, may have represented their use as the centre of an agricultural estate or the stronghold of a local war-leader. However, none appears to have continued to function as a town.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, as a way of drawing different elements of this thesis together, it will be useful to look briefly at two elements of the narrative history of Roman Britain: the imperial requisition and supply system, and the ongoing pattern of revolts and usurpations linked to Britain, and at their impact on the diocese and its administrative system. It seems that the ever increasing exploitation of Britain's resources may have taken its toll on the British provinces and their elites. At the same time, however, the towns had become dependent on the imperial system: the provincial capitals, as recipients of imperial patronage and a position as the top administrative centres of the diocese, and all the "large" towns, as late centres of collection and production for the imperial supply system. This appears to have been particularly true for the latter as the fourth century wore on, if the evidence from Winchester and Lincoln, for example, has been correctly interpreted.¹¹² Evidence has been presented to support the possible presence in towns of imperial storehouses for grain and other commodities, of animal stockyards and meat-processing centres, and of weapon, uniform and possibly military equipment manufacturing.

At the same time, there appears to have been a diminishing of elite participation in the towns, especially from the mid fourth century. This may suggest that the numbers of the elites were decreasing, or that more of the elites were now residing primarily in the countryside and withdrawing from participation in towns as much as possible, as appears to have been happening in other parts of the western empire. It is possible that among the British elites there was some resistance to continued participation in the Roman system, a reluctance to meet the level of imperial demands for personal investment and taxation, in addition to required contributions for labour and military recruitment from among their tenants or estate workers.

Though Roman Britain had been linked to revolts and usurpations throughout its history, from the mid fourth century it appears to have particularly become a major centre for and supporter of such activities. This began in the 340s, if Constans' winter visit then was to put down a revolt, or else in the 350s with what appears to have probably been

¹¹² Discussed in the section on Domestic and Commercial Settlement.

significant support for the usurpation of Magnentius. At least a significant part of these revolts was no doubt supported and encouraged by the British elites, perhaps due to the reluctance and resentment mentioned above.

In the late third century, and particularly in the last six decades or so of Roman rule of the island, Britain¹¹³ was cut off for significant periods of time from the resources of the central empire, which would have been needed by the usurper to feed, supply, and pay his army and administration, as well as to support his court. This must have necessitated an increase in the level of resource exploitation and taxation in order to make up for the shortfall. This would have been very hard on Britain, as would such ongoing periods of upheaval, and possibly reprisals upon each return to the central empire. It could certainly not have been economically beneficial for Britain, and must have contributed to a notable decrease in wealth and increase in poverty for the elites. The possible reduction of troops, taken to the continent during revolts and not returned afterwards, may also have had an economic impact on Britain, due to the loss of their collective and individual spending power.

Though it is far from certain, it is possible that the usurpations of 406 and 407 resulted from military and particularly elite frustration at the neglect of Britain by the central government, seen in the end of a supply of coinage to Britain other than small amounts of precious metals. However, the final blow for the British elite, and perhaps for what remnants of the garrisons what were still stationed at the Shore Forts, was the 408 or 409 barbarian attack, and the lack of any assistance against it from Constantine III's regime. Tired of contributing to the empire without the benefit even of adequate protection, and of seeing their resources taken off to the continent, the British elite turned against Constantine III's administration. It is possible that they had the support of the local garrison and its officers in accomplishing this.

An alternative scenario is suggested by the fact that the lack of coin shipments could have resulted in the taxation and supply system not functioning properly in early fifth-century Britain. Commanders of military units may have been forced to requisition supplies from farms near their forts, at this point located probably primarily on the shores of the south-east. This may have placed an unsustainable burden on the peasantry of this area, and combined with the barbarian attack, if it was in the same region, may have led

¹¹³ As well as other western provinces involved in some of the revolts.

to an uprising and extreme disorder. This could have caused irreparable damage to an already weakened and perhaps malfunctioning administration, especially if the area in which such an uprising occurred included the diocesan capital at London.

In either case, the Roman system in Britain was not able to continue after the loss of the imperial administration. Without the needs of imperial supply and taxation to drive them, the provincial and town economies collapsed. This represents the end of the main reason for the towns' existence. They would no longer be centres for administration, tax collection, and imperial supply, or of local elite residence or elite display. Within twenty years or less, they would no longer be towns at all.

Appendix

Map of Roman Britain: Towns and Forts



Literary Sources

Date	Significance	Sources
55 BC	First invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar.	Caesar, <i>Gallic War</i> 2.14, 2.8-9, 4.20-38 Dio Cassius 29.51-53
54 BC	Second invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar.	Caesar, <i>Gallic War</i> 5.1-23 Dio Cassius 40.1-4
AD 43	Invasion of Britain by Claudius.	Dio Cassius 40.19-23 Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i> 17.24
AD 47	First revolt against Rome by the Iceni.	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 12.31
ca. AD 50	Resistance against Rome by other British tribes and Roman military action against them.	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 12.32-40, 14.29-30
AD 60-61	Revolt of Boudicca, the Iceni and the Trinovantes.	Dio Cassius 62.1-12 Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i> 15-16 Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 14.31-39
AD 78-84	Campaigns by Agricola in Wales, northern England, and Scotland.	Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i> 18-38
ca. AD 122	Beginning of construction of Hadrian's Wall.	Scriptores Historiae Augustae, <i>Hadrian</i> 5.1-2, 5.11.2
ca. AD 139-143	Construction of the Antonine Wall.	Scriptores Historiae Augustae, <i>Antoninus Pius</i> 5.4
ca. AD 180-184	Lengthy invasion of northern England by tribes from Scotland.	Dio Cassius, 72.8
AD 193-197	Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, uses British troops in an attempt to become emperor, but defeated in Gaul by Septimius Severus.	Dio Cassius 73.14.3, 73.15.1-2, 75.4.1, 75.6-7 Herodian 2.15.1-5, 3.5.2-8, 3.7.1
AD 208-211	Campaigns by Septimius Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta in Scotland.	Dio Cassius 76.4.1, 76.13, 76.15.1-2 Herodian 3.14.1-10, 3.15.1-3

Date	Significance	Sources
<p>AD 259-274¹¹⁴</p> <p>AD 259</p> <p>AD 274</p>	<p>Period of the breakaway Gallic Empire, of which Britain was a part.</p> <p>Revolt of Postumus, a senior military commander in Gaul, against the central empire of Gallienus.</p> <p>Tetricus I surrenders to Aurelius and the regions of the Gallic Empire are returned to the rule of the central empire.</p> <p>There do not appear to be any references to Britain in the surviving ancient literary works that discuss the Gallic Empire; however, Britain's inclusion in it is indicated from finds of coins and inscriptions in Britain.</p>	<p>Aurelius Victor 33.8 Eutropius 9.9 Zosimus 1.38</p> <p>Aurelius Victor 35.3-5 Eutropius 9.13</p>
<p>AD 259-269¹¹⁵</p>	<p>Evidence for reign of Gallic Emperor Postumus in the British provinces.</p>	<p>4 British milestones: RIB 2232, 2255, 2260; <i>JRS</i> 55 (1965), 224</p> <p>3 British military inscriptions: RIB 605, 1883, 1886¹¹⁶</p>
<p>AD 269-271</p>	<p>Evidence for reign of the Gallic Emperor Victorinus in the British provinces.</p>	<p>5 British milestones: RIB 2238, 2241, 2251, 2261, 2287, 2296</p> <p>Inscriptions on 3 tiles from British legionary fortresses: RIB II 2459.64 RIB 2463.56-7¹¹⁷</p>
<p>AD 271-274</p>	<p>Evidence for reign of the Gallic Emperor Tetricus I in the British provinces.</p>	<p>3 British milestones: RIB ii.2224-6</p> <p>1 inscribed tile from a British fort: RIB 1185¹¹⁸</p>

¹¹⁴ There is a possibility that Britain was not under the rule of the Gallic Empire until 261 (Drinkwater 1987: 168; Birley 2005: 364).

¹¹⁵ Or AD 261-269, as indicated in note 1.

¹¹⁶ Birley 2005: 354

¹¹⁷ Birley 2005: 365

¹¹⁸ Birley 2005: 365

Date	Significance	Sources
ca. AD 279-280	Revolt in reign of Probus by anonymous governor of Britain.	Zosimus 1.66. 2
ca. AD 280	Sometime during reign of Probus, attempted revolt in Gaul by Briton Bonosus.	Scriptores Historiae Augustae, <i>Probus</i> 18.5
AD 286	Carausius' usurpation of Britain and northern Gaul.	Aurelius Victor 39.20-1 Eutropius 9.21 Panegyric on Constantius Caesar 12.1
AD 296	Constantius defeats Carausius' successor Allectus and returns Britain to the central empire.	Panegyric on Constantius Caesar 13-20
AD 306	Death of Constantius in York and proclamation of his son Constantine as emperor.	Aurelius Victor 40.2-4 Eutropius 10.1.3; 10.2.2 Zosimus 2.8.2; 2.9.1
Sometime ca. AD 310 to mid-312 ¹¹⁹ and ca. 314	Constantine may have made two return trips to Britain, the first perhaps to collect troops for his upcoming conflict with Maxentius, the second to put down a revolt in Britain against unknown opponents.	Eusebius, <i>De Vita Constantini</i> 1.8; 1.25
AD 342-343	Constans' winter visit to Britain, possibly to prevent with a planned rebellion.	Ammianus Marcellinus 20.1.1; 28.3.8 Firmicus Maternus, <i>De error profanorum religionem</i> 28.6 Libanius, <i>Oration</i> 59.126-135
Late AD 353	Paulus the Chain is sent to Britain by Constantius II to uncover and punish supporters of the usurper Magnentius.	Ammianus Marcellinus, 14.5.6-9
AD 359	Julian ships grain from Britain to the continent in a fleet of 600 boats.	Ammianus Marcellinus 18.2.3 Julian, <i>Letter to the Senate and People of Athens</i> 279D-280C Zosimus 3.5.2

¹¹⁹ Based on evidence from coins minted in London at this time (Birley 2005: 411).

Date	Significance	Sources
AD 360	<i>Magister equitum</i> Lupicinus' visit to Britain on the orders of Julian with a small field army after reports of raiding in the north.	Ammianus Marcellinus 20.1.1-3; 20.9.9
AD 367-368	The "Barbarian Conspiracy"; Count Theodosius takes a small field army to Britain on the orders of Valentinian to put down invasion, stop rebellions, and restore a lost province.	Ammianus Marcellinus 27.8.1-10; 28.3.1-8
AD 383-388	Magnus Maximus is proclaimed emperor by his troops in Britain and crosses the Channel with an army to seize the Gallic prefecture, which he holds till his defeat and execution by Theodosius in 388. Possible campaign in northern Britain shortly before or after his proclamation.	<i>Gallic Chronicle of 452</i> 382, 387 Orosius 7.34.9-10, 7.35.3-4 Prosper Tiro, <i>Chronicon</i> 388 Sulpicius Severus, <i>Vita Martini</i> 20.3 Zosimus 4.35.26, 4.37.1-3
ca. AD 398-399	Possible campaign in northern Britain by Honorius' <i>magister militum</i> Stilicho; may have simply represented the dispatch of military units to Britain.	Claudian, <i>de consulatu Stilichonis</i> 2.247-255 Claudian, <i>In Eutropium</i> 1.392-393
ca. AD 401-402	Stilicho thought to have possibly removed troops from Britain to fight Goths in Italy.	Claudian, <i>de bello Gothico</i> 416-418
ca. AD 405/406	Horde of Germanic barbarian crosses the Rhine on the last day of the year and floods into Gaul.	Prosper Tiro, <i>Chronicon</i> 406
AD 406	Proclamation of Marcus as emperor by troops in Britain; he is shortly deposed and Gratian is proclaimed emperor.	Olympiodorus, Frag. 12 Zosimus 6.2.1-2
AD 407	Gratian is deposed by the British troops; Constantine III is proclaimed emperor and takes an army across the channel to usurp the Gallic prefecture.	Olympiodorus, Frag. 12 Orosius 7.40.4 Zosimus 6.1.5
ca. AD 408-409	Britain suffers from a barbarian attack and revolts from Constantine III, expelling his administration.	Zosimus 6.5.2-3
ca. AD 410	The "Rescript of Honorius", a letter supposedly to the towns of Britain telling them to defend themselves, but Bruttium in Italy may have been the area intended, and Britain inserted due to a copying error.	Zosimus 6.10.2

Date	Significance	Sources
AD 411	Supposed Saxon attack on Britain.	<i>Gallic Chronicle of 452</i> , 411
Sometime during the late fourth to mid fifth-centuries.	St Patrick's childhood in Britain on a <i>villula</i> near a small town, with a father who was a decurion in a large town.	St Patrick, <i>Confessio</i> St Patrick, <i>Epistola</i>
AD 429	St Germanus' first visit to Britain to combat Pelagianism, possibly to Verulamium.	Constantius of Lyon, <i>Vita Germani</i> 12-18 Prosper Tiro, <i>Chronicon</i> 429
ca. AD 435	St Germanus' second visit to Britain.	Constantius of Lyon, <i>Vita Germani</i> 25-27
AD 441	Supposed Saxon takeover of Britain.	<i>Gallic Chronicle of 452</i> , 441
ca. AD 446-454	British appeal to the <i>magister militum</i> Aëtius for help against the barbarian attack.	Gildas, <i>De Excidio</i> 20.1
AD 444-456 ¹²⁰	Arrival of the Saxon federates at the invitation of the <i>superbus tyrannus</i> (Vortigern).	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , 449-456 Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 1.15 Gildas, <i>De Excidio</i> 23
ca. AD 500 ¹²¹	British defeat of Saxons at Mount Badon.	Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 1.16 Gildas, <i>De Excidio</i> 26.1
ca. AD 540	Traditionally accepted date for Gildas' writing of <i>De Excidio</i> .	Gildas, <i>De Excidio</i> 26.1
AD 577	Supposed British defeat by the king of Anglo-Saxon Wessex, and loss to Wessex of the British towns of Bath, Cirencester, and Gloucester.	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , 577

¹²⁰ Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s dates, based on Bede's interpretation of Gildas.

¹²¹ Bede's date, based on his interpretation of Gildas.

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