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**APPENDIX N** SUMMARY OF IRON AGE SHRINE SITES

(from Wait et al.)

A summary of fourteen Iron Age enclosure sites researched follows in alphabetical order:

**Site**

DANEbury

**Location**

Hampshire

**Intervention**

Identified from earthwork

Area Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation of the hillfort revealed a densely occupied settlement exhibiting signs of planning and zonation. The general pattern of occupation consisting of 73 roundhouse buildings associated with a multitude of pits and 4-post structures. Unusual to this layout was a series of four square timber structures all constructed using continuous bedding trenches. Three of these buildings (average 3m square) faced eastward toward the main entrance of the hillfort, flanking the road atop a false summit. These buildings contained no internal features. The fourth and latest structure (10m across) straddled the road. At least one of these buildings was in use at anyone time during the lifetime of the hillfort. A number of storage pits in their disuse contained a variety of *ritually placed* items including articulated human remains, skulls and mandibles of various wild and domestic animals found in association with other cultural objects.

**Interpretation**

Within the general pattern of domestic settlement within the hillfort the shape, construction, longevity and location of the four timber structures prompted the excavator to interpret these as possible shrines similar to others identified elsewhere. The deliberate and careful deposition of material in the disuse of functional pits is also seen as a ritual act.

**Date**

The chronology of the site was constructed from the pottery assemblage, artefactual analogy and C14 samples. Within the phasing criteria one of the four timber shrines continued to be in use at anyone time between the Early Iron Age and the 1st Century BC

**Site**

FRILFORD

**Location**

Oxon

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed a pennanular ditch 6m in diameter with an entrance gap to the west. Within this were two parallel rows of three postholes aligned north to south, a square pit and a posthole marking a possible gate. The ditch had been recut on several occasions and, being nearly 3m wide in some places, was of a significant scale to the area it enclosed. An iron

ploughshare was recovered from a posthole and a miniature bronze sword and shield were found within the square pit. This feature was deliberately backfilled before being built over by a circular Romano Celtic temple around 90 AD.

**Interpretation**

Interpretation as a shrine based primarily on its succession by a Romano Celtic temple. The form of the Iron Age feature is without parallel and serves no recognisable functional purpose. The presence of miniature weapons has been noted elsewhere. The longevity and maintenance of the ditches implies it was of some importance.

**Date**

An Iron Age date is based on stratigraphic relationships. The main ditch cuts a number of Early Iron Age features and is itself cut by the later Romano Celtic structure.

**Site**

GOSBECKS FARM

**Location**

Colchester Essex

**Intervention**

Identified from earthwork

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed a square multiple ditched temenos enclosure overlain by a square Romano-Celtic temple. Although no evidence for a shrine predating the Roman-Celtic temple was found an amount of pottery and coins were recovered from the early ditches implying an Iron Age predecessor.

**Interpretation**

Interpretation based on assumption that the Romano-Celtic temple must have replaced an Iron Age temple.

**Date**

Late Iron Age date based on pottery and coin evidence.

**Site**

HARLOW

**Location**

Essex

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Re-excavation of a Romano-Celtic temple first uncovered by Wheeler in 1928 revealed evidence for an earlier palisade enclosure and three hoards of coins and brooches.

**Interpretation**

Although no evidence for an Iron Age shrine was identified, the presence of an earlier temenos enclosure and votive deposits implies that the Romano-Celtic temple was constructed over an existing temple.

**Date**

The Iron Age temple can be dated to between 50 BC and 50 AD on the basis of the coin and brooch evidence.

**Site**

HARROW HILL

**Location**

Sussex

**Intervention**

Identified from earthwork

Limited Excavation in 1937

**Summary**

The earthwork represents the remains of a sub-rectangular hilltop enclosure 60m x 52m with a west facing entrance and an internal bank. Limited excavation in 1937 revealed evidence for a substantial gateway and a palisade. Six trenches within the enclosure failed to locate any structural remains. The faunal evidence recovered from the site consisted nearly all of mandible and teeth fragments, the majority of which from cattle. The absence of other bones is notable particularly when the whole enclosure is estimated at containing the remains of more than one thousand heads.

**Interpretation**

Originally considered to be a defended enclosure but the lack of internal structures, small scale of the ditch and bank, presence of selected animal parts and location of site over a large number of Bronze Age flint mines implies a possible *ritual* connection. Analogy of ritual deposition of selected animal parts drawn with the site of Gournay-sur-Aronde.

**Date**

Early Iron Age date based on small amount of pottery recovered in 1937 excavations.

**Site**

HAYLING ISLAND

**Location**

HANTS.

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation of a Romano Celtic temple revealed the presence of an Iron Age predecessor directly beneath. The Iron shrine consisted of a circular structure 8m in diameter centrally placed within a courtyard 22m square which was defined by a ditch and partial lengths of palisade or hedge. Several postholes were identified within the structure along with a central pit which may have held a shrine post or standing stone. Within the courtyard and often associated with patches of burnt gravel a number of horse fittings, socketed spearheads, brooches, scabbards and currency bars were recovered often showing signs of deliberate breakage. Cattle bones were notably absent from the faunal assemblage and appear to have been deliberately excluded.

**Interpretation**

The interpretation of this site as an Iron Age shrine is based on its succession by a stone Romano-Celtic temple and the presence of a large quantity of high status metalwork some of which has been deliberately broken prior to deposition. The distribution of these artefacts shows zonation within the enclosure. The central pit has analogies with other sites in Europe at Libenice, Goloring and Triguères.

**Date**

Mid-1st century BC - mid-1st century AD date based on coins and metalwork

**Site**

HEATHROW

**Location**

Middlesex

**Intervention**

Identified from Earthwork

Excavation

**Summary**

The earthwork and excavation revealed a sub-rectangular enclosure, measuring circa 100m square, defined by a substantial ditch 8m wide and 2.5m deep with an entrance along its southern edge. Within the enclosure a total of eleven hut circles were identified associated with a number of pits and post holes. Offset slightly to the west the remains of an Iron Age shrine with an east facing entrance were excavated. This consisted of an ambulatory, 9m x 11m, defined by a wall of tightly spaced postholes, surrounding an inner cella, 5m x 4m, of trench built construction. Few finds were recovered from this structure.

**Interpretation**

The temple at Heathrow is central to any discussion of Celtic shrines. The position of several of the roundhouse buildings to the bank and ditch implies that at least several of the structures and possibly the temple are earlier than the enclosure and were originally part of an open settlement. The form of the temple has analogies with Danebury and South Cadbury.

**Date**

3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC date based on pottery and stratigraphic relationships

**Site**

LANCING RING

**Location**

Sussex

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed a small square timber structure, 2m square, surrounded by a concentric ambulatory, 3m square, enclosed eccentrically, just within the entranceway of a sub-circular ditch and palisade temenos which was 40m in diameter. The small timber buildings were of a bedding trench construction. Evidence for an earlier round structure could be seen from the published plan as an intermittent line of gullies creating an arc 4.5m in diameter around its southwestern corner.

**Interpretation**

The form of this shrine shares similarities with a number of examples from other sites, eg. Danebury and Heathrow. A stone Romano-Celtic temple located to the west of its Iron Age predecessor was built in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

**Date**

1st Century BC

**Site**

MAIDEN CASTLE

**Location**

Dorset

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation within the hillfort revealed evidence for two possible Iron Age shrines. The earliest structure consisted of an irregular sub-rectangular arrangement of postholes aligned eastward toward the main gate adjacent to the road. This would have created a building 6m x 3m with a possible internal division. 3m west of this a later round structure, 8m in diameter, was constructed using dry stone wall foundations and a timber portico supported by posts. Within this a quantity of Iron Age brooches, coins, iron weapons and infant burials were found. Both these features were located within an open area of the site at the top of the hill.

**Interpretation**

The interpretation of the timber structure as an Iron Age shrine appears to have been made on its proximity to the later building as well as its unusual shape and location. The stone shrine contained a number of high status artefacts deposited in a ritual context and was superseded in the Roman period by a circular Romano-Celtic shrine within its limits.

**Date**

Timber shrine dated to the 4th century BC

The stone shrine dated to the 1st century BC - 1st century AD.

**Site**

MUNTHAM COURT

**Location**

Sussex

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed the remains of a possible Iron Age shrine underneath a circular Romano-Celtic temple. It consisted of a rectangular post-built structure 2m x 3m located within a palisade enclosure.

**Interpretation**

Interpretation based on analogy with other sites and succession by a later Romano-Celtic temple.

**Date**

Undated

**Site**

SOUTH CADBURY

**Location**

Somerset

**Intervention**

Identified from Earthwork

Geophysical Survey

Excavation

**Summary**

Within the excavation of the hillfort, four rectangular timber structures were identified which have been interpreted as Iron Age shrines. Three of these were of posthole construction aligned east to west with an east facing entrance and a possible internal partition. They varied in length from 5m to 3m. Although no internal features were identified two of the structures were surrounded by pits which contained horse and cattle skulls. The fourth structure was of trench built construction with an internal division creating a portico. Outside this were over twenty burials of young animals. All these structures were located on a central ridge in an open area of the hillfort.

**Interpretation**

The interpretation of these structures as shrines is based on their location and unusual shape in relation to other buildings on the hillfort. This, and their association with a number of pits containing ritually deposited animal remains, means an analogy can be drawn between the evidence from South Cadbury and that from Danebury.

**Date**

2nd -1st century BC date offered for the post-built shrines with the trench-built structure dating to the 1st century AD when domestic occupation of the site had ceased.

**Site**

THISTLETON

**Location**

Rutland

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed a pennanular gully 12.6m across defining an area of limestone paving underneath a circular Romano-Celtic temple. This pre-Roman feature was associated with thirteen Coritanian coins, several brooches and pottery.

**Interpretation**

Identified as a possible shrine by its association with a later Romano-Celtic temple and the presence of possible pre-Roman votive deposits.

**Date**

Dated from the coin and pottery assemblage to the 1st century AD.

**Site**

ULEY  
WEST HILL

**Location**

Glos.

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation revealed two rectangular structures enclosed within a rectangular temenos defined by three ditch segments with a gap in the northeast corner. The first possible shrine consisted of bedding trench structure aligned northwest-southeast measuring 5.5m x 4.7m. The second structure measures 8m x 7m and has no eastern wall. Both buildings were associated with infant burials and a pit to the east of the second shrine contained several iron spearheads, eight partly complete fine ware pots, bone tools and the articulated rear limb of a cow. This second shrine was built over by a stone constructed rectangular Romano-Celtic temple in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD.

**Interpretation**

Both structures were interpreted as shrines due to their association with the later Roman-Celtic shrine, their shape and construction and their association with a number of votively deposited items.

**Date**

The information from coin and pottery evidence alludes to a 1st century BC to a 1st century AD date to the shrine structures.

**Site**

WOODEATON

**Location**

Oxon

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

The excavation of a Romano-Celtic temple revealed several pre-Roman deposits. These included a pre-Roman palisade temenos with a number of associated finds which include several Belgic coins, six miniature bronze spears and four miniature bronze axes.

**Interpretation**

Although an Iron Age shrine has not been identified, the presence of a pre-Roman temenos and a number of votive objects suggests that the Romano-Celtic temple replaced an already existing shrine structure.

**Date**

Pre-Roman shrine dated to the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD from metalwork and pottery.

**Site**

WORTH

**Location**

Kent

**Intervention**

Excavation

**Summary**

Excavation of a Romano-Celtic shrine revealed four postholes occurring in two pairs within and parallel to the Roman walls dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC. Associated with these features were three miniature bronze shields, three pre-Roman brooches and late Iron Age pottery.

**Interpretation**

The presence of votive deposits within pre-Roman deposits underneath the Romano-Celtic temple allude to the possibility of a late Iron Age shrine.

**Date**

Dated by pottery to the late 1st century BC.