

Iron Age

The Iron Age spans from the later eighth century BC through to the time of the Roman invasion of Britain, although, like the transition between many periods, there is no definitive occurrence which separates this from the Late Bronze Age. Many of the characteristics, originally thought to exemplify the period, can now be associated with the Late Bronze Age. These include the construction of hillforts (Haselgrove, 1999 p.113).

Unlike during the earlier periods, the people of the Iron Age did not construct monuments to demarcate the burial of their dead. There are, however, examples of specialised interments, such as those of the *Arras Culture* of Eastern Yorkshire. This community was quite contained and shows strong interaction with the continent through chariot burials. An example of these were found at Dane's Graves (Cunliffe, 1991 p.77)

The inhabitants of Britain were socially grouped and occupied loose territories. These groups are likely to have stemmed from extended families. The settlements range from small homesteads to massive earthwork enclosures. These are often found on higher and the larger of these are referred to as hillforts. The dispersion of hillforts is largely weighted towards the south and southeast, the region of the Welsh Marches and the western coast of Scotland (Cunliffe, 1995, Fig.3 p.15). It has been questioned whether these fortified enclosures were primarily constructed for defensive use, as a display of power or as a focal point for a wider spread community.

One of the most documented explanations for the sparse settlement of the North West region is that of its agricultural marginality (Cunliffe, 1991 p.247 Nevell, 1999 p.14). As already mentioned above, the cooler air currents coming in from the Atlantic, bringing with them a higher precipitation rate, combined with the higher altitudes, affecting temperature, greatly reduced the ability to grow crop and therefore support large communities.

These factors may have pushed the economy of the people to favour animal husbandry as opposed to agriculture. This, together with the isolated and inhospitable terrain, may have reduced the need for defended community centres, dividing the people into smaller groups (Cunliffe 1995, p.278). This may also explain why the territory known as Brigantia, which occupied much of northern England, is generally accepted as not being one tribe, but a confederation of smaller ones.

Of those few hillforts in the region two notable ones are Almondbury, Yorkshire(c.20 miles to the northeast of Mellor) and Mam Tor, Derbyshire(c.12miles to the southeast of Mellor).

Almondbury underwent at least six phases of development during the prehistoric times. It began as an open settlement at the end of the third millennium, and gradually gained defences. Firstly by a single ditch, followed by successive ditches and ramparts. The first ditch was 3m wide and two metres deep, encompassing an area of 2.2hectares (5.5acres)-the same as Mellor. Its final stage was of slighting by burning in 431bc +/-180 (Varley, 1976 p.127)

Much of the lands east of the Pennines show abandonment of fortified enclosures during the early part of the mid first millennium BC, a trend which had spread throughout the Pennine regions by around 450BC (Higham, 1987 p.1). The radiocarbon date of 430bc +/-140 from the charcoal layer within the ditch in Tr. 1 may be indicative of the time of abandonment at Mellor.

Mam Tor is one of the largest hillforts in the north of England at 6.4 hectares (16 acres). It is essentially univallated (single ditch), however there are indications of a smaller, inner ditch to some parts of the enclosure (Coombs, 1976 p.147). The limited excavations of the site during the later half of the 1960's, revealed a series of hut circles and posthole structures, as well as pits. Sections were also cut through the ditch and rampart. Evidence was found to suggest that the rampart was preceded by a timber palisade and that the settlement stemmed from the Late Bronze Age. There were no indications as to when the fort went out of use although the apparent lack of Roman artefacts suggests that the site was never occupied during this period and had been abandoned by the first century AD.

Roman Period

Following campaigns by Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC, the Roman invasion proper occurred in AD 43 under Claudius. The southeastern tribes were quickly overpowered and under the future

emperor Vespasian, the southwest was targeted. Caractacus led resistance in South Wales with the Silures and during the winter of AD 47-48 attacked a tribe allied to Rome, probably the Dobunni. Then governor, Ostorius Scapula, began more aggressive policies occupying the West Midlands and cutting off the Welsh from the Brigantes occupying the central northern parts of the country. Sites at Chester, Walton-le-Dale, Whitchurch and Wroxeter were probably established at this time, if only on a semi-permanent basis (Walker, 1987 p.5)

A revolt in Icenian territory, now East Anglia, in AD 47 was quickly resolved and the armies returned to Wales where Caractacus had moved to the North in lands occupied by the Ordovices. Guerrilla tactics were abandoned and Caractacus made a stand from a fortified hilltop. The battle was lost and he fled to seek refuge from the Brigantes under Queen Cartimandua who, having already established ties with Rome, handed him over in AD 52. This decision would have jeopardised the already tentative internal situation within the confederacy of the Brigantes, which had recently seen troubles over their allying with Rome. A few years later intervention from Roman troops was required to deal with the fracas between Cartimandua and her husband, Venutius with control falling to him. The forts at Templeborough, Chesterfield and probably Littlechester had already been established under Nero by the governor at that time, Didius Gallus (Walker, 1987 p.5). It is likely that these were positioned to enable swift movement into the territories of the Brigantes and may have been so as a request from Cartimandua (Hartley, 1987 p.16).

Resistance continued in Wales and in AD 51 the Silures defeated a Legion but during the late 50s were worn down by the continuing campaigns of Didius Gallus. The Roman presence was not to conquer but to remove the threat from the frontier, however policy changed in AD 58 and Veranias was ordered to conquer Britain. A single campaign finished off the Silures in AD 59

followed by moves towards the Ordovices by Suetonius Paulinus.

In AD 60 Queen Boudicca led a rebellion, again in East Anglia, destroying the Roman towns of Colchester, Verulamium and London. The Brigantes played no part in this, such as would be expected under Venutius, so it is believed that Cartimandua had regained control. However by AD 69 the problems had returned and Cartimandua divorced Venutius and shackled up with his armour bearer, Vellocatus. The control of the kingdom was seized by Venutius, however it was some years before the Roman troops entered the battle to rescue Cartimandua.

Petillus Cerialis's campaigns along the eastern side of the Pennines flushed out Venutius by AD 72 but with considerable casualties to the Roman armies. York was established during this period as a legionary fortress and housed the *Legio IX*. The Brigantes continued to war against Rome probably employing guerilla tactics from the hills (Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.19).

Cerialis's campaigns are also likely to have spread from the western side of the Pennines although evidence is more sparse. There is evidence of sites of this period at Ribchester (Walker, 1987 p.7), together with those sites already established by Scapula.

In AD 74, Cerialis was removed from Britain and replaced by Julius Frontinus, probably brought in due to his proven record in mountain warfare (Walker, 1987 p.7), who campaigned across

Wales and subdued the area despite suffering losses. This redirection of the Roman advance may have given the Brigantian rebels hope, however succession by Agricola and his sweep across the territories would have quelled their aspirations (Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.19). Between AD 77-83 his campaigns possibly reached as far north as Inverness (Gregory forthcoming, 2002).

Separation of Brigantia into smaller, more manageable tracts was necessary to protect the rear of the advancing forces. A network of roads and military establishments across the northern territories of England was created. It is possible that much of the labour for these engineering tasks was undertaken by natives under the supervision of the Roman armies (Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.22). A major road crossing the Pennines from the legionary fortress being constructed at Chester to that at York was essential, with strongholds positioned along its route, separated by a days march (Redhead, 1989 p.14). Two of these were the nearby forts at Manchester and Castleshaw.

Manchester's first fort was also established c.AD 79 and was a standard auxiliary cohort turf and timber fort. In the AD 90's it was enlarged and was redeveloped again in the latter half of the second century to contain stone buildings. The fort was finally defended by stone walls from the beginning of the 3rd century before abandonment in the early-5th century (Walker, 1987 p.141-143).

The fort at Castleshaw was also built in c.AD 79 and seems to have been slighted and abandoned in the AD 90s. It was subsequently overlain by a smaller fortlet built around AD 105 and eventually abandoned in the AD 120s.

Melandra Castle, the Roman fort four and a half miles to the northeast of Mellor was built prior to AD 78 and lay en-route from Manchester to Brough-on-Noe. The first turf and timber fort was reinforced in the early-2nd century with stone walling and a second ditch before abandonment in c. AD 140. Outside of the fort, lay a *vicus*, military bathhouse, *mansio* and cemetery (Hart, 1984,1990 p.87-90).

At 140m AOD it lies on a rise of land within the Vale of Glossop with good views to the east and west, out of view from Mellor. A near direct, yet feasible passage from Mellor to Melandra was walked in part during the course of the excavation. The route headed down into the valley to the east of Mill Brow where the stream is narrower and not in a steep gorge. From here Gird Lane, the old road to Glossop, takes a reasonably straight course towards the top, along a footpath past the cairns on the summit (if the cairns on Ludworth Intakes are associated with settlement at Mellor it is possible that the route followed an earlier Bronze Age trackway, an idea postulated by Peter Noble during the excavations of 2001). From here the path follows down into the vale.

Approximately 10 years ago a small lead figurine in the shape of an owl was found by metal detector from the area of Mill Brow (Plate 21). The Roman Goddess, Minerva was often portrayed with an owl and as the goddess of warfare, wisdom and craft, it is possible that this object was carried by a Roman soldier as a tribute to her (Eyre-Morgan, pers comm.). A number of similar objects, many of birds have been found. An owl cast in bronze was found at Chester (Green, 1978).

Locally, possible Roman sites have been identified at Highstones, Tintwistle and Mottram Church. The former is visible as an undated rectangular earthwork consisting ditch, rampart and causewayed entrance, overlooking the Torside reservoir (Hart, 1984, 1990). The latter lies along the route from Melandra to Manchester and was noticed as crop marks on aerial photographs. This underwent testpitting during research by UMAU and although two sherds of late-1st century pottery were found, the existence of a suggested signal station was not confirmed (Roberts, 1998).

In the field to the south of the church, a silver *dinarius*, was found by Mr Peter Hodgson, dating to the Emperor Vespasian, AD 69-79.

There are a number of sites dating from the late-1st century through to the 2nd century, west of the Pennines which although not auxiliary forts, are likely to have been run by the military. These include supply bases and works depots at Wigan, Walton-le-Dale, Holt and Wilderspool (Walker, 1987 p.7). These would have been essential for the construction and maintenance of the forts in the region.

The Roman pottery found at Mellor dates from the late-1st century, through to the 3rd century (Leary, this report). This illustrates that the site was occupied from the launch of the campaigns into Brigantia and continued for some time, beyond that of some nearby sites from the Roman period. The discovery of tile fragments implies that buildings must have been erected during this period. Where precisely these stood and their function are two questions yet to be answered. Without these, and other such answers, it is impossible to establish the purpose of the Roman occupation of Mellor. Although speculative it may have served as a sentry post, making the most of the views out towards Manchester; an industrial works to supply the garrisons although civilian settlements outside of Melandra and Manchester could also have served these