

The Site in Context

Excavations at Main Road, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire



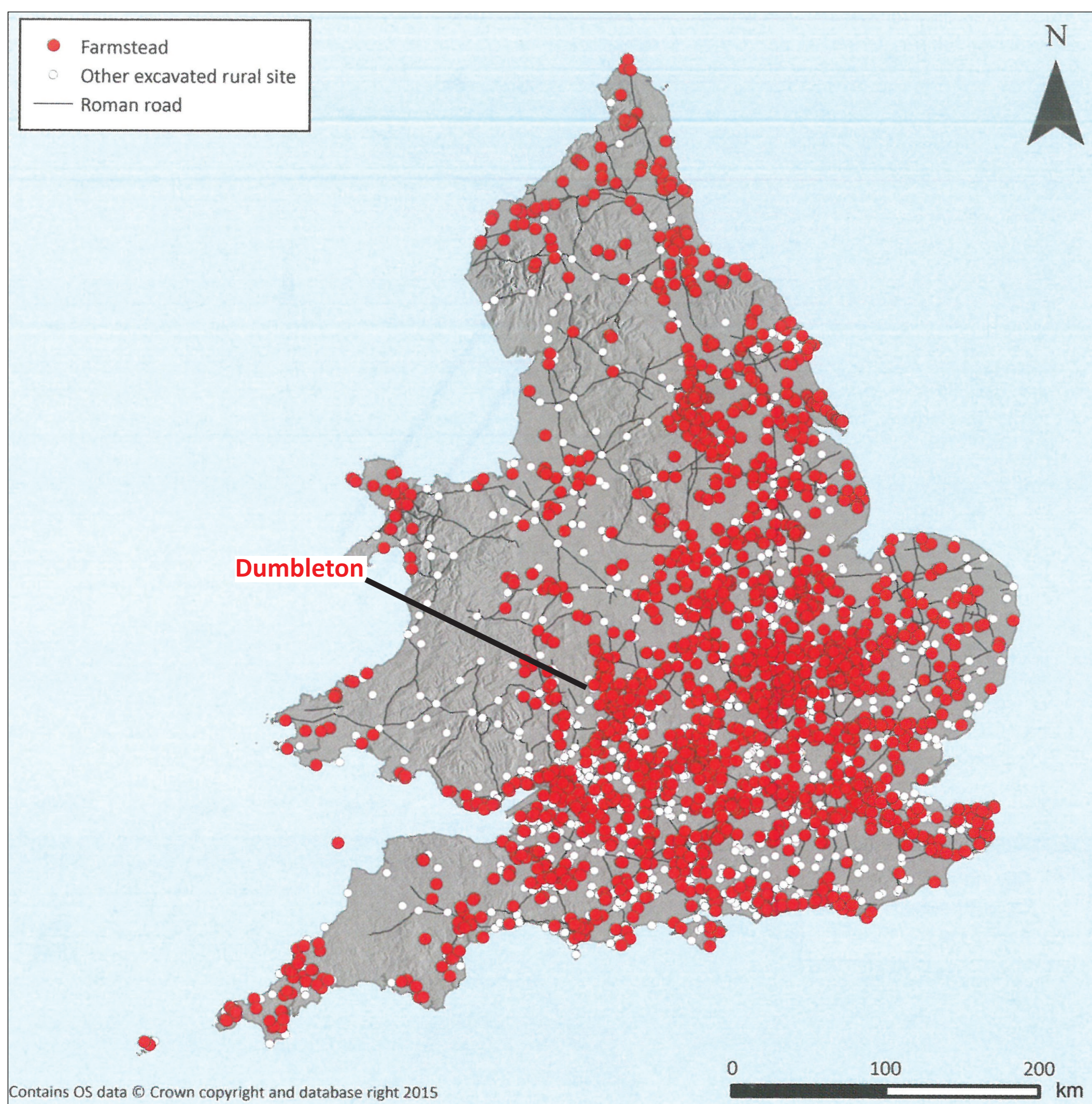
A Rural Settlement Site

For many years research of rural Roman sites concentrated on villas, mainly as they were most visible archaeologically and hence they became a popular type of site to research and excavate.

While these generally high status sites tend to provide a wealth of material finds, not to mention colourful mosaics, they only offer insight into a small section of the society at that time.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus in trying to understand other rural settlement types, which come in many forms: polyfocal farmsteads which often consist of a group of farmsteads; compact villages with much more extensive settlement activity consisting of small rectilinear compounds; linear villages that are dominated by a one or two streets or trackway; and isolated farmsteads typified by rectilinear or curvilinear enclosures.

Which one of these site types this Dumbleton site may represent will hopefully become clearer during the post-excavation stage.



Above: Distribution map of England showing all excavated sites recorded as Roman farmsteads (red) with other Roman rural sites (white) and roads (black).



Millfields, Cam Villa (Gloucestershire) (above). A small rural villa, located within a wider Roman field system, excavated by TVAS South West in 2019. Apart from two ovens no outbuildings were found. It may be that this villa stood alone or any other buildings lie outside of the excavation area. High status features included a hypocaust, stone furniture and painted wall plaster.

Right: A nearly complete ceramic vessel, probably of Late Iron Age date



Late Iron Age or Early Roman?

The Roman period began with the conquest of southern Britain by the emperor Claudius (beginning in AD43). A century earlier Julius Caesar had attempted a conquest and parts of the south of England had already established trade routes and other contact with the Roman continent.

Late Iron Age customs and practices did not just stop with the arrival of the Roman army, however, and the transition would have taken a considerable period of time, occurring in different places at different times.

At the other end of the period, the influx of Anglo-Saxon migrants had started probably as much as half a century before the 'official' end of the Roman period in Britain with the formal withdrawal of imperial authority in AD410.