The Shaping of the English Landscape

An atlas of archaeology from the Bronze Age to Domesday Book

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and

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Introduction

by Chris Gosden

At the heart of the English Landscapes and Identities (EngLaId) project lay maps, diagrams, drawings and paintings. This is appropriate as the whole notion of landscape entered English through the Dutch notion of *landskip*, designating a painted landscape. This Atlas derives from a collaboration between an artist, Miranda Creswell, and an expert in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Chris Green. Such a collaboration might seem to span the divide between art and science, but in fact Miranda and Chris worked across the divide, in many ways ignoring it, both educating the other.

Coming into the project relatively new to archaeology, Miranda made us all think more about shape, colour and modes of representation, and about how we present our information to be both convincing and visually stimulating. Underlying Chris's work is a mass of computation, with many of his maps combining and condensing a number of variables, getting us all to think in more complex ways about the mass of archaeological information at our disposal. Such layering and combining of influences probably helped shape Miranda's thoughts about landscape. In some of her work, Miranda has drawn one landscape from the same viewpoint but on a series of different occasions, so that each drawing combines a number of times, each with its own weather pattern, moving birds or trees. In playing with time, these drawings are deeply archaeological.

Both the maps and drawings might well be described as 'working' in the sense that they are not representations, but the research process in action. Both Chris and Miranda worked with and through their illustrations, so that they and the rest of the team thought through the materials presented here.

The Atlas is complementary to the project's other publications, throwing further light and depth on many of the issues confronted by the project as a whole. How to deal with a mass of archaeological data in addition to all the factors affecting its discovery, recovery, analysis and publication were all issues at the heart of EngLaId. Some progress was made in understanding broad influences on archaeological work (Chapter 1), but also on variations over time and space in how people in England lived in the past.

A further important aspect of the project was working with a broad range of people interested in archaeology, from school children in Liverpool and Birkenhead (p.23) to dog walkers in Didcot (p.5) and many others in between. Miranda produced some of her most interesting work in these contexts, as well as encouraging others to produce a mass of painting and drawing, as well as discussion and thought about the past.

In all, this is a unique piece of work, which is a great tribute to the skill and intelligence of Chris and Miranda, but also a testimony to their ability to work together in different but complementary ways. It is a piece of work which can inform, but above all provides enjoyment of the range and interest of archaeological evidence, creating a unique set of images, many of considerable beauty.

Acknowledgements

Landscapes and Identities: the Case of the English Landscape, 1500 BC to AD 1086 (EngLaId) was a project that ran within the School of Archaeology at the University of Oxford from 2011 to 2016. It was funded by the European Research Council (Grant Number 269797) and conducted by a project team consisting of Prof. Chris Gosden, Anwen Cooper, Tyler Franconi (from 2014), Chris Green, Letty Ten Harkel, Zena Kamash (up to 2014), and Laura Morley. Victoria Donnelly, Sarah Mallet, and Dan Stansbie were the project's three doctoral students. In the early stages of the project, the team included John Pybus and Xin Xiong of the Oxford eResearch Centre. Miranda Creswell was the project's artist.

The maps and statistics presented in this Atlas are based upon the database constructed by the project team on the EngLaId project. That database consists of records sourced from various local, national, and project repositories:

Local Historic Environment Records (HERs);

Historic England's National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE);

Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS);

Fitzwilliam Museum's Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds (EMC);

Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP);

Yates 2007 (prehistoric field systems), Palmer 2010 (Domesday Book), and Kinory 2012 (Iron Age and Roman salt processing evidence).

Where maps present data from different sources, these will be acknowledged on the relevant page and any relevant data character information outlined.

The artworks in this Atlas are original works made by Miranda Creswell.

We would like to thank the following for their assistance and/or provision of data during this project:

All of the HER officers of England;

Simon Crutchley, Lindsay Jones, Poppy Starkie, and Martin Newman at Historic England;

Dan Pett, Katie Robbins, Sam Moorhead, Mary Chester-Kadwell, Stephen Moon, and Roger Bland at the British Museum (PAS);

Martin Allen at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (EMC);

Ehren Milner and Tim Darvill at the University of Bournemouth (AIP);

Tim Evans at the Archaeology Data Service (ADS);

David Yates;

Janice Kinory;

Keith Westcott and Crispin Flower at exeGesIS Spatial Data Management;

Ian Cartwright for photography of the artworks.

Links:
- Details of HERs: http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/
- NRHE online: http://www.pastscape.org.uk/
- PAS website: https://finds.org.uk/
- EMC website: http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/
- AIP website: https://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/aipintro.htm

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- Kinory, J.L. 2012. Salt Production, Distribution and Use in the British Iron Age. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports British Series 559
- Palmer, J. 2010. Electronic Edition of Domesday Book: Translation, Databases and Scholarly Commentary, 1086; Second Edition. UK Data Service, http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-5694-1
- Yates, D.T. 2007. Land, Power and Prestige: Bronze Age Field Systems in Southern England. Oxford: Oxbow

How to read the maps and artworks in this Atlas

All projects require spatial and temporal limits. EngLaId was concerned with the extent of the modern country of England and with a time period spanning the Middle Bronze Age (c.1500 BC) to the Domesday survey (AD 1086). Naturally, these limits impose restrictions on what we can say about the data gathered, but they represent natural boundaries in terms of datasets with reasonably consistent / coherent data structures and fall (just) within the bounds of sensible data manageability, taking into account the time, personnel, and funds available.

Maps which present data in hexagons should be read as showing the presence or absence of records for the particular element mapped across the previously mentioned sources within the project database (see Acknowledgements). These maps do not show the number of records of each type within each respective hexagon, simply the presence of at least one record of that type within one or more of the source datasets. Also, these maps represent the best state of our knowledge of English archaeology (in 2012), but there will undoubtedly be mistakes present, e.g. sites of incorrect date or type. Similarly, most statistics (unless otherwise stated) are based upon similar presence / absence data by 1 x 1 km grid square. The reason for this is that there is no simple way of identifying overlaps across these datasets where the same site or object appears in multiple sources, other than labour-intensive manual comparison of mapped data. For a database of this magnitude (over 900,000 records) such a task would have been impossible within the constraints of the EngLaId project.

Data presented in this way has had records for which the evidence type was recorded as solely place-name and/ or documentary removed, with the exception of the Domesday data. This is to improve internal consistency, as the inclusion of place-name / documentary evidence within HER data is highly regionally varied. All data presented in hexagons have been simplified down to a set of eight monument / site type categories, split into around 120 sub-types. The broad categories are:

1. Agriculture and subsistence
2. Religious, ritual and funerary
3. Domestic and civil
4. Architectural forms
5. Industrial
6. Communication and transport
7. Defensive
8. Other

All maps presented are projected using the British National Grid (OSGB 1936) projection defined in ArcGIS 10.

At the time of publication, an interactive version of the mapped data can be found here:
http://englaid.arch.ox.ac.uk/

The artworks were concerned with experimenting with time periods. They were deliberately made in pencil so as not to denote a particular seasonal moment which might become apparent in colour. The artworks were drawn over lengthy periods, sometimes weeks, pushing the boundaries of what is perceived to be the length of a so called 'working drawing' (Berger 2007). The drawings therefore, are meant to be read not as descriptions of a moment in time but moments of indeterminate length, echoing some of the archaeological work herein showing long time periods and large datasets. As for denoting spatiality, most drawings were made from a fixed point and are therefore conservative in their description of space.

Due to the lengthy time period of the project (five years), the artist travelled throughout England and made thirteen detailed drawings as part of a series 'Recording England' (deliberately referencing the Recording Britain project; Palmer 1946-9), so that they covered a large area as a series. The sites were chosen in collaboration with the rest of the EnglaId team and show a mixture of periods as well as both well-visited and less-visited sites, representing archaeology in England in a wide sense. The way that the sites were drawn, in the same format and materials, aimed to show them on an equal footing, so that field formations, for instance, are given the same weight as hillforts.

References:
• Palmer, A. (ed.) 1946-9. Recording Britain. Oxford: Oxford University Press
• Berger. J. 2007. Berger on Drawing. Aghabullogue, Ireland: Occasional Press

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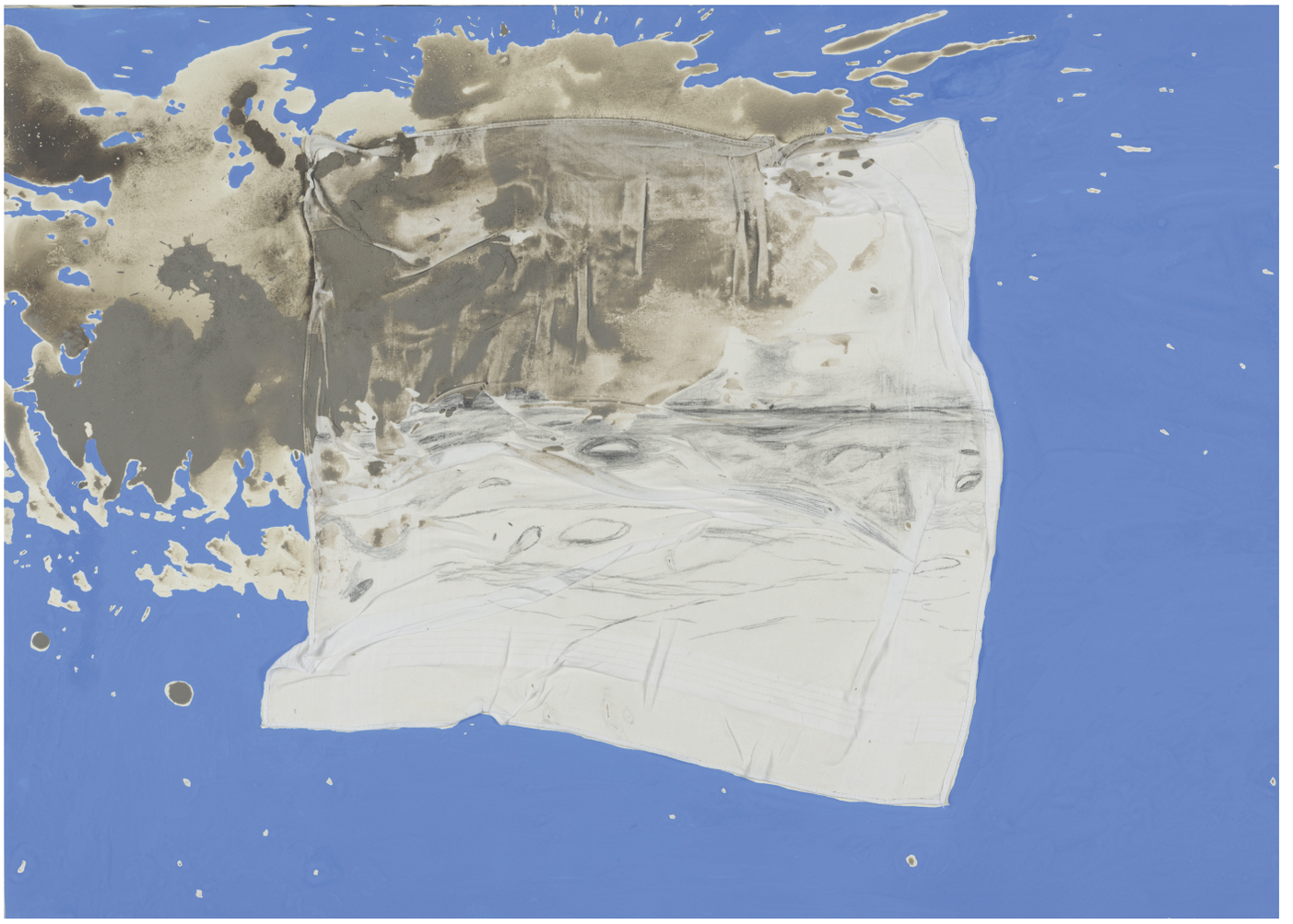


Mud Map, the Buried and the Ephemeral. 2015.
Mud from the Isle of Wight, handkerchief and drawing. Image by Miranda Creswell.

Chapter One:

Understanding dataset structure

This chapter will present and discuss some of the factors that help to structure the relationship between archaeological data and the way in which it is gathered and constructed. In other words, we wished to understand our datasets' characters in order to become more or less confident in the patterns and structures they were showing to us.

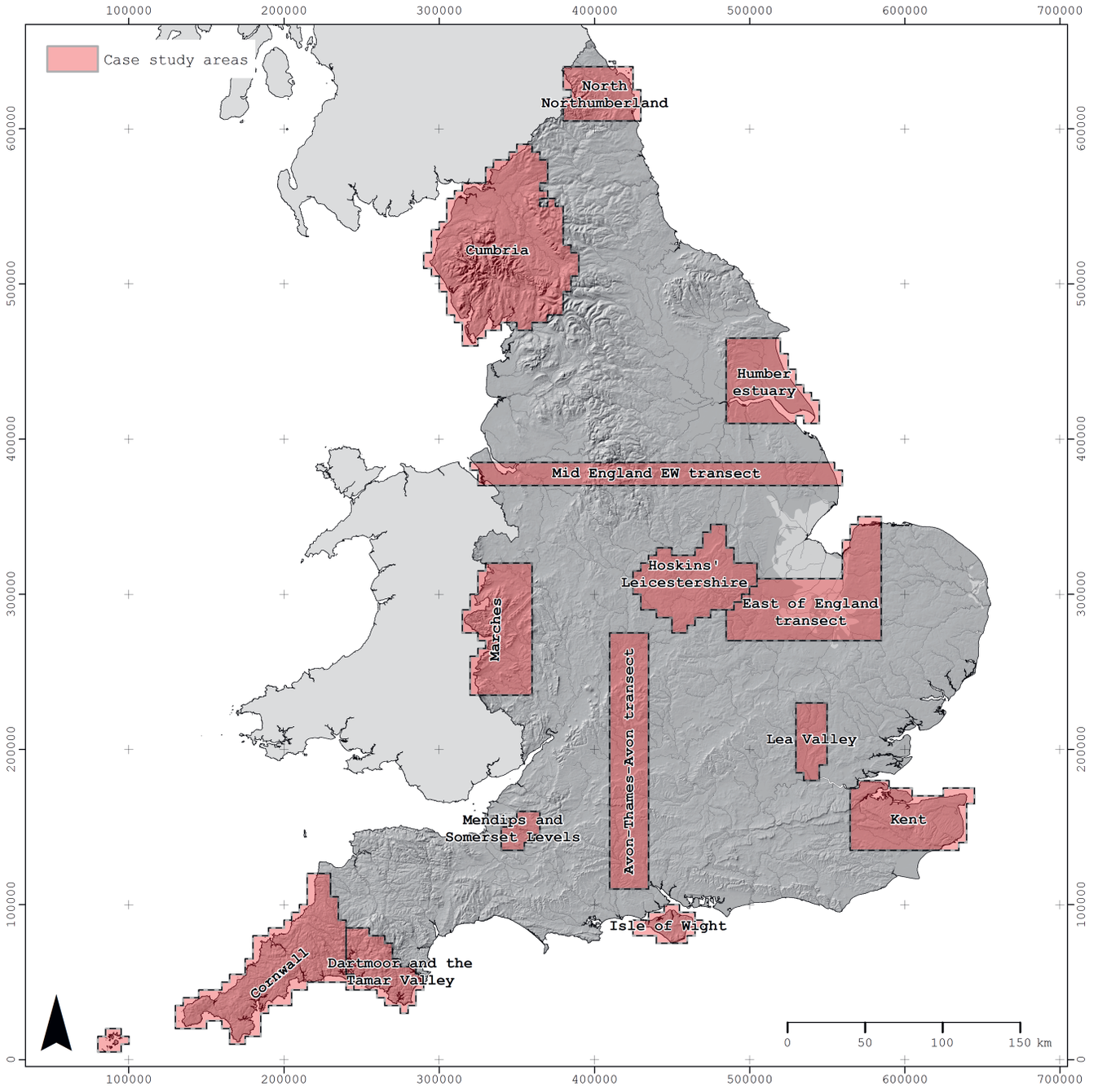
The characterfulness of data observed was not done without a certain amount of self-observation within the group of researchers: by observing how different time periods denote different ways of gathering information through their different evidences. Early medievalists work with different source material than archaeologists working with Iron Age and Bronze Age material, and different again from researchers working with Roman material. The EnglaId group could therefore observe individual working methods at close hand within their team. Miranda Creswell took photographs of each team member's personal notes and these were observed and discussed. The result was a heightened awareness of individual working methods and their consequences. Rather than ideas of group unity and uniformity, there was a conscious decision to respect individual methodology. By 'rubbing shoulders' procedurally speaking, small and almost undiscernible working changes began to appear.

Through Maps. 2016.
This image has been made from 12 photographs of key research meetings between 2012 and 2016 at the University of Oxford. Discussions around the themes of bias and character were enabled through the use of printed maps created by Chris Green, which were brought to each meeting as a significant way to generate debate. Artwork by Miranda Creswell.

Case studies

Most of the maps presented in this Atlas include the case study areas shown below. These were the areas of England selected for further, more in-depth analysis as part of the EngLaId project.

More detail on the case studies and the various studies undertaken can be found in other EngLaId publications. They will also be referred to at various points within the Atlas.



PPG 16 Big Bang (I)

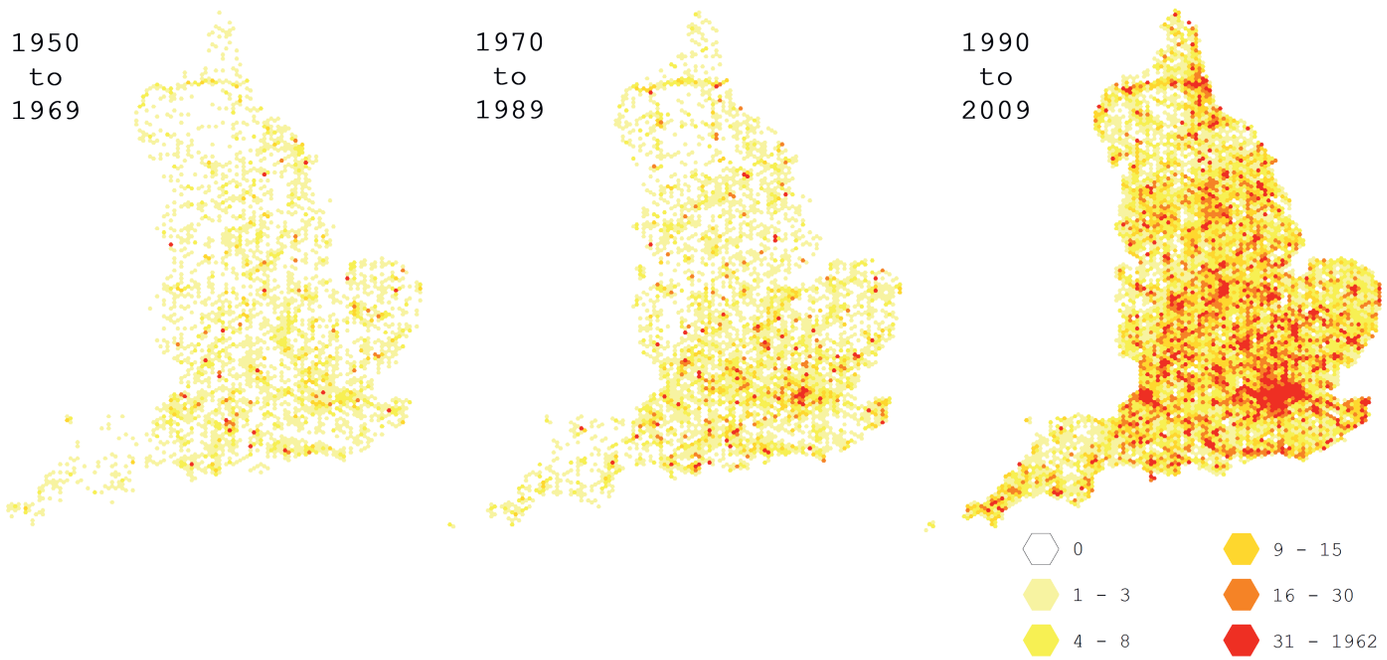
with Victoria Donnelly

Modern development provides an opportunity for archaeological investigation as part of the planning and construction process. Although PPG 16 (Planning Policy Guidance 16) was explicitly designed as a mechanism within the planning process to allow archaeological access to development sites prior to and during development, the sheer volume of investigation undertaken since the introduction of PPG 16 in 1990 was an unanticipated result. The three maps below compare the number of archaeological events recorded in the NRHE Excavation Index (Historic England 2011) from 1950 to 1969, 1970 to 1989, and 1990 to 2009 (collated by hexagons). As should immediately be apparent, the introduction of developer funding for archaeological work prior to development has resulted in a massive increase in the amount of archaeological investigations in England since 1990.

The influence of PPG 16 on archaeology is not only through the significantly increased volume of archaeological investigations that are undertaken now in comparison to the decades before 1990; PPG 16 has also had an effect on the siting of archaeological investigations. These investigations are located where development happens, and are guided by the economic and legislative drivers of development rather than by research interests. Looking at the distribution of archaeological investigations in the maps below, there is a clear difference in before and after 1990. After 1990, archaeological investigation is now spread much more broadly across the English landscape and captures archaeological evidence from many previously less intensively studied areas. By incorporating the results of development-led archaeology into the archaeological record, the overall picture of past human behaviour in England can now be based on a geographically much broader and more diverse evidence base than was previously the case.

Since PPG 16, the primary factors governing the location of archaeological fieldwork have shifted from being archaeological research questions and where "rescue" efforts were thought to prove most fruitful, to being governed largely by planning control processes. The latter form a complex mix of socio-economic factors (determining where development is most likely) and models of known archaeology (determining whether intervention would likely be needed). As a result, a large degree of structural bias has entered into the modern archaeological record, resulting in distributions that reflect both past and present conditions.

However, this bias should not be conceived of as a problem but rather as an opportunity. We therefore prefer to think of these elements as part of the characterfulness of our data (Cooper & Green 2016), using the concept of "affordance". Within archaeology, affordance is used to represent an idea of the relationship between humans and their environment as mutually constitutive (Ingold 1992). We would use it here in similar vein to represent the relationship between planning control processes and archaeological distributions as similarly mutually dependent and productive. Understanding this relationship is vital to understanding archaeological distributions in the modern day.



References:
• Cooper, A. & C. Green. 2016. 'Embracing the complexities of 'big data' in archaeology: the case of the English Landscape and Identities project.' Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 23: 271–304
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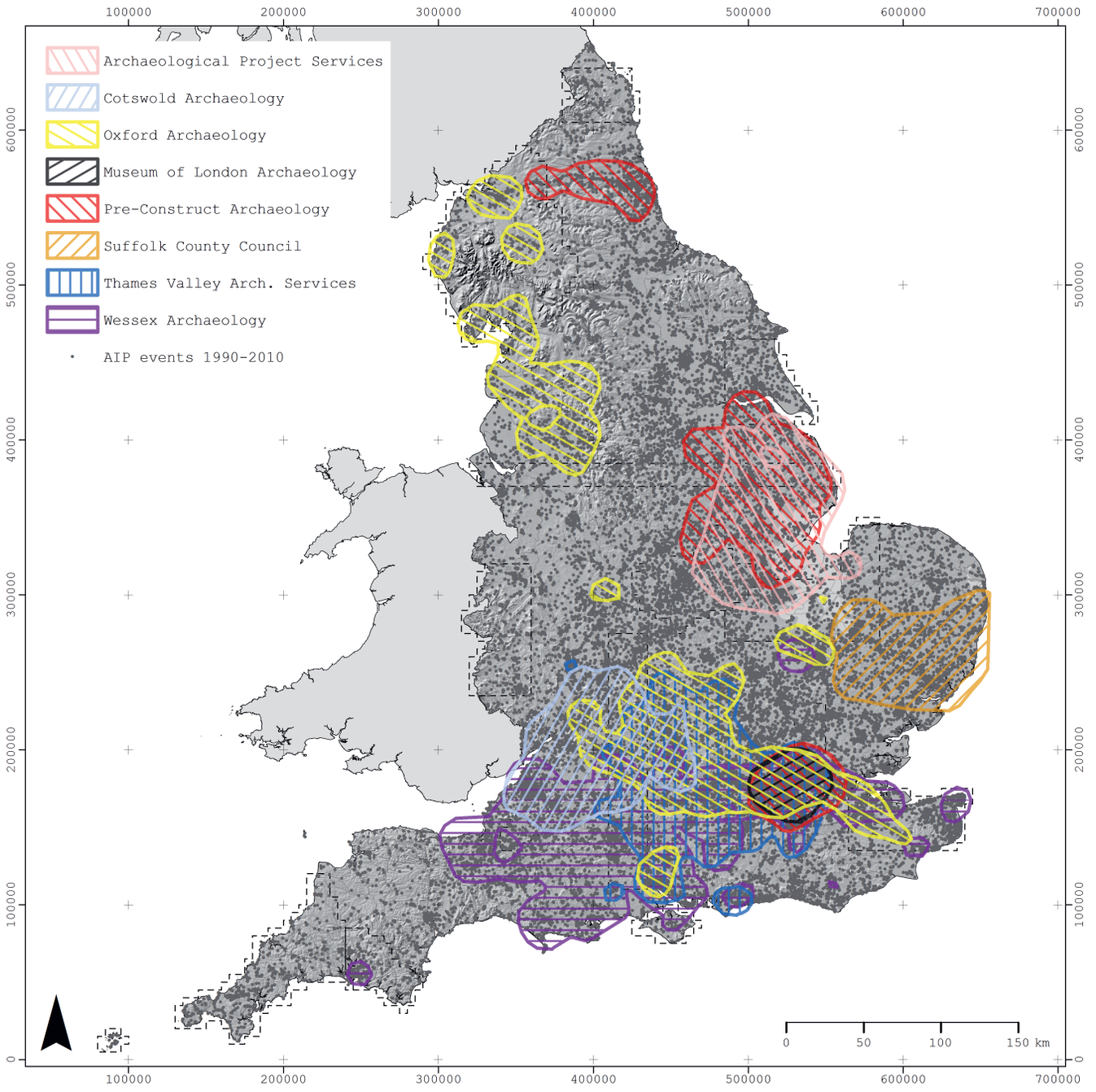
• Historic England. 2011. NRHE Excavation Index. http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/304/

PPG 16 Big Bang (II)

with Victoria Donnelly

The success of development led archaeology has resulted in the growth of a complex system of decision makers and practitioners which design, manage and produce the archaeological fieldwork resulting from development. Archaeological organizations that undertake archaeological fieldwork range in size from small one-person operations to large corporate groups which employ hundreds of archaeological specialists and work on many different sites simultaneously. Many of the archaeological opportunities provided by development are awarded through a competitive tendering process and this capitalistic environment has interesting implications for the archaeological record.

This map shows the core working areas of the eight organizations which undertake archaeological fieldwork with the highest number of records in the Archaeological Investigations Project database (AIP) during the period 1990 to 2010. Each of these groups are shown to have a clearly defined territory within which they usually operate; no single organisation undertook archaeological fieldwork across all areas of England. Here the archaeological fieldwork which forms the basis of the English archaeological record is shown to be a product of a very regional approach. The largest organisations which most influence the production of overall archaeological data are mainly based within a central southern belt where the volume of development supports multiple competing groups.



References:

• AIP website: https://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/aipintro.htm

Developer funding and archaeology

The very close bond that has come into being over the past quarter of a century between archaeological fieldwork and development (pp.3-4) has created interesting implications within the relationship between professional archaeologists and the general public. Development in an area can be highly contentious (as seen in the example below), with local people often highly resistant to the loss of beloved countryside or the expansion of their towns for new housing. Archaeologists can thus become somewhat stuck in the middle between the economic forces driving new development (often resisted by the community) and their function in providing new insights into the past of an area (often welcomed by the community).

In the case of Great Western Park, the town of Didcot (population c.25,000 in the 2011 census) saw expansion of its housing stock by around 3,300 new homes: an increase in the built area of the town of over 25%. The area on which the new development was constructed was previously mostly countryside and had been a favoured dog walking location for many local residents for several decades. As such, local resistance to the scheme was substantial and heartfelt. In some ways, the extensive archaeological fieldwork that was undertaken in advance of the development could be seen as a mitigating factor in the developer's attempt to quell local antagonism (hence the prominent featuring of archaeology on the development's website), beyond simply being a requirement of the planning conditions. How well it worked is not for us to judge here, but this introduces an interesting new complication to the relationship between commercial archaeology and development.

In essence, then, commercial archaeological fieldwork companies are almost entirely dependent on development and the planning process in order to generate work and money, but developers are also somewhat dependent on archaeologists to legitimise their practice in the eyes of the local community, especially where developments impact directly on areas of nucleated settlement. The greater power in this relationship is clearly on the side of the developers, but perhaps the position of archaeologists in the relationship is not quite as weak as some might expect: commercial imperatives also strengthen the case to undertake thorough and competent archaeological fieldwork, not simply scientific curiosity.

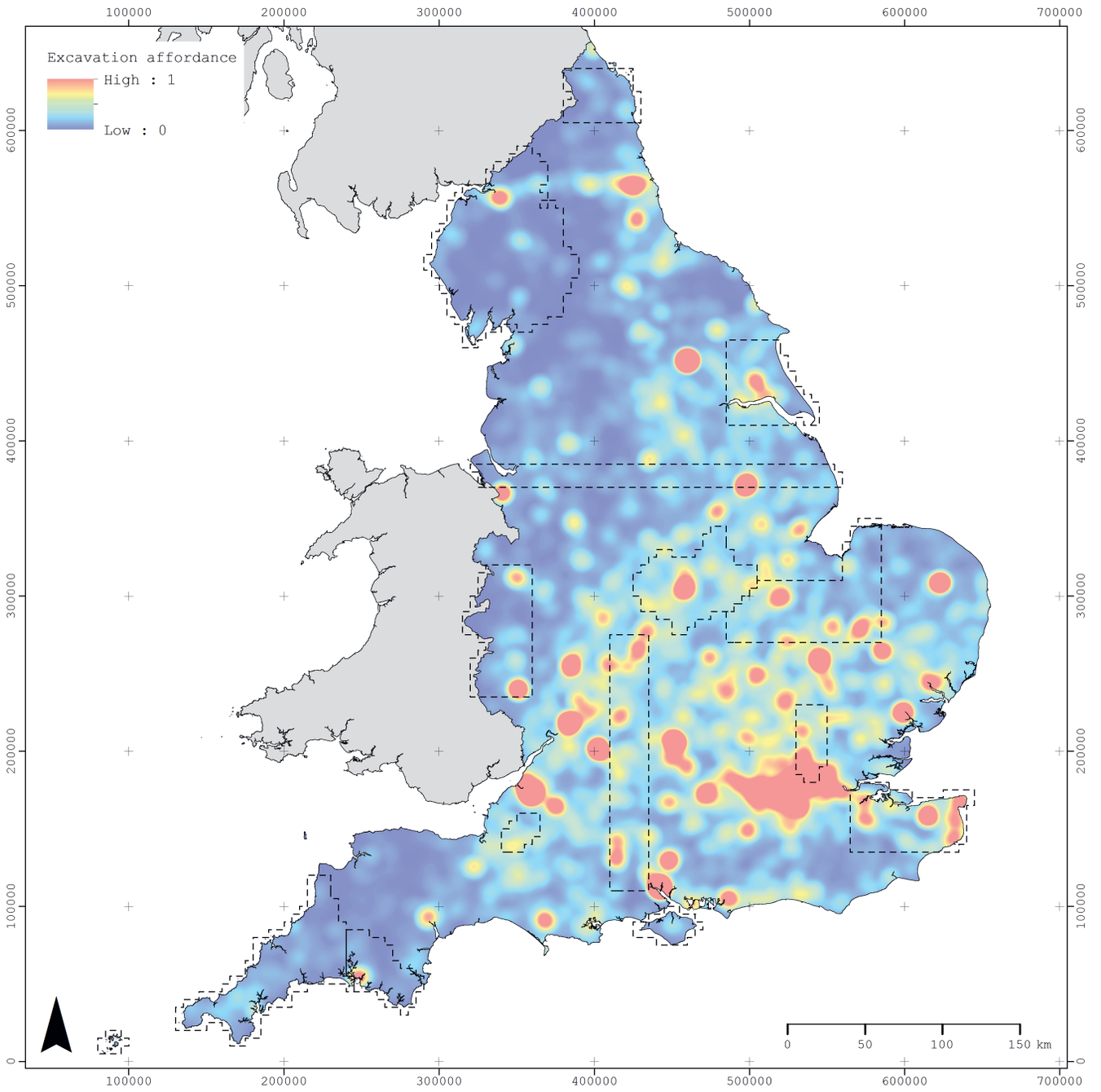
Didcot Dog Mile. 2016.
The drawing and the photograph are of the same site in Didcot with an interval of four years. The drawing is of a landscape showing an excavation by Oxford Archaeology with Iron Age pits in the foreground; the photograph shows the development (Great Western Park) that subsequently replaced the excavated landscape. The artist drew for a period of three months in 2012, gathering local interest that resulted in a community exhibition called The Didcot Dog Mile, the name of the area as known to dog walkers and the local community. Artwork by Miranda Creswell.

References:
• Great Western Park: https://www.gw-park.co.uk

Excavation

Mapping the affordances associated with excavation of archaeological material is not straightforward. Collating planning statistics, particularly at a high level of spatial resolution, is nigh impossible. As such, we had to rely on mapping the density of excavations themselves (using the NRHE Excavation Index) to try to understand the spatial structure of excavation as a phenomenon. Obviously, this is imperfect, as the argument becomes circular. However, to counteract this we have included excavations that produced material of any time period or which produced no positive archaeological results. This is the best model we could construct using the data available to us and it should not be wrong in any important way.

Areas of high value in the model are more likely to see excavation take place and are thus more likely to produce archaeological data of a detailed character: close dating, stratigraphic information, and data on artefacts and ecological remains. Areas of low value in the model will have seen less excavation take place and, as such, more of the data available to us is likely to have come from other sources, such as aerial survey.

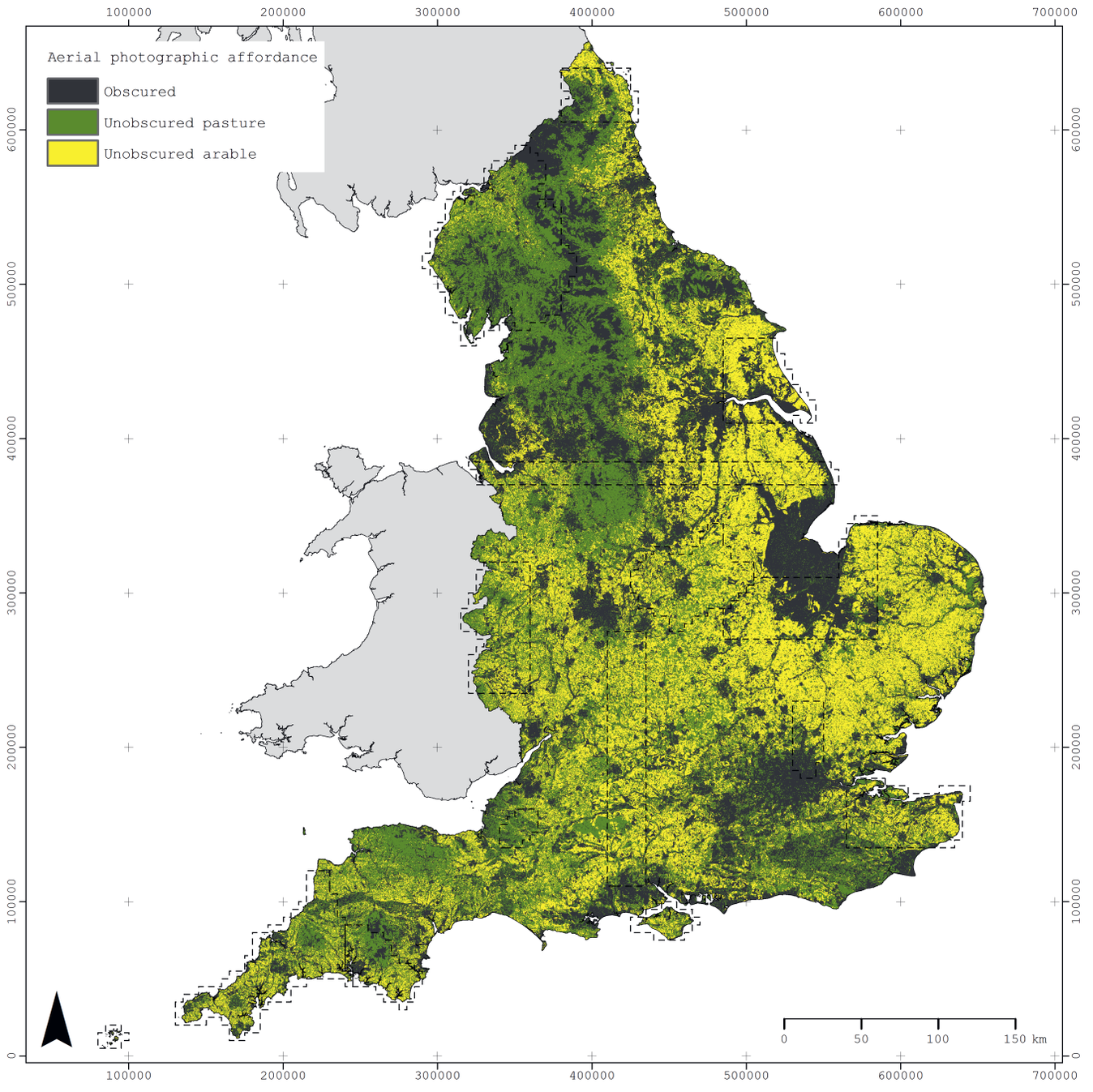


References:
• Historic England. 2011. NRHE Excavation Index. http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/304/

Aerial prospection

Despite advances in technologies used to discover new archaeological sites (e.g. airborne laser scanning or geophysical survey), aerial photographic prospection remains the most common method by which new areas of archaeological interest are discovered (e.g. during the hot dry summer of 2018). However, aerial survey does not work everywhere. On arable land, if the soils are conducive, buried archaeological features may show up as patches of faster growth (ripening earlier, e.g. due to buried ditches) or slower growth (ripening later, e.g. due to buried walls). These are called 'cropmarks' and the effect is accentuated in dry summers. Equally, in very dry years buried features may show up as 'parchmarks' on pasture land. Pasture will also show earthworks, especially in slanting light conditions or under light levels of snow cover. Most other types of land cover (e.g. urban land, lakes / reservoirs, woodland) will not show archaeological features from the air (excluding standing historic buildings).

The model presented here shows unobscured arable land (liable to show cropmarks) and unobscured pasture land (liable to show earthworks or occasionally parchmarks). The other areas are obscured from the air in some way, whether by above ground features or sub-surface deposits (including soils that show few cropmarks in the arable areas; Evans 1990). It can be used to suggest whether archaeological features mapped from the air are not showing up in an area due to genuine lack of below-ground archaeology or due to the conditions being unconducive to successful aerial survey.



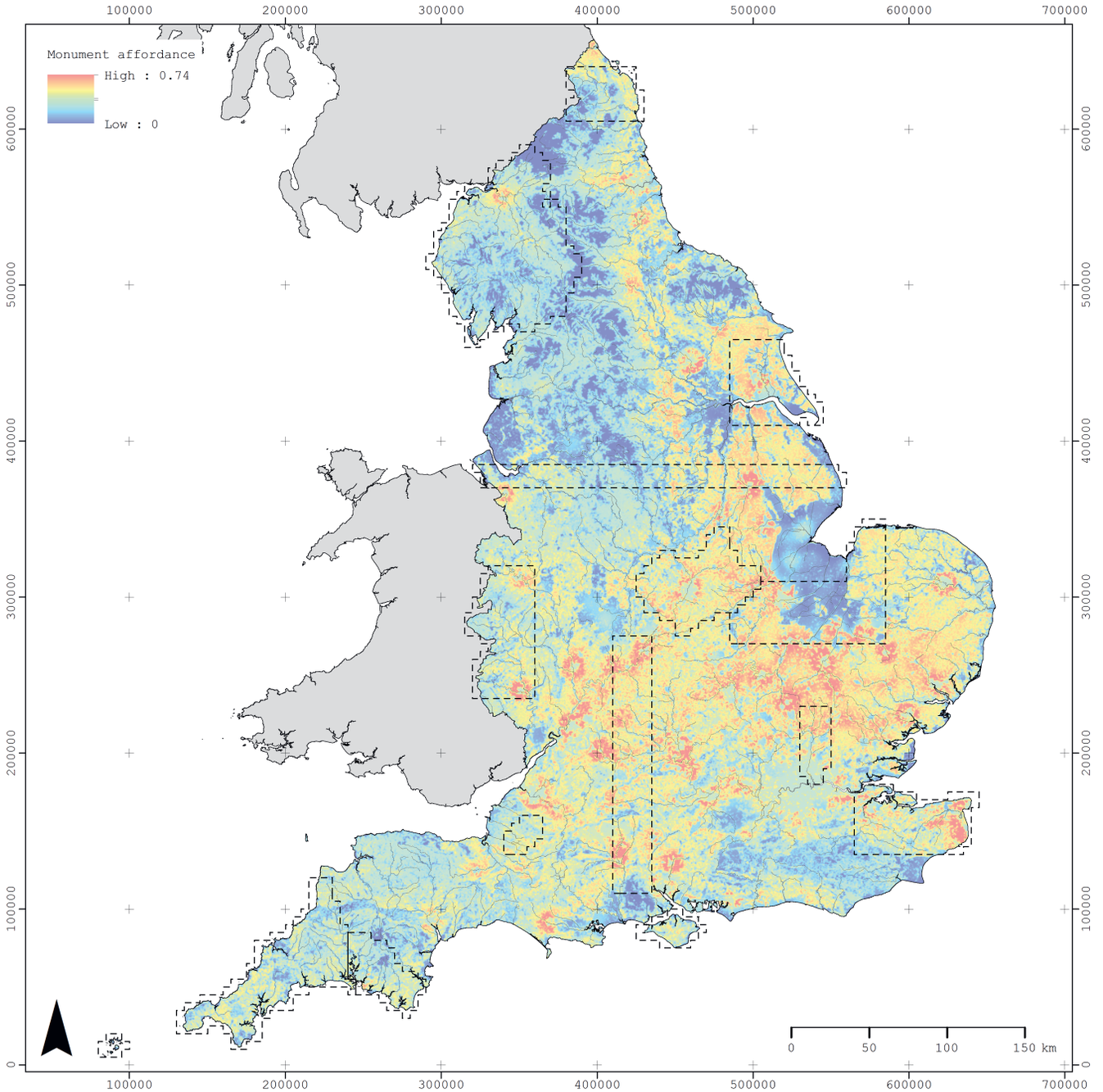
References:

• Evans, R. 1990. 'Crop patterns recorded on aerial photographs of England and Wales: their type, extent and agricultural implications.' Journal of Agricultural Science, Cambridge 115: 369-382

Monuments

It is then possible to combine the two models presented on the previous pages into a model of the potential afforded by different parts of England for the discovery of archaeological sites (by sites, we mean records of any archaeology other than single findspots). The values on the two models were weighted according to the proportion of the records in our database which record excavation or aerial survey as a source of evidence. Essentially, then, higher values in the model represent a higher opportunity for archaeology to be discovered and lower values a lower opportunity.

In this way, it starts to become possible to test the degree to which distributions are structured by the various elements of the model. Some types of site will only occur in areas of higher probability, which suggests that their distributions are highly dependent upon the modern fieldwork factors which structure our record, rather than purely due to variability in the ancient past. Other types of site will be found across all areas of the model, which suggests that they are less dependent upon modern fieldwork factors in order to be discovered, and thus being more representative of genuine distributions of ancient activity. We shall see examples of each throughout this atlas.

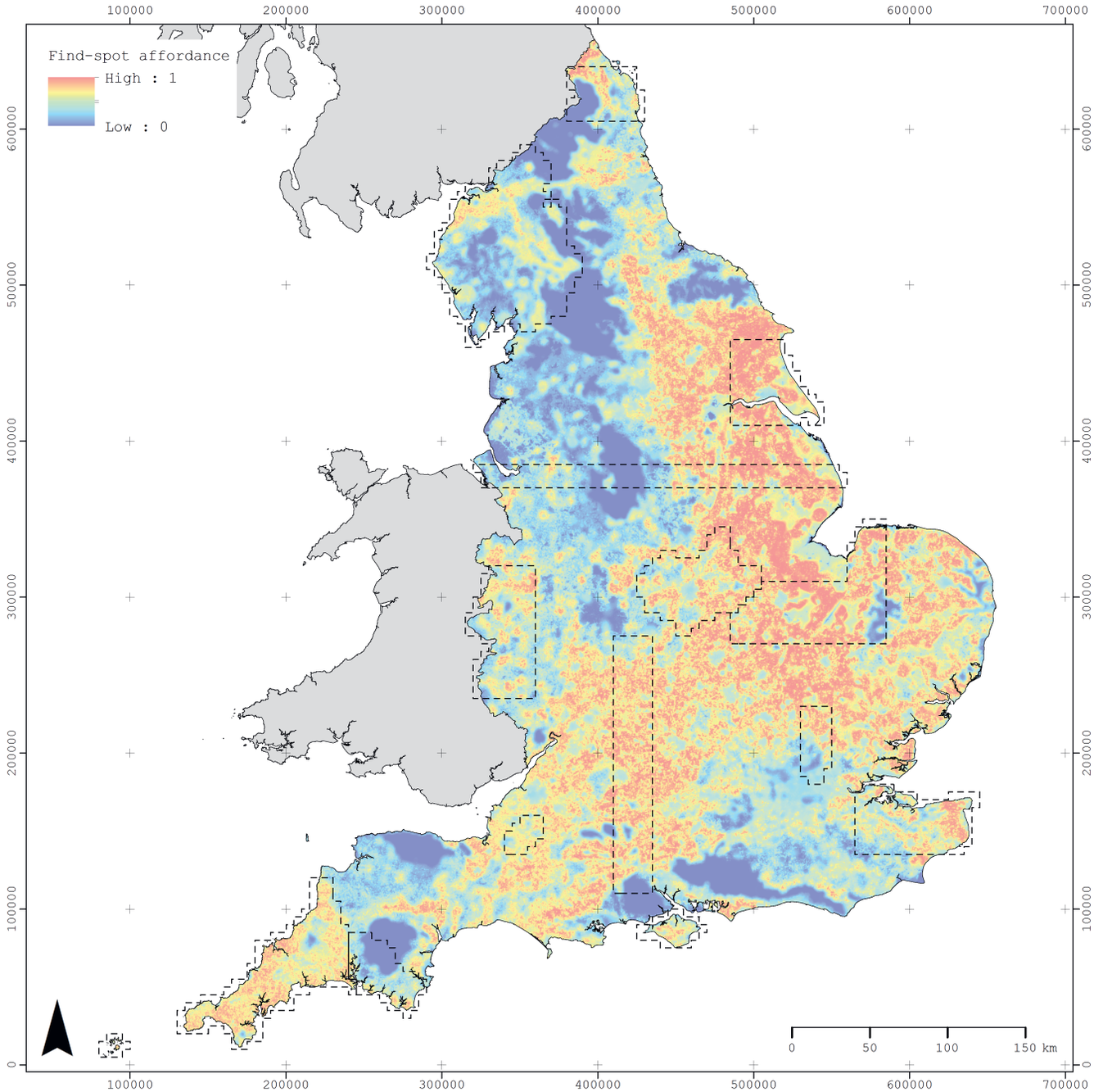


Individual find-spots

after Robbins 2012; 2013; 2014

A different model of modern affordances is needed for findspots, most examples of which in our database come from the Portable Antiquites Scheme (PAS). Excellent work by Robbins (2012; 2013; 2014) has outlined many of the factors which help to structure the distribution of records in the PAS. Some of those factors are impossible or impracticable to map nationally (e.g. proximity to metal dectorists' homes), but others are conducive to broad scale modelling.

The model presented here combines data on land cover (with arable land being the most popular ground surface for metal detecting, followed by pasture land) with data on proximity to known archaeological sites (in this instance Roman sites of any type and early medieval funerary sites) and with data on obscuration of the ground surface (e.g. by water bodies or buildings) or other constraints on metal detecting (e.g. areas where it is banned, such as scheduled monuments or national parks). As with the previous model, areas with higher values should be read as presenting greater opportunities for archaeological finds to occur, and vice versa. Again, we can then use this model to test the distributions of finds in our databases to try to assess the extent to which they are structured by modern opportunity rather than purely by ancient activity.



References:
• Robbins, K. 2012. From past to present: understanding the impact of sampling bias on data recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton
• Robbins, K. 2013. 'Balancing the scales: exploring the variable effects of collection bias on data collected by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.' Landscapes 14(1): 54-72
• Robbins, K. 2014. Portable Antiquities Scheme: A guide for researchers. https://finds.org.uk/research/advice

Ceramic / aceramic areas over time

Other important elements that structure the nature of the English archaeological record are the various affordances associated with the dating of sites. Of these, one key area is the differential use of ceramics across different parts of England. Ceramic evidence remains the principle way by which excavated archaeological features are dated. This is because dating using pottery requires expertise, but does not generally require expensive scientific instruments (unlike radiocarbon dating for example).

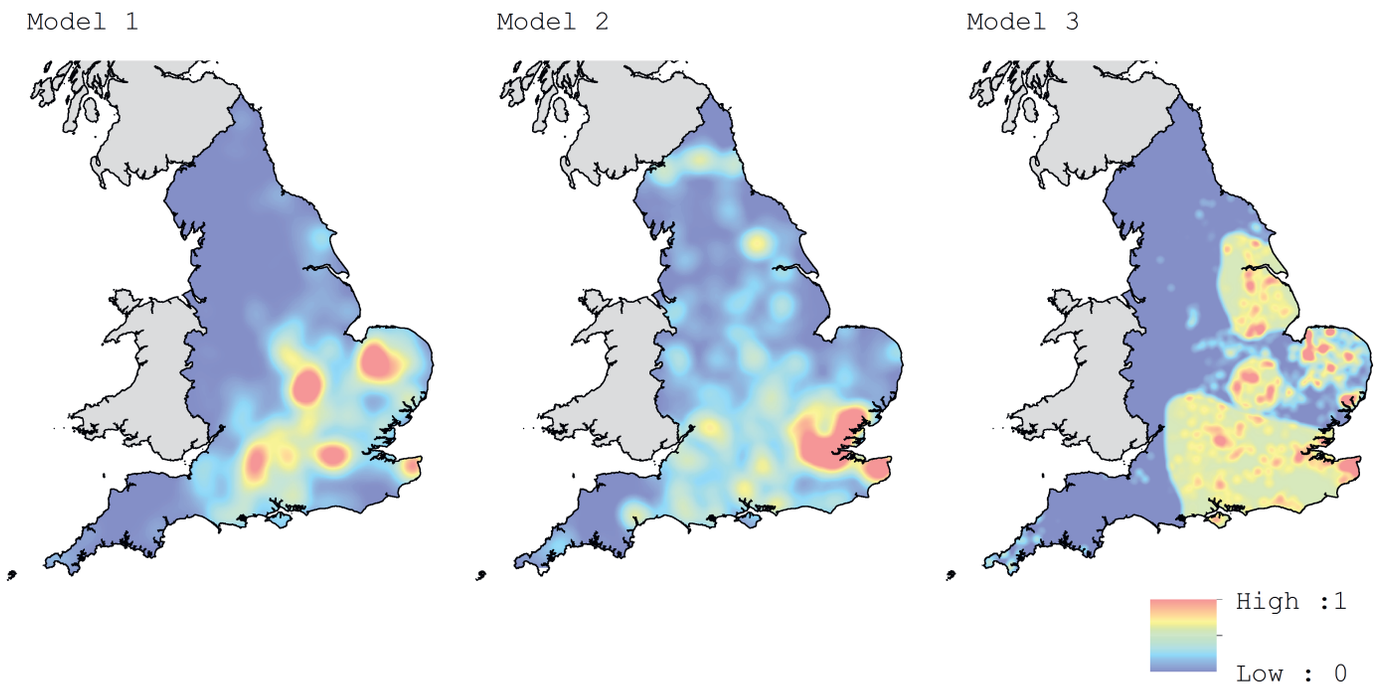
However, pottery was not used everywhere in England through all of our time period. As such, areas where little or no pottery was used are much harder to date archaeologically: they must either be dated based upon the type of site generally (an unreliable method) or via discovery of material suitable for scientific dating (which has cost implications). The models on this page show the presence or absence of widespread evidence for ceramics across our time period. We can see that pottery was most widely used in the Roman period, but used in much more restricted in areas in later prehistory and in the early medieval period.

Model 1 is of later prehistoric pottery. It shows pottery density as recorded by Earl et al. 2007.

Model 2 is of Roman pottery. It shows variety of wares based upon Tyers 1996-2014.

Model 3 is of early medieval pottery. It is a mix of density of certain types of pottery (Blinkhorn 2012; Myres 1969; Wood 2011) alongside half-weighted approximated ware regions (Vince 1993) and, as a proxy, early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Martin 2011).

All models have been normalised to vary between 0 (lowest values within the dataset) to 1 (highest values within the dataset). All three models are variously out of date due to lack of availability of updated collated data. This is particularly the case with Model 3. However, these are the best possible models we could produce within the data and time constraints of EngLaId. All three models suggest that dating sites through the study of pottery assemblages should generally be much more practical in southern and eastern parts of England than in northern and western parts.



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Quality / quantity of dating evidence

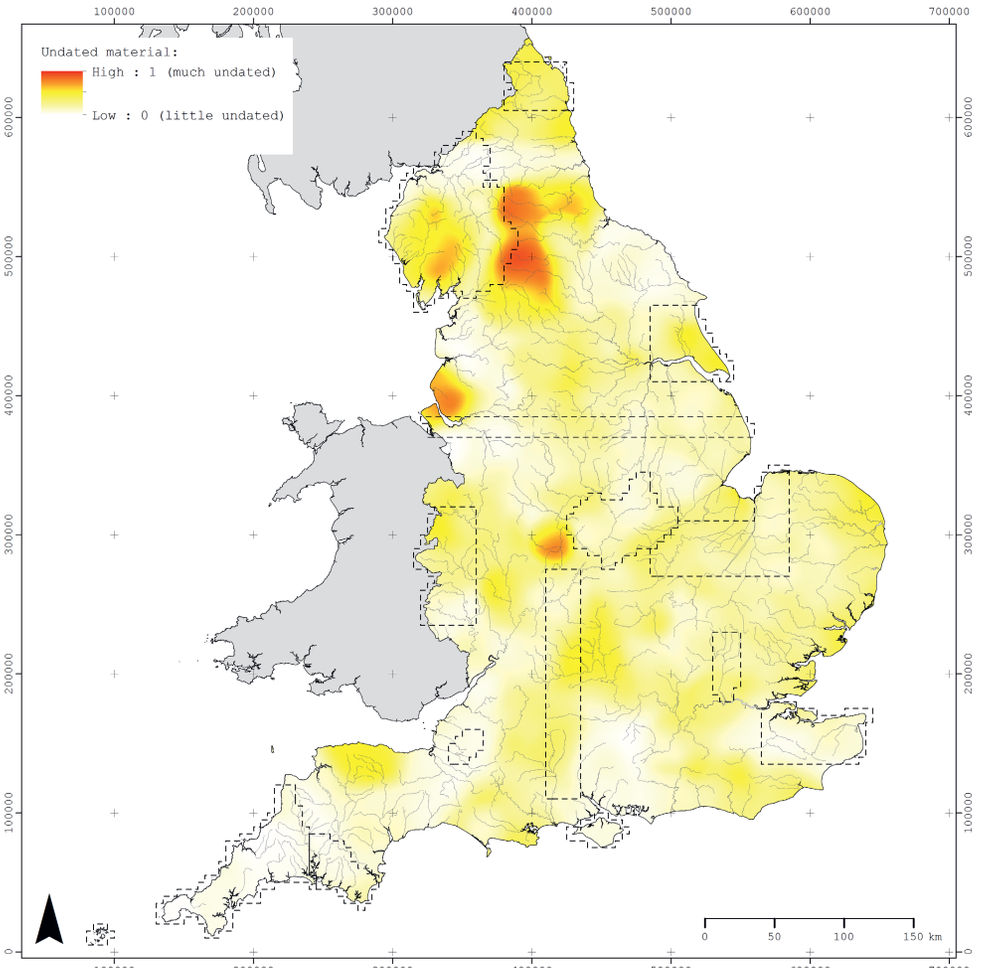
with Zena Kamash

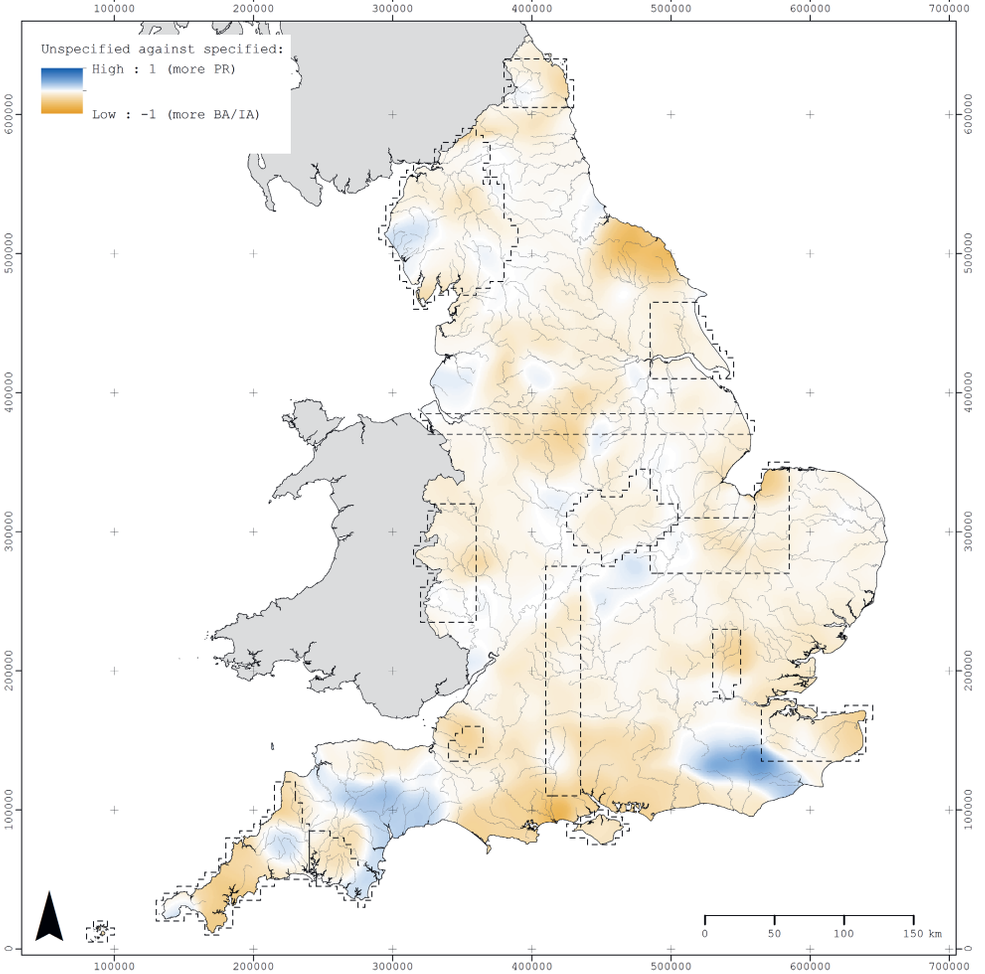
The quality and quantity of dating evidence varies regionally across England. This is largely due to the different types of fieldwork that are more or less common in different regions, as extensive survey will tend to produce less clear-cut dates than excavation. Two ways of examining this issue are by looking at the proportion of records of undated or uncertain date (as a proportion of all records) or by looking at the ratio between unspecified 'prehistoric' and specified prehistoric (i.e. in our case, 'Bronze Age' or 'Iron Age') dates.

The first map here is shaded according to the proportion of undated / uncertainly dated types by 1 x 1 km grid square. It clearly shows that the urban areas of the north west and the West Midlands, and the upland areas of northern Britain (particularly the Pennines) show a higher proportion of undated records than the rest of the country.

The second map here is shaded to show the ratio between unspecific and specific prehistoric dates, again by 1x1km grid square. Here, we can see that parts of the south west and also the Weald show particularly high proportions of unspecified prehistoric material.

Together, these two maps can be used to show us which parts of the country might falsely show up as being of low activity levels at particular points in time, largely due to there being less opportunity to conduct excavation which might improve the dating of sites discovered using aerial or ground-based survey methods, or due to lack of suitable materials for dating sites precisely. That is to say, it may appear that little is going on in an area at a particular point in time, but that might simply be because the sites that exist are only very coarsely dated (or not dated at all).





Gonalston, the Trent Valley, Nottinghamshire. 2012 to 2014.
This site was excavated in 1996 in advance of gravel extraction at Hoveringham Quarry. The view that was drawn was once the site of a gravel island, with many early field systems, plus housing and occupation from the late Iron Age to the Roman period. After the excavation and gravel extraction, the site was flooded and is now a series of lakes, with much wildlife, and bordered by a railway line. Drawing by Miranda Creswell.