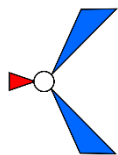


1054 CA1

bncdoc.id	H7Y
bncdoc.author	Wacher, John
bncdoc.year	1990
bncdoc.title	The 'small towns' of Roman Britain.
bncdoc.info	The 'small towns' of Roman Britain. Sample containing about 43282 words from a book (domain: world affairs)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
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<1054/c>	<p>be related to the question of landownership and the availability of labour, and may have nothing whatever to do with markets. The extent of these economic activities must have been constrained by the modes of transport available. For foot traffic, a distance of some 10-12 km (6-7 miles) would probably have been a more-than-adequate day's journey, especially if burdened with goods and needing to leave enough time for their disposal at the destination. Pack animals, with the driver also mounted, could probably have doubled the distance, as indeed could have most carts and wagons. A light chaise or unburdened pony could have extended this perhaps to 30 km (19 miles), but any distances above those quoted would have required an overnight stop and consequently an increase in the prices of the goods. While this might have proved acceptable for itinerant traders, to most local people it would have been unattractive and most would have preferred to be home by nightfall or soon after. It seems likely, therefore, that transport must always have been a limiting factor on trade. How often, for instance, did a normal inhabitant of Thorpe travel to Lincoln, his nearest major town, but some 30 km (19 miles) away? It is worth remembering that there are still people in Britain today who have never been to London. Despite traffic and trade, all small towns maintained strong agricultural connections, because their inhabitants had to be fed, clothed and shod. Unfortunately, detailed evidence for the nature of these connections is limited, so it remains impossible to estimate how many of the inhabitants were involved in farming as opposed to other occupations. It is difficult to identify farms inside these settlements, while related field systems have been suggested at only a handful of sites, including the presumed Romano-British fields at Braintree and the sequence of enclosures at Brampton. Elsewhere, it is likely that the original boundaries between the fields will only be recognized through extensive survey and excavation. Within many sites, however, there are ranges of buildings which often occupy enclosed strips of land not unlike medieval crofts, suggesting that some people, craftsmen included, were raising their own produce or keeping their own pigs and fowl. At Great Dunmow, for instance, it has been suggested that such strips were up to c. 100 m (327 ft) deep, while the Fosse Way southwest of Ilchester was lined by two successive rows of enclosures some 50 by 20 m (165 by 66 ft) in size. There is also evidence from Godmanchester to indicate an associated range of agricultural features, including two-post hay racks, hearths, corn-drying floors, threshing floors and</p> <p>a large number of wicker granaries</p> <p>. Although we know very little about the tenurial and ownership patterns of these sites, it is likely that some of the inhabitants actually owned land outside the settlement and grew their own crops. It has also been suggested that they and other less-fortunately-placed inhabitants provided a reservoir of day-labourers for nearby landowners to help on the land at harvest time or on other labour intensive occasions. It is probably true to say, therefore, that most small towns, when taken with their immediate surroundings, were to some degree self-sufficient in basic</p>
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	

	<p>agricultural produce. This would have included grain and a moderate supply of meat, from either stock or game. Limited supplies of fruit and vegetables must have been available, while an abundance of natural fruits and nuts could have been gathered in season, for either home consumption or for sale in the local market. Local resources were probably exploited to satisfy the demand for wool, leather and wood, while spinning, weaving, fulling and possibly dyeing were all essentially part of the normal domestic scene. It remains difficult, however, to measure this level of self-sufficiency on purely archaeological grounds. Some sites were clearly more dependent than others upon their own agricultural production, which encourages the belief that many small towns at the bottom end of the urban scale did not develop much in size or functional complexity beyond their large-village counterparts. Higher up the scale, however, a greater reliance on produce from nearby rural estates might be expected, traded in exchange for a range of urban goods and services ; however, it is precisely this aspect of economic co-operation which is difficult to establish on current evidence. Beyond the agricultural connection, the main economic strength of a community resided in the number and variety of craftsmen which it could support. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the range of economic services carried out at individual small towns is never easy to define. In contrast to Gaul and Germany, where there are numerous inscriptions referring to craftsmen, as well as several sculptured reliefs, hardly any relevant inscriptions, let alone sculptures, occur in Britain, and even they are usually divorced from the physical structures and work places. We must therefore depend almost exclusively on the archaeological record, even though the survival of crucial evidence for the range of shops and their resident craftsmen is frequently highly selective and difficult to interpret in the context of market-places and external economic contacts. Archaeology has, however, revealed a growing number of very characteristic narrow rectangular structures stretching back from the available street frontages and often forming blocks or rows. These strip buildings are a common feature of urban sites throughout the empire and are usually identified as the shops and workshops of</p>
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