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Something special

*The archaeology of deposition practices
in and around the house and yard
(Neolithic–Modern Period)*

D.S. Habermehl

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With contributions from:

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Colophon

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This publication presents the results of a study of special deposition practices in and around the house and yard throughout the Netherlands from the Neolithic to the Modern Period. The study is part of the Cultural Heritage Agency's (RCE) 'Harvest for Malta' project, which aims to answer research questions by examining and analysing data from archaeological reports, viewed in totality. The results then provide input for updating the Dutch National Archaeology Research Agenda (NOaA).

The aim of this study is to arrive at a better understanding of the composition, context, nature and significance of special deposits and deposition practices based on an inventory of data from Dutch Malta reports. It asks what types of deposits and depositional practices can be identified and how they should be understood in relation to people's daily lives within their immediate living environment of house, yard and settlement. This publication also identifies how the study of special deposits has evolved within the context of Malta archaeology and the extent to which the information presented in archaeological reports lends itself to synthesising research.

Underpinning this study is an inventory of data from a wealth of archaeological reports from the period 2005 to 2019, supplemented by relevant reports from the period 1997 to 2005 and sometimes by data from older studies. More than 950 archaeological reports were searched using a set of criteria and search terms. Data on possible special deposits from 404 reports were entered into a database.

This publication first introduces the study parameters and then explores some key terms, such as 'ritual', 'special deposits', 'deposition practices' and 'home and yard'. In this study, 'special deposits' are defined as objects or assemblages that appear to have been deposited with care, reverence and/or ceremony, with no intention of being put back into circulation.¹ Special deposits and underlying practices had diverse backgrounds, meanings and purposes. They were intended to give meaningful shape to people's lives and surroundings, to create, emphasise and transform identities, and to communicate (with both supernatural powers and other people), manipulate and commemorate. Ritual is a form of behaviour, a practice, or even a 'performance'. It is characterised by formality, structure and repetition. Although frequently

used to shape the relationship with the supernatural world, ritual was also employed to shape, accentuate, maintain and transform social relationships and identities.

Special deposits are found in various contexts: houses, outbuildings, granaries, pits, wells, ditches, ritual places, residual channels and fens. Further distinctions are made within these contexts between the different periods and, where necessary, between the different positions within structures. Houses were key deposition locations through time. The principal locations for special deposits within houses are the features of the core structure and pits, but they also occur regularly near entrances and walls.

The study reveals that in prehistoric times special deposits were mainly associated with the abandonment and/or dismantling of structures (and probably with the yard as a whole). These deposits often contained fairly large amounts of fragmented (and often burnt) material, although complete objects were also deposited in dismantled structures. Deposits of this kind are found in houses, outbuildings, granaries and wells. From the Roman period on, this picture changes, with foundation deposits becoming more prevalent. While most involve single deposits, some are composite in nature.

The deposits in the inventory contain a wide variety of objects. As an organising principle, we defined different object categories based on their function or nature. These categories include vessels, animal remains, food attributes, textile attributes, weapons/militaria, tools, fibulae and jewellery, botanical remains, human remains, coins and 'antique' objects. For each object category, we examined how and where they were deposited over time and what the nature and significance of the objects might have been.

In addition to the original function and meaning, it is important to note how objects were deliberately modified before or during deposition. Modification in the form of fragmentation, burning, bending or perforation is a regularly observed phenomenon for all periods. It appears to have been a way in which objects were deliberately 'disabled' and withdrawn from normal everyday use. Parts (or fragments) of objects may also have been deliberately deposited to symbolise the complete object (*pars pro toto*). The deliberate destruction of objects may have symbolized

¹ This definition is taken from Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

significant social transformations, such as the abandonment of a house site. Within the context of the yard and settlement, deposits often involved parts of objects, while outside that context we tend to see more complete objects.

We have combined and compared detailed analyses of context and composition in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the nature and significance of special deposits.

We then applied insights from anthropological, archaeological, historical, folkloric and religious literature. This enabled us to identify different types of special deposits and deposition practices, each with its own meanings, purposes and intentions.

A fairly sizeable category of deposits is associated with the biography of the house, yard and settlement. These deposits mark key moments in the life cycle, including construction/occupation, major renovations, abandonment/dismantling and the post-abandonment phase. Deposits of this kind are found in houses, outbuildings, granaries, wells and sometimes even (residual) channels. The position of deposits within archaeological features is indicative of the relationship between the deposits and the life cycle of the structure in question.

Deposits of magical objects were intended to manipulate and control supernatural powers, for both good and evil.² They served to protect against evil forces, to break spells or to bring harm (black magic). Magical objects included complete vessels (and their contents), animal remains, antique flint axes and arrowheads, sharp iron tools, horseshoes, shoes, pendants and amulets. These magical deposits are often found in liminal locations (the boundaries between two 'spheres'): in or near walls, near entrances, under floors, near hearths, as well as in wells and possibly ditches. Houses and their inhabitants, livestock and drinking water were thereby afforded magical protection.

Some special deposits relate to communal events in which the consumption of food and drink played an important role. These 'feasts' were a form of 'public ritual'. Feasts may have marked various significant moments, such as

certain times of the year and the construction or abandonment of a yard or settlement. They may also have been linked to the forging and strengthening of social relationships or the commemoration of former inhabitants (ancestors). Clues here are the remains of slaughtered animals, substantial numbers of vessels (including drinking vessels and large pots or vats), food remains and objects associated with food preparation.

Other deposits may have been linked to the identity of individuals, families and communities. Deposits containing personal objects such as jewellery, fibulae, weapons and military equipment can sometimes be associated with rites of passage. In rites of separation, the symbols of an 'old identity' were discarded (and deposited) before the new identity was adopted. Many of these deposits occur in liminal locations, suggesting a possible link between the nature of these rituals and the nature of the liminal places (as places of transition). Other deposits stand out by virtue of the 'antique' objects that they contain. There are surprisingly many examples of these 'heirlooms'. The deposition of objects of this kind probably relates to practices that expressed family identity – in relation to each other, to other families or to the territory used or claimed by the family.

Within Malta archaeology there is considerable variation in the way in which special deposits and deposition practices are identified, approached, studied and presented. There is also variation in the terminology used (e.g. ritual, intentional, special, structured deposits).

We recommend that special deposits and deposition practices be given a separate section in future reports and that they be explicitly presented and discussed as a separate topic. The data needs to be presented, described and discussed completely and comprehensively, with specific attention to context, feature context, composition and modification. Research designs should also focus more specifically on special deposition practices (through specified research questions) and set requirements for the method of documentation and presentation. Based on the present study, we make recommendations for additional research questions and associated guidelines.

² Merrifield 1987; Van der Sanden 2004, 198; McCauley & Lawson 1990, 123.

‘Ritual’ is a subject that has left few archaeologists unmoved. The variety of responses is illuminating: some embrace it as a fertile subject, while others avoid or even ridicule it. The simple fact is the ritual behaviour is an integral part of human behaviour and, as such, we encounter the material reflection of ritual practices in our archaeological record. ‘Ritual’ is both an important and a challenging subject within archaeology. It is important because of the opportunity it gives us to link phenomena in the archaeological record to the meaningful life world of past societies. It is challenging because of the difficulties – on the basis of archaeological sources alone – of penetrating the air of symbolism, metaphysical notions and ideology within societies that will have been so very different from our modern Western society. Whatever the case, as an important and indispensable part of the stories we tell about people in the past, the study of ritual deserves a permanent place within archaeology.

A better understanding of the material manifestations of rituals and ritual behaviour can help shed light on aspects of human lives that might otherwise go unnoticed. The study of special deposition practices may increase our understanding of how people gave meaningful shape to their life world – in relation to each other, their animals, the built environment, the natural environment and the ‘supernatural’. Ritual was not the sole preserve of special occasions or places and formal religion, but was interwoven with everyday life in, on and around the house and yard.

Special deposits

It is the archaeological record that furnishes archaeologists with their clues about ritual. These clues take the form of finds or assemblages that are believed or confirmed to reflect ritual practices. In most instances, these are objects or parts of objects that were deliberately, and with care and ceremony, buried or placed in the soil, or deposited in wet places (such as channels, fens and depressions).³ Assemblages of this kind are often referred to as ‘ritual depositions’. Here, we have opted for the terms ‘special deposits’ and ‘special deposition practices’ as they emphasise the special nature of these deposits and practices without making *a priori* pronouncements about their ritual nature and meaning. By studying special deposits, we may

be able to fathom the ‘grammar’ of a ‘ritual language’ that we now barely speak or understand.⁴

Background to this study

This study is part of the Cultural Heritage Agency’s (RCE) ‘Harvest for Malta’ project, which aims to answer particular research questions by studying and analysing data from archaeological reports, viewed in totality. The results and insights from these studies then provide input for updating the Dutch National Archaeology Research Agenda (NOaA).

The RCE identifies ‘knowledge opportunities’ (geographical, thematic and/or chronological) which constitute major gaps in our knowledge that could potentially be filled by means of a synthesising analysis of a sizeable number of Malta research reports.⁵ The present study was set up in response to the thematic knowledge opportunity ‘ritual depositions in and around the house and yard’.

The aim of this study

This study focuses on analysing special deposits and special deposition practices in and around the house and yard. It is based on a dataset compiled from a large number of archaeological reports that have appeared in recent years within the framework of ‘Malta archaeology’, the Dutch system of archaeology that has evolved over the past twenty years in response to the Treaty of Malta (or Valletta, 1992). The chronological and geographical parameters have been defined in broad terms: the period from the Neolithic to the Modern Period within the national borders of the Netherlands. The inventory underpinning this study aims to provide an overview and to answer the research questions. Completeness is not an end in itself. More than 950 archaeological reports were searched using a set of criteria and search terms (see Section 4.1). Relevant data from 404 reports were entered into a database.

Structure of the report

This introduction is followed firstly by an exploration of theoretical backgrounds relating to the archaeology of ritual, to deposition practices and to the spatial and thematic context of house and yard. The aim and research questions are then discussed, followed by the approach and method. Next comes the data analysis,

³ Gerritsen 2003, 80.

⁴ Rooijackers 1994, 10.

⁵ De Groot & Groenewoudt 2013.

with Chapters 5 and 6 focusing respectively on the context (houses, granaries, wells, etc.) and composition (various defined object categories) of the special deposits. Chapter 7 then brings together the resulting patterns, developments and insights to give us a broader understanding – from different perspectives – of the nature, background and meaning of special deposits and associated deposition practices in and around the house and yard. Chapter 8 reflects on the current research and reporting practices within Malta archaeology and makes suggestions for future research possibilities, some of which take the form of further research questions for the Dutch National Archaeology Research Agenda (NOaA). Lastly, in Chapter 9, we return to the research questions and answer them point by point. The Appendix contains a list of all the sites for which special deposits have been inventoried, including references.

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This chapter will explore some key terms in greater detail, with a particular focus on ‘ritual’, ‘special deposits’, ‘deposition practices’ and ‘house and yard’. It should be noted in advance that the discussion and theory relating to ritual is particularly complex and extensive. What follows is therefore a general exploration that singles out the most relevant aspects.

2.1 Ordinary, special or ritual?

Ordinary rubbish or special deposit?

When we refer to ritual, special, intentional or structured deposits, the emphasis is always on their special status. This creates a distinction between ‘special’ deposits and deposits (find assemblages) that should apparently be viewed as ‘normal’. The latter are generally referred to as ‘functional deposits’ or ‘rubbish’, which then raises the important question: how can we distinguish between ‘special deposits’ and ‘deposits of rubbish’?

This question is more complex than it might first appear. Firstly, ideas about what does and does not constitute rubbish are culturally specific and cannot therefore be generally defined across time and space.⁶ Several researchers warn of the influence of our somewhat binary, modern Western notions of rubbish and non-rubbish, ritual and non-ritual, sacred and profane.⁷ Both ethnological and archaeological research has shown us that, in pre-modern and pre-Western societies, ritual and profane cannot simply be separated.⁸ There are no clear boundaries between ‘the ritual’ and ‘the profane’, everyday and functional.⁹ ‘Ritual can often not be separated from other, practical and functional aspects of everyday life.’¹⁰ Moreover, ritual is not by definition reserved for special places, people or objects.¹¹ Thus, rituals relate by no means exclusively to religion but play a role in many and varied aspects of everyday life: social relationships, the economy and the organisation of house and yard.¹² It is especially in this latter setting that ritual and everyday life are intimately intertwined, involving complex connections.

The upshot is that we cannot make a simple, clear distinction between ‘functional’ and ‘ritual’, between what we should regard as ‘rubbish’ and what as ‘special’. To illustrate:

a sacrifice that we from our modern perspective might regard as ‘pure ritual’ may have been viewed by participants in the past as an integral and functional part of daily life, fully entwined with ‘functional’ practices such as building a house, harvesting and milling grain, slaughtering livestock, etc. The people involved may have regarded an animal sacrifice as a logical and rational action, an investment to ensure well-being, prosperity and fertility.¹³ On the other hand, non-ritual activities – such as cleaning the house and/or yard – could also be highly formalised, structured and expressive.

Loss, savings hoards, emergency hoards and special incidents

That fact that assemblages cannot be viewed as ‘rubbish’ does not necessarily mean that they are the result of ritual practices. We need to be aware of the different circumstances that could lie behind deposits identified as special. We will briefly outline some of these possible circumstances here. The first is incidental loss. For example, a coin or fibula may have been accidentally lost in a well or ditch, or may have ended up in the rubbish by mistake. Or a whole jar may have been lost when water was drawn from a well. Secondly, the deposit could be a savings hoard. This involves goods and objects that were buried to keep them safe (or cool), with the intention of being retrieved and used later. In some instances, savings hoards may have been left in the ground unintentionally. This category of deposits includes objects or goods stored in cellar or storage pits, as well as savings hoards containing coins. A third category is emergency hoards, which were buried in times of emergency, such as an impending raid. The plan will have been to retrieve the hidden valuables at a later date. A final category that we can distinguish involves deposits that are linked to special incidents. For example, a house might have burned down unintentionally, with the burnt remains deposited together in the ground. These deposits also differ from ordinary ‘rubbish’ but without ritual practices being involved.¹⁴

Ritual

‘Ritual’ is a fraught term, and one with a history. With the rise of post-processual archaeology, archaeologists began to focus more on the theme of ‘ritual practices’. The study of ritual

⁶ Groot 2009, 389; Nieuwhof 2015, 100; Therkorn & Besselsen 2008. Fontijn 2002, 16; Groot 2009, 389–390.

⁷ See, for example, Bell 1992; Hill 1996, 23; Brück 1999; Gerritsen 2003.

⁸ Goody 1977; Bloch 1989, 122; Brück 1999.

⁹ Lewis 1980, 6–7; Hill 1995; Brück 1999; Bradley 2003, 2005; Fogelin 2007.

¹⁰ Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

¹¹ Bradley 2003, 13; Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

¹² See also Groot 2008; Gerritsen 2003, 81.

¹³ Groot 2008, 110.

¹⁴ Van den Broeke 2015, 90.

soon revealed two weaknesses, however. Firstly, archaeologists tended to interpret as ritual any phenomena that they were unable to explain in functional terms.¹⁵ Secondly, they would often use the term quite uncritically as a definitive interpretation, without further exploring its possible meanings and implications.¹⁶ It appears that these criticisms are still relevant today.

Ritual behaviour is closely linked to the human condition; in fact, it is hard to imagine life without it.¹⁷ We explained above that ritual is not exclusively confined to the religious sphere. Merrifield points out that ritual can be religious, magical and social.¹⁸ Ritual behaviour is immensely diverse, exhibiting major differences across time and space. Arriving at a definition that does justice to all aspects of such behaviour is therefore an impossible task, all the more so since ritual has been studied and defined within various academic disciplines.¹⁹ The wide variety of material contexts, meanings and effects of ritual practices make it impossible for us to reduce them to a single interpretive framework.²⁰

Nevertheless, we are able to single out the most characteristic features of ritual, based on a variety of studies.²¹

1. Ritual is behaviour, a practice or even a 'performance'. Bradley, for example, defines ritual as 'a specialized form of behaviour which emphasizes some of the concerns of daily life through a kind of performance.'²² Platvoet points out that ritual can be distinguished from 'normal interaction' through its distinctive performative quality that attracts an audience's attention.²³ Merrifield and Nieuwhof also refer to ritual as a 'practice' and 'performance'.²⁴
2. Ritual is frequently characterised by formality, structure and repetition.²⁵ Platvoet, for instance, describes ritual behaviour as an 'ordered sequence of stylized social behaviour'²⁶ and Merrifield as 'prescribed or customary behaviour'.²⁷ Repetition also plays an important role. The repetition of actions or words emphasises the special circumstances and importance of the ritual in question.²⁸ We also see formalising, ordering and repetition reflected in the deposits that are the subject of this study. The selection, treatment and ordering of

objects may be subject to specific conventions, rules and traditions. It is these aspects that often enable the identification of rituals in the archaeological record.²⁹

3. The relationship with the supernatural world is shaped through ritual. The supernatural world can be seen as an extension, or even an integral part, of the natural world.³⁰ Rituals can be used to influence supernatural beings or forces, for example by asking them for protection, good health, fertility or good fortune, or to offer thanks.³¹ There is reciprocity in this arrangement: a gift, a sacrifice, is made in return for the requested favour.³² 'Magic', on the other hand, does not involve a reciprocal exchange but is a one-sided manipulation and control of supernatural forces and powers, based for instance on 'magic objects'.³³
4. Ritual is a social practice; it is more than purely symbolic behaviour.³⁴ Ritual can be used to shape, emphasise, maintain and transform social relationships and identities.³⁵ It does so, for example, by underlining a shared identity, or by ritually marking the symbolic transition from one social identity (or life stage) to another. Rituals can also be used to secure political power and influence.³⁶
5. Ritual has an important psychological component. Rituals enable people to maintain their position in their social milieu and to feel less helpless in a potentially threatening world, especially in times of conflict and uncertainty.³⁷ Rituals offer a sense of control and can serve 'to calm the anxiety that arises from confrontation with the unforeseen, the unknown, the incommensurable, the event that eludes understanding and technical action, and the uncontrolled (...). It allows a person to be reassured or to take courage and go forward again with tenfold strength.'³⁸

¹⁵ Hodder 1982, 164; Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

¹⁶ Orme 1981, 218; Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

¹⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 79.

¹⁸ Merrifield 1987, 6.

¹⁹ See also Nieuwhof 2015, 78; Groot 2008, 99.

²⁰ Swenson 2015, 331.

²¹ See also Lewis 1980, 7.

²² Bradley 2005, xiii.

²³ Platvoet 1995, 41.

²⁴ Merrifield 1987; Nieuwhof 2015, 79.

²⁵ See, for example, Lewis 1980, 116, 25; Richards & Thomas 1984, 191.

²⁶ Platvoet 1995, 41.

²⁷ Merrifield 1987, 6.

²⁸ Bloch 1989, 42; Groot 2008, 100.

²⁹ In contrast to this emphasis on structure and standardisation, Nieuwhof (2015, 78) points out that the dynamics of ritual practices should not be underestimated.

³⁰ Nieuwhof 2015, 79.

³¹ Van der Sanden 2004, 196; Groot 2008, 99; Merrifield 1987, 6.

³² For a definition of 'sacrifice' and the practice of sacrifice, see, for example, Van Baaren 1975; Van Baal 1976; Boyer 2001; Kok 2008, 31; Van der Sanden 2004, 196.

³³ Merrifield 1987, Chapters 1 and 7; Van der Sanden 2004, 198; Nieuwhof 2015, 87.

³⁴ Gerritsen 2003, 81.

³⁵ Merrifield 1987, 6; Bell 1992, 130; Derks 1998, 212; Groot 2008.

³⁶ Hill 2001.

³⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 70, 436; Groot 2008, 102.

³⁸ Jamous 1992, 68–69; Groot 2008, 102.

2.2 Key terms and concepts

Special deposits and deposition practices

Although the remit for this study refers to ‘ritual depositions in and around the house and yard’, we have opted to use the terms ‘special deposition practices’ and ‘special deposits’. The diverse terminology we encounter in the literature reflects the complexity of the subject. Here, we briefly explore the terminology that appears in the literature and the choices we made for this study.

The terms ‘deposition’ and ‘deposit’ are used in the literature to denote objects or a coherent assemblage of objects (of fragments thereof) deposited in the soil and found by archaeologists. In terms of context, this could entail both contexts created by people (postholes, pits, ditches, wells, etc.) and natural elements (such as (residual) channels, fens or depressions in the landscape). The word ‘deposition’ is frequently used to refer to the deposited objects or assemblage. In this study, however, we follow Peter van den Broeke, who reserves the term ‘deposition’ for the act of *depositing* and who uses ‘deposit’ to refer to the archaeological manifestation of that act.³⁹ We also use ‘deposition practices’ as a catch-all term for the practices or uses relating to the deposition or burial of material in the soil or water.

This study deals with deposits that can be regarded as ‘special’ or ‘different’. In general, ‘different’ means that these deposits cannot be regarded as rubbish, nor as the remains of everyday, functional practices.⁴⁰ Van den Broeke describes a special or ritual deposit as ‘an object or assemblage that has been deposited with care, reverence and/or ceremony with no intention of being put back into circulation.’⁴¹ Gerritsen refers to the conscious placement of cultural material in the soil or in wet contexts.⁴² With respect to the possible special deposits that are inventoried and included here, we should emphasise that it is not always possible in practice to determine whether a deposit should be regarded as a special deposit in terms of the above theoretical definitions. Of necessity therefore, we used a broader definition when inventorying the data, with a focus on objects or assemblages that appear to have been deposited with care, reverence and/or ceremony, with no intention

of them being recirculated.

The literature uses many terms to denote special deposits as referred to above. The chief among them are:

- ritual deposits (*rituele depots*)
- special deposits (*speciale/bijzondere depots*)
- deliberate deposits (*bewuste depots*)
- intentional deposits (*intentionele depots*)
- selective deposits (*selectieve depots*)
- structured deposits (*gestructureerde depots*)

Each of these terms highlights a different aspect of the deposits in question. ‘Ritual deposit’ emphasises the ritual nature of the actions underlying the deposit. It is therefore an interpretive term that makes pronouncements about the nature and meaning of the actions behind the deposits and/or the objects that are part of them. However, the interpretation of what constitutes ritual and how it can be identified in the archaeological record is a complex debate in itself. In order to circumvent this issue of interpretation, in the use of terminology at least, the word ‘ritual’ is often avoided and many researchers opt for an alternative to indicate the distinctive nature of the deposits. One commonly used term is ‘special deposit’, which emphasises a deposit’s special, anomalous nature. It implies that the deposits cannot be regarded as ‘functional’ or ‘ordinary rubbish’. However, this leaves open the question of whether the underlying practices also have a ritual or ceremonial component. Two other terms – deliberate and intentional deposits – emphasise the intentionality of the deposition practice. These are deliberately deposited objects that may have been placed with a specific intention and purpose.⁴³ It excludes objects or assemblages that have accidentally ended up in that place or feature. The term ‘selective deposit’ emphasises the fact that the material intended for deposition was consciously selected. Again, it involves the non-random, deliberate and probably meaningful selection of material for deposition. A related term is ‘structured deposit’, with a particular emphasis on the structure and patterns in the composition of deposits, or the pattern that can be identified in the mode of deposition or the deposition location. This structuring may also clearly demonstrate the intentionality of the deposits.

³⁹ See Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Hill 1995; Brück 1999; Groot 2009, 390 and Nieuwhof 2015, 113–114 for a discussion on identifying rubbish and non-rubbish.

⁴¹ Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

⁴² Gerritsen 2003, 80–82.

⁴³ It should be noted, however, that the dumping of rubbish was also a conscious and intentional practice, although there will have been an absence of care and ceremony.

As well as these more general terms for special deposits, we also encounter more targeted terms in the literature, relating to specific ritual practices. The main ones are ‘foundation deposits’ and ‘closing deposits’ (the latter also referred to as abandonment offerings or termination deposits). They refer to the deposition practices relating to the construction and abandonment of the house and yard (or another type of structure). These terms are therefore much more interpretive, since they presuppose a ritual practice relating to a specific moment and with a specific purpose (the ‘sacrifice’ as a ‘gift’ to a supernatural being or power). With regard to the Dutch terms *bouwoffer* (which translates literally as ‘foundation sacrifice’) and *verlatingsoffer* (‘abandonment sacrifice’ but generally referred to in the English literature as ‘abandonment’ or ‘closing deposit’), we should point out that ‘sacrifice’ could be problematic here given the many possible variations of this phenomenon. Certainly not all instances appear by definition to entail a ‘sacrifice’, hence the more appropriate term ‘deposit’.⁴⁴ The term ‘sacrifice’ is sometimes also used alone to indicate the nature of the underlying practice and/or the object. In most instances, however, the term is used uncritically, which sometimes gives rise to doubt as to whether it is in fact a ‘gift’ to a higher or supernatural power.⁴⁵

As emphasised earlier, we have opted in this study to use the terms ‘special deposits’ and ‘special deposition practices’. For various reasons, these deposits can be regarded as special or different, without making *a priori* statements about the possible ritual nature and intention of the underlying practices. The terms ‘foundation deposit’ and ‘closing deposit’ will also be used if the special deposits can be associated with specific ‘life phases’ of a structure or yard.

Ritual reflected in the archaeological record

It is important to be aware that the archaeological record cannot possibly reflect the true richness of ritual behaviour and practices. Song, dance, music, the spoken word, social interaction, colour, aromas and gestures will also have played an essential part in rituals. At best, archaeologists unearth only the indirect, material manifestations of these actions and events – and then, only the materials that have

been preserved in the soil over time. Organic materials such as wood, textile and unburnt botanical remains will decay under suboptimal preservation conditions. Traces of ritual practices may also be disturbed through post-depositional processes, such as degradation and agricultural activity. This is especially true of any traces of rituals left on or just below the surface.

Primary and secondary deposits

For special deposits, we can make a general distinction between primary and secondary deposits.⁴⁶ With primary deposits, the deposition itself is the most important ritual. Examples here are the deposition of votive offerings in wet locations or the burying of objects when a house is being built. Secondary deposits include the remains left over from rituals performed above ground; they are buried or deposited after the ritual is completed.⁴⁷ In fact, the deposition of these remains may have formed part of the ritual practices themselves.⁴⁸ These remains could be those of communal meals and feasts, of animal sacrifices or of household goods that were broken up and burned after a house was dismantled. In addition, there are objects that did not end up intentionally in the soil when rituals were performed, as well as special objects that had a ritual connotation in themselves, without it being clear how they came to be in the soil. Figurines or incense dishes are examples of this latter category.

House and yard

‘House and yard’ constitute the spatial (and thematic) context for this study. They represented people’s immediate, and largely self-designed, living environment. The main elements are the built structures, such as the house, outbuildings and granaries, as well as wells/waterholes and the ditches that bounded the house and yard. It is within this context that daily life took place and where relationships within the family, between families and with the wider outside world were shaped on a daily basis.⁴⁹ The shaping of that world had not only a physical dimension (e.g. house, outbuilding, well, boundary ditch), but also a mental/symbolic one. It is this latter dimension that the study of ritual practices (including deposition practices) can perhaps shed light on. Research into ritual gives us an opportunity to better understand the lived, meaningful life world of people in the past.

⁴⁴ See also Nieuwhof 2015, 65 and Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

⁴⁵ On sacrifices and the practice of sacrifice, see for example Van Baaren 1975; Van Baal 1976; Boyer 2001; Kok 2008, 31; Van der Sanden 2004, 196.

⁴⁶ Nieuwhof 2015, 118.

⁴⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 118.

⁴⁸ Groot 2008, 133, 157.

⁴⁹ Gerritsen 2007, 155; Rapoport 1989, XIII.

House and yard were inextricably linked to the people who created them; in a sense, they shaped each other.⁵⁰ All manner of ideas and (cosmological) connotations underpinned the way in which people fashioned their living environment.⁵¹ As Lawrence-Zuniga emphasises: ‘Humans tend to experience and live in their immediate environments, in the totality of their material and social, fixed and movable dimensions, as continuous and whole both in use and conception.’⁵²

Different spheres can be defined within the context of house and yard – ‘from inside to outside’. The house stood at the centre of the yard and family (‘the household’). Houses were closely tied to the way in which people lived in the world, how they saw that world and how they conducted themselves.⁵³ The inner sphere of the house was the hearth, located in the living area. The outer sphere comprised the entrances, walls, eaves and house ditches. Surrounding the house was the yard, sometimes physically demarcated from the outside world by means of boundary ditches, fences or palisades. Often, the yard also contained outbuildings, granaries

and wells. A settlement could be made up of several yards, sometimes loosely clustered as separate entities, or arranged within a larger enclosure. Yard and settlement ditches formed the boundary between the ‘inner’ world of the families and the world outside. In the immediate vicinity of settlements were the fields and meadows, as well as natural elements such as wet places (channels, fens, depressions, etc.).

Finally, we can point to the ‘biographical perspective’ of the house and yard, chiefly elaborated in Dutch archaeology by Gerritsen, with a primary emphasis on houses.⁵⁴ As with people, the built structures that people used had a life cycle: construction (‘birth’), use, abandonment and/or demolition (‘death’) and the period thereafter (‘commemoration’ or reuse).⁵⁵ The various significant moments and transitions in this life cycle could be marked or facilitated by ritual practices, which would sometimes result in special deposits. The built structures involved were houses, as well as outbuildings, wells or even entire yards or settlements.

⁵⁰ Gerritsen 2003, 8.

⁵¹ Gerritsen 2003, 8, 32; Tilley *et al.* 2006, 440.

⁵² Lawrence-Zuniga 2001, 171.

⁵³ Gerritsen 2003; Gerritsen 2007, 155.

⁵⁴ Gerritsen 2003.

⁵⁵ Gerritsen 2003; Bradley 2005, 51.

The general aim of this study is to shed light on special deposits and deposition practices in and around the house and yard. Both the chronological and geographical parameters have been defined in broad terms: the period between the Neolithic and the Modern Period within the national borders of the Netherlands.

The basic research question is as follows:

1. *'What is the nature, context and meaning of intentional (ritual?) depositions in and around the house and yard? (NOaA question 29).⁵⁶*

This broad question concentrates on special (intentional) deposits in and around the house and yard, with a particular focus on their nature, context and meaning. The term 'composition' could also be added to this list.

Research questions

The other research questions relate to more specific subthemes. We can make a broad distinction between two focus areas. The first category of research questions relates to the analysis and interpretation of special deposits. The second involves a reflection on the study of special deposition practices within the current context of Malta archaeology. The questions in the first category are addressed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This is followed by a separate chapter (Chapter 8) dealing with the questions in the second category. Chapter 9 then answers the questions point by point.

These are the research questions in the first category:

4. What kinds of ritual depositions have been distinguished, to what extent are they standardised and in what contexts do they occur?

5. How often do different types of ritual depositions occur, compared with the number of houses, yards and fields surveyed?
6. How are ritual depositions geographically distributed within the Netherlands?
7. To what extent and in what context are ritual depositions found in urban settings?
8. Are there different patterns of occurrence of ritual depositions in the different archaeological periods (chronological distribution)?
9. To what extent do post-depositional processes such as soil disturbance and degradation possibly affect the numerical occurrence and the geographical and chronological distribution of ritual depositions?
10. To what extent can we substantiate the assumptions that house-related ritual depositions were standard and that they marked stages in the life cycle of the house and yard?

The following research questions apply to the second category:

2. Which explanatory models are used to identify, interpret and categorise possible intentional depositions with a ritual purpose (i.e. 'ritual depositions')?
3. What arguments are used in Malta reports to interpret objects or assemblages as ritual depositions and to what extent are they valid?

⁵⁶ Once again, it is important to note that 'rubbish deposits' can also be classified under the term 'intentional deposits'. However, the terms of reference for the study make it clear that this was not the intention. These 'rubbish deposits' are therefore not discussed here further.

This section outlines the approach and method chosen for this study. First to be discussed is the approach adopted when compiling the inventory on which this study is based. The approach to data analysis is then addressed.

4.1 Compiling the inventory

Much has been said above about the problem of defining 'ritual' and the archaeological phenomena that might be associated with it. This problem also affects the inventorying of data that can be linked to special deposition practices.

Special deposits in Malta reports

The subject's complexity and the diverse approaches are reflected in the way in which excavators and researchers identify, label and present special deposits. Whereas one excavator or researcher might identify and designate a deposit as ritual, special or intentional, another might simply ignore it, or not label it explicitly as 'special'. Reports regularly focus on unusual finds or deposits, without explicitly labelling them as 'special' or 'ritual'. As a result, these deposits can be difficult to identify as such in the reports. This variation in identification, interpretation and labelling thus affects the inventory and composition of the dataset.

Compiling an inventory of special deposits is at least partly dependent on how these deposits have been identified by excavators and how they are presented, described and labelled in reports.

There is also considerable variation in the way in which interpretations are substantiated and presented. A ritual interpretation is often put forward as one of several scenarios or only a very cautious interpretation is suggested, without any further discussion of the validity of that interpretation. Unsubstantiated suggestions are sometimes made, the merits of which are difficult, if not impossible, to assess on the basis of the archaeological report alone.

The data source: Malta reports (1997-)2005–2019

This study is based on data presented in Malta reports from the period 2005 to 2019. Where relevant, reports from the period 1997 to 2005 are also included. The same applies to relevant data from research prior to 1997. Data in this latter category mainly come from synthesising

studies that examined special deposition practices.⁵⁷ A minimum excavation area of 0.5 hectares was used for the Malta excavations. This means that not only definitive, comprehensive excavations were inventoried, but also larger trial-trench excavations. In all cases, only reported data was used. It was not possible within the confines of this study to consult primary excavation data.

Inventory procedure

Archis 3 was used to generate lists of Malta reports that present the results of studies involving an area of more than 0.5 hectares. The majority of these reports were then collected digitally via Archis or DANS Easy. In a small number of cases they were obtained by other means, both digital and analogue.

These reports were then systematically searched using a number of predetermined criteria and search terms. Context also served as a key criterion. For example, special deposits were only included in the inventory if it could be established or was suspected that they were located in or around the house or yard. A total of more than 950 reports were searched using a set of criteria and search terms (see below). Relevant data from 404 reports were entered into a database.

Criteria and search terms

The reports were initially searched for deposits that excavators and researchers had explicitly identified and labelled as being 'ritual' or 'special'.⁵⁸ A 'limited' approach of this nature would certainly mean, however, that interesting and relevant deposits would be missed. Additional criteria and search terms were therefore compiled in order to create a broader inventory.

These criteria are not exclusive; they must always be assessed in combination and within the archaeological context.⁵⁹ The most relevant criteria are:

1. Completeness: a high degree of completeness of objects, skulls and (partial) skeletons
2. Quantity: large quantities of material, especially where the same material is concerned

⁵⁷ The data mainly relate to deposits that can be associated with houses.

⁵⁸ The search was based on the terms listed above that were used in Malta reports.

⁵⁹ For criteria, see further Groot 2008, 115–116 (with a specific focus on animal bone); Nieuwhof 2015, 115–116, 437; Groenewoudt *et al.* 2016, 6, Table 1.

3. Composition: indications of repetition and structure in the composition of assemblages
4. Context: the relationship of deposits to human-built structures, such as houses, outbuildings and wells, as well as the positioning of deposits within these structures or within features (at the bottom of a posthole, at the top of a well, at the entrance to a house, in a wall). The landscape context may also be relevant (e.g. on or near the transition between wet and dry, or high and low).
5. Modification: indications of (deliberate) burning, fragmentation, perforation, bending or 'painting'
6. Placement: indication of deliberate placement of objects, individually, in relation to each other or to the context. For example, objects placed in an inverted position, inside one another, the laying of paving made of sherds within a feature.
7. The special character of objects: some objects are in themselves conspicuous or 'suspicious'. This includes objects that are clearly older than their deposition context, human bone and hair, miniature objects, figurines, exotic and foreign objects, jewellery and weapons/militaria.

Search terms were compiled to enable an effective search of the reports. The first search involved such terms as 'rituele' (ritual), 'speciale'/'bijzondere' (special), 'intentionele' (intentional), 'gestructureerde' (structured) or 'bewuste' (deliberate) 'deposities' (depositions) or 'depots' (deposits). The more specific search terms included 'offer' (sacrifice), 'bouwoffer' (foundation deposit), 'afscheidsdepositie'/'verlatingsdepositie'/'verlatingsoffer' (all synonyms for closing deposit), 'rituele maaltijd' (ritual meal), 'cultus' (cult), 'magie/magisch' (magic/magical), 'goden' (gods) and 'heiligheid' (sanctuary). Additional search terms were subsequently defined based on the criteria described above so that, among other things, complete objects and skeletons, special objects or deposits in specific contexts could be found in the reports.⁶⁰ Based on the set criteria, decisions were then made as to whether the deposits in question should be included in the dataset.

Entry in the database

Deposits identified as relevant were then entered into an Access database designed for that purpose. Data was entered at different levels: settlement, structure, deposit and the finds within the deposit. This meant that both the context and the composition of the inventoried deposits could be properly recorded and analysed.

4.2 Analysis

To be able to systematically present and analyse the many inventoried deposits, we chose a structure that focused on the context and composition of the deposits.⁶¹

A contextual approach is of critical importance for a better understanding of special deposits and deposition practices.⁶² As pointed out above, different context levels can be distinguished: the structure (such as house, granary, well), position within the structure (such as walls, entrances, hearths) and position within the feature (on the bottom, in the packing soil, the core or the youngest fill of a posthole). In Chapter 5, the various contexts are taken as the point of departure: houses and buildings, outbuildings, granaries, wells/waterholes, ditches, pits, (residual) channels/depressions/fens and ritual places. A further distinction is frequently made between the different positions and periods. Derived tables shed light on the occurrence of deposits by context and period, as well as on the relationship between the type of deposit (single, composite or fragmented), the context and the period.

The subsequent analysis chapter, Chapter 6, takes as its focus the composition of the special deposits. The discussion is organised in terms of various object categories: vessels, animal remains, objects associated with food production and processing (food attributes), objects associated with textile production and processing (textile attributes), tools, weapons/militaria, fibulae/jewellery, botanical remains, coins, human remains, antique objects and other objects (see Section 6.1 for a detailed description). For each object category, we investigated how they formed part of special deposits and deposition practices over time and how we should interpret their use and deposition.

⁶⁰ The search terms were as follows: *compleet/complete* (complete), *verbrand* (burned), *miniatuur* (miniature), *skelet* (skeleton), *schedel* (skull), *menselijk bot* (human bone), *erfstuk* (heirloom), *voorouders* (ancestors).

⁶¹ See also Verspay 2011, 172.

⁶² See also Nieuwhof 2015, 115.

The analysis chapters describe many special deposits, accompanied each time by a reference to the relevant site. For practical reasons, however, a reference to the report in question is

not always provided. An alphabetical list of all the sites, including references, can be found in Appendix I.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the context (i.e. archaeological structures) in which special deposits are found. This allows us to meaningfully organise the complex and extensive dataset, to present it systematically and to analyse it further.

We have distinguished the following contexts in this study:

- Houses and buildings⁶³
- Outbuildings
- Granaries
- Animal burials⁶⁴
- Pits⁶⁵
- Wells and waterholes
- Ditches
- Ritual places
- (Residual) channels, fens and depressions

In the following, we describe and analyse the inventoried deposits by context. A distinction is sometimes made between the different periods and/or locations within the respective structures. The latter applies especially to houses and other buildings, where we further distinguish between deposits in or near the core structure, the hearth, the walls, the entrances, the exterior of the house and the pits that can be directly associated with the house. In most cases, a summary table provides an overview of the subdataset, while derived tables shed light on the structure of the data, organised by period. The composition of the deposits is also outlined for each context, with a distinction made between different deposit categories (single deposits, composite deposits and deposits containing fragmented material)⁶⁶ and object categories (see Section 6.1 for a definition and description of the various object categories).

For practical reasons, we do not always provide a reference to the relevant archaeological report for the many examples described below. These references can be found in the list of sites in Appendix 1.

Before examining the deposits in the different contexts in greater detail, we will give a broader overview, in the next section, of the contexts and the deposits that can be associated with them.

5.2 General overview: contexts

But first we will broadly outline how the dataset is organised, based on the context. We will examine in turn the number of deposits for each context and period, the geographical distribution of deposits in the various contexts and the composition of deposits for each context (broken down into object categories).

5.2.1 Contexts: all periods

Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1 present an overview of the number of deposits, by context.⁶⁷ The total number of inventoried deposits comes to 1353. Almost a quarter of them can be regarded as belonging to the context of ‘houses and buildings’ (24%). Pit deposits are also well represented (23%), followed by animal burials⁶⁸ (16%) and deposits in wells/waterholes (15%). Less well represented are ditches (7%), granaries (5%), outbuildings (3%) and (residual) channels (3%). The few deposits from ‘ritual places’ are assigned to the ‘other’ category (4%), which also includes deposits that cannot be attributed to any of the defined contexts, including those from covering (cultural) layers.

⁶³ ‘Houses’ refers to structures for which a residential function has been established or assumed. For structures interpreted as buildings, the precise function is often less clear.

⁶⁴ Animal burials are not examined separately in this chapter but are discussed at length in Section 6.4, which looks at special deposits containing animal remains.

⁶⁵ These are pits that did not serve as waterholes, were not used as burial pits and were not located inside (or directly outside) houses.

⁶⁶ Single deposits are deposits containing a single object (possibly in the form of sherds or fragments), or part of an object, that was deposited as such. Composite deposits contain several more or less complete objects. Deposits with fragmented material are assemblages of fragmented material from several objects that were deposited in that state.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that the description and analysis of the individual contexts (and object categories) include some data from older research that did not form part of the core dataset for the present study, which focuses primarily on data from Malta archaeology. The dataset analysed here therefore differs slightly from the datasets studied for each context and object category.

⁶⁸ The inventory criteria for animal burials have been applied more broadly than for other deposits. A decision was taken not to include only the animal burials that excavators had explicitly interpreted as special deposits (see also Section 6.4).

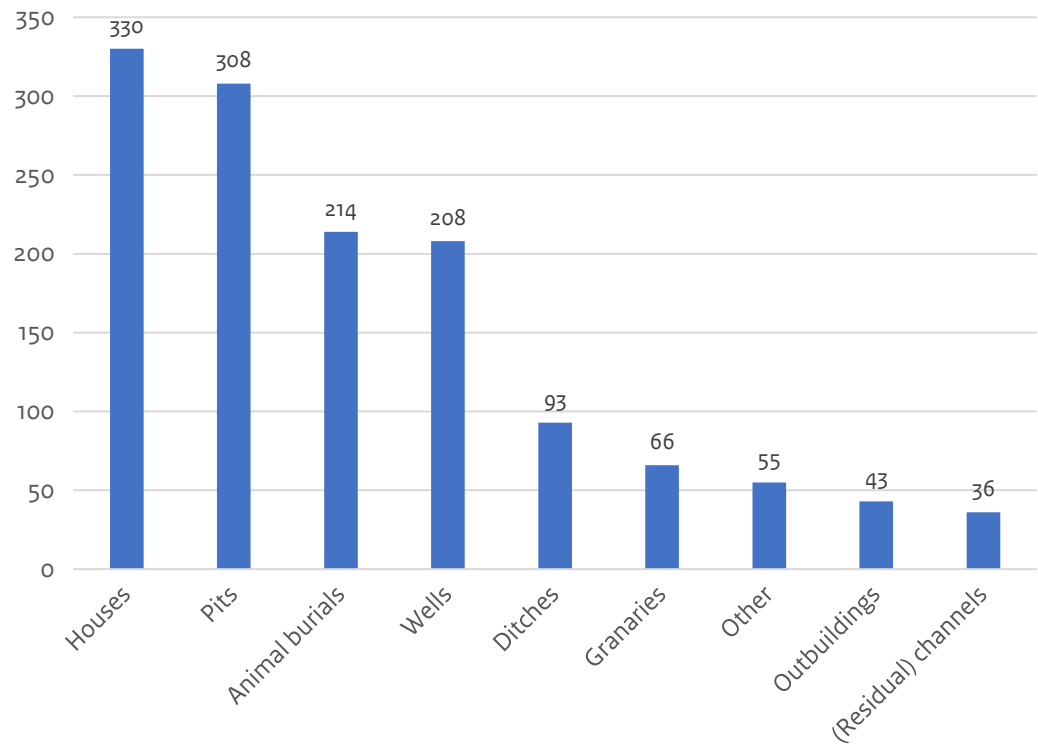


Fig. 5.1. Overview of the number of inventoried special deposits, by context.

Table 5.1. Overview of special deposits by context (all deposits).

Context	N	%
Outbuildings	43	3%
Animal burials	214	16%
Ditches	93	7%
Houses	330	24%
Pits	308	23%
Other	55	4%
Residual channels	36	3%
Granaries	66	5%
Wells/waterholes	208	15%
Total	1353	100%

5.2.2 Contexts: chronological distribution

Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2 give an overview of special deposits, by context and main period. This overview reveals some interesting points. The occurrence of deposits in houses and ditches in each period roughly matches that of the

general distribution (cf. Tables 5.1 and 5.2). Pits, granaries and residual channels show a different picture, however, with a clear predominance in the Iron Age, followed at some distance by the Roman period. Outbuildings occur most frequently in the Middle Ages, followed by the Iron Age. Animal burials show a clear predominance in the Roman period, followed by the Middle Ages and the Modern Period but are barely represented in the prehistoric period.

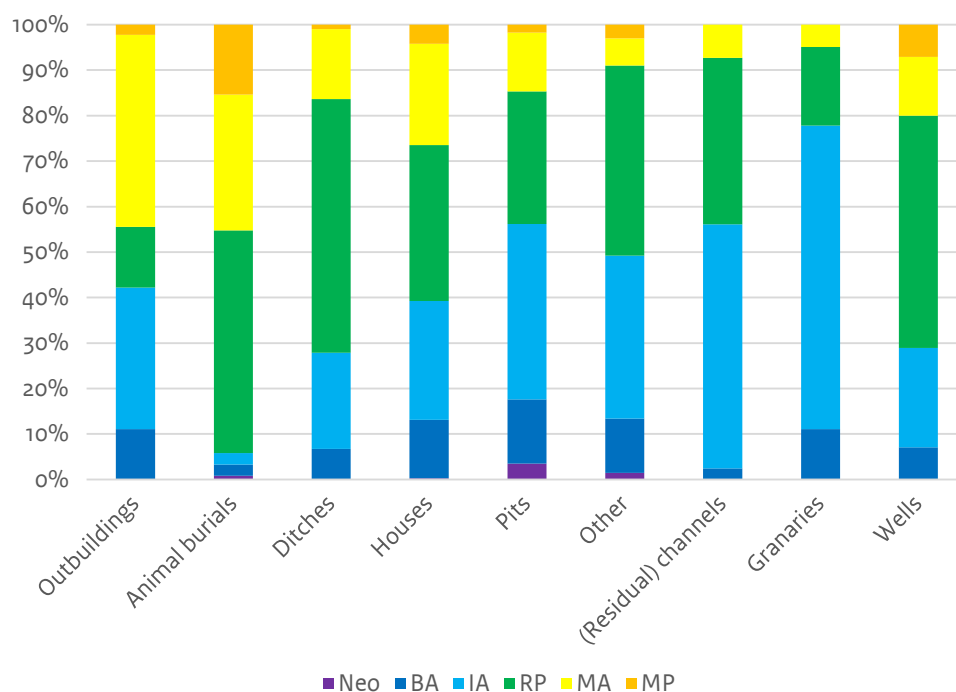


Fig. 5.2. Overview of special deposits, by context and main period.

Table 5.2. Overview of the relative chronological distribution by context.

Context	Neo	BA	IA	RP	MA	MP	Total
Outbuildings (N=43)	0%	11%	31%	13%	42%	2%	100%
Animal burials (N=214)	1%	2%	2%	49%	30%	15%	100%
Ditches (N=93)	0%	7%	21%	56%	15%	1%	100%
Houses (N=330)	0%	13%	26%	34%	22%	4%	100%
Pits (N=308)	4%	14%	39%	29%	13%	2%	100%
Other (N=55)	1%	12%	36%	42%	6%	3%	100%
Residual channels (N=36)	0%	2%	54%	37%	7%	0%	100%
Granaries (N=66)	0%	11%	67%	17%	5%	0%	100%
Wells/waterholes (N=208)	0%	7%	22%	51%	13%	7%	100%

criteria used for animal burials (see also Section 6.4). Wells/waterholes (21%) and houses (19%) are also fairly well represented in this period.

5.2.3 Contexts: composition of deposits

Tables 5.4 and 5.5 provide an overview of the dataset, by context and object category (see Section 6.1 for a definition of the different object categories). Looking at all the deposits, we see a clear dominance of vessels and animal bone, with the object categories of food attributes and tools lagging well behind. Further behind again are textile attributes and fibulae/jewellery.

In terms of composition for each structural

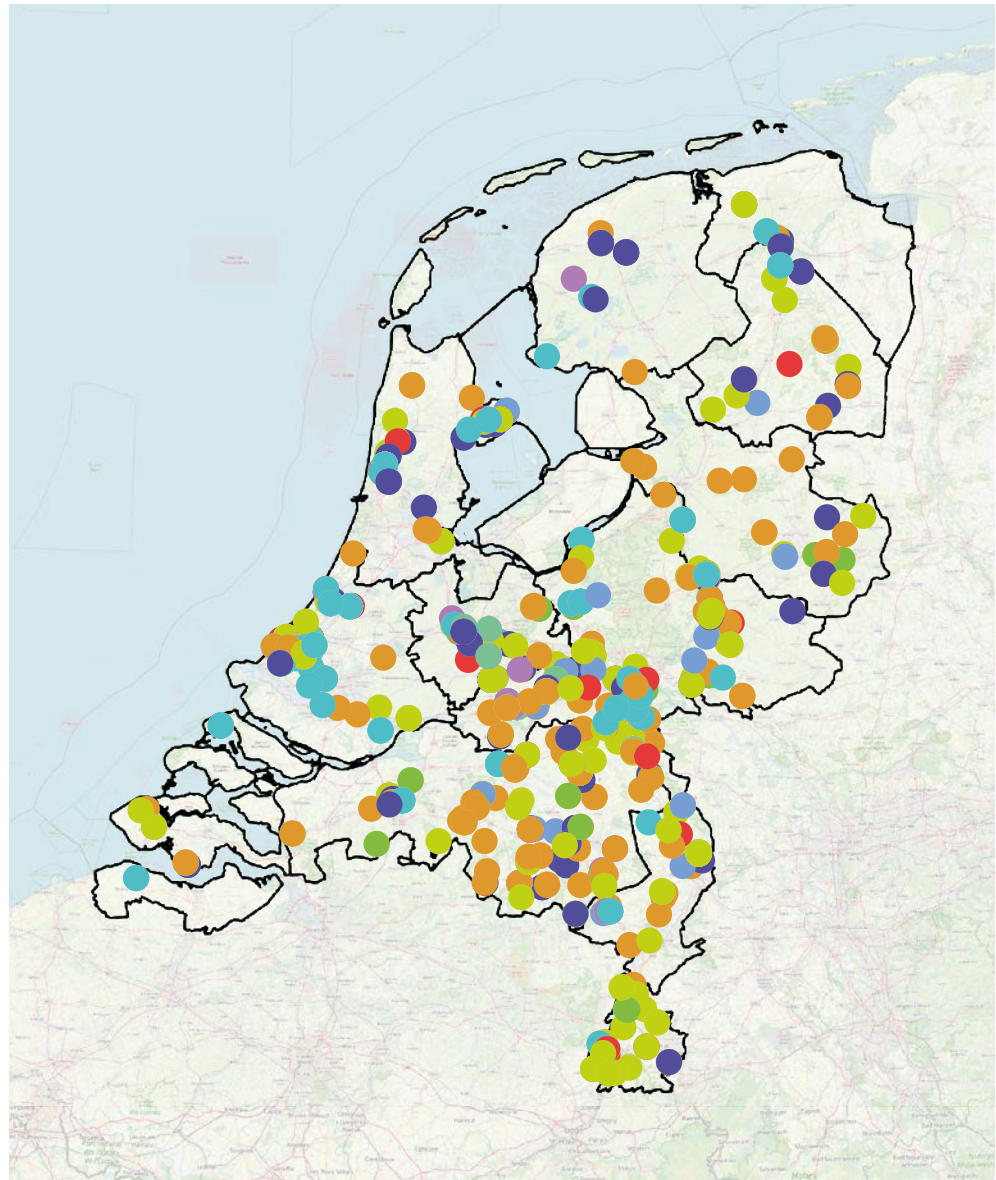
category, we observe the following. Houses and pits present a similar picture. There is a clear predominance of vessels, followed by animal bone and, some distance behind, the object categories of tools, food attributes and textile attributes. Although few in number, textile attributes are well represented in granaries. For ditches, there is a conspicuous prominence of animal bone, while weapons/militaria are also fairly well represented. Tools and textile attributes, on the other hand, are virtually non-existent in ditches. Weapons/militaria are also fairly well represented in residual channels, while food attributes are virtually absent. This last object category is remarkably well represented in wells/waterholes and outbuildings.

Table 5.4. Overview of the occurrence of the different object categories by context (all periods). The calculated total is higher than the number of deposits because some deposits contain several object categories.

Context	Animal bone	Tools	Weapons/militaria	Coins	Fibulae/jewellery	Textile attributes	Vessels	Burnt loam	Food attributes	Other	Total
Outbuildings	7	4	0	0	3	3	15	0	8	7	47
Animal burials	233	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	241
Ditches	40	1	8	5	5	1	28	1	11	29	129
Houses	47	39	11	14	14	24	156	20	36	147	508
Pits	70	45	10	5	14	32	129	23	50	188	566
Other	8	6	1	1	6	5	10	2	10	24	73
Residual channels	10	3	4	2	5	3	19	0	1	22	69
Granaries	6	4	0	1	2	6	21	4	4	22	70
Wells/waterholes	40	23	7	12	21	14	83	4	54	104	362
Total	461	126	42	40	72	88	464	54	174	544	2065

Table 5.5. Percentage overview of the occurrence of the different object categories by context. The 'other' category is not included here.

Context	Animal bone	Tools	Weapons/militaria	Coins	Fibulae/jewellery	Textile attributes	Vessels	Burnt loam	Food attributes	Total
Outbuildings	18%	10%	0%	0%	8%	8%	38%	0%	20%	100%
Animal burials	97%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Ditches	40%	1%	8%	5%	5%	1%	28%	1%	11%	100%
Houses	13%	11%	3%	4%	4%	7%	43%	6%	10%	100%
Pits	19%	12%	3%	1%	4%	8%	34%	6%	13%	100%
Other	16%	12%	2%	2%	12%	10%	20%	4%	20%	100%
Residual channels	21%	6%	9%	4%	11%	6%	40%	0%	2%	100%
Granaries	13%	8%	0%	2%	4%	13%	44%	8%	8%	100%
Wells/waterholes	16%	9%	3%	5%	8%	5%	32%	2%	21%	100%



Contexts

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Outbuildings | ● Other |
| ● Animal burials | ● (Residual) channels |
| ● Ditches | ● Granaries |
| ● Houses | ● Wells/waterholes |
| ● Pits | |

Fig. 5.4. Distribution of all inventoried special deposits from all periods, by context.

5.2.4 Contexts: distribution patterns

Lastly, we will examine the distribution of the different contexts and how they relate to the general distribution pattern for the deposits (see Fig. 5.4). Here we focus only on contexts that show a different distribution pattern: granaries, ditches, animal burials and (residual) channels (Fig. 5.5).

With regard to deposits in granaries, we see that the coastal region (Zeeland, Zuid-Holland,

Noord-Holland and Friesland) is not represented at all. For the rest, the distribution pattern for granary deposits matches fairly closely the pattern for houses. The absence of granary deposits in the coastal region can perhaps be explained by the relatively small number of large-scale prehistoric sites that have been investigated and the fact that there appear to have been many fewer granaries per settlement than on the sandy soils.

Ditch deposits show a very different distribution. Here we see a clear cluster in the Utrecht-Gelderland river region, the western



Granaries



Ditches



Animal burials



(Residual) channels

Fig. 5.5. Distribution patterns for special deposits in structure categories of granaries, ditches, animal burials and (residual) channels (all periods).

coastal area and West-Friesland, while the sandy soil areas are virtually unrepresented. This pattern seems to correlate closely with the type of subsoil and the hydrological conditions of the inhabited territory. More and deeper drainage ditches will have been needed in the clayey and rather wet soils.

The distribution picture for (residual) channels partly matches that for ditches. The channels are concentrated almost exclusively in the Utrecht-Gelderland river area. This distribution pattern is also linked to the landscape conditions of that dynamic river

region, with its many (residual) channels that were important landscape features that attracted human habitation.

Animal burials more closely match the general distribution than do the contexts described above. However, we see that Brabant and Limburg are underrepresented compared to the general distribution pattern. This can probably be explained by the preservation conditions in these areas, as bone material is preserved much less well in sand and loess than in clay.

Regarding the distribution pattern for

houses (not shown), the number of deposits in Zuid-Limburg is smaller than in the general distribution pattern. This can be explained by the fact that our knowledge of houses and buildings in the loess region is fairly limited, especially compared with areas further north.

- deposits in relation to the core structure
- deposits in relation to the hearth
- deposits in relation to the entrance
- deposits in relation to the wall
- deposits in relation to the byre
- deposits in pits inside the house
- deposits on the exterior of the house⁷⁰

5.3 Special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries

5.3.1 Introduction

Here we discuss special deposits that can be directly associated in spatial terms with houses, buildings, outbuildings and granaries. ‘House’ refers to a structure with an assumed residential function. The precise function is often less clear for structures that are interpreted as buildings. Outbuildings are generally non-residential structures that are situated in the yard and which functioned as sheds, byres, workshops, storerooms or a combination of these. Granaries are the smallest outbuildings, for which a crop-storage function is generally assumed.

Special deposits occur in houses, outbuildings and granaries between the Neolithic and the Modern Period. The aim of this section is to shed light on special deposition practices in relation to these structures over time. The key aspects here are the dating of deposits, the feature context, the siting in relation to the house and the composition of the deposited material. Below, the inventoried deposits are studied for each main period.⁶⁹ For houses/buildings, the dataset is organised in terms of the location of deposits in relation to the house. To this end, the following locations have been identified:

5.3.2 Neolithic (to Early Bronze Age)

Houses and buildings

The number of special deposits that can be directly associated with houses is small for the Neolithic (Table 5.6). Two deposits with a definite house association are known from the settlement of Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen. The first is a find concentration within overlapping house plans 4, 5 and 8, which contained fragments of three burnt natural stone axes and three burnt bone artefacts. The axes appear to have been deliberately broken. Another pit is located inside house 3 and contained a large, lugged pottery fragment. The excavator interprets both deposits as closing deposits. Other interesting house deposits are documented in overlapping Late Neolithic houses 45FH and 45GH at Meteren-De Bogen. Two human burials were found within these houses, while a concentration of charred grain in a wall posthole (house 45FH) can perhaps also be interpreted as a special deposit. The excavator suggests that the youngest house was used for the burial ritual following the habitation phase, with the abandoned house perhaps acquiring a ritual or ceremonial function. A burial mound was subsequently erected over the house.

Various other houses from the Linear Pottery Culture (LBK) are also known from older

⁶⁹ This study adheres to the periods as set out in the Archaeological Basic Register (ABR).

⁷⁰ These are deposits positioned on the outside of the wall, a short distance from the house (about 1 m).

Table 5.6. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Neolithic (to Early Bronze Age).

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	houses 4/5/8	find concentration	indeterminate	fragments of 3 deliberately smashed and burned natural stone axes, burnt bone artefacts	-2850	-2600
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	house 3	pit	pit	ceramic fragment with lug	-2850	-2600
Meteren	De Bogen	house 45FH	posthole	wall	charred grain remains	-2450	-2000
Meteren	De Bogen	house 45FH/45GH	pit	pit	2 graves, possibly inside the house	-2450	-2000

Table 5.7. Overview of special deposits in possible (out)buildings from the Neolithic (to Early Bronze Age).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Rhenen	Remmerden	1.1 kg of pottery (barbed-wire decoration) in posthole in post cluster	-2100	-1800
Rhenen	Remmerden	complete quernstone in posthole in post cluster (possibly the same structure as above)	-2100	-1800

studies, with a sizeable proportion of the postholes yielding large quantities of burnt loam and charcoal.⁷¹ Based on these observations, the houses appear to have been deliberately (and ritually) burned. They may have been the homes of village leaders and their families, in which case the rituals may have related to the symbolic termination of their leadership.⁷²

(Out)buildings (?)

From the Rhenen-Remmerden site we know of two special deposits from postholes within pits/feature clusters that cannot be classified as structures (Table 5.7).⁷³ They date from the transitional period between the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age (c. 2100–1800 BC). The first deposit contained a large quantity of ‘barbed wire’ pottery (1.1 kg). Another posthole yielded a complete saddle quernstone (12.5 kg). It is unclear how these deposits should be interpreted.

5.3.3 Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age)

Houses

The inventoried dataset contains 28 deposits from the Bronze Age and a further eleven from the Late Bronze Age or (Early) Iron Age (Table 5.8). The chronological concentration is in the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age), with the Early Bronze Age barely represented. It is important to note, however, that the Early Bronze Age spanned just two centuries, whereas the Middle Bronze Age lasted at least seven. Pits dominate the contexts, followed by deposits in the core structure of a house (Table 5.9). Deposits at entrances, walls and in house ditches/outer postholes occur with roughly equal frequency.

Core structure

Special deposits relating to the core structure of houses are known from Medemblik-Schepenwijk II (a rubbing stone at the top of an aisle posthole), Rhenen-Remmerden (a spearhead at the top of an aisle post hole), Goirle-Huzarenwei (a complete pot at the top of a posthole), Twello-Achter ‘t Holhuis (a heavily burnt section of a pot and a cooking stone from a central posthole), Beuningen-Hogewald II (40 sherds of a possible single pot in a posthole), Meteren-De Bogen (a broken loom weight in the core of an aisle post hole) and Huissen-Agropark II (an almost complete, decorated pot in a possible central posthole). Two miniature pots in a central posthole of a house at Hoogkarspel site F, 2a/2b constitute an old find.⁷⁴

Four instances involve a (virtually) complete pot that was deposited in a posthole, sometimes in the form of sherds. The sherds in one of these deposits were burned (Huissen-Agropark II). The same applies to the section of a pot from the posthole of a house in Twello. The position of the pot at the top of the posthole of the house in Goirle suggests that it was deposited after the posts were removed. The same can be said of the spearhead from Rhenen (at the top of a posthole) and the loom weight from Meteren (in the core of the posthole). However, the excavator suggests that the pot from the Beuningen posthole may have been deposited while the house was being built. The same applies to the pots from Hoogkarspel.

Pits

Special deposits in pits inside houses predominate in the Bronze Age. A distinction can be made within this category between pits containing a large quantity of fragmented material and pits with a single object.

Pits with a large quantity of fragmented finds are known from houses at Ede-Molen Concordia, Twello-Achter ‘t Holhuis, Udenhout-

⁷¹ Van der Velde & Van Wijk 2014, 52–54, with further references. This involves a specific category of special houses (of type 1a) at the sites of Geleen-Janskampveld, Sittard and Langweiler 2 and 9 (Germany).

⁷² Van der Velde & Van Wijk 2014.

⁷³ Van Hoof, Meurkens & Jongste 2005.

⁷⁴ Reported by Van den Broeke 1977, and taken up by Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5. See also Van den Broeke 2005b, 660.

Table 5.8. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age).

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Apeldoorn	Nuon terrein	house 1	pit	wall	large complete pot, in sherds (320)	-1100	-250
Bennekom	Boerhaavelaan	house 34	pit	wall	pottery sherds	-1800	-1100
Beuningen	Hogewald II	house 1	posthole	core structure	40 pottery sherds, possibly from 1 pot	-1800	-1100
Boekel	Parkweg	unknown	pit	wall	inverted pot at centre of short wall of (presumed) house	-1800	-1500
Boekel	Parkweg	unknown	pit	exterior	2 complete ceramic pots in pit immediately adjacent to (presumed) house	-1800	-1500
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	unknown	pit	entrance	many chaff remains of covered wheat, large quantity of burnt pottery, natural stone	-1100	-800
Dalen	De Spil	unknown	hearth pit	hearth	pottery sherds of at least 1 storage jar and 44 pieces of burnt loam	-1100	-500
Dalen	De Spil	unknown	posthole	unknown	pottery sherds of at least 1 storage jar and 65 pieces of burnt loam	-1100	-500
Deursen-Dennenburg	Laagstraat 58	house 1	posthole	entrance	fragment of barrel-shaped pot and 4 pieces of burnt loam	-1500	-1000
Ede	Molen Concordia	house 2	pit	pit	fragments of three quernstones, cobble fragment and large flake	-1100	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	unknown	house ditch	house ditch	skull with lower jaw, hyoid bone, atlas and axis vertebrae and 2 forelegs, all of cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	unknown	house ditch	house ditch	right foreleg and virtually complete trunk, all of cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	house 22	house ditch	house ditch	13 talus bones, 4 upper molars and 1 lower molar, all of cattle	-1800	-800
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house 1 (site 5)	cultural layer	entrance	bronze awl and sickle near western entrance. Burnt loam, 4 burnt human skull fragments near southern entrance	-1460	-1400
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house 1 (site 6)	cultural layer	wall	bronze awl, spirals and arrowhead near wall. Second awl and dagger a little further away in the yard	-1800	-1100
Goirle	Huzarenwei	house 7	posthole	core structure	complete pot at top of posthole	-974	-807
Grootebroek	Schaperstraat	house 1	house ditch	house ditch	(almost) complete animal burial of cattle and skull (with lichen deposit)	-1100	-800
Hattermerbroek	Bedrijventerrein-Zuid	house 26	pit	pit	decapitated pot in shallow pit between truss posts	-1420	-1210
Huissen	Agropark II	unknown	posthole	core structure	almost complete, fully decorated pot (decapitated)	-1100	-500
Medemblik	Schepenwijk II	house 4	posthole	core structure	rubbing stone at top of aisle post	-1800	-1100
Meteren	De Bogen	house 45AH	posthole	core structure	broken loom weight in core of aisle post	-1500	-1100
Meteren	De Bogen	house 28-1	pit	pit	burnt loam and large fragments of at least 10 loom weights	-2000	-1500
Meteren	De Bogen	house 28-4	pit	pit	317 pottery fragments, 1093 fragments of burnt loam, 493 fragments of natural stone, 639 fragments of ceramic objects, 70 animal bone fragments	-2000	-1500
Meteren	De Bogen	house 28-4	pit	pit	654 pottery sherds, burnt loam, natural stone and animal bone	-2000	-1500
Neer	De Mendert, fase 7 en 8	house 1	pit	pit	sherds of 1 pot, in pit at central axis of house	-1800	-1100
Reusel	Boegent	house 1	pit	pit	sherds of at least 2 small pots, fragments of whetstones/quernstone runner, fragments of possible runner stones, large quantity of charcoal	-1100	-500
Rhenen	Remmerden	house 4	posthole	core structure	bronze spearhead at top of posthole	-1800	-1100

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Tiel	Medel-Oude Weiden	house 1	posthole	wall	924 sherds of 1 beaker pot and 197 fragments of animal bone (cattle, sheep/ goat and pig)	-2000	-1800
Tilburg	Tradepark	house 7	pit	pit	upright 'decapitated' pot	-2000	-800
Tilburg	Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan	unknown	pit	pit	bronze knobbed sickle in pit inside (old) house	-2000	-1100
Twello	Achter 't Holhuis	house 1	posthole	core structure	part of pot with Kalenderberg decoration, other pottery sherds, cooking stone	-1100	-500
Twello	Achter 't Holhuis	house 9	pit	pit	5 kg of pottery sherds	-1100	-800
Twello	De Schaker	house 26	posthole	outer post	cobble	-1739	-1521
Udenhout	Den Bogerd	house 60	pit	pit	large pottery sherds (g MAI)	-1100	-800
Vorden	Smidsstraat	house 4	pit	pit	inverted pot	-1100	-250
Vorden	Smidsstraat	house 1	pit	pit	inverted pot	-1100	-250
Zutphen	Voorsterallee	house 1	pit	entrance	loom weight fragments	-1100	-500
Zutphen	Voorsterallee	house 1	pit	entrance	loom weight fragments	-1100	-500
Zutphen	Voorsterallee	house 1	pit	entrance	loom weight fragments	-1100	-500

Table 5.9. Overview of special deposits in houses (Bronze Age), by subperiod and location inside the house.

	Core structure	Entrance	Wall	Hearth	Pit	Exterior	Unknown	Total
EBA	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
E-MBA	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
MBA	4	2	3	-	2	2	-	13
M-LBA	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
LBA	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	6
LBA-IA	2	3	-	1	1	-	1	8
LBA-MIA	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	3
BA	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	8	6	5	1	13	6	1	39

Den Bogerd, Reusel-Boegent and Meteren-De Bogen. The Ede pit contained a large amount of natural stone: fragments of several quernstones, a cobble fragment, a large flake and 18 fragments of granite. The Twello pit yielded 5 kg of secondarily burnt pottery (no burnt fracture surfaces) and the Udenhoutse pit the sherds of at least nine pots. The Reusel pit contained sherds from at least two small pots, quernstone fragments and a large amount of charcoal. Pits containing many finds were documented in

three houses at the settlement of Meteren-De Bogen; they yielded large quantities of pottery, loom weights, burnt loam, natural stone and animal bone, at least some of which was burnt. The pit in the Reusel house contained a large amount of charcoal. Most of these deposits date to the Late Bronze Age, sometimes extending into the Early Iron Age. Only the Meteren deposits are older and date to the Early Bronze Age or first part of the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000–1500 BC).

The remaining pits yielded a single object. The pits at Tilburg-Tradepark, Neer-De Mendert, Vorden-Smidsstraat and Hattemerbroek-Bedrijventerrein-Zuid contained (almost) complete pots. The two pit deposits at Vorden (houses 1 and 4) contained inverted pots, a phenomenon that we also encounter elsewhere (such as in the wall of a house at Boekel-Parkweg). These pots appear to be unburnt and were placed intact in the pit. A pit inside a house at Tilburg-Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan contained a bronze knobbed sickle. The pits at Neer and Hattemerbroek clearly had a central location, between the truss posts on the house's central axis. In other cases, such as Vorden and Tilburg-Tradepark, the pits were less centrally located.

It is not always easy to establish the relationship between these deposits and the biography of the houses. An interpretation as closing deposits is suggested for deposits containing (mostly burnt) fragmented material.

For deposits of complete pots, the interpretation is less clear. For the pot from Tilburg-Tradepark, the excavator suggests that it could be a foundation deposit, while an interpretation as a foundation or closing deposit is proposed for the Neer pot. It is interesting to note that the pit with the knobbed sickle at Tilburg-Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan is younger than the house plan in which it was buried. This could indicate that the abandoned house was visited at a later time, possibly in order to perform special practices or rituals.⁷⁵

Entrances

Deposits at the entrances to houses are documented at Deursen-Dennenweg-Laagstraat 58 (part of a burnt pot and burnt loam from an entrance posthole), Boxmeer-Maasbroeksche Blokken (a large quantity of wheat chaff in a pit at the entrance, together with a large amount of burnt pottery and stone material)⁷⁶ and Zutphen-Voorsterallee (150 loom weight fragments in three pits located at and in front of the entrance). Special objects have also been found near the entrances to a house at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok (site 5), but then in the covering cultural layer. A bronze sickle and an awl were found at one entrance and a concentration of burnt clay and four burnt human skull fragments near another.⁷⁷ An old find is that of a miniature pot in an entrance posthole in the above-mentioned house at Hoogkarspel site F, 2a/2b, which is reported as being deposited when the house was renovated (Fig. 5.6).⁷⁸

Although some excavators are cautious about their interpretations, an interpretation as closing deposits seems the most likely for most deposits, given the location of the objects or features and the degree of burning and

fragmentation. The many loom weights from the three pits at Zutphen may be a complete set, originating from a dismantled loom. An interpretation as a foundation or renovation deposit is explicitly suggested only for the miniature pot from Hoogkarspel.

Walls

Deposits near or in house walls are documented at Tiel-Medel-Oude Weiden (sherds of a single beaker pot and bone fragments of cattle, sheep/goats and pigs), Bennekom-Boerhaavelaan (many pottery sherds), Boekel-Parkweg (an inverted pot) and the Apeldoorn-Nuon site (burnt sherds of a large, (almost) complete pot). Finally, we can mention the special finds discovered near the wall of house 1 (site 6) at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok: bronze spirals, an awl and an arrowhead. As with the other house at Eigenblok (site 5, see above), these finds come from the covering cultural layer.⁷⁹ The excavator comments that the Apeldoorn pot was burned *after* fragmentation. That deposit is interpreted as a foundation or closing deposit, while an interpretation as a possible foundation deposit is suggested for the deposits from Tiel and Boekel.

Exterior

Deposits at the exterior of houses are documented, for example, at Twello-De Schaker (a cobble in an outer post) and Boekel-Parkweg (two complete pots in a pit outside a house). The remaining deposits in this category are all animal remains. The house ditches of three houses at Enkhuizen-Haling 13 contained skeleton parts and skulls (all cattle), which would suggest that these elements were deliberately selected. One of these deposits contained five molars and 13 talus bones. A second house ditch yielded a skull and

- ⁷⁵ Gerritsen 2003, 99. Gerritsen describes this phenomenon, referring to examples from the Early Iron Age, including Riethoven, Sint-Oedenrode and Someren.
- ⁷⁶ Van der Velde 1998, 37; Van den Broeke 2002a, Appendix 1. This deposit is not described and interpreted as such in the archaeological report.
- ⁷⁷ Also found at this site was a bronze spiral that may have been a similar type of deposition. It is suggested, also in view of the many amphibolite fragments at this house site, that this may involve a deliberately fragmented anvil that was then scattered across the house site following abandonment (Jongste 2002, 595). It seems that these practices should be associated with the final phase of habitation, probably when the house was dismantled or the subsequent phase (Hielkema 2002, 338; Jongste & Van Wijngaarden 2002). The excavator suggests that the objects may have been attached to the wall, that they protruded from the roof covering or were stored under the roof partitions. They may have ended up on the ground when the house collapsed (Jongste & Van Wijngaarden 2002, 594).
- ⁷⁸ Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5.
- ⁷⁹ A second awl, a dagger and large pottery sherds with many band appliques were also found in the same yard (Hielkema 2002).

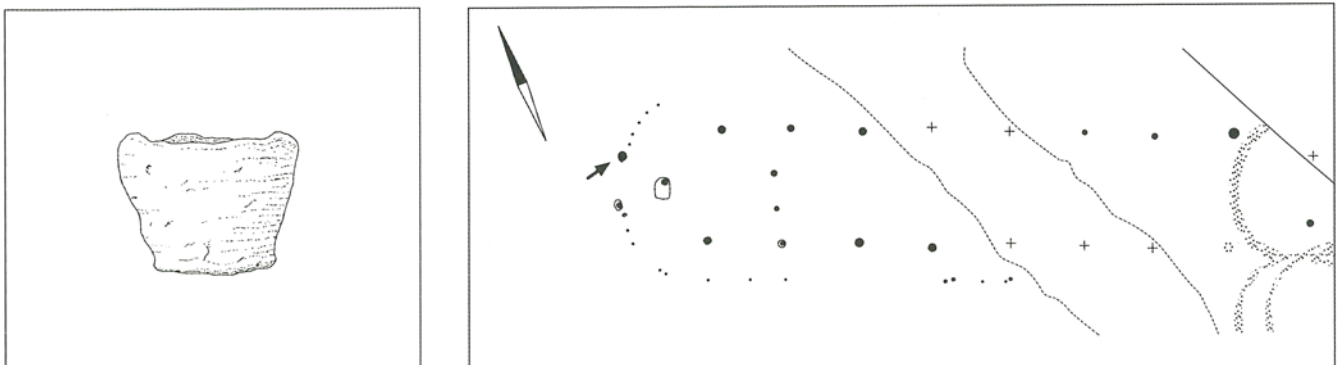


Fig. 5.6. Complete bowl in a posthole at the entrance to a house at Hoogkarspel (source: Van den Broeke 2005b, 660).

Table 5.10. Overview of special deposits in outbuildings from the Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Enkhuizen	Haling 20E	complete, ovoid quernstone in a posthole of outbuilding BGo1	-1800	-1100

two forelegs and the third a right foreleg and an almost complete trunk. The animal remains from a house ditch at Grootebroek-Schaperstraat were a skull and part of a skeleton. A lichen deposit on the skull may indicate that it was displayed above ground, possibly on the house as a symbolic or magical object.

Hearths

The inventory contains only one example of deposits in or near hearths for this period. This involves chunks of burnt loam (some bearing twig impressions) and the sherds of at least one storage jar from a hearth inside a house at Dalen-De Spil.

Outbuildings and granaries

Outbuildings

Only one deposit can be associated with an outbuilding (Table 5.10). This is a complete, ovoid quernstone from a posthole of outbuilding BGo1 at Enkhuizen-Haling 20E. It is one of the few deposits containing quernstones or quernstone fragments from this period.

Granaries

Nine granary deposits are inventoried for this period (Table 5.11). Two instances – Maastricht-Landgoederenzone and Huissen-Agropark II – involved (almost) complete pots deposited in postholes. In the case of Maastricht, the unburnt pot was placed upright in the posthole, together with an antique pointed flint blade. Although the Huissen pot shows traces of burning, these appear to be signs of use. Another complete object is a spindle whorl from granary 96 in the settlement of Borger-Daalkampen. The deposits from Someren-Waterdael III and Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg involve fragmented pottery (51 (12 MNI) and 136 sherds, respectively). This pottery appears to have been deposited in the postholes in a fragmented state. A final interesting deposit involves two cattle skulls in two features of granary 30GS at Meteren-De Bogen. The excavator suggests that this was perhaps not an ordinary granary, but a small building with a special, ritual function.⁸⁰ A nearby pit also containing a cattle skull may be viewed in a similar light. All granary deposits from this period that are given a specific interpretation are labelled closing deposits.

Table 5.11. Overview of special deposits in granaries from the Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Maastricht	A2 Landgoederenzone	(originally) complete pot and antique flint pointed blade	-1900	-1300
Meteren	De Bogen	two cattle skulls	-1800	-1100
Groningen	De Linie	charred barley, grapeseeds and raisin seeds	-1800	-500
Huissen	Agropark II	complete ceramic pot	-1100	-800
Someren	Waterdael III	51 pottery sherds (866 g) (12 MNI)	-1100	-800
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	136 pottery sherds in one posthole	-1100	-800
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	15 pottery sherds and 3 pieces of animal bone in one posthole	-1100	-19
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	large quantity of burnt loam	-1100	-19
Borger	Daalkampen	spindle whorl	-1100	-19

⁸⁰ On the interpretation of 'granary-like' structures, see for example Groenewoudt 2011, 195–196.

Composition

Table 5.12 summarises the composition of the special deposits described above, broken down into single deposits, composite deposits and deposits containing fragmented material.

The table shows that single deposits and deposits of fragmented material occur with roughly equal frequency. Composite deposits are fairly rare for this period.

The single deposits mainly involve pottery, but also a loom weight, rubbing stone, cobble, spearhead, knobbed sickle and animal skull. Deposits of fragmented material primarily contained pottery, but also quernstone fragments and fragments of loom weights, natural stone and burnt loam. These deposits date predominantly to the Late Bronze Age.

If we examine the composition of deposits more closely (in terms of object categories; see Section 6.1), we see that vessels predominate, followed some way behind by animal bone, food attributes, burnt loam and textile attributes (Table 5.13). Weapons, jewellery and tools barely feature.

Table 5.12. Overview of special deposits from the Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age), by category.

	Houses	Outbuildings	Granaries	Total
Single	18	1	3	22
Fragmented	16	-	4	20
Composite	4	-	1	5
NA/indeterminate	1	-	1	2

Table 5.13. Overview of object categories in special deposits from the Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age). Deposits may contain several object categories.

	Houses	Outbuildings	Granaries	Total
Vessels	24	-	5	31
Animal bone	7	-	3	10
Textile attributes	5	-	1	6
Tools	1	-	1	2
Food attributes	6	1	-	7
Fibulae/jewellery	1	-	-	1
Weapons/militaria	2	-	-	2
Coins	-	-	-	-
Burnt loam	7	-	1	8
Botanical remains	1	-	1	2
Other	-	-	-	-

5.3.4 Iron Age (to Roman period)

Houses

There are 89 Iron Age deposits associated with houses (Table 5.14). In terms of chronological structure, the Early Iron Age dominates this subdataset, followed by the Middle and then the Late Iron Age. Judging by the most securely dated deposits, the number appears to decline as the Iron Age progresses. In that sense, the Iron Age corresponds well with the Bronze Age, where deposits from the Middle and Late Bronze Age (to Early Iron Age) are most prevalent. In terms of contexts too, the Iron Age closely matches the Bronze Age (Table 5.15). As in the Bronze Age, deposits in pits and the core structure predominate, followed by entrances and walls. However, there are more known examples of deposits in hearths in the Iron Age and no deposits at house exteriors.

Table 5.14. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Iron Age (to Roman period).

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Assendelft	Q	unknown	pit	pit	ceramic pot, living section	-800	-500
Beegden		unknown	pit	pit	metal chisel, knife and unknown object, in house annexe	-250	-125
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 310	pit	pit	layer of burnt grain kernels, covered by 673 pottery sherds and ceramic disc	-500	-250
Boekel	Parkweg	unknown (same house)	posthole	core structure	586 pebbles in (bottom of) pot, in central posthole	-800	-500
Boekel	Parkweg	unknown (same house)	cellar pit	pit	approx. 3000 pot sherds (13 MNI), quernstone, lumps of charcoal	-800	-500
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker		hearth pit	hearth	pottery sherds (storage jar)	-500	-19
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker	house 1	posthole	entrance	23 pottery sherds	-250	-19
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker	house 1	pit	wall	pottery sherds (40), animal bone (1), natural stone (6) and flint (1)	-250	-19
Borger	N34	house 7	posthole	core structure	ceramic oven grille	-800	-400
Borger	N34	house 9	pit	pit	sherds of at least 1 storage jar, flint, animal bone	-500	-250
Borne	Bornsche Maten-Eschwonen	house 79/169	pit	pit	concentration of pottery sherds	-250	-19
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house H4039	pit	entrance	1327 pottery sherds (29.5 kg) (8 MNI), neatly stacked	-500	-375
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house H4034	posthole	core structure	approx. 70 pottery sherds, burnt loam, burnt bone, in the western central posthole	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house H4030	hearth pit	hearth	at least 2 quernstones, flat erratic boulder (broken), 2 large hearthstone fragments	-500	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house H4012	posthole	wall	pottery sherds (4 MNI), natural stone, slag, in posthole of short wall	-429	-327
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house H4032/H4033	possible hearth pit	hearth	more than 10 kg of natural stone: 1 quernstone, stone tools, large erratic boulder and 2 kg of cracked natural stone	-400	-250
Breda	Landgoed Heilaar	house 3	pit	pit	pottery sherds	-500	-19
Breda	Landgoed Heilaar	house 3	pit	pit	pottery sherds and charcoal	-300	-200
Breda	Moskes	house 11	pit	pit	pit cluster over house 11 (pit 37): many pottery sherds, natural stone, burnt bone, burnt loam, charcoal	-800	-500
Breda	Moskes	house 11	pit	pit	pit cluster over house 11 (pit 34): pottery sherds (3 MNI) under layer of charcoal	-800	-500
Breda	Moskes	house 11	pit	pit	pit cluster over house 11 (pit 35): pottery sherds, whetstones, spindle whorl, charcoal, burnt loam, pieces of quernstone and flint	-800	-500
Breda	Moskes	house 11	pit	pit	pit cluster over house 11 (pit 38): a large buried storage jar containing a small pot, barley, proso millet and emmer wheat, charcoal and burnt bone	-800	-500
Breda	Moskes	house 11	pit	pit	pit cluster over house 11 (pit 31): 2 inverted pots placed alongside each other on the bottom of the pit, together with other pottery sherds, several pieces of natural stone and flint	-800	-500
Breedeweg	Parachutistenstraat	house 2	posthole	core structure	complete loom weight in western aisle posthole	-250	-19

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Coevorden	Molenakkers II, fase I	house 1	posthole	core structure	2 complete pecking or rubbing stones, ceramic base sherd	-800	-500
Cuijk	De Nielt	house 8096	posthole	core structure	pottery sherds in the central posthole	-500	-19
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	house 3	posthole	core structure	46 pottery sherds above aisle posthole	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	house 3	pit	pit	concentration of pottery	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	house 3	layer	floor	thick layer of (predominantly) burnt pottery above southeastern half of house	-800	-500
Dalfsen	Oosterdalfsen	unknown	pit	pit	361 pottery sherds	-800	-250
De Zilk	Sportterrein	house 4	posthole	core structure	ceramic base disc in central posthole	-800	-500
Deventer	Siemelinksweg/ De Braam	unknown	hearth	hearth	concentration of natural stone (5.6 kg), including saddle quern and pieces of tephrite	-800	-500
Didam	Kerkwijk	house 1	posthole	core structure	pottery sherds and quernstone fragments in middle central posthole	-500	-250
Didam	Kerkwijk	house 11	posthole	wall	pottery sherds in posthole in northern wall	-500	-250
Ede	Park Reehorst, fase 1-3	house 89	posthole	wall (corner)	inverted pot	-250	-19
Ede	Park Reehorst, fase 1-3	house 63	posthole	core structure	193 pottery sherds and 21 fragments of (deliberately?) broken loom weights in eastern central posthole	-110	60
Ede	Park Reehorst, fase 1-3	house 88	posthole	entrance	large pottery fragment	-250	-19
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 501	pit	pit	complete pot with burnt horse bone	-500	-19
Elst	Vierslag	house 1	posthole	core structure	secondarily heated ceramic based disc, pottery sherds (11 MNI)	-800	-500
Emmen	Noordbargeres	house 10	pit	pit	145 pottery sherds (3.5 kg), burnt loam, 166 fragments of burnt animal bone, piece of burnt flint	-650	-400
Epse	't Wilgert	unknown	posthole	entrance	Celtic coin	-250	-19
Goirle	Huzarenwei	house 2	posthole	core structure	pot at top of posthole of core structure	-800	-500
Haaren	Wijngaert III	house 56	posthole	core structure	complete pot in middle central posthole	-500	-250
Haps	Kamps Veld	house M	posthole	core structure	complete bowl in central posthole	-500	-19
Helden	Keup	house 2	posthole	core structure	pottery in posthole of core structure, in northeastern short wall	-500	-19
Helden	Schrames	house 96	pit	wall	many pottery sherds, natural stone, flint and burnt loam	-300	-100
Helmond	Brandevoort II/ Hazenwinkel	house 142	pit	pit	glass bracelet fragment, in pit in centre of house	-220	-75
Hengelo	Plangebied Winkelskamp	house 6	pit	pit	583 pottery sherds, 62 broken rollingstones and slag material, in pit in centre of house	-800	-500
Leersum	Middelweggebied	house 12	posthole	core structure	6 sherds of a tripartite pot	-800	-500
Leersum	Middelweggebied	house 12	pit	wall	burnt animal bone and pottery in pit near wall	-800	-500
Leiden/ Wassenaar	Rijnlandroute/ knooppunt Ommedijk	house 8	posthole	entrance	complete pot, in sherds	-250	-19
Leusden	De Schammer	house 9	posthole	core structure	(almost) complete pot in sherds in middle central posthole	-125	-19
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	house 1	posthole	entrance	grinding block	-800	-500
Luchen	phase 2	house 2	hearth pit	hearth	large piece of pottery	-800	-500
Malden	Broeksingel	house 2	posthole	core structure	fragments onburnt aardewerk	-800	-19

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Malden	Broeksingel	house 1	posthole	core structure	burnt loam (6.1 kg) and pottery sherds in central posthole	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	house 1	posthole	core structure	pottery sherds and loom weight fragments in post-removal pit above central posthole	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	house 3	pit	pit	large roughened baseless pot with 73 sling bullets and loom weight fragment	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	house 2	posthole	core structure	762 pottery sherds and loom weight fragment in central posthole	-360	-164
Nijmegen	Noord-Vindplaats 173	unknown	posthole	entrance	2 spindle whorls	-800	-500
Nijmegen	Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat	unknown	posthole	core structure	pot base beneath approx. 7.5 kg of burnt loam (possible hearth collar) in (western) central posthole with post removed	-400	-250
Nijverdal	Eversberg	unknown	posthole	wall	14 pottery sherds, 3 pecking/rubbing stones, cobble	-250	-150
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molenweg	house 20	posthole	core structure	pottery concentration in western central posthole	-500	-250
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molenweg	house 25	posthole	core structure	pottery concentration in western central posthole	-500	-250
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	unknown	pit	pit	tufts of human hair, carefully deposited beneath the floor	-400	-250
Raalte	De Zegge	unknown	posthole	core structure?	bowl, at bottom of posthole	-800	-500
Raalte	De Zegge	unknown	posthole	core structure	pot, at bottom of central posthole	-800	-500
Riethoven	De Heesmortel	house 1	pit	pit	pottery sherds (2 MNI)	-800	-500
Riethoven	De Heesmortel	house 2	pit	pit	pottery sherds (3 MNI)	-800	-500
Rosmalen	Noord	house 8.1	posthole	entrance	6 pottery sherds, in posthole at southern entrance	-800	-500
Someren	Groote Hoeven	house 4	posthole	core structure	pot rims (3 MNI)	-800	-12
Sterksel	Weiakkers	house 4	pit	entrance	ceramic bowl with holes in bottom	-500	-19
Tilburg	Tradepark	house 37	posthole	entrance	complete pot	-500	-250
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	house 37	pit	pit	several large sherds of handmade bowl, beneath a complete quernstone, at bottom of pit	-250	70
Udenhout	Den Bogerd	house 60	pit	pit	quernstone pieces	-800	-625
Ulfth	Biezenakker	house 1	posthole	core structure	large wall fragment of pot and loom weight fragment	-800	-700
Ulfth	Biezenakker	house 1	posthole	core structure	fragments of the same pot in 2 different postholes	-800	-500
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Driebergen-Lange Dreef	house 1	ditch/pit	entrance	hundreds of pottery sherds and fragments of 2 burnt loom weights in ditches and pits near house entrances	-500	-19
Valkenswaard	Waalreseweg	house 4	pit	pit	spindle whorl, complete quernstone and pottery sherds	-800	-625
Valkenswaard	Waalreseweg	house 4	pit	pit	12 virtually complete pots, placed on side and upside down. Some larger pots contain smaller ones.	-800	-625
Weerselo	't Spikkert	unknown	pit	wall	many pottery sherds (including a complete storage jar), in 2 pits, outside wall	-400	-20
Wehl	Heideslag	house STRo2	posthole	core structure	pottery sherds (storage jars and tableware) in aisle posthole	-800	-500
Wehl	Heideslag	house STRo2	posthole	core structure	rim sherds of 2 storage jars in central posthole	-800	-500
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/Aijerbandstraat	unknown	hearth or fire pit	hearth	129 pottery sherds (9 MNI), spindle whorl and 4 burnt stones (including 1 pecking/rubbing stone)	-800	-500

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Wolder	Cannerberg	house 2	pit	pit	pottery sherds, natural stone, burnt loam, 2 miniature pots (1 upright, 1 inverted), at bottom of pit	-800	-500
Wolder	Cannerberg	house 2	pit	pit	pottery sherds (as paving) in pit	-800	-500
Zijdeveld		unknown	layer	floor	approx. 1000 burnt pottery sherds, above the features, at floor level	-800	-500
Zutphen	Eefdese Enk	house 7	pit	pit	saddle quern	-800	-500

Table 5.15. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Iron Age (to Roman period), by subperiod and location inside the house.

	Core structure	Entrance	Wall	Hearth	Pit	Exterior	Other	Total
EIA	13	3	1	3	17	-	2	39
E-MIA	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
MIA	8	2	2	2	4	-	-	18
M-LIA	4	2	3	1	3	-	-	13
LIA	2	4	3	-	3	-	-	12
LIA-RP	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	3
IA	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	30	11	9	6	31	-	2	89

Core structure

Deposits in the core structure of houses vary considerably in terms of the quantity of material, completeness, composition and modification (such as the degree of fragmentation and burning). Some of the deposits consist of one or more (almost) complete objects. Examples include deposits at Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat (a complete loom weight), Leusden-De Schammer (a pot), Raalte-De Zegge (a bowl), Haaren-Wijngaart (a pot) and Goirle-Huzarenwei (a pot). A deposit from a central posthole of a house at Boekel-Parkweg consists of a pot base containing 586 pebbles. The excavators suggest various interpretations: a supply of sling shot or catapult stones, a post foundation and a foundation deposit. This deposit may be similar to ones containing ceramic sling shot at Malden-Broeksingel (house 3) and Haps (house C) (see also below).

Other deposits consist of fragmented material. This sometimes involves fairly small

quantities, such as the six burnt sherds of a single tripartite pot from a posthole in house 12 at Leersum-Middelweggebied and the burnt fragments of the same type of Schräghals pot from two central postholes in house 1 at Ulft-Biezenakker. It has been established that the fracture surfaces of the sherds in this latter deposit were also burnt. This material thus appears to have lain in a fire before being deposited in the postholes.⁸¹ Other features of this house have also yielded burnt sherds, as well as a loom weight fragment. The posts of this house appear to have been deliberately removed from the ground when the building was abandoned and fragments of (burnt) material were subsequently deposited in several features. Other notable deposits are the burnt base disc of a large pot in a house at Elst-Vierslag, a ceramic base disc in a central posthole in house 4 at De Zilk-Sportterrein and another pot base and two complete pecking or rubbing stones in a house at Coevorden-Molenakkers II (phase 1). Forty-six pottery sherds were found above the aisle postholes of house 3 at Culemborg-Hoge Prijs. The position of the material indicates that it was deposited in the posthole after the post had been removed.

Some deposits are much more extensive. They have been found in houses at Ede-Park Reehorst (193 burnt pottery sherds and loom weight fragments), Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat (a pot base beneath about 7.5 kg of burnt loam from a hearth collar) and Malden-Broeksingel (house 1: a total of 5.2 kg of burnt pottery, 6 kg of burnt loam and loom weight fragments) (Fig. 5.7). The material from the latter house comes from two pits that were dug to remove the central posts. We can observe varying degrees of burning in the material from the two features. The excavator suggests that this deliberately deposited material appears to have been selected from different layers of the pyre.⁸²

⁸¹ Hermesen & Weiß-König 2014, 53.

⁸² Schurmans 2011b, 49.

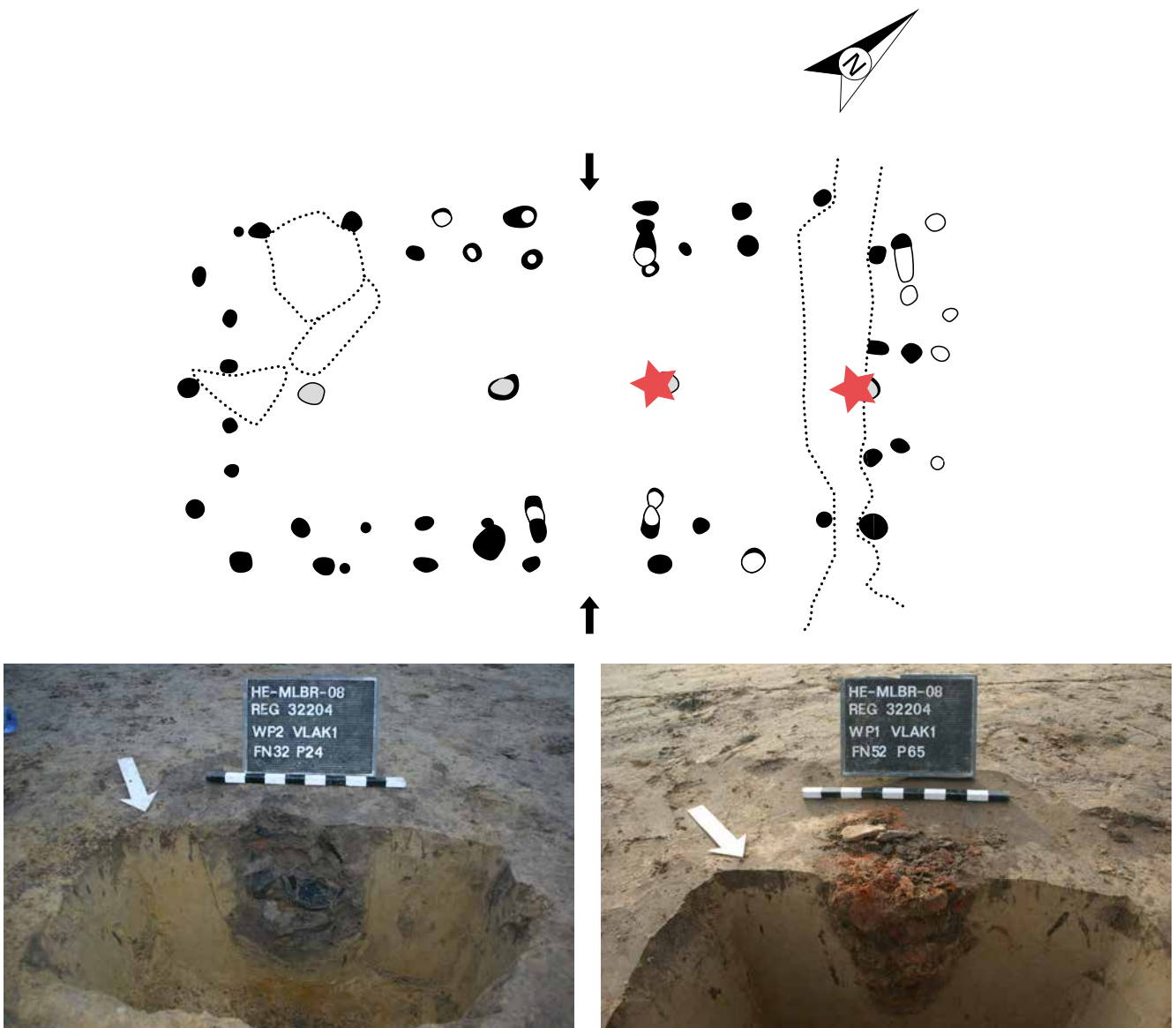


Fig. 5.7. Two closing deposits in central postholes of house 1 at Malden-Broeksingel. The house plan showing locations (red star) of the closing deposits (above). The closing deposits in the field (below) (source: Schurmans 2011b, 104, Fig. 8.5 adapted).

Regarding the location of the central postholes that contained deposits, some of them are situated near the house entrances. This applies in any case to the houses at Malden-Broeksingel (house 1), Leusden-De Schammer, Didam-Kerkwijk and Haaren-Wijngaert III. It is quite possible that this location was consciously chosen, a phenomenon that we also observe for the Roman period.⁸³ In a few other instances, deposits were located in the westernmost central postholes: Cuijk-De Nielt (house 8096), Nistelrode (houses 20 and 25), Malden-Broeksingel (house 2), Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat, Boxmeer-Sterckwijk and Leersum-Middelweg-gebied. This preferred location could relate to the function of this western part of the house. In most instances, it appears to have been used as living quarters.⁸⁴ Here too we see a parallel

with the Roman period.

The interpretations of the deposits described here differ somewhat. The vast majority of deposits with a specific interpretation are classed as possible closing deposits. The degree of fragmentation, burning and the position of the objects inside the features are key here. Only in a few instances has a possible interpretation as a foundation deposit been suggested, although only with some certainty in relation to the Raalte pot.⁸⁵ Two deposits are associated with a house's renovation or restoration phase. These are a loom weight in the core of a posthole at Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat and a deposit containing unburnt pottery in a posthole of house 2 at Malden-Broeksingel.

⁸³ See also van Hoof 2007.

⁸⁴ And yet there are also exceptions. In a house at Ede-Park Reehorst, this was the easternmost central posthole. However, it is suspected that the byre occupied the western side of this house (Norde 2019a, 356).

⁸⁵ Gerritsen 2003, 66.

Pits

Pit deposits are also well represented. They vary considerably in terms of composition. One or several objects were deposited in some pits, such as at Zutphen-Eefde Enk (a complete saddle quern), Eersel-Kerkebogten (a small complete pot with burnt horse bone), Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveld (sherds of a bowl, beneath a complete quernstone), Helmond-Brandevoort II (a glass bracelet fragment) and Assendelft (a pot). A deposit in house 3 at Malden-Broeksingel contained a large pot without a base with 73 sling shot bullets and a loom weight fragment. A similar deposit is known from house C at Haps, comprising 70 sling shot bullets and the burnt sherds of five pots, also dated to the Middle Iron Age.⁸⁶ Both sling shot deposits show traces of burning and are interpreted as special deposits.

Other pits contained more extensive deposits. Good examples are documented at Boekel-Parkweg (some 3,000 pottery sherds, a quernstone and lumps of charcoal), Hengelo-Plangebied (583 mainly burnt pottery sherds, 62 broken rolling stones and slag material), Emmen-Noordbargeres (3.5 kg of burnt pottery sherds, burnt loam and burnt animal bone) and Best-Aarle, house 310 (a layer with 673 sherds of burnt pottery covering a layer of burnt grains). A pit at Valkenswaard-Waalreseweg yielded twelve virtually complete pots placed either on their sides or upside down. Smaller pots were placed inside some of the larger ones. This is clearly a case of deliberate placement and arranging. Something similar could be observed in pit deposits at Breda-Moskes (including the two inverted pots in pit 31 and a storage jar containing a smaller pot in pit 38) and Wolder-Cannerberg (two miniature pots in a pit – one upright, the other inverted).

In some cases there are indications that material may have been burned on site. This applies, for example, to the above-mentioned pit at Boekel-Parkweg. A layer of burnt reddish-brown soil was documented at the bottom of the cellar or storage pit, suggesting that a (hot) fire had burned at that spot. The lumps of charcoal also tie in with this picture. Although the excavator's interpretation is that the house in question burned down, it is also possible that the objects were burned on the spot in connection with abandonment rituals. Pits in houses at Breda-Landgoed Heilaar and Breda-Moskes also contained a large quantity of charcoal. However,

it is not easy to determine from the available data whether the charcoal was brought from elsewhere and deposited secondarily in the pit, or whether it should be interpreted as having been burned on site. In a similar vein, we can point to pits near two houses at Riethoven, where there are also indications of the presence of fire at the site (Fig. 5.8).⁸⁷

A case that merits special attention is the cluster of pits near house 11 at Breda-Moskes (Fig. 5.8). Here there were at least five pits containing mainly fragmented material: pottery sherds, burnt bone, burnt loam, quernstone fragments, whetstones and a spindle whorl. Pit 38, referred to above, yielded a large storage jar containing a small pot and many seeds of barley, millet and emmer wheat, charcoal, burnt bone and a whetstone. At least one of the pits intersected the features of the house, showing that it is younger than the house plan. This is also suggested by the deposits. It thus appears that these deposits should be associated with the abandonment and dismantling of the house, or the period thereafter. Perhaps the abandoned house site continued to be visited for the performance of ritual acts.⁸⁸

Interpretations as closing deposits also predominate for the pits. Only in a few cases is an interpretation as a foundation deposit suggested. This latter category includes a pot in a house at Assendelft and a glass bracelet fragment in a pit inside house 142 at Helmond-Brandevoort II. In these instances, it is assumed that the objects were buried under the floor of the houses before the houses were occupied. A similar phenomenon has also been documented for house platforms at Ezinge.⁸⁹ The question, however, is whether such deposits can be distinguished with certainty from deposits relating to the habitation phase of the house.

Entrances

Deposits at house entrances are documented at Epse-'t Wilgert (an isolated Celtic coin), Nijmegen-Noord-Vindplaats 73 (two spinning whorls), Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase 1 (a grinding block), Tilburg-Tradepark (a complete pot) and Sterksel-Weiakkers (a bowl with holes in the base). In addition, the burnt sherds of a complete pot were deposited in the entrance posthole of a house at Leiden-Wassenaar-Rijnlandroute. Deposits at the entrances to houses at Ede-Park Reehorst, Borger-

⁸⁶ Gerritsen 2003, 94, with further references to Verwers 1972.

⁸⁷ Gerritsen 2003, 98.

⁸⁸ Koot & Berkvens 2004, 201–203. Koot & Berkvens suggest that these pits may relate to ritual practices carried out at the former house, perhaps in connection with ancestor worship. For other indications of this phenomenon, see Gerritsen 2003, 100, 107. Reference can also be made to the deposition of a bronze knobbed sickle in the abandoned Bronze Age house at Tilburg-Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan.

⁸⁹ Nieuwhof 2015.

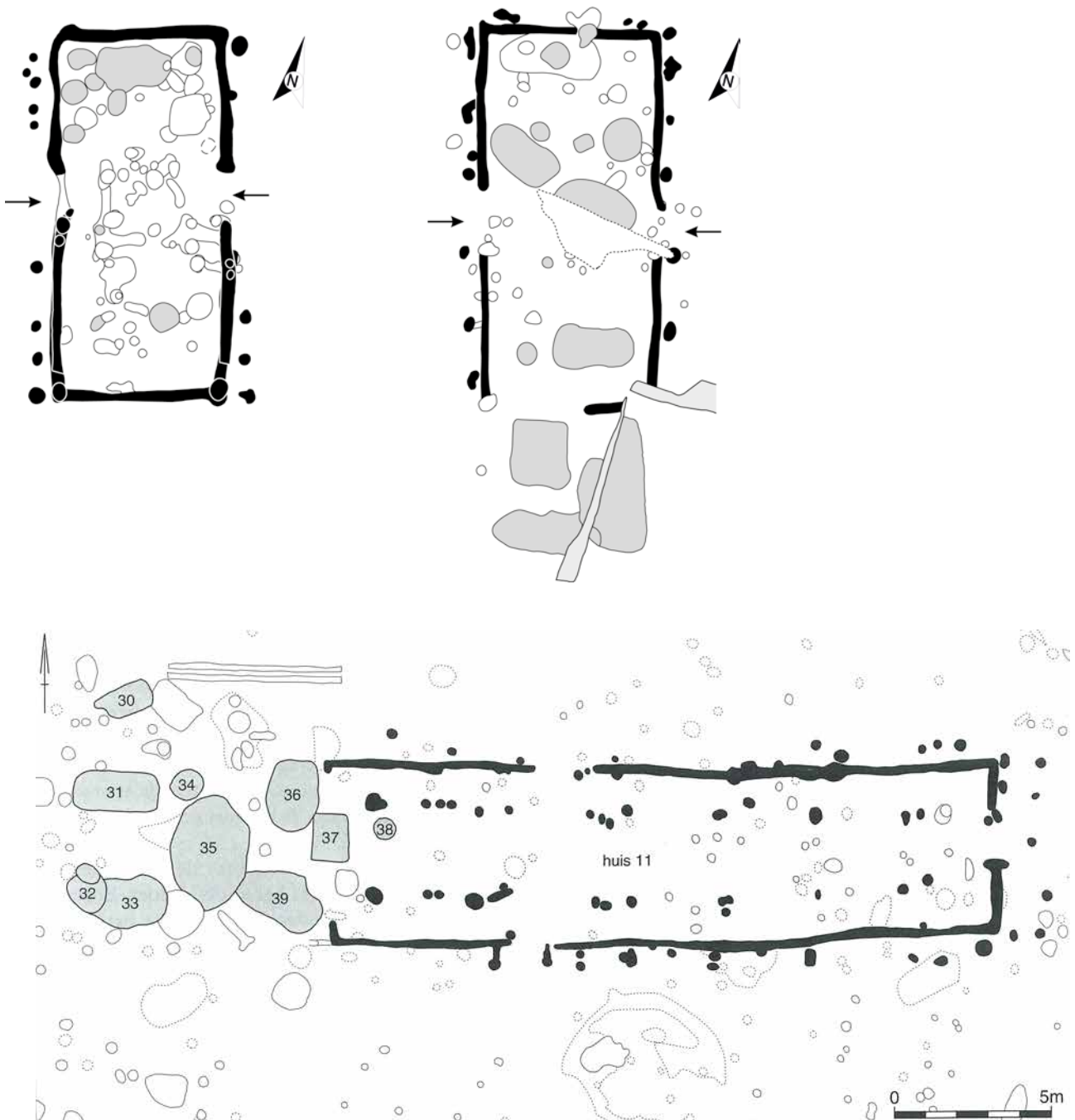


Fig. 5.8. Pit clusters with special deposits at two houses at Riethoven (above) and house 11 in Breda-Moskes (below) (source: Gerritsen 2003, Fig. 3.31; Koot & Berkvens 2004, 202, Fig. 10.4).

Daalkampen II-Klokbeker and Rosmalen-Noord also involved relatively small quantities of fragmented pottery. Larger deposits of fragmented material are known from Driebergen-Lange Dreef and Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. At the Driebergen house, ditches and pits at the opposing entrances

contained hundreds of pottery sherds and the fragments of two loom weights. The proportion of burnt pottery was relatively low. At the entrance to house 4039 at Boxmeer, no fewer than 1327 pottery sherds (29.5 kg) were found, neatly stacked in a pit. They appear to belong to about eight different pots. A little over half of



Fig. 5.9. Horse and cattle skulls and dog bone in the sod wall of a house at Ezinge (source: Van den Broeke 2005b, 661).

the sherds from the pit display slight traces of burning.

For most of the deposits assigned an explicit interpretation, the excavators suggest that they are closing deposits. However, the pot from Tilburg-Tradepark and the two spindle whorls from Nijmegen-Noord-Vindplaats 7 are assumed to have been deposited when the houses were being built.

Walls

Some of the deposits associated with house walls are individual objects, such as an inverted pot in the northeastern corner of the house at Ede-Park Reehorst. Slightly larger deposits come from Leersum-Middelweggebied (pottery sherds and burnt animal bone), Nijverdal-Eversberg (14 pottery sherds, three pecking/rubbing stones and a cobble) and Borger-Daalkampen II-Klokbeker (40 pottery sherds, animal bone, natural stone and flint). Pit deposits were found by the walls of houses at Weerselo-’t Spikkert (5 kg of pottery sherds, including a complete storage jar) and Helden-Schrames (6.7 kg of pottery sherds, natural stone, flint and burnt loam). In the case of Weerselo, the pit is located against the outside wall. A deposit from older

studies involved horse and cattle skulls and dog bone deposited or buried in the sod wall of a house in Ezinge (Middle Iron Age).⁹⁰

Once again, most deposits assigned an explicit interpretation are regarded as closing deposits, or as foundation or closing deposits. Only the deposit at Ezinge is explicitly interpreted by Gerritsen as a foundation deposit (Fig. 5.9).⁹¹

Hearths

We know of relatively many Iron Age special deposits that can be associated with hearths. They often involve natural stone, sometimes in large quantities. A hearth in house 4030 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded part of a rotating quernstone, fragments of a non-rotating quernstone and a flat erratic boulder. Another hearth at the site (house 4032) contained more than 10 kg of natural stone, including a large part of a quernstone (of the ‘Napoleon’s hat’ variety), two rubbing stones/runner stones, a pecking/hammerstone and a pecking/rubbing stone. An interpretation as closing deposits has been suggested for these deposits. The hearth of a house at Deventer-Siemelinksweg also yielded a concentration of natural stone (5.6 kg), including a quernstone and loose chunks of

⁹⁰ Gerritsen 2003, 64.

⁹¹ Gerritsen 2003, 66.

tephrite. Hearths containing more pottery can also be mentioned here, such as those at Luchen (a large piece of pottery), Well-Aijen (129 pottery sherds (9 MNI), a spindle whorl and four burnt stones (including one tool)) and Borger-Daalkampen II-Klokbeker (storage jar sherds).

House floor (ground level)

The floor level of the houses has not survived in the vast majority of cases. As a result, we tend to only know about objects that were deposited (slightly) deeper within the house features. However, material that appears to have been deposited at floor level has been documented in a number of especially well-preserved houses. The first instance concerns house 3 at Culemborg-Hoge Prijs, where a thick layer containing a large quantity of mainly burnt pottery is documented above the southeastern half of the building. Pottery concentrations were also found above one of the aisle postholes and in an internal pit. In another well-preserved house at Zijderveld, both the floor level and the hearth have been preserved.⁹² Here too, a layer containing a large quantity of burnt pottery was observed above the ground features. It comprised a least a thousand sherds of many non-complete pots.

In both cases, a large number of vessels appear to have been burned elsewhere and then brought to the house site, with fragments or objects – consciously selected or otherwise – ending up in pits and dismantled postholes, or being deliberately placed there. The fact that deposits are often found at the top of postholes, even in less well-preserved houses, ties in with this picture. In most houses we find only material deposits in the buried features, but larger quantities of (burnt and fragmented) household goods may originally have been scattered across all or part of the dismantled house site. It is therefore quite conceivable that – as a result of limited preservation – we are only seeing a portion of the original deposition practices. It is also possible that when fragmented household goods were deposited in features, this involved specific selections and choices regarding the objects to be deposited, the place of deposition (in central postholes, wall postholes or at the entrance) and the way in which the objects were deposited (stacked, inverted, etc.).

If we take a slightly broader perspective, we find indications in other periods too of

material distribution at the occupation level of house sites, probably associated with the abandonment and dismantling of the houses. We can refer here to Bronze Age houses at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok (with various special objects in the covering cultural layer above the houses), a Roman house at Rotterdam-Delftse Schie (with pottery sherds, fibulae and coins that were deposited around the house) and a house at Ellewoutsdijk. The excavator of the latter house suggests that the ceramic pots were smashed on site. We can also point to deposits on the floors of houses 713 and 715 at Ezinge, with three loom weights and a loom weight and miniature pot respectively.⁹³ A final interesting parallel is the well-preserved house sites at Schagen, described by Therkorn.⁹⁴ She reconstructs a practice whereby the houses in question, after being abandoned and dismantled, were covered with low mounds of cut turf, clay and a large quantity of find material (including large amounts of pottery and bone), and were then set alight. Therkorn emphasises that the abandoned house sites were ‘buried’ in this way, at the same time creating a form of monument in the landscape. Although Therkorn reports that this practice was geographically confined to the region above the Oer-IJ, it raises the question of whether somewhat comparable practices may have been common elsewhere, such as in relation to the house at Culemborg-Hoge Prijs.

Houses with several deposits

In various houses, several special deposits are documented. It is interesting to see whether these deposits can be associated with the same or different practices and deposition times.

Houses with several pit deposits are known at Breda-Landgoed Heilaar (house 3), Valkenswaard-Waalreneweg (house 4) and Breda-Moskes (house 11). Both deposits at Breda-Landgoed Heilaar are interpreted as closing deposits. The excavator suggests that the pit deposits at Valkenswaard are possibly associated with the house’s habitation phase. The pits at Breda-Moskes may relate to practices carried out after the house was abandoned.

At Ulft-Biezenakker too, we find several deposits that appear to be linked to the dismantling of the house. For example, fragments of the same burnt Schräghals pot were found in two central postholes, while a wall

⁹² Van den Broeke 2015, 91; Van den Broeke 2020, with further references.

⁹³ Nieuwhof 2015, 177.

⁹⁴ Therkorn 2004, 16, 55.

posthole of the same house contained a large, burnt wall fragment of a handmade pot and a rectangular loom weight fragment.⁹⁵ It is quite conceivable that these objects were deposited in the postholes at the same time, following the dismantling of the house. The same might be suggested for deposits in houses at Steenderen-Covikseweg (two postholes containing burnt pottery), Wehl-Heideslag (burnt pottery in two different postholes), Malden-Broeksingel (burnt pottery and loom weights in two central postholes) and Leersum-Middelweggebied (burnt pottery sherds in an aisle posthole and burnt pottery and burnt animal bone near the wall).

In the case of Boekel-Parkweg, the excavator suggests different interpretations for the two deposits inside the house: as a possible foundation deposit for the pot (base) containing pebbles in a central posthole and as a possible closing deposit for the cellar deposit.

Possible (out)buildings and granaries

Possible (out)buildings

Thirteen deposits are known from the features of possible Iron Age outbuildings (Tables 5.16 and 5.17). In some cases these are deposits from 'isolated postholes' (whether or not within clusters of features) that originally belonged to a structure that cannot be reconstructed further.

Table 5.16. Overview of special deposits in possible buildings/outbuildings and granaries from the Iron Age (to Roman period).

	(Out)buildings (?)	Granaries
EIA	3	8
E-MIA	1	5
MIA	2	9
M-LIA	3	5
LIA	2	7
LIA-ERP	1	1
IA	1	5
Total	13	40

They are listed here as 'possible (out)buildings'. The small number of deposits is evenly distributed over the sub-periods within the Iron Age.

The single deposits include a small, complete, handmade pot from a possible outbuilding at Beek-Waterstraat and a spindle whorl in a possible outbuilding at Pesse. Much more frequently, however, they comprised fragmented material. The burnt sherds of a large pot were stacked in the core of a posthole at Steenderen-Covikseweg. Another posthole nearby also yielded burnt pot remains. These postholes may have been part of the same structure. Large quantities of fragmented and burnt pottery were sometimes deposited in the postholes of other buildings, such as at Zevenaer-Wageningen-Mouterijnoort, Weert-Kampershoek Noord, Borger-Daalkampen, Son en Breugel-HIVA-terrein and Nuenen-Kerkackers-Luistruik phase 2. Some 1.5 kg of pottery sherds from two different features were found in outbuilding 413 at Weert.

In addition to pottery, two deposits contained quernstone fragments and two others contained spindle whorls. In the case of Rhenen-Remmerden (N225 Rotonde) these were three fitting fragments of a bedstone from two postholes within a post cluster and another possible runner stone from one of these postholes. Other notable deposits are the two fragments of blue glass bracelets from two different postholes of outbuilding B4316 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck and a human skull fragment from a posthole at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet.

Only the small pot from Beek-Waterstraat is explicitly interpreted as a foundation deposit. It is suggested that the two glass bracelet fragments from the outbuilding at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck could be a foundation deposit, or the result of a rite of passage. It is suggested that the other deposits for which there is a specific interpretation could be closing deposits.

⁹⁵ Hermesen & Weiß-König 2014, 53. The fracture surfaces of the material from the Ulft house showed visible signs of burning, which means that it will have been broken before or while it was burned.

Table 5.17. Overview of special deposits in outbuildings from the Iron Age (to Roman period).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Beek	Waterstraat	small handmade pot in posthole of possible outbuilding	-800	-500
Borger	Daalkampen	114 pottery sherds (7 MNI storage jars) and 1 spindle whorl	-500	-19
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	2 fragments of blue, 5-ribbed bracelets in 2 different postholes of outbuilding B4316	-300	-100
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	human skull fragment in 'isolated' posthole	-150	-19
Nuenen	Kerkackers-Luistruik, fase 2	3 broken pots in a posthole	-250	70
Pesse	Fluitenberg	spindle whorl in isolated posthole	-500	-250
Rhenen	Remmerden (rotonde N225)	3 matching bedstone fragments in 2 postholes in post cluster and possible runner stone in one of the postholes	-250	-19
Son	Son en Breugel-HIVA-terrein	34 pottery sherds (7 MNI) in posthole	-430	-377
Steenderen	Covikseweg	sherds of 1 large pot, stacked in posthole, after removal of post (post cluster)	-800	-500
Steenderen	Covikseweg	parts of rim and wall of pot in posthole (post cluster)	-800	-500
Weert	Kampershoek Noord, fase 1	35 pottery sherds (1.5 kg) in 2 features of outbuilding 413	-800	-250
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/Aijerbandstraat	quernstone fragments in isolated posthole	-800	-19
Zevenaar	Wageningen-Mouterijnoort	large quantity of burnt pottery in posthole, after removal of post	-300	-200

Granaries

The number of granary deposits from the Iron Age is quite high, especially compared to previous and later periods (Table 5.18). There are 40 granary deposits in total, fairly evenly distributed over the different sub-periods of the Iron Age (Table 5.16).

Deposits containing fragmented material strongly predominate, followed at some distance by single deposits (see Table 5.19).

Some deposits of fragmented material involve only pottery, but many contain fragments of other object categories as well, such as natural stone objects, ceramic objects or burnt loam. There is considerable variation in both the composition of the deposits and the quantity of material. In some cases, large quantities of find material are involved. The core of a single granary posthole at Nijmegen-Noord-Lent-Laauwik contained 11 kg of pottery sherds and a second posthole yielded 5 kg. The sherds come from many different pots, with large (storage) jars predominating.⁹⁶ The two granary postholes in the settlement of Oss-Zaltbommelseweg also yielded at least 11 kg of pottery, tephrite and other stone (much of it secondarily burnt).⁹⁷ Other examples are known from Culemborg-Hoge Prijs (granary 71: 4.2 kg of pottery and two loom weights), Zundert-Weereijspark (granary 13002: 291 pottery sherds in several postholes) (Fig. 5.10), Nijmegen-Noord-Lent-Laauwik (granary 2: 3.6 kg of pottery

(a maximum of 25 specimens) and burnt loam) (Fig. 5.10), Nijmegen-Lent site 9-57 (granary 2: 4.1 kg of pottery), Tiel-Medel-De Reth (granary 13004: 2.9 kg of pottery), Someren-Waterdael (granary 477: 2.1 kg of pottery) and Oss-Almstein (2.5 kg of pottery and 2.2 kg of burnt loam).⁹⁸ There were smaller deposits at Leusden-De Schammer (sherds of a complete pot neatly stacked in a posthole), Borgharen-Daalderveld-Pasestraat (large fragments of several burnt loom weights), Culemborg-Hoge Prijs (granary 53: 21 pottery sherds, 14 bits of animal bone and three pieces of tephrite), Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid (burnt pottery sherds in the cores of two postholes) and Malden-Broeksingel (a burnt, complete pot in sherds). At Oosterhout-De Contreie a complete, unburnt pot was centrally positioned in one of the postholes of granary 3004. This position indicates that the post had been removed at the time that the pot was placed in the hole. The posthole of granary 3002 at the same site contained 113 burnt pottery sherds from a single tripartite pot. Both granaries date from the same period. This latter example shows the variation in treatment before the material was deposited. Whereas fragmented and burnt material was sometimes deposited in the postholes of dismantled granaries, in other cases this involved complete, unburnt objects.⁹⁹

The single and composite deposits included deposits in granaries at Someren-Groote

⁹⁶ Van den Broeke 2002a.

⁹⁷ Van den Broeke 2002a; Gerritsen 2003, 93. Gerritsen also mentions an old example from the settlement at Haps (500–19 BC), where the postholes of a granary contained a large amount of pottery.

⁹⁸ For Oss-Almstein, see Van den Broeke 2002a and Gerritsen 2003, 93.

⁹⁹ See also Van den Broeke 2015.

Table 5.18. Overview of special deposits in granaries from the Iron Age (to Roman period).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Azelo	Aardgastransportleidingtracé A-670	complete pot in sherds and complete sandstone anvil	-500	-19
Barneveld	Bloemendal	pottery sherds and part of an iron knife	-500	-250
Borger	Daalkampen	large quernstone fragment	-250	-19
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker	many sherds of handmade pottery in pit inside granary	-250	70
Borgharen	Daalderveld-Pasestraat	fragments of several burnt loom weights	-500	-400
Cuijk	De Nielt	pottery sherds, compact in posthole	-500	-250
Cuijk	De Nielt	sherds of handmade pottery, compact in posthole	-500	-250
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	21 pottery sherds, 14 pieces of animal bone and 3 pieces of tephrite	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	sherds of 1 pot	-800	-250
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	decorated spindle whorl and several sherds	-725	-700
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	2 loom weights, 4.2 kg of pottery	-500	-250
Denekamp	Lattrop	approx. 90 sherds of large storage jar in posthole core	-800	-19
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	burnt pottery sherds in cores of 2 postholes	-375	-100
Didam	Kerkwijk	sandstone whetstone in posthole	-800	-19
Didam	Kerkwijk	quernstone in posthole	-500	-200
Eersel	Kerkebogten	fragments of dish and pot in posthole core	-500	-250
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	3 loom weights in posthole core	-250	-19
Geleen	Einighauserweg 101	pottery sherds in youngest fill of posthole	-500	-450
Geleen	Hof van Limburg	pottery and stones	-800	-500
Groningen	Helpermaar	complete ceramic pot	-500	-250
Heteren	Uilenburg	(complete?) ceramic pot, possibly placed upside down	-800	-500
Hijken	Hijkerveld	large part of bowl at top of posthole. Matching sherd in another posthole	-800	-19
Leusden	De Schammer	complete pot in sherds, neatly stacked in posthole	-500	-19
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase III	76 pot sherds	-800	-250
Maastricht	Az Landgoederenzone	58 pottery sherds in 1 posthole	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	burnt, complete pot in sherds	-800	-250
Nijmegen	Laauwik	large pieces of pottery and burnt loam in 7 postholes	-800	-19
Nijmegen	Lent-Laauwikstraat-Noord	more than 11 kg of pottery sherds in core of 1 posthole; 5 kg of pottery from second posthole	-800	-500
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	large pottery sherds from 2 postholes, some from the same pots (total of 4.1 kg)	-800	-500
Oosterhout	De Contreie	almost complete pot in 1 posthole	-250	-19
Oosterhout	De Contreie	complete (?) pot	-250	-19
Oss	Almstein	2.2 kg of burnt loam in 1 posthole, 2.5 kg of pottery in another posthole	-600	-400
Oss	Zaltbommelseweg	11 kg of pottery, tephrite and other natural stone in 2 postholes	-250	-19
Someren	Groote Hoeven	complete ceramic beaker (in sherds) and piece of salt trough	-800	-500
Someren	Waterdael III	69 sherds (2.1 kg) (6 MNI) in posthole core	-250	-150
Tiel	Medel	234 pottery sherds (2.9 kg) at top of posthole	-250	-19
Veghel	De Scheifelaar II	42 sherds of a pot in posthole	-500	-250
Vorden	Ruurloseweg	bottom of a ceramic pot	-800	-500
Wehl	Heideslag	part of granite quernstone, loom weight and pottery in several postholes	-800	-500
Zundert	Weereijs Park	pottery in 4 features; concentration in top fill of posthole	-800	-250

Table 5.19. Overview of special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries from the Iron Age, by category.

	Houses	Outbuildings (?)	Granaries	Total
Single	23	4	8	35
Fragmented	55	9	31	95
Composite	11	-	1	12
NA/indeterminate	-	-	-	-

Hoeven (a complete pottery beaker (in sherds)), Heteren-Uilenburg (a probably complete and possibly inverted pot) and Groningen-Helpermaar (a complete pot). Other complete objects from granary postholes include two documented spindle whorls (Culemborg-Hoge Puijs, granary 67 and Borger-Daalkampen, granary 96), three loom weights (Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, granary 149), a sandstone whetstone (Didam-Kerkwijk, granary 14) and a quernstone (Didam-Kerkwijk, granary 45).

Four granary deposits from the Early and Middle Iron Age and a further two from the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age (also described earlier) are documented in the settlement of Culemborg-Hoge Puijs. Here too, we see a diversity of deposits. For example, they may contain a large quantity of burnt loam

(granary 58), a documented spindle whorl (granary 67), the partially burnt sherds of a pot (granary 68), 4.2 kg of pottery and two loom weights (granary 71), pottery, chunks of tephrite and animal bone (granary 53) and pottery and animal bone (granary 50). Five of these deposits are interpreted as closing deposits. Only for the spindle whorl from granary 67 is it suggested that it could be a foundation or closing deposit.

In summary, it would appear that the Iron Age granary deposits predominantly involved (mainly) burnt and fragmented material that was deposited in the postholes after the posts had been removed. In some cases, the fragments can be reconstructed into an (almost) complete object. Most deposits are interpreted as closing deposits (and sometimes as foundation or closing deposits). An explicit interpretation as foundation deposits can only be suggested for the deposits at Vorden-Ruurloseweg and Heteren-Uilenburg.

Composition

Table 5.19 gives an overview of the composition of the special deposits described above, broken down into the categories of single deposits, composite deposits and deposits containing fragmented material. We see a clear dominance of deposits of fragmented material, followed at some distance by single and composite deposits. This is true for houses, possible outbuildings and granaries. Deposits of fragmented material are clearly concentrated in the Early and Middle Iron



Fig. 5.10. Special deposits with fragmented material in granary postholes at Zundert-Weereijspark (left) and Nijmegen-Noord-Lent-Laaauwik (right) (source: VUHbs Archeologie; Van den Broeke 2015, Fig. 3).

Table 5.20. Overview of occurrence of object categories in special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries from the Iron Age.

	Houses	(Out)buildings (?)	Granaries	Total
Vessels	69	8	35	112
Animal bone	9	-	-	9
Textile attributes	12	2	5	19
Tools	8	-	3	11
Food attributes	11	1	5	17
Fibulae/jewellery	1	1	-	2
Weapons/militaria	1	-	-	1
Coins	1	-	-	1
Burnt loam	8	-	1	9
Botanical remains	2	-	-	2
Human bone	3	1	-	4
Other	1	-	-	1

Age. The picture for the Iron Age thus corresponds closely to that for the Bronze Age, with deposits of fragmented material concentrated in the Late Bronze Age.

If we look at the composition of deposits

in terms of object categories, we see a strong predominance of vessels, followed at a distance by food attributes, textile attributes, animal bone, tools and burnt loam (Table 5.20). The other categories scarcely feature. Deposits in houses and granaries have a very similar composition. The numbers for possible outbuildings are too small to be able to make any meaningful statements.

The composition of Iron Age deposits corresponds quite well to that of Bronze Age deposits, although animal bone and burnt loam are less well represented in the Iron Age and there is a larger proportion of tools. It should be noted, however, that the numbers involved are small.

5.3.5 Roman period

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Houses and buildings

The Roman period has by far the most special deposits that can be associated directly with houses. Table 5.21 shows deposits inventoried from Malta reports in the context of this study. A sizeable number of deposits from this period are also known from older studies and earlier (partial) inventories.¹⁰⁰ Given the importance of this older dataset, we have decided to include these data in the overview.

¹⁰⁰ Including inventories by Gerritsen 2003, Van Kampen 2008; Van Hoof 2007 and Ball & Jansen 2018.

Table 5.21. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Roman period.

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Assendelft	F5	unknown	wall ditch	wall	ceramic pot	0	100
Assendelft	N1	unknown	posthole	core structure?	human femur	0	100
Beek	Waterstraat	unknown	southernmost wall post: corner post?	wall (corner?)	ceramic pot; hole in bottom	0	150
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 370	entrance posthole	entrance	knife	100	200
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 386	sunken byre	byre	iron lancehead or spearhead, hook wrench	200	250
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 386	wall post	wall	knife	200	250
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker	house 5	large pit inside house	pit	large stone	-19	70
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house 3001	western central post	core structure	ceramic jug	150	200
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house 3002	post-removal pits above 2 central posts	core structure	post-removal pit 1: 3 kg of small quernstone pieces + Roman brick (> 5 kg)	150	250

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house 3002	post-removal pits above 2 central posts	core structure	post-removal pit 2: part of sandstone whetstone	150	250
Boxtel	Korenmolen	house 8002	2 pits at northern entrance	entrance	humous material	100	200
Boxtel	Korenmolen	possibly belonging to 8002	in youngest fill of pit	pit	charred hazelnut shells, burnt loam and charcoal	100	200
Boxtel	Korenmolen	possibly belonging to 8002	in youngest fill of pit	pit	large number of tephrite quernstone fragments, burnt loam and charcoal	100	200
Breda	Huifakker	house 59	posthole near entrance	entrance	large number of tephrite quernstone fragments and tuffstone	250	300
Breda	Steenakker	house 47	sunken byre	byre	sawblade, pin, wire fibula, fibula fragments, hairpin, hearth shovel, ornament, 3 fishhooks, 2 spearheads, 1 key, nails, 12 hobnails, nail, knife tang, 7 glass beads, large quantity of natural stone, burnt loam, plasterwork	250	300
Breda	Steenakker	house 48	pit along northern wall	wall	nails, 2 shield grips, a fibula hinge, 1 padlock spring, 2 copper lockplate fragments from a chest and a lead cylinder, possibly a fishing sinker	250	300
Breda	Steenakker	house 48	posthole	unknown	13 glass beads from a single posthole	250	300
Budel	Noord-Duitse school	house 9	entrance pit(s)	entrance	11 iron objects: knives, spearhead and undefined objects	230	300
Budel	Noord-Duitse school	house 9	entrance pit(s)	entrance	at the other house entrance: dagger/knife	230	300
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	house 594a	wall post of northern long wall	wall	golden Nervii coin (c. 60 BC)	271	272
Cuijk	De Nielt	house 8032	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	painted beaker	75	125
Cuijk	De Nielt	house 8027	eastern truss post of second truss	core structure	mortarium	200	260
Cuijk	De Nielt	sunken hut 9001	in sunken hut	fill of sunken hut	complete pedestal bowl	400	450
Cuijk	De Nielt	sunken hut 9003	in sunken hut	fill of sunken hut	complete pedestal bowl	400	450
Cuijk	De Nielt	house 8068	wall ditch	wall	handmade pot	30	70
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8012	on house exterior	exterior	2 horse skulls and 1 cattle skull in 3 pits. Possibly complete animal burials	50	100
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8020	entrance posthole	entrance	coin hoard	180	200
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8003	inside house, next to entrance	entrance	animal grave (cattle)	200	300
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8002	central post, transition between living and byre sections, next to core	core structure	painted beaker	100	150
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8005	central post, transition between living and byre sections, on the bottom of posthole, on (decayed) plank	core structure	painted beaker	150	200
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8003	centrally located inside house	pit	charred material, demolition waste, virtually complete, burnt handmade pot	200	300
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8005	pit cutting house 8005	pit	complete sawblade, virtually complete, handmade Late Roman pot	270	450
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house 8005/ pit 25033	pit in northeast corner of house	wall (corner)	dolabra, anvil, 2 knives, split pin, nails, 2 keys and 2 whetstones	150	200
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/ Kwaklaan	house 123	pit near southern entrance	entrance	complete cattle skull and more than 100 pottery sherds	100	130

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/ Kwaklaan	house 123	3 large pits in living section (western part)	pit	approx. 1300 sherds of handmade pottery, spindle whorl, animal bone and burnt loam	100	130
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/ Kwaklaan	house 123	pit in northwest corner	wall (corner)	handmade miniature pot	100	130
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/ Kwaklaan	house 108	wall ditch, northwest corner	wall (corner)	handmade miniature pot with grapeseeds	100	130
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	house 103	pit along the southern wall	wall	pewter plate, iron nails, bronze cauldron, 2 whetstones, jug, 2 terra sigillata plates, terra sigillata beaker, painted beaker, coarse ware cooking pot, smooth ware jug amphora, iron hammerhead and 2 fragments of red deer antler, 3 large storage jars of Low Lands ware placed in a row (1 inverted). In middle storage jar: 2 painted beakers and a crushed coarse ware jug. Western storage jar completely filled with burnt loam, and covered with a layer of ash	200	300
Den Haag	Uithofslaan	house 1008	large, oblong pit inside the house	pit	sherds of handmade and wheel-thrown pottery (younger than house)	120	150
Den Haag	Wateringseveld	unknown	wall ditch at corner of house	wall (corner)	complete pot	-19	450
Deventer	Colmschate	unknown	aisle post near entrance	entrance	bronze Victoria figurine	250	300
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	house 2	at bottom of northeastern aisle posthole	core structure	complete conical spindle whorl	0	75
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	house 2	at top of northeastern aisle posthole	core structure	heavily burnt bowl (including fracture surfaces) higher in posthole	0	75
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	house 2	at bottom of posthole (post removed)	unknown	exceptionally large pottery sherds	0	75
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	house 2	at bottom of posthole (post removed)	unknown	exceptionally large pottery sherds	0	75
Druten	Klepperheide	house 11	in front of northern entrance to the house	entrance	2 horse burials	30	60
Druten	Klepperheide	house 1	inside the house, next to the entrance	entrance	2 horse burials	50	100
Eindhoven	Noord-Brabantlaan	house 11	sunken byre	byre	large part of Neolithic axe	150	270
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	house 6	pit inside house; central axis	pit	animal bone, wooden planks and posts, pottery, phosphate-rich organic material	80	120
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	house 6	in northwest corner of living section	wall	concentration of pottery	80	120
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	house 5	pit, top end	wall	phosphate-rich fill, fine grass, parts of posts (stacked)	100	140
Geldermalsen	Rijs and Ooijen	house 1	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	spindle whorl	-19	25
Geldermalsen	Rijs and Ooijen	house 2	western central post	core structure	handmade bowl	-19	70
Heerlen	Trilandis	house 5	core structure	core structure	187 pottery sherds, including terra sigillata, terra nigra, mortaria	100	180
Heeten	De Telgen	unknown	posthole of house	unknown	9 coins	150	200
Heeten		unknown	entrance post	entrance	footed beaker	300	400
Houten	Castellum	house 8001	post-removal pit of central post	core structure	2 handmade bowls and 1 cork urn, (antique) wire fibula, eye fibula	25	50
Lent	Steltsestraat	house 5h.3	wall ditch	wall	runner stone, incomplete	70	270
Lieshout	Beekseweg	house 400	edge of sunken byre	byre	scythe and plane	200	300
Midden-Delfland	site 03.01	unknown	near entrance	entrance	part of handmade pot	75	150

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Midden-Delfland	site 03.01	unknown	southeast corner	wall (corner)	part of handmade pot	75	150
Midden-Delfland	site 21.23	unknown	northeast corner of 3 successive houses	wall (corner)	phases 1–2: laurel wreath of plaited twigs; iron knife	20	120
Midden-Delfland	site 21.23	unknown	northeast corner of 3 successive houses	wall (corner)	phase 3: pottery lid, Mesolithic flint core	20	120
Midden-Delfland	site 01.23	unknown	northern wall ditch	wall	iron ploughshare	100	200
Midden-Delfland	site 03.01	unknown	northeast corner	wall (corner)	gaming pieces	0	100
Midden-Delfland	site 19.07	unknown	southwest corner	wall (corner)	pot	90	180
Naaldwijk	Holland College	house NHC-5	near house NHC-5	exterior	selection of bones from 2 horses, including skulls	175	225
Naaldwijk	Holland College	house NHC-5	pit 3 m north of house NHC-5	exterior	complete horse skeleton	175	225
Naaldwijk	Holland college	house 8001	southern long wall, possibly near entrance	entrance	handmade lugged pot	25	75
Nieuwegein	Batastraat	house 1	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	handmade cup	275	325
Nieuwegein	Batastraat	house 2	corner	wall (corner)	ceramic jug	275	325
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house 54	pit near entrance	entrance	2 handmade pots, 1 ring-based amphora, whetstone, chisel, ploughshare and pickaxe	0	125
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house 7	central post, transition between living and byre sections, immediately adjacent to post	core structure	ceramic jug	200	300
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house 3	wall ditch	wall	ceramic jug	0	270
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house 20	wall ditch, southeast corner	wall	ceramic jug	75	125
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	building 8	posthole	wall	coin(s)	200	300
Nistelrode		house 6	wall post at corner	wall (corner)	spoon drill	1	270
Oosterhout	Van Boetzelaerstraat	house 6	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	painted beaker	50	100
Oosterhout	Van Boetzelaerstraat	house 7	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	coarse ware beaker (Stuart 204)	50	100
Oss	De Geer	house 3	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete quernstone (Napoleon's hat)	0	70
Oss	Horzak	house 51	pit outside house	exterior	complete jug	-19	450
Oss	Horzak	house 4a	outer post	exterior	stone axe, Middle/Late Neolithic	-19	450
Oss	Horzak	house 36	entrance post	entrance	almost complete beaker	-19	450
Oss	Horzak	house 18	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	pottery beaker placed above bronze coin	-19	450
Oss	Horzak	house 7	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	coin (as, Vespasian)	50	100
Oss	Horzak	house 41	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	pottery beaker	125	180

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Oss	Ussen	house 9	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete quernstone (runner stone and bedstone)	100	150
Oss	Ussen	house 3	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete pottery beaker	150	200
Oss	Westerveld	house 74	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	ceramic jug	25	75
Reusel	Zuid	unknown	central post	core structure	concentration of nails	-19	450
Reusel	Zuid	unknown	central post	core structure	nails, fitting strip, axe, ring with hook and weight, part of scythe, latch and bone	-19	450
Riethoven	Heesmortel	house 107	central post	core structure	coin (dupondius, Nero)	70	125
Rijswijk	De Bult	house 19	southeast corner of house	wall (corner)	ceramic bowl	175	275
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house 23	on southern side of house	exterior	sherd with graffito (VSLM?), whetstone with inscription (text and 8-pointed star), complete ceramic beakers, mortarium, coins and fibulae	100	200
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house 23	hearth	hearth	large quantity of charred grain	100	200
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	house 1	outer post, southeast corner of house	exterior (corner)	ceramic pot (fragmented)	150	225
Someren	Ter Hofstadlaan	house 300	corner post	wall (corner)	2 ankle cuffs, 2 axle caps and a series of other (probable) wagon components	75	200
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	structure 14002/14005	in (wall) ditch, near entrances	entrance	complete pottery (including miniature pot) and inverted pot base on top of loom weight	-30	-10
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	house 8002	house ditch near entrance	entrance	379 sherds of handmade pottery (29 MNI), 2 sling bullets, ceramic discs, loom weight, spoon-bow fibula	1	30
Tiel	Oude Tielseweg	house 1	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete bowl, handmade pottery	25	70
Tiel	Oude Tielseweg	house 3	central post, transition between living and byre sections; in the middle of the fill, not at the bottom	core structure	2 pots, beaker size	70	110
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 1	house ditch	exterior	partial horse skeleton	10	50
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 15	house ditch	exterior	2 dog skeletons	250	270
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 2	house ditch	exterior	cattle skull	270	350
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 8	ditch next to entrance	entrance	complete handmade pot	-30	10
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 27	central post, top end	core structure	small colander/sieve	0	70
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 14	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	2 pottery beakers and a coin	90	150
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 3	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete ceramic bowl	90	180
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house 10	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete pot	100	160

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Tiel	Medel-Rotonde	house 1	central post, transition between living and byre sections; niche next to posthole	core structure	small conical handmade ceramic beaker	10	40
Tiel	Medel-Rotonde	house 2	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	painted beaker, terra nigra pot	90	150
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 8	in cultural layer near house	exterior	eye fibula	0	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 8	ditch, transition between living and byre sections	entrance	eye fibula	0	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 27	entrance pit/ditch	entrance	runner stone fragment	0	200
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 34	pits near entrance	entrance	large part of quernstone (pit 1), large quantity of pottery (pit 2)	40	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 36	top part of central posts, after removal of posts	core structure	burnt pottery, burnt loam and pieces of quernstone	0	50
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 34	top part of central posts, after removal of posts	core structure	burnt pottery, burnt loam and pieces of quernstone	40	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 7	westernmost central post, packing soil	core structure	complete carving knife	100	200
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 37	northwest corner of house	pit	sherds of a handmade bowl beneath a complete tephrite quernstone	-50	50
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 36	wall post	wall	2 quernstone fragments, upright	0	50
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 56	two points opposite one another in the wall ditch	wall	virtually complete coarse ware pot (fragmented)	150	200
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	house 56	two points opposite one another in the wall ditch	wall	concentration of wall sherds of Dressel 20 amphora	150	200
Utrecht	De Woerd		wall ditch, top end	wall	coin	3	17
Varsen	Aardgastransport-leidingtracé Scheemda-Ommen (A-661)		wall post	wall	stacked sherds of 3 pots, slightly burnt	-19	70
Veessen	Hoogwatergeul	house 7	western part of house	pit	horse grave	270	450
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 6	westernmost central post, top of the core (about 30 cm)	core structure	large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam	0	300
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 5	in the core of a central post throughout the fill	core structure	burnt animal bone; mainly fragments of deer antler	50	250
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 5	second central post from the west; plane around the features very dirty	core structure	large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam	50	250
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 2	large zone (2.5 x 3 m) above post core of second central post from the west	core structure	large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam	150	200
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 7	second central post from the west	core structure	large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam	175	225

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house 5	sunken byre	byre	188 pieces of slag, fragments of possible quernstone, whetstone fragments, 5 nails, special bronze miniature bucket, trapezoidal iron object, lump of smelted lead, iron horse bit, bronze fibula	50	250
Wateringen	Juliahof	house WJ-02	northern entrance posthole	entrance	half a tephrite quernstone	150	225
Wateringen	Juliahof	house WJ-05	south wall ditch or palisaded ditch	wall	base of a ceramic pot, sandstone whetstone	50	125
Weert	Laarderweg	house 38	central post	core structure	coin	-19	450
Weert	Laarderweg	house 25	central post	core structure	coin	-19	450
Wehl	Norman Belvealstraat	sunken hut 11	corner of sunken hut	pit	handmill (runner stone and bedstone)	70	270
Westeinde	Noormansveld		pit inside house	pit	burnt pottery, burnt loam, charcoal and the point of a chopping knife or bill hook	200	300
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 11	house 1	westernmost central post	core structure	complete jug (fragmented)	90	150
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 11	house 15	westernmost central post	core structure	complete pot (Hofheim 87)	125	150
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 11	house 65	central post, transition between living and byre sections	core structure	complete jug (Stuart 110a)	125	150
Wijster		house 38	entrance post	entrance	terra sigillata bowl placed on top of a handmade beaker	300	400

General

The inventoried dataset contains 148 deposits inside or near houses (Table 5.21). These are separate deposits, several of which can occur within a single house. Table 5.22 summarises the subdataset, broken down into sub-period and location in relation to the house. The chronological concentration is clearly in the Middle Roman period, followed by the Early Roman period, with the Late Roman period less well represented. In terms of contexts, the core structure predominates (33%), followed by walls/corners (22%), entrances (18%), pits (10%) and the exterior of the house (9%). Byres and hearths play a minor role. For deposits in the core

structure, we see a clear predominance in the Early and Middle Roman period but this fades in the Late Roman period (and the overlap between the Middle and Late Roman period), when pits (and possibly entrances) play a more prominent role.

Core structure

A total of 49 deposits can be associated with the core structure of houses. They are made up of 30 single deposits, six composite deposits and twelve deposits of fragmented material.

The single deposits mainly involve complete vessels, with a clear predominance of jugs and beakers. Beakers were found in the central postholes of houses at Cuijk-De Nielt (house 8032), Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (houses 8002 and 8005) (Fig. 5.11), Oss-Horzak (house 41), Oss-Ussen (house 3), Oosterhout-Van Boetzel-aerstraat (houses 6 and 7) and Tiel-Medel-Rotonde (house 1). The latter case concerns a small handmade beaker. Beakers also occur in various composite deposits, such as at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (house 14; two pottery beakers and a coin), Tiel-Medel-Rotonde (house 2: a painted beaker and a terra nigra pot), Tiel-Oude Tielseweg (two coarse ware pots of beaker size) and Oss-Horzak house 18 (a beaker placed over a bronze coin). Jugs are known from central postholes in houses at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen site 11 (houses 1 and 65), Oss-Westerveld (house 74) and Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen (house 7). Vessel deposits also contained a few pots, bowls,

Table 5.22. Overview of special deposits in/near houses from the Roman period, by period and location inside the house.

	Core structure	Entrance	Wall	Wall (corner)	Hearth	Pit	Exterior	Byre	Other	Total
ERP	11	6	4	-	-	2	2	-	2	27
E-MRP	9	6	3	5	-	-	4	1	-	28
MRP	22	7	9	7	1	8	5	2	1	62
M-LRP	1	5	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	12
LRP	1	2	2	-	-	2	1	-	2	10
RP	5	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	9
Total	49	27	20	13	1	14	14	5	5	148



Fig. 5.11. Foundation deposits in central postholes of houses from the Roman period. Beakers in central postholes of 8002 and 8005 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (above) and in a central posthole in Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat (below). The beaker in the central posthole of house 8005 was placed on a wooden plank (source: Van Kampen 2018, Fig. 5.10; Van den Broeke 2004).

a mortarium and a small colander or sieve (Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg house 27).

In addition to vessels, coins occur with some regularity, such as in central postholes at Weert-Laarderweg, Oss-Horzak and Riethoven-Heesmortel, as well as in composite deposits at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (two pottery beakers and a coin) and Oss-Horzak (pottery beaker placed over a bronze coin). Rarer finds are a complete quernstone set (runner stone and bedstone) in house 9 at Oss-Ussen (Fig. 5.12), a complete antique quernstone (Napoleon's hat) in house 3 at Oss-De Geer, spinning whorls in houses at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid and Geldermalsen-Rijs and Ooijen and a complete carving knife in a central posthole of house 7 at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél.

These complete, unburnt objects were predominantly found at the bottom of the packing soil of the postholes. They sometimes occurred on the bottom of the posthole and sometimes on the foundation plank (as at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen house 8005 (Fig. 5.11) and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg house 3) or in a separately dug niche next to the packing soil



Fig. 5.12. Quernstones in a central posthole of house 9 at Oss-Ussen (source: Richard Jansen, Universiteit Leiden).

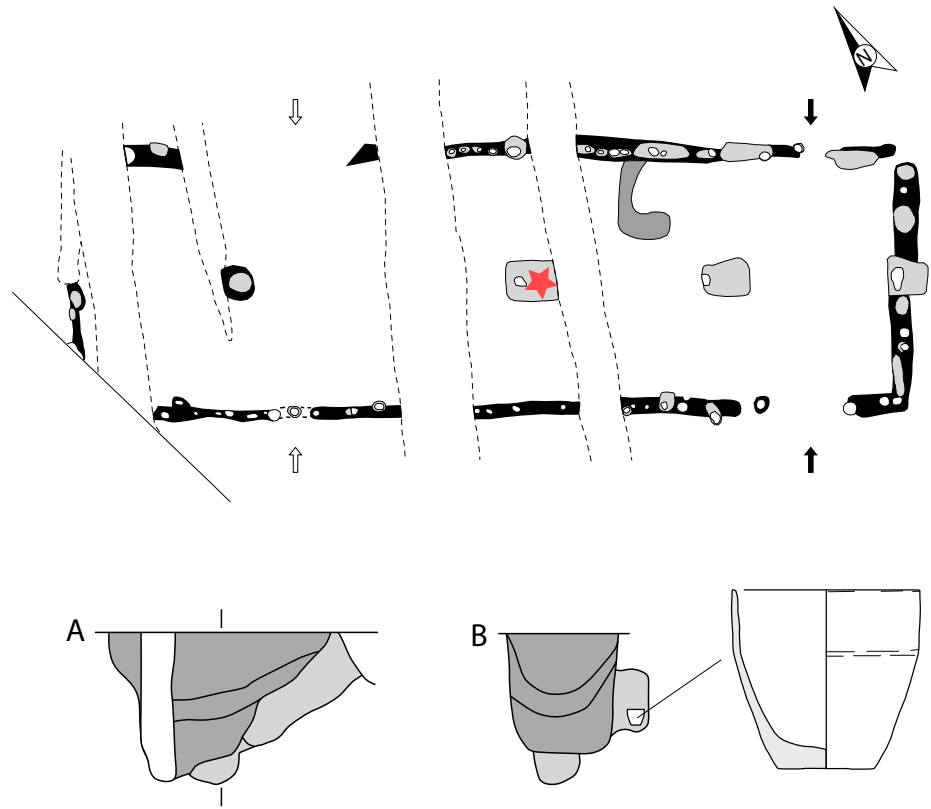


Fig. 5.13. Plan of house 1 at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde showing the location of the foundation deposit (above) (scale 1:200). Longitudinal section (A) and cross-section (B) of the central posthole (scale 1:40) and the handmade ceramic beaker (scale 1:3) (below) (source: Heeren 2005, Fig. 7, 8).

(as in house 1 at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde) (Fig. 5.13).

Almost all single and composite deposits are interpreted as possible foundation deposits. One of the few exceptions is a jug in the western central posthole of house 3001 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, interpreted as a closing deposit. The excavators report that the post appears to have been removed, after which the jug was placed in the pit. An interpretation as a closing deposit is also suggested for the antique quernstone in the post-removal pit of a central posthole of a house at Oss-De Geer.

Deposits of fragmented material often occur at the top of central postholes or in post-removal pits. Burnt pottery, burnt loam and pieces of quernstone were found in the upper sections of the central postholes of houses 34 and 36 at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvcl. The material was deposited there after the posts had been removed. A fragmented and heavily burnt bowl was found at the top of northeastern aisle posthole of house 2 at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid. The fact that the fracture surfaces were

also burnt suggests that the bowl came into contact with fire after fragmentation and was probably deliberately selected from the 'pyre' for deposition in the post feature. This phenomenon has also been observed for Iron Age deposits. Other deposits of fragmented material are known from a central posthole of a house at Heerlen-Trilandis (187 pottery sherds from various vessels) and from two post-removal pits of house 3002 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (about 3 kg of quernstone pieces, some 5 kg of brick and a whetstone fragment). A post-removal pit over a central posthole in house 8001 at Houten-Castellum yielded a deposit consisting of two handmade bowls, a corkware urn, an antique wire fibula and an eye fibula (Fig. 5.14). Separate mention should be made of deposits containing a large amount of charcoal and burnt loam, which were found at and around the central posthole of four houses at Oerle-Zuid (houses 2, 5, 6 and 7). Interestingly, this involved the second central post in each case (counting from the west). The area around



Fig. 5.14. Special deposit in the central posthole of house 8001 at Houten-Castellum (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 7.56).

the central postholes was conspicuously 'dirty'. The excavator refers to 'burn sites' and suggests that the remains of the house were swept together there after the house was demolished and set alight, whereby the central post remained standing.¹⁰¹ According to the excavator, this practice was part of an abandonment ritual in which the house site was 'ritually purified'.¹⁰² Fragmented material such as pottery and quernstone fragments, which is often well represented in other closing deposits, is conspicuously absent here. It seems that in this ritual only the remains of the house itself were burned and deposited, although the burnt fragments of a deer antler were found in the core of a central posthole in house 5. In this case the post was probably removed, after which the feature was filled up with fire debris, including the burnt antler fragments. This deposit also seems to have been part of the special practices surrounding the abandonment and dismantling of the house.¹⁰³

For deposits associated with core structures, the Brabant sandy soil area (including Oss, Veldhoven, Uden and Boxmeer) and the river area (including Tiel, Nieuwegein, Oosterhout, Wijchen and Cuijk) are particularly well represented in terms of geographical distribution. The coastal areas, the northern and eastern

sandy soils and the loess region are only represented to a minor extent.

In most cases the core structure involved the central postholes of two-aisled structures. Only in a few cases did it involve aisle postholes of three-aisled houses, such as house 8027 at Cuijk-De Nielt and house 2 at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid. In the combined two-/three-aisled house 1 at Tiel-Oude Tielseweg and house 74 at Oss-Westerveld, a deposit was also present in the central posthole of the two-aisled section. Deposits were often found in the (mainly western) central posthole that was closest to the house entrances. This could be linked to the function of that part of the house as living quarters.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, this analysis shows that house entrances were particularly important places for special deposition practices.

Walls (and corners)

In addition to the features of the core structure, the walls of houses are a prominent deposition context. In all, this involves 33 deposits, 20 of which are single deposits, ten composite deposits and three deposits of fragmented material. In some cases (13 deposits), deposits were specifically placed in the corners of houses. Again, the single and composite deposits

¹⁰¹ Hissel 2012, 364–365.

¹⁰² Hissel 2012, 364–365.

¹⁰³ Hissel 2012, 107.

¹⁰⁴ Jansen & Van Hoof 2003, 50, with further references to Wesselingh 2000, 215; Jansen & Fokkens 2002, 330.

predominantly comprise complete vessels. This includes at least seven pots, two miniature pots, two bowls and three jugs. A concentration of wall sherds of a Dressel 20-type amphora were found in a wall ditch of a house at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél. Interestingly, the pot in a house at Beek-Waterstraat has a hole in the base. In addition to vessels, there are deposits containing quernstones (Lent-Steltsestraat and Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél, house 36), coins (Castricum-Oosterbuurt, Utrecht-De Meern-De Woerd and a possible coin hoard at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen), a knife (Best-Aarle, house 386), an iron ploughshare (Midden-Delfland, site 01.23), gaming pieces (Midden-Delfland, site 03.01) and a spoon drill (Nistelrode).

A few deposits contained several metal objects. The first concerns a deposit in a corner post of house 300 at Someren-Ter Hofstadlaan. It contained two ankle cuffs, as well as axle caps and a series of other components, presumably of a wagon. An interpretation as a closing deposit has been suggested for this deposit. A pit in the northeastern corner of house 8005 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen yielded a deposit containing a dolabra (axe/pickaxe), an anvil, two knives, a split pin, nails, two keys and two whetstones. And a pit along the northern wall of house 48 at Breda-Steenakker contained an assemblage of metal objects, including nails, two shield grips, a fibula hinge, a padlock spring, two copper lock-plate fragments of a chest and a lead cylinder, possibly a fishing sinker. No unequivocal interpretation is available for these last two deposits.

Another extensive deposit was found in a pit along the southern wall of house 103 at Den Haag-Ockenburgh II. It consisted of a remarkably large number of vessels (including a pewter plate, a bronze cauldron, three storage jars, jugs, plates, beakers, a jug amphora and a cooking pot), two whetstones, nails, an iron hammer head and two fragments of red deer antler. One of the storage jars was placed upside down and the second contained two beakers and a jug. The third was completely filled with loam, covered by a layer of ash. The excavators suggest that this deposit may relate to the construction, use or abandonment of the house. The tools and loam could suggest that the construction phase is the most likely.

With regard to composite deposits, we can also mention a handmade miniature pot

containing grape seeds from the northwest corner of house 108 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (Fig. 5.15). The pot will have been deposited with its contents of grapes or raisins, probably as an offering. Midden-Delfland-site 21.23 yielded special deposits in the northeast corner of three consecutive houses. The first two phases include a deposit consisting of a laurel wreath of plaited twigs and an iron knife. The third phase is characterised by a deposit containing a ceramic lid and a Mesolithic flint core.

The three deposits of fragmented material were found at Ellewoutsdijk and Varsen-Aardgastransportleidingtracé Scheemda-Ommen (A-661). House 6 at Ellewoutsdijk yielded a pottery concentration in the corner of the house, where the excavator suggests that broken pottery was discarded. However, we could also be dealing with a special deposition practice linked to the abandonment and dismantling of the house site. A deep pit with a phosphate-rich fill and stacked wooden posts was found under the top end of house 5 on the same site. The excavator suggests that it could be a foundation deposit.

Deposits in walls and corners are almost exclusively interpreted as foundation deposits. An interpretation as closing deposits is only suggested for the Varsen deposit and that of Someren-Terhofstadlaan.

For deposits associated with the walls/corners of houses, the western coastal area (Ellewoutsdijk, Midden-Delfland, Den Haag, Rijswijk, Watering, Castricum and Assendelft), the Brabant sandy soils (Someren, Nistelrode, Uden, Best) and the river area (Nieuwegein, Utrecht and Cuijk) are well represented in terms of distribution. As previously emphasised by Van Hoof, the western coastal area stands out when it comes to corner deposits.¹⁰⁵ Such deposits also occur elsewhere, however, such as at Nieuwegein, Cuijk, Someren, Nistelrode and Beek.

Entrances

A total of 27 deposits can be specifically placed at the entrances to houses. They comprise eleven single deposits, six composite deposits, six animal burials and two deposits of fragmented material.¹⁰⁶

Here too, the single and composite deposits are mainly made up of vessels (pots, jars, beakers, a ring-based amphora) (Fig. 5.16),

¹⁰⁵ Van Hoof 2007, 264.

¹⁰⁶ Two deposits containing only humous material (Boxtel-Korenmolen, house 8002) cannot be assigned to any of categories defined here.

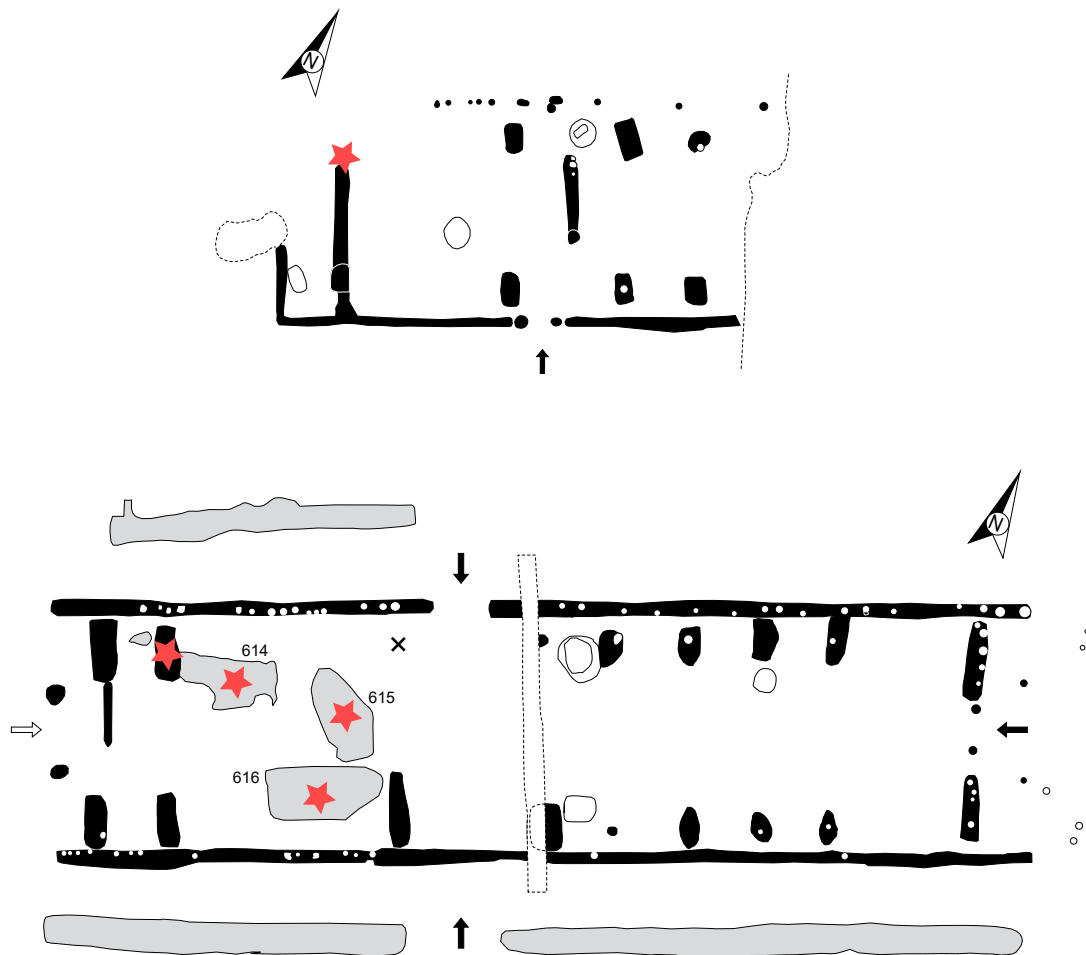


Fig. 5.15. The location of special deposits in houses 108 (above) and 123 (below) at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan. Scale 1:200 (source: Siemons & Lanzing 2009, Fig. 3.10, Fig. 3.16 adapted).

as well as quernstones (Wateringen-Juliahof and Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél), knives (Best-Aarle and two entrances at Budel-Noord-Duitschool) and fibulae (Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél and Tiel-Medel-De Reth). An exceptional find is a bronze Victoria figurine that was deposited at the entrance to a third-century house at Deventer-Colmschate-Skibaan.¹⁰⁷ Also meriting separate mention is a coin hoard containing 16 coins (mainly asses), which was buried in an entrance posthole of house 8020 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. This coin hoard is interpreted as a foundation deposit. A coin hoard in house 20 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, also buried at the house entrance and containing 27 silver denarii, should be viewed in a similar vein. Unlike the Heeswijkse Kampen deposit, however, the excavator believes that it is more likely to be a savings hoard than a foundation

deposit, given its considerable value and the fact that foundation deposits are always of limited value.¹⁰⁸

A further separate category of deposits at house entrances is that of animal burials. The entrances to houses 1 and 11 at Druten-Klepperheide each yielded two horse burials, while the entrances to houses in Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan and Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen featured cattle burials. These animal burials are interpreted as possible foundation deposits. The Den Haag cattle burial may have involved a deposition during the habitation phase.

Some deposits stand out by virtue of their diverse composition. A pit at the northern entrance to house 54 at Nistelrode yielded three complete vessels, a whetstone, a chisel, a ploughshare and a pickaxe. The excavators interpret this deposit as a closing deposit.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Hermesen 2004. Hermesen interprets this as a foundation deposit.

¹⁰⁸ Heeren 2006a, 247.

¹⁰⁹ Jansen 2007.

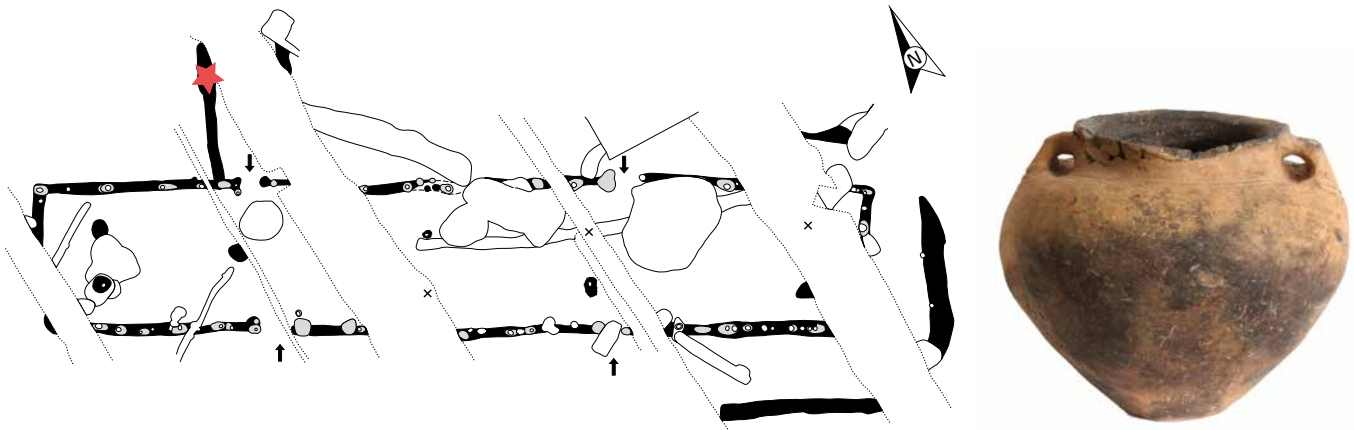


Fig. 5.16. Plan of house 8 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg showing the location of a complete handmade ceramic pot near the entrance (left) (scale 1:300) and a photo of the pot (right) (source: Heeren 2006, 224 adapted; photo: D.S. Habermehl).

Another deposit containing metal objects was found at the entrance to house 9 at Budel-Noord-Duitse school (AD 230–300). One entrance yielded eleven iron objects, including knives, a spearhead and various objects that cannot be further specified. A dagger or knife was found at the other entrance. An interpretation as closing deposits is suggested for both deposits. A final deposit, from house ditches at the entrance to house 8002 at Tiel-Medel-De Reth, comprised three complete vessels (including a miniature pot), a spoon-bow fibula, a loom weight, four ceramic (gaming) discs and two ceramic slingshot fragments. One of the pots featured a white/light-brown deposit which can perhaps be interpreted, on the basis of the residue analysis, as carbonised bone ash.

Deposits containing fragmented material include, firstly, many fragments of tephrite and tuff in an entrance posthole of house 59 at Breda-Huifakker. Two pits at the entrance to house 34 at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél contained a large quantity of pottery sherds and part of a quernstone. These deposits are interpreted as closing deposits. The pit containing the above-mentioned cattle burial also yielded a hundred pottery sherds (house 123 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan). The excavators suggest that this deposit may be linked to the habitation phase of the house.

In terms of distribution, we see entrance deposits particularly well represented in the Brabant sandy soil region, the river area and the western coastal region (Zuid-Holland). Deposits at Deventer and Heeten represent the eastern part of the Netherlands.

Pits inside the house

Pit deposits associated with houses comprise two single deposits, two composite deposits, ten deposits of fragmented material and a pit containing the partial skeleton of a horse. There is a clear predominance of deposits containing fragmented material, presenting a different picture than for deposits in the core structure, walls and entrances described above.

The single deposits concerned a large stone in a pit inside house 5 at Borger-Daalkampen II-Klokbeker and a rotary handmill buried in a Middle Roman sunken hut at Wehl-Norman Belvealstraat. The sunken hut also showed traces of fire. The excavator suggests that the handmill may have been deliberately deposited before the hut was set alight.

The composite deposits were made in pits in houses at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél (sherds of a handmade bowl with a complete quernstone placed on top) and Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (a complete saw blade and an almost complete, handmade (Late Roman) pot). The bowl in the Uden deposit may have been broken into fragments by the quernstone. The pit at Cuijk cuts the features of house 8005 and was therefore only dug after the house was no longer in use.

Most pit deposits are characterised by fragmented (and often burnt) material, in most cases pottery, burnt loam, charcoal and quernstone fragments. A pit in a house at Westeinde-Noormansveld contained a large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam, parts of two secondarily burnt pots and the tip of an iron knife or bill hook. And in house 123 at Den Haag-

Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan, three pits were found that yielded a total of about 1300 sherds of handmade pottery, a spindle whorl, animal bone and burnt loam (Fig. 5.15). The excavators suggest an interpretation as a closing deposit or a deposit commemorating the former inhabitants after the house was abandoned. A large pit inside house 1008 at Den Haag-Uithofslaan contained sherds of both handmade and wheel-thrown pottery, with the pottery being somewhat younger than the house. The excavator suggests that it could be a closing deposit. Based on the material dating, it could also relate to practices in an already abandoned house. Another pit with a closing deposit is known from house 8003 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (Fig. 5.17). The pit contained charred material, demolition debris and a burnt, almost complete handmade pot. A patchy charcoal-rich zone could be observed around the pit, similar to observations at four houses at Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid (see above). Could there have been a 'burn site' here in Cuijk too, where the remains of the house and household goods were burned and then deposited in the pit? A final pit deposit inside house 6 at Ellewoutsdijk contained animal bone, wooden planks and posts, pottery and phosphate-rich organic material. The archaeological report links the pit to 'rituals', with no further suggestions. Given the fragmentation of the material, it could be a closing deposit. Perhaps the planks and posts formed part of the house structure?

Also worth mentioning is a pit containing the partial skeleton of a horse in house 7 at Veessen-Hoogwatergeul. The presence of

chopping marks suggests that some or all of the horse meat was eaten. The way in which the animal was buried inside the house (still partially connected anatomically) is unusual. It could constitute the remains of a special (sacrificial) meal, although it is not possible to determine at which occasion or during which of the house's 'life phases' this took place.

Some of the pit deposits described here are assigned a general interpretation as 'special deposits'. Because pits do not form part of the construction elements of houses, it is often difficult to establish which life phase of the house they can be associated with. Nevertheless, an interpretation as closing deposits has been suggested for at least five deposits, based primarily on the composition and the degree of burning. Here too, the picture for pit deposits differs from the deposits described earlier, where foundation deposits are particularly well represented.

In terms of distribution, Brabant and the western coastal area are again well represented, although pit deposits are also known from Drenthe (Westeinde-Noormansveld and Borger-Daalkampen II-Klokbeker) and Gelderland (Wehl-Norman Belvealstraat and Veessen-Hoogwatergeul).

Byres

An interesting but problematic category is that of deposits from sunken byres in byre houses. This is because these deeper sections will have functioned as artefact traps or as ideal places for the dumping of waste. Extensive assemblages are sometimes found in sunken byres, often with



Fig. 5.17. Closing deposit in house 8003 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. The pit contained charred material, demolition debris and an almost complete, burnt, handmade ceramic pot (source: Van Kampen 2018, Fig. 5.11).

a varied composition. Many excavators are reluctant to interpret such assemblages as special deposits. Ball and Jansen also omit assemblages from sunken byres in their inventory of foundation and closing deposits in eastern Noord-Brabant.¹¹⁰ However, not all deposits from these areas can be interpreted satisfactorily as 'ordinary rubbish'. We will therefore discuss some interesting examples.

A plane and a scythe broken into two pieces were found in the byre of house 400 at Lieshout-Beekseweg. The excavator suggests a possible interpretation as a closing deposit. The byre of house 386 at Best-Aarle yielded an iron lance- or spearhead and a hook wrench, while a large section of a polished Neolithic axe (as well as several hundred pottery sherds) were found in the byre of house 11 at Eindhoven-Noord-Brabantlaan. This latter find could have been a 'magical object' that was kept in the house, perhaps on the ridge beam (see Section 6.13.2).

Larger deposits are known, for example, from the byre of a house at Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid. This deposit comprised a variety of finds (including tephrite, slag and nails), some of them special objects such as an iron horse bit, a bronze fibula and a miniature bronze bucket. Another extensive deposit was found in the byre of house 47 at Breda-Steenakker. Among the most special finds were a saw blade, a pin, seven glass beads, a wire fibula, a hairpin, a hearth shovel, fishhooks, two spearheads and a key. It is difficult to properly interpret the combination of these unusual objects and the many pieces of presumed 'ordinary rubbish' (a range of natural stone, burnt loam and plasterwork). The wide variety of material, the fragmentation and the lack of structure suggest a rubbish dump. The excavators have therefore interpreted the deposit in functional terms and suggest that the location should be understood as a smithy or a place for storing goods.

Two final deposits containing very unusual objects have been unearthed beyond the Dutch border, in Brecht (Belgium). One sunken byre yielded a natural stone make-up plate and a special silver ring, originating from France or Italy. The second contained a deposit of four axes, including one from the middle Late Neolithic, one from the Bronze Age and one from the Roman period.¹¹¹ It seems highly unlikely that special objects of this kind were simply discarded as rubbish.

All in all, there are tentative indications that assemblages found in sunken byres can sometimes be linked to special deposition practices. When houses were abandoned and dismantled, objects may have been deliberately deposited in these features as part of abandonment rituals. However, the nature of the feature context makes it difficult to distinguish these possibly deliberately deposited objects from the material that ended up there or was left behind in other ways or for different reasons.

Exterior of the house

This category often involves deposits in pits along the outside wall, in outer postholes or in ditches around the house. There are 14 such deposits, six of them single, seven animal burials and one containing fragmented material.

The single deposit category includes two deposits from outer postholes of houses at Oss-Horzak (an antique stone axe and a jug) and a fragmented pot from an outer corner post of a house at Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder.

Deposits of animal remains were found, firstly, in two pits outside house NHC-5 at Naaldwijk-Holland College. One pit contained a complete horse skeleton, the other a selection of bones from two horses (including the skulls). In the latter deposit, the placement of the skulls and other bones in the pit suggest a deliberate arrangement. Slaughter marks on the cervical and thoracic vertebrae indicate that the meat was consumed. One of the skulls also appears to have been smashed. According to Groot, the fact that these are the remains of slaughtered animals does not preclude them being buried with care and perhaps even as part of ritual acts.¹¹² A probable similar find involves three pits, dug along the long side of house 8012 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. One of the pits contained the remains of cattle, the other two the remains of horses. Given the poor preservation of the bone material, it is not possible to determine whether these are partial skeletons or complete animal burials. The remaining deposits of animal remains were found in three houses (1, 2 and 15) at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. These remains were deposited in the house ditches (Fig. 5.18). They comprised the partial skeleton of a horse, a cattle skull and the skeletons of two dogs.

A slightly different deposit is one found outside a house at Rotterdam-Delftse Schie.

¹¹⁰ Ball & Jansen 2018, 383.

¹¹¹ Bracke et al. 2020, 7.

¹¹² Groot 2008, 187.

It involves an unusual assemblage of find material on the south side of the house, comprising (almost) complete ceramic beakers, a mortarium, coins, fibulae and an amber bead. The excavator suggests that the inhabitants left some of their household goods on the south

side of the house, or even smashed them on the spot, perhaps as part of an abandonment ritual. A quantity of burnt grain was also deposited in the hearth of the same house, possibly as part of the same ritual (see below).

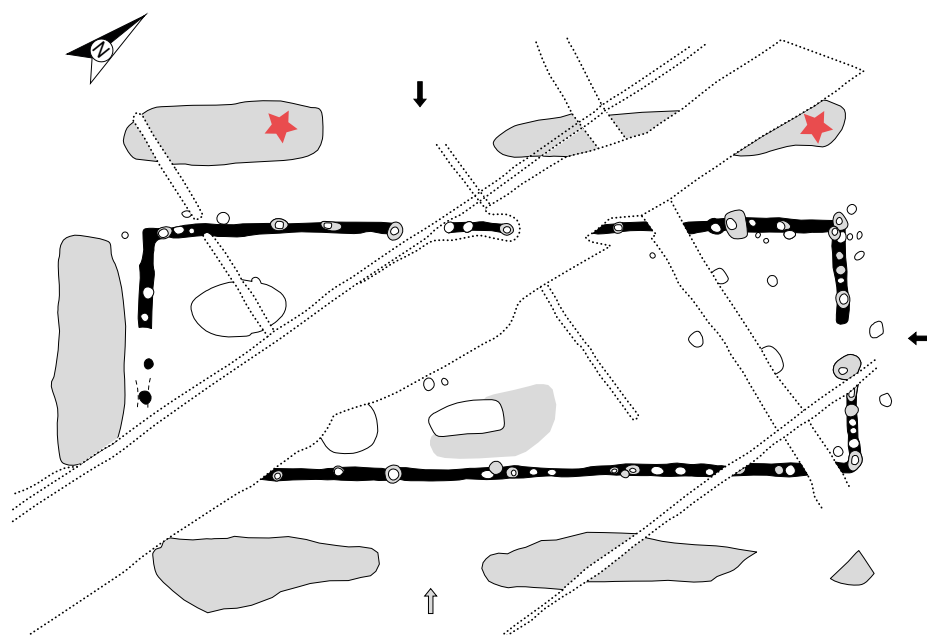


Fig. 5.18. Plan of house 15 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg showing the location of two dog graves in the house ditches. Photo of one of the graves in the field. Scale 1:200 (source: Heeren 2006, Fig. 17.20; Groot 2008, Fig. 3.14).

Hearths

Only one instance of special deposits associated with the hearth has been inventoried for this period. It concerns a large amount of charred grain in the hearth of house 23 at Rotterdam-Delftse Schie. The excavator stresses that such a large quantity of grain will not have ended up in the hearth by chance. It is possibly therefore a closing deposit.

Other

Lastly, we can mention a few other deposits, including two pedestal bowls from the fill of two sunken huts at Cuijk-De Nielt. An interpretation as closing deposits has been suggested for these deposits. The same interpretation is also suggested for nine coins in the posthole of a house at Heeten-De Telgen.¹¹³ Unfortunately, it is not clear just where in the house the coins were deposited.

Multiple and multi-phase deposits

Houses with several deposits

Some houses are documented as having several special deposits. Interesting examples are the metal deposits at two entrances to a house at Budel-Noord-Duitse school, two pottery deposits at two locations opposite each other in the wall ditch of house 56 at Uden-Noord-Hengstheugel, deposits in two post-removal pits in house 5 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck and possible deposits in the wall (an iron knife) and byre (an iron lance- or spearhead and a hook wrench) of house 386 at Best-Aarle. Three special deposits were found in house 123 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld. These were a complete miniature pot in the western corner of the house, a cattle burial (with over a hundred pottery sherds) at the entrance and a further three large pits containing a total of about 1300 sherds of handmade pottery, a spindle whorl, animal bone and burnt loam in the living section of the house. The first deposit is associated with the construction phase, the second with the foundation or habitation phase and the pit deposits with the phase relating to the abandonment/dismantling of the house, or the period thereafter. A complete conical spindle whorl, interpreted as a foundation deposit, was found at the bottom of an aisle posthole in house 2 at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid. Higher up in the same posthole was

a heavily burnt bowl, which is associated with the abandonment and dismantling of the house. Sizeable sherds were found at the bottom of two other postholes; they appear to have been deposited after the posts were removed. Thus here too, we find a combination of deposits that could mark the beginning and end phases of the house. The same probably also applies to the deposits in house 8003 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. A cattle grave was found near the entrance, while a centrally located pit within the house contained charred material, demolition waste and an almost complete, burnt handmade pot. Lastly, we can refer to house 5 at Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid, which yielded burnt antler fragments in the core of one of the central postholes, a large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam in another central posthole and an interesting find assemblage in the sunken byre. An interpretation as closing deposits seems obvious for the first two deposits. The interpretation of the third deposit is less clear-cut, but this too could be a closing deposit. A house site at Midden-Delfland site 03.01 yielded part of a handmade pot at the entrance, ceramic 'gaming pieces' in the northeast corner and part of a handmade pot in the southeast corner of the house. Van Londen makes specific reference to these finds but gives no suggestions about their interpretation.¹¹⁴

Multi-phase deposits

There are also two possible 'multi-phase' deposits. The first comes from house 14 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (Fig. 5.19), where a central posthole yielded several objects – two beakers and a coin – that can definitely be regarded as special deposits. One of the beakers consists of sherds. The structure of the feature fill reveals that the central post had been replaced. One of the beakers can probably be viewed as a foundation deposit in the first central posthole (the first house phase), with a further beaker (and coin) being deposited when the post was replaced. The old, damaged foundation deposit may have been deliberately put back at that time. A similar situation is reconstructed for house 2 at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde. Here too, two vessels were found in a single central posthole, once again with indications of a renovation phase. And again, the respective vessels can probably be associated with the original construction phase and the

¹¹³ Van Beek 2009, 547, with reference to Erdrich & Van der Velde 2007, 233–234.

¹¹⁴ Van Londen 2006, 62.

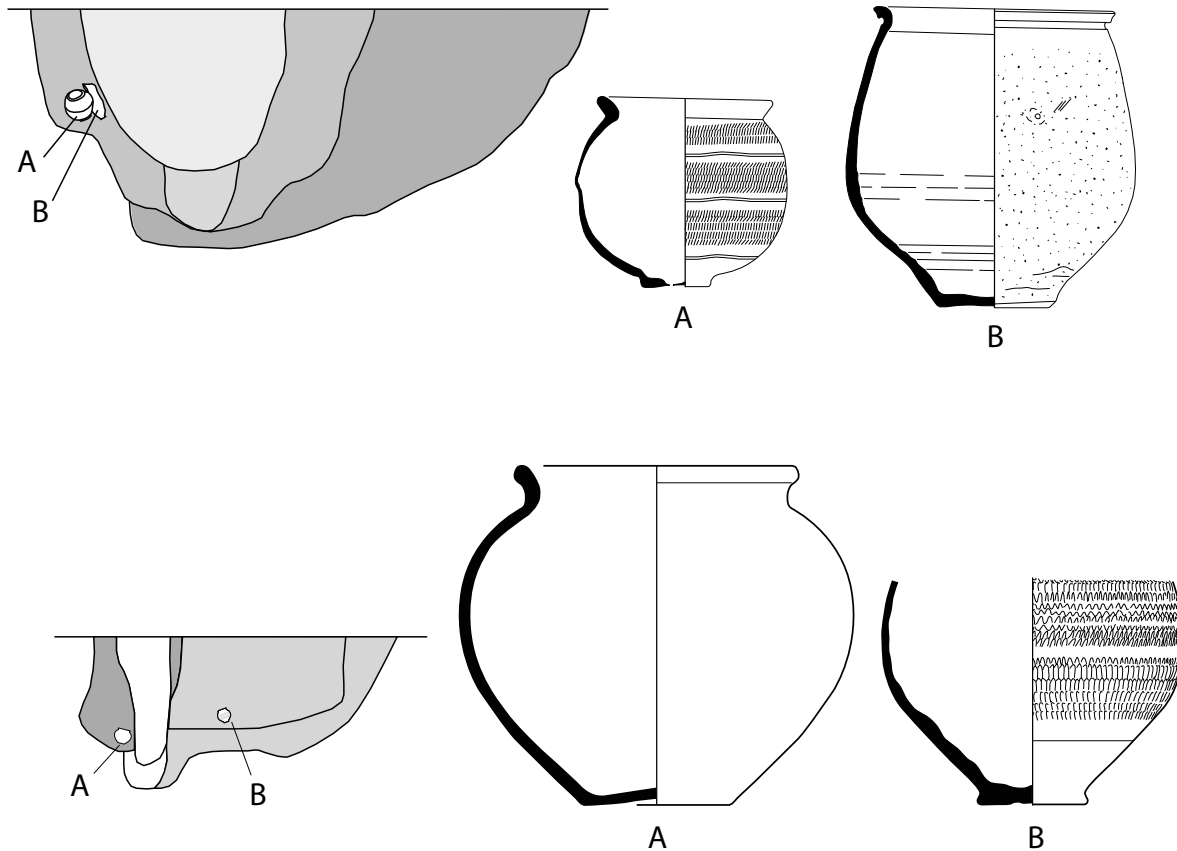


Fig. 5.19. Examples of multi-phase deposits. Two vessels from a central posthole of house 14 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (above). Two vessels from a central posthole of house 2 at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde (below). Cut scale 1:20; pottery scale 1:3 (source: Heeren 2006, 235 adapted; Heeren 2005, 21 adapted).

renovation. Three deposits were found in the northeast corner of the multi-phase house site of Midden-Delfland, site 21.23. These were a plaited 'willow wreath' (house phase 1), an iron knife (house phase 2) and a ceramic lid with a Mesolithic flint core placed on top of it (house phase 3).¹¹⁵ Van Londen calls these deposits 'house offerings', but does not elaborate further on the time of deposition or the nature of the deposition practice.

Outbuildings and granaries

Outbuildings

The number of deposits in possible outbuildings is small for this period (Table 5.23). It involved (almost) complete, unburnt pots in two instances (Castricum-Oosterbuurt and Breda-Huifakker) and quernstone fragments in two others (Boxmeer-Sterckwijck and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg). A final deposit was of a complete saw blade in the wall ditch of outbuilding 33 at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél. An interpretation as possible foundation deposits has been

Table 5.23. Overview of special deposits in outbuildings from the Roman period.

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	2 matching quernstone fragments	70	270
Breda	Huifakker	almost complete pot (in sherds)	125	300
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	complete handmade pot	0	270
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	large fragment of tephrite	270	350
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvél	complete iron saw blade (in wall ditch)	0	100

¹¹⁵ Van Londen 2006, 147–148.

Table 5.24. Overview of special deposits in granaries from the Roman period.

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ceramic colander in core of posthole	-19	70
Lieshout	Beekseweg	gold stater	-58	1
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvcl	complete fibula	70	100
Utrecht	Hoge Weide	complete handmade pot	-19	70

suggested for the deposits of Uden, Castricum, Breda and Tiel, with no interpretation given for the Boxmeer deposit.

Granaries

The inventory contains only four granary deposits for the Roman period (Table 5.24). This presents a very different picture from the Iron Age, where the number of granary deposits is much higher. All four granaries date to early in the Roman period (before AD 100). The Lieshout deposit could also date to the very last phase of the Late Iron Age. Complete objects are involved in each case: a handmade pot, a ceramic colander, a fibula and a coin. The coin is a gold Ambiani stater from a posthole in granary 300 at Lieshout-Beekseweg, of quite some value. Because of its rarity and high value, the excavators find it is less likely that the coin was lost or originated from an older find layer and suggest an interpretation as a foundation or closing deposit.¹¹⁶ The deposits from Geldermalsen and Uden are interpreted as closing deposits and the pot from the granary at Utrecht-Hoge Weide

is only referred to in general terms as a 'special deposit'.

Composition

Table 5.25 summarises the composition of the above special deposits placed in houses, broken down into categories (single, composite, fragmented and animal burial). It shows that single deposits strongly predominate, followed at some distance by composite deposits and deposits of fragmented material. Animal burials associated with houses also occur now in significant numbers. There are no deposits of fragmented material that can be dated with certainty to the Late Roman period. In almost

Table 5.25. Overview of special deposits in houses from the Roman period, by period and category.

	Single	Composite	Fragmented	Animal burial	NA	Total
ERP	14	4	6	3	-	27
E-MRP	12	6	5	5	-	28
MRP	31	9	15	4	3	62
M-LRP	3	5	3	1	-	12
LRP	7	2	-	1	-	10
RP	6	3	-	-	-	9
Total	73	29	29	14	3	148

Table 5.26. Overview of object categories in special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries from the Roman period.

	Houses	(Out)buildings (?)	Granaries	Total
Vessels	84	2	2	88
Animal bone	19	-	-	19
Textile attributes	4	-	-	4
Tools	17	-	-	18
Food attributes	18	-	-	20
Fibulae/jewellery	8	-	1	9
Weapons/ militaria	6	-	-	6
Coins	12	-	1	13
Keys	2	-	-	2
Botanical remains	7	-	-	7
Human remains	1	-	-	1
Burnt loam	11	-	-	11
Ritual object	4	-	-	4
Other	10	-	-	10

¹¹⁶ Hiddink 2005a, 313.

all cases, the few outbuildings and granaries (not included in Table 5.25) involve single deposits. Deposits of fragmented material – like those often found in Iron Age granaries – are absent for the Roman period. If we take a closer look at the composition of deposits (Table 5.26), we see that vessels predominate in houses (and outbuildings and granaries), followed at a distance by tools, food attributes and animal bone. Coins are also relatively well represented in this period.

5.3.6 Middle Ages and Modern Period: rural context

Houses and buildings in a rural context

For deposits from the Middle Ages and Modern Period, a distinction is made between houses/buildings in a rural context and those in an urban context. These categories will be discussed separately. First, we will look at deposits in rural houses/buildings.

General

The dataset contains 66 deposits in houses/buildings from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (Table 5.27). The chronological concentration is clearly in the Late Middle Ages (AD 1050–1500), followed at a distance by the Early Middle Ages. There are almost no deposits from the Modern Period. At least in part, this can be explained by the greater rarity of early medieval sites and the fact that deposits from urban contexts are not included here. Also, some extensive settlements from the Late Middle Ages have been well researched (e.g. Someren, Best, Eersel and Deurne), which means that relatively many special deposits have been documented. In terms of contexts, the core structure predominates (about 45%), followed at some distance by pits and walls (about 17% and 14%) (Table 5.28).

Core structure

Deposits from features of the core structure (central, aisle or truss postholes) show a diverse picture, in which a general distinction can be made between deposits containing one or a few (complete) objects and those containing fragmented material (sometimes in large quantities). There are 22 single deposits,

two composite deposits and seven deposits of fragmented material (four of which come from a single house).

The category of single deposits includes deposits of complete pottery in houses at Groningen-De Held III, Veghel-De Scheifelaar II, Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker and Best-Aarle (two houses). In all instances, these deposits are from the High or Late Middle Ages. Where specified, they are interpreted as foundation deposits. Other deposits containing isolated objects involve fibulae on three occasions, with a dating in the Early Middle Ages (two) and between 900 and 1225 (one).¹¹⁷ The other metal objects are a wood chisel (Best-Aarle house 595), a flat piece of silver cut in half (Tilburg-HaVep) and three keys (Ittervoort-Santfort and two deposits at Someren-Waterdael III). In addition, individual spindle whorls were deposited in the truss postholes of two houses at Best-Aarle (houses 564 and 591) and half a quernstone in the truss posthole of a house at Wijchen-Oosterweg-Meerdreef.¹¹⁸ Animal skulls also occur as special deposits. The truss postholes of buildings 627 and 266/621 at Eersel-Kerkebogten yielded a horse and a cattle skull respectively and the central posthole of house 3 at Veessen-Hoogwatergeul contained a cat skull with three associated vertebrae.¹¹⁹ A layer of emmer wheat straw discovered at the bottom of an aisle posthole of a pioneer farm at Gouda-Oostpolder is a unique deposit.¹²⁰

In most cases an interpretation as foundation deposits is suggested for the above deposits. Only the fibula in the house at Monster-Voormalig campingterrein Molenslag is interpreted as a closing deposit, although this possibility is also suggested for the key from Ittervoort-Santfort. The excavators suggest an interpretation as foundation or closing deposits for the key from a building at Diessen-Vroonacker, the fibula from a building at Susteren-Salvatorplein and the animal skulls from Eersel. An interpretation as a foundation deposit and/or an apotropaic deposit (to ward off evil) is suggested for the cat skull from Veessen.

Deposits of fragmented material include ones placed in several post-removal pits in houses at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (house 2523), Someren-Waterdael III (building 1326) and Someren-Hoge Akkers (house 22). Two of these deposits involved quernstone fragments (21 kg in the case of Someren-Waterdael III) and the

¹¹⁷ The sites of Monster-Voormalig campingterrein Molenslag, Barneveld-Harselaar-Zuid, phase 1A and Susteren-Salvatorplein.

¹¹⁸ However, a functional interpretation as a post 'foundation' is another possibility for this quernstone piece.

¹¹⁹ Deposits involving cats are rare. We can also mention a modern-era deposit in an urban context at 's-Hertogenbosch-Orthenstraat 41, where a cat was bricked into a wall.

¹²⁰ The publication (Kok 1999) does not interpret this layer of straw as a possible special deposit. Upon enquiry, however, Laura Kooistra suggested that special deposition practices could be involved, with the straw being deliberately placed under the post as a foundation deposit. Given that this is a pioneer farm, it is also possible that the straw was brought in from elsewhere. Email from Laura Kooistra, 2 November 2021.

Table 5.27. Overview of special deposits in houses/buildings from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts).

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Barneveld	Harselaar-Zuid, fase 1A	house 18	posthole	core structure	complete disc fibula in the packing soil of westernmost central posthole	900	1225
Beetgumermolen	Alddyk	house 2	pit	pit	skull of adult woman	1100	1200
Berkel-Enschot	Enschotsebaan-noord	house 2	posthole	hearth	tuff stone and burnt loam in 'post P'	900	1180
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 564	posthole	core structure	spindle whorl in core of truss posthole	890	940
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 523	posthole	core structure	complete globular pot in southeastern end posthole	1100	1150
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 591	posthole	core structure	complete spindle whorl in posthole	1114	1325
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 516	posthole	core structure	stoneware jug in packing soil of middle truss posthole	1310	1350
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house 595	posthole	core structure	plane in packing soil of a truss posthole	1325	1425
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house 2523	posthole	core structure?	quernstone pieces in 2 post-removal pits and unusual stones in 2 other post-removal pits	850	900
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/Peperstraat 35	unknown	sunken byre	byre	64 metal objects (including knives, scissors, pitchforks, reaping hook, chisel, tools, buckle, horseshoe, riding spur, coin and ring brooch)	1250	1500
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	house 417	posthole	entrance	complete key, complete arrowhead and spindle whorl from house features	900	925
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	house 418	posthole	core structure	at least 1 and possibly 3 ceramic beakers in truss posthole(s) of house 418 (end truss)	1100	1200
Didam	Randweg-Zuid/Kasteel Didam	house 2	posthole	core structure?	several Roman (!) pots	1000	1100
Diessen	Vroonacker	building C2	posthole	core structure?	iron key	1050	1150
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 627	posthole	core structure	horse skull in truss posthole	1000	1250
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 266/621	posthole	core structure	cattle skull in truss posthole	1050	1125
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 219	animal grave	pit	2 animal graves near truss posts	1050	1125
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 266/621	animal grave	pit	2 animal graves near truss posts	1050	1125
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 267	animal grave	pit	cattle grave near truss post	1100	1175
Eersel	Kerkebogten	house 270	animal grave	pit	cattle grave	1150	1200
Gouda	Oostpolder		posthole	core structure	layer of emmer wheat straw beneath aisle post	1100	1170
Groningen	De Held III	unknown	posthole	core structure	complete globular pot	900	1300
Heesch	Hoogstraat 28-30	house 5	posthole	core structure	many fragments of cattle molars at top of truss posthole	1000	1250
Hulsel	Kerkekkers	house 5	posthole	core structure	pottery sherds, roof tile and 22 pieces of natural stone (including 7 tools)	500	700
Ittervoort	Santfort		posthole	core structure	key in posthole of living section of house	1100	1200
Kapel-Avezaath	Muggenborch	house 8001	house ditch	exterior	bronze Hanseatic dish with bread wheat and chaff remains, upright at end of house ditch	1275	1300
Katwijk	Zanderij	house 61	posthole	unknown	sherds of spherical pot	725	775
Lent	Kasteel Lent	house 97	posthole	unknown	crane furcula	1100	1200
Limmen	De Krocht	building 47	pit	pit	burnt wooden dish in pit between 2 truss posts	710	970
Limmen	De Krocht	house 72	pit	pit	grave of prenatal piglet	800	1000
Limmen	De Krocht	house 18	pit	pit	cleft sheep skull, in corner of pit	1100	1200

Place	Toponym	House	Context	Location	Brief description	Beginning	End
Meterik	Meterikse veld	house 1b	posthole	wall	complete globular pot	900	1000
Middelburg	Hof Ramsburg	unknown	pit	entrance	tripod cooking pot, buried next to threshold	1600	1800
Monster	Voormalig campingterrein Molenslag	house 2	posthole	core structure	complete (Domburg) fibula with closed pin	504	604
Nederweert	coreelhoven	unknown	pit	exterior	iron key, covered by 2 large pottery sherds, one and a half horseshoes in 2 pits, outside of wall	1200	1300
Nieuwstadt	Elsenewal	house 2	posthole	wall (corner)	half a pot and a stone	1225	1350
Putten	Husselerveld	house 20	posthole	wall	sherds of 1 pot in 2 adjacent pits. Probably initially deposited in first phase of house; dug up during second phase and reburied in almost the same place.	900	1300
Schagen	N241	unknown	animal grave	entrance	animal grave with young sheep or goat behind entrance	1200	1300
Sint Anthonis	Kruising dr. Verbeecklaan en N272	unknown	pit	pit	almost complete stone ware jug	1280	1350
Someren	Hoge Akkers	building 121	posthole	core structure	bottom of ceramic drinking beaker and fragments of 2 small horseshoes in post-removal pit above truss posthole	1000	1500
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house 22	hearth	hearth	fragment of Roman ribbed bowl (!), 5 white pebbles, 2 whetstones and 1 iron fragment	1100	1200
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house 22	entrance pit	entrance	large quantity of burnt oak in pit near entrance to house 22	1100	1200
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house 51	entrance pit	entrance	complete globular pot and one and a half horseshoes	1100	1200
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house 22		core structure	large quantities of burnt loam in post-removal pits	1100	1200
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house 22	posthole	wall (corner)	scissors, key, needle and (ceramic) spindle whorl at top of pit	1100	1200
Someren	Sijkensstraat	building 2	posthole	unknown	burnt loam or burnt (handmade) pottery	1150	1300
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1263	posthole	wall (corner post)	complete key from core of corner posthole	700	900
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1389	posthole	core structure	key in packing soil of a truss posthole	1000	1100
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1471	posthole	core structure	fragment of an iron key	1100	1150
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1326	posthole	core structure	21 kg of quernstone fragments from several post-removal pits	1125	1250
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1326	pit	wall	complete ceramic rattle in post-removal pit, short eastern wall	1125	1250
Someren	Waterdael III	building 1326	posthole	wall	lock/latch in post-removal pit, short western wall	1125	1250
Susteren	Salvatorplein	unknown	posthole	core structure?	fibula in core of posthole	800	900
Tilburg	HaVeP	unknown	posthole	core structure	flat piece of silver bullion (chopped in half)	900	1000
Utrecht	A2	house 1	unknown	wall (corner)	gold tremissis near southwestern corner of house	600	650
Veessen	Hoogwatergeul	house 3	posthole	core structure	cat skull and three vertebrae in the central posthole	1000	1400
Veghel	De Scheifelaar II	house 9	posthole	core structure	complete Pingsdorf pot in truss posthole	1000	1250
Venlo	Floriade, deelgebied 7	house 2	pit	entrance	inverted globular pot	1100	1200
Wijchen	Oosterweg/ Meerdreef	house 8015	posthole	core structure	half a rotary quern in truss posthole	1000	1300
Zutphen	Looërenk	unknown	stone wall	wall	2 coins in footing course of dividing wall	1768	1775

Table 5.28. Overview of special deposits in/near houses from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts), by period and location inside the house.

	Core structure	Entrance	Wall	Hearth	Pit	Exterior	Byre	Animal burial	Other	Total
EMA	9	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	2	16
E-LMA	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	4
MA	19	3	4	1	3	2	1	7	2	42
LMA-MP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MP	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
total	31	4	9	2	5	2	2	7	4	66

third comprised burnt loam. Brightly coloured stones, perhaps with a special significance, were also found in other post-removal pits at the above-mentioned Boxmeer house.¹²¹

It seems highly likely that the other deposits in this category ended up in the features after the houses had been abandoned and dismantled. An interesting combination is that of the base of a ceramic drinking beaker and fragments of two small horseshoes found in the post-removal pit of one of the truss posts of house 121 at Someren-Hoge Akkers. A truss posthole of a house at Hulsel-Kerkekkers contained a large quantity of partly burnt stones (including some tools), as well as fragments of pottery and roof tile. The excavator suggests that this material came from a hearth pit or cooking site and was deposited in the pit following the abandonment and dismantling of the house.

An interesting deposit, but one that is difficult to interpret, came from a posthole inside house 2 at Didam-Randweg-Zuid from the High Middle Ages. At least three complete Late Roman pots were found in this feature. The excavator suggests that it could be a foundation deposit, while emphasising that the connection with the much later house is unclear. Although the deposition of antique objects is not unknown, it is fairly hard to imagine in the case of these complete, rather vulnerable pieces. Perhaps the pots were discovered and excavated by the medieval occupants, who then used them in special deposition practices.

¹²¹ The excavators suggest that the querns and unusual stones may reflect two different rituals.

¹²² The corners selected are as follows: Nieuwstadt-Elseneval (western corner), Someren-Waterdael III (southeast), Someren-Hoge Akkers (northeast), Utrecht-Az (southwest) and Meterik-Meterikseveld (northwest).

¹²³ A horse burial was found just outside the house entrance during a recent investigation at Weert-Kampershoeck. The investigation report is still in preparation and is therefore not included in this study (Van Haasteren in preparation).

Walls

The special deposits found in walls are exclusively single and composite deposits. There are no deposits of fragmented material. We know of single deposits from, among other places, Meterik-Meterikseveld (a complete globular pot), Putten-Husselerveld (complete pottery) and Someren-Waterdael III (a complete ceramic rattle from building 1326 and a key from building 1263). In addition, a gold tremissis was found near the corner of a house at Utrecht-Az, but in this case there are uncertainties about both the deposition location and the interpretation. We know of composite deposits from Nieuwstadt-Elseneval (half a pot and a stone at the corner of a house) and Zutphen-Looërenk (two coins in the footing course of a stone partition). Another interesting composite deposit from the corner of above-mentioned house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers contained scissors, a key, a needle and a ceramic spinning whorl.

For the deposits in houses at Nieuwstadt-Elseneval, Someren-Waterdael III (building 1263), Someren-Hoge Akkers (house 22) and possibly houses at Utrecht-Az and Meterik-Meterikseveld, house corners appear to have been specifically chosen as the deposition location. There does not seem to be a clear preference for a particular corner or point of the compass.¹²²

Interpretations of the wall deposits are not consistent. The Putten and Zutphen deposits are interpreted as foundation deposits, while the composite deposit from Someren is considered a closing deposit.

Entrances

Deposits associated with entrances firstly involve individual objects, such as at Venlo-Floriade subarea 7 (an inverted globular pot) (Fig. 5.20), Someren-Hoge Akkers (house 51: a complete globular pot and one and a half horseshoes) and Middelburg-Hof Ramsburg (a ceramic tripod cooking pot beneath the threshold of a rural stone structure). Deposits at the entrances to houses at Someren-Hoge Akkers (house 22) and Schagen-N241 are of a different order. These involved a pit containing a large quantity of burnt oak and an animal grave of a young sheep or goat.¹²³

An interpretation as possible closing deposits is suggested for both of the Someren



Fig. 5.20. An inverted globular pot, deposited at the entrance to house 2 at Venlo-Floriade subarea 7. Map scale 1:200 (source: Hakvoort & Van der Meij 2010, 93, 109 adapted).

deposits, whereas the Schagen animal burial is considered a possible foundation deposit, as is the tripod cooking pot found in Middelburg. For the inverted pot from Venlo, the excavators mention various possible interpretations, including that of foundation deposit, closing deposit and an object to ward off evil.

Pits

Some of the pit deposits are single deposits. We know of examples from Sint Anthonis (a complete pottery vessel), Limmen-De Krocht, house 47 (a burnt wooden dish), Limmen-De Krocht, house 18 (a cleft sheep skull) and Beetgumermolen-Alldyk (a human skull).

The other pits involved animal burials. Such burials are documented in four houses at Eersel-Kerkebogten, all involving cattle and dating from the High Middle Ages. Four animal burials (two in each) were documented near the truss posts of houses 219 and 266/621.¹²⁴ Houses 267 and 270 involved a single animal grave. In some cases the animal burials cut the packing soil of the truss posts, which means that the animals were buried in the house after the building was erected, or perhaps even after the house was no longer in use.¹²⁵ Finally, we can mention the grave of a prenatal piglet that can

possibly be associated with house 72 at Limmen-De Krocht (AD 800–1000).

Hearths

Only two special deposits can be associated with hearths. The hearth of house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers contained an interesting find assemblage, including a fragment of a Roman ribbed bowl, five white pebbles, two whetstones and an iron fragment.¹²⁶ 'Post P'¹²⁷ of a house at Berkel Enschoot-Enschootsebaan-Noord contained a deposit of fragments of tuff and burnt loam. A possible interpretation as a closing deposit is suggested for the Someren deposit.

Exterior

Two special deposits were located at house exteriors. A bronze Hanseatic dish containing bread wheat and chaff was placed at the end of a house ditch at Kapel-Avezaath-Muggenborch. Immediately outside a house at Nederweert-Kerneelhoven were two pits with an interesting deposit, including one and a half horseshoes, a spindle whorl and an iron key, covered by two large pottery sherds. An interpretation as a closing deposit is suggested for the deposit at Kapel-Avezaath. The Nederweert deposit is only described in general terms as a 'special deposit'.

¹²⁴ A cattle skull was also deposited in a truss posthole of house 266/621 (see above).

¹²⁵ The animal burials inside the Eersel houses are interpreted by the excavator as foundation or closing deposits. For animal burials in and near houses from the Middle Ages and Modern Period, see also Huijbers 2007. Regarding the animal burials of Eersel, Huijbers (2007, 325) emphasises that animal burials are usually found in outer post areas of buildings, not in the interior.

¹²⁶ Schabbink 2003, 8.

¹²⁷ This posthole is usually associated with the presence of a hearth.

Byres

A deposit containing 64 metal objects was found in a late medieval sunken byre at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf. Among them were knives, several scissors, pitchforks, a reaping hook, a chisel, a buckle, a horseshoe, a riding spur, a coin and a ring brooch. Although the excavators link this deposit to specialised artisanal activities, we have included it here because of possible parallels with previous periods.

Deposits with an unknown location

For some special deposits it was not possible to establish the exact location within the house. A complete key, a complete arrowhead and a spindle whorl were found in the features of house 417 at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker. And a posthole of house 97 at Lent-Kasteel Lent contained the furcula (wishbone) of a crane. Both the bird species and the bone element are unusual.

Houses with several deposits

In some houses, more than one special deposit was documented. The house with the largest number of deposits is house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers, where special deposits are documented at the hearth, the entrance, the wall and in various post-removal pits. In all instances, these may be closing deposits. The variation in the context, nature and composition of the different deposits could suggest that there were different (ritual) practices surrounding the abandonment/dismantling of the house. These rituals would have involved specific objects, or object combinations, that were deposited at specific places in the dismantled house. Whereas some may have had links with the personal identity of the former inhabitants (scissors, key, needle and spinning whorl),¹²⁸ others may have involved house construction debris (burnt loam from the post-removal pits, possibly burnt oak at the entrance). The pebbles and the Roman glass fragment in the hearth may also have had a specific symbolic or magical meaning, or have been linked to the identity of the former household.

Several deposits are also known from building 1326 at Someren-Waterdael III. These are a ceramic rattle from the wall, quernstone fragments (21 kg) from several post-

removal pits and part of a lock or bolt from another wall. Here too, these were all objects that ended up in the features after the house was dismantled. Whereas an item like the rattle might be considered a special object with a personal or symbolic meaning, the quernstone fragments seem to be part of household goods deposited in the dismantled house after fragmentation.

The features of house 417 at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker contained a complete key, a complete arrowhead and a spindle whorl. It is not clear exactly which features they were found in. Here too, these could be finds with specific personal or more general symbolic connotations. Following Huijbers, the key and spindle whorl may have a female association, while the arrowhead fits in with a male identity.¹²⁹

Outbuildings and granaries

Outbuildings

There are twelve inventoried deposits from possible outbuildings: six from the Early Middle Ages, five from the Late Middle Ages and one from the Modern Period (Table 5.29).

Deposits in these outbuildings are very similar to those in houses: the individual spindle whorl in the core of a truss posthole of outbuilding 529 at Berst-Aarle and the key in outbuilding B38 at Utrecht-A2. The (partly) complete pottery in outbuildings at Enter-Middenplein, Utrecht-A2, Stroe-Houtbeekweg and an isolated posthole at Best-Oranjestraat also correspond to this familiar picture. The same applies to the animal bone in outbuildings at Utrecht-A2, Naaldwijk-Hoogeland and Enter-Middenplein (including skull parts) and the quernstone fragments and natural stone tools in outbuilding 2530 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. Only the complete tripod cooking pot in the post-removal pit of a shed or sheep pen at Stroe-Houtbeekweg has been explicitly interpreted as a closing deposit. An interpretation as foundation deposits is suggested for the remaining deposits, or a more general interpretation as a 'special deposit'.

An interesting find is that of a special amethyst bead in an early medieval posthole (AD 650–750) at Wijk bij Duurstede-Veilingterrein. Another involves unusual types of stone from three postholes at Venlo-Trade Port Noord (phase II), which can be attributed to

¹²⁸ Huijbers 2007, 367, following Schabbink 1999, 135. Huijbers adopts a gender perspective here and states that this specific combination of objects arose from ideas and values of 'femininity'. Huijbers states that this deposit could sometimes have a spatial relationship to the area of the house associated with women's activities.

¹²⁹ See Huijbers 2007, 367.

Table 5.29. Overview of special deposits in outbuildings from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Best	Oranjestraat	sherds of 1 large globular pot in posthole of outbuilding 1	1175	1400
Best-Aarle	Aarle	spindle whorl in core of truss posthole of outbuilding 529	1175	1200
Boxmeer	Sterckwijk	grinding block and 9 pieces of quernstone in 1 posthole, whetstone in another posthole of outbuilding 2530	450	1000
Enter	Middenplein	half a Pingsdorf pot beneath post core, cattle jaw next to posthole	1000	1500
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	horse skull, left and right femur of a young horse in posthole of outbuilding 10	1050	1150
Stroe	Houtbeekweg	complete, inverted tripod cooking pot ('grape') in post-removal pit above truss posthole of building 1 (shed/sheep pen)	1375	1425
Utrecht	A2	complete horn core with some cattle skull fragments in posthole of outbuilding B24	675	700
Utrecht	A2	large part of a handmade pot at bottom of a posthole of outbuilding B18	675	725
Utrecht	A2	heavy bronze key in posthole of outbuilding B38	750	775
Venlo	Trade Port Noord, fase II	selection of unusual types of stone in 3 postholes of a (possible) building	1900	2000
Wijk bij Duurstede	Veilingterrein	amethyst bead in isolated posthole	650	750

Table 5.30. Overview of special deposits in granaries from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Angerlo	Kolkwijk	small pecking/rubbing stone, unusual, twisted black pebble	450	1000
Hasselo	t Oosterveld	sherds of handmade pottery, complete bronze disc fibula	800	900
Utrecht	A2	horse skull next to granary, inverted	575	800
Utrecht	A2	pig jaw	625	675
Utrecht	A2	half a pig jaw	625	675

a recent structure.¹³⁰ The researcher suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit, emphasising that the find may demonstrate how special deposition practices of this kind continued well into the twentieth century.¹³¹

Granaries

For the Middle Ages and Modern Period too, only a few deposits (five) associated with granaries are known, all dated to the Early Middle Ages (Table 5.30). Three were found at the Utrecht-A2 site. They contained animal bone, associated with early medieval granaries 15 and 21. Granary 15 yielded a complete pig jaw and granary 21 half a pig jaw. In addition, an inverted horse skull was found right next to granary 21. The excavator assumes that special deposition practices were involved but does not specify this further. Another deposit involved a small pecking/rubbing stone and an unusual, twisted black pebble in the features of a granary

at Angerlo-Kolkwijk (AD 450–1050). The last deposit is a complete bronze disc fibula from the posthole of a ninth-century haystack at Hasselo-’t Oosterveld. For this find the excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit.

Composition

Table 5.31 gives an overview of the composition of the special deposits described above, broken down into categories (single, composite, fragmented or animal burial). The table shows that single deposits feature most frequently, followed at some distance by composite deposits. Deposits of fragmented material are small in number, especially compared to previous periods. Animal burials associated with houses also play a significant role, as in the Roman period.

A closer examination of the composition of deposits (Table 5.32) reveals a predominance of vessels in both houses and outbuildings, as well as a strong representation of animal bone.

¹³⁰ Melkert writes: 'Remarkably, almost all the finds belong to cryptocrystalline quartz varieties such as flint and black pebble. The only other stones found were a Revinian-type quartzitic siltstone and a micaceous quartz phyllite. The former stands out because of the sharp-edged holes resulting from weathered ore, the latter for its high sheen' (Melkert 2011, 147).

¹³¹ Melkert 2011, 147.

The categories of keys, tools, textile attributes, food attributes and fibulae/jewellery are much less well represented.

Table 5.31. Overview of special deposits from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts), by structure type and category.

	Houses/buildings	Outbuildings (?)	Granaries	Total
Single	37	9	3	49
Fragmented	8	1	-	9
Composite	11	1	2	14
Animal burial	7	-	-	7
NA/indeterminate	3	1	-	4

Table 5.32. Overview of special deposits from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (rural contexts), by structure type and object category. Deposits may contain several object categories.

	Houses	Outbuildings (?)	Granaries	Total
Vessels	20	4	1	25
Animal bone	14	2	3	19
Textile attributes	4	1	-	5
Tools	5	1	1	7
Food attributes	4	1	-	5
Fibulae/jewellery	4	2	1	7
Weapons/militaria	1	-	-	1
Coins	3	-	-	3
Keys	8	1	-	9
Horseshoes	3	-	-	3
Burnt loam	3	-	-	3
Other	7	1	-	8

5.3.7 Middle Ages and Modern Period: urban contexts

Houses and buildings in urban contexts

The research remit explicitly included deposition practices in an urban context.¹³² We will therefore discuss these deposits separately here. In view of the rather limited dataset, we have also included data from the pre-Malta period, as well as deposits from village centres.¹³³

We see that urban archaeology has paid fairly little explicit attention to special deposition practices and to 'ritual'. Many deposits are only described in cursory fashion and the discussion of the interpretation of special deposits contains little of substance.

General

The inventoried dataset contains 25 deposits in houses/buildings in cities and village centres (see Table 5.33). Interestingly, eleven of these deposits originate from 's-Hertogenbosch. It seems likely that this simply reflects the state of research and the extent of publication.¹³⁴

Table 5.34 shows that the inventoried deposits date from 1300 onwards and continue through to the nineteenth century. Most deposits (14) belong in the first phase (1300–1500), followed by the period 1500–1700 (definitely eight, possibly nine) and the period 1700–1900 (definitely two, possibly three). The number of known deposits thus clearly declines with time. In terms of contexts, we see that (hearth) floors predominate, especially in the earliest phase (1300–1500). Deposits that are specifically associated with hearth floors occur almost exclusively in the fourteenth century, with the exception of the slightly younger deposit at Groningen-Schoolholm (1500–1550). The second well-represented category are deposits associated with walls, which seem to occur slightly more often in the second period (1500–1700). But once again, the numbers are small. The number of special deposits found in the other contexts are negligible.

Hearth and floor

The best represented deposition context within urban houses is the (hearth) floor. In most cases these deposits can be specifically associated with hearths. In other instances, the location

¹³² Chapter 3, research question 7: To what extent and in what context are ritual deposits found in urban settings?

¹³³ Roman cities are omitted here.

¹³⁴ Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021. In a recent article, Van Genabeek & Jayasena provide a good overview for 's-Hertogenbosch.

Table 5.33. Overview of special deposits in houses/buildings from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (urban contexts).

Place	Toponym	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Amersfoort	Coninckstraat 15	floor	unused, unfinished tripod cooking pot, beneath floor	1300	1500
Amersfoort	Korte Gracht	wall?	shoes/mules, probably bricked into wall	1600	1700
Amersfoort	Muurhuizen 19	wall	8 shoes, 1 mule, 2 stones and a scrubbing brush, bricked into wall	1575	1642
Amsterdam	Anjelierstraat	entrance	complete pottery beneath thresholds of various side entrances to a house	1600	1625
Amsterdam	Warmoesstraat	wall	large grey pot with inscription, beneath foundations	1300	1400
Amsterdam	Warmoesstraat 91	hearth floor	almost complete globular pot, beneath hearth floor	1300	1400
Bergen op Zoom	Cauwenborgh	wall	undamaged (but used) chamber pot and a stoneware pointy-nosed Bartmann jug with broken-off neck, beneath foundations	1500	1600
Bergen op Zoom	Cauwenborgh	wall	bottom part of a stoneware beaker containing 2 silver Spanish coins (reales), beneath foundations	1500	1600
Etten		floor	2 Bartmann jugs and an undecorated jug, covered by 2 majolica dishes, topped in turn by a red ceramic dish with slip decoration. Beneath the floor	1600	1625
Groningen	Schoolholm	hearth floor	brass canister with 4 pennies, beneath hearth floor	1500	1550
Hardenberg	De Hoge Doelen	floor?	4 undamaged Bartmann jugs, probably buried inside the house	1550	1600
Heerjansdam	Molenaarshuis	floor	2 upright stoneware jugs, each covered by an inverted red ware lugged bowl, beneath the floor of a house	1725	1775
's-Hertogenbosch	Hinthamerstraat/ Prinsenstraat	hearth floor	3 pits under the hearth floor: large wall sherd of storage jar; inverted globular pot; bottom part of inverted storage jar	1300	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Papenhulst	hearth floor	grey ceramic fire cover, near hearth floor	1300	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Zuidwal	hearth floor	2 inverted jugs, beneath hearth floor	1350	1400
Kampen	Hofstraat	wall	stoneware jug, bricked into wall	1400	1450
's-Hertogenbosch	Orthenstraat 41	wall	complete, desiccated cat, bricked into wall	1500	1900
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat (house 1)	hearth floor	2 proto-stoneware jugs, 1 inverted grey ceramic jug, several sherds and a nail, beneath hearth floor	1325	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat (house 1)	entrance (?)	inverted spherical storage jar with several nails (and chalky deposit; opening smeared with a layer of loam), beneath possible threshold	1325	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat (house 2)	hearth floor	large fragment of an inverted (old and damaged) grey jug, beneath hearth floor	1325	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat (house 3)	hearth floor	grey jug buried upright with natural stone 'lid', beneath hearth floor	1350	1400
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat (house 4)	hearth floor	jug buried upside down, beneath hearth floor. Neck and handle broken off.	1325	1350
's-Hertogenbosch	Weversplaats	hearth floor	3 (damaged and inverted) stoneware jugs, buried beneath the hearth (in succession)	1300	1400
's-Hertogenbosch	Museumkwartier	floor	grey ware pot, beneath the floor	1300	1500
Zutphen	Lieve Heersteeg 18–26	floor	2 coins, beneath the floor	1823	1823

Table 5.34. Overview of special deposits in houses/buildings from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (urban contexts), by (sub)period and context.

Period	Hearth (floor)	Entrance	Wall	Total
1300-1500	11	1	2	14
1500-1700	3	1	4 (5)	8 (9)
1700-1900	2	-	-1	2 (3)
Total	16	2	7	25

within the house is less easy to establish or we are dealing with deposits buried elsewhere under the floor. The city of 's-Hertogenbosch in particular provides various examples that are well documented and described.¹³⁵ All cases involve fourteenth-century houses and deposits. Three pits containing fragments of two pots were found beneath a hearth floor in a house on Hinthamerstraat (1300–1350). The pits contained, respectively, a large sherd of a storage jar, an inverted globular pot and the inverted lower part of a storage jar, which fits the sherd from the first pit. It is not entirely clear whether the pots were buried before the hearth was created or once it was already in

¹³⁵ See Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021 for an overview.



Fig. 5.21 Two examples of special deposits in urban houses at 's-Hertogenbosch-Weversplaats (left) and 's-Hertogenbosch-Snellestraat (right) (source: Erfgoed 's-Hertogenbosch).

operation.¹³⁶ A pit containing a grey ceramic fire cover (with one handle broken off) was found next to the hearth floor of a house at the Papenhulst site (1300–1350) and two inverted jugs were buried beneath a hearth floor on the Zuidwal (1350–1400). A fourth example from 's-Hertogenbosch concerned three stoneware jugs under a hearth at the Weversplaats (1300–1400) (Fig. 5.21). The rims of two of them were already broken off when the jugs were buried. The third jug was complete, but the belly and base were cracked. Most deposits came from the Snellestraat site (Fig. 5.21),¹³⁷ where special deposits were discovered and investigated in four different houses. The first house (1325–1350) yielded two proto-stoneware jugs, one grey ceramic jug, buried upside down, several sherds and a nail, all buried together beneath a hearth floor. A large fragment of a grey jug, also buried upside down, was found beneath a hearth floor in house 2 (1350–1400). The jug in house 3 (1350–1400) was buried upright, but once again beneath the hearth and with its opening covered with a natural stone 'lid'. Lastly, a further jug was found under a probable hearth floor in house 4 (1325–1350). It was buried upside down and its handle and neck had broken off before it was buried.

Finds at Groningen-Schoolholm and Amsterdam-Warmoesstraat show that the practice of depositing objects near hearths was not confined to 's-Hertogenbosch.¹³⁸ A brass canister with four small coins was found under the hearth floor of an urban house in Groningen (1500–1550) and a complete globular pot was

discovered beneath the hearth of a house on the Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam (1300–1400).

In several other instances the exact position of the special deposits could not be determined, but deposition beneath the (hearth) floor is likely. A bronze tripod cooking pot was found in a house on Amersfoort-Coninckstraat (1300–1500), while four undamaged Bartmann jugs at Hardenberg-De Hoge Doelen were probably also associated with an urban house. A final example concerns a grey ware pot (1300–1500) buried upside down beneath the floor of an urban house at 's-Hertogenbosch-Museumkwartier.

The vast majority of deposits found under (hearth) floors date to the fourteenth century, although the deposits from Amersfoort-Coninckstraat and 's-Hertogenbosch-Museumkwartier could also be slightly younger. This is definitely the case with a deposit under the hearth floor at Groningen-Schoolholm (1500–1550). This deposit differs significantly in terms of composition from the fourteenth-century deposits. Even younger examples of deposits beneath floors are known from villages such as Etten (1600–1625) and Heerjansdam (1725–1775). In the latter location, a pit was discovered under the floor of the miller's house, containing two upright stoneware jugs, each covered with an inverted red ware lugged bowl. A pit in a house at Etten contained two Bartmann jugs and an undecorated jug, covered with two majolica dishes and topped again by a red ceramic dish with slip decoration. The youngest deposit also comes from an urban house. This entailed two coins under the floor of a small

¹³⁶ See Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021, 7; Cleijne 2007, 17–18.

¹³⁷ Van de Venne 2018.

¹³⁸ Huijbers also mentions an old find from Baarle, where 'a pot full of rubbish' was found beneath the hearth (Huijbers 2007, 447, with further references to Gooren 1959).

house at Zutphen-Lieve Heersteeg. They were probably deposited at the time that the houses were built, in around 1823.

Walls

Seven deposits can be associated with house walls. These consist of four bricked-in deposits and three deposits under the wall foundations. The bricked-in deposits include two deposits of shoes, one of a complete, desiccated cat and one of a stoneware jug. A surprising eight shoes, a muzzle, two stones and a scrubbing brush were found in a bricked-up niche in a house at Amersfoort- Muurhuizen.¹³⁹ For deposits found beneath wall foundations, we can firstly mention a large grey pot with an inscription from Amsterdam-Warmoesstraat (1300–1400). Two similar deposits are documented in a single building at Bergen op Zoom-Cauwenborgh (1500–1600). The first is a stoneware beaker containing two silver Spanish coins and the second an undamaged (but used) chamber pot and a stoneware pointy-nosed Bartmann jug with the neck broken off.

Entrances

Only a few deposits can be linked with certainty to house entrances. The best example is known from Amsterdam-Anjeliersstraat (1600–1625), where a complete stoneware jug (bearing the year 1604) and white ware pottery with a green lead glaze were found beneath the thresholds of different side entrances to a house, both filled with lime mortar. These deposits probably relate to the earliest phase of the Jordaen neighbourhood, when they may have had a specific, symbolic significance for the occupation of the house and yard, or to protect the house and its entrances. Another possibility is that the new occupants were adhering to traditions from their (non-urban?) place of origin. A second ‘threshold deposit’ (a spherical storage jar, buried upside down and containing a few nails and chalky deposit) comes from a house on the above-mentioned Snellestraat in ‘s-Hertogenbosch (1325–1350).¹⁴⁰ This too was the first phase of the house in question.

Modern-era deposits under thresholds are also known from the previously described country estate of Middelburg-Hof Ramsburg (a complete tripod cooking pot) and from older investigations at Baardwijk (a jug), Loon op Zand (a jug), Dorst (a Bartmann jug) and Waalwijk

(a jug filled with oats).¹⁴¹ More generally, we can also point to the phenomenon of ‘witch bottles’, which is particularly well documented in England.¹⁴² Witch bottles are often buried beneath thresholds but are also found under floors and near hearths. The pot described above from the Snellestraat displays some similarities to witch bottles. It was smeared with a layer of loam and contained several nails. And perhaps the chalky deposit also says something about the original (special?) contents of the pot.

Excavator interpretations

In the vast majority of cases (22 of the 25), excavators suggest an interpretation as possible foundation deposits for deposits found in urban houses. This includes all deposits under (hearth) floors and foundations. The bricked-in deposits are more generally interpreted as special deposits. This is because it is not clear whether they were bricked in when the house was first occupied, or not until later. It is interesting in this respect to note Van Genabeek and Jayasena’s comment that the three stoneware jugs beneath the hearth at ‘s-Hertogenbosch-Weversplaats were buried in succession (‘within a short time’).¹⁴³ In that scenario, an interpretation as a foundation deposit would have to be qualified, given that at least some of the jugs were buried after the house was first built. It is also possible that some other deposits were not buried or bricked in at the time of construction, but only after the houses were occupied. We can also refer here to the shoe deposits in England, where shoes were added to existing deposits over time.¹⁴⁴ In those cases the deposited objects might perhaps be understood as relating to the realm of defensive magic or counter-magic.

Composition

Table 5.35 summarises the composition of the special deposits described above, broken down into categories (single, composite or fragmented). We see a clear predominance of single deposits, followed by composite deposits. There are no deposits of fragmented material.

If we look more closely at the composition of these deposits (Table 5.36), we see firstly that there is much less variation in the deposited objects than in previous periods and in medieval/modern-era houses in rural contexts. In the vast majority of cases, vessels have been deposited. This involves a variety of pots, jugs, dishes,

¹³⁹ Goubitz 1989. For a recent article on ‘concealed shoes’, see Van Doesburg & Driedijk 2021. See also Section 6.14.4.

¹⁴⁰ Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021, 6.

¹⁴¹ Huijbers 2007, 447.

¹⁴² Witch bottles are ceramic jugs (often Bartmann jugs) in which urine, human hair, nail clippings and often copper needles and iron nails were placed and then sealed with a cork or lead stopper. The idea was to release bewitched individuals from their spell (Van Vilsteren 2007; Merrifield 1987).

¹⁴³ Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Goubitz 1989, 233, with reference to Swann 1969.

Table 5.35. Overview of special deposits from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (urban contexts), by category.

	N
Single	15
Fragmented	-
Composite	10
NA/indeterminate	-

Table 5.36. Overview of object categories from special deposits associated with houses from the Middle Ages and Modern Period (urban contexts). Deposits may contain several object categories.

	N
Vessels	20
Animal bone	1
Shoes	2
Coins	3

a bowl, a fire cover and a bronze tripod cooking pot. Only a few other categories are represented to a modest degree: coins, shoes and animal bone. Coins were deposited beneath a foundation and (hearth) floor, while shoes, like the complete cat, were bricked into walls.

Special aspects

Damaged and incomplete objects

In some cases the deposited objects are damaged or incomplete, or they are misfires (pottery). The jug from house 2 at 's-Hertogenbosch-Snellestraat is old and severely damaged and the neck and handle of the jug from house 4 were broken off before the jug was buried. The jugs buried at the Weversplaats were also damaged and the handle of the fire cover from 's-Hertogenbosch-Papenhulst was broken off. At Bergen-op-Zoom-Cauwenborgh (1500–1600) there was an undamaged but used chamber pot and a stoneware pointy-nosed Bartmann jug with the neck broken off. This jug was also a misfire, with a hole in it. Another example of misfires in special deposits can be found at the Oosterhout-Bowlingplein site.¹⁴⁵ Here an excavated pit

revealed a circle of plates placed on their side, partly surrounded by inverted storage jars (1675–1725). All the pottery pieces were misfires from a local potter. In addition to used or damaged and more or less complete items of pottery, sometimes only parts of pottery items were deposited. Such examples came from houses 1 and 2 on the Bossche Snellestraat.

The situation with the bronze cauldron from Amersfoort-Coninckstraat (1300–1500) is slightly different. This was an unused tripod cooking pot that was not finished after production. Both the casting seams and casting plug are still present, which suggests that the vessel was never intended for cooking purposes.

The deposition of used and damaged objects is not an unknown phenomenon. Examples can be found in both other periods and contexts. An interesting parallel from the Modern Period involves the bronze cauldrons that were deposited in the Drenthe bogs. Van Vilsteren has conducted extensive research on these cauldrons and points out that many of the deposited specimens are damaged.¹⁴⁶

This damage includes holes in the walls/bases, broken-off handles or broken-off feet. In the case of over half of the cauldrons, the damage was probably deliberate.¹⁴⁷

Objects buried upside down

A second observation that merits attention is the position in which some of the objects were deposited. Some pots and jugs were deliberately placed upside down, with the opening facing down. Interestingly, all cases in this subdataset come from 's-Hertogenbosch, with examples from houses 1, 2 and 4 on the Snellestraat, the Hinthamerstraat/Prinsenstraat, the Zuidwal, the Weversplaats and the Museumkwartier. These are exclusively fourteenth-century deposits. (Non-urban) late medieval and modern-era parallels at Stroe (an inverted tripod cooking pot in a shed or sheep pen (1375–1425)), Bladel-Kriekeschoor (various inverted pots in aditch alongside a house (1120–1190))¹⁴⁸ and the above-mentioned find from Oosterhout-Bowlingplein (1675–1725) demonstrate that the inverted deposition of objects was not a tradition confined to 's-Hertogenbosch. We can also point to an inverted globular pot from a waterhole at Best-Aarle (1075–1125) and another from a house at Venlo-Floriade (1100–1200). The inverted

¹⁴⁵ Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021, 13, with further references to an oral communication by Hans Koopmanschap.

¹⁴⁶ Van Vilsteren 2005.

¹⁴⁷ Van Vilsteren 2005, 16.

¹⁴⁸ See also Huijbers 2007, 200.

deposition of mainly vessels was also a recurring phenomenon in earlier periods.

Covered pots and jugs

A possible related phenomenon was the covering of (upright) pots and jugs. The jug in house 3 at 's-Hertogenbosch-Snellestraat was covered with a 'lid' of natural stone and the stoneware jugs in the miller's house at Heerjansdam were covered with inverted red ware lugged bowls. The Bartmann jugs in Etten were covered with majolica dishes. It is possible that both the inverted placement and the covering of vessels were intended to make the opening inaccessible and to prevent anything from entering or escaping. From other periods we know, for example, of an inverted pot base covering a loom weight (Tiel-Medel-De Reth) and inverted pots covering, among other things, human cremation remains.¹⁴⁹ The inverted pots described above may also have covered something of which there is no longer any trace.

Figures and text

A final aspect is the possible role of figures or text on the deposited pottery. This applies first of all to the Bartmann jugs, which feature bearded 'masks' on the neck. It is suggested that the later degenerated versions of these 'masks' were the reason why these jugs were selected for deposition (e.g. as witch bottles).¹⁵⁰ Within our dataset we find Bartmann jugs at Hardenberg, Bergen op Zoom and Etten.

One deposited pot stands out because of the stamped text 'Ave Mari Ave Maria' (Amsterdam-Warmoesstraat). These words may have given this particular pot a special significance or special apotropaic power.

5.3.8 Special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries: an overview

Deposition practices through time

This section examines the evolving deposition practices in houses, outbuildings and granaries through time, based on the above overviews. The number of inventoried deposits is small for the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, which makes it difficult to draw well-founded conclusions about deposition practices at that time. We do

see, however, that they mainly involve deposits of fragmented (and burnt) material (Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen and Meteren-De Bogen) and are perhaps closing deposits. The same interpretation can be suggested for a pit deposit containing a knobbed sickle in a house at Tilburg-Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan, which may have been placed when the house was long abandoned. Only the fragmented 'potbeker' in the wall of a house at Tiel-Medel-Oude Weiden can perhaps be understood as a foundation deposit.

The number of inventoried deposits in houses increased from the Middle Bronze Age onwards. Deposits in pits predominate, followed by deposits in the core structure, at entrances and on the house exterior. Single deposits and deposits of fragmented material occur with roughly equal frequency. From this period on, we see the emergence of pit deposits containing often sizeable quantities of varied, fragmented (and often partly burnt) material. Some pits also contained large quantities of charcoal. Interpretations as closing deposits predominate for deposits in pits, the core structure and entrances. Some of the deposits are interpreted as possible foundation deposits.¹⁵¹ From the Bronze Age we know of the earliest granary deposits (nine), which in all cases are interpreted as possible closing deposits. With regard to the composition of deposits, vessels predominate, followed by the categories of animal bone, burnt loam, food attributes and textile attributes.

The number of inventoried deposits more than doubles for the Iron Age in relation to the Bronze Age (89 deposits). The number of granary deposits also rises considerably (40 deposits), occurring in the Early, Middle and Late Iron Age. With regard to houses, deposits occur mainly in the core structure, followed closely by pits, with entrances and walls trailing behind. However, in the Early Iron Age pit deposits still dominate. Deposits of fragmented (and often burnt) material predominate, both in houses and in outbuildings and granaries. These deposits are most likely associated with the abandonment and dismantling of the house, outbuilding or granary. In some other instances, (complete) objects were deposited at the top of the postholes after the post had been removed. These deposits can also be linked to the final phase of the structures in question. Fragmented material also appears to have been deposited at

¹⁴⁹ Therkorn 2004, 23–25.

¹⁵⁰ Van Vilsteren 2007, 72.

¹⁵¹ However, there are question marks about some of these suggested interpretations. See, for example, the possible foundation deposit of Beuningen-Hoge Wald.

floor level in some houses (Culemborg-Hoge Prijs house 3 and Zijderveld), probably in connection with the abandonment and dismantling of the house. In terms of composition, the picture for Iron Age deposits corresponds fairly closely to that for the Bronze Age. Vessels strongly predominate, followed at some distance by textile attributes, food attributes, animal bone, tools and burnt loam.

For the Roman period, the number of inventoried house deposits rises significantly once more (148 deposits). In this period we see several shifts in relation to previous periods. Firstly, the predominance of deposits in the core structure is much more evident, followed by walls, entrances and pits. Secondly, single deposits are now much better represented, with the vast majority being complete, unburnt objects. The interpretations also show a shift, with foundation deposits now comprising a clear majority. These deposits mainly involve complete vessels, but also coins, quernstones and spindle whorls. They were often placed at the bottom of the central postholes of houses, next to and sometimes beneath the roof-bearing post. Deposits were placed noticeably often in the western central posthole that marked the separation between the living and byre sections of the house and which was often located closest to the house entrances. But deposits of fragmented (and burnt) material did not disappear altogether in the Roman period. They still occurred in the features of the core structure, in walls, pits and at entrances, although clearly less often than in previous periods. And – as in the Iron Age – there are indications that material was deposited at floor level, in or near the house (Rotterdam-Delftse Schie, Ellewoutsdijk and Veldhoven-Oerle). Deposits of fragmented material can probably be linked to the abandonment and dismantling of houses. Regarding the composition of deposits, vessels now predominate, followed by food attributes, tools and animal bone. Textile attributes are less evident in this period. Beakers and jugs are well represented when it comes to vessels. There may be a connection with offerings of drinks/liquids or the (communal) rituals surrounding the building of houses, in which the consumption of alcohol may have played a role. With regard to animal bone, there were a number of animal burials near the entrances to houses at Druten-Klepperheide,

Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan and Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. There were also animal burials alongside the houses at Naaldwijk-Holland College and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. While the complete skeletons could be those of animals intended to protect the house from evil influences, the partial skeletons should perhaps be understood as the remains of a communal meal and the associated sacrifice ritual.

For the Middle Ages and Modern Period, the number of inventoried deposits in rural contexts is smaller than in the Iron Age and Roman period (66 deposits). As in the Roman period, deposits in the core structure strongly predominate, followed by pits and walls. And now too, single deposits predominate, while deposits of fragmented material play only a minor role. Most deposits are interpreted as foundation deposits, although there are definite indications of closing deposits (especially in post-removal pits). Outbuildings are fairly well represented in this period as deposition locations (twelve deposits), especially compared to previous periods. When it comes to the composition of deposits, vessels also predominate in this period but animal bone now plays a more prominent role as well. This includes animal burials in various houses at Eersel-Kerkebogten, a house at Limmen-De Krocht and at the entrance to a house at Schagen-N241. Keys also appear to feature more prominently in deposition practices. Deposited objects are now more frequently interpreted as magical, apotropaic objects, an interpretation that is virtually absent from the repertoire for previous periods. It is likely that this shift primarily reflects the availability of written sources about magic and sorcery.

Finally, we can mention deposits from urban contexts. The picture for these deposits differs significantly from the house deposits just described. Deposits associated with hearths strongly predominate in urban contexts, followed by walls/foundations and entrances. In all cases these are single or composite deposits. There are no deposits of fragmented material. Virtually all deposits are interpreted as foundation deposits. We can perhaps assume an apotropaic function for some deposits and objects (such as the shoes, cat and possibly the pots buried beneath the threshold). The composition of the deposits is less varied than in other periods and contexts. There is a strong predominance of vessels, usually involving

complete items. Several deposits also involve coins, shoes and even a complete cat (bricked-up into a wall). Despite the differences, we also see similarities in practices from other periods and contexts: the inverted deposition of vessels and the importance of liminal places such as walls and entrances.

The distribution of special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries

The maps in Figure 5.22 show the distribution pattern for special deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries during the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman period and Middle Ages/Modern Period. For the Neolithic, the number of special deposits is too small to be able to make pronouncements about distribution patterns. We can deduce some possible patterns by examining and comparing the distribution patterns.

For the Bronze Age the houses containing special deposits are mainly concentrated in the central and southern Netherlands, but absent altogether from the western coastal area. Some deposits are represented in West-Friesland, however. This overall distribution pattern remains unchanged for the Iron Age, with some special deposits now inventoried along the west coast. Granary deposits are confined to the eastern half of the country in both the Bronze and Iron Ages. No granary deposits are inventoried in the coastal provinces for any period.

The distribution pattern for the Roman period is somewhat more uniform than for previous periods. The western provinces are also better represented. Possible clusters can be identified in the eastern part of the river area/Maaskant and the regions around Den Haag and Eindhoven. As with the other periods, the number of deposits in the provinces above the major rivers remains relatively small.

The Middle Ages and Modern Period show an even more uniform picture, across almost the whole of the Netherlands. No possible clusters are identified for this period. Deposits in urban contexts are also evenly distributed across the country, although only in a small number of cities with medieval origins.

Granaries: location and function

Location

It is interesting to see whether granaries can be associated with contemporaneous houses and yards, or whether they occupied a more isolated position in the landscape. This latter phenomenon has been brought to our attention by Van den Broeke and Gerritsen.¹⁵² Examples include granaries at Denekamp-Lattrop, Oss-Almstein, Nijmegen-Lent-Laauwikstraat-Noord and Zundert-Weereijspark. De Vries also points out that granaries containing special deposits were not necessarily found near houses (referring to examples at Ruinen-Oldhave Bos and Emmen-Noordbargeres).¹⁵³

Within our dataset we can at least point to granary 58 at Borgharen-Daalderveld-Pasestraat, which the excavator reports as being located in the ‘outlying area’ of the settlement. Granary 107 at Leusden-De Schammer is also reported as being situated in the periphery of the yards and may have played a special role in the community, although this suggestion is not elaborated further.¹⁵⁴

In other cases, granaries with special deposits do appear to have been part of the yards. Granary 13004 at Tiel-Medel is considered part of the yard of a house (8006) and the granaries of Someren-Waterdael III were located between several houses. Granary 36 of Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg seems to have belonged to a yard, as did the granaries at Huissen-Agropark II, Wehl-Heideslag and Veghel-De Scheifelaar II. However, it is not possible to determine from many of the reports whether granaries were part of contemporaneous yards or whether they were situated on the periphery or outside them. A closer analysis could shed some more light on this, but that is beyond the scope of this study. Another possibility is that apparently isolated granaries did in fact belong to houses that either stood outside the excavation boundaries or have not been archaeologically identified.¹⁵⁵

Function

It is customary archaeological practice to interpret structures with a small number of posts (usually 4, 6, 9 or 12) as granaries. The suggestion is that these structures were used to store crops. However, there may have been a greater functional variation within this category of smaller structures.¹⁵⁶ In the

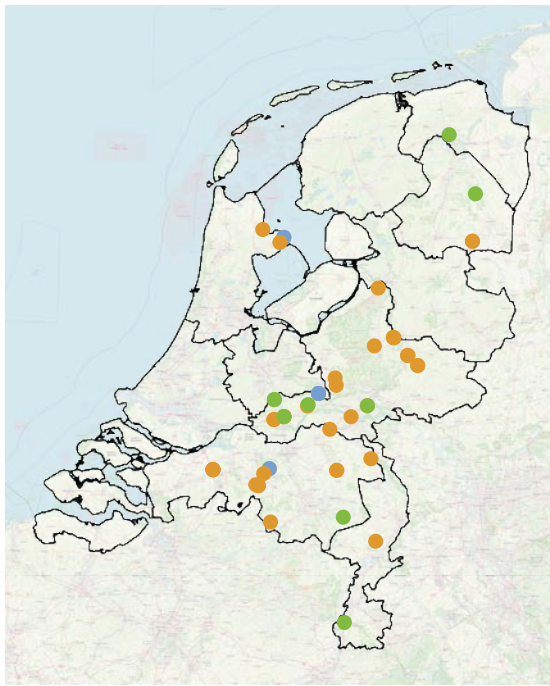
¹⁵² Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015; Gerritsen 2003.

¹⁵³ De Vries 2021, 105–106. The deposits in these granaries are highlighted by De Vries in her thesis, but the excavators do not identify them as special deposits. They are therefore not included in the dataset.

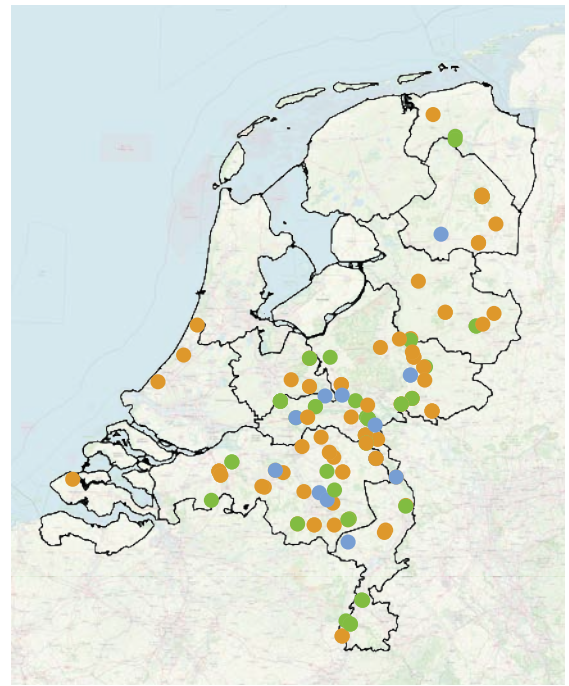
¹⁵⁴ On the interpretation of ‘granary-like’ structures, see Groenewoudt 2011, 195–196.

¹⁵⁵ For example, it can be assumed that the house plans of Late Iron Age site 3 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet have not survived archaeologically, whereas it was possible to document the granaries (with deeper foundations) (Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009, 112).

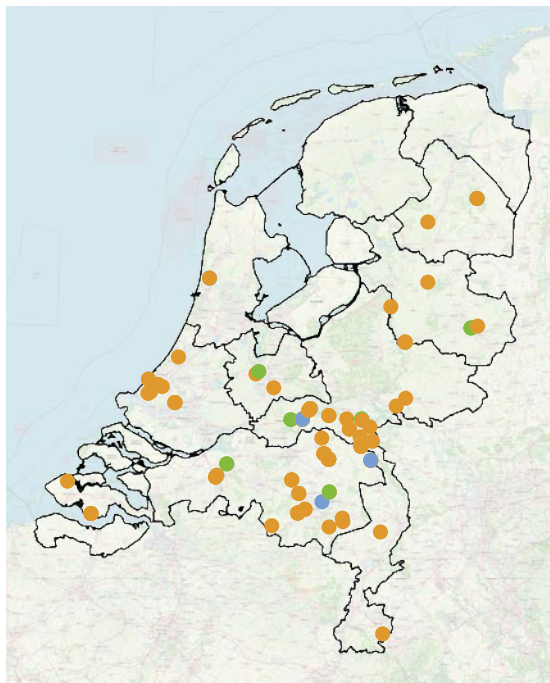
¹⁵⁶ Four-posted structures are also found in grave fields, for which an interpretation as granaries seems unlikely (see Groenewoudt 2011).



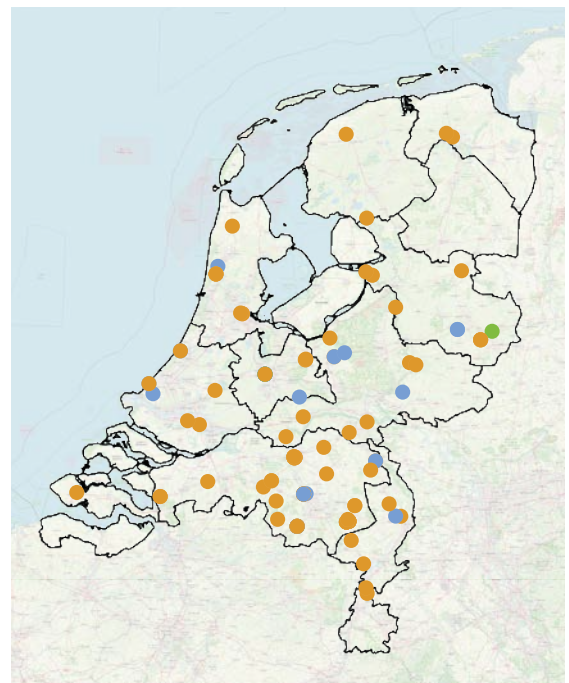
Bronze Age



Iron Age



Roman period



Middle Ages/Modern Period

Fig. 5.22. Distribution of deposits in houses (orange), outbuildings (blue) and granaries (green) during the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman period and Middle Ages/Modern Age.

inventoried data, we can point to a 'granary' at Veghel-De Scheifelaar II (in yard 1, close to a house). Because of the unusually deep postholes, it is suspected as having a different function than the other granaries in the immediate vicinity. The excavators do not suggest, however, what this function might be.¹⁵⁷ For granary 30GS at Meteren-De Bogen too, the excavator suggests a possible special, ritual function, on the basis of cattle skulls in two of the postholes.

¹⁵⁷ In this light, we can refer to a cult place at Lomm, where a six-posted structure is characterised by surprisingly deeply buried posts. The excavators suggest a special function for this structure, possibly relating to the death ritual (Gerrets & De Leeuwe 2011, 108–109).

How frequently do house deposits occur?

This section has clearly demonstrated that deposition practices relating to houses were a regular phenomenon, one with a long time-depth as part of a lengthy tradition of deposition and associated practices. But how frequently do they occur in relation to the total number of houses? In other words, were such practices a routine part of house construction, use and/or abandonment or did they apply to only a limited proportion of houses (see Chapter 3, research question 5)?

It has not been possible within the parameters of this study to answer this question on the basis of the complete subdataset. This would have meant establishing the total number of investigated houses for each (sub) phase, including in settlements with no evidence of special deposition practices. As an alternative, we opted to study several extensive, well-researched settlements from different periods. It should be noted, however, that this allows us to paint only a fragmentary picture as the situation can vary considerably from one region to another.

Bronze Age

Here we discuss the settlements of Vorden-Smidstraat and Meteren-De Bogen. The former had a total of five (and possibly seven) houses, three or four of which were rebuilt on the same spot. Pots were deposited upside down (in pits) in two houses (1 and 4). At Meteren-De Bogen, three pits containing special deposits were documented at site 28, inside three houses. These appear to be closing deposits. A total of eleven houses were identified at this site, five of which largely overlapped. This means that there were special deposits in at most three of the eleven houses/house phases. Special deposits were found in two of the nine houses at site 45 at De Bogen. These were a broken loom weight in one of the aisle postholes of house 45AH (1500–1100 BC) and burnt grain in a wall posthole of the probable Late Neolithic house 45FH. Ten and eight houses respectively are documented for the other sites (29 and 30), with no indications of special deposition practices. However, two special deposits (cattle skulls) are documented in a granary and nearby pit at site 30. Altogether, special deposition practices seem to have been involved in a limited proportion of houses in this period. However, there may be clear differences between sites/yards.

Iron Age

A ribbon settlement was excavated at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, with a total of 47 house plans from the Iron Age. Special deposits were documented in five different houses from the Middle Iron Age (houses 4012, 4030, 4034, 4032/4033 and 4039). The deposits were found in two hearths, at the entrance to a house, in a central posthole and in a wall posthole. Given the total number of houses, the number of deposits is small.

Once again, different clusters and yards can be reconstructed. Houses 4030 and 4034 were part of the same yard (within feature cluster 10), which had a total of three houses that succeeded one another in time. Two of these houses (4029 and 4034) were built in exactly the same spot. A closing deposit was found in the core structure of house 4034. House 4030 stood a short distance away and was probably the youngest of the three. A deposit is documented there in a hearth pit (containing many stones, including quernstones). Thus two of the three houses in this yard are characterised by special deposits. House 4039 was located in the southernmost part of the ribbon settlement (feature cluster 13), together with eight other houses. It appears to have been deliberately dismantled and a sizeable closing deposit near the entrance suggests that abandonment rituals were also performed there. House 4039 was definitely not the youngest house in this cluster. The overlapping houses 4032/4033 were located within feature cluster 11, with a total of five house plans, spread across two yards. House 4032/4033 occupied the yard with a total of three houses. A hearth attributed to house 4032 contained a closing deposit. House 4032 is the oldest house in the yard. And lastly, house 4012 was located inside feature cluster 6, in a yard with at least three house plans. It appears, however, that these houses do not represent continuous habitation.

Based on this survey, we see a picture emerging in which, in the Iron Age too, special deposits are found in only a limited proportion of houses. Assuming some 40 houses from the Middle Iron Age and five deposits from that period, this would mean that special deposition practices took place in about one in every five houses (20%). We should immediately point out that there are plenty of flaws in this 'calculation', due in part to the often limited chronological resolution and the fact that not all special deposits will have survived or have been identified and labelled as such. Also, in this settlement too, the proportion of houses with special deposits can vary considerably from one yard to the next.

Roman period

For the Roman period, we will first take a look at the settlement of Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, which comprised a total of 25 houses from the period between c. 50 BC and AD 350. Three

houses can be assigned to the earliest habitation phase (phase 2.1: 50 BC–AD 10), of which only house 8 contained special deposits (a complete pot at the entrance and a partial sheep skeleton in the house ditch). In the subsequent phase (phase 2.2: AD 10–50) there were probably two houses, of which house 1 contained a special deposit (the limbs of a horse in the house ditch). For phase 3.1 (c. AD 40–100) there were six houses, one with a special deposit (a colander in the central posthole of house 27 as a foundation deposit). Houses 4, 26 and 27 overlapped and the excavator assumes that house 27 is the oldest of the three. There were four houses in phase 3.2 (AD 90–150) and special deposits were found in houses 14 and 10 (foundation deposits). House 14 even appears to have had a two-phase foundation deposit, whereby a new one was buried during a renovation phase and the old one was also put back into the same central posthole. Phase 4 involved five houses, with a foundation deposit only in house 3. Each of phases 5 and 6 involved a single house. A coin hoard was found in house 20 (phase 5), but this has been interpreted as a savings hoard. Two dog skeletons were deposited in the house ditch of house 15 (phase 6). Judging by this settlement, special deposition practices appear to have been more common than in the Iron Age settlement of Boxmeer described above.

It is important to point out the major differences between settlements and regions. In his 2007 article, Van Hoof calculates that a house deposit has been documented in 30 of the total 209 houses in the Maaskant region (14%), whereas the proportion for the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region is considerably lower (3%).¹⁵⁸ At Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, deposits in seven of the 25 houses represents a fairly sizeable percentage (28%). However, in the settlement of Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (Late Iron Age–Late Roman period), located some 6 km from Tiel, special deposits were documented in only one of the 17 houses (unpublished) (6%).¹⁵⁹ And in the settlement of Nederweert-Rosveld, where 19 houses were investigated, there is no evidence of house deposits at all.¹⁶⁰ The same is true of the recently examined settlement at Vinkel-Koksteeg, with 14 houses (AD 1–225).¹⁶¹

Middle Ages

The settlement of Best-Aarle can serve as a useful test case for the Middle Ages. A total of

three early medieval houses have been documented there, one of which contained a special deposit (33%). For the Late Middle Ages there were 16 houses, four of which yielded a special deposit (25%). If we home in on yard level, we see that house 564 (a spindle whorl in a truss posthole) is the oldest house in a multi-phase yard that existed from the late ninth to the early twelfth century. There were at least five houses. House 523 (a complete globular pot in an endpost) was part of another multi-phase yard with five houses, four of which were rebuilt on almost the same site. House 523 is not the oldest house, nor the youngest. Six houses from different periods have been documented for the yard of house 516 (a stoneware jug in the packing soil of a truss posthole). And buildings 591 and 595 (a wood chisel and spindle whorl) are the two oldest houses at site 51–52 (13 houses).

A second, largely investigated, settlement is that of Someren-Waterdael III. Special deposits were documented here in four buildings (1263, 1389, 1471 and 1326): one from the Early Middle Ages (1263) and three from the High Middle Ages. A total of 23 buildings have been documented for the Early Middle Ages (some with overlapping plans). The proportion of houses containing deposits is therefore very small (4%). No fewer than 81 buildings have been identified for the High Middle Ages.¹⁶² Thus the proportion of houses containing special deposits for this period is roughly equivalent to that of the previous period (just under 4%).

Overview

Based on the above survey, we can conclude for all periods that archaeologically traceable special deposits relating to houses appear to be the exception rather than the rule. In some cases, up to a quarter of houses contained special deposits. More often, however, the proportion is much smaller. There are also well-researched settlements that have yielded no special deposits at all. We note that the frequency with which special deposits occur in houses appears to vary considerably by region, settlement, (sub)period/settlement phase and even yard.

¹⁵⁸ Van Hoof 2007, 264.

¹⁵⁹ Oral communication by Julie Van Kerckhove.

¹⁶⁰ Hiddink 2005b.

¹⁶¹ Van Renswoude 2021.

¹⁶² All structures (of varying sizes) that the excavators define as buildings are included here. Outbuildings are excluded, however. De Boer 2012, 449.

5.4 Pits

5.4.1 Introduction

This section looks at special deposits found in pits. It focuses specifically on pits that did not serve as waterholes, were not used as burial pits and were not located inside or immediately outside houses. Waterholes and pits associated with houses are described elsewhere (see Sections 5.3 and 5.5). ‘Pit’ is a broad, non-specific term that covers a wide variety of phenomena. It includes storage and supply pits, silos, cellar pits, loam-extraction pits and pits that were specially dug for the deposition of objects. The pits described here were located in the yard, on the fringes of the yard or even outside the yard, but their spatial relationship to contemporaneous habitation is often difficult to establish with any certainty.

In view of the size of the subdataset, only derived tables are included for this context rather than a general summary table.

5.4.2 General picture

The dataset contains 308 pits containing possible special deposits, dated to the period from the Early Neolithic to the Modern Period (Table 5.37). In terms of chronological distribution, we see a clear predominance in the Iron Age, followed by the Roman period. The Bronze Age and the Middle Ages show a roughly equal representation, with the Modern Period barely featuring. About 94 percent of the Bronze Age pits are from the Middle and Late Bronze Age, and 82 percent of the Iron Age pits date to the Early or Middle Iron Age. This means that the pit deposits are mainly concentrated in the period between the Middle Bronze Age and the Middle Iron Age. In the Roman period, pit deposits are fairly evenly distributed across the subperiods. The same applies to the Middle Ages. For the Neolithic, we also note that virtually all inventoried deposits are pit deposits.

It is not always easy to determine the exact spatial location of pits in relation to contemporaneous habitation: either the

Table 5.37. Overview of pit deposits by period. Some (42) broadly dated pits are not included.

Period	N	%
Neo	14	5%
BA	40	15%
BA-IA	4	2%
IA	108	41%
IA-RP	9	3%
RP	57	21%
MA	29	11%
MA-MP	2	1%
MP	3	1%
Total	266	100%

chronological resolution is too low or pits are the only features to have been excavated.

Overall, the spatial location in relation to the house and yard cannot be properly established for about 38 percent of the pits. A location in the yard can be determined or suspected for 46 percent of the pits. Eleven percent were probably located on the fringes of the yard or settlement and a location outside the yard and settlement can be assumed for 5 percent of the pits. This is just an overall analysis, however. The study parameters did not allow for a more detailed study of spatial patterns.

5.4.3 Composition

Table 5.38 shows the composition of the special deposits for each period, broken down into single deposits, composite deposits and deposits of fragmented material. Overall, fragmented material clearly dominates the pit deposits. However, the relative proportions of the different deposit categories vary considerably from one period to the next. Single and composite deposits predominate in the Neolithic, which is represented on a modest scale. In the Bronze Age the proportion of deposits containing fragmented material shows a clear increase, becoming most prevalent in the Iron Age (about 76%). This picture shifts again in the Roman period, when the different categories are fairly evenly represented. Subsequently,

Table 5.38. Overview of pit deposits, broken down into single deposits, composite deposits and deposits with fragmented material.

Period	Single	Composite	Fragmented	Total
Neo	6	5	3	14
BA	16	7	17	40
BA-IA	1	2	1	4
IA	14	12	82	108
IA-RP	2	2	5	9
RP	17	17	23	57
MA	20	5	4	29
MA-MP	-	2	-	2
MP	1		2	3
Total	77	52	137	266

single deposits clearly predominate in the Middle Ages.

Although the numbers for some periods are too small, the overview in Table 5.39 allows us to identify several patterns in the composition of deposits. For the Neolithic, we see a predominance of the object categories of food attributes and tools, despite the low numbers. Vessels make up the dominant category in the Bronze Age, but food attributes and tools are still fairly well

represented. In the Iron Age, vessels are even more prominent, followed by food and textile attributes. The ‘burnt loam’ category is now fairly well represented. In the Roman period there is an increase in the proportion of animal bone, as well as fibulae/jewellery, weapons/militaria and coins. Food attributes, textile attributes and burnt loam decline in importance, however. Animal bone is more prominent in the medieval pits, while tools are also fairly well represented. The category of food attributes is now absent altogether, however. For the Modern Period, the number of deposits is too small to say anything meaningful about their composition.

5.4.4 Pit deposits through time

Neolithic

Pit deposits clearly dominate our dataset in the Neolithic. The oldest case, Hardinxveld-De Bruin, involves ‘deposition pits’ in the transitional area between the dry residential zone and a wetter area. These pits yielded interesting finds, including a large pot, red deer antler, red deer bone and unworked pieces of wood. For the wood type, spindle tree, a possible special meaning is suggested. The same location between wet and dry can be established for a pit deposit at Den Haag-Ypenburg location 4, on the fringes of the settlement. This pit (S2-276) contained an archaeologically complete pot on the bottom and a complete granite bedstone at

Table 5.39. Overview of the representation of the different object categories in pit deposits.

Period	Vessels	Animal bone	Textile attributes	Food attributes	Tools	Fibulae/jewellery	Weapons/militaria	Burnt loam	Coins	Human bone	Botanical remains
Neo	4	4	-	5	5	-	-	-	-	1	1
BA	24	6	2	8	7	2	3	4	-	1	1
IA	98	19	20	26	11	4	1	18	-	3	2
RP	45	15	7	7	8	6	4	2	3	3	3
MA	16	11	2	-	5	1	2	0	1	4	-
MP	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	189	55	31	46	37	13	10	24	4	12	7

the top. A little higher on the dune was a deposition pit (S4-z6) containing nine flint fragments, including six axe flakes, a tool and two flakes. The pit at Schipluiden-Noordhoorn was also situated on the edge of the settlement and contained a supply of sloe berries beneath the bones of at least three cattle and a smashed dog skull.

Other pits appear to have been located within the habitation zone rather than on the periphery. These include a pit with a surprisingly large erratic boulder at Wolder-Cannerberg¹⁶³ and a pit with a quernstone and runner stone at Beek-Kerkeveld. A burnt, disabled sickle came from pit 4 at Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen.¹⁶⁴ Two other pits within this settlement contained three quernstones (one of them broken) and the remains of an unburnt, human skull, respectively.¹⁶⁵ Finally, we can mention pit deposits at Rosmalen-Noord (an archaeologically complete 'potbeker' in acharcoal-rich fill) and Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (a concentration of pottery, a quernstone and erratic boulders).

Several pit deposits from older research are certainly worth mentioning. A very extensive pit deposit is known from the settlement of Maastricht-Klinkers.¹⁶⁶ This pit was located on the edge of the settlement, near a cliff where the valley of the Meuse drops down. In this case too, the location is close to a transition zone, this time between high and low. The pit contained a huge assemblage, including some 46 kg of pottery, flint, natural stone, burnt loam, burnt bone and charcoal. This large quantity of material indicates that different households were probably involved in the associated practices. The pit's structure suggests that there may have been two communal events, separated by time. Another pit deposit, at Sittard-Mgr. Claessenstraat, contained 1215 fragments of pottery, 619 pieces of flint (35 of them arrowheads), a piece of ochre and 13 rubbing stone fragments. This pit was also located on the edge of the settlement.

Bronze Age

Bronze Age deposits of fragmented material are prominent in the dataset. They date almost exclusively to the Middle and Late Bronze Age. A Middle Bronze Age pit at Den Haag-Oude Waalsdorperweg contained 70 pottery sherds, loom weight fragments (5 MNI), a large amount

of natural stone, some charcoal, burnt loam, an amber bead and a flint arrowhead. The pit appears to have been situated in a house yard. We know of another, similar pit deposit from the settlement at Zutphen-Looërenk (Early Bronze Age). The pit contained pottery sherds, a possible loom weight, some ochre, an amber bead, flint, cattle tooth enamel and a sandstone pecking stone.¹⁶⁷ This pit was also probably located in a house yard. We can also mention pit deposits from the Middle Bronze Age at Wijchen-Bijsterhouses-Vindplaats 2/Small Kamp and Ressen-Zuiderveld. The former pit contained sherds from various incomplete pots, pecking stones, rubbing stones and flint tools. A pit deposit at Ressen-Zuiderveld involved 130 sherds of partly burnt pottery and burnt loam. This latter deposit is explicitly interpreted as a closing deposit.

Pit deposits from the Late Bronze Age have been found at Borgharen-Daalderveld-Pasestraat (a large amount of pottery, burnt loam and charcoal), Didam-Loilseveld/Doetinchemseweg (mostly burnt pottery and natural stone, including quernstone fragments), Deventer-Brinkgreven (15 kg of heavily burnt pottery, 5 kg of burnt loam and partly burnt natural stone, including a polishing stone), Rhenen-Remmerden-Remmerden II (burnt pottery and natural stone) and Schipperskerk-Deelgebied Koeweide (about 21 kg of pottery, natural stone and burnt loam). A pit at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck contained over 4.5 kg of (partly burnt) natural stone, including modified material and cracked stones. A large pit at Groningen-De Linie was characterised by a black burn layer containing several pottery sherds, a spindle whorl, burnt bone and lumps of loam. Beneath the burn layer was a layer of sherds, an almost complete pot and a Neolithic scraper. Although it could be established that some pits (such as those at Didam and Schipperskerk) were located in a yard, the relationship of many other pits to contemporaneous yards is difficult to determine.

Pit deposits containing fragmented material often have a similar composition, comprising fragmented and often (partly) burnt pottery, quernstone fragments, ceramic objects, burnt loam, natural stone and flint tools, and cooking or hearthstones. Thus these pits tie in with those containing fragmented material that are found in greater numbers in the Iron Age (see below).

¹⁶³ A similar large stone, this time covered with ochre, was found at the bottom of a pit at the Elsloo-Koolweg site (Amkreutz & Van Wijk 2020, 93; Van Wijk & Porreij-Lyklema 2015).

¹⁶⁴ A deposit associated with a house was found at the same site, containing fragments of three burnt, deliberately smashed natural stone axes and three burnt bone artefacts. The excavators suggest an interpretation as a closing deposit (Stokkel & Bulten 2017, 135).

¹⁶⁵ Stokkel & Bulten 2017, 293.

¹⁶⁶ Theunissen 1990; De Warrimont 2003; Amkreutz & Van Wijk 2020.

¹⁶⁷ Although the excavator explicitly states that this pit does not constitute a special deposit, it is included here because of its similarity to the pit at Oude Waalsdorperweg described above.

In most cases, the contents of these pits can probably be understood as the fragmented and burnt remains of a house inventory, including mobile material culture, as well as parts of the dismantled building structure and hearths. Some Bronze Age deposits contained 'special' objects such as amber beads, an 'antique' scraper and an arrowhead.

For single and composite Bronze Age deposits, we can point to examples at Breda-Moskes (a bronze knobbed sickle, near house 1), Enkhuizen-Haling 13 (a dog skull) and Boxmeer-Maasbroeksche Blokken (a quernstone, near a house). A silo at this latter site contained a layer of charred grain and a bronze chisel. In addition, inverted pots are known from pits at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen and Wijchen-Bijsterhouses site 11. Pit deposits containing inverted pots have already been described above for the Bronze Age houses at Vorden-Smidstraat.

Composite deposits have been found at Elst-Het Bosje (a granite quernstone, covered by a charred layer of barley and emmer wheat) and Borger-N34 (three (partly burnt) quernstones and two hammerstones). Also worth mentioning is a deposit at Elst-Het Bosje, where a small pit (S59.147) containing a large number of sherds from an enormous biconical (storage) jar was found at the edge of feature cluster 2. A large stone rested on top of the sherds. This jar may have been deliberately smashed or tossed in with the stone at the time of deposition. A second notable deposit concerns a large number of loom weights in a pit at Zutphen-Looërenk, near house 17 (Middle Bronze Age). An (almost) complete set of loom weights may have been deposited here after the loom was dismantled. A final deposit to be mentioned concerns a pit at Enkhuizen-Haling 13 with four talus bones and nine upper jaw molars of cattle, the talus bone of a pig and the upper jaw molar of a horse. They appear to have been specifically selected. We can also point out the possible special function and significance of talus bones (astragali).¹⁶⁸

Iron Age

Pits containing fragmented material are strongly predominant in the Iron Age, with single and composite deposits playing only a limited role. At least 85 percent of the pits containing fragmented material date to the Early or Middle Iron Age. Only about 10 percent of these

deposits can be dated with certainty to the Late Iron Age or the Late Iron Age–Early Roman period.

The pits with fragmented material closely match the pit deposits described above, mainly from the Middle and Late Bronze Age. For the Iron Age we know of good examples at Twello-De Schaker (large quantity of pottery (21 MNI) and loom weight fragments), Ruinen-Mr. Harm Smeengestraat ((partly) burnt pottery, natural stone and charcoal), Tynaarlo-Donderen (about 4 kg of (partly) burnt pottery sherds and a complete quernstone) and Brunssum-De Kling (286 pottery sherds, cooking and hearthstones and burnt loam). The quernstone from the Tynaarlo pit is assumed to have been broken deliberately. Silo S4100 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijk contained a charcoal layer with a large amount of spelt wheat and barley, as well as parts of loom weights, natural stone and a good deal of pottery (Middle Iron Age). A pit (S75.84) at Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase II contained an unusually large quantity of burnt pottery (39 kg) and a further 1.5 kg of burnt loam. The same applies to a pit at Weert-Kampershoek-Noord phase 2, with some 20 kg of pottery, pieces of natural stone and a loom weight.

More pits of this kind have been found together in some places. Four pits are documented quite close together at Helden-Panningen-Stokx. Two of them each contained more than 6 kg of pottery sherds, while a third pit yielded 14 kg of pottery (Fig. 5.23). At least some of the pottery appears to be burnt. There is a clear predominance of large (storage) jars, a phenomenon that we see more frequently in the Early Iron Age. In addition to pottery, this deposit contained burnt loam and natural stone (including chunks of tephrite and a whetstone). The pits at Panningen-Stokx are interpreted as storage or supply pits and the deposits as closing deposits. It is difficult to establish whether the pits were filled at the same event but it is certainly possible. At Goirle-Huzarenwei too, there are more of this type of pit from the Early Iron Age. Structures 107, 108 and 115 contained pottery sherds, ceramic objects, charcoal, natural stone, flint, burnt bone and burnt loam. In addition to a miniature bowl and one or more dishes with an internally thickened rim (*haakrandschalen*), pit 115 contained a large quantity of fragmented and complete loom weights (29 MNI). Once again, this may be

¹⁶⁸ Some researchers associate astragali (especially sets of loose talus bones) with oracles and divination (Therkorn 2004, 63; Thilderkvist 2013, 140; Nieuwhof 2015, 191).



Fig. 5.23. Pit deposit containing a large amount of fragmented and burnt material at Panningen Stokx (source: Hiddink 2008b, Fig. 10).

one (or perhaps two) sets of loom weights from a dismantled loom.

Some pits also contained animal bone, sometimes burnt. For example, a pit deposit (pit 25006) at Houten-Castellum contained 260 fragments of pottery, 255 bone fragments (including the horn core of a goat and a worked, decorated tibia), at least two ceramic base discs, a knife with only the organic handle missing (perhaps a razor), burnt loam and natural stone. A pit at Middelaar-Kopseweg contained 337 sherds of burnt pottery, 15 sling bullets, burnt loam, burnt bone and an iron socketed axe. This pit may originally have been a supply or storage pit. A dark, charcoal-containing layer has been documented here, as in some other (storage) pits/silos. From older research we know of a pit at Druten-Scharenburg that yielded burnt pottery, as well as a large amount of animal bone at the bottom of the pit.¹⁶⁹

There are examples of single deposits at Rosmalen-Noord (an inverted bedstone above its associated runner stone), Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase III (a complete quernstone), Veessen-Hoogwatergeul (a cattle skull) and Nijmegen-Lent-Vindplaats 9/57 (a beaker that was deliberately halved following burning). Silo S72

at Brunssum-De Kling (Early–Middle Iron Age) contained an almost complete bowl with radial comb decoration that was buried after the silo was filled. Pits with a single complete pot are known from, among other places, Naaldwijk-Hoogeland and Rhenen-Remmerden-Rotonde N225. The latter deposit was a pot with exceptional decoration that was placed upside down in a pit. Several pits were found at Den Haag-Wijndaeler plantsoen (Late Iron Age) that can be associated with field ditches. They all contained complete or large segments of pots. Chaff and/or grain was also found in some pits and pit 1 also contained a spindle whorl. The excavator suggests that the pits may have been specially dug for ritual purposes, for example as sacrificial pits. In that light we can also refer to the practice of depositing complete pots in ditches. It is these liminal locations – serving as boundaries between yards and fields – that were important places for special deposition practices.

There are also various interesting composite deposits. A pit at Wolder-Cannerberg contained a row of 15 complete loom weights. Again, this could be a complete set of loom weights from a dismantled loom. A pit near house 1 at Oss-Brabantstraat contained a ring-

¹⁶⁹ Tuijn & Vissers 2000.

based dish and fragments from another dish. A pit at Den Haag-Wijndaelerplantsoen yielded two archaeologically complete pots and one at Valkenburg-Grondverbeteringsinstallatie Hoogheemraadschap Rijnland an (almost) complete pot and a dog skull. A pit at Nieuwstadt-Elsenewal, situated near two possible buildings, contained several (almost) complete pots that were placed against each other in a row. One of the pots was inverted. Immediately above the level of the pots was a roughly 10 cm thick layer of hundreds of bone fragments of cattle, horses, sheep/goats, pigs and dogs. The pit also contained flint and natural stone, including six (partly burnt) complete stones. The placement of some of these stones suggests that they were used to smash the ceramic pots. The presence of so much animal bone is unusual and could perhaps be linked to the preparation and consumption of a communal meal. According to the excavator, however, these are the remains of a household inventory. Another special deposit of several complete pots was found in pit 3001 at Oosterhout-De Contreie (Early Iron Age). These were five pots of a different size and shape, placed inside one another. This deposit is reminiscent of the deposit containing twelve complete pots in a pit located inside a house at Valkenswaard-Waalreneweg (800–625 BC). A final pit deposit is unique by virtue of its size and diversity. It involves a large pit at Grijpskerke-Kievitshoekweg, dated to between c. 205 and 165 BC. The pit contained a very extensive deposit that included 660 kg of handmade pottery (220–342 MNI), fragments of fire dogs or roasting spits and fired-clay ovens, pieces of two quernstones, a bronze bracelet fragment, the complete skeleton of a dog (probably deliberately killed), the bone remains of at least 15 cattle and several sheep, and a complete human pelvis with the accompanying lumbar spine. The material was deposited in the pit at the same time. Some pots were placed intact in the pit. With regard to the vessels, we see the occurrence of perforated bases and ‘stripes or splashes of paint’. The vessels, ovens, fire dogs/roasting spits, quernstones and animal remains could all be linked to the preparation and consumption of food and drink. This deposit therefore appears to reflect several communal meals and rituals, or a sizeable ‘festival’. Its extent could indicate that the entire local

community of that time was involved: at least 15 to 20 families.¹⁷⁰ Although the pit’s wider context cannot be properly established, it does not appear to have been located in or near a settlement. If we are indeed dealing here with a large communal event, it seems likely to have taken place outside the context of an individual yard.

Roman period

In the Roman period, the relative proportion of pit deposits containing fragmented material declined significantly in relation to the Iron Age, with single and composite deposits being better represented.

We will describe several examples of deposits with fragmented material. An Early or Middle Roman pit along the southern settlement ditch (and near houses 3 and 4) at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen contained a large number of sherds, as well as a vertically placed (probably deliberately) roof tile. A pit at Marssum-It Aldlân (19 BC–AD 100) contained about 3 kg of pottery sherds, several hearth collar fragments, a ceramic plate and disc, a horse skull and a dog skull. A second pit at this site (AD 200–400) yielded 2.7 kg of stacked pottery sherds and the skull of a young dog, with the lower jaw. A pit deposit at Den Haag-Uithofslaan (pit 6002) (AD 150–240) contained pottery sherds, a fibula and large fragments of a possible hearth screen/fire dog or mobile hearth. We can also point to pits at Heiloo-Stationsplein (S151) (145 pottery sherds of a couple of pots and 30 tephrite fragments (AD 0–300)) and Eckelrade-Putstraat (55 sherds of wheel-thrown pottery, quernstone fragments and an iron knife (AD 150–250)). Two pit deposits at Margraten-Scheulderstreeg are also worth mentioning. The pits were probably used primarily as latrines or cesspits (S2.8 and S2.9; AD 150–250). The first (S2.8) contained pottery sherds and natural stone, including half a quernstone. The second (S2.9) contained 358 pieces of pottery, 58 pieces of natural stone (including a whetstone) and three fragments of ceramic building material. The pottery was partly stacked, with a complete mortarium resting on an incomplete, inverted pot right near the bottom. The pottery in this deposit is characterised by a high degree of completeness and comprises vessels, kitchenware, and transportation and storage ware (31 MNI).

¹⁷⁰ Van Dierendonck 2016.

The excavator interprets both deposits as closing deposits. Another interesting pit deposit at Tiel-Medel-De Reth (pit 25008; 30/15 BC–AD 10) contained 13 kg of pottery, including burnt fragments of small beakers and large storage jars. Van Kerckhove associates these remains with the brewing and consumption of beer as part of ceremonial meals and drinking parties.¹⁷¹ The fact that this pit also contained animal bone and charred food remains (prepared with emmer wheat) matches this picture. Another Early Roman pit deposit (S1099) at Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch was unusually large, containing some 48 kg of heavily burnt pottery sherds, hearth collar fragments, fragments of loom weights and animal bone (Fig. 5.24). The excavator interprets the deposit as a closing deposit, although it should be said that it is unusually large compared to most other closing deposits. A slightly younger deposit is documented in a pit complex (69) at Heerlen-Trilandis (AD 100–300). This involves some 1500 pottery sherds, often from virtually complete specimens. The deposit contained pottery of different ages, which seems to indicate that ‘antique’ vessels were also deposited here, possibly heirlooms. The location of the deposit is also interesting –

at the settlement entrance, where the access road reached the settlement. Postholes around the pit cluster could indicate the presence here of a light structure, possibly a fence or trellis. As such, it could therefore be a kind of ritual place located near the entrance to the settlement. A pit deposit on the edge of a settlement at Sint Maartensbrug-Grote Sloot 154 contained fragments of at least 25 pots, including four virtually complete ones. Two of these pots were placed upside down. The pit also yielded bone fragments of cattle and the skull fragment of a sheep or goat. The excavator suggests that the four complete pots can be considered a closing deposit.

With regard to Roman-era deposits of fragmented material, we can observe that the material is less frequently burnt than in similar pit deposits from previous periods. An exception is the Borne deposit just described, which closely resembles deposits familiar to us from the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Single and composite deposits are found in many other pits. These include pit deposits at Castricum-Oosterbuurt (a complete, antique bronze skillet), Houten-Castellum (a complete jug in pit 25184) and Cuijk-De Nielt (a handmade



Fig. 5.24. A pit containing a large amount of burnt and fragmented material at Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch (source: Scholte Lubberink 2007, Fig. 30).

¹⁷¹ Van Kerckhove 2019, 277, with reference to Nieuwhof 2015, 151.

pot with blood decoration in a fourth-century pit). A pit at Marssum-It Aldlân yielded a complete pot, loose pottery sherds (10 MNI) and a bone tool (AD 200–400). A second pit (AD 50–250) contained a complete pot, animal bone, slag and two ceramic artefacts, while a pit at Heiloo-Stationsplein yielded two complete pots, including a miniature one. Two unusual pit deposits from the Late Roman period comprised collections of various special objects. Thus, a pit at Eme-Laaksche veld (AD 275–425) contained a bronze hinged fibula, a bronze finger ring, a loom weight, sherds of a footed beaker, a spinning whorl, a horse skull, a whetstone and a flint arrowhead. Both the arrowhead and the hinged fibula were of considerable age at the time of deposition.¹⁷²

We know of a second, fourth-century pit from Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (pit 67). This pit deposit contained a decorated bone comb, the complete valve of a North Sea shell, an amber bead, and fragments of a mirror, wire fibula, stud and bronze ring. Alongside fourth-century pottery, there is also pottery from the second and third centuries, including a complete terra sigillata mortarium (with grafitto). Here too, antique objects appear to have been deposited.

Finally, we can point to an especially rich pit deposit from Nistelrode, 300 m north of the settlement of Zwarte Molen, at the transition between the dry inhabited zone and a wetter area.¹⁷³ The deposit contained 30 bronze objects that had been carefully deposited in the pit. These mainly comprised a drinking and serving set, intended for the preparation, serving and consumption of wine. The traces of wear clearly show that the set had been used for a long time. This sizeable deposit represents a considerable value. Koster interprets the set as an emergency deposit, probably buried in response to an impending disaster in the middle or second half of the third century.¹⁷⁴ However, Fontijn and Jansen also propose a possible interpretation as a ritual deposit, linked to ceremonial drinking parties. What is important here is the specific landscape context of a seepage zone. Wet locations have been used since the Bronze Age for deposition purposes.¹⁷⁵

Middle Ages and Modern Period

Single deposits clearly predominate in the Middle Ages and Modern Period, while deposits

of fragmented material barely feature.

Deposits of complete pots and special objects play a significant role in this period.

We know of some interesting pit deposits from the Early Middle Ages, including those at Utrecht-Vleuten-Wilhelminalaan (AD 500–800), Utrecht-A2 and Wijk bij Duurstede-Veilingterrein (AD 675–725). The first involves the remains of three different pots, which were almost half or three quarters intact. A complete bowl, which appears to have been deliberately smashed with a stick, was found in pit 94 at Wijk bij Duurstede. Complete pots were also deposited in two other pits at this site (pits 834 and 233), as well as in a pit at Didam-Randweg-Zuid/Kasteel Didam (AD 700–900). A complete globular pot was buried at Best-Aarle, right next to the entrance to the yard (AD 700–1300). Several special early medieval pit deposits have been documented at the Utrecht-A2 site. These involve a pit with a human skull showing strike marks from an axe (pit K21) (AD 675–725), a pit with a complete iron spearhead (AD 625–675) and one with a special composite deposit (K14; AD 700–750). This latter deposit contained an (almost) complete horse skull, a decorated glass spindle whorl, an orange-red glass bead, a complete Roman sling bullet, worked antler and a worked needle tip. Both the glass spindle whorl and the sling bullet are antique objects.

A complete disc fibula from a pit at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf/Peperstraat 35 (AD 900–1050) and a complete spouted jar in a pit at Someren-Acaciaweg 2 (AD 965–1050) can also be mentioned. A pit at Delft-Voordijks-hoornsepolder contained a dog skull, the right lower leg of a horse and a complete amphora (AD 1075–1150).

Two pits at Diemen-Plangebied Noordflank Centrum (AD 1120–1300) are slightly younger. One contained a wooden case with a sliding lid and a wooden weaving sword, the other a miniature pot, a wooden peg and a nicely worked wooden object with an unknown function. A thirteenth-century pit at Alblasserdam-Lange Steeg also contained several wooden objects, including a complete axe and a knife, both with wooden handles. The tip of the knife blade is folded over, perhaps deliberately. This may have been done for functional purposes (e.g. for use as a scoring knife or drawknife). It is also conceivable, however, that there was another, ritual reason behind

¹⁷² Bouwmeester 2000, 75.

¹⁷³ Jansen 2007; Koster 2007; Halbertsma & Jansen 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Koster 2007, 444; Fontijn & Jansen 2007.

¹⁷⁵ Fontijn & Jansen 2007; see also Halberstma & Jansen 2010.

this bending. A thirteenth-century pit at Sittard-Haagsittard yielded a small, flattened pewter candlestick. Stoepker views this as an elite object, possibly an heirloom, that was deliberately deposited when the yard was abandoned.¹⁷⁶

For the Modern Period, a deposit from pit 1.19 at Nuenen-Witte Hondpad (AD 1500–1550) is of particular interest. This pit was situated some 10 m from a house and contained a special deposit with several (almost) complete ceramic jugs and pots and no fewer than 87 iron objects. One complete jug stands out among the pottery. It is a special vessel with a slip decoration depicting the story of St Catharine. Jugs of this kind are rarely found and, if found, they usually come from the grounds of castles.¹⁷⁷ The metal objects included a complete single bevel broad axe and two buckles. Also found were pieces of a small shovel, two cow bells, chest fittings and part of a wagon. Although this rather varied collection of iron lacks any clear coherence, the contents of the deposit certainly show that it is a special deposit. It is difficult to establish with certainty, however, whether it is an emergency deposit, a savings hoard or a deposit of objects that were ceremonially buried when the yard was abandoned.

We would like to discuss two modern-era pits that are relevant to the discussion about how to interpret deposits from this late period. In general, we can say that younger deposits are less readily interpreted as ‘special’ or ‘ritual’ than deposits from the Roman period or prehistory.¹⁷⁸ The pits in question are large rectangular pits, 5 to 10 m north of a farmhouse plan at Zeeland-Voederheil II. The excavator refers to these pits as rubbish pits. However, there is an interesting similarity to deposits of fragmented material from earlier periods, which raises the question of whether we can unequivocally interpret such pits as ‘ordinary rubbish pits’. The first pit (S1.83) contained a grey to dark-grey layer of sand, brick, pottery sherds, jugs, a beaker, plates, tripod cooking pots, an ointment jar and a handled bowl and 10.5 kg of natural stone. An almost complete ceramic plate was placed upright against the pit edge and an almost complete tripod cooking pot was placed upside down in the pit. The excavator notes that the brick was cracked only after deposition, probably as a result of secondary burning. The second pit (S1.92) contained 86 pottery fragments and 6.5 kg of

ceramic building material, a whetstone, a possible writing slate and roofing shingles. Regarding the first of these pit deposits in particular, there are various indications of special deposition practices.

5.4.5 Discussion and interpretation

Deposits in ‘isolated’ pits (not directly associated with houses) dominate the Neolithic, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. The relative importance of pit deposits declined from the Late Iron Age on, a trend that continued in the Roman period, Middle Ages and Modern Period.

Deposits of fragmented material clearly played a major role in Iron Age pit deposits. They often contained a large quantity of fragmented and often (partly) burnt pottery, quernstone fragments, loom weights, spindle whorls, natural stone and burnt loam. These pit deposits are often linked in the literature to abandonment rituals, an interpretation that is developed in detail by Gerritsen and Van Hoof, among others.¹⁷⁹ Gerritsen states that burning and burying part of the house inventory will have symbolically marked the end of habitation.¹⁸⁰ It is possible that objects linked to the house and household (the former occupants) became inalienable and could therefore not be taken or reused.¹⁸¹ Gerritsen reconstructs practices during the abandonment phase and shortly thereafter. Pits were dug in and near houses, fires were lit and objects were ‘destroyed’ in the fires. Both the burnt material and some unburnt objects were subsequently buried.¹⁸² Although it is often impossible in the case of isolated pits to establish a direct link with the abandonment and dismantling of a house, Gerritsen and Van Hoof believe this to be the most credible explanation, especially in view of the size and composition of the deposits.¹⁸³

As an alternative interpretation, Gerritsen suggests that these deposits could be associated with communal feasting. The deposited vessels could then be regarded as the remains of the pots, bowls and dishes that were used for the preparation and consumption of large quantities of food. Deposits involving exceptionally large numbers of vessels could be viewed in this light.¹⁸⁴ Such feasts could relate to the abandonment and dismantling of the house,

¹⁷⁶ Stoepker 2017, 78–80.

¹⁷⁷ Bink 2020, 26.

¹⁷⁸ See also Morris 2012. Morris has researched this phenomenon for the interpretation of deposits of animal bone in England. Morris points to the fact that prehistoric deposits are more likely to be labelled ‘ritual’ than historical ones and attributes this to our preconceptions about the different periods.

¹⁷⁹ Gerritsen 2003, 97–102; Van Hoof 2002, 84–89.

¹⁸⁰ Gerritsen refers here in broad terms to ‘site maintenance practices’, with the deposits in question marking the end of the site (Gerritsen 2003, Section 3.3.4).

¹⁸¹ Gerritsen 2003, 102.

¹⁸² Gerritsen 2003, 100.

¹⁸³ Gerritsen 2003, 100; Van Hoof 2002, 84–89.

¹⁸⁴ Gerritsen 2003, 102.

or to the subsequent phases in order to commemorate the former occupants (ancestors) at an abandoned house site. Van den Broeke and De Vries emphasise that isolated pit deposits (containing fragmented and burnt material) should not be 'routinely' interpreted as closing deposits, but that alternative interpretations should also be considered.¹⁸⁵ Alternative interpretations are in fact proposed for some of the pits in our dataset. We see this most clearly in the case of the very extensive pit deposit of Grijpskerke. The enormous number of vessels, the large quantity of animal remains, the fire dogs or roasting spits and the oven remains all seem to tie in with a large, special feast involving many families. But pit deposits that include fragmented pottery and animal bone at Tiel-Medel-De Reth, Nieuwstadt-Elseneval and Druten-Scharenburg could perhaps also be understood in this light, albeit on a smaller scale. Finally, we can mention the pits containing surprising concentrations of animal bone. For example, a pit at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg contained the remains of some ten cattle and horses (Fig. 5.25). According to Groot, this bone concentration should be understood as the remains of a major event in which these animals were slaughtered for a big feast.¹⁸⁶ For pits of this

type containing bone concentrations, it is important to examine the animal bone specifically for evidence of special (ritual) slaughtering practices.¹⁸⁷

A notable and much less numerous category of pit deposits are those containing collections of special objects. These are the Late Roman pits at Eme-Laaksche Veld and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and the early medieval pit at Utrecht-Az. Alongside other remarkable objects, each of these three pits contained antique objects. These were old vessels, an arrowhead that is thousands of years old, a century-old sling bullet and an antique spindle whorl. It is interesting to refer here to Nieuwhof, who writes that families possessed collections of special, meaningful (and perhaps even inalienable) objects. This included special gifts, remnants from special occasions, exotic objects such as fossils and old stone tools, and the bone fragments of deceased ancestors or family members.¹⁸⁸ Heirlooms will also have formed part of this type of collection. Perhaps these pit deposits were linked to these special family collections. We cannot determine with certainty just how the deposition of this kind of collection should be understood. Should they also be associated with the abandonment of a yard or



Fig. 5.25. Example of a pit containing a large quantity of cattle and horse bone, probably the remains of a large feast (source: Groot 2008, Fig. 3.21).

¹⁸⁵ Van den Broeke 2015, 90; De Vries 2021, 211. Van den Broeke also wonders whether some cases could involve the tidied remains of houses that burned down by accident.

¹⁸⁶ Groot 2008, 134–135.

¹⁸⁷ See Groot 2008, 140.

¹⁸⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 292.

settlement, or were there ritual practices underlining the identity of the family, possibly in relation to the territory claimed by that family?¹⁸⁹

5.5 Wells and waterholes

5.5.1 Introduction

Wells and waterholes are also important contexts for the study of special deposition practices. As water sources created (in part) by people, they were located on the fringes of the yard or settlement and were directly linked to the primary daily water needs of the inhabitants. As wet, liminal places, however, they may also have played a special role in people's experiential world and therefore be associated with rituals and deposition practices. The literature shows that research into special deposition practices is even scarcer and less advanced for wells than, for example, houses, granaries and pits.

This section describes and analyses deposits in both wells and waterholes, with no distinction generally made between the two. This is chiefly because of the close similarity between the two structures and the tendency for archaeological reports to use the terms interchangeably. The distinction between wells and waterholes

relates primarily to their depth and construction. Whereas wells have a lining that was built in a fairly deep well shaft, waterholes were generally fairly shallow pits that drew water at a shallower depth and were equipped with a simple shoring structure at most. Water will have been drawn from wells with the help of a bucket, jar or cauldron. Waterholes may also have been used for the watering of livestock.

Finds and assemblages in wells are regularly explained in functional terms. That is because objects lost in a well could not be recovered, or only with difficulty, and deep wells may have acted as artefact traps and/or ideal places in which to dump rubbish. Special deposition practices relating to wells are now garnering more attention.¹⁹⁰

5.5.2 General picture

Table 5.40 gives a full overview of the special deposits inventoried in wells and waterholes. Table 5.41 divides deposits into main periods. The latter table shows a clear predominance in the Roman period, followed by the Iron Age and the Middle Ages. The Bronze Age and the Modern Period are both represented by a small number of deposits.

¹⁸⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, Clarke 1997; Groot 2009, 59–64; Van Haasteren & Groot 2013; Verspay 2017, 569–574.; Verspay 2015, 161–164.

Table 5.40. Overview of special deposits in wells and waterholes (all periods).

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Brief description	Beginning	End
Achterberg	Oost	waterhole	1.5 kg of pottery sherds, broken cooking stones (?)	-800	-250
Achterberg	Oost	waterhole	3.7 kg of pottery sherds, broken cooking stones (?), quernstone fragments, rubbing stone/whetstone	-800	-250
Achterberg	Oost	waterhole	2.1 kg of pottery sherds, broken cooking stones (?), quernstone fragments	-800	-250
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	13 kg of tephrite (runner stone/bedstone set), ceramic cylinder/chimney, tall pot shattered by other objects	250	400
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	large pottery fragments, about 40 kg of tephrite from 3 sets of quernstones, partial skeleton of a chicken, lower jaw of a dog, hearth collar (?), 2 spindle whorls, 2 loom weights, part of an iron knife	250	400
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	13 kg of pottery in well (cracked and misshapen), partly burnt pieces of construction timber, fragment of hearth collar/oven wall, loom weight, cooking stone	250	400
Barneveld	Harselaar-Zuid, fase 1A	well	complete ceramic jug	1200	1300
Best	Dijkstraten	well	complete stoneware jug, horseshoe, iron rod, alderwood ball, hand broom, at bottom of core	1575	1650
Best	Dijkstraten	well	deliberately damaged scythe blade	1600	1700
Best	Dijkstraten	well	composite shoe sole, youngest fill	1750	1800
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	complete oak ploughshare with arrow-shaped end	-500	-250
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	wooden spade/ploughshare	270	450
Best-Aarle	Aarle	waterhole	several cattle jaws around a globular pot	1075	1125
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	3 alderwood balls on the bottom	1400	1450
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	sole of child's shoe, 2 horseshoes, in fill	1675	1725
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	complete stoneware bottle and ashwood bobbin	1750	1800
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	complete shoe, bottom fill layers	1775	1850
Borsele	Steendammeweg, vindplaats 7	waterhole	almost complete handmade pot, bottom fill	50	100
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	fragments of loom weights, ceramic knobbed macehead and bobbin, flint axe	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	large fragments of at least 5 different quernstones (including at least 1 set)	0	70
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	3 quernstone fragments	725	900
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	complete bedstone	850	1000
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	large fragments of runner stone and bedstone	850	1000
Breda	Huifakker	well	complete pot and 33 quernstone fragments at the bottom	-500	-19
Breda	Huifakker	well	complete Roman amphora in youngest fill of old well (Late Bronze–Early iron)	-19	270
Breda	Huifakker	well	fragments of handmill (tephrite)	100	300
Breda	Huifakker	well	2 pots	150	270
Breda	Huifakker	well	(almost) complete briquetage vessel, complete fibula	200	300
Breda	Huifakker	well	rim fragment of bronze bucket, fragments of helmet, metal ploughshare	250	300
Breda	Steenakker	waterhole	25 kg of burnt pottery, loom weights, whetstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam, at top of waterhole	-900	-400
Breda	Vinkenburg	well	arrow-shaped ard share	-500	-250
Bruchem	Geerweg 1–3	well	scythe	200	300
Budel	Meemortel	well	charred acorns	-1000	-822
Castricum	De Boogaert	well	complete pot, on bottom	100	300
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	pottery (also complete), thick-walled chunks of clay (oven?), ash, charcoal remains, bone, rope	0	270
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	large quantity of handmade pottery	0	270
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	4 complete handmade pots, on the bottom, barley remains in pot	200	300
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	2 complete handmade pots, barley in pot	250	325
Coevorden	Holsloot	well	pottery, burnt loam, natural stone, wood, charcoal, parts of hearth in youngest fill of well. Also an almost complete pot at the bottom	-400	-200
Colmschate	Op het spoor van de Holterweg	well	small bowl with traces of paint or blood	-800	-500
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	well	spearhead, complete (military) handmill	109	150

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Brief description	Beginning	End
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	complete frontal bone of human skull	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	half a pot and 3 pottery concentrations in humous underfill	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	quernstone	-800	-250
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	almost complete ceramic bowl on underside of fill 3, also human tibia fragment	-388	-204
Culemborg	Lokkershoek	well	very large quantity of animal bone material	-2000	-19
Culemborg	Lokkershoek	well	complete pot	-1100	-800
Culemborg	Prijseweg/ Goilberdingen	waterhole	loom weight fragments, several complete loom weights	-800	70
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	well	(almost) complete beaker, at the bottom	120	200
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	well	wooden shovel, at bottom of construction pit fill	141	141
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	well	wooden ladder in construction pit fill of well	236	236
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	waterhole	arrowhead , Bell Beaker period	-52	-73
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	(almost) complete pot, quernstone, part of grinding block and possible rubbing stone. From upper fill: iron socketed axe and fibula (younger than well)	-600	-400
Drechterland	Houtpolder	well	partial skeletons of 3 young elk, complete pot and 2 complete quernstones	-1800	-1100
Eersel	Kerkebogten	well	hundreds of charred rye grains + about 100 charred grains of cultivated or wild oats.	1259	1271
Eindhoven	Putten	well	foot of a bronze candlestick, pewter ewer	1500	1525
Eindhoven	Putten	well	685 fragments of red ware, 3 coins, leather shoe fragments	1575	1600
Elst	Lijnden- Tobbenhofsestraat	waterhole	almost complete bedstone of pot quern	1350	1500
Emmen	Frieslandweg	waterhole	sherds of large decorated pot, on bottom	100	300
Emmen	Frieslandweg	waterhole	bottom quernstone of handmill, at top of waterhole	100	300
Ewijk	Keizershoeve I	well	pottery sherds (18 MNI), some possibly complete	-800	-19
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	well	2 wire fibulae in well-deconstruction pit	100	150
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	well	dog skeleton in upper fill, loose bone from horse, ram and 6 cattle in other fill layers	100	200
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	waterhole	horse skull, articulated lower legs	150	200
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	well	bronze cauldron containing a complete coarse ware jug	150	250
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	well	dog skeleton	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	waterhole	cattle skull	270	350
Geldrop-Mierlo	Genoehuis	well	wool, weaving shuttle and spindle whorl	1500	1700
Groenlo	Woerdseweg	well	177 pottery sherds	-800	-500
Groenlo	Woerdseweg	well	quernstone fragments, quernstone/whetstone, pecking stone, pecking/ rubbing stone, rubbing stone/whetstone, grinding block, cooking stone	651	899
Groningen	De Linie	well	oak ard share	-500	-250
Groningen	De Linie	waterhole	many pottery sherds, oak ard share, wooden beam (construction timber?). Large quantity of animal bone and spindle whorl at bottom of waterhole	-500	-250
Groningen	Helpermaar-Eiland	well	complete pot	0	100
Grootebroek	Schaperstraat	waterhole	2 forked branches at bottom, cattle skull at top	-2000	-800
Hasselo	Grutterskamp	waterhole	400 pottery sherds, burnt food	-425	-125
Heerlen	Trilandis	well	2 fragments of metal bracelet, human bone remains	270	450
Heiloo	Zandzoomzone 10	well	2 complete horseshoes, a complete ceramic tripod cooking pot and two hooks in bottom layer	1600	1650
Heiloo	Zandzoomzone 10	well	leather belt with iron buckle under shell layer. Iron knife and wooden ball above shell layer	1625	1800
Hempens	Teerns	well	1 complete pot	100	250
Hempens	Teerns	well	73 fragments of construction timber, 2 complete pots	100	250
Hempens	Teerns	well	22 fragments of construction timber, 2 complete pots	100	250
Hempens	Teerns	well	3 complete pots	100	250
Heteren	Uilenburg	well	parts of horse limbs	-19	450
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	waterhole	piece of human skull	-1200	-1000

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Brief description	Beginning	End
Hoorn	Achterstraat	well	complete brass collar candelstick with baluster-shaped stem	1675	1750
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	wooden dish, (almost) complete ceramic bowl, bronze wire fibula	40	70
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	coin, buckle of hip belt, 2 broken-off jug necks, fragment of deer antler, half a skull at the bottom	40	100
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	quernstone (runner stone and bedstone), dog skull, bone vial with henbane	70	100
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	amphora neck	75	200
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	4 handmade pots and a large amphora wall sherd	100	125
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	iron signet ring, broken-off jug neck	100	125
Katwijk	Zanderij	well	metal objects, glass bead, several fibulae	40	100
Katwijk	Zanderij	well	5 worked pieces of limestone, piece of quernstone, 4 cattle skulls	100	200
Leeuwarden	Werpsterhoek	waterhole	large fragment of a globular pot	1250	1350
Leiderdorp	Plantage	well	complete pot	-19	150
Leiderdorp	Plantage	well	cattle skull fragment with 2 horn cores atop a pair of leather shoes, above bottom fill	500	800
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-Noord	waterhole	ard share point, placed upright at the bottom	-800	-250
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-Noord	well	pot with a fibula in fill, iron spearhead in youngest fill	-71	-60
Limmen	De Krocht	well	large section of horse spinal column	900	950
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase II	waterhole	1250 pottery sherds, burnt and unburnt stones, quernstones, grinding/pecking tools, some with ochre residue	-800	-500
Maastricht	Az Landgoederenzone	well	3 almost complete pots at top of fill	40	100
Marssum	It Aldlân	well	human heel bone	375	500
Midlaren	De Bloemert	well	pottery (3 MNI), quernstone fragment, 2 whetstones, iron nail	-500	-250
Midlaren	De Bloemert	well	wooden ploughshare and wooden ladder	700	750
Naaldwijk	Holland College	well	jug amphora with neck broken off, baseless storage jar, 468 pieces of animal bone	250	400
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	well	ceramic pot, at top	450	1000
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	well	wooden cart wheel	450	1000
Nederweert	Rosveld	well	iron ring and wooden bowl	211	212
Neede	Doctor A. Th. Plantenstraat	well	almost complete quernstone, chunks of natural stone holding the quernstone in place	750	1300
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve	waterhole 501	complete pot and small fragment of wood with drill holes and nail holes	-100	50
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve	waterhole 503	sherds of 1 large pot/storage jar and 2 complete pots. 1 with pigment decoration, 1 pointed wooden post	-100	50
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve	waterhole	handmade pottery (possibly 1 pot), bronze fibula	70	120
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve	waterhole	6 pointed wooden stakes	150	200
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	well	quernstone fragment, rubbing stone fragment	-800	-500
Nijmegen	Molenweg 49	well	complete sword	1450	1550
Nijmegen	Steltestraat	well	terra sigillata ink pot, large quantity of animal bone in youngest fill	80	110
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	well	small decorated wooden beaker, bottom fill	106	118
Nuenen	De Luistruik, fase 1	waterhole	8.1 kg of pottery sherds, quernstone fragments, burnt loam	-800	-19
Nuenen	De Luistruik, fase 1	well	ceramic beaker	1050	1125
Nuenen	Kerkakkers/Luistruik, fase 2	waterhole	73 pottery sherds, 2 cooking stones, possible wooden ploughshare	-250	70
Oegstgeest	Nieuw Rhijngest-Zuid, fase 1	well	wooden trough	500	700
Oele	Olde Meulenweg	well	burnt loam (1m thick layer) dumped in well	1100	1200
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	waterhole	human radius bone	-500	-300
Ommeren	Ommerenveldseweg	well	horse skull	900	1200
Oss	De Geer	well	wooden objects (posts and planks), ash wood shovel	27	119
Oudorp	Lauwershof	well	thimble, 3 grey stoneware jugs (1 with pewter lid), animal bone	1550	1600
Reusel	Kruisstraat	well	462 pottery sherds in youngest fill of well	250	276
Rhenen	Achterberg West 2	well	36 pottery sherds (5 MNI), including 1 almost complete pot	-250	-19
Schipluiden	Harnaspolder	waterhole	(almost) complete sheep skeleton, at top of well	125	175

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Brief description	Beginning	End
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	well	6 quernstone fragments	125	270
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	waterhole	ceramic base disc, sherds of 3 decorated handmade pots	125	270
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	waterhole	complete pot (with opening slanting downwards), ceramic base disc	125	270
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	well	2 more or less complete pig skeletons, in closing fill of well	225	260
Sneek	Stadsrondweg oost	well	7 wells with complete pots in middle of fill	-25	100
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	well	cattle skull and cattle horn cores	-1800	-1100
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	well	half a Henkeltasse, buried under the well itself	-1100	-800
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	well	cattle skull with 2 holes and traces of wear	-1100	-800
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	well	quernstone	-1100	-800
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	well	smashed horse skull	40	100
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	well	sheep skull	40	100
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	well	partial skeleton and skull of sheep	40	100
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	well	skull and limbs of horse	270	350
Tubbergen	Prins Bernhardstraat	waterhole	147 pottery sherds (9 MNI), 7 pecking/rubbing stones, 5 pecking stones, 5 pecking/rubbing stones	-500	-250
Uden	Botermarkt	well	Neolithic axe	1400	1450
Uitgeest	Waldijk II	waterhole	pottery sherds (14 MNI), partly decorated with paint/blood	100	200
Utrecht	De Meern-Burgemeester Middelweerdbaan	waterhole	large quantity of pottery (2 complete), tephrite	1	50
Utrecht	De Woerd	well	metal forehead band of Roman cavalry helmet (deliberately bent)	40	70
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	waterhole	complete pot	-25	100
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	waterhole	complete, handmade pot standing on the bottom, piece of alder bark (bowl?), bones of young sheep/goat, stake pointed at both ends, pointed willow branch	-25	100
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	waterhole	complete pot and pointed post	-25	100
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	waterhole	pointed, alderwood post and alderwood bowl	-25	100
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Driebergen-Lange Dreef	well	archaeologically complete bowl	-500	-19
Valkenswaard	Lage Heide	well	bronze knotted candlestick, 2 fragments of leather shoe	1500	1600
Velden	De Vilgert	waterhole	56 pottery sherds, 4 quernstone fragments (?), more than 1 kg of burnt loam	-500	-250
Venhuizen	Voetakkers	waterhole	complete cattle skull on bottom	-1800	-1100
Venhuizen	Voetakkers	waterhole	crushed quernstone	-1800	-1100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	painted beaker, mortarium, decorative nail, coin, in different fills	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	glass bead, spoon drill, bronze snake head bracelet, iron knife, decorative nail, bronze finger ring, seal box, hairpin, Roman coin, ceramic beaker, fibula, carved wooden phallus, carved wooden breast, complete ermine, hob-nailed shoe sole, in different fills	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	mortarium, decorative nail	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	coin, human femur (with cut marks)	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	bronze furniture fitting of woman's head, complete quernstone, row of stones, bone hairpin, complete ceramic funnel or 'cheese cover', 2 complete ceramic beakers, complete pot, loom weight, fragments of wooden bucket	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	wagon fitting, bucket hoop fragments, 3 boat hooks, 2 Roman coins, glass ointment jar, flipper-like sandal sole	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	3 Roman coins, bronze horse fitting, iron fitting	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	5 complete pots, comb, dog skeleton, shoe soles, glass bracelet fragments, bone hairpin, ring with light-blue glass cameo, Roman coin, in different fills	275	325
Voorburg	Forum Hadriani	well	2 wagon wheels, several oak planks and 27 amber beads at top of well	-19	270
Voorburg	Forum Hadriani	well	bronze ladle and basin, quernstone, wooden animal head	165	200
Wehl	Heideslag	well	pewter disc fibula	1312	1350
Westeinde	Noormansveld	waterhole	large rubbing stone	-800	450
Wijk bij Duurstede	Veilingterrein	well	complete pottery bowl	675	750
Wijk bij Duurstede	Veilingterrein	well	complete pot and sherds of 8 more pots	750	800

Table 5.41. The number of special deposits in wells and waterholes, by period.

Period	N	%
BA	11	6%
BA-IA	2	1%
IA	33	19%
IA-RP	5	3%
RP	83	48%
RP-MA	1	1%
MA	24	14%
MA-MP	2	1%
MP	13	7%
Total	174	100%

Table 5.42. Special deposits in wells and waterholes, by period and category.

	Single	Composite	Fragmented	NA
BA (-IA)	8	2	2	1
IA (-RP)	13	7	18	-
RP	32	33	18	-
MA	15	5	5	1
MP	3	9	1	-
Total	71	56	44	2

¹⁹¹ For composite deposits it is often difficult to determine with certainty whether the objects were deposited in the well or waterhole at the same time, or whether it was a case of several separate (and hence single) deposits being made at different times.

¹⁹² We should point out that several well-investigated sites (such as Voorburg-Arentsburg and Best-Aarle) weigh heavily here.

5.5.3 Composition

Table 5.42 provides an overview of well and waterhole deposits, broken down into main period and deposit category.¹⁹¹ We see an overall predominance of single and composite deposits. Composite deposits are especially well represented in the Roman period and Modern Period.¹⁹² Deposits of fragmented material predominate in the Iron Age, a pattern that we also observe for other contexts. Deposits of fragmented material barely feature in the Middle Ages and Modern Period.

Looking at the representation of the different object categories in the deposits described here (Table 5.43), we see a clear predominance of vessels, followed by the categories of food attributes and animal bone. Tools and fibulae/jewellery follow some distance behind.

The strong representation of food attributes is evident here and differs from the picture shown for other contexts. This object category is fairly well represented in all periods, especially the Iron Age and Middle Ages. The category consists primarily of quernstones or quernstone fragments, as well as the points of several ard shares and a scythe.

Table 5.43. Object categories in special deposits in wells, by period.

	Vessels	Animal bone	Textile attributes	Tools	Food attributes	Fibulae/jewellery	Weapons/militaria	Coins	Horseshoes	Wooden balls	Shoes	Candlesticks	Botanical remains	Wooden stakes	Construction timber	Human bone	Burnt loam	Other
BA (-IA)	4	6	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-
IA (-RP)	24	1	1	8	21	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	3	3	-
RP	47	23	3	3	16	10	5	6	-	-	3	-	3	4	4	3	-	3
MA	8	4	-	2	7	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	3
MP	5	1	2	2	1	-	-	1	3	2	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	88	35	7	16	48	13	8	7	3	3	9	3	6	6	5	7	5	7

5.5.4 Deposits through time

Bronze Age (to Iron Age)

The oldest special deposits from wells date to the (Middle) Bronze Age. Animal remains and quernstones (in the object category of food attributes) are well represented.

The animal remains involve cattle skulls found in four wells, including one skull with horns. The skull from well 1 at Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg has two holes and signs of wear. It appears to have been suspended, which means that it may have had a special symbolic or magical significance. Another interesting deposit with animal remains came from well 9 at Drechterland-Houtpolder, which yielded partial skeletons of three young elk, a complete pot and two complete quernstones. The deposition of animal remains does not coincide with the period of use for these wells and should therefore be associated with their decommissioning. The elk will have been hunted and their meat probably consumed, perhaps as part of a communal (ritual) meal. A deposit that may also be linked to a communal meal was found in a well at Culemborg-Lokkershoek (Bronze Age–Iron Age), which contained a good deal of animal bone material. Corresponding pieces of bone were found in a nearby pit.

As well as the complete quernstones from the well at Drechterland-Houtpolder, quernstones are also known from wells at Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg and Venhuizen-Voetakkers. The one in the latter deposit was completely pulverised, possibly as a result of heating.

With regard to vessels, a notable find is that of half a Henkeltasse buried beneath well 10 at Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg. This deposit appears to be associated with the well's construction.

An extensive deposit of fragmented material is known from well 12 at Breda-Steenakker (900–400 BC). The upper layers of the well contained more than 25 kg of largely secondarily burnt and sintered pottery, loom weights, whetstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam. This could be the burnt remains of household goods and possible parts of built structures. This deposit could therefore relate to the abandonment of the associated yard.

Two anomalous deposits are the forked

branches at the bottom of a well at Grootebroek-Schaperstraat and a supply of charred acorns in a well at Budel-Meemortel. We can also mention a piece of human skull from waterhole S3644 at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg.

Iron Age (to Roman period)

Compared with the Bronze Age, the number of deposits containing fragmented material in the Iron Age is high. We also note the large proportion of objects from the category of food attributes.

Most deposits of fragmented material involve combinations of fragmented pottery (often in large quantities and sometimes demonstrably burnt), quernstone fragments, (broken) cooking stones, tools or tool fragments and sometimes also burnt loam. These deposits date to the Early or Middle Iron Age and not the Late Iron Age. Both the composition and the dating tie in well with the pit deposits of fragmented material. In addition to a large quantity of pottery sherds, waterhole D at Groningen-de Linie contained an oak ard share, a sizeable quantity of animal bone and a wooden beam that can perhaps be interpreted as construction timber. The youngest fill phase of a well at Coevorden-Holsloot yielded a deposit of fragmented pottery, burnt loam, natural stone, wood, charcoal and parts of a hearth. And a waterhole at Culemborg-Prijsseweg was filled with loom weights, some of them intact. The burnt loam, construction timber, hearth elements and loom weights seem to indicate that parts of dismantled structures and house inventories (such as the loom) were deposited in the wells/waterholes.

Other interesting deposits of fragmented material were found in a well at Ewijk-Keizershoeve and a waterhole at Hasselo-Grutterskamp. The former yielded the (unburnt) sherds of at least 18 pots, some of which may have been deposited whole in the well. In the Hasselo waterhole, burnt food remains were found alongside 400 pottery sherds.

In addition to the quernstone fragments in the above deposits, complete quernstones were deposited in waterholes at Didam-Kerkwijk, Randweg-Zuid and Culemborg-Hoge Prijs. Other interesting deposits involving objects from the food attributes category are the ard share or ard share points. They were found in wells/waterholes at Groningen-De Linie, Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord, Breda-

Vinkenburg, Nuenen-Kerkkackers-Luistruik phase 2 and Best-Aarle. The Lieshout deposit involved an ard share point that was placed vertically in the bottom of waterhole 511. The excavator suggests the possibility of a fertility ritual.

We know of other deposits with special objects from wells/waterholes at Didam-Kerkwijk/Randweg-Zuid, Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord, Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid, Deventer-Colmschate and Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve. The Didam well involved an iron socketed axe and a fibula, which were both younger than the fill of the well. These may therefore have been deposited later in a well that had fallen into disuse. This phenomenon is also known from other places (such as a well at Breda-Huifakker). A pot with a fibula (standing upright in the fill) and an iron spearhead (in the youngest fill phase) were found in well 508. This well was deliberately dismantled or destroyed. The excavator suggests that the well (or the water it contained) may have become unusable and therefore had to be rendered 'harmless'. Another interesting deposit from a well at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck involved parts of loom weights, two special ceramic objects (a knobbed macehead and a bobbin) and a flint axe. This latter axe is probably older than the well and is an antique object. This find therefore ties in with a deposit in an Iron Age waterhole at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid, in which an arrowhead from the Bell Beaker period was found. Another special object from a well at Deventer-Colmschate was a small bowl 'painted' with pigment (possibly animal or human blood). A pot of blood paint (or rather drips) was also found in a waterhole 503 at Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve, together with two other complete pots.

Roman period (to Middle Ages)

Deposits of fragmented material are relatively less frequent in the Roman period. Together, single and composite deposits clearly predominate.

The object category of vessels is strongly predominant in this period. Unlike the Iron Age, there are relatively many deposits of complete vessels in the Roman period, routinely found at the bottom of the wells. At times this involves several complete pots, such as in wells at Hempen-Teerns (three complete pots in well 4001) and Castricum-Oosterbuurt (two and four complete pots respectively from the bottom of

wells S80 and S98). The Castricum pots contained barley, which makes it unlikely that they were left accidentally when water was being drawn. The pots at the top of the fill of a well at Maastricht-A2 Landgoederenzone were also clearly deliberately deposited. Here, three pots were placed inside one another and deposited in the well at the same time.

The vessels comprised not just ceramic items, but also wooden and metal pieces. A good example from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet involved a complete bronze cauldron containing a complete, coarse ware jug. The cauldron had been repaired several times. This is probably a deposit that can be associated with the decommissioning of the well, or the abandonment of the yard or settlement. Other metal vessels are a bronze basin that was deposited together with a bronze dipper in well 9 at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani. For wooden vessels, we can point to deposits at Houten-Castellum (a wooden dish, together with an (almost) complete ceramic bowl and a wire fibula), Nederweert-Rosveld (a wooden bowl from well 315) and Utrecht-Rijnvliet (a possible bowl of alder bark, together with a handmade pot and bone from a young sheep/goat).

Although less prevalent, deposits with fragmented material still occur in the Roman period. Examples have been found in wells at Castricum-Oosterbuurt ((partly) burnt pottery, lumps of clay, ash and charcoal), Reusel-Kruisstraat (462 pottery sherds in the youngest fill phase) and Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (large fragments of at least five different quernstones in well 3007). Another interesting case involves deposits from three wells at Assum-Waldijk/Assummervaart. They are diverse and closely resemble deposits from the Iron Age. The deposit from well 5 contained large pottery fragments, about 40 kg of tephrite from three sets of quernstones, animal bone, a possible hearth collar, two spindle whorls, two loom weights and part of an iron knife. Well 6 yielded about 13 kg of pottery (cracked and deformed), partly burnt pieces of construction timber, a fragment of a hearth collar/oven, a loom weight and a cooking stone. A tall, lugged pot in well 4 appears to have been shattered when a set of quernstones were thrown on top. These deposits could be the remains, deliberately fragmented and selectively deposited, of household goods and the

dismantled remains of a building structure and house inventory. The same picture emerges in several well deposits at Hempens-Teerns, where many fragments of construction timber were deposited in two wells (4005 and 4006) (22 and 73 pieces respectively), together with complete ceramic pots in each case. The construction timber even included an almost complete shutter of a window or small door. These, too, appear to be parts of one or more dismantled structures that were deposited in wells, perhaps as part of special deposition practices and abandonment rituals. Lastly, and in a similar vein, we can point to a wooden structural beam from the above-mentioned Iron Age waterhole D at Groningen-De Linie and a fragment of construction timber from waterhole 501 at Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve.

Compared with the Iron Age, the Roman period has yielded many well/waterhole deposits containing animal remains. Some of these are skulls (as in waterhole 13 at Geldermalsen--Hondsgemet and in two wells at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg). Partial skeletons have also been found in various wells/waterholes, mainly at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, but also in a well at Heteren-Uilenburg (limbs of a horse). An (almost) complete sheep was deposited at the top of waterhole 504 at Schipluiden-Harnaspolder and a complete dog in a well at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. Another complete dog was buried in the upper fill of a second well at this latter site (well 16), while the remains of a horse, a ram and six cows were found in the fill below. A nice example from older research involves concentrations of animal bone in three wells at the Late Roman site of Heeten.¹⁹³ These concentrations are the remains of cattle and pigs, each time seemingly the result of a single event. The remains of at least nine cattle and four pigs were deposited in one of the wells. The deposition of animal remains in wells will always have heralded the end of the well. The remains of slaughtered animals whose meat has been eaten could relate to celebrations to mark the decommissioning of the well, or – more likely – the abandonment of the house, yard or settlement (see also Section 6.4.6).

An interesting category of objects from wells can be linked to the Roman army. The deliberately bent metal forehead band from a Roman helmet was found in a well at Utrecht-

De Meern-De Woerd. There was also a spearhead and complete military rotary handmill in well 7001 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen, helmet fragments from well 20 at Breda-Huifakker and a belt buckle from waterhole 25217 at Houten-Castellum (as part of a composite deposit). The helmets in particular are special, personal objects. The Huifakker helmet probably belonged to a man who had served as an archer in the Roman auxiliaries, while the helmet from De Woerd is a cavalry helmet. For items of this kind, we should perhaps be thinking in terms of depositions relating to a rite of passage, symbolically marking and facilitating the transition from a military career to civilian life as a veteran.¹⁹⁴ Liminal (and wet) places such as wells and waterholes (and also (residual) channels and water courses) were considered particularly suitable for the deposition of such objects.

We know of a number of wells containing unusually diverse and 'rich' deposits at the sites of Voorburg-Arentsburg and Voorburg-Forum Hadriani. This can be explained – at least in part – by the urban context of these wells. The Voorburg-Forum Hadriani site had two wells with special deposits. Two wagon wheels were deposited at the top of the fill in well 3, together with a necklace of 27 amber beads. A bronze basin and ladle, a quernstone and a wooden animal head were found in the above-mentioned well 9. Worth noting is the position of the undamaged bronze vessels beneath the quernstone. In all instances the objects appear to have been deliberately deposited in the well as part of special deposition practices. The deposition of the vessels and quernstone would not have coincided with the active use of the well and must therefore be linked to the well's final phase.

Possible special deposits were found in at least six wells (S4201, S4199, S4183, S4108, S4048 and S4172) at the Voorburg-Arentsburg site. The most diverse assemblage came from well 4201. Some remarkable objects were collected from different layers, including several coins, a complete upright beaker, a virtually complete stoat, wood carvings in the shape of a phallus and a breast, the nail-studded sole of a shoe, a spoon drill, a bronze snake head bracelet, an iron knife with a twisted handle, a square enamelled seal box, a bronze finger ring, a bone

¹⁹³ Lauwerier et al. 1999.

¹⁹⁴ Langeveld et al. 2010, 301.

hairpin and a glass bead. Various special objects were also collected from the other wells, including a sandal sole (S4172), complete beakers, a funnel or 'cheese cover' and a loom weight (S4199), a bone hairpin, a ring with a light-blue glass gem, a dog skeleton and two complete vessels (S4048). Oddly, the excavator associates the complete pieces of pottery from the bottom layers of well S4199 with the well's decommissioning. This is because they have the youngest dating of the objects in the well.

The excavators of Voorburg-Arentsburg point to the possible presence of votive and abandonment offerings in wells. This could include complete vessels, as well as a rich array of other find categories and objects.¹⁹⁵ They also point to the possible talismanic properties (to ward off evil or bring good luck) of special objects such as the snake head bracelet and the carvings with a phallic motif from well S4201.¹⁹⁶

Middle Ages and Modern Period

In many instances, well deposits from the Middle Ages and Modern Period involve complete vessels, including jugs, pots, a bottle, a bowl, a beaker and a tripod cooking pot. Also notable is a pewter ewer from a well at Eindhoven-Putten (1500–1525) and a stone jug with a pewter lid from a well at Oudorp-Lauwershof (1550–1600). A deposit from waterhole 545 at Best-Aarle stands out because several cattle jawbones were placed there around a complete globular pot.

As with the Iron Age, we see that the object category of food attributes is well represented in well deposits from the Middle Ages. There are five deposits containing quernstones or quernstone fragments, four of which belong to the early medieval period. An interesting deposit is one from a well at Neede-Doctor A. Th. Plantenstraat, where an almost complete quernstone was held in place by chunks of natural stone. Also in this object category are a wooden ploughshare from an early medieval well at Midlaren-De Bloemert and a deliberately damaged scythe blade from a seventeenth-century well at Best-Dijkstraten.

Three medieval deposits contained fragmented material, sometimes in large amounts. These were deposits at Oele-Older Meulenweg (a 1m thick layer of burnt loam), Groenlo-Woerdseweg (a set of natural stone

objects, including quernstone fragments, grinding stones, pecking stones, whetstones and a cooking stone) and Wijk-bij Duurstede-Veilingterrein (a complete pot and the sherds of eight others). The only modern-era deposit with fragmented material was a sizeable quantity of pottery (685 fragments of redware) from well 5 at Eindhoven-Putten.

Deposits with special objects included a pewter disc fibula from a fourteenth-century well at Wehl-Heideslag, a Neolithic axe from a well at Uden-Bootermarkt (1400–1450) and a complete sword from a well at Nijmegen-Molenweg 49 (1450–1550). The objects from well 1 at Geldrop-Mierlo-Genoehuis (1500–1700) – a weaving shuttle, a spindle whorl and a quantity of wool – can be specifically associated with textile production. In this context we can also mention a thimble from a well at Oudorp-Lauwershof and an ash wood bobbin from a spinning wheel in a well at Best-Aarle.

Some types of objects from medieval and modern-era wells appear characteristic of this period. These are horseshoes, candlesticks and wooden balls.¹⁹⁷ Horseshoes have been found in wells at Best-Aarle, Best-Dijkstraten and Heiloo-Zandzoomzone 10. They can probably be understood as part of defensive magic or counter-magic, with horseshoes being deposited to protect the well from evil influences (poisoning, drying up) or to lift a spell (see Section 6.14.2, horseshoes). Several candlesticks from wells can perhaps also be linked to special deposition practices. Candlesticks were found in wells at Eindhoven-Putten (the base of a bronze candlestick), Valkenswaard-Lage Heide (an almost complete, bronze knotted candlestick) and Hoorn-Achterstraat (a complete brass collar candlestick) (see Section 6.14.5). A frequently repaired pewter ewer (c. 1500–1525) was also found in the Eindhoven well, while the candlestick from the well at Valkenswaard is associated with two fragments of leather shoes. Wooden balls were found in several wells at Best-Aarle (three alderwood balls at the bottom), well 9284 at Best-Dijkstraten (an alderwood ball, together with a stoneware jug, a horseshoe, and a hand broom, amongst other things) and well 1 at Heiloo-Zandzoomzone 10 (a wooden ball and an iron knife). For wooden balls in special deposits, Verspay points to a possible symbolic association with the male testes and hence to a metaphorical reference to fertility.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 115.

¹⁹⁶ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

¹⁹⁷ Most of these objects feature and are described in studies by Verspay (Verspay 2015, 2017).

¹⁹⁸ Verspay 2017, 566, 571.

A final object category that is represented in various medieval and modern-era wells is shoes or parts of shoes (see also Section 6.14.4). These are known, for example, from wells at Leiderdorp-Plantage (a pair of leather shoes beneath a skull fragment with two horn cores), Eindhoven-Putten, Valkenswaard-Lage Heide (combined with the candlestick) and several wells at Best-Aarle, including a combination of a leather shoe sole and two horseshoes (well 363). For these shoes too, an apotropaic interpretation is suggested, although Verspay also mentions a possible role in rites of passage.¹⁹⁹

5.5.5 The biography of wells in relation to special deposition practices

Like houses, buildings, outbuildings and granaries, wells also have a 'life cycle' – from construction to abandonment and/or dismantling. We can therefore apply the 'biographical perspective' to wells.²⁰⁰ Primarily developed by Groot and Van Haasteren, this approach is also used in some archaeological reports.²⁰¹ At the heart of the biographical approach is defining and identifying different 'life stages' of the well and the (ritual) deposition practices that accompany them. The positioning of objects inside the well is important, with distinctions made between, for example, the construction pit fill, the bottom of the well, the fill, the youngest fill phase (routinely referred to as *nazak* in Dutch archaeological jargon) and any pit associated with the dismantling of a well. In this way, objects can potentially be linked to the different life stages of the well: construction, inauguration, use, decommissioning and/or dismantling and the period after decommissioning. The emphasis is usually on the beginning and end phases (or 'consecration' and 'closure'), in part because these are most readily identifiable.²⁰² Although the exact location of objects in wells is not always easy to pin down, we attempt below to apply the biographical approach to the dataset inventoried here.

The construction phase (fill of the construction pit)

The well-construction phase involved digging the well shaft and building and placing the lining.

As with houses, this construction moment may be marked by rituals and special deposition practices. Reaching the groundwater table may also have been a significant moment in the case of wells.²⁰³ Objects that can be associated with certainty with the construction phase often come from the fill of the construction pit (*insteek*), although objects on the bottom of the well are sometimes also linked to construction or inauguration.

Objects are rarely found in the construction pit fill of wells.²⁰⁴ First, we can mention two wells at Breda-Huifakker. A bronze bucket fragment, fragments of a helmet and a metal ploughshare were found in the construction pit fill of well 20. Both the helmet and the bucket may have been deliberately disabled through fragmentation and bending prior to deposition. The nature of the objects, the type of material and the way in which the objects are modified suggest that we are dealing here with a special deposit. The deposit from the second well (well 37) contained an almost complete briquetage vessel, a complete fibula and many pottery sherds. This could also be a special deposit associated with the construction of the well. Strictly speaking, a third notable deposit, consisting of half a Henkeltasse, does not come from the construction pit fill but appears to have been buried at the bottom of well 10 at Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg (1100–800 BC). If this vessel was indeed buried in this spot, it is probably also a foundation deposit. Finally, we can refer to a deposit from older research. A shoe was found in the construction pit fill of a third-century well at Venray, which Van Haasteren and Groot regard as a special deposit, associated with the well's construction phase.²⁰⁵

Two other deposits that can perhaps be associated with the construction phase are documented in wells at Heiloo-Zandzoomzone 10. Well 2 yielded two complete horseshoes, a complete ceramic tripod cooking pot and two hooks (with a wooden shank), covered by a layer of clay with several bricks and a wooden plank. According to the excavator, this stratigraphy indicates that the deposit can be linked to the building of the well and can thus be regarded as a foundation deposit.²⁰⁶ Something similar was observed at well 11 on the same site. A leather belt with a buckle was deposited under a layer of shells (possibly added as a filter), perhaps also as a foundation deposit. A wooden ball and a knife

¹⁹⁹ Verspay 2017, 572–573.

²⁰⁰ For more details on the cultural biography of houses/buildings, see Gerritsen 2003, 37. It is generally much more difficult to effectively distinguish between the different development phases of waterholes than it is for wells. Deposits in waterholes are therefore largely excluded here.

²⁰¹ Groot 2008; Van Haasteren 2011; Van Haasteren & Groot 2013. For the application in archaeological reports, see for example Driessen & Besselsen 2014 (Voorburg-Arentsburg), Verspay 2015 (Best-Dijkstraten) and Verspay 2017 (Best-Aarle).

²⁰² See Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 176–177; Verspay 2017, 560.

²⁰³ Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 39.

²⁰⁴ No special deposits were found in the construction pit fill of well-investigated wells at, for example, Best-Aarle, Best-Dijkstraten and Voorburg-Arentsburg (see Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 176–177; Verspay 2015; Verspay 2017, 560).

²⁰⁵ Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 25.

²⁰⁶ The excavator also suggests that these could be objects with an apotropaic function.

were found just above the filter layer.

A separate category of objects that is sometimes found in the construction pit fill of wells are wooden shovels and ladders.²⁰⁷ They are known from wells at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker (well 522) and Oss-De Geer (well 4). Van Haasteren and Groot suggest that both the shovels and ladders could be special deposits, whereas Hiddink prefers a functional interpretation.²⁰⁸ The shovels and ladders may have been deliberately deposited to mark the well's construction. Here too, we should emphasise that functional and ritual aspects may be closely interwoven. As a parallel, we can also point to the deposition of wooden shovels in swamps outside settlement contexts.²⁰⁹

Period of use (fill)

Once wells were built, they were used for drawing water. They will have gradually filled up with sediment (the lowest fill), probably necessitating periodic cleaning. Repair work may also have been carried out during the period in which the well was in use.²¹⁰

Objects will have ended up in the well during its lifespan. These could be objects relating to the well's operation or maintenance: complete or parts of pots and cauldrons, well hooks and wooden ladders and shovels.²¹¹ Objects such as fibulae and coins may occasionally have been lost when water was being drawn, or during maintenance work. It is clearly unlikely that rubbish was deposited in functioning wells as this would have affected the quality of the drinking water.

Other objects may have been linked to special deposition practices. These would be votive or other offerings, objects intended to bring luck or ward off evil, or deposits (symbolically) marking a particular phase of use (a repair phase?).²¹²

With regard to objects from the fill of wells, it is generally difficult to be certain about just when they were deposited. This obviously happened after the well was built, but the exact time of deposition is seldom established. It is also important to remember that wells may have been re-dug during their lifetime. Objects found at the bottom of wells may have been associated with the inauguration of the well, but this is not certain.²¹³ We see this clearly in the case of the complete vessels at the bottom of well S4199 at Voorburg-Arentsburg,

which represents the youngest pottery in that well and which should probably be associated with its abandonment.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, Verspay emphasises that the many special objects found at the bottom of wells may have been deposited in an early phase of the well or even when it was first used.²¹⁵ In this context, Driessen and Besselsen refer more specifically to votive offerings, deposits linked to the inauguration of the well, but which appear to have been made after the well was built.²¹⁶ They point to a complete quernstone at the bottom of the above-mentioned well S4199 and a human femur with cut marks from well S4108 (Voorburg-Arentsburg).²¹⁷ The inventoried dataset contains various examples of complete vessels found on the bottom or in the bottom-most fill of wells. This includes pots found in two wells at Breda-Huifakker, a complete pot from a well at Castricum-De Boogaert, several complete pots from two wells at Castricum-Oosterbuurt, ceramic beakers in wells at Den Haag-Ockenburg II and Nuenen-De Luistruik phase 1 (1050–1125), a wooden beaker from a second-century well at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen and ceramic jugs in wells at Barneveld-Harselaar-Zuid, phase 1A and Best-Dijkstraten. These deposits date from the period between the Middle Iron Age and the Modern Period. Although a functional interpretation cannot be entirely ruled out for some deposits, the large variation in shapes, the association with other special objects and the contents of some pots (Castricum-Oosterbuurt) suggest that they are special deposits. Similarly, we can point to the pieces of pottery from a well (ROM-6) at Naaldwijk-Holland College. This is a jug amphora without a neck and a small storage jar without a base. Incomplete and perhaps deliberately 'modified' pieces of this kind often form part of special deposits.

Other objects in the bottom-most fill of wells include a wooden ploughshare from a well at Groningen-De Linie (Middle Iron Age), a complete brass collar candlestick from a well at Hoorn-Achterstraat (1675–1750), a bone hairpin and a cameo ring in the bottom filter layer of well S4048 at Voorburg-Arentsburg and the above-mentioned quernstone from well S4199 at the same site. Besides vessels, finds at the bottom of the wells at Best-Aarle and Best-Dijkstraten include wooden balls, shoes and horseshoes.²¹⁸

²⁰⁷ These objects were found in both the construction pit fill and the fill of the well.

²⁰⁸ Hiddink 2008b, 102; Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 35. Van Haasteren & Groot point, among other things, to a deposit of three shovels that appears to have been deliberately placed in a well at Raalte-Boetelerenk and the fact that the ladders will have been too small for functional purposes when cleaning the well.

²⁰⁹ Glob 1951.

²¹⁰ The ladders and shovels found in some wells are linked to such cleaning and repair work (see Hiddink 2005b, 102; Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 31).

²¹¹ Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 30.

²¹² Some objects may have been 'used as votive offerings between people and water nymphs or water-related superhuman actors' (Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 176–177; see also Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 39).

²¹³ See Van Haasteren & Groot 2013, 40; Verspay 2017, 563.

²¹⁴ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 121.

²¹⁵ Verspay 2017, 563.

²¹⁶ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 115.

²¹⁷ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 177.

²¹⁸ Verspay 2017, 563; Verspay 2015.

Abandonment/decommissioning

The largest quantities of find material can often be associated with the decommissioning (and filling-in) of the wells. Deposits associated with this final phase are fairly easy to identify as they will undeniably have put an end to the functional use of the wells or waterholes. Examples include very large objects, large amounts of material and anything that will have adversely affected the water quality (such as animal remains or, in the case of Nijmegen-Steltsestraat, a full inkpot).

Deposits associated with a well's final phase show a varied picture. Some are extensive deposits of fragmented material, while others are single or composite deposits of a few special objects. Deposits with animal remains make up a separate category.

Deposits of fragmented material include the wells described above at Assum-Waldijk/Assummervaart and Hempens-Teerns. Several wells at these sites clearly contained the remains of dismantled house structures and (destroyed) house inventories: (fragmented) vessels, quernstones, hearth remains and construction timber. More examples come from Uitgeest-Waldijk II (parts of about 14 pots, including some with 'blood decoration'), Groningen-De Linie (a large quantity of pottery sherds at the top of waterhole D, together with a wooden ard share and possible construction timber), Nuenen-De Luistruik phase 1 (more than 8 kg of pottery, quernstone fragments and burnt loam) and Breda-Steenakker (more than 25 kg of mainly secondarily burnt and sintered pottery, whetstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam). Here too, we appear to be dealing with the fragmented (and sometimes burnt) remains of house construction (walls, floors, building elements and hearths) and household goods (vessels etc.). These deposits can probably be associated with the dismantling of the house and yard. They are similar to deposits that we know from pits. The decommissioning of the well in this case probably formed part of the wider abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard.

Single or composite deposits that may be linked to the decommissioning of wells are known from different periods. An early example of a special deposit was found in Middle Bronze Age well 9 at Drechterland-Houtpolder, involving the partial skeletons of three young elk, a complete bipartite pot and two complete

quernstones. As the well cannot have been in use when these objects were deposited, they must relate to its decommissioning. Other examples are known from Maastricht-Az Landgoederenzone (AD 40–100) (three pots placed inside each other), Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (AD 150–250) (a copper cauldron containing a coarse ware jug), Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (AD 875–925) (a complete bedstone) and the two Roman wells at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani described above.²¹⁹ A final interesting deposit is a full inkpot from well 23 at Nijmegen-Steltsestraat (AD 80–110). The excavators suggest that this deposit represents an act of sabotage (contaminating the water with ink) or a closing deposit. In either case, the deposit will have rendered the well unusable.

In a similar vein, we can mention several special composite deposits from three waterholes at Houten-Castellum. Given their size and composition, they will also relate to the final phase of these structures. Waterhole 25217 contained a coin, a belt buckle, two broken-off jug necks, a deer antler fragment and half a cattle skull (AD 40–110). Another waterhole (25213) at this site yielded four handmade pots and a large sherd from the wall of a Dressel 20 amphora (AD 100–125) (Fig. 5.26), while a third waterhole contained an almost complete quernstone, a dog skull and a bone vial containing seeds from the medicinal plant henbane (AD 70–100). These deposits appear to involve special, deliberately selected objects with symbolic meanings.

Only in two cases are there concrete indications of a special deposit being associated with the dismantling of a well. Two fibulae were deposited in the pit associated with the dismantling of well 14 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (AD 100–150). And dismantled well 508 at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord (Late Iron Age) yielded a small pot containing a fibula in the fill of the well and an iron spearhead in the youngest fill phase.

Several deposits of animal remains have been mentioned above. We know of deposits that appear to be linked to the dismantling/final phase of wells from, for example, Roman settlements at Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder (a complete sheep and two fairly complete pig skeletons in the 'closing' fill of wells), Katwijk-Zanderij (including four cattle skulls), Heteren-Uilenburg (the limbs of a horse) and various

²¹⁹ One of the Roman wells yielded a bronze basin, a bronze ladle and a wooden animal head, beneath a complete quernstone. The vessels are undamaged, which appears to suggest that the quernstone was placed with care. Two wagon wheels and 27 amber beads were deposited at the top of the fill in the second well.



Fig. 5.26. Special deposit at the top of waterhole 25213 at Houten-Castellum (above) and at the top of waterhole 19 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (below) (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 19.8; Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009, Plate 7).

wells at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (several partial skeletons). Deposits containing a large amount of 'loose bone' are known, for example, from the Roman wells at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (bone from five cattle and horse and sheep

skulls), Naaldwijk-Holland College (468 fragments of bone) and the prehistoric well at Culemborg-Lokkershoek (a very large quantity of animal bone material). And we have already referred above to Late Roman well deposits containing large quantities of animal bone at Heeten.²²⁰ Deposits such as these will certainly have rendered wells unusable and can probably be linked to communal celebrations at which meat was consumed in large quantities (see also Section 7.4).

The period following abandonment

In some cases, special deposits in wells may be linked to the phase *after*, perhaps long after, the well was decommissioned. The former well may have been partly filled-in and perhaps appeared as a wet depression in the terrain, marked by different vegetation. As such, it may have been a visible and possibly meaningful place.

It is often difficult to determine when the objects were deposited in the upper fill layers of wells – at the time of decommissioning, shortly thereafter or not until years later? In particular, objects from the youngest fill phase (*nazak*) can potentially be associated with the post-abandonment phase.

A definite instance of later deposition in a long-abandoned well involves a complete Roman miniature amphora in the youngest fill phase of well 13 at Breda-Huifakker. This well

²²⁰ Lauwerier et al. 1999.

was in use during the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age and had therefore been out of use for centuries at the time of deposition. Besides the unusual context, we can point to the ritual connotation of miniatures of this kind.²²¹ Another interesting example is a deposit containing an iron socketed axe and a bronze fibula from the youngest fill phase of well 2 at Didam-Kerkwijk/Randweg-Zuid. Once again, the deposited objects appear to be younger than the well (600–400 BC) and must therefore have been special objects. We can also point to a spearhead from the youngest fill phase of the dismantled well described above, well 508 at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord (Late Iron Age), and the special objects (including a flint axe) from the youngest fill phase of well 4002 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijk (500–350 BC). From a much later period is a shoe sole from the youngest fill phase of well 988 at Best-Dijkstraten (1750–1800).

Deposits of animal remains are sometimes found in the youngest fill phases of wells. This phase of the well at Nijmegen-Steltsestraat (AD 80–110) contained a considerable quantity of animal bone, while that of well 16 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (AD 100–200) contained a dog burial. We know of another interesting deposit involving dogs from Voerendaal-Ten Hove, where five dogs were buried in the youngest fill phase of an old well.²²² The dogs appear to have met a violent death, possibly during a raid in which the large granary at this Roman villa also went up in flames (Late Roman period). Although the depressions left behind by former wells may simply have lent themselves to the ‘dumping’ of dead animals, it is equally possible that these special places were consciously selected because of a special significance attributed to them.

5.6 Ditches

5.6.1 Introduction

The ditches that are the focus of this section bounded and shaped the settlement space and were not part of the built structures (such as wall or house ditches), graves or ritual places. They functioned as the boundaries of yards,

the settlement as a whole, or plots and parcels (fields and meadows). They may also have played a part in the water regime of the habitation zone. It is not always possible in practice to identify the ditches’ location, and hence function, in relation to contemporaneous habitation.

5.6.2 General picture

The inventoried dataset contains 159 special deposits that are included in the context of ditches (Table 5.44). Table 5.45 presents an overview of their chronological distribution. It shows that ditch deposits predominated in the Roman period, followed at some distance by the Iron Age, the Bronze Age, the Modern Period and the Middle Ages. The dataset contains no ditch deposits from the Neolithic.

With regard to the numbers presented in Table 5.45, it is not always clear from archaeological reports whether special deposits should be viewed as separate deposits or as objects deposited at the same time (e.g. animal skulls and complete pots found in the same ditch). The numbers refer to assumed separate deposits (comprising one or more objects). This means that a single ditch could contain several separate deposits.

Location of the ditches

More than 60 percent of the inventoried ditch deposits (some 100 deposits) are shown to have been located on the edge of the yard or settlement. They are therefore deposits made in yard or settlement ditches. In only a few instances (13 deposits) does a location outside the settlement seem most likely – in plot, parcel and/or drainage ditches – and one exceptional instance involves a ditch that can be considered a road ditch. It has not been possible to determine the location of the remaining ditches in relation to contemporaneous habitation.

²²¹ See, for example, hundreds of miniature amphorae at the Bergen op Zoom-Paradeplaats site, deposited in a fen or swampy depression. These are the remains of a ritual sacrifice (Niemeijer 2009).

²²² Willems & Kooistra 1988, 143; Kooistra 1996; Hiddink in preparation.

Table 5.44. Overview of special deposits in ditches (all periods).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Bunnik	Rietsloot	complete small pot	25	75
Castricum	De Boogaert	skeletons of 1 horse, 2 sheep and 2 humans	100	300
Castricum	De Boogaert	human skeleton	200	400
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	horse skull	100	200
Culemborg	Culemborg-Hoge Prijs	partial pig skeleton	-800	-500
Culemborg	Culemborg-Hoge Prijs	half a pot	-800	-500
Culemborg	Culemborg-Hoge Prijs	pot sherds	-800	-500
Den Haag	Hertenrade	5 archaeologically complete pots	100	200
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	horse skeleton, with quarter of a quernstone near the head and a smaller piece on the ribs	50	100
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	miniature pot	70	100
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	skeletons of 3 cattle and 2 horses	125	175
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	2 partial sheep skeletons, partial horse skeleton and dog skeleton	125	200
Den Haag	Zevenwoudenlaan	horse skull	100	200
Den Haag	Zevenwoudenlaan	pig skull	100	200
Den Haag	Zevenwoudenlaan	complete pot (in sherds)	100	300
Dordrecht	Overkampweg	calf skeleton	0	0
Elst	Park Lingezege/De linten	piglet skeleton	-800	450
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	partial sheep/goat skeleton	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	animal skull parts	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	human femur	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	possible animal figurine	-1100	-800
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	fragment of human skull	-150	-19
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	concentration of burnt grain, 3 fibulae, forelegs of horse, piece of glass bracelet, 1 complete pot and stacked pieces of natural stone	-120	-50
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	horse skull	-120	-50
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	partial cattle skeleton	-50	50
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	horse skull	50	120
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	horse skull	120	150
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	cattle skeleton	120	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	sheep skull	150	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	pig skull	150	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	dog skeleton	150	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	cattle skeleton	150	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	partial cattle skeleton	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	large number of coins	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	horse skull	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	horse skull and neck of jug amphora	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	cattle skull	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	almost complete human skull	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	coin deposit of 30 antoniniani	300	325
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	skeleton of neonatal pig	300	350
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	complete quernstone and half a loom weight	1100	1135
Groningen	De Linie	large quantity of pottery	75	125
Heiloo	Hoogeweg, UWP 5	horse skull, quernstone fragments	450	750
Heteren	Uilenburg	iron lancehead	-19	450
Heteren	Uilenburg	partial horse skeleton	0	100
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	complete quernstone	-2000	-1800

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	complete quernstone	-2000	-800
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	partial dog skeleton	-2000	-800
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	partial dog skeleton	-2000	-800
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	3 fibulae, bronze bracelet, natural stone pendant, bronze flat-headed pin and flint sickle	-1250	-850
Hoogkarspel	Streekweg 269-275	3 cattle skeletons	1275	1325
Hoogkarspel	Streekweg 289-293	miniature cup and pot	-1000	-800
Houten	Castellum	bottom of handmade pot with broken grains of barley and emmer in pot (food remains (porridge/mash))	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	2 pots, part of fire dog, 3 ceramic base discs	-450	-350
Houten	Castellum	2 archaeologically complete pots and a cheese mould	-450	-250
Houten	Castellum	4 complete pots, woven basket and henbane	70	120
Houten	Hofstad Diepriool	2 complete pots and parts of military equipment (helmet and armour components)	50	100
Katwijk	Zanderij-Westerbaan	human skeleton (baby)	700	800
Leiderdorp	Plantage	horse skull	700	750
Leiderdorp	Plantage	cattle skeleton (cut into pieces)	700	750
Lent	Ruimte voor de Waal	human skull fragments	-19	450
Lent	Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost	partial horse skeleton	1375	1600
Lent	Zone H	8 horses and 9 cattle	1500	1600
Limmen	De Krocht	partial skeleton of prenatal pig	825	1500
Limmen	De Krocht	partial dog skeleton	900	1200
Limmen	De Krocht	sheep skeleton	1000	1900
Limmen	De Krocht	dog skeleton	1100	1200
Marssum	It Aldlân	sherds with reddish-brown traces	-250	250
Meteren	De Plantage	horse skull	0	0
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	part of cattle limb	0	0
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	dog skeleton and partial dog skeleton	175	200
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	partial human skull	175	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	cat skeleton	175	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	human skeleton (baby)	175	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	horse skeleton	175	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	complete pots	200	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	human pelvis	1000	1250
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland-Oost 't Zand Heultje	horse skeleton	-19	175
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland-Oost 't Zand Heultje	horse skeleton	-19	175
Nijmegen	Frans Halsstraat/ Daalseweg	complete jug	-19	450
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	(almost) complete dish (in sherds)	-800	-19
Odijk	Singel West/ Schoudermantel	468 sherds of handmade pottery	-250	-19
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	large quantity of loose animal bone	-250	70
Ommeren	Ommerenveldseweg	horse skull	900	1300
Oosterhout	Aardgastransport-leidingtracé Angerlo-Beuningen	partial horse skeleton	70	270
Oss	Brabantstraat	horse skull	-19	450
Poeldijk	De Kreken, fase III	half a quernstone	0	300
Rijswijk	De Paulinesymfonie	dog skull	-19	450
Rijswijk	De Paulinesymfonie	partial horse skeleton	0	0
Rijswijk	De Paulinesymfonie	horse skeleton	0	0

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Rijswijk	De Paulinesymfonie	foal skeleton	0	0
Schagen	N241	miniature pot with large sherd, baking plate fragment	-250	-1
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	complete pot on bottom	125	150
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	base fragment of tazza or incense dish	150	175
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	complete pot on bottom	175	200
Someren	Ter Hofstadlaan	87kg of tephrite, burnt loam and pottery sherds	1150	1175
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	sheep skeleton	40	150
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	dog skull	150	200
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	dog skeleton	150	250
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	dog skeleton, partial deer skeleton	150	250
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	dog skull, loose cat and goose bone	200	250
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	335 fragments of animal bone	270	350
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	horse skull	270	350
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	horse skull and partial horse skeleton	270	350
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	dog skeleton, horse skull	270	350
Utrecht	Az	2 gold pendants	750	775
Utrecht	Hoograven/ Duurstedelaan	complete pot	-250	-19
Utrecht	Hoograven/ Duurstedelaan	complete pot	-250	70
Voorburg	Arentsburg	complete pot	-40	130
Wateringen	Juliahof	dog skeleton	50	250
Weert	Kampershoek Noord, fase 2	1861 pottery sherds	1000	1200
Wijk bij Duurstede	De Horden	large quantity of pottery	100	200
Wommels	Wommels-Zuid	large quantity of pottery	-19	70

Table 5.45. Overview of special deposits in ditches, by period.

Period	N
Neo	-
BA	15
IA	26
IA-RP	6
RP	72
MA	15
MA-MP	2
MP	17
Undated	6
Total	159

5.6.3 Composition

Table 5.46 gives an overview of the composition of the special deposits by period, broken down into the various object categories.²²³ Overall, we see a strong predominance of animal bone, followed by vessels. Thus the composition of the ditch deposits differs markedly from that found

in other contexts. It should be pointed out, however, that the animal remains from several Roman-era settlements have been studied in detail, with a specific focus on special deposition practices.²²⁴ The present study also includes various animal burials in medieval and modern-era ditches that have not been specifically interpreted as special deposits by the excavators. Nevertheless, it would appear that the deposition of animal remains is often explicitly linked to liminal places, to which the ditches described here belong. The Iron Age presents a somewhat different picture, with animal bone occurring in small numbers and vessels predominating. Just how we should interpret this difference is not clear. With regard to vessels, the Iron Age and Roman period are well represented, but the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages and the Modern Period are not. In the two former periods, deposits containing complete pots show a clear predominance, with the other object categories playing a more modest role. Deposits with quernstones (object category of food attributes) occur in the Bronze Age, the Roman period and the Middle Ages and most fibulae/jewellery belong in the Iron Age (but come from a single site). Human bone is an interesting and fairly well-represented object

²²³ For each individual deposit, we have determined which object categories are represented. Where present, these categories are scored as '1'. It is not always clear, however, whether deposits found in ditches can be regarded as individual or coherent deposits.

²²⁴ For the detailed study of special deposits with animal remains at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and Geldermalsen Hondsgemet, see Groot 2006; Groot 2008; Groot 2009.

Table 5.46. Overview of special deposits in ditches, by period and object category.

	Vessels	Animal bone	Textile attributes	Food attributes	Tools	Fibulae/jewellery	Weapons/militaria	Burnt loam	Coins	Human bone	Ritual object	Botanical remains	Other
Neo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BA	1	4	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
IA	12	3	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	2	2
IA-RP	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RP	22	48	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	6	2	1	1
MA	2	10	1	3	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	-
MA-MP	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MP	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Undated	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	40	93	1	8	-	7	-	1	3	10	3	3	5

category, while the ‘other’ category includes a fire dog, a baking plate and a woven basket. The possible ritual objects are deity figurines or fragments and an animal figurine.

5.6.4 Ditch deposits through time

Bronze Age

Deposits from Bronze Age ditches came from only three sites: Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg, Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 289-293 and Enkhuizen-Haling 13. The latter site yielded various special deposits from different places in the ditches: fragments of six animal skulls, a human femur and a stylised animal figurine. These ditches formed part of a large ditch system whose precise function is unclear. The skulls and skull parts predominantly occur in the ditches themselves or in the shaft-shaped pits that were dug in the ditches and the ditch junctions. The ditches at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg yielded two single deposits of complete quernstones and two deposits of partial dog skeletons.²²⁵ A final special deposit (1250–850 BC) from the youngest fill of a ditch at this site contained rare bronze objects, including two bronze bracelets, a stone pendant, three bronze spectacle fibulae, a bronze flat-headed pin, a series of bronze rings and a flint sickle. The special deposit (1000–800 BC) at Hoogkarspel-

Streekweg 289-293 contained a miniature cup and a small pot, also from the last phase of the ditch.

Some of the Bronze Age ditch deposits have a special character: not only the ‘exotic’ objects from the Markerwaardweg deposit but also the miniature pottery from the Streekweg and the animal figurine from Haling 13. The human bone and animal skulls can perhaps also be included in this category as they do not appear to be connected with everyday activities performed inside and in the immediate vicinity of the house. There may be a link between the special nature of these objects and the special status of these ditches as liminal places.

Iron Age (–Early Roman period)

Vessels dominate the Iron Age ditch deposits. These are predominantly deposits of one or more (almost) complete pots. Examples are known from Nijmegen-Lent site 9/57, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, Utrecht-Hoograven (at the corner of a ditch and the intersection of two ditches), Voorburg-Arentsbrug (the yard ditch of house 5), Culemborg-Hoge Prijs, Schagen-N241 (a miniature pot) and Houten-Castellum (two ditches in/near the residual channel). One of the Houten ditches yielded the bottom of a handmade pot with broken grains of barley and emmer wheat, probably food remains (porridge/mash). The pot sherds from a ditch at Marssum-It Aldlân stand out for a

²²⁵ Roessingh & Tol 2019.

different reason. They feature reddish-brown 'painting', which is associated with special practices (see Section 6.3.3). The only ditch deposit containing fragmented material is a concentration of 468 pottery sherds from a ditch at Odijk-Singel West/Schoudermantel. This ditch forms part of a rectangular ditch structure (6.5 x 7.5 m), whose function cannot be determined with certainty. The excavator suggests a possible interpretation as a ritual place, but emphasises that it could also involve an 'ordinary' settlement structure and 'ordinary household rubbish'.²²⁶

Composite deposits were found in several ditches. The deposit at Schagen-N241 included a miniature pot containing a large sherd and a baking plate fragment. Of the above-mentioned ditches at Houten-Castellum, ditch 6017 contained two pots and a cheese mould and ditch S12.79/S14.51 contained two small pots, part of a fire dog and three ceramic base discs. The Schagen baking plate and the Houten fire dog are interesting finds that can perhaps be viewed as special, symbolic objects, both associated with fire and the special status and significance of the hearth.²²⁷ Another interesting find is a series of special deposits in a Late Iron Age ditch (G36) at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet.²²⁸ This ditch marked the separation between the more elevated settlement and the lower floodplain. The special deposits from this ditch comprised a concentration of burnt grain, three fibulae, the forelegs of a horse, a piece of a glass bracelet, a complete pot and stacked pieces of natural stone. A horse skull was found a short distance from the ditch, and the possible ritual place (ditched site 1) is also located nearby.²²⁹ Thus there are strong indications that this liminal place had a special significance in the experiential world of the inhabitants.

Deposits of animal remains involved a partial pig skeleton (Culemborg-Hoge Prijs), a partial cattle skeleton (Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet) and the above-mentioned forelegs (and skull) of a horse from ditch G36 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. In the excavator's view, a concentration of animal bone material in a ditch at Oldehove-Lege Wier (Late Iron Age–Early Roman period) cannot be regarded as ordinary rubbish. Instead, it could represent the remains of a communal (ritual) meal. A human skull fragment came from a ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet.

Roman period

Unlike the Iron Age, deposits with animal remains predominate in the Roman period. These are complete skeletons (23), partial skeletons (6), skulls (17) and loose bone (2). These deposits occur in settlement ditches, yard ditches, plot ditches and drainage ditches. In most cases, the skeletons and skulls appear to have been carefully placed in the ditches.²³⁰ In terms of animal species, horses clearly predominate, followed by dogs and then cattle, sheep/goats and pigs. These are mainly separate, single deposits, with several deposits sometimes occurring in the same ditch. In Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, for example, three deposits of complete skeletons (two dogs and a neonatal piglet) and six deposits of skulls (three of horses, one of cattle, a pig and a sheep) were found, often in the ditches bounding the settlement. We see a similar picture in other Roman-era settlements, with skulls found in ditches at Den Haag-Zevenwoudenlaan, Rijswijk-De Paulinesymfonie, Oss-Brabantstraat, Castricum-Oosterbuurt and Tiel-Passewaaij. (Partial) skeletons are documented in ditches at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan, Wateringen-Juliahof, Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Naaldwijk-Hoogeland and Heteren-Uilenburg, among other places.

The remains of several animals are sometimes deposited together. We can point to a complete dog skeleton and a partial deer skeleton in a ditch at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg.²³¹ Two other deposits at the same site contained a combination of a horse skull and a dog skeleton, and a dog skull and loose bone material, including goose and cat bone. Another interesting burial was found in ditch 411 near houses 106 and 107 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan. Three cattle and two horses were buried in tight proximity some 20 m from the nearest house. Of interest are the signs of burning on the legs. The excavator suggests a possible interpretation as a mass grave for sick animals, but ultimately thinks it most likely that it was a closing deposit. It is an unusually large deposit, in which seemingly useful animals were sacrificed without the meat being eaten. The excavator states: 'Given that house 107 belonged to the final habitation phase of the settlement, the size of the deposition might perhaps even be explained by the fact that it was a deposit marking the abandonment of the settlement.'²³²

²²⁶ Schurmans & Verhelst 2007, 40.

²²⁷ De Clercq 2007, 191–192, 204; Nieuwhof 2015, 179–180, 204.

²²⁸ Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009, 95.

²²⁹ A fibula and a Neolithic axe can be associated with this place (see Section 5.8.3).

²³⁰ See, for example, Groot 2008, 128.

²³¹ Traces of skinning have been found on both the dog and the deer, suggesting that the skins were removed before the remains were buried. Slaughter traces were observed in the deer. The meat from this animal was probably (partly) consumed before the remains were deposited. Quite possibly, the skin and some of the meat was eaten (perhaps at a communal (ritual) meal), after which the remains were deposited in the ditch (Groot 2008, 138–139).

²³² Simons & Lanzing 2009, 308–309.



Fig. 5.27. Special deposit in ditch 6006 at Houten-Castellum (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 19.8).

Several (probably separate) special deposits were also found in a Late Roman ditch in the northeast corner of the settlement at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. The upper fill of the settlement ditch included a human skull, a dog skeleton, a cattle skull, a pig skeleton, a horse skull and the neck of a jug amphora. The excavator reports that some of the silver metal finds (fibulae and hairpins) also come from this ditch.²³³

Only in exceptional cases have animal remains been deposited together with other objects. We can point to a horse burial associated with quernstone fragments at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (in yard ditch 442 around house 121) and the above-mentioned neck of a jug amphora that was deposited alongside a horse skull in a ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet.

An unusual deposit of animal bone came from ditch 177.006 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. It involved a concentration of 335 bone fragments (of at least six horses and nine cattle), over a length of at least 20 m. Slaughter marks can be seen on some of the bones. Groot points out that this will have involved an enormous quantity of meat and states that the high representation of horse bones contradicts an interpretation as normal offal.²³⁴ It is more likely to represent the remains of a communal ritual meal. These remains were perhaps treated

and deposited in a special way, which may have involved selection for deposition.²³⁵

As in the Iron Age, Roman-era vessels found in ditches often involved complete pieces. Complete pots, sometimes several, were found, for example, in ditches at Den Haag-Hertenrade, Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder, Nijmegen-Frans Halsstraat/Daalseweg, Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (a miniature pot in the yard ditch of house 121) and Houten-Castellum. The Houten-Castellum deposit came from ditch 6006, which was dug into the old residual channel fills, on the edge of the settlement. In the Roman period, this must still have been a wet, or at least damp, location. The deposit contained four complete handmade bowls and pots, a woven willow basket and the remains of henbane (Fig. 5.27). The pots show clear traces of soot and cooking residues.

Deposits containing fragmented pottery are known from Wommels-Wommels-Zuid, Groningen-De Linie and Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden. Regarding the former site, the excavator reports that the inhabitants appear to have deposited their household goods in the ditches around the terp as an abandonment ritual. There was also a large amount of pottery in a ditch (ditch d) at Groningen-De Linie, although the nature of this deposit cannot be properly established.²³⁶

²³³ Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009, 110–111.

²³⁴ Groot 2008, 135–137, 266.

²³⁵ Groot 2008, 137.

²³⁶ Daleman 2007, 13; De Vries 2015, 110.

Another special ditch deposit was documented at the Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool site. It comprised two complete pots and a special assemblage of military equipment (c. AD 50–100) (see also Section 6.g). There were seven virtually complete cheek pieces of military helmets and fragments of plate armour. The exact function of the ditch is unclear, although the excavators suggest that the ditch may have been part of a ritual place.²³⁷

Another ditch deposit with possible links to the Roman army involves a lancehead from a ditch on the edge of a settlement at Heteren-Uilenburg.

With regard to the find category of coins, we can mention two deposits from the Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet site. The first is a coin hoard consisting of some 30 antoniniani, deposited in the western corner of the system of ditches enclosing the settlement. Aarts suggests that a special deposition practice was involved, perhaps in the context of redeveloping the settlement between AD 300 and 325.²³⁸ The concentration of late third-century coins found in a ditch near the assumed entrance to the settlement of Hondsgemet is a different matter. These coins may be the result of a deposition practice relating to entering (or leaving) the settlement.²³⁹ Once again, this underscores the significance of liminal places.

The human bone involved, on the one hand, loose human skull parts in ditches at Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal and Naaldwijk-Hoogeland and, on the other, a complete skull at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. Skulls, or skull parts, were involved in each instance. The other deposits contained burials of complete skeletons. The first skeleton was that of a baby who was buried in a settlement ditch at Naaldwijk-Hoogeland. Three other skeletons are of adults buried in ditches on the fringes of the settlement of Castricum-De Boogaert (c. AD 100–400). Two of the skeletons were laid partly over one another in the ditch and then covered. The skeletons of a horse and two sheep were buried in the same ditch. The excavator suggests a connection with ancestor worship or an interpretation as founders' graves. This latter interpretation seems less likely, however, for an existing peripheral ditch. The fact that three human skeletons were buried there could suggest that there was a small grave field on the edge of the settlement, as has been established for the nearby settlement of Castricum-

Oosterbuurt.²⁴⁰ However, we know little about the funerary traditions in this period and region, which makes the skeleton burials difficult to interpret.

Middle Ages and Modern Period

Ditch deposits with animal remains also predominated in the Middle Ages and Modern Period. In the vast majority of cases this involved (partial) skeletons, with horses and cattle being fairly equally represented. There were also two dog skeletons, from the same site.

Several deposits with animal remains were found in various ditches. A bovine cut into pieces was found in Leiderdorp-Plantage (AD 700–750), and a few metres away, a horse skull (with lower jaw) on top of a cattle scapula. In a plot ditch at Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 269–275 (AD 1275–1325), an adult and a juvenile bovine were buried right next to each other, with a third bovine a slight distance away. We can also mention two dog skeletons and a prenatal piglet from different ditches at Limmen-De Krocht and a horse skull, associated with the burnt fragments of a quernstone, from an early medieval ditch at Heiloo-Hoogeweg. An association of horses and quernstones is also known from the Roman site of Den Haag-Hoge Veld and Kwaklaan described above.

For the Modern Period, there is a series of animal burials from the Lent-Zone H site. This involved eight horses and nine cattle that were deposited in the outer canal of Fort Knodsenburg, probably in the canal's final phase.

Human bone is known from two contexts. The first concerns the skeleton of a baby from an early medieval ditch at Katwijk-Zanderij-Westerbaan (about 10 m from a house). The second is a human pelvis associated with a medieval ditch at Naaldwijk-Hoogeland.

With regard to vessels, we see that the dataset for this period does not contain any ditch deposits involving complete pots, which were fairly numerous in the Iron Age and Roman Period. We can, however, point to a complete bronze cauldron (tripod cooking pot) from a pit along the edge of a parcel ditch at Best-Dijkstraten (AD 1350–1650). This cauldron, too, will have been deliberately buried on the periphery of the settlement. The excavator suggests that it may have been intended to protect the settlement from evil spirits and/or as a gift (containing food) to appease the spirits.

²³⁷ Van Renswoude & Schurmans 2017

²³⁸ Aarts 2009, 293.

²³⁹ Aarts 2009, 296.

²⁴⁰ Hagers & Sier 1999; Dijk 2015.

The location of the deposit, at the transition between the habitation zone and surrounding fields, is typical in this regard.²⁴¹

Deposits with fragmented material, often in large quantities, of are known from yard ditches at Weert-Kampershoek-Noord (AD 1000–1200) and Someren-Ter Hofstadlaan (AD 1150–1175). The first contained a large amount of pottery (1861 sherds) and the second no less than 87 kilos of tephrite, pottery and burnt loam. Both deposits were probably linked to the abandonment of the yards.

Finally, we can mention a special deposit from the yard ditch at the Utrecht-Az site. This yielded two exceptional gold pendants that are considerably older than the ditch in which they were deposited. The personal nature, the high value and the age of the pendants make this a very interesting deposit. We should perhaps be thinking here in terms of heirlooms that were deposited at the edge of the yard on a special occasion.

5.6.5 Discussion

The picture painted by the ditch deposits described above differs in various respects from that of other contexts. Firstly, deposits with animal remains occur frequently, especially in the Roman period and Middle Ages. Most involve skulls and (partial) skeletons. The vessels are primarily complete items, often deposited separately in the ditches, especially during the Iron Age and Roman period. There are no vessel deposits of this kind for the Middle Ages, although a bronze tripod cooking pot buried near a settlement ditch shows that this custom did not disappear entirely. Deposits of fragmented material did not play a significant role in any of the periods. In addition, the number of deposits containing burnt material is very small. The limited number of deposits containing fragmented and burnt material is clearly different from that in houses/buildings, granaries and pits.

The overrepresentation of animal remains in ditches can be approached from different perspectives. From a purely functional, pragmatic point of view, we can point out that ditches lent themselves well to the 'dumping' of carcasses. Moreover, these ditches were usually located on the edges of, or even outside,

the inhabited area, which would have reduced the time investment, bad odours and risk of contamination. On the other hand, the animals were often buried with care and in some cases they were clearly special deposits, characterised by certain combinations, selections and compositions. For the medieval/modern-era burials, Huijbers assumes that the animals had died of disease.²⁴² She states that '[b]urial at the yard boundary is a form of marginalisation as well as a conscious burial at a boundary, a transition, as an expression of the ambivalent nature of the animal. The animal is ambivalent because on the one hand it is a respected animal, but on the other it is perceived by the house group as representing a great danger because it is sick and unclean.'²⁴³ For animal burials associated with houses, some researchers point to the possible protective function of animals, especially when buried near entrances or outside walls. This interpretation is rarely, if ever, suggested for burials in ditches, but we can ask whether this is justified. Might some of these animals have been deliberately buried at yard and settlement boundaries because of their protective powers?

It is often assumed that (partial) skeletons represent the deposited remains of communal (votive) meals. In that case, too, this did not involve inconsequential waste that had to be disposed of but remains that may have been ritually charged. Perhaps the few deposits with sizeable quantities of loose animal bone can also be understood in this way.

A further salient aspect of ditch deposits is the relatively frequent occurrence of special objects. These are objects with possible special symbolic or ritual functions and meanings. We can point to miniature pots (from ditches at Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 289-293, Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan and Schagen-N241), ceramic base discs (from ditches at Houten-Castellum and Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder), human bone remains, the animal figurine, the baking plate, the fire dog, the gold pendants and the basket of henbane (Houten-Castellum). The composite Bronze Age deposit at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg consisted of 'exotic' objects imported from various regions. Pointing to the 'cosmopolitan' nature of the deposit, the excavators suggest that these are elements from various 'costumes'.²⁴⁴ Incidentally, objects of this kind are never found in graves. It seems that

²⁴¹ Moesker & Dijkstra 2015, 170–171, 234.

²⁴² 180 Huijbers 2007, 317.

²⁴³ Huijbers 2007, 317–318.

²⁴⁴ In the Hoogkarspel deposit local and/or southern-inspired forms (the bracelets) were combined with Scandinavian ones (the fibulae) (Fontijn & Knippenberg 2019, 749–752).

they could not be associated with individual people, but had a special, ambiguous significance.²⁴⁵

The fact that some ditches contained several deposits shows that ditches could be places where repeated deposition occurred. Examples are the two ditches at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (dated to the Late Iron Age and Roman period), the coin deposition near the entrance to that same settlement and ditches at Houten-Castellum, Enkhuizen-Haling 13 and Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg.

Regarding special deposition practices in ditches, it is important to consider the nature of ditches as liminal places marking the boundary and transition between two spheres. This could be the transition between the 'inner' sphere of the yard or settlement and the outside world, whereby it was important to symbolically protect the inner sphere against evil influences from outside.²⁴⁶ In some cases, ditches also marked the transition from high to low (such as the Late Iron Age ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet) or from dry to wet (such as the ditches near the residual channel at Houten-Castellum). Liminal places are ambivalent and potentially 'dangerous', but they are also places that can act as contact zones between humans and the supernatural.²⁴⁷

With respect to the liminal nature of ditches, it is interesting to look more closely at deposits of complete vessels. The excavators suggest several interpretations for the tripod cooking pot from the settlement ditch at Best-Dijkstraten. On the one hand, this cauldron (along with its presumed food contents) could serve as an offering to appease the spirits who lived outside the settlement, and to thereby guarantee prosperity and good fortune. On the other hand, and partially overlapping with this first interpretation, the deposit can be viewed as defensive magic to protect the habitation area from evil spirits.²⁴⁸ These explanatory models can perhaps also be applied to deposits of complete vessels in ditches from the Roman period and the Iron Age. In these instances, too, the pots (and any contents) can be understood as gifts to supernatural spirits, beings or powers, or as deposits to protect against evil forces from outside.

5.7 Channels, fens and depressions

5.7.1 Introduction

Unlike the structures discussed above, (residual) channels, fens and depressions were not created by human hands but are natural elements in the landscape. What they have in common is that they are relatively low-lying, wet or damp and are usually located outside or on the periphery of settlements.

Wet, peripheral places are known to have played a prominent role in the deposition of objects and human and animal remains.²⁴⁹ In many cases they are situated well outside the context of house and yard (e.g. rivers, stream valleys and swamps). In the context of this study we will look at examples of such places in the immediate vicinity of settlements. It should be noted, however, that the precise spatial relationship cannot be properly established in all cases.

Challenges

Perhaps more so than for other contexts, identifying special deposits in channels and other wet places is no easy task. That is because these contexts generally yield a considerable quantity of find material and they cannot be viewed as closed contexts. Channels have often been open for a long time. They may also have functioned as artefact traps and would have been attractive places in which to dump settlement rubbish. As a result, it is often difficult to identify the structure and coherence of assemblages, both of which are key aspects when it comes to identifying special deposits. Various archaeological reports reveal that researchers struggle to interpret assemblages and distribution patterns. They are often very reticent when it comes to ritual interpretations.²⁵⁰

In general, it should also be noted that some studies clearly focus on identifying special deposition practices, whereas this is less true of others. As a result, some sites stand out more than others in this respect. For example, the study of the channels at Voorburg-Arentsburg and Houten-Castellum explicitly addresses deposition patterns and special deposition practices.

²⁴⁵ Fontijn & Knippenberg 2019, 750.

²⁴⁶ Lauwerier et al. Suggest that the animal burials associated with the settlement fence at Heeten served as a 'mental' demarcation of the settlement. They draw a comparison with the Roman ritual known as *suovetaurilia*, in which animal sacrifices were made to ritually purify a place (Lauwerier et al. 1999, 186).

²⁴⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 84; Huijbers 2007, 394; Turner 1967, 93–111; Bowie 2000.

²⁴⁸ Moesker & Dijkstra 2015, 170–171, 234.

²⁴⁹ See, for example, Fontijn 2002, 2007; Van der Sanden 2004; Van Vilsteren 1996, 1998; De Vries 2015, 2021; Glob 1969.

²⁵⁰ See, for example, the interpretation of the find assemblage from the pothole at Utrecht-Rijnvliet, the coins from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and the metal finds (fibulae, horse bit, axe) from the channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station. The metal finds from the channel at Utrecht-Sportpark Terweide 2 are interpreted as 'ordinary' settlement waste (Den Hartog 2009). With regard to the many fibulae from the channel at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, no patterns could be reconstructed that point to special deposition practices (oral communication by Erik Verhelst; unpublished manuscript of Romeinendag lecture).

Table 5.47. Overview of special deposits in channels, fens and depressions (all periods).

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Cuijk	De Nielt	depression	layer/fill	bronze sieve, key, arrowhead, spearhead, horse gear pendant, mask fragment, ceramic base disc, baseless pot	200	300
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	(residual) channel	channel layer	animal skulls, 3 (almost) complete pots, loose human bone, coins	-120	270
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	human bone fragments, sling bullets, spindle whorl, complete pottery, stone tools, metal ornaments and needle	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	miniature pot, complete pots, beaker, at least 32 ceramic base discs, pig skeleton, loose human bone, fibulae	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	2 equilateral disc fibulae	150	225
Houten	Hofstad Diepriool	(residual) channel	channel layer	large pot/storage jar; (reddish-)brown traces on exterior	-300	-200
Houten	Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	(residual) channel	channel layer	large sherds of large beaker pot with thick bands of charred (food) residues, large quernstone/anvil, human vertebra and charred grain remains	-2150	-1800
Ommeren	Ommerenveldseweg	depression	depression	horse skull etc.	900	1300
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	(residual) channel	channel layer	large pottery sherds, miniature pot, spindle whorl, 5 loom weights, large quantity of animal bone	-30	15
Utrecht	A2	pot hole	pot hole	animal skulls, piglet skeleton	675	750
Utrecht	A2	(residual) channel	channel layer	3 human skulls	750	775
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV-station	(residual) channel	channel layer	sherds of several complete pots with food remains. Also 'painting' with brownish-red 'paint' or blood	1	20
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV-station	(residual) channel	channel layer	12 fibulae (11 of them complete)	20	100
Utrecht	De Uithof-Hoofddijk	(residual) channel	channel layer	2 complete pots, pottery with reddish-brown 'painting', 3 wooden objects (1 with anthropomorphic features)	-250	70
Utrecht	Hoge Weide	(residual) channel	channel layer	loose human bone	-25	50
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	(residual) channel	channel layer	5 fibulae (3 of them complete), 2 bracelet fragments (1 bent)	-25	100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	channel layer	unusual concentrations of special objects: incense dishes, signet rings, fibulae, (modified) coins, perforated pottery	175	225
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	channel layer	ceramic beaker with 26 complete hazelnuts, grains and herbs	225	250
Wijchen	Oosterweg/Meerdreef	fen	layer/fill	(fragments) of natural stone tools	-2900	-2750

5.7.2 General picture

The inventoried subdataset contains 13 sites with possible special deposits in channels or other wet places (Table 5.47). These deposits date from the Neolithic to the Late Middle Ages. Some contain many different objects, some of which appear to have been deposited over a long period. In most cases, it is not possible to determine the extent to which objects were deposited separately or as part of coherent

assemblages. The complexity of these structures and the different ways in which the objects are discussed and presented in archaeological reports make it difficult to consistently organise the dataset in the form of a quantitative overview. Derived tables have therefore not been included. In general, however, we can say that Roman-era deposits predominate, followed by those from the Iron Age. The Middle Ages, Bronze Age and Neolithic are represented in only a minor way.

5.7.3 Composition of deposits

With regard to the composition of deposits we see a predominance of vessels and animal bone, followed at some distance by fibulae/jewellery and human bone. Some of the fibulae are part of assemblages containing several specimens.²⁵¹ The same applies to the coins.²⁵²

The vessels comprise ordinary items (pots, beakers, bowls and jugs), as well as special objects, such as incense dishes, miniatures, pots without a base and ceramic base discs. The most exceptional objects are a wine sieve from a depression at Cuijk-De Nielt, a possible wooden idol from a channel at Utrecht-De Uithof-Hoofddijk, fragments of ceramic masks and botanic material, including from pots and beakers in channels at Voorburg-Arentsburg and Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station.

5.7.4 Deposits through time

The earliest wet deposition spot is the Neolithic fen at Wijchen-Oosterweg/Meerdreef (2900–2750 BC), located on the periphery of Neolithic habitation. Based on the distribution and composition of natural stone, Boreel cautiously concludes that two of the natural stone clusters should perhaps be understood as deliberate, selective deposits.²⁵³ The cluster in the deepest part of the fen stands out in particular. The finds include a range of stone tools, including anvil or anvil fragments, (hammer) axes, pecking stones, whetstones and rubbing stones, as well as rock crystal, agate and a stone possibly bearing a drawing. The material shows a remarkably high degree of burning. Given the number of objects, this assemblage appears to have been created over a lengthy period through successive depositions. The fen is a distinctive location, surrounded by a palisade. If special deposition practices did indeed take place here, a ‘ritual function’ could perhaps be assigned to this palisade as well.²⁵⁴

A second deposit dates to the Late Neolithic or the Early Bronze Age and was found in the lower layers of a pool in the residual channel at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) (2150–1800 BC). The deposit contained large pottery fragments,

including a sizeable pot (34 cm rim diameter) with thick bands of charred (food) residues, which ended up whole in the channel.

In addition to pottery, the pool contained a large but unused natural stone that was fashioned into a quernstone or anvil, a human vertebra and charred grains of barley and emmer wheat. Both the pottery and the associated food remains could be interpreted as the remains of a communal meal.

From the Middle Iron Age we know of an entire series of deposits from the residual channel at Houten-Castellum. There are finds from various channel fills from this period that can be regarded as special deposits. They include several complete pots, a few specimens of miniature pottery, animal skeletons, loom weights and many base discs. The channel also contained pieces of human bone, although it is not clear whether they were deposited deliberately. Two places in the channel stand out in particular. The first is located near an enclosure (19001) that has been assigned a ritual interpretation and which is partly situated in the residual channel. This ritual place is described in more detail in Section 5.8.3. The find assemblage is remarkable, comprising human bone (including a complete skull), complete pots, quernstone fragments, sling bullets, loom weights, spinning whorls, ‘Kropfnadeln’, fibulae, belt hooks and spearheads. Another special find assemblage could be identified in the same channel some 20 m south of this ritual place. The channel was deepest, and therefore wettest, at this spot. The assemblage consists of human bone fragments, sling bullets, complete pottery and metal objects. It seems highly likely that this wet location was specially selected for the deposition of objects. The human bone fragments and the spatial association with a grave on the bank of the channel suggest that this place too – like the nearby ritual place – should possibly be associated with ancestor worship or a death cult.

A special deposit from a channel at Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool (300–200 BC), not far from Houten-Castellum, is a slightly younger deposit. An (almost) complete, large (storage) jar was found in the bottom channel fills. Brown traces, possibly of animal blood, are visible on the outside of the jar.

Several special deposits from the channel at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet date to the Late Iron Age. Three archaeologically complete pots can

²⁵¹ For example, the fibulae from the channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station, Voorburg-Arentsburg and Utrecht-Rijnvliet.

²⁵² These are the coins from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and Voorburg-Arentsburg.

²⁵³ Boreel 2017, 205.

²⁵⁴ Van Kampen 2017, 59.

perhaps be associated with the beginning phase of the channel. One of the pots is characterised by the same kind of reddish-brown traces of 'painting' as the above jar from Houten-Hofstad Diepriool. Another interesting deposit from this period merits attention, despite the fact that the immediate context is a grave field. Large quantities of pottery, glass bracelet fragments, ceramic objects and stone tools were deposited in a natural fen at Zutphen-Leesten, probably as part of funerary rituals.²⁵⁵ The excavators suggest that these could be the destroyed household goods of an individual who died and was cremated.²⁵⁶

We know of several interesting deposits in channels from the transitional period between the Late Iron Age and the Early Roman period. The channel at Utrecht-De Uithof-Hoofddijk yielded two complete pots, a ceramic disc, the partial skeleton of a pig and three wooden objects, one of which has anthropomorphic features and which can perhaps be interpreted as an 'idol'.²⁵⁷ Pottery sherds were also found here with traces of 'painting' in animal blood. Based on the unusual composition of the assemblage and the possible 'idol', the excavator suggests that a ritual place may have occupied the adjacent bank. The special assemblage finds in the Early Roman channel at Tiel-Medel-De Reth involved a large amount of barely fragmented pottery, a miniature pot, a spinning whorl, at least five loom weights and a large quantity of animal bone. Once again, traces of 'painting' in animal blood can be identified on some of the pottery. The Utrecht-Rijnvliet site (25 BC–AD 100) yielded five fibulae (three of them complete) and two bracelet fragments, including a bent silver bracelet. These finds can be associated with the possible ritual place that was located on the bank.²⁵⁸

A special deposit from the earliest phase of the channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station dates to the Early Roman period (AD 1–20). The channel yielded four separate find concentrations, comprising almost complete handmade cooking pots and bone material from the fleshy parts of cattle. Residues of plant and animal remains/meat products were found in the cooking pots. Once again, there were pots with traces of animal blood 'painting'. The excavator suggests that meals, perhaps of a ritual nature, were consumed on the banks of the channel.²⁵⁹ A slightly later phase of the same channel also contained interesting finds,

although the excavator exercises caution and rejects an interpretation as a ritual deposit. These finds were twelve fibulae (only one of which is incomplete), a horse bit and an axe. A concentration of coins in the residual channel at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet may indicate another Early Roman deposition practice. Aarts suggests two interpretations: a secondary deposition as rubbish and a deliberate deposition as part of a ritual.²⁶⁰

Various special deposits in channels can also be identified for the Middle Roman period. Two disc fibulae, part of a pair, were found in the Middle Roman phase of the channel at Houten-Castellum. They are quite likely to have been deposited at the same time. The special objects from the channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg, which was also used as a harbour, are of quite a different order. A sizeable quantity of material was collected from this channel and was closely examined and analysed, with a particular focus on possible special deposition practices.²⁶¹ The researchers draw attention to the completeness of a large proportion of the fibulae from the channel, as well as the presence of several striking examples. The coin distribution provides indications of special deposition practices, as does the observation that 38 of these coins 'were deliberately altered'.²⁶² The other special finds include a complete beaker containing, among other things, nuts,²⁶³ perforated jugs and beakers, a concentration of incense dish fragments and nine signet rings. Objects with an obvious ritual or symbolic significance were also found in the channel, such as terracotta deity figurines, Medusa fittings, a Bacchus cup, Silenus pendants, snake head bracelets, fragments of terracotta masks, and pendants with a lunula, glans penis or vulva motif. Driessen and Besselsen emphasise the unlikelihood that 'religiously charged' artefacts, such as incense dishes, deity figurines and magical objects, were discarded as 'ordinary' rubbish.²⁶⁴

A final example from the Roman period concerns an assemblage of special finds from a depression at the Cuijk-De Nielt site. This depression was located on the fringes of the settlement and yielded a large quantity of find material. The special objects are a baseless pot, a base disc, a ceramic face mask fragment, a wine sieve, an arrowhead, a spearhead, a horse-gear pendant and a key with a Silenus head. The assumption, based on the combination

²⁵⁵ Van Straten & Fermin 2012, 119–120.

²⁵⁶ Van Straten & Fermin 2012, 173.

²⁵⁷ The approx. 50 cm high, wicker figurine dates to between 118 BC and AD 26 and appears to have a face, torso and legs, the latter tapering to a point so that it could be poked into the ground.

²⁵⁸ See Dielemans 2013, 79–88.

²⁵⁹ Weterings & Meijer 2011, 164.

²⁶⁰ Aarts 2009.

²⁶¹ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 167–170.

²⁶² This refers to the notching of the obverse and reverse, and to perforation or bending.

²⁶³ More precisely, these were 26 complete hazelnuts, a cereal grain, a six-row covered barley grain, a bread wheat grain, a spelt grain, a grape seed, henbane, wild catnip and a flaxseed or linseed.

²⁶⁴ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

of finds, is that special deposition practices were at play here.²⁶⁵

An early medieval special deposit (AD 675–750) came from a pool or pothole at the Utrecht-A2 site. Several skulls, including horse and dog skulls, were found in this pool, along with a complete piglet skeleton. The fact that the pool yielded little other find material could indicate that these were also the result of special deposition practices.

A final possible special deposit is that of a horse skull in a depression at Ommeren-Ommerveldseweg (AD 900–1300). However, the depression also contained a large amount of other find material, which makes a definitive interpretation of this object difficult.

5.7.5 Discussion

Wet, peripheral places certainly played a special role in people's experiential world. Inasmuch as can be determined, the places studied were located fairly close to human settlement. They can perhaps be viewed as transition or contact zones between the inhabited and uninhabited worlds, as well as between the human world and the supernatural. As such, they were liminal places often characterised by ritual activity, including deposition practices.²⁶⁶ The section on ritual places also discusses the significance of wet places and watercourses (Section 5.8.3). An old water course even forms an integral part of the ritual places at Houten-Castellum and Midden-Delfland MD 21.15, as well as the large cult place of Elst-Westeraam. In many other instances, ritual places are situated near a watercourse.

Special deposits in new channels

There are indications at various sites that the deposits can be specifically associated with the beginning phase of the channels. Examples include an (almost) complete pot in the channel at Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool (300–200 BC), three archaeologically complete pots in the channel at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (70–40 BC), the deposit in the channel at Tiel-Medel-De Reth (30–15 BC)²⁶⁷ and four find concentrations in the channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station (AD 1–20).²⁶⁸ The much older deposit in the residual channel at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20)

(2150–1800 BC) can probably also be associated with the beginning phase of this channel.

Interestingly, four of these deposits contained pots with reddish-brown traces or runs of 'painting'. Chemical analysis reveals that this reddish-brown substance was probably animal blood. Various researchers link such painting or runs to ritual practices.²⁶⁹

We also see the clear presence of charred residues on pots in deposits at Tiel-Medel-De Reth, Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station and Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20). In addition, the channel fill at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) contained charred grains of barley and emmer wheat, while bone material from the fleshy parts of cattle was found in the deposit at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station. These could well be the remains of communal ritual meals and/or their preparation.

The deposits mentioned here appear to relate to new phases of the channels, or to the inauguration of a site near or along the channel. Natural 'events' such as the creation of a new channel may have been marked through ritual practices. Similarly, we can point to the special finds at the potholes in Utrecht-Hoge Woerd and Utrecht-A2, which are also landscape elements created by the force of water. Communal meals may have formed part of such rituals. The pots with 'painting' could relate to practices connected with the (ritual) slaughter of animals. The human vertebra from Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) can similarly be understood as an ancestral object that may have been deliberately deposited to forge a meaningful link between the new place of residence and the community that settled there.

5.8 Ritual places

5.8.1 Introduction

This category of structures involves places with a specific ritual function. These were often clearly demarcated places on the periphery of or outside settlements that were characterised by unusual (and at times extensive) find assemblages and sometimes by small structures or post settings in the courtyard. These places are given various labels: 'open-air sanctuaries', '(rural) cult

²⁶⁵ Habermehl & Van Renswoude 2017, 895.

²⁶⁶ Fontijn 2002, 266; Huijbers 2007, 324; Nieuwhof 2015, 84.

²⁶⁷ A large amount of barely fragmented pottery, a miniature pot, loom weights and a large quantity of animal bone.

²⁶⁸ The four separate find concentrations consist of almost complete handmade cooking pots and bone material from the fleshy parts of cattle. Residues of plant and animal remains/meat products were found in the cooking pots.

²⁶⁹ Abbink 1999, 313; Nieuwhof 2015, 146. These could be features relating to the slaughter of animals (and the collecting of blood), or decorative patterns deliberately made using animal blood, or a combination of the two. These possibilities could perhaps tie in with a ritual context, especially as the residue is mainly found on complete pots that were deliberately deposited. (Van Kerckhove 2019; Oudemans 2019).

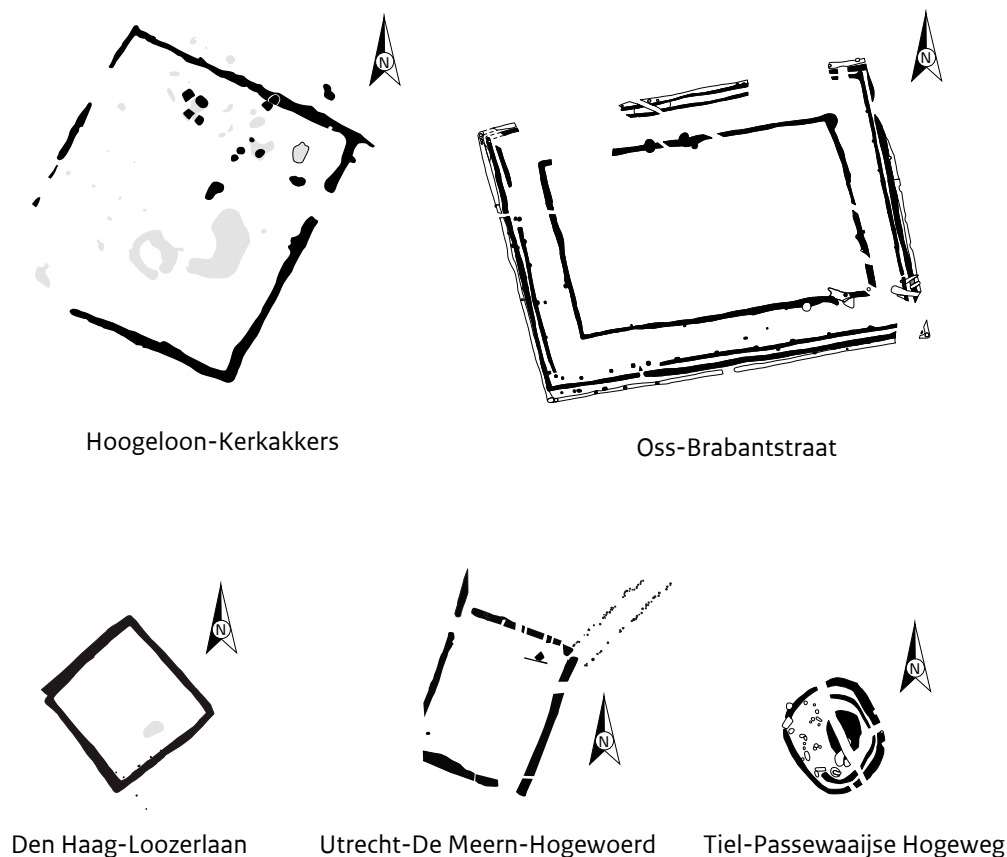


Fig. 5.28. Examples of possible ritual places. Scale 1:600 (source: Hiddink 2015, Fig. 12.9; De Leeuwe 2011, Fig. 41; Van Zoolingen 2010, Fig. 107; Kerkhoven 2017, Fig. 3.3; Heeren 2006, Fig. 17.63).

places' or 'ritual enclosures'. In this section we focus on formal ritual places. These had a fixed location and were modest in size. Often, though not invariably, they were demarcated and shaped by human hands (see Fig. 5.28 for examples).²⁷⁰ Informal ritual places were specific places or zones in the natural landscape (including swamps, channels and fens (see also Section 5.7) that may also have had a ritual significance and function.²⁷¹

Studies of formal ritual places have mainly focused on the southern Netherlands. This is partly because almost no formal ritual places are known in the northern and eastern regions, where natural settings appear to have been used as ritual places.²⁷² Natural places of this kind were often located outside settlements.

Ritual places can only partly be viewed as belonging to the spatial context of the house and yard. In many instances, they are obviously located outside settlements, while in others their position in relation to settlements is unclear. There are also cult places that appear to be

linked to grave fields and burial rituals.²⁷³

The study of ritual or cult places is a research area in itself and one that extends well beyond the scope of the present study. Here we will confine ourselves as much as possible to surveying examples that are relevant to our study and which can shed more light on the role of rituals and deposition practices in settlement contexts.²⁷⁴

The identification and interpretation of ritual places is the subject of lively discussion. The study and interpretation of rural cult places in our region owes much to an influential 1987 article by Slofstra and Van der Sanden, which was substantially based on their research on the cult place at Gournay-sur-Aronde (northern France). In that article the authors described various enclosures in the southern Netherlands and northern Belgium, interpreting them as 'rural cult places' that can be linked to a cult of (mythical) ancestors at the local level. We also refer here to studies by Derks and a more recent study by Groenewoudt, Van Beek and Groothedde.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ For a description of 'formal' and 'informal' ritual places, see Groenewoudt *et al.* 2016, 6.

²⁷¹ On the identification of informal cult places (natural sites), see Groenewoudt *et al.* 2016, 6.

²⁷² Groenewoudt *et al.* 2016, 9–10.

²⁷³ See, for example, Gerritsen 2003, 150; Fontijn 2002.

²⁷⁴ For more extensive and ongoing research into Iron Age cult places, we refer to De Leeuwe (in preparation).

²⁷⁵ Derks 1998, 133; Groenewoudt *et al.* 2016. Derks defines cult places (or ritual places) as places intended for the worship of one or more cosmological forces, separate from the profane world, where the members of a community regularly gather to perform their personal or communal rituals before a ritual focal point. He therefore separates the everyday and the ritual, unlike the special deposits described in this study. Examples of a ritual focal point could be a built structure, a statue or idol, as well as a tree, post or post setting (Derks 1998, 133).

The degree of caution and critical discussion varies considerably from one researcher to the next. The discussions about the possible ritual places at Hoogeloon,²⁷⁶ Oss-Westerveld,²⁷⁷ Utrecht-Rijnvliet,²⁷⁸ Utrecht-Hoge Woerd (LR78)²⁷⁹ and Tiel-Medel-De Reth²⁸⁰ reveal that interpretation is neither simple nor clear-cut.

5.8.2 General picture

Table 5.48 gives an overview of ritual places discussed here. It does not include ritual places that can clearly be associated with funerary practices or grave fields.²⁸¹

The ritual places included here date from the Middle Iron Age to the Middle Roman period, with the Middle Roman period clearly dominating. Virtually all of these places were defined by ditches. Only at Voerendaal-Ten Hove was there no defined area but instead two

temples that stood behind a Roman villa.

The ditch structures vary in shape from round, oval and U-shaped (open on one side) to rectangular and square, with rectangular the most common. The dimensions also vary: the smallest had sides of less than 10 m, while the largest had sides of more than 40 m.

In terms of location, half of the ritual places were probably situated on the edge of a settlement, with the remainder probably outside it. Only the ritual place at Oss-Westerveld was located within a settlement.

It has not been possible in most cases to properly reconstruct built structures within the ditched areas, although isolated postholes or pits are documented in some instances. Post settings or palisades have been reconstructed for some ritual places, such as Oss-Westerveld and possibly Den Haag-Lozerlaan, but possible buildings could only be reconstructed from the postholes documented at Hoogeloon.

²⁷⁶ Hiddink 2014, 249–260.
²⁷⁷ Wesselingh 2000, 126–128.
²⁷⁸ Dielemans 2013, 79–88.
²⁷⁹ Kerkhoven 2017.
²⁸⁰ Habermehl *et al.* 2019, 746–752.
²⁸¹ See Gerritsen 2003, 149; Fontijn 2002; Ball & Jansen 2018, 381–383.

Table 5.48. Overview of ritual places and associated finds (all periods).

Place	Toponym	Brief description	Beginning	End
Delft	Harnaschpolder	approx. 40 kg of (mainly handmade) pottery, complete mortarium, miniature pot, 5 ceramic 'marbles', various spindle whorls, cattle skull, tazza fragment, 2 fibulae, 1 bent coin, 2 bracelets (1 bent) and 1 strap junction	125	200
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	handmade pottery	100	150
Den Haag	Loozerlaan	pottery, bronze jug and handle of bronze jug	75	200
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	fibula and Neolithic stone axe	-150	-70
Hoogeloon	Kerkackers	pottery, burnt animal bone	0	200
Houten	Castellum	skull, human skull fragment and loose bone, deer skull, complete (burnt) pots, ceramic base discs, quernstone fragments, sling bullets, loom weights, colanders, spindle whorls, iron Kropfnadel, iron fibulae, 10 iron belt hooks and 2 iron spearheads	-400	-250
Leidschendam	Leeuwenbergh	complete pots in a row (in ditches), fibulae	150	225
Midden-Delfland	MD 21.15	6 fibulae and handmade pottery	60	150
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	no find material	75	200
Oss	Brabantstraat	14 Roman coins, human skull fragment	-50	50
Oss	Westerveld	pottery (1 complete), animal bone	1	100
Oss-Ussen	R49	concentrations of burnt pottery in inner space, pottery in ditches, burnt animal bone	-300	-250
Poeldijk	Westhof	base of dolium, iron bands from bucket/vat or plate armour, tools with wooden handles	150	200
Son	Nieuwstraat	seal box, Venus figurine, sherds of beakers and plates	-19	225
Tiel	Oude Tielseweg	pottery sherds of complete pots (partly burnt), selection of special pottery forms	25	75
Tiel	Pasewaaijse Hogeweg	paving of pottery sherds, charcoal, burnt bone, fragment of glass bracelet	-50	10
Utrecht	Hoge Woerd	2 inverted pots in ditch	100	200
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	quernstone fragments, 2 ceramic beads and many pottery sherds	0	30
Voerendaal	Ten Hove	approx. 500 sherds of terra nigra; selection of specific pottery type	100	270

5.8.3 Ritual places through time

Iron Age

The enclosure at Houten-Castellum ranks among the earliest of the ritual places described here (400–250 BC).²⁸² It is also the one that yielded the most extensive and remarkable find assemblage. The enclosure may have been open on one side (U-shaped) and it measured approx. 18 x 18 m. The location of the site is unusual as it partly occupied a partly accreted residual channel.²⁸³ The relationship to contemporaneous habitation cannot be established for this ritual place, but a location on the edge of or outside the settlement seems self-evident. Several deep pits associated with the enclosure contained unusual finds: a complete human skull, a human skull fragment, a deer skull fragment and large quernstone fragments. In addition to pit finds, the assemblage from the associated channel fill also had a special composition, including two complete (burnt) pots, base discs, two fragments of human bone, quernstone fragments, sling bullets, loom weights, colanders, spinning whorls, four iron 'Kropfnadeln', four iron fibulae, ten iron belt hooks and two iron spearheads. A surprising number of finds show traces of secondary burning. The distribution and homogeneity of the complex suggest that the objects were deposited within a limited time frame. A find that merits special mention is an enormous pot also associated with the enclosure. Large pots of this kind are usually labelled storage jars, but the specific find context here alerts us to another possible function. The size and overall shape of the piece correspond to large ceramic specimens mainly found in fifth-century BC graves and which are interpreted in northern France as wine-mixing vats (*cratères*) or vessels for beverages.²⁸⁴

A second ritual place from the Middle Iron Age is the rectangular enclosure at Oss-R49 (18.5 x 19 m) (300–250 BC), which was palisaded on four sides. There are indications of fire (discoloured sand) within the enclosure and burnt pottery was found in two postholes. The ditches contained many pottery sherds and burnt animal bone. Contemporaneous houses stood a short distance (about 25 m) from the enclosure.²⁸⁵

From the Late Iron Age (150–70 BC) we

know of a small U-shaped area (approx. 7.2 x 5.2 m) on the periphery of the settlement at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. Two special finds – a Nauheim fibula from the ditch and a Neolithic stone axe from the covering cultural layer – suggest that this could be a ritual place. However, the excavators were reluctant to interpret it definitively as a ritual deposit. Several special deposits were also found in a ditch near this structure (a concentration of burnt grain, three fibulae, the forelegs of a horse, a piece of La Tène glass, a complete pot and stacked pieces of natural stone). We can also point to a possible ritual place at Odijk-Singel West/Schoudermantel (Late Iron Age). This involves a rectangular ditch structure (6.5 x 7.5 m) with a concentration of 468 pottery sherds. Here too, the site's function cannot be determined, but the excavator suggests a possible interpretation as a ritual place, alongside that of an 'ordinary' settlement structure.²⁸⁶

Roman period

A first possible ritual place dates to the final decades before the beginning of our era. This is a ditched area (14002/14005) measuring 10 x 28.5 m at Tiel-Medel-De Reth, described earlier in this study as a house site.²⁸⁷ Various special deposits, including complete pottery, are documented from the ditches at this site, especially near the opposing entrances. Several special objects were also found around the site, including six Celtic triquetrum coins, a silver quinarius, an iron signet ring and an appliqué disc fibula. Another possible ritual place from the beginning of our era was discovered at Utrecht-Rijnvliet. This involved a large pit surrounded by a wooden structure. The excavator discusses various interpretation scenarios, including that of a house (for the wooden structure) and a closing deposit (for the centrally positioned pit deposit). However, no good parallels are known for the reconstructed structure.²⁸⁸ The second scenario assumes a function as a ritual place, possibly even as part of a larger sacrificial site in and alongside the nearby channel. The central pit in particular points to an interpretation as a ritual place. It appears that the pit was used over a long period of time (some 10–30 years), that (burnt) material was regularly deposited there and that a fire had burned on the sherd paving. The pit

²⁸² Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, 881–883.

²⁸³ There is an interesting parallel here with the much younger cult place (and later Gallo-Roman temple) of Elst-Westeraam, where the enclosure is also partly built over an old channel (Van Enckevort 2007). Perhaps something similar may have occurred on a much smaller scale with the possible ritual place at Midden Delfland MD 21.15 (Van Londen 2006, 135).

²⁸⁴ Van den Broeke 2017, 164.

²⁸⁵ Van der Sanden 1998, 315–316; Gerritsen 2003, 156–158.

²⁸⁶ Schurmans & Verhelst 2007, 40.

²⁸⁷ See the discussion on the interpretation of this structure in Habermehl *et al.* 2019, 746–752.

²⁸⁸ Although the explanation for the structure corresponds in some respects to parts of known houses from the region (Dielemans 2013, 79–80).

contents included several quernstone fragments, two ceramic beads and a good deal of pottery (highly fragmented, at least 100 MNI). Also of interest is the possible association with special finds in the nearby residual channel (several fibulae and part of a deliberately bent silver bracelet), with posts and stakes placed in the channel²⁸⁹ and with a few wells/waterholes in which complete objects were deposited. Lastly, we can mention the structure's orientation. Calculations show that the winter solstice sunrise falls precisely through the centre of STR1.²⁹⁰ The excavator suggests a possible association of this possible ritual place with the Yule celebrations around the winter solstice.

A ritual place at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (50 BC–AD 10), situated fairly close to several houses (about 25–50 m), is a little younger. This is a double oval enclosure (8 x 9 m), at the centre of which was a large oval feature paved with pottery sherds (see also the pit at Utrecht-Rijnvliet described above). A large amount of charcoal and several splinters of burnt bone were found on the pottery paving. The origin of the bone is unknown. The presence of postholes in this feature could indicate that there were once posts here, or even a small structure, which may have functioned as a ritual focus. In addition to the sherd paving, a piece of a glass bracelet can probably be attributed to this ritual place.

From roughly the same period we know of a larger (32 x 23 m) rectangular ritual place at Oss-Brabantstraat (c. 50 BC–AD 50). This is a two-phase rectangular enclosure, where wooden walls once stood in the ditches. The first phase featured a double enclosure, with a separate, central defined space, surrounded by a 2.5 m wide 'corridor'. The entrance to the enclosure was marked by vertical posts. The finds that stand out are a burnt human skull fragment and 14 coins. No features that can be associated with the use of this ritual place are documented in the inner space.

There was a possible ritual place from the Roman period at Son-Nieuwstraat. This involved a section of ditch of unusual width and length, as well as associated finds, including sherds of beakers, plates, a seal box and a Venus figurine.²⁹¹ A ditched area is also partly documented inside the settlement of Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen, containing several postholes and a pit. A palisade probably once

stood in the ditch. Based on the structure and central location, this enclosure was initially interpreted as a ritual place, although later additional research has cast doubt on this interpretation.²⁹²

The possible ritual place at Hoogeloon (20 x 22 m) also appears to date to the Early Roman period, although a firm dating remains problematic. This enclosure is situated just outside the settlement and Slofstra and Van der Sanden have interpreted it as a cult place. Hiddink, however, in his thorough, integrated work on the site, is critical and expresses his doubts about this interpretation.²⁹³ Several pits and two rows of postholes, set roughly at right angles to each other, are documented in the inner space. Slofstra and Van der Sanden have interpreted them as a ritual post setting.²⁹⁴ The finds consist of Gallo-Belgic pottery, some burnt bone, a glass bracelet fragment, five coins, fragments of a clay-pipe figurine and five iron knives, some of which appear deliberately broken. Hiddink describes the finds as not particularly special and states that they do not support an interpretation as a cult place.

Another interesting enclosure from the first century AD, at Oss-Westerveld, had already been described by Slofstra and Van der Sanden as a rural cult place. However, this interpretation has also been criticised and further qualified in later research.²⁹⁵ A sizeable (45 x 40 m) ditched area featuring a row of five postholes was located inside the ditched settlement of Oss-Westerveld. Slofstra and Van der Sanden have interpreted this palisade as a (ritual) post setting. The ditches contained pottery sherds, small fragments of animal bone and burnt loam. Wesselingh emphasises that none of the finds can be properly viewed as votive offerings.²⁹⁶ She also finds the interpretation of post setting unconvincing, arguing that its location within the settlement differs from the norm.²⁹⁷ As an alternative, she suggests that the enclosure was possibly used for a one-off ritual to mark the construction and inauguration of the Westerveld settlement.²⁹⁸

A final example from the Early Roman period concerns a ritual place at Tiel-Oude Tielseweg.²⁹⁹ This is a circular enclosure (S1364), located opposite a contemporaneous house, on the other side of the residual channel. A large quantity of partly burnt pottery was found in the ditch, much of which could be reconstructed into

²⁸⁹ The excavator points to posts and stakes in the residual channel and hints at a possible ritual function, without making this interpretation explicit (Dielemans 2013, 82). The excavator also points to sacrificial sites in swamps/channels in, for example, Denmark, referring to a reconstructed site in the Lejre Forsøgscenter, Denmark, where a cluster of irregularly placed stakes topped by horse skulls has been reconstructed (Dielemans 2013, 86).

²⁹⁰ Dielemans 2013, 86.

²⁹¹ Van der Weerden 2005; Ball & Jansen 2018, 381.

²⁹² Van Enckevort 2007; Hensen & Janssens 2015, 45–46.

²⁹³ Hiddink 2014, 250–260.

²⁹⁴ Hiddink does not rule out an alternative interpretation as the central posts of an Alphen-Ekeren-type (Hiddink 2014, 256).

²⁹⁵ Wesselingh 2000, 126–128.

²⁹⁶ Wesselingh 2000, 126.

²⁹⁷ Wesselingh 2000, 126–127.

²⁹⁸ Wesselingh 2000, 128.

²⁹⁹ Verhelst 2001, 30–32.

complete pots. The majority of the wheel-thrown pottery is heavily burnt. With regard to the pottery assemblage, Verhelst notes that it contains a selection of special pottery forms not found in the settlement features.

Most ritual places date to the Middle Roman period. They are located at Den Haag-Lozerlaan, Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan, Delft-Harnaschpolder, Poeldijk-Westhof, Utrecht-De Meern-Hoge Woerd (LR78), Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh and Midden-Delfland MD 21.15.

The enclosures of Poeldijk (AD 150–200), Den Haag-Hoge Veld (AD 100–150) and Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh (AD 150–225) appear to be located close to yards and therefore formed part of the settlements. The one at Poeldijk-Westhof is a rectangular enclosure (7 x 8 m) with several small post features in the inner space. A dolium base and folded iron bands were found in the ditch. The bands could be hoops from a bucket or barrel, but also plate armour components. The enclosure at Den Haag-Hoge Veld (16.5 x 14 m) was situated some 50 m from the nearest house in the settlement.³⁰⁰ Several postholes and a section of ditch are documented in the inner space. There are no special finds. Finally, the ritual place of Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh is a U-shaped structure measuring 16 x 12 m, situated close to three yards. Several pits also form part of this structure. The special find material includes fibulae and pottery. A row of handmade pots was found in the ditches. The pottery also differs from what is usually found in settlement contexts.³⁰¹

Various other ritual places from the Middle Roman period appear to have been located outside settlements. This involves structures at Den Haag-Lozerlaan (AD 75–200), Utrecht-De Meern-Hoge Woerd (LR78) (AD 100–200), Midden-Delfland MD 21.15 (c. AD 60–150) and Delft-Harnaschpolder (c. AD 125–200). Large pottery sherds, a bronze jug and the handle of a second bronze jug were found in the two-phase square enclosure at Den Haag-Lozerlaan (maximum of 9.5 x 9.5 m). There may have been post settings in the inner space. At Delft-Harnaschpolder, there was also a double enclosure with maximum dimensions of 18 x 9 m, and with several pits and postholes within the ditches. The find assemblage is fairly large and comprised more than 40 kg of (mainly

handmade) pottery, a complete mortarium (burnt on the exterior), a handmade miniature pot, five ceramic 'marbles', several spindle whorls, a cattle skull and the fragment of a tazza (burnt on the interior). The pottery contained several special items (an imitation ribbed bowl, three-lugged pots and a colander) that were not found in the settlement. The metal objects included two fibulae, a coin, two bracelets and a strap junction. The coin and one of the bracelets are bent. The possible ritual place at Midden-Delfland MD 21.15 (7 x 6 m) was originally interpreted by Van Londen as a livestock pen, but Van Zoolingen describes it as a ritual place in view of the structure and associated find material.³⁰² This find material involved six fibulae and a large quantity of pottery. The specific location should also be mentioned here: partially over an old creek.

Two small temples at the rear of the Roman villa at Voerendaal-Ten Hove, almost right on the boundary of the villa grounds, present a different picture.³⁰³ Only the stone foundations of these temple structures have been recovered. One temple measures 4.85 x 3.1 m, the other 3.5 x 2.9 m. A remarkable concentration of pottery was found around the second temple. It comprised more than 500 sherds of a specific type of ceramic bottle, the Holwerda 25, probably dating to between c. 50 and 150 AD. This kind of pottery appears to have been deliberately selected for the practices carried out in and around the temple. Perhaps most striking are the inscriptions observed on a few of these sherds (seven pieces). These appear to be personal names, although part of the name of a goddess can perhaps also be deciphered. They are probably votive inscriptions.

5.8.4 Discussion

There is considerable variation among the ritual places described here, but also distinct similarities. The fairly small ritual places located close to houses probably had a local function (such as Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, Poeldijk-Westhof and Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh). They may have been used by one family or household, or by a few perhaps related families living together. They were probably situated on the edge of the

³⁰⁰ Siemons & Lanzing 2009, 139.

³⁰¹ Wiepking 1997, 86; Van Zoolingen 2010, 89.

³⁰² Van Londen 2006, 135; Van Zoolingen 2010, 158.

³⁰³ See Hiddink in preparation; Derks 1998, 151–152.

yards. This is also true of the temples at the Voerendaal-Ten Hove villa. They stood on the edge of the villa grounds, behind the main building, and will have been used by some or all of the community living on the villa grounds. A few other sites appear to have been situated outside settlements (such as Oss-Brabantstraat, Utrecht-De Meern-Hoge Woerd (LR78) and Delft-Harnaschpolder). Ritual places such as Delft-Harnaschpolder or Oss-Brabantstraat may have been used by a larger community, possibly from various surrounding settlements.

It is often difficult to determine what the sites looked like. The spatial demarcation is one important aspect. In some instances, there is evidence of palisades (Oss-R49) or even wooden walls (Oss-Brabantstraat). In others, the boundary may have simply consisted of a ditch. Isolated postholes or pits have occasionally been found in the inner spaces but they do not allow for any obvious reconstruction. They may represent post settings or palisades, but they could also have been small buildings or structures, perhaps resembling the well-known 'temple of Bargerroosterveld'.³⁰⁴ At Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, the sherd-paved site may have served as a ritual focus, perhaps with an associated wooden structure above it. In that sense, this ritual place may have been similar to the one at Utrecht-Rijnvliet, where a central feature (with sherd paving) and a wooden structure are documented. For the enclosure at Houten-Castellum, there are indications that at least one of the human skulls was displayed, perhaps on a stake.

Location

It is clear from the above that the ritual places discussed here have a peripheral location in relation to the habitation zone.³⁰⁵ It is these peripheral places that appear to have played a key role in the performance of rituals. Moreover, in some cases, people seem to have specifically chosen a location near a watercourse.

The Houten-Castellum enclosure even partly occupied the residual channel and the Midden-Delfland site was also partly laid out across an old creek. An interesting parallel is the large cult place (and later Gallo-Roman temple) of Elst-Westeraam. Here too, part of the ditched site was laid over an old watercourse. In other cases, the ritual places are located not far from watercourses, such as at Den Haag-Lozerlaan,

Utrecht-De Meern-Hoge Woerd (LR78), Utrecht-Rijnvliet, Tiel-Oude Tielseweg and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. And for the larger cult places at Empel and Lomm, which are not discussed here, the location on the river was clearly a conscious choice.

Ritual practices

It is often difficult to determine which (ritual) practices took place within the enclosures. And yet there are clues that could perhaps shed more light on this. First is the fragmented and partly burnt pottery that has often been recovered from the ditches on the sites. Sizeable quantities of pottery were found in the ditches of the enclosures at Delft-Harnaschpolder, Den Haag-Lozerlaan, Oss-R49, Midden-Delfland and Tiel-Oude Tielseweg. Sometimes more or less complete pots can be reconstructed from the sherds, whereas Delft-Harnaschpolder yielded a large number of pottery pieces from which no complete forms can be reconstructed. Several complete, unfragmented pots were placed in ditches at Utrecht-De Meern-Hoge Woerd (LR78), Tiel-Medel-De Reth and Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh. It is quite conceivable that these finds are the remnants of rituals carried out within the enclosure. Fire appears to have played a role here. The remains of these rituals then ended up in the ditches, either immediately or later, or they were placed there with care and deliberation (such as the complete pots). The burnt animal bone that is sometimes found ties in with this picture. This could involve sacrificial practices and/or the preparation and consumption of (communal) meals, the remains of which ended up in the ditches or pits. We also find a possible clue to communal consumption in Houten-Castellum, where a fragment of a large ceramic mixing vat was found in association with a ritual place.

For the pottery, a conscious selection appears to have been made on occasions with regard to the vessels that were used or deposited at ritual places. This pottery clearly differs from what was used in the settlements. Indications for this have been found at Tiel-Oude Tielseweg, Delft-Harnaschpolder, Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh and Voerendaal-Ten Hove.

Personal objects?

Some of the ritual places yielded a large variety of objects. Found alongside pottery at Delft-

³⁰⁴ Van der Sanden 2000.

³⁰⁵ In addition, there are ritual places located outside or well outside settlements. These are informal ritual places (such as swamps, channels and fens), as well as ritual places near grave fields. An early medieval possible ritual places was recently excavated at Springendal, near Hezingen (De Kort *et al.* 2022). This involved a palisade, where coins were deposited, buried or attached. There was also a large erratic boulder, where coins and a pendant were found. This possible ritual place was located outside a settlement context, possibly close to a crossroad.

Harnaschpolder were marbles, spindle whorls, fibulae, bracelets and a strap junction, and at Houten-Castellum sling bullets, loom weights, colanders, spinning whorls, ‘Kropfnadeln’, fibulae, belt hooks and spearheads. At least some of these objects may have been items of personal significance relating to the social identity of the person who deposited them. This is easy to imagine for items such as jewellery (bracelets, ‘Kropfnadeln’ and fibulae). Some objects – militaria and weapons – may be specifically linked to a martial or military identity. Examples are the spearheads and possibly the belt hooks from Houten-Castellum and the iron bands from Poeldijk-Westhof, which should perhaps be understood as plate armour. The large deposit of military equipment from Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool could also be associated with a ritual place (see also Section 6.9). The fact that the deposition of military items may have been part of ritual practices is a known phenomenon; it is well-documented, for example, at the large cult place of Empel, where 140 fragments of military equipment were found alongside many coins and fibulae. Such practices may relate to rites of passage, in which soldiers marked their return to civilian life through rituals.³⁰⁶

Ancestors

Slofstra and Van der Sanden suggest in their article that rural cult places can be linked to the cult of (mythical) ancestors at a local level.³⁰⁷ In most cases, however, there is no evidence to support this in our dataset. A possible exception is the ritual place at Oss-Brabantstraat, where a human skull fragment was found. Most relevant, however, is the Houten-Castellum enclosure. A complete human skull and part of a skull were found in pits associated with this enclosure and two more fragments of human bone were found in the vicinity. There are indications that the complete skull had been displayed. The report concludes that this ritual place could perhaps be associated with ancestor worship.³⁰⁸ It is also interesting to refer to the study by Fontijn, who suggests that the cult place at Nijmegen-Kops plateau may have played a role in the ‘creation’ of ancestors as part of funerary rituals.³⁰⁹ The ritual place at Houten-Castellum should perhaps also be viewed in this light, especially given the inhumation grave documented a short distance from the enclosure on the bank of the residual channel.

³⁰⁶ Van Driel-Murray 1994, 106.

³⁰⁷ Gerritsen 2003, 163. Gerritsen has doubts about this interpretation. He emphasises that different ritual places will have been connected to different ritual practices, which will not in all instances have related to ancestors. For ritual places near settlements, Gerritsen suggests a focus on ‘cosmological phenomena’ other than ancestors (Gerritsen 2003, 163).

³⁰⁸ Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, 882.

³⁰⁹ Fontijn 2002.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter takes the content and composition of special deposits as the starting point for analysis. To facilitate the consistent description and analysis of the wealth of data, we have defined a number of relevant object categories. Object category refers to the specific functional, material or thematic category of objects that can be identified within the highly diverse set of deposited objects. The chapter addresses the different object categories in turn, highlighting the key patterns, their development and associated themes.

The following object categories are defined in this study:

- Vessels. Ceramic, metal, wooden and glass vessels that were originally used in the preparation, serving, consumption, storage and transporting of predominantly food and drink.³¹⁰
- Animal remains. All remains of animal origin, especially (partial) skeletons, skulls and loose bone material.
- Food attributes. Objects that can be associated with food production and processing. These are quernstones, sickles, scythes, plough shoes and ard share points.
- Textile attributes. Objects that can be associated with textile production and processing. These are predominantly loom weights and spindle whorls.
- Tools. A diverse category of metal tools, including whetstones, pecking stones, hammerstones, axes, knives, awls and chisels.
- Weapons and militaria. Objects that can be associated with combat, defence and/or the army, including swords, daggers, spearheads, helmets, armour and slingshot.
- Fibulae and jewellery. A diverse category of personal objects, including fibulae, bracelets, finger rings and beads.
- Botanical remains. The remains of crops and plants, including grain, herbs and fruit.
- Coins. Single coins and coin deposits.
- Human remains. Human bone and hair.
- Burnt loam and remains of ovens and hearths.
- Antique objects. Objects that are considerably older than their deposition context.

- Other objects. A few 'loose' object types, such as shoes, horseshoes, keys and candlesticks, as well as some object types that may have had a special ritual significance or function, including ceramic masks, deity figurines and amulets.

6.2 General overview: object categories

Before examining these various object categories separately, we will first present an overview.

The aim is to shed light on the occurrence of the main object categories in special deposits in time and space. The category of 'other' objects (horseshoes, keys etc.) is not included here, nor are the smaller categories such as botanical and human remains.

6.2.1 Object categories: all periods

Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1 provide a full overview of the number of special deposits in which the various object categories occur (all periods).³¹¹

Given that a single deposit may contain several object categories, the total number here is higher than the number of inventoried special deposits shown in Table 5.1 (1353 deposits). The most prevalent object categories are vessels and animal bone (both about 22%). The prominence of the 'other' category (26%) is chiefly due to the large quantity of indeterminate natural stone, as well as objects and object categories that are not specified in the overview. Animal bone is inventoried more broadly than the other object categories (see also Section 6.3). We have also included animal burials that the excavators have not explicitly interpreted as special deposits. Of the remaining object categories, food attributes (8%) and tools (6%) are best represented, followed by textile attributes (4%), fibulae/jewellery (3%), burnt loam (3%), weapons/militaria (2%) and coins (2%).

³¹⁰ It should be noted that in at least some cases the vessels will simply have served as a container for food, etc. and were not intended as the actual deposit or offering.

³¹¹ It is important to note that the description and analysis of the individual contexts (and object categories) includes data from older studies that are not part of the core dataset for the present study, for which the primary focus was information from archaeological reports within the context of 'Malta archaeology'. The dataset analysed here thus differs slightly from the datasets examined by context and object category.

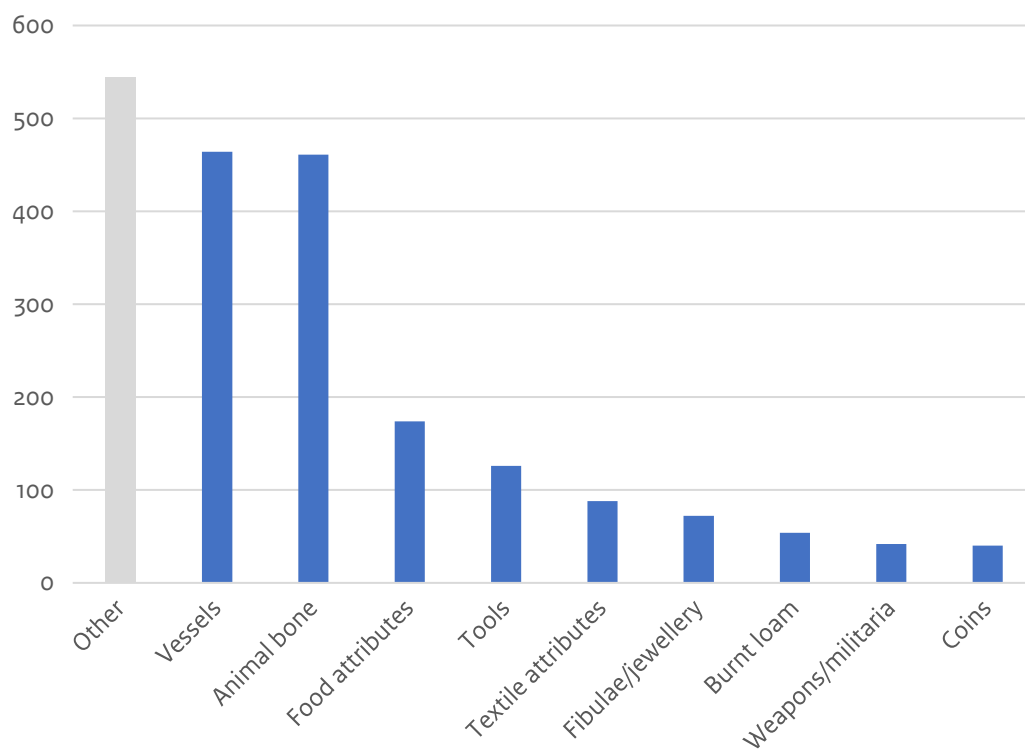


Fig. 6.1. Overview of the occurrence of the different object categories in special deposits. The total number of deposits shown here is larger than the number of inventoried deposits, as one deposit may contain several object categories.

Table 6.1. Total overview of number of special deposits in which the different object categories occur. The total number of deposits shown here is larger than the number of deposits in the inventory as one deposit may contain several object categories.

Category	N	%
Other	544	26%
Vessels	464	22%
Animal bone	461	22%
Food attributes	174	8%
Tools	126	6%
Textile attributes	88	4%
Fibulae/jewellery	72	3%
Burnt loam	54	3%
Weapons/militaria	42	2%
Coins	40	2%
Total	2065	100%

6.2.2 Object categories: chronological distribution

Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2 present an overview of the chronological distribution by object category. They show that the Roman period dominates for most object categories. Coins, fibulae/jewellery, weapons/militaria and animal bone are especially well represented in that period. A different

picture is revealed for textile attributes, food attributes and burnt loam, which occur most frequently in the Iron Age.

If we look at the occurrence of the different object categories in special deposits by period, we can identify a number of patterns and developments (see Fig. 6.3 and Table 6.3).

For the Neolithic, tools (24%) and food attributes (19%) are well represented, whereas the proportion of vessels (16%) is fairly limited. In this early period, it seems that ceramic vessels

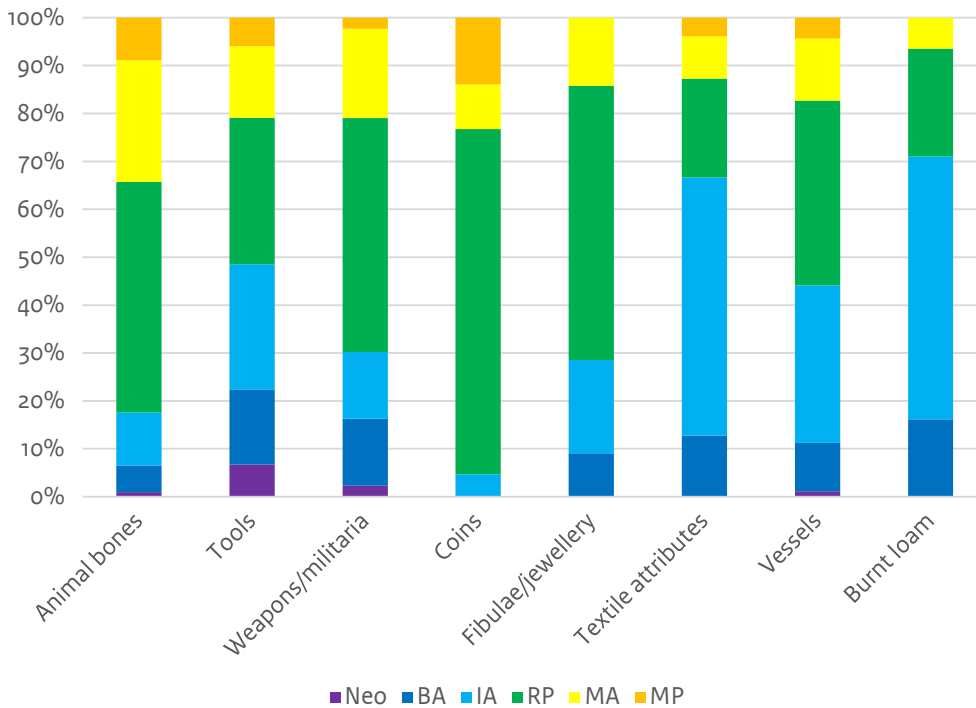


Fig. 6.2. Overview of the chronological distribution by object category

Table 6.2. Chronological distribution by object category.

Category	Neo	BA	IA	RP	MA	MP	Total
Animal bone (N=461)	1%	6%	11%	48%	25%	9%	100%
Tools (N=126)	7%	16%	26%	31%	15%	6%	100%
Weapons/militaria (N=42)	2%	14%	14%	49%	19%	2%	100%
Coins (N=40)	0%	0%	5%	72%	9%	14%	100%
Fibulae/jewellery (N=72)	0%	9%	19%	57%	14%	0%	100%
Textile attributes (N=88)	0%	13%	54%	21%	9%	4%	100%
Vessels (N=464)	1%	10%	33%	39%	13%	4%	100%
Burnt loam (N=54)	0%	16%	55%	23%	6%	0%	100%
Food attributes (N=174)	4%	15%	43%	27%	10%	1%	100%
Other (N=544)	1%	11%	36%	32%	13%	6%	100%

picture, with houses and wells/waterholes being the dominant contexts, followed by pits and ditches. Finally, animal burials are the dominant context for animal bone, followed by pits. Houses, wells and ditches are also fairly equally represented.

All in all, the categories of food attributes, fibulae/jewellery, coins, militaria/weapons and animal bone appear to have their own 'profile'. Wells/waterholes are very well represented for the first three categories, while ditches and residual channels play a comparatively important role for weapons/militaria.

6.2.4 Object categories: distribution patterns

Lastly, we examine the distribution of the different object categories and see how this relates to the general distribution pattern for the inventoried deposits (see Figs 6.4 and 6.5). We show the contexts that have a different distribution picture. This concerns the object categories of fibulae/jewellery, coins, weapons/militaria and burnt loam (Fig. 6.5).

We see that fibulae/jewellery are mainly concentrated in the southern half of the Netherlands (Fig. 6.5). This distribution is primarily a reflection of the distribution of fibulae from the Roman period, which occur almost exclusively in deposits south of the limes. The same explanation holds for the coin distribution. Here too, we see the predominance of Roman coins, which occur almost solely in deposits south of the limes. The distribution of weapons/militaria reveals a similar pattern, with Roman-era deposits predominating once again. Weapons/militaria from the Bronze Age and Iron Age, however, are also mainly concentrated in the river area.

The distribution of burnt loam shows a less marked, though still noticeable, difference from the general distribution pattern. Compared to the general picture, burnt loam is virtually unrepresented in deposits from the western and northern coastal regions.

6.3 Vessels

'Vessels' is often the most common object category in special deposits.³¹³ This is perhaps hardly surprising given that vessels can be linked to a wide range of everyday activities: the preparation, serving, consumption, storage and transportation of all manner of food and drink. For at least some special deposits, vessels themselves will not have been intended as the actual deposit or offering but will simply have served as a container, with the contents being the primary reason for deposition (e.g. food, as well as burnt loam, mortar or metal objects). In addition, for this category in particular, we should consider possible functional explanations for the presence of complete vessels in the archaeological record. These include buried ash pots (for the deposition of ashes), dust pots (for sweeping dirt into) and mouse pots (used as mouse traps, often buried in haystacks).³¹⁴

The vast majority of the vessels described here are ceramic. Metal, wooden or glass vessels were also found in a small number of deposits. Vessels in deposits cover a broad spectrum of forms and functions, ranging from beakers, bowls, pots, jugs, plates and dishes to cauldrons and amphorae.

Given the size of the subdataset, only derived tables are included for this object category and not a general summary table.

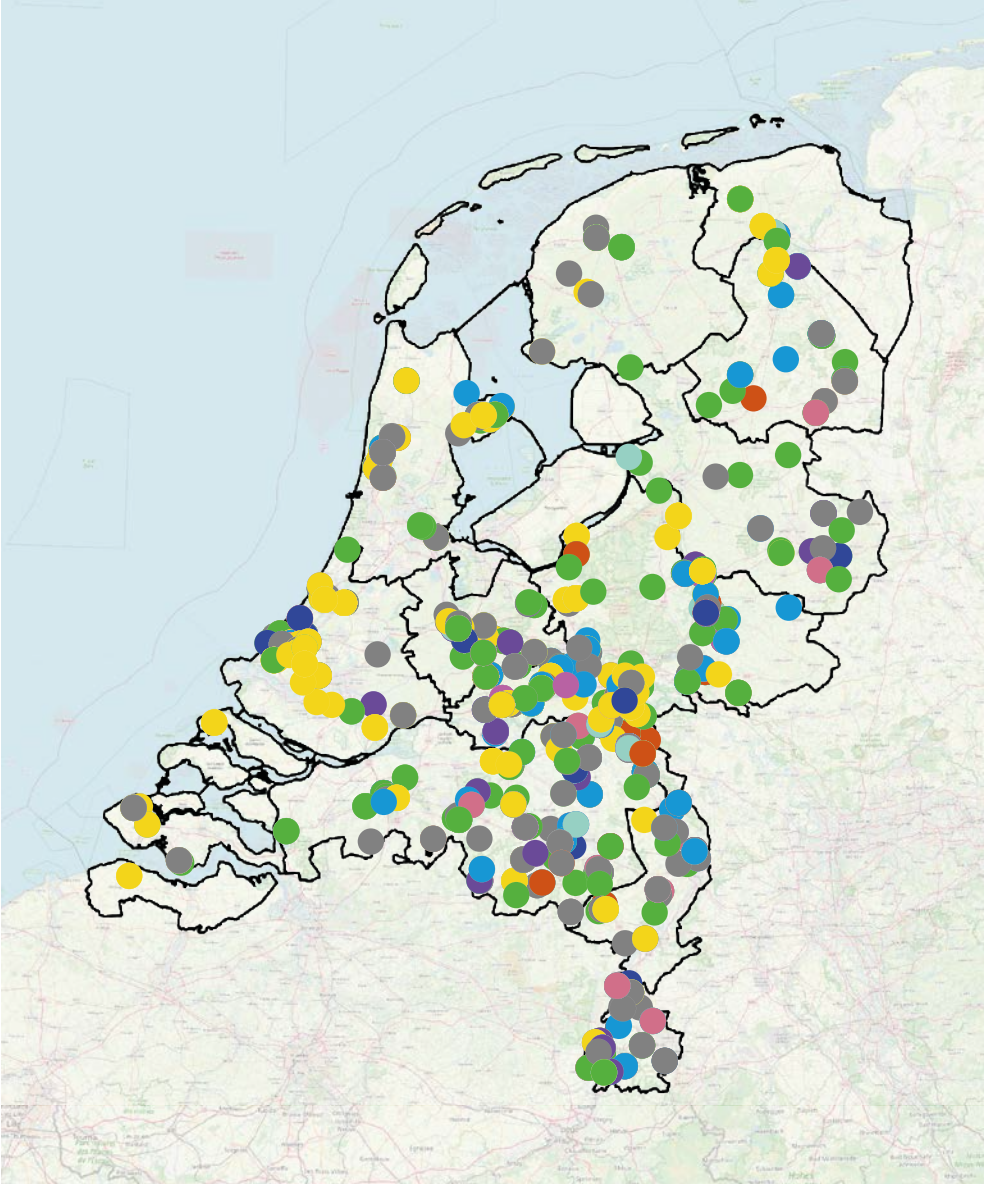
6.3.1 General picture

Table 6.5 shows an overview of the number of deposits containing vessels, by period and context. The chronological picture shows a clear predominance in the Iron Age, despite the fact that the Roman period has yielded the largest total number of deposits.

In terms of contexts, we see a clear predominance of pits and houses, followed at a distance by wells/waterholes. Broken down by period, we see that pits are the dominant context in the Bronze and Iron Ages, but begin to decline in significance from the Roman period on. Granaries are well represented in the Iron Age, with wells/waterholes also prominent in

³¹³ Vessels predominate in all contexts, with the exception of ditches, where animal bone is most prevalent.

³¹⁴ For an overview of the special use of pottery, see Van Doesburg 2020.



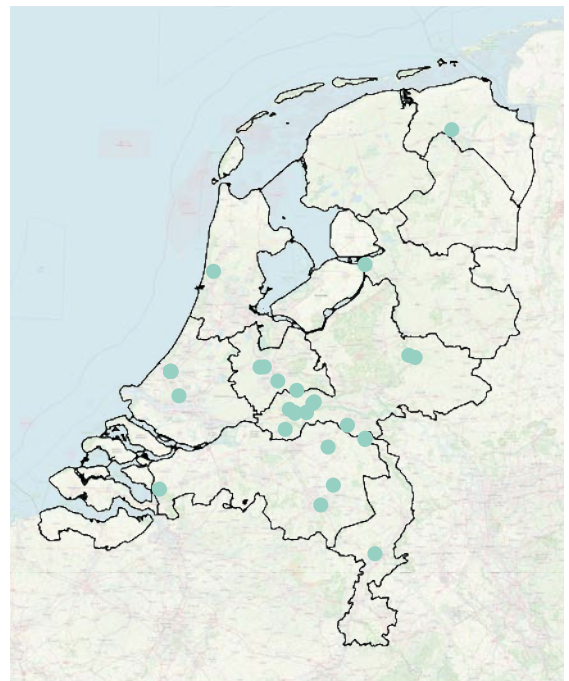
Object categories

- Tools
- Weapons/militaria
- Coins
- Other
- Fibulae/jewellery
- Textile attributes
- Vessels
- Burnt loam
- Food attributes
- Animal bones

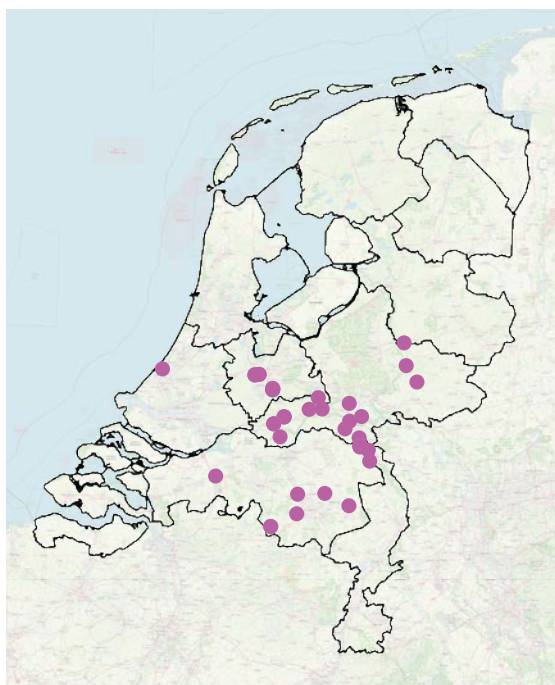
Fig. 6.4. The distribution of the inventoried special deposits, by object category.



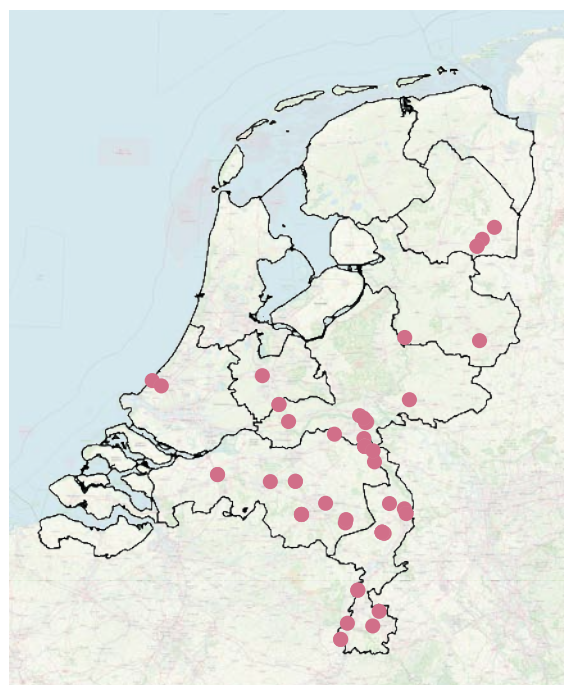
Fibulae/jewellery



Coins



Weapons/militaria



Burnt loam

Fig. 6.5. The distribution of the object categories of fibulae/jewellery, coins, weapons/militaria and burnt loam.

Table 6.5. Special deposits of vessels, by period and context.

	Houses/ buildings	Pits	Outbuildings	(Out)buildings?	Granaries	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
Neo	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
Neo-BA	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
BA	19	25	-	-	4	3	1	-	1	53
BA-IA	12	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	17
IA	57	98	2	5	30	21	10	12	1	236
IA-RP	2	9	-	3	1	3	3	1	-	22
RP	49	42	-	2	2	49	16	6	5	171
MA	34	13	5	1	1	7	3	-	-	64
MA-MP	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
MP	8	2	-	-	-	6	-	-	1	17
Broadly dated	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	182	199	7	12	39	90	33	20	9	590

Table 6.6. Special deposits of vessels, by period and category.

	Single	Composite	Fragmented	Total
Neo	4	-	2	6
Neo-BA	1	-	1	2
BA	21	3	29	53
BA-IA	6	1	10	17
IA	64	7	165	236
IA-RP	8	2	12	22
RP	84	32	55	171
MA	52	4	8	64
MA-MP	-	2	-	2
MP	9	5	3	17
Total	249	56	285	590

the Roman period.

Table 6.6 divides the vessel deposits into three categories: single, composite and fragmented.³¹⁵ Deposits of fragmented material dominate overall. Broken down into periods, we see that deposits of fragmented vessels are especially prevalent in the Iron Age, but also predominate in the Bronze Age. This picture ties in with the dominance of pits (with fragmented material) in these two periods. The picture shifts

in the Roman period, when single deposits clearly predominate and composite deposits are also well represented. For the Middle Ages too (and to a lesser extent the Modern Period), single deposits predominate.

6.3.2 Vessels by deposit category

Single and composite deposits

Single deposits involve a single deposited vessel. These 'loose' pieces occur in all the contexts defined here. They cover a variety of forms, ranging from miniature pots to large storage jars and 'potbekers'. One of the earliest deposits is an archaeologically complete pot at the bottom of a Neolithic pit at Den Haag-Ypenburg location 4 (Middle Neolithic). Another example is the sizeable beaker pot from the channel at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) (rim diameter 34 cm) (Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age). Thick food residues suggest that this pot may have been used for the preparation of a (communal?) meal. A further interesting find is that of an enormous biconical pot or storage jar in pit S59.147 at Elst-Het Bosje (Late Bronze Age). A stone was found near the pot, which may have been used to deliberately smash it. We can also mention a large, richly decorated pot that was placed upside down in a pit at Rhenen-Remmerden-Rotonde N225 (Late Iron Age) (Fig. 6.6). Such inverted vessels are also known,

³¹⁵ See Section 5.1. Single deposits are those that contain a single vessel (possibly in sherds), or part of a vessel, which has been deposited as such. Composite deposits contain several more or less complete vessels. Deposits of fragmented vessels refers to fragments of several (incomplete) vessels that were deposited as fragments. Deposits are defined as single or composite if they demonstrably involve the deposition of one or more complete vessels that became fragmented during or after deposition.

for example, from Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen site 11 (Middle–Late Bronze Age) and Wijchen-Meshallen/Kraanvogel (Middle Iron Age).

Several single vessel deposits from the prehistoric period can be associated with houses. Firstly, these are pots from pits located inside houses, such as at Tilburg-Tradepark (Bronze Age), Hattemerbroek-Bedrijventerrein-Zuid (Middle Bronze Age), Vorden-Smitstraat (inverted pots in pits inside two separate houses (Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age)) and Eersel-Kerkebogten (Middle–Late Iron Age). A pit containing an inverted pot was located in the short end gable of a house at Boekel-Parkweg (Middle Bronze Age). In terms of pot contents, the deposit at Eersel stands out as it contained the burnt bone remains of parts of the lower leg and head of a horse (Fig. 6.7). From the Late Bronze Age on, we also know of deposits with complete vessels found in house postholes. These include a bowl and pot at the top of the postholes of two separate houses at Goirle-Huzarenwei (Late Bronze Age) and a pot in a central posthole at Huissen-Agropark II (Late Bronze Age). The deposits at Goirle are interpreted as closing deposits. The same applies to the complete pot that was deposited in the post-

removal pit over a central posthole of a house at Haaren-Wijngaert (Middle Iron Age). On the other hand, a complete pot found in the posthole of the northern entrance to house 37 at Tilburg-Tradepark is interpreted as a foundation deposit (Middle Iron Age).

Most single vessel deposits date to the Roman period. By and large, these deposits are connected with construction elements of houses (often central posts). Jugs and beakers are conspicuously well represented, along with pots and bowls. Whereas the beakers and jugs can probably be associated with drink or drink offerings, the pots are more likely to relate to solid foods. Somewhat different are the small, round colander or sieve found in the central posthole of house 27 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and the terra sigillata mortarium from the core structure of house 8027 at Cuijk-De Nielt. For the Middle Ages too, many complete vessels are associated with houses. For wooden houses in the countryside these are often (globular) pots, whereas in late medieval urban houses it is jugs that are very well represented. Often, however, this entails several vessels for which it is not always certain whether they were deposited at different times (as single



Fig. 6.6. The unusually decorated, inverted pot from Rhenen-Remmerden-Rotonde N225 (source: Schute & Molthof 2012, Fig. 4).



Fig. 6.7. Pot with burnt remains of horse bones from a house at Eersel-Kerkebogten (source: Lascaris 2011, Plate 3, A).

deposits) or at the same time (as composite deposits).

Complete pots were also regularly placed in the postholes of removed granary posts. These granaries mainly date from the Iron Age, although several instances are known from the Bronze Age and Roman period. From the Bronze Age we know of complete vessels from granary 1 at Huissen-Agropark II and granary 25 at Maastricht-A2 Landgoederzone (together with a pointed flint blade). For the Iron Age, complete pots were deposited in granaries at Oosterhout-De Contreie (granaries 3002 and 3004), Groningen-Helpermaar-Eiland and Azelo-Aardgastransportleidingtracé A-670. The posthole of an early Roman granary at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet contained a colander.

Lastly, we can mention individual, complete pots that were deposited on the fringes of settlements (mainly in ditches, but also pits). This phenomenon is especially well known for the Iron Age and Roman period. A special example from the Middle Ages comes from Best-Dijkstraten, where a complete bronze cauldron (*grape*) was buried in a ditch on the edge of the settlement (AD 1350–1650) (Fig. 6.8). Complete pots and cauldrons of this kind may

have contained food that was placed as sacrifices at these liminal locations.³¹⁶ They may also have served to protect the yard and settlement from evil forces from outside.

Composite deposits are those that contain one or more vessels for which it can be established or suspected that they were (almost) intact when deposited. There is considerable variation within this category, ranging from two to more than ten complete vessels.

For the Bronze Age, this includes deposits at Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 289–293 (a miniature cup and pot in a ditch), Boekel-Parkweg (two complete pots in a pit), Cuijk-De Nielt (a pit with two complete pots) and Breda-Moskes (two inverted pots at the bottom of pit 31 and a storage jar containing a smaller pot in pit 38). The Iron Age deposits include deposits at Den Haag-Wijndaelerplantsoen (two pits, each with two (almost) complete pots) and Houten-Castellum (two ditches, each with two (almost) complete vessels). For pits at Breda-Huifakker, Wolder-Cannerberg and Oldehove-Englum-Leege Wier, we observe an interesting phenomenon: a combination of upright and inverted pots, including miniatures.

A remarkably large composite deposit comes from a pit inside house 4 at

³¹⁶ See also Van Vilsteren's study of bronze cooking pots from bogs in Drenthe (Van Vilsteren 1998, 2005).



Fig. 6.8. Bronze cauldron, deposited in the settlement ditch at Best-Dijkstraten (source: Moesker & Dijkstra 2015, Fig. 12.12; photo: Restaura).

Valkenswaard-Waalresegeweg (800–625 BC). It contained twelve unburnt, almost complete pots that were placed on their side and upside down (Fig. 6.9). Some items were placed inside others, as in the above-mentioned deposit in pit 38 at Breda-Moskes. The vessel deposit from Valkenswaard contained a variety of forms: large pots, bowls, small, lugged pots, beakers and

a dish. These would appear to be items with different functions in the preparation, presentation and consumption of food and drink. A pit deposit (KL3001) at Oosterhout-De Contreie (Early Iron Age) presents a similar picture, with five vessels, including storage jars and table and drinking wares, placed partly inside and on top of one another. Similar vessel deposits are also known from earlier research. We can point to a deposit from Bladel (Early Iron Age), consisting of an inverted bowl and storage jar and a large pot containing two smaller bowls and a pot.³¹⁷

For the Roman period there are composite vessel deposits from, for example, Sint Maartensbrug-Grote Sloop 154 (AD 50–100) and Heiloo-Stationsplein (AD 0–300). The former site involved a ditch-like pit containing about 20.4 kg of pottery from at least 25 pots, including two almost complete, but broken pots that were placed upside down. The pit at Heiloo-Stationsplein included two complete pots and a miniature pot. A miniature pot and three other complete, handmade pots of different sizes were found in a deposit near the entrance to house 8002 at Tiel-Medel-De Reth (AD 1–30). Two similar composite deposits from Houten-Castellum (waterhole 25213 and ditch 6006) each comprised four complete handmade pots/bowls



Fig. 6.9. Special deposit with twelve complete pots at Valkenswaard-Waalresegeweg, in the field and during restoration (source: Moerman & Van den Bos 2013, Figs 18, 19; photo: Restaura).

³¹⁷ See Gerritsen 2003, 84, also for further examples.



Fig. 6.10. Deposit with complete handmade pots in waterhole 25213 at Houten-Castellum. (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 19.8).

(Fig. 6.10). One also contained a large amphora sherd, the other a woven basket with henbane. Foundation deposits may also include several vessels, such as a beaker and pot at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde (house 2) and two beakers at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (house 14). In both instances, the excavator suspects that these deposits represent different construction times (building and renovation).

A large Roman-era vessel deposit is known from a pit inside house 103 at Den Haag-Ockenburg II. This third-century deposit contained a sizeable number of vessels (including a pewter plate, a bronze cauldron, three storage jars, jars, plates, beakers, a jug amphora and a cooking pot). One of the storage jars was inverted and the second contained the two beakers and jug. There are marked similarities between this third-century deposit and the older deposits at Valkenswaard and Oosterhout described above, which are many

centuries older. Finally, we can mention the thirty-piece bronze deposit of Nistelrode, although it was deposited some distance from the settlement of Zwarte Molen (Fig. 6.11).³¹⁸ It contained many bronze vessels, mainly associated with the preparation, serving and consumption of wine. They include basins, plates, candlesticks, skillets, sieves, ladles, jugs and buckets.

In the Middle Ages, deposits with globular pots and jugs appear to dominate. Jugs are especially well represented in urban contexts, although several large pots and storage jars were also deposited. In urban houses, the vessels were buried together under the floors or hearth floors of houses at 's-Hertogenbosch-Weversplaats, 's-Hertogenbosch-Snellestraat and 's-Hertogenbosch-Zuidwal and Hardenberg-De Hoge Doelen. In many instances the jugs were buried upside down. Two deposits at Etten (1600–1625) and Heerjansdam (1725–1775) also

³¹⁸ Fontijn & Jansen 2007; see also Halberstma & Jansen 2010.



Fig. 6.11. The Nistelrode bronze deposit (source: Jansen 2007, Fig. 12.1).

stand out. The one at Heerjansdam involved two upright stone jugs, each covered by an inverted, lugged red ware bowl. A pit in a house at Etten contained two Bartmann jugs and an undecorated jug, covered by two majolica dishes, with a red ceramic dish with slip decoration placed on top.

Deposits with fragmented vessels

In the Bronze and Iron Ages, the predominant deposits were of fragmented and often partly burnt vessels, for which it is established or suspected that the material was deposited in a fragmentary state. Frequently, only parts of the vessels were deposited and the fragments cannot be reconstructed into complete forms.

Some of the deposits shed light on the form spectrum of the deposited vessels. A pit at Didam-Loilseveld (Middle or Late Bronze Age) contained more than 6.5 kg of pottery, including parts of at least two large and two smaller pots. A pit in house 9 at Twello-Achter 't Holthuis yielded no fewer than 17 vessels of different sizes. No more than half of any specimen was recovered. And a pit in house 60 at Udenhout-Den Bogerd yielded the partly burnt remains of

nine ceramic pots (Late Bronze Age). This too was a fairly diverse assemblage, containing pots, bowls and a lugged bowl/beaker. The pottery from pit 25024 at Cuijk-De Nielt (Middle Bronze Age) mainly comprised comparatively large barrel or bucket forms, although the pit also contained the foot of a small vessel.

Deposits of fragmented vessels predominate in the Early and Middle Iron Age. They are mainly pit deposits, sometimes inside houses, but often in the yard, on settlement fringes or even outside settlements. Some of these deposits give us an idea of the composition of the pottery assemblage. Large storage jars predominate in all three pits at Helden-Panningen-Stokx. A kind of cup and a number of bowls were found in pit 103, while Deventer-Brinkgreven yielded 15 kg of heavily burnt and sintered sherds from at least six pots and a dish. Pit 750 at Voerendaal-ten Hove yielded at least four large pots/storage jars and a dish. A deposit at Itteren-Emmaus (Early-Middle Iron Age) contained several large roughened (*betsmeten*) pots and a dish (5 MNI). A pit deposit at Assen-Messchenveld II (600–450 BC) shows a similar picture, with eight storage jars and a bowl.

Three thousand sherds from Boekel-Parkweg (Early Iron Age) could be reconstructed into at least 13 different vessels, including three large storage jars, two dishes and various other pots. A pit at Nieuwstadt-Elsenewal contained mainly large storage jars, although sherds of a bowl or dish and a small, spherical pot were also found. To summarise, there appears to have been a clear preference in the Early Iron Age for depositing large pots/storage jars.³¹⁹ These deposits do not appear to represent the average vessel inventory of households. In that sense, they also differ from the composite deposits of Valkenswaard and Oosterhout, among others (see above), where a variety of vessels were deposited. It is not clear how we should understand this preference for large pots/storage jars. They may be linked to the rituals and practices surrounding the abandonment/dismantling of house sites, or to communal events or feasts. In this respect, the term ‘storage jar’ is perhaps somewhat misleading, given that the function cannot be established in the vast majority of cases.

Deposits of large pots also occur in the Middle Iron Age. Pit 1 at Herpen-Wilgendaal (350–200 BC) contained 8.2 kg of pottery sherds from a small number of pots/storage jars. And a sizeable deposit (about 30 kg) near the entrance to house 4039 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (500–375 BC) contained the fragmented remains of at least eight, mainly large pots (form types 23a and 58). Nevertheless, the deposits now appear to have a more varied composition. For example, two deposits at Cuijk-De Nielt (pits 25005 and 26042) contained large storage jars, combined with smaller bowls and pots. A pit deposit (S18) at Middelaar-Kopseweg (450–380 BC) contained bowls, pots, a funnel and a bowl/dish, while pit 4131 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded the remains of large pots/storage jars, as well as many unburnished bowls. A final pit deposit, at Heiloo-Zuiderloo (100 BC–AD 100), contained large, partly burnt fragments of at least six large (cooking) pots, together with two beakers.

We know of two interesting pits from the Early Roman period at Tiel-Medel-De Reth and Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch. The former contained large storage jars and several small beakers. Van Kerckhove suggests that these jars and beakers may have been used for the brewing and consumption of beer at ceremonial

meals and drinking parties.³²⁰ The pit at Borne (S1099) contained some 48 kg of heavily burnt pottery sherds. This appears to be a diverse deposit containing spherical pots, steep-walled pots and thick-walled bowls/tall dishes in a variety of sizes. In addition to pottery, the pit contained fragments of a hearth collar, loom weight fragments and animal bone. This deposit is interpreted as a closing deposit.

Deposits of fragmented pottery play only a limited role in the Middle Ages. Possible special deposits were identified at Someren-Terhofstadlaan (AD 1150–1175) and Eindhoven-Putten (AD 1575–1600). Besides 87 kg of tephrite and burnt loam, ditch 423 at Someren contained sherds of a storage jar in Elmpt fabric, globular pots and other pots of various sizes. Well 5 at Eindhoven contained 685 fragments of red ware pottery, including a variety of forms: milk bowls, tripod cooking pots, plates, porridge bowls, a colander and a storage jar. It should be noted that the excavators do not explicitly interpret either of the deposits as a special deposit.

6.3.3 Vessels: special aspects

Here we discuss several special categories and aspects of vessels found in special deposits: exceptional vessels, miniature vessels, ‘modified’ vessels and vessels with traces of ‘paint’, pigment or blood.

Special vessels

As far as can be ascertained, the vast majority of the vessels appear to be ‘ordinary’ domestic pottery that would have formed part of the household inventory. In some cases, however, special pieces were deposited.

A first notable item is a bronze ‘skillet’ from a pit at Castricum-Oosterbuurt. This is a complete bronze object that was probably a century old at the time of deposition. Skilletts had many uses, including as cooking, eating and drinking utensils, as well as for ladling and mixing wine.³²¹ Another vessel that can be associated with wine consumption is a bronze basin, which was found together with a ladle in well 9 at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani. Both may have been used to filter wine (together with a wine sieve that was not recovered). We should also mention the extensive bronze deposit from

³¹⁹ See also the deposits from the Early Iron Age at Nijmegen-Lent described by Van den Broeke. Van den Broeke 2002a, 46–49.

³²⁰ Van Kerckhove 2019, 277, with a reference to Nieuwhof 2015, 151.

³²¹ Koster 2007, 440.



Fig. 6.12. A late medieval pot with stamped text 'Ave Mari Ave Maria', deposited beneath wall foundations of a house at Amsterdam-Warmoesstraat (source: Monumenten en Archeologie, Gemeente Amsterdam).

Nistelrode, which comprised a thirty-piece set of table and drinking ware, including skillets, ladles and basins.³²²

From earlier periods we also know of special vessels that can be associated with the (communal) consumption of wine. First is an enormous pot from the residual channel of Houten-Castellum, found near the ritual place located there. The pot was originally at least 85 cm high and had a capacity of about one hundred litres. Van den Broeke points out that the shape and size are similar to mixing vessels for wine or drinking vessels known from northern France (Middle Iron Age). This large pot can probably be associated with communal eating and drinking occasions, like those that may have occurred in the context of the ritual place.³²³ A second special piece is a situla-shaped pot with an attached cup (or cups) from an outbuilding in Ittervoort-Santfort (Early Iron Age). This special vessel can also be associated with wine consumption.³²⁴ The features of a second outbuilding also yielded a lobed or parasol dish, which Van den Broeke does not consider to be part of the normal household inventory.³²⁵

Some deposits provide indications that specially decorated vessels were selected for deposition. This could be the case for an exceptionally decorated pot that was placed upside down in a pit at Rhenen-Remmerden-Rotonde N225 (Late Iron Age) (Fig. 6.6). It is a large, biconical pot with rich Kalenderberg decoration in a motif that could represent a red

deer. We can also mention a fully decorated pot from a central posthole in a Late Bronze Age house at Huissen-Agropark II and a late medieval pot with the punched text 'Ave Mari Ave Maria' at Amsterdam-Warmoesstraat (Fig. 6.12). We can assume that the latter pot had a special significance or was attributed a special, possibly apotropaic power. There are also pots with reddish-brown traces that will be discussed in greater detail below.

At some possible ritual places, specific types of pottery that differed from the conventional domestic pottery appear to have been deliberately selected. More than 500 sherds of a specific type of ceramic bottle (Holwerda 25) were concentrated around one of the temples behind the villa of Voerendaal. A specific pottery type appears to have been selected for the rituals performed there. Inscriptions on some of the vessels suggest that they are votive offerings. The pottery from the ritual places at Tiel-Oude Tielseweg and Leidschendam-Leeuwenbergh also seems to involve spectrums that differ from the ordinary settlement spectrum. Most of the pottery types found at the ritual place in Tiel do not occur in the settlement.³²⁶

Miniature vessels

Miniature vessels are a fairly common feature of special deposits from the Neolithic through to the Middle Ages. The earliest miniature pot in our dataset was found in a posthole of a palisade (fence) at Den Haag-De Wateringse

³²² Koster 2007.

³²³ Van den Broeke 2017, 163–164.

³²⁴ Drenth *et al.* 2007; Arnoldussen 2011;

Van den Broeke 2015, 93.

³²⁵ Van den Broeke 2015, 86–87.

³²⁶ Verhelst 2001, 31.



Fig. 6.13. Pinch pot with traces of burning and wear on the rim, from the residual channel at Houten-Castellum (source: Sinke 2017, Fig. 7.50).

Binnentuinen (2850–2600 BC). The miniature cup and pot from Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 289–293 (1000–800 BC) were found in a ditch that seems to have functioned as a boundary demarcation. Other miniature pots were found in ditches at Schagen-N241 (Late Iron Age) and Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (AD 70–100). The Schagen deposit contained a miniature pot into which a large cup sherd had been inserted, together with a baking plate fragment. The Den Haag deposit included a handmade miniature pot in the yard ditch of house 121.

Miniature pots are also sometimes found in deposits containing fragmented material. A miniature Henkeltasse was found in a closing deposit (with partly burnt pottery, stones and quernstone fragments) in a waterhole at Bennekom-Boerhaavelaan/Streekziekenhuis (Late Bronze Age). A similar deposit in a waterhole at Breda-Steenakker (900–400 BC) contained – besides a miniature pot – 25 kg of largely burnt pottery (50 MNI), whetstone fragments, loom weights, charcoal and burnt loam. A pit deposit at Goirle-Huzarenwei (Early Iron Age) involved many loom weights (including nine complete specimens), one or more dishes (*haakrandschalen*, with perforations) and a miniature bowl. Other pit deposits with miniature pots are known from Uitgeest-Waldijk II (AD 100–200), Den Haag-Wijndaelerplantsoen (250–100 BC), Naaldwijk-Trade Parc Westland Mars (AD 100–200), and Heiloo-Stationsplein (AD 0–300). The large

quantity of pottery (14 MNI) in the Uitgeest pit included vessels with red-brown-black traces (see below). The pits at Den Haag and Heiloo yielded combinations of a large and a miniature pot, in the first instance combined with a spindle whorl and burnt grain. For the Naaldwijk deposit, the pit showed traces of fire. From the Middle Ages we know of a pit deposit with a miniature pot in white Maasland ware and two wooden objects at Diemen-Plangebied Noordflank Centrum (AD 1125–1300).

In several cases, miniature pots are associated with houses. Two miniature pots were found at the bottom of a pit inside house 2 at Wolder-Cannerberg: one upright, the other inverted.³²⁷ Other house deposits are known from Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan and Tiel-Medel-De Reth. Miniature pots were found in two houses at the former site. These were a small handmade pot containing grape seeds in the northwestern corner of house 108 and a similar pot in the northwestern corner of house 123. At house 8002 in Tiel-Medel-De Reth, a miniature pot was part of a composite deposit found near the entrance.

Miniature vessels were found in the residual channel at Houten-Castellum (Middle Iron Age), partly associated with the ritual place located there (Middle Iron Age). Interestingly, a pinch pot associated with this ritual place was secondarily heated and shows signs of wear on the outside rim (Fig. 6.13).³²⁸ A burnished miniature beaker

³²⁷ Similar deposits with larger pots were also found at other sites, such as pit 95 at Breda-Huifakker (400–200 BC). A bowl and a tripartite pot were stacked in the pit, one upright, the other inverted.

³²⁸ Sinke 2017, 401.

was found right in the corner of the ritual enclosure.³²⁹ In all likelihood, these items were used in the rituals performed at this site.

Another notable deposit of a miniature vessel is documented in the upper fill of well 13 (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age) at Breda-Huifakker. A miniature amphora (17 cm) was deposited in this prehistoric well much later – the Roman period. The old well was probably still visible as a depression in the landscape, perhaps marked by different vegetation. A final miniature concerns a bronze bucket that was found together with various other metal objects in the sunken byre of house 5 at Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid.

The occurrence of miniature vessels in special deposits is interesting. These items are likely to have had a special significance and/or function, as evidenced by their occurrence outside the context of house and yard. Miniatures are known from a range of ritual contexts, including sanctuaries at Buchten, Bergen op Zoom, Aiseau-Presles (Belgium) and Pommern-Martberg (Germany), as well as rivers.³³⁰ At Buchten and Bergen op Zoom, the miniatures were amphorae. They can be regarded as objects made specially for ritual use.³³¹ They probably served as containers for contents, possibly oil or wine, that were offered as sacrifices and then deposited near the sanctuary. Nieuwhof also suggests that miniature pots may have been used to offer small quantities of food (fat or butter) or drink.³³²

Vessels with traces of ‘paint’, pigment or blood

Unusual types of vessels are those featuring red-brown-black stripes, ‘dots’ or runs (Fig. 6.14). Traces of this kind are variously interpreted in the literature as ‘paint’, ‘painting’, ‘pigment’ and ‘blood’, and the pottery is sometimes referred to as ‘blood pots’. These traces usually occur on the vessel exterior, but sometimes on the interior as well.³³³ The stripes and dots occasionally seem to have been deliberately applied, although this cannot be established with certainty. The drips run down from the rim of the pot, but sometimes ‘rise’ from the base.³³⁴ In this latter case, the pots must have been positioned upside down when the ‘paint’ was applied (such as at Marssum-It Aldlân, Wierum and Groningen-Paddepoel).³³⁵

Some of the ‘paint’ traces have been subjected to chemical analysis, which has

revealed that the substance is blood, probably from an animal. Abbink concludes that the blood was mixed with an inorganic substance.³³⁶

At Tiel-Medel-De Reth, the blood appears to have been mixed with animal fat and in one case with vegetable fat.³³⁷ An interpretation as animal blood is also suggested for ‘paint’ traces on pots at Utrecht-De Uithof-Hoofddijk, Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station and Ellewoutsdijk. For Marssum-It Aldlân, however, the excavator refers to a highly ferrous liquid, but it is not clear whether this is based on chemical analysis.

Pottery bearing these traces occurs predominantly in the central, northern and western Netherlands. For the northern part of the Netherlands, we know of examples from Englum, Groningen (Paddepoel), Wierum, Marssum, Deventer, Schagen and Uitgeest. Examples in the river area come from Houten-Hofstad Diepriool, Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station, Utrecht-Uithof-Hoofddijk, Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve, Tiel-Medel-De Reth, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and Cuijk-De Nielt. The following sites are known for the western coastal region: Schagen, Den Haag-Uithofslaan, Grijpskerke-Kievitshoekweg and Ellewoutsdijk.

The earliest example is a small bowl found in a well at Deventer-Colmschate-Holterweg and dating to the Early Iron Age. The excavator reports traces of paint or animal or human blood on the bowl. Although most examples come from the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period, they continue to occur later in the Roman period, as attested by finds from Englum, Den Haag and Uitgeest. The youngest example with ‘blood decoration’ concerns a handmade pot from a fourth-century pit at Cuijk-De Nielt.

For some Early Roman pots with reddish-brown traces in the river area, there may be a link to the northern coastal region. Deposits at Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve and Tiel-Medel-De Reth contain pottery assemblages with distinct ‘Frisian’ characteristics. For the De Reth site, it is explicitly suggested that newcomers from the north settled there in the final decades before the beginning of our era.³³⁸ The ‘blood traces’ on the pots may therefore be associated with practices that the settlers brought with them from the north. Another, younger example is interesting in this context. Sherds with ‘paint traces’ were found in an early second-century yard in the settlement of Blerick-Heierhoeve. Based in part on the divergent house plan, Van den Broeke

³²⁹ Boreel & Habermehl 2017, 834.

³³⁰ Derks & De Fraiture 2015; Paridaens 2012, 2013; Merrifield 1987, 112–115.

³³¹ Derks & De Fraiture 2015, 179.

³³² Nieuwhof 2015, 176.

³³³ As established at Tiel-Medel-De Reth; see Van Kerckhove 2019, 296–301.

³³⁴ Pots with runs that rise from the base are known, for example, from Marssum-It Aldlân, Wierum and Groningen-Paddepoel. For the pottery from the latter two sites, see Nieuwhof 2015, 145.

³³⁵ For the pottery from the latter two sites, see Nieuwhof 2015, 145.

³³⁶ Abbink 1999, 313.

³³⁷ Oudemans 2019, 717.

³³⁸ See Habermehl *et al.* 2019; Habermehl *et al.* in press.

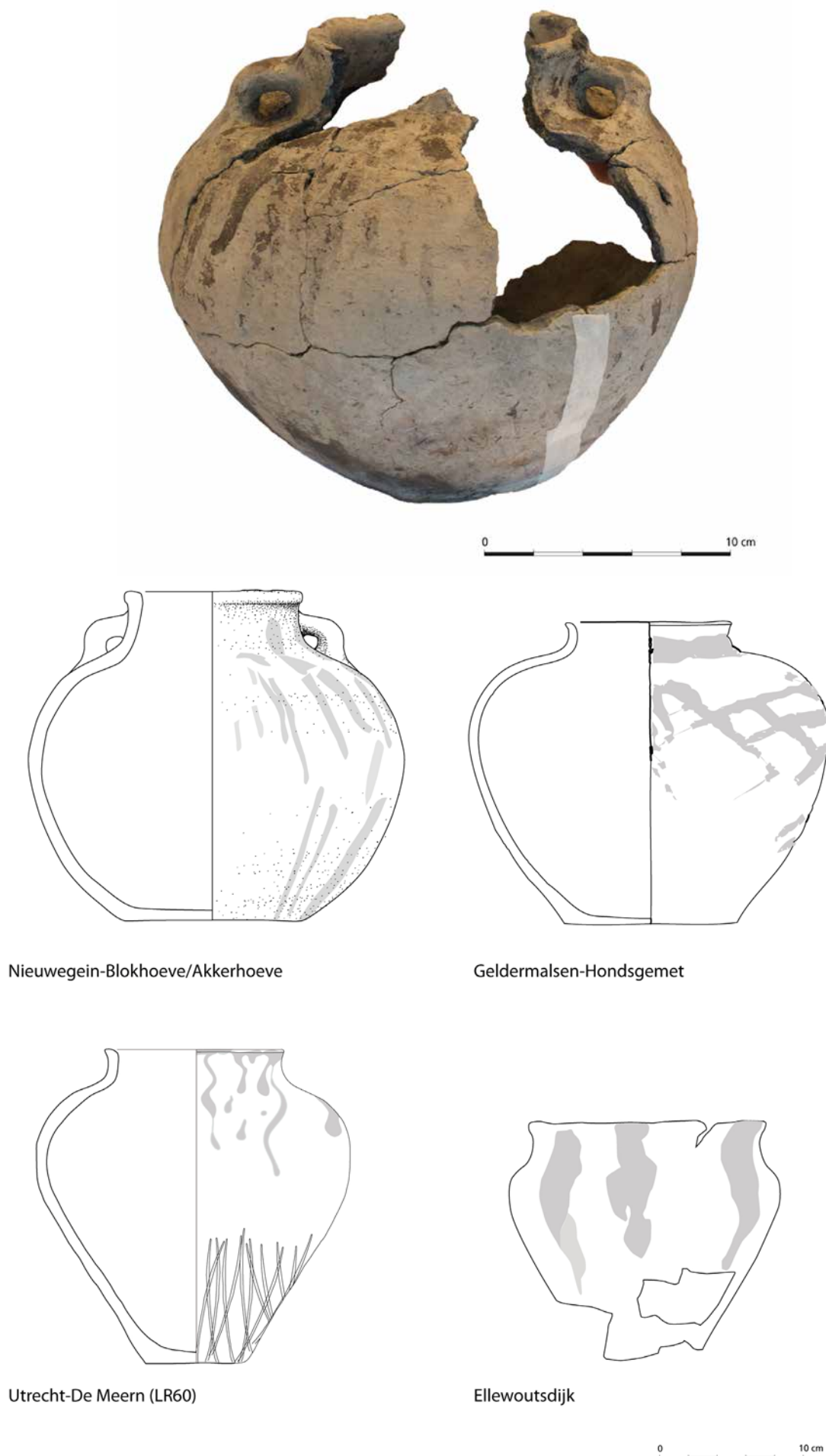


Fig. 6.14. Photo of a pot with reddish-brown 'traces of blood' from Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve and examples from other sites (source: Van Mousch & Leenders 2019, Figs 5.16–5.17).

interprets the yard as the home of a Frisian migrant family.³³⁹

Regarding contexts, we note that pottery featuring these reddish-brown traces are often found in wet contexts, especially in (residual) channels in the river area. Such pots are known from residual channels at Houten-Hofstad Diepriool, Utrecht-Uithof-Hoofddijk, Tiel-Medel-De Reth, Utrecht De Meern-HOV-station and Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. In Nieuwegein and Uitgeest, the pottery comes from waterholes, in Deventer from a well and in Marssum from a ditch. Although preservation conditions may play a role here, it is also possible that wet contexts were specifically selected for the deposition of this type of pot.

Pots featuring 'painting' are sometimes part of large assemblages. A waterhole at Uitgeest-Waldijk II contained the remains of 14 ceramic pots, while deposits in residual channels at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station and Tiel-Medel-De Reth yielded sizeable quantities of pottery. In the case of Utrecht, there are indications of a communal meal, as is the case with the very extensive pit deposit at Grijskerke-Kievitshoekweg. The 'painted' pottery from the channel at Utrecht-Uithof-Hoofddijk is associated with two complete pots and three wooden objects, one of which has anthropomorphic features and can perhaps be interpreted as an 'idol'.

Abbink suggests that 'paint' was deliberately applied to pots intended for ritual use on special occasions,³⁴⁰ and that the 'painting' took place when the pots were withdrawn from normal everyday use. This interpretation is supported by

the fact that the 'paint' is sometimes visibly applied over damage to the pot surface.

Nieuwhof also suggests that these 'painted' pots may have been used in specific rituals,³⁴¹ perhaps relating to animal sacrifices.³⁴²

Although this phenomenon requires further study, animal blood does seem to have played a part in ritual practices. These pots may have been used to collect animal blood or have played some other role in the slaughter of animals. The fact that, in some instances at least, the blood was mixed with fat or an inorganic substance could suggest the conscious 'preparation' of a liquid, which may have been consumed. As a parallel, we can point to the drinking of cattle blood among the African Masai on special occasions such as births and marriages.³⁴³

Modified vessels

Vessels found in special deposits can be modified in different ways.³⁴⁴ This is mainly perforated vessels, ceramic base discs, pots from which the base has been removed and the broken-off necks of jugs and amphorae.

Perforated vessels

Examples of pots with perforated bases were found in Iron Age pits at Arnhem-Hoogstedelaan-Klingelbeekseweg (a pot with two holes in the bottom) and Grijskerke-Kievitshoek (several pots with perforated bases). A bowl with holes in the bottom was also found near the entrance to a house at Sterksel-Weiakkers/Kanhoeve II (Middle-Late Iron Age) and a pot with a perforated bottom comes from a posthole of a house at

³³⁹ Van den Broeke 2018.

³⁴⁰ Abbink 1999, 313.

³⁴¹ Nieuwhof 2015, 146.

³⁴² Nieuwhof 2015, 290.

³⁴³ Arhem 1989.

³⁴⁴ Van Kerckhove 2019, 269.



Fig. 6.15. Pottery with deliberately perforated bases from Voorburg-Arentsburg (source: Van Kerckhove 2014, Fig. II-1.197).

Beek-Waterstraat (Early–Middle Roman period). A sizeable quantity of pottery with perforated bottoms is documented from a channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg (Fig. 6.15) and a beaker with a perforated wall comes from a well at the same site. There are additional indications of special objects and deposition practices for both these latter contexts. Handmade pots with perforated bottoms were also found in the notable special deposit at Oldehove-Englum-Leege Wier (including eight human skulls).³⁴⁵ Other perforated vessels – colanders – were deposited in a central posthole of house 27 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (a foundation deposit) and a granary posthole at Geldermalsen Hondsgemet (a closing deposit).

Perforated pottery is interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, the perforations could relate to the primary functional use of the vessels, for example as a sieve. On the other hand, they could be linked to ritual practices. Nieuwhof, for example, interprets the perforated pots from Oldehove as relating to ancestral sacrifices. The pots may have been used to offer liquids, which could drain into the soil through the perforated base. Nieuwhof suggests a possible belief that the ancestors lived underground.³⁴⁶ Other authors point to perforations as a form of ritual destruction, rendering the pots unusable and removing them from the sphere of everyday life.³⁴⁷ Van Kerckhove points out that perforated pottery is also known from burial fields in Germania Inferior, Gallia Belgica and Britannia.³⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that during the Roman period some pottery appears to have been deliberately ‘disabled’ while still in the production workshop. ‘It seems that the potter used a hammer to punch a small hole in the shoulder or bottom of the pot to make it unusable,’ suggests Van Kerckhove.³⁴⁹ This pottery may have been specially produced for ritual use.³⁵⁰

Ceramic base discs

Many of the ceramic base discs are complete, round discs, but some are halved or quartered. Base discs are definitely known to occur from the Early Iron Age onwards.³⁵¹ The deposition of base discs is fairly well documented at a number of inventoried sites, such as Houten-Castellum, Cuijk-De Nielt and Voorburg-Arentsburg.

At least 30 such discs were collected from different fills of the channel at Houten-Castellum.³⁵²

Associated objects and the proximity of ritual place 19001 suggest that these discs were also related to special practices.³⁵³ Another base disc comes from a depression at Cuijk-De Nielt, in this case in association with a wine sieve, a bronze key, a spearhead, an arrowhead and a baseless pot.³⁵⁴

Two similar deposits with base discs are known from Early Iron Age houses at De Zilk-Sportterrein and Elst-Vierslag. At the former site, this involved a completely burnt base disc in a posthole of house 4. At the latter site it also involved a burnt base disc at the bottom of a posthole of a house. The fact that the fracture surfaces are also burnt suggests that the disc was placed deliberately, ending up in the fire. It is probably a closing deposit.

Ceramic base discs are also known from wheel-thrown pottery from the Roman period. They are the small bases of painted beakers. These ceramic discs are considerably smaller and are often interpreted as playing discs.³⁵⁵ Here we can mention two ceramic base discs from Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder. One is the base disc of a smooth jug from a waterhole (514) and the other a base fragment of a tazza or incense dish from a ditch.

Some deposits contain ‘ceramic discs’ that are not base discs, but which come from other parts of ceramic vessels.³⁵⁶ Examples of ceramic discs in deposits are known, for example, from a pit inside house 310 at Best-Aarle. This deposit consisted of a layer of burnt grain, the sherds of four pots and a round ceramic disc. A deposit near the entrance to house 8002 at Tiel-Medel-De Reth contained four ceramic discs, a miniature pot, two complete pots, a complete spoon-bow fibula, fragments of two sling bullets and a triangular loom weight.

The function of ceramic discs is difficult to establish with certainty. Some, even if deliberately included as part of special deposits, could be playing discs. This explanation appears unlikely for the larger base discs from the residual channel at Houten and the houses described above. These discs may have been assigned a symbolic significance. For the burnt base disc from Elst-Vierslag, Van den Broeke suggests that the colour and shape may have evoked an association with the sun or moon.³⁵⁷

³⁴⁵ Nieuwhof 2015, 141.

³⁴⁶ Nieuwhof 2015, 156.

³⁴⁷ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 466. A similar phenomenon involving the perforation of vessels for deposition is also known with respect to the bronze cauldrons from the Drenthe bogs (Van Vilsteren 1998). For the Middle Ages and Modern Period, Van der Sanden points to the perforation of objects used in counter-magic (Van der Sanden 2004, 197). Such objects will have become ‘ritually charged’ through these rituals and would therefore have needed to be rendered harmless.

³⁴⁸ Van Kerckhove 2014, 170.

³⁴⁹ Van Kerckhove 2014, 406, with reference to oral communications by M. Gechter and C. Höpken.

³⁵⁰ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 186.

³⁵¹ Van Kerckhove 2017, 370. For the secondary use of pottery sherds, see also Van den Broeke 2005a, 609, with reference to Van Heeringen 1992.

³⁵² Sinke 2017, 405.

³⁵³ Sinke 2017, 405.

³⁵⁴ Habermehl & Van Renswoude 2017, 895.

³⁵⁵ See, for example, Haalebos 1967, 24; Van Kerckhove 2009, 199.

³⁵⁶ These discs are not perforated and are often referred to as ‘playing discs’. Perforated ceramic discs can probably be interpreted as spindle whorls (Van den Broeke 2005a, 614; Haalebos 1967, 24; Van Kerckhove 2009, 199).

³⁵⁷ Van den Broeke 2015, 84–85.

Baseless pots

Another category of ‘modified’ vessels is that of baseless pots. A complete ceramic bowl found in a well at Voorburg-Arentsburg appears to have had the bottom deliberately knocked out.³⁵⁸ A similar phenomenon is known from well ROM 6 (AD 250–400) at Naaldwijk-Hollandcollege, where the bottom of a fairly small storage jar has been deliberately removed. A bowl without a bottom (Middle Iron Age) is known from the residual channel at Houten-Castellum and the above-mentioned depression at Cuijk-De Nielt contained a complete baseless pot with a base disc. Interestingly, all these instances involve wet contexts. It is not clear how we should interpret these ‘baseless’ pots. Once again, there may have been a ritual whereby pots were rendered unusable. On the other hand, baseless pots may have fulfilled a special function in the sacrifice process.

Broken-off necks

For broken-off necks, we can point to two deposits from waterholes at Houten-Castellum. The deposit in waterhole 25171 contained the broken-off neck of a smooth ware jug and a special iron signet ring. The deposit in waterhole 25217 contained two complete necks of a jug or jug amphora, a bronze military buckle and a bronze coin. The necks are broken off at the transition from the shoulder. We can also mention a pointy-nosed Bartmann jug with the neck broken off. This neckless jug was deposited beneath the foundation of a house at Bergen op Zoom-Cauwenborgh (AD 1575–1600).

6.4 Deposits with animal remains

Maaïke Groot & Diederick Habermehl

6.4.1 Introduction

This section discusses special deposits containing animal remains. These include both composite deposits made up partly of animal remains and deposits consisting solely of animal remains, including animal burials. Although common, such deposits are still not well understood. For example, while animal burials were always deliberate and intentional, this does not necessarily mean that they were of

a ritual nature.³⁵⁹ Many excavators are reluctant to interpret animal remains as special deposits.

Below, we will first raise some methodological issues relating to the study design and data analysis. This is followed by a general overview of deposits containing animal remains, focusing on the distribution by context, animal species and period. This in turn is followed by an analysis of the three categories of deposits: (partial) skeletons, skulls and loose bone material. Again, context, animal species and period are the key organising variables. The section concludes with a closer discussion of various aspects of interest.

6.4.2 Methodological issues

The inventory and analysis of depositions with animal remains raises some methodological issues. First, it is important to emphasise that because animal remains have traditionally been so readily interpreted as (slaughter) waste or ‘regular’ burials, it is difficult to find them as special deposits. Many excavators and specialists are reluctant to label deposits with animal remains as special deposits. However, we can observe distinct differences among the different researchers, as well as the different periods.³⁶⁰ Whereas some researchers, in their study and description of animal remains, pay specific, detailed attention to noticeable patterns and special deposition practices, others primarily describe and interpret these remains – often very summarily – as ‘functional’. The danger of this uneven focus is that it creates a research bias in the dataset.

Following on from this first point, we should note that distinguishing between ‘special’ and ‘functional’ is not without its problems. Deposits of (partial) skeletons may primarily contain slaughter waste (head and feet), but also skin. In addition, slaughter waste may come from a ritually slaughtered animal that was consumed during a communal (ritual) meal or feast. Animal burials may involve animals that died of disease and whose carcasses therefore had to be removed, as well as special animals that were buried with care, had a magical function, or were sacrificed whole. In addition, detritus from craft and industry, such as concentrations of horn cores or foot

³⁵⁸ Van Kerckhove 2014, 457.

³⁵⁹ For a discussion on this issue, Lauwerier *et al.* 1999; Groot 2008, Chapter 3; Thilderkvist 2013; Huijbers 2007, 317–318; Van der Jagt & Esser 2022.

³⁶⁰ In this regard, it is also interesting to refer to Morris’ study (Morris 2012). Regarding the interpretation of associated bone groups (ABG; a neutral term used in the United Kingdom for groups of associated bone), Morris points to the fact that prehistoric deposits are more likely to be labelled ‘ritual’ than historical ones. Morris attributes this to our preconceived notions about the different periods.

elements, also bears similarities to special deposits.³⁶¹ The context, composition (the presence or absence of certain elements), arrangement (signs that elements have been manipulated) and associations with other objects are key when interpreting deposits.³⁶²

A last point relates to the availability and publication of data in research reports. It is often difficult to distil sufficient data about animal remains from these reports. Frequently, information about the context, location, species determination (especially for 'loose bone'), degree of burning, presence or absence of traces of slaughter and the representation of bone elements is either limited or incomplete. A further complicating factor is the interpretation of deposits with animal remains. We have attempted here to compile a broad, though not exhaustive inventory of deposits with animal remains. In principle, (complete) animal burials are treated as special deposits. However, a decision was made not to include in the dataset some (partial) skeletons for which there was an inadequate description. Altogether, the subdataset presents a broad picture that is not necessarily an accurate reflection of historical reality.

6.4.3 Data analysis

Prior to the analysis, Maaïke Groot cleaned up the dataset and made some organisational adjustments, with the primary aim of making it quantifiable.

Deposits with several animal species and/or categories often took up several lines in the original dataset. Where possible, these duplications were removed in the clean-up and the data was condensed into one line. Each line was then assigned a deposit number. This was based on the assumption that animal remains that seem

to have ended up in the same feature at the same time should be regarded as a single deposition. Deposits in ditches in particular can be spatially differentiated and, if this is the case, they are viewed as separate depositions. Some lines in the table of (partial) skeletons describe several deposits, as in the case of Lent-Zone H and Eelde-Groote Veen. Because there was limited information about these (partial) skeletons, we decided not to put them in separate lines during the data cleaning process. As a result, the total number of deposits with (partial) skeletons is greater than the number of lines in the table. However, (partial) skeletons were counted separately in the quantitative analysis (by period, category and animal species).

For the purpose of describing and analysing the deposits, three categories were identified to structure the dataset: skulls, (partial) skeletons and loose bone. As a consequence, one deposit can cover several categories (e.g. a deposit containing a (partial) skeleton and a loose, unassociated skull), making the total number of deposits broken down into categories higher than the total number of deposits. It should also be noted that broader criteria were used to inventory (partial) skeletons than other categories. For example, animal burials in settlement contexts are included in the inventory even if they were not interpreted as 'ritual'. This is because the burial of (complete) animals is by definition a non-everyday activity and in that sense is by definition special. There is still a good deal of discussion about how to interpret animal burials, with widely differing views and opinions.³⁶³ Skulls are only included if a 'special deposit' may have been involved, often judging by the context or association with other objects. It should be noted that excavators seldom specifically designate skulls as 'special deposits'. Loose bone is also only included if there are indications of a possible special deposit (e.g. based on quantity, context or association with other finds).

³⁶¹ The waste from processing horn, bone and leather is fairly well known, making it easier to distinguish between 'functional' and 'special' deposits.

³⁶² See the discussion in, for example, Lauwerier *et al.* 1999; Groot 2008.

³⁶³ However, recent decades have seen a growing interest in the meaning of animal burials and deposits containing partial skeletons. See, for example, Lauwerier *et al.* 1999; Lauwerier 2004; Groot 2008, 2012; Thilderkvist 2013; Prummel & De Vries 2020; Van der Jagt & Esser 2022.

Table 6.7. Overview of inventoried special deposits with animal remains.

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Arnhem-De Laar		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Arnhem-Schuytgraaf site 7		1		pit	pit	cattle	-800	450
Arnhem-Schuytgraaf site 7		1		animal burial	pit	horse	-19	450
Arnhem-Schuytgraaf site 7		1		animal burial	pit	dog	70	270
Assum-Waldijk/Assummervaart		1	1	well	well	chicken	250	400
Barneveld-Harselaar-zuid fase 1A		1		animal burial	pit	pig	1050	1300
Barneveld-Harselaar-zuid fase 1A		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1050	1300
Beegden-Eerdweg 4			1	pit	pit	various	425	475
Bemmel-Plakse Wei		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1600	1900
Bemmel-Plakse Wie		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Best-Aarle			1	waterhole	waterhole	cattle	1075	1125
Beuningen-Molenstraat		1		animal burial	pit	horse	100	300
Beuningen-Molenstraat		1		animal burial	pit	dog	100	300
Borger-Daalkampen II-Klokbeker			1	house	pit	unknown	-250	-19
Borger-N34			1	house	pit	unknown	-400	-250
Borgharen-Daalderveld-pasestraat		1		animal burial	pit	dog	-1800	1000
Borgharen-Daalderveld-pasestraat		1		animal burial	pit	dog	1500	2000
Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch			1	pit	pit	unknown	-19	70
Boxmeer-Sterckwijck			1	house	posthole	various	-500	-250
Boxtel-Korenmolen	1			pit	pit	cattle	-19	270
Breda-De Beijerd		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1300	1400
Breda-De Beijerd		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1350	1450
Breda-Moskes			1	house	pit	unknown	-1100	-800
Bunnik-Rietsloot		1		depression	depression	horse	-250	70
Bunnik-Rietsloot		1		pit	pit	pig	1250	1500
Castricum-De Boogaert		1		ditch	ditch	sheep/goat	0	300
Castricum-De Boogaert		1		ditch	ditch	horse	0	300
Castricum-De Boogaert		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	100	300
Castricum-Oosterbuurt		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	270
Castricum-Oosterbuurt		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	270
Castricum-Oosterbuurt	1			ditch	ditch	horse	100	200
Castricum-Oosterbuurt		1		animal burial	pit	dog	100	225
Colmschate-Siemelinksweg		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Colmschate-Siemelinksweg		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Colmschate-Siemelinksweg		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Colmschate-Siemelinksweg		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Colmschate-Siemelinksweg		1		animal burial	pit	sheep/goat	0	0
Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen		1		house	animal burial	cattle	200	300
Culemborg-Hoge Prijs			1	granary	posthole	unknown	-1100	-19
Culemborg-Hoge Prijs		1		ditch	ditch	pig	-800	-500
Culemborg-Hoge Prijs			1	pit	pit	red deer	-800	-500
Culemborg-Hoge Prijs			1	granary	posthole	unknown	-800	-500
Culemborg-Lokkershoek		1		pit	pit	sheep/goat	0	0
Culemborg-Lokkershoek		1		well	well	various	0	0
Culemborg-Prijsseweg, Goilberdingen		1		pit	pit	cattle	-800	70
Delft-Harnaschpolder		1		pit	pit	dog	100	200
Delft-Voordijkshoornsepolder	1	1		pit	pit	horse	1075	1150

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Den Bosch-Orthenstraat 41		1		house	stone wall	cat	1500	1900
Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan		1		ditch	ditch	cattle and horse	0	0
Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan		1		ditch	ditch	horse	50	100
Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan		1		house	pit	cattle	100	130
Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan			1	house	pit	various	100	130
Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan		1		ditch	ditch	sheep, horse, dog	125	200
Den Haag-Ockenburg II			1	house	pit	red deer	200	300
Den Haag-Ypenburg-Locatie 4		1		animal burial	pit	dog	-4200	-2850
Den Haag-Ypenburg-Locatie 4		1		animal burial	pit	dog	-4200	-2850
Den Haag-Zevenwoudenlaan		1		animal burial	pit	dog	0	0
Den Haag-Zevenwoudenlaan		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Den Haag-Zevenwoudenlaan	1			ditch	pit	horse	100	200
Den Haag-Zevenwoudenlaan	1			ditch	ditch	pig	100	200
Diemen-Plangebied Noordflank Centrum		1		animal burial	pit	goose	1125	1300
Doetinchen-Wijnbergen		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	500	1500
Dordrecht-Overkampweg, Rondweg (N3)				animal burial	ditch	cattle	0	0
Dordrecht-Overkampweg, Rondweg (N3)				animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Dordrecht-Overkampweg, Rondweg (N3)		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1500
Drechterland-Houtpolder		1		well	well	elk	-1800	-1100
Druuten-Klepperheide		1		house	animal burial	horse	30	60
Druuten-Klepperheide		1		house	pit	horse	50	100
Eelde-Groote Veen		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Eelde-Groote Veen		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Eelde-Groote Veen		17		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Eersel-Kerkebogten		1		house	pit	horse	-500	-19
Eersel-Kerkebogten	1			house	posthole	horse	1000	1250
Eersel-Kerkebogten	1			house	posthole	cattle	1050	1125
Eersel-Kerkebogten		1		house	pit	cattle	1050	1125
Eersel-Kerkebogten		1		house	pit	cattle	1050	1125
Eersel-Kerkebogten	1			house	pit	cattle	1050	1125
Eersel-Kerkebogten	1			outbuilding	pit	cattle	1100	1150
Eersel-Kerkebogten		1		house	animal burial	cattle	1100	1175
Eersel-Kerkebogten		1		house	animal burial	cattle	1150	1200
Ellewoutsdijk			1	house	pit	various	80	120
Elst-De Merm		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1740	1940
Elst-Park Lingezege, de linten		1		ditch	ditch	pig	-800	450
Eme-Laaksche veld	1			pit	pit	horse	275	425
Enkhuizen-Haling 13		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13		1		house ditch	house ditch	cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13		1		house ditch	house ditch	cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13			1	animal burial	pit	cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13			1	animal burial	ditch	sheep/goat	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13	1			pit	pit	cattle, pig, goat	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13	1			ditch	ditch	cattle, dog, sheep	-1800	-800

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Enkhuizen-Haling 13	1			pit	pit	dog	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13			1	house ditch	house ditch	cattle	-1800	-800
Enkhuizen-Haling 13			1	pit	pit	various	-1800	-800
Enter-Middenplein			1	outbuilding	posthole	cattle	1000	1500
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			(residual) channel	channel layer	cattle	-120	-50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			(residual) channel	channel layer	dog	-120	-50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		ditch	ditch	horse	-120	-50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	horse	-120	-50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	ditch	cattle	-50	50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	posthole	sheep/goat	-50	50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			(residual) channel	channel layer	pig	-50	50
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		pit	pit	cattle	0	0
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		well	waterhole	dog	0	0
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	horse	50	120
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1	1		well	waterhole	horse, ram, cattle	100	200
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	horse	120	150
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	cattle	120	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		waterhole	waterhole	horse	150	200
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	pit	horse	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	sheep	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		ditch	ditch	dog	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		ditch	channel layer	dog	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet			1	animal burial	pit	cattle, horse	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	pit	horse	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	ditch	cattle	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	pig	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		well	well	horse	150	270
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		well	waterhole	dog	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	horse	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			ditch	ditch	horse	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			animal burial	ditch	cattle	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		animal burial	ditch	cattle	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet	1			waterhole	waterhole	cattle	270	350
Geldermalsen-dogsgemet		1		ditch	ditch	pig	300	350
Grijpskerke-Kievitshoekweg		1	1	pit	pit	dog, cattle, sheep	-200	-150
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1000	1400

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cat	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	dog	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	sheep	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	sheep	1000	1400
Groningen-De Held III		1		animal burial	pit	dog	1000	1400
Groningen-De Linie			1	waterhole	waterhole	various	-500	-250
Gronsveld-Duijsterstraat			1	pit	pit	various	-700	-500
Grootebroek-Schaperstraat	1	1		house	house ditch	cattle	-1100	-800
Harderwijk-Academiestraat 3		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1400	1600
Harderwijk-Academiestraat 3		1		animal burial	pit	dog	1700	1900
Hardinxveld-Giessendam-De Bruin			1	pit	pit	red deer	-5500	-4450
Heiloo-Hoogeweg, UWP 5	1			ditch	ditch	horse	450	750
Heiloo-Hoogeweg, UWP 5	1			pit	pit	horse	500	900
Heiloo-Stationsplein-De Blinken		1		(out)building	beneath stone wall	cattle	1300	1400
Hemelum-Sint-Nicolaasklooster		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1200	1400
Heteren-Uilenburg		1		well	well	horse	-19	450
Heteren-Uilenburg		1		pit	pit	dog	-19	450
Heteren-Uilenburg		1		ditch	ditch	horse	0	100
Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg		1		animal burial	ditch	dog	-2000	-800
Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg		1		animal burial	ditch	dog	-2000	-800
Hoogkarspel-Streekweg 269-275		1		animal burial	ditch	cattle	1275	1325
Houten-Castellum	1			pit/ritual enclosure	pit	red deer	-500	-250
Houten-Castellum		1		pit/ritual enclosure	pit	sheep/goat	-500	-250
Houten-Castellum		1		(residual) channel	channel layer	pig	-450	-400
Houten-Castellum			1	pit	pit	horse	0	0
Houten-Castellum		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	100
Houten-Castellum	1		1	waterhole	waterhole	cattle and red deer	40	100
Houten-Castellum	1			waterhole	waterhole	dog	70	100
Houten-Castellum		1		animal burial	pit	horse	75	125
Houten-Castellum		1		animal burial	pit	horse	75	200
Huissen-Loosstraat-zuid			1	oven	oven	red deer	0	0
Itteren-Emmaus			1	pit	pit	various	-780	-417
Katwijk-Transformatorstation Industrieweg		1		animal burial	pit	dog, horse	140	200
Katwijk-Zanderij	1			well	well	cattle	100	200
Katwijk-Zanderij	1		1	outbuilding	pit	horse	450	1050
Leersum-Middelweggebied			1	house	pit	pig and sheep/goat	-800	-500
Leeuwarden-Werpsterhoek		1		animal burial	pit	pig	1250	2000
Leeuwarden-Werpsterhoek		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1250	2000
Leeuwarden-Werpsterhoek		1		animal burial	pit	pig	1250	2000
Leeuwarden-Werpsterhoek		1		animal burial	pit	pig	1500	1500
Leiderdorp-Plantage	1			animal burial	pit	horse	450	800
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	450	800

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Leiderdorp-Plantage	1			well	well	cattle	500	800
Leiderdorp-Plantage	1			ditch	ditch	horse, cattle	700	750
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		ditch	ditch	cattle	700	750
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		ditch	ditch	cattle	700	750
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		pit	pit	horse	700	1000
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	horse	750	900
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1190	1278
Leiderdorp-Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1200	1300
Leiderdorp-Simon Smitweg/Willem Alexanderlaan/Parallelweg	1			terp	elevation layer	horse	-19	450
Lent-Kasteel Lent			1	house	posthole	crane	1100	1200
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal		1		(residual) channel	pit	dog	-19	450
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal		1		pit	pit	horse	-19	450
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1250	1375
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost		1		animal burial	pit	pig	1250	1375
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1250	1375
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost		1		ditch	ditch	horse	1375	1600
Lent-Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1375	1600
Lent-Steltsestraat		1		pit	pit	dog	1200	1500
Lent-Zone H		17		animal burial	ditch	cattle	1500	1600
Lent-Zone H		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1800	2000
Limmen-De Krocht				house	pit	pig	800	1000
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	ditch	pig	825	1500
Limmen-De Krocht		1		well	well	horse	900	950
Limmen-De Krocht		1		ditch	ditch	dog	900	1200
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	pit	horse	900	1800
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	pit	sheep	1000	1150
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	ditch/pit	sheep/goat	1000	1900
Limmen-De Krocht	1			house	pit	sheep	1100	1200
Limmen-De Krocht		1		ditch	ditch	dog	1100	1200
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	ditch	dog	1100	1200
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1150	1900
Limmen-de krocht				animal burial	pit	sheep/goat	1200	2000
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1250	1900
Limmen-De Krocht		1		animal burial	ditch	dog	1250	1900
Marssum-It Aldlân	1			pit	pit	horse, dog	-19	100
Marssum-It Aldlân		1		well	well	cattle	0	0
Marssum-It Aldlân			1	pit	pit	cattle	0	0
Marssum-It Aldlân		1		pit	pit	cattle, horse, dog	250	0
Marssum-It Aldlân	1			pit	pit	dog	275	425
Merselo-Grootdorp		1		animal burial	pit	horse	800	900
Meteren-De Bogen			1	house	pit	unknown	-2000	-1500
Meteren-De Bogen			1	house	pit	unknown	-2000	-1500
Meteren-De Bogen	1			granary	posthole	cattle	-1800	-1100
Meteren-De Bogen	1			pit	pit	cattle	-1800	-1100
Meteren-De Plantage	1			ditch	ditch	horse	0	0

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Meteren-De Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Meteren-De Plantage		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1250	1907
Middelbaar-Kopseweg			1	pit	pit	unknown	-450	-380
Middelburg-Hof Ramsburg		1		pit	pit	dog	1600	1800
Midden-Delfland-Abtswoude		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1150	2000
Midden-Delfland-Abtswoude		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1600	2000
Midden-Delfland-Abtswoude		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1600	2000
Midden-Delfland-Abtswoude		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1600	2000
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1200	1250
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1300	1550
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1350	1500
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1350	2000
Midden-Delfland-Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1500	1600
Midden-Delfland-Woudse Polder		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1200	2000
Naaldwijk-Holland College		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	270
Naaldwijk-Holland College		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	270
Naaldwijk-Holland College		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	270
Naaldwijk-Holland College		1	1	well	well	dog	250	400
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		pit	pit	dog	100	125
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		pit	pit	dog	75	200
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		ditch	ditch	dog	175	200
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		house	pit	horse	175	225
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		house	pit	horse	175	225
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		ditch	pit	horse	175	225
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		ditch	ditch	cat	175	225
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		posthole	posthole	cattle	0	0
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		outbuilding	posthole	horse	1050	1150
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland		1		ditch	ditch	cattle	0	0
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland West Zuid		1		animal burial	pit	dog	-19	450
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland West Zuid		1		animal burial	pit	horse	275	350
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland West Zuid		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	290	350
Naaldwijk-Hoogeland-Oost 't Zand Heultje		1		animal burial	ditch	horse	-19	175
Naaldwijk-Trace Parc Westland Mars		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	2000
Nederweert-Rosveld		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1250
Nederweert-Rosveld		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1250
Nieuwstadt-Elsenewal			1	pit	pit	cattle, horse, sheep/goat, pig and dog	-800	-400
Nieuwstadt-Elsenewal			1	pit	pit	cattle, horse, sheep/goat, pig and dog	-800	-250
Nijmegen-Grote Kopse Hof		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Nijmegen-Grote Kopse Hof		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat		1		animal grave		horse	-19	450
Nijmegen-Steltsestraat			1	well	well	horse, cattle, pig, goat	80	110

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Odiijk-Singel West/Schoudermantel		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	270	450
Odiijk-Singel West/Schoudermantel		1		animal burial	animal burial	cattle	270	700
Oene-West	1			pit	pit	pig	1000	1100
Oldehove-Englum- Leege Wier		1		ditch	ditch	various	-250	70
Oldehove-Englum- Leege Wier			1	pit	pit	various	-200	-100
Oldehove-Englum- Leege Wier		1		pit	pit	dog	-100	100
Oldehove-Englum- Leege Wier		1		pit	pit	fish	0	0
Ommeren-Ommerenveldseweg		1		pit	pit	horse	900	1200
Ommeren-Ommerenveldseweg	1			well	well	horse	900	1200
Ommeren-Ommerenveldseweg	1			ditch	ditch	horse	900	1200
Ommeren-Ommerenveldseweg	1			pit	pit	horse	900	1200
Ommeren-Ommerenveldseweg	1			depression	depression	horse	900	1200
Oosterhout-Aardgastransportleidingtracé Angerlo-Beuningen		1		pit	pit	pig	70	270
Oosterhout-Aardgastransportleidingtracé Angerlo-Beuningen		1		ditch	ditch	horse	70	270
Oosterhout-'t Klumke		1		animal burial	pit	horse	215	275
Oss-Brabantstraat	1			ditch	ditch	horse	-19	450
Ouddorp-Smalle Einde		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Ouddorp-Smalle Einde		1		animal burial	pit	pig	0	0
Ouddorp-Smalle Einde		1		animal burial	pit	goose	0	0
Ouddorp-Smalle Einde		1		animal burial	pit	cat	0	0
Oudorp-Lauwershof	1			well	well	mole	1475	1600
Overasselt-Schoonenburgseweg	1			pit	pit	horse	0	0
Poeldijk-De Kreken Fase II, sites F and G/H		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1200	1500
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	350
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	350
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B	1			animal burial	pit	pig	0	350
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	350
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	350
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B			1	animal burial	pit	cattle	75	125
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	horse	200	300
Poeldijk-Westhof-vindplaats B		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	200	300
Poortugaal-Rhoon Valkensteinsche Blok		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Ressen-Zuiderveld		1		animal burial	pit	dog	0	0
Rhoon-Smitshoek-Portland		1		(out)building	wall ditch	cattle	900	1000
Rijswijk-De Paulinesymfonie	1			animal burial	ditch	dog	-19	450
Rijswijk-De Paulinesymfonie		1		animal burial	ditch	horse	0	0
Rijswijk-De Paulinesymfonie		1		animal burial	ditch	horse	0	0
Rotterdam-Delftse Schie		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1700	2000
Schagen-N241			1	pit	pit	cattle/sheep/ goat	-300	-200
Schagen-N241		1		house	pit	sheep/goat	1200	1300
Schipluiden-Harnaspolder	1			palisade	posthole	horse	125	150
Schipluiden-Harnaspolder		1		waterhole	waterhole	sheep	125	175
Schipluiden-Harnaspolder		1		pit	pit	dog	125	270
Schipluiden-Harnaspolder	1	1		pit	pit	dog	125	270
Schipluiden-Harnaspolder		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	125	270

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder		1		animal burial	pit	pig	125	270
Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder		1		animal burial	pit	dog	175	200
Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder		1		well	well	pig	225	260
Schipluiden-Noordhoorn	1		1	pit	pit	dog	-3600	-3400
Schoondijke-Einsteinstraat		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Schoondijke-Einsteinstraat		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Serooskerke		1		house	pit	cattle	-50	50
Sneek-Harinxmaland		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Sneek-Harinxmaland		1		animal burial	pit	dog	1250	2000
Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg	1			well	well	cattle	-1800	-1100
Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg	1			well	waterhole	cattle	-1800	-800
Tiel-Medel-De Reth		1		pit	pit	cattle	-19	70
Tiel-Medel-Rotonde		1		animal burial	pit	dog	10	40
Tiel-Medel-Rotonde		1		animal burial	pit	dog	10	200
Tiel-Medel-Rotonde	1			animal burial	pit	horse	70	130
Tiel-Medel-Rotonde		1		animal burial	pit	horse	70	130
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1	1		pit	pit	sheep	-50	10
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		house	house ditch	sheep	-50	10
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		house	house ditch	horse	10	50
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1	1		pit	pit	crow	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			well	well	horse	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			well	well	sheep	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		well	well	sheep	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	horse	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg			1	pit	pit	sheep	40	100
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		ditch	ditch	sheep	40	150
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	cattle	40	150
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			ditch	ditch	dog	150	200
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	dog	150	200
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	dog	150	200
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg			1	pit	pit	horse, cattle	150	200
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	cattle	150	200
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		ditch	ditch	dog	150	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		ditch	ditch	dog, red deer	150	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			pit	pit	horse	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1		1	ditch	ditch	dog	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	sheep	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	dog	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	horse	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		pit	pit	horse	200	250
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		house	house ditch	dog	250	270
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		house	house ditch	dog	250	270
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			ditch	ditch	horse	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1		1	house	house ditch	cattle	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1	1		ditch	ditch	dog, horse	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg	1			ditch	ditch	horse	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		ditch	pit	red deer	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg		1		well	pit	horse	270	350

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg			1	ditch	ditch	horse, cattle	270	350
Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg			1	pit	pit	cinereous vulture, bald eagle, red deer and beaver, cattle, pig	300	400
Tiel-Tiel-Medel, 'Oude Weiden', site 5			1	house	posthole	cattle, sheep/goat, pig	-2000	-1800
Tynaarlo-Donderen			1	pit	pit	sheep/goat	-800	-250
Utrecht-A2		1		animal burial	pit	dog	575	700
Utrecht-A2	1			granary	unknown	horse	575	800
Utrecht-A2		1		animal burial	pit	horse	600	700
Utrecht-A2		1		animal burial	pit	horse	600	700
Utrecht-A2			1	granary	posthole	pig	625	675
Utrecht-A2			1	granary	posthole	pig	625	675
Utrecht-A2	1			outbuilding	posthole	cattle	675	700
Utrecht-A2	1	1		depression/pool	depression/pool	pig, dog, horse	675	750
Utrecht-A2	1		1	pit	pit	horse, antler, worked bone	700	750
Utrecht-A2	1			pit	pit	horse	700	750
Utrecht-De Uithof-Hoofddijk		1		(residual) channel	channel layer	pig/wild boar?	-250	70
Utrecht-Leidsche Rijn-Leeuwesteijn Noord		1		animal burial	pit	dog	725	900
Utrecht-Rijnvliet			1	ritual place	pit	sheep/goat	-25	100
Utrecht-Rijnvliet			1	waterhole	waterhole	sheep/goat	-25	100
Utrecht-Vleuten-Wilhelminalaan 14		1		animal burial	pit	dog	500	750
Valkenburg-Grondverbeteringsinstallatie Hoogheemraadschap Rijnland	1			pit	pit	dog	-800	-19
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	450	1000
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul		1		animal burial	pit	pig	450	1500
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul		1		house	pit	horse	270	450
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul		1		animal burial	pit	horse	270	450
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul		1		pit	pit	cattle	270	450
Veessen-Hoogwatergeul	1			house	posthole	cat	1000	2000
Veldhoven-Oerle-zuid			1	house	posthole	red deer	50	250
Venhuizen-Voetakkers	1			waterhole	waterhole	cattle	-1800	-1100
Vlaardingen-Holysingel – Hoog Lede		1		animal burial	pit	horse	0	0
Vleuten-house te Vleuten/ Utrechtseweg		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Vleuten-house te Vleuten/ Utrechtseweg		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Vlijmen-De Grassen		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1000	1500
Vlijmen-De Grassen		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1500
Vlijmen-De Grassen		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1000	1500
Vlijmen-De Grassen		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1000	1500
Vlijmen-De Grassen		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1300	1400
Voerendaal-Ten Hove		1		animal burial	well	dog	200	300
Voorburg-Arentsburg		1		well	well	ermine	-19	450
Voorburg-Arentsburg			1	well	well	fox	-19	450
Voorburg-Arentsburg		1		well	well	dog	275	325
Wassenaar aan den Rijn-RijnlandRoute, Knooppunt Ommedijk		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Wassenaar aan den Rijn-RijnlandRoute, Knooppunt Ommedijk		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0

Site	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Structure type	Context	Species	Beginning	End
Wassenaar aan den Rijn-RijnlandRoute, Knooppunt Ommedijk		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	0	0
Wassenaar aan den Rijn-RijnlandRoute, Knooppunt Ommedijk		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1500	2000
Wateringen-Heerenvliet		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1500	1700
Wateringen-Juliahof		1		ditch	ditch	dog	50	250
Wateringen-Juliahof		1		animal burial	ditch	sheep/goat	80	225
Wateringen-Juliahof		1		animal burial	pit	dog	80	225
Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen-Vindplaats 2, kleine kamp			1	pit	pit	various	-1800	-1100
Wijchen-Paschalishof		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1250	1500
Wijchen-Paschalishof		1		animal burial	pit	horse	1250	1800
Zwaag-Bangert 61		1		animal burial	pit	cattle	1600	1700

6.4.4 General picture

The animal bone deposits come from 143 sites, some of which span several phases (including 'dating unknown'). This represents 179 'period sites', dating from the Neolithic to the Modern Period.³⁶⁴ A total of 417 deposits containing animal remains (bone or antler) are included in the analysis. As mentioned above, a number of duplications in the original inventory have been omitted. The dating of 50 deposits is unknown.

Figure 6.16 shows an overview of distribution by period. It reveals a strong predominance in the Roman period (38%), followed by the Middle Ages (21%). At 6 to 7 percent, the Iron Age, Bronze Age and Middle Ages–Modern Period are fairly evenly represented, whereas the Neolithic, Early Middle Ages and Modern Period have yielded smaller numbers of deposits (about 1–4%). The number of deposits is small for the overlapping phases of the Bronze Age–Iron Age,

Iron Age–Roman period and Roman period–Early Middle Ages. The strong representation of the Roman period and Middle Ages may be linked to the larger number of excavations of sites from those periods and the detailed examination of animal bone from several large Roman settlements.³⁶⁵ This bias can be partly resolved by taking the average number of deposits per 'period site', which is 2.3 (Fig. 6.17). Period sites from the Roman period (3.3), Early Middle Ages (3.0), Middle Ages (2.9) and Modern Period (4.9) have yielded an above average number of deposits, while this is below average for the remaining period sites. Thus animal deposits are most prevalent in the Modern Period. Another possible bias relates to the size of the excavations/sites. For example, we would expect the number of deposits to be higher for larger excavations. Here too, there is a relationship to the period. Neolithic sites, for example, are usually smaller than sites from later periods.

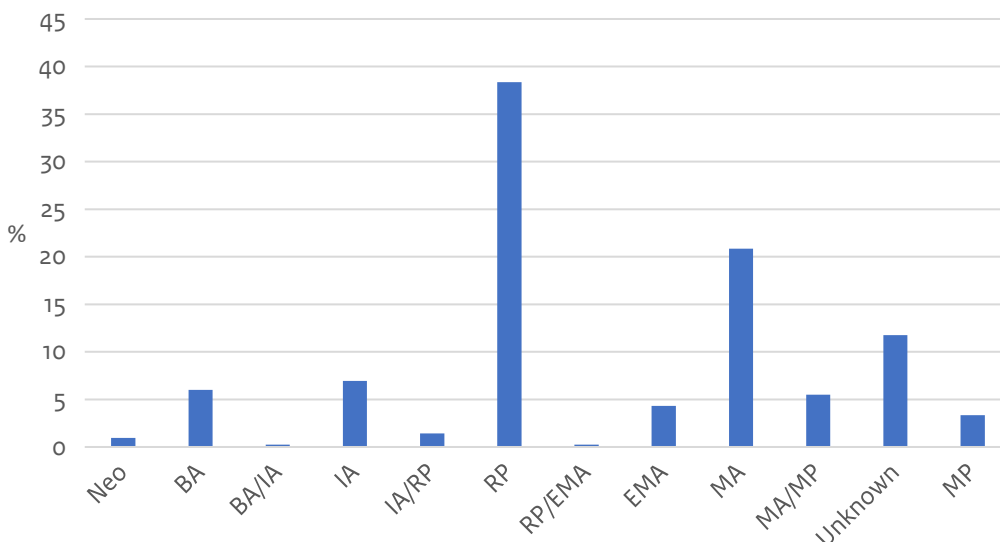


Fig. 6.16. The percentage of special deposits with animal bone, by period.

³⁶⁴ A 'period site' is an assemblage from a specific phase or period of a specific site, such as animal bone from the Iron Age phase of settlement X.

³⁶⁵ For example, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Naaldwijk-Holland College and Poeldijk-Westhof-site B.

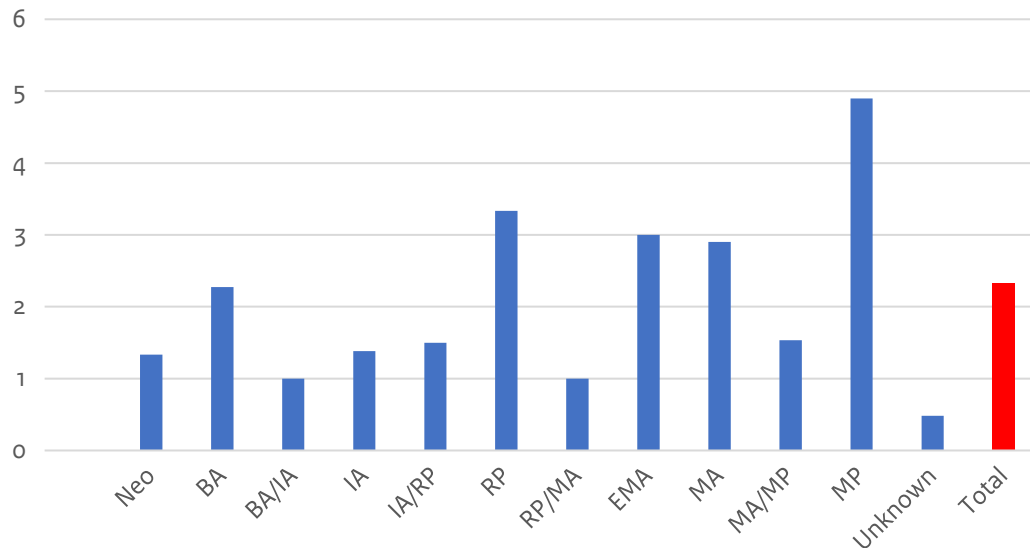


Fig. 6.17. The average number of special deposits with animal bone, per period site (= total number of deposits with animal bone per period/number of period sites per period).

Contexts

Figure 6.18 presents an overview of the contexts in which deposits of animal remains occur. We see a strong predominance of pits, followed at some distance by ditches. Houses, outbuildings and wells are represented to a lesser degree, while other contexts play a negligible role.

Animal species

The majority of the deposits consist of the remains of domestic animals, with cattle, horses and dogs the most prevalent (Fig. 6.19). In our

interpretation we should bear in mind that dogs and horses were not eaten in all periods and that a functional explanation for complete skeletons of these species (carcasses) is therefore possible. The same is true for other species, but then only in the case of sick animals deemed unsuitable for consumption. No animal species are reported in some deposits, especially in terms of loose bone.

The remaining species reveal a wide range of predominantly wild animals: red deer, elk, wild boar, beavers, foxes, cats, ermine, moles,

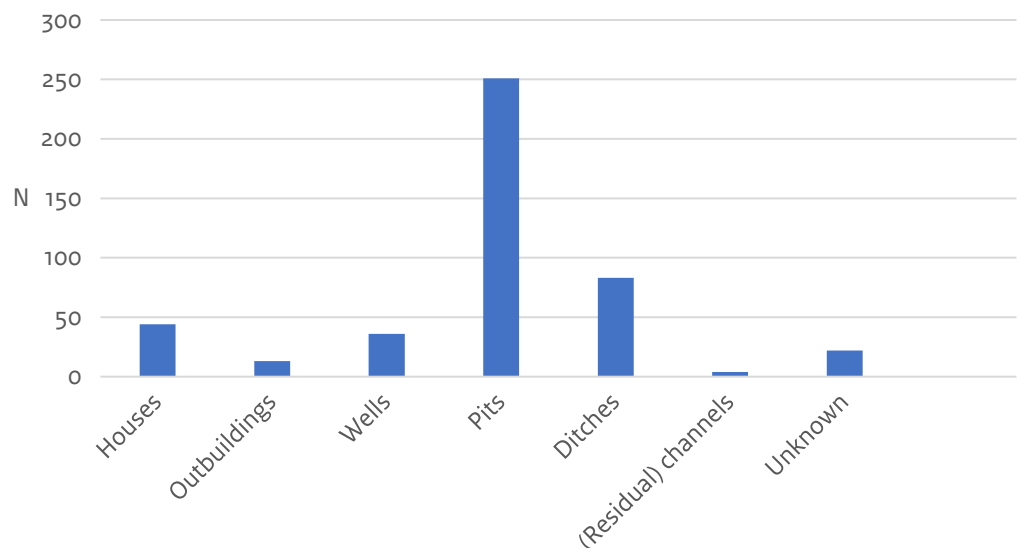


Fig. 6.18. The number of animal bone deposits by context. The 'granaries' and 'outbuildings' categories are classified here under 'outbuildings'.

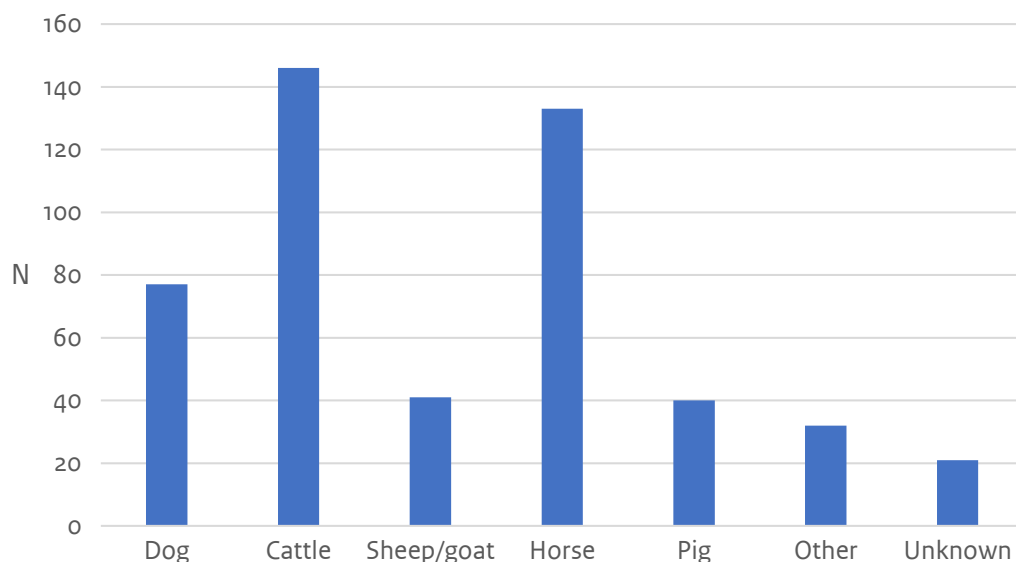


Fig. 6.19. The number of special deposits by species.

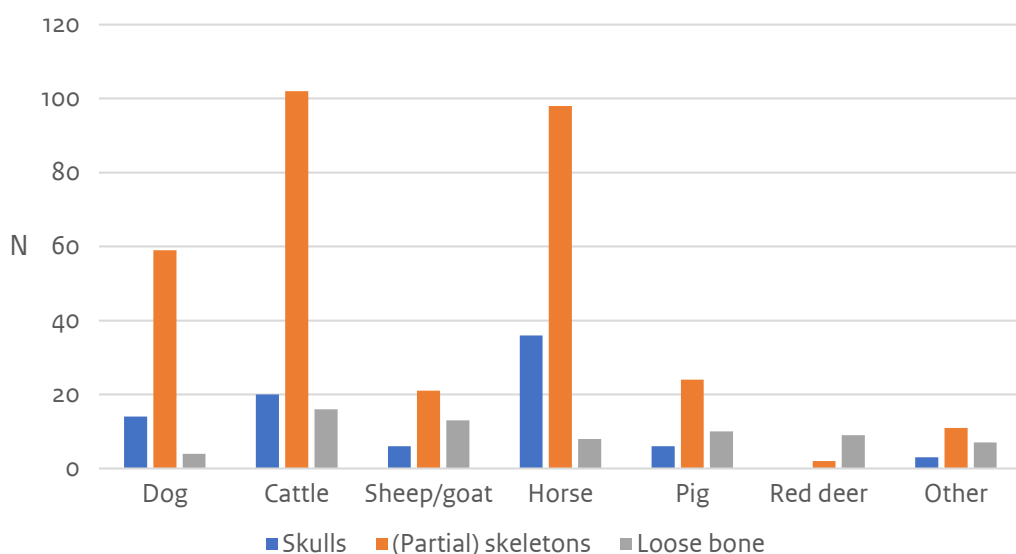


Fig. 6.20. The number of special animal bone deposits, by species and category.

geese, crows, bald eagles, cinereous vultures, cranes and cod. There is also one deposit involving hens. Most instances involve a one-off occurrence in a deposit. Red deer, however, are found in eleven deposits (Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman period and Early Middle Ages). In the six deposits containing cat remains, it is not certain whether the animals were wild or domestic cats. In the case of two Roman-era depositions (a skeleton and a lower jawbone found alongside a dog skull), they are more likely to be wild cats, whereas the cat head found in a posthole from the Middle Ages/Modern Period is probably of a domestic cat, as are (partial) skeletons from the

Middle Ages and Modern Period. Geese are the only other animal species that occurs more than once in deposits: a complete skeleton in a medieval pit, an undated skeleton and two loose remains found in combination with a dog skull and the lower jawbone of a cat (Roman period). Once again, it is not clear whether the geese were wild or domesticated.

Figure 6.20 provides an overview of the number of deposits, broken down into animal species and category ((partial) skeleton, skull or loose bone). Deposits of (partial) skeletons predominate for dogs, cattle, sheep/goats, horses and pigs. This is not the case with red

Table 6.8. Number of special deposits with animal remains, by species and period.

	Dog	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Horse	Pig	Other	Unknown	Total
Neo	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	5
BA	4	15	4	-	3	1	4	31
BA-IA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
IA	6	8	7	6	6	2	9	44
IA-RP	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	7
RP	42	37	18	66	10	17	5	195
RP-MA	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
EMA	4	3	-	10	4	1	-	22
MA	7	45	5	24	7	3	-	91
MA-MP	4	7	2	7	2	2	-	24
MP	1	11	1	3	-	1	-	17
Unknown	5	17	2	16	7	4	1	52
Total	77	146	41	133	40	32	21	490

deer, where antler is most prevalent. For horses, we also note a fairly large number of skulls.

Table 6.8 shows an overview of the number of deposits, broken down into animal species and period. We see that half of all dog and horse deposits date to the Roman period, but this applies to only about 25 percent of the cattle. At 31 percent, cattle are best represented in the Middle Ages. Sheep or goat deposits are also most prevalent in the Roman period, whereas pigs are more evenly distributed. Horses do not occur in deposits from the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This can be explained by the fact that domesticated horses were not introduced into the Netherlands until the Bronze Age and only occurred in small numbers at that time.

6.4.5 Deposits with skulls, (partial) skeletons and loose bone

A distinction was made in the inventory and analysis between three categories of deposits with animal remains. The first category comprises (almost) complete skulls. The second category contains complete and partial skeletons and articulated limbs, and the third loose bone, associated in most instances with other objects in special deposits. These categories are

Table 6.9. Number of special deposits with animal remains by defined category.

	Skulls	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Total
Neo	1	2	2	5
BA	9	7	9	25
BA-IA	-	-	1	1
IA	5	9	16	30
IA-RP	2	5	-	7
RP	37	111	21	169
RP-MA	-	1	-	1
EMA	10	7	4	21
MA	12	72	3	87
MA-MP	2	20	-	22
MP	-	29	-	29
Unknown	1	59	3	64
Total	79	322	59	460

discussed separately below.

Because several categories can occur in a single deposit, the total shown in Table 6.9 (460) is higher than the total number of deposits mentioned earlier (417). Figure 6.21 shows a strong predominance of (partial) skeletons

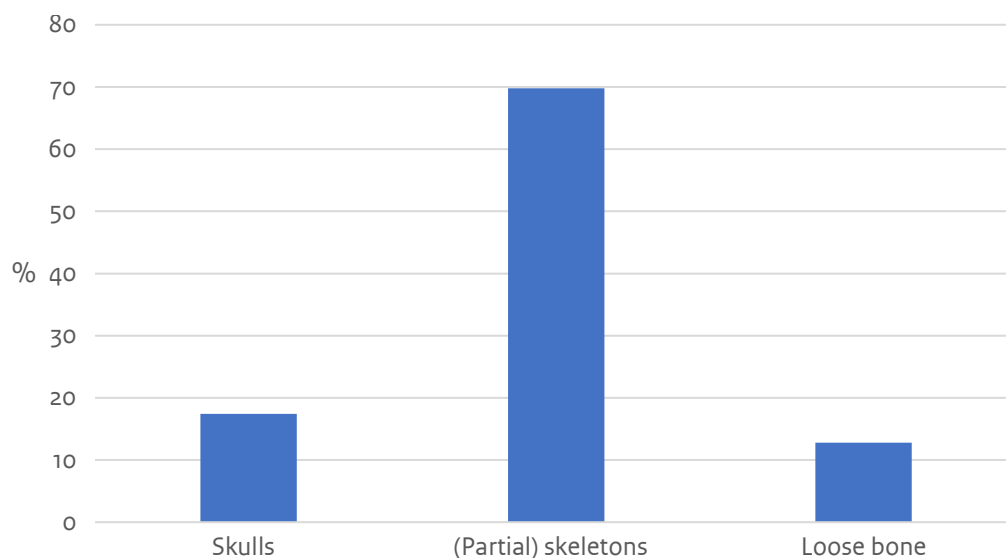


Fig. 6.21. The percentage of special deposits of animal bone, by category.

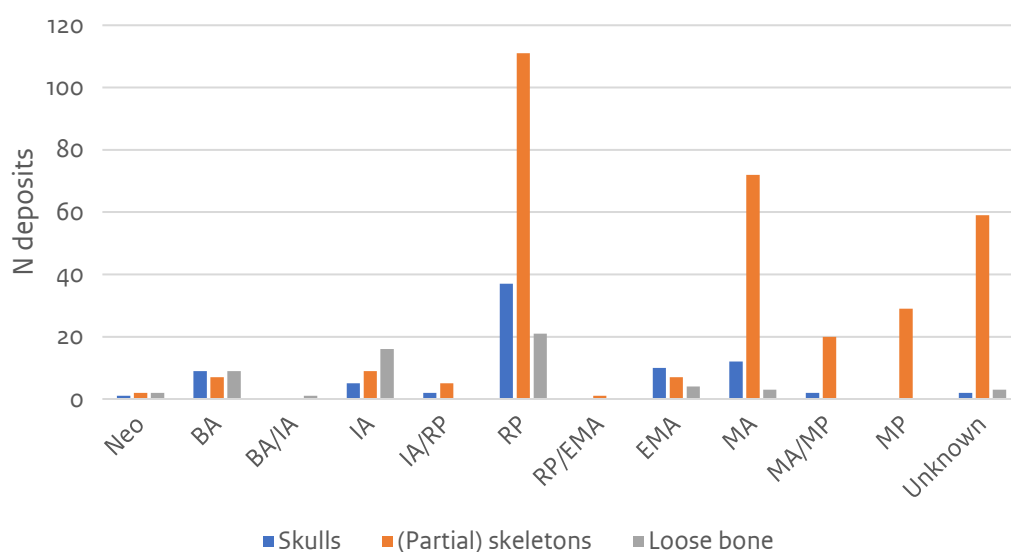


Fig. 6.22. The number of special animal bone deposits, by category and period.

(about 70%), followed by skulls (about 17%) and loose bone (about 13%). This clearly reflects the fact that (partial) skeletons are regarded by definition as special deposits, which is not the case with skulls and loose bone.

Figure 6.22. and Table 6.9 present an overview of the number of deposits, broken down by category and period. These summaries show that the different categories of animal bone deposits occur with equal frequency in the Bronze Age, with deposits of loose bone predominating in the Iron Age. There is a strong prevalence of (partial) skeletons in the Roman

period, Middle Ages, Middle Ages/Modern Period and Modern Period. The Early Middle Ages show a different picture again, with skull deposits now predominating. The undated deposits largely involve (partial) skeletons. This is because the lack of associated find material can make animal burials difficult to date.

If we then look at the relationship between the contexts and deposit categories (Table 6.10), we see that (partial) skeletons are primarily found in pits, whereas skulls are found comparatively more frequently in ditches. Wells/pits, houses and outbuildings are also fairly

Table 6.10. Number of special deposits with animal remains, by context and category.

	Skull	(Partial) skeleton	Loose bone	Total
Houses	7	22	15	44
Outbuildings	5	2	6	13
Wells	13	15	8	36
Pits	22	204	25	251
Ditches	24	56	3	83
(Residual) channels	4	3	-	7
Unknown	4	20	2	26
Total	79	322	59	460

common contexts for skull deposits. The fact that pits are such a prominent context for (partial) skeletons is because complete animals in particular were often buried in specially dug pits. Pits also predominate in terms of loose bone, although houses are also fairly well represented.

Skull deposits

The first category to be discussed is that of animal skull deposits (see examples in Fig. 6.23). Loose animal skulls or parts of skulls are by no means routinely regarded as special deposits.³⁶⁶ Interpretations often depend on the find context, the find associations and the researcher involved. Skulls tend to be regarded as 'ordinary'

slaughter waste rather than special, especially if found together with fragmented animal bone. The inventoried dataset contains 79 special deposits with skulls or skull parts (Table 6.10). In terms of chronological distribution, we see a clear predominance in the Roman period, followed by the Middle Ages (Table 6.11). Within the different periods, skulls are very well represented in the Bronze Age and Early Middle Ages compared with (partial) skeletons and loose bone. In the other periods, skulls occur less frequently than (partial) skeletons. Only for the Modern Period does the dataset contain no skulls. In terms of animal species, horse skulls predominate in both the Roman period and Middle Ages. We also see dogs occupying a prominent position in the Roman period, with cattle only in third place. The picture changes for the Bronze Age, with cattle the most prevalent and no known horse skulls. Sheep/goat and pig skulls play a minor role in all periods. In addition to the usual domestic animals, skulls of cats and a mole were found.

For the Roman period and Middle Ages, certain animal species appear to have been specifically selected. This is suggested by the fact that the distribution of animal species in skull deposits does not correspond to the 'general picture' for these periods, in which cattle occupy a more prominent place. It should be noted that both horses and dogs were species that were not normally consumed.

Figure 6.24 presents an overview of skull deposits, by context. We see a clear predominance of ditches and pits, followed by

³⁶⁶ Not all the skulls that seem to have been deliberately deposited are complete. The skulls from pits and ditches at Enkhuizen-Haling 13 are mainly calvaria that are broken off just before or at the eye sockets, with the base of the skull often missing. In other cases, there are skull parts, such as part of a cattle skull in waterhole 13 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, half a cattle skull from waterhole 25217 at Houten-Castellum and part of a dog skull in ditch 179.030 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg.



Fig. 6.23. Examples of deposits with animal skulls at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (left) and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (right) (source: Groot 2009, Fig. 14.28; M. Groot).

Table 6.11. Number of special deposits with skulls, by period and species.

	Dog	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Horse	Pig	Red deer	Other	Total
Neo	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BA	2	8	2	-	1	-	-	13
BA-IA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
IA	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	4
IA-RP	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
RP	7	5	3	19	3	-	1	38
RP-EMA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
EMA	1	2	-	8	-	-	-	11
MA	1	3	1	6	1	-	-	12
MA-MP	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
MP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Unknown	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	14	20	6	36	6	0	3	84

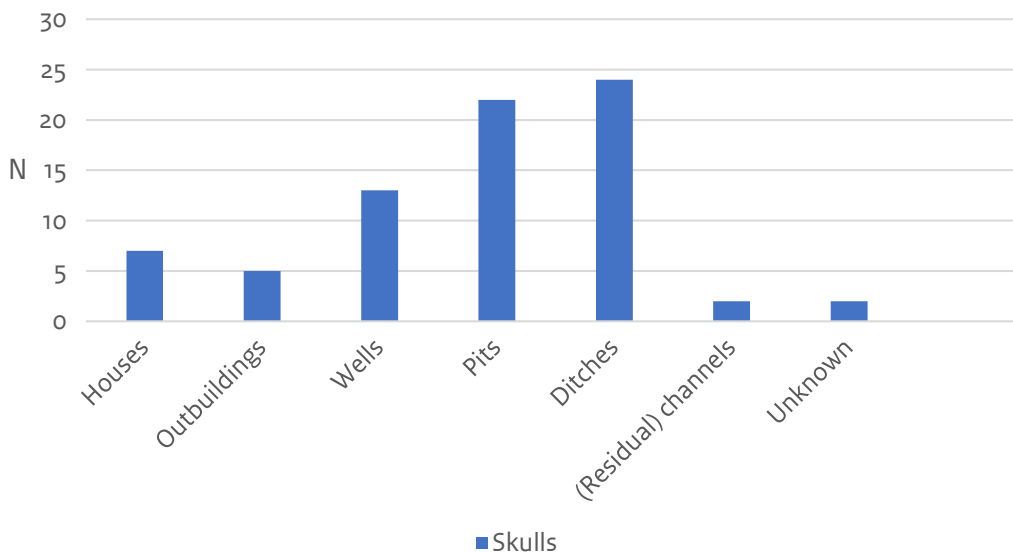


Fig. 6.24. Overview of special deposits with animal skulls, by context.

wells/waterholes. The number of skull deposits in houses, outbuildings and granaries is relatively small.

Deposits with (partial) skeletons

With 322 inventoried deposits, (partial) skeletons are by far the largest category among the deposits discussed here. This category includes complete skeletons, partial skeletons and articulated limbs (loose or in various compositions)

(see examples in Fig. 6.25), with (almost) complete skeletons predominating (about 60%). The remaining deposits are of partial skeletons and articulated limbs.

The burial of complete animals is by definition a notable activity – a special deposit in a sense – although it does not necessarily involve ritual practices or purposes. In many instances, it is difficult, if not impossible, to definitively identify the nature of the burials.



Fig. 6.25. Examples of special deposits with skeletons and partial skeletons. Complete horse skeleton from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (A), complete dog skeleton from Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (B), skull and lower legs of a horse from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (C). (source: Groot 2008, Fig. 3.12; Groot 2009, Figs 14.32, 14.35).

Table 6.12 gives an overview of the (partial) skeletons in the inventory, broken down by period and animal species. In terms of chronological distribution, there are only a small number for the prehistoric period. They mainly occur in the Roman period and are also well represented in the Middle Ages and Modern Period.

Looking at the distribution by species, we see a predominance of cattle and horses (Table 6.12), followed by dogs, with sheep/goats and pigs playing a minor role. The most noticeable pattern is evident in the Roman period, where horses clearly predominate,

followed by dogs. Cattle, sheep/goats and pigs are much less well represented. This pattern corresponds closely to the one we observed for skulls from this period, discussed above.

Cattle are most prevalent in the Bronze Age, Middle Ages and Modern Period, with horses continuing to occupy second place in the latter two periods. Lastly, we note that horses are also fairly well represented in the Iron Age, although the numbers are small. The 'other' category contains a wide variety of wild and domestic species, including three young elk (from one well), ermine, crows, hens, cats, geese and fish.

Figure 6.26 summarises the deposits

Table 6.12. Number of special deposits with (partial) skeletons, by period and species.

	Dog	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Horse	Pig	Red deer	Other	Total
Neo	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
BA	2	4	-	-	-	-	1	7
BA-IA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
IA	2	2	1	3	3	-	-	11
IA-RP	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	4
RP	33	12	10	51	5	2	4	117
RP-EMA	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
EMA	3	1	-	2	1	-	-	7
MA	6	40	4	18	6	-	2	76
MA-MP	4	7	1	7	2	-	-	21
MP	1	19	1	10	-	-	1	32
Unknown	5	16	2	13	7	-	3	46
Total	59	102	21	105	24	2	11	324

containing (partial) skeletons, by context. Pits clearly predominate, followed some way behind by ditches. The dominance of pits is unsurprising given that most complete animals will have been buried in specially dug pits. The fairly strong representation of ditches ties in with the pattern that we observed for skulls. Ditches were popular places for the deposition of animal remains. Deposits involving (partial) skeletons are also represented in houses, outbuildings and wells, but are much less prevalent.

Deposits with loose bone

The final category is that of deposits with loose animal bone. It is more difficult to distinguish between loose bone and 'normal waste' than for the other categories. The deposits have therefore been interpreted mainly as 'special' on the basis of quantity, specific context and/or association with other objects. In a few cases, it is the specific composition of the bone material (elements and/or animal species) that has prompted an interpretation as special deposits.

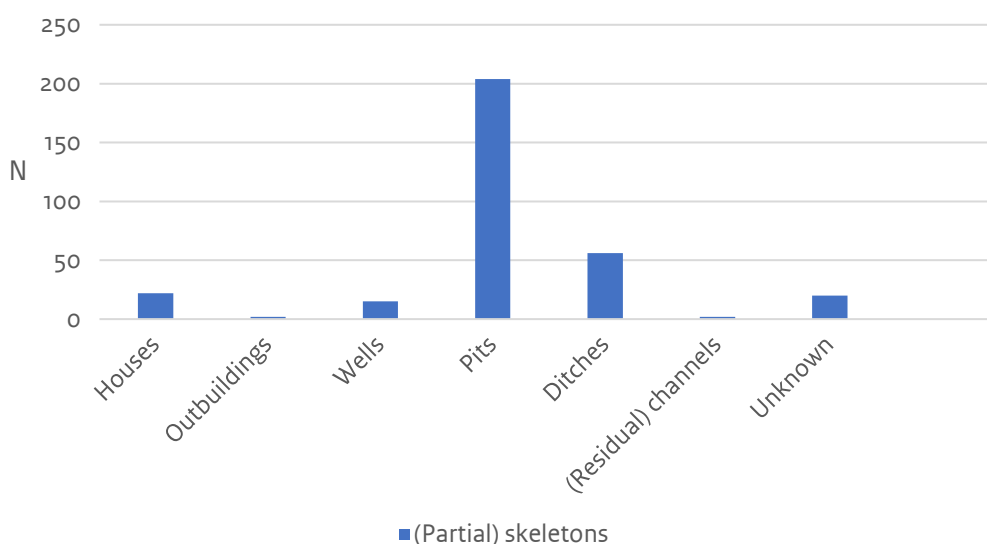


Fig. 6.26. Overview of special deposits with skeletons and partial skeletons, by context.

Table 6.13. Number of special deposits with loose bone, by period and species.

	Dog	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Horse	Pig	Red deer	Other	Total
Neo	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
BA	-	4	2	-	2	-	-	8
BA-IA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
IA	2	5	6	2	3	2	-	20
IA-RP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
RP	2	3	5	5	2	4	6	27
RP-EMA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
EMA	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	4
MA	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	3
MA-MP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
MP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Unknown	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	3
Total	4	16	13	8	10	9	7	67

In many instances, the animal bone in this category is described in limited detail. Often, there is simply a general reference to ‘animal bone’ as part of a special composite deposit, without the species or elements/parts being specified.

Table 6.13 gives an overview of the deposits with loose bone, by period and animal species. There are 59 deposits in all. However, because several animal species are represented in some deposits, the total in Table 6.13 is 67. For the

loose bone category, the chronological distribution is clearly different than for deposits with skulls and (partial) skeletons. Once again, the majority of finds occur in the Roman period. The Iron and Bronze Ages are also fairly well represented, but there are few finds from the Middle Ages. Deposits of loose bone occur less frequently in the Roman period and Middle Ages compared to skulls and (partial) skeletons. They occupy a prominent place in the prehistoric period, however, and are the dominant category

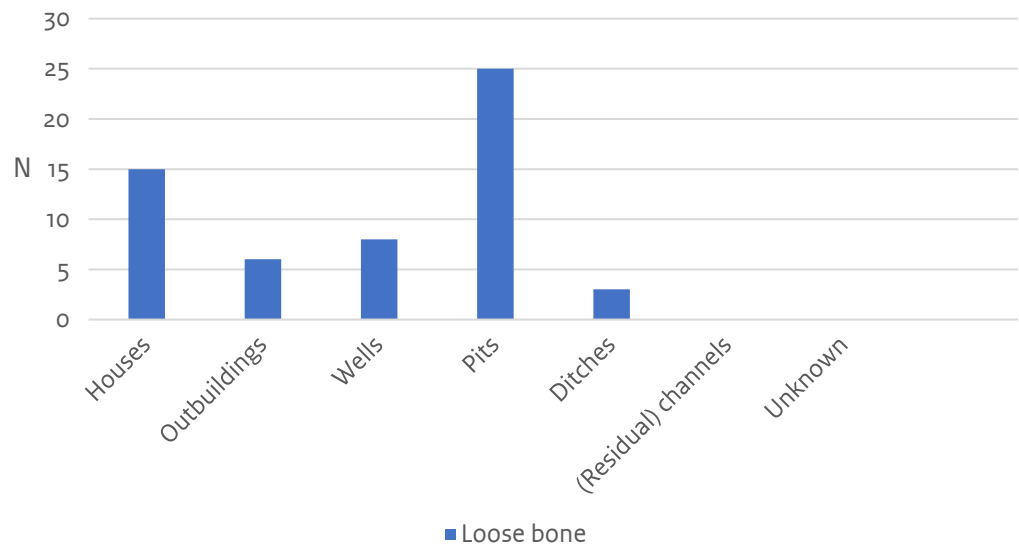


Fig. 6.27. Overview of special deposits with loose bone, by context.

in the Iron Age.

The species distribution for loose bone also differs markedly than for skulls and (partial) skeletons (c.f. Tables 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13). Cattle predominate overall, followed by sheep/goats and pigs, with horses playing a less significant role. Of the common animal species, dogs feature the least. For the Roman period, horses continue to be prominently represented, along with sheep/goats. We also note a fairly good representation of red deer (mainly antler). The remaining species include geese, foxes, wild boar, beavers, cinereous vultures, bald eagles and cranes. Once again, it should be borne in mind that the numbers are relatively small, which could distort the picture reconstructed here.

Figure 6.27 shows an overview of deposits with loose bone, by context. We see a clear predominance of pits, with houses, outbuildings and wells/pits also fairly well represented. Unlike for skulls and (partial) skeletons, ditches do not play a significant role.

6.4.6 A closer look at the deposits

Following on from the overviews presented and described above, we examine several deposit categories in greater detail below.

Skulls in combination with special objects

In some cases, skulls form part of special composite deposits. A good example is a deposit in a Late Roman pit at Eme-Laaksche veld, which, in addition to a horse skull, contained sherds of a footed beaker, a spindle whorl, a loom weight, a bronze hinged fibula, a bronze finger ring, a whetstone and an antique flint arrowhead. Another interesting deposit from a waterhole at Houten-Castellum comprised half a cattle skull, an antler fragment, a coin, a buckle of a hip belt and two broken-off jug necks. And another waterhole at the same site yielded an almost complete quernstone, a dog skull and a bone vial containing henbane seeds. Also special is a pit at Tiel-Passwaaijse Hogeweg with a horse skull, an iron knife and the skeleton of a carrion crow.³⁶⁷ An early medieval example concerns a pit with a horse skull, together with an orange-red glass bead, an antique glass spindle whorl, a Roman sling bullet and a piece

of worked antler (Utrecht-Az). From the same period we know of a skull fragment with two horn cores that was found atop a pair of shoes in a well at Leiderdorp-Plantage. These deposits appear to involve special objects that were deliberately selected, possibly by virtue of their personal and/or symbolic or magical significance. Given that these deposits included skulls, this could suggest that a specific symbolic or magical significance was attributed to skulls as well.

Animal skeletons in combination with special objects

In some instances, buried animal skeletons are associated with other objects. An interesting example involves a second-century pit at Delft-Harnaschpolder, where a dog skeleton was found at the bottom of the pit, with no fewer than 78 virtually complete loom weights placed on top. Another interesting combination is that of a young cattle skeleton placed around a complete pot at Castricum-De Bogaert (AD 100–300). A further complete pot was buried in the vicinity. The special deposits at both Delft and Castricum were probably located on the settlement fringe.

Another notable deposit concerns a horse grave near an outbuilding in the settlement at Beuningen-Molenstraat (early second century AD). When the skeleton was unearthed, 13 bronze objects were recovered from around the horse's head: fittings, rings and a large pendant from the horse's bridle. The withers height suggests that this was a military horse. Two horse graves at other sites are associated with fibulae. These are a complete horse buried in a pit at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (with two fibulae) and a horse cut into pieces in a pit at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat, where a closed fibula was found among the ribs. These finds suggest that the horses were buried in a cloth fastened with fibulae.³⁶⁸ The animals were clearly buried with special care and purpose. A possible third example, outside the context of the settlement, concerns the grave field at Tiel-Medel-Hazenkamp, where a fibula was found in a documented cattle grave.³⁶⁹ The final example is a horse grave in a yard ditch at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (AD 50–100), where a quarter of a quernstone was placed at the horse's head, with a smaller quernstone fragment on the ribs.

³⁶⁷ Groot 2008, 133.

³⁶⁸ Groot 2008, 126; Van den Broeke 2004, 8.

³⁶⁹ Habermehl et al. 2019, 155–156.

Concentrations of 'loose' animal bone

Some special deposits comprise sizeable concentrations of animal bone (see examples in Fig. 6.28). An early example involves a Neolithic pit at Schipluiden-Noordhoorn, where a large quantity of animal bone was deposited at the same time, together with many sloe berries. There were at least three cattle and a dog with a smashed skull. From the Roman period, pits with bone concentrations are known, for example, from Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. Pit 168.120 94 contained bone fragments from at least five horses, five cattle, sheep/goats and pigs. A pit at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet contained the disarticulated bones of at least three horses and two cattle. There was also a large concentration of cattle bones (4 MNI) in a pit at Poeldijk-Westhof site B and many horse bones in pit 25182 at Houten-Castellum.

Animal bone concentrations are sometimes found in wells and ditches. A ditch in Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg contained 335 animal bone fragments from at least six horses and nine cattle. Traces of slaughter show that the animals were skinned and cut into pieces and that pieces of meat were removed. A ditch in Oldehove-Englum yielded a concentration of animal bone but no other finds. With regard to wells, we can point to well 16 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, in which a large quantity of animal bone from six cattle was found, in combination with a ram skull and a horse skull. A well at Naaldwijk-Hollandcollege contained 68 fragments of animal bone, some of them in association. An interesting example from older research concerns four animal bone concentrations in three wells and a pit at the Late Roman site of Heeten.³⁷⁰ These concentrations comprised the

remains of cattle and pigs, in each case apparently the result of a single event. The remains of at least nine cattle and four pigs were deposited in one of the wells.

The bone concentrations described above represent a considerable quantity of meat. This suggests that large numbers of people were involved in the events behind these deposits. These occasions may have been large feasts, ceremonies or rituals, in which animals were slaughtered, the meat communally consumed, and the remains then deposited or sacrificed.³⁷¹ Such events are often referred to as 'feasting' – the communal consumption of food or drink, often on a special occasion, whether or not associated with rituals, and involving food that differed from the everyday diet.³⁷² We can view the remains of these ritual meals as ritually charged 'waste' that was then deposited separately.³⁷³ Communal events like these will have been organised for a variety of occasions, including perhaps the abandonment of a settlement, as deposits in wells could suggest.

Some of the feasts must have been fairly substantial. It is calculated that one of the well deposits (nine cattle and four pigs) at Heeten is the result of a large-scale event at supralocal level, certainly involving more people than those living in the settlement.³⁷⁴ The same will apply to bone concentrations from the ditch (six horses and nine cattle) and pit (five horses, five cattle, sheep/goats and pigs) at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and a large composite pit deposit at Grijpskerke-Kievitshoekweg (including at least 15 cattle).



Fig. 6.28. Examples of special deposits with concentrations of loose animal bone. Concentration of horse bones at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (left) and concentration of animal bone in waterhole 19 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (right) (source: Groot 2008, Fig. 3.22; Groot 2009, Plate 7).

³⁷⁰ Lauwerier *et al.* 1999.

³⁷¹ See also Groot 2008, 106–108; Thilderkvist 2013, 140; Nieuwhof 2015, 192.

³⁷² Hayden 1996, 137–138; Dietler 2011; Dietler & Hayden 2001, 3.

³⁷³ Rowley-Conwy 2018.

³⁷⁴ Lauwerier *et al.* 1999, 177–178. Lauwerier *et al.* Calculate a minimum number of participants of 76, with the feasting lasting several days.

Animal bone as part of extensive deposits with fragmented material

A notable category of pits are those containing extensive deposits of fragmented material. These pits have also regularly yielded animal bone. Some good examples are pits at Gronsveld-Duijsterstraat (pottery sherds (23 MNI), many cooking stones, pieces of quernstones and burnt animal bone (Early Iron Age)), Middelaar-Kopseweg (a large quantity of burnt pottery, 15 sling bullets, burnt loam, an iron socketed axe and burnt animal bone (Middle Iron Age)), Nieuwstadt-Elsenewal (a large quantity of pottery (6 MNI), natural stone and hundreds of bone fragments of cattle, horse, sheep/goats, pigs and dogs (Early–Middle Iron Age)) and Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch (about 48 kg of pottery, two loom weights, charred grain, parts of a hearth collar and animal bone). By far the largest deposit is known from Grijpskerke-Kievitshoekweg, with 660 kg of handmade pottery, fragments of fire dogs or roasting spits and fired-clay ovens, pieces of two quernstones, a bronze bracelet fragment, animal bone and part of a human skeleton. The animal bone comprises skull fragments of about 15 cattle, sheep bones and a complete dog skeleton.

The composite deposits described above contained the fragmented remains of vessels, quernstones, loom weights and sometimes parts of hearths or mud walls. Pits of this kind are generally associated with rituals surrounding the abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard.³⁷⁵ On the other hand, they could also contain the deposited remains of a communal meal. These interpretations are not mutually exclusive, however. Communal eating and drinking may have formed part of the rituals surrounding the abandonment of the house, yard or settlement. The meat of the animals slaughtered on that occasion will then have been consumed by the people taking part in the ritual. As emphasised above, this could be major events, in which the number of participants was greater than the number of inhabitants of the individual house site or settlement.

Deliberately placed animal remains

Some skulls or other elements were deliberately placed. For example, a skull was positioned with its snout pointing downwards in a pit at Heiloo-Hoogeweg (UWP 5) and another was placed

upside down at Utrecht-Az. At the Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg site, a calf skull replaced a sheep skull on a sheep skeleton (Early Roman). Other examples from Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and Tiel-Medel site 6 involve horse skulls placed in parallel in a pit and the lower legs of horse or cattle arranged either in parallel or crossed.³⁷⁶ Another clearly arranged animal remains deposit is known from Naaldwijk-Holland College. This involved two horse skulls, six limbs and vertebrae, with the skulls placed touching one another, flanked by a row of vertebrae on one side and the metapodia on the other two sides (Fig. 6.29).³⁷⁷ A final example concerns a pit deposit inside a house at Limmen-De Krocht. Two parts of a sheep skull, split down the middle, were placed neatly in the corner of the pit, facing each other.

Deposits with animal remains in houses and outbuildings

Examples of deposits with animal remains in or near houses are known from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages, with a predominance in the Roman period.

In prehistoric houses, these deposits occur in pits, postholes and house ditches. The vast majority of cases involve loose bone. Pits inside houses at Meteren-De Bogen, Breda-Moskes and Emmen-Noordbargeres contained composite deposits with a large quantity of pottery, loom weights, burnt loam, natural stone and animal bone. In all instances, the material was at least partly burnt. Such deposits are interpreted as closing deposits. The right foreleg and almost complete trunk of a bovine were deposited in the house ditch of a Bronze Age house at Enkhuizen-Haling 13. And elements placed in the house ditch of another house on the same site appear to have been deliberately selected. The first house ditch yielded five teeth and no fewer than 13 talus bones. Another remarkable find comes from a Middle Iron Age house at Eersel-Kerkebogten. A pit inside house 501 yielded a complete pot containing the burnt remains of parts of the lower legs and head of a horse.

Complete animal burials are associated with various houses from the Roman period and Middle Ages. These include horse graves in the Early Roman houses at Druten-Klepperheide (houses 1 and 11), a cattle grave in the third-

³⁷⁵ See Van Hoof 2002; Gerritsen 2003, 97–102.

³⁷⁶ Groot 2008.

³⁷⁷ Groot 2008, 187.



Fig. 6.29. Special deposit with deliberately arranged remains of two horses at Naaldwijk-Holland College: two skulls with lower jaws, six lower legs with associated phalanges and several cervical and thoracic vertebrae (source: Van der Feijst et al. 2008, Fig. 11.13).

century house 8003 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen, a horse grave in Late Roman house 7 at Veessen-Hoogwatergeul and a cattle skeleton in house 123 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (AD 100–130). Interestingly, both the horses from the Druten houses and the cattle from the houses at Cuijk and Den Haag were specifically buried near the entrances. The same applies to a sheep/goat that was buried near a medieval house at Schagen-N241. We can also mention a pig grave (a prenatal piglet) in a tenth-century house at Limmen-De Krocht, as well as several animal graves in various medieval houses at Eersel-Kerkbogten. Animal burials are documented in four houses at this latter site. Two animals were buried near the truss posts in both house 219 and house 266/621. Houses 267 and 270 each contained a single animal grave. All the animal burials from Eersel involve cattle and all date to the high medieval period. A cattle burial from the late medieval period, associated with a fourteenth-century stone building (perhaps a byre or workshop), was found at Heiloo-Stationsplein-De Blinken. The animal's head was placed against the building. Worthy of separate mention is a find at 's-Hertogenbosch-

Orthenstraat 41, where a complete, desiccated cat was found, bricked into a stone wall (Fig. 6.30). The excavator suggests that the animal may have been intended to ward off misfortune, or – more specifically – plagues of mice.

Skulls in or near houses and outbuildings are known, for example, from Eersel-Kerkbogten (a horse and a cattle skull from the truss postholes of buildings 627 and 266/621), Veessen-Hoogwatergeul (a cat skull in a central posthole), Grootebroek-Schaperstraat (the above-mentioned skull part from a house ditch), Tiel-Passewaaij (a cattle skull from a house ditch), Heesch-Hoogstraat 28–30 (a cattle skull in a truss posthole), Naaldwijk-Hoogeland (a horse skull and two femurs in the posthole of an (out)building) and Utrecht-A2 (a fairly complete horn core with a few skull fragments from a posthole of an outbuilding). There are also a few other animal remains, such as a pig jawbone in the postholes of two early medieval granaries at Utrecht-A2. Most skull deposits in or near houses date from the Middle Ages, whereas the Roman period is represented to only a limited extent.



Fig. 6.30. A complete, desiccated cat bricked into a wall of a building at 's-Hertogenbosch-Orthenstraat 41 (source: Erfgoed 's-Hertogenbosch).

6.4.7 Discussion and interpretation

Animal remains appear to have played a prominent role in special deposition practices, revealing the special relationship between humans and animals. After all, animals were part of everyday life for most people in the pre-industrial era and indispensable for their livelihoods. The welfare of farming families was largely dependent on that of their livestock. As well as being economically significant, animals were woven into the fabric of people's social lives. They played a role in social transactions such as marriages, they had symbolic meanings, they occupied a central place in sacrificial rituals and feasts, and they were companions in daily life (pets), hunting (horses and dogs) or battle (horses).³⁷⁸

The interpretation of complete skeletons

Complete skeletons or animal burials are understood and interpreted in different ways. We can identify four common interpretations, the first three being: as sacrificial animals, as (special) animals buried with care and as animals that died of disease and whose carcasses therefore had to be buried. There is a possible overlap between the latter two. A fourth interpretation is the possible function of animals

(or parts of animals) as magical 'objects' with apotropaic properties and significance. We will discuss this in a separate section below.

In most instances when animals were sacrificed, at least some of the meat will have been consumed, possibly as part of a communal (ritual) meal, after which the leftover skeleton remains were deposited.³⁷⁹ What we then find in the archaeological record are partial skeletons and/or loose bone remains. It would appear that complete animals were rarely buried as part of sacrificial practices. Thilderkvist suggests that this only occurred when the ritual functioned as an important indicator of wealth or status.³⁸⁰ Perhaps animal burials in and near houses should be understood in this way. They may have been sacrificed when the houses were built or inaugurated, possibly to ensure the well-being of the house and household, but perhaps also to express social status by means of the ritual. A further possibility is that animals buried in or near houses had a protective function. The positioning of these animals near the entrances to buildings (e.g. at Druuten and Den Haag) may be indicative in this respect. Historical sources provide examples of cattle buried beneath the barn door to protect against contagious livestock diseases.³⁸¹ The bricked-in cat from 's-Hertogenbosch can probably also be understood as fulfilling a protective, apotropaic function. The liminal placement of animals at

³⁷⁸ Russell 2012.

³⁷⁹ Lauwerier 2002, 63–64; Groot 2008, 107–108.

³⁸⁰ Thilderkvist 2013, 140.

³⁸¹ Huijbers 2007, 318.

entrances and in walls would indicate this.

Other animal burials may involve deceased animals that were buried with care. Perhaps having played a special role in the life of the inhabitants, they thereby acquired a special significance. The special bond between people and animals was then expressed in the thoughtful mode of burial. In some instances, animal burials of this kind seem to have involved funerary practices reminiscent of those surrounding the death and burial of humans.³⁸² Possible examples are the Roman horse grave at Beuningen-Molenstraat (with horse gear surrounding the head) and the graves associated with fibulae at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. We can also point to the occasional interment of animals in grave fields. Known examples include the Roman burial field of Tiel-Medel-Hazenkamp, where both a horse and a cattle grave (with a fibula) are documented.³⁸³ Horse graves are also known from Roman grave fields, including Zaltbommel-De Wildeman,³⁸⁴ Valkenburg,³⁸⁵ and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg.³⁸⁶ It is suggested for both Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and Tiel-Medel-Hazenkamp that the graves could be those of stallions used to breed horses for the Roman army.³⁸⁷ Here too, the horses were assigned a special significance and were therefore buried with particular care. Horses and dogs were also buried in early medieval cemeteries, both separately and together with humans.³⁸⁸ Once again, this demonstrates the special bond that could exist between people and animals.

The third interpretation relates to the burial of animals that had died of disease. This tends to be the common interpretation for medieval and modern-era animal graves in particular. Huijbers is one such researcher who assumes that most animal burials from the Middle Ages and Modern Period involve animals that died of disease.³⁸⁹ The disease will have rendered them unclean and inedible. Huijbers views the fact that these animals were often buried on the fringes of yards and settlements as a form of marginalisation, but also an expression of the ambivalent nature of the animal that had died of disease.³⁹⁰ The fact that it is mainly cattle and horses that were buried with care also attests to the respect felt for these animals, which had a close relationship with humans.³⁹¹ Pig burials are less frequent, perhaps reflecting a greater

distance between humans and pigs.³⁹² Here too, the relationship between humans and animals probably played a role in the deposition practices of animal remains. Van der Jagt and Esser suggest that the standard interpretation of animal burials as deceased, sick animals does not do justice to the background of the individual deposits. They point out that the role of rituals should also be seriously considered for medieval and modern-era animal burials as it is entirely conceivable that traditions relating to animal burials did not cease with the advent of Christianity.

The prominence of horses and dogs

In the categories of skulls and (partial) skeletons, we see that horses and dogs are strongly represented, certainly in the Roman period, but also in the Middle Ages. As this picture does not reflect the general species distribution, conscious selection therefore seems to be at play. Dogs may have had a special significance by virtue of their association with guarding the house and yard, with hunting and with herding livestock. A 'personal' bond may also have existed between people and dogs. On the other hand, Nieuwhof points to the possible role of dogs in the excarnation (defleshing) of the deceased, which also gave them a special significance.³⁹³ It is also possible that dogs were eaten in a ritual context rather than as ordinary food.³⁹⁴

Burial rituals can provide clues to the special role and significance of both horses and dogs. The two species are regularly found in grave fields, buried separately or together with a deceased individual.³⁹⁵ With horses, reference is made to the fact that they represented a personal possession of great value and status.³⁹⁶ Like dogs, horses can also be associated with warrior equipment and with hunting. Prummel suggests that dogs were used in the early medieval funerary ritual to express the status of the deceased.³⁹⁷ This might explain why large dogs in particular were selected.

Preference for liminal locations

We have seen above that deposits with animal remains occur comparatively often in ditch structures. These are mainly the ditches that mark the boundary of a yard and/or settlement. They are liminal places, the boundaries between 'inside and outside'.³⁹⁸

In this light, it is interesting to look

³⁸² See also Nieuwhof 2015, 193.

³⁸³ Habermehl *et al.* 2019, 155–156.

³⁸⁴ Veldman & Blom 2010, 230.

³⁸⁵ Verhagen 1987.

³⁸⁶ Groot 2008.

³⁸⁷ Groot 2011, 93; Habermehl *et al.* 2019, 155–156.

³⁸⁸ Prummel 1992; Van der Jagt *et al.* 2014.

³⁸⁹ Huijbers 2007, 317–318.

³⁹⁰ Huijbers 2007, 317–318.

³⁹¹ Huijbers 2007, 318.

³⁹² Huijbers 2007, 318.

³⁹³ Nieuwhof 2015, 277.

³⁹⁴ Nieuwhof 2015, 148.

³⁹⁵ See, for example, Fern 2012; Prummel 1992; Witte 2006.

³⁹⁶ Witte 2006.

³⁹⁷ Prummel 1992.

³⁹⁸ See Nieuwhof 2015, 84, 153; Huijbers 2007, 394. Such liminal places are located 'between two worlds' and are therefore ambiguous and potentially 'perilous'. They are ideal places for rituals.

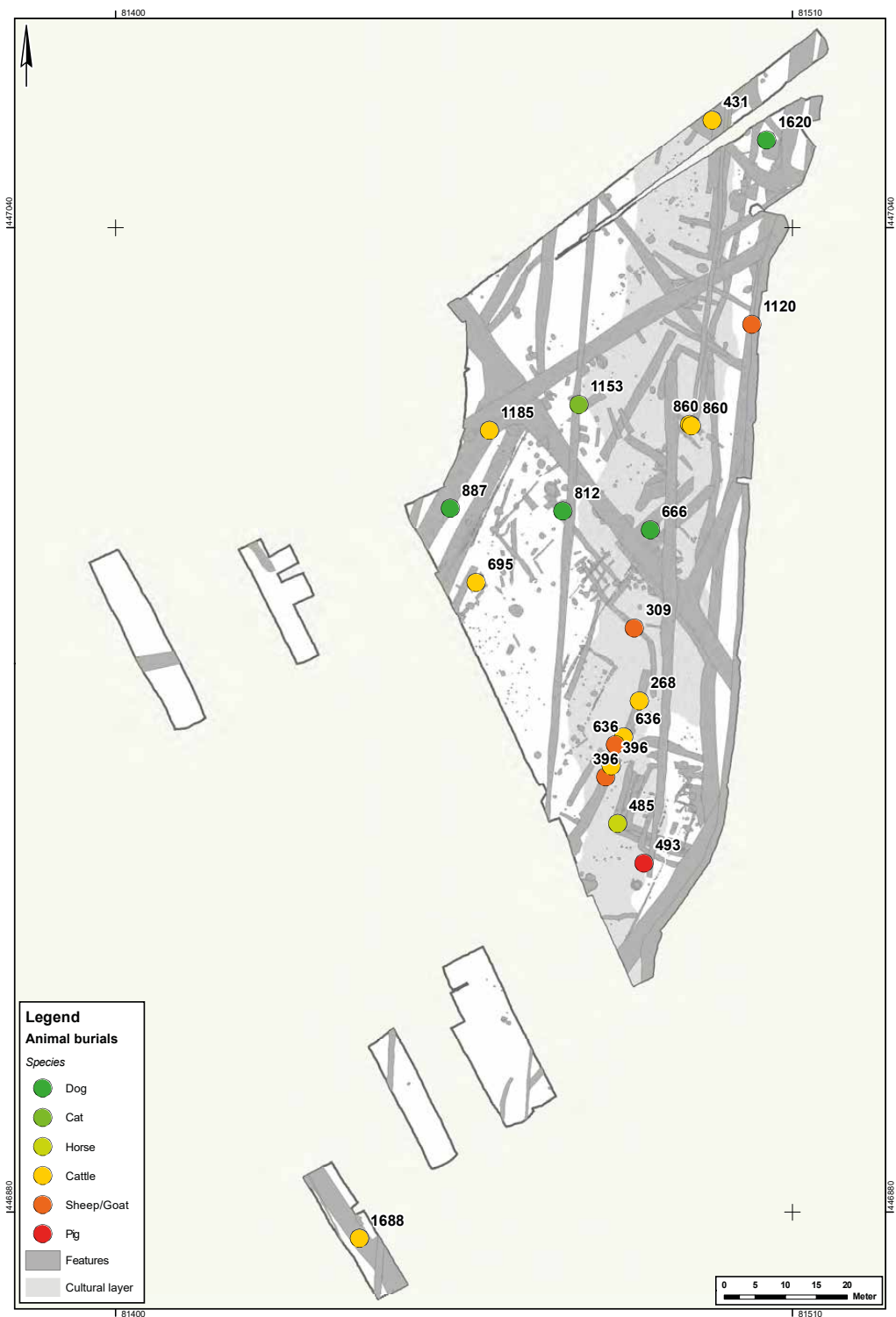


Fig. 6.31. Distribution of animal burials at the Delft-Harnaschpolder site (source: Bakx 2011, 116).

more closely at the Delft-Harnaschpolder and Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet sites. The distribution pattern for the former site (see Fig. 6.31) clearly shows that animal burials were almost exclusively located in or near ditch structures.³⁹⁹ The yard ditch of house 1 (c. AD 75–100) contained various deposits of animal remains, as did the later plot ditches that cannot be associated directly with habitation. We see a similar picture for deposits of animal remains at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet.⁴⁰⁰ The preference for liminal contexts is evident from the fact that eight of the twelve skull deposits come from ditches (mainly enclosure ditches) and three from a residual channel.⁴⁰¹ Ditches are also the most common context for (partial) skeletons.

But it is not only deposits on the outskirts of settlements that demonstrate this preference for liminal places. The vast majority of animal remain deposits that are associated with houses have been found near the entrances, along the (outside) walls or even in the walls.

Animal remains as objects of special significance

There are some indications that animal remains were used as special, magical or ritual objects. We can point first of all to animal skulls, (cattle) horns and antlers. Finds at Grootebroek-Schaperstraat and Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg suggest that skulls were indeed viewed as special objects. Part of a skull with a lichen deposit was found near a house at the former site. The excavator suggests that the skull may have been displayed above ground, near or on the house. At the Tiel site, the deposit was of a cattle skull with two holes and traces of wear. The skull appears to have been suspended. In both cases, it is quite likely that the skulls were used as special, possibly ‘magical’ objects, perhaps to protect the house. A similar phenomenon is also known from a much later period. In his study of modern-era rituals in Brabant, Rooijackers reports that a horse skull could be attached to the roof of a farmhouse to ward off evil.⁴⁰² And we also know from ethnographic studies that animal skulls (or skull parts, such as horn cores and jawbones) were displayed after slaughter in the context of ‘feasting’.⁴⁰³ In some instances, cattle bucrania – the part of the skull with the horn cores – appear to have been deliberately deposited.⁴⁰⁴ The special significance of cattle bucrania has

been demonstrated in many regions and goes back to the Mesolithic. Many cattle horns are known from bogs in Drenthe, Germany and Denmark, dating from the Early Neolithic to the Middle Ages.⁴⁰⁵ We can also point to a ritual building from the Middle Bronze Age that was excavated in Bargerooosterveld in Drenthe and which featured wooden horns.⁴⁰⁶ Cattle horns may have had a special significance, for example as fertility symbols.⁴⁰⁷ Excavations from further afield also reveal that cattle horns were special objects. Aurochs bucrania were displayed in domestic contexts at Çatalhöyük and bucrania have been found in large numbers in graves at Kerma.⁴⁰⁸ Lastly, we should emphasise that (complete) skulls are regularly found in houses and sometimes form part of deposits containing exceptional objects.

On occasions, antlers also appear to have functioned as objects with a special (symbolic) significance. A red deer skull fragment with antlers was found in a pit associated with a ritual enclosure at Houten-Castellum. And in the above-mentioned waterhole at Houten-Castellum, an antler fragment formed part of a deposit of special objects. Another special deposit containing antlers comprised two half antler branches and a full red deer antler branch amid a pile of pottery sherds, found in a pit at Culemborg-Hoge Prijs (Early Iron Age). We can also mention antler fragments from a rich deposit inside building 103 at Den Haag-Ockenburg II and burnt antler fragments from the core of a central posthole of a house at Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid.

The head can probably be regarded as the most important part of an animal. The skull could perhaps even be seen as representing the whole animal. In early medieval art, for example, we observe a clear emphasis on animal heads. Fern sees a connection with the decapitation of sacrificial animals.⁴⁰⁹ Witte also emphasises the special significance of horse heads and mentions decapitated horse skeletons and the possible marking of graves with the skull.⁴¹⁰

Other animal remains may also have been used as objects with special, symbolic meanings or functions. A possible example are the 13 talus bones (astragali) of cattle from a house ditch at Enkhuizen-Haling 13. Similar collections of astragali are known from other sites, as well as from graves, certainly until the Middle Ages.⁴¹¹ Different researchers associate astragali

³⁹⁹ Bakx 2011, 117, Table 10.4. The excavators qualify these (partial) skeletons and skulls as ‘notable depositions’, but state that it is unclear whether they should be classed as ritual (Bakx 2011, 147).

⁴⁰⁰ Groot 2009, 392.

⁴⁰¹ Groot 2009, 392.

⁴⁰² Rooijackers 1994, 504.

⁴⁰³ See, for example, Clarke 2001, 161–162; Adams 2004, 65, 73, 76. The practice of displaying primarily the skulls or bucrania of wild or domestic cattle is also known from other regions and periods (see, for example, Chaix 2001; Twiss 2015).

⁴⁰⁴ We can point here to a skull fragment with two horn cores in the early medieval well at Leiderdorp-Plantage, horn cores in a Bronze Age well at Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg and part of a skull with horns in a posthole of an early medieval outbuilding at Utrecht-A2.

⁴⁰⁵ Prummel & Van der Sanden 1995.

⁴⁰⁶ Van der Sanden 2002.

⁴⁰⁷ Hielkema *et al.* 2002, 155–156.

⁴⁰⁸ Relke 2007; Chaix 2001.

⁴⁰⁹ Fern 2012.

⁴¹⁰ Witte 2006.

⁴¹¹ Therkom 2004, 63, with further references; Thilderkvist 2013, 140.

(especially sets of loose talus bones) with oracles and divination.⁴¹²

Deposits with animal remains through time

Regarding developments in deposition practices involving animal remains, it is interesting to look at Morris's research on associated bone groups (ABGs) in southern England.⁴¹³ ABG is used as a neutral term to describe deposits with animal remains. Morris identifies a number of trends, the first of which is that ABGs are more common in the Iron Age, Roman period and Middle Ages than in the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Morris explains this difference on the basis of the type of site (grave contexts versus settlements) and the differing excavation scope, with older sites often investigated on a much smaller scale. A second trend is the increasing number of dog deposits. Whereas the species ratio in special deposits in earlier prehistory corresponds to that for 'normal' waste, this is no longer the case later. A third trend is that ABGs occur in different contexts, but that pits are particularly well represented.

The trends identified by Morris for in southern England partially correspond to the trends reconstructed above for the Netherlands. Deposits with animal remains are more common in the Netherlands in the Roman period and Middle Ages than in other periods, but the Iron Age and Early Middle Ages lag behind (Fig. 6.32). An increase over time in the number of dog deposits cannot be properly established for the Netherlands because of the small number of prehistoric deposits containing dogs. Deposits for the prehistoric periods are combined in Fig. 6.32. This shows a significant increase – compared to the prehistoric periods – in the proportion of horses in particular in the Roman period and Early Middle Ages, mainly at the expense of cattle. There is also a small but insignificant rise in the proportion of dogs. Certainly for the Roman period, the species ratio in deposits corresponds poorly to that of 'normal' waste. However, no clear long-term trends can be properly reconstructed.

⁴¹² Therkorn 2004, 63; Thildevik 2013, 140; Nieuwhof 2015, 191.

⁴¹³ Morris 2012.

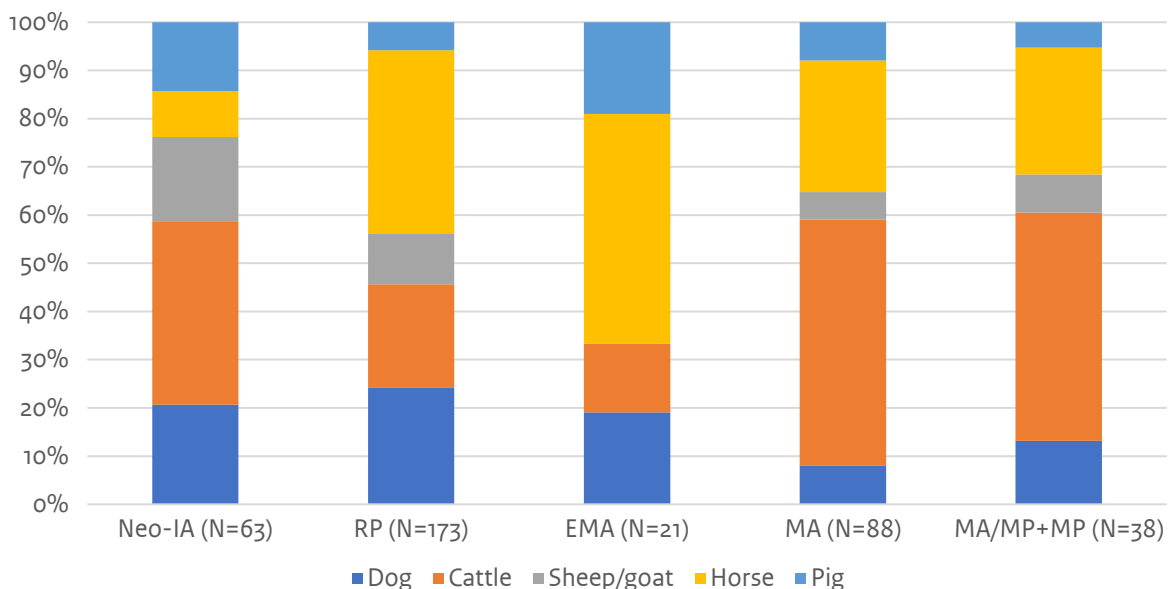


Fig. 6.32. Special deposits with the main animal species, by period. The prehistoric periods are combined, some transitional periods are omitted and the Middle Ages/Modern Period are combined.

Neo Roman Early medieval Medieval Medieval–Modern + Modern Dog Cattle Sheep/goat Horse Pig

6.5 Textile attributes

6.5.1 Introduction

The object category of textile attributes contains objects that can be directly associated with the production and processing of textiles. These are mainly loom weights and spindle whorls. Some rarer objects in this category are a needle, bobbin, weaving shuttle, weaving sword and thimble.

6.5.2 Loom weights

Loom weights are by far the most common objects in this category. They occur in special deposits from the Bronze Age to the High Middle Ages (Tables 6.14 and 6.15)). Loom weights were used with vertical – or warp-weighted – looms and served to keep the bundles of hanging warp threads taut. When the horizontal loom was invented in the twelfth century, loom weights were no longer needed.⁴¹⁴

Table 6.15 gives an overview of the inventoried deposits with loom weights, broken down by period and context. The table shows a clear chronological concentration in the Iron Age, especially the Early and Middle Iron Age. The Middle Ages are represented by a single deposit. However, caution is advised in view of the relatively low numbers. In terms of distribution by context, we see that pits dominate and that houses are also well represented. On the other hand, the number of deposits from ditches and (residual) channels is very limited. The few granary deposits all date to the Iron Age.

Houses and granaries

For deposits in houses, six were found in postholes, five in pits directly associated with houses and two in entrance ditches. All the granary deposits occurred in postholes.

Whenever specifically interpreted, deposits with loom weights are referred to as closing deposits.⁴¹⁵

Loom weights from postholes all involve a single weight or one or several fragments. The weights are often fragmented, but complete specimens were deposited in postholes in houses at Ulft Biezenakker and Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat. Postholes of houses at Ulft-Biezenakker, Malden-Broeksingel (houses 1 and 2) and Ede-Park Reehorst yielded fragments of a loom weight along with pottery. Loom weight pieces were deposited in the core of an aisle posthole in house 45AH at Meteren-De Bogen. The same applies to the complete loom weight at Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat. The excavator suggests that the fragmented loom weight in the central posthole of the above-mentioned house at Ede-Park Reehorst may have been deliberately broken.

Some pits associated with houses contained a sizeable number of loom weight fragments. A pit inside a house at Meteren-De Bogen (2000–1500 BC) contained fragments of at least ten loom weights, together with burnt loam. Three pits at the entrance to a house at Zutphen-Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk yielded a total of 142 loom weight fragments. Loom weight deposits are also specifically linked to house entrances at Utrechtse Heuvelrug-Driebergen Lange Dreef and Tiel-Medel-De Reth. A deposit near the entrances to a house at Utrechtse Heuvelrug contained fragments of two loom weights and a large quantity of pottery, while a deposit at the entrance to Tiel house 8002 contained a loom weight, complete vessels, ceramic discs, sling bullets and a fibula.

Deposits from postholes or granaries are known, for example, from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (three loom weights in the core of a posthole), Culemborg-Hoge Prijs (two loom weights, together with burnt loam and 4.2 kg of pottery), Borgharen-Daalderveld-Pasestraat (several burnt loom weights) and Wehl-Heideslag (a loom weight, (partly burnt) pottery and natural stone).

⁴¹⁴ Huijbers 2007, 334.

⁴¹⁵ It is also suggested that the loom weight from the core of an aisle posthole at Breedeweg-Parachutistenstraat could be a foundation deposit made when the house was renovated.

Table 6.14. Overview of special deposits with loom weights and loom weight fragments.

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Alphen	Kerkakkers	pit	pit	22 loom weight fragments, large quantity of pottery and natural stone	-600	-400
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	2 loom weights, 2 spindle whorls and many quernstone fragments	250	400
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	loom weight, approx. 13 kg of pottery and charred construction timber	250	400
Borgharen	Daalderveld/ Pasestraat	granary	posthole	several burnt loom weights	-500	-400
Borne	Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch	pit	pit	2 loom weight fragments, part of a large composite deposit	-19	70
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	silo	silo	loom weight fragments, approx. 7 kg of pottery, natural stone and charcoal layer, large quantity of spelt wheat	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	loom weight fragments, ceramic knobbed macehead, bobbin and flint axe	-500	-350
Breda	Moskes	pit	pit	7 loom weights (2 complete), spindle whorl, large quantity of pottery and a whetstone	-800	-250
Breda	Steenakker	waterhole	waterhole	2 loom weights, approx. 25 kg of burnt pottery, whetstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam	-900	-400
Breedeweg	Parachutistenstraat	house	posthole	complete loom weight in aisle posthole	-250	-19
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	2 complete loom weights, loom weight fragments, spindle whorl, burnt loam, natural stone and iron sickle	-800	-500
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	fragments of 2 loom weights, approx. 3 kg of burnt pottery and burnt loam	-650	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	granary	posthole	2 loom weights, 4.2 kg of pottery and burnt loam	-500	-250
Culemborg	Prijsseweg/ Goilberdingen	waterhole	waterhole	8 loom weights, some of them complete	-800	70
Delft	Harnaschpolder	pit	pit	78 virtually complete loom weights, spindle whorl and dog skeleton	100	200
Den Haag	Oude Waaltdorperweg	pit	pit	loom weight fragments (5 MNI), amber bead, flint arrowhead and pottery sherds	-1800	-1100
Ede	Park Reehorst, fase 1-3	house	posthole	21 fragments of (deliberately?) broken loom weights in central posthole	-170	-50
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	loom weight, spindle whorl, arrowhead, whetstone, finger ring, fibula, horse skull and pottery	275	425
Ermelo	Hamburgerweg/Oude Telgterweg	pit	pit	2 (fragmented) loom weights, 2 spindle whorls and 1093 pottery sherds	-749	-236
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	granary	posthole	3 loom weights in posthole core	-250	-19
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	ditch	ditch	half a loom weight, together with complete quernstone	1100	1135
Goirle	Huzarenwei	pit	pit	loom weight fragments (20 MNI) + 9 almost complete loom weights	-800	-500
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	loom weight fragment on bottom of residual channel	-450	-400
Malden	Broeksingel	house	posthole	loom weight fragments, pottery	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	house	pit	loom weight fragment	-500	-250
Malden	Broeksingel	pit	posthole	loom weight fragment, pottery	-500	-19
Malden	Broeksingel	house	posthole	loom weight fragment, pottery	-400	-200
Meteren	De Bogen	house	pit	loom weight fragments (10 MNI), burnt loam	-2000	-1500
Meteren	De Bogen	house	posthole	loom weight fragments in posthole core	-1500	-1100
Middelaar	Kopseweg	unknown	unknown	loom weight in upright pot	-250	70

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	(residual) channel	channel layer	5 loom weights, spindle whorl and large quantity of pottery	-30	15
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	house	entrance ditch	loom weight, pottery, ceramic discs, sling bullets and fibula	1	30
Twello	De Schaker	pit	pit	14 complete (fragmented) loom weights	-800	-500
Twello	De Schaker	pit	pit	several loom weight fragments, large quantity of pottery	-800	-500
Ulft	Biezenakker	house	posthole	loom weight, pottery	-800	-500
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Driebergen Lange Dreef	house	entrance ditch	fragments of 2 loom weights, large quantity of pottery	-300	-100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	complete loom weight, complete pieces of pottery	200	300
Weert	Kampershoek Noord, fase 2	pit	pit	loom weight fragments, natural stone and 1461 sherds of burnt pottery	-800	-250
Wehl	Heideslag	granary	posthole	loom weight, pottery and natural stone	-800	-500
Wolder	Cannerberg	pit	pit	15 complete loom weights in a row	-800	-500
Zutphen	Looërenk	house	cultural layer	concentration of possible loom weight fragments (around houses 9 and 10)	-1800	-1100
Zutphen	Looërenk	pit	pit	almost complete set of loom weights	-1515	-1437
Zutphen	Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk	house	pit	loom weight fragments, left of entrance to house 1	-1100	-500
Zutphen	Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk	house	pit	loom weight fragments, right of entrance to house 1	-1100	-500
Zutphen	Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk	house	pit	loom weight fragments, at centre of entrance to house 1	-1100	-500

Table 6.15. Overview of special deposits with loom weights, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Granaries	Wells	Pits	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
BA	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	5
BA-IA	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	4
IA	8	4	1	11	-	1	-	25
IA-RP	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
RP	1	-	3	3	-	1	-	8
MA	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	12	4	6	18	1	2	1	45

Pits with deposits of fragmented material

Over a third of the loom weight deposits involved – often large – deposits of diverse fragmented material, mainly in pits, waterholes and wells. These deposits date predominantly to the Early and Middle Iron Age. Pits that are directly associated with houses have been discussed above.

Deposits from other contexts usually

comprise fragments of one or more loom weights, often together with large quantities of frequently burnt pottery, and often burnt loam and natural stone. Besides loom weights, these deposits sometimes contained spindle whorls. Good examples are known from Twello-De Schaker, Weert-Kampershoek-Noord fase 2, Breda-Steenakker, Cuijk-De Nielt and Alphen-Kerkackers. Waterhole 12 at Breda-Steenakker yielded two loom weights, some 25 kg of burnt pottery, whetstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam. An early Roman pit at Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch contained some 48 kg of partly burnt pottery, hearth collar fragments, charred grain, animal bone and pieces of two loom weights. This type of deposit comprising fragmented and often partly burnt material is frequently linked to special practices surrounding the abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard. They probably contain a selection of household goods.

Deposits with possible loom weight sets

Rather than just one or a few loom weights, some deposits may have contained virtually complete sets, which functioned as such as part of a loom. These may then have been deposited together once the loom was dismantled as part

of special practices surrounding the abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard. In all cases, these sets were deposited in pits, sometimes clearly near houses.

The inventoried dataset contains several examples of large sets of loom weights, often with up to twelve or 15 weights. Fifteen complete loom weights were arranged in a row in a pit at Wolder-Cannerberg (Early Iron Age), 14 weights were found at the bottom of a pit at Twello-De Schaker (Early Iron Age) and 15 weights came from a pit near house 17 at Zutphen-Looërenk (Middle Bronze Age).⁴¹⁶ Another interesting find concerns the above-mentioned 142 loom weights fragments deposited in three pits near the entrance to house 1 at Zutphen-Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age). Unfortunately, there is no clarity regarding the minimum number of loom weights that can be reconstructed from these fragments. However, the location of the pits suggests that this deposit should also be associated with the abandonment/dismantling of the house. A final sizable loom weight deposit comes from pit 115 at Goirle-Huzarenwei (Early Iron Age), which yielded 285 fragments of at least twenty weights and a further nine almost complete weights. This is roughly twice as many weights as in the deposits described above.

A deposit of a different kind is a second-century dog burial that was covered by no fewer than 78 loom weights (Delft-Harnaschpolder) (Fig. 6.33). This deposit differs from the ones described above in terms of both dating and structure. It must definitely involve loom weight sets from several looms.

Composite deposits with loom weights

Besides deposits containing a large quantity of fragmented material, several special composite deposits merit some attention. In addition to the dog skeleton and loom weights described above, this concerns deposits at Den Haag-Oude Waalsdorperweg (Middle Bronze Age), Middelaar-Kopseweg (Late Iron Age–Early Roman period), Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (Middle Iron Age) and Eme-Laaksche veld (Late Roman period). The Middelaar deposit



Fig. 6.33. Pit with 78 loom weights, covering a dog skeleton (not visible in the photo) at Delft-Harnaschpolder. (source: Bakx 2011, Fig. 3.15).

was of a loom weight in an upright pot. The feature context for this deposit is not known, unfortunately. The deposit from Den Haag is much bigger and contained, in addition to pottery sherds and loom weight fragments (5 MNI), an amber bead and a flint arrowhead. The youngest fill phase of a well at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded parts of loom weights, combined among other things with a ceramic bobbin and a flint axe. Lastly, the deposit at Eme-Laaksche veld contained a spindle whorl, loom weight, whetstone, finger ring, fibula, horse skull and sherds of a footed beaker.

⁴¹⁶ The concentration of fragments of possible loom weights around houses 9 and 10 at Zutphen-Looërenk can perhaps also be understood in this light. We can also mention a pre-Malta deposit with fragments of at least twelve loom weights in a storage pit next to a house at Colmschate-Swormink, together with 776 pottery sherds (81 MNI) (Groenewoudt & Verlinde 1989).

Combinations of loom weights and spindle whorls

Loom weights appear together with spindle whorls in various deposits. These combined finds occur in pits at Cuijk-De Nielt (pit 25031), Delft-Harnaschpolder, Eme-Laaksche veld, Ermelo-Hamburgerweg and Breda-Moskes (pit 43), a well at Assum and the residual channel at Tiel-Medel-De Reth.

6.5.3 Spindle whorls

Spindle whorls, like loom weights, also occur regularly in special deposits (Table 6.16), from the Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age to the High–Late Middle Ages. Spindle whorls were used to spin flax and wool yarn by hand.

Table 6.17 presents an overview of inventoried deposits with spindle whorls, by period and context. In terms of chronological distribution, spindle whorls also show a clear concentration in the Iron Age, and again, especially the Early and Middle Iron Age. The Middle Ages are also fairly well represented. When it comes to distribution by context, pits dominate once again, followed by houses and (out)buildings. For pits, the main concentration is in the Early and Middle Iron Age. As with loom weights, we also note an absence of spindle whorl deposits in ditches.

Spindle whorls in houses, (out)buildings and granaries

The earliest spindle whorl deposits in houses come from pits. These are a pit near house 11 at Breda-Moskes (partly burnt pottery, natural stone (including tools), large quernstone fragments and a spindle whorl) (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age), Valkenswaard-Waalreseweg (some pottery sherds, a complete quernstone and a spindle whorl) (Early Iron Age) and Well-Aijen-Sintelenberg/ Aijerbandstraat (partly burnt pottery, a pecking/rubbing stone, natural stone and a spindle whorl) (Early Iron Age). The latter site probably involved a hearth or fire pit.

The postholes that yielded the earliest spindle whorls cannot be reconstructed into part of a structure. Postholes at Pesse-Fluitenbergh (Middle Iron Age) and Borger-Daalkampen (Late Bronze Age–Iron Age) yielded a single spindle whorl and a combination of a spindle whorl and

partly burnt pottery respectively.

A spindle whorl at the bottom of a posthole of a house at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid is interpreted by the excavator as a foundation deposit and dates to the Early Roman period. All other spindle whorls found in the postholes of houses date to the Middle Ages. Of interest are the three deposits at Best-Aarle, where spindle whorls were found in the core structure of houses 564 and 591 and outbuilding 529. More specifically, they occurred in the core of a truss posthole in house 564 and the outbuilding. The excavator suggests a possible interpretation as foundation deposits but the placement in the cores would also match an interpretation as closing deposits. Interesting finds were collected from the features of building 417 at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker, including a lead spindle whorl, an arrowhead and a key. This combination of spindle whorl and key is also known from a special deposit in the corner of house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers, which contained a spindle whorl, scissors, a key and a needle. A final composite deposit from this period comes from Nederweert-Kerneelhoven, where special objects, including a spindle whorl, horseshoes and once again an iron key, were deposited in two pits.

With regard to granaries (dated to the Late Bronze Age–Iron Age and Early Iron Age), both instances involve loose spindle whorls found in postholes. The fact that one of the spindle whorls is burnt could indicate that it was deposited after the granaries were abandoned/dismantled.

Spindle whorls in extensive composite deposits

As with pits that are directly associated with houses, other pits also predominantly yield large deposits of fragmented material. The pits often date to the Early or Middle Iron Age. Good examples are found at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (a spindle whorl, 4 kg of pottery, stone tools), Lomm-Hoogwatergeul (a spindle whorl, 1905 pottery sherds, a quernstone and whetstone), Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen (a spindle whorl, natural stone and 812 pottery sherds) and Ermelo-Hamburgerweg (two spindle whorls, loom weights and 1093 pottery sherds). Pits of this kind are generally associated with special practices surrounding the abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard.

Table 6.16. Overview of special deposits with spindle whorls/spindle whorl fragments.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	2 spindle whorls, 2 loom weights and quernstones, etc.	250	400
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	posthole	spindle whorl in core of truss posthole	890	940
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	posthole	spindle whorl	1114	1325
Best-Aarle	Aarle	outbuilding	posthole	spindle whorl in core of truss posthole	1175	1200
Borger	Daalkampen	granary	posthole	spindle whorl	-1100	-19
Borger	Daalkampen	pit	pit	spindle whorl, pottery	-800	-500
Borger	Daalkampen	(out)building?	posthole	spindle whorl, pottery (7 MNI)	-500	-19
Borger	N34	pit	pit	2 spindle whorls, pottery	-800	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	spindle whorl, 4 kg of pottery and stone tools	-500	-350
Breda	Huifakker	pit	pit	fragments of spindle whorls, pottery	-19	270
Breda	Moskes	house	pit	spindle whorl, charcoal and burnt loam	-1100	-500
Breda	Moskes	cellar pit	pit	spindle whorl, 7 loom weights, large quantity of pottery and whetstone	-800	-250
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	spindle whorl, loom weights, burnt loam, natural stone and iron sickle	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	granary	posthole	decorated spindle whorl	-725	-700
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	house	pit	spindle whorl, large quantity of pottery, animal bone and burnt loam	100	130
Den Haag	Wijndaelerplantsoen	pit	pit	spindle whorl, 2 almost complete pots	-250	-100
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	building	posthole	lead spindle whorl, arrowhead and key (house 417)	900	925
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	house	posthole	complete spindle whorl at bottom of posthole	0	75
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	spindle whorl, loom weight, arrowhead, whetstone, finger ring, fibula, horse skull and pottery, etc.	275	425
Ermelo	Hamburgerweg/Oude Telgterweg	pit	pit	2 spindle whorls, loom weights and 1093 pottery sherds	-749	-236
Geldrop-Mierlo	Genoehouse	well	well	spindle whorl, wool and wooden weaving shuttle	1500	1700
Groningen	De Linie	pit	pit	spindle whorl, large quantity of pottery, Neolithic scraper	-1100	-500
Groningen	De Linie	waterhole	waterhole	spindle whorl, large quantity of pottery, animal bone, ard share and construction timber	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	pit	spindle whorl, human skull and partial sheep/goat skeleton	-500	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	pit	pit	spindle whorl, 1905 pottery sherds, quernstone and whetstone	-800	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase II	pit	pit	spindle whorl, many burnt stones and 50 pottery sherds	-800	-500
Malden	Broeksingel	pit	pit	spindle whorl, 119 pottery sherds, complete quernstone and glass bracelet fragment	-500	-19
Nederweert	Kerneelhoven	house	pit	spindle whorl, horseshoes	1200	1300
Pesse	Fluitenberg	(out)building?	posthole	spindle whorl	-500	-250
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	pit	spindle whorl, scissors, key and needle (in corner of house 22)	1100	1200
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	(residual) channel	channel layer	spindle whorl, 5 loom weights and large quantity of pottery	-30	15
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	glass spindle whorl, horse skull, worked antler, glass bead and sling bullet etc.	700	750
Valkenswaard	Waalreseweg	house	pit	spindle whorl, quernstone and pottery	-800	-625
Wehl	Norman Belvealstraat	pit	pit	complete spindle whorl, natural stone, pottery and burnt loam	0	100
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/ Aijerbandstraat	house	hearth or fire pit	spindle whorl, 129 pottery sherds and burnt stones	-800	-500
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 11	pit	pit	spindle whorl, natural stone and 812 pottery sherds	-500	-250

Table 6.17. Overview of special deposits with spindle whorls, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Granaries	Wells	Pits	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Total
BA-IA	1	1	-	-	1	-	3
IA	2	1	2	1	12	-	18
RP	2	-	-	1	3	1	7
MA	4	-	2	-	1	-	7
MP	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	9	2	4	3	17	1	36

Spindle whorls in special composite deposits

In some deposits, spindle whorls are associated with special objects. A good example is the pit deposit of Eme-Laaksche veld, described above. Another interesting deposit comes from pit 25022 at Houten-Castellum. The pit, which is part of the ritual place that was partly located in the residual channel, contained a spindle whorl, a human skull and a partial sheep/goat skeleton. Alongside a spindle whorl, a well at Geldrop-Mierlo-Genoehuis yielded wool and a wooden weaving shuttle. All these objects are associated with textile production. Lastly, a well at Assum-Waldijk/Assummervaart contained two spindle whorls, along with two loom weights and quernstones. In the instances described here, it would seem that spindle whorls were deliberately selected for deposition, perhaps in specific association with other objects.

6.5.4 Other textile-related objects

Besides the loom weights and spindle whorls, there are several other objects that can probably be classed as textile attributes. These are unique objects that only feature once in the inventoried dataset.

The first is the above-mentioned ceramic bobbin, which was found together with loom weights and a flint axe in a well at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (Middle Iron Age). The other objects in this category date from the Middle Ages and

Modern Period. A medieval pit at Diemen-Plangebied Noordflank Centrum yielded a complete wooden weaving sword – an implement used to beat in the weft of a fabric – (and a wooden case with a sliding lid). The deposit from house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers comes from roughly the same period. The needle, and probably the scissors, can be associated with textile-related activities. In both instances, the modern-era objects are well deposits. We have already referred to the wooden weaving shuttle – an implement onto which lengths of yarn are wound – and a quantity of wool from a well at Geldrop-Mierlo-Genoehuis (AD 1500–1700). The deposit from well 9 at Oudorp-Lauwershof contained a thimble, as well as three stone jugs (AD 1550–1600).

6.5.5 Discussion

Both loom weights and spindle whorls are functional objects that played a key role in the production and processing of textile in the domestic sphere. They will often have formed part of the house inventory. Loom weights barely feature in deposits after the Roman period, whereas spindle whorls are fairly well represented at this time, especially in deposits that can be directly associated with the house. Both loom weights and spindle whorls are rarely, if ever, deposited in ditches (the fringes of the yard and settlement), possibly reflecting the fact that textile-related activities belonged to the house's 'inner sphere'.

Loom weights and spindle whorls are ceramic objects that are well preserved in the soil. The fact that it is these objects that we find does not mean that other textile-related objects were not deposited. Examples include wooden objects, such as spindles, weaving swords and loom components, as well as wool, which will not have survived in many conditions. Nor will anything have remained of these objects if they were burned.

Loom weights and spindle whorls form part of diverse assemblages of fragmented material in a large proportion of the deposits presented here. Assemblages of this kind appear to involve the fragmented – and often burnt – remains of household goods and possibly built structures. Household goods included looms and spinning

and sewing implements. After the house was abandoned and dismantled, some of the destroyed household goods appear to have been 'interred' in and around the house, in pits/postholes that were part of the house structure, as well as in outbuildings, granaries and sometimes wells or waterholes. Postholes often contained a limited number of loom weights, loom weight parts or spindle whorls that may have been deliberately selected for deposition. However, several pits yielded complete sets of weights from looms that were dismantled when the house was abandoned.

The composition of some deposits seems to indicate that spindle whorls and loom weights were regarded as meaningful objects to which a symbolic significance was assigned.⁴¹⁷ Some deposits contained several objects that emphasise the theme of textile production and/or processing. We can point here to deposits at Someren-Hoge Akkers (a spindle whorl, scissors, needle (and key)), Geldrop-Mierlo-Gnoenhuis (a weaving shuttle, wool and spindle whorl) and various deposits in which loom weights and spindle whorls co-occur.

Textile production and processing were activities that took place in the inner sphere of the house, where women played a key role. For such objects, Huijbers points to the 'metaphorical connection with the domain of the female genus'.⁴¹⁸ She argues that a deposit like the one at the Someren house would have been assembled on the basis of notions and values of 'femininity'. And for earlier periods too, textile production and processing are often explicitly linked to female roles and tasks.⁴¹⁹ The association between spindle whorls and keys, as found in the medieval deposits at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker, Someren-Hoge Akkers and Nederweert-Kerneelhoven, deserve specific mention in this regard. According to Huijbers, keys are associated with the role of women as keepers of the house and home.⁴²⁰

6.6 Food attributes

6.6.1 Introduction

This object category comprises objects that are linked to food production and processing. The relevant activities include tilling the soil, harvesting crops and processing crops into food products. The objects in question are quernstones, sickles, scythes, plough shoes and ard share points. These tools were directly linked to the livelihoods of farming societies and will therefore have had a special significance, not only in functional terms but perhaps also symbolically. We will come back to this last point later.

6.6.2 Quernstones

Quernstones are by far the best-represented objects within the object category of food attributes. They occur in special deposits over a long period, from the Neolithic to the Late Middle Ages (Table 6.18). They are found in a range of contexts, including houses, wells, pits, ditches and channel fills. Quernstones can be regarded as household objects, used for the grinding of grain. As such, they are inextricably linked to food production and processing and to the daily diet of the household. Alongside this practical significance, quernstones probably also had significant symbolic connotations.

General

There is a total of 122 inventoried deposits with quernstones (Table 6.19). In some instances, several deposits are documented at the same site. There are usually two or three quernstone deposits per site, but the settlement of Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, for example, yielded no fewer than eleven (Table 6.18).

The majority date to the Iron Age (40%), but the Roman period is also well represented (26%). The Bronze Age and Middle Ages have roughly the same number of deposits (12% and 13%). Pits are the dominant context, although wells are also well represented, followed by houses. Whereas pits continue to dominate in the Iron Age, wells and houses are the most

⁴¹⁷ See also Nieuwhof 2015, 178. The fact that spinning may have an important symbolic significance – possibly associated with personal identity or the supernatural – is also evident from finds of spindles in graves. A spindle was used in hand spinning but was also associated as a symbolic object with the Three Fates (who wove the threads of human life) and with Volva or Veleda, wise women or visionaries of high repute, who practised *seid*, a kind of magic or 'witchcraft', the name of which means 'thread or cord.'

⁴¹⁸ Huijbers 2007, 367.

⁴¹⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 178.

⁴²⁰ Huijbers 2007, 339–340; see also Schabink 1999.

Table 6.18. Overview of special deposits with quernstones or quernstone fragments.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Achterberg	Achterberg-Oost	waterhole	waterhole	tephrite fragments, pottery and cooking stones	-800	-250
Achterberg	Achterberg-Oost	waterhole	waterhole	tephrite fragments, 91 pottery sherds	-800	-250
Assen	Messchenveld II	pit	pit	2 quernstone fragments, 305 pottery sherds	-600	-450
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	large pieces of bedstone and running stone and possibly of a second bedstone (13 kg) at top of well, also a complete, fragmented pot, etc.	250	400
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	chunks of tephrite from 3 sets of quernstones (approx. 40 kg), large pottery sherds, 2 loom weights, 2 spindle whorls and partial chicken skeleton	250	400
Beek	Kerkeveld	pit	pit	quernstone with running stone	-5300	-4200
Bennekom	Boerhaavelaan, streekziekenhouse.	pit	well/waterhole	large quernstone (approx. 180 kg), deliberately fragmented	-905	-805
Boekel	Parkweg	house	cellar pit	quernstone, approx. 3000 pottery sherds and charcoal	-800	-500
Borger	Daalkampen	pit	pit	running stone and bedstone, pottery	-800	-250
Borger	Daalkampen	granary	posthole	large quernstone fragment	-250	-19
Borger	N34	pit	pit	3 quernstones, large quantity of pottery, animal bone and hammer stone	-1100	-500
Borger	N34	pit	pit	3 quernstones, 2 hammer stones	-1100	-250
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	pit	pit	quernstone	-1800	-1100
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	quernstone, concentration of pottery	-5300	-2000
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	hearth pit	2 quernstones, broken erratic boulder and hearth stones	-500	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	possible hearth pit	quernstone, 2 rubbing/running stones, 1 pecking/hammer stone and 1 pecking/rubbing stone	-500	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	large fragments of at least 5 different quernstones, including 1 set of running stone and bedstone	0	70
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	posthole	3 kg of quernstone fragments, whetstone and 5 kg of bricks in post-removal pit over central posthole	150	200
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	outbuilding	posthole	large fragment of tephrite	270	350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	outbuilding	posthole	quernstone fragments, whetstone and grinding block	450	1000
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	3 quernstone fragments	725	900
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	posthole	quernstone fragments in 2 postholes of house	850	900
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	large fragments of running stone and bedstone	850	1000
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	complete bedstone	875	925
Boxtel	Korenmolen	house	posthole	large number of quernstone fragments, large quantity of burnt loam and charcoal in youngest fill/post-removal pit	100	200
Breda	Huifakker	well	well	quernstone fragments, complete pot, at bottom of well	-500	-19
Breda	Huifakker	house	posthole	quernstone fragments, large quantity of tuff	250	300
Breda	Moskes	house	pit	larger pieces of quernstone, spindle whorl, flint flakes, whetstones, pottery, burnt loam and charcoal	-800	-500
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	pit	pit	2 complete quernstones, large quantity of broken tephrite	-994	-831
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	pit	pit	17 kg of quernstone fragments	270	450
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	well	well	complete military handmill, complete spearhead	109	150
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	granary	posthole	3 large chunks of tephrite, animal bone and pottery	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	waterhole	oval quernstone	-800	-250
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	pit	pit	3 quernstones (1 broken)	-2850	-2600
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	ditch	ditch	quernstone fragments near complete horse skeleton	50	100
Den Haag	Ypenburg-Locatie 4	pit	pit	granite bedstone, (probably) complete pot	-3700	-3435
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	unknown	unknown	bedstone and running stone of handmill (one atop the other), no feature context	0	75
Deventer	Siemelinksweg/De Braam	house	hearth	quernstone, concentration of stones	-800	-500

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	well	complete quernstone, grinding block, rubbing stone, virtually complete pot and 2 fibulae	-600	-400
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	well	3 complete quernstones, quernstone fragment	-600	-400
Didam	Kerkwijk	house	posthole	quernstone fragments, pottery, in central posthole	-500	-250
Didam	Kerkwijk	granary	posthole	complete quernstone	-500	-200
Drechterland	Houtpolder	well	well	2 used quernstones, partial skeletons of 3 elk and complete pot	-1800	-1050
Eckelrade	Putstraat	pit	pit	quernstone fragments, 55 pottery sherds and iron knife	150	250
Ede	Molen Concordia	house	pit	quernstone fragments, fragment of cobble and large flake	-1100	-800
Elst	Het Bosje	pit	pit	square granite quernstone, burnt supply of grain	-1500	-1150
Elst	Lijnden/ Tobbenhofsestraat	waterhole	waterhole	almost complete bedstone of pot quern	1350	1500
Elst	Park Lingezege, de linten	pit	pit	fragment of quernstone or whetstone, fragment of tuff	150	270
Emmen	Frieslandweg	waterhole	waterhole	bedstone of handmill	100	300
Enkhuizen	Haling 20E	outbuilding	posthole	complete, ovoid quernstone	-1800	-1050
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	ditch	ditch	complete quernstone, half of disc-shaped loom weight	1100	1135
Grijpskerke	Kievitshoekweg	pit	pit	fragments of 2 quernstones, part of large deposit (including approx. 660 kg of pottery)	-200	-150
Groenlo	Woerdseweg	well	well	quernstone fragments, pecking stone, fragment of pecking/rubbing stone, fragment of rubbing stone/whetstone and fragment of grinding block	651	899
Gronsveld	Duijsterstraat	pit	pit	"quernstone fragments, many cooking stones, burnt animal bone, pottery sherds (23 MNI) and bottom of pot (on bottom of pit)"	-700	-500
Heiloo	Hoogeweg, UWP 5	ditch	ditch	quernstone fragments, skull of adult horse	450	750
Heiloo	Stationsplein	pit	pit	quernstone fragments, 145 pottery sherds	0	300
Helden	Panningen-Stokx	pit	pit	tephrite fragments, pottery (mainly storage jars) and burnt loam	-800	-500
Hengelo	Plangebied Winkelskamp	pit	pit	complete quernstone	-2000	-800
Hengelo	Plangebied Winkelskamp	pit	pit	complete quernstone	-2000	-800
Herpen	Wilgendaal	pit	pit	complete quernstone, 8.2 kg of pottery (mainly large pots/storage jars) as paving	-350	-200
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch	ditch	complete quernstone	-2000	-1800
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch	ditch	complete quernstone	-2000	-800
Horst	Schengweg 5-7	pit	pit	fragmented bedstone	-800	-250
Houten	Castellum	pit/ritual place	pit	large quernstone fragment in pit near ritual enclosure	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	pit/ritual place	pit	large quernstone fragment in pit near ritual enclosure	-350	-250
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	fragments of quernstones (including a set)	70	100
Houten	Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	(residual) channel	channel layer	quernstone (or anvil) at bottom of channel	-2150	-1800
Hulsel	Kerkekkers	house	posthole	tephrite fragments, stone tools, fragments of pottery and roof tile	500	700
Itteren	Emmaus	pit	pit	quernstone, pecking/rubbing stone	-780	-417
Katwijk	Zanderij	well	well	quernstone fragment, 5 pieces of worked limestone	100	200
Lent	Steltestraat	house	ditch	running stone in wall ditch	70	270
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	pit	pit	quernstone fragments, whetstone	-800	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase III	pit	pit	possible quernstone fragment, grinding block	-800	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase III	pit	pit	complete quernstone	-500	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase II	waterhole	waterhole	large quernstone fragments of natural stone (including grinding/pecking tools) and 1250 pottery sherds	-800	-500
Malden	Broeksingel	pit	pit	complete quernstone	-500	-19

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Margraten	Scheuldersteeg	pit	pit	half a quernstone, 36 pottery sherds	150	250
Midlaren	De Bloemert	well	well	quernstone fragment, 2 whetstones, pottery and iron nail	-500	-250
Neede	Doctor A. Th. Plantenstraat	well	well	almost complete quernstone and pieces of natural stone holding the quernstone in place	750	1300
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	well	well	fragment of bedstone or running stone, rubbing stone fragment	-800	-500
Nuenen	De Luistruik, fase 1	waterhole	waterhole	quernstone fragments, approx. 8 kg of pottery, burnt loam and possible whetstone	-800	-19
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	house	platform	quernstone, 8 human skulls, etc.	-300	-200
Oosterhout	Park 15	pit	pit	tephrite fragments, pottery	-800	-500
Oss	De Geer	house	posthole	almost complete quernstone in post-removal pit above central posthole	0	70
Poeldijk	De Kreken fase 3	ditch	ditch	half a quernstone	-19	300
Reusel	Boegent	house	pit	possible running stone and bedstone	-1100	-500
Rhenen	Remmerden	(out)building?	posthole	complete quernstone	-2100	-1800
Rhenen	Remmerden (rotonde N225)	(out)building?	posthole	3 matching quernstone fragments from 2 postholes in post cluster	-250	-19
Rosmalen	Noord	pit	pit	bedstone placed upside down, on top of associated running stone	-800	-500
Rosmalen	Noord	palisade	pit	running stone and bedstone	-800	-500
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	well	well	6 quernstone fragments	125	270
Someren	Ter Hofstadlaan	ditch	ditch	87 kg of tephrite, 200 pottery sherds and burnt loam	1150	1175
Someren	Waterdael III	(out)building	posthole	21 kg of quernstone fragments from several post-removal pits	1125	1250
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	well	well	quernstone	-1100	-800
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	outbuilding	posthole	2 quernstone fragments	70	270
Tynaarlo	Donderen	pit	pit	complete quernstone, pottery. Indications of deliberate fragmentation	-800	-250
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvel	house	pit	complete quernstone on top of large pottery sherds	-250	70
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvel	house	wall ditch	2 large quernstone fragments, placed upright against one another in wall posthole	0	50
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvel	house	entrance ditch	large quernstone fragment	0	200
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuvel	house	entrance pit	large part of quernstone	40	100
Udenhout	Den Bogerd/Mortel	house	pit	quernstone fragments	-800	-500
Utrecht	De Meern-Burgemeester Middelweerdbaan	waterhole	waterhole	tephrite fragments, 2 almost complete pots	1	50
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	ritual place (?)	pit	quernstone fragments, sherd paving, ceramic bead, animal bone, burnt loam and charred grain	-25	100
Valkenswaard	Waalreseweg	house	pit	complete quernstone, pottery sherds and spindle whorl	-800	-625
Velden	De Vilgert	waterhole	waterhole	quernstone fragments, 56 pottery sherds and burnt loam	-500	-250
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house	sunken byre	quernstone fragments, several special metal objects, slag and part of whetstone	50	250
Venhuizen	Voetackers	waterhole	waterhole	crushed quernstone	-1800	-1050
Voerendaal	Ten Hove	pit	pit	quernstone fragments, 49 large pottery sherds (large pots) and burnt loam	-700	-600
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	complete running stone on bottom of well	200	300
Voorburg	Forum Hadriani	well	well	complete quernstone, on top of 2 bronze vessels and a wooden animal head	165	200
Vorden	Ruurloseweg	(out)building?	posthole	large quernstone fragments	-800	-19
Wateringen	Juliahof	house	entrance posthole	70 quernstone fragments	150	225
Wehl	Heideslag	granary	posthole	quernstone fragments, loom weight and pottery	-800	-500
Wehl	Norman Belvealstraat	house	pit	running stone and bedstone (one atop the other) in corner of sunken hut	70	270
Well	Hoogwatergeul Well-Aijen, werkvak 1	pit	pit	quernstone fragments, whetstone	-500	-250

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/ Aijerbandstraat	(out)building?	posthole	fragmented quernstone	-800	-19
Westeinde	Noormansveld	waterhole	waterhole	bedstone (or rubbing stone)	-800	-19
Westerbork	Hoofdstraat 36	(out)building?	posthole	quernstone fragments	900	1200
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 2/Kleine Kamp	pit	pit	intensively used running stone(s), pecking stone	-1800	-1100
Wijchen	Oosterweg/ Meerdreef	house	posthole	half a rotary quernstone in truss posthole	1000	1300
Wolder	Cannerberg	pit	pit	complete quernstone placed against the side of the pit	-800	-500
Zutphen	Eefdesse Enk	house	pit	complete quernstone	1100	500

Table 6.19. Overview of special deposits with quernstones, by period and deposition context.

	Houses/buildings	(Out)buildings (?)	Granaries	Pits	Ditches	Wells	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
Neo	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4
Neo-BA	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
BA	1	1	-	6	2	4	-	-	14
BA-IA	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3
IA	8	3	4	21	-	12	-	1	49
IA-RP	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
RP	11	2	-	5	2	11	-	1	32
MA	4	3	-	-	3	6	-	-	16
Total	26	10	4	39	7	33	1	3	122

common deposition contexts in the Roman period and Middle Ages, with pits declining in importance. Deposits in ditches, granaries and (residual) channels play only a modest role.

Houses, (out)buildings and granaries

Within this subdataset, 40 deposits (33%) can be associated with possible building structures. This involves 26 houses, ten possible (out) buildings and four granaries.

All the granaries date from the Iron Age. In three cases, the deposits are of quernstone fragments and in one instance a complete quernstone. All were deposited in postholes. In two deposits, the quernstone fragments were combined with other finds: pottery sherds, animal bone and a loom weight.

For (out)buildings, the structures date from different periods. It is sometimes not clear whether the postholes where deposits were found belonged to a building. These could be either one- or two-post structures. Complete quernstones were found in the features of two possible (out)buildings: a complete quernstone weighing 12.5 kg in a posthole at Rhenen-Remmerden and a complete, ovoid quernstone

in a posthole of an outbuilding at Enkhuizen-Haling 20E. The two other deposits involved quernstone fragments, whether a single large fragment, several fragments, or large quantities. For example, a Late Roman outbuilding at Tiel-Passewaaij yielded a single large piece of tephrite, for which the excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit.

At Rhenen-Remmerden, three fitting fragments of quernstone were found in two postholes that were part of a posthole cluster. These fragments are likely to have been deposited at the same time. A larger quantity of quernstone fragments is known from Someren-Waterdael III, where 76 fragments (about 21 kg) were collected from various post-removal pits of a late medieval building. Quernstone fragments are sometimes combined with other objects. Alongside quernstone fragments, the posthole of an early medieval outbuilding at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded a whetstone and a grinding block.

Deposits associated with houses include both complete quernstones and quernstone fragments. With regard to (almost) complete quernstones, we can mention Valkenswaard-Waalreneweg (a complete quernstone in a pit

inside a house from the Early Iron Age, together with pottery sherds and a spindle whorl), Oss-De Geer (an almost complete quernstone in the post-removal pit above a central posthole of an Early Roman house), Lent-Steltsestraat (a runner stone in the wall ditch of a Middle Roman house) and Zutphen-Eefdese Enk (a complete quernstone in a pit inside a late medieval house). The quernstone in the Early Roman house at Oss-De Geer is considerably older than the house itself. This 'antique' quernstone may have been an object imbued with a special significance.

In some cases quernstones are associated with hearths/hearth pits, in all instances as part of a natural stone deposit. A hearth pit in a house at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck contained the fragments of two quernstones, together with a broken erratic boulder and hearthstones. A large quernstone fragment was found in a second possible hearth pit at the same site, together with various stone tools. And a hearth at Deventer-Siemelinksweg/De Braam yielded a quernstone combined with a concentration of stones. It is difficult to give an unequivocal interpretation for these deposits. They could be objects that were deliberately placed or left behind in the hearth when the house was abandoned or dismantled. Deposits of this kind are indeed documented in areas where hearths tend to be better preserved (such as the wetlands of Noord- and Zuid-Holland and the northern terp region).⁴²¹ The fact that hearths were a common location for special deposition practices is also illustrated by other deposits in our dataset, as well as older finds, such as a runner stone beneath a hearth in a house at Paddepoel II.⁴²²

It is often assumed or established that deposits with quernstone fragments were deposited after the house in question was dismantled. These deposits sometimes occur in post-removal pits. In other instances, the positioning of the objects (in the core of the posthole, at the top of the posthole or in a post-removal pit) suggests the same interpretation. We know of examples from Wijchen-Oosterweghalve (a rotary quernstone in a truss posthole of a late medieval house), Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (3 kg of quernstone fragments in the post-removal pit over a central posthole, together with a whetstone and 5 kg of brick), Hulsel-Kerkekkers (quernstone fragments in a posthole, together with stone tools and

fragments of pottery and roof tile), Didam-Kerkwijk (a fragmented quernstone in a central posthole) and Oss-De Geer (a quernstone in a post-removal pit; see above). In addition, a pit in house 2 at Ede-Molen Concordia contained fragments of several quernstones, together with a cobble fragment and a large flint flake (1100–800 BC). This latter deposit is interpreted as a foundation or closing deposit; we think it more likely to be a closing deposit.

Wells and waterholes

Wells and waterholes are well represented contexts. Complete quernstones were found in twelve wells. The earliest deposits date from the Middle Bronze Age. A waterhole at Venhuizen-Voetackers contained a complete, pulverised and probably burnt quernstone. A well at Drechterland-Houtpolder-West (Middle Bronze Age) yielded two complete quernstones, as well as the partial skeletons of three young elk and a complete pot. Two wells at Didam-Kerkwijk (both 600–400 BC) contained complete quernstones. There were three complete quernstones in one of the wells, alongside quernstone fragments. The other well also yielded a grinding block, a rubbing stone, a virtually complete pot and two fibulae. We see similar deposits from much later periods as well. Many quernstone fragments were found in two wells at Assum-Waldijk/Assummervaart, which the excavators were able to reconstruct into complete quernstones (AD 250–400). In the first well, these were a bedstone and runner stone, while the second well contained fragments of three sets of quernstones. When and how the quernstones became fragmented is difficult to determine but it is quite conceivable that they were smashed when thrown into the well. In one of the wells a complete ceramic pot was shattered by the quernstones placed on top of it. Similarly, a quernstone lay atop a bronze basin and ladle in a well at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani (AD 165–200). And another example from the Roman period concerns a complete military handmill, which was deposited together with a complete spearhead in a well at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (AD 109–150). The above instances appear to largely involve deposits that marked the end of the life of the well or waterhole. A possible exception is a complete runner stone found at the bottom of a well at Voorburg-Arentsburg. Here the excavator

⁴²¹ See Nieuwhof 2015; Therkorn 2004.

⁴²² Nieuwhof 2015, 186, with further reference to Hopman 2013.

suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit ('consecration offering'). The youngest examples of deposits with complete quernstones are known from Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (AD 875–925) and Lijnden-Tobbenhofsestraat (AD 1350–1500). All in all, we can establish that the deposition of complete quernstones in wells was an age-old practice, from at least the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Middle Ages.

Parts of quernstone were deposited in various other wells/waterholes, often in combination with other objects. For the Iron Age, this mainly involved combinations with pottery, natural stone objects and burnt loam. Alongside large quernstone fragments, a waterhole at Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase III contained natural stone grinding/pecking tools and 1250 sherds of pottery (Early Iron Age). In addition to quernstone fragments, an Iron Age waterhole at Nuenen-De Luistruik phase 1 yielded some 8 kg of pottery, burnt loam and a possible whetstone. Quernstone fragments were combined with pottery and two whetstones in a well at Midlaren-De Bloemert (Middle Iron Age) and with pottery and cooking stones in two waterholes at Achterberg-Oost (Early–Middle Iron Age). We know of other combinations from an Early Roman waterhole at De Meern-Burgemeester Middelweerdlaan (quernstone fragments and two almost complete pots) and an early medieval well at Groenlo-Woerdseweg (quernstone fragments and natural stone pecking/rubbing/grinding tools).

Quernstones in pits

Pits dominate the deposition contexts during the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. In about half of all cases these are pits with complete quernstones (runner stones, bedstones or a combination). The other half is made up of pits with quernstone fragments. In both instances, they occur regularly with other objects.

The complete quernstones are loose stones, combinations of a bedstone and a runner stone (Beek-Kerkeveld, Borger-Daalkampen, Wehl-Norman Belvealstraat and Rosmalen-Noord) or several quernstones together (Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen and Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen). Quernstones were sometimes deposited in association with other objects. Complete quernstones in pits at Den Haag-Ypenburg-Locatie 4, Tynaarlo-Donderen, Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveld and Herpen-Wilgendaal

were combined with pottery. At Herpen it involved a pit near the bank of a watercourse, with a paving of pottery (about 8.2 kg). Another interesting deposit concerns a complete quernstone covered by a layer of charred barley and emmer wheat in a Bronze Age pit at Elst-Het Bosje. The excavator suggests that the pit was specially dug for the deposit.

The remaining deposits involve quernstone fragments. These fragments are chiefly combined with pottery and stone tools (whetstones and grinding blocks, hammerstones and pecking/rubbing stones). Sometimes they are large composite deposits, such as at Breda-Moskes (pottery, burnt loam, a spindle whorl, flint flakes, whetstones and charcoal), Gronsveld-Duijsterstraat (pottery sherds (23 MNI), many cooking stones, burnt animal bone and the bottom of a pot) and Grijskerke-Kievitshoekweg (including 660 kg of pottery, a bronze bracelet fragment, animal and human bone). Besides quernstone fragments, pit S15 at Utrecht-Rijnvliet contained a paving of sherds, a ceramic bead, animal bone, burnt loam and charred grain. This latter pit may have been part of a ritual place. Quernstone fragments have also been found in pits that can be associated with the ritual enclosure at Houten-Castellum.

Quernstones in ditches

Seven inventoried ditch deposits date to the Bronze Age, Roman period and Middle Ages. Complete quernstones were deposited in some ditches, such as in two Bronze Age ditches at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg and in a medieval yard ditch at Geldermalsen-Stationslocatie. Half a quernstone was found in a Roman ditch at Poeldijk-De Kreken. Deposits with quernstone fragments are known from ditches at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (AD 50–100) and Heiloo-Hoogeweg (AD 450–750). Interestingly, both instances involve combinations of quernstones and horses. The Den Haag deposit entailed a complete horse skeleton, with a quarter of a quernstone placed at the head and a smaller piece at the ribs. The ditch at Heiloo contained burnt quernstone fragments and a horse skull. Lastly, a concentration of no fewer than 87 kg of quernstone fragments was deposited in a medieval yard ditch at Someren-Ter Hofstadlaan, together with pottery sherds and burnt loam (AD 1150–1175).

A quernstone in a residual channel

Only one quernstone deposit comes from a residual channel. A complete quernstone (or perhaps anvil) was deposited on the bottom of a pool located in a residual channel at the Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) site, along with large pottery fragments (including a very large pot), a human vertebra and charred grains. Some of the finds could point to a ritual meal. The large quernstone may therefore have played a role in food preparation.

The history of use of quernstones

It is interesting to consider the history of use of quernstones. How intensively were they used before deposition? Although there is limited information on this subject, the inventoried data allows us to establish several facts.

The intensity of use identified for the quernstones ranges from (almost) unused, through to normal use and very intensive use. One quernstone that does not appear to have been used comes from the above-mentioned residual channel at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20). The excavator suggests that the stone may have been specially intended for deposition. Quernstones bearing only slight traces of use were found in ditches at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg (Early Bronze Age), a pit at Elst-Het Bosje (Middle Bronze Age), a well at Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder (AD 125–270) and the wells at Assum (AD 250–400).

Intensively used quernstones are known from a Middle Bronze Age well at Drechterland-Houtpolder-West (two quernstones), a Bronze Age pit at Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen and a medieval well at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. The excavator notes that the underside of the latter quernstone was decorated and that the stone may have been deliberately 'beautified' as part of a ritual.⁴²³

We can perhaps make some deductions based on these observations. Firstly, the fact that some complete quernstones were barely used indicates that they were not discarded as waste but were deliberately deposited for other reasons. Secondly, the deposition of both barely used and highly worn quernstones could suggest that the biography of the quernstone was not an important consideration when it came to deposition. They may have been deposited at a specific time or event (e.g. the abandonment and dismantling of the house and yard), regardless of their condition at the time.

Secondary working of quernstones

Some of the deposited quernstones show signs of secondary working, including (deliberate) fragmentation and burning. Unfortunately, excavation reports often fail to investigate and discuss these aspects. We can nonetheless make a few comments based on the available data.

It was established that the quernstones in 17 deposits were at least partly exposed to fire. Almost all cases involve fragmented quernstones. Although a link between the burning and fragmentation is likely, this cannot be substantiated. Two complete quernstones – one from a Bronze Age pit at Hengelo-Plangebied Winkelskamp and one from a Bronze Age waterhole at Venhuizen-Voetackers – show traces of burning. The latter was found in a completely pulverised state in the waterhole. Deposits with (partly) burnt quernstones date almost exclusively from the Bronze or Iron Age. The only exception is an early medieval deposit of burnt quernstone fragments in a ditch, together with the skull of an adult horse (Heiloo-Hoogeweg).

With regard to deliberate fragmentation, we can point to a deposit at Bennekom-Boerhavelaan (Late Bronze Age), where a quernstone weighing some 180 kg appears to have been deliberately smashed. The often large quantities of quernstone fragments found in or at the top of wells may have broken as a result of the deposition itself. Even when parts of quernstones were deliberately deposited in postholes/pits, they are likely to have come from a quernstone that was first deliberately shattered. This is also evident from the fact that fragments from different postholes sometimes fit together. Van Gijn and Verbaas point out that stone tools do not simply break and that we can suspect a deliberate act in the case of many fragmented quernstones and tools.⁴²⁴ The deliberate fragmentation of objects has been established in the case of other object categories, including pottery and natural stone, as well as metal objects such as bracelets and horseshoes.

A third notable phenomenon is the covering of quernstones (and other stones) with ochre. The quernstone with runner stone from the Neolithic settlement at Beek-Kerkeveld was covered with red ochre, as were some quernstones in the composite deposit in a waterhole at Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase II

⁴²³ Blom & Van der Velde 2015, 501.

⁴²⁴ Van Gijn & Verbaas 2009, 6–7. We can also point to a quernstone deposited under the hearth of a house at Paddepoel II. It was established that this quernstone was deliberately broken into pieces (Nieuwhof 2015, 186, with further reference to Hopman 2013).

⁴²⁵ Van Gijn & Verbaas 2009, 7.

(Early Iron Age). This ochre is often interpreted as the residue from grinding ochre using the quernstones. However, detailed analysis of the quernstones at Geleen-Janskamperveld has revealed that the ochre residue is also present on the sides and undersides of the stones. This makes it more likely that the ochre was deliberately applied to the quernstones.⁴²⁵ Ochre can perhaps be seen as symbolising blood and life and will have been used in a ritual context.⁴²⁶

The symbolic significance of quernstones

The fact that quernstones played a key part in special deposits and practices suggests that they probably also had an important symbolic significance. Lidström Holmberg points out that the functional and symbolic aspects of quernstones will have been closely intertwined.⁴²⁷ In that respect, it is interesting to note that quernstone deposits do not occur solely within the context of house and yard, but were also deposited on a large scale in swamps and peat bogs.⁴²⁸

In the literature, quernstones are often associated with fertility and female activities.⁴²⁹ Van der Sanden interprets deposits in bogs as offerings to supernatural powers to beg or give thanks for a good harvest.⁴³⁰ Others have pointed out that quernstones – as revolving,

circular objects – may have been viewed as symbols of the cyclical nature of things, such as nature, the family and the cosmos.⁴³¹

6.6.3 Sickles

The dataset contains twelve sickle deposits (Table 6.20). Sickles were used to cut grasses and cereals and are thus directly associated with agrarian activities. The earliest sickles were made of flint and, from the Bronze Age on, of bronze and later iron.

In terms of chronological distribution, the Bronze Age clearly dominates (Table 6.21). The predominant contexts are pits, but some deposits have also been found in ditches and cultural layers. The dominance of the Bronze Age may be due to the fact that iron is generally less well preserved in the soil.

The inventoried sickles come from settlement sites. The relationship to specific settlement structures, such as houses and outbuildings, cannot be properly established in many instances. There are three exceptions. A bronze sickle and an awl were found in the covering cultural layer at the western entrance to a house at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok (site 5)

⁴²⁶ Van Gijn & Verbaas 2009, 7. We can also point to the occurrence of ochre in Neolithic graves.

⁴²⁷ Lidström Holmberg 1998.

⁴²⁸ See, for example, Van der Sanden 1998; De Vries 2015.

⁴²⁹ Van der Sanden 1998, 127–128; Lidström Holmberg 1998, 127.

⁴³⁰ Van der Sanden 1998, 127.

⁴³¹ Nieuwhof 2015, 88.

Table 6.20. Overview of special deposits with sickles.

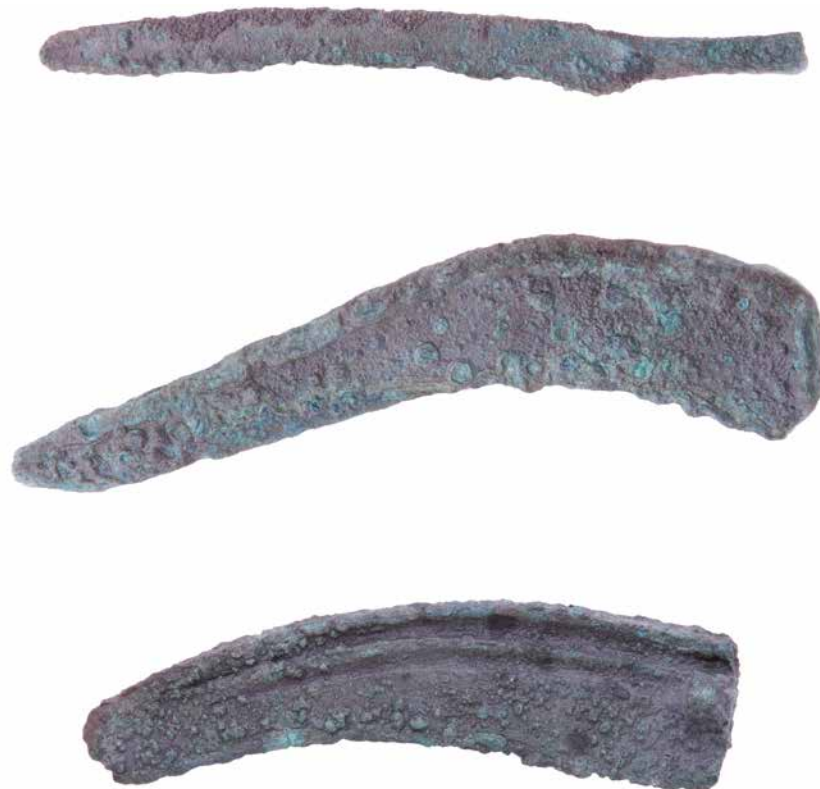
Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Material	Brief description	Beginning	End
Breda	Moskes	pit	pit	bronze	bronze knobbed sickle from pit near house 1	-1800	-1100
Cuijk	De Nielt	unknown	cultural layer	bronze	2 bronze sickles and 1 knife	-1100	-1800
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	iron	iron sickle, loom weights, spindle whorl, natural stone and burnt loam, upper fill of pit 25031	-800	-500
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	iron	fragment of an arch sickle, scythe	70	270
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	pit	pit	flint	flint sickle in pit 4	-3000	-2000
Dodewaard	Site 38	cultural layer	cultural layer	bronze	bronze sickle in cultural layer near house site	-1800	-1050
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	bronze	bronze sickle in cultural layer near western entrance to house	-1460	-1400
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch	ditch	flint	flint sickle in composite deposit	-1250	-850
Houten	Castellum	pit	pit	iron	possible iron sickle in composite deposit	-500	-325
Odijk	Singel West/Schoudermantel	ditch	ditch	iron	iron sickle	-250	700
Tilburg	Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan	house	pit	bronze	bronze knobbed sickle in pit in former house	-2000	-1100
Venray	Hoogrieboek	pit	pit	bronze	bronze knobbed sickle, pottery	-1800	-1100

Table 6.21. Overview of special deposits with sickles, by period and deposition context.

	Pits	Ditches	Cultural layers	Total
Neo	1	-	-	1
BA	3	1	3	7
IA	2	-	-	2
IA-RP-MA	-	1	-	1
RP	1	-	-	1
Total	7	2	3	12

(Fig. 6.37).⁴³² The second example concerns a bronze knobbed sickle in a pit inside a (former) house at Tilburg-Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan (2000–1100 BC). This pit is younger than the house and appears to have been dug later in the abandoned house. Gerritsen describes similar phenomena regarding Early Iron Age houses at Someren, Riethoven and Sint-Oedenrode.⁴³³ Finally, we can mention another sickle from a pit at Breda-Moskes, although the pit was located close to a house, rather than inside it.

Most sickles were found in 'isolated' pits. The pit at Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen yielded a flint sickle, together with large pot fragments. The pit was located in the middle of the settlement. Traces of use on the sickle show that it was used to harvest grain but was



0 5cm

Fig. 6.34. Special deposit with bronze sickles and a knife at Cuijk-De Nielt (source: Habermehl & Van Renswoude 2017, Fig. 10.3).

⁴³² Also found at this site was a bronze spiral that may have belonged to a similar type of deposit. It is also suggested that the many amphibolite fragments at this house site could be a deliberately fragmented anvil that was purposefully scattered across the house site following abandonment (Jongste & Van Wijngaarden 2002, 595).

⁴³³ Gerritsen 2003, 99–100.

Table 6.22. Overview of special deposits with scythes.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Bruchem	Geerweg 1-3	well	well	iron scythe at top of well	200	300
Cuijk	De Nielt	pit	pit	iron scythe, sickle fragment (pit 26018)	70	270
Lieshout	Beekseweg	house	deepened byre	iron scythe, plane (house 400)	200	300

deliberately rendered unusable and burnt before deposition. It was broken into four pieces. The pit deposit with a sickle at Houten-Castellum was situated in the partially accreted residual channel (500–325 BC). An interpretation as a sickle is not entirely certain for this iron object: the excavator also suggests razor as an alternative interpretation. The iron sickle from the pit at Cuijk-De Nielt was combined with loom weights, a spindle whorl, natural stone and burnt loam (800–500 BC). Another, Middle Roman pit at the same site yielded a fragment of an arched sickle, together with a scythe. It is interesting here to note the combination of agrarian tools.

With regard to ditch deposits, one that stands out is a particularly rich composite deposit at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg (c. 1250–850 BC). Besides the bronze parts of several ‘costumes’, it contained an ‘exotic’ flint sickle, made from ‘Plattenflint’ from Helgoland.

Various other sickles lack a clear context. Two bronze sickles and a bronze knife were collected from a cultural layer at Cuijk-De Nielt (Fig. 6.34). The excavated site was certainly inhabited in the Bronze Age, although no house plans survive. A sickle was found in a cultural layer at a house site at Dodewaard. We can also mention older sickle finds at Opheusden (Middle Bronze Age A), Beers, Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer, Buren (fragments of five flint sickles, found on the surface) and Heiloo (five sickles grouped together, inserted upright into the peat bog).⁴³⁴

Interestingly, the sickles from settlement contexts show clear traces of use.⁴³⁵ It was established that a large part of the original cutting blade of the sickle from Venray-Hoogrie-broek had disappeared as a result of grinding and wear. Traces of use on the flint sickle from Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen have already been mentioned. This is in contrast to sickles found in wet contexts, which – Fontijn points out – generally show no traces of use.⁴³⁶

This could mean that the sickles deposited in settlement contexts had a different biography from the ones found outside settlements.

With regard to the occurrence of Bronze Age sickles, Fontijn concludes that they are concentrated in the central and southern Netherlands. Our inventory shows the largest concentration in the central and eastern river area (Houten, Geldermalsen, Wijk bij Duurstede, Dodewaard, Opheusden and Cuijk), with the sandy region (Breda, Tilburg, Venray) also represented. Two other sites are located in the western coastal region (Den Haag) and northern Noord-Holland (Hoogkarspel).

6.6.4 Scythes

Scythes can also be linked directly to agrarian activities. They were used to mow or harvest crops. The inventory contains only a few examples, all from the Roman period (see Table 6.22). The oldest (c. AD 70–270) is an iron scythe from the above-mentioned Middle Roman pit at Cuijk-De Nielt, in which the iron sickle fragment was also found.⁴³⁷ Two other scythes date to the third century AD. A scythe was found at the top of a well at Bruchem-Geerweg 1-3; it appears to have been deposited after the well fell into disuse. It could be a closing deposit. The same interpretation can be suggested for the scythe of Lieshout-Beekseweg, that was found together with a plane in the sunken byre of a house. Some interesting finds also come from other sunken byres, which seems to point to deposition practices surrounding the abandonment or dismantling of the house (see Section 5.3.5).

Although (complete) scythes were also found elsewhere, there is often a lack of robust context information, which makes it difficult to interpret these finds more precisely.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ Fontijn 2002, 137; Hielkema 2002, 328–329. For Beers, see Verwers 1992, Fig. 15. For Buren and Heiloo, see Arnoldussen 2008, 451–452. For Heiloo, see Brunsting 1962. The location of the Heiloo find (in the peat bog) suggests that these sickles were deposited in a wet context, outside the settlement grounds. These finds are not part of the core dataset of this study and not included further here.

⁴³⁵ See also Fontijn 2002, 137.

⁴³⁶ Fontijn 2002, 137.

⁴³⁷ In addition to the scythe and sickle, the pit contained a large assemblage of handmade pottery from the Middle Iron Age. Some of the material is burnt and the assemblage as a whole suggests a special deposition. However, both the scythe and the sickle date to the Middle Roman period. It could be a pit that continued to be visible as a conspicuous element in the landscape and which was therefore used for deposition purposes in the Middle Roman period.

⁴³⁸ See, for example, a complete scythe at Utrecht-Sportpark Terweide 2 (Hendriksen 2009; Den Hartog 2009).

Table 6.23. Overview of special deposits with plough shoes and ard share points.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Material	Type	Beginning	End
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	wood	oak	-500	-250
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	wood	oak	270	450
Breda	Huifakker	well	well	metal	iron	250	300
Breda	Vinkenburg	well	well	wood	oak	-500	-250
Groningen	De Linie	waterhole	waterhole	wood	oak	-500	-250
Groningen	De Linie	well	well	wood	oak	-500	-250
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-Noord	waterhole	waterhole	wood		-800	-250
Midlaren	De Bloemert	well	well	wood	oak	700	750
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house	entrance pit	metal	iron	0	125
Nuenen	Kerkakkers/Luistruik, phase 2	waterhole	waterhole	wood	oak	-250	70

6.6.5 Plough shoes and ard share points

Ploughs are part of the object category of food attributes. The inventoried dataset contains ten deposits with plough components (Table 6.23). These are the most identifiable parts of the plough: the wooden points/shares and the metal plough shoes used to reinforce the shares.

The oldest objects, dated to the Iron Age, are wooden ard share points, usually made of oak. It is no coincidence that they come from wells or waterholes, contexts in which wood can be well preserved. It is of course possible that similar objects were also deposited at that time in 'dry' pits, ditches or postholes but were not preserved. An ard share point was placed upright in the bottom of waterhole 511 at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord. Another interesting case is that of an alder wood ploughshare from a waterhole at Nuenen-Kerkakkers/Luistruik phase 2 (Late Iron Age–Early Roman period).⁴³⁹ The soft wood could indicate that the ploughshare was not intended for use but had a symbolic function.⁴⁴⁰

Two iron plough shoes from the Roman period are known from Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen and Breda-Huifakker. The find from the first site shows that plough components were indeed deposited in dry contexts. A ploughshare was deposited in a pit near the northern entrance to house 54 at that site, together with a chisel and a small pickaxe (c. AD 150–300). The other iron ploughshare was found in a well. In

addition to the ploughshare, the fill of the construction pit of well 20 at Breda-Huifakker yielded fragments of an iron bucket with a bronze rim and a Roman helmet (c. AD 250–300). This deposit can probably be associated with the well's construction phase. In a similar vein, we can point to a possible parallel at Vlaardingen-Hoogstad, where a wooden plough point with an iron plough shoe appears to be a foundation deposit placed beneath a Roman dam structure.⁴⁴¹

The youngest deposit is an oak ploughshare found together with a small wooden ladder in a well at Midlaren-De Bloemert (c. AD 700–750).

Although these finds are often not explicitly interpreted in the excavation reports, in many cases it is easy to support an interpretation as special deposits.⁴⁴² Among other things, cave paintings reveal that ploughing would have been an important symbolic motif at an early date, while ploughs and plough components deposited in swamps point to their symbolic significance and ritual associations.⁴⁴³ The fact that some of these deposits involve non-functional ploughs made of soft wood emphasises their symbolic, ceremonial function and significance. The ploughs deposited in swamps and peat bogs are generally interpreted as (votive) offerings.⁴⁴⁴ In the case of an iron ploughshare find from a medieval well at Zuidbarge, Van Vilsteren suspects an interpretation as an offering.⁴⁴⁵ The excavator suggests a link to a fertility ritual.

⁴³⁹ Lange *et al.* 2017, 231.

⁴⁴⁰ Lange *et al.* 2017, 231.

⁴⁴¹ De Ridder 2000.

⁴⁴² See also Van Haasteren 2011, 32.

⁴⁴³ See Bradley 2005, 84–86; Glob 1951, 131–132.

⁴⁴⁴ Van der Sanden 1993–1994.

⁴⁴⁵ Van Vilsteren 1996.

6.7 Tools

6.7.1 Introduction

The tools category contains a range of natural stone and metal tools. This section describes the tools by material type.

6.7.2 Natural stone tools

A variety of objects fall into the category of stone tools. These are mainly grinding tools, axes (including flint axes), hammerstones and pecking stones, polishing stones, anvils, blades and scrapers. The inventoried dataset contains 55 deposits of natural stone tools (Tables 6.24 and 6.25). The overview (Table 6.25) shows a clear predominance in the Iron Age, followed some way behind by the Roman period.

Table 6.24. Overview of special deposits with natural stone tools.

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Achterberg	Oost	waterhole	waterhole	rubbing stone/whetstone, 3,7 kg of pottery, quernstone fragments and broken natural stone	-800	-250
Azelo	Aardgastransport-leidingtracé A-670	granary	posthole	anvil; complete pot (in sherds) in another posthole	-500	-19
Borger	N34	pit	pit	1 hammerstone, pottery sherds and quernstone fragments	-1100	-500
Borger	N34	pit	pit	2 hammerstones and 3 quernstones	-1100	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	3 whetstones, 4 kg of pottery (19 MNI) and 2 spindle whorls	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	Silo	silo	whetstone, 7 kg of pottery, loom weight fragments, unworked natural stone and a layer of charcoal and burnt grain	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	well	well	flint axe, loom weight fragments, ceramic bobbin and knobbed macehead (youngest fill phase)	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	possible hearth pit	pecking/hammerstone, pecking/rubbing stone, natural stone (quernstones and erratic boulders)	-500	-250
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	large 6 kg whetstone at top of pit, 7,5 kg of pottery (9 MNI) placed on the bottom and along pit walls	-450	-325
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	house	posthole	part of sandstone whetstone in post-removal pit	150	200
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	outbuilding	posthole	grinding block and 9 pieces of quernstone. Whetstone in another posthole	450	1000
Breda	Moskes	house	pit	burnt pottery, flint flakes and core repair products, small rounded whetstones, quernstone pieces and spindle whorl	-1100	-500
Breda	Moskes	cellar pit	pit	whetstone, loom weights and spindle whorl (pit 43)	-800	-250
Castenray	De Diepeling	fence/corral	posthole	fragmented stones: 2 pecking/rubbing stones, 2 whetstone/rubbing stones, unusual stones. pottery sherds	-800	-500
Coevorden	Molenakkers II, fase I	house	posthole	2 complete pecking or rubbing stones (central posthole)	-800	-500
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house	pit	2 whetstones, together with dolabra, anvil, 2 knives, split pin, nails and 2 keys	270	450
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	house	pit	fragments of 3 axes, deliberately smashed and burned	-2850	-2000
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	house	pit	2 whetstones, part of a composite deposit	200	300
Den Haag	Ypenburg-Locatie 4	pit	pit	6 axe flakes, tool, 2 flakes (flint)	-3900	-3435
Deventer	Brinkgreven	pit	pit	polishing stone, 15 kg of burnt pottery and burnt loam	-1100	-800
Didam	Kerkwijk	granary	posthole	whetstone	-800	-19
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	well	grinding tools, part of grinding block, possible rubbing stone, quernstone fragments, complete pots, bronze fibula and iron socketed axe	-600	-400

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Doorn	Dribergsestraatweg 63	pit	pit	whetstone, approx. 13 kg of pottery (6 MNI)	-650	-500
Eindhoven	Noord-Brabantlaan	house	sunken byre	large part of Neolithic axe	150	270
Elst	Het Bosje	pit	pit	2 pecking stones on top of large pot (in sherds)	-900	-800
Elst	Park Lingezege/De linten	pit	pit	quernstone/whetstone fragment, piece of tuff and of granite with wear surface	150	270
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	whetstone, part of extensive composite desposit	275	425
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	Neolithic axe	-150	-70
Groenlo	Woerdseweg	well	well	fragments of grinding block, pecking stone, pecking/rubbing stone, rubbing stone/whetstone, quernstones	651	899
Helden	Panningen-Stokx	pit	pit	broken whetstone, 6.1 kg of pottery and 6.3 kg of burnt loam	-800	-500
Hengelo	Elderinkweg	pit	pit	23 natural stone objects, including 19 artefacts, mainly for metal working	-2500	-2000
Houten	Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	(residual) channel	channel layer	anvil or quernstone, large beaker pot, burnt grain and human vertebra	-2150	-1800
Itteren	Emmaus	pit	pit	pecking/rubbing stone, quernstone fragment, natural stone, 2.4 kg of pottery (5 MNI), burnt loam, charcoal and burnt grain remains	-780	-417
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	pit	pit	whetstone, quernstone fragments, fragmented natural stone, spindle whorl and 15 kg of pottery	-800	-250
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	house	posthole	grinding block	-800	-500
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase II	waterhole	waterhole	whetstone/pecking tools, some with ochre residues, quernstone fragments, burnt stones, 26 kg of pottery and burnt loam	-800	-500
Maastricht	Az Landgoederenzone	granary	posthole	pointed blade, complete pot	-1900	-1400
Margraten	Scheuldersteeg	pit	pit	whetstone, pottery (including a complete mortarium)	150	250
Midlaren	De Bloemert	well	well	2 whetstones, pottery and quernstone fragments	-500	-250
Nijverdal	Eversberg	house	posthole	3 pecking/rubbing stones (wall posthole)	-250	-19
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house	entrance pit	whetstone, 2 handmade pots, ring-based amphora, chisel, ploughshare and pickaxe	0	125
Reusel	Boegent	house	pit	burnt potttery , fragments of whetstones, tephrite and large quantity of charcoal	-1000	-810
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house	occupation level?	whetstone with inscription (text and 8-pointed star), sherd with graffito (VSLM?), complete potttery and beakers, mortarium, coins and fibulae	100	200
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	hearth	2 whetstones, fragment of Roman ribbed bowl (!), 5 white pebbles and piece of iron	1100	1200
Tubberbergen	Prins Bernhardstraat	waterhole	waterhole	5 pecking stones, 7 pecking/rubbing stones, 5 whetstones/pecking stones, 3,5 kg of pottery (9 MNI)	-500	-250
Uden	Botermarkt	well	well	Neolithic axe	1400	1450
Udenhout	Den Bogerd	outbuilding	posthole?	Neolithic pointed blade	-1100	-500
Utrecht	Hogeweide 3a	palisade	posthole	large whetstone	1200	1300
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house	sunken byre	fragments of whetstone, part of a composite deposit	50	250
Wateringen	Juliahof	ditch	ditch	piece of whetstone, against underside of large storage jar	50	125
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/Aijerbandstraat	house	hearth or fire pit	pecking/rubbing stone, burnt stones, spindle whorl and 2 kg of pottery	-800	-500
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 2/Kleine Kamp	pit	pit	3 pecking/rubbing stones, 1 blade, 1 flake, 1 thumbnail scraper, pottery sherds	-1800	-1100
Wijchen	Oosterweg/Meerdreef	fen	fill/layer	concentration of stone tools: 3 anvil fragments, 1 pecking stone, 1 quernstone/whetstone, 1 whetstone, 1 polishing stone/whetstone and 1 quernstone	-2900	-2750
Wijchen	Oosterweg/Meerdreef	fen	fill/layer	concentration of stone tools: (fragments of) anvils, axes, pecking stones, whetstones and rubbing stones	-2900	-2750
Zeeland	Voederheil II	pit	pit	whetstone, possible writing slate, roof shingles and pottery sherd	1500	1600
Zutphen	Looërenk	pit	pit	pecking stone, part of a composite deposit	-2000	-1100

Table 6.25. Overview of special deposits with natural stone tools, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Pits	Outbuildings	Granaries	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels/ fens	Other	Total
Neo	1	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	5
Neo-BA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
BA	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	5
BA-IA	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	4
IA	5	8	-	2	6	1	-	1	23
RP	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
MA	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	5
MP	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	16	20	2	3	8	1	3	2	55

The Neolithic, Bronze Age and Middle Ages are fairly equally represented. In terms of contexts, we see a predominance of pits, followed by houses. Wells are also fairly well represented.

Neolithic

The oldest inventoried tool deposit is that from Den Haag-Ypenburg-Locatie 4. A 'deposition pit' (S4-26) dug into the peat on a dune contained nine flint fragments, including six axe flakes, a tool and two flakes. Den Haag-De Wateringse Binnentuinen yielded a find concentration inside overlapping house plans 4, 5 and 8. This deposit contained fragments of three burnt natural stone axes and three burnt bone artefacts. The axes appear to have been deliberately broken. For this period, we also know of concentrations of stone tools from a fen at Wijchen-Oosterweg/Meerdreef (2900–2750 BC).⁴⁴⁶ The first concentration comprised various stone tools, including three anvil fragments, a pecking stone, a quernstone/whetstone, a whetstone, a polishing stone/whetstone and a quernstone. Two of the items are burnt. A second concentration contained 42 fragments of modified stone tools, including anvils or anvil fragments, (hammer) axes, pecking stones, whetstones and rubbing stones. Once again, the fragmentation of the material is conspicuous. Both concentrations are described as possible special deposits. In view of the number of objects, these appear to be deposits created over a longer period as a result of successive depositions.

A very interesting deposit from the Late Neolithic is a pit deposit at Hengelo-Elderinkweg, which contained 23 natural stone objects, including 19 artefacts.⁴⁴⁷ Although largely metal-working tools, they also include other whetstones and rubbing stones and two arrow shaft polishers. Three of the tools showed traces of gold and copper working. Interestingly, at least eleven artefacts were still usable at the time of deposition. Also noteworthy is that at least some of the stones had been carefully placed in the pit. In addition, two of the artefacts had been deliberately smashed. The excavators conclude that it is probably 'a deposit of stone smithy tools in a dry context.'⁴⁴⁸ They make no definitive statements about the reason for deposition, but they do consider an interpretation as a temporary savings hoard (intended for later retrieval) to be unlikely.⁴⁴⁹

Bronze Age (–Iron Age)

From the Bronze Age we know of whetstone fragments from a pit inside house 1 at Reusel-Boegent (Late Bronze Age), together with pottery, tephrite and a large quantity of charcoal. A similar type of deposit is known from pit 35 near house 11 at Breda Moskes (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age). This pit contained small, rounded whetstones, together with burnt pottery, flint fragments (flakes and core repair products), quernstone fragments, a spindle whorl, burnt loam and charcoal. Both deposits are probably closing deposits. Similar deposits

⁴⁴⁶ Boreel 2017, 205.

⁴⁴⁷ Williams 2009, 42–64.

⁴⁴⁸ Williams 2009, 58.

⁴⁴⁹ Williams 2009, 61–62.

are known from pits that are not directly associated with houses, such as at Wijchen-Bijsterhuizen (Middle Bronze Age), Deventer-Brinkgreven (Late Bronze Age) and Borger-N34 (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age). They also involve combinations of stone tools, (partly burnt) pottery sherds, (occasionally burnt) quernstone fragments and burnt loam. Besides a pecking stone, a pit at Zutphen-Looërenk (Early–Middle Bronze Age) yielded a large quantity of pottery, an amber bead, a burnt loam object, some ochre and cattle tooth enamel. Another deposit concerns a pit at the Elst-Het Bosje site, where two pecking stones appear to have been used to smash a large pot. Lastly, we can mention a further two deposits with antique objects. Neolithic pointed blades were deposited in the posthole of an outbuilding at Udenhout-Den Bogerd (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age) and a granary at Maastricht-A2 Landgoederzone (Early–Middle Bronze Age). The antique blade from the Maastricht granary was associated with a complete pot.

Iron Age

In the Iron Age most stone tools were part of composite pit deposits with fragmented material. As in the Bronze Age, these deposits mainly contained a large quantity of – often partly burnt – pottery sherds, quernstone fragments, ceramic objects, (broken) natural stone fragments and burnt loam. Such deposits are also known from waterholes from this period. These deposits frequently involved whetstones. Worth mentioning is a large 6 kg whetstone at the top of pit 4002 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. The bottom of the pit was lined with 7.5 kg of neatly stacked pottery sherds.

Although most deposits contained just one or a few tools, a waterhole deposit at Tubbergen-Prins Bernhardstraat yielded a larger quantity: five pecking stones, seven pecking/rubbing stones and five whetstones/pecking stones, together with 3.5 kg of pottery (9 MNI). Well 2 at Didam-Kerkwijk and Randweg-Zuid also contained a large deposit of natural stone, among other things, including grinding material, part of a grinding block, a possible rubbing stone and quernstone fragments. Also found in the well were complete pots, a bronze fibula and an iron socketed axe. A final well containing many tools is one at Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase II, in which many grinding tools, large stones and

many quernstone fragments were deposited. Fragmented pottery and burnt loam were also present.

The deposits described above seem to relate to the abandonment of the house and/or yard. The tools were probably deposited as part of household goods, together with other (destroyed) objects, hearth remains and construction elements.

Other tool deposits can be associated with houses or granaries. These include two complete pecking or rubbing stones in the central posthole of a house at Coevorden-Molenakkers II, three pecking/rubbing stones from the wall posthole of a house at Nijverdal-Eversberg and a grinding block in a posthole of a house, possibly at the entrance, at Lomm-Hoogwatergeul phase I. In two instances deposits were found in possible hearth pits of houses at Well-Aijen-Sintelenberg and Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. The latter deposit contained a pecking/hammerstone, two rubbing stones/runner stones and a pecking/rubbing stone as part of a deposit of more than 10 kg of natural stone, including a quernstone (Napoleon's hat) and other pieces of unworked natural stone. With regard to granaries, a whetstone was found in a granary at Didam-Kerkwijk/Randweg-Zuid and an anvil in a granary at Azelo-Aardgastransportleidingtracé. A complete pot was also deposited, in sherds, in another posthole of the latter granary.

Worthy of separate mention is a Neolithic stone axe found at the Late Iron Age site of Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. This axe can perhaps be associated with a possible ritual place (Section 5.8.3).

Roman period

Deposits associated with houses predominate in the Roman period. They include a whetstone in the wall ditch of a house at Wateringen-Juliahof, a whetstone in the post-removal pit over a central posthole in house 3002 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck and a whetstone as part of a composite deposit with several metal objects (a ploughshare, chisel and small pickaxe) near the entrance to house 54 at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen. A deposit possibly associated with house 8005 in pit 25033 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen yielded two whetstones combined with iron tools, including two knives, a dolabra (axe/pickaxe) and an anvil.⁴⁵⁰ Also worth mentioning is a special whetstone at a house site at Rotterdam-Delftse

⁴⁵⁰ Van Kampen 2018, 199.

Schie. It was probably deposited around the house along with other objects as part of abandonment rituals. Scratched into the whetstone are an eight-pointed star and possible letters, the meaning of which is unclear. These inscriptions may relate to the whetstone being used in a ritual context. Two whetstones in a pit along the southern wall of house 103 at Den Haag-Ockenburgh II (third century AD) are part of a sizeable composite deposit containing a large quantity of complete ceramic and metal vessels, nails and an iron hammer head. For this deposit, the excavators suggest a link with the construction, use or abandonment of the house. Finally, fragments of a whetstone and a Neolithic axe were found in the fill of the sunken byres of houses at Eindhoven-Noord-Brabantlaan and Veldhoven-Oerle-Zuid. The deposition of these objects may have been associated with the final phase of the house.

Middle Ages and Modern Period

A first deposit from this period was found in the hearth of house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers. It contained two whetstones, five white pebbles, a fragment of a Roman – hence antique – ribbed bowl and a piece of iron. A deposit in an outbuilding at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck also contained grinding tools, deposited in two different postholes. One posthole yielded a grinding block and nine pieces of quernstone, the other posthole a whetstone. A deposit in a palisade posthole at Utrecht-Hoge Weide 3a again involves a large whetstone.

A deposit of several stone tools comes from a well at Groenlo-Woerdseweg. The deposit comprised a large quantity of natural stone, including fragments of a grinding block, a pecking stone, a pecking/rubbing stone, a rubbing stone/whetstone and quernstones. Another special find from a late medieval well at Uden-Boterdammarkt concerns a Neolithic axe. This is probably an object to which magical properties were attributed (a ‘thunderstone’ or ‘thunder axe’) (see also Section 6.13).⁴⁵¹

6.7.3 Metal tools

The inventoried dataset contains 38 deposits of metal tools (Tables 6.26 and 6.27). The overview (Table 6.27) shows a strong predominance in the

Roman period, followed by the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages and the Iron Age. In the Iron Age, stone tools still predominate, with metal tools represented in limited numbers. In terms of contexts, houses predominate, followed closely by pits.

The most prevalent tools are knives (19 definite and two possible), followed by axes (nine), chisels (five), awls (two), scissors (two) and saws (two or three). There are also two adzes/hammers, a pickaxe, a pitchfork and a spoon drill.

Knives are mainly found in pits and postholes. However, the oldest knife, from Cuijk-De Nielt, was found in a cultural layer covering the site, together with the two sickles described earlier (c. 1800–1100 BC). One knife from a posthole was found in a granary at Barneveld-Bloemendal (c. 500–250 BC). This find is interpreted as a closing deposit. Four other deposits can be associated with houses. Eleven iron objects (including knives and a spearhead) and a knife or dagger respectively were deposited near two separate entrances to a house at Budel-Noord-Duitse school (c. AD 230–300). However, the knives should perhaps be viewed as weapons rather than tools. Another notable find is a complete carving knife in the packing soil of the western central posthole of house 7 (AD 100–200) at Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveel. Two other deposits involve a complete knife at the entrance to the second-century house 370 at Best-Aarle and another one in a wall posthole of house 386 in the same settlement (AD 200–250).

The other knives come from pits and a well. Most of them date from the Roman period. A knife was deposited in a pit at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, together with the carrion crow skeleton and loose animal bone (c. AD 40–100) and at Eckelrade-Putstraat a knife was found in a cluster of postholes/pits (AD 150–250). A special deposit at Wijchen-Tienakker – a presumed villa site – consists of a knife and two coins that are likely to have originally been stored in a chest. A second pit deposit, consisting of a knife and a complete upright pot, was found a short distance away. Both deposits date to the third century BC and were found near an outbuilding. Another possible deposit from the third century comes from a pit inside a house at Westeinde-Noormansveld and contained the point of a chopping knife (or *hiep*). Lastly,

⁴⁵¹ See Beuker 1997; Verhart 2015, 84; Verhart *et al.* 2021.

Table 6.26. Overview of special deposits with metal tools.

Place	Toponym	Structure type	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Alblasserdam	Lange Steeg	pit	pit	complete axe with wooden handle and knife with wooden handle	1200	1300
Assum	Waldijk/ Assummervaart	well	well	part of iron knife, pottery sherds, loom weights, spindle whorls, animal bone and 3 sets of quernstones	250	400
Barneveld	Bloemendal	granary	posthole	knife fragment	-500	-250
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	posthole	complete knife (at entrance)	100	200
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	posthole	iron knife (in wall posthole)	200	250
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	posthole	chisel (in packing soil of truss post)	1325	1425
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	silo	silo	bronze chisel, charred grain	-1800	-1050
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/ Peperstraat 35	house	sunken byre	deposit of metal objects including knives, scissors, pitchforks, reaping hook, chisel, tools, hooked nail	1250	1500
Budel	Budel-Noord-Duitse school	house	entrance pit	11 iron objects at entrance to house 9: knives, spearhead and uncertain objects	230	300
Budel	Budel-Noord-Duitse school	house	entrance pit	dagger/knife, near other entrance to house 9	230	300
Cuijk	De Nielt	unknown	cultural layer	knife and 2 bronze sickles	-1100	-800
Cuijk	De Nielt	depression	layer in depression	iron knife, baseless pot, wine sieve, fragment of face mask, spearhead, arrowhead, horse gear and decorated key, etc.	200	300
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house	pit	iron saw blade, almost complete pot	270	450
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house	pit	dolabra, anvil, 2 knives, split pin, nails, 2 keys and 2 whetstones	270	450
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	house	pit	hammer head, part of composite deposit	200	300
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	well	iron socketed axe, fibula, complete pots and stone tools	-600	-400
Eckelrade	Putstraat	pit	pit	complete iron knife	150	250
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	2 bronze awls, spirals and an arrowhead near house (site 6)	-1800	-1050
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	bronze awl, sickle, near western entrance to house (site 5)	-1460	-1400
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	pit	pit	2 knives (set), possibly same deposit as silver coins	1100	1150
Heiloo	Zandzoomzone 10	well	well	iron knife, wooden ball in fill. Leather belt with buckle beneath shell layer	1625	1800
Houten	Castellum	pit	pit	complete knife/razor or sickle, base discs, ceramic grill fragments and spear/lance/needle of worked bone	-500	-325
Lieshout	Beekseweg	house	sunken byre	plane, scythe	200	300
Maastricht	A2 Landgoederenzone	cultural layer	cultural layer	bronze palstave	-1800	-1100
Middelaar	Kopseweg	pit	pit	iron socketed axe, large amount of burnt pottery, ceramic funnel, 15 sling bullets, burnt loam and burnt bone	-450	-380
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	house	entrance pit	chisel and pickaxe, together with ploughshare, whetstone and 2 handmade pots	0	125
Nuenen	Witte Hondpad	pit	pit	almost complete axe and small shovel, part of composite deposit	1475	1550
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	posthole	scissors, key, needle and spindle whorl	1100	1200
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	unknown	unknown	bronze socketed axe	-1100	-800
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	animal burial	pit	iron knife, carrion crow skeleton and horse skull	40	100
Twello	Achter 't Holthouse	pit	pit	heel fragment of a palstave	-1800	-1100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	house	posthole	complete carving knife (central posthole)	100	200
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	outbuilding	wall ditch	complete iron saw blade (wall ditch)	0	100
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV- station	(residual) channel	channel layer	iron axe with wooden handle. Also horse bit and 12 fibulae, etc.	20	100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	spoon drill and knife (S4201)	200	250
Westeinde	Noormansveld	house	pit	point of chopping knife or bill hook (brush knife), burnt pottery, burnt loam and charcoal	200	300
Wijchen	Tienakker	pit	pit	iron knife, together with complete pot	200	270
Wijchen	Tienakker	pit	pit	iron knife in chest, 2 coins	222	300

Table 6.27. Overview of special deposits with metal tools, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Pits	Outbuildings	Granaries	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
BA	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	7
IA	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	4
RP	9	4	1	-	2	-	2	1	19
MA	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
MP	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	14	12	1	1	4	-	2	4	38

two knives were part of an extensive Late Roman pit deposit at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. The deposit also contained a dolabra (axe/pickaxe), an anvil, a split pin, nails, a key and two whetstones (Fig. 6.35).⁴⁵² A knife from a well is known from the Roman site of Voorburg-Arentsburg (layer 6 of barrel well 4201).

From the Middle Ages we know of several knife deposits, including a deposit in the sunken byre of a house at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf (ADD 1250–1500) and a knife from a pit cluster at Alblasserdam-Lange Steeg, where a complete axe was also found (AD 1200–1300). A final possible deposit was found at the Geldermalsen-Stationslocatie. A complete knife, and a fragment of a similar knife, was found in or near a pit that overlaps with the one containing a coin deposit (c. AD 1100–1150). The knives and coins may have been part of the same deposit.⁴⁵³

Metal axes are rare finds at settlement sites. They are primarily deposited in wet places outside settlements.⁴⁵⁴ The finds from Tiel-Medel-Bredesteeg and Rosmalen-De Groote Wielen can be interpreted in that light. The former concerns a bronze socketed axe found just outside the settlement boundary. In Rosmalen, a bronze flat axe was found in a wet depression outside the settlement. There are more examples of bronze axes that were deposited just outside settlements, often in low-lying, wet areas (bogs, swamps, depressions, channels, and stream and river valleys).⁴⁵⁵ These fall outside the scope of this study, however. Our inventory nevertheless contains several metal axes from a settlement context. A notable example is a complete, virtually

undamaged iron socketed axe from a pit at Middelaar-Kopseweg (c. 500–380 BC). This pit also yielded a large quantity of burnt pottery, a ceramic funnel, 15 sling bullets, burnt loam and burnt bone. A house plan dates from the same period. Another example is an iron socketed axe, accompanied by two fibulae in the youngest fill phase of well 2 at Didam-Kerkwijk (600–400 BC). It is interesting to note that the objects are clearly younger than the fill of the well (which also yielded a natural stone grinding block and rubbing stone). This could therefore involve a deposition in an old, disused well that was still visible in the landscape. A third example is a heel fragment of a palstave from a pit near house 14 at Twello-Achter 't Holthuis. The fact that it is only a small part of an axe perhaps makes an interpretation as a special deposit less convincing.

The other tools include two chisels. The first was found in a Middle Bronze Age silo at Boxmeer-Maasbroeksche Blokken, while the second was part of a composite deposit pit at the entrance to a Roman house at Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen (together with a ploughshare and a small pick/pickaxe) (AD 150–300). Also worth noting are four saw blades. These are a complete iron saw blade from the wall ditch of an (out) building (Uden-Noord-Hengstheuvél) (first century AD), a saw blade from a Late Roman pit (Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen) (c. AD 270–450), a saw from the Oerle dolium (probably third century AD) and a final example from the sunken byre of house 47 at Breda-West (AD 250–275). Thus, most examples date to fairly late in the Roman period (see also below).

Scissors are known from several deposits,

⁴⁵² Van Kampen 2018, 199.

⁴⁵³ Van Renswoude & Schurmans 2015, 106.

⁴⁵⁴ Fontijn 2002, 118.

⁴⁵⁵ See, for example, Fontijn 2002; De Vries 2015; Essink & Hielkema 1997/1998.



Fig. 6.35. Special deposit with iron tools from a pit at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (source: Van Kampen 2018, Fig. 5.13).

including the Roman dolium of Den Haag-Ockenburgh II (early third century AD), a twelfth-century house at Someren-Hoge Akkers (together with a key, needle and spindle whorl) and a late medieval sunken byre at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf. Other tools are two awls from the Bronze Age site of Geldermalsen-Eigenblok. A hammer head was found in a large pit deposit at Den Haag-Ockenburgh II (third century AD) and the dolium deposit at Oerle-Zandoerleseweg (probably third century AD). A final tool is a spoon drill from layer 6 of barrel well 4201 at Voorburg-Arentsburg.

Large composite deposits of metal objects from the third century AD are an interesting phenomenon. These deposits often include tools. We can mention the iron objects at the entrance to a house at Budel-Noord-Duitse school (c. AD 230–300), the deposits of iron objects at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (c. AD 270–450), the deposit at the entrance to a house at Nistelrode (AD 150–300), the scythe and plane in the sunken byre at Lieshout-Beekseweg (AD 200–300), the metal deposit in the sunken byre of house 47 at Breda-West (AD 250–275), the pit deposit and dolium deposit at Den Haag-Ockenburgh II and the dolium deposit at Oerle-Zandoerleseweg (probably third century AD). This latter dolium contained an enormous quantity of metal objects, including tools such as adzes, a drawknife, a saw and a fork.⁴⁵⁶ We note the combinations of metal tools and whetstones, as in the deposits at Cuijk, Nistelrode and the pit deposit of Ockenburgh II. A deposit in a pit at Nuenen-Witte Hondpad is known from a much later period. This involved several (almost) complete ceramic jugs and pots and no fewer than 87 iron objects, including a single bevel broad axe and a small shovel or shepherd shovel. It also included two cow bells, chest fittings and part of a wagon.

6.7.4 Interpretation and discussion

Reviewing the above, a number of things stand out. Firstly, the composition of the tools is rather diverse in prehistoric times, with a variety of pecking, rubbing and grinding tools, axes, pointed blades, an anvil and a scraper. Whetstones seem to occupy an increasingly prominent position during the Iron Age,

becoming most prevalent in the Roman period and the period thereafter. It is unclear how we should interpret this. Perhaps many stone tools were replaced by metal ones, especially from the Iron Age on, whereas whetstones continued to be used. On the other hand, whetstones may have acquired an increasingly important symbolic significance over time, which meant that they were more often selected for deposition.⁴⁵⁷

What we observe for metal tools is first and foremost the prominence of knives. This may simply reflect how common these implements were. On the other hand, sharp objects such as knives (and perhaps axes and chisels) may have had specific (symbolic) meanings and functions. Merrifield and Verspay, for example, point to the use of sharp iron objects within the context of apotropaic, or protective, magic.⁴⁵⁸ It is difficult to determine whether a similar interpretation could apply to pre-medieval deposits of sharp objects such as knives, but that is certainly possible. Here we can point to deposits in Roman-era houses at Best-Aarle, Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveld and Budel-Noord-Duitse school, where knives were deposited close to entrances, in walls and in features of the core structure.

Deposits containing possible tool sets are an interesting category. Sets of this kind are known with both natural stone and metal tools, most of which appear to have still been usable. In the case of metal tools, the material could also be reused. We cannot establish definitively how we should interpret deposits of this kind. They may have been personal tool sets associated with the (former) occupants of the house sites. The deposit can then perhaps be understood in the light of the inalienable connection with both the occupant/user and the house site.

6.8 Fibulae and jewellery

6.8.1 Introduction

Both fibulae and jewellery are personal items worn on the body. It is the personal nature of these objects that is relevant in relation to special deposition practices and rituals. They may have been closely entwined with the personal, social identity of the wearers.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ Hiddink 2016.

⁴⁵⁷ Melkert 2018, 153, with reference to De Clercq 2011.

⁴⁵⁸ Merrifield 1987, 162; Verspay 2017, 559.

⁴⁵⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 116.

This sets them apart from objects of a more 'general' nature, such as tools, coins and household goods, including vessels, loom weights, spindle whorls and quernstones.

6.8.2 Fibulae

General picture

The inventoried dataset includes 37 fibulae deposits (Tables 6.28 and 6.29). While some involve 'loose', individual fibulae (e.g. most deposits in houses), others contain several fibulae (e.g. in residual channels and wells). In terms of chronological distribution, the Roman period strongly dominates, followed at some distance by the Middle Ages (Table 6.29). Only a small number of fibulae deposits are known from the Iron and Bronze Ages. Wells/waterholes and houses are the predominant contexts. Deposits associated with houses date exclusively to the Roman period and Middle Ages.

Fibulae deposits through time

The oldest inventoried deposit with fibulae is a composite deposit from a ditch at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg (1250–850 BC). In addition to three bronze spectacle fibulae, this deposit included two bronze bracelets and a stone pendant.⁴⁶⁰ A deposit from a well at Didam-Kerkwijk (c. 600–400 BC) dates from the Iron Age. Besides a bronze fibula, the well yielded an iron socketed axe, a quernstone, a grinding block and handmade pottery. Other finds from the Iron Age include four iron fibulae near the ritual enclosure in the residual channel of Houten-Castellum (c. 500–250 BC) and a Nauheim fibula from Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, which can also be associated with a possible ritual place (c. 150–70 BC). Not far from this ritual place is a ditch from that period with several special deposits, including three fibulae.⁴⁶¹

Another deposit that may also be associated with a ritual place contained five fibulae (three of which are complete) from the residual channel at Utrecht-Rijnvliet (25 BC–AD 100), associated with a bent silver bracelet, among other finds.⁴⁶² Other notable finds are a fibula in a ceramic pot from a well at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord (Late Iron Age) and an appliqué disc fibula from the covering layers

above a possible house site at Tiel-Medel-De Reth (c. 30–15 BC). An iron signet ring and several coins were found nearby.

Unlike in previous periods, fibulae were also deposited in or near houses, outbuildings and granaries from the Roman period on. At Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveld, two fibulae – one near the entrance – were associated with the first-century house 8. The excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit. A fibula deposited in a posthole of a granary in the same settlement is interpreted as a closing deposit. Other fibulae near houses or buildings include a spoon-bow fibula in a composite deposit at the entrance to house 8002 at Tiel-Medel-De Reth, a bronze fibula from a composite deposit in the sunken byre of house 5 at Oerle-Zuid and a number of fibulae found around a house at Rotterdam-Delftse Schie, together with coins and complete ceramic beakers (c. AD 100–200). A deposit with two fibulae in a post-removal pit of house 8001 at Houten-Castellum stands out by virtue of the fact that one of the fibulae is much older than the deposition context; the deposit therefore involves an antique item.

However, most Roman deposits involving fibulae come from wells/waterholes. Good examples are fibulae in waterholes at Houten-Castellum and Nieuwegein-Blokhoeve, several fibulae from a well at Katwijk-Zanderij (AD 40–100) and a fibula from a barrel well at Voorburg-Arentsburg. Two fibulae from well 14 at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet were deposited in the pit associated with the dismantling of the well. We can also mention a deposit from waterhole 25014 at Houten-Castellum, which, in addition to a fibula, contained a complete ceramic bowl and a complete wooden dish.

Fibulae deposits are also known from other wet contexts, namely (residual) channels. The interpretation of these objects is often not clear-cut and some excavators are cautious about their interpretations. This applies to the complete fibulae from a residual channel at the Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station site. Although only one of the twelve fibulae is incomplete, the excavator rejects an interpretation as a ritual deposit. The same applies to fibulae (and other metal objects) from the residual channels at Utrecht-Sportpark Terweide 2 and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg. They are viewed as 'ordinary' settlement waste and not the result of special deposition practices.⁴⁶³ However,

⁴⁶⁰ The excavators point to the 'cosmopolitan' nature of the deposit and suggest that these are elements from the 'costumes' of different individuals. Large fibulae like the ones in the deposit belonged to people who occupied important social roles (Fontijn & Knippenberg 2019, 749–752).

⁴⁶¹ Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009, 95.

⁴⁶² See Dielemans 2013, 79–88.

⁴⁶³ In an unpublished analysis of fibulae from the residual channel at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Verhelst points out that no patterns indicating special deposition practices can be reconstructed (oral communication by Erik Verhelst; unpublished manuscript of Romeinendag lecture).

Table 6.28. Overview of special deposits with fibulae.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Barneveld	Harselaar-Zuid, fase 1A	house	posthole	complete disc fibula (central posthole)	900	1225
Breda	Huifakker	well	well	complete fibula	200	300
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/ Peperstraat 35	pit	pit	disc fibula	900	1050
Den Haag	Uithofslaan	pit	pit	fibula, hearth screen/fire dog	150	240
Didam	Kerkwijk	well	well	bronze fibula, iron socketed axe, quernstone, grinding block and handmade pottery	-600	-400
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	bronze hinged fibula, part of composite deposit	275	425
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	Nauheim fibula, associated with possible ritual place	-150	-70
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	3 fibulae in ditch G36	-150	-70
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	well	well	2 fibulae in deconstruction pit of well 14	100	150
Hasselo	't Oosterveld	granary	posthole	pseudo-coin fibula, pottery sherds	800	900
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch	ditch	3 fibulae, part of composite deposit	-1250	-850
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	channel layer	4 iron fibulae	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	house	posthole	2 fibulae in post-removal pit, part of composite deposit	25	50
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	wire fibula, ceramic bowl and wooden dish	40	70
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	2 equilateral disc fibulae	150	225
Katwijk	Zanderij	well	well	several fibulae	40	100
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-Noord	well	well	fibula in small pot	-71	-60
Monster	Voormalig campingterrein Molenslag	house	posthole	complete Domburg fibula	504	604
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve- Akkerhoeve	waterhole	waterhole	wire fibula, sherds of complete pot	90	180
Nijmegen	Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat	animal grave	pit	fibula among ribs of a horse	-19	450
Odijk	Singel West/ Schoudermantel	unknown	posthole	two-part footbow fibula	275	375
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house	unknown	fibulae, coins, complete ceramic beakers etc. around the house	100	200
Susteren	Salvatorplein	building	posthole	fibula	800	900
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	unknown	cultural layer?	appliqué disc fibula from cultural layer at (possible) house site	-10	-15
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	house	entrance ditch	spoon-bow fibula, part of composite deposit	1	30
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	animal burial	pit	2 bronze fibulae near complete horse skeleton	40	100
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	pit	pit	wire fibula, part of special composite deposit	300	400
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	house	entrance ditch	eye fibula (house 8)	0	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	house	cultural layer	eye fibula (house 8)	0	100
Uden	Noord-Hengstheuveld	granary	posthole	fibula	70	100
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV- station	(residual) channel	channel layer	12 fibulae	20	100
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	(residual) channel	channel layer	fibulae, bent silver bracelet, in residual channel at special structures (ritual place?)	-25	100
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	house	sunken byre	bronze fibula, part of composite deposit	50	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	channel layer	(complete) fibulae	175	225
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	fibula (S4201)	200	250
Wehl	Heideslag	well	well	pewter disc fibula	1312	1350

Table 6.29. Overview of number of special deposits with fibulae, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Pits	Outbuildings	Granaries	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
BA	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
IA	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	1	5
RP	6	3	-	1	6	-	4	4	24
MA	3	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	7
Total	9	4	1	2	9	3	4	5	37

two equilateral disc fibulae in the residual channel of Houten-Castellum (c. AD 100–150) are assumed to have been deliberately deposited at the same time as part of a special deposition practice. And for the fibulae found in the channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg, the excavators also believe that special deposition practices were involved. They point to the completeness of many of the fibulae and the presence of several notable examples, including ones labelled ‘ethnic’ with a British and Elbe-Germanic connection. The occurrence of other special finds, such as modified coins, a complete beaker containing nuts and sizeable concentrations of coins and finger rings, reinforces the idea that special deposition practices were involved in relation to this channel.

Fibulae are associated with other jewellery and special objects in the Late Roman deposits at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (pit 67) and Eme-Laaksche veld. In the case of the Tiel deposit, this included a bronze ring, a stud and mirror fragments, among other. Besides a bronze hinged fibula, the varied deposit from Eme included a bronze finger ring, a spindle whorl, a loom weight, a whetstone, a horse skull, an ‘antique’ arrowhead and sherds of a footed beaker.

A final separate category is that of fibulae associated with animal burials. A complete horse skeleton at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg is associated with two fibulae and a closed fibula was found among the ribs of a horse buried in pieces at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van

Boetzelaerstraat (Fig. 6.36). These fibulae may have been used to pin together a cloth in which the horse was buried and which has not survived. They therefore attest to the respectful way in which way in which all or parts of the deceased animals were treated.

Various fibulae deposits are also known from the post-Roman period. For houses, this is a complete Domburg fibula with a closed needle from a posthole of a sixth-century house at Monster-Voormalig campingterrein, a complete disc fibula from a central posthole of a house at Barneveld-Harselaar-Zuid phase 1A (AD 900–1225) and a fibula from a posthole of a wooden building at Susteren-Salvatorplein (c. AD 800–900). A complete bronze disc fibula was found in a posthole of a haystack at Hasselo-’t Oosterveld (AD 800–900). For this last deposit, the excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit or a sacrifice for a good harvest, deposited during or shortly after the land was first exploited. An interpretation as a closing deposit is suggested for the house deposit at Monster, while the excavator suggests that the Susteren deposit is a foundation or closing deposit. The youngest fibula deposit involves a decorated pewter disc fibula in a well from the first half of the fourteenth century at Wehl-Heideslag. Again, it is interesting to note that the fibula probably dates from the eleventh century and is therefore considerably older than the deposition context. The excavator does not explicitly refer to this find as a special deposit.



Fig. 6.36. Fibula among the ribs of a horse buried in parts at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat (source: Van den Broeke 2002b).

6.8.3 Jewellery

We can identify 33 deposits of jewellery in the inventoried dataset (Tables 6.30 and 6.31). The Roman period dominates once again. Compared with the fibulae category, the Iron and Bronze Ages are now better represented than the Middle Ages. Pits and wells dominate the contexts, followed at some distance by houses (Table 6.31). This presents a slightly different picture than for fibula deposits, where houses predominate.

If we look at the jewellery type, we see a predominance of bracelets (eleven deposits),⁴⁶⁴ followed by beads (nine deposits)⁴⁶⁵ and metal finger rings (seven deposits). Finger rings only occur in deposits from the Roman period. Less well represented are deposits with bone hairpins (three deposits from different wells at Voorburg-Arentsburg), pendants, spirals, Kropfnadeln, a bronze flat-headed pin and a ring brooch.

The earliest deposits with jewellery date from the Bronze Age. This includes a pit deposit from Zutphen-Looërenk, which is a composite deposit with an amber disc-shaped bead, a large quantity of pottery, a ceramic object, ochre, flint, cattle tooth enamel and a sandstone pecking stone. The fact that the bead is the only amber find from the excavation attests to its being a special object. Another amber bead is known

from a Bronze Age pit at Den Haag-Oude Waalsdorperweg. The deposit also contained pottery sherds, loom weight fragments and a flint arrowhead. A third special deposit from this period is the above-mentioned ditch deposit of Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg, which included a bronze bracelet, a natural stone pendant and a bronze flat-headed pin. Two deposits at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok are associated with house sites. These are three bronze spirals from the house site at site 6 and one spiral from the house site at site 5. Both cases may involve deposition practices linked to the abandonment of these house sites. Other objects in these deposits are bronze awls, a sickle, an arrowhead and a dagger.

Bracelets found in pits clearly dominate in the Iron Age. These include pit deposits at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (a bronze bracelet, possibly belonging to a child), Grijskerke-Kievitshoek (a fragment of a bronze bracelet in an enormous composite deposit), Elst-De Merm (a fragment of a lignite bracelet) and Heumen-Malden-Broeksingel (a fragment of a six-ribbed glass bracelet, together with a complete quernstone, two spindle whorls and 119 pottery sherds). A central pit inside a house at the Helmond-Brandevoort II site yielded a purple five-ribbed bracelet, interpreted as a foundation deposit (c. 220–75 BC). Fragments of a blue, five-ribbed bracelet, distorted by heating, from two different postholes of a building at Boxmeer-

⁴⁶⁴ There are six deposits with metal bracelets, four with glass bracelets and one of lignite.

⁴⁶⁵ These are four deposits with amber beads, three with glass beads, one with a ceramic bead and one with an amethyst bead.

Table 6.30. Overview of special deposits with jewellery.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	bronze bracelet	-500	-350
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	(out)building	posthole	2 fragments of blue, 5-ribbed bracelets	-300	-100
Breda	Steenakker	house	posthole	13 glass beads (house 48)	250	300
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/ Peperstraat 35	house	sunken byre	ring brooch, part of composite deposit of metal objects	1250	1500
Cuijk	De Nielt	coin hoard	in ceramic beaker	silver lunula pendant at top of ceramic beaker with coin hoard and peppercorns	251	270
Den Haag	Oude Waalsdorperweg	pit	pit	amber bead	-1800	-1100
Elst	De Merm	pit	pit	fragment of lignite bracelet	-800	-500
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	bronze hinged fibula, part of special composite deposit	275	425
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	3 bronze spirals (house site 6)	-1800	-1100
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	bronze spiral (house site 5)	-1460	-1400
Grijpskerke	Kievitshoekweg	pit	pit	fragment of bronze bracelet, part of very large deposit	-200	-150
Heerlen	Trilandis	well	well	2 bracelet fragments	270	450
Helmond	Brandevoort II/ Hazewinkel	house	pit	5-ribbed glass bracelet	-220	-75
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch	ditch	bronze bracelet, natural stone pendant and bronze flat-headed pin. Part of composite deposit	-1250	-850
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	ritual place	4 iron Kropfnadeln	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	iron signet ring with signet stone, broken-off neck of jug	100	125
Katwijk	Zanderij	well	well	glass bead	40	100
Malden	Broeksingel	pit	pit	6-ribbed glass bracelet	-500	-19
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	unknown	cultural layer?	signet ring with red stone	-30	-15
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	pit	pit	bronze finger ring, part of special composite deposit	300	400
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	orange-red glass bead, part of special composite deposit	700	750
Utrecht	A2	ditch	ditch	2 gold pendants	750	775
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	(residual) channel	channel layer	part of silver bracelet (deliberately bent), fibulae	-25	100
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	ritual place (?)	pit	ceramic bead, burnt loam, pottery with animal bone (partly burnt)	-25	100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	(residual) channel	9 signet rings and 1 snake head bracelet	175	225
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	bronze snake head bracelet, bone hairpin and glass bead	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	bronze finger ring, seal box, hairpin and bead	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	bone hairpin	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	bone hairpin and 4 pieces of twisted glass bracelet	275	325
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	3 finger rings, including one with a cameo	275	325
Voorburg	Forum Hadriani	well	well	27 amber beads, 2 wooden wagon wheels and wooden planks at top of well 3	-19	270
Wijk bij Duurstede	Veilingterrein	(out)building?	posthole	amethyst bead	650	750
Zutphen	Looërenk	pit	pit	amber disc-shaped bead, large quantity of pottery, ceramic object, ochre, flint, cattle tooth enamel and pecking stone	-2000	-1100

Table 6.31. Overview of number of special deposits with jewellery, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	Pits	Outbuildings	Granaries	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
BA	2	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	5
IA	1	4	1	-	-	-	1	1	8
RP	1	2	-	-	9	-	2	2	16
MA	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	4
Total	5	9	2	-	9	2	3	3	33

Sterckwijck can perhaps be viewed as a foundation deposit, although the excavator also suggests an association with a rite of passage. Finally, we can point to an interesting parallel, whereby fragments of glass bracelets were deposited in a fen near a grave field at Zutphen-Leesten, together with large quantities of pottery, ceramic objects and stone tools.⁴⁶⁶

Almost all jewellery deposits from the Roman period are associated with wet contexts, namely wells and (residual) channels. The signet ring from Tiel-Medel-De Reth was found near both the channel crossing and the possible house site 14002/14005, located on the bank. Several other signet rings and many bracelet fragments were also found at the crossing.⁴⁶⁷ Jewellery deposits are also known from the (residual) channels of Utrecht-Rijnvliet (a deliberately bent part of a silver bracelet) and Voorburg-Arentsburg (nine signet rings from the riparian zone of the channel and a special snake head bracelet).⁴⁶⁸ The excavators explicitly associate both of the latter deposits with special deposition practices. The remaining Roman deposits with jewellery come from wells or waterholes. A well at Heerlen-Trilandis contained two fragments of the same metal bracelet, and several barrel wells at Voorburg-Arentsburg yielded finger rings, hairpins, beads, fragments of a glass bracelet and part of a special bronze snake head bracelet. The excavators suggest that this latter object is a religiously 'charged' artefact intended to ward off evil and/or bring good luck.⁴⁶⁹ There were also deposits in a waterhole at Houten-Castellum (a signet ring and broken-off jug neck) and a well at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani (a full set of amber beads,

together with two wooden cartwheels).

Regarding dry contexts from this period, we can point to a deposit of 13 blue glass paste beads from a posthole of house 48 at Breda-Steenakker and to the above-mentioned composite deposit from pit 67 of Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, which included a bronze finger ring and an amber bead.

For the post-Roman period, there is firstly an amethyst bead from a posthole of a building at Wijk bij Duurstede-Veilingterrein (AD 650–750), a unique find for Dorestad. An orange-red glass bead comes from a pit deposit at Utrecht-A2, together with a horse skull, worked antler, an antique Roman sling bullet and an antique glass spindle whorl (AD 700–750). A second special deposit with jewellery is also known from this latter site. Two matching gold pendants were found in a yard ditch. Once again, these are antique objects. Based on Merovingian stylistic features, the pendants date to between c. 500 and 650 AD, whereas the excavators date the ditch to about or shortly after 750 AD.⁴⁷⁰ The youngest deposit is a metal deposit from the byre of a house at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf (AD 1250–1500), which also includes a ring brooch.

6.8.4 Discussion

Finally, we will examine several salient points in more detail, starting with the fairly consistent fragmentation of the deposited bracelets. Only the pit at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck and the ditch at Hoogkarspel yielded complete bronze bracelets. Bracelets may have been deliberately broken as

⁴⁶⁶ Van Straten & Fermin 2012, 119–120.

⁴⁶⁷ Van Renswoude 2019, 417.

⁴⁶⁸ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

⁴⁶⁹ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

⁴⁷⁰ Nokkert *et al.* 2009, 136.

part of a ritual practice ('ritual destruction'). This is evidenced by the bent (probably deliberately) section of bracelet from the residual channel at Utrecht-Rijnvliet, by two parts of the same metal bracelet from a well at Heerlen-Trilandis and by bracelet fragments, distorted through heating, in the (out)building at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. We can also point to bracelet fragments from a fen at Zutphen-Leesten.⁴⁷¹

A second point concerns the prominent association of both fibulae and jewellery with wells and, to a lesser degree, (residual) channels. These are primarily finger rings, bracelets and beads. The channels of Utrecht-Rijnvliet and Voorburg-Arentsburg show evidence of deposition practices involving fibulae over time. In the case of the latter channel, this may also be true for signet rings.

Both the personal nature of the objects under discussion and the preference for liminal deposition locations such as wells and channels would accord with their role in rites of passage.⁴⁷² These rituals symbolically and ritually marked and facilitated the transition between different life stages and social identities. The deposition (or sacrifice) of objects may also have been part of such rituals, in which case the objects are probably linked to specific social/personal identities.⁴⁷³

6.9 Weapons and militaria

Weapons and militaria are specifically associated with combat and have symbolic meanings relating to martiality and warriorship. For the Roman period, there are associations with the Roman army, with army service and with the return of veterans to their settlements of origin. The dataset contains 28 deposits of weapons and/or militaria (Tables 6.32 and 6.33). They date from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Middle Ages, with the Roman period clearly dominant (Table 6.33). Besides pits and houses, wells are particularly well represented in terms of contexts. There is an absence of deposits in outbuildings or granaries.

The oldest weapons that can be viewed as possible special deposits around the house and yard date from the Bronze Age. At the very least, these are two flint arrowheads, a bronze

arrowhead and a spearhead. The flint arrowheads were found in pits, both of which are located at a settlement site, although their relationship to contemporaneous habitation is not entirely clear. The arrowhead of Boxmeer-Sterckwijck was deposited in a pit together with 4.5 kg of partly burnt natural stone. The arrowhead is probably older than the deposition context. The other flint arrowhead comes from a pit at the Den Haag-Oude Waalsdorperweg site (1800–1100 BC), together with pottery sherds, loom weight fragments and an amber bead. The bronze arrowhead, found at site 6 at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok, was found just outside the wall of house 1, together with bronze spirals and an awl (Fig. 6.37). A further weapon, a dagger, was found along with another awl some distance (about 7 m) from the house, but may originally have been positioned near the house. As described earlier, these could be objects that were deposited during or after the dismantling of the house. A bronze spearhead from this period can also be associated with a house. It was found at the top of a central posthole of house 4 at Rhenen-Remmerden (Middle Bronze Age). The spearhead is heavily worn. Its placement in the posthole suggests that it was deposited after the house was dismantled. The rarity of this find is demonstrated by Fontijn's survey, which does not feature any spearheads in Bronze Age settlements.⁴⁷⁴ The vast majority of examples come from wet contexts outside settlements.

However, several spearheads are known from special deposits at settlement sites from the Iron Age. One was found in the youngest fill phase of a well at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord (Late Iron Age). The well appears to have been deliberately destroyed or dismantled. The position of the spearhead seems to suggest that it was not deposited until after, perhaps long after, the well was abandoned. Two more iron spearheads were found in a wet context, namely near the ritual enclosure in the residual channel at Houten-Castellum (c. 500–250 BC). Ten belt hooks were also found near the enclosure. They too can be linked to special deposition practices. Two large iron spearheads come from a dry context at Cuijk-De Nielt. The spearheads are virtually identical and are likely to have ended up in the ground at the same time. Because they were found in a cultural layer, their exact deposition context is unclear.

⁴⁷¹ Van Straten & Fermin 2012, 119–120.

⁴⁷² Nieuwhof 2015, 82–84.

⁴⁷³ Fontijn 2002, 276; Nieuwhof 2015, 82–84.

⁴⁷⁴ Fontijn 2002, 118.

Table 6.32. Overview of special deposits with weapons/militaria.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Object(s)	Brief description	Beginning	End
Beuningen	Molenstraat	animal burial	pit	horse gear	horse gear in grave of military horse	100	300
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	pit	pit	arrowhead	flint arrowhead, 4.5 kg of natural stone	-1100	-800
Breda	Huifakker	well	well	helmet	half a military helmet, ploughshare and fragments of iron bucket in fill of well-construction pit	250	300
Budel	Noord-Duitse school	house	entrance pit	spearhead, dagger	spearhead, dagger, knives and other iron objects near house entrances	230	300
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	well	well	spearhead	spearhead, military rotary handmill	109	150
Den Haag	Oude Waalsdorperweg	pit	pit	arrowhead	flint arrowhead	-1800	-1100
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	building	posthole	arrowhead	arrowhead	900	925
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	waterhole	waterhole	arrowhead	(antique) arrowhead	-52	73
Eme	Laaksche veld	pit	pit	arrowhead	(antique) arrowhead, whetstone	275	425
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	arrowhead, dagger	bronze arrowhead and dagger (house 1)	-1800	-1100
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	ditch	ditch	lancehead	lancehead	1100	1200
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	ditch	ditch	arrowhead	arrowhead	1100	1300
Heteren	Uilenburg	ditch	ditch	lancehead	lancehead	-19	450
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	channel layer	spearhead	2 spearheads, fibulae, 10 belt hooks and 4 Kropfnaldeln from residual channel near ritual place	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	buckle	military buckle, coin, 2 broken-off jug necks, 1 antler fragment and half a cattle skull	40	100
Houten	Hofstad Diepriool	ditch	ditch	helmet	7 virtually complete helmet cheek pieces	50	100
Houten	Hofstad Diepriool	ditch	ditch	plate armour	10 large and 30 smaller parts of plate armour components	50	100
Kesteren	De Woerd	pit	pit	buckle	2 military buckles	0	70
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-Noord	well	well	spearhead	iron spearhead	-71	-60
Malden	Broeksingel	house	pit	sling bullets	73 sling bullets and loom weight fragment in a large, roughened baseless pot	-500	-250
Middelaar	Kopseweg	pit	pit	sling bullet	fragments of 14 sling bullets and 1 complete sling bullet, about 8 kg of (burnt) pottery, iron socketed axe, burnt loam, 2 pieces of burnt animal bone	-450	-380
Rhemen	Remmerden	house	posthole	spearhead	bronze spearhead at top of central posthole (house 4)	-1800	-1100
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	house	entrance ditch	sling bullet	two sling bullet fragments, part of composite deposit	1	30
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	spearhead	spearhead	625	675
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	sling bullet	(antique) sling bullet, part of special composite deposit	700	750
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV-station	(residual) channel	channel layer	spearhead, horse bit	spearhead, horse bit, fibulae and complete axe	20	100
Utrecht	De Meern-De Woerd	well	waterhole	cavalry helmet	forehead band of Roman cavalry helmet	40	70

We have already referred above to an ‘antique’ arrowhead from a Bronze Age pit at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck. We also know of two deposits that contained antique arrowheads. These are an arrowhead from the Bell Beaker

period at the top of a waterhole from the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period (Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid) and an arrowhead from the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age in a Late Roman pit at Eme-Laaksche veld. Antique

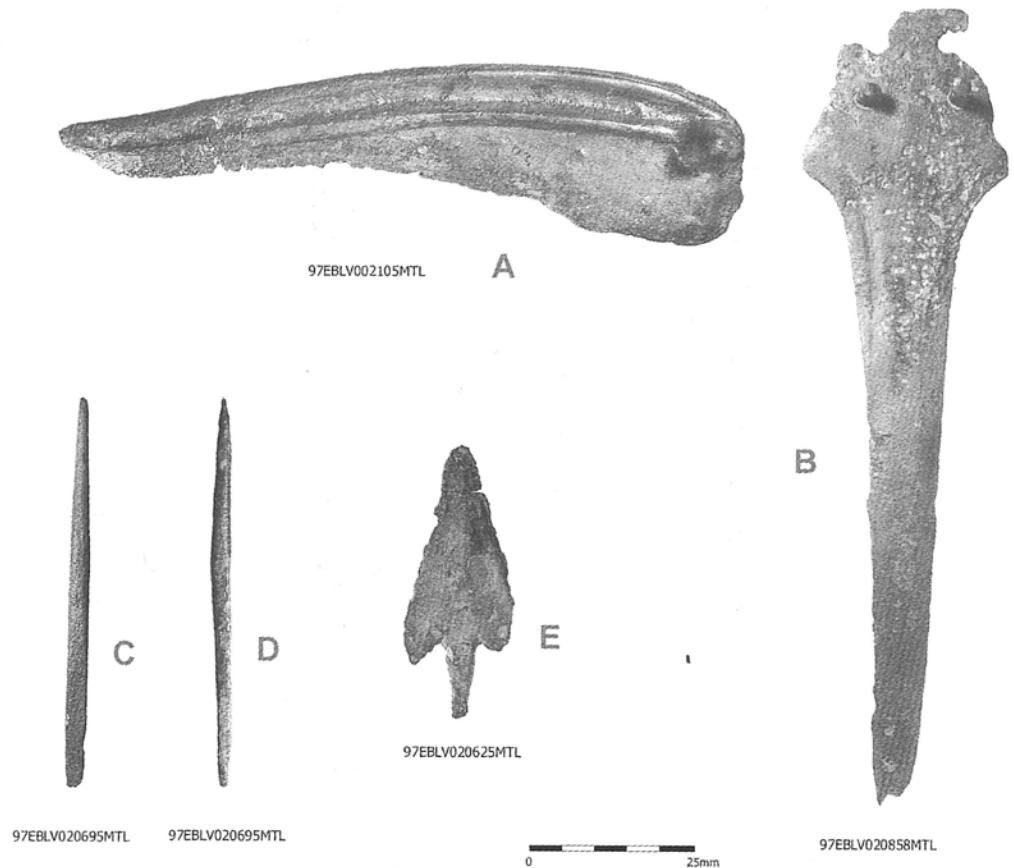


Fig. 6.37. Several bronze objects from house sites at sites 5 and 6 at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok: sickle (A), dagger (B), two awls (C–D) and an arrowhead (E) (source: Jongste 2002, Fig. 9).

Table 6.33. Overview of special deposits with weapons/militaria, by period and deposition context.

	Houses/buildings	Pits	Ditches	Wells	(Residual) channels	Total
BA	2	2	-	-	-	4
IA	1	1	-	1	2	5
IA–RP	-	-	-	1	-	1
RP	2	3	3	4	1	13
MA	1	1	2	-	-	5
Total	6	7	5	6	3	28

⁴⁷⁵ Gerritsen 2003, 94, with further reference to Verwers 1972. We can also point to a deposit of 210 sling bullets in a settlement ditch at Oss-Schalkskamp (Gerritsen 2003, 94).

objects of this kind could be family heirlooms or magical objects, in which the association with martiality or warriorship probably does not play a primary role.

With regard to sling bullets, we can point first to an interesting deposit in house 3 at Malden-Broeksingel (Middle Iron Age). This is a large, baseless pot with 73 sling bullets (and a loom weight fragment). A similar deposit is known from house C at Haps, comprising 70 sling bullets and the burnt sherds of five pots (Middle Iron Age).⁴⁷⁵ The pot base with 586 pebbles in a central posthole of a house at Boekel-Parkweg can perhaps also be understood as a stock of sling bullets or catapult stones. An interpretation as special deposits seems plausible in all instances. Also from the Middle Iron Age is a pit deposit at Middelaar-Kopseweg containing 15 sling bullets, a large quantity of burnt pottery, burnt loam, burnt bone and an iron socketed axe.

The category of weapons and militaria is more diverse in the Roman period than in previous periods. Also represented, in addition to weapons, are armour and armour parts, helmets and military belts. For helmets, we can first mention a deliberately bent metal forehead



Fig. 6.38. Special deposit with iron components of military equipment at Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, 1165; photo: Restaura).

band of a Roman cavalry helmet from a well at Utrecht-De Meern-De Woerd (c. AD 40–70). A similar find is that of a halved, misshapen helmet from a well at Breda-Huifakker (c. AD 250–300). This latter helmet probably belonged to a man who had served as an archer in the Roman auxiliaries. Another interesting deposit comes from a ditch along the residual channel at Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool. The deposit contained seven almost complete cheek pieces of military helmets, together with plate armour fragments and two complete ceramic pots (c. AD 50–100) (Fig. 6.38).⁴⁷⁶ All three of these deposits are associated with wet contexts. In that respect, it is interesting to note that the majority of helmet deposits from outside settlements also come from wet contexts. Complete helmets have been found in rivers, such as the Waal at Millingen,⁴⁷⁷ and the former Rhine bed at Bodegraven-Wierickerschans⁴⁷⁸ and Woerden.⁴⁷⁹ Another find is a bronze face mask of a cavalry helmet from the riparian zone of a wide channel at Leiden-Roomburg.⁴⁸⁰ Lastly,

we can mention the well-known Peel helmet, from a swamp near Deurne. Compared with deposits from outside settlements, we observe that those found within settlements are not complete, undamaged helmets, but parts or fragments, some of which appear to have been deliberately damaged, bent or fragmented.

Other militaria are also sometimes deposited in wet contexts. A military belt buckle was found in a waterhole (AD 40–100) at Houten-Castellum, while a well in Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen yielded both a spearhead and a military rotary handmill. Another well, at the Nijmegen-Molenweg 49/71 site, contained a complete sword but unfortunately there is no further information available. We can also point to a deposit at Houten-Hofstad-Diepriool, which included ten larger plate armour components (*lorica segmentata*). Special deposition practices involving weapons and militaria may also have occurred at some of the other (residual) channels. These complexes are difficult to interpret and many excavators are

⁴⁷⁶ Such notable deposits with (parts of) military equipment belonging to several people are also known from Nijmegen-Kops Plateau, where a deposit from the cavalry camp included eight helmets, while ten saddle horns were found in two other deposits (Van Enckevort & Willems 1994; Nicolay 2007, 196).

⁴⁷⁷ Nicolay 2007, 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Braat 1939, 29–32.

⁴⁷⁹ Nicolay et al. 2008, 2–8; Vos et al. 2010, 113–115.

⁴⁸⁰ Hazenberg 2000, 50–51; fig. 3.20; Van Enckevort & Hazenberg 1997, 38–39. Unworn coins and horse bones with many chopping and cut marks could also indicate special deposition practices at this wet spot (De Rijk 2016, 20).

cautious about classifying them as special deposits. A case in point is the metal complex from the channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station, where a sizeable proportion of the finds are of a Roman military nature (including a complete spearhead and a complete horse bit). The excavator ultimately decided that the assemblage cannot properly be interpreted as a special deposit (primarily because of its distribution in both time and space) but that 'normal waste' is not a satisfactory interpretation either. Regarding the deposition of weapons and militaria in wet places outside settlement contexts, we can point to the riparian zone of the Rhine in Alphen aan den Rijn and Zwammerdam (containing complete swords, daggers, spearheads and parts of shields).⁴⁸¹ Similar deposits have been observed near the castellum in De Meern.⁴⁸²

Militaria and weapons occur in dry contexts too. We can point to two Early Roman military buckles from a pit in the centre of the settlement at Kesteren-De Woerd, a lancehead from a ditch on the edge of the settlement of Heteren-Uilenburg and a set of three military pendants on the settlement fringe at Arnhem-De Laar 6/7.⁴⁸³ Van den Broeke also mentions an interesting deposit near the western boundary of the settlement of Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat (c. AD 50–120).⁴⁸⁴ This is a small pit with a complete gladius, a lance foot, various iron nails and some animal bone (Fig. 6.39). The deposit at Budel-Noord-Duitse school is atypical. Several metal objects were found there near the entrances to house 9, including a spearhead and a dagger (AD 230–300).

⁴⁸¹ Bakker 2013, 63–78; Bron 2013, 145; De Bruin 2017, 95.

⁴⁸² Dielemans 2012, 261.

⁴⁸³ The latter deposit is taken from Nicolay 2007, 195, but is not included in our dataset (unpublished and limited data).

For Kesteren, see Sier & Koot 2001, 382.

⁴⁸⁴ Van den Broeke 2002b, 16–17; Nicolay 2007, 195.

⁴⁸⁵ See, for example, Nicolay 2007; Derks & Roymans 2006; Vos 2009.

⁴⁸⁶ Nicolay 2007, 173; Vos 2009, 197.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Characteristic of the first-century assemblages is their affinity in terms of (1) location in the peripheral zone of settlements, (2) deposition in a purpose-dug pit, and (3) the incomplete nature of the set of objects deposited' (Nicolay 2007, 195).

⁴⁸⁸ Van Driel-Murray 1994; Nicolay 2007, 181.



Fig. 6.39. Special deposit with a complete gladius, lance foot and various iron nails at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat (source: Van den Broeke 2004).

The deposit near the entrance to house 8002 at Tiel-Medel-De Reth also contained various objects: besides two ceramic sling bullet fragments, there were complete vessels, a fibula, a loom weight and ceramic discs. A final deposit with militaria concerns a horse grave near an outbuilding within the settlement at Beuningen-Molenstraat (early second century AD). Thirteen bronze objects placed directly around the horse's head – fittings, rings and a large pendant from the horse's bridle – were recovered when the skeleton was excavated. The withers height suggests that this was a military horse.

The deposition of militaria can perhaps be considered in the context of the discussion about veterans.⁴⁸⁵ Nicolay points out that veterans took all or part of their military equipment back home with them at the end of military service and kept it there. These items may have been used on special occasions.⁴⁸⁶ Such personal objects probably had a special significance for the individual owners. Although militaria are regularly found in rural settlements, there are only a few instances in which special deposition practices can be demonstrated.⁴⁸⁷ Nicolay points out that, following on from the Late Iron Age, it was still fairly common to sacrifice weaponry, especially in the first century BC.⁴⁸⁸ He associates these deposition practices with key moments in a soldier's life: the safe return to the settlement of origin and the return to civilian life. Thus the deposition of items of this type probably formed part of rites of passage.

Only a few weapons or militaria are known from the presumed special deposits from the post-Roman period. An early medieval example concerns a complete iron spearhead from a pit at Utrecht-A2 (LR51) (AD 625–675). The pit is situated in a yard that also yielded an axe fragment. Postholes of a house at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker (AD 900–925) contained an iron arrowhead, as well as a complete key and a lead spindle whorl. An arrowhead and a lancehead from two separate twelfth-century settlement ditches at Geldermalsen-Stationslocatie could also be special deposits.

6.10 Human remains

6.10.1 Introduction

Human remains constitute a find category within the context of house and yard that attracts attention by its very nature.⁴⁸⁹ This is because of the general assumption that the remains of deceased individuals were treated with care and were interred in graves in their entirety, often – though not exclusively – outside settlements.

Here we will examine loose human remains within the context of house and yard. These are skulls, skull parts, the postcranial skeleton and fragments thereof. We will not discuss complete burials as they constitute a separate research topic that falls outside the scope of this study.

Archaeological reports regularly label human bone as a ‘special find’, with no further comments about the nature of the deposition.

It is frequently assumed, sometimes implicitly, that human remains come from disturbed graves and have ended up secondarily in settlement features. On the other hand, there is also evidence that human remains may have been preserved and used – and possibly even displayed – as special objects in the context of house and yard. These special objects may then have been deposited during rituals.

6.10.2 General picture

Table 6.34 provides an overview of the inventoried deposits with loose human remains, 57 in all. With regard to chronological distribution, we see that all periods after the Neolithic are fairly well represented (Table 6.35). Pits dominate the contexts, followed closely by ditches and channels. Wells/waterholes and houses are also fairly well represented.

⁴⁸⁹ A study is currently in preparation of loose human skeleton material in Bronze Age settlement contexts (Roessingh & Baetsen in preparation).

Table 6.34. Overview of special deposits with human remains.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Alkmaar	Doelenstraat	pit	pit	9 skulls (without lower jaw), 'manure layer', large quantity of animal bone, fish scales and pottery	1425	1500
Beetgumermolen	Alddyk	house	pit	complete skull	1100	1200
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	waterhole	skull fragment (frontal bone)	-800	-500
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	waterhole	waterhole	tibia fragment	-388	-204
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	pit	pit	skull fragment, 3 quernstones	-2850	-2600
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	ditch	ditch	femur	-1800	-800
Ewijk	Keizershoeve I	house	pit	humerus of baby	-19	450
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	house	cultural layer	4 burnt skull fragments, burnt clay (near house entrance). Bronze awl and a sickle near other entrance	-1460	-1400
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	(out)building?	posthole	skull fragment (petrous bone)	-150	-19
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	(residual) channel	channel layer	2 fragments of right femur (14C dating: Early Iron Age)	-150	-19
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	skull fragment	-150	-19
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	(residual) channel	channel layer	tibia shaft fragment	70	270
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	almost complete skull; also horse skull and neck of jug amphora in same ditch	270	350
Grijpskerke	Kievitshoekweg	pit	pit	complete pelvis with associated lumbar vertebrae, part of an extensive deposit	-200	-150
Heerlen	Trilandis	well	well	human bone remains (Middle Iron Age), 2 fragments of 1 bracelet	270	450
Hoogkarspel	Hoogkarspeltunnel	pit	pit	fragments of child's skull	-1800	-1100
Hoogkarspel	Houterpolder-West	ditch	ditch	skull fragment	-1800	-1100

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	ditch/pit/posthole	ditch/pit/posthole	human bone in 11 different contexts (7 skulls)	-1800	-800
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	waterhole	waterhole	skull fragment	-1200	-1000
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	pit	skull fragment, together with deer antler	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	ritual place	pit	skull (without lower jaw), together with spindle whorl and partial skeleton of sheep/goat	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	almost complete skull; signs of having been displayed	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	48 pieces of human bone (15 skull)	-500	-19
Houten	Castellum	(residual) channel	channel layer	8 pieces of human bone (1 skull)	-19	120
Houten	Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	(residual) channel	channel layer	vertebra, sherds of large beaker pot, anvil/quernstone, charred grain remains	-2150	-1800
Leiderdorp	Simon Smitweg	elevation layer	elevation layer	human tibia	-19	450
Lent	Ruimte voor de Waal	ditch	ditch	3 skull fragments	-19	450
Marssum	It Aldlân	well	well	heel bone	375	500
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	pit	pit	femur (of child)	-19	450
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	pit	pit	skull fragment (occipital bone)	-19	450
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	ditch	ditch	skull fragment (frontal bone). Head trauma	175	225
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	pit	pit	bone fragment, some pottery fragments and animal bone	700	1000
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	ditch	pit	pelvis	1000	1250
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	pit	pit	skull	-800	70
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	waterhole	waterhole	fragment of radial bone	-500	-300
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	house	house platform	8 skulls and skull parts, complete pots etc.	-300	-200
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	house	floor	tufts of human hair	-429	-357
Rhenen	Remmerden	pit	pit	burnt human bone	-800	-500
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	fragment of lower jaw	575	800
Utrecht	A2	pit	pit	skull with axe marks, amber	675	725
Utrecht	A2	unknown	pit	bone of baby, bronze ring (buckle/strap junction?)	675	725
Utrecht	A2	(residual) channel	channel layer	3 skulls (1 with associated cervical vertebrae)	750	775
Utrecht	Hoge Weide	(residual) channel	channel layer	lower jaw	-25	50
Utrecht	Leidsche Rijn-Leeuwesteyn Noord	pit	pit	finger phalanx bone	725	900
Utrecht	LR84-Sportpark Terweide	unknown	unknown	2 fragments of (different) human femurs, animal bone	-250	70
Voerendaal	Ten Hove	pit	pit	skull fragment, large pot and decorated bowl	325	375
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	femur (with cut marks)	200	250

Table 6.35. Overview of special deposits with human remains, by period and context.

	Houses/buildings	(Out)buildings?	Pits	Wells	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Other	Total
Neo	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Neo-BA	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
BA	4		3	1	8	-	-	16
IA	1	1	2	3	1	5	1	14
IA-RP	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
RP	1	-	3	2	3	3	1	13
RP-MA	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
MA	1	-	5	-	1	1	1	9
Total	7	1	14	7	13	10	4	57

6.10.3 Skulls and skull parts

More than half of the finds involve skulls or skull parts, which suggests that a selection process may have been at play. On the other hand, we should point out that fragmented remains of long (and small) bones are not always easy to identify as being of human origin.

The oldest skull find is that of unburnt skull fragments in a Late Neolithic cultural layer close to a hunting camp at Den Haag-Wateringse Binnentuinen. The excavator suggests that it is a special deposit but also mentions the possibility of a disturbed grave. For the Bronze Age, firstly, four skull fragments, together with burnt clay, were found in a cultural layer near the entrance to a house at site 5 at Geldermalsen-Eigenblok. Interestingly, a bronze awl and a sickle were found near another entrance to the same house. These objects were probably associated with the final phase of the house site and were deliberately deposited. The vast majority of cases (definitely nine of the 13 deposits) at other Bronze Age sites – Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg, Houterpolder-West and Hoogkarspeltunnel – involve skull fragments.⁴⁹⁰ These skull parts have chiefly been found in ditches, but also in pits, a waterhole, a house ditch and a posthole that was part of a house.

Iron Age deposits involving skulls and skull

parts are known from Nijmegen-Lent-Site 9/57, Culemborg-Hoge Prijs, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, Houten-Castellum and Oldehove-Englum-Leege Wier. The latter two stand out in particular. Firstly, the Houten deposit comprised a complete skull (together with a spindle whorl and partial skeleton of a sheep/goat) (Fig. 6.40) and a skull fragment (along with deer antler) from two pits that can be associated with the ritual place that was partly situated in the residual channel (see also Section 5.8.3).

The complete skull shows signs that it may have been displayed. The same applies to an almost complete skull from the same period found elsewhere in the residual channel. The Oldehove deposit is a large composite deposit with eight skulls and skull parts arranged in a circle, together with partial animal skeletons, complete pots and a rubbing stone. These objects were deposited in a manure-rich fill during the construction of a new house platform.

Skulls from the Roman period are known from several pits and ditches. An almost complete skull was found in a Late Roman ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. A horse skull and the neck of jug amphora were found in the same ditch. A Late Roman pit at Voerendaal-Ten Hove contained a skull fragment, together with large pieces of a big pot and a decorated bowl.

For the Middle Ages we can first point to three skulls from an early medieval channel at Utrecht-Az. The excavator suggests that these

⁴⁹⁰ See Table 22.3 in Roessingh & Tol 2019, 699.



Fig. 6.40. A complete human skull in a pit at the ritual place at Houten-Castellum (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 20.27).

could be the remains of washed-away graves. One of the skulls had several neck vertebrae attached. A second interesting find is that of a complete skull from a pit inside twelfth-century house 2 at Beetgumermolen-Alddyk. A third deposit involved a pit at Alkmaar-Doelenstraat, with nine human skulls placed together (with missing lower jaws) (1425–1500). This latter context, described as a rubbish pit, also contained a large quantity of animal bone and a black ‘manure layer’ that included fish scales and pottery. Among the pottery was a small hanging pot resembling a holy water cup. It is difficult to determine how the skulls should be interpreted in this context. They may have come from cleared graves and reburied here intentionally (perhaps even ceremonially?), or ‘dumped’.

6.10.4 Postcranial skeletons

The remaining deposits involve parts of postcranial skeletons and in one case human hair. Some notable examples are discussed here.

The oldest deposit comes from the bottom layers of the fill of a pool in the residual channel of Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) (2150–1800 BC). This deposit contained a particularly large pot

(containing charred (food) residues), a large quernstone or anvil, charred grains and a human vertebra. Both the pottery and the associated food residues appear to be the remains of a communal meal. Another deposit that combines human remains and indications of a communal meal is known from a pit at Grijskerke-Kievitshoekweg. However, it is an exceptionally large deposit that included 660 kg of pottery (220–342 MNI), fragments of fire dogs or roasting spits, pieces of two quernstones and animal bone. Also deposited in the pit was a complete human pelvis with its associated lumbar vertebrae. Fifteen to twenty families – probably the entire local community – may have taken part in this substantial collective ritual.⁴⁹¹

Human bone is associated with houses in other instances too. This includes a pelvic blade and two femurs from a house ditch at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg (Middle–Late Bronze Age), tufts of human hair under the floor of a house at Oldehove-Englum-Lege Wier (Middle Iron Age) and a pit with the humerus of a baby, associated with two house plans at Ewijk-Keizershoeve I. For this latter find, the excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit, without elaborating further or providing any supporting evidence.

Loose bone fragments are also known from

⁴⁹¹ Van Dierendonck 2016.

various pits, ditches, channels and wells/waterholes. Often, these contexts and associated finds do not provide any clues as to the further interpretation of the bone remains or the circumstances in which they ended up in the features. In some cases, the bones feature cut or gnaw marks or had clearly been broken at an earlier date. A waterhole at Oldehove-Englum-Lege Wier yielded a radius that was broken or gnawed at shortly after the individual had died. Cut marks have also been identified on three of the postcranial bones from the channel of Houten-Castellum. The femur fragment with cut marks from well S4108 at Voorburg-Arentsburg was found in the sandy filter layer at the bottom of the well, which suggests that it was deliberately deposited there.⁴⁹² Another well find concerns human bone remains in Late Roman well 2 of Heerlen-Trilandis, where two fragments of the same metal bracelet were also found. Based on 14C dating, the bone fragments are dated to the Middle or Late Iron Age.

6.10.5 Discussion and interpretation

There are various relevant issues when it comes to interpreting human bone remains in the context of house and yard. These are primarily the discussion about the role of excarnation and alternative forms of burial, the role of rites of passage and the use of human bone as a special object.

Special deposits or disturbed graves?

There are two prevailing explanatory models for interpreting human bone in the context of house and yard. In the first, human remains are viewed as the disturbed remains of graves. This could include bone from graves that have been washed away or disturbed by other means (e.g. by animals or later digging activities). This bone could then end up secondarily in settlement features, often as waste or litter. In the second model, human remains are seen as meaningful objects that were deliberately kept, displayed and/or deposited.

It is suggested that the skulls from the channel at Utrecht-A2 and most of the human bone material from the channel at Houten-Castellum probably came from graves that had been washed away.⁴⁹³ The same may apply to the

weathered human bone fragments from the channel at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, which are demonstrably much older than the context in which they were found. In other instances, the human bone material comes from pits that include fragmented pottery and animal bone, with no further pointers to an interpretation as special deposits. Such pits are found at Culemborg-Hoge Prijs (pit 12), Utrecht-LR84-Sportpark Terweide and Naaldwijk-Hoogeland. The pit at Utrecht-A2, containing the bone of a baby, is interpreted by the excavator as a rubbish pit.

At other times, the context or find association offers clues to an interpretation as a special deposit. This includes skulls and skull parts from the ritual place/channel of Houten-Castellum, the partial skeleton in the large deposit at Grijskerke, the skull in the house at Beetgumermolen-Alddyk, the eight skulls from the house platform at Oldehove, the skull from the Late Roman ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, the human vertebra from a pool at Houten-Hofstad (Vleugel 20), the hair tufts from the house platform at Englum and the femur fragment from the well at Voorburg-Arentsburg. Based on the context, structure and association, we can assume that these all involve the deliberate and meaningful deposition of human bone.

Excarnation and alternative forms of burial

In some cases human remains found around the house and yard can be understood as the result of alternative forms of burial that differ from the well-known inhumation and cremation traditions.⁴⁹⁴ It is also important to bear in mind that we know very little about the funerary practices in some regions and periods. This is true, for example, of the western and northern Dutch coastal region during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age.⁴⁹⁵

Human remains may have been 'secondarily buried' around the house and yard. This would have involved parts of bodies or skeletons that had first been 'interred' or 'treated' elsewhere (perhaps outside the settlement).⁴⁹⁶ Excarnation, or defleshing, may have played a key role here. In excarnation, the bodies of the deceased are exposed to the elements and left to decompose, for example, in special death huts, on platforms, or even in trees.⁴⁹⁷ Scavengers may have played an important part in this. It is also possible that bodies were (temporarily) buried, cut into pieces

⁴⁹² Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 222. Driessen and Besselsen mention a parallel, whereby similar cut marks feature on a human femur from a Roman well at Oudenburg (see Vanhoutte 2009, 103).

⁴⁹³ For Houten, see Panhuysen 2017, 744.

⁴⁹⁴ In the central part of southern England, the occurrence of incomplete human skeletons in pits and (enclosure) ditches within an Iron Age settlement site are explained as a secondary burial ritual (Carr & Knüsel 1997, 169).

⁴⁹⁵ See Van den Broeke 2020, 92; Van Kooten 2016; Nieuwhof 2015, 438–439.

⁴⁹⁶ Baetsen 2009, 352–354.

⁴⁹⁷ However, another possibility is that the bodies were first buried and the bones excavated later (Nieuwhof 2015, 85).

or moved.⁴⁹⁸ Part of the body may have been deposited in pits or ditches to decompose further.⁴⁹⁹ Gnaw and cut marks on human bones could be seen as indicating excarnation processes.⁵⁰⁰ During or after excarnation, parts of the skeleton may have been collected, preserved or used in secondary rituals within the context of house and yard, including the deposition of these remains.⁵⁰¹

Within our dataset we find cut marks on several bones from the residual channel of Houten-Castellum, the femur from the well at Voorburg-Arentsburg and the radial bone from the waterhole at Oldehove. The bone from the latter waterhole was broken and gnawed shortly after the death of the individual concerned. The researchers at the Houten and Oldehove sites explicitly link the marks on the bones to excarnation.⁵⁰² The bones would have been collected after excarnation and eventually deposited as part of ritual practices. For the deposit of eight skulls at Oldehove, Nieuwhof also assumes that the skulls were collected after excarnation.⁵⁰³ In addition, we can point to several finds with associated bone elements, such as the pelvis with vertebrae in the Grijpskerke pit (Late Iron Age), the skull with cervical vertebrae from the early medieval channel at Utrecht and the two femurs with pelvic blade from the house ditch at Hoogkarspel (Middle–Late Bronze Age). Finds of this type could also relate to excarnation practices and the secondary interment of body parts. For a much later period we can point to the skull from twelfth-century house 2 at Beetgummolen–Alddyk. Here too, the excavator suggests that there may have been different funerary practices. In the northern Netherlands during this period, there appears to have been a practice of collectively interring the partial skeletal remains of the dead in stone sarcophagi. The medieval skull of Beetgummolen may be a kind of secondary interment within the house.

Rites of passage

The deposition of human remains may be associated in some instances with rites of passage.⁵⁰⁴ Baetsen links the human remains found in or near ditched enclosures (at Geldermalsen–Hondsgemet and Culemborg–Hoge Prijs) to rituals intended to facilitate and mark the transition from being a living member of the community to a deceased one

(or ancestor).⁵⁰⁵ Here we can assume a link between the liminal location of these deposits (associated with the crossing of boundaries) and the transition that was ‘performed’ in these rituals. In this respect, it is interesting to note that ditches, channels and wells are well-represented contexts for human bone deposits.

Nieuwhof also points out that a ritual may have been involved in the deposit of eight skulls at Oldehove, in which the deceased made the transition to ancestor status. At the same time, the ritual – accompanied by a communal meal – marked the construction of a new house platform.⁵⁰⁶ Human hair found in the house platform at the same site can also be interpreted in the context of rites of passage. This, however, was likely to be a transition during the individual’s life, where cutting off the hair formed part of a rite of separation. The ‘old life’, or ‘old identity’, was thereby terminated and the associated symbols were cast off or removed (and deposited).⁵⁰⁷

Human bone as special objects

Human bone was not necessarily deposited or interred immediately in all cases. Ancestral bone remains may sometimes have been preserved, used and even exchanged within families and communities as valuable, inalienable objects.⁵⁰⁸ The bone remains of deceased relatives may have been collected during or after excarnation or dug up from the ground once the body had decomposed.

Nieuwhof suggests that families possessed collections of special, meaningful objects, including bone fragments of deceased ancestors or relatives, as well as heirlooms, some of which we occasionally encounter in deposits (see also Sections 6.13 and 7.3.2).⁵⁰⁹ Such objects would have served to symbolise the familial bonds, underscoring the family’s genealogy and identity, probably also during rituals.⁵¹⁰

These special objects may have been deposited during rituals in which family identity was a key focus. It was apparently important in these rituals to stress family identity – in relation to one another, to other families or to the territory claimed by the family.⁵¹¹

Human bone remains as special objects can perhaps be identified in the well at Voorburg (a femur with cut marks), the well at Heerlen–Trilandis (‘antique’ bone remains), the waterhole at Oldehove (a broken radius) and the deposit

⁴⁹⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 84–85.

⁴⁹⁹ Baetsen 2015, 238.

⁵⁰⁰ Panhuyzen 2017, 774. Panhuyzen regards the cut marks on four bones from the residual channel at Houten-Castellum as possible indications of excarnation. Nieuwhof also interprets gnaw and cut marks in the light of excarnation practices (Nieuwhof 2015, 147).

⁵⁰¹ Carr & Knüsel 1997, 169; Nieuwhof 2015, 196. Such rituals and deposition practices may have been intended to promote fertility and the renewal of life (see Carr & Knüsel 1997, 171; Rieckhoff 2002, 25).

⁵⁰² Nieuwhof 2015, 147; Panhuyzen 2017, 744. Nieuwhof assumes that excarnation was a common practice in the terp region (Nieuwhof 2015, 84–85, 108). For the Geldermalsen–Hondsgemet and Culemborg–Hoge Prijs sites, Baetsen explicitly mentions excarnation as a possible interpretation of the loose bone, in the absence however of any concrete evidence in the form of cut marks and the like (Baetsen 2009, 2015).

⁵⁰³ Nieuwhof 2015, 140, 142.

⁵⁰⁴ Baetsen 2009, 341–354; Baetsen 2015, 239; Nieuwhof 2015, 142.

⁵⁰⁵ Baetsen 2009, 252; Baetsen 2015, 129–240.

⁵⁰⁶ Nieuwhof 2015, 142.

⁵⁰⁷ Van Gennep 1977; Nieuwhof 2015, 82.

⁵⁰⁸ Weiner 1985; 1992; Nieuwhof 2015, 101.

⁵⁰⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 292.

⁵¹⁰ Nieuwhof 2015, 101; Chapman 2000, 6–7; Lillios 1999.

⁵¹¹ Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

with eight skulls at that same site. The skulls from Houten-Castellum also appear to be special objects. Two skulls show signs of having been displayed, probably in the context of the ritual place that will have been used by a small, local community.⁵¹² As important symbolic objects, these skulls may have been associated with the users' common ancestors. The human vertebra from the pool at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) can perhaps be understood in a similar fashion. If collective rituals were indeed performed at the inauguration of a new site, the deposition of a human bone associated with an ancestor may have been a conscious act that established a relationship between the site and the family or community occupying it.

6.11 Coins

6.11.1 Introduction

Coins had no function in the day-to-day activities inside the house or on the land (e.g. in relation to food production and preparation or textile production). Nor were they objects that would normally have been deliberately discarded as waste. Coins may have been associated with economic transactions and the store of value but – depending on their economic context – will certainly have had a symbolic value as well and been used as special objects, including a role in sacrifices. After all, they were small, portable objects with an assured value and were readily available for deposition purposes.

The interpretation of coins as possible special deposits is not unproblematic, however. The recovered coins are invariably complete and are items that were easy to lose. Interpretations as emergency or savings hoards are frequently suggested for coin deposits (assemblages of coins placed in the ground at the same time and in association (e.g. in a pot or purse)).⁵¹³ Many excavators are hesitant to interpret coins as special deposits of a ritual nature. As a consequence, this subdataset is fairly small and patchy. Moreover, some of the deposits included here have not been explicitly interpreted as special deposits by the excavators.

6.11.2 General picture

The dataset contains 36 possible special deposits with coins (Table 6.36). In terms of chronological distribution, the (Late Iron Age–) Roman period, Middle Ages and Modern Period are all represented (Table 6.37). We see a predominance in the Middle Roman period, with the third century slightly better represented than the second. The Modern Period is better represented than the Middle Ages, but the numbers are small. Regarding contexts, most deposits occur in houses, followed at some distance by wells/waterholes and pits. Coins found in the features of houses are more readily labelled 'special' than loose coins found in pits and ditches.

6.11.3 Coin deposits by context

Coins in houses/buildings

Most coins in the inventory come from features that can be directly associated with houses. Two separate deposits, each containing a single coin, were found in a central posthole in two houses at Oss-Horzak, one of them together with a painted beaker. The individual coin was found beneath the 'foundation plank' of the central post, which means that it is unlikely to have been lost.⁵¹⁴ A coin was also found in the central posthole of a house at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, together with a terra nigra beaker and a painted beaker. In several other instances, coins have come from the wall ditch or wall postholes. All instances involve individual coins, making the interpretation of these deposits more problematic. Most notable is the coin – a Celtic gold coin from the Late Iron Age – found in the wall posthole of a third-century house at Castricum-Oosterbuurt. Given that it is an antique object, accidental loss is unlikely. And although we cannot entirely rule out that older material may have ended up in this younger feature, the most obvious interpretation is as a special deposit (as with the gold coin in the Lieshout granary (see below)). The excavator suggests that it is a foundation deposit. The same interpretation is suggested for the deposits mentioned earlier.

The contexts of the coins associated with a

⁵¹² It has also been established that skulls were displayed at other Iron Age sites and there are written sources describing this practice. See Dedet 2011.

⁵¹³ See Galestin 2001 for the interpretation of coin deposits within and outside settlement contexts.

⁵¹⁴ Jansen & Fokkens 2002, 330.

Table 6.36. Overview of special deposits with coins.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Beegden	Eerdweg 4	pit	pit	coin hoard with 36 coins (1 deliberately clipped), bronze	425	475
Bergen op Zoom	Cauwenborgh	house	stone wall	2 silver Spanish coins in stoneware 'snelle', beneath foundation	1500	1600
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/ Peperstraat 35	house	sunken byre	coin, part of composite deposit of metal objects	1250	1500
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	house	posthole	gold Celtic coin (Nervii) (wall posthole)	271	272
Cuijk	De Nielt	house	pit	coin hoard in pot, together with pepper and silver pendant	200	250
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	house	posthole	16 coins in coin hoard (mainly asses) (near house entrance)	180	200
Eindhoven	Putten	well	well	3 coins, leather shoe and large quantity of red ware pottery (685 sherds)	1575	1600
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	(residual) channel	channel layer	coins in residual channel	-19	70
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	coins in settlement ditch, near entrance	270	350
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	coin hoard (30 antoniniani) in western corner of ditch system	300	325
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	pit	pit	coin hoard with 9 silver coins, in pit in ditch	1100	1150
Groningen	Schoolholm	house	hearth floor	4 coins in brass tube, under hearth floor	1500	1550
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	bronze coin, buckle, 2 broken-off jug necks, 1 antler fragment and half a cattle skull at bottom of waterhole	40	100
Lieshout	Beekseweg	granary	posthole	gold Ambiani stater	-58	1
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen	building	posthole?	coin hoard, probably originally deposited in posthole of building 8	164	200
Oss	Horzak	house	posthole	as of Vespasian in western central posthole of house 7 (beneath foundation plank)	69	99
Oss	Horzak	house	posthole	as of Antoninus Pius and painted beaker in central posthole of house 18	138	168
Oss	Westerveld	house	wall ditch	denarius of Augustus in wall ditch of house 108	-2	50
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house (site)	cultural layer	coins, complete ceramic beakers and fibulae around house plan	100	200
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	house (site)	cultural layer	7 Celtic coins and 2 republican coins on house site	-30	-15
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	house	posthole	coin and beaker in central posthole	90	150
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	pit	pit	denarius of Septimius Severus, part of special composite deposit	300	400
Tiel	Medel-Rotonde	pit	pit	3 moneyer's asses	10	40
Utrecht	A2	house	layer	gold tremissis near southwest corner of house	600	650
Utrecht	De Woerd	house	wall ditch	moneyer's as of Augustus	3	17
Veldhoven	Oerle	field	field	34 coins in fields south of Oerle	1450	1750
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	channel layer	38 deliberately modified coins in channel. Also other special finds from channel, including incense dishes, perforated pottery, signet rings, terracotta figurines and masks	175	225
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	sestertius of Trajan	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	2 Roman coins, together with other special objects	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	3 Roman coins, together with other special objects	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	1 Roman coin, together with other special objects	235	236
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	2 Roman coins, together with other special objects	275	325
Wijchen	Tienakker	pit	pit	2 plated denarii and knife, inside chest in pit near well superstructure	222	270
Zutphen	Looërenk	house	stone wall	2 coins in the footing course of a dividing wall	1768	1775
Zutphen	Wanne 5-9/ Lievenheersteeg 18-26	house	floor	2 coins under the floor	1823	1823

Table 6.37. Overview of special deposits with coins, by period and deposition context.

	Houses/buildings	Granaries	Wells	Pits	Ditches	(Residual) channels	Fields	Total
ERP	3	1	1	1	-	1	-	7
MRP	8	-	4	1	-	1	-	15
LRP	1	-	1	2	2	-	-	6
EMA	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
LMA	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
MP	4	-	1	-	-	-	1	6
Total	18	1	7	5	2	2	1	36



Fig. 6.41. Coin hoard in the corner of a house at Cuijk-De Nielt (source: Habermehl & Van Renswoude 2017, figs 12.1, 12.11B).

house site at Rotterdam-Delftse Schie and a possible house site at Tiel-Medel-De Reth Van are of a different nature. These finds were more or less scattered across the site. At the Rotterdam house site, they were associated with pottery and fibulae. The excavator suggests that the inhabitants deliberately deposited the objects there as part of ritual practices relating to the abandonment and dismantling of the house. This might be the case for the Tiel house site too, although it could also be a coin deposit disturbed by ploughing.

Several instances definitely involve coherent deposits of multiple coins. A coin hoard with 16 coins was found near the entrance to house 8020 at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen. This 'hoard' is limited in both size and value

and the excavator therefore interprets it as a foundation deposit. Another coin deposit was found in house 20 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, again near the entrance. With 27 silver denarii, this deposit represents a much greater value, prompting the excavator to conclude that it was more likely to be a savings hoard than a foundation deposit.⁵¹⁵ Whatever the case, the similar positioning of the two coin deposits near the house entrance is worth noting as entrances were significant locations for special deposition practices. We can also point to a special coin deposit in the corner of a house at Cuijk-De Nielt. This deposit is even larger (141 coins, including 111 denarii) and is interpreted as a savings, circulation or emergency hoard (Fig. 6.41).⁵¹⁶ A coin hoard disturbed by ploughing

⁵¹⁵ Heeren 2006, 247.

⁵¹⁶ Aarts 2017, 494–495.

from Nistelrode-Zwarte Molen can probably be associated with a third-century building from the final phase of the settlement. A possible interpretation as a votive offering is suggested for this deposit.⁵¹⁷

With regard to possible coin deposits in medieval houses, we can point to a gold tremissis found near the southwest corner of a house at Utrecht-A2 (AD 600–650) and a coin that was part of a composite metal deposit in the sunken byre of a house at Bruchem-Gemeentewerf (AD 1250–1500). In neither case is the interpretation clear-cut. Various interesting deposits are known from the Modern Period, including coins found beneath (hearth) floors (Groningen-Schoolholm and Zutphen-Wanne 5–9), two coins from the footing course of a dividing wall at Zutphen-Looërenk and two silver Spanish coins in a stoneware jug beneath the foundation of a house at Bergen op Zoom-Cauwenborgh.

Granaries

There is a single known case of a coin found in a granary: a gold Ambiani stater in the posthole of granary 300 at Lieshout-Beekseweg. This coin stands out by virtue of its value. The excavators suggest an interpretation as a foundation or closing deposit and consider an interpretation as a lost item or as material originating from an older find layer to be less likely because of the coin's rarity and high value.⁵¹⁸ There are no indications that this structure had a special function or significance.

Wells and waterholes

Coins have been found in various wells and a waterhole. Their interpretation is problematic, however, given that all cases involve one or a few individual coins whose association with other (sometimes notable) objects cannot be definitively established.⁵¹⁹ One of the most convincing instances concerns a coin in a waterhole at Houten-Castellum. It is part of an interesting find complex, consisting of a bronze military buckle, two broken-off jug necks, an antler fragment and half a cattle skull. The well-researched wells at Voorburg-Arentsburg that produced a wealth of finds are prominently represented in our dataset, in part because of the strong focus on special deposition practices in the research. Coins were found in six wells, each time in combination with a range of other

objects, some of them very notable. In each case, however, there were no more than three coins per well, from different fills. This makes it difficult to prove that special deposition practices, rather than incidental loss, were in fact involved.

A well from a later period is known at Eindhoven-Putten, where three coins were found, together with a leather shoe and a large quantity of pottery (685 sherds). In this case too, however, it is difficult to explain the presence of the coins more precisely.

Pits

There are three examples of small coin deposits among the pit deposits in the inventory. The smallest is an Early Roman deposit of three moneyer's asses from a pit in the yard of house 1 at Tiel-Medel-Rotonde. There is also a Late Roman coin hoard of 36 coins (one deliberately clipped) from a pit at Beegden-Eerdweg 4 and a high medieval coin hoard of nine silver coins from a pit in a ditch at Geldermalsen-Stationslocatie. Once again, the interpretation of these deposits is problematic. Coins also occur in composite deposits in other pits. A third-century pit with a chest at Wijchen-Tienakker yielded two plated denarii and a knife. A fourth-century pit deposit from pit 67 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg is highly diverse, including – in addition to a denarius of Septimius Severus – mirror fragments, antique vessels, a decorated comb, an amber bead, a wire fibula, a stud and a bronze finger ring. The coin in this latter deposit can perhaps best be regarded as a special (symbolic) object.

Ditches

All coin deposits in ditches involve multiple coins. Thirty antoniniani were buried in the western corner of the ditch system surrounding the settlement of Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. Aarts suggests a special deposition practice, possibly as part of the settlement's redevelopment between 300 and 325 BC.⁵²⁰ The concentration of late third-century coins found at the entrance to the same settlement is somewhat different in nature. For these coins, Aarts suggests a practice in which people intentionally deposited coins in the ditches when entering or leaving the settlement.⁵²¹ These coins would not have been deposited on a single occasion, but individually over a longer period.

⁵¹⁷ Jansen 2007, 411.

⁵¹⁸ Hiddink 2005a, 313.

⁵¹⁹ Van Haasteren does not include coins in his thesis on special deposits in wells (Van Haasteren 2011). For the wells at Best-Aarle, Verspay is also cautious about interpreting the coins as special deposits, although he does interpret other objects in the wells as such (Verspay 2017).

⁵²⁰ Aarts 2009, 293.

⁵²¹ Aarts 2009, 296.

Residual channels

Residual channels often contain considerable quantities of find material, frequently including coins. Distribution patterns and associations are particularly relevant when it comes to interpreting these coin finds. Our inventory contains a few examples of possible special coin deposits in residual channels. For the settlement of Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, we see that a large proportion of the early Roman coin finds came from the residual channel. Aarts suggests two possible interpretations: the coins were discarded in a rubbish dump or they were deliberately tossed into the residual channel as part of ritual acts.⁵²²

A channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg has yielded an interesting concentration of coins. Some stand out because they appear to have been modified. This takes the form of perforations, bending, or deep notches on the obverse or reverse.⁵²³ It is the coins that have been modified in some way that seem to be concentrated in a specific channel phase. Kemmers explicitly suggests that the damaged coins were ritual deposits.⁵²⁴ They would then have been part of deposition practices that included several other object categories. The channel also yielded incense dishes, perforated pottery, fibulae, signet rings, terracotta figurines and mask fragments.⁵²⁵

Fields

Coins found in fields are mainly interpreted as having been ploughed up, as ending up there alongside manure or rubbish, or as the result of incidental loss. However, for the fields of Veldhoven-Oerle, the excavators conclude from in-depth field cover research that coins were probably deliberately deposited on or buried. Three concreted coins with the remains of a leather casing indicate that they were buried beyond the reach of a plough. Patterns can also be identified in the distribution of coins that differ from those for material regarded as 'ordinary rubbish'.⁵²⁶ Another important finding is that the dating of the coins suggests that they were deposited over a longer period of time. Verspay therefore refers to the deposition of this kind of coin as a 'practice'. He assumes that both the coins and devotional pendants found in fields were intentionally deposited, perhaps as offerings to Mary or the saints to beg for a good harvest or to ward off evil.⁵²⁷ The key role of

farmland as a source of food renders such deposition practices quite plausible.

6.12 Botanical remains

6.12.1 Introduction

Besides objects manufactured by human hand, botanical remains were also sometimes part of special deposits. This involved all or parts of plants, seeds, grains, nuts, pits and fruit, as well as the remains of prepared food.

This subdataset is fairly small (36 deposits). The reasons for this are two-fold: there are many conditions in which botanical remains are not preserved and little systematic attention has been paid to botanical remains in the study of special deposition practices. There seems to be a general reluctance among excavators to interpret botanical remains as part of special deposition practices.

6.12.2 General picture

Table 6.38 presents an overview of possible special deposits containing botanical remains. In terms of chronological distribution, we see that the Roman period dominates, followed by the Iron Age and Bronze Age (Table 6.39). In terms of contexts, we also see that pits dominate, followed by houses and wells/waterholes.

6.12.3 Deposits of charred grain

There are many instances of charred grain deposits, from different kinds of context and different periods. Firstly, there are silo deposits.⁵²⁸ Silo S4100 at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded a charcoal layer containing a sizeable quantity of spelt and barley, as well as parts of loom weights, natural stone and a good deal of pottery (Middle Iron Age). A silo at Boxmeer-Maasbroeksche Blokken contained a layer of charred grain, together with a bronze chisel (Middle Bronze Age).

⁵²² Aarts 2009, 294.

⁵²³ On the interpretation of medieval and modern-era bent coins, see also Van Vilsteren 2019.

⁵²⁴ Kemmers 2014, 605.

⁵²⁵ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 167–170.

⁵²⁶ Theuws *et al.* 2011a, 149.

⁵²⁷ Theuws *et al.* 2011a, 150.

⁵²⁸ For a further overview of grain deposits in pits and silos, see Gerritsen 2003, 91, Table 3.10; Van Hoof 2002, 82.

Table 6.38. Overview of special deposits with botanical remains.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	pit	layer of charred cereal grains, covered by secondarily burnt pottery and ceramic disc	-500	-250
Borne	Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch	pit	pit	charred grain, about 48 kg of pottery, ceramic objects and animal bone	-19	70
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	house	pit	large amount of charred wheat chaff remains, large quantity of burnt pottery and stone material	-1100	-800
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	pit	pit	2 pits inside house 3 with concentrations of charred grain (emmer and barley)	-1800	-1100
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	silo	silo	charred grain and bronze chisel	-1800	-1050
Boxmeer	Sterckwijk	silo	silo	charcoal layer with large quantity of spelt wheat and barley, parts of loom weights, natural stone and large amounts of pottery	-500	-350
Boxtel	Korenmolen	house?	posthole	charred hazelnut shells, charcoal and burnt loam in post-removal pit, youngest fill	100	200
Budel	Meemortel	well	well	charred acorns	-1000	-822
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	well	barley or linseed in handmade pot, at bottom of well	200	300
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	well	well	barley or linseed in handmade pot, at bottom of well	250	325
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	house	posthole	pot with grapeseeds	100	130
Den Haag	Wijndaelerplantsoen	pit	pit	burnt grain throughout feature, together with two almost complete pots and spindle whorl	-250	-100
Eersel	Kerkebogten	well	well	hundreds of charred rye grains and cultivated oats or wild oats	1259	1271
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	house	pit	phosphate-rich organic material and peat, wooden posts/planks, pottery and bone	80	120
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	house	pit	fine grass, wooden posts	100	140
Elst	Het Bosje	pit	pit	charred layer of barley and emmer wheat covering a quernstone	-1500	-1150
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	ditch	ditch	concentration of burnt grain, 3 fibulae, foreleg of horse, glass bracelet fragment, complete pot and stacked pieces of natural stone	-200	-50
Gouda	Oostpolder	house	posthole	layer of straw, chaff and kernels of emmer wheat and oats at the bottom of an aisle posthole of a house	1100	1170
Grijpskerke	Kievitshoekweg	pit	pit	rope made of grass fibre, part of large deposit	-200	-150
Groningen	De Linie	granary	posthole	charred barley and grape or raisin seeds in granary posthole	-1800	-500
Hasselo	Grutterskamp	waterhole	waterhole	burnt food remains, 400 large pottery sherds in upper fill	-425	-125
Houten	Castellum	ditch	ditch	broken grains of barley and emmer in pot	-500	-250
Houten	Castellum	ditch	ditch	remains of henbane in a woven basket and 4 handmade pots/bowls	70	120
Houten	Castellum	waterhole	waterhole	henbane seeds in animal bone vial, quernstone and dog skull	70	100
Houten	Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	(residual) channel	channel layer	charred grains of barley and emmer, complete beaker pot, anvil/quernstone and human vertebra, at bottom of residual channel	-2150	-1800
Itteren	Emmaus	pit	pit	charred remains of covered barley, oats, emmer wheat and rye, large quantity of burnt pottery, natural stone tools, burnt animal bone and burnt loam	-780	-417
Kapel-Avezaath	Muggenborch	house	house ditch	chaff remains and bread wheat grains in Hanseatic dish	1275	1300
Katwijk	Zanderij	fire pit	pit	two uncharred fig seeds	50	100
Meteren	De Bogen	house	posthole	very many charred remains of grain, barley and emmer in wall posthole of house 45FH	-2450	-2000
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	house	hearth pit	large quantity of charred grain	100	200
Schipluiden	Noordhoorn	pit	pit	large quantity of unburnt blackthorn, cattle bones and a smashed dog skull	-3600	-3500
Tiel	Medel-Krommewei en Ooijische Wetering	pit	pit	charred grain and pulses	100	200
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV-station	(residual) channel	channel layer	residues of green plants, grain products, milk products and fish products in cooking pots, cattle bones	1	20
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	pit	pit	charred grain, large quantity of pottery, animal bone, quernstone, burnt loam and 1 ceramic bead. Part of possible ritual place	-25	100
Voorburg	Arentsburg	(residual) channel	channel layer	complete ceramic beaker with 26 hazelnuts, 1 cereal grain, 1 barley grain, 1 bread wheat grain, 1 spelt grain, 1 grapeseed and henbane	225	250

Table 6.39. Overview of special deposits with botanical remains, by period and deposition context.

	Houses/buildings	Granaries	Pits	Silos	Ditches	Wells	(Residual) channels	Total
Neo	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Neo-BA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
BA	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	6
BA-IA	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
IA	-	-	4	1	2	1	-	8
RP	5	-	4	-	1	3	2	15
MA	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Total	9	1	11	2	3	7	3	36

In several instances, deposits of charred grain are associated with houses. The oldest example concerns a site at Meteren-De Bogen (2450–2000 BC), where a very large quantity of charred remains of grain, barley and emmer wheat were found in a posthole in the northern wall of house 45FH. In addition, two pits with concentrations of charred grain (emmer and barley) are documented in house 3 at Boxmeer-Maasbroeksche Blokken.⁵²⁹ Another pit deposit associated with a house is that of Best-Aarle (Middle Iron Age). The pit contained a layer of charred grains, in this case covered by secondarily burnt pottery and a ceramic disc. The pit may originally have been used to store grain. From the Roman period we know of a concentration of burnt grain in a hearth inside a house at Rotterdam-Delftsche Schie (AD 100–200). The excavator emphasises that the quantity is too large for the grain to have ended up there by chance and suggests an interpretation as a closing deposit.

Sometimes charred grain is found in pits together with a large quantity of fragmented material. Examples are known from sites at Borne-Bornsche Maten-Zuid Esch and Itteren-Emmaus. In addition to the charred remains of covered barley, oats, emmer wheat and rye, the pit at Itteren (Early–Middle Iron Age) contained a large quantity of burnt pottery, natural stone, burnt animal bone and burnt loam. Besides charred grain, the Early Roman pit at Borne yielded about 48 kg of pottery, ceramic objects and animal bone. Both deposits are interpreted as closing deposits. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the charred grain remains were an integral part of these deposits. It is suggested that the grain in the Itteren deposit may have been part of a sacrifice. The same

applies to the burnt grain remains in a pit at Den Haag-Wijndaelerplantsoen (250–100 BC), where two almost complete pots (including a miniature) and a spindle whorl were deposited.

Grain deposits are also known from a settlement ditch at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (Late Iron Age),⁵³⁰ a special pit at Utrecht-Rijnvliet (25 BC–AD 100) and a thirteenth-century well at Eersel-Kerkebogten (hundreds of charred grains of rye and cultivated or wild oats). The Rijnvliet pit is associated with a possible ritual place and, alongside charred grain remains, it yielded quernstone fragments, a paving of pottery sherds, animal bone, burnt loam and a ceramic bead. This material may have been the product of special practices carried out at the ritual place. A final deposit contained a quernstone, covered by a charred layer of barley and emmer wheat, at the Elst-Het Bosje site (Middle Bronze Age). The excavator suggests that this pit appears to have been specially dug for the deposit.

Thus, in at least some cases, the wheat seems to have been an integral part of the deposits and/or played a role in associated rituals. The fact that deliberately deposited material was involved – rather than remains that were accidentally burned – is evident from combinations with special objects and the way in which it was sometimes arranged in the features in question.⁵³¹ In most instances the grain appears to have been burned elsewhere and then deposited, sometimes in combination with the other objects. Only the ritual pit at Utrecht-Rijnvliet provides clues that burning occurred on site.⁵³² The deposits of charred grain contain grains that had not been processed into food.

Some excavators and researchers simply interpret charred grain in special deposits as a

⁵²⁹ Gerritsen 2003, 91, with reference to Hiddink 2000.

⁵³⁰ This ditch (G36) also contained other special deposits, namely three fibulae, the foreleg of a horse, part of a glass bracelet, a complete pot and stacked pieces of natural stone.

⁵³¹ See also Gerritsen argumentation by 2003, 91–92; Van Hoof 2002, 82–84.

⁵³² For examples with indications of on-site burning, see Gerritsen 2003, 91.

‘sacrifice’. Brück’s interpretation is more complex.⁵³³ She points out that the burning and burial of grain (as a life-giving food) was in some ways akin to the treatment of the dead. The ritual burning and interment of this material symbolised not only the end of a phase or cycle, but also the beginning of a new stage.⁵³⁴ In this respect, it is interesting to note that most deposits with charred grain can be associated with the final phase and the abandonment of the house and yard. In line with Brück’s suggestions, the burning of grain (and other things) could then be regarded as both a (symbolic) ending and a new beginning.

6.12.4 Remains of grain, chaff and straw

Some deposits contain the remains of grain, chaff and straw, sometimes unburnt. Handmade pots at the bottom of two wells at Castricum-Oosterbuurt contained barley or linseed,⁵³⁵ and bread wheat grains were found in a Hanseatic dish in the ditch of a house at Kapel-Avezaath-Muggenborch. Chaff remains were also found in both cases. The residue in the Hanseatic dish come from unthreshed or uncleaned grain. The excavator suggests that it could be an offering. Another medieval deposit involved a layer of emmer wheat straw, oat kernels and oat chaff at the bottom of an aisle posthole of a pioneer farm at Gouda-Oostpolder. Because there were probably no fields in use at the time that the house was built, these grain remains may have been brought in from elsewhere.⁵³⁶ Finally, we can mention a pit near the entrance to a house plan at Boxmeer-Maasbroekse Blokken (Late Bronze Age). It contained many charred remains of wheat chaff, together with a sizeable quantity of burnt pottery and stone material.⁵³⁷

6.12.5 Other deposits with botanical remains

In addition to grain, there are several deposits with other charred botanical remains. A post-removal pit or the youngest fill of a posthole north of house 8002 at Boxel-Korenmolen contained charred hazelnut shells, charcoal and

burnt loam (AD 100–200).⁵³⁸ A well at Budel-Meemortel (Late Bronze Age) yielded burnt acorns. A posthole of a granary at Groningen-De Linie contained both charred barley and grape or raisin seeds (Middle Bronze Age–Early Iron Age).

Some deposits with uncharred remains are also of interest. The first concerns a pit on the edge of the Middle Neolithic settlement of Schipluiden-Noordhoorn. A supply of sloe berries was deposited at the bottom of the pit, covered by the bones of various animals (at least three cattle and a dog with a smashed skull). The second deposit was a ceramic beaker from the channel of Voorburg-Arentsburg with 26 complete hazelnuts, a cereal grain, a six-row covered barley grain, a bread wheat grain, a spelt grain, a grape seed, henbane, wild catnip and a flax or linseed (AD 225–250). The excavator suggests an interpretation as a fertility sacrifice or an offering for a safe journey.⁵³⁹

6.12.6 Exotic fruit/non-exotic plants

Some botanical remains stand out by virtue of their non-indigenous origins. Our inventoried dataset contains several examples. A small handmade pot, in which grape seeds were found, was placed in the corner of house 108 at Den Haag-Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan (AD 100–130). The pot probably contained grapes or raisins when it was placed there as a foundation deposit. Other examples of grape seeds are known from the above-mentioned beaker with hazelnuts from the channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg (AD 225–250) and the granary at Groningen-De Linie (Middle Bronze Age–Early Iron Age). The fig is another exotic fruit. Two fig seeds were found in a large ‘fire pit’ at Katwijk-Zanderij (AD 50–100). As exotic fruit, grapes/raisins and figs may have had a special meaning.

6.12.7 Deposits of prepared food remains

Besides grains and fruit, there are various deposits in which the remains of prepared food were also found. This relates to residues on or food remains in vessels. In the residual channel at Utrecht-De Meern-HOV-station (AD 1–20), a large quantity of pottery was found with

⁵³³ Brück 2006, 304.

⁵³⁴ Brück 2006, 304.

⁵³⁵ Page 67 of the report refers to barley from the pots in question. However, page 169 in the chapter on botanical macroremains particularly emphasises the presence of many linseeds in these pots. It appears from Appendix 11 on page 315 that linseed was chiefly involved (Hagers & Sier 1999).

⁵³⁶ This layer of straw is not interpreted as a possible special deposit in the publication (Kok 1999). When asked, however, Laura Kooistra suggested that special deposition practices could be involved, with the straw deliberately placed under the post as a foundation deposit. Given that we are dealing here with a pioneer farm, it is also possible that the straw was brought in from elsewhere. Email from Laura Kooistra, 2 November 2021.

⁵³⁷ Van der Velde 1998, 37; Van den Broeke 2002a, Appendix 1. This deposit is not described and interpreted as such in the archaeological report.

⁵³⁸ This posthole does not appear to belong to the plan of house 8002. There is another posthole nearby that yielded a special deposit of quemstone fragments, charcoal and burnt loam (Van Kampen & Huijsmans 2020, 40–41).

⁵³⁹ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 168.

residues of green plants and grain, milk and fish products, along with animal bone. The excavator associates these remains with communal meals consumed on the bank of the residual channel.⁵⁴⁰ Another, much older channel deposit at Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20) (2150–1800 BC) contained a large pot with thick bands of charred (food) residues, which were found at the bottom of a pool together with a large stone (a quernstone or anvil), a human vertebra and charred grains of barley and emmer wheat. This too seems to be the remains of a communal meal. Two other interesting deposits come from Houten-Castellum. The remains of what appears to be a kind of mash (broken grains of barley and emmer wheat) were found at the bottom of a pot in ditch 6025 (500–250 BC). Another ditch deposit contained four complete pots with sizeable quantities of soot and food residues, together with a basket with henbane (AD 70–120). Although the cooking residues have not been analysed further, they could also relate to the preparation of food as part of rituals carried out there. On the other hand, we cannot rule out that the traces and cooking residues are linked to the ‘normal’ use of the pots prior to deposition. Lastly, we can point to a deposit in a waterhole at Hasselo-Grutterskamp (425–125 BC). Four hundred large pottery sherds were found in the rich humous upper fill of this pit. Palaeobotanical analysis reveals that (burnt) food was also deposited here.

6.12.8 Plants with a special meaning and function: henbane

Several special deposits contained remains of plants that are not eaten but which may have had a special function or meaning. There are several interesting deposits of henbane. The first concerns the beaker with hazelnuts mentioned earlier, from Voorburg-Arentsburg, which contained henbane in addition to the hazelnuts, grape seed, cereal grains and wild catnip.

Two other deposits come from the same site of Houten-Castellum (AD 70–100/120). The first contained four handmade pots/bowls and a basket of henbane, deposited in a ditch in the partly accreted residual channel. The second was a bone vial containing henbane seeds, which was deposited in a waterhole together with a quernstone and a dog skull (Fig. 6.42). An older parallel is that of a bronze vial from Uitgeest-Dorregeest, filled with seeds of medicinal plants (also Roman period).⁵⁴¹ All these deposits were found in wet contexts. This may be due to the favourable preservation conditions for botanical materials. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that these spots were consciously chosen for the deposition of these special materials and objects.

Henbane had come to our region from central and southern Europe in prehistoric times. Although highly toxic, it can be used as a medicine to relieve pain. It also has hallucinogenic properties. Alternative names such as *malkruid* (‘crazy herb’) and *profetenkruid* (soothsayers’ herb) speak volumes. Henbane also has religious connotations, including possible references to the Celtic god Bile or Bel. We know that the Romans used the plant in death rituals and to decorate graves.⁵⁴² Medieval sources also reveal an association between henbane and magic and sorcery. In one of the sources, henbane is used in rituals intended to bring rain in times of drought.⁵⁴³ Henbane was also used in counter-magic to thwart witches and spells.⁵⁴⁴

It is difficult to determine exactly how henbane deposits should be understood. Nevertheless, henbane’s special meaning and/or properties will have played a part. The vial from Houten could be linked to medicine, but also to a ritual. Henbane’s hallucinogenic properties are of interest here. Were these seeds used as a mind-altering substance, perhaps to make contact with the world of spirits and gods? And can we see here clues to the presence of a ritual or religious specialist, an individual who facilitated contact between that world and the human world?

⁵⁴⁰ Weterings & Meijer 2011, 164.

⁵⁴¹ Woltering 1982, 207; Buurman 1988.

⁵⁴² Kooistra 2017, 758–759.

⁵⁴³ Bräunlein 1986, 54, 69. This is a ninth-century text by Burchard von Worms.

⁵⁴⁴ Bräunlein 1986, 69.



Fig. 6.42. Bone vial containing henbane seeds from a waterhole at Houten-Castellum (source: Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, Fig. 14.14B).

6.13 Antique objects

6.13.1 Introduction

This is not a specific functional category of objects, but concerns objects that were significantly old – up to thousands of years – at the time of deposition. Here we will only discuss objects whose anomalous age has been recognised and reported. We suspect that the dataset contains more such objects but that the chronological resolution of the context or individual objects is insufficient to identify them as ‘antique’. Added to that, for objects that were only a few generations old at the time of deposition, it is more difficult to establish whether they are ‘antique’ than for those that were centuries or even millennia old when deposited.

Antique objects can potentially be regarded as special, meaningful and perhaps even magical objects. We know that prehistoric axes were regarded until the Modern Period as objects of non-human provenance to which special properties were assigned (e.g. warding off evil, protection from lightning strikes and even predicting the future).⁵⁴⁵ On the other hand, antique objects could have been heirlooms that were carefully preserved within families for a long time. As such, they would have been intertwined with the family’s identity and instrumental in the link between past and present.

6.13.2 Flint artefacts: axes, arrowheads, cores and a scraper

A notable category of antique objects is that of flint artefacts. The sheer number of examples in later deposition contexts makes it unlikely that they are chance finds originating from older find layers. Moreover, in some cases they are clearly part of special composite deposits and therefore appear to have been specifically selected for deposition. We know of Neolithic stone axes from the wall of a Roman house at Oss-Horzak, the sunken byre of a Roman house at Eindhoven-Noord-Brabantlaan, a fourteenth-century well at Uden-Botermarkt, a possible ritual place at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (Late Iron Age) (Fig. 6.43) and a third-century pit at Den Haag-Scheveningseweg.⁵⁴⁶ The youngest fill phase of a well from the Middle Iron Age in Boxmeer-Sterckwijck yielded a flint axe (associated with loom weight fragments and two special ceramic objects (a knobbed macehead and a bobbin)).⁵⁴⁷ Also, a Neolithic axe has recently been discovered in the wall of a medieval house at Weert.⁵⁴⁸ A good example from Flanders concerns a deposit of four axes from different periods (one from the Neolithic, two bronze specimens from the Bronze Age and an iron example from the Roman period) in a third-century sunken byre at Brecht.⁵⁴⁹

Historical sources inform us that the Greeks and Romans viewed ancient axes as special objects.⁵⁵⁰ The best-known function of these

⁵⁴⁵ Van Eijk 2007; Verhart *et al.* 2021.

⁵⁴⁶ Waasdorp 1999.

⁵⁴⁷ Blom & Van der Velde 2015, 277.

⁵⁴⁸ Oral communication by Valentijn van den Brink.

⁵⁴⁹ Bracke *et al.* 2020, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Merrifield 1987, 10.



Fig. 6.43. Neolithic axe from the Late Iron Age site at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (source: Van Renswoude & van Kerckhove 2009, Fig. 4.7 adapted).

axes was to protect against lightning strikes ('thunderstones'), but broader protective and healing properties were also attributed to them. The Neolithic axes and arrowheads that are associated with houses, outbuildings and granaries may have been hung or 'hidden' in these structures as protection from lightning strikes, or more generally from evil outside forces.⁵⁵¹

The occurrence of antique polished axes in the context of Roman sanctuaries, such as the one at Born-Buchten, is also a reflection of the special, ritual or even religious significance of this type of object.⁵⁵² The fact that they were also associated in later periods with churches and monasteries, like the well-known St Martin's hammer, attests to this special significance going back a long way.⁵⁵³

Besides antique flint axes, ancient flint arrowheads and cores also occur in special deposits. Examples include a Neolithic pointed blade in an outbuilding from the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age at Udenhout-De Bogerd, an arrowhead (Middle Bronze Age A) from a Late Bronze Age pit (5024) at Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, a Neolithic pointed blade (together with a complete pot) in a granary at Maastricht-Az Landgoederenzone (Bronze Age), a Neolithic arrowhead from a waterhole at Deventer-Molbergsweg-Zuid (Late Iron Age–Early Roman

period) and a flint arrowhead from a special composite pit deposit at Eme-Laaksche veld (Late Roman period). This latter deposit also included an antique hinged fibula (dating to the first century AD). We can also point to the presence of a Mesolithic core, placed on a ceramic lid, in a Roman house at Midden-Delfland (site 21.23) and a Mesolithic core from an extensive deposit containing fragmented material at Nieuwstadt-Elseneval (800–400 BC). A final antique flint object is a Neolithic scraper from a much younger pit (Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age) at Groningen-De Linie (pit C). The scraper was found together with pottery sherds, an almost complete pot, a spindle whorl, burnt bone and some burnt loam.

6.13.3 Other antique objects

Besides flint objects, our inventory contains a diverse range of other antique objects, including coins, fibulae, vessels, jewellery and a quernstone. A first notable item is a gold coin of the Nervii, struck in about 60 BC, found in the features of a house from the second half of the third century AD (Castricum-Oosterbuurt). Although we cannot entirely rule out that it originated from an older find layer, that seems unlikely given the

⁵⁵¹ Van Eijk 2007; Verhart 2009; Verhart 2015; Creemers *et al.* 2021.

⁵⁵² Verhart 2015.

⁵⁵³ Verhart 2015, 84, with further reference to Schuyf 1995, 68–69 and Hoof 1970.

coin's value. Another notable deposit comes from a post-removal pit above the central posthole of an Early Roman house at Oss-De Geer. It is a 'Napoleon's hat', a type of quernstone from the Middle Iron Age and the beginning of the Late Iron Age. This quernstone must have been 200 years old at the time of deposition and was deposited as a special object when the house was abandoned. A third antique object associated with a house is a fibula from a post-removal pit of house 8001 at Houten-Castellum. The fibula is certainly 200 years older than the Early Roman house in which it was deposited, along with, among other things, an Early Roman fibula and three pieces of pottery. A fourth came from a ditch of a possible Early Roman house site at Tiel-Medel-De Reth (14002/14005). This is a complete pot that was probably significantly older than the ditch in which it was deposited. Also of interest is the fact that this pot was made in Frisian territory. It could therefore have been brought by newcomers who came to live on the bank of the Medel residual channel in the final decades BC.⁵⁵⁴ In that case, it could symbolise the link with both previous generations and the former homeland. A fifth deposit, from the yard ditch of a house at Utrecht-A2, contained two gold pendants. Based on their typically Merovingian stylistic features, the pendants date to between 500 and 650 AD, whereas the ditch is definitely a century younger (AD 750–775). Another medieval example that may be associated with a house is a deposit of several Late Roman pots in a posthole of high medieval house 2 at Didam-Randweg-Zuid. The excavator suggests that it could be a foundation deposit, although there is a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the deposit and the much later main building. Lastly, we can point to a fragment of a Roman ribbed bowl from the hearth of twelfth-century house 22 at Someren-Hoge Akkers. Also found in the hearth were two whetstones and five white pebbles. The combination of unusual objects could point to special deposition practices, with the piece of Roman glass perhaps chosen for its specific appearance.⁵⁵⁵

Antique items are also known from several wet contexts. An interesting find comes from well 2 in the settlement of Heerlen-Trilandis.

It concerns human bone remains, associated with two bracelet fragments. A 14C dating shows that the human remains come from the Middle or Late Iron Age, whereas the well was operational during the Late Roman period. This latter find is also interesting because human bone remains – as physical relics of the ancestors – were sometimes kept within families as special objects, linked to the ancestors. The human bone from the Heerlen well can perhaps be understood in this way. A second, much younger deposit concerns a pewter disc fibula from a fourteenth-century well at Wehl-Heideslag. The fibula probably dates from the eleventh century and would therefore have been 250 years old at the time of deposition. A final object from a wet context is a complete fibula from the residual channel at Tiel-Medel-De Reth. It was made between c. 450 and 200 BC, but was only deposited, close to the channel crossing, in the Roman period.⁵⁵⁶

Antique objects are also known from several pits. A deposit from pit complex 69 at Heerlen-Trilandis (AD 100–300) contained pottery from different periods, which would seem to suggest that here too objects were deposited that had been kept for a long time. We observe a similar phenomenon in fourth-century pit 67 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, where pottery from the second and third centuries was also deposited, including a complete terra sigillata mortarium (with grafitto) (AD 150–225).⁵⁵⁷ We have already mentioned the antique, first-century hinged fibula in the Late Roman pit of Eme-Laaksche veld (also containing an antique flint arrowhead). Other pits are one at Castricum-Oosterbuurt (third century or later) and one at Utrecht-A2 (AD 700–750). A bronze skillet from the period 70–120 BC was found in the former pit. The second contained, among other things, worked antler, a glass bead, a Roman sling bullet and a sixth-century glass spindle whorl. The two latter objects are antique. Lastly, we can mention a possible antique object from a later period: a small, flattened pewter candlestick from a thirteenth-century pit at Sittard-Haagsittard. Stoepker suggests that it could be an old elite object – an heirloom – that was deliberately buried when the yard was abandoned.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Van Kerckhove 2019, 269; see also Habermehl *et al.* in preparation.

⁵⁵⁵ Schabbink 2003.

⁵⁵⁶ Van Renswoude 2019, 366–367.

⁵⁵⁷ This fourth-century pit also contained a decorated bone comb, the complete valve of a North Sea shell, an amber bead, and fragments of a mirror, wire fibula, stud and bronze ring.

⁵⁵⁸ Stoepker 2017, 78–80.

6.13.4 Objects used for a long time

Besides objects that can be classed as ‘antique’ on the basis of their clearly older dates, there are others of which we can suspect, based on their traces of use, that they were in use for a long period of time. We can mention here several examples of deposited metal vessels. The first is a bronze basin, deposited together with an accompanying bronze ladle, a wooden animal head and a complete quernstone, at the bottom of a well at Voorburg-Forum Hadriani. The second is a bronze cauldron, in which a ceramic jug was placed, deposited in a well at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet. The third concerns the remains of a metal cauldron in a large composite deposit from a pit near the wall of house 103 at Den Haag-Ockenburg II. This cauldron had also been patched up in many places and will therefore have been used for a long time. A final example is a repeatedly repaired pewter jug from well 3 at Eindhoven-Putten (AD 1500–1525). Repaired vessels of this kind may have been kept (and used) within the family for a long time and passed down from generation to generation. As such, they may have acquired a special status and significance.

6.14 Other types of object

6.14.1 Introduction

This section addresses several other object types that occur regularly in possible special deposits but which do not fall into one of the defined categories. These are horseshoes, keys, shoes and candlesticks, which date predominantly, though not exclusively, to the Middle Ages and Modern Period.

We also discuss a few more object types that had a possible special or ‘ritual’ significance or function. These are ceramic masks, tazzas or incense dishes, pendants, amulets, figurines and anthropomorphic figures. Such objects are by definition very likely to be special deposits. Once again, however, we will focus on objects whose context and/or find association explicitly points to special deposition practices. A more

exhaustive inventory of this category objects does not fit within the scope of this study.

6.14.2 Horseshoes

Horseshoes, designed to protect horses’ hooves, begin to appear in the Early Middle Ages. The horseshoes in the inventory date from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries (Table 6.40) and were found in deposits in houses, pits, wells and fields.

With regard to deposits associated with houses, we can mention Someren-Hoge Akkers (two houses (1100–1200 and 1000–1500)), Nederweert-Kerneelhoven (1200–1300) and Bruchem-Gemeentewerf (1250–1500). In both Nederweert and Someren (house 51) there was a complete horseshoe and half a horseshoe. Fragments of two horseshoes were found near house 121 at Someren, in both cases in post-removal pits. They may be associated with the dismantling of houses. We can also assume an association with the abandonment of the house for the deposits at Nederweert and Bruchem (positioned in the youngest fill phase). It is quite likely that the horseshoes originally hung in or on the house, probably as magical, apotropaic objects. Once the house was abandoned and dismantled, the horseshoes were then deposited in the house features. Objects of this kind may have been viewed as an inalienable part of the house and as such could not be ‘reused’.

Horseshoes in wells are known from Best-Dijkstraten (well S9284) (1575–1650), Best-Aarle (well 363) (1675–1725) and Heiloo-Zandzoomzone 10 (1600–1650). The lower fill of the well in Best-Dijkstraten contained a complete horseshoe (together with a stone jug, alder wood balls, a hand broom made of birch twigs and an iron rod). The well at Best-Aarle contained two horseshoes and the sole of a child’s shoe. Two complete horseshoes were also found in the lower fill of the Heiloo well, together with a complete ceramic tripod cooking pot and two hooks. The excavator associates this fill with the well’s construction phase.

A third category is that of isolated horseshoes found ‘loose’ in fields in the large-scale field cover study carried out in Veldhoven.⁵⁵⁹ This study unearthed at least ten horseshoes, dated to between c. 1400 and 1700.⁵⁶⁰ All the

⁵⁵⁹ Verspay 2011b.

⁵⁶⁰ Verspay 2011b, 171–173.

Table 6.40. Overview of special deposits with horseshoes.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	posthole	fragments of 2 horseshoes and base of drinking beaker in post-removal pit above truss posthole	1050	1500
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	entrance posthole	one and a half horseshoes, globular pot	1100	1200
Nederweert	Kerneelhoven	house	pit	one and a half horseshoes, iron key, covered by two large pottery sherds in two pits	1200	1300
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf	house	sunken byre	horseshoe, part of composite deposit	1250	1500
Veldhoven	Oerle	field	field	at least 10 (mainly broken) horseshoes in field cover	1400	1700
Best	Dijkstraten	well	well	horseshoe at bottom of well	1575	1650
Heiloo	Zandzoomzone 10	well	well	2 complete horseshoes, at bottom of well	1600	1650
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	2 horseshoes, shoe sole	1675	1725

horseshoes were broken, sometimes in at least three pieces.

We can also cite several examples from older studies.⁵⁶¹ Research at Velsbroek unearthed an unusual deposit consisting of five horseshoes, arranged around a horse scapula (1000–1300). The deposit was buried beneath a turf mound covered with white sand with a diameter of about 13 m.⁵⁶² Nearby was another rectangular pit containing a horseshoe. The excavators interpret these remarkable deposits as the result of rituals relating to the (symbolic, ritual) marking of the seasons.⁵⁶³ Deposits with horseshoes are also known from the Broekpolder.⁵⁶⁴ These are a half horseshoe in a high medieval pit, together with a pinewood plank, the bottom half of an Andenne pot, a rib of a sheep or goat and a willow branch. Another, eighteenth-century pit also contained a horseshoe fragment, with two forelegs of a horse in the layer above.

The horseshoe deposits described here can be regarded as possible special deposits because there is no simple functional explanation (e.g. as litter or rubbish) for their presence in these contexts and assemblages. An interesting aspect is the fragmentation of some of the horseshoes, especially those found in houses and fields. Verspay emphasises that, under normal circumstances, iron horseshoes do not simply break.⁵⁶⁵ The fact that the roads in this period were still unpaved makes such breakages even more unusual. Nor can post-depositional fragmentation (e.g. due to ploughing or digging) be demonstrated in the case of the field finds, and it is certainly unlikely for horseshoes found

in houses. It is therefore likely that the horseshoes were deliberately broken.

Such deliberate fragmentation is a phenomenon that is also observed with other kinds of object, including vessels, jewellery and militaria. For horseshoes associated with the abandonment of a house, this fragmentation fits a pattern. Household goods appear to have been ‘destroyed’ by means of deliberate fragmentation (and often burning), after which the remains were ‘interred’ in or around the house.

The magical connotation of horseshoes is a known phenomenon. Historical, folkloric and archaeological research also show that horseshoes were associated with magical practices.⁵⁶⁶ Merrieffield points to the magical properties of horseshoes and their function in apotropaic and counter-magic, for example against spells and witchcraft.⁵⁶⁷ Horseshoes may have been suspended as magical objects in or on the house or byre to protect people and livestock.⁵⁶⁸

In relation to wells, Verspay suggests that horseshoes may have been employed to prevent a well from drying up or to protect the water from evil spirits.⁵⁶⁹ Water was, after all, essential for the inhabitants. The same can be said of fields, which had to be well protected, including symbolically. Horseshoes in fields may also be associated with protection and counter-magic.⁵⁷⁰

There are various aspects to the special significance of horseshoes. First is the association with horses, to which protective properties were attributed.⁵⁷¹ Secondly, the intrinsic quality of the iron may have played a role. Traditionally, iron was a magically charged material, in part because of the mystique surrounding the work

⁵⁶¹ These deposits are taken from Verspay 2011b, 172–173.

⁵⁶² Verspay 2011b, 171–173 with further reference to Therkorn 2004, 109–124.

⁵⁶³ Therkorn 2004, 109–124.

⁵⁶⁴ Therkorn *et al.* 2009.

⁵⁶⁵ Verspay 2011b, 171–173.

⁵⁶⁶ See the overview by Merrifield (1987) and, for the Netherlands, by Rooijackers (1994), Mostert (1995) and Gielis (1995). We can also point to horseshoes from swamps and peat bogs, including in Drenthe. These deposits also point to the special significance of the objects (Van der Sanden 2004, 200).

⁵⁶⁷ Merrifield 1987, 161–162.

⁵⁶⁸ Merrifield 1987, 161–162.

⁵⁶⁹ Verspay 2015, 164, with reference to Krekelberg 1932, 70–74.

⁵⁷⁰ Verspay suggests that the hundreds of iron nails in the field cover might also be viewed as special deposits and not simply as rubbish (Verspay 2011b, 172).

⁵⁷¹ Verspay 2017, 572. The horses may have served as protection against calamity, as we know from seventeenth-century texts (Rooijackers 1994, 504).

of smiths.⁵⁷² Iron was therefore imbued with an apotropaic power. Both horses and iron come together in horseshoes, which may have acquired a powerful symbolic significance.⁵⁷³ The above-mentioned deposits from Velsbroek and the Broekpolder are also interesting in this respect, given the association between horseshoe and horse (bone material).

6.14.3 Keys

Keys also feature fairly regularly in possible special deposits (see Table 6.41 for an overview). The oldest key deposits date to the Roman period. This involves a key from the sunken byre of house 386 at Best-Aarle (along with an iron lance- or spearhead) (AD 200–250), from the sunken byre of house 47 at Breda-West (as part of a very large and diverse assemblage) (AD 250–300), from a pit at Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen (as part of a Late Roman deposit with various iron tools)⁵⁷⁴ and from a depression at Cuijk-De Nielt (AD 200–300). The interpretation of the keys from the sunken byre is far from straightforward. The key from De Nielt, decorated with the bronze head of the satyr Silenus, is an exceptional object. Several other interesting finds come from the same depression, including a wine sieve, a ceramic base disc, a baseless pot, part of a ceramic face mask, a spearhead and an arrowhead. This combination of unusual objects suggests that special deposition practices could be at play here.

The remaining keys are from medieval contexts. An early example was found in a posthole of a large outbuilding at Utrecht-A2 (AD 750–775). It is a heavy bronze key that appears to have been deliberately placed in the posthole. The excavator suggests an interpretation as a foundation deposit. Another complete key from this period (AD 700–900) was found in the core of a posthole at the corner of building 1263 at Someren-Waterdael III. This key appears to have ended up there, probably deliberately deposited, after the house was dismantled. A complete key from a house at Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker (AD 900–925) is slightly younger. The features of this same house also yielded a complete arrowhead and a lead spindle whorl.

Most medieval key depositions date from

the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. An iron key in the above-mentioned pit at twelfth-century house 1 at Nederweert-Kerneelhoven was covered by two large sherds of blueish-grey pottery.⁵⁷⁵ Deposits from houses at Someren-Hoge Akkers (house 22), Ittervoort-Santfort (1100–1200) and Diessen-Vroonacker (1050–1150) come from roughly the same period. At the house at Someren, the deposit – consisting of a key, scissors, a needle and a spindle whorl – was found in a post-removal pit in the corner of the house. In Ittervoort and Diessen keys were found in postholes. An interpretation as closing deposits is suggested for the Nederweert, Someren and Ittervoort deposits. The excavator of the Diessen house suggests an interpretation as a foundation or closing deposit. Parts of keys are also known from the postholes of two different buildings at Someren-Waterdael III (1000–1100 and 1100–1150). It is not clear, however, whether these key fragments should be regarded as special deposits.

The above shows that deposits with keys occur mainly in the High or Late Middle Ages. Also, all medieval key deposits are associated with houses/buildings. We may be dealing here with a chronologically defined deposition tradition, with a peak in the later Middle Ages. In geographical terms, these deposits are for the time being almost solely confined to the Brabant-Limburg sandy soil region. In most instances, the deposition of keys seems to relate to the abandonment and dismantling of houses but on occasions an interpretation as foundation deposits has also been suggested. For the Roman period, the picture is more diverse and less clear. The interpretation of deposits in sunken byres is somewhat problematic and the other keys from this period were found in contexts outside the house.

The (symbolic) significance of keys is discussed, among others, by Schabbink and Huijbers,⁵⁷⁶ who associate keys with a woman's authority over the management of household effects in the matrimonial home. As her role was to manage affairs inside the home (the household and family), she had control over the key to the house.⁵⁷⁷ In the specific case of the Someren deposit, this female association is reinforced by the combination of a key with a needle and spindle whorl (and possibly scissors). They can be linked to the domestic activities of spinning and clothes-making.⁵⁷⁸ Regarding the

⁵⁷² Verspay 2011b, 172; Merrifield 1987, 163–175.

⁵⁷³ Verspay 2017, 572.

⁵⁷⁴ A key was also found in a third-century dolium at Den Haag-Ockenburg, as part of an extensive composite deposit that also contained tableware and various other metal objects (Waasdorp & Van Zoolingen 2015, 125–128).

⁵⁷⁵ One complete and one half horseshoe were found in a second, adjacent pit.

⁵⁷⁶ Huijbers 2007, 339–340; Schabbink 1999.

⁵⁷⁷ Huijbers 2007, 340, referring further to Arnold 1987, 263 and Hermesdorf 1956, 89–90.

⁵⁷⁸ Huijbers 2007, 367–368.

Table 6.41. Overview of special deposits with keys.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Best-Aarle	Aarle	house	byre	hook wrench, iron lancehead or spearhead	200	250
Breda	Steenakker	house	sunken byre	key, part of composite deposit	250	300
Cuijk	De Nielt	depression	layer in depression	decorated key	200	300
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	pit	pit	key, part of composite deposit of iron tools	270	450
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	unknown	dolium	key, part of composite deposit in dolium	200	225
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	building	posthole	complete key	900	925
Diessen	Vroonacker	building	posthole	complete key	1050	1150
Ittervoort	Santfort	house	posthole	complete key	1100	1200
Nederweert	Kerneelhoven	house	pit	key, covered by two large sherds	1200	1300
Someren	Hoge Akkers	house	posthole	complete key, scissors, needle and a spindle whorl in post-removal pit	1100	1200
Someren	Waterdael III	building	posthole	complete key in posthole core	700	900
Someren	Waterdael III	house	posthole	key in fill of construction pit for truss post	1000	1100
Someren	Waterdael III	building	posthole	key fragment	1100	1150
Utrecht	A2	outbuilding	posthole	complete bronze key	750	775

interpretation as a closing deposit, the deposition of keys can perhaps be understood as the symbolic conclusion of a woman's position as the head of household affairs.⁵⁷⁹ The medieval deposition of keys therefore appears to involve objects deposited for their specific symbolic meaning or connotation, which as such played a role in the symbolic ending (or perhaps opening?) of the house and household. The Roman period shows a different picture. It is quite possible that the keys in Roman deposits – especially those outside the context of the house – should be understood differently.

6.14.4 Shoes

Shoes are another fairly small category of possible deposition objects. Made of leather, they will only have been preserved under exceptionally good conditions (either wet or completely dry).

The inventoried dataset contains 15 shoe deposits (Table 6.42). They date from the Middle Roman period to the Modern Period, with modern-era deposits predominating. In terms of context, the deposits were mainly found in wells. In two cases, however, they were bricked into a stone wall.⁵⁸⁰ With regard to these

wall contexts, it should be emphasised that such deposits will not have been preserved if the above-ground house structure was demolished.

The Roman-era shoes all come from wells at Voorburg-Arentsburg. They are three wells, dated between c. 200 and 325 AD. Besides shoes, the wells yielded a broad spectrum of other objects of interest. Driessen and Besselsen suggest that shoe deposits in wells should perhaps be seen as special deposits or 'sacrifices' but they do not go into any more detail.⁵⁸¹ Regarding the sandal sole from well S4172, they view its good state of preservation as an indication that it was not discarded as rubbish but was probably deliberately deposited. An example worth mentioning from older research concerns two shoes from a third-century well at Venray. One came from the fill of the construction pit and can be associated with the well's construction. The other was found in the fill and is linked to the decommissioning of the well. According to Van Haasteren and Groot, both instances could involve objects that were deliberately deposited at different 'life stages' of the well, namely its construction and abandonment.⁵⁸² The selection of the two shoes may not be coincidental: Van Haasteren and Groot suggest that the deposition of the second shoe marked the end of the well's phase of use while at the same time referring back to the

⁵⁷⁹ Huijbers 2007, 460.

⁵⁸⁰ See Van Doesburg & Driedijk 2021 for a recent study that refers to more examples.

⁵⁸¹ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 178.

⁵⁸² Van Haasteren & Groot 2012, 25.

Table 6.42. Overview of special deposits with shoes.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Brief description	Beginning	End
Amersfoort	Korte Gracht	house	stone wall?	shoes/mules	1600	1700
Amersfoort	Muurhuizen 19	house	stone wall	8 shoes, 1 mule, 2 pebbles and a scrubbing brush in a bricked-up wall niche	1575	1642
Best	Dijkstraten	well	well	shoe sole (youngest fill)	1750	1800
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	shoe sole (fill)	1100	1125
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	sole of a left shoe	1375	1450
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	shoe sole and upper	1400	1500
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	'sole' of wooden clog	1650	1700
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	leather sole of child's shoe, 2 horseshoes	1675	1725
Best-Aarle	Aarle	well	well	complete shoe, at bottom of well	1775	1850
Eindhoven	Putten	well	well	leather shoe, 3 coins and many pottery sherds	1575	1600
Leiderdorp	Plantage	well	well	pair of leather shoes, on boundary of lowest fill	500	800
Valkenswaard	Lage Heide	well	well	2 fragments of leather shoe, part of bronze knotted candlestick	1500	1600
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	nail-studded sole	200	250
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	sandal sole	200	300
Voorburg	Arentsburg	well	well	parts of shoe soles	275	325

deposition of the first shoe during the well's construction.⁵⁸³

The oldest medieval deposit is of a pair of leather shoes and a cattle skull fragment with two horn cores that was deposited on top of the shoes (Leiderdorp-Plantage) (AD 500–800). This combination of notable finds can be seen as indicating a special deposit. Other wells have also yielded interesting combinations of objects. Besides a leather shoe, part of a bronze knotted candlestick was found in the well at Valkenswaard-Lage Heide (AD 1500–1600). And alongside a complete leather shoe, a well at Eindhoven-Putten contained several coins and a very large quantity of pottery (AD 1575–1600). Shoe remains were found in six wells from the Late Middle Ages and Modern Period at the Best-Aarle site.⁵⁸⁴ A single shoe was involved in each case, usually the shoe sole and on one occasion a complete shoe. In well 363, the leather sole of a child's shoe was associated with two horseshoes.

Two other interesting modern-era deposits involved shoes that were bricked into the walls of stone houses. No fewer than eight shoes, a muzzle, two stones and a scrubbing brush were bricked into the wall of a house at Amersfoort-Muurhuizen. And another shoe was found at a house on the Korte Gracht in the same city, probably also bricked in. In a recent article,

Van Doesburg and Driedijk mention several other shoe deposits from the above-ground structures of houses.⁵⁸⁵

There does not appear to be a functional explanation for the these bricked-in deposits. Moreover, the deliberately placing of shoes in the structure of houses is a well-documented phenomenon, especially in England.⁵⁸⁶ Among other places, shoes are found in ceilings, above entrances, under thresholds and in or near walls. This attests to shoes being assigned a special symbolic function, including that of warding off evil.⁵⁸⁷ For the bricked-in shoes from Amersfoort, Goubitz suggests an apotropaic interpretation, although he also mentions in passing a possible interpretation as a foundation deposit.⁵⁸⁸ Van Doesburg and Driedijk suggest a possible interpretation as a sacrifice to the household gods.⁵⁸⁹

Although less unambiguous, we can also assume that shoes found in wells were special deposits.⁵⁹⁰ Verspay emphasises that there does not seem to be a relationship between the shoes and the use of these wells and that they do not appear to constitute resoling waste, for example. For the wells at Best-Aarle, Verspay notes that most finds involved shoe soles, often the left shoe, and that they often appear to have been deliberately damaged.⁵⁹¹ As in houses,

⁵⁸³ Van Haasteren & Groot 2012, 41.

⁵⁸⁴ Tol *et al.* 2017.

⁵⁸⁵ Van Doesburg & Driedijk 2021.

⁵⁸⁶ Merrifield 1987, 133–136; Goubitz 1989, with a reference to Swann 1969.

⁵⁸⁷ Goubitz 1989; for the symbolic meanings and the use of shoes in rituals, see also Therkom 2004, 57–62; Verspay 2017, 571 and Van Doesburg & Driedijk 2021. Shoes are also associated with fertility and with representations of power and order.

⁵⁸⁸ Goubitz 1989, 234.

⁵⁸⁹ Van Doesburg & Driedijk 2021, 13.

⁵⁹⁰ Verspay 2017, 563; Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 178.

⁵⁹¹ Verspay 2017, 563.

Table 6.43. Overview of special deposits with candlesticks.

Place	Toponym	Structure	Context	Material	Brief description	Beginning	End
Alkmaar	Langestraat 52	cesspit	cesspit	copper	2 candlesticks	1400	1550
Eindhoven	Putten	well	well	bronze	candlestick foot	1500	1525
Hoorn	Achterstraat	well	well	brass	complete collar candlestick	1675	1750
Sittard	Haagsittard	pit	pit	pewter	small candlestick	1200	1300
Valkenswaard	Lage Heide	well	well	bronze	bottom part of knotted candlestick	1500	1600

the deposition of shoes could also relate to their apotropaic function. On the other hand, these shoes may have played a role in rites of passage, symbolically marking the beginning of the yard, well and/or family. Verspay suggests that '[t]he shoes could be a reference to marriage and a sign that the yard was occupied by a newly-married couple. Their deposition in the well linked the beginning of the yard's occupation and the start of the inhabitants' life as a married couple.'⁵⁹²

6.14.5 Candlesticks

The dataset contains five candlestick deposits. They date from c. 1200 to 1750 and come from three wells, a pit and a cesspit (Table 6.43).

The earliest example is a small, richly decorated pewter candlestick from Sittard-Haagsittard (c. AD 1200–1300). It was found crushed in a pit with thirteenth-century pottery among settlement features from the same period. The excavator suggests an interpretation as a closing deposit, commenting that it could be an antique 'heirloom'. A second case involves not one but two special copper candlesticks (AD 1400–1550) from a cesspit at Alkmaar-Langestraat 52. Although cesspits were used for the deposition of waste, these two finds are nevertheless highly unusual. They are unlikely to have been discarded as waste and the incidental loss of two such candlesticks is also unlikely. However, it is not clear how we should interpret this find. To our knowledge, there are no other convincing cases of special deposits in cess pits.

The other three candlesticks all come from wells. The bronze foot of a candlestick was found in well 3 at Eindhoven-Putten, together with a special pewter ewer (AD 1500–1525), which is certainly a luxury object. The ewer is

misshapen and has been repaired in several places. The combination of candlestick and ewer is unusual and once again an interpretation as loss or waste seems unlikely. A well at Valkenswaard-Lage Heide contained a partially misshapen, bronze knotted candlestick, with several parts missing (AD 1500–1600). A final notable find is that of a complete brass collar candlestick with a baluster-shaped stem from a well at Hoorn-Achterstraat (AD 1675–1750).

It is difficult to interpret the meaning of these finds and their deposition. Their relatively high material value renders an interpretation as waste less likely, while the association with other finds (as in Eindhoven-Putten and Alkmaar-Langestraat) makes it improbable that they were lost. Finally, the fact that various candlesticks were damaged or incomplete speaks against an interpretation as lost objects. Candlesticks may have had a specific symbolic significance and have been deposited for that reason.

6.14.6 Ceramic masks

The inventory contains several deposits with ceramic mask fragments, often made of white pipe clay, all dating from the Roman period. Three mask fragments were found in the depression and a nearby posthole at Cuijk-De Nielt. Other special objects were also found in the depression, including a wine sieve, a baseless pot, a special decorated key, an arrowhead and a spearhead. The channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg contained two mask fragments. Here too, many special objects were found in the same context, pointing to special deposition practices at this site. Mask fragments were also found in other settlements, such as Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (six fragments), Tiel-Passewaaïjse Hogeweg and Den Haag-Ockenburgh II (two fragments in

⁵⁹² Verspay 2017, 572–573.

a backyard), but the find context provides no further indications of special practices or intentions regarding the deposition of these objects. Waterbolk assumes that the well-known half mask from Middelstum-Boerdamsterweg, found in a building, was used in religious ceremonies.⁵⁹³

The ceramic masks described here often feature a satyr-like bald man with a satanic smile. Pointed teeth gave some masks a terrifying appearance. Such masks may have been used during festivals, processions or special cult practices.⁵⁹⁴ However, an apotropaic function in the house is perhaps most likely for the examples mentioned here.

6.14.7 Tazzas or incense dishes

Tazzas or incense dishes were used to burn incense and therefore had a special function in ritual or religious practices. The dataset includes two special deposits with fragments of tazzas or incense dishes. The first involves a concentration of incense dish fragments in a section of the channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg. This may be ‘religious waste’ that was not simply discarded as ‘ordinary’ waste.⁵⁹⁵ A second deposit involved a secondarily modified base fragment of a tazza or incense dish that was deposited in a ditch at Schipluiden-Harnaschpolder. Both the object and the liminal location are of interest.

6.14.8 Pendants and amulets

The inventory has produced only a few amulets or pendants that can be viewed as possible special deposits.⁵⁹⁶ The first is the lunula pendant from the Roman coin hoard of Cuijk-De Nielt. This pendant was probably placed at the top of a ceramic beaker as an apotropaic object to protect the coin hoard. Of much younger date are the modern-era devotional pendants that were recovered during field cover research in Veldhoven and near a demolished farmhouse in Best-Dijkstraten. Regarding the field finds, Verspay states that the pendants – and the coins from the same field – were specially deposited rather than accidentally lost or discarded as waste.⁵⁹⁷ That is because two of the three

pendants are made of silver and in one case two pendants are corroded together, which could suggest that they were buried together. Verspay interprets the pendants in the fields as offerings to Mary or to the saints to plea for a good harvest or to ward off evil. Regarding the three pendants from the farmhouse in Best-Dijkstraten, Verspay assumes that these devotionalia were hung up at various places in the house, byre or yard to bless the house and yard and to ward off evil.⁵⁹⁸ For the Ezinge pendants made of terra sigillata sherds, Nieuwhof also suggests a function as a protective, magical amulet.⁵⁹⁹ Such amulets may have been deposited as part of rites of passage, or to enhance the effectiveness of rituals.⁶⁰⁰

Finally, we can point to a collection of cabbalistic/alchemical amulets, found at various locations in Zutphen (from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries) (Fig. 6.44).⁶⁰¹ They come from the canals around the Algemene Begraafplaats (21 amulets), the essen layers of a field and in ground fill in the IJssel. These amulets were also magical objects to which apotropaic properties were attributed.

6.14.9 Figurines and anthropomorphic figures

This category comprises objects that represent animal or human figures, perhaps supernatural beings or gods. The oldest example is a stylised animal figurine (possibly a pig) from a ditch at Enkhuizen-Haling 13 (Late Bronze Age). Somewhat younger is a two-legged wooden object that can perhaps be interpreted as an anthropomorphic figure, or ‘idol’.⁶⁰² It was found in channel fill at the Utrecht-Uithof-Hoofddijk site. The fact that the idol may have featured in ritual practices is supported by its association with other special finds, including two virtually complete pots that seem to have contained plant or animal products, pottery painted with animal blood and animal bone. As a possible parallel we can point to another wooden anthropomorphic figure, found in a waterhole at Oss-Ussen. Schinkel regards an interpretation of this figure as the protector god of water as the ‘least unlikely’.⁶⁰³

Various deity and other figurines from the Roman period are included in our dataset.

⁵⁹³ Waterbolk 1988, 17.

⁵⁹⁴ Rose 2000, 76–78; Van Kerckhove 2009; Mobius 1961, 144; Van Boekel 1987, 815–816; Van Boekel 2006, 338–339.

⁵⁹⁵ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

⁵⁹⁶ The pendants from the deposit of Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg and Utrecht-A2 (LR51)/A2-Sportpark Strijland (LR54) are not included here as they are regarded as jewellery. Harness pendants are also not included, although they could certainly have had a symbolic or magical significance.

⁵⁹⁷ Verspay 2011a, 146–151.

⁵⁹⁸ Verspay 2015.

⁵⁹⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 147.

⁶⁰⁰ Nieuwhof 2015, 210.

⁶⁰¹ Fermin 2018.

⁶⁰² The approx. 50 cm high, wicker figurine dates to between 118 BC and AD 26 and appears to have a face, torso and legs, the latter tapering to a point so that it could be poked into the ground. For an international overview of similar ‘idols’, see Van der Sanden & Capelle 2002.

⁶⁰³ Schinkel 1998, 139.

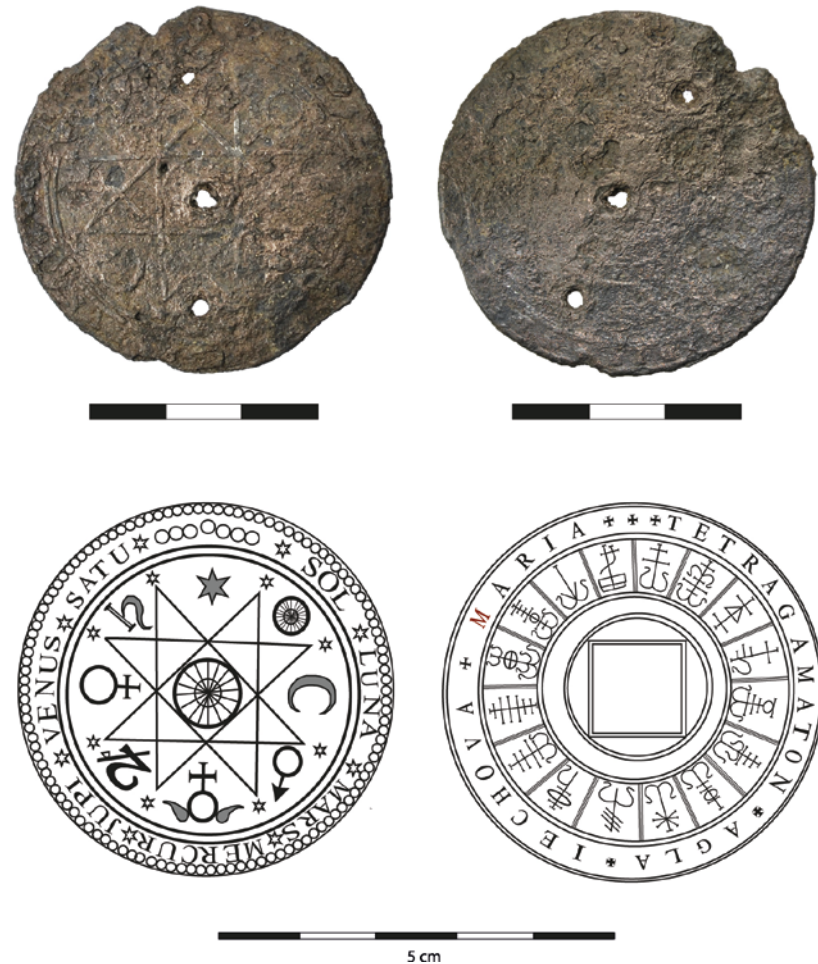


Fig. 6.44. Photo and reconstruction of one of the amulets from Zutphen (source: Fermin 2018, 9).

Examples include a pipe clay figurine of Mercurius from well 9 at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg (c. AD 150–200), a complete pipe clay figurine of a lion from a pit at Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet and two lion figurines and a figurine of the goddess Cybele at Nijmegen-Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat.⁶⁰⁴ Figurines like these were probably used in the context of religious/ritual practices, intended to beseech favours, to give thanks for wishes granted, and to request divine protection for or appease deceased loved ones.⁶⁰⁵ A notable deposit is that of a Victoria figurine that was placed in the posthole at the entrance to a house at Colmschate-Weteringer Enk (AD 250–300).⁶⁰⁶

In view of its location, this deposition may have been intended to protect the house and household. However, Hermesen interprets it in more general terms as a foundation deposit. A bronze Mercury figurine was found near house 25 at Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden, as well as a fragment of a pipe clay deity figurine.⁶⁰⁷ These finds are difficult to interpret but are unlikely to be 'ordinary' rubbish. Finally, fragments of 14 terracotta figurines were found in the channel at Voorburg-Arentsburg. Driessen and Besselsen emphasise that these figurines too are unlikely to have been discarded as 'ordinary' waste.⁶⁰⁸ Special deposition practices can also be suspected in this case.

⁶⁰⁴ Van den Broeke 2002b, 16.

⁶⁰⁵ Van Boekel 2006, 332; see also Van Boekel 1987, 686.

⁶⁰⁶ Hermesen 2004.

⁶⁰⁷ Vos 2002, 61.

⁶⁰⁸ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 170.

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have examined a host of special deposits from various perspectives, including context, composition and period. This chapter combines and compares patterns, developments and insights in order to reach a broader understanding of the occurrence, nature, background and significance of special deposits and deposition practices around the house and yard. Here we will focus on some of the most relevant interpretive frameworks and perspectives: the biographical perspective, identity, feasting, magic and liminality. We will also reflect on the possible role of post-depositional processes such as soil disturbance and degradation in relation to the preservation and identification of special deposits.

7.2 The biographical perspective

Like people, the built structures that people use have a life cycle: construction ('birth'), use, abandonment and/or demolition ('death') and the period thereafter ('commemoration' or reuse).⁶⁰⁹ The various significant moments and transitions in the life cycle can be marked or facilitated through ritual practices, which may sometimes result in a special deposit. Built structures include not just houses, but also outbuildings, wells or even entire yards or settlements. The exploitation of a new tract of land is another moment that could be marked by ritual. The 'biographical perspective', based on this life cycle, is a key perspective for interpreting deposition practices.

7.2.1 Life phases

In Dutch archaeology, the 'biographical perspective' has largely been developed by Gerritsen, whose primary concern is with houses.⁶¹⁰ This approach is based on the idea that the life cycles of a house and its occupants are closely linked.⁶¹¹ It would appear that it is the life cycle of the occupants rather than the physical lifespan of the wooden structure that chiefly determines

when a house is abandoned. Gerritsen's model defines four phases: house construction, habitation, abandonment and post-abandonment (Fig. 7.1).⁶¹² Key moments in the biography of the house – especially the transitions between the different phases – may be marked by ceremonial and ritualised activities, including communal feasts and sacrificial practices. The biographical perspective has also been applied to other structures such as granaries, outbuildings and wells.⁶¹³ In these instances too, key moments in their biography may have been symbolically marked through ritual practices.

7.2.2 The construction phase

The construction of a house, building or well was a significant moment, involving several aspects of relevance to us. Firstly, it would have entailed a significant investment of labour that transcended the level of the individual household. A team of builders probably gathered on such occasions to build a new house or dig a new well, whereby the building process became a social event. Secondly, raw materials were extracted from the vicinity. Trees were felled, wood was processed, reeds were cut and loam or clay was extracted. 'New' tracts of land were also occupied and the soil was disturbed by digging postholes and well shafts. In this sense, building a house or well entailed an intervention in the natural environment, a disruption of the existing harmony and balance. Thirdly, the construction of a new house was coupled with the start of a new household within the local community. Thus, the building of a new house was linked to significant shifts in social relations and relationships.⁶¹⁴

The time of construction was probably accompanied by ritual practices, many of which have left no traces for archaeologists to find. But if objects were deposited in the ground on such occasions, this gives us a glimpse into ritual practices surrounding the construction phase of buildings or wells, or the exploitation of new land. Deposits of this kind are generally referred to as 'building sacrifices', but we have opted for the more neutral term 'foundation deposits'. This is because a 'sacrifice' implies a specific practice and intention (the 'sacrifice' as a 'gift' to a supernatural being), whereas little is known

⁶⁰⁹ Gerritsen 2003; Bradley 2005, 51.

⁶¹⁰ Gerritsen 2003.

⁶¹¹ Gerritsen 2003, 36. See also Huijbers (2007) for a similar perspective applied to medieval houses and settlements.

⁶¹² Gerritsen 2003, 40, Fig. 3.1.

⁶¹³ Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015; Van Haasteren 2011; Van Haasteren & Groot 2012. See also Van Hoof 2002.

⁶¹⁴ Gerritsen 2003, 63.

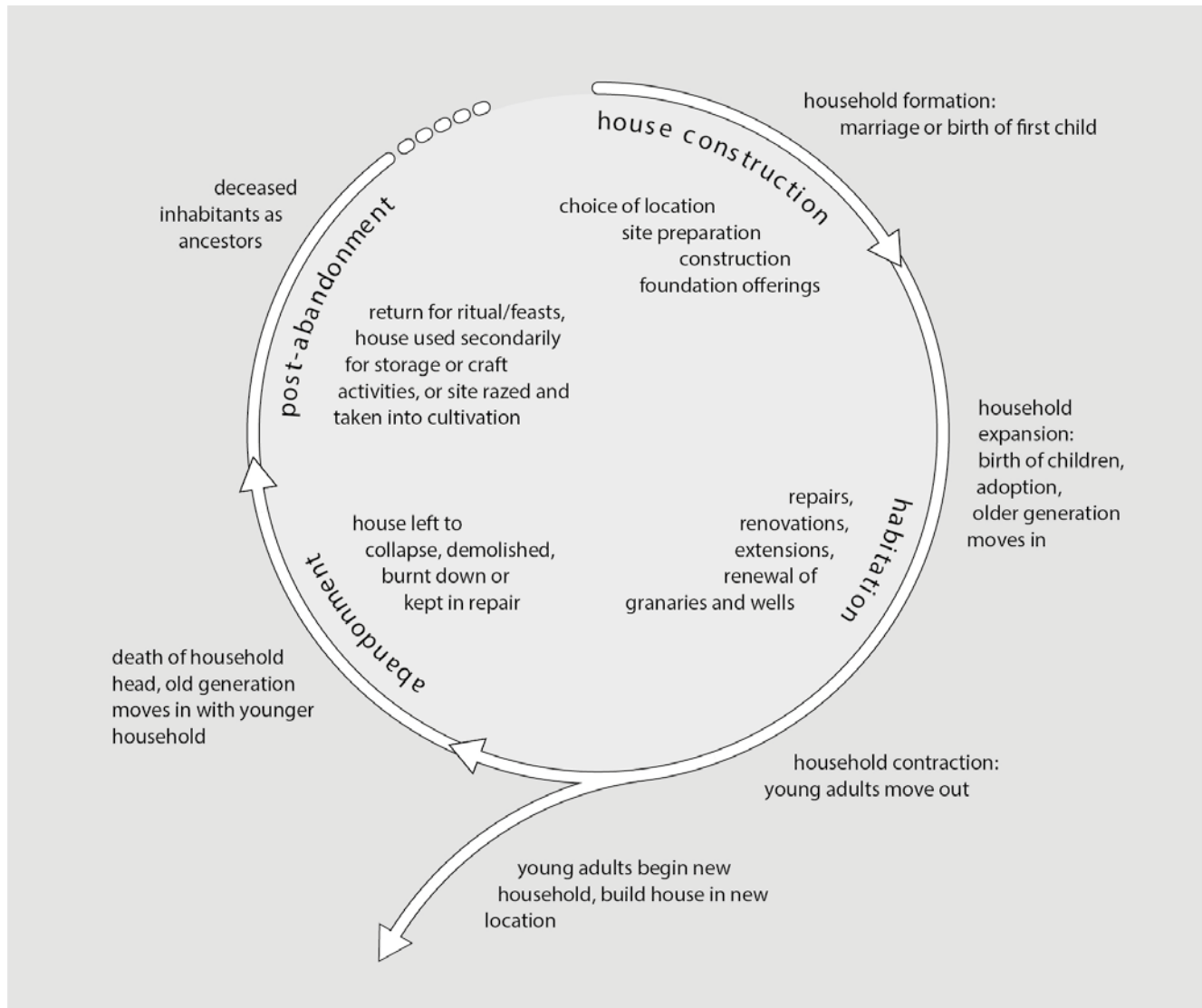


Fig. 7.1. The cultural biography of a single-phase yard. Gerritsen's model (source: Gerritsen 2003, Fig. 3.1).

about the nature and intention of the deposition practice.⁶¹⁵

Foundation deposits in houses, wells and channels

Most deposits connected with the construction phase are known from houses or other buildings. There are few foundation deposits for the prehistoric period (see Sections 5.3.2, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). Gerritsen cites only one example in his study of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region and only a few from other regions.⁶¹⁶ However, there is some doubt as to whether these examples should in fact be interpreted as foundation deposits. In the light of our current understanding, a critical reassessment may be

needed when it comes to older research.⁶¹⁷ In our dataset, the number of possible foundation deposits from the prehistoric period is also fairly small, with closing deposits clearly predominant at that time. The Bronze Age deposits, which excavators interpret as foundation deposits, mainly come from pits inside houses. Here, too, a critical reassessment is needed. In the case of pit deposits, the relationship to the biography of the house is difficult to establish with certainty. Some more convincing examples from the Iron Age can be found near the entrance and walls of houses. Altogether, we can conclude that the number of convincing examples of prehistoric foundation deposits is small. In terms of the location of these deposits, we see that they

⁶¹⁵ See also Trebsche 2008, 73; Nieuwhof 2015, 65 and Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

⁶¹⁶ Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5.

⁶¹⁷ See, for example, a deposit at Wijster, which was initially interpreted as a foundation deposit but later reinterpreted by Van Es as a closing deposit (Van den Broeke 2015, 95; Van Es 2012, 22–24).

occur more frequently in walls and entrances than in postholes of the core structure.

This picture changes in the Roman period, when foundation deposits can be clearly identified as such in a greater number of houses (see Section 5.3.5). These deposits involved complete, unburnt objects that were buried under or adjacent to the structural elements of the houses – often the roof-bearing elements (the central and aisle posts) – when these were put in place. They were usually single deposits of complete vessels, but coins, quernstones and spindle whorls were also deposited on occasions. This is a well-known deposition practice for the river area, the Maaskant region and the western coastal region. It is less known for the Kempen region of Brabant, the eastern and northern sandy soils, the loess region and the other coastal areas, although a sizeable number of houses have been investigated in at least some of these regions. This may be a reflection of region-specific practices and customs. In the northern terp region, for example, foundation deposits were not buried in the roof-bearing elements but in the earthen platforms on which the houses were built.⁶¹⁸ A further possibility is that common rituals have not left any archaeologically visible traces, whereby they remain elusive for archaeologists.

Foundation deposits are also a well-known phenomenon in medieval and modern-era houses (see Sections 5.3.6 and 5.3.7). Again, this often involves complete vessels, but also metal objects such as fibulae. Examples of foundation deposits are known well into the Modern Period and this practice has even continued to the present day.⁶¹⁹ These ritual practices did not cease with urbanisation. From late medieval urban houses in particular, we know of many examples of pots and jugs buried beneath hearths, floors, walls and thresholds (Section 5.3.7). These deposits reflect ritual practices that go back centuries, perhaps millennia. The fact that these practices mainly occurred in the early phase of strong urbanisation, in the Late Middle Ages, may be linked to the influx of families from the countryside who brought their traditional practices to the city.

In addition to houses, the construction and inauguration of wells were sometimes symbolically marked through rituals and depositions (Section 5.5.5). This is evidenced by special deposits in the well shafts that were

dug to build well linings. Such deposits are known from different periods, from the Bronze Age to the Modern Period. Special objects at the bottom of some wells may be associated with the well's inauguration. They include complete vessels, quernstones, horseshoes, wooden balls and even a human bone fragment.

Finally, we can point to possible ritual practices accompanying the occupation of new territory. Special deposits of this kind can perhaps be identified in the earliest stages of development of some residual channels (see Section 5.7.5). They contain deposited objects and the remains of communal meals. There are indications of the communal preparation and consumption of food, the slaughter of animals and the deposition of the remains of these meals. A piece of deposited human bone could potentially be linked to the ritual and symbolic connection between the new land and the community of newcomers (and their ancestors). These practices will have taken place when the land along the newly created channels was first occupied.

Interpreting foundation deposits

Various interpretations can be explored for a better understanding of the rituals surrounding the construction of built structures or the occupation of new territory. Firstly, these rituals and deposition practices may be linked to the protective spirits of a place or to household gods. These supernatural entities were present on the site of the future house, and perhaps also in the trees that supplied the wood to build the house.⁶²⁰ According to Huijbers, they may have been represented as physical beings, or as a personified life force.⁶²¹ Foundation deposits may be understood as offerings in the 'negotiation' with these spirits, with a view to obtaining consent to build on the chosen site. This is exemplified in a historical text from the Silesian region:

*... In new houses or, perchance, in houses that they reoccupy, they bury pots full of various things for the household gods (penatibus), whom the people call Stetewaldiu, indifferent corners under the ground and sometimes behind the hearth. That is why they will not permit anything to be poured behind the hearth....*⁶²²

⁶¹⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 142, 218–220.

⁶¹⁹ Van Doesburg 2020, 12.

⁶²⁰ Huijbers 2007, 441–443.

⁶²¹ Huijbers 2007, 280.

⁶²² Mostert 1995, 249.

It is likely that the favour and permission of subterranean spirits and forces was also needed for the digging of wells, the occupation of new land and the use of wood from felled trees and that rituals and deposition practices could be understood in this light.

A second interpretation concerns the apotropaic or protective function of the objects deposited at the time of construction, or perhaps later (see also Section 7.5). The placing or burial of special objects protected the house and its occupants from evil outside forces. The location of the objects is relevant here. There was a clear preference for liminal locations in the house, especially the entrances and exterior walls, but also the hearth, floors and ceilings. Some of the deposits that are generally referred to as foundation deposits could be understood in this way. Examples include animals and objects buried close to house entrances or objects buried in or near the exterior walls of houses, or incorporated into the wall (see Section 5.3). Some of these objects were not necessarily deposited at the time that the house was built. It is entirely possible that apotropaic objects were buried or placed in or near the house over time, or added to existing deposits.

A final interpretation concerns the feasting that may have accompanied the construction of buildings or the occupation of new territory. Trebsche points to possible communal feasts or drinking parties to celebrate the building of a new house, including the offering of meat. As emphasised above, house construction will have required a large number of people.⁶²³ Some deposits in or near houses can perhaps be associated with these feasts. Some of the deposits in (residual) channels mentioned earlier may also be linked to communal meals, feasts, and the occupation of new territory along these channels (see also Section 5.7.5).

near the hearth, under the floor, near the walls, at the entrances and in the house ditches. They could also be deposited in the yard outside the house. However, in most cases it is difficult to distinguish with certainty deposits made in the phase of use from foundation and closing deposits.⁶²⁴

In general, deposition practices associated with the habitation phase of the house and yard will have been intended to ensure the well-being of the house and household.⁶²⁵ Reference has already been made above to the deposition of apotropaic ('magical') objects in or near houses (see also Section 7.5). These special objects may well have been deposited during the house's habitation phase, whether or not at significant events or at special times.⁶²⁶ Their purpose was to protect the house and household from evil spirits or to undo spells. The deposits were probably made primarily near the entrances, in or near walls and near or beneath hearths. Another possibility, however, is that the buried objects were linked to black magic, designed to harm the occupants.⁶²⁷ However, it is well-nigh impossible to reconstruct with certainty the purpose and meaning of these deposits and objects.

A special category of special deposits can be linked to renovations (see Sections 5.3.4.1 and 5.3.5.2). These deposits were also part of the house's habitation phase. Sometimes they were made in the same postholes as the initial foundation deposit. As such, they marked a renovation and heralded a new phase of occupation.

For some deposits, it is suspected or established that they were made 'in phases'. There are sometimes indications that objects were buried or deposited in more or less the same place at different times, which means that they were added later to an existing deposit. These deposits were therefore not associated solely with the construction or inauguration of the house, but evolved during the phase of habitation or use. It is generally not possible to pinpoint why new objects were deposited during the house's occupation. Reasons could include significant changes in the composition of the household, the arrival of new occupants, or other major events that called for a ritual act. Examples could be the medieval deposits near the hearth and the shoes hidden in the structure of the house (see Section 5.3.7). The same may

7.2.3 The habitation or use phase

Identifying special deposits that can be linked with certainty to the habitation phase of the house and yard is no easy task. In theory, objects could be buried or placed in almost every location in the house during its time of occupation: by the roof-bearing posts, under or

⁶²³ Trebsche 2008, 74.

⁶²⁴ In his study of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region, Gerritsen does not cite any specific examples of deposits associated with this phase (Gerritsen 2003, 106).

⁶²⁵ Gerritsen 2003, 106.

⁶²⁶ Merrifield mentions an eighteenth-century flask buried near the foundation of a late medieval church. It is probably a witch bottle, intended to undo a spell cast by a witch (Merrifield 1987, 16–21).

⁶²⁷ Gärtner 2005, 202, with reference to Laux 1993, 35.

be true of some deposits found near the entrances to houses and near, in or along the outside of walls (e.g. in house ditches or pits). Here, too, objects may have been buried or added to existing deposits when the house was occupied, or deposited in the same spot. This could entail animal remains, complete vessels and other special objects. However, there is a need for more detailed study of this phenomenon.

7.2.4 The abandonment and dismantling phase

The abandonment of the house and yard was also a culturally and socially significant time, with the house coming to an end in both a physical and social sense.⁶²⁸ Once again, this important moment may have been symbolically marked by ritual practices. The manifestations of these practices can be fairly readily identified on the basis of the location and composition of the special deposits. In terms of location, we refer firstly to deposits found in postholes from which the post had been removed. The objects could then have been deposited in the resulting hole. Some of these holes were completely filled with pottery or burnt loam, or neatly ‘stacked’ pottery sherds. In other instances, the deposited material was concentrated at the top of the posthole or in a pit that was specially dug in order to remove the post (a ‘post-removal pit’). Again, these deposits could only have been made once the post was removed. The same applies to deposits containing large objects, which could obviously not have been placed if a post was still present in the posthole.

Besides the location, the composition and modification of the deposited material is often seen as signalling a closing deposit. These are often deposits containing large quantities of fragmented and often (partially) burnt material. This material frequently seems to involve the remains of household goods: fragments of vessels, loom weights, spindle whorls, quernstones, natural stone tools, hearthstones and burnt loam (possibly from the hearth, wall or floor). Sometimes there is evidence of feasting (communal meals and drinking parties) that may have taken place when the house and house site was abandoned and dismantled

(see also Section 7.4).

Some of the pit deposits referred to above are situated within house plans. They could relate to pits that functioned when the house was inhabited (such as storage and cellar pits), as well as pits that were specially dug for the purpose of depositing material. The impractical location of some pits within the house could indicate that they were not dug until the house was abandoned or dismantled. It is often impossible to determine with certainty whether deposition occurred when the house was being abandoned and dismantled, or shortly thereafter (see also below). A definitive association with abandonment rituals is even more difficult to establish for pit deposits located outside the house. For this reason, various authors suggest that we should be careful about interpreting such pits as closing deposits.⁶²⁹

Whereas the large quantities of burnt and fragmented material were initially associated with abandonment rituals, it is now clear that closing deposits display greater variation and nuance.⁶³⁰ For example, the degree of burning varies considerably and complete, unburnt objects can also be associated with abandonment practices. Nor are larger quantities of material necessarily involved. A fairly small number of deposited fragments or objects can sometimes indicate an abandonment ritual.⁶³¹ Sometimes the special objects deposited in dismantled houses may be associated with the personal or collective identity of the occupants. These could include keys, jewellery, weapons and antique objects (possibly heirlooms; Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2) These items may have been inalienable, linked to the identity (social persona) of the former occupants of the house.

Practices relating to the abandonment of the house and yard

Based on special deposits, an overall reconstruction can be made of special practices relating to the abandonment of the house and yard. We can identify the following general ‘phases’:

1. the dismantling of the house (and other structures that were part of the yard),
2. the fragmentation and often burning of part of the house and house inventory,
3. the deposition of these remains on the house site and yard.

Regarding the first phase, we regularly encounter evidence that the structure of the house (or granary/outbuilding) was deliberately

⁶²⁸ Gerritsen 2003, 96.

⁶²⁹ Van den Broeke, 2015, 90; De Vries 2021, 211.

⁶³⁰ See Gerritsen 2003; Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015; Van Hoof 2002; Trebsche 2008; De Vries 2021.

⁶³¹ Trebsche 2008; Van den Broeke 2015; De Vries 2021.

dismantled. For example, it can be established that the posts belonging to the structure were at least partially removed or excavated. Also, deposits linked to the abandonment of the house and yard often contain building remains, including parts of wattle and daub walls and/or floors, hearths (including hearth collars and hearthstones) and – in the best preserved cases – construction timber (including parts of doors and shutters). The complete sets of loom weights that occasionally feature in special deposits seem to indicate that looms were also deliberately dismantled during this phase.

The second phase relates to the deliberate ‘destruction’ of parts of the house, the semi-mobile household inventory and the mobile household goods (see ‘Ritual destruction’ below). In several instances, it can be established that objects were deliberately destroyed. Burning often occurred elsewhere, not at the deposition site. There may have been a ‘central burn site’, where remains of the house and its inventory were burned.⁶³² In some cases, a fire appears to have been lit in the house itself for the purpose of burning household goods.⁶³³ There is evidence to suggest that some objects such as vessels or quernstones were deliberately smashed in wells, pits or on the ground inside or around the house. In other cases, stones, sticks or other objects were used to break vessels.

The third phase concerns the ‘interment’ of the fragmented and (partially) burnt objects at the former house site. This often involved fragmented remains that were deposited or placed in the features of dismantled structures (houses and granaries), in pits inside the house, in pits in the yard and/or in wells. Material of this kind does not appear to have been deposited in peripheral places, such as settlement ditches, (residual) channels, fens or depressions. In some places, such as large pits or wells, a mix of fragmented materials were deposited, often combinations of fragmented vessels, quernstones, ceramic objects, burnt clay and natural stone objects (including hearthstones and tools). In other cases, specific objects or fragments seem to have been deliberately and carefully placed, often in postholes from which the posts had been removed. These sometimes involved complete objects with little or no signs of burning. There are also indications that the fragmented remains of household goods were sometimes distributed over the former ground

or floor level in or around the house.⁶³⁴

This practice may have been more frequent than we can establish archaeologically, as traces will often have been removed by later soil disturbance (see also Section 7.7). In those instances, it is only material that ended up in deeper features that has been preserved.

Ritual destruction

The second phase, as defined above, involved the deliberate ‘destruction’ of the house and household goods. Physical fragmentation and burning seem to have been a key component of the rituals surrounding the abandonment of the house and yard. The different degrees of burning (some objects were unburnt or only very partially burnt) suggests that the ultimate aim was to not to burn things completely.

We should also consider the symbolic aspects of this destruction. According to Brück, fragmentation and burning symbolised the social transformations that took place when the house site was abandoned. They symbolised the transition from the old social reality to the new one.⁶³⁵ The relationship between the house/yard and its occupants on the one hand and the rest of the local community on the other was thereby symbolically and ritually reshaped. In that sense, Brück does not view the ‘destruction’ of the house and household effects as simply an ‘end’ (or ‘death’), but also as a source of new life, a regeneration.⁶³⁶ ‘Pots, quernstones, bronzes, houses and humans were subjected to processes of fragmentation and reincorporation that suggest that life was thought to emerge out of death,’ Brück emphasises.⁶³⁷ ‘In every case, it was the processes of burning and breaking which facilitated the renewal of life.’⁶³⁸ Seen from this perspective, practices relating to the ‘death’ of the house and yard closely resemble the funerary rituals surrounding the death of people. In the latter case, the ritual fragmentation and burning of the body facilitated the transition from being a living member of the community to an ancestor. Van den Broeke also points out the analogy between the cremation and abandonment rituals. In both cases, fire was involved and remnants were selected from a pyre and then deposited in a pit or posthole.⁶³⁹ ‘It is entirely conceivable that in the conceptual world of late prehistoric communities the abandonment ritual was equated with the cremation of the house and its inventory,’ Van den Broeke concludes.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³² Van den Broeke 2015, 94.

⁶³³ As in the case of deposits containing a large quantity of charcoal and burnt loam found near and around the central posts of four houses at Oerle-Zuid (houses 2, 5, 6 and 7). There is also evidence of on-site fires in pits inside houses at Boekel-Parkweg and Riethoven. On occasions, large quantities of charcoal have been found in other deposits (Breda-Landgoed Heilaar, Breda-Moskes and Reusel-Boegent). However, the available data does not allow us to determine whether the presence of this charcoal also indicates on-site burning.

⁶³⁴ Such indications have been found at sites at Rotterdam-Delftische Schie, Culemborg-Hoge Prijs, Zijdeveld and possibly Geldermalsen-Eigenblok and Ellewoutsdijk.

⁶³⁵ Brück 2006, 303.

⁶³⁶ Brück 2006, with further reference to Fitzpatrick 1997; Hingley 1997; Williams 2004.

⁶³⁷ Brück 2006, 311.

⁶³⁸ Brück 2006, 305.

⁶³⁹ Van den Broeke 2015, 93.

⁶⁴⁰ Van den Broeke 2015, 93.

Monuments in the landscape

Through the ritual practices of dismantling, destruction and interment, the former house sites in all probability acquired a new role and meaning within the settlement landscape and the collective memory of the community. In some cases, they are likely to have been transformed into a form of monument in the landscape, linked to the memory of the former inhabitants, the ancestors. Therkorn describes how low mounds were erected over the dismantled houses at Schagen so that the house was ‘buried’, as it were, thereby creating a visible, recognisable monument.⁶⁴¹ It thus became a meaningful place in the landscape, a place of remembrance, surrounded by stories.⁶⁴² Similar practices are mentioned by Bradley.⁶⁴³ He describes practices relating to house abandonment, in which houses were transformed into a kind of monument in the landscape, sometimes including large quantities of material deposited at the entrances and along the exterior walls, as well as people, animals, food, pottery and tools buried beneath the house floors.⁶⁴⁴ Our dataset also highlights such patterns, especially for the prehistoric period. Moreover, we can identify possible special deposits relating to the phase *after* the house was abandoned and dismantled (see below), i.e. the phase in which the house lay abandoned in the landscape. These deposits also reveal that abandoned house sites may have continued to play a role as recognisable places in the mythical landscape and the experiential world of its inhabitants, probably linked to the ancestors.

Regarding the above, as with the ‘destruction’ of the house and household goods, we can emphasise the similarity to funerary practices. Therkorn refers to the practices surrounding the abandonment/dismantling and monumentalisation of house sites in terms of ‘death’ and ‘burial’.⁶⁴⁵ Like funerary monuments, abandoned house sites can perhaps also be viewed as monuments commemorating the ancestors.

Through time

Closing deposits are a fairly common phenomenon in prehistory, while foundation deposits are rare (see Sections 5.3.2, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). This suggests that it was primarily the abandonment of the house and yard that was ritually marked (in a way that is archaeologically

visible). This does not necessarily mean that rituals were not performed when houses were built, as it is also possible that they did not leave any archaeologically visible traces, or their remains have not been preserved.

The picture for the Roman period is markedly different. We see a significant decline in the number of closing deposits, whereas foundation deposits are much better represented (see Section 5.3.5). This shift may be linked to the changing dynamic of habitation. From the later Iron Age on, yards became increasingly stable, a trend that continued in the Roman period. Yards and settlements were organised in more rigid fashion by means of yard and settlement ditches and as such became ‘fixed’ in the landscape. These changing dynamics no doubt had an impact on the relationship between the household and house site. As successive generations of a social group now built their house on the same site, the direct link between the biography of the house/yard and that of the household will have faded.⁶⁴⁶ These changes are also likely to have influenced the ritual practices associated with the biography of the house and household. It is perhaps in this context that we should understand the waning significance of abandonment rituals.

Another possible explanation for the changing ritual practices in the Roman period could lie in the major demographic shifts that occurred during the last phase of the Late Iron Age and the earliest Roman period. We know from both historical and archaeological sources that Caesar’s campaigns and operations, and later those of Augustus, had far-reaching consequences for the demographic composition of the central and southern Netherlands.⁶⁴⁷ In the decades around the beginning of our era, groups of newcomers arrived in the Dutch river area and the region to the south.⁶⁴⁸ This influx could also be linked to the changes in ritual practices, which are particularly well documented in the central and eastern river area and the Maaskant region, where foundation deposits clearly predominated from the Early Roman period on. However, the parameters of the present study precludes a further elaboration of this hypothesis, which requires additional research and substantiation.

And finally, we must not ignore or underestimate the cultural influence of the Romans themselves. Indigenous groups may

⁶⁴¹ Therkorn 2004, 16. This phenomenon is comparable to the erection of burial mounds which, as visible monuments, often occupied a specific place in the cultural landscape and were frequently linked to the memory of the ancestors. It should be noted, however, that – by virtue of their size – burial mounds were often part of the cultural landscape for a much longer time, sometimes even to this day.

⁶⁴² Therkorn 2004, 16.

⁶⁴³ Bradley 2005, 53.

⁶⁴⁴ Bradley 2005, 53.

⁶⁴⁵ Therkorn 2004, 281–220.

⁶⁴⁶ Gerritsen 2003, 108.

⁶⁴⁷ Roymans 2019.

⁶⁴⁸ Kemmers 2005; Eck 2004, 46–55; Habermehl *et al.* in preparation.

have come into contact at an early stage with new customs, traditions and rituals via the military. However, additional research is also needed on the role of romanisation in relation to the depositional practices discussed here.

7.2.5 The post-abandonment phase

Once abandoned and dismantled, former house sites sometimes took on a new role and meaning in the mythical landscape, perhaps even as visible ‘monuments’ (see above). These abandoned sites may have been meaningful places frequented by the descendants of the former occupants or other family members, and where rituals may have been performed.⁶⁴⁹ Although we can possibly identify the material manifestation of these rituals in the special pit deposits inside and around some house plans, it is often very difficult to establish whether deposits were made after the house site had been abandoned and dismantled. Only in a few instances can it be plausibly demonstrated that the deposited material is younger than the associated house (see Sections 5.3.3, 5.3.4 and 5.3.5).

In the case of wells too, there is evidence of special deposition practices after – perhaps long after – the wells were decommissioned (see Section 5.5.5).⁶⁵⁰ In some instances, objects were deposited in the upper fill that corresponds to the period after decommissioning. These objects include a fibula, a spearhead, a flint axe and a complete Roman miniature amphora. Former wells were probably still visible as depressions in the ground (perhaps still wet), characterised by different vegetation. As prominent places, they may have had a special significance, appropriate for the deposition of objects. It is also possible that such places were recognised as the remains of settlements once inhabited by previous generations.

7.3 Identity

A second aspect to explore in greater detail is identity – personal identity, family identity, and possibly the collective identity of larger communities. How were these identities

expressed, marked or ‘concluded’ in ritual practices, including through the deposition of objects?

7.3.1 Rites of passage

Humans, like other materials, underwent rites of passage at critical stages in their lives, which required the destruction of the old social persona and the relationships this sustained, and the creation of a new identity. At death, this was achieved through the fragmentation and burning of the body itself, although at other points in the lifecycle, the breaking and deposition of artefacts that stood in a metaphorical relationship with the human body (for example pots) would have achieved the same purpose.⁶⁵¹

Rites of passage are performed to facilitate and mark changes in people’s lives.⁶⁵² These changes revolve around the social identity of people within their communities. Key moments in people’s lives include birth, reaching adulthood, marriage and death. But ritual practices can also mark other significant moments, such as moving house, a new job or position, honourable discharge from the armed forces, pregnancy or recovery from an illness.⁶⁵³ At those moments, people can become part of a different group or social ‘category’. Rites of passage are primarily social rituals rather than religious, even though religious elements can definitely play a part.

Rites of passage share the same overall structure in which we can distinguish different phases. The first is the rite of separation, which symbolically concludes the past (the old ‘state’ or identity). Objects or materials that symbolise the ‘old life’ – i.e. the former identity – can be deposited, destroyed or buried in such rituals.⁶⁵⁴ This is followed by the transitional or liminal phase, which is an intermediate stage between the ‘old life’ that has come to an end and the ‘new life’ that has yet to begin. In the next phase, the rite of incorporation, the new life has begun and the new identity is assumed, including the symbols associated with this identity. The rite of incorporation can be accompanied by feasts and the receiving of gifts.

⁶⁴⁹ Gerritsen 2003, 96–104. For the reuse of abandoned house sites, see also

Fokkens *et al.* 2019, 23, 76, 206–207.

⁶⁵⁰ For the reuse of abandoned wells, see also Fokkens *et al.* 2019, 206–207.

⁶⁵¹ Brück 2001, 157.

⁶⁵² Van Gennep 1977.

⁶⁵³ Nieuwhof 2015, 82–83.

⁶⁵⁴ See also Fontijn 2002, 276.

Fibulae and jewellery

A first category of deposited objects that may be linked to individual rites of passage are fibulae and jewellery. These are objects with a possible personal significance, associated with personal identities within the community.⁶⁵⁵ They were worn on the body and were therefore publicly visible. Their deposition may have been linked to rites of separation, in which old symbols were set aside. We will first discuss the deposition of bracelets and finger rings. The former were sometimes broken and bent, perhaps deliberately as part of a ritual practice. We should emphasise, especially regarding metal bracelets, that they were unlikely to have become broken or bent accidentally. With regard to finger rings and fibulae, we note that several specimens were sometimes deposited in the same place (see Sections 6.8.2 and 6.8.3). They were probably deposited by different people at different times. Regarding the choice of deposition location, we note that liminal, partially wet places – (residual) channels, wells and ditches – are remarkably well represented. The liminal location of these deposits ties in with their presumed role in rites of separation.⁶⁵⁶

Weapons and militaria

Another category of objects that may be associated with rites of passage are weapons and militaria (see Section 6.9). Fontijn points out that the deposition of weapons and military equipment in natural, often wet places corresponds to particular phases in the life cycle of a warrior, including his death. For certain men, weapons and military equipment can be seen as a key component of their warrior identity, and the deposition of such objects may relate to the ‘deconstruction’ of that identity.⁶⁵⁷ Certainly in the Roman period, the deposition of weapons and militaria could be understood in the context of rites of separation, symbolically ending the army career and marking a return to civilian life.⁶⁵⁸

The military equipment that was deposited includes parts of helmet, pieces of armour, buckles, military pendants and belt hooks (see Section 6.9). The weapon category includes arrowheads, spearheads, daggers and a complete gladius. Once again, we see a preference for liminal, mostly wet deposition locations: (residual) channels, wells, depressions and settlement ditches. This same pattern can be seen outside the context of the house and

yard. We can refer here to the deposition of weapons and militaria in the Rhine at the army camps of Alphen aan den Rijn and Zwammerdam (complete swords, daggers, spearheads and shield parts) and in a channel near the castellum at De Meern.⁶⁵⁹ As with bracelets, we also find evidence of militaria being deliberately fragmented, bent out of shape and disassembled. Often it is parts of belts, helmets and armour that were deposited rather than complete pieces. Two helmets appear to have been deliberately bent out of shape. A third helmet deposit contained a selection of disassembled parts from several helmets (Section 6.9). These practices may also have been linked to rites of separation.

Human remains

Loose human bone remains found in the context of house and yard could also be linked to rites of passage and/or family identity (see Section 6.10). The deposition of these remains may, for example, be connected to rituals performed to facilitate the transition from a living member of the community to an ‘ancestor’.⁶⁶⁰ The bone remains were probably collected after the body of the deceased had first been at least partially excarnated (through burial, exposure to the air or to scavengers).⁶⁶¹ The bones may have subsequently been used in rituals and then ‘secondarily’ interred. In the case of human bone remains, we also note that they were frequently deposited in liminal places, such as channels, wells/waterholes and ditches (see also Section 7.6).

Human remains could also involve parts of living individuals. For example, a deposit of human hair at Oldehove-Englum can perhaps be seen as the result of a rite of separation.⁶⁶² The cutting and deposition of the hair would then have been a symbolic practice in which the old identity was discarded.

The relationship between houses and social persona

Various deposits could indicate a link between the final phase of a built structure and the end of a social persona (of one of the house occupants). There are special deposits involving keys, textile-related objects, weapons and jewellery in houses from different periods. These objects could symbolise specific social, personal identities of the occupants. Their location

⁶⁵⁵ For fibulae and identity, see Pudney 2011; Heeren & Van der Feijst 2017, 340–341.

⁶⁵⁶ Nieuwhof 2015, 82–84.

⁶⁵⁷ Fontijn 2005, 150.

⁶⁵⁸ See Van Driel-Murray 1994; Nicolay 2005.

⁶⁵⁹ Dielemans 2012, 261.

⁶⁶⁰ Baetsen 2009, 252; Baetsen 2015, 129–240.

⁶⁶¹ Carr & Knüsel 1997, 169; Nieuwhof 2015, 196. Such rituals and deposition practices may have served to promote fertility and the renewal of life (Carr & Knüsel 1997, 171; Rieckhoff 2002, 25).

⁶⁶² Nieuwhof 2015, 90.

suggests that the deposition was connected with the abandonment and dismantling of the houses. Thus two significant moments were symbolically marked at the same time: the abandonment/dismantling of the house and the ‘dismantling’ of the social persona of the occupant or occupants.⁶⁶³

Textile-related objects (such as spindle whorls, needles and scissors) in deposits may be linked more specifically to the role of women and the domestic activities of spinning and making clothes (see Sections 6.5.3, 6.5.4 and 6.5.5).⁶⁶⁴ In addition, Huijbers links the deposition of keys inside houses with the cessation of the woman’s position as head of the domestic sphere (Section 6.14.3).⁶⁶⁵ Based on this reasoning, the weapons deposited when houses were abandoned can perhaps be linked to a male warrior identity.

7.3.2 Antique objects as heirlooms: family identity

In the dataset inventoried for this study, one particular object category stands out by virtue of its dating. These are antique objects that were of considerable age at the time of deposition (Section 6.13), often more than one hundred years. This category contains a diverse range of objects: fibulae, flint tools/artefacts (especially axes and arrowheads), ceramic vessels, jewellery, a glass spindle whorl, a bronze skillet, a candlestick and even a quernstone. Antique objects were deposited through the ages, certainly from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. We can also identify objects, such as frequently patched bronze vessels, that had clearly been long in use at the time of deposition. These are items that had probably been in the possession of individuals and families or had circulated for a long period of time.

It seems unlikely that antique objects were kept by chance and then selected at random for deposition. We can observe a distinct pattern in the dataset. It seems that antique pieces were ascribed a special meaning and were deliberately passed down within families from generation to generation. These heirlooms were not merely functional items, they were also important symbols imbued with the family’s identity and its social reproduction. In modern Western

societies to this day, we still have heirlooms, such as wedding rings, jewellery, porcelain and watches. Heirlooms symbolise social relationships that transcend the boundaries of individual human lives. Above all, they symbolise a collective past, rather than a relationship with a specific individual.⁶⁶⁶

Heirlooms may have been part of collections of special, meaningful (and perhaps inalienable) objects that were kept within families. This type of collection also included special gifts, relics of special events, exotic objects (such as fossils and old stone tools) and bone fragments of deceased ancestors or family members.⁶⁶⁷ They were a kind of family archive with close connections to the family’s history, and hence identity.⁶⁶⁸ Some pit deposits with combinations of personal, exotic and antique objects may well be linked to collections of this kind.⁶⁶⁹

This raises the question as to why such meaningful, long-held and inalienable objects were ultimately deliberately buried in the ground. This deposition probably relates to their specific significance for the family. The rituals in which they played a part may have involved the expression family identity. They may have stressed various relationships: the relationship between family members, the relationship with the ancestors, the relationship with other families and/or the relationship to the territory claimed by the family.⁶⁷⁰ Perhaps there were specific circumstances where accentuating these identities and relationships was paramount. In this regard, Nieuwhof associates the deposition of heirlooms at Ezinge with the burgeoning population and the scarcity of available land. Such circumstances may have made it imperative for families to emphasise their family identity in relation to their territory.⁶⁷¹

7.3.3 Cultural identity?

In some cases, deposited objects could be associated with the conscious expression of cultural identities. We can point in particular to a number of deposits from the Early Roman period at Tiel, Houten, Geldermalsen and Nieuwegein in the central river area. These deposits contained a specific type of pot with ‘Frisian’ characteristics. Some of the pots have been identified as having been imported.

⁶⁶³ See, for example, Huijbers (2007, 367), who links deposits of keys and textile-related objects from Someren and elsewhere with the social identity of women (e.g. as head (and key holder) in the domestic sphere).

⁶⁶⁴ Huijbers 2007, 367–368; Verspay 2017, 567.

⁶⁶⁵ Huijbers 2007, 367.

⁶⁶⁶ Lillios 1999, 243.

⁶⁶⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 292.

⁶⁶⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

⁶⁶⁹ More specifically, these are the Late Roman pit deposits at Eme-Laaksche Veld and Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and the early medieval pit deposit at Utrecht-Az.

⁶⁷⁰ Lillios 1999, 258; Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

⁶⁷¹ Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

A recent study of various pottery assemblages in the Tiel region has shown that newcomers from different regions were living there in the Early Roman period, and probably in the northern coastal area and German Lippe region as well.⁶⁷² The newcomers arrived in the Tiel region (and probably neighbouring regions) in the decades around the beginning of our era.⁶⁷³ It is therefore conceivable that specific vessels were selected for deposition precisely because of their outward appearance associated with the newcomers' homeland (and hence ancestors). The fact that an antique, imported vessel appears to be involved on at least one occasion ties in with this picture.⁶⁷⁴

7.4 Feasting, meals and drinking parties

'Feasting' was a form of 'public ritual' in which the consumption of food and drink played a key role.⁶⁷⁵ This communal consumption of food and/or drink occurred in a manner that differed from everyday practice.⁶⁷⁶ Feasting was an important mode of social communication, ritually marking important moments and constructing, affirming and articulating social (and political) relationships. It could be accompanied by ceremony and ritual, often involving supernatural beings.⁶⁷⁷ All manner of practices could be ritualised to varying degrees, including the slaughter of animals, the preparation and communal consumption of food and drink, and the deposition of the material remains of the feast.

Feasting fulfilled different functions and could mark various significant moments and events, including the building of a house, the abandonment or dismantling of the house, or the commemoration of its former occupants (the ancestors).⁶⁷⁸ Other key moments could involve the cycle of the seasons, such as the beginning of the harvest period or the summer and winter solstices, or significant events in a person's life, such as birth, marriage and death. Feasting could also serve to legitimise social distinctions and to secure political power and influence in social competition.⁶⁷⁹ Feasting revolved around expensive and exotic foods, tableware and prestige goods, with a view to impressing the participants and to expressing social status, wealth and influence. A final type

of feasting was designed to create, emphasise and strengthen social bonds. Prestige goods did not play a role in this type of feasting, which was all about solidarity and connection.⁶⁸⁰

7.4.1 Feasting remains

In terms of the archaeological source material, feasts are also of such great interest because they leave behind potentially visible and identifiable archaeological traces.⁶⁸¹ These are mainly the remains of slaughtered animals, other food remains and the vessels used for the preparation and consumption of food and drink.

A first category of deposits sometimes associated with feasting concerns the deposits containing a large quantity of fragmented (and often burnt) material. These deposits are particularly well represented from the Middle Bronze Age to the Middle Iron Age (see Sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.4). Many have been interpreted as closing deposits and their fragmented contents are viewed as the remains of the house and the household inventory: vessels, loom weights, spindle whorls, quernstones, tools, hearth remains and possibly the remains of mud walls and/or floors (see also Section 7.2.4 above). In some deposits of this kind, we also find possible evidence of feasting practices.⁶⁸² There are several clues that could indicate feasting. The first is a larger quantity of vessels than what would be expected in the inventory of a single household. This suggests the product of a major communal event. Fewer vessels, however, could also be linked to the communal consumption of food and drink, but on a smaller scale. As mentioned above, the construction and abandonment of the house may have been accompanied by communal feasting, possibly on the scale of a few families, or a team of people engaged in building the house. The composition of the deposited vessels is also relevant here. For example, a combination of large pots or storage jars, jugs, small beakers or plates could suggest a feast. And sometimes we can identify special vessels that are specifically related to communal drinking. These include a large ceramic vat (*cratère*) for communal drinking occasions, a special ceramic vessel designed for wine consumption and pieces of a bronze wine set from the Roman period (Section 6.3.3).

⁶⁷² Habermehl *et al.* in preparation.

⁶⁷³ Habermehl *et al.* in preparation.

⁶⁷⁴ Van Kerckhove 2019, 269.

⁶⁷⁵ 'Feasting' is the term commonly used by authors in English. Archaeological reports generally refer to collective, communal, ceremonial or ritual meals and sometimes to drinking parties. For a definition of feasting, see Dietler 2001, 67; Dietler 1996, 89.

⁶⁷⁶ Dietler 1996, 89; see also Groot 2008,

103–104 and Thilderkvist 2013, 134–135.

⁶⁷⁷ Nieuwhof 2015, 99.

⁶⁷⁸ Trebsche 2008; Adams 2004, 62; Gerritsen 2003, 63. This feasting marked the construction of the house and rewarded the individuals who were part of the building team.

⁶⁷⁹ Hayden 1996, 144; Nieuwhof 2015, 99.

⁶⁸⁰ Groot 2008, 104.

⁶⁸¹ Groot 2008, 106–107. Groot mentions some key criteria for identifying deposits associated with feasting, based on a study by Hayden (1996).

⁶⁸² See also Gerritsen 2003, 100; Van den Broeke, 2015, 90; De Vries 2021, 211.

The jugs and beakers that are frequently part of foundation deposits could also be linked to drinking. Another clue to feasting may be found in the remains of the meals themselves: the remains of slaughtered animals and of prepared food. At least some of the animal skeletons and skulls deposited in settlements could be associated with ritual slaughter and consumption. There is evidence that at least some of the meat from partial skeletons was consumed before the remains were deposited, probably as a sacrifice in the context of ritual practices (see Sections 6.4.6 and 6.4.7).⁶⁸³ In some cases, the skulls may have been displayed as mementos of these feasts.⁶⁸⁴ Other deposits contain concentrations of animal bone from multiple animals that all appear to have been slaughtered at the same time. These bone concentrations can be viewed as the result of feasts in which often copious quantities of meat were consumed by large groups of people.⁶⁸⁵ Prepared food remains refers to residues (often charred) that were left in or on vessels, or cooking residues that can be associated with the preparation of that food (see Section 6.12). Further indications of communal meals and feasting include fire dogs or roasting spits, ovens and quernstones, and fragments thereof. These items may also have played a role in the preparation of food, including meat and bread.

Depositing the remains of communal feasts probably entailed more than simply removing the debris. In addition to preparing and consuming food and drink, depositing the remains may have been an integral part of the ritualised practices. The remains may have been sacrificed, or were regarded as ritually charged ‘waste’, which needed to be buried separately after the feast.⁶⁸⁶

7.5 Magic and magical objects

Magic presupposes a ‘fundamental attitude’ toward the supernatural world that is different in essential ways from that of sacrificial practices. Whereas sacrifice involves ‘giving’, thanking or beseeching in relation to the supernatural world, magic is about manipulating and controlling supernatural powers, for both good and evil.⁶⁸⁷ It involves the use of objects (or practices) to which special, magical powers are attributed.⁶⁸⁸

We frequently encounter the concepts of magic and sorcery in the study of depositional practices in the Middle Ages and Modern Period.⁶⁸⁹ This is probably a reflection of the historical source material available for this period, which paints a picture of the experiential world of people in the past – a world filled with symbolism, invisible forces and supernatural beings, which they could influence or fall victim to.⁶⁹⁰ All manner of events were interpreted in terms of enchantment and magic. There are just a few, if any, sources available for the period before the Middle Ages. However, this does not mean that magic and magical objects played no role at that time.⁶⁹¹ For the earlier periods too, the deposition of specific objects – such as antique flint artefacts, knives or animal footbones, as well as a preference for liminal deposition locations (e.g. entrances, walls, hearths) – could be construed as evidence of magical practices. From Roman times we know of curse tablets, which were deployed to place a curse on someone.⁶⁹² In all likelihood, the difference between the periods identified here is largely, or even solely, the result of the interpretive frameworks and the concepts used.

7.5.1 Apotropaic magic, counter-magic and black magic?

With regard to magical deposition practices, a general distinction can be made between apotropaic magic, counter-magic and black magic. The first category concerns the deposition of objects with apotropaic properties. Their purpose was to provide protection from evil influences, including disease, pests and drought.⁶⁹³ Counter-magic involved objects that were used and deposited to break a supposed spell. In black magic, the magical power of objects was used to harm people.⁶⁹⁴ In most cases, unfortunately, it is all but impossible to determine with certainty the precise significance of objects or the reasons for their deposition.

7.5.2 Magical deposits, magical objects

A range of deposited objects can potentially be associated with magical practices. In most cases,

⁶⁸³ Groot 2008, 138–139.

⁶⁸⁴ See, for example, Clarke 2001, 161–162; Adams 2004, 65, 73, 76; Lucas & McGovern 2008, 7–12, 19–22; Thilderkvist 2013, 122.

⁶⁸⁵ Lauwerier *et al.* 1999, 177–178; Groot 2008, 139. Based on a deposit in a well at Heeten, Lauwerier *et al.* calculate a minimum number of participants of 76, with the feasting lasting several days.

⁶⁸⁶ Groot 2009, 137; Rowley-Conwy 2018.

⁶⁸⁷ Merrifield 1987; Van der Sanden 2004, 198; Lawson & McCauley 1990, 123ff.

⁶⁸⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 86–87. As an alternative to the somewhat loaded term ‘magic’, reference is also made to ‘instrument-special ritual’. Here Nieuwhof (2015, 86–87) follows the usage in the study by Lawson & McCauley 1990.

⁶⁸⁹ See, for example, Merrifield 1987, Van der Sanden 2004; Gärtner 2005; Van Vilsteren 2007; Verspay 2015, 2017.

⁶⁹⁰ See, for example, Van der Sanden 2004; Huijbers 2007; Rooijakkers 1994.

⁶⁹¹ For the possible role of magic and magical objects in earlier periods, see Nieuwhof 2015, 211. Among other things, Nieuwhof mentions playing discs, cattle and horse foot bones, flint axes, bird bones, amber and snail shells. See also Merrifield 1987, 10.

⁶⁹² For a study on the occurrence and use of curse tablets in the Roman Empire, see Urbanová 2018.

⁶⁹³ Merrifield 1987, 161–162.

⁶⁹⁴ Gärtner 2005, 202, referring to Laux 1993, 35. Curse tablets from the Roman period can also be included in this category.

this seems to involve apotropaic magic, in which the objects were used to protect against evil forces. It was a means by which the occupants sought to protect themselves, their houses and hearths, their livestock, drinking water, fields and crops.

Possible magical objects include complete vessels (and their contents), complete animals, animal skulls and footbones, playing discs, antique flint axes and arrowheads, sharp iron tools, horseshoes, shoes, pendants and amulets.

Complete vessels were buried beneath hearths and thresholds, at entrances, in or near house walls and under foundations. Although often interpreted as foundation deposits (and sometimes closing deposits), these vessels may well have had a magical significance – to ward off evil influences – and they may also have played a role in counter-magic or even black magic.⁶⁹⁵ Likely contenders are the jars with conspicuous features (such as appliqué or texts) or contents (such as nails) (see Section 5.3.7).

Animal remains may also have played a significant role in magical practices. We refer here to the animal burials and skull deposits at the entrances and walls of houses and buildings (see Section 6.4.6). We encounter deposits of this kind from prehistory through to the Modern Period. Historical sources describe how cattle were buried under the byre door to protect livestock from contagious diseases.⁶⁹⁶ And Merrifield describes how the bones and skulls of horses, dogs and chickens were deliberately placed in houses as a defence against evil spirits, or more specifically as a protection against witchcraft.⁶⁹⁷ Some skulls deposited in houses are documented as having been displayed. Although there are several possible interpretations, these skulls may have been used as magical, apotropaic objects placed on or near houses.⁶⁹⁸ A separate category of animal bones are the foot bones that may have been used as game pieces or in divination (see Section 6.4.7).⁶⁹⁹ Like ceramic discs, they may have had a magical function and as such were deposited near house entrances and walls.

Antique flint axes (and arrowheads) are another specific category of objects with magical properties. They were often thousands of years old at the time of deposition and are unlikely to have been recognised as the product of human hands. Historical sources inform us that these ancient artefacts – certainly from Roman times

on – were used as special, magical objects, including for their apotropaic function, and more specifically as a protection against lightning strikes (see Section 6.13.2). Neolithic axes are known from Roman cult places but were also used in settlement contexts and deposited in or near houses and in wells or waterholes.

Finally, we can mention the possible magical connotation of horseshoes, shoes, sharp iron tools and pendants/amulets. Their deliberate deposition in or near houses, in wells and even fields can be understood as a way to protect the household, livestock, water and crops from evil spirits and misfortune.⁷⁰⁰

7.5.3 Context and time of deposition

Objects that were possibly linked to magical practices were often deposited or placed in specific locations. Inside houses, these were often the liminal locations: the entrances, walls, hearth/chimney and sometimes the floor and roof structure.⁷⁰¹ It was these places – the transitions between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ – that required protection against evil external influences. We should also bear in mind that magical objects such as horseshoes, flint axes, pendants/amulets, animal remains and shoes were sometimes ‘hidden’ in or fixed to the above-ground structure of the house, including the roof structure, ceilings, floor structure, door, door frame and walls.⁷⁰²

While magic objects may have been deposited when the house was being built or inaugurated, another definite possibility is that this occurred during the habitation phase. Sometimes there is tangible evidence that existing deposits were ‘supplemented’ and thus created over time. In many instances, it is simply not possible to ascertain with certainty exactly when a deposit came about. However, the ‘standard’ interpretation of objects that were deliberately deposited near or in houses as foundation or closing deposits ignores the potential complexity of deposition practices, their purpose and meaning.

⁶⁹⁵ Regarding counter-magic, we can point to the phenomenon of witch bottles. Witch bottles are ceramic jugs (often Bartmann jugs) in which urine, human hair, nail clippings and often copper needles and iron nails were placed and then closed with a cork or lead stopper. The idea was to release bewitched people from a spell (Van Vilsteren 2007; Merrifield 1987; Van der Sanden 2004, 193–194). They were often buried in or near houses or buildings, often beneath the floor, near the hearth or at the entrance. Regarding black magic, historical sources reveal that magical objects were sometimes buried at the entrances to houses for the purpose of bringing harm to the inhabitants (Gärtner 2005, 202, referring to Laux 1993, 35).

⁶⁹⁶ Huijbers 2007, 318.

⁶⁹⁷ Verspay 2017, 572–573.

⁶⁹⁸ For example, historical sources tell us that a horse skull placed on the farmhouse roof could ward off disaster (Rooijackers 1994, 504).

⁶⁹⁹ Therkorn 2004, 63; Thilderkvist 2013, 140; Nieuwhof 2015, 191.

⁷⁰⁰ Historical, folkloric and archaeological research shows that horseshoes are associated with magical practices. Merrifield points out, among other things, the magical properties of horseshoes and their function in defensive and counter-magic, for example against enchantment and witchcraft (Merrifield 1987, 161–162). For the Netherlands, see studies by Rooijackers (1994), Mostert (1995) and Gielis (1995). For the interpretation of horseshoes on fields, see Theuws *et al.* 2011, 164, 172, with reference to Kregelberg 1932, 70–74. We can also refer to the horseshoes from swamps and peat bogs, including in Drenthe. These deposits also point to the special significance of the objects (Van der Sanden 2004, 200).

⁷⁰¹ Merrifield describes many examples of deposition practices in these locations inside the house (Merrifield 1987, 135).

⁷⁰² Deposits of bricked-in shoes and cats are a well-documented phenomenon in England (Swann 1969; Merrifield 1987, 131, 135). Goubitz (1989) and Van Doesburg (2021) describe several shoe deposits in the Netherlands.

7.6 Liminality

Liminality is a recurring term in relation to special deposition practices, regardless of the context or object category, with liminal locations playing a significant role in ritual deposition practices.

Liminality refers to the transition or boundary between two phases or spheres. It is central to Van Gennep and Turner's work on rites of passage, in which the liminal phase is a kind of 'in-between moment' in the transition from one role or identity to another: 'betwixt and between', as Turner puts it.⁷⁰³ Liminal phases and locations are viewed as ambiguous and paradoxical and are associated with impurity, pollution and danger.⁷⁰⁴ On the other hand, liminal places can also be seen as points of contact between humans and the supernatural.⁷⁰⁵

Various places around the house and yard can be identified as liminal locations. For houses, these are first and foremost the entrances and walls as these constitute the boundaries or transitions between the world inside the house – the domestic sphere – and the world outside. They are the places where these two spheres come into contact. As such, they embody danger and may require ritual, symbolic attention in order to protect the house and household. It is in this light that the long tradition of deposition practices around the house entrance and threshold can be understood (Bronze Age–Modern Age). Historical sources and folkloric literature also tell us about all manner of rituals and beliefs in relation to entrances and thresholds, including wedding rituals.⁷⁰⁶

With regard to house walls, we can also point to a long-standing deposition tradition (Bronze Age–Modern Age), in which objects were deposited in the walls themselves or along the exterior walls, in pits and house ditches. Deposited objects include animal remains (including complete animal burials, skulls and a complete bricked-in cat; see Sections 6.4.6 and 6.4.7), shoes (Section 6.14.4), complete vessels (Section 6.3) and stone and metal tools (Section 6.7). Inside the house, the hearth could also be a liminal place. We know from medieval sources that the hearth was viewed at that time as the entrance used by the house spirits.⁷⁰⁷ It is therefore no coincidence that a variety of rituals

existed in relation to this significant, central place, including burying pots and jugs under the hearth floor, as well as placing magical objects in the chimney. Such practices are particularly well known from late medieval urban houses, where the hearth floors may be well preserved. No similar deposits are known for the preceding periods, although we do know of objects that seem to have been deliberately deposited in the hearth when the house was abandoned. It should be noted, however, that the hearths in many wooden houses will not have survived due to subsequent disturbance of the soil.

Outside the house, but in the context of the settlement, it is primarily yard and settlement ditches (Section 5.6), residual channels, fens, depressions (Section 5.7) and wells/waterholes (Section 5.5) that can be identified as important liminal locations. They constitute the transitions between inhabited and uninhabited, wet and dry, above ground and below ground, and sometimes high and low. Surprisingly often, special deposits in pits and waterholes are located on the fringes of the settlement (the transition between inhabited and uninhabited), and often on or near the transitions between wet and dry. Deposits near or in residual channels, fens and depressions should probably also be understood in this way. The location of a ritual site at Houten-Castellum (partly in a residual channel) (Section 5.8) and the large cult site of Elst-Westeraam, where an old channel is incorporated within the cult site, attests to the significant ritual associations that such places may have had.⁷⁰⁸ Besides a transition between wet and dry, wells also represent a transition between above ground and below ground.

Yard and settlement ditches – as contact points between two spheres – were also important deposition locations. We note the many deposits with animal remains: skulls, partial skeletons and complete animal burials. Especially in the Iron Age and Roman period, many complete pots were also deposited in these ditches. Perhaps these deposits should be seen as a reflection of the interaction between the settlement inhabitants and the supernatural beings and forces that resided outside the settlement. The pots may have contained food that was intended as a sacrificial offering to these beings or forces. On the other hand, the objects deposited in these ditches may have been magical objects, intended to protect the

⁷⁰³ Van Gennep 1977; Turner 1967.

⁷⁰⁴ Nieuwhof 2015, 84; Turner 1967, 93–111;

Huijbers 2007, 324; Scribner 1992

⁷⁰⁵ Brück 1999, 302–303; Nieuwhof 2015, 84; Fontijn 2002.

⁷⁰⁶ Huijbers 2007, 83, 214. For example, entering the house could involve removing footwear, washing hands, or the house occupants greeting guests at the threshold.

⁷⁰⁷ Huijbers 2007 445–446.

⁷⁰⁸ Van Enckevort 2007.

yard, the settlement and its inhabitants. The deposits thus symbolically and ritually marked and protected the boundaries of the yard and settlement. In some instances, the entrances to the settlements were specifically marked by special deposits, including coins, complete vessels and animal burials.

The object categories that are noticeably well represented at liminal deposition locations, such as ditches, channels and wells, are weapons/militaria (Section 6.9), fibulae/jewellery (Section 6.8) and human bone remains (Section 6.10). Section 7.3.1 has shown that these object categories may have played a key role in rites of passage – or separation, to be more precise. There may well be a link between the nature and purpose of the rituals and the nature of these liminal deposition locations. The transition that was the focus of rituals corresponds well with these places of transition, and their ambiguous significance. They would have been ideal locations in which to discard the old identities and associated symbols before taking on the new identity.

Lastly, we can point to liminal places outside the settlement context. These include swamps, peat bogs, rivers and springs. These natural, peripheral places were often seen as points of contact between humans and the supernatural.⁷⁰⁹ It is therefore no coincidence that they are often characterised by a good deal of ritual activity, including deposition practices.⁷¹⁰

7.7 Post-depositional processes

When reconstructing ritual practices, archaeologists are obliged to rely on what has been preserved in the archaeological record. We have pointed out several times in this volume that archaeological sources by definition provide only a limited understanding of the world of ritual practices, which will also have included song, dance, aromas, gestures and the like. Besides the archaeological remains that ended up in the soil, the picture we have of ritual practices is also determined by whether and how these remains have been preserved there. Hence the importance of considering the possible role of post-depositional processes such as soil disturbance and degradation in the preservation and identification of special deposits.

We will first discuss the preservation of deposited objects. Generally speaking, objects made of organic material will only be preserved under particularly favourable conditions. This mainly applies to wooden objects, unburnt botanical remains and leather. There are significant differences between contexts, and between the various regions. Organic remains are often well preserved in wet contexts such as wells/waterholes, residual channels and fens but less so, or not at all, in 'dry' contexts such as postholes, pits and dry ditches. These conditions can have a significant influence on our impression of the composition of special deposits. Some wells and waterholes contain wooden and share components, fragments of construction timber from house structures and wooden vessels, whereas these are absent from dry contexts. Regarding regional differences, a general distinction can be made between the relatively wet areas, mainly in the coastal regions and the river area on the one hand and the dry regions with predominantly sandy and loess soils on the other. The coastal wetlands (including the terp region) provide good preservation conditions, in which organic materials survive much better – and more often – than, for example, in the sandy and loess areas.⁷¹¹ A good example are the tufts of human hair found under the floor of a house at Oldehove-Englum (Groningen terp region). Such materials are only preserved under exceptionally good conditions. Bone material is also much better preserved in these wet regions, and in the clay soils of the river area, than in sandy and loess soils. Examples are the rows of animal molars that are sometimes found in postholes/pits in sandy areas and can be understood as the last remaining vestiges of animal skulls, which have otherwise completely decayed. Poor preservation conditions sometimes render animal burials and partial skeletons unrecognisable. Finally, we can point to unburnt food residues. Although food probably constituted a regular part of sacrificial practices, it is only found in exceptional cases. In most instances, we can only assume that deposited complete dishes once contained food, and that the residues have not survived. All in all, therefore, the preservation conditions of the soil have largely determined what remains of the depositions that were once placed there and hence the picture we can form of these

⁷⁰⁹ Brück 1999, 302–303; Nieuwhof 2015, 84; Fontijn 2002.

⁷¹⁰ See the studies by Fontijn (2002), Van Vilsteren (1998), Van der Sanden (2012) and De Vries (2015, 2021), among others, on deposition practices in these places within the landscape.

⁷¹¹ See Therkorn (2004) for the prominence of wooden objects in special deposits around the Oer-IJ. See also Van Londen 2006 and Nieuwhof 2015.

deposition practices and the rituals behind them.

With regard to the different regions, we see not only varying conditions for the preservation of organic materials but also varying degrees of soil disturbance. Whereas the old ground and floor level (including hearths) has regularly been preserved in the coastal wetlands (including the terp region),⁷¹² much of this old level has been disturbed by later activities in the vast majority of cases in the loess and sandy regions. There, the complete pots that have often been ‘decapitated’ as a result of later disturbance of the soil are a typical example. The degree of soil disturbance has a significant impact on our ability to reconstruct deposition practices and associated rituals. Exceptionally well-preserved house sites, such as at Zijderveld, Culemborg-Hoge Prijs, Rotterdam-Delftsche Schie, Midden-Delfland, Schagen and Ezinge, show that special

deposition practices may also have occurred at the occupation surface, including on the floor of the house, in the hearth or immediately around the house.⁷¹³ We can also point to the previously cited example of the low mounds that were erected over the dismantled house sites at Schagen.⁷¹⁴ It is only the favourable preservation conditions that allow us to reconstruct such practices. Potentially similar practices will simply not be identified in sandy and loess regions because the more elevated house sites are not usually preserved. In that case, we only encounter deposits made in deeper features. These examples demonstrate that key information may have been lost in the regions that have experienced greater soil disturbance and that our picture of deposition practices may well be significantly influenced by these conditions.

⁷¹² Therkorn 2004; Therkorn *et al.* 2009; Van Londen 2006.

⁷¹³ Nieuwhof 2015, 177–178, 181.

⁷¹⁴ Therkorn 2004, 16.

8 Malta practice and research into special deposition practices

8.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reflects on research into special deposition practices within the practice of ‘Malta archaeology’ and makes recommendations for future research. We focus first on the criteria, arguments and explanatory models used in Malta archaeology to identify, excavate, analyse and interpret special deposits and deposition practices (questions 2 and 3 in the study remit). Next, we consider the extent to which the data generated by Malta archaeology can be successfully used to create a synthesis and to make broader knowledge gains. We then make recommendations for improvement with respect to excavation, research and reporting practices. Finally, we make substantive suggestions for future research (and future Written Schemes of Investigation (WSIs)), including supplementary research questions for the National Archaeological Research Agenda (NOaA).

8.2 Terminology, argumentation and interpretation

This study primarily examines special deposits that excavators have explicitly labelled as such. It is interesting to look more closely at the criteria and arguments that excavators use to identify and define special deposition practices and the terminology they use to describe them.⁷⁵

8.2.1 Terminology

The term ‘deposition’ (*depositie*) is generally used in Malta reports for both the action/activity (the deposition of one or more objects) and the result of that action (the object or assembly of objects found in the soil). In this publication, however, we have adopted the terminology used by Van den Broeke, reserving the term ‘deposition’ for the action and using ‘deposit’ for the archaeological result of that action.⁷⁶ We also refer to ‘special deposition practices’ when discussing the general theme that is our focus here (see also Section 2.2).

Earlier in this publication, we drew attention to the diverse range of terms that excavators use to describe special deposits and deposition practices. The reports in the inventory frequently refer to ‘ritual’, ‘special’, ‘intentional’, ‘conscious’, ‘selective’ or ‘structured’ deposits (see Section 2.2). The term ‘ritual’ implies something about the nature of the underlying practice or purpose of the deposition. There is considerable debate about the definition of this term, however, and most excavators are therefore reluctant to use it, especially as an *a priori* denotation of an archaeological phenomenon. They opt for more neutral terms, emphasising a specific quality of the deposits in question, namely their ‘atypical nature’ (‘special’), the ‘intentionality’ (‘conscious’, ‘intentional’) or the ‘specific structure’ (‘structured’ ‘selective’). Some of these latter terms have a strong archaeological focus, which – initially at least – ignores the background, motivation or meaning of the deposits. Excavators sometimes use the term ‘deposition’ without an adjective when they in fact seem to be referring to special deposition practices or deposits. It is as though the meaning of ‘special’ or ‘intentional’ is already encapsulated in the word ‘deposition’.

Besides the more general terminology just mentioned, the Malta reports also employ more specific terms. These are mainly the common terms *bouwoffer* (foundation deposit) and *verlatingsoffer* (closing deposit), which define both the nature of the practice and the time of deposition. The term *offer* (sacrifice/offering) is sometimes used alone to indicate the nature of the underlying practice and/or object. In most cases, however, the term is not employed critically, raising doubts as to whether a ‘gift’ to a higher power or natural or supernatural force was in fact intended.⁷⁷

8.2.2 Criteria and arguments

‘Special deposits’ are identified and named as such because they differ from the ‘normal’ pattern. However, there are no absolute, set criteria for identifying special deposits, nor for what should be considered ‘normal’. Thus, the extent to which special deposits are identified and named largely depends on the excavators involved, their knowledge, their frame of reference and their views on what can be

⁷⁵ For discussion on the criteria for identifying ‘special deposits’, see studies by Van den Broeke, Groot, Verspay, Nieuwhof and De Vries, among others (Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015, 2020; Groot 2006, 2008, 2009; Verspay 2017, 551–576; Nieuwhof 2015; De Vries 2021).

⁷⁶ See Van den Broeke 2020, 84.

⁷⁷ See also Van den Broeke 2015, 89. For a definition of ‘sacrifice’ and the practice of sacrifice, see, for example, Van Baaren 1975; Van Baal 1976; Boyer 2001; Kok 2008, 31; Van der Sanden 2004, 196.

regarded as 'normal' and 'special'. We can nevertheless cite a number of arguments used in Malta reports for identifying and interpreting 'special deposits' and 'special deposition practices'.

It is important to point out, however, that in a significant proportion of cases the excavators do not explicitly mention their criteria and arguments. Often, they simply comment that a deposit can be interpreted as a possible special deposit, foundation deposit or closing deposit, without naming the criteria they have used or explaining the reasons for their interpretation in more detail (although these can often be deduced from the nature or composition of the deposits, or the excavators' implicit reasoning). Sometimes reference is made to parallels at other sites or to specific studies (such as those by Van den Broeke, Gerritsen, Groot, Nieuwhof or Therkorn), which helps us to form a picture of the underlying criteria and arguments.

An examination of the Malta reports inventoried for this study reveals the most prominent criteria: completeness, context and location, quantity, composition, nature, and modification. The various criteria are briefly described in turn below. In most cases, however, special deposits are interpreted on the basis of combined criteria. It is these combinations that reinforce the interpretations. To illustrate: one and a half horseshoes in a pit at the entrance to a house (nature, completeness, modification, context), a complete cattle skull in a well (completeness, context, nature), fifty sherds of burnt pottery in a granary posthole (quantity, modification, context) or a complete fibula in a central posthole that has yielded no other finds (completeness, composition, context).

The most common arguments/criteria that appear in the inventoried reports are as follows:

1. **Completeness.** An object's degree of completeness is the most frequently used argument. Complete objects immediately stand out, are easy to identify as such and therefore quickly draw the excavator's attention. A 'functional' interpretation as rubbish for deposits of complete objects is often considered unlikely since these objects were still in a usable state. Moreover, their good state of preservation – especially in the case of fragile pieces, such as pottery – shows that they were

deposited with care, and therefore deliberately. Besides objects, animal remains could be deposited, which is why complete and partial skeletons are also regularly labelled 'special deposits'.

2. **Context and location.** This relates primarily to the context and feature context. Objects (complete or otherwise) in the postholes of houses and other buildings or other directly associated features immediately raise questions. The same applies to wells, waterholes and other wet places, such as (residual) channels, pools and fens. Specific locations inside buildings, such as central postholes, hearths or in and around entrances, may also indicate special deposits. In addition to the broader context and feature context, the specific location of objects within features can be a criterion. Indications of deliberate placement of objects within the feature or in relation to each other are used as arguments for an interpretation as a special deposit. For example, objects in posthole cores are often interpreted as belonging to 'abandonment rituals' (referred to as closing deposits in this study), while a complete beaker next to the core of a central post is interpreted as a 'foundation deposit'.
3. **Quantity.** It is generally assumed that the presence of larger quantities of find material in features cannot be explained as having ended up there accidentally as litter. 'Intentionality' is often assumed in such cases. Especially with respect to houses or other buildings, an interpretation as 'special deposit' quickly comes to mind.⁷¹⁸
4. **Composition.** Selectivity and structure are important aspects of the composition of deposits. This composition sometimes stands out by virtue of the selective presence of just a few find categories, specific elements/components of objects (or animals) or an individual object (with no further finds in that feature). Deposits are also interpreted as 'special' on the basis of specific combinations of materials, such as Iron Age pits with combinations of burnt pottery, ceramic objects, burnt loam and natural stone.

⁷¹⁸ It should be noted, however, that deposits of rubbish may also involve larger quantities of material that were also deposited intentionally. Thus, the criterion of quantity should not be applied in isolation but in combination with other criteria.

5. Nature of the object. In some cases, one or more objects are so special in nature that this is used as an argument for an interpretation as a special deposit. On the one hand, this could be objects with ritual, magical or symbolic connotations, such as horseshoes, incense dishes, face masks, devotional pendants, and deity and other figurines. On the other hand, this could involve 'personal' or particularly valuable objects, such as jewellery, pendants, bronze candlesticks and bronze cauldrons. Human bone also falls into this category as we can generally assume that human remains were treated with care and were imbued with special significance by the community of the living.
6. Modification. The intentional modification of objects is used as an argument for some special deposits. This includes intentional burning, fragmentation, halving, bending, perforation and 'painting'. Burning and fragmentation are often regarded as evidence of closing deposits.⁷¹⁹

8.2.3 A 'selective' versus systematic approach

Finally, we would like to point out the risks inherent in the current approach to the study of special deposition practices. That approach is characterised by a focus on what is 'special', on what is different. This focus can lead to a fairly 'narrow', 'selective' and fragmentary approach, in which the most conspicuous, divergent deposits are highlighted on the basis of predetermined criteria, whereby the excavator's knowledge and frames of reference are deciding factors. Added to this, our modern Western notions of what can be regarded as 'normal', 'functional' or 'special', valuable or worthless also play a major role.

We would like to argue for a broader approach that enables a more systematic and contextual analysis, which in turn will allow us to arrive at a more nuanced and complex understanding of special deposition practices. The focus should be on formation processes and deposition practices in a broader sense, as a springboard for the study of special deposition

practices. This does not involve selecting special deposits 'in advance' on the basis of set criteria or arguments but examining them from a broader perspective that takes account of all the finds from all the features (e.g. all the postholes of a structure). Various researchers have already gained experience with this broader approach and the results are promising.⁷²⁰ It should be noted, however, that this approach is labour-intensive and that further research is needed to determine its feasibility within current Malta practice.

8.3 Explanatory models

The next step is to look at the explanatory models used to interpret special deposits and practices. We observe first of all that in many instances a classification as a special deposit is viewed as an interpretation in itself, with no further discussion of the nature, meaning, background and rationale of the practices behind the depositions.⁷²¹ An interpretation as 'special deposit' seems to be the end point rather than an initial classification from which to explore further.⁷²² Interpretive discussions about the further interpretation of special deposits are often absent from Malta reports, or they are quickly disposed of with references to parallels, or with unelaborated suggestions for one or more common interpretations, such as foundation deposit, closing deposit or communal (ritual) meal. Overall, the interpretation of special deposition practices in Malta reports can be described as limited.

That said, we are able to identify several common explanatory models within Malta archaeology that are used to further interpret special deposits. These models are briefly described below.

1. The biography of structures: foundation and closing deposits. Two of the most common models relate to the biography of archaeological structures (including houses, outbuildings and wells). The first, 'foundation sacrifices' (referred to here as a foundation deposits), marked the construction phase, while closing deposits can be linked to the decommissioning, dismantling or abandonment of a structure.

⁷¹⁹ See also Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015.

⁷²⁰ See Gerritsen 2003 (with reference to Brück 1999); Van den Broeke 2015, 2020; Groot 2008, Therkorn 2004; Therkorn & Besselsen 2008; Trebsche 2007; De Vries 2021.

⁷²¹ This issue has already been raised by Orme (Orme 1981, 218)

⁷²² Orme 1981, 218; see also Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

The phenomenon of ‘foundation sacrifices’ was described in nineteenth-century folklore studies (e.g. the work of the German folklorist Paul Sartori). It was subsequently identified in the archaeological record and ‘traced back’, as it were, to earlier periods. Foundation deposits were therefore identified well before Malta archaeology got underway. The consideration and interpretation of closing deposits and abandonment rituals is of a more recent date, however.⁷²³ The fairly ‘early’ Malta reports on the Hempens-Teerns⁷²⁴ and Geldermalsen-Eigenblok⁷²⁵ sites examined abandonment rituals and their possible archaeological manifestations. In his report, Waldus refers to Schiffer, who describes people’s behaviours upon leaving a settlement.⁷²⁶ Closing deposits are increasingly identified and described in more recent Malta reports, with frequent references to publications by Van den Broeke and Gerritsen.⁷²⁷ Only in a small number of cases are special deposits associated with other phases in the biography of structures, such as a renovation or use phase, or the period after the structure was abandoned.

2. Sacrificial practices. Sacrifices can be considered as forms of gift exchange that create and/or maintain a relationship between human and superhuman actors.⁷²⁸ Some reports associate special deposits with ‘sacrificial practices’. This may involve objects in postholes/pits, ditches and wells, as well as (residual) channels, pools and depressions in the landscape. An interpretation of ‘sacrifice’ is often proposed, without further discussion of the meaning or nature of these deposits and practices. The extent to which the special deposition practices really do entail an exchange and relationship between human and superhuman actors is seldom explicitly asked and addressed, let alone answered. The special deposits in (residual) channels at Voorburg-Arentsburg and Utrecht-De Uithof-Hoofddijk have been associated with sacrificial practices.⁷²⁹ But the deposition of the presumed remains of communal (ritual) meals or drinking parties (see below) is also interpreted at times as a sacrificial offering

(see Grijskerke-Kievitshoek). Sometimes, the presumed sacrificial practices are more specifically associated with fertility, as is the case with an ard share point in a well at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof-Noord and cattle skulls/horns from a granary at Meteren-De Bogen.

3. Communal (ritual) meals or drinking parties. Another recurring explanatory model in archaeological reports interprets special deposits as the remains of communal (ritual) meals and/or drinking parties. In particular, the presence of large vessels, plates, beakers, meaty animal bones and food remains or cooking residues in and on vessels are often viewed as evidence of meals or drinking parties. Examples come from sites at Grijskerke-Kievitshoeksweg, Houten-Hofstad (Vleugel 20), Houten-Castellum, Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet, Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, Tiel-Medel-De Reth, Naaldwijk-Hoogeland west zuid and Poeldijk-Westhof-Site B.
4. Defensive or counter-magic. Some reports draw attention to the apotropaic or protective properties of some objects and deposits. Examples are horseshoes, which written sources tell us were imbued with these properties, or thunderstones, prehistoric stone axes that were still used as a form of magical protection in the Modern Period. We can also point to objects (shoes, cats, jugs, pots) that were bricked into stone walls or buried beneath the thresholds of houses. This latter category could also involve counter-magic, in which the spell is deflected back on to the witch or wizard who initially cast it.⁷³⁰ Finally, animal remains may also have fulfilled a protective function.⁷³¹ This explanatory model is strongly associated with the Middle Ages and Modern Period and seems to barely apply to interpretations for earlier periods. This is no doubt due to the availability, or lack thereof, of written sources describing the role of magic.
5. Rites of passage. In a small number of cases, deposits are associated with rites of passage. These rites were performed to facilitate and mark social transitions, such as the transition to adulthood or the

⁷²³ See articles and publications by Therkom 1987; Gerritsen 1999, 2003; Van den Broeke 2002a; Van Hoof 2002.

⁷²⁴ Waldus 2000.

⁷²⁵ Jongste & Van Wijngaarden 2002.

⁷²⁶ Schiffer 1985, 25.

⁷²⁷ Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015; Gerritsen 2003.

⁷²⁸ For a definition of ‘sacrifice’ and sacrificial practice, see, for example, Van Baaren 1975; Van Baal 1976; Boyer 2001; Kok 2008, 31; Van der Sanden 2004, 196.

⁷²⁹ Driessen & Besselsen 2014, 168.

⁷³⁰ See Merrifield 1987; Van der Sanden 2004.

⁷³¹ See Groot 2009, 407.

transition from the world of the living to the world of the ancestors.⁷³² Examples of deposits that excavators have linked to rites of passage are pits containing human bone remains at Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg,⁷³³ a glass bracelet fragment from an outbuilding at Boxmeer-Sterckwijk⁷³⁴ and a deposit of militaria from Houten-Hofstad Diepriool.⁷³⁵ The foundation and closing deposits described above are also a form of rite of passage. In this case, they relate to transitions between phases in the biography of built structures rather than to social transitions in the lives of people.

6. Seasonal rituals. Particularly in Noord-Holland, find assemblages from 'special pits' have been associated with seasonal rituals by Therkorn and others.⁷³⁶ A small number of Malta reports use this explanatory model in relation to special deposits in pits.⁷³⁷
7. Ancestor worship. A few reports mention ancestor worship as a possible interpretation for finds of human bone within a settlement context. Examples are finds of human remains at Hoogkarspel-Markerwaardweg/Hoogkarspeltunnel, Oldehove-Englum-Lege Wier, Delft-Woudselaan and Houten-Castellum.

The explanatory models described above entail the 'ritual' interpretation of special deposits. However, there are also special, notable or atypical deposits that are interpreted in functional terms. For example, complete objects in wells could be viewed as incidental losses. Other deposits are sometimes interpreted as savings hoards, whereby objects were buried for safe-keeping with a view to being retrieved later. And finally, we can point to interpretations as emergency hoards, in which objects were buried at a time of emergency (such as an impending raid).

8.4 Reflection on the usefulness of Malta reports for synthesising research

For this study, an inventory was made of data from a large number of Malta reports. These data provide insights into the quality and usefulness of the reports for synthesising research. This section addresses each of these insights in turn, outlining areas for improvement and making suggestions for future research and reporting.

8.4.1 Improvements and suggestions

It is important first of all to point out that there are major differences between the various Malta reports. These differences are evident in the way in which 'special deposits' are approached, how they are identified and interpreted, the degree to which and detail with which special deposition practices are described and discussed, and the quality and completeness of the presented data. These aspects are discussed in more detail below. The issues mentioned are more general rather than anecdotal, and we will not refer to individual reports. The aim is to identify areas for improvement and to make suggestions for improving reporting practices in the study of special deposition practices.

Explicit themes, discussions and arguments

Where some reports may approach 'special deposits' and 'special deposition practices' as a separate topic and discuss them at length,⁷³⁸ others mention them only in passing. Our view is that it is always advisable to approach this topic explicitly and comprehensively and to evaluate and discuss it in the context of the site and the broader literature. This will enable individual reports to contribute more effectively to our knowledge of special deposits and deposition practices. Variations in terminology and interpretation are another factor. Because excavators are generally reluctant to classify (and interpret) deposits as 'ritual', they tend to not pay attention to possible special deposits. Other researchers, on the other hand, readily interpret special deposits as rituals, as

⁷³² See, for example, Van Gennep 1977; Fontijn 2002; Nieuwhof 2015, 82–83.

⁷³³ Heeren 2006, 178.

⁷³⁴ Blom & Van der Velde 2015, 344.

⁷³⁵ Van Renswoude & Schurmans 2017.

⁷³⁶ Therkorn 2004; Therkorn & Besselsen 2008; Therkorn *et al.* 2009.

⁷³⁷ See, for example, Zandboer 2012 (Langedijk-De Druppels) and Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2017, 881 (Houten-Castellum).

⁷³⁸ See, for example, work by Groot (e.g. animal burials from Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg and Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet), Van den Broeke (e.g. Lent-Dijkteruglegging) and Verspay (e.g. Veldhoven-Oerle, Best-Dijkstraten and Best-Aarle) (Groot 2006, 2008, 2009; Heirbaut & Koot 2016b, 103–108; Verspay 2011a, 2011b, 2015, 2017).

foundation or closing deposits, but with no further discussion or specific arguments. By explicitly identifying, describing and interpreting possible special deposits as such, researchers can ensure that the results of their individual studies will make a greater contribution to the wider study of deposition practices. This is much more difficult if they confine themselves to incidental, general comments or cautious suggestions. We feel that the complexity of the subject should not mean that possible special deposits go unnoticed and therefore make no contribution to research.

A more specific and systematic focus on this topic will also lead to better identification of special deposits and deposition practices, as evidenced in studies by Groot, Verspay, Van den Broeke, Therkorn, Nieuwhof and De Vries, among others. This can be achieved by calling for more specific attention to special deposits and deposition practices in Written Schemes of Investigation. It is also a good idea to devote explicit, comprehensive attention to this topic in a section of the report specifically devoted to special deposits (see also 'Coherence' below).

A focus on context and associations

Although context information is vital when interpreting possible special deposits, it is often missing in reports, or is incomplete, insufficiently detailed or difficult to find. For example, a report might not state clearly where a special deposit was found in a house, where a pit or well containing special contents is located, or in what fill of a feature a special find or burnt pottery assemblage was found. And yet information of this kind is essential when analysing and interpreting special deposits. Also, there is frequently a lack of clarity about the association between special deposits and structures. Excavators need to ask whether a relationship can be established between the pits or wells containing special contents and contemporaneous houses or buildings.

Context data about special deposits should always be presented clearly and completely, at feature, structure, yard and settlement level. For complex structures, such as houses and wells, there needs to be a full description of where the relevant deposits were found – which features within a structure and which layers/fills within a feature. Formation processes must not be neglected. When did the deposit

end up in the feature or structure – during the construction phase, the phase of use, at the time of abandonment or dismantling, or not until a later stage? With regard to the broader context, it is important to provide a full description of how features with special deposits (pits, ditches, wells, animal burials) relate to contemporaneous yards and buildings.

A focus on context begins with documentation in the field. Especially for possible special deposits, the location of objects within features has to be documented with utmost accuracy. By paying explicit attention to special deposition practices in the field, we can focus immediately on specific research questions, scenarios and formation processes. A proper recording of an object's location lays the foundation for all subsequent descriptions, analysis and reporting. Context data must then be described clearly, completely and in sufficient detail and, above all, it must be illustrated through tables and figures.

Coherence and integration

Coherence is essential when presenting and analysing data about special deposition practices. Reports often present data, interpretations and discussions in rather patchy fashion. Some authors may address special deposition practices in their specialist reports, but the topic is not then discussed in a wider context. For example, a pottery specialist may identify and describe specially deposited pottery as such, but a whetstone and fibula from the same deposit are not separately described in the respective specialist chapters. If special deposits are not presented in an integrated, complete and coherent manner, information is lost and their findability is restricted.

We recommend that special deposits be described in full, which means that the context, the complete composition of objects and the interpretive discussion should be clearly presented in one place in the report. A good option here is to adopt the catalogue format as it presents data clearly, completely and within a set structure.

There is also a need for greater consultation and exchange between specialists, with the project leader as the central coordinator and manager to keep an eye on broader interpretations and themes. Specific input should be sought from specialists for any special deposition practices or notable finds that could indicate

such practices. It is the project leader's job to include the theme of special deposition practices and to discuss the existence of possible special deposits with the relevant specialists. The results of the specialist analyses should then be integrated into a comprehensive description and interpretation.

Completeness and level of detail

Completeness is important when studying the material in special deposits. It is not uncommon to see only a selective presentation of the composition of special deposits in archaeological reports. Sometimes just one or a few special objects are mentioned and described, and it is unclear what other objects the deposits contained. Other information that is regularly omitted concerns numbers or weights, modification, positioning, degree of completeness and the minimum number of individuals (MNI).

Material from special deposits should not be described selectively, but in full (including charcoal, burnt loam, etc.). This includes information about number/weight, fragmentation, completeness, modification (e.g. burning) and positioning. The complete and detailed presentation of data, in both text and images, is essential for a better understanding of the practices behind special deposits.

Explicit focus on the biography of structures and yards

For a better understanding of deposition practices, it is important to pay explicit attention to formation processes and the biography of structures, such as houses, outbuildings and wells, as well as to those of individual pits. This means investigating the life cycle of these features, structures and yards, which can be reconstructed on the basis of they were built and how special deposits were positioned. Detailed attention should be paid to the positioning of deposits within features and structures, which should be described and illustrated in detail. An attempt should also be made to link these deposits to the biography of features, structures and yards as this can shed more light on the background and meaning of deposits and the possible practices behind them. For example, are they primary or secondary deposits (see also Section 2.2)? Were pits and wells deliberately filled in/taken out of use? Are there any indications in the soil layers above house plans

of the presence of find concentrations that might be associated with the house's abandonment? Are there any clues to suggest that significant amounts of find material were deposited over the abandoned house site, possibly even resulting in low mounds?

A focus on regional diversity

There needs to be a greater focus on regional diversity in the study of deposition practices within Malta archaeology. The vast majority of Malta reports refer primarily to research based on data from the central and southern parts of the Netherlands, such as the well-known studies by Van den Broeke and Gerritsen. This situation should be carefully considered when studying other regions. Criteria that are successfully applied in the southern part of the Netherlands to identify special deposits may be of limited – if any – validity in the eastern or northern part of the country. In order to fit data into existing models, researchers may overlook region-specific characteristics and ignore regional diversity.⁷³⁹ Key studies such as those by Nieuwhof, De Vries (for the northern Netherlands), Therkorn and Kok (for Noord-Holland) need to be better integrated into Malta research on special deposition practices. This will give us a more diverse and nuanced picture of deposition practices through time and space.

Academic archaeology and Malta archaeology

There appears to be a difference between studies by researchers who have close ties with academic archaeology and those who operate entirely within the framework of Malta. We see this primarily in the degree to which explicit themes are identified, and in the depth and quality of discussion. The work of Groot, Verspay, Van den Broeke, Therkorn, Nieuwhof and De Vries are excellent examples of this more specific focus. Better collaboration between academic archaeology and 'Malta archaeology' could lead to better research into special deposition practices. This could be achieved by stipulating additional requirements in the Written Scheme of Investigation. The excavators involved also need to know how to find relevant literature.

⁷³⁹ Van Beek 2011, 25.

8.4.2 The importance of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)

Suggestions have already been made in passing for ways to improve research practice. One of the instruments that can perhaps best achieve this is the Written Scheme of Investigation. The WSI deals with the research design and is an excellent means by which to draw more explicit attention to the theme of ‘special deposition practices’ and to set out the content-related and practical frameworks in which this should be done. This could take the form of research questions (see also Section 8.5 below), guidelines and frameworks for research and reporting. Requirements should also be set for the way in which this specific subject is presented in the relevant report (comprehensive, complete, detailed, with attention to context, composition and coherence, etc.).

8.5 Additions to the National Archaeological Research Agenda (NOaA)

8.5.1 NoaA theme: ‘The archaeology of ritual’

‘The archaeology of ritual’ is included as a separate theme (number 7) in the National Archaeological Research Agenda (NOaA). Four research questions are defined within this theme, two of which relate to special deposition practices around the house and yard. The other two questions concern formal cult places and ‘sacrificial landscapes’.⁷⁴⁰ Based on this study, we can define additional focus areas and research questions. In this section we make suggestions for supplementing the NOaA theme of ‘The archaeology of ritual’.

The two current NOaA questions relating to special deposition practices around the house and yard are as follows:

- What is the nature, context and meaning of intentional (ritual?) depositions in and around the house and yard? (NOaA question 29)

- What actions and activities are associated with the falling into disuse of settlements, buildings, wells, etc.? (NOaA question 131)

The first question, which is broad and general, forms the basis for the study of special deposition practices in the broad sense, including the present study. The second relates to one specific phase in the biography of settlements, buildings and wells – their abandonment. It therefore draws specific attention to the study of closing deposits.⁷⁴¹

8.5.2 Recommendations for research questions and methodology

Based on the present study, we are able to define additional points of interest and research questions. These in turn can contribute to the study of deposition practices within the practice of Malta archaeology.

Because the first of the current NOaA research questions is so broad, most of the research questions that can be defined fall readily under its umbrella. However, we would like to argue that more specific and explicitly worded questions be included in the theme of ‘The archaeology of ritual’. This will enable the NOaA to provide more direction and substance for research on this theme, which should in turn expand our knowledge of special deposition practices, and their purpose and meaning in past societies. We set out each research question below, followed by a brief explanation.

We would also like to refer to the focus areas outlined in section 8.4.1 above, in particular the complete, detailed and integrated documentation and presentation of special deposits, the focus on contexts and associations, and on the biography of structures.

1. What is the exact composition of find assemblages that may be interpreted as special deposits?

It is important to obtain a sound, complete picture of the exact composition of possible special deposits (both during the field evaluation and in the report). This includes all material categories, including burnt loam, charcoal and botanical materials. This information should not

⁷⁴⁰ Nationale Onderzoeksagenda Archeologie 2.0 (cultureelerfgoed.nl).

⁷⁴¹ Regarding the question about closing deposits, these are reportedly fairly scarce. Based on the present study, however, this does not appear to be the case. In fact, they seem to be even more common than deposits that can be specifically associated with the construction or use phase of structures.

be scattered in piecemeal fashion throughout the report, but presented clearly and comprehensively in one place.

2. Is there evidence that the find material within a special deposit has been intentionally modified?

It is important to clearly document how the find material in special deposits has been deliberately modified as this may constitute part of the practice underpinning the deposit. This modification could take the form of deliberate fragmentation, burning, deformation or bending, perforation, the removal of specific parts of objects (e.g. broken-off necks and ceramic base discs that have been removed from the vessels in question) or the application of paint/blood or other substances.

3. Can possible special deposits be associated with specific phases in the biography of structures or yards and, if so, how?

Special deposits can often be associated with specific phases in the biography of structures or yards. We can make a general distinction between construction/inauguration, use, renovation/modification, decommissioning/dismantling and the post-use phase. Starting in the field, by properly researching, recording and explaining which phase special deposits can be associated with, we will arrive at a better understanding of the interpretation of special deposits and deposition practices. It is important to clearly present and argue how the deposit in question has been assigned to a specific phase.

4. How do pits containing special deposits relate spatially to contemporaneous houses and yards?

Pits containing special deposits are regularly documented during excavations. They often contain large quantities of burnt pottery, ceramic objects, burnt loam and natural stone. Frequently, there does not appear to be a direct association with houses. It is important to investigate further whether and how these pits can be associated with contemporaneous habitation features and what this may mean in terms of interpreting these deposits.

5. What is the background, function and meaning of objects or object assemblages in special deposits?

It is important to gain a greater understanding of the background and meaning of the assemblages/objects that are found in special deposits. Are they vessels with contents, individual 'sacrificial objects', the remains of 'ordinary' household goods, the remains of communal meals or drinking parties, or the remains of objects of a personal nature? What clues are there for further interpreting these objects and deposits?

6. What indications are there of the presence of organic materials in special deposits?

Where preservation conditions are favourable, organic matter is often found in special deposits. This could be wooden objects or organic fibres, as well as the contents of deposited vessels, such as food. It is important to focus specific attention on the organic components of special deposits in order to build a better picture of them.

7. What indications are there that the deposited objects were used? What traces of use can be observed?

Some objects in special deposits were used intensively, while others were deposited in an (almost) unused state. Some objects were also damaged before deposition. A better understanding of the history of use of deposited objects can foster a better understanding of these deposits and related deposition practices.

8. In how many phases did the deposit come about?

Some special deposits may have evolved created in phases, rather than all at once. This entails objects being deposited in the same place, buried or 'added' to an existing deposit in some other way at different times.

9. What indications are there of special deposition practices in residual channels, for example based on distribution patterns or the composition of the find assemblages?

The study of residual channels offers a wide range of interesting research opportunities, including with regard to special deposition practices. Residual channels can reveal practices in which objects were deliberately deposited in the channel, or special practices that took place on the bank or (partly) in the channel.

10. What indications are there of the intentional deposition of loose objects, such as coins or fibulae, around the house, yard or within the settlement?

The deposition of small, loose objects may have been an easily-performed sacrificial practice that was carried out within the settlement.

Such objects may have been deposited in specific places in or near the settlement, such as at the settlement entrance or in wet places (such as wells, channels, or depressions). It may be possible to reconstruct such practices based on distribution patterns for small finds.

11. What indications are there that objects were deposited on or buried in fields as part of special deposition practices?

In detailed field cover research at Veldhoven-Oerle (Late Middle Ages–Modern Period), the researchers concluded that at least some of the horseshoes, coins, pendants (and perhaps even nails) found in fields were deliberately deposited or buried there, for example during ritual processions and harvest festivals.⁷⁴²

The question is whether such special deposits on or in fields can also be identified for other periods and locations.

12. What indications are there that ritual practices around the house and yard continued into the Middle Ages and Modern Period?

Morris points out that prehistoric deposits are more likely than historical ones to be labelled 'ritual'.⁷⁴³ This difference is probably due to preconceived ideas about the different time periods. Christianisation is also sometimes associated with the supposed disappearance of non-Christian rituals and practices. The question is to what extent existing pre-Christian rituals and practices did in fact disappear, or whether they can still be traced back to the (later) Middle Ages and Modern Period.

⁷⁴² Theuws *et al.* 2011, 6, 17; Verspay 2011a, 2011b.

⁷⁴³ Morris 2012.

The research questions outlined in Chapter 3 are answered in this concluding chapter. Where appropriate, reference is made to the sections dealing with the relevant topic.

1. *What is the nature, context and meaning of intentional (ritual?) depositions in and around the house and yard? (NoaA question 29)*

The special deposits in the inventory have been identified and included on the basis of their 'different' or 'unusual' characteristics (see also Sections 2.1 and 2.2). The criteria adopted are the completeness of objects, the quantity of objects/material, the composition of deposits, the context (including feature context) and location of deposits/objects, the modification and fragmentation of objects, and their placement and special nature (see Section 4.1). Deposits are often referred to as 'special' on the basis of a combination of these criteria. Generally, this means that these deposits cannot be regarded as rubbish, nor as the remnants of everyday, functional practices.⁷⁴⁴ Their 'special' nature can then be further defined (see question 4).

With regard to context, we have divided special deposits into those found in houses/buildings, outbuildings, granaries, pits, ditches, wells/waterholes, ritual places and residual channels/fens/depressions (see chapter 5). There is also a small category of special deposits found on and in fields. The context can be further specified within certain structures. For example, special deposits within houses/buildings may be located in the features of the core structure, at entrances, walls, the hearth and on the house exterior. Also of relevance is the location of deposits within individual features. This helps us determine at what point the deposit was established: when the structure was being built, during its phase of use or when/after it was abandoned or dismantled.

We studied the context and composition of deposits in combination in order to understand their possible significance. Subsequently, we incorporated insights from anthropological, archaeological, historical, folkloric and religious literature. This has enabled us to identify different types of special deposits, each with their own meanings and purposes. These categories are described in more detail in the answer to question 4 (see also Chapter 7). They are: 1) deposits associated with the

different phases of the life of the house and yard (the 'biographical perspective'; see Section 7.2), 2) deposits containing magical objects that were intended to protect the house and household, to break existing spells or to inflict harm on others through magic (see Section 7.5), (3) deposits associated with communal feasting (including the consumption of food and drink; see Section 7.4), (4) deposits associated with rites of passage (see Section 7.31), and (5) deposits associated with the expression of family or cultural identity (see Sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3).

2. *Which explanatory models are used to identify, interpret and categorise possible intentional depositions with a ritual purpose, i.e. 'ritual depositions'?*

A number of criteria and arguments are used within Malta archaeology to identify special deposits. These are set out in the answer to research question 3 (see also Section 8.2.2). We can also identify a number of explanatory models for the further interpretation and categorisation of special deposits (see Section 8.3). Some of these models are widely used, and others rarely, or rarely explicitly. We also note that an interpretation as a 'special deposit' is often regarded as an interpretation in itself, with no further consideration given to the possible nature, meaning, background and rationale for the practices behind the deposit.⁷⁴⁵ An interpretation as a 'special deposit' seems to be viewed as an end in itself rather than as an initial classification from which to explore the topic in greater detail.⁷⁴⁶

The 'biographical perspective' is clearly the most common of the explanatory models. It interprets special deposits in relation to the key 'life phases' of structures such as houses, buildings, outbuildings and wells. Interpretations as foundation and closing deposits are by far the most prevalent. In a second common but more general explanatory model, special deposits are interpreted as the manifestation of 'sacrificial practices'. Sacrifices can be viewed as forms of gift exchange that create and/or maintain a relationship between humans and superhuman actors.⁷⁴⁷ This interpretation and the term 'sacrifice' are often used uncritically, without being discussed or elaborated further. A third, somewhat less common explanatory model involves the

⁷⁴⁴ See, for example, Hill 1995; Brück 1999; Groot 2009, 390 and Nieuwhof 2015, 113–114 for a discussion on identifying rubbish and non-rubbish.

⁷⁴⁵ This issue has already been raised by Orme (Orme 1981, 218).

⁷⁴⁶ Orme 1981, 218; see also Nieuwhof 2015, 14.

⁷⁴⁷ For a definition of 'sacrifice' and the practice of sacrifice, see e.g. Van Baaren 1975; Van Baal 1976; Boyer 2001; Kok 2008, 31; Van der Sanden 2004, 196.

interpretation of deposits as the remains of communal ritual meals or drinking parties (feasts). For the Middle Ages–Modern Age, interpretations of special deposits as ‘apotropaic and counter-magic’ are especially common. In all likelihood, this is largely a product of the availability of historical sources describing magical practices. There also appears to be a close association between the use of this explanatory model and the researchers or research body involved. Less common explanatory models include rites of passage, seasonal rituals and ancestor worship (see Section 8.3).

3. *What arguments are used in Malta reports to interpret objects/assemblages of objects as ritual depositions and to what extent are they valid?*

Various criteria and arguments are used within Malta archaeology to identify and interpret special deposits (see Section 8.2.2). In most cases, these deposits are identified using a combination of criteria and arguments (see below), although excavators do not state this explicitly in a significant proportion of cases. They often simply state that a deposit is a possible special deposit, foundation deposit or closing deposit, without citing the criteria used or providing further arguments to support their interpretation.

The following criteria and arguments for interpreting special deposits appear most often in Malta reports:

1. **Completeness.** A high degree of completeness is seen as an indication that the objects were deposited intentionally and with care. An interpretation as ‘ordinary rubbish’ for deposits of complete objects is often considered unlikely since these objects were still in a usable state. This is the most common criterion used.
2. **Context and position.** This concerns the context (the type of structure where the special deposit was found), the feature context (the kind of feature where it was found, including in relation to a possible structure) and the position of the deposit in the feature (which fill of the feature it was found in and how the objects were ‘arranged’ in relation to each other).

This contextual information can provide important insights into how and when a deposit came about, as well as the possible underlying intention.

3. **Quantity.** The amount of material is sometimes seen as an indication of ‘intentionality’. In the case of larger quantities of material, an interpretation as ‘litter’ becomes less likely.
4. **Composition.** Specific, frequently occurring combinations of objects may suggest an interpretation as a special deposit. In these instances, an arrangement can be observed in the deposit composition. Selection may also be involved, whereby specific objects are either conspicuously present, or absent altogether.
5. **Modification.** For example, (intentional) burning, fragmentation, halving, bending, perforation and painting.
6. **Nature of the object.** For example, objects with a specific ritual, magical or symbolic connotation (including horseshoes and figurines), or particularly valuable objects and objects of a personal nature (including jewellery).

While certainly valid, the relevance of these criteria depends on how they are applied, combined and made explicit in the analysis and reporting. As mentioned above, arguments, criteria and considerations are not always explicitly stated, let alone assessed against one another. Sometimes there is a definite focus on what is ‘special’, on what is ‘different’. This brings with it the risk of a rather ‘narrow’, ‘selective’ and patchy approach. An alternative is to propose a broader, more systematic and contextual approach that focuses on formation processes and deposition practices in a wider sense. This would mean that special deposits are not selected ‘in advance’ on the basis of a set of criteria, but are studied from a broader perspective that looks in an integrated way at deposits in all the features (e.g. all the postholes of a structure). Special deposition practices can then be identified on that basis.

4. *What kinds of ritual depositions have been distinguished, to what extent are they standardised and in what contexts do they occur?*

Firstly, we make a fundamental distinction between primary and secondary deposits.⁷⁴⁸ Primary deposits consist of objects or materials that were deliberately deposited as part of a ritual (e.g. burying objects when a house was being built or depositing offerings in wet locations). Secondary deposits involve the remains of rituals performed above ground and which were then buried or deposited after the ritual (perhaps as an integral part of ritual practices).⁷⁴⁹ These include the remains of communal meals and feasts, the remains of sacrificial animals or the burnt, fragmented remains of the house and household goods that were deposited in and near the house. Further, we should mention objects that ended up in the soil unintentionally during the performance of rituals and special objects with a ritual connotation for which it is not clear how they came to be there. The latter category includes deity and other figurines and incense dishes.

Several deposit types can be identified within the general category of 'special deposits' (see also question 2 above). First are the deposits that can be linked to the biography ('life stages') of structures such as houses, buildings and wells. These mark the construction phase (foundation deposits) or abandonment and/or dismantling phase (closing deposits), or they can be linked to the occupation or use phase. This latter category includes special deposits that mark a renovation phase or deposits of magical objects designed to protect the house and household. Sometimes deposits can be identified from the period after the house or well was taken out of commission and lay abandoned in the settlement or landscape. These deposits may be associated with rituals commemorating the ancestors who once lived there.

Deposits of magical objects have been alluded to above. They include horseshoes, shoes, complete vessels, animal remains (ranging from complete animals and skulls to loose bones), pendants and amulets, flint axes and arrowheads, playing discs and sharp iron tools (see Section 7.5). They were intended to 'magically' protect a house, well or field from evil influences (such as diseases, pests, drought), to break existing spells and perhaps even to

harm other people (black magic). Deposits with magical objects appear to be mainly associated with liminal locations, such as house entrances, walls and hearths, as well as ditches and wells. As the boundaries between two spheres, it was these liminal places that had to be protected.

Yet another category of deposits can be associated with communal (ritual) feasts, in which the consumption of food and drink played a key part. Feasting occurred at a range of significant times: when a house or settlement was being built or abandoned/dismantled, at weddings, deaths, births and significant times during the year (the cycle of the seasons). Feasting also served to mould and accentuate social relationships (relationships between families, settlements and larger social groups). Deposits associated with feasts contain evidence of communal food and drink consumption, including many or special vessels (large vats, beakers, wine sets), the remains of slaughtered animals, the remains of food and food preparation and associated objects (such as roasting spits, ovens and quernstones). Such deposits are found in a wide range of contexts: pits, ditches, channels, wells and houses.

Most deposits that can be linked to rites of passage appear to result from rites of separation, in which the symbols of an old identity were discarded (and deposited) before the new identity (and associated symbols) was taken on. Clues here are deposits containing personal objects, such as fibulae and jewellery (bracelets, finger rings), weapons and militaria (spears, arrowheads, daggers, helmets, parts of armour and buckles), keys and textile-related objects and perhaps also loose human bone remains. These bone remains could be deposits linked to rituals performed to facilitate the transition from living member of the community to 'ancestor'.⁷⁵⁰ Like deposits of magical objects, deposits associated with rites of passage are mainly found in liminal places: channels, ditches and wells. It would appear that the liminal nature of these locations – as places of transition – corresponds well with the nature and purpose of rites of separation, hence the conscious choice of these places as deposition locations. In other instances, deposits in the features of dismantled houses could also be linked to personal rites of passage. In that case, the house itself and the social persona of the occupant or occupants appear to have been ritually dismantled/

⁷⁴⁸ Nieuwhof 2015, 118.

⁷⁴⁹ Nieuwhof 2015, 118; Groot 2008, 133, 157.

⁷⁵⁰ Baetsen 2009, 252; Baetsen 2015, 129–240.

terminated at one and the same time.

Other deposits may have been linked to family identity. These are deposits that contained special objects, including antique objects (probably heirlooms) and human bone remains. These objects may have been part of special collections kept within families and which were linked to family identity (and to ancestors). They may have been deposited as part of rituals in which family identity played a key role. This may have underscored various relationships: between family members, with the ancestors, with other families and/or with the territory claimed by the family.⁷⁵¹

Lastly, some special deposits may have expressed a cultural identity or origin. We can cite the example of vessel depositions made by migrant families, involving specific vessels that may have been selected as a reference to the region of origin. This emphasised a cultural identity, as well as the relationship to the ancestors who had their roots in that region.

The diversity and variation of the different types of special deposits is particularly remarkable. We see this, for example, in the sheer number of different objects and object types that were deposited as part of special practices. While there does not appear to have been any set standard, we are able to identify patterns. These patterns are particularly evident in the choice of deposition locations, such as house entrances, walls, features of the core structure and hearths. For some types of deposits, there appears to be a preference for wet, liminal places, such as channels, wells/waterholes and ditches.

5. *How often do different types of ritual depositions occur, compared to the number of houses, yards and fields surveyed?*

To answer this question, we looked more closely at a sample of well-researched settlements from different periods (see Section 5.3.8). The number of houses with special deposits from the Neolithic is too small to say anything meaningful. For the Bronze Age, special deposits have been identified in two of the five/seven houses at Vorden-Smitstraat, in three of the eleven houses at Meteren-De Bogen site 28 and in two of the nine houses at Meteren-De Bogen site 45. Two other sites at Meteren-De Bogen, with ten and eight houses, yielded no special deposits at all.

The Iron Age site of Boxmeer-Sterckwijck, which has been investigated on a large scale, yielded five house deposits for some forty houses (approx. 20%).

In the Roman settlement of Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, special deposits are documented in seven of the 25 houses (28%), while the nearby settlement of Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet yielded just one special deposit for 17 houses (approx. 6%). Houses containing special deposits are completely absent in some well-researched settlements, such as Nederweert-Rosveld (19 houses) and Vinkel-Koksteeg (14 houses).

In the medieval settlement at Best-Aarle, special deposits were found in one of the three early medieval houses and in four of the sixteen houses from the High/Late Middle Ages. The proportion of houses with special deposits is considerably lower in the settlement of Someren-Waterdael III: one out of 23 buildings for the Early Middle Ages and three out of 81 buildings for the High Middle Ages. For both periods, the proportion of buildings containing special deposits is roughly four percent.

Based on what can be observed archaeologically at selected sites, we can generally conclude that it was not standard practice to place special deposits in houses. They occur in only a fairly limited proportion of houses (0% to 28%). We observe that the frequency with which special deposits occur in houses can vary considerably per region, settlement, (sub)period/settlement phase and even yard.

In order to be able to comment on the occurrence of special deposits in yards, we looked at special deposits in wells/waterholes and in granaries/outbuildings. We should point out that several outbuildings and wells may have belonged to a single yard. And in many cases it is not possible to assign such structures with certainty to a yard. No special deposits are documented in any of the seven granaries at the above-mentioned Bronze Age site of Vorden-Smidstraat, nor were any wells found at the site. At Meteren-De Bogen, a special deposit is documented in one of the 62 granaries and no special deposits are documented in the 18 wells/waterholes.⁷⁵² In Boxmeer-Sterckwijck (Iron Age), special deposits have been documented in one of the more than four hundred outbuildings/granaries (<0.5%) and in one of the twenty

⁷⁵¹ Lillios 1999, 258; Nieuwhof 2015, 227.

⁷⁵² The granary containing a special deposit is located at site 30, where a total of eleven granaries are documented.

wells/waterholes (5%). In Geldermalsen-Hondsgemet (Late Iron Age–Roman period), there were special deposits in two of the more than 150 granaries (approx. 1%) and in seven of the 88 wells/waterholes (approx. 8%). In the Roman settlement of Tiel-Passewaaijse Hogeweg, a special deposit is documented in one of the 60 outbuildings/granaries (approx. 2%) and in four of the 17 wells (approx. 24%). For the Middle Ages, special deposits have been found in two of the 74 granaries (approx. 3%) at Someren-Waterdael III. None of the 61 wells/waterholes at that site yielded any special deposits. At Best-Aarle (Middle Ages–Modern Period), special deposits are documented in seven of the 45 wells (approx. 16%) and in one of the 28 outbuildings/granaries (approx. 4%).

Thus we can also conclude that special depositions do not appear to have been standard practice in outbuildings/granaries and wells/waterholes. The proportion of special deposits in granaries/outbuildings is particularly small. A possible factor at play here is that several of these structures will have belonged to a single yard.

We are not able to make any well-substantiated statements about the occurrence of special deposits in fields as not enough research has been done on these specific practices. Verspay has demonstrated that rituals involving the deposition of objects (including horseshoes, coins and devotional pendants) may have been performed on or near fields in the Modern Period.⁷⁵³ Similar studies of field deposits have not yet been carried out for other places and periods. Further research is required here.

6. *How are ritual depositions geographically distributed within the Netherlands?*

The geographical distribution of special deposits within the Netherlands (all periods and categories) is shown in Figure 9.1. We see that the central and southeastern parts of the Netherlands are best represented. In geographical terms, this refers to the central and eastern river area, eastern Brabant and Limburg. A cluster can also be identified in the wider Den Haag region.

The regions above the major rivers (Noord-Holland, Gelderland, Overijssel, Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen), western Noord-Brabant and Zeeland are less well represented. This distribution pattern could simply reflect differences in the state of research. A fairly large amount of large-scale settlement research has been conducted in both the river area and the southern sandy soil region. In addition, the study of special deposition practices has largely focused on the central-eastern river area, the Maaskant area and the Brabant sandy soil region (e.g. studies by Gerritsen, Van den Broeke, Van Hoof and Huijbers).⁷⁵⁴ This regional research focus may also have affected the identification of special deposits and hence their distribution. If special deposits are identified using criteria based on one specific region, then deposition traditions specific to other regions may be overlooked.⁷⁵⁵

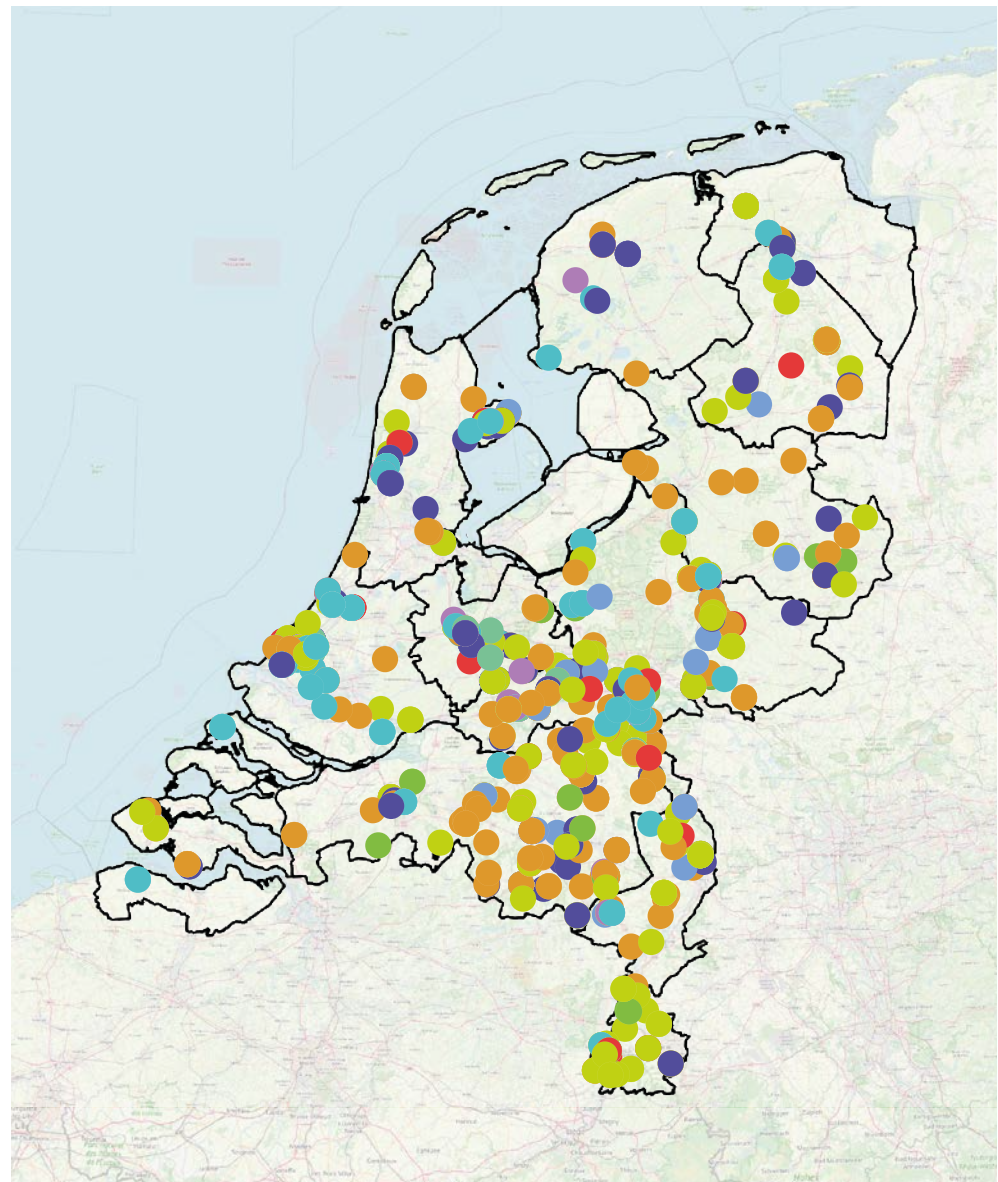
If we examine the distribution of special deposits by context (e.g. house, granary, ditch, (residual) channel), several things stand out (see Section 5.2.4). First of all, the distribution of houses and wells/waterholes corresponds to the general distribution pattern. For some other contexts, the distribution pattern appears to be tied to the landscape conditions of the areas concerned. This is true, for example, for ditches and (residual) channels. With regard to ditches, we see a distinct cluster in the Utrecht-Gelderland river area, the western coastal region and West Friesland. Channels are almost solely confined to the Utrecht-Gelderland river area.

Both instances (ditches and channels) involve wet locations. For animal burials, we see that Brabant and Limburg are underrepresented compared with the general distribution pattern, perhaps due to the poor preservation conditions in these regions. Bone material is much less well preserved in sandy and loess soils than in clay (see also research question 9). A final noticeable distribution pattern relates to special deposits in granaries, for which the coastal region (Zeeland, Zuid-Holland, Noord-Holland and Friesland) is not represented at all. Otherwise, the distribution of granary deposits corresponds fairly well to that of houses.

⁷⁵³ Verspay 2011a and b.

⁷⁵⁴ Van Hoof 2002; Van den Broeke 2002a, 2015; Gerritsen 2003; Huijbers 2007. More recent research into special deposition practices has been conducted in the Drenthe sandy soil area (De Vries 2015 and 2021) and the Groningen terp region (Nieuwhof 2015).

⁷⁵⁵ Van Beek 2011, 25. In his study of settlement patterns, Van Beek points out the risk of region-specific characteristics being overlooked and regional diversity ignored in order to make the data fit existing models.



Contexts

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Outbuildings | ● Other |
| ● Animal burials | ● (Residual) channels |
| ● Ditches | ● Granaries |
| ● Houses | ● Wells/waterholes |
| ● Pits | |

Fig. 9.1. Distribution of all inventoried special deposits from all periods, by context.

Table 9.2. Object categories, by period.

Category	Neo (N=33)	BA (N=209)	IA (N=605)	RP (N=783)	MA (N=320)	MP (N=115)
Animal bone	14%	13%	8%	29%	37%	36%
Tools	24%	9%	5%	5%	6%	6%
Weapons/militaria	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Coins	0%	0%	0%	4%	1%	5%
Fibulae/jewellery	0%	3%	2%	5%	3%	0%
Textile attributes	0%	6%	8%	2%	3%	3%
Vessels	16%	23%	26%	23%	19%	18%
Burnt loam	0%	4%	5%	2%	1%	0%
Food attributes	19%	13%	12%	6%	5%	2%
Other	24%	28%	32%	22%	23%	30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

deposits in the Iron Age. Later, in the Roman period, houses, wells/waterholes and animal burials become dominant. Pits are now less prominently represented and the number of deposits in granaries has fallen sharply. Houses are also the most common context in the Middle Ages, followed by animal burials. The latter category is strongly dominant in the Modern Period (47%), followed by wells/waterholes (21%) and houses (19%).⁷⁵⁷

The chronological distribution of deposits based on composition (object categories) also reveals some distinct patterns (see Table 9.2). We see that tools (24%) and food attributes (19%) are well represented in the Neolithic, whereas the proportion of vessels (16%) is relatively small. In the Bronze Age, the proportion of vessels rises to about 23%, which is roughly equivalent to that for the subsequent main periods (the Iron Age and Roman period). Animal bone and food attributes are both fairly well represented in the Bronze Age (at about 13%), followed by tools (9%) and textile attributes (6%). Burnt loam also appears in fairly high percentages (4%) in deposits in the Bronze Age, and in the Iron Age too (5%). Also in the Iron Age, the proportion of vessels increases slightly (26%), as do the categories of textile attributes (8%) and burnt loam (5%). The high proportion of the 'other' category for this period can be explained by the many deposits of natural stone that cannot be assigned to any of the other defined categories (individual pieces of natural stone and hearth/cooking stones). In the Roman period, animal bone has significantly increased

(29%), even outstripping vessels (23%). In part, this is explained by the extensive research into special deposits containing animal remains at a number of comprehensively excavated settlements from this period.⁷⁵⁸ The categories of fibulae/jewellery (5%), coins (4%) and weapons/militaria (2%) have increased in percentage terms, probably reflecting the growing use of coins and fibulae during this period and the presence of Roman army veterans in rural settlements. The categories of food attributes (6%), tools (5%), textile attributes (2%) and burnt loam (2%) are less well represented than in the Iron Age. Animal bone (37%) also predominates in the Middle Ages, followed by vessels (19%), a pattern that continues into the Modern Period. Food attributes play a negligible role (2%), while the percentages of coins (5%) and tools (6%) have increased slightly.

9. To what extent do post-depositional processes such as soil disturbance and degradation possibly affect the numerical occurrence and the geographical and chronological distribution of ritual depositions?

Post-depositional processes such as soil disturbance and degradation can influence and distort our perception of special deposition practices in various ways. With regard to degradation, there are differences between wet and dry areas. In wet areas (the coastal regions, peat bogs and the river area), items such as wood, leather, unburnt botanical remains (including food remains) and animal bone are significantly better preserved than in the drier

⁷⁵⁷ The prominence of animal burials in the Modern Period can be explained by the broader inventory criteria for this category (see Section 6.4.3) and the comparatively small total number of special deposits in that period.

⁷⁵⁸ See, for example, Groot 2006, 2008, 2009.

areas (the regions with predominantly sandy and loess soils in the southern, eastern and northern Netherlands). As a result, traces of some specially deposited objects may not be found in the drier regions, affecting what we observe of the composition of special deposits. For the distribution of animal burials, we see that Brabant and Limburg are underrepresented compared to the general distribution pattern, a phenomenon that can be explained by the preservation conditions in these regions, given that bone material is more poorly preserved in sand and loess than in clay. Degradation also affects our perception of the relationship between specific objects and contexts. For example, wooden ard share points are only found in wells and waterholes. This is probably largely a reflection of the different preservation conditions in the different structures, although we cannot establish this with certainty. Such objects may also originally have been deposited in dry pits and in house features, where they have not survived.

With regard to the degree of soil disturbance, we can by and large make the same regional distinctions. Whereas the old ground and floor level (including hearths) has sometimes been preserved in the coastal wetlands (including the terp area) and river area,⁷⁵⁹ it has been disturbed by subsequent activity in the vast majority of loess and sandy regions. There is no doubt that these circumstances influence our view of special deposition practices, especially if they took place on or immediately below the old ground level (including in hearths). In places where the old ground level has been disturbed, only special deposits from deeper features will have been preserved.

10. *To what extent can we substantiate the assumptions that house-related ritual depositions were standard and that they marked stages in the life cycle of the house and yard?*

Special deposits in or close to houses are known from the Neolithic to well into the Modern Period. The study of various settlements that have been subject to large-scale investigation shows that special deposits in houses (or at least those that are archaeologically identifiable) are not a standard feature in any period (see the answer to question 5). They only occur in some of the houses studied. While the proportion of

houses containing special deposits is sometimes as high as a quarter, more often it is much less. Moreover, some of the large-scale settlement investigations have not yielded any houses with special deposits. The frequency with which special deposits occur in houses varies considerably per region, settlement, (sub)period/settlement phase and even yard.

In terms of the 'biographical perspective' (see Section 7.2), special deposits and deposition practices are associated with the 'life stages' of houses. Interpretations as foundation deposits (linked to the house's construction phase) and closing deposits (linked to the abandonment and dismantling phase) clearly predominate. The criteria used to identify them mainly relate to the location of deposits within the house features and the composition (and 'modification') of the deposits (see Sections 4.1 and 8.2.2). By carefully analysing the location and composition (including modification) of these deposits, we are in a position to determine when the deposit ended up in the feature in question and which actions may have preceded this. This can then suggest which of the phases in the life of the house – construction or abandonment/dismantling – the deposits are associated with. However, some of the deposits interpreted as foundation or closing deposits have not been meticulously described and illustrated. And sometimes no reasons (or insufficient reasons) are given as to how this interpretation was arrived at. In cases such as these, there is no way of verifying the interpretation.

The relationship to the evolution of the house ('life phases') cannot be properly determined for some of the special deposits in houses. This mainly applies to deposits in pits located in or near the house (which are not part of the house structure) and deposits at entrances and walls (including house ditches). In these situations too, it is important not to become fixated on an interpretation as a foundation or closing deposit since objects may also have been deposited, buried or placed while the house was in use. These deposits may have marked other key moments in the evolution of the house or household (including personal rites of passage; see Section 7.3.1), or were intended to protect or safeguard the well-being of the occupants (and probably their livestock). This latter category includes the deposition of magical objects that were intended to protect the house

⁷⁵⁹ Therkorn 2004; Therkorn et al. 2009; Van Londen 2006.

and household or to break an existing spell (see Section 7.5). They were often deposited near, in, on and beneath entrances, walls, floors and hearths.

In general, we can conclude that the 'biographical perspective' is an important and highly useful explanatory model for interpreting special deposits in houses. By making a detailed study and report of the location and

composition (and modification) of the deposits, we can present a credible case for linking at least some of the special deposits to the life stages of the house. However, it is also important to free ourselves from the binary of foundation deposit/closing deposit and to be open to alternative explanatory models, including ones relating to rites of passage and magical practices.

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Appendix I List of sites and references.

Appendix I List of sites and references.

Place	Toponym	References
Achterberg	Oost	Ter Wal 2020
Alblasserdam	Lange Steeg	De Boer 2006
Alkmaar	Doelenstraat	De Jong-Lambregts & Roedema 2009
Alkmaar	Langestraat 52	Provincie Noord-Holland 2017
Alphen	Kerkakkers	De Koning 2005
Amersfoort	Coninckstraat 15	Miltenburg & Van Vilsteren 2016
Amersfoort	Korte Gracht	Goubitz 1989
Amersfoort	Muurhuizen 19	Boekenoogen 2004
Amsterdam	Anjelierstraat	Van Vilsteren 2007
Amsterdam	Warmoesstraat	Van Regteren Altena & Zantkuyl 1969
Amsterdam	Warmoesstraat 91	Jayasena 2020
Angerlo	Kolkwijk	Bouma 2013b
Apeldoorn	Nuon terrein	Williams 2007
Arnhem	De Laar	Tuinstra et al. 2005
Arnhem	Hoogstedelaan/Klingelbeekseweg	Defilet 2012
Arnhem	Schuytgraaf vindplaats 7	Roessingh & Blom 2009
Assen	Messchenveld II	Ter Wal 2008
Assendelft	F5	Therkorn 1987, 203, 215
Assendelft	N1	Van Gijn 1987
Assendelft	Q	Therkorn 1987, 179, 215
Assum	Waldijk/Assummervaart	De Koning 2008
Azelo	Aardgastransportleidingtracé A-670	Zielman 2013
Barneveld	Bloemendal	Bouma 2020
Barneveld	Harselaar-West, vindplaats A	Brouwer 2013
Barneveld	Harselaar-Zuid, fase 1A	Meurkens 2018
Beegden	Eerdweg 4	Dijkstra 2015
Beek	Kerkeveld	Lohof & Wyns 2009
Beek	Waterstraat	Zee 2009
Beetgumermolen	Alddyk	Waldus 2012
Bemmel	Plakse Wei	Rap & Veenstra 2020
Bennekom	Boerhaavelaan	De Leeuwe 2008a
Bergeijk	Waterlaat 6	Van de Glind 2013
Bergen op Zoom	Cauwenborgh	Van Vilsteren 2007
Berkel-Enschot	Enschotsebaan-Noord	Mostert 2014
Berkel-enschot	Enschotsebaan-Zuid 2	Brouwer 2015
Best	Dijkstraten	Moesker & Dijkstra 2015
Best	Oranjestraat	Kooi 2012
Best-Aarle	Aarle	Tol et al. 2017
Beuningen	Hogewald II	Huis in 't Veld 2006
Beuningen	Molenstraat	Van der Kamp & Polak 2001
Boekel	Parkweg	De Jong 2008
Borger	Daalkampen	De Wit et al. 2009
Borger	Daalkampen II-Klokbeker	Van de Meij 2010

Place	Toponym	References
Borger	N34	Kooi & De Wit 2003
Borgharen	Daalderveld/Pasestraat	Van de Graaf & Loonen 2014
Borne	Bornsche Maten-Eschwonen	Scholte Lubberink 2020
Borne	Bornsche Maten-Zuid esch	Scholte Lubberink 2007
Borsele	Steendammeweg, vindplaats 7	Sier 2001
Boxmeer	Maasbroeksche Blokken	Van der Velde et al. 1998
Boxmeer	Sterckwijck	Blom & Van der Velde 2015
Boxtel	In Goede Aarde	Van Renswoude & Norde 2011
Boxtel	Korenmolen	Van Kampen & Huijsmans 2020
Breda	De Beijerd	Van de Venne 2008
Breda	Huifakker	Koot & Berkvens 2004
Breda	Landgoed Heilaar	Van Mousch et al. 2009
Breda	Moskes	Koot & Berkvens 2004
Breda	Steenakker	Koot & Berkvens 2004
Breda	Vinkenburg	Kranendonk et al. 2006
Breedeweg	Parachutistenstraat	Hoegen et al. 2008
Bruchem	Geerweg 1–3	Diependaal 2016
Bruchem	Gemeentewerf/Peperstraat 35	Verniers & Blom 2018
Brunssum	De Kling	Hensen 2015
Budel	Budel-Noord-Duitse school	Bink 2012
Budel	Meemortel	Van den Brink & Tops 2012
Bunnik	Rietsloot	Ilson et al. 2016
Castenray	De Diepeling	Van der Veken & Müller 2013
Castricum	De Boogaert	Gerritsen & Vaars 2007; Verduin & De Koning 2013; Dijk 2015
Castricum	Oosterbuurt	Hagers & Sier 1999
Coevorden	Holsloot	Van der Velde et al. 2003
Coevorden	Molenakkers II, fase I	De Wit 2016
Colmschate	Holterweg	Hermesen & Haveman 2009
Colmschate	Siemelinksweg	Van der Wal & Mittendorff 2012
Cuijk	De Nielt	Habermehl & Van Renswoude 2017
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	Roessingh & Vanneste 2009
Cuijk	Heeswijkse Kampen	Van Kampen 2018
Culemborg	Hoge Prijs	Verhelst et al. 2015
Culemborg	Lokkershoek	Van der Storm & Roessingh 2009
Culemborg	Prijsseweg/Goilberdingen	Corver 2013
Dalen	De Spil	De Wit 2003
Dalfsen	Oosterdalfsen	Bouma & Van der Velde 2017
De Zilk	Sportterrein	Briels & Schutte 2018
Delft	Harnaschpolder	Bakx 2011
Delft	Voordijkshoornsepolder	Bult 2011
Den Haag	De Wateringse Binnentuinen	Stokkel & Bulten 2017
Den Haag	Hertenrade	Van Veen 2009
Den Haag	Hoge Veld/Kwaklaan	Siemons & Lanzing 2009

Place	Toponym	References
Den Haag	Loozerlaan	Van Zoolingen 2010
Den Haag	Ockenburg II	Waasdorp & Van Zoolingen 2015
Den Haag	Oude Waalsdorperweg	Bakker 2007
Den Haag	Uithofslaan	Siemons & Kersing 2011
Den Haag	Wateringseveld	Van Hoof 2007
Den Haag	Wijndaelerplantsoen	Stokkel 2012
Den Haag	Ypenburg-Locatie 4	Koot et al. 2008
Den Haag	Zevenwoudenlaan	Van Zoolingen 2014
Deurne	Groot Bottelsche Akker	Hiddink 2008a
Deursen-Dennenburg	Laagstraat 58	Van de Glind 2019
Deventer	Brinkgreven	Van de Glind et al. 2015
Deventer	Molbergsweg-Zuid	Kastelein et al. 2015
Deventer	Olthof Beekdal	Vermeulen et al. 2012
Deventer	Siemelinksweg/De Braam	Kastelein & Hermsen 2011
Didam	Kerkwijk	Van der Veken & Prangmsma 2011
Didam	Loilseveld	Vanneste & Prangmsma 2011
Didam	Randweg-Zuid/Kasteel Didam	Van Engeldorp Gastelaars & Van der Velde 2017
Diemen	Plangebied Noordflank Centrum	Vanoverbeke et al. 2011
Diessen	Vroonacker	Van Bentheim 2012
Dodewaard	Site 38	Drenth & Bulten 1997; Fontijn 2002, 137, 333.
Doetinchem	Wijnbergen	Lohof 2008
Doorn	Dribergsestraatweg 63	Buikema 2019
Dordrecht	Overkampweg/Rondweg (N3)	Hos & Dorst 2010
Drechterland	Houtpolder	Roessingh & Tol 2019
Druuten	Klepperheide	Maas 2007
Eckelrade	Putstraat	Hensen 2013
Ede	De Vallei	Van der Heiden 2002
Ede	Molen Concordia	Williams & Hazen 2010
Ede	Park Reehorst, fase 1–3	Norde 2019a
Eelde	Groote Veen	Tulp 2014
Eersel	Eersel Kerkebogten	Lascharis 2011
Eindhoven	Noord Brabantlaan	Arts et al. 2017
Eindhoven	Putten	Debruyne & Vroomans 2012
Ellewoutsdijk	Ellewoutsdijk	Sier 2003
Elst	De Merm	Knippenberg & Heribaut 2006
Elst	Het Bosje	Meurkens 2009
Elst	Lijnden/Tobbenhofsestraat	Van der Feijst & Blom 2017
Elst	Park Lingezegeen/De linten	Verniers et al. 2017
Elst	Vierslag	Veenstra 2013
Eme	Laaksche veld	Bouwmeester 2000
Emmen	Frieslandweg	De Wit 2000
Emmen	Noordbargeres	De Wit 2015
Enkhuizen	Haling 13	Van der Linde & Hamburg 2014

Place	Toponym	References
Enkhuizen	Haling 20E	Bot 2018
Enschede	Josink Es	Ploegaert 2004
Enter	De Akkers, fase 2	Houkes & Van der Velde 2008
Enter	Middenplein	Mol 2020
Ermelo	Hamburgerweg/Oude Telgterweg	Pronk 2013
Etten		Van Vilsteren 2007
Ewijk	Keizershoeve I	Blom et al. 2012
Geldermalsen	Eigenblok	Jongste & Van Wijngaarden 2002
Geldermalsen	Hondsgemet	Van Renswoude & Van Kerckhove 2009
Geldermalsen	Rijs en Ooijen	Verhelst 2003
Geldermalsen	Stationslocatie	Van Renswoude & Schurmans 2015
Geldrop-Mierlo	Genoehuis	Hissel et al. 2017
Geleen	Einighauserweg 101	Langeveld 2017
Geleen	Hof van Limburg	Van Hoof et al. 2013
Goirle	Huzarenwei	Bink 2005
Gouda	Oostpolder	Kok 1999
Grijpskerke	Kievitshoekweg	Van Dierendonck 2016
Groenlo	Woerdseweg	Williams-Kodde 2012
Groningen	De Held III	Huis in 't veld 2010a
Groningen	De Linie	Daleman 2007
groningen	Helpermaar-Eiland	Huis in 't veld 2010b
Groningen	Schoolholm	Kortekaas 2013
Gronsveld	Duijsterstraat	Van Dijk 2009
Grootebroek	Schaperstraat/Zesstedenweg 10–12, 13	Gerritsen 2018
Haaren	Wijngaert III	Verbeek 2011
Haps	Kamps Veld	Verwers 1972
Hardenberg	De Hoge Doelen	Van Vilsteren 2007
Harderwijk	Academiestraat 3	Schabbink 2012
Hardinxveld-Giessendam	De Bruin	Louwe Kooijmans 2001
Hasselo	Grutterskamp	Scholte Lubberink & Willemse 2009
Hasselo	't Oosterveld	Scholte Lubberink 2011
Hattermerbroek	Bedrijventerrein-Zuid	Hamburg et al. 2011
Heerjansdam	Molenaarshuis	Van Vilsteren 2007
Heerlen	Trilandis	Tichelman 2014
Heesch	Hoogstraat 28–30	Tump 2014a
Heeten	De Telgen	Van Beek 2009, 547; Erdrich & Van der Velde 2007, 233–234
Heiloo	Hoogeweg, UWP 5	Dijkstra & Moesker 2017
Heiloo	Stationsplein	Knippenberg 2007
Heiloo	Stationsplein-De Blinken	Van Rooijen & De Koning 2006
Heiloo	Zandzoomzone 10	Rebergen 2009
Heiloo	Zuiderloo, UWP 1	Van der Heiden 2017
Helden	Keup	De Winter 2013

Place	Toponym	References
Helden	Panningen-Stokx	Hiddink 2008b
Helden	Schrames	de winter 2010
Helmond	Brandevoort II/Hazenwinkel	Van den Bruel et al. 2015
Hemelum	Sint-Nicolaasklooster	Hielkema 2019a
Hempens	Teerns	Waldus 2000
Hengelo	Elderinkweg	Williams 2009
Hengelo	Plangebied Winkelskamp	Van der Leije 2018
Herpen	Wilgendaal	Ball & Jansen 2002
's-Hertogenbosch	Hinthamerstraat 163/Mgr. Prinsenstraat 1A-C	Cleijne 2007
's-Hertogenbosch	Museumkwartier	Van der Mark et al. 2018
's-Hertogenbosch	Orthenstraat 41	Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021
's-Hertogenbosch	Papenhulst	Van Genabeek 2005
's-Hertogenbosch	Snellestraat	Van de Venne 2018
's-Hertogenbosch	Weversplaats	Van Genabeek & Jayasena 2021
's-Hertogenbosch	Zuidwal	Van de Venne in voorbereiding
Heteren	Uilenburg	Blom & Roessingh 2010
Honselersdijk	Trade Parc Westland, Mars, vindplaats 2	Van der Feijst 2019
Hoogeloon	Kerkackers	Hiddink 2014
Hoogkarspel	site F, 2a/2b	Bakker et al. 1968; Van den Broeke 1977
Hoogkarspel	Hoogkarspeltunnel	Roessingh & Tol 2019
Hoogkarspel	Markerwaardweg	Roessingh & Tol 2019
Hoogkarspel	Streekweg 269-275	Gerritsen 2014
Hoogkarspel	Streekweg 289-293	Ter Steege 2018
Hoorn	Achterstraat	Schrickx 2009
Horst	Schengweg 5-7	Bink et al. 2014
Houten	Castellum	Van Renswoude & Habermehl 2019
Houten	Hofstad Diepriool	Schurmans 2005
Houten	Houten-Hofstad (VleuGel 20)	Besselsen & Van der Heiden 2009
Huissen	Agropark II	Bergsma & Stokkel 2011
Huissen	Loosstraat-zuid	Schurmans 2008
Hulsel	Kerkekkers	De Leeuwe 2008b
Itteren	Emmaus	Meurkens & Tol 2011
Ittervoort	Santfort	Schotten 2007
Kampen	Haatland	Ufkes & Tuinstra 2006
Kampen	Hofstraat	Van Vilsteren 2007
Kapel-Avezaath	Muggenborch	Van Renswoude 2011
Katwijk	Transformatorstation Industrieweg	Kerkhoven 2017
Katwijk	Zanderij	Van der Velde 2008
Katwijk	Zanderij-Westerbaan	Van der Velde 2011
Kesteren	De Woerd	Sier & Koot 2001
Leersum	Middelweggebied	Tump 2014b
Leeuwarden	Werpsterhoek	Veenstra & Hekman 2012
Leiden en Wassenaar	Rijnlandroute, knooppunt Ommedijk	Meijer et al. 2020

Place	Toponym	References
Leiderdorp	Plantage	Dijkstra et al. 2016
Leiderdorp	Simon Smitweg/Willem Alexanderlaan/ Parallelweg	De Koning & Hoogendijk 2012
Leidschendam	Leeuwenbergh	Wiepking 1997
Lent	Dijkteruglegging, plangebied west	Heirbaut & Koot 2016a
Lent	Kasteel Lent	Koot & Heirbaut 2016a
Lent	Ruimte voor de Waal	Hermesen 2019
Lent	Ruimte voor de Waal, zone J, N. Plaatbrug oost	Verhelst 2019
Lent	Steltsestraat	Koot et al. 2020
Lent	Zone H	Koot & Heirbaut 2016b
Leusden	De Schammer	Hulst et al. 2013
Lieshout	Beekseweg	Hiddink 2005a
Lieshout	Nieuwenhof-noord	Van der Weerden & Brouwer 2015
Limmel	Verkabeling hoogspanningskabels	Kooi 2016
Limmen	De Krocht	Dijkstra et al. 2006
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase I	Prangma 2008
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase II	Gerrets & De Leeuwe 2011
Lomm	Hoogwatergeul, fase III	Gerrets & Williams 2011
Luchen	fase 2	De Leeuwe 2010
Maastricht	A2 Landgoederenzone	Hazen et al. 2015
Maastricht	Heukelstraat 15–17	Hendrikk & Torremans 2010
Malden	Broeksingel	Schurmans 2011b
Margraten	Scheuldersteeg	Tichelman & Bosma 2019
Marssum	Marssum-It Aldlân	Hielkema 2015
Medemblik	Schepenwijk II	Schurmans 2010
Merselo	Grootdorp	Dijkstra & Schutte 2007
Meteren	De Bogen	Meijlink & Kranendonk 2002
Meteren	De Plantage	Jezeer & Verniers 2012
Meterik	Meterikse veld	De Koning 2009
Middelbaar	Kopseweg	Hermesen 2013
Middelburg	Hof Ramsburg	Silkens & Meijlink 2012
Midden-Delfland	Abtswoude	Bakx & Bult 2011
Midden-Delfland	Harnaschpolder/'t Scharnier	Bult 2014
Midden-Delfland	MD 21.15	Van Londen 2006; Van Zoolingen 2010
Midden-Delfland	site 01.23	Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5; Van Londen 2006
Midden-Delfland	site 03.01	Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5; Van Londen 2006
Midden-Delfland	site 21.23	Gerritsen 2003, 66, Table 3.5; Van Londen 2006
Midden-Delfland	Woudse Polder	Dijkstrat 2006
Midlaren	De Bloemert	Nicolay 2008
Monster	Voormalig campingterrein Molenslag	Bakx 2020
Naaldwijk	Holland College	Van Kampen 2008; Van der Feijst et al. 2008
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland	Goossens 2012
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland West Zuid	Van der Feijst 2015
Naaldwijk	Hoogeland-Oost 't Zand Heultje	Van der Feijst 2012

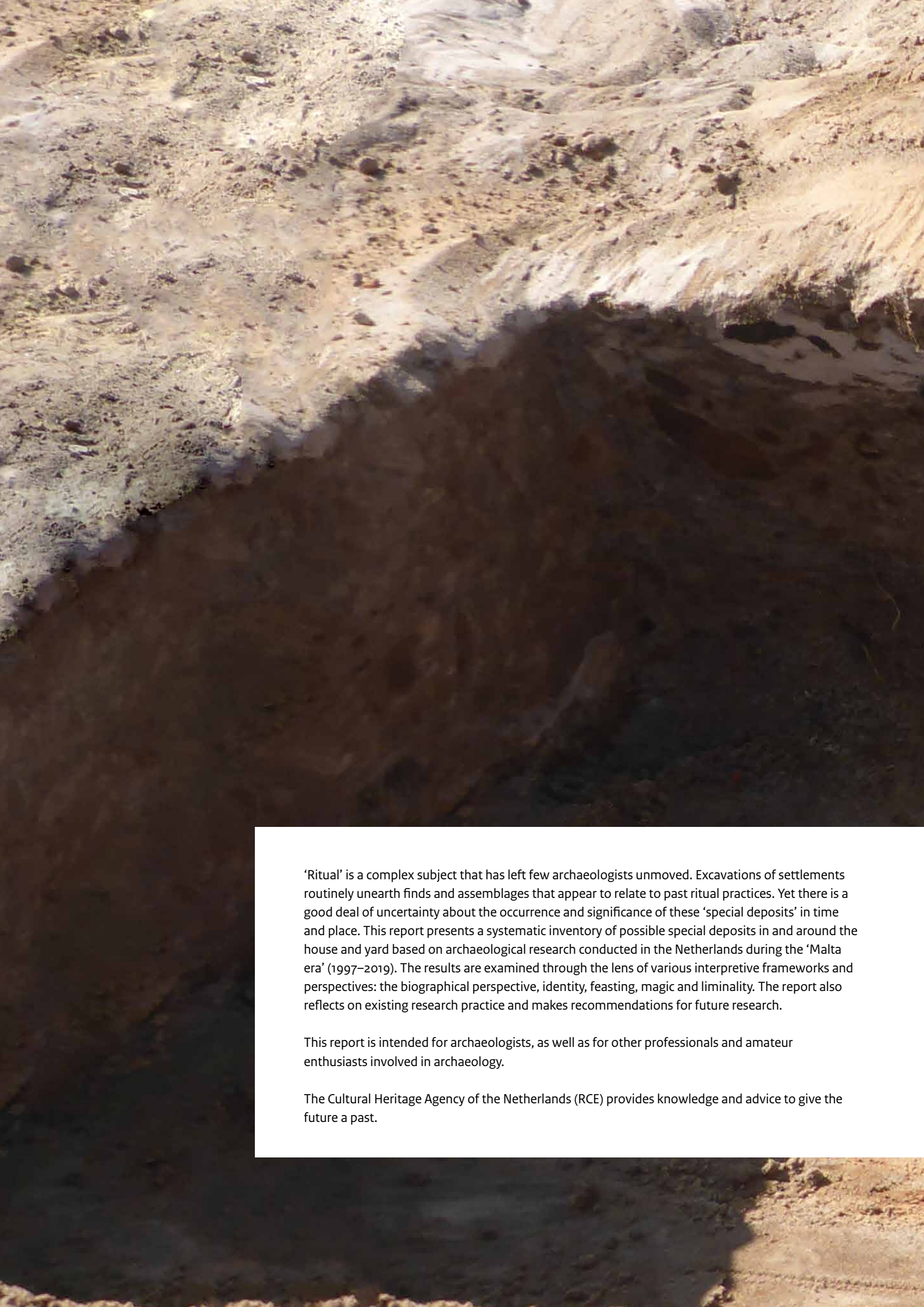
Place	Toponym	References
Naaldwijk	Trace Parc Westland Mars	Leijnse et al. 2015
Nederweert	Kerneelhoven	Schotten 2005
Nederweert	Rosveld	Hiddink 2005b
Neede	Doctor A. Th. Plantenstraat	Burnier et al. 2015
Neer	De Mendert, fase 7 en 8	Hos 2016
Nieuwegein	Bataustraart	Van Kampen 2008
Nieuwegein	Blokhoeve-Akkerhoeve	Van Mousch & Leenders 2019
Nieuwegein	Bossenwaard	De Groot 2015
Nieuwstadt	Elsenewal	Van Dijk 2013
Nijmegen	Frans Halsstraat/Daalseweg	Harmsen & Van Enckevort 2015
Nijmegen	Grote Kopse Hof	Van Enckevort & Wildenberg 2009
Nijmegen	Lent-Vindplaats 9/57	Heirbaut & Koot 2016b
Nijmegen	Molenweg 49 en 71	Van Enckevort 2019
Nijmegen	Noord-Lent-Laauwik	Van den Broeke 2002; Van den Broeke & Tunker 2013
Nijmegen	Oosterhout-Van Boetzelaerstraat	Van den Broeke 2002
Nijmegen	Steltsestraat	Van den Broeke et al. 2011
Nijverdal	Eversberg	Gerrets et al. 2012
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molen/Mortel/Loo	Jansen 2007
Nistelrode	Zwarte Molenweg	Hensen & Janssens 2016
Nuenen	De Luistruik, fase 1	Wattenberghe 2011
Nuenen	Kerkakkers/Luistruik, fase 2	Te Kiefte 2016
Nuenen	Witte Hondpad	Bink 2020
Odijk	Singel West/Schoudermantel	Schurmans & Verheest 2007
Oegstgeest	Nieuw Rhijngest-Zuid, fase 1	Jezeer 2011
Oele	Olde Meulenweg	Schabbink 2013b
Oene	Oene-west	Tump 2012
Oldehove	Englum-Leege Wier	Nieuwhof 2015
Ommeren	Ommerenveldseweg	Van der Leije 2020
Oosterhout	Aardgastransportleidingtracé Angerlo-Beuningen	Verhelst & Zielman 2014
Oosterhout	De Contreie	Roessingh & Blom 2012
Oosterhout	Park 15	Van der Linde & Porreij-Lyklema 2019
Oosterhout	't Klumke	Ball & Van den Broeke 2007
Oosterhout	Van Boetzelaerstraat	Van den Broeke 2002
Oss	Brabantstraat	De Leeuwe 2011
Oss	De Geer	Jansen & Van Hoof 2003
Oss	Horzak	Van Hoof 2007
Oss	Ussen	Wesselingh 2000
Oss	Westerveld	Wesselingh 2000
Oss-Ussen	R49	Van der Sanden 1998
Ouddorp	Smalle Einde	Stokkel 2009
Oudorp	Lauwershof	Médard & Vaars 2015
Overasselt	Schoonenburgseweg	Verhelst 2020

Place	Toponym	References
Pesse	Fluitenberg	Schrijer & De Neef 2008
Poeldijk	De Kreken fase II	Hazen & Blom 2010
Poeldijk	De Kreken, fase III	Vossen 2019
Poeldijk	Westhof-vindplaats B	Blom & Van der Feijst 2007
Poortugaal-Rhoon	Valkensteinsche Blok	Meirsmen & Van der Roest 2010
Putten	Husselerveld	Blom & Van Waveren 2005
Raalte	De Zegge	Terlouw 1996
Ressen	Zuiderveld	Van den Broeke et al. 2010
Reusel	Boegent	Van der Weerden 2008
Reusel	Kruisstraat	Bink 2011
Reusel	Zuid	Delporte 2013, 27
Rhenen	Achterberg West 2	Van Benthem 2020
Rhenen	Remmerden	Van Hoof et al. 2005
Rhenen	Remmerden (rotonde N225)	Schutte & Molthof 2012
Rhenen	Remmerden II, kavels 6, 9 en 14	Müller 2013
Rhoon-Smitshoek	Portland	Hallewas 2009
Riethoven	Heesmortel	Hiddink 2013
Rijswijk	De Paulinesymfonie	Dorenbos et al. 2010
Rosmalen	Noord	De Koning & Vaars 2003
Rotterdam	Delftse Schie	Van Zon & Goossens 2015
Ruinen	Mr. Harm Smeengestraat	De Roller 2009
Ruinerwold		Van Vilsteren 2007
Schagen	N241	Griffioen 2016
Schipluiden	Harnaschpolder	Flamman & Goossens 2006
Schipluiden	Noordhoorn	Louwe-Kooijmans et al. 2006
Schipperskerk	Deelgebied Koeweide	Van der Leije 2016
Schoondijke	Einsteinstraat	Lehouck & Vandevelde 2010
Serooskerke	Diversen	Dijkstra & Zuidhoff 2011
Sint Anthonis	kruising Dr. Verbeecklaan en N272	Van Hoof & van Wijk 2007
Sint Maartensbrug	Grote Sloot 154	Brattinga & De Koning 2017
Sittard	Haagsittard	Stoepker 2017
Sneek	Harinxmaland	Hielkema 2019b
Sneek	Stadsrondweg oost	Niekus 2002
Someren	Acaciaweg 2	Hoogendijk 2015
Someren	Groote Hoeven	Weekers-Hendriks & Müller 2020
Someren	Hoge Akkers	Schabbink 2003
Someren	Sijlkenstraat	Van Haasteren 2016
Someren	Ter Hofstadlaan	De Boer & Hiddink 2009
Someren	Waterdael III	De Boer & Hiddink 2012
Son	Nieuwstraat	Van der Weerden 2005; Van der Weerden 2012
Son	Son en Breugel/HIVA-terrein	Norde 2008
Spanga/Scherpenzeel		Van Vilsteren 2014
Steenderen	Covikseweg	Norde 2015

Place	Toponym	References
Sterksel	Weiakkers	Vanneste 2010
Stroe	Houtbeekweg	Hakvoort 2016
Susteren	Salvatorplein	Stoepker 2021
Tiel	Medel Krommewei en Ooijsche Wetering	Blom & Williams 2008
Tiel	Medel-Bredesteeg	Van Hoof & Jongste 2007
Tiel	Medel-De Reth	Habermehl et al. 2019
Tiel	Medel-Rotonde	Heeren 2006b
Tiel	Oude Tielseweg	Verhelst 2001
Tiel	Passewaaijse Hogeweg	Heeren 2006a
Tiel	Tiel-Medel-Oude Weiden, vindplaats 5	Ufkes 2005
Tilburg	HaVeP	Van Zon & Dijkstra 2015
Tilburg	Schaapsven	Meurkens 2015
Tilburg	Tradepark	Tol 2015
Tilburg	Zwaluwenbunders-Zuidkamerlaan	Van de Geer 2019
Tilligte	Tilligte-west	Hesseling et al. 2013
Tubberbergen	Prins Bernhardstraat	Vissinga 2011
Twello	Achter 't Holhuis	De Wit 2012
Twello	De Schaker	Tol 2014
Tynaarlo	Donderen	Hielkema 2008
Uden	Botermarkt	Van Eijk 2007
Uden	Uden-Noord-Hengstheuveld	Goossens & Meurkens 2013
Udenhout	Den Bogerd	Van Zon 2018
Uitgeest	Waldijk II	Williams 2012
Ulf	Biezenakker	Hermesen & Weiß-König 2014
Utrecht	A2	Nokkert et al. 2009
Utrecht	De Meern-Burgemeester Middelweerdbaan	Meijer 2009
Utrecht	De Meern-De Woerd	Langeveld et al. 2010
Utrecht	De Meern-HOV-station	Weterings & Meijer 2011
Utrecht	De Uithof-Hoofddijk	Dielemans 2018
Utrecht	Hoge Weide	Den Hartog 2009
Utrecht	Hogeweide 3a	Van der Kamp 2018
Utrecht	Hoograven/Duurstedelaan	Dielemans 2014
Utrecht	Leidsche Rijn-Leeuwesteyn Noord	Norde 2019b
Utrecht	LR84-Sportpark Terweide	Den Hartog 2017
Utrecht	LR86-Castellumlaan	Van der Kamp 2019
Utrecht	Rijnvliet	Dielemans 2013
Utrecht	Thematerweg	Den Hartog 2009
Utrecht	Vleuten-Wilhelminalaan 14	Den Hartog 2010
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Driebergen Lange Dreef	Schurmans 2011a
Valkenburg	Grondverbeteringsinstallatie Hoogheemraadschap Rijnland	Van der Leije 2010
Valkenswaard	Lage Heide	Schurmans 2013
Valkenswaard	Waalreseweg	Moerman & Van de Bos 2013
Valthe	Hunebedden D36 en D37	Raemaekers 2015

Place	Toponym	References
Varsen	Aardgastransportleidingtracé Scheemda-Ommen (A-661)	Hielkema 2014
Veessen	Hoogwatergeul	Geerts 2017
Veghel	De Scheifelaar II	Van der Veken & Blom 2012
Velden	De Vilgert	Van der Veken 2017
Veldhoven	Oerle-zuid	Hissel 2012
Venhuizen	Voetakkers	Roessingh & Tol 2019
Venlo	Floriade, deelgebied 7	Hakvoort & Van der Meij 2010
Venlo	Trade Port Noord, fase II	Gerrets & Jacobs 2011
Venray	Hoogriebroek	Stoepker 2000
Vlaardingen	Holysingel/Hoog Lede	Alma et al. 2012
Vleuten	Huis te Vleuten/Utrechtseweg	Dijkstra & De Boer 2005
Vlijmen	De Grassen	Van Kampen 2016
Voerendaal	Ten Hove	Kooistra 1996; Hiddink in preparation
Voorburg	Arentsburg	Driessen & Besselsen 2014
Voorburg	Forum Hadriani	Bink & Franzen 2009
Vorden	Ruurloseweg	Van Benthem 2009
Vorden	Smidsstraat	Gerritsen 2010
Wassenaar aan den Rijn	RijnlandRoute/Knooppunt Ommedijk	Meijer 2020
Wateringen	Heerenvliet	Dorenbos & Koot 2005
Wateringen	Juliahof	Eimmermann 2009
Weerselo	't Spikkert	Schabbink 2013a
Weert	Kampershoek Noord, fase 1	Hiddink 2010
Weert	Kampershoek Noord, fase 2	Hiddink & De Boer 2014
Weert	Laarderweg	Roymans & Tol 1996, 62
Wehl	Heideslag	Jezeer 2014
Wehl	Norman Belvealstraat	Bouma 2013a
Well	Hoogwatergeul Well-Aijen, werkvak 1	Ter Wal & Tebbens 2012
Well-Aijen	Sintelenberg/Aijerbandstraat	Bouma & Müller 2014
Westeinde	Noormansveld	Arnoldussen & De Wit 2018
Westerbork	Hoofdstraat 36	Tulp 2016
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 11	Schurmans & Oosterbaan 2016
Wijchen	Bijsterhuizen, vindplaats 2/Kleine Kamp	Hermesen 2011
Wijchen	Boskant	Zandboer 2013
Wijchen	Oosterweg/Meerdreef	Van Kampen 2017
Wijchen	Paschalishof	Tulp 2008
Wijchen	Tienakker	Heirbaut & Van Enckevort 2011
Wijchen	Tunnelweg, Meshallen	Heirbaut et al. 2010
Wijk bij Duurstede	De Horden	Vos 2002
Wijk bij Duurstede	Veilingterrein	Dijkstra 2012
Wolder	Cannerberg	Van Wijk 2016
Wommels	Wommels-Zuid	Varwijk & De Langen 2018
Zeeland	Voederheil II	Bouma et al. 2016

Place	Toponym	References
Zevenaar	Wageningen-Mouterijnoort	Hermesen 2014
Zundert	Weereijs Park	Van den Brink & Van Renswoude 2019
Zutphen	Eefdesse Enk	Osinga 2012
Zutphen	Klaprooslaan 2	Kastelein 2013
Zutphen	Looërenk	Bouwmeester et al. 2008
Zutphen	Voorsterallee/Wolfelerenk	Fermin 2011
Zutphen	Wanne 5-9/Lievenheersteeg 18-26	Den Braven 2010
Zwaag	Bangert 61	Duijn 2013



'Ritual' is a complex subject that has left few archaeologists unmoved. Excavations of settlements routinely unearth finds and assemblages that appear to relate to past ritual practices. Yet there is a good deal of uncertainty about the occurrence and significance of these 'special deposits' in time and place. This report presents a systematic inventory of possible special deposits in and around the house and yard based on archaeological research conducted in the Netherlands during the 'Malta era' (1997–2019). The results are examined through the lens of various interpretive frameworks and perspectives: the biographical perspective, identity, feasting, magic and liminality. The report also reflects on existing research practice and makes recommendations for future research.

This report is intended for archaeologists, as well as for other professionals and amateur enthusiasts involved in archaeology.

The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) provides knowledge and advice to give the future a past.