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SNY	19257
ENY	6483
CNY	-
Parish	3060
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**COOK'S QUARRY, WEST HESLERTON**

**Excavation of an Anglo Saxon Burial**

**By C. Haughton, Landscape Research Centre**



**COOK'S SAND QUARRY, WEST HESLERTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE  
(HESLERTON PARISH PROJECT SITE 10)**

**Report on the Rescue Excavation of an Anglo-Saxon Burial** MNY36120  
**Christine Haughton, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1998**

Following the recent removal of topsoil from an area at the northern end of Cook's sand quarry, it was noticed by one of the quarry employees, that a bone (the right humerus of an adult) had fallen from the north-facing section of the quarry edge. Further examination revealed some ribs and a cranium protruding from the section. Neil Campling, County Archaeologist, was informed on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1998, and Christine Haughton of the Landscape Research Centre and Nick Pearson from York were called upon to investigate.

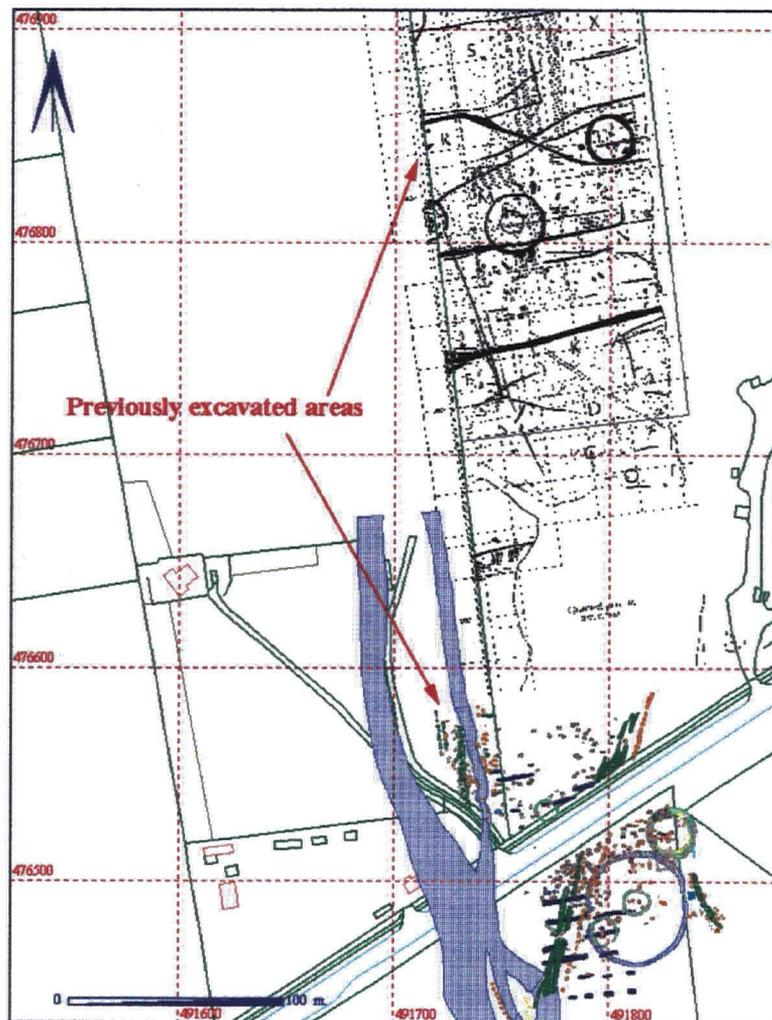


Figure One Plan showing previously excavated areas

The grave cut was visible in section and had a depth of approximately 30cm from the base of the topsoil. Mr. Cook kindly provided ladders so that the grave section could be examined at close quarters. The top of the grave had not been disturbed by stripping as the machine had not removed the topsoil from the very edge of the quarry due to the risk of collapse.

After removing the overburden with shovels, the grave was excavated in plan to reveal a flexed burial lying on its left side with the head to the east. Excavation was made difficult by the fact that the grave was right on the quarry edge which, Mr. Cook had warned, was likely to give way at any time if any weight were put upon it. The grave pit itself was ovoid in plan and around 1m in length and >45 cm wide; the fill had been much disturbed by small animal burrows. The sides sloped gently to a flat base. There was no evidence of a grave lining or coffin. The bone was in good condition, probably due to the large amounts of chalk gravel in the sand which had provided an alkaline environment. The right radius, ulna, and some of the small hand bones were missing, presumed lost from the edge of the quarry in the same manner as the humerus retrieved earlier. The cranium was slightly crushed. Green staining of the lower jaw alerted the excavators to the likely presence of copper alloy and, indeed, resting on the right shoulder and below the chin was a copper alloy cruciform brooch. No other grave goods were present.

The burial is probably that of a female on the basis of cranial and pelvic features, and the fact that it was accompanied by a cruciform brooch, found usually in female assemblages. The longbone epiphyses are incompletely fused indicating that she was a young adult when she died. No bone pathologies were observed.

The skeleton and brooch were photographed *in situ*. True vertical photography was not possible due to the danger of the unstable quarry edge, but it should be possible to produce a rectified digitised grave plan from the photographs.

It was decided to lift both the cranium, left scapula and clavicle and the brooch together as a single soil block due to the presence of overlying mineral-preserved organic material (probably textile) which would have disintegrated otherwise. The remainder of the bones were lifted and bagged separately. The skeletal material and the brooch are currently with the Landscape Research Centre in Yedingham. It should be possible to have the bones examined at the same time as the skeletal material from

the West Heslerton Anglo-Saxon Settlement. The Ancient Monuments Laboratory Conservator, Glynis Edwards, who is currently working on other material from West Heslerton will be approached to see if she is willing to deal with the brooch and its associated organic material.

Mr. Cook informed the Coroner that human remains had been found, and Christine Haughton informed Sergeant Scarlett of Scarborough Police that the body was approximately 1500 years old, a date confirmed by the presence of the brooch, which falls within the broad range of AD 450-650. More precise dating may be possible when the brooch has been X-rayed and the organic material removed to reveal the decoration.

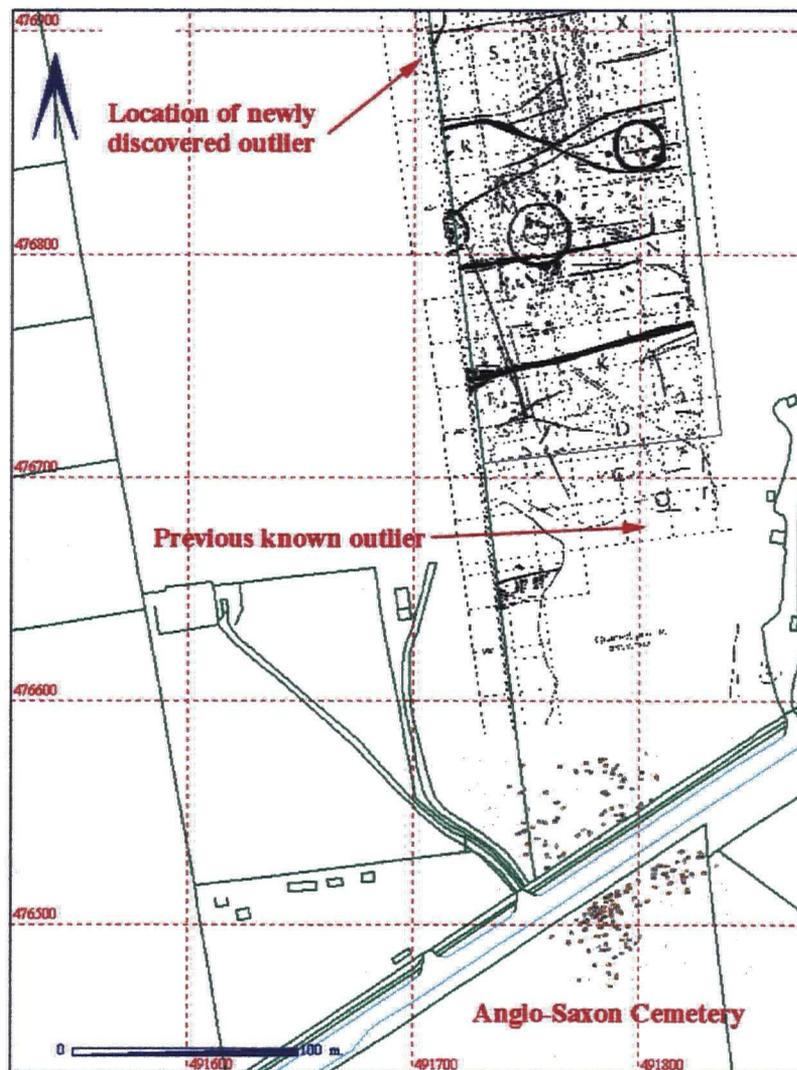


Figure Two Plan showing the location of the newly discovered grave in relation to the previously excavated cemetery.

Prior to excavation the grave was presumed to be prehistoric in date, due to the presence of previously excavated Bronze Age round barrows in the vicinity

(Powlesland *et al*, 1986, 75-110). It was therefore surprising to discover that the burial was, in fact, that of an Anglo-Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavated by the Heslerton Parish Project from 1979 to 1987 lies some 330m to the south of this grave, on either side of the A64 trunk road, although there was one outlier, Grave 1C464, 115m to the north of the northern limit of the cemetery proper (Powlesland & Haughton, 1998 forthcoming).

A brief examination of the surrounding area revealed no other obvious features, although machine tracks over the area and patches of compacted topsoil made it difficult to see surface features clearly. The exceptionally dry and windy conditions resulting in sand blowing across the site may also have obscured evidence of archaeological activity. It would be advisable to re-examine this area following some rain. An examination of the quarry section revealed a possible V-sectioned ditch to the east of the burial; it is possible that this is a continuation of the ditch of Enclosure A excavated on Heslerton Site 1 in 1983 (Powlesland *et al*, 1986, 161-162; Fig.68). Further features just to the west of the burial include what appear to be areas of animal disturbance. Three sherds of mediaeval sand-gritted pottery were recovered from the surface of the area.

### References

- Powlesland, D., Haughton, C., and Hanson, J 1986 'Excavations at Heslerton, North Yorkshire 1978-82'. *Archaeol. J.*, **143** (1986), 53-173.
- Powlesland, D. & Haughton, C. 1998 (forthcoming) *West Heslerton: The Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery*, English Heritage/Landscape Research Centre Monograph

### Acknowledgements

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