

# **THE ROMAN CEMETERY AT BROUGHAM, CUMBRIA**

EXCAVATIONS 1966–67



# THE ROMAN CEMETERY AT BROUGHAM, CUMBRIA

EXCAVATIONS 1966–67

BY

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## SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the excavations in the Roman cemetery at Brougham, Cumbria, which lay to the east of the fort and *vicus*. The site was excavated in 1966 and 1967 in advance of and during the building of a new road which destroyed the site. The programme of analysis was undertaken in 2000–2002, and the results have shown that it is possible to extract much new information from old excavations.

The cemetery was in use during the third century A.D. The dead were cremated and it is clear that a wide range of pyre goods were burnt with the deceased, including jewellery, glass and metal vessels, military equipment and objects of ivory. Their remains were interred primarily in the form of urned cremation burials accompanied by other pottery vessels and sometimes by ones of glass. A range of other funerary features was recovered including deposits of pyre debris and deposits of pottery vessels without cremated bone.

The osteological analysis revealed that all ages from infants of six months to mature adults were buried in the cemetery. By studying the associations of the age and sex of the deceased with their pyre and grave goods, it was possible to show that the funeral rites were strongly structured according to gender and age. The associations were explored using statistical significance tests and it can be shown that the patterns are highly unlikely to have come about by chance.

The clearest difference was between the children and immature individuals and the adults. Adults were burnt on biers elaborately decorated with bone inlays surrounded by personal equipment, and frequently accompanied by the remains of animals. Some of these were in the form of meat joints, but in other cases the entire carcass of the animal had been placed on the pyre. The animal species represented included cattle, sheep/goat, dog, domestic fowl and goose. Pig was conspicuous by its rarity. Most unusually within a Roman milieu, the complete carcasses of horses were occasionally placed on the pyre. In several cases women had been cremated accompanied by horses and military equipment, raising interesting questions about the nature of the military community. The children may either have had fewer pyre goods, or have had mainly ones that have left no archaeological trace. At the time of the excavations sieving would not have been a routine part of the excavation process and so the remains of plant offerings such as fruits and other vegetable foodstuffs would not have been recovered.

The types of vessel placed in the grave were also influenced by the age and sex of the deceased. Trier colour-coat beakers were clearly felt to be particularly appropriate for infants and children in the earliest years of the cemetery, both as urns and as grave goods. Dr. 33 samian cups only occurred in the graves of children of eight years or younger, deep samian bowls were the preserve of adults. Interestingly, decorated Central Gaulish samian bowls made in the later second century appear to have been reserved for mature adults. This association between old items and people who may have been the elders of their community was also seen in some of the glass vessels and in the one metal vessel, an enamelled patera, deposited as a grave good. This suggests that there may have been differences in the funerary rituals of young and old adults, as well as those between children and adults. Differences between the sexes were also noted. Glass drinking cups, for example, were only placed in the graves of adult males.



Various strands of evidence including elements of the pyre and grave goods, epigraphy and some burial practices suggest the community burying their dead in the cemetery originated from the Danubian area and included elements who may have come from beyond the frontier.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude présente les résultats des fouilles archéologiques effectuées dans le cimetière romain de Brougham (dans le comté de Cumbria en Grande-Bretagne), situé à l'est du fort et du *vicus*. Le site fut l'objet de fouilles en 1966 et 1967 avant et pendant la construction d'une nouvelle route qui a détruit le site. Les résultats du programme d'analyses entrepris en 2000 et 2002 montrent qu'il est possible d'extraire de nombreuses nouvelles informations à partir d'anciennes fouilles.

Le cimetière était utilisé au troisième siècle après J.-C. Les morts étaient incinérés et il est clair qu'un large éventail de mobilier funéraire primaire, notamment des bijoux, des récipients en verre et en métal, des objets à caractère militaire et des pièces en ivoire étaient brûlés sur le bûcher avec le défunt. Placés dans des urnes à incinération, étaient principalement enterrés avec des offrandes secondaires, généralement en céramique, et quelquefois en verre. Une variété d'autres éléments funéraires ont été retrouvés y compris des dépôts de débris de bûcher et des dépôts de poterie sans os incinérés.

Les analyses ostéologiques ont révélé que des personnes de tout âge, des nourrissons de six mois aux adultes d'âge mûr, ont été enterrées dans le cimetière. En étudiant la corrélation entre d'une part l'âge et le sexe des défunts et d'autre part leur bûcher et les objets de leur tombe, il a été possible de montrer que les rites funéraires étaient fortement structurés selon le sexe et l'âge. Ces corrélations ont été analysées en utilisant des tests statistiques significatifs et il peut être démontré qu'il est extrêmement peu probable qu'elles soient l'effet du hasard.

La différence la plus nette réside entre d'une part les enfants et les jeunes individus et d'autre part les adultes. Ceux-ci étaient incinérés sur des lits de morts décorées avec des d'incrustations élaborée en os, entourés de biens personnels et fréquemment accompagnés de restes d'animaux. Parfois ces restes se présentaient sous forme de morceaux de viande mais dans d'autres cas toute la carcasse de l'animal était placée sur le bûcher. Parmi les espèces animales représentées l'on trouve les bovins, les moutons-chèvres, les chiens, les volailles et les oies. On remarque la rareté du porc. Et, fait tout à fait inhabituel pour un milieu romain, des carcasses entières de chevaux étaient parfois déposées sur le bûcher. Dans plusieurs cas, des femmes ont été incinérées accompagnées de chevaux et de mobilier militaire ce qui pose d'intéressantes questions quant à la nature de la communauté militaire. Les enfants avaient soit moins d'objets sur le bûcher ou recevaient des offrandes qui ont brûlé entièrement. En absence d'un tamisage systématique au moment des fouilles, il est possible que les restes d'offrandes végétales telles que des fruits ou autres légumes n'aient pas été retrouvés.

Les types de récipients placés dans la tombe reflètent aussi l'âge et le sexe du défunt. Au cours des premières années d'existence du cimetière, des gobelets de Trèves à revêtement argileux (*Moselkeramik*) étaient clairement considérés comme étant particulièrement appropriés pour les nourrissons et les enfants ; ils pouvaient servir à la fois d'urne et d'objets d'offrande funéraire. Des coupes en terre sigillée du type Drag. 33 n'ont été trouvées que dans les tombes d'enfants de huit ans ou moins, les bols profonds en terre sigillée étaient réservés aux adultes. Les bols en terre sigillée de la Gaule centrale décorés de façon très intéressante et fabriqués vers la fin du deuxième siècle sembleraient avoir été propres aux offrandes d'adultes d'âge mûr. Le lien entre les objets relativement anciens lors de leur dépose et les défunts, met en évidence, qu'il pouvait s'agir des aînés de leur communauté. La même possibilité

d'interprétation se prête, pour certains récipients en verre et également pour le seul récipient en métal, une patère émaillée, déposés comme offrandes. Ceci suggère des différences entre des rites funéraires des jeunes adultes et d'adultes d'âge mûr de même qu'entre ceux des enfants et des adultes. Des différences selon le sexe ont aussi été remarquées. Par exemple les coupes en verre servant à boire n'étaient placées que dans les tombes d'hommes adultes.

Des indices à caractère très variable concernant le bûcher, le mobilier funéraire, les inscriptions ainsi que certaines pratiques funéraires suggèrent que la communauté qui enterrait ses morts dans ce cimetière était originaire de la région du Danube et comprenait des éléments culturels qui auraient pu venir d'au-delà de la frontière.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesem Bericht liegen die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen auf dem östlich des Forts und des Vicus gelegenen römischen Friedhof in Brougham in Cumbria vor. Die Ausgrabungen erfolgten 1966 und 1967 vor und während des Baus einer neuen Straße, welche die Ausgrabungsstätte zerstörte. Die Auswertung wurde in den Jahren 2000 bis 2002 durchgeführt; die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass viele neue Informationen aus Altgrabungen gewonnen werden können.

Die Nekropole wurde im dritten Jahrhundert n.Chr. benutzt. Die Toten wurden kremiert; eine Vielzahl an Beigaben wurde zusammen mit den Verstorbenen verbrannt, einschließlich Schmuck, Glas- und Metallgefäße, militärische Ausrüstungsgegenstände und Objekte aus Elfenbein. Die Überreste wurden hauptsächlich in Urnen beigesetzt, begleitet von anderen Ton- und gelegentlich Glasgefäßen. Verschiedene andere Beisetzungsformen liegen vor, einschließlich der Beisetzung von Scheiterhaufenresten und von Tongefäßen ohne Leichenbrand.

Die anthropologischen Untersuchungen haben gezeigt, dass alle Altersgruppen vom sechs Monate alten Säugling bis zu Erwachsenen reiferer Jahre auf dem Friedhof beigesetzt wurden. Eine Untersuchung der Beziehungen zwischen Alter und Geschlecht der Verstorbenen und der Scheiterhaufen- und Grabbeigaben konnte aufzeigen, dass die Begräbnisriten stark nach Geschlecht und Alter strukturiert waren. Diese Beziehungen wurden mit Hilfe statistischer Signifikanztests untersucht, die aufzeigten, dass die festgestellten Muster mit größter Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht zufällig sind.

Der deutlichste Unterschied bestand zwischen Kindern und Jugendlichen und den Erwachsenen. Erwachsene wurden auf Totenbetten verbrannt, die mit Beinintarsien kunstvoll verziert waren; zudem waren die Toten von persönlichen Gegenständen umgeben, oft auch von Überresten von Tieren. Dabei konnte es sich um Fleischstücke oder aber um ganze Tierkörper handeln. Zu den Tierarten gehören Rinder, Schafe bzw. Ziegen, Hunde, Hausgeflügel und Gänse. Es ist auffällig, dass Schweine nur selten als Totenbeigaben benutzt wurden, und besonders unüblich in diesem römischen Umfeld ist die gelegentliche Präsenz von ganzen Pferden auf dem Scheiterhaufen. In einigen Fällen sind Frauen mit Pferden und militärischer Ausrüstung verbrannt worden, was interessante Fragen über die Art der militärischen Einheit aufwirft. Kinder hatten entweder weniger Beigaben oder hauptsächlich solche, von denen keine archäologischen Spuren zurückblieben. Zum Zeitpunkt der Ausgrabungen war das Durchsieben der Erde kein routinemäßiger Bestandteil des Ausgrabungsverfahrens und daher hätten Überreste von Pflanzenopfern wie Früchte oder andere pflanzlichen Lebensmittel nicht gefunden werden können.

Die Gefäßtypen, die in die Gräber gelegt wurden, waren ebenfalls vom Alter und dem Geschlecht des Verstorbenen abhängig. In den frühen Jahren des Friedhofs wurden offensichtlich Trierer Becher mit Glanztonüberzug (*Moselkeramik*) für Kleinkinder und Kinder sowohl als Urnen als auch als Grabbeigaben bevorzugt. TS-Becher des Typs Drag. 33 kommen nur in Gräbern von Kindern bis zu acht Jahre vor; tiefe TS-Schüsseln waren den Erwachsenen vorbehalten. Interessant verzierte TS-Schüsseln aus Mittelgallien aus dem späteren zweiten Jahrhundert waren offensichtlich älteren Erwachsenen vorbehalten. Diese Beziehung zwischen älteren Gegenständen und älteren Personen, die möglicherweise die Ältesten ihrer Gemeinde waren, findet sich ebenfalls bei einigen anderen Grabbeigaben, so bei Glasgefäßen und beim einzigen Metallgefäß, einer emaillierten Patera. Dies lässt darauf schließen, dass es

möglicherweise Unterschiede zwischen den Begräbnisritualen von jungen und älteren Erwachsenen sowie von Kindern und Erwachsenen gab. Weitere Unterschiede sind geschlechtsspezifisch. So wurden beispielsweise gläserne Trinkgefäße nur erwachsenen Männern in das Grab gelegt.

Die Interpretation verschiedener Aspekte, so des Scheiterhaufens und der Grabbeigaben, der Inschriften sowie bestimmter Begräbnispraktiken, lassen darauf schließen, dass die Gemeinschaft, die ihre Toten auf diesem Friedhof begraben hat, aus dem Donaugebiet stammte; verschiedene Elemente stammen möglicherweise sogar von jenseits der römischen Reichsgrenze.