

APPENDIX 9: SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF THE ACCESSIONED FINDS FROM THE GRAVE GROUPS AT CUXTON CEMETERY

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1. Introduction

A total of 190 objects from 31 graves at ARC CXT 98 have been accessioned; a few items share more than one accession number, while others should be split. The concentration of the finds in the graves varies considerably. Most finds were recovered by hand excavation, but one or two were found in sieved residues. They comprise an important assemblage with some high quality pieces and a few of particular interest (the gold pendants, workbox, needle case/container and continental-style buckles).

The study of the distribution of the finds and their location in the different graves has considerable potential to assist the following fieldwork aims:

- *To establish a chronology for the cemetery and a sequence of development within it*
- *To help determine burial practices.*

Methodology

All the finds were recorded on the MoLAS oracle database with single entries for most items. These entries have been subsequently added to the RLE Datasets. The finds were assessed by material category (see separate reports) and then grouped by grave in order to gain an impression of the range of assemblages and the correlation of object types. The finds were related to the graves on the grave plan, but their location has not been considered other than in general terms.

Quantification

A total of 190 finds were recovered. Taking the assemblage by material category, iron is the most common material in most graves. Copper is well represented in some graves but is not present in every group. The beads of glass and stone are mainly from one grave, with smaller groups from a few others. Quantification is complicated by the fact that several items are composites. Organic material is hard to quantify but exists in mineralised form on many items.

In all 31 of the 36 inhumation burials contained grave goods which had been associated with skeletons; finds were also recovered from three other contexts [149], [357], [367]. Most graves contain less than five items, but a few stand out as particularly rich (see below).

The most common finds are weapons, knives, jewellery and dress accessories. There are no swords or true seaxes, and no brooches.

Provenance

The distribution of the finds in the graves is summarised in Table 18. All the groups are important – even those with only one or two finds, as they contribute to part of the wider picture (see below), but a few are more prestigious and should be discussed in detail. The finds from [246], [290], and [293] were also associated with pottery.

Male graves.

Of the graves that contained identifiable males, [299] had a spear but no shield. Male [261] is of particular interest, as he wore at least one continental-style belt set, and had no weapons; this is the only burial with ‘coins’ (one real and two symbolic). The finds from [261] are well preserved and the belt fittings are of particular interest as they are either imported or copies of a continental type, and possibly older than the other finds. This male also had a lace tag at the waist, suggesting an additional girdle, while the distribution of the other finds suggests that they might have been in a bag or purse

Four graves containing unsexed adult remains have typically male assemblages; of these, [246] and [372] each contained spears and shields. The shield from [372] is the oldest from the site, and is the only one with large rivets. Grave [246] is of interest, partly because the shield is the latest from the site; the deceased had a high quality composite belt buckle and was also accompanied by an imported Frankish bottle. This grave should be discussed in detail. Graves [164] and [312] each contained only a spear; male [164] had a possible cloak fastener at the shoulder.

Some graves containing no bone also have typically male assemblages ([282], [290]). Of these, [290] contained a spear and a chaff-tempered pot, while [282] seems to be related to [246] as it is the only other grave containing a Continental-style belt buckle, this time in association with a much better purse which seems to have contained a knife and a tool. Discussion of this grave must consider other burials with purses containing tools. The above graves are of relevance to the study of burial rites, economy and trade.

Skeleton [193] was identified as adult male, but the grave goods could equally be female, as they include two glass beads and no specifically male items; this could perhaps be the grave of a young man.

Female graves.

Four graves contained bone identifiable as adult female ([214], [240], [296], [363]). Of these, the best group is from [214], which was comparatively richly furnished with a necklace of glass beads and at least one silver ring, and numerous items in the area of the waist and pelvis. Some items such as shears, knives and a chatelaine are often found in these locations, but the placing of two amethyst beads by the left hip is unexpected. Two bone and iron pendants, which must have been fastened to a belt, are also very unusual. This was the only female grave with a comb, although it is in such poor condition it is quite possible that others have decayed. The site records note that the comb was once in a case, although no trace of this survives now. A composite buckle at the waist may have fastened a shroud. The finds from [240], a mother and child burial, include a silver pin on the chest and a disc-like object found at the waist which remains to be identified; it is unlike any of the other buckles from the site and could be an important find.

One skeleton identifiable only as an adult ([305]) contains the most wealthy female assemblage from the site, with more jewellery than [214], and several items not found in any other grave; the finds are also in good condition. The grave goods include several pendants and necklace rings of gold and silver, and the only bracelet from the site. Of particular interest are the workbox and needle-case/container, of which the latter could be imported from the East Mediterranean. The iron includes purse mount/firesteel, at least

two, possibly three knives and fragments of keys/chatelaine. This is a key group dating to the mid- or second half of 7th century; parallels for different items may be found in Southampton, Norfolk, and Suffolk, amongst other sites. The above graves are of relevance to the study of burial rites, economy and trade.

Two adult graves, [168] and [210], containing only beads are probably of younger women, while [285] contained a very unusual ring-headed pin which of 'Celtic' type (Appendix 5, 6.7).

Four graves identified as children contained grave goods. Of these, [172], [276] and [293] were probably boys; [293] and possibly [276] contain spears, while [293] also has a chaff-tempered pot. The bead from [186] might suggest that this burial was of was a girl.

Indeterminate.

Several skeletons identifiable only as adults contained items that could be male or female, and some graves contain very few artefacts, or none at all. This could reflect either their status or date (*ie.* the preference for unfurnished graves after the end of the 7th century).

Conservation

Needs for conservation and investigation have been noted in the individual assessments. It must be stressed that since the overall scheme of the publication has not yet been determined these should be open to revision. For example, should it be decided to photograph certain grave groups together (and this would be highly desirable) there will almost certainly be further conservation work needed than has currently been indicated.

Comparative material

Technically all sites in Kent are of some relevance to the study of the Cuxton finds, but those in the Medway area and between Rochester and the coast around Dover (including Saltwood) must be considered. There are numerous relevant sites beyond the county with which this site should be compared. The material appears to fit well within the culture of the late 6th and 7th centuries in southern England, and although some pieces such as the large 'purse frame' are quite unusual, several parallels for the buckles, purse mount/strike-a-light, spears and shields have already been noted in other cemeteries across the country. Some of the more relevant sites are listed below.

The closest published site is that at Polhill in the Darenth valley, although this might start and end slightly later than Cuxton (Philp 1973; Hawkes 1973). Closer still, but largely unpublished and potentially earlier in date, are the finds from cemeteries in Rochester, notably those at Watts Avenue and Star Hill, Eastgate, (Payne 1895, lv; 1897, liv-lvii; Smith 1912, 376; Meaney 1964, 134). Other sites in Orange Terrace and Roebuck Road were first thought to be Jutish, but may also be relevant (Payne 1898, 3; 1900, liv-lv). Finds of the same date have also been recovered previously from Cuxton and Strood (Smith 1912, 377; Meaney 1964, 138; Swanton 1973). Other sites in north-east Kent which have, or are likely to have, relevant comparative material include Horton Kirby (Cumberland 1940; Meaney 1964, 124). Little of this material, however, has been adequately published.

Other relevant sites in Kent include Faversham (eg Leeds 1936), Sibertswold (notably grave 172, which offers a parallel for grave [305]), Buckland, Dover (Evison 1987) and the

more diverse sites of Finglesham (Hawkes 1958) and Saltwood. Comparanda will also be found in the Faussett collection (*Inventorium Sepulchrale*) and the various publications by Roach Smith, amongst others. Sites outside Kent include Sutton Hoo, Taplow, Boss Hall, Southampton, the Cambridgeshire cemeteries of Burwell and Shudy Camps (Lethbridge 1931; 1936), and Leighton Buzzard (Hyslop 1963). Continental literature has not been checked, but there are undoubtedly relevant assemblages in France and the Low Countries.

Potential for further work

The study of the material should assist the following Fieldwork Event Aims:

- *To establish a chronology for the cemetery*
- 1.1 With the exception of one or two possible heirlooms, the assessment has shown that the metalwork is slightly later than first thought. The finds, can be broadly dated to the period 580-700, and it has been found that there is a sequence within the dates of the four shield bosses. Most finds date to the mid-7th century, but some items, including at least one shield, were old when buried, and others may well have been so. The cemetery thus spans two or at most, four generations. The potential exists, through further research, to refine the dating of the finds in at least some of the graves, but the problem of the unfurnished graves and those with very few finds, which could equally be chronologically late, or of lesser status, needs more attention.
 - 1.2 Scientific dating of the human bone (¹⁴C), if this can be done, would help to establish a more precise chronology for the site. The 7th century falls on a particularly good part of the ¹⁴C dating curve, and the use of high precision samples (200g longbone) would allow dating within 40 years at 95% confidence. Up to six samples taken from suitable graves with different orientations and grave goods would aid both the phasing and interpretation of the site and the dating of the finds.
 - *To help determine burial practices*
 - 1.3 The investment in artefacts and mortuary structures at Cuxton is somewhat polarised and the grave assemblages range from largely furnished to largely unfurnished. Two female graves ([214] and [305]) and two male graves ([246], [261]) contained more ‘prestigious’ items than the others. As at Polhill (Hawkes 1973, 200), the graves former lie within ring ditches, but the latter do not. The significance of this phenomenon needs more consideration, but reflects investment choices in the use of either below-ground accessories or above-ground monuments. The former can in turn be used to consider variables such as age, gender, status, cultural affinities and beliefs of the individuals and perhaps also relationships between them (eg the pairing of graves [282] and [305]); there is much scope to develop this field of research.
 - 1.4 The assessment has also shown that the finds can help in the identification of male and female groups where the preservation is poor or bone is lacking altogether, and that they have the potential to inform on contemporary dress. There are, however, a few anomalies where ‘male’ objects occur with female inhumations, and vice versa, which need further consideration. Study of the combination and positioning of different items on or by the body, and the way in which they have decayed or corroded, will help to build up a picture of burial rites in relation to age or gender, and if these rites changed through time. The

lack of brooches and cloisonne jewellery probably reflects changes in dress during the 7th century (Boddington 1990, 189) as much as the early Christian date of the site (Lethbridge 1931, 70), but are the shields are found graves on all alignments. Are they associated with more pagan/less Christian males or is the shield in the east-west grave [164] an heirloom?

- *To establish a sequence of development within the cemetery*

- 1.5 Once the dating of the finds has been established and/or refined, analysis of the different burial practices and the distribution of the graves may help to identify some chronological trends and perhaps even family groups. At present it can be noted that three of the shield burials are aligned to face the Medway, and that they lack ring ditches. The 'richest' graves are at the western end of the site, with an approximate east-west orientation, and three of them lack ring ditches. The semi-furnished graves might be poorer individuals, but it is more probable that they are later in the sequence (see above).

The following Landscape Zone aims (towns and their rural landscapes 100 BC-AD) 1700 may be addressed when the finds are considered together with the other accessions:

- *The ways in which human populations moved through the landscape, including the organisation of communication networks*

- 1.6 Even if the cemetery cannot be linked to a settlement, research into the finds can aid the understanding not only the site itself but the wider context in which the community functioned. The weapons from 5th- and 6th-century cemetery sites in the Rochester area reflect the fact that this was an important river crossing (Hawkes 1982, 74), but it must be determined to what extent the need to defend the northern boundary of Kent persisted in the 7th century. Given that Cuxton was on the north bank of the Medway, did it defend the Kentish kingdom, or that of Surrey? Indeed, given the lack of swords, can the composition of the male grave goods at Cuxton be used to demonstrate a 'military' function at all? The presence of spears does not necessarily denote that this was a warfaring community; it is likely that every male used one, for hunting as much as combat. Shields are weapons that become less common in graves throughout the 7th century. The similarity of the finds to assemblages from both sides of the Medway might thus reflect a more peaceful era and the development of Watling Street as part of the new communication and trade networks that were established between Canterbury, Rochester and London in the 7th century.

- *The economy of human populations using the landscape, including trade and contact with other populations*

- 1.7 The finds from ARC CXT 98 are generally quite homogenous, and show a 'cultural identity' of sorts for the site. Parallels between the pottery and other finds from sites on both sides of the Medway have been noted in the different material assessments (above), and these testify to trade networks, even if they cannot yet be defined. The amethyst beads, cowrie bead and the possible imported metalwork point to contact, direct or indirect with places beyond the immediate Kentish/Frankish sphere (evidenced by the glass and the pottery bottle). The gold does not indicate external trade as such as it was probably recycled.

- 1.8 Of particular interest for the CTRL project, therefore, is the question of how objects from the Continent were distributed (via Dover or other ports), and the changing proportion of imports as the distance from the coast increases. The

Cuxton and Saltwood sites should be analysed within their own terms of reference, but comparison and contrast of the differences in the location and assemblage composition of the two sites (and others near them) will help to understand the implications of these differences. For example, does the marked contrast between the range and numbers of 'luxury' goods at Saltwood (eg. brooches, buckets, Coptic bowls) and the scarcity of such items at Cuxton reflect status or the size and location of the sites? Cuxton may appear poor by comparison with Saltwood, but it was possibly of some standing in the local context: a few finds are of a relatively high quality, while one is possibly unique. The large amount of iron shows that the people of Cuxton had sufficient means to bury items that could otherwise have been recycled

- 1.9 It also needs to be determined whether the Cuxton people were culturally closer to those of Darenth than, say, Faversham. Saltwood appears to have a longer time span and has continental affinities which are characteristic of that area, but not obvious at Cuxton or in north-west Kent. More detailed comparison of the Cuxton finds with those from other sites, including Saltwood, will also help to establish whether there was continuity of tradition, or cultural change in 7th-century Kent, how this was manifested and how it relates to regional and national trends. Consideration of these and related points will help to place other Kentish sites of the period within this research framework.

- *New research aims.*

New cemetery assemblages of the 7th century are important, wherever they are, and Cuxton is a welcome addition to the corpus for Kent, and especially to the known cemeteries of west Kent/the Medway area, many of which are slightly earlier in date. They will inform on technology and use, and will help to provide a much-needed typology of different classes of finds for this period in this part of Kent, where many earlier finds still go unpublished. This work will ideally include a survey of the collections in Rochester and Maidstone museums, and will help to redress the imbalance of knowledge of 7th-century Kent, where more is known of the east than the west. Consideration of the site in the context of Conversion-period cemeteries, both in the county and across the country as a whole, will be of regional, if not wider significance.

Further work

If studied in detail, Cuxton has the potential to become a type-site for north Kent for some time to come. It is recommended that the finds are presented both by grave group and by object type, with a discussion of the overall significance of the material. In addition to the tasks included in the material-specific finds assessments, time must be allocated in order to:

- Analyse the general relation of the finds groups to their location on the site
- Study the finds assemblage in its local, regional and national context
- Edit the catalogues by grave and discuss the grave groups
- Prepare tables and a general discussion of the assemblage
- Edit finds texts

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Table 1: Assessment of the finds by grave group

SK: Skeleton, A: Adult, M: Male, F: Female, C: Child, Brackets (): Provisional sex

Context	Sex	Date	Material	Count	Comments
149	Grave fill	7 th century	Iron	1	Hinge?
164	SK/A (M)	7 th century	Copper	1	Very small buckle
164	SK/A (M)	7 th century	Iron	4	Shield boss, virtually complete low cone type Spear; short leaf-shaped blade Small, angle-backed knife Unknown
166	SK/A	7 th century	Iron	2	Buckle with pin, oval frame Knife
168	SK/A (F)	Later 7 th century	Glass	2	Beads (red, turquoise spiral)
172	SK/C	7 th century	Iron	1	Knife (blade)
178	SK/A (F?)	7 th century	Copper	1	Small buckle; oval frame and square plate
178	SK/A (F?)	7 th century	Iron	2	Medium-sized angle-backed seax-type knife Chain/chatelaine? (fragment)
186	SK/C	7 th century	Amber	1	Bead
190	SK/A	Mid-to-later 7 th century	Copper	2	Tiny buckle, oval frame and rectangular plate Two tiny fragments buckle plate
190	SK/A	7 th century	Iron	5	Large knife Knife 2 Mounts Key fragment
193	SK/AM (F?)	7 th century	Composite	1	Copper mount on wood/leather
193	SK/AM (F?)	Later 7 th century	Copper	1	Lace tag
193	SK/AM (F?)	7 th century	Iron	1	Knife, complete small blade; X-6651
193	SK/AM (F?)	7 th century	Glass	2	Beads (pale green annular; burnt ?green annular)
210	SK/A (F?)	7 th century	Glass	3	Beads (blue, yellow, white)
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Silver	1	Ring
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Iron	7	Buckle Ring (chatelaine?) 2 keys 2 knives Shears

Context	Sex	Date	Material	Count	Comments
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Composite	3	Iron buckle with copper rivets 2 antler pendants with iron mounts
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Shell	1	Small cowrie bead
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Stone	2	Beads: 2 amethyst drops
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Glass	29	Beads: 1 white; 10 red; 6 green; 8 blue; 4 yellow
214	SK/AF	7 th century	Bone	1	Comb: Antler/iron rivets [214-6]
240	SK/AF+ C	7 th century	Iron	3	Small knife, complete; possibly in leather case Pin? (with textile) Uncertain. Perforated disc with additional attachment
240	SK/AF+ C	7 th century	Wood	1	Fragments of box/coffin?
246	SK/A (M)	Mid-to-later 7 th century	Composite	1	Buckle, copper alloy with garnet in mount of beaded gold wire
246	SK/A (M)	7 th century	Copper	1	[246f] x-6642; oval plate +2 perforations
246	SK/A (M)	Mid-to-later 7 th century	Iron	6	Shield boss, complete, conical + grip Shield mount or grip Twin domed rivets ?shield fitting Spear Knife Buckle, small oval
	SK/A (M)	7 th century	Pottery	1	Frankish bottle
261	SK/AM	Late 6 th to early 7 th century	Copper	10	Tiny buckle, possibly from purse Large Continental-style buckle with rounded buckle plate and triangular buckle plate with domed studs Lace tag Mount (tongue-shaped + rivet) Coin? Disc (?symbolic coin, possibly silver)
261	SK/AM	7 th century	Iron	5	Key? Suspension loop Knife Perforated disc (buckle fitting or symbolic coin) Mount

Context	Sex	Date	Material	Count	Comments
276	SK/C	7 th century	Iron	2	Spear? Knife
282	No bone (M)	7 th century	Copper	6	Large belt buckle; continental type with integral triangular plate Purse frame with 2 Tiny buckles and mount Triangular open mount
282	No bone (M)	7 th century	Iron	4	Large, angle-backed knife Knife? or shears Tool (?awl) Mount (strip) in poor condition ?file or shield fitting?
285	No bone	Later 6th to 7 th century?	Copper	1	Unusual ring-headed pin (Celtic or part of set of linked pins?)
285	No bone	7 th century	Iron	1	Knife? Poor condition; associated wood; X-6653
290	No bone (M)	Mid-to- later 7 th century	Copper	1	Tiny buckle, oval frame; plate with serrated edge.
290	No bone (M)	7 th century	Composite	1	Spear (with mineralised wood/ textile)
290	No bone (M)	7 th century	Iron	2	2 knives
290	No bone (M)	7 th century	Pottery	1	Tall-necked chaff-tempered jar
293	SK/C (M)	7 th century	Silver	1	Pin
293	SK/C (M)	7 th century	Copper	1	Tiny buckle and buckle plate
293	SK/C (M)	7 th century	Iron	4	Buckle; oval frame, Ferrule or tool Spear, type D leaf-shaped; Knife
293	SK/C (M)	7 th century	Pottery	1	Chaff-tempered jar
296	SK/AF	7 th century	Glass	1	Bead (green)
296	SK/AF	7 th century	Iron	5	Knife Chatelaine/keys Shears (with textile) Buckle, round
299	SK/AM	7 th century	Composite	2	Knife, iron with copper rivet ?pattern welding Buckle/plate + copper rivets
299	SK/AM	7 th century	Iron	2	Spear Knife
302	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Glass	1	Bead (large polychrome)

Context	Sex	Date	Material	Count	Comments
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Gold	1	Scutiform pendant with filigree quatrefoil and central boss; high quality
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Silver	6	Bulla pendant 5 rings (1 broken) and one fragment
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Composite	1	Fragment
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Composite	2	Small gold pendant with green glass setting Bone in iron mount; cf [214]
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Copper	3	Bracelet with twisted fastening. Needle-case/box with lid attached to a chain ?import Work box, cylindrical with punched decoration; zoomorphic attachment plate
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Glass	2	Bead (small green melon bead) Blue marbled ?mount/counter
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Iron	7	Purse/strike-a-light (textile) Small oval buckle with long triangular plate 4 knives Chatelaine/key?
305	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Stone	1	Small cut garnet
312	SK/A (M)	Later 7 th century	Composite	1	Iron buckle with decorative copper rivets
312	SK/A (M)	Later 7 th century	Iron	3	Spear 2 knives (mineralised wood)
315	SK/AF (M)	Late 7 th - early 8 th cent	Composite	1(3)	Shield boss, small low cone type
315	SK/AF (M)	Late 7 th - early 8 th cent	Iron	3	Spear, short leaf-shaped Knife Buckle
318	SK/A (F)	7 th century	Iron	1	Knife (or shears)
323	SK/A	7 th century	Iron	1	Knife, very poor condition; X-6653
357	No bone	7 th century	Glass	3	Beads (very small yellow)
363	SK/AF	Mid-to-later 7 th century	Composite	1	Buckle, iron frame with copper alloy plate
363	SK/AF	Mid-to-later 7 th century	Iron	2	Buckle (textiles) Long angle-backed knife (2 pieces)

Context	Sex	Date	Material	Count	Comments
367	No bone	7 th century	Iron	2	Knife Ring from chatelaine?
372	SK/A (M)	7 th century	Copper	1	Oval buckle, rectangular buckle with three large decorative rivets. Possibly unworn.
372	SK/A (M)	6 th century; later 7 th century	Iron	8	Knife (mineralised wood) 4 large circular shield mounts Shield boss (the oldest from the site) Spear, leaf-shaped; latest find in grave Spear, butt-ferrule