

S6, were found in the south-west part of the excavated area (Fig. 2), where a number of other burials, lacking clear evidence for their mode of death, are more likely to belong to this phase of the site's use than the pagan one. Lowther's discovery of mutilated and dismembered bodies was in the same general area. He interpreted his discovery as representing the massacre of Danes fleeing from a battle²⁰, but it is evident from the incidence of intercutting burials of this phase that interment took place on more than one occasion. Stratigraphically some of the execution victims are later than some pagan burials, but how much later is difficult to say. The one possible indication on the site of a date for the execution victims was the recovery of two sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery from feature 103 (Fig. 2), if it is accepted that it represents the hole dug for a gallows tree²¹.

A better guide to the probable date of the site is to be found by comparison with similar sites excavated elsewhere²². One of the best examples of this type of site is that excavated at Guildown²³. The location of the site is closely similar to that at the Goblin Works: both occupy elevated positions on the North Downs overlooking a medieval town situated where a river cuts through the Downs (Leatherhead by the Mole, and Guildford by the Wey, respectively). More importantly, the Guildown site produced evidence of an early Saxon cemetery overlain by a large execution cemetery.

The excavator (Lowther, again) was inclined to ascribe the majority of the bodies to a reputed massacre of 1036, but was aware that more than one occasion of burial was involved: most pertinently one burial was found with a coin of 1043. This type of evidence is matched at another execution site at Stockbridge Down²⁴, Hampshire, where an armpit purse produced coinage whose latest date of use is put at 1065²⁵. This is not the place to attempt an exhaustive review of the known execution sites²⁶, and it will be sufficient to say that wherever dating evidence is forthcoming, it belongs to the late Saxon or early Norman period, and it therefore seems highly likely that the Goblin Works site belongs to the same era.

It has, furthermore, been pointed out by Aldsworth²⁷ that such sites, like the present one, seem to be deliberately sited on boundaries. Clearly, therefore, the edge of a territory was thought to be the appropriate place for the execution and burial of criminals condemned to death by the increasingly ferocious late Saxon laws²⁸. In these circumstances it may be largely coincidence, occasioned by preference for the same type of site, which leads commonly, but not exclusively, to the re-use of pagan Saxon sites for this purpose, rather than any lingering notion of the inherent appropriateness of a pagan burial ground for criminals who, by definition, were outside the Christian faith.

Excavations & Post-Excavation Work

City, by Museum of London, Department of Urban Archaeology. A series of long term excavations. Enquiries to DUA, Museum of London, London Wall, EC2Y 5HN (01-600 3699).

Croydon & District, processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Mrs Muriel Shaw, 28 Lismore Road, South Croydon, CR2 7QA (01-688 2720).

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to DGLA, Museum of London (01-600 3699 x241).

Local enquiries to:

North London: 3-7 Ray Street, London EC1R 3DJ (01-837 8363).

South-west London: St. Luke's House, Sandycombe Road, Kew, Surrey (01-940 5989).

Southwark and Lambeth: Port Medical Centre, English Grounds, Morgans Lane, London SE1 2HT (01-407 1989 or 1258).

West London: 273A Brentford High Street, Brentford, Middlesex (01-560 3880).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham

Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (01-731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Marion Shipley, Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston (01-546 5386).

North-east London, by Passmore Edwards Museum. Enquiries to Pat Wilkinson, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, E15 4LZ (01-534 4545).

Surrey, by Surrey Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to David Bird, County Archaeological Officer, Planning Department, County Hall, Kingston, Surrey (01-541 8911).

Vauxhall Pottery, by Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society. Processing of excavated material continues three nights a week. Enquiries to S.L.A.S., c/o Cuming Museum, 155 Walworth Road, SE17 (01-703 3324).

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