

CLEATHAM, NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE, THE 'KIRTON IN LINDSEY' CEMETERY (SE936007) (Fig. 3)

Excavations carried out on a mixed rite Anglo-Saxon cemetery by Kevin Leahy for Scunthorpe, now North Lincolnshire, Museum.

The 'Kirton in Lindsey' cemetery was discovered in 1856 during the construction of a road. It was described as being on a high ridge of ground running north and south through the greater part of the county, called the 'Cliff, (Lincoln Edge) just within the northern limit of the parish of Kirton-in-Lindsey'.¹ Most of the fifty or sixty urns found in 1856 were smashed in a fruitless search for treasure, but eight vessels survived, including an important faceted carinated bowl of apparently early date.² In 1978 the site of the cemetery was identified but it was found that a recent change in agricultural practice had made its destruction by ploughing inevitable. In view of this, large-scale excavations were carried out by the writer between 1984 and 1989. This work defined the extent of the cemetery on all sides, and resulted in around 95% of the site being excavated (Fig. 3). Systematic field-walking during the course of the excavation showed that, even after at least 150 years of ploughing, the distribution of sherds in the top soil still directly reflected the shape and extent of the cemetery as revealed by excavation.

The 1,014 urns recorded on site were lifted en-bloc with their contents. Further deposits were identified during the post-excavation process giving a total of around 1,100 cremation burials. Despite plough damage the general level of preservation was excellent and most of the vessels have been reconstructed on paper. In addition to the cremations 62 inhumations were found. These were scattered over the whole site, apparently without focus and, in every case where a relationship could be demonstrated, were later than the urns: indeed many of the inhumation graves cut through earlier cremations. Parallels between the finds from the urns and the inhumation graves suggest, however, a period of overlap between the two rites. A ditch (not shown on the plan) marked the northern limit of the cremation cemetery but not that of the inhumations.

Although this site is known in the literature as the 'Kirton in Lindsey' cemetery, all of the recent finds came from the neighbouring parish of Manton. In 1856 it must have been assumed that the urns came from the northern edge of a cemetery in Kirton parish when in fact they represented the southern edge of a cemetery near the former township of Cleatham in Manton parish. The cemetery known by Eagles, Meaney, and Myres as 'Kirton in Lindsey' should now correctly be referred to as Cleatham.³

The post-excavation analysis of the archaeological material from the Cleatham cemetery is being carried out by the excavator and will be completed as part of a regional study in 2002. It has so far proved impossible to obtain funding for a report on human remains from the site. However, it is hoped that the great potential of this aspect of the site will be recognized and the report on this, England's third largest cremation cemetery, will be completed.

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¹ E. Trollope, note in *Arch. J.*, xiv (1857), 275-76.

² J. N. L. Myres, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Pottery of the Pagan Period* (Cambridge, 1977), no. 2441, fig. 96.

³ B. N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 2 vols (Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Brit. Ser. 68) (Oxford, 1979); A. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964); J. N. L. Myres, *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (Oxford, 1969); Myres, op. cit. in note 2.

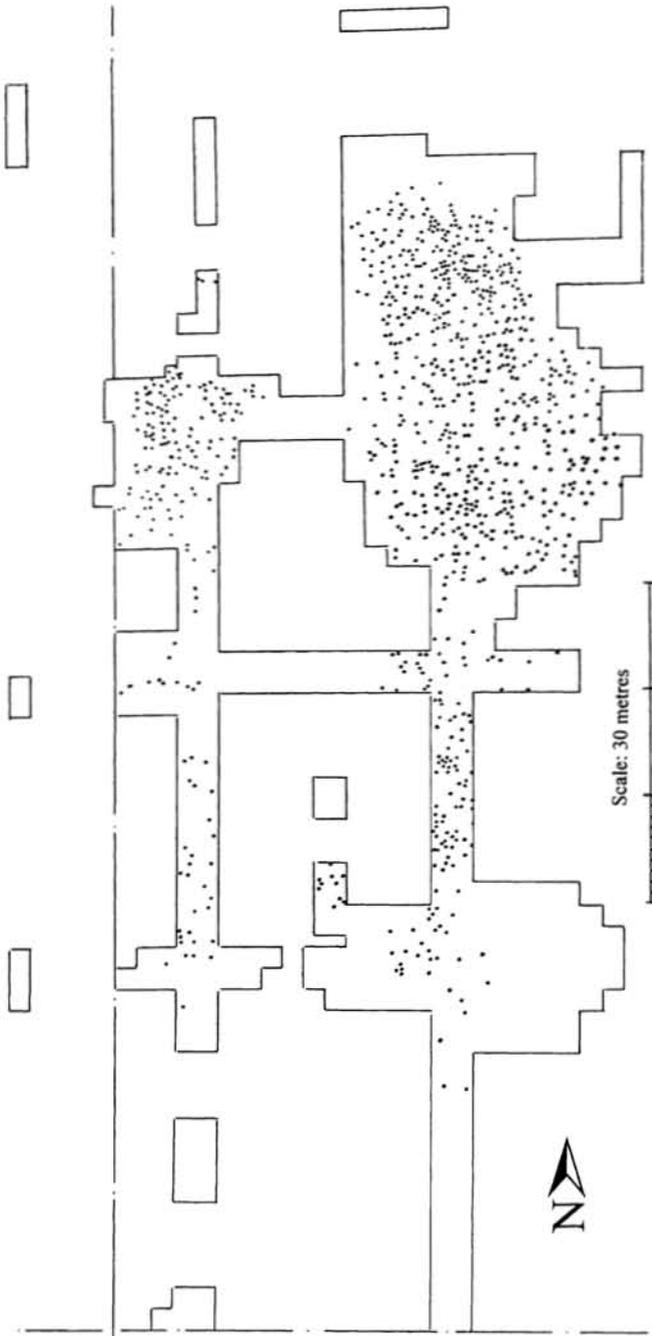


FIG 3

Cleatham, N. Lincolnshire: Excavation plan of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery showing the distribution of urns.