

Digital Chapter 5 : the Northern *vicus*

Part 4 : Report on the cremated bone

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(file name : Ch5DCremation)

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Report on the cremated bone

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Digital Chapter 5: The Northern Vicus

Part IV : Report on the cremated bone

Dr. Joan Weyman

(This report was found in the archive but without any indication of where the cremation burial was found. We think it must be the one found whilst excavating Vicus Building 1 – see p. 108-9 of the letterpress volume)

The material was received as an undisturbed in-urned cremation. On emptying the pot, it was seen that the larger fragments had been inserted first and the 'sweepings' on top. After rinsing and drying, the weight of bone was 625 grams, with few pieces as large as 75mm in greatest dimension and most very fragmentary. The material was of human origin and parts of the following were identified: long bones, including a head of femur, ribs, vertebrae, pelvis, fragments of skull vault, with the occipital bone. There were no identifiable remains of the petrous bones of the skull which usually survive to some extent, and of the facial skeleton, only a small fragment of the alveolar bone with a tiny apical tooth fragment still in situ and one other tooth root had survived. The latter was of a maxillary premolar.

The remains showed a considerable variation in the degree of cremation, and the best fragments were surprisingly some of the vertebral bodies and the occipital bone. This pattern of survival may lead to a speculation as to whether the body had been laid face down when placed on the pyre.

There was no evidence of more than one individual, and as the bones were lacking in robustness, this may represent a female or young adult rather than a mature male. Other than the urn, there was nothing else found accompanying the cremation.