

## Notes

### A ROMAN FIGURED BRONZE FROM BETWEEN FOTHERINGHAY AND NASSINGTON, NORTHANTS

The hollow-cast bronze mount illustrated in FIG 1 belongs to Mr Nigel Cunnington of Oundle who found it in the vicinity of an extensive area of Roman settlement beside the River Nene between Fotheringhay and Nassington villages. The object which is 42mm long is in the form of an apparently youthful head portrayed in the round. The face is beardless and has been modelled with lentoid eyes beneath slightly pronounced eyebrows. The nose is wedge-shaped and the small mouth is slit-like and almost lipless. The hair is depicted high on the brow and has a jagged fringe; its individual tresses, each stylistically rendered by deeply engraved patterns, conceal the ears and are swept to the back of the head above a longitudinal wave at the nape. The long, slender neck broadens towards the edge of the object where the moulding of a tunic begins. The item is complete apart from a projecting arm on the left-hand side as viewed from the front. It was originally attached to a square-sectioned iron rod or tang, part of which survives and has caused the object to split at the back of the head.

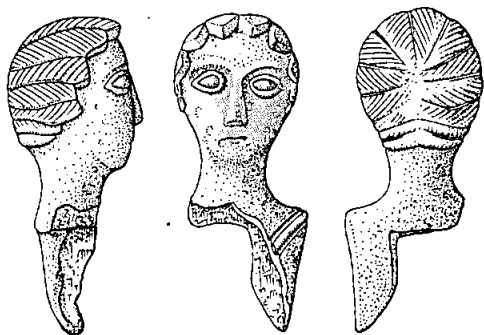


Fig 1 (actual size)

The function of the casting remains unclear, but it is too small to have formed the handle of a knife. Possible explanations of its use are that it may have been attached to a key-shank or could have formed the finial of the stem of a spoon. Regrettably, it remains uncertain

whether the subject was intended as a specific deity or other personage and it is equally unclear if a male or female is represented. However, the treatment of individual features is particularly characteristic of provincial Celtic workmanship and in this the object forms an important addition to the small collection of such items already known from Roman Northamptonshire.

BRIAN DIX

### HUMAN BURIALS AT CHURCH BARN, FOTHERINGHAY

A chance find of human skeletal material by builder's workmen at Church Barn, Fotheringhay (TL 05949318) led to a limited investigation by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit of a number of graves from the former extent of the parish churchyard. The discoveries were made in June 1983 during conversion of a series of farm buildings to residential use and a full record was made possible through the kindness of the architect and owner, Mr Robert Weighton, and the site contractor, E Bowman & Sons Ltd, Stamford.

Alterations to the existing structures included the partial rebuilding of a series of sheds which had been added at an unknown date to the east of the northern end of an early 19th century barn (cf RCHM 1984, 74: Fotheringhay (12)). The design to adapt this area for living purposes entailed replacement of the front wall with a construction of concrete-foundations and brick-footings and in addition caused other trenches to be opened along the lines of internal dividing walls and for connecting services. At the same time the height of the existing floor was lowered in several places.

Removal of the soil and other made-up earth on which the building rested disturbed a number of graves which had penetrated the underlying natural gravel (FIG 2). The remains of ten human burials were collected by workmen during excavation beside the original barn (nos 16-25 below) and the contents of ten further graves were recorded *in situ* as work progressed eastwards; fragments of five additional burials (nos 11-15) were recovered

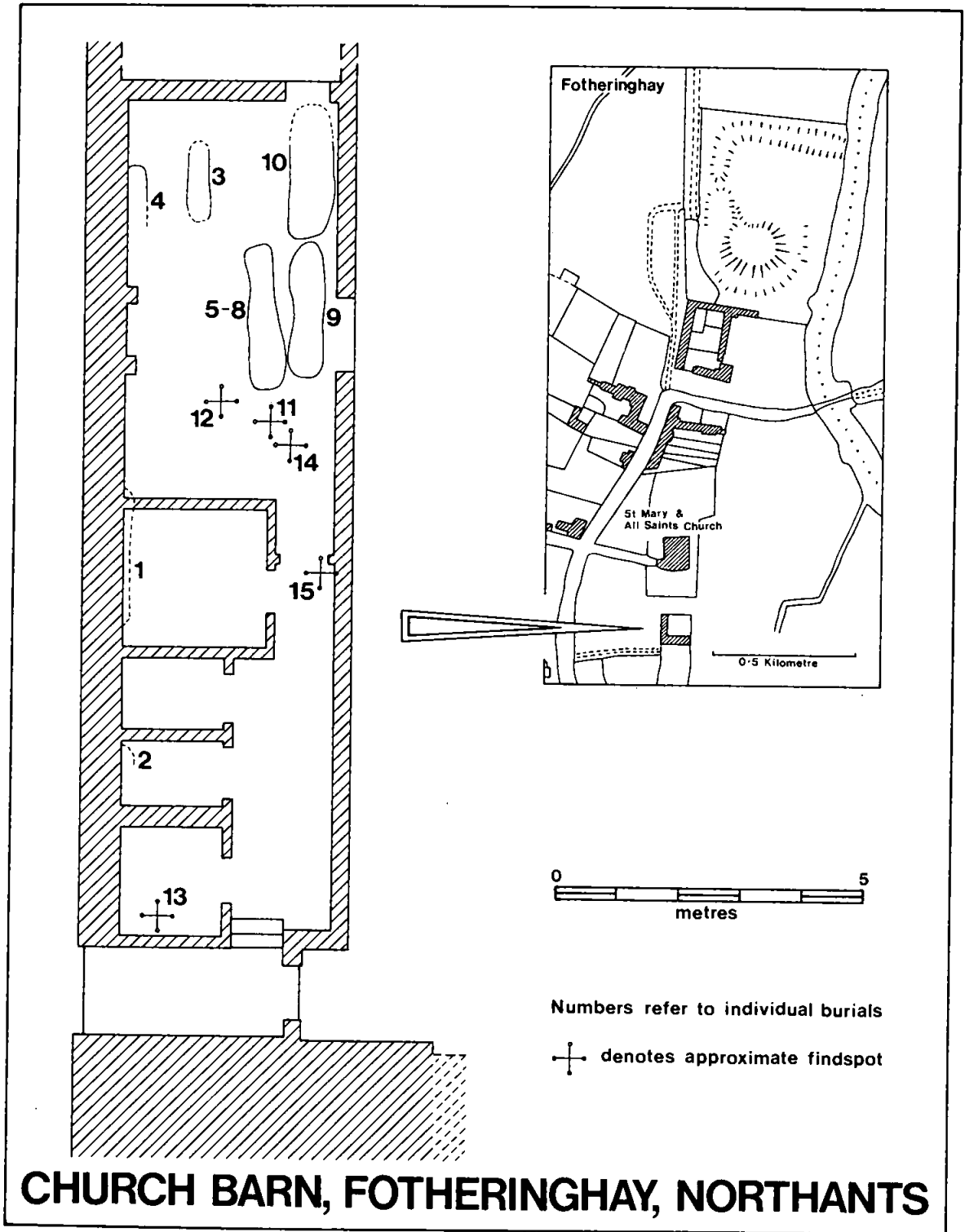


Fig 2

from subsequent foundation-trenches.

The contractor's work involved the removal of varying depths of material, comprising earth from directly beneath the building together with quantities of undisturbed natural soil. The former topsoil, surviving to a depth between 0.10-0.20m, was contaminated in several places with builder's waste and with other disturbances suggested that previous building operations had already destroyed the original ground-surface from which the graves were cut. This observation was supported by the evidence of the graves themselves which either had survived at the base of the mixed earth or were located at shallow depths of up to 0.21m in the underlying natural gravel.

Details of the mixed population of 26 individuals represented by the salvaged remains can be described briefly. Of the total of eleven instances where body-orientation could be determined, two interments had apparently occurred on a N-S alignment but the remainder were oriented with heads at the W; probably all the bodies had been buried in extended, supine positions. Ageing and sexing are based on anatomical identifications undertaken by Miss Sally Parker prior to reburial. A detailed skeletal inventory is retained in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive.

<i>Burial 1</i>	14-17 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 2</i>	Adult. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 3</i>	4-8 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 4</i>	3-5 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 5</i>	Adult. ?Male.
<i>Burial 6</i>	45+ years. ?Female.
<i>Burial 7</i>	Adult. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 8</i>	15-20 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 9</i>	17-25 years. ?Male.
<i>Burial 10</i>	17-25 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 11</i>	5-7 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 12</i>	Adult. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 13</i>	0-5 years. Indeterminate.
<i>Burial 14</i>	Adult. Female.
<i>Burial 15</i>	Adult. Indeterminate.

*Burials 16-25* The remains of at least another ten individuals were represented in material collected by workmen. The group included two adult males, one aged 17-25 years, and three possible females aged 25-35, 35-45, and over 45 years respectively; sexing was indeterminate for three other adults among whom one was aged 25-35 years. Two children were also represented, one of 0-4 years and the other of 5-10 years.

The individual dates of interment are unclear. Not all of the burials were contemporary, as shown by the way in which nos 5-7 had cut into an existing grave (burial 8). A *terminus post quem* of the 13th century is indicated by sherds of Lyveden-Stanion wares found with burials 5 and 6 (T Pearson, pers comm) but, as with other pottery of similar date from the environs of burial 2, it is possible that the pieces represent residual material which became incorporated into grave-earth. However, we may infer that the burials had taken place before 1716 when the earliest surviving survey of the village shows the churchyard already reduced to the size which it has maintained to the present day (*NRO*, Map 467). The burials from Church Barn therefore may reasonably be supposed to be of Medieval origin, when it can be expected that a greater area was available for burial to the W of the church until at least such time as the former collegiate choir was demolished towards the close of the 16th century (RCHM 1984, 66: Fotheringhay (1)).

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BRIAN DIX

#### A NINETEENTH CENTURY BOTTLE KILN AT FAXTON

A short article on p103 of *J Northamptonshire Natur Hist Soc.* 25 (1929) recorded an excursion by Beeby Thompson and Major Markham to view the remains of a pottery kiln in the northern part of Faxton parish. The kiln was located 'near to the well known as Faxton Corner, or more precisely south of Bullock's Penn Spinney and between that and Stonegrove Spinney', where it lay adjacent to 'a considerable excavation which obviously supplied the raw materials for the pottery'.

Beeby Thompson, who is best known for his writings on local geology, published a full description of the kiln, 'a round brick structure with a conical top', and thoughtfully provided a

photograph of it. A separate photograph showing two small pots said to have been made in the kiln 'one hundred or more years ago' was included on p191 of the same journal-issue. The kiln was destroyed in 1935-6 and rubble from it was used for making-up farm roads (H Johnson, pers comm).

The site of the kiln was visited in 1974 by Robert Moore and John Small, who found it by 'an unevenness in the ground surface and by fragments of brick showing through the turf' (*Northamptonshire Archaeol*, 10 (1975), 172). In 1984 the writer discovered the site was still under pasture, with the kiln plainly visible as a circular depression roughly in the middle of the field. The surrounding unevenness suggested that the field had not been ploughed since the kiln went out of use. The adjacent quarry pit, first recorded on the 6in OS map 1885 edition, was however being filled with farm refuse.

Because little is known of 19th century 'country pottery', and almost nothing about Faxton ware, it was felt that excavation might obtain samples for reference. The landowner, the late Sir Gerald Glover, and Mr Cecil Brown, Farm Manager, kindly granted permission for the writer to open a few small trenches across the site.

As a partial description of the kiln existed, there seemed little reason to excavate the kiln itself, beyond using it as the starting point of enquiry. Consequently, turf was removed above one quadrant; the structure lay immediately below without an intervening destruction layer. In view of the excellent condition of the kiln and the unusual layout of its flues, it was decided to reveal its complete plan.

#### THE EXCAVATION (FIG 3)

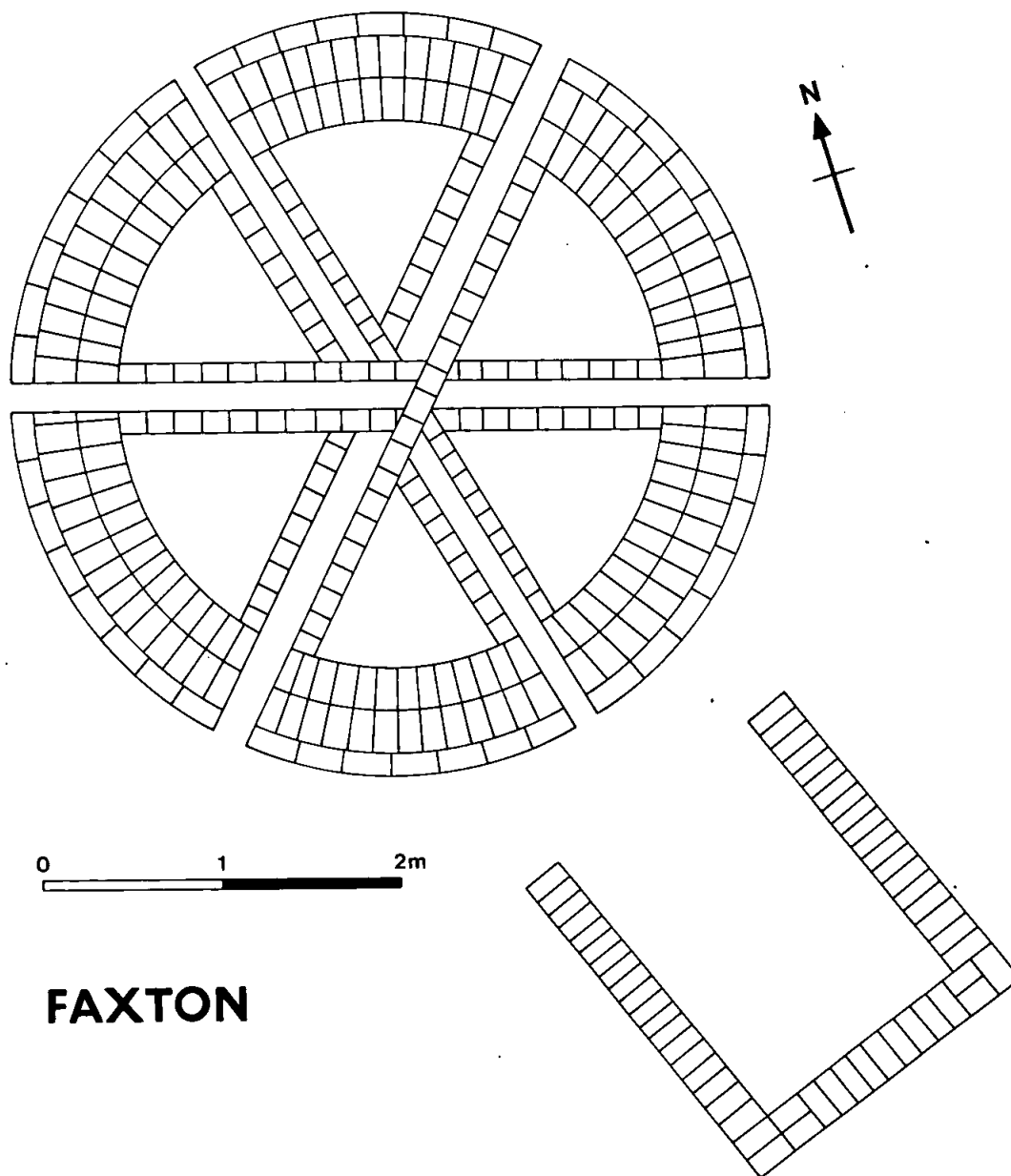
The kiln wall was 0.60m thick and constructed of three rows of well-fired buff-orange bricks: two rows were laid side by side and the outer row end to end. The wall was broken at six opposed points by a series of fire-holes, 0.17m wide, which led into brick-lined flue channels radiating from the centre of the kiln like the spokes of a wheel. A section across the E-W flue showed that it was 0.30m deep. The oven floor between the S and SE flues was removed to the subsoil and comprised a red ashy material above a mass of burnt clay, pantile

fragments and partly fired bricks which were in a red fabric and differed from those of the kiln structure. Except for one small sherd of Willow Pattern-type, no pottery was found in the kiln.

Further areas of turf were lifted from the uneven ground around the kiln to reveal large quantities of broken brick, pantiles and a few fragments of land-drain and floor-tile. The foundations of an open-ended red brick structure, 2.07m × 1.80m, survived immediately beneath the turf 0.66m to the SE of the kiln. Again no pottery was found.

The removal of turf 12m to the east of the kiln exposed an extensive hard-baked clay surface, on the edge of which two short double rows of bricks contained a clinker-like material. Close by a further row of bricks remained *in situ*. Though no attempt was made to expose the entire area, the impression was that of the remains of a Scotch-type brick kiln similar to an example excavated recently at Brigstock Park (report forthcoming). A number of sherds of white, sandy, biscuit-fired pottery were found at the base of the turf layer and many of the trial-holes produced fragmentary or complete bricks in a well-fired buff fabric and impressed with the initials JHL in the frog. They may be identified with James Hay Langham of Cottesbrooke Hall who was the landowner in the 19th century.

The recent excavation results, with Beeby Thompson's description and previous photographs, allow us to reconstruct the kiln's appearance. The chamber stood *c* 4m high with walls 0.60m thick and an internal diameter of 3m. Six fire-holes, each 1.80m high, were set around its circumference in a fairly even spacing. There was also a loading 'wicket' which had collapsed by the time of Thompson's visit to leave an opening *c* 3.4m × 1m. The roof of the chamber formed 'a rather flat dome with numerous small openings into the cone above'. These openings, or vents, were arranged in two circles around a large central opening, with 13 vents in the outer ring and 8 inside. Above them the conical top, which included a chimney-like appendage, was *c* 3.3m tall. The entire structure was surrounded by two iron expansion bands and at a short height above the base a row of bricks protruded from the inner wall (H Johnson, pers comm).



## FAXTON

Fig 3

The kiln-type is thus of a coal-fired, multi-flue updraught design, known by its shape as a bottle-kiln or -oven (Fraser 1969). Although previously most common in the pottery industry, where the type developed from the

Medieval and later multi-flue kilns of NE England and the Midlands (Barton 1975), such ovens were often used in the manufacture of blue bricks and related products requiring controlled firing.

## DISCUSSION

The scatter of off-white biscuit-fired pottery suggests that pottery was made there at some time, and a reference in the *Northampton Mercury* of 23 April 1909 to an unsuccessful attempt to exploit the fine white clay at Faxton seems fairly firm evidence (cf *Northamptonshire Archaeol.* 10 (1975), 172). However, whilst pottery was possibly made in the excavated kiln, its main function appears to have been in firing bricks, tiles and pipes. The following local entries in trade directories would appear relevant:

## in Faxton

*Kelly's*

Joseph Bonsor, brick and tile maker (1885; 1890; 1894)  
Executors of Joseph Bonsor, brick and tile maker (1898; 1903)

Trustees of the late Joseph Bonsor (1906)

## in Lamport

*Kelly's*

John Bonsor, brick and tile maker (1877)

*Wright's*

John Bonsor, brick and tile maker (1884)

Further search has revealed that the same family made bricks and tiles at Naseby between 1849-71 and that the 1871 Census Return shows Joseph Bonsor, a 41-year-old brickmaker, living there at Brickyard Cottage. At that time he employed 5 men and 3 boys.

While living at Faxton, Joseph Bonsor was a tenant of James Hay Langham of Cottesbrooke Hall and carried out considerable work for him, as shown in the following extracts from the Langham (C) accounts in the Northamptonshire Records Office:

2 June 1884, paid Bonsor £207 19s 3d for pipes.

23 December 1884, paid Bonsor £5 0s 8d for bricks.

2 June 1885, paid Bonsor £11 14s 9d for bricks etc.

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B BELLAMY

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BRIAN DIX