X

EXCAVATION AT KIRKHILL, WEST HEPPLE, 1972

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THE EXCAVATION, financed by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, took place in the last week of July and the first two weeks of August 1972. Thanks are due to Mr. B. Howey both for permission to excavate and for his kindness in providing accommodation, to his sisters the Misses Howey for an unflagging interest in our welfare, and to those members of the Rothbury and Coquetdale History Society who made us so welcome in their valley, forsaking many a free evening to help in a way that was truly appreciated. Thanks are due also to those too numerous to mention individually who worked on the site, but especially to Simon Carr-Ellison who proved to be an indispensable support and greatly helped in preparing the results for publication. Lastly I should like to thank all those who provided specialist reports and services, notably Mr. J. Cummings whose assistance with both the photography and other problems made his presence invaluable, and Mr. R. Robson for advice on many technical details concerning masonry,—to them a special debt of gratitude must be recorded. All the finds resulting from the season's work, with the exception of the grave-covers, Collared Urn and flint arrowhead, have generously been donated by Mr. Howey to the Rothbury Museum. The Collared Urn and flint arrowhead are now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne (Reg. 1973·2), and the medieval grave-covers in Hepple Parish Church.

LOCATION (fig. 1)

The site of Kirkhill lies immediately west of West Hepple Farm (NT 975007), on a broad gently sloping spur which points to the south-west and which is divided almost equally along its length by a geological fault. To the south-east of this fault lies the Upper Tuedian Fell Sandstone, while to the north-west are those peculiar alternations of shale, impure cementstone and sandstone which make up the Cementstone group. With a command of the valley surpassed only by that from Harehaugh to the south, the summit of the spur gives an uninterrupted view northwards as far as Biddlestone, while the course of the River Coquet can be followed from Sharperton in the north-west to the base of the spur which it sweeps around to continue in an erratic but ever easterly course, intermittently visible as far as Rothbury. Beyond the river to the south rise the steep slopes of the Simonside Hills

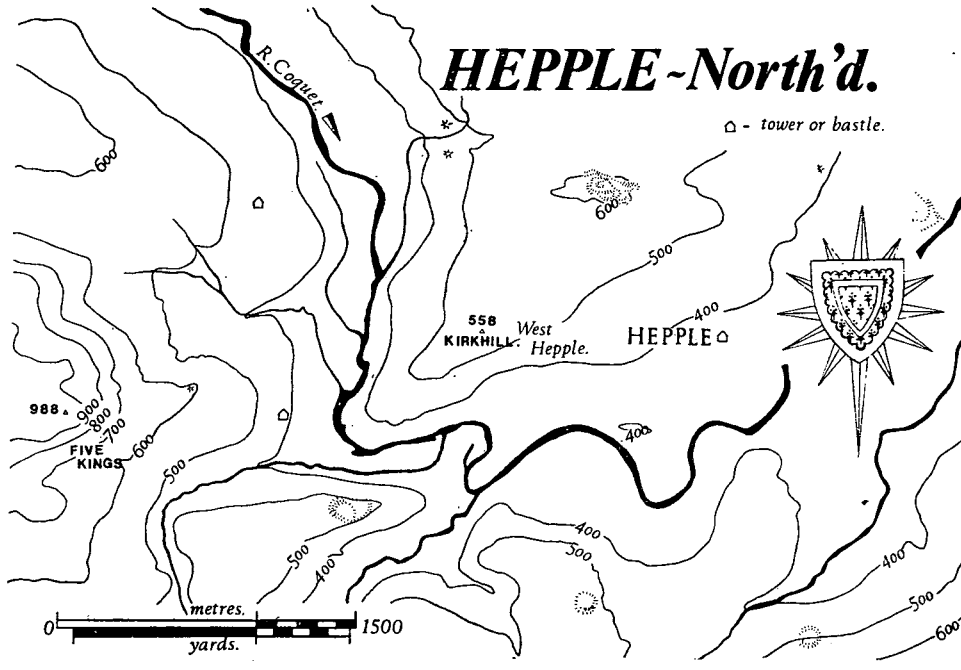


Fig. 1. Location of Kirkhill

stretching far away to the east, and pierced immediately opposite by the valley of Grasslees Burn which divides Harehaugh Hill from its parent mass. To the west of Kirkhill across the elbow of the river sits the Beacon, rising to 988′ while to the north-east the spur merges into the larger mass of which it is the most southerly extension.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

With such a commanding sweep of the valley it was inevitable that Kirkhill should attract early man. The earliest reference to the discovery of prehistoric material on Kirkhill is contained in Hodgson's manuscript notes, probably written in 1821 when he visited the site, and indicating the existence of a Bronze Age cemetery,

> "In the field on which the Kirk on the Hill stands, several urns have been found of the character of that drawn (bad sketch, fig. 4a). Some of an Indian sort of workmanship, brown without and black within. The urns were found in small barrows thrown up over the Kistvaens. About eight of them in all, some smaller than the one drawn, one larger. Two were

found in one Kistvaen, and one in each of the others. One given to the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle."[1]

Further accounts of the discovery of urns at the site do not make clear whether it is those already recorded by Hodgson that are being referred to, or later, independent discoveries; presumably Mackenzie at least is echoing Hodgson when he states:

"West of Hepple and near the site of the old chapel, a number of urns have been found."[2]

Discoveries known to have been made at Hepple but where the findspot is not recorded, include a jet bead, "found with a burnt body in a cairn near Hepple",[3] and a miniature Food Vessel,[4] both in the possession of the Rev. Greenwell at the time he wrote *British Barrows* where the latter was first illustrated.[5] This vessel is also referred to in the 1885-6 volume of the Berwickshire Naturalists Field Club, where a fuller account than Greenwell's bald statement adds that a Mr. Wilson had found, "several urns at Kirkhill".[6] The author makes clear that the date he gives for these discoveries, about 1862, is no more than an approximation, moreover his information would appear to have derived from the same Mr. Wilson whose family was known personally to Hodgson and indeed almost certainly the source of information for Hodgson's earlier account. Are all these fragmentary accounts a variation of the discovery initially recorded by Hodgson, or do they preserve a vague tradition of separate discoveries? Although it is possible to build up an *a priori* case for fusing these divergent accounts, and gloss over Hodgson's failure to record that these discoveries were made by an acquaintance of his, (and Hodgson was usually scrupulous in acknowledging his sources), the date suggested for these "later" discoveries coincides with a period of renewed activity on the hilltop, culminating in the field clearance in 1885-6;—a suitable time for fresh discoveries.[7]

Several slender fragments of evidence indicate activity at Hepple in the

[1] Hodgson, Notebook 'M', pp. 87-90. M15, A29, in the Black Gate Library, Newcastle upon Tyne. This last vessel was recorded as being within a larger one, both found in a "cell formed by four upright slabs and covered with fine sand from the Coquet." Given to the Society of Antiquaries on March 1st 1815 by a Mr Smart of Trewhitt, it has since been lost. *AA*[1] (1822). Donations, p. 6. Reg. 1815-5.

[2] E. Mackenzie, *View of Northumberland*, 1825 (2nd ed.), Vol. II, p. 76. The 1811 edition makes no mention of these discoveries.

[3] In the British Museum. Reg. No. 79, 12-9, 1735.

[4] In the British Museum. Reg. No. 79, 12-9, 1509.

[5] Greenwell, *British Barrows*, p. 91, fig. 79 and p. 424, fn. 1. *Also* Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, Vol. III, no. 283, and *NCH*, XV, fig. 8.

[6] Tate MS, quoted in *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists Field Club*, 1885-6, p. 296.

[7] *PSAN* (1887), vol. III, p. 216, and *infra*, p. 157. The vessel donated to the Society of Antiquaries was given by Mr. Smart not Mr. Wilson.

Anglo-Saxon period.[8] Hodgson notes that a number of glass beads were found on Kirkhill, some scarlet, some streaked greenish and white.[9] His description and illustration are suggestive of the marvered glass beads familiar in the Anglo-Saxon period, but this is only tentative. Rather more reliable is the evidence for an early 7th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery within half a mile of Kirkhill.[10] Moreover, the petition made in A.D. 1200 to commute thanage for landholding by knight service at Hepple, suggests the very late survival of a prominent Anglo-Saxon family here at Hepple, maintaining local custom and avoiding intermarriage with Norman fortune hunters until the end of the 12th century.[11]

There is a local tradition that the site of the medieval village was here at Kirkhill but the evidence behind this may be no more than that noted by Mackenzie who early in the 18th century could see clear traces of what he took to be the village, "about a hundred paces west of the site of the chapel".[12] Unfortunately the plough has now reduced all minor irregularities to uniformity. That no record of this chapel's existence has survived from when it was in use is both interesting and not a little puzzling. It was in ruins when visited by Lord Oxford's chaplain in 1725, who noted in addition that,

> "Just by this ruin lies a hollow stone which seems to have been the font. They continue still to bury at this place, but not very frequently."[13]

This tradition of burial within the disused church receives support from both Hodgson and Mackenzie, the latter adding that five of the adjoining villages used the site for the burial of strangers and unchristened children in particular.[14]

The use of the ruins as a quarry to provide the building stone for West Hepple farmhouse must have provoked some resentment among those with relations already interred within the church and can certainly have done little to entice further deposition. Whether, as Mackenzie suggests, burials ceased to be made in 1760, the year West Hepple Farm was built, or whether

[8] Mr. Hardy's neat onomastic trick of deriving the place-name Hepple from "Hall of the Heap" (cf. fn. 6), thereby giving a compound settlement name, must now be abandoned for the less intriguing derivation from the Anglo-Saxon "hepe" (dog-rose), "denu" (valley).

[9] Hodgson, *op. cit.*, (cf. fn. 1).

[10] The cemetery appears to date to the early 7th century. In the British Museum, Nos. 2080-2089 inclusive (cf. pp. 278-80).

[11] *Liber Rubeus de Scaccario* (Rolls Series, 1896), vol. II, p. 563; *Liber Feodorum* (Records Commission), p. 395; *Rotuli Cancellerarium* (Records Commission), p. 57; and *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finilus* (Records Commission), p. 61.

[12] Mackenzie, *loc. cit.* (cf. fn. 2).

[13] *Portland MSS.*, Vol. VI (1901), p. 127, and NCH, XV, p. 331. Until 1760 the font and pedestal were well preserved. The font now stands in the Parish Church at Hepple but no trace remains of the decoration sketched by Hodgson.

[14] Mackenzie records that, "the chapel was used as a place of sepulchre", and also implies burial *within* the walls of the chapel. Hodgson, surprisingly not as forthcoming on this point, nevertheless gives a colourful story of how, "Mrs. Wilson's mother, who died 30 years since upwards of the age of 80, remembers one woman being buried there who hung herself." On these see M. Philips in *AA*[2] (1888), XIII, p. 68.

they tailed off gradually towards the close of the century, clearly Hodgson and Mackenzie had salvaged no more than a dim memory when they recorded the use of the site as a cemetery.

In 1887 Maberly Phillips read a letter to the Society of Antiquaries from a Mr. Brook of Hepple, informing him of recent work carried out on the site:

> "In February 1865 or 1866, the late farmer, Mr. James Howey, employed a man named John Toggon to dig up the remaining foundations of the Old Kirk so that ploughing could go on uninterruptedly. In taking up the foundations Toggon came across a corpse lying SW-NE. All the bones except the teeth crumbled to powder as soon as they were exposed to air.... Two coins were found—one a Scotch penny and the other a French copper coin of what may be termed recent date; Louis XVIII, if my memory serves me correctly. The burial ground seems to have been at the east end of the field, as human bones have been seen during the last three or four years.... About 35 years ago a stone was dug up on the site of the kirk, which Mr. D. Dixon thinks must have been a receptacle for holy water. It was carted to the foot of the Kiln road. It resisted the united efforts of several men to break it. However, as they were determined to break it, they put some blasting powder into it. When the powder exploded, one of the fragments struck a man named George Archer, and broke several of his ribs—a just retribution I think."[15]

By 1865 only the remaining debris of the church itself was resisting the plough, the cemetery around faring less well as periodically the shares revealed its occupants. In hiring Toggon, James Howey hoped to remove even this obstacle, although the nature of the robbing and the limited success of this venture fosters a suspicion that Toggon was concerned merely with salvaging the more valuable building stone.[16] Until recent excavation the site of the chapel cannot have changed much from when John Toggon left it over a century ago, except for the addition of a small stone cross set up by Sir J. Buchanan-Riddell to mark the site of the chapel sometime between 1905 and 1914.

THE EXCAVATION (fig. 2)

Apart from the modern marker set up by Sir J. Buchanan-Riddell (con-

[15] *PSAN*[2] (1887), vol. III, p. 216.

[16] *Infra*, p. 167. A single sherd found in the robber trench of the north wall of the chancel suggests that this stretch at least could not have been robbed as early as 1760 when the site was first quarried (the ware begins in the 1820's), and would seem to be the work of Toggon. The absence of nearby field clearance cairns lends support to a theory of Toggon's preoccupation with the more valuable dressed stones.

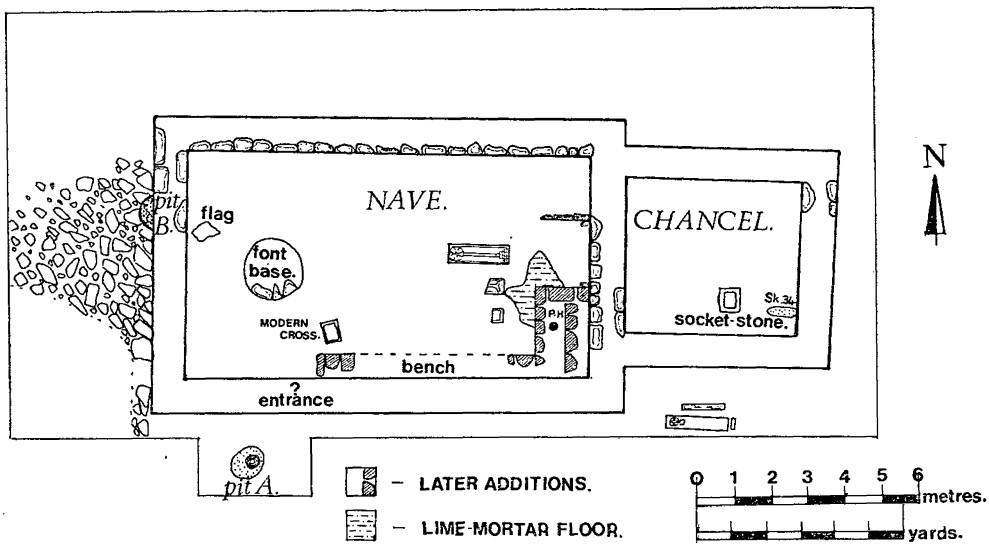


Fig. 2

veniently at the O.S. spot height of 558′), the only indication of where the chapel once stood is a small square platform of rough grass covering the debris (NT 975008). This stands slightly proud of the surrounding land surface, a fine sandy soil annually eroded lowering the height of the crest. It was not possible in the time available to strip the chapel completely. The area had been heavily disturbed by later intrusions including burials, therefore effort was concentrated on those areas relatively free from later disturbances. Not all the skeletons were removed from the chancel, but sections made to elucidate its structural history. Neither did time allow the complete excavation of the areas to north and west of the chapel, and an anticipated further season's work to tie up these loose ends cannot now take place as it has subsequently been learnt that the land will not be available for excavation in the forseeable future.

Underlying the chancel and extending eastwards lay the fissured and weathered natural Fell Sandstone at a minimum depth of 1·2 m.[17] To the west of the chancel and almost in line with its division from the nave, this bedrock sloped steeply in a south-westerly direction, being overlain by an extremely soggy rotted conglomeration which represents the washed out and now disaggregated sandstone.

[17] The depths relate directly to the O.S. spot height of 171·54 m (558′).

THE BRONZE AGE CEMETERY

At the western end of the trench, two pits cut into this soft subsoil. Pit A lay to the south of the nave in an extension made to confirm the absence of a southern porch to the chapel. Roughly ovoid in shape (710 mm N/S, 590 mm E/W, and 630 mm in depth), the sides sloped steeply down to a flat bottom with an average diameter of 400 mm. The pit was filled with a mixture of natural subsoil and brown earth showing every indication of extensive burning. Within this fill, and slightly to north of centre, a complete collared urn was discovered inverted over a flat burnt sandstone flag. This completely sealed the contents of the vessel and as no bone had split out on inversion it is possible that either the flag had been held close to the mouth when inverted, that the inversion may have taken place elsewhere, or that the mouth of the vessel had been covered with an organic lid as has been suggested the case with some such vessels.[18] Later examination identified the partial remains of at least three adults (some fragments stained green) and a child, a small quantity of sterile earth probably scraped up with the cremations, and two calcined flints. The pit itself was unsealed in that no trace of the original medieval ground surface remained in the overlying brown earth, which imperceptibly merged into topsoil. Although the upper part of the pit projected slightly into this overlying brown soil, subsequent disturbance, perhaps allied with a phase in the history of the stone chapel, could have removed any traces of what covering mound may once have existed.

Pit B had subsequently been sectioned by the west wall of the nave, removing a little over half of a diameter which cannot have exceeded 1·25 m E/W. This pit was 510 mm deep, with more gently sloping sides than A but leading to the same flat bottom. A thin band of brown soil 30-50 mm thick occasionally separated the distinctive fill of the pit from its natural sides, suggesting that possibly the upcast had not been placed sufficiently distant from the side of the pit to prevent it trickling back in. The fill was almost identical to that in pit A, being burnt subsoil and brown earth, but here forming a pyramidal shape within the pit, overlain and surrounded by a more homogenous sooty layer. Apart from its burnt fill, the pit contained nothing in the way of cremated bone or pottery to indicate that it had ever fulfilled a funerary function, however, the overall marked similarity between pits A and B seem too striking to be fortuitous, prompting the suggestion that, like A, the origin of B should be sought in the Bronze Age.

Above pit B, and stretching away to either side, was a thick layer of soil. This earth spread disappeared into the sides of the trench but thinned east-

[18] F. Lynch, "Report on the Re-excavation of Two Bronze Age Cairns in Anglesey, Bedd Branwen and Treiorwerth", *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, vol. CXXX (1971), p. 24.

wards to disappear 10·40 m from the western edge of the trench. This earth spread was certainly earlier than the stone chapel whose foundations at the western end cut into, and partially projected through it, but until an area further to the west can be examined it is open to speculation as to whether this represents the levelling of a barrow before the chapel's construction or simply the result of soil creep from the summit of the knoll.

SKELETON 34

Within the south-east corner of the chancel, and in a grave cut partially into bedrock, lay a skeleton in an E/W position. Extended on its right side with knees slightly flexed, it occupied a wide rectangular grave-cut (length 168 mm, width 580 mm, depth 2·29 mm), this being filled with a dark brown charcoal flecked soil. The head butted against the western end of the grave cut, the toes against the eastern end which was here conterminous with the foundation trench marking the eastern wall of the chancel. From near the base of the spine was recovered a small bronze fragment which may have been an awl. Later burials of no less than four children had cut down through the chancel packing into the earlier grave fill, but where unaffected by subsequent disturbances, a band of brown earth projected over the grave fill, in turn overlain by a layer of charcoal and ash sealed by chancel packing.

THE POST-HOLE FEATURE

Within the nave of the chapel, and underlying the only undisturbed patch of lime-mortar floor, lay a spread of charcoal and ash 20-40 mm thick. As the stone chapel has produced evidence of only two phases in its history, and because this lime-mortar floor can demonstrably be shown to be part of the first phase, the burnt spread would appear to belong to a pre-stone chapel period. What remained of the burning did not extend far undisturbed, its edges coinciding with those of the lime-mortar floor and its eastern side being cut by the dividing wall between nave and chancel. However, the thin band of charcoal and ash found to underlie chancel packing (*supra*) suggests that the burnt spread had extended eastwards. Underlying this burning was a single oval post-pit cutting down into the natural subsoil (290 mm E/W, 350 mm N/S, and 470 mm in depth). Filled with earth and three large packing stones, faint traces remained of the post it had once contained but were too ephemeral to allow any inference as to shape or dimension.

In absence of any absolute dating evidence for this feature, its place in the history of the site must rely upon stratigraphical considerations. A thin band of earth separated this destruction from the natural subsoil, while above, and resting directly upon it lay the thin skin of the lime-mortar

floor. The lack of natural growth between the burnt layer and the lime-mortar floor could imply that there was no great time lag between the destruction of the wooden feature and the construction of the chapel. It could equally be argued that levelling for the chapel may have removed any overlying build-up and even part of the destruction layer, although this seems less likely. The post-pit could relate to the Bronze Age cemetery; equally it possibly played some part in the chapel's construction such as scaffolding, but it is unlikely that the burning down of such a structure would have left so substantial an ash and charcoal deposit. Without wishing to press an argument *ex silentio* unduly, it is worthwhile considering that as yet little is known of the timber churches which existed in the Anglo-Saxon period, many of which must still lie undetected beneath our stone ones.[19]

THE STONE CHAPEL: *First Phase*

The small stone chapel built on the highest point of the spur was of simple nave and chancel plan, the nave being orientated at 73° east from true north, the chancel slightly at an angle at 77° east. The chancel was not set central to the east wall of the nave, being 1·8 m to the north, but this to some extent countered the variant angle of the chancel, bringing the focal point in the chapel slightly more into line with the E/W axis of the nave. The foundations at the western end were cut through soil and natural subsoil to an average depth of 600 mm, and a width of 940 mm. Into this trench were packed small stones, a mass of waterworn boulders, and a quantity of back-filled earth. Where the natural Fell sandstone rose near the surface only as much of the shattered bedrock was removed as was necessary to provide a firm footing for the walls, the difference being made up with a similar foundation packing as to the west. Upon this solid foundation were laid the coarse-grained sandstone building stones to construct a wall 900 mm in width. Few stones had been squared on all sides, the majority only on the outer faces or where abutment was necessary, thereby leaving the unworked rear of the stone to form a stronger bond with the wall-core, made up of small stones and chippings fastened with a poor sandy mortar.

The completed nave measured internally 11·55 m E/W, by 5·96 m N/S; the chancel internally 4·65 m E/W, by 3·90 m N/S. As nowhere did more than the lowest course of the outside walls survive, it proved impossible to determine whether the walls had risen at a uniform width from the ground (900 mm), or if an offset course had existed. Similarly stone robbing at all angles, including the junctions of chancel and nave, left little evidence as to the method of quoining used. That larger stones had existed at the angles

[19] C. Thomas, "An Early Christian Cemetery and Chapel on Ardwall Isle, Kirkcudbright", *Mediaeval Archaeology* (1967), Vol. II, pp. 169-171.

was indicated in the survival of a single large stone at the north-west corner of the nave. Measuring 480 mm in length, almost twice that of the more normal building stone used, its position was not inconsistent with the method of side-alternate quoining.

Still less remained to indicate the original width of the chancel arch. Here only the foundation trench and lowest course of masonry survived, the former extending unbroken from the eastern end of the south wall of the nave to link with its northern counterpart in completely enclosing the rectangle of the nave. Despite the lack of structural evidence at the junctions of nave and chancel the uniform character of the foundations at these points indicate archaeologically that the nave and chancel was of one build.

At the south-east corner of the nave a small patch of lime-mortar floor 20 mm in thickness owed its survival to later overlying structural modifications. The surface skin was extremely flaky showing every indication of having been exposed to heavy burning.[20] To the east it butted against the bottom of the lowest course of wall masonry; to the south its edges had been cut by later modifications which elsewhere preserved it; while its surviving edges to the north and west were defined by later burials. At the western end of the nave, a single flagstone was all that survived to suggest that the lime-mortar floor did not extend over the whole of the nave, but that part at least was flagged. In absence of a direct relationship this can be no more than suggested although the laying of a new floor would be expected to entail either the complete removal of the old floor surface, or its survival as a bedding underneath and at neither point did the two types of floor exist together.

Within the chancel the actual floor level had not survived while the packing material below it merged imperceptibly with the packing below the second floor (*infra*, p. 164). The continuation of masonry across the chancel entrance indicates that the primary floor in the chancel must have been at least one course higher than that in the nave. A drastic remodelling had been carried out within the chancel involving a heightening of the floor and it may have been that the original floor was of flagstones taken up and re-utilized at a higher level.

Resting directly upon the underlying soil, 2·25 m from the west wall of the nave and 2·85 m from the south wall, lay three dressed sandstone blocks *in situ*. At the same level as the bottom course of wall masonry, they butted against one another to form a curve accentuated by dressing the outside face to give a smooth continuous arc. One disturbed fragment lay within the arc inscribed by the stones, which if continued would give a small circular base 130 mm high and 1·37 mm in diameter, with its centre lying 400 mm to

[20] Doubt has been expressed as to whether this lime-mortar had in fact been the floor surface, or perhaps had acted as a bedding for something more durable such as tiles or flagstones. If this was the case it is surprising that no trace of such a surface remained beneath the destruction debris which rested directly upon the lime-mortar surface and had clearly burnt it.

the north of the E/W axis of the nave. To see this as the pedestal of a font which was standing relatively unscathed until the 1760's is an interpretation which best fits the available evidence.

Still within the nave, 2·20 m west of the nave/chancel division, a grave slab lay exactly along the E/W axis of the nave. Of coarse-grained sandstone 1·69 m in length, it was 570 mm wide at the western end tapering to 490 mm at the eastern end. Above the chamfered edges rose in relief a floreate cross surmounting a stepped plinth, and the bare areas either side of the cross-stem filled with the inscription:

HIC IACET DOMINA MARIORA | [· · ·] VIT VXOR DOMINI RO | BERTI TAYLBIOS

On removing the grave-slab it was only with difficulty that the grave-cut 1·77 m E/W and 740 mm N/S could be defined. Where unprotected by the grave-slab the grave-cut had been disturbed but beneath this it proved difficult to distinguish from the natural subsoil. Narrowing slightly with depth, at 750 mm below the level of the lime-mortar floor extremely thin dark stains were all that remained to suggest a wooden coffin. The skeleton lay at a depth of 870 mm, in an extended back posture measuring *in situ* 1·74 m in length. Although this grave was isolated from any contemporary features by later disturbances, it could well provide a *terminus ante quem* for the initial destruction of the church. Marjorie Tailbois is known from literary sources to have been alive as late as 1258-9,[21] and the surface of her grave-slab had clearly been severely damaged by fire. Whereas many of the fractures may no doubt have been caused by the slow collapse of masonry marking the final abandonment of the chapel there are no grounds for suggesting that this final destruction had ever been accompanied by fire as had the first.

Lying to the south and parallel with this grave-slab, were fragments of two others. Only the foot ends of these survived being surrounded by skeletons of a later age. The largest lay 400 mm south of the above, 570 mm in length and 350 mm N/S. The only surviving decoration was the lower stem of a cross standing upon a hill. This fragment also bore the unmistakable marks of burning as did the last, a tiny mound of sandstone fragments barely hanging together in the form of the extreme foot of a grave-slab. Visible disurbance to the north of the central slab would account for the absence of further monuments of the sort that Mackenzie records as, "being both within and without the walls of the holy building".[22]

Lying outside the south wall of the chancel were two medieval grave-slabs. A short slab (1·6 m in length, 280 mm wide), almost certainly covered a child's grave, and was undecorated apart from panel moulding around the sides and top. The larger (1·85 m in length, 390 mm wide at the head, and 270 mm wide at the foot), still retained its foot-slab *in situ*. Badly levelled the surface was decorated with an expanded armed cross within a circle, set immediately above an empty square.

[21] *Northumberland Pleas from the Curia Regis and Assize Rolls, 1198-1272* (Records Series), vol. II, and *Curia Regis Roll*, no. 162.

[22] Mackenzie, *loc. cit.* (cf. fn. 2).

Directly overlying the lime-mortar floor where, protected by later structural additions, a spread of charcoal and ash lay in places 50-60 mm thick. No evidence of any roofing material other than wood was noted in this layer although admittedly the surviving sample was small, however it did produce a melted glass fragment and a jug sherd dateable to the 14th century. Several blobs of solidified lead were recovered, but all from areas of subsequent disturbance.

Second Phase

The burning had been sufficiently severe to require considerable changes and additions to be carried out on the structure of the church. Within the chancel the old floor surface was now superseded by a new one at a higher level, the difference being made up with a packing of rubble incorporating reddened stones attesting the severity of the destruction. Above the rubble surface 470 mm higher than the lime-mortar floor of the nave, no trace remained of this later floor surface, although some clue may be drawn from two pieces of evidence, one within, the other well outside, the chapel.

Built into the heightened chancel floor, 2·63 m east of the west chancel wall and 900 mm north of its south wall, was an extremely large sandstone block 700 mm in height. Tapering as it rose (680 mm × 650 mm to 580 mm × 508 mm), a socket had been cut into the top to take the base of a cross-shaft 435 mm wide and 470 mm in length. The stone stood on a firm underpinning of cobbles between which lay fragments of unpainted plaster suggesting that before destruction the walls had been plastered. The upper part of the stone had obviously received a more careful finish than the roughly tooled lower part, the change occurring about 100 mm from the top of the stone. This change also coincided with the chancel packing around it, leaving the projection vulnerable to the plough which had several times scarred and fractured it. It seems reasonable to assume that flagstones had once rested upon this packing, but not a single flagstone remained within the chancel to confirm or deny this hypothesis. However, a short stretch of the field wall bounding Kirkhill to the north, was made up almost exclusively of flagstones. Even topping the wall, their flatness contrasted with the more usual rounded coping stones which continued where the flagstones failed. With an average dimension of 500 mm by 400 mm, the most constant measurement was a thickness of 80-100 mm.

In addition to providing steps for access to a now heightened chancel floor, two new features were incorporated within the nave at its eastern end. in the south-east corner of the nave and directly overlying the burning which marks the end of the first phase of the chapel, two lines of stones ran N/S, parallel with the wall dividing nave and chancel (cf. fig. 2). Their dressed faces to the west lay at a distance of 1·33 m and 560 mm respectively from the

western face of this nave/chancel divide. At a distance of 2·14 m north of the south wall of the nave, the outer line turned eastwards at 90° to meet the nave/chancel division in a butt join, the inner face continuing until it reached this redirected line. This redirected line had an identical counterpart 1·90 m to the north, presumbably all that survived of a feature corresponding to that to the south. The overall surface of these additions was on average 160 mm above the level of the lime-mortar floor, never varying by more than 40 mm. This floor had continued in use after the destruction for although the additions had sealed evidence of the catastrophe, the outer stones rested firmly upon this floor. Clearly in the process of setting the chapel once again in order, these modifications were begun if not finished, before the nave had been completely cleared of debris.

That these additions can represent more than one step seems doubtful; not only was the difference in height between inner and outer lines minimal (although it is possible that the inner line received a second course), but more important, they would seem to lead to nowhere except a blank wall. To interpret one of these as a pulpit leaves unexplained the corresponding feature at the opposite side of the chancel arch, and I am grateful to Barbara Harbottle for the suggestion that they could be the bases of two side altars which rested upon the inner line of stones, the outer forming a single step up to them from the nave.

The only surviving trace of the steps leading from nave to chancel was a darkened earth overlying the lime-mortar floor at this point, and two small stone supports tucked into the corners where the modifications joined the earlier structure. Running along the inside face of the south wall of the nave were the remains of a small bench 560 mm in width. Few facing stones remained *in situ* but sufficient to demonstrate its bond with the above addition as being part and parcel of the same modifications. Equally fortunate was the survival of three stones marking its westernmost extent, 3·44 m east of the west wall of the nave. Marking the western limit of this feature was an upright slab broken across the top, yet still projecting well above the surviving stones to the east. Immediately to the south-west of this slab the foundations of the south wall of the nave were uncharacteristically free from the usual disturbance which had accompanied the progress of stone-robbing elsewhere along this stretch of wall. By itself, the termination of the bench does little other than pose the question as to why stop at this point in particular?, but if taken in conjunction with the apparent interruption of the stone-robbers' progress, it may shed some light upon the problem of the entrance.

The only alternative contender for the position of the doorway would seem to be in the west wall of the nave, now so badly robbed as to offer no clues.[23] Certainly no porch ever stood outside this west wall, but then

[23] The north wall is a possibility being not an uncommon feature of many Anglo-Saxon churches, mediaeval churches on the other hand invariably have the main entrance in either the south or west wall of the nave.

neither did one stand against the south wall. When considering the possibility of a western entrance, one further piece of evidence must be considered. After the church had gone out of use, and before extensive quarrying had reduced its walls, part of Kirkhill came under the plough. The numerous large stones and boulders cleared from the ploughed areas were tidily stacked against the outside face of the west wall of the nave. Some of considerable size, the majority were pitched eastwards leaning against the wall face all along its length. At no point was this pitching found to be sufficiently broken to justify suggesting that an entrance had existed against which pitched stones could not rest. The field clearance must have occurred before, or during the time when the ruins were in use as a cemetery, for it was quarrying which both removed these walls and put an end to illicit burials. Unless other entrances existed (and evidence is incomplete on this point), or unless the walls had completely collapsed at other points, the field clearance cairn outside the only entrance must have caused considerable difficulty to those negotiating a western entrance,—especially if bearing a coffin.

That the final abandonment of the chapel was not accompanied by violent destruction is indicated by the clean and unburnt condition of those stones marking the secondary works within the chapel, and also by the large fragments of collapsed masonry *overlying* burials of the 17th and 18th centuries within both nave and chancel. In one case, at the north-west corner of the nave, a large mass of walling had collapsed incorporating the lower sill of a window, and as nowhere other than at the south-east corner of the nave did such fallen masonry overlie the original floor, it is possible that this had already been removed for the stones where flagged, the lime-mortar being mixed in the grave fillings.

Little remains to indicate when this final abandonment took place, although the report by Mackenzie of an inscribed monument within the chancel at least allowed the writers of *NCH* to suggest that it had occurred sometime after 1625.[24] For reasons expressed elsewhere the authenticity of this dedication is highly suspect,[25] in which case the only reasonably sure guide is the medieval pottery which terminates at the close of the 14th century with one sherd continuing into the 15th century. Thereafter the numerous burials historically attested by Lord Oxford's chaplain, Hodgson and Mackenzie,[26] were discovered at practically every point within the chapel but especially concentrated within the chancel. Not all could be extracted in the time available, but of the thirty-two of this period recovered, nineteen were those of children and babies, and in three cases associations suggested the death of both mother and child. Not all the skeletons appear to have been in coffins as in several cases the skeleton fitted tightly into the grave cut, and in one instance the grave-fill produced a bent shroud-pin.

[24] First mentioned by Mackenzie, *op. cit.* (fn. 2), and discussed in *NCH*, XV, p. 332.

[25] *Infra*, p. 187.

[26] Footnotes 13 and 14.

Archaeologically little distinction could be made between the two historically recorded periods of quarrying on the site (1760 and 1865/6), and but for this record the early 19th century sherd of pottery in the robber trench of the chancel's north wall would almost certainly have posited a uniform quarrying at or after this date. This quarrying and attempted field clearance was everywhere in evidence, stripping the walls in many places down to foundations, otherwise surviving only as a first course significantly best preserved at the extreme north-west corner where most distant from what was, and still is, the most convenient route from the present village.

Summary and Conclusions

It is questionable to assume that the flints need represent an activity earlier than the Bronze Age. Despite the deficiencies in our knowledge of northern flint-working traditions,[27] the flint scrapers at least are typical of the forms included with Collared Urns and Food Vessels, a local example occurring within a Cinerary Urn from Spital Hill, Simonside.[28] The arrowhead is not characteristic of Early Bronze Age types, being in form midway between the Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowheads and the barbed and tanged variety more normal for the Bronze Age.

The discovery of pits A and B, and the Collared Urn, are valuable in providing the only extant evidence apart from a poor drawing and several vague references for what must have been a cemetery of considerable size. Hodgson records eight vessels all from cists covered by a barrow, and in one instance a vessel contained a Miniature Food Vessel. This variety of types from the one cemetery is not surprising, Food Vessels and Collared Urns are frequently found together, and with the permutations possible for association of Food Vessels, Collared Urns, Encrusted Urns, Pygmy Vesssels, and even Beakers and Biconical Urns, earlier theories of a chronological transition from one type to the next are now clearly untenable.[29] Within the valley, apart from a highly suspect association of Beaker, Food Vessel and Incense cup from a barrow near Rothbury,[30] the only other known occurrence of two vessels from the same burial are those of a Miniature Collared Urn and Accessary vessel from Holystone Common.[31]

While it is possible that further discoveries may have been made at Kirkhill, it is not unlikely that the Pygmy Vessel and jet bead at present in the British Museum may well have come from this site.[32] The bead is only the fourth jet object to be found within the valley, a V-perforated jet button

[27] C. Burgess, "A Bronze Age Rock Shelter in Northumberland", *AA*[4] (1972), L, p. 38.

[28] *AA*[2] (1894), XV, p. 28, fig. BG.

[29] I. Longworth in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* (1961), and C. Burgess in *Current Archaeology*, 19, p. 209.

[30] Nancy Newbigin in *PSAN*[4] (1935-6), p. 32.

[31] Greenwell, *loc. cit.*, p. 429 (cf. fn. 5).

[32] Footnotes 3 and 4.

was found in each of two cists at Great Tosson, where they accompanied inhumations, in one case associated with a Food Vessel,[33] and a jet ring has recently been found in a barrow on Debdon Moor.[34]

The thin burnt layer underlying the chancel packing and partially projecting over the grave-fill of skeleton 34 (*supra*, p. 160) will only satisfactorily relate to the burnt spread and single post-pit under the lime-mortar floor within the nave. As skeleton 34 predates this burning it could represent a Bronze Age inhumation, especially if the interpretation of the thin bronze rod near the base of the spine as an awl is correct. No satisfactory explanation, however, can be offered to account for this burnt layer, and in view of the heavy disturbances encountered it seems unlikely that future excavation could substantially make good this deficiency. It would certainly appear to predate the construction of the stone chapel, which pottery suggests took place in the early 12th century,—the same century in fact when the font was made.[35]

This chapel was not an elaborate structure. Before its initial destruction it had been plastered internally and probably provided with glass windows. In size and dimensions it compares favourably with other medieval foundations for which sizes can be ascertained.[36] By these criteria it is most closely paralleled by Haughton Chapel,[37] but both Bewick,[38] and Brandon,[39] approximate closely in size with any given structural measurement never varying by more than 1·40 m from its corresponding measurement in each of these churches. The distinction between church and chapel, being essentially one of status, cannot be gauged solely from archaeological considerations and the presence of a font and grave-yard here at Kirkhill may imply no more than a small local chapel appropriating some of the rites normally the preserve of the parish church.

The initial destruction of the chapel cannot be dated closely, although for reasons argued elsewhere it would appear to have occurred after A.D. 1258.[40] A single jug sherd from the burnt layer places it sometime in the 14th century, —a convenient time for attributing this to the Scots whose most damaging raid of the century occurred in 1346. Though only a suggestion, it is interesting to note that an inquisition held at Newcastle in 1372, to determine whether Walter Tailbois was of age to succeed to the manor, "Robert Louthre says that the said heir was born at Hephale and baptised in the church of Routhbury, and was 21 years of age at the Feast of Purification last. This the deponent knows because he lifted him from the sacred font."[41] Could

[33] *PSAS* (1860), IV, pp. 58-63, and Greenwell, *op. cit.*, p. 431, fig. 160. Now in the British Museum.

[34] Unpublished apart from a brief report in *Archaeological Newsbulletin for Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland*, No. XII, p. 18. The finds are at present in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne, Reg. 1969. 29.

[35] *Infra*, p. 176.

[36] B. Harbottle and R. A. S. Cowper, in *AA*[4] (1963), XLI, p. 53, fn. 7.

[37] H. L. Honeyman, "Some Early Masonry in Northumberland", *AA*[4] (1935), XII, p. 171.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

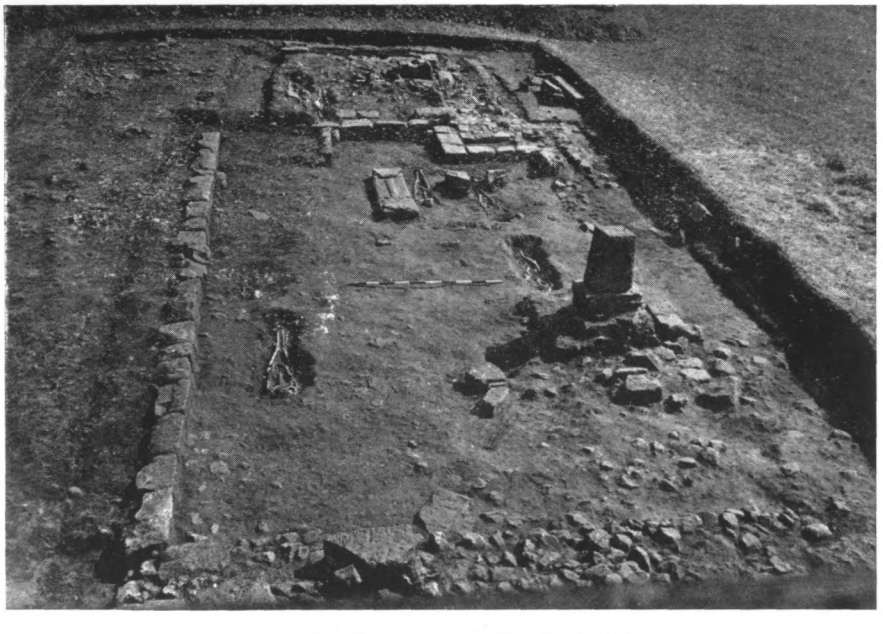
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[40] *Supra*, p. 163.

[41] *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, XIII, Edward III, no. 140.

1. Collared urn from Pit A

Photo: R. Miket



2. Kirkhill: chapel from the west

Photo: J. Cummings

1. Grave slab of Lady Marjorie Tailbois
Photo: J. Cummings

2. 12th century font from Kirkhill, now in Hepple parish church
Photo: R. Miket

this be because the chapel had been destroyed and was still in a state of disrepair by 1351?

With its restoration, the elaborations referred to were included,[42] but at no time do the usual encrustations such as porches and side chapel seem to have been added to the outside fabric. The small bench along the south wall of the nave does not appear to be a markedly unusual feature, occurring in St. Ebba's chapel although here of uncertain date.[43] Also it was not uncommon to erect stone crosses within the church, many existed within the chancels of continental churches between the 9th and 11th centuries.[44] In England, a cross stood near the chancel arch of Reculver church as early as 1296.[45]

In 1386, Sir Walter Tailbois, wishing to consolidate his estates, exchanged his moiety of Hepple with Robert Ogle who held the remainder, for a moiety in Hurworth. Henceforth, the manor of Hepple was completely in the possession of the Ogles.[46] This can have had little effect upon the chapel, although the grave-slab now in Hepple parish church, with the three *crescents*, so blasoned for Robert of Ogle, could indicate family burial at Kirkhill after 1386. This is approaching that time when the medieval pottery terminates, and if the chapel was still functioning by the mid-15th century it bears no evidence of the destruction caused to Hepple by the Scots in 1406, 1416 and 1436, unless the 14th century potsherd found in the only destruction layer is a late survival.[47]

Until recent excavation, a *terminus ante quem* for the abandonment of the chapel has had to rely upon the interpretation of a poem taken from a "tombstone" aligned on a north/south axis within the chancel. The poem was first published by Mackenzie,[49] and records a Countess whom the compilers of *NCH* identified with Jane, last Countess of Ogle, who died in 1625.[50] Although her tomb lies in Westminster Abbey, it was suggested that the "tombstone" was probably a monument. Were this acceptable, the abandonment must have occurred within the century following as it was certainly desolate and crumbling when visited by Lord Oxford's chaplain in 1725. From internal evidence the poem cannot have been written as early as 1625, and more probably was constructed sometime after 1700;[51] moreover it definitely records a burial. As no suitable candidate can be found for such a late date, and considering the suspicion attached to the authenticity of this poem as existing on a "tombstone" within the chancel it seems unwise to use it as evidence.

[42] *Supra*, p. 164.
[43] *NCH*, I, p. 321.
[44] H. M. Taylor, "Reculver Reconsidered", *Archaeological Journal* (1968), CXXV, p. 291.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 294.
[46] *VCH*, Durham, III, p. 287.
[47] *Calendar Patent Rolls, 1405-8*, p. 141; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, 4 Henry V, no. 250; and *ibid.*, 15 Henry VI, no. 56.
[48] Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 74 (cf. fn. 2).
[49] *Ibid.* For the poem see *infra*, p. 187, and the text in *NCH*, XV, p. 332.
[50] *NCH*, XV, p. 332.
[51] *Infra*, p. 187.

THE FINDS

(Where marked with an asterisk, they are illustrated.)

THE FLINTS

A total of twenty flints were found, of which four had been utilised. Except for two calcined flints contained within the Collared Urn, the remainder came from areas of subsequent disturbance. The quality and colour of the flint varies from translucent milky-grey to grey-black, and several flakes are fractured. A threefold division is adopted, distinguishing between primary (wholly cortical) flakes, secondary (partially cortical) flakes, and tertiary (wholly non-cortical) flakes.

Topsoil

Eleven flakes, none being over 28 mm in length. One is primary, four secondary and six tertiary.

*Thumbnail scraper. Ave. diameter 25 mm, thickness 9 mm. Roughly symmetrical with the angle of retouch between 40° and 60°. The main wear is on the retouched end indicating forward scraping, the opposite side is cortical (fig. 6c).

Debris and rubble

Secondary flake in cloudy-grey flint. Length 221 mm, max. width 12 mm, thickness 5 mm.

*Triangular flint worked on both edges. Length of blade 22 mm, width 14 mm, thickness 3 mm. Tertiary with natural fractures. In grey-brown flint. The retouched edge (between 50° and 80°) is steep and well worn (fig. 6d).

Robber trench of south wall of nave

Microblade; teritary in opaque brown flint. Length of blade 24 mm, max. width 9 mm, max. thickness 5 mm.

Grave fill of skeleton 20

*Flat based triangular arrowhead. Length 26 mm, width 12 mm, thickness 4 mm. Finely worked with bifacial retouch (fig. 6b).

From within the Collared Urn

Two fragmentary flakes of calcined flint, one bulbous.

JET OBJECT

A. Morrison, Dept. of Archaeology, Glasgow University

**Jet bead.* Length 26 mm, max. diameter 15 mm. In the British Museum. Reg. No. 79 12-9 1735. Fig. 4c.

The fusiform bead formerly in the possession of Greenwell is said to have been found associated with a burnt body in a cist "at Hepple. It is of a form regularly associated with Food Vessels in cist burials. One or more individual beads have been found in cists and they, like this example, could have been component parts of crescentic jet necklaces of the type best known from Food Vessel burials in Scotland" (Childe, *Prehistory of Scotland*, 1935, p. 104, and Piggott, Traders and metalworkers, in S. Piggott (ed.), *The Prehistoric Peoples of Scotland*, 1962, 99-101). Elgee (*Early Man in North-East Yorkshire*, 1930, 108-118) makes much of the quality and quantity of East Yorkshire jet, and objects of jet from this region could have been carried over a distance by way of trade. A necklace of jet discs with two fusiform beads accompanied an inhumation in Barrow 64, Garrowby Wold Group, Yorkshire (Mortimer, *Forty Years Researches*, 1905, fig. 362), a jet necklace was associated with a cremation in a Collared Urn at Barrow 13, Calais Wold Group, Yorkshire (Mortimer, *op. cit.*, fig. 418a), and a jet spacer-plate necklace was found with a Beaker burial at Middleton-on-the-Wolds, Yorkshire (Mortimer, *op. cit.*, fig. 1017).

THE STONEWORK

(unless otherwise indicated, the material was a coarse-grained sandstone)

*1. One of two fragments illustrated by Hodgson and now lost. It shows in relief the blade of a sword, and the stem of a cross leading to a webbed foot which represents a hill (fig. 3e).
*2. The second fragment illustrated by Hodgson is now in Hepple Parish Church, inset into the north wall of the nave above the font. It portrays a floriate cross and three *crescents* (fig. 3c).
*3. The grave-slab of Lady Marjorie Tailbois measured 1·69 m E/W, and was 570 mm wide at the head, tapering to 490 mm at the foot. Badly cracked and burnt, above the chamfered edge rose a floriate cross in relief, set upon a stepped dias. Either side of the cross stem was the inscription:

HIC IACET DOMINA MARIORA | [· · ·] VIT VXOR DOMINI RO | BERTI TAYLBOIS
"Here lies the lady Marjorie ... wife of Lord Robert Taylbois"

This grave-slab is an important addition to that small number of datable medieval grave-slabs in that its fashioning can be narrowed down to within seven years. In 1257 Robert Tailbois the elder, and husband of Marjorie, died (*Calendar of Inquisitions Port Mortem*, Henry III, p. 102). The son, another Robert, succeeded to the estate and consequently must have been at least 21 years of age. A reference in the Curia Regis Rolls (*Pleas from the Curia Regis and Assize Rolls* 1198-1272, Vol. II, 1921. no. 162), indicates that Lady Marjorie was still alive in 1259 when her son would have been at least 23 years of age. The skeleton report indicates death in the early to mid forties, in which case even under the most optimistic circumstances, 1266 is the latest date she could have been alive (fig. 3a).

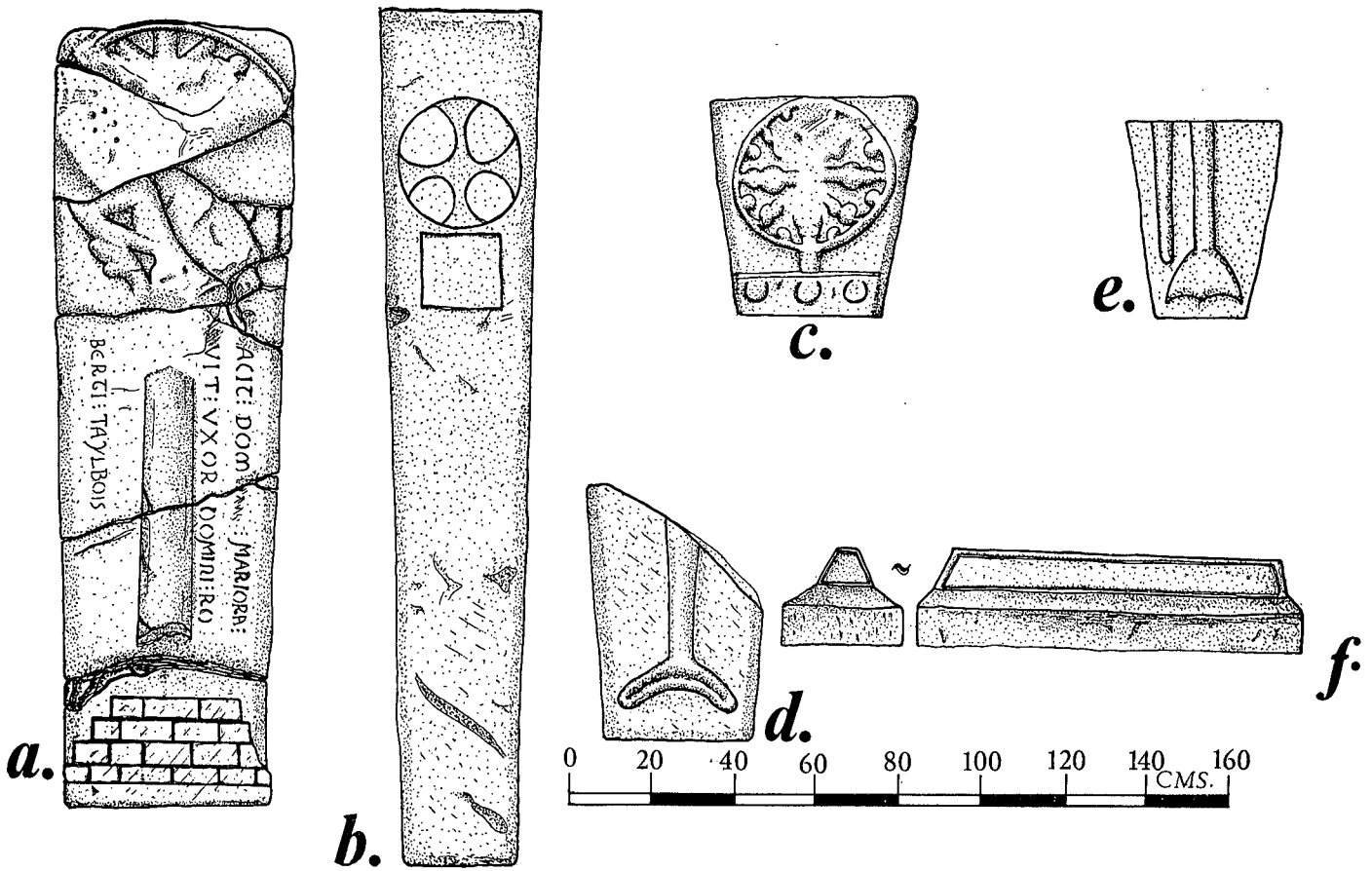


Fig. 3. Medieval grave-slabs

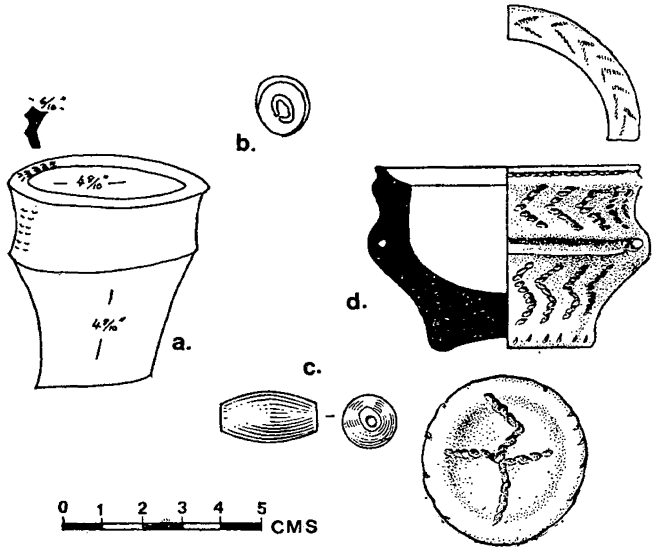


Fig. 4. Early discoveries from Hepple (c. and d. by P. C. Compton) (1/1)

*4. Foot end of a grave-slab lying within the nave, 570 mm in length, but broken, and 350 mm in width. Badly burnt and cracked with traces of a chamfer (fig. 3d).

5. Badly burnt and cracked extremity of a grave-slab.

*6. Complete grave-slab lying outside the south wall of the chapel. 1·6 m in length, 280 mm in width at the base, and 240 mm in height. Probably covering a child's grave, it was stepped at mid-height, the sides and top being decorated with plain panelling (fig. 3f).

*7. Complete grave-slab lying outside the south wall of the chancel and parallel to the above, 1·85 m in length, and tapering from 390 mm at the head to 270 mm at the foot, beyond which was the small foot slab still *in situ*. Apart from a rough chamfer, the only decoration was an expanded armed cross within a circle, set above an empty square (fig. 3b).

*8. Small broken fragment, 180 mm in length and 40 mm thick, with a single chamfered edge and the letters VM rudely incised on the face. ?Mason's mark (fig. 5c).

*9. Small block bearing an oblique incised line across the face, from which six lines hang vertically. 90 mm × 121 mm (fig. 5d).

*10. Triangular stone 19 mm in length, 80 mm in width, and 240 mm deep. In the centre of the face is a mortice hole, presumably for either a door pivot or a sliding bolt (fig. 5b).

*11. Socket stone, 700 mm high, 680 mm long, and 650 mm wide, with a socket 470 mm long, 435 mm wide, and 80 mm deep.

*12. Small rectangular block 126 mm high, and 180 mm in both thickness and width. At one end a continuous line runs around the stone, the area between this and the end being divided into plain panels.

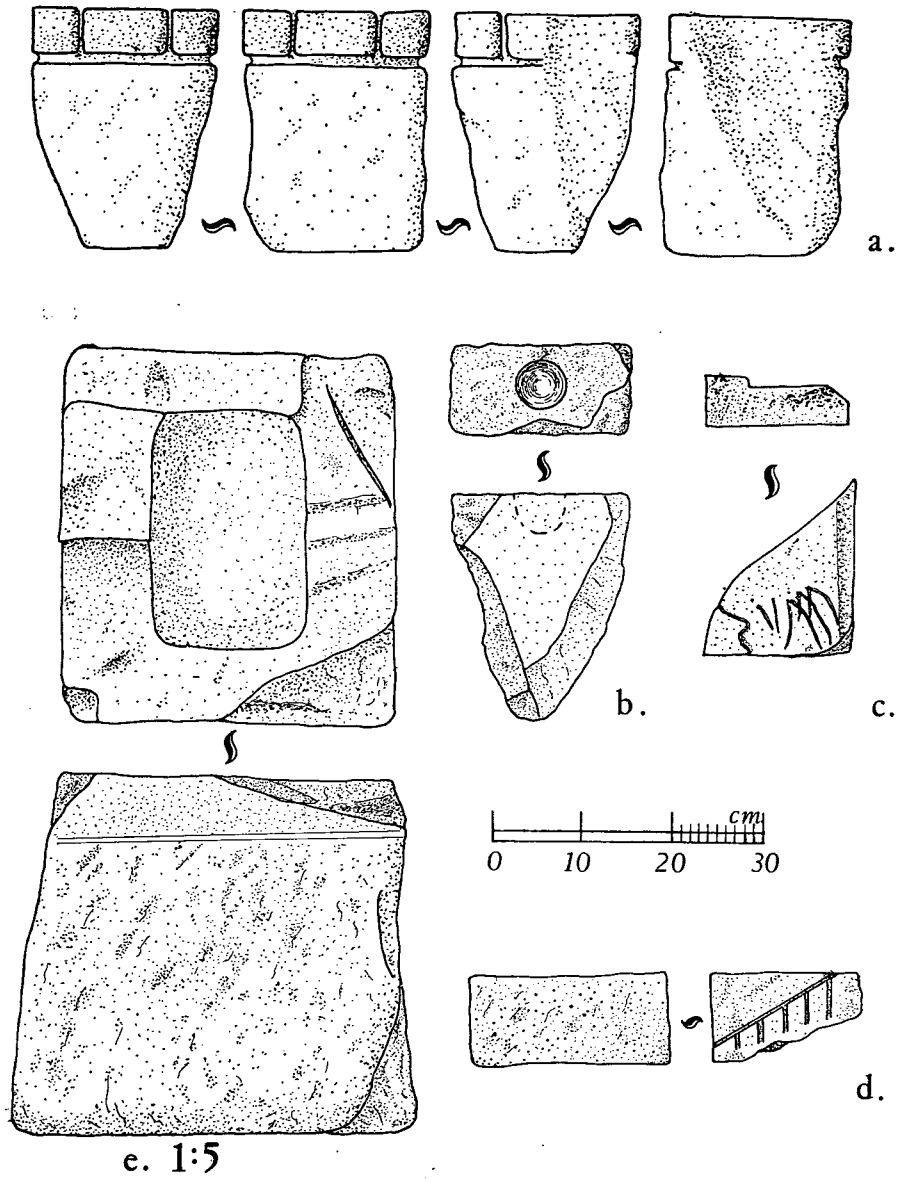


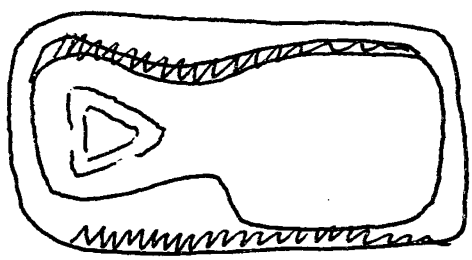
Fig. 5. Stonework

THE HEPPLE FONT (Plate XVII, 2)

J. T. Lang, Neville's Cross, Durham

The bowl of the font now in the church at Hepple almost certainly came from the Kirkhill site. Material from the former chapel was used in 1760 to build the adjoining farmhouse (E. Mackenzie [*cf.* fn. 2] and W. W. Tomlinson, *Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland,* 11th ed., p. 342), and as late as 1888 Tomlinson recorded: "the bason and carved pedestal of the font are preserved in the farmhouse here". Only the bowl survives; its height varies only slightly from 405 mm to 420 mm. Its sides are 90 mm thick, including the modern lead lining. Two short stretches of the rim remain, plain and rectangular in section.

The decoration of the font is meagre. On the present south side an ill-proportioned figure with a pear-shaped face and full length robe stands beneath a round arch which rests on two pillars with lumpy bases and stepped capitals. The arch has faint traces of a incised medial line above the westernmost capitals. The figure's feet are depicted and his right hand extends laterally over the flanking pillar. Honeyman described the decoration as an arcade of niches containing figures, (H. L. Honeyman, "Some Early Masonry in Northumberland", *AA*[4] (1935), XII, 184) and Pevsner perpetuates the plural though admitting that only one is visible. (N. Pevsner, *Northumberland* (1957), 169-70). In fact there is no evidence for there ever having been an arcade running round the bowl. The carving, in places, stands almost a centimetre in relief and it seems impossible for a single arch to remain whilst the rest wear away beyond trace. It is not uncommon for 12th century fonts to have haphazard decoration, part of which includes an arch containing a figure, for example the fonts at Walton (Lancs.) and Cowlam (East Yorks.). Though the Hepple font is much worn, chipped about its rim and scratched and pitted near its base, there is no evidence of relief carving other than the solitary figure, apart from a small elliptical bump 40 mm by 25 mm on the side directly opposite the figure carving, perhaps all that remains of the triangle which Hodgson recorded in his notebooks. (J. Hodgson, Notebook M, 88, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.) The present east and west sides of the bowl seem never to have carried ornament.



After Hodgson

The figure has a crudely carved face with a pointed chin, a feature interpreted by some as a beard, but the Virgin and Child of the Walton font (F. Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers* (1908), 164) have analogous faces and the shape is more likely a rustic survival of 10th century carving of clumsy character such as occurs at Aycliffe and Sockburn in Co. Durham. There are, however, many 12th century parallels for this

type of face, especially on fonts, for example those at North Grimston (East Yorks.) and Kirkby (Lancs.). The laterally extended right hand is also a common motif on Norman fonts; it is often raised in blessing, as on the lead fonts at Sandhurst (Gloucs.) and Walton on the Hill (Surrey) (*Ibid.*, 82-3) and at Fincham (Norfolk) the posture is adopted not only by a row of secular figures but also by Adam and Eve. (*Ibid.*, 156.)

The stepped capitals of the pillars are so schematised and poorly cut that it would be dangerous to attempt a comparison with actual pre-Conquest architecture. Triple stemming occurs on the canon tables of the Lindisfarne Gospels but this is more an indication of convention than of period. The arch of the Walton font has a similar crude capital or impost and the arcade of the Wansford font (*Ibid.*, 182) has a pair of incised horizontal strips forming the capital; both are of the 12th century. At Hepple the upper strip is 30 mm wide and the lower 10 mm. It is interesting to compare certain measurements of the Hepple carving: both the arch and the pillars are 45 mm wide, whilst the figure, tightly filling the niche, is 90 mm wide at the shoulders, twice the unit used for the architectural frame. Honeyman's oblique argument (Honeyman, *op. cit.*, 184, footnote 47) that concentric extrados and intrados indicate a pre-Conquest date does not help in dating the Hepple font once it has been compared with the great number of Norman arcaded fonts which abound throughout England.

The problem of the pedestal, last recorded by Tomlinson, remains. No indication is given of the nature of its carving, nor of its form, which may have been anything from a shallow plinth to a cluster of shafts. There are many examples of early fonts which originally rested on the ground being elevated on pedestals in the medieval period, for example that at Chadsunt, (Bond, *op. cit.*, 45) so we cannot be sure that the Hepple stem was contemporary with the bowl. The dimensions and shape suggest that at the time of the bowl's construction it probably stood without a pedestal in the manner of the Walton and East Riding font. Certainly the wall of the tub is much scarred near its base. The lost pedestal must have been at least as wide as the present modern stem, bearing in mind the weight of the bowl and the diameter of the circular platform upon which it stood. The three dressed stones revealed in the excavation are most likely the footings of this platform, the diameter being too great for a pedestal in relation to that of the bowl.

The Hepple font must be seen as a crude example of the ubiquitous 12th century tub font, possibly possessing a later pedestal and platform, and whilst it remains one of the earliest fonts in Northumberland it cannot be safely ascribed to the pre-Conquest period. It is worth recalling Bond's maxim regarding such fonts: "it by no means follows that what is archaic is also ancient". (*Ibid.*, 139.)

THE BRONZE AGE POTTERY

A. Morrison, Dept. of Archaeology, Glasgow University

*Food Vessel. Height 121 mm, width 121 mm, thickness 15 mm (fig. 4a).

This vessel, illustrated in Hodgson's Ms. notes (*cf.* fn. 1), is presumably the same one which was donated to the Society of Antiquaries by Mr. Smart of Trewhitt on March 1st, 1815 (Donations Book, 1815·5). Now lost, there is no doubt that it was a Food Vessel, and from general shape to have been of Yorkshire type. It could further be classified as Abercromby's Type 3 (Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, 1912, vol. I, p. 24). The lack of features on the drawing makes comparison difficult but it resembles most closely a Food Vessel from Wykeham Moor, Yorkshire (Elgee, *Early Man in North-East Yorkshire*, 1930, fig. 23g). Recorded as being found within a larger one, "in a cell formed by four upright stones and covered with fine sand

from the Coquet", the larger vessel was probably a Cinerary Urn and such associations are not uncommon.

*Miniature Food Vessel. Height 48 mm, mouth width 68 mm, thickness 7-18 mm. In the British Museum, Reg. No. 79 12-9 -509 (fig. 4d).

A whipped cord herring-bone decorates the internal rim bevel, and a single horizontal twisted cord line runs around the outer rim bevel. In the neck and on the body is a twisted cord herring-bone, and on the base a rough twisted cord cross.

This Pygmy vessel of Miniature Food Vessel form, was in Greenwell's possession when writing his book *British Barrows* (p. 91, fig. 79, and p. 94, fn. 1), and has subsequently been illustrated in Abercromby (*ibid.*, vol. II, no. 283), and *NCH* (vol. XV, fig. 8). In form it is Abercromby's type 1a (ibid., p. 93), Food Vessel reduced to Pygmy Vessel proportions. The Pygmy Vessel seems to have fulfilled the same function as the Food Vessel in that it accompanied burials or cremations, perhaps to hold some form of offering. Pygmy Vessels have been found associated with other types of pottery, but they occur very frequently with cremation burials in urns, and often in the Cinerary Urn itself. Two main forms are known, the biconical Pygmy Vessel, which has been suggested as an intrusion into Britain, perhaps from Atlantic Europe by way of the Atlantic seaboard or Irish Sea (Savory, "The Late Bronze Age in Wales", in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, CVII, 1958, pp. 3-63). The Miniature Food Vessel form seems more likely to be a native development from the Food Vessel.

This example is a very fine specimen and resembles very much a vessel from Skichen, Carmyllie, Forfarshire (Angus), (Abercromby, *op. cit.*, fig. 300), wrongly represented by Childe (*Prehistory of Scotland*, 1935, pl. XI/I) as from North Queensferry. Food Vessels from Alwinton, Northumberland (Abercromby, *op. cit.*, fig. 163) and Barrow 36, The Riggs, E.R. Yorkshire (Abercromby, *op. cit.*, fig. 34) are enlarged versions of the Hepple Pygmy Vessel. The cruciform design on the base is not unusual in the Pygmy Vessel range or in full size Food Vessels. The design may be produced by incision or cord impression, either as a deliberate cruciform or by the intersection of lines in the quartering of the base of such a vessel and where the segments so produced are alternately hatched and unhatched. (Abercromby, *op. cit.*, fig. 289; Rynne, "Bronze Age Burials at Drung, Co. Donegal", *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, XCIII, 1963, pp. 167-179; Rynne, "A Middle Bronze Age Burial at Knockboy, Co. Antrim", *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 28, 1964, pp. 62-66).

*Collared Urn. Height 309-331 mm, rim diameter 265-273 mm, basal diameter 109 mm, ave. thickness 15 mm. Museum of Antiquities, Reg. No. 1972·42 (fig. 6a).

The slightly everted rim has a broad and shallow internal rim bevel, decorated with a twisted cord herring-bone proceeding anticlockwise. The straight collar, thickening at the bottom has also been covered in a thin twisted cord; here the pattern is oblique feathering from left to right, giving an impression of overlap. Beneath the collar and down to the shoulder, a carelessly applied incised herring-bone pattern has been executed with a sharp blade, sometimes four, sometimes five jabs in alternate directions vertically on the vessel's surface.

This fine smooth surface has an almost polished quality, generally a rich honey brown colour except for a little black staining confined to the shoulder, and occasional pinkish-red patches. Internally the surface is less smooth, darker brown in colour with blotches of heavy black staining. The core is black and packed with grog, some chips being over 8 mm in length.

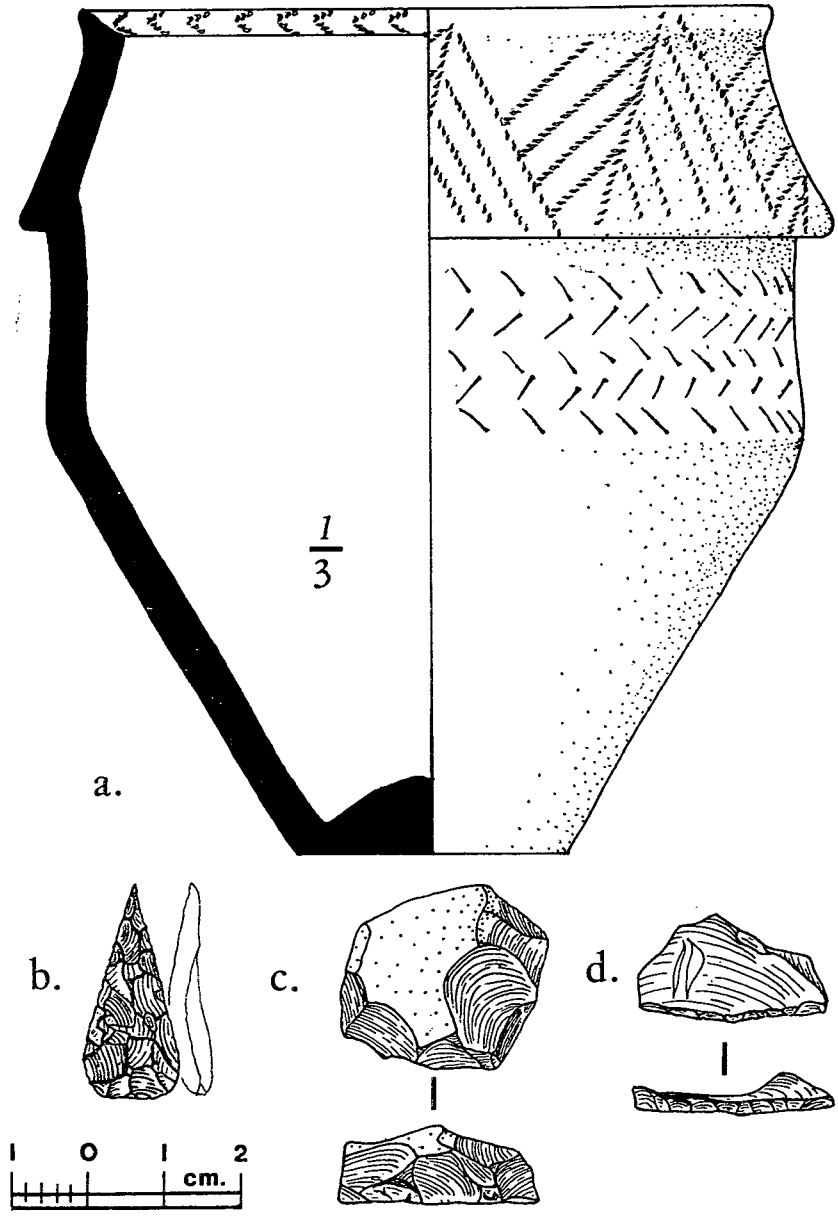


Fig. 6. Collared urn and flints

The inverted position of the urn is in common with most discoveries of this type, whether in a simple pit or in a pit lined with slabs. In a study of forty-five Collared Urns from South-west Scotland, details of the position of the urn at the time of discovery are known for twenty-eight examples (Morrison, "Cinerary Urns and Pygmy Vessels of South-west Scotland", in *Trans. Dumfries and Galloway Nat. Hist. Ant. Soc.* XLV 1968, pp. 81-140). Of these twenty-three were inverted, four on a slab or flat stone, one on pebbles or small boulders, and one with its base protected by a slab. The idea, often proposed, of the collar as a projection under which a cover of skin or leather could be tied is hinted at here by the fact that no cremated bone had escaped from the urn. Other types of cover are known: an inverted Collared Urn from Kirkbean, Kirkcudbright, was sealed with a clay plug (Morrison, *op. cit.*, 1968, No. 85).

The urn would appear to belong in the Primary Series of the Collared Urn tradition (Longworth, "The Origins and Development of the Primary Series in the Collared Urn Tradition in England and Wales", in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 27, 1961, pp. 263-306). Few of these are known for Northumberland (Longworth, *op. cit.*, fig. 8), the nearest concentration being on the Wolds and Moors of the North Riding of Yorkshire. There are, however, many parellels for form and decoration among Scottish Collared Urns. The collar decoration of alternate upright and inverted triangles of oblique parallel lines of twisted cord impressions is quite common in Collared Urns, and examples are known from Dinwoodiegreen Farm, Annandale, Dumfriesshire; Orchard Farm, Canonbie, Dumfriesshire; Girvan, Ayrshire; Muirkirk, Ayrshire; Cumnock, Ayrshire, in South-west Scotland (Morrison, *op. cit.*, Nos. 38, 41, 51, 100, 104), and from the cemeteries at Kirkpark, Musselburgh, Midlothian (Low and Anderson, "Notice of a Cemetery of Graves and Cinerary Urns ... at Kirkpark, Musselburgh", in *PSAS*, 16, 1882, pp. 419-29). A nearer example is perhaps the urn found inverted in a hole below the base of the mound of barrow No. 71, Wharram Percy Group, Yorkshire (Mortimer, *Forty Years Researches*, 1905). In this urn the design of upright and inverted triangles with cord-impressed filling on the collar is combined with incised decoration on the neck, though not of herring-bone pattern.

THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY

L. Thoms, Dundee Museum

topsoil (a total of 60 sherds, of which two were rims, and three handles)

The vessels represented range in date from the early 13th to the early 19th century. The majority are from jugs of 13/14th century date, with a few sherds indicative of 14th and even 15th century vessels.

1. Body sherd of cooking pot, thin walls and slightly oxidised exterior. ?Early 13th C.

*2. Rim of jug, slightly oxidised with flattened lip. In green/brown glaze.

*3. Flat outturned rim of cooking pot, slightly reduced exterior. Early 12th C.

rubble and debris (seven sherds)

Two groups of jug were distinguished, one of late 13th/early 14th century date, the other late 14th century.

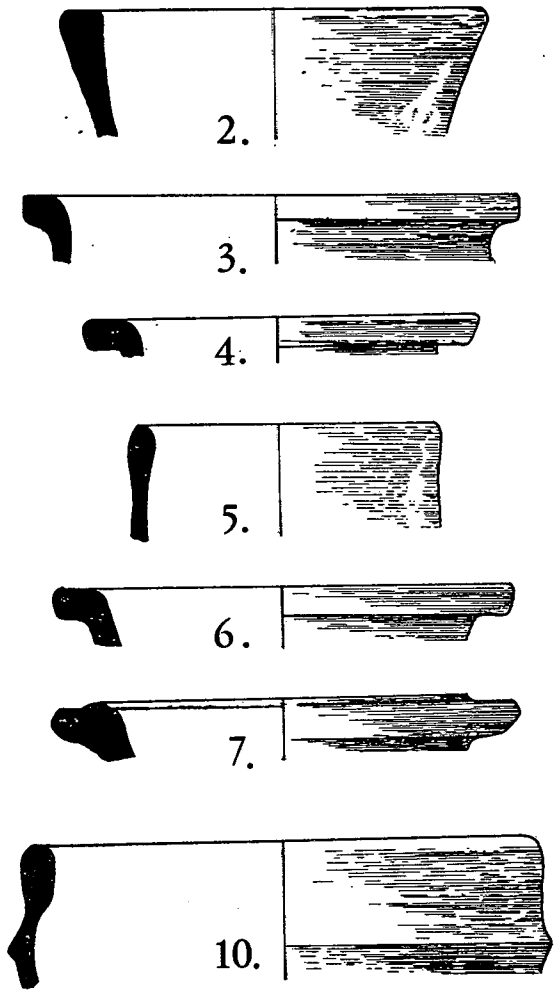


Fig. 7. Medieval pottery (½)

brown earth overlying chancel packing (three body sherds, one rim)

The body sherds again represented jugs (early 13th century), the rim only exists as a fragment but may indicate an early 13th century date.
*4. Outturned rim, oxidised. 13th C.

medieval topsoil (four body sherds)

Jug. 13th century.

robber trenches (six body sherds, one rim fragment)

The majority of the body sherds belong to jugs of 14th century date, two possibly belonging to the late 13th century.

*5. Rim of plain jug with upright rim. Oxidised interior. 14th C.

medieval topsoil around gravestones (nine body sherds, two rims)

*6. Flat outturned rim of cooking pot, slightly reduced exterior. Late 12th/early 13th C.
*7. Rim of cooking pot. Late 13th/early 14th C.
8. Basal angle of cooking pot. Oxidised exterior. 12th/early 13th C.

destruction layer of stone chapel, period I (six sherds)

9. Jug. 14th C.

grave 5 (one sherd)

*10. Plain jug with pinched spout, in yellow/green glaze. 13th C.

robber trench of south wall of nave

11. Jug. Late 14th/early 15th century.

As expected from a site of this nature, the volume of pottery recovered was not great therefore little conclusive information could be drawn from it. No unusual forms or fabrics existed within the group, but rather the pottery is in keeping with known material from the region. Dates ascribed to the sherds have been given as a guide and are necessarily only provisional.

THE GLASS

Sixteen fragments of window glass were recovered, all from disturbed contexts. The quality of glass as recovered, varies from an extremely friable and flakey condition, to a quite solid and well preserved state, probably representing the varying soil conditions rather than any differences of chemical composition. Similarly, a three-ply formation as seen in the section of some fragments, is almost certainly due to imbibed salts. Only three colours were represented, a golden yellow, green, and a dark cobalt blue. Several fragments retained their grozed edges, and all were heavily patinated and non-transparent.

Apart from a single blob of solidified glass from the burnt layer associated with the initial destruction of the chapel, no other fragments can be related to this first period.

THE PAINTED GLASS FRAGMENT

L. C. Evetts, Dept. of Fine Art, Newcastle University

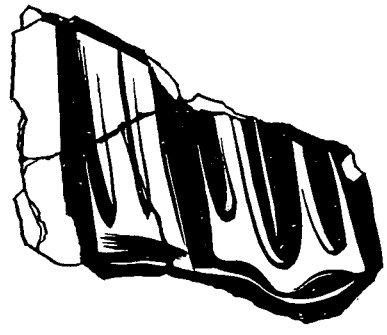


Fig. 8

The fragment of painted glass undoubtedly represents part of the drapery of a figure, and the style of painting indicates a date in the 13th century. It is probably from a medallion type of window in which the figure groups would be approximately fifteen inches high. Where the paint occurs near the edge of the piece of glass there is unmistakable evidence of the original grozing. Therefore it is ascertained that on three sides, the piece of glass is of the original size, and that these edges would fit into the lead calmes.

THE COIN

Half a silver Long-cross penny of Henry III. Precise identification is difficult, but possibly struck at Canterbury between A.D. 1251-1272 (cf. J. J. North, *English Hammered Coinage*, 997, pl. xvi, 37).

Obv. Crown low central fleur, lis of three small pellets.

Rev. Long cross voided with three pellets in each angle.

THE METALWORK

topsoil

*Iron Ferrule. Length 121 mm, max. diameter 29 mm (fig. 9a)

Hollow conical ferrule, fashioned from V-shaped plate with the point annealed. No trace of rivet attachment.

*Iron Key. Length 313 mm, diameter of stem 17 mm (fig. 9b).

Circular bow, slightly flattened. Thin square bit and rolled over circular stem. The stem and bit, being rolled out of a single sheet, is a feature of the type II keys (*London Museum*. Mediaeval Catalogue, 1956, p. 136 and pl. XXX, no. 21), and dateable to between the late 11th and late 13th centuries.

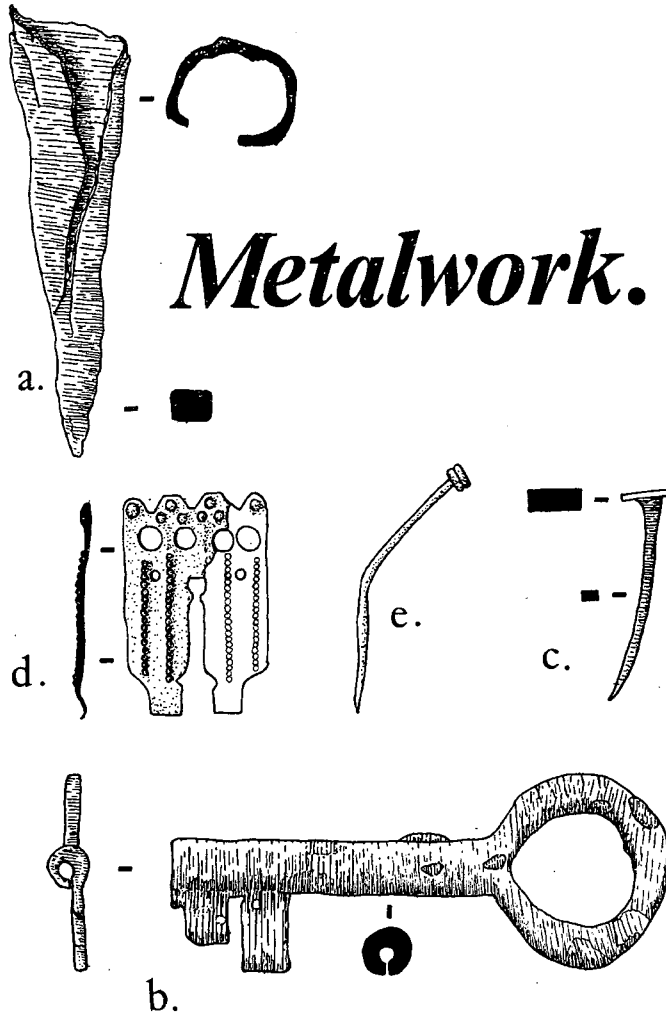


Fig. 9. a, b and c: 2/3; d and e 3/2

*Bronze Pin. Length 38 mm (fig. 9e).
Small bronze shroud-pin, with a small tightly waisted head and flattened top.

*Bronze ?Clasp.. Max. length 28 mm, width 13 mm, thickness 0·2 mm (fig. 9d).
Very thin fragment of bronze sheet with punched decoration in relief. Broken across the lug at the base, and along the top right hand edge. As the other edges seem to be part of the cutaway, and therefore intentional, it is possible to suggest a reconstruction of the right hand portion at least, as having corresponded to the left hand side. The smaller hole between the ribs of small punched circles may have been for small rivets, but this is unlikely to apply to the larger holes. Its function may have been as a clasp holding a book closed.

skeleton 1 grave-fill

Iron Buckle. Length 32 mm, diameter 27 mm.
Heavily corroded square iron buckle, with the pin missing. From near the pelvis.

skeleton 34 grave-fill

Bronze fragment. Length 21 mm, diameter 2 mm.
Encrusted thin bronze rod with circular section and broken at both ends. Found near the lumbar vertebrae of skeleton 34. ?Bronze Age awl.

The Nails

Over fifty-six complete or fragmentary nails were recovered, of which only ten were stratified. The majority were bent, but for a solitary large nail with round head and rectangular shank, of the 60% which portray head and shank on the one fragment, all seem to fall within two distinct types. Numerically the smaller group, yet the most diverse in both size and length, are those with round head and round shank. Seven examples, all from topsoil or grave-cuts, varied in length from 35 to 88 mm. The larger group, with rectangular head and rectangular shank, were of a uniform size, varying by not more than 6 mm when complete. This was furthermore, the only type found amongst the burnt layer within the chapel, represented here by five complete nails (fig. 9c).

The Lead Objects

Numerous fragments of lead were found, all from areas of subsequent disturbance. Most had been reduced to a molten state, the only recognisable shapes being of calmes. Of the three fragments recognisable as such, all were from the outside edge of the window, having a bevelled solid edge and a channel U-shaped in section to hold the glass.

THE ANIMAL BONES

topsoil

Sheep	three lower molars; incomplete metatarsal.
Mole	complete skeleton.

rubble and debris

Boar	worn canine.
Horse	2nd premolar.
Ox	fragments of tibia, ribs, and scapula; metatarsal with the distal end broken and fused.

SKELETAL EXAMINATION OF MARJORIE TAILBOIS

Dr. T. E. Barlow & Dr. D. E. Wright, Dept. of Anatomy, Newcastle University

The skeleton was fairly complete and in good condition considering its age. It was of a woman—the curvature of the sciatic notch was characteristically wide—of height approximately 5′ 6″-5′ 8″, and at the time of death her age was around 40 years. The height was calculated from an examination of the femurs, and the age from the fact that the cranial sutures were clearly seen (and thus not ossified) on the *outside* of the skull—but *not* on the *inside*. No pathological processes were detectable in the bones of the skeleton and one could express the opinion that it belonged to a normal healthy woman.

DENTAL REPORT

D. Jackson, Dental School, Newcastle University

Both jaws are well formed and bear a normal relationship to one another. The anterior teeth in both jaws are crowded, with imbrication (overlapping) of the lower incisors and rotation of the upper lacterial incisors. (2/2).

teeth present: $\frac{76\ \ 4321/1234\ \ 67}{76E4321/1234E67}$

radiographs confirm that $\frac{85/58}{85/58}$ are absent

The two lower second deciduous molars $\overline{(E/E)}$ are still present, and spaces in the upper jaw, and state of the ridges, together with the absence of the upper second premolars (5 / 5), suggest that upper second deciduous molars (E / E) had been present to within a few years of death.

Attrition

Evidence of this is present on all the teeth, being most marked on $\frac{6\ \ 21/12\ \ 6}{6E21/1\ \ E6}$

The attrition is strikingly more obvious on $\frac{6/6}{6/6}$ than on $\frac{7/7}{7/7}$

Dental caries (decay)

There is no evidence of dental caries.

Periodontium

There is both sub- and supra-gingival caculus (tartar) present on the teeth and some loss of the crests of the alveolar (tooth supporting) bone. The bone loss varies from mild to moderate, the posterior teeth being the more severely affected.

Conclusions

The degree of attrition, periodontal state, and the retention of deciduous teeth suggest an age of middle to early forties. There has been a congenital absence of eight teeth, $\frac{85/58}{85/58}$

THE URN CREMATIONS

Dr. T. E. Barlow & Dr. D. E. Wright, Dept. of Anatomy, University of Newcastle

(As it was highly likely that the Collared Urn contained more than one individual, and possible that some order may have existed in the introduction of the several individuals and possible associated objects, the contents were removed in arbitrary layers of 50 mm intervals. As the following shows, no orderly introduction existed, the several persons represented being well intermixed when deposited in the urn. R.M.)

The funerary urn contained only fragments of bone and careful examination permitted the identification of portions of 6 heads of femurs—indicating the remains of at least 3 persons. It would be difficult to relate these to the stratification layers in the urn as presented for examination. The presence of one very small terminal phalanx suggests that one of the individuals was a child or young person. Portions of many bones could be recognised, e.g. parts of ribs, vertebrae, but the only other noteworthy feature was that a part of one tibia showed a distortion possibly characteristic of rickets. A similar distortion was seen in a phalanx found at the same level in the funerary urn.

DENTAL REPORT

Dr. J. Weyman, Dental School, University of Newcastle

Among the cremated remains were tooth bearing parts of maxillae from three distinct individuals, and of the mandible form from two individuals. These were all in the permanent dentition and with fully formed roots. They were therefore all over the age of 15 years, and one at least in the third decade.

The many roots of teeth, most of which were not in their sockets, bore out this estimate, with one—possibly two—exceptions. A mandibular molar, probably the first, had immature root ends, and another root was possibly that of a first dentition canine. This would suggest the remains of a child, in addition to the three mature individuals, who was probably 8-9 years old, or alternatively, if the tooth was a second molar and a first, 13-14 years, but this is less likely.

There is no real evidence as to sex, although one maxillary fragment showed tooth roots of a more slender and shorter form, so that a female may have been present.

* * *

Several cremated bone fragments from the Collared Urn were stained with a colour varying from green to blue. Similar phenomena have been noted as occurring elsewhere (Greenwell, *British Barrows*, p. 16, and more recently F. Lynch in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol. CXXX, 1971, p. 34 and fn. 23). Generally recognised as not necessarily indicating bronze staining, but rather being due to ferrous salts, a sample was kindly analysed by Margaret Iley of the Chemistry Dept., Newcastle University. No copper or tin traces existed, but rather a marked amount of iron and manganese with slight traces of sulphur. Dr. N. A. Campbell is certain that the colour derives from Prussian Blue, and I am grateful to him for the following note:

"Suggested mechanisms for the formation of Prussian Blue on old calcined bones.

"Prussian Blue is formed when iron salts are brought into contact with hexacyanoferrates (formerly known as prussiates or ferrocyanides). Hexacyanoferrates are

traditionally made by heating animal matter, usually bones, blood and hooves, in contact with iron compounds. Such iron compounds might be found in ochre clays, pyritous rocks, iron bearing streams, or might be formed from iron in the blood. To convert the hexacyanoferrate into Prussian Blue further contact with iron salts is usually required, but prolonged exposure to air can bring about surface conversion. The Dept. of Inorganic Chemistry has an old specimen of potassium hexacyanoferrate which has developed a fine deep coating of Prussian Blue, merely by exposure to air."

Earth samples from the pits and Collared Urn were examined for pollen but no traces were found.

CARBON 14 ANALYSIS OF THE CHARCOAL FROM PIT A

Dr. Harkness, Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre, East Kilbride

Prior to C-14 assay all suspected modern rootlets were hand picked from the sample and possible humic acid contaminants (from decomposition of overlying soil humus) removed by alkali digestion. As per recognised procedure the C-14 age is calculated on the basis of the Libby half-life (5570 years) and corrected for isotopic refraction relative to a $\delta^{13}c$ value of $-25{\cdot}0\,°/oo$.

	3242 ± 90 B.P.
SRR-133.	1292 B.C.
	$\delta^{13}C = -28{\cdot}6°/oo$

(Here I would like to express my thanks to The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne for a grant enabling the above analysis to be carried out. R.M.)

THE POEM (said to have been on a "tombstone" in the chancel)

T. Cain, Dept. of English, Newcastle University

The text is first given by Mackenzie (cf. fn. 48), and thereafter by the compilers of *NCH* (cf. fn. 49).

Though it offers little evidence on which any very accurate dating could be based, there can be no doubt that this poem is a good deal later than its context would seem to imply. It was certainly written after 1660, and probably after 1700. The verse form is one that is often used by Restoration and Eighteenth century poets, and the rather bland complacent rhythms are much more reminiscent of the early Eighteenth than of the early Seventeenth century. This is true also of the somewhat too neat parallelism of thought that is seen clearly in the second and third verses, and the rather obvious alliteration which is used to enforce it. Were it not for the fact that circumstances make it impossible, the poem could date from as late as 1760. As it is, I would suggest that it was probably written between 1700 and 1740.