

## VII

### A NOTE ON SOME BURIALS FROM BACK GLADSTONE STREET, HARTLEPOOL

*Edwina V. W. Proudfoot*

#### INTRODUCTION

BACK GLADSTONE STREET (NZ 5282 3499) is a narrow cobbled street between Gladstone and Beaconsfield Streets, an area of terraced housing, west of the Town Moor of Hartlepool, some 350 yards (0.32 km) northwest of St. Hilda's Church, at about 25 ft (7.5 m) O.D. (fig. 1). The early history of the Back Gladstone Street area and its relationship to the development of Hartlepool is not known.

Workmen in 1964, laying a G.P.O. cable, uncovered some human remains, which were reported to the police and then came to the notice of Mr. Robert Wood, of Hartlepool and District Archaeological Society, who took charge of the bones, which he later passed to the writer. In addition, residents of Gladstone Street stated (May 1964) that human bones were found in their gardens from time to time, but no such remains were seen by the writer. Nor were the particular houses identified. Later (1973), a resident of Gladstone Street showed Dr. David Austin human bones found when an extension was built onto his house.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Wood approached the writer early in 1964, on behalf of the then recently formed Hartlepool and District Archaeological Society, with a request to direct an excavation in Back Gladstone Street. It was agreed to carry out a small exploratory excavation, partly as a training exercise, and this took place from the 16th to the 24th May, 1964, with members of the Society. Thanks should be expressed to Mr. Robert Wood, who found out about the site and made all the initial arrangements for the excavation. In addition thanks are due to the Hartlepool Town Council for permission to excavate and for the supply of tools and other equipment. Thanks are due to the residents of the street for their tolerance of, and interest in, the work. Finally thanks are due to the members of the Society, who worked in very difficult conditions.<sup>2</sup>

The objects of the excavation were to attempt to locate further remains *in situ* and to establish a context for them, if possible. It was hoped that such a trial excavation would be of value in the planning of future excavations in this part of Hartlepool, since much urban renewal was to be undertaken, and it seemed probable that further archaeological work would be carried out. In fact there has been no further excavation in this part of the town and so the results noted here have not been supplemented.<sup>3</sup>

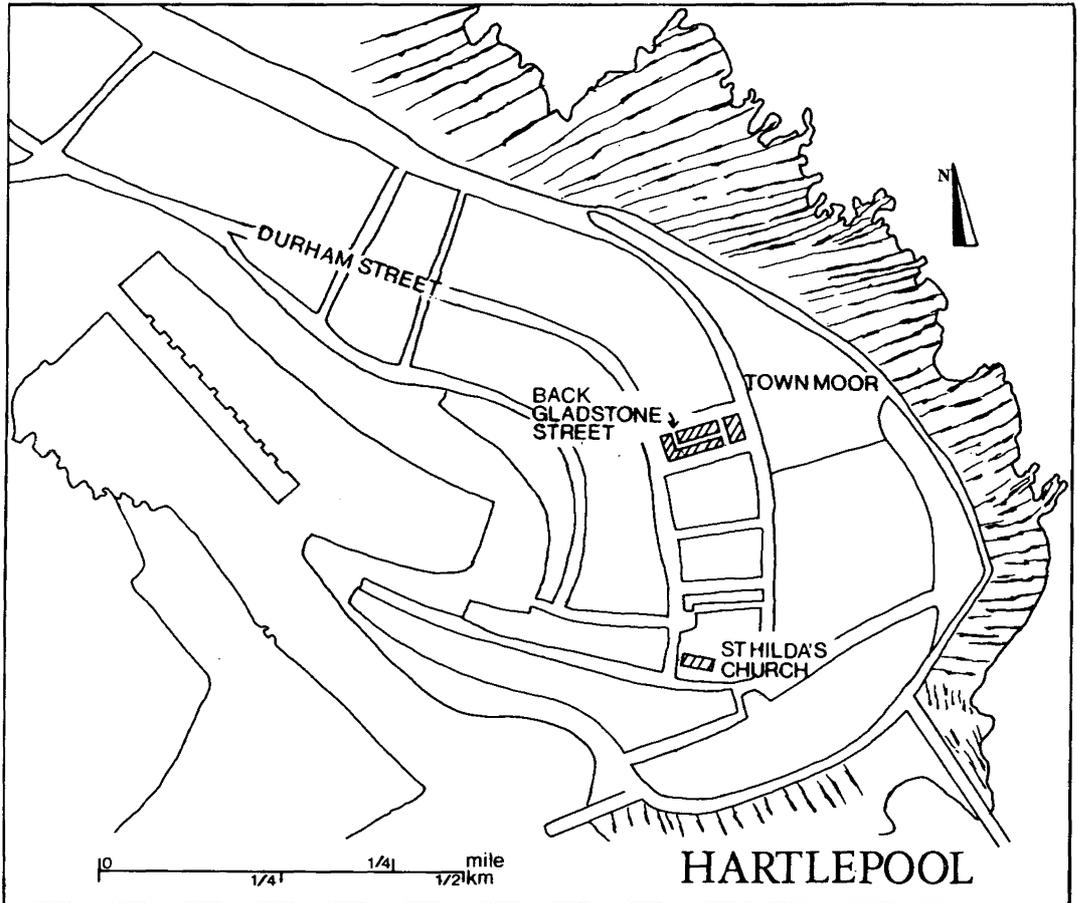


Fig. 1. Map of Hartlepool, showing the location of Back Gladstone Street.  
Based on O.S. 6 inch map.

#### THE EXCAVATION (fig. 2A)

One narrow trench was excavated, west of the centre of Back Gladstone Street (fig. 2A). This trench, labelled X-Z on the plan, was 38 ft (11.6 m) long, 2 ft (0.61 m) wide from X-Y and 4 ft (1.22 m) wide from Y-Z; it was restricted to that width by the G.P.O. cable on the south and a watermain uncovered on the north. Undisturbed natural limestone was found at a depth of about 2 ft (61 cm) at the west end of the trench but at the east there was bright orange sand, reached at a depth of 3 ft (91.5 cm).

The whole of the upper filling of the trench proved to have been disturbed. The

# HARTLEPOOL, BACK GLADSTONE STREET, 1964

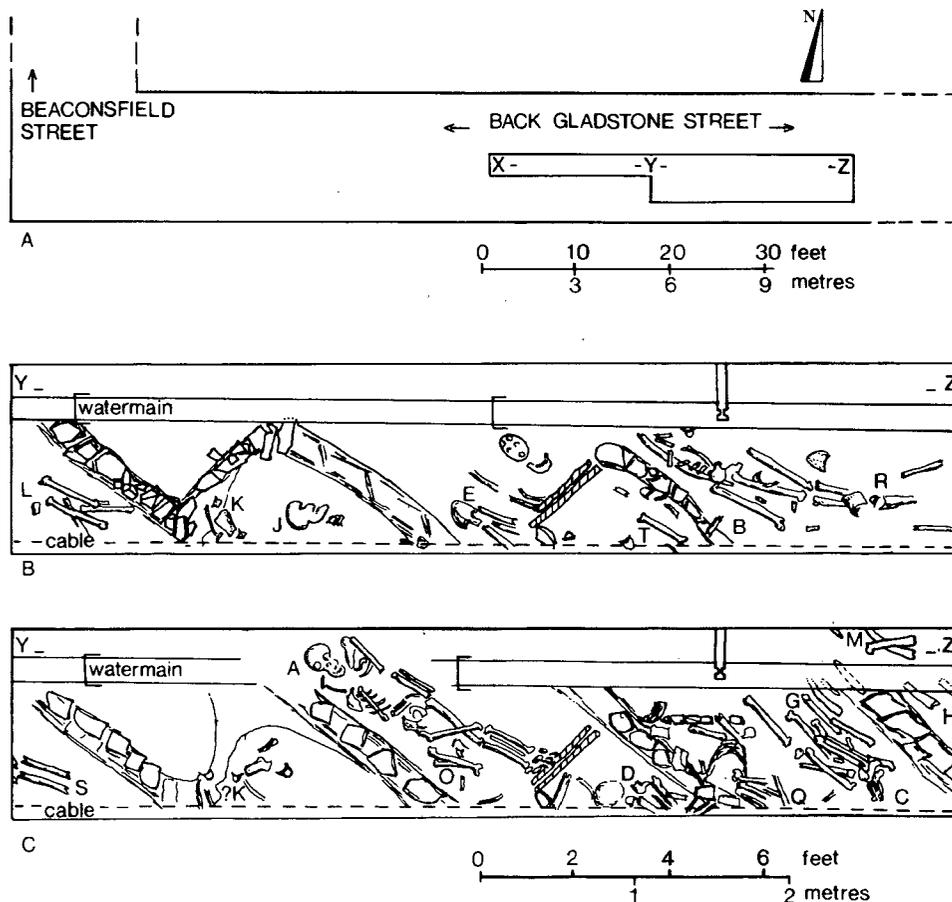


Fig. 2A. Back Gladstone Street, showing the location of the excavation, Trench X-Y-Z.

B. Groups of bones thought to belong together, above 2 ft 3 ins (0.69 cm).  
 C. Groups of bones thought to belong together, below 2 ft 3 ins (0.69 cm).  
 The division was arbitrary and had no cultural or chronological significance.  
 Some bones have been omitted for clarity.

top 1 ft (30.5 cm) consisted of cobbles and road metalling below which was a layer of dirty orange sand about 1 ft (30.5 cm) thick. At the east end of the trench, between X and Y, this layer rested on weathered magnesium limestone, in which no archaeological features were noted, though scattered finds of bone and pottery in the dirty orange sand layer indicated the possible presence of archaeological features in the vicinity.

The wider, eastern end of the trench, between Y and Z, resembled X–Y in the upper layers, but below 2 ft (61 cm) the limestone dipped and was covered by a layer of clean orange sand, in which were the bases of several disturbed graves. These were all incomplete because of the disturbed nature of the site and because of the angle at which the trench cut them. Trench Y–Z is shown in figures 2B and C, where an attempt has been made to indicate the major deposits of bones, from above and below 2 ft 3 in (0.69 m), an arbitrary separation.

The placing of the watermain on the north side of the trench had disturbed some bones, but others remained *in situ* below the pipe (fig. 2C, A and pl. XIIIa). The G.P.O. workmen removed the bones they encountered in their trench on the south, but some of these were later recovered and are included in Dr. Calvin Wells' report (see note 4). Between the two modern disturbances was the remains of a series of burials, some in remnant graves, some pushed aside, all incomplete. It was not possible to identify contemporary or intrusive burials, and therefore the remains are discussed together. Only one individual, A, was almost complete (fig. 2C and pl. XIIIa), while other individuals were represented by only two or three bones, for example S or O. In other cases, such as K it was not possible to tell whether the bones belonged together or not. The majority of individuals were represented by long bones and other bones, while only four skulls plus one skull fragment were found. Most of the remains were too fragmentary and disturbed for the mode of burial to be ascertained with certainty, but in one case, A, the individual was placed on his back, head to the west and without grave goods.

One grave resembled a stone cist, with limestone blocks placed along the north side and a piece of sandstone at the west (pl. XIIIb). Most of the other graves were dug into the sand or limestone, and in some cases blocks seem to have been placed along the edge (e.g. fig. 2C, A and pl. XIIIa). All graves examined had sandy bases. It is not feasible to generalize further, because of the small sample of graves, and the fact that none of those examined was complete and undisturbed.

#### *The Skeletal Remains:* summary of a report by Calvin Wells<sup>4</sup>

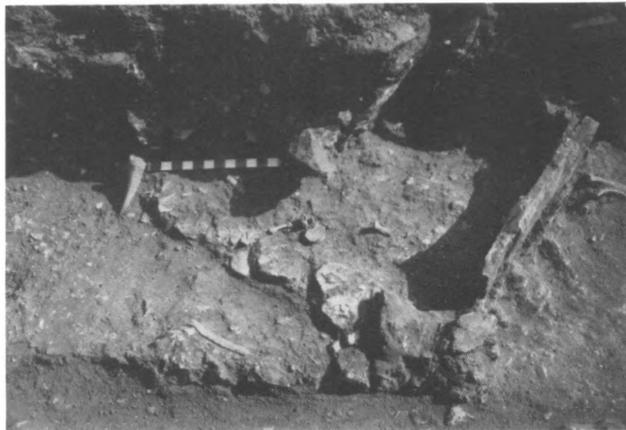
All the skeletal remains were sent for examination in 1964 to Dr. Calvin Wells, who found them of interest in spite of their fragmentary state. Dr. Wells' report is summarized here and copies of his full report are available for consultation as listed in note 4. Discussion of the skeletal material has been restricted to general observations, however, because of the degree of disturbance in the small area excavated and because there were no archaeological factors which isolated contemporary burials, groups of related burials or provided a datable context. The bones



a). The only articulated skeleton, A, with the upper part of the remains *in situ* below the water-main.

b). Detail of one grave which resembled a cist, with a sandstone block at the west end.

c). Bone groups Q and C (below), illustrating the level of disturbance generally encountered.



were found in groups, but it is felt these should probably be regarded as accidental associations at present, on the basis of the small sample. The early disturbance of the graves, as well as such factors as soil conditions affecting preservation, limit the information which can be derived from the remains and so demographic comment is restricted.

Fourteen groups of bones were excavated, seven of which contained parts of two or more skeletons; fragments of twenty-six persons were identified. In addition, three individuals were represented among the bones found in the G.P.O. trench, making twenty-nine persons in all. Fifteen (51.7%) were diagnosed as males, or possibly males, nine (31%) as females or possibly females, five (17%) were unsexable, of which three (10.3%) were children. The three children were aged 6-10, 7-10 and 8-11; three males were aged ?35, 35-50, 40-50; two females were 30-40 and 35-45, while the remainder were of uncertain age. The male to female and adult to child ratios are not statistically normal, but this is presumably due to the nature of the sample and is unlikely to be typical of the cemetery as a whole.

The individuals varied considerably in robustness, and there was a moderate range of heights in the five cases where this could be estimated. Three males were 5 ft 5.6 ins (1665 mm), 5 ft 8.7 ins (1745 mm) and 5 ft 9.9 ins (1775 mm) and two females were 5 ft 0.4 ins (1535 mm) and 5 ft 5.6 ins (1645 mm) in height. The low rate of caries among the dentitions examined was of interest, since in some cases there was no caries even where there was considerable attrition of the teeth. In one case (Da) two of the lower teeth were worn down in a crescentic shape.

Squatting facets were well marked in the two females skeletons (H, Q), where the evidence survived; there were no such facets in one male (T) and they were small in the other (Da). These were the only remains which could be examined for this feature. Osteoarthritis was extensively observed, affecting vertebrae, hip, wrist and other joints, the lesions reflecting "wear and tear", the results of a lifetime of hard work and heavy strains. This evidence is reinforced by a case of spinal osteophytosis, and by Schmorl's nodes on the vertebrae of three skeletons. Bilateral cribra orbitalia was noted in the remains of a child, and was almost certainly due to an iron deficiency anaemia, probably due to an inadequate diet, lacking in meat and vegetables, but such anaemia may have been aggravated as a result of heavy intestinal infestation by parasites, such as tape and round worms. One humerus and an ulna were bowed, perhaps by rickets.

There is insufficient evidence to give a clear picture of the pathologies which afflicted these people, and there were few genetic characteristics of note. However, it would appear that two groups were probably represented, one possibly of Anglo-Saxon origin, reflected in the low caries and squatting facets noted, and the other of later date. The possible case of rickets might belong to such a later group.

## SMALL FINDS

### A. POTTERY (Appendix 1)

Eighty sherds of pottery, all unstratified, and mainly of thirteenth and fourteenth century date, conforming to the range of wares recognizable as Hartlepool wares,<sup>5</sup> were found during the excavation. No sherds were associated with the remnant graves and they cannot be shown to have any connection with the period before, during or after the use of the area as a cemetery. Many of the sherds have freshly broken edges, presumably as a result of the modern disturbances. No pot count has been attempted, since there are so many small, apparently unrelated sherds, though general observations of the range of fabrics, glaze and other characteristics may indicate the presence of a large number of different pots.

Of the eighty sherds, thirty are unglazed or from unglazed parts of glazed pots, and forty-eight are glazed or have glazed spots on them. The other two sherds are not medieval. Most are undistinguished body sherds, though there are some rim, base and handle sherds. The ware is fine and hard, normally buff or orange in colour, with sand, mica and quartz grits as well as some iron ore inclusions. Shell tempering is not obvious, though its former presence may be indicated by voids in the fabric, which sometimes result in a corky surface appearance. Little difference between glazed and unglazed fabrics can be seen. A wide range of glaze colours is represented, and some sherds show crazing of the glaze. Individual vessel shapes cannot be reconstructed, as most of the sherds are small, though the majority are probably from jars, jugs or bowls. Some sherds certainly represent Hartlepool 'jugs', some with vertical striped decoration, and some with scale appliqué.<sup>6</sup> A partial catalogue, unillustrated, of sherds with diagnostic characteristics, is given in Appendix 1.

### B. NON-POTTERY FINDS

There were very few non-pottery finds, and these, too, were unstratified. Several iron nails were found. One is 3.3 in (8.2 cm) in length, probably square in section, but the shape of the head is unclear. A fragment of iron, a piece of slag and two flakes of struck flint were also found, as were one tusk, one animal tooth and a quantity of marine and land shells. Half a melon-shaped bead of turquoise vitreous paste was located in the section at the top of the filling of the G.P.O. trench. The bead has a horizontal diameter of 1.15 ins (2.9 cm), vertical diameter of 0.85 ins (2.2 cm) and the perforation diameter is 0.5 ins (1.2 cm). Large melon-shaped beads of this kind are regularly found on sites of Roman date and sites with post-Roman occupation, but they are rarely stratified and are difficult to date closely.<sup>7</sup>

No cultural context can be adduced from any of the above finds in connection with the burials on the site, and their presence can merely be routinely noted.<sup>8</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Neither the limits of the cemetery nor its cultural and chronological associations were known previously, and this small test excavation has not provided such information, though it has raised several questions about the history of the area.

The earliest burials are possibly of pre-Conquest date; perhaps an Anglo-Saxon or Early Christian date might be considered appropriate. The archaeological evidence had been disturbed since intrusive burials had been inserted among the original deposits, but it seems that the individuals were placed on their backs with their heads to the west, a burial method frequently cited as Early Christian, though not exclusively so. One burial had been placed in a "long cist", a grave construction also frequently associated with Early Christian traditions. The presence of squatting facets on some of the bones is suggestive of an Anglo-Saxon component among the remains. An Anglo-Saxon or Early Christian date might be considered appropriate for unaccompanied burials of the type discussed here, particularly in view of the proximity to the important ecclesiastical site of St. Hilda, already recorded in the seventh century A.D.

In addition to the early group of burials noted above there were some intrusive burials. These later burials were also unaccompanied and were oriented. Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century pottery found in some quantity in the area may indicate a possible date for some intrusive burials, though it must be emphasized there was no direct association. That some of the burials might have been of later date still might be suggested by the anatomical observation of a possible case of rickets and of an example of crescentic tooth wear, a feature often associated with clay pipe smoking. No clay pipe fragments were noted among the finds, however.

From this small sample of burials and in such a small excavation it has not been possible to associate a group of bones or burials with any specific phase of the development of the cemetery, especially since early and later bones were found together. Further excavation on a larger scale will be needed to try and establish the nature and extent of the cemetery and confirm its period or periods of use.

#### APPENDIX 1

##### *Pottery catalogue*

Fifteen sherds are listed in the catalogue, because they show the general range of wares and glazes, and also have definitive characteristics. Measurements refer to the single greatest dimension simply as an indication of size. The average thickness of the sherds varied from 0.15 ins (0.4 cm) to 0.3 ins (0.6 cm) and is only stated where it differs significantly from this range. Most of the glazes, fabrics, colours and definitive features can be paralleled in the published material from the area (see note 5).

1. BGS64/65A/78. Fragment of thumbled base; finger and fingernail impressions on inside. Hard, fine buff ware; orange core. Some blackening around thumbled area. (2.7 ins: 6.9 cm).
2. BGS64/15/44. Wall sherd, basal angle. Finger tip decoration. Hard, fine ware, brick red on outer surface, orange inside and orange core. Three probably accidental glaze spots on outside. Slight blackening of outer surface. (1.8 ins: 4.6 cm).

3. BGS/1A/6. Base, plain. Three small indentations on base, filled with and surrounded by light olive glaze. Buff outer surface, grey inside and core. (2.7 ins: 7 cm).
4. BGS64/26/58. Strap handle, central groove, slightly asymmetrical. Olive green glaze overall, apart from a lengthwise strip on underside, where surface is exposed. Orange/yellow faded edging to glaze. Grey core, orange surface where exposed, buff below glaze. (1.9 ins: 4.9 cm long; 1.65 ins: 4.2 cm wide).
5. BGS64/1/21. Handle, circular. Vertical strip of bright green glaze. Abraded orange surface. Grey core. (3.35 ins: 8.5 cm long. Diameter 1.05 ins: 2.6 cm).
6. BGS64/1/11. Straphandle. Olive green glaze, yellow on underside. Glaze not continuous over edge. Pitting below glaze. Buff/orange under surface, almost grey below glaze. Some large grits. (1.65 ins: 4.2 cm).
7. BGS64/6/34. Rim, internal bevel, sharply everted neck. Fine hard ware, orange core, almost buff surfaces. Some grits visible. (1.5 ins: 3.75 cm).
8. BGS64/85/80. Rim, fine hard ware. Buff throughout; yellow and bright green glaze. (2.1 ins: 5.4 cm).
9. BGS64/39/71. Body sherd. Bright orange glaze, crazed, green and brown vertical stripes. Fine, hard fabric, orange throughout. (1.7 ins: 4.4 cm).
10. BGS64/1A/4. Body sherd. Green and yellow-green glaze. Scale appliqué. Fine, hard fabric, orange, some grits visible below glaze. (1.65 ins: 4.2 cm).
11. BGS64/6/28. Body sherd, similar to no. 10. Possibly from same vessel. (1.4 ins: 3.6 cm).
12. BGS64/1/14. Body sherd. Bright green glaze, some pitting below glaze. Scale appliqué. Very fine, hard ware, buff throughout. (1.6 ins: 4.1 cm).
13. BGS64/1/18. Body sherd. Pitted. Hard, slightly gritty fabric, buff throughout. (1.6 ins: 4.1 cm).
14. BGS64/1A/2. Base, plain. Fine, hard ware, many large grits, including angular white quartz and some red iron ore. Several large voids give a corky outer surface appearance. Core orange, surfaces buff to orange. (2.2 ins: 5.5 cm).
15. BGS64/3/22. Body sherd. Sandy coarse ware, very thick (6.5 ins: 1.2 cm). Grey/brown core, grey surface. Sooty adhesion on inner surface. (3.25 ins: 8.3 cm). Possibly of later date than most of other sherds.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Information in a letter from Dr. Austin. These remains are not discussed in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> In particular Miss V. Smith (now Mrs. P. Johnson), Mr. A. Woodhead, Mr. J. Proud and Mr. and Mrs. F. Yeoman and Mr. L. Giles.

<sup>3</sup> The delay in writing this note has been due in part to the writer having lived abroad for some years.

<sup>4</sup> It is with regret that we must record that Dr. Wells died in July 1978, shortly after completing his report, but he did see this note in draft. Dr. Wells' report is summarised here by permission of Dr. B. Green, his archaeological executor. The full report is available for consultation at the Black Gate, Newcastle; the Gray Art Gallery & Museum, Hartlepool; Dr. Green and Mrs. Proudfoot; the

Dept. of the Environment, Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report No. 2704, unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Miss L. Thoms who confirmed the general nature of the pottery.

<sup>6</sup> The majority of the fabrics, glazes and diagnostic characteristics can be paralleled in the published pottery from the area. See Jarret, M. A. and Edwards, B. J. N., "Mediaeval and other pottery from Hartlepool, County Durham", *AA*, 4th series, XL, p. 241-51 and Addis, E. L., "The Pottery", *AA*, 5th series, IV, pp. 100-24.

<sup>7</sup> A similar bead is illustrated in Curle, J., *Newstead, A. Roman Frontier post and its people*, 1911, p. 336, pl. XCI. no. 7 and Gillam, J., *AA*, 5th series, XLVI Corbridge, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> All the finds have been deposited in the Gray Art Gallery and Museum, Hartlepool.

