V

A Romano-British Cemetery at Lanchester, Durham

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In the summer of 1981, during the course of construction of a major gas pipeline from St. Fergus to Bishop Auckland, a considerable number of burials were found to the south-west of the Roman fort at Lanchester (NGR NZ 156 466) (fig. 1). The pipeline route lay immediately outside the scheduled area, which was thought to have included, not only the fort, but the full extent of the Roman civilian settlement. The burials were found about 350 m

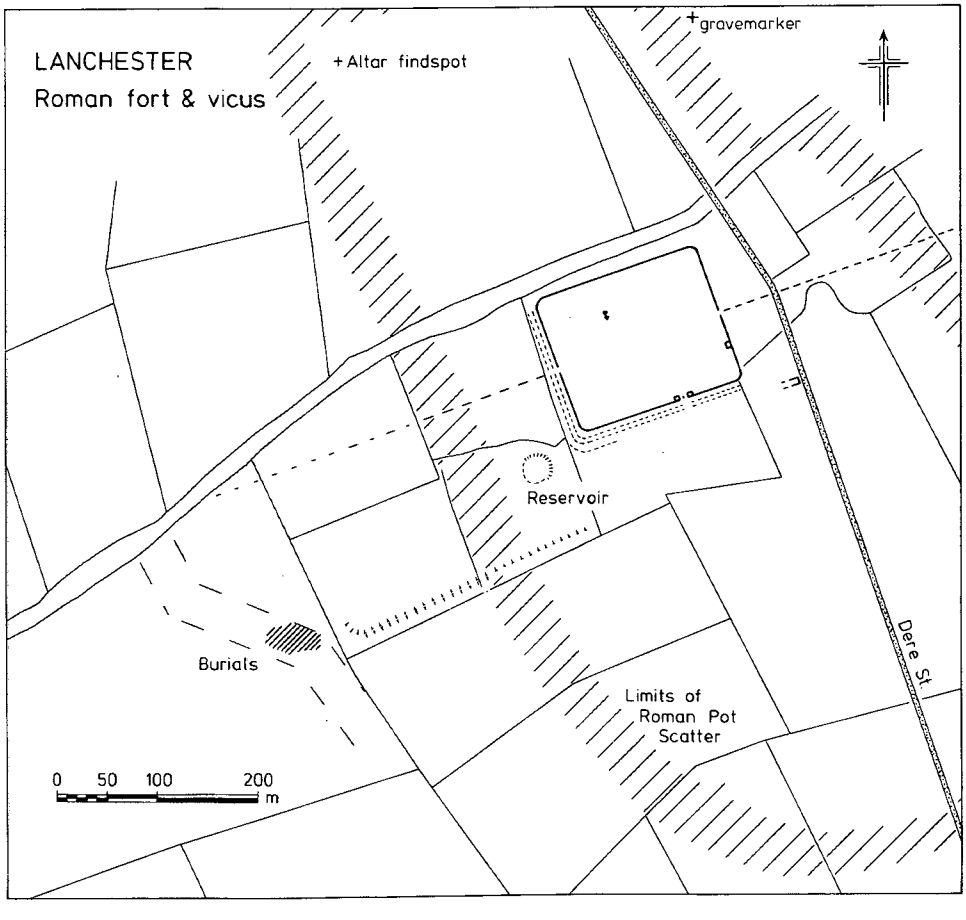


Fig. 1. Position of the cemetery in relation to the known Roman topography of Lanchester.

from the south-western corner of the fort.

The site was first located when Mr. Austin, the landowner, lifted the lid of one of the stone-lined cists, thinking that it was a drainage channel. Quickly realizing the significance of the find, he elicited the help of his fellow members of the Lanchester Society of Antiquaries who excavated the first cist and located another. Local professional archaeologists were informed and the author saw the find the

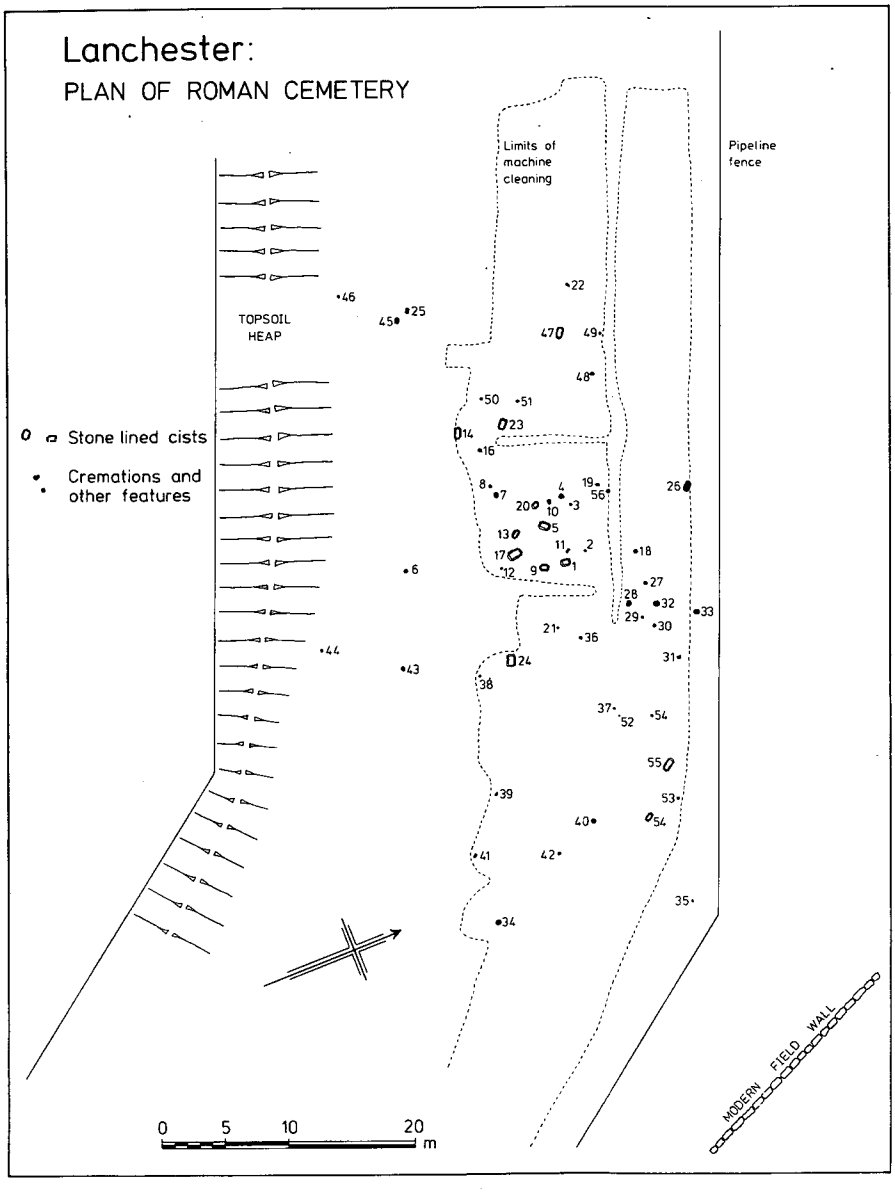


Fig. 2. Plan of the cemetery and its relationship to the pipelaying works.

next day. The easement surface, which had been stripped by bulldozers three weeks earlier, was baked hard and the colours bleached out. Cleaning by hand was only used on the central area and on the individual features, when discovered. The majority of the features were located when a Drott-like machine was used to re-skim parts of the easement surface (see fig. 2); others were found by the presence of bone or charcoal on the surface. While the author is confident that the boundaries of the cemetery are accurate, it is unlikely that the full plan was recovered, particularly where the pipe was stacked and spoil dumped.

Topography

The site lies on the south eastern slope of a ridge extending east from Humber Hill at the height of 186 m (610 ft) A.O.D. The burials occurred on a flat piece of ground where the topsoil overlay the eroded and broken surface of the yellow sandstone bedrock on which patches of yellow clay survived. The steep drop down to the River Browney marked the south-eastern limit of the site and the bottom of a gentle incline was the boundary to the north-west. No man-made boundaries were located during the excavation. Therefore, it seems that the Romans may have chosen this particular place because the intractable subsoil made it unsuitable for agriculture. The site lies some distance away from the line of the Roman road, which, from the parchmarks visible on some aerial photographs, is assumed to run straight out of the west gate of the fort, *c.* 150 m NW of the cemetery.

The Features

Fifty-seven features were found, of which the shallower were often just patches of deposit set into depressions in the bedrock. All were badly damaged by ploughing, and finally by the passage of the contractor's machinery. A list of features is given below (table 1), and the numbers can be located on the site plan (fig. 2).

Stone-lined Cists

Eight cists, from the twelve discovered, merit detailed description and illustration. Individual plans and sections appear separately on figs. 3 and 4.

Feature 1: The cist was set in a sub-rectangular pit 0·90 m by 0·50 m and the slabs were held by a dark brown loam containing some broken sandstone and sand. The cist was trapezoidal in shape, 0·63 m long, 0·25 m wide and 0·22 m deep internally. This was the first feature found and the author never saw it with the lid or fill in place. Both the lid and floor were made of two sandstone slabs and the fill was a light brown, sandy loam with no trace of bone or charcoal. There was a shallow circular hole at one end, 0·05 m in diameter and 0·05 m deep, that may have been the base of a setting for a grave-marker. No finds came from within the cist.

Feature 5: The cist was set in an oval pit cut into the bedrock surface. The internal dimensions of the cist were 0·74 m long, 0·44 m wide and 0·31 m deep. The ends sloped, reducing the size at the floor of the cist, which was formed by the natural sandy clay and sandstone bedrock. The fill was a light brown, silty loam with flecks of charcoal and bone in the corners and on the bottom. Some large pieces of sandstone flagging were mixed into the top of the fill and came either from the broken lid or from the side slabs. No finds were made.

Feature 13: The cist was set into a sub-rectangular pit packed with loam. Only three of the side slabs survived enclosing a space, 0·54 m long, 0·35 m wide and 0·28 m deep. The floor was the natural yellow clay with some broken sandstone pieces. The lid had collapsed into the cist and a square patch, 0·05 m by 0·05 m, of baked, light yellow clay and charcoal adhered to its upper surface. The lid sealed a fill of light brown sandy loam and lumps of charcoal. No finds or bone came from the cist. At the north-east end was an irregular, oval pit, 0·34 m by 0·24 m and 0·22 m deep, filled with a brown loam and a large packing stone. As in feature 1, this may represent the posthole of a timber grave-marker. A Black-Burnished Ware bodysherd and an iron object came from this ancillary feature.

Feature 14: The cist was set in a sub-rectangular pit 1·11 m by 0·75 m, cut through

TABLE 1.

Feature no.	Description	Ancillary features	Bone	Charcoal	Pottery	Other finds	Robbed
1	Stone-lined cist	Posthole?	—	—	—	—	Lid intact?
2	Cremation, circ. patch	—	√	√	Base BB jar	—	—
3	Cremation, circ. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
4	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	Rim BB jar	—	—
5	Stone-lined cist	—	√	√	—	—	Lid broken
6	Cremation irreg. pit	—	√	√	Rim and body jar	—	—
7	Cremation circ. pit	outer pit	√	√	Rim BB jar	—	—
8	Pit	—	—	—	—	—	—
9	Stone-lined cist	—	—	—	Rim and body BB jar	—	Lid broken
10	Triangular patch	—	—	—	—	—	—
11	Poss. crem. circ. patches	—	√	√	—	—	—
12	Square posthole	—	—	√	—	—	—
13	Stone-lined cist	posthole	—	√	BB body sherd	Iron obj.	Lid broken
14	Stone-lined cist	—	—	√	—	—	Lid broken
15	Non-archaeological						
16	Cremation, sub-rect pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
17	Stone-lined cist	—	fleck	fleck	Grey-ware base	—	Lid frags
18	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
19	Cremation, oval pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
20	Stone-lined cist	—	fleck	fleck	Rimsherd BB jar	—	Robbing pit
21	Cremation, circ. pit	—	√	√	Rim coarseware jar	—	—
22	Intrusion	—	—	√	—	—	—
23	Stone-lined cist	—	—	√	—	—	No lid
24	Stone-lined cist	—	—	—	Base BB jar	—	Robbing pit
25	Cremation, sub-rect. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
26	Poss. crem. patch	—	√	√	—	—	—
27	Cremation circ. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
28	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	Rim and body BB jar	—	—
29	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
30	Sub-rectangular pit	—	—	√	—	Iron obj. slag	—
31	Cremation circ. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
32	Cremation sub-rect pit	ditch	√	√	—	Hobnails	—
33	Cremation circ. patch	—	√	√	—	Glass frag	—
34	Poss crem. circ. pit	—	—	√	—	—	—
35	Cremation, sub-rect. pit	—	√	√	—	Hobnails	—
36	Poss. crem. stone-lined pit	—	—	√	—	—	—
37	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
38	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
39	Cremation, triang. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
40	Cremation, circ. patch	—	√	√	—	—	—
41	Poss. crem. rect. patch	—	√	√	—	—	—
42	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
43	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—
44	Cremation, sub-rect. pit	—	√	√	Bodysherd grey ware	Hobnails	
45	Cremation, circ. pit	—	√	√	Bodysherds BB jars	Hobnails	—
46	Poss. crem. circ. pit	—	—	√	—	—	—
47	Stone-lined cist	—	—	fleck	Colour-coat beaker	—	No lid
48	Cremation, circ. pit	—	√	√	—	—	—

TABLE 1.—*(cont.)*

Feature no.	Description	Ancillary features	Bone	Charcoal	Pottery	Other finds	Robbed
49	Poss. crem. charcoal patch	—	—	✓	—	—	—
50	Poss. crem. patch	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
51	Cremation, irreg. pit	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
52	Poss. crem. circ. pit	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
53	Cremation, circ. pit	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
54	Stone-lined cist		✓	✓	Bodysherds BB jar	Nails	Base of coffin
55	Stone-lined cist	—	—	✓	—	Nails	No lid
56	Poss. crem. circ. pit	—	—	✓	BB Bodysherd	Hobnail	—
57	Cremation, circ. pit	—	✓	✓	Bodysherd coarseware	Hobnail	—

the sandstone bedrock. The side slabs were packed with broken sandstone and a sandy loam. The cist was well made and rectangular in shape, 0·63 m by 0·44 internally and 0·29 m deep, and floored by a single flat stone set in yellow sand. The fill was a dark brown loam, probably ploughsoil fallen into the cavity, but a broken slab caught in the half section may be part of the lid. Some charcoal was present, but no bone or finds.

Feature 20: This small cist was set in the side of an irregular pit cut into the bedrock. Two sides of the cist were formed by upright slabs and the floor was made of pieces of sandstone set in yellow sand. The cist measured 0·45 m long, 0·27 m wide and 0·18 m deep and was filled with a light brown sandy loam. Part of a Black-Burnished jar rim came from the fill. Through the northern end of the cist, a sub-circular robber pit, 0·25 m diameter and 0·32 m deep had been dug to a depth below the level of the cist floor. This was filled with a more distinctive dark brown loam, probably ploughsoil.

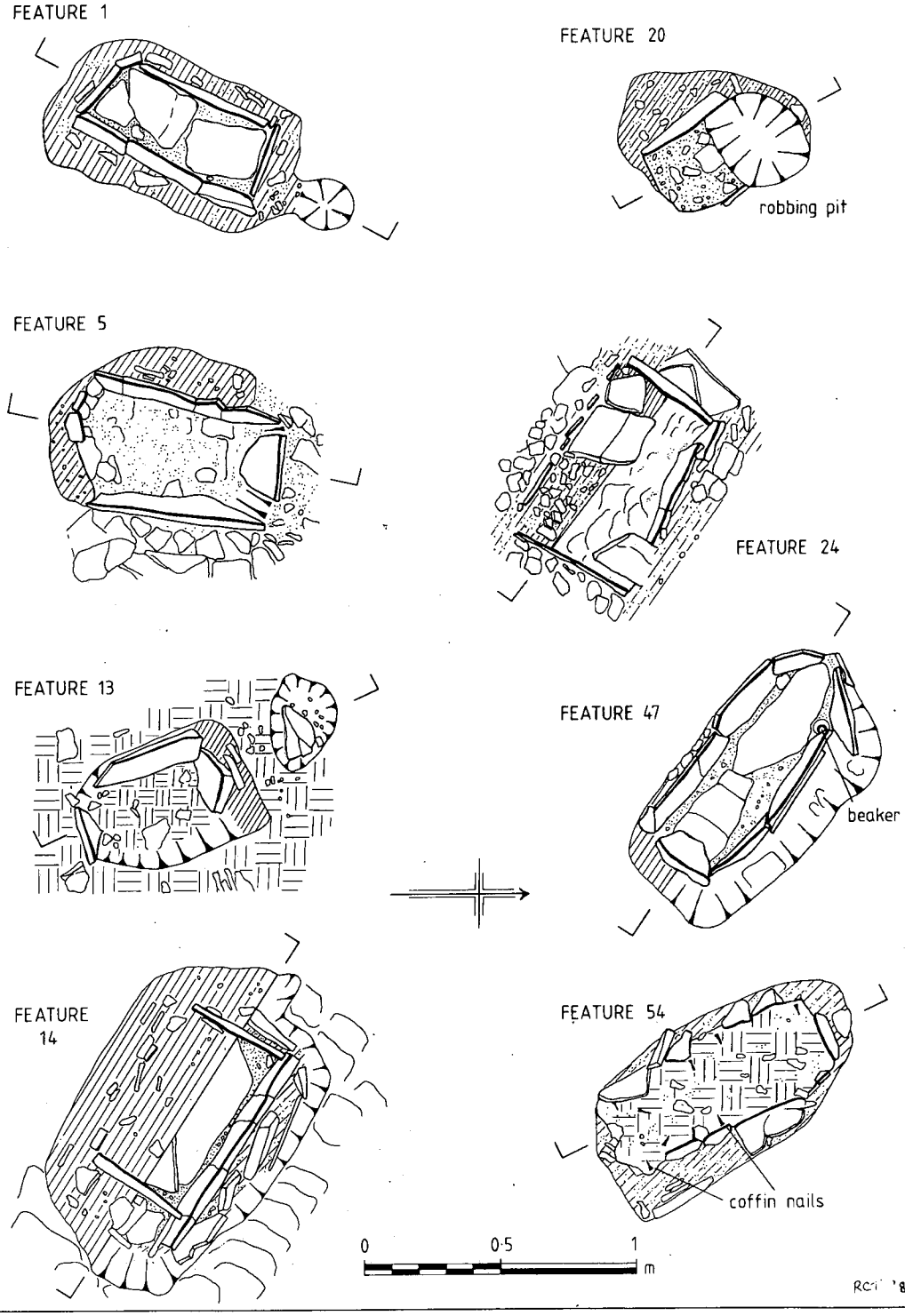
Feature 24: A rectangular cist set directly into the sandstone bedrock. The cist measured 0·70 m by 0·45 m internally and was 0·29 m deep, the floor being the bedrock. Parts of the lid survived in two corners, sealing a dark brown loam and some sandstone pebbles. It can be seen in the section that the lid was broken and a robber pit was shown by a lighter brown, sandy loam full of broken sandstone slabs, forming tip lines. The cist produced the base of a Black-Burnished jar, but it is not known from which fill.

Feature 47: This boat-shaped cist was set in the side of a sub-rectangular pit. The cist measured, 0·88 m long, 0·35 m wide and 0·23 m deep internally and the floor was made of two sandstone flags. The cist had two fills, the lower layer of a sandy yellow clay and pieces of sandstone slab 0·05 m thick, and the remainder of the fill was the usual light brown, sandy loam with small sandstone pieces. No trace of the lid survived. A complete colour-coated beaker was found, trapped under one of the side slabs and against a floor slab. No bone or other finds came from the cist.

Feature 54: A badly truncated and damaged cist was set in an oval pit cut into the bedrock. The sides were made of small sandstone pieces and river cobbles and measured 0·82 m long and 0·33 m wide internally. The greatest surviving depth was 0·14 m. An upper fill of unconsolidated ploughsoil within the cist was removed, to reveal a thin layer of yellow sandy clay overlying the bedrock. Within this clay were eight iron nails, six of which were found with their heads against the sides of the cist. These suggest that the cist was lined with timber or a tightly fitting wooden coffin had been placed within the cist. The cist also produced some Black-Burnished bodysherds.

Of the other cists, only feature 55 (not illustrated) produced nails. Like feature 54, the sides were made of several pieces of stone, but the nails were not so formally arranged and

STONE-LINED CISTS: PLANS



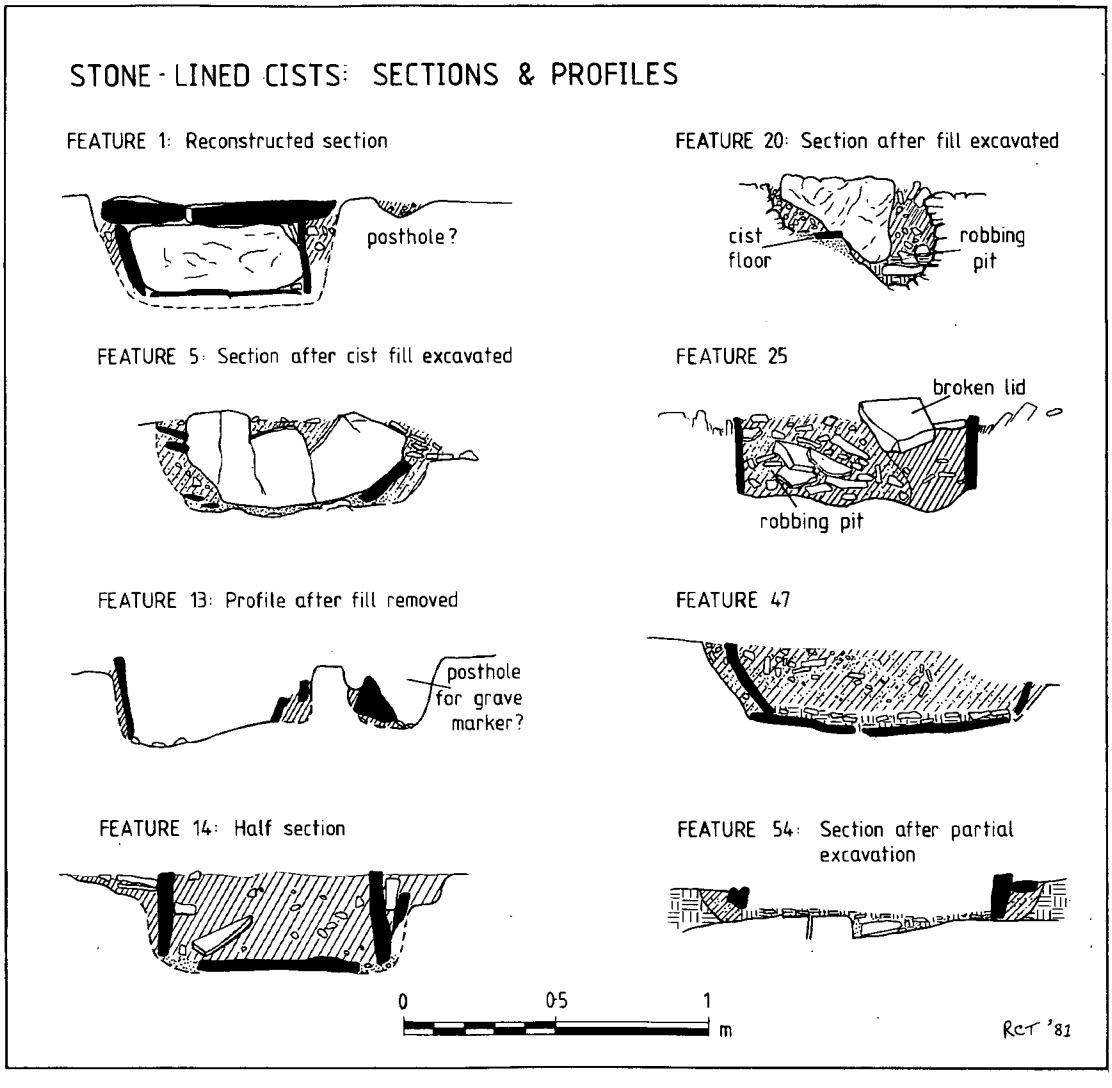


Fig. 4. Sections and profiles of selected stone-lined cists (for plans see fig. 3).

some came from the packing of the side slabs. Therefore, it cannot be proved that a wooden coffin was contained within this cist.

The most striking fact about these burials is the absence of any quantity of bone and the rarity of finds within the cists. It is usual to find inhumations within cists of this type, but from their size only small children could have been fitted in. The soil is sufficiently acid to have destroyed the relatively soft bone and any wooden coffin or cloth shroud which may have contained the body. However, the bodies must have been buried with no metal objects, dress fastenings or any shoes with iron hobnails.

The only certainly associated gravegood to come from within the cists was the colour-

Fig. 3. Plans of selected stone-lined cists.

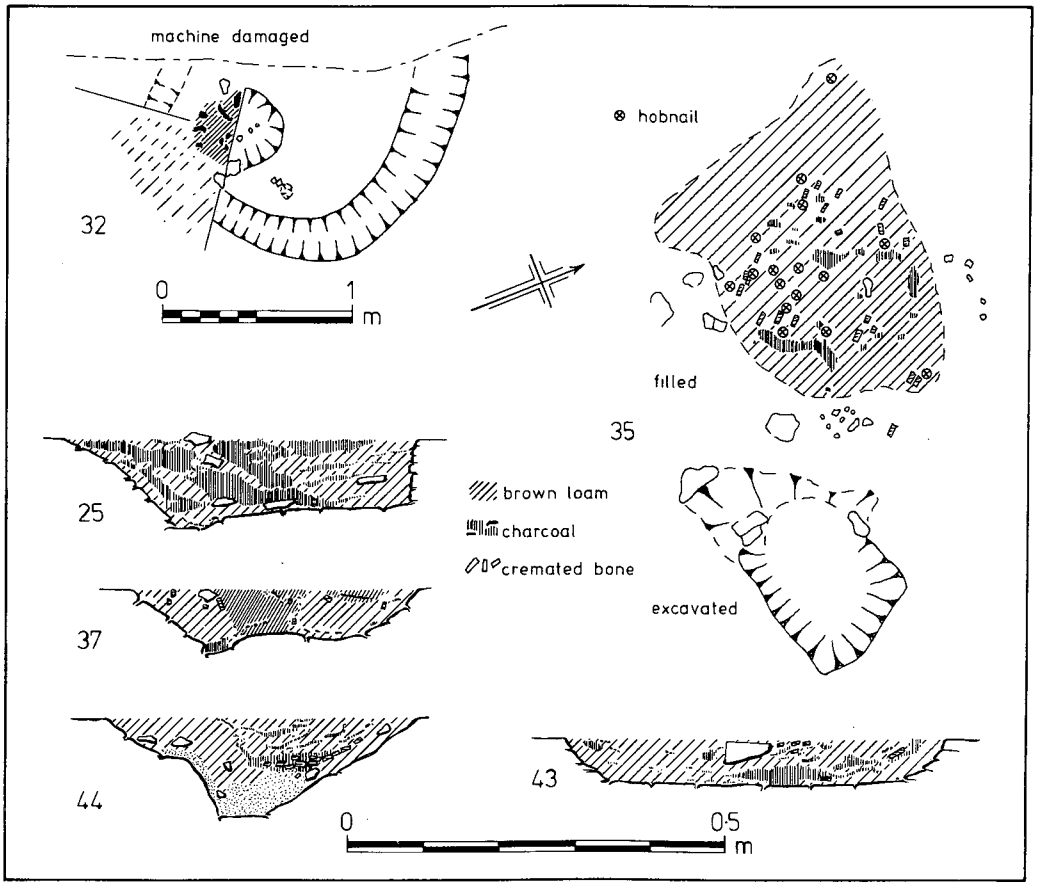
coated beaker from feature 47. However, two of the cists can be shown to have been robbed, and five others had part of the lid collapsed within the cist. Over the years however, soil must have slowly percolated through the cracks between the slabs. Feature 9 produced sherds from above the collapsed lid, indicating that a vessel may have been put on the cist or even broken over it. There was no evidence for when these cists were robbed, but sufficient time had passed for the cists to have become filled with soil so that the robber pits were distinct.

Cremation Pits

Twenty-nine features seemed to be cremation pits. All these features are truncated and this is why a class of possible cremation pits has had to be introduced, where it is not certain that a deliberate burial was involved. Only seven of these produced sufficient pottery for it to be certain that the cremated remains were confined within an urn. In these seven instances, only two of the possible cremation pits contained bases, and five had part of the rim present, indicating that the vessel had been inverted over the remains.

The existence of a container for the burnt bone could not be proven in the rest of the pits, where the bone was mixed up in a charcoal and loam matrix. Leather, cloth or wooden re-

Fig. 5. Plans and sections of selected cremation burials.



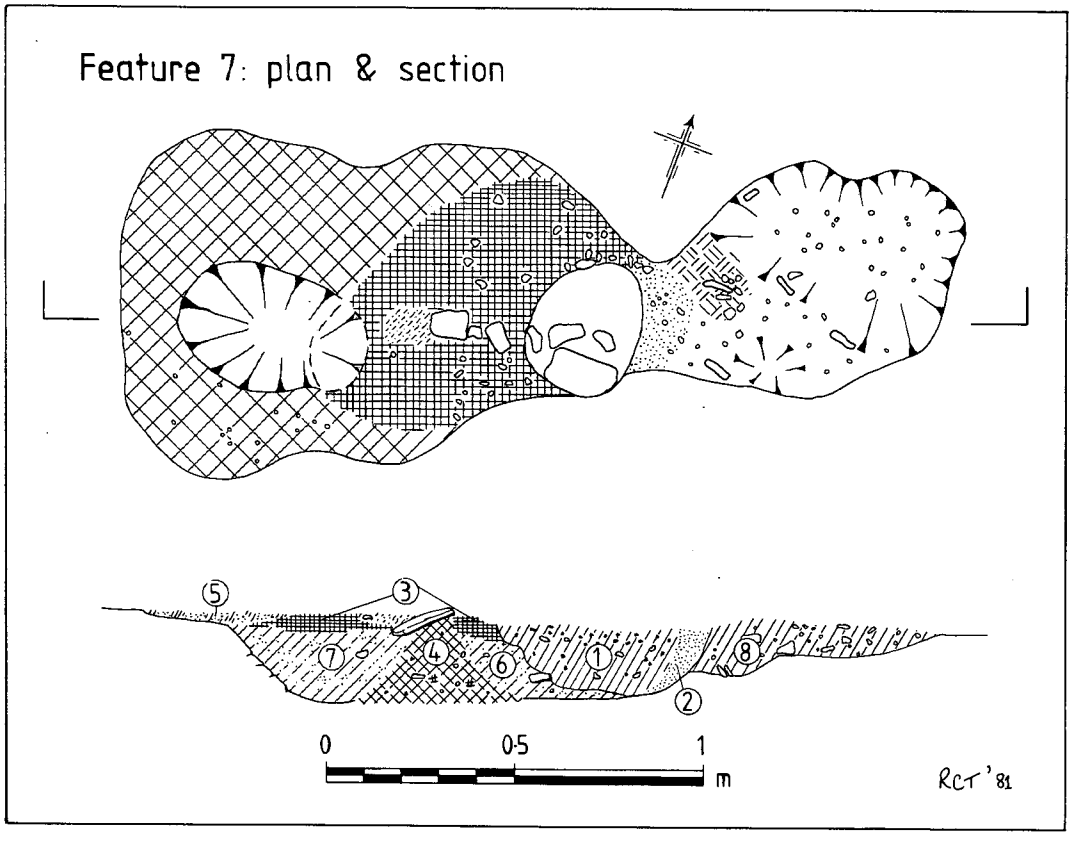


Fig. 6.

ceptacles cannot be discounted, especially where the pits were sub-rectangular in shape, with vertical sides and a flat bottom and averaged 0·35 m by 0·25 m in size. Other cremations survived at the level excavated, as patches, often irregular but some being circular or oval in shape. These ranged in size from around 0·25 m to 0·50 m in diameter. Five of the cremations and one of the possible cremations produced hobnails and their significance is discussed below.

Four sections of these cremations have been illustrated on Fig. 5. Two of them are worthy of more detailed description and illustration, as they had ancillary features surviving.

Feature 7: (fig. 6) A sub-circular cremation pit, *c.* 0·35 m diameter and 0·16 m deep had been cut through an area of baked red clay. The pit was filled with a light brown loam with charcoal and bone mixed in towards the top (layer 1). One edge of the pit was lined with yellow sand (layer 2). The baked red clay (layer 3) partially sealed a pair of pits earlier than the cremation. Originally the intrusion was an elongated, irregular figure-8 in shape which was divided by a wall of yellow clay with pieces of charcoal and baked red clay (layer 4).

On the west side of the wall the intrusion formed an oval pit, feature 8, which had become filled with a soft brown, sandy silt (layer 7); and to the east it was irregular in shape with a loam and sandstone fill (layer 8). As can be seen in plan, the intrusion was partly sealed by red clay, which was then baked, and then the cremation pit was inserted through this layer. These features are the only suggestion that the

bodies were cremated on the site.

Feature 32: (fig. 5) A sub-rectangular pit, 0·46 m by 0·40 m and 0·13 m deep, was filled with a light brown loam in which charcoal and burnt bone formed irregular lenses. The pit also produced four hobnails. The pit was in one corner of a sub-rectangular area enclosed by a shallow trench. The area enclosed was 1·1 m wide and at least the same in length and the trench varied in width from 0·14 m to 0·26 m with a maximum depth surviving of 0·07 m. It was filled with a dark brown loam and the very bottom of the trench was lined with white sand. A single small intrusion was located within the enclosed area; this may have been a stakehole.

Possible cremation pits

Ten of the features have been classified as possible cremations. In plan and section they resembled the cremation pits described above, but they contained very little or no burnt bone. The features were severely truncated and, if the human remains were in a container, this could have easily been removed by later disturbance. Conversely if the bodies had been cremated on site then, as at Trentholme Drive, York (Wenham, 1968), any other intrusions would have been likely to have been filled with a mixture of loam, charcoal and bone from the Roman surface level. Five other intrusions were recorded, scattered about the cemetery. These have not been described.

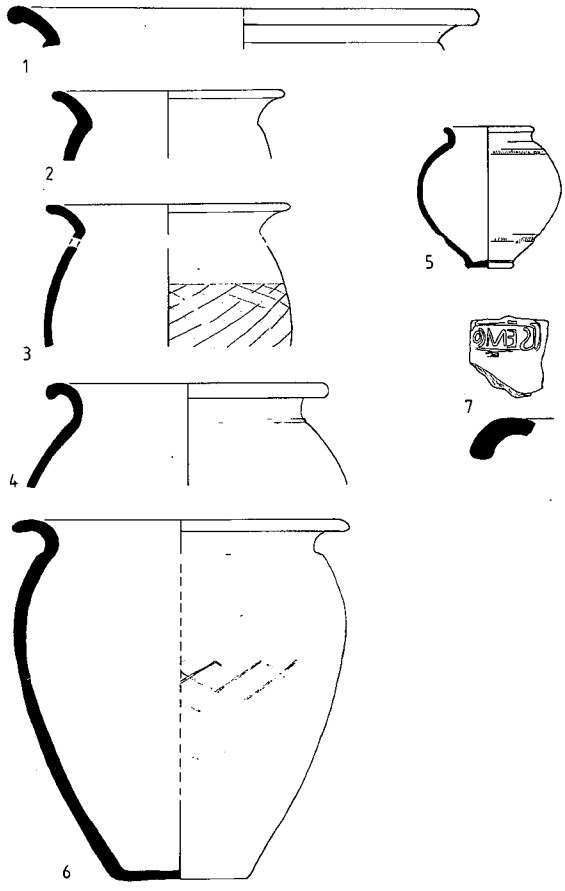


Fig. 7. The coarse pottery (scale 1:4).

Coarse Pottery

The pottery has been listed by feature number, with the topsoil finds at the end. Only seven examples have proved worthy of illustration (see fig. 7). Where only single or a very few sherds survived in a feature, they are unlikely to represent a burial urn, but to have derived from surrounding deposits. The majority of the vessels are in Black-Burnished Ware and this has been abbreviated to BB1 and BB2 where appropriate.

Feature 2: About half the base of BB1 jar.

Feature 4: A very fragmentary rim of a BB2 jar. 3rd century.

Feature 6: Part of the rim and some bodysherds of a large, wide-mouthed jar. The fabric is soft and light grey with some quartzite filler. One of the bodysherds has four, narrow horizontal bands of burnishing. No parallel found. Illustrated (fig. 7 no. 1).

Feature 7: About 20% of the rim and body of a BB1 jar. The surface has reddish-buff patches. No decoration survives. Gillam 1976, no. 6, early 3rd century. Illustrated (fig. 7 no. 2).

Feature 9: Fragments of a rim and some bodysherds from a BB2 jar. The body has obtuse lattice decoration. Gillam 1976, no. 9/10, mid-late 3rd century. Composite illustration (fig. 7 no. 3).

Feature 13: Sherd from the shoulder of a BB1 jar.

Feature 17: Basal sherd in a soft, light grey fabric with darker surface.

Feature 20: Rimsherd of a BB1 jar with a reddish-buff surface (3rd century ?), and a single, mid-grey, colour-coated sherd with a buff-cream fabric.

Feature 21: About 30% of the rim and shoulder of a jar in a hard, dark grey, fabric with some fine, quartzite filler. The surfaces have oxidized a brick red colour. Similar to Black-Burnished forms of the 3rd century. Illustrated (fig. 7 no. 4).

Feature 24: Part of the base and wall of a BB1 jar.

Feature 28: Fragment of rim and some small bodysherds of a BB1 jar. One sherd has obtuse lattice decoration. 3rd century.

Feature 44: Bodysherd in a mid-grey fabric.

Feature 45: Bodysherds from at least two BB vessels.

Feature 47: A complete colour-coated beaker. The fabric has a hard, light-grey core with pinkish-orange surfaces. The vessel is completely covered with a lustrous, grey-brown slip. A faint and poorly applied band of rouletting fills each of the shallow cordons, one at the top and one at the bottom of the vessel. Gillam 1968, no. 50, A.D. 200–300. Illustrated (fig. 7 no. 5).

Feature 54: Sherds from two vessels, bodysherd in a soft, grey fabric, and a rim sherd (with lid seating) and six body sherds of a jar in a BB1 fabric.

Feature 56: Bodysherd in a BB1 fabric.

Feature 57: Bodysherd in an orange fabric.

Topsoil Finds

In addition to the following, some twenty Roman sherds and two pieces of Roman glass were picked up.

1. About 50% of a large BB1 jar. Traces of an obtuse, lattice decoration survive. Likely to have been disturbed from a cremation during removal of topsoil. Gillam 1976, no. 10 late 3rd century. Illustrated (fig. 7 no. 6).
2. A stamped mortarium rimsherd. Mrs. K. Hartley kindly reported on the stamp:

> The retrograde stamp reads SENICO and is one of four dies used by this potter. His primary fabric, an off-white one, and some characteristics of his rim forms and his stamps, suggest that his main activity may have been north west of Lincoln. The Lanchester rim, like one from Hibaldstow, Lincs, is in a second fabric (red-brown with a cream slip), which almost certainly indicated that for some brief period of his career he worked at another site, as yet unknown, but probably further north. His work is undoubtedly second century, probably *c.* A.D. 140–180. (fig. 7 no. 7)

Iron Objects

In all, ten of the features produced iron objects which can be divided into three types, hobnails from *calcei*, iron nails and indeterminate lumps. The majority of the objects were radiographed.

Hobnails

Feature 32 (4), Feature 35 (17), Feature 44 (3), Feature 45 (1), Feature 56 (1) and Feature 57 (2) all produced hobnails from within the fill of cremation pits. Only in the case of feature 45 was there any evidence for the cremation being within an urn. Radiography showed that the hobnails were shaped like large drawing pins, and had been driven through the sole of the shoe, then hammered level with the sole and finally the top bent back downwards.

Nails

Two of the stone-lined cists produced nails.

Feature 54: Eight nails came from within the lower layer of the fill of the chamber. They were found in such a way as to suggest that the body was placed within a wooden coffin fitting quite tightly into the cist (see fig. 3). The nails, where they survived intact, were about 8 cm in length, with large flat heads.

Feature 55: Ten nails were found both within the fill of the chamber and in the deposit

between the slabs and the sides of the pit. They were not distributed in such a way as to prove the presence of a coffin as in feature 54. The nails were shorter in length, around 5 cm, again with large and very flat heads.

Discussion

This cemetery, though discovered by chance, is the largest to be excavated in the Roman military zone in Britain. However, in a number of ways, it is not typical of what might be expected. Roman cemeteries were required by law to be outside the area of settlement. This is true at Lanchester, where the extent of the settlement might be indicated by the bank and ditch, recorded by MacLauchlan (1852) or shown by the area in which pottery has been recovered whilst fieldwalking (fig. 1). Burials are normally to be found alongside main roads, where the richer or more prominent citizens are often recorded in inscriptions. This cemetery lies 160 m to the south of the line of the road running west of the fort. In this it is similar to the only other substantial excavation of a cemetery outside a fort in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall, the site at Petty Knowes, close to the fort at High Rochester, where the centre of the cemetery was 150 m from the road (Charlton and Mitcheson 1984). Both sites also occupied barren and rocky patches of land.

The date range of the Lanchester cemetery can only be surmised. So few burials produced any finds that no idea of its evolution or main periods of deposition can be given. The pottery evidence, as it is, spans the period from the mid 2nd century to the late 3rd century, with the majority of the finds concentrated in the third century. The traditional practice of cremation tends to dominate in burials of the 1st and 2nd centuries, to be replaced by inhumation in the 3rd and 4th centuries. However individual cemeteries may behave quite differently (Salway 1981). At Lanchester, there would appear to be a mixture of cremation and inhumation within stone-lined cists. The date of the cemetery spans the expected change in burial practice, though this may be coincidental. However, these stone-lined cists are not typical of Romano-British inhumation.

The cists range in length internally from 0·45 m to 0·88 m, and in width from 0·25 m to 0·45 m. In feature 54 and probably in 55, the effective width and length was shortened because of the presence of a wooden coffin. If these cists were intended to contain extended inhumations, then they must have represented the burial of babies or small children. This may explain the complete absence of bone from any of these cists because the acid soil would have quickly dissolved the soft bone. It would also be confirmed by the rarity of grave goods, as items of value might not have been expended on such young children. Yet Salway points out that "only infant burials seem to have been exempted from the general prohibition (of burying within settlements), judging by their occurrence in towns" (Salway 1981, 695).

Not only is the small size of the cists unusual, but also their construction. In the substantial cemetery at Trentholme Drive, York (Wenham 1968), the only adult inhumation was buried extended within a coffin and surrounded by a cist with a single flagstone for the floor and the roof, separated by rubble walling. Where the inhumations were of children or adolescents, they were buried in pits, crouched and on their sides. Further south, there is a tradition of both inhumation and cremation being associated with stone linings, or in the former case, sometimes with stones placed on their chests. Black (1986, 226–7) associates this tradition with the famous plaster or gypsum burials of Lullingstone and elsewhere, and believes them to be pagan. None of these use flags to form the characteristic boat-shaped cists of the Lanchester cemetery, though burial 10 at Petty Knowes was similar in size and construction (Charlton and Mitcheson, 1984).

A single cist of this type was found within the Roman fort at Ravenglass, Cumbria (Potter 1979). Made of irregular limestone slabs, it measured 1·34 by 0·24 by 0·29 m, had a lid of slabs and only contained a soil fill and no finds. It was inserted into late Roman levels and from its E–W orientation, considered early Christian by the excavator. Short cist burials of this form are typical of the Bronze Age in the North-East (Stopford *et al.* 1985).

What can be analysed from this group of cists is their orientation. As Fig. 8 shows, this is not random. All occur in an arc between WNW to NNE for their northerly ends and ESE to SSW for their southerly ends. Amongst this group of twelve, there are two clusters of four, one orientated 305° to 55° and the other 335° to 25°. Preferred orientation may arise in two ways. The burials may tend to align themselves parallel or perpendicular to a major topographical feature such as a road or ditch, as suggested by McDonald (1979, 424), or the orientation reflects a religious practice. The road and embankment to the west of the fort are orientated WSW–ENE, so that the central group of four cists are almost exactly perpendicular. None, however, are orientated parallel to this alignment. Black (1986, 215–17) has summarized the evidence for orientation within other Romano-British cemeteries, particularly in the South-East. The relatively few Iron Age inhumations known are orientated with the head to the north or north-east, a practice which re-occurs with late Saxon and early Norman gallows victims. Pagan Roman burials, also seem to fall in an arc between NW and NE, as do the sixteen rectangular pits containing cremation burials at Petty Knowes.

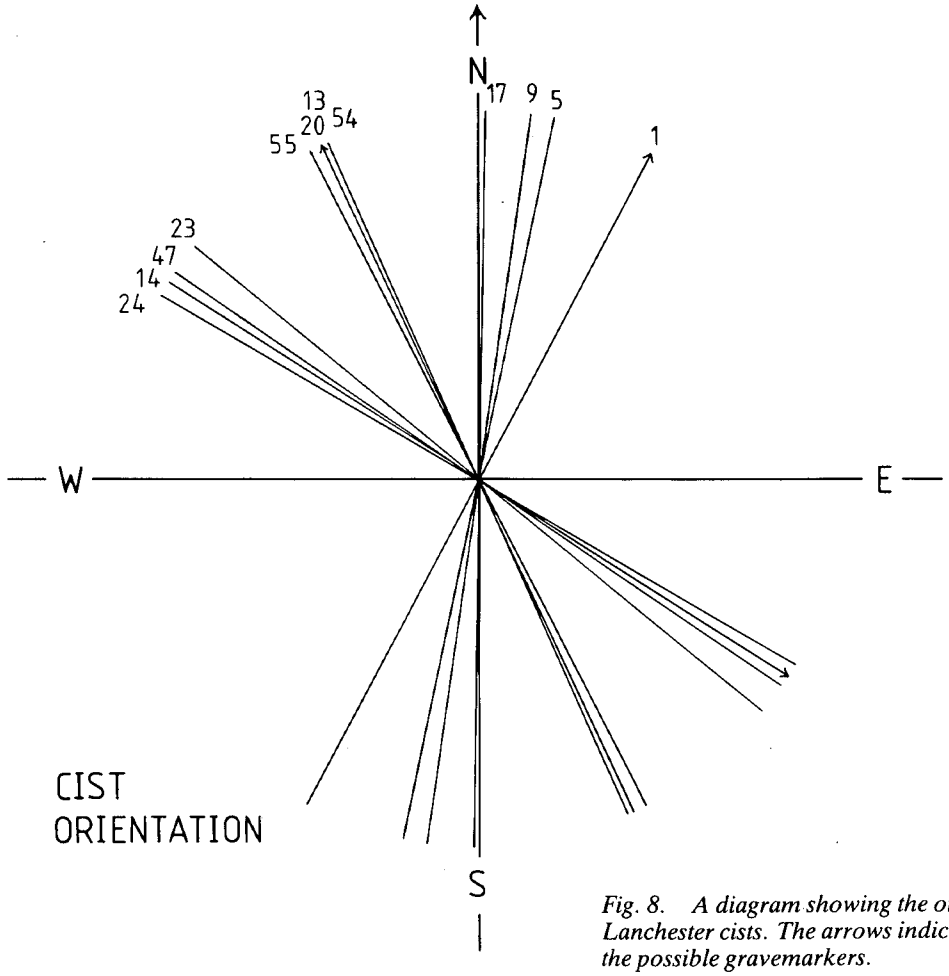


Fig. 8. A diagram showing the orientation of the Lanchester cists. The arrows indicate the position of the possible gravemarkers.

Here nine grave pits lay with their long axes NE–SW, three by N–S, three NNW–SSE and one NW–SE (Charlton and Mitcheson 1984, 6). In late Roman cemeteries, where the burials are thought to be Christian, the orientations tend to be E–W, with the variations perhaps due to the movement of the direction of sunrise during the year. Rahtz's analysis of his excavation of the cemetery at Cassington, Somerset would seem to show that when the numbers of burials with particular orientations are compared with the direction of sunrise, there is a peak over the winter months, as would be expected (Rahtz 1977). The conclusion must be that at Lanchester the stone-lined cists represent non-Christian burials.

Two other traits are exhibited by some of these cists. Three have evidence for gravemarkers. Features 1 and 13 had post holes at their northern ends and the section across feature 14 may indicate a post setting against the side slab of the cist. A stone gravemarker was found at Lanchester in 1962, in the excavations of a trench for a waterpipe, but in the north vicus. Its position is shown on Fig. 1 (Reed, A., pers. comm.). There was clear evidence of the robbing of two cists, features 20 and 24, though at what date is not clear.

The cremation burials have provided less data to analyse. No idea of the sex or age of any of the burials can be given. Only seven of the twenty-nine cremation pits contained evidence for burial urns, of which five would seem to have been inverted over the remains. The rarity of urns and grave goods suggests a very impoverished group being buried. The pottery was almost exclusively Black-Burnished Ware, the basic pottery of the auxiliary soldier in the area of Hadrian's Wall. The same ware was also used for most of the burials at Petty Knowes. Another similarity is in the only fine ware present, for both sites produced a complete colour-coated beaker.

Another class of find made in seven of the cremation pits were hobnails. Only in feature 35, with seventeen hobnails, were they in any number. The occurrence of hobnails in Romano-British cremations is almost ubiquitous. At Skeleton Green, Braughing (Partridge 1981), shoes were placed alongside the cremations, which on decay have left only the hobnails behind. Black (1986, 232–3) gives a list of similar occurrences. This includes burials from both Ospringe, Kent and Chichester St. Pancras, Hampshire, where hobnails were found within a cremation urn or directly beneath, which is similar to the situation at Lanchester. If the bodies were cremated with their shoes on and only part of the remains of the funeral pyre put into the grave pit, then this may explain why only isolated finds occur. Salway (1981, 705–6) goes further and suggests that "the presence of a building at the cemetery near the amphitheatre outside Cirencester which contained a furnace and over 2,000 of these hobnails, makes one wonder whether footwear was specially made for funerary purposes—indeed whether on occasion a few nails may not have been placed in the grave as a symbolic gesture in place of an actual pair of boots".

Of the twenty-two other cremations buried without urns, little can be said. Two were quite complex. Feature 7 would seem to be a cremation dug through the base of the pyre on which the body was burnt. Again this was noted at Petty Knowes, but is otherwise rare in Britain (Black, 1986, 210). The cremation within feature 32 was enclosed by a sub-rectangular ditch. This may imply the presence of a barrow, though the size at 1·1 m square and the shallowness of the ditch suggest smaller earthworks than at the Petty Knowes site.

It is not certain who was buried at the Lanchester cemetery. The known date range of the burials, the mid 2nd century to the late 3rd century, seems to mirror the main activity within the fort. Lanchester would appear to have been built in *c.* 140, as part of the reorganization of the military zone, following the move to the Antonine Wall (Breeze and Dobson 1976, 83). Epigraphic and archaeological evidence suggest a re-occupation or an intensification of activity in the mid 3rd century and again in the early 4th century, with no clear evidence of occupation beyond that date (Steer 1936). Around the fort must have grown a considerable civilian settlement, as attested by the building remains and the scatter of finds

(fig. 1). Sited on Dere Street, any vicus could have prospered on the passing trade and it would not have needed any garrison to sustain it. It has also been suggested that the fort may have controlled the exploitation of the local mineral wealth, which was likely to have been a continuous operation (Hodgson 1822). The remoteness from the road, the poverty of the burials and the apparent mixture of adult cremations and child inhumations implies that the cemetery at Lanchester was for the inhabitants of the civilian settlement around the fort rather than for the garrison.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jane O'Dea, Clive Hart, Wally Austin and members of the Lanchester Society of Antiquaries for their help during the excavation. Alan Reed and Beryl Charlton both made valuable comments and improvements on earlier drafts of this report and encouraged me to publish these results. Kay Hartley kindly identified and described the mortarium stamp. The work was undertaken whilst I was employed by the British Gas Corporation and the support of Phil Catherall and Dave Perkins was much appreciated.

Publication of this report has been assisted by a grant from British Gas.

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