

III

An Excavation in the Roman Cemetery at South Shields

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with contributions by: Paul Bidwell, Alexandra Croom and Joy Langston

Several phases of use were revealed in a small area of the cemetery containing both cremations and inhumations. No unburnt bone survived because of the acidity of the soil, but grave-goods were found.

Introduction (fig. 1)

Excavation, funded by South Tyneside MBC and carried out by Tyne and Wear Museums, took place during a period of six weeks in June–August of 1993 at a children's playground in Morton Walk, South Shields, in advance of proposed development. The site, lying approximately 240m south of the south-west angle of Arbeia Roman fort, is in an area long thought to comprise part of the Roman burial grounds.

The fort is situated on a headland called The Lawe, the development of which has been described in detail elsewhere (Bidwell and Speak 1994).

Roman finds made during the construction of housing in the nineteenth century indicated an extensive civil settlement. Discoveries included two very fine tombstones (*RIB* 1064 and 1065), cremation urns and inhumations.

Some Victorian terraces were demolished in the 1960s for the construction of modern housing; the children's playground at Morton Walk was laid out at that time.

In 1983 trial trenching was carried out by Tyne and Wear Museums c. 70m south-east of Morton Walk (fig. 1). Terracing had removed all archaeological levels in the westernmost trench, while the depth of overburden in the east suggested the infilling of a valley running south from the fort, a little to the west of the modern Baring Street.

Subsequently an unpublished survey of the environs of the fort by Paul Bidwell and Jane Lunn of Tyne and Wear Museums collated the documentary evidence for the extensive civil settlement and its burial grounds.

Topography of the Morton Walk site (fig. 1)

The Morton Walk playground (NGR NZ 3648 6757) occupies an area 23 m by 15 m at a height of 21 m above sea level. The long axis of the playground was aligned north-east/south-west, and all orientations cited in the account below refer to true north rather than site north.

A machine-cut trial trench in the northern corner of the site revealed a brown silty soil (context 46), a maximum of 0.35 m in depth and containing Roman pottery. The subsoil consisted of a layer of orange sandy clay, 0.40 m in depth, overlying banded sands.

Two excavation areas were opened (A and B on fig. 1). Terracing had removed all Roman levels from area B and the north-western corner of A. Area B was abandoned and all references below to "the excavation area" refer to area A.

Surviving levels in the south and east indicated the slope of the land in Roman times. There was a fall to the east of 0.78 m over a distance of 9 m, or a slope of 1 in 11. This accords with the results of the trial trenching of 1983. The fall to the south was 0.50 m over a distance of 11 m, or a slope of 1 in 22.

All Roman deposits described below consisted of sandy silts, unless otherwise indicated. Activity on the site was divided into six periods, as described below. (Features not illustrated are marked, n.i.).

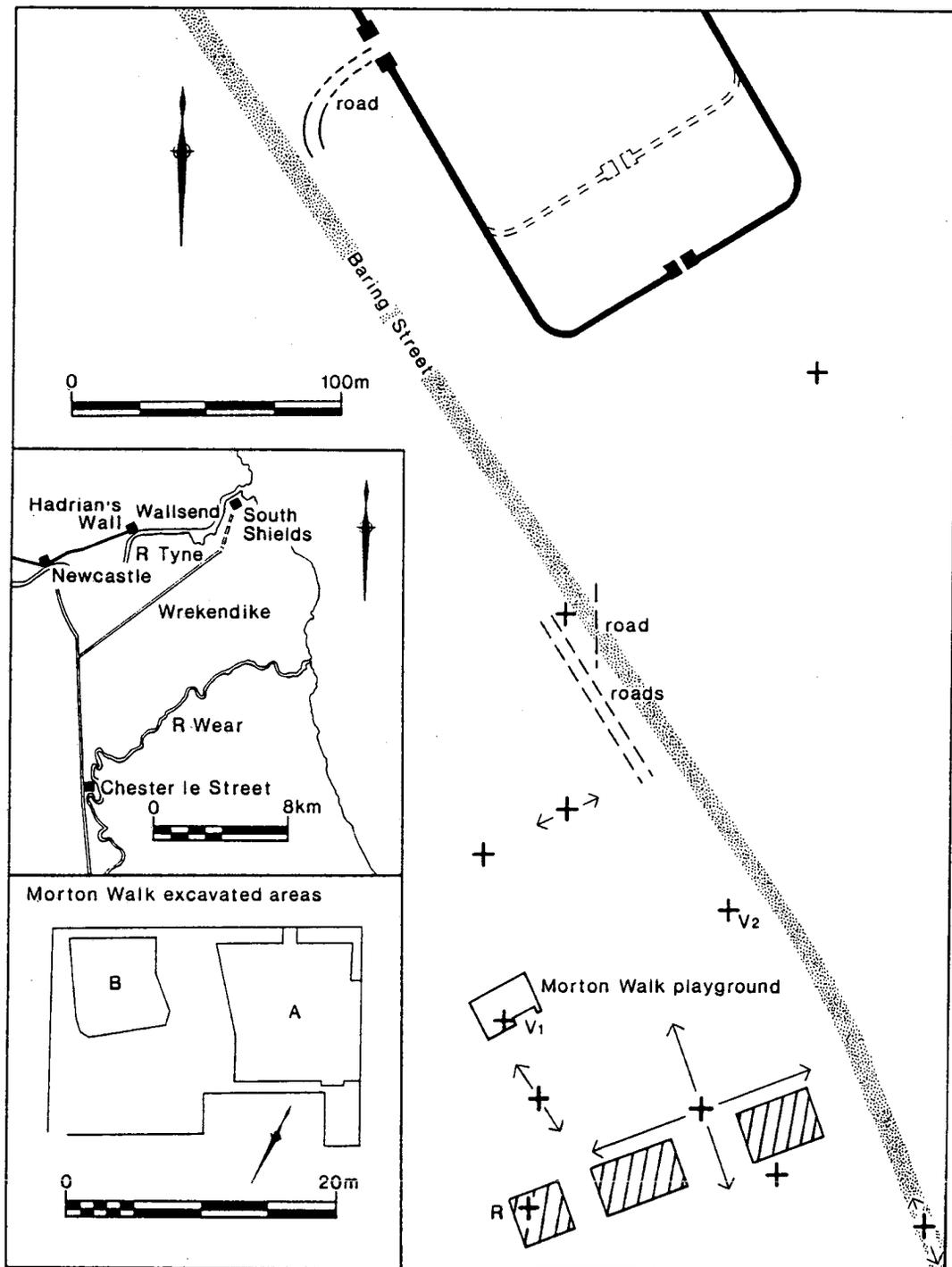


Fig. 1 Location map showing the position of the Morton Walk site, the cemeteries and Roman roads at South Shields, in relation to the fort. (Crosses indicate findspots of Roman material discovered in the nineteenth century: V1, V2, fragments of Victor tombstone; R, Regina tombstone. Shaded areas trenched in 1983. Modern road stippled). Scale 1:2500.

1. Pre-Roman

Evidence of pre-Roman activity was confined to the presence of flints, which will be reported elsewhere as part of a survey of all prehistoric finds from The Lawe. There was no evidence of pre-Roman structures or signs of ploughing.

2. Cremations (fig.2)

Two cremations were found in the south-east corner of the excavation (C1 and C2 on fig.2a), dated on pottery evidence to the second century.

Cremation 1 had been placed on the ground surface and covered by a mound, part of which extended beyond the north-eastern limit of excavation. The lowest material (50, n.i.), a mixed layer a maximum of 80mm in depth, contained the residues of burning, including burnt daub, coal, charcoal and small fragments of burnt bone. Resting on this were two flagons. The fill (55) of the larger (fig.4, no.1) contained cremated bone and copper alloy fragments (n.i., no.27). The smaller (fig.4, no.2), containing only silt, had possibly originally held an offering. Packed around the flagons and covering the whole of the burnt material (50) was a layer of yellow clay (28), the maximum surviving depth being 0.20m. The upper levels were damaged by modern levelling, but the surviving slope of the south-western portion suggested the remains of a mound, probably c. 3m in diameter.

Both the clay and mixed layer below had been cut by a wall foundation (see below, 5).

Since there were no signs of burning on the Roman ground surface, the cremation had not taken place *in situ*, as with some cremations in the cemetery at Petty Knowes (Charlton and Mitcheson 1984). However, in other respects there were parallels with the rites at Petty Knowes. After fragments of cremated bone had been collected in the flagon, the debris of burning was scooped up with the soil on which it lay, and placed with the vessels (cf. Petty Knowes, *ibid.*, 20–1). The concentration of

burnt daub suggested cremation had taken place within a clay structure. A group of hobnails (n.i., no.28) resting on the ground surface (46, n.i.) below the clay, presumably an offering, is also reminiscent of cremations at Petty Knowes (*ibid.*, 9–18).

Cremation 2 had been buried in a pit. Whether this had been covered by a mound is unclear, because of later disturbance.

It lay 3.50m south of cremation 1, but relationships between the two had been destroyed by the foundation trench for the later wall. To the south of the foundation was a mixed layer (49), similar in composition to layer 50, but with a lower concentration of burnt daub and charcoal.

At its southern extent the mixed layer (49) was abutted by an arc of orange clay (52), 40mm in depth. It was cut by a pit (39), into which the clay had slumped. The pit was a maximum of 0.30m in depth. Resting on the bottom and inverted, was a vessel in Black Burnished Ware Category 2, containing the cremation. The pit fill (38, n.i.) contained charcoal, burnt bone and some large fragments of burnt daub, together with a fragment of a triangular rim from BB2 bowl or dish and a rim sherd from a samian bowl (Form 31R) of mid-to late Antonine date.

Features possibly related to the cremations (fig. 2b)

An intrusion (48), to the north of cremation 1, ran into the north-eastern limit of excavation. The excavated portion was 0.35m in depth. The lower fills of clay and silt were covered by a layer of sandstone blocks (47) in brown clay which also contained a fragment of antler. The blocks, some of which were roughly dressed, included yellow, red and pink sandstone. Restricted space made relationships difficult to determine, but it appeared that the southern edge of the sandstone blocks were overlain by the clay mound (28) of cremation 1.

Between the two cremations, but truncated by the cut for the wall foundation, was a pit (76), 0.30m in depth.

A narrow gully (54) of U-shaped profile, lay

in the southern corner of the excavation. It was a maximum of 0.20m deep, and was cut by a later gully (8). The fill of the narrow gully (53, n.i.) contained a large amount of charcoal and coal, together with fragments of glass, hobnails, a small rivulet of lead and flecks of burnt bone. Pottery included small body sherds of cooking pots in Black Burnished Ware Category 2 and allied fabrics and a rim sherd possibly of Gilham (1970) Type 115-17.

Roughly 2m to the north-west was the truncated remains of a pit or scoop (78), a maximum of 0.30m in depth. The fill (77, n.i.) contained flecks of burnt daub and charcoal.

A patch of charcoal (71), 30mm in depth, lying 4.50m further north-west, was cut by grave 4, described below.

3. *Inhumations (figs 2 and 3)*

Of the four burials found in the northern part of the site, three belonged to this phase. There was no direct stratigraphical relationship between them and the cremations. The burials can be dated to the late third or fourth centuries.

The three graves were aligned roughly north/south. Although no human bone had survived, other evidence was sufficient to suggest that grave 1 was that of a female, grave 3 of a child of unknown sex and grave 4 probably of an adult male. All three had been provided with grave-goods.

A fourth burial in the area, grave 2, belonged to the second phase of the cemetery (see 4, below).

Grave 1

This grave is particularly interesting because of the grave-goods deposited in it. The collection of personal ornaments not only indicates that the burial was that of a female, but some of the objects are themselves unusual. Also they provide dating evidence for the burial, some of the bracelets and glass beads being dated to the fourth century, possibly to the second half of it.

The cut of the grave (21) was sub-rectangular (fig.2). The surviving cut was

0.60m in depth; however as modern levelling had removed much of the Roman soil layer (46, n.i.), it is impossible to say from what height the grave was cut. The sides were vertical for most of their depth, sloping to a narrow U-shaped profile towards the base. The lowest fill (63, n.i.) was 0.25m in depth. Its outer edges were slightly darker in colour than the centre: although this darker band corresponded roughly with the sides of the grave cut, it was too irregular to represent a coffin and probably indicates the presence of a shroud.

Lining the sides of the cut was a layer of redeposited natural clay (80, n.i.), an average of 0.10m thick and extending to within 0.10m of the bottom of the grave, the point at which the sides sloped inwards. It also partially overlaid the darker outer band of sand mentioned above.

Overlying the lowest fill (63) was a lighter sand (24, n.i.), 0.20m in depth. The uppermost fill (10, n.i.), the surviving depth of which was 0.15m, contained frequent yellow sandstone fragments.

Grave-goods had been placed in the north-eastern and north-western corners of the grave, presumably at either side of the head (figs 3 and 5). At the north-western corner was a collection of personal ornaments (figs 6 and 7), which had probably been contained in a wooden box. A jet spindlewhorl (fig.8, no.24) was found immediately to the south of this group, i.e. beside the right shoulder. Placed upright in the north-eastern corner of the grave was a jet object (fig.8, no.23), probably a distaff. The collection is discussed more fully below (pp.54-61).

Grave 3

The oval cut (43) had vertical sides and a flat base and was 0.44m in depth (fig.2), measured from the top of the Roman soil surface. From its size, it had clearly belonged to a child. There was a uniform sandy fill (23, n.i.). A poppy head beaker (fig.4, no.4) lay on its side 0.26m from the northern end of the grave (fig.3).

Grave 4

Stains in the fill of this grave preserved the

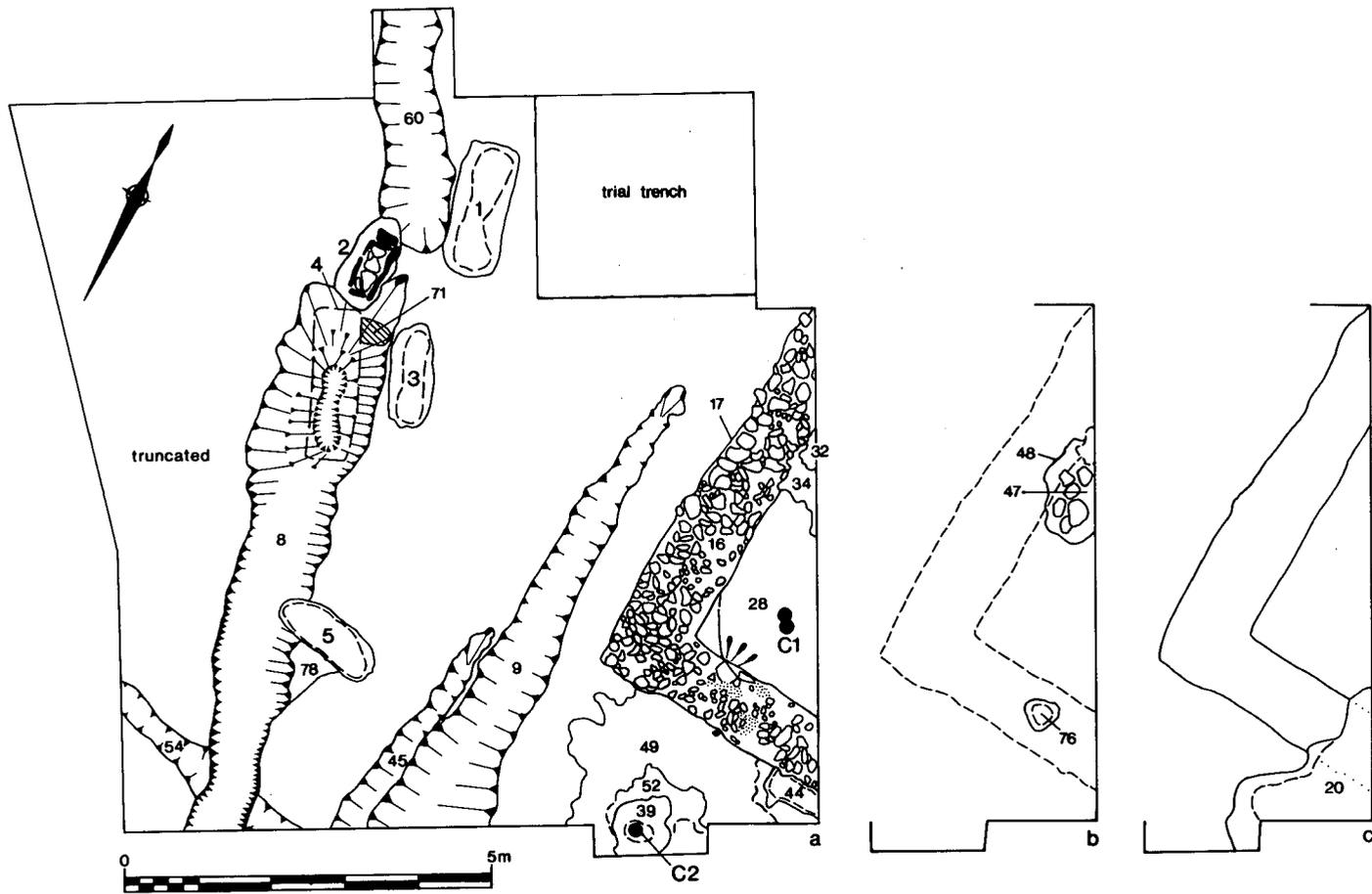


Fig. 2 Features of all periods at Morton Walk. (Features underlying the wall foundation shown on 2b; latest phase of robbing shown on 2c). Scale 1:100.

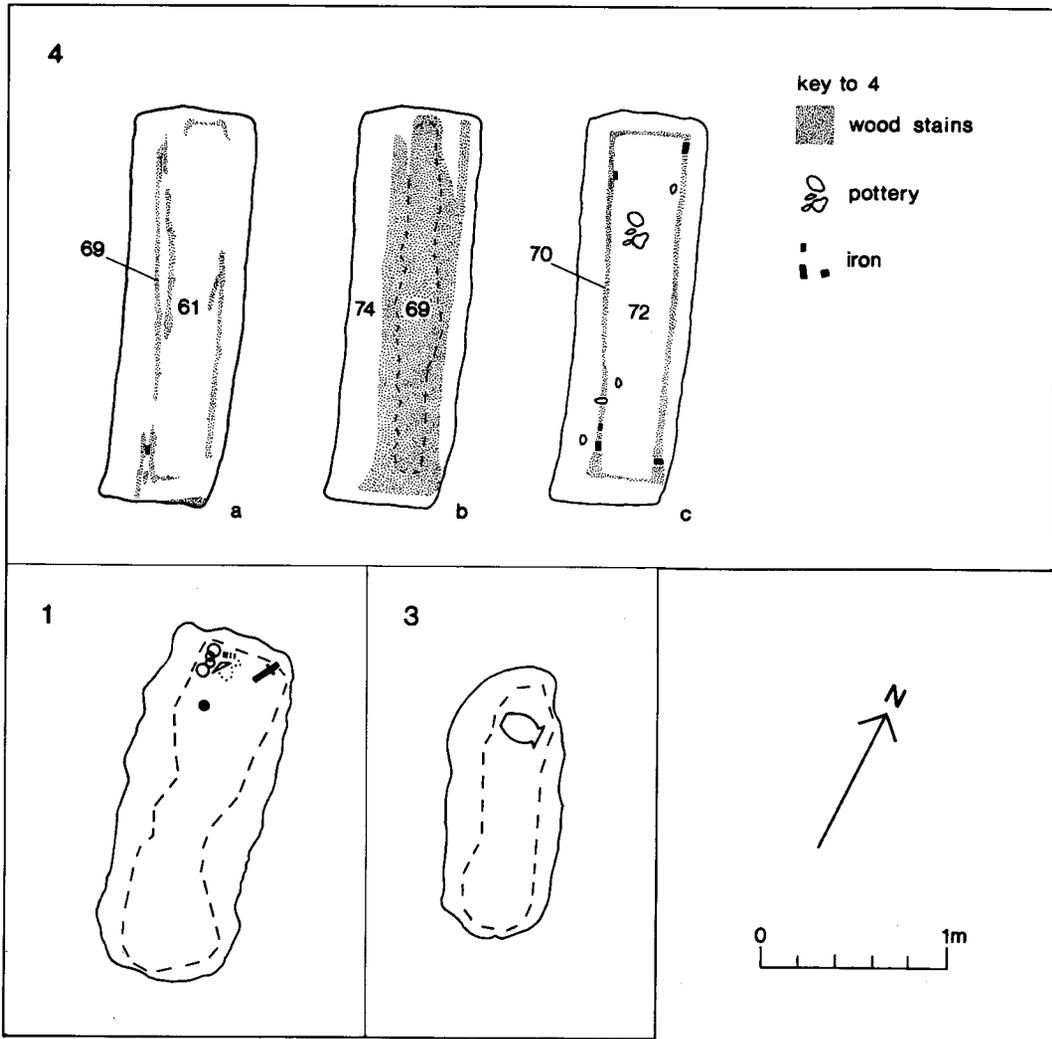


Fig. 3 Graves 1, 3 and 4. Scale 1:40.

faint outline of a body (n.i.), which because of its length, c. 1.80m, is assumed to be that of an adult male. Darker stains represented the decayed wood of the coffin. This was a simple rectangular shape, but immediately above it was a layer of decayed wood of a much more complex shape, the interpretation of which can only be speculative. Possibly it represented a very elaborate lid, or possibly the bier on which the coffin had been carried was also buried with it.

The cut of the grave (62) was rectangular, with vertical sides and a flat base (fig. 2). The upper levels had been cut by a later gully (8), and modern levelling had removed the Roman soil layer (46, n.i.). The surviving depth of the grave was 1m, measured from the top of the clay subsoil. The upper fill (61), was of light brown sand.

Decayed wood was found at a depth of 0.50m below the top of the cut. It was seen first as bands of black material, 20mm wide

(fig. 3a): these were firmer and more cohesive than the surrounding sand, but no fibres survived to make identification of the wood possible. Further cleaning revealed a black layer (69), extending the full length of the grave, and slightly skewed across it so as to touch the south-eastern corner (fig. 3b). The layer was very uneven, varying in depth from 10mm to 25mm. There was a sharp discontinuity (shown by the dashed line) where the central portion had collapsed by a maximum of 80mm.

Removal of this layer revealed the remains of a rectangular wooden coffin (fig. 3c). The sides (70) were a uniform 0.18m in depth, and the corroded remains of iron fittings were found in all four corners (figs 3a, 3c). The fill was redeposited yellow sand (72). No discernible shadows were apparent within it at the time of excavation, but later examination of photographs revealed the faint outline of a skull at the north-western end.

The coffin base survived as a layer of brown clay (73, n.i.), only 10mm in depth. This only survived where the body had rested on it, and the outline of an extended inhumation was thus visible. Traces of iron staining were mixed with the clay at the foot end: these may represent hobnails, either worn on shoes or placed beside the feet, cf. burials at Lankhills (Clarke 1979, 20) and Poundbury (Farwell and Molleson 1993, 99).

Sherds of a small beaker (fig. 4, no. 5), dated to the late third or fourth century, were found at several different depths; the positions of all are plotted on fig. 3c. One fragment rested directly on the coffin base at the northern corner; most large body-sherds were clustered within the fill (72). Another fragment was imbedded in the wood at the south-western side and the base was outside the coffin in a layer of redeposited sand (74).

4. *Second phase of cemetery (fig. 2)*

4 construction: boundary gully

A gully running through the western half of the excavation area was discontinuous, the two excavated lengths being separated by a narrow

causeway, and can be interpreted as a boundary with an entrance. Both terminals were roughly squared; the lip of the south-eastern terminal became more shallow at its upper edge.

The south-eastern portion (8) was a maximum of 0.45m deep, with straight sides and a flat base for most of its length. Its north-western end cut, and was almost co-extensive with, grave 4. Here the gully had a wider, deeper, V-shaped profile, where it had eroded the soft upper fill of the grave. The north-western stretch of the gully (60) had a flat base and slightly sloping sides, and deepened to a maximum of 0.48m at the terminal.

The cist burial (see below) inserted across the entrance causeway, almost certainly while the gully was still in use, seems to indicate the gully delimited a burial ground rather than some other form of enclosure. However, it is not possible to say whether a single burial was enclosed, or an entire cemetery.

4 occupation: cist

Both parts of the boundary gully became filled with fine brown silt (n.i., layer 6 in the south, layer 59 in the north). A small stone cist, grave 2, clearly that of a very young child, belonged to this phase. Unlike sites where many closely-spaced graves have cut a disused boundary ditch, cf. Lankhills (op. cit., fig. 5) and Poundbury (op. cit., fig. 33), there was plenty of other space available at Morton Walk for the cist. Its siting therefore appears to have been deliberate, with the intention of marking the entrance. Although it cut into gully fill at the shallow edges of the terminals, this does not rule out the possibility that deeper parts of the gully, though partially silted, were still in use, or at least visible as hollows.

Grave 2

The sub-rectangular cut (42) was 0.28m in depth. The long sides of the cist (41) were formed from roughly dressed slabs, two of red sandstone, one green and one of soft chalky limestone. The short sides were each formed of a single red sandstone slab, and there was an additional stone behind the slab at the north-

ern end. This was a fragment of coarse-grained white sandstone cut from a millstone (fig. 9, no. 30). A plug of clay had been placed behind to keep it upright, but it was too small to have projected above the Roman ground surface and cannot therefore have acted as a grave marker. The base of the cist was made of irregularly shaped slabs of red, green and yellow sandstone and one small fragment of the same millstone mentioned above.

Over the grave fill of brown sand (36, n.i.) were three rectangular flags (26, n.i.), one green sandstone, one red and one of chalky limestone. Four smaller sandstone fragments lay above these.

Similar small cists have been found at Lan-
chester, Co. Durham (Turner 1990, 65–70).

Drainage gully: A shallow gully of U-shaped profile running down the eastern half of the excavation area seems clearly intended for drainage. It had no direct stratigraphical relationship to any other features on the site, although a continuation of its fill was cut by a wall foundation of a later phase (see below). The drainage gully took a different line from that of the boundary gully (fig. 2). Its course seems to mark a change of alignment within the cemetery, the new alignment subsequently being taken by the wall foundation. For this reason it is placed in the latter part of this phase.

It had been recut once. A 3.30 m length of gully (45) in the southern part of the site was a maximum of 0.25 m in depth. Its fill (37, n.i.) was cut by a longer stretch of gully (9) on the same alignment, but slightly further east. The recut was only 0.10 m deep at the northern end, increasing to a depth of 0.26 m at the south, and widening.

4 demolition: silting and levelling

A layer of fine brown silt (22, n.i.) was found across most of the site, overlying the fill of the boundary gully and extending down the slope to the east, where it merged with the fill (7, n.i.) of the drainage gully. Modern terracing had removed the silt (22) from the western side of the site.

In addition, the south-east corner of the site had been deliberately levelled. The fill of the drainage gully contained large inclusions of yellow clay, probably derived from the clay (28) covering cremation 1, lowered prior to the construction of the wall described below.

5. Third phase of cemetery: stone wall and possible grave (fig. 2)

Construction of stone wall: Part of the foundations of a substantial stone wall, forming a right-angled corner, was found at the eastern edge of the site, cutting both the silt layer (22, n.i.) and the mound covering cremation 1. A length of 5.60 m, running roughly north/south, fell within the excavation trench; at the southern end was a return, which was excavated for a length of 2.60 m. A wall in this position would seem to be related to the cemetery. It could have formed either the boundary of a cemetery or the perimeter wall of a single funerary monument.

The width of the foundation trench (17) was 1 m, and its maximum surviving depth was 0.20 m, although in many places the surrounding soil had been terraced, leaving foundation stones upstanding. To the north these were directly overlain by a thin layer of modern demolition material, but down the slope to the south preservation was better.

The foundation (16) consisted of a lower layer of water-worn cobbles in a matrix of yellow clay; above this were patches of a levelling layer of sandstone chippings in clay. These spilled out down the slope to the south, in a patch (13, n.i.) roughly 0.80 m by 0.80 m. A similar layer (14, n.i.) was found spreading northwards from the northern limit of the foundation.

Possible grave: A small oval intrusion (19) was found in the southern part of the site, running approximately east/west (shown as grave 5 on fig. 2). It had straight sides and was a maximum of 0.35 m in depth. It cut the fill (6, n.i.) of the boundary gully, but as the overall silt layer (22, n.i.) had been truncated in that area, it was

impossible to tell from what height the intrusion had been cut. It is included here because it was roughly parallel to the return wall of the cobble foundation, and may therefore have been associated with it, cf. graves outside a walled cemetery at Derby, running parallel with, or at right angles to, the wall (Wheeler 1985a, 229, fig. 98). The fill (18, n.i.) contained frequent inclusions of sandstone chippings. The similarity in size and shape between this feature and the child's grave 3 is clear: however, the only means of testing whether this was another grave would have been by phosphate analysis for the presence of bone, and since no samples of the fill were taken, nothing can be proved.

6. *Robbing and silting (figs 2a and 2c)*

The date of demolition of the stone wall is unknown, but robbing may be indicated by intrusions, small portions of which were found in the excavation area.

A trench (44), 0.25 m in depth, followed the outer edge of the foundation in the south-east corner of the site. The fill (34, n.i.) spilled out over the corner of the site, covering the edge of the foundation and the pit containing cremation 2. It was cut by a large scoop (20), which also extended across the foundation, and deepened to a maximum of 0.20 m in the eastern corner of the site. The fill (12, n.i.) contained a fragment of pottery of thirteenth- or fourteenth-century date (Identification: Sue Mills).

Small intrusions cutting the eastern side of the foundation also cut the stony upper fill of the earlier pit (48). Part of an irregularly-shaped pit (34) cut the stony layer (47). Its fill was in turn cut by a small pit (32).

THE FINDS

POTTERY (fig. 4)

by P. T. Bidwell

1. Flagon. Cremation 1

Fine fabric with rare, scattered inclusions, mostly ferrous but some sandstone (?) up to 3 mm across; grey core, red oxidized surfaces. The vessel had lost its single handle before it was deposited with the cremation; the exterior surface has been adversely affected by soil conditions, removing any evidence of a slip, burnishing or polishing. No close parallels have been found for the rim-form, but the ovoid profile of the body, the groove dividing the neck from the body, and the absence of a well-defined footring, are typical of second-century flagons.

2. Flagon. Cremation 1

Fine, buff fabric, slightly micaceous, no visible inclusions; exterior surface removed by soil action. The rim, handle and some body sherds were lost before the vessel was deposited with the cremation. The pear-shaped profile would accord with a second-century date.

3. BB2 cooking pot. Cremation 2

Cooking pot in Black Burnished Ware Category 2. Coarse, sandy fabric, slightly micaceous; pale grey core, dark grey surfaces; burnished on shoulder and rim and above base after lattice decoration applied; base slightly worn. BB2 seems to have first reached the North during the occupation of the Antonine Wall, when the fort at South Shields was perhaps still occupied, although on a reduced scale (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 16). The profile of this vessel is similar to examples from the Antonine Wall and its outposts (e.g. Strageath, Frere and Wilkes 1989, fig. 121, 108–21). Second half of the second century.

4. Poppy-head beaker. Grave 3

Fine, buff, micaceous fabric; silvery grey slip, polished, with panels of barbotine dots. Most of the rim was missing and the external sur-

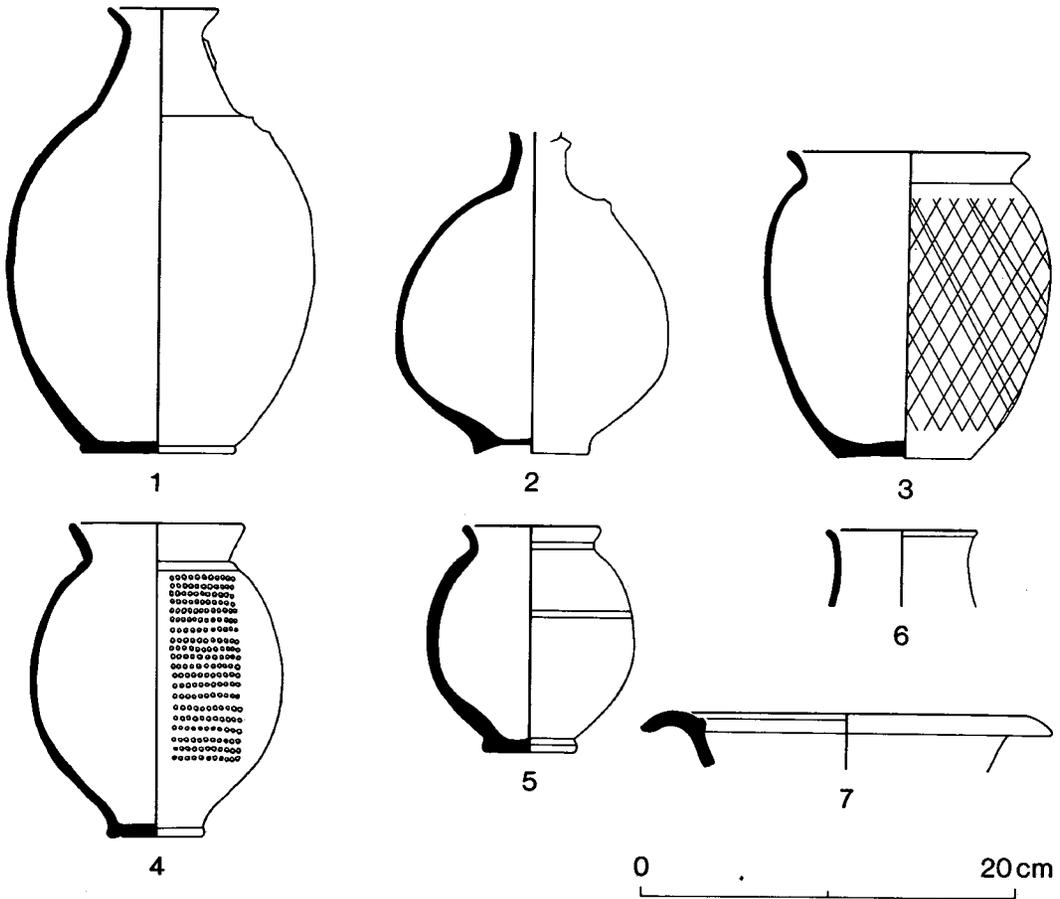


Fig. 4 Pottery. Scale 1:4.

faces were very worn when the vessel was deposited; a vertical crack and slight distortion of the vessel extending for a distance of 75 mm below the neck is probably a result of pressure exerted on the vessel by the weight of the grave-fill. This beaker is very similar to two examples with complete profiles from the so-called Corbridge destruction deposit (Richmond and Gillam 1950, fig. 6, 9–10), originally dated to *c.* 200, but other beakers with similar profiles are known from the Antonine Wall (e.g. Old Kilpatrick, Miller 1928, Pl. XXI, 18; Mumrills, Gillam in Steer 1960–1, fig. 14, 63). Second half of second century.

5. Beaker in East Yorkshire grey ware.
Grave 4

Fine, sandy fabric, highly micaceous; white/pale grey with black surfaces. The fabric is similar to East Yorkshire Fabric B as defined in Bidwell 1985, 179; a sherd of this fabric examined by J. Evans using neutron activation analysis seemed securely attributable to the Crambeck kilns (*ibid.*, microfiche 2: A7, 9). Beakers of this type (Corder and Birley 1937, Type 11) belonged to an early period of production at Crambeck, as is shown by the recovery of a complete example from Period 4B occupation (*c.* 250–60 to *c.* 275–300) at Vindolanda (Bidwell 1985, fig. 71, 139). How long

they remained in production is uncertain. Late third or fourth century.

6. Carinated beaker? 46 (Roman soil layer)
Grey Ware Fabric 1 (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 231–2); a locally-produced grey ware found in Hadrianic and later contexts at South Shields. Possibly from a vessel with a carination above the base and a footring as Gillam (1970), Type 177, from turret 7b. Second century.

7. Segmental bowl. Modern topsoil
Coarse sandy fabric; reddish-buff with grey core and buff surfaces. Cf. Gillam 1970, Type 294, c. 120–50.

The site produced 4.5kg of pottery (including the complete vessels from cremations and burials); it was thinly scattered across the site,

most features producing a few sherds which were sometimes abraded. Samian, amphorae, mortaria and coarse wares were represented. The only notable feature of the collection was the absence of later Roman pottery, especially East Yorkshire grey ware (except for the beaker in burial 4, fig.4, no.5) and calcite-gritted ware.

SMALL FINDS

(figs 5–9)

by A. T. Croom

Note on the numbering system: Each of the finds below is identified by catalogue number, site code (context number followed by small

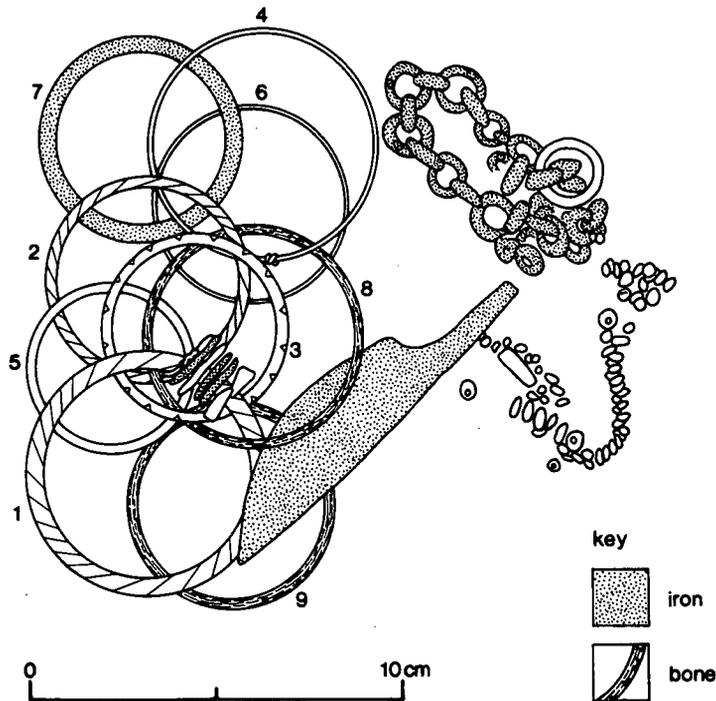


Fig. 5 Diagram showing probable position of personal ornaments as deposited in grave 1 (drawn from X-rays and photographs). Scale 1:2.

finds number) and phase. Where a context was assigned more than one number during excavation, the equivalent is quoted. The grave-goods and iron coffin fittings (A and B below) belong to phase 3: for other finds (C) the phase is shown in brackets after the site code.

A. *The grave-goods in grave 1*

The collection of jewellery was found at one end of the grave, near the jet objects (fig. 3). It consists of nine bracelets, six finger rings, a string of beads, an iron chain, a knife, a purse or cloth covering and an unidentified piece of bone. Impressions in the iron corrosion show that some of the objects rested on a wooden surface, possibly part of a box, although no fittings or other traces of one were found.

The group was partially excavated on site, then lifted in a block for further excavation, consolidation and partial cleaning by the North of England Museums Conservation Laboratory. Figure 5 shows the general lay-out of the group; however, because of the very poor condition of the metalwork, it has not always been possible to determine the relationship of one bracelet to another. Rather than attempt to reconstruct small fragments into complete bracelets when details of overall shape or fastening were unknown, only sample pieces have been drawn (fig. 6).

Bracelets (figs 5 and 6)

- 1 Copper alloy bracelet (W:4mm B(max.):5mm. Wire D:2mm. Internal D:min. approx. 55mm) 63-5
Bracelet made of two circular-section wires twisted together. One fragment narrows to a hook or eye fastener, but no actual fastener survives. The type was in use throughout the Roman period (Cool 1993, 89). Cf: South Shields (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 3-273); Lankhills, Type 1A (Clarke 1979, 302); Poundbury (Cool 1993, fig. 65, no. 7), late Roman grave.
- 2 Copper alloy bracelet (W:3mm B:3mm. Wire D:1mm. Internal D:approx. 48mm) 63-6
Three circular-section wires twisted together. No surviving fastener. Cf: South Shields (op. cit., 3-271-2, 274-5); Lankhills, Type A2, in graves dating from 310-350/370 to 370-410 (op. cit., 303).
- 3 Copper alloy bracelet (W:2mm B:3mm. Internal D:approx. 43mm) 63-7
Thin strip bracelet of rectangular cross-section, with ?chevron pattern cut onto outer edge. No surviving fastening. The light strip bracelet was the most common form in the fourth century (Cool 1993, 89). Cf: South Shields (op. cit., 3-232-4); Lankhills, Type D1h, in graves dated 310-370 (op. cit., 306); Poundbury (op. cit., fig. 64, no. 10; fig. 66, no. 16), late Roman graves.
- 4 Copper alloy bracelet (W:2mm B:2mm. Internal D:approx. 58mm) 63-8
Oval cross-section bracelet with sliding knot fastener formed by twisting one end of the wire twice round the bracelet. Undecorated. Most common in the third and fourth centuries (Cool 1993, 91). Cf: South Shields (op. cit., 3-249-50); Lankhills: Types B1c and C1a, in graves dated 330-370 (op. cit., 303-4); Poundbury (op. cit., fig. 67, no. 22), late Roman grave.
- 5 Copper alloy bracelet (W:1mm B:2mm. Internal D:approx. 40mm) 63-9
Thin, oval cross-section. The fastening described below (no. 6) may possibly come from this bracelet.
- 6 Copper alloy bracelet (Wire W:1mm B:0.75mm) 63-10
Thin wire; seen on X-ray only. An incomplete eye terminal, made of oval cross-section wire twisted round the bracelet four times, may come from this bracelet. For fastener, cf: South Shields (op. cit., 3-251-4).
- 7 Iron bracelet (W:2mm B:4mm. Internal D:approx. 50mm) 63-11
Small, sub-rectangular cross-section.

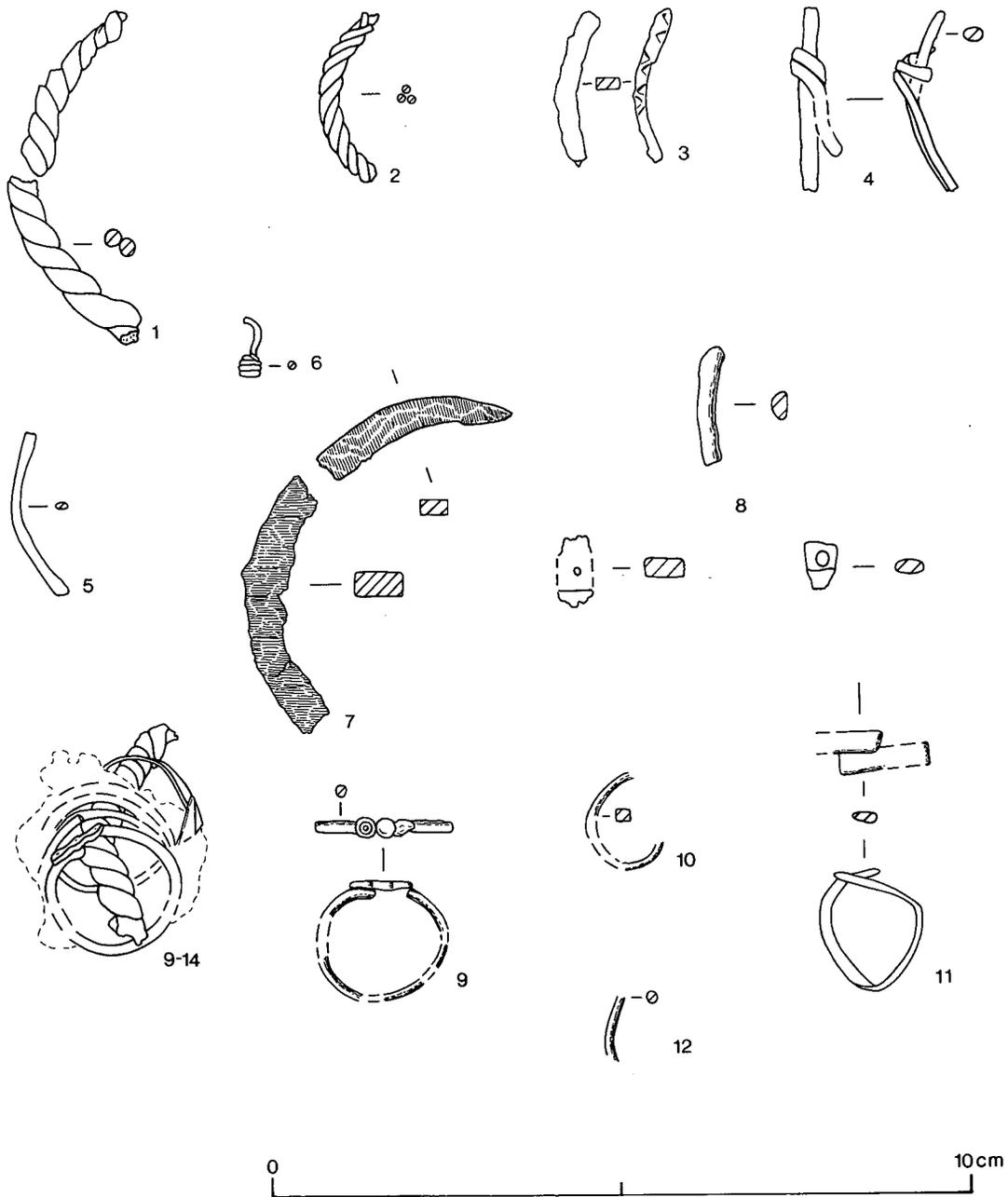


Fig. 6 Copper alloy objects from grave 1. Scale 1:1.

One fragment tapers to a point. At Lankhills a few examples of iron bracelets were found, with circular cross-sections, in graves dating from 310–330 to 370–380 (op. cit., 311).

- 8 Bone bracelets (W:5 mm B:2 mm) 63-12, 63-13

Fragmentary pieces of rectangular cross-section bone bracelets, with traces of copper alloy sheathing and iron rivets. Since this type usually has two rivets to fasten the ends of the loop together (Clarke 1979, 314), there are at least two examples present. Bone bracelets are dated to the fourth century (Greep 1993, 107). Cf: Lankhills: Type B, in graves dated 350–370 (op. cit., 313); Poundbury, Type 2 (Greep 1993, 107), from late Roman graves.

- 11 Copper alloy ring (W:3 mm B:1 mm) 63-19

Penannular loop of rectangular cross-section with overlapping terminals. Undecorated. Although more common in the early period, this type of ring is occasionally found in the fourth century (Cool 1993, 93). Cf: South Shields (op. cit., 3-203); Poundbury (op. cit., fig. 68, nos 30, 32), late Roman graves.

- 12 Iron ring (D:2 mm) 63-15

Thin iron ring of circular cross-section. Cf: Lankhills (op. cit., 318, no. 368), late Roman grave.

- 13 Iron ring 63-17

(Not separately illustrated). Thin, unknown cross-section.

- 14 Iron ring 63-18

As above.

Rings (figs 5 and 6)

Six rings had been threaded onto the large bracelet (no. 1 above). Impression in the iron corrosion below them shows that they rested on the wooden board below. They were found in the following order, from left (uppermost) to right: 9, 12, 10, 13, 14, 11 (composite drawing shows 13 and 14 in dashed lines).

- 9 Copper alloy ring (W:2 mm B(hoop):2 mm. Internal D:20 mm) 63-14
Ring of roughly square cross-section, with applied bezel of three linked circles decorated with dot and ring. The loop is broken under the bezel, but the breadth of the band suggests the setting was probably originally soldered onto a complete rather than penannular loop. Although rings with three circular settings are known, and rings with three projections are found in late Roman deposits, it is difficult to find a close parallel for this form of bezel.

- 10 Copper alloy ring (W:2 mm B:2 mm) 63-16

Ring of roughly square cross-section.

The iron work and associated finds (figs 5 and 7)

- 15 Knife (L:102 mm W:25 mm B:3 mm. Tang L:37 mm W:4 mm B:4 mm) 63-20

Small knife with a straight back continuing the line of the tang and a wide blade with a convex cutting edge curving up to a point. Manning 1985 Type 12A, found throughout the Roman period. There are traces of iron preserved wood on the lower surface of the blade, and fragments of bone bracelets on both surfaces. On the upper surface, overlapping the blade slightly, was a bulbous, roughly pear-shaped area of poorly preserved bone. It is unclear whether this was worked in any way. No traces of organic material survives on the tang. Cf: Housesteads: Manning 1976, fig. 22, nos 127–8, 130. Knives in late Roman female graves: Poundbury (Mills 1993, 96).

- 16 Chain (Iron link D:11 mm W:1.5 mm B:2 mm. Copper alloy ring D:20 mm. D(wire):3 mm) 63-21

(Illustration drawn from X-ray). Well-made iron chain of unknown length,

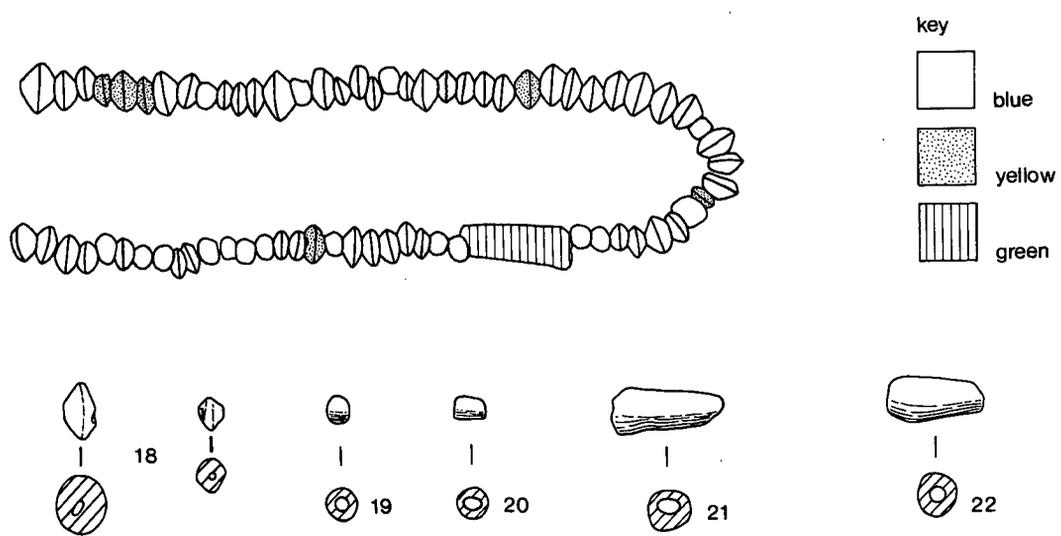
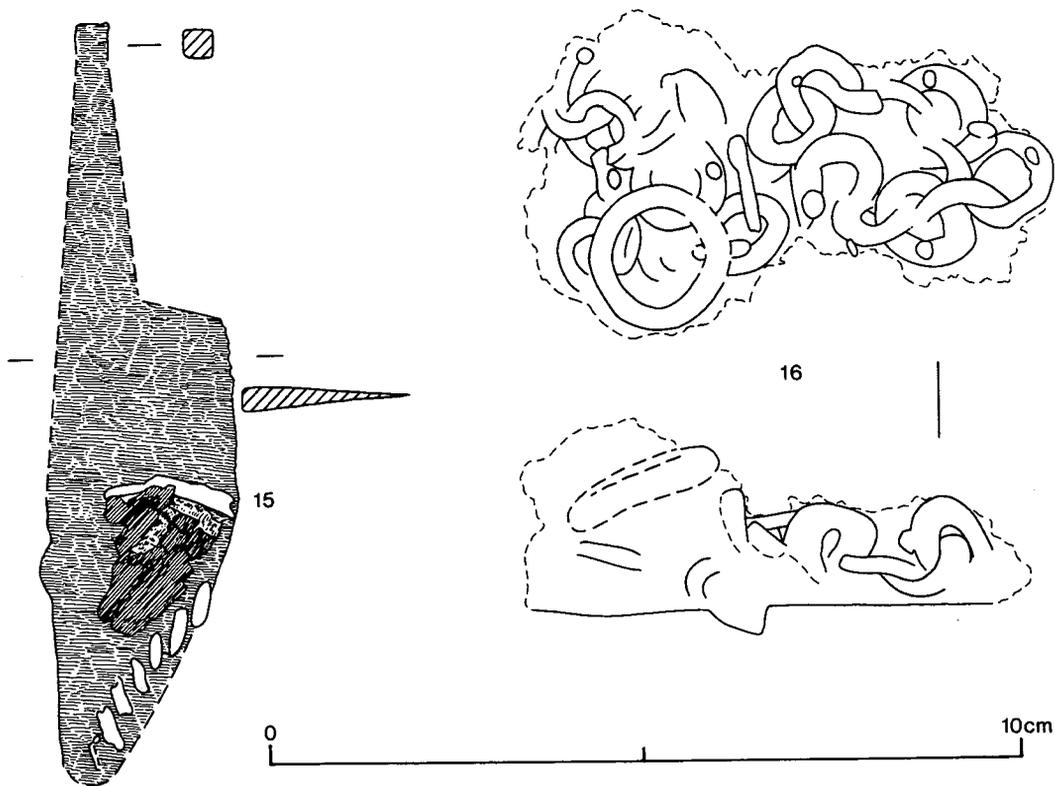


Fig. 7 Iron objects and glass beads from grave 1. Scale 1:1.

made up of circular links of rectangular cross-section. X-rays show that some of these links (possibly alternate ones) are rivetted. Circular links in chains are very rare in the Roman period, with oval or figure-of-eight links being much more usual (Manning 1985, 139); circular links with circular cross-section were found in a first century deposit at The Lunt (Hobley 1969, fig.25, no.9). A copper alloy ring of circular cross-section seems to be connected to one end of the chain.

The chain would appear to be too bulky to wear as a necklace (although in the Anglo-Saxon period iron chains of similar size were worn as jewellery: Evison 1987, 230). It was, however, found near the knife and might well be associated with it; a chain (of unspecified metal), interpreted as an attachment for hanging an iron key from a belt, was found on a body in a burial in York (RCHM 1962, 100b). If the chain were indeed part of a *châtelaine* hanging from a belt or girdle, it raises interesting questions about the woman's costume. Gravestones dated up to the mid-third century show that the "Gallic coat" was widely worn by the rich in the North, a garment distinguished by always being unbelted (Wild 1985, 369, 388). There are, however, two tombstones of young girls wearing tunics with girdles: *Vacia* from Carlisle (*CSIR* I.6. 495, dated to the second century) and *Velibia Ertola* from Corbridge (*CSIR* I.1 71, dated to the late third or possibly fourth century). Unfortunately, lack of any other evidence, such as buckles, brooches, or textile remains, means nothing else can be said about the possible costume of the female from Morton Walk.

Copper alloy chains were found in boxes of jewellery in two other burials in York (RCHM 1962, 83a, 101a).

The wood remains preserved in the iron corrosion on the lower side of the chain show two separate panels of wood with a narrow gap between them.

- 17 Organic impressions (Not illustrated). On the iron corrosion above the chain areas of textile and skin or leather impressions were found (identification by G.Smyth). These could be either the remains of a covering for the jewellery, a girdle, or a cloth-lined leather purse, possibly part of the *châtelaine*. For linen-lined leather or hide purses, cf: Water Newton, fourth-century hoard (*Britannia* 7 (1976), 333); Holborough, third-century burial (Jessup 1955, 22, 55-6)

Beads (figs 5 and 7)

Glass bead necklace 63-4

String of 100 glass beads containing 67 biconical blue, 9 biconical amber-yellow, 2 biconical greenish-yellow, 19 small globular blue, 1 short cylindrical blue, 1 pear-shaped blue-green and 1 pear-shaped pink. Although 24 of the beads were found loose, it was possible to reconstruct the original layout of much of the string from the beads' positions in the ground (figs 5 and 7). The pear-shaped beads are in poor condition compared to the other beads.

- 18 Biconical beads (D:8 to 4mm L:4 to 2mm)

The biconical beads vary greatly in size. The "small" blue biconical beads are mainly, but not exclusively, late Roman in date, while the "very small" blue and yellow beads are dated to the fourth to fifth centuries (Guido 1978, 97-8). Cf: South Shields (op. cit., 4-35, 4-37); Lank-hills: in graves dating from 310-330 to 350-390 (Guido 1979, 297-300); Pound-bury, Grave 112, late Roman (Guido and Mills 1993, fig.101, no.7); Butt Road, Colchester, 2 grave deposits, date 320-450 (Crummy 1983, 32, nos 656-682).

- 19 Globular beads (D:4mm to 3mm L:2 to 3mm)

The globular beads are made of the same translucent blue glass as the bicon-

ical beads. Cf: Lankhills, in graves dating from 310–330 to 310–350/70 (Guido 1979, 297–300); Poundbury, late Roman (Guido and Mills 1993, fig. 101, no. 2).

- 20 Cylindrical bead (D:4 mm L:3 mm)
Short round-section cylindrical bead of translucent blue glass, slightly lighter in colour than the other blue beads. Beads of this shape and size in green glass are a distinctive late Roman form, but short examples in blue are rare (Guido 1978, 944–5). Cf: Lankhills, in graves dating from 350–70 to 390–410 (Guido 1979, 297–300).

- 21 Pear-shaped bead (L:15 mm D:6 to 4 mm)
A long, tapering circular-section cylindrical bead, apparently in translucent blue-green glass. Cf: Lankhills: translucent green (Grave 199, date 310–350/370); almost opaque bottle green (Grave 336, date 350–370) (Guido 1979, 298–299).

- 22 Pear-shaped bead (L:12 mm D:6 to 4 mm)
Distinctly pear-shaped bead, with circular cross-section, incomplete at the narrow end. It is apparently made of translucent pink glass, which is a very rare colour in Roman beads. In discussing a “light translucent pinkish mauve” segmented bead from the cemetery at Cirencester, Guido points out that this colour is rare before the mid-fifth century, when it is found in beads from Anglo-Saxon necklaces. Such “intrusive” beads, outside the usual range of Roman forms, became more common in the late Roman period (Guido 1982, DO4, DO6). The shape itself is uncommon; Guido lists only one circular-section bead, which is 9 mm long and light blue in colour (Guido 1978, 225).

As the smallest diameter of the holes in the beads is just under 1 mm, they must have been strung on thread rather than a leather thong. The beads, when strung together, produce a length of approximately 312 mm, which pro-

duces a loop too big to be a bracelet. As there were no traces of any fasteners, and thin thread would be too difficult to re-tie every time the string of beads was worn, it seems likely they were strung on a loop of thread large enough to go over the head, with bare thread showing at the back of the neck.

Jet (fig. 8)

(Identification of material: L. Allason-Jones)

J. P. Wild (1970, Table E) lists the examples of jet distaffs found in this country and on the Continent, in Germany and Gallia Belgica (the jet probably comes from Whitby and was exported), while jet or shale spindlewhorls are found on many Roman sites, including the late cemeteries of Poundbury and Lankhills. The fort and its vicinity at South Shields itself have produced at least 20 jet or shale spindlewhorls and a fragment of spindle or distaff (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 7.171–190, Allason-Jones 1983, 133, 3). The objects are all probably Whitby jet.

- 23 Jet ?distaff (Distaff L:121 mm W(max):17 mm B:9 mm. Disc D.:25 mm B:6 mm) 63.1

The object consists of two elements that have both been modified after manufacture. The surfaces are all polished, except the top face at the narrow end, which is pierced by a hole 2 mm in diameter and c. 7 mm deep. The unfinished state of this face suggests that it was not intended to be visible and was covered by an attachment of some sort. Although the shape of this rod is reminiscent of a handle, the dimensions of the hole suggest that only a lightweight attachment could have been fixed to the shank.

The second element is a disc with five concentric grooves on its finely worked upper surface. The lower surface has one groove and a curved profile which has been trimmed off to form a flat surface 19 mm in diameter. This flat

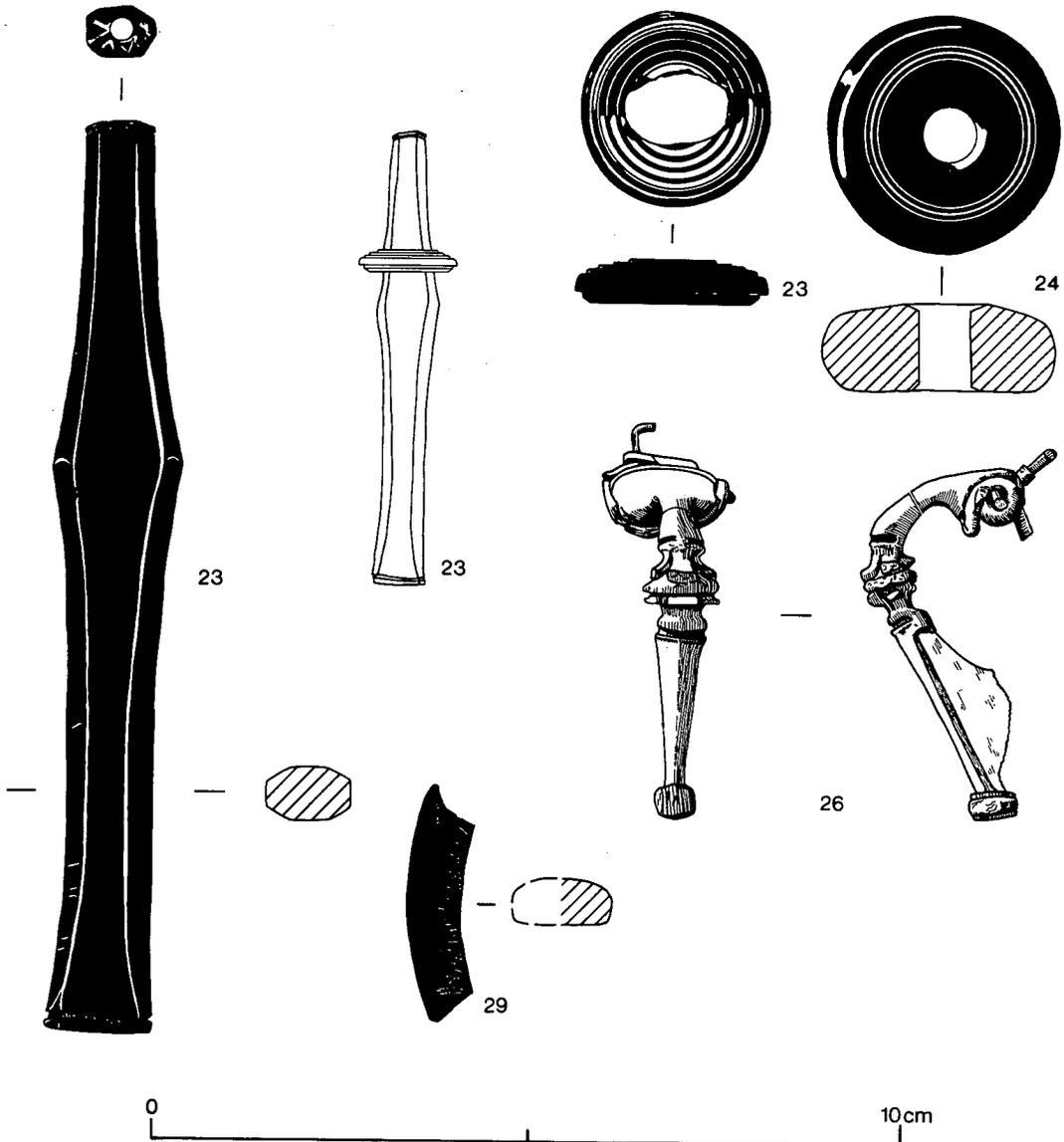


Fig. 8 Jet objects from grave 1 (nos 23-4) and other finds from Morton Walk (nos 26, 29). Scale 1:1. Outline of no. 23 at scale 1:2.

surface is unpolished, in contrast to the rest of the disc. The oval hole required to fit the disc onto the shank cuts across the circles and remains unsmoothed on the inner surfaces, and is an obvious modification of the original disc. The size of the disc falls between that of the

majority of the spindlewhorls from South Shields (above 30mm diameter; Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 7:171-190) and that of the disc heads for bone pins (below 15mm diameter; op. cit., 2:443-6).

The object, although consisting of a shank and "whorl", seems unlikely to have been a spindle, particularly since a separate spindlewhorl of the more usual design was found in the same grave. An alternative use is as a distaff. It is shorter than known complete jet examples, the smallest of which is 159 mm long (from York, RCHM 1962, 143), but one of the German examples has similarities in its shape. This distaff, found in a grave at Tongeren, has the same cross-section and midway expansion, although with its ornate terminals at both ends it is almost twice the length of the South Shields example (Hagen 1937, Taf. 34, G11). Although most jet distaffs are apparently carved in one piece, the conical "vase" on the Tongeren example is detachable and it is possible that the hole drilled in the Shields' example was for the attachment of a decorative terminal (perhaps even the disc before its modification). A possible distaff of bone from the Poundbury cemetery had a separate disc attached to one end (Greep 1993, 108, 17). The German examples also parallel the association of distaffs with round collars, either as a terminal or at the mid-point (for example, Hagen 1937, G11, G5 and G6).

Jet distaffs are almost exclusively found in late Roman graves (Wild 1970, 32).

- 24 Jet spindlewhorl (D:31 mm B:12 mm D(hole):7 mm) 63-2
Jet spindlewhorl, with 3 close, incised concentric rings on the upper face. The central hole is countersunk on the upper surface only. There is no exact parallel from the collection of spindlewhorls from South Shields, since most decorated examples have lines or dot-and-ring on the edges as well as their faces (cf. Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 7-172).

B. Finds from grave 4

- 25 Iron coffin fittings Nails, 70-1-4, 70-6-7 Bar, 70-5
(Not illustrated). The coffin nails sur-

vive in very poor condition, although many are surrounded by large areas of iron-preserved wood remains. In all cases, the wood grain is horizontal and at right angles to the shank of the nail.

All the nails are incomplete. The longest is at least 72 mm, and they all have shanks with a square cross-section of 6-7 mm. It was possible to recover the position of four or five nails on the right hand wall of the coffin; one was found lying vertically and one diagonally near the head of the coffin, and two (probably three) were lying horizontally in line near the foot.

There were at least four other incomplete square-section nails within the wood stains, and a tapering flat bar. The wood grain is at right angles near the wider end, but runs parallel with it at the narrow end (70-4, 70-6, 70-7, iron bar, 70-5). (Full details in the archive).

C. Other finds (fig. 8)

Copper alloy

- 26 Trumpet brooch (L(without loop):47 mm W(head):17 mm) 1-1 (modern topsoil)
(by M. E. Snape) Collingwood type Rii, with mouldings and acanthus decoration continuous around the bow. Detail of acanthus not strongly moulded. In profile, head has strong backward recurve. Bow broken, now restored. Fine incised line around edge of head and down outer edges of leg. Moulded decoration round foot obscured by corrosion. Catchplate turnover missing. Spring of six turns, stump of pin surviving. Head-loop, formed from axis wire of spring, now broken.

Trumpet brooches are thought to have originated in the Midlands (Mackreth 1973, 22-3), although many examples are found in the North. A recent review of their dating suggests that they were developed before A.D. 75 and

that most went out of use between A.D. 150 and 175 (Mackreth 1990, 109).

Apart from this example, a total of 20 trumpet brooches have been found at South Shields, of which 13 belong to type Rii (Snape 1993, 109). Examples are found at many sites on the northern frontier, the largest groups being: nine brooches from Corbridge (*ibid.*, 40, 70), five from Chesters (*ibid.*, 114), at least four from Vindolanda (*ibid.*, 74), and seven from Carlisle (*ibid.*, 90–1; Padley 1991, 105, no. 7; Mackreth 1990, 109, no. 9). The type is found throughout Britain, with some examples on the Continent.

- 27 Object 55-1 (2)
(Not illustrated). Small, unidentifiable copper alloy fragments found amongst bone fragments in cremation 1.

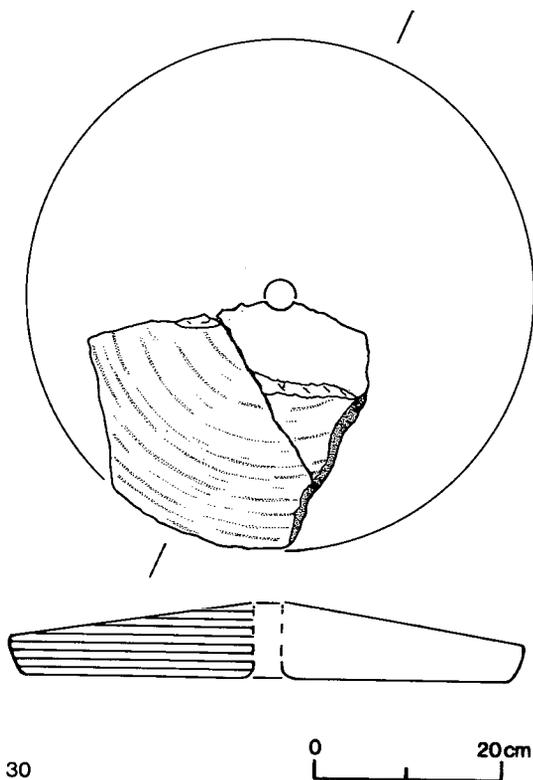


Fig. 9 Millstone. Scale 1:8.

Iron

- 28 Hobnails
Small numbers of incomplete hobnails with square cross-section shanks were found in the following contexts: 22.5 (4dem), 46.1 (2) and 66.2, equiv. to 53 (2–3). Full details are in the archive report. (Not illustrated.)

Shale

- 29 Shale bracelet (B:6mm. Internal diam. c. 70mm) 6.1 (4occ.)
Small fragment of bracelet of D-shaped cross-section. Tool marks on interior surface. Cf: South Shields, 32 shale bracelets, plain and decorated (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 7:108–139) and fragments of two others in the fort collection (small finds nos J11, J17).

Millstone (fig. 9)

(Identification of stone: *S. Speak*)

- 30 Millstone (D(original):approx. 540mm
B(edge):46mm B(max):77mm
D(eye):34mm) 41.1 (3)
Lower stone of orthoquartzite, a type of sandstone locally available. Central eye and horizontal base. The grinding surface is worn. It may have originally been dressed with pocking, although coarse grain stone was often left undressed (Welfare 1985, 113).

Glass

- 31 (Not illustrated). Only small fragments of Roman glass were recovered from the following contexts: 53 (phase 2–3), 16 (phase 5 con., unsealed) and 35.1 (phase 6). There were fragments from two separate square-sided bottles (first to second century A.D.) in a modern layer (1.6, 1.7), and other small unstratified fragments.

The above will be reported on more fully in future as part of a general study of glass from South Shields.

Human remains
by J. Langston

Cremation 1

Context 55: fill of flagon

Although the bones in this context are in a poor and fragmentary condition, there was no obvious replication of any bone, and it can be assumed the remains represent a single individual. Even allowing for distortion in burning, the long bone fragments are of small dimension and the individual is therefore possibly a female. Among the fragments there are four unfused long bone ends; unfortunately the shafts are either absent or too abraded to identify positively the bone, but the larger two are possible ends of radius and ulna, and the smaller two are possibly long bones of hand or foot (metacarpals/metatarsals or phanges). The age of fusion of these bones suggests an age range of the late teens to early twenties. Unfortunately there are no teeth present to give a more precise indication of the age of this individual.

Further details of the bone from this and the other contexts can be found in the excavation archive.

Context 50: layer with burnt material
Unidentifiable fragments.

Cremation 2

Context 57: fill of BB2 cooking pot

Fragments of cortical bone. Tooth fragments, unidentifiable.

Context 38: fill of pit containing BB2 cooking pot

Fragments of skull and part of shaft of radius.

Context 23: fill of grave 3

Small fragment of bone. One molar tooth—M3, complete and open rooted; size and state of development suggest it belonged to an individual who died at c.12 years. Fragments of second tooth, probably (second?) premolar.

DISCUSSION

Character and extent of the cemetery: The closest parallel for the Morton Walk cemetery in the military north is a cemetery at Derby (Wheeler 1985a), which ranged in date from the early second to the mid-fourth century. Derby was the site of the fort, Little Chester, until at least A.D.225 (Wheeler 1985b, 300–4). After that the military nature of the occupation is less certain: the site was re-fortified in the late third to early fourth century, but whether for military or civilian use is unclear. There is no evidence for occupation of the site or use of the cemetery beyond the mid-fourth century.

The finds made at South Shields since the nineteenth century indicate that its cemeteries were far richer than that excavated at Derby, and it is not surprising that the burial grounds of a coastal supply base like South Shields should reflect the wealth and cosmopolitan nature of its community. The tombstones of Victor and Regina are amongst the finest from Roman Britain, and their unweathered state suggests they may have been housed within structures. Grave 1 at Morton Walk was very well provided with grave-goods.

The total extent of the South Shields burial grounds is unknown. There is no evidence of interments to the east of Baring Street apart from an isolated burial shown on Figure 1, and there are two possible explanations for this. It has been suggested that a predecessor of the mid-Antonine fort may have been situated somewhere on The Lawe, possibly to the south or east of the known stone fort (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 16). If that were the case, the area occupied by an earlier fort could have been retained for some military purpose even after a replacement had been built, and so burials might never have been allowed in that area. An

alternative explanation may simply be that not all finds were recorded. OS maps of the late nineteenth century show that building operations to the east of Baring Street were carried out slightly later than those to the west: possibly by that time reporting of discoveries was less favoured, as might be the case if any burial grounds to the south-east of the fort were poorer than those to the south-west.

Cemetery development within a military vicus: Direct comparisons cannot be made between cemetery development in the towns of southern Britain and that in military areas, because it is likely that the army would have regulated the system of land holding in the military *vici*. This may help to explain why the Morton Walk cemetery was re-used several times over a long period, rather than being part of a system which developed in a linear way, as for example at Winchester (Clarke 1979, 10–11, fig. 2).

A more striking feature at Morton Walk is that inhumations possibly of the fourth century should be found 300m from the fort, implying that even at such a late date the South Shields cemeteries may not have encroached close to the fort. In contrast, at Chesters, burials were made on the site of the military bath-house immediately to the east of the fort (Bruce 1885, 101), suggesting a contracting *vicus*. The implication therefore is that the *vicus* at South Shields may not have contracted to such an extent.

The cremations: In general the cemetery at Petty Knowes provides a parallel for the cremations at Morton Walk, which presumably also took the form of circular earth barrows. There was insufficient evidence to say whether each barrow was ever encircled by a ditch and bank, as at Petty Knowes (Charlton and Mitcheson 1984, 5). Similarly, only excavation over a wider area could have established whether any cremations took place *in situ* at South Shields. Unusually, at Petty Knowes one of the cremations was dated as late as the third or early fourth century (*ibid.*, 28), an occurrence so far unparalleled at South Shields.

The pottery from the cemetery: Apart from vessels found with the cremations and inhumations, very little pottery was recovered from the site. However, some conclusions can be drawn. The lack of any late pottery suggests no ceremonies such as funeral feasts were associated with the inhumations. The same seems true of the cremation phase, as there is no preponderance of vessels such as amphorae or beakers, which might have indicated such a rite. The group is typical of occupation material, and may have been residual on the site or have arrived with earth used to form barrows.

Grave-goods: Various categories of grave-goods have been defined and different functions suggested for them (Woodward 1993, 230–3; Clarke 1979, 145–82).

The objects deposited in grave 1 at Morton Walk are paralleled by similar groups found in many graves in other cemeteries. However, the Morton Walk grave-goods appear to be an unusually rich example of the type, in terms of both number and variety of objects. Very few grave-goods were present at all in the cemetery excavated at Derby (Wheeler 1985a, 228, 235). Of civilian cemeteries, only a few of the burials at Lankhills have comparable groups (*op. cit.*, graves 117, 155, 183, 188, 337 and 438), and of the many graves at Poundbury containing grave-goods, only the grave of a ten-year-old girl contained a roughly similar collection (Farwell and Molleson 1993, 86, grave 840). Also at Poundbury, analysis of the age of females provided with grave-goods showed that the peak occurrence was for young women in their twenties (Woodward 1993, 230).

The objects from grave 1 are therefore not only important in establishing a fourth-century date for the burial, but provide interesting new evidence of late Roman costume. If the unusual decorative chain was indeed part of *châtelaine* suspended from a belt or girdle, it suggests that elements of costume usually associated with the post-Roman period had already been adopted in the fourth century.

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