

AN UNUSUALLY-ALIGNED BURIAL IN NORWICH CATHEDRAL CLOSE

by Francesca Boghi and Peter Warsop

During the course of a watching brief at Life's Green, Norwich Cathedral Close (NGR ref. TG 623561 308966) during July 2002 an unusually-aligned post-medieval coffin burial was discovered. The watching brief, funded by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral and conducted by Norfolk Archaeological Unit, monitored the excavation of a gas pipeline trench from Bishopgate to the north transept of the cathedral.

The north-to-south aligned burial was the most significant finding. Several clusters of undated disarticulated human remains, probably disturbed by previous service trenches, were also found nearby, indicating that this grave was not isolated.

The burial was nested in the corner of a pre-existing right-angled wall, with the grave cut partially truncating the wall. Given the limited width of the trench, it is not known whether there were any physical impediments, such as a return of the wall towards the north, that prevented the burial from being oriented east-to-west. It is possible that the constraints posed by the presence of a pre-existing wall, previous graves, or possibly the existence of a path connecting the north side of the cathedral with Bishopgate may have influenced the orientation of this grave. Personal preference, possibly motivated by a non-conformist affiliation, is also a possibility. The proximity of this burial to the bishop's chapel, which was leased to the Walloon congregation between 1565 and 1631 (Atherton 1996, 660), is in this respect significant.

The articulated skeleton, supine with limbs extended and in a very good state of preservation, was that of a middle aged male (35–50 years) with a stature of 159.9 ± 2.99 cm and a particularly well-developed musculature of the pectoral girdle. His left leg showed a long-standing spiral fracture of both tibia and fibula, probably the result of a single accident. The presence of calcified musculature tissue (*myositis ossificans*) indicates that complications followed the injury. Despite this, both fractured bones healed in perfect alignment with a very good rate of apposition and minimal shortening, indicating that a good level of care had ensured the correct reduction and immobilisation of the fractured limb.

Several changes across the skeleton were indicative of the early stages of *diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis* (DISH), though a diagnosis could not be made due to the lack of sufficient diagnostic criteria. DISH is a slow progressive disease of unknown cause, which induces stiffness, reduction of motion and back pain.

This individual also appears to have suffered from childhood anaemia (*cribra orbitalia*) and from minor episodes of non-specific infection in both feet. Osteo-arthritis affected both shoulder joints and *Schmorl's nodes* or herniae in the spine were observed in all eight surviving thoracic vertebrae. These lesions are generally associated with trauma caused by exceeding the weight-bearing capacity of the spine, or increased weakness of the vertebral bodies through ageing. Three of the fifteen teeth present had caries and seven teeth (out of a total of 25 available alveolar positions) were lost pre-mortem, apparently mainly because of severe periodontal disease.

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COLKIRK SETTLEMENT PATTERN: A REAPPRAISAL AND A QUESTION

by Paul Rutledge

In 1990 I wrote in *Norfolk Archaeology*¹: 'Colkirk lies along a boulder clay ridge ... The site was comparatively inhospitable ... It is therefore not surprising that the settlement is a comparatively late one. The place-name is Scandinavian and Christian... No pre-Conquest archaeological finds are reported from Colkirk.' The revolution in field archaeology brought about by fieldwalking and controlled metal detection has since reached the parish. Metal detecting has, in Andrew Rogerson's words, 'in one field close to the present village revealed, as well as an Icenian gold stater, a substantial concentration of Roman finds near to a group of four pieces of sixth-century metalwork, along with Middle and Late Saxon material'.² This field (SMR 30867) lies north and north-west of the church and north of a suggested Roman road called Toft Way³, on which the church lies, which runs eastwards through the parish from the neighbourhood of the Roman crossroads settlement at Toftrees about 1km to the west. It includes the open-field furlong Drake North ('dragon hoard'), recorded on the parish map of 1592/1617, which alone previously hinted at archaeological largess here.⁴ Even more recently prehistoric, probably Iron Age, pottery has been collected by Dr Rogerson in the churchyard (SMR 7126) and he has located a concentration of Iron Age potsherds in the north-eastern sector of the parish (SMR 34298). Smaller areas (SMR 10863 and 30016) examined just north and west of the village nucleus and the enclosed central green have produced mainly Late Saxon and later material, though another just north-east of it has yielded a sceat of 710–15 and a Pagan Saxon pendant (SMR 30823). Occupation, even if shifting and intermittent, may be assumed at least on the interflaves between the small streams that run north out of the parish from the pre-Roman period onwards, though the church and nearby green became the main focus of settlement in the Late Saxon period.

These discoveries prompt another look at the place-name. For Colkirk, Ekwall gives the derivation Cola's or Koli's church and comments that the first element may be Old English Cola or Scandinavian Koli — personal names — and that the second element varies in early records between Old English *cirice* and Old Scandinavian *kirki*, both meaning church.⁵ The assumption made in 1990 was that the place-name and the settlement were late pre-Conquest, post-dating the conversion of the Danes to Christianity, and that the Old English variant was a borrowing by Danish speakers. In the light of these recent discoveries it now seems possible that the name was established in the Anglo-Saxon period and later adapted to Danish usage. Tom Williamson opens up further possibilities by referring to the name in the context of the possible Christianisation of a pagan shrine.⁶