

Further excavations at the former Goblin Works, Ashtead (TQ 182 567)

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In 1985 rescue excavations on part of the site now occupied by the headquarters of Esso Petroleum PLC revealed 33 inhumation burials. These were found to belong to two groups and were either of pagan Saxon type or were the graves of people executed, probably in the late Saxon period. In 1989 a further 11 burials (some from each group) were excavated together with a number of other features believed to be post holes.

Preface and acknowledgments

In 1985, working in advance of redevelopment at the former Goblin Works, Ashtead, a team of archaeologists led by Rob Poulton revealed 33 inhumation burials. Of these thirteen were identified as burials in the pagan Saxon tradition, probably of 7th century date, whilst at least six were found to be of people executed probably in the late Saxon period; it was not possible to assign the remainder to either of these groups with any certainty (Poulton 1987). This work followed the discovery in 1927 of a pit containing mutilated and dismembered bodies guessed to be Saxon by Lowther (1951, 24), and the discovery of a Saxon spearhead found with human bones during ground levelling in 1974 (fig 1). It should be noted by the reader that throughout this report the word 'pagan' has been used as a term of convenience to distinguish the earlier burials from the later executions. It is not intended to imply that those concerned were necessarily pagan by belief as they may well have been under the influence of, or fully converted to Christianity by this time even though the dead were still buried in the pagan tradition. The continuing redevelopment of the site led to the need for an examination of an area close to the previous excavation (fig 1c) and, after mechanical removal of the topsoil in November 1988 to assess its archaeological potential, three further weeks of excavation ensued from 3 April 1989 (fig 2). Later in the same year, following the removal of a power generator lying between the 1985 and 1989 sites, three further burials were excavated (fig 3).

For the most part the results of this excavation supplement the discoveries of 1985 which are fully reported elsewhere (Poulton 1989). Therefore, it is not the author's intention to repeat background and discussion material already available, but to present a report covering the additional burials examined and material which can be regarded as providing new information.

As on the previous occasion this work was made possible by the interest and financial support of Esso and by the assistance of their contractors, Higgs & Hill, who provided the equipment and personnel required to strip the site. I am especially grateful to John Sylvester of Esso for his help and co-operation. The excavation was organised on behalf of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (part of the Planning Department, Surrey County Council). Thanks must also go to Mark Dover, David Evans, Simon Hind and Louise Steele of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, to Catherine Dyer, and to Gladys Alexander, Ernest Crosland, Bob Graham and Leslie le Mottee of the Leatherhead and District and Mayford History Societies for their hard work on site and dedication during the frequently adverse weather conditions, and again to Leslie le Mottee for his continued vigilance as the redevelopment proceeded. For their assistance at the post excavation stage I would like to thank the following: Dr Tony Waldron for studying the human bone; Jon Cotton and Phil Jones for identifying the prehistoric pottery; Phil Jones again for identifying

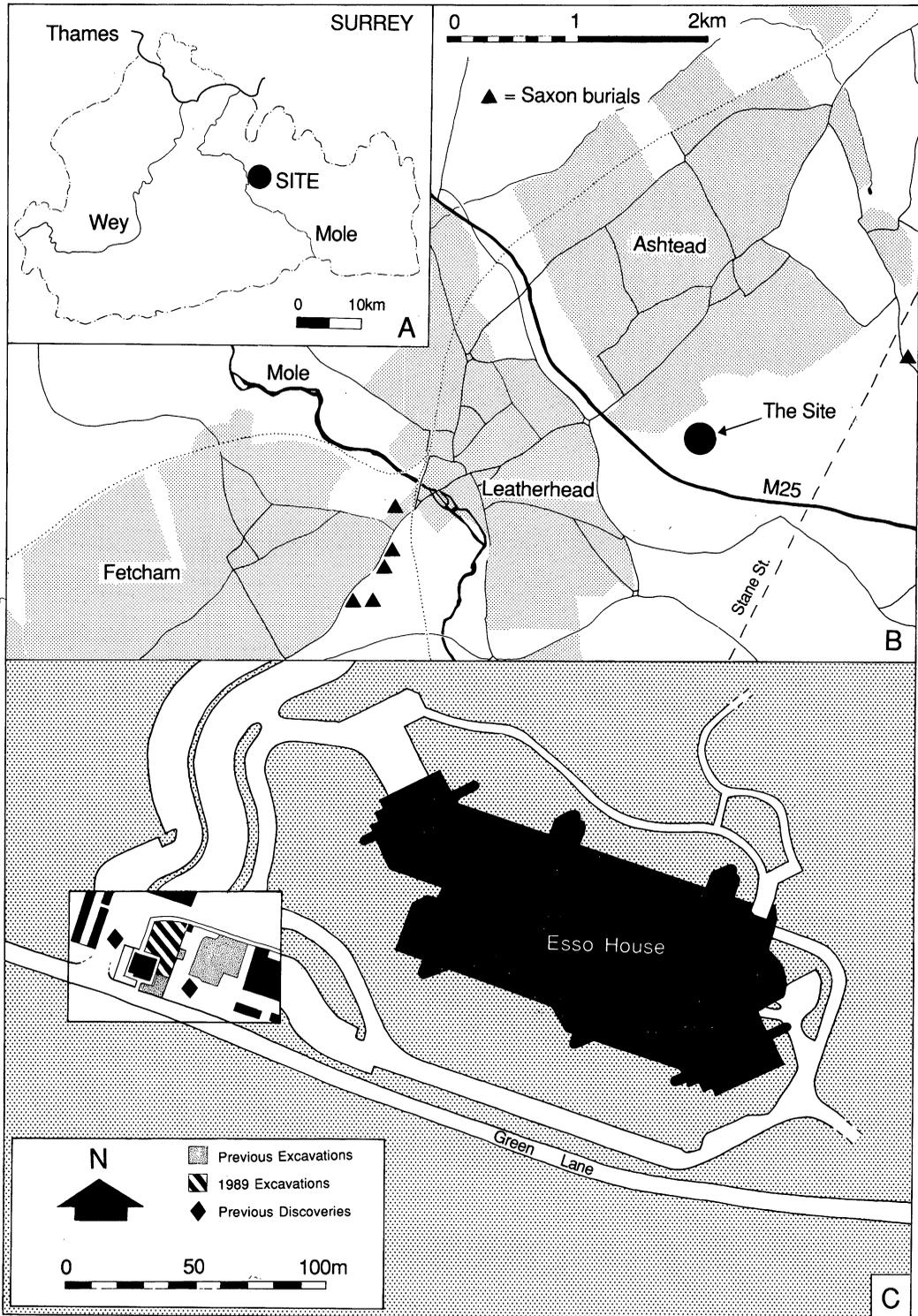


Fig 1. Goblin Works, Ashtead: The new Esso headquarters, Ashtead. The inset (1c) locates buildings of the former Goblin Works at the time of excavation, the areas excavated in 1984, 1985 and 1989, and additional burials found in 1927 and 1974

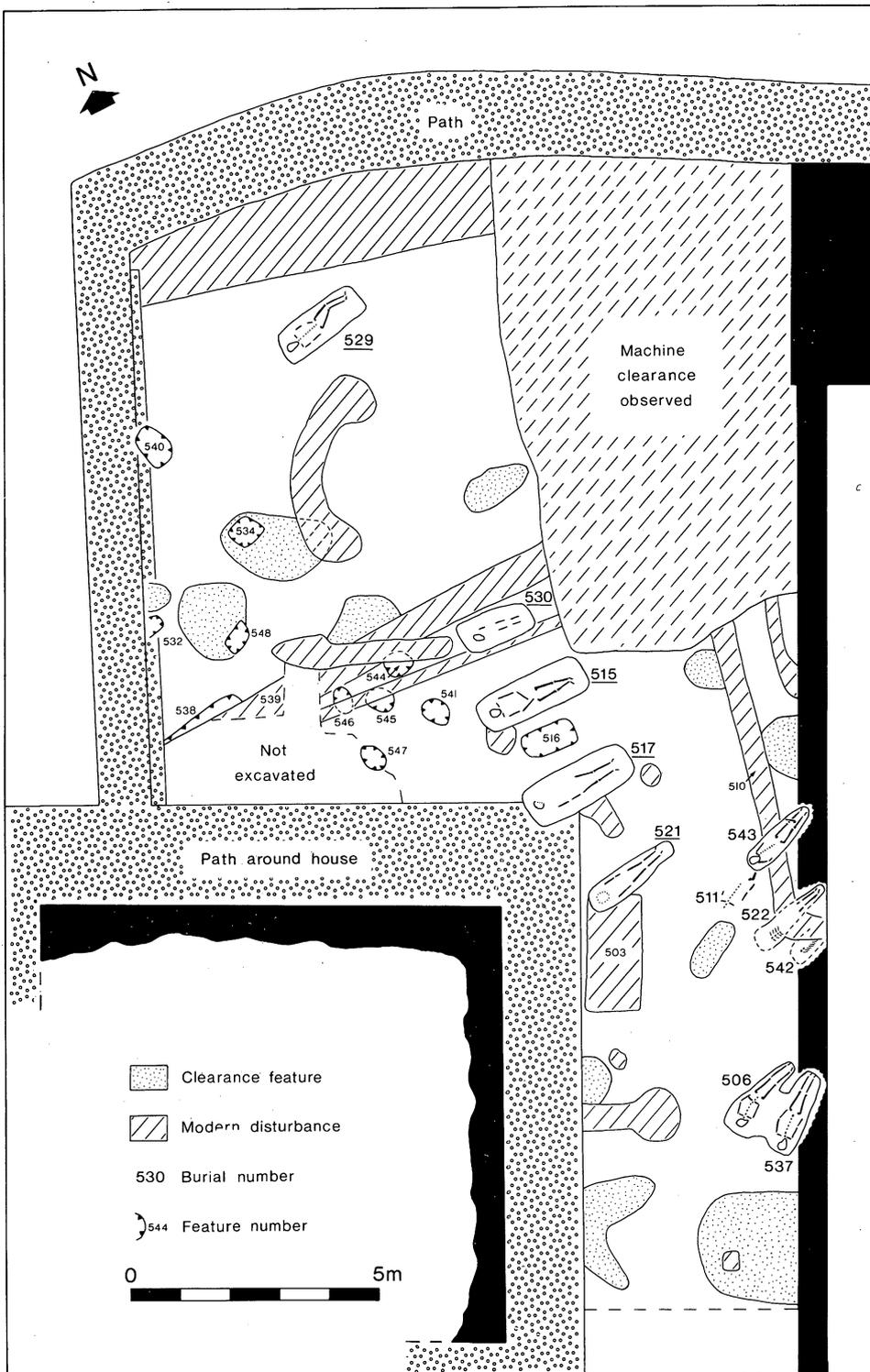


Fig 2. Goblin Works, Ashted: The 1989 excavation. Pagan burials have their number underlined

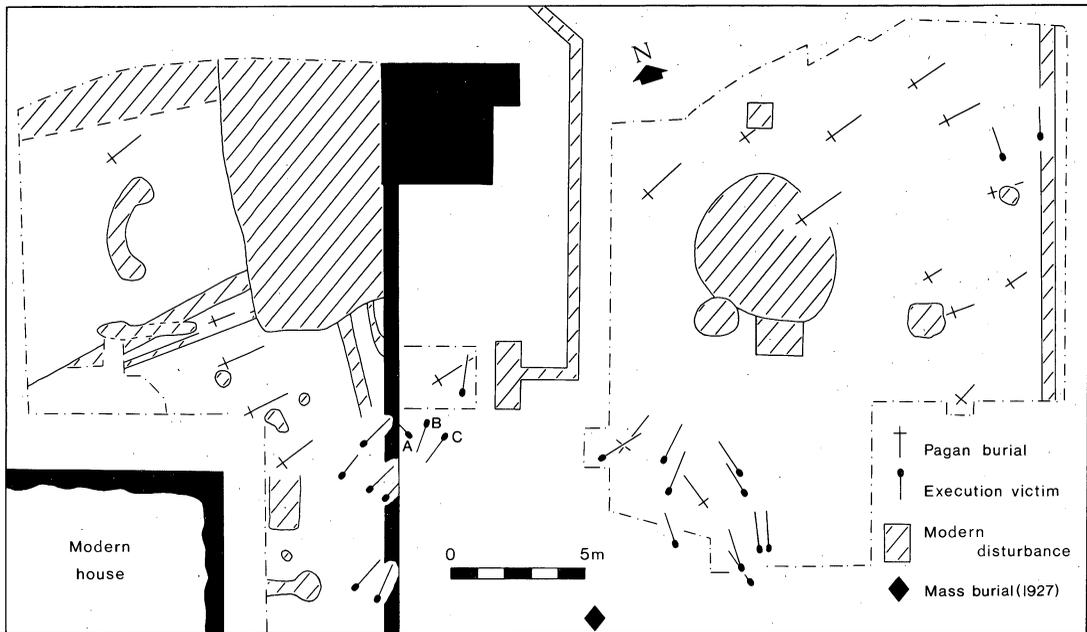


Fig 3. Goblin Works, Ashted: The overall distribution of pagan and execution burials from the 1985 and 1989 excavations. A, B and C are burials found by Esso staff during the removal of a power generator after the 1989 excavation

the flints, tile and Roman pottery; Nick Branch for looking at the seeds; and Giles Pattison for the finds drawings. Further I am most grateful to Mark Reeve for his research into bronze spiral-headed pins, and to English Heritage for the conservation of items of metalwork from the excavation. Finally, my special thanks must go to Rob Poulton for making the necessary off-site arrangements for the smooth running of the excavation, and for his help and advice during the preparation of this report.

The report on the 1985 excavations (Poulton 1987) contained some unfortunate omissions in its acknowledgments. The opportunity is taken now to note that its publication was made possible with the aid of a grant from English Heritage, and that Poulton 1987, plate 23 is English Heritage copyright.

The complete archive of the excavations in 1985 and 1989 including the finds will be housed in Guildford Museum.

The excavation

The area available for excavation was situated to the north and east of a modern house just inside the main gates of the former Goblin works and was formerly the garden of that property. The site lay a little to the west of the 1985 excavation, while just to the south an unproductive trial trench had been dug in 1984. A small trench dug in the intervening ground, also in 1985, had revealed two burials, but although an attempt was made at the machining stage to examine this area further, the exercise had to be abandoned because of difficulties encountered by the mechanical excavator working in what had become a confined space (see fig 1c).

The first stage of excavation was to remove any topsoil which remained after machining and to define areas of disturbance to the natural chalk below. This exercise confirmed that machining had caused slight damage to the skull of S506 and torso of S511 but had in general left the archaeological remains undisturbed. The miscellaneous or uncertain features encountered were half-sectioned and drawn in accordance with usual archaeological practice

while those features known to be a grave, or assumed to be so by their appearance, were excavated to reveal as much of the skeleton as possible prior to its being photographed, drawn sufficiently to record the key points, and lifted. With the identification in recent years of the probable significance of finger flexion as an indicator of a violent death (Waldron & Waldron 1988), special care was taken during the excavation of the hand region of skeletons believed to have been from interments after execution. Unfortunately, in most cases the finger bones were found to have been disturbed or were partly missing and in no case was this phenomenon observed.

Microfiche (1-23)

Detailed information concerning all the features encountered has been presented on microfiche. The material has been separated into 4 groups: (1) the catalogue of pagan and execution burials (M 2-14); (2) the catalogue of other features a) possible burials, b) post holes; c) various irregularly shaped features lacking definite cuts or having a part-cut edge believed to represent the sites of former trees or bushes or clearances of the same at some unknown date; d) modern disturbances including garden features and those concerning various service pipes and cables (M 15-18); (3) the catalogue of finds follows next (M 18-20) which covers items of pottery, tile, brick, daub, flint; and small finds for cross-reference purposes; and lastly (4) the catalogue of human remains, by Tony Waldron (M 21-3).

EVIDENCE FOR FURTHER BURIALS (Microfiche 15)

Some uncertainty surrounds the interpretation of features 516 and 538 (fig 2) but it seems likely that both may have been pagan burials. 516 lay between two pagan burials, S515 and S517, and although shorter and narrower than these was on the same alignment with a similar soily fill. This feature cut the natural chalk to a depth of 12cm and yielded no finds but may well have accommodated a baby or very small child (therefore presumably a pagan) the bones of which may well have perished. Feature 538 was almost completely removed by a sewer pipe trench (539), but its shape and orientation together with a small fragment of human bone recovered from the surviving fill suggested that this was another grave. This feature was cut at least 37cm into the natural chalk and this depth indicated that a pagan burial was most likely—the significance of depth in distinguishing between each group of burials is discussed below.

The remains of eleven burials were discovered during this excavation and of these, five would appear to have been pagan burials while six most probably belong to the group previously recognised as representing the victims of execution (Poulton 1989). These figures can be adjusted if it is accepted that 516 and 538 were further burials. The burials from each season of excavation have been combined on fig 3 which shows the relative distribution and orientation of both pagan and execution groups.

THE POST HOLES (Microfiche 15-18)

Nine post holes (532, 534, 540, 541, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548) were discovered during the recent excavations representing the only features of archaeological interest other than the graves. However, an interpretation of them is not easy. 541, 544, 546 and 547 form a reasonably symmetrical square being between 1.25m and 1.50m apart (excluding the diagonal axes and measuring centre to centre) with 545 lying just to the north of its centre. Each would appear to be sub-circular in shape and cut solid chalk to similar depths (20 to 27cm suggesting a likely depth of between 50 and 70cm below the contemporary ground surface) indicating that they are associated—possibly as part of a small over-ground structure—though the configuration is perhaps too small even for this. Since the remainder are irregular both in appearance and depth, they may not be directly connected, but may

be associated with other post holes lying to the south or west of the excavated area. If 540, measuring 80cm × 55cm and surviving to a depth of 40cm, had been a post hole rather than a small flat-bottomed pit, then it must have supported a substantial timber; the two fill layers discovered were indicative of a post pipe so such a function seems probable. As far as dating is concerned the paucity of finds from these features, consisting solely of two tiny fragments of prehistoric pottery (probably Bronze Age) from 547 and a small piece of Medieval (or later) tile in disturbed soil near the top of 541, is entirely unhelpful.

The finds

THE HUMAN REMAINS by *Tony Waldron* (Microfiche 21-3)

The human remains from this site were recovered on two separate occasions and those which were excavated first formed the subject of an earlier report (Poulton 1989, 71-91). The earlier report recorded the observations on 23 skeletons and a quantity of disarticulated bone; the present report deals with a further eleven skeletons and a small amount of loose bone. (The catalogue of the remains is in microfiche).

The inhumations

Of the eleven inhumations, five were pagan burials and six were considered to be executed criminals. In general the state of preservation was poor and most of the skeletons had suffered considerable *post mortem* damage. An age and sex were assigned to each skeleton where possible using the methods referred to in the earlier report. Measurements were taken from intact limb bones and these were used to estimate heights from the equations published by Trotter (1970).

The pagan burials

There were four adults and one child of less than five years of age in this group. Of the four adults, two were male, one female and in the other, sex could not be determined. One of the males was aged 35-45 at death and the other, 45-55. The age of the female could not be determined but the skeleton of unknown sex was judged to be 45-55 at death.

Based on the left femur, the height of the female in this group was judged to be 1.55m. The standard error of this measurement is 0.0372m so that her 'true' height would most likely lie between 1.51 and 1.59m.

The executed burials

Of these six, three were male and one female; sex could not be determined in the two remaining skeletons. Two of the males could be given an age; one was between 15-25 when he met his untimely end and the other was between 25 and 35. The female was aged 25-35; no age could be given to the other three skeletons although all were adult.

The height of the female in this group was 1.57m (± 0.0372) and the height of two of the males was estimated to be 1.66 (± 0.0432)m and 1.71 (± 0.0299)m.

Comparison with skeletons from previous report (Poulton 1989, 79-91)

The demographic data from the two reports have been combined in Table 1 from which it will be seen that the executed skeletons tend to be younger than those who managed to survive to a natural death but the groups are too small to be certain that this is anything more than a chance finding.

<i>Pagan burials</i>			
Age	Male	Female	Unknown
4-6			3
6-8			2
15-	2		
25-		2	
35-	2		1
45-	4	1	
Adult		1	
<i>Executed</i>			
15-	1		
25-	4	1	
35-	1		
45-	2		
Adult	1		2

TABLE 1. Age and sex of skeletons from Goblin Works, Ashtead. The figures are inclusive of the discoveries in both 1985 (Poulton 1989, 71-91) and 1989.

In Table 2 the heights have been combined. The mean height of the pagan males is 1.74m (standard deviation 0.05m) whilst that of the executed men is 1.71m (SD 0.04m). For comparison, the average height of modern British men is 1.74m (OPCS, 1983) so that the males in this group would not appear noticeably different in height from their modern counterparts. The average height of modern women is 1.66m so that the executed female and one of the pagan females are decidedly short; on the other hand, the second pagan female is 6cm taller than the modern average. Given the very small numbers, however, nothing of significance should be read into these results.

<i>Pagan burials</i>	
Male	Female
1.71	1.55
1.72	1.72
1.74	
1.76	
1.83	
<i>Executed</i>	
1.66	1.57
1.70	
1.71	
1.73	
1.75	

TABLE 2. Estimated heights (m) of skeletons from Goblin Works, Ashtead. The figures are inclusive of the discoveries in both 1985 (Poulton 1989, 71-91) and 1989.

Pathology

Only two of the skeletons showed any evidence of pathology, S521 and S529. The disease in the first skeleton was confined to a single premolar which had dental caries. The second skeleton was completely edentulous, the teeth presumably having been lost as the result of gum or tooth disease. This second skeleton (S529) also had a swelling on the antero-lateral aspect of the left tibia in the lower half. Unfortunately, the bone was poorly preserved and

much of the cortex over the swelling had been lost so that it was impossible to be certain of its exact morphology. A radiograph of the lesion was not helpful in making a diagnosis.

The disarticulated bone

There was a rather small amount of disarticulated bone; those bones which were positively identified are shown in microfiche. The minimum number of individuals represented amongst this assemblage was one infant, one juvenile (aged 5–15) and four adults. One of the adults was almost certainly male as judged from the diameter of a femoral head. There were no pathological changes on any of these bones.

Comment

This small group of skeletons contains very little which is unusual and the numbers are too small to permit of any statistical or other analysis. The executed skeletons showed no signs of their mode of execution although presumably this was by hanging. I discussed this at some length in the earlier report on the skeletons from this site and suggested that it would be very unlikely that hanging with a running noose would cause any disruption to the cervical spine or to the base of the skull such as may be found when the criminal is 'dropped'. At most archaeological sites the evidence for execution comes from the careless disposal of the bodies and a position of the hands which suggests that they were tied together, usually behind the back. Sometimes the fingers may be found to be in a position of forced flexion such as might occur during moments of extreme stress and this is a pointer to a violent death (Waldron & Waldron 1988). The cervical spine of one of the execution victims (S511) appeared to have been damaged and there was a suggestion that this might have been the result of hanging. None of the vertebrae was damaged when examined, however, and it is most likely that the appearances were due to some *post mortem* event.

MINERAL-PRESERVED REMAINS ON THE METALWORK (Microfiche 20)

The conservation of all items of metalwork from the site by Adrian Tribe, the HBMCF funded Conservator for SE England, provided additional information about some of the finds, as follows:

S515 Iron knife – the tang bore traces of mineral-replaced wood or horn indicating a handle of either of these materials

S517 Iron knife – the tang bore traces of mineral-replaced horn indicating a horn handle. On the blade were several small areas of mineral-replaced textile, identified as a simple tabby weave with an S-spun thread in one direction and a Z-spun thread in the other

S521 Iron knife – this had traces of mineral-replaced horn on the tang indicating that the knife had a horn handle

S521 Bronze buckle – a small area of mineral-preserved textile was present on the rear buckle plate. A tabby weave of Z-spun threads with about 15 threads/cm in each system was identified (though measured only 2mm)

S537 Iron buckle with copper spike – extensive areas of very degraded mineral-replaced textile were observed but neither the weave pattern nor the thread spin direction could be discerned

S537 Unidentified object – a small 'L'-shaped iron object found adhering to a lump of chalk in the grave fill was partially covered with very degraded mineral-replaced textile (the weave pattern and thread spin details could not be discerned) so it is possible that this object was a clothing attachment

THE SEEDS FROM BURIAL S506 by Nick Branch

A sample for plant macrofossil analysis (weighing approximately fifteen grammes) was taken from the lower abdominal area of the skeleton. The sample was wet-sieved and microscopic examination revealed a total of 530 seeds of *Atriplex* L.sp. (common name - Orache. Clapham, Tutin & Moore 1989). In addition, small fragments of faecal material were identified.

The seeds were identified using external morphological characteristics (Berggren 1981). The absence of any internal anatomy suggests that the seeds were preserved by a process resembling waterlogging (anaerobic conditions with a low pH). The conditions of preservation, the presence of faecal material and the location of the sample suggests that the seeds had been eaten.

Atriplex (eg *Atriplex patula*) is a genus of the Chenopodiaceae family (Goosefoot). The family includes *Spinacea oleracea* (Spinach) and *Chenopodium album* (Fat hen). Both of these plants are well known as edible foods—the seed and green parts eaten raw or cooked. There has been no archaeobotanical evidence to suggest that any of the native wild species of *Atriplex* were eaten. *A. hortensis* (also known as mountain spinach) was cultivated in Western Asia and SE Europe before being introduced into W Europe in the Middle Ages (De Rougemont 1989). Since the young leaves of this species were normally eaten prior to the plant setting seed, it would be surprising if the seeds were present in this context. This suggests that either the seeds were chosen specifically to be eaten or that they were eaten accidentally when a mature plant was gathered. Like Spinach and Fat Hen, we might conclude that Orache would have similar nutritional value and perhaps formed an important component in the diet.

OTHER FINDS (Microfiche 18–20)

Some finds of prehistoric date are of intrinsic interest despite the fact that they derive either from obviously later features (such as grave fills) or from features of uncertain date. These consist of a small collection of struck flints, mainly waste flakes probably representative of scattered chippings and floor surface debris, and thirteen (plus two of uncertain date) sherds of pottery. The flints and most of the pottery has been identified as being Middle Bronze Age material, the latter having a fabric containing small angular pieces of calcined flint. One crude sherd showing possible finger tip impressions and containing larger pieces of calcined flint in the fabric is thought to be Neolithic while a further sherd may belong to the Mid-Neolithic period or Late Bronze Age.

Discussion

THE PAGAN CEMETERY

The pagan graves favoured an orientation that was approximately east-west, which is typical of the majority of pagan Saxon inhumations, and were cut into solid chalk to levels which suggest an original depth of perhaps 80–110cm. The linearity and even spacing between S521, S517, S515 and the child burial S530 (pl 6) may suggest that this group was buried at the same time or alternatively might indicate that the location of earlier burials was preserved by a mound or other marker and was avoided (these suggestions need not be mutually exclusive). Apart from the rather narrow cut containing S521 (pl 4) these graves appear to have provided ample space for their respective burials and the position of the skeletal remains within each suggests that the body was laid to rest with care and a sense of dignity. All were buried in a supine position and had their legs extended except for S529 (pl 5) whose legs were to one side and bent at the knees. Looking at the known cemetery as a whole these points begin to appear significant when distinguishing between the two groups of burial recognised. Although exceptions do exist (namely the

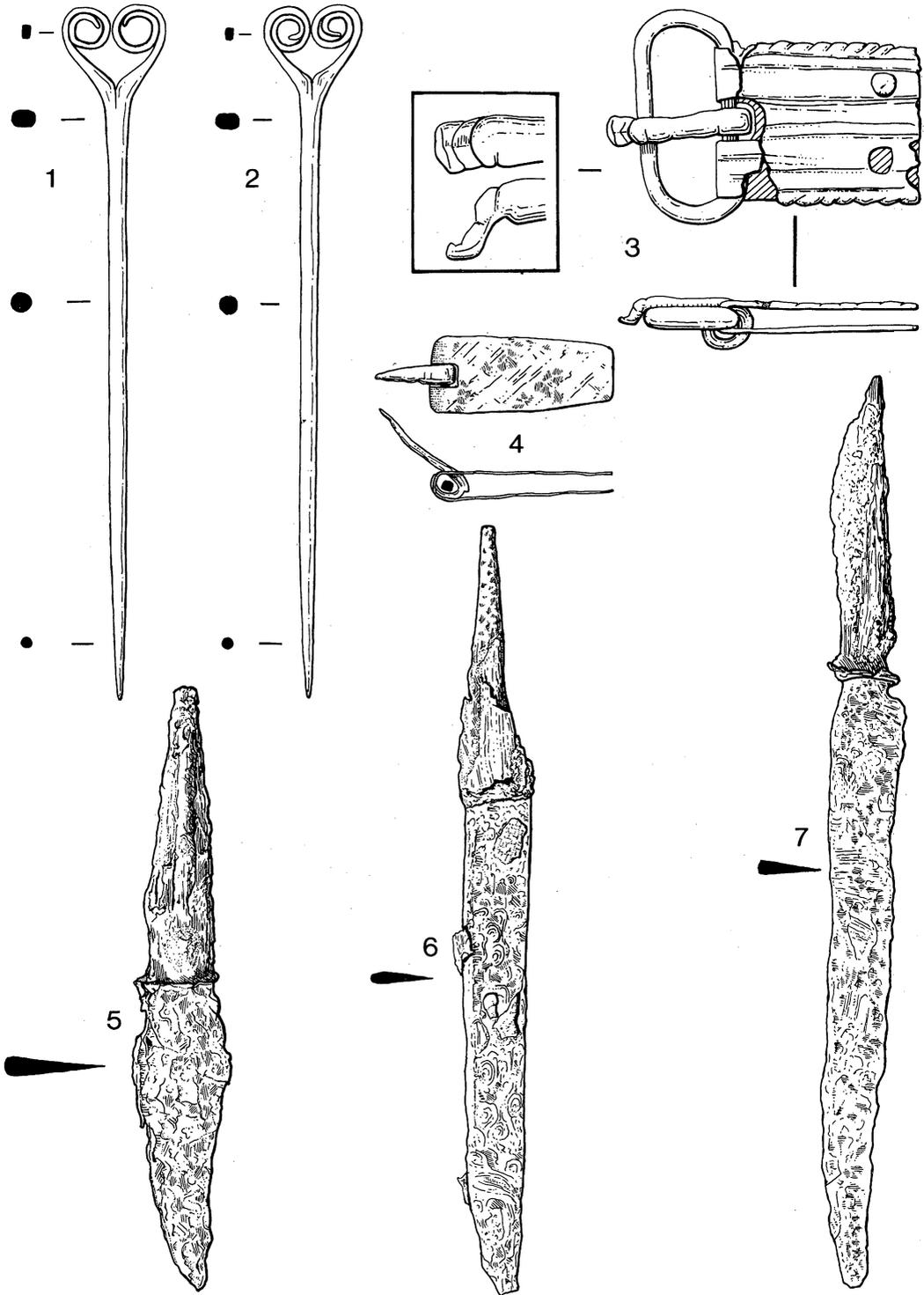


Fig 4. Goblin Works, Ashtead: The finds. 1, 2 - copper alloy spiral-headed pins from S517 (scale 2:1); 3 - copper alloy buckle from S521 (scale 2:1 inset at 4:1); 4 - iron buckle with copper alloy spike from S537 (scale 1:1); 5, 6, 7 - iron knives from S515, S517 and S521 respectively (scale 1:1)

over-small grave of S23 and the seemingly unnecessary closeness of the feet of S15 to the end of its grave (Poulton 1989) these would seem to be relatively minor variations to a pattern of careful burial not seen with the later executions.

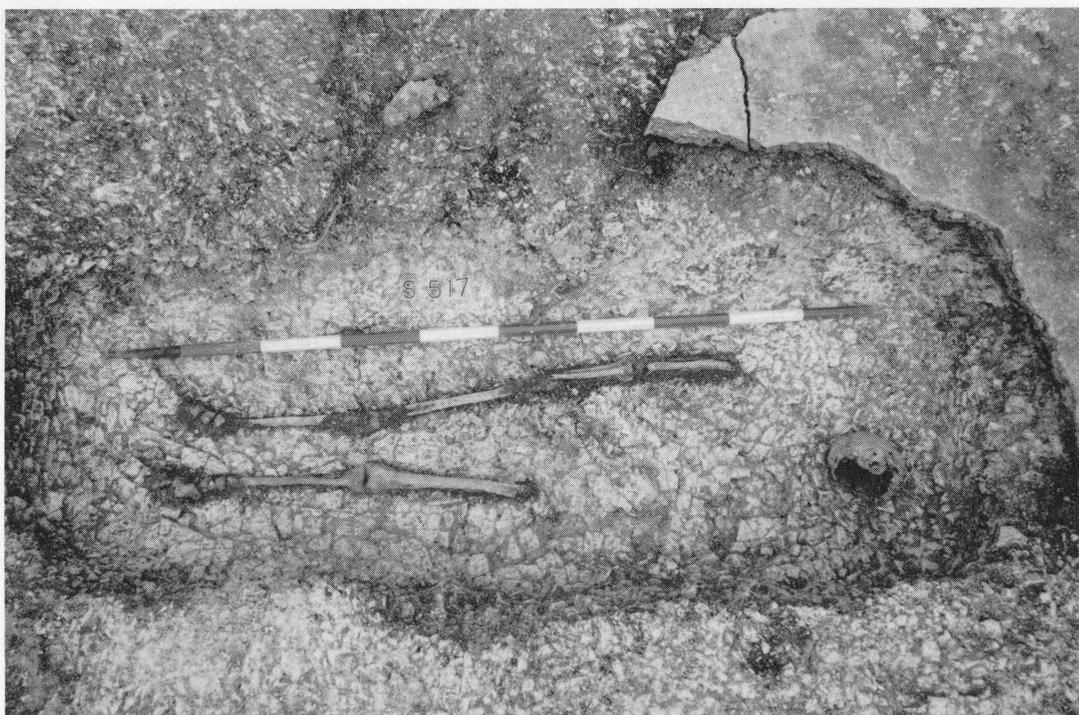
Three of these burials had grave goods buried with them (fig 4) and certain points of interest arise from these. S521 had an iron knife and a small bronze buckle with strap mount and traces of iron rivets, found by the left and right side of the waist respectively, but the size and direction of the buckle and mount suggest that the two may not be directly connected. The eye of the buckle could not have taken a strap over 10mm in width so it seems unlikely that it was part of a waist belt. However, it may well have supported a small pouch or similar item and have been looped around a more substantial waist belt (or cord) which has since decayed. S515 (pl 2) was accompanied by an iron knife curiously placed between the right foot and the end of the grave. Although knives are probably the most common artefact found in Anglo-Saxon graves, one in such a position appears to be most unusual though grave 69 in the cemetery at Mitcham was similar in that an iron knife was found at the feet under a pottery bowl (Morris & Bidder 1959, 65). Also of interest are the grave goods buried with S517 (pl 3). These consist of two small (51mm long in each case) bronze pins (fig 4.1, 2), located one in the vicinity of the neck and one between the knees, and another iron knife positioned in the region of the left hip. Both pins appear to have been made by splitting and flattening the intended head end and coiling the two split pieces until they met forming almost identical double spiral heads. In the positions found, and considering that these pins were clearly too delicate to support or fasten any substantial item of clothing, the implication is that the body in this grave may have been wrapped in some form of shroud. Although the presence of buckles and fastenings found in other graves in this cemetery suggests that most or all of the pagans were buried clothed, this is the first indication of the possible use of a burial garment here. The use of a pin to fasten a shroud has also been suggested by Evison (1987, 82) when reporting on the cemetery at Buckland, but this suggestion relates to pins found at the neck, and the



Pl 1. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S511 (and skull of S543). (Looking south, scale in 0.2m divisions)



Pl 2. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S515. (Looking from above, scale in 0.2m divisions)



Pl 3. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S517. (Looking from above, scale in 0.2m divisions)

presence here of a second pin between the knees may add weight to the idea of such being used in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Parallels from other Anglo-Saxon sites (Detsicas & Hawkes, 1973; Cunliffe 1976, 207-14) suggest a 7th century date for such items.

The state of bone preservation in the recently excavated graves was in all cases worse for those identified as being pagan than for the execution victims; this is perhaps a further indicator of their greater antiquity. However, it may be better to guard against making such assumptions purely on the condition of bone as so many localised factors can affect its preservation. The ribs and vertebrae of S517 and S521 did not survive and the skull of S521 was little more than a stain. However, the position of the flower bed 503 which cut the upper fill of grave 521 without disturbing any bone, and of the corner of the concrete path around the house which apparently afforded some protection to the right arm and cranium of S517 lying directly below it, may have caused the preservation to vary considerably (especially if horticultural chemicals were used in any part of the house garden).



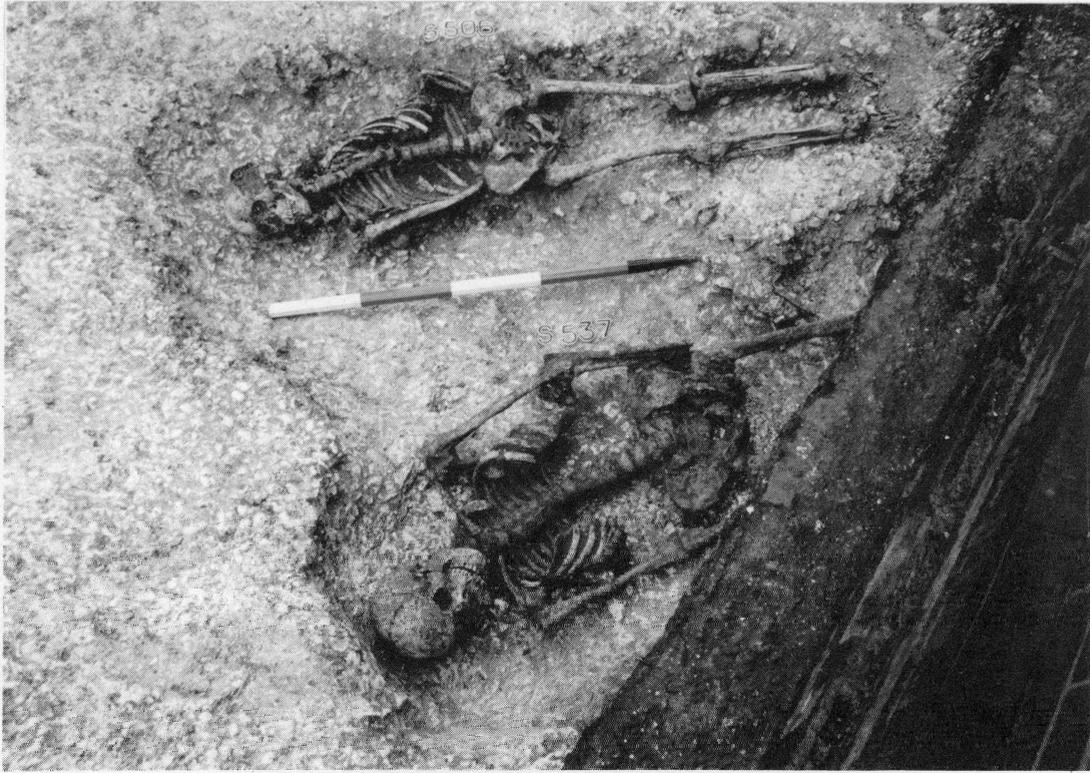
Pl 4. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S521. Iron knife visible. (Looking west, scale in 0.2m divisions)



Pl 5. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S529. (Looking from above, scale in 0.2m divisions)



Pl 6. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S530. (Looking from above, scale in 0.2m divisions)



Pl 7. Goblin Works, Ashtead: S506 and S537. (Looking from above, scale in 0.2m divisions)

In conclusion it may be suggested that the present discoveries support the interpretation of the date and context of the pagan cemetery offered by Poulton (1989). Such finds as there are could well be of late 6th or 7th century date, while the continued absence in any of the grave fills or elsewhere within the excavated area of material indicative of an adjacent settlement enhances the suggestion that the cemetery was located away from the spheres of domestic activity and may well have been on the edge of an established estate with possible pre-Saxon origins.

THE EXECUTION SITE

When compared with the pagan burials just discussed those of this group assume an entirely different character in keeping with their probable status at the time of death. Orientated in a more north-east to south-westerly direction the original depth of these graves was probably no more than 50cm where they penetrated the natural chalk, and even shallower where the body lay directly over it. Their narrowness and restrictive length indicates that a minimum of effort was spent on the preparation of these features which on the whole give the impression of being associated more with the unceremonious disposal of bodies than with careful burial. The emerging pattern from the known cemetery suggests that such criteria provide a reliable basis for distinguishing between the pagan and later burials found here, though in most cases more obvious indicators of likely execution were absent during the recent excavation. All were buried in extended supine positions.

Burials S511 and S542 (pl 9) were in graves that did not cut or at most only marginally disturbed the surface of the natural chalk, while S522 (pl 9) was in a narrow grave cut 10cm into the chalk at its deepest point. All had been heavily disturbed, the latter pair



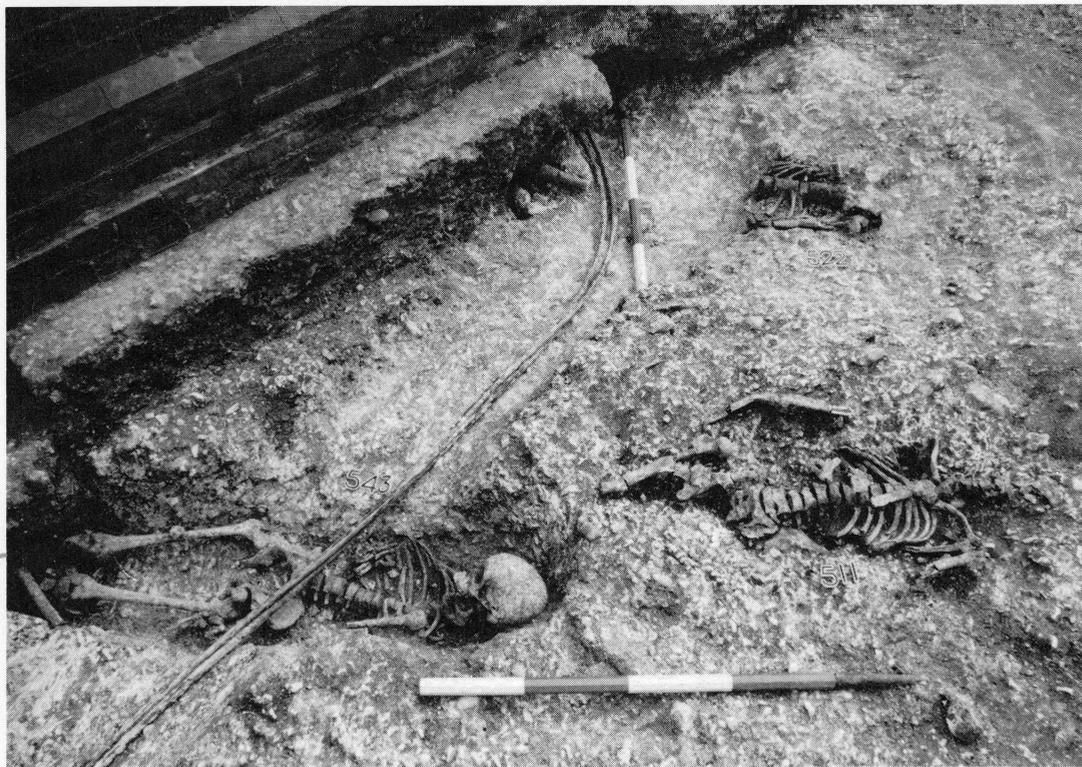
Pl 8. Goblin Works, Ashted: S506 - close-up showing the right forearm crossed beneath the spinal column and both wrists meeting by the left hand side of the body where they were probably tied

certainly by modern interference (which can be extended to include minor site-clearance damage to S511) though earlier disturbance is also likely in each instance. The left femur of S511 was completely missing and during the excavation it was thought that this grave may have been cut by S543, the backfill of which was found to contain an additional femur. However, specialist examination showed this stray bone to be a right femur, so it must have come from another burial in the vicinity. Certainly some relationship must have existed between S511 and S543 as they would clearly have overlapped, but this did not survive for archaeological recognition. It should also be noted that S522 is most probably the same burial as S30 (from 1985), S542 is probably the same as S32, and S31 may represent disturbed bone from either or both of these (Poulton 1987, 312; 1989, 70-71). However, the 1985 contexts appear to have been mislocated on the published plan (Poulton 1989, 71, fig 2) and in fact lay 1m further to the north as is indicated in this report (fig 3).

The remaining inhumations were relatively complete, possibly preserved because their graves had been slightly cut into natural, but even so an electric cable trench caused some damage to S543 (pl 9). In this extremely cramped burial the right arm had been dislocated or otherwise displaced so that the upper portion of the humerus lay beneath the skull. The clearest indication of execution came from S506 (pl 7) which had its right forearm crossed behind its back and both wrists meeting by the left side of the body (pl 8) which indicates that they had been tied; a likely preparation for hanging. S8 and S21 make good parallels from the 1985 season (Poulton 1989). Immediately beside this the grave of S537 (pl 7) again displayed the characteristics of an execution without leaving any skeletal evidence of such a death. However, this is quite acceptable if death was by running noose hanging (see Waldron & Waldron 1988 and above). The homogeneous fills and merging cuts of these two may even indicate that S506 and S537 were buried at the same time (see pl 7).

An interesting discovery was made during the excavation of S506 when a large number of small black seeds were observed within the ribcage of this burial. This material was presumably present in the stomach of the corpse when interred and may be representative of a final meal as the remains examined were all commonplace in the contemporary diet. A full specialist report appears above.

The execution burials were located entirely in the southern part of the excavated area confirming the observation by Poulton (1989) that those known lie mainly to the south and west of his Feature 103, the postulated post setting for a gibbet. The few finds from these graves help little with their chronological placing and basically consist of several scraps of prehistoric pottery and a further residual sherd of Roman date. With the one exception of a small heavily corroded iron buckle with copper alloy spike (fig 4) found close to the right hip of S537, no evidence of clothing (suggested by buckles or other non-



Pl 9. Goblin Works, Ashtead: Three execution burials S543 (lower left), S511 (centre right) and S522 (upper right). S511 and S543 were cut by a modern cable trench. (Looking south, scales in 0.2m divisions)

organic fastenings) was found with any of these interments. Poulton has suggested that this may be because these people were stripped prior to burial. If this is correct then the argument may be taken a stage further for those with tied hands, who must have been stripped to the waist at least before their execution, since it is impossible to remove sleeved clothing from a person bound at the wrists. Alternatively all readily reusable items such as buckled belts may have been removed, leaving the victim clad only in biodegradable garments which have not survived.

Although no archaeological relationship existed between the pagan and execution burials here, it was demonstrated stratigraphically in 1985 that some of the former were earlier than the latter. Also, considering that no known documentary records refer to a place of execution in the immediate vicinity of the site, these burials are unlikely to be post-1066. In the absence of more conclusive dating material the best clue to the age of the execution site comes from analogical arguments. Such have already been adequately presented for the Goblin Works (Poulton 1989), by comparison with Guildown (Lowther 1931), Stockbridge Down (Gray-Hill 1937) and by mention of other Hampshire examples (in Aldsworth 1979), where such material as is forthcoming points to a Saxo-Norman date for these interments. For further discussion of the significance of the site and its location see Poulton 1987 and 1989.

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