

# THE ROMAN AND ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT GREAT CASTERTON: THE 1966 EXCAVATION

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*Based on a report by Guy Grainger and Christine Mahany, with contributions  
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This paper, which is based on a completed monograph written by Guy Grainger from notes and records by Christine Mahany, presents the results of an excavation in 1966 of Roman and Anglo-Saxon burials on the north side of the Roman defences of Great Casterton. The main conclusion is that Roman burials, in all probability, continue into the fifth century in an extensive area north of the walled town. At some stage in the later fifth century, Anglo-Saxon cremation burials were buried to the east, while somewhat later (where there is a relationship), Anglo-Saxon inhumation burials are also present.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Circumstances of the excavation**

During the course of road-widening operations in Ryhall Road by Rutland County Council in September 1966, F. Rotherham, the foreman in charge of the work, noticed that human bones and Saxon pottery were being disturbed by the mechanical excavator. He immediately informed Nottingham University, and Stamford and Oakham Museums. An emergency excavation was accordingly undertaken, firstly by J. L. Barber of Oakham School Museum and the late Malcolm Dean, and subsequently by Christine Mahany for the Stamford Archaeological Research Committee on behalf of the Ministry of Public Building and Works. The excavation continued for six weeks. The Assistant Supervisor was C. S. B. Young, but otherwise the labour was provided entirely by volunteers. In view of the nature of the emergency it was decided to concentrate the available resources on recovering as much as possible of the plan of the cemetery, and not to attempt to excavate underlying features.

### **The setting of the excavation (Fig. 1)**

The excavations were on the north side of Ryhall Road, which runs immediately outside and parallel to the northern side of the defences of Roman Great Casterton. Excavations by the Nottingham University Summer School between 1950 and 1958 (Corder 1951, 1954 and 1961) have made a huge contribution to our understanding of the site. A Roman fort lay north-east of the town (Todd 1968). This was occupied from the AD 40s to the 80s and it is possible that the town began as a civilian

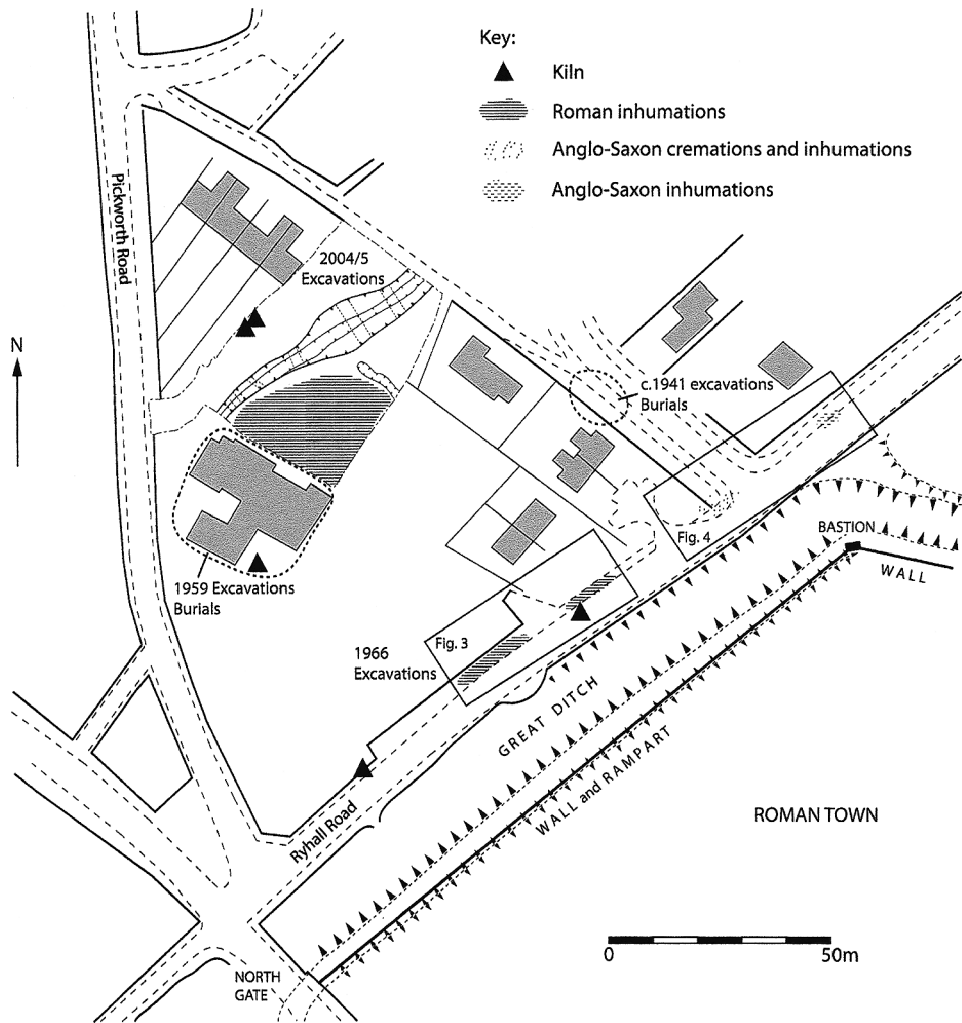


Fig. 1. Site in relation to Roman town defences and other discoveries.

settlement outside the gates of the fort. The town was subsequently considered important enough to merit the building of town defences enclosing some 7.3ha, which were built in the late second century AD. The main street of the town is formed by Ermine Street, which runs north to south through the town. It is believed that there were only north and south gates. Four modern roads converge at the north gate, which lay some 80m south-west of the nearest 1966 burials: it seems possible that each, including Ryhall Road, is on the line of a Roman precursor.

Burials were found outside the walls of the town on two occasions prior to 1966. In about 1941, during the installation of a septic tank north-east of the police houses on Ryhall Road, about 20 skeletons were discovered 'very densely packed in rows, some with coins' (F. Collins pers. comm.). This suggests more Roman burials, only tens of metres from the 1966 discoveries.

In 1959, during the building of a primary school, part of a late Roman cemetery was found some 50m to the north-west of the 1966 Roman graves. Numerous burials, apparently in rows with feet to the east, were disturbed at a depth of 0.60m (2ft) to 1.06m (3ft 6in). Many were simple interments; others were contained in rough cists formed of slabs of local limestone set on edge, with larger slabs as covers. No grave goods were recovered, but pottery from the site suggested a late third to second half of the fourth century date (Corder 1961, 50). No more detailed records of this rescue work could be located. In 2004–5, Archaeological Solutions Ltd excavated an area north of the primary school and found a further extent of the same later third- to fourth-century inhumation cemetery, bounded to the north by a major boundary ditch parallel to the town defences. The cemetery appears to have been formally planned, and the majority of the burials were supine extended, orientated north-east to south-west (apparently aligned on the boundary ditch) with few grave goods. There were 139 Late Roman burials of which 130 were orientated broadly between east–west and north-east–south-west: the majority were arranged with the skulls lying to the north-east (McConnell and Grassam 2005). It is unclear if burials extended between these and the 1966 burials, an area now covered by school playing fields. No Anglo-Saxon burials were identified in any of the other excavations.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE 1966 EXCAVATIONS (Figs 2–5)

The features investigated in 1966 consisted of 79 burials and a Roman kiln. The excavators were of the view that all the burials were cut into the counterscarp bank associated with the wide defensive ditch of the town, which seems to have been dug in around AD 360 (Corder 1961, 12–13). It was not possible to dig any features underlying the burials, so this is not certain.

The burials were divided by date and rite into three groups: Group 1 consisted of 29 Late Roman inhumations; Group 2 was made up of 35 Anglo-Saxon cremations (although around half of these are only represented by sherds and many are not associated with cremated bone) and Group 3 contained 15 Anglo-Saxon inhumations. It should, however, be noted that the dating of a number of the inhumations, particularly those supposedly belonging to the Roman group, could only be inferred. Thus, while all but one of the Group 2 cremations and most (10 out of 15) of the Group 3 inhumations could definitely be identified as Anglo-Saxon, only five of the 29 Group 1 inhumations were certainly Roman. The remaining undated inhumations were assigned to Groups 1 or 3 on the basis of both their proximity to dated graves and of the position of the body, which tended to be fully extended supine in the Roman area and at least slightly flexed in the Anglo-Saxon area. It is considered with some confidence that the majority of the burials were assigned to the correct group. There are doubts about grave 12 (Roman?) and, to a lesser degree, grave 32 (Anglo-Saxon?).

A Roman pottery kiln, producing colour-coated pottery, was also excavated in 1966. A similar kiln was found in 1958 (Corder 1958, 50–3) and another kiln excavated by ULAS in 2011 next to Great Casterton Primary School (Hunt 2012; Cooper forthcoming).

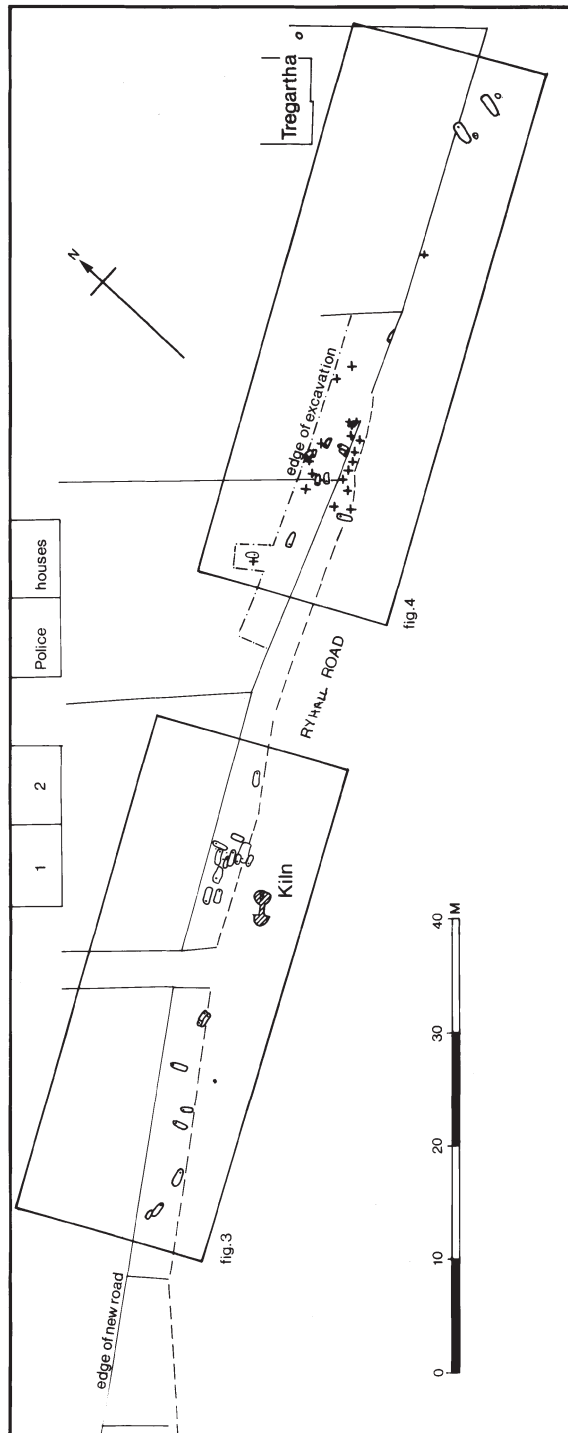


Fig. 2. Overall site plan of 1966 excavation.

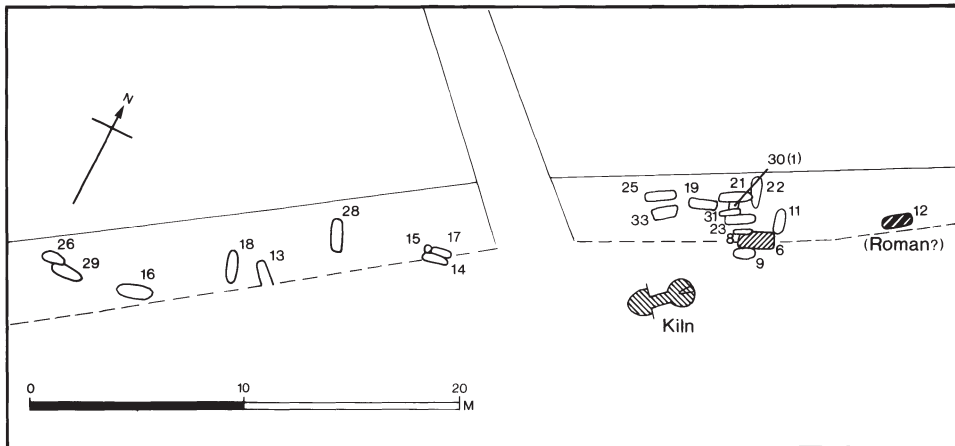


Fig. 3. Area plan of Roman inhumations.

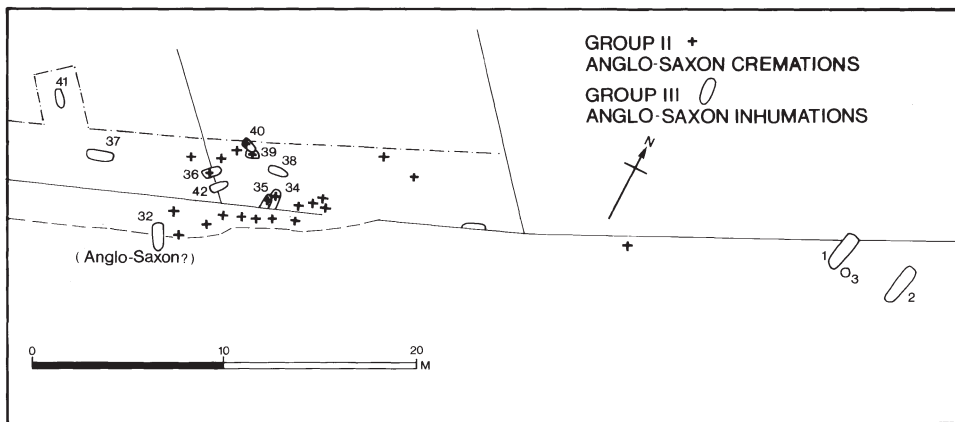


Fig. 4. Area plan of Anglo-Saxon burials, inhumations numbered.

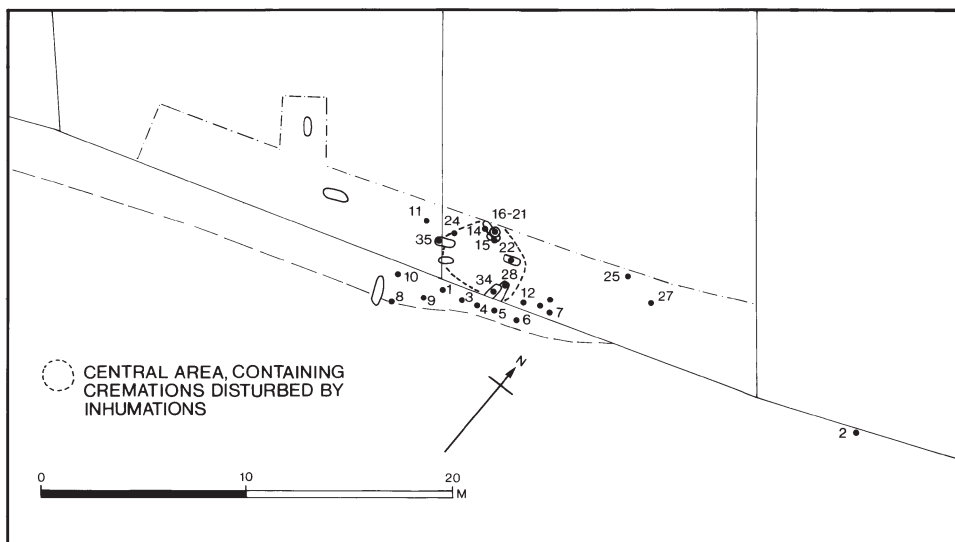


Fig. 5. Area plan of Anglo-Saxon burials, cremations numbered.

## INVENTORY OF BURIALS

## Group 1 – Roman inhumations (Figs 6–9)

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival and position	Finds
6A	–	–	F 45–50	Stone coffin	11	8, 9	Skull, long bones by feet of 6B	
6B	E–W <i>c.</i> 73° (W)	–	M 40	Stone coffin	–	–	Supine but disturbed	Brown colour- coated globular bowl with white fabric between legs
8	SW–NE (SW)	–	–	–	6	–	Only right radius and ulna + disturbed remains above lid of 6	Bronze three- strand bracelet on right wrist
9	E–W <i>c.</i> 68° (W)	–	F 6	–	6	–	Almost complete supine	Iron bracket, 4 nails (residual)
10	–	–	M adult 1.85	–	–	–	Poor Position unknown	None
11	SE–NW <i>c.</i> 336° (SE)	1.40 × 0.49	M 40–50 1.70	–	–	6	Almost complete; extended supine; decapitated skull between tibia	None
12	NE–SW <i>c.</i> 239° (NE)	–	F? 30–40 1.57	–	–	–	Complete, poor condition; extended supine	None
13	NW–SE <i>c.</i> 139° (NW)	1.27 × 0.50	M 35–45 1.75	Partial stone lining	–	–	Good, except lower legs; extended supine	None
14	E–W <i>c.</i> 264° (E)	–	M 40–50 1.75	–	–	15, 17	Complete; extended supine	None

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival and position	Finds
15	–	–	F 12	–	14	17	Skull only	None
16	E–W <i>c.</i> 255° (E)	1.78 × 0.60	F 35–45 1.59	Partial stone lining + basal slabs	–	–	Left side machined; extended supine	None
17	E–W <i>c.</i> 254° (E)	1.10 × 0.45	6–7	–	–	–	Extended supine; decapitated head between tibia	None
18	N–S <i>c.</i> 160° (N)	–	F adult 1.47	–	–	–	Disturbed by machine; extended supine	None
19	SW–NE <i>c.</i> 61° (SW)	–	M 25–30 1.73	Partial stone lining	21	–	Complete; extended supine	None
20A	–	–	M? 12	–	–	–	Incomplete skull perhaps from Grave 31	None
20B	–	–	M old	–	–	–	Disturbed frags	None
21	NE–SW <i>c.</i> 242° (NE)	1.70 × 0.58	M 45–55 1.73	Partial stone lining?	30, 22	19	Feet cut by 19; extended supine	None
22A	N–S <i>c.</i> 161° (N)	1.75 × 0.56	F adult	Wooden coffin: 9 nails (1.54 × 0.36) fairly complete stone slab lining	22B	21	Poor condition; extended supine	Copper alloy bow brooch of Hull's Type 93 dated AD 65–80 (hull 1968) (residual) Blue glass bead (residual)
22B	–	–	M 40–50	–	–	21 &/or 22A	Disturbed, skull frags only	None
23	NE–SW <i>c.</i> 244° (NE)	2.06 × 0.89	M 35–45 1.70	Partial stone lining	30, 31	–	Complete: extended supine	None
24A	–	–	F 12	–	–	–	Disturbed Skull +	None
24B	–	–	M?	–	–	–	Single tibia	None

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival and position	Finds
25	NE-SW c.63° (SW)	1.99 × 0.84	M 35-45 1.63	Partial stone lining	-	-	Undisturbed; extended prone; body bound?	None
26	E-W c.263° (E)	-	M 40-50 1.72	-	-	29?	Only feet undisturbed; many fragments of long bones; probably extended supine	Grey colour- coat beaker with white fabric and wide mouth; globular brown colour-coat bowl in white fabric probably associated
28	NW-SE (NW)	1.49 × 0.50	?F 12	Partial stone lining	-	-	Complete skull crushed; extended supine	Bronze coin - indicated by stain - in mouth: 10 small bronze frags to right of mandible
29	E-W c.265° (E)	2.23 × 0.72	M 35-45	Partial stone lining	?26	-	Fairly good condition; extended supine	2 nails (probably not coffin but a board?)
30	NW-SE 156° (NW)	-	-	-	-	21, 23, 31	Disturbed; extended(?) supine	None
31	NE-SW c.240° (NE)	-	F 14-15	-	30	23	Skull, left arm and left side of chest removed by 23; skull may be 20A; extended supine	None
33	NE-SW c.242° (NE)	-	F 25-30 1.53	Partial stone lining; 2 nails	-	-	Complete; good condition; extended supine	2 iron nails, one with wood traces



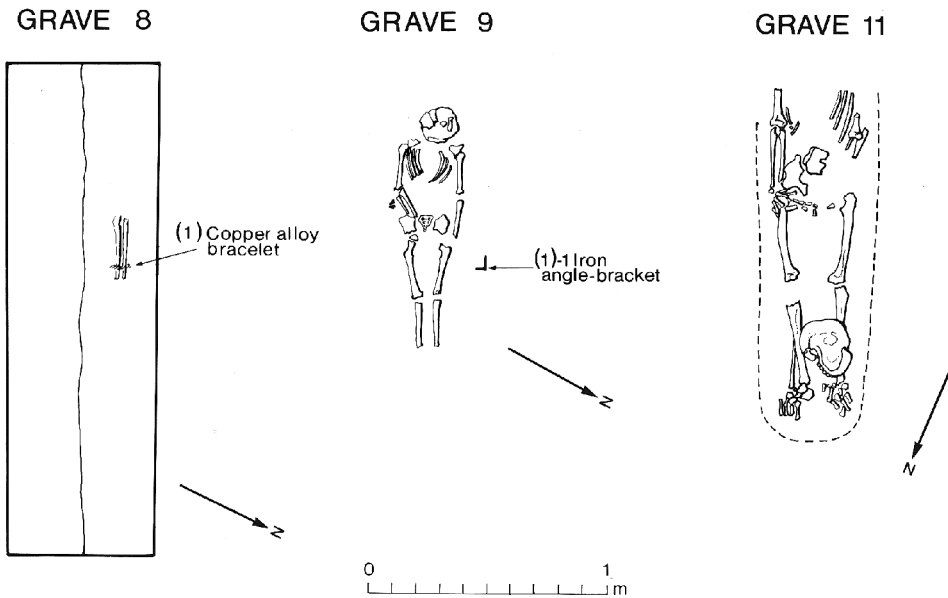
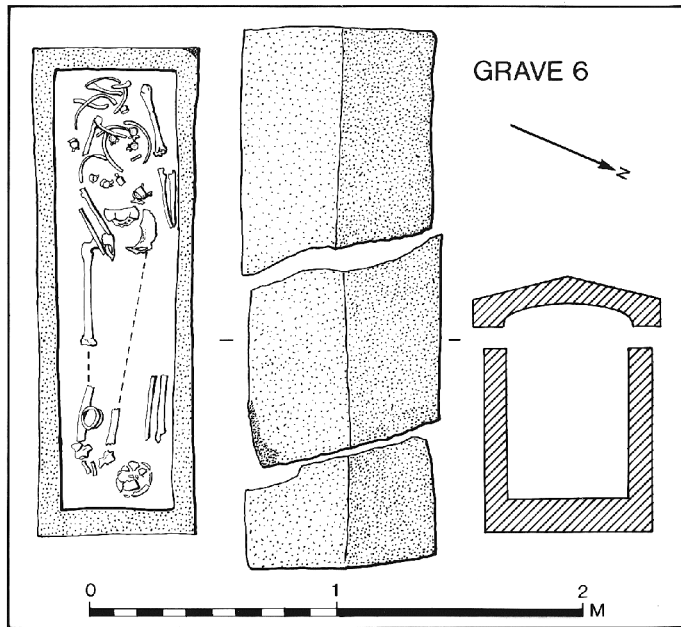


Fig. 6. Grave plans: Roman graves 6, 8, 9 and 11.

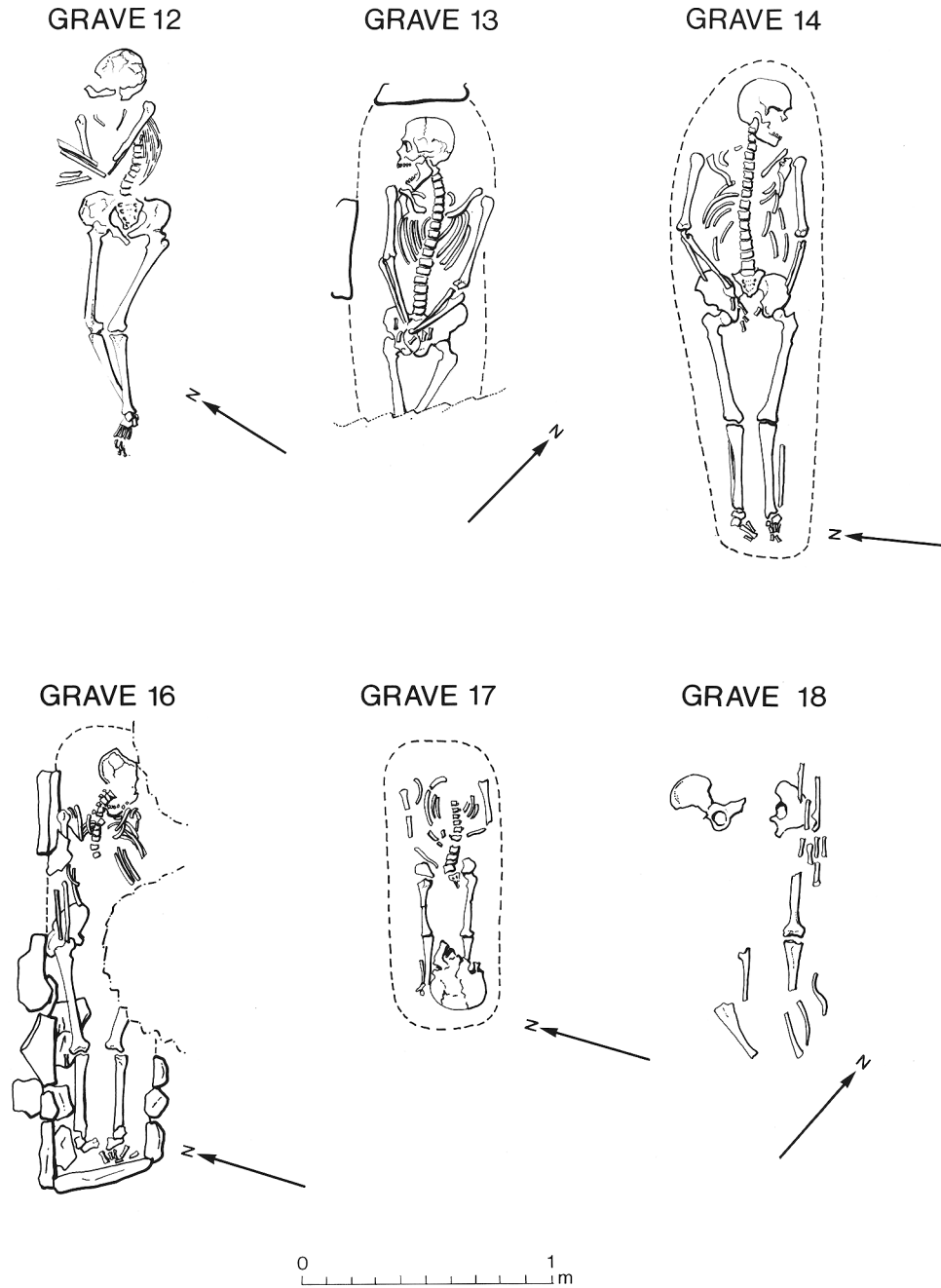


Fig. 7. Grave plans: Roman graves 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18.

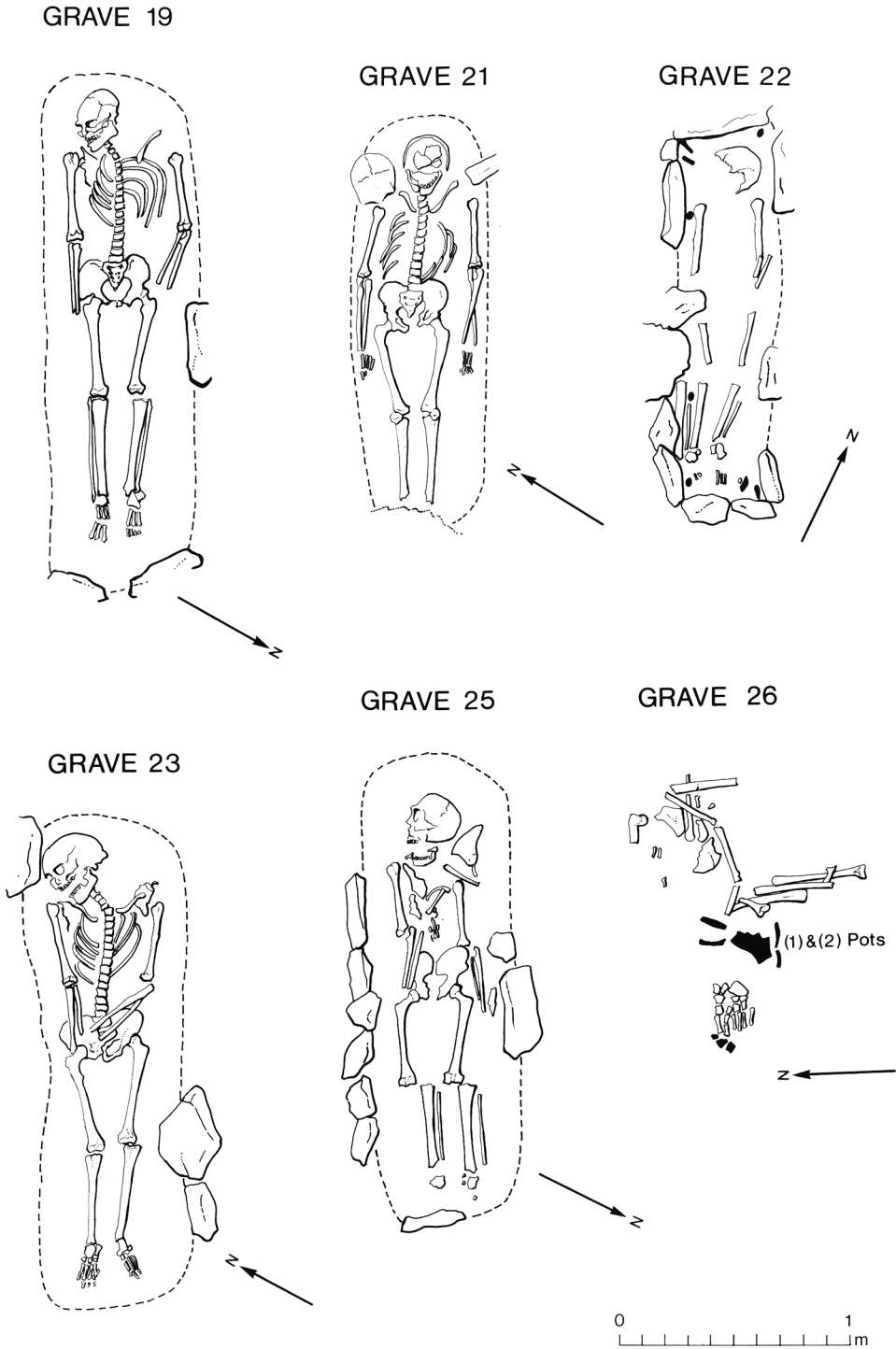


Fig. 8. Grave plans: Roman graves 19, 21, 22, 23, 25 and 26.

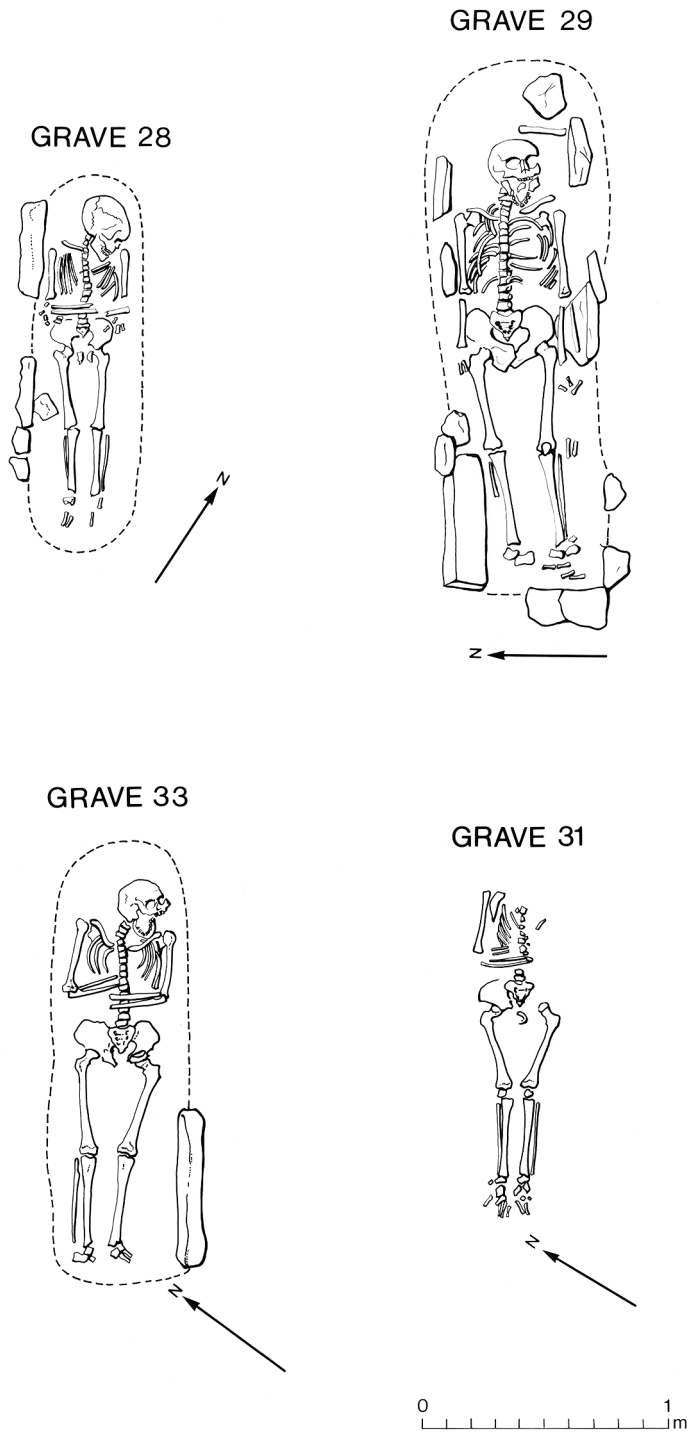


Fig. 9. Grave plans: Roman graves 28, 29, 31 and 33.

### Group 2 – Anglo-Saxon cremations (Figs 12–23)

The numbering given by Grainger and Mahany has been retained.

Myres Corpus numbers are from Myres (1977) and stamp types are from Briscoe (1981).

CREMATION 1: Complete vessel but no recorded human remains

Form: Biconical vessel with slightly flaring rim. The body is decorated with a rather unevenly executed chevron-and-dot design interrupted by a curvilinear groove, defining a series of two crudely incised crosses and a swastika. The neck is decorated with four horizontal grooves over a row of impressed dots. These are separated by a groove from two zones of triple-line chevrons, the upper zone containing dots in the angles of the basal triangles.

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and quartzite grits up to 4mm. Very dark grey throughout and carefully smoothed on both surfaces.

Myres Corpus no. 4004 (fig. 130).

CREMATION 2: Partially disturbed. Around 40 per cent of the urn survives. Contained cremated bones of adolescent female(?)

Form: Shouldered, bossed vessel. The neck is decorated with a row of finger impressed dots defined by two groups of three horizontal grooves. The hollow shoulder bosses are separated from each other by a pendant triangle formed by three finger-impressed dots. Each boss is defined by a grooved arc and covered with 12 vertical grooves which hang from a single horizontal groove.

Fabric/finish: smooth with abundant ill-sorted quartz sand, moderate haematite and sub-rounded flint, and sparse mica. Very dark grey and well-smoothed on both surfaces.

Myres Corpus no. 4005 (fig. 168).

Grave-goods: Ivory purse-ring(?) fragments are burnt and shattered into *c.*40 fragments. The ring was apparently oblate in cross-section. The internal diameter of the ring is estimated at *c.*64mm.

CREMATION 3: Disturbed? No cremated human bone recorded

Form: Flat-angled base of a sub-biconical (?) vessel, with internally made perforation. This vessel could not be located for re-examination.

Grave-goods: 17 burnt bone gaming pieces of plano-convex disc type. Eight of the pieces (1–8) have circular drilled holes in the flat surface.

CREMATION 4: Disturbed? Around 60 per cent of the vessel survives. No cremated human bone recorded.

Form: Sub-biconical vessel, with flaring rim. The neck is decorated with a shallow 'half-swastika' and a vertical groove. The zone of decoration is defined above and below by flat, slashed collars set between incised lines. The shoulder is covered by shallow diagonal grooves set between two fine incised lines forming a chevron design.

Fabric/finish: smooth and identical to that of cremation 2. Very dark grey throughout, with a lightly, evenly burnished exterior surface and a scraped interior.

Myres Corpus no. 4006 (fig. 123).

CREMATION 5: Disturbed – only a loose sherd of urn (around 5 per cent of vessel).  
Form: Biconical vessel.

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and quartzite grits up to 4mm, common sub-rounded flint and mica, and moderate haematite. Exterior is light reddish-brown to grey; interior is grey and both surfaces are smoothed.

CREMATION 6: Disturbed? No cremated human bone recorded.

Form: Biconical urn with flaring rim. A flat slashed collar is defined above and below by a slight ridge and groove. Below a single groove around a shoulder lie broad, shallow grooves, defined by fine incised lines forming uneven pendant triangles from the apex of which rise vertical grooves.

Fabric/finish: smooth and identical to that of cremation 2. Very dark grey throughout. Myres Corpus no. 4007 (fig. 269).

CREMATION 7: Disturbed. No cremated human bone recorded. Around 40 per cent of vessel survives.

Form: Everted rim and shoulder of a crudely formed biconical vessel.

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and quartzite grits, and a moderate quantity of calcareous material, probably limestone. Black throughout, both surfaces wiped smooth.

CREMATION 8: Disturbed. Around 30 per cent of the vessel survives. Cremated bones of adult.

Form: Sub-biconical urn. The surviving shoulder fragment bears a row of F2ai stamps (Briscoe 1981, 14) beneath a horizontal groove. The hollow shoulder bosses are defined by groups of three diagonal grooves, themselves enclosed by a pendant triangle of A1ci stamps.

Fabric/finish: very coarse with abundant ill-sorted quartz sand up to 4mm and moderate mica. Reddish-grey throughout, with a smoothed exterior and weathered interior.

Myres Corpus no. 4009 (fig. 292).

Contains: 2. Cremated sheep/goat bones of an immature individual, including at least two cervical vertebrae, and possibly four other fragments, one of which may have been from the cranium.

3. L-shaped piece of lead-tin alloy, suitable for use as a solder. Association uncertain.

CREMATION 9: Disturbed. Around 10 per cent of the vessel survives. Cremated bone of infant (*c.*18 months).

Form: Body sherd from a biconical urn. The neck is decorated by a row of A7civ stamps (Briscoe 1981, 7) between two horizontal grooves. The hollow, stamped shoulder boss is surrounded by five diagonal grooves, forming an indeterminate pattern. The panels between the bosses are randomly stamped.

Fabric/finish: contains a moderate amount of ill-sorted quartz sand. Dark grey-brown throughout and well-smoothed on both surfaces.

Grave-good: Blue-green glass bead (unburnt?).

CREMATION 10: Disturbed. Around 30 per cent of the vessel survives. Cremated bones of female (?), possibly adolescent or young adult. Recovered as two groups. Base could not be relocated.

Form: Sub-biconical vessel with grooved chevron decoration covering shoulder and body. Neck decorated with an unclassified, zigzag stamp.

Fabric/finish: relatively fine, containing common ill-sorted quartz sand. Dark grey, with a lightly burnished exterior surface and smoothed interior.

Grave-good: Bone double-sided composite comb fragment (unburnt) with evidence of iron rivets.

CREMATION 11: Disturbed. Around 30 per cent of the vessel survives. No cremated human bone recorded.

Form: Biconical bossed urn. The neck is decorated with a row of A5a stamps (Briscoe 1981, 5), defined by at least two horizontal grooves above and three below. Each small, hollow boss is decorated with a narrow standing arc, bisected by a vertical groove.

Fabric/finish: relatively fine, containing common, ill-sorted quartz sand, moderate haematite and unidentified calcareous material, probably limestone. Urn is grey-brown throughout and carefully smoothed on both surfaces.

Myres Corpus no. 4010 (fig. 251).

CREMATION 12: Partially disturbed; 50 per cent of the vessel survives. Cremated human remains of male? Adult.

Form: Sub-biconical urn with flaring rim. The neck is decorated with alternating A4a<sub>ii</sub> and F2a<sub>i</sub> stamps (Briscoe 1981, 5, 14), set between horizontal grooves. The shoulder is decorated with a band of randomly interspersed groups of A4a<sub>ii</sub>, F2a<sub>i</sub>, E2b and A7c<sub>iv</sub> stamps (Briscoe 1981, 5, 14, 12 and 7), above two horizontal grooves below, which runs a triple-groove chevron design.

Fabric/finish: coarse, with abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and quartzite grits up to 3mm, moderate shell and sparse haematite. Very dark grey, lightly burnished exterior, dark reddish-grey, smoothed interior.

Myres Corpus no. 4008 (fig. 292).

Grave-goods: 2. Triangular-backed composite bone comb fragment (unburnt) with iron rivets.

3. Copper-alloy tweezers (unburnt) decorated with ring and dot, and an attached ring.

4. 'Miniature' iron razor.

5. Iron tang? fragment.

6. Sixteen fragments of burnt and badly distorted greenish-blue vessel glass.

7. Plano-convex bone bead fragment (burnt?). The central perforation was drilled from both sides.

CREMATION 13: Disturbed. Base of urn, now unlocated.

CREMATION 14: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40. Around 15 per cent of the vessel survives. May have contained the cremated human remains of a male(?) adult, bone comb fragment (2) and brooch(?) fragment (3) found nearby.

Form: Biconical vessel with a straight shoulder, flaring rim and 'swollen' carination. The neck is decorated with four horizontal grooves and the shoulder with C2avi stamps (Briscoe 1981, 9).

Fabric/finish: contains common ill-sorted quartz sand and calcareous material, and moderate haematite. Very dark reddish-grey throughout. Exterior surfaces lightly and evenly burnished, interior smoothed.

Myres Corpus no. 4011 (fig. 133).

Grave-goods: 2. Double-sided bone comb fragment (unburnt) with a double row of iron rivets, and ring and dot decoration.

3. Gunmetal (copper, tin, lead, zinc alloy) object; brooch(?) fragment distorted by the heat of the cremation.

CREMATION 15: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40. No cremated human bone recorded. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Three sherds from a vessel of indeterminate form grooved and decorated with a C2avi stamp (Briscoe 1981, 9), which is visually identical to that on cremation 14.

Fabric/finish: contains abundant ill-sorted quartz sand with common haematite and moderate calcareous material, probably limestone. Very dark reddish-grey and lightly, evenly burnished on both surfaces.

Grave-goods: 2. Iron tweezers.

CREMATION 16: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? No cremated human bone recorded. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Grooved body sherd.

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant quartz sand and quartzite grits. Reddish grey throughout, exterior smoothed, interior abraded.

CREMATION 17: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? – loose fragment of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Body sherd, grooved and decorated with a possible H1ai stamp (Briscoe 1981, 16).

Fabric/finish: contains abundant, ill-sorted quartz sand. Very dark grey throughout and smoothed on both surfaces.

CREMATION 18: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? – loose fragment of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Body sherd decorated with A4aiii stamp (Briscoe 1981, 20).

Fabric/finish: contains abundant, ill-sorted quartz sand. Very dark grey, smoothed exterior; reddish grey, smoothed interior.

CREMATION 19: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? – loose fragment of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.



Form: Body sherd decorated with A4aiii (Briscoe 1981, 20) stamps, together with a further unclassified stamp form.

Fabric/finish: contains common quartz sand and moderate haematite. Very dark grey, smoothed exterior; reddish-grey, smoothed interior.

CREMATION 20: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? – loose fragments of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Three body sherds, probably from the same vessel.

Fabric/finish: relatively fine, containing common ill-sorted quartz sand. Dark reddish-grey throughout and smoothed on both surfaces.

CREMATION 21: Disturbed by graves 39 and 40? – loose fragment of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Body sherd with A5 stamp.

Fabric is fine, containing common ill-sorted quartz sand and moderate calcareous material, probably limestone. Very dark grey throughout and carefully smoothed on both surfaces.

CREMATION 22: Disturbed by grave 38. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives. Associated with adult cremated human bone.

Form: Shouldered vessel with closely-spaced, narrow, solid vertical bosses, creating a ridged effect.

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and common quartzite grits. Exterior surface dark reddish-grey, interior surface very dark grey. Both surfaces lightly and unevenly burnished.

Grave-good: Double-sided composite bone comb fragment (unburnt), comprising a single undecorated end plate with three loose teeth and pierced by two rivet holes.

CREMATION 23: Disturbed – loose fragment of urn. Around 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Neck and shoulder of an urn with hollow shoulder bosses. The neck is decorated with a row of A5ai stamps between two groups of three horizontal grooves.

Fabric/finish: contains abundant ill-sorted quartz sand. Very dark grey throughout, with burnished exterior and smoothed interior.

CREMATION 24: Disturbed, contained cremated human remains of a male? Adult.

Form: Urn fragments, now unlocated.

Grave-good: 2. Fragments of a triangular-backed composite comb (unburnt), comprising part of one tooth segment pierced by an iron rivet, together with small fragments of both connecting plates.

3. Horse tooth: fragment of the occlusal surface of a maxillary molar (burnt?).

CREMATION 25: Disturbed? Around 80 per cent of the vessel survives. Cremated remains of an adolescent, sex unknown.

Form: Biconical vessel with three internally caused perforations, one in the base, two in the walls of the vessel. A sherd decorated with an A4aiii stamp is recorded as belonging to the same vessel, but this is uncertain.

Fabric/finish: a fine clay matrix containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and common haematite. The vessel is a uniform reddish-grey, carefully smoothed on the outside and scraped smooth on the inside.

Myres Corpus no. 4012 (fig. 31).

Grave-goods: 2. Bone comb fragment (unburnt) of a triangular-backed composite comb, comprising part of one end plate with two rivet holes.

3. Bone bead fragment (burnt). Half the bead survives.

CREMATION 26: Disturbed – loose fragments of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Two sherds, decorated with F2d stamp (Briscoe 1981, 14).

Fabric/finish: fine, containing common quartz sand and moderate sub-rounded flint. Very dark grey, lightly burnished exterior surfaces, light reddish-brown core and abraded interior.

CREMATION 27: Disturbed. Contained cremated human remains of a female(?) adult(?).

Form: base only

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant quartz sand and quartzite grits, as well as common mica. Very dark grey, burnished surfaces, with dark grey core and reddish-brown under-skin.

Grave-goods: 2. Ivory ring fragments (burnt), 13 of the 22 surviving fragments can be pieced together to form a fragment that is sub-rectangular in plan, and plano-convex in both long and cross-sections.

3. Glass fragment (burnt?): near circular-sectioned blue glass rod, tapering from a squared break to a rounded end.

4. Iron plate (burnt?): A now H-shaped iron plate, originally almost rectangular with an apparently intentional but somewhat irregular rectangular slot in one end – perhaps a nail hole. Rather less certain is an irregular hole in the centre of the other end, seemingly caused by the fragmentation of the badly corroded iron. The end with the deliberate (?) slot is slightly bent in long section – this may be due to deformation caused by the heat of the cremation.

CREMATION 28: Disturbed by grave 34. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives. No skeletal remains were recovered.

Form: Seven sherds including one rim sherd.

Fabric/finish: contains abundant quartz sand and moderate haematite. Very dark grey, smoothed exterior surfaces; reddish-grey, smoothed interior.

CREMATION 29: Disturbed – loose sherd of urn. Less than 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Vertical rim sherd.

Fabric/finish: fine, containing common, ill-sorted quartz sand. Dark grey throughout, and smoothed on both surfaces.

CREMATION 30: Disturbed – loose sherds of urn.

Form: Two body sherds from a hollow-bossed vessel.

Fabric/finish: fine, containing common ill-sorted quartz sand with moderate quantities of shell and haematite. Very dark reddish-grey and smoothed on both surfaces.

CREMATION 31: Disturbed – loose sherd of urn. Around 5 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Possible shoulder decorated with an F2a stamp (Briscoe 1981, 14).

Fabric/finish: contains abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and moderate haematite. Very dark grey throughout. Exterior surfaces smoothed, interior abraded.

Size: Sherd 60 × 56mm.

CREMATION 32: Disturbed – loose sherd of urn.

Form: Body sherd with hollow boss and A4a<sub>ii</sub> stamp (Briscoe 1981, 5).

Fabric/finish: contains abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and moderate haematite. Very dark grey, smoothed exterior surface; grey, smoothed interior surface.

CREMATION 33: Disturbed – loose sherds of urn. Around 5–10 per cent of the vessel survives.

Form: Two body sherds decorated with A3a<sub>i</sub> and A4a<sub>i</sub> stamps (Briscoe 1981, 4–5).

Fabric/finish: coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand, common calcareous material and moderate mica. Reddish-brown smoothed exterior surface; very dark grey, smoothed interior surface.

CREMATION 34: Disturbed by grave 35. Cremated human remains (age and sex unknown) were recovered, but there was no sign of an urn.

CREMATION 35: Disturbed by grave 36. Cremated human remains and Anglo-Saxon pottery sherds were recovered from the grave fill.

Form: sherds could not be located.

### Group 3 – Anglo-Saxon inhumations (Figs 10 and 11)

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/breadth (m)	Sex/age/stature (m)	Coffin/structure	Cut Cuts	Survival/position	Finds (numbers as in figures)
1	N-S c.173° (N)	2.04/ >0.77	M 25–35 1.68	Complete – stone lining of vertical slabs. A number of horizontal slabs may be covering	–	Undisturbed except foot end of grave; extended supine	Bone comb by shoulder; iron nails with square heads; both stolen before investigation

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature (m)	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Survival/ position	Finds (numbers as in figures)
2	N-S (N)	–	Sex? Adult	Limestone cist as grave 1	–	–	Skull missing; extended supine 1. Small hemispherical glass cup probably fourth/early fifth century. 2. Iron buckle. 3. Iron knife fragment (straight back) + copper alloy stain on clavicle +10 sherds of ?residual A/S pottery in grave fill + 1 under basal slab
3	–	–	–	–	–	–	Skull + necklace (skull from grave 2?) 10 glass beads. 1, 3, 5. Yellow (or 3?amber) 2, 4. Reddish/brown. 6. Red with yellow/brown trails. 7, 9. Blue with yellow/brown trails. 8. Green with yellow trails. 10. Red with grey spots
32	NW-SE <i>c.</i> 150° (NW)	<i>c.</i> 1.92/ 0.68	M 45–50	–	–	–	Complete but not in good condition; extended supine. Constriction of upper body may suggest coffin 2 iron nails, square-headed, traces of wood on shank of 1-1, grain at 90° to long axis of shank
34	N-S <i>c.</i> 9° (S)	–	F 30–40	Buried in shallow scoop	C28	–	Lower legs destroyed, rest not in good condition; semi-flexed on left side 1. Iron knife lying across left elbow

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature (m)	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival/ position	Finds (numbers as in figures)
35	N-S c.359° (S)	–	Sex? 2–2 1/2	–	C34	–	Undisturbed. Fragments of skull, long bones, ribs, innominates not in good condition; flexed on right side	None
36	NE-SW 34° (SW)	0.99+/ 0.66	M c.40–45	Cut into limestone rubble	C35	–	Undisturbed. Modern wall stopped excavation of foot end; semi- crouched. Upper body supine; Legs flexed to right	1. Iron Spearhead under knees, point downwards. Swanton Type C2. 2. Iron knife. 3. Coin of Tetricus. 4-1. Rectangular Cu alloy sheet to right of left forearm said to be wrist clasp (lost). 4-2. Irregularly shaped ?wrist clasp fragments. XRF analysis suggests tinned bronze. 5. 2 bronze droplets – metal working debris (residual). 6. Speculum (high tin copper alloy) casting waste. Form: Irregular droplet with spicules (residual) + copper alloy stain on rib indicating another object
37	NE-SW c.67° (SW)	1.13/ 0.62	M 16–17 1.73	2 stones at head end of grave	–	–	Complete in fair condition; crouched semi-prone on right side	None

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/breadth (m)	Sex/age/stature (m)	Coffin/structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival/position	Finds (numbers as in figures)
38A	–	–	?F Adult	–	38B	–	Right radius and ulna in grave 38	None
38B	E–W <i>c.</i> 74° (W)	–	Sex? 2–2 1/2	–	C22	–	Disturbed	1. Complete sub-biconical pot to left of skull. Very coarse fabric with abundant ill-sorted quartz sand and quartzite grits up to 4mm and moderate haematite. Lightly burnished exterior and crudely smoothed interior. Myres corpus no. 4014 (Myres 1977, fig. 27)
39	NW–SE <i>c.</i> 123° (NW)	0.90/ 0.45	Sex? 5–5 1/2	Partial stone lining; slabs at head and on right side	C14 C15 C16– 21	40	Cut by and partly overlain by grave 40. Pelvis, legs and left humerus removed. Poor condition; supine	? Complete pottery vessel 39/40. Hemispherical bowl with inturned rim. Fabric has common ill-sorted quartz sand and some calcareous material (?limestone). Reddish/brown and smoothed on both surfaces. Myres corpus no. 4015. Or 40
40	E–W <i>c.</i> 77° (W)	–	Sex? <i>c.</i> 0–4 months	–	–	–	Ribs, Innominates and legs. Poor condition; semi-flexed on right side	? Complete pottery vessel 39/40. Or 39

Grave	Orientation (head)	Length/ breadth (m)	Sex/age/ stature (m)	Coffin/ structure	Cuts	Cut by	Survival/ position	Finds (numbers as in figures)
41	NW-SE <i>c.</i> 316° (SE)	<i>c.</i> 0.81/ 0.43	Sex? <i>c.</i> 2	Partial stone lining – 5 slabs at sides and foot and basal slab under skull	–	–	Skull frags and a few post-cranial remains; supine, possibly slightly turned to left	Complete pottery vessel. Straight sided, slightly beaded rim. Fabric as grave 38. Brown, smoothed on both sides. Myres corpus no. 4013 (fig. 68)
42	NE-SW <i>c.</i> 42° (SW)	–	F? <i>c.</i> 20–25	–	–	–	Undisturbed, but under modern wall, semi-flexed	None
43	E-W (W)	–	F <i>c.</i> 16–18	–	–	–	Disturbed by workmen. Foot cut by fence post. Lumbar vertebrae, right innominate and femur, right hand; extended supine	1-1. Copper alloy wrist clasps of Hines Class B 13b/17b 1-1. Catch plate with a hollow rolled 'tube' decorated with a line of double crescent motifs. On rear edge a series of small v-shaped notches. 1-2. Copper alloy catch plate. As 1-1 except 'tube' is missing. 1-3. Copper alloy hook plate. As 1-1 except for projecting hook. Dated late fifth/ late sixth century. 2. Iron chisel (poss Roman) (residual?) 3. Iron plate fragment (residual?)

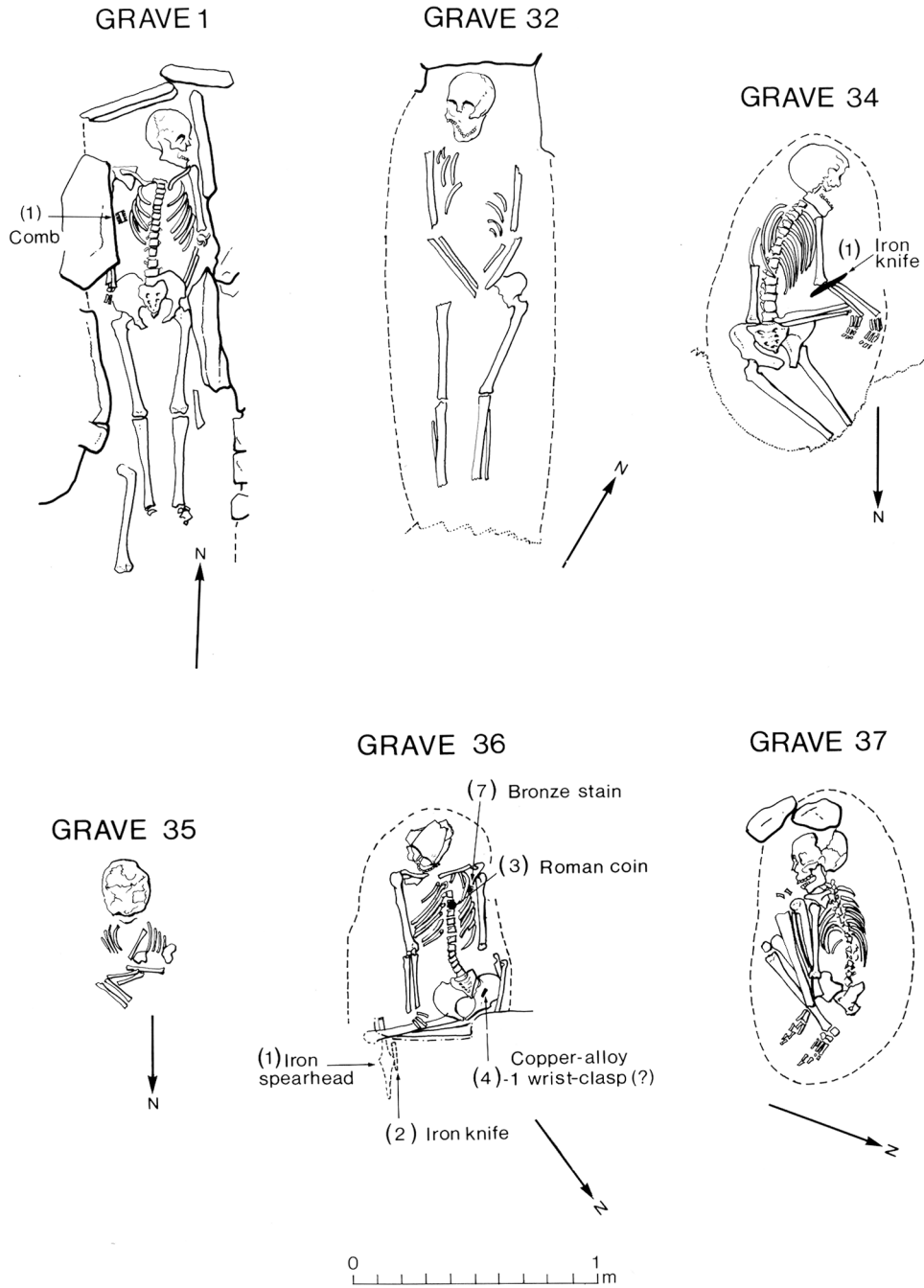


Fig. 10. Grave plans: Anglo-Saxon graves 1, 32, 34, 35, 36 and 37.



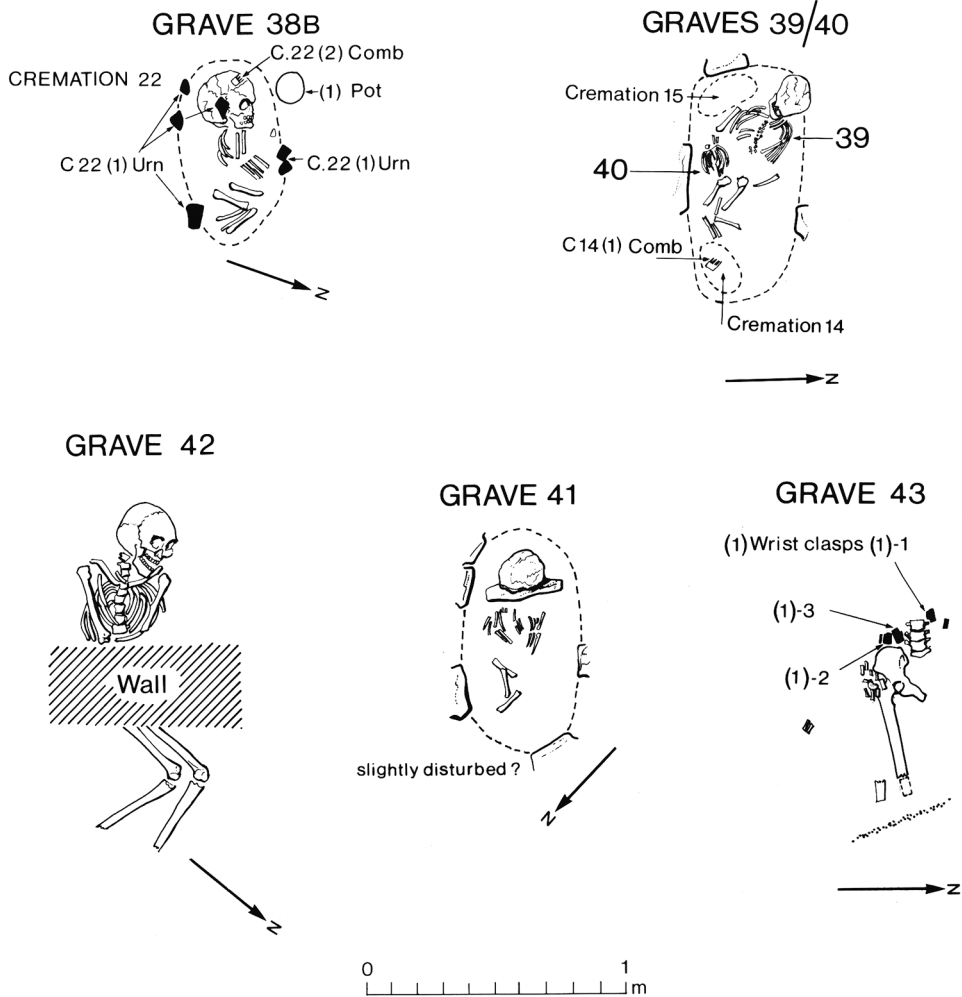


Fig. 11. Grave plans: Anglo-Saxon graves 38B, 39/40, 41, 42 and 43.

## FINDS

### Roman finds (Figs 22 and 23)

Only three Roman graves produced associated dateable finds:

Grave 6B produced a brown colour-coated globular bowl with white fabric of fourth century date (N. Cooper pers. comm.).

Grave 8 produced a three-strand bronze bracelet, which has been flattened in a vice. These were defined as Clarke's type A.2.a in his Lankhill's cemetery report (Clarke 1979, 303). They are not uncommon Late Roman finds (e.g. Butt Road cemetery, Colchester; Crummy 1983, 3).

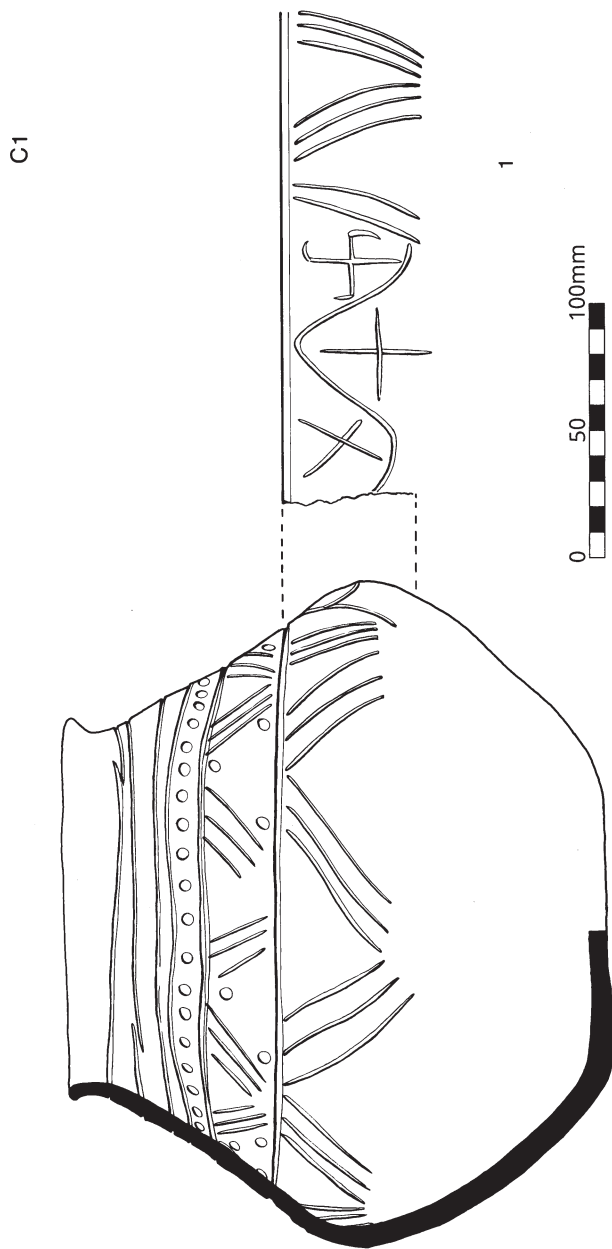


Fig. 12. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C1.

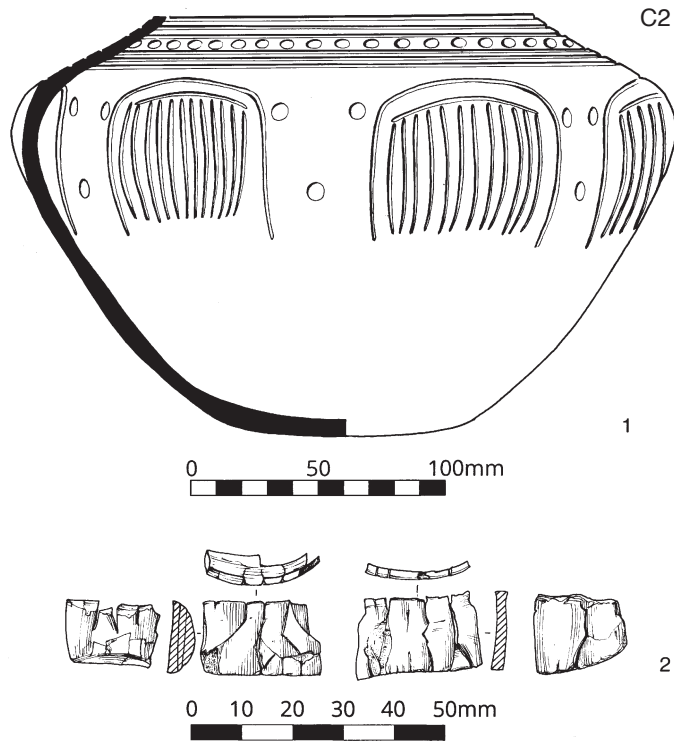


Fig. 13. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C2.

Grave 26 produced two pots, a beaker and a bowl. Both were colour-coated and probably Nene Valley products of fourth-century date, and the tall funnel neck of the beaker suggests a late fourth century date (N. Cooper pers. comm.).

### Anglo-Saxon small finds

Eight of the cremation burials and five of the inhumations have associated grave goods in addition to pottery vessels, which will be dealt with in the next section. Three unstratified finds (a brooch and two spearheads) were probably from disturbed inhumations.

#### COPPER ALLOY WRIST CLASPS

A set of wrist clasps, comprising one hook and two eyes, was found in Grave 43, while fragments of bronze sheet and a lost rectangular bronze sheet from Grave 36 were also described as wrist clasps.

The Grave 43 wrist clasps (Fig. 23) consist of rectangular plates with applied tubes, and are defined by Hines as Form B.13.b or B.17.b (Hines 1984, 81). Examples have been found at, for example, Morningthorpe, Norfolk, Graves 30 and 208, Holdenby, Northants, Grave 8, Sleaford Graves 97, 123 and 151, and Spong Hill Graves 46 and 48. Hines believes it possible that both Forms B.13.b and B.17 had appeared by the end of the fifth century and were certainly in use by the

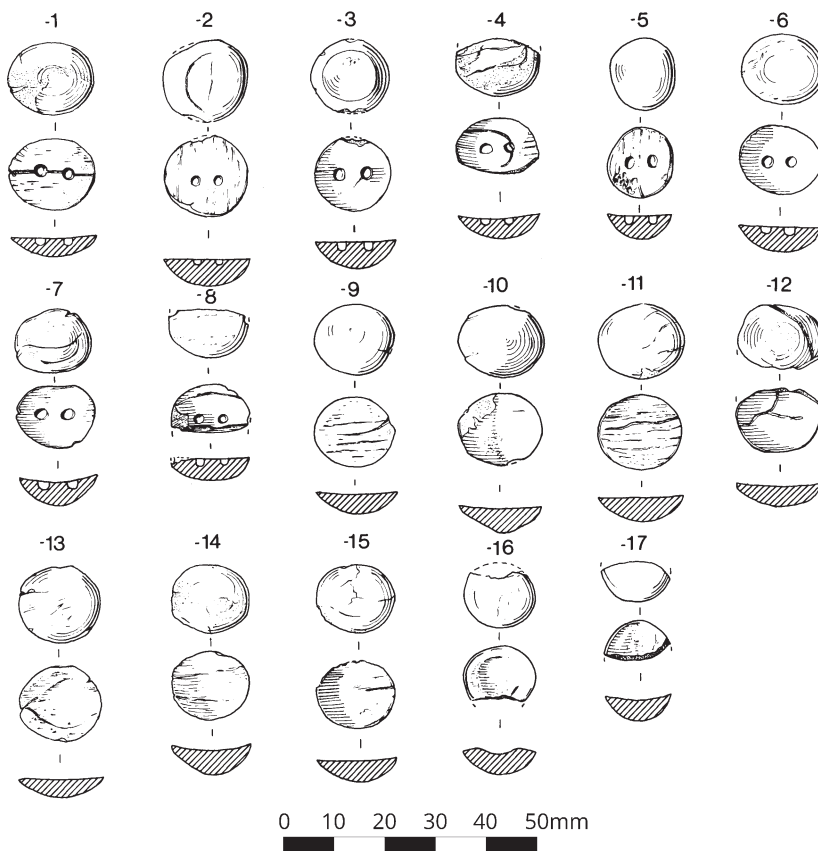
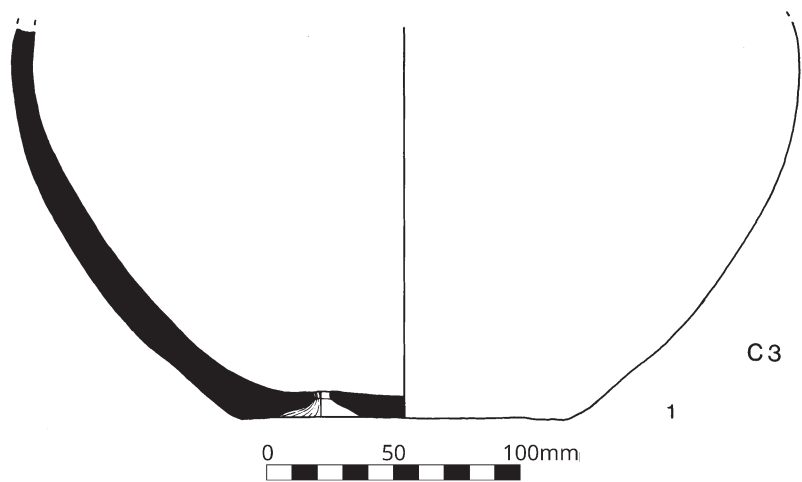


Fig. 14. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C3.

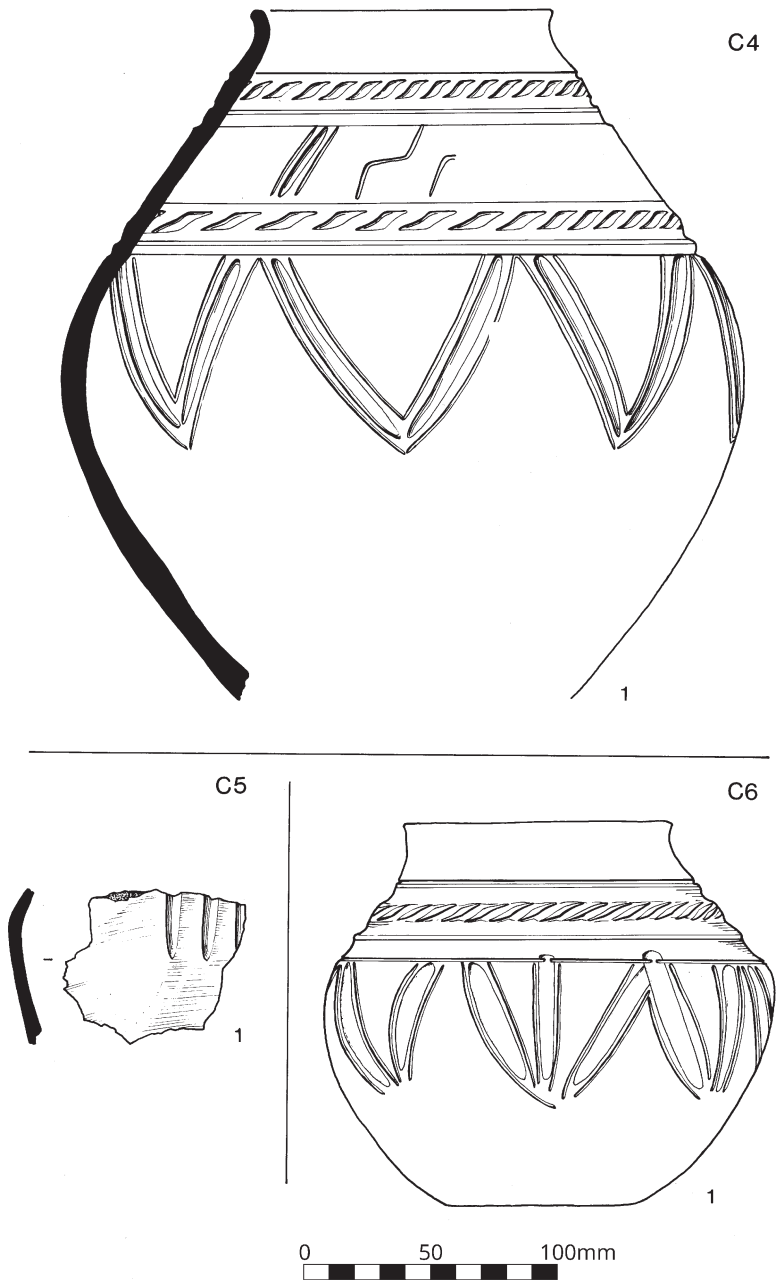


Fig. 15. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C4, C5 and C6.

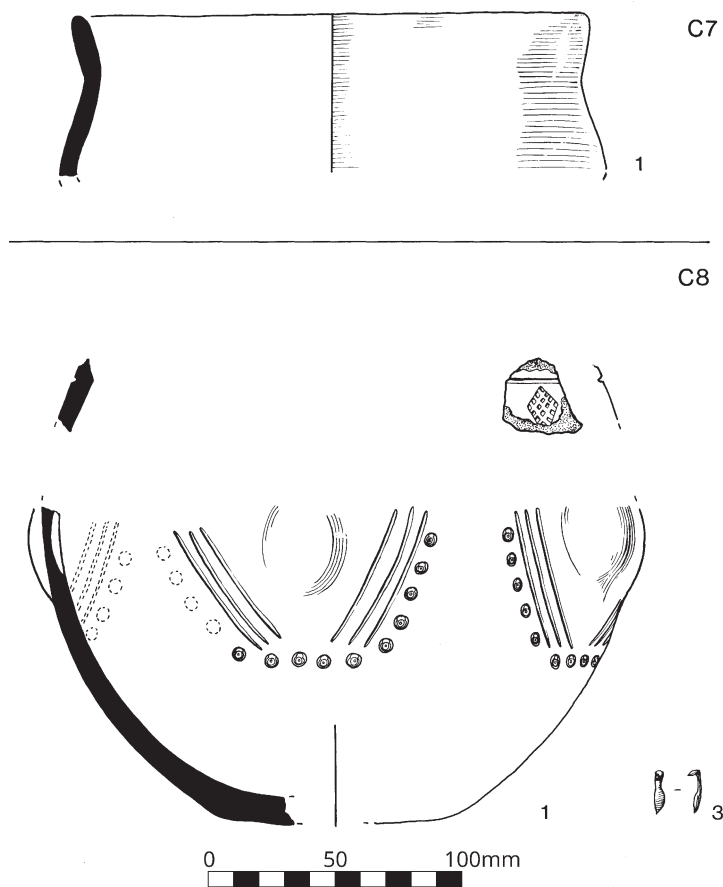


Fig. 16. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C7 and C8.

first quarter of the sixth century (op. cit. 107). Form B.13.b is thought to be entirely contemporary with form B.17 (op. cit. 80–1), which appears to have remained in use until wrist-clasps went out of fashion around 560–70 (op. cit., 74, fig. 19).

Plates described as wrist-clasps were encountered in Grave 36. Unfortunately, the apparently diagnostic plate (4)-1 is no longer extant, while the other, (4)-2, survives only as a number of tiny tinned copper-alloy fragments. It must be considered doubtful that these plates are wrist-clasps (or were not *in situ*), as the osteological and grave good evidence indicate that Grave 36 contained a male, and Hines was unable to find a single certain male burial in England that was associated with this object type (Hines 1984, 108).

#### TOILET SETS AND COMBS

A number of cremations contain 'toilet' accessories and/or combs, all unburnt and added after cremation. The toilet set from C12 (Fig. 18) consisted of at least two items, copper-alloy tweezers (3) (closely paralleled by Spong Hill 1783) and a miniature iron razor, and possibly a third represented by an iron tang fragment (7),

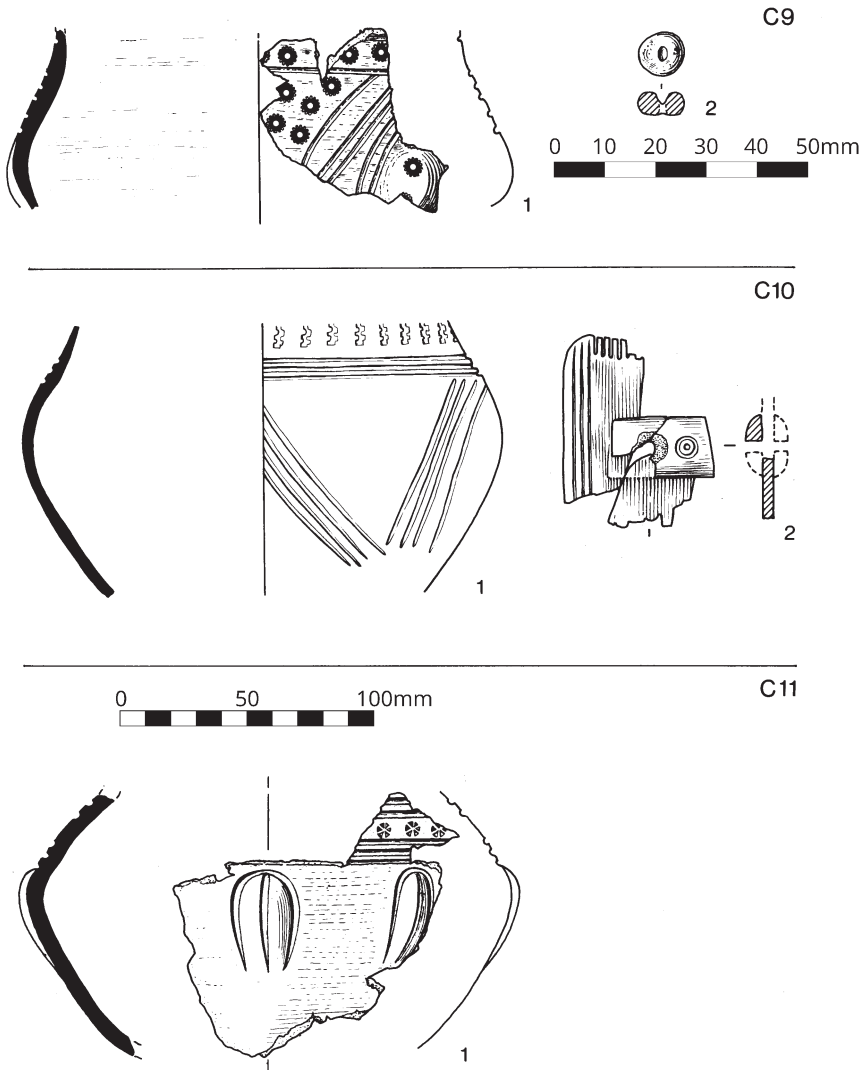


Fig. 17. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C9, C10 and C11.

as well as a comb. The single toilet set object from C15 was a pair of small iron tweezers (Fig. 19).

Combs were recorded in five other cremations (C10, 14, 22, 24 and 25) and a comb is reported from Grave 1, but was, reportedly, stolen. In general, these are composite items with a number of tooth segments, sandwiched by connecting plates and held together by iron rivets.

The combs from C12 (Fig. 18) and C24 (Fig. 22) clearly belong to the elongated form as seen; for example, in the comb from cremation 1778 at Spong Hill, Norfolk (Hills and Penn 1981, fig. 171). The C25 (Fig. 20) comb is very fragmentary, but has a rather steeper back-slope, more reminiscent of the equilateral form; it would

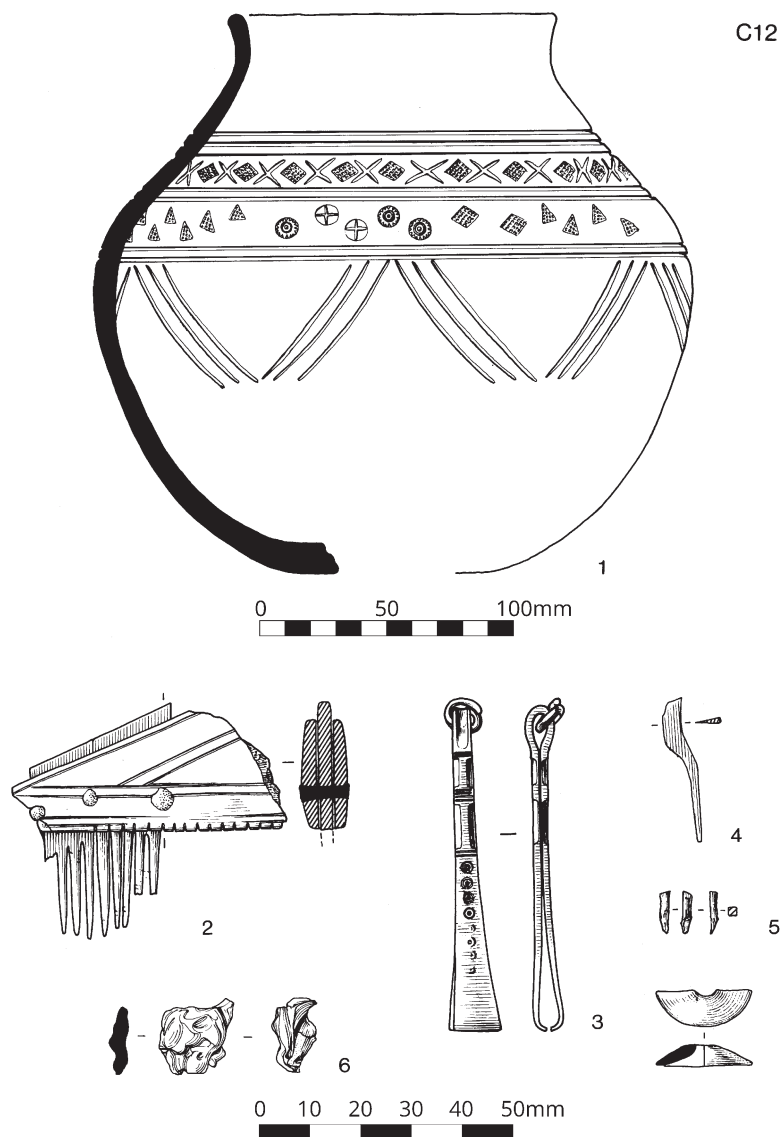


Fig. 18. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C12.

have looked much like the comb from Spong Hill cremation 2161 (*op. cit.*, fig. 173). None of the triangular-backed combs from Great Casterton are closely datable, but the type at Spong Hill is seen as early but continuing into the sixth-century (Riddler and Trazaska-Nartowski 2013, 115–18).

The combs from C10 (Fig. 17) and 22 (Fig. 20) are of double-sided composite type, with elongated profiles and plain rectangular ends (MacGregor 1985, 92–4). The comb recovered from C14 (Fig. 18) is rather more interesting. It is also a double-sided composite comb, but has a double row of iron rivets and shaped,



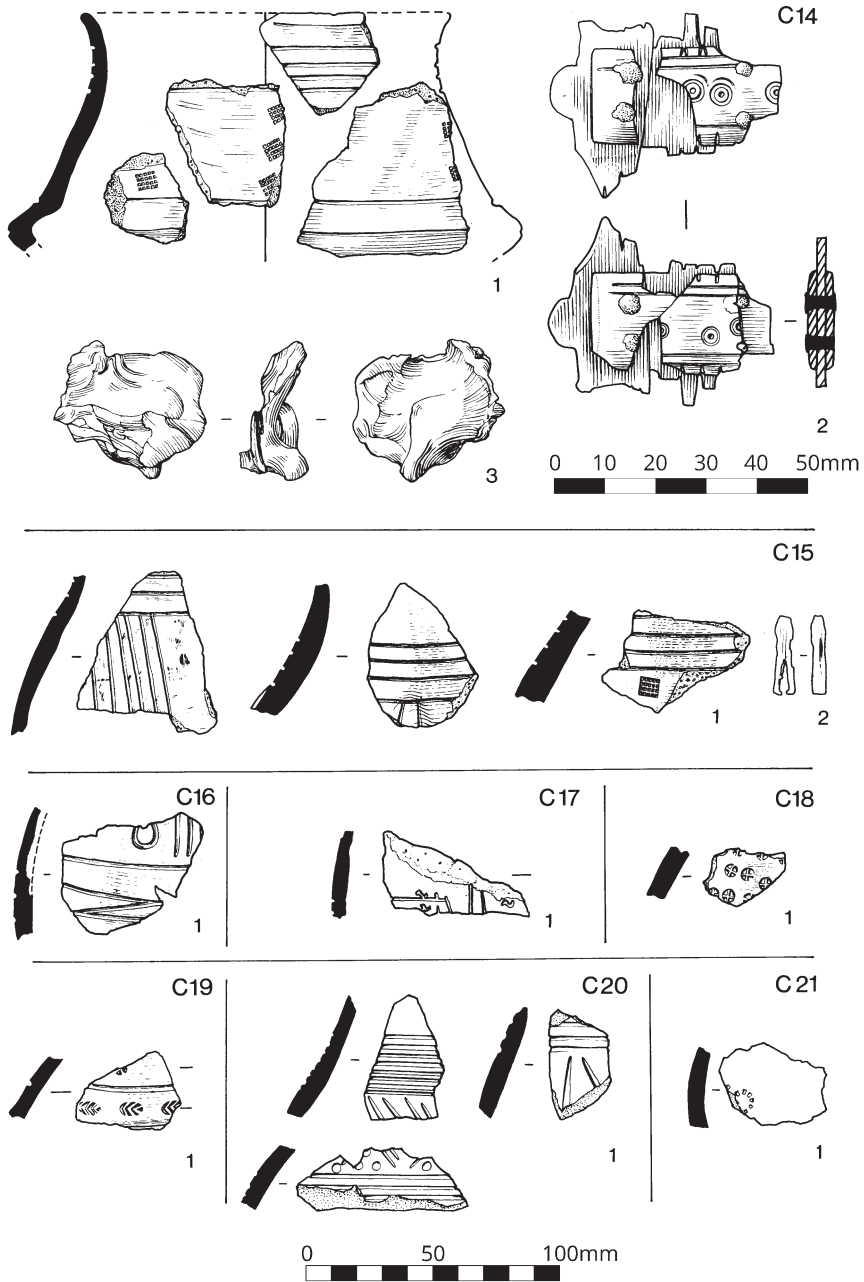


Fig. 19. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C14–C21.

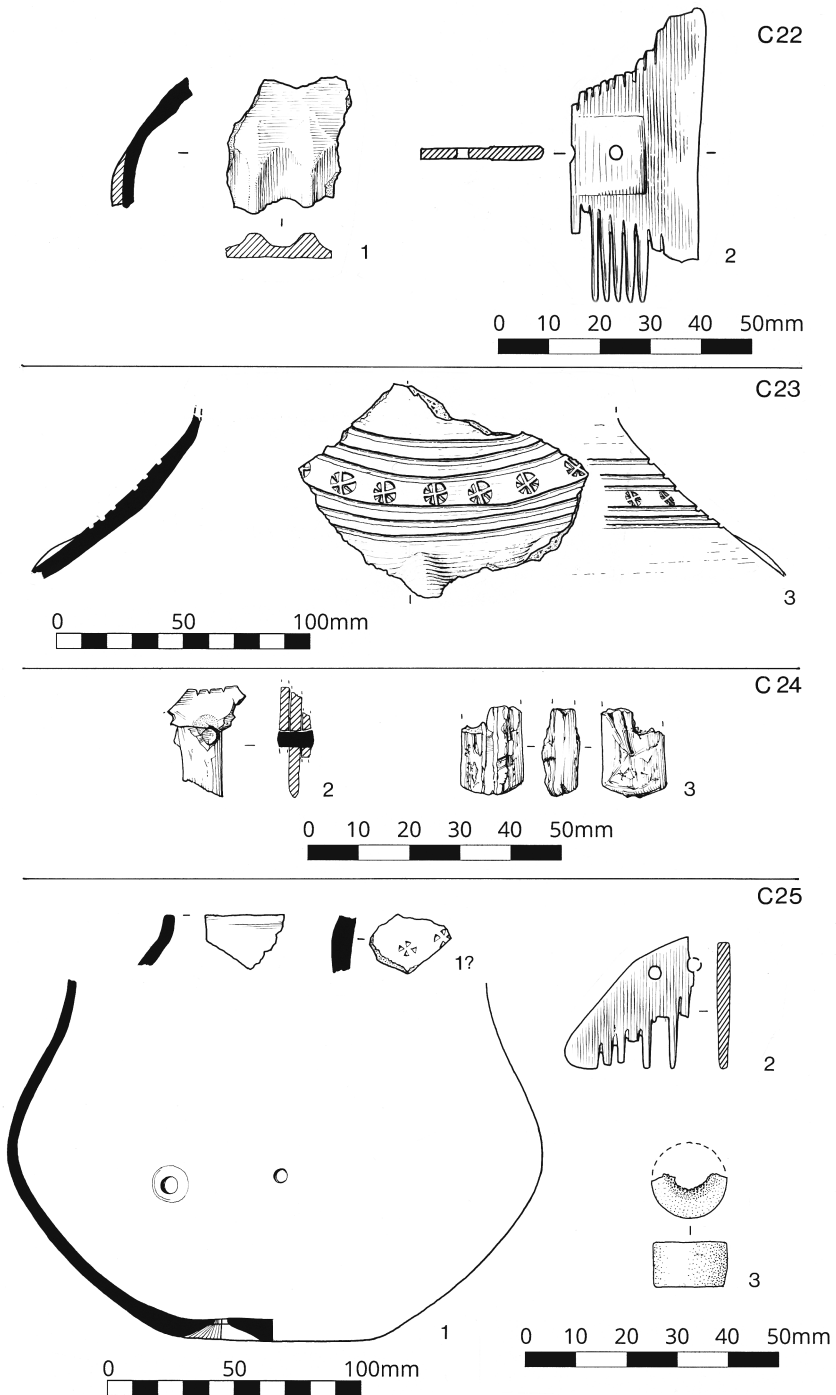


Fig. 20. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C22-C25.

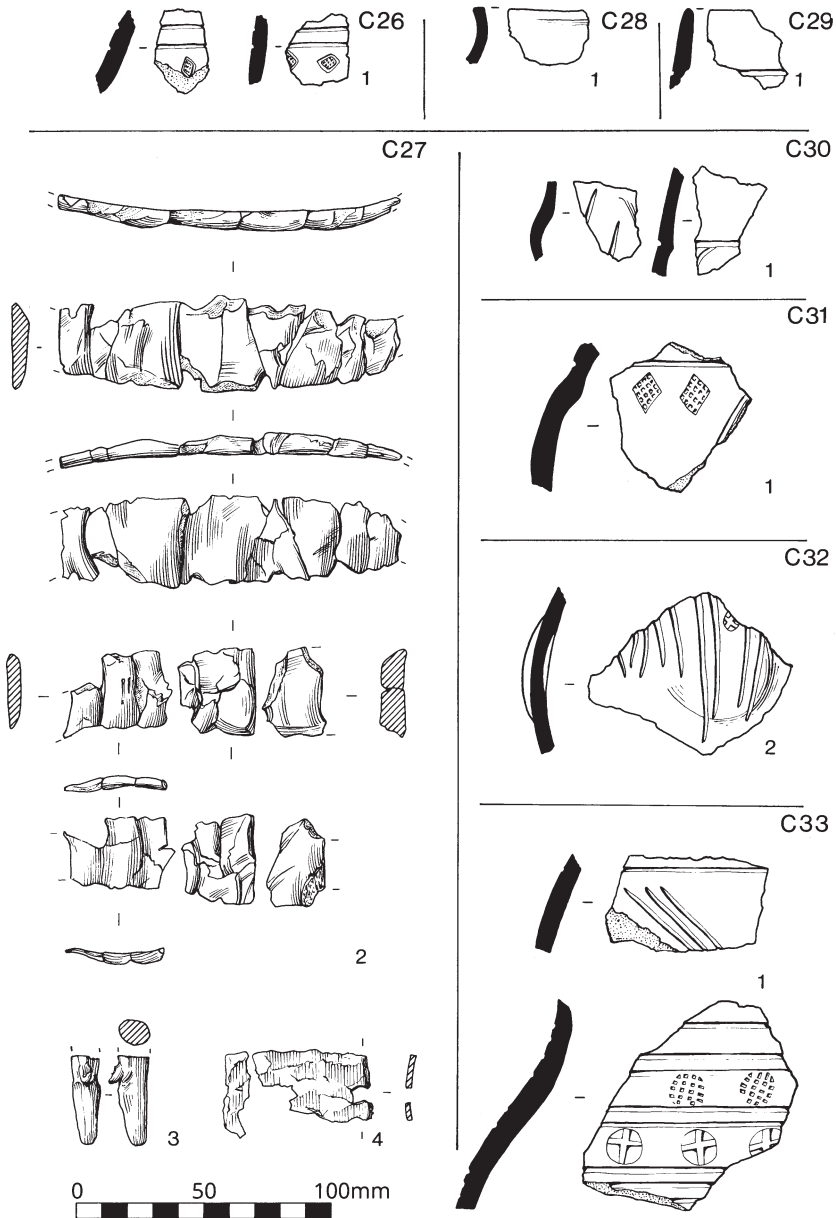


Fig. 21. Anglo-Saxon cremations: C26-C33.

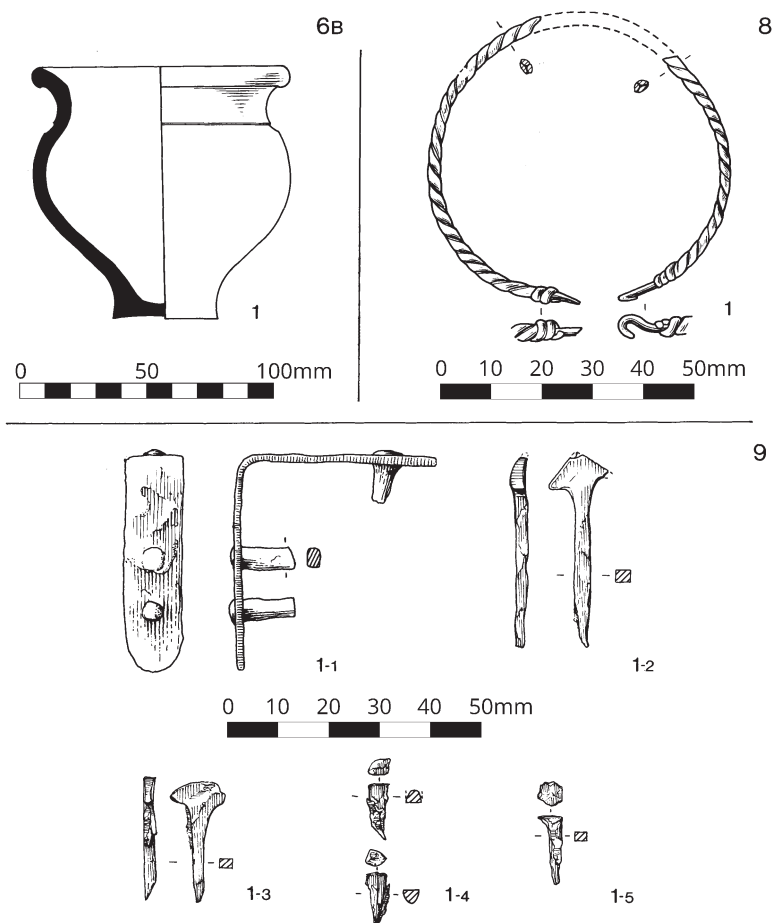


Fig. 22. Roman finds: Graves 6B, 8 and 9.

possibly double concave (angled), ends. The connecting plate is decorated with ring and dot, and rectangular in section.

#### IRON SPEARHEADS (Figs 24 and 27)

The only stratified spearhead came from Grave 36 (1) and is of Swanton Type C2. The typology and dating has been called into question, but Swanton believed that the C2 form continues in use from the time of the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements through to at least the end of the seventh century (Swanton 1973, 51–3). Two other spearheads were also recovered as unstratified finds and were of Swanton Type E2 (Swanton 1973, 81–3) with an angular blade, thought to be sixth century (U10), and of Swanton Type C2 or C3 (Swanton 1973, 50–8) with a leaf-shaped blade (U11). This last example was found in road widening in 1968 (OAKRM:1968.141).

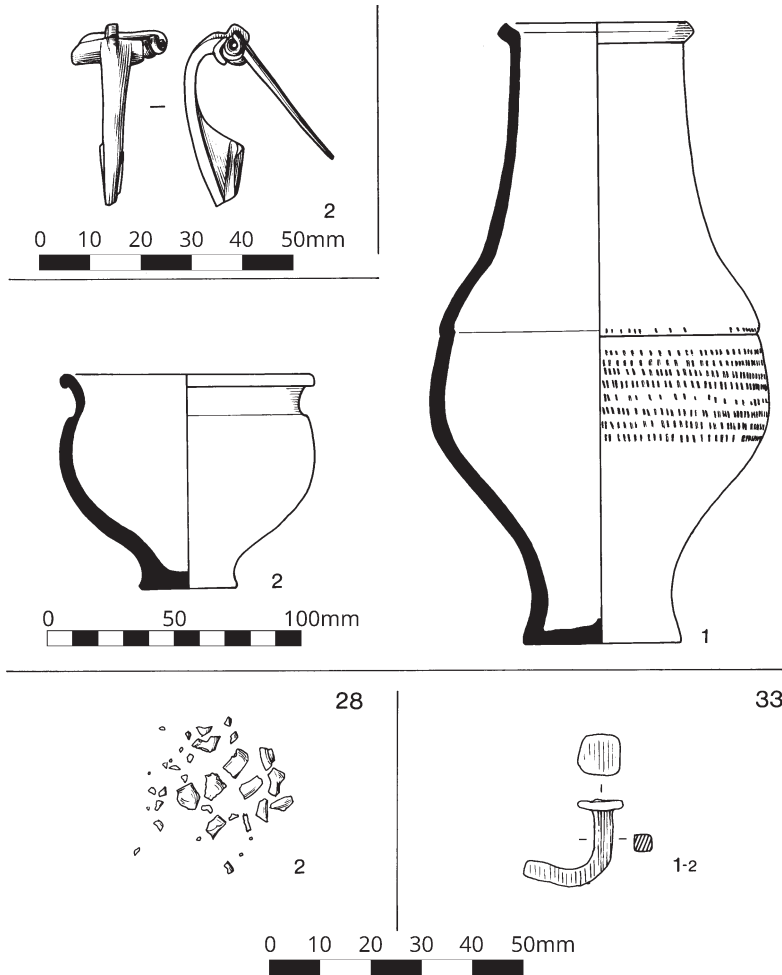


Fig. 23. Roman finds: Graves 22, 26, 28 and 33.

GLASS (John Shepherd)

The two cremations (C12 and C27) both contained glass fragments. The fire-damaged fragments from C12 (5) appeared possibly to be early Roman in date and may have been residual, while the fragment from C27 (3) was unidentifiable.

The small hemispherical cup from Grave 2 (Fig. 24) belongs to Isings Form 96 (Isings 1957, 113–14), with two further examples – one from Tongres, the other unpublished – being noted by Vanderhoeven (1958, 20, Nos 14 and 15). Isings dates this form to the late third and, especially, the fourth centuries, while Vanderhoeven would put the cups he publishes into the second half of the fourth century or the first quarter of the fifth century.

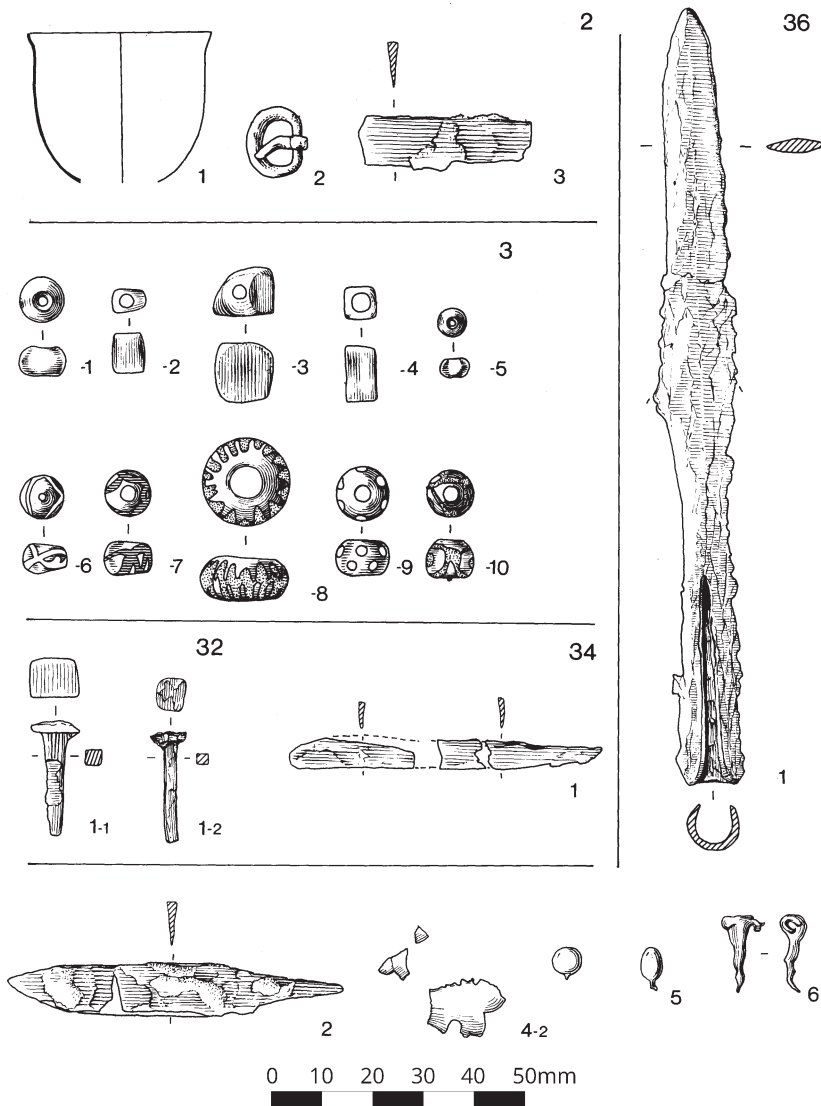


Fig. 24. Anglo-Saxon finds: Graves 2, 3, 32, 34 and 36.

GAMING PIECES

The 17 gaming pieces from C3 (Fig. 14) are all of the plano-convex form. Green comments that plano-convex counters are more commonly found in cremations than in inhumations, and that the relationship between this form of gaming piece and other types is unclear (Myres and Green 1973, 98-9); 347 antler gaming pieces of the same type were recovered from Spong Hill. Eight of the Great Casterton pieces had two base marks. While some have seen these as hidden symbols forming part of a game, it is now thought most likely that they are lathe marks caused in the

production process (Riddler and Trazaska-Nartowski 2013, 151). It is believed that the pieces were used to play *taeġl*, a battle game where a king is defended against an attacking force of twice their number. Clearly a complete set is not represented here.

#### BEADS

Grave 3 produced ten beads, five of plain coloured glass, and five decorated with trails or dots (Fig. 22). C9 produced an unburnt blue glass bead, the commonest type of Anglo-Saxon bead.

Bone/antler beads were found in C12, which was plano-convex, and C25, which was cylindrical. The former is defined as Type A2 at Spong Hill and the latter as Type C. Bone and antler beads are relatively scarce and dating is imprecise (Riddler and Trazaska-Nartowski 2013, 94–8).

#### IVORY BAG RINGS

Two cremations (C2 and C27) produce fragments of ivory bag rings (Figs 13 and 21). These are of elephant ivory, probably with an African origin. They do not survive well in cremations, splitting longitudinally into thin flakes which are curved in long section and retain a hint of the original cross-section. These are found widely in both inhumations (e.g. the Glen Parva Lady) and cremations, with 208 examples from Spong Hill urns (Riddler and Trazaska-Nartowski 2013, 103–4). They are now widely accepted as rings for the tops of bags suspended from the waist.

#### BROOCHES

A fused mass, shown to be gunmetal by XRF analysis from C14, was almost certainly a brooch (Fig. 19). The only other brooch (Fig. 26) was unstratified (U9), but probably represents a disturbed inhumation. It is a partially tinned copper alloy cruciform brooch with an enamel inset made of gunmetal (i.e. copper alloy with significant amounts of tin and zinc) (XRF analysis). The white metal seen on the head knob projection is tinning, apparently a very thin layer applied when molten. It is of Åberg/Leeds group IVb (Leeds 1945, 69–72), probably of late sixth century date. It was very worn when buried, and a rivet mark on one of the transverse ridges indicates that the horse-head terminal had broken off and then been crudely re-attached prior to deposition. The terminal has subsequently become detached a second time and lost, but it is impossible to determine whether this occurred before or after burial.

## THE ANGLO-SAXON POTTERY – Helena Hamerow

### Introduction

The Anglo-Saxon pottery assemblage from Great Casterton consists of 18 complete, or near-complete vessels, three bases, and a number of unstratified sherds that represent up to 15 individual vessels.

Three pots (Fig. 25) were included as accessory vessels in inhumations (graves 38, 39/40 and 41) and are small, plain forms, sometimes regarded as ‘domestic’, although no clear distinction between settlement and cemetery ceramics can be drawn.

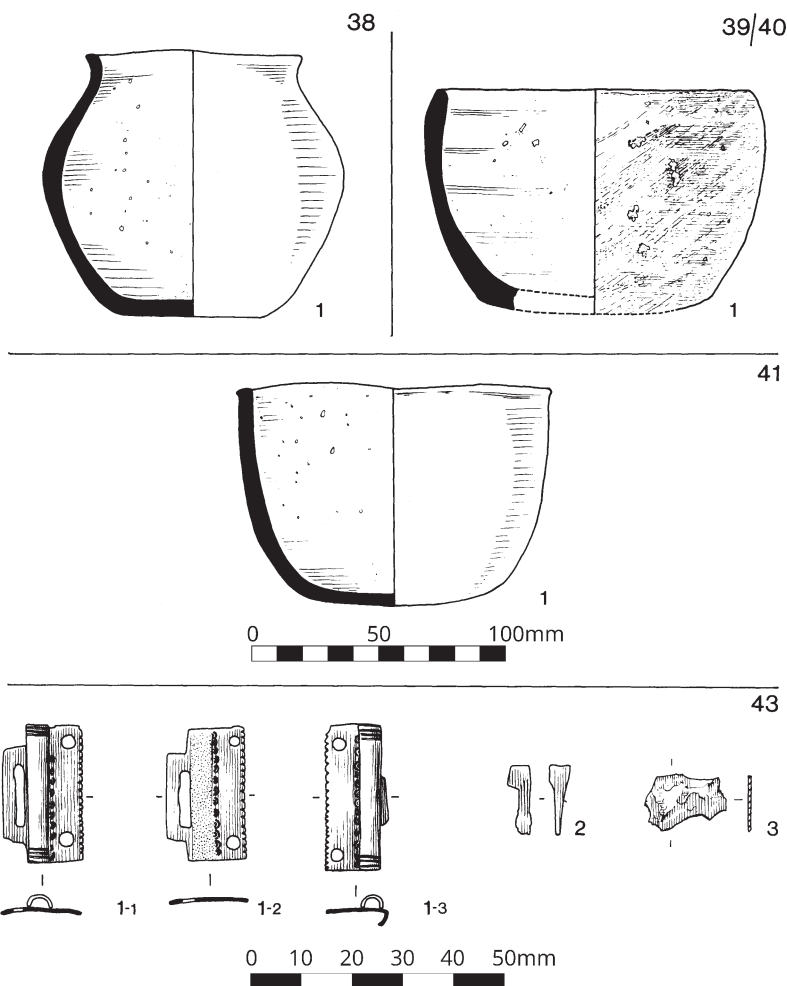


Fig. 25. Anglo-Saxon finds: Graves 38, 39/40, 41 and 43.

Of the relatively complete cremation urns, three are undecorated, seven are stamped, and at least six of the stamped vessels are also bossed. Of the estimated 15 fragmentary vessels, all are decorated, ten are stamped, and three are bossed. This high proportion of decorated pottery, which displays both considerable variety in form and type of decoration, as well as certain internal consistencies, provides an opportunity to examine both internal patterning and regional affinities. It should be stressed, however, that this is a small and not necessarily representative sample of urns from a cemetery whose total population remains unknown.

### The Forms

Of the 15 cremation urns to which a form can be assigned, 11 (nos 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 259) are characterised by a biconical or sub-biconical profile; that is,



U9

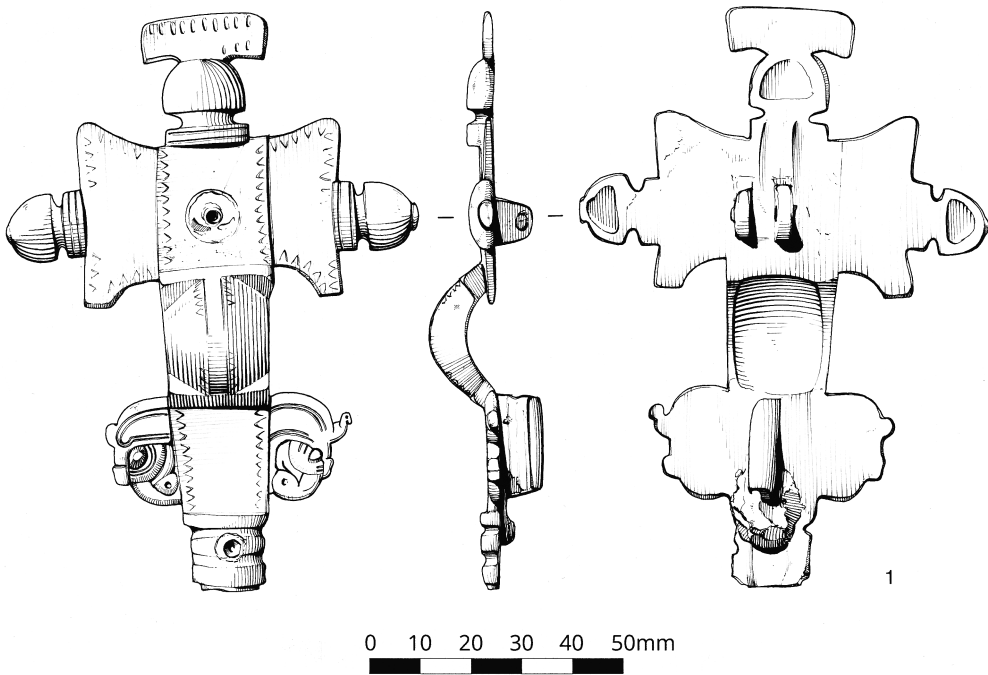


Fig. 26. Anglo-Saxon finds: U9.

with the carination falling near the centre. Within this broad, essentially updatable category, several distinctive sub-groups can be distinguished. Urn 14 belongs to a relatively small group of urns with what J. N. L. Myres termed a 'swollen carination', whose distribution seems to focus upon Middle and East Anglia (Myres 1977, fig. 133). Its biconical form is accentuated by a conical neck, setting it apart from the other Great Casterton biconicals, which are all to some degree hollow-necked. Urns 9 and 11 are both bossed biconical pots, although Urn 9 falls within the range of wide-mouthed bowls. Urn 4 is a particularly tall, sub-biconical form, with an ill-defined neck and slightly flaring rim.

Four examples of shouldered vessels – Urns 2, 18, 22 and 23 – are represented. Urn 2 may represent a fragment of a vertically ribbed vessel, related to the group of 'fluted' pots depicted in fig. 87 of Myres' *Corpus*. Of the 15 vessels of this and related types illustrated, five come from Rutland itself, one from Leicestershire, and a further two from Northamptonshire. Several regional series of these fluted vessels can be distinguished, one focusing on the Cambridge area, another upon Surrey, a third on the Upper Thames, and the fourth on the Lower Thames and Kent. These range broadly in date from the small fifth-century vessel from Canterbury, to the seventh-century vessel found at Drury Lane. On the Continent this form occurs primarily in Holland, again from the fifth to seventh centuries (Myres 1937: 434–6). Urn 2 is of the distinctive 'hump shouldered' form, whose wide shoulder is further

accentuated by hollow bosses. For this form, Myres suggests a late fifth to early sixth century date, although the only well-dated English example is an urn from Lackford, which contained an Åberg Group II cruciform brooch dated to *c.*AD 500 (Lethbridge 1951, fig. 14).

### Decoration

The division of decoration into linear, plastic and stamped, arranged in horizontal, enclosed-zone, curvilinear schemes and so on, is of course artificial, and to base an analysis solely on these divisions would be misleading. They are essential for establishing a classification, but it is the combination of form with types and schemes of decoration that gives each vessel the character by which it can be compared and contrasted with others. As the Great Casterton urns lack directly associated, closely datable finds, there is no intrinsic reason why all the designs represented could not have been contemporary. Nevertheless, it is clear that certain similarities in execution and design merit closer examination, and using Myres' classification as a broad framework for comparison and discussion, certain patterns begin to emerge.

Urn 1 is decorated primarily with grooves and impressed dots, arranged in two horizontal zones of chevron-and-dot design. A similar arrangement of a single band of triple-line chevrons, with three dots arranged in a triangle, appear on an urn from Spong Hill which contained a fifth-century applied brooch (Hills and Penn 1981, fig. 47.2143A). Eagles notes that there are no closely datable English examples of two horizontal zones of chevron-and-dot design, but cites an urn from Hammoor II in eastern Holstein containing a cruciform brooch dated to the late fifth or early sixth centuries (Eagles 1979, 95–6, fig. 71.413). The chevron-and-dot motif, which also appears on the fragmentary Urn 20, has roots in the late fourth century on the island of Funen (according to Albrechtsen's revised dating for pottery from his phase III), the Elbe-Weser triangle and western Schleswig, although it enjoyed a broad, long-lived popularity; Urn 1 harks back to these early patterns (Myres 1969, 80–1 and *n.*; 1977, 24–5, 121 and *n.*). The lower band of triple-line chevrons is interrupted by a curvilinear groove, winding its way around a series of two crosses and a swastika. As Brown has noted (Brown 1981, 229), the distribution of the freehand swastika and, indeed, the swastika motif generally focuses upon Lindsey and East Anglia, and appears most commonly in the fifth century (Myres 1977, 66). Like Urn 1, Urn 2 is decorated with a band of impressed dots around the neck, and triangles of impressed dots appear in the spaces between the bosses. While both vessels thus make use of rather similar schemes, the design on Urn 2 is more carefully executed than the rather haphazard rendering on Urn 1.

Urn 4 and 6 share a number of features: both have flat, slashed collars, and a linear chevron design emphasised by broad, shallow grooves covering the shoulders. The overall design, however, is largely achieved through the use of narrow incised lines that add emphasis to the collars, and the 'line-and-groove' technique which defines the chevrons. Aside from the somewhat unusual 'half-swastika' or 'wurm' motif making its appearance on the neck of Urn 4, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about the decoration of these vessels, and yet their similarity is striking – perhaps enough so as to suggest that they are the products of the same hand.

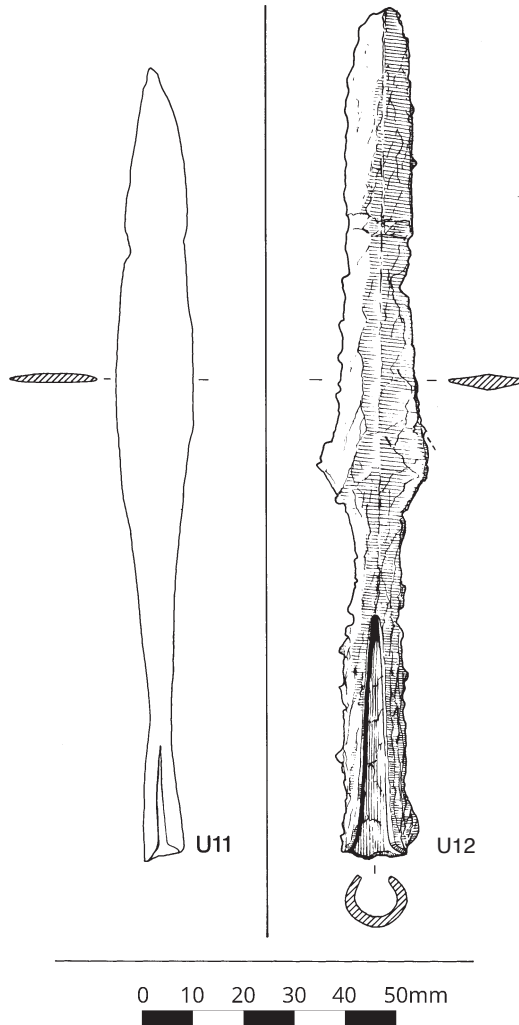


Fig. 27. Anglo-Saxon finds: U11 and U12.

Myres suggests Corpus No. 3785 from North Elmham as a close parallel for Urn 6 (Myres 1977, vol. 1, p. 295). There are also a number of parallels for Urns 4 and 6 from the Saxon cemeteries of Altenwalde, near Cuxhaven (Waller 1957, Taf 4.25; 8.56; 9.70; 15.129) and Westerwanna (Zimmer-Linnfeld 1969, Taf 10.73).

Urn 12 combines empty chevrons and stamps. The lack of Continental parallels for this type of design leads Myres to suggest a date in the first half of the sixth century (Myres 1977, 51–2); indeed, the only well-dated example of this design, a bowl from Mucking Grave 102, has been dated on the basis of associated finds to the sixth century (Jones, Evison and Myres 1968, fig. 4; Hirst and Clark 2009, fig. 386).

All but one of the chevron patterns on the Great Casterton urns are triple-line. While there are not enough well-dated English examples on which to base

a generalisation, a vessel from Spong Hill bearing triple-line chevrons contained a cruciform brooch dated to the second half of the fifth century (Hills 1977, fig. 29.1664), and Urn A12 from Caistor contained an Åberg Group III cruciform brooch dated to the early sixth century (Myres and Green 1973, 88, fig. 10). Eagles has noted that Continental examples of triple-line chevrons occur primarily in fourth- and fifth-century contexts (Eagles 1979, 93).

Four of the five relatively complete shoulder-bossed urns are also stamped (Urns 8, 9, 11 and 23). The bosses do not dominate the decorative scheme, as they do in the elaborate *Buckelurnen* of the second half of the fifth century, but are considerably reduced in size, and serve either as the foundation for a linear, grooved ornament, as on Urns 2 and 11, or to define or separate panels of decoration. Myres has suggested that this reduction in the prominence of shoulder bosses develops in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, a process which can be observed at Girton and St John's (Myres 1969, 34), and that bosses and stamps occurring together were produced primarily as a feature of the sixth century (Myres 1977, 2, 28). For the bosses in a stamped, pendant triangle motif that appears on Urn 8, Myres also suggests a sixth-century date (Myres 1977, 54–5, fig. 332).

Urns 1 and 11 carry modified forms of the standing arc, or *stehende Bogen* motif. Myres has shown that in the fourth and early fifth centuries, this motif occurs primarily in western Holstein and the northwest Elbe-Weser triangle region, then spreading south and west along the Frisian coast (Myres 1977, 29). The examples appearing on Urns 2 and 11, however, are quite removed from the relatively simple, standard *stehende Bogen* found in these early contexts; Urn 11 is furthermore bossed and stamped, and thus, for the reasons discussed above, may well be a product of the late fifth or early sixth-century. Both are examples of the 'comb' motif; that is, a standing arc over a group of vertical lines, found on the Continent again primarily in the Elbe-Weser region, for example, at Westerwanna (Zimmer-Linnfeld 1960, Taf 123). In England there is an example from Thurmaston, dated to the mid-fifth century by an Åberg Group I cruciform brooch (Williams 1983, 30, fig. 8.2), and from Castle Acre, dated to the late fifth or early sixth century (Eagles 1979, 100).

### Stamps

Approximately half of the Great Casterton urns are stamped, with a total of 22 different stamps being represented. The stamps have been drawn at 1:1, and tabulated by urn and by motif, in order to present both the range of similar motifs and the stamps present on each urn (Fig. 28). Briscoe's classification has been adopted, with references to her sub-groups provided in the catalogue.

The majority of the motifs are relatively common and widely distributed. Urn 19, however, bears a highly unusual stamp, which Briscoe suggests is a 'Tree of Life' motif (T Briscoe pers. comm., June 1985). Similar stamps have been recorded from Orsett Cock, Essex and Saxby, Leics, as well as Spong Hill (Hills and Penn 1981: fig. 129.1983; 130:S917), but these bear only a distant resemblance to the Great Casterton stamp, which, along with that used to decorate Urn 10, must for the time being be considered unique.

		Cremation number																		
		8	9	10	11	12	14	15	17	18	19	20	21	23	25	26	31	32	33	
Motif number	A1																			
	A3																			
	A4																			
	A5																			
	A7																			
	C2																			
	E2																			
	F2																			
	H1																			
	Uc.																			

Unclassified

Fig. 28. Pottery stamps on cremation urns.

Urns 9 and 12 are decorated with 'cogwheel' motifs; Myres has suggested that these may be a replacement for 'finger-tip' rosettes and that both went out of use by the end of the fifth century (Myres 1937, 428), but at present there is insufficient evidence to confirm this.

Finally, the high proportion (approximately one-third) of grid-type stamps (i.e. A2, C2, E2, F2) is striking and compares well with Thurmaston (Williams 1983, Table 3).

### The fabrics

No thin-sections were made of the Great Casterton urns, but all of the macroscopically identifiable inclusions are presumed to be local in origin. The fabrics differ primarily in the combination rather than type of inclusions. The predominant inclusions are quartz sand and quartzite grits up to 40mm in size, and varying quantities of haematite, sub-rounded flint, mica, shell and a calcareous material, which is almost certainly limestone.

The terminology used to describe the fabrics has been chosen in accordance with Peacock's recommendations (Peacock 1977, 29), with the addition of the admittedly subjective assessment of the relative fineness or coarseness of the fabric when these are exceptional. As the assemblage is small, with no highly distinctive fabrics or detailed fabric analysis, it was felt that to divide the vessels into fabric groups was unnecessary, and would require purely subjective divisions of very similar fabrics containing essentially identical inclusions, differing only in the quantities they contained and hence their relative coarseness.

The most common fabric (nine urns) is moderately to very coarse, containing abundant ill-sorted quartz sand, quartzite grits and moderate quantities of haematite. This is followed by a relatively coarse fabric containing almost exclusively quartz sand and quartzite grits (seven urns). The third most common fabric ranges from fine to moderately coarse in texture, and contains varying quantities of haematite and limestone (five urns).

This range of combinations may well reflect a deliberate selection of tempers, particularly when considerable quantities of mica and shell are present in the fabric. It is interesting to note that Urns 14 and 15, which are stamp-linked, are also composed of similar fabrics. Urns 4 and 6, which display marked stylistic similarities, were also made from similar fabrics. Urn 24 stands out as an exceptionally coarse-decorated vessel which is also the most micaceous, while Urn 15 contains an unusually large quantity of haematite.

### Dating and discussion

In the absence of directly associated, well-dated grave goods, the dating of the cremation urns is tentative at best and rests entirely upon a handful of well-dated vessels from widely distributed sites. Nevertheless, from the preceding discussion it is evident that the Great Casterton urns are primarily products of the first half of the sixth century, a date consistent with the metalwork produced by the site. Urns 1 and 2, however, may well belong to the fifth century.

### SKELETAL MATERIAL

A report on the human bones by Bernard Denston is included in the report lodged at Rutland County Museum, and the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record. The skeletal material could not be located at Rutland County Museum. In general, the bone was not well preserved. Denston's estimate of sex, age and height is included in the tables describing each burial, although not all were available to be examined. It is by no means surprising that most adults in both the Roman and Anglo-Saxon groups suffered a degree of arthritis.

### DISCUSSION OF THE BURIALS

#### Roman inhumations (Group I)

The earliest group of burials are the Roman inhumations of which there were up to 29 examples, mostly fully extended supine burials (as opposed to the mostly flexed Anglo-Saxon burials). If we accept the proposition that all the burials were cut into the counterscarp bank associated with the wide town ditch dug, in around AD 360 (and the excavators certainly believed this) this would give us a tentative *terminus post quem* for the burials.

The orientation of 21 of these could be established. Most are aligned with the road or at right angles to it), which is parallel to the Roman defences; that is, north-east to south-west (or broadly east to west). Six were broadly north-south (11, 13,

18, 22, 28 and 30), mostly with head to the north; except 11, which was broadly south (and decapitated). Where graves inter-cut north–south, graves are earlier than broadly east–west graves. Ten of these have heads to the east and the other five with heads to the west (6, 8, 9, 19 and 25). This last group is around Grave 6, which was buried in a stone coffin (a second sarcophagus was found in the 2004 excavations to the north-west of this site). This was made of Barnack stone with a lid and is undoubtedly high status. It was used more than once – the original occupant (6A) pushed aside as disarticulated bone to make way for burial 6B, which was itself disturbed – perhaps by someone searching the coffin for valuables. The only surviving grave good was a bowl between the legs of 6B. Another burial, Grave 8, was buried over the coffin – perhaps suggesting a family relationship – but was very disturbed by the shifting of the coffin lid either to insert 6B or subsequent robbing. The sarcophagus cuts Grave 11, a decapitated skeleton, suggesting a long sequence of burial.

Four burials had metal coffin fittings. Grave 9 had an angle bracket similar to coffin fittings from Winchester and York and four nails, but none were, apparently, *in situ* and were presumed to be from a burial that had been disturbed. Grave 22A produced nine nails, which probably do represent a wooden coffin, while the nails in graves 29 and 33 may also represent coffins, although both have partial stone linings. Another eight (graves 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25 and 28) also have elements of stone lining. This phenomenon has been discussed in a local and national context by Lynden Cooper (1996, 21–7). It was widely practised in the cemetery areas excavated to the north of this site in 1959 and 2004. It does seem to be a widespread fourth-century practice and has been linked to the spread of Christianity, although this is not certain. Christian burials are generally aligned east to west, with heads to the west. Graves 13, 19 and 25 are in this alignment with partial stone linings, but both north–south and east–west graves with heads to the east also have similar linings. The graves are very similar to those excavated to the north-west in 2004–5 (McConnell and Grassam 2005).

Most of the graves do not produce dating evidence. Grave 26, although disturbed, probably had in it a colour-coated beaker and, probably, a colour-coated bowl. The former dates to the later fourth century. Grave 28, a north–south burial, is likely to have had a coin in the mouth, although this was not recovered, being inferred from a copper stain on the bone. Nine of the 139 Later Roman burials, excavated to the north-west in 2004, had coins as grave goods. This is thought to be associated with the belief that Charon the ferryman needed paying for his services.

There are a few burials that merit comment. Burials 11 and 17 were both decapitated with the skull put between the legs. This is a fairly common Late Roman burial rite. Two more decapitations (F2022 and 2023) were found in the 2004–5 excavations, one found with a Late Roman antler comb (McConnell and Grassam 2005). Martin Henig suggests that decapitation, when not simply punitive, may have been a religious rite observed at the time of burial, perhaps manifesting respect for the head as the seat of the soul – an idea common to both Roman and Celtic peoples, or else a superstitious rite designed to prevent ghosts from walking (Henig 1984, 203). The second anomalous Roman burial is Grave 25. The body was buried face down in such a manner as to suggest that the upper body had been tightly bound



with the arms forced to the back, and that the lower legs had probably also been bound. There was no osteological evidence that this man had met a violent death, and it is quite possible that the body was trussed after death. It should, however, be noted that the tips of the nasal bones of this individual had been fractured during life. Prone burials are unusual, and this may indicate a violent death or low status.

It does seem certain that the Roman burial sequence is not short. The Eastern concentration of Roman burials around the stone sarcophagus (Grave 6) allows us to construct a sequence. The earliest burials are Graves 30 and probably 11 and 22, which are all broadly north–south. Grave 30 is cut by Graves 21, 31 and (possibly) 23. Grave 21 cuts 22 and is cut by Grave 19. While the insertion of a second burial in the sarcophagus is clearly deliberate, this in itself must have been after enough years for the body to have decayed so that the remains of the first burial could be swept down to the bottom of the sarcophagus. It is impossible to tell if the burial above the stone lid (Grave 8) was disturbed by this insertion or a later intrusion. There is no evidence of surface markers, but graves are likely to have been visible, at least, as low mounds. We might then expect the sequence of burials to be spread over several decades. If the sequence starts after AD 360 it must surely extend into the fifth-century.

### Anglo-Saxon burials (Groups 2 and 3)

The dating of the Anglo-Saxon burials is unfortunately equally imprecise. There appear to be two groups of burials. A central area north-east of the main Roman concentration contains cremations that are, in places, disturbed by inhumations. The cremations are likely to date to the late fifth and early sixth centuries, with at least some of the inhumations rather later. The chronology of the Anglo-Saxon inhumations is not any more certain. To the east of the main group are Graves 1–3 (although C2 and an unnumbered grave on the site plan lie between the two groups). Grave 1 had a seemingly complete, vertically set slab lining, with at least a partial cover of similar, though horizontal, slabs, and Grave 2 had a similar structure. Strikingly, Grave 2 appeared to contain a decapitated body, while a skull was located in a pit close to Grave 1, along with ten beads of Anglo-Saxon type. Sadly, Grave 2 was not perfectly recorded and the skeletal material was not seen by the bone specialist. The excavator certainly believed it to be a decapitation. Grave 2 contained a Late Roman hemispherical glass cup, which could have been made at any time from the late third-century through to the early fifth century; an iron buckle, an iron knife and the trace of a copper-alloy object, possibly a brooch or a coin. It is tempting to link the apparent decapitation with the Roman examples and see this as a continuation of native customs, but decapitated skeletons are not unknown in Saxon cemeteries, as, for example, at Wheately, Loveden Hill and Great Addington (Lucy 2000, 75). Graves 37 and 41 are equally undatable beyond Early Anglo-Saxon, while Grave 32 is not even certainly Anglo-Saxon. The cutting of Grave 39 by Grave 40 and of Grave 38A by Grave 38B does, however, suggest that the inhumations were deposited over a number of years. Three burials (37, 39 and 41) have partial slab linings. In Graves 37 and 39 they consist of just two slabs, while in Grave 41, five slabs were positioned at the sides and the foot end of the grave,



and a sixth slab was found underneath the skull. While these are similar to the Roman lined graves, they are not uncommon in a Saxon context (Lucy 2000, 101). Nails were recovered from Graves 1 and 32, but may well have been residual rather than indicating wooden coffins. The dating of the wrist-clasps from Grave 43 to the period *c.*490–580, and the possible later sixth century date for the cruciform brooch (U9), suggest that burials continued well into, and perhaps beyond, the sixth century.

## CONCLUSION

The Great Casterton 1966 burials have been cited on many occasions as a possible example of continuity between Roman and Saxon burials (e.g. Todd 1973; Whitwell 1992, 138; Lucy 2000, 150). For this reason it was decided to publish the evidence for the site to allow this to be more fully evaluated. It has not been possible to fully bring the specialist reports up to date and incorporate the most recent thinking (especially the important synthesis of the Spong Hill material (Hills and Lucy 2013)), and this should be borne in mind. The main conclusion is that Roman burials, in all probability, continue into the fifth century in a wide area north of the walled town. At some stage in the later fifth century, Anglo-Saxon cremation burials are buried a little way to the east, while somewhat later (where there is a relationship), Anglo-Saxon inhumation burials are also present, although the two rites may overlap in date. Graves 1, 2 and 3 – two cist graves, one without a head, and a pit containing a skull – are tantalisingly different and may not be contemporary with the other inhumations. While there is nothing to conclusively fill the gap between Roman and Anglo-Saxon burials, the proximity is striking and falls into a pattern in other local Roman urban centres, such as Leicester, Medbourne and Vernemetum in Leicestershire, and Ancaster and Caistor in Lincolnshire, where Anglo-Saxon burials are found close to Late Roman towns.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present paper is based on a completed monograph written by Guy Grainger, based on notes and records by Christine Mahany. Guy Grainger was funded by English Heritage. The full text can be found in the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record. Finds are held at Rutland County Museum under the accession number OAKRM:1975.30. The archive does not include the human remains. This writer has not had the benefit of seeing any contemporary notes or plans and the specialist reports, written in the 1980s, are of their time. I would like to thank Guy Grainger for his agreement to reduce his original report; Dr Helen Woodhouse of Historic England for tracking down the drawings; Helen Wells of Leicestershire County Council for providing a copy of the original report; Nick Cooper of ULAS for his encouragement and expertise; Richard Knox of Leicestershire County Museums for reading a draft of the report; Lorraine Cornwell of Rutland County Council for answering many queries; and Professor Helena Hamerow for editing her Anglo-Saxon pottery report. Diagrams were produced by Christine Boddington in the English Heritage Drawing Office, except for Fig. 1, which was by Dr Michael Hawkes.

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