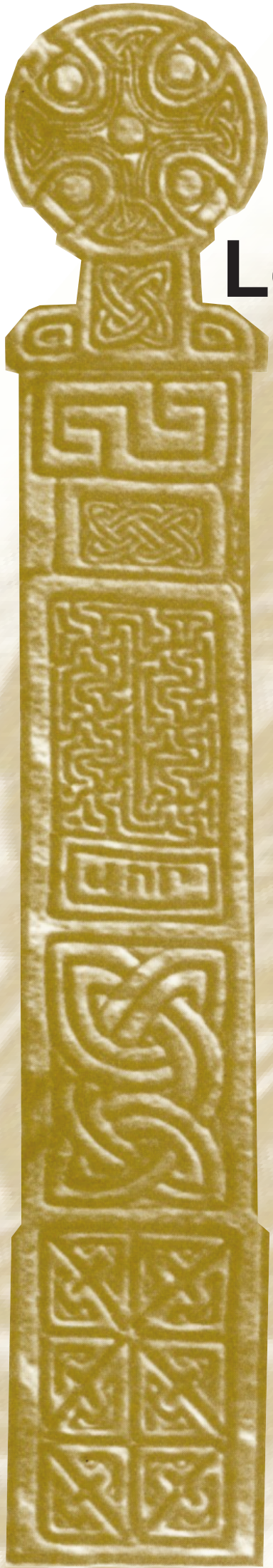


Ledbury Trunk Main

Archaeological Programme of Works

Section 2

PART THREE: Archaeological Excavation

- Access Pits (AP) 4

3.5 ACCESS PIT (AP) 4

3.5.1 Site Location

Access Pit 4 was located at NGR SO 63183 43262, approximately 100m east-southeast of AP 3 and 65m east-southeast of the River Frome.

2.5.2 Description

Excavations continued on the south side of the River Frome with the opening of Access Pit 4, which produced a highly significant body of results relating to the hitherto unrecognised use of this area of the known Roman settlement at Stretton Grandison as a burial ground during the Romano-British and post-Roman/early medieval periods.

The excavation revealed a small number of cremation and inhumation burials, together with evidence of domestic activity, representing two principal phases of activity spanning the late 2nd through to the 6th/7th centuries, with an apparent break in occupation beginning some time in the 4th century. The earlier phase exhibited clear evidence of sub-phases of activity, evidenced, for example, by the intercutting of ditch features, possibly representing a reorganisation of the site or the redefinition of boundaries, while the earlier and later phases as a whole differed markedly in character.

The period of Romano-British occupation from the 2nd to 4th centuries appears to reflect a pre-Christian tradition of north-south burial and an apparent emphasis on integrating the living and the dead, with evidence for activities such as butchery, crop processing and domestic-scale ceramic production taking place close by. A stone-lined well (4004) also belongs in this phase of activity, which appears to have remained in use throughout this and the succeeding post-Roman phase. This emphasis on the domestic, together with the rather informal layout of the graves and the very low density of interments, suggest that this may have been a burial ground attached to a farmstead or other residential unit and that the deceased were members of a single familial group. Were it part of a larger communal cemetery serving a more urbanised settlement, a higher density of burials and a more formalised plan would be expected, although it should be noted that the burials revealed during the excavation of AP4 may represent only a small proportion of the complete burial assemblage, with the boundaries of the cemetery area possibly extending well beyond the limits of the excavation. The nature, and indeed the location, of any such farmstead are unknown at present, although the relatively high intensity of domestic activity suggests it was probably close by, while the presence of small quantities of decorated samian ware, a metal key and fragments of *tegula*, *imbrex* and box-flue tile (implying the existence of a hypocaust heating system), together with the presence of a finely constructed masonry well and a kiln, suggest relatively high status, perhaps something of the order of a small villa.

By contrast, the emphasis during the post-Roman/early medieval phase appears to focus on exclusion rather than integration, with the area taking on a more liminal character, which may inidcate its use as a deviant burial ground, a type of cemetery established during the Anglo-Saxon period to accommodate certain excluded classes of people—social outcasts—whose felonies or misdemeanours, physical deformity or unusual or premature death marked them out as being different from others in the population. Such individuals would probably have been regarded with fear and superstition by their peers and consigned to the margins of the community, away from the main focus of settlement.

The excavated remains from this phase include the decapitated skeleton of an adolescent (4050), who had been subjected to multiple blade injuries inflicted by a sword or axe; a woman with severe deformity of the spine (4037); a young child (4042) and several infants and neonates (4053, 4056, 4078, 4105, 4102 and 4099). These later burials exhibit rather random alignments, with both east-west and south-north orientation represented, although they do seem to respect a north-south ditch [4009/4087], which appears to separate the mortuary area from activity of a more mundane character, represented by a series of small pits or postholes and the earlier stone-lined well. The well appears still to have remained open during this phase and may have acquired some degree of cultural significance through its association with antiquity.

This quite marked cultural shift between the Romano-British and post-Roman phases of activity coincided with a wider pattern of hydrological change in the Frome Valley characterised by an increase in both the frequency and intensity of riverine flooding, leading probably to increasingly sporadic use of the post-Roman landscape and its eventual abandonment.

The uppermost deposit encountered within AP4, extending to a depth of 0.3-0.4m, was a typical brown alluvial plough soil, consisting of firm reddish-brown silty clay with occasional medium subangular stones (4001). Below this was a substantial deposit of overbank alluvium consisting of firm light to mid yellowish-red silty clay with very rare small stones (4002), extending to a depth of 1-1.5m below existing ground level. This significant accumulation of material, which produced a very small number of residual Romano-British Severn Valley ware sherds, reflects post-Roman hydrological change giving rise to a seasonally flooded system accumulating fine-grained mineralogenic deposits.

Underlying (4002) was (4046), consisting of moderately compact to firm reddish-grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking and small subangular stones, which extended trenchwide to a maximum thickness of 0.21m and was probably deposited under conditions of seasonal flooding and increased sedimentation. This material also formed the uppermost fill (4006) of the stone-lined well (4004), which appears to have remained a visible feature of the immediate landscape for a considerable span of time extending from the period of Romano- British occupation through the post-Roman abandonment phase and early medieval reoccupation.

Deposit (4046) produced 108 (residual) sherds weighing 1448g with a mixture of mainly 2nd-3rd century material, including imported Moselkeramik black slipped ware of the later 2nd-3rd centuries, Dorset black burnished ware, central Gaulish samian and Severn Valley ware. A coin of 330-35 AD bearing an illegible mintmark and emperor was also found within this deposit. In addition to the pottery assemblage and the coin, a glass chip measuring 6mm × 4mm × 1.5mm from an opaque mid blue faceted bead was also recovered. This may represent a diamond-and-triangle faceted bead of the late Roman period, although several attributes suggest it might be later. First, it is made from opaque, rather than the normal translucent glass, second, the bead that this fragment represents would have been smaller than usual, and third, the types of facet preserved do not correspond closely to those on the late Roman form. Thus, given that the chip came from a post-Roman context, the probability that it is of relatively recent date must be high (Wild, 2008).

Deposit (4046) overlay a number of apparently randomly-oriented inhumations displaying no consistent pattern in terms of burial practice. Although the precise character of the burial ground at this time is not clear, the rather gruesome nature of certain aspects of the evidence

raises some intriguing possibilities. Of key importance was the discovery of a prone (face-down) adolescent inhumation comprising the decapitated skeletal remains (4050) of a male/female aged 15-16½, who had sustained multiple blade injuries to the cranium, mandible, neck and right shoulder (at least three of which would have been fatal) from a weapon such as a sword, *seax* (a large Anglo-Saxon single-edged knife) or axe (**Plate 34; Fig. 22**). The injuries appear to be consistent with battle wounds or possibly a murderous assault.

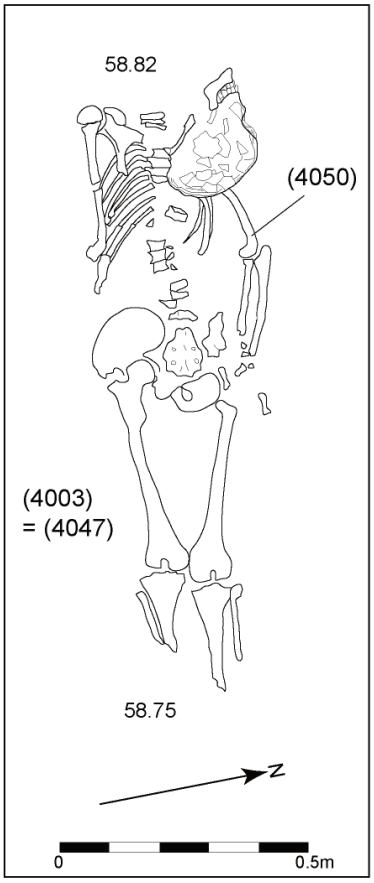


Plate 34 & Fig. 22: Skeleton (4050)—the decapitated remains of an adolescent radiocarbon dated to the period AD550-660

Alternatively, (4050) may represent an execution victim, although this appears less likely given the apparent frenzied manner in which the blows were delivered. The violent death of this individual, whatever the circumstances, was initially presumed to have occurred sometime towards the end of the Romano-British occupation, perhaps during a period of social and political instability accompanying the decline of Roman governance. Surprisingly, however, a relatively late radiocarbon date of AD 550-660 (Cal BP 1400 to 1290) subsequently obtained from a sample of skeletal material placed this event firmly in the post-Roman/early medieval period.

The remains appear to have been hastily disposed-of in a shallow, poorly-defined grave [4048] oriented west-east, consisting of a sub-rectangular grave cut measuring approximately 1.8m × 0.6m × >0.2m, with rounded corners and a concave base and sides, although this cut may well have been truncated by later agricultural activity. The grave had been backfilled with a moderately compact charcoal-flecked reddish-brown silty clay (4049) containing a decorated fragment of residual central Gaulish samian ware, together with

sherds of both oxidised and reduced Severn Valley ware and a single chip of colourless glass. No trace of a coffin or other burial container was identified. Cattle bone also occurred in association with skeleton (4050), which may relate to food offerings, either placed in the grave as a joint of meat or as the remains of food eaten during the wake (Caffell, 2007), although one of the bones showed marks of pathological damage and dog-gnawing and may have been buried by a dog or redeposited by other means unrelated to the burial. The fill also revealed evidence of unburnt dog bone and spelt wheat.

A second burial (4037) (**Plate 35; Fig. 23**) exhibited a pathological condition not previously seen in Britain in any excavated skeleton dating to the Romano-British or early medieval periods. Although more difficult to assess, as many relevant parts of the skeleton were missing, this individual was almost certainly female and probably over the age of 35 years, who had been laid in a grave measuring 1.6m north-south × 0.65m east-west × 0.2m, with a sharp break of slope at the top of the profile and moderately sloping sides breaking gradually to a slightly concave base. The skeleton was oriented south-north, with the head to the south, and had been laid on its left side in an extended posture with straight legs and arms crossed over the chest.

Plate 35: View southwest showing skeleton (4037) the remains of a 35-year-old woman, buried with arms crossed, who suffered from curvature of the spine

Analysis of the remains clearly indicated that this individual had suffered from scoliosis, a condition characterised by a pronounced sideways curvature of the spine and (in this case) a distorted ribcage. Few such cases have been recognized in the archaeological record and apparently none dating to the Romano-British or early medieval periods (Caffell, 2008). The condition probably developed in adolescence and progressed slowly through adulthood, probably giving rise to shortness of breath and back pain. Resultant asymmetrical weight distribution and abnormal stresses placed on the spine probably led to the degeneration observed in this woman's spinal joints and the fusion of the right (and possibly left) sacroiliac joints. The condition would have been of sufficient severity to require medical treatment had it been observed in a modern patient and would presumably have been visible to others in the population, although the woman would have been capable of many normal physical activities, including pregnancy and childbirth. The fill (4036) overlying the remains consisted of moderately compact dark brown-to-black silty clay, with frequent charcoal/charcoal dust,

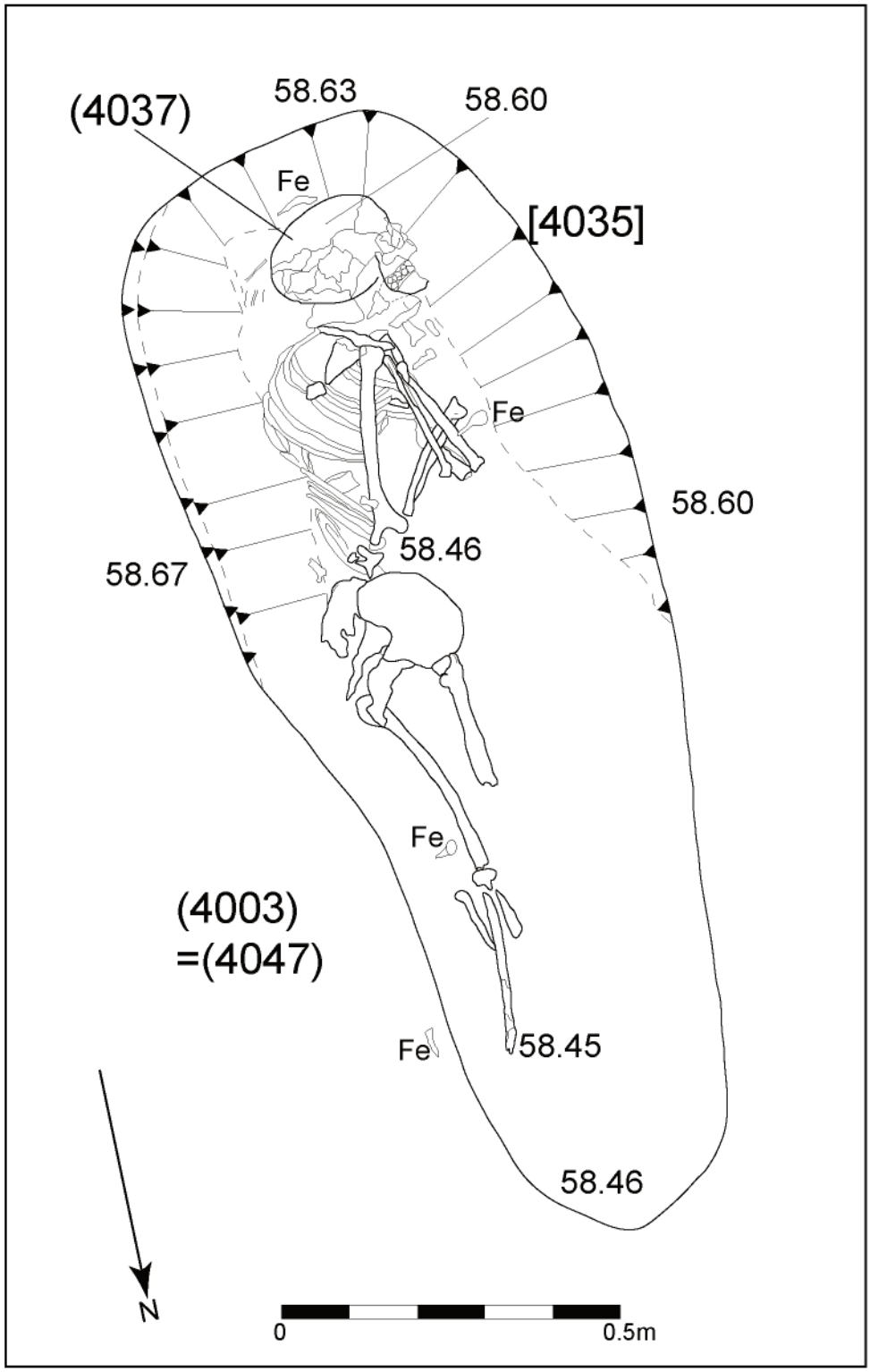


Fig. 23: Plan of skeleton (4037)

small white sandstone fragments and iron nails, together with a single residual sherd of oxidised Severn Valley ware. The fill also contained pig, sheep and cattle/cattle-size bones, possibly again relating to food offerings associated with the burial.

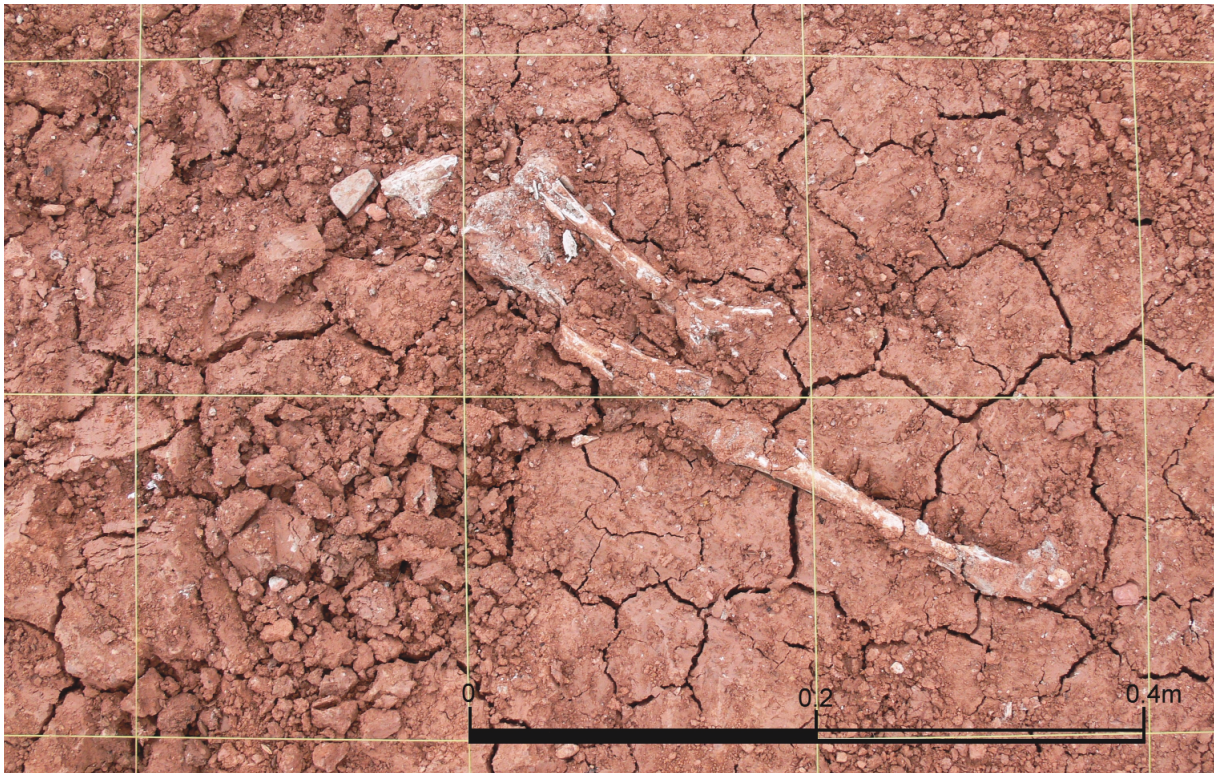
Significantly, the remainder of the inhumations in this phase of burial activity were all children and infants (4042, 4053, 4056, 4078, 4099, 4102 and 4105). Beneath grave fill (4041) were the heavily truncated remains of an extended supine inhumation aligned northwest-southeast (head at northwest), representing a child of indeterminate sex aged between two and five years (4042) (**Plate 36; Fig. 24**). These highly fragmented remains (five to 10 per cent complete) comprised the right and left legs—although neither was complete—and a single proximal foot phalanx. The fill itself consisted of moderately compact reddish-brown sand-silt-clay containing occasional iron nails and sherds of fine grey, wheelmade Malvernian, Severn Valley and Dorset black burnished ware. Again, pig and cattle/cattle-size bone was found within the grave.

The remains of east-west burial (4053) (**Plate 37; Fig. 25**) were found within what appeared to have been a pre-existing roughly ovoid pit [4054] measuring 1.3m × 0.45m × 0.14m and comprised a damaged unfused skull, left and right scapula, left and right humerus, radius and ulna, with further remains subsequently recovered from the fill (4052), a moderately compact to firm dark brown silty clay containing charcoal flecking, occasional iron nails and sherds of Dorset black burnished pottery and oxidised Severn Valley ware. Based on bone size and stage of development, these remains were identified as a late foetus, neonate or young infant.

Skeleton (4056) again appeared to have been heavily disturbed, with a fragment of sandstone lodged in the central portion of the interment, which had crushed and fragmented the ribcage. The burial appeared to have been oriented north-south with the head at north—although the skull was missing—and the skeleton was apparently flexed and lying on its right side (**Plate 37; Fig. 25**). Skeleton (4078) (**Plate 38; Fig. 26**) was situated outside the area of direct engineering impact and thus was not subject to full investigation; however, the recorded skeletal remains comprised what appeared to be the intact skull of an infant, together with partial post-cranial remains consisting of right and left humerus and femur, right ilium and right tibia and fibula. Again, the skeleton appeared to be flexed and on its right side, with the hands probably placed in front of the body/face.

Skeleton (4102) (**Plate 39; Fig. 27**) was consistent with a late foetus, neonate or young infant, in terms of bone size and development stage, and had been interred west-east on its left side in a flexed position with the head originally at the west, although this had apparently been displaced and was lying next to the feet. It is possible that the skull belonged to another individual, but as both this and the post-cranial remains were found within the same grave cut [4100], it appears they formed part of a single interment. Further disarticulated remains subsequently recovered from the fill (4101)—a moderately compact charcoal- and mortar-flecked silty clay—included fragments of clavicle, humerus, cranium, rib and vertebra. Skeleton (4105) (**Plate 39; Fig. 27**) also appeared to be that of a neonate; however, the orientation of this burial could not be established from the remains.

To the south of the main cluster of burials were the remains of a probable neonate (4099) (**Plate 40; Fig. 28**). Its grave cut [4097] was extremely poorly defined but appeared to be ovoid in form and contained a firm mid reddish-brown silty clay deposit (4098) within which was a considerable quantity of fragmented human bone, apparently representing a flexed inhumation consisting of limb bone remains and a few vertebrae, together with a fragment of



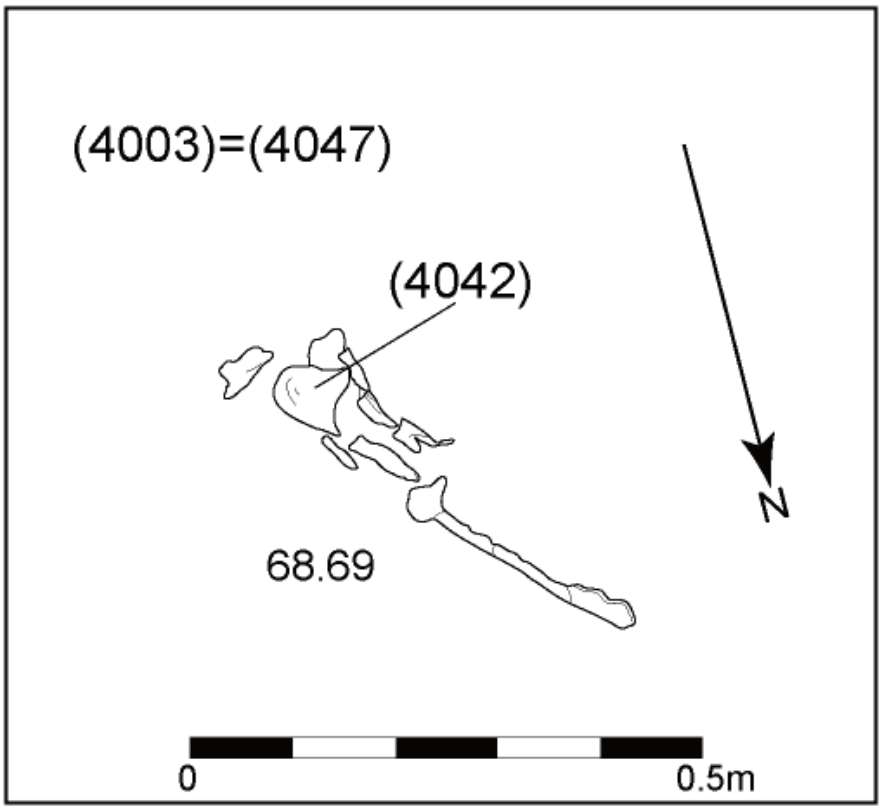


Plate 36 & Fig. 24: Remains of skeleton (4042)

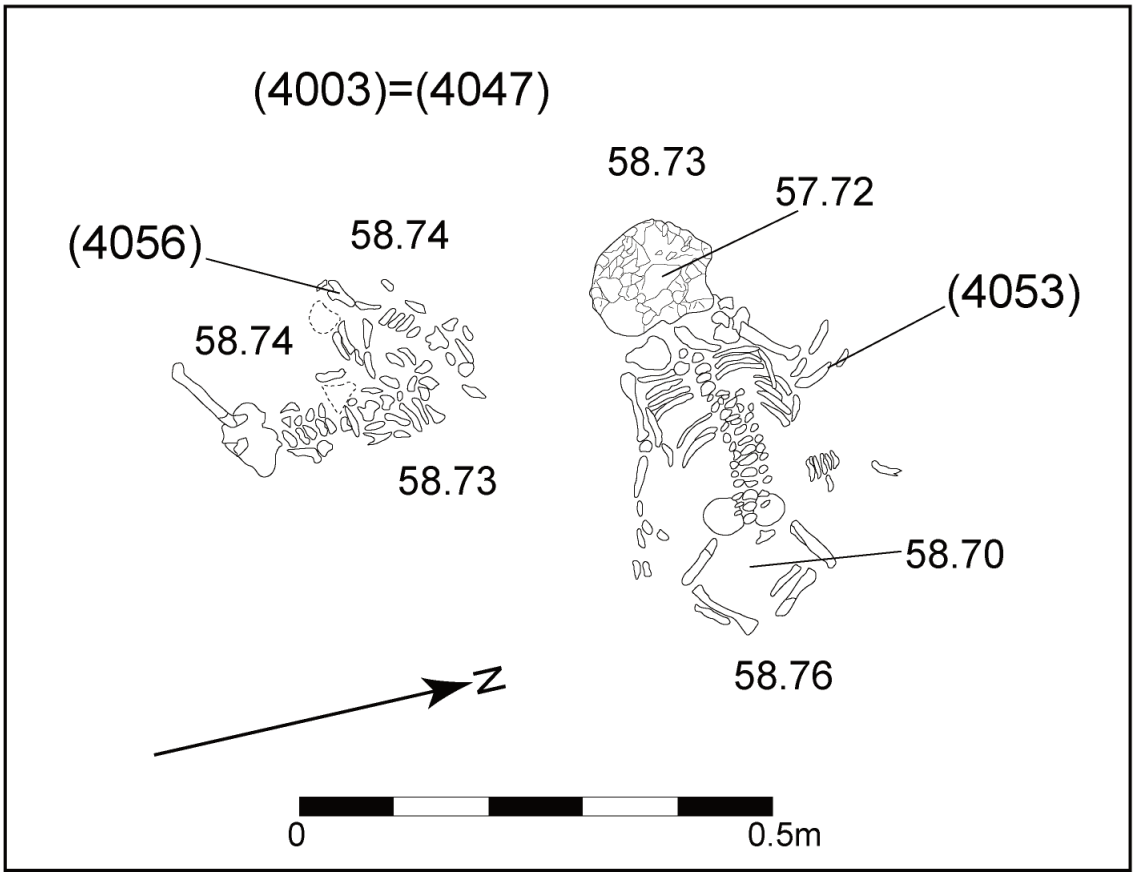
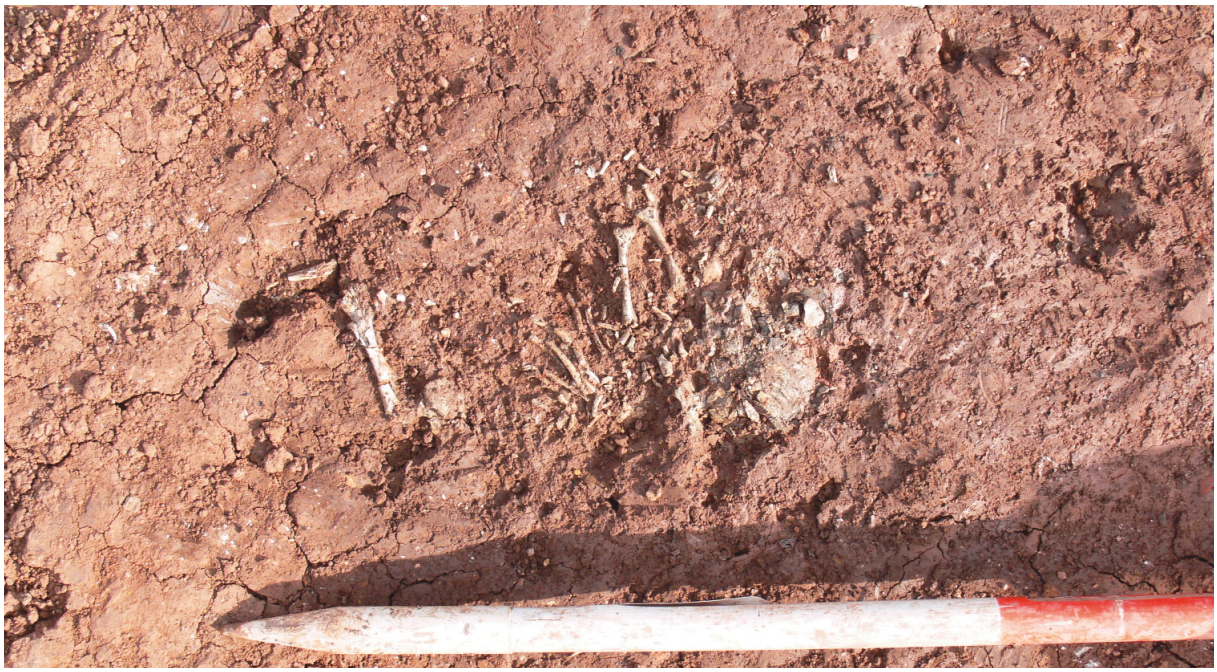


Plate 37 & Fig. 25: Late foetus, neonate or young infant (4053) and heavily disturbed remais of infant skeleton (4056)



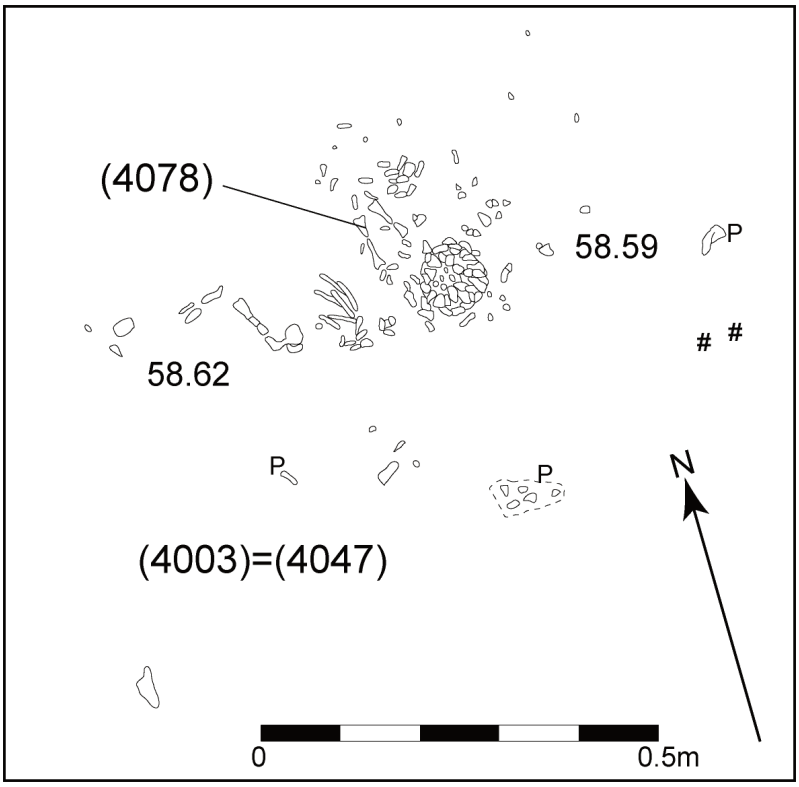
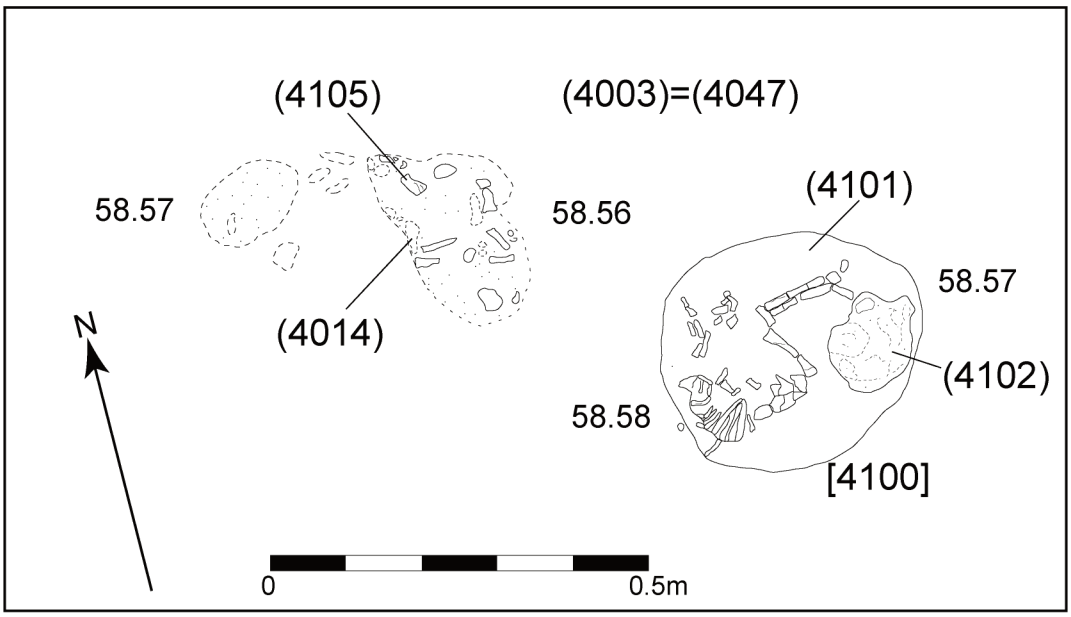
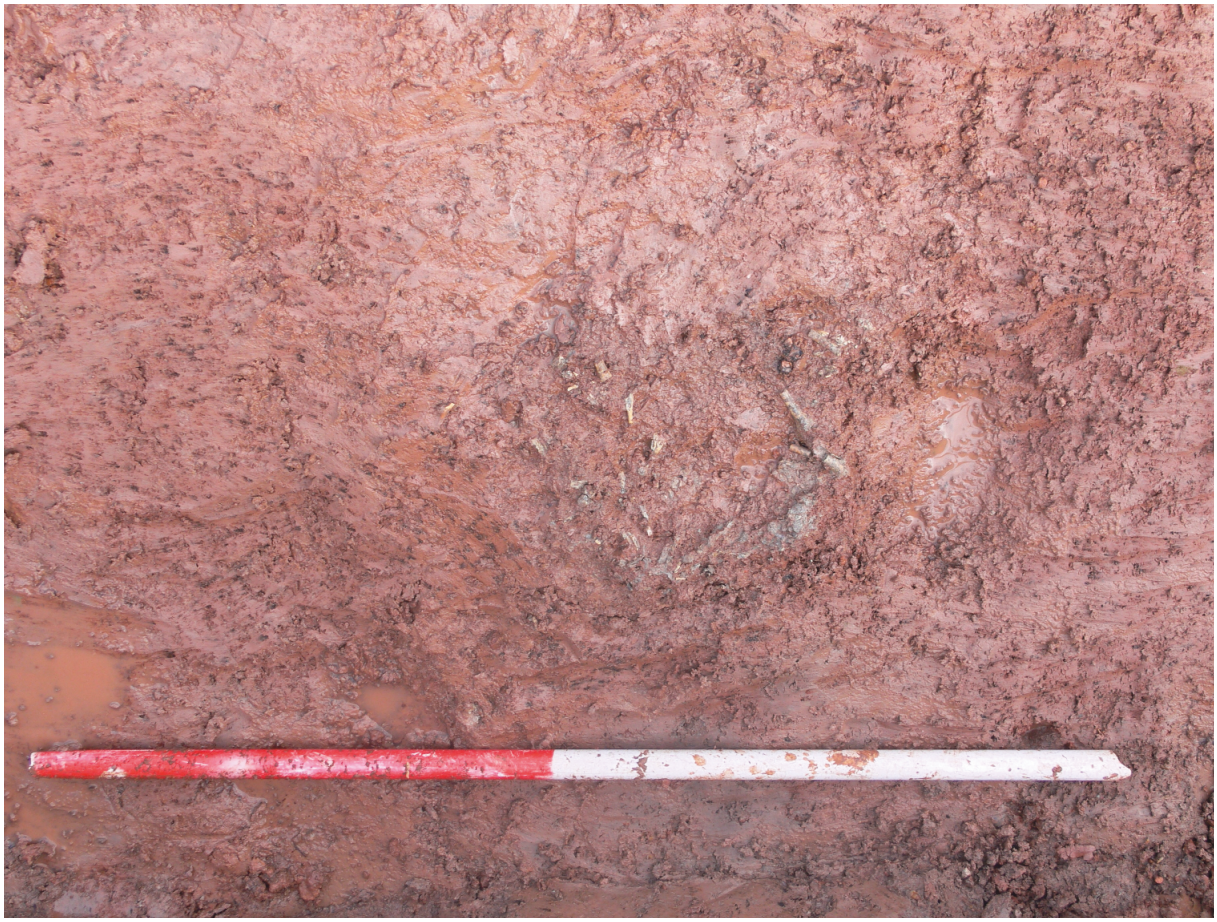


Plate 38 & Fig. 26: Apparent intact skiull of an infant(4078), together with partial post-cranial remains, consisting of right and left humerus, right ilium and right tibia and fibula. The skeleton appeard to be flexed and on its right side, with the hands parobaly placed in front of the body/face

Plate 39 (view northwest) & Fig. 27: Remains of late foetus, neonate or young infant (4102), with head apparently displaced and lying next to feet, and probable neonate (4105)





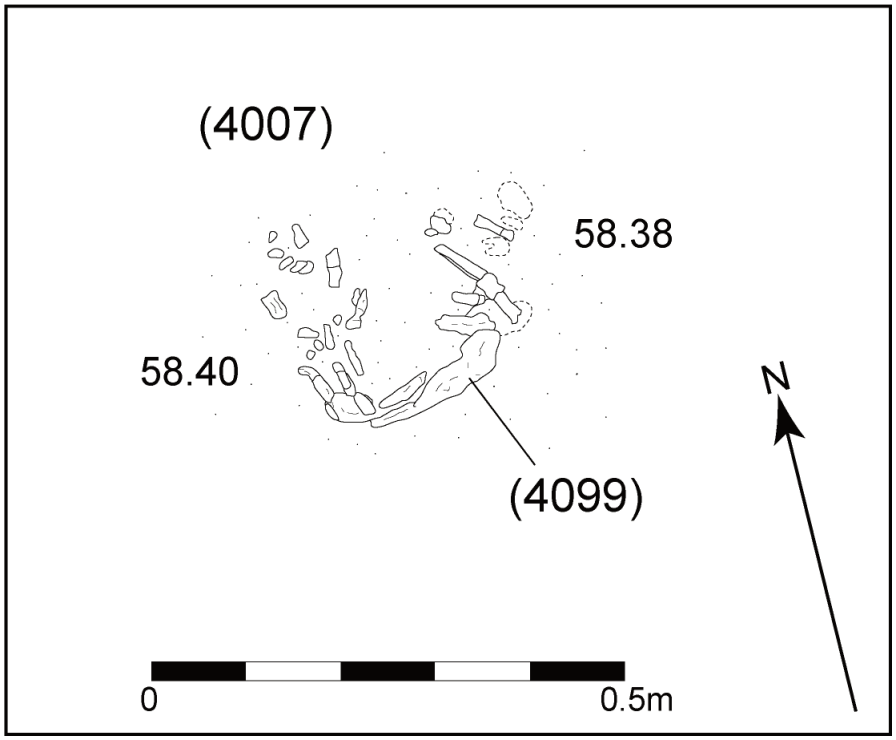


Plate 40 & Fig. 28: Remains of a probable neonate (4099)

pelvis. The skull and the hand/foot bones were missing; however, the inhumation appeared to be oriented east-west, with the head to the west, and to have been laid on its left side with arms outstretched and legs flexed. As no distinct grave cut was identified, this individual may have been interred in a simple shallow scoop that has left little trace in the archaeological record.

Ditch [4009] (**Plate 41; Figs. 29 & 30**), dating to this later phase of burial activity, was exposed during excavation of the original engineering access pit, measuring 9m × 8m, and was found to continue as a slightly curvilinear length of ditch [4087] when this area was subsequently extended (**Plate 42; Figs. 29 & 30**). The initial section [4009] consisted of a linear cut orientated north-south measuring 8m × 1m × 0.3m with a sharp break of slope at the top of the profile and moderately sloping sides breaking to a slightly concave base. The fill (4008) of this feature consisted of firm dark greyish-brown charcoal-flecked silty clay containing occasional small subangular stones, animal bone and iron nails. The dimensions and profile of the ditch changed as it continued south as [4087], consisting of a linear north-south cut measuring >8m × 0.57m × 0.23m, with a sharp break of slope at the top and vertical sides breaking sharply to a flat base. This southernmost ditch section appeared to terminate abruptly and no further evidence of its continuation was identified. The fill (4088) of ditch [4087] was composed of moderately compact dark greyish-brown silty clay containing moderate amounts of small gritty gravels, charcoal flecking and residual ceramic sherds, together with animal bone and occasional iron nails.

Ditch [4009]/[4087] produced residual fragments from an oxidised Severn Valley ware jar, together with two sherds and a rim of a central Gaulish samian vessel (form 18/31 or 31) of Antonine date. Later material is represented by 3rd-4th century pottery, notably an Oxfordshire colour-coated *mortarium* and sherds from a Moselle indented beaker. Also found were Baetican *amphorae* fragments, fired clay and CBM, including fragments of *imbrex*. The ditch, which may originally have continued in a southwest direction, appears to represent a boundary feature of some significance, apparently demarcating two quite distinct foci of activity, with an area to the east apparently reserved exclusively for burials while a series of probable domestic waste pits or postholes, together with the still-extant Romano-British stone-lined well, were located to the west of the ditch.

These pits formed a distinct cluster of features located in the northwest part of the excavation area and included intercutting features [4012] and [4022]. Pit [4012] comprised an elongated ovoid cut oriented southwest-northeast measuring 0.55m × 0.3m × 0.18m, with a sharp break of slope at the top of the profile and vertical sides breaking sharply to a concave base. The pit was filled by (4013), a loose to moderately compact yellowish-brown silty clay containing frequent burnt wood fragments and charcoal flecks (increasing in size towards the base), with moderate amounts of small rounded pebbles, some small fragments of unidentified burnt bone, fired clay and unclassified crumbs. Cutting this feature at its southwest extremity was a second probable domestic waste pit or posthole [4022], which was more bowl-shaped in form, consisting of a sub-circular cut measuring 0.6m × 0.4m × 0.2m, with a sharp break of slope at the top of the cut and moderately sloping sides breaking gradually to a concave base. This pit was filled by (4023), a moderately compact to firm mid reddish-brown silty clay containing frequent small subangular stones and charcoal flecking, occasional mortar flecking and bone, together with fired clay and fragments of *imbrex* and *tegula*.

Also located in this area of the site was a circular cut [4010] forming a small, truncated posthole measuring 0.13m × 0.03m. The break of slope at the top of this cut was sharp and the sides vertical, breaking sharply to a flat base. The feature was filled by (4011), a

Plate 41: View north showing Slot 1 & Slot 2 through ditch [4009]

Plate 42: View north showing Slot 2 through ditch [4087]

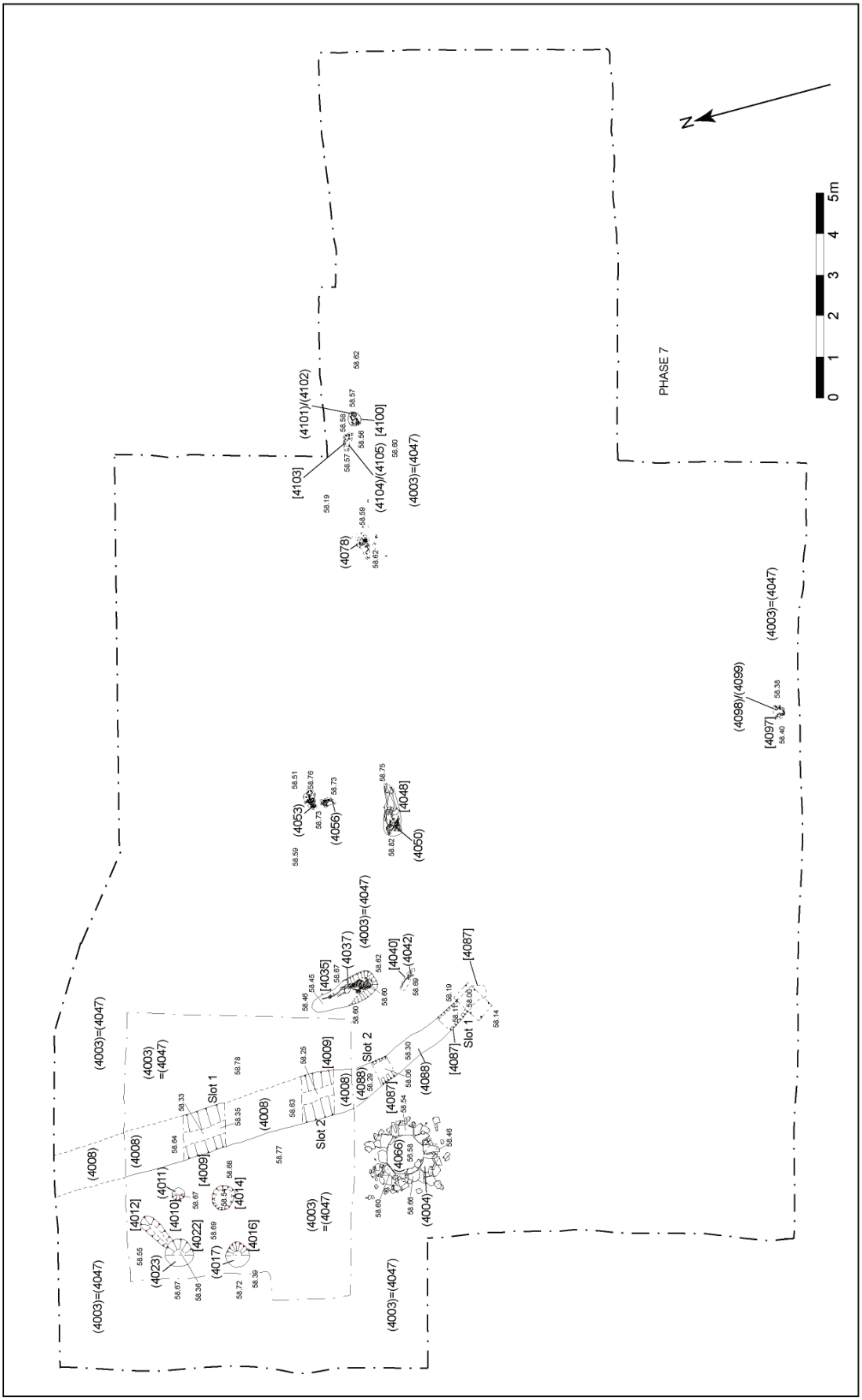


Fig. 29: Plan of Access Pit 4 showing post-Roman features

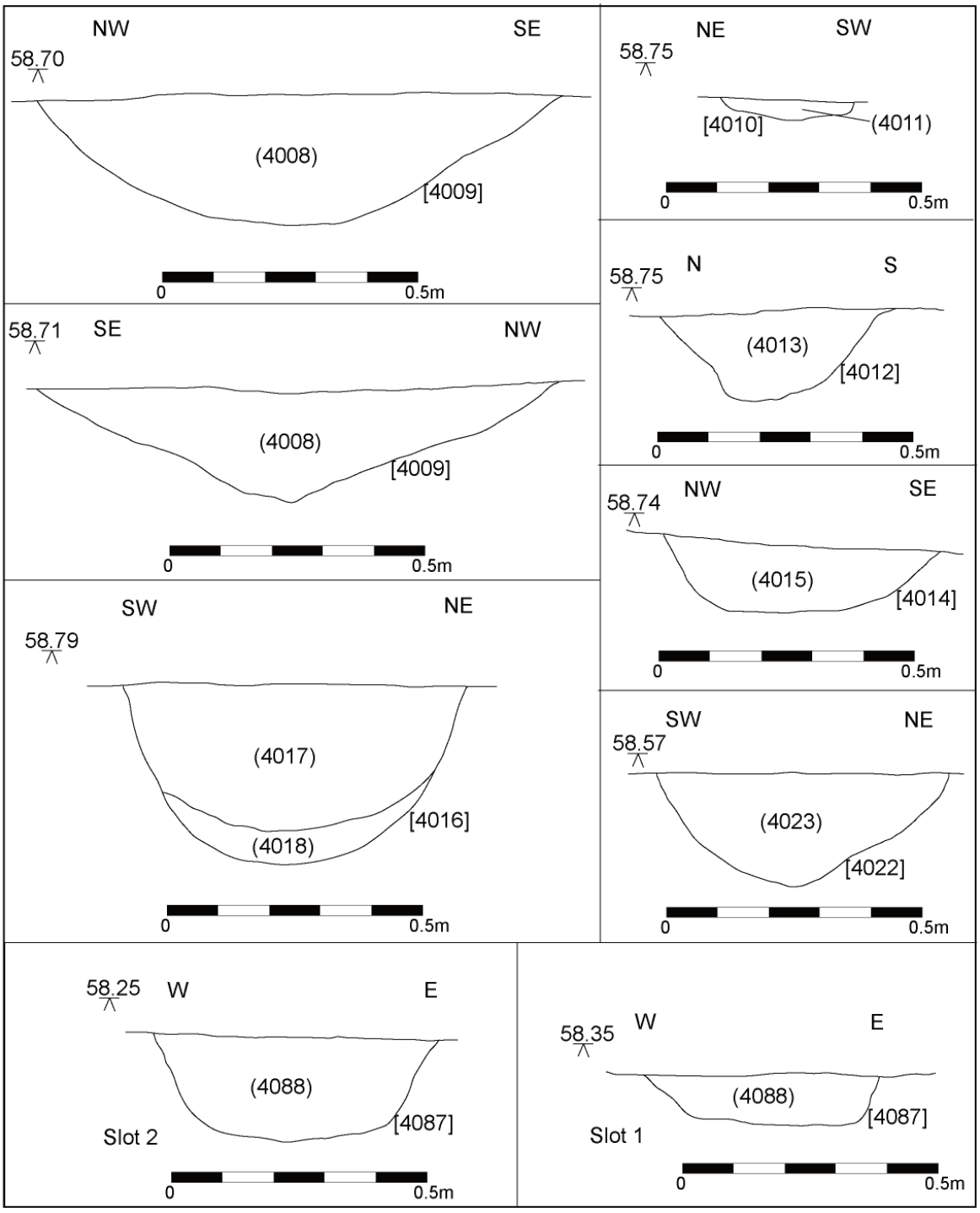


Fig. 30: Profiles of post-Roman features

moderately compact to firm dark, charcoal-rich silty clay containing occasional small subangular stones. To the south and southwest of [4010] were two further probable waste pits, [4014] and [4016]. The first of these [4014] comprised a circular cut measuring 0.55m × 0.53m × 0.15m with a sharp break of slope at the top of the profile and vertical/slightly concave sides breaking sharply to a flat base. This was filled by (4015), a moderately compact light greyish-brown charcoal-flecked silty clay containing frequent small rounded and subangular stones with occasional charcoal fragments at its base. Waste pit [4016] comprised a circular cut measuring 0.6m × 0.55m × 0.42m with a sharp break of slope and steeply sloping sides breaking sharply to a concave base. At the base of the pit was a deposit of loose charcoal (4018) measuring 0.5m × >0.15m × 0.04m and, above this, a secondary fill (4017) measuring 0.6m × 0.55m × 0.38m, consisting of moderately compact reddish-brown sandy clay containing occasional small pebbles, charcoal flecking and daub, together with two rim sherds of reduced Severn Valley ware.

The inhumations and other features comprising this phase of use provide significant evidence of post-Roman/early medieval activity within this area of the Frome valley. Prone burial and decapitation frequently occur in Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries of the 7th and 8th centuries and these were used as a mark of disrespect for the corpses of convicted offenders. Skeleton (4050) may thus represent an executed criminal, the dating of the remains being broadly consistent with this interpretation, although perhaps slightly early. It is almost certainly the case that the area was subject to Anglo-Saxon control at this time and highly likely that Yarkhill/Stretton Grandison was under the direct rule of Merewald of the sub-kingdom of the *Magonsaete*, who were reputedly converted to Christianity in AD 660 and whose connection with Yarkhill is attested in a later charter of AD 811 (Perry, 2002, 50-1).

Against this interpretation, however, the savage and seemingly unrestrained nature of the blows to the victim's head would appear to be inconsistent with a controlled official execution and seem more likely to have been sustained in battle or during an assault. Furthermore, the cemetery was clearly not reserved exclusively for criminals, as it contains both neonate and infant burials, and it would thus perhaps be more accurate to describe this area as representing part of a so-called 'deviant burial ground', established in the location of an earlier Romano-British cemetery, which was used to inter 'wrongdoers and others of whom their peers were wary' (Reynolds, 2009, 1), including criminals, the disabled or disfigured or those who had suffered an unusual or premature death, such as suicide victims and stillborn children, for whom normal burial rites might have been regarded as inappropriate.

The features comprising this phase of activity were all found to cut deposit (4003=4047), which appears to represent a period of disuse and abandonment postdating a prolonged phase of Romano-British occupation probably spanning the early 2nd-early 4th centuries AD, which was characterised by burial activity and by a series of pits, ditches and other features, including a stone-lined well (4004) of finely worked squared masonry blocks and a kiln structure containing large amounts of fired clay, together with evidence of butchery and crop-processing.

Context (4003=4047) extended trenchwide (>32m × >18m) to an average thickness of 0.15m and consisted of moderately compact dark greyish-brown silty clay containing frequent very small rounded stones and charcoal flecking, together with pottery, CBM fragments, including two pieces of *imbrex*, and iron objects, including several nails and a complete buckle. A bronze coin of Constantius II or Constans was also found (**Plates 43 & 44**). This deposit produced most of the animal remains from AP4, consisting principally of cattle isolated teeth and terminal limb elements, with relatively few major meat-bearing bones. A similar range of

caprovid remains was also identified; pig, however, was represented mainly by mandibles and isolated teeth. Horse was present, represented by a varied selection of skeletal elements, and a number of possible human fragments were recovered, representing babies or infants. Bone retrieved from bulk samples provided little additional identifiable material and generally comprised very many small (typically less than 25mm in maximum dimension) pieces of bone. Shell, although far from abundant, was represented by some complete oyster valves. A range of arable weed seeds and a few grains of barley were recovered, indicative of cultivation, with hulled barley specifically identified in context (4003).

(4003=4047) produced just over 50 per cent of the pottery from AP4, which, overall, suggests a *tpq* in the later 3rd-early 4th century, although the material was slightly mixed (Timby, 2008). That from (4003) included several samian sherds from centres in both south and central Gaul spanning the Flavian through to the Antonine period, including a residual sherd from a hemispherical bowl of central Gaulish samian ware (form 37) of *c.* AD 135-65 (**Plate 45**) decorated with a single, wide festoon containing an animal, possibly the bear (O.1627), above a panther (O.1521). The festoon and types were all used by Cinnamus, one of the most prolific of the potters based at Lezoux, a major production centre located near modern Clermont-Ferrand, which dominated the British market from around 120 AD to the late 2nd century; the bar below the type in the festoon may be part of Cinnamus' tab-stamp, 'CINNAMI'. The pottery assemblage also included Dorset black burnished ware, including a

Plates 43 & 44: Obverse (left) and reverse of Roman coin from (4003)

number of 4th century sherds displaying oblique burnished lattice decoration, a rim from a Mancetter-Hartshill white ware *mortarium*, sherds of southern Spanish Baetican *amphorae*, probably from the globular *amphora* Dressel 20, used for transporting olive oil, and local wares, including Severn Valley ware, fine black ware and miscellaneous colour-coated wares. Context (4003) also produced a body fragment of blue/green glass measuring 37mm x 19mm, with a wall thickness 3mm, which was a common colour of the 1st to 3rd centuries. Two bronze coins were also recovered from (4003), the earliest of which dates to the reign of the Gallic emperor Victorinus (AD 269-71), which was minted in France/Germany (Mint II, issue V), with the later coin dating to the reign of Constantius II, minted in Trier after April 340 AD.

Context (4047) produced a substantial pottery assemblage, comprising a predominantly central Gaulish samian group of early to mid Antonine date, including two decorated sherds, with five of the 40 or so vessels originating from south Gaul. The first of the decorated pieces

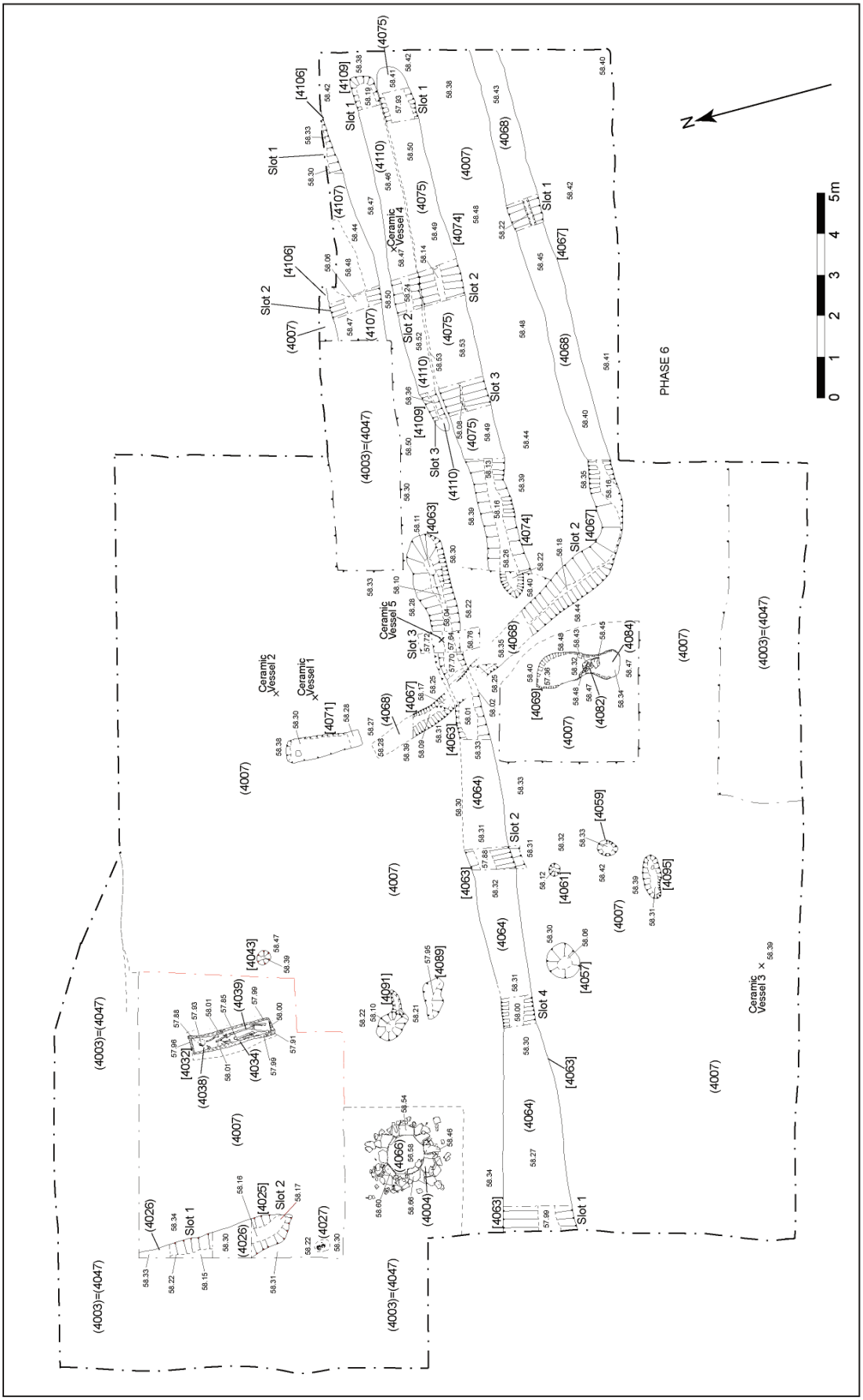


Fig. 31: Plan of Access Pit 4 showing Romano-British features

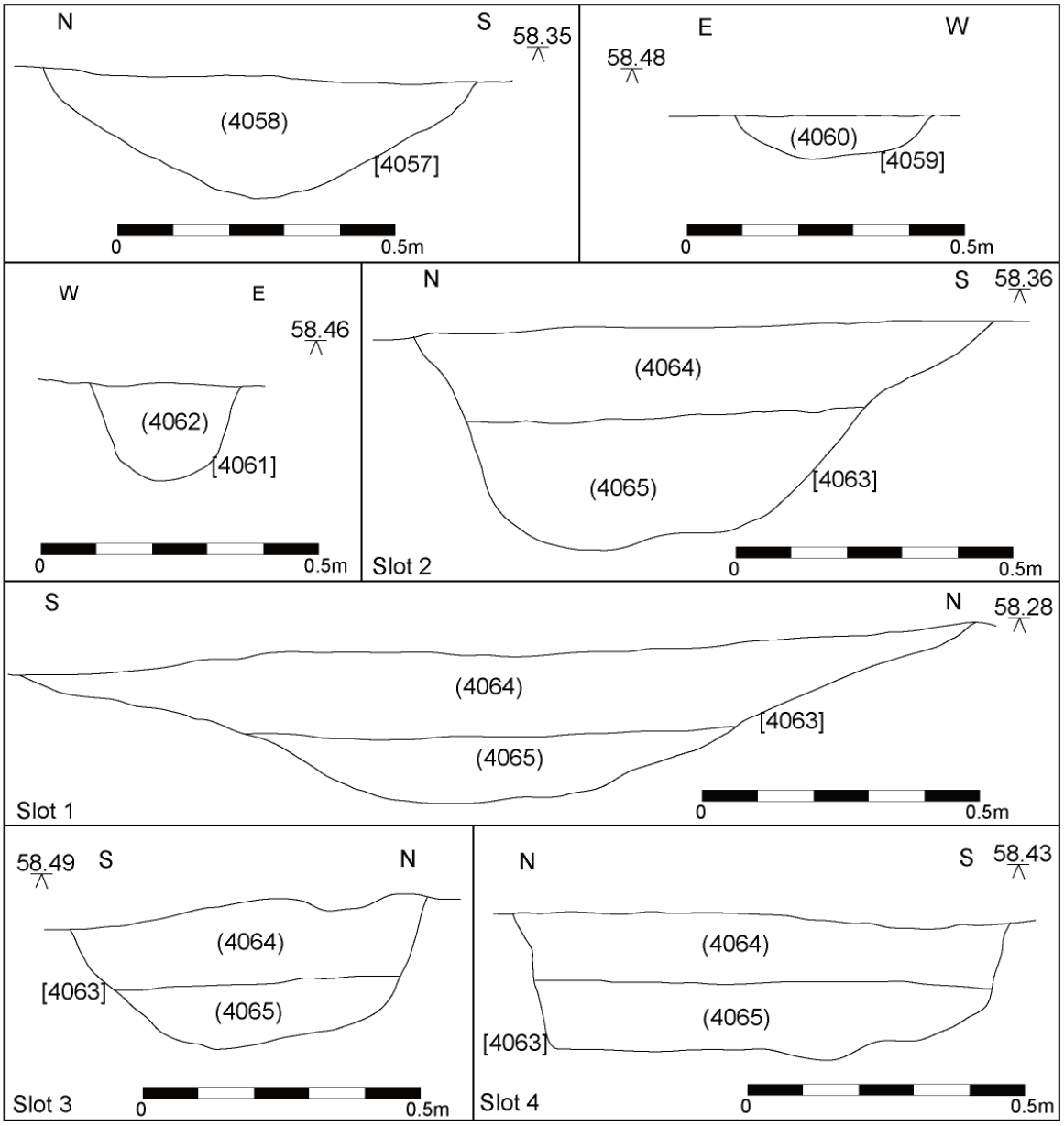


Fig. 32: Profiles of Romano-British features

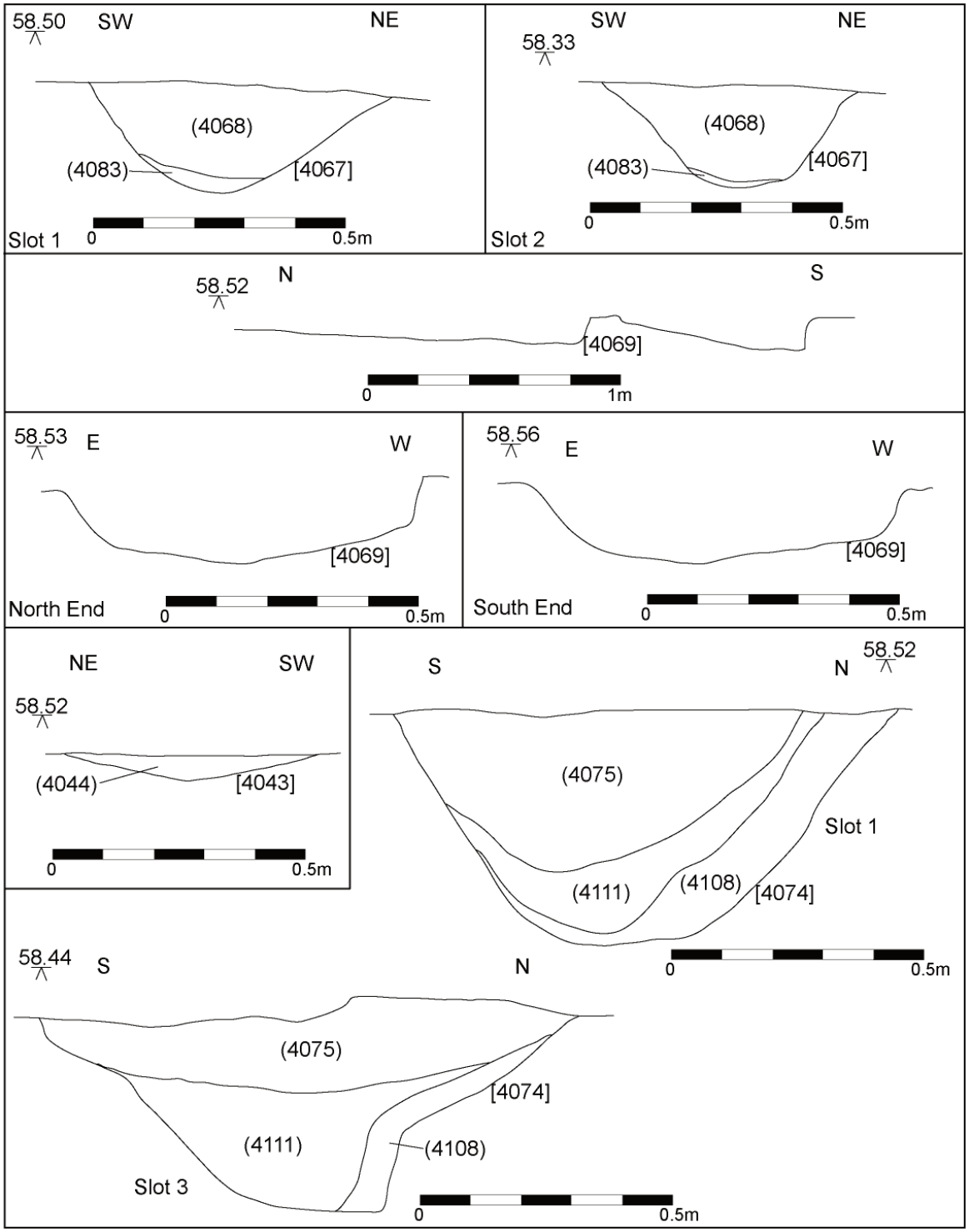


Fig. 33:Profiles of Romano-British features

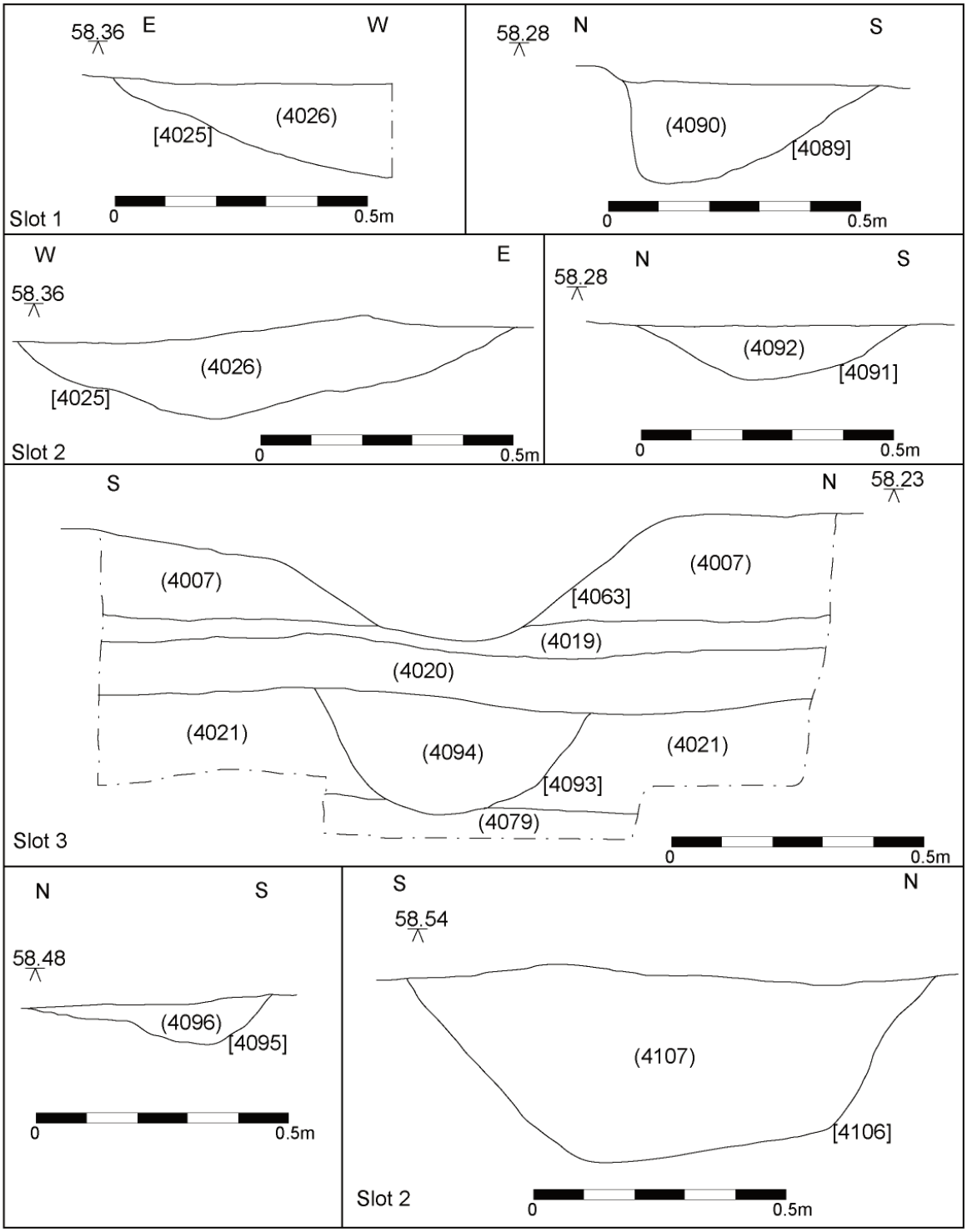


Fig. 34: Profiles of Romano-British features

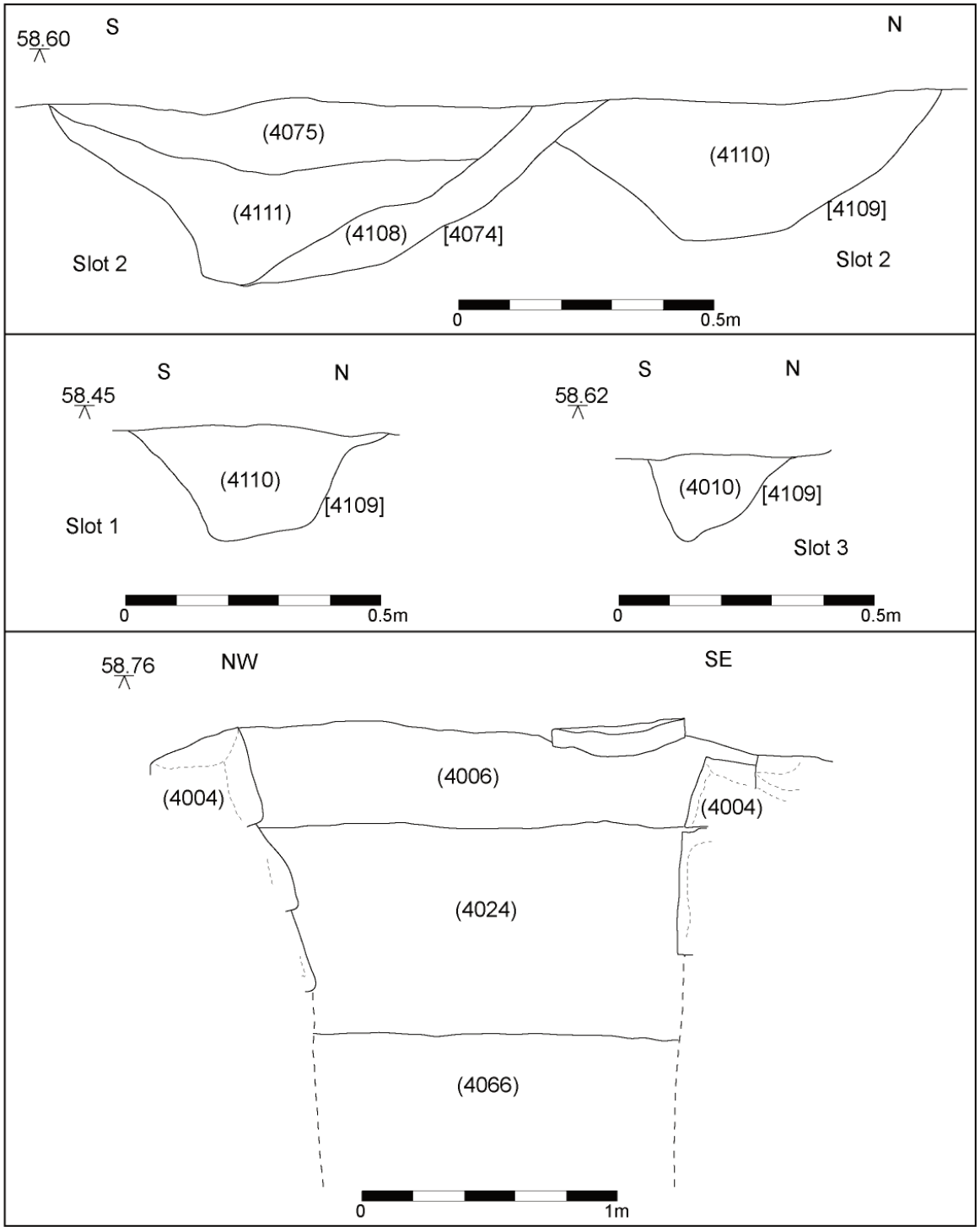


Fig. 35: Profiles of Romano-British features

was from a hemispherical decorated bowl of central Gaulish samian ware (form 37) bearing freestyle decoration with the horseman (O.246) and the snake-on-rock ornament (O.2155) (**Plate 46**). The snake-on-rock motif was used, as here, as a space-filler by the Lezoux potter Attianus and also, later, by Criciro. The horseman was used by Sacer of Lezoux, although not attested for his associate Attianus. The style is likely to be that of the Sacer-Attianus group, dating to *c.* AD 125-45. Also from a decorated central Gaulish hemispherical bowl (form 37) were two non-joining sherds of *c.* AD 135-65, both with rivet-holes and likely to be from the same bowl (**Plate 47**). One of the sherds shows the ovolo (Rogers B144) used on

Plate 45: Residual sherd from a hemispherical bowl of central Gaulish samian ware (form 37) of *c.* AD 135-65

the early work of Cinnamus in association with Cerialis, and part of an animal (?); the other, their warrior (O.207A). Other central Gaulish samian sherds were recovered from this deposit, including a bowl fragment (form 37d) of Antonine date, a body sherd from a plate/bowl (form 18/31) of Trajanic-Hadrianic date and a rim from a plate/bowl (form 18/31R) of Hadrianic/Antonine date.

Deposit (4003=4047) overlay several semi-complete or complete cremation urns, with a possible date range spanning the 2nd to 4th centuries. The first of these (Vessel 1) (**Plates 48 & 49**) comprised a broken but complete ceramic vessel of oxidised Severn Valley ware with its contents intact, which was lifted from site by wrapping with polyethylene film and subsequently excavated and reconstructed by Ms Jennifer Jones of Durham University's conservation laboratory and the contents analysed by Dr Anwen Caffell, also of Durham University. Removal of the fill revealed some 638.5g of cremated human bone exhibiting variable degrees of burning, with some fragments completely calcined and others only lightly burned, lying mainly in the mid-section of the vessel, with 20-30mm of overlying fill. The remains were those of a presumed adult but were incomplete, comprising several identifiable fragments of cranial vault, vertebra, upper limb (humerus, radius, ulna, hand) and lower limb (femur), suggesting some of the burial had been lost. No remains of grave goods were found within the fill. The burial jar appeared to have lain on its side for a considerable period, as the sherds below the cremation were particularly water worn. The pottery fragments were subsequently consolidated and the vessel reassembled using conservation grade adhesive. The reconstructed burial urn measures *c.*280mm high, with an everted rim 111mm in diameter and a flat base, also *c.*111mm, and measures *c.*235mm diameter at its widest point. There is no decoration and the smooth fabric has few visible inclusions. All joins were found to be abraded, probably the result of water percolation during burial.

A second vessel (Vessel 2) consisted of the lower two-thirds of an oxidised Severn Valley

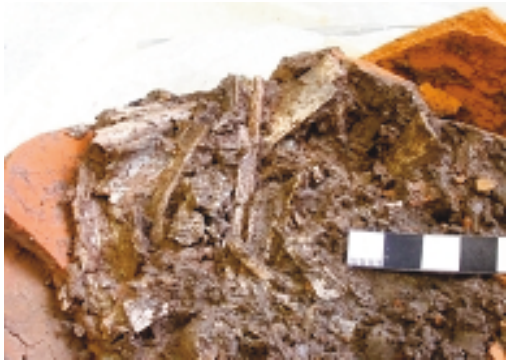
ware jar and contained a substantial amount of cremated bone representing a complete or near-complete adult burial. Similar to Vessel 1, this vessel was lifted from site wrapped in polyethylene film and delivered to Archaeological Services Durham University packed with some loose surrounding soil, which was processed and the flot retained. The polyethylene film was left in place, and the soil and cremated bone fill removed. The bone was washed through a coarse sieve, with a further 500µ sieve below it. The flot resulting from the fill was retained and the cremated bone was dried. The vessel was dismantled and the sherds washed without brushes and air-dried retaining the relationship between the pieces as far as possible. Only the flat base and part of the walls of the vessel survive. A substantial weight of

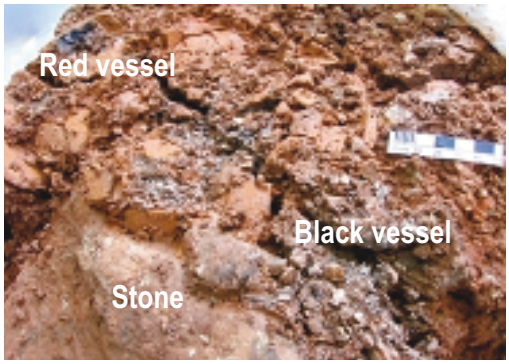
(Left) Plate 46:Form 37, central Gaulish, from (4047) showing freestyle decoration with the horseman (O.246) and the snake-on-rock ornament (O.2155) *c.*AD 125-45

(Right) Plate 47: Form 37, central Gualish samian ware, two non-joining sherds of *c.* AD 135-165, both with rivet-holes and likely to be from the same bowl)

approximately 1380g of cremated bone was recovered representing an almost complete adult burial. This comprised fragments of cranial vault, torso (vertebrae, ribs), upper limb (humerus, radius), pelvis, and lower limb (femur, fibula, feet).

The third burial (Vessel 3) (**Plate 50**) was lifted intact within a block of soil and excavated in laboratory conditions. During excavation of the block, it became clear that there were body sherds of an oxidised Severn Valley ware-type jar, together with a second cremation vessel representing a Dorset black burnished ware jar, and that both vessels were bordered by a large, irregular stone measuring 220mm × 136mm, with one finished face and one original curving edge, exhibiting evidence of a pecked perforation in the middle of one of the long edges. A second small sub-rectangular stone measuring 95mm x 88mm was found on the opposite side of the Severn Valley ware pot. Examination of the soil block and the condition of the vessels suggested that the Dorset black burnished ware jar was probably deposited first and that it had been subsequently disturbed or truncated by the deposition of the Severn Valley ware vessel and possibly also the large stone, which was lying against both pots. The first interment contained approximately 277g of cremated bone, mostly comprising small unidentifiable fragments, although some long bone fragments were present indicative of an adult/adolescent individual. The Severn Valley ware vessel contained approximately 880g of friable cremated bone with a few recognisable fragments of cranial vault and long bone representing an adult burial or possibly that of an adolescent. The vessels were fragmentary and only the bases and lower parts of the walls survived. The cremated bone fragments were very crushed and packed tightly into the bases, suggesting that larger pieces of bone had been lost; the black vessel contained the least amount of cremated bone (suggesting much of this burial may have been lost).





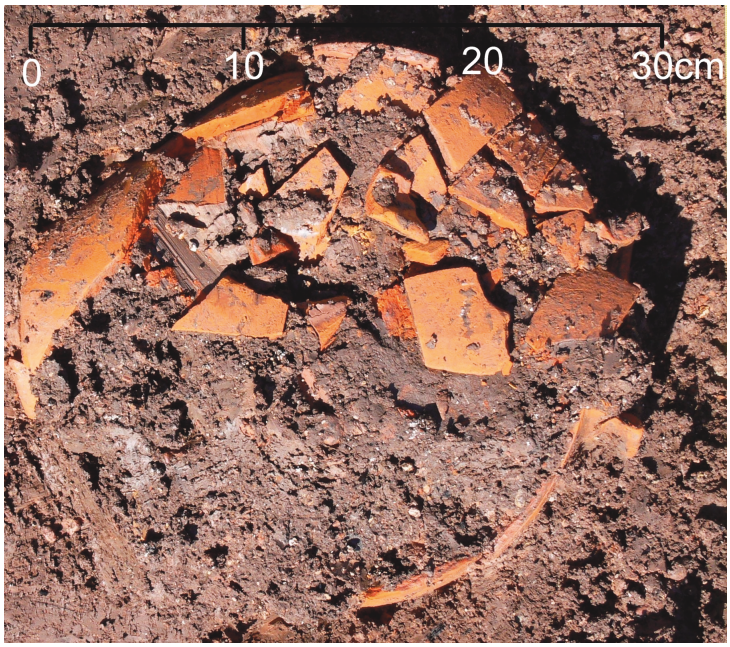
(Top left) Plate 48: Vessel 1 showing condition on arrival at Durham University and *in situ* cremated bone

(Above right) Plate 49: Vessel 1 following reconstruction

(Above left) Plate 50: Vessel 3 and stone in soil block

(Below) Plate 51: Vessel 4 *in situ*

(Left) Plate 52: Vessel 5 as found within ditch (4063)



Another, almost complete everted-rim oxidised Severn Valley ware jar (Vessel 4) (**Plate 51**) was also recovered—with cremated bone fill *in situ*—from within the fill (4110) of an east-west ditch [4109]. Part of the rim was detached and a further rim fragment was found in the fill. The fill and cremated bone was removed and washed through a coarse sieve, with a further 500µ sieve below it. Approximately 1844g of variably burnt bone was recovered, probably representing a near-complete adult burial, which included fragments of cranial vault, tooth, torso (vertebrae, ribs), upper limb (humerus, radius, ulna), and lower limb (femur, tibia, fibula, foot). The individual had suffered two fractured ribs that had subsequently healed. The vessel was washed without brushes and dried. It is an undecorated jar with a flat base and everted rim standing *c.*245mm high, with a rim 111 mm in diameter, and is *c.*228mm diameter at its widest point. The poorly fired fabric is pale red with a faint dark core and has few visible inclusions.

A fifth vessel was recovered from a ditch [4063] (**Plate 52**) and was found to contain a small quantity (22.7g) of unidentified burnt bone, mostly pale grey/white, with some mid and dark grey material.

Several inhumation burials were also overlaid by (4003=4047), including a male adult (4039) interred within a wooden coffin (4034). This coffin was found to have survived in an exceptionally well-preserved condition due to the presence of permanently waterlogged conditions (**Plate 53; Fig. 36**) and has subsequently been analysed and conserved. The adult skeleton has yielded key radiocarbon dating evidence and a considerable amount of data relating to diet and pathology—including age-related degenerative conditions—has been obtained from specialist examination of the remains.

Skeleton (4039) and its associated coffin lay within a rectangular grave cut [4032] measuring 2.2m × 0.8m × 0.5m. The partially disarticulated (70-80 per cent complete) remains comprised an extended supine inhumation oriented north-south with the head at north, which, based on certain indicators present in the pelvis and skull, was identified as a mature male aged 46+ years. The skull was poorly preserved, with the right side of the face and most of the cranial vault absent, and the arms and hands had been displaced. The ribs were largely incomplete and the right half of the hip, most of the sacrum, the right fibula and some of the foot bones were missing. The bone itself was unusually hard and dark in colour resuting in excellent surface preservation.

Height has been calculated as 1.76m (5’ 9’’), well above the average for the Roman period of 1.69m, and the heavily worn teeth, a characteristic of ancient populations, attest to a lifetime’s consumption of heavy, gritty food. All teeth exhibited accretions of mineralised plaque (calculus) indicating poor oral hygiene, which had resulted in decay and tooth loss. The presence of dental enamel hypoplasia (DEH) (a line in the enamel indicating periods of interrupted tooth growth) suggests (4039) had experienced episodes of poor nutrition, illness, or both, during childhood. Several pathological conditions were noted, including degenerative joint disease (osteoarthritis) and the spinal condition known as diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH), which is characterised by flowing ‘candle-wax’ type calcification along the sides of the vertebrae and which is generally more apparent in individuals over the age of 50. DISH has also been associated with obesity and adult-onset diabetes in older males and can result from consumption of a rich and plentiful diet. Trauma injuries included four fractured ribs, possibly caused by a blow, which had subsequently healed, and signs of soft tissue injury around the ankle. A thumb fracture incurred apparently as a result of punching was also noted, offering fascinating evidence of interpersonal violence at this time. Unusually, (4039) had six lumbar vertebrae rather than five and two of the toes had fused as

a result of joint disease or trauma.

A tooth from skeleton (4039) yielded sufficient carbon for accurate measurement and returned a 2 sigma calibrated date range of AD 10-210 (Cal BP 1940-1740). The presence of late 2nd or 3rd century pottery within the lower grave fill (4038), a 0.35m thick firm/plastic mid bluish-grey silty clay, suggests a date towards the upper end of this range, an interpretation corroborated by the presence in (4038) of a body fragment of high quality colourless glass of a type used mainly in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and by the discovery within the upper grave fill (4033) of a blue/green glass body chip from a prismatic bottle of a type that continued in use until the end of the 2nd century, with some examples still in use in the 3rd century. This

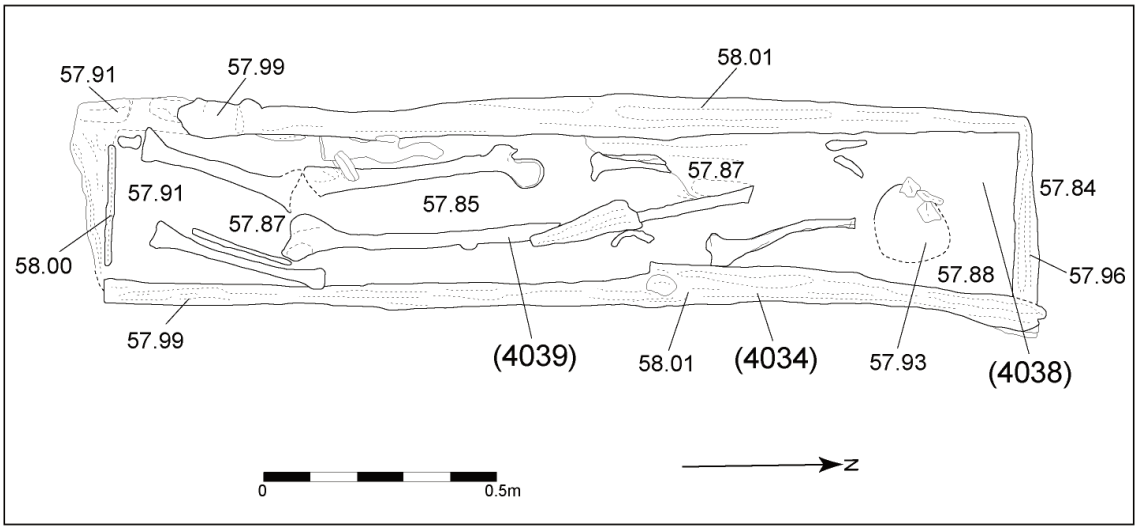


Plate 53 & Fig. 36: Skeleton (4039) within remains of oak coffin

secondary fill material, underlying (4003=4047), was composed of firm orangey-brown charcoal-flecked silty clay containing occasional larger fragments of charcoal, small sub-rounded stones and fragmentary and largely unidentifiable animal bone.

The coffin was examined on site by Ian Panter of York Archaeological Trust and the fills extensively sampled before removal by Border Archaeology. During lifting, the coffin separated naturally into its individual components (comprising two sides, a base and two end pieces) and each of the archaeological timbers was removed and placed on a rigid plank, which was then wrapped in polyethylene film to prevent drying and to secure it in place for

delivery to the Trust's Walmgate Warehouse for recording, study and conservation. In terms of overall dimensions, the coffin measured approximately 2m long, 400mm wide and 180mm deep (for dimensions of individual timbers see Appendices) and was of oak (*Quercus* spp.). The structure was fastened with iron nails driven through pre-cut holes in the face of the side planks into the edge of the base plank. Although there was no intact lid present, fragments of wood adhering to bone in places may be interpreted as the decayed remains of some kind of covering. Damage was noted along the upper edges of the side elements of the coffin, i.e. those parts of the structure closest to the upper limit of the local water table, with some fragmentation occurring at the ends of planks/boards. After recording and study, the coffin was conserved by impregnating the wood with two grades of polyethylene glycol wax (PEG) followed by accelerated freeze-drying and eventual reconstruction using wooden dowels and conservation grade adhesive.

It is possible that the coffin was originally designed for a purpose other than burial, although there appears to be no evidence of what this might have been. This is suggested by the marked flexing of the legs of (4039), the lower leg bones having been displaced sideways, suggesting that some effort had been used to accommodate this unusually tall individual within a pre-existing container of insufficient size (**Plate 55**). It is possible that the body was partially decomposed before being placed in the coffin, although excarnation rituals are usually associated with Iron Age funerary practice (Gwilt & Haselgrove, 1997, 167-73; Cunliffe, 2005, 21). However, there is limited evidence from several Romano-British burial grounds in the Middle and Upper Ouse Valley indicating that the tradition of excarnation may have continued, albeit sporadically, throughout the Roman period (Meade, 2008), and possible evidence of excarnation has been identified on a number of Romano-British sites in

Plate 54: View west showing coffin (4034) *in situ*

Wales (Pollock, 2006, 83). The absence of a lid (although, as stated above, a covering may originally have been present) and the low sides have lead to the further suggestion that this, possibly reused container served as some kind of bier during the funeral ritual that was used both to transport the individual to the grave and to inter the remains (Panter, 2008).

A second coffin burial (4073), also aligned north-south and again probably that of an adult, was subsequently revealed to the east of (4039) (**Plate 56; Fig. 37**). This appeared complete and, unlike the previous example, possessed a lid, part of which had been removed to expose the skull. This apparent high level of preservation, however, proved illusory as, due to the burial being situated above the probable upper limit of the local water table, the wood had decayed to a point at which the coffin consisted of little more than a textured soil stain. No further investigation of this burial was undertaken due to time and budgetary constraints; however, the evidently intentional exposure of the skull did raise some interesting questions

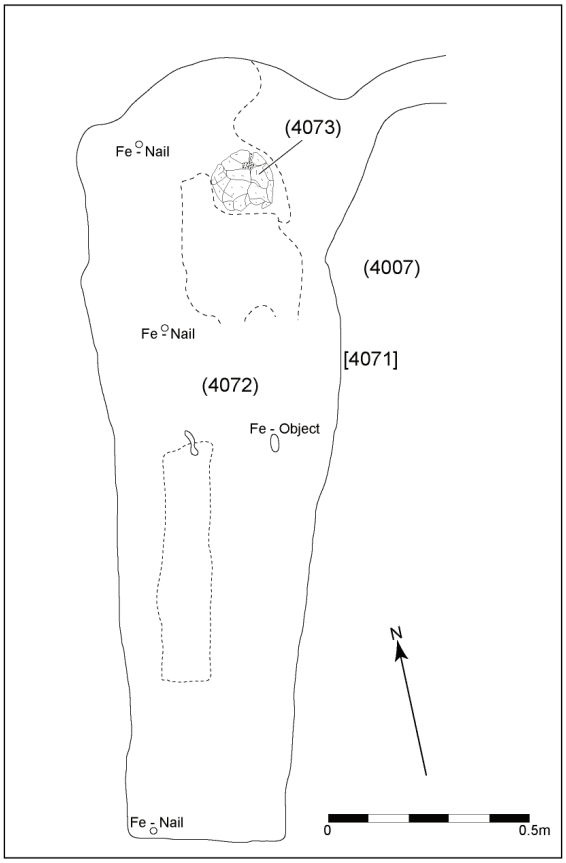
regarding burial practice, specifically with reference to the ritual, widespread in the Roman world, of 'feeding the dead', which involved the insertion of a pipe into the coffin down which food and drink could be poured during festivals of the dead (Toynbee, 1971, 51-2). Interestingly, a curious curving channel leading off from the skull area was noted during investigation of the soils around the burial, which may have accommodated such a device.

Plate 55: Skeleton (4039) showing displaced lower limbs

The fill (4072) overlying the coffin contained residual sherds of Dorset black burnished ware and grey ware and a rim sherd from a south Gaulish samian cup (form 27) of the Flavian or Trajanic period. Also present was a very small colour-coated sherd representing a vessel possibly manufactured in the New Forest area.

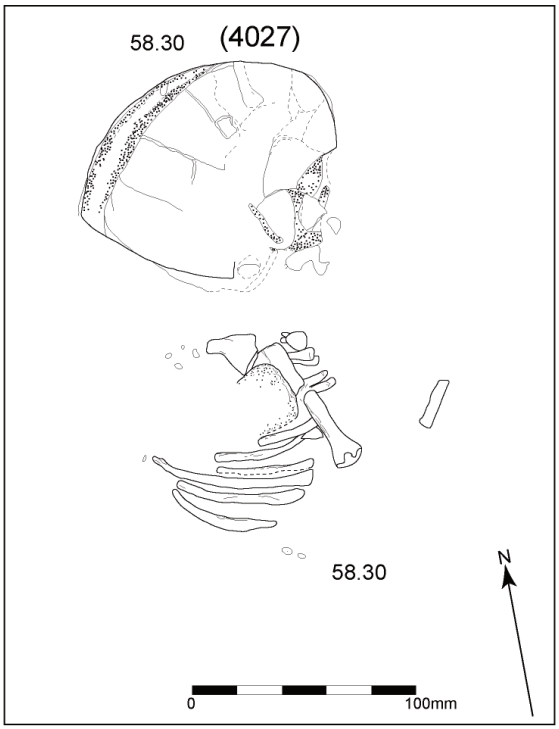
The burial of a neonate (4027) lying north-south in a flexed position with the head to the north was revealed close to and immediately west of ditch [4025] within the northwest part of the excavation area (**Plate 57; Fig. 38**). Exposed were part of the skull, the right arm and several right ribs. The skeleton, as revealed during excavation, appeared to be fully articulated and was block-lifted to preserve its integrity. The burial was subsequently removed in its entirety off-site for excavation under laboratory conditions by staff at the University of Durham.

The skeleton proved to be 90-95 per cent complete, with only the right half of the mandible/maxilla, right scapula and much of the clavicle, the lower half of the ulna and some right metacarpals missing. The condition of the bones was considered good, with most of the surface detail preserved, although there had been some fragmentation. An age assessment was carried out based on the presence of deciduous teeth in the early stages of formation and on skeletal development, both of which indicated that this individual had been either stillborn or had died within a few weeks of birth; it was not, however, possible to estimate the sex of the neonate. Its curled position, as though sleeping, was probably the result of physiology rather than a reflection of burial practice, as the head and body do not straighten naturally until the age of about three months; similarly, the north-south orientation of the burial appears to have been influenced more by the physical presence of ditch [4025] than by cultural factors. However, the location of the remains close to a ditch may be significant, as it



(Above left & right) Plate 56 & Fig. 37: Adult inhumation (4073) aligned north-south within decayed wooden coffin

(Below left & right) Plate 57 & Fig. 38: Neonate (4027) lying north-south in a flexed position with the head to the north



is known that neonate burials are often consigned to settlement or territorial boundary locations, possibly reflecting a belief in their liminality and the need to exclude them from communal burial areas. Such burials may also be associated with crop-processing areas (although, this tends to be a feature of late Roman burial practice) and it is perhaps significant that large amounts of chaff were identified in the fill (4026) of [4025].

Directly beneath the baby was a firm dark grey to black silty clay (4031), which may have been part of deposit (4019) or possibly associated with an earlier cremation burial, consisting of burnt bone and fragments of two pottery vessels, the remains of which were found throughout the clay block containing (4027). The quantity of cremated bone was small and the fragments were too small to permit identification, although some were possibly cranial and one was probably a rib. Also revealed during the course of the laboratory excavation of (4027) were remains of mouse and shrew, which appear to have been taking advantage of the disturbed soil around the burial and may have been attracted by food offerings, while the sheep/goat bones also found in this deposit may themselves have been the remains of such offerings. No grave cut associated with the burial was identified on site and none was revealed during subsequent laboratory excavation of the clay block; the cut appears to have become indistinguishable from the surrounding soils (4028). These soils overlay (4031) and consisted of firm reddish-brown sandy clay containing both oxidised and reduced (black variant) Severn Valley ware, together with sherds of locally produced grey ware with rusticated decoration dating typologically from the early 2nd century AD. Significantly, deposit (4028) also produced a fragment of box-flue tile from an internal heating system, attesting to the likely presence in the area of a building of some status.

A second neonate inhumation was identified within the central area of the site comprising disarticulated remains within the fill (4044) of a near-circular pit [4043] measuring 0.38m × 0.37m × 0.25m (**Fig. 31**). In profile, the pit had a sharp break of slope at the top of the cut with concave, gradually sloping sides breaking gradually to a slightly concave base. The disarticulated material represented a (10-20 per cent complete) neonate and consisted of part of the spine, two left ribs and around 30 un-sided rib fragments, part of the left scapula, the right proximal humerus, four sacral bodies and part of the right ilium, and the right proximal femur. The bone was contained within a moderately compact dark greyish-brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional fired clay, together with sherds of grey ware and oxidised Severn Valley ware.

This phase of activity also witnessed the construction of stone-lined well/cistern (4004) (**Plates 58 & 59; Figs 39 & 40**). The well structure consisted of a sub-circular cut [4005] measuring 1.6m × 1m, which was lined with sandstone masonry (4004). The upper 0.5m of the lining was constructed of clay-bonded squared masonry blocks measuring on average 350mm × 150mm × 150mm, while the lower section consisted of randomly coursed sandstone masonry with average dimensions of 450mm × 150mm × 150mm. Further investigation, however, was precluded by health and safety considerations and excavation ceased before reaching the full depth of the well. Of those deposits investigated, the uppermost (4006) measured 0.16m thick and consisted of moderately compact to firm, dark orangey-brown silty clay containing frequent charcoal fragments, occasional CBM, pottery and daub flecking, and very occasional iron objects, mainly nails. The pottery included a sherd of central Gaulish samian dating to AD 170-200, Dorset black burnished ware and oxidised Severn Valley ware fragments, together with unclassified crumbs. It should be noted that his deposit also produced the latest samian sherd from the site, namely, a scrap of gritted *mortarium* (form 45?), suggesting that samian ware vessels continued to be imported until the end of the 2nd century AD. In total, the well produced 41 quite fragmentary sherds;

Plate 58: View north of stone-lined well/cistern (4004)

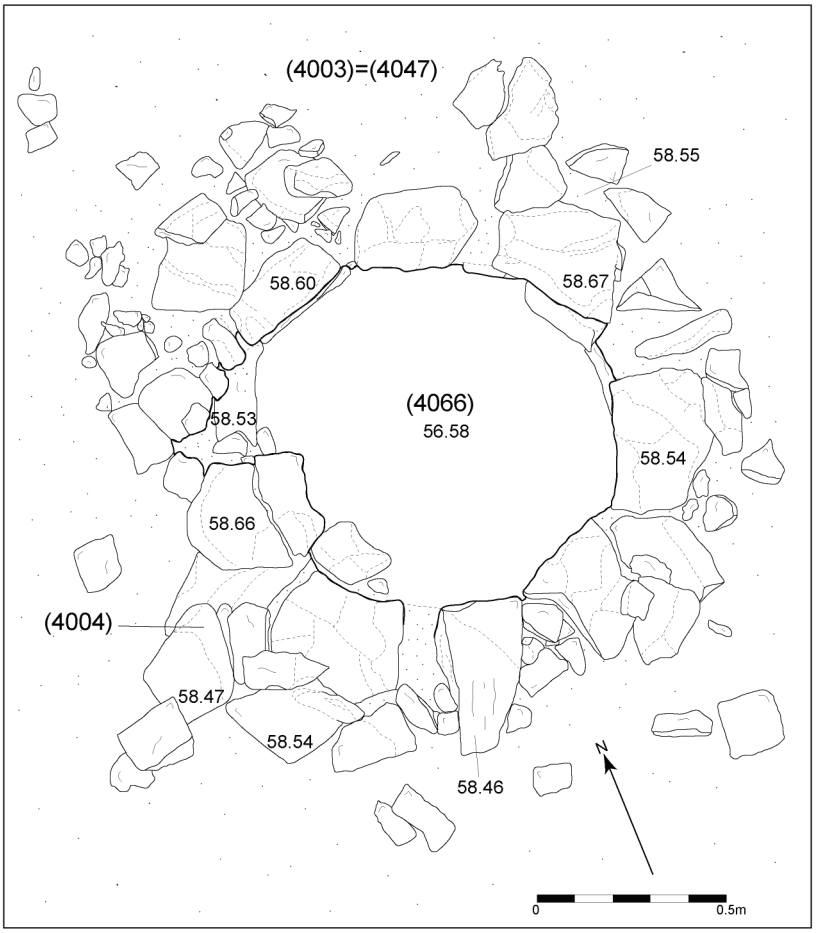
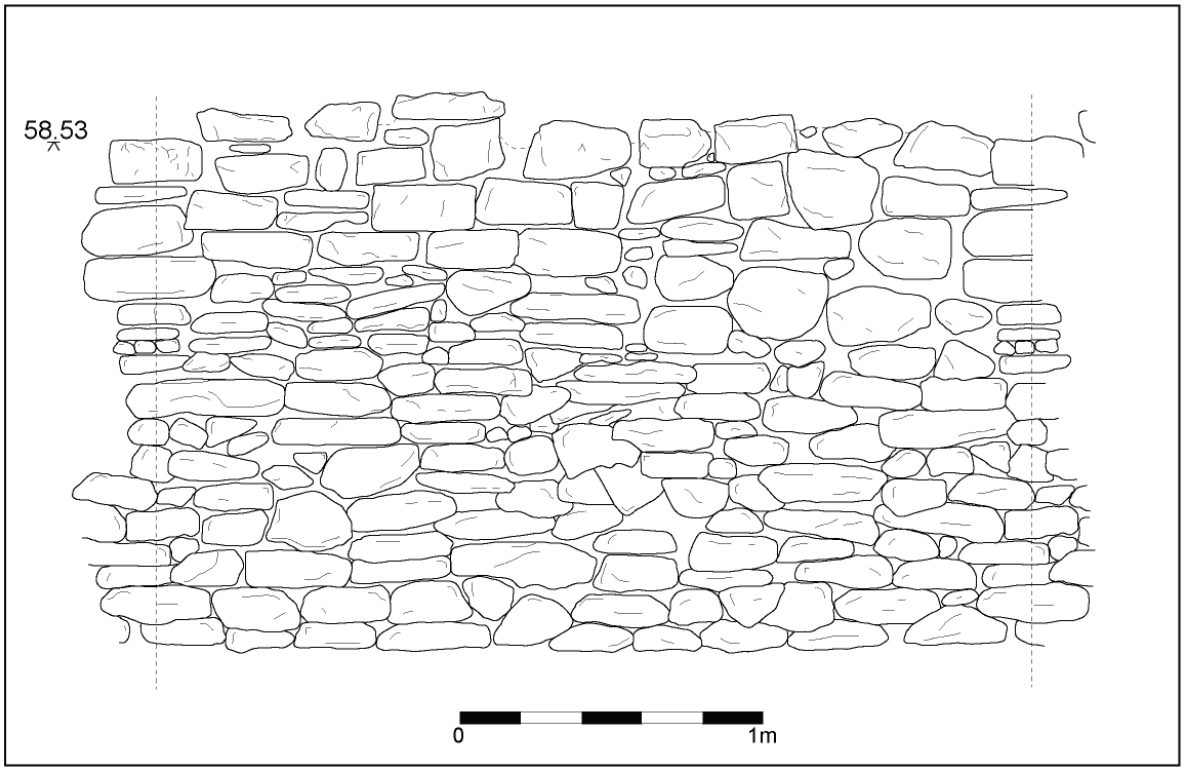


Fig. 39: Plan of well/cistern (4004)

(Above) Plate 59: Detail of well construction

(Below) Fig. 40: Elevation showing detail of well construction



the assemblage was mixed chronologically, with wares ranging in date from the 1st to possibly the early 3rd century AD, which probably represents largely redeposited material. Underlying (4006) was a second fill (4024) of 0.4m thickness, which consisted of firm mid orangey-brown mortar-and-charcoal-flecked silty clay producing several iron nails and three sherds of oxidised Severn Valley ware, together with small mammal and amphibian remains and abundant chaff remains indicative of cereal-processing activity being carried out close to the well.

Beneath (4024) was a further fill deposit (4066), consisting of moderately compact to firm mid greyish-brown silty clay from which was recovered a pottery assemblage containing central Gaulish samian ware (form 18-31/31) of the Hadrianic/Antonine period, south Gaulish samian, Malvernian metamorphic ware, Dorset black burnished ware, oxidised Severn Valley ware, handmade Malvernian ware, fine grey wares and a number of miscellaneous sherds. In terms of animal bone, hand-collection yielded some exceptionally well-preserved vertebrate material, with 89 of the fragments being measurable and 14 comprising mandibles with teeth *in situ*. Additionally, a large number of fragments were recovered from the processing of fill samples. Among a total of 265 fragments were cattle, caprovid and pig bone, together with 73 fragments of a medium to large-sized adult dog skeleton. Also present were vole, amphibian, land snail, woodcock and oyster. Two possible human bone fragments were also recovered. Charred plant macrofossils recovered from the well included hulled barley, wheat (including spelt) and a single caryopsis from *cf*. brome grass, while waterlogged seeds represented a range of *taxa* characteristic of aquatic, ruderal, woodland, wetland and wide-niche habitats, including water plantain, hemlock and rush, which perhaps grew on exposed mud resulting from disturbance around the well or localised drainage activities. The ruderal *taxa*, particularly common nettle and knotgrass, may have favoured rather drier ground, but would also have thrived in the disturbed area adjacent to the well.

Notable among the small finds was the sole and part of the upper of a right foot child's shoe (*c.* UK size 12/13) from (4066) (**Plate 60**). The sole measured 188mm long, 65mm wide across the forepart and 47mm wide at the heel. The back part of the upper appeared to be intact, although damaged, and was originally made from a single thickness of leather, which had become laminated. At its maximum height, the upper measured 39mm and was sharply angled at each side, meeting and joining with the sole behind the ankle. The front part of the upper was separately constructed, although there was no indication of its form, while the sole comprised at least five layers of leather and had iron hobnails attached. There was no evidence of repair, although the toe edge of the sole and the top edge of the upper were damaged. The shoe was kept in appropriate storage conditions prior to receipt by Durham University's Conservation Laboratory, where work was carried out under the direction of Ms Jennifer Jones. Washing and freeze-drying followed immersion in PEG (polyethylene glycol) and the leather was surface-treated with lubricant in white spirit; loose hobnails and leather fragments were re-adhered using conservation-grade adhesive.

Plate 60: Child's show recovered from Romano-British stone-lined well