

A Late Roman Cemetery at Bletsoe



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**A Late Roman Cemetery at Bletsoe,
Bedfordshire**

by

Michael Dawson

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A Late Roman Cemetery at Bletsoe, Bedfordshire

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**Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph Series
No 1 1994**

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MONOGRAPH SERIES**

No 1 1994

**BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL**

Edited by Evelyn Baker with the assistance of Michael Dawson and Anna Slowikowski

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Contents

List of illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	1
The site in its landscape setting	1
The villa and its structures	3
Structure 1	3
The finds	3
Pottery <i>A Slowikowski</i>	3
Copper alloy	3
The coins	4
Stone	4
Structure 2	4
Structure 3	6
The finds	6
Copper alloy	6
Bone	6
The cemetery area	7
The field system	7
The finds and environmental evidence from the field system	7
The Animal Bones <i>R Clark</i>	7
Iron	7
Copper alloy	9
Bone	9
Stone implements	11
Ceramic finds (other than pottery) <i>A Slowikowski</i>	11
Coins	11
The pottery <i>A Slowikowski</i>	11
Catalogue of illustrated pottery	16
Conclusion	16
The cemetery	16
Structure of the graveyard	18
The cemetery: discussion	28
Orientation	28
Coffins and stone lining	29
Skeletal position	29
Child inhumations	29
Discussion: the human remains <i>C B Denston and C Duhig</i>	29
The grave goods	31
The pottery <i>A Slowikowski</i>	32
The date of the cemetery	32
General Discussion	32
Appendix 1: The pottery <i>A Slowikowski</i>	34
Introduction	34
Type Series	34
Appendix 2: Brick and tile <i>A Slowikowski</i>	39
Appendix 3: Skeletal catalogue <i>C B Denston and C Duhig</i>	41
Graves 1–15 (1968 excavation)	41
Grave 1	41
Grave 2	41
Grave 3	41

Grave 4	41
Grave 5	41
Grave 6	41
Grave 7	41
Grave 8	42
Grave 9	42
Grave 10	42
Grave 11	42
Grave 12	42
Grave 13	42
Grave 14	42
Grave 15	43
Graves S1–S13 (1969–70)	43
S1	43
S2	43
S3	43
S4	43
S5	43
S6	43
S7	44
S8	44
S9	44
S10	44
S11	44
S12	45
S13	45
Graves 100–128 (1970)	47
Grave 100	47
Grave 101	47
Grave 102	47
Grave 103	47
Grave 104	47
Grave 105	47
Grave 106	47
Grave 108	49
Grave 110	49
Grave 111	49
Grave 112	49
Grave 113	49
Grave 115	49
Grave 116	49
Grave 118	50
Grave 119	50
Grave 120	52
Grave 121	52
Grave 122	53
Grave 123	53
Grave 124	53
Grave 128	53
Appendix 4: Notes on the Roman glass from Bletsoe <i>H E M Cool</i>	55
Catalogue	55

Abbreviations	55
Yellow/brown (amber)	56
Peacock (green/blue)	56
Light greenish colourless	56
Footnotes	57
The site archive	59
Summaries	61
Bibliography	63
Index ..	67

List of illustrations

Fig 1	Composite plan showing the location of Bletsoe and the excavated areas discussed in this report
Fig 2	The floor/occupation horizon of structure 1
Fig 3	Structure 3, the hearth flue
Fig 4	1 Miniature sword, 2 Finger-ring, 3 Needle, 5 Bracelet, 6 Plate fragment, 10 Bone Pin
Fig 5	18 File, 24 Nib, 25 Boss, 26 Unidentified object, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45 Bracelet fragments
Fig 6	Bone objects. 46 Pin, 47 Bead, 48 Bone spoon, 49 Awl, 50 whetstone, 55 vessel base with drilled hole, 56 ceramic sieve
Fig 7	Clay moulds
Fig 8	Roman pottery from pit 1
Fig 9	Roman pottery from the cemetery ditch system
Fig 10	Roman pottery from the Roman ditch system and pit 2
Fig 11	The cemetery area at Bletsoe
Fig 12	The Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 13	Coffin nail from grave S11
Fig 14	Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 15	Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 16	Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 17	Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 18	Roman graves at Bletsoe
Fig 19	Incidence of caries and tooth loss at Bletsoe
Fig 20	Comparison of cephalic indices and basi-bregmatic heights in skulls from Bletsoe
Fig 21	Unstratified Roman pottery
Fig 22	Unstratified Roman pottery
Fig 23	Pottery quantification table
Fig 24	Partially stone lined grave 101
Fig 25	Adult inhumation, stone lined 102
Fig 26	Child's stone-lined grave 108
Fig 27	Adult inhumation, supine 110
Fig 28	The possible double grave 116/111
Fig 29	Adult inhumation 115
Fig 30	Adult inhumations 111 (left) & 116 (right)
Fig 31	Child's stone-lined burial 117
Fig 32	Adult inhumation 121
Fig 33	Roman glass from the Bletsoe cemetery

Foreword

The Bedfordshire Archaeological Council (BAC) was formed in 1959 to co-ordinate archaeological excavation and other fieldwork in the county and also to produce a permanent record of this work through publishing the county journal or record, Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal, now Bedfordshire Archaeology.

The BAC comprises all active fieldwork groups and societies within Bedfordshire, and includes representatives from Luton and Bedford Museums and senior archaeologists from the County Council. A great deal of important rescue fieldwork undertaken by dedicated groups and individuals, nearly all of it under the auspices of the BAC and County Council, is published virtually every year in the county journal, a series well respected in this country and abroad for its high academic standards.

From the early 1970s, national awareness of the importance of England's heritage increased. Recognition grew that it was a unique and vulnerable resource which needed to be managed and protected from needless harm so that it could be passed to future generations. Archaeology ceased to be solely a seasonal event and became in addition, a full time profession; the quantity and diversity of necessary work had exceeded the capacity of dedicated individuals operating unsupported and in their spare time.

Bedfordshire County Council was one of the first local authorities to respond to the new situation, in 1972 creating the full time professional post of Archaeological Liaison Officer. In recognition of growing public expectations and the size of the problem, the County Planning Department now has a Heritage Group responsible for conserving and promoting the understanding of Bedfordshire's historic environment. Its functions include a task recognised by the BAC back in 1959, maintaining and developing a comprehensive central index. The Historic Environment Record (HER) currently has nearly 16,000 multiple entries covering Bedfordshire – and it is still growing. The clarification and

strengthening of planning procedures through DOE's Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 has increased the potential for preserving sites in the face of development proposals. The HER is an invaluable tool to enable the planning archaeologist to encourage the care and preservation of sites. It is now easier to detect where the heritage might be at risk and take steps to mitigate the effects.

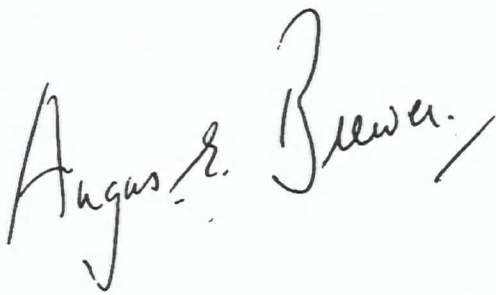
Those sites that cannot be preserved need to be recorded, and the County Council has a team of experienced archaeologists operating a full rescue excavation and survey service from its specially adapted St Mary's Church Archaeology Centre in Bedford. Bedfordshire's rich archaeological heritage is treated as a precious, and diminishing, resource able to give the people of Bedfordshire a sense of involvement in local history, and an educational resource for children, parents and teachers. A picture of the historic county is gradually being pieced together from countless small fragments. Sites are dug, the finds and records analysed, and the ordered results passed to the two registered museums in the county, Luton and Bedford, for display and curation.

No project is complete until its results have been properly published. The increased pace of work means that a number of large and important reports from the County Archaeology Service are nearing completion. Some of these may be published by English Heritage in its own series, and some others in national specialist period journals. Most however belong in the local journal, but this ought not to be changed by the sheer volume of reports so that worthy contributions by others are excluded.

The solution is the establishment of an occasional Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph series under the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council. We have pleasure in introducing the first volume as an example of the co-operation to promote heritage matters that exists between the County and the Archaeological Council. The Bletsoe Roman Cemetery was excavated in the

late 1960s by a combination of the former North Bedfordshire Archaeological Society and professionals under MOPBW (now English Heritage). The analysis of old records and finds to produce this report has been undertaken by the County Council's archaeologists. In this way it has been possible to recognise the efforts of the early field workers and to bring the results of this work to the attention of the people of Bedfordshire as well as archaeologists and academics.

The series will mostly concentrate upon more recent excavations, and not exclusively ones generated by the County Council Service. However, this first volume, a blend of old and new, amateur and professional, Bedfordshire County Council and the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, is an entirely appropriate standard bearer for this new archaeological venture.



Angus Brewer

Chairman,
Bedfordshire County Council



Ron Fowler

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Bedfordshire Archaeological Council

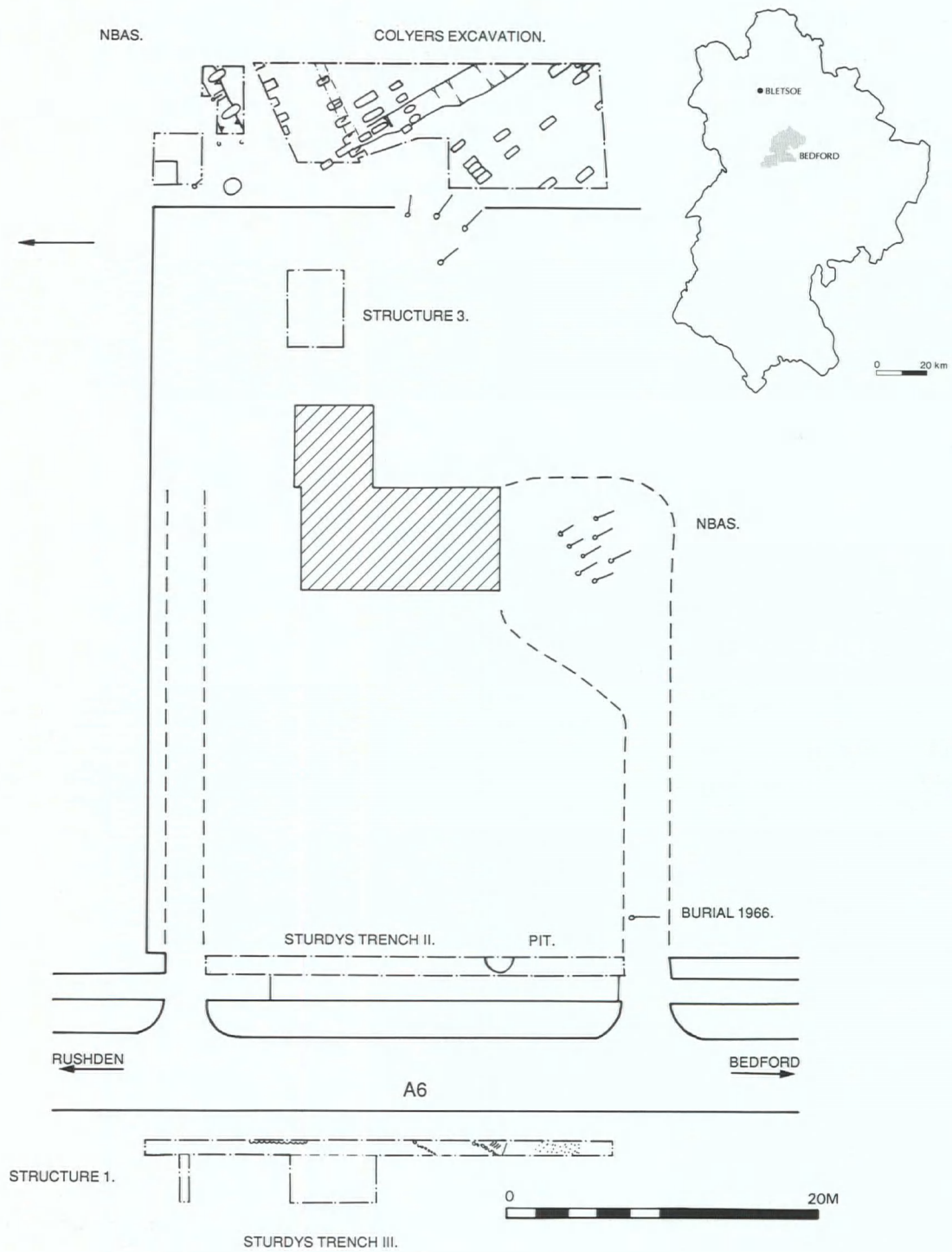


Fig 1 Composite plan showing the location of Bletsoe and the excavated areas discussed in this report.

Introduction

The presence of a Roman site at Bletsoe, Bedfordshire was first recognised in 1936, when, during the excavation of wall footings for a new rectory, workmen revealed human skeletons, Roman coins and a copper alloy penannular ornament (Kuhliche 1936, 83–4). The site was originally called Bletsoe villa but has been referred to since as Bletsoe Grange and Bletsoe cemetery. Interpretations of the date of the cemetery have varied from late Roman to 12th century.

In October 1966 the rectory changed hands. In the same year the new owner, Mr John Dunkley, discovered an inhumation and some Roman pottery when repairing the drive. Subsequently in June 1967 road widening of the A6 provided the Ministry of Public Building and Works with the opportunity to examine structural remains visible in a series of small drainage trenches flanking the road outside the rectory. This work was supervised by Mr D Sturdy. Later, in August 1967, Mr Dunkley discovered a further fifteen skeletons in graves whilst removing a flower bed on the line of his drive (Jones 1968; Kennet 1969, 85) and these were excavated by North Bedfordshire Archaeological Society. In 1968 NBAS began excavations east of the rectory boundary on land lent by the owner Mr J Harris. Their intention was to define the limits of the cemetery, but the discovery of another four skeletons in their trenches led to further excavations funded by the Ministry of Public Building and Works. The MOPBW excavations in 1970 were directed by Miss C Colyer on behalf of the Society and during one summer season forty graves were examined in addition to a possible late field ditch or boundary. The report which follows is divided into three parts: (1) the villa and its structures; (2) the field system beneath the cemetery; (3) the cemetery. It attempts to reconcile all dispersed extant evidence and show the probable existence of a Roman villa and explore in more depth evidence excavated in the nearby cemetery.

Acknowledgements

The report reflects the hard work of those who excavated the site in the 1960s and 1970s, Mr J Jones and the NBAS; D Sturdy and C C Colyer for MOPBW. Apart from the site record two works of synthesis were

undertaken: the interim reports by Jack Jones and a detailed analysis of the human bones commissioned by members of NBAS. Recent research however has meant reappraising some of the written text; in particular the report on the skeletal material by B Denston (1971) was kindly edited and brought up to date by C Duhig in 1991 then of the Department of Biological Anthropology, University of Cambridge. The present report could not have been completed without the help and enthusiasm of members of Bedford County Council Planning Department's Archaeology Service, particularly A Slowikowski who analysed the pottery, the illustrators M Trevarthen who drew the small finds and pottery, P Dodgson the ceramic small finds, C Marshall site plans and J Wells the skeletons. C C Colyer kindly read the report.

The site in its landscape setting

The 1936 report made it clear that a settlement of Roman date had been damaged during house building; the period of occupation, however, was uncertain. Coins from Tetricus (273) to Valens (364–7) had been recovered but the pottery could only be described as Romano-British by C F C Hawkes. By the late 1960s the site was being referred to as a villa. This report attempts to establish that the Bletsoe site is that of a large farm or villa with a range of ancillary buildings.

The Roman site at Bletsoe lies in an embayment of the valley eroded by the river Great Ouse through the kelloways and Oxford clays to the cornbrash and Great Oolite. The site is on the north of the embayment on gravels with a low ridge capped by boulder clay to the east. The alluvial soils of the embayment provide a light easy to work loam soil. A short distance to the north, a stream, as it flows south-west into the Great Ouse, has cut through the gravels to the Great Oolite.

The Roman site is eight miles south of the Roman small town of Irchester and is presently in the parish of Bletsoe. The modern village with its medieval core lies almost a quarter of a mile south of the site on the rising ground of the clay capped ridge. The route of the modern A6 runs through the site of Roman occupation; recent aerial photography has shown a complex of cropmark enclosures west of the modern road.

The villa site at Bletsoe is one of a series of such sites located along the valley of the river Gt Ouse. In Bedfordshire these are Odell, Carlton, Bletsoe, Felmersham, Pavenham, Moor End, Kempston Church End, Newnham Marina and Tempsford (Simco 1984, Map A). Further west into Buckinghamshire (Mynard 1987, fig 4) the density of villas and possible villas increases dramatically.

Mynard concluded that on the upper Ouse an increase in the density of rural settlement took place during the 2nd century, but was followed by contraction in the mid to late 3rd century. The situation was characterised by the villas at Latimer (Branigan 1971) and Brixworth (Woods 1973). Regional differences are apparent as some later economic expansion was evident during the fourth century in the upper Ouse at Bancroft but not apparently at Towcester, Ashton, Piddington or Whittlebury.

In the east, the Ouse flows north through the Fens to the Wash where the incidence of villas is entirely reduced (Salway 1970).

The pattern of villa sites, often located above the flood plain of the Ouse and its tributaries such as the Ivel, suggests a close relationship between the light easy to work and fertile soils of the river valleys and the early development of the villa. At sites such as

Newnham Marina and Kempston Church End there is no evidence other than that of arable farming to account for the wealth of the villa establishment. Furthermore the spatial distribution of the villas may indicate the extent of land holding necessary to sustain a villa, although considerably more work is needed to understand the agricultural regime which must have formed the economic basis of these villa estates.

Two factors are important: the range of agricultural implements available was limited (Manning 1964; Manning 1969; White 1967) and the heavy undrained clay soils of the area beyond the valleys are difficult to work using horsedrawn technology. Evidence of occupation on the claylands is therefore understandably sparse (Mynard 1989, fig 4; Simco 1984, Maps A, B, C).

At Bletsoe there is no excavated evidence of Iron Age settlement or very early Roman occupation. The cropmarks on the west of the site however and the 1st century coin finds do suggest that one possible area of research is whether this villa has Iron Age antecedents similar to those discovered at Park Street and elsewhere (Neale *et al* 1989). Development probably took place in the late 3rd century and occupation may have continued into the 5th.

The villa and its structures

The Roman structures lay on the south west side of the site. Some were examined by Sturdy in August 1967 and others were seen during excavation for a garden shed by Mr Dunkley and members of NBAS in 1966. The structures were observed and recorded in several trenches. In the original record these are referred to by their excavator's name or by the trench reference number. Where contexts are referred to in this report their original number is retained but to avoid confusion new structure numbers are used to distinguish areas of excavation.¹

Structure 1 (Fig 2)

The western-most structure was described as comprising five near-parallel slots suggesting a timber building laid on sleeper beams. The slots (Slots 1–5) which were described but not planned were sealed by a yellow/buff clayey horizon (4) and a loam layer, which to Sturdy indicated the collapsed remains of daub walls. The five slots were each filled with this same yellow/buff silty material. This description however probably indicates an horizon at the base of topsoil with plough scores cut into it. One possible wall foundation, however, was a shallow gully 355mm deep and 1219mm across (4B). (Not ill).

Nearby was a shallow feature incompletely excavated but filled with loam and gravel. Pot and coins, as well as its shape, indicate that this was probably a shallow pit (5).

The area of the building suggests domestic use with surfaces of cobbling in which charcoal, bone, shell and fragments of pot had become embedded; elsewhere the compacted yellow clay is indicative of a floor,

whilst stones on edge may have been packing for supporting posts. A sketch plan in the note book suggests the building was oriented north to south.

The full extent of this building is unknown but thirty feet (9.14m) to the east was a second trench parallel to Structure 1 (fig 1) in which no structural remains were evident except a small pit² containing pottery fragments and three coins.

The finds³

Pottery

Slots 1, 3, and 4 from Structure 1 contained datable pottery: small sherds of shelly ware, Oxford red ware or Nene valley colour coat. Slot 3 also contained a single sherd of Samian which is probably residual. Dating of these sherds (Table 5) falls within the 4th century.

Copper alloy

- 1 Miniature sword. Made from a sheet of copper alloy this tiny *pugio* may have formed part of a child's toy or a votive object. Context 6 SF 23, fig 4.
- 2 Finger-ring with hexagonal bezel. The paste, glass or stone is now missing. This ring with its cutaway shoulder is a close parallel to one from Chichester which Henig dated to the 3rd century (Down 1978 fig 44.10 and note 1). Context 3 SF 34, fig 4.
- 3 Needle. Simple, circular section needle. Context 4B SF 45, fig 4.
- 4 Needle. Complete but bent example of a sewing needle. Context 4B SF 45, fig 4
- 5 Bracelet fragment with incised chevron decoration, oval section. Context 4B/6 SF 43, fig 4

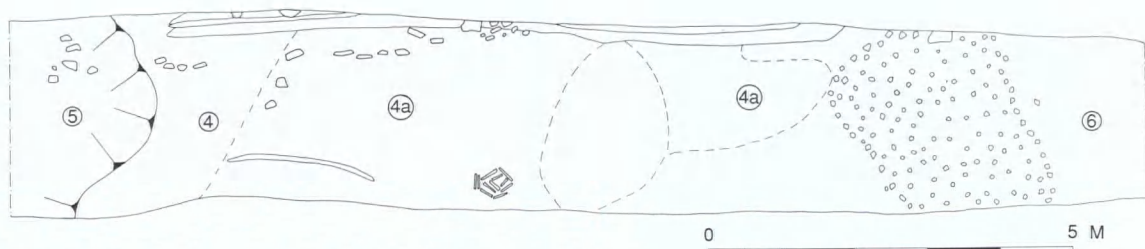


Fig 2 The floor/occupation horizon of structure 1. See fig 1 for location.

Table 1: Record of coins recovered during Sturdy's excavation of Structure 1

SF/ yr No	Reign	Date		Context
19/67	Constantinus II	350-355	Unofficial fallen horseman.	III 6
23/67		late 3rd	Radiate frag	III 6
25/67	Constantine I	330-340	Wolf, Romulus and Remus	Trench 2 pit
25/67	Unid.		Wolf, Romulus and Remus	
25/67	Constans Aug	347-350	Phoenix on globe; fel temp reparatio	Trench 2 pit
25/67	Valentinian I	364-75	Securitas republicae	Trench 2 pit
26/67		late 3rd	Barbarous radiate	III 6
27/67	Gallienus	253-268	Diana B Cons Aug	III 4a/6
28/67		late 3rd	Radiate copy	III 4a/6
29/67	Constantius I	330-335	Constantinopolis	III 4a
30/67	Salonina	253-268	IVNO REGINA	III 6
32/67	Tetricus	c270		III 4a/6
35/67	Claudius II	c270	Altar	III 4a/6
36/67	Constantinian	335-341	Gloria Exercitas	III 4a/6
37/67		c350-355	Barbarous fel temp reparatio fallen horseman	III 4a/6
38/67		late 3rd	Radiate copy	III 4a/6
40/67		c350-355	Barbarous fallen horseman	III 4a 4
1/67		c350-355	Barbarous fallen horseman	III 4a/6
43/67				III 4a/6
46/67		late 3rd	Radiate copy	III 4b
47/67		mid 3rd		III 4b
48/67	?Victorinus	c260-270		III 4b
49/67		late 3rd	Radiate copy	III 4b

The coins

The area of structure 1 yielded coins as listed (see Table 1).

Stone

In addition to the recorded finds a column base was noted during Sturdy's excavation. This is now lost and no drawing or photograph has been found with the original site records. A sketch made by Simco in 1981 of a column found at Bletsoe in Mr Jones garden is similar to fig 106, from Dalton Parlours (Wrathmell and Nicholson 1990).

The finds from the area of structure 1, although only a small group, seem domestic in character thus possibly strengthening the suggestion that this building is close to, or part of, a dwelling.

Structure 2

One hundred and twenty feet (36.57m) north of Structure 1, and revealed in two linear trenches on either side of the road, was a stone-lined drain (not illustrated). Sealed by topsoil it comprised a hollow culvert made of two parallel, dwarf drystone walls capped by flat stones. Although the type of stone was not recorded it may be assumed to be local oolitic limestone. The drain ran for c 30ft (9.14m), the full

width of the modern road (Fig 1). There were no recorded finds and it is possible that this was actually a road drain.

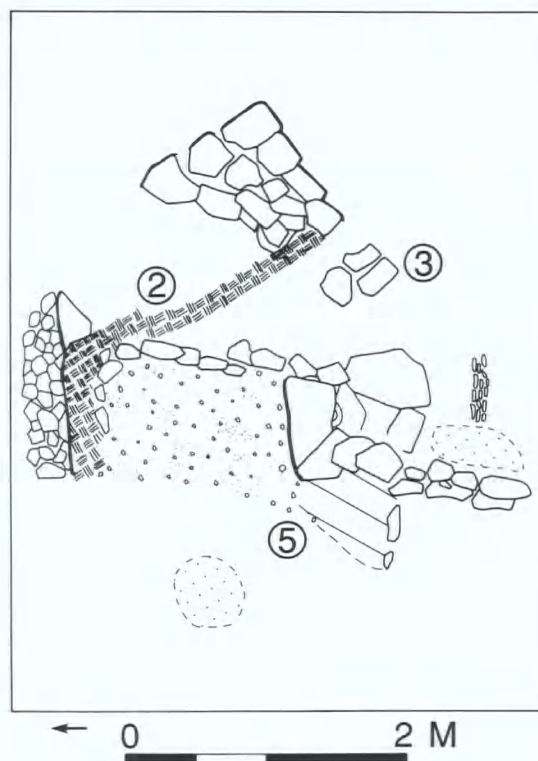


Fig 3 Structure 3, the hearth flue. See fig 1 for the location.

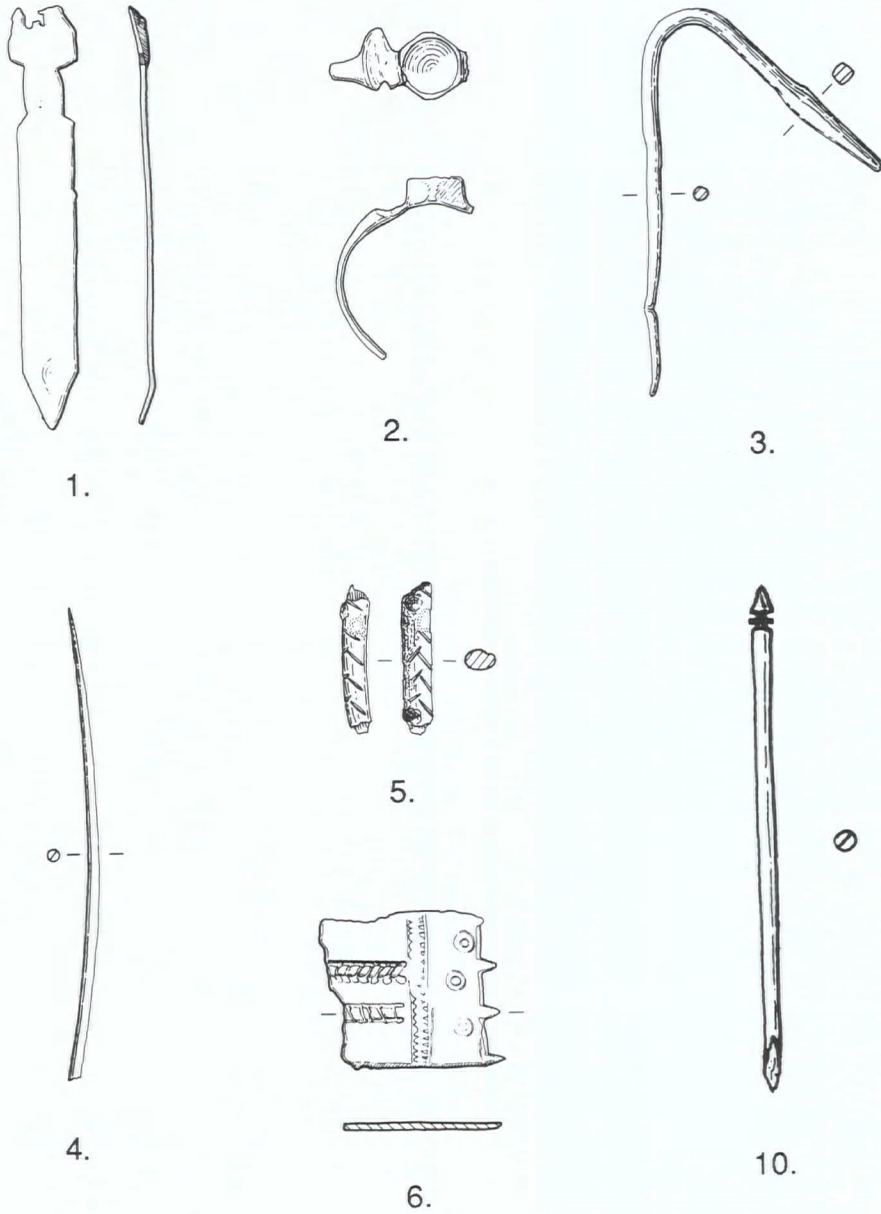


Fig 4 1 Miniature sword (1:1), 2 Finger-ring (1:1), 3 Needle (1:1), 4, 5 Bracelet (1:1), 6 Plate fragment (1:1), 10 Bone Pin (1:1)

Structure 3

A third structure was found east of the modern house.⁴ It comprised the damaged base of a clay-lined hearth or oven. The structure comprised an unmortared limestone hearth lined with clay which had hardened when fired. The floor of the hearth was clay and two possible flues were identified: one was lined with crushed tile and a broken quernstone fragment; the other was represented by a gap in the stone wall. The design of the hearth suggests a T-shaped corn drying oven similar to that at Bromham (Tilson 1973, 30).

The finds

Copper alloy

- 6 Decorated plate fragment. Possible fragment of a strap end (SF 3, fig 4).
- 7 Plate. Sub-rectangular tinned plate with five rivets 11mm × 18mm (SF 4 not ill).
- 8 Tinned fragment probably from a vessel, rounded (SF 4 not ill).
- 9 Brooch fragment. Upper section of probably a Hod Hill type (SF 4 not ill).

Bone

- 10 Pin. Turned decorated head, broken point (SF 1 fig 4).

From the rather slight evidence of structures found, and from the quantity of artefacts at Bletsoe, it seems clear that the structures so far touched upon are peripheral to any house site. Nevertheless the quality of finds and the now lost column fragment, recorded by Sturdy in or near structure 1, suggest a substantial building.

The date of the occupation of the villa complex can only be estimated generally from the finds. The coins from stratified contexts in Structure 1 (III 6 and III 4a), and the decorated plate (6) from Structure 3 indicate the 4th century. Coins have a date range from Gallienus to the second half of the 4th century. Such a small sample cannot be an entirely reliable guide to the date of occupation of the villa, but combined with pottery evidence from the slots (Table 5) which also suggests the 4th century, a broad date range from 3rd to 4th century is all that can be assumed.

The cemetery area

The field system (Fig 5)

The cemetery at Bletsoe covered an extensive area east of the proposed villa structures and surrounding the position of the corn drying oven. Some of the graves had been cut through pre-existing features which were probably the remains of an earlier field system. The ditches, as silted, shallow residual hollows, may once have separated the cemetery from agricultural land, only to be encroached upon later and become part of the cemetery itself. The system of field boundaries probably focused on the villa site.

Graves 122, 109, 113, 114, 118, 104 were dug into the ditch silts. The date of the ditch silting is particularly important as it gives a *terminus post quem* for these graves. The dating of the ditches and aspects of the relationship between the cemetery area and the remainder of the villa are derived from pottery and small finds.

The primary ditch silts comprised layers of gravel and clay silts with some later activity evident from shallow pits dug into them. The NW-SE ditch comprised layer 3, as well as pits F2, F3, F5; the NE-SW ditch, included pit F6.

In addition to the ditches a pit, 'pit 1', was excavated in 1969 (fig 11).

The finds and environmental evidence from the field system

The list of small finds from the cemetery area is published to characterise the type of deposit represented by the ditch fills and the material backfilled into the graves. The illustrated material is intended to enhance the characterisation, but in particular items such as the bracelets have an intrinsic worth in establishing distribution patterns which may give a wider insight into local or regional trading patterns. Information derived from the animal bone assemblage is used to illustrate one aspect of the villa's domestic regime.

The Animal Bones

A total of 518 bone fragments was recorded from the Bletsoe cemetery. Of these 266 were identified to bone type and animal species. The remaining 252 consisted of unidentifiable fragments. This was a high figure due to the fragmentary nature of the assemblage, a result

of the normal post-depositional factors that affect animal bone, together with damage during excavation and the subsequent storage. However, in general terms the assemblage was in fair condition. The majority of the bones came from the ditch fills of the cemetery area, although a few graves also contained animal bone.

The most common animal was cattle and 154 bones were recorded. A relatively large proportion of these bones were fragments of skull and teeth together with feet bones such as phalanges and metapodials. This could be interpreted as butchery waste as none of these bones offer much food value. However, this is somewhat speculative because of the limited range of features excavated in the cemetery area. Long bones, rib fragments and vertebrae were recorded in low numbers. Most of the cattle bones belonged to mature animals, although the nature of the assemblage does not allow interpretation with regard to the structure of the herd in terms of age and sex.

A total of 97 sheep/goat bones were recorded. The fragmentary nature of the bones made it impossible to distinguish between these two species. It is, however, suggested that the main population was sheep with the possible exception of one goat metapodial. These bones consisted of a high proportion of skull fragments and teeth, as well as metapodials and phalanges. Smaller quantities of humeri, femora and pelvic material was recorded. This is a very similar pattern to the cattle bones mentioned above.

Pig (5 bone fragments), dog (4 fragments) and horse (3 fragments) are rare components of the assemblage.

In conclusion the assemblage could be seen as typical of farm yard material. It might be suggested that the bones represented activities associated with butchery, such as the slaughter and dismemberment of low meat bearing bones. These activities are often conducted away from the main focus of settlement.

Iron

The iron work from the cemetery area is dominated by nails, few of which survived adequately to yield reliable measurements of length, clenching or other distortions. They serve to characterise the deposits as probably domestic refuse.

11 Nails (RB gully, not ills).

12 Nail fragments × 2 (F2, CM, not ills).

13 Nail, domed head of large nail or spike. Head dia

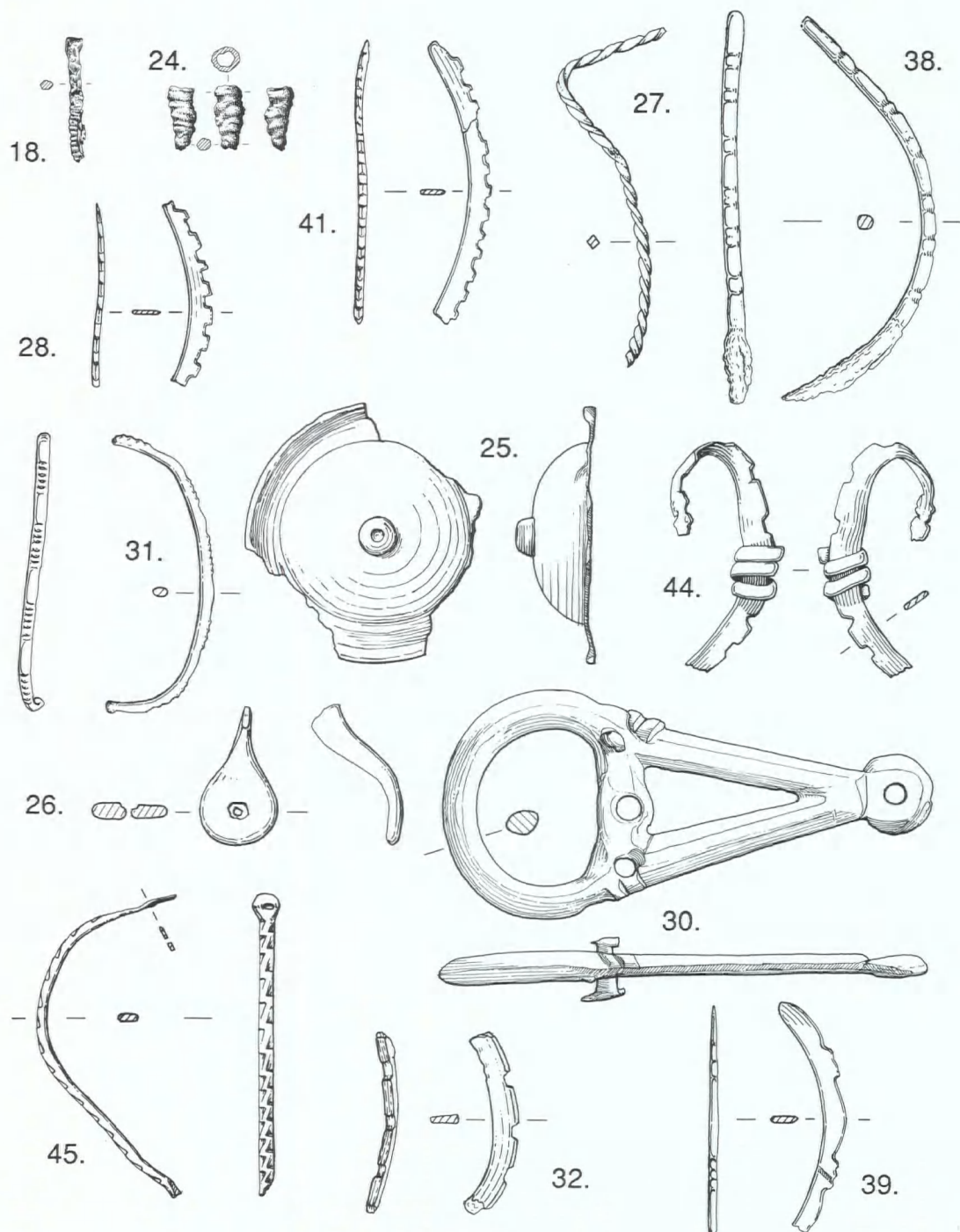


Fig 5 18 File (1:3), 24 Nib (1:3), 25 Boss (1:2), 26 Unidentified object (1:2), 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45 Bracelet fragments (all 1:2)

- 24mm, tapering square section shank from 8mm × 8mm, (F2 AI, not ills).
- 14 Nail head 18mm dia (F3 AJ, not ills).
- 15 Nail 163mm shank 7mm × 7mm (F5, not ills).
- 16 Nails × 13 (F5, not ills).
- 17 Nail fragments square shank 2.5mm × 2.5mm L 35mm, twisted head no surviving dia.
- 18 File, fragment of 'rats tail' file L 48mm c 2mm sq (F5, fig 5).

The remaining ironwork from the cemetery area was largely fragmentary pieces of other larger artefacts broken or discarded in antiquity.

- 19 Plate fragment. L 131mm W 23mm T > 1mm (F2 CZ, not ills).
- 20 Ring. Ext dia 38mm, int dia 23mm, circular section (F5, not ills).
- 21 Pipe collar fragment. L 41mm, W 31mm, T 3mm; pipe dia 160mm (F5, not ills).
- 22 Purse mount fragment, L 118mm T 14mm tapering corroded section (F5, not ills).
- 23 Plate fragment with possibly two perforations for rivets L 39mm, W 18mm, T > 1mm (AG, not ills).
- 24 Nib, often referred to as cattle goads. This type of object was found recently at Vindolanda with ink adhering to the point and may therefore be an ink nib⁵ (AG, fig 5).

Copper alloy

- 25 Boss-shaped object. This is similar to the round dome-shaped objects which are interpreted as harness strap distributors. Three points around the circumference have been broken possibly where the loops were once located (SF 1, fig 5).
- 26 Foot or terminal. Referred to as toothpick or nail cleaner (Crummy 1983, 61 No 1939); it is neither of these. It was dated to the post-Roman period (1, fig 5).
- 27 Bracelet fragment, distorted and twisted in antiquity (Gully, SF 13, fig 5).
- 28 Bracelet fragment, toothed decoration (F2 CL, SF 73, fig 5).
- 29 Pin fragment (F3, SF 25, not ills).
- 30 Buckle plate/mount. This buckle plate with three securing rivets is of a type familiar from the frontier sites along the Danube and Rhine rivers. One example from the frontier in the Dacia Ripensis fort of Gornea, can be dated to the reign of Diocletian when this fort was occupied (Gudea 1977 fig 50.4). Late examples from Britain and northern Europe were discussed by Bohme (1986). It was the

- latter's contention that such artefacts date to the late 4th and probably into the early 5th centuries. British examples include those from Woodeaton (Swoboda 1986) and Shakenoak (Brodribb, Hands and Walker 1968-73) (F5 Gully, SF 57, fig 5).
- 31 Bracelet fragment, section of ribbed bracelet, probably broken and discarded in antiquity (III 1, fig 5).
- 32 Bracelet fragment, ornamented with toothed decoration (III 1, fig 5).
- 33 Bracelet fragment, band with lateral incisions, L 19mm; W 6mm; Dia 50mm (IV 2, SF 49, not ills).
- 34 Fragment, binding strip with off centre rivet at one end; L 25mm W 7mm (not ills).
- 35 Spoon bowl. Fragment only survives of this object (IV AJ F3, SF 38, not ills).
- 36 Sheet fragment (F3, SF 25, not ills).
- 37 Bracelet fragment, toothed decoration with coiled copper alloy addition (BY, SF 58, not ills).
- 38 Bracelet, decorated portion including terminal, which once probably ended in hook (F5, SF 61, fig 5).
- 39 Bracelet fragment, decorated with cross cuts and small terminals (F5, SF 59, fig 5).
- 40 Bracelet fragment, narrow band, 2mm; L 16mm with dia 70mm (F5, SF 60, not ills).
- 41 Bracelet fragment, toothed decoration on narrow band (IV, SF 10, fig 5).
- 42 Mirror fragment, 90mm dia, > 1mm thick (fill of grave 11, SF 10, not ills).
- 43 Pin fragment, L 21mm c 1mm dia (fill of grave 100, SF 48, not ills).
- 44 Bracelet fragment comprising toothed decoration with coiled copper alloy addition. Broken in antiquity (IV BY, SF 58, fig 5).
- 45 Bracelet; narrow with chevron design, broken in antiquity. Hole for clasp still intact in one flattened terminal (fill of grave 122, fig 5).

Bone

- 46 Bone pin. Curving pin with small terminal, made from sheep sized rib (F5, SF 64, fig 6).
- 47 Bead. Half of this barrel shaped bead survives. The object appears very worn over a small area of the surface eroding the incised decoration (F3, SF 42, fig 6).
- 48 Discus shaped bone fragment with triangular decoration reinforcing basal joint between disc and shank. Terminal of spoon (AX, SF 31, fig 6).
- 49 Awl or blanket needle (IV 13 ph 8, fig 6).

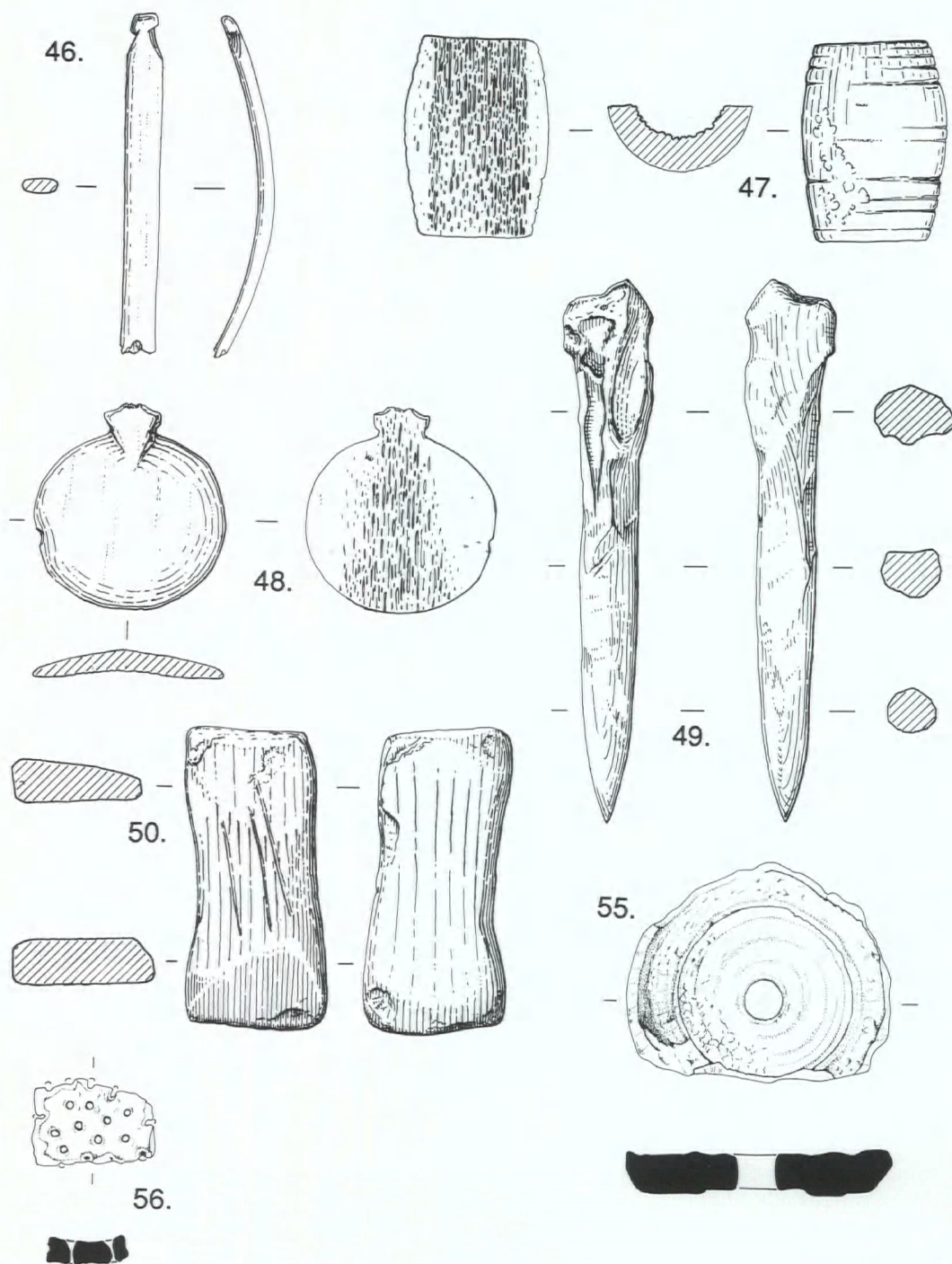


Fig 6 46 Pin (1:1), 47 Bead (1:1), 48 Bone spoon (1:1), 49 Awl (1:1), 50 whetstone (1:2), 55 vessel base with drilled hole 1:2, 56 ceramic sieve (1:2).

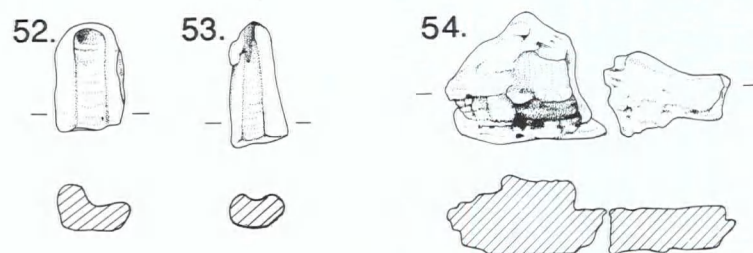


Fig 7 Clay moulds (1:2)

Stone implements

- 50 Whetstone, fine siltstone showing slight evidence of wear (F3 AJ, SF 41, fig 6).
 51 Quern fragment, Neidermendig lava (fill of grave 117, SF 52, not ills).

Ceramic finds (other than pots)

- 52 Fragment of mould (5g), possibly part of a brooch foot (Hattatt 1985 Fig 31 No 357). Fabric is fine sandy and soft. Quartz inclusions are clear and pink, 0.1–0.3mm. Exterior buff/pink, interior reduced light grey (F5, fig 7).
 53 Fragment of mould (5g) possibly the tapering handle part of a spoon. In Britain the only assemblage of complete spoon moulds of this type have been found at Castleford, West Yorkshire, dating to the 3rd/4th century (Bayley and Budd 1988, 10). Fabric as 52 (topsoil in cemetery area, SF 6, fig 7).
 54 Two fragments of mould (33g) of unidentifiable object. Fabric as 52 above (F5, BY, fig 7). Fragments of moulds (1038g) were found in Pit II, all badly abraded and in crumbly condition (not ills). Other unidentifiable fragments of moulds were found in the ditches, in layers 2 and 5; fabric as above.
 55 Nene valley colour coat base fragment with post-firing hole, 11mm dia, in centre; some possibly post-depositional fire blackening. Possible loom weight (F3 AJ, SF 34, fig 6).
 56 Fragment of grey ware with holes pierced before firing; possibly part of wine strainer or sieve (fig 6).
 57 Fragments of kiln bar (IV, SF 16; fill of Gr 11 AK, SF27; F1 AH, not ills).

In addition to the finds listed and described above were several fragments of lead from trenches II and III.

Coins (Table 2)

The coins found in the cemetery area come largely from a loam horizon: layers 2, 3, 4 (from the 1969 excavation) and groups AA, AF, AI, AJ, AN, BE, BG, BO, BP, CC, DC (from the 1970 excavation). They include examples from the 1st century in contrast to coins from Structure 1, the only structure to yield coins. First century coins are not common, yet two, in conjunction with the early pot from pit 1 (Table 5), are possibly sufficient to conjecture early occupation at the site. The findspot, layer AF, is however a loam horizon and coins of Valentinian (8/70), Valens (19/70) and Constantine (14/70) were found in the same context. The remaining coins in the list come either from grave fills (9/69, 10/69, 17/69) or layers 7 and 5 which are the horizons from which the graves were cut. The dating evidence provided by these latter coins is dealt with in the discussion of the date of the cemetery.

The pottery (A Slowikowski)

The pottery assemblage from the cemetery is dominated by a few very limited types, predominantly shelly wares, grey wares and Nene Valley colour coat (Table 5 p 38). In addition, Oxford red wares form a smaller proportion and other types are represented by 1% or less of the total. Although in production throughout the Roman period, the shelly ware industry expanded in the 4th century and dominates late Roman pottery assemblages. A probable source for this type is Harrold, less than five miles away from Bletsoe, up the river Great Ouse.

With the exception of pit 1, a date in the 4th century can be ascribed to the vessels found in the pre-cemetery features. The coins, however, indicate a more precise date in the mid-late 4th century (see p 32). Pit 1 is no different in its high proportion of shelly wares, although the presence of the ring-necked

Table 2: List of coins found in the cemetery area with their contexts as recorded

No	Reign	Date		Site context
4/70	Gordian III	238-44	Antoninianus	AA
7/70	Valens	367-75	AE3	AF
8/70	Valentinian	364-75	AE3	AF
14/70	Constantine I	321	AE3	AF
15/70	Trajan	98-117	Sestertius	AF
17/70	Victorinus	268-70	Antoninianus	BG
18/70	Trajan	103-11	Denarius	AF
19/70	Valens	364-7	AE3	AF
21/70	Valens	367-75	AE3	AA
22/70	Constantine II	335-7	AE4	BE
23/70	Gratian	367-75	AE3	AJ
24/70	House of Constantine	350-60	AE4 (copy)	AI
28/70	Valens	367-75	AE3	BO
63/70	Urbs Roma		AE4 (copy)	CC
65/70	Victorinus	268-70	Antoninianus	AN
66/70	House of Valentinian	364-78	AE3	BP
67/70	Julian	361-3	Siliqua	DC
77/70	Constantius II		AE4 (copy)	topsoil
1/69	Gallienus	259-68		III 4
2/69	Tetricus I	268-73		IV
3/69	Tetricus II	268-73	Pax Aug	III 5
4/69	House of Constantine I	341-46	Victoriae Dd Augg Q Nu	IV
5/69	Constantius II	348-50	Fel temp reperatio	III 4
6/69	Magnentius	350-53	Victoriae Dd Nu Aug et Cae	III 4
7/69	Magnentius	350-53	Victoriae Dd Nu Aug et Cae	III 7
8/69	Valens	364-78	Securitas Reipublicae OF/1 (Lyons) LVGPD	IV
9/69	Valens	364-78	Securitas Reipublicae OF/1 (Lyons) LVGPD	III S11
10/69	Valens	364-83	Securitas Reipublicae OF/1 (Arles) CONST	III S13
11/69	House of Valentinian	364-83	Securitas Reipublicae	II 3
12/69	Postumus	258-68	Victoria Augusta	III 2
13/69	Tetricus II	268-73		IV
14/69	Tetricus I	270-80		IV
15/69	House of Constantine	330-45	Gloria Exercitus	III 3a
16/69	House of Constantine	341-50	Victoriae Dd Augg Q Nu	IV
17/69	Magnentius/Decentius	350-60	Victoriae Dd Nu Aug et Cae	III S13
18/6	Theodosian	384-95	Victoria Augg	III 1
18 without number and now lost	Constantius II/Constans	350-60	Fel temp reperatio	

flagon (no 1) in such a complete state, casts some doubt on its late date. Shelly wares were in production at an earlier date, and possibly residual examples are seen in Pit 1 (nos 8-9). The other forms in this pit, particularly the necked jars with rilled shoulders (no 11) point to a date in 4th century. The excavators may have unknowingly dug into an earlier feature, although it is as likely that the flagon was a treasured heirloom and not discarded till some 150 years later.

The limited range of fabric types is consistent with a date in the late 4th century. Smaller, local pottery industries had largely gone out of production by this time and the markets were dominated by fewer but larger industries. Their limited number led to a more

sudden collapse, for whatever reason, of the whole organised pottery industry, at the end of the 4th century (Lyne and Jeffries 1979, 61).

The forms present on the site are also very limited. The two forms predominating in grey ware are 'dog dish' types and simple, triangular-rimmed, straight-sided bowls. Smaller proportions of folded beakers and jar forms also occur. The Nene Valley colour coat forms are mostly either flanged bowls or beakers (both folded and plain), with other forms making up a smaller proportion. Shelly forms are mainly jars, large vessels (unsooted) for storage, and smaller vessels (externally sooted) for cooking. Rilling is common on the bodies of both type of jar. Bowls are also found but

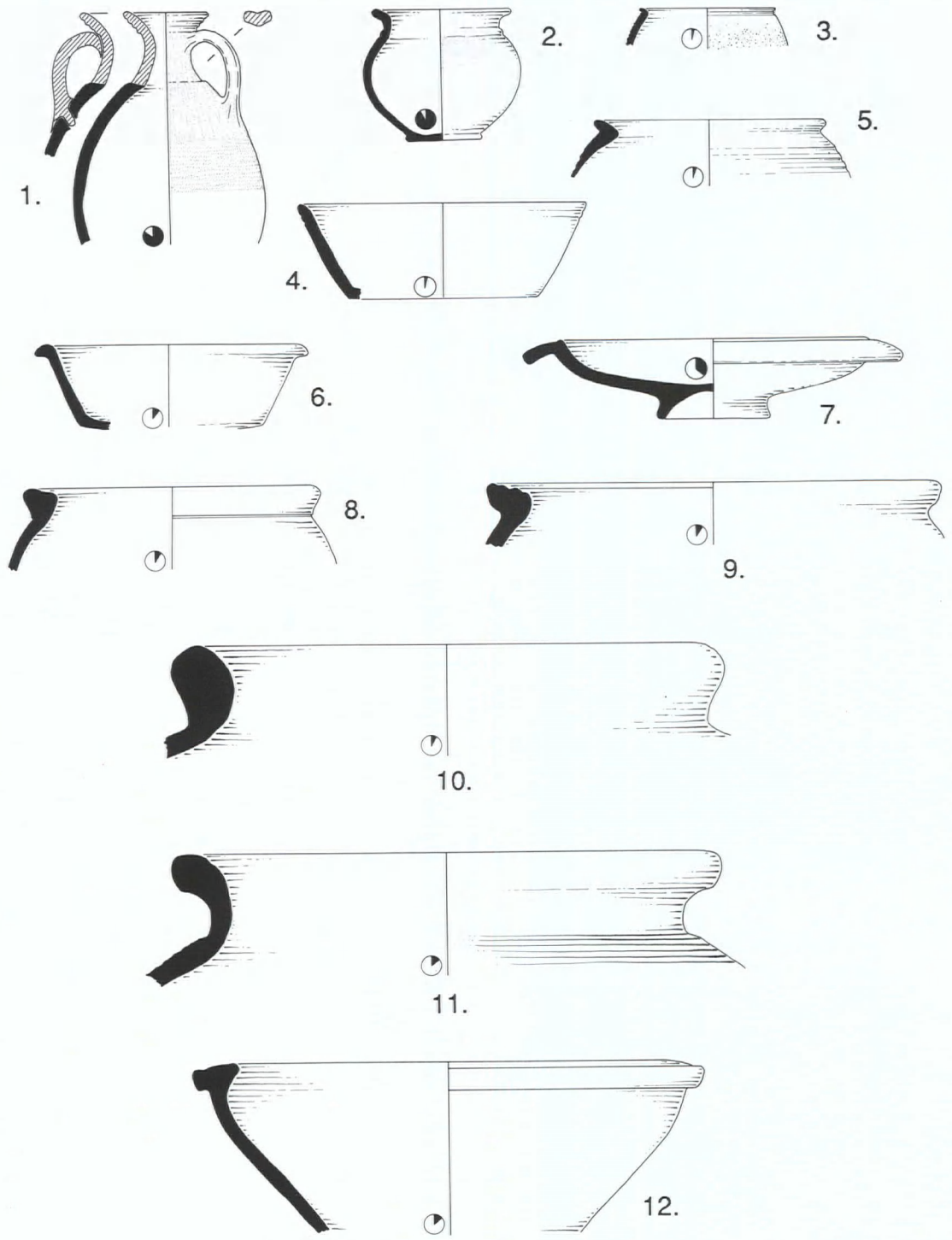


Fig 8 Roman pottery from pit 1 (1:4).

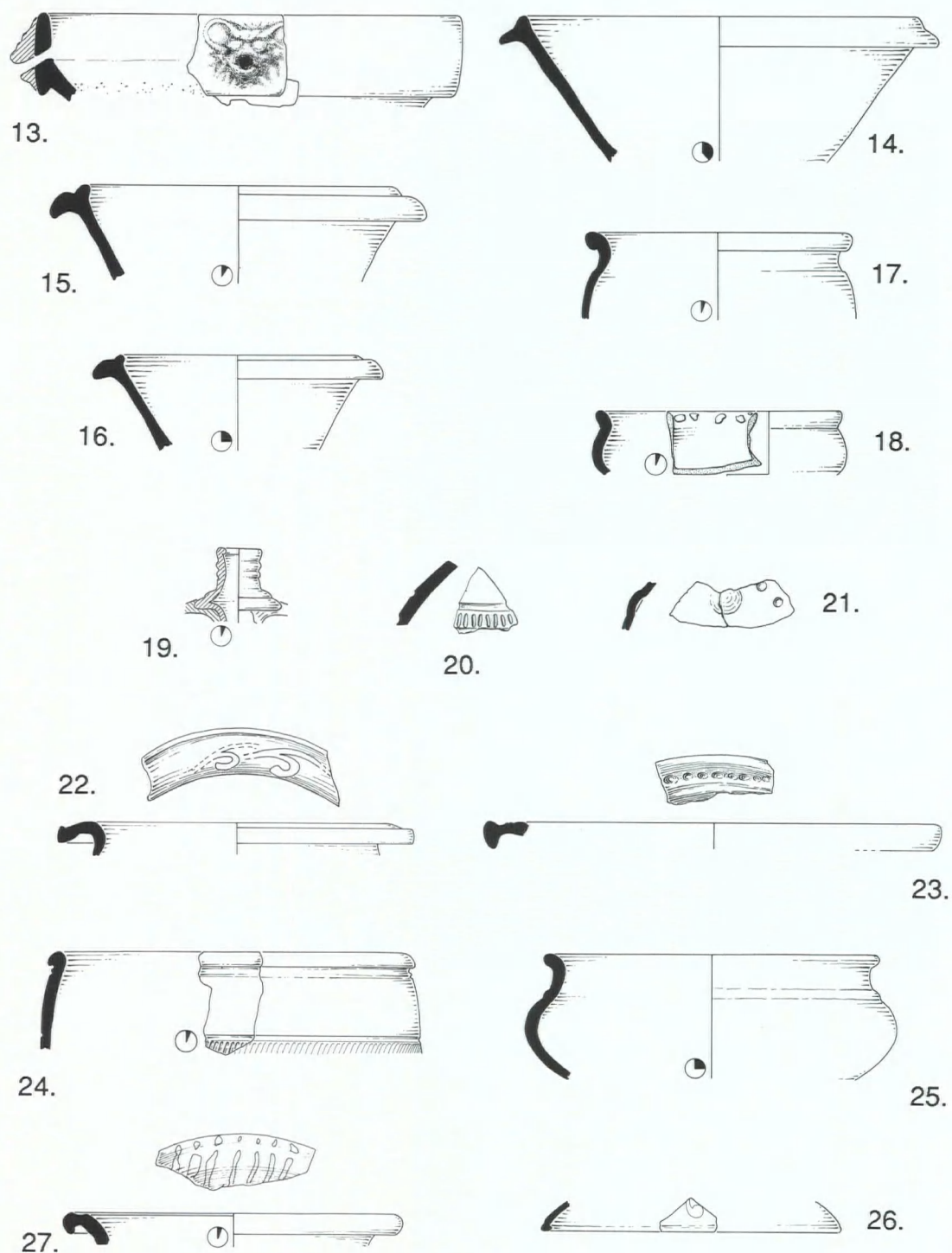


Fig 9 Roman pottery from the cemetery ditch system (1:4).

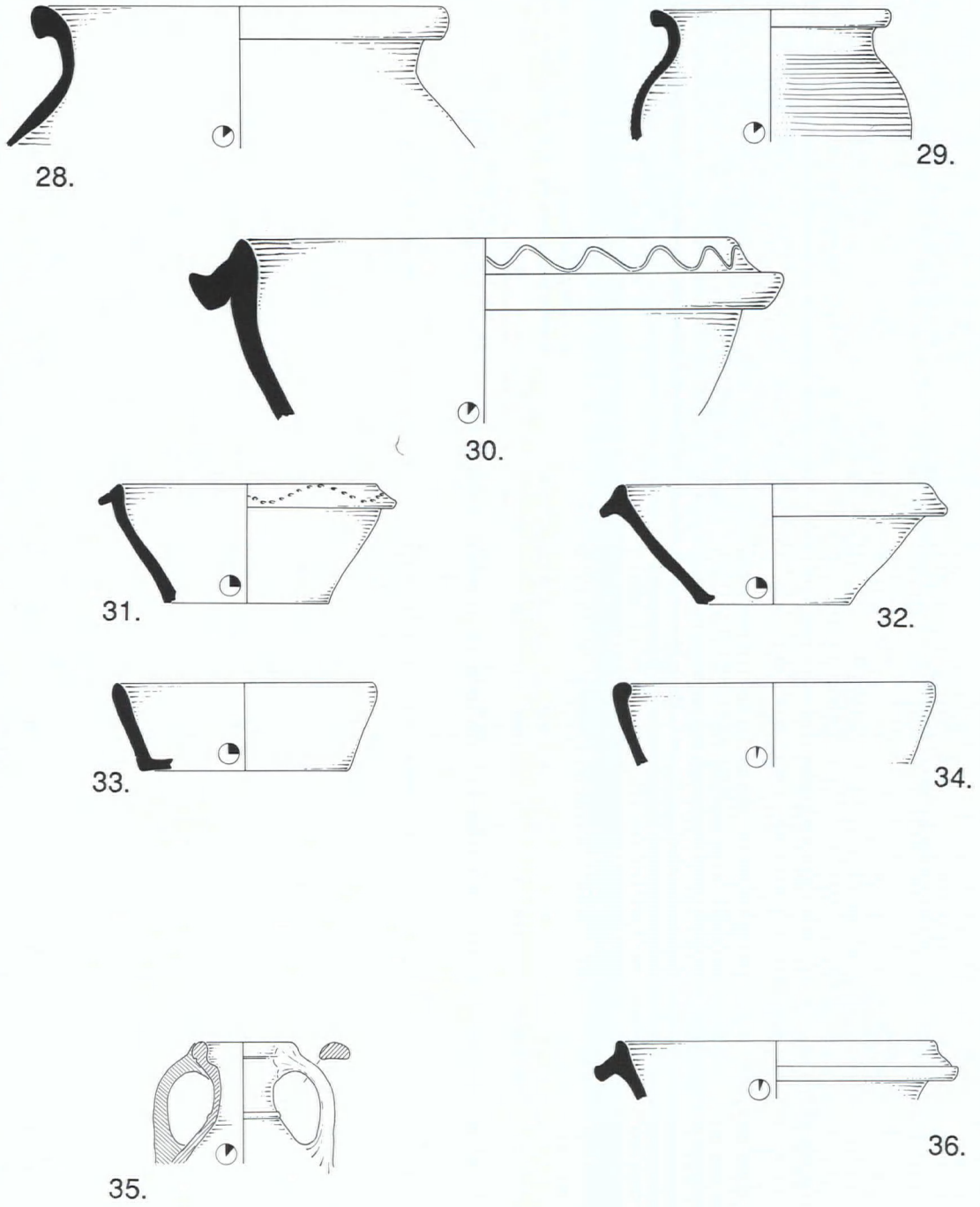


Fig 10 Roman pottery from the Roman ditch system and pit 2 (1:4).

not in such large quantities. They tend to be round-bodied with hammer-head rims, often decorated.

Although Bletsoe has not produced a large quantity of stratified pottery, it is a fairly closely dated group and fits into the ceramic pattern of the area.

Catalogue of illustrated pottery

Fig 8 Pit 1

- 1 White slipped Hadham flagon
- 2 Black ware jar
- 3 Roughcast cornice rimmed beaker
- 4 Grey ware bowl
- 5 Grey ware jar
- 6 NVCC bowl
- 7 Oxford red ware dish
- 8 Shelly jar
- 9 Shelly jar
- 10 Shelly jar
- 11 Shelly jar with external rilling
- 12 Shelly bowl

Fig 9 Cemetery ditch system

- 13 Samian mortarium with bat-headed spout. Form Dr 45, late 2nd–mid 3rd century (sherds from III 4 and 6)
- 14 Grey ware bowl (4)
- 15 NVCC bowl (F2 BR)
- 16 NVCC bowl (5)
- 17 NVCC jar (4)
- 18 NVCC bowl with white barbotine decoration on rim (4)
- 19 NVCC flagon (8)
- 20 Alice Holt/Farnham vessel (4)
- 21 Grey Hadham vessel (sherds from 1, F2 AI; G11 AK)
- 22 Oxford red ware dish with white scrolls (IV BR)
- 23 Oxford red ware dish with impressed decoration (5)
- 24 Oxford red ware copying Samian form Dr 30, with rouletted decoration (Ditch)
- 25 Oxford red ware bowl (5)
- 26 Oxford red ware lid with white scrolls (7)
- 27 Oxford white ware with red painted decoration (sherds from 5, 7)

Fig 10 Cemetery ditch system and Pit 2

- 28 Shelly jar (F5 BY)
- 29 Shelly jar (F5 BY)
- 30 Shelly bowl (8)
- 31 Shelly bowl (sherds from F3; Pit 2; F5)
- 32 Shelly bowl (F5)

33 Shelly bowl (F5)

34 Shelly bowl or lid with external sooting (F5)

35 Oxford red ware flagon (Pit 2; F3)

36 Shelly bowl (Pit 2; F3)

Conclusion

The deposits in the area of the cemetery seem to comprise domestic refuse associated with agricultural activity. The quantity of pottery and the bracelets are particularly interesting as these may indicate a high proportion of household rubbish. The bone assemblage is typical of farm yard material, the bones representing activities associated with butchery, such as the slaughter and dismemberment of low meat bearing bones. These activities are often conducted away from the main focus of settlement. None of the artefacts apart from the coins are closely datable with the exception of the riveted buckle plate (30 fig 5) nor were any of the artefacts listed above from graves actual grave goods (those are dealt with under individual graves). Thus the area appears to have been used for the disposal of domestic refuse, but not in large quantities. Instead the ditches were partially filled with sands and silts, with some small pits dug into them. Larger scale refuse disposal was carried out nearby in pits (pit 1). One possible interpretation is that this area, before becoming a cemetery, had been used as a midden. The compost was distributed elsewhere leaving a mixture of domestic breakages and waste.

The cemetery (fig 11)

The cemetery at Bletsoe was excavated in three areas: 15 skeletons (Graves 1–15) were discovered in June 1967 around the hearth, Structure 3, and E of Structures 1 and 2; a single burial near to Structure 1 was found under the Rectory drive (not recorded); and a further 40 graves (S1–13 and Graves 100–28) were recorded from 1969 to 1970 east of the villa. The numbering system used here reflects that used by the excavators, 1–15 for graves dug before 1968; S1–S13 for graves excavated by NBAS in 1969; Graves 100–28 excavated in 1970.

Graves 1–7 were grouped together, all orientated generally NW to SE with the head at the NW end. Detailed records of the method of burial were not made at the time although a report for limited circulation was made (Jones 1968). A series of photographs by Mr Dunkley was particularly helpful therefore in

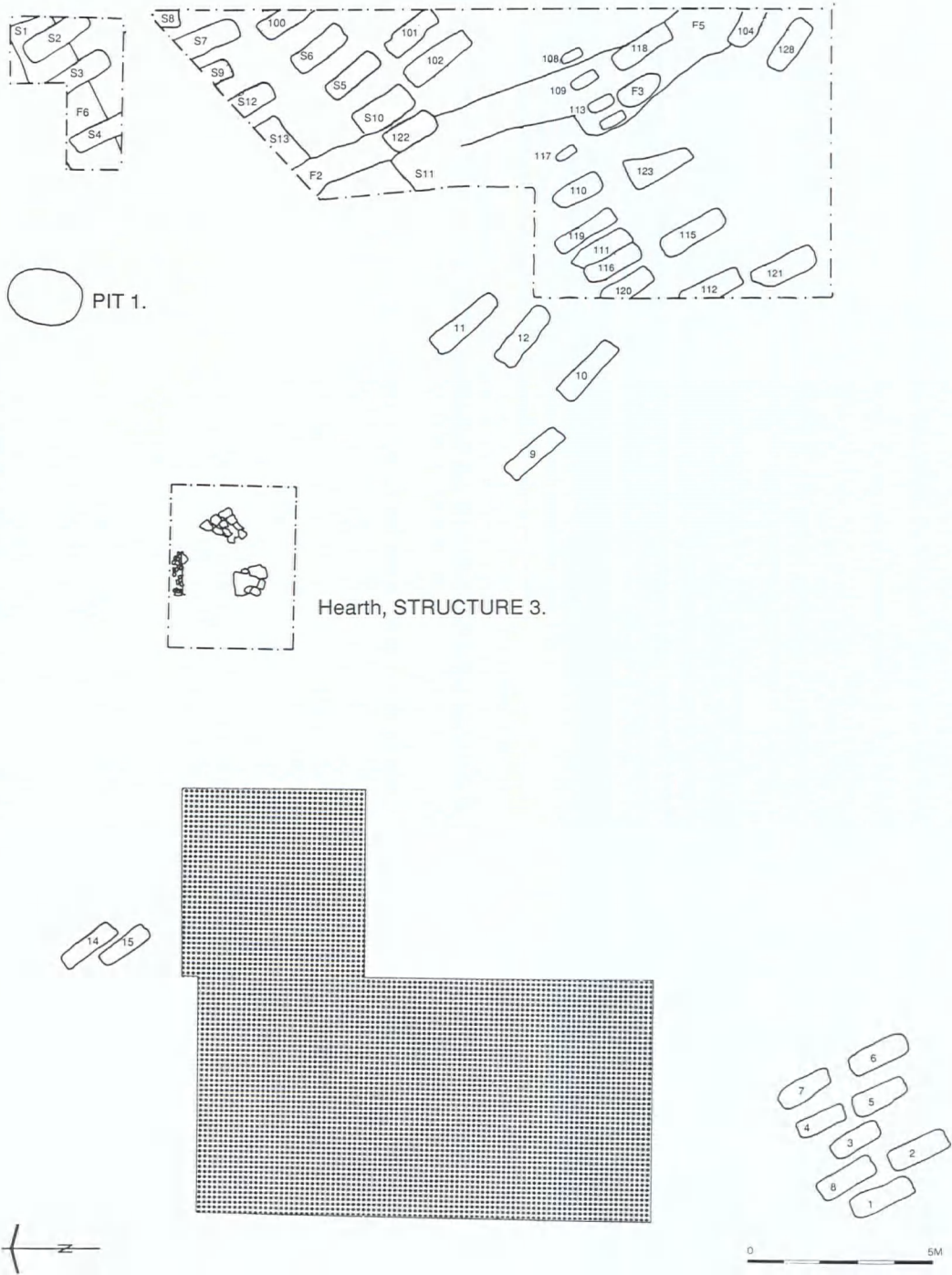


Fig 11 The cemetery area at Bletsoe. The present house is shaded.

illustrating the burial position of some of the skeletons. Of the remaining graves 9–12 were found east of the hearth area, Structure 3, and two, 14–15, west of here. One was under the Rectory drive.

The first fifteen burials were described generally by Jones (1968)

'it was clear that they were all buried in an East West [*sic*] direction with the arms crossed over the abdomen. There were no grave goods or any sign of any material in which they might have been buried. All were buried about three feet deep and invariably there was a number of rough natural stones associated with the burials, sometimes forming a circle around the skull; sometimes down both sides, or down one side; and some had apparently been placed on the body, for they were found resting on the backbone. In one instance a Roman brick was found near a skull, and in all cases quantities of very fragmented Roman pottery were found around and above the skeletons ... In some cases nails have been found resting on or in close proximity to the arm and leg joints, whilst all the skeletons seem to have been buried quite close to each other, less than 2 feet separating some of them.'

Close examination of records⁶ gleaned from several sources has allowed a more detailed listing of the graves and their attributes.⁷

Structure of the graveyard

The graves at Bletsoe were presumably dug from an old ground surface which is nowhere clearly defined. Only in the area of graves S1–13 and 100–28 were the topsoil horizons recorded revealing only evidence of modern ploughing. Subsoil horizons numbered 4, 4a, 5, 5a, 6, 7, and 8 provide some indication of ground use before the cemetery, and possibly some indication of the date of the beginning of the cemetery.

Grave 1 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. Orientation 120° TN Depth 33in (0.83m)
3. Supine, hands on pelvis
4. Male – 40–50 yrs
5. Shallow grave in brown loam, stone beside head

Grave 2 (Fig 12)

1. Inhumation
2. 130/310° TN Depth 24in (0.61m)

3. Supine, hands on pelvis
4. Upper skeleton missing, male – 50+ yrs
5. Shallow grave in brown loam

Grave 3 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 310° TN
3. Supine, left femur crossed over right
4. Female – 40–50 yrs
5. Stone by head

Grave 4 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 315° TN
3. Supine
4. Female – 40–50 yrs
5. Three stones by left side including a flat stone beside head

Grave 5 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 320° TN
3. Supine, (legs remain under modern driveway)
4. Female – 20–30 yrs
5. Large stone in abdominal cavity, and stone by head

Grave 6 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 310° TN
3. Supine, considerably damaged and only excavated to upper mid femur⁸
4. Female – 50+ yrs

Grave 7 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 305° TN
3. Supine
4. Male – 45–55 yrs
5. Head and shoulders covered in small stones

Grave 8 (fig 12)

1. Inhumation
2. 310° TN
3. Supine, arms crossed on chest
4. Female – 20–25 yrs
5. Roman tile beside head

Grave 9 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. 115° TN
4. Male – 17–20 yrs

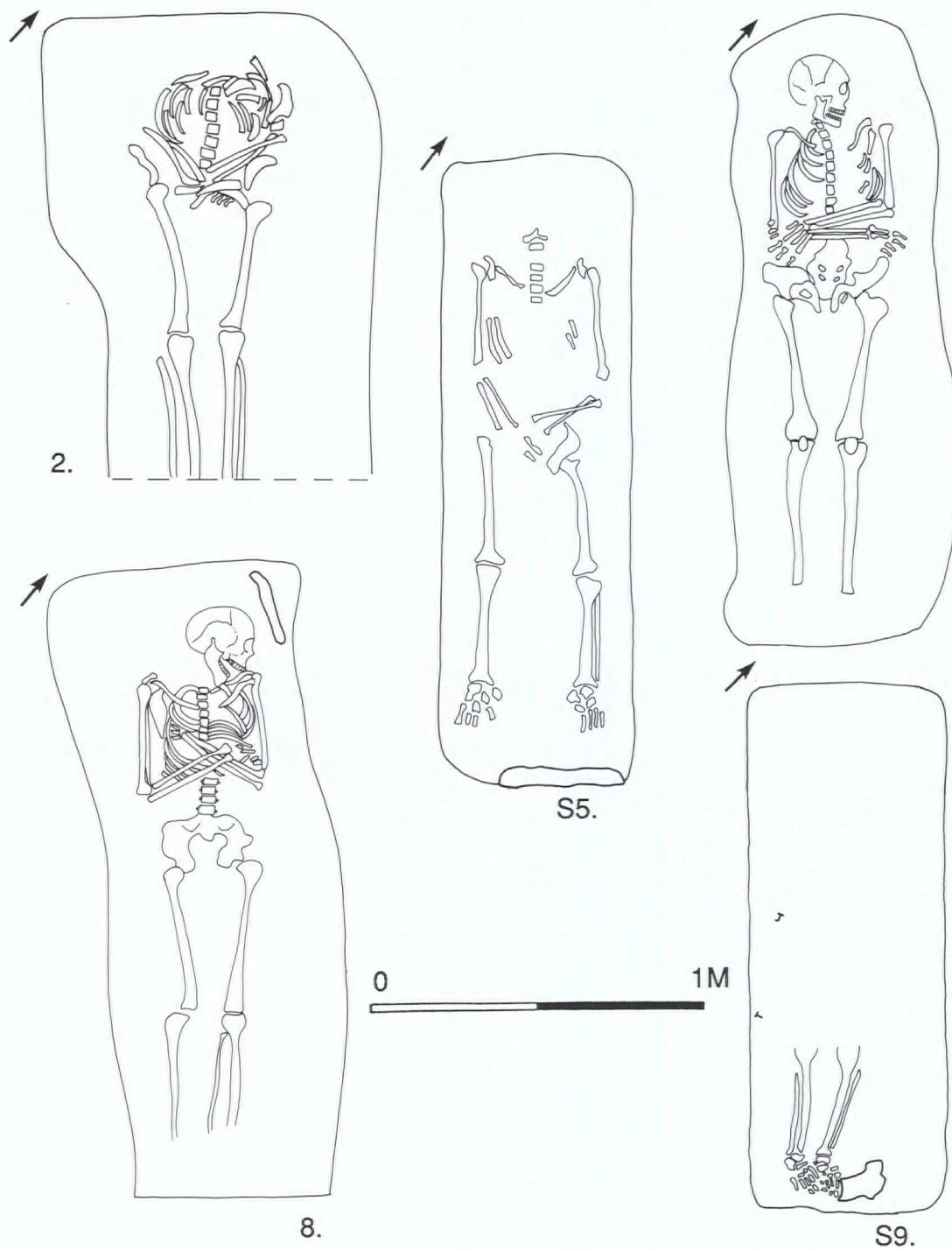


Fig 12 The Roman graves at Bletsoe.

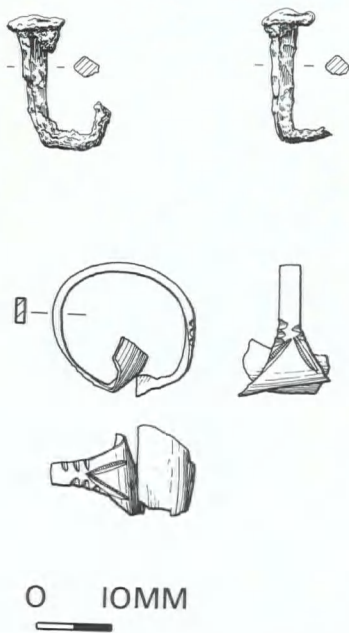


Fig 13 Coffin nails (1:3) bronze ring (1:1) from grave S11.

5. Stone on right side. Depth 3ft 6in (1.06m)

Graves 10, 11 and 12 were located on the eastern edge of the garden away from the main group.

Grave 10 No surviving detail

1. Inhumation
2. -
3. -
4. Male - 30-40 yrs

Grave 11 No surviving details

1. Inhumation
2. -
3. -
4. Male - 40-50 yrs

Grave 12 (fig 14)

Lower portion of body only survives

1. Inhumation
3. Supine arms crossed on pelvis

Grave 13

1. Inhumation
2. -
3. -
4. Female - 30-40 yrs

Grave 14 No surviving details

1. Inhumation
2. 125° TN
3. -
4. Male - 40-50 yrs

Grave 15 No surviving details

1. Inhumation
2. 130° TN
3. -
4. Male

The second area of the cemetery was excavated from 1968 on;⁹ this was work undertaken by two groups, NBAS and Colyer. Each group used a mutually exclusive numbering sequence to distinguish when the burials were excavated, differentiating between the later excavations and the first fifteen burials from 1967/8.

The first group, S1-S13 (S: skeleton) were excavated in NBAS Trench II.

S1 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. NW-SE
4. Female - approximately 40-45 years; stature approximately 5ft 1½in (1.56m)

S2 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
4. Female - approximately 17-23 years; stature approximately 5ft 1¼in (1.55m)
5. Stones enclose head in rectangular lining
6. Small fragment of pot beneath (this could not be located in 1991)

S3 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Female - approximately 25-30 years; stature approximately 5ft 2in (1.57m)
5. A number of stones at feet
6. Piece of metal between leg bones below left knee (not located in 1991)

S4 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Male - approximately 35-45 years; stature c 5ft 8in (1.72m)

The following graves 5-14 excavated in NBAS area

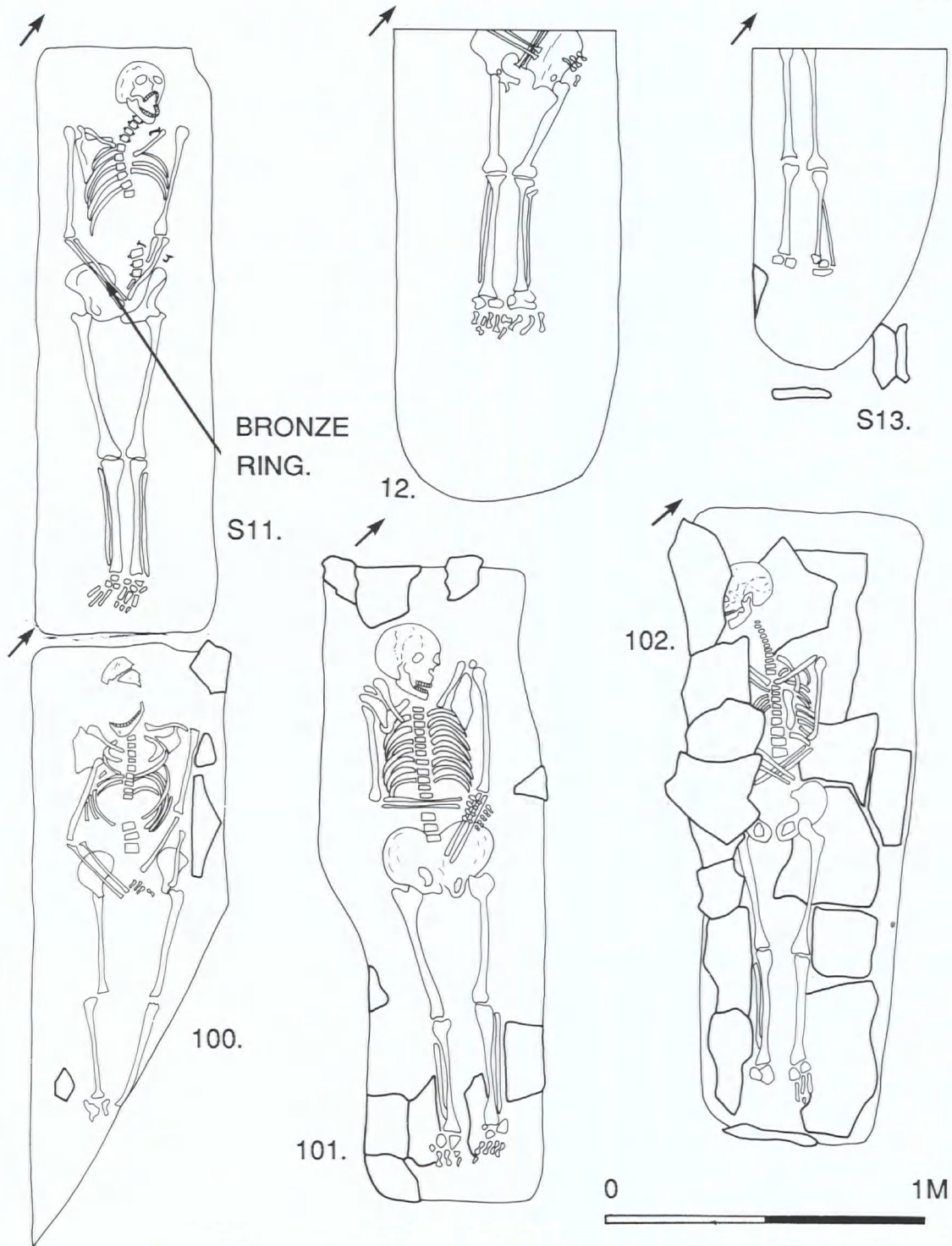


Fig 14 Roman graves at Bletsoe.

III.

S5 (fig 12)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine; hands crossed on pelvis. Head appears to be 'propped up'
4. Male - approximately 25-30 years; stature approximately 5ft 4½in (1.63m)
5. Large slabs upright at foot of grave, 650mm deep

S6 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine; head to north
4. Male - approximately 45-50 yrs; stature approximately 5ft 5in (1.65m)
5. Lined with stone, two vertical at end, 700mm deep
6. Nails × 3. Clenched at 43mm (fig 13)

S7 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
4. Male - approximately 30-50 yrs; stature approximately 5ft 8¼in (1.73m)
5. Stones at pelvis and feet
6. Nail head in fill (not ills)

S8 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to N
3. Supine
4. Male - adult
6. Iron nail on pelvis (not ills)
- Hobnails × 4 (not ills)

S9 (fig 12)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Female approximately 40-50 yrs; stature approximately 4ft 11½in (1.51m)
6. Hobnails × 3 (SF 56, not ills)

S10 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine; head appears to be 'propped up' on a stone
4. Male aged possibly 40-50 yrs; stature approximately 5ft 5½in (1.65m)
5. Stone lining along west side
6. Large animal bone on right side (not located 1991)

S11 (fig 14)

1. Inhumation
3. Extended supine inhumation, hands crossed on

pelvis

4. Male - approximately 30-35 years; stature approximately 5ft 10in (1.77m)
6. Two nails near left shoulder and two at feet (SF 62), three surviving nails clenched at 42mm (fig 14). Bronze ring found near ribs and fingers (SF 2) (Fig 14)

S12 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine, hands crossed 'as usual' (ie in pelvis area)
4. Male - approximately 35-40 years; stature approximately 5ft 4¾in (1.64m)
5. Stone lining at feet
6. Iron bar fragments L 27mm × 13mm sq (not ills)

S13 (fig 14)

1. Inhumation
4. Female - adult
6. Nail head in grave fill (not ills)

The following graves, which were totally excavated by Colyer, were assigned a new number series with the prefix 1.

Grave 100 (fig 14)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine, hands crossed over pelvis
4. Female - approximately 25-30 years; stature approximately 5ft 1¼in (1.55m)
5. Stone packing down left side of body. Worked squared stone used in grave lining (not located in 1991)

Grave 101 (fig 14)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine, with right hand holding or laid on top of the left elbow
4. Male - approximately 40-50 years; stature approximately 5ft 6in (1.66m)
5. Stone slabs under feet

Grave 102 (fig 14)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine, hands crossed over lower abdomen
4. Male - approximately 35-45 yrs; stature approximately 5ft 5¾in (1.67m)
5. Right side of body covered by stone slabs. 700mm deep. Upright slab at foot

Grave 103 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation

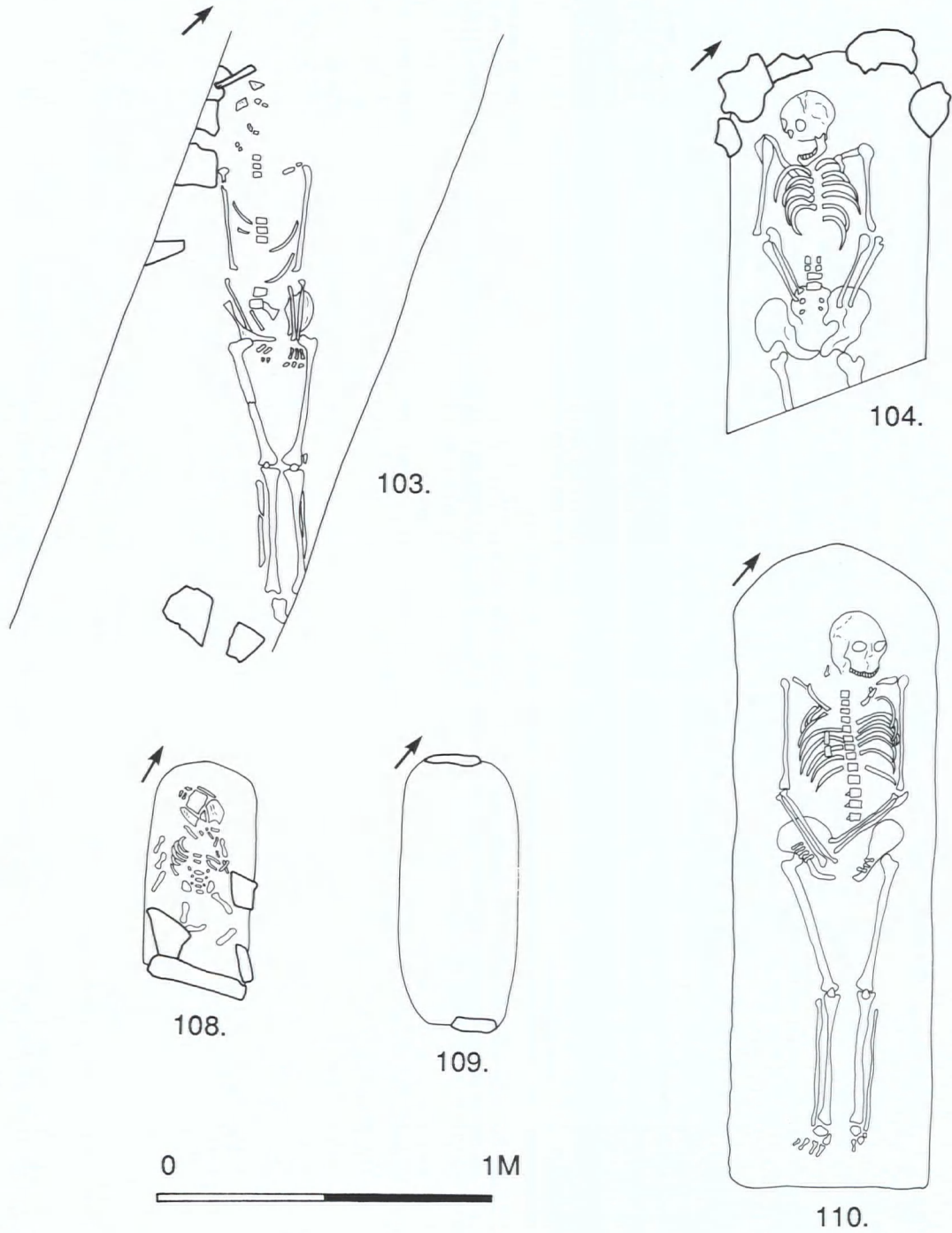


Fig 15 Roman graves at Bletsoe.

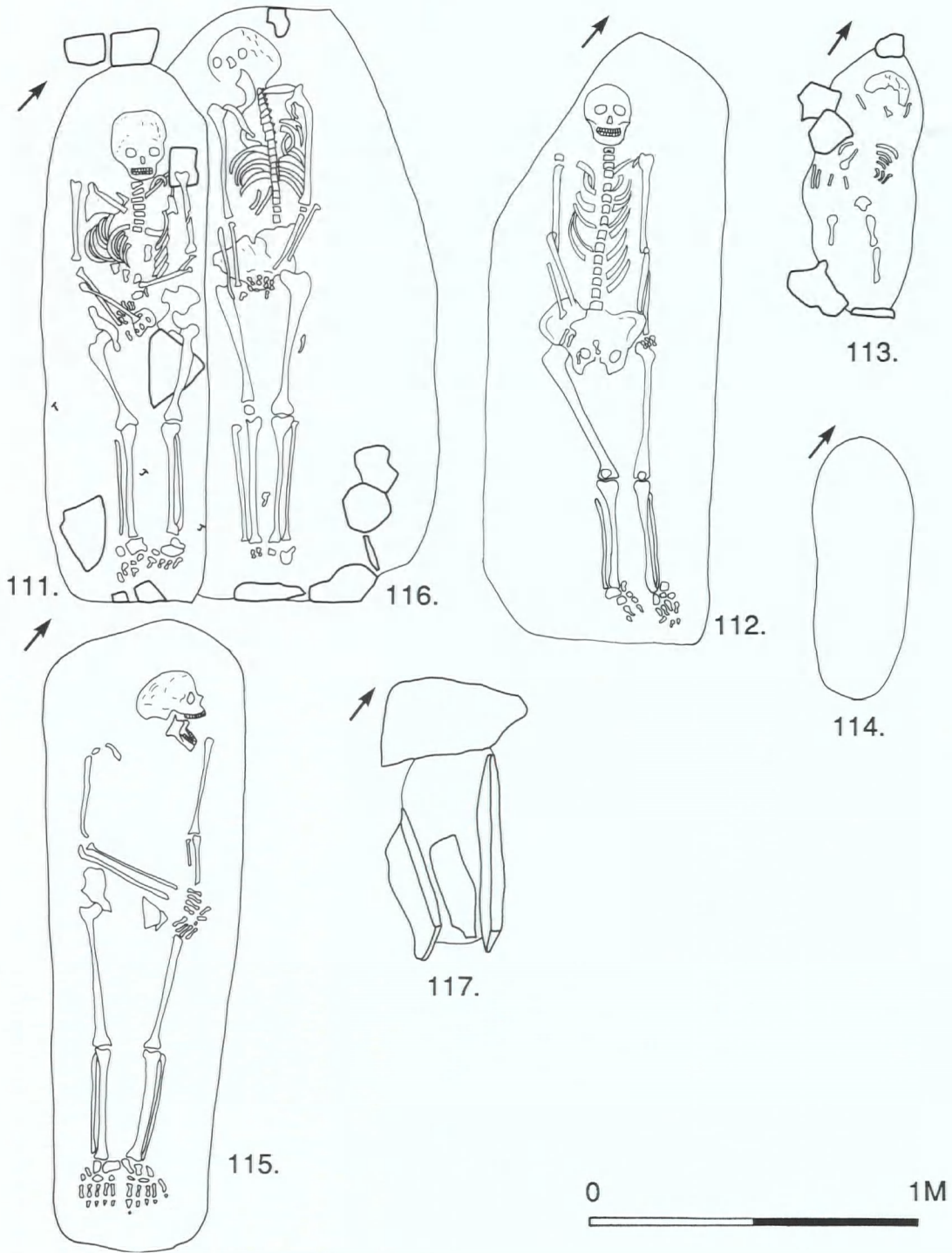


Fig 16 Roman graves at Bletsoe.

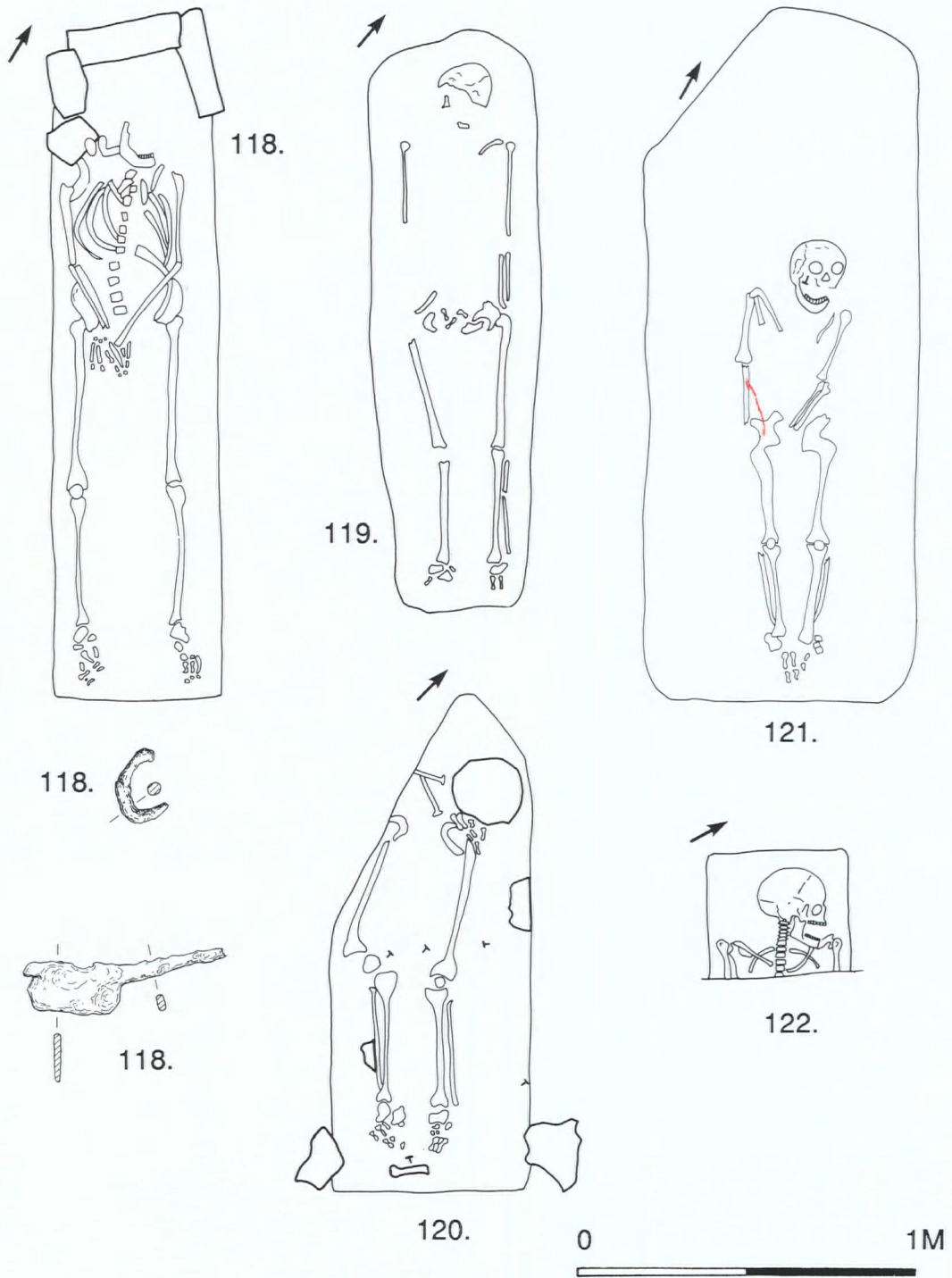


Fig 17 Roman graves at Bletsoe. Fe ring and nail, gr 118 (1:3); Cu alloy ring, gr 122 (1:1).

3. Supine, hands on pelvis
4. Female – approximately 40–50yrs; stature approximately 5ft 5¼in (1.65m)
5. Stone packing around head and feet. 700mm deep
6. Animal bone in fill near feet

Grave 104 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Female – age 50±5yrs. Stature approximately 5ft ½in (1.53m)
5. Stones irregularly placed around head. 700mm deep
6. Nail, possibly from coffin, clenched at 42mm (not ill)

Grave 105 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation, disturbed in antiquity
4. Child – approximately 5 yrs
5. 600mm deep

Grave 106 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to north
4. Infant – approximately 3 mths
5. 500mm deep

Grave 107 (Not illustrated)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to north
3. Infant
5. 400mm deep

Grave 108 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to north
3. Infant, arms by sides
4. Infant – approximately birth–3 mths
5. Stones arranged round sides and feet, 500mm deep
6. Large nail head in fill (SF 53)

Grave 109 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation
3. Infant
5. Stone at head and feet

Grave 110 (fig 15)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to North
3. Supine; hands crossed over pelvis. 700mm deep
4. Male – approximately 25–30 yrs; stature approxi-

mately 5ft 6in (1.65m)

Grave 111 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation
2. Head to north
3. Adult, hands on pelvis
4. Female – stature approximately 5ft 4¼in (1.63m)
5. Stone packing around feet, 600mm deep
6. Nail fragment (not ill)

Grave 112 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Female – approximately 25–30yrs; stature approximately 5ft 2in (1.57m)
6. Large animal jawbone in fill at 900mm (not located in 1991)

Grave 113 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation
4. Child – possibly about 1 yr
5. Stones at head and feet, 450mm deep

Grave 114 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation

Grave 115 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation
 4. Female – approximately 40–50yrs; stature approximately 5ft 6¾in (1.69m)
- Foetus – 6.25 lunar months (Olivier and Pineau 1958)

Grave 116 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation
4. Female – approximately 20–25yrs; stature 4ft 11in (1.49m)
5. Stone at head and feet
6. Nail fragments, possibly of 3 coffin nails (not ill)

Grave 117 (fig 16)

1. Inhumation.
 4. Infant – skull only surviving
 5. Stone cist with flat cap stone
 6. Hobnails × 2 in fill (not ill)
- Nails fragments × 2 (not ill)

Grave 118 (fig 17)

1. Adult
4. Male – approximately 40–50 yrs; stature approximately 6ft 0in (1.83m)
6. Knife: portion of blade and tang (fig 17)

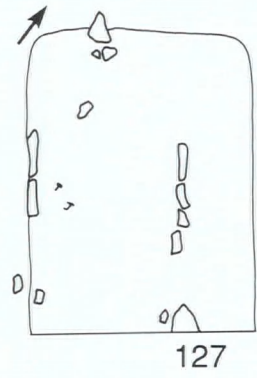
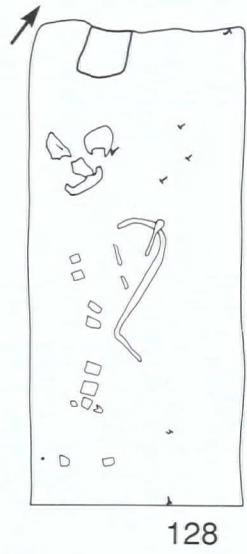
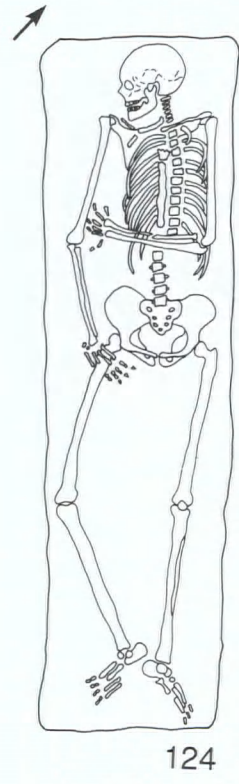
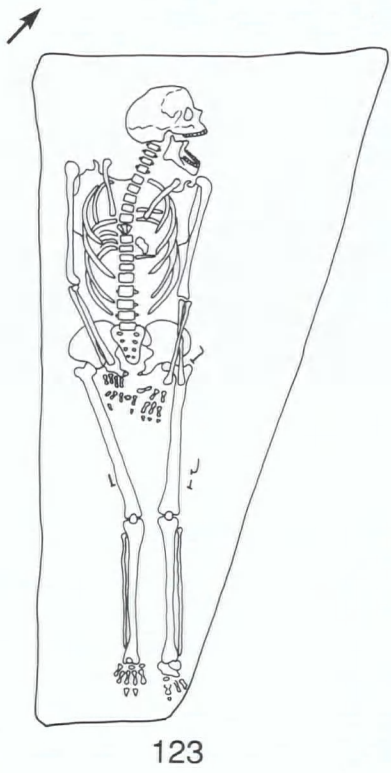


Fig 18 Roman graves at Bletsoe.

Ring, Fe, probably finger ring, although any characteristics such as bezel now missing. Distorted into oval shape (fig 17)

Grave 119 (fig 17)

1. Inhumation
3. Supine
4. Female – possibly 50, plus or minus a few years; stature approximately 5ft 1¾in (1.56m)
5. Stones at head and feet

Grave 120 (fig 17)

1. Inhumation
3. Adult; supine.
4. Male approximately 30–35yrs, stature approximately 5ft 8¼in (1.73m)
5. Stones at head and feet

Grave 121 (fig 17)

1. Inhumation
4. Female – approximately 16–17yrs; stature approximately 4ft 9¾in (1.46m)
6. Nail (Fe) fragment in fill (not ill)

Grave 122 (fig 17)

1. Inhumation
4. Male – approximately 30–40 yrs
6. Finger-ring, simple circular section copper alloy (fig 17) Bracelet fragment. It is uncertain that this is part of the grave furniture, although the tradition of placing broken objects in graves is documented; the precise findspot of this bracelet was not recorded (Catalogue no 44 fig 5).

Grave 123 (fig 18)

1. Inhumation
 4. Male – approximately 35–40 yrs; stature approximately 5ft 6¼in
 6. Finger ring near hands.
- Casket fittings (Fe): Angle binding (not ill)
- Nails (Fe) × 5, possibly coffin fittings. Very corroded but fragments that survive suggest tapering square shank and clenching (not ill).

Grave 124 (fig 18)

1. Inhumation
4. Male – approximately 45–50 yrs; stature 5ft 9¾in (1.77m)

Grave 125

No surviving information

Grave 126

No surviving information

Grave 127 (fig 18)

1. Infant

Grave 128 (fig 18)

1. Inhumation
4. Male – approximately 35–45; stature very approximately 5ft 9¾in (1.77m)
6. Nail (Fe) fragments × 2 in fill.

The cemetery: discussion

The Bletsoe cemetery comprises 54 identified graves and has several distinct characteristics: uniform orientation, stone packing, supine burial and few grave goods. Discussion of these characteristics is important to derive both a date and a possible cultural context for the cemetery as a whole.

The general trends of burial fashion in Roman Britain move from predominantly cremation in the 1st century to a mixture of cremation and inhumation in the 2nd, to almost exclusively inhumation in the 4th century (Philpott 1991). Within this general pattern pre-Roman traditions (Black 1986) and classical practice have been identified (Alcock 1980). Bletsoe, which has no evidence of cremation would therefore, appear to fall into the tradition of burial after the 3rd century.

Orientation

Inhumation began to dominate Romano-British burial practice in the later 3rd century but with a variety of orientations. Throughout the century the trend is towards E–W orientation (Rahtz and Fowler 1972). At the end of the Roman period E–W orientation persists, but the incidence of depositing grave goods decreases, as for example at Cannington (Rahtz 1977). Other smaller cemeteries, such as the late 4th century Lynch Farm (Jones 1975) and the 5th century Bancroft (Williams 1984), exhibit a variety of orientations with few or no grave goods.

The appearance of Saxon inhumation cemeteries in the 5th century raises the possibility that the Bletsoe

cemetery is pagan Saxon. In the early 5th century there are distinct regional variations amongst Saxon cemeteries (Johnson 1980, map 17 and 21). Creations dominate the east from York to Lincoln, inhumation is prevalent in the Thames valley, and mixed rites are dominant in the Chilterns as far east as Cambridge. The absence of any cremation evidence argues against a Saxon cemetery of the early 5th centuries, although NE-SW orientations are present in some mixed cemeteries. At the end of the 5th century, although the regional distinctions are becoming blurred, the lack of any Saxon artefacts remains the principal obstacle to early Saxon dating at Bletsoe.

One further possible comparison is the 7th and 8th century Saxon cemetery at King Harry Lane, St Albans, where there were a number of NE-SW oriented graves. They were, however, in a group among other graves which contained distinctive Saxon grave goods (Ager 1989, 219-27).

A second possibility is that the cemetery at Bletsoe is Christian (Jones 1968). Grave orientation is uniformly NW-SE at Bletsoe, with the heads invariably at the northern end of the graves. As early as 1976, however, Rahtz (1977) argued for the abandonment of E-W orientation alone as an indicator of Christian burial. At Icklingham the graves around a small Roman baptistery were oriented NW-SE but these were aligned with the baptistery building and church (West 1976) and there is no evidence of such specific buildings at Bletsoe. More recently Watts (1989) argued that care taken in the burial of children, especially perinatal or neonate, indicated Christian practice; this may be reflected in the clustering of infant graves 108, 109, 113, 114, 117.

Topography or the use of landmarks has emerged as a recurrent theme in cemetery organisation. It is evident at Icklingham and Winchester that E-W orientation was a response to topography and changing fashion (Clark 1979, 132). At Bletsoe the NW-SE orientation of the graves is parallel and perpendicular to two earlier ditches. It is possible therefore that the ditches may once have provided boundaries for the cemetery that were subsequently overrun as the cemetery expanded; but not, however, before they provided some topographical alignment for the layout of graves.

A final aspect of the orientation of the graves is their layout. The extent of the cemetery and the consistency of orientation argues not only for the use of gravemarkers (for which there is no physical evi-

dence), but that blank areas between burials may indicate groups particular about their position within the cemetery.

Coffins and Stone lining

In graves S6, S11, 116, 123, the graves may have contained coffins which were evident only from the surviving nails. In each grave from which nails were recovered insufficient survived to suggest the coffins were nailed throughout. However the clenching of the nails at 42 and 46mm suggests planks of possibly 20mm thickness.

In 25 graves¹⁰ stones had been placed around the body forming a loose lining or packing. In all cases the packing material was limestone slabs probably derived from local sources. None of the stone had any mortar and only one stone, in Gr 100, was dressed. This may suggest that the stones did not originate with demolition material from the nearby villa.¹¹

What emerges is that there is a small number of graves similar to Bletsoe in cemeteries at Lynch Farm, Northants; Margidunum, Notts; possibly Bancroft, Bucks; where the stone packing appears to be the dominant characteristic with orientation and direction of the body more variable. At each of these sites there is evidence of late, even post-Roman, occupation.

Skeletal position

The position of the skeletons at Bletsoe is exclusively supine with only minor variations in the layout of individuals. The dominant form is where the hands are crossed on the lap, but the deep grave 12 has its arms crossed on the chest. In grave 101 the right arm lies over the left, and in grave 124 it is the left arm which lies across the body.

There are many parallels for such skeletal positioning in Roman cemeteries, but in contrast other local late cemeteries have a considerable variety of skeletal position. The Dunstable cemetery (Matthews 1981) is particularly noteworthy, as are the recently excavated late cemeteries at Sandy,¹² Beds, and Kempston Church End, Beds.¹³

In the cemeteries which contained stone-packed graves the supine position is typical.

Child inhumations

At Bletsoe the incidence of child burial is low: five

Table 3 Age/sex composition of skeletons at Bletsoe

Age band	Males	Females	Both sexes
16-17		1	1
17-20	1	-	1
17-23		1	1
20-25	-	2	4
20-30		1	1
25-30	2	2	4
30-35	2		2
30-40	2	1	3
30-50	1		1
35-40	2		2
35-45	3		3
40-45		1	1
40-50	5	5	10
45-50	3		3
45-55	1		1
50+	1	4	5
Adult	2	1	3
Total	25	21	46

infants (107, 108, 109, 117, 127) out of 56 burials with no late adolescents. At Bletsoe the child burials occur singly in a discrete area; they were apparently carefully placed, and were avoided by later graves. The placing of the children in miniature versions of graves occupied by adults appears to indicate that children were buried using similar ceremony, and with as much care as their elders. The possibility that this is a Christian rite has been noted above. Historical references to child burial and disposal were summarised by Carcopino (1956, 42, 77) following Juvenal (6 602). Until the 3rd century a father might expose an unwanted child to die, but during the 3rd century this right was removed (*Dig XXV 3, 4*). It was however Carcopino's opinion that the practice of exposure may have continued; archaeological evidence in the form of perinatal skeletons found in refuse pits or ditches might be expected, but is not present at Bletsoe.

More recently Allason-Jones (1989, 36) highlighted the low incidence of death in childbirth or early infant mortality in Roman Britain, making the point that contraception may have been a more potent force than hitherto recognised during the Roman period. The low proportion of child burials at Bletsoe seems to corroborate the observations of Allason-Jones regarding population proportions.

One particular grave may indicate an aspect of infant mortality. This is the grave of a woman which

was found to contain the bones of a foetus from which we could conclude she died in childbirth.¹⁴ Ortner and Putschar (1985, 100) however have pointed out there are several other causes of death unrelated to childbirth which may have led to the decease of mother and child.

Discussion: the human remains

CBD examined the material immediately after excavation, and this report has been compiled from his record sheets, without re-examination of the remains. It will be appreciated that any apparent anachronisms in terminology or method reflect the state of our discipline twenty years ago.

Fifteen skeletons were recovered from the 1967 excavations (graves 1-15). Preservation of skeletal elements varied between individuals; overall condition was good, although some breakage had occurred *post mortem*, necessitating repair; there was some erosion and a number of skulls had been deformed by soil pressure. Data sheets, which include all measurements taken on skull and long bones, are kept in the Department of Biological Anthropology. Measurements taken on skull and long bones were those of Buxton and Morant (1933), Morant (1936) and Mukherjee, Rao and Trevor (1955).

Determination of sex for the individuals was straightforward, using the methods summarised in Brothwell (1963). The sex balance was roughly equal, 25 being adjudged male, 21 female, and 4 being immature individuals which could not be sexed. Estimates of age at death were made from three criteria: degree of attrition of molar teeth (Brothwell 1963), condition of pubic symphyses (Todd 1920; McKern and Stewart 1957), and the closure of the cranial sutures. This latter method is now rarely used,

Table 4 Prevalence of dental caries, ante mortem tooth loss and abscesses in Bletsoe population

	Maxilla	Mandible	Total	%
Number of teeth examined	307	404	711	
Number of teeth with caries	22	26	48	6.7
Number of teeth possible	481	581	1062	
Number of teeth lost <i>ante mortem</i>	103	106	209	19.7
Number of sockets examined	392	482	874	
Number with abscess cavities	41	34	75	8.6

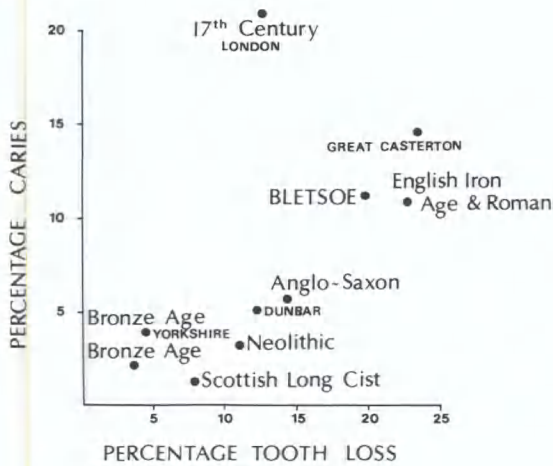


Fig 19 Incidence of caries and tooth loss at Bletsoe compared with a range of British sites (after Brothwell 1961).

but was still utilised when the material was first examined (CBD). When two or more criteria of age estimation could be used, no conflict was found between them. The age structure of the group is shown in Table 3.

Two sets of remains (Grs 106, 108) classified as immature were of very young infants, possibly neonates or up to three months old, one other was approximately one year old (Gr 113), and the fourth was approximately five years of age (Gr 105).

Incidence of dental caries, *ante mortem* tooth loss and abscesses is given in Table 4. The incidence of caries and tooth loss can be compared with samples plotted by Brothwell (1961) from a range of British sites: the Bletsoe group is similar to the sample of British Iron Age and Roman dentitions. Periodontal disease, as judged from recession of the alveolar borders, was widespread and sometimes severe; calculus was present in about half the dentitions. Dental enamel hypoplasia, an indicator of childhood stress (nutritional or febrile) was present in 22 individuals. Five individuals had probably congenital absence of the third molars, while the absence of the lower central incisors in another skeleton might have been congenital or due to loss early in life.

The principal pathological changes, other than dental disease, were those of the arthroses. In the spine, 'osteophytosis' is recorded in half of the adult spinal columns: these proliferative changes at the

margins of the vertebral bodies can contribute to a diagnosis of osteoarthritis, but without other pathological changes they may be simply indicative of age. However it is probably reasonable to record osteoarthritis in one spine, that of an elderly male individual, which also displays eburnation on the odontoid process of the axis and the odontoid facet of the atlas. In recording the rest of the skeleton, the term 'osteoarthritis' has been used, which includes a constellation of changes including osteophyte development, breakdown of joint surfaces, sclerosis, eburnation and ankylosis. It is present to a greater degree in 28 adults, being found in all the joints of the limbs, in the extremities, and in two temporomandibular joints.

Eight cases of trauma were found, of which the individual in Grave 118 exhibited fractures of the sacrum, left clavicle, ribs and left innominate, accompanied by ankylosis of the left acetabulum and femoral head; this same man has osteoarthritic lesions of both shoulders and arms and osteophytic lipping of the entire vertebral column. Other abnormalities were extra-cortical new bone on both tibiae of a male individual, another tibia with a bump of bone in the enemial crest, and two partial sacralizations of vertebrae: unilateral ankylosis of a fifth lumbar vertebrae in a female skeleton, and a sixth lumbar vertebra with partial ankylosis in a male. Eleven orbits had some degree of cribra orbitalia, a lesion bearing some relation to anaemic disorder.

Certain discontinuous (non-metrical) traits may be of significance in determining genetic affinity and distance. Those noted by Brothwell (1963) were recorded:

Metopism	5/38 skulls
Ossicles in lambdoid suture	15/33 skulls
Inca bones	2/33 skulls
Parietal notch bones	11/70 parietals
Mandibular tori	16/30 mandibles
Palatine tori	6/29 palates
Maxillary tori	2/29 maxilliae

Other traits mentioned by Brothwell were not found. The high incidence of the metopic suture in this may suggest familial relationships, as metopism is generally held to be a hereditary character despite its variable expression (Hauser and De Stefano 1989). In the post cranial skeleton, platymeria (antero-posterior flattening of the femoral shaft) was found in 21 out of 22 individuals whose femora could be measured for

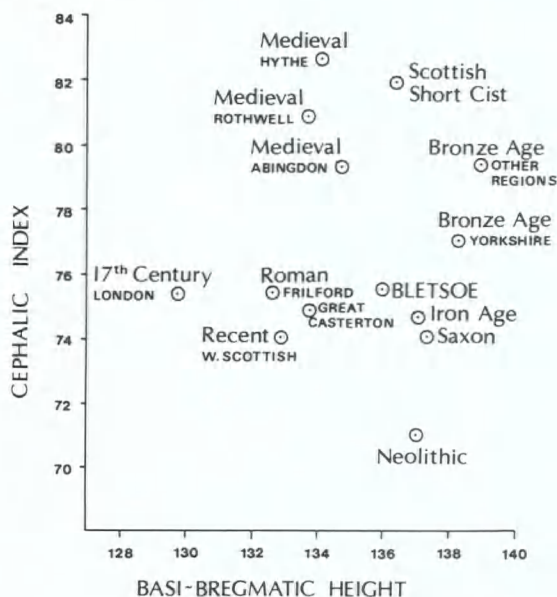


Fig 20 Comparison of cephalic indices and basi-bregmatic heights in skulls from Bletsoe with those on a range of British sites (after Brothwell 1963).

this feature. A nutritional cause has been suggested, but the majority view is that it is related to mechanical factors.

Height estimates for this group, from the regression equations of Trotter and Gleser (1952), gave a mean for the males of 5ft 7in, and for the females of 5ft 2in; as there were not, in all cases, all the limb bones present, these statures must be considered as tentative estimates (fig 19 and 20). The means do not differ significantly from the average heights of inhabitants of south-east England at the time when the material was examined: men 5ft 8in–5ft 9in, women 5ft 3in.

The cranial indices and basi-bregmatic heights of the skulls from this group were compared with other British material recorded by Brothwell (1963) and our sample is well within the ranges for Romano-British to Saxon periods.

The grave goods

Few graves at Bletsoe contained any grave goods but those that do are most important.

Hobnails were found in graves S8 and S9, a tradition familiar in Roman graves from 1st to 4th century. The finger-rings from graves 122 and S11 are probably both of Roman manufacture. The ring in 122 is

a simple copper alloy band whilst that in S11 dates to the 3rd century.

Other finds in graves are more problematic. The iron knife in grave 118 is simple and unadorned; the ring from the same grave fill and finds group (BW) could have been the suspension loop of the knife. Such knives are known throughout the Roman period (Manning 1985, pl 53 and 54). One example with a chain still attached is known from a 5th century burial in Canterbury. The knife, however, does not fall easily into the series of knives found in Saxon graves, which tend to be longer and thinner than this example (Härke 1989).

In graves S10 and 112 animal bones suggest offerings to sustain the dead in the next world (Alcock 1980, 63 ff).

The pottery

The grave fills contained some sherds of pottery, mainly Nene Valley colour coat, grey wares and shelly wares. Small, single body sherds were usual. None of the grave fills could be dated earlier than the late 3rd century, although earlier residual pottery was found in a small number. Residual pottery dated mainly to the 2nd–3rd centuries and consisted of abraded sherds of Samian, light coloured flagon ware, roughcast beakers, poppy head beakers, some Verulamium ware and one fragment of 1st century grog tempered ware.

The date of the cemetery

The date of the use of the cemetery at Bletsoe is derived from three sources: material found in the graves; artefacts found in the Roman ditches through which several graves were cut; comparison of the burial rite with other examples of this type of cemetery.

The date of the finds and pottery from the ditches was found to correspond closely. The pottery comprises an assemblage of which the latest constituents date to the mid 4th century. The small finds, although largely undatable, included a late buckle probably of the mid 4th century (Catalogue No 30). This confirms a *terminus post quem* for the graves cut into the ditch silts of mid to late 4th century.

In graves S11 and S13 coins of Valens 364–74 and Magnentius/Decentius 350–60, although not recorded as grave goods, provide a *terminus post quem* for these graves of the latter half of the 4th century.

This date does not conflict with that derived from the grave goods in S11 and 122 and 118 above.

Elsewhere, the tradition of stone-packed graves, occasionally with poor insubstantial coffins, appears to originate in the mid 3rd century; grave 57 at Cirencester had a coin of Salonina (253–7) in the fill providing a *terminus post quem* for a grave which had packing around the head and sides (McWhirr 1983, 94–5). The tradition of stone packing in graves with a variety of orientations continues through the late Roman period, evident at Ashton (Dix 1983, 305) and Bancroft Mausoleum and shrine (Williams 1984).

The closest parallels to the Bletsoe cemetery are those at Margidunum and Lynch Farm where both N–S orientation and stone packing are evident; both are dated to the post-Roman period. Combining the attributes so far discussed, and noting the absence of any Anglo-Saxon artefact evidence, Bletsoe cemetery could have been in use in the late 4th or possibly early 5th century. It was a time when historical circumstance created an environment in which the traditional archaeological indicators such as ceramics, coins and precious metalwork were largely absent.

General Discussion

It is clear from the descriptions of the structures west of the cemetery that Bletsoe is a villa site, evident from

the column base, the ceramic tiles, the possible stone-lined drain as well as the other finds; it is also evident that none of the structures so far investigated is the villa house itself. From the wooden Structure 1 and the possible corn drying kiln it is reasonable to assume that this was part of the service area of the villa. The spatial relationship between the cemetery and other structures indicates that the cemetery probably developed outside the immediate area of the structures, but may have begun to encroach, and ultimately to surround the corn dryer.

More precisely, the absence of worked stone or stone with adhering mortar, in the stone packing of the graves noted above, suggests the cemetery was in use contemporaneously with the villa. However the pottery from the grave fills and the position of pit 1 seem to indicate that the cemetery began to be used at a time when these areas had ceased to be used for their original purpose. The animal bone, on which there is no evidence of animal gnawing, appears to show that dogs were unable to reach the area in which this refuse was disposed. The general evidence of coins from the cemetery, and the list of coin stray finds from the site,¹⁵ seem to reinforce the perception that the period of activity overall lasted from the very late 1st century to the 4th. The date of the cemetery's use in the 4th century suggests that burial took place here in the final phase of the villa's occupancy.

Appendix 1: The Pottery

Introduction

The pottery from Bletsoe has been divided into three groups: the villa structures; the field system; the cemetery. Method of quantification was according to the level of information that could be gleaned from each group. The pottery from the villa structures, and the stratified pre-cemetery features was fully quantified by sherd count, weight and EVEs (rim percentages). Sherd count and weight are recorded in Table 5. The pottery from the loam horizons immediately below topsoil in the cemetery area, and the pottery from the grave fills was quantified by sherd count and the record may be consulted in the archive.

During excavation the pottery was recorded as follows. Features were allocated individual numbers; the pottery from the villa structures was recorded according to those numbers. Within the cemetery area, however, discrete assemblages of pottery within features were given a double letter code. The pottery was recorded within these groups, quantified by type.

There is also fieldwalking material from the fields around the site as well as collections from topsoil. This does not add to the information from the stratified pottery and therefore is not published. Intrinsically interesting vessels have been illustrated to show the range of vessels across the site, and to provide more complete examples of otherwise unpublished types. Illustrations of the stratified groups can be found in figs 7, 8, 9. They are discussed in the relevant part of the text.

Full type descriptions have been omitted as these are published elsewhere; brief descriptions are given below. These types will be incorporated into the Bedfordshire Type Series, which will be fully established when the pottery from major excavations at Sandy, Bedfordshire, is analysed.

Type Series

Grogged – fairly smooth, lumpy fabric; orange-brown surfaces with a grey core. Inclusions are primarily rounded fragments of grog. This type is of local manufacture, often copying Gallo-Belgic styles. It is found in pre-Conquest contexts, but continued in use into the early Roman period (Thompson 1982). Only one abraded sherd was found at Bletsoe, residual in the fill of gully F2/F5.

Samian – fine orange ware, usually in tableware forms, imported from Gaul. Small fragments were found, residual in later contexts, although two complete vessels, Dr 33 and Dr 18/31 (nos 38 and 39), are unstratified and in the possession of Mr J Dunkley. The Dr 33 cup no 37 is clearly stamped. The Dr 18/31 bowl has the blurred stamp of Beliniccus, a potter from Les Martres-de-Veyre, Lezoux, and dated to c AD 130–50. The same stamp has been found at Baldock (Dickinson 1986, 204) and Gorhambury, Herts (Dickinson 1990, 200).

Roughcast – fine grey reduced fabric, smooth interiors but exteriors roughened by the addition of clay particles to the surface to give a pimply appearance. Only three sherds were found, from a small cornice-rimmed beaker, and may be residual in the fill of pit 1, (but see p 12). This type of beaker was made in a number of centres on the continent in the 2nd century (Symonds 1990, 10).

White ware – a light coloured sandy fabric found in small quantities on the site, usually undiagnostic body sherds, probably belonging to flagons. They may date to the 2nd century, in which case they are residual in the pits and gullies.

Black burnished type (BB) – two sherds of a dark grey ware with external acute-angled lattice decoration were found. Possibly of 2nd or early 3rd century date, these sherds are residual in later contexts.

Grey ware – with the shelly wares, this type is the commonest pottery on the site. This category consists of a variety of fabric types, grouped together because of their general characteristics of a sandy fabric and plain, utilitarian forms. Their dating is from the 2nd century onwards. The nearest known source of grey wares is the Mile Road kiln site in Bedford, about seven miles from Bletsoe (Swan 1984, 60).

Buff ware – two single body sherds were found in this sandy, buff-coloured fabric with a grey core. The fragments were undiagnostic and are probably residual in the fill of pit 1 (but see p 11).

Black ware – a complete vessel, a small jar, was found in pit 1. It was impossible to examine the fabric in a clean break, but the surfaces are fairly smooth with the sand tempering visible. The jar is decorated with burnished horizontal lines.

Mortaria (Oxford) – a single fragment of a mortarium in a white sandy fabric with a pink core, and the

characteristic translucent pink quartz grits of the Oxford area, was found in pit 1. The rim fragment corresponds to Young's type M17.2 dated to the late 3rd century (Young 1977, 74).

Mortaria (Nene Valley) – a single fragment of a mortarium in a white sandy fabric with black grits, characteristic of the Nene Valley was found in the gully F2/F5. The fragment is of undiagnostic form.

Nene Valley Colour Coat (NVCC) – the commonest fine ware found on site, the fabric is a smooth white or orange paste with a dark colour coat. Standard NVCC forms were found, including flanged bowls, dishes, folded beakers, rouletted beakers, flagons and a castor box lid. The earliest date so far for the colour coat industry in the Nene Valley is in the late 2nd century, but it continued into the 4th century and it is to this later phase that the pottery from Bletsoe is dated (Howe, Perrin and Macreth 1981, 7).

Alice Holt/Farnham – a single body sherd has been identified as belonging to this type. The 4th century saw an expansion in this industry and it is at this date that the widest distribution of the products is found, with small quantities reaching Bedfordshire (Lyne and Jeffries 1979, 58). This sherd, however, may date to an earlier phase of the industry (Going pers comm).

Oxford red – a late Roman orange-pink fabric with a red slip, often imitating Samian forms. Decoration is in the form of rouletting, demi-rosettes or white painted scrolls (Young 1977, 133). No full profiles were found.

Hadham – small quantities of the pottery from the Much Hadham industry in Hertfordshire, were found at Bletsoe (Going 1987, 3). Most of it is of the orange-red type with a distinctive black and white speckled fabric although there are a few examples of the grey pottery of this type. It is generally dated to the 4th century. However, the top half of a ring-necked flagon (no 10), slipped all over externally in white and subsequently burnished, was found in pit 1. This may be of an earlier date. Similar flagons have been found at Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk (Gurney 1986, 82).

Shelly – the largest proportion, over half, of the pottery was of this type. Shell was a tempering agent used in pre-Conquest, 'Belgic' pottery and probably continued in use in Bedfordshire throughout the Roman period. It was most popular in the 4th century when the kilns at Harrold, Bedfordshire, were at their greatest production (Brown 1972).

Forms are limited with jars and bowls forming the bulk.

Amphora – a single body sherd of an amphora in a reduced grey fabric was found, possibly residual, in gully F2/F5.

Fig 21 Unstratified pottery

37 Samian cup form Dr 33, stamped CEVI

38 Samian dish form Dr 18/31 with blurred stamp **BELINNICCUS**.

39 Brown sandy flagon with frilled neck

40 White ware flagon with neck applied separately

41 Grey ware face pot; complete vessel survives;¹⁶ it is unstratified. Eyebrows are in relief, emphasised by stabbing; eyes are applied pellets sitting within round depressions; the nose is lightly moulded with rows of stabbing beneath, to indicate a beard.

Few of these vessels have been found complete, fewer in dated contexts. Face pots are first encountered in the Rhineland, during the early 1st century, where they were used as cremation vessels. They were introduced into Britain by the army and continued in use throughout the Roman period. It has been suggested that large faces on the girth of the pot indicate an earlier tradition than smaller faces on the shoulder (Braithwaite 1984, 103). This places the Bletsoe vessel in the earlier group. Regional groups have been defined by Braithwaite (1984) but this vessel does not fit comfortably in any of them. The stabbing to indicate eyebrows and a beard is common throughout the tradition. Applied eyes, especially in round depressions are rare, although they do occur on examples from the Suffolk group (Braithwaite 1984, 111). Closer to Bedfordshire, there is a distinct group of facepots from Verulamium, all made in the buff white Verulamium region ware. This type of face pot has been found at King Harry Lane where it is dated to the Flavian period (Stead and Rigby 1989, 66). West of Bletsoe, a fragment has been found at Bancroft villa. The fabric is red Hadham ware, dating to the 4th century (Marney 1989, 123).

The function of the Bletsoe vessel is unknown, there is no evidence of a cremation except for the complete state of the pot. Elsewhere they have been found buried in ritual deposits and this use cannot be ruled out.

42 Grey ware bowl

43 Grey ware bowl with knife-trimmed base angle

44 Grey ware strainer with pre-firing holes bored from the interior

45 NVCC folded beaker

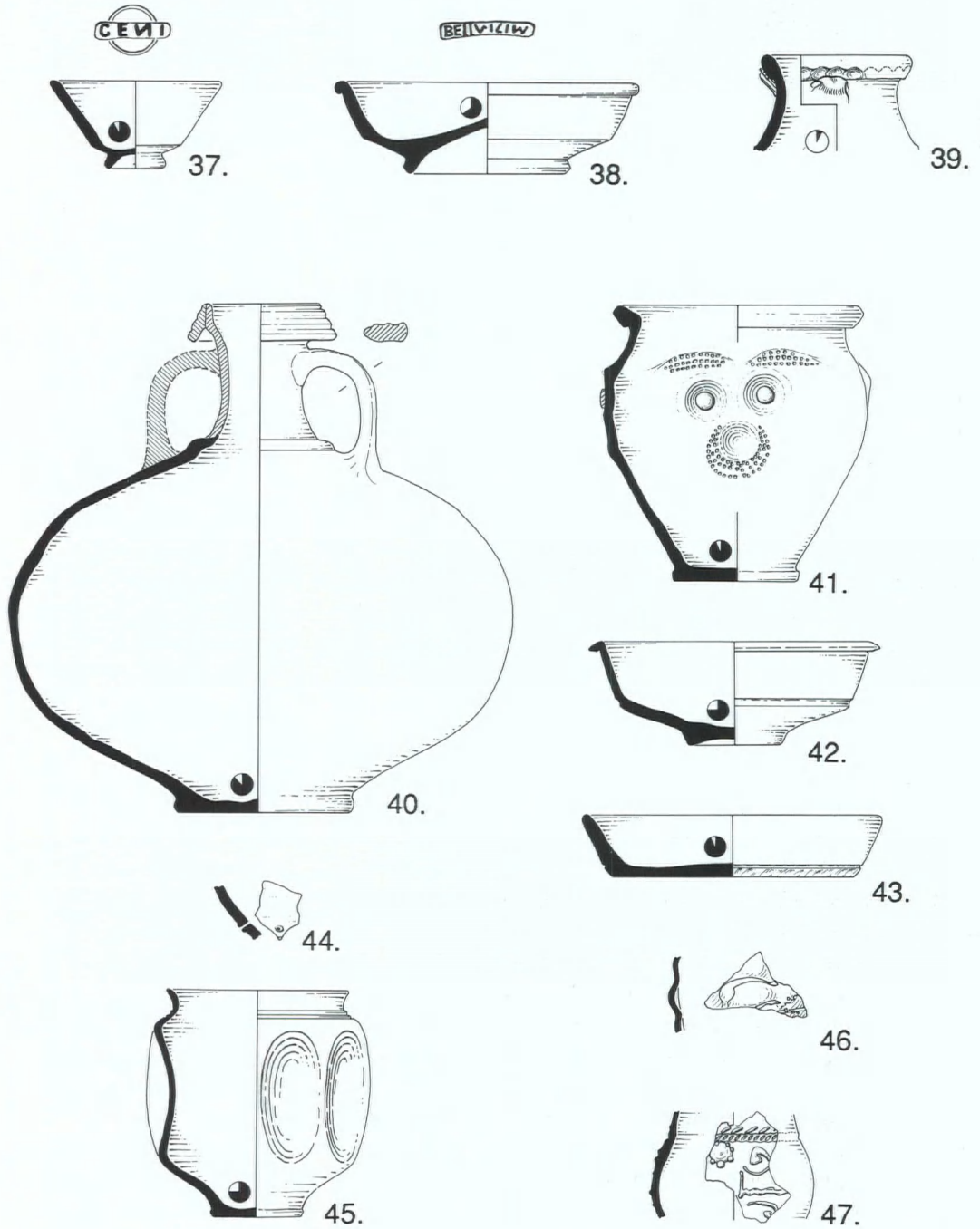


Fig 21 Unstratified Roman pottery (1:4).

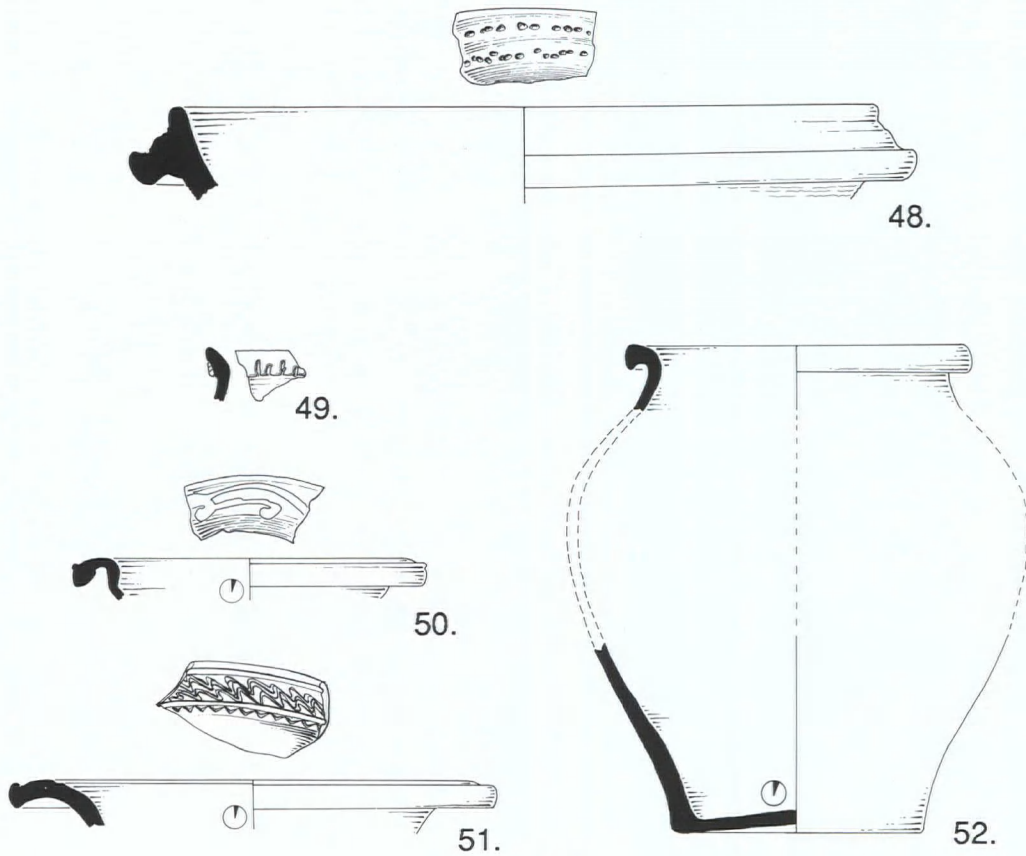


Fig 22 Unstratified Roman pottery (1:4).

46 White ware head pot, showing eye outlined in red. Head pots as defined by Braithwaite (1984) are known in parchment ware with reddish-brown details. Unlike the face pot, head pots are widely dispersed. They are a later development than the face pot. Moulded face flacons are known from the Oxford area produced both in red colour coat and parchment ware dated to the 2nd half of the 4th century (Mundy 1975, 188).

47 NVCC vessel with white barbotine decoration

Fig 22 Unstratified pottery

48 Shelly bowl with randomly impressed rim

49 Shelly flagon with applied frill to rim

50 Oxford red ware dish with white scrolls

51 Oxford red ware dish with combed rim

52 Shelly jar.

	Villa Structure				Field System											
	Slot 1	Slot 3	Slot 4	Pit	F1 AH	Pit 2		NE-SW Ditch				Pit 1	F2 AI	F2 BR	F2 CH	F2 CL
						F3 AJ	F3 BQ	F6 BZ	F7 CQ	F8 D8						
Grogged Samian		1:1			4:63	1:1	2:7					5:38	1:32			
Rough Cast White Ware B.B.							1:9	1:94	2:9			2:67	2:20			
Grey Ware Buff		1:1		12:140	18:156	19:170	5:87	1:4	7:34			58:755	6:73	3:89		1:4
Black												6:157		2:12		
Mortaria - Oxf												1:89				
Mortaria - NV																
NVCC			1:8	2:39		10:88	3:24		1:1		17:308	5:69	3:16	1:16	1:5	
Alice Holt																
Oxford Red		1:1	1:1	5:34	2:24	3:83	4:96				16:202	3:20	1:48			
Hadham						1:8					4:356					
Shelly Amphora	1:2	1:1	1:1	9:118	22:464	93:2560	13:414	4:146	21:415	2:10	118:4941	22:435	20:361	1:20		
Total Sherds	1	4	3	28	46	127	28	6	31	2	232	39	29	2	2	
Total Weight	2	4	10	331	707	2910	637	244	459	10	6951	649	526	36	9	

Contd	NE-SW Ditch				Soil/Loam Horizons										NW/SE Ditch	Total
	F2 CM	F2 DD	F5 CL	F5 BY	4	4a	5	5a	6	6 or 4	6 or 4a	7	8	R/B		
														Gully		
Grogged Samian			1:1	3:21	2:90	1:6									2:38	
Rough Cast White Ware B.B.										1:1					24:262	
Grey Ware Buff	21:177	2:8	1:2	17:2688	12:409	1:1	17:101	10:63	39:389	9:32	29:226	1:12	10:184	6:105	306:3490	
Black															2:12	
Mortaria - Oxf															6:157	
Mortaria - NV				1:53				1:47							2:136	
NVCC	13:70		1:21	12:198	8:76	2:5	21:72	5:14	12:84	4:8	10:54	6:29	8:107	10:129	156:1441	
Alice Holt					1:10										1:10	
Oxford Red	5:108			2:13	13:143		2:6	5:17	8:28	1:1	12:28	1:3	4:38	5:66	94:960	
Hadham							5:42	1:15				1:7			12:428	
Shelly Amphora	18:281	3:24	4:113	90:2362	17:1377		76:805	15:63	83:1112	7:55	37:387	14:85	28:407	42:702	762:17661	
Total Sherds	57	5	7	125	53	4	121	37	145	22	90	23	50	64	1383	
Total Weight	636	32	137	2915	2105	12	1026	219	1624	97	724	136	736	1430	25314	

Table 5: Pottery quantification. Pottery types quantified by sherds:weight (g) within context.

Appendix 2: Brick and tile

A small quantity of brick and tile was found, most of it unstratified. Two fabric types occurred:

Shelly: fairly soft, with colours ranging from light orange or buff to various shades of grey. Mainly *tegulae* and *imbrices*, but some box flue tiles also occurred in this fabric only. The tiles found at Bletsoe may originate at Harrold.

Sandy: hard fired sandy fabric with colours in the red/orange to brown range. Surfaces can be quite rough to touch. A patchy light grey core may occur. *Tegulae*, *imbrices*, and brick/floor tiles occurred in this fabric.

Only three stratified contexts contained tile. The pit in area II contained two sandy tegula fragments; two contexts within the gully (F2), 6 (S end) and 6/4a, contained one shelly *imbrex* and one sandy *tegula* respectively.

Appendix 3: Skeletal catalogue

Graves 1–15 (1967)

Grave 1

Male, approximately 40–50 years, stature 5ft 7in, cranial index 82.1 (brachycephalic).

Condition: Fairly complete skull, most of post cranial. Slight *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Slight osteophytosis of cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral vertebrae; slight osteoarthritis of left mandibular condyle. Trauma to left clavicle. Extra-cortical new bone on both tibia shafts.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 3/32, PM tooth loss 7/29, abscesses 0/29, caries 1/22, periodontal disease extensive, calculus slight, hypoplasia slight. Overcrowding of mandibular incisors and canines.

Non-metrical features: Parietal notch bones L × 1, R × 2, wormian bones in lambdoid suture × 5.

Grave 2

Male, approximately 50+ years, stature 5ft 9½in.

Condition: Skull and mandible absent, only lower spine, pelvis, legs and lower arms present. Most bones eroded.

General pathology: Medium degree of osteophytosis on L3–4, slight osteoarthritis in both acetabula, both first metatarsals and naviculars, right talus.

Dental pathology: Not determinable.

Non-metrical features: absent.

Grave 3

Female, approximately 40–50 years, stature 4ft 9¼in, cranial index 76.0 (mesocephalic).

Condition: Lower arms absent.

General pathology: Absent.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 3/32, PM tooth loss 2/29, abscesses ?1/30, caries 1/27, periodontal disease medium, calculus slight, hypoplasia ?slight. Lower central incisors lost early in life or congenitally absent.

Non-metrical features: Metopism. Slight mandibular and palatal tori.

Grave 4

Female, approximately 40–50 years, stature 5ft 3¼in. Condition: Skull fragments only, no mandible, post cranial partial except for legs. Eroded, some *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Medium degree of osteophytosis on only surviving vertebrae (L1–5), slight osteoarthritis of joints of femora, tibiae and ulnae.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0/16, PM tooth loss 6/16, abscesses 0/10, caries 1/10, periodontal disease absent, calculus absent, hypoplasia slight.

Non-metrical features: absent.

Grave 5

Female, approximately 20–30 years, stature 5ft 5in.

Condition: skull vault fragmentary, most of post cranial present.

General pathology: Slight osteophytosis on L3–S1, osteoarthritis on joints of ulnae, right radius, possibly on right first metatarsal and both first metacarpals.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0/13, PM tooth loss 0/13, abscesses 1/13, caries 2/13, periodontal disease slight, calculus absent, hypoplasia absent. Malalignment of mandibular canines and left first premolar.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular torus.

Grave 6

Female, approximately 50+ years, stature not determinable.

Condition: Fragments of skull and post cranial only. Some *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Extensive osteoarthritis, with eburnation of distal right femur, proximal right tibia and right patella.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 4/12, PM tooth loss 4/8, abscesses ?1/8, caries 0/4, periodontal disease extensive, calculus absent, hypoplasia absent.

Non-metrical features: Metopism.

Grave 7

Male, approximately 45–55 years, stature 5ft 5in, cranial index 76.1 (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull and post cranial somewhat fragment-

ary except legs.

General pathology: Medium to extensive degree of osteophytosis on only vertebrae present (cervicals).

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 4/16, PM tooth loss 4/12, abscesses 1/12, caries 1/8, periodontal disease medium, calculus absent, hypoplasia slight. Gap between mandibular premolars.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular torus.

Grave 8

Female, approximately 20–25 years, stature 5ft 5in, cranial index 69.7 (dolichocephalic).

Condition: Almost complete. Some *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Medium degree of cribra orbitalia.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0/32, PM tooth loss 0/32, abscesses 0/32, caries 0/32, periodontal disease absent, calculus slight, hypoplasia slight. Overbite.

Non-metrical features: Parietal notch bones L × 1, R × 1, wormian bones in lambdoid suture × 2. Slight mandibular torus.

Grave 9

Male, approximately 17–20 years, stature 5ft 6¾in.

Condition: Almost complete.

General pathology: Six lumbar vertebrae with partial sacralization of L6. Schmorl's nodes T5–L6. Pit in proximal phalanx.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0/31, PM tooth loss 0/31, abscesses 0/31, caries 2/30, periodontal disease absent, calculus medium, hypoplasia slight. Left mandibular third molar unerupted or congenitally absent. Overbite.

Non-metrical features: wormian bones in lambdoid suture × 5. Slight mandibular torus.

Grave 10

Male, approximately 30–40 years, stature not determinable, cranial index 79.7 (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull, two innominate fragments and six long-bone fragments only.

General pathology: AM tooth loss 4/28, PM tooth loss 4/24, abscesses 0/24, caries 1/19, periodontal disease medium, calculus slight, hypoplasia slight. All third molars unerupted or congenitally absent.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular torus.

Grave 11

Male, approximately 40–50 years, stature not determinable, cranial index 77.9 (mesocephalic).

Condition: Mixed with material from grave 12, two skulls but post cranial bones few, sorted by sex but some mixing.

General pathology: Osteophytosis on thoracic vertebrae, changes in facet joints C1–5.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 13/16, PM tooth loss 2/3, abscesses 3/3, caries 1/3, periodontal disease absent, calculus absent, hypoplasia absent.

Non-metrical features: Parietal notch bones L × 4, R × 2.

Grave 12

Female, approximately 20–25 years, stature not determinable.

Condition: See Grave 11. Some *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Hole in external table of basioccipital probably not pathological.

Dental pathology: Not determinable.

Non-metrical features: Metopism. Tripartite inca bone.

Grave 13

Female, approximately 30–40 years, stature 4ft 10½in

Condition: Skull and post cranial fragmentary. Some *post mortem* deformation.

General pathology: Absent.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0/14, PM tooth loss 0/14, abscesses 0/14, caries 1/14, periodontal disease slight, calculus slight, hypoplasia slight.

Non-metrical features: Absent.

Grave 14

Male, approximately 40–50 years, stature 5ft 11¼in, cranial index 74.3 (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull slightly broken, most of post cranial bones.

General pathology: Extensive osteophytosis C1–7 (eburnation C1–2), L1–S1, medium on T6–12; osteoarthritis on both acetabula, all joint surfaces at shoulders and elbows, mandibular fossa. Bump of bone on cnemial crest of right tibia.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 20/32, PM tooth loss 7/12, abscesses 3/12, caries 1/5, periodontal disease

extensive, calculus absent, hypoplasia absent.
Non-metrical features: Parietal notch bone R × 1.

Grave 15

Male, adult.
Condition: Innominates only.
General pathology: Absent.
Dental pathology: Not determinable.
Non-metrical features: Absent.

Graves S1–S13 (1969–70)

S1

Female, approximately 40–45 years, Stature approximately 5ft 1½in Cranial index 76.3mm – mesocephalic.
Condition: Fairly complete skull. Some long bones complete and other post cranial remains. Slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.
General Pathology: Slight osteophytosis of cervical and lumbar vertebrae – possible osteoarthritis. Manifestations of a slight degree of arthritis at the distal extremity of two metacarpal bones. Trauma had occurred at the mid-portion of the shaft of the left clavical. Slight osteoporosis in the left orbit.
Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 3–31, PM tooth 12–28, abscesses 1–28, Caries 4–16, periodontal disease medium, calculus slight.
Non-metrical Features: Two wormian bones in the lambdoid suture. An inca bone.

S2

Female, approximately 17–23 years. Stature c 5ft 1¼in, cranial index 77.6mm (mesocephalic).
Condition: Fairly complete skull. Some complete long bones, and other post cranial remains.
General Pathology: None detectable on the bones preserved.
Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32, PM tooth loss 10–32, abscesses 0–32, Caries 0–22, periodontal disease slight, calculus slight, hypoplasia slight; overbite.

S3

Female, approximately 25–30 years, stature approximately 5ft 2in, cranial index 77.4mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull complete except for one mandibular condyle. Some complete long bones and other post-cranial bones.

General Pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32, PM tooth loss 1–32, abscesses 2–32, Caries 2–31, periodontal disease medium, calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; edge-to-edge bite.

Non-metrical Features: Metopism.

S4

Male, approximately 35–45 years, stature c 5ft 8in, cranial index not calculable.

Condition: Cranium broken *post mortem*. Some complete long bones and other postcranial remains.

General Pathology: Osteophytosis (bony lipping) slight on lumbar and thoracic vertebrae, and glenoid fossa of scapulae. Slight manifestations of osteo-arthritis at the distal extremity of both first metacarpal bones, and the proximal extremity of the left ulna. Sacralization of the fifth lumbar vertebra.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 2–31, PM tooth loss 0–31, abscesses 2–31, Caries 1–29, periodontal disease medium; calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; edge-to-edge bite.

Non-metrical Features: Slight mandibular tori.

S5

Male, approximately 25–30 years, stature approximately 5ft 4½in, cranial index 77.1mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull complete, post cranial remains fragmentary except for some long bones.

General Pathology: None detectable of the bones preserved.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32, PM tooth loss 1–32, abscesses 0–32, caries 0–31; calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; edge-to-edge bite. Congenital absence of the upper third molars.

Non-metrical Features: Two wormian bones in the lambdoid suture.

S6

Male, approximately 45–50 yrs, stature approx 5ft 5in, cranial index 77.3mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Long bones good. Cranium broken *post mortem*.

General Pathology: Osteophytosis slight at rims of

cervical and thoracic vertebrae. Manifestations of arthritis at glenoid cavity of the scapula and proximal extremities of the radii, these of a slight occurrence. Possible abscess cavity 24mm in length, 12mm wide, and 10mm deep in the superior surface of the body of the 3rd lumbar vertebra. The left clivical and right ramus of the mandible displayed trauma. The right mandibular condyle was missing, but from the appearance of the fractured surface of the ramus it seemed as though the condyle was completely severed and never united again. It was also possible that some infection persisted at the fractured surface at the time of death. Displayed, the right side of the frontal bone, was a raised oval shaped irregular area measuring 50 × 20mm with also minute foraminae. Possibly this and the trauma of the mandible could be connected, resulting from a blow(s) from a weapon, or from an accident of some kind.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 6–17, PM tooth loss 4–11, abscesses 2–11, Caries 1–7, periodontal disease extensive; calculus slight; hypoplasia slight.

Non-metrical features: Slight orbital osteoporosis.

S7

Male, approximately 30–50 yrs, stature approximately 5ft 8¼in, cranial index 77.7mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. Some long bones complete, and also other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Osteophytosis slight on lumbar vertebrae, other vertebrae too eroded. Other manifestations of osteoarthritis of a slight degree were of the proximal extremities of the femora; distal extremities, ulnae; right calcaneum, the articular surface for the talus; and possibly metatarsal bones. A small exostosis midway on the medial surface of the shaft of the right tibia, slight orbital osteoporosis.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 6–32, PM tooth loss 9–26, abscesses 1–26, 0–17, peridontal disease medium; hypoplasia slight.

Non metrical features: Slight mandibular tori.

S8

Male, adult.

Condition: Remains few in number and fragmentary and all of the post cranial skeleton.

General pathology: The bones that survived of this skeleton displayed that the individual suffered with osteoarthritis. This was apparent to a medium degree

of severity involving lumbar and thoracic vertebrae, glenoid fossa of the right scapula, and slight manifestations at the head portion of both humeri.

S9

Female, approximately 40–50 years, stature approximately 4ft 11½in.

Condition: Fragments of a skull, and mostly fragments of the post cranial remains.

General pathology: As with the remains from Grave 8, those bones that survived displayed that the individual suffered with osteoarthritis. It varied between slight and medium degrees and was detected at the distal extremity of the right radius, at the femoral heads, extremities of the tibiae the acetabulae, and possibly some bones from the hands and feet.

S10

Male, aged possibly 40–50 yrs, stature approximately 5ft 5½in, cranial index 75.9mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. Long bones complete and other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Widespread osteoarthritis. Medium or slight degrees displayed at proximal extremities of the femora, distal extremities of the ulnae, proximal extremities of the radii, glenoid fossa of scapulae, clavicles, and innominate bones. Also manifestations of slight to medium degrees of arthritis affecting some carpal and metacarpal bones, slight osteoporosis.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 19–32, PM tooth loss 6–11, abscesses 11–16, caries 1–5 periodontal disease extensive; hypoplasia slight.

Non-metrical features: Four wormian bones in the lambdoid suture; two parietal notch bones.

S11

Male, approximately 30–35 years, stature approximately 5ft 10in.

Condition: Skull fairly good. Some long bones complete and other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Slight to medium osteoarthritis affecting the cervical and thoracic vertebrae, also the glenoid cavity on the right scapula, slight orbital osteoporosis.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32 PM 0–32, abscesses 0–32, caries 1–32, periodontal disease, slight; calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; edge to edge



Fig 24 Left, partially stone lined grave 101

bite.

Non metrical features: Medium mandibular toris. A slight maxilla torus.

S12

Male, approx 35–40 years, stature approx 5ft 4³/₄in, cranial index 75.1mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. Complete long bones and other postcranial remains.

General Pathology: Slight to medium osteophytosis affecting all the vertebral column. Slight manifestations of osteoarthritis displayed on the right femur, both radii, both ulnae, and the glenoid fossa of the scapulae. The sacrum was ankylosed at the right side to the innominate bone.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 2–32, PM tooth loss

2–30, abscesses 1–30, caries 0–28. Periodontal disease, medium; calculus, medium. Edge to edge bites.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular tori.

S13

Female, adult.

Condition: Very fragmentary skull. Post cranial remains very few and fragmentary.

General Pathology: The only vertebra amongst the remains, this a cervical, displayed a medium degree of osteoarthritis affecting the right inferior articular facet.



Fig 25 Adult inhumation, stone lined 102

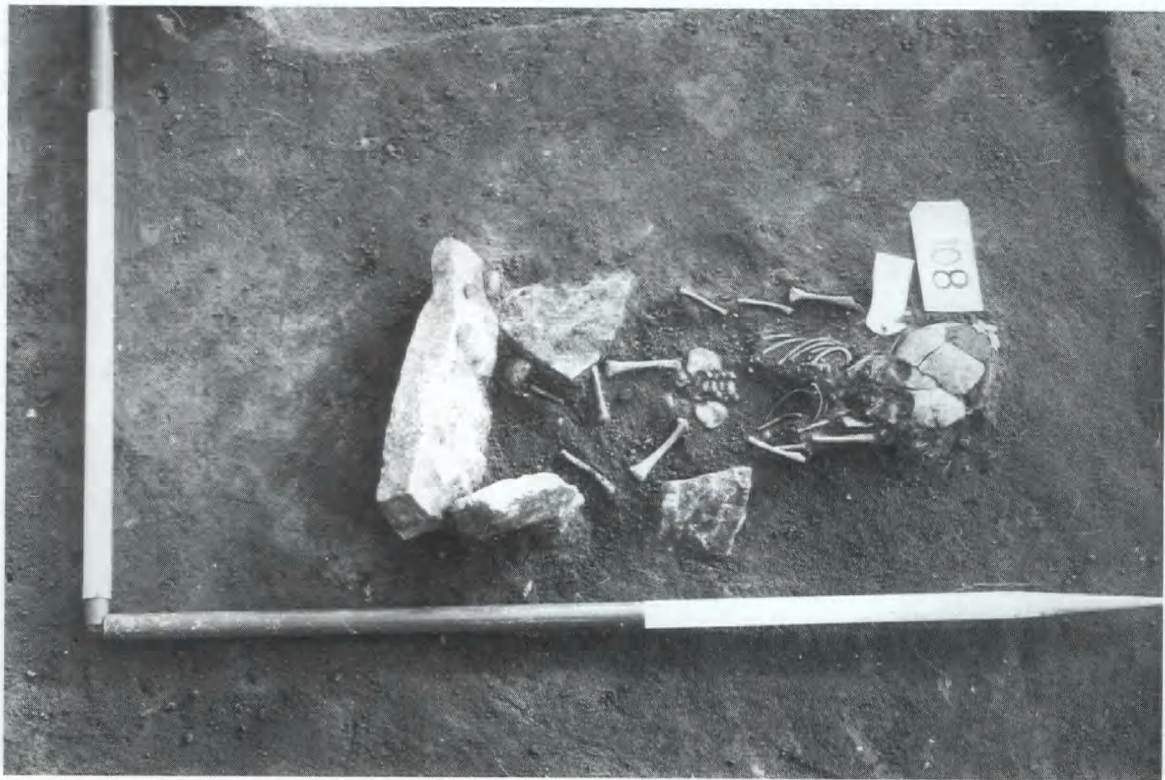


Fig 26 Stone lined child's grave 108

Graves 100–128 (1970)

Grave 100

Female, approximately 25–30 years, stature approximately 5ft 1¼in, cranial index 75.3mm (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. A few intact long bones but otherwise the post cranial remains were rather fragmentary.

General Pathology: None detected in the bones that were preserved, slight orbital osteoporosis.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32, PM tooth loss 5–32, abscesses 0–32, caries 0–27, periodontal disease, slight; Calculus, slight; edge to edge bite. Hypoplasia, nil.

Non-metrical features: Metopism, slight mandibular tori.

Grave 101

Male, approximately 40–50 years, stature about 5ft 6.6in, cranial index 79.2mm, (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. Some complete long bones and other post cranial remains. Slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General pathology: Medium to extensive osteoarthritis affecting the cervical vertebrae, slight to medium degree the thoracic and lumbar. Other bones displaying either slight or medium degrees of osteoarthritis were the distal extremity of the femora, the distal extremity of the left humerus, both extremities of the ulnae, the glenoid fossa of the scapulae, and possibly some bones of the hands. Trauma had occurred of a rib and also near to the right parietal eminence of the cranium; and possibly the superior rim of the left orbit.

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 8–32, PM tooth loss 0–24, abscesses 3–26, caries 2–24. Periodontal disease extensive; calculus slight; hypoplasia; edge to edge bite.

Non metrical features: Five wormian bones along the lambdoid suture.

Grave 102

Male, approximately 35–45 yrs, stature approximately 5ft 5¾in, cranial index 71.6mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull good. Some complete long bones and other post cranial remains.

General Pathology: Slight to medium osteophytosis at

the rims of the body portion of thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. Other bones possibly affected by osteoarthritis were the calcanae and talae, humeri, scapulae, the right ulna, and innominate bones. Trauma had occurred of the nasal bones, and the possibility arose that the fifth metacarpal bone had also been affected by trauma. Slight orbital osteoporosis

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 10–32, PM tooth loss 1–22, abscesses 12–23, caries 2–21, periodontal disease medium; calculus slight; hypoplasia medium; edge to edge bite.

Non-metrical features: Metopism, slight mandibular tori, medium palativus.

Grave 103

Female, approximately 40–50yrs, stature 5ft 5¼in

Condition: Skull very fragmentary. Some complete long bones and other post-cranial remains.

General pathology: Slight to medium osteophytosis affecting cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. Possible slight manifestations of osteoarthritis affecting the ulnae, and the glenoid fossa of the left scapula.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 3–11, PM tooth loss 6–8, abscesses 0–8, caries 0–2.

Non-metrical features: Ten wormian bones along the lambdoid suture.

Grave 104

Female, age 50±5yrs. Stature 5ft ½in

Condition: Skull fair. A few complete long bones and other postcranial material. Slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General pathology: Possible slight beginnings of osteoarthritis on the humeri, radii, and ulnae. Slight orbital osteoporosis.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 15–30, PM tooth loss 7–15, abscesses 2–15, caries 0–8, periodontal disease extensive; hypoplasia slight.

Grave 105

Child, approximately 5 yrs

Condition: Skull in places fragmentary but has been restored as much as possible. Some post cranial bones but somewhat fragmentary.

Grave 106

Infant, approximately 3 mths

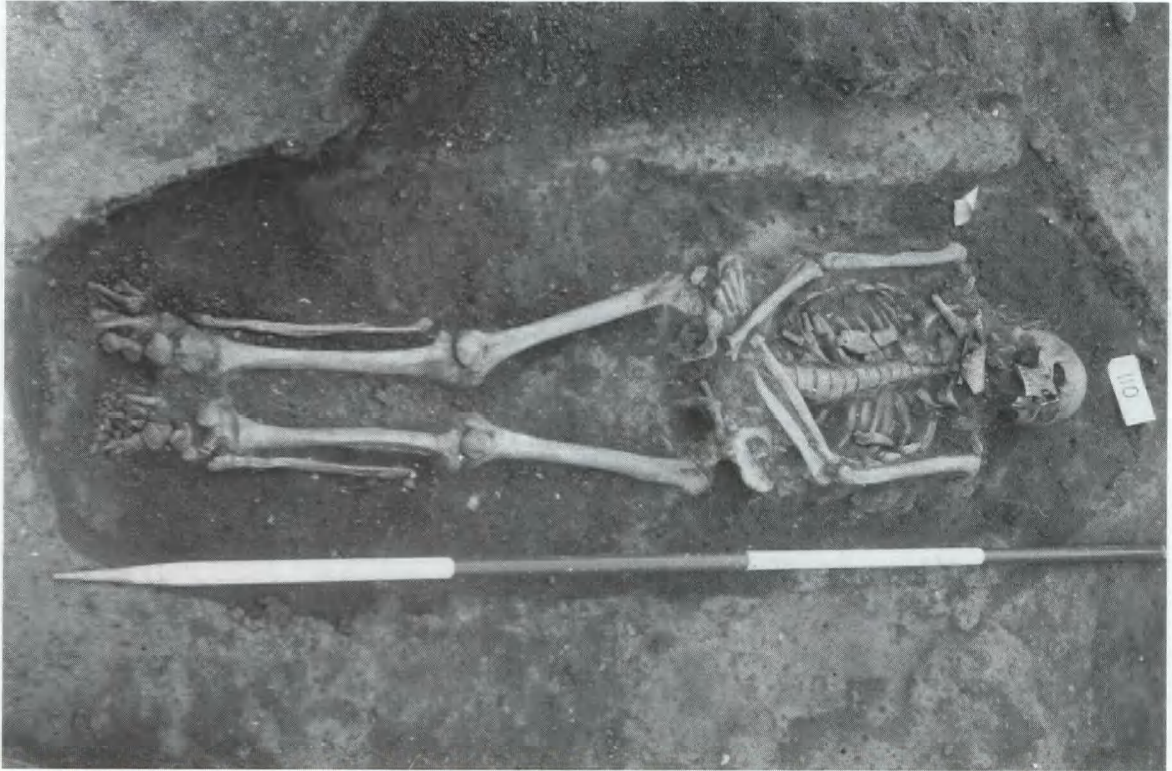


Fig 27 Adult inhumation 110



Fig 28 The possible double grave 116/111.

Condition: Fragments of a cranium and post cranial bones.

Grave 108

Infant, age approximately: birth–3 mths.

Condition: Fragments of a skull. Post cranial remains mostly intact.

Grave 110

Male, approximately 25–30 yrs, stature approximately 5ft 6in. Cephalic index 72.3mm (dolicephalic). Condition: Skull fairly good. Complete long bones and other postcranial remains.

General pathology: Some flattening of the rims of the acetabula of the innominate bones. Some *ante mortem* erosion of the superior surface. The right acetabulum less affected than the left. Possible cause ?dislocation.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0–32, PM tooth loss 0–32, abscesses 1–32, caries 1–32, periodontal disease slight; calculus medium; over-bit, hypoplasia nil.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular tori. Large square 'chinned' mandible.

Grave 111

Female, stature approximately 5ft 4¼in, cranial index 74.7mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull broken in places. Some complete long bones and other post cranial remains. Slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General pathology: Most vertebrae had been eroded *post mortem*, but it was possible to detect slight osteophytosis on some cervical and thoracic vertebrae. Possible slight manifestation of arthritis on some metacarpal bones.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 25–20, PM 5–5, abscesses 1–5.

Non metrical features: Three wormian bones in the lambdoid suture, slight orbital osteoporosis. Medium degree of palativus.

Grave 112

Female, approximately 25–30yrs, stature approximately 5ft 2in, cephalic index 79.2mm, (mesocephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good. Complete long bones

and other postcranial remains, slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General pathology: None.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0–28, PM tooth loss 1–28, abscesses 0–28, caries 0–27, calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; possible congenital absence of the upper and lower third molars.

Non-metrical features: Slight orbital osteoporosis.

Grave 113

Child, possibly about 1 year

Condition: Very few fragmentary remains of a cranium and post-cranial bones.

Grave 115

Female, approximately 40–50yrs, stature approximately 5ft 6¾in, cranial index 72.9mm, (dolicephalic).

Foetus in grave fill.

Condition: Skull fairly good. Some complete long bones and other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Nothing was observed on the bone present.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 4–32; PM tooth loss 2–28; abscesses 6–29; caries 8, 26; periodontal disease medium; hypoplasia nil; over bite.

Non-metrical features: One wormian bone along the lambdoid suture; slight mandibular tori.

Grave 116

Female, approximately 20–25yrs, stature 4ft 11in, cephalic index 70.2mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull fairly good, but some *post mortem* erosion of the cranium. Complete long bones and other post cranial remains. Slight *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General pathology: Possible slight degrees of osteoarthritis affecting the left humerus, the right ulna and some of the bones of the hands and feet. Trauma had occurred of the nasal bones and the distal extremity of the right radius. Possible *ante mortem* dislocation of the epiphysis of the left calcaneus.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 1–30, PM tooth loss 2–29, abscesses 1–30, caries 0–27, periodontal disease slight; calculus slight; hypoplasia slight; over-bite. Possible congenital absence of the mandibular third molars.



Fig 29 Adult inhumation 115

Non-metrical features: Two wormian bones along the lambdoid suture.

Grave 118

Male, approximately 40–50 yrs, stature approximately 6ft 0in, cephalic index 71.7mm (dolicephalic). Condition: Skull in fair condition, some small portions missing. Some complete long bones and other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Extensive osteoarthritis throughout the post cranial skeleton. The area of maximum involvement was the articular joint of the head of the left femur and the contiguous surface of the acetabulum of the innominate bone. These bones had become completely ankylosed. Features of the bone texture in the area of the ankylosis suggests the possibility of a fracture in the first instance, the osteoarthritis being a

secondary development. The vertebral column displayed slight to medium degrees of osteoarthritis the whole length from the cervical to the sacrum. Other bones displaying manifestations of osteoarthritis were the radii and ulnae, glenoid fossa of the scapulae, possibly the right talus and bones of the hands. Trauma had occurred at the area of the fourth to fifth segments of the sacrum; the left clavicle, possibly some ribs and the left innominate bone already mentioned. Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 20–30, PM tooth loss 5–10, abscesses 3–10, caries 1–5, periodontal disease medium.

Non-metrical features: Slight mandibular tori.

Grave 119

Female, aged possibly $50 \pm$ a few years, stature 5ft 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.



Fig 30 Adult inhumations 111 (left) & 116 (right)



Fig 31 Stone lined child burial 117

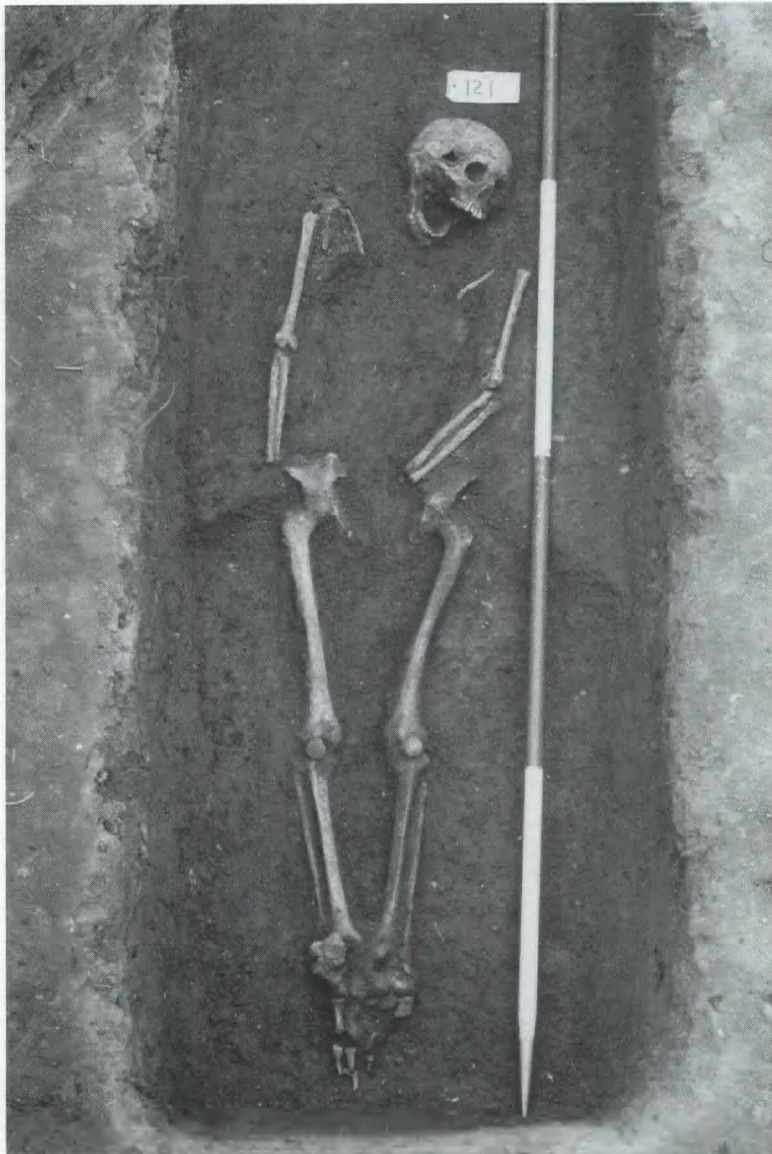


Fig 32 Adult inhumation 121

Condition: The mandible complete but cranium in the calvarium state. (Calvarium - cranium minus facial area). Post cranial remains few in number and mostly fragmentary. Two complete long bones.

General pathology: Though the bones were in the main of a fragmentary condition, the humeri displayed signs of osteoarthritis at the articular area of the head portions, and the contiguous surfaces of the glenoid fossa of the scapulae.

Dental pathology AM tooth loss 11-16; PM tooth loss 4-5; abscesses 0-5; caries 0-1.

Grave 120

Male, approximately 30-35yrs, stature 5ft 8¼in

Condition: No skull. Complete long bones and other post cranial remains.

General Pathology: Just the fourth and the fifth

lumbar vertebrae and the sacrum recovered of the skeleton and all display osteophytosis. Osteoarthritis also prevalent on the radii and ulna, with an area of eburnation at the distal articular extremity of the left radius. Manifestations of osteoarthritis were also present at the distal extremity of the right tibia, and proximal extremity of right humerus. The tarsal and metatarsal, and the carpal and metacarpal bones had also been affected, the first left metacarpal displaying eburnation at the distal articular extremity.

Grave 121

Female, approximately 16-17yrs, stature approximately 4ft 9¾in

Condition: A skull, but *post mortem* earth pressure has distorted the cranium, and portions missing due to erosion. Long bones fairly intact and a few other

postcranial remains. Extensive *post mortem* deformation of the cranium.

General Pathology: None

Dental Pathology: AM tooth loss 0-31, PM tooth loss 0-31, abscesses 0-31, caries 0-31, edge to edge bite.

Non metrical features: Three wormian bones along the lambdoid suture.

Grave 122

Male, approximately 30-40 yrs, cranial index 73.2mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Just a skull in very good state of preservation.

General Pathology: None

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 6-32, PM tooth loss 13-26, abscesses 3-26, caries 7-13, periodontal disease extensive; hypoplasia slight; edge to edge bite.

Non metrical features: One wormian bone in lambdoid suture, one parietal notch bone on the left side, slight palativus, one epipteric bone on the left side.

Grave 123

Male, approximately approximately 35-40 yrs, stature approximately 5ft 6¼in, cranial index 74.3mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull excellent. Complete long bones and other post cranial remains.

General pathology: Possible manifestations of arthritis affecting some tarsal bones. Partial sacrialization of the fifth lumbar vertebra at the right side.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 0-32, PM tooth loss 0-32, abscesses 2-32, caries 2-32, periodontal disease slight; calculus slight; edge to edge bite.

Non metrical features: One wormian bone along the lambdoid suture, a right parietal notch bone, slight mandibular tori, slight palativus.

Grave 124

Male, approximately 45-50 yrs, stature 5ft 9¼in, cephalic index 74.7mm (dolicephalic).

Condition: Skull quite good. Complete long bones and other postcranial remains.

General pathology: slight to medium osteophytosis of the rims of the body portion of vertebrae from the cervical area of the vertebral column down to the sacrum. Other bones with a slight involvement were the ulnae, radii, glenoid fossa of the right scapula, and possibly some bones of the hands and feet. Trauma had occurred at the mid portion of the right clavicle, and the distal third of the shaft of the right fibula. Exostosis at the proximal extremity of the shaft of the right fibula.

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 4-32, PM tooth loss 6-28, abscesses 6-29, caries 3-22, periodontal disease extensive; calculus medium; edge to edge bite.

Non metrical features: One wormian bone along the lambdoid suture.

Grave 128

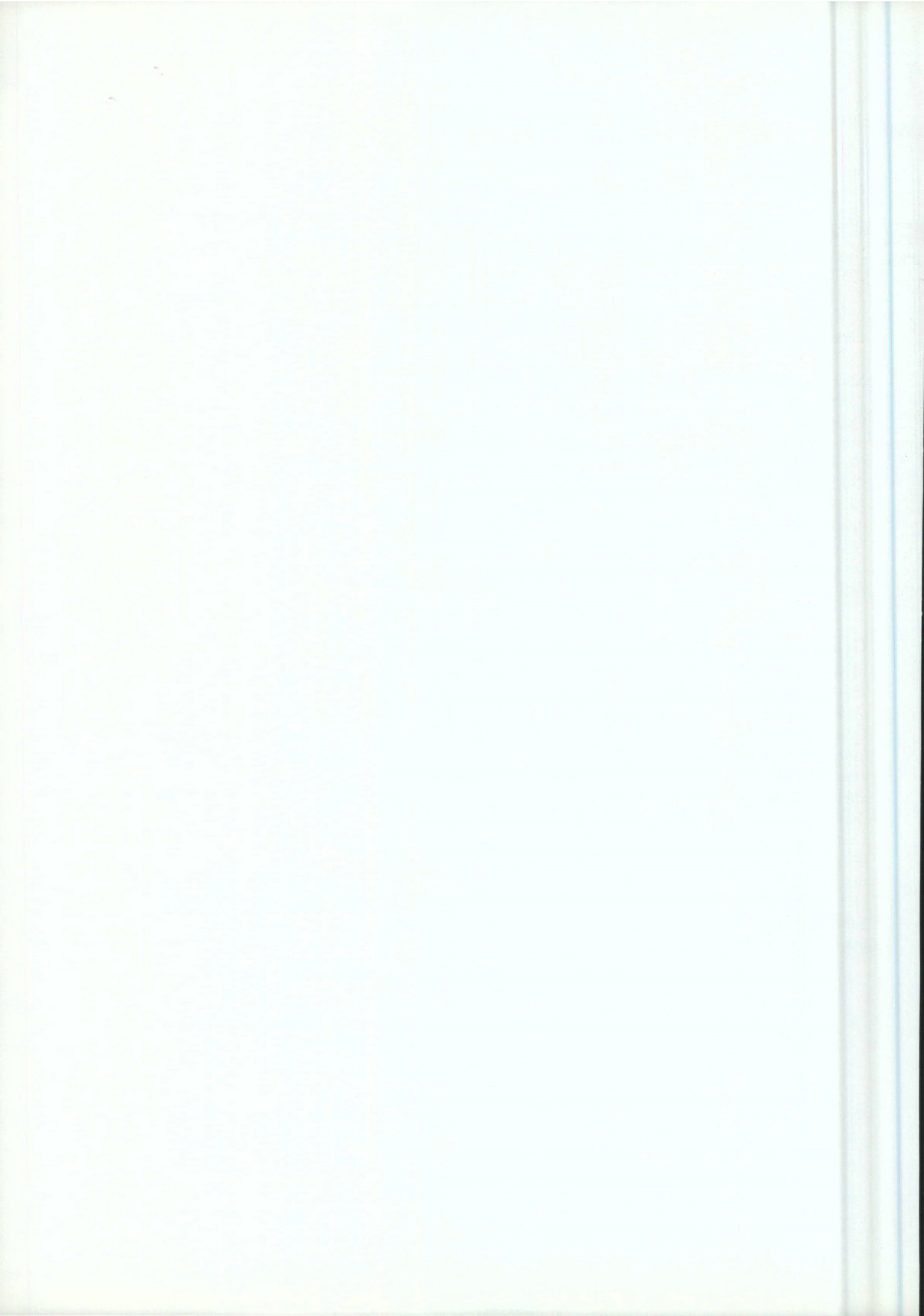
Male, approximately 35-45, stature very approximately 5ft 9¼in.

Condition: Skull rather fragmentary. One complete long bone. A few fragmentary other post-cranial remains.

General pathology: Four lumbar vertebrae were preserved, all of which displayed medium degrees of osteoarthritis. Possible manifestations at the humeral head. All the teeth absent, possibly *ante mortem*, from the right maxillary alveolus, and this area had a solid swollen appearance: tumour?

Dental pathology: AM tooth loss 14-24, PM tooth loss 2-10, abscesses 1-12, caries 1-8, periodontal disease extensive.

Non-metrical features: None.



Appendix 4: Notes on the Roman glass from Bletsoe

Fragments from six glass vessels of Roman or immediately post Roman date were recovered from the excavations at Bletsoe. The earliest vessel is represented by the base fragment no 1 which is most likely to have come from a tubular rimmed bowl (Isings Form 45; Cool and Price forthcoming nos 630–92). This was a very common form in use between the mid 1st and mid 2nd centuries. With the exception of no 2, all of the other fragments are of 4th century date and are made of the greenish colourless, bubbly glass typical of that period. Two of the fragments come from common 4th century forms. Number 3 is from a conical beaker with cracked off rim (Isings Form 106). Beakers such as this, together with a very similar hemispherical cup form (Isings Form 96), always dominate 4th century vessel glass assemblages (Cool and Price forthcoming nos 553–614). The type of bottle commonly known as a Frontinus bottle or barrel jug (Isings Forms 89 and 128; Cool and Price forthcoming nos 2259–62) is also widespread in Roman Britain but never occurs in such large numbers. It is represented at Bletsoe by a body fragment from one of the corrugated body zones (no 5). Fourth century tubular rim bowls (no 4) are much rarer (Cool and Price forthcoming no 691). Less than a dozen examples are known to me from Romano-British sites and with such a small number it is difficult to judge when they were most popular. There are some indications, however, that this was towards the end of the 4th and possibly into the 5th centuries. Bowls found in contexts of that date include two from Burgh Castle, Norfolk (Harden 1983, 81 nos 81–2,

fig 37) and one from Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (Charlesworth 1984, 155 no 18, fig 39). A bowl of this type has also been found in a 5th century grave at High Down, Sussex (Harden 1951, 263, 266 no I(h), fig 8). The fourth late Roman vessel in the assemblage is a ribbed handle fragment (no 6). The most likely form for this to have come from is a funnel-mouthed jug (Isings Form 120; Cool and Price forthcoming nos 1160–1). The peacock blue fragment no 2 cannot be identified with the same precision as the other fragments in the assemblage. Such a colour was used occasionally in the Roman period especially during the 1st century. The colour is also occasionally used for vessels of the 8th and 9th centuries. In the absence of sufficient diagnostic features to suggest what the form of the vessel was, making a choice between a Roman and post Roman date can only be made in the light of the known history of occupation on the site.

Catalogue

Abbreviations

RD	Rim diameter
BD	Base diameter
WT	Wall thickness
Dim	Dimensions
L	Length

All measurements are in millimetres

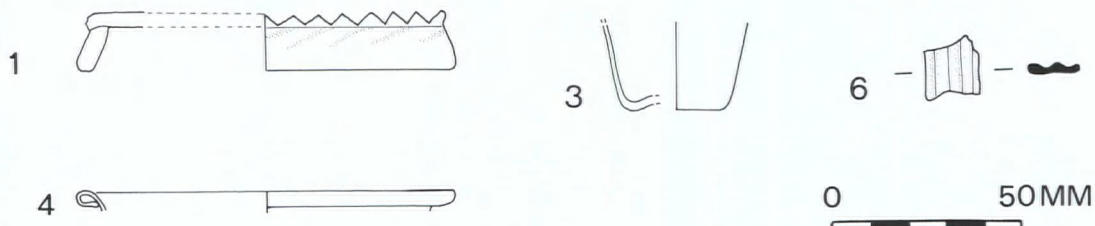


Fig 33 Roman glass from the Bletsoe cemetery

Yellow/brown (amber)

- 1 Base fragment. Cloudy iridescence. Applied true base ring with diagonal tooling marks and post technique scars. Side grozed.
BD 100. BII (1) Topsoil (fig 24)

Peacock (green/blue)

- 2 Base fragment. Small bubbles. Edge of concave base.
Dim 17.5 × 13, WT 1.5. BL70 SF45 (BY) F5

Light greenish colourless

- 3 Lower body and base fragment of conical beaker. Many small bubbles; streaky weathering. Straight side concave base.

BD c 25, WT 1, PH 23. BL 70 SF54 G104 (fig 24)

- 4 Rim fragment of tubular rimmed bowl. Many small bubbles. Out-turned rim, tubular edge bent down and in.
BD 100. BIII (2) (fig 24)
- 5 Body fragment of barrel jug. Weathered surfaces. Mould blown. Parts of two horizontal ribs.
Dim 23.5 × 18, WT 1. BL70 SF74 G118 (BW) IV
- 6 Handle fragment. Curved handle with 3 rounded ribs.
L 15, Section 15.5 × 3. BL SF47 G2 CA (fig 24)

Footnotes

- 1 Structure 1 equates to Sturdy Trench III; Structure 2 to Sturdy Area IV; Structure 3 to NBAS area I (1968).
- 2 There are three pits at Bletsoe pit 1 and pit 2 in the cemetery area and the pit in Sturdy's trench. For clarity this is simply referred to as 'pit' A.
- 3 Many of the finds that remain from the period of excavations from 1966 to 1969 were donated to Bedford Museum by Mr Jack Jones in February 1981. A few are in the personal collection of Mr Dunkley.
- 4 This area was referred to by NBAS confusingly as both Area 1 and Box 1 and apparently lay to the east of the rectory. A plan at 1:20 details the location I.
- 5 This observation was made by A R Birley at the Limes Conference, Canterbury 1989.
- 6 The principal sources of information for the early graveyard excavations were:
 1. A plan, signed D G R, showing the positions of graves 1-7 with the skeletons drawn in stylised fashion with brief notes. This plan also included orientations true north.
 2. A series of photographs of the excavations taken in 1968 showed, albeit obliquely, the attitude of the skeletons. The photographs were lent by Mr John Dunkeley the land owner.
 3. A note book entitled Bletsoe New Vicarage which contained detailed notes of burials 1 and 2 and brief notes on burials 1-15.
- 7 The following descriptions listing the attributes of individual graves have not been put in tabular form as is often current practice with larger cemeteries such as Winchester (Clarke 1979, Table 2, 23-94) Dunstable (Matthews 1981, Table 7). There are two reasons for this: the variety of recording techniques has led to omissions which are not consistent and which if not drawn attention to may suggest the absence of a particular attribute; secondly there is a wealth of pathological detail and other observations in some cases based on subjective opinion that are more appropriate to a textual format. Nevertheless some ordering has been attempted (Jones 1977, 20-25). The following indicates the ordering of information:
 1. Burial type; 2. Orientation; 3. Attitude of skeleton; 4. Pathology; 5. Grave structure; 6. Objects in the grave.
8. Information derived from JD's photographs.
9. The second series of skeletons was excavated by NBAS beginning in 1968 with two 10ft x 10ft trenches. As skeletons were discovered a third trench was begun. One struck the top of a deep pit and was referred to subsequently as pit 1, the first trench remained as Trench 1. During 1969 the third trench, trench II, was extended and called trench III. On 17 August 1969 all the complete skeletons in Trench II were lifted (S2, S3, S4). The graves in trench III were explored during September 1969 and several skeletons lifted with the exception of graves S5, S6, S8, S10 and S11. These graves were observed by NBAS but backfilled to be re-excavated by Colyer in 1970. The details which follow for these graves are an amalgamation of records from both excavations.
- 10 Gr 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, from the 1967 season; S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S10, S12, 100, 102, 103, 104, 108, 109, 111, 113, 116, 117, 120.
- 11 Stone packing in graves is evident at several cemeteries: Lynch Farm (Jones 1975, 99), Ancaster (Wilson 1968, 198), Ospringe, Cirencester (McWhirr 1983, 94-95), Frilford (Dudley Buxton 1921, 91; Bradford and Goodchild 1939, 56-7), Margidunum (Todd 1969, fig 33), Bancroft (Williams 1984, 304) and Ashton (Dix 1983, 305-6; 1984, 300-1), whilst further south and west there is Winchester (Clarke 1979), Brean Down, and Henley Wood. The stone cist tradition of south-west Wales and south-west England and the cists which are occasionally present further east, for instance at Trentholme Drive and Cirencester, are probably remnant survival of early Celtic practice (Black 1986). Bletsoe cemetery's stone packing is probably a devolved form. Black (1986, 227) has argued that stone lining was part of a tradition of grave lining stretching back to the pre-Roman Iron Age, and that stone lining in particular was widespread in the late Roman period. Amongst the cemeteries which may be grouped along with Bletsoe in having stone packed graves, none appear to have so consistent a rite as at Bletsoe. The orientation of the packed graves at Winchester is E-W, and the packing here is effected by

using flint nodules and tile. At Ospringe flints were packed around a coffin, and at Cirencester the graves are oriented NE-SW but with heads to the south. At Lynch farm packing occurs only in graves 38 and 50. In grave 38 the orientation is N-S, head to south, and in grave 50, E-W. At Cirencester graves have a variety of orientations. Of 22 with stone packing only 38 and 279 are E-W, and only 11, 31, 34 and 272 of the N-S graves have heads to the N. At Margidunum, however, grave 7, although described as oriented E-W, is actually NW-SE, head to N. None of the other graves in the south cemetery were packed. At Bancroft mausoleum stone lined graves were oriented E-W between two buildings (Williams 1984, 304). At Ashton, some graves were stone lined and some contained nailed coffins (Dix 1983, 305-6) but all were oriented E-W.

- 12 Excavations undertaken by Bedfordshire County Council's Archaeology Service. Brief notices have appeared in *Britannia* 1989 and 1990.
- 13 Rescue excavations in 1991 at a villa site north of Kempston Church End by Bedfordshire County Council's Archaeology Service.
- 14 Unfortunately the position of the neonate bones was not recorded at the time of excavation.

The following is a list of the coins found in the area of villa and cemetery, where these form part of the new Rectory garden. They are all now in the collection of Mr J Dunkley.

1/68	Constans Aug	347-350	Emperor in galley TRS Trier
2/68	Claudius II	268-70	
3/68	Severus Alexander	222-235	base denarius
4/68	Gratian	367-375	Gloria novi saeculi
5/68	Constans or Constantius II Caes	335-337	Gloria Exercitus
6/68	Valens	364-78	Securitas reipublicae
7/68	Tetricus or Victorinus	c 270	
8/68	Carausius	287-93	PROVID I/c
9/68	Valens	364-375	
10/68	Constantine I	330-335	Gloria exercitas
11/68	Unid		
12/68	Valens	364-78	Securitas reipublicae
13/68	Valens or Valentinian	361-378	Securitas reipublicae
14/68	Constantius II	341-348	Two Victories
In addition Mr Dunkley holds 6 unstratified coins which were not numbered			
-/68		350-55	Fel temp reparatio
-/68		350-55	Fel temp reparatio
-/68		350-55	Fel temp reparatio
-/68	Valens or Valentinian	364-75	Securitas reipublicae
-/68	Constantius II Caes	330-335	Two standards
-/68	Galerius	305-311	foliis

- 16 This vessel is in the possession of Mr Dunkley.

The Site Archive

The site archive has been deposited in Bedford Museum, except for the skeletal remains which have been deposited with the Department of Biological Anthropology, University of Cambridge; there are also some finds (including coins) which were recorded at the time of excavation but are no longer traceable. The archive in Bedford Museum includes finds from the 1936 excavations by F W Kuhliche and Bedford Modern School (accession number 1972/B/141) and finds and records from the 1967–1970 excavations by the MoPBW and North Bedfordshire Archaeological Society (accession number 1981/35).

Summaries

The Roman settlement site was first discovered at Bletsoe in the 1930s and was quickly identified as the location of a Roman villa. Subsequent excavation in the late 1960s and early 1970s revealed little further evidence to substantiate a probable villa site but led to the discovery of a late 4th century inhumation cemetery. Fifty six graves were excavated, the predominant rite was burial oriented N-S with only a few inhumations accompanied by grave goods. Burials S11, 122 were accompanied by small items of personal ornament such as finger rings. Several inhumations were possibly in coffins evident now only from clenched nails found in the grave fills. One distinctive aspect of the cemetery was the presence of several graves in which the dead had been placed in stone lined graves or where stones had been used as rudimentary pillows.

Artefact finds comprising coins and other fragmentary items established the date of the cemetery in the late 4th century AD.

Résumé

On a découvert le site romain de Bletsoe pendant les années 1930s; il était reconnu rapidement comme l'emplacement d'une villa romaine. Les fouilles supplémentaires ont eu lieu au but des années 1960s et au début des années 1970s. Ces fouilles-là ont permis de mettre au jour une cimetière romaine.

On a fouillé 56 tombes. La mode prédominante de sépulture est l'inhumation dans les fosses alignées nord-sud. Il n'y a que quelques corps accompagnés de mobilier de tombe. Tombes nos S11 et 122 ont livré les objets de parure, comme des bagues. On ne peut pas trouver des traces de coffrage en bois, mais la

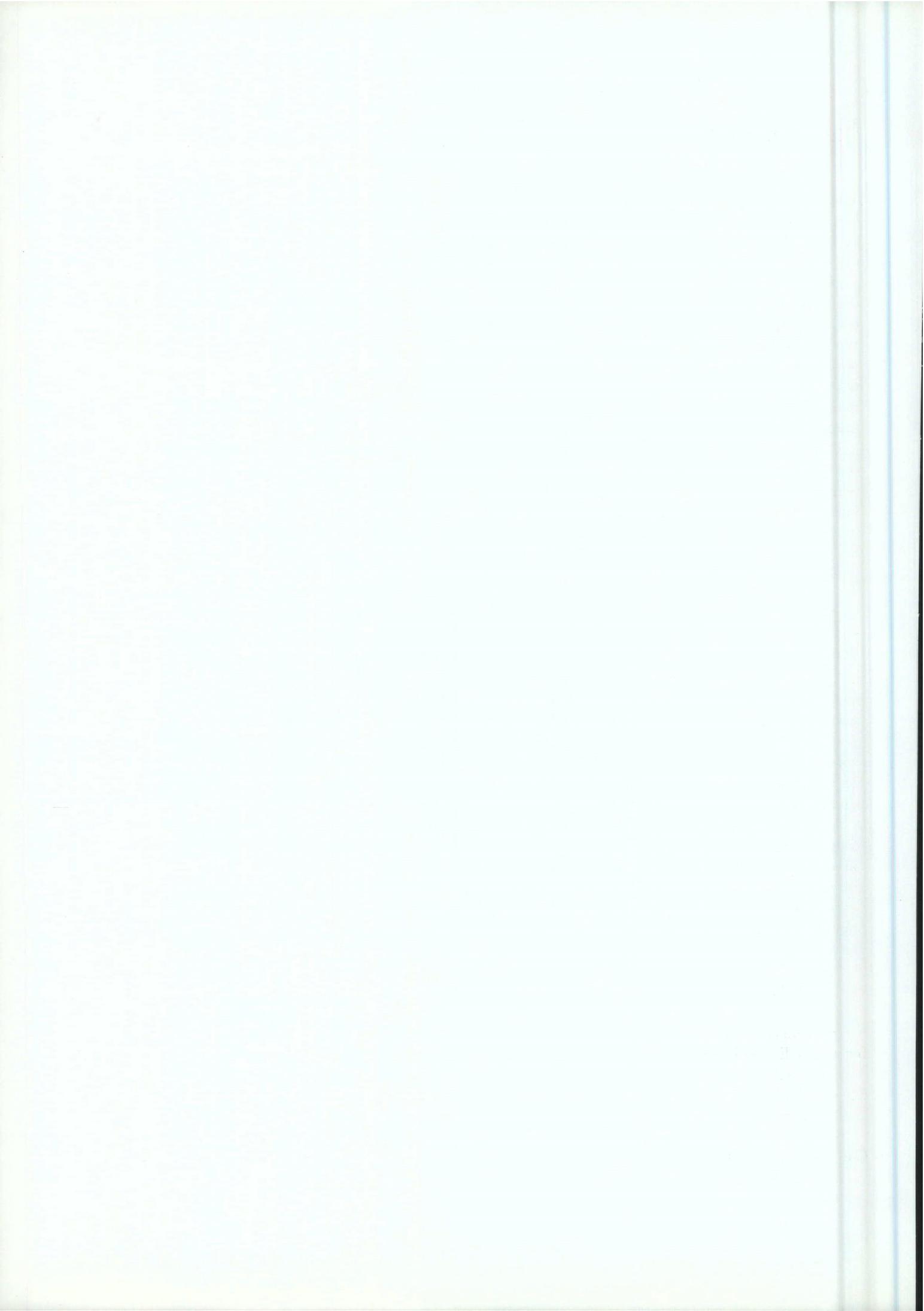
presence des clous de cercueil dans plusieurs tombes indique l'usage des cercueils. Plusieurs tombes présentent une structure particulière; ce sont les tombes revêtues de pierre où fournies d'un «orreiller de pierre» sous la crâne du défunt.

Les objets, y compris des monnaies, indiquent que la cimetière remonte au fin du IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.

Zusammenfassung

Die Romanische Siedlung wurde zuerst in Bletsoe 1930., entdeckt und wurde auch gleich als eine Roman Villa Siedlung anerkannt. Die folgenden Ausgrabungen ende 1960., und anfang 1970., Jahren brachten kaum weitere überzeugende Beweismaterial für eine mögliche Roman Villa Siedlung zum Vorschein aber brachte zur Entdeckung eine vom ende 4., Jahrhunderte wende Friedhof's Bestattungsriten. 56 Gräber wurden ausgegraben, die vorherrschende Orientierung waren Beerddigungsriten N-S nur wenige Beisetzungen wurden mit Grabeguthaben begleitet. Beerddigungen S11 und 122 wurden mit kleine Gegenstände wie persönlichen Schmuck sowie Fingerringe ins Grabbeigelegt. Es ist möglich dass einige Beerddigungen mit Särge stattfanden der nur einziger Beweis dafür sind die in der Grabhöhlen gefundene Nietenägel. Eines von den besonderst Charakteristische Kennzeichen des Friedhof's sind einige Gräber die mit Steine ausgelegt wurden oder nur mit rudimentärem Steinkopfkissen auf die man die verstorbenen legte.

Die Findungen von Artefakte bestehen aus Münzen und fragmentierten Gegenstände welche das Datum des Friedhof ende 4., Jahrhundert AD erwiesen hat.



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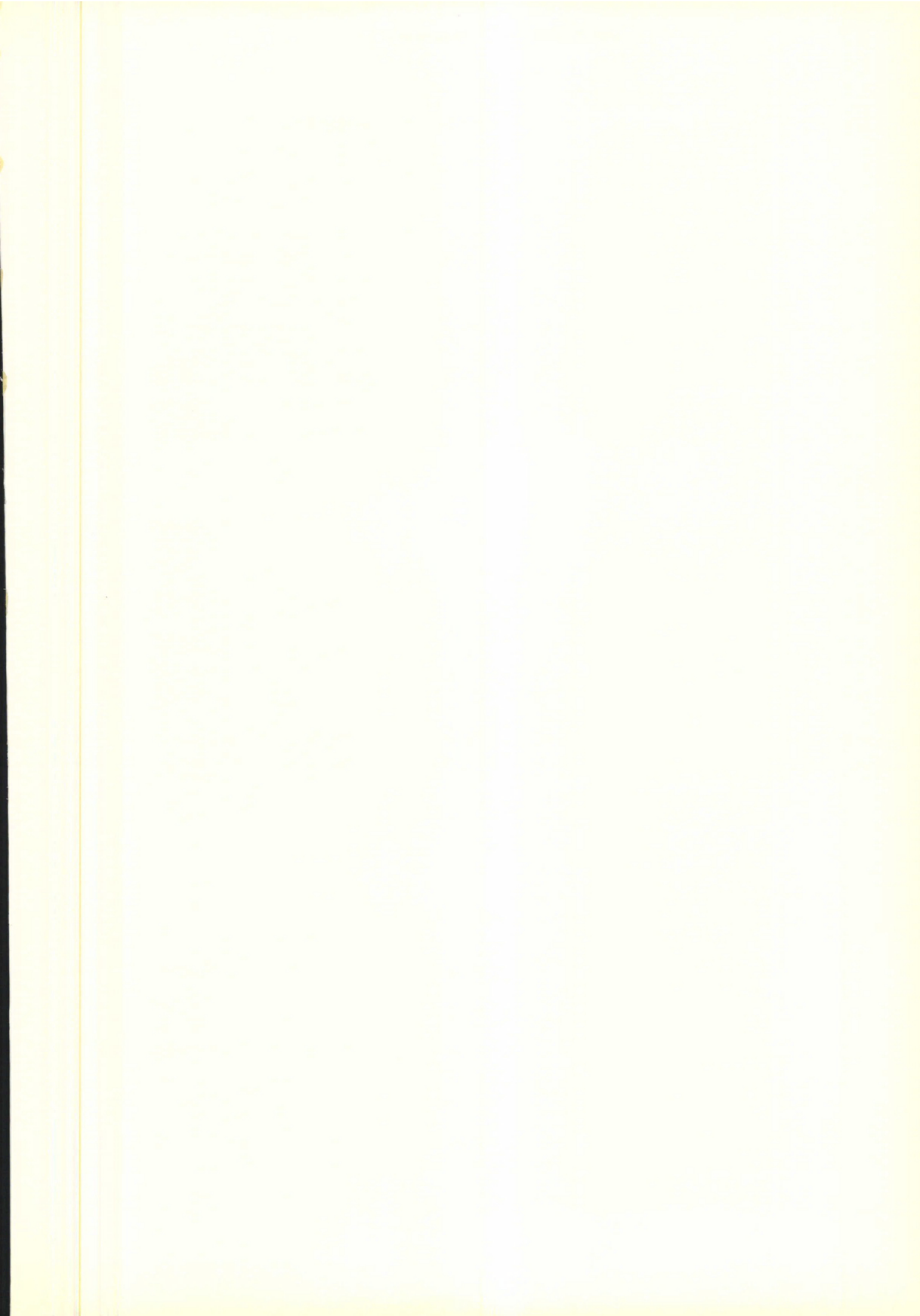
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Index

- Alice Holt/Farnham 35
 Amphora 35
 animal bones 7, 22, 26, 32
 Ashton 2, 57
 arthritis 44, 53
 Awl 9
- Bancroft 2, 28, 29, 32, 35
 Belgic 35
 black ware 34
 Black burnished ware 34
 bracelet 3, 9, 28
 brachycephalic 41ff
 Brean Down 57
 Brixworth 2
 Bromham 6
 brooch 6
 buckle 9
 Buckingham 2
 buff ware 34
 Burgh Castle, Norfolk 55
- calculus 41ff
 Cannington 28
 Caries (dental) 30, 43ff
 Carlton 2
 casket fittings 28
 Castleford, West Yorkshire 11
 cattle 7
 childbirth 29, 30
 child burials 28, 29
 Christian burial 28, 29
 Church End, Kempston 2
 Cirencester 57
 Claudius II 4
 chemical crest 42
 coins 4, 6, 11, 32
 condyle 44
 Constans Aug 4
 Constantine I 4, 11, 12
 Constantinian 4
 Constantinopolis 4
 Constantius I 4
 Constantinus II 4
 corn drying kiln 32
- Dalton Parlours 4
 Decentius 32
- dog 7
 Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxon 55
 Dunstable cemetery 29, 57
- face pot 35
 Felmersham 2
 Fens 2
 file 9
 finger-ring 3
 foetus 26, 49
 Frilford, Berks 57
 Frontinus bottle/barrel jug 55
- Gallienus 4, 6, 12
 goat 7
 Gordian 12
 Gratian 12
 grave goods 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 32
 gravemarkers 29
 grey ware 16, 34
 Grogged 34
- Hadham 35
 Harrold 11, 35
 Head pots 37
 High Down, Sussex 55
 hobnails 22, 26, 32
 horse 7
 Hockwold cum Wilton, Nor 35
 hypoplasia 41ff
- Icklingham 29
 Irchester 1
 ironwork 7ff
- Julian 12
 Juvenal 30
- Kempston, Church End 2,
 kiln bars 11
 King Harry Lane, Herts 29, 35
 knives 26, 32
- lambdoid suture 41ff
 Latimer (villa) 2
 Les Martes de Veyre 34
 Lynch Farm 28, 33, 57

- Magnentius 12, 32
 mandibular fossa 41ff
 mandibular incisors 41ff
 mandibular premolars 41ff
 mandibular tori 41ff
 Margidunum 29, 33, 57
 metatarsals 41ff
 Metopism 41ff
 Mile Road, Bedford 34
 mirror 9
 Moor End 2
 Mortaria (Nene Valley) 35
 Mortaria (Oxford) 34
 mould 11
- nails 7, 9, 26, 29
 NBAS 1, 3, 57
 naviculars 41ff
 needle 3
 Newnham Marina, Bedford 2
 Nene Valley Colour coat 11, 12, 16, 32, 35, 37
 nib 9
 Niedermendig lava 11
- Odell 2
 colitic limestone 4
 Orientation 28
 osteoarthritis 41ff
 osteophytosis 30, 41ff
 osteoporosis 44ff
 Oxford red 11, 16, 35, 37
- palatal tori 41ff
 Park Street 2
 pathology 30, 41ff
 Pavenham 2
 periodontal disease 30, 41ff
 Piddington 2
 pig 7
 pin 6, 9
- Postumus 12
 pugio 3
- quern 11
- Rhineland 35
 ring 9
 Roughcast 34
- Salonina 4, 32
 Samian 32, 34, 35
 Sandy 29
 sheep 7
 Shelly wares 16, 35, 37
 spoon 9
- Tempsford 2
 Tetricus I 1, 4, 12
 Tetricus II 12
 Theodosius 12
 tibia 41ff
 Towcester 2
 Trajan 12
 trauma 31
 Trentholme Drive 57
 tubular rimmed bowl 55
- Urbs Roma 12
- Valens 11, 12, 32
 Valentinian I 4, 11, 12
 Verulamium ware 32, 35
 Victorinus 4, 12
- whetstone 11
 white ware 34, 37
 Whittlebury 2
 Winchester 29, 57
 wormian bones 42ff





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