

## **CLOSURE REPORT LKD 001**

**Project name and number:** Lackford early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery, Suffolk 7593 / ANL

**Author:** Faye Minter

**Date:** March 2023

### **Project summary and impact statement:**

The project followed on from an assessment phase that involved the preliminary work on material excavated in 2015 and 2016 from the early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery at Lackford. Analysis work was carried out on the pottery, cremated bone, finds of antler, bone, ivory, glass and metal, and charcoal recovered from the fifteen pots found below the ploughsoil and a further 37 groups of finds identified on the surface of the ploughsoil. Finds specialists also revisited the material from Lackford held in Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (CUMAA) that was excavated during 1947-1949 and selectively published by T C Lethbridge (Lethbridge 1951). This material has been more comprehensively listed and identified. The project also drew on the only surviving excavation record, a notebook kept by Lethbridge that provided some information about the excavated contexts which could be combined with the museum catalogue and the publication to provide a better basis for studying the assemblage.

The key research outputs of the project are a detailed archive report (Anderson *et al.* 2022), available along with previous reports and other 2015-6 digital records on the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), and a draft publication volume for submission to East Anglian Archaeology. The publication volume provides an account of the results of the 2015-6 excavations and integrates the material found with the re-appraisal of the 1947-9 material, particularly in comparison with the more comprehensive work done at Spong Hill, Norfolk. It also includes a summary publication of the adjacent Roman site, LKD 018, a small excavation that was funded by HBMC in 1981-2.

The project was presented to the public in the form of a small exhibition at West Stow Museum in 2021, this ran from 17/05/2021-17/11/2021 and visitor figures indicate that the display was seen by 10,636 members of the public including school groups, all visitor feedback received was positive. The landowner has already responded positively to suggestions about managing the strip on the north side of the field which contains the 2015-6 excavation area and probably a substantial part of the 1947-9 area, by planting with minimal rooting seed mixes rather than the maize used previously for cover.

In common with other cremation cemeteries of this date it is difficult to define the extent of the site without extensive test excavations (Lackford Context Report, Minter and Plouviez 2018, 13-15) which makes more formal protection measures via scheduling difficult. It is however recognised on the Suffolk HER as a site of national importance based on the rarity of the site type, the evidence for surviving burials and the group value of the site in the context of other sites (mainly Icklingham Roman settlement, which is partially scheduled, and West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village).

The academic advisor to the project, Catherine Hills, has read the publication draft and commented favourably, with only a few suggested improvements, 'This report is a great piece of work, Lackford getting a proper consideration at last.'

### **Highlights, Challenges and Recommendations:**

Most of the analysis work followed standard archaeological research methods and guidelines. It included the visits by the specialists (Anderson, Broadly, Minter, Plouviez, Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski) to CUMAA to examine the 1947-9 excavation material, which had to be facilitated early in the project to fit with CUMAA store relocation plans and went very smoothly thanks to good co-operation between the team and the curator at CUMAA, for example supplying digital catalogue extracts in advance.

Communication between team members and with HE have been good throughout the project. The project has included several years of impact from Covid-19. This contributed to delays, for example in setting up the display at West Stow, reduced access to source material, for example in SCCAS archive paper store and made face-to-face project meetings impossible.

The project has over-run by two and a half years; the original one year plan was clearly very optimistic for a project involving numerous, mostly self-employed or otherwise employed, specialists who had many competing projects in hand. However all participants have been very generous with their time and so there has not been any financial overspend.

The publication draft has focussed on key aspects that provide significantly new data and ideas. As planned this includes the first cremated bone data from the site, both human and animal. The amount of animal bone suggests that sacrifices of animals on the cremation pyre was a significant element at Lackford. Study of the 1947-9 finds, particularly the bone/antler and the glass, has filled significant gaps in the 1951 publication. Combined with the appraisal of the complete Lackford pottery assemblage, including identification of fabric groups, it will now be possible to find information about the site as a whole rather than as selected by Lethbridge in 1951. The comprehensive study of the bone and antler in particular reveals gaps, errors and misidentifications in the 1951 report; the complete collection provides new information about the chronology and selection of this material, particularly the antler combs with comparisons to Spong Hill and West Stow.

The inclusion of the Roman site, LKD 018, added a substantial load to the preparation of the draft publication, despite not re-visiting most of the physical archive. It is however important for understanding the context of the cemetery and is also an important comparator to the well-known site at Leylands Farm, Hockwold and to a recent site at Red Lodge, Suffolk.

The lipid analysis of a sample of the 2015-6 pots provided the first direct evidence that these vessels regularly contained mostly dairy products of some kind, before being used as cremation containers; this seems to contradict many previous theories although there remains a discrepancy between the composition of domestic and funerary groups. For this reason the full lipid report is included in the publication as an appendix. As the report notes there appears to be no other residues research on early Anglo-Saxon pottery, funerary or domestic and we suggest HE could help promote this research; SCCAS is doing so through the development control process.