

Archaeological investigations at 24 Friary Fields, Dunstable, Bedfordshire

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SUMMARY

Excavations by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust at 24 Friary Fields revealed stratified deposits, principally of Roman and medieval date. The earliest evidence comprised 2nd century pits, and some of this ephemeral activity may have had late 1st century origins. Fifteen graves belonging to the known, late Roman, cemetery were recorded and three could be dated to the latter half of the 4th century. Further evidence of the cemetery boundary ditch was recorded. Boundary features and eight of the previously known cross-shaped pits associated with the Dominican Friary were recorded. The most likely interpretation of the pits is that they comprise part of formal gardens established in the late medieval period.

INTRODUCTION

Between August 2001 and January 2002 the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (HAT) carried out a series of archaeological investigations on land at 24 Friary Field, Dunstable, Bedfordshire (TL 0183 2157) (Figs 1-2). These were commissioned by Moody Homes Ltd in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site. The potential of the site was known in advance (below), and was characterised by a trial trench evaluation (Gardner and Murray, 2001). Thereafter an excavation was undertaken in the southern part of the site, and detailed archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in the area of building plots A and B (Fig 3). All phases of investigation were carried out in accordance with Briefs issued by Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer and Specifications prepared in response by HAT.

SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies in the SW part of the historic core of Dunstable and comprises a rectangular parcel of land with a total area of c 750 m² (Figs 1-2). It lies on generally level ground at c.149 m above OD and is at the foot of the Chiltern Ridge. The solid geology is Middle Chalk. The site is bounded to the S, E and

W by modern residential properties and their gardens, and to the N by the thoroughfare of Friary Field.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This area of Dunstable lies near to the course of the Icknield Way (which re-emerges from the town c. 400 m to the SW in the area of Downs Farm). However, despite this association and the discovery of Iron Age pottery occurring in residual contexts in an excavation at Pond Cottage, Bull Pond Lane (Hudspith, 1991), no major prehistoric occupation sites are known in the vicinity of the site.

The first major settlement was established, perhaps initially as a *mansio* (one is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary as being XII Roman miles north of *Verulamium* on Watling Street), during the Roman period around the junction of the Icknield Way and Watling Street. This grew into the Roman small town of *Durocobrivae*. Some evidence of the settlement has been recorded in previous excavations, though no substantial structural remains have been recovered. Wells, a length of metallised surface and three "primitive dwellings or huts", excavated in the 1960s and ascribed to the Roman period, are all that are known (Matthews, 1964). Consequently, the layout and chronological development of the town remains poorly understood. While this lack of evidence may be due in part to the circumstances of modern development it has also been suggested elsewhere that truncation due to medieval landscaping may have been widespread (Clark and Dawson, 1995). The most notable previous work comprises a series of excavations carried out between 1967 and 1981 which partially revealed a late Roman (3rd to 5th century) inhumation cemetery including 55 inhumations within a ditched enclosure (Fig 2). These excavations also revealed parts of the boundary ditches of the cemetery in which a further 50 human burials, four horses and a dog were recorded (Matthews, 1981). 'Casual' burials were also recorded in the upper fills of abandoned wells that had subsequently collapsed - in some cases before the bodies had completely

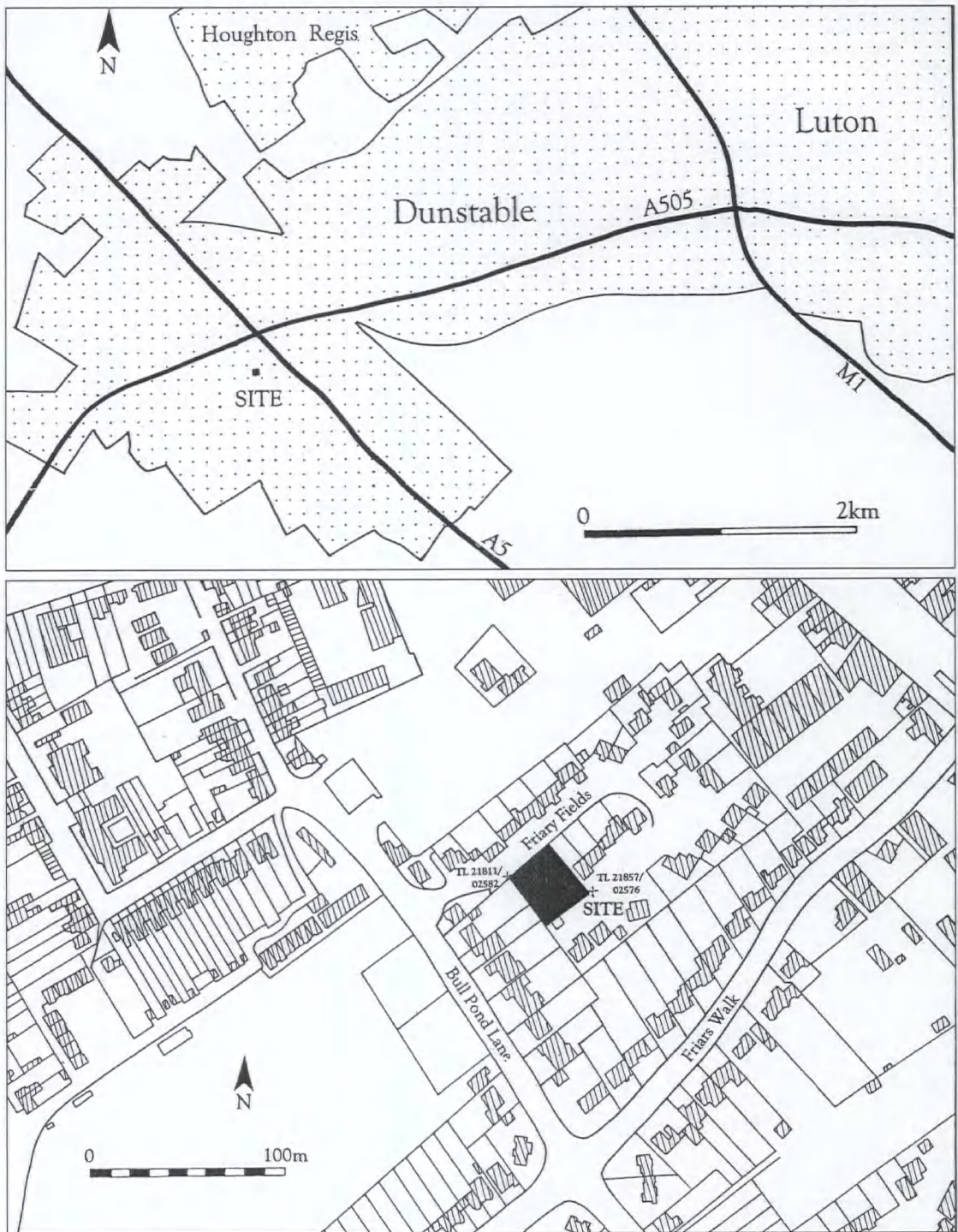


Figure 1 Site location plan

decomposed - leading to the discovery of fragmentary yet still articulated remains at depths in excess of 10 m in some of the wells (Matthews, 1981). The same excavations also produced some evidence for metalworking and pottery production in this quarter of the town. The fate of the town at the end of the Roman period is poorly understood, though abandonment seems likely as there is no direct evidence of settlement continuity into the Early Saxon period.

The junction of Watling Street and Icknield Way was again the focus for the next major period of settlement when, in 1119, Henry I founded a new town in the corner of his Houghton Regis Estate. Immediately to the NE of the site a Dominican

Friary was founded in 1259, with the first church built shortly after. The site of The Friary has also been subject to previous excavations, carried out from the 1920s to the 1980s (e.g. Clark and Maull 1989, Green and Horne 1991). The evidence of most direct relevance to this site concerns a large number of enigmatic cross-shaped pits. These features were dated to the medieval period and thought to be associated with the Friary. The extent of earlier excavation also indicated that they were likely to extend into the area of the Roman cemetery and the present site (Fig 2). Green and Horne also identified a series of substantial ditches thought to relate to the north-western boundary of the Friary's grounds.

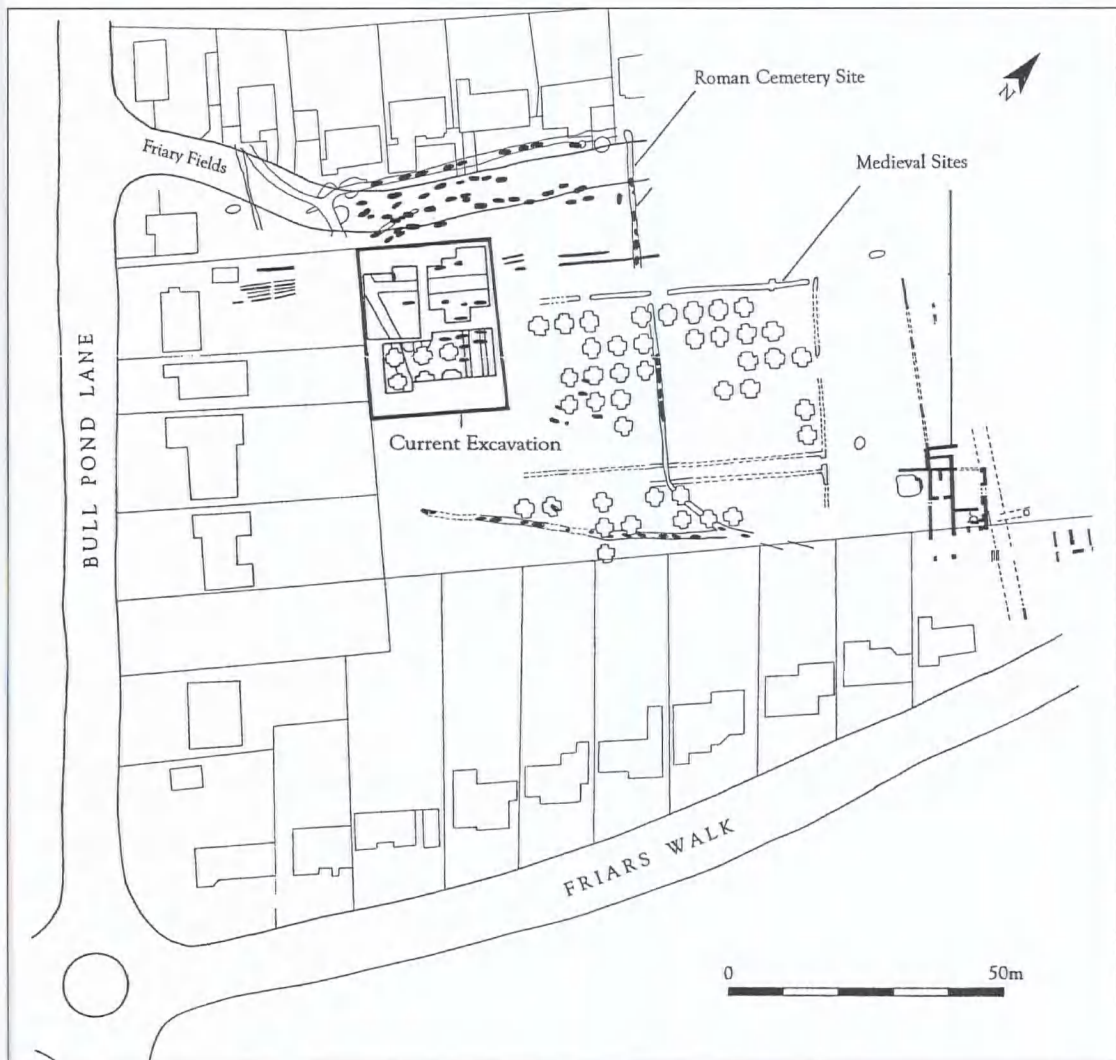


Figure 2 Detailed site location plan

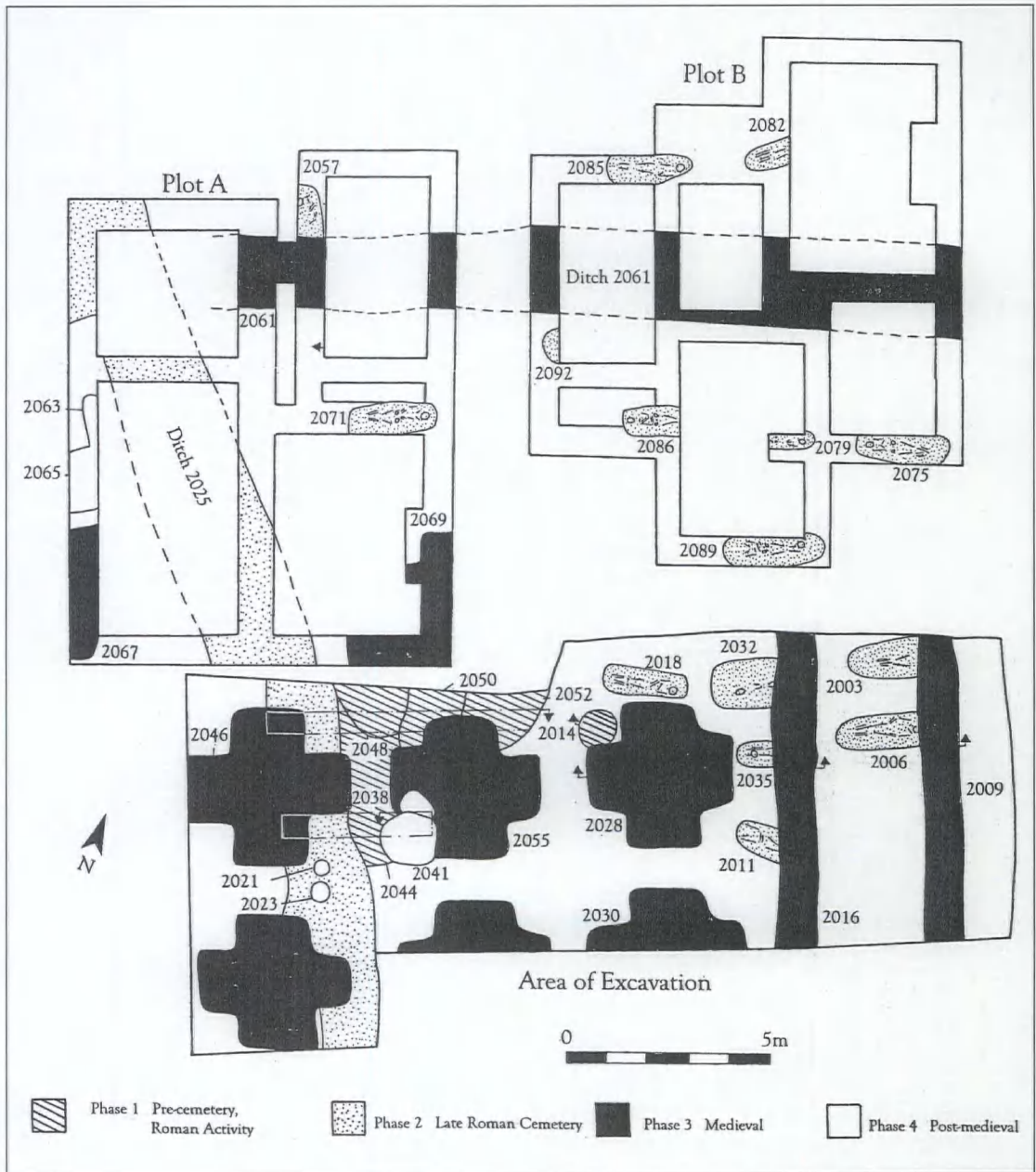


Figure 3 Phase plan

The site's high archaeological potential was confirmed following a trial trench evaluation. This revealed at least one Roman inhumation and an enclosure ditch. The latter was thought to represent a continuation of the southern boundary of the cemetery identified in the earlier excavations undertaken

by the Manshead Archaeological Society in the area of the modern Friary Field roadway (Fig 2). Medieval deposits were also recorded but within the confines of the evaluation trenches it was not possible to relate these to the cross shaped features or the 'buttress trench' known in the vicinity.

Feature	Depth (m)	Fill (s)	Findings
Pit 2014	0.21	2015	Pottery (19 g), tile (8 g), animal bone (<1 g)
Pit 2044	0.40	2045	Pottery (80 g), animal bone (30 g)
Pit 2048	0.75	2049	Pottery (62 g), animal bone (198 g)
Pit 2050	0.60	2051	Pottery (152 g), animal bone (111 g), shell (1 g)
Pit 2052	0.65	2053, 2054	Pottery (667 g), brick (74 g), Animal bone (384 g), shell (1 g)

Table 1 Pre-Cemetery Features

METHODOLOGY

The excavation of the proposed back garden areas of the new dwellings covered an area of some 160 m². Topsoil and subsoil were mechanically excavated using a flat bladed ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. Archaeological features were then cleaned and excavated by hand.

The monitoring and recording comprised the supervised mechanical excavation of the foundation trenches of the two proposed dwellings, plots A and B (Fig 3). The trenches were excavated to the necessary foundation depth with work stopping as appropriate to enable the hand excavation of archaeological deposits. Nine inhumation graves were partially revealed during the watching brief stage of the investigations.

THE EXCAVATIONS

PHASE 1: PRE-CEMETERY ROMAN ACTIVITY (MID 1ST TO 2ND CENTURIES AD)

A small group of five pits pre-dated the cemetery (Table 1).

Pit 2014 was located in the centre of the excavation and was cut by a medieval feature 2028 (Figs 3-4). The pit contained a single fill that yielded a small quantity of mid 1st – early 2nd century pottery, tile and animal bone. The remaining four features of this phase also comprise intercutting pits. The earliest of these, 2044, was much truncated and was poorly defined (Figs 3-4). It also contained mid 1st to early 2nd century pottery, and a small quantity of animal bone. Northwards the primary fill of pit 2052 contained early to mid 2nd century pottery, fragments of animal bone, brick and shell (Figs 3-4). Pit 2048 contained 2nd century pottery and animal bone. Pits 2052 and 2048 were cut by pit 2050, which contained 2nd century pottery, animal bone and shell.

PHASE 2: ROMAN INHUMATION CEMETERY (3RD TO 5TH CENTURIES AD), ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTH-WESTERN BOUNDARY DITCH

An area of the previously known Roman cemetery

was excavated (Figs 2-3). The evidence comprised 15 inhumation graves. Six were revealed in the area of the excavation and a further eight during the monitoring and recording. A substantial ditch (2025) was recorded along the southern limit of the site. All the inhumations were to the N of the ditch.

Table 2 presents a descriptive detail of the inhumations and is supported by illustrations (Figs 5-6). The description of orientation follows the convention of Viner and Leach (1982, 76) so that a grave described as W-E indicates that the head is to the W (the first cardinal point denotes the head position).

In all cases the orientation of the skeleton accorded with the alignment of the grave, so only grave orientations are described. A number of the graves were only partially revealed. Where discernible, the burial position was consistent: supine with legs extended and arms along the side with slight variations in hand position. All the grave pits were rectangular/sub-rectangular with vertical or near vertical sides and flat bases. An average grave depth of 0.53 m was recorded, with a range of 0.35 – 0.70 m. Medieval features truncated several graves (2003, 2006, 2011, 2032, 2035) but due to their depths the skeletons were undisturbed. All graves were of dimensions appropriate to the corpse they contained, with the exception of Grave 2032, which appeared somewhat larger than was necessary. Skeleton 2033 in Grave 2032 was poorly preserved, in contrast to the others, and may have been treated differently (Human Bone Report below). No ‘plaster’ burials were recorded. There was no evidence for above ground markers. No evidence for stone linings or cists was present. No clear evidence of coffins, either as preserved fragments of wood or as ‘coffin stains’ was recorded, though the presence of iron nails in Graves 2003, 2006 and 2086 suggests that they may have been present and that soil conditions precluded their survival. More substantial evidence of coffins was recorded in the excavations undertaken by the Manshead Society, indicating that they were employed in at least some of the graves at Friary Field (Matthews 1981, 5). Three graves contained

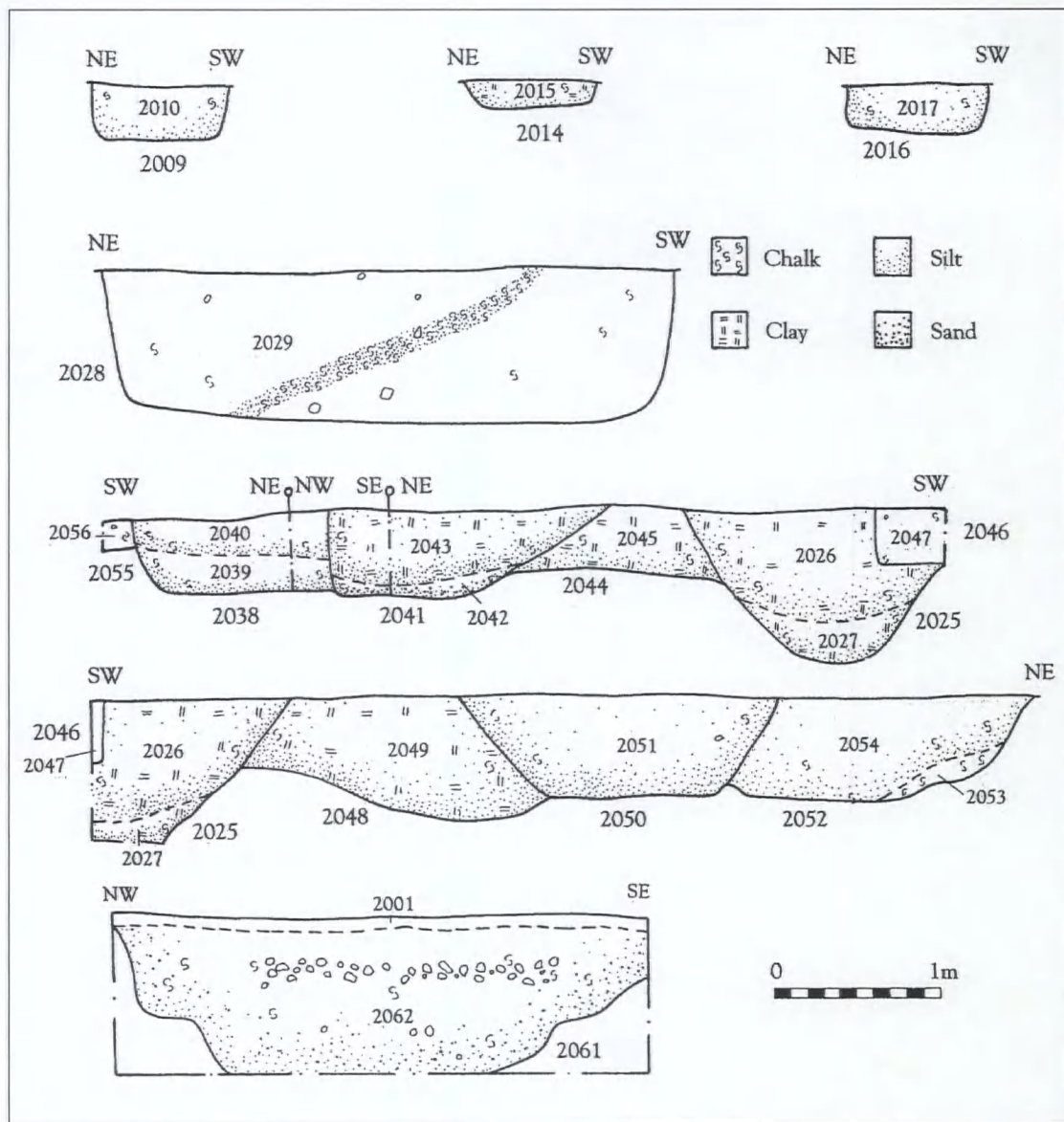


Figure 4 Sections

grave goods: a bone comb from G2006 (SF1 Fig 8.1), a glass bowl from G2085 (SF2 Fig 8.2), and a fragmentary Oxford orange slipped ware beaker recovered from G2057. These items comprise the dating evidence, which indicates a predominantly late 4th century date for the burials.

Ditch 2025 was traced for c. 23 m from the south-western corner of Plot A to the south-eastern edge of the excavation (Figs 3-4). Though it was only par-

tially revealed and heavily truncated by medieval features, a broadly E-W alignment was evident. It was c 1.65 m wide and 0.70 m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It contained two fills, the first of which comprised a clayey silt, indicative of natural silting. This basal fill (2027) contained 2nd century pottery (448 g) and disarticulated human bone (105g), animal bone (<1 g) and oyster shell (44g). The upper fill (2026) was characterised by the pres-

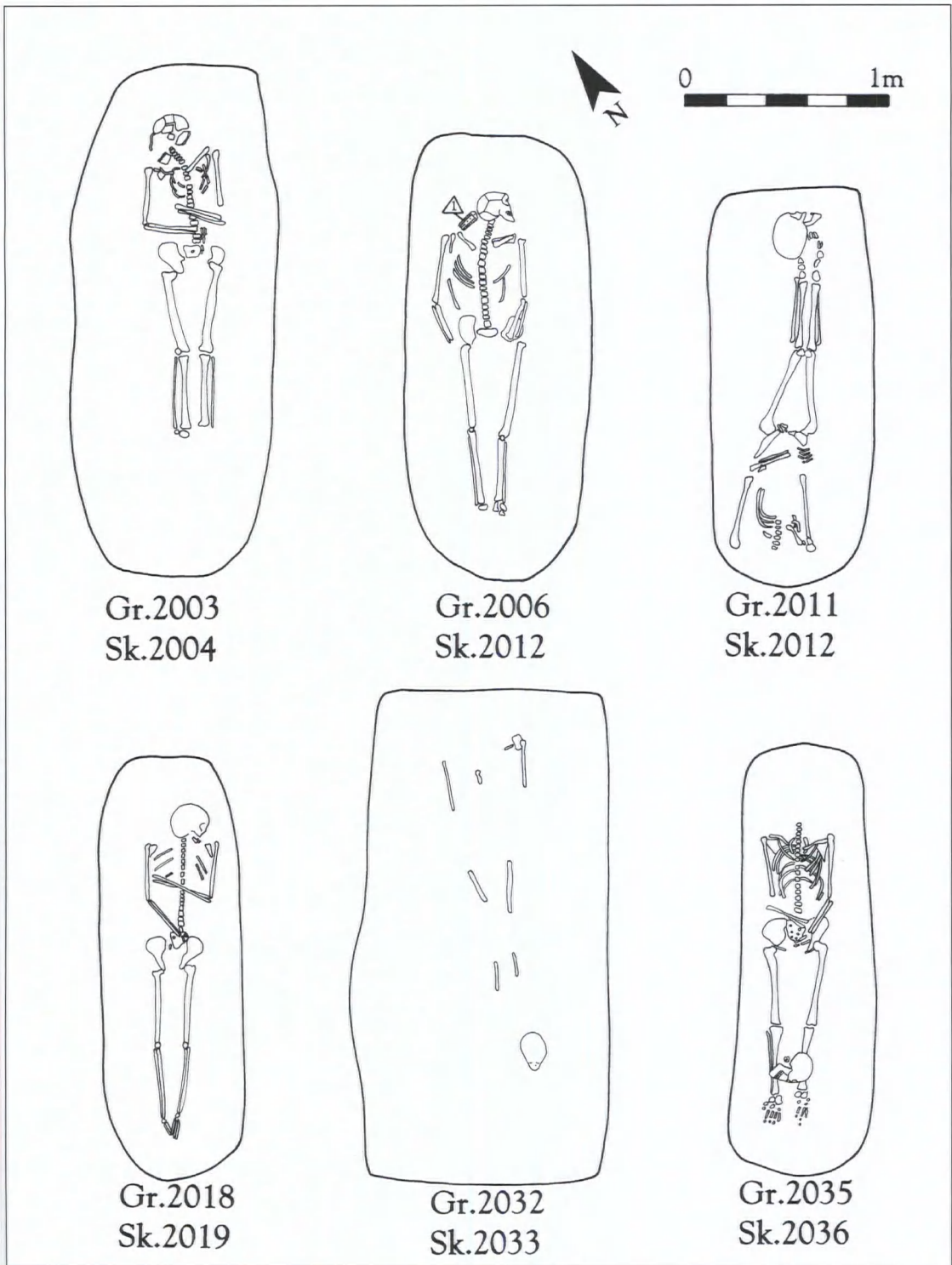


Figure 5 Skeletons

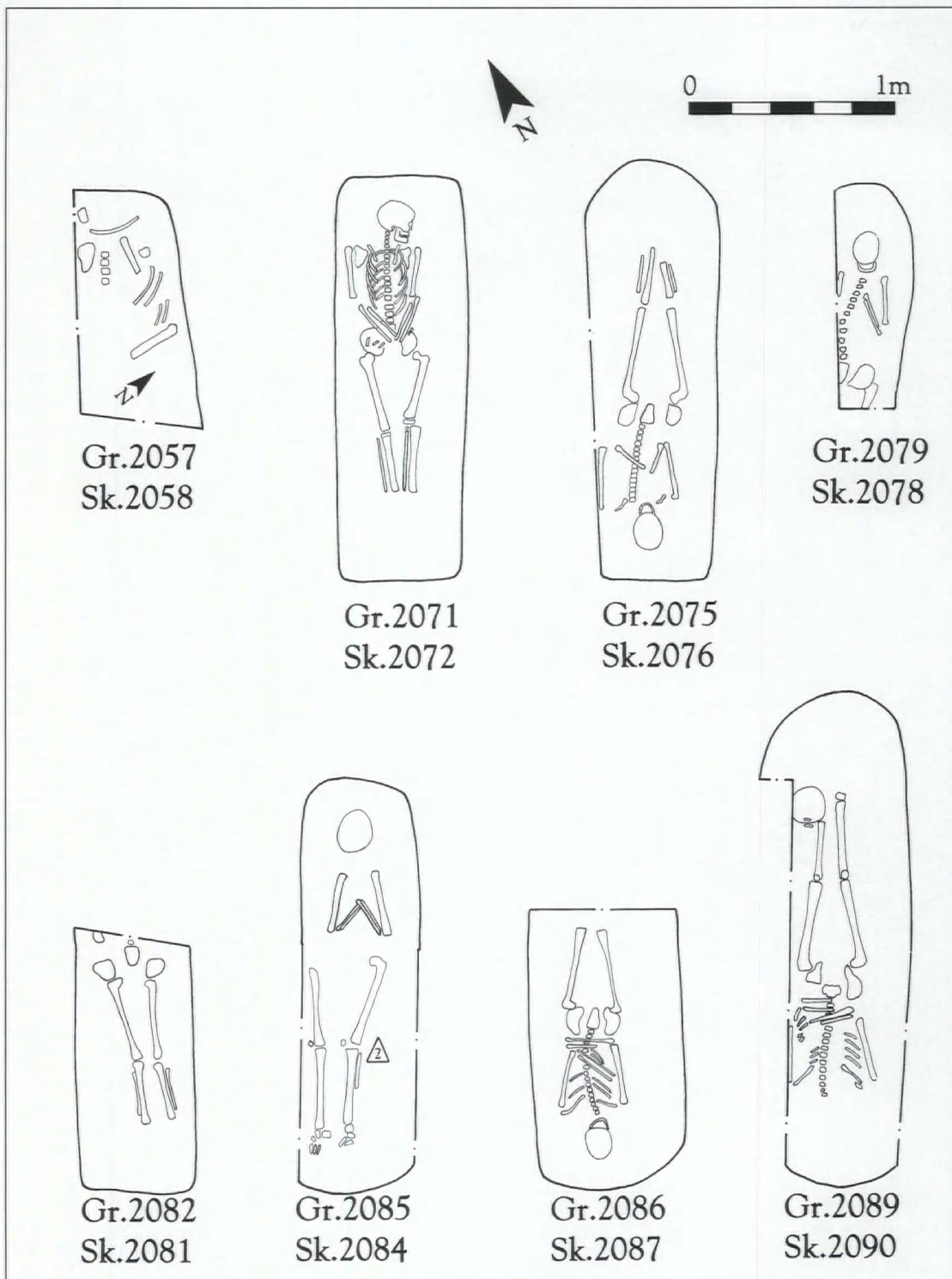


Figure 6 Skeletons

Feature No.	Skeleton	Orientation	Length/ breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Finds
2003	2004	NE-SW	2.40 x 0.70	0.70	Tile, stone, iron nail, animal bone
2006	2007	NE-SW	2.20 x 0.96	0.60	SF1 Bone comb, iron nail
2011	2012	SW-NE	1.95 x 0.80	0.60	Slag
2035	2036	NE-SW	2.12 x 0.65	0.66	Animal bone, residual pottery (138g – 2nd C)
2032	2033	NE-SW	2.40 x 1.27	0.65	Stone, animal bone, Roman pottery
2018	2019	NE-SW	2.00 x 0.70	0.56	Animal bone
2057	2058	NW-SE	1.20 x 0.48	0.35	Pottery (270-400)
2071	2072	NE-SW	1.95 x 0.65	0.35	None
2075	2076	SW-NE	2.10 x 0.60	0.50	Tile
2079	2078	NE-SW	1.10 x 0.36	0.40	None
2082	2081	NE-SW	1.30 x 0.54	0.45	None
2085	2084	NE-SW	1.25 x 0.63	0.45	SF2 Glass vessel
2086	2087	SW-NE	1.40 x 0.78	0.53	5 iron nails
2089	2090	SW-NE	2.44 x 0.71	0.50	None
2092	2093	NE-SW	0.73 x 0.40	0.58	None

Table 2 Late Roman Inhumations

ence of some chalk fragments indicative of more rapid filling and contained a similar finds assemblage including disarticulated human bone (52g). The pottery from Layer 2026 is predominantly of mid to late 2nd century date. The upper ditch fill also contained an almost complete Nene Valley miniature of late 3rd to 4th century date (Fig 7 No.1), a vessel which would normally accompany a burial.

Though both the basal and upper fills of Ditch 2025 contained 2nd century Roman pottery, this pottery is described as being of variable condition (Pottery Report below) suggesting that it is not a primary deposit. Significant residual finds have been identified, indeed, the largest quantity of Roman pottery was derived from medieval cross-shaped pit 2028 (Pottery Report below). The upper fill of Ditch 2025 also contained a late 3rd to 4th century funerary vessel, and Layers 2026 and 2027 each contained disarticulated human bone likely associated with the late Roman cemetery. The form and finds assemblage of Ditch 2025 suggests that it was a cemetery boundary ditch (below), and when the alignment of ditch is examined in the context of the previous cemetery excavations (Fig 2) it seems likely that it represents a south-western cemetery boundary ditch, part of which has been recorded by the Manshead Archaeological Society (Matthews 1981).

PHASE 3: MEDIEVAL

Eight of the cross-shaped pits, previously recorded to the NE, were recorded (Figs 2–3). A single NNE/SSW aligned ditch (2061) was partially

revealed during the monitoring and recording and is a probable continuation of the ‘buttress trench’, again previously recorded to the NE. Two parallel ditches (2009 and 2016) were revealed in the NE corner of the site.

Of the eight cross-shaped pits four were only partially revealed. They were evenly spaced, with their centres *c.* 4.30 m apart and were 3.50 m wide along their longest axes. Two examples were excavated, 2028 and 2030 (Figs 3-4). Both had flat bases and vertical sides and were 0.90 m deep. These dimensions accord well with the account given by Green and Horne (1991, 2). The excavated examples had similar fills with no indications of silting or evidence for them having stood open for any length of time. Both contained mixed finds assemblages, Pit 2028, in particular, contained much residual Roman pottery. Both pits contained 11th – 12th century pottery.

A substantial ditch, F2061, was traced for some 25 m running in a NNE/SSW direction through the area of the watching brief and therefore only limited segments could be excavated (Figs 3-4). It had a stepped profile, was 2.20 m wide and in excess of 1 m deep. The alignment of this ditch had coincided exactly with that of an evaluation trench in an earlier HAT investigation (Gardner and Murray, 2001) which had, as a result, erroneously interpreted its fill as an area of quarrying. The pottery assemblage recovered from this feature is dominated by 11th – 12th century pottery (Post Roman Pottery Report below). A small amount of residual Roman material was also recovered. Its alignment in relation to the previously

Feature	Depth (m)	Length x width (m)	Fill (s)	Finds
Pit 2021	0.12	0.50 x 0.46	2022	Brick, slag, animal bone, coal.
Pit 2023	0.12	0.58 x 0.35+	2024	Pottery, brick.
Pit 2038	0.47	0.90 x 0.70	2039, 2040	None.
Pit 2041	0.52	1.40 x 1.10	2042, 2043	Pottery, animal bone.
? 2063	unexcavated	-	-	-
? 2065	unexcavated	-	-	-

Table 3 Post-Medieval Features

excavated features to the NE suggests that it represents a continuation of the 'buttress trench' described by Green and Horne (1991, 4).

The NE corner of the excavated area revealed two parallel ditches, F2009 and 2016 (Figs 3-4). They did not extend into the area of the watching brief to the NW. Both had near vertical sides and flat bases and had similar fills. They were in excess of 5 m in length and varied between 0.80 – 1.06 m in width and 0.25 – 0.39 m in depth. They contained very mixed finds assemblages including residual Roman and early medieval pottery in addition to components indicative of a possible 15th to 16th century date.

PHASE 4: POST-MEDIEVAL

Four pits (2021, 2023, 2038, 2041) and two partially revealed features of uncertain type (2063, 2065) were recorded (Fig 3, Table 3). A post-medieval layer (2060) also sealed the earlier archaeological features.

Two small circular pits, 2021 and 2023, cut the fill of boundary ditch 2025. Both contained similar fills and small mixed finds assemblages. 2023 contained a sherd of late 18th/19th century pottery. Pits 2038 and 2041 cut medieval cross-shaped pit 2055. Both had steep sides and flat bases. They both contained two fills which yielded few finds, though the upper fill of 2041 contained some residual Roman pottery. Given that they cut Pit 2044 (Phase 1) this is not unexpected. Two further features, F2063 and F2065, were only exposed within the narrow confines of the foundations of Plot A and consequently neither was excavated further. Layer 2060 sealed all earlier cut features and contained a mixed pottery assemblage dating as late as the late 18th to 19th centuries along with a quantity of animal bone.

ROMAN POTTERY

Andrew Fawcett

INTRODUCTION

The excavation at Friary Field yielded 503 sherds,

weighing 6006g, with a total rim estimated vessel equivalent (r.eve) of 6.08. In addition 64 sherds (844g) with a r.eve of 0.86 were recovered during the evaluation. Generally the pottery is not well preserved. The average sherd weight (not including *amphorae*, *mortaria* and storage fabrics) is 8.36g. The majority of contexts which contained Roman pottery were pits or ditches, only a small number of sherds are from grave fills. A significant percentage of the Roman pottery was residual within medieval contexts, indeed, the largest quantity of Roman pottery was from medieval cross-shaped pit 2028.

METHODOLOGY

All of the pottery has been examined at x20 magnification. The fabric codes are based on the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series and national systems (Tomber and Dore 1998). Form matches are based on a variety of sites: Harrold (Brown 1994), Verulamium (Wilson 1972, 1983 and 1984), Baldock (Rigby 1986) and Chells (Waugh 1999).

Fabric Descriptions

LGF SA (R01B) La Graufesenque samian ware.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 28-29.

Date: AD40 to c AD110/120.

Source: La Graufesenque in southern Gaul.

LMV SA (R01A) Les Martres-de-Veyre samian ware.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 30-31.

Date: AD100 to 120/5.

Source: Les Martres-de-Veyre in central Gaul.

Comments/Form: two forms are noted, the transitional dish Drg18/31 and a possible Drg?37 bowl: r.eve 0.05.

LEZ SA 2 (R01A) Lezoux samian ware (category 2).

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 32-33.

Date: c AD120 to later 2nd C AD.

Source: Lezoux in central Gaul.

Comments/Form: this is the most common samian fabric. The form range is limited to two bowls (Drg37 and 38) and three dishes (two Drg18/31's and one 31): r.eve 0.23.

CHF SA (R01C) Chemery-Faulquemont samian ware.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 36.

Date: c AD120 to mid 2nd C AD.

Source: eastern Gaul.

Comments/Form: a single sherd weighing just 1g represents this fabric.

RHZ SA (R01C) Rheinzabern samian ware.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 39.

Date: AD138 to mid 3rd C AD.

Source: eastern Gaul.

Comments/Form: one unidentifiable form is present: r.eve 0.01.

TRI SA (R01C) Trier samian ware.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 41.

Date: AD138 to mid 3rd C AD.

Source: eastern Gaul.

Comments/Form: a single unknown form is present: r.eve 0.02.

OXF RS (R11G) Oxford red/brown slipped ware.

Description: Young 1977; Tomber and Dore 1998, 176.

Date: AD240 to 410.

Source: Oxford.

Comments/Form: a dish, bowl and beaker are present: r.eve 0.21.

COL CC (R04E) Colchester colour coats.

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 132.

Date: AD120 to later 3rd C AD.

Source: Colchester.

Comments/Form: just two body sherds represent this fabric.

LNV CC (R12B) Lower Nene Valley colour coats.

Description: Perrin 1999; Tomber and Dore 1998, 117-119.

Date: AD150 to 410.

Source: Lower Nene Valley.

Comments/Form: a miniature ?bottle is from 2026 (Fig 7 No. 1).

UNS CC (R38) Unsourced colour coats.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: throughout the Roman period.

Source: local and regional.

Comments/Form: a single body sherd accounts for this fabric.

ROB MD (R02) Romano-British mica dusted ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: c Late 1st to c mid 2nd C AD.

Source: local or regional.

Comments/Form: just one body sherd is present.

OXF WH (R11E) Oxford white ware.

Description: Young 1977; Tyers 1996, 129-130.

Date: AD100 to 410.

Source: Oxford.

Comments/Form: four different *mortaria* are present, mostly too small for other than general identification: r.eve 0.33.

VER WH (R03A) Verulamium region white ware.

Description: Davies *et al* 1994, 41-59; Tomber and Dore 1998, 154.

Date: in Bedford mid/late 1st to mid/late 2nd C AD.

Source: kilns around north London and the Verulamium area.

Comments/Form: two reed rim bowls, a *mortaria* and two beaded jars are present: r.eve 0.66.

UNS WH (R03B, 3C) Unsourced white wares.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: mid 1st to 2nd C AD.

Source: local and regional.

Comments/Form: only body sherds comprise this fabric.

UNS BU (R10A) Unsourced buff wares.

Description: Going 1987, 7; Bedford fabric archive.

Date: mid 1st to 2nd C AD.

Source: local.

Comments/Form: a single dish form is present: r.eve 0.04.

HAD WS (-) Hadham white slipped ware.

Description: Fawcett forthcoming b.

Date: late 1st to 2nd C AD.

Source: the Hadhams, east Hertfordshire.

Comments: just one body sherd is present.

UNS WS (R06H) Unsourced white slipped grey ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: late 1st to late 2nd C AD.

Source: local, probably copying Highgate Wood style.

Comments/Form: two dish fragments and a poppy-head beaker account for this fabric: r.eve 0.29.

UNS FO (R05B) Unsourced fine oxidised ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: throughout the Roman period.

Source: local and regional.

Comments: one body sherd is present.

UNS OX (R05A, 5C) Unsourced oxidised ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: throughout the Roman period.

Source: local and regional.

Comments/Form: only one of the three jars is large enough for matching and this is a ledge rim type copying the Harrod style: r.eve 0.22.

BSW (R07B, 7E) Black surfaced Romanising ware.

Description: Fawcett forthcoming a; Bedford fabric archive.

Date: most common up to the 2nd C AD.

Source: mostly local.

Comments/Form: this fabric is the most common and is dominated by plain dish forms. Although mostly of the standard type an unusual form is noted from 2070 (Fig.7, No 8). The most striking beaker form is a globular type (Fig 7 No. 6). The single flagon present is in BSW. Virtually all of the jars are too small for matching: r.eve 1.22.

DOR BB 1 (R07A) Dorset black burnished ware (category 1).

Description: Tomber and Dore 1998, 127.

Date: in Bedford from c AD120 until AD410.

Source: Wareham/Poolo.

Comments/Form: the single early dish form is in the mixed 2031 context, only seven sherds of BB1 occur on the site: r.eve 0.03.

UNS BB (R07C) Unsourced black burnished ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.

Date: as BB1.

Source: local copy of BB1.

Comments/Form: of the three dishes one has an incipient flange, noted in 2062, a mixed context. One flat rimmed bowl occurs in another mixed fill (2029): r.eve 0.28.

GRF (R06C) Unsourced fine grey ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.
Date: throughout the Roman period.
Source: local and regional.
Comments/Form: only 20 sherds make up this fabric and most forms (two dishes and a beaker) are too small for an accurate form match: r.eve 0.08.

GRS (R06B, 5D, 5E, 5F) Unsourced grey wares.
Description: Bedford fabric archive.
Date: throughout the Roman period.
Source: local and regional.
Comments/Form: the second largest fabric group, however only one dish, three jar types and a beaker (copying the folded style) are recorded: r.eve 0.38.

HAD RE 1 (R22B) Hadham reduced ware (category 1).
Description: Fawcett forthcoming a and b.
Date: the entire Roman period.
Source: the Hadhams, east Hertfordshire.
Comments/Form: just five non-diagnostic sherds account for this fabric.

HGW RE C (-) Highgate Wood reduced ware (category C).
Description: Davies *et al* 1994, 82-88; Tomber and Dore 1998, 136.
Date: c AD65 to c AD180.
Source: Highgate Wood, north London.
Comments/Form: a single body sherd, probably from a poppy-head beaker, is present.

VER RE (-) Verulamium region reduced ware.
Description: as VER WH (*above*).
Date: c AD55 to late 2nd century AD.
Source: as VER WH (*above*).
Comments/Form: one body sherd is present.

HAR SH (R13) Harrold shell tempered ware.
Description: Brown 1994; Tomber and Dore 1998, 115.
Date: throughout the Roman period.
Source: Harrold in Bedfordshire, however a number of other sources are likely in adjoining regions.
Comments/Form: this is the third largest category. The form assemblage, except one late bowl type, consists solely of jars, by far the most common being the ledge rim type. r.eve 1.38

PNK GT (R09A) Pink grog tempered ware.
Description: Marney 1989, 174; Tomber and Dore 1998, 210.
Date: c AD160 to 410.
Source: local.
Comments/Form: only six non-diagnostic sherds are present

SOB GT (F06B, 6C) Southern British grog tempered ware.
Description: Thompson 1982; Tomber and Dore 1998, 115.
Date: c 20BC to at least AD70.
Source: local.
Comments/Form: all of the diagnostic sherds belong to storage jars dated to around the middle of the 2nd C AD: r.eve 0.41.

UNS GS (F05) Unsourced grog and shell tempered ware.
Description: Bedford fabric archive.
Date: late Iron-Age to c AD70.
Source: local.
Comments/Form: only four non-diagnostic sherds are present.

UNS QF (F01C) Unsourced quartz and flint tempered ware.

Description: Bedford fabric archive.
Date: Iron-Age.
Source: local.
Comments/Form: a single sherd from the evaluation is present.

BAT AM (R19A) Baetican amphorae fabric.
Description: Tyers 1996, 87-88; Tomber and Dore 1998, 84.
Date: 1st C AD to AD260.
Source: Guadalquivir Valley, Spain.
Comments/Form: the three sherds representing this fabric are from medieval cross shaped pit 2028 (2029).

DATING EVIDENCE

The earliest activity is represented by the assemblages from pits 2014 and 2044. However, the dating of mid 1st to early 2nd centuries AD is tentative because it is based on the presence of early grog-tempered fabrics occurring with genuine Roman wares. Much of the pottery is poorly preserved and the sherds are non-diagnostic.

A more securely dated assemblage, early – mid 2nd C, with an average sherd weight of 13.5 g, was recovered from pit 2052. The continental finewares comprise just two sherds of samian from Lezoux, central Gaul. Two forms are represented, a transitional dish Drg 18/31 and a bowl Drg 38. There are no *amphorae* or Romano-British fineware fabrics. The coarseware component is very localised. The furthest travelled are Verulamium white wares from Hertfordshire, represented by a single *mortaria* and a reed rim bowl (Fig 7 No.5). A number of shell tempered sherds from Harrold were recorded, including an early jar type (Fig 7 No.7). The remainder of this assemblage is unsourced, and consists of two main fabrics: black-surfaced and sandy grey wares. Three forms are noted in the black-surfaced category, including a globular beaker (Fig 7 No.6).

Mid to later 2nd century pottery comes from the upper fill of the cemetery boundary ditch (2025). However, it is in variable condition with an average sherd weight of just under 7 g. Lezoux is the only samian product and accounts for only 1% by weight with no diagnostic sherds. The only Romano-British finewares represented are Colchester colour coated and an unsourced colour coat, both occurring as single non-diagnostic sherds. An almost complete Nene Valley miniature (Fig 7 No.1) may be intrusive, or else the 2nd century pottery is residual. The form of the miniature has no direct parallel but it is likely to be of late 3rd to 4th century AD date. There is only slight diversification in the sourced coarsewares. Verulamium is still represented but Harrold makes up some 25% of the coarseware component. The form range is restricted to early everted rim jar types 70 and 79 (Brown 1994) and two examples of the

developed ledge rim jar. A small number of Oxford white ware *mortaria* sherds and a single beaker sherd from Highgate Wood are also noted. The unsourced coarsewares are slightly more varied, with the introduction of white slipped wares, a local copy of BB1 and other white ware types. Overall, black-surfaced and greywares dominate the unsourced material (12% and 13% respectively). The form range is largely restricted to plain dishes, except for a one basic globular beaker and one poppy-head type.

The pottery from the lower fill (2027) of boundary ditch 2025, and Pits 2048 and 2050 are less securely dateable and have been assigned a general 2nd-century date. The same general fabric trends as in the assemblages described above are evident. However, single sherds of Trier samian, Hadham reduced ware and Verulamium reduced ware are also present. The form range is also similar, with basic dish and jar types dominating. The only other vessel type is represented by a single Oxford *mortaria* sherd.

Evidence for late Roman activity is sparse. Where possible 3rd or 4th century dates occur they are at the upper end of very long date ranges associated with long-lived coarsewares. Some later Roman ceramics are noted in medieval contexts. Finewares consist mostly of Oxford red/brown slipped ware. There are few late coarseware forms: a Harrold 255 bowl (Brown 1994) from pit 2041; a BB1 incipient flanged dish copy from ditch 2061; an M18 Oxford white ware *mortaria* from cross-shaped pit 2028; and a late Harrold storage jar (Brown 1994, No 238) from the post-medieval overburden.

Only a single grave fill (Grave 2057 L2059) contained pottery that may be contemporary with the cemetery. This comprised 12 very fragmentary, conjoining sherds of Oxford red/brown slipped ware. They derive from a beaker in the C22-26 range (Young, 1977). Almost all of the neck and all of the rim and base are missing, though it may still be assigned a date range of AD 270-400. Based on the analysis of this ware's distribution (Tyers 1996, 178) its arrival in Dunstable is likely to be in the 4th century. It is notable that the dating of this vessel and the Nene Valley miniature from upper fill of ditch 2025 (Fig 7 No.1) (above) accords well with the comb

recovered from Grave 2006 (Small Finds Report below) and the glass bowl from Grave 2085 (Glass Report below).

Cross-shaped pit 2028, though medieval, yielded some noteworthy residual Roman pottery. This includes a Verulamium jar (Fig 7 No.2), a blackware dish (Fig 7 No.3) and an early Harrold jar type (Fig 7 No.4). A single Hadham storage jar body-herd is present, not previously recorded this far from the kilns by the author.

DISCUSSION

A small number of features contain uncontaminated Roman assemblages, and these are quite small. Nonetheless the ceramics recovered are entirely consistent in form and date with those recorded from previous excavations in the area (Matthews *et al* 1981, 49-59). The majority of the pottery is 2nd century; 3rd and 4th century pottery is sparse except for a few long lived fabrics and forms.

The low percentage of finewares may be an indicator of low status, and similarly only three *amphorae* sherds are present. Lezoux is the most common samian fabric (average overall sherd weight of 7.6 g). The average weight of the remaining samian fabrics is a only 3g, which typifies the condition of most of the pottery. The form types are also fairly limited. Jars and plain rimmed dishes dominate. The remainder of the diagnostic assemblage is divided between reed rim bowls, *mortaria*, a limited number of beakers and one a flagon.

The coarseware fabric range is correspondingly restricted. The majority were likely to have been locally produced or from the region. It is probable that some of the pottery originated from the nearby kilns excavated by the Manshead Archaeological Society (Matthews *et al* 1981, 49). The coarsewares which can be sourced are limited to sherds from Verulamium, a few from Hadham, Hertfordshire, a few BB1 from Dorset, white ware from Oxford and a single example from Highgate Wood. The principal sourced coarseware is the Bedfordshire 'Harrold' ware (some 42km away). However, even the percentages of this fabric are not substantial (15% by weight in comparison to 10% from Verulamium).

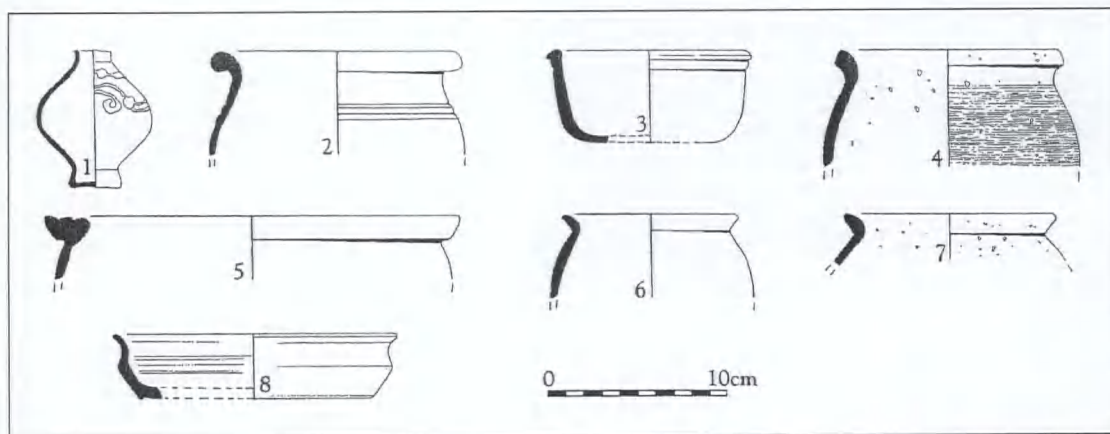


Figure 7 Roman pottery

ILLUSTRATED POTTERY

- 1) 2026 Miniature from the Nene Valley with no direct parallel. Probably dated between the *c* late 3rd and 4th C AD. Displays white barbotine decoration on a dark grey colour coat.
- 2) 2029 Verulamium region white ware jar. The sherd is buff coloured and displays some sooting. Its nearest parallel from Verulamium, 2248, dated AD120 to 145: r.eve 0.37.
- 3) 2029 Dish in a Romanising fabric with a cordon and groove just below the rim. The surface is patchy dark grey to black with brown margins and grey core. The nearest match is 2549 from Verulamium, dated AD140-155: r.eve 0.15.
- 4) 2029 This Harrold jar type is dated from the second half of the 2nd C AD to at least the early 3rd C. The inner surface is buff, the core orange with a reduced outer surface. Brown 79 is the nearest match: r.eve 0.14.
- 5) 2054 A Verulamium white ware reed rim bowl, similar to 669 from Verulamium, dated AD130 to 170. The vessel is peach to buff on the surfaces with an orange core: r.eve 0.15.
- 6) 2054 In a Romanising fabric, the beaker's nearest comparison is Verulamium, 2078. The fabric is fairly sandy with a burnished patchy black outer surface dated from around AD130 to 150: r.eve 0.15.
- 7) 2054 Another Harrold style shell tempered jar. However, its nearest equal is at Verulamium, 2182. This is dated AD138 to 192. The core is dark grey with light brown outer and inner surfaces: r.eve 0.14.
- 8) 2070 This is a fairly unusual form in a Romanising fabric. Although is fairly coarse the outer surface is highly burnished. There is no direct match for this dish, however its style may indicate a date range from the mid 1st to early 2nd C AD.

POST-ROMAN POTTERY

Berni Sudds

The small medieval and later assemblage from the investigations at Friary Field amounts to 60 sherds, weighing 475g. The Estimated Vessel Equivalent (eve) by rim sherd measurement (percentage present) is 0.54.

The pottery was identified following a visit to the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series (CTS) and is listed below in date order by fabric code and common name (Table 4). All ware types and fabric sub-divisions are listed and described in the archive version of this report with the exception of a couple of unsourced coarseware and glazed ware fabrics that are included below. The assemblage was recorded and analysed to the minimum standards set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (Slowikowski *et al*, 2001). A full quantification of the assemblage by feature, context and fabric is included in a Ceramic Catalogue, which, with the Fabric Description Records forms part of the site archive.

ADDITIONAL FABRIC DESCRIPTIONS

Medieval

Parallels for the following fabrics were not found within the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series. All are unsourced and can only be broadly dated.

Fabric C: *Non-specific medieval*: Fine sandy fabric with mid-grey core and margins and buff surfaces. Abundant well-sorted fine to medium well-rounded to sub-angular clear, white and iron stained quartz (up to 0.5mm). Occasional fine to medium, rounded to angular calcareous inclusions and rare very fine to medium, rounded to angular ferrous oxide.

Fabric C: *Unsourced fine sandy glazed ware*: Fine sandy fabric with a light buff core, light grey-buff to mid orange margins and light orange surfaces. Abundant fine angular to rounded and occasional coarse sub-rounded to rounded white and clear quartz. Occasional fine to coarse, angular to rounded red and brown ferrous oxide. Rare fine to coarse, angular to well-rounded calcareous inclusions and medium to very coarse dark grey organic inclusions (the latter often burnt out).

Ware	CTS code	Date range	No	Wg. (g)	% Wg.	REVE
Harrold/ Olney Hyde 'A' ware / Medieval Shelly (source unknown)	B05/B07	c. AD 1100-1250 (?1300)	4	30	6%	-
Coarse Sandy ware	C59A	c. AD 1000-1200	37	269	57%	0.23
Sandy ware	C59B	c. AD 1000-1200	5	24	5%	0.06
London-type ware	C57	c. AD 1125/50-1350	1	5	1%	-
Non-specific medieval	C	Medieval	1	5	1%	-
Unsources glazed wares	C	c. AD 1100-1400/1500	3	17	4%	0.10
Hertfordshire-type Greyware (South Bedfordshire tradition)	C60	c. AD 1150-1325/50	1	10	2%	-
Gritty Red ware	C65	c. AD 1200-1400	1	50	10%	-
Non-specific late medieval	E	c. AD 1400-1600	1	3	1%	-
Glazed red earthenware (fine)	P01	c. AD 1500-1900	2	22	5%	-
Unglazed red earthenware	P	c. AD 1700-1900 (+)	2	37	8%	0.15
Refined white earthenware	P55	c. AD 1750-1900 (+)	1	1	Present	-
Transfer-printed ware	P45	c. AD 1780-1900 (+)	1	2	Present	-
Total			60	475g		0.54

Table 4 Ware types. CTS No. = Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series fabric code.

Fabric C: *Unsources sandy glazed ware*: Hard sandy fabric with a fairly harsh texture. Light grey to buff core, light grey, buff to dark grey-buff margins and light grey to buff surfaces. Abundant well sorted fine to medium, angular to rounded clear, white and iron-stained quartz. Occasional to moderate poorly sorted angular to well-rounded red to dark brown ferrous oxide.

DISCUSSION

The assemblage is dominated by local coarseware fabrics primarily of early medieval date although a small quantity of medieval sandy glazed wares and some post-medieval wares have also been recorded. With an average sherd weight of 8g the Friary Field material is in fair condition but many of the context assemblages are small, secondary and relatively mixed in terms of date. Post-Roman pottery was recovered from eight features and layers but the majority can only be tentatively dated.

The groups from cross-shaped pit 2030 and the 'buttress trench' 2061 are dominated by early medieval sandy products (C, C59A, C59B) dating from the 11th to 12th centuries. These wares occur in isolation in ditch 2061 but in association with Harrold/ Olney Hyde 'A' /Medieval Shelly products and sandy glazed jug sherds within pit 2030 dating from the 12th century. The pottery from parallel ditches 2009 and 2016 contained a range of broadly dated material including early medieval sandy wares (C59A), glazed products (C, C65) and a single Hertfordshire-type glazed ware. The presence of a late medieval oxidised product, however, may suggest a group date as late as late as the 15th to 16th century.

Cross-shaped pit 2030 and the parallel ditches 2009 and 2016 represent further examples features already investigated at Friary Field by the Manshead Archaeological Society (Green and Horne 1991). Although the function and date of these features remain in question it has been suggested that they may represent the remnants of a planned horticultural garden associated with the Friary (*ibid*, 4). The presence of sandy greywares from Flitwick suggests a date for these features from the 15th century although a date into the early 16th century, right up to the dissolution is also thought possible (*ibid*, 30). Unfortunately, the assemblages from both investigations are small, mixed and predominantly early but the late medieval oxidised sherd from ditch 2016 would tentatively verify a 15th or 16th century date. The early material is thought to have been derived from soil stripped from the surrounding fields used to fill the pits (*ibid*, 30). If so, much of the early medieval material is likely to be secondary.

An indication of a post-medieval presence on site is provided by a small group of sherds from pit 2023 and general layer 2060. A substantial quantity of Roman pottery was recovered from layer 2060, dating predominantly to the 2nd century, but the presence of localised red earthenware products (P01) along with transfer-printed ware (P45) may be suggestive of a late 18th to 19th century date. Pit 2023 produced a single non-diagnostic refined white earthenware dating from the mid 18th to 19th century.

Given the size of the Friary Field assemblage relative fabric quantities may not necessarily be repre-

sentative but the range and combination of material demonstrated is fairly typical of the region. It compares well with earlier excavations on this site and to others of a similar date in the vicinity (Slowikowski 1995, 156; Green and Horne 1991; Slowikowski, forthcoming; Brine 1988). As at Chalgrave and Grove Priory the early medieval groups are dominated by localised sandy wares of the south Bedfordshire C59 tradition (Brine 1988, 43; Slowikowski, *pers. comm.*) A single sherd of Hertfordshire-type greyware was also identified. Although similar to products of the South Hertfordshire greyware industry this sherd is thought to be of a more localised south Bedfordshire tradition. A similar mid 12th to early to mid 14th century date range is still tentatively suggested (Slowikowski, *pers. comm.*). The small group of shelly wares recovered are all non-diagnostic but may potentially be sourced to the Harrold or Olney Hyde traditions.

Similarly to Chalgrave, glazed wares also represent a small element of the Friary Field assemblage although some remain unsourced (Brine 1988). A single Gritty Red ware jug handle was recovered from ditch 2009. This fabric has been identified at Grove Priory, Stratton and other sites in south Bedfordshire in small quantity but remains unsourced (Slowikowski, *pers. comm.*). A single London-type sherd, despite being intrusive in grave 2003, may suggest the area, if not the site itself, was involved in some form of regional trade during the medieval period. London-type ware is thought to have been in circulation in London from late 11th century but is not likely to have reached Dunstable much before the early to mid 12th century (Vince and Jenner 1991, 83-85).

Few forms were identified and are represented by early medieval sandy jar sherds and glazed jug forms. Jar forms with everted, squared rims occur in fabric C59A and can be paralleled both within previously excavated groups from the site and at Grove Priory (Green and Horne 1991, Fig 23 - Nos 71, 80, 82, 88; Slowikowski, forthcoming, Nos 103 and 105). A single everted, thumb decorated C59B jar rim, similar to a C59B vessel found at Chalgrave, was also identified (Brine 1988, Fig 8, No.19). Decoration on coarseware forms is limited to a single C59A body sherd with an applied thumbed strip and a rouletted B05/ B07 sherd. The glazed sherds derive from jug forms and are decorated with applied clay strips, painted slip decoration and green glaze. A single unsourced fine sandy glazed upright, internally bevelled jug rim represents the

only diagnostic sherd. Evidence of sooting on some of the sandy coarsewares may be suggestive of a domestic function but as much of the pottery is evidently residual little can be concluded with regard to on-site activity.

SMALL FINDS

Nina Crummy

COMB

Fig 8.1. SF 1. Grave 2006 (2008). Small double-sided composite comb made of red deer antler, held together by five iron rivets. Length 89 mm, width c 52 mm. One of the connecting plates, presumably that placed on the coffin floor, is much more decayed than the other, and the comb is now also slightly concave longitudinally, with the decayed connecting-plate on the underside. The connecting plates are plain, with a chamfer on all four sides, but are scarred with tooth-cutting marks on the long sides. As is usual, the teeth are wider on one side than the other. The end-plates are also quite decayed, but retain sufficient form to show that three zones were defined, with each side sweeping outwards with a concave profile and the centre worked into a series of low projections, which appear to conform to the standard design of two low triangular or rounded humps flanking a long rounded centre. At the more decayed end a small perforation is placed just below the junction of the central zone and one of the sides.

Three stages can be defined in the decorative working of comb end-plates, Stage 1: simple; Stage 2: developed/potentially zoomorphic; and Stage 3: fully zoomorphic, with only three animals represented in this final stage, horse, owl, or dolphin (Crummy 2001, Fig 4). The Dunstable comb belongs to Stage 2. It has been argued that these stages are evidence that a comb-maker prepared a number of combs for sale at either Stage 1 or Stage 2, then at point of sale might personalise them into full zoomorphs for extra cost (Crummy 2001, 103). The connecting-plates might also be further embellished at this point; though there is evidence from an unfinished comb from Richborough that they were decorated before the sections of the comb were assembled (Henderson 1949, plate 56).

The small perforation at one end of the Dunstable comb may have served a functional purpose, perhaps for attaching a thong which could be used to hang the comb when not in use. Other Stage 2 combs have similar holes (eg Greep 1993, Fig 78, 1), while most Stage 3 combs include round holes or more complex cut-outs in the overall design (Crummy 2001, Fig 3).

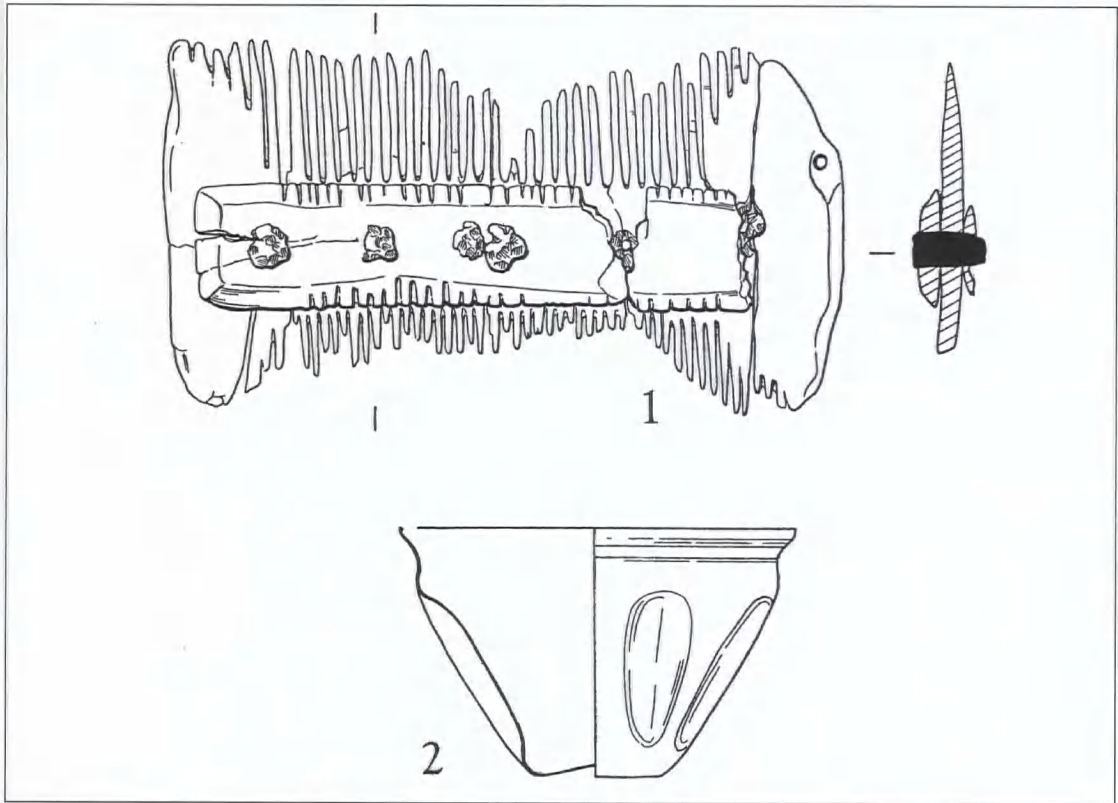


Figure 8 Small finds:
 Double-sided composite comb from Grave 2006 (SF1) (1:1)
 Glass conical bowl from Grave 2085 (SF2) (1:2)

Composite double-sided antler combs appear in Britain towards the end of the 4th century, and those from occupation sites rather than graves suggest an earliest date of *c.* AD 360. A fragment from Colchester came from the cellar of Building 154 in Insula 19, backfilled in the last half of the 4th century and containing a probable dispersed hoard with a closing date of *c.* 350-60 (Crummy, P 1981, Fig 8, 2; Crummy, P 1992, 333). Four fragments from London came from the deliberate infilling, *c.* 370, of a drain from a small bath in Building 6 at Pudding Lane (Milne 1985, 141, Fig 81, d-e). In addition a remarkable collection from York was found in rubbish deposits in a disused stone building on the Wellington Row site, dated to later than *c.* 380 (Ottaway 1993, 113-14, Fig 71).

Combs of this type have been found as grave goods in the late Roman cemeteries of Winchester, (Galloway 1979; Crummy *et al.*, forthcoming), Poundbury, Dorset (Greep 1993), Colchester (Crummy 1983; Crummy *et al.*, 1993), Cirencester (McWhirr *et al.* 1982, Fig 80,

175), and Chichester (Down and Magilton 1993, Fig 28.6, 2). Though generally in adult female graves they can occur in male graves: e.g. Grave 413 at Lankhills, Winchester (Galloway 1979, Fig 31, 521) and Grave 258 at Butt Road, Colchester (Crummy *et al.*, 1993, Table 2.58), and also in children's burials: e.g. Graves 333 and 381 at Lankhills (Galloway 1979, Fig 31, 316, 479) and Grave 519 at Colchester (Crummy *et al.*, 1993, Table 2.58).

BULK IRONWORK

[123] (121). Trench 3 (evaluation). Ditch fill. Triangular fragment of thin sheet, slightly crumpled. Probably from a decorative strap fitting, though no perforations for attachment are present. Maximum dimensions 33 mm long by 12 mm wide.

Grave 2003 (2005). Intrusive modern machine-made nail.

Grave 2006 (2008). Iron nail of Manning (1985), Type 1b, the tip of the shank missing and the more or less flat round head damaged. Length 43 mm.

Grave 2011 (2013). Tapering fragment, probably the tip of a nail shank. Length 17 mm.

Grave 2086 (2088). Three iron nails of Manning's Type 1b, one nail shank, and an unusual ?nail.:

Type 1b, with large rectangular head, length 38 mm (incomplete).

Type 1b, with sub-rectangular head, clenched to give a maximum wood thickness of 20 mm, complete, length (straight) about 70 mm.

Type 1b, with damaged square head, complete, length 80 mm
Nail shank, length 50 mm

Nail-like fitting with square section shank and flat spatulate head, length 52 mm; the head appears slightly rolled at the end, and may have been hammered over the corner of a plank.

STONE

Cross-shaped pit 2028 (2029). Small brick-shaped building block of iron-rich sandstone with traces of mortar on some of the faces. Damaged at one end. Length 120 mm, section 46 mm by 42 mm.

Grave 2003 (2005). Grave 1. Waterworn pebble with traces of mortar, used as building stone. Maximum dimensions 83 mm by 55 by 35 mm.

GLASS

Hilary Cool

The vessel found in Grave 2085 is a small example of an indented truncated conical bowl (Isings Form 117) (Fig 8.2). Normally in Britain these have been found with larger rim diameters, and Price and Cottam (1998, 128) note a range of 110-140 mm for them. This example has proportions more reminiscent of a cup. Occasionally, conical beakers with similar indentations are found (e.g. Vanpeene 1993, 50 no. 081, plate XVIII), examples of which have only rarely been found on Romano-British sites such as at The Brooks, Winchester (unpublished). It seems clear that the bowl form was the commonest but various other proportions, of which this is one, were possible but less common. Such bowls, and the allied forms, appear to have come into use in the middle of the 4th century, were common in the second half of it (Cool 1995, 13), and clearly continued into the 5th century (Harry and Morris 1997, 74). To my knowledge, this is the first time that one has been found as a grave good within a Romano-British cemetery, though several have been noted as survivals in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Harden 1956, 158 Group A.d.i.).

Though the cup now lacks some fragments, it is probable that it was placed in the grave entire. This cemetery has now produced two graves with glass vessels. During the earlier excavations a tall beaker with trailed decoration was found with an adult

female (Matthews 1981, 45 no 54, Fig 35). This does not appear to have been the subject of specialist examination but from the drawing seems most likely to be another late 4th to 5th century variety (Isings Form 109c; Pirling 1974, 101 form 193). This too is a rare find in Roman Britain. The discovery of these two vessels in the cemetery is of some interest as glass vessels were used as grave goods occasionally rather than commonly in the 4th century Roman Britain (Philpott 1991, 118). Whether they should be seen generally as an indicator of status is open to question as glass drinking vessels were still a common find in late 4th century habitation sites. In the case of the Dunstable vessels, however, it might be possible to suggest that they were marking some form of special status for the individuals buried with them. One of the vessels is definitely unusual within a wider Romano-British *milieu*, and the example found in these excavations also has unusual features. Neither fall centrally within the commonly available range of the later 4th century.

Catalogue

Grave 2085 (2083) SF2

Cup in numerous joining fragments, small parts of rim and body missing. Pale greenish colourless; many small bubbles, thick black flaking iridescence. Curved rim, edge cracked off but not ground; upper body slightly convex-curved, then sloping into shallow concave base. Eleven narrow, deep indentations around body; abraded band below rim edge and at junction with rim and side. Rim diameter 103 mm, base diameter 37 mm, height 67 mm, wall thickness 1 mm.

BUILDING MATERIAL

Andrew Fawcett

Just over 7 kg of building material was recovered. Two contexts contained some 71% of this material: build-up deposit (101) recorded during the evaluation and general layer (2060). The remaining contexts contained only one or two fragments of building material.

The condition of the material from layers 101 and 2060 is good. The 'form' range consists entirely of flat tile. The fabric range is similarly limited to almost a single type. This is a highly fired sandy fabric whose main characteristic is the presence of sparse, large, mainly red and white flint. This fabric is post-medieval. Although one or two of the smaller fragments may be medieval, only a single abraded fragment of glazed tile can be firmly dated to this period. This second fabric is hard, sandy and tempered with lime. A small number of flat tile pieces

are of Roman date.

The remaining fragments are sparse and variously abraded. The forms that can be recognised comprise flat tile with occasional examples of brick.

In summary the assemblage does not indicate the presence of a building (especially of Roman or medieval date). The Roman material, for example,

contains no examples of *imbrex*, *tegulae* or box flue tile. Similarly there are no instances of mortar, daub or plaster. An examination of the fabric range indicates that flint is frequent and was used during many periods. Interestingly there are no examples of the shell-tempered tiles that were produced at Harrold in the NW of the county.

Grave	Skeleton	Sex	Age	Stature (m)	Position	Pathology/comments
2003	2004	♀	25-35	1.65 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Virtually complete. Well preserved. Bilateral cribra orbitalia.
2006	2007	♂	45+	1.61 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Virtually complete. Well preserved. Intrusive sheep phalanx. Spiral fracture of right tibia and fibula. Osteoarthritis of distal inter-phalangeal joints, dental disease, osteophyte on odontoid peg, transitional vertebra.
2011	2012	♂	45+	1.73 ± 0.04	Supine, extended*	Much post mortem damage, lacking lower thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. Dental disease, ectopic upper left canine, osteoarthritis of cervical spine and acromio-clavicular joints.
2018	2019	♀	45+	1.64 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Substantially complete. Well preserved. Dental disease, osteoarthritis of acromio-clavicular joints, inter-vertebral disc disease of L5/S1, Schmorl's nodes T9-11, metopic suture.
2032	2033	♂	45+	-	Supine, extended*	Very fragmentary, poor surface condition. Evidence of decapitation cut through C3. Dental disease, osteoarthritis of spine, left temporo-mandibular joint and left acromio-clavicular joint.
2035	2036	♀	25-35	-	- Supine, extended*	Virtually complete. Well preserved. Green staining on left maxilla and zygoma, left mandible and right distal tibia. Evidence of decapitation cut through C3. Dental disease and transitional vertebra.
2057	2058	♀	Adult	-	Supine, extended	Partial skeleton. Intrusive cattle bones. Dental disease, fractures of left clavicle and three right ribs, Paget's disease of left tibia, Schmorl's nodes on T8-12.
2071	2072	♂	17-25	-	Supine, extended	Virtually complete. Well preserved. Intrusive cow bone.
2075	2076	♂	45+	1.75 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Substantially complete but much post mortem damage. Dental disease, osteoarthritis of cervical spine, right elbow and left acromio-clavicular joint. Disc disease of cervical spine.
2079	2078	♂	Adult	-	Supine, extended	Fragmentary with much post mortem damage. Osteoarthritis of cervical and upper thoracic spine and left acromio-clavicular joints. Disc disease of L5/S1
2082	2081	♂	35-45	1.81 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Partial with much post mortem damage.
2085	2084	♂	Adult	1.73 ± 0.04	Lying on right side, extended	Partial with much post mortem damage. Osteoarthritis of right acromio-clavicular and distal inter-phalangeal joints, Schmorl's nodes of lower thoracic spine.
2086	2087	♀	45+	1.61 ± 0.04	Supine, extended	Substantially complete. Intrusive cattle bone. Dental disease, fusion of laminae of T4/5.
2089	2090	♂	35-45	1.75 ± 0.04	Supine, extended*	Virtually complete. Well preserved. Intrusive cow bone. Dental disease, Schmorl's nodes on thoracic and lumbar spine. Evidence of decapitation cut on C4.
2092	2093	?	Adult	-	Supine, extended	Fragments of feet only.

Table 5 Catalogue of Human Remains (* = head displaced).

HUMAN REMAINS

Tony Waldron

Fifteen discrete inhumations and a small quantity of disarticulated material were recovered from this site. The skeletons are generally substantial in quantity and the bones were well preserved, although a number had suffered considerable post-mortem damage. One skeleton, 2033 (Grave 2032), was very fragmentary and the surface condition of the bones was extremely poor. It was thought that the body may have been quick-limed (Matthews 1981, 7), and the state of the bones is consistent with this supposition. Each of the skeletons was examined in order to determine the age and sex of the individual and to see whether any pathological changes were present. Since four of the individuals appeared to have been decapitated, particular attention was given to the examination of the cervical vertebrae for signs of damage caused by the decapitation. One of the skeletons, 2036 (Grave 2035), had green staining on the left maxilla, zygoma and mandible and also on the distal right tibia, presumably where some copper-containing objects had been in contact with the bone during burial. Summary details of all the skeletons are given in Table 5.

Age and sex

Age and sex were determined using standard anthropological techniques (Jurmain, 1998). All but one of the skeletons were of mature adults, the last being of an immature male aged between 17 and 25 (Sk 2072), judging from the state of his epiphyseal fusion. There were seven males and seven females, the final skeleton being too fragmentary to sex (Sk 2093). The ages at death are shown – by sex – below where it can be seen that there was a preponderance of deaths in the oldest age group. Although this is what one might expect, the small numbers preclude any firm conclusions from being drawn.

Age	Male	Female	Unknown
15 -	1	-	-
25 -	-	2	-
35 -	1	1	-
45+	3	3	-
Unknown	2	1	1

Table 6 Age and Sex of Skeletons

Height

The height of ten of the skeletons could be estimated using the maximum length of the femur which is

the preferred method since this gives the most consistent results and enables valid comparisons to be made between assemblages from different sites (Waldron, 1998) The results of the estimation are shown below.

Female	Male	Skeleton number
1.59		2036
	1.61	2007
1.61		2087
1.64		2019
1.65		2004
	1.73	2012
	1.73	2084
	1.75	2076
	1.75	2090
	1.81	2081

Table 7 Estimated Height (m) of Skeletons

It is interesting that there is little overlap between the male and female heights, but this is almost certainly an artefact of small numbers. For comparison, the average height of modern British females is 1.61 m and of British males, 1.74 m. On this basis, the individuals from the present site would be indistinguishable in height from their modern counterparts.

Teeth

Fourteen of the skeletons had teeth present, although because of post-mortem damages to the jaws, the number that could be accounted for in each case varied somewhat. Eight of the fourteen had dental disease of some kind, either dental caries, ante-mortem tooth loss, or dental abscesses, or any combination of the three. The findings are summarised in Table 8.

In addition to the dental disease noted above, one skeleton (Sk 2012) had an ectopic upper left canine. The tooth was approximately 45° to its normal orientation and had pushed the upper incisors forward. Both incisor sockets were empty but it appeared that the second incisor was much smaller than normal, its growth having been impeded by the pressure from the aberrant canine.

Pathology

For such a small assemblage there was a good deal of pathology present, no doubt reflecting the relatively old age at death of many of the individuals. The most common condition present was osteoarthritis, with eight individuals affected. As is usually the case, the acromio-clavicular joints were most frequently involved (in six cases). In three

Sex	Number			
	Teeth present	Missing ante-mortem	With caries	Dental abscesses
F	31+1S			
F	26	2	1	
F	22+1U	8	1	1
F	31+1S			
F	9+7S	1		
F	1			
F	17+2S	6	3	2
M	9+1S	21	1	
M	13+4S	15		
M	24+8S			
M	18+8S	6	3	
M	11+6S			
M	8+6S			
M	27+2S	3	1	

Table 8 Dental Disease (S = empty sockets, teeth lost post-mortem. U = unerupted tooth)

cases the facet joints of the spine were affected. There were two cases with OA of the distal interphalangeal joints and single cases in which the elbow and the temporo-mandibular joints were the seat of disease.

There were two individuals with fractured bones. The first (Sk 2007) had a spiral fracture of the right tibia and fibula which had healed well although somewhat out of alignment and with some shortening, suggesting that any treatment that might have been attempted had not been entirely satisfactory. The distal fragment of the tibia was angled forward by about 15° and there was approximately 25 mm of shortening. The limb would have been perfectly serviceable, however, although the individual might have walked with a slight limp. There was no arthritic change in either the ankle or the knee joints suggesting that the mechanics of neither joint had been substantially altered by the fracture.

The second case (Sk 2058) presented with a fractured left clavicle and three fractured right ribs. The clavicle was fractured in its mid-point which is the most common site and may have been sustained either by a fall or by a direct blow. Presuming that the fractures to the clavicle and the ribs occurred at the same time, then a fall is the most likely to have been the cause.

A third case of probable trauma was that in which the proximal and distal phalanges of one finger were fused together at an angle of approximately 40°. This might have been the result of an infection in the inter-phalangeal joint, but it is more likely that the

joint was traumatically dislocated and not reduced. The resultant bleed then probably ossified fusing the phalanges together. It was not possible to say which finger was involved and it is doubtful that the individual suffered much disability as a result.

There were three cases with inter-vertebral disc disease, two affecting the lower cervical spine and one affecting the disc between the fifth lumbar vertebra and the first sacral segment. Inter-vertebral disc disease is the result of degenerative changes in the disc and there is concomitant inflammatory change in the fibres that secure the fibrous part of the disc to the end plate of the vertebrae. It is usually accompanied by marginal osteophyte around the affected vertebrae and is recognised in the skeleton by pitting on the end plates of the vertebrae. In some cases the osteophyte that is formed encroaches onto the inter-vertebral foramen of the cervical vertebrae through which the nerve roots leave the spine to innervate the arm and hand and this can sometimes be observed in the skeleton. It was not noted in either of the cases in this assemblage, however, but it is probable that all three individuals were subject to some pain in either the neck or the back.

The conditions noted above are all commonly observed in skeletal populations, but one individual had a relatively uncommon condition, Paget's disease of the tibia. The distal part of the left tibia was swollen and, as the result of a post-mortem break, the architecture of the bone was seen to be abnormal. In addition the lower part of the shaft of the tibia was slightly bent. Bending or fracturing of bone in

Paget's disease is common because the abnormal bone is weaker than normal, cortical bone. There have not been many reports of Paget's disease in the palaeopathological literature (e.g. Wells and Woodhouse, 1975; Aaron *et al.*, 1992; Spalding *et al.*, 1996) and this had led to the notion that it may be a 'new' disease. My late colleague Juliet Rogers, however, carried out a detailed radiological survey of bones from the site of Barton-on-Humber and found that the prevalence of the disease was approximately equal to that found nowadays although it seemed to have been more frequent in the medieval than the post-medieval period (Rogers, *pers comm.*).

Among the other conditions noted was a single case of bilateral cribra orbitalia (2004) which is still sometimes considered to be an indication of iron deficiency anaemia, but since there is no clinical evidence to support this supposition, there seem no grounds for supporting this view any longer. There was a single case in which the laminae of the fourth and fifth thoracic vertebrae were fused. There was no pathology elsewhere in the skeleton and nothing to suggest what the cause of the fusion might have been.

Three cases were found with Schmorl's nodes in the lower thoracic spine and a fourth in which both the lower thoracic and lumbar vertebrae were involved. These present themselves as indentations in the end plates of the vertebrae and are caused by herniation of the nucleus pulposus of the inter-vertebral disc through the surrounding fibrous part of the disc. The herniated part of the disc causes a pressure defect in the bone, which may take varying shapes. Schmorl's nodes are common and easily recognised in the skeleton. They generally cause no symptoms unless they are placed very anteriorly when some degree of kyphosis may result. This was the case in which the lumbar vertebrae were affected. Both the first and the fourth lumbar vertebrae had anteriorly placed nodes which caused a very slight degree of angulation. This condition is sometimes referred to as Scheuermann's disease and can be a cause of back pain, particularly in adolescents. Whether this individual also had back pain during life is impossible to say with certainty, but given that the angulation of the spine was very slight, it is unlikely.

In a further two cases, transitional vertebrae were noted. So-called transitional vertebrae and fifth lumbar vertebrae in which the transverse process has developed to resemble the lateral mass of the sacrum (they are thus, transitional between a lumbar vertebra and a sacral segment). The prevalence of transitional vertebrae in the normal population is about 6

– 8% so that finding two of only eight extant fifth lumbar vertebrae affected seems to be very unusual (Waldron, 1993). The small sample, however, means that the 95% confidence interval is extremely wide (7–59%) and this result is most likely to be another artefact of small numbers.

Decapitations

Four of the skeletons (2012, 2033, 2036, 2090) were found with the skull detached from the body and in each of these the cervical vertebrae were examined particularly carefully to note any evidence of decapitation. In fact, strong evidence was only found in one case (2033) a male of at least 45 years of age at the time of his sudden death. In this individual a slice had been taken on the left hand side of the body the third cervical vertebra. The cut had extended upwards through the left hand facet joints of the second and third cervical vertebrae and the lower part of the spinous process of the axis.

In two other cases there was much less impressive evidence. The inferior surface of the third cervical vertebra of (2036), a woman of between 25 and 35 years of age, had a small cut on the inferior surface of the third cervical vertebra, on the right hand side. There were no other cut marks and this might easily have passed for post-mortem damage if the history of this individual had not been known. The third cervical vertebra had not survived in the case of (2090), a male of 35–45 years of age at death, perhaps because it had been badly damaged during the execution. There was a small cut on the left hand side of the superior surface of the fourth cervical vertebra, which, again, might have passed for post-mortem damage without foreknowledge of the mode of death. In the final case, (2012) a male of at least 45 years of age at death, all the cervical vertebrae were extant and there was no evidence at all of any damage that might have resulted from execution. Presumably the cut must have passed through an inter-vertebral disc without damaging the bone at all, an extremely unlikely event but the only one that accords with the evidence.

ANIMAL BONE

Ian Baxter

Introduction

A total of 10 kg of animal bone fragments were recovered, amounting to 90 'countable' fragments identifiable to species or a broader taxonomic category (Table 9). This is a multi-period site with over half of the identified fragments recovered from

Taxon	Romano-British	Medieval	Post-Medieval	Total
Cattle (<i>Bos f. domestic</i>)	26	2	13	41
Sheep/Goat (<i>Ovis/Capra f. domestic</i>)	4	8	4	16
Sheep (<i>Ovis f. domestic</i>)	(-)	(-)	(2)	(2)
Pig (<i>Sus f. domestic</i>)	1	1	-	2
Horse (<i>Equus caballus</i>)	21	1	6	28
Dog (<i>Canis familiaris</i>)	1	1	1	3
Cat (<i>Felis catus</i>)	-	-	+	+
Total	53	13	24	90

Table 9 Number of hand-collected mammal bones (NISP). "Sheep/Goat" also includes the specimens identified to species. Numbers in parentheses are not included in the total of the period. "+" means that the taxon is present but no specimens could be "counted" (see text).

deposits dating to the Romano-British period. As a consequence, the assemblage from any particular period is tiny and very little reliable information can be obtained regarding animal husbandry or kill-off patterns.

The animal bones were, in general, well preserved but affected by leaching from the alkaline soil. Canid gnawing was limited but many bones of the larger domestic species (principally cattle) had been extensively butchered, rendering taxonomic identification and/or inclusion amongst the 'countable' fragments difficult or impossible.

Methods

All of the animal bones were hand-collected. Consequently an under-representation of bones from the smaller species is to be expected. The mammal bones were recorded following a modified version of the method described in Davis (1992) and Alberella and Davis (1994). In brief, all teeth (lower and upper) and a restricted suite of parts of the postcranial skeleton was recorded and used in counts. These are: horncores with a complete transverse section, skull (zygomaticus), atlas, axis, scapula (glenoid articulation), distal humerus, distal radius, proximal ulna, carpal 2+3, distal metacarpal, pelvis (ischial part of acetabulum), distal femur, distal tibia, calcaneum (sustenaculum), astragalus (lateral side), centrotarsale, distal metatarsal, proximal parts of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd phalanges. At least 50% of a given part had to be present for it to be counted. The presence of large (cattle/horse size) and medium (sheep/pig size) vertebrae and ribs was recorded for each context, although these were not counted. "Non-countable" elements of particular interest were recorded but not included in the counts.

The separation of sheep and goat was attempted

on the following elements: dP₃, dP₄, humerus, distal metapodials (both fused and unfused), and distal tibia using the criteria described in Boessneck (1969), Kratochvil (1969), and Payne (1969 and 1985). The shape of the enamel folds (Davis 1980; Eisenmann 1980, 1981) was used for identifying equid teeth to species. All equid lower premolars and molars were measured following Payne (1991). These measurements are retained in archive. All measurable equid upper premolars and molars were measured for their crown heights in order to estimate age at death (following Levine 1982), and incisors were aged following Barone (1980). Equid postcrania were identified to species based on criteria described in Baxter (1998). Wear stages were recorded for all P₄s and dP₄s as well as for the lower molars of sheep/goat, both isolated and in mandibles. Tooth wear stages follow Grant (1982).

Measurements follow von den Driesch (1976). Humerus HTC and BT and tibia Bd measurements were taken for all species as suggested by Payne and Bull (1988) for pigs. Cattle metapodia follow Davis (1992). The state of the epiphyseal ends of bones was also recorded and is retained in the archive.

Romano-British

The Romano-British assemblage comprises 59% of "countable" animal bones. The quantities of animal bones recovered are too small to attempt to describe them in any sub-division smaller than the general 'Romano-British'. Only domestic mammals are represented.

Cattle are the main taxon represented during this period, accounting for 49% of the total. A (probable) adult shorthorned cow horncore was found in Pit 2052 (2054). No cattle bones suitable for calculating withers heights were recovered

Butchered cattle-sized long bone, vertebra and rib fragments were widespread in the Romano-British deposits suggesting that complete carcasses were being processed. They include split long bones resulting from the retrieval of bone marrow.

Horse remains are also frequent in the Romano-British deposits, coming a close second to cattle at nearly 40% of countable fragments. Ages at death range between six to over eighteen years with a mean of around nine years based on Barone (1980) and Levine (1982). No suitable equid bones were sufficiently preserved to calculate withers heights, but based on other sites of similar period and the size of the teeth, the majority will have been pony sized animals. The upper canine of a stallion was found in Ditch 2025 (2026). Most of the equid remains are mandibles and teeth.

Uncounted equid postcranial fragments were also frequent in the Romano-British deposits.

One notable pathology was seen amongst the equid remains: a P₄ with a series of five small pits running the height of the posterior lingual surface of the tooth and culminating in a larger irregular pit with adjacent swelling just above the root. The tooth also has a swelling just above the root on the buccal side. The indications suggest a long-standing abscess and subsequent infection, which may have eventually resulted in the death of the animal.

Sheep/goat and pig are relatively infrequent in the Romano-British deposits, accounting for only 9% of domestic species, which suggests that the site is peripheral to the main occupation site (Wilson, 1996).

A small dog mandible was found in Ditch 2025 (2026). From its size this could easily belong to a fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). However, based on the morphology of the P₃ and the length of the M₁ alveolus, the mandible most probably belongs to a small domestic dog.

Medieval

The medieval assemblage is small. Little can be said, except that sheep/goat comprise the most abundant taxon. The wool of sheep is known from contemporary documentary sources to be particularly important during this period. Cattle, horse and pig remains are infrequent and domestic dog is restricted to a single phalanx.

Perinatal and very young calf bones were found in Pit 2028 (2029), suggesting that cattle were being bred and raised in the immediate vicinity. An (uncounted) proximal metacarpus III with fused Mc.V and proximal exostoses stage 2-3 probably came from a draught animal as this condition has only been documented in recent oxen (Bartosiewicz

et al, 1997, 44).

A noteworthy postcrania include three left astragali (which must derive from three separate horses) were found in Pit 2028 (2029).

Post-Medieval

Most of the post-medieval material derives from Layer 2060. While this layer has been dated to the post-medieval period, it contained residual finds. Any conclusions to be drawn from the animal bone assemblage are therefore problematic.

Cattle are the most frequent taxon by number of identifiable fragments (NISP), amounting to 54% of domestic species (Table 9). Two bones were recovered suitable for providing withers height estimates, which range between 117-121 cm based on the multiplication factors of Matolcsi (1970). These withers heights are not remarkable for the period and could equally well belong to Romano-British or medieval cattle. A cattle metacarpus from (2060) has the distal epiphysis broadened stage 3 with stage 3 palmar depressions (Bartosiewicz *et al*, 1997), most probably deriving from a draught animal. The uncounted fragments from this context include butchered cattle sized long bone and rib fragments.

The remains of horses and ponies are also very frequent in the deposits of this period, accounting for 25% of fragments. Teeth derive from animals aged between twelve to thirteen years and include bones from animals 142 cm (*c.* 14 hands) and 158 cm (*c.* 16 hands) high at the withers, based on the multiplication factors of Kiesewalter (1888).

Sheep bones include a metacarpal and a calcaneum from (2060) belonging to animals 55cm and 62cm high at the withers based on the multiplication factors of Teichert (1975).

An (uncounted) domestic cat (*Felis catus*) proximal femur was found in (2060).

Discussion

It seems probable, on the basis of the animal bones recovered, that this site was peripheral to the main areas of occupation during both the Romano-British and post-medieval periods. Otherwise a higher frequency of sheep/goat and pig remains might be expected (Wilson, 1996). Horse remains are prominent in both periods, perhaps suggesting proximity to lines of communication (*i.e.* roads) existing between this and other centres of occupation.

DISCUSSION

Five pits pre-dating the cemetery were encountered (Phase 1). The earliest of these, 2044 could have

been backfilled as early as the middle of the 1st century and was subsequently much truncated. The other pits indicate a quite narrow period of activity concentrated in the early to mid 2nd century. The function of these features is unclear. The animal bone assemblages, for example, do not suggest that any notable patterns of disposal had taken place. Whatever the activity, the evidence revealed here suggests it is peripheral to the main settlement.

CEMETERY LAYOUT, DEVELOPMENT AND CHRONOLOGY

It is well known that Roman law prohibited burial inside towns: "*Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito*" – "you shall not bury or burn a dead man within a city". This was a regulation of the Twelve Tables, compiled in 451-450 BC and regarded as the foundation of Roman law. It was re-enacted by Antonius Pius (138-161). Little is known of the layout of the urban area of *Durocbrivae* and the limited evidence available suggests that the inhumations from Friary Field are part of an extra-mural cemetery to the S or SW of the core of the Roman town. Such cemeteries are common throughout Roman Britain. The Roman cemetery at Friary Field covers an area of c.0.3 ha enclosed by four ditches. Whether the cemetery in its entirety was fully planned from the outset, or made use of an existing enclosed area, is unknown but there is some evidence of managed layout of the graves themselves. Both those on the present site and some of the previously excavated examples show evidence of being laid out in rows (Fig 2). Such rows are common in other late Roman inhumation cemeteries such as Lankhills in Winchester (Clarke 1979) and Poundbury in Dorset (Farwell and Molleson 1993). A small group of burials inside the enclosure to the NE of the present site were laid out in a more haphazard fashion. Matthews (1981) notes that there were differences between these two groups in terms of the number with grave goods and the number of 'decapitations' (both were more prevalent in the larger group).

Though no examples of articulated burials within the boundary ditch were recorded during the current investigations, the Friary Field cemetery is unusual in its use of the boundary ditches for burial. This is not frequently seen in other Roman cemeteries. At *Londinium*, for example, the many boundaries excavated in the eastern cemetery were seldom disturbed by graves (Barber and Bowsher 2000). The ditch had clearly become filled by the time of the cemetery activity and some graves were cut only into the ditch

fill, rather than through the chalk of the ditch base. No particular trend is noticeable in relation to ditch burial and other unusual treatment. For example, a total of 16 burials with displaced heads have now been recorded in the cemetery – ten occurring in the enclosed area and six in the ditches. Perhaps an explanation for this use of the ditches is one of practicality, the prevailing chalk would represent much more difficult digging than the ditch fill. Whether the practice reflects chronological, social or religious differences cannot be judged on the available evidence.

The dating and chronology of individual graves is often difficult to establish in late Roman cemeteries due to the frequent stratigraphical isolation of the graves and lack of grave goods. Matthews (1981) puts forward a broad date range of the 3rd to 5th centuries for the previously excavated graves. However, of the 15 graves excavated on the present site three can be securely dated. Both the glass bowl found in Grave 2085 and the comb found in Grave 2006 date from the second half of the 4th century, with possible continuation into the beginning of the 5th century. Similarly, the beaker found in Grave 2057 is dated to the late 3rd/4th century (AD 270-400), and the miniature funerary vessel from the upper fill of the boundary ditch 2025 is late 3rd to 4th century.

The organisation of the graves into rows is suggestive of some degree of control. The unusual treatment of burials within the ditches and wells may also indicate conscious decisions to exclude individuals from the planned area of the cemetery or to expedite their rapid disposal under pressure from external circumstances such as an epidemic of disease. The available evidence sheds little light on the circumstances of these unusual burials. The cemetery organisation may have been along municipal lines, following the continental model, and would have been very complex, involving the municipal senate, families, patronage and burial clubs (Barber and Bowsher 2000, 330). The possible implications of such Romano-British municipal management should be borne in mind: 'initial choice of sites, allocation of plots and a degree of small-minded fussiness about order, arrangement and alignment', as Thomas (1981, 232) suggests.

BURIAL PRACTICES

The orientation of the 15 graves was variable with the majority (66.66%) with their head to the NE, 26.66% to the SW and one (6.66%) to the NW (Table 2). True W-E alignment is often very common in late Roman cemeteries in Britain, and this has often been

associated with Christianity (though there is much debate over this association – see below). It is also well documented that there is a tendency for W-E burial to become more prevalent over time, with many cemeteries exhibiting burials almost exclusively of this alignment by the end of the 4th century (Philpott 1991, 222-228). However, when the previously excavated graves from within the cemetery enclosure are also considered we see a total of 54 with heads to the NE, 11 to the SW and 2 to the NW. This is clearly at variance with any prevailing view of a province-wide burial rite incorporating W-E burial by the end of the 4th century. The alignment of the ditch burials is not included due to their alignment being limited by the confines of the ditch. Other sites have produced similar evidence that is at variance with the prevailing picture of ‘dominant’ W-E burial. For example, at Haymarket Towers, Leicester, a wide variety of grave orientations and head positions were noted in a small sample of 4th century graves (Cooper 1998). Mixed alignments were also observed at the eastern cemetery of Roman London (as were graves that respected topographical or other obstructions), and in this case only a slight correlation of orientation with chronology could be observed (Barber and Bowsher 2000). It is clear that at Friary Field grave alignment and head position appear to have been chosen for some graves within the ditched enclosure. However, it is also apparent that other unknown factors were involved in a large number of burials that took place in the abandoned wells and ditches in the remainder of the cemetery. For example, the supine burial position, which dominated within the enclosure, was often not observed in the case of the ditch burials (Matthews 1981).

Burial goods were found in three of the 15 (20%) graves. This gives a total of 16 out of 120 (13%) graves in the whole cemetery. No significant correlation between stature and the presence of burial goods was noted, which has been used to contribute to the consideration of burial goods and status by some authors (e.g. Barber and Bowsher 2000, 325). Two of the three accompanied skeletons were male. This is at odds with the overall evidence from the cemetery, which shows that only three (19%) of the 16 examples were male, four (25%) were immature, and nine (56%) were female. When the sex of the previously excavated skeletons (Matthews 1981, 37) is added to the data (Human Bone Report above) it can be seen that 42% of the total burials were male, 36% were female and 22% were indeterminate/juvenile. This observation could indicate that deposition of burial goods at Friary Field was biased toward

female graves but the low sample size means that the evidence is too weak to assert this with certainty. In addition, the challenges presented by correlating the sex of an individual as assessed by burial goods and skeletal characteristics are well known (Henderson 1989, 77-83). It must therefore be remembered that the reasons for the inclusion of what might be regarded as characteristically ‘male’ or ‘female’ burial goods may not relate to the actual biological sex of the individual. The presence of the comb with the male burial in Grave 2006 at this site illustrates these difficulties. In addition to their being considered in terms of status indicators (below) burial goods have also been interpreted by some as offering comfort to the spirit of the dead in the afterlife (e.g. Black 1986, 220) or special treatment for those who died young (Crummy *et al* 1993, 130).

Burial goods have often been considered as indicators of status, along with osteological evidence (e.g. for poor nutrition), containers for the dead (coffins and cremation urns), and burial in relation to structures such as mausolea. Deducing status from the treatment of the dead in this way has often not proved straightforward. One example is that of Lankhills in which Clarke (1979, 191) reminds us: ‘even if social status can be defined in archaeological terms, its social meaning is far from clear.’ It must also be remembered that status could be more visibly demonstrated in funerary rites (e.g. processions or feasting) rather than burial rites, and evidence for these is absent from the Friary Field site. The Friary Field cemetery is unusual in its treatment of individuals buried in the ditches and wells. It could be conjectured that the casual manner of these burials indicates less respectful treatment of the dead in these cases and that this, in turn, could indicate that they were perhaps lower status. It has been suggested that the wealthy might have been buried nearer to major roads (e.g. Barber and Bowsher 2000, 328). The current site is close to the major thoroughfares on which the town was founded yet there is little firm evidence to suggest that either poor or rich are interred in (or excluded from) the cemetery. Ultimately, inferring much about social organisation from cemetery evidence is fraught with difficulties as many aspects of a burial rite observed during excavation could be seen as ‘anonymous’ in terms of the living person or their relatives. As Hodder concisely puts it: ‘In death people often become what they have not been in life’ (1980, 168).

A notable feature of the Friary Field burials is the occurrence of burials with displaced heads. There is evidence (particularly strong in one case) for delib-

erate removal of the head by decapitation in three examples (Human Bone Report above). A further 12 examples were recovered in the previous excavations, and seven of these are described as showing clear evidence (in the form of cut marks) for decapitation (Matthews 1981, 38). All these burials, with one exception, have the head placed on or near the legs. The only exception had the head buried in the top of the grave fill (Matthews 1981, 28). Ten occur in the northern cemetery area and six in ditch burials. There is no notable correlation with grave alignment. They do not occur in the southern group of burials within the ditched enclosure and, though the sample is small, it might be suggested that these were treated differently (they also have a lower incidence of burial goods). The practice of skull displacement has been often been connected with Celtic religious practices, manifest as unusual reverence/treatment of the human head (e.g. Cotton 1996, Marsh and West 1981). This has sometimes been used to suggest the continuity of indigenous British elements in the population where it occurs in Roman cemeteries (Barber and Bowsher 2000, 317). However, the type of skull displacement more likely to be associated with Celtic practices (as observed at the La Tène I cemetery at Monte Troté in the Ardennes) involves removal after decomposition, often with the mandible left *in situ* (Marsh and West 1981). There is no clear evidence for this at Friary Field and, in fact, true decapitation at or shortly after death seems likely in many cases. The late date of the burials also makes a native or Romano-Celtic explanation unlikely. Also, it cannot be assumed that execution took place in any or all of these cases – we cannot know if the decapitation was the cause of death or if it took place shortly after death. It is certainly a possible explanation for some, but it is difficult to consider the ‘beheaded’ infant burial recorded in previous excavations (Matthews 1981, 32) in the context of a criminal punishment.

Watts (1991) has made a valuable assessment of the difficulties posed by the attribution of religion to excavated Romano-British evidence. In this study 29 cemeteries were analysed and the various strands of evidence ‘traditionally’ associated with Christianity were evaluated. These included ‘external evidence’ which relates to the locality in which the cemetery is found and ‘internal evidence’ which relates to the circumstances of the burials themselves. The internal characteristics include: west-east orientation, undisturbed burials, supine extended position, the absence of decapitated burials, the presence of ‘plaster’ burials, young infants being accorded equal respect, con-

temporaneous pagan burials, the presence of focal graves and mausolea and an absence of grave goods (Watts 1991, 80-81). These characteristics are then given relative values and a ‘score’ produced for a particular cemetery. The previous excavations at Dunstable were included in this analysis and a score of 13 was produced (Watts 1991, 85). This remains unchanged following the recent excavations. This score is one of the five lowest for any of the Romano-British cemeteries studied by Watts and is considered to be very poor evidence for the presence of a Christian influence on the burial practices observed. However in the absence of any clear *in situ* evidence the arguments put forward in Watts’ study, using a largely subjective list of characteristics, are difficult to sustain. For example, W-E burial is one of the most commonly assumed characteristics of Christian burial in field archaeology, yet when examined in isolation it is less convincing. Its specific link with Christian practice is unclear as it has yet to be demonstrated when (or why) it was adopted as part of the Christian tradition – it is certainly not based on the prescriptions of any canon law. Indeed, Philpott’s (1991) review of Romano-British burial practices argues that there is little that is distinctive about the burial of Christians in the province of *Brittania*. There is, as yet, a dearth of clear evidence for Christianity in Roman Dunstable. This situation is paralleled in other towns such as *Londinium* where the mixed burial practices observed in the eastern cemetery have been interpreted as having more of a social, rather than religious or chronological, explanation (Barber and Bowsher 2000, 333).

It has been suggested that a consistent burial tradition involving W-E oriented supine burial can be seen developing throughout the Roman Empire around the middle of the 2nd century AD (Hope 1999, 55-57). The recent evidence is at odds with this hypothesis. Although inhumation is dominant, its practice is far from consistent. However, the site is not unique, as the consistency of this proposed change in burial practice is not clear-cut. For example, at Butt Road, Colchester, inhumation does not dominate until *c.* 320-340 (Crummy and Crossan 1993). At Trentholme Drive, York, inhumation co-exists with cremation up to the end of the 3rd century (Wenham 1968). And at *Londinium* cremation and inhumation co-exist into the 4th century (Barber and Bowsher 2000). In the face of such variation it is perhaps unwise to view the Friary Field cemetery in terms of chronological development or simple divisions between Christian and pagan or rich and poor. Such an approach ignores a multitude of factors (e.g.

regional, civic or even professional identity) that may be, at least for the present, invisible in the archaeological record.

MEDIEVAL AND LATER FEATURES

Eight medieval cross-shaped pits were either wholly or partially revealed and the excavated examples were identical to those described by Green and Horne (1991, 2-4). Similarly, a continuation of the previously identified 'buttress trench' was recorded (2061). The most likely interpretation of these features put forward so far is one in which they form parts of a planned formal garden (Green and Horne 1991, 4). The current excavations have revealed no evidence to either prove or disprove this hypothesis. The dating evidence comprised a mixed ceramic assemblage primarily residual Roman, and 11th to 12th century medieval material. Given the Priory's foundation date (1259) the early medieval material is unlikely to be in its primary context of deposition. Analysis of previously excavated examples suggested that the abraded early material was likely to have been derived from soil stripped from surrounding fields and used to fill the cross-shaped pits and buttress trench (Green and Horne 1991, 30). The two parallel ditches revealed in the NE corner of current excavation yielded similar assemblages but one feature contained a component of 15th to 16th century date (Post Roman Pottery Report above). Ultimately the function and date of the medieval features remains unclear but perhaps the most likely interpretation follows Green and Horne's (1991, 30) theory that they represent garden features and were most likely constructed in the second half of the Priory's life during the 15th/early 16th centuries.

Scant evidence of post-medieval activity was recorded. Two pits were cut a cross-shaped pit and Roman features, though they produced little evidence of their date and function. A further two small 18th/19th century pits cut the cemetery ditch. A layer sealing the earlier archaeological deposits is indicative of agricultural activity in the late post-medieval period.

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