

The excavation of a 1st–2nd century cemetery at New Venue, Court Drive, Dunstable

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with contributions by
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SUMMARY

Excavations at the site of the New Venue development in Dunstable revealed a Roman cemetery that comprised 20 cremations and seven inhumation burials. The cemetery was in use during the first two centuries AD, after which the area appears to have been abandoned.

INTRODUCTION

The site investigation at New Venue Dunstable was conducted by AOC Archaeology Group in advance of the redevelopment of the site by CDP Dunstable Limited. The investigation area is located approximately 1km to the northwest of Dunstable town centre at National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 0185 2246 (Fig. 1), within the grounds of Dunstable Park Recreation Centre.

An evaluation, comprising five machine-excavated trenches, was carried out in November 2003. This was followed by strip and map recording which started in September 2006. The Roman cemetery was uncovered during the excavation for the new children's playground.

The archaeological fieldwork was completed in December 2004. All of the work was recorded using the site code NVD 04. The archive for this deposit will be deposited and available for consultation upon request at Luton Museums Service.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Dunstable falls into the modern day area known as the Chilterns, the hills of which are formed by an outcrop of Chalk and are, in places, overlain by clay with flints, up to a depth of four metres on the north-western side of the London basin. The Chalk strata have been tilted to create a dip slope that rises so gently towards the north-west that it generally has the character of a plateau. The plateau is cut by a series of through-valleys that divide it into roughly rectangular blocks with

many branching dry valleys further dividing these blocks and thereby creating a varied mix of landscapes, (Countryside Agency 2006).

The site is located on a plateau of chalk, which has a gentle rise to the south-west.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

The focus of prehistoric activity in the Dunstable area appears to have been at some distance from the site itself; on the downs and prominences around the town. Numerous flint implements from the Neolithic period were recovered during the 19th century from Dunstable Downs, to the south-west (VCH I; 161–7), and within Maiden Bower, an Iron Age hill fort, about 2km to the northwest (VCH I; 270). Also on Dunstable Downs was the Five Knolls barrow cemetery and a long barrow, now destroyed. Several cremation burials and a contracted inhumation have also been noted in this area (VCH I; 168–9).

The origin of the Romano–British settlement of *Durocobrivis*, now known as modern Dunstable, was probably in the 1st century. Watling Street, now followed by the A5, was the main Roman road from London to Chester and was probably built soon after the conquest. The junction with the existing Icknield Way would have been of some local significance, and at twelve miles from Verulamium (St. Albans) it was a convenient stopping point at which to site a staging post. Its appearance in no less than three Roman itineraries of the imperial post implies that there was a posting station

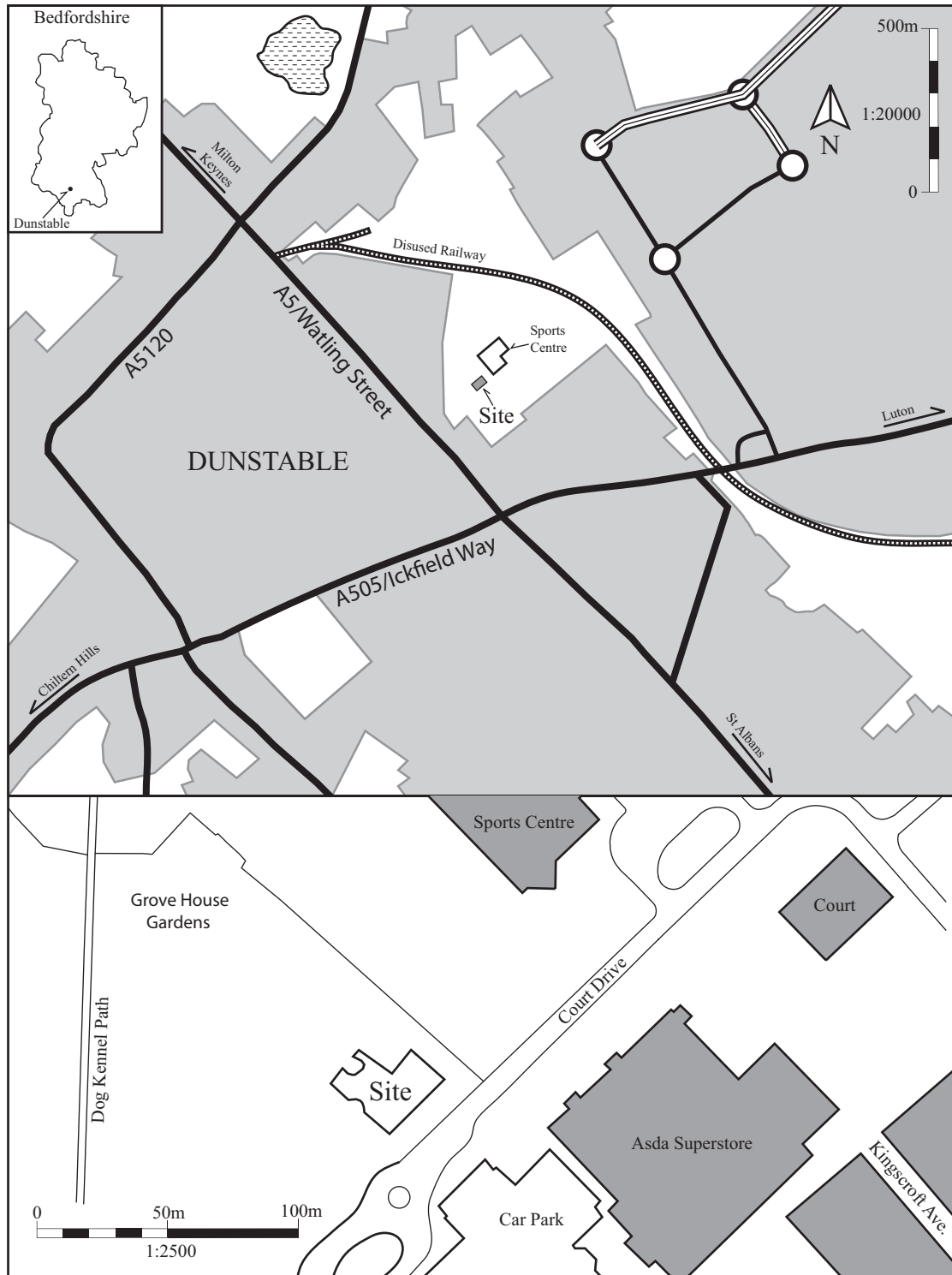


Figure 1: Site location

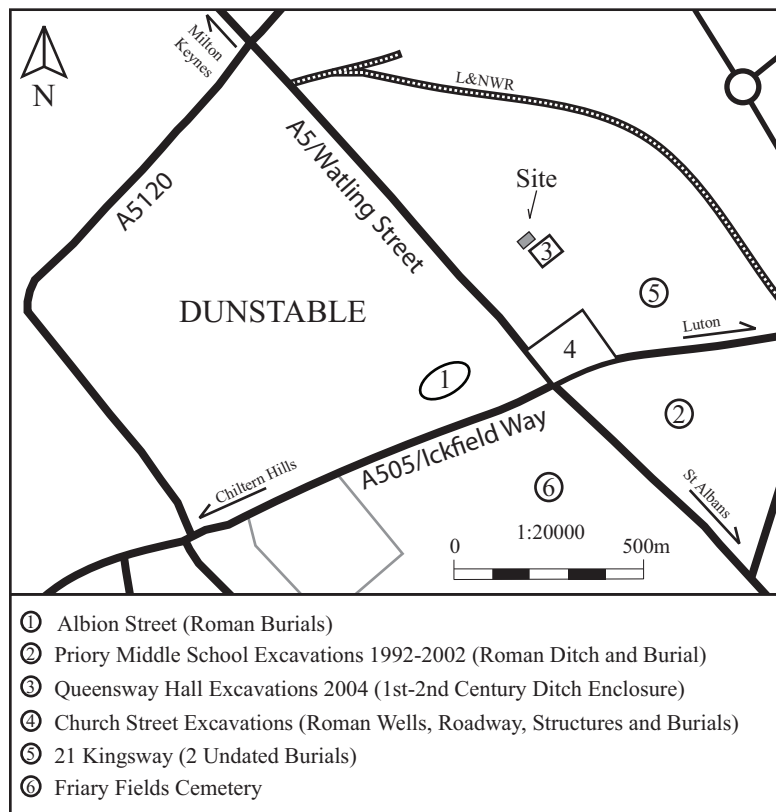


Figure 2: Gazetteer of Roman archaeology in Dunstable

there, (Branigan & Niblett, 2003). The station might have led to the development of a small settlement serving the station, messengers and passing travellers and may also have provided a focus for a relatively dispersed agricultural based 'Belgic' or late Iron Age society.

There is limited evidence for Roman Dunstable with only a handful of sites yielding significant Roman archaeology. Local to the site was the excavation at Queensway Hall (excavated in 2000 by Northampton Archaeology), where evidence of a Roman ditch enclosure with associated ditches and pits was recorded, see Fig. 3 (Mudd 2004). These excavations provided evidence dating to the 1st century AD with activity ceasing on site in the late 1st -early 2nd century. The evidence suggests that the enclosure may have been used for agricultural purposes rather than occupation, as finds such as domestic pottery and structural debris were limited.

Other early Roman archaeology in Dunstable was recorded at a site excavated in 1964 just off Church Street, approximately 300m to the

south-west of the New Venue site. Several possible dwellings, pits, wells and a possible track way were recorded with several yielding possible early dates. The dwellings are described as primitive mainly composed of postholes, sunken floors and chalk walls. The wells and pits contained various forms of domestic rubbish including pottery, oyster shell, building tile and animal bone. Excavation of the metalled tracked way uncovered sherds of pottery as well as numerous Roman coins dating from the 2nd century to the 4th century AD. Also on site were a cremation burial and two inhumations, suggesting a cemetery, (Manshead Magazine 14). Lack of dating evidence prevents establishing a chronology with the cemetery excavated on this site.

Another example of pre-Roman and early-Roman settlement was excavated in the northern outskirts of Dunstable at Puddlehill, now known as Castle Hill. The evidence for structural remains on this site was in the form of trodden floors which would have been the internal surfaces of timber structures. The structures have been dated to the

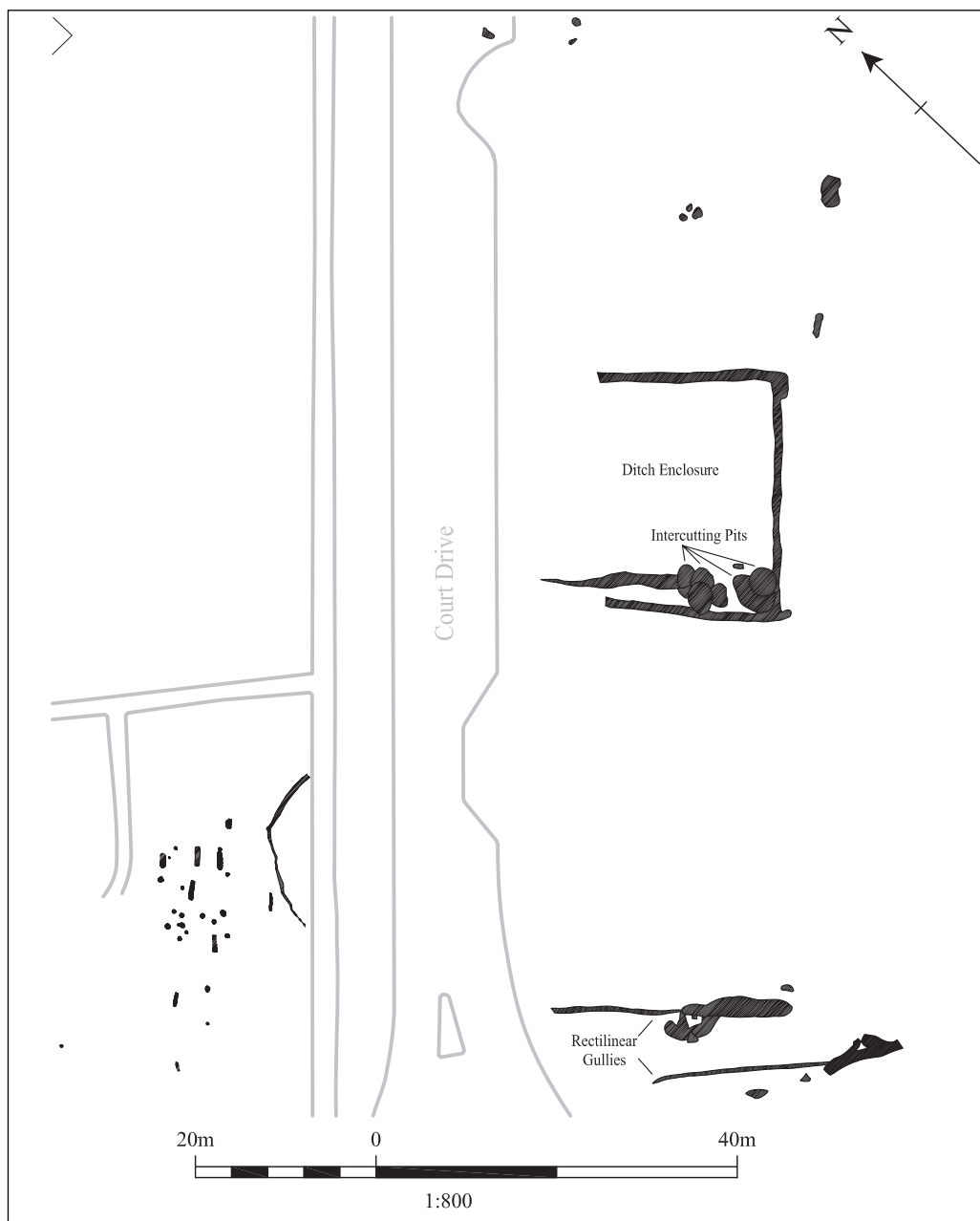


Figure 3: The archaeology recorded at the New Venue Cemetery and Queensway Hall site

1st–2nd century with no activity after the 2nd century. Also recorded on site were nine cremations burials interned in urns made in the pre-Roman ‘Belgic’ style (Matthews 1989). The abandonment or shift in settlement pattern of this site echoes that of both the Queensway Hall site and the New

Venue cemetery. This suggests there was a universal change or shift in the settlement patterns of the inhabitants during the 2nd century.

The Friar Fields cemetery was located in the south-western quadrant of Dunstable approximately 650m to the south-west of the New Venue

site. The site at Friar Fields contained some 1st–2nd century pits and wells, but appears to have been mainly used during the 3rd–5th centuries for inhumation burials. The establishment of this cemetery on the diagonally opposite side of the current town suggests that there was a significant shift in the pattern of occupation during the 2nd–3rd century AD.

THE RESULTS

During the strip and record exercise in the area demarcated for the new playground, part of a Roman cemetery was excavated revealing 20 cremation burials and seven inhumation burials (Fig. 4). The cemetery dates to the 1st–2nd century AD. After the 2nd century the cemetery falls out of use with no later cremations or inhumations being interned.

PRE-ROMAN EVIDENCE

There was no evidence of any significant pre-Roman activity on site that might have suggested that the location of the cemetery had been determined by pre-existing land use or settlement. Towards the east of the site, a small, narrow, circular ditch [1058] was recorded, (Fig. 4). No datable finds were recovered from the ditch and as the feature has no stratigraphic relationship with the cemetery, is it impossible to determine whether it was related to it.

FUNERARY PROCESS

Bustum

Feature [1062] was interpreted as a bustum. A bustum is the site of a cremation and burial, where the pyre is constructed over a grave shaped pit. The

pyre debris and the cremated remains are then deposited into the pit below, (Barber & Bowsher, 2000). The rectangular feature [1062] measured 1.90m long x 0.30m wide x 0.10m deep, and was filled by a black brown grey clay silt that contained a large quantity of charcoal fragments and cremated bone (Fig. 4). Charcoal remains recovered from the fill (and from six other cremations) has been identified as being derived from oak (*Quercus* sp). Oak has excellent burning properties and has long been valued as fuel. Oak is unlikely to have grown on the thin calcareous soils that characterise much of the area and it is not present locally today. This suggests that oak was preferentially selected over other, equally good, fuel woods which were probably available locally.

The fill of the bustum contained 422g of cremated bone which varied in colour from buff to dark grey/black. Only 12g of bone was identifiable.

BURIAL PRACTICE

Inhumation Burials

All of the burials were laid on an east-west alignment with the position of the head at the eastern end but a number of different corpse positions were recorded (see Table 1). Due to the lack of associated features on site, it remains unclear whether the burials were related to any contemporary Roman features nearby, however both the inhumations and the ditch enclosure excavated on the Queensway Hall site are aligned at a 90° angle to Watling Street and parallel to the Icknield Way (pre Roman).

In grave cut [1082] the corpse was laid in a prone (face down) position. The remains were extended, with the arms resting either side of the body and the legs out stretched indicating that there was no post burial body disturbance or bone tumble. This was the only prone burial on site and

Grave Cut	Skeleton	Orientation	Body Position	Length/breadth (m)	Depth (m)	% of remains	Finds
1066	1065	E–W	Crouched	0.77 x 0.36	0.15	35	None
1070	1069	E–W	Supine	2.14 x 0.55	0.54	95	Votive vessel
1073	1072	E–W	Supine	1.98 x 0.56	0.52	95	None
1082	1081	E–W	Prone	2.15 x 0.50	0.42	95	None
1090	1089	E–W	Supine	1.55 x 0.53	0.30	80	None
1093	1092	E–W	Crouched	1.65 x 0.66	0.37	90	None
1096	1095	E–W	Supine	1.90 x 0.45	0.43	85	None

Table 1: Inhumation burials

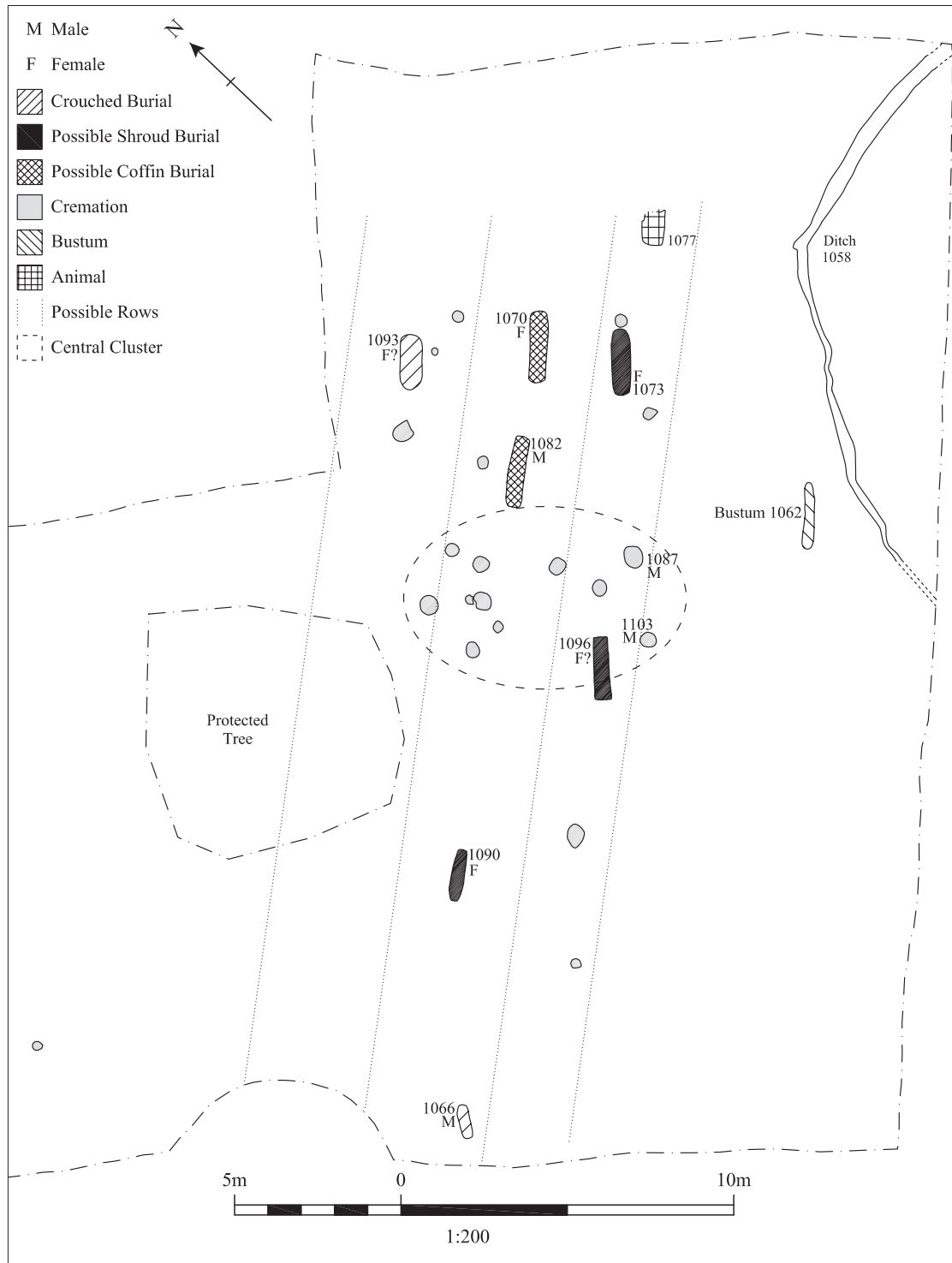


Figure 4: The Roman cemetery: burial practice

may represent a variation on the burial rite or simply an 'undertaker's error' (Barber & Bowsher, 2000). In grave cuts [1066] and [1093] the corpse was laid in a crouched position with the legs pulled up underneath the body. The arms of the corpse within grave [1066] were laid across the chest whilst the corpse in grave [1093] had both of its arms tucked under its face and head. The corpse in burial [1093] was laid on its right hand side, facing north-west, whilst the corpse in burial [1066] was recorded lying on its left side. The remaining corpses were supine burials, with all but one corpse, lying in an extended position. The exception was the corpse within burial [1090] which had slightly drawn up legs, though not in a fully crouched position. The arm positions in these four graves varied from extended to crossed arms over the chest or waist.

Only one grave [1070] contained grave goods, a single vessel deposited at the eastern end of the grave directly on top of the corpse's left upper arm. The complete votive vessel was recorded as a jar in fabric F09, a grog and sand-tempered ware. The fabric and vessel type (wheel thrown) indicating a 'Belgic' tradition, dating to conquest period-1st century AD.

Cremation Burials

A total of 20 cremation burials were recorded on site, 16 were urned, three were unurned and one was within a casket burial, interned within an urned burial. Each of the burials contained the remains of one individual with the exception of cremation [1042] which contained the remains of two. The cremation burials were deposited within circular or oval cuts, with the exception of three cremations which were sub-rectangular. The size of the burial cuts varied from 0.65m by 0.50m wide, to 0.24m by 0.20m. The depth of the cremations at between 0.05m to 0.35m is dictated by the level of truncation across the site. Three small sub-circular post holes were located near three burials possibly suggesting the use of grave markers.

The majority of cremation urns were made in local fabric R14 including examples of jars such as a cordoned jar and a lid seated jar. The second type of burial container excavated on site was a possible casket. During the excavation of cremation burial [1029] a large amount of metal was recovered. The contents of the cremation urn revealed six iron split-spike loops with copper alloy wires and a cast angular ring, and up to four nails, see Table 9. These fragments are thought to

have been fasteners for a type of box suggesting that this cremation is part of a tradition known as casket burials.

Several cremation burials contained grave goods such as multiple votive vessels, hobnail boots and jewellery. Votive vessels accompanied the main cremation urns in nine vessels. The vessels were both locally produced wares in the 'Belgic' style, and imported foreign wares, including four examples of central Gaulish ware (Les Martres-de-Veyre) and southern Gaulish samian ware (La Graufesenque). All of the samian ware on site was stamped with a potters mark such as MAGN (Magnus), OFLICIN (Licinus) and VITALISMSF (Vitalis). One example of a samian dish from cremation [1033] had been broken in antiquity and repaired using lead rivets. One cremation [1105] contained evidence of hobnail boots. The condition of the hobnails recovered from the cremation urn suggests that they were either worn or placed on the pyre. Items of personal adornment included a glass bead (heat affected) and three iron brooches in the form of Headstud, Colchester and Camulodunum Type III (Gaulish). All of the brooches were broken which might suggest ritual 'killing' of the grave goods.

SPECIALIST REPORTS

THE POTTERY
A.M.Slowikowski

Introduction

Forty eight individual vessels were recovered, each being recorded separately, by context, fabric and form, and quantified by sherd and weight. Fabric codes are those in use by the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series. Few vessels were intact although most had substantial parts surviving. Rims were largely absent or very fragmentary so estimated vessel equivalents were not recorded. At least seven vessels had sherds spread through different contexts, although in most cases these were separate layers within the same burial fill. Other recorded attributes are glaze and decoration, evidence of use such as sooting, wear marks, residues and post-firing modification, and evidence of manufacture.

Pottery fabric descriptions

F06B Grog-tempered ware (1 vess; 87 sh; 1.732kg)

Fairly soft and soapy to the touch. Surfaces are orange-brown

to grey-black with a grey core. Grog is the predominant temper, dark grey or buff, 0.5–1.5mm. Also contains sparse fine quartz and red or black iron ore. Date and parallels: Fully discussed by Thompson (1982).

A single cordoned jar was found in this fabric.

F07 Shelly ware (1 vess; 58 sh; 0.711kg)

Fairly hard fired, bright orange brown with a grey core; dense shell inclusions, seen as elongated white inclusions, give a speckled white appearance to the surfaces.

A single lid-seated jar was found in this fabric.

F09 Grog and sand tempered ware (9 vess; 257sh; 4.978kg)

Harsh to moderately soapy in texture, depending on the proportions of sand and grog. Generally reduced to shades of brown or grey. Moderate to abundant angular black and/or buff grog, and varying amounts of sub-angular quartz, 0.1–0.5mm, but can be up to 1.0mm. Some examples may also contain sparse but quite large chalky lumps, up to 3.0mm, and frequent black inclusions, imperfectly fired out organic matter. This fabric type is possibly a variant of the grog and sand tempered wares of which R14 is also a part (see R14 below).

The same basic range of forms occurs in both fabric types: jars, usually cordoned, and pedestal urns. Both hand made and wheel thrown examples occur.

R01 Samian (see samian report by F.Wild) (4 vess; 38 sh; 0.709kg)

R03A Verulamium region ware (3 vess; 38 sh; 0.392kg)

Hard, fairly rough gritty fabric, off-white or pinkish in colour, with abundant sub-rounded quartz and sparse red iron ore. Fully described by Tomber and Dore (1998, 154–55).

The lower part of a jar was recovered as well as body sherds from a small thin walled jar or beaker.

R03C Fine white ware (1 vess; 97 sh; 0.138kg)

Smooth surfaces, off-white to buff in colour with a fine dense fabric giving a soapy feel. Few inclusions visible but these are poorly sorted sub-rounded quartz, 0.2–0.5mm, and sparse red iron ore, 0.1–0.3mm. Surfaces are slightly micaceous.

A single beaker or small jar was found.

R05A Orange sandy ware (6 vess; 233 sh; 1.596kg)

Dense fabric with few inclusions visible to the naked eye. Smooth surfaces, finely micaceous, orange in colour, although interiors may be brown or grey, with a grey core. Sparse sub-angular quartz approx. 0.3mm, sparse rounded red inclusions, possibly iron ore, approx. 0.3mm and moderate rounded white chalky inclusions, 0.1mm or less, although some examples are fewer but larger, up to 2.0mm. Very occasionally rounded grog or perhaps natural clay pellets, may be present. The presence of a bloated waster in this fabric indicates that this type was being manufactured in the immediate locality. The presence of chalk in the fabric supports this. The butt beaker (illust 19) is a variant of this type without chalky inclusions and with the addition of organic matter, which has imperfectly fired out and appears as small black patches.

A variety of forms was found, among them beakers, including a butt beaker, a jar and a flagon.

R05B Fine orange sandy ware (1 vess; 39 sh; 0.198kg)

Particularly fine orange sandy ware, very smooth and orange throughout. Fine micaceous fabric with all inclusions 0.1mm or less. Subrounded quartz and moderate red iron ore may be

seen, in addition to frequent tiny white inclusions, probably chalk, which appear as a speckled background.

A single beaker was found with a thin dark red slip, largely worn away, on both the interior and the exterior.

R14 Harsh sandy ware (16 vess; 552 sh; 5.104kg)

This category covers a variety of fabrics across the county, all of a similar date and with similar characteristics, but here it is possibly a local type. Fairly soft fired (can be scratched with a finger nail) usually patchily oxidised/reduced surfaces in varying shades of orange to brown, and a reduced dark grey core. Characterised by the very harsh feel. Inclusions are abundant rounded to sub-rounded quartz, 0.3–0.7mm, and sparse black patches where organic matter has imperfectly fired out. Occasional inclusions of black and/or buff grog, but not in all sherds (see F09 above). Varying amounts of small chalky inclusions may also occur, suggesting a local fabric. F09 and R14 are probably extremes in a range of grog and sand tempered wares, with varying proportions of grog and sand occurring.

A similar range of forms to fabric F09 is found, including jars, cordoned jars and pedestal urns, but also lid-seated jars and bowls.

R26 Terra Nigra (2 vess; 64 sh; 0.298kg)

Two platters were found, both with some variation to their fabric, but with the same visual characteristics, copying terra nigra. They are described separately below.

Illust 22 Micaceous surfaces smoothed and burnished exterior. Patchy black/brown surfaces, smooth and fine and fairly soft. Dense abundant small white rounded chalky inclusions, 0.1–0.5mm, sometimes occurring as lenses within the fabric, possibly indicating poorly mixed clay. Black patches indicate imperfectly fired out organic matter. Because of the presence of chalky inclusions, this may be a local product.

Illust 23 Smooth, soapy fine surfaces with burnished exterior. Black with slightly reddish margins. Poorly sorted angular quartz, 0.2–1.5mm. Some small black patches where organic matter has imperfectly fired out. Sparse sub-angular brown inclusions, soft and possibly grog, 0.3–0.5mm.

R30 Fine micaceous (1 vess; 5 sh; 0.013kg)

Fine, smooth micaceous fabric, light grey throughout. Few inclusions are visible although possible iron ore appearing as small black speckles, is present. A single vessel was found, whose fabric is so close to the St Remy glazed ware flagon (see below) that it could be of the same type. The vessel however, is so abraded and fragmentary that any signs of glaze have totally disappeared. It may be a beaker or small jar.

R32B Central Gaulish glazed ware (St Remy ware) (1 vess; 27 sh; 0.076kg)

Very fine, smooth, pale whitish grey throughout. Very micaceous especially on the surfaces. A dense fabric with few inclusions visible: sparse sub-rounded quartz, 0.1mm or less; some possible black iron ore inclusions, also 0.1mm or less, particularly visible on the surface where the glaze has worn away; sparse elongated thin black inclusions, possibly organic matter which has imperfectly fired out. Characterised by a thickly applied dark olive green glaze which also covers the interior. The underside of the base was also once glazed, but only traces remain.

A single small flask was found, with characteristic relief-moulded decoration in the form of rows of leaves. Much of the

Cremation no	F06B	F07	F09	R01A	R03A	R03C	R05A	R05B	R14	R26	R30	R32B
1005				1		1			1			
1012									1			
1015									1			
1018									1			
1021					1							
1025	1						1					
1029			2									
1033			1	1	1						1	
1039		1										
1046				1			1					1
1051									1			
1054									1			
1061									1			
1070			1									
1087			1				1					
1103							1	1		1		
1107									1	1		
1112									2			

Table 2: Variety of fabrics occurring in each cremation

surface has deteriorated, but the glaze remains in patches and the relief-moulding is clear and, in some places, sharply defined, indicating a good quality mould.

R Unidentifiable Roman

From soil samples only

Discussion: pottery

The date range for the pottery in the cemetery is from the early 1st century to early 2nd century AD, although some may be earlier. Many of the vessels have 'belgic' characteristics, such as cordons, pedestal bases and grog-tempered fabrics. They are likely to be pre-Conquest, but it is equally possible that they were buried post-Conquest. They may have been retained as heirlooms for burial with their owner, or they may have had little significance except that they were now old fashioned and fit for burial. Pottery with 'belgic' characteristics of form and fabric have been found with 2nd-century pottery in Luton (Ren Hudspith pers. comm.), so it is not unlikely that 'old fashioned' pottery continued to be used, if not made, well into the Roman period in this region. Cremation [1021] contains a Verulamium Region ware (R03A) jar dating to the early-mid 2nd century, and is likely to be among the latest of the excavated cremations. Body sherds of Verulamium Region ware (R03A) were also recovered from cremation [1033] but this was badly disturbed and only small fragments survived. However, if the sherds originate from a cremation or accessory vessel, cremations [1033] and [1021] may be contemporary.

Most of the vessels are in fabrics F09 or R14, possible variations within the same broad fabric type (Table 2). They are mutually exclusive, with either F09 or R14 being chosen for the burial vessel. Accessory vessels are more varied with only cremations [1029] and [1112] containing more than one vessel in the same fabric.

Hand and wheel thrown examples occur, suggesting that several potters or potters' workshops were producing the same basic range of vessel forms in similar fabrics, but using different techniques. The production of wheel-thrown pottery would mean the purchase of a wheel and an investment in training, with correspondingly high set-up costs. This implies a Roman influence while the continuance of handmade vessels, often in the same fabric, suggests a backward looking community, steeped in ancient tradition.

The forms occurring in fabrics F09 and R14 are all variations of the jar, with the single addition of a lid-seated bowl in fabric R14 (Table 3). Jars also occur in other fabrics, but there is more variety of fabric in other forms, and an absence of non-jar forms in fabrics F09 and R14. This suggests the choice of local wares for the cremation vessel and non-local, possibly high status vessels for accessories.

Sources

The majority of the vessels are of a harsh sandy fabric, varying in firing colour from orange through varying shades of brown to grey. They are of local origin, probably made in, or in the

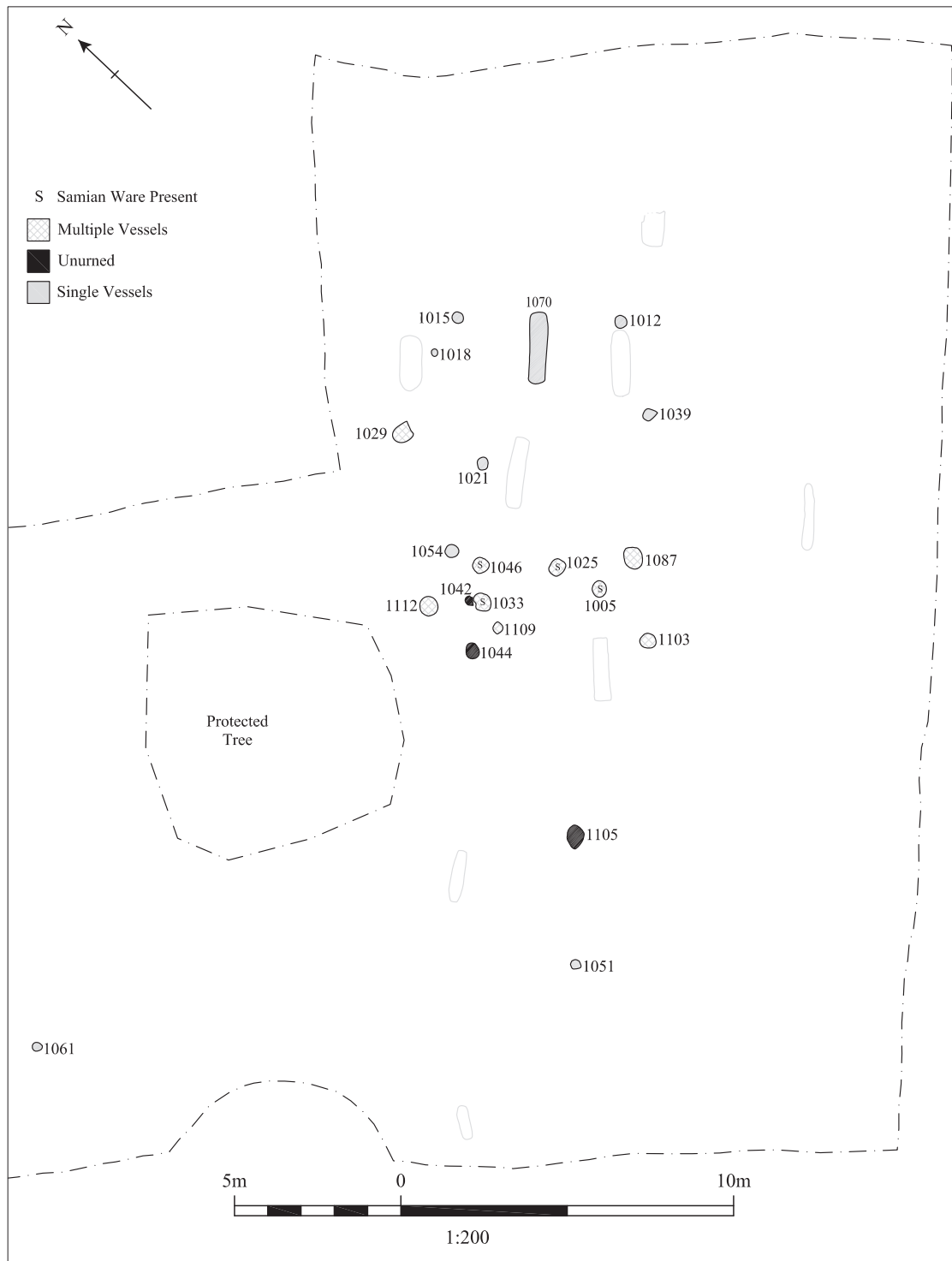


Figure 5: Roman cemetery: distribution of grave goods

Fabric	Pedestal urn	Jar	Cordoned jar	Lid seated jar	Lid seated bowl	Beaker	Butt beaker	Dish	Platter	Flagon/flask
F06B			1							
F07				1						
F09	2	3	1							
R01A								2	2	
R03A		2								
R03C						1				
R05A		1				1	1			1
R05B						1				
R14	1	4	4		1					
R26									2	
R30						1				
R32B										1

Table 3: Variety of identifiable forms occurring in each fabric type

vicinity of, Dunstable. Although no pottery kilns have yet been recognised the presence of the waster/second attests to their existence. Wasters are unusable vessels spoilt at the point of manufacture and discarded there; so they would not have travelled far from the kiln site. Seconds are also spoilt vessels but still usable, therefore they may have travelled further, although unlikely much beyond the local market. The vessel from cremation [1103] is probably a waster although still largely surviving in one piece. The surfaces have been split apart in a number of places by bubbles caused by the vessel not drying out sufficiently prior to firing. The water in the body turns to steam and causes the vessel to bubble, a fault known as 'bloating'. This vessel may have been acquired, cheaply, directly from the manufacturing site as it is unlikely to have reached the market.

Shelly wares were made in a number of small production sites all over north Bedfordshire. Here the Jurassic clays provide suitable raw materials and have been used in pottery manufacture from the Iron Age to the medieval period. The products of these kilns do not have a wide distribution, and it is not until the large manufactory at Harrold monopolised the shelly ware industry in the area that its products reach most of Roman Britain, particularly in the 4th century (Brown 1994). During the Conquest period, shelly pottery was being made at Stagsden, one of several small potting workshops known in the area. It is only 8km from Harrold and may even have been its precursor. Four kilns were excavated, together with their products, both wasters and usable vessels. Among the pottery from kiln G7 were jars with bases which had a distinctive potter's mark on them (Slowikowski 2000, 82). The same mark has been

recognised on the base of a shelly jar from the cemetery (Illust. 11, Fig. 7). It was likely to have been made in the same workshop, if not by the same potter. Archaeomagnetic dating of the kilns indicated a date within the range AD 40–110 (Clark 2000, 125), giving a date for the manufacture, if not the deposition, of this shelly jar. Why this particular vessel was chosen for burial is unclear. Its significance may have lain in the distance it had travelled; the distinctively different colour and surface appearance from the local sandy wares or even the fact that it was a marked vessel. It may have been a treasured family possession or just another cooking pot. There are signs of soot blackening on the exterior.

Imported vessels are largely samian dishes but there is a rare example of a Central Gaulish glazed ware flask (Illust. 14, Fig. 7) from Cremation [1046]. The flask is a small vessel with characteristic relief-moulded decoration in the form of rows of leaves, with an overall lead glaze. Most of the vessels found in Britain come from St Remy-en-Rollat, in the Allier valley (Tyers 1996, 141). These vessels are rare in Britain. Those that do survive are usually complete as they are most commonly found in burials. They can be dated closely to between AD 43 and AD 70/75. A form series of these glazed wares has been published (Greene 1978) but there is no parallel for the Dunstable form in the series. It is far more angular than any of the flagons illustrated and smaller, and may have been copying metal forms. Although it has been suggested that glazed flagons were used as tableware, to complement samian dishes, the Dunstable flask is too small to hold much liquid. Added to this is the fact that the Dunstable flask is glazed internally as well as externally while other closed forms such as the flagons are glazed externally

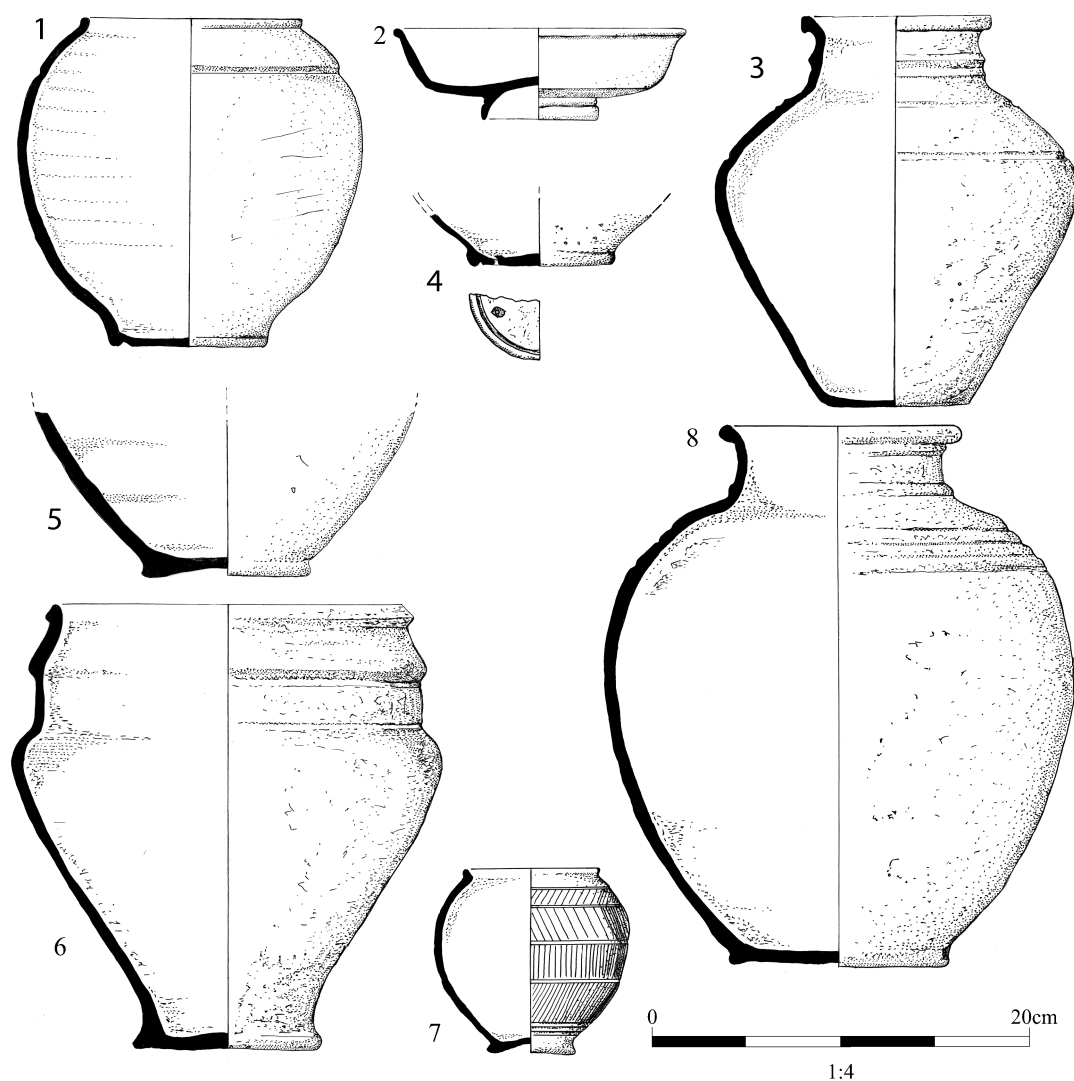


Figure 6: Roman pottery

only (Tyers 1996, 140). It is more likely to have held other substances, such as precious oil or perfume.

There are few examples known from the region. A single sherd from a beaker was found at Milton Keynes (Marney 1989, 179) while a base fragment was found at the cremation cemetery at Harlington, unfortunately unstratified (Wells 2001, 30).

Glazed vessels are rare in the Roman period, although the skill needed to produce them was there. White slipped and green lead-glazed wares were manufactured in Britain in the 1st and early

2nd centuries, and are known from assemblages in the county, such as Sandy (Slowikowski 1991) but glazed vessels, in general, had a short lived popularity, and, by the second quarter of the 2nd century, they were no longer being produced (Arthur 1978, 295).

Signs of ritual activity

The choice of vessels for burial corresponds with the idea of deliberately 'killing' a vessel as part of the burial ritual, or of using a previously 'spoilt' vessel (Philpott 1991, 239). The use of the waster is a case in point. The vessel was unusable,

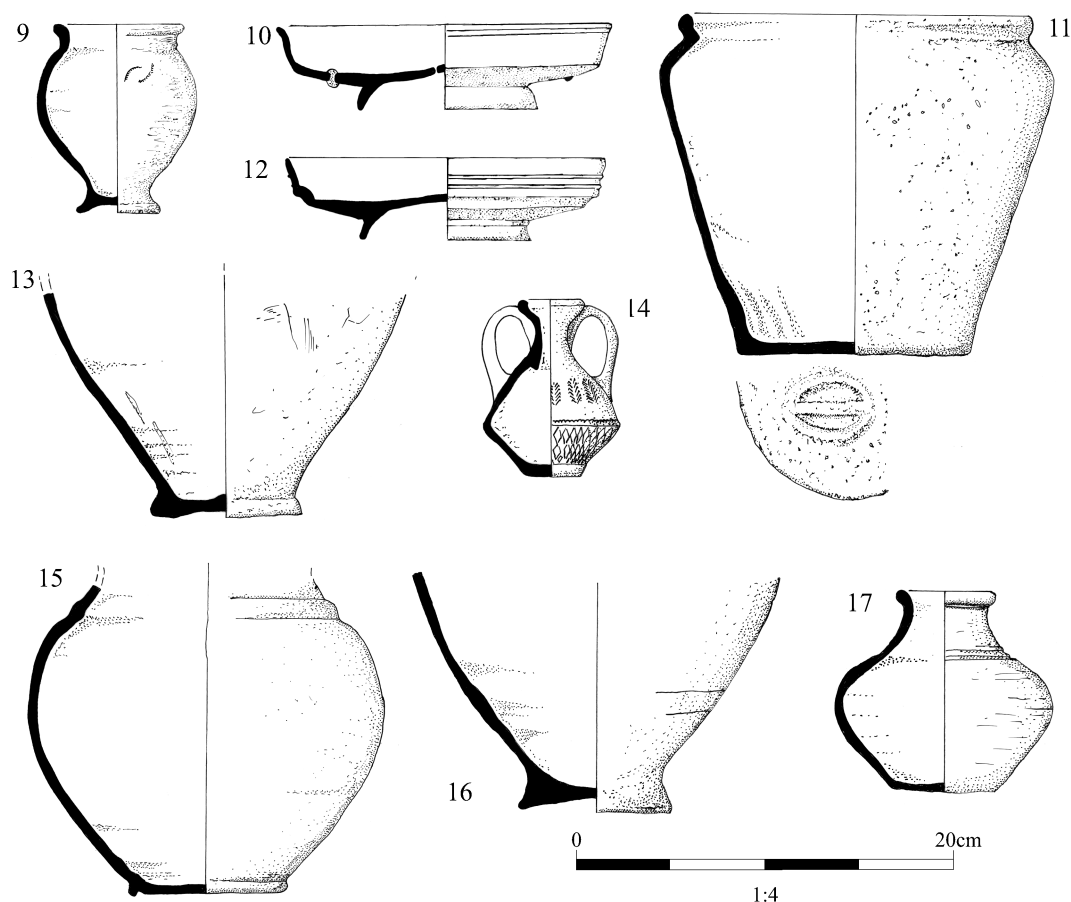


Figure 7: Roman pottery

imperfect and probably deliberately broken. The breaks are not fresh and they clearly reveal the imperfect, bloated fabric of the vessel. Although not common, the use of wasters or seconds has been noted in other cemeteries, such as Skeleton Green, Puckeridge (Partridge 1981, 249). Their use has been attributed to their symbolic role rather than poverty of the dead person or their family (Philpott 1991, 36).

Repaired vessels were also used, such as (Illust. 10, Fig. 7) the samian dish with lead rivets from Cremation [1033]. It is unclear, however, whether the dish was chosen because it was already repaired or whether it was broken and repaired in preparation for burial. The same uncertainty pertains to the vessel with a pre-firing hole in the base, (Illust. 4, Fig. 6) from Cremation [1015]. Was it the hole that made it the perfect choice for burial?

Cremation [1029] is distinctive in its choice of vessels as well as the non-ceramic grave goods (Duncan 2006). The burial contains two brooches which were possibly deliberately broken, as well as the remains of copper alloy and iron fastenings from a possible wooden box. The vessels comprise a cordoned jar, the cremation vessel, and a small pedestal jar, both in grog and sand fabric F09 (Illust. 8-9, Fig. 6&7), suggesting relatively low status. The cremation jar itself is particularly large with a wide circumference. It is incomplete with only a small part of the rim surviving; all the breaks are old. There is copper alloy and iron staining inside this vessel, in the base angle, suggesting that the box may have been placed inside the jar. It cannot be certain whether the jar was deliberately broken to insert the casket, or intact on burial.

Quality of the vessels and status of the burials

Although 'quality' is a subjective term, there does appear to be a distinct difference in the quality of the various vessels used in the burial rite. It has been noted that vessels used to hold cremations are often not of the best and have frequently been used for other purposes (Philpotts 1991, 36). Sooting on the surfaces suggests domestic use as cooking vessels prior to their use as cremation vessels. For example, the grog and sand F09 jar from cremation [1033] and the shelly F07 jar from cremation [1039] (Illust. 11, Fig. 7) have patchy external sooting but clean bases, indicating that they rested on something during cooking, which prevented direct contact of the base with the flames. The grog tempered F06B jar from cremation [1025] (Illust. 6, Fig. 6) is sooted on the body and the base. These vessels were locally made, often large handmade jars and rarely decorated. The cordoned jar from cremation [1112] (Illust. 24, Fig. 8) shows signs of heavy use prior to burial: there is a wear mark around the circumference on the underside of the base.

Accessory vessels, on the other hand, are of better quality and there are a number of imported vessels among them. They are small in size, although not exclusively so, and there is a difference in the numbers buried. Rarely are there more than two vessels in the same fabric (Table 2).

If it is assumed that the richer, higher status burials are those with the largest number of vessels, then three of the burials stand out. They are

cremations [1005], [1033] and [1046], all with three or more vessels (Table 4). A consistent feature of these cremation groups is the presence of samian dishes. All the samian vessels found with burials occur in these three 'high status' cremations. The only other samian vessel on the site came from the fill of a post hole [1055]. It is noteworthy that the casket burial, cremation [1029], contained only two vessels, both in the same grog and sand fabric F09. In terms of its ceramics, it was not among the 'high status' cremations.

Although buried with native-style vessels, the inclusion of continental imports, which would have been expensive and probably treasured items, suggests that it was the Roman credentials of the dead, and possibly also their families, that were on display, rather than just their individual status.

Catalogue of illustrated pottery (Figs. 6–8)

Illust. 1 Cremation [1005] Cordoned jar in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware with some sparse buff grog; grey brown surfaces; handmade; single cordon at neck and wider cordons on shoulder; footring base; burnished exterior; context (1007) (91 sherds; 0.745kg)

Illust. 2 Cremation [1005] Dish in fabric R01A Samian ware; Central Gaul; stamped [VITALISMSF]; context (1008) (19 sherds; 0.283kg); context (1004) (3 sherds; 10g) sample <1> (5 sherds; 3g)

Illust. 3 Cremation [1012] Cordoned jar in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware; grey brown surfaces; hand-made; patchy sooting on exterior; context (1010) (82 sherds; 0.902kg)

Illust. 4 Cremation [1015] Jar in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware; cremation vessel; grey brown surfaces; wheel thrown; one hole pierced pre-firing near edge of footring in base; context (1014) (22 sherds; 62g)

Cremation no	Pedestal urn	Jar	Cordoned jar	Lid seated jar	Lid seated bowl	Beaker	Butt beaker	Dish	Platter	Flagon/flask
1005			1			1		1		
1012			1							
1015		1								
1018		1								
1021		1								
1025			1			1				
1029	1		1							
1033		2				1		1		
1039				1						
1046		1							1	1
1051		1								
1054			1							
1061	1									
1070		1								
1087	1						1			
1103						1			1	1
1107		1							1	
1112			1		1					

Table 4: Variety of identifiable forms occurring in each cremation

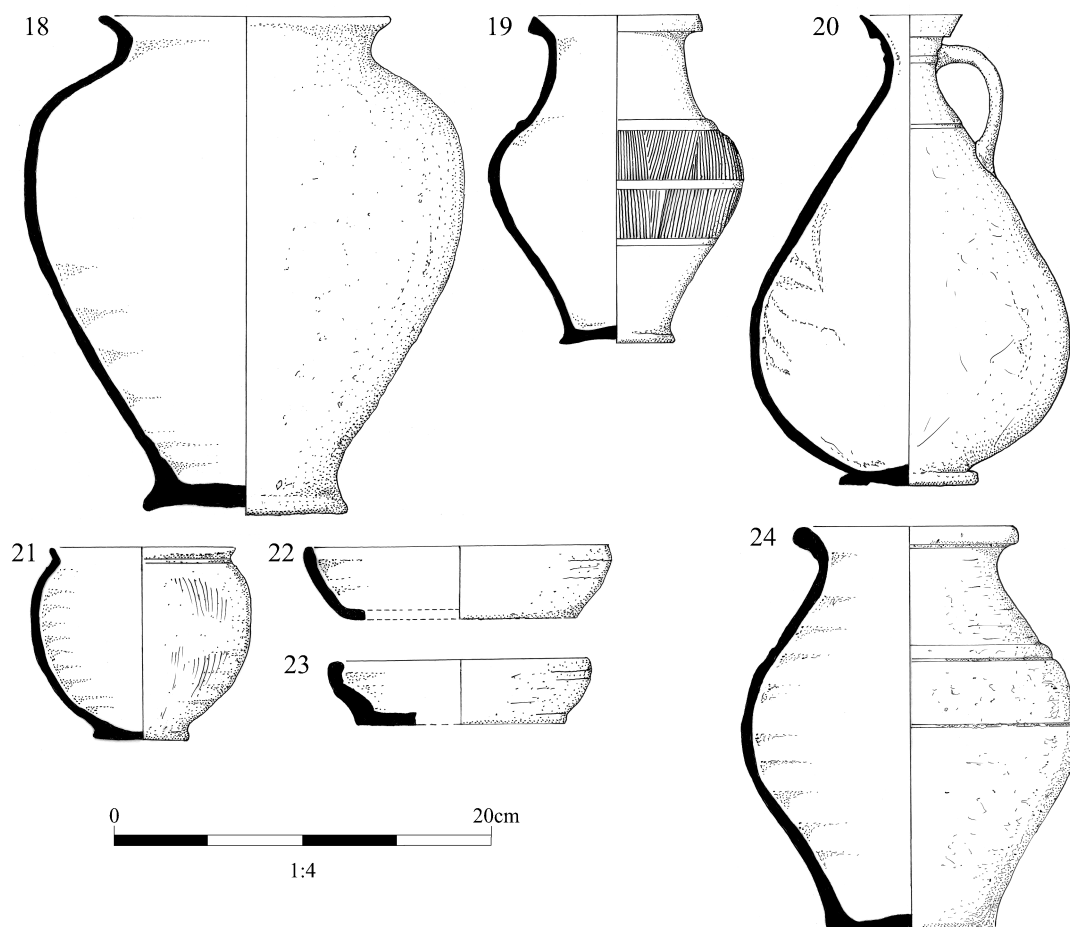


Figure 8: Roman pottery

- Illust. 5 Cremation [1021] Jar in R03A Verulamium Region whiteware; cremation vessel; wheel thrown; context (1020) (35 sherds; 0.387kg)
- Illust. 6 Cremation [1025] Large cordoned jar in fabric F06B Grog-tempered ware with abundant black and buff grog and very sparse quartz; orange surfaces; wheel thrown; wide cordons and footring base; patchy sooted exterior, especially inside the footring; context (1022) (87 sherds; 1.732kg)
- Illust. 7 Cremation [1025] Beaker in fabric R05A Orange sandy ware; cremation vessel; orange surfaces; wheel thrown; rouletted? ; context (1023) (53 sherds; 0.138kg); context (1022) (1 sherd; 4g)
- Illust. 8 Cremation [1029] Large cordoned jar in fabric F09 Grog and sand-tempered ware with frequent black and buff grog; cremation vessel; orange surfaces; hand made; footring base; signs of iron and copper alloy staining in the base angle; context (1027) (85 sherds; 1.868kg)
- Illust. 9 Cremation [1029] Complete pedestal jar in fabric F09 Grog and sand-tempered ware; small votive vessel (c. 13cm); grey brown surfaces; wheel thrown; context (1028) (3 sherds; 0.202kg)
- Illust. 10 Cremation [1033] Dish in fabric R01A Samian ware; South Gaul; votive vessel; stamped base [MAGN]; three lead rivets *in situ*; context (1031) (7sherds; 0.247kg)
- Illust. 11 Cremation [1039] Lid-seated jar in F07 Shelly ware; orange surfaces; hand-made; Stagsden potter's mark on base; patchy sooting on exterior but with a clean base; spall on lower body; context (1038) (53sherds; 0.697kg); context (1036) sample <11> (15 sherds; 8g); Cremation [1056] context (1055) (5 sherds; 14g)
- Illust. 12 Cremation [1046] Dr 15/17 platter in R01A Samian ware; Southern Gaul; stamped [OFLICIN]; context (1045) (13 sherds; 0.167kg)
- Illust. 13 Cremation [1046] Jar in R05A Orange sandy ware; orange surfaces; wheel thrown; pedestal foot has come away possibly prior to burial; context (1045) (98 sherds; 0.426kg); Cremation [1090] context (1088) (1 sherd; 3g)
- Illust. 14 Cremation [1046] Small flask in fabric R32B St Remy glazed ware; dated to AD 43–70/75; angular form with leaf decoration in moulded relief; glaze dripped inside as well as on exterior; context (1045) (27 sherds; 76g)
- Illust. 15 Cremation [1054] Cordoned jar in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware; grey brown surfaces; wheel thrown; footring base; context (1052) (89 sherds; 0.612kg); context (1053) (17 sherds; 0.101kg)

- Illust. 16 Cremation [1061] Pedestal urn in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware; cremation vessel; grey brown surfaces; wheel thrown; context (1060) (30 sherds; 0.289kg)
- Illust. 17 Cremation [1070] Complete jar in fabric F09 Grog and sand-tempered ware; votive vessel; grey brown surfaces; wheel thrown; context (1068) (25 sherds; 0.275kg)
- Illust. 18 Cremation [1087] Large pedestal urn in fabric F09 Grog and sand-tempered ware; cremation vessel; orange surfaces; hand made; context (1085) (83 sherds; 1.511kg)
- Illust. 19 Cremation [1087] Complete butt beaker in fabric R05A Orange sandy ware; votive vessel; orange surfaces; wheel thrown; context (1086) (complete vessel; 0.387kg)
- Illust. 20 Cremation [1103] Flagon in fabric R05A Orange sandy ware; waster with signs of bloating; orange surfaces; wheel thrown; context (1098) (117 sherds; 0.680kg); context (1099) sample <18> (16 sherds; 12g)
- Illust. 21 Cremation [1103] Beaker in fabric R05B Fine orange sandy ware with worn red slip on interior and exterior; wheel thrown; context (1100) (39 sherds; 0.198kg)
- Illust. 22 Cremation [1103] Platter in fabric R26 copying Terra Nigra; grey brown surfaces; hand made; context (1101) (50 sherds; 0.217kg)
- Illust. 23 Cremation [1107] Platter in fabric R26 copying Terra Nigra; wheel thrown; context (1107) (14 sherds; 81g)
- Illust. 24 Cremation [1112] Cordoned jar in fabric R14 Harsh Sandy ware; cremation vessel; grey brown; hand made; patchy sooting on exterior; wear mark under base angle; context (1111) (106 sherds; 1.116kg)

THE SAMIAN WARE

Felicity C. Wild

The site produced probably four vessels of samian ware, all dish forms and all from cremations apart from a group of four joining sherds of form 15/17 from the fill of a small post-hole (1055) in [1056]. One dish was Central Gaulish, from Les Martres-de-Veyre, dating to the first quarter of the second century AD; the others were all South Gaulish, from La Graufesenque, and pre-Flavian. It is noteworthy that one dish placed with a cremation had been repaired. The detailed information on the potters' stamps was obtained from the works cited. Ligatured letters are denoted by underlining.

Form 15/17, South Gaulish. Fifteen fragments in all: seven of base and eight of rim. The rim sherds join in two groups of four, amounting to just over a full circle, which suggests the presence of two identical dishes. The four joining sherds from the post-hole (1055) mentioned above may come from one of them.

The joining base fragments show the stamp OFLICIN, by Licinus of La Graufesenque. Licinus had a great many different dies, but a similar stamp with this reading occurs at Vechten (Polak 2000, 252, L14). He made the pre-Flavian forms Ritt. 1 and Ritt. 8, and his site record includes the pre-Flavian forts of Rheingönheim and Kingsholm, Gloucester. c.AD 45–65. (1045) in cut [1046].

Form 18, South Gaulish. Seven joining sherds amounting to almost the complete dish, which had broken in half in antiquity and been mended with three lead rivets across the base, of which fragments survive. The dish is an early example of the form, with a short, upright wall and sharp angle, though no external groove, between wall and base. The stamp, broken and damaged, reads MAGN[]. Magnus was not one of the more common potters. Parallels to the stamp exist at Vechten (Polak 2000, 259, M18), also damaged, but possibly this die, reading MAG[N]IMA, and La Graufesenque (Hermet 1934, pl. 111, 88) where he presumably worked. His work occurs on Ritt. 1, in the second pottery shop at Colchester, burnt during the Boudican revolt, and Period I (pre-Flavian) at Zwammerdam. c.AD 50–70. (1031) in cut [1033].

Form 18/31, Central Gaulish. Many fragments, including small chips, amounting to almost the complete dish, with the stamp VITALISMSF (Romeuf 2001, pl. 36, 191, 2) by Vitalis iii of Les Martres-de-Veyre. The stamp normally occurs, as here, on early examples of form 18/31, but also occasionally on form 15/17. It occurs in Period IIA at Verulamium (Hartley 1972, 233, S58) and in the Hadrianic Second Fire at London. c.AD 100–125. (1008, 1004, 1010) in cut [1005].

THE HUMAN BONE

Melissa Melikian

Methodology

The human bones were analysed in accordance with recommendations by English Heritage (2002) and the IFA (Brickley & McKinley 2004). Specifically age was assessed following Ubelaker (1989), Scheuer & Black (2000), Sundick (1978), Brooks & Suchey (1990), Lovejoy *et al* (1985) and (Brothwell 1981). A holistic approach was adopted and individuals were classed into one of ten age ranges. 0=no data, 1=foetal/neonate, 2=1–6 months, 3=7–11 months, 4=1–5 yrs, 5=6–11 yrs, 6=12–17 yrs, 7=18–25 yrs, 8=26–35 yrs, 9=36–45 yrs, 10=46+ yrs, 11=adult, 12=subadult. Age category 0 was assigned in the absence of osteological age indicators. Age category 11 was applicable where the individual could be classed as adult, i.e. permanent dentition or complete fusion, but a more accurate age range could not be determined. Age category 12 was applicable where the individual was classed as sub-adult, i.e. fusion was incomplete or deciduous dentition present, but a more accurate age range could not be given.

Determination of the sex of skeletal individuals is based on the secondary sex characteristics that manifest themselves at puberty. As a result with the exception of bimolecular analysis, there are no acceptable methods for sexing juvenile remains. The biological sex of the adult skeletons was assessed following Phenice (1969), Buikstra &

Ubelaker (1994) and Acsadi & Nemeskeri (1970). Again a holistic approach was adopted and individuals were classed into one of the following categories: 0 = undetermined sex, 1 = female, 2 = probable female, 3 = indeterminate, 4 = probable male, 5 = male. Undetermined sex was allocated where no osteological sex indicators were present. Individuals were classed as indeterminate where the sex determination was ambiguous and could not be defined as male or female.

A range of metric data was recovered following the definitions of Howells (1973) and Brothwell (1981). In this study height was calculated using the formulae of Trotter (1970) and Trotter & Gleser (1952, 1958, 1970). Where applicable the following indices were also calculated: cephalic, platymeric and platycnemic. Non-metric traits were recorded following Brothwell (1981) Berry & Berry (1967) and Finnigan (1978). The following non-metric traits were scored: metopism, coronal wormian bones, sagittal wormian bones, ossicles at lambda, os inca, ossicles in lambdoid suture, maxillary torus, mandibular torus, os acromiale, distal septal aperture, supracondylar process, vastus notch and the type of calcaneal facet.

Each tooth or tooth position was assessed to ascertain the completeness of the dentition and the prevalence of dental pathology. The presence or absence of dental caries was noted for each tooth and, if dental caries was identified, then the site at which the lesion was initiated was noted following (Hillson 1996). The amount of calculus deposit and alveolar disease was recorded following Brothwell (1981). The presence or absence of enamel hypoplasia was also noted.

Where applicable, every joint of the skeleton was assessed for joint disease (osteoarthritis) following Rogers *et al* (1987) and Rogers & Waldron (1995). For each vertebra the presence or absence of the following pathology was recorded following Rogers *et al* (1987) and Rogers & Waldron (1995); osteoarthritis, osteophyte, fusion, intervertebral disc disease, Schmorl's nodes and ligamentum flavum. Enthesopathies are extra bones growths which develop for a variety of reasons including trauma, 'stress' and muscle activity and are thought to be age related. The following areas were examined for the presence of enthesopathies; rotator cuff, deltoid tubercle, radial tuberosity, olecranon process, medial epicondyle of the humerus, lateral epicondyle of the humerus, iliac crest, ischial tuberosity, greater trochanter, lesser

trochanter, linea aspera, tibial tubercle, soleal line, fibula, patella, posterior surface of the calcaneus, inferior surface of the calcaneus, finger flexors and metatarsal shafts. Any gross pathology was described and diagnosis was based on findings in Aufderheide & Rodriguez-Martin (1997) and Ortner & Putschar (1981).

For those cremation urns that were relatively complete they were excavated stratigraphically in the laboratory following McKinley (1994). The cremated bone was analysed following McKinley (1994, 2000 & 2004). The sample was observed for the presence and positioning of any pyre goods, grave goods or animal bone. The minimum number of individuals (MNI) was identified. Age was assessed from the stage of skeletal and dental development and degenerative change described above. Where possible sex was estimated using the methods described above. In addition the bone was examined for any pathological conditions.

Results

A total of seven articulated inhumations and 21 cremation burials were identified. Due to the small sample size the results were assessed by individual rather than adopting a population-based approach.

Inhumations

The inhumation burials were aligned east-west with the heads situated at the east end. Only one inhumation burial contained evidence of grave goods in the form of a ceramic vessel. The results of the analysis of the articulated inhumations are summarised in Table 5 below.

The small assemblage recovered from the inhumations consists of 2 males and 5 female or probable females. No sub-adults were represented in the assemblage. Stature was calculated using a number of different measurements. Only five individuals had long bones sufficiently intact to calculate a stature estimation. The small numbers preclude any conclusions regarding the population of *Durocibrivis* (Roman Dunstable). However when compared to the average height of modern British males (1.75m) and females (1.61m) the individuals from New Venue are shorter. All seven individuals had teeth present. Of these, five displayed ante-mortem tooth loss, three had ante-mortem tooth loss and three had dental caries. One individual displayed enamel hypoplasia; an enamel developmental defect which is the result of 'stress' when the teeth form e.g. illness, injury, dietary deficiency.

Skeleton number	Pres.	Completeness (%)	Sex	Age (years)	Stature (cm)	Pathology
1065	2	35	M	26–35	–	
1069	1	95	F	26–35	160cm ± 4.45cm	myositis ossificans, enamel hypoplasia
1072	1	95	F	36–45	152cm ± 4.45cm	–
1081	1	95	M	26–35	171cm ± 4.05cm	–
1089	3	80	F	46+	–	–
1092	1	90	F?	36–45	152cm ± 4.45cm	–
1095	2	85	F?	36–45	158cm ± 3.72cm	right calcaneonavicular coalition

Table 5: The skeletons from New Venue, Dunstable

One individual displayed pathology consistent with myositis ossificans; a relatively common condition where an extra-osseous growth of new bone occurs as a result of trauma. One individual had calcaneonavicular coalition in the right foot. The condition may be congenital or developmental and is relatively uncommon with an incidence of *c.*1%. The condition would have caused restricted movement of the foot.

Cremations

A total of 21 cremation burials were identified on site. Many of these burials contained more than one deposit containing cremated bone. The metric data for the cremation burials is shown in Appendix A. A summary of the cremation burials is shown in Table 6.

A small amount of neonate bone was recovered from one cremation deposit; the remainder of the assemblage originated from adult individuals. With the exception of one cremation which consisted of two individuals, all the cremations consisted of a MNI of one. One individual (1030) displayed evidence of degenerative joint disease in the form of marginal osteophyte around the head of an unidentified PP1 of the foot.

Discussion: human bone

The Romans traditionally buried their dead along main roads external to the main settlement. Until the mid-second century, the predominant method of burial in Roman Britain was cremation. In the mid-second century the practice of inhumation was introduced from the continent. This became increasingly popular with time and by the 4th century was the generally accepted method of burial.

All the inhumations were on an east-west alignment which appears to be respecting the road alignment. Only one inhumation contained grave goods in the form of a complete vessel, probably once containing oil or perfume. It appears that none of the burials were within coffins but instead

were in simple, earth-cut graves. The cremations were both within cremation urns and unurned. It is probable that some of these unurned cremations were within other containers which have since decomposed; as evidenced by the presence of iron nails retrieved from the grave fill. Several of the cremation burials contained grave goods in the form of secondary ceramic and glass vessels and hobnail boots. Evidence of pyre goods was found in several instances, including animal offerings and possible metal jewellery or other metallic offerings.

REGISTERED FINDS

H.B. Duncan

Introduction

Non-ceramic artefacts were found in ten out of twenty cremations. In contrast none were found accompanying the inhumation burials. Grave goods and pyre goods were found in both unurned and urned burials. The range of artefacts present in most burials was limited, in the main comprising small quantities of nails and hobnails. Only burials [1044] and [1029] had a wider range of goods, including items of personal ornament and, in the case of [1029], a possible casket. Where burials had both an urn and one or more accessory vessel, no grave goods were found within the accessory vessel fills, although four of these burials did produce finds from the fill of the cremation pit itself. A descriptive catalogue of the artefacts by burial number can be found in the project archive; the evidence is presented in summary form in Table 8. The following discussion is presented by finds type.

Nails

Seven burials, including both urned and unurned, produced from one to four nails (Table 8). Where complete the nails were between 30mm and 51mm

Context number	Parent context	Weight (g)	Age	Sex	MINI	Pyre/grave goods	Colour
1004	[1005]	209	U	U	1	Charcoal, Fish vertebra, Iron nails	Buff to light grey
1007	[1005]	1164	A	U	1	Iron nails	Black to buff/white
1009	[1005]	73	U	U	1	Charcoal	Light grey
1010	[1012]	416	A	U	1	Charcoal	Buff
1011	[1012]	1252	A	U	1	Charcoal	Buff and light grey
1013	[1015]	89	U	U	1	Charcoal	Buff
1014	[1015]	2	U	U	1	-	Buff
1016	[1018]	44	U	U	1	-	Buff
1017	[1018]	2	U	U	1	-	Buff
1019	[1021]	1	U	U	1	-	Buff
1020	[1021]	208	A	U	1	Charcoal, Charred seed	Buff
1022	[1025]	1412	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron hobnail	Buff
1024	[1025]	<1	U	U	1	Charcoal	Buff
1027	[1029]	1928	A	U	1	Charcoal, Animal bone, Iron nail, Copper object, Iron object, Copper alloy brooch	Buff
1030	[1033]	1077	A	U	1	Charcoal	Grey
1032	[1033]	1297	A	U	1	-	Buff
1036	[1039]	51	U	U	1	-	Buff to light grey
1038	[1039]	91	U	U	1	-	Grey
1041	[1042]	993	N&A	U	2	Charcoal, Hobnail	Buff to grey
1043	[1044]	619	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron brooch, Glass bead	Buff
1045	[1046]	297	U	U	1	Glass fragment, Iron nail	Buff
1049	[1051]	60	U	U	1	-	Buff
1050	[1051]	228	U	U	1	-	Buff to light brown
1052	[1054]	643	A	U	1	Charcoal	Buff
1053	[1054]	1	U	U	1	-	Buff
1059	[1061]	3	U	U	1	Charcoal	Buff
1060	[1061]	188	U	U	1	-	White to black
1063	[1064]	422	U	U	1	Charcoal, Glass fragment	Buff to black
1083	[1087]	7	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron nail	Buff
1084	[1087]	290	A	U	1	Charcoal, Iron nail	Buff to beige
1085	[1087]	2167	A	M?	1	Charcoal, Iron object	Buff to light grey
1097	[1103]	423	A	U	1	Charcoal, Cremated animal bone, Iron object	Buff
1099	[1103]	57	U	U	1	Charcoal	White to buff
1100	[1103]	115	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron object	Buff
1102	[1103]	1043	A	M?	1	Charcoal, Cremated animal bone, Iron object	Buff to dark grey
1104	[1105]	260	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron nails	Buff
1106	[1109]	49	U	U	1	-	Buff
1107	[1109]	1240	A	U	1	Charcoal, Cremated animal bone	Buff
1108	[1109]	10	U	U	1	-	Buff
1110	[1112]	457	U	U	1	Charcoal, Iron nails	Buff

Table 6: The cremation burials from New Venue, Dunstable

Context number	Total	10mm	5mm	2mm	Max frag	id. wt.	% total	Skull	Axial	U.limb	L.limb
	wt. (g)	(% total)	(% total)	(% total)	mm.	wt. (g)	wt.	(% id)	(% id)	(% id)	(% id)
1004	209	28.2	51.7	20.1	40	6	2.9	83.3	0	0	16.7
1007	1164	42	32.3	25.7	62	110	9.5	41.8	55.5	0	2.7
1009	73	5.5	20.5	74	25	1	1.4	100	0	0	0
1010	416	17.3	58	24.7	41	11	2.6	63.6	9.1	18.1	9.1
1011	1252	39.8	17.6	42.7	69	155	12.4	47.7	13.5	7.1	31.6
1013	89	32.6	41.6	25.8	36	3	3.4	100	0	0	0
1014	2	50	50	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
1016	44	22.7	54.5	22.7	29	8	18.2	100	0	0	0
1017	2	50	50	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
1019	1	0	100	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
1020	208	30.8	42.8	26.4	32	9	4.3	11.1	22.2	11.1	55.6
1022	1412	20.1	40.2	39.7	51	41	2.9	70.7	9.8	73	12.2
1024	<1	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
1027	1928	54.6	16.4	29	86	407	21.1	47.9	19.9	5.4	26.8
1030	1077	35.7	35.6	28.7	56	53	4.9	28.3	7.5	9.4	54.7
1032	1297	34	36.2	29.8	94	96	7.4	49	33.3	5.2	12.5
1036	51	31.4	49	19.6	25	7	13.7	42.9	57.1	0	0
1038	91	24.2	41.7	34.1	34	1	1.1	100	0	0	0
1041	993	49.8	38.9	11.3	64	177	17.8	44	39.5	6.8	9.6
1043	619	27.8	59	13.2	36	28	4.5	85.7	10.7	3.6	0
1045	297	31.3	55.6	13.1	43	21	7	85.7	9.5	4.8	0
1049	60	16.7	65	18.3	28	2	3.3	0	100	0	0
1050	288	61.5	15.6	22.9	56	33	11.5	51.5	18.2	0	30.3
1052	643	40.6	44.6	14.8	51	38	5.9	97.4	0	0	2.6
1053	1	0	100	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
1059	3	0	66.7	33.3	21	<1	0	0	0	0	0
1060	188	19.7	31.4	48.9	24	3	1.6	66.7	0	0	33.3
1063	422	25.4	58.3	16.6	40	12	2.8	100	0	0	0
1083	7	14.3	57.1	28.6	30	<1	0	0	0	0	0
1084	290	17.2	60.7	22.1	53	8	2.8	62.5	0	37.5	0
1085	2167	54.7	21.1	24.1	75	273	12.6	20.9	42.1	11.4	25.6
1097	423	20.6	62.9	16.6	34	15	3.5	60	26.7	13.3	0
1099	57	14	56.1	29.8	29	1	1.8	100	0	0	0
1100	115	32.2	47.8	20	48	3	2.6	0	50	50	0
1102	1043	54.6	36.3	9.1	59	250	24	18.8	27.2	0.4	7.2
1104	260	27.7	56.9	15.4	55	16	6.2	100	0	0	0
1106	49	32.7	46.9	20.4	47	3	6	33.3	33.3	33.3	0
1107	1240	39.1	26.7	34.2	60	140	11.3	23.6	55	0	21.4
1108	10	0	80	20	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
1110	457	28.4	57.3	14.2	60	23	5	95.7	0	4.3	0

Table 7: New Venue, Dunstable: Cremated bone weights and percentage distribution by fraction size and skeletal area, and maximum fragment size

long, with flat heads of rounded to rectangular shape. These equate with Manning's type 1B nail, for general purpose use (1985, 134). In only one instance was there evidence for a possible rove on the tip of a nail shank (RF24) from burial [1112]. The condition of the nails differed, some examples being almost pristine in appearance while others displayed varying degrees of corrosion. The condition of the pristine nails is likely to have been the result of heat from the pyre and the small numbers of them in the burials might suggest that old timbers, with structural nails and other fittings

remaining in place, may have been used within the pyre and then accidentally incorporated into the cremation deposit. The four nails found within the urn of burial [1029] may well have formed part of the possible casket (see Containers).

Containers

Wood

The largest assemblage of metal artefacts was found within cremation urn [1027] from cremation burial [1029]. The cremation urn was excavated in

Feature	Description	Artefacts from urn	Artefacts from burial fill	Comment
1042	Unurned burial		Hobnail (1)	
1044	Unurned burial		Glass bead (1); Brooch (1)	
1105	Unurned burial		Hobnails (24); Nails (2)	Nails heat-affected
1005	Urned burial	Nails (2)	Nail (1)	Nails heat-affected
1025	Urned burial	Hobnail (1)		
1029	Urned burial	Brooches (2); Casket fittings (7) Fragment (1 CA) Nails (4)		
1046	Urned burial		Nail (1); Glass (1)	
1087	Urned burial	Hobnail (1)	Nails (3) lower fill; Nail (1) upper fill	Single nail from lower fill heat-affected
1103	Urned burial	Nail (1)	Fragment (1 FE)	
1112	Urned burial		Nails (4)	3 nails heat-affected
1062	Pyre Pit		Glass slivers (2)	

Table 8: Non-ceramic artefacts from cremation or cremation-related features (CA = copper alloy; FE = ferrous)

spits, the upper three spits containing no grave goods. Spits 4 to 7 yielded, in addition to the remains of two brooches (see Personal Ornament), six iron split-spike loops, several with copper alloy wire and one with remains of a cast annular ring, *in situ* and up to four nails (Table 9).

Two sizes of split-spike loop were evident, the smaller and more numerous examples ranging between 19.4mm to 23mm long, while two examples, both from spit 7, were slightly larger, measuring between 27 and 30mm. Where the split-spiques were complete, all had their tips bent or clenched at right angles. The distance between the bent tips and the start of the loop indicate that they pierced wood of about 10mm thickness. Three of the split-spike loops retained portions of circular-sectioned copper alloy wire, diameter 2.2mm, threaded through the spike loop, the end of the wire then bent over to fix it in place. One of the larger split-spike loops (part of RF7, Fig. 9), retained about a third of a cast copper alloy ring with decorative ridging.

A possible explanation for this group of fasteners may lie in a cremation from Walls Field,

Baldock, Herts. Four cast copper alloy rings, also with decorative ridging, and paired split-spike loops were found within cremation burial no. 5 in Walls Field. These rings and split-spike loops are thought to have functioned as hinges for a small wooden box which contained a single brooch (Stead and Rigby 1986, 61–63). The cast ring and iron split-spike loop (part of RF7, Fig. 9) from Dunstable may have once served a similar role. As the cast ring is incomplete it is not known whether a second split-spike loop (perhaps RF27) held the opposing side of the ring. RF4 and RF6 (Fig 9), from spits 5 and 6 respectively, are likely to have joined to form a simple curved drop handle of about 57mm length. It is possible that a second drop handle is represented by RF8 from spit 7. The copper alloy sheet fragment (RF3) could possibly have served as part of the box fittings, but its distorted shape precludes certainty.

If this interpretation of these remains is correct it is possible that cremation [1029] belongs to a group of burials known as casket burials. These burials possess a casket which either held, or accompanied, the cremated remains (Philpott

Artefact type	Spit 4	Spit 5	Spit 6	Spit 7
Split-spike loop with CA wire		1 (RF4)	1 (RF6)	1 (RF8)
Split-spike loop with cast CA ring				1 (RF7 part)
Split-spike loop	1 (RF25)			1 (RF27)
Nail	1 (RF2)	3 (RF26)		
CA sheet (binding?)		1 (RF3)		
Brooch			1 (RF5)	1 (RF7 part)

Table 9: Finds from Urn 1027, Burial 1029 (CA = copper alloy)

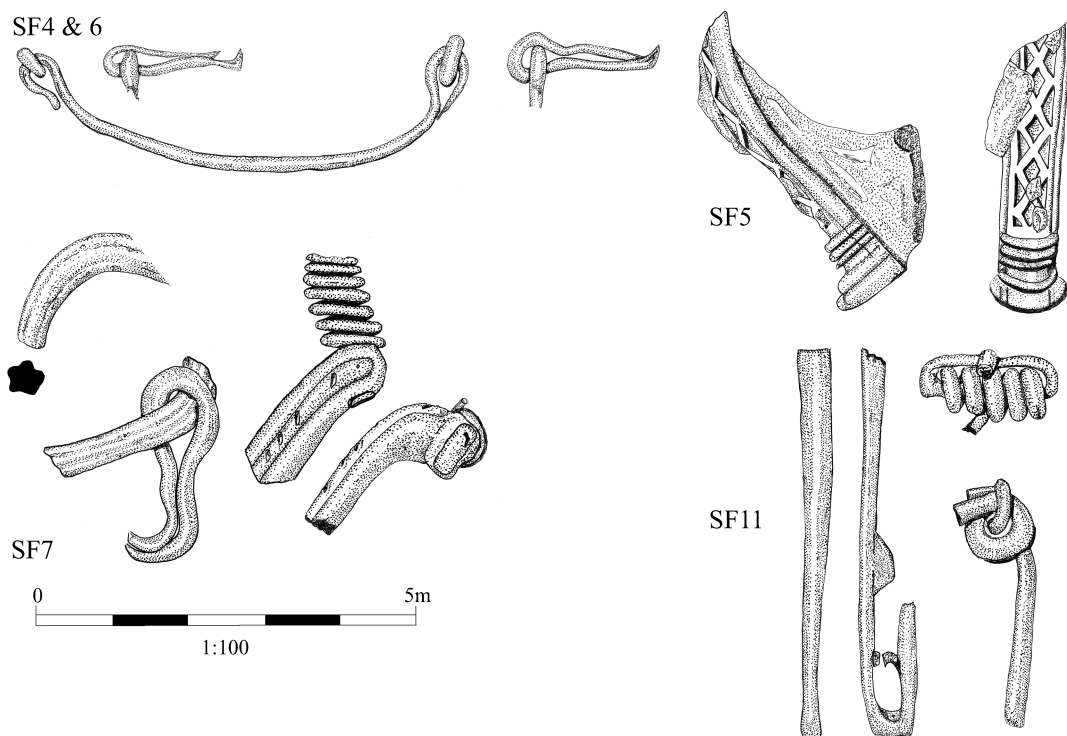


Figure 9: Casket fittings and fragments of brooches

1991, 12–13). Casket burials are confined almost wholly to south eastern England with concentrations in some Hertfordshire cemeteries and elsewhere in small numbers (Philpott 1991, 13). At Skeleton Green, Puckeridge, Hertfordshire four certain and one probable casket burials were encountered, while Borrill recorded a further ten burials from south east England (1981, 304–321). Philpott (1991, 12–14) has identified a further twenty-four certain or probable examples.

The earliest example of a casket burial is dated to the Claudian period, but numbers increase dramatically in the later 1st century (Philpott 1991, 13). Philpott argues that the use of casket in the mid to late 1st century has the appearance of the high ranking native aristocracy adopting a Roman idiom to express their traditional burial practices (1991, 16).

Although casket fittings have been found in association with cinerary urns (Philpott 1991, 13), burial [1029] may be unique in having the box fittings contained within an urn. The urn itself (1027) is in a fragmented and incomplete state, lacking the rim. It has a very bulbous body, the

girth estimated to be at least double the base diameter of 115mm (pers. com. A. Slowikowski). None of the breaks appear recent and therefore the possibility of either post-depositional damage or the utilisation of only the lower portion of the vessel in the burial process must be considered. The complete suite of casket fittings are also absent; it could be they did not survive the burial environment but post-depositional damage or partial inclusion should also be borne in mind. The latter possibility may be apposite when considering the associated brooch fragments (see Personal Ornament, below).

Glass

Evidence for glass vessels within burials was limited to a small sherd of clear colourless glass (RF12) from burial [1046]. The only other evidence of glass vessels came from the fill of the possible pyre site [1062]. These comprised of tiny slivers of natural green glass and clear colourless glass (RF14 and RF15). Neither fragment showed any evidence of having been heat-affected. Although it is possible that these two fragments

were Roman in date, their forms cannot be reconstructed nor do they appear to relate to the use of the pyre site.

Personal Ornament

Two burials contained items of personal ornament. Unurned burial [1044] contained a bead and a brooch within the cremation burial. The blue bead (RF10) exhibits distortion and discolouration, indicating it was exposed to high temperatures and therefore may well have been worn during the cremation process. Associated with the bead, but showing no visible signs of having been a pyre good, was an iron one piece brooch (RF11, Fig. 9) The fragmentary survival of the brooch, in five pieces, precludes certainty as to the exact type. Three traits, the six coil spring with the suggestion of a forward facing hook, the straight profile of the bow and the double perforated catch plate, suggest it could belong to the Camulodunum Type III Simple Gaulish brooches, possibly of wire/rod bow form (c.f. Olivier 1988, 39–40). This form of brooch occurs in both pre- and post-Conquest contexts in England. There are some indications that examples having a more elaborately perforated catch plate (c.f. Olivier 1988, fig.18 no. 22) may be more common during the first half of the 1st century AD, although the type continued in popularity into the third quarter of that century (Olivier 1988, 40). Although this identification of brooch type is tentative, and due to the damage to the catch plate it is uncertain if the perforations match the more elaborate pattern, it is possible that Burial [1044] may be one of the earlier burials in this small Dunstable cemetery.

Burial [1029] contained both an urn and an accessory vessel. Cremation urn [1027] was excavated in spits and contained the remains of two brooches, RF5 from spit 6 and RF7 from spit 7, (Fig. 9). RF5 comprised the lower portion of a brooch with enamelled decoration. The decoration, comprising cells of diamond and triangular shape, can be seen on brooches of both Headstud and Trumpet form. The rectangular sectioned bow and the close parallel of a brooch from Colchester (Crummy 1983, 13 and fig.9.65), suggest the Dunstable brooch may well be of Headstud form. As a type they are known to have been in use by the mid-Flavian period, as one with a similar pattern of enamelling was found at the Lunt in a pit dated no later than *c.* AD75 (Hobley 1973, 66, no. 6, fig 19; Cool 1998, 30).

The second brooch (RF7) is also incomplete but in this instance the upper portion of the brooch is represented (Fig. 9). This consists of a head with a double-perforated lug to secure the external chord and axial bar, one wing, half of a ten coil spring and short portion of a plano-convex bow. The upper bow has a central raised rib with groove either side extending the surviving length of the bow. The original surface of the brooch has been heavily disrupted by blistering corrosion products but there is some evidence to suggest that the central rib may have had transverse notching. Without the full extent of the brooch surviving it is difficult to be certain of the brooch form. It does, however, appear to belong to the general Colchester Derivative class. Colchester Derivative brooches with spring and double perforated lug are most common in post-Conquest contexts, remaining in use throughout the late 1st century AD (Olivier 1988, 46).

Within the general rite of Roman cremation the brooch is by far the predominant type of personal ornament in mid and late 1st century cremations, usually occurring without other types of ornament (Philpott 1991, 129). The distribution of cremations furnished with brooches shows a marked concentration in the former cremation-using area of south eastern England. It has been argued above that burial [1029] may well be a 'casket burial' and Philpott has noted that finds of personal ornament in casket burials are scarce, although examples are known (c.f. Philpott 1991, 14). The date range of the Colchester Derivative (RF7) and the probable Headstud (RF5) brooches suggests that this burial occurred sometime in the third quarter of the 1st century or the very early 2nd century AD. The fact that the top of one type of brooch and the bottom of the other type have been deposited seems more than accidental chance. These 'half' brooches may have been deliberately mutilated, an example of artefacts being ritually 'killed' before deposition (Haslegrove 1997, 66). Whether the same ritual was applied to the cremation urn and the possible casket remains uncertain.

Footwear

Four burials, two urned and two unurned, produced hobnails (Table 8). In three instances this comprised a single hobnail. Where this occurred in urned burials the hobnail was found within the urn fill. By contrast however unurned burial [1105] had a total of 24 hobnails within its fill.

The distribution of hobnails in cremations represents a rite concentrated in the smaller towns and rural settlements of the La Tene III area of south eastern England and may well represent continuation of a native custom of including leather shoes within burials (Philpott 1991, 165). Although iron-shod footwear was probably common amongst urban populations in the 1st century AD, there are few hobnail cremations that can be securely dated to this period, the majority dating to the 2nd century (Philpott 1991, 165). The increase in the numbers of 2nd century cremations with hobnails, and their concentration in smaller towns and rural settlements, may merely reflect the progressive spread of iron-shod footwear amongst non-urban communities.

It is questionable whether the instances of single hobnails in cremations [1042], [1025] and [1087] actually represent this rite. The presence of single hobnails within cremation urns at King Harry Lane, Verulamium was suggested to have occurred accidentally when the burnt remains were collected up from the pyre debris (Stead and Rigby 1989, 111; Philpott 1991, 166).

The quantity of hobnails from burial [1105] however does indicate intentional inclusion and may suggest a date in the latter half of the 1st to 2nd centuries for this burial. These hobnails do not appear to have been concentrated in one part of the burial but instead were found throughout the fill. The hobnails survived in extremely good condition, perhaps indicating that they were worn during the cremation rite and carefully retrieved from the pyre. Philpott's survey of grave furniture in burials with hobnails indicates that the level of furnishing is high, perhaps indicative of status burials (1991, 166). This does not appear to be the case with burial [1105] which was unurned, had no accessory vessels or any other artefacts beyond portions of two general purpose nails (see Nails, above).

Summary : registered finds

A suggested date can be offered for three of the ten cremations producing registered finds based upon the typological date of grave or pyre goods. The presence of a probable Camulodunum Type III Simple Gaulish brooch accompanying unurned burial [1044] suggests that this may be one of the earlier burials within the cemetery. The fragmentary survival of this brooch precludes certainty, but the suggestion of a more elaborately perforated catch plate may indicate a date in the first half of the 1st century AD, when this trait was more

common. The brooch type however did continue into use into the third quarter of the 1st century.

A second unurned burial, [1105], contained 24 hobnails seemingly worn during the cremation rite. There are few hobnail cremations that can be securely dated to the 1st century suggesting this burial may be later 1st century at the earliest, but more probably falls within the 2nd century when the number of such burials increased, in particular in smaller towns and rural settlements.

Urned burial [1029] is noteworthy not only for the range and quantity of items found, but also the manner of their deposition. It has been argued above that the assortment of small split spike loops and associated copper alloy wires and cast ring are the remains of a small casket, although the full complement of fittings is not present. The casket, or part of a casket, appears to have been placed within a cremation urn, the vessel also possibly incomplete at the point of burial. Two brooch halves, the upper half of a Colchester Derivative and the lower half of a Headstud, were also found within the urn. These half brooches may have been deliberately mutilated or 'killed' as part of the burial ritual. The date ranges of the brooch types, combined with known dates of casket burials, strongly suggests that burial [1029] dates from the third quarter of the 1st century or the very early 2nd century.

Catalogue of illustrations: registered finds by cremation

Cremation 1029 Urned

RF4 [1027] (Fig. 9) Cremation urn spit 5. Iron and copper alloy. Part of a simple curved drop handle. Remains of an iron split-spike loop with looped over copper alloy wire of circular diameter *in situ*. Copper alloy wire broken in two, but appears to curve, length about 51mm. One end is broken off. Appears to join RF6 from spit 6 to form complete drop handle. Length split-spike loop 21mm; diameter wire diameter 2.2mm. X-ray pl. 1 joins RF6 to form simple curved drop handle

RF6 [1027] (Fig. 9) Cremation Urn spit 6. Iron and copper alloy. Part of a simple curved drop handle. Split-spike loop with a copper alloy wire of circular section threaded through the head. Appears to join RF4 from spit 5 to form complete drop handle. Length split-spike loop 19.4mm; diameter wire 2.2. X-ray pl. 1 joins RF4 to form simple curved drop handle

RF5 [1027] (Fig. 9) Cremation Urn spit 6. Brooch. Copper alloy. Rectangular sectioned bow, tapering slightly to foot-knob, with a groove parallel to each edge and diamond and triangular cells, cells probably originally set with enamel. Three horizontal ridges are situated across lower bow, separated from the oval foot-knob with ridged upper surface, by a deep

concavity. Triangular catch plate. Length 41.5mm, width 9.3mm. X-ray pls. 1 & 3.

RF7 Cremation Urn [1027] spit 7 (Fig. 9). Copper alloy. Upper portion of brooch, comprising plano-convex sectioned bow and head of brooch with a lug to hold the external chord. Half of the spring survives, comprising 5 coils. X-ray indicates that the spring is secured by passing the external chord and axial bar through a lug with two perforations behind the head. The upper perforation retains the external chord *in situ*. The lower perforation appears to have worn through. The upper bow has a central raised rib with a groove either side. The single surviving wing appears to be semi-cylindrical, but the state of preservation precludes determining whether the wing was decorated. Length 40.7mm

**Iron and copper alloy. Split-spike loop and cast annular ring. An extensively corroded iron split-spike loop is attached, via corrosion products, to the brooch coil. About one third of a cast copper alloy annular ring is threaded through the head of the split-spike loop. The annular ring has decorative ridging. Length split-spike loop 27mm; Diameter cast ring 28mm, width 4mm. X-ray pls. 1 & 3

Cremation [1044] Unurned

RF11 [1043] (Fig. 9) Cremation cut fill. Brooch. Iron. Incomplete. Simple Gaulish wire/rod bow brooch(?). One piece brooch with spring of 6 coils and possible external chord with remnants of forward facing hook. Plain narrow rod-like bow with straight profile(?), tapering towards foot. Catch plate double perforated. Short section of pin survives. In 5 pieces, extensively corroded and shape distorted. Estimated length 65-70mm. X-ray pl. 2

ANIMAL BONES

Kevin Rielly

Introduction

A small number of animal bones were recovered from features associated with the early Roman cemetery. Following the description of these remains, an attempt is made to interpret their presence in relation to the obviously ritual nature of this site. The site assemblage was recorded onto an animal bone database using Microsoft Access, this was devised for the environmental section of the Museum of London Specialist Services. This database is divided into various headings, as follows:- species, skeletal part, fragmentation (the proportion of the skeletal part represented), sex, age (a general age if possible, as well as teeth eruption/wear and epiphyses fusion), size and various modifications as butchery, burning, gnawing, working and pathology. The tooth eruption/wear uses the method devised by Grant (1975 and 1982), while the measurements are essentially

taken from von den Driesch (1976). A bone was deemed as measurable if it was a whole limb bone (bird and mammal domesticates), or if it included an epiphysis which could be classed as belonging to an adult. This includes mandibles where the adult third molar is in wear and various limb bones with fused intermediate and/or late epiphyses. Approximate ages for the tooth eruption and epiphyses fusion sequences are taken from Schmid (1972, 75 and 77) and Amorosi (1989, 98 and 99). A large proportion of this data will be detailed in the following text, and is otherwise available in its complete form in the site archive.

Description of the bones

Cremations and associated features

Animal bones were recovered from seven of the cremation pits (Table 10), all within the major concentration of these features in the centre of the site. In addition, a few bones were found in the fill (1063) of an elongated pit, [1062], interpreted as a bustum. These date between the early 1st century up to the 2nd century, defined by the following phases:- 1. pre Conquest-early 1st century AD; 2. post Conquest-1st century AD; and 3. 1st-2nd century AD. The various animal bone assemblages include those which are clearly associated with the burial activity and those which may represent redeposited food waste. The former category includes the calcined remains of an adult chicken (all limb bones are fused), found within the fill (1027), of the cremation vessel in pit [1025]. As there are both wing and leg parts, it can be assumed that this may represent a whole carcass or at least a dressed carcass i.e. after removal of the head, neck and feet. In addition, two calcined pig backleg joints were found within the two fills of pit [1103] (the same sieved fills also providing a collection of unburnt mouse/vole fragments). Each represents a subadult individual (distal tibia unfused but the size of the bones suggests these animals are probably second rather than first year animals), possibly taken from a dressed carcass and deposited as a whole joint. The single bone, an unburnt sheep-size rib from (1107), was also taken from a cremation vessel, [1109]. This could represent the remains of a food offering, perhaps associated with a culmination event following the deposition of the human remains. The other fills from cremations, [1005], [1042], [1046] and [1087], include a cattle foot bone and then one each with single fish vertebrae and another with

Fill	Cremation/ feature	Phase	Description/recovery (H hand, S sieved)
1004	1005	3	Cyprinid vertebra (S)
1027	1025	1	Chicken coracoid, ulna and tibia, all calcined (H)
1040	1042	2	Cattle metatarsus (H)
1045	1046	3	Clupeid vertebra (S)
1063		1	Small mammal vertebra (H)
1084	1087	1	2 amphibian vertebrae (S)
1097, 1102	1103	3	1097 – Pig femur, fibula, patella and tibia, all calcined (H); unidentified bird phalange (S); 4 mouse/vole teeth and a mouse/vole longbone fragment (S); 1102 – pig femur, tibia and calcaneus, all calcined; 13 mouse/vole teeth and a mouse/vole femur (S)
1107		2	Sheep-size rib (H)

Table 10: Cremation and possible cremation animal bones

two amphibian vertebrae. Notably, these small species, as well as the small rodent bones from [1103], were all taken from sieved soil samples. The small rodents and amphibians may represent the accidental inclusion of wild fauna within these archaeological deposits. The other bones could represent the residual remains of a general spread of animal bone waste, not associated with the cemetery. The cattle foot bone, in particular, is clearly not food waste and therefore unlikely to be a grave good.

The bustum fill, (1063), provided a cat- or a dog-sized vertebra from a young individual. While this is an unlikely grave good, its association with cremated remains, albeit redeposited, perhaps suggests a ritual rather than mundane explanation for its presence.

Conclusion: animal bones

The interpretation of animal bones as cremation grave goods is clearly dependant on the state of the bone, particularly if calcined, and its location. Bones recovered within a cremation vessel, even when unburnt, are more likely than not to represent grave goods. The limitation of calcined grave goods to chicken and pig is comparable to the evidence from the various cemeteries located around the periphery of Roman London, and in particular those on the eastern side (Barber and Bowsher 2000, 72–76). In addition, chicken is often represented by relatively complete carcasses and pig by select joints. However, at the aforementioned cemeteries, pig is generally represented by foreleg rather than hindleg joints. It is notable that pig and, especially, chicken also form the major component of the animal grave goods found in inhumation burials within the London cemeteries (ibid, 131; Watson 2003, 16; McKinder 2000, 21).

The absence of animal grave goods from the other cremations could suggest some variation in burial practises. Alternatively, their absence may relate more to the quantity of bone removed from the pyre (see Barber and Bowsher 2000, 76). These same cemeteries also provided a variety of unburnt animal bones, many from cremation vessels, strongly suggesting the inclusion of food offerings other than those burnt on the pyre.

It is of interest that no animal grave goods were recovered from the inhumation burials. Again, in comparison to the London cemeteries, there were a considerably greater proportion of cremations than inhumations with such grave goods. Thus, their absence at this site may simply relate to the fact that an insufficient number of graves were present on site to provide a meaningful sample.

The other bones found in the cremation fills, discounting the small rodents and amphibians, could represent residual remains of general refuse disposal. This was postulated as an explanation for the cattle foot bone from (1040), cut [1042] and it could also explain the presence of fishbones. While it may be significant that these bones were only found in cremation fills, it should be pointed out that their distribution may relate more to the sieving strategy (limited to certain cremation fills) rather than an actual pattern of deposition.

CHARCOAL REMAINS

Phil Austin

Introduction

Six wood charcoal samples recovered from excavation of cremation deposits at Dunstable, Bedfordshire (site code NVD04).

Methodology

Each sample was dry sieved to separate the remains into >4mm and 4–2mm size categories. Fragments >4mm typically retain sufficient anatomical characteristics to enable secure identification. Fragments 4–2mm are less likely to retain diagnostic features but can often still be identified. Below 2mm fragments cannot be securely identified. For this assessment only fragments >4mm were examined. From initial inspection fragment characteristics, and features visible to the naked eye, suggested that the majority of fragments in each sample were probably *Quercus* sp. (Oak). For this reason the least ‘*Quercus*-like’ fragments were preferentially selected for detailed examination. Fragment preparation and examination follows standard procedures as described in Hather (2000). Nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

Results

The findings of this assessment are summarized in Table 11. Of the 60 fragments examined, 59 were identified as Oak and a single fragment, from sample <16> (1084) cut [1087], was identified as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Both taxa are deciduous hardwoods indigenous to southern Britain and were the only taxa identified. Fragment preservation in most instances was good. Mineral deposits were present in the vessels of several fragments but not so severe that features were obscured hampering identification. Thermal degradation was occasionally more severe than average, but tended to be localised. None of the examined fragments exhibited signs of ‘vitrification’; the most acute form of thermal degradation that results in ‘glass like’ brittle fragments in which anatomical features are homogenised.

Context	Samp/ feature	Frag count (est.)	ID (Qty)
1110	23	900	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (10)
1107	–	40	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (10)
1084	16	800	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (9) <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> (1)
1063	14/1 (west)	1400	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (10)
1063	14/2 (east)	450	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (10)
1063	14/3 (mid)	1550	<i>Quercus</i> sp. (10)

Table 11: Charcoal species

Comments: charcoal

The findings of this assessment suggest that the large majority of fragments in each sample are Oak and that this was the principal wood used. Both

Oak and Beech have excellent burning properties and have long been valued as fuel woods. Unlike Beech, Oak is unlikely to have grown on the thin calcareous soils that characterise much of the area and it is not present locally today. This suggests that Oak was preferentially selected over other, equally good, fuel woods which were probably available locally.

DISCUSSION

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CEMETERY

The cemetery lies approximately 240m to the north-east of the Roman Road of Watling Street. How prominent the road would have been when the cemetery was first used is unclear. There is certainly more evidence for the late Iron Age and early Roman period in the northern part of Dunstable, than the remainder of the town suggesting that the cemetery was located near to a small dispersed local population settled in the north, rather than near the cross roads.

The chronology of the site is difficult to ascertain due to the lack of stratigraphy, the mix of pottery fabrics and wares which range in date from the late 1st century BC to the early 2nd century AD, and the lack of dating for the inhumation burials. The cemetery appears to have been in use during the 1st and 2nd century AD. The lack of datable finds from the inhumation burials means that the chronological correlation with the cremations remains unclear. The votive vessel recovered from inhumation burial [1070] dates to the first century AD which falls within the general dates of the cemetery. The latest burials on site date to the 2nd century. The inclusion of Verulamium Region Ware (R03A) dated to the early to mid 2nd century within cremation burials [1021] suggests that is one of the latest burials on site.

CEMETERY LAYOUT

The eight inhumations excavated on site may have been laid out into rows (Fig. 4). All of the grave cuts are on the same alignment, north-east to south-west, suggesting deliberate spatial placement. The graves are also aligned parallel to Icknield Way and perpendicular to Watling Street which may suggest that the inhumations were positioned respecting either or both of these.

Towards the centre of the excavated cemetery was a group of 11 cremations which seemed to form a small cluster (Fig. 4). The remaining cremations were slightly more dispersed across the cemetery, with one cremation burial some 20m west of the central cluster. The central cluster may indicate a social grouping, or high status group, with decreasing status or non-related burials interned further away from the central group. The cremation detached from the central focus of the cemetery may be the start of a second group that extends beyond the excavation area to the west. Only three burials had grave markers. There is little to link these burials in terms of wealth, status or spatially that might suggest why they had markers. The use of markers however suggests a wish to indicate certain burials, perhaps to help signal areas already in use or possibly as location markers for visitors.

FUNERARY PRACTICE

No pyres were recorded on site but evidence of the pyre was recorded in several cremation burials. Pyre goods were recovered in eight cremations, whilst charcoal recovered from the site suggests that Oak was the chosen wood used in the cremation pyre. Several nails recovered from three cremations suggest that the timber used in the pyre had previously been used elsewhere. Evidence of hobnails and a bead suggest that some of the corpses might have been dressed or covered in personal belongings, whilst two burials suggest that food offerings were also put on the pyre.

Only one *in situ* cremation and burial was recorded on site, a bustum. Again evidence was recovered suggesting the use of oak as the construction timber for the pyre which would have been burnt along with the corpse and then buried within the linear pit below. Glass slivers within the fill suggest that some sort of glass vessel was placed within the burial, possibly already broken in line with the ritual killing of the grave goods recorded in other cremation burials.

BURIAL PRACTICE

Due to the relatively small sample of burials on site a population-based study was not reasonable to pursue. Only one other site, towards the northern

outskirts of Dunstable, has produced evidence for the internment of burials in the early Roman period. That cemetery is likely to have been related to the settlement based in Puddlehill which might suggest that the cemetery at the New Venue also relates to a small settlement based locally, rather than being linked to any settlement near the cross roads to the south.

Not all of the cremations on site could be sexed or aged but where this could be established, the age ranged from 26–45+ with both genders represented. No infant nor juveniles were recorded in the burials, but one neonate was recorded in one cremation burial interned with an adult male. Any interpretation based on gender and age is restricted, as it cannot be assumed that this site represents the whole of the cemetery.

The status of the burials is hard to determine. Assumptions that burials with grave goods have a higher status than those that do not, might be misleading. The layout of the inhumation burials is very formulaic with no one burial standing out. The inclusion of a pottery vessel in one grave may have ritual connotations rather than status related ones. The central cluster of cremations does seem to include the 'richer' of the burials though this is not exclusive as burial [1029] is located towards the north-east of the cluster. The central cluster of 11 burials contained all but one of the multi-vessel cremations and most of the cremations with none ceramic grave goods (Fig. 5), which might suggest that this central group might be linked by a similar social status or burial tradition.

The breaking of a vessel before internment or the use of broken and used vessels appears to be a prominent ritual tradition amongst the burials on site. This is echoed in the 'killing' of the brooches interned in two of the cremation burials. There may also be a ritual aspect to the use of older and more local or traditional pottery as the main cremation vessel. The community may have used this as reverence to their ancestors or as an indicator of their heritage (communal identity) in the face of new social change.

DISUSE OF THE CEMETERY

The cemetery was active in the 1st–2nd century AD. After the 2nd century the cemetery fell out of use with no later cremations or inhumations being

interned. The site itself seems to have been totally abandoned as no later dated Roman features were recorded on site. This suggests that the knowledge of the cemetery location was probably passed on through generations, thus upkeeping the principle of not living in the vicinity of an area dedicated to the dead. It also follows a general trend for Roman Dunstable in the abandonment of the northern part of the town. Both the site at Puddlehill (Castle Hill) and the site at the former Queensway Hall, directly east of the site, were abandoned in the 2nd century suggesting the focus of the settlement or town when entering the 3rd century had changed. This shift is also reflected in the Friars Field site. Only a small amount of possible domestic pitting and deep wells was recorded on the Friary Field site dating to the 1st–2nd century AD. After the second century the Friary Field site was used as a cemetery until the 5th century, mainly for the internment of inhumation burials.

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