

# AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT BOTTLEDUMP CORNER, TATTENHOE, MILTON KEYNES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

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WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY M FARLEY, F PRITCHARD AND A WALDRON.

*Artefacts associated with five inhumations were recovered during the re-alignment of the A421 Buckingham-Bletchley road. The finds are consistent with a small Anglo-Saxon cemetery of seventh-century date. It is likely that evidence for additional burials has been completely removed by ploughing.*

## *Discovery and Investigations*

At the beginning of March 1992 the County Museum Archaeological Service was alerted when local metal detectorists informed the Museum that inhumations, together with a number of apparently Saxon artefacts, were present at a location known as Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe, where the ground surface had been stripped preparatory to the laying of a drainage Line to the north of the new A421 Buckingham-Bletchley road alignment, NGR SP 8294 3281 (Fig. 1). After an initial site visit, a Home Office licence for the exhumation of human remains was obtained by the Museum and the Coroner was informed.

Construction work on the part of the road where archaeology had been identified was halted for four and a half days while investigations took place. A machine was used to strip and clean an area of approximately 70 × 30 metres around the burials. Co-operation with the metal detectorists ensured that a detailed search was made of this area for further artefacts. Initial observations had suggested that grave cuts would be difficult or impossible to see in the boulder clay substrate, and that discovery of further burials would be best accomplished by detection of any metal artefacts buried with them. Detailed investigation of two of the areas where the

metal artefacts had first been discovered revealed human skeletal remains; a third individual (without grave goods) had also been found at the time of the initial site visit. A fourth inhumation was discovered during stripping of the larger area, and the grave goods associated with a fifth burial were found with a metal detector following removal of the topsoil dump on the southern side of the stripped area (Fig. 2).

## *Site Location*

The cemetery lies close to the southern boundary of the parish of Tattenhoe. This boundary is defined by the line of the Roman Road from Magiovinium to Alchester, which in this section is generally but not entirely straight. The placename Bottledump Corner is derived from a building some 750m further west at the junction with the road to Newton Longville; in 1801 the field in which the cemetery was situated was called Plowd Piece (Selby Estate Map, BM Add Mss 37071 D; reproduced in Croft and Mynard 1993). The ground slopes gently down from south to north, meeting a small stream in a slight valley some 300m to the northwest. There are no contemporary Saxon settlements known within the immediate vicinity.

**The following correction to Figures 1 and 2 of this article appeared in Records volume 37, along with the corrected figures below.**

**CORRECTION:**

In the article in Vol 36 on the *Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bottledump Corner*, an unfortunate confusion led to Figure 2 being omitted altogether, and its caption attributed to half of Figure 1. The correct figures are now published on pp 1–2 of the present volume.

# ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT BOTTLEDUMP CORNER: A CORRECTION

The correct versions of Figs. 1 and 2, and their captions, appear on this and the following page.

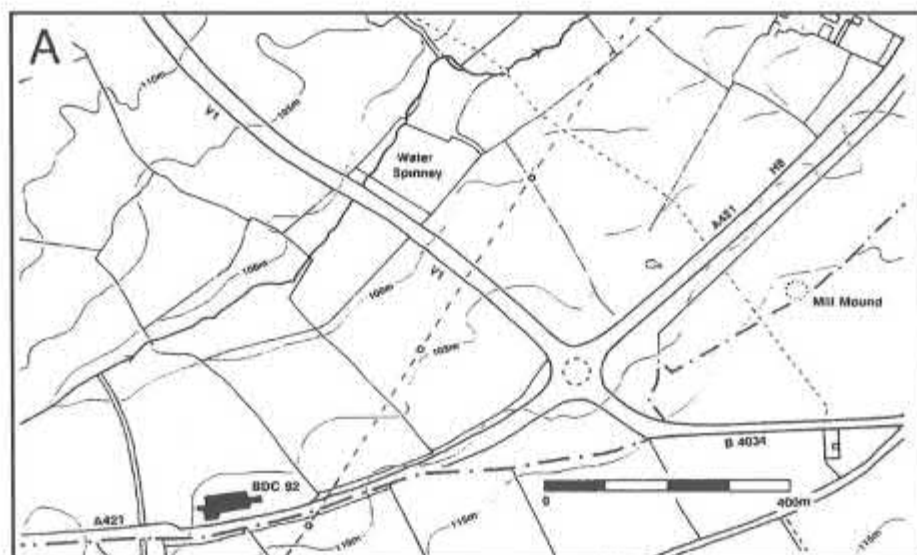
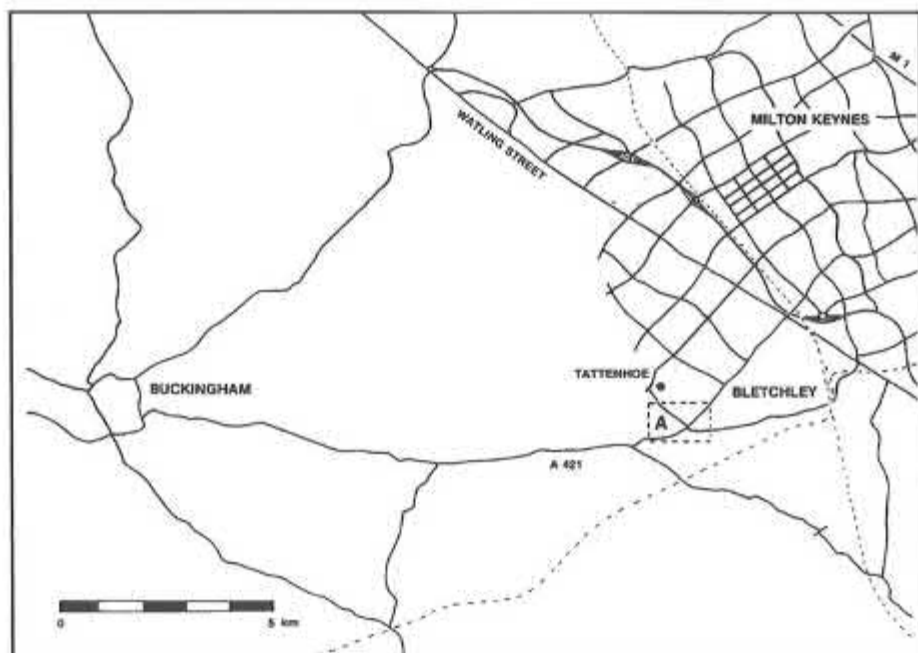
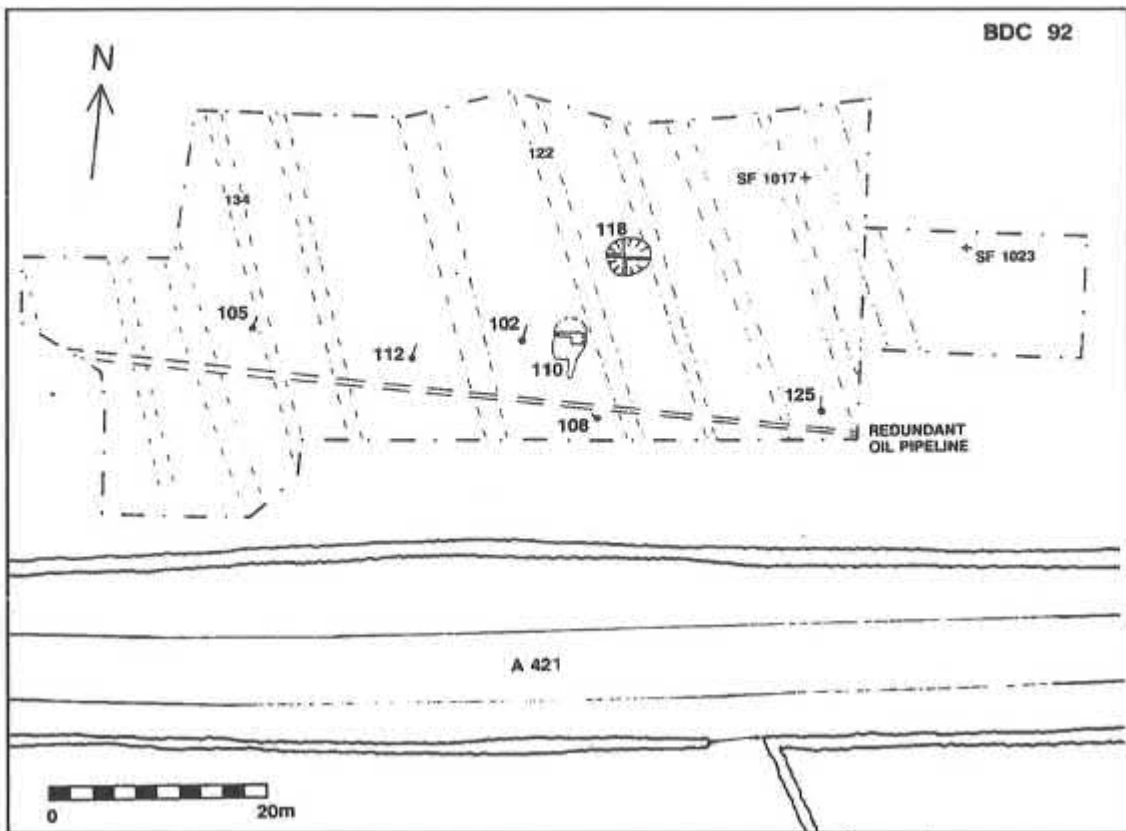


Fig.1: Location of Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes.



**Fig. 2:** Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe; Plan of area excavated showing ridge and furrow and position of finds and burials.

### *The Remains*

The remains consisted of five burials and three further features which did not appear to be associated with the burials.

The burials were all of adults, as far as could be ascertained, and were all aligned approximately north-south with the head to the south. Each was within about 0.20–0.30m of the modern ground surface. Relict ridge and furrow was faintly visible over the entire area, and it was clear that medieval and later ploughing, not to mention the machinestripping during the initial stages of road construction, had been responsible for the severe post-depositional fragmentation, compression and partial disarticulation of the skeletal remains. The underlying geology comprised chalky boulder clay, and the soil conditions themselves were not conducive to good preservation of the bone. It was

not certain what pathological or physiological evidence, if any, had been preserved in these circumstances, and the specialist bone report confirms the limited conclusions which could be drawn from the material.

The individual burials are described under the context numbers allocated on site (Fig. 3):

**BURIAL 102** was an extended inhumation orientated north-northeast to south-southwest with the head (approximately) to the south. Although extremely fragmentary, substantial parts of the skeleton were present. Smaller bones (eg digits), vertebrae, most of the ribs and the ends of the longbones were generally poorly preserved or absent. There had been marked post-depositional displacement of the body. There were no grave goods associated with this burial, which was apparently female.

**BURIAL 105** was aligned similarly to 102. Parts of the skull, ribs, lower vertebrae, right and left humerus and left femur were present although badly crushed. It had been buried with a spear along the right side of the body; an iron knife and a small copper alloy buckle were also found near the left hand. The finds assemblage would denote a male, which is also likely on an anatomical basis

**BURIAL 108** appeared to be aligned northwest-southeast, although so little of the inhumation had survived that this was difficult to determine with any accuracy. An oil pipeline trench had destroyed most of this burial. Only the skull, which was badly crushed and had been further damaged by machining and a few loose bone fragments from the upper part of the body (including part of one humerus) were present. One bead of green glass, two of blue glass, and two of amethyst, together with a copper alloy pin, were recovered from around the neck area. During the excavation of these items, minute fragments of silver were observed in the clay matrix, and nodules of this clay from the neck area were lifted for more detailed study. X-rays of the nodules revealed the presence of a number of silver wire and silver sheet fragments, identified after conservation as the remains of a necklace, consisting of silver rings and a pendant. These finds suggest that the individual was female.

**BURIAL 112** was also poorly preserved, with the lower limbs and most of the left arm largely missing. This individual had been buried with a spear at the left side (only a few socket fragments remaining) and a knife, found in the region of the left elbow, indicating a male burial.

**BURIAL 125** was in an extremely fragmentary state, consisting of parts of the skull, left femur and left side of the pelvic girdle, a few ribs, and a long bone (humerus) which was clearly displaced. The individual had been buried with a spear on the right side; again, the artefact suggests a male inhumation.

A further spearhead recovered by the metal detectorists was not associated with any skeletal remains, and it was concluded that either the spearhead or the skeleton, with which, presumably, it had originally been associated, had been displaced by ploughing (Fig. 8). Additional items of metalwork (SF 1004, 1005, 1006, 1023) and six sherds of pottery were recovered from the area which had been stripped by machine, but there is no reason to assume that all, or even any, of these items were related to the cemetery.

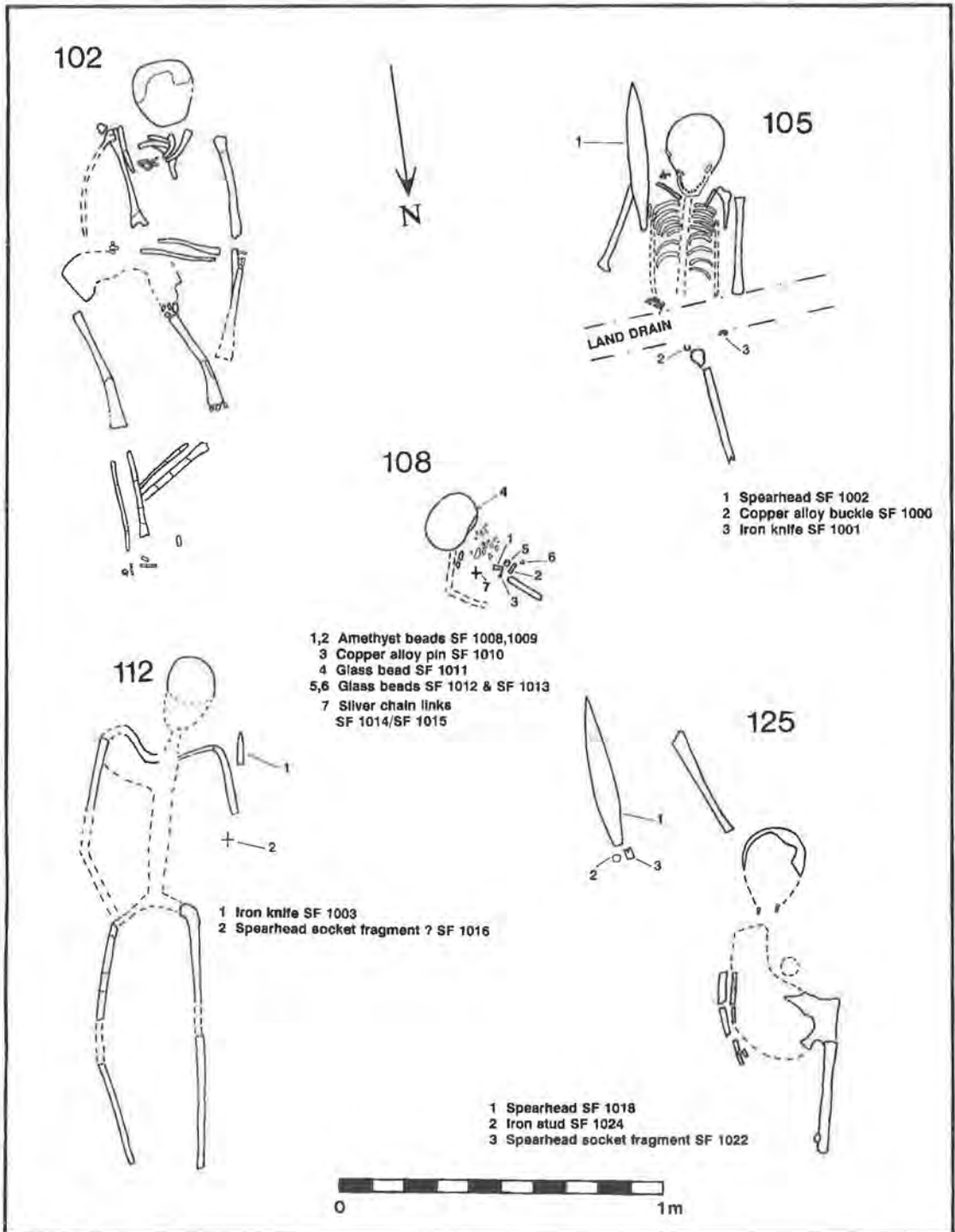
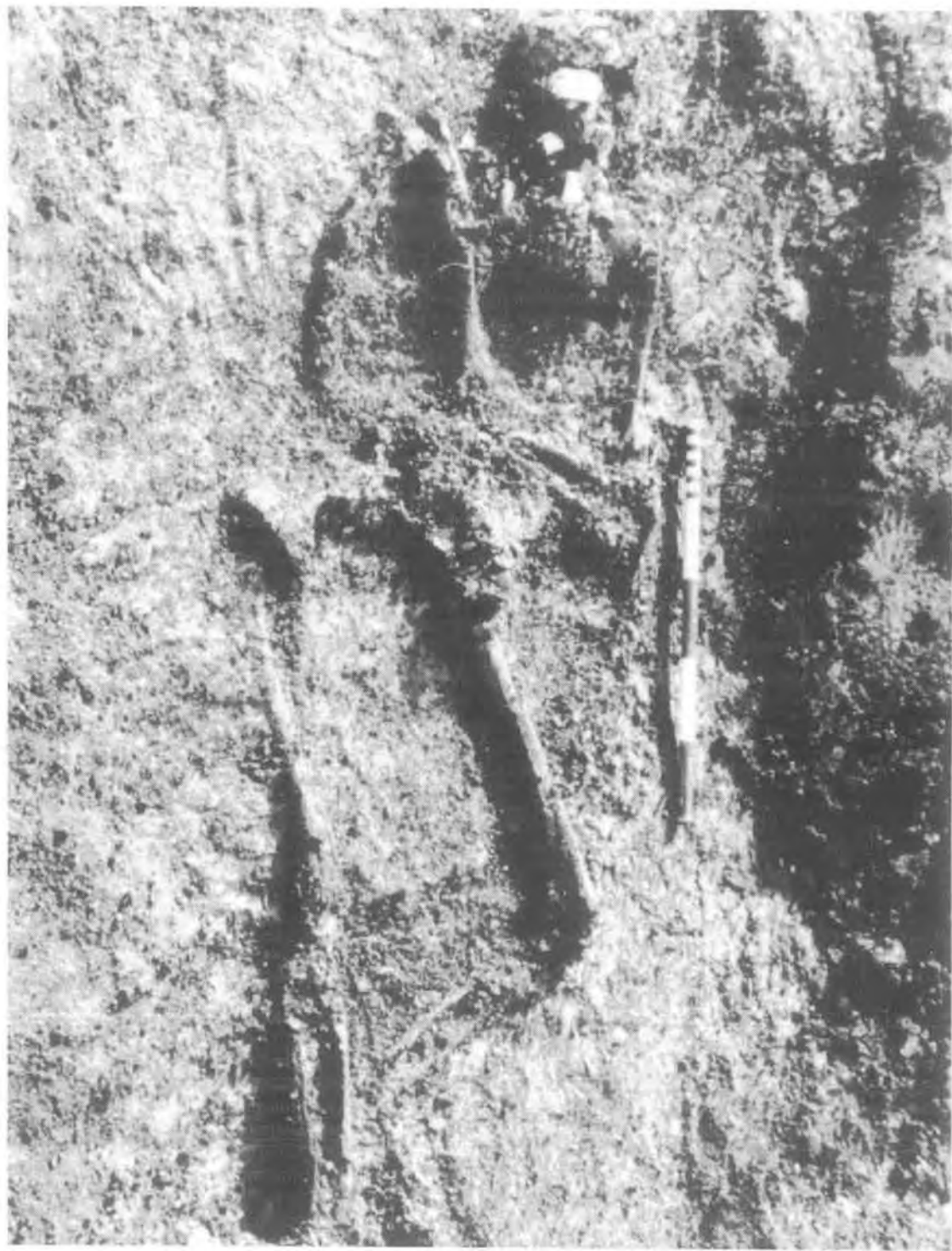


Fig. 3: Inhumations and associated grave goods.



**Fig. 4:** Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bottledump Corner, Tattenhoe. Burial 102 *in situ*. (photo A. Hunn)



Other features were also recorded during the investigations which do not appear to be associated with the cemetery, as follows:

A shallow depression (118), 3.9 × 3.3m and 0.09m deep, with a fill of silty clay and occasional small stones, may have been a pit although the edges were not well defined and it is possible that the feature was natural in origin. The fill contained two Romano-British sherds, and others were recovered from a small patch of grey humic soil (121) immediately east of depression 118.

An irregularly shaped feature (110), maximum dimensions 4.27 × 3.15m and 0.30m deep was probably a treehole. During a late stage in the investigations, when construction work had recommenced on the site, a pipetrench was cut through this feature, and a possible ditch 123, (not shown on plan) was noted in the side of the pipe-trench directly beneath it. The presence of a landdrain and the effects of ridge and furrow, to say nothing of the constraints posed by the activities of the contractors, meant that this feature could only be cursorily investigated. The greater part of the fill (context 127) differed from that of the supposed tree-hole (110) in that it contained occasional charcoal fragments. In addition a fragment of prehistoric pottery (described below) was recovered from a depth of 0.81m below the stripped surface.

### *The Skeletal Remains*

by Tony Waldron, PhD, MD

(Palaeopathology Study Group, Institute of Archaeology, London)

The five burials recovered from the site were poorly preserved and greatly fragmented *post mortem*, and the bone surface showed considerable signs of attrition. Each of the skeletons was assigned an age and sex using standard anthropological techniques (Workshop of European Anthropologists, 1980, 517–549). All skeletons were from adults, but only two were complete enough to ascertain a probable sex, one probably male and one probably female. Both these individuals were aged between 25 and 35 years at death, one other was aged between 35 and 45 and the two remaining were older, aged at least 45. In no case were any of the long bones intact and so no estimations of height could be made. A brief description of each skeleton is given below:

**BURIAL 102** This skeleton was represented by fragments of skull including the left petrous temporal bone and left mastoid; a portion of the left mandible and all three molars *in situ* was also present. From the morphol-

ogy of the mastoid process it seemed likely that this was a female skeleton. Mid-shaft fragments of all the major long bones, the metacarpal metatarsals and phalanges were present and there were also some parts of the pelvis. There was little of the axial skeleton present but there were portions of scapular, clavicle and ribs. There were twenty-six teeth amongst the assemblage, 5 incisors, 3 canines, 8 pre-molars and 10 molars. One of the second molars had caries. The dental wear suggested an age at death of between 25 and 35 years.

**BURIAL 105** There were skull and mandible fragments from this skeleton, including the right petrous temporal bone and the left mandibular head. Thirty teeth were present, 7 incisors, 3 canines, 8 premolars and 12 molars; none was caried. Mid-shaft and distal fragments of the left humerus were present together with mid-shaft fragments of the right. The proximal part of the left ulna was also present and other fragments of radius and ulna. From the hands, portions of the metacarpals were found with two middle and one proximal phalanx. Of the vertebrae, only a fragment of the atlas and the odontoid peg of the axis were identified. A mid-shaft section of the left femur was present together with the left femoral head, the diameter of which was 48mm, suggesting that this individual was probably male. From the dental wear the age of death was estimated to be between 25 and 35 years.

**BURIAL 108** This was an adult skeleton of unknown sex represented by a number of skull fragments including one petrous temporal bone. A total of twenty-four teeth was present, 8 incisors, 3 canines, 5 pre-molars and 8 molars; two of the molars had caries and some of the incisors had considerable deposits of calculus on them. The teeth were extremely worn indicating that this individual had been at least 45 years old at death. There were also some unidentified long bone fragments present.

**BURIAL 112** This skeleton was from another relatively old individual judging from the wear on the few teeth which had survived. There were six in all, 1 incisor, 1 canine, 1 premolar and 3 molars; none was caried. Fragments of the skull and mandible and all of the principal leg bones were present. There was in addition a small part of the left femoral head with a normal articular surface. The skeleton could not be assigned a sex.

**BURIAL 125** This was an adult skeleton of unknown sex. Parts of the skull, including both petrous temporal bones were present and five teeth, 4 pre-molars and 1 molar. The wear on the teeth indicated an age at death of between 35 and 45 years. Few other bones were represented but there were portions of the left femur, including part of the head with a normal articular surface, parts of the pelvis and some other fragments which were probably from the humerus.

In so small a sample of skeletons, especially where most of the joint surfaces had not survived, it was not surprising that no pathological changes were found in the bones. It was notable, however, that two of the five showed evidence of dental caries. Other authors have also found that dental caries was common in this period. Moore and Corbett (1971, 151–168), in what is still probably the most comprehensive study of dental disease in Anglo-Saxon times, found a caries rate of 7–18%, depending on age. Even though based on extremely small numbers, the prevalence of dental caries found in the present skeletons (20%) corresponds reasonably well with this data.

### *The Finds*

Artefacts recovered from four of the burials are listed below, together with a few finds from associated but unstratified contexts. In addition to the finds described here, a small quantity of fragmentary and unidentifiable ironwork, as well as a Romano-British coin (possibly 1st or 2nd century) and a post-medieval button, were found (unillustrated). A total of six sherds of pottery were also collected. No Anglo-Saxon fabrics were identified; at least three sherds were Romano-British and one was Bronze Age.

#### **BURIAL 105** (*Small Finds, SF 1000, 1002, 1003*)

##### **SF 1000** Copper Alloy Buckle

Found close to head of left femur, towards central pelvis area. 20mm × 27mm. The buckle (Fig. 4) has a plain oval loop frame and rectangular plate. The latter comprised two thin plates held together by three rivets; the underside has crumbled away. (Some shattered fragments have been retained). During conservation, traces of a white metal ("tinning") were noticed on the fastener pin, and organic remains on the buckle plate (probably representing the former attachment of a leather strap). A rather less complete buckle, but of striking similarity nonetheless, is that illustrated from Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Hyslop 1963, 183). The relatively short distance (approximately seven miles) between Tattenhoe and Chamberlains Barn, and the strong similarity between the two buckles, suggest that they may well have been manufactured in the same workshop.

##### **SF 1001** Iron Knife

Located adjacent to head of left femur, 77mm × 15mm. Badly corroded small, tanged iron knife with snapped-off point. Organic deposits (probably wood) were identified

adhering to the tang of the handle during examination under a microscope (Fig. 5).

##### **SF 1002** Iron spearhead

Lying across right shoulder/upper chest of skeleton.

415mm × 45mm. Badly corroded socketed iron spearhead, together with four loose fragments of broken socket and the tip of the point. On the underside of the blade only, traces of mineralized straw were identified during conservation. Abundant mineralized wood particles were exposed on the inside of the socket during conservation, these very likely representing a former shaft. Analysis by A Miles revealed that the wood fibres were from a ring-porous hardwood, possibly ash (*Fraxinus* species)

The spearhead represents the largest category (C3) of Anglo-Saxon leaf-shaped blades (measuring between 300 and 500mm), identified by Swanton (1973, 55–57), with a slender profile and the socket taking up a relatively small fraction of its entire length. The majority of such spearheads probably belonged to the 7th century (Fig. 4).

#### **BURIAL 108** (*Small Finds, SF 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015*)

##### **SF 1008** Amethyst Bead (Necklace component)

Raised by machine from upper chest area of skeleton. 22.5mm × 11mm × 9mm. Translucent purple colour. Elongated tear-drop shape, ground and polished. The longitudinal hole has a consistent round section but displays the sharp bend or "nick" typical of these beads, the result of boring at both ends (Fig. 5).

##### **SF 1009** Amethyst Bead (Necklace component)

From upper chest area of skeleton. 22mm × 10mm × 9mm. Translucent purple colour. Elongated tear-drop shape, ground and polished (Fig. 5).

##### **SF 1011** Glass Bead (Necklace component)

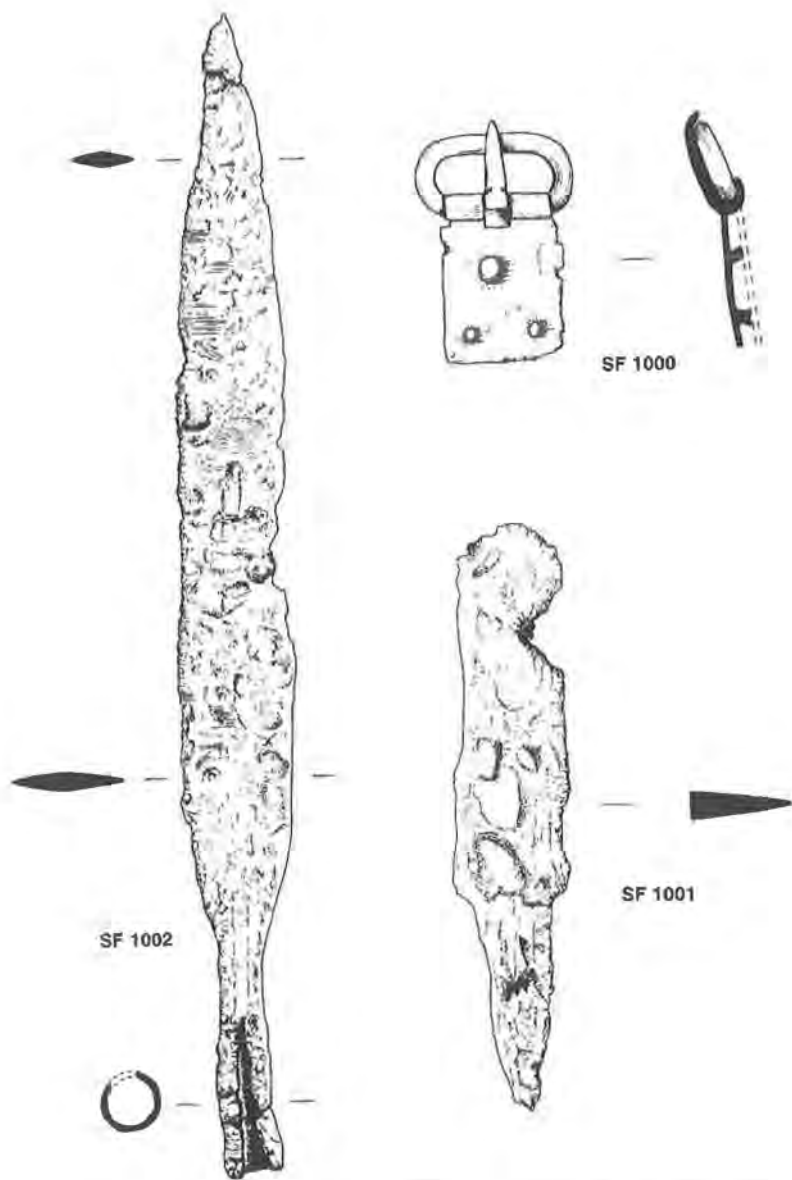
Found immediately to the left of skull. 8mm × 6mm. Opaque green colour. Short cylindrical bead with large, (4mm diameter), round stringing hole (Fig. 5).

##### **SF 1012** Glass Bead (Necklace component)

From upper chest area of skeleton. 12mm × 45mm. Translucent pale blue colour. Annular bead with a relatively small, (1.5mm diameter), round stringing hole (Fig. 6).

##### **SF 1013** Glass Bead (Necklace component)

Unstratified, but in general area of skeleton. 8mm ×



**Fig. 5:** Artefacts associated with Burial 105 (SF numbers 1000, 1001, both scale 1:1; 1002. *Scale 1:3*).

3mm. Dark/Navy blue colour. Annular bead with a relatively large, (4mm diameter) stringing hole. (Fig. 6).

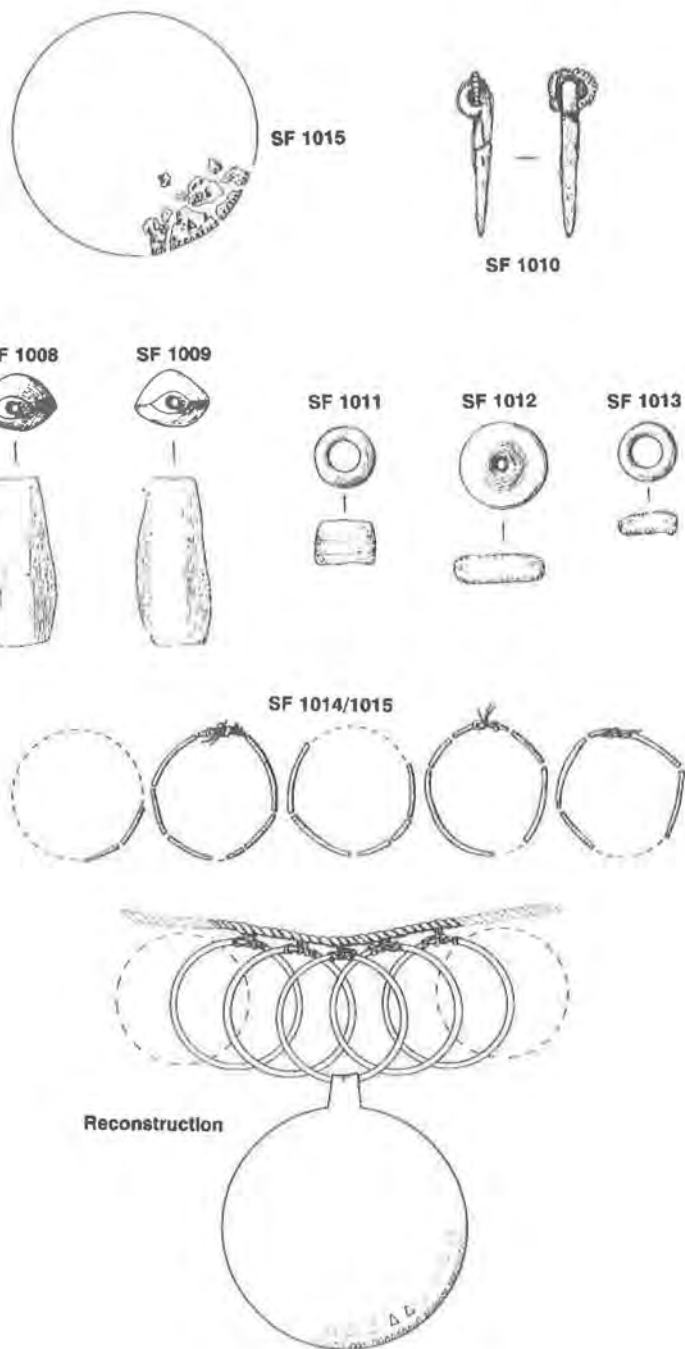
**SF 1010 Silver Pin (Dress accessory)**

From upper chest area of skeleton. 22mm long, 6.5 x 5mm wide head. Small, damaged pin, the head consisting of a tiny circular "cogged" plate surrounding shattered slivers of silver sheet. Examination under the micro-

scope reveals unmineralised ginger-coloured spun fibres caught between the shattered plate and the pin loop, and also mineralised woven textile (remains not included in Ms Pritchard's report below) adhering to the pin stem. (Fig. 6).

**SF 1014/1015 Silver Chain Links (Necklace component)**

Five separate clay nodules, each containing fragments of



**Fig. 6:** Artefacts associated with Burial 108 (SF numbers 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015), and reconstruction of necklace. (Scale 1:1).

silver wire rings, were lifted from the upper chest region of the skeleton and later X-rayed. Conservation work involved isolating the rings from their clay environment before treatment.

Estimated diameter of individual chain links, in the region of 18mm. Silver ring fragments, comprising at least five individual rings, were identified.

Three of the ring fragments each possess an isolated patch of woven organic fibres bound around them, and in one case these fibres are clearly knotted. On two pieces of silver wire the fibres, mineralised by silver corrosion, are anchored between the tightly interwoven twists of the terminals. The fibres almost certainly represent the remains of the knot which attached each silver link to a beadstring (Fig. 6).

#### **SF 1014/1015 Silver Pendant Fragments (Necklace component)**

Three of the five clay nodules lifted from the upper chest region of the skeleton were found to contain dozens of minute particles of sheet silver after X-ray. Triangular, stamped decoration was revealed on nine of the fragments, which were identified as the remains of a decorated pendant, with an estimated diameter of around 32mm, and were lying only 3mm away from the silver necklace rings. Only these larger decorated fragments possessed sufficient detail and information to allow identification, partial reconstruction and stylistic analysis to take place. There is evidence of decoration on several other fragments, but this is obscured by thick corrosion encrustation.

The pin (Fig. 6) is probably one of a pair of linked pins, designed to be worn just below the chin, fastening together items of clothing worn immediately underneath a cloak or shroud.

It is not known how many silver rings were originally attached to the one beadstring, but it is quite possible that a number of additional silver rings were not recovered. The wire rings were strung side by side and appear to have overlapped one another. Two rings examined in one clay block suggest that each ring's attachment to the string was as little as 14mm from its neighbour. Silver rings found in an Anglo-Saxon grave (no.23) at Lower Brook Street, Winchester (Biddle 1990, 630) are arranged in a similar fashion. Those, however, have a slightly larger diameter (22.5mm average) than these rings recovered from Tattenhoe, but have similar inter-woven, knotted terminals.

The proximity of the five beads to the silver rings and pendant suggest an association between them. It is possible that the beads were strung onto the same beadstring as the silver rings, but not between the rings as there is insufficient room. Similarly, the beads are too large to have been threaded onto the rings themselves or indeed to have been positioned within them, as at Lower Brook Street, Winchester (Grave 23; Biddle 1990, 630); at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Cemetery 2, Graves 8 and 9; Hyslop 1963, 174–175) and at a cemetery at Camerton in Somerset, (Grave 94b; Leeds 1936, plate 31). The most likely possibilities are that they were threaded on to one or either end of the beadstring, or that they were threaded entirely independently. The pendant, owing to its extremely fragmentary nature, has too few characteristics to provide exact parallels, but this too may be of seventh century date. A pendant recovered from Faversham in Kent (Leeds 1936, plate 30b) displays a systematically-punched border relief similar to the Tattenhoe pendant, together with distinctive triangular stamped impressions. The border notching along the edge of the Tattenhoe pendant will almost certainly have continued around the ornament, but the overall design created by the triangular impressions (of which only two remain) can only be surmised. No remains of a clasp or suspension perforation were found, but the pendant was undoubtedly suspended around the neck and worn as a centrepiece, intended to be visually prominent (see Fig. 5 –reconstruction). The close proximity (3mm) of the pendant to the silver coils, (?and beads), strongly suggest that the pendant formed part of the necklace and was either attached to the beadstring itself, or to a central silver necklace coil.

The make-up of beadstrings during the Anglo-Saxon period appears to have been extremely individualistic, but a significant number of published jewellery assemblages, recovered from the upper chest region of skeletons from several sites, appear to comprise the silver wire rings, beads and pendant(s) of a necklace, and the remains of a pair of linked pins, fastening together clothing around the neck. The necklace from Lower Brook Street Winchester (Grave 23), already mentioned, comprised up to thirty silver wire rings, fourteen beads and seven pendants and is thought to have been buried c. AD 650–700 (Biddle 1990, 621–627). One

of the two cemetery sites at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard included a very similar assemblage, (Cemetery 2, Grave 39) comprising silver rings, five glass beads, a pendant and a pair of linked pins (Hyslop 1963, 182); a late seventh century date is suggested. The similarities between the grave goods from these two sites have particular interest as Leighton Buzzard lies but seven miles from the Tattenhoe cemetery. The cemetery at Marina Drive, Dunstable, contained one assemblage which included a festoon of silver wire rings, beads (the material of which was not recorded) and a silver pendant; this group was dated to the late sixth or early seventh century (Morris 1962). Another Anglo-Saxon cemetery site at Camerton, Somerset produced five silver rings, six beads, a pin and two silver pendants in one single grave; this too is likely to be seventh century (Leeds 1936, 105–114, plate 31).

#### **BURIAL 112** (SF 1003, 1016)

##### **SF 1003** Iron Knife

Lifted by metal detectorist from above left elbow of skeleton, and possibly resting on the humerus. 177mm × 30mm. Badly corroded seax-type iron knife with broken-off tip. Tanged, with a curved back and cutting edge, similar to the Dover Type 1 series, 5th–7th century (Evison 1987, 113). Original file marks (? a result of sharpening) are evident under the microscope together with hammer impact sites. Small areas of mineralised straw and other organic remains were also noted on both blade and tang; the residues on the tang are from the horn handle (information kindly supplied by Jacqui Watson, Ancient Monuments Laboratory), (Fig. 7)

##### **SF 1016** Spearhead socket fragments

Found just below left elbow of skeleton fragments Fifteen severely corroded fragments of iron from a shattered socket, presumably originally be-longing to a spearhead. The fragments range in size from 28 × 14mm to 5 × 4mm. The exterior surfaces were extensively covered by mineralised textiles (see Ms Pritchard's report p115) whilst slivers of mineralised wood from the shaft were still adhering to the inner surface of several fragments. (not illustrated).

#### **BURIAL 125** (Small Finds, 1018, 1024).

##### **SF 1018** Iron Spearhead

Found south-east of and close to the skull. 440mm × 65mm. Severely corroded socketed iron spearhead of exceptionally large width, plus four loose fragments

broken off from the socket. X-rays reveal that the spearhead has no central strengthening core which one would normally expect in such an implement, and this, together with its large size, suggest that the spearhead may have been forged entirely as a ceremonial blade. Extensive textile remains extend the whole length of the underside; areas of weave and tangled fibres are clearly visible under the microscope. Mineralized straw was identified during conservation, primarily on the underside, but also on the uppermost tip. Wood fibre was particularly common in the broken shaft socket and also on the four shattered socket fragments; specialist analysis revealed the wood to be most probably oak (*Quercus* species).

Similar to the spearhead recovered from Burial 105 (SF 1002), this spearhead (SF 1018) was forged in the leaf-shaped tradition and intended to be ostentatious, as reflected by its abnormal width. A similar, though even longer (495mm) spear with short socket and only the faintest trace of a mid-rib, was found at Shenley during the early 1970s (the authors are indebted to David Parish for bringing this item to their attention). The width and the relatively flat cross section would have rendered these items relatively ineffective in combat. A 7th century date is likely (Fig. 7).

##### **SF 1024** Iron ?Stud

Found close to Spearhead, SF 1018 by metal detectorist. 29mm diameter. Dome-headed, circular iron object (?stud), thickly encrusted with iron corrosion inner surface lined with a thin layer of copper (?anticorrosive measure/?decorative).

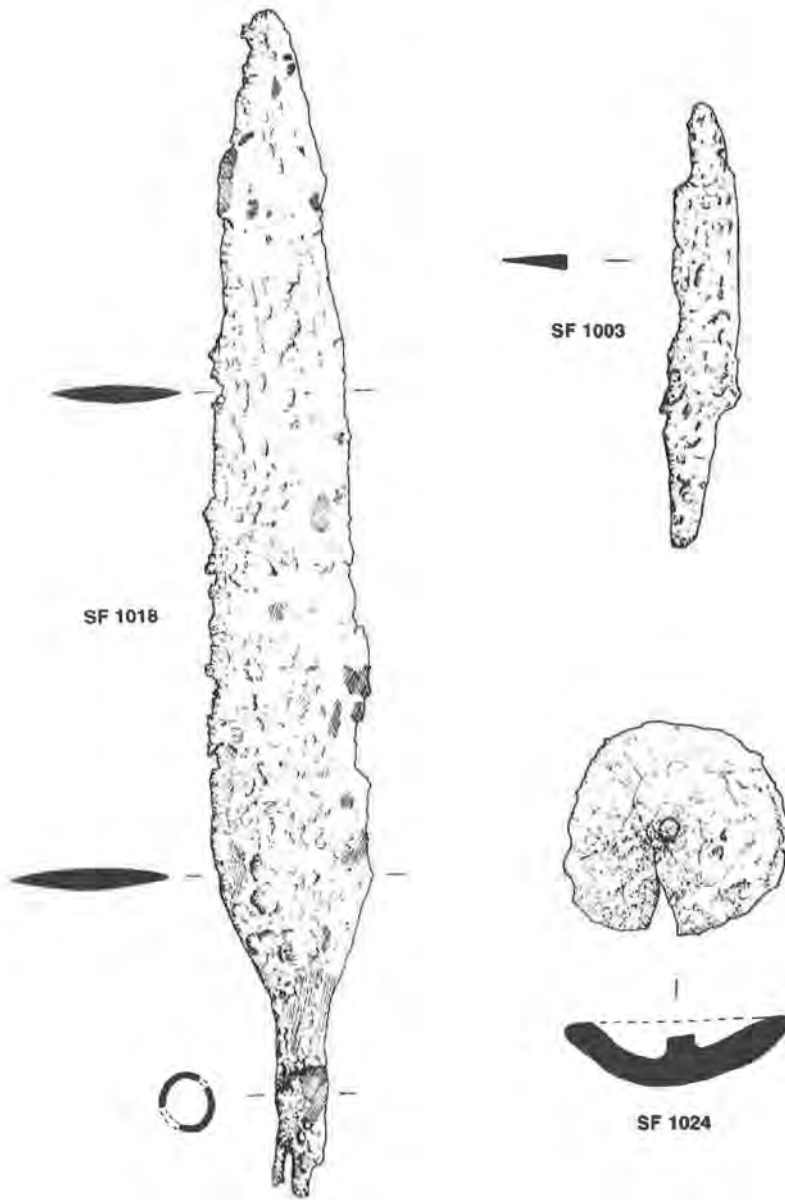
The remains of an attached ?pin are represented by a small, broken-off projection within the inside of the dome, to which are attached mineralised wood fibres. Mineralized textile remains were also identified on the outer surface during conservation (Fig. 7).

#### *Unstratified Finds*

Several further small finds were recovered from unstratified contexts, but within the general cemetery area and its immediate environs (SF 1004, 1005, 1006, 1023).

##### **SF 1004** Iron Spearhead

Metal detector find, 243mm × 35mm. Badly corroded iron spearhead with only two-thirds remaining; tip and nearly all socket missing. Mineralized straw and textile fibres were identified on the blade, and wood remains were extracted from socket; the latter have been analysed and identified as oak fibres (*Quercus* species). The spearhead was forged in the leaf-shaped tradition and



**Fig. 7:** Artefacts associated with Burial 112 and 125. (SF numbers 1003 and 1018, 1024 respectively). Scales 1:3, (1003, and 1018) and 1:1 (1024).

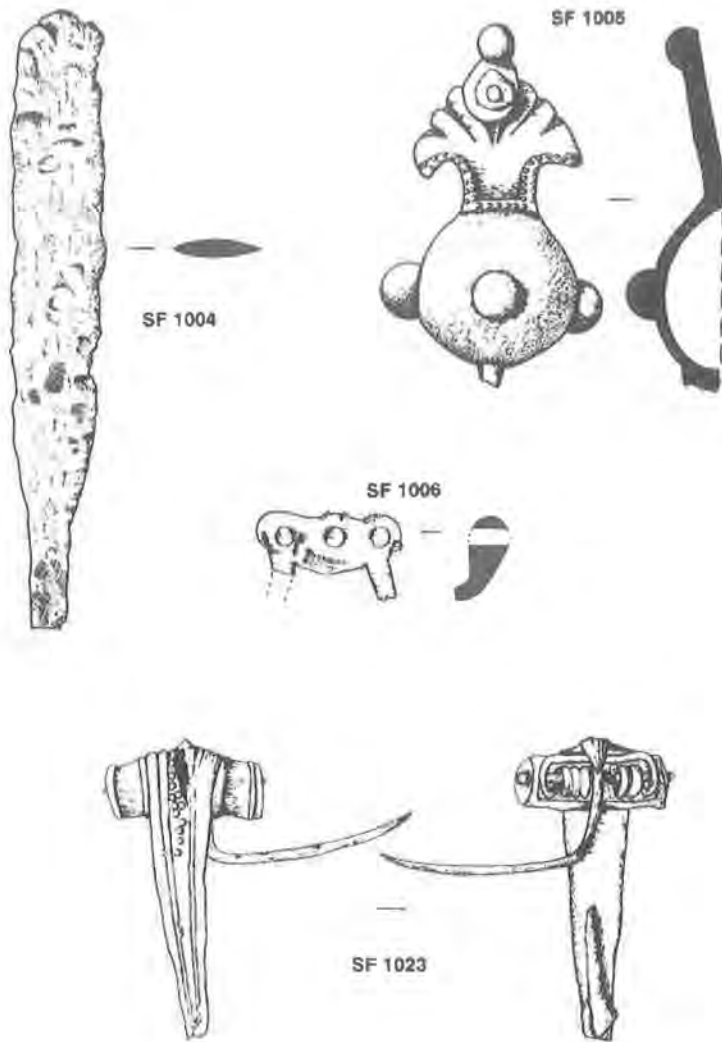
most likely belongs to the seventh century (Swanton 1973, 1974). (Fig. 7).

**SF 1005** Copper Alloy ?Fitting/Brooch

Found at edge of circular depression 118. 48mm x 29mm. Decorated copper alloy object with no evidence of either a hinge or pin. The reverse shows evidence of

having been “tinned” or soldered. A *Fleur-de-Lys*-type arrangement, crowned by a small decorative ball, sits upon a hollow, dome-shaped body, attached to the outside of which are three further, regularly-spaced decorative balls (Fig. 8).

**SF 1006** Copper Alloy Buckle/Strap End. Metal detector find from furrow. 59mm x 11mm. Broken, delicately-



**Fig. 8:** Artefacts (SF numbers 1004, 1005, 1006, 1023) from unstratified contexts. Scales 1:3 (1004) and 1:1 (1005, 1006 and 1023)

shaped buckle/strap end with three equally-spaced, round perforations. These holes are surrounded by iron corrosion, suggesting that iron pins/rivets were originally fitted through them (Fig. 8).

**SF 1023** Copper Alloy Brooch. Metal detector find. 40mm x 20mm. Fine Romano-British copper alloy bow brooch, with pin and hinge still attached. It belongs to a group of brooches known as the "Polden Hill" type, evolving from the "Colchester-brooch" around the middle of the first century AD, and continuing at least until its end (Cunliffe 1968, 75-76 and 79-81). The Tattenhoe

brooch was made in two pieces and displays a characteristic cast bow, rounded and dolphin-shaped with large circular side wings, these having pierced disc ends. Linear mouldings running down the back of the bow itself enclose circular impressions which decorate the upper half of the spine only. Examination under the microscope revealed isolated spinal patches of a white metal coating; this "dusting" was applied as an anti-tarnish measure but was also intended as a decorative feature. The triangular catchplate is rather short and simple for "Polden Hill" brooches, but the tapering crown is most characteristic (Fig. 8).





**Fig. 9:** X-Ray of silver ring fragments and pendant remains (SF 1014/1015) within clay nodule lifted from inhumation 108.(Scale 1:1) (photo D. Parish)

### *Textiles*

*by Frances Pritchard*

Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.

Traces of textile are preserved on three iron spearheads, a silver dress pin and two silver wire rings from a necklace (Table 1). On the ironwork the fibres are mineralised, whereas some of the fibres in contact with the silver jewellery remain closer to their original character, although they are too brittle to be mounted for examination under a microscope. Visual analysis, nevertheless, suggests that all the fibres are probably wool.

#### *Woven fabrics*

Two spearheads (SFs 1004 and 1018) had lain in contact with similar cloths, relatively thick tabby-woven fabrics made from yarn that was loosely Z-spun, which would have resulted in a soft texture. In both cloths a few threads appear to be S-spun

indicating that they may have been patterned with stripes of contrasting colour.

The socket of another spearhead (SF 1016), which was the only part of the weapon recovered, had also been in contact with cloth. This is a 2.2 twill of medium weight, Z-spun in one system (probably the warp) and S-spun in the other. No displacement is visible in the warp or weft but the area of the cloth is too small to be certain that it was unpatterned. Twills of this type and quality were common in Anglo-Saxon England and it has been suggested that the similar textiles preserved on spearheads from Ardale cemetery, Essex were blankets or cloaks (Crowfoot 1988, 55).

#### *Cords*

A fine plaited cord is knotted to the head of the silver pin (SF1010) and wound round the top of the shank indicating that the pin was used as a

Grave	Object	Position on Object	Fibre	Spin	Weave etc.	Threads per cm	Comments
108	Silver pin SF1010 Silver wire rings SF1014 & SF1015	on shank on head & round shank between sliding knots	(a) mineralised and unmineralised (b) ? wool unmineralised	Z	3-strand plait 3 two-ply strands, Z-cabled	not analysed	
112	Iron spearhead SF1016	round socket	mineralised	Z/S	2.2 twill	7/7 on 5mm	
125	Iron spearhead SF1018	on blade & socket	mineralised	Z/Z	tabby	7/7	possible spin patterning
Loose find	Iron spearhead SF1004	mainly round socket	mineralised	Z/Z	tabby	10/10	possible spin patterning

**Table 1:** Textile Remains

dressfastener and was not merely ornamental. A similar three-strand plait was recorded on an annular brooch from Grave 14, Spong Hill, Norfolk (Crowfoot and Jones 1984, 19 and 23) and probably also on another brooch from Grave 55, Bergh Apton, Norfolk (Crowfoot 1978, 102)

By contrast, the string linking the festoon or collar of wire rings was made by twisting (cabling) three groups of two-ply threads in a Z-direction. On both rings which preserve traces of the cord (SF1014 and 1015), it lies between the "sliding knot", which secures the free ends of the wire. This is contrary to other excavated examples, where a continuous cord strings one, or more, beads between each ring as well as tying in place the rings, usually edge to edge (eg graves 8,9,39 and 57 at Leighton Buzzard II; Hyslop 1963,173, figs 8 and 9, 181, fig 13, 185, fig 17), and suggests that a slightly different style of wearing the necklet was adopted here. This accords with a recently published study of wire ring necklaces dating to the seventh century which emphasises that no two pieces are alike. (Hawkes 1990, 624).

### Pottery

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A few scraps of pottery ranging in date from Romano-British to late medieval or post-medieval were found unstratified within the area under investigation.



**Fig. 10:** Sherd of Middle Bronze Age pottery. (Scale 1:2.)

Stratified sherds were as follows:

The fill (119) of feature 118 contained two sherds: a base of a fine sandy orange colour-coated fabric, probably Oxfordshire ware and thus late third/fourth century in date, and a sherd in a soft grog-tempered Romano-British fabric. (Four sherds from a jar in identical fabric were recovered from what was effectively an unstratified context (121) in the vicinity of feature 118).

The cut feature 123 contained a single body sherd, 13mm thick, with an applied impressed cordon (Fig. 10). The fabric contained prominent white quartz grits. A Middle Bronze Age barrel/bucket urn tradition would be appropriate (c.f. Dalwood *et al* 1989, fig 8 nos 6-8 for similar examples, though with flint and/or calcareous temper, from Walton Lodge, Aylesbury). Occurrences of such material are not common in this area and *comparanda* are thus hard to come by.

### Discussion

The excavations revealed a very small amount of evidence for pre-Saxon activity. The single sherd of possible Middle Bronze Age pottery came from what may have been a prehistoric feature, whilst there is a minor accumulation of Romano-British material, mainly in and around a shallow depression which might have been artificially

made or might have been some form of natural hollow.

It is difficult to place the Bottledump Corner cemetery within a settlement context. There is little direct evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in the immediate vicinity of the cemetery. The size (five individuals) is very small, although it is possible that the site extends further to the south. It is also likely that evidence for additional inhumations has been completely removed by ploughing. Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are not common in Buckinghamshire. However a seventh-century inhumation cemetery was examined during the investigation of the medieval earthworks at Westbury by Shenley, 3km to the north of the Tattenhoe cemetery, in 1990 (Busby 1991, 44–46). The isolated find of a spearhead at Shenley Church End, noted in the description of SF 1018 above, may indicate another cemetery, especially as the findspot is, like the Tattenhoe cemetery, immediately adjacent to what became the parish boundary, a favoured location for pagan cemeteries. Given the dearth of Anglo-Saxon cemetery evidence in Milton Keynes, the Bottledump Corner site is a useful addition to our knowledge of the period.

The finds associated with the five inhumations would be consistent with a seventh-century date. The amethyst beads and knives, paralleled at the Buckland cemetery, Dover (Evison 1987, 57–67, 113) and elsewhere, and the elongated-leaf shape of two of the spears (paralleled throughout southeastern England), are diagnostic of cemeteries of the late Pagan Saxon period (Swanton 1973, 55–57). The most useful dating evidence however is that from the assemblage associated with burial 108, which, as indicated above, includes elements parallel, in cemeteries dated to the seventh century at Winchester and Leighton Buzzard. However, these assemblages need not necessarily belong to the later seventh century. Hines (1984, 232) discusses this point and points to the occurrence of silver rings at Gilton, Kent, in a context which may well be early seventh century. The cemetery at Marina Drive, Dunstable (Morris 1962), which included an individual buried with a festoon of silver rings, was also dated to the late sixth or early seventh century.

The Bottledump Corner cemetery therefore appears to belong to a period in which Christianity

was beginning to gain ground. Seventh century cemeteries have been defined as belonging to a transition period between cemeteries that are clearly pagan and those that are obviously Christian (eg Boddington 1990; 1992). The instant at which a particular population becomes Christian is not necessarily evident from the archaeological record, for Christianity was only one element (albeit an important one) of social and ideological change during a period in which a major re-organisation of the landscape was also taking place.

One further feature of interest is the orientation of the burials at Bottledump Corner. Despite the degree of postdepositional disturbance, there is clear evidence that the overall trend is towards north-south inhumations. This is in distinct contrast to Boddington's assertion (Boddington 1992) that transitional cemeteries are universally orientated east-west. Another feature is the occurrence of weapons (spears) in all three male graves at Bottledump Corner. There is a decline in the provision of grave-goods during the so-called transitional period, but within this general trend more complex patterns have been identified: in particular weapons and costume items (*ie* precisely the categories of artefact present at Bottledump Corner) are the grave-goods which go out of favour first. For example, weapons are virtually absent from the apparently contemporary cemetery at Chamberlains Barn 2.

Whilst it is probably dangerous to draw firm conclusions from such a small cemetery, the net impression is that if one were to accept a date for the cemetery in the second half of the seventh century, then the inhumations considered here exhibit an undue degree of conservatism, and a date earlier in the seventh century may therefore be more satisfactory.

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The finds and site archive are at Buckinghamshire County Museum, reference CAS 3587; accession numbers 1993.114; 1993.204.

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