

## EXCAVATIONS AT SHAVARDS FARM, MEONSTOKE: THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY

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### ABSTRACT

*This report is concerned with research excavations at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke, in 1998 and 1999, which recovered part of an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Incorporated into this report is a full account of all burials discovered by excavation in the 1970s and 80s. While the site makes an important addition to the growing corpus of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Hampshire, the range of artefacts and burial rites also provide important information about cultural influences and social practices at this time in the Meon Valley.*

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Previous fieldwork and excavations at Shavards Farm have amply demonstrated the importance of the site to such crucial questions as the late Roman to Anglo-Saxon transition (King 1987; King *forthcoming*; Hughes 1986; Stedman *in prep*). Moreover, the area boasts valuable historical evidence, in the form of charters, (Sawyer 1968, no's 276: 463; Grundy 1917) and place-name evidence (Coates 1989; Gover 1961). For a summary of the historical evidence the reader is referred to the work of Barbara Yorke (1989). In addition, there is an important post-medieval cartographic resource for the Meon valley (Moir *et al.* 1994, 15–19; Stedman *in prep*; Stedman and Stoodley *in prep*). In combination, this range of material provides an excellent opportunity to assess the evolution of this part of the central Meon valley during the five hundred years or so following the end of Roman rule.

### *The research aims of the project*

The 1998–9 programme of excavations was initially prompted by the discovery by metal detectorists of Anglo-Saxon metalwork from the area around previously excavated graves (Devenish and Champion 1978; Hughes 1985, 1986), which suggested to the authors that the known cemetery was far larger in size than originally believed. The recovery of a sample of graves from the cemetery was recognised as a high priority because these earlier discoveries had revealed that the cemetery contained burials of a seventh-century date and interments of this date had not yet been examined under archaeological conditions in the Meon Valley. A related aim was also to assess the extent of the threat posed by modern agricultural activity and the use of metal detectors, because the shallow depth of previously excavated deposits (1988) indicated the fragile and vulnerable nature of the deposits: English Heritage M.A.P 2 rating (Stedman and Stoodley 1998, 10).

Overall, the project was guided by Welch's recommendations in *Archaeology in Hampshire – A Framework for the Future*, which stated that 'projects should not be limited to the location and excavation of settlements and/or their associated burial grounds, but should seek to establish the long term sequence of settlement within coherent land units' (Welch 1996, 37). Thus the programme of fieldwork also sought to examine whether the cemetery was situated within a definable land unit and to gauge its relationship with the evidence for settlement activity over the AD350–700 period (King *forthcoming*; Hughes 1986). The outcome of this fieldwork and the

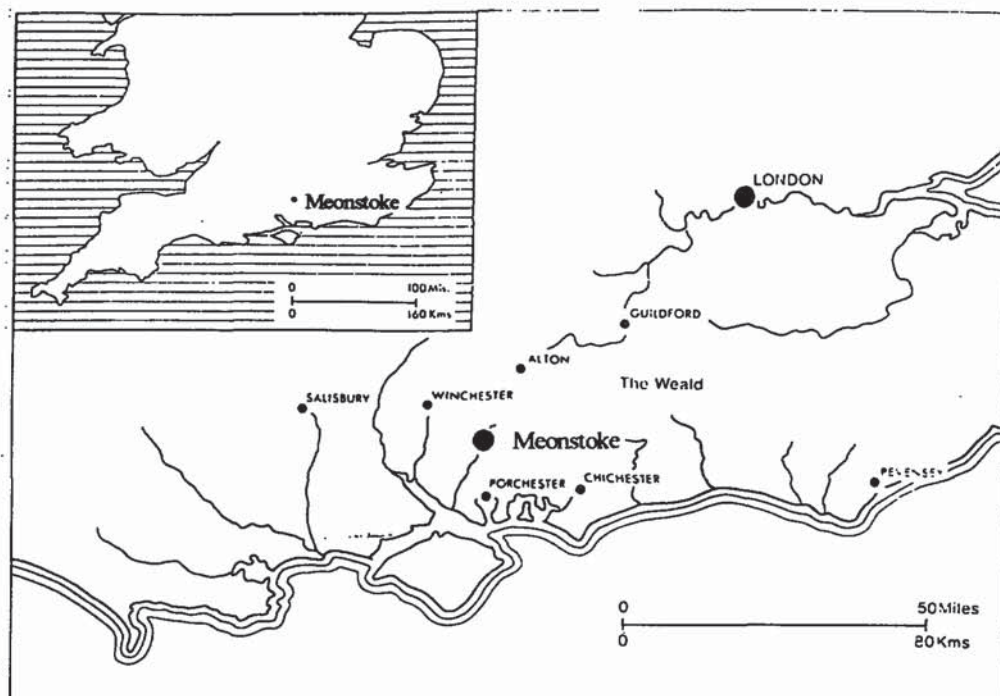


Fig. 1 Location of Meonstoke in southern England

results of excavations on the site of the settlement will be the subject of a subsequent report (Stedman and Stoodley *in prep*).

#### *Geology and topography*

The cemetery is situated in the modern parish of Corhampton and Meonstoke and lies a short distance, about 1 km, to the north east of the village of Meonstoke. It was sited upon a promontory of the river terrace on the 67 m contour, about 500 m to the east of the River Meon, and the village of Exton, which like Meonstoke has an early medieval origin (Figs 1, 2). The site is flanked by chalk downland ridges to both the east and the west. The eastern chalk valley rises 195 m O.D. to Old Winchester Hill, notable for its prominent Bronze Age barrow cemetery and univallate Iron Age hillfort. Across the river, the north-western downland crest reaches a similar height at Beacon Hill and is again

associated with the site of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery (Collins and Hurst 1978,17).

The cemetery is bisected by Shavard Lane, which runs in a north-south direction, and in turn intersects the two east-west Southern Hampshire Ridgeway tracks, which ford the Meon to the west at Shavards Farm and Exton Cross. This rectilinear river terrace land-unit is also bisected on its western edge by the north-south Turnpike road that was adapted to form the modern A32 Gosport to Alton road. The road in turn forms the natural boundary between the river terrace and the flood plain/post-medieval water meadow systems to the west. It is this river terrace that the modern Shavards Farm land-unit closely mirrors.

Shavards Farm's underlying geology consists of Alluvium to Middle Chalk soils. Interestingly, the cemetery site and Shavard Lane seem to mark the interface between the upper chalk and the mixed gravel soils. To the south of the land-unit, the

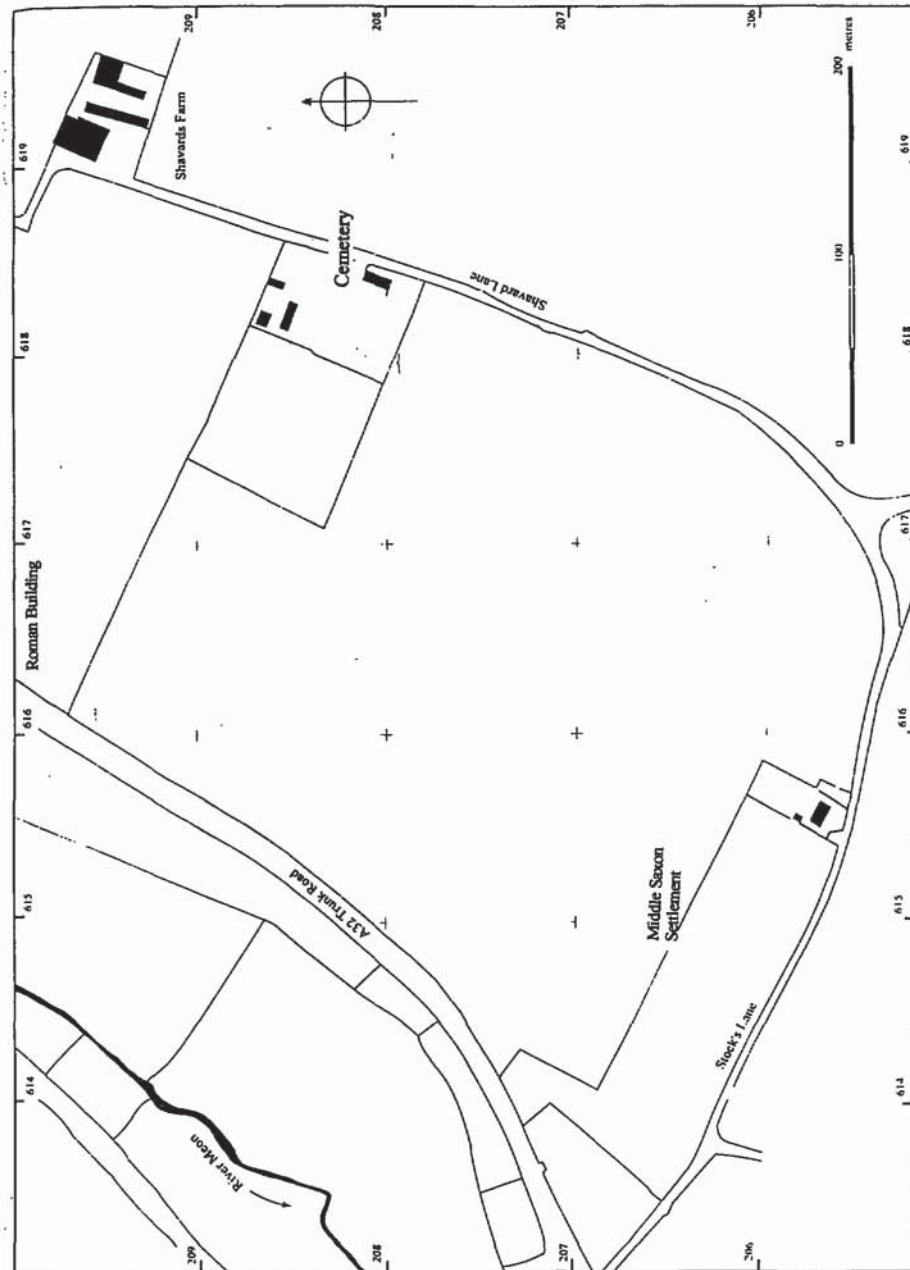


Fig. 2 Map of Shavards Farm showing principal sites



higher ground contains calcareous soils which are derived from the chalk, whilst at the northern end, the heavier more flinty soil formations lie over drift deposits that are composed mostly of Valley Gravel soils. The western, northern and river boundaries of the land unit can be traced within the AD940 Exton charter (Hughes 1994: Stedman *in prep*), while the earliest post-medieval cartographic data is contained in both Isaac Taylor's 1759 engraving of Hampshire and the 1841–3 Meonstoke Tithe Map.

#### *Anglo-Saxon discoveries in the Meon Valley*

A sixth-century gilt-bronze buckle-loop and rectangular plate with central garnet setting was unearthed from a burial near to the Bronze Age round barrow at Dolly Firs, Privett (near East Meon) during the construction of a road in the mid nineteenth century (Meaney 1964, 98: Hookey 1937, 199–200). At Preshaw, near Wind Farm, a gold chain and gold bracteate pendant was found in a burial that had been placed close to a group of Bronze Age barrows (Meaney 1964, 99). A fragment of a late fifth- to sixth-century pair of tweezers and a button brooch were found at the site of the Lippen Wood villa at Warnford (Stedman and Stoodley 2000, 137). In the above examples the association of Anglo-Saxon material with Roman and prehistoric sites, attests to the continued attraction of these places into the early medieval period.

Finds not believed to be associated with earlier evidence include a gilded, sixth-century saucer brooch decorated with seven spirals that was located by a metal detectorist in Soberton parish. The type is well known and can be compared to others from the continental homelands (Stedman and Stoodley 2000, 137–8). In addition, a field survey adjacent to the River Meon at Soberton produced an Anglo-Saxon period iron knife (Schadla-Hall 1977, 139). In Meonstoke village, two badly disturbed inhumation burials accompanied by two iron buckle loops and a nail were excavated on a raised promontory (Hughes 1986).

Most of these burials probably belong to much larger burial grounds, yet the only Meon Valley cemetery to have been investigated on any scale is

the fifth- and sixth-century inhumation cemetery at Droxford which was discovered in 1900 during the construction of the railway linking Alton with Fareham. In 1974 the opportunity arose to investigate the remaining part of the cemetery and this excavation produced over 40 graves (Aldsworth 1979, 93).

#### *Discoveries at Shavards Farm*

A number of fieldwork projects, excavations and chance discoveries during the last seventy years have demonstrated that Shavards Farm was occupied at many points between the Iron Age and the ninth-century AD. The earliest evidence is provided by a crouched inhumation burial that was excavated by Hughes in 1987, and which has recently been radiocarbon dated to the middle Iron Age. The site is, however, justifiably most famous for its Roman-period discoveries. In 1937, on the eastern side of the river ford, a Roman building was revealed and hastily recorded during road widening operations associated with the A32 Gosport to Alton road (Davis 1937, 294). Between 1984–1991 excavations by Professor A. King (King Alfred's College, Winchester) in collaboration with the late Dr T. Potter (British Museum) discovered two late Iron Age annular enclosure ditches and a Roman aisled building with a well-preserved collapsed façade (King 1996, 56). In the post-Roman period an earth-fast post-hole structure and a sunken-featured building were dug into the destruction layer of this building. This layer also produced pottery and iron and bronze metalwork (King *forthcoming*; Stedman *in prep*). Thus, like many Roman villas, Shavards Farm continued to see occupation in the immediate post-Roman period, although the nature of this is difficult to discern.

The first indication of burial activity in the post-Roman period came accidentally during building work at a private property on Shavard Lane and 300 m south east of the Roman building. Trenching had disturbed a number of burials, which included a weapon-burial of the sixth century (Devenish and Champion 1978). Then, in 1983 in the field opposite this property and approximately 50 m to the north, two further



inhumation burials were discovered during tree planting operations; they were reported and subsequently reburied. The potential of the site was recognised by Michael Hughes, who between 1984–1988, conducted a series of excavations as part of the Meonstoke Landscape Project, which in addition to uncovering a settlement, probably of the middle Saxon period (650–850 AD), revealed a further seven burials (Hughes 1985, 1986).

In 1984 Hughes excavated an area adjacent to the property where the burial was disturbed in 1972 (Hughes 1985, 5–6), leading to the excavation of one further grave. In the following year, this area was again examined but without the identification of any further graves (Hughes 1986, 15). During 1987 and 88, Hughes turned his attention to the field on the opposite side of Shavard Lane and a series of trenches were dug, one directly over one of the burials found in 1983. In this trench four burials, including an important weapon burial of the seventh century, were excavated. A trench further to the south, and opposite Shawford House located two more burials, but because there was insufficient time the graves were backfilled without recording or excavating. The plans of graves 3, 5 and 6 in this report are those drawn in 1987 and 1988 by Hughes' excavation team. Unfortunately because of poor weather conditions grave 4 was not drawn. It was however photographed and a copy of this has been used to illustrate the burial.

The importance of the site has been further demonstrated by the discovery of 176 artefacts from a variety of periods by metal detectorists. These include fifth-century metalwork, which testifies to activity on this site at a very early date in the post-Roman period. Particularly notable are a finely cast, 'supporting-arm' brooch dating from AD 380–420, and paralleled on the continent at the Westerwanna cemetery (Lower Saxony) (Böhme 1974, Tab 50: 2) and a rare belt-mount of the so-called Quoit Brooch Style found to the east of the Roman building (Ager 1996, 111). These finds are the property of the farm owners, but they have generously allowed them to be catalogued and entered into a database (Iles and Stedman 1998, *unpublished*). With the assistance of the farm owners and some of the

detectorists it was possible to note the find spots of the majority of these pieces. This data has been an important aid, especially helping to reconstruct the extent of both the cemetery and its contemporary settlement (Stedman and Stoodley, *in prep*).

#### *The historical context and place-name evidence*

It is Bede who provides the first direct written evidence for the area. In drawing upon the local knowledge of Bishop Daniel in the early eighth century, he acknowledges the existence of an *Iutarum natio*, or Jutish province (HE I, 15; Yorke 1989, 89–91), situated within southern Hampshire. Bede (H.E. iv. 13) also mentions the existence of a subgroup within the Meon Valley: *Meanuarorum prouinciam* (province of the dwellers by Meon), which suggests that the valley was home to a distinct group of Jutes settled within this wider Jutish province (Yorke 1994). In addition, the place-name *Ytedene*, 'valley of the Jutes' near East Meon was probably given by people of a different ethnicity living nearby, such as Saxons who may be identified in the place known today as Exton (*Essexaxtunate*: East Saxon tun).

We hear how Wulfhere of Mercia, then overlord of Aethelwealh of the South Saxons, granted the South Saxon king the provinces of the Wight and the Meonwara as a reward for his conversion to the Christian faith. Bede recounts its subsequent conquest and annexation by the Gewisse, or West Saxons, in the second half of the seventh century (HE IV, 13; Yorke 1989, 89), and the explicit references to the *Meonware*, suggest that the area retained some of its autonomy. Like many once independent areas, or small kingdoms, it certainly seems to have survived as an administrative unit under West Saxon control (Yorke 1989, 90–1). The eighth- to ninth-century Meon charters, the lost place-name *Ytedene* and the tribal name *Essexaxtunate* may indicate the continued need to define settlement nomenclature in terms of a perceived ethnicity (Stedman *in prep*). And although a chronology of local place-names is problematic, the place-name Meonstoke (the cattle farm by the Meon) is first referred to within the Exton AD940 charter (Grundy 1917), suggesting that before the ninth



century, perhaps as early as the late seventh century, the native river name had been incorporated into the later OE settlement nomenclature (Coates 1989, Yorke 1994, 13).

## THE EXCAVATIONS

### *Methodology*

The archaeological investigation of the cemetery site was outlined within a project design specification that was prepared with regard to Appendix 2 of the Management of Archaeological Projects (Andrews 1991: Stedman and Stoodley 1998, 4). A thorough desktop evaluation of existing archives and reports was undertaken in the spring of 1998, which laid the foundation for a coherent excavation strategy and enabled the authors to place the excavation trenches over areas that were of a high archaeological potential. The correct siting of the trenches was also facilitated by a geophysical survey, and the site grid was tied in with the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

All graves had been dug to a shallow depth, and were excavated by hand using mattocks, trowels and smaller instruments, such as plasterer's leaves and dental picks, necessary for the more complex parts of the human skeleton. Soil from the torso and cranial areas were kept for analysis. The burials were drawn at 1:10 and photographed oblique and vertically in both black and white and colour. Measurements were taken with a Quick Set Level and all the grave fills were 100% sieved. Environmental sampling of the ditch fills was also undertaken, though later specialist advice, in regard to the potential high contamination risk of the samples from the previous excavations and disturbance, made their utilisation untenable.

### *The 1998 season*

The cemetery was known to extend under a private residential property, (Fig. 3), which was defined as zone A, and the presence of a series of paddocks identified on the 1841 Meonstoke Tithe Award and the Meonstoke Parish 1868/1870 6 inch Ordnance Survey map suggested that the paddock had retained some of its boundaries into

the modern period and may thus have escaped damage by agricultural activity. Considering the proximity of this paddock to the burials revealed in 1972, it was realised that this area could prove important in defining the extent of the cemetery. The owners were keen to allow a geophysical survey of their garden and paddock areas, as well as a series of test pitting. A magnetometry survey was carried out during winter 1998 which identified magnetic anomalies consistent with metal objects. This was followed by a programme of test pits, but although a foot-plate of an early Anglo-Saxon brooch was found, it was discovered that the anomalies were caused by objects of a relatively modern age. In addition, further test pits were dug at regular intervals over the entire paddock area, but no archaeological features were discerned.

The field on the east side of Shavard Lane was defined as zone B and investigated in August 1998. In this year, Trench A (measuring 10 × 4 m) was sited on a north-south alignment adjacent to the modern Shavard Lane field boundary at (SU 6185 2084) directly over Hughes' 1987-8 Trench 8 in order to reinvestigate the linear ditch and to investigate for any further burials. The topsoil and subsoil was removed by hand and the chalk was cleaned by hand. The topsoil consisted of the backfill of the 1988 excavation and was thus highly mixed, but included worked and burnt flint, Roman tile fragments, medieval coarse wares, and various post-medieval objects. The ditch and the empty graves were recognised but no new graves were identified.

A sondage (trench E) measuring 4.35 m long by 2.0 m wide was excavated from the northern section of Trench A in order to allow the ditch to be explored with a view to recovering dating evidence. No graves were identified in this extension. The topsoil encountered comprised of a greyish brown firm silty-clay plough soil (Context 1017) with moderate natural flint and decayed chalk inclusions and contained post-medieval pottery and glass. It overlay a dark-greyish brown, compact silty, clay subsoil (Context 1018) that contained abundant to sparse, angular, decayed chalk lumps and occasional multi-sized natural flint fragments.

The second trench excavated in 1998 (Trench B) measured 12 × 4 m and was sited on a north-

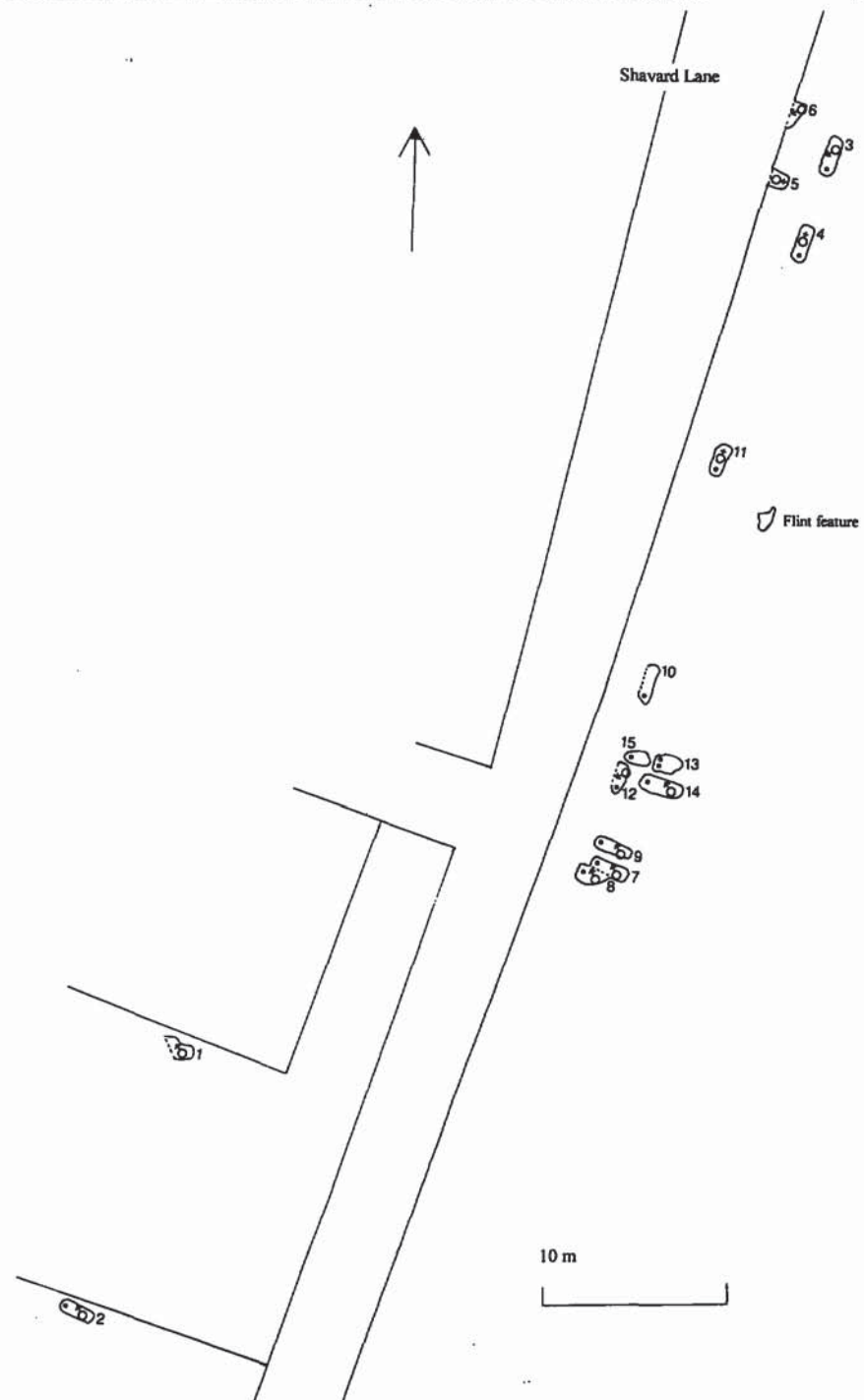


Fig. 3 Site plan of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Dots indicate position of heads



south alignment adjacent to the modern field boundary (SU 6186 2081). The northern extent of the trench was sited over Hughes' 1988 trench (12) which had located two graves (7 and 8). The aim was to excavate these, in addition to examining the nature of the ditch, particularly its relationship to the graves, and to examine the area for any further interments. The topsoil and subsoil was removed by hand and the chalk was cleaned by hand. A highly mixed greyish brown silty to humic clay layer (Context 1000) was encountered which was composed of a fairly compact to firm plough soil and consisted of sub rounded chalk inclusions and sparse flint fragments. It was striated with stubble to the depth of 0.06–0.07 m and contained a mix of multiperiod finds. This soil overlay (Context 1001) a greyish white periglacial chalk deposit bedrock which was tested approximately to the depth of 0.10 m and was found to overlay the chalk natural. Burnt Roman floor tile fragments, and three prehistoric flints were found on the surface of the chalk bedrock (including a Neolithic/Bronze Age flint flake).

It was discovered that modern ploughing had not led directly to the disturbance of the graves and other features, but the compaction of the soil by modern farming machinery had resulted in compression damage to the graves, especially the skulls and long bones. The action of the lane hedgerow roots had resulted in the build up of a protective layer of modern plough soil, but this can be contrasted to the wider pattern of damage to the east of the hedgerow and further out in the field which is suggested by the recovery of a number of early and middle Anglo-Saxon metalwork finds from the plough soil (Stedman and Stoodley 2000).

#### *The 1999 season*

During the 1998 excavation a resistivity survey was carried out over a narrow strip, 10 m wide, along the edge of the field (zone B). It was hoped that this would provide more information about the direction that the ditch was running in. Fortunately a linear feature was found extending northwards which closely followed the modern field boundary. The survey also revealed a num-

ber of rectangular pit-like, or grave-like, features in close association with the ditch. On balance these were interpreted as graves, and this information proved important in planning the 1999 programme of excavation. Because the greatest cluster of features lay in the area between the two 1998 trenches, it was decided in 1999 to excavate one large trench (F) (measuring 22 × 5 m) on a north-south alignment between the 1998 Trenches A/E, and Trench B and adjacent to the modern field boundary. This meant that since work began in the 1980s a narrow strip along the field boundary measuring almost 50 m in length had now been explored.

Because in 1998 the topsoil and subsoil had not, as expected, produced any features or finds of significance the soil layers were machine stripped until the chalk was encountered. The topsoil consisted of a highly mixed, dark-reddish brown silty-clay loam which contained abundant multi-sized angular to sub-rounded decayed chalk fragments. The layer was striated by hedgerow roots to the west and crop stubble to the east of the trench, with the upper part of the soil horizon being very humic in content. Again a variety of finds were recorded. The subsoil below (Context 1051) was a firm, damp, light yellowish-brown silty clay loam containing multi-sized sub-rounded decayed chalk fragments, with some fine striated roots being present. The subsoil to the east of the trench overlay the periglacial surfaces of the chalk bedrock (Context 1056) to the depth of 0.21 m.

The chalk was cleaned by hand and the linear ditch was immediately visible as a dark feature running in a north-south direction. Unfortunately a modern British Telecom service trench had destroyed the western edge of the ditch, and thus it was not possible to retrieve a complete profile of the ditch in this trench. In total six graves were recovered, but unlike the ditch they were not immediately noticeable. As Hughes had discovered in the 1980s, the graves were backfilled mostly with chalk blocks, and this rendered them almost invisible against the highly fractured surface of the weathered chalk. It was only with repeated cleaning and exposure to the elements that they gradually emerged as rough rectangular shapes. Fortunately, the realisation that there was a strong association between flints and graves (see



below) also helped to locate these features. It is regrettable that two burials, which had been placed in the ditch, had been had truncated longitudinally by the British Telecom service trench, resulting in the right hand side of each being lost.

#### *Pre-cemetery features*

A linear ditch was identified in all the 1998 and 1999 trenches. As Table 1 shows the ditch did not have uniform dimensions of width and depth and the character of its sides undulated from being concave to convex in section. From north to south the ditch seemed to narrow and widen in section, a factor which possibly determined the siting of several of the Anglo-Saxon burials. At the bottom of the cut in Trench F a group of three bevelled cut-marks are suggestive of tool marks. Early Anglo-Saxon pottery and residual Roman finds were found on the disturbed edge of the top of the ditch cut and fill suggesting that the contemporary cemetery ground-surface had been located. Not taking into account the disturbed western half of the ditch in trench F, the topsoil (Context 1050) and subsoil (Context 1056) contained a range of multi-period finds, but the post-medieval material in the upper ditch fill may suggest that the ditch was not entirely silted up or backfilled during this period. It is possible that its survival into this period determined the siting of Shavard Lane. Overall, the sharp ditch profile and the absence of evidence for re-cutting or subsequent slumping of the chalk cut may point to the ditch being deliberately backfilled as a single event.

#### *Gully*

Two linear gullies were also found in Trench F and B. These were lying to the east of the ditch and can probably be interpreted as a single linear gully. In trench B it was found to have a shallow sloping

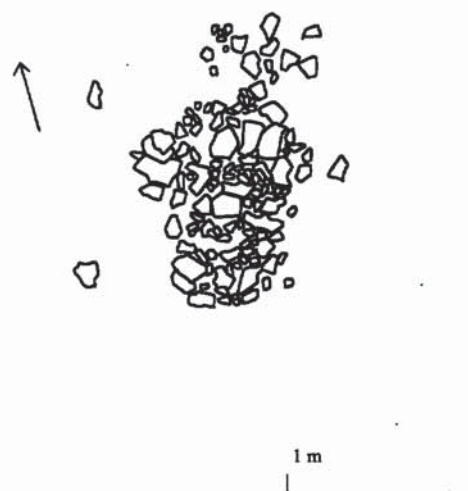


Fig. 4 Flint feature (1:20)

concave to 'v' shaped side, with slightly bevelled edges. This feature was not excavated in entirety. The sampled part measured 0.12 m long  $\times$  0.30 to 0.50 m wide and with a maximum depth of 0.75 m.

#### *Post-holes*

Four definite, and one possible, post-holes were identified in Trench A, all in close association to the ditch (Tab 2). These features had been excavated in the 1980s and because the information about their original fills could not be located, their stratigraphic relationship to the ditch cut is unclear. However, one post-hole cuts the side of the ditch and this is strongly suggestive that the post was inserted into both the ditch fill and cut. It must also be mentioned that the post-holes may have been contemporary with the cemetery: part

Table 1 Details of the ditch

<i>Trench</i>	<i>profile</i>	<i>Width m.</i>	<i>Depth m.</i>
A	Convex sides with flat base	1.49	0.43
B	Convex 'v'-shaped cut with concave base	0.50	0.75
F	Rectangular to slightly concave	1.10	0.49

Table 2 Details of the post-holes

<i>Post-hole (context)</i>	<i>profile</i>	<i>Diameter m.</i>	<i>Depth m.</i>
1011	Sub-rounded, steep to sloping sides with uneven base	0.45	0.12
1012	Sub-rounded, steep sided with flat base	0.47	0.20
1013	Sub-rectangular to sub-rounded, steep to vertical sides with flat base	0.38	0.18
1014	Sub-rounded, vertical sides, uneven base	0.23	0.22

of an external grave structure associated with Grave 3 and in fact, such above-ground timber structures are a not uncommon find in cemeteries of the seventh and early eighth century (Hogarth 1973).

#### *Non-grave cemetery features*

Below the subsoil in Trench F a deposit of 90 small to medium sub-angular to angular flint nodules was located (Context 1072) aligned in a NNE to SSW direction. The feature formed a sub-angular to sub-rounded feature whose surviving extent measured 1.60 m long  $\times$  0.90 m wide (Fig. 4). The largest blocks measuring c. 0.20 m were found on the peripheral edges of the feature, whilst the smallest gravel material, measuring c. 0.04 m, was used as a filling between the larger blocks. Traces of a light grey compact sandy loam were also found within the lower course of flints and this included a single nodule with evidence of red ceramic staining on its surfaces. Two large sub-angular flint nodules were found detached from the structure, lying over the ditch which suggests that the feature had experienced plough damage. The foundation of the structure was well bedded and tamped down in a friable to compact light grey beige sandy clay loam gravel soil containing very sparse inclusions of sub-angular chalk fragments and angular to sub-angular coarse sand grits (Context 1069). The only artefacts present within this deposit were two angular Samian ware vessel fragments. Directly beneath the feature was a very shallow

north-south aligned linear sub-rectangular to ovoid scoop (Context 1070) with bevelled edges, mildly concave sides and flat base measuring 0.55 m in width  $\times$  0.98 m length.

Overall, it is highly likely that the cairn was associated with a possible ground surface feature that was visible above the chalk natural surface. Parallels for such a feature within the context of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery are not numerous. Although from the context of a known religious site and thus of doubtful relevance, a very similar feature was excavated at Glastonbury Tor, which Ken Dark suggests may have been a saint's tomb or shrine (Dark 2000, 123). At Shavards Farm it must be considered that the feature may pre-date the cemetery, perhaps associated in some way with earlier periods of activity, although the importance of flints in the burial practices of this community suggests that it may be contemporary.

#### *The graves: their fills and preservation*

The condition of the 15 graves that have been examined archaeologically is variable: five had been seriously disturbed resulting in at least half of each burial being lost and most of this disturbance was fairly recent. The construction of a sewer trench in 1972, which led to the discovery of the cemetery, truncated grave 1; the upper half of grave 6 was lost to tree planting in 1983; while a British Telecom service trench was responsible for truncating both graves 10 and 12 down the



Table 3 Concordance of graves

<i>Year</i>	<i>original no.</i>	<i>new no.</i>	<i>excavation by</i>
1972	549/2	grave 1	D. C. Devenish
1984	2	grave 2	M. Hughes
1988	221	grave 3	M. Hughes
1987	210	grave 4	M. Hughes
1987	204	grave 5	M. Hughes
1988	205	grave 6	M. Hughes
1998	301	grave 7	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1998	300	grave 8	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1998	303	grave 9	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	400	grave 10	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	401	grave 11	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	402	grave 12	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	403	grave 13 A/B	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	404	grave 14	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley
1999	405	grave 15	M. Stedman & N. Stoodley

middle. In addition, grave 11 was slightly disturbed by the latter action and also by archaeological investigations in 1988. The disturbance experienced by grave 5 was, however, of a different nature. The grave is on the field boundary with Shavard Lane. The lane is now considerably lower than the surface of the field and it is likely that the lowering of the lane, probably through centuries of erosion, resulted in this disturbance.

Except for disturbed parts, all the graves were excavated in entirety and all the graves contained skeletal material with the majority of the skeletons being in fair or good condition. It is certain that these graves are part of a much larger cemetery: as mentioned disturbed skeletal material from 1972 represents a further four or five individuals; and discoveries of human bone and artefacts from around the immediate vicinity indicates that the cemetery stretches in both a north and west direction.

## GRAVE CATALOGUE

The catalogue includes all the graves that have been archaeologically examined and for the sake of consistency have been renumbered (Tab 3). The first line of each catalogue entry consists of the grave orientation, where it was established, with the position of the head given first and followed by the dimensions (length, width and depth) of the grave. The depth refers to the cut in the chalk and not the depth from the modern surface.

### *Grave 1 (Fig. 5)*

266°. c. 1.85 × c. 1.00 × c. 0.40 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Excavated in 1972 (Devenish and Champion 1978). Badly disturbed: burial cut in half by sewer trench, only the lower part survived intact. Filling of chalk with hardly any earth. At the east end of the grave was a rectangular flat-bottomed

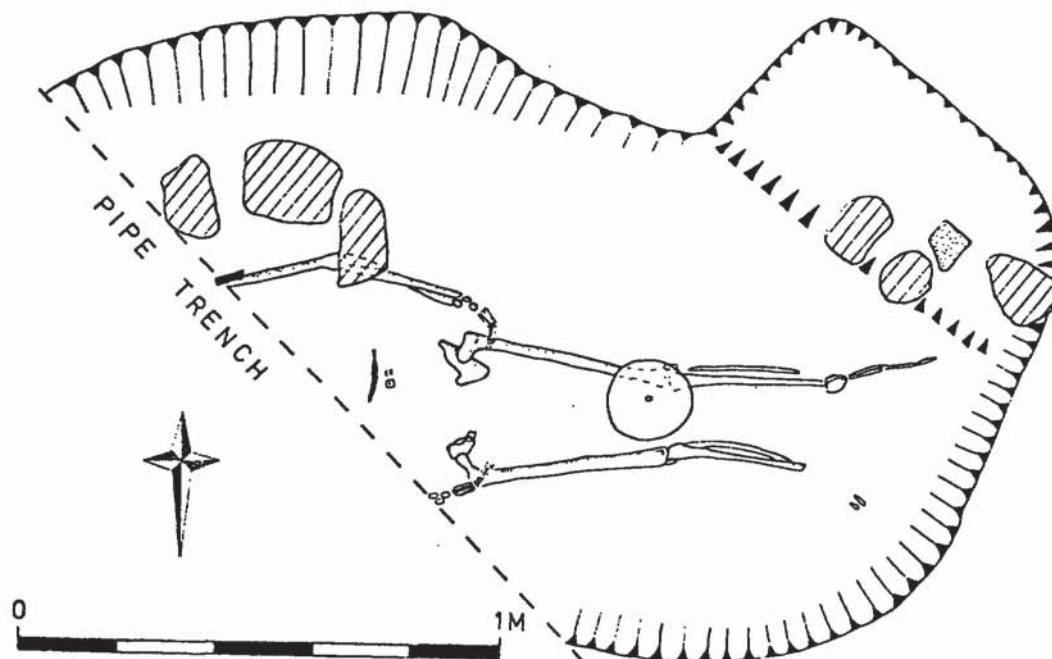


Fig. 5 Grave 1 (after Devenish and Champion 1978, fig 1)

pit, 10 cm deeper than the grave, containing three large flints and a block of sandstone. Three large flints were found in the filling at the NW corner, one overlying the left elbow and according to the workmen other large flints had been seen in the area near the skull. Remains of a further four or five individuals were collected from the disturbed area around this grave.

Skeleton of a middle aged male. Extended supine; legs straight; arms straight with both hands resting on pelvis/upper femurs.

#### *Associated finds*

- A) Iron *spearhead* at left shoulder apparently pointing to the head end of the grave. A large part of the artefact was removed in trenching but the socket remained in situ. Overall length 240 mm (originally 255 mm: broken tip), maximum width 44 mm. The socket is split and a wooden shaft with a diameter of 20 mm survives for a distance of 15 mm below it.
- B) Iron *shield boss and grip*, over knees, face of boss up-

permost. The boss has a diameter of 165 mm and a height of 77 mm. Also recovered were three (originally five) iron disc-headed rivets with diameters of 19 mm which fixed the boss to the shield-board. The grip is 135 mm in length with a maximum width of 30mm and is associated with two disc-headed rivets 15 mm in diameter.

- C) Iron *knife* at waist, tip pointing to the right. Straight back, curved cutting edge. Overall length 140 mm (end of tang broken); maximum width 21 mm.
- D) Copper alloy *buckle and 'shoe-shaped' rivets* lying at the waist with the tongue pointing to the right; height 32 mm, width 21 mm. Originally tinned. Associated with a pair of copper alloy 'shoe-shaped' rivets: lengths 17 and 18 mm (both broken). Tinned with perforated attachment lugs on the back.

#### *Grave 2 (Fig. 6)*

294°. 1.66 × 0.50 × ? m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk. Excavated in 1984 (Hughes 1985). Grave too small for occupant whose skull had been forced into an upright position.



Skeleton of young male. Extended supine; skull upright; arms and legs straight.

*Associated finds*

- A) Iron *spearhead* outside upper right humerus, level with skull and pointing to the head end of grave. It has a length of 265 mm and a width of 31 mm. The socket is split and has a diameter of 20 mm.
- B) Iron *shield boss and grip* placed over ribs on right hand side of chest, face of boss uppermost. The boss has a diameter of 148 mm and a height of 95 mm. The height of the wall is 18 mm and the width of the rim is 22 mm. The apex button has a diameter of 41 mm. Only one of originally five rivets still survives. The grip is fragmentary but is flanged and has a length of 140 mm and a width of 27 mm.
- C) Copper alloy *buckle*, position in grave unknown. Unfortunately this artefact has been lost without record and cannot be commented on.

*Grave 3 (Fig. 7)*

200°. 2.20 × 0.90 × ? m. Rectangular grave (probably overcut by excavators). Post-hole or pit at foot end of the grave with dark brown earth fill, a probable setting for a grave marker. Possibly a disturbed multiple burial: evidence from the unusual position of the spearhead and disarticulated skeletal remains. Excavated in 1988 by Hughes.

Skeleton of a young to middle aged male. Extended supine; skull upright; legs straight; both arms straight and coming to rest on upper femurs/pelvis. The fill also contained fragments of juvenile skull and long bones.

*Associated finds*

- A) Iron *spearhead* (Fig. 8A) lying to the left of the skull, with c. 50 mm of the shaft end over the skull, and pointing to the west edge. It is 368 mm in length with a width of 37 mm. The socket is split and has a diameter of 15 mm.
- B) Iron *shield boss and grip* (Fig. 8B) over knees, face of boss uppermost. The boss has a diameter of 135 mm and a height of 220 mm. The height of the wall is 27 mm and the width of the rim is 11 mm. The apex button has a diameter of 13 mm. The boss was fixed to the board by seven sets of paired rivets, although only six single rivets now remain

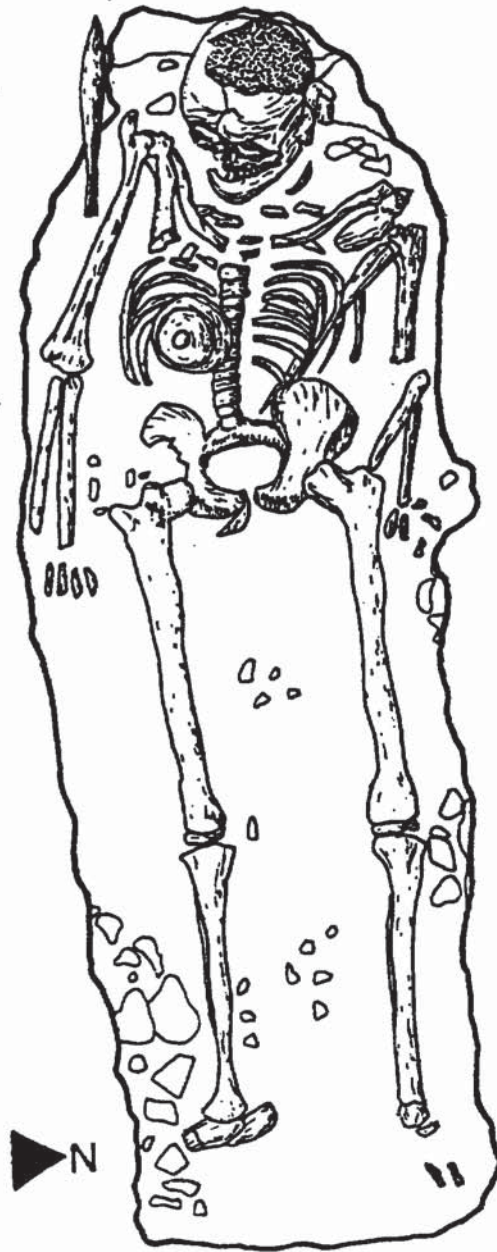


Fig. 6 Grave 2 (after Hughes 1985, fig 5)

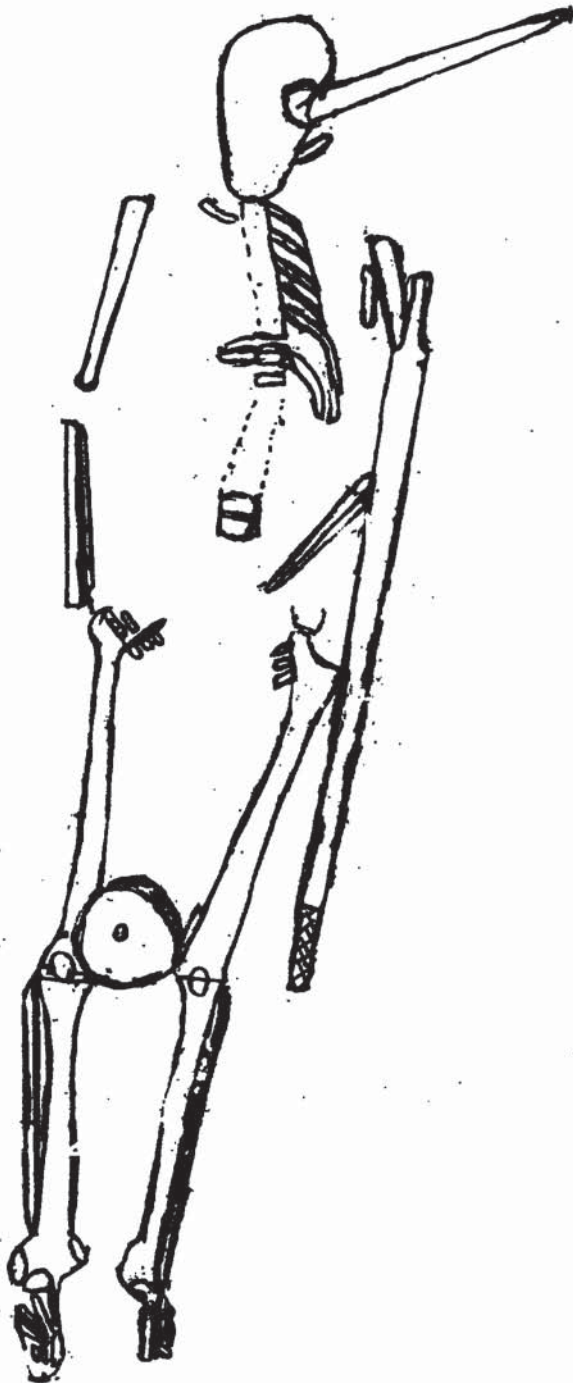


Fig. 7 Grave 3 (archive plan from 1988) (1:10)

in situ, and of these three have silver-gilt disc heads though it is probable that they were all originally decorated in this manner. Organic material survives under the plate and on the rivets. The fragmentary grip consists of a strip of iron, length 184 mm, width 20 mm, that was folded at each end around a circular iron plate of diameter of 162 mm, which was riveted to the underside of the shield-board. In addition there are seven further rivets, some of the paired type, which may have been associated with the shield.

- C) Iron sword (Fig. 8C) placed alongside the left hand side of the body. The sword consists of a blade and tang with a small iron pommel. Total length of sword 867 mm, width 56 mm, length of blade 749 mm. The tang has a sub-rectangular section, which flutes outwards towards the upper guard: length 90 mm, width 16 mm. The pommel is of a simple boat shape with a sub-rectangular tang section: length 36 mm, width 7 mm. Traces of the scabbard are found over the blade and an U-shaped scabbard chape was found at the tip of the blade: length 33 mm, width 10 mm. Small iron objects, probably fittings from a scabbard, have corroded to the blade and other material from beneath the sword and humerus, which include a small iron rod, length 16 mm, and rivet shank may also be associated (not illustrated).
- D) Small iron buckle (Fig. 8D) found on the upper surface of the sword with rectangular iron plate. Very corroded and the plate has also corroded onto a strap-end. The loop is 16 mm in height and c. 11 mm in width; the iron tongue is still extant. Dimensions of the plate cannot be established.
- E) Iron strap-end found with the buckle. Corroded onto buckle plate. Dimensions of the artefact cannot be established.
- F) Iron buckle (not illustrated) very fragmentary with rectangular plate; height 35 mm; width 25 mm.
- G) Part of iron strap fitting (not illustrated) from under sword point. U-shaped fitting, 20 mm in height; 10 mm in width. Small rivet two-thirds of the way along one of the sides. Organic deposits adhering to it.
- H) Iron knife (Fig. 8H) under sword, possible wood/organic material on the side of the blade from the sword scabbard. Curved back, straight cutting edge. Fragmentary and very corroded. Overall length 77 mm; width of blade 15 mm. Tip of the blade and part of tang is missing.
- I) Iron knife fragmentary (not illustrated). Straight back curved cutting edge; length of blade 104 mm.
- J) Iron vessel handle (Fig. 8J) with a single iron rivet



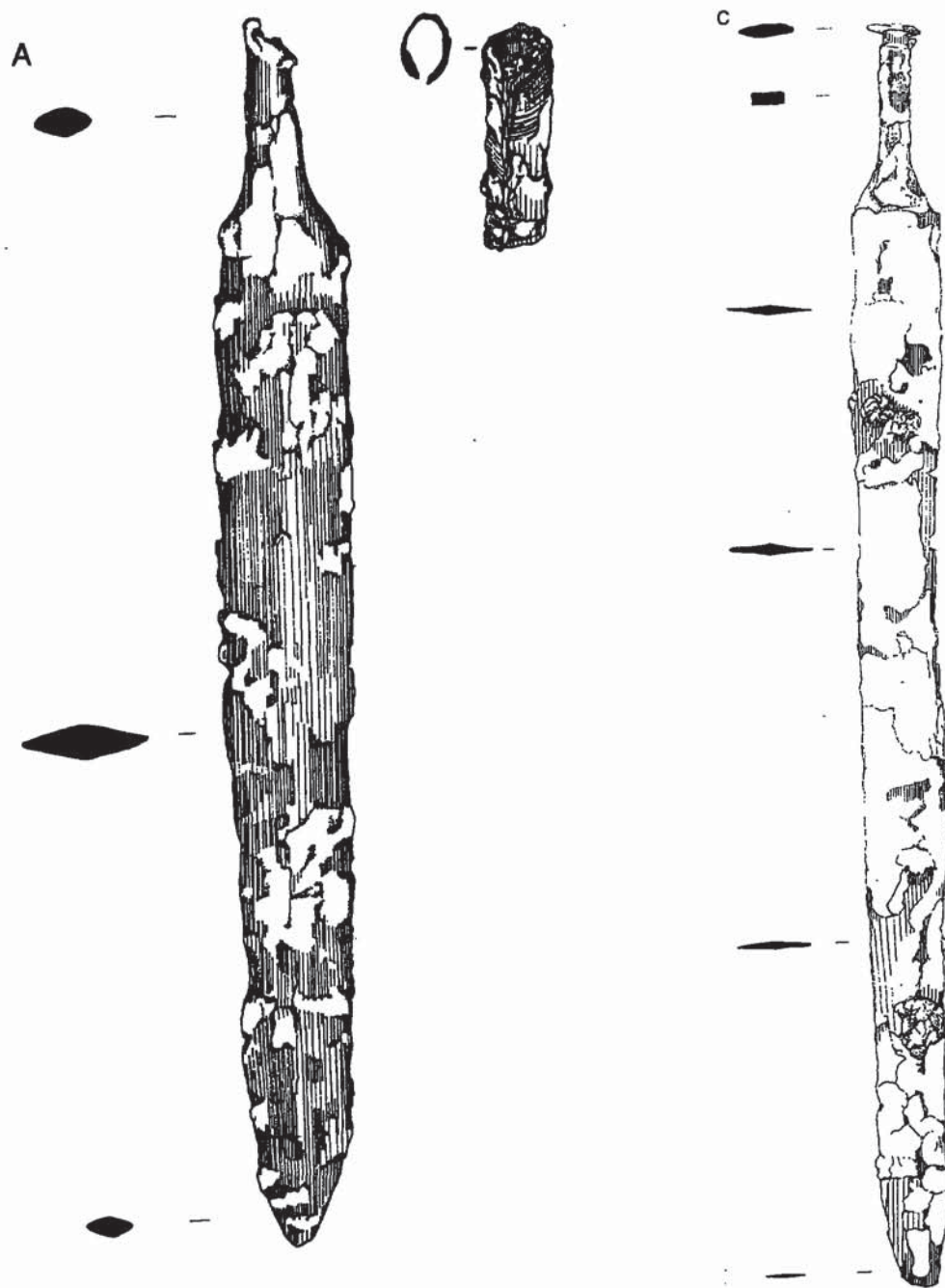


Fig. 8 A Spearhead & C sword, from grave 3. A: 1:2 & C: 1:5

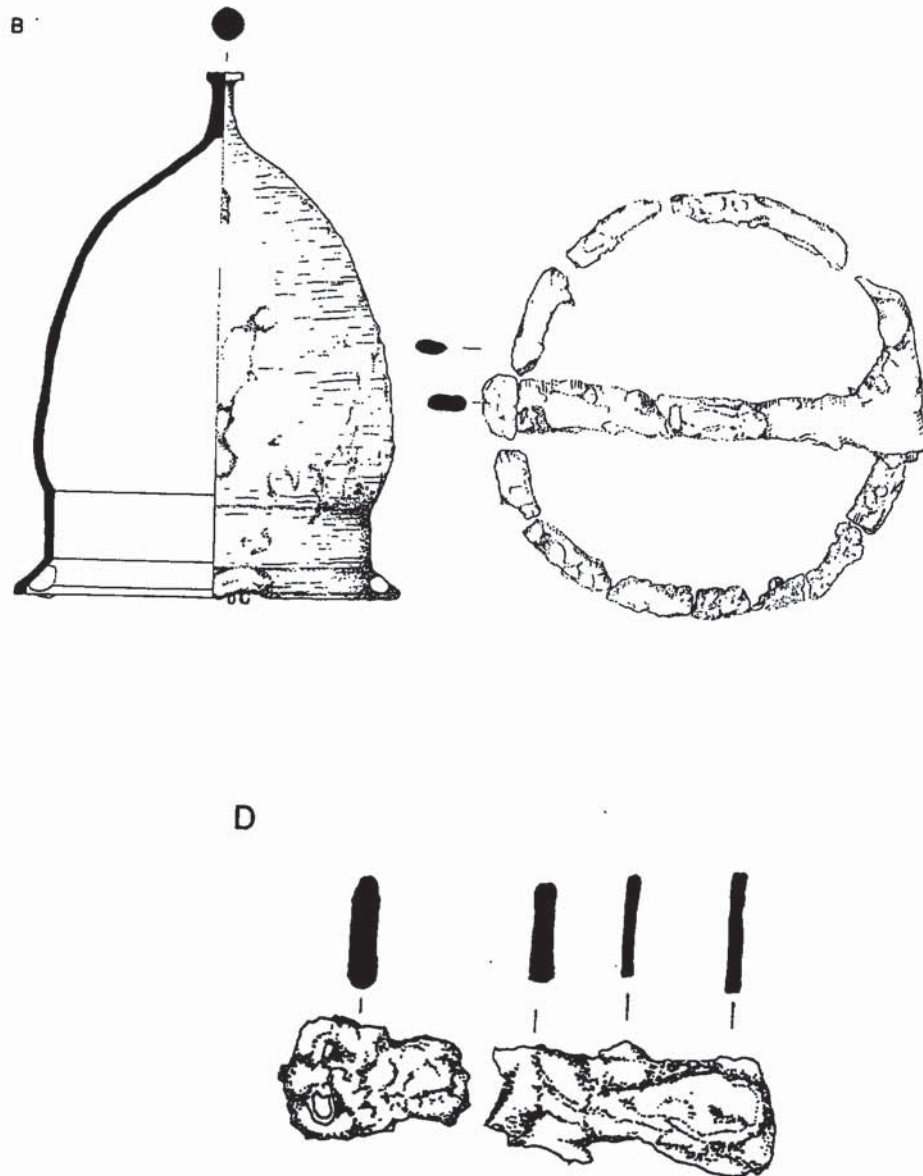


Fig. 8 (*cont.*) B shield boss and grip & D buckle, from grave 3. B: 1:3 & D: 1:1



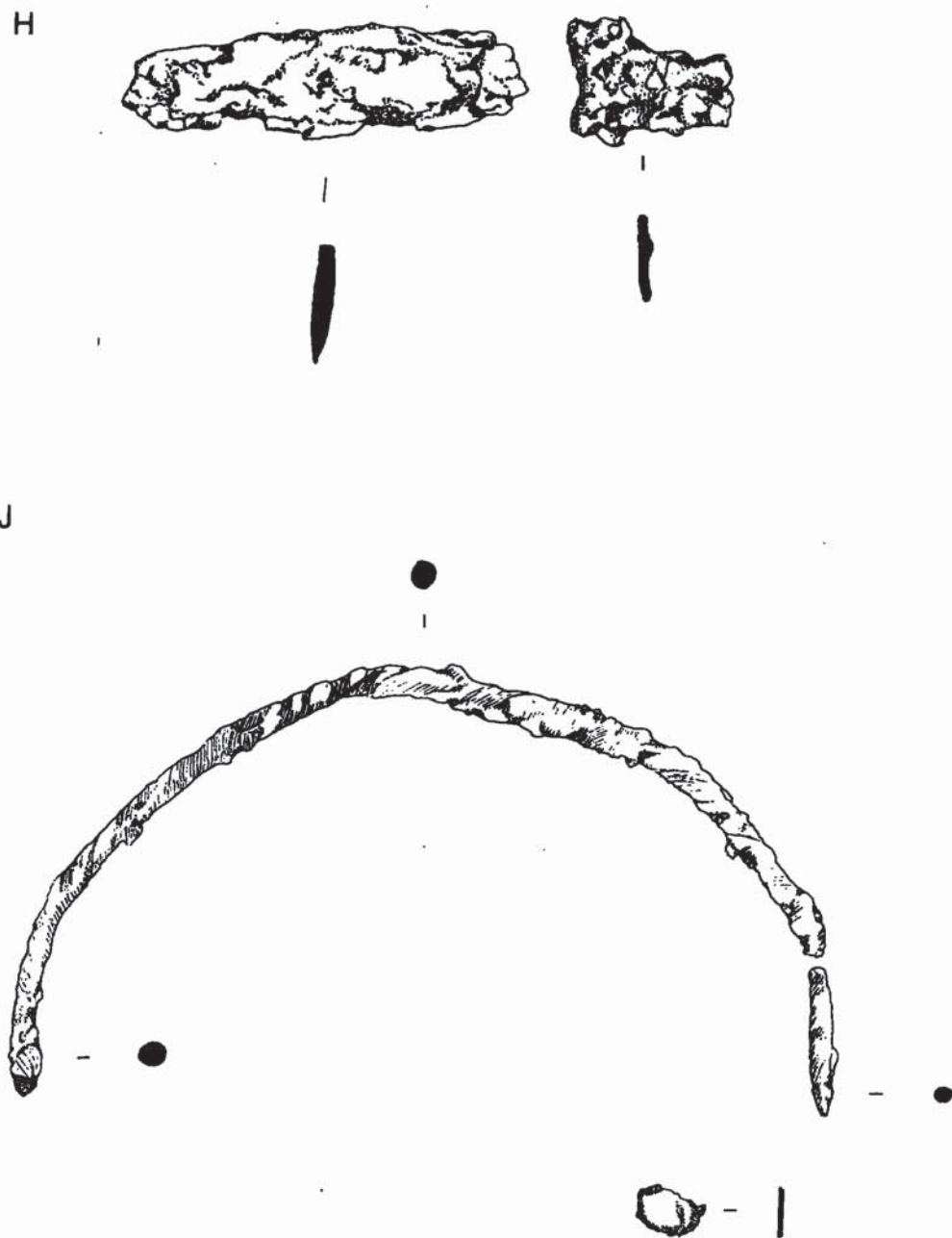


Fig. 8 (*cont.*) H knife & J vessel handle, from grave 3. H: 1:1 & J: 2:3



Fig. 9 Grave 4 (archive photograph from 1987)

(diameter 15 mm). Semi-circular in shape and made from a rod of iron. It is roughly circular in section. Height of 95 mm, and a width of 173 mm. The rod has a diameter of 5 mm.

#### *Grave 4 (Fig. 9)*

200°. 1.90 × 0.90 × ? m. Sub-rectangular grave (probably overcut by excavators). Excavated in 1987 by Hughes. Because of poor weather conditions the skeleton was excavated without being planned.

Skeleton of a young female. Prone; legs straight; skull facing down; left arm straight; right arm bent back with hand resting on lower back/pelvis.

#### *Associated finds*

- A) Iron knife (Fig. 10), position unknown. Curved back, straight blade but curving in near tip. Overall length 134 mm; maximum width 21mm.
- B) Fossil (*Holaster Subglobosus*), (not illustrated) position unknown.

#### *Grave 5 (Fig. 11)*

275°. Dimensions not recorded. Badly disturbed: truncated by lane; upper part of body missing; lower legs and feet disturbed when trench dug. Possibly a rectangular grave. Excavated in 1987 by Hughes. Four pieces of iron and a nail recovered from the fill may have belonged to a coffin (not illustrated).



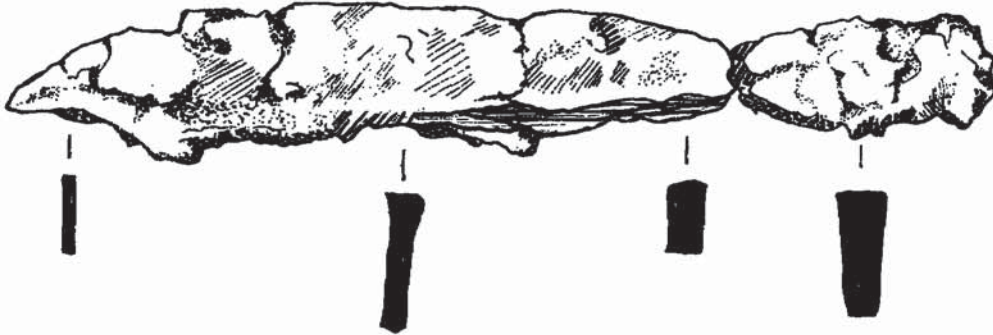


Fig. 10 Knife from grave 4 (1:1)

Skeleton of an ?old female. Extended supine; legs straight; arms straight with hands crossed over pelvis.

No associated finds, though the pieces of iron may have belonged to an object.

#### Grave 6 (Fig. 12)

194°. Dimensions not recorded. Badly disturbed by JCB in 1983 during tree planting. Excavated in 1987 by Hughes.

Skeleton of ?young male. Appears to be extended supine; legs straight.

#### Associated finds

- A) Iron buckle and rectangular plate (Fig. 13). Iron buckle loop with iron tongue, height of buckle 36 mm; width 24 mm. The plate has become detached from the buckle: length 39 mm; width 18 mm
- B) Three small pieces of iron and two pieces of ?lead (not illustrated) (positions in grave unknown).

#### Grave 7 (Fig. 14)

291°. 1.85 × 0.45 × 0.48 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. First uncovered by Hughes in 1987, but backfilled without planning; re-excavated in 1998. Burial forced into a grave that was too small to fully accommodate it: the skull was pushed forward onto the right clavicle.

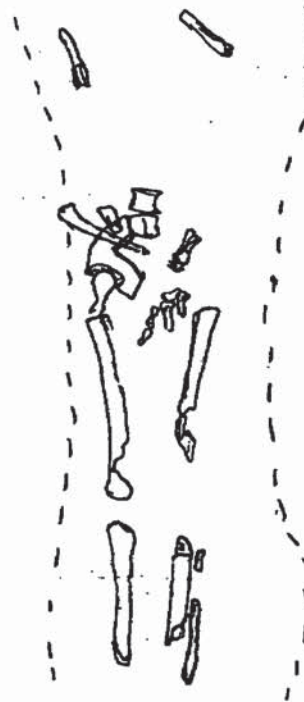


Fig. 11 Grave 5 (1:10) (archive plan from 1987)

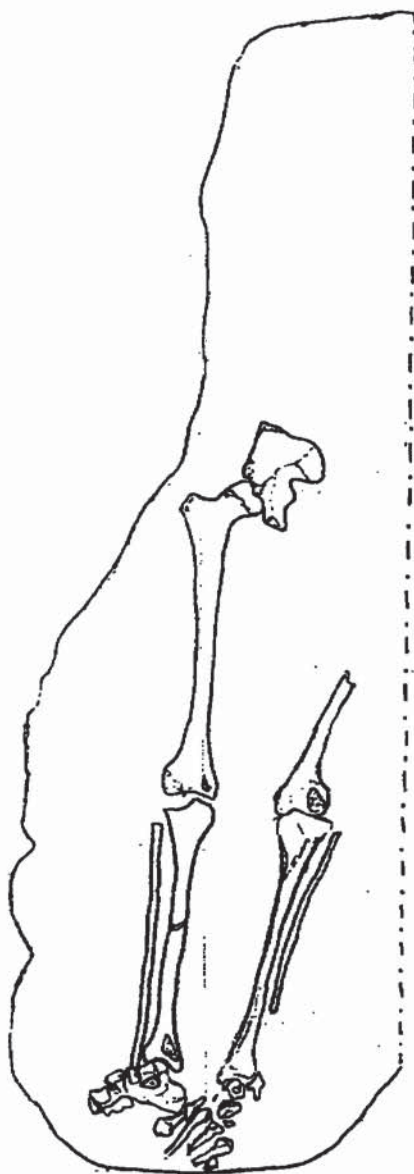


Fig. 12 Grave 6 (1:10) (archive plan from 1987)

Slightly disturbed when revealed in 1987. At the foot end small chalk blocks lined the grave walls. It had six large flints in the fill all at the same level and positioned over the upper part of the body.

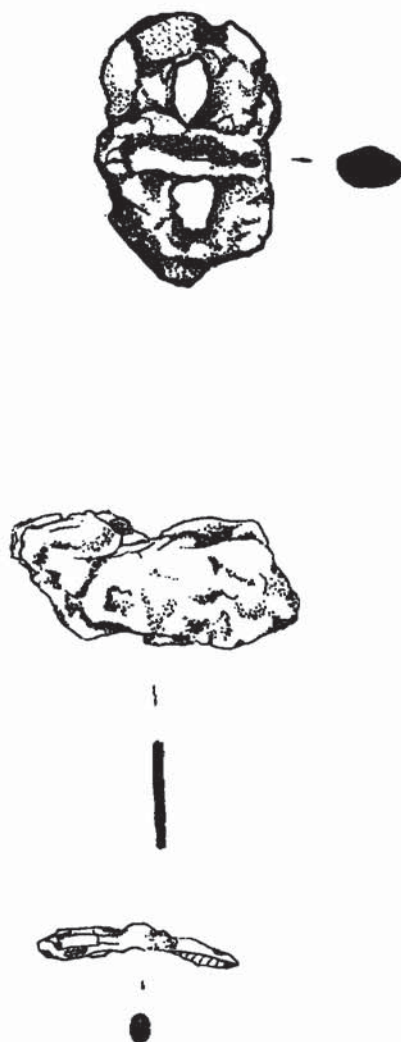


Fig. 13 Buckle and plate from grave 6 (1:1)

Skeleton of a young male. Extended supine; legs straight; skull to south; left arm straight; right arm over abdomen with hand coming to rest over left hand.

No associated finds.



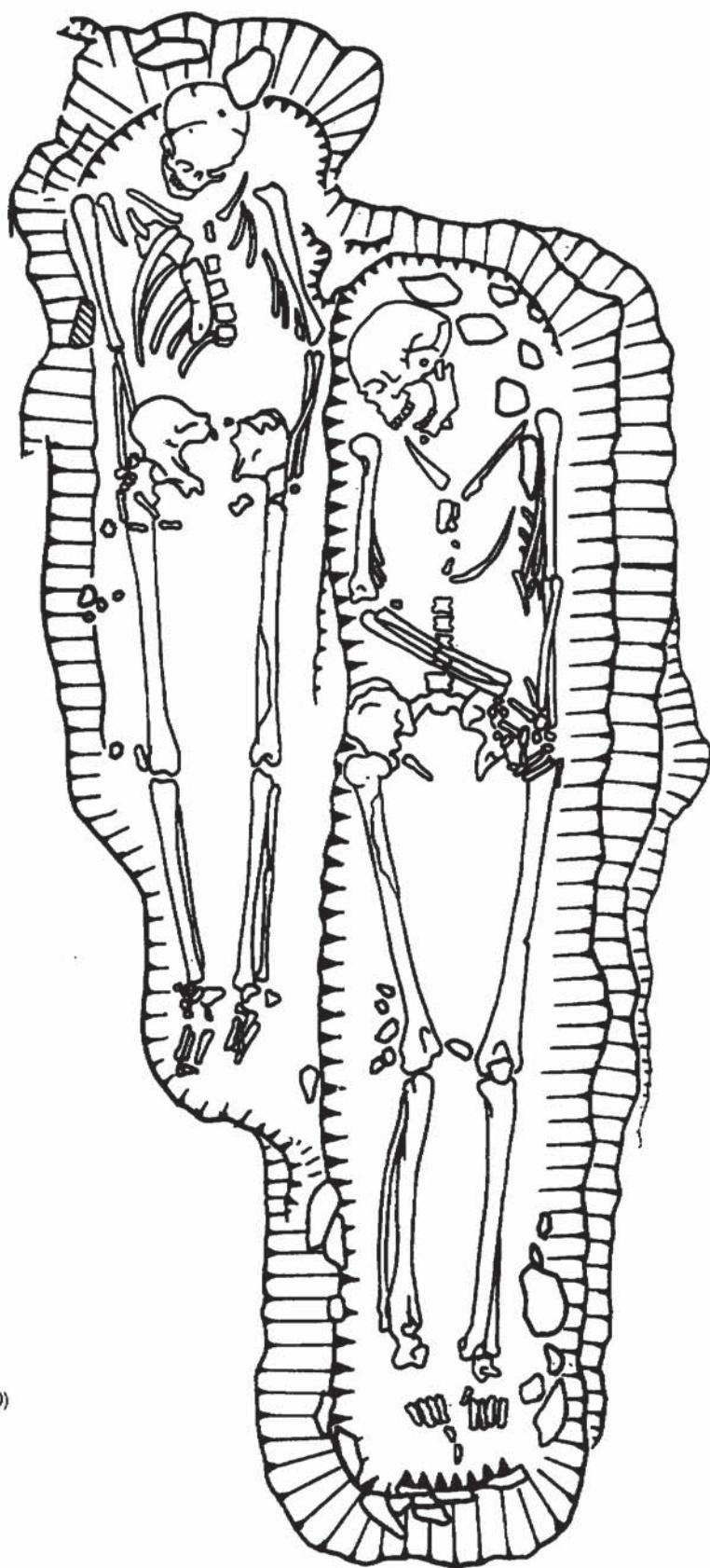


Fig. 14 Graves 7 (right) & 8 (left) (1:10)

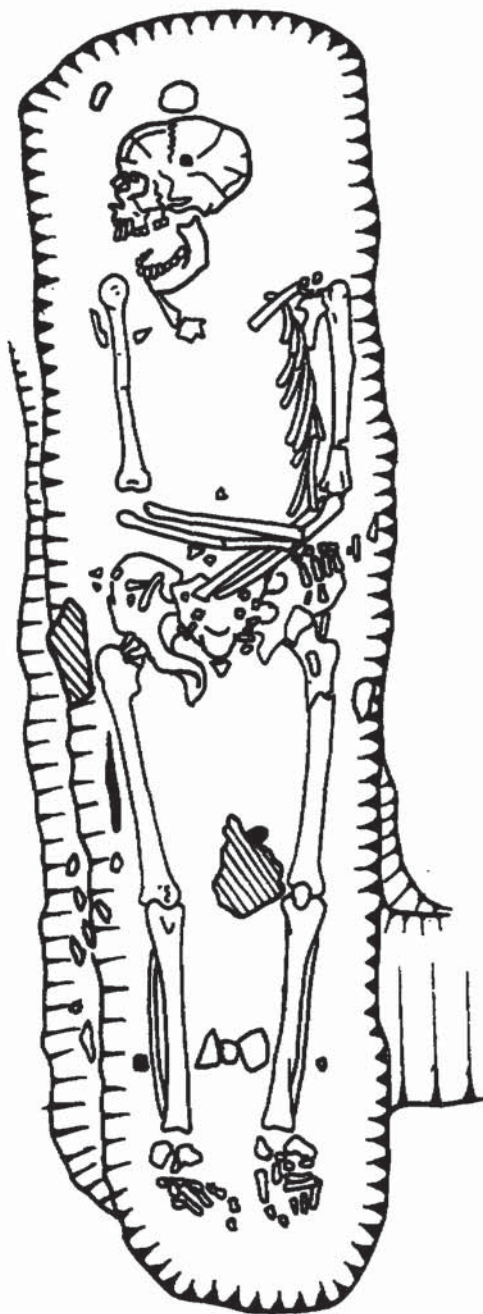


Fig. 15 Grave 9 (1:10)

*Grave 8 (Fig. 14)*

293°. 1.47 × 0.40 × 0.18 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. Partially revealed in 1987 when grave 7 was investigated. Excavated in 1998. Burial forced into a grave that was too small to fully accommodate it; the skull was pushed forward on to the upper chest. Slightly disturbed on its northern edge by grave 7. A flint nodule was embedded between the right arm and grave wall.

Skeleton of a young/middle-aged male. Extended supine; skull upright; legs straight; arms straight; hands resting on pelvis/upper femurs.

No associated finds.

*Grave 9 (Fig. 15)*

293°. 1.71 × 0.45 × 0.29 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. A flint was placed over the knees and one was embedded between top of right leg/pelvis and grave wall.

Skeleton of young male. Extended supine; skull to south; legs straight; arms crossed over pelvis.

*Associated finds*

- A) *Iron knife* (Fig. 16A), outside, and lying parallel to, right femur. Tip broken. Angled back curved cutting edge. Total length 191 mm; width of blade 19 mm. Various objects are adhering to the blade by corrosion, possibly rivets/fitings from a scabbard.
- B) *Iron buckle* (Fig. 16B), by right fibula. Fragmentary tongue, part adhering to loop by corrosion. Height of loop 39 mm; width 29 mm.
- C) *Pottery*, fragment (sherd of middle Iron Age flint-tempered cooking pot) (not illustrated) on skull.
- D) *Fossil shark tooth* (*Cretalamna* or *Scapanorhynchus* type) (Fig. 16D) on left shoulder; 28 mm in length; 11 mm in width.
- E) *Iron pyrite* (not illustrated) between knees and covered by flint.

*Grave 10 (Fig. 17)*

196°. 1.50 × c. 0.60 × 0.50 m. Probably a sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. Recovered from fill: three iron fragments, one possible nail, two fragments of flint, two human bone fragments, a sheep's tooth and a Roman tile fragment. Badly disturbed by modern service



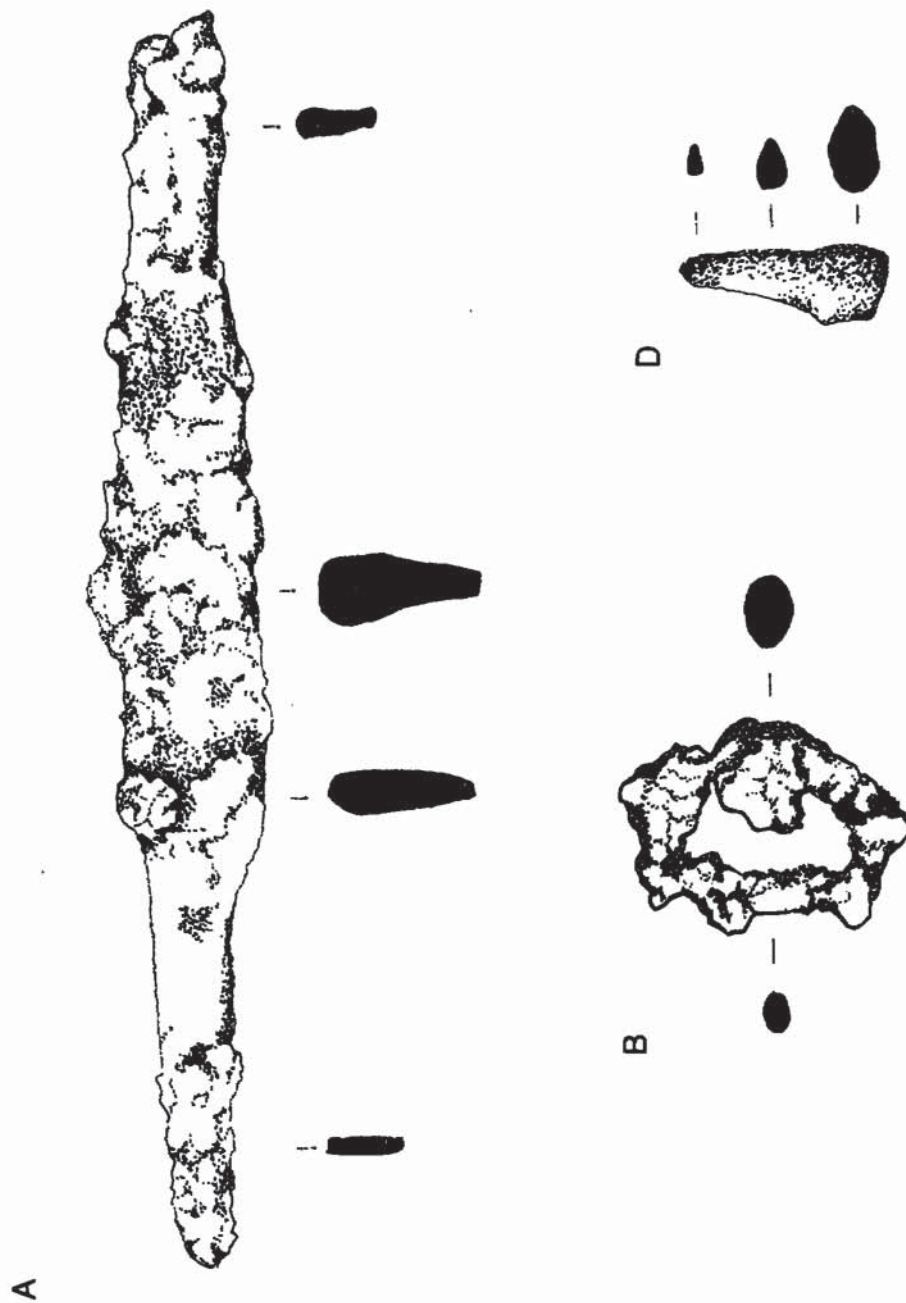


Fig. 16 A Knife; B buckle & D fossil from grave 9 (all 1:1)

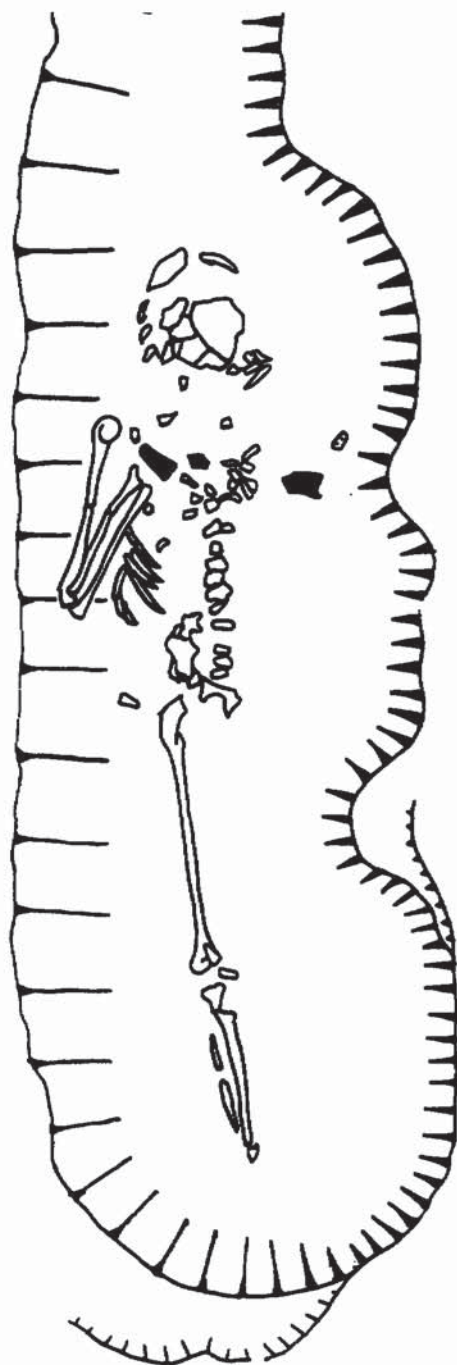


Fig. 17 Grave 10 (1:10)

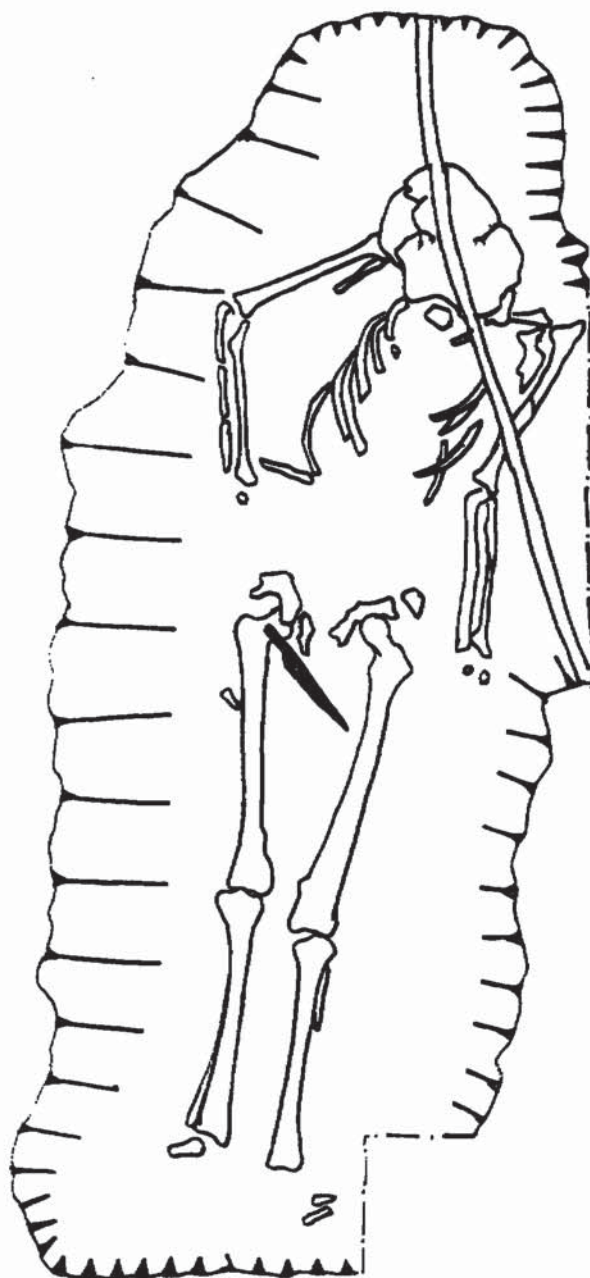


Fig. 18 Grave 11 (1:10) (British Telecom cable shown in upper right)



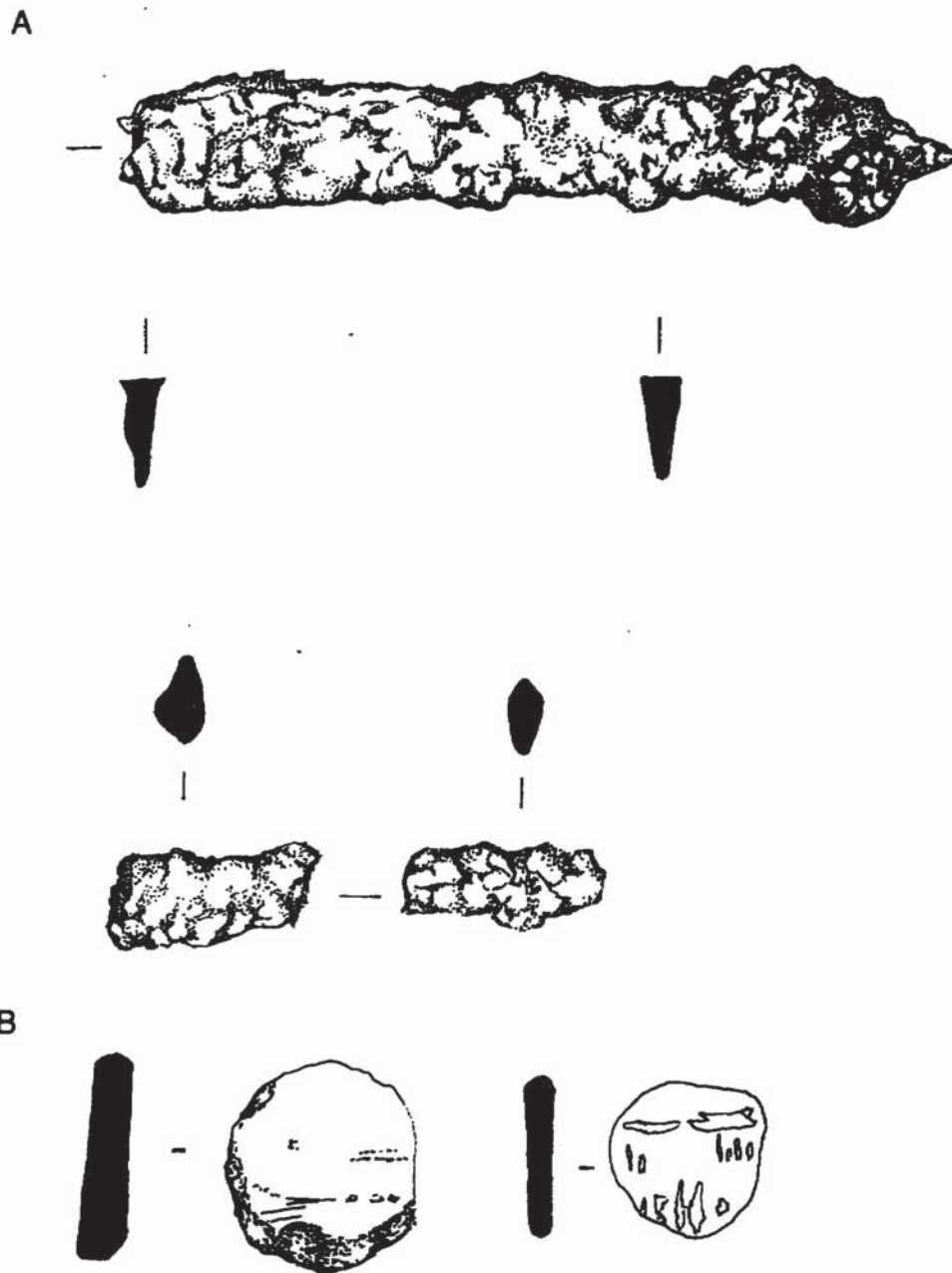


Fig. 19 A Knife; B 2 × gaming counters from grave 11 (all 1:1)

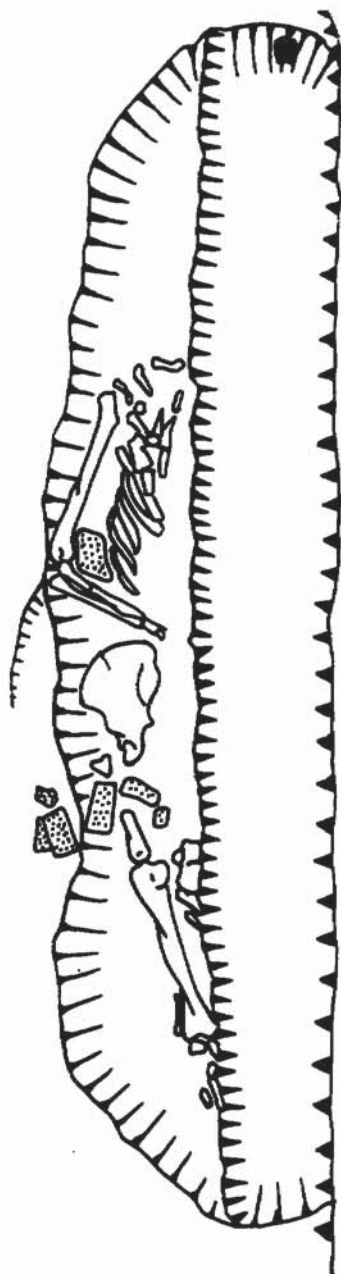


Fig. 20 Grave 12 (1:10)

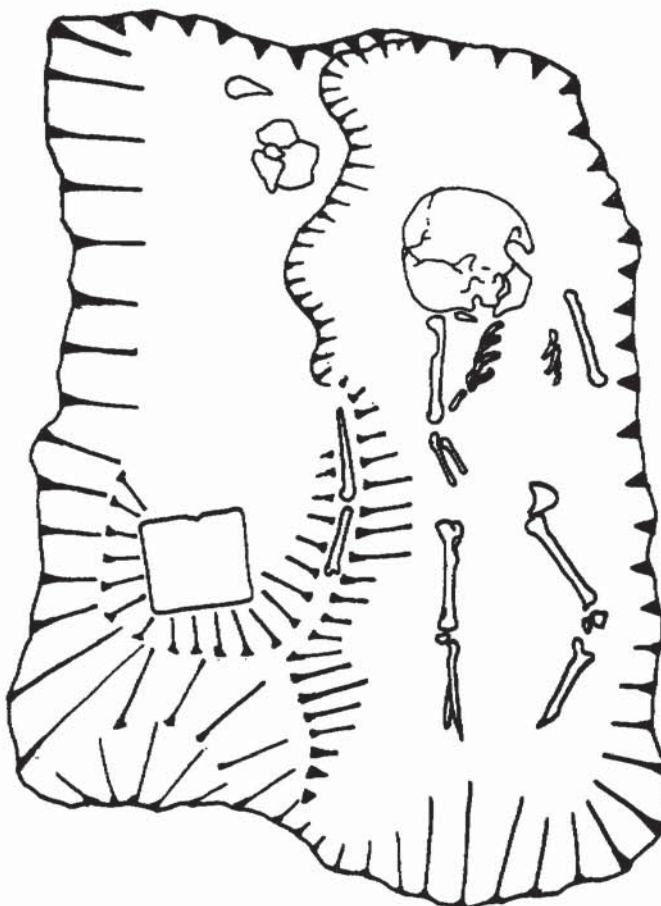


Fig. 21 Grave 13 A (left) &amp; B (right) (1:10)

trench, which destroyed almost all the left-hand side of the burial. Chalk blocks at foot end.

Skeleton of an adolescent of about 14–15 years. Extended supine; head upright; right leg straight; right arm bent upwards and resting on chest.

No associated finds.

#### *Grave 11 (Fig. 18)*

205°. 1.65 × 0.70 × 0.16 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. Recovered from fill: a head of a small iron nail, flint point, fragment of early Saxon quartz-tempered sandy ware and a fragment of burnt bone. Slightly disturbed by modern



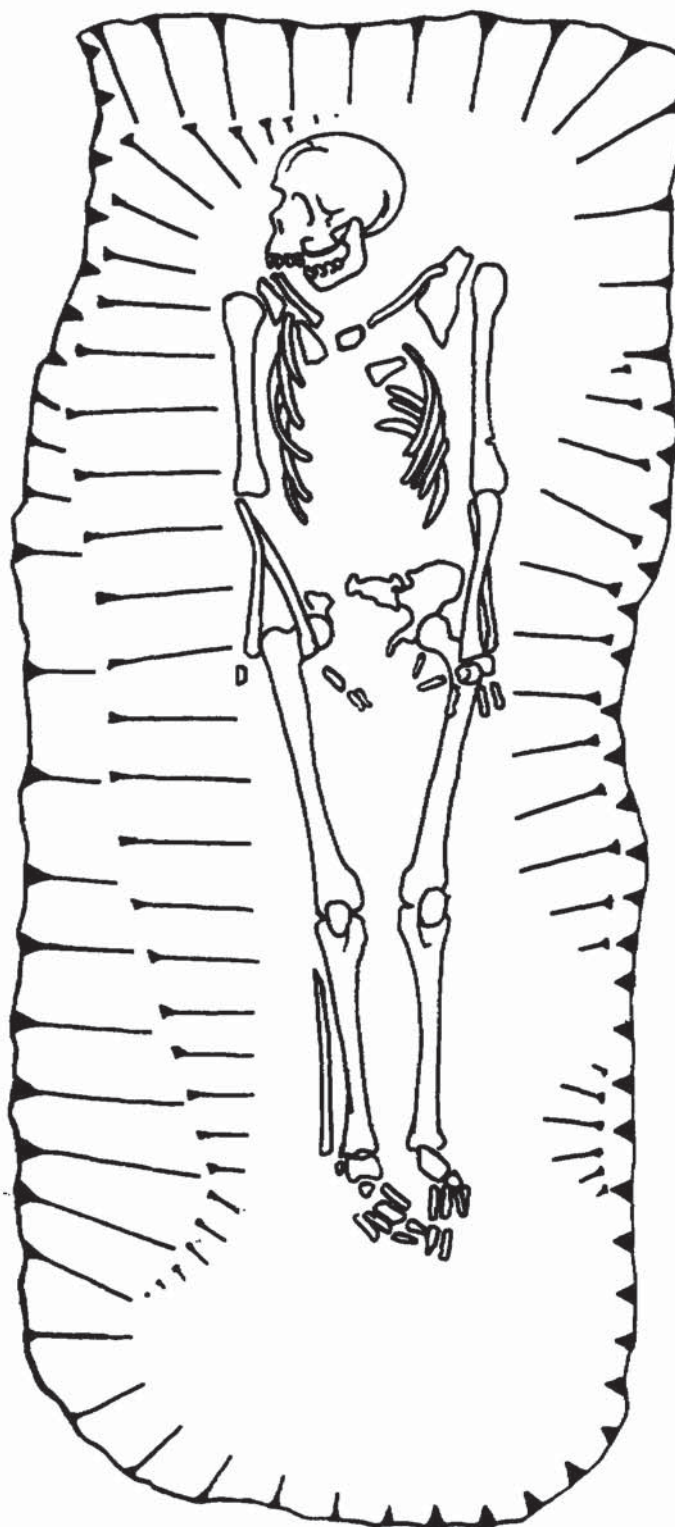


Fig. 22 Grave 14 (1:10)

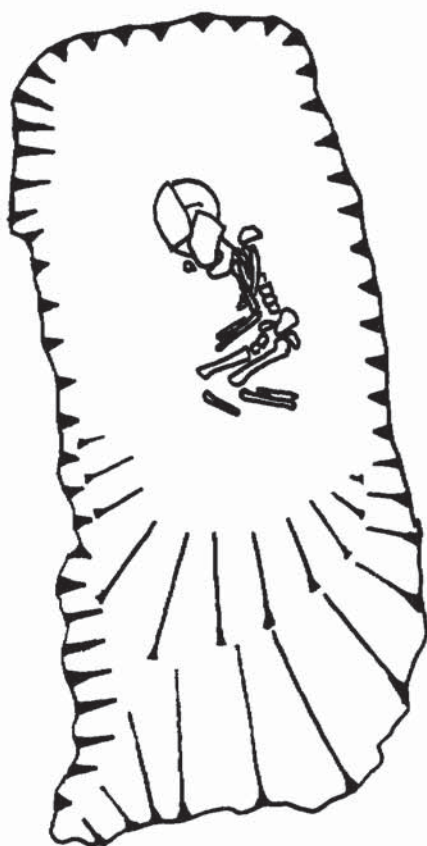


Fig. 23 Grave 15 (1:10)

service trench and an archaeological trench from 1988, which only just failed to locate this grave. Two gaming pieces, which may have originally come from this interment, were recovered from the disturbed earth above the grave.

Skeleton of a middle-aged to old female. Extended supine with the upper body turned to the left side; skull to north; legs straight; left arm straight; right arm bent away from the body with the hand on the pelvis.

#### *Associated finds*

- A) Iron *knife* (Fig. 19A) lying inside the upper right femur, pointing diagonally to feet. Curved back with straight blade. Fragmentary; length 167 mm; width 16 mm; probable evidence of scabbard from two rivets that had fused to the knife.

- B) Gaming counter made from New Forest Colour coated Grey ware (Fig. 19B).

- C) Gaming counter made from Samian Ware (Fig. 19B).

#### *Grave 12 (Fig. 20)*

193°. 1.58 × 0.55 × 0.10 m. Probably a sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. Recovered from fill: three sherds of middle Iron Age flint-tempered cooking pot. Badly disturbed by modern service trench, which destroyed almost all the left hand side of the burial. Flint over knee; chalk blocks placed over the feet and under the knee and at the head end of the grave.

Skeleton of an adult male. Extended supine; skull removed by modern disturbance; right leg bent upright and supported under chalk blocks; right arm flexed with hand over pelvis.

Apparently no associated finds.

#### *Grave 13 A/B (Fig. 21)*

265(A)/279(B)°. Dimensions of pit A: 1.04 × 0.35 × 0.34 m; dimensions of pit B: 1.15 × 0.42 × 0.46 m. Fill of chalk and earth. Double burial: originally a single burial, this grave was enlarged to accommodate another individual. The first burial, 13A, had a complete Roman *Lydion* tile placed at the foot end of the grave; while 13B had several flints over the skull. Three small iron nails were found in the fill, possible evidence for a coffin (not illustrated).

13A a child of about 12–18 months; 13B a child of about 3 years. 13A probably extended supine; 13B extended supine; skull upright; right leg straight; left leg flexed; arms straight.

No associated finds.

#### *Grave 14 (Fig. 22)*

287°. 2.20 × 0.80 × 0.74 m. Rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. Recovered from fill: a fragment of iron, three Roman tile fragments, a prehistoric flint flake with bored hole and three fragments of human bone. Three layers of flints, the top consisting of four, the middle three and the bottom two, were placed over the skull forming a



column, of which the top was visible from the surface of the chalk.

Skeleton of a middle-aged male. Extended supine; skull to south; legs straight; arms straight with hands resting on pelvis/upper femurs.

No associated finds.

#### *Grave 15 (Fig. 23)*

265°. 0.90 × 0.45 × 0.18 m. Sub-rectangular grave. Fill of chalk and earth. One flint was placed at the head end of the grave to the west of the skull, one was roughly in the centre of the grave and two were at the foot end.

Skeleton of a newborn infant. Crouched on right side; knees drawn up; arms projecting away from the body.

No associated finds.

### THE HUMAN BONES

by Sue Anderson (full report in archive)

A minimum of 21 Saxon individuals were identified amongst the human skeletal remains recovered from both sides of Shavard Lane. Excavations in 1972 revealed one grave, but bones collected represent at least five or six individuals. Clearly this is not the complete cemetery, and there is likely to be some bias in the results of this analysis.

The majority of the skeletons were in fair or good condition, although some of the disturbed remains and smaller children were poorly preserved. However, most bones were broken, often into many fragments, and many showed signs of surface erosion. The sample comprised 16 adults and five children (Tab 4). The adult portion consisted of 12 men and four women, ranging from young to old, but with the majority in youth or middle-age. Four of the children were under five years old, and one was a teenager. With a group of this size, it is difficult to make definitive conclusions, but there is clearly a significant difference in terms of adult sex ratio. This may simply be a result of excavation bias, although it is interesting to note that three of the four women were buried next to each other towards the north end of the site. The majority of men from the site were in

young (Y) or middle-age (MA) at the time of death, only one (1972.567/1) being potentially older. In contrast, two of the four women were middle-aged or old. Again, due to the size of the group, it is not possible to make any conclusions about this apparent difference.

In terms of physical size and appearance, this group is no different from larger Saxon groups in the south and east of England. Stature and cranial measurements are all within normal limits. Non-metric traits were recorded for the cranial and post-cranial skeleton, but few unusual traits were present. It was not possible to suggest any family groupings within the cemetery on the basis of non-metric or congenital anomalies; however, the adult and child's skull found in grave 3 had both retained the metopic suture, perhaps suggesting a biological relationship between the two.

Dental pathology is comparable with other groups of the period, and suggested that dental health in this population was good. Carious lesions and abscesses were rare, as is expected in populations with little sugar or carbohydrates in the diet. Of note is the sub-adult (grave 10) that had a large carious lesion in the upper right first molar, which had resulted in an open cavity and a periapical abscess. This is unusual in a child of this period, particularly as, in this case, the molar would only have been fully erupted for about eight years at the time of death. Enamel hypoplasia was noted on the teeth of three individuals. In two cases (4, 10) it consisted of very slight lines, but in one young – middle-aged male (8), pitting and hypoplastic lines were evident in the enamel of all anterior teeth. This individual's enamel had apparently been affected by malnutrition or illness between the ages of 2–6 years.

Degenerative disease was rare, probably because so few of the group were biologically old. However, the degree of trauma and stress injuries was high, as is often the case in rural populations whose main occupation is farming. Overall, the group appears to have been relatively healthy and physically robust, all skeletons showing large muscle markings and little evidence of disease beyond the stresses and strains of daily life.

*Table 4* Sex and age of all skeletons (MA = middle age; Y = young)

<i>Grave no.</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Unsexed</i>	<i>Child</i>
1	MA			
2	Young			
3A	Y-MA			
3B				c.2-5
4		Young		
5		Old?		
6	?Young			
7	Young			
8	Y-MA			
9	Young			
10				c.14-15
11		MA/Old		
12	Adult			
13A				12-18m
13B				c.3
14	MA			
15				newborn
disturbed material from 1972				
skeleton no.				
549/2b				Adult (=566/1?)
566/1	Adult			
566/1b		Adult		
567/1	MA+			
567/1b	Adult			

## BURIAL PRACTICES

### *Grave size and shape*

The grave pits are generally of a sub-rectangular shape – the most common type of outline found. The information on grave size is not complete – a

result of the weathered chalk which made it very difficult to judge whether the edge of the grave had been found. This seems to have been a problem in the 1980's, especially in the case of graves 3 and 4 where it was feared that the excavator had over cut, this may explain the large dimensions of these. However, compared to graves elsewhere



these dimensions are not unusual, and it is the other graves which are on the small side when compared to other cemeteries in Wessex. And as most of these cemeteries are also situated on chalk, the small sizes cannot be interpreted as a result of the labour required to dig a grave into the hard chalk bedrock.

Both the individuals in graves 7 and 8 seem to have been forced into their graves: they were 'slumped' against the grave end and with the action of time their skulls had come to rest on the upper torso. Burial in a grave, clearly too small to accommodate the person comfortably, may suggest that less care was shown in the interment of this individual. Alternatively, the graves may have been dug in advance, for example in the summer when the ground was soft, and by the end of winter only the less desirable pits may have been available.

#### *Intercutting graves*

There was only one case of graves intercutting (graves 7 and 8). Grave 7 is stratigraphically earlier, and it was slightly disturbed on the southern edge when grave 8 was dug. That the two graves were intended to be kept separate is clear from the fact that grave 8 was not dug to the same depth as 7, and only slightly cut into the edge of 8. From this evidence it seems that the position of grave 7 must have been known. Also, no other graves were found to the south of 8. This is interesting, because if space was not at a premium, which it does not seem to be, why were the graves placed so close together? Perhaps the individuals were related by blood or kin, or in some other way such as by profession or religion etc., which necessitated that their graves were placed so close. A very similar situation was found in the neighbouring cemetery of Droxford. Here graves 16 and 17 were intercutting, but the stratigraphic relationship between them could not be determined (Aldsworth 1979, 120), and the accompanying grave goods are of no assistance either.

#### *Grave structures*

##### *Flints*

Graves 1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14 and 15 all produced flints. Grave 1 provides the most interesting case:

three large flints were discovered in the fill at the north-west corner over the upper body, and according to the workmen that had found the grave more had been placed over the skull. In addition, at the foot end of the grave a rectangular flat-bottomed pit, 10 cm deeper than the grave floor and containing three large flints and a block of sandstone was revealed. The authors are not aware of any similar examples, and any suggestions regarding its function must remain speculative, though it is not unrealistic to believe that it may originally have served as a platform on which objects or foodstuffs had been placed or even acted as the setting for a grave marker.

In grave 7, six large flints had been placed in the fill above the upper body. In this and the above case the flints may have been used as a covering, perhaps offering protection to the burial and/or acting as a substitute for a coffin. Flint coverings were relatively popular in the Upper Thames, for example in the cemetery of Abingdon I (Leeds and Harden 1936) eight graves had this feature. Elsewhere they are rare, and it is unusual for more than one grave per cemetery to have had a stone covering.

In grave 9 a flint had been placed over the individual's knees and beneath this was discovered an iron pyrite. While in grave 12, a flint had been placed directly over the right kneecap. The right leg was raised up and supported under the kneecap by chalk blocks. Unfortunately we cannot comment on the left leg as this was removed through disturbance. This is a rare position for the leg to be in, and the flint was probably bound up with this unusual practice. A slightly different situation was discovered in grave 14: here three layers of flints had been placed above the skull. The uppermost ones were visible from the surface of the chalk and it is possible that more flints had been placed in the topsoil and that the structure had served as some type of marker.

Given the strong association between flints and graves, and the flint spread discovered in 1999, it is only natural to assume that flints played a particularly important role in the burial practices of this community. Yet, overall the practice of placing flints and stones within the grave is a rare custom. In a national sample of 3401 burials, only 3% had this feature. However,



nearly half of these cases ( $n = 45$ ) are from Wessex. In particular, they cluster at Winnall II ( $n=13$ ) (Meaney and Hawkes 1970), Andover (Cook and Dacre 1985) ( $n = 12$ ) and Worthy Park (Hawkes *forthcoming*) ( $n = 5$ ). Particularly relevant for this site are the examples from Droxford where three burials were discovered to have had flints in direct association with the body. Most reminiscent of Meonstoke is burial 20, which had three flints placed over the shoulders (Aldsworth 1979, fig 11).

#### *Roman tile*

A complete Roman *Lydion* tile had been placed at the foot end of burial A in grave 13. It was in a roughly horizontal position suggesting perhaps that it had served as a base on which a food offering or other organic object had been placed.

#### *Coffins*

No definite evidence for coffins was found, and only one grave produced possible evidence: grave 13 in which three small nails may indicate the prior existence of a wooden container. Coffins provide a simple method in which to protect the deceased from the earth backfill, and are the most numerous of all grave structures being present in 4% of a national sample. In fact they were probably more numerous: the small sample being a result of the poor preservation of timber.

#### *External structures*

A pit or post-hole was discovered at the north end of the seventh-century weapon burial (grave 3). On balance this is probably the latter, and served as the setting for a marker post. External grave structures, such as posts, rectangular and annular ditches, barrows and timber mortuary structures were popular in the seventh century, and reflect a concern for the above-ground marking of graves. They are a frequent discovery in the cemeteries of Kent: for example, at St Peter's Broadstairs many graves were found to have wooden ledges, ring ditches and post-holes (Hogarth 1973). The sword suggests that the individual in grave 3 was of some importance, and the presence of a grave marker, and the extra expenditure which this involved, would not be out of step with such a hypothesis. As already mentioned the post-holes found in close as-

sociation with this grave may have originally taken the timber posts of an above-ground mortuary structure, such as found at Apple Down (Down and Welch 1990, 15). The flint column that was discovered in grave 14 seems also to have been intended as a marker (see above).

#### *Burial position*

The predominant position to place the deceased was extended supine with legs straight and arms beside the body, which is the dominant rite in almost all early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, especially those south of the Thames: for example at Andover, from 40 adult burials for which the position was known, 28 were laid extended supine, while at Worthy Park 59 of the 71 adults were similarly treated. At Meonstoke several slight deviations from an extended position were noted: the female in grave 11 had been slightly twisted onto the left side; while the male in grave 12 had his only surviving leg raised and supported on chalk blocks. It may be significant that the examination of the right humerus of this male discovered possible evidence of physical stress/trauma on a muscle attachment. The position of the leg in the grave may reflect the discomfort experienced by this individual in life.

Only two burials recorded major differences in position: the woman in grave 4 had been laid on her front (prone), and the newborn infant in grave 15 was in a crouched position. A prone attitude is the rarest of all positions: from a national sample of 1163 burials only one per cent was found to be prone (Stoodley 1999b, 55). A prone inhumation was discovered at Droxford (burial 7), while two were recovered from Worthy Park (burials 43 and 78). This style of burial is often found to coincide with a lack of material wealth and such sinister practices as the tying of wrists behind the back (Harman *et al.* 1981, 164), and at Meonstoke, Droxford and Worthy Park the burials were very poorly furnished. Such a position is usually interpreted as indicating a deviant burial, and the traditional explanation is that the individual had committed some offence, or acted in some way in life that necessitated a rite that marked them out as different to the rest of the community.

It is not unusual to find an infant or young child



in a crouched position: at Droxford burial 32 of a child aged 4–5 years, and at Worthy Park burial 65 which belonged to a 1 year old. The usual explanation for this style is that it is meant to portray the position of the foetus in the womb, and given the association between this and younger age groups it is not an implausible hypothesis.

#### *Multiple burial*

Only one grave contained more than a single inhumation: grave 13 of two sub-adults. This was originally a single grave (13A), which was enlarged both length ways and width ways to allow another interment to take place. This is very interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, consecutive burials, where additional interments are added to a pre-existing grave, are rarer than contemporary multiples, i.e. when two or more individuals are buried at the same time (Stoodley *forthcoming*). Secondly, the most common combinations in multiple burials are of adults, or adults and sub-adults; it is very unusual to find two sub-adults in the same grave. In this case, the first burial was of a very young child of 12–18 months, while the latter belonged to a three-year-old. Thirdly, most consecutive multiples take the form of either 'stacked' burials, that is a later interment placed on top of an earlier one, or the destructive reuse of the grave that sees considerable damage being inflicted on the primary burial. Incidentally, such a situation may explain the presence of fragments of juvenile skeletal material in the fill of grave 3. When a primary burial is disturbed in such a manner, the lack of respect being shown suggests that the occupants were not related, though for grave 3 the skeletal evidence may in fact suggest just such a relationship (see above). If, as is the case with grave 13, the secondary interment is carried out carefully, the evidence may suggest that some kind of relationship did exist. It is tempting to suggest that we may have the burial of two young brothers that died in quick succession. Though as the author's (NS) research into the multiple burial rite has demonstrated, the other practices associated with these burials are often quite complex and may indicate a situation that is more complicated than a simple familial relationship.

#### *Orientation*

Grave alignment demonstrated a modest degree of variability. The most popular direction was for the grave to be orientated SSW–NNE, with the head at the southerly end (six burials). Five burials were lying W–E (head W), while the same number had a WNW–ESE (head westerly extreme of the grave) alignment. Overall there are two principal alignments – a westerly and a southerly one; these are in fact the main alignments found in cemeteries of this date, for example, at Andover the majority of burials ranged between SSE and SW.

### CEMETERY LAYOUT AND ORGANISATION

Despite having what is probably only a small section of a much larger cemetery some comments about the character of the site can be made. Until the 1999 excavation the authors felt fairly confident that the general development of the cemetery was understood. It was believed that the earliest graves were placed to the west of Shavard Lane, probably within the vicinity of the private property and the sixth-century burials already discovered (graves 1 and 2). And it was believed that the cemetery spread out in a horizontal manner, with the latest graves lying to the east of Shavard Lane. The definite seventh-century burial (grave 3) and the others, all of typical seventh-century character, were seen to support this hypothesis. However, during 1999, some intriguing discoveries were made: firstly a fifth- to sixth-century disc brooch was recovered from the spoil; and secondly, in several places human bone was discovered in shallow features, possibly the bottoms of graves that had been largely destroyed. In one case, a few fragments of bone were associated with a pierced Roman coin. This has resulted in a modification to the original idea: there may not have been such a neat chronological development to the cemetery after all. It is possible that some later burials were intermingled amongst the late fifth and sixth century ones. Given that the later graves are largely intact, it would seem natural to assume that it was the seventh-century activity that was responsible



for this disturbance. Perhaps the positions of these burials were no longer visible from the surface, and the disturbance was accidental; alternatively, it may have been intentional grave robbing – the proximity of well-furnished burials may have been too much of a temptation. Whatever the cause, the destruction was on a sufficient enough scale to almost completely erase all evidence of their existence. Such a situation is rare: in cases of disturbance, either by robbing or intercutting, more of the burial usually survives. Admittedly, the excavation only covered a small area of the site and further work is necessary before it can be ascertained for certain what had happened.

The ditch running in a north-south direction along the edge of the field played a major role in the organisation of the cemetery. The siting of early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries around earlier features, and in particular ditches, has been noted on numerous occasions. At Mucking (Essex) (Jones 1975), graves in both the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were cut into the fill of Roman field ditches. The alignments of many graves in the cemetery of Portway East, Andover, were influenced by the prehistoric linear ditch, which ran down the eastern edge of the cemetery. Graves may have been cut into earlier, silted up, ditches because the fill was easier to dig into than the natural surface. This would certainly have been the case at Meonstoke. Alternatively, individual or family status may have determined the siting of graves: those that were unable to attract the effort required in digging a grave into the chalk might have been assigned a plot along the ditch, although the placing of grave 3 in the ditch, argues against this thesis.

A quick glance at the cemetery plan shows two distinct clusters of graves. It may have been that the cemetery was organised around individual burial plots, perhaps belonging to individual families. Where similar grave clusters have been discovered, e.g. Andover and Sewerby (East Yorkshire), the mix of different ages and sexes plus variations in the social status of the interred, based on burial wealth, has suggested that a family or household explanation is the most likely explanation for this spatial patterning (Hirst 1985, 102; Stoodley 1999b, 123–132).

## THE GRAVE GOODS

### *Weapons*

#### *Spearheads*

A Swanton series K1 spearhead with a broken tip was recovered from grave 1 (for a description see Devenish and Champion 1978, 38). These spearheads belong to a series that have a corrugated section; in particular the shape of the K1 blade is of a two-plane surface with a concave left-hand half, the section being acutely stepped or helicoidal (Swanton 1973, 128). At 240 mm in length (originally 255 mm) this example is of a medium size for the group. It is a type found mainly in the Upper Thames valley and south of the Thames (Swanton 1973, 128–131). Locally, examples have been found unstratified at Droxford; while further north two were recovered from Worthy Park (graves 83 and 87) and one from Andover (grave 26). They are found in later fifth to mid sixth-century contexts (450–575 AD) and are rare: only 3.5% of a national sample of 428 spearheads were of this type, and they are most commonly found in assemblages containing shields (47%), such as here. Grave 2 produced a spearhead of Swanton group H2 (see Hughes 1985). These spearheads belong to a group of angular, concave-sided spearheads, whose blades are longer than their sockets. Such examples are a common type found throughout the country from the later fifth to the early seventh century, and are usually found in association with a shield boss.

From grave 3 came a spearhead of Swanton group E3 (figure 8). This is a large and distinctive group, characterised by a long and tapering blade which comprises between two-thirds and three-quarters of the length of the spearhead, with the blade angle set close to the socket-junction (Swanton 1973, 83). Most range from between 350 mm to 450 mm in length, so the Meonstoke one at 368 mm is clearly one of the shorter examples. This group has a broad geographical distribution, though their scarcity in the Upper Thames valley is in contrast to the heavy concentrations found in east Kent. Although they do occur in sixth-century contexts, they are primarily associated with late sixth- and seventh-century burials (Swanton 1973, 83–5) and a number of these, like at Meonstoke,



have also been associated with sugar-loaf shield bosses, for example: Boughton Aluph and Sibertswold (Kent) (Swanton 1973, 85).

#### *Shield bosses*

Graves 1 and 2 contained shield-bosses of Härke and Dickinson group 1.1 (for illustrations see Devenish and Champion 1978; Hughes 1985). Characteristics of these bosses include a low height with a large diameter; a straight cone with four flange rivets, and a tendency for plain disc-headed apexes (Dickinson and Härke 1992, 10). They are particularly common in the Upper Thames and Wessex, and mainly date to the period 450–550 AD. The example from grave 1 displays all these characteristics, except that it was attached to the shield-board by five disc-headed rivets (Devenish and Champion 1978, 38).

The boss in grave 1 was found with its grip, which is 14 cm in length and is of type Ia 1. That is a short grip with expanded terminals – the most frequent type in the early Anglo-Saxon period (Dickinson and Härke 1992, 24). It was also recovered with the two iron disc-headed rivets, which would have fixed it to the board (Devenish and Champion 1978, 38).

Grave 3 produced a distinctive 'sugar-loaf' shield-boss (Fig. 8B). The characteristics of these bosses include a tall curved cone with a convex dome that usually displays a point, which has been flattened into a disc (Dickinson and Härke group 7). These forms emerged in the second half of the seventh century and are concentrated in Wessex, Kent and the eastern counties (Dickinson and Härke 1992, 21). Evison (1963) noted that material with these forms was remarkably homogeneous in character: in particular the other weapons they are usually placed with are spears and seaxes. It was thus interesting to find that this example was associated with a spear and sword. Moreover the boss itself is unique. Firstly, it was fastened to the shield board by flat-headed, silvered or tinned, rivets and most of the examples listed by Evison (1963) in her study utilised plain dome-headed iron rivets. Secondly, the use of paired rivets to attach the boss to the board is also unusual. A similar example was discovered in a barrow-burial at Farthingdown, Surrey (Evison 1963, fig 30): six pairs of rivets were joined on the

underside of the board by iron strips in a very similar manner to the Meonstoke example. At Meonstoke the quality of these rivets and the general nature of the assemblage reinforces the belief that it belonged to somebody of some importance within the community (see below).

#### *Sword*

One sword was recovered (grave 3, Fig. 8C). A radiograph of this object is not available so it is unknown whether it was pattern-welded. The sword is double-edged and consists of a blade and a tang with a small iron pommel of simple boat shape. The lower guard of the tang has a recessed section directly below the pommel indicating that an organic guard once existed. Although there is evidence for the scabbard over the entire length of the blade, there is no evidence for a scabbard rim and other reinforcing plates, though a U-shaped copper alloy chape with organic material adhering to its inside was found at the tip of the sword. The sword was placed along the left side of the body, and the buckle and strap-end found on the upper surface of the sword may be evidence for a sword belt or baldric. For reconstructions of a baldric and methods of suspending the sword see Carver (1998, fig 77).

#### *Personal equipment*

##### *Knives*

Graves 1 and 3 contained a Böhner type B knife. These are common knives that are found throughout all areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement in the early period and date to the fifth and sixth centuries. The other knife from grave 3 and those from graves 4, 11, and possibly 9, all correspond to Böhner type C – a form current during the seventh century.

##### *Gaming counters*

Two gaming counters were recovered from the disturbed fill above grave 11 (Figure 19B). It is not possible to associate them definitely with this burial, but their proximity suggests that this is the most likely scenario. Both of these circular objects had been made from pottery and it may be significant that one was black and the other red. Gaming pieces are rare inclusions in graves and the numbers found vary greatly. For example, at Sarre (Kent) a bag in grave 6 included about 50 small circular counters



made from bone or ivory (Brent 1866, 157–8). It is generally believed that such counters were used in playing a board game, perhaps *tæfl*, to which documentary sources refer (Geake 1997, 100).

#### *Amulets and keepsakes*

Graves 4 and 9 produced fossils, which may have been kept as personal possessions because they were believed to possess magical powers, although it is possible, because they are local to the area, that they entered accidentally during backfilling. The position of the shark's tooth fossil lying on the left shoulder of the occupant in grave 9 though is suggestive of deliberative action. The inclusion of fossils is a practice that increases as the early period progresses and may well be a reflection of the unease felt in society to the religious and political changes that were occurring at this time.

#### *Vessels*

A semi-circular rod of iron was recovered from grave 3 (Figure 8J). This is probably the handle of a vessel which has not survived the passage of time. A similar example was excavated from the cemetery at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard, Beds (Hyslop 1964, 179). Here two strands of iron had been twisted together and the ends had been hooked through perforated plates attached to the top of a vessel. In most cases it can be surmised that the vessels were originally straight-sided wooden stave-built receptacles bound by iron hoops, which because of their appearance are usually referred to as buckets. Since at Meonstoke no other metal fittings were found, the vessel may have been made entirely of wood, or the iron fittings could have corroded away, a process which would have been accelerated if the grave had been disturbed and the fittings scattered throughout the fill.

#### *Dress accessories*

##### *Buckles*

Buckles were recovered from graves 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9. The most interesting example comes from grave 1 and is associated with a pair of shoe-shaped rivets. This buckle has a rectangular loop with punched decoration and was originally tinned. A very similar buckle was found in Petersfinger cemetery (Wilts) grave 63A. Buckles of this shape are

most commonly found in Kent, and the 'shoe-shaped' rivets associated with it are Frankish in taste. From grave 9 came a small D-shaped iron buckle, while a similar buckle, but with a long rectangular plate, was recovered from grave 6. Both of these are of a common type found throughout the country in the seventh century, and thus concur with the general late date given to the group of burials to which these interments belongs.

## DATING AND CHRONOLOGY

Any dates suggested on the basis of only a handful of burials are going to be tentative. However, two burials have proved valuable in bracketing the life-span of this site: the spearhead of Swanton type K1 is dated to 450–575 AD, while the bronze rectangular buckle of Kentish form is dated to the mid sixth century. We can therefore assign grave 1 to the period 525–575 AD. Unfortunately, the weapons in burial 2 are not helpful for dating, and we can only suggest a date somewhere in the later fifth or sixth century for this inhumation. At the other end of the range lies burial 3 with its sword, spear and distinctive 'sugar-loaf' shield boss. The boss gives this burial a date of deposition in the second half of the seventh century. Graves spatially related to this burial (graves 4–6) may be tentatively dated by association to the seventh century. This date finds confirmation from the paucity of finds – a characteristic of burial practices in this century. Burials 7, 8 and 9, located to the south of the former group, can also probably be dated to this century: again from the general dearth of finds, and the character of the goods with which burial 9 was interred – a small buckle and type C knife.

On the basis of this small sample, there is sufficient dating evidence to claim that the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Meonstoke was in use during both the sixth and seventh centuries. Cemeteries in use during both these centuries are rare in Wessex and tend to cluster in Kent (Dover Buckland, Evison 1987; Finglesham, Hawkes 1958 and Broadstairs unpublished), though isolated examples are found elsewhere such as at Lechlade (Gloucestershire) (Boyle *et al.* 1998) and Castledyke South (Humberside) (Drinkall and Foreman 1998). Most of the cemeteries in Wessex began sometime in the



later fifth century and went out of use by the end of the sixth century, although burial at both Worthy Park and Alton (Evison 1988) extended into the first half of the seventh century.

### THE WIDER PICTURE

The majority of the burials from Shavards Farm date from the seventh century and are quite different in character from burials of the previous century. In most cases, particularly in Wessex, burial in the seventh century took place in newly founded cemeteries. The reasons why this relocation occurred have been vigorously debated, though the fact that this change roughly coincides with the reintroduction of Christianity to these shores has prompted several scholars to interpret the change in religious terms (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 54). More recently, however, landscape, social and economic reasons have been suggested (Boddington 1990). This is not the place to survey these arguments, suffice to say that general explanations cannot take account of the specific circumstances experienced by each example, and more sophisticated contextual examinations which consider each site in its own local environment are more likely to produce realistic answers.

It is cemeteries like Shavards Farm that saw burial taking place from the early sixth to late seventh century which demonstrate that blanket generalisations cannot be applied. It is clear that Meonstoke and Apple Down, which lies just north of Chichester, contrast markedly with cemeteries in Northern Hampshire and Wiltshire where the more typical two-cemetery pattern is evidenced. A good example is provided by Portway, Andover, where the early cemetery (Cook and Dacre 1985) was closed at some point in the late sixth or early seventh century to be succeeded by a seventh- to early eighth-century burial ground some 800 m to the west (Stoodley *in prep*).

At Meonstoke the seventh-century part of the cemetery clearly displays many of the characteristics indicative of burial at this time: a lack of cremation burial; a reduction in the placing of grave goods and a concern with the external marking of the grave. These are a feature of

contemporary Hampshire sites, such as the archetypal final-phase cemetery of Winnall II (Meaney and Hawkes 1970) and the overriding impression is that of a regularisation in burial ritual. Yet, at the same time, a small number of burials stand out as different. Generally speaking, two separate, though at the same time intimately associated, groups are recognised. The first group is characterised by having a greater quantity of grave goods than one normally associates with burial in this century. The most blatant examples of this practice are the 'princely' burials, such as at Sutton Hoo (Suffolk) (Carver 1998) and Taplow (Buckinghamshire), which were accompanied by a large variety of wealthy artefacts. However, the emphasis, which has been placed on these, has diverted attention away from a group of burials, which although not displaying such a degree of wealth, nevertheless stand out when compared to the typical seventh-century ones. In addition, they share similar general characteristics with the group of 'princely' burials, such as the burial of vessels and external features that mark the position of the grave for posterity. Good local examples can be sited from Ford in Wilts (Musty 1969) and Oliver's Battery (Hants). At Ford the burial of an elderly male took place in the last quarter of the seventh century accompanied with a seax, shield, two spears, a comb, buckle and bronze hanging bowl that had contained onions and crab-apples. At Oliver's Battery, near Winchester, a burial accompanied by a bronze hanging bowl, seax and spear was interred in the north-east corner of the earthwork (Andrews 1932).

'Princely' burials are usually interpreted as the graves of the regional leaders, or kings, of the fledgling Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Likewise it is plausible to envisage the more modest graves as belonging to a tier lower down, such as the aristocracy which, generally speaking, employed a similar, though less elaborate, symbolism in the marking of their status. Taken together these changes in burial rite are generally believed to indicate that an increase in social stratification was taking place (Arnold 1988). Burial was now the arena for signalling the status of the elites: kin-based communities of the fifth and sixth centuries were gradually giving way to a more hierarchical society – reflections of the early kings



and kingdoms that we glimpse in Bede and other documentary sources, such as the Tribal Hideage.

It can be argued that grave 3 can also be interpreted within a similar context. Not only is this burial contemporary with Ford and Oliver's Battery, but it was accompanied by similar grave goods, and the position of this grave was also marked for posterity, though with a post and not an earthwork. Moreover, it may once have been more richly furnished. From the position of the spearhead it seems likely that the grave may have been disturbed at some point in the past. As already suggested the fragments of juvenile skeletal material (a child of between 2 and 5 years) in the fill of grave 3 may indicate that the burial of the male adult was reusing this grave pit. However, on balance this seems unlikely, as it would probably have been necessary to enlarge the grave of a juvenile in order to accommodate the adult. In this respect, it is unfortunate that the excavators of this grave were unable to define the edges of the grave with any degree of certainty. It is more probable that this may have been a contemporary double burial of an adult and juvenile which had been seriously affected by an act of grave robbing. Moreover, it would have been an easy target, if as suspected, its position was marked. Overall, it is reasonable to interpret the level of symbolism invested in this burial as reflecting somebody of some social standing within the Meon Valley in the later seventh century, perhaps an official or representative of the king of this area.

Alongside these elite burials we encounter individuals that had been accorded a very different type of ritual: the deviant burial, so-called because they exhibit minority rites which clearly mark them as different, for example burial face down, decapitation and the binding of limbs. Although such burials are known from the fifth and sixth century, they increase in number during the next century (Geake 1992, 87) and they may be part and parcel of the changes that accompanied the emergence of the kingdoms, in particularly the reflection of an embryonic judicial system (Reynolds 1997). It is often noted that the two types of burial go hand in hand, see especially Sutton Hoo: a 'royal' burial ground associated with a group of burials, some of which had been hanged, beheaded or mutilated. Several of the

burials are probably contemporary with the 'royal' burials and were directly associated with the practice of kingship (Carver 1998, 139–40). Likewise at Shavards Farm, excavation discovered just to the south of grave 3, a woman placed face down in her grave (4) with her right arm twisted behind her back, perhaps suggesting that she had been pushed into the grave while still alive and then forcibly held in. Can we suggest that she had wronged the individual in grave 3 in some way, or even been implicated in his death? Or does it reflect a lord and servant relationship? We shall never know the reasons that were responsible for this unceremonious treatment, but taken with the contrasting evidence of grave 3, these practices provide a clear indication of the changing nature of society at this time.

Finally, although the sample of burials may not be representative of the cemetery population, the disproportionate ratio of males to females can be paralleled in a number of other southern Hampshire cemeteries which share a similar date and are sited in strategically important positions. The burial grounds at Portsdown I (overlooking Portsmouth harbour), Snells Corner (close to the South Saxon boundary), Bargates (overlooking Christchurch harbour), and the recently excavated cemetery at Southampton (by the River Itchen and Hamwic), all belong to a distinctive group of seventh- and early eighth-century sites, which do not seem to have been used by the whole community (Stoodley 1999a). In addition, weapon burials no longer appear to have taken place in community cemeteries, identified from the roughly equal proportions of men, women and children, such as Winnall II, but are confined to these more rigidly structured sites. The large number of males seems to suggest that separate burial grounds had been established for mainly male-based communities. Given the strategic positions of most of these sites, and their martial appearance, it is plausible to suggest that these cemeteries belonged to military garrisons. Was the individual in grave 3 the leader of one of these groups? A conscious decision by the kings to militarise this region, particularly to protect the harbours and important route ways, is totally understandable when the historical context is considered. The Jutish provinces in southern



Hampshire were contested on a number of occasions during the second half of the seventh century. After harrying the Isle of Wight in 661, King Wulfhere of Mercia placed both it, and the *Meonware*, under South Saxon control (Yorke 1995, 59). This action had resulted in the West Saxons being surrounded on the south and east by Mercian controlled provinces. Conquest of the Hampshire Jutes thus became a necessity, and was finally achieved by Cædwalla during the years 685–6. Another incentive to conquer the Jutes would have been the access to the sea, via the natural harbours that southern Hampshire afforded. By its control of the Thames corridor from about the 670s, Mercia had effectively barred the West Saxons from participating in long distance trade and a desire to capitalise on the growth of overseas trade is reflected in the establishment of the port of Hamwic. The suggestion that the cemetery at Shavards Farm served one of these military strong points in the seventh century cannot yet be proven, but it may be significant that the cemetery and settlement at Meonstoke were sited close to a fording point of the River Meon (Stedman *in prep*).

## CONCLUSION

This, the first report on excavations at Shavards Farm, has concentrated on the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, bringing together for the first time all the known burial evidence. It is hoped that it has demonstrated to the reader the importance of Meonstoke both to the study of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and to wider issues, not least how the evidence provided by death and burial is able to provide important insights into the changing social organisation of the living. This account will be followed by reports on the important Roman building (King *forthcoming*) and the Anglo-Saxon settlement (Stedman and Stoodley *in prep*). Finally all the evidence will be presented in a synthesis which will discuss in detail the passage from the Roman to the Saxon period (Stedman *in prep*). The latter two publications will consider a number of key issues that this report has only briefly touched upon: the status and function of Shavards Farm in the early medieval period and the appar-

ent links with Kent that the artefacts seem to suggest.

Although our knowledge of what occurred in the sub-Roman period has in recent years increased, many aspects of the fifth and sixth centuries remain poorly understood, but sites such as Shavards Farm, have the potential to provide us with a clearer idea of what happened during this critical stage in England's history.

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