

CHANGING BURIAL PRACTICE IN SEVENTH-CENTURY HAMPSHIRE: THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT PORTWAY WEST, ANDOVER

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ABSTRACT

The seventh century cemetery at Portway West was the successor to the late fifth to sixth century one found in 1974 at Portway East. It belongs to class of cemeteries more commonly known as Final-Phase, a distinct and short-lived group which displays many differences in terms of burial rites when compared to the practices of the preceding two centuries. This article summarizes the evidence from the 17 excavated graves and assesses it against the background of seventh- and eighth-century Hampshire, arguing that the changes are more complex than has been originally thought and ultimately result from a variety of different stimuli.

INTRODUCTION

The evidence from Portway West will first be summarized and the salient points highlighted. Where relevant, comparisons will also be made to Portway East. Full details, including an illustrated catalogue and specialist reports, can be found in the site archive at Hampshire County Council Museums Service Accession Number AS73.

In 1981 Andover Archaeological Society (AAS), under the direction of Max Dacre, and Test Valley Archaeological Committee (TVAC), investigated an Anglo-Saxon cemetery on the western part of the Portway Industrial Estate, Andover, Hampshire (Fig. 1). It was sited 800 m away from the late fifth- to sixth-century mixed rite cemetery at Portway East, the probable predecessor of Portway West (Cook and Dacre 1985, 22), at NGR SU 337464 and at 90 m OD overlooking the River Anton on the north facing slope of the valley. The cemeteries were

placed in a rich archaeological landscape, with evidence from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British periods. In particular, it lies close to the Silchester to Old Sarum Roman road, and just south of the prehistoric track known as the Harrow Way (Fig. 1).

Portway is an example of the 'two cemetery pattern', i.e. where a burial ground of the fifth and sixth centuries was replaced in the following one by a new burial location. The later cemeteries can be identified by several notable changes that occurred to practice during the seventh century: a reduction in grave goods, the appearance of several new types of objects, the move towards just inhumation as a method of disposal, more standardised orientation and the use of external features to mark the location of individual graves (Hyslop 1963, 190–91). This class of cemetery is traditionally known as Final-Phase, a term coined by Leeds in 1936 to denote the last of the burials accompanied by grave goods. A famous example of paired burial grounds was discovered at Winnall, Winchester (Meaney and Hawkes 1970) but the surviving evidence is not expansive. The early cemetery, Winnall I, was discovered during the construction of the railway and the only surviving evidence is three unstratified shield bosses. Winnall II, the apparent successor, was discovered 400 m to the north-east during development in 1955; about half of the burial ground was investigated under controlled conditions. The general scarcity of evidence in Hampshire relating to this major realignment of mortuary customs made the publication of the Portway West site a priority.

The excavations yielded 16 graves, though previously in 1974 a single grave (17) had been

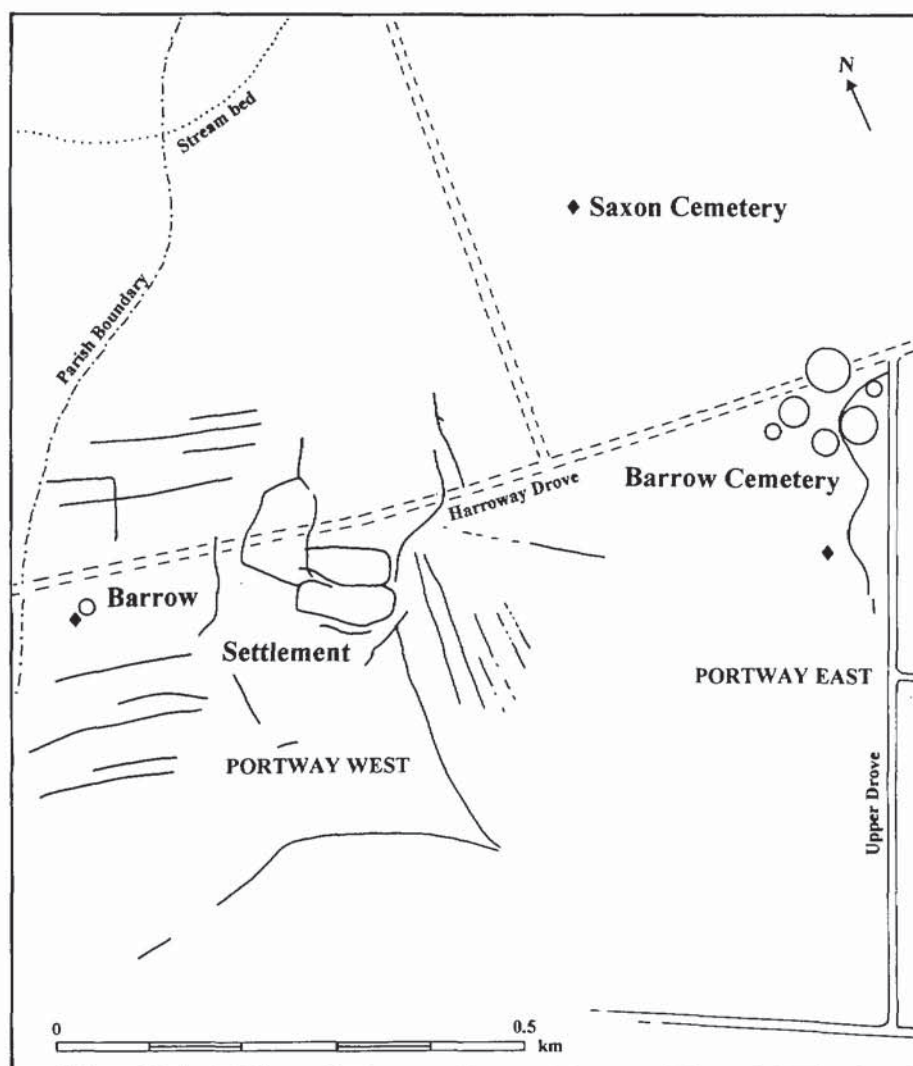


Fig. 1 Portway, Andover, Hampshire showing the relationship of the two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries to other features (note the settlement is Iron Age in date)

recovered by Andover and District Excavations Committee. The graves were excavated in entirety, except for three interments (1, 4 and 6), of these, 11 contained skeletal material. Interestingly six did not produce any trace of an interment, which is surprising as skeletal preservation was generally good. It is therefore unlikely that the body had disappeared entirely.

Perhaps, as suggested for two empty graves at Portway East, the pits served as a monument to individuals who had died away from the settlement (Cook and Dacre 1985, 56).

It is certain that the graves were once part of a much larger cemetery: the cemetery plan (Fig. 2) shows three distinct clusters of burials and the areas in between probably contained

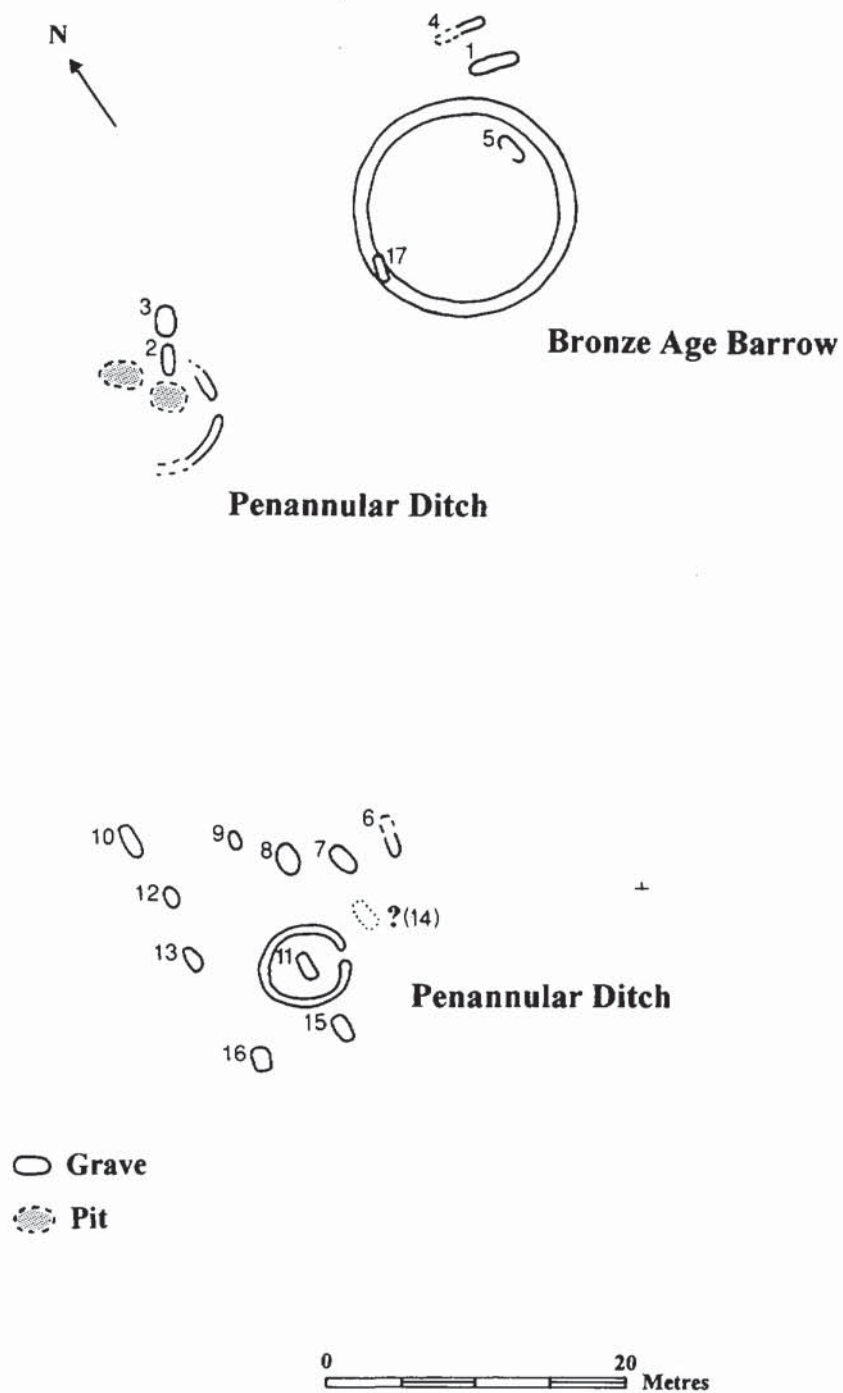


Fig. 2 Plan of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Portway West

Table 1 Comparison of grave dimensions between cemeteries

	<i>Average length</i>	<i>Average width</i>	<i>Average depth</i>
Portway West	167.48	63.35	24.69
Portway East	170.48	67.02	65.69
Winnall II	188.76	83.29	36.96
Bargates	193.46	70.52	32.07

many more, which were destroyed during the development of the area. With such a small proportion available, it is hard to say anything conclusive about the development and internal organisation of the cemetery, though a few suggestions can be made. The main cluster of graves is arranged in rough rows and the cemetery may have been organised on this principle. The use of rows can be recognised in the Hampshire cemeteries of Winnall II (Meaney and Hawkes 1970) and Bedhampton (unpublished). Assuming that the excavated graves belong to the same cemetery, it would have covered a minimum area of about 3,600 m² – roughly twice the size of Portway East which contained 69 graves and 86 cremations. There does not appear to have been a standard size of Final-Phase cemetery: it is estimated that about half of Winnall II was excavated and this yielded 47 graves. However Harford Farm (Norfolk), a completely recovered example, produced just 45 graves (Penn 2000).

BURIAL PRACTICE (Figs. 3–4)

Grave Structure

Apart from one small oval-shaped grave, the pits are either rectangular or sub-rectangular shapes, the predominant forms of the period. Compared to Portway East (Table 1), the graves exhibit roughly the same average length and width, though it is interesting that they were much shallower overall, a situation also noted in other contemporary cemeteries. This may indicate that the protection of the body was no

longer so important. An explanation for this change may be sought in the fact that grave goods were no longer routinely placed with the dead (see below); a deep layer of fill was no longer necessary to deter robbery.

None of the graves produced evidence for an internal grave structure, such as a coffin, planking or stone packing, which is in stark contrast to Portway East where 17% of the graves produced such features. At Portway West, two penannular ditches were excavated: one surrounded grave 11 and a partial example was found in the northern part of the cemetery. The latter was not excavated in its entirety, which may explain why a central grave was not found. Penannular ditches belong to a group of external mortuary features that become common in the seventh century (Hogarth 1973), a time when a greater emphasis was placed on marking grave location. It is possible that low barrows were raised from these ditches, though the break in the circuit cautions against this. It is more likely that they were quarries for an earthwork bank, with the bank and ditch demarcating a sacred zone around the grave. In this case, the gap would probably have served as an 'entrance' into the area. They are not found in the cemeteries of the fifth and sixth centuries, though at Portway East, two cremations were surrounded by annular ditches (Cook and Dacre 1985, 59).

The complete example comprised a ditch with a diameter 5.5 m and a depth of just 0.15 m; both the examples have an eastern 'entrance.' Local parallels are not numerous, though three definite penannular ditches, each containing a central grave, have been excavated at Cook Street, Southampton (Garner 1994, 84; 2001,

177). It is possible that individuals associated with such structures were of a higher social rank: the presence of additional grave furniture, such as coffins and the occurrence of grave goods in several of the Southampton examples may support this notion. The example from Portway West produced evidence for a small necklet, in addition to an unidentified iron object.

Deposition

All of the burials except the male in grave 17 were extended supine (Fig. 5). This body had been placed on the right side but was twisted over to such an extent that the body was lying almost prone. Burial face-down is a minority rite. In addition, this grave had been dug into the ditch of the Bronze Age barrow. Is this mere coincidence or were both location and ritual marking this man out as different?

Orientation

It was possible to establish the orientation of 11 burials and the majority of these were placed with their heads between 167° and 200°, i.e. within almost 30° of the South Pole. A similar range is also found at Portway East where the ditch running north-south along the eastern side of the cemetery determined the alignment of many of the graves. At Portway West it is possible that the graves may have been orientated on the western boundary of a potential Portway West land-unit (Stoodley *forthcoming*), though it seems likely that the graves near to the Bronze Age barrow had their direction determined by the curve of the barrow ditch.

Multiple burial

In common with all early and middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries the majority of graves contained single interments. The exception is grave 3, which is a genuine double burial of two (probable) adult males (Fig. 3), which is interesting because combinations involving two adults of the same sex are rare; it was much more common for an adult and a juvenile to be paired (Stoodley 2002a, 112–14). Moreover, a

third individual was represented by fragments of clavicles and scapulae, which may suggest that this grave was originally occupied by a single inhumation and was then reused by burials A and B, an act which almost totally destroyed the earlier, primary, interment.

Both the individuals were found to be headless and this indicates that we are looking at an even more complex burial rite. The remains were in a poor condition and it was not possible to examine the cervical vertebrae, which might disclose the manner in which the act had taken place. It seems, however, that decapitation should be considered as a rite accorded to these two. Overall, this is a highly unusual and potentially significant discovery.

The grave goods

A total of 13 objects were recovered from six graves. Of these, all the objects from the TVAC excavations and the ?spear from the AAS excavations are now unfortunately lost. Burials with accompanying objects were sparsely furnished; the exception was grave 6, which contained five objects.

Iron work

It was reported that a spearhead or a knife was found with grave 8. This object cannot be located and unfortunately was not drawn, but on the plan of the grave it is lying outside the upper right arm pointing to the head end of the grave, a position consistent with its interpretation as a spear. Knives are the most frequently occurring objects and were recovered from three graves (6, 7 & 10). They are well represented in cemeteries spanning the entire early Anglo-Saxon period, which must be a simple reflection of their usefulness in everyday life. All the knives were to the left of the pelvis, in all likelihood attached to a belt. Yet only grave 6 contained a buckle and even this example was not found in the waist area. Nevertheless, a simple rope knotted at the waist would have served as an adequate substitute for a buckled leather strip. One of the knives (grave 6, Fig. 6) has a curved back and cutting edge and can be assigned to Böhner (1958) class A /

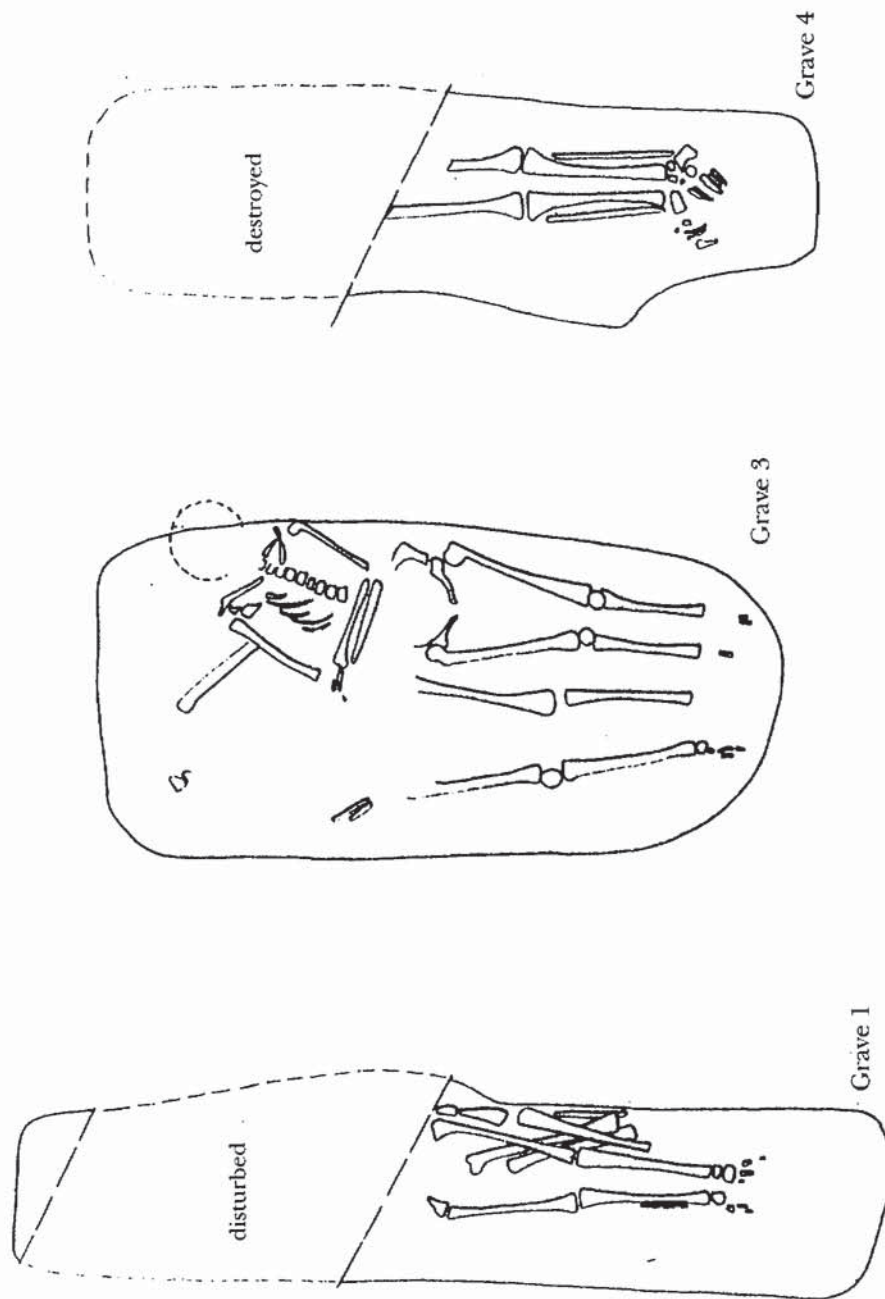


Fig. 3 Plan of graves excavated by Andover Archaeological Society (1:20)

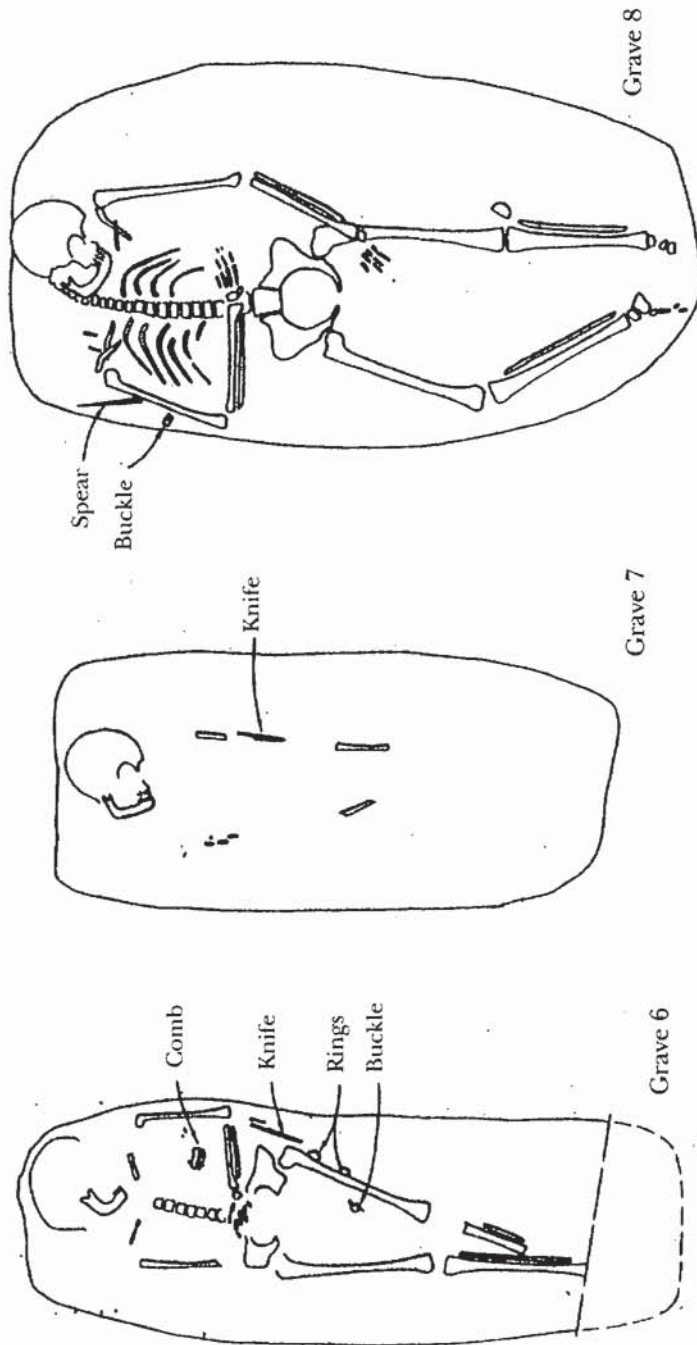


Fig. 3 (cont.) Plan of graves excavated by Andover Archaeological Society (1:20)

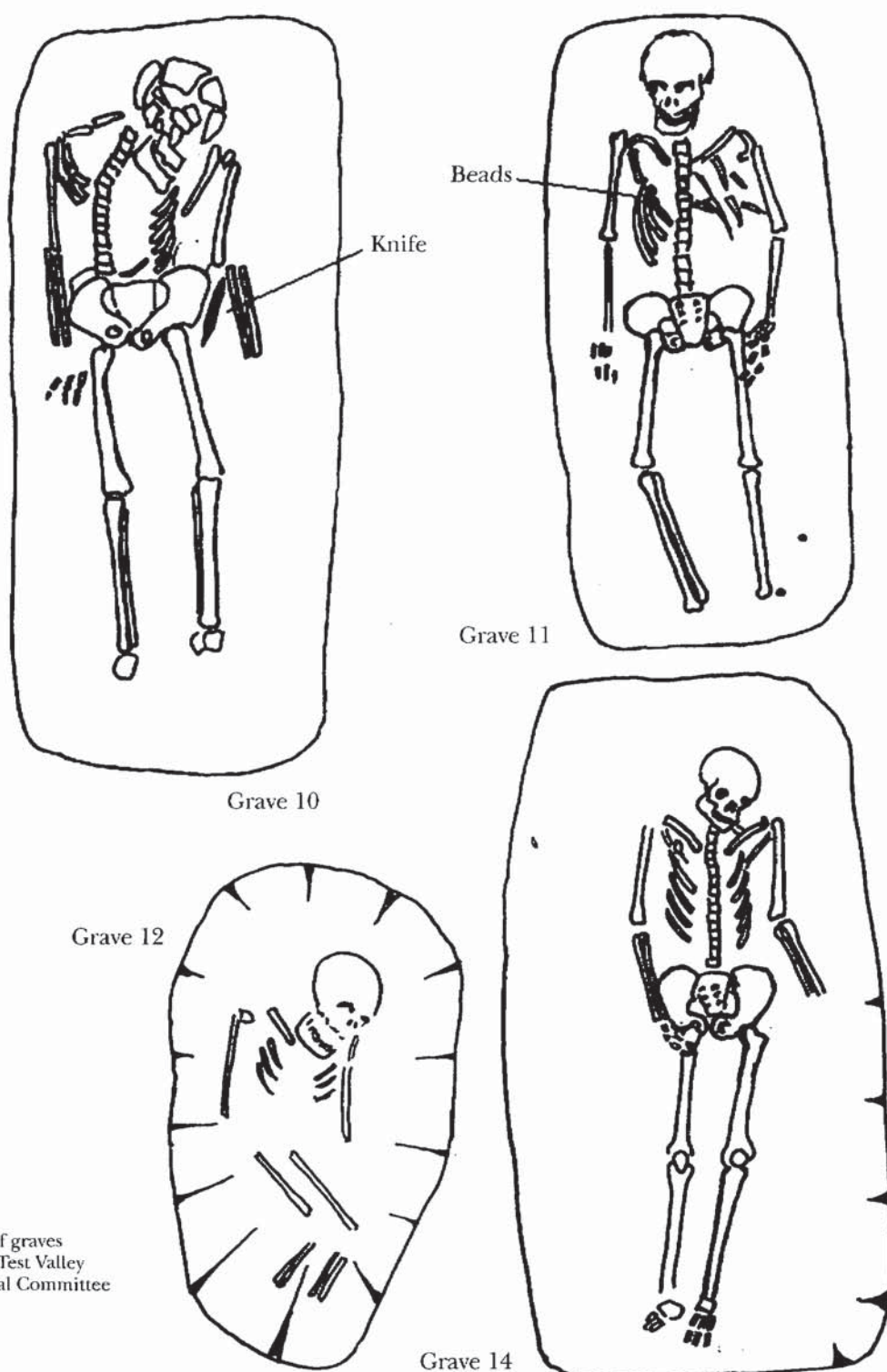


Fig. 4 Plan of graves
excavated by Test Valley
Archaeological Committee
(1:20)



Fig. 5 Grave 17

Evison (1987) type 1, a form popular throughout the early Anglo-Saxon period. The other two examples have straight cutting edges and curved backs and thus belong to Böhner class C/ Evison type 4, a type fashionable in the seventh and eighth centuries (Fig. 7). It may be significant that the three burials with knives were all in the same row in the southern half of the cemetery.

Grave 6 produced a fragmentary iron chain consisting of ten links (Fig. 6). One link has a length of 29.8 mm, which gives a total length for the chain of about 300 mm. At one end the chain terminates in a copper alloy ring which has a copper alloy double pronged object adhering to it by corrosion. It also has one copper alloy and one iron ring associated with it. The chain and rings were found together, just outside the left femur. In all likelihood, these were associated with the buckle that was close by (see below), forming part of a chatelaine suspended from the waist. Patches of mineralised textile are preserved on the links of the chain, probably from the garment covering the legs.

Copper alloy

Two graves produced copper alloy buckles, though neither was associated with the waist area. The example in grave 6 has just been discussed. In grave 8 the buckle was just outside

the right humerus and close to the probable spearhead, where it may have been attached to a strip of some description and used to fasten a cloth around the spearhead. Evison has made a similar suggestion for pins that have been found in association with spearheads (Evison 1987, 82). In fact, mineralised textile remains were found on the rivet heads, perhaps from the wrapping around the spear. Geake's (1997, 79) study has discovered that although the majority of small buckles did act as belt fasteners, the variety of positions in which they have been found demonstrates that they were multipurpose, serving to fasten the straps of knife scabbards, bags, etc.

Both buckles are similar and are of a relatively simple design, consisting of a plain oval loop and tongue with a rectangular plate. They are not identical, however, for the example from grave 6 (Fig. 6) has an iron tongue, while the buckle from grave 8 (Fig. 7) has a bronze one. Parallels can easily be identified in contemporary cemeteries such as Snells Corner (Hants) (Knocker 1956) (graves 19 & 22) and Polhill (Kent) (Hawkes 1973). Small simple buckles of this form are easily the most popular in seventh- and eighth-century contexts (Geake 1997, 79). Until recently, it has been usual to view these items as type-fossils of the period, but as Geake points out, they are fairly common in late fifth- to sixth-century burials too (*ibid.*).

Grave 6 yielded a silver and garnet composite pin (Fig. 6). These items take one of two forms: either a pair of garnet-set pins linked by silver chains, for example graves 39 and 55 at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (cemetery II) (Hyslop 1963) and Winnall II (grave 8), or single pins without attachments for chains, such as this example, with parallels in Kent at Sibertswold (grave 180) and Chartham Down (grave 44) (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 37). In the Portway West example, two pieces of garnet lying on a gold foil were held in the head of the pin by a resin. The position of this pin was not included on the plan of the burial, but Geake (1997, 66–67) states that the most common place for a single pin to be found is the neck or throat area, followed by the chest and upper body. The association with the neck

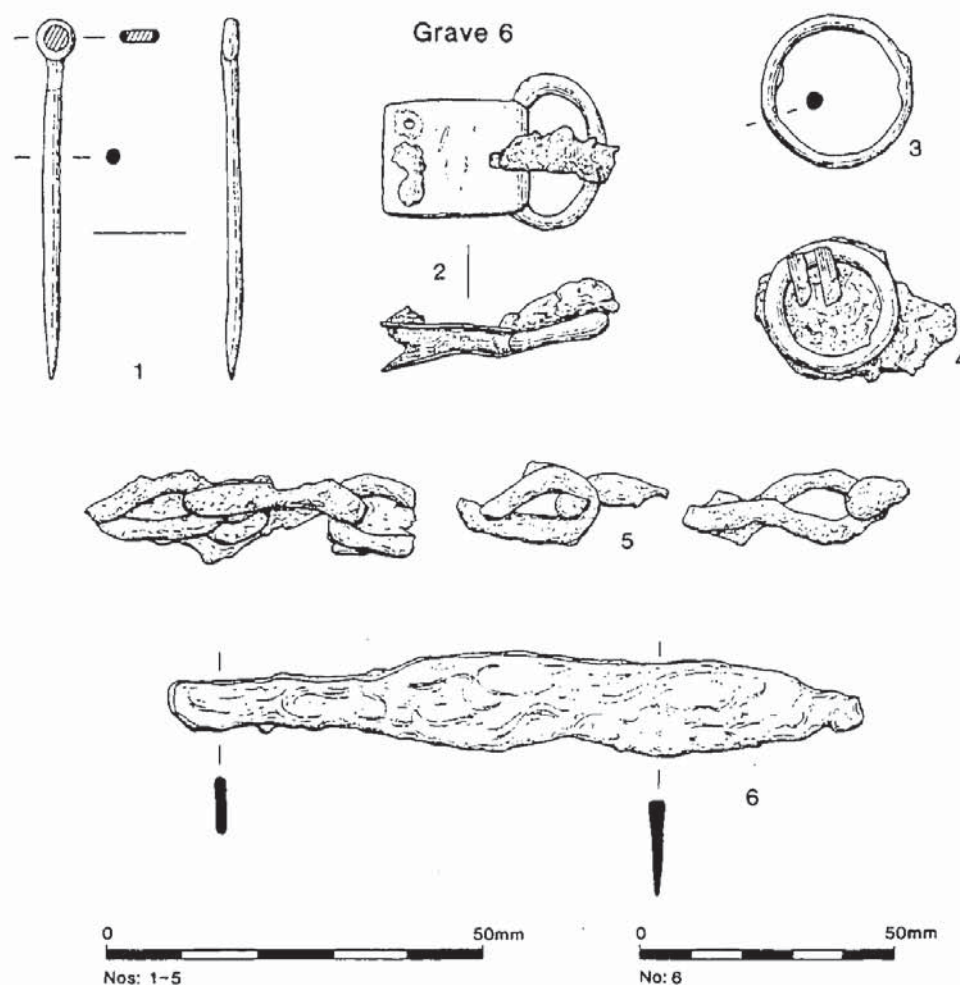


Fig. 6 Grave goods from grave 6

area suggests that in many cases a pin was used to fasten an item of clothing, perhaps a cloak or headscarf. Single pins may also have been used to fasten shrouds. It is, however, very difficult to distinguish the function that a single pin served (Geake 1997, 66–67), although a single pin in a cemetery, where grave goods were still being buried, implies that clothed interments were taking place and the pin was acting as a fastener. At Winnall II, the single pin in grave 7 was recovered from the area between

the skull and the head of the grave, perhaps fastening a head-dress or acting as a hair pin (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 37). In addition, the iron pin in grave 43 at Bedhampton was in a similar position, while the bronze pin in grave 6 at Snell's Corner was positioned at the neck. Despite these local parallels, single pins are rare in Hampshire. In fact they are spread thinly throughout the country except in Kent, where they were relatively popular at this time (Geake 1997, 67).

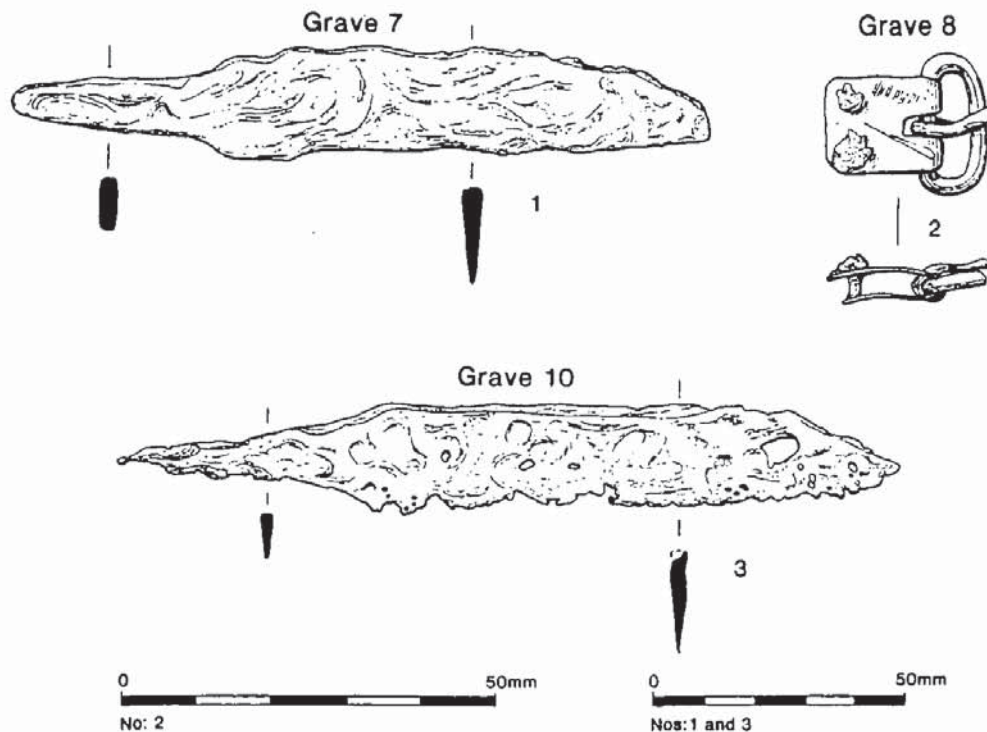


Fig. 7 Grave goods from 7, 8 & 10

Glass beads

Two polychrome glass beads were found on the right hand side of the chest of burial 11. The first is a dark glass bead with white inlay and the second is green glass with ropework inlay. Unfortunately, these beads are now lost, but the latter appears to be of Brugmann's (2004, 41) Annular Twist type, which she has as a seventh- to eighth-century development. The position that these were found in indicates that they were part of a tiny necklace or necklet. By the seventh century, large necklaces are no longer deposited; in their place small necklets of beads, pendants and thin wire rings are found. The female of contemporary date recovered from grave 4 at Weston Colley, Micheldever, also produced several beads and fragmentary wire rings (Fern and Stoodley 2005). Necklets may originally have consisted of other objects of a perishable nature that have long since disappeared.

Bone object

A bone comb was found in grave 6 (not illustrated due to fragmentary state). The comb is of the usual double-sided composite antler or bone variety, which was common throughout the period. It consists of flat plates of bone into which the teeth have been cut. Iron rivets were then used to attach reinforcing plates to each side of the comb and the plates have been decorated with a double row of dots. One of the combs from Portway East (grave 25) was decorated with a single row of ring and dot motifs. The positioning of combs in graves varies considerably and they cannot be described as part of the dress; rather, they appear to have been separate grave furnishings (Geake 1997, 63). The position of the comb in grave 6, to the left of the lower chest, could be taken to support this thesis; either it was placed on top of the body during the

burial, or thrown in when the grave was being backfilled.

DATING AND CHRONOLOGY

At the outset it must be stressed that there is little conclusive dating evidence. There are no intercutting graves from which stratigraphic relationships can be discerned. It is hard to assign absolute dates because most of the associated grave goods are not diagnostic. Although most of the objects regularly occurred in Final-Phase cemeteries, they were also deposited in the fifth and sixth centuries. If it is accepted, however, that Portway West was the successor to Portway East (Stoodley *forthcoming*), then it is logical to place the foundation of the former shortly after the latter closed and to envisage an unbroken sequence of burial from the earlier to the later cemetery. Prior to the abandonment of Portway East, practices normally associated with the Final Phase may have begun to take hold (Stoodley *forthcoming*), which might indicate that burial continued into the early seventh century. Portway West would then have been established shortly after, although there are no interments from the latter which can be definitely placed in the early seventh century. It could be countered that the general scarcity of grave goods at Portway West, compared to some other later cemeteries, such as Winnall II, is notable and may in fact indicate that the cemetery was established later in the seventh century. Recent work utilising the latest developments in radiocarbon dating at the Buttermarket cemetery, Ipswich, have shown that an absence of grave goods cannot be interpreted in chronological terms, however (Scull and Bayliss 1999, 86).

The only object to which a close date can be assigned is the composite pin from grave 6. Similar examples have been found with objects that are dated with some confidence to the second half of the seventh century (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 47–48). Apart from this pin, there are no objects particularly diagnostic of the seventh century and it is the lack of burial wealth generally, which implies a post 600 AD date.

In addition, penannular ditches are considered to be a mortuary feature of the later seventh and eighth centuries (Hogarth 1973, 118–119) and Garner has dated the cemetery at Cook Street, Southampton, which contained several penannular ditches, to the first half of the eighth century (Garner 2001, 181). Burial 2 at Cook Street was enclosed by a penannular ditch and gave a calibrated radiocarbon age of AD 658–762 and AD 642–777 at one and two sigma levels of confidence respectively (Garner 2001, 177). With regard to the chronology of Portway West, it is worth pointing out that grave 2 cuts the partially excavated penannular ditch. This could have happened shortly after the construction of the penannular ditch, but this would imply that little respect was being shown to the occupant of the central grave, if indeed there ever was one. Alternatively, the cemetery could have been in use for long enough to permit the digging of a grave into an earlier mortuary structure without causing concern. It is hard to believe that it would have been acceptable to allow graves to encroach over the ditch within living memory of the earlier burial. The fact that the two males in grave 3 appear to have reused a pre-existing grave pit should be viewed in a similar light. The evidence seems to suggest that the cemetery at Portway West was in use for a considerable length of time, probably in excess of a hundred years: 625–750 AD.

DISCUSSION: CHANGING BURIAL RITES IN HAMPSHIRE

Miranda Hyslop (1963, 190–1) has compiled a list of criteria by which Final-Phase cemeteries can be identified and Portway West demonstrates many of these features, particularly the reduction of grave goods and cemetery relocation. Integral to the Final-Phase model is the belief that the changes witnessed within burial practices are directly associated with and resulting from the conversion to Christianity in the seventh century. Thus, a seemingly neat progression in burial from pagan to Christian could be charted both in terms of grave goods and cemeteries. This model was applied in

Table 2 Comparison of graves with and without grave goods by cemetery

	<i>Number of burials</i>	<i>Proportion without grave goods</i>
<i>5th–6th century</i>		
Portway East	71	24
Alton	50	26
Droxford	41	22
Worthy Park	105	37
<i>7th–8th century</i>		
Portway West	17	71
Bedhampton	88	78
Winnall II	47	45
Ports Down I	28	89
Bargates	27	23
Snells Corner	33	18

Hampshire to Winnall, Winchester (Meaney and Hawkes 1970). The early cemetery, Winnall I, was succeeded by a new site 400 m to the north-east, which displays all the hall-marks of a Final-Phase cemetery. In the report, the authors argued that relocation to a new cemetery took place under Christian influence and that the decline in grave goods was a response to the recent conversion of the area (Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 54).

More recently scholars have shied away from a purely religious explanation. It has been pointed out that the documentary sources for the conversion and the decline of the practice do not tally; in addition not a single canon or law forbids the practice (for general views see Boddington 1990, 187–190; Morris 1983, 53–62). In opposition to these views, Shepherd (1979) concentrated on economic reasons for the decline of the accompanied rite, while Boddington (1990) argued that a mixture of social, economic and landscape factors could be responsible. The evidence from Portway clearly

shows that the change that occurred in both cemetery location and mortuary customs in the seventh century is complex and multi-faceted. The former of these topics has been discussed in detail by the author elsewhere (Stoodley *forthcoming*); the latter will be considered here and will involve evaluating the evidence against the backdrop of seventh-century Hampshire.

One of the most notable and widely stated changes in the seventh century is the decline in the number of grave goods placed with the deceased. Table 2 shows that in most of Hampshire's Final-Phase cemeteries, the number of unaccompanied burials has significantly increased. Those that are still accompanied generally have only knives and buckles. At Portway West, grave goods accompanied six of the burials. But the only individual interred with a range of objects is in grave 6. This woman had five items, while the other individuals were interred with just one or two objects, such as a knife.

Rather than there being a uniform decline in grave furnishing, it is possible that there is not a simple progression from accompanied burial to unaccompanied; there may be a short-lived and deliberate phase of burial around the early seventh century, which is characterised by a lack of burial wealth and/or diagnostic grave goods, which would result in invisibility. Geake (2002, 146) has identified a lacunae in burial in the early seventh century, which she suggests may have resulted from a crisis leading to a general indecision over how to go about interring people and which was manifested in an unaccompanied and consequently difficult to identify rite. One implication of this is that poorly furnished or unaccompanied burials in Final-Phase cemeteries are being dated too late; these are the missing early seventh-century interments and are not to be treated as contemporary with those of the later seventh century. They could be earlier, which would lend support to the notion that the two Portway sites succeeded each other without a break.

In addition to the fluctuating nature of the grave good rite, there is differential treatment of males and females. Gender-specific

behaviour is a major characteristic of the burial rite in the migration period, with weapons and jewellery restricted to males and females respectively (Stoodley 1999), but during the seventh century significant modification takes place. Foreign influences and insular developments lead to profound changes in the furnishing of the female body, characterised by the introduction of new types of jewellery and costume (Geake 1997, 120). The result is, that in contrast to the sixth century, when clear regional differences were observed in costume, a similar fashion was now found throughout the country. On the surface Hampshire is no different: examples are found at Portway West (grave 6), Winnall II (especially graves 7, 8 and 10), Lower Brook Street, Winchester, (Biddle 1975), Weston Colley (grave 4) and Snells' Corner grave 6. Hampshire obviously was not immune to these fashions, but the tiny numbers of these burials in any one cemetery is intriguing, especially when compared to a region like Kent. The general lack of evidence for female costume indicates that in this area at least Hampshire had not fully embraced these new cultural mores. Of course, future discoveries may contradict this assertion, but it is possible that Hampshire stands in opposition to the widespread consistency observed in female interments across the country in the seventh-century, which is usually taken to indicate that some sense of a 'national' identity was being symbolised via higher-status females. Attention has been drawn to differences in seventh-century material culture, particularly styles of art, which may 'represent an explicitly political assertion of difference in identity, articulated in terms of allegiance to rival networks' (Hines, 1999, 231). Was Hampshire more resilient to changes in female costume? This might have been the case if the influences were flowing out of a region(s) which was deemed a political or military threat. It should not be forgotten that during the seventh century, Hampshire was a hotly contested region and was put under increasing pressure by neighbouring kingdoms (Yorke 1989).

The situation regarding the weapon-burial rite is rather more complex. On the basis of

community cemeteries such as Winnall II, Bedhampton and Portway West, which have produced only one possible weapon between them, it would seem that the rite came to a sudden end. The weapon-burial rite did not disappear overnight, however; weaponry was still being deposited in the wealthy burials of the seventh century, e.g. Oliver's Battery, Winchester (Andrews 1932), and it seems that the newly emerged elite of the seventh century had appropriated this as a means to symbolise their rank. Yet the evidence from Hampshire indicates that the situation may have been even more complex than this. Research has discovered that individuals were still being interred with weapons in cemeteries that were neither community burial grounds, nor the site of elite burials (Stoodley 1999), e.g. Ports Down I, (Corney et al, 1969), Snells Corner and Bargates (now in East Dorset) (Jarvis 1983), all of which have weapon burials in conjunction with a predominance of male burials. Moreover, a recent excavation in a seventh- to early-eighth century cemetery at Southampton (Hamwic) has produced similar findings (Stoodley 2002b). A new type of site can be recognised which has a distinctively masculine and martial character. These would not normally be considered high-status sites, but are sufficiently different to the community cemeteries to be treated as a separate category. Thus, the change in burial practice is not only about a reduction in grave goods but also involves the fragmentation of once associated practices into separate sites. This is a very different situation to the early Anglo-Saxon period where only community cemeteries were used. Given this complexity, it is much harder to regard Christianity as the sole driving force behind the change.

Also indicative of seventh-century mortuary custom is a much greater concern with the structure of the grave. Previously, the grave could have been embellished with coffins and stone linings: for example, structures that afforded the occupant some protection, but were invisible from the surface. In the seventh century a much greater preoccupation with external marking is observed: marker posts, barrows and penannular and annular ditches

could be employed. For example, the burial grounds of Bargates, Portway West and several of the Hamwic cemeteries have produced penannular ditches. This is important and demonstrates that the changes found in portable material culture were not the only ones to affect the burial rite. Had this method of display taken over the role that the grave goods had previously occupied? Moreover, had the elite practice of marking the grave with external features, seen earlier on in the seventh century, (such as Taplow in Buckinghamshire and dated to the 620's AD), now filtered down to affect the burial mores of other social groups, albeit in keeping with their more lowly position, less obtrusive monuments were used?

Another important feature of the burial archaeology is the phenomenon of deviant burials. While some individuals were having their last resting-places marked for posterity, others experienced a different kind of treatment: unusual rites that have negative connotations and are occasionally associated with evidence of maltreatment of the individual. The distinguishing features of these burials are: prone burial, decapitation and amputation of limbs, the binding of hands and feet and orientation with the head to the north or east, i.e. minority rites indicating that these individuals were viewed as considerably different to the rest of society. These practices are found in the fifth and sixth centuries, but during the seventh, in Hampshire at least, increase in frequency.

The double burial of two headless males from grave 3 is a prime example. Decapitation is a minority rite; few individuals in any cemetery are treated in this way and many burial grounds do not produce examples (Wilson 1992, 92–95). Decapitation takes two forms: the head is missing entirely or it is lying out of position elsewhere in the grave (Wilson 1992, 93). The latter has its origins in the Roman period (for example, seven burials at the late Roman cemetery of Lankhills, Winchester, had been decapitated (Clarke 1979, 372)) and its occurrence in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries seems to indicate survival of the rite. The former probably represents a different rite, which in the Anglo-Saxon period seems to have had a

strong association with adult males and should be counted as a deviant practice.

Other cases, which demonstrate these attitudes, have been excavated in the County. At Winnall II, burials 23 and 11 were decapitated (the latter was orientated to the east), while 28, 35 and 46 were disfigured. At Ports Down II, grave 2 belonged to a young adult who had been decapitated. In this case the mandible showed cuts which may suggest that the individual had been alive when the act was carried out (Bradley and Lewis 1969, 41).

Andrew Reynolds (1997, 37) has argued that such practices in the early period represent the burial of wrongdoers within community burial grounds. At this time there are no examples of cemeteries given over entirely to wrongdoers, but under the influence of Christianity and the growth of kingship, such sites, known as execution cemeteries and apparently for non-Christians, are established from the seventh century. The interments again display evidence of beheading, amputation, careless burial etc. Reynold's model draws heavily on the evidence from the Winchester area, in particular Winnall II and Old Dairy Cottage, Harestock; the community burial ground with a small number of deviant burials (Winnall), is succeeded at Harestock by a formal execution cemetery (Reynolds 1997, 37). There may have been a gap between the two, as Winnall seems to have closed in the mid eighth century and two sets of radiocarbon dates from Old Dairy Cottage centre on the ninth and tenth centuries AD (Cherryson *pers. comm.*). The latter is on the boundary between Chilcomb hundred and the estate at Easton, an association evidenced throughout Hampshire, which has led Reynolds to suggest that wrongdoers were taken to the edges of the territories to be executed and buried (Reynolds 1997, 37).

Portway West cemetery is close to the parish boundary with Penton Mewsey, which might fossilise the earlier boundary of a Saxon land unit (Russel 1985). Because a separate execution site did not exist at this time, it could be claimed that towards the end of its life, Portway West's function changed and it was used to bury several individuals accused of and punished

for wrongdoings. It is just possible that Portway demonstrates, in part, the evolution of practices associated with the development of the judicial system. A change in function could also explain both the proposed longevity of Portway West and the lack of respect shown to the earlier occupant in grave 3. If the dating of Portway West is correct it may be placed before the establishment of the cemetery at Old Dairy Cottage. Portway West lacks, however, the final component; it did not develop into a proper late Saxon execution cemetery. Perhaps a formal, and as yet undiscovered, site was established close by.

CONCLUSION

The detailed study of a partially explored cemetery has provided evidence for a range of practices, demonstrating that burial during the seventh century in Hampshire was considerably more varied than traditionally believed. The significant and wide-ranging changes to practice at Portway, corroborated by examining other contemporary Hampshire sites, encourages a much broader understanding of burial during this period; a break from the intellectual straightjacket that the Final-Phase model imposes. In particular, this case study has thrown into sharp focus other fascinating aspects of the mortuary rite that the strong emphasis previously accorded to the topic of the declining grave goods had obscured. It is hard to find an explanation for these changes, although it seems probable that one general explanation

cannot take of all these developments into account. This was a time when fundamental changes to the structure of society were taking place, such as the establishment of kingdoms, the reintroduction of Christianity and a developing system of law and order to name just a few. It is against this varied cultural, political and social backdrop that the changing funerary practices should be interpreted. The transformation may result from a combination of pressures; the traditional religious explanation may have been only one of the reasons and one that may not have been relevant for all communities. In fact, as the Portway case-study urges, each case should be studied in isolation before collating the evidence, in order to examine for any common or regional patterning. It is hoped that other, similar, studies will be undertaken, against which Hampshire can be evaluated and which might reveal the presence of hitherto unsuspected complexity.

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