Grave fill and inclusions

Backfill

As the graves from Snape were excavated in shallow spits and regularly planned, it was possible to note aspects of the fill in detail. Often, the backfill was a patchy mix of grey topsoil and bright orange natural sand, but in several graves it was distinctly separated when redeposited, showing that the topsoil and natural had been piled up independently, probably one heap on either side of the cut. To have remained unmixed when redeposited suggests the involvement of at least two people backfilling the grave at the same time. This process was observed in graves 2, 6 and 16, whilst boat grave 4 perhaps had three people backfilling, as the grave centre was filled with grey topsoil throughout, and each end was of orange natural. In grave 11, the topsoil was clearly backfilled first and the orange natural last, again suggesting two distinct heaps for the gravedigger's spoil. In other graves, for instance grave 45, distinct tip lines were observed, mixing within the fill. Graves 37 and 43 had at their surface distinct ovals of grey sand within redeposited natural, directly above the body position. Neither were recuts and they seem to reflect a subsequent slumping of grey topsoil further into the grave fill (Fig. 70).

Finally, two graves produced evidence of spoil being used in the arrangement of structures within the grave. Grave 47 had a tripartite division of fill extending into the boat stain with grey topsoil fill at the centre and yellow-brown redeposited natural on either side. This is best explained as redeposited natural sand being used in the lower levels to pack the boat into its cut. This packing may have been maintained above the gunwhale level where one or possibly two pieces of textile (stains *1826* and *1827*) appear to have been draped over the sand and into the boat at the south-east corner (Figs 75 and 76). Grey topsoil may then have been backfilled straight into the gap at the centre when the grave was filled in. A second case of sand packing a cut was in grave 32. Here grey topsoil (deeper and cleaner than simple trampled earth) appears to have been used at the base for the organic layer's edges to be laid on. As excavated topsoil would have been at the bottom of a single spoil heap, two separate heaps may again be indicated.

Trampled sand was only noted at the bases of graves 9 and 40. Three graves, 4, 7 and 47, produced rectilinear patches of dark sand which suggested that turves were incorporated into the backfill.

Organics

The grave fills produced many instances of organic inclusions, stressing the possible involvement of a far wider range of ritual attributes to inhumation burial than simply the deposition of a body and grave-goods. In many cases all that could be distinguished as 'organic' were patches of sand with a 'sticky' texture, usually retaining moisture longer. Some were possibly originally of wood and there were numerous instances of graves with odd small charcoal flecks. There may well have been other types of inclusions but the acidic sand of the site meant that any animal/meat joint offerings, wood or textile would all have degraded into a very similar-looking sand. Indeed, a few graves had small lumps akin to body stain suggesting meat buried with the body but only in grave 47 was the shape of such a patch clear enough to warrant such an identification (Pl. XXV). One other instance of a possible food offering came from grave 32 where a rodent-nibbled plum stone was preserved by mineral salts. A parallel to this is found in the provision of hazel nuts from a grave at Burwell, Cambs. (Lethbridge 1926, 73).

Three graves produced more certain evidence for the incorporation of vegetation. In grave 47 a random mass of stems and leaves were seen covering iron clamp *Ci*. Additionally, all three hoops of bucket *F* and the boss of shield *A* were encrusted with pinnae (leaflets) of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.). The large quantities of the latter especially, suggest their deliberate inclusion as some form of covering. Similarly, shield *D* in grave 3 and shield *D* and belt buckle *E* in grave 32 produced evidence for similar coverings of vegetation. A twig on brooch *C* in grave 8 may represent the same practice.

Coverings of vegetation have been seen in other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, for instance grave 19 Sewerby, E. Yorks. (Hirst 1985, 31); at Mucking, Essex (Jones and Jones 1975, 175); probably from a grave at Warren Hill, Mildenhall, Suffolk (Prigg 1888, 59); at the Buttermarket, Ipswich (K. Wade pers. comm.); and in grave 18 Swaffham Paddocks, Norfolk, where the impression of a bracken leaf was preserved on the shield boss (Hills and Wade-Martins 1976, 9 and pl. VIII). The practice therefore seems to have had a wide distribution. Interpretations of its significance should perhaps be restricted due to the lack of detailed knowledge of the plant species often involved. Given the use of wood in many graves from Snape, a ritualistic interpretation is possible and the observations of Penelope Walton Rogers regarding the alkanet-like colourant in six graves (p. 214) are of interest here. She notes the possibility that alkannin-containing plants had been deliberately placed on the bodies in some graves, and comments that the Romanesque shrine of 3rd-century Saint Maurus, in Bohemia, contained silks, resins and plant remains including laurel leaves (a Christian symbol of everlasting life) and a root of dyers' alkanet *A. tinctoria* (Samhylová 1993). Whilst the reason for placing the root in the shrine is not known, its deliberate inclusion suggests that alkanet may have had a symbolic importance in the medieval world. Moreover, it emphasises the likely symbolic and certainly deliberate nature of the other organic inclusions noted.

Objects

A few inhumations contained objects within their fill which were not amongst the usual run of Anglo-Saxon grave-goods. Whether their inclusion was deliberate in all cases is unclear.

Grave 20 contained a fragment of a granite saddle quern, whilst grave 47 contained a large quartzite stone with some bruising, possibly a maul. Their presence may well be accidental; they were both found in the upper fill of the graves, the most likely position for objects redeposited from the topsoil layer, and they had no other apparent association with these graves.

A more certain case of a deliberate inclusion was found in grave 10. Here, a soil stain directly comparable to those of the body containers in other graves, appeared halfway down the fill (Pl. XII and Fig. 23 II). A small fragment of charred wood was found within the outline of the stain but could not be identified. The stain had a well-defined beak

shape at its western end, widening out with a loss of definition to a pointed 'tail' at the east. It was clearly once an object of some sort and continued to the next planning level. Its positioning seems to have been deliberate, the 'beak' being placed directly over the head of the body with the rest of the stain covering the area of the torso and part of the legs.

The object is difficult to interpret. Its pointed, beak-like shape is most obviously paralleled in the bow shape of the Snape and especially Slusegård boats (see Chapter 5 section II, pp. 199–200). Whilst this example was fragmentary, its shape was so clear and distinctive that such an identification is very attractive. The burial of bits of boats is known from Slusegård and has already been suggested as being represented at Snape by the container in grave 3. Given the practice of cutting up boats to use in graves, it seems most likely that the piece in grave 10 was from a genuine one. However, as its incorporation in the grave was not for containing the body it might, arguably, not have mattered whether the object was real, or merely symbolic. Logically, such an interpretation lends weight to there having been a wider meaning for the two definite and one suggested logboat burials other than simply their re-use as coffins (see further Chapter 7 section II, pp. 262–4). Finally, the arrangement of the piece above the body and more specifically, the bow being above the head, corresponds closely to the placing of charred wood branches above bodies in other graves and implies that this too is related to a burial rite.

Charred wood

Incorporating material by Rowena Gale

A striking feature of the Snape inhumations is the inclusion of charred wood, both in terms of size (grave 9, piece i; 1.2m long) and quantity (grave 27, with twenty-four lumps). Examination demonstrated that the pieces were indeed of charcoal rather than the ferrimanganiferous replacement of wood (Fryer and Murphy 1992). Species identified include oak (*Quercus*), gorse (*Ulex*), willow/poplar (*Salix/Populus*), hazel (*Corylus*) and blackthorn/cherry (*Prunus*). The frequent incorporation of charcoal was such that an amorphous area with charred fragments seen in Area B has been tentatively interpreted as a grave (35). Being inert, charcoal is unaffected by different soil conditions and its inclusion in pieces is well known from many other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. However, Snape seems to differ from most other cemeteries through the quantity of material found in many graves.

In all, thirty-three (82.5%) of the forty inhumation graves excavated 1985–92 contained charred wood of some description, ranging from small flecks to large burnt timbers. A few pieces were preserved as no more than dense black soil stains although they obviously derived from burnt wood, often incorporating small charcoal flecks. In the majority of cases there were remains with a clear structure. Together, the pieces can be broadly categorised as flecks (in twelve cases: 30% of all graves), lumps and smears of various sizes (fifteen graves; 37.5%), and larger pieces with structure (six graves; 15%). Only seven graves had no burnt wood inclusions.

The inclusion of larger pieces in graves was clearly deliberate and ranged from single pieces to the extremes seen in graves 9 and 27. In several instances the wood

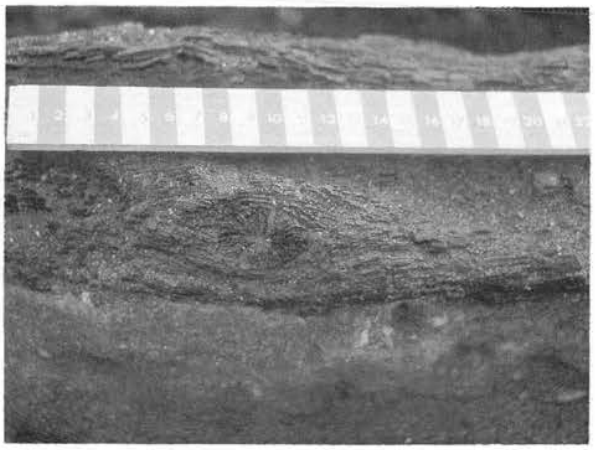

Plate LVII Knot in charred wood from grave 9

structure remained in such excellent condition that the grain and knots could be seen (Pl. LVII). These examples, and occasionally the charcoal identifications including softwood, suggest that most lumps were branches rather than planks or shaped wood. At first sight it would seem that the presence of charred wood inclusions was simply accidental, perhaps the result of vegetation clearance on the cemetery site. However, closer observation demonstrated that the larger pieces especially, were carefully positioned, for instance forming a covering layer above the body in grave 9. Likewise, in graves 8 and 39 although the pieces were small, like the 'bow' stain in grave 10, they were placed directly over the head. In grave 17 the three pieces flanked the coffin, level with the torso, as did the piece in grave 20. Similarly, in grave 21 the body was flanked all along its length by mixed charcoal pieces. The incorporation of smaller smears and lumps tended to be in the upper levels of grave fills and with fewer indications of deliberate positioning. The charcoal flecks seen in many varied even more greatly between both the upper and lower levels of the grave fill; in several cases, for instance graves 32, 36 and 45, they were caught up with the textile containers. As there are examples of both larger and smaller lumps, it is difficult to be clear where deliberate deposition ends and chance inclusion begins. The presence of charcoal in so many graves suggests that such incorporations were made throughout the life of the cemetery, reducing the chance of these having been accidental incorporations residing in the topsoil as a result of, for instance, slash and burn clearance of the cemetery site.

Perhaps the most obvious relationship with the burnt wood is to the 'burnt stone features' which contained largely gorse and oak charcoal and which, like the graves, included many oak stems. Whatever the use of these burnt stone features, their Anglo-Saxon date means they could have been the easiest source for such large pieces of charred wood, or that they were used to burn branches for inclusion. If there is a relationship, the absence of gorse fragments in the graves compared to those in the burnt stone features would seem to be a consequence of larger wood pieces being selected for burial.

Clearly, the incorporation of wood was considered necessary or significant in many burials and the overwhelming presence of so many pieces suggests that

their being charred was an important element. The presence of burnt material in Anglo-Saxon inhumations elsewhere has been remarked upon by several scholars who have interpreted its presence in various ways. Meaney suggested an association with cremation ritual which served 'to release the spirit of the dead' (1964, 17) whilst Salin put forward several explanations including charcoal being brought from the family fire to indicate an association between the living and the dead (1952, 206–7). For Wilson, the use of charcoal 'might represent the symbolic purification of the grave' (1992, 126). Two observations may be made. First, the larger pieces were clearly carefully positioned, over or around the body. The apparent derivation of the wood from branches rather than artefacts implies a ritual use and seems to emphasise the pieces as coming from the wild tree rather than, for instance, being spare planks. Secondly, most accounts of other cemeteries speak only of charcoal and do not specify the actual wood species involved. This is, potentially, a crucial omission since the use of charred wood perhaps finds a parallel in the spreading of vegetation in graves which, as has been seen, may have had specific symbolic connotations according to the species. The identification of most of the charred pieces as oak, especially the larger pieces, may therefore be significant.

Oak has had many mystical and religious connotations (Cooper 1978) and it may be that it was considered particularly apt for use in funerary rituals. Oak is known to have had ritual associations with Donar, the Germanic predecessor to Thor, who had strong associations with forest groves and especially oak woods (Todd 1987, 164–5). Indeed, if we are to believe Adam of Bremen, a 'guardian' tree, once familiar in Germanic and Scandinavian areas, was next to the great heathen temple at Uppsala. Such trees echoed Yggdrasill, the World Tree described by the late 12th-century author Snorri Sturluson, which formed a universal link between mankind, the dead and the gods (Davidson 1964, 191). The difficulty of using such later material should warn us against making too direct a link between these recorded beliefs and the material from Snape. Nevertheless, it is an analogy requiring careful thought; the long-lived maintenance of such associations can be seen in the pagan Prussians still celebrating their thunder god Perkuno — linked with Latin *quercus* (oak) — with a fire and images of gods placed in a holy oak, as late as the 16th century (Davidson 1964, 87). Similarly, the use is known of partially charred wood coffins in the later Anglo-Saxon period, apparently having symbolic associations with eternity (Rodwell 1981, 150). A direct parallel for these associations could be the charred ?boat in grave 3. Just as the use of boat burial might imply adherence to a particular deity (pp. 262–3), such an interpretation could be possible for those graves using branches of charred oak, especially when the pieces had been carefully arranged in the ground as seen in grave 9. The deliberate covering of the body with charred wood might, therefore, be a direct analogy for the deceased's protection by a particular deity symbolised by the wood. In connection with this, it may be no coincidence that the only burial container to be found charred, the ?boat in grave 3, was made of oak.

Burnt flints

Within the fill of several graves (and also ring-ditches and other features) were inclusions of burnt flint. Unfortunately, their presence and frequency was not fully recorded until the later years of the excavation as they were initially considered to be residual within the topsoil, deriving probably from heathland fires. Following the discovery of the burnt stone features, their presence is perhaps better explained, like the charred wood inclusions, as deriving from such features. Alternatively, they may represent material burnt on the topsoil, for instance the sites of cremation pyres.

Their presence was recorded in only seven graves, of which one, grave 46, cut burnt stone feature *1775*, so it was impossible to distinguish between flint that might have been deliberately rather than accidentally included. There were many more graves which contained small fragments that were simply not recorded.

The inclusion of the pieces can be seen as either deliberate or accidental; the latter is most likely but the mass of material (sixty-two pieces, or 0.22kg) from grave 27 also makes it possible that these could have been consciously deposited. The flints are probably best seen as an adjunct to charred wood since, where recorded, they always occurred in graves containing elements of burnt wood.

Pottery scatters

Eight graves contained sherds. In the case of grave 47, sherds found in the uppermost fill probably represent a plough-damaged cremation, perhaps buried at the same time as the inhumation, as in grave 17, or inserted later into the top of, or beside, the grave. If these inclusions were made accidentally, it implies a scattering of many vessels or their fragments across the Anglo-Saxon topsoil, some of which became incorporated into graves. For instance, the pottery and bone fragments which made up grave 80 seem to have been smashed and subsequently backfilled within grave 5. Likewise, a loose scattering of fragments was seen in mixed backfill in grave 25. Other examples of pottery deriving from individual vessels but scattered across the topsoil seem to be either the remains of plough-damaged cremations, or to relate to the cremation pyre discussed below (section III, pp. 252–5). However, it is also clear that more structured deposits of pottery were made.

Analysis by Shirley Carnegie of all the sherds from Snape revealed several instances of matching or joining fragments, deriving from different features (Fig. 147). In grave 4, pottery sealed in the fill derived from vessel *1152*, sherds of which were found in a scatter to the south of Area A and sealed within the remains of urn *0073* in grave 78. Similarly, grave 6 produced pot *A* (*0462*), complete except for a chip out of the rim. The missing fragment was found some 20m away at the opposite corner of the area, mixed with sherds from the shattered urn *1597* of grave 90. Pot *1154* was made up of sherds that derived from the lens of topsoil sealed within grave 10, in the 'cremation pyre' scatter on the southern edge of Area A and from directly above grave 22. Finally, in the scatters of pottery from the topsoil, sherd *0206* from the south-west corner of Area A came from the same vessel, *1594*, as sherds *0347* and *0348* some 17m away, in the south-east corner of the area.

If all these sherds were accidental inclusions, their final resting places provide impressive evidence of the mobility of sherds across the original Anglo-Saxon ground surface during the cemetery's use. The alternative is that some represent deliberate depositions of pottery, of

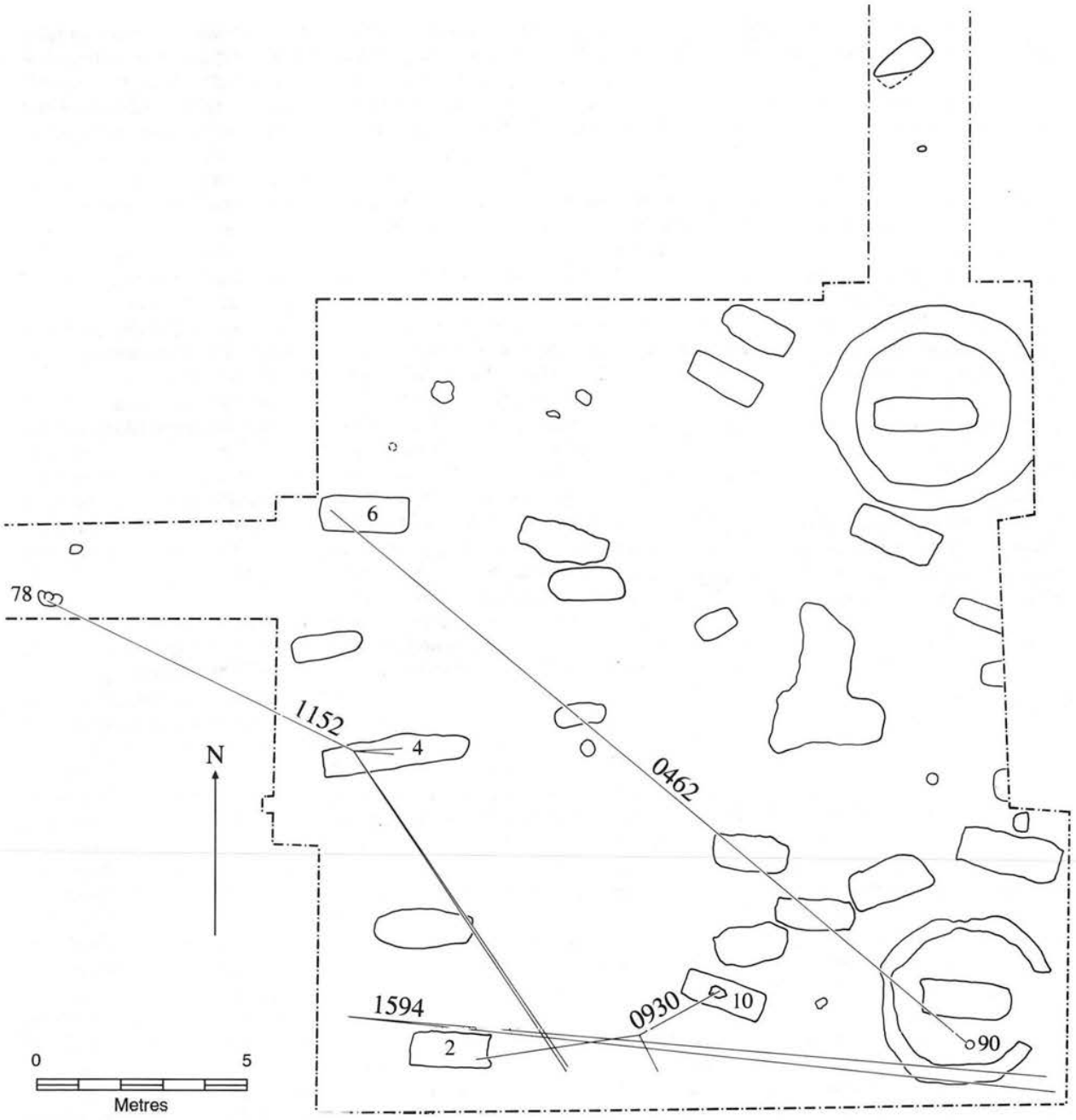

Figure 147 Location of sherds deriving from the same component vessel

which the missing piece from pot *A* in grave 6 seems a good example.

More compelling evidence for the deliberate deposition of sherds comes from other graves. For instance, in grave 5 the remains of vessel *0677* were all found in the lower levels of the grave in a dense cluster directly over the pelvic area, apparently deliberately placed. Similarly in grave 6 the large sherd, *E*, lay directly above the chest of the body, just east of the shield boss. Finally, in boat grave 47, separate from the probable cremation urn already described, two sherds were found in the feet area at the bottom of the boat, associated with a mass of other grave-goods, possibly once contained in a box. One had been converted from the wall of a pot into a ?spindle whorl and the other was the base and footring of a Roman wheel-turned pot subsequently broken and deliberately shaped. It is tempting to see the latter especially as a 'high-class' sherd inclusion, concomitant with the status of the grave.

The presence of these sherd depositions raises two questions. First, what is the reason for the inclusion of sherds linked with pottery found elsewhere on the site? Second, and more generally, why was pottery deposited in graves?

The demonstrable cross-linking of sherds invites explanation beyond pottery always being incorporated in grave fills accidentally. Inclusions of pottery have been noticed in other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, most notably at Wakerley, Northants., where the deliberate deposition of sherds was seen in forty-one of eighty-five inhumations. Here, in two cases, sherds from the same vessel were found in different graves (Pearson 1988–89, 160). At Sewerby, E. Yorks., five graves contained Anglo-Saxon sherds and burnt flints. Hirst cites Johnson's (1912)

discussion in which he saw these as representing fire (flints) and water (the vessel) enabling the deceased the means of perpetuating life. In considering the fifty-seven inhumations at Spong Hill, Hills *et al* (1984, 7) have suggested that some sherds could have been deliberately included, perhaps being deliberately broken as a 'ritual killing' of pots. The Snape material does not contradict either of these views and could be similarly interpreted. More impressive though, is the similarity with the pottery at Wakerley, which suggests that individual sherds could take on a proactive meaning. As at Wakerley, the appearance of cross-linked pottery, sometimes over large distances, suggests a relationship between the individuals in these graves, perhaps coming from the same family (Pearson 1988–89, 160). The conclusion must be that loose sherds need not be simply accidental inclusions in graves, although only in certain cases can deliberate deposition be demonstrated.

Cremated bone

Cremated bone was found within the fill of seven inhumations. Its incorporation appears to be the result of three possibilities; accidental inclusion, the redeposition of a disturbed cremation, and deliberate inclusion. Although distinguishing which is represented is difficult, it is suggested that all three can be seen at Snape.

Accidental inclusion is the easiest option for interpretation. Since bone collection from pyres is known to have been poor at times (McKinley 1994, 85), the topsoil may have had much loose bone that could be incorporated into the backfill of graves by chance. This might explain the odd bone fragments in graves 6 and 32, the amorphous spread in grave 12, and the loose scatter of bone concentrated in a distinct lens of redeposited topsoil in grave 12 (intriguingly, once again found over the position of the head in the grave).

Slightly more difficult is when to call the material a redeposited cremation, because the bone weights can be quite small. This seems the most likely explanation for the material found in grave 5, an inhumation. Although only 19g of bone was recovered, this seems to have belonged to pot *0318* (recovered as 118 sherds) along with two burnt objects (grave 80). Had they been seen on the surface, they would have been interpreted as a truncated cremation and there seems no reason to alter this view simply because they were contained in the fill of a grave. The association with pot *0318* and the burnt objects cannot be proven but seems reasonable, not least given the shattered nature of the vessel.

Altogether more difficult to prove is the presence of a deliberate inclusion, yet it is suggested that this is represented by the material from grave 11. Here, a mass of bone (60.5g) and a few burnt objects (grave 99, a cremation) were sealed in the fill across the whole area of the grave but at only a single level. The amount of bone is still far short of the average to be expected from an intact cremation (p. 227) which suggests that this is not the bone of an entire cremated individual. However, it is difficult to see the bone as an accidental inclusion. It was found in one horizon, spread over the whole area of the grave, yet the fragments were at a single, even, level, with a height difference of no more than 50mm. Had the bone been the result of accidental incorporation, or the redeposition of a smashed cremation (which must have been unurned as no pottery was found in the grave fill), a more widely-spaced distribution within the grave backfill might be expected as was found with the cremation (grave 80) in grave 5 and the pottery in grave 25. The flat level of the bone instead suggests both an even backfilling of the grave and a deliberate scattering of bone at what would probably have been originally mid-depth, if the height of the topsoil is added. This interpretation has two points commending it. First, the incorporation of cremated individuals, albeit urned, has been seen in other inhumations like grave 17, hinting that at least a part of a cremated individual's bones might be saved for burial later, perhaps with the inhumation of a loved one. Second, this scattering is perhaps analogous to the coverings of wood or objects seen in other graves.

Orientation

There has been much discussion over the years about the possible implications of grave orientation for understanding burial ritual and cemetery analysis. It is felt here that the difficulties associated with using grave orientation makes it of only limited application, and all the more so at Snape where the sample of graves is relatively small. A brief survey and orientation chart (Fig. 148) is given in the interests of consistency with other Anglo-Saxon cemetery reports. At the outset it is perhaps best to distinguish between orientation, that is, positions of the solar arc, and alignments which can relate to more general associations in the direction of graves.

Orientation has been argued by some as relating to the ethnic origins of the person buried (Faull 1977) and, by relating it to the solar arc, even to the time of year that the grave was dug (Hawkes 1976). Various objections have been found to such approaches and one might add that if the exact orientations suggested as necessary were important, the position of the body itself rather than the grave might be the crucial factor. In practice, the body, its container (if any) and the grave cut frequently all differ in orientation. A more fundamental objection is that, in general, grave cuts from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are irregular, making a measurement of their exact orientation impossible.

Nevertheless, it is evident that orientation had some importance, as most Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have bodies buried either east-west or north-south rather than at all angles of the compass. Such considerations would seem to be present in most East Anglian cemeteries where east-west graves are almost universal. Snape has only east-west graves with the exception of possible grave 30, unexcavated, seen in trial trench VI. Similarly all east-west are the far larger samples of graves from Westgarth Gardens, Suffolk (West 1988), and Bergh Apton, Spong Hill, Morning Thorpe and Harford Farm, all Norfolk (Green and Rogerson 1978; Hills *et al* 1984; Green *et al* 1987; Penn 2000). It would seem to be of little relevance to try comparing the detail of such bearings (West 1988, 7–8) as the general range is consistent.

Of the forty graves with sufficient remains to determine, twenty-seven (67.5%) had their heads at the west end and five (12.5%) to the east; a further eight burials (20%) left no trace. Such a preponderance of west-east burials is consistent with the East Anglian examples cited above and suggests the perception of a 'usual' direction in which to lay out the dead.

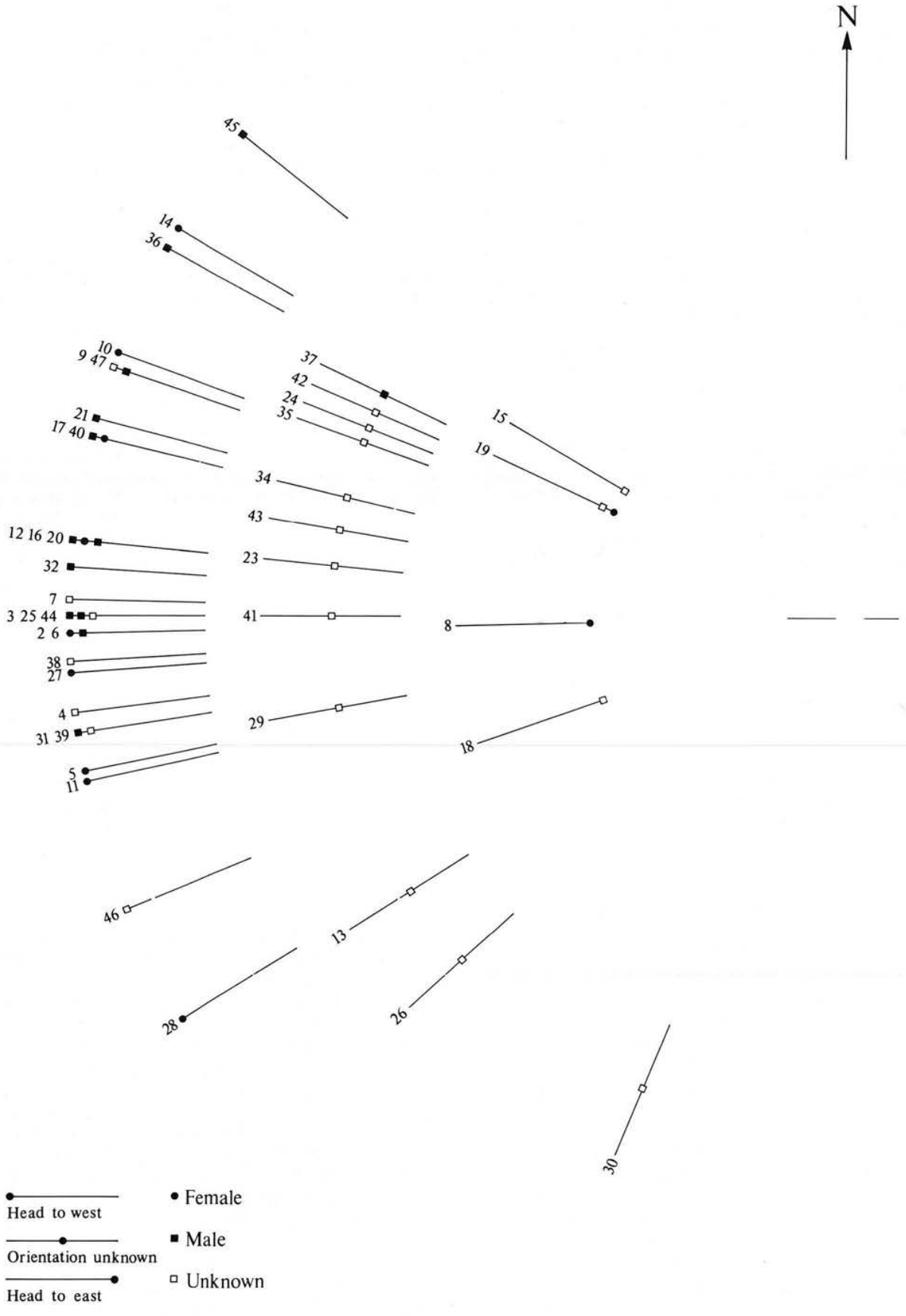

Figure 148 Inhumation grave orientations

Alignments

The role of alignments in influencing the orientation of grave cuts is far clearer. Both Rahtz (1978) and Rodwell (1981, 132) have pointed out the influence that topographical features often had in determining the alignment of a grave and at times 'deflecting' them from the desired direction. Instances of this from Snape are arguably graves 18 and 21 affected by the ring-ditch around grave 20 and perhaps graves 45 and 47 relative to mound 4. The suggestion made for Norton, Cleveland, that a possibly Bronze Age mound influenced the orientation of surrounding inhumations on lines radiating from a central point (Sherlock and Welch 1992, 15) cannot unfortunately be made for Snape. There are no apparently sequential topographical foci to influence possible groups of graves sharing alignments and the dating of the grave-goods is not considered accurate enough to confirm any possible phasing. The influence of the presumed prehistoric barrows in both attracting Anglo-Saxon burials and influencing clustering has, though, already been noted (above, pp. 236–8). The orientation of graves can, arguably, be seen most profitably as relating to the topography of the site than in any detailed discussion of their relationship to the solar arc.

Body positions

The nature of the acid sand meant that bone from all inhumations had been destroyed, except small fragments mineralised by contact with grave-goods and, exceptionally, a few tiny pieces in grave 12. This has made the detailed appraisal of body positions difficult. In eleven cases either only the head or no body stain at all survived; in the remaining twenty-nine inhumation graves excavated, the thirty bodies gave some indication of the way in which they had been laid out.

There are three main types of position represented: supine extended (eight cases); supine extended with feet crossed (six cases), and flexed (thirteen cases). Other variations were present, notably the sprawled upper body from the double burial in grave 19 and the prone burial in grave 44. A tightly flexed, possibly crouched, burial was seen in grave 39. As Table 10 makes clear, there are no real preferential trends for body positions; flexed burial is nominally more popular, especially in female burials, being selected in thirteen cases, but if supine extended, with and without legs crossed are counted together, they occur in fourteen cases, balancing up the numbers. The positions are all quite consistent with Anglo-Saxon inhumations in general, for instance Faull's study of 5,300 examples (1977, 5) and correspond to the available evidence for other East Anglian cemeteries. Of more interest are the exceptions to these rules, from graves 19, 39, and 44.

	Male	*Female*	*Unknown*	*Total*
Flexed	3	6	4	13
Extended	3	3	2	8
Extended, feet crossed	4	1	1	6
Other	-	-	3	3
Blank/head only	2	1	8	11
Total	12	11	18	41

Table 10 Body positions by sex

Grave 39

The body in grave 39 is the most difficult to discuss because it was so unclear and badly preserved when excavated (see catalogue). The body was only tentatively identified, its stain merging with the organic layer it rested on or was wrapped in. If interpreted correctly, then the body seems to have been in a crouched position most similar to prehistoric and Roman burials. The absence of grave-goods and the lack of any obvious association with other graves or features makes this inhumation undatable, although the charred wood stain above the head perhaps indicates that it was Anglo-Saxon. This grave is something of a curiosity, perhaps reflecting insular burial practices although also finding parallels in the tightly positioned post-Roman burial from grave 1188 Poundbury, Dorset and graves 26 and 32 Little Eriswell, Suffolk (Farwell and Molleson 1993, 83; Hutchinson 1966).

Grave 19

In grave 19, a body with no grave-goods except possibly a small iron buckle, was left in a sprawled position directly above a normally-furnished female inhumation burial (Pl. LVIII). The above-average size of the cut indicates that two burials were envisaged when the grave was first dug, but the manner of the deposit is in stark contrast to the double burials known in other East Anglian cemeteries, especially in the Cambridgeshire area, for instance Edix Hill, Barrington (Malim and Hines 1998). Here, grave cuts are made wide enough for both bodies to be laid out side by side on the grave floor, in the manner of single inhumation burials. The upper body from the Snape grave, by contrast, rested in an uncentral position, lying against the north-eastern corner of the grave. This, and the lack of grave-goods, raises the possibility that the body may be categorised a 'deviant' burial (Geake 1992), although the absence of skeletal remains for information on the age, sex and especially cause of death is unfortunate. An obvious parallel for this double burial is that of the burials in graves 41/49 at Sewerby, E. Yorks. Here, a middle-aged woman was found buried face down in a contorted position and was suggested to have been buried alive, above the body of a young female in a well-furnished grave. Other parallels to this type of burial exist, for instance grave H3 at Finglesham, Kent (Chadwick 1958, 25), and Cheesecake Hill, Driffield, Yorks. (Meaney 1964, 285). Further examples are enumerated by Hirst (1985, 41) but most are of less certain application in deriving from antiquarian or poorly recorded excavations, often with stratigraphic uncertainties about the relationship between upper and lower bodies. The burials in grave 19 at Snape are clearly contemporary, as seems also to have been the case at Sewerby (Hirst 1985, 39). Double burials of this type are self-evidently unusual, and the placement of the upper body with less apparent care and often few or no grave-goods seems characteristic. Their interpretation has always been more problematic but the apparent lack of respect shown to the upper body at Snape raises the possibility of its having been a ritual killing, subsequently incorporated into the main grave. If it is so interpreted, it could have been a slave buried with the mistress, and therefore included perhaps as a form of grave-good.

The nature of sacrificial or ritual killing in Anglo-Saxon England is poorly understood. Reynolds (1996) has pointed out that there is a general absence of clear examples of such killings, even though Davidson

(1992) has argued that the Anglo-Saxons may have carried out human sacrifice. Whilst the upper body from grave 19 may, therefore, add to the archaeological evidence for such practices, the absence of palaeopathological data makes it remain an equivocal case.

Grave 44

Grave 44 raised the possibility of its occupant having been killed, as it was buried face down. It is true that prone burials are known from several Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and have been seen by Faull (1977) as perhaps indicating continuing Romano-British burial customs, especially in the north of England. Indeed, this was considered one of the possible explanations for the relatively high number of seven examples found at Norton, Cleveland (Sherlock and Welch 1992, 26–27). There are, though, fewer examples in East Anglia and their appearance in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries across England lacks any otherwise distinctively 'British' element. Recent research has suggested that prone burials are a phenomenon originating in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the 6th and 7th centuries, in which the individuals were probably judicial killings and viewed 'very differently from other members of the community' (Reynolds 1997, 34). Prone burial was not only an exception, but a calculated opposition of the normal supine or flexed ways of laying out the body, and with it, implications of a normal body being able to 'rise up' at some future point are reversed, so that the body continues down (Hirst 1985, 36–7).

In the case of the Snape burial, a number of features indicate that the treatment of the body was disrespectful. First, the body was not placed exactly in the grave, which was dug to the correct length for the individual. Instead, the head was pushed back sharply, the face being pressed against the grave west end, leaving a gap to the east of the feet. The clear impression was that the body had been thrown into the grave from the east. Secondly, no grave-goods were found buried with the body, unlike nearly all the other Snape burials. Finally, a large flint cobble was found resting on the back of the body, between the shoulder blades. Given the paucity of flint from the site, and its total absence in nodules of this size, this must have been imported and be a deliberate inclusion within the grave. The use of a stone also finds a striking parallel in those found on the shoulders and pelvis of the body, once again, in grave 41 at Sewerby. Here, Hirst suggested that they might have been used to prevent the woman moving, or were used to weigh her down (1985, 39). Whilst Grainger argued that the stone on the Sewerby body would not in itself have prevented the person from moving if still alive (1986, 161) this presumes the individual not to have been unconscious or disabled in some way, perhaps by beating or drugging (Hirst 1993, 43). A similar interpretation is possible for the Snape body, that it was alive when buried, although the awkward body position would suggest that the individual may not have actually been conscious. The stone may, therefore, have been either thrown in to apply a *coup de grâce*, or have been the result of a final insulting 'parting shot' at the body.

Whether the individual in grave 44 was a sacrificial or judicial killing is less obvious. Reynolds has pointed out that Anglo-Saxon execution sites, originating in the 7th century with the institution of kingship, can often be seen to stand on the boundaries of territories, and are often to be found associated with extant barrows (1997, 34–37). An example is the recently-excavated site at South Acre, Norfolk, where at least 119 'deviant' burials were found placed around the mound, producing radiocarbon dates suggesting interment from pagan to Late Anglo-Saxon times (Wymer 1996, 88–89). The proximity of grave 44 to mound 4 at Snape would fit this pattern and perhaps also provides an explanation for the body in grave 46, which was curious. Although the body here was buried supine extended, it had no accompanying grave-goods, no organics related to grave structures, and had been squeezed into a very narrow grave cut, more akin to a slit trench. Like grave 44, this burial is undated although is stratigraphically later than burnt stone feature *1775*, which it cut. These burnt stone features surround mound 4 and radiocarbon determinations show them to date from the cemetery's use. How much later grave 46 might be is a moot question. If it, and grave 44, are Middle or Late Anglo-Saxon in date, interpreting them as judicial killings is clearly preferable, despite there only being a pair of them. A similar situation appears to have been found at Galley Hills, Surrey, where only five execution victims were found around one of several mounds (Barfoot and Price-Williams 1976) and 'there is no good reason why execution burials should necessarily focus on one particular mound if several are available' (A. Reynolds, pers. comm.). If belonging to the pagan period, both graves might be of either a sacrificial or judicial nature. Given their presence on a site including aristocratic, presumably royal, involvement through ship burial, either could be acceptable.

Plate LVIII Upper body in grave 19 emerging from the fill, apparently thrown on its side against the northern edge of the cut

Endnotes:

1. The sherd from the 1972 material held in the Ipswich Museum cannot be provenanced to Snape with certainty, due to some mixing of material in the storage boxes. It is, however, quite likely. One might also add to the list of possible prehistoric finds the granite saddle quern found in the upper fill of grave 20, for which 'a date within the late Bronze Age or Iron Age is preferred' (David Buckley, report on saddle quern in site archive).
2. The horn in grave 1 was found under the left shoulder of the skeleton (Serjeantson 1994, 66), which would support its use as a layer for the body to rest on. That in grave 9 was also at the bottom of the grave 'by the right foot' (Evison 1994, 92).
3. Like that above grave 4 from urn *1152*, its retrieval from the surface meant that it could not be seen whether it was contained within the fill of the grave cut and therefore sealed.

III. Cremations

by Tim Pestell

Burial types

Only twenty-one cremations from Snape have been excavated under controlled conditions and the damaged nature of most of these means that there can be only limited discussion. Like the inhumations, the cremations were found buried in a variety of ways. Only the copper-alloy bowl had evidence of having been covered for burial, although many of the urns may have originally been sealed by organic covers which have left no trace. This may be reflected in covered urns having been more likely to collapse due to the pressure of earth upon them, than those left uncovered and packed inside and out by backfill.

In urns

This was the most common form of cremation burial, represented in the vast majority of cases (forty-three of fifty-one burials, or 84.3%). The urns all fall within the standard range of pagan Anglo-Saxon forms. The damage caused to the most recently excavated urns and the lack of bone in the complete ones from earlier excavations means that no attempts at correlation between the containers and contained can be made as Richards (1987) has attempted elsewhere. One urn, *0507* (grave 91) had a hole deliberately made in its base. Pot *H*, apparently associated with the body in grave 5, had a sherd missing from the centre of its base. This may have been a deliberate break but since the urn was reconstructed from fragments found at the bottom of the inhumation fill, this cannot be proven.

Grave 78, as outlined in the catalogue, is problematic. The urn was plough-damaged, only the bottom half surviving within its cut, but no cremated bone was found associated. Notwithstanding this rather important omission, the urn was like the other cremations, hence its listing as such. It has no readily apparent explanation as it is unlikely to have been deliberately emptied at some point after deposition only to be re-buried; a 'cenotaph' cremation burial seems equally unlikely.

Unurned

Seven cremations (13.7%) from the site were buried without any apparent container, one from the 1972 sewer trench (grave 74) and six from the recent excavations (graves 82, 83, 85, 96, 97 and 99). It is unclear whether any unurned cremations were found during the 1862–3 excavations. Unurned burial is a rarer form of the cremation rite but still widely known from many Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. It is unclear whether the bone was wrapped in cloth or placed in organic containers which have rotted and left no trace although this seems likely. No evidence for any such containers was found at Snape. One of the unurned burials, grave 83, contained the upper parts of a pot but none of its base. Although plough-damaged, because the deposit was mostly contained in a shallow scoop, the pot is considered a grave-good.

Copper-alloy bowl

The use of an open metal bowl as a container for a cremation is unusual, the Snape example (in grave 68) being one of only nineteen (possibly twenty) examples according to a recently published list (Dickinson and Speake 1992, 128–9). The majority of these are from 'high status' burials frequently of late 6th/early 7th-century date. Whilst seven of these nineteen were found beneath barrows, the Snape example seems to have been more modestly interred, although the nature of its recovery from a narrow service trench makes it difficult to be certain.

Instead, the Snape cremation appears to take as its closest parallel 'urn' 204 from Illington, Norfolk (Davison *et al* 1993, 36 and 48), also apparently interred as a flat burial in the cemetery, with nothing other than the bowl itself to mark it out as unusual. Like many other instances of cremations in bronze bowls, that from Snape had been wrapped in a cloth, apparently of north-west European manufacture (Crowfoot 1973). The Snape cremation differs from several of its more exalted parallels by having a solitary grave-good, an iron rivet. The small quantity of animal bone included is also quite consistent with many Anglo-Saxon cremations (see p. 258 and Richards 1987).

Nevertheless, the use of a bronze bowl for burial appears to indicate some status, since their use as containers for cremations is so limited. Bronze bowls are generally considered an item associated with wealthy (if not always 'rich') burial assemblages. When used to contain cremations they are most common in East Anglia, appearing within a small area in south-east Suffolk, in the barrow at Brightwell Heath and most notably from Sutton Hoo in mounds 4, 5, 6, 7 and 18 (Carver 1992, 368–69). However, they are not a purely East Anglian phenomenon, as examples have been found at Coombe, Kent, Loveden Hill, Lincs. (two burials), possibly at Asthall (Oxon.), and at Baginton, Warwicks. (five burials) (Fig. 149).

The Snape bowl or its burial cannot be dated accurately but it conforms to a known type of cremation assemblage in this area of Suffolk. Similarly, the incomplete information about the cremation's exact context is unfortunate but its proximity to the presumed site of the ship burial mound may not be coincidence, perhaps representing a clustering of graves of the local leading family.

Figure 149 Distribution map of cremations buried within bronze bowls

Inclusions

Just as the inhumation graves were found to contain a wide variety of extraneous material, often deliberately placed in the grave, so did several cremations, albeit on a lesser scale. The small number excavated, especially in the latest campaign, means that there can be no statistical validity attached to the results. Nevertheless, the inclusions are of interest. In common with many other Anglo-Saxon cremation assemblages a number of burnt animal bones were detected. These are discussed below in section IV.

Charcoal

incorporating material by Rowena Gale

The inclusion of charcoal fragments might be expected given the involvement of pyres with cremations, but as with the inhumations, the inclusion of wood may also have had some ritual connotations. Six cremations included charred wood, including a bone collection from the 1862–3 urns. Species represented were oak (*Quercus*), gorse (*Ulex*), gorse/broom (*Ulex/Cytisus*), heather (*Ericaceae*), alder (*Alnus*) and cherry/blackthorn (*Prunus*).

The charred wheat grain found in grave 69 is an unusual occurrence although Peter Murphy remarks (pers. comm.) that if cremations were routinely flotated their presence might be seen more often. Small amounts of crop remains were also found in some cremations at the Springfield Lyons cemetery in Essex and in nine urns (from over 2000) from Spong Hill, Norfolk (McKinley 1994, 91). There is some evidence that spelt, a characteristic Roman grain crop continued in use into the Early Anglo-Saxon period. It is unclear whether the inclusion was deliberate or not, although Whitelock (1954, 25) refers to a pagan Anglo-Saxon practice of burning grain after death 'for the health of the living and the house'.

Although not strictly contained in a cremation, some charcoal from the pyre area (see below) proved to be fragments of pine (*Pinus*) of the *sylvestris* group which includes Scots pine. As Rowena Gale points out (p. 226),

its presence is unusual, which suggests particular selection — perhaps with some assumed importance reflecting its rarity value. Alternatively, it may have been of artefactual derivation either imported as wood or as a ready made item. Its presence in the cemetery was also of interest since pine trees have sometimes been associated with immortality and the wood has been used to make coffins in the belief that it protected the body from corruption (Cooper 1978).

Wood

Only grave 68 (the bronze bowl) preserved actual wood fragments through mineralisation. The wood had been assumed to be from modern tree roots (West and Owles 1973, 50) but examination by Rowena Gale showed them to be of oak (*Quercus*) with a ring porous structure, indicating their origin from an aerial part of the tree such as a branch or trunk. The wood could, therefore, derive from an object placed in the cut (although not now morphologically recognisable as such) or perhaps be from a piece used originally for some internal structure. The possibility of a totemic inclusion must also be considered, and the wood might have been part of a scatter of vegetation as seen in some of the inhumations.

Sherds

Several cremations included sherds deposited in the cut unrelated to the burial urn. The clearest instances of this were seen in graves 78 and 83. In grave 78, a sherd from vessel *1152* appears to have been a deliberate deposition, being found in the bottom of urn *0073*; sherds from this vessel were also found in topsoil layer *0273* and in the fill of grave 4 (an inhumation; Fig. 147). In grave 83, the upper fragments of a smashed pot were collected from a scoop containing bone. Other examples of inclusions (as the cremations were themselves scattered) were the lip sherd from grave 6 pot *A* found in the shattered remains of urn *1597* (grave 90), and, less certainly, two sherds from at least one other vessel mixed in with the remains of grave 83.

The damaged nature of many cremations means that other examples may simply have been destroyed. The inclusions of cross-linked pottery are often too far apart to be the result of simply accidental incorporation and in common with the sherds in inhumations (above, pp. 244–6), their presence seems more likely to have been for symbolic or ritual reasons.

Other

In one case (grave 69) a flint flake of uncertain origin was included. More common were small amounts of burnt flint which were seen in eight different assemblages, always of small size and in small quantities. Their origin is probably accidental, being scraped up with the bone collected from the pyre site.

In two cases residues from the pyre were noted, a 'cokey' looking material being seen in the bone from grave 91, and a small piece of 'cremation slag' coming from grave 70. This slag seems to be principally silica fused at high temperatures in the cremation pyre and, according to Henderson *et al* (1987), occurs most often in cremations in areas of sandy soil — like Snape.

The cremation pyre

by William Filmer-Sankey, Shirley Carnegie and Tim Pestell

Introduction

Within Area A a number of scatters of pottery sherds, cremated bone, charcoal, metal fragments and burnt flints were found preserved in the Anglo-Saxon topsoil layer (*0273*). These were excavated in detail and the finds have all been individually catalogued (above, Chapter 4 section IV). A similar range of material — notably pottery — from the upper fills of several graves suggest that further scatters within the topsoil through which the graves were dug may have been destroyed by ploughing. The main scatter was spread over 2 square metres on the southern edge of the excavation area, in and adjacent to an inhumation (grave 10; Figs 6, 23 I and 150).[1] Rather than being simply the remains of cremations badly truncated by ploughing, these surface scatters seem best interpreted as the remains of a cremation pyre. This suggestion was first presented by Carnegie and Filmer-Sankey (1993) and has been refined as a result of further post-excavation analysis.

Dating

The nature of the material itself, catalogued pp. 175–9, makes it virtually impossible to date the 'pyre' scatter beyond being contemporary with the cemetery. Pottery from vessels found in the scatter was contained within a patch of grey topsoil sealed in the fill of the inhumation and so the grave appears to be stratigraphically later. The body from this was furnished with wrist clasps of 6th-century date so a broadly mid 6th-century date for the scatter is suggested.

Interpretation

Difficulties in the interpretation of this area were first raised by analysis of the pottery. This demonstrated that the sherds, in the largest density found anywhere in the cemetery, derived from at least eight separate pots. Moreover, the most natural interpretation, that they represented a group of plough-damaged cremations, seemed highly unlikely as the scatter included only a very small amount of cremated bone (total weight 211.6g). Given that even the truncated cremations at Snape have a mean weight of 119.9g (and adults of 142.9g), this was clearly insufficient for eight cremations.[2] Doubts were increased by the presence in the scatter of numerous pieces of charcoal and burnt flint. Neither was normally seen in cremation assemblages, except as only very small and occasional inclusions.

A far more likely explanation for this scatter is offered by the Roman Iron Age and Early Medieval Saxon cemetery of Liebenau, Kr. Nienburg, Germany. The site is notable for the remains of several funeral pyres (*Scheiterhaufenplätze*). Aspects of their interpretation are still problematic but their overall identification and characteristics have been established in the various reports of the site (Cosack 1982, 10–14; Häßler 1983, 15–21; 1990, 14–20). These pyres are characterised by spreads of material up to 4m in diameter and between 0.01– 0.3m in depth. Typically, they contain burnt bone (usually in smaller quantities than in cremation urns), charcoal (which has often stained the surrounding clean sand), burnt metal fragments, glass objects and the sherds of a

URN			BODY		CONTENTS					
No.	*Container*	*Decorated*	*Sex*	*Age*	*Grave goods*	*Animal bone*	*Charcoal*	*Burnt flint*	*Comments*	*From*
48	Urn	Y								1862/3
49	Urn	Y								1862/3
50	Urn	Y								1862/3
51	Urn	Y								1862/3
52	Urn	Y								1862/3
53	Urn	Y								1862/3
54	Urn	Y								1862/3
55	Urn	Y (bosses)								1862/3
56	Urn									1862/3
57	Urn									1862/3
58	Urn	Y								1862/3
59	Urn	Y								1862/3
60	Urn	Y								1862/3
61	Urn	Y								1862/3
62	Urn	Y								1862/3
63	Urn	Y (bosses)								1862/3
64	Urn				Y					1862/3
65	Urn									1862/3
66	Urn		?F	middle aged adult	Y	Y				1862/3
67	Urn	Y	?F	middle/old adult	Y		Y	Y		1970
68	Bronze bowl		?F	?old adult	Y	Y		Y	mineralised wood	1972
69	Urn	Y	M	young adult			Y		included flint flake	1972
70	Urn	Y (bosses)	?	infant	Y		Y	Y	cremation slag	1972
71	Urn	Y (bosses)	?	infant			Y			1972
72	Urn		?	adult		Y				1972
73	Urn	Y	?	adult	Y	Y				1972
74			M	young adult	Y					1972
75	Urn	Y (bosses)	?	infant						1972
76	Urn	Y (bosses)	?F	?young adult	Y					1972
77	Urn		?	middle/old adult	Y					1985/9
78	Urn		contained no bone						contained sherd from grave 4	1985/9
79	Urn	Y	?M	middle/old adult						1985/9
80	Urn	Y	?	adult	Y		?		scatter in fill grave 5	1985/9
81	Urn	Y	?F	young adult	Y	Y				1985/9
82						Y				1985/9
83					Y	Y	Y	Y	contained sherds from another vessel	1985/9
84	Urn	Y	?	adult	Y					1985/9
85			?	adult	Y					1985/9
86	Urn		?	adult						1985/9
87	Urn	Y	?F	middle/old adult	Y					1985/9
88	Urn		?	child						1985/9
89	Urn		?	child	Y					1985/9
90	Urn	Y	?	infant/juvenile						1985/9
91	Urn		?M	young adult						1985/9
92	Urn		?M	adult						1985/9
93	Urn		?	young/mid adult	Y			Y		1985/9
94	Urn		?	infant						1985/9
95	Urn		?	adult						1985/9
96			?	adult						1985/9
97									unexcavated	1985/9
98	Urn								unexcavated	1985/9
99					Y	Y	?		scattered in fill grave 11	1985/9

Table 11 Summary of cremation burial attributes

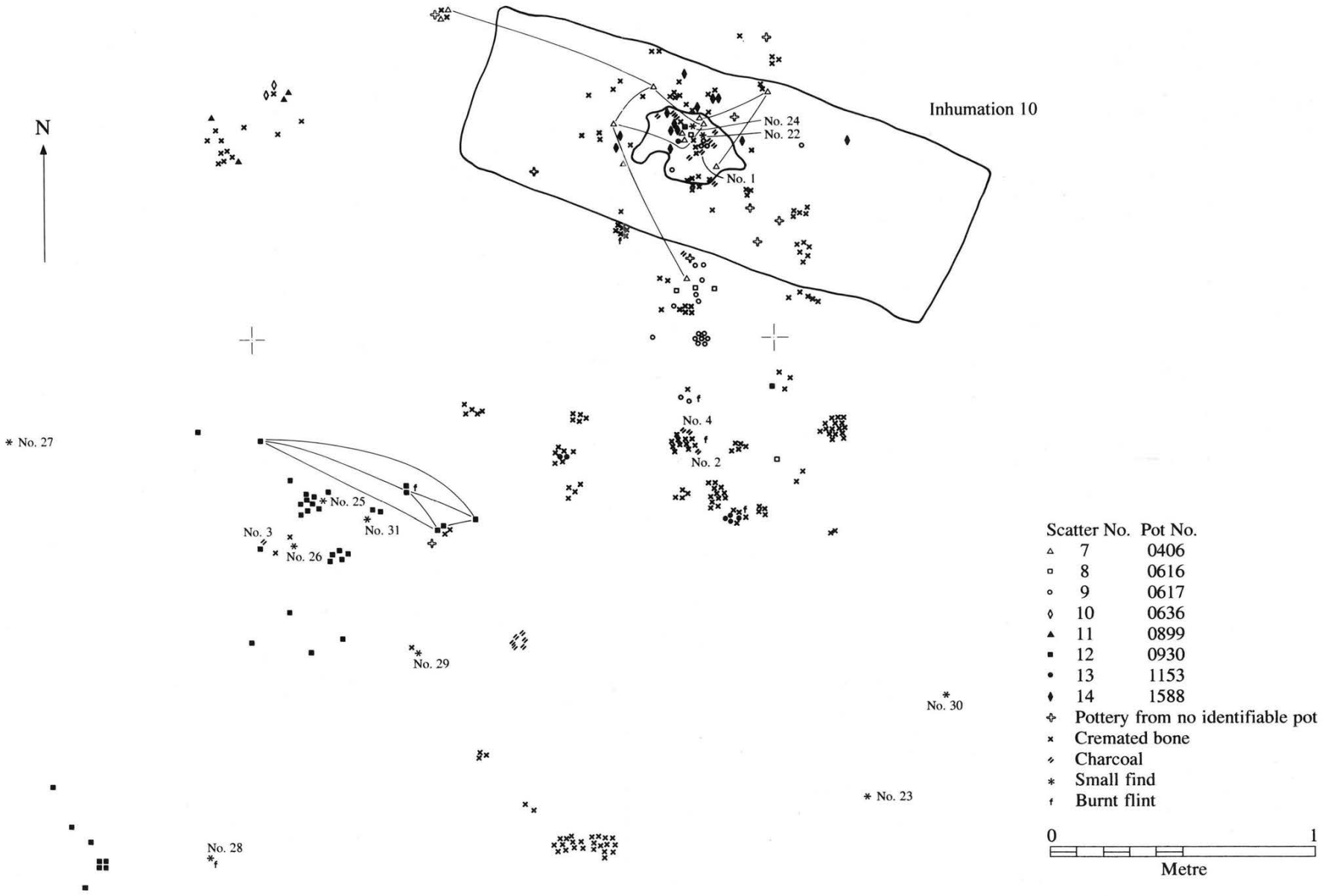

Figure 150 The cremation pyre area. Location of component vessels and metal small finds. Scale 1:15

number of pots, some of which have secondary burning. Occasionally, pyres contained post-holes arranged variously in circles, triangles or 'as the ground plan of miniature houses' (Genrich 1981a, 60). These have been interpreted as belonging to a pyre superstructure which, when an orientation survives, is often north-south, corresponding to the orientation of the inhumation graves in the cemetery. Cremation urns, containing only burnt bone and grave-goods, are sometimes found buried with the spread or close to it; in some cases they have been linked to the pyres by joining fragments of burnt bone or grave-goods (Cosack 1982, 10–14).

The body to be cremated appears to have been placed on the pyre accompanied by grave-goods and surrounded by food offerings placed in pots. After burning, most of the bone and grave-goods were collected for burial in an urn within or close to the pyre site. In a few cases the bone and grave-goods were left uncollected and the pyre itself formed the grave, being covered by a low mound. The frequent association of a pyre with an urn implies that most were used only once although some with both male and female bones may represent repeated use or a single multiple cremation.

The size, nature and components of the spread of cremated material from Snape have obvious and close similarities with the Liebenau pyres, although there are some differences. The principal distinction is the lack of staining in the sand caused by burning. The burnt stone features from Snape exhibited the red staining seen at Liebenau, albeit in only a very thin layer but no such patches were seen in the spread area. However, this reddened sand was only ever seen at Snape in the yellow natural sand, whereas the suggested pyre spreads were found in the light grey topsoil.

Other differences between Snape and Liebenau are trivial and can be disregarded. The absence of any post-holes in the Snape spread is not applicable as not all examples at Liebenau had these. The lack of secondary burning of the sherds is similarly not universal at Liebenau. In contrast, the Snape spread shares other more essential features with the Liebenau pyres. At both sites the pyre spreads follow the same orientation as their inhumations, east-west at Snape, north-south at Liebenau.

It can be seen that the Snape pottery forms coherent groups, around a central area in which only bone occurs, immediately to the south of the inhumation (Fig. 150). This presumably reflects the arrangement of pots around the body in the centre. The bone was collected as several constituent components and could derive from more than one individual, although only one gathering of material (*0083*) indicated a sex, probably male. Most of the components contained adult bone, and one included a sutural ossicle ('wormian bone', *c.f.* graves 89 and 91). Four unidentifiable fragments (11.2g) of animal bone were also included. The fragments of metal small-finds found in the scatter may also be interpreted as grave-goods accompanying the dead on a pyre and tend to suggest a female. They include fragments of brooches and of a wrist clasp (Fig. 150; scatters, Nos 26–28). These pieces were also found reasonably close together within the spreads, brooch bits 26 and 27, 1.17m apart, and brooch and wrist clasp fragments 26 and 28, 1.26m apart. More elements of a personal dress assemblage are represented by the strap-end and buckle (Fig 150; scatters Nos 22 and 24) found in the fill of grave 10.

Implications

If the Snape material is accepted as representing the remains of a cremation pyre, it is important in being the first identified and recorded in detail from Anglo-Saxon England. Other suggested instances have mostly been observations with the actual material left unrecorded, as for instance at Coombe, Kent (Davidson and Webster 1967). The example from the large cremation cemetery of Sancton in the Yorkshire Wolds is similarly based on rather tenuous evidence; accounts of the site describe it as being 'an area of burnt clay, charcoal and bone measuring two feet by one foot' (Myres and Southern 1973). The absence of any detailed plans or photographs of the area make it possible that this could be no more than an urned cremation that had been smeared across the subsoil.[3]

According to Genrich (1981b, 18), pyres of the Liebenau type have a distribution restricted to the Weser area where examples date back to the Iron Age, demonstrating their long tradition in the area. They are strikingly absent from the large Anglian cemeteries such as Bordesholm and Suderbrarup (Saggau 1985, 26; Bantelman 1988, 73) which have only simple urn burial; one might see such large cemeteries as Spong Hill also conforming to this same pattern. The example of Sancton, if seen as a cremation area, does not conform to the Liebenau type.

The identification of this particular type of pyre has other implications. Burial customs have been argued to be a reliable way of distinguishing the ethnic origins of Anglo-Saxon settlers in England. Arguably, the burial rite employed and the way that it was structured, are just as, if not more, diagnostic than the objects contained within a grave in terms of the ethnic affiliation of the settlers. In this case, the funeral pyre from Snape could be interpreted as that of a genuine Saxon or Saxons, demonstrating the survival and translation of this tradition of burial rite into mid 6th-century England from the Continent.

Endnotes:

1. The scatter of cremated bone in grave 11 may possibly be associated but other interpretations exist for this (p. 246); as it cannot be proven to have any relationship to the 'pyre' spreads, it is catalogued independently (as grave 99).
2. The Bronze Age cremation is excluded from these statistics which relate only to the Anglo-Saxon burials.
3. We are grateful to Mr B. Sitch, Assistant Keeper of Archaeology, Hull Museum, for his help in supplying details of this area from the site archive held there.

IV. Animal Burials

by Tim Pestell

Animal inhumations

Snape produced evidence for two animal inhumations, both associated with grave 47. Only one of these, the horse head, could be positively identified (see below). The second animal was seen on the south side of the grave (Pl. XXV), resting on an organic layer and its identification is interpretive. Whilst the sand cast was of the distinctive 'body stain', exactly what was represented was difficult to determine. The inclusion could possibly have been only a joint of meat rather than a whole animal, and as recovered, the stain was not clear enough to resolve this point.

However, since the stains represent the skeletal elements of a body, they appear to be convincing enough to have belonged to a whole, articulated, animal.

If the animal is taken to have been complete, its species is impossible to determine. A dog might seem to be the obvious candidate, having good parallels in a number of other Germanic and Anglo-Saxon graves, usually associated with male burials (Prummel 1992). The diminutive size of the Snape animal might make this seem less likely, although a lap-dog is known from a female grave at Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire (Meaney 1964, 211) and there was a small dog buried in a high-status male grave at Mitcham, Surrey (Bidder 1906, 58–9). An alternative is that the body was of a very young animal. Various other species of animal have been found incorporated in Anglo-Saxon graves, but these are almost always characterised by being odd or selected bones, suggestive of either accidental or amuletic incorporations, or meat offerings. Thus, if the Snape animal is indeed complete, it is impossible to make any closer suggestions as to its identity.

Horse head

The horse's head associated with grave 47 was an unusual find with relatively few Anglo-Saxon parallels. It can be securely dated as Anglo-Saxon both by a radiocarbon date of cal AD 430–670 at 2σ (GU–5233; 1460±70BP), and by its matching elements of harness tack found within the inhumation grave, a deposit of *c.* 600AD.

Horse burials have been seen by some as a substantially east European/central Asiatic rite. Popular amongst Eurasian nomadic peoples, the horse's socio-economic importance led to the development of rituals connected with it (Genito 1992, 47). Müller-Wille's work (1970–71) has made it clear that horse burials are also widely known in Germanic western Europe, amongst which some of the most famous are those from the Swedish ship burials at Valsgärde and Vendel.

The now rather dated starting point for examining horse burials in England is Vierck's catalogue (in Müller-Wille 1970/71), which listed twenty-nine sites, although twenty-one of these were from antiquarian excavations for which detailed information is lacking and one (Kemp Town) is in fact erroneous (Welch 1983, 431–2). Three sites mentioned in his list have since been published; Wanlip/Birstall, Leics. (Liddle 1979), Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Notts. (Dean and Kinsley 1993) and Great Chesterford, Essex (Evison 1994). To these sites may be added the further examples of horse burials from Snape, Icklingham, Sutton Hoo and Lakenheath, all Suffolk (Prigg 1888, 70; Carver 1992, 362; K. Wade pers. comm.); West Heslerton, N. Yorks. (Powlesland *et al* 1987) and Springfield Lyons, Essex (D. Buckley pers. comm.) (Fig. 151). It is important to recognise the variety in the types of horse burial, as several of Vierck's sites have no more than the burial of bits of horses such as odd teeth and, at Milton, near Sittingbourne, Kent, the leg of a horse found interspersed amongst graves (Payne 1893, 103). Vierck also included examples of cremated horse remains. This latter category of horse burial, also now more widely recognised, will be considered later. Omitting these other types leaves fifteen sites with entire horse burials, four with head burials and four of unknown type. Of the entire horse burials, one from Reading can be omitted from the present discussion as it appears to have been of 10th-century date. It may be that the more fragmentary nature of head-only burials has led to fewer being identified. Of the four uncertain types listed by Vierck, the original sources cited usually imply that the burials were of whole or nearly whole horses.

Inhumed horses are normally considered an element of high status burial (Piggot 1992, 116), typically associated with males. A few female associations exist, such as those from Selzen and Gammertingen on the Continent (Brown 1915, 420), but there is only one clear English example, from Willoughby-on-the-Wolds (Dean and Kinsley 1993, 60). The apparently status-based treatment of horse burials as grave accoutrements accords with Bede's description of a good horse being seen as a status symbol (Bede, *HE* iii, 14), and Richards has seen the horse as having had a powerful symbolism in defining status, wealth and mobility in a society becoming increasingly settled (1992, 139). This is perhaps also reflected in the 'rider and fallen warrior' panels on the Sutton Hoo helmet (Bruce-Mitford 1978, 190). The tack buried with most horses shows that they were for riding, and maintaining these animals for warfare was an expensive and therefore high-status activity in contemporary societies (Piggot 1992, 116).

It would seem that the burial of a head rather than the whole body of a horse has little bearing on the status of the grave it accompanies; both, after all, necessitated the slaughter of the whole animal. Additionally, both types have been found with tack; only one of the four English horse head burials has been unaccompanied (Barham, Kent, Meaney 1964, 111). The Snape horse head conforms in other respects to many complete horse burials. From a canine tooth, it appears to have been male (above, p. 232), like the majority of Germanic horse burials (O'Connor 1994, 32). More important, the head had been placed in an apparently formulaic pattern, to the north of the grave with which it was associated, and to the left-hand side of its owner. This pattern is found regularly in those burials for which sufficient information exists (horse burial 3 at Willoughby is a possible exception but it is unclear whether it is in fact associated with the nearest grave). Like the inhumations they accompany, horse burials tended to be placed with their heads to the west; the Snape head, although lacking a body, was similarly placed at the north-west corner of grave 47.

The distribution of horse burial types is difficult to plot with any degree of accuracy as the information for the majority of them is old and unclear. One can, however, reject Evison's assertion that 'complete skeleton horse burials are confined to the Anglian areas surrounding the Wash' (1994, 29) as there are a number of examples in the Midlands and several at Fairford, Gloucs. Moreover, if elements of horses are also considered, the distribution extends to virtually all areas of the pagan Anglo-Saxon settlement. Horse head burials, though, are apparently restricted to the south-east, and are all close to the coast. Horse bones identified in cremation assemblages at present have a biased distribution as the sites with such detailed bone studies are still relatively rare. Their distribution cannot therefore be taken as significant, although at present it appears to be essentially Anglian.

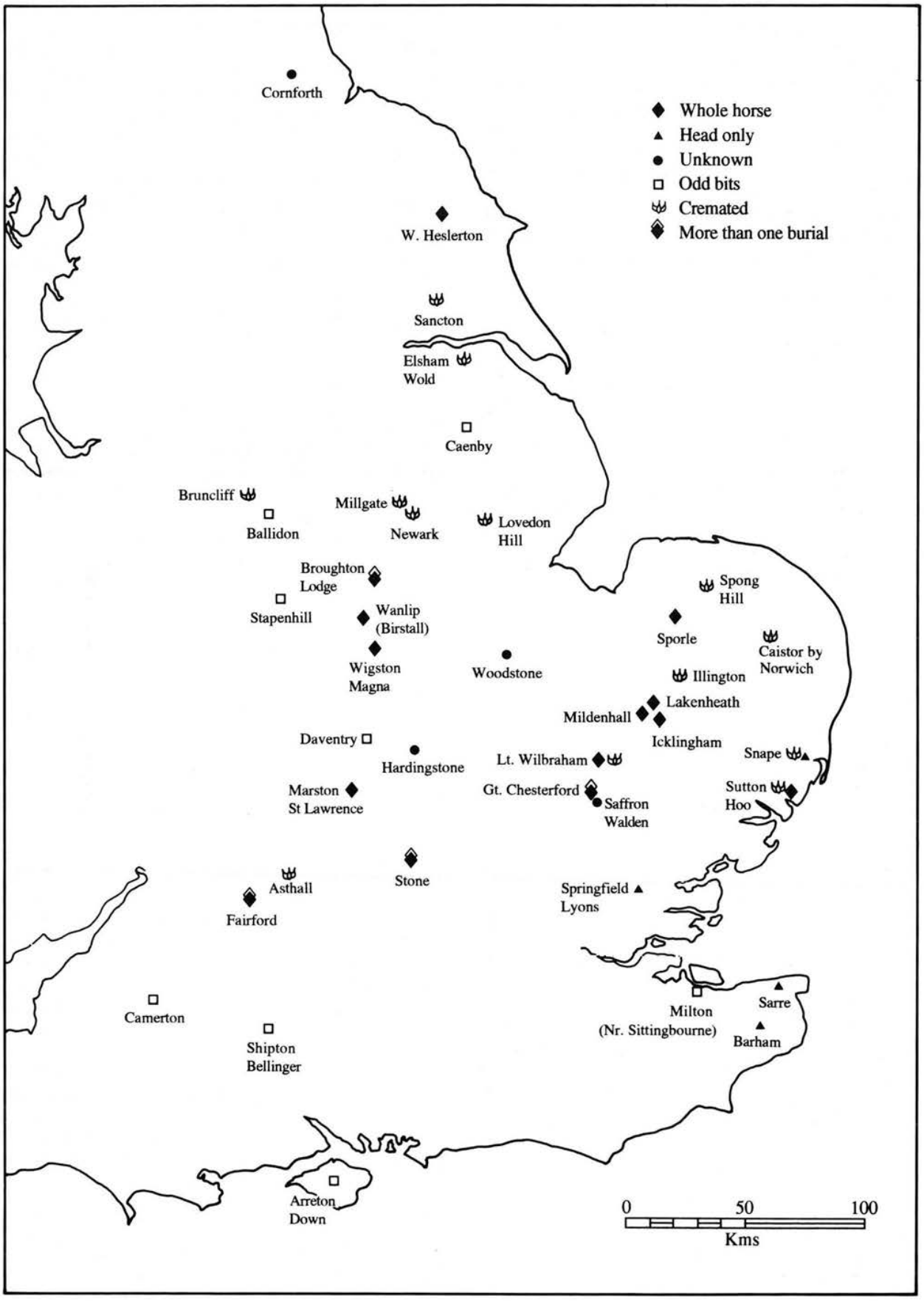

Figure 151 Distribution map of pagan Anglo-Saxon horse burials (after Vierck 1970/1, with additions)

Cremated animal burials

Snape produced burnt animal bone in eleven of the thirty-two cremations examined (34.4%), a frequency within the range of other Anglo-Saxon cremation assemblages, for example Loveden Hill 15% (Richards 1987, 125) and Spong Hill 46.4% (Bond 1994). The Snape examples could only be identified in four of the eleven instances. Two of these were of horse/cow (graves 83 and 99), one of horse/donkey (grave 66) and one of ?pig/horse/cow (grave 72). Fragmentation of the bone precluded any more precise discussion, such as the possible bias in the skeletal elements represented, to parallel or to contrast with other sites. In all cases the animal bone was fired to the same degree as the human remains, suggesting their deliberate rather than accidental inclusion on the pyre. It also made it impossible to tell where the animal or part of animal had been positioned on the pyre during cremation.

Whilst the proportion of cremations with animal remains is far higher than that for the inhumations, only one instance, grave 66, had a large amount of bone. This burial, a cremation recovered in the 1862–3 excavation, contained nearly 10% animal bone by weight, of horse/donkey. This might represent the deliberate burning of part or all of the animal on the pyre with the body. Such a practice is known elsewhere in the Germanic world for instance at Vallentuna, Sweden (Sjosvard *et al* 1983) and is a practice mentioned by Tacitus (*Germania* 27). More usually, bone appears as a few odd fragments.

Discussion

Two points are of interest. First, the proportion of animal bones, both at Snape and in general, is far higher in cremations than inhumations. Second, of the cremated animal bone, the proportion identifiable as from horses is very high, especially when compared to the overall number of horses inhumed with their owners. Explaining the reason behind this apparent patterning is more difficult.

Whilst the number of animal bones in inhumations may have been underestimated,[1] especially as contamination by residual animal bone is difficult to distinguish from deliberate depositions, their number remains very small. Consequently, it may be asked whether animal bone was more likely to be included within a cremation as a result of the ritual surrounding that form of burial, compared with inhumation.

The evidence is difficult to interpret because of the fragmentary nature of the cremated bone. In an interim discussion of the Spong Hill material, McKinley suggested that many bone elements found were those normally encountered in the detritus of butchered animals. This suggested that the missing parts might perhaps have been used in a ritual funerary feast (1989b, 244). This would accord with the non meat-bearing elements seen in many other burials across the Germanic world (Müller-Wille 1970/71, 181). It would also help to explain the presence of the mandible, tibia shaft and carpal in two Snape cremations (graves 66 and 83), and potentially to explain the fate of the rest of the horse originally belonging to the head buried with grave 47.

However, in the final report, Bond commented that the general evidence suggested whole animals were burnt, the presence of apparent 'head and hoof' burials argued to be largely the result of taphonomic processes, with these denser bone elements surviving cremation better. This not only detracts from a 'funeral feast' theory, but is supported by the general absence of butchery marks amongst the cremated remains (compared, for instance, with those few bones from the Spong Hill settlement; Bond 1994, 123). Complementary results from Sancton (Bond 1993) seem to confirm the high number of horses included in cremation burials. It would appear that horse burial was far more common in cremations, contrasting with the number of instances associated with inhumations.

It seems advisable to retreat a step in examining the inclusion of horses, to their ritual involvement in burial. The symbolic importance of horses in the material culture of the Germanic world has been variously noted, appearing for instance as stamps on pots and on metalwork such as cruciform brooches (Richards 1992, 139). This may well have been because of the position of the horse in popular religion on the Continent, a role that seems to have grown from the late Roman Iron Age onwards with Tacitus, writing in AD 98, mentioning white horses being kept in sacred groves to be used for divination (*Germania* 10). Similarly, Todd has commented of the remains from the Skedemoss votive deposits, that as both horse trappings and horse bones 'were very much to the fore...it has been suggested that a horse-god held sway' (1987, 174). By the Viking Age, a horse cult, possibly with earlier origins, was associated with the Vanir and especially Freyr, chief god of fertility in Norway and Sweden (Davidson 1964, 97). For the Anglo-Saxons, the horse seems to have had associations with the war-god Tîw (Davidson 1964, 60) which might have made it especially suitable for burial with warriors.

The association of several horses with high-status graves, especially those accompanied by tack showing their capacity for being ridden, has tended to reinforce the view of inhumed horses as being accoutrements to rich burials. The wealthy grave 47 at Snape, the recent double grave beneath mound 17 at Sutton Hoo and the formulaic positioning of many associated burials would tend not to contradict this. The question remains though, why decapitate the horse and bury only its head? If the funeral feast explanation is rejected, a deeper, meaningful reason must be sought. The Snape head may in fact represent the interface between concepts of high-status burial and the ritual incorporations represented in cremations.

Several examples of ritual horse inhumations exist, with the animals actually being buried alone, for instance that at Wanlip; horse 2 at Great Chesterford; horse 4 at Willoughby, and the horse head at Springfield Lyons (although, intriguingly, possibly associated with a nearby group of cremations; D. Buckley pers. comm.). Perhaps most interesting is horse 1B103 from West Heslerton, which was buried on its own, with tack, but with the head cut off and placed in the centre of the grave (Powlesland *et al* 1987, 163). The role of the head is perhaps also to be recognised in many of the horse burials in Vierck's original list, where those horse elements mentioned included teeth (for instance Arreton Down, Shipton Bellinger, Camerton, Daventry and Ballidon). The West Heslerton horse emphasises the importance of the head in ritual and provides a clearer context for the selection of only this element for burial at Snape. Its inclusion was clearly considered not only appropriate, but must have carried with it further associations or implications that made deposition of the rest of the body superfluous. A

possible explanation is that the head was understood to be powerful in itself, carrying protective qualities for the burial of the dead as Rowell noted was later the case in medieval Lithuania (1994, 122–123).

In this way, the Snape horse head could be understood to have had an importance in burial as, arguably, those animals found in cremation burials had. It might be that the elements of tack best emphasize the aspirations of the buried individual to be identified with the warrior class. At the same time, the horse, as with the head at Snape, arguably fulfilled deeper ritual associations that caution us against making the assumption that horse burials simply indicate 'high status'.

Endnotes:

1. Some account must also be taken of the bias in the cemeteries excavated; many have been dug in advance of gravel extraction operations where the soil conditions result in poor bone survival. By contrast, cremated bone survives reasonably well in acidic soil as it contains a reduced organic component (McKinley 1989b, 241).

V. Burnt Stone Features

by Tim Pestell

The seven 'burnt stone features' excavated in the south-east of the site were initially thought to represent bonfires from modern tree-clearance. Subsequent investigation showed that they were all features of antiquity, and all were examined in detail throughout.

Size and structure

All examples shared a very similar structure and dimensions. Deep ploughing and the 'gyrotiller' (above, pp. 8–9) had affected all features' upper levels and mixed up some others lower down, for example *1771* and *2251*. All except *1771* and *1779* preserved a basic rectangular shape with slightly rounded corners and a flat base. There does not appear to have been any attempt to orientate the features. They ranged in size from 1.34 × 0.9m to 1.92 × 1.26m and from 0.13 to 0.35m deep. The sand around the edges and bases of them all had been burnt pink. In the best preserved pits, notably *1849* (Fig. 127 and Pl. XXX), the bottom and edges were lined with charcoal, typically firm-textured fragments of roundwood (branches and stems) up to 25mm in diameter. Within this lining were packed fire-crazed flints of nearly uniform small to medium size (50–100mm diameter) with, occasionally, larger nodules. Mixed throughout were more charcoal fragments and smaller burnt flint chippings. It was often difficult to determine what structure, if any, there had been at higher levels due to the agricultural activity; this damage had probably caused further fracturing of flints in the upper layers.

Those features that were relatively undisturbed showed a level layering of the flints over the wood, with some additional wood mixed in (for example *1849*). The careful arrangement of these layers is an aspect noted by O'Kelly (1954) as advantageous for heating stones. The presence of the flints is especially noteworthy; the soil at Snape is almost purely stone-free glacial sand with occasional bands of peagrit. The flints could not have been collected from the site or its immediate area but had been carefully selected, gathered and imported from further afield. The amount of stone recovered from these features — or at least those parts surviving — demonstrates the effort involved in their construction. The average content was some 83.51kg with a range of 23.86kg (*2251*) to 176.53kg (*1849*). There was also a reasonable quantity of charcoal, with a mean weight of 0.82kg and a range of 0.08kg (*1779*) to 3.27kg (in *1849*, despite not being substantially larger than the others). Including the charcoal and burnt flint redeposited in grave 46 from feature *1775* gives the same range, but raises the means to 84.11kg (burnt flint) and 0.92kg (charcoal).

Wood species

by Rowena Gale

The species represented, usually as roundwood, consisted mainly of gorse (*Ulex*) and oak (*Quercus*) with small representations of *Prunus*, members of Pomoideae (which include hawthorn, apple, pear and rowan) and rose/bramble (*Rosa/Rubus*). The inclusion of oak and gorse in large quantities is unsurprising as traditionally both have been exploited for their high calorific values when used as charcoal or wood fuels. They have proved particularly important for use in kilns, ovens and other industrial purposes (Lucas 1960; Keepax 1974; Lambrick 1985).

It was impossible to tell whether the fuel was used as charcoal or wood but it may be concluded that these species would have heated the flints more rapidly than many others. Gorse in particular could have been used for an initial 'quick burn' whilst the wood/charcoal lining the feature, denied enough oxygen for fast combustion, may have prolonged the period of burning, maximising heat efficiency.

The inclusion of a wide variety of wood types, many being found in only very small quantities, could suggest their deliberate selection, perhaps related to symbolic associations or ritual importance. The possible ritual associations with oak have already been discussed (pp. 243–4) and the use of rowan may also have had such connotations. Wróblewski has argued that rowan was widely known in Scandinavia as having apotropaic powers (1992, 185–6) and possible associations with Thor, being described in the *Skáldskaparmál* (Poetic Diction) of Sturluson's *Edda* as 'Thor's salvation' (Faulkes 1987, 82). Certainly, given the energy used in the importation of the flint cobbles there may have been similar care exercised in the selection of wood types.

Date

The interpretation of features filled with burnt stone has normally revolved around the general discussion of 'pot-boiler' mounds, usually from prehistoric contexts. An Anglo-Saxon date was not originally suspected since an underlying prehistoric site was anticipated (see p. 236) and this type of feature did not seem to have been identified in any other cemetery. Additionally, the only stratigraphic relationship was where unfurnished grave 46 (presumed to be Anglo-Saxon) cut pit *1775*. Subsequently, it was recognised that similar features of uncertain date had been encountered at West Stow (West 1990, 27–30) and radiocarbon determinations were sought.

Pit *1794* yielded a date range of cal AD 415–544 at 1σ (GU–5234; 1580±50BP) and pit *1849* of cal AD 260–416 at 1σ (GU–5235; 1680±50BP). Whilst the latter is potentially of late Roman date, the range brings it into the

5th century, and the determination from *1794* shows that the features should be associated with the Anglo-Saxon use of the site. The date range of feature *1849* may additionally have been affected if oak heartwood amongst the charcoal sample submitted had been dated although Rowena Gale notes that many of the charcoal fragments were from stems. Difficulties in dating were also encountered at West Stow where 'fire pit' *383* contained Anglo-Saxon sherds but pit *46* was cut by a suggested Phase III Iron Age feature (West 1990, 29).

Uses and parallels

Burnt stone features have usually been interpreted as pits for cooking although Barfield and Hodder (1987) raise the possibility of certain examples having been used for bathing. Finally, in the context of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, the identification of these features as cremation pyres is naturally seductive.

The possibility that the features at Snape are the remains of sauna baths is the easiest to dismiss since they differ in several fundamental respects: they are not close to water, have no very large accumulations of material, and lack the crucial trough-type lining of clay, stone or wood used for boiling water. Thus, although there is wide ethnographic evidence for saunas having been used for ritual purification, their presence in a cemetery set in free-draining sandy soil is extremely unlikely.

The two other alternatives appear more credible. Whilst interpreting the pits as cremation pyres is superficially attractive, there are several difficulties in sustaining such a view. The features are generally smaller than an average body size and do not show any apparent concern for orientation as do pyres elsewhere (see above, section III). It might also be expected that more examples would have been encountered in other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Finally, analysis of cremations from many sites has demonstrated that the collection of bone after burning was often inefficient (McKinley 1989a, 69); Snape is no exception in this respect (see p. 227). Notwithstanding the plough-damage seen, it might be expected that some pieces of bone would have been left mixed in the fill of such pits, perhaps along with droplets of melted grave-goods as encountered in many cremations. The fills of all the Snape burnt stone features were 100% sieved and no finds were recovered. Although such items might have been difficult to identify if sooted by charcoal, they were carefully sought and their absence seems damning. The existence of near-identical parallels from the Anglo-Saxon settlement at West Stow encourages identification with the third option, of cooking pits.

Outdoor cooking pits are known chiefly from prehistoric contexts but continued in use into the Early Medieval period in north-west Europe, for instance known as *fulacht fiadh* in Ireland (O'Kelly 1954). Similarly, Ólsen (1909) noted the Norse word *seyðir*, used for instance in *Landnámabók* ('H') in reference to a cooking pit. Olsen (1966, 284) mentioned 'the oval pit... [with] sooty stones in it' from Hofstaðir, Mývatnssveit (Iceland) being possibly a feature 'which could be the trace of a ritual baking pit... well-suited for the ritual preparation of sacrificial animals for a convivial meal'.[1] In common with many (prehistoric) examples, the lack of food elements need not detract from the Snape examples being thus interpreted; indeed the high natural acidity of the surrounding heathland soil could easily have destroyed unburnt animal bones left from cooked joints of meat. If such features are associated with a form of ritual feasting or cooking at the time of burial, it perhaps provides a link with the food or animal offerings known to have been placed in Anglo-Saxon graves (Wilson 1992, 98–99).

Other various uses, for instance industrial, have been assigned to burnt mounds and alternative interpretations exist, although it should be noted that the Snape examples yielded no waste products such as slags. An intriguing possibility is a connection between the pits and the charred wood encountered in the fill of many of the Snape inhumations not least given the burnt flint recovered from several grave fills, most notably that of grave 27. Finally, it is interesting to note the distribution of the features. They all occur in the south-east corner of the site and with the exception of *2251*, are loosely arranged around the standing mound 4. They might, therefore, reflect ritual activity around the barrow.

Despite the unusual nature of the burnt stone features, there are a few other parallels to Snape beyond those at West Stow. An example is pit *248* from Norton, Cleveland, which contained several fills of burnt material with the stones at the bottom (Sherlock and Welch 1992, 13–14). A single example, close to Anglo-Saxon inhumations, was excavated in August 1998 at Flixton, Suffolk (S. Boulter pers. comm.). More certain Anglo-Saxon parallels are pits *22* and *43* from Nettleton Top, Lincolnshire (Field and Leahy 1993) which had similar dimensions to those from Snape. Charcoal samples from these features suggested that they had contained wood, some probably dead, from hedge trimming or scrub clearance which was used as tinder. These pits had no evidence of industrial use and, intriguingly, seem to have been sited on a Bronze Age barrow. Most important, from the evidence of three *grubenhäuser* in close proximity, the site appears to have been a settlement rather than a cemetery. This again seems to weaken the case for these types of features having been used for cremation. There are several other more enigmatic possibilities, typically from old excavations where detailed information is lacking. For instance, Humphreys *et al* (1923, 97) mentioned a large hearth from the cemetery at Bidford-on-Avon, Warwicks., consisting of 'about a wheelbarrow-full of large pebbles, charred and split by the action of fire' but not apparently related to the nearest body buried about three feet away. Similarly, Lethbridge (1931) noted 'the site of a large fire' which 'had been about 4' in diameter' in the cemetery at Little Wilbraham (Cambs.). Clearly, it will be of interest to see whether future excavations of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries bring to light further examples. It may well be that such features can be shown to have been far more common in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and to have played a regular part in the ritual associated with burial.

Reconstructed burnt stone feature: performance and observations

At the end of the final excavation season (1992) it was decided to attempt to build a reconstruction burnt stone pit to gain some idea of its performance and characteristics. As the decision was made very much on the spur of the moment, the more rigorous approaches to experimental archaeology as advocated by, for example, Coles (1979) could not be applied. Nevertheless, the experience is considered worth relating.

A combination of materials was used, limited to those growing in the immediate area. A shallow rectangular pit was first excavated and filled with a mixture of long grass, branches and stems, of varying species including gorse. This mixture was used to line the pit before a layer of flints was added on top. Many of these were complete stones that had been excavated from the original features; where possible 'new' stones were also incorporated but the nature of the site meant that nearly all were of small size. Indeed the difficulty of finding enough stones on the site meant that this layer was relatively thin. Above was placed a covering layer of more long grass and branches before ignition (with the aid of a 20th-century match).

The initial result was a bonfire which gave off much smoke and a good flame. The stone layer underwent a rapid heating, fracturing and spitting small chippings out up to 5m away. Possibly because the stone layer was so thin the fuel layer threatened to burn out. The flames were lightly doused with water at which point the feature continued to burn steadily much like a barbeque. Although continued observation became less rigorous during the ensuing site party, the feature maintained a high temperature for in excess of seven hours, sufficient to melt at least one wine bottle. The evidence from our reconstruction, although crude, demonstrates that cooking or any other activity requiring a steady and high heat, could have been conducted for several hours.

Endnote:

1. I am grateful to Professor Ray Page for this reference.

Chapter 7. Discussion

I. Introduction

by William Filmer-Sankey

Although a relatively small number of graves has been excavated at Snape, the site has the potential to make a far greater contribution to the understanding of Anglo-Saxon archaeology than many more extensively excavated sites.

The reason for this lies in the unusual organic survival which has resulted in the preservation of the remains of burial containers, textiles, and other objects placed in the graves. This adds an entirely new dimension to the study of Anglo-Saxon burial rite which has traditionally been dominated by grave-goods and, to a lesser extent, by grave structure, and has concentrated largely on calculating the status of individual corpses[1]. The fact that the excavation could be carried out without any undue pressure of time meant that every effort could be made to record these features in detail.

II. Pagan Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite, Religious Belief and Ethnic Origin

by William Filmer-Sankey

The most remarkable aspect of the new information which the site has provided relates to the variety and complexity of pagan Anglo-Saxon burial rite. The evidence for this has been discussed in detail above, but is worth summarising here. Those arranging a funeral had an enormous number of choices to make. They must first decide whether the body should be inhumed or cremated. If the former, then they must decide whether the body should be placed in a container, such as a coffin or boat, and whether the grave should be lined with textile or other organic material. In digging the grave, they had to decide whether to keep the topsoil and subsoil separate, for distinct backfilling. In which of a restricted number of ways should the body be laid in the grave? Once the body had been placed in the grave, was it appropriate for charred wood to be placed in the backfill and, if so, how much? Should a layer of bracken be placed in the grave? Finally, once the grave had been backfilled, they had to decide whether there should be a structure over it and, if so, what form it should take (mound or post-built structure). If they chose a mound, should it be constructed from a ring-ditch, or from quarry pits or from somewhere else altogether? The choice of grave-goods, traditionally seen as the main element of decision, pales into insignificance compared with the multitude of other choices which had to be made.

If the body was to be cremated rather than inhumed, it is clear from the Snape evidence that a wholly different set of questions had to be asked. How should the body be burned? Should animals be included among the objects placed upon the pyre? If so, what animals? Should the burnt remains be placed directly in the ground or in an urn or other container, such as a bronze bowl. If in a container, should the remains be covered by a lid or not. Although there is no direct evidence for surface structures (whether of earth or wood) over cremations at Snape, we know from Sutton Hoo mounds 3–7 and Appledown (Welch 1992, 66) that they did exist and could be as varied as those over inhumation burials.

Cremation burial has often been assumed to be no more than a simple version of inhumation burial (Welch 1992, 87). The evidence from Snape shows that this was not the case. Rather, as Richards (1987) has argued, it was a completely separate ritual, just as complicated but abiding by a different set of rules.

In short, burying a pagan Anglo-Saxon required a huge number of choices. It is worth noting that the evidence for this variety relates only to those parts of the burial ritual which leave an archaelogically recognisable trace. There is no reason to doubt that there were many other choices (as in the initial laying out of the body, the funeral procession and feast) which have left no direct archaeological trace. There is nevertheless indirect evidence that they were of importance. The insect *puparia* found on the body of the ?musician in grave 32 indicates that his corpse was not buried immediately and it is tempting to speculate that it may have been laid out prior to burial. We know from the wailing woman and the sons of twelve noble warriors who galloped around Beowulf's barrow that considerable ceremonial accompanied the burial. Such displays, though archaeologically invisible, were of course a much more powerful medium for display than the actual placing of the body and accompanying objects in the ground.

The evidence from Snape shows further that the process was not random, but was carefully thought out and controlled. This is seen most clearly in the choice of containers in the inhumation graves. The boats used in grave 1 (the 1862 ship burial) and in graves 4 and 47 were clearly not just convenient boxes which happened to be lying around. The use of a boat of whatever size can only reflect a decision carefully taken, in full light of the not inconsiderable practical implications. A boat was needed in certain cases because of the message that it gave to the mourners. If one accepts that the choice of a boat for three graves was not random, then one must logically accept that the choice of a coffin, or a textile lined chamber or indeed of no container at all, was also a conscious one, and that the use of a particular type of container was a significant message. If one accepts this, it must surely follow that all the choices which had to be made were dictated not by whim, but by regulation. Every aspect of pagan Anglo-Saxon burial rite was chosen for the message that it gave.

The question is, of course, what message was being given? More accurately, what messages were being given, since it is likely that the complexity of the burial rite reflects a similarly complex symbolic language. Is it possible to isolate a dominant message? We suggest that it is possible, and that dominant message has nothing whatsoever to do with status as has traditionally been assumed (Welch 1992, 71–87; see endnote 1). That status is not the prime concern of the buriers is proved by the fact that there is no pattern to link graves with 'richer' contents

to any of the other elements of variety, such as the provision of a grave marker or of charred wood. The signals of status, where they occur, are obscured. The case of boat grave 4 makes the point very well. On most sites, without the benefit of Snape's unusual preservation, the grave would have been found to contain no more than a simple iron knife, an iron stud and a buckle. It would thus have been a candidate for a low score in any of the more popular status scales (Arnold 1980, Shephard 1979). The additional evidence provided by Snape, however, gives a quite different slant. In the first place, the use of a boat, however small, raises the status level simply because of the effort required to bring it the 2.5 km from the river. Then there is the evidence provided by the pair of ?drinking horns remarkably preserved at the east end of the boat. Their significance lies in the fact that they are a pair, implying that the dead person was intending to provide drink for another and was thus a feast giver, a person of high standing in the Early Medieval Germanic world (Werner 1986 and 1992). Pairs of drinking horns are, of course, rare finds in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, occurring in only the grandest graves such as Sutton Hoo mound 1 and Taplow (East in Bruce-Mitford 1983, 385–95).

In short, the evidence from Snape indicates that, where status was signalled by grave contents, it is in a highly symbolic way, with relatively humble objects (such as the undecorated cows' horns in grave 4) used to convey a complex message. In the case of the 1862 ship burial (grave 1), it is not the fact that the ring is of gold that implies the high status, but the fact of its potential function as a seal (above p. 198). It follows that, lacking the detailed knowledge required to interpret these symbols, it will in most cases be impossible for us today to understand what such objects may have meant to the 6th-century onlooker. Any attempt to interpret the social hierarchy of Anglo-Saxon society from its graves can only fail. Härke has already made the same suggestion in his discussion of the symbolic function of weapons in graves (Härke 1989).

The best way to begin to understand the complexity of the symbolism of Anglo-Saxon burial rite is to see it at its most basic level, which is as an expression of religious belief. The prime reason why it was thought necessary to mark out the sex of the dead person by dressing the corpse rather than just wrapping it in a shroud (to take the most obvious example) was because pagan Anglo-Saxon religion demanded it. The same is true of all the other attributes signalled by the burial rite. If status was shown in a burial, it was because 6th-century religious belief felt it important, or (at the very least) tolerated it. The burial rite of pagan Anglo-Saxon England is thus first and foremost a statement of religious belief.

Seen in this light, the extraordinary variety of burial rite visible at Snape becomes much easier to understand. Relatively little is known about pagan Anglo-Saxon religion, but that which is points to great diversity, with many different deities having different attributes and being worshipped in different ways (Wilson 1992). There is furthermore no evidence to suggest, as the bland label of 'paganism' is often taken to imply, that it was a morally and spiritually bankrupt force, with the late 6th-century Anglo-Saxons simply waiting for a decent religion to come along! As Mayr-Harting has pointed out, the conversion to Christianity was no push-over, with virtually every single kingdom reverting to paganism after initial conversion (Mayr-Harting 1972, 29–30). East Anglia, of course, was no exception to this rule with Rædwald's famously ambivalent attitude to the new religion followed by the murder of his converted son Earpwald by the heathen Ricbert (Bede; *HE* ii, 15).

The evidence of the complexity of burial rite at Snape is best interpreted as an archaeological reflection of the richness and variety of pagan Anglo-Saxon religious belief, which persisted until the eve of conversion to Christianity. It is tempting, but probably fruitless, to try to identify particular methods of burial with particular strands of belief or even deities though a link between oak charcoal and the god Donar was noted above (p. 244). In this context, furthermore, it is also of interest that Crumlin-Pedersen has argued for the identification of boat burial with the cult of Frey, whose magic ship *Skiðblaðnir* is an important feature in Norse mythology (Crumlin-Pedersen 1991, 216–22). It is tempting to do the same at Snape: the worship of Frey is suggested from place-name evidence at Friday Street in Rendlesham, 8km to the south-west.

The archaeological evidence thus fits very well with the scanty written evidence to suggest a wide variety of religious beliefs still thriving on the eve of conversion to Christianity. The archaeological evidence can be taken one step further, to explain why there was such a diversity.

It has long been recognised that ethnic origin (actual or perceived) is an important message of Anglo-Saxon burial rite (but see Lucy 1995). Thus certain dress accessories (particularly brooches and wrist clasps) have clear links with the areas whence the settlers came. Snape both widens and reinforces this link, by suggesting that it was the ethnic origin of the settlers that determined their religion and thus dominated their burial rite. The use of boat burial is accepted to be evidence of Scandinavian origin. The funeral pyre identified at Snape (above, pp. 252–5) has its only parallels with the Saxon cemetery at Liebenau. None of the great Anglian cemeteries, even though extensively excavated, have produced anything remotely resembling the Saxon examples, indicating that this particular method of cremation was a marker of Saxon origin. It seems unlikely, given the identification of only one pyre, that all the cremations were burnt in this way. Some at least of the urns show parallels with the Anglian types (*e.g.* that from grave 51; Myres 1977 I, 37–41, type II.6), and it is tempting to suggest that their occupants were cremated elsewhere in a traditionally Anglian way which has left thusfar no archaeologically identifiable trace either in England or in the Anglian homelands. The wearing of wrist clasps by the women buried in graves 5, 10, and 16 should be seen in the same light: demonstrating their ethnic link with Scandinavia, where the fashion of fastening cuffs with metal clasps originated (Hines 1984, 1993). The inclusion of wrist clasps in the grave must not be seen in isolation, since they were presumably stitched onto an equally 'national costume', which must have served to demonstrate the ethnic origin of the person being buried. Although it is usually assumed that the dress fittings and clothing remains found in burials were part of everyday dress, it could equally be that there was a special costume that was used only for burials, certainly for corpses and perhaps for mourners too. It is of particular interest that Swedish-style horse-hair embroidery was found attached to a wrist clasp in grave 5, giving a rare hint of the sort of costume that might have been involved.

Elisabeth Crowfoot (above, p. 211) suggests that the piece of textile may have been old (even perhaps pre-migration) when used in the burial costume, further reinforcing the case for seeing these garments as purpose-made to indicate the ethnic origin of the dead women, and as a vital part of the burial ritual. Her study of the textile remains showed what may well be part of a different 'national costume' in grave 37, the fragments of textile which are paralleled only in Alamannic graves (above, p. 208–9).

The use of boats, of a particular type of funeral pyre and of a particular type of burial costume, distinctively woven and/or needing wrist clasps are the most obvious indications that the affirmation of ethnic origin was a vital part of the symbolism of burial and thus, probably, the determinant of religious belief. There are other, less certain, indicators, such as the crouched burial in grave 39. Such burial, elsewhere, has been interpreted as a Romano-British style and its presence in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries thus evidence for the continued existence of an 'indigenous' population (Hills *et al* 1984, 41). Even if no further links between a type of burial rite and an area of origin can be proved in the fugitive archaeological record, it is surely probable that they existed. If the choice of a boat as burial container demonstrated ethnic origin, why should a textile-lined chamber not give a similar message? If one type of burial costume proclaimed Scandinavian or Alamannic descent, why not all of them?

If one accepts that the assertion of ethnic origin (as the chief determinant of religious belief) was an important (if not the important) message of burial rite at Snape, two further conclusions can be drawn. The first is that the population of 6th-century Snape contained elements drawn from a wide area of northern and middle Europe. Caution is needed, as it is impossible archaeologically to distinguish between those who actually came from those areas, and those who adopted its uniform for political, social or economic reasons. However, there were Scandinavians from the wrist clasp and boat-burying traditions, Alamanni with distinctively woven textiles, there were Saxons using on-site cremation pyres, and Angles using other cremating methods. There were survivors of the indigenous population. Finally, since the name of the adjoining village is Friston, it is possible that there were Frisians too (Ekwall 1960, 188; but see Scarfe 1972, 84).

The second conclusion is that, at Snape at least, the memory of where your ancestors had come from remained of importance long after the migration had taken place. To some extent this is what we should expect. Bede, as is well known, displays a reasonably detailed (and accurate) knowledge of the origins of the Anglo-Saxon settlement (most notably in *HE* i, 15 and v, 9) which must have survived in the oral tradition into the 8th century for him to record. At the same time, however, there was clearly a general tendency to assimilate these smaller, diverse elements into the simpler ethnic blocks (basically Angles and Saxons) of the emerging kingdoms. This process was indirectly helped by the introduction of Christianity which deprived the Anglo-Saxons of the chance to display ethnic identity in burial rite.

More research is needed before we can know whether this concern to remember ethnic origin, perhaps for more than a century after the initial migration, is a phenomenon which occurs in all Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, or whether it is more restricted. It will be argued below that the Sandlings lay between two of the emerging simpler ethnic blocks of the East Saxons and the East Angles, and this may have encouraged the maintenance of a separate (and diverse) identity longer than in other areas. Martin Carver, in his discussion of Sutton Hoo, has drawn attention to the way that burial rite may be used for political ends, so that the maintenance of diversity in burial rite at Snape (and Sutton Hoo — see below) could be seen as a way of demonstrating independence from the emerging might of the 'Saxons' to the south and the 'Angles' to the north and west.

III. Snape, Sutton Hoo and the Emergence of the Kingdom of East Anglia

by William Filmer-Sankey

The past ten years have seen an enormous increase in the amount of archaeological evidence to help us to understand the process of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the Sandlings and the consequent emergence of the kingdom of East Anglia. In addition to the parallel projects at Snape and Sutton Hoo were the wider field survey carried out by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit (Newman 1992), the excavation of the Boss Hall and Buttermarket cemeteries in Ipswich (Newman 1993; Scull forthcoming), and the reassessment of the Hadleigh Road cemetery, Ipswich, first excavated by Nina Layard in 1906–7 (Plunkett 1994).

It will not be possible to understand fully the impact of this new information until it has all been published. Nevertheless, it is worth advancing some preliminary hypotheses, if only to act as a foil for future research. The first area of speculation concerns the twin relationships between Snape and Sutton Hoo and between Snape and the other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of the area. To begin with the former, it has been apparent since 1938, when Mrs Pretty's chauffeur drove Basil Brown to view the Snape rivets in Aldeburgh Museum (Bruce-Mitford 1974, 150), that there must be a link between Snape and Sutton Hoo. The principal initial aim of the Snape Project was to provide data which could be directly compared with that generated by the Sutton Hoo Project (above, p. 1) and this aim was largely realised, for it is now possible to make direct comparisons between the two sites, and to reveal both similarities and differences.

To begin with the similarities, there is that of location. Both sites are similarly situated, on marginal heathland overlooking a major river estuary. It will be recalled that, before the recent plantations, the Snape cemetery would have been clearly visible from the river Alde, in the same way that Sutton Hoo is visible from the river Deben (above, p. 1). Both sites survived into the 19th century as visible barrow cemeteries.

There is a similarity too in the apparently deliberate use of existing (prehistoric) earthworks. The 'swamping' of a Bronze Age barrow by the builders of the grave 1 ship burial can be directly compared with the fact that, at Sutton Hoo, every attempt seems to have been made to place mounds astride the linear banks and ditches which criss-cross the site (Carver 1990a, fig. 5).

The most obvious similarity between the two sites, however, is the shared rite of high status ship burial. It was argued above that the presence of a seal ring in the 1862 ship burial from Snape (grave 1) implies that the man

buried in the ship was of the highest (arguably royal) status.

This similarity is far deeper than just ship burial; it extends to the whole panoply of pagan Anglo-Saxon burial rite evident at the two sites. As at Snape, so at Sutton Hoo, variety is a striking feature, with almost as many methods of burial as there are excavated mounds. Carver's inventory (1993, 17–19) lists:

Inhumation in ship (Mound 1)
Inhumation under ship (Mound 2)
Inhumation in ?tray or ?dugout under mound (Mound 3)
Inhumation burial in coffin with horse (Mound 17)
Cremation burial in bronze bowl (Mounds 4, 5, 6, 18)
'Deviant burials', including human sacrifice, associated with mound (Mound 5) or in isolation (Group 1, east of the barrow cemetery)

It is striking that every single one of these methods of burial can be paralleled at Snape:

Inhumation in ship (Grave 1)
Inhumation under part of a boat (Grave 10)
Inhumation in a dugout (Graves 4, 47 and ?3)
Coffin burial (Grave 17)
Horse burial (associated with Grave 47)
Cremation burial in bronze bowl (Grave 68)
Deviant burials associated with another body (Grave 19, upper body)
Deviant burial associated with a mound (?Grave 44)

If these shared methods of burial are the most obvious link between the two sites, they also reflect one of the most significant differences, that of the scale of the burials. Carver has argued that the burials at Sutton Hoo are either those of the elite or of those bound to them, burials at both ends of the scale but not in the middle of it. At Snape, by contrast, there are burials of all types, from the splendour of the ?royal ship burial in grave 1, through the majority 'average' Anglo-Saxon graves to the 'deviant burials' of graves 44 and 19. The parallel use of particular types of burial rite indicates that the same messages were being given at both sites; at Sutton Hoo there seems to have been a need to put much greater emphasis upon them. The significance of this fact is considered below.

The second difference between Snape and Sutton Hoo is one of date. Despite the difficulties of accurate dating at both sites (see above, pp. 234–6 for Snape) it is clear that Snape is the earlier of the two. As Snape comes to an end in the late 6th or early 7th centuries, so Sutton Hoo starts, with the bulk of the excavated graves being put into the 'late 6th/early 7th century' or later (Carver 1993, 17–19).

A final difference is the length of time that the two sites were in use. Snape, as discussed above, may have had a period of use of in excess of 100 years. Sutton Hoo by contrast seems to have had only a brief burst of intense activity.

It is intriguing that it is precisely those features separating Snape from Sutton Hoo which link it to other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. In terms of its size, date, length of use and the scale of the graves, Snape is a 'typical' Anglo-Saxon cemetery. A similar range of burial rite (including the use of a dugout boat), for example, has been observed at the Buttermarket cemetery in Ipswich (K. Wade, pers. comm.).

It is immediately clear, therefore, that Snape forms a link between the 'elitist' cemetery of Sutton Hoo, and the mass of pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, which Martin Carver has called 'folk cemeteries'. It is possible to go further and to consider more carefully the nature of this link.

In the first place, one can define more subtly the features which the Snape cemetery shares with other 'folk cemeteries'. It is notable that, if looking for the closest parallel to Snape in terms of size, grave density, and mixture of inhumation and cremation, one is inevitably drawn, not to the classic East Anglian cemeteries of Spong Hill and Morning Thorpe, but south to the East Saxon cemeteries such as Mucking II (*Current Archaeology* 1975). This apparent bias towards the south is reinforced by other features. Briscoe (above, p. 231) has commented on the fact that the pottery stamps relate more to sites in Essex and the Thames Estuary than to the more inland East Anglian sites. In view of the presence of a characteristically Saxon cremation pyre (above, pp. 252–5), this latter fact should come as no surprise. Indeed this Anglo-Saxon link between the Sandlings and Essex should be seen as no more than the continuation of a tradition which stretches back at least to the Iron Age, when this area of south-east Suffolk looked south to the Catuvellauni rather than north to the Iceni (Martin 1988, 68–72). If anything it would have been strengthened in the early medieval period by the relative ease of sea communications between the regularly spaced and deeply penetrating estuaries of south-east Suffolk and Essex, compared with both the lack of such estuaries to the north and to the slow and cumbersome nature of land communication (Carver 1990b, 122 and fig. 15.3). Indeed, in a curious way, it continues today: far more boat owners on the Alde and Deben have sailed south to Hamford Water and the river Blackwater, even to the Thames, than have ever ventured north of Orford Ness.

The fact that in archaeological terms the links both of Snape specifically, and the Sandlings generally, were with Essex to the south rather than with East Anglia to the north is intriguing; the written evidence gives a different perspective. For we know that, by AD 664 at the latest, this part of Suffolk lay within the kingdom of East Anglia. The source of this information is of course Bede's by-the-by statement in *HE* iii, 22, that the East Saxon king Swidhelm 'had been baptised by Cedd in the province of the East Angles at the king's *vicus regius* of Rendlesham [...] his godfather was Æthelwald, king of the East Angles, brother of king Anna'. Æthelwald was king from 655–664.

It is necessary therefore to explain why, despite its similarities with Saxon Essex, the Sandlings at an early date became part of the East Anglian kingdom. The (or, perhaps more modestly, an) answer may be found by a more careful analysis of the link between Sutton Hoo, Snape and the other Sandling cemeteries. The discussion above shows that the variety of burial ritual identified by Carver as a distinguishing character of Sutton Hoo is in fact equally a characteristic of Snape and, arguably, of the Sandling cemeteries in general.[2]

This shared variety of burial rite can only mean that the people buried at Sutton Hoo have their origins in the Sandlings area. As was discussed above, in the context of Snape, the choice of burial rite was one of a number of ways of signalling ethnic origin. In choosing to use ships and logboats as a distinctive part of the burial rite at Sutton Hoo, those organising the funerals were signalling not just a Scandinavian but also a Sandling origin. Any suggestion,

therefore, that the Sutton Hoo burials are those of invading outsiders from Essex or anywhere else must be dismissed (see for example Parker Pearson *et al* 1993).

In his discussion of Sutton Hoo, Carver has interpreted the elite nature of the cemetery, and the lack of 'normal' Anglo-Saxon burials, as demonstrating archaeologically the moment at which a newly emerging Anglo-Saxon royal dynasty (by implication the Wuffingas) was able to break free of a local tribal base, and to base its power on a firmer standing (Carver 1989, 141–58). Carver has suggested that this firmer standing was taxation, though a kingship based on tribute gained from large-scale raiding used to maintain a warrior elite in the type of heroic society portrayed by *Beowulf* is equally plausible. Newton's suggestion for the poem's composition in East Anglia at about this time could thus gain additional relevance (Newton 1993). Whatever the precise nature of the foundations for this newly enlarged kingship, however, Carver's overall interpretation remains persuasive. If it is correct, then two conclusions follow.

The first is that the Snape cemetery, with its ship burial (and other mounds) among 'folk graves', represents the immediately preceding stage in this process, when a local Sandling elite had developed but had not yet managed to break free from its local ties. The relative chronology of the Snape and Sutton Hoo cemeteries (above, p. 265) fits this pattern perfectly. The fact that the 1862 ship burial from Snape (grave 1) appears to have swamped a pre-existing mound also gains in relevance. Although we know that mound to have been Bronze Age, the Anglo-Saxons (as Bradley 1987 has demonstrated) would have had no such concept. They are likely to have seen it as the mound of an earlier, ancestral ruler. The deliberate swamping of this mound by the 1862 ship burial indicates the assertion of power by a new elite, anxious to stake its claim as superior to the 'ancestors'.

The second conclusion of Carver's analysis of Sutton Hoo combined with the foregoing analysis of Snape is that the Wuffinga kings of East Anglia had their origins in the Sandlings, an area peripheral to, perhaps even ethnically distinct from, the kingdom which they made their own. Why they expanded to the Anglian north and west, rather than to the Saxon south, must remain a matter of mystery, though it may be quite simply because the kingdom of the East Saxons was already firmly established by the time that the Wuffingas were ready to expand.

The evidence from Snape, taken in conjunction with the emerging evidence for Sutton Hoo and the other Sandling sites, provides perfect archaeological support for the 'knock-out' model of the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms put forward by Bassett (1989, 26–7), whereby the smaller kingdoms were gradually subsumed into larger units, often by conquest, until the seven major kingdoms of the 8th century emerged. Snape adds detail to this model by illuminating the earlier phase in which local leaders sought to demonstrate their growing power within a local tribal base. It also demonstrates the random nature of the process of the formation of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom, whereby a local elite from the very edge could successfully lay claim to the kingdom as a whole.

IV. Postscript: the Later Use of the Cemetery

by William Filmer-Sankey

The surviving barrows of the Snape cemetery were a striking sight in the 19th century and it is inconceivable that they did not figure in the lives of the medieval inhabitants of the village. We are fortunate to have a rare and intriguing glimpse of a use to which they may have been put. In the late 13th and 14th centuries there was a family in Snape which held land along the parish boundary with Friston (*i.e.* in the area of the cemetery) by the name of Thingelow. The name Thingelow is clearly derived from the OE *Thing* (meeting) and OE *hlaw* (mound); a direct parallel is to be found in the West Suffolk Hundred of Thingoe, which took its name from the meeting place of the Hundred Court. This parallel with the known meeting place of a hundred court is intriguing. The Snape cemetery lies in the Hundred of Plomesgate, for the court site of which there is no documentary evidence.

Endnotes

1. For a popular summary of the current approach to cemeteries and their contents, see Welch 1992, 71–87. See especially p. 72: *'Cemetery analysis is undertaken with the aim of firstly establishing the sequence of development of the burial ground and its organization [...]. It then goes on to attempt to assess the relative status within that community of the individuals buried in each generation'*. A very different view of 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries is given by Lucy (1995).
2. Proof of this hypothesis must await publication of the Buttermarket and Boss Hall cemeteries. Even at this stage, however, a general similarity in burial rites has been observed (K. Wade, pers. comm.).

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