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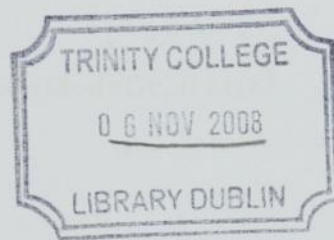
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**FURNISHED
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**ARTEFACTS &
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Stephen H. Harrison



Ph.D. Thesis

School of Histories and Humanities

(Dept of Medieval History)

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(University of Dublin)

2008

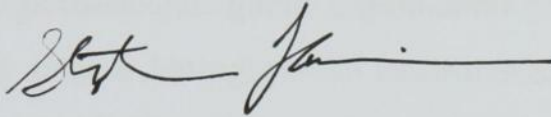
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Stephen H Harrison MA(NUI) BA(Mod)(Dubl) MIAI

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of furnished insular Scandinavian burial practices in the ninth and tenth century. At its core is a reappraisal of the available published evidence for what are more generally called Viking graves in Britain and Ireland, which forms the second volume of this work. As the quality of this evidence varies widely, a system was devised whereby they could be divided into definite, probable and possible categories, based on the reliability of the records associated with their original discovery and the survival of distinct artefacts. Burial sites were also examined, with the study correlating original description with contemporary 1:50:000 maps, although both older and more detailed maps were consulted where appropriate. Again, they were divided into definite, probable and possible examples, based on the quality of records for the most reliable burial found at each site.

Ultimately, 379 burials were identified, spread between 194 sites, of which 193 were definite, 100 probable, and 83 possible, the remaining 3 being 'unclassified'. This figure was considerably larger than previous estimates had suggested, largely due to the inclusion of 'tertiary' burials within the count, these being ninth and tenth century furnished graves that lacked the weapons or oval brooches normally used to identify 'Viking' graves, but which are nonetheless furnished and of Viking Age date.

Evidence for a total of 200 graves containing weapons was examined in detail. It is argued that these graves are not associated with 'warriors' or 'raiders', but are rather expressions of status created by communities who were firmly established in local areas. These male 'weapon' graves can be contrasted with 50 graves that contained oval brooches and are conventionally associated with women. While the present study confirms these gender associations, it is argued that the lower number of women's grave is a reflection of burial practices rather than the absence of Scandinavian women from some insular areas. Like weapon graves, brooch burials are expressions of status, with the creators of both adding artefacts to the burial assemblage to reinforce ideas of status and power. While certain artefacts occur in both grave types, it is argued that men and women generally expressed their authority through the use of different objects.

The 126 tertiary burials were also examined. While some of these graves clearly represent individuals of a lower social status than those buried with weapons or brooches, it would seem that local indigenous Christian practices may have encouraged the use of this particular form of furnished burial. Nonetheless, it is argued that these burials represent an adaptation of the rites used in weapon and brooch burial, notably through the incorporation of the same artefacts.

When the landscape context of these graves was examined in detail, it was noted that the overwhelming majority are situated on slightly raised ground overlooking confined areas such as bays or valley floors. Just over half of burial sites occur at existing monuments, either prehistoric or contemporary, and it is argued that the placing of furnished graves in existing ancient mounds or in Christian cemeteries, like their position in the broader landscape, represents an attempt by those performing these graves to demonstrate their authority to local communities. Furnished insular Scandinavian burials are not primarily expressions of religious belief or ethnicity, but are rather conscious expressions of power and authority in which both artefacts and landscape are manipulated to reinforce the authority of certain individuals at the deaths of others. As such, they form a unique source of evidence for insular Scandinavian activity in the early Viking Age.

Stephen H Harrison

22 June 2008

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To the memory of
John Noble ('Jack') Tinnion
(1943 - 2006)

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction¹

Given the enormous developments in archaeological knowledge, theory and practice that have occurred in the last fifty years, it is perhaps odd that the most obvious starting point for any insular² study of what are generally called ‘Viking’ graves remains a series of publications funded by a Norwegian institution that was founded in the aftermath of the First World War. The Scientific Research Fund of 1919 (*Forskningsfundet av 1919*) was one of a number of similar bodies set up at that time, but was unusual in supporting a major archaeological research project, specifically ‘a comprehensive investigation of the Viking remains in the British Isles’.³ Under the general editorship of Haakon Shetelig, this research was eventually published as a series of volumes collectively entitled *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*. While the first volume discussed documentary evidence and provided a general historical narrative,⁴ and the fifth listed ‘British material’ in Norway,⁵ the project’s central aim seems always to have been the production of comprehensive catalogues of ‘Viking’ artefacts in Scotland, Ireland and England, and these were eventually published as volumes two, three and four respectively.⁶ Although sculptural and structural evidence was essentially ignored and the project focused almost exclusively on artefacts, it was still remarkably ambitious in its scope and scale and these five volumes were not published until 1940, more than twenty

¹ Following the conventional formatting rules for theses submitted through the Dept. of History, Trinity College, Dublin, all footnotes have been laid out according to the (revised) *Irish Historical Studies* ‘Rules for contributors’, as published in *Irish Historical Studies* xxxiii, no 131 (May, 2003), pp 351-68. For convenience, the footnotes for each section of both the thesis and catalogue have been numbered independently and each reference is provided in an unabbreviated form on the first occasion it is cited in each section. Full bibliographies have been provided for both the thesis text (as chapter 6) and the catalogue (volume ii).

² Throughout the following text, ‘Britain and Ireland’ refers to the archipelago otherwise called the British Isles, with the adjective ‘insular’ referring to the same area. ‘Scotland’, ‘Wales’ and ‘England’ refer to the modern nations and political boundaries, with ‘Britain’ referring to Great Britain and associated smaller islands, including Man where appropriate. ‘Ireland’ refers to the island of Ireland, unless used together with Britain, in which case it refers to the modern republic.

³ Magnus Olsen & J. S. Worm-Müller, ‘Preface’ to Haakon Shetelig, *An Introduction to the Viking History of Western Europe*: idem (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* i (Oslo, 1940), vii

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vii

⁵ Jan Petersen, *British Antiquities of the Viking Period found in Norway*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* v (Oslo, 1940)

⁶ Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*. (5 vols, Oslo, 1940). Full details of individual volumes are provided when texts are first cited and in the bibliography (section 6.0).

years after the establishment of the *Forskningsfund*. A further fourteen years were to elapse before the final, sixth, interpretative volume was published in 1954, a delay which its preface attributed to the editor's illness, but which must have been at the very least compounded by the German occupation of Norway that began in 1940.⁷

Given the project's scale, it is remarkable not so much that there were considerable delays or that subsequent research has revealed a whole series of errors, both minor and major, but rather that this information was ever successfully gathered and published at all. Sigurd Grieg had less than eight weeks between 8 June and 1 August 1925 in which to catalogue the entire Scottish corpus,⁸ while his colleague Anathon Bjørn catalogued all of the English material, including that from the Isle of Man, between May and July of the same year.⁹ Johannes Bøe, who examined the Irish material, spent just a 'summer' in Ireland the following year, 1926, although he continued to correspond with the National Museum of Ireland for some time after this date.¹⁰ It is, of course, true that the number of artefacts then preserved in British and Irish museums was substantially less than today, and indeed Grieg specifically noted 'that a much smaller number of Viking antiquities had been found in Scotland than was to be expected'.¹¹ Nonetheless his catalogue (the largest of the three) runs to 190 pages, while Bøe's is 126 and Bjørn's 89, all remarkable achievements given the time constraints under which they worked. Graham-Campbell and Batey's comment that despite its 'numerous misprints, duplications and other errors', Grieg's volume 'remain[s] the starting-point for all subsequent discussion of the material'¹² is equally true of Bøe's, and to a lesser extent Bjørn and Shetelig's texts. While numerous local and regional studies have been produced in the intervening years, the *Viking Antiquities* project remains the only comprehensive and reasonably detailed

⁷ 'Introduction' to A. O. Curle, Manus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to Their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954)

⁸ Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p. 9

⁹ Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England with a Supplement of Viking Antiquities on the Continent of Western Europe*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), p.7. Note that Bjørn was solely responsible for the collection of English evidence, with Shetelig researching that from the continent; see Olsen & Worm-Müller, 'Preface', p. vii.

¹⁰ Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), pp 7 & 59-65

¹¹ Grieg, *Scotland*, p. 9

¹² James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 47

study of Viking artefacts in Scotland, Ireland, and England that has ever been undertaken, let alone published. Despite its limitations, it remains an essential source for modern researchers, particularly those studying either graves or silver hoards.¹³

It is also interesting to note that when Grieg commented on the ‘small number’ of Viking Age finds from Scotland, he explicitly attributed this to ‘the influence of Christianity on the burial customs’,¹⁴ a comment that perfectly illustrates the perceived importance of grave-goods to Viking archaeology at the time. All three texts are to a greater or lesser extent dominated by grave-goods, which are not only listed first in every case, but take up more than a fifth of the English catalogue and over half the Irish and Scottish volumes.¹⁵ Furnished burials and their contents were undoubtedly the most common form of Viking Age archaeological evidence at the time, but their influence was even more significant in that this evidence was also fundamental to the way in which the Viking Age was studied and understood in Britain, Ireland and indeed Scandinavia itself. Graves had provided almost all of the artefacts included in the ‘Younger Iron Age’ (*Yngre Jernalder*) section of Rygh’s *Norske Oldsager* in 1886, and Petersen’s work on *De Norske Vikingsverd* (1919) and *Vikingetidens Smykker* (1928), a continuation of this tradition of typological analysis of what were almost exclusively grave-goods, was effectively contemporary with the *Viking Antiquities* project.¹⁶ It is no coincidence that Shetelig’s own detailed study of Iron Age western Norway was entitled *Vestlandske Graver i Jernalderen*, for here as elsewhere furnished burials formed the key (indeed sometimes the only) source of evidence for the period: ‘prehistoric archaeology’s most important source’ and one which was ‘quite extraordinarily rich’ in the Viking Age in particular.¹⁷ Even at urban sites such as Birka in neighbouring Sweden, research by Stolpe prior to this date had largely focused on the cemeteries around the settlement, rather than

¹³ For a discussion of previous research on insular ‘Viking’ burial, see Section 1.2

¹⁴ Grieg, *Scotland*, p. 9

¹⁵ Using a simple page count, 52% of Bøe, *Ireland*, 47% of Grieg, *Scotland* and 20% of Bjørn & Shetelig, *England* are given over to graves, or more specifically grave-goods.

¹⁶ Oluf Rygh, *Norske Oldsager Ordnete og Forklarede* (Christiania, 1885, Reprint, Trondheim, 1999); Jan Petersen, *De Norske Vikingsverd – En Typologisk-Kronologisk Studie over Vikingetidens Vaaben* (Oslo, 1919); idem, *Vikingetidens Smykker: Stavanger Museums Skrifter* ii (Stavanger, 1928)

¹⁷ ‘vor forhistoriske arkeologis vigtigste studiesmateriale’... ‘ganske overordentlig rikt’. Haakon Shetelig, *Vestlandske Graver i Jernalderen. Bergens Museums Skrifter* New Ser. ii.1 (Bergen, 1912) p. 173

the 'black earth' or *svarta jorden* itself.¹⁸ Perhaps as a result of this, furnished graves also dominated socio-political interpretations of Viking-Age Scandinavia so that, for example, the boat-burials at Gokstad and Oseberg were explicitly associated with the Yngling dynasty of Vestfold,¹⁹ and thus linked to the national narrative, providing a source of inspiration to the newly independent Norway. More modestly furnished Norwegian burials, despite often containing rather more grave-goods than their insular counterparts, were generally interpreted as those of *bønder*, the free farmers who allegedly formed the core of both the Viking Age and modern nations.²⁰ Given the importance of grave-goods both to the known archaeological record and to the interpretation of this record, it is perhaps unsurprising that the only major interpretative work directly derived from the Scientific Research Fund project is Shetelig's study of Viking graves in Britain and Ireland, published as two (almost identical) articles in 1945 and 1954.²¹ What is rather more surprising is the extent to which the study of Viking graves in Britain and Ireland has been neglected in the period since the publication of the final volume of *Viking Antiquities* in 1954.

Some of this lack of interest may be attributed to the way in which archaeology has changed both as a practice and a discipline in the years since 1954. If, broadly speaking, archaeology in the inter-war years was dominated by the study of artefacts, post-war archaeology was increasingly dominated by the study of settlement and habitation sites. This change had already begun in the years before the publication of the first five volumes of *Viking Antiquities*, but Grieg's account of Scottish 'finds from dwelling-sites', for example, was only six pages long.²² By the time the sixth volume was produced, however, it had become necessary to include an entire section on Scottish rural sites, incorporating new evidence from Jarlshof, Shetland, and a

¹⁸ Helen Clarke & Björn Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age* (Leicester, 1991, revised 1995), pp 73-4

¹⁹ See, for example, A. W. Brøgger and Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo, 1951), pp 115-24

²⁰ E.g. A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), pp 15-16, although his translation of *bønder* as 'peasants' is problematic in this context. This approach to Viking Age furnished graves is discussed in more detail in section 2.1

²¹ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), pp 1-55; Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves' in Curle *et al*, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers*, pp 65-112

²² Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 143-50

number of other Scottish 'dwellings'.²³ While there were (and are) a series of long-established difficulties associated with the identification of comparable rural settlement sites in England and Ireland,²⁴ extensive urban excavations, most obviously at Dublin and York, where systematic investigations began in 1962 and 1972 respectively,²⁵ have led to major changes in the ways in which insular Scandinavian activity is perceived and studied in these areas too. The complex stratigraphy, excellent preservation and vast quantities of material revealed by urban excavations in particular have provided entirely new avenues of research for archaeologists in Britain, Ireland and further afield. New excavation, recording and conservation techniques applied to both urban and rural sites have provided new opportunities to examine structural evidence and organic material which was rarely, if ever, recovered in the pre-war years, quite literally adding new dimensions to our understanding of life in the Viking Age.²⁶ As development-driven ('rescue') archaeology continues to expand, particularly in Ireland, there is no indication that the quantity of material being produced is slowing down and the fact that no project similar to *Viking Antiquities* could even be attempted today is due in no small part to recent settlement excavations, particularly those at urban sites.

Given the new opportunities for research provided by the excavation of both urban and rural settlement sites across these islands, and indeed in Scandinavian, it is perhaps not surprising that the study of Viking graves has been somewhat neglected in the same period. Furnished burials have, of course, continued to provide vital evidence for general studies of early Scandinavian activity in Scotland, Ireland and Man, and to a lesser extent in England and Wales.²⁷ New 'Viking' graves have also

²³ Curle, A. O., 'Dwellings of the Viking Period. Jarlshof and Freswick' in idem *et al*, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers*, pp 9-63

²⁴ For a recent reappraisal of these difficulties in England, see J. D. Richards, 'Identifying Anglo-Scandinavian settlements' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Studies in the Early Middle Ages* ii (Turnhout, 2000), pp 295-309. For Ireland, see John Bradley, 'The interpretation of Scandinavian settlement in Ireland' in John Bradley (ed), *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland: studies presented to F. X. Martin, o.s.a.* (Kilkenny, 1988), pp 49-78

²⁵ Linzi Simpson, 'Forty years a-digging' in Seán Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin* i (Dublin, 2000), pp 11-68; R. A. Hall, *Viking Age York* (London, 1994), p. 26

²⁶ See Christopher Gerrard, *Medieval Archaeology: Understanding Traditions and Contemporary Approaches* (London, 2003), pp 95-99, 118-22. For examples of the range of research areas opened up by urban excavations, see in particular the various York fascicules and the volumes produced by the Dublin Excavations Publications Project.

²⁷ The most recent publications to do this are Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland* for Scotland ; Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke,

been discovered in the course of major research excavations, perhaps most notably at Heath Wood (formerly known as Ingleby) and Repton, Derbyshire, as well as St Patrick's Isle (also called Peel Castle), Man.²⁸ Excavated and recorded to an exceptionally high standard, these burials have been the subject of a whole series of scientific tests and analysis which have added greatly to our understanding of furnished burial in this period. Graves discovered as a result of erosion, such as Cnip (Kneep), Lewis, and Scar, Orkney,²⁹ or development, as at South Great George's Street, Dublin and Adwick-le-Street, Doncaster,³⁰ have been excavated to a comparable level, and a steady trickle of publications, both new discoveries and reappraisals of older finds, has continued throughout this period. The remarkable detail provided by these new excavations and studies has, however, thrown into sharp relief the exceptionally poor conditions under which many early burials were recovered and recorded. While the frequently impressive artefacts associated with Viking Age furnished graves attracted the attention of many early antiquarians and amateur archaeologists, who produced extensive records of discoveries and material that would otherwise have been entirely forgotten, their recording priorities were very different to those of the late twentieth century. Individual interests coupled with geographical distance led to collections and records that varied widely in detail, quality and reliability, and which can be exceptionally difficult to approach in a systematic way.³¹ As some artefacts are rarely, if ever, found outside funerary

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 131-65 for Ireland; Marshall Cubbon, 'The archaeology of the Vikings in the isle of Man in Christine Foote, Peter Fell, James Graham-Campbell and Robert Thomson (eds), *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: Select Papers from the Ninth Viking Congress, Isle of Man, 4-14 July 1981* (London, 1983), pp 13-25 for the Isle of Man; J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed., London, 1991; 2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000) for England; and Mark Redknap, *Vikings in Wales: An Archaeological Quest* (Cardiff, 2000) for Wales. Further discussion and a more extensive list is provided in section 1.2.

²⁸ J. D. Richards, 'Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv (2004), pp 23-116; Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army' 873-4', in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 45-96; David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later Prehistoric* Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii (Liverpool, 2002)

²⁹ R. D. E. Welander, C. E. Batey & T. G. Cowie, 'A Viking burial from Kneep, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxvii (1987), pp 147-74; Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999)

³⁰ Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin: is this the *longphort*?' in Seán Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), pp 11-62; Greg Speed & Penelope Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xlvi (2004), pp 51-90

³¹ For a more detailed examination of the development of research on this subject, see section 1.2

contexts, many 'possible' graves can be tentatively identified through these sources, but it can prove exceptionally difficult to draw direct comparisons between different accounts, sometimes even of the same burials,³² and many contemporary archaeologists are reluctant to make extensive use of an antiquarian records which appear so deeply flawed.

The contemporary lack of interest in these early records of Viking Age graves may also be part of a more general archaeological scepticism about the importance of artefacts in general and grave-goods in particular. The kinds of ethnic and religious assumptions made by antiquarian and indeed early and mid-twentieth century commentators about furnished burial, particularly in the early middle ages, have quite correctly been called into question by many contemporary archaeologists.³³ While the Viking Age is one of the rare occasions in this period for which there is clear historical and linguistic evidence for migration, the 'obsession' with invasion for which many early archaeologists have been criticised has been replaced by a unwillingness to accept almost any evidence for population movement.³⁴ Today, the relationship between ethnicity and either artefacts or burial practice is so problematic that many avoid the issue entirely.³⁵ Similarly, while proponents of the 'New Archaeology' and the early phases of the processual school which developed from it often viewed scientifically excavated furnished burials as ideal potential evidence for such things as social rank and gender roles,³⁶ post-processualists instead point to the complexity of the rituals associated with burial and the difficulties associated with any specific interpretation of this material.³⁷ Thus, to many contemporary

³² For examples of some of these problems, see Stephen Briggs, 'A neglected Viking burial with beads from Kilmainham, Dublin, discovered in 1847' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxix (1985), pp 94-108, or S. H. Harrison, 'The Suffolk Street sword: further notes on the College Green Cemetery' in *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Viking Congress, forthcoming*

³³ For a critique of these approaches in the context of Anglo-Saxon furnished burial, see S. J. Lucy, 'Burial practice in early medieval eastern England: constructing local identities, deconstructing ethnicities' in S. J. Lucy & Andrew Reynolds (eds) *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph* vii (London, 2002), pp 72-87

³⁴ For an extended critique of this approach, see Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (London, 1997), particularly pp 15-39

³⁵ This is not an entirely new development. By not including a chapter on burial in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), D. M. Wilson effectively avoided the entire issue of Anglian, Saxon and Jutish identity which had characterised much of the research on Anglo-Saxon burial up to that point

³⁶ Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes & Klavs Randsborg (eds) *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge, 1981) is often regarded as the ultimate expression of this processualist approach.

³⁷ Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud 1999) provides a useful introduction to some contemporary approaches to the subject.

archaeologists, any attempt to study insular Viking Age furnished burial is highly problematic, not just empirically but also intellectually.³⁸

Given these commonly held perceptions, it may well be asked why the current study has been undertaken at all. An initial thesis proposal had hoped to examine the historical and archaeological evidence for the gradual assimilation of the Hiberno-Norse community into the Irish and Anglo-Norman polities, a project that would rely heavily on the evidence produced by Dublin's urban excavations. As part of this process, it was decided to examine the ninth and early tenth-century furnished burials from Dublin for evidence of the settlement's initial character. At an early stage, however, it became clear that despite the best efforts of a number of commentators, perhaps most notably O'Brien, Ó Floinn, Hall and Briggs³⁹ records of the furnished burials of Dublin remained very confused, and it was difficult, if not impossible, to make any definite, quantitative statements on this material. Fortunately, the Irish Viking Graves Project (1999-2001 & 2005) directly addressed many of these issues, and research carried out behalf of this project has resolved many of the fundamental problems associated with the Dublin corpus, particularly the identification of specific artefacts, assemblages and sites.⁴⁰ As a result, it was now theoretically possible to draw direct comparisons between the furnished graves of Dublin and those of the rest of Britain and Ireland for the first time. Similar local studies of burials, cemeteries and regions in other parts of Britain and Ireland had also been carried out in other parts of Britain and Ireland since the late 1980s and consequently a great deal of new information was available. Inevitably, however, all of these recent studies, including that for Dublin, used comparative material from other parts of these islands that had not been seriously revised since the publication of *Viking Antiquities*. Consequently,

³⁸ For more detailed discussion of some of these developments, see sections 1.2 & 3.2

³⁹ E.g. Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A reconsideration of the location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham / Islandbridge, Dublin' in Conleth Manning (ed.), *Dublin and Beyond the Pale: Studies in Honour of Patrick Healy* (Bray, 2001), pp 35-44; Ó Floinn, 'Early Viking age', pp 131-43; R. A. Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Dublin' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* civ (1974), pp 64-83; Briggs, 'Neglected Viking burial', pp 94-108. These are discussed in more detail in section 1.2, and the current state of knowledge of the Dublin burials is summarised in section 1.4.

⁴⁰ The results of the Irish Viking Graves Project are to be published as S. H. Harrison & R. Ó Floinn, *The Viking Graves of Ireland: A Catalogue of Irish Viking Age Furnished Burials and their Contents*. Dublin, National Museum of Ireland & Royal Irish Academy, *forthcoming*. Within this thesis, most references are to the Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report in the NMI Archive. I am deeply grateful to R. Ó Floinn and the Dublin Excavations Publications Project for permission to use material gathered in the course of that project in advance of publication.

there was a clear need for a systematic revision of the insular burial evidence as a whole. This ultimately became the focus of the present thesis.

At the same time, the success of the Irish Viking Graves Project clearly demonstrated that however problematic antiquarian records might be, detailed reading could often produce information that had effectively been forgotten by later commentators. Because furnished burials attracted attention long before settlement sites, far more have been identified, and consequently these early sources provide an exceptional source of evidence for broad patterns of insular Scandinavian activity in the early Viking Age. While the quality of individual records varied widely, if approached in a systematic way, they could potentially be ‘ranked’ according to their reliability, with the evidence produced by ‘definite’ examples being supplemented by less reliable ‘probable and ‘possible’ accounts.⁴¹ While experts might quibble on the precise categorisation of individual burials, the scale of the corpus would effectively even out these minor variations. More importantly, the resulting catalogue would allow the direct comparison of furnished burials from different parts of Britain and Ireland, all of which had been defined and catalogued according to a common system, and would consequently allow for a general revision of this material across these islands.

One of the first results of this systematic re-evaluation of all ‘Viking’ graves was the realisation that the corpus was considerably larger than had previously been appreciated. Initial estimates, derived from Shetelig’s two summary articles of 1945 and 1954 (above) suggested a very approximate figure of 250 graves. More recent regional studies were at least broadly compatible, estimating 24 burial sites for the Isle of Man⁴², less than 25 for the rest of modern England⁴³ (in both cases almost all single graves), perhaps 75 graves for Ireland⁴⁴ and approximately 130 for Scotland,⁴⁵ giving a total of a little less than 260 for these islands as a whole. Despite the rejection of a substantial number of exceptionally tenuous references to potential burials, the final total included in the present study was 379 burials, spread between

⁴¹ See section 1.3 for a detailed discussion of the criteria used for the subdivision of insular Scandinavian furnished burials.

⁴² D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), p. 18

⁴³ Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed.) p. 142

⁴⁴ S. H. Harrison, ‘Viking graves and grave-goods in Ireland’ in A. C. Larsen (ed.) *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 63

⁴⁵ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p. 47

194 sites, almost half as large again as earlier estimates. The approximately 120 additional graves include recently excavated examples and those identified in hitherto neglected records, many of which, while markedly different to 'Viking' graves as they are traditionally defined, are nonetheless Viking Age furnished burials and have been included on that basis.⁴⁶ While the resulting catalogue, which forms the second volume of this work, is introduced in more detail elsewhere,⁴⁷ it may be appropriate at this point to note that the three digit numbers in parentheses which follow site names refer to specific catalogue entries.

While most of the additional burials, like many known examples, were modestly furnished, containing only a few artefacts, the sheer number of graves recorded resulted in a total of 1153 artefacts or artefact groups⁴⁸ being included in the catalogue. Even without the difficulties associated with extensive museum visits, the fact so many grave-goods had been damaged or lost in the years since their discovery meant that a conventional typological study of this material was impossible. Instead, the present study emphasises the use of these artefacts as grave-goods, and their significance within burial assemblages, and focuses on the presence or absence of specific artefacts within assemblages, rather than detailed typological comparisons of artefact form. Swords, for example, are treated as a single artefact type, regardless of their hilt form and position within Petersen's typology, although the latter information was recorded in the catalogue when it was readily available. While this approach eliminated any possibility of establishing a chronological sequence of graves, the narrow chronological range of all insular Scandinavian furnished burials meant that the latter dating process would always have been problematic. At the same time, it was felt that the social conditions which underlay the creation of these graves was unlikely to have undergone a radical transformation between the mid-ninth and mid-tenth centuries.⁴⁹ Even without such fine typological distinctions, however, it was clear that there is considerable regional variation in the types of artefacts placed in these burials. The distribution of oval brooches within Britain and Ireland is perhaps one of the more obvious examples, and had already been noted by

⁴⁶ For more detailed definitions, see section 1.3 and for extended discussion, section 3.2

⁴⁷ See section 1.3

⁴⁸ 'Artefact groups', used in the calculation of 'artefact counts' for individual graves, are defined in section 1.3.

⁴⁹ For more extensive discussion of the date ranges of insular Scandinavian furnished burials, see section 1.4

commentators such as Wilson,⁵⁰ but other grave-good types, such as ringed pins and coins, have equally striking regional distributions, few of which had been noted previously. Conversely, other artefact types occur at a fairly constant level throughout these islands, supporting older ideas of a single dominant form of 'Viking' burial in this period.

Nonetheless, it was clear that the range and combinations of artefacts placed in Viking Age furnished burials is considerably more diverse than had previously been assumed, and merited closer study. Numerical assessments of this diversity provided new opportunities to investigate the frequency of burials containing different artefact types, from weapons to much more modest dress-fasteners, and to identify a more limited range of ostensibly 'high' or 'low' status artefacts in more detail. As this division illustrates, this study also seeks to investigate the social conditions that may have driven the creation of these furnished burials, and in particular the idea that these grave-goods functioned as expressions of social rank and status. By approaching this material from a contextual rather than a typological perspective, it was hoped these graves, both old and new, might provide new perspectives on early insular Scandinavian society.⁵¹

If the study of the contents of Viking Age furnished burials has been somewhat neglected since the publication of the final volume of *Viking Antiquities*, at least at an insular level, it rapidly became clear that there had simply never been a serious attempt to place these burials within a broader physical or cultural landscape. While a focus on artefacts was undoubtedly part of early archaeological approaches to most periods and assemblages, in the case of Viking Age furnished graves this trend was almost certainly compounded by a conviction that as the graves of 'raiders', their distribution was essentially random and revealed no more than the extent of raiding activity. As early as 1945, Shetelig had disputed this general assumption, specifically associating furnished burial with permanent settlement,⁵² and some subsequent

⁵⁰ D. M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Series xxvi (1976), p. 99

⁵¹ See chapters 2 & 3.

⁵² Shetelig, 'The Viking graves', p. 2

scholars, notably Wilson,⁵³ have built upon this idea. Indeed, it was already widely accepted in northern Scotland in the 1920s,⁵⁴ but further south, the idea of Viking graves as those of warrior raiders, with a more limited connection to the local landscape, has proved remarkably resilient even in the Inner Hebrides,⁵⁵ and to an even greater extent in England⁵⁶ and particularly Ireland.⁵⁷ Even in those cases where furnished graves have been incorporated within regional studies of insular Scandinavian settlement, however, it is striking that their position with the immediate, local landscape has been almost entirely ignored. Recent excavation reports have generally provided detailed topographical information on burial sites, but as these represented no more than a handful of the total corpus, few general comments could be made. Surprisingly, close inspection of early antiquarian records demonstrated that a large number included comparatively detailed topographical information, which had been ignored by later researchers. Using these records, many burial sites could be re-identified, or at least associated with relatively confined areas close to their original find spots. Armed with this information, it is possible to place many graves within a general, if not a specific, topographical context, and thus to examine broad trends in the relationship between burial sites and the local landscape.⁵⁸

Another surprising discovery was the realisation that a much larger proportion of Viking Age furnished burials than had previously been realised occurred at sites with extant monuments. Some scholars, most notably Wilson,⁵⁹ and most recently O'Brien,⁶⁰ have pointed to the relationship between Viking graves and Christian burial sites, but the practice is rather more extensive than is generally appreciated.⁶¹ Similarly, the reuse of mounds and other prehistoric sites for Viking Age furnished

⁵³ D. M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement', pp 95-113

⁵⁴ Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, p. 114, 121

⁵⁵ See, for example, Kristján Eldjárn, 'Graves and grave-goods: survey and evaluation' in Alexander Fenton & Hermann Pálsson (eds) *The Northern and Western Isles in the Viking World: Survival, Continuity and Change* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp 7-8

⁵⁶ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle's interpretation of the furnished burials at Repton in particular is fundamentally based on this approach. See idem, 'great heathen army'.

⁵⁷ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials' is the most recent published example of this approach.

⁵⁸ See chapter 4

⁵⁹ D. M. Wilson, *Viking Age in the Isle of Man*, pp 26-7 and idem, 'The Viking's relationship with Christianity in northern England', in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 3rd Series xxx (1967), p. 44

⁶⁰ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin' in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, p. 220

⁶¹ See section 4.2

burial were generally interpreted as a means of ‘spar[ing] the work of erecting a new one’,⁶² and the full extent of the practice was not appreciated.⁶³ As with grave-goods, the compilation of this information has revealed considerable regional variation as well as certain common trends, and has provided new perspectives on this very neglected aspect of the furnished burial rite.

The incorporation of a study of the topographical context of insular Viking graves within the present study has also provided an opportunity to combine two archaeological methodologies that are all too frequently treated as entirely independent, these being the study of artefacts and landscape respectively. In the context of the present study, they have instead been treated as two different aspects of the burial ritual. Similarly, the study also seeks to straddle the divide between approaches to burial rituals that emphasise the unique nature of each site (or indeed burial), and more conservative approaches that are sometimes reluctant to move beyond numerical assessment.⁶⁴ The application of some contemporary interpretative methodologies to the secure data set which lies at the core of the present study can provide new insights to insular Scandinavian society in the ninth and tenth centuries, while retaining an appreciation of more general distribution patterns and practices.

At the heart of the present thesis is the idea that neither the contents nor the sites of furnished insular Scandinavian burials are random, nor do they represent the simple disposal of the dead in blind obedience to an inherited ethnic or religious ritual. Instead, these graves are complex expressions of social rank and status, created by certain groups within insular Scandinavian communities in response to local social, political and economic needs, potentially as a means of transferring authority from one generation to the next and establishing a secure connection between specific communities and the local landscape. Through the selection of both grave-goods and grave sites, the ritual of furnished burial was constantly adapted to suit local needs in different parts of these islands, and the identification of similarities and differences in

⁶² Shetelig, ‘Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland’, p. 29

⁶³ See section 4.3

⁶⁴ The contrast in these two approaches can perhaps be most effectively demonstrated by comparing the essays in Philip Rahtz, Tanya Dickenson & Lorna Watts (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979. BAR British Series lxxxii* (1980) with those in Lucy and Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval Britain*

their contents and contexts provides a vital insight to some of the earliest phases of insular Scandinavian settlement across these islands.

With the exception of the catalogue, which has been included as an appendix (volume two), this thesis (volume one) has been divided into five chapters. The first introduces the subject of burial, including a summary of previous research (section 1.2), a discussion of the definitions applied to this material (1.3) and an initial summary of the evidence produced during this study (1.4). The second chapter introduces the subject of grave-goods (2.1), before moving on to assess the role of weapons (2.2) and oval brooches (2.3) in the furnished burial rite, these being the two most common artefact forms found in insular Scandinavian graves. Chapter Three provides a more detailed study of some of the artefacts used to mark particularly high-status graves (3.1), as well as a discussion of the more modestly furnished 'tertiary' burials, at least some of which seem to occupy the opposite end of the social spectrum (3.3). The fourth chapter moves on the subject of landscape. Following an introduction (4.1), the relationship between furnished burials and the physical landscape is assessed (4.2). This is followed by a consideration of the relationship between these graves and 'ancient' (i.e. prehistoric) monuments (4.3), as well as contemporary 'Christian' burial fields (4.4). Finally, the Conclusion (5.0) seeks to relate the two themes of landscape and artefact, and to summarise the findings of the present study.

1.2 Previous Research

Discoveries of Viking Age furnished graves have been sporadically recorded across most of these islands since the seventeenth century, and as a direct result surviving accounts vary enormously in extent, quality and interpretation. Many individuals, particularly early antiquarians, worked in near isolation and followed their own, often eccentric, agenda. Consequently, near-contemporary, and sometimes neighbouring commentators could produce material of widely varying quality, and while certain trends are clearly discernible, there are invariably exceptions. Some early antiquarians, by chance or design, recorded information that was to be ignored by most of their peers for centuries, while circumstances occasionally prevented even twentieth-century commentators producing contextual evidence for relatively recent finds. At one extreme is John Wallace, whose 1693 account on what was almost certainly a Viking Age furnished grave that had been found near Pierowall, Orkney included the statement that it contained ‘a man lying with his sword in one hand and a Daneish ax (*sic*) in the other’ (018.01),¹ information on the position of artefacts within a grave that was almost entirely ignored by most commentators until the late nineteenth century. At the other extreme is George Coffey, whose 1903 account of a pair of oval brooches recently acquired by the National Museum of Ireland could not provide any details on the grave, and indeed could only provenance the find to ‘somewhere between Three Mile Water and Arklow (Wicklow)’, points 16km apart (187).² Both accounts reflect the proximity of the recorders to the finds they described, circumstances that invariably affected the quality of their descriptions. Wallace had either been an eyewitness or had communicated with someone who was, while Coffey was trying to describe artefacts that had passed through several hands before coming to academic attention. In as much as they stand out among contemporary descriptions, however, they illustrate something of the diversity of accounts of burials throughout the three and a half centuries for which there are records. Nonetheless, certain broad trends in both the recording and interpretation of what can now be recognised as ‘Viking’ graves are clearly discernible, and reflect a gradually improving understanding of these deposits in this period.

¹ John Wallace, *Description of the Isles of Orkney* (1693), cited in James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.129

² George Coffey, ‘A pair of brooches and chains of the Viking period recently found in Ireland’ in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxii (1902), p.71-3

The earliest surviving reference to what some modern commentators believe was a Viking grave occurs in Sir James Ware's *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus Eius, Disquisitiones*, published in 1654. The second edition (1658) of this text expands on a brief note in the first, providing a comprehensive account of what was clearly a long cist that had been found beneath a 'lowly' hill (*collis egestus*) at College Green, Dublin in 1646.³ Just under forty years later, c.1686, 'a square enclosure of fifteen foot [c.4.57m]' containing a single skeleton surrounded by many others, was found at Repton, Derbyshire, again while excavating a mound, and has also been interpreted as a Viking Age grave by modern commentators (123.01).⁴ Neither early account makes any reference to grave-goods, and while there is no direct evidence that there were grave-goods in the 1646 College Green cist (indeed it has been excluded from the present catalogue on this basis), at least four furnished graves were found in the same area in the nineteenth century⁵, while at Repton, twentieth-century excavations of the same monument produced a whole series of artefacts, including an axe, part of a sword and fragments of both iron and precious metal.⁶ In the case of the Repton grave at least, it would seem that the original finders simply ignored these grave-goods. In this context, Wallace's notes on the position of the artefacts at Pierowall are even more striking, while Martin Martin's 1703 note (in *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*) on a recently discovered grave from Ensay (Western Isles: 053) 'in which were found a pair of scales made of brass, and a little hammer'⁷ is unusual in emphasising the artefacts. Even when their presence was noted, artefacts discovered at this early date were unlikely to survive, and in the case of the Ensay grave, there is now some debate as to whether the brass 'scales' was a balance or a

³ James Ware, *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus Eius, Disquisitiones* (2nd Ed., London, 1658), pp 348-50

⁴ Wallace's account of this discovery was published by Simon Degge in *Philosophical Transactions* xxxv (1728) and is cited in Martin Biddle, Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, J. P. Northover and Hugh Pagan, 'Coins of the Anglo-Saxon period from Repton, Derbyshire. 1. A parcel of pennies from a mass-burial associated with the Viking wintering at Repton in 873-4' in M. A. S. Blackburn (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History* (Leicester, 1986), pp 111-22

⁵ For a description of the criteria governing the selection of evidence for Viking graves, see section 1.3. For a more extensive discussion of Ware's 'ancient sepulchre, see S. H. Harrison, 'College Green – a neglected 'Viking' cemetery at Dublin', in Andras Mortensen & S. V. Arge, *Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Viking Congress, Tórshavn, 19-30 July 2001* (Tórshavn, 2005), pp 329-39.

⁶ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army, 873-4' in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997* (Oxford, 2001), pp 68-9

⁷ Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (London, 1703), p.50

pair of oval brooches.⁸ Despite this confusion, however, there can be little doubt that the grave was of Viking Age date, and while the absence of iron artefacts is unusual, comparative evidence from later in the eighteenth century indicates that most early antiquarians focused on precious metals, or at least jewellery, rather than iron.

More than fifty years separate Martin's account of the Ensay grave and the next record of the discovery of a possible Viking Age furnished burial. In 1756, another mound was disturbed at Blackerne (Dumfries and Galloway: 090), when a silver arm ring and an amber bead were recovered. In contrast to the earlier accounts, the surviving records make no explicit reference to the discovery of human remains, but if they are indeed grave-goods, the arm ring, now in the National Museums of Scotland, represents the earliest discovered grave-good from these islands to survive to the present day.⁹ The second half of the eighteenth century saw the preservation of a number of other potential grave-goods, and it is notable that while silver objects are comparatively rare finds in insular 'Viking' graves, they are clearly over-represented among artefacts recorded and collected at this time. Unlike the Blackerne arm ring, surviving accounts indicate that the silver brooch found on Rathlin Island at some point before 1784 almost definitely came from a grave (082.1: Antrim)¹⁰, and while there is no contextual evidence for the Kilmainham brooch, found at approximately the same time, it is certainly possible that it came from a grave that formed part of this exceptional cemetery.¹¹ As well as silver artefacts, a number of copper alloy oval brooches were also preserved and have survived to the present day. An example in the British Museum is almost certainly one of two found c.1763 'lying on either side of a skeleton' on an island in the Sound of Harris (Western Isles: 054),¹² and a pair of oval brooches, also found 'lying beside a skeleton' at Castletown (Highland: 040) in

⁸ Most commentators since Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940), p.79 have agreed that the artefact was probably a balance.

⁹ James Graham-Campbell, *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD850-1100)* (Edinburgh, 1995), p.153

¹⁰ Richard Warner, 'The re-provenancing of two important penannular brooches of the Viking period' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* xxxvi & xxxvii (1973 & 1974), p.61

¹¹ Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report. National Museum of Ireland Archive

¹² Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), p.555, citing *Vestusta Monumenta* 2; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NG08SW 1 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

1784 have also survived, albeit in two separate institutions.¹³ Iron artefacts, in contrast, attracted far less attention, although a limited number, particularly swords, were recovered and at least temporarily preserved, with some of them described and illustrated in texts such as Walker's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*,¹⁴ or the comparatively detailed account of the grave found at Beacon Hill / Aspatia (094: Cumbria) in 1789.¹⁵ Despite references to the preservation of swords in private collections, notably two from what is now Parnell Square (175.1 & 2: Dublin),¹⁶ and another from Kilmainham that was preserved at the Royal Hospital there for at least forty years (177.01),¹⁷ no iron artefact found before 1800 has survived to the present day. While poor conservation techniques are undoubtedly at least partially responsible for this, it must also be considered part of a broader bias in contemporary collection policies. As late as 1852, the Dublin-based antiquarian George Petrie told a meeting of the Royal Irish Academy that he had been 'induced to withdraw [an iron axe from his collection] by the ridicule it created'.¹⁸ With no means of dating such iron artefacts, there seems to have been a general suspicion that they were all too modern.

By the early nineteenth century, however, a limited number of writers were convinced that some iron artefacts could be of considerable antiquity. Wallace was exceptional in proposing that the 1693 Pierowall artefacts were 'Danish' (018.01; above) and the term was not applied to another insular furnished burial for a century and a half, but some late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century commentators proposed that graves containing iron weapons might be 'Roman' or 'Tartar', as was proposed for the Heskett burial (093: Cumbria),¹⁹ or more commonly 'British', a term applied to remains such as those from Beacon Hill (094; above) and Hasty Knoll

¹³ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.24

¹⁴ J. C. Walker, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards: An Historical Essay on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern Irish, Addressed to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Charlemont – to which is Subjoined a Memoir of the Armour and Weapons of the Irish* (Dublin, 2nd Ed., 1818), 'weapons' (unnumbered plate facing p.205)

¹⁵ Hayman Rooke, 'Druidical and other British remains in Cumberland, described by Hayman Rooke, Esq., F. A. S., in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Lort' in *Archaeologia* x (1792), pp 111-3.

¹⁶ Walker, *Historical Memoirs*, p.131

¹⁷ George Petrie, 'Ancient monument in the Hospital Fields, Dublin' in *Dublin Penny Journal* i.9 (25 August 1832), pp 68-9

¹⁸ Quoted in Anon., 'Proceedings, Monday February 9th, 1852' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* v (1852), p.242

¹⁹ Christopher Hodgson, 'An account of some antiquities found in a cairn, near Heskett-in-the-Forest, in Cumberland, in a letter from Mr. Christopher Hodgson, to the Rev. John Hodgson, Secretary' in *Archaeologia Aeliana* 1st Ser. ii (1832), p.109

(105; Lancashire)²⁰, and even a group of weapons found at College Green, Dublin c.1817 (180.1-2), which also have the distinction of being the earliest discovered iron artefacts to have survived to the present day.²¹ One of the first antiquarians to move beyond this terminology, approaching these burials in a more systematic way, was J. Huband Smith, who presented a paper to the Royal Irish Academy on a furnished burial from Larne (083: Antrim) in 1841.²² Using an argument related to the recently developed 'Three Age System', Smith argued that this grave and several others recently discovered at Kilmainham (177.01-3: Dublin)²³ could be dated to what would now be called the prehistoric Iron Age, a modest deduction that met with surprisingly strong resistance. As late as 1850, William Wilde, who was clearly one of Smith's strongest critics, argued that all of these burials contained the remains of high medieval Knights Templar.²⁴

While Smith's theory was essentially correct, neither he nor anyone else in Ireland or Britain seems to have considered the possibility that these graves might be 'Scandinavian' or 'Viking'. This development can be primarily attributed to the Danish archaeologist, J.J.A. Worsaae, who visited these islands in 1846-7. During a presentation to the Royal Irish Academy late in 1846, he argued that the Larne find and the then steadily increasing number of graves from Kilmainham (177.01-15) were actually those of Scandinavians, basing this statement on similarities between artefacts found in the Irish burials and those known to have accompanied Viking Age graves in Norway.²⁵ The 1852 publication of an English translation of his *Minder om de Danske og Normændene i England, Skotland og Irland*²⁶ brought his ideas to a wide audience, but although it seems that more than a hundred graves had been discovered by this time,²⁷ Worsaae's *Account* described only a handful of examples, all from Dublin or northern Scotland, the contents of which he had had the

²⁰ John Whittaker, *The History of Manchester* (2 vols, London, 1775), ii, 6-7

²¹ Anon., *Catalogue of Irish Antiquities now Exhibiting at the Long Room in the Rotunda, Collected by the Late Henry Charles Sirr, Esq., formerly Mayor of the City of Dublin* (Dublin, 1841)

²² J. H. Smith, 'An account of the discovery, in the month of November last, of a human skeleton, accompanied with weapons, ornaments, &c., interred on the sea shore, in the vicinity of Larne, in the County of Antrim' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* ii (1841), pp 40-6

²³ Anon., 'Minutes', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 2 (1841), p.62

²⁴ W. R. Wilde, *The Beauties of the Boyne and its Tributary, the Blackwater* (Dublin, 1850), p.237

²⁵ J. J. A. Worsaae, 'A review of the different descriptions of Danish and Irish antiquities, and of several historical events connected with the invasion of Ireland by the Danes' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iii (1846), pp 325-44

²⁶ idem, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852)

²⁷ See sections 1.3 & 1.4

opportunity to examine personally. Although Worsaae was interested in the landscape context of burials, particularly in Scotland,²⁸ it was the explicit link which he drew between Viking Age Scandinavian artefacts and insular 'Viking' graves which was to have the most wide-reaching impact on the study of these monuments in Britain and Ireland. While their classification has become progressively more sophisticated, the presence of 'Scandinavian' artefacts remains the fundamental means by which 'Viking' graves are identified today.²⁹

As with Smith, however, initial reactions to Worsaae's publication were not entirely positive. Bizarrely, one reviewer entirely ignored his typological argument, and claimed (for the first time in print) that the Kilmainham graves were those of the Irish dead of the Battle of Clontarf, accusing Worsaae's interpretation of 'pandering to the worst prejudices of his English readership'.³⁰ Such resistance faded rapidly, however, and even if not always explicitly acknowledged, Worsaae's interpretation of these graves quickly became dominant. The anonymous author of a short paper on the Claughton Hall burial (102: Lancashire), discovered in 1822 but not published until 1849, was apparently the first insular writer to identify oval brooches and iron weapons as Scandinavian, and although Worsaae's influence was not acknowledged, no other potential source for this information can be identified at this time.³¹ J.W. Mallett, on the other hand, explicitly cited Worsaae as an authority when identifying Scandinavian artefacts from Kilmainham as part of the first chemical analysis of 'Viking' grave-goods, carried out in 1852.³² Charles Haliday's *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, which was being written at approximately the same time, did not cite Worsaae, but his identification of the aforementioned artefacts from College Green (180:1-2: Dublin) as 'Scandinavian' can only have been derived (directly or indirectly) from the latter. The identification of two more burials from the site (180.3-4) as 'Scandinavian', however, seems to have been on his own initiative.³³

²⁸ See section 4.1

²⁹ See section 1.3

³⁰ J. T. Gilbert (?), 'Mr Worsaae on the Danes and Norwegians in Ireland' in *Irish Quarterly Review*, p. 826. Undated offprint, RIA library.

³¹ Anon., 'Proceedings, February 2, 1849', in *Archaeological Journal* vi (1849), pp 72-5. It is of course, entirely possible that the author received this information at second hand, through a member of the Society of Antiquaries.

³² J. W. Mallett, 'Report on the chemical examination of antiquities from the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy' in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* xxii (1855), pp 335-6

³³ Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd Ed., Dublin, 1882: Reprint, Shannon, 1969), p.155

By 1857, even the initially sceptical William Wilde had been convinced of the Scandinavian origins of the Kilmainham assemblage and described them as ‘Danish’ in the (ultimately unpublished) ‘Catalogue of Iron Antiquities’ he prepared for the Royal Irish Academy.³⁴ He remained sceptical about their funerary context, however, and when in 1866 he published a short article on a newly discovered assemblage from ‘Islandbridge’ (177.36-44: Dublin), a few hundred metres from ‘Kilmainham’, he insisted the skeletons found with these artefacts represented

Scandinavian raiders... killed in battle or some sudden skirmish [who] lay there on the lightly covered gravel field on the south side of the Liffey, until the birds of prey picked their bones, and the weeds, grass, and soil accumulated over them during the last eight or nine hundred years.³⁵

Despite this interpretation, which must already have seemed eccentric to most of his contemporaries, Wilde’s article was the most extensive description of an insular ‘Viking’ funerary assemblage that had ever been published, although its length was largely due to the scale of the find, which comprised ‘about 78 specimens’ (now believed to represent a minimum of nine burials). Published comparative material was then very limited, but Wilde failed even to draw parallels between the ‘Islandbridge’ material and the material from the neighbouring site of ‘Kilmainham’ which he had catalogued less than a decade previously. Nonetheless, with the single exception of Donnybrook (183: Dublin), his paper was the last substantial publication on Viking graves from Dublin, and indeed Ireland, until the early twentieth century, and while this must be partially due to a reduction in the number of finds, other major discoveries, including a second substantial find at ‘Islandbridge’ in 1869 (177.45-7) were simply never published.

Instead, the focus of research on insular Viking graves moved from Ireland to Scotland, and more particularly to a single individual, Joseph Anderson, Keeper of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland’s Museum in Edinburgh for more than thirty years, a position which gave him unrivalled access to both artefacts and information from across Scotland. His 1874 article on ‘Relics of the Viking Period of the

³⁴ Typescript of original MS preserved in IAD Archive, National Museum of Ireland.

³⁵ W. R. Wilde, ‘On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), p.14

Northmen in Scotland', while technically a general article on insular Scandinavian artefacts, was easily the most significant publication on insular 'Viking' graves since Worsaae's *Account*, and was very much more detailed.³⁶ Rather than dealing with burial as a single theme, however, the relevant sections of Anderson's paper are divided according to artefact type, with sections on 'tortoise or bowl-shaped brooches' and 'characteristic weapons of the Viking period', the latter being subdivided into swords, shield bosses, spears and axeheads. While access to comparative material remained limited, Anderson made every effort to find parallels for artefacts, most obviously within Scotland, but also in Scandinavia, where he had visited a number of museums. While hardly a detailed typological study, his 1874 article demonstrates a keen interest in manufacturing processes and represents the most sophisticated approach to grave-goods of this type and period yet undertaken in either Britain or Ireland.

Anderson was, however, rather more than an early typologist and made determined efforts to understand the customs that had led to the deposition of these artefacts, which he was increasingly aware came from a funerary context. His explanatory model was essentially religious, and firmly based on documentary evidence. Having already published an English translation of Ibn Fadlan's description of a Rus funeral, suitably bowdlerized for Victorian tastes,³⁷ and edited an English translation of *Orkneyingasaga*,³⁸ Anderson was familiar with many medieval accounts of Viking burials and used these sources when attempting to interpret the material found in many Scottish graves, perhaps most strongly when describing two richly-furnished burials that had been discovered at Ballinaby, Islay (073:2-3: Argyll & Bute) in 1878 (figs.2.3.1 & 2.3.2). In addition to describing and illustrating the Ballinaby grave-goods in what was then remarkable detail, the paper included an extensive discussion of 'the burial customs of the Norse Sea-Kings', which drew on a number of literary sources, as well as material from other parts of what we would now call the 'Viking

³⁶ Anderson, 'Relics', pp 536-94

³⁷ Joseph Anderson, 'Description by Ahmed Ibn-Fozlan (an eye-witness) of the ceremonies attending the incremation of the dead body of a Norse chief, written in the early part of the tenth century. Translated from Holmboe's Danish version of the Arabic original, with notes on the origin of cremation, and its continuance' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ix (1872), pp.518-31

³⁸ idem., *Orkneyinga Saga* (Edinburgh, 1873; Reprinted 1999)

world'.³⁹ Using this evidence, Anderson argued that grave-goods were fundamentally preparations for an afterlife that was seen as a direct reflection of the life the deceased were leaving. His paper was also the first written in an insular context to explicitly and exclusively associate oval brooches with women's graves and weapons with men's graves, although his rigid division of gender roles was arguably as much a reflection of Victorian attitudes as the evidence itself.⁴⁰

While it is difficult to demonstrate that all subsequent articles on belief systems and / or gender in 'Viking' graves have been directly influenced by Anderson's work, he was certainly the first commentator to address these issues at any length in print. Despite some errors, his 1874 and 1879 papers, combined with his comments on the Vikings in *Scotland in Pagan Times* (1883),⁴¹ provided a basic framework for the study and interpretation of Viking Age furnished burials in Scotland and indeed elsewhere. His final article on the subject, published in 1907, discussed two 'ship' burials from the west coast of Scotland,⁴² but despite a recent publication on the same subject by the young Haakon Shetelig,⁴³ Anderson failed to contextualise these burials as he had earlier finds in the 1870s. However, the continuing, if indirect, influence of his earlier papers can be seen in many later works, such as Curle's 1914 publication on recent finds from Oronsay (072.3) and Reay (035.2), which proposed a local, Scottish typology for oval brooches, divided into types with names such as Pierowall, Ballinaby and Castletown.⁴⁴ This article represents the apex of local typological studies of insular Scandinavian grave-goods: as early twentieth-century Scandinavian typologies, notably those of Petersen (below), were developed and

³⁹ idem., 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq of Ballinaby, with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1879), pp.51-89

⁴⁰ See in particular section 2.3

⁴¹ idem., *Scotland in Pagan Times: The Iron Age. The Rhind Lectures in Archaeology for 1881* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1883)

⁴² idem., 'Notice of bronze brooches and personal ornaments from a ship-burial of the Viking time in Oronsay, and other bronze ornaments from Colonsay. Presented to the National Museum by the Right Hon. Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, G.C.M.G., with a description, from notes by the late William Galloway, of a ship-burial of the Viking time at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xli (1907), pp 437-49

⁴³ Haakon S[c]hetelig, 'Ship Burials' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* iv (1906), pp 326-63

⁴⁴ James Curle, 'On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvi (1914), pp 292-315

became more widely available, such localised studies became increasingly redundant.

The work of Anderson and Curle stands out among that of their peers precisely because both sought to contextualise individual burials and finds, but the period between 1870 and 1926 saw the discovery of no less than 65 furnished burials throughout these islands, many of which were the subject of more or less contemporary publications. Unlike earlier accounts, these brief reports, usually only a few pages long, followed an increasingly standardised format that essentially focused on the description and classification of grave-goods. Ferguson's 1899 description of the Ormside burial (098.1: Cumbria),⁴⁵ Cochrane's 1906 account of Ballyholme (084: Down)⁴⁶ and Balfour's 1910 account of Millhill (079: Argyll & Bute),⁴⁷ from England, Ireland and Scotland respectively, can serve as examples of this new approach to the subject, which represented an increasing consensus among antiquarians and archaeologists that also extended to artefact retrieval and preservation. As in earlier periods, however, there were exceptions to these general trends, and a sizable minority of finds, while they eventually made their way into Museum collections, were never formally published. That this was the case in the Isle of Man is unsurprising, given the lack of suitable local journals, but the fact that swords from Kildare Street (181: Dublin) and the Morrigh (186: Wicklow) were acquired by the Dublin Museum of Science and Art (now the National Museum of Ireland) without any corresponding published record of their discovery is more surprising, but by no means exceptional in the period.

In addition to an increasing concern with detailed artefact descriptions, some commentators began to take an interest in the context from which these objects had been recovered. A detailed description of two burial mounds at Kildonnan, Eigg (048.2-3: Highland) published in 1878, which included a plan and section (**fig.4.3.5**),

⁴⁵ R. S. Ferguson, 'Various finds in Ormside Churchyard' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 1st Ser. xv (1899), pp 377-80

⁴⁶ Robert Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, Co. Down' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxvi (1906), pp 450-4

⁴⁷ J. A. Balfour, 'Notices of a Viking grave mound at Millhill, Lamlash, Arran' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlv (1910), pp 221-4

seems to be the earliest example of this new approach,⁴⁸ although Frazer published a rather less accurate sketch plan of the Aylesbury Road / Donnybrook grave (183: Dublin) the following year.⁴⁹ Although Frazer's interpretation was deeply problematic, the fact that the site could be reinterpreted in the 1990s⁵⁰ is a tribute to the care and relative precision with which he recorded it. Grieve's 1914 account of Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072: Argyll & Bute),⁵¹ on the other hand, despite the presence of a sketch plan, remains problematic and stratigraphically ambiguous, although it should be remembered that part of Grieve's plan was based on a twenty-three year old description, while Frazer was a first hand witness at Donnybrook. Similarly, while there was a new interest in plans of graves and sites, there were occasions when such images could be produced to a very high quality without necessarily improving their accuracy, the 1883 watercolour of the Kiloran Bay boat burial (067: Argyll & Bute)⁵² being a case in point. Despite its impressive appearance, there is no evidence that this plan (**fig.3.1.1**), which seems to have been based on an earlier sketch and notes, was any more accurate than the rough plans which accompanied other accounts of Scottish burials, such as Balfour's report on Kingscross Point Arran in 1909 (080: N. Ayrshire)⁵³ or Lethbridge's account of his investigations at Tote, Skye (047: Highland) in 1922 (**fig.4.3.4**).⁵⁴ Kermodé's plan of his 1927 excavations at Knock-e-Dooney (150: Man)⁵⁵ is similarly vague, and can be contrasted with the relatively detailed illustrations of the grave-goods from this grave mound which were published as part of the same article.⁵⁶ Given that Knock-e-

⁴⁸ Norman MacPherson, 'Notes on antiquities from the isle of Eigg' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xii (1878), pp 577-97

⁴⁹ William Frazer, 'Description of a great sepulchral mound at Aylesbury Road, near Donnybrook, in the county of Dublin, containing human and animal remains, as well as some objects of antiquarian interest, referable to the tenth or eleventh centuries' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xvi (1880), pp 29-55

⁵⁰ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A re-assessment of the 'great sepulchral mound' containing a Viking burial at Donnybrook, Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxvi (1992), pp 170-3

⁵¹ Symington Grieve, 'Note upon Carn nan Bharraich, or Cairn of the Men of Barra, a burial mound of the Viking time on the island of Oronsay, Argyllshire, with an outline of the political history of the Western Isles during the latter half of the ninth century' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp 272-92

⁵² This watercolour, by William Galloway, is reproduced in Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, fig.7.3. For comment on its accuracy, see *ibid.*, p.118

⁵³ J. A. Balfour, 'Notice of a Viking grave-mound, Kingscross, Arran' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xliii (1909), pp 371-5

⁵⁴ T. C. Lethbridge, 'A burial of the 'Viking age' in Skye' in *The Archaeological Journal* lxxvii (1920), pp 135-6

⁵⁵ Also spelled Knock-y-Doonee.

⁵⁶ P. M. C. Kermodé, 'Ship-burial from the isle of Man' in *The Antiquaries Journal* x (1930), pp 126-33

Dooney and Tote represent two of the first excavations of 'Viking' graves by professional archaeologists, the detail provided by these publications, particularly Lethbridge's two page account of Tote, is disappointing.

Although the first professionally managed excavations of Viking Age furnished graves did not take place until the early twentieth century, a tradition of amateur excavation of graves, almost invariably mounds, can be traced back to the late eighteenth century, when, for example, a Capt. Burgess of H.M.S. *Savage* carried out a number of excavations at Ballinaby (073.5: Argyll & Bute).⁵⁷ Unfortunately, these early investigations left comparatively few records, and their quality is often little different to those of 'accidental' discoveries, which have constituted the majority of 'finds' of Viking graves in every period. By the early twentieth century, archaeologists were determined to record these chance finds in rather more detail than had previously been the case, and the quality of some of these accounts is rather better than contemporary excavations. The first detailed plan of an individual burial, for example, formed part of the account of a chance find recovered from eroding dunes at Reay, Caithness (035.3: Highland) in 1926.⁵⁸ Although technically based on an eye witness account rather than the grave itself, this description, like later publications of finds such as the 1947 burial from Eyrephort (188: Galway),⁵⁹ and even the 1979 Cnip (Kneep) burial from Lewis (050.1: Western Isles)⁶⁰ was compiled with great care and represents a new concern with contextual detail. Unfortunately, however, this new concern for detail was not (or could not be) universally applied. Had similar information been recorded for the 1932 burial from Ballinaby, Islay (073.4: Argyll & Bute),⁶¹ or the furnished burials from the War Memorial Park at Islandbridge in 1933-4 (176: Dublin),⁶² our understanding of these

⁵⁷ Anon., *Argyll: An Inventory of the Monuments 5: Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Oronsay* (Edinburgh, 1984), p.294, citing the *New Statistical Account*

⁵⁸ A. J. H. Edwards, 'Excavations of graves at Ackergill and of an earth-house at Freswick Links, Caithness, and a description of the discovery of a Viking grave at Reay, Caithness' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xli (1927), pp 196-209

⁵⁹ Joseph Raftery, 'A Viking burial in County Galway' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* xxix (1961), pp 3-6

⁶⁰ R. D. E. Welander, C. E. Batey & T. G. Cowie, 'A Viking burial from Kneep, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxvii (1987), pp 147-74

⁶¹ A. J. H. Edwards, 'A Viking cist-grave at Ballinaby, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lxxviii (1934), pp 74-8

⁶² If two contemporary newspaper articles are ignored, the only published description of the 1933-4 Islandbridge finds occurs in Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), pp 59-65

burials would be greatly improved. Nonetheless, the limited publications on both finds contain information that would have been ignored by most observers half a century earlier.

If the years between 1874 and 1940 saw a steady improvement in the quality of reports on new discoveries, and the early twentieth century also saw the beginning of systematic, controlled excavations of burial sites, this period also saw the earliest attempts to reassess older discoveries in the light of an improved understanding of the archaeological record, and to carry out regional assessments of burials, or at least their contents. After Anderson's 1874 paper (above), the earliest of these was Coffey & Armstrong's study of the highly complex and largely unpublished records of the Kilmainham-Islandbridge cemetery (177: Dublin).⁶³ While it is now clear that their project was only partially successful, their 1910 paper was the first occasion on which many of the artefacts from the site had ever been published. It was also the last occasion on which it was felt necessary to argue that these artefacts were grave-goods and that the site was a cemetery: indeed the text's only extended discussion is a refutation of Wilde's 1866 interpretation of the site as a battlefield (above). The rest of the text is artefact-focused and essentially descriptive, and makes no attempt to associate artefacts with individual graves, or even to estimate minimum numbers for the cemetery. As a result, few scholars fully appreciated the scale of the Kilmainham-Islandbridge cemetery before the 1990s (below). A slightly later article by B.R.S. Megaw entitled 'Weapons of the Viking Age found in Man' was published in 1937.⁶⁴ Despite the title, Megaw was clearly aware that the overwhelming majority of these weapons were grave-goods, and listed them by provenance (i.e. grave) rather than artefact type, an approach that was admittedly easier to apply to the dispersed burials of Man than the nucleated graves of Kilmainham-Islandbridge. As with Coffey & Armstrong's material, however, Megaw's article represented the first occasion upon which most of these Manx artefacts had been published. Three years earlier, in 1934, J.D. Cowen had published an article on 'Viking' artefacts, including grave-goods, which were preserved in the Tullie House Museum,

⁶³ George Coffey & E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects found at Islandbridge and Kilmainham' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), pp 107-23

⁶⁴ B. R. S. Megaw, 'Weapons of the Viking age found in Man' in *Journal of the Manx Museum* iii:53 (1937), pp 234-6

Carlisle.⁶⁵ Again, despite its title, Cowen's article was effectively the first regional study of 'Viking' archaeology in England (i.e. Cumbria), and placed a strong emphasis on the importance of burial evidence, particularly the Hesket and Ormside graves (above), something which he also stressed in a second article on the subject published thirty-three years later in 1967.⁶⁶

While Cowen's 1934 article described a wide range of material, including grave-goods, his interpretation of this material was minimal, a charge which could also be levelled at Coffey, Armstrong and Megaw's surveys. In contrast, the fourth and final regional assessment of this period sought to place furnished burials within a broader narrative framework. A.W. Brøgger's *Ancient Emigrants*, published in 1929, was a study of 'Norse Settlement in Scotland' and as such not only included a broader geographical area than the other studies, but also drew upon a wider evidence base, seeking to place archaeological evidence within an historical framework.⁶⁷ Interestingly, Brøgger was the first to draw an explicit link between furnished burial and settlement, an idea that was to have a strong influence on later interpretations of Scottish graves, and he was also the first to propose that there were regional variations in insular furnished burial, specifically between the Northern and Western Isles. His insistence that the graves of the Northern Isles were those of *bønder* or free farmers was an explicit denial that furnished burials denoted rank, but paradoxically he also argued that the burials of the Western Isles were, in contrast, the graves of the 'upper strata of society'.⁶⁸ Despite its inconsistency, this argument was surprisingly influential, and as late as 1984, Eldjárn published an interpretation of the burials of the Western and Northern Isles which represented a direct continuation of Brøgger's proposal.⁶⁹ While *Ancient Emigrants* was very much a product of its time, and many of its conclusions are now highly questionable, its narrative scope was exceptional

⁶⁵ J. D. Cowen, 'A catalogue of objects of the Viking period in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Ser. xxxiv (1934), pp 166-187

⁶⁶ *idem.*, 'Viking burials in Cumbria: a supplement' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Ser. lxxvii (1967), pp 31-3

⁶⁷ A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929)

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 126-7

⁶⁹ Kristján Eldjárn, 'Graves and grave goods: survey and evaluation' in Alexander Fenton & Hermann Pálsson (eds), *The Northern and Western Isles in the Viking World: Survival, Continuity and Change* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp 2-11

for its time, and it was easily the most significant (interpretative) publication on the subject between 1880 and 1940.

The significance of *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1940 but still the only major study of furnished Viking Age graves in Britain and Ireland, has been discussed elsewhere,⁷⁰ but the scale of the undertaking is all the more remarkable when it is realised that when Grieg, Bøe, Bjørn and Shetelig visited these islands in 1925 and 1926, the only general studies which had been published were those by Anderson and Coffey and Armstrong.⁷¹ Publication delays led to Brøgger, Cowen and Megaw publishing their local studies before *Viking Antiquities*, but the latter text represents the first survey of furnished burial for most parts of Britain and Ireland, including the former Danelaw, as well as the first (and last!) comprehensive, systematic and detailed study of furnished burial throughout these islands. Although the survey included silver and 'stray finds', it was the burial evidence that attracted by far the most detailed commentary in the years following the publication of the first five volumes, with Shetelig's two (virtually identical) articles on the subject, published in 1945 and 1954 respectively,⁷² having particular significance and influencing the interpretation of insular burial for the rest of the century. Like Brøgger, Shetelig saw these graves as evidence of colonial activity, and while associating them with a settled population, saw those buried in them as absolutely culturally distinct from the surrounding population, with far closer connections to Norway than their immediate neighbours. While there were of course minor differences, graves such as Hesket were essentially 'in complete accordance with the prevailing Norwegian custom'.⁷³ To Shetelig, therefore, burials were primarily cultural creations, albeit with a religious significance, which were to be directly and almost exclusively related to similar deposits in Norway.

⁷⁰ See section 1.1

⁷¹ Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (5 vols, Oslo, 1940)

⁷² Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), pp.1-55; & idem., 'The Viking graves' in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig (eds), *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), pp 65-112

⁷³ Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.26

The surprisingly limited direct influence of *Viking Antiquities* is something that has been commented on elsewhere in this text.⁷⁴ However, one notable exception was Wilson's 1976 study of Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles, which relied heavily on the catalogues, and in particular the burial evidence, to produce the first general distribution map of 'Viking' graves in Britain and Ireland (**fig.4.1.1**).⁷⁵ Wilson's article was unusual in that it covered a particularly wide geographical area, but similar studies of smaller areas, following the tradition established in the inter-war period, were increasingly common, and provided a context within which new archaeological discoveries could be placed. Wilson himself produced detailed studies of the archaeological evidence for Scandinavian activity on the Isle of Man⁷⁶ and 'Anglo-Saxon' England,⁷⁷ and there have been more recent studies of the archaeological evidence from Cumbria by B.J.N. Edwards,⁷⁸ discussions of the evidence from Ireland by N. Edwards⁷⁹ and R. Ó Floinn⁸⁰ while Redknap has recently produced the first serious appraisal of the somewhat limited evidence from Wales.⁸¹ As in the first half of the century, however, the most wide-ranging and comprehensive regional survey has focused on Scotland.⁸² In addition to published material, Graham-Campbell and Batey's 1998 text makes use of the otherwise unpublished work of the Scottish Viking Graves Project, providing the most comprehensive list of furnished graves available to date, as well as series of case-study re-assessments of important burials, including Càrn a'Bharraich, Ballinaby and Kiloran Bay (072, 073.2 & 3 and 067: all Argyll & Bute). Graham-Campbell has also been responsible for one of the few international studies that have included burial evidence, specifically a paper on the early Viking Age archaeology of the Irish Sea Basin.⁸³ Although all of these surveys include all forms of archaeological evidence, most have emphasised the particular importance of burial to

⁷⁴ See section 1.1

⁷⁵ D. M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* xxvi (1976), pp 95-113

⁷⁶ *idem.*, *The Viking Age on the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974)

⁷⁷ *idem.*, 'The Scandinavians in England' in *idem.*, *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), pp 393-403

⁷⁸ B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998)

⁷⁹ Nancy Edwards, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland* (London, 1990), pp.172-92

⁸⁰ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 131-65

⁸¹ Mark Redknap, *Vikings in Wales: An Archaeological Quest* (Cardiff, 2000)

⁸² Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*

⁸³ James Graham-Campbell, 'The early Viking age in the Irish Sea area' in Clarke *et al.*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, pp 104-30

the understanding of early Viking Age activity in their respective areas. Furnished graves have also provided key evidence for several local studies of Scandinavian activity in different parts of Britain and Ireland, notably Crawford's study of *Scandinavian Scotland*⁸⁴ and Richards' *Viking Age England*.⁸⁵ However, only five regional studies have specifically focused on burial, these being Eldjárn's paper on the Scottish Isles (above), Batey's study of Caithness,⁸⁶ Edwards' summary of the Cumbrian evidence,⁸⁷ Graham-Campbell's examination of the evidence from the 'central and southern Danelaw'⁸⁸ and Harrison's summary of the evidence from Ireland.⁸⁹ With the possible exception of Eldjárn's paper, even these specialised studies have essentially confined themselves to reassessments of the burial evidence available for their respective regions, rather than making any serious attempts to reinterpret their significance, a tendency that is, if anything, even more noticeable in more general texts on Viking Age Britain and Ireland.

When considering this aspect of regional studies, however, it should be noted that there has been one particular exception: England, or more specifically the Danelaw. As a result of *Viking Antiquities*, and a number of other general studies (above), it has become increasingly obvious that both the frequency and density of furnished burial in the Danelaw are considerably less than elsewhere. Wilson was one of the first to note and attempt to explain this, and proposed an essentially religious model that in some ways echoed that proposed by Anderson eighty years before. As grave-goods were an expression of religious belief, their absence could be explained by the increasingly 'sophisticated' influence of Christianity.⁹⁰ Despite his familiarity with material from the Isle of Man (above), however, Wilson failed to explain why a similar Christian influence in the latter area did not result in a similar reduction in

⁸⁴ Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987)

⁸⁵ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed. London, 1991; 2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000)

⁸⁶ C. E. Batey, 'The Viking and late Norse graves of Caithness and Sutherland' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp 148-72

⁸⁷ B. J. N. Edwards, 'The Vikings in north-west England: the archaeological evidence' in J. Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Viking Treasure from the North-West: The Cuerdale Hoard in Context* (Liverpool, 1992), pp 45-8

⁸⁸ James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings in the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 105-23

⁸⁹ S. H. Harrison, 'Viking graves and grave-goods in Ireland' in A. C. Larsen (ed.) *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2000), pp 61-76

⁹⁰ D. M. Wilson, 'The Vikings relationship with Christianity in northern England' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 3rd Ser. xxx (1967), pp 36, 44-5

graves or grave-goods. The paucity of graves in the Danelaw was again addressed by Graham-Campbell in 1979, when he placed particular emphasis on the difficulties associated with differentiating Late Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age furnished burials,⁹¹ a theme to which he was to return in more detail in 2001 (above). Although these articles, combined with a number of excavations at cemeteries, notably Repton and Heath Wood (123 & 124: both Derbyshire) have increased the total number of burials known from the Danelaw, furnished graves remain underrepresented and in many ways atypical of burials elsewhere. Richards first edition of *Viking Age England* from 1991, like Wilson's article more than thirty years earlier, chose to focus on the less problematic material from the Isle of Man, but the second edition of 2000 has directly addressed the issue, presumably inspired by the author's own excavations at Heath Wood (below).⁹² Richards has also addressed the issue in more general terms, pointing to variety in burial practice in Scandinavia and elsewhere,⁹³ and more recently Halsall has addressed the problem in an even more iconoclastic way, by questioning the underlying ethnic and religious assumptions that govern the identification of 'Viking' graves in the first place.⁹⁴ Griffiths, on the other hand, has recently produced a study of northwestern England which seeks to understand furnished burial as part of a more general process of territorial control and assimilation in this area, an idea which may well have a wider application.⁹⁵ However, such challenging assessments of the burial evidence itself, while more common in England than elsewhere, have been very much in the minority.

Instead, a major development of the post-war years has been the publication of increasingly detailed reports on individual discoveries of Viking graves. A pattern of brief reports on recently discovered graves, which was already well-established before the Second World War (above), continued in post-war publications such as

⁹¹ James Graham-Campbell, 'The Scandinavian Viking-age burials of England – some problems of interpretation' in Philip Rahtz, Tanya Dickenson & Lorna Watts (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979: BAR British Ser. lxxxii* (1980), pp 379-82

⁹² Compare Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed), pp.102-18 & (2nd Ed.), pp 142-58

⁹³ e.g. J. D. Richards, 'The Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxix (1995), pp 60-2

⁹⁴ Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds) *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. Studies in the Early Middle Ages 2* (Turnhout, 2000), pp 259-76

⁹⁵ David Griffiths, 'Settlement and acculturation in the Irish Sea Region' in John Hines, Alan Lane & Mark Redknap (eds) *Land, Sea and Home. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xx* (Leeds, 2004), pp 125-138

Raftery's account of the Eyrephort burial,⁹⁶ but these reports of 'accidental' discoveries were becoming increasingly more detailed, as in the 1982 account of the Claghbane 'cenotaph' (157: Man),⁹⁷ a process which at least to date has culminated in the Cnip (Kneep) report of 1987 (050.1: Highland).⁹⁸ Another notable post-war trend has been an increase in the discovery of burials during professional excavations, and as with reports of chance discoveries, the resulting publications have become increasingly detailed. This process began with Wilson's posthumous publication of Bersu's excavations of *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man*.⁹⁹ While this text continued the traditional focus on grave-goods, there was a new emphasis on the context from which they had been recovered and this trend has continued ever since, even in situations where the graves had clearly been badly disturbed before excavation, such as South Great George's Street (182: Dublin).¹⁰⁰ The detailed research associated with individual reports, from Scar (012: Orkney)¹⁰¹ to Adwick-le-Street (118: Nottinghamshire)¹⁰² make them increasingly important to our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole, although the sheer quantity and quality of the information which they provide can make it difficult to draw direct comparisons between these professionally excavated graves and those recorded under very different circumstances at rather earlier dates. Detailed scientific analysis is quite literally added new dimensions to our understanding of certain artefact types, and at the same time detailed stratigraphic work is providing new evidence for increasingly complex relationships between Viking Age furnished graves and pre-existing levels, both early medieval, as at Peel (160:Man)¹⁰³ and prehistoric, as at Cnip (050: Western Isles).¹⁰⁴ The forthcoming publication of other recently

⁹⁶ Raftery, J., 'Viking burial in Galway', pp 3-6

⁹⁷ A. M. Cubbon, 'Find of a Viking sword, spear and shield at Claghbane, Ramsey, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* viii.4(1982), pp 439-57

⁹⁸ Welander *et al*, 'Viking burial from Kneep'

⁹⁹ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph i* (London, 1966)

¹⁰⁰ Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin: is this the *longphort*?' in Seán Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), pp 11-62

¹⁰¹ Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999)

¹⁰² Greg Speed & Penelope Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xlvi (2004), pp 51-90

¹⁰³ David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88 Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later. Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii* (Liverpool, 2002)

¹⁰⁴ A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, Tim Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), pp 719-525

discovered graves, from Woodstown (191: Waterford) to Cumwhitton (190: Cumbria) will further improve our understanding of this phenomenon.

Many of these recent reports have acted as catalysts for new research on various aspects of 'Viking' burial, and have provided opportunities to apply modern research techniques to aspects of burial as varied as specific grave-good types, gender roles, the significance of age at burial, the relationship between furnished and unfurnished 'pagan' graves and the relationship between these graves and extant monuments and burials.¹⁰⁵ Armed with a better understanding of Viking burial practices, several commentators have also begun to re-evaluate older records of graves, with O'Brien's work on Aylesbury Road¹⁰⁶ and the Kilmainham-Islandbridge burial complex (183 & 177: both Dublin)¹⁰⁷ being good examples, although similar studies have also been carried out on other sites such as Rathlin (082: Antrim)¹⁰⁸ and Millhill (079: N Ayrshire),¹⁰⁹ while work on the richly furnished but little understood burial from Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute), is ongoing.¹¹⁰ While this research continues a tradition of reassessing antiquarian evidence that goes back to the 1920s and includes Hall's early work on sites such as the Phoenix Park (174: Dublin)¹¹¹ and Aylesbury Road / Donnybrook (183: Dublin),¹¹² more recent research tends to focus on reconstructing the original context of burials, although as Ó Floinn's work on the Wicklow graves (186 & 187)¹¹³ demonstrates, the re-identification and reinterpretation of artefacts continues to play a vital role in these re-assessments.

¹⁰⁵ The work carried out in advance of the publication of the Scar (Owen & Dalland, *Scar*) and Adwick-le-Street (Speed & Rogers 'Adwick-le-Street') burials is exceptional, but most modern reports touch on one or more of these themes.

¹⁰⁶ O'Brien, 'Re-assessment of the 'great sepulchral mound'', pp 170-3

¹⁰⁷ idem., 'A reconsideration of the location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham / Islandbridge, Dublin' in Conleth Manning (ed.), *Dublin and Beyond the Pale: Studies in Honour of Patrick Healy* (Dublin, 1998), pp.35-44; idem., 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin' in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, pp 203-221

¹⁰⁸ Warner, 'two important penannular brooches', pp 58-70

¹⁰⁹ S. H. Harrison, 'The Millhill burial in context: artifact, culture and chronology in the "Viking west"' in Steffen Stummann Hansen & Klavs Randsborg (eds), *Vikings in the West: Acta Archaeologica lxxi: Acta Archaeologica Supplementa ii* (2000), pp 65-78

¹¹⁰ e.g. Jan Bill, 'Kiloran Bay revisited – confirmation of a doubtful boat grave' in Mortensen & Arge, *Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic*, pp 345-358

¹¹¹ R. A. Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Dublin' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* civ (1974), pp 39-43

¹¹² idem, 'A Viking-age grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxii (1978), pp 64-83

¹¹³ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking burials from County Wicklow' in *Wicklow Archaeology and History* i (1998), pp.29-35

Given the quality of many antiquarian records, these two aspects of reappraisal are often inseparable.

Of course, the publication of stray finds and recent excavations, the reappraisal of older discoveries, and the more general reassessments associated with new regional studies are closely related and in many cases effectively overlap, with many reappraisals of individual sites being heavily influenced by more recent discoveries, or forming part of more general reappraisals. As this brief review has demonstrated, the last fifty years have seen a steady trickle of publications on 'Viking' graves, even if the focus of archaeological research has moved elsewhere.¹¹⁴ Similarly, the study of burial, while no longer the dominant force it once was, continues to form an important branch of research within the discipline of archaeology as a whole, as well as in Viking studies. The role of grave-goods in the establishment of early typologies, from Rygh's *Norsk Oldsager* of 1885,¹¹⁵ to Petersen's more sophisticated (and still essentially unsurpassed) *De Norske Vikingesverd* of 1919, *Vikingetidens Smykker* of 1928,¹¹⁶ and even *Vikingetidens Redskaper* of 1952¹¹⁷ has also been emphasised, but it is worth reiterating the fact that until recently, in Norway as in Britain and Ireland, the study of Viking Age archaeology was essentially the study of grave-goods, as exemplified by Shetelig's *Vestlandske Graver fra Jernalderen*, which had a focus which entirely matched its title.¹¹⁸ Even as late as 1967, Hagen saw graves as the key means of studying the Norwegian Iron Age as a whole, and the Later (*Yngre*) Iron Age in particular.¹¹⁹ Indeed, many Scandinavian commentators have specifically used the abandonment of furnished burial, and the associated (but not necessarily directly linked) introduction of Christianity as a means of defining the end of the Viking Age itself.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ See section 1.1

¹¹⁵ Oluf Rygh, *Norske Oldsager* (Christiania, 1885; Reprint, Trondheim 1999)

¹¹⁶ Jan Petersen, *De Norske Vikingesverd. En Typologisk-Kronologisk Studie over Vikingetidens Vaaben* (Oslo, 1919); idem, *Vikingetidens Smykker* (Stavanger, 1928)

¹¹⁷ idem, *Vikingetidens Redskaper. Skrifter Utgit av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo* (Oslo, 1951)

¹¹⁸ Haakon Shetelig, *Vestlandske Graver fra Jernalderen. Bergens Museums Skrifter New Ser. ii.1* (Bergen, 1912)

¹¹⁹ Anders Hagen, *Norges Oldtid* (Oslo, 1967), p.394. This text was published in English in the same year as *Norway* (London).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 394, 397

While the sheer quantity of graves and grave-goods from Later Iron Age Norway (Hagan estimated more than 7,000 examples in 1967) has given them a particular important role in the archaeological assessment of the period, burial evidence has also been crucial to the study of almost every group who have ever placed artefacts in the graves of their dead. At a more immediate geographical and chronological level, grave-goods have played a central role in the study of all other Early Medieval groups with similar (furnished) burial practices, perhaps most obviously the Anglo-Saxons and Franks. Their grave-goods have been fundamental to discussions of early medieval ethnicity, identity and territorial extent, both in England and on the continent.¹²¹ While such 'culture historical' approaches are now deeply unfashionable, the study of burial and grave-goods also played an important role within the 'New Archaeology' of the 1960s, and its direct successor, processualism. With its new emphasis on quantification and 'scientific' methodologies, grave-goods seemed to provide an ideal source for investigating themes such as social status or gender roles, both approaches that feature prominently in *The Archaeology of Death*, one of the more influential texts of the 1980s.¹²² Although only one of the essays in this collection dealt with Viking Age (Danish) graves, many of its approaches could potentially be applied to the subject, and indeed Dommasnes published a paper in the same year, 1982, which argued for a strong relationship between grave-goods and 'female roles and ranks' in western Norway.¹²³ In 1985, Solbjerg published the results of a more wide-ranging study of Later Iron Age Norwegian material that specifically argued for a quantifiable relationship between social status and grave-goods in both male and female burials of the period.¹²⁴ When published, both articles represented entirely new approaches to the study of Viking Age furnished burial, but given the dominance of similar, quantitative approaches to the study of prehistoric grave-goods at the time, it is perhaps surprising that similar methodologies were so rarely applied to Viking Age material in Scandinavia and indeed elsewhere. While

¹²¹ While a detailed discussion of this material is beyond the present text, a useful summary of the continental evidence is provided in Guy Halsall, *Early Medieval Cemeteries: An Introduction to Burial Archaeology in the Post-Roman West* (Glasgow, 1995). For a summary of the role of burial evidence in the identification of various groups within Anglo-Saxon England, see Martin Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1992), pp 62-4, 71-107

¹²² Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes & Klavs Randsborg (eds) *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge, 1982)

¹²³ L. H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), pp 70-84

¹²⁴ Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985), pp 61-76

both Solbjerg's and Dommasnes's methodologies can seem rather mechanistic today, this is largely attributable to the steadily increasing influence of post-processualism, which contains within it a deep suspicion of generalisation and of attempts to draw broad inferences from archaeological evidence, which is instead essentially perceived as the result of specific, individual responses to very local circumstances. While both processualism and post-processualism represent far more complex intellectual movements than can be summarised here, it is perhaps these specific aspects of the schools that have had the strongest impact on the study of Viking Age burial. It may also be the (indirect?) influence of post-processualism which has led some archaeologists to place increasing emphasis on the importance of the social context within which furnished burials were created, and has resulted in a new interest in themes such as inheritance,¹²⁵ pagan belief systems,¹²⁶ and the increasing importance of Christianity.¹²⁷ There is also a new awareness, particularly among Scandinavian archaeologists, that individual artefacts, from spindle whorls¹²⁸ to whalebone plaques,¹²⁹ and even entire boats¹³⁰ can be viewed in several different ways, and interpreted at multiple levels, a theme that is increasingly important to the interpretation of women's grave-goods. In all cases, the potential symbolic meaning of grave-goods and of the ritual of furnished burials itself is coming under increasing scrutiny. A detailed study of these developments is far beyond the capacity of the current review, and there is also a danger that this approach could lead to a perception of insular furnished burials as no more than a passive reflection of Scandinavian practices, a common view in the past, but one that is deeply problematic. The influence of contemporary indigenous groups on insular Scandinavian burial practices may be little studied and less understood, but cannot be eliminated from any study of the phenomenon.

¹²⁵ Dagfinn Skre, 'Haug og grav. Hva betyr gravhaugene?' in Ann Christiansson, Else Mundal & Ingvild Øye (eds), *Middelalderens Symboler* (Bergen, 1997), pp 37-52

¹²⁶ N. S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. AUN xxxi (Uppsala, 2002)

¹²⁷ See, for example, A. S. Gräslund, 'The role of Scandinavian women in Christianisation: the neglected evidence' in Martin Carver (ed.) *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe AD300-1300* (London, 2003), pp 483-496

¹²⁸ Martin Rundkvist, 'Late Viking period pagan burial in Gotland: the symbolic code' in Dragos Gheorghiu (ed.) *Material, Virtual and Temporal Compositions: On the Relationship Between Objects*. BAR International Series cmliii (Oxford, 2001), pp 83-8

¹²⁹ For an exploration of these ideas in a Scottish context, see Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, pp. 77-80

¹³⁰ Ole Crumlin-Pedersen & Birgitte Munch Thye (eds) *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia: Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History i* (Copenhagen, 1995)

While not directly related to the topic, there have also been important developments in interpretative approaches to Anglo-Saxon furnished burial practices. While these graves are both chronologically and geographically distinct, and at least superficially demonstrate a far greater variety than their Viking Age equivalents, the study of Anglo-Saxon burial, in contrast to that of 'Viking' graves, has acted as something of a barometer for the latest trends in archaeological thought. Traditional approaches, which emphasised cultural identity and sought to distinguish Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, perhaps addressed issues of ethnicity that were unimportant in Scandinavian contexts, but there is no Viking Age equivalent of Pader's *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*, which used the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Holywell Row (Suffolk) as a means of examining a series of general themes in mortuary archaeology.¹³¹ Unsurprisingly, there is considerable overlap in research interests between the two disciplines, particularly with regard to social status and gender roles, but many of the approaches to Anglo-Saxon burial are rather more radical than their Viking Age equivalents. Lucy has characterised older interpretations of Anglo-Saxon grave-goods as evidence for 'housewives, warriors and slaves',¹³² something which might also be said of many contemporary approaches to Viking Age burial, but among Anglo-Saxon archaeologists this approach is seen as increasingly problematic and is being challenged from several directions, with recent critiques of the perceived relationship between grave-goods, sex and gender, reappraisals of artefacts normally associated with 'warriors', notably Härke's work on weapons,¹³³ and re-examinations of the importance of belief in the creation of these monuments being just three examples.¹³⁴ As with the study of other time periods, there is a new emphasis on the importance of local circumstances in the creation of Anglo-Saxon burials,¹³⁵ and this has been accompanied by an upsurge in

¹³¹ E. J. Pader, *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*: BAR International Series ciii (1982)

¹³² S. J. Lucy, 'Housewives, warriors and slaves? Sex and gender in Anglo-Saxon burials' in Jenny Moore & Elizabeth Scott (eds), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (London, 1997), pp 150-68

¹³³ Heinrich Härke, 'Warrior graves? The background of the Anglo-Saxon weapon burial rite' in *Past and Present* cxxvi (1990), pp 22-43

¹³⁴ e.g. Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion Period England c.600 – c.850*. BAR British Series cclxi (1997)

¹³⁵ e.g. S. J. Lucy, 'Burial practice in early medieval eastern England: constructing local identities, deconstructing ethnicity' in S. J. Lucy & Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xvii (London 2002), pp 72-87

interest in the use of burial as a means of strengthening social cohesion and dominance, as explored by a series of recent studies, from Geake's study of the control of burial rites¹³⁶ to Williams' work on the reuse of existing monuments for Anglo-Saxon furnished burial.¹³⁷ While the many important differences between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian burial practices can never be forgotten, many of the theoretical developments that underlie these new approaches to Anglo-Saxon graves have clear implications for the study of Viking burials.

Ultimately, a literary review of this type can provide no more than an overview of certain key trends and developments within a discipline. Its focus, like that of this thesis, has been the identification of certain key developments in the study of insular Scandinavian furnished burial, with a particular emphasis on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century material which forms a key source of evidence for the present study. While many themes have been touched upon, the development of interest in grave-goods in the nineteenth century, and in the context of graves in the twentieth century, have been particularly emphasised. The importance of recent publications of chance finds, excavations and regional reviews has also been stressed, but it is hoped that this review has also demonstrated that there is a real need for a more general reappraisal of the Viking Age burial evidence from Britain and Ireland, not simply in terms of basic quantification (although this is also clearly an issue), but also in terms of interpretation. Developments in the study of contemporary Scandinavian and earlier Anglo-Saxon graves have provided potential new approaches to Viking Age insular material. Before beginning to discuss potential new interpretations, or indeed even attempting to quantify this material, however, a rather more fundamental issue needs to be addressed. Given the enormous range in the quality of the evidence available for Viking Age furnished graves, how can this material be assessed as a unit?

¹³⁶ Helen Geake, 'The control of burial practice in Anglo-Saxon England' in Carver, *Cross Goes North*, pp 259-69

¹³⁷ e.g. Howard Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead: the reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments in early Anglo-Saxon burial sites' in *Medieval Archaeology* xli (1997), pp 1-32

1.3 Defining Furnished Burials

As will be clear from the previous section, 'Viking' graves were first identified as such in the mid-nineteenth century, when it was realised that the artefacts found within them resembled material found in similar Later Iron Age graves in Scandinavia, and particularly in Norway. To most nineteenth and indeed twentieth century commentators, the identification of these graves as 'Viking' was a direct extension of the typological classification of their grave-goods: they required no definition beyond the material found within them. Even antiquarians such as William Wilde, who doubted their funerary context, had no doubt that the classification of a group of artefacts as Scandinavian was sufficient to identify the origins of any associated 'osseous remains', whatever their deposition circumstances.¹ While some early scholars, notably Worsaae and Anderson, also emphasised the importance of the burial rite, they viewed grave-goods as the primary manifestation of this ritual.² As progressively more sophisticated typologies became available, it became steadily easier to identify and classify Scandinavian artefacts, and consequently the burials from which they came,³ but no attempt was made to define what are here called 'furnished insular Scandinavian burials' (occasionally abbreviated FISBs). More recently, increasingly sophisticated recording and excavation techniques have vastly increased the amount of information extracted from individual burials and cemeteries, but these methodological and typological developments have also revealed a number of problems with what has previously been seen as a relative unsophisticated identification process. It is now clear that the wide-ranging quality and extent of records compiled over the last three and a half centuries have effectively concealed considerable variety within the burial record itself.

At one level, the almost total absence of elaborately furnished Iron Age graves from much of Britain and Ireland has meant that almost any reference to the discovery of

¹ W. R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), p.14

² For evidence of this increasing emphasis on burial rite, compare J. J. A. Worsaae's brief notes in *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852), pp.255 & pp.325-30 to Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by Specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), pp.536-94), and to idem, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq, of Ballinaby. With notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in their sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), pp.51-89

³ See section 1.2

iron weapons and human remains can be at least tentatively interpreted as a potential furnished insular Scandinavian burial, however confused or confusing the original account may be. 'Discoveries' of such possible cemetery sites in older records have been occurring since the 1870s, when Anderson reinterpreted references to (lost) finds, such as those from Cornaigbeg, Tiree (062: Argyll & Bute), as possible burials, but the process is more characteristic of twentieth century research, with the most recent potential site, at or near Tuquoy, Westray (019: Orkney) proposed by the Scottish Viking Graves Project and first published as such in 1998.⁴ While the information that can be extracted from such vague antiquarian accounts is limited and their reliability can sometimes be questioned, they have at the very least the potential to contribute to our understanding of distribution patterns. Furthermore, while the interpretation of these references is comparatively straightforward in areas without an indigenous Iron Age burial tradition, this is not the case in those areas where Anglo-Saxon communities practised furnished inhumation at a slightly earlier date. Thus, sites such as 'Hasty Knoll' (105: Lancashire) have been interpreted as both Anglo-Saxon and insular Scandinavian, without any real hope of future clarification.⁵ Where even slightly more extensive records exist, particularly those where either the original artefacts or illustrations of them survive, the fact that elaborately furnished burial had been almost entirely abandoned by the Anglo-Saxons before the mid-eighth century, approximately a century before the earliest insular Scandinavian burial in the same area, has made it comparatively easy to identify Viking Age graves, although debate continues on a number of exceptionally 'late' or 'early' well-furnished graves, perhaps most notably Harrold (128: Bedfordshire),⁶ as well as a problematic group of more modestly furnished graves spread throughout England (see below).

⁴ Anderson, 'Relics', p.555; James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.56

⁵ J. D. Cowen, 'Viking burials in Cumbria' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* xlviii (1948), pp 75-6 & B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), pp 18-19 both argue for a Viking Age date. Audrey Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), p.143, suggests it may have been Anglo-Saxon

⁶ See B. N. Eagles & V. I. Evison, 'Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire, 1951-3' in *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* v (1970), pp 17-55 for a strong argument in favour of a Viking Age date, but Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion Period England c.600-c.850: BAR British Series* cclxi (1997), pp 61, 126 suggests that it is earlier, and Anglo-Saxon

Even in cases where there is sufficient evidence to identify weapons and jewellery (particularly oval brooches) as Viking Age, surviving records can still be difficult to interpret. In 1985, Solberg argued that the overwhelming majority of Viking Age weapon finds from Norway, even those traditionally regarded as 'stray finds', were actually from burial contexts, and thus gave further support to a general trend in both Scandinavia and Britain and Ireland to interpret all such artefacts as the product of graves, whatever the quality of the original record.⁷ Using Solberg's criteria, for example, the sword discovered at Gooderstone (126: Norfolk) in 1957 is clear evidence for a burial at this site, and indeed Wilson had already interpreted it as such twenty years before her publication.⁸ The same evidence has, however, been rejected by more recent commentators such as Richards and Graham-Campbell, who point to the ambiguity of the record, particularly the absence of any reference to human remains.⁹ This re-evaluation (like several others) represents a new awareness of the range of circumstances under which artefacts, particularly weapons, could be deposited in the Viking Age. A particularly strong link has been established between weapons and wetland, river and lake sites, for example, and while some commentators might still argue that such finds represent accidental loss rather than 'ritual deposition', any assessment of a find site which does not take the local water table into consideration must be regarded as deeply flawed.¹⁰ Away from the water, too, the relationship between artefacts and burials has been further complicated by the discovery of an assemblage at Claghbane (157: Isle of Man) in the early 1980s.¹¹ While the assemblage conforms almost precisely to what might be expected in a furnished insular Scandinavian burial, subsequent excavations failed to produce any evidence of associated human remains, and the site has been interpreted as a

⁷ Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985), p.65

⁸ D. M. Wilson, 'Some neglected late Anglo-Saxon swords' in *Medieval Archaeology* ix (1965), pp 35-6

⁹ See particularly James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 106-8

¹⁰ For a discussion of ritual deposition in rivers, see J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), pp 31-3

¹¹ A. M. Cubbon, 'Find of a Viking sword, spear and shield at Claghbane, Ramsey, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* viii (1984), pp 439-457

'cenotaph'.¹² If this is correct, it calls into question the evidence from a number of proposed 'burial' sites in Britain and Ireland, such as the weapons found at Boiden, Glenfruin (077: Argyll & Bute) in 1851, and more particularly a whole series of isolated finds of single weapons, from Gooderstone (above) to the Morragh (186: Wicklow)¹³ and the Kirk of St Ola, Mainland (006: Shetland).¹⁴

Interpretations of antiquarian evidence have become more sophisticated in other ways too, so that, for example, a number of recent commentators have argued that the oval brooches from 'double' burials at Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) and perhaps Santon (131: Norfolk) may represent a form of ritual deposit associated with a single (male) grave.¹⁵ It is also becoming increasingly clear that while Solberg's 1985 association of all Viking Age weapon finds with burials is broadly correct, there are a limited number of cases where weapons and even brooches have been found in what may well be domestic contexts. One recent discovery, for example, is an oval brooch fragment found in a substantial midden at Mangerstadh, Lewis (051: Western Isles).¹⁶ While this could represent the badly disturbed remains of a burial within what was effectively an extant raised mound, it may also represent a rare example of disposal of one of these brooches following breakage. Similarly, a number of urban sites, perhaps most notably Dublin, have produced a limited number of weapons, particularly spearheads, but including at least one (Anglo-Saxon) sword hilt.¹⁷

Just as recent research has changed our understanding of the circumstances under which 'typical Viking' grave-goods might be deposited, so too it has changed our perceptions of the kinds of objects that were placed in graves. While there has long been an awareness that a wide range of objects might be placed in Viking Age

¹² Marshall Cubbon, 'The archaeology of the Vikings in the isle of Man' in Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell & Robert Thomson (eds), *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man* (London, 1983), p.18

¹³ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking burials from County Wicklow' in *Wicklow Archaeology and History* i (1998), pp 29-35

¹⁴ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.4

¹⁵ Edwards, *Vikings*, p.15; Richards, *Viking Age England*, pp 144, 151

¹⁶ M. Carson, 'Iron age finds from the isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), pp 370

¹⁷ P. F. Wallace, 'The economy and commerce of Viking age Dublin' in Klaus Düwel, Herbert Jankuhn, Harald Siems & Dieter Timpe (eds) *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa 4 Der Handel in Karolinger- und Wikingerzeit* (Göttingen, 1987), p.219

furnished graves, it has been widely assumed that all these burials contained either weapons or oval brooches in addition to these other objects. This assumption, which amounted to an unspoken definition, dominated studies of insular Scandinavian graves from a remarkably early date and strongly influenced the way in which many older records were interpreted. In 1874, for example, Joseph Anderson interpreted a reference by a Mr. Pope to 'odd machines of rusty iron resembling ploughshares' found at Haimar (Highland) as an explicit reference to weapons (and potentially graves), thus reinforcing a model which he himself was helping to create.¹⁸ The assumption that all 'Viking' graves contained either weapons or jewellery may have grown out of a long-standing Scandinavian belief that Viking Age furnished graves represented free farmers (*bønder*) and their families, which in turn led to an assumption that almost all grades of society were buried in this way.¹⁹ Although these assumptions were successfully challenged in Scandinavia more than twenty years ago,²⁰ they continue to influence interpretations of ninth and tenth century insular furnished burials today, in that it is still widely believed that such graves represent what might perhaps be termed 'ordinary Vikings' and their families. It may also be this assumption, combined with an assumed rigid dividing line between furnished and unfurnished burial, which has led to an almost complete lack of interest in those Viking Age graves which contain neither weapons nor oval brooches. If Anglo-Saxon scholars traditionally divided their burial evidence into three groups caricatured by Lucy as 'housewives, warriors and slaves', Viking Age scholars have tended to think only in terms of 'Vikings' and 'wives'.²¹ Despite these preconceptions, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that perhaps a third of Viking Age insular furnished burials contained neither weapons nor brooches, and that these include some otherwise richly furnished examples. Neither the woman in the Scar boat burial, Sanday (012: Orkney) nor the 'pagan lady' from Peel (160.1:

¹⁸ Anderson, 'Relics', p.563. Haimar was rejected as possible burial site in the course of this study, both because the 'ploughshares' were never described as weapons, and because they came from a wetland context.

¹⁹ From an insular perspective, this view is perhaps most clearly expressed in A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), pp 13, 16, where Norway is seen as an iron-rich 'peasant society, and a phenomenally well furnished burial at Aamot, Hedmark, is described as that of a 'well-to-do peasant'

²⁰ Among the most noticeable critiques of this approach are the work of Solberg, 'Social status' and L. H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), pp 70-83

²¹ S. J. Lucy, 'Housewives, warriors and slaves? Sex and gender in Anglo-Saxon burials' in Jenny Moore & Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible People and processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), pp 150-67

Man) were buried with oval brooches, for example,²² and while such extensive and varied assemblages might well have been recognised in the past anyway, the same is hardly true of the more modest grave assemblages found throughout these islands.

Such modestly furnished graves and their contents also raise additional problems, particularly where the cultural or ethnic identity of the individuals buried in them is concerned. It is now widely accepted that many of the artefacts placed in Viking graves have an insular or even continental origin, rather than being specifically Scandinavian, so that although the burial rites employed at sites such as the boat grave at Balladoole (167: Isle of Man) are clearly Scandinavian, the shield boss and horse trappings in the grave are of insular origin, while the spurs and associated strap ends are Carolingian.²³ The practice of including insular artefacts in grave assemblages can create particular problems in the case of graves that contain only a few objects, none of which need necessarily be of Scandinavian origin. While the issue of cultural or ethnic identity is discussed elsewhere,²⁴ the possibility that such modestly furnished graves may represent an indigenous rather than an insular Scandinavian practice cannot be dismissed out of hand. Ringed pins are a case in point. They regularly occur as part of the assemblages placed in well-furnished graves such as that from Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute), but they are also found in graves where they are the only artefact, as at Stenness, Mainland (030: Orkney) and in particular at Christian cemeteries such as Brigham (095: Cumbria), Llanfairpwllgwyngyll (149: Gwynedd) and West Nappin (169: Cumbria), where they are widely believed to represent disturbed burials. Fanning specifically associated many ringed pins with insular 'Viking' graves, but his suggestion that they may have served as shroud pins opens up the definite possibility that they were being used in what were effectively Christian contexts.²⁵ His suggestion does not in itself explain

²² The woman in the Scar grave was buried with an equal-armed brooch: see Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), pp 60-73, but the Peel's 'pagan' lady had no Scandinavian jewellery: see David Freke, 'The cemeteries: the excavated evidence' in David Freke, *Excavations at St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking Medieval and Later. Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii* (Liverpool, 2002), pp 61-3 & 66-9

²³ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph i* (London, 1966), pp 1-44

²⁴ See in particular sections 3.2 & 4.4.

²⁵ Thomas Fanning, 'Some aspects of the bronze ringed pin in Scotland' in Anne O'Connor & D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five'; Studies Presented to R B K Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1983), p.325

why these pins occur in some graves and not others, but it does serve as an appropriate reminder that 'Christian' burials were not always entirely unfurnished. In some cases comparatively complex artefacts could be buried in Christian contexts, as with four graves at Ladykirk, Ripon (113: North Yorkshire), being a particularly good example. Each of these graves, all close to the east end of the church, contained a single comb, and it has been suggested that these artefacts may have been liturgical, the graves being those of priests.²⁶ Thus, despite having been deposited in the Viking Age, these furnished burials need not necessarily have any direct insular Scandinavian associations. On the other hand, there seems no reason to doubt that the comb found in a woman's grave at St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham (107: Lancashire) was a grave good of sorts, but the relationship between such modestly furnished burials and more elaborately furnished Viking Age insular burials has never been studied in detail.²⁷ The problem is equally acute in the case of coins. Again, these sometimes occur in what are clearly insular Scandinavian burial contexts, such as Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire), but they also occasionally occur in Anglo-Saxon graves which either seem to predate Scandinavian settlement, as at Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk), and/or which occur in areas where there is no other evidence for Scandinavian activity, such as Hamwic.²⁸ Recently, Halsall has argued that many of these modestly furnished graves are actually those of members of the indigenous Christian population, and even suggests that a limited number of elaborate Anglo-Saxon burials may have occurred in the ninth century. If, for example, the sword from Wensley Church (112: North Yorkshire) is Anglo-Saxon in style, why should it not have been buried with a member of the Anglo-Saxon rather than the Scandinavian community?²⁹ Halsall's arguments are addressed in more

²⁶ R. A. Hall & M. Whyman, 'Settlement and monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to 11th Centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* xl (1996), p.130. A more general discussion of liturgical combs, including specific examples of their being buried with priests, is included in Elizabeth Parker MacLachlan, 'Liturgical vessels and implements' in T. J. Heffernan & E. A. Matter (eds), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (Kalamazoo, 2001), pp 425-7

²⁷ T. W. Potter, & R. D. Andrews, 'Excavation and survey at St Patrick's Chapel and St Peter's Church, Heysham, Lancashire, 1977-8' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxiv (1994), pp 79, 124

²⁸ D. M. Metcalf, 'The coins' in P. Andrews (ed.), *Southampton Finds, Volume 1: The Coins and Pottery from Hamwic* (Southampton, 1988), p.26

²⁹ Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Turnhout, 2000), pp 259-76

detail elsewhere,³⁰ but further illustrate some of the complexities associated with the precise definition of FISBs in this period.

While the increased accuracy with which archaeological material is recovered and recorded has led to a steady increase in the confidence with which artefacts can be directly associated with human remains, it has also led to a comparatively new phenomenon, by which certain artefacts from graves are treated as 'residual'. In the case of York Minster (114) for example, no less than five graves contained coins, but all were dismissed in this way, despite the fact that one (114.7) was found between the left arm and pelvis of the skeleton.³¹ Given the chronological difficulties associated with the eleventh century stirrup-strap mount from a grave at Waltham Abbey (Essex), similar interpretations are not in themselves unreasonable, but the grounds for proposing an artefact as 'residual' are often tenuous in the extreme.³² Elsewhere, modern excavations have also provided corroborating evidence for more traditional interpretations of certain 'stray' finds as grave-goods. At Repton (123: Derbyshire), for example, the directors believe that they have identified the grave from which an axe was recovered during construction work in 1923 (123.11), and suggest that a Viking Age spearhead from a nearby pit, clearly not in its original context, also comes from a nearby disturbed burial (123.12).³³ These discoveries support the widely held assumption that similar material from churchyard sites across these islands were originally deposited in furnished graves, even though they have been found 'out of context', as with a number of artefacts from the cemetery at Mail (007: Shetland).³⁴ Despite the application of modern excavation techniques, however, the original context of a limited number of finds remains ambiguous, and this is even more the case when similar material is found away from known burial sites.

From the limited discussion presented here, it will be clear while the volume of information recorded at the discovery of individual burials has radically increased in

³⁰ See section 2.2

³¹ Derek Phillips & Brenda Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster* (London, 1995), pp 497, 500, 528, 581

³² For a discussion of the Waltham Abbey find, see Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', pp 114-5

³³ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbej-Biddle (eds), 'Repton and the 'great heathen army' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, pp 55, 65 & 74

³⁴ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.64

the past fifty years, the interpretation of this new evidence has also become much more complex, and the identification of 'Viking' graves is no longer the comparatively clear-cut process which pioneers such as Anderson assumed it to be. Most subsequent commentators have approached the corpus with a firm idea of what constituted a Viking burial, and in attempting to deal with a remarkably diverse body of evidence have, to a greater or lesser extent, failed to take account of the range either of deposition rituals or of grave-goods assemblages used in Viking Age Britain and Ireland. Recent research has questioned the Scandinavian character of all Viking Age insular furnished burials, and the extent to which the introduction of Christianity had eliminated indigenous furnished burial, particularly in Anglo-Saxon England. As a result of these developments, no two surveys of Viking Age furnished graves have produced precisely the same results, even at the level of basic recording. The differences between the distribution maps produced by Wilson and Richards in 1976 and 2000 respectively are not simply the result of new discoveries: equally significant are the burials that have been discounted in the interim.³⁵ One of the most spectacular examples of this process was the rejection of a whole series of Scottish 'Viking burial mounds' following the realisation that the majority of them were (early) modern kelp kilns.³⁶ At the heart of any study of these graves are, of course, a group of 'male' and 'female' burials about which almost all commentators agree, which contained either Viking Age weapons or oval brooches that were directly associated with human remains. However, one of the chief problems with any general survey of the phenomenon lies in the identification and definition of a 'penumbra' of graves which are contemporary with these 'core' burials: examples which are problematic either because they lack 'typical' insular Scandinavian grave goods, or because the record is such that their association with a burial cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt.

Given all of these problems, it was clear almost from the beginning of the current project that the basic record was seriously flawed and that there was a real need for a systematic re-evaluation of all potential furnished insular Scandinavian burial sites within the British Isles, reappraising original accounts of discoveries wherever

³⁵ D. M. Wilson, 'The Scandinavians in England' in idem (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1976), fig. 10.1 and Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed.), fig. 63

³⁶ Leslie Alcock, 'The supposed Viking burials on the islands of Canna and Sanday, Small Isles' in O'Connor & Clarke, *Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five*, pp 293-309

possible and recording the resulting information in a format which would facilitate a general review of the evidence. The resulting catalogue (see appendices A – F and below) forms the basis of chapters two, three and four, which present a reappraisal of the contents and landscape context of these burials. Before moving on to this detailed discussion, however, it may be appropriate to discuss the basic methodology and terminology used in the compilation of the catalogue.

For each burial, while the most recent information and reinterpretations were considered, precedence was given to the earliest available published sources as the most reliable accounts of the original discoveries. In several cases, remarkable errors were noted, whereby a failure to consult older sources had resulted in the consolidation and perpetuation of fundamental errors, both in terms of grave contents and provenance. Many of these errors first occurred in the general surveys of the early- and mid-twentieth century, and in particular in *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* and Shetelig's related publications.³⁷ Other errors seem to have an older and more complex origin. A set of material from Lyking, Sandwick parish (026: Orkney), for example, was misprovenanced to Lyking, Holm parish, for a considerable period of time, and even in better mapped areas such as Norfolk, the Santon burial (131) 'migrated' c.1.5km downstream to Santon Downham between 1867 and 1940.³⁸ In the case of Scotland in particular, CANMORE (the RCAHMS computerised database), while perhaps not a published source by conventional definitions, nonetheless provided an invaluable source of references, although its very comprehensiveness has led to a range of errors, as at Watten (042: Highland) and Longhills (043: Highland).³⁹ In Ireland, the Irish Viking Grave Project's willingness to allow the use of evidence discovered during that project meant that

³⁷ See section 1.2

³⁸ For the two potential sites of the burial at Lyking, see RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY21NE 24 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007). For Santon, see R. A. Smith, 'Anglo-Saxon Remains' in H. A. Doubleday (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Norfolk* (London, 1901), i, 347-9 and Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), pp 12-13

³⁹ In this case, the confusion of a (probable) 'male' grave at Watten and a (probable) 'female' grave at Longhills / Westerseat has resulted in a doubling of burials at both sites. Compare Shetelig, 'The Viking Graves' in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), p.72, to the original entry in Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940), pp 24-5 and RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND35SE20 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

unpublished sources could be used. Given the exceptionally poor published records for Dublin in general, and Kilmainham and Islandbridge in particular, this evidence was invaluable and allowed a number of serious errors to be rectified.⁴⁰ While it is unfortunate that a similar level of research could not be carried out elsewhere in the study area, the close geographical proximity of burial sites at Dublin combined with the chronological proximity of various nineteenth-century discoveries had resulted in exceptionally confused records. Elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, greater geographical and chronological distances separated individual records, and while some early antiquarian references, notably to the Western Isles, were confused, most burials could at least be pinned down to at least to a specific island. Where exceptions occurred, as with the early record of a burial from the non-existent 'island of Sangay, between the isles of Uist and Harris', both Anderson's suggestion of 'Langay'⁴¹ and Graham-Campbell & Batey's proposal of 'Ensay'⁴² were considered, before tentatively opting for the former (054: Western Isles). While not ideal, an attempt to reappraise other unpublished sources would have necessitated focusing on a specific region of these islands, and would therefore have involved abandoning the general insular approach which was seen as central to the present study. Similarly, at an early stage of the project it was decided that as neither time nor financial resources would allow extensive site visits and it was decided to base all topographical research on maps. While this limited some aspects of the landscape investigations (see chapter 4),⁴³ it should be appreciated that in the vast majority of cases few, if any, traces of the original burial sites survive on the ground anyway, and site visits would not necessarily have allowed graves to be identified with any more accuracy than was possible using appropriate map resources.

For convenience, the resulting catalogue has been divided into a series of zones, each corresponding to a specific area that contained groups of burials that seemed to form more or less discrete geographical units. As one of the key problems with many twentieth century studies of FISBs has been a tendency to focus research within modern national boundaries, it was decided instead to divide the insular material on the basis of shared features and geographical proximity. The validity of the resulting

⁴⁰ See section 1.4

⁴¹ Anderson, 'Relics', p.555

⁴² Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.76

⁴³ See sections 4.1 & 4.2

divisions is discussed in more detail in section 1.4, and here it will merely be noted that Zone A corresponds to northern Scotland, Zone B to western Scotland and Ulster, Zone C to southern Scotland and northern England, Zone D to England south of the Trent and Wales, Zone E to the Isle of Man and Zone F to Dublin and the other provinces of Ireland (**fig.1.3.1**).

Each catalogue entry is presented in a standardised format, with certain key information presented in summary form at the beginning of each entry. Every burial site which fulfilled certain basic criteria (see below) was given a unique three digit number. In cases where more than one grave was discovered at a given site, individual numbers were given to each grave and separated from the site number by a decimal point. Thus 047 represents the (only) furnished grave from Tote, Skye, while 124.07 represents the seventh example from Heath Wood, Derbyshire. In general, site numbers were allocated moving from north to south and west to east, although occasional later discoveries break this general pattern. Individual grave numbers were normally allocated in chronological order of discovery, so that 073.1 was given to the grave found at Ballinaby, Islay (Argyll & Bute) at some point before 1788, while 073.4 was given to a grave found in 1932. As with site numbers, however, occasional later discoveries meant that this rule was general rather than absolute. Where several burials were found simultaneously (as during excavations), they were recorded in order of record reliability (see below). On those rare occasions where evidence for a number of burials had been recorded simultaneously and could not be separated into individual grave assemblages, all evidence was recorded simultaneously. 177.40-42, for example, relates to an assemblage from Kilmainham (Dublin) that seems to have represented a minimum of three graves found in 1866.⁴⁴ As will already be clear, site and burial numbers have been used throughout the present text as a means of avoiding extensive footnoting, the catalogue entries themselves being fully referenced. Of course, specific references to individual scholars' research and/or interpretations have been noted wherever necessary or appropriate.

⁴⁴ This material was included in Wilde, 'Scandinavian antiquities', pp 13-22. The essentially artificial division between 'Kilmainham' and 'Islandbridge' has been ignored in the present text (see section 1.4).

The line immediately below the catalogue number records the site name, followed by the modern administrative unit within which it lies. Sites from smaller islands, particularly in Scotland, also note the island name in brackets. On occasions where sites have been referred to by several different names, the one used consistently in the present text is given in block capitals, alternative names being given in lower case. In the case of the burials from St Patrick's Isle, Peel, for example (160: Man), the latter name, used to refer to the site within the thesis text, is in block capitals. This first line of each catalogue entry also includes a National Grid Reference (NGR) that refers either to the British or Irish OS grid. Six-figure references are most commonly used, although some recent, more detailed surveys occasionally use eight-figure references. When prefixed by a lower case *c.* (*circa*), the NGR should be regarded as approximate rather than precise (although almost certainly accurate to within 200m), while those prefixed by an upper case *C.* may be out by a kilometre or more. While the usefulness of such vague provenances may be disputed, they can still contribute to some general discussions of burial distribution, particularly at the regional level. In a limited number of cases, but particularly in Scotland, some early provenances were so vague that burials could only be associated with islands, often of some considerable size. Such vaguely provenanced material was only used in the most general evaluations of distribution patterns, and was excluded from any detailed analysis. Again prefixed with an upper case *C.*, these entries are clearly referred to within the text.

The second line provides a basic classification of the burial (or occasionally burials) to which the catalogue entry refers. When compiling the catalogue, it was thought inappropriate to apply traditional, deterministic labels to the material under study, and consequently reinforce traditional divisions of this material into 'male', 'female' and / or 'Viking', although the appropriateness of these labels forms a key theme of chapter 2. Instead, the graves under study were divided into three groups, with this division being based purely on the grave-goods that they contained.

The first (and ultimately most common) group comprised 'weapon' burials, which as the name suggests, contained one or more weapons: invariably swords, spearheads, axeheads and / or shield bosses. The second group, 'brooch' burials, contained at least one oval brooch, and more generally a pair of these artefacts. These two groups, which broadly correspond to traditional 'male' and 'female' 'Viking' graves, were

found to be almost entirely exclusive, with the only two exceptions, Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) and Santon (131: Norfolk), normally interpreted as 'double' graves. The appropriateness of these divisions is demonstrated in sections 2.2 and 2.3, but initial research also indicated a real need for a third category of furnished burials, to incorporate graves which contained neither weapons nor oval brooches, but which were of Viking Age date, a group that had been almost entirely ignored by previous commentators. This 'tertiary' group was initially intended to be as inclusive as possible, and the catalogue included all identified graves of approximately the correct date, a process which was ultimately to prove problematic when it came to identifying those graves that were explicitly Scandinavian, particularly in southern England (Zone D). The group also proved exceptionally diverse in terms of grave contents, ranging from the occupant of at least one boat burial (012 Scar: Orkney) to burials containing no more than a few gold threads, as at Repton (123:08 & 09: Derbyshire) Despite the obvious difficulties associated with the ethnicity of at least some of these graves, and their occasionally problematic relationship to 'weapon' and 'brooch' graves, it was felt that this burial group merited further investigation. The many problems associated with their study and interpretation are discussed in section 3.2.

The resulting three-fold division of material into weapon, brooch and tertiary graves provided a basic subdivision for the burial evidence, but there was an additional problem in that the records of the discovery of these graves varied widely in terms of quality and indeed basic reliability. Rather than simply rejecting all early (and many later) records, it was felt necessary to incorporate this diversity in some way. Consequently, a second system of subdivision was developed, based on evidence quality. Burials with the most reliable evidence were classified as 'definite'. These had either surviving artefacts or contemporary illustrations that were of sufficient quality to allow them to be dated to the Viking Age. In addition, original accounts of the discovery of these 'definite' burials included clear references to the discovery of human remains, occasionally cremated bone, but more general skeletal material. Obviously, all scientifically excavated burials fall into this category, but a surprising number of early accounts were also of sufficient quality to be included, the earliest discovered definite burial being the brooch grave from Castletown (040: Highland),

found in September 1786.⁴⁵ Conversely, some comparatively recent discoveries were not included in this group, sometimes due to poor recovery conditions or recording practices, but also because detailed recording led to the identification of graves which had artefacts in their grave-fill, but which may have been residual or 'accidental' inclusions rather than 'definite' grave-goods, as is the case with a number of graves from York Minster (114). There were also a limited number of burials, most notably from Anglo-Saxon England (Zones C & D), which were definitely furnished, but by no means definitely of insular Scandinavian origin, a group which included the Ladykirk graves (113: Yorkshire, above) as well as a number of burials with coins, such as Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk). For obvious reasons, these problems were most acute in the case of tertiary burials, and they are discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

In many cases, the surviving records failed either to provide sufficient evidence for a 'definite' Viking Age date of burial, or for a direct association between recovered artefacts and human remains. Graves lacking one or other of these elements, most commonly a lack of evidence of human remains, were classified as 'probable'. While the omission of this evidence from early records may be a direct reflection of contemporary antiquarian interests, some modern finds also fell into this category, particularly in the case of sites which had been badly disturbed before archaeological investigations took place, as with the oval brooch recovered at Thurso East (041: Highland) in the early 1970s. In some cases, groups of (lost) artefacts that could not be precisely dated were nonetheless identified as 'probable' due to the fact that 'definite' graves had been found in the same area. This was particularly characteristic of the evidence from Kilmainham (147: Dublin), where the scale of the cemetery leaves little doubt that most references to iron swords from the area probably related to Viking graves.

In the case of even more tenuous evidence, burials could be classified as 'possible', usually because neither their precise date nor their association with human remains could be demonstrated conclusively. The group includes a limited number of finds from sites which are of Viking Age date, but which may well represent stray finds or

⁴⁵ Traill's notes on this site are brief but to the point, and leave remarkably little room for doubt. They were published some 88 years after the burial was discovered, in Anderson, 'Relics', pp 549-50

ritual deposition rather than material eroded from a grave, as at Toome (086: Antrim), as well as a limited number of finds from riverine contexts, such as an oval brooch from an unknown site on the River Bann (087: Antrim / Londonderry) and a sword from Battersea (143: London). It should be emphasised, however, that the majority of single artefacts directly associated with wetland sites or contexts, such as Whitbarrow Scar (Cumbria)⁴⁶ were excluded from the catalogue. In all cases, justification of the classification used for each burial is included within the catalogue entry. While the figures produced by this classification are discussed in detail in section 1.4, it will be noted that well-furnished graves were more likely to be classified as definite or probable than poorly furnished ones, as were weapon and brooch burials. This is an obvious reflection both of the fact that weapon and brooch burials tend to be better furnished than tertiary graves, and of the rarity with which weapons and oval brooches are found outside burial contexts. While the identification of tertiary burials remains inherently more problematic, however, this does not in itself justify continuing to ignore the phenomenon completely.

Approximately fifty graves and sites were, however, entirely rejected during the compilation of the catalogue, some at later stages than others, with perhaps the most obvious cases being those graves where rivets or 'nails' were found within the grave-cut. While a very limited number of graves containing these artefacts were included on the assumption that these artefacts represented lost composite wood and iron artefacts, particularly in zones where rivets and nails are rare discoveries, it was thought that the majority of examples, particularly those in England, represented coffins, biers, or other structures which are not technically grave-goods⁴⁷. Thus a group of five graves from Barton-upon-Humber were entirely rejected,⁴⁸ while a grave from York Minster which contained a body resting on a clinker-built bier was included due to the presence of a coin rather than the more obvious rivets (114.1).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ F. R. C. Hutton, 'Witherslack church and manor', in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 2nd Ser. i (1901), p.193

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the range of burial practices used in Viking Age England, see Dawn Hadley, 'Burial practice in northern England in the later Anglo-Saxon period', in S. J. Lucy & Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph* 17 (2002), pp 209-28. For discussion of this phenomenon with the present thesis, see section 3.2

⁴⁸ Warkwick Rodwell & Kirsty Rodwell, 'St Peter's Church, Barton-upon-Humber: excavations and structural study 1978-81' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxii (1982), pp 290-2

⁴⁹ Derek Phillips & Brenda Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster* (London, 1995), pp 500-5

As with other forms of evidence, more detailed notes have been provided in the body of each catalogue entry.

This resulting division of burials into weapon, brooch and tertiary graves, each of which was either definite, probable or possible, is arguably too simplistic, and while every effort was made to apply similar criteria to each example, elements of subjective assessment are doubtless still present. Nonetheless, the system applied here does have the advantage of allowing a relatively systematic assessment of FISBs throughout these islands, one which reflects both the range of material recovered from these graves and the very variable quality of available evidence. Crucially, it also allows the material to be studied as a unit. Specialists in the graves of certain regions may perhaps criticise the validity of some specific classifications, but the scale of the catalogue and resulting database, which incorporate 379 graves spread between 194 sites, should nonetheless allow general trends to be identified, as well as facilitate the direct comparison of different areas. Given the variable quality of the evidence, many sections of the present study, while taking the evidence provided by probable and possible examples into consideration emphasise the evidence provided by definite burials, but it should be noted that in general the evidence provided by all three categories was remarkably consistent.

Somewhat less controversially, the same (second) line of each catalogue entry also provides a note on whether the burial was an inhumation, a cremation, or unknown, with a second note reflecting the quality of the evidence on which this was based, ranging from the discovery of bent or otherwise damaged artefacts to the discovery of burnt human remains. While it has been clear since at least the 1940s that the rite of cremation is comparatively rare in Britain and Ireland, precise numbers remain hotly debated, with the most sceptical commentators refusing to accept the evidence from any sites other than Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), and even then only those graves which were scientifically excavated in the recent past.⁵⁰ While others are less source-critical, few would now accept Shetelig's bland assumption that all bent

⁵⁰ See section 4.4

weapons are associated with cremation burials,⁵¹ and the excavation of sites such as Ballateare (154: Isle of Man),⁵² where cremated animal bone was spread over an inhumation burial means that older records of charcoal associated with possible grave-goods cannot be taken entirely at face value. Ultimately, detailed analysis of this phenomenon lay outside the main focus of the present thesis (but see sections 1.4 & 4.4).

The third line of the catalogue provides information on the burial site, and more specifically the relationship between these graves and any earlier activity. Much of the landscape chapter of the present study examines site reuse, and the creation of Viking Age furnished graves at either Christian (or at least Early Medieval indigenous) burial grounds, or alternatively on or close to prehistoric monuments, perhaps most obviously extant burial mounds.⁵³ As with other sections of the catalogue, this information is presented in summary form, with more detailed discussion of the evidence being included in the text of each catalogue entry. The third line also includes notes on the form of grave used, particularly whether it was earth-cut or placed within a cist, and also any evidence for a mound. The presence of a boat or horse, both unusual burial practices in an insular context, was also recorded here. While not central to the present study, some of this information is discussed in more detail in section 3.1.

The fourth and final line of summary information relates to the date of recovery and the quality of the published record. The most precise recovery date available was recorded in all cases, but many entries have no more than a *terminus ante quem* that relates to the first publication of the finds and or sites. For convenience, assessments of record quality were also summarised using four classifications that ranged from very good to poor. 'Very good' records generally corresponded to burials recovered and recorded under modern, scientifically controlled conditions. 'Good' records showed a concern for detail and an awareness of the burial context from which the grave-goods came, but did not provide quite the same volume of information.

⁵¹ Shetelig, 'The Viking Graves', pp.28-9 emphasises this idea. See S. H. Harrison, *Viking Age Shield Bosses in Dublin and the Irish Sea Area* (MA, University College Cork, 1995), pp 108-118 for a critique of Shetelig's approach with particular reference to Dublin.

⁵² Bersu. & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p.51

⁵³ See section 4.3

'Moderate' records were rather less concerned with details of find circumstances, but still provided a reasonable level of detail, but 'poor' records were sufficiently ambiguous to cast doubt on the nature of the deposit and on occasion even the precise area from which the artefact or artefacts in question were recovered. This assessment was never entirely systematic, and was rarely used in the analysis carried out as part of the thesis, although record quality of course directly contributed to each burial's classification as definite, probable or possible.

This essentially tabular summary of each catalogue entry is followed by a full list of artefacts recorded as having come from that site or burial. Weapons are listed first, followed by oval brooches and other types of jewellery, then tools, and finally miscellaneous artefacts. In addition, the entry for each burial has a number which broadly corresponds to the total number of artefacts deposited within it. However, it should be noted that discrete groups of small artefacts were normally considered single finds when calculating this 'artefact count' number.⁵⁴ Beads, for example, counted as a single 'artefact' for the purposes of this calculation, as did pairs of oval brooches, sets of lead weights and gaming pieces. Occasionally, when a group of artefacts representing several graves was recorded as a unit, an average figure is recorded which was created by dividing the total number of artefacts by the minimum number of graves. An assemblage of 49 artefacts found at Kilmainham in 1845 which represented a minimum of 10 graves, for example, was given an average 'artefact count' of 4.9 / grave. While these figures can be seen as somewhat artificial, artefact count provides a mechanism by which graves can be compared, albeit at a superficial level, and thus provides a starting point for more detailed analysis of the relationship between grave-goods and status which forms the core of much of this study's artefact analysis. Given the constraints of time, it proved impossible to carry out any detailed typological or chronological analysis of the more than 1150 artefacts included in the catalogue, although detailed analysis carried out by others was included in the catalogue when it was seen as potentially important to discussion.

Following the summary information and list of grave-goods, each entry contains three successive textual entries. The first ('main') section contains general

⁵⁴ For further discussion, see section 2.1

information on such things as the date and circumstances of discovery, a basic description of the grave, and the location of artefacts within it. Evidence for previous activity at the site is also recorded here, together with any particularly unusual or controversial interpretations of the material. For convenience, all the sources from which these entries are derived are listed in a single footnote at the end of this 'main' section, although individual contributions, particularly interpretations, are acknowledged within the text itself.

The second entry, entitled 'Site/Location', briefly describes each site, with the level of detail provided being a direct reflection of the accuracy of the original provenance. For obvious reasons, this information is only provided for the first grave at any cemetery, unless there is specific information relating to the site of an individual burial or find group, as frequently occurs at Kilmainham (177: Dublin), or at other sites where finds were made over an extended period of time, as at Pierowall (018: Orkney). While a detailed discussion of methodology is provided in section 4.1, it should perhaps be noted here that the primary sources of topographical evidence were the 1:50,000 OS sheets for the respective areas of study, corresponding to the Discoverer, Landranger and Discovery Series for Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland respectively. Each entry gives a source for the NGR used for that burial, the majority involving a comparison of maps with original, text-based descriptions. Given this approach, landscape analysis focused on such things as altitude, slope, proximity to the sea, and relationships to nearby physical features such as inlets, channels, rivers and hills, with the significance of these relationships being discussed in section 4.2. In most cases, the information in this section was derived from the same sources used to compile the initial paragraph, but on those rare occasions where additional information was used, this is referenced accordingly.

The final section of each entry, 'Interpretation', provides a justification of the grave's classification in terms of both 'type' and 'certainty'. In the majority of cases, this process is self-explanatory, conforming to the parameters laid down earlier in this section, but on those occasions where specific local circumstances influenced this process, details are provided here.

The resulting catalogue took the better part of two years to compile, but ultimately provided a readily accessible and directly comparable body of data that could then be used to address two key research themes, these being the relationship between grave-goods and social roles, particularly status (chapters 2 & 3) and the significance of the positioning of burials within the landscape (chapter 4). Before moving on to such detailed analysis, however, it may be appropriate to summarise the results of this study at a more basic level, by describing each of the six zones and providing a general overview of the distribution of furnished insular Scandinavian burials throughout these islands.

1.4 Furnished Insular Scandinavian Burial – An Overview

As will be clear from sections 1.1 and 1.2, there has been only one substantial attempt to produce a detailed overview of ‘Viking’ graves in Britain and Ireland. Shetelig’s work, published in English as two virtually identical articles in 1945 and 1954, was directly derived from information included in volumes two to four of *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*.¹ Perhaps influenced by the organisation of the information in these catalogues, Shetelig’s description of furnished insular Scandinavian burials (hereafter FISBs) began with the northernmost graves, in Shetland and moved steadily south through Scotland and then England as far as Thames valley, before shifting westwards to summarise the evidence from the Isle of Man and Ireland, with the last (potential) burial noted by him being ‘Navan’ (i.e. Athlumney: 170), Co. Meath.² This comparatively brief summary of the burial evidence was followed by a more general discussion of ‘burial customs and grave-goods’, which included cremation, boat burial, and the relationship between ‘Viking’ graves and Christian graveyards, which treated the corpus as a single entity and made no concerted effort to comment on the specific countries covered by individual volumes of the 1940 publication. Given his initial summary of the available evidence, it is also striking that Shetelig made no attempt to quantify any particular ‘burial custom’, or indeed to provide even an approximate minimum number of burials from these islands. Indeed, this reluctance to provide any numerical assessment of the evidence may have contributed to the project’s more general failure to produce any maps. Certainly Wilson, who published the first general distribution map of ‘Viking graves’ in 1976 (**fig.4.1.1**),³ seems to have been equally reluctant to estimate the number of burials under study. Instead, most twentieth-century calculations of minimum numbers have been produced as part of more local, regional studies, with rather smaller, less diverse assemblages, and Wilson himself provided minimum figures for England⁴ and Man⁵ at almost

¹ Haakon Shetelig, ‘The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland’ in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), pp 1-55; Haakon Shetelig, ‘The distribution of the graves and the extent of Norse settlements’ in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), pp 65-112; Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (5 vols, Oslo, 1940). For a more extended discussion of this project, see section 1.1

² Shetelig, ‘The Viking graves (1945)’, pp 3-21

³ D. M. Wilson, ‘Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* xxvi (1976), pp 95-113

⁴ idem, ‘The Scandinavians in England’ in idem (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), p.396

precisely the same time as his more general study. While various regional estimates are now available, however, it has proved difficult, if not impossible, to draw direct comparisons between them, because they have been calculated using widely different criteria and definitions.⁶ More specifically, all attempts to estimate minimum numbers of FIBSs across these islands have been forced to address the particularly thorny issue of the Dublin corpus. Here, a combination of the geographical proximity of burial sites and the chronological proximity of recovery dates compounded the difficulties associated with an exceptionally large corpus, and by the early twentieth century had resulted in records that were so confused that no general figures were readily available. While this confusion was focused on the largest cemetery at Dublin, generally called 'Kilmainham-Islandbridge', a site which resisted the best efforts of both Coffey & Armstrong⁷ and Bøe⁸ to provide secure minimum numbers of grave-goods, let alone furnished burials, the difficulties associated with the interpretation of this burial complex were greatly increased by the presence of a dozen smaller cemeteries and single graves less than 5km from it, many of which were discovered at approximately the same time that material was being recovered from the larger complex. Like Kilmainham-Islandbridge, these smaller burial sites were neither well-studied nor understood when Bøe visited Dublin in 1926, and it is only in the past thirty years that much of this evidence has been re-assessed, notably in the work of Hall,⁹ O'Brien¹⁰ and Ó Floinn,¹¹ who have re-examined the antiquarian and artefactual evidence from Dublin and indeed further afield. The study of the 'Kilmainham-Islandbridge' corpus has also made some progress in the same period, initially through the work of Briggs,¹² but more recently and more

⁵ *idem*, *The Viking Age on the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), p.18

⁶ See sections 1.1 & 1.2

⁷ George Coffey & E.C.R. Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects found at Islandbridge and Kilmainham', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), pp 107-23

⁸ Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), pp 11-65

⁹ R.A. Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Dublin' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* civ (1974), pp 39-43; *idem*, 'A Viking-age grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxii (1978), pp 64-83

¹⁰ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A re-assessment of the 'great sepulchral mound' containing a Viking burial at Donnybrook, Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxvi (1992), pp 170-3

¹¹ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 131-65

¹² Stephen Briggs, 'A neglected Viking burial with beads from Kilmainham, Dublin, discovered in 1847' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxix (1985), pp 94-108. NB – This grave actually seems to have been discovered late in 1845. Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

comprehensively through O'Brien's work¹³ on the cemetery as a whole. While O'Brien's two articles were ground-breaking at the time, however, a reappraisal of unpublished records now in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) has challenged some of her interpretations, and in particular her belief that there were two more or less equally sized cemeteries, one at 'Kilmainham' and the other at 'Islandbridge'. It is now clear that while there were indeed two cemeteries, a substantial assemblage (177.36-44) which Wilde provenanced to 'Islandbridge' in 1866¹⁴ was actually found much closer to the 'Kilmainham' material recovered in the 1840s and 1850s (177.06-35)¹⁵ than to the graves found at the War Memorial Park at Islandbridge in the 1930s (176.1-5),¹⁶ and should therefore be considered part of the former group rather than the latter. By applying the basic criteria established in section 1.3 to the rather more detailed findings of the IVGP, it is now possible to say with some confidence that five definite graves (three weapon and two tertiary) were recovered at the War Memorial Park (hereafter Islandbridge: 176), approximately 0.5km west of a much larger burial complex (hereafter Kilmainham: 177), comprising a minimum of 48 graves (39 weapon, 5 brooch and 4 tertiary), all but two of which are definite or probable. As older records of smaller assemblages, such as Parnell Square (175) and Bride Street (179) have been joined by more recent finds, such as S. Gt. George's St (182) and Finglas (172), a further 19 burials have been identified in the Dublin area, spread between twelve other sites. Thus, a minimum of 72 burials is now known from the Dublin area, 69 of which are definite or probable, a figure that is almost certainly an underestimate, but which nonetheless confirms the importance of this corpus to any assessment of furnished insular Scandinavian burial.

Armed with these precise, if minimum, numbers for Dublin, and with figures for the rest of these islands which are the result of similar, albeit less complex,

¹³ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A reconsideration of the location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham / Islandbridge, Dublin' in Conleth Manning (ed.) *Dublin and Beyond the Pale: Studies in Honour of Patrick Healy* (Dublin, 1998), pp 35-44; idem, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin' in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, pp 203-221

¹⁴ W. R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), pp 13-22

¹⁵ With the exception of some brief (anonymous) notes in the contemporary volumes of the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iii (1845-7) pp 150, 195-6 & iv (1847-50) pp 219, 311, xvi, this 'Kilmainham' material has never been fully published. Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

¹⁶ Again, with the exception of contemporary newspaper reports and a brief note in Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland: Haakon Shetelig* (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), pp 57-65, this material has never been adequately published.

reassessments of published sources, it has been possible to produce a basic numerical assessment of FISBs, essentially for the first time ever. While it may be suggested that these figures remain distorted by regional variations in retrieval and recording patterns, and this possibility must certainly be considered in any appraisal of the evidence, it can also be argued that more than three centuries of retrieval and the increasingly systematic recording of burials across these islands from the late nineteenth century onwards must surely have minimised such variation. Certainly, the quality of specific records seems to depend on individual antiquarians and archaeologists, rather than the area within which they operated,¹⁷ and as far as local topography is concerned, certain trends are noticeable across these islands. It may be true, for example, that many Scottish coastal graves owe their discovery to the erosion of the machair landscape in which they were deposited, but the almost total absence of similar graves from the very similar landscape of parts of western Ireland, or indeed the more intensively farmed east coast of England, must reflect genuine variations in the original distribution pattern. Similarly, the same intensive agricultural activity which characterises much of lowland England has not produced more than a handful of possible burials, such as Kersey (135: Suffolk) and Gooderstone (126: Norfolk), while much more limited ploughing and topsoil stripping activity in the northern and western parts of these islands has produced evidence for far more potential burial sites, from Swandro (020: Orkney) to Claghbane (157: Man). Again, this can only be a reflection of genuine variations in the distribution pattern.

At another level, our knowledge of the exceptionally complex burial patterns of the Dublin area may well be the direct result of nineteenth-century developments in and around the city, but contemporary development at other former insular Scandinavian urban sites did not produce similar evidence. Almost all of York's few, primarily tertiary burials have been discovered during excavations at church sites (114-7) and only two of the 'five boroughs' (Nottingham and Lincoln: 119 & 122) have produced any evidence for burial at all. Given such clear variations in the record, it seems clear that the pattern of furnished burial identified in the present study, while obviously incomplete, must at least broadly represent the situation in the Viking Age.

¹⁷ See section 1.2

Shetelig's sixty-two year old warning that the corpus inevitably excludes 'finds lost or destroyed [and] discoveries still in store'¹⁸ can never be forgotten, but nonetheless there is now sufficient evidence to allow some general comments on the corpus to be made.

At the most basic level, research indicates that there are 194 sites which have produced evidence for at least one Viking Age furnished burial. Of these, just 86 included at least one definite grave, a further 58 had at least one probable burial, and the remaining 50 had only 'possible' graves (map 1.4.1). In the context of regional variations in the record (above), it is interesting to note that the ratios of definite, probable and possible sites, like individual graves, are relatively constant across the study area, which extends from Unst (001-4: Shetland) south to an intriguing group of graves around Reading (138-41: Berkshire), and from the enigmatic (and probably non-Scandinavian) tertiary burial at Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk) to the definite weapon grave at Eyrephort (188: Galway). Spread between these 194 sites, a total of 379 Viking Age furnished graves have been identified. This is considerably more than the estimated figure of *c.*260 produced by combining earlier regional accounts,¹⁹ although when the 126 tertiary burials are excluded, together with three 'unclassified' graves from Westness (021:6-8: Orkney),²⁰ the 200 weapon and 50 brooch burials identified in the present study provide a rather closer match. It is, however, the contention of the present study that the majority of these tertiary burials display at least some insular Scandinavian influence, and are at least as much a representation of Anglo-Scandinavian as Anglo-Saxon traditions, particularly within the Danelaw.²¹ Of the 379 graves included in the catalogue, 196 (51%) had sufficient evidence to be considered 'definite', 100 (27%) were 'probable', and the remaining 83 (22%) were possible.

When the figures are examined in more detail, a number of minor variations can be noted (**fig.1.4.1**). Perhaps unsurprisingly, tertiary burials were almost twice as likely

¹⁸ Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.3

¹⁹ see section 1.1

²⁰ These 'unclassified' graves are called 'furnished' in the only available publication on the cemetery, but no list of the grave-goods is provided. See S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds) *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.315

²¹ See section 3.2

to be classified as 'possible' than either weapon or brooch graves, with 30% falling into this category, compared to 18% of both weapon and brooch graves. Some of this variation can perhaps be attributed to the small size of the artefacts concerned, which can sometimes be considered chance intrusions to grave-fills, as at York Minster (e.g. 114:8), or which can be removed from a burial context by later activity and become 'stray finds', as seems to be the case with the ringed pins found at sites from Oxtro (029: Orkney) to Brigham (095: Cumbria) and Llanfairpwllgwyngyll (149: Gwynedd). Weapons and oval brooches, on the other hand, being larger, or less likely to go unnoticed when removed from their original burial context and are generally less likely to be considered 'stray' or 'isolated' finds if subsequently recovered, although the oval brooch fragment from Mangerstadh (051: Lewis)²² and early interpretations of the spearhead from Lancaster (101: Lancashire)²³ form two interesting exceptions, as do a number of finds at or beside fords, from Toome (086: Antrim)²⁴ to Magdalen Bridge (130: Oxford).²⁵

Perhaps more surprising is the fact that weapon burials were those least likely to be classified as definite, with only 47% of these graves falling into this category, compared to 62% of brooch and 54% of tertiary burials (fig.1.4.1). This particular anomaly would appear to be a reflection of the age of discovery of many weapon graves. While the overwhelming majority of tertiary burials (109) have been found since 1850, over a third of weapon burials (72) were found before this date. Weapons were thus among the earliest grave-goods to be identified, recorded and collected by antiquarians at a time when there was little, if any, interest in what were usually dismissed as 'osseous remains',²⁶ and there can be little doubt that human remains found in association with these early finds often went unrecorded (see section 1.2).²⁷ In 1845, for example, when a very substantial assemblage was recovered at Kilmainham, the (confessedly minimal) account of the discovery made no record of

²² M. Carson, 'Iron age finds from the isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), p.370

²³ D. M. Wilson & D. G. Hurst, 'Medieval Britain in 1961' in *Medieval Archaeology* vi-vii (1962-3), p.308

²⁴ Bøe, *Ireland*, pp 83-4

²⁵ Percy Manning & E. T. Leeds, 'An archaeological survey of Oxfordshire' in *Archaeologia* lxxi (1921), p.253

²⁶ For a late example of this, see Wilde, 'Scandinavian antiquities', p.14

²⁷ See section 1.2

the presence of human remains.²⁸ When Worsaae visited Dublin a little more than a year later, however, he established that these artefacts, primarily weapons, had been found in association with skeletons that had been laid out in rows of stone-lined graves.²⁹ As evidence for human remains or a grave-cut is a basic criterion for 'definite' burials, this category is under-represented in early discoveries, with only 39% of weapon burials (28) found before 1850 being defined as such. The low numbers of definite weapon burials are thus primarily a reflection of the early date from which the discovery of weapons was noted by antiquarians. Tertiary burials, on the other hand, generally found at a later date, are much more likely to have had associated human remains recorded at the time, and indeed 61 of the 109 tertiary graves found after 1850 (56%) fall into this category.

While differences in discovery date go some way towards explaining the discrepancy between definite weapon and tertiary burials, the higher proportion of definite brooch burials is more difficult to explain. While a similar proportion of brooch burials (19 of 51) were found before 1850, 13 (68%) have been classified as definite. It may be that the positioning of these brooches in direct contact with skeletons was more likely to be recorded by early antiquarians, as with the eighteenth-century finds from 'Sangay' (perhaps Langay - 054: Western Isles) and Castletown (040: Highland). The corpus is also sufficiently small that Rendall's careful notes on five inhumations with oval brooches from Pierowall (018:4-6 & 12-14: Orkney) in or soon after 1839 could distort the statistics by ten, if not fifteen, percent.³⁰ Bearing this in mind, it may be worth noting that if the figures for definite and probable burials are combined, then an identical proportion of weapon and brooch burials (82%) fall into this group, while the lower proportion of definite and probable tertiary graves (70%) continues to reflect the higher proportion of possible examples in this group.

Whatever the precise reasons for these minor fluctuations between grave types, it is clear that the distribution of the 379 graves among the 194 sites is very uneven

²⁸ Anon., 'Proceedings' and 'Donations' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iii (1845-6), pp 150, 195-6

²⁹ J. J. A. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852), p.325

³⁰ Rendall's notes on these burials have been effectively summarised in Arne Thorsteinsson, 'The Viking burial place at Pierowall, Westray, Orkney' in Bjarni Niclasen (ed.) *The Fifth Viking Congress, Tórshavn, July 1965* (Tórshavn, 1968), pp 150-73

(fig.1.4.2). Just under three quarters (74%) of the sites identified in this study (144) had just one furnished burial, and a further fifth (21%) were small cemeteries, with 2-5 graves. Only one in twenty sites studied had more than five graves, and just two percent of the total had more than ten graves. If definite burials are considered in isolation, the dominance of single graves is a little less extreme, but this is a direct reflection of the fact that all sites with more than four burials have at least one definite example among them. Even so, 50 of the 86 definite sites (58%) are single burials. Thus, somewhere between half and three quarters of known sites are single burials, and only three – Kilmainham (177: Dublin), Pierowall (018: Orkney) and Repton (123: Derbyshire) – have produced more than ten graves. To some extent, these figures may reflect find circumstances. By chance or design, all three large sites have effectively experienced more or less total excavation, while many of the single burials represent chance finds. At Cnip (or Kneep: 050: Western Isles), Lewis, a programme of excavations has demonstrated that what was originally thought to have been a single furnished grave, discovered by chance in 1979, actually forms part of a much more complex cemetery which included four other, modestly furnished burials (050:2-5) and two unfurnished graves.³¹ It cannot be assumed, however, that all recorded single graves were originally part of larger burial complexes. Two recent, extensive excavations at the Christian cemetery associated with the church of St Michael le Pole (193: Dublin), for example, have only produced evidence for two (disturbed) definite graves. A number of more or less professionally excavated graves on the Isle of Man, from Knock-e-Dooney (150) to Balladoole (167), also uncovered what were clearly single graves with no further, associated furnished graves. Given that 95% of all sites, and 89% of definite sites had five graves or less, it seems clear that while FISBs were not always entirely isolated, they generally occur in very small numbers at individual sites, with large cemeteries being very much the exception rather than the rule. Possible reasons for this pattern are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

As has already been noted,³² all identified graves and sites were divided into six zones, named A-F, which were intended both to divide the catalogue into

³¹ For a detailed account of the discovery of the 'additional' graves at Cnip, see A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, Tim Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), pp 719-52

³² See section 1.3

manageable units and to facilitate comparison between different parts of these islands. Like Shetelig's original survey, these zones progress from northern Scotland south through Great Britain, before incorporating the Isle of Man and Ireland. The first, Zone A is the largest both in terms of the number of sites and individual graves, with 87 burials spread between 47 sites. Usually called 'Northern Scotland' in the present study, it extends south from Unst through Shetland and Orkney to the former Caithness and Sutherland (now part of Highland), and also includes two sets of isolated burial sites further south again, one on the north side of the Dornoch Firth and the other approximately 40km upstream of the Spey estuary, on the south side of the Moray Firth. Despite covering a large area, Zone A is easily the most geographically cohesive area, with more than 125km separating the westernmost graves of this group, just east of Cape Wrath, from the closest graves in Zone B, on the west coast of Lewis. Within Zone A, by far the largest cemetery is Pierowall (018: Orkney), the second largest in these islands with 17 graves, while Westness (021: Orkney) with 9, and Gurness (024: Orkney) with 5, are just over 20km further south, on opposite sides of Eynhallow Sound. These cemeteries form part of a more general concentration of burials in Orkney, where two thirds of the burials in Zone A (58) are focused. Within the zone as a whole, 36 graves were weapon, 22 brooch and 26 tertiary, with the ratios for definite burials broadly corresponding to these ratios (**fig.1.4.3**).

Zone B, here called 'Western Scotland', actually excluded a number of graves on the Solway Firth, which instead formed part of Zone C, but also included Ulster. Given the narrowness of the North Channel, the fact that only *c.*50km separates the cemetery on Rathlin (082: Antrim) from burial sites on Islay, Gigha, and Arran, and the similarities between the isolated coastal burials of Ulster and those of Scotland's Western Isles, this grouping initially seemed plausible, although three possible and probable burials in the Bann valley which were subsequently identified and included are rather less typical of the rest of the zone. Nonetheless, at least 100km separates Leger Hill (088: Antrim) and St John's Point (085: Down), the southernmost graves of Zone B, from Athlumney (170: Meath), the closest burial of Zone F (the rest of Ireland) and a similar distance separates the burial at Millhill (079: Arran) from the closest burials of Zone C. Within Zone B itself, a total of 62 furnished burials were identified, spread between 42 sites. As elsewhere, the overwhelming majority of

these sites (32) were single burials, and only one site, Ballinaby, Islay (073: Argyll & Bute) had more than five graves. It should be noted, however, that there is a definite concentration of burials and sites on Islay, Colonsay and Oronsay, close to the centre of the zone, where there is evidence for 19 burials spread between 10 sites, a number of which are exceptionally well-furnished. Taking Zone B as a whole, 26 graves were weapon, 15 brooch, and the remainder (21) tertiary, with the figures for definite burials alone suggesting broadly similar ratios (**fig.1.4.4**).

Both the distribution patterns and types of burials found in Zones A and B are broadly similar, and both can be contrasted with the zones into which the remainder of Great Britain was divided. Zone C, here called 'northern England', also incorporated the aforementioned three Scottish graves close to the northern shores of the Solway Firth, all of which are substantially closer to the graves of northern Cumbria than those of the western isles (Zone B). Originally, the boundary between the northern zone C and southern zone D was reasonably clearly defined, with some 90km separating the (possible) graves of York (114-116) from those of Lincoln (119-120). However, the recent publication of a brooch burial from Adwick-le-Street (118: Nottinghamshire) has narrowed the distance between the two groups considerably.³³ Given its contents and the fact that the burial is (slightly) closer to York than Lincoln, this newly published grave was included in Zone C, with the Trent valley effectively marking the northern boundary of Zone D. On the west coast, only c.40km separate the possible grave at Hasty Knoll (105: Lancashire) from Meols (189: Merseyside), technically in Zone D, a somewhat arbitrary division that is discussed in more detail below. Within Zone C itself, however, there is evidence for 58 graves spread between 30 sites. Following more general patterns, 20 of these were single burials, but there is a concentration of nine possible tertiary burials at York Minster (114), with a further seven possible graves spread between three other sites in the area (115-117). More recently, an important cemetery containing no less than six comparatively well furnished definite graves has been discovered at Cumwhitton (190: Cumbria), and while research is ongoing, sufficient evidence was available to include this material in the present study. The 58 graves in zone C comprised 25 weapon, 5 brooch and 28 tertiary burials, with the figures for definite burials broadly

³³ This burial has been published as Greg Speed and Penelope Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xlviii (2004), pp 51-90

corresponding to the same proportions (**fig.1.4.5**). In its limited number of brooch burials and relatively high number of tertiary burials, Zone C resembles Zone D rather more than any area further to the west or north.

The southern Zone (D) consisted of the remainder of England, along with the (six) potential burials that have been identified in Wales. Its northern boundaries, corresponding to the Trent valley, have already been discussed, and the southernmost graves were found in the Thames valley. While a limited number of possible tertiary burials have been discovered south of this point, given the almost continuous control of this area by Christian, Anglo-Saxon forces throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, these were excluded from the present study. Within the boundaries of Zone D, a total of 57 potential graves were identified, spread between 32 sites, of which the largest is Repton (123: Derbyshire) with 13 burials, followed by Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire) with excavated evidence for 10 graves.³⁴ As these two cemeteries are only *c.*4km apart,³⁵ forty percent of the burials from this zone are focused in this small area. To the south there is much smaller concentration of four single graves in Berkshire (139-41) and a less focused group of single graves in western East Anglia. The six burials on the west coast, on the other hand, are effectively outliers, with *c.*130km separating Meols (189: Merseyside) from Repton (123), and a similar distance separating Caerwent (148: Gwent) from Hook Norton (129: Oxfordshire), an issue that led to the development of an alternative division of the English and Welsh material (below). Of the graves in Zone D, however, 27 were weapon burials, 1 was a (probable) brooch grave, and the remaining 29 were tertiary (**fig.1.4.6**). The substantial number of tertiary burials was even more striking when definite examples were examined in isolation, with 21 of 35 examples (60%) being of this type. Even allowing for the under-representation of definite weapon burials (above), the concentration of tertiary burials in this area is striking and raises a number of issues about this form of burial. These are addressed in more detail in section 3.2.

Given the considerable distance between the burials of the west coast and those of the Danelaw, particularly in Zone D, and a similar, if less pronounced division in

³⁴ J. D. Richards, 'Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv (2004), p.46 notes the presence of 59 burial mounds at Heath Wood. However, only those which have produced grave-goods have been included in the present study.

³⁵ Richards, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.100

Zone C between burials to the east and west of the Pennines, the distance between Ormside (98: Cumbria) and Wensley (112: N Yorkshire) being just under 40km, it was thought appropriate to provide an alternative subdivision of zones C and D along a north-south axis, one which reflected the watershed of the Pennines. This alternative subdivision allowed all the graves associated with the Irish Sea coast to be grouped together, and the graves of the Danelaw to be treated as a distinct unit, a division which has been suggested by a number of commentators, most recently Richards.³⁶ Consequently, zones C and D were subdivided into C1 & C2 and D1 and D2 respectively, with C1 and D1 covering the area to the west, and C2 and D2 the area to the east of the watershed (**fig.1.4.7**). The resulting division produced some interesting results. While zones C and D contained almost precisely the same number of burials, with 57 and 58 graves respectively, the balance between C1/D1 and C2/D2 was much less even, with 78 graves falling within the eastern area, and just 37 within the western (**figs.1.4.8 & 1.4.9**). Equally striking was the division between grave types, with weapon burials dominating the western group and tertiary burials the eastern, with both trends also noticeable when definite burials were examined in isolation. Again, this supports the idea that Viking Age furnished burial in eastern England was in some way different to that practised elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, a proposal examined in more detail elsewhere.³⁷

The fifth zone, E, corresponding to the Isle of Man, was the smallest in terms of area, number of sites, and number of individual graves, although the latter figures, 31 burials spread between 20 sites, can be directly compared to those from western England and southern Scotland (C1/D1). Despite the small size of the corpus, and the fact that the nearest graves of Zones B and C were only 50-60km to the west, north and south, the island forms a distinct geographical entity, and its burials share a number of distinctive features. Almost three quarters of the sites on Man are single graves, with the only substantial cemetery being St Patrick's Isle (160), with 7 furnished burials. There is also a concentration of three burial sites a short distance to the east of this site, in the Neb valley (161-3) and a striking concentration of four single burials on the north-west coast (152-4 & 169). Elsewhere, the distribution of graves is more even, although the high ground at the centre of the island is

³⁶ J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), p.142

³⁷ See section 3.2

consistently avoided. The overwhelming majority of burials (21) are weapon graves with the remainder being tertiary (10), although the dominance of weapon burials is somewhat reduced if definite examples are examined in isolation (**fig.1.4.10**). One striking feature of the Manx corpus is the total absence of brooch burials, although it should be noted that one of the tertiary burials from St Patrick's Isle was clearly a well-furnished woman's grave (160:1; the so-called 'pagan lady').

The final zone under study, F, generally called 'Ireland', actually excludes Ulster, (part of Zone B, see above). Given the dominance of the Dublin assemblage when considering the insular corpus as a whole (above), it is perhaps unsurprising that this Zone is dominated by this settlement and its graves, particularly when the 13 cemeteries from the city and county are joined by six single burials from the surrounding counties, which must also be related to the settlement in some way. Only four of the 23 sites identified in Zone F, and 6 of the 84 graves have no relationship to Dublin. Of these, two (191-2) are in the Suir valley, upstream of the area where Waterford would develop in the tenth century, and the remaining graves are at two exceptionally isolated sites on the west coast, with the evidence from Cloghermore Cave (194: Kerry) being atypical of the insular corpus and perhaps less than conclusive. The definite weapon burial at Eyrephort (188: Galway) is some 220km west of its nearest neighbour, and given its coastal location might equally be considered part of Zone B, were it not separated from the nearest burial in that group by an even greater distance. Of the 84 burials identified, 65 are weapon graves, 8 brooch, and just 11 tertiary (**fig.1.4.11**). Although these figures have undoubtedly been influenced by the Dublin assemblage, particularly Kilmainham (177), where weapons and oval brooches have regularly been used to calculate minimum numbers, the figures for definite burials alone suggest a similar dominance of weapon graves. In reality, the number of tertiary burials may have been rather higher, but this cannot be demonstrated at present. With a pronounced focus of 78 graves (93% of the total from the zone) in the greater Dublin area, the distribution of burial sites in Zone F is markedly different to all others in the present study.

As will be clear from this brief summary, the six (or eight) zones into which the corpus has been divided vary considerably in their geographical area, number of burial sites and graves, and in the clarity of the divisions between them. While Zone

A appears absolutely distinct, the boundary between Zones B and F can be disputed, particular by those who would prefer to see Ireland as a distinct geographical unit, with a division at the North Channel rather than Co. Louth. Similarly, the divisions between Zones C and D, and indeed C1/D1 and C2/D2, are by no means entirely clear-cut and other boundaries could potentially be drawn. Nonetheless, the six zones as defined here do allow the direct comparison of different parts of Britain and Ireland, and have the potential to reveal regional differences in burial practices that are not necessarily obvious to those focusing on specific parts of these islands, wherever they may be.

At one level, this very basic overview of the evidence has confirmed a number of regional trends that were already generally known. Since Bøe's 1926 survey of the Irish material,³⁸ it has been understood that the Irish corpus (or in this case, zone F) is entirely dominated by material from Dublin, and more specifically Kilmainham. While 'Kilmainham' is no longer the 'vast Viking cemetery'³⁹ it was once imagined to be (see above), with 48 graves it is more than twice the size of the next nearest burial ground, has produced 13% of all known FISBs and almost exactly the same proportion of definite burials. The cemetery may not be 'vast', but it is certainly out of all proportion to anything else currently known from these islands and when the other burial sites within 5km of the modern city centre are included, Dublin with 19% of known graves from these islands remains 'the most important Norse burial-place in the British Isles'.⁴⁰ Similarly, the figures available as a result of the present study confirm Wilson's 1976 statement that the overwhelming majority of women's graves occurred in Scotland,⁴¹ with 36 of 50 known examples (72%), and almost exactly the same proportion of definite burials, occurring in Zones A or B. In contrast, only four brooch graves are known from zones C & D, and none at all from Zone F. Possible reasons for this distribution, and the relationship between brooch burials and women's graves, are discussed in detail in section 2.3. A discovery that is effectively new, on the other hand, is the focus of tertiary burials in eastern and southern England (C2/D2). Even in the north and west of these islands where such

³⁸ Published as Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940). For a discussion of the circumstances under which this volume was produced, see section 1.1.

³⁹ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham / Islandbridge', p.35

⁴⁰ Haakon Shetelig, 'Viking graves (1945)', p.20

⁴¹ Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west', p.99

graves can be identified with reasonable confidence, their inclusion in surveys of 'Viking' graves has been a comparatively recent development, and in the Danelaw, with its directly comparable and comparatively recent traditions of indigenous furnished burial, there has been an understandable reluctance to classify them as 'Scandinavian'.⁴² Nonetheless, these Anglo-Scandinavian graves do share certain characteristics with tertiary burials in the north and west, and merit further study, even if their role as statements of 'Scandinavian' ethnic identity is open to question, with some suggesting 'Anglo-Saxon', and others 'Danish' origins for graves of this type.⁴³ This discussion forms a key part of section 2.5. Conversely, comparison of the various zones confirms that while there are clearly local variations in burial practice, weapon burials are consistently important across these islands, albeit ranging from 41 - 47% of the total in Zones A-D, and rising sharply to 68% and 77% in Zones E & F respectively.

One aspect of the study of these graves that lies outside the present study is a detailed typological study of the grave-goods which are their most obvious and only real unifying characteristic. Previous research has focused almost exclusively on this aspect of burial, but while the results of this research have been extensively used throughout the present work wherever appropriate, the scale of the corpus, comprising as it does rather more than 1100 artefacts, effectively precluded this approach, particularly as the only readily available source, Shetelig's *Viking Antiquities*, uses a whole range of typological systems which are cited in an entirely unsystematic manner. A serious typological reassessment of the corpus would have necessitated an extensive series of museum visits and would have extended the duration of the thesis almost indefinitely. Instead, artefact types were recorded, with the major emphasis within the artefact chapters being the inclusion or exclusion of grave-good types, from the various weapons to dress fastenings and tools.

While even this somewhat simplistic approach to artefact types has produced some interesting results (see chapter 2), the exclusion of detailed typological assessment

⁴² This reluctance can be traced back to the late 1960s, as in, for example, Vera Evison, 'A Viking grave at Sonning, Berks.' in *The Antiquaries Journal* xli (1969), p.341. For a more recent discussion of the use of grave-goods by Christian communities, see R. A. Hall, & Mark Whyman, 'Settlement and monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to 11th centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* xl (1996), p.130

⁴³ For this ongoing debate, see sections 3.2 & 4.4

has inevitably led to the abandonment of typological dating within the present study. This is not necessarily a serious disadvantage. Typological dating is invariably problematic, and this is particularly true when trying to identify fine chronological distinctions within a narrow time period which at the absolute maximum cannot have lasted over more than 200 years (c.AD800-1000), and which in reality may have covered just half this date range. Indeed, in extreme cases detailed typological assessment has failed even to confirm a Viking Age date for some furnished graves, notable Harrold (128: Bedfordshire)⁴⁴ and Canwick Common (120: Lincolnshire).⁴⁵ It is not easy to subdivide the period under study using absolute dating methods either. While some radiocarbon dates have been produced for Viking Age furnished burials, the practice remains very much the exception rather than the rule, and even in those cases where it has been employed, the resulting broad date ranges often fail to provide sufficiently exact dates and can even contradict other sources of evidence. Radiocarbon dates from three of the four skeletons discovered at South Great George's Street (182.2-4: Dublin), for example, have produced date ranges focused in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, some time before the earliest documentary records of Scandinavian activity on the River Liffey.⁴⁶ Attempts to link burials to specific historical events, such as the 'Great Army's occupation of Repton in AD873-4 are equally problematic, and while interesting, are difficult to demonstrate conclusively.⁴⁷

Despite the many difficulties associated with the precise dating of specific graves, however, it may be appropriate to discuss the available evidence in a little more detail. According to conventional, document-based chronologies of Scandinavian activity in Britain and Ireland, the earliest raid took place at Lindisfarne in AD793, with raiding parties reaching the northern coast of Ireland only a few years later, in

⁴⁴ B. N. Eagles & V. I. Evison, 'Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire, 1951-3', in *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* v (1970), pp 42-4 has argued for a Viking Age date, while Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-goods in Conversion Period England c.600 – c.850. BAR British Series cclxi* (1997), pp 61, 71, 126 has argued that it is an unusually late (but pre-Viking Age) Anglo-Saxon grave.

⁴⁵ This sword is widely considered 11th century in date: see R. A. Smith, *British Museum Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities 1923* (London, 1923: Rpt Ipswich 1993), p.94, but the possibility that it is tenth century cannot be entirely ruled out.

⁴⁶ See Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin: is this the *longphort*?' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), p.50

⁴⁷ For a cautious critique of this approach, see James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw, in James Graham-Campbell, R.A. Hall, Judith Jesch and D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings in the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), p.110

AD795.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, it was to be approximately forty-five years before the earliest overwintering of a Scandinavian group is noted in the Irish Annals,⁴⁹ and more than fifty-five before the first recorded over-wintering in England.⁵⁰ In Ireland, the establishment of more or less permanent bases is first recorded in AD841,⁵¹ while in England the arrival of the 'Great Army' in AD865, and the subsequent conquest of the eastern part of the country marked a similar move towards settlement.⁵² In England, the treaty between Guthrum and Alfred is widely believed to have led to a relatively rapid conversion to Christianity, a process which presumably resulted in the eventual abandonment of furnished burial,⁵³ although Cumbria remains something of an exception (below). In Ireland, where the process of conversion seems to have been rather slower and the death of the first demonstrably Christian king of Dublin was not recorded until AD980,⁵⁴ no furnished burials are thought to be anything like this late, something which holds true for the rest of Britain and Ireland. In Scotland, where historical records simply do not exist, it has often been suggested that some burials may date from as early as AD800, but again there seems no reason to think furnished burial continued beyond the mid-tenth century at the latest.⁵⁵

Recently, there have been a number of attempts to push back the date of the earliest Scandinavian activity in these islands, and more particularly Scotland. Myhre in particular has made extensive use of grave-goods in an attempt to demonstrate this.⁵⁶ However, the evidence for this is thin on the ground and inherently problematic, not least because virtually every 'early' artefact type noted by Myhre, from Berdal type oval brooches to single-edged swords, have also been identified at Dublin, where indeed a second pair of Berdal brooches has recently been identified at Finglas

⁴⁸ Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (1987), p.193

⁴⁹ 'Gennti for Loch Eachadh beós' ('the heathens were still on Lough Neagh) in Seán mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *The Annals of Ulster (to AD1131)* (Dublin, 2004), pp 298-9 (AD841)

⁵⁰ 'And for the first time men stayed through the winter on Thanet'. Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents c.500-1042* (2nd Ed., London, 1979), p.188 (AD851)

⁵¹ 'Longphort oc Linn Duachaill... Longphort oc Duiblinn' ('Longphuirt at Annagassan and Dublin), in mac Airt and mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, pp 298-9 (AD841)

⁵² Roesdahl, *Vikings*, pp 234-7

⁵³ Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west', pp 97-8. See also sections 3.2 and 4.4

⁵⁴ 'Amlaibh, son of Sitric, chief lord of the foreigners of Dublin, went to Hi on pilgrimage; and he died there, after penance and a good life' in John O'Donovan (ed.) *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616* (7 vols, Dublin, 1856), ii, 711-3

⁵⁵ For a detailed reappraisal of the chronology of Scottish burials, see James Graham-Campbell & C.E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp 152-4

⁵⁶ Bjørn Myhre, 'The Beginning of the Viking Age – Some Current Archaeological Problems', in Anthony Fawkes & Richard Perkins (eds) *Viking Revaluations* (London, 1993), pp 188-92

(172).⁵⁷ The majority of historians and archaeologists would agree that no Scandinavian graves at Dublin can have been created before the establishment of a *longphort* there in AD837 at the earliest. If all of these 'early' artefact forms were available for deposition in Dublin in the mid-ninth century, those Scottish graves that contain similar grave-goods need not necessarily be any earlier. Other research on 'early' Scottish grave-goods, notably the 'exceptionally early' shield boss from Millhill (079: Arran) has also cast doubt on their early date, instead suggesting a broadly mid-ninth century origin.⁵⁸ In the Danelaw, too, documentary evidence continues to suggest that the earliest graves date from the second half of the ninth century.⁵⁹

At the opposite end of the proposed date range for FISBs, there is a general consensus that the furnished graves of Cumbria and Lancashire (zone C1) date from no earlier than the tenth century, an interpretation broadly derived from documentary records of Ingemundr's invasion of the Wirral in the years following the expulsion of the Hiberno-Norse population of Dublin in AD902 and the presence of some Gaelic place-names in this area.⁶⁰ Edwards has recently questioned this absolute rule, and argues that at least some graves may date from the (late) ninth century,⁶¹ but Graham-Campbell has recently reiterated his support for a tenth century date for burials in this area, and further proposed that the earliest burials on Man also date from no earlier than *c.*AD900,⁶² somewhat later than the mid-ninth century dates proposed by Wilson in 1974.⁶³ While it is possible that earlier (i.e. late ninth century) graves exist both on Man and in northwestern England, this is unlikely to be demonstrated using typological methods alone. It is, however, noticeable that these two areas lack any of the characteristically 'early' artefacts that have occasionally

⁵⁷ These brooches have been identified as 'Berdal type' by Maeve Sikora, NMI. *Pers. Comm.*

⁵⁸ S. H. Harrison, 'The Millhill burial in context: artefact, culture and chronology in the "Viking West"', in Steffan Stummann Hansen & Klavs Randsborg (eds) *Vikings in the West: Acta Archaeologica lxxi: Acta Archaeologica Supplementa ii* (2000), pp 65-78

⁵⁹ The 'earliest' dates proposed for furnished burials in this area are normally associated with the various camps of the 'Great Army'. See Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian Burial', pp 106, 109-10, 115

⁶⁰ See N. J. Higham, 'Northumbria, Mercia, and the Irish Sea Norse, 893-926' in James Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Viking Treasure from the North-West: The Cuerdale Hoard in Context* (Liverpool, 1992), pp 21-30

⁶¹ B.J.N. Edwards, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), p.1-2

⁶² James Graham-Campbell, 'The Early Viking Age in the Irish Sea Area', in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, pp 112, 117

⁶³ D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age on the Isle of Man: the Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), p.28

been found in Scotland and Ireland. In both the latter areas, however, there is also some artefactual evidence for continuing furnished burial in the tenth century, including double-shelled oval brooches from sites such as Arklow (187: Wicklow)⁶⁴ and Castletown (040: Highland)⁶⁵ as well as Petersen type X swords from sites such as Bride Street (179: Dublin) and Larne (083: Antrim).⁶⁶ Indeed, the latest evidence for a definite 'Viking' burial found anywhere in these islands comes from a coin of Eadmund (940-6), buried in a weapon grave at Buckquoy (022: Orkney). Even in eastern England, however, there is limited evidence for some tenth-century burials, ranging from a type X sword from Nottingham (122)⁶⁷ to some rather more ambiguous evidence from Magdalen Bridge, Oxford (130).⁶⁸

Whatever the precise date of individual burials, the artefactual and other evidence available for furnished graves suggests that the practice lasted for at most a century and a half, from c.800 to 950, and it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the overwhelming majority were created in the century between c.830 and 930. The evidence of 'early' artefacts, whatever their absolute date, further demonstrates that traditional, simplistic models, which envision a gradual migration of Scandinavian activity south from the Northern Isles, with northern material earlier than southern, cannot be sustained using the available evidence from graves.⁶⁹ Instead, the evidence now points to activity beginning at a number of widely spaced sites spread throughout zones A, B & F, from sites such as Pierowall (018: Orkney) and Millhill

⁶⁴ For the most recent dating of Wicklow, see Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking burials from County Wicklow' in *Wicklow Archaeology and Society* i (1998), p.34

⁶⁵ For the most recent detailed study of this find, see C. E. Batey, 'The Viking and late Norse graves of Caithness and Sutherland' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds) *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso & Kirkwall, 22 August – 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.151

⁶⁶ The Bride Street sword has been reassociated with this site as a result of research carried out on behalf of the IVGP. Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report. NMI Archive. The Larne sword was reidentified and classified as type X in Thomas Fanning, 'The Viking grave goods discovered near Larne, Co. Antrim in 1840' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* c (1970), p.76. Petersen type X swords is have been confirmed as of tenth century date in Aidan Walsh, 'A summary classification of Viking age swords in Ireland' in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, p.232

⁶⁷ Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.106

⁶⁸ This interpretation was initially proposed by John Blair & Barbara Crawford, 'A late-Viking burial at Magdalen Bridge, Oxford?' in *Oxoniensia* lxii (1997), pp 135-43

⁶⁹ See for example, A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), pp 121, 127, where the earliest settlement of Orkney is dated to c.AD800, while that of the western Isles is dated to shortly before the mid-ninth century. The idea that Scotland was settled some considerable time before Ireland is also central to some recent theories developed by Donncha Ó Corráin.

(079: Arran),⁷⁰ to Finglas (172) and College Green (180) at Dublin.⁷¹ Furnished burials subsequently spread to other sites in these zones and in eastern England (C2/D2), and in the tenth century at the latest, spread to the Isle of Man and western England (C1/D1).

The resulting narrow chronological range and broadly contemporary use of furnished burial by insular Scandinavian communities across these islands suggests that an approach that minimises chronological variation between burials is justified. Further support for this approach is provided by the realisation that with a few notable exceptions, furnished burials of demonstrably widely different dates almost never occur at the same burial sites. One particular exception is Kilmainham (177: Dublin), which has produced evidence for both ninth- and tenth-century burials, but the sheer scale of this cemetery (above) makes this unsurprising. At Repton (123: Derbyshire), there is clear evidence for two phases of burial, with a number of tertiary graves (123:07-9) overlying a rather more elaborate weapon burial within a mound (123:01), but the later graves, containing bodies wrapped or dressed in elaborate cloth, may well represent a subtly different burial tradition (see section 3.2). At nearby Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), the excavator has proposed that almost all its mounds were created within an exceptionally narrow chronological span,⁷² and while the cemetery at Pierowall (018: Orkney) need not have been created quite so rapidly, a cursory examination of its artefacts suggests a broadly ninth-century date range.⁷³ While other small cemeteries such as Westray (021: Orkney) and Ballinaby (073: Islay) may have been in use for some time, there is only one Scottish site where there is clear evidence for two successive phases of burial, this being Càrn a' Bharraich (072: Oronsay), where a mound covering a boat burial overlay, or was cut by, an additional grave.⁷⁴ At no other insular site is there any secure evidence to suggest

⁷⁰ Batey & Graham-Campbell, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.154 identify both graves as relatively early, although their comments on Clibberswick (001: Shetland) further demonstrate some of the difficulties associated with typological dating.

⁷¹ An early date for Finglas is suggested by a pair of Berdal type oval brooches, and a single-edged sword has been found at College Green. Examples of both 'early' artefact types have also been identified in the Kilmainham assemblage.

⁷² Richards, 'Viking barrow cemetery', pp 65-7

⁷³ This statement is based on an examination of the artefacts included in Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 90-6

⁷⁴ Despite the inclusion of a simple plan, the account of this discovery is exceptionally confused, and although it clearly demonstrates that there were two phases, it is by no means certain which was the earlier. See Symington Grieve, 'Note upon Carn nan Bharraich, or Cairn of the Men of Barra, a burial mound of the Viking time on the island of Oronsay, Argyllshire, with an outline of the political

that burial continued for an extended period of time, and the many insular burial sites represented by single graves can only be indications that these local insular Scandinavian communities, for whatever reason, only used the practice once (see chapter 2). This supports a long-held belief, originally expressed by Shetelig, that this burial practice was used only by the first generation of Viking settlers.⁷⁵ While the reasons for this are by no means fully understood, the evidence indicates that whatever the point within the ninth or tenth century when they were created, all of these furnished burials were created by recently arrived insular Scandinavian groups, and were therefore created under similar circumstances within a comparatively confined period of time. Consequently, graves of slightly different dates are at least broadly comparable, as are the social factors that influenced their creation, whatever the precise local circumstances.

If the precise date of a given burial did not unduly impact on the types of artefacts chosen for deposition within it, it can also be assumed that the date of a given burial did not affect the selection of burial sites either, with directly comparable factors influencing this choice throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. Nonetheless, even a superficial examination of the distribution pattern reveals some clear regional variations. Perhaps the most immediately obvious is a tendency for burials in zones C2 and D2 to extend rather further inland than anywhere else in the study area, where the pattern is essentially coastal. There is also a marked tendency to find graves spread along certain river valleys, ranging in size from substantial waterways such as the Trent (zone D) and Suir (zone F), through smaller rivers such as the Bann (zone B), Spey (zone A) and Eden (zone C) to much smaller streams such as the Neb (zone E), with by no means all of these waterways being navigable. The positioning of burials within the landscape is discussed in more detail in section 4.2, but it may be appropriate to note here that there is also a clear tendency for burials to occur in definite clusters, rather than being spread evenly across areas known to have experienced Scandinavian incursions. While Dublin (zone F) is perhaps the most obvious of these, smaller nucleations can be found throughout the study area, from the western part of Mainland, Orkney (zone A) to Colonsay and Oronsay (Zone B) to

history of the Western Isles during the latter half of the ninth century' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvi (1914), pp 272-91

⁷⁵ Shetelig 'The Viking graves', pp 2, 23-4, 36

central East Anglia (Zone D). Conversely, there are extensive areas known (or at least suspected) to have experienced extensive Scandinavian settlement that have not yet produced any evidence for furnished burials, with the fertile territory of eastern Mainland (Orkney) being a case in point,⁷⁶ although the (perceived) general absence of burials from the Danelaw is perhaps the most widely known of these.⁷⁷ Whatever their potential origin, it is clear that these variations merit closer investigation (see section 4.1).

It is precisely these variations in both artefact and site selection and their potential interpretation which form the focus of the present study. Having provided a very general overview of the survey that lies at the core of this work, and of Viking Age furnished burials patterns across Britain and Ireland, we may now turn our attention to a more detailed examination of the first of its two themes, artefacts.

⁷⁶ For a recent appraisal of this distribution pattern, see James Barrett, 'Christian and pagan practice during the conversion of Viking age Orkney and Shetland' in Martin Carver (ed.) *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), pp 220-1

⁷⁷ Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed.) p.142

CHAPTER TWO – ARTEFACTS (I) Weapon and Brooch Burials

2.1 Introduction to Grave-Goods

It has already been noted that the overwhelming majority of research on furnished insular Scandinavian burials has effectively ignored their position within the broader physical and cultural landscape.¹ This disinterest, however, stands in complete contrast to that created and sustained by the artefacts discovered within them, which form the focus of this chapter. At one level, of course, this distinction is hardly surprising. ‘Viking’ graves have, after all, almost invariably been identified as a result of their contents, and they continue to be effectively defined by their grave-goods today.² Long before Worsaae and other pioneers identified them as Scandinavian, the distinctive weapons and brooches that characterise so many of these burials attracted the interest of antiquarians. This was perhaps most notable in Scotland and Ireland, where sporadic accounts of what can now be recognised as Viking Age grave-goods were recorded from the early eighteenth century onwards.³ Early descriptions of similar grave-goods also occurred in England,⁴ but here the presence of earlier Anglo-Saxon furnished burials makes the interpretation of some of these early accounts rather more problematic than elsewhere.⁵ As time progressed, the high quality and excellent preservation of many of these objects, at least partially the result of the care with which they had been deposited, made them highly desirable to collectors, both private and public, but their context was all too often ignored. Later again, typologists were also drawn to these artefacts, and there were even a number of short-lived insular typologies of Scandinavian artefacts, of which Curle’s study of Scottish oval brooches, divided into its Pierowall, Ballinaby and

¹ See section 1.2

² See section 1.3

³ Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (London, 1703), p.50; Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and a Voyage to the Hebrides* (2nd Ed., London, 1772), pp 255-6; J. C. Walker, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (2nd Ed., Dublin, 1818), pp 30, 131, 173

⁴ Hayman Rooke, ‘Druidical and other British remains in Cumberland, described by Hayman Rooke, Esq., F. A. S., in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Lort’ in *Archaeologia* x (1792), pp.111-3

⁵ See, for example, the site near Blackrod, Lancashire (105), identified as Viking Age in J. D. Cowen, ‘Viking burials in Cumbria’, in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society New Series* xlvi (1949), pp 73-6, but which Audrey Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), p.143 tentatively identifies as Anglo-Saxon in origin.

Reay types, is probably the most developed example,⁶ although Wheeler's sword typology was undoubtedly more widely used.⁷ In Scandinavia too, similar preservation conditions led to extensive studies of grave-goods in the same period, and indeed Rygh's section on the 'Younger Iron Age' and all three of Petersen's wide-ranging typological studies focused almost exclusively on grave-goods.⁸ Given the assumed Scandinavian origin of the artefacts recovered from FISBs, it is perhaps hardly surprising that these Scandinavian typologies, particular Petersen's, came to dominate twentieth-century studies of these grave-goods.

The compilation of *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* predated the dominance of Petersen's typologies, and the authors of its six volumes made use of an almost bewildering range of typological systems and other reference points, annotated in a number of different ways, which can make the identification of individual artefacts highly problematic.⁹ Despite this confusion, however, all of the compilers demonstrated a similar concern for the typological identification of the artefacts under discussion, one that led almost invariably to Scandinavian parallels. The dominance of grave-goods in these texts, a feature already discussed elsewhere,¹⁰ is a direct reflection of the long tradition of antiquarian and archaeological interest, collection and recording of these artefacts not just in Britain and Ireland, but in Scandinavia as well. In the same way, the authors' emphasis on broad patterns of developing artefact forms rather than the contents and context of individual graves is a direct reflection of scholarly thought at the time of compilation and publication. Although some later interpretative texts, notably

⁶ James Curle, 'On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvi (1914), pp 292-315

⁷ R. E. M. Wheeler, *London and the Vikings* (London, 1927)

⁸ Oluf Rygh, *Norske Oldsager Ordrede og Forklarede* (Christiania, 1885; Reprint, Trondheim 1999); Jan Petersen, *De Norske Vikingesverd. En Typologisk-Kronologisk Studie over Vikingetidens Vaaben Skrifter Utgit av Videnskapsselskapet i Kristiania 1919, 2. Historisk-Filosofisk Klasse i* (Kristiania, 1919); idem, *Vikingetidens Smykker. Stavanger Museums Skrifter ii* (Stavanger, 1928); idem, *Vikingetidens Redskaper. Skrifter Utgit av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo* (Oslo, 1951)

⁹ Haakon Shetelig, (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (5 vols, Oslo, 1940, vol.6, Oslo, 1954)); A detailed study of the typological systems used in this text is beyond the current study, but while Rygh, Petersen and Wheeler feature prominently (and apparently interchangeably) within these volumes, there are numerous references to other articles and authors.

¹⁰ See sections 1.1 & 1.3

those by Shetelig and Wilson,¹¹ sought to interpret the material contained in *Viking Antiquities* by focusing on the evidence for burial rites and traditions, and more recent excavation reports have discussed these practices in detail, there has been a general lack of interest in comparative studies of individual assemblages and their relationship with the social *milieu* which produced them.¹² To some extent, this neglect can be seen as the result of a series of firmly held assumptions about these burials and their contents. Viking Age grave-goods have been almost universally assumed to be the personal possessions of the deceased, virtually those objects in their possession at the time of death.¹³ As the graves of ‘raiders’ (a dominant theme in both England and Ireland), or more rarely ‘first settlers’ (an idea occasionally raised in Scotland and on the Isle of Man), the social context which had produced them was seen as essentially transient and impermanent, and therefore needed no detailed analysis. In this context, Shetelig’s assertion that these were the graves of ‘Norse colonists permanently established on the land’ was unusually forthright, but the major focus of his paper was a detailed comparison of these ‘customs and rites’ with contemporary Scandinavian material rather than an investigation of their more local significance.¹⁴

Shetelig’s emphasis on the ‘customs and rites’ used in these burials was part of a long tradition in which many nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars sought to explain the presence of artefacts in FISBs using what were essentially religious models. Grave-goods were, after all, by far the most obvious feature of ‘Viking’ graves and the primary means by which they could be identified against the background of indigenous, unfurnished, Christian burials. As it could be assumed that the absence of grave-goods

¹¹ Haakon Shetelig, ‘The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland’ in *Acta Archaeologica* xiv (1945), pp.1-55 & ‘The distribution of the graves and the extent of Norse settlements’ in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig (eds) *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), pp 65-112; D. M. Wilson, ‘Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Ser.5 vol. xxvi (1976), pp 95-113

¹² Although most recent publications of insular burials have included some contextual information, the detailed comparative studies in Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial In Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick’s Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later. Centre for Manx Studies Monographs* ii (Liverpool, 2002), and J. D. Richards, ‘Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire’ in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv (2004), pp 23-116 are perhaps of particular significance.

¹³ E.g. Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London, 1987), p.156

¹⁴ Shetelig, ‘Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland’, p.2

was a reflection of Christian beliefs, it therefore followed that their presence must be associated with pagan beliefs. The late nineteenth century saw the translation and publication of a whole series of Icelandic sagas, some of which seemed to provide information on burial rituals, and Anderson was personally responsible for bringing a translation of Ibn Fadlan's account of a *Rus* funeral to a wider (Scottish) audience in 1872.¹⁵ Suitably bowdlerised for Victorian tastes, this description, combined with excerpts from *Heimskringla* and elsewhere, resulted in interpretations of FISBs that focused almost exclusively on ideas of the afterlife, and increasingly on 'Valhalla'. The deeply problematic nature of these primary sources, particularly when applied to insular burial material, is discussed in more detail elsewhere,¹⁶ but for the present it may be suggested that while ritual and belief clearly had a part to play in the assembly of grave-goods, the variety within these assemblages indicates both that these beliefs were more varied than the surviving documentary sources would suggest, and that FISBs fulfilled complex social functions that went far beyond the preparation of the dead for an afterlife.

To many nineteenth- and even twentieth-century commentators, however, weapons could be directly linked to a belief in Valhalla. By extension, all grave-goods could be identified as personal possessions and as part of an essentially functional preparation of the dead for the afterlife. Consequently, specific assemblages attracted comparatively little attention beyond general comments on 'gender' and 'occupation'. As was so often the case, Anderson laid the foundation for this approach in his 1880 study of two of the burials from Ballinaby, Islay (073.2 & 073.3), interpreted as those of a 'smith' and a 'woman' respectively, with the presence of 'smithy tools' being 'quite in accordance with the faith that foretold the need of weapons'.¹⁷ Anderson can perhaps be forgiven for failing to recognise the exceptional wealth of these graves, but more recent

¹⁵ Joseph Anderson, 'Description by Ahmed Ibn-Fozlan (an eye-witness) of the ceremonies attending the incineration of the dead body of a Norse chief, within the early part of the tenth century. Translated from Holmboe's Danish version of the Arabic original, with notes on the origin of cremation, and its continuance' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ix (1872), pp 518-31

¹⁶ See in particular section 3.1

¹⁷ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell, Esq., of Ballinaby: with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1879), pp.55, 63

commentators have tended to follow the same general pattern of interpretation on those rare occasions when they have moved beyond basic descriptions of the artefacts themselves. In contrast, discussions of such issues as social rank and status, gender roles, and the more complex symbolism of individual artefacts has been comparatively muted, and although a handful of exceptionally well furnished graves such as Kiloran Bay (067) have been identified as those of 'chieftains',¹⁸ most graves have been identified as those of simple 'Vikings', 'warriors' or 'Viking women', whatever the number or quality of the artefacts found within them. This reluctance to comment on social rank in FISBs was undoubtedly compounded by the work of early twentieth-century Scandinavian scholars, perhaps most notably Brøgger, who saw Viking Age society as essentially egalitarian, and who consequently tended to gloss over differences between graves, seeing almost all of the Norwegian burials as those of *bønder*, free peasant farmers who were part of 'a peasant civilisation devoted to agricultural pursuits and hunting and trapping'.¹⁹ On occasion, this belief could be taken to extraordinary levels, as with the exceptionally elaborate grave from Aamot, Hedmark. Furnished with a sword, spearhead, shield boss, two axes, seven projectile heads, a penannular brooch, sickle, cauldron and bridle, the latter artefact strongly suggesting a horse was placed in the grave, Brøgger nonetheless considered it the grave of a 'typical peasant farmer', with the number and quality of the artefacts suggesting no more than that this social group had access to large quantities of iron in the period.²⁰ Given that only 7 FISB have produced more than ten artefacts, while Aamot has an artefact count of eighteen, it is perhaps hardly surprising that British and Irish scholars made a series of similar assumptions about the social rank of those buried in furnished graves in their respective areas. If not precisely *bønder*, then these were clearly the graves of 'ordinary' Vikings, killed on raids or dying following the establishment of small farmsteads, and attempts to differentiate between the 'peasant' graves of northern Scotland and the 'aristocratic' graves of the Western Isles rarely presented systematic evidence to support their theories.

¹⁸ E.g. James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.122

¹⁹ Brøgger's views are perhaps most clearly expressed in English in A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), p.8

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp 13, 16, and plate facing pg.20

Given the widely held assumption that furnished burials were essentially expressions of religious belief produced by a fundamentally egalitarian society, it is hardly surprising that their study, like that of most aspects of medieval or historic archaeology, was largely unaffected by developments in archaeological theory, particularly social interpretation, which characterised the discipline from the 1960s onwards.²¹ Both the 'New Archaeology' and the more recent 'processual' school emphasised the importance of quantification as a means of studying past societies, and to many early practitioners, grave-goods and mortuary practices provided an ideal subject for study. Unlike most archaeological material, grave-goods were consciously selected by those performing the burial ritual and were often recovered as discrete groups, two factors that suggested they might provide an unusually direct link to those societies which had produced them. In many ways, this systematic approach to graves and grave-goods reached its apogee in the 1981 publication, *The Archaeology of Death*,²² in which a series of case studies examined mortuary evidence from a series of sites around the world with the explicit intention of investigating themes such as social complexity, rank and gender roles. While only one of these case studies addressed Viking Age material,²³ and the study of furnished insular Scandinavian burials was almost entirely unaffected by these developments, two short articles on Norwegian Viking Age graves were produced in the same intellectual climate. In 1982, Dommasnes used burial material to address the issue of gender roles and ranks in western Norway, and in 1985, Solberg produced a broader study of social ranks, based on the type and number of weapons in Norwegian graves.²⁴ Although both articles provide some intriguing comparative material,²⁵ they had comparatively little influence on the study of insular Scandinavian burials.

²¹ For a general introduction to these developments, see Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.386-483. For more general definitions and discussions, see Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999)

²² Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes, Ian & Klavs Randsborg (eds), *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge, 1981)

²³ Randsborg, Klavs, 'Burial, succession and early state formation in Denmark', in Chapman *et al*, *Archaeology of Death*, pp 105-21

²⁴ L. H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), pp 70-84; Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985), pp 61-76

²⁵ See sections 2.2 & 2.3

Archaeological theory has of course moved on since the 1980s, and post-processualist approaches to the past are deeply critical of what they see as the rather simplistic approaches to material culture that characterised much of the work of the 1980s.²⁶ There is a new awareness of the complexity of burial rites and the huge range of factors that may influence the production of individual grave assemblages, and there has been a general movement away from the study of 'the systematic, institutional relationship of the social system' to 'the active reproduction of social relations through an agency'.²⁷ Burials, like most other forms of archaeological evidence, are not simply passive reflections of an established norm, but are consciously negotiated at a local level, and the majority of current archaeological researchers operate at this same, local level, demonstrating a keen concern for the wide range of factors which resulted in the selection of individual artefacts for burial. Burials, many would now argue, cannot be directly compared, because the factors that influenced their deposition varied from place to place. Large numbers of elaborate grave-goods may be deposited by social groups under threat rather than providing a simple expression of power by a securely established elite,²⁸ and in the present context it has long been suggested that the absence of grave-goods may be the result of a Christian influence rather than comparative poverty.²⁹ Conversely, it is now argued that the conversion to Christianity does not automatically lead to the abandonment of grave-goods,³⁰ and in some extreme cases, that the use of grave-goods in ninth and tenth-century insular contexts does not necessarily imply a Scandinavian origin for the deceased and his or her community.³¹

²⁶ For an extended critique of *The Archaeology of Death*, see Sarah Tarlow & Brian Boyd (eds) *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* ii.1 (1992)

²⁷ J. C. Barrett, 'Comment' in Tarlow & Boyd, *Archaeological Review*, p.160

²⁸ See, for example, some recent interpretations of the material from Sutton Hoo.

²⁹ E.g. D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), p.30

³⁰ E.g. B. K. Young, 'The myth of the pagan cemetery' in C. E. Karkov, K. M. Wickham-Crowley & B. K. Young (eds), *Spaces of the Living and the Dead: An Archaeological Dialogue. American Early Medieval Studies* iii (1999), pp.61-85

³¹ Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds) *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. Studies in the Early Middle Ages* ii (Turnhout, 2000), p.264

All of these criticisms are of course valid, and are addressed in more detail elsewhere,³² but while any approach to grave-goods must take these and other factors into account, only the most extreme proponents of the post-processual school would argue that there is no relationship between grave-goods and the groups who consciously selected and deposited them, however complex the factors that influenced their selection may have been. No detailed assessment of the number and type of artefacts placed in FISBs has ever been undertaken, and however problematic this assessment, or how varied the precise reasons for selecting individual grave-goods, clear patterns do emerge and can potentially provide new insights to insular Scandinavian activity in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Even a very superficial overview of FISBs suggests an enormous range in the number and type of artefacts placed in graves (see section 1.4). It has already been pointed out that the minimum of 379 graves for which we have evidence can be divided into three distinct groups (see section 1.3). Of these, weapon graves are the largest group, with 200 examples or just over half the total (53%). Rather less common are brooch burials, with 50 examples (14%), while the generally neglected group here called tertiary burials has 126 examples, almost exactly a third of the total (33%).³³ A number of commentators have noted how remarkably similar the contents of many of these graves are, particularly those in the weapon and brooch group, and have even suggested that this may be the result of a selection policy on the part of some early collectors.³⁴ While a certain selectivity undoubtedly contributed to this pattern, however, the fact remains that 250 graves, 66% of the total, contain at least one weapon or oval brooch, with the ratio of definite burials corresponding almost precisely. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter (sections 3.2 & 3.3) has been given over to a detailed discussion of these artefacts, their distribution, and potential interpretation.

³² See section 3.2

³³ Note that 3 graves, all from Westness, (021.6-8: Orkney) are 'unclassified'. See section 1.4

³⁴ E.g. Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p.138 and *pers. Comm.* idem

While two-thirds of FISBs share a comparatively limited range of artefacts, there is also a remarkable variety in the quantity and range of artefacts placed in these graves. A more detailed discussion of this is provided elsewhere (see section 1.4), but for the present it may be noted that 135 (36%) of the 376 graves with sufficient evidence to be included in this study contained just one artefact, 76 (20%) contained two, and 50 (13%) contain three (see fig.2.1.1).³⁵ Thus, 69% of FISBs contained three artefacts or less, while only 51 graves (14%) contained more than five artefacts, and of these, only 7 (2%) contained more than ten artefacts. Where definite burials are concerned, this pattern is a little less pronounced, with 25% of these burials having one, 15% having two and 15% (again) having three artefacts, for just 55% of the definite total, while 4% contained more than ten, but these figures reflect the simple fact that well-furnished graves are more likely to be classified as definite than those with one or two.

The artefact count of each of the three groups of weapon, brooch and tertiary burials is also interesting (**fig.2.1.2**). Given that over half of FISBs are weapons graves, it is perhaps unsurprising that they dominate the corpus of both poorly and well-furnished burials, but the fact that almost all well-furnished graves are weapon graves is one which merits further discussion (see section 2.2). Despite being numerically fewer, brooch burials follow a very similar pattern, although the most richly furnished woman's grave known, that from Ardvouray (060), contained thirteen artefacts, as against seventeen in the weapon burial from Kiloran Bay (067). The two most richly furnished tertiary burials, from Carn a Bharraich, Oronsay (72.1), and St. Patrick's Isle, Man (160.1), both contained nine artefacts, but the overwhelming majority of tertiary graves (105 of 123, or 85%) contained three artefacts or less. This is a substantially higher proportion than either weapon or brooch burials and may perhaps suggest some differences in status, an idea addressed in more detail in section 3.2, which deals specifically with this group, by far the most neglected of those identified in this study.

³⁵ These figures include burials from Kilmainham (177), with fractional values for minimum numbers of grave-goods, specifically 4 graves with an average of 2.5 artefacts and 8 with an average of 3.3 artefacts.

Rather than confine this analysis to numerical counts, however, it was decided to address the issue of the range of artefacts placed in graves by examining two specific artefact types and their potential significance to the burial ritual (section 3.1). Boat burial is exceptionally rare in Britain and Ireland, and is normally taken to indicate high status, although its potential ritual significance has also attracted attention, particularly in Scandinavia. In contrast, the presence of smith's tools in an equally limited number of graves has attracted comparatively little comment beyond developments of Anderson's idea of smithing in the afterlife. By examining these two artefact groups and their potential significance in more detail, it was hoped to address a series of issue relating to the selection of grave-goods and their potential significance at both a social and symbolic level. By so doing, it is hoped to develop a series of ideas relating to the selection of artefacts in general, one which may be applicable to FISBs in general.

2.2 'Viking Graves'? Weapon Burials Re-Examined

In the modern popular imagination, 'Vikings' are almost inextricably linked with warfare and weaponry. These associations can be traced back to contemporary early medieval writers, effectively beginning with Alcuin of York's assessment of the AD793 raid on Lindisfarne that is normally taken to mark the beginning of the 'Viking Age'.¹ However, an emphasis on the Vikings' military ability and violent tendencies took on a new intensity in the nineteenth century, particularly among historians writing about those parts of western Europe that had suffered the full impact of Viking raids.² It was in precisely this historiographical context, when addressing the Royal Irish Academy in 1846, that Worsaae first drew an explicit connection between insular 'Viking' graves and warfare. Correctly identifying the then newly discovered graves from Kilmainham (177.06-15) as 'Scandinavian', he made no attempt to deny their 'violent' character, or their association with 'Viking' marauders, suggesting that the artefacts found in them were 'perhaps the very weapons by which Norsemen had shed Irish blood'.³ Twenty years later, Wilde was so struck by the weapons and 'panoply of war' found in another part of the same cemetery that he proposed the bodies found with this material had been struck down in a 'battle'.⁴ Even Charles Haliday, easily the most sympathetic nineteenth-century commentator on Viking Age Dublin, was convinced that weapon burials such as those from College Green were those of 'warriors'.⁵

Elsewhere in these islands, the link between graves, weapons and 'raiding' was perhaps not quite so pronounced as in Ireland, which has a particularly high proportion of weapon graves,⁶ but the same basic assumption underlay many discussion of Viking graves. Anderson, for example, in his pioneering study of the 'Relics of the Viking Period... in Scotland', had no doubt that weapons were

¹ 'Letter of Alcuin to Ethelred, king of Northumbria' in Dorothy Whitelock (ed.) *English Historical Documents c.500-1042* (2nd Ed., London, 1979), pp 842-4

² As late as the 1980s, an exhibition at the British Museum sought to redress the 'bad press' that the Vikings had received in the past. See Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 2

³ J. J. A. Worsaae, 'A review of the different descriptions of Danish and Irish antiquities, and of several historical events connected with the invasion of Ireland' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iii (1847), p. 333

⁴ W. R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), p.14. For a more extended discussion of Wilde's interpretation of this material, see section 1.2

⁵ Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd Ed., Dublin, 1884: Reprint, Shannon, 1969), p. 154

⁶ See section 1.4

specifically associated with 'heathen' 'Viking' 'warrior(s)',⁷ and he further emphasised the martial character of both Scandinavian life and afterlife in a second article a few years later.⁸ Further south and more than fifty years later, Cowen was confident that the weapon burial from Hesket (093: Cumbria) represented 'a tolerably complete inventory of the personal possessions of a Norse warrior',⁹ and at much the same time (the 1930s) members of the Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and District Field Club were informed that a recently discovered weapon grave at Talacre (145: Gwynedd) was the site at which 'the Vikings buried their fallen comrade'.¹⁰ Nearly forty years later and further south again, Evison was prepared to consider all the weapon graves of southern England either as those of 'early Viking raiders who died in attacks launched from boats', or the remains of individuals who had fought in the Great Army.¹¹

This latter idea has enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, with Graham-Campbell cautiously reiterating Evison's proposal that a group of graves around Reading (138-41: Berkshire) could be associated with the Great Army's overwintering at that site in AD870-1, and noting a potential connection between at least one of the weapon burials at Nottingham (122) and the winter camp there in AD867-8.¹² At Repton (123: Derbyshire), Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle are convinced that all the weapon and several tertiary graves there can be linked to the Great Army's overwintering at the site in AD873-4.¹³ Similarly, Richards has proposed that the burials at the nearby site of Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), only three of which included weapon fragments among their grave-goods, can also be associated with the Great

⁷ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1872-4), p.562

⁸ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell, Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1879-80), pp 72-4

⁹ J. D. Cowen, 'A catalogue of objects of the Viking period in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 2nd Ser. xxxiv (1934), p.175

¹⁰ F. G. Smith, 'Talacre and the Viking grave' in *Proceedings of the Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and District Field Club* xvii (1931-3), p.45

¹¹ V. I. Evison, 'A Viking grave at Sonning, Berks.' in *The Antiquaries Journal* il (1969), p.342

¹² James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch & David Parsons (eds) *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 106,114

¹³ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army', 873-4' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, p. 60

Army, or at the very least the 'war-torn frontier zone' of the 870s.¹⁴ Simpson's recent interpretation of a group of weapon and tertiary graves from South Great George's Street (182: Dublin) as 'Viking warrior burials', perhaps part of a 'raiding party', is the latest in a long tradition of similar interpretations of these remains.¹⁵ While the last sixty years have seen some dissenting voices, perhaps most notably Shetelig¹⁶ and Wilson,¹⁷ as well as a number of more regional and local commentators,¹⁸ the assumption that the majority of insular Viking graves are in some way linked to 'warriors' and 'raiding' continues to underlie most interpretations of these monuments throughout Britain and Ireland.

At first glance, the evidence provided by the graves themselves appears to support their interpretation as essentially martial monuments. As will already be clear, the overwhelming majority of furnished insular Scandinavian burials, comprising 200 of the 379 listed here, or 53% of the total, contained at least one weapon, and while the proportion is slightly lower when definite burials are considered in isolation (47%), there are clear reasons for this¹⁹ and weapon burials effectively dominate these definite graves as well. If the occasionally problematic tertiary burials are temporarily put to one side, weapon burials outnumber brooch graves by 200 to 50 within the study area. Interestingly, a similar ratio is characteristic of Norway itself. Of the 4,629 graves there that were assessed by Solberg in 1985, 3,796 (82%) contained weapons.²⁰ While Solberg's criteria for identifying weapons as grave-goods were particularly generous, and her study included Merovingian as well as Viking Age material (i.e. c.AD550-1000)²¹ the dominance of graves with weapons in both areas is striking. However, Norwegian commentators such as Solberg and

¹⁴ J. D. Richards, 'Boundaries and cult centres: Viking burial in Derbyshire' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, p.102

¹⁵ Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warriors burials in Dublin: is this the *Longphort*?', in Seán Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), p.53

¹⁶ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.2

¹⁷ D. M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* xxvi (1976), p.99

¹⁸ See section 1.2

¹⁹ See section 1.4

²⁰ Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985), p.63

²¹ Solberg does not provide a chronological definition of the Merovingian or Viking period. These dates are derived from Anders Hagan, *Norges Oldtid* (1st Ed. Oslo, 1967), pp 392-4

Dommasnes²² place much less emphasis on the 'military' character of the grave-goods, and in Denmark, where weapon graves are much rarer than elsewhere in Scandinavia, recent work has emphasised the status of the deceased, rather than their ability to fight.²³

Throughout the three regions into which she divided her study area, which comprised most of the country south of the Arctic Circle (**fig.2.2.1**), Solberg identified three weapons that were characteristic of the both the Merovingian and Viking periods, these being the sword, spear and axe. While she noted that shield bosses occurred in one in seven graves of these periods and are also referred to in early law tracts, she made the surprising decision to omit these artefacts from her study 'since they represent[ed] defensive armament'.²⁴ Less surprising was her omission of arrowheads. While figures for Norway are presently unavailable, these artefacts are rare in insular furnished graves, with no more than 38 examples recorded, even when possible examples are included. At Scar, eight arrowheads were rusted together as a single mass, representing the contents of a quiver,²⁵ but among the material found at Kilmainham in 1845 (177.06-15), nine arrowheads were recorded as individual artefacts.²⁶ Although these must have been buried separately, and could well have come from several different graves, they have here been interpreted as representing a minimum of one, which gives a total of nine insular examples that contain arrowheads. As such, these are by far the rarest weapons in these graves and also enjoy the distinction of being the only type that has never been identified as the only weapon in a grave. Solberg's decision to ignore knives is even more understandable, and has also been followed in the present study, where they are interpreted as domestic or industrial artefacts, a decision based both on their small size and the fact that unlike any other weapon discussed here, they are regularly found in brooch burials.²⁷

²² L. H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), pp.70-84

²³ These two concepts are hardly mutually exclusive, however (see below). For a processualist interpretation of the Danish evidence, see Klavs Randsborg, 'Burial, succession and early state formation in Denmark', in Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes & Klavs Randsborg (eds) *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge, 1981), pp 113-5

²⁴ Solberg, 'Social Status', pp 66, 72

²⁵ Kim Nissan, Rod McCullagh & Andrea Smith, 'The arrowheads' in Olwen Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), pp 112-5

²⁶ This information has been derived from research carried out on behalf of the IVGP.

²⁷ James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts – A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980), p. 10

Of the three weapon types included in Solberg's study of southern Norway, the least common in insular contexts is the axe. Just thirty-five axeheads have been recorded from definite, probable and possible burials across these islands. This is odd, because by the twelfth century they were specifically associated with Scandinavians. The Cambro-Norman Giraldus Cambrensis, writing in the 1180s, was convinced that the Irish had acquired their habit of fighting with axes from the Ostmen, a statement that can only reflect a widely held contemporary belief.²⁸ While this tradition could potentially relate to the period after the insular Scandinavian population had abandoned grave-goods, the contrast with the Norwegian evidence is equally striking. While figures varied somewhat between the three regions into which Solberg divided her study area, between 48% and 63% of the weapon graves examined by her contained an axe, with the highest occurrence in the western part of the country (**fig 2.2.2**).²⁹ The equivalent figure for weapon burials in Britain and Ireland is just 18%, although one grave, from Ballinaby (073.2: Islay) contained two axes, a combination not noted by Solberg. While at least one Irish antiquarian specifically recorded his reluctance to collect iron axes,³⁰ there seems no reason to suppose that acquisition strategies were markedly different in the two areas, and consequently axes must have been placed in insular graves much less frequently than in Norway. Furthermore, they almost never occur as the only weapon in insular graves, with just 5% of weapon burials (9 examples) falling in this category, unlike central and southern Norway, where 28-32% of weapon burials are of this type.³¹ In contrast to some other parts of Scandinavia, notably Denmark, where a limited number of axes found in graves are elaborately decorated and clearly high-status objects,³² all examples found in these islands are undecorated, and their form is recognisably Scandinavian,³³ something which is not necessarily true of the other weapons found in insular Scandinavian graves.

²⁸ "From [Ostmen rebellions] and the former coming of the Norwegians the Irish in their anxiety developed the use of the axe". Gerald of Wales (J. J. O'Meara, trans. & ed.), *The History and Topography of Ireland* (London, 1982), p.122

²⁹ These figures have been extrapolated from Solberg 'Social Status', Table 1, p.66

³⁰ See section 1.1

³¹ Ibid.

³² Else Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark* (London, 1982), pp 136-7

³³ This rather general comment is based on the confidence with which they have been classified throughout Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1940), a confidence which stands in contrast to the treatment of other artefact types, such as spearheads.

In contrast to axeheads, spearheads are relatively common finds in insular weapon graves. One hundred and four examples are known, spread between 98 burials, with four graves apparently having two spearheads each, although only one of these, Heskett (093), is definite. Another, a definite burial from Ballateare (154: Man) contained three spearheads, the largest number in the study area. In Norway, Solberg did not note multiple spearheads in any single burial, but the artefacts occurred in 40-43% of all weapon graves, the proportion being lowest in eastern Norway. In insular contexts, spearheads occur rather more frequently, being found in 53% of graves. Although they are numerically more common, however, spearheads are rarely the only weapon placed in insular graves, with just 12% of weapon burials (22 examples) taking this form. This can be contrasted with Solberg's study area, where 18-22% of the graves with weapons contained a single spearhead (**fig.2.2.2**).³⁴ Without engaging in detailed typological discussion, it is clear that the spearheads found in insular graves occur in a much wider range of forms than axeheads, and that a substantial proportion of these are of insular rather than Scandinavian origin. This trend that is particularly noticeable in the case of the Kilmainham corpus,³⁵ but insular types occasionally occur at sites across these islands.³⁶ Spearheads could be used for either thrusting or throwing,³⁷ and it may be that the latter function led to their being replaced more frequently. Unlike axes, spears were also used by indigenous groups in Britain and Ireland, and it is also possible that their popularity in surrounding communities may have influenced the availability, and hence the frequency with which they were selected as grave-goods.

Although ignored by Solberg (above), shield bosses are relatively frequent finds in insular Scandinavian weapon graves, with sixty-eight examples known, spread between the same number of graves. Indeed, in ten cases they are the only 'weapons'

³⁴ All figures for Norway in the present paragraph have been extrapolated from Solberg, 'Social Status, Table 1, p.66

³⁵ This was first noted by Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p.26

³⁶ Again, this general comment is based on the frequency with which spearheads cannot be assigned to specific Scandinavian types in Shetelig's *Viking Antiquities*. For a more specific example, see D. M. Wilson's discussion of one of the Ballateare spearheads in Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph* i (London, 1966), p.57

³⁷ J. K. Siddorn, *Viking Weapons and Warfare* (Stroud, 2000), p.37

identified in individual graves, although it should be pointed out that only two of these, Balladoole (167: Man) and South Great George's Street (182.2: Dublin) are definite, and the latter grave had clearly been disturbed before excavation took place.³⁸ Petersen once complained of the 'paucity of forms' in which Scandinavian shield bosses occurred,³⁹ and only one of the four Viking Age types identified by him regularly occurs in Britain and Ireland. However, conical forms derived from Anglo-Saxon types are also found in insular furnished graves,⁴⁰ and at Dublin, a specifically insular Scandinavian shield boss type seems to have developed.⁴¹ Whatever the precise form taken by shield bosses, evidence from Ballateare (154: Man) demonstrates that shields could be decorated in bright colours,⁴² and that from Claghbane (157: also Man) suggests that rivets or studs might also have been arranged in decorative patterns on shield boards.⁴³ Although there is no direct evidence that specific symbols or colours were associated with individuals in the Viking Age, shields were nonetheless large artefacts that were visible from a considerable distance. As such, their inclusion among an individual's grave-goods is unsurprising. Armour and helmets, on the other hand, have never been found in any insular Scandinavian furnished grave.⁴⁴

The perceived relative status of axes, spears and shields in the Viking Age is debatable, but there can be no serious doubt that the most important, or at least prestigious, weapon of the period was the sword.⁴⁵ Recent research in Ireland has demonstrated that the complex construction technique called pattern welding was not as common as is generally believed,⁴⁶ but even without this extra labour, the volume of iron and level of skill involved in their production made swords inherently more valuable than any other weapon type in regular use. With the exception of a limited

³⁸ Simpson 'Viking Warrior Burials', p.38

³⁹ Jan Petersen, *De Norske Vikingesverd – En Typologisk-Chronologisk Studie over Vikingetidens Vaaben* (Christiania, 1919), p.19

⁴⁰ S. H. Harrison, 'The Millhill burial in context – artefact, culture and chronology in the "Viking West"', in *Acta Archaeologica lxxi : Acta Archaeologica Supplementa ii* (2000), pp 65-78

⁴¹ As with spearheads, this was first noted in Bøe, *Norse Antiquities*, pp 34-5

⁴² Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, pp 60-1

⁴³ A. M. Cubbon, 'Find of a Viking sword, spear and shield at Claghbane, Ramsey, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* viii (1982), pp 447-9

⁴⁴ James Graham-Campbell *Viking Artefacts - A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980) p. 68

⁴⁵ Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts*, p. 67

⁴⁶ This work was carried out as part of IVGP research, and its provisional finds are noted here with permission. Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report. NMI Archive

number of single-edged swords, all dating from the Early Viking Age,⁴⁷ these artefacts were double-edged, and their prestige extended far beyond Scandinavian communities, with a whole series of Anglo-Saxon sources emphasising both the social and military importance of the sword.⁴⁸ In Ireland, similar sources are perhaps lacking, but the recovery of an exceptionally fine Viking Age sword from the crannog site of Ballinderry, Co. Westmeath, demonstrates the appeal of such objects to Irish as well as Hiberno-Norse groups.⁴⁹ From production centres in the Rhineland, blades of exceptional quality travelled throughout the Carolingian empire and beyond, even if the majority now only survive in Viking graves.⁵⁰ The blade's inherent value could be further enhanced by the addition of an elaborate hilt, and it is hardly coincidental that the most common hilt type found in graves across the Viking world is Petersen's type H, which is frequently elaborately decorated with flattened silver and / or copper alloy wires in a manner that is hardly utilitarian.⁵¹ Unlike shield bosses and spearheads, swords found in insular Scandinavian graves can be directly related to standard Scandinavian typologies, but this is deceptive. Several hilt types described by Petersen in 1919 are not Scandinavian in origin, his type K being Frankish, and the his type L Anglo-Saxon,⁵² for example, but their presence in Viking Age furnished graves provides further evidence of the appeal of such high status weapons to ethnic groups across northern Europe in the period. Under the circumstances, the fact that no less than 153 examples are known from insular furnished graves is perhaps unsurprising, although the contrast with Norway itself is striking (below).

That these swords and indeed all of the weapons identified here were seen as fundamentally masculine in character and part of an essentially male environment is virtually undisputed, at least among those who best understand Viking Age material. To Dommasnes, writing in 1982, 'any combination of fighting weapons' could be

⁴⁷ See section 1.4

⁴⁸ Many of these sources have been gathered together in H. E. Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England* (1962, Rpt. Woodbridge, 1994), pp 104-57

⁴⁹ For a summary of its discovery and importance, see P. F. Wallace and Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds) *Treasures of the National Museum of Ireland* (Dublin, 2002), p.228

⁵⁰ Ewart Oakeshott, 'Introduction to the Viking sword' in Ian Pierce, *Swords of the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp 3, 7-8

⁵¹ Petersen, *Vikingsverd*, pp 88-100

⁵² Pierce, *Swords*, pp 20-24

used to distinguish 'male graves',⁵³ and Solberg, writing three years later, echoed this almost precisely when she used the discovery of any weapon as evidence for a 'man's grave'.⁵⁴ Thus, both writers' 'male' or 'men's graves' correspond precisely to what are here called weapon graves, although the way in which each addressed what Dommasnes called 'source criticism' was very different. Dommasnes confined herself to what are effectively the equivalent of definite burials in the present study, while Solberg drew no distinction between the three levels of certainty used here. Both writers used medieval legal texts to support their association of weapons with male graves, but a more general assumption that these artefacts were exclusively male can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Recent archaeological research across all time periods has been sceptical of such absolute gender divisions,⁵⁵ but in the Viking Age itself, it is clear that weapons and oval brooches form assemblages that are essentially exclusive. Rare exceptions, such as Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) and Santon (131: Norfolk), are normally interpreted as 'double graves', where a man and woman were buried side by side, if not physically in the same grave.⁵⁶

Osteological evidence broadly supports the long-standing association between weapons and male burials, although with only fourteen published studies of skeletal material from insular weapon graves, this evidence is surprisingly limited. In all but one case, however, the remains have been identified as male, the one, puzzling exception being a cremation burial at Heath Wood (124.09: Derbyshire), where what are *probably* the remains of woman were accompanied by a sword hilt mount. Despite this possible exception, there seems little doubt that weapons, in both life and death, were specifically associated with masculinity.⁵⁷

⁵³ Dommasnes, 'Female roles and ranks', p.73

⁵⁴ Solberg, 'Social Status', p.63

⁵⁵ For one recent study of this, see Emily Weglian, 'Grave goods do not a gender make: a case study from Singen am Hohentwiel, Germany' in Bettina Arnold & N. L. Wicker (eds) *Gender and the Archaeology of Death* (Oxford, 2001), pp 137-58. The issue of gender and grave-goods is discussed in greater detail in section 2.3.

⁵⁶ Shetelig 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', pp 36-7, referring to Santon. He does not seem to have been aware of the presence of weapons at Claughton Hall, which he considered a woman's grave.

⁵⁷ For a more general assessment of the relationship between masculinity and weapons, and indeed the exclusion of women from these groups, see Guy Halsall, 'Violence and society in the early medieval west: an introductory survey', in Guy Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998), p.31

While the limited osteological evidence that is available generally supports long-standing assumptions that those buried in insular weapon graves were men, it provides rather less certain evidence that they were 'warriors'. Many insular scholars seem convinced that these graves represent 'Vikings' in the most restricted sense: individuals who lived not merely with but by the sword, through the often piratical exploitation of indigenous communities. In this context, however, it is worth noting that only two of the fourteen skeletons from weapon graves for which published information is available demonstrate clear evidence of violent death. At Repton, Derbyshire, the most extensively furnished burial at the site (123.02) contained the remains of a man who 'had been hit on the head and then killed by a massive cut into the head of the left femur',⁵⁸ while an unfortunate individual at Westness (021.4: Orkney) 'had been shot by four arrows in his back, arm, belly and thighbone'.⁵⁹ While the absence of similar evidence from the other skeletons does not entirely preclude the possibility of violent death, it raises the definite possibility that many individuals buried with weapons died peacefully.

In this context, it should also be noted that the skeleton's age profile is not entirely consistent with popular perceptions of youthful 'Vikings' either. Three of the ten skeletons that were sufficiently well-preserved to allow aging, from Ballateare (154: Man), South Great George's Street and Ship Street / Golden Lane (182.1 & 193.1: both Dublin), fell into the 20-30 age bracket, and may therefore represent unlucky young raiders. Three others were under twenty at the time of death, but two of these, from Grishipoll (064: Argyll & Bute) and another from South Great George's Street (182.2), were over fifteen, and might therefore also be considered 'young' warriors. The remaining four, however, were rather older, in the 30-40 age bracket, and at least two of these, from Talacre (145: Gwynedd) and Repton (023.02) were over 35 at the time of death. It is by no means inconceivable that such mature individuals also formed part of a warband (indeed this is precisely the Biddles' interpretation of the Repton grave) but the presence of a juvenile aged somewhere between 8 and 13 in a weapon grave at Balnakeil (033:Highland) stretches conventional interpretation of

⁵⁸ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 'Great heathen army', p.61

⁵⁹ S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso and Kirkwall, 22 August - 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.316

this evidence rather further, particularly when it is understood that at no more than five feet tall, it is by no means certain that he could have used the sword with which he was buried.⁶⁰ If all of these individuals were primarily 'warriors', it might be expected that more mature individuals would be accompanied by a greater number of weapons, and perhaps more grave-goods generally, but this is not the case. While the aforementioned 35-40 year old buried at Repton (023.02) was accompanied by ten grave-goods, albeit just one weapon (a sword), the man from Talacre (145), of a similar age, was buried with just two artefacts, including his spear. The confessedly disturbed burial of a 17-20 year old at South Great Georges Street (182.2: Dublin) only contained a shield boss, but that of the juvenile from Balnakeil (033) was accompanied by ten grave-goods, including a sword, spear and shield boss. If weapon graves are purely military in character, then there does not appear to have been any assumption that military ability improved with age. Instead, the (admittedly limited) osteological evidence suggests that the inclusion or exclusion of weapons from burial assemblages was a process governed by far more complex processes than basic military ability.

While a lack of direct evidence for violent trauma and the varying age of those buried with weapons provide some ground for questioning the interpretation of weapon graves as those of 'Viking warriors', there is a far more fundamental reason why this should be questioned. While most contemporary scholars would argue the numbers involved in Viking raids and even in larger and better-documented campaigns such as that of the 'Great Army' were comparatively small,⁶¹ the 200 graves identified in the present study cannot be an accurate reflection of the total number of male (insular) Scandinavians active in Britain and Ireland in the ninth and tenth centuries. Indeed, even if all 379 furnished burials under consideration in the present study are considered 'Viking', and the period in which furnished burial was practiced is compressed to an unrealistic ninety year period with artificially long generations of thirty years, the total insular Scandinavian population at any one time

⁶⁰ James Graham-Campbell & C.E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.142

⁶¹ See P. H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings* (London, 1982), pp 90-1, 93-4

for which there is burial evidence would be just 127.⁶² Even allowing for the successful return to Scandinavia of many warriors, and the fact that only a fraction of the graves in existence have been discovered, these figures cannot realistically represent the total population. The evidence from Norway is even more convincing. In 1983, Hagen estimated that there were more than 7,000 (furnished) graves of Merovingian and Viking Age date in Norway.⁶³ If thirty-year generations spread over a period of at least 400 years are applied to a probably excessive 7,500 graves, the total population at any one time represented by these graves is no more than 564 individuals, spread through a country some 1,800km from north to south.⁶⁴ Based on the figures already presented, Solberg's study area, which covers perhaps two thirds of this area, would have had a population of approximately 348 at any one time, of which 285 would be 'male' (i.e. were buried with weapons).⁶⁵ Again, it can be argued that these figures relate only to those graves that have been discovered and recorded and that the calculation of generations is exceptionally crude, entirely ignoring the evidence that there are far more burials of ninth- and tenth- than seventh- or eighth-century date.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, these figures, however approximate, clearly demonstrate that only a small proportion of the total population of early medieval Norway can have been buried with grave-goods. In the words of Dommasnes, 'this custom cannot have been practised by all... [and furnished] burial itself is an indication of relatively high rank'.⁶⁷

There is absolutely no reason to think that the situation in Britain and Ireland was any different. Indeed, local influences may well have led to a rapid decline in the frequency with which graves of this type were created.⁶⁸ Therefore, while it is possible, and indeed even probable, that many of those buried in insular weapon graves at least occasionally engaged in combat, only a small fraction of those of

⁶² With three thirty-year generations spread over 90 years, approximately 1/3 of the population represented by the burials would be alive at any one time ($379/3 = 127$). If more realistic figures were applied (see section 1.4), the numbers alive at any one time would be even lower.

⁶³ Anders Hagen, *Norges Oldtid* (Oslo, 1967), p.397

⁶⁴ There would be 13.3 thirty year generations in a 400 year period ($7,500 / 13.3 = 564$). Given the exaggeration of numbers and the focus of time, this is definitely an overestimation.

⁶⁵ Using the same calculations as for the country as a whole. 348 ($4629 / 13.3$) furnished graves and 285 ($3796 / 13.3$) weapon graves in any single generation. Again, these figures must represent an overestimation.

⁶⁶ See Dommasnes 'Female roles and ranks', p.76 & fig.3

⁶⁷ *eadem*, pp.71, 73

⁶⁸ See in particular section 3.2 & 4.4

Scandinavian origin who raided and fought in these islands can have been buried with weapons, or indeed any grave-goods. As in Norway, these individuals must have been of 'relatively high rank'.

Within those restricted social groups who buried at least some of their members with grave-goods, weapons are by far the most common artefacts not directly associated with clothing that are placed in graves. Of the 1,154 artefacts identified in the present study, 366, or just under a third (32%) were weapons, and Solberg's figures suggest that these artefacts were equally important in Norway. The distribution of these weapons between the 200 known insular weapon graves is anything but even, ranging from one to five artefacts in specific examples. If burial with weapons was in itself an expression of rank as much as military ability, then it seems very likely that the number of weapons placed in graves was also related to status, and that those buried with more weapons were of a higher social rank than those buried with less.

In 1985, this hypothesis formed the core of Solberg's study of Norwegian weapon graves. To investigate this fully, she divided her 3,796 'men's (i.e. weapon) graves into three groups. The first (group one) consisted of graves with one weapon, the second (group two) of graves with two, and the third (group three) of graves with all three offensive weapons included in her study (i.e. swords, spears and axes, above). The simple fact that group three graves comprise only 10-15% of the total weapon graves according to region (**fig. 2.2.2**) supported her basic proposal, as high status graves should occur less often than those of lower status. Group one graves, on the other hand, representing lower status individuals, should be more common, and indeed they formed anything between 61 and 74% of the total weapon graves in her study areas, with the lowest proportion occurring in the comparatively wealthy western part of the country, which also had the highest proportion of group three graves. Solberg also used the comparative rarity of swords in group one as evidence that burials of this type were 'the most prestigious of the single weapon graves',⁶⁹ an assumption that is entirely in accordance with more general beliefs about the status of these weapons (above). While the three groups identified by Solberg could not be directly linked to the social ranks identified in later law tracts, her research leaves

⁶⁹ Solberg, 'Social status', p.66

little doubt that weapon burials were created by a society that was hierarchical rather than egalitarian. If those buried in these graves corresponded to Brøgger's *bønder*, or free farmers,⁷⁰ the evidence of provided by their burials indicates that this group formed no more than a fraction of the total population, and included individuals of comparatively diverse social rank. Neither Solberg nor Dommasnes, who worked with a much smaller area and number of graves (213),⁷¹ had any doubt that the weapons placed in them were expressions of social status, not military ability.

Although some aspects of Solberg's methodology are problematic, particularly her tendency to assume *all* weapons come from graves (above), the sheer volume of material examined by her provides an ideal summary of the bulk of the Norwegian evidence, and provides data with which the insular material can be directly compared. To facilitate this process, the evidence of definite, probable and possible graves was combined, and swords, spear and axeheads were isolated from other weapon types. As a result, 186 of the 200 insular weapon burials were suitable for comparison, the other fourteen containing shield bosses or having particularly poor records. By dividing this material into the same categories used by Solberg, direct comparisons can be made (**fig.2.2.3**). As in Norway, group one burials, containing a single weapon, are the most common, followed by group two, with two, and group three graves, accompanied by all three types examined by Solberg, being most rare. However, there are also striking differences between the two regions. With 104 examples (56%), group one graves occurred less frequently in insular contexts than in any part of Norway. Furthermore, swords were the most common weapon placed in group one graves, with 73 graves (39%) containing no other weapon. The comparative rarity of axe and spear burials in insular group one burials has already been noted (above), and consequently the percentage of insular group one sword burials is almost double that for any part of Norway, where these graves are instead dominated by spears and axes. Group two graves, with two weapons, are also much more common in insular contexts, where they comprise 35% of the total weapon burials (65 graves), as against 17-24% across Norway. While the difference is not quite so pronounced, swords are also fractionally more common in insular group two graves than their Norwegian equivalents. In fact, there are only two insular group

⁷⁰ See section 2.1

⁷¹ Dommasnes, 'Female roles and ranks', p.70

two graves, only one of which (Kildonnan: 048.2: Highland) is definite, that do not contain swords. Group three graves, on the other hand, are slightly less common in insular than in Norwegian contexts, comprising 9% of the former group (17) and 10-15% of the latter.

These variations between southern Norway and the present study area are intriguing, and provide perhaps the first definite evidence that insular furnished burial practices are not simply passive reflections of a Scandinavian prototype. The interpretation of this variation is more problematic, but these figures seem to suggest either a change in the social groups using furnished burial, or a change in the resources (i.e. weapons) that these groups were committing to them. In either case, the evidence demonstrates a decline in the frequency of graves at the bottom end of Solberg's hierarchy. Fewer group one graves were created in Britain and Ireland, and those that were created were much more likely to contain a sword than the less prestigious spear or axe. At the same time, an increase in the frequency of group two graves, again with swords, suggests that a greater proportion of the insular Scandinavian population creating weapon burials were committing two artefacts rather than one to these graves. The fact that the proportion of group 3 graves did not increase in insular contexts seems to contradict this trend, but this could potentially be a reflection of the general rarity of axes in insular contexts. In this context, a similar desire to commit a greater number of weapons to individual graves could explain the occurrence of grave with multiple spearheads, a phenomenon that occasionally occurs in Norway and elsewhere,⁷² but which is sufficiently rare to have been ignored by Solberg. Alternatively, it may reflect a more general tendency for insular furnished burials to be less well-furnished than some of their Scandinavian counterparts, but even if this is the case, there is a clear correspondence between insular graves with all three weapons and those with a large number of other grave-goods. Examples included some of the most richly-furnished burials in these islands, such as Westness (042.2), Kiloran Bay (067), Hesket (093) and Knock-y-Doonee (150), and indeed, the only graves with all three of Solberg's weapons that did not contain substantial numbers of other artefacts are early discoveries, such as Pierowall

⁷² E.g. James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts – A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980), p. 69

(18.15), Claughton Hall (160), and various graves from Kilmainham (177.3, 6-7), where it is exceptionally difficult to associate artefacts with specific graves.⁷³

Thus, while the proportion of group three burials does not seem to have increased in insular contexts, they were clearly particularly important, high status graves. Instead, it was at the opposite end of the social spectrum represented by weapon burials that major changes seem to have occurred in insular contexts. Those who in Scandinavia would have been buried with a single spear or axe were no longer buried in that way, and it would seem that social groups either had the resources to commit a sword and perhaps another weapon to a grave, or did not use the ritual at all. The clear decline in the frequency and type of group one graves raises the definite possibility, indeed probability, that the proportion of the insular Scandinavian population creating weapon burials was even smaller than that in Norway, and consequently the status of those buried in insular Scandinavian weapon burials was potentially higher than their Scandinavian equivalents.

The application of Solberg's methodology to the insular evidence allows the direct comparison of this material with Norwegian furnished burials, and produces some very interesting results. Unfortunately, the limitations of her methodology, and in particular her exclusion of shield bosses, arrowheads and multiple occurrences of the same weapon type, mean that the resulting figures are not necessarily a full reflection of the complexity of weapon combinations present in insular graves. Consequently, a second assessment of insular weapon graves was undertaken in which these issues were addressed. As, unlike Norway, there were no legal texts to which information on the occurrence of specific weapon types or combinations could be compared, a simple numerical system was developed, whereby each 'weapon' in a grave, including shield bosses, was given a value of 'one'. Multiple arrowheads, where they occurred, were also given a value of 'one' as a reflection of their small size and presumed association with a single weapon, the bow. While it might be argued that this system fails to reflect the higher status of the sword, these artefacts occurred in 153 insular weapon graves, and this frequency should minimise any potential distortion.

⁷³ See section 1.4

Broadly speaking, the pattern revealed by this second, more detailed study (**fig.2.2.4**) reflected the figures produced by the application of Solberg's methodology. One hundred and ninety-five weapon graves had sufficient surviving information to allow their inclusion in the present survey, and of these 49% (96) contained a single weapon. As the number of weapons included among the grave-goods increased, the number of graves fell steadily, with only 9% (17) having 4 or 5 weapons. Even though multiple spear and axeheads are known from graves, no single burial contained more than five weapons. Only two contained all five weapon types, sword, spear, axe, shield and arrowheads, and one of these, from Kilmainham (177.06: Dublin), is effectively a reconstruction based on a minimum number of burials. The only definite example is a boat burial from Westness (021.2), which, with an artefact count of ten, reflects a general tendency for burials with multiple weapons to be well furnished. Of course, these figures broadly reflect the figures produced using Solberg's methodology, and indeed many of her group three burials correspond to those with four or five weapons identified in the present assessment. Conversely, the inclusion of multiple weapons, shield bosses and arrowheads reduced the proportion of graves with single weapons even further, to just under half the total studied. While this evidence cannot be directly compared to Norway, it may once again point to a tendency for those creating insular graves either to place more weapons in these burials, or to abandon the practice entirely.

As Solberg's paper pointed to considerable variation across her study area, it was decided to compare the various zones of the present study using the present (revised) system (**fig.2.2.4**), which allowed the incorporation of a greater number of burials as well as a greater range of weapons. In all but one zone, graves with single weapons were the most common, the one exception being zone C, where there was a single additional burial with two, a variation that is hardly statistically significant. Rather more noteworthy is the fact that 77% of the weapon burials in zone D (20 examples) held single weapons, a proportion that is more than twice the average across these islands. There is a corresponding reduction in graves with multiple weapons in this zone, with only one grave, the probable burial from Meols (189: Merseyside), having more than two. It should also be noted that this latter material represents a disparate assemblage assumed to represent a single grave. When eastern England (zones

C2/D2) is examined in isolation, the proportion of single graves is also higher than average, comprising 66% (19) of the 29 weapon burials identified in this area. Conversely, only one grave, from Kildale (109: North Yorkshire), had three weapons in it (Solberg's classic sword, spear and axe combination), and no grave had a greater number of weapons. If this information is combined with the more basic distribution patterns discussed in section 1.4, it would seem not merely that eastern England has far fewer weapon burials relative to other grave types, but that the few graves that do occur in this area contain fewer weapons than those elsewhere.

The number of weapons per grave in western England and Wales (zones C1/D1), on the other hand, is broadly similar to that for Scotland and Man and suggests some similarities between weapon graves in all the regions around the Irish Sea. It is also interesting to note that although Dublin and Ireland excluding Ulster (Zone F) have a far higher proportion of weapon burials than the other regions, the proportions of graves with different numbers of weapons in them broadly follow general insular patterns. The slightly higher proportion of graves with three or more weapons in Zone F has presumably been influenced by the calculations of minimum numbers of burials applied to the Kilmainham material, a process that has almost certainly led to the overestimation of the number of weapons in individual graves. At a more general level, it is interesting to note that across these islands, no more than one grave with a count of five weapons has been identified in each zone, with none at all identified in zone D (**fig.2.2.5**). If these graves represent the apex of the weapon burial practice, their distribution is very wide. Two examples, from Westness (021.2: Orkney) and Kilmainham (177.28: Dublin) formed part of cemeteries and were effectively surrounded by slightly less well-furnished weapon graves, but the other three, Kiloran Bay (067: Colonsay), Hesketh (093: Cumbria) and Ballateare (154: Man) are isolated graves with no evidence of extensive contemporary burial activity in the immediate area. Graves with four weapons also tend to be widely dispersed, with the only concentration (unsurprisingly) occurring at Dublin, where minimum figures suggest there were four graves of this type. Elsewhere, graves with four weapons are widely spaced (**fig.2.2.5**), from Woodstown (191: Waterford) to Knock-y-Doonee (150: Man) and perhaps Meols (189: Merseyside: above), and like those with five weapons, can be assumed to represent the graves of major figures within their respective areas.

Of course, the blind assumption that graves with more weapons invariably represented individuals with a higher status than those with less may be problematic. Whatever the situation may have been in Norway, there is clear documentary evidence that political power in Early Viking Age Britain and Ireland fluctuated constantly from individual to individual, and indeed from group to group. Various Irish Annals and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* record constant shifts in political power among insular Scandinavian groups from the mid-ninth century onwards, and *Orkneyinga Saga*, while a much later and less reliable source, suggests similar fluctuations shifts in the power structures within the early Earldom of Orkney.⁷⁴ While these recorded changes relate to the leaders of major political groups, there is no reason to doubt that their successes, failures and indeed struggles would have had an impact on less influential individuals and groups living in the same areas. Under these circumstances, the number of weapons placed in a grave may be as much a reflection of a given group's aspirations to status as their actual power at the time of an individual's death. Comparison with the use of weapons burials elsewhere would indicate that the inclusion of a greater number of artefacts than normal may also have been used as a social mechanism to deal with a death that had a particularly severe social impact, or even as part of a process of establishing a new political authority.⁷⁵ Conversely, some individuals of high status may have been buried in comparatively modest graves, perhaps because of changing political circumstances, or even because of (potentially related) changes in belief systems.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, those choosing to place weapons in insular Scandinavian graves were undoubtedly sharing in a common rite, and in as much as access to weapons reflected the wealth of particular groups, then graves with multiple weapons must broadly represent the graves of individuals with control of greater resources. Other high status individuals may have been buried in different ways, and weapon burials cannot be taken to represent anything like all high status insular Scandinavian groups, but the patterns identified here must reflect the distribution of at least some of these groups.

⁷⁴ Hermann Pálsson & Paul Edwards (eds), *Orkneyinga Saga: This History of the Earls of Orkney* (London, 1978)

⁷⁵ For a summary of some of these new approaches to grave-goods and funerary rites, see Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud, 1999), pp.72-94

⁷⁶ See sections 3.2 & 4.4

Whatever the relative status of individuals buried in insular weapon graves, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that all buried according to this rite were in some way exceptional, in as much as these graves represent only a fraction of the male population. Although this fraction may have been even lower in Britain and Ireland than Norway, recent research in the latter area may provide some insight as to the use of this practice on the deaths of some individuals but not others. In an article which technically focused on Norwegian grave-mounds rather than grave-goods, Skre argued that a 'mound was built every generation', a statement that can only be based on the grave-goods buried within them. Thus, 'it is a reasonable assumption that the mound was built over the grave of the deceased owner, and that the building of his mound was a part of the ritual performed by his heir'.⁷⁷ By association, therefore, the creation of a weapon grave, or indeed any furnished grave, could form part of the same social process, whereby an individual inheriting land from another used the funerary rite as a means of legitimising his inheritance, and the memory of grave contents, as well their position in the landscape (see chapter 4), reinforced the right of the living to their land. In the case of insular Scandinavian burials, it has long been accepted that furnished burials represent only the first generation or generations of Scandinavian settlers in Britain and Ireland,⁷⁸ with the abandonment of the practice being seen as part of the process of conversion. It was, however, also these first generations of settlers who perhaps most urgently required a tangible link between themselves and their new inheritance, a link that could potentially be established through the creation of a furnished burial. Performed before a large, assembled group, the associated rituals could link the first generation of those who inherited land to those who had initially taken it, with or without using some of the weapons that had been placed in these graves.

A direct association between weapon graves and land ownership would perhaps help to explain the distribution of isolated weapon graves throughout the study area, and would support older, more general suggestions that they can be linked to areas of early Scandinavian settlement (above). Eighty-three burial sites, 42% of the total of 194 sites in the present study, have produced evidence for a single weapon grave

⁷⁷ Dagfinn Skre, 'The social context of settlement in Norway in the first millennium', in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xxxiv (2001), p.10

⁷⁸ Shetelig, 'Viking graves', pp 2, 23-4, 36

(fig.2.2.6). These occur throughout the study area, from a single example at the Kirk of St Ola (006: Shetland) to a group of three graves in and around Reading (138-40, and from Kersey (135: Suffolk) to Eyrephort (188: Galway), although sites of this type are focused in the northern and western Isles, north-western England and on the Isle of Man. In the latter area, it has also been suggested that some of these isolated weapon graves, covered by large mounds, like the Norwegian examples studied by Skre, represent the graves of the first settlers on the island.⁷⁹ At one site in particular, Ballateare (154), a link between this weapon grave and the surrounding landscape was apparently reinforced by the inclusion of turves and topsoil representing more than 500 square metres of stripped ground within the body of the mound that covered the burial pit.⁸⁰ The evidence from Ballateare is particularly compelling, but similar, if more modestly furnished and constructed graves, may well have been created to establish similar links with other parts of these islands. Far from being the graves of warriors, buried more or less where they fell, or even having a broad association with areas of Scandinavian activity, these graves could potentially have played a vital role in the transition from the first to second generations of permanently established settlers. Not all of these settlements ultimately proved successful, but those who created these burials certainly must have hoped that they would endure.

Although they represent single rather than multiple generations, these isolated weapon graves may well have been produced by the same social pressures that resulted in the Norwegian grave fields studied by Skre. The evidence from cemeteries is perhaps more difficult to explain, but could potentially have followed a similar pattern. Small, isolated cemeteries with less than five furnished graves could represent settlements which changed hands comparatively rapidly, with each transfer requiring the repetition of the burial ritual. The limitations of typological dating would not allow such a rapid sequence of burials to be identified: indeed, all of them would effectively appear broadly contemporary. Ballinaby (073: Argyll & Bute), with four weapon graves, two of which are definite, could potentially have been such a site, albeit particularly unfortunate in terms of land ownership. Larger cemeteries are more difficult to link to land ownership as such, but may have followed a related pattern. The populations represented by large cemeteries such as Kilmainham (177:

⁷⁹ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed., London, 1991), pp 106-7

⁸⁰ Bersu & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p.48

Dublin), Pierowall (018: Orkney) and even Repton (123: Derbyshire) must have been substantial, if perhaps transient, and by no means all of those buried there are likely to have been landowners: certainly, they cannot have been buried on their own property. Nonetheless, individuals buried in furnished graves at these settlements are likely to have had heirs, whether descendants or otherwise, and individuals anxious to legitimate that inheritance, whatever its form and extent. Within the comparatively restricted confines of a nucleated settlement, competition between different political groups may also have been more intense, and the creation of a weapon grave for a deceased member of a specific group may have been related to a process of competitive display that was important even in the absence of direct inherited (landed) wealth. This competitive display, here expressed in the creation of weapon graves, may also have played an important role in the creation of more elaborate graves and could go some way towards explaining the exceptional wealth of some of Dublin's furnished graves, and indeed the apparent frequency of weapon burials at Kilmainham. Similar factors may also have influenced the creation of graves at other sites, perhaps with less stable populations, such as Pierowall, or even Repton.

At the latter site, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle's insistence that all but a handful of the furnished graves Repton can be dated to a single half-year of intense activity between 873 and 874 is problematic.⁸¹ If these graves were instead associated with inheritance or competitive display, then many of these graves could potentially have been created in the years immediately after the site ceased to be a military base. Given the site's location close to a major political boundary, its associations with high status Christian burial, and the additional significance it must have gained from its associations with the 'Great Army's over-wintering there, it may have had exceptional importance as a burial site in the years after Scandinavian settlement began in the area. After all, two of the five weapon graves at Repton (123.02 & 12), and three of the eight tertiary burials there (123.03-05) were placed within the 1.46ha area enclosed by the ditch and bank at the site. This decision would be entirely understandable if part of the site's prestige was derived from its former associations with the 'Great Army', but would make no sense whatsoever if that group were still attempting to cram itself into this confined area when the burial took place. Indeed,

⁸¹ Biddle & Biddle, 'Great heathen army', pp 60, 65

the excavators themselves have proposed that a group of modestly furnished tertiary burials which formed part of a group of burials that extended over the 'mausoleum' burial mound south-west of the enclosure represent a later generation of 'Scandinavians' seeking to associate themselves with this high status site.⁸² The model proposed here would simply push that process back into the later ninth century. Were this theory correct, it would indicate that most of the weapon burials at Repton, and potentially those elsewhere in the Danelaw, like their counterparts in other parts of Britain and Ireland, could actually be associated with settlement, rather than the military campaigns that have often dominated their interpretation in the past.

While much of this section has emphasised the fact that insular Scandinavian weapon burials cannot be seen simply as 'warriors' graves, but are instead complex monuments which express more general ideas of rank and status, often in the context of inheritance or other moments of social stress, this should not be seen as an attempt to negate the importance of military activity, and indeed ability, in early medieval Britain and Ireland. The use of weapons in particular to demonstrate male status is a direct reflection of an intrinsically violent age in which the ability, indeed the right, to carry and use weapons was intimately connected to ideas of rank and status.⁸³ Indeed, Walsh's comment that 'in early Christian and medieval times the sword was both a symbol of power and a means of acquiring that power'⁸⁴ is a simple statement of fact which might equally apply to any of the weapons under study here. Those who were buried with weapons were those who had access to them in life, and who lived in an environment in which violence was an accepted part of everyday life.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the intriguing evidence from the juvenile burial at Balnakeil (033: above) suggests that this need not always have been the case. Similarly, the burial of individuals with a shield and no other weapons can hardly be interpreted as an adequate reflection of the equipment with which they formerly made war. In the case of otherwise well-furnished graves such as the boat burial from Balladoole (167: Man), however, it is certainly at least as reasonable to suggest that this artefact was at

⁸² *ibid.*, p.86. See also section 3.2

⁸³ For an exploration of this theme across western Europe in the early middle ages, see Halsall, 'Violence and Society', pp 1-45

⁸⁴ Aidan Walsh, 'Viking swords in Ireland' in *Archaeology Ireland* ix (1995), p.37

⁸⁵ See David Dumville, *The Churches of Northern Britain in the First Viking-Age: Fifth Whithorn Lecture* (Whithorn, 1997) pp 8-15 for a critique of some modern interpretations of the Viking Age that seek to play down their inherent violence.

least as important as a symbol of the deceased's ability to defend his territory as it was a preparation for the afterlife. Whatever the precise interpretation of this particular site, it seems clear that the symbolic value of all weapons extended beyond their primary function as instruments of slaughter, and that those who were buried with them were no transient 'warriors' or 'Vikings'. While they may well have fought, this is unlikely to have been more than a single component of what was a far more complex and varied social role.

One final piece of evidence may serve both to demonstrate both the importance of weapons to the expression of rank and the complexity of their relationship to the burial ritual. In 1948, a virtually complete ring-headed cross was recovered from the walling of a church at Middleton, North Yorkshire (**fig.2.2.7**). On the shaft of this cross is carved a figure, presumably male, wearing a conical helmet, with a spear on his right side and a shield, sword and axe on his left. Another artefact, presumably a knife, is held at waist level. When first discovered, this artefact was confidently interpreted as a representation in stone of a 'Viking' (i.e. 'furnished weapon) grave, presumably created by an early convert who could not bear to be entirely parted from his weapons in death. More recent interpretations have, however, challenged this interpretation, suggesting that instead of representing a dead 'Viking' lying in a grave, the carving represents a living 'chieftain' surrounded by the symbols of his power – his weapons.⁸⁶ Given the representation of a helmet in the carving, the latter interpretation is perhaps more plausible, but what is of interest here is not which interpretation is correct, but rather the fact that the carving can potentially be interpreted in either way. When buried with weapons, an individual was surrounded by precisely the same artefacts which had symbolised and if necessary enforced his authority when alive. To those witnessing the burial ceremony, the symbolic value of these artefacts could not have been clearer. Even individuals who were unfamiliar with the burial rite itself, such as members of local Christian communities, could potentially have understood their general significance, and have recognised the burial as a statement of political as well as military power.

⁸⁶ Controversy surrounding the Middleton Cross and its interpretation is summarised in R. N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980), pp 209-14

As the single most common grave type identified in the present study, and the burial type perhaps most closely associated with insular Scandinavian groups, weapon graves serve as a useful introduction to the corpus as a whole, and provide an opportunity to introduce some of the central proposals of the thesis, specifically the idea that these monuments represent a permanent rather than a transient community, and that the artefacts placed in them have a more complex symbolic value than is generally accepted, one which is potentially linked to ideas of social rank or authority, and perhaps to inheritance. Given that a close examination of these graves provides considerable evidence to support this hypothesis, it is possible that the placing of other artefacts in insular furnished graves may have had a similar and perhaps even related significance in the early Viking Age. Bearing this in mind, it may now be appropriate to turn our attention to the second major furnished burial type identified in the present study, brooch graves.

2.3 Brooch Burial – Re-evaluating Women’s Graves

“Vikings are irredeemably male in the popular imagination”.¹ So begins Jesch’s multidisciplinary study of *Women in the Viking Age*, published in 1991. As the previous section has demonstrated, this statement is true even in the comparatively specialised study of furnished burial, where interpretations have been dominated by weapon graves and their presumed associations with raiding and warfare. In these fundamentally masculine pursuits, the only possible role for women was as passive observers, either insular victims carried off into captivity or Scandinavian relatives patiently waiting to share in some of the proceeds of their menfolk’s pillaging on their return.² As Jesch’s work points out, the reality was more complex and a detailed reading of documentary and related sources provides a subtly different view of the role of women, both within Scandinavia and abroad.³ Despite this new research, however, archaeological interpretations of women’s graves have generally remained conservative, and the importance of brooch burial to the understanding of early Viking Age activity in Britain and Ireland has been minimised, with most scholars continuing to emphasise the importance of the more numerous male (i.e. weapon) graves.

Worsaae, who pioneered the study of insular Scandinavian graves,⁴ seems to have been entirely unaware of the evidence for women’s graves contained within his surprisingly limited corpus, and his interpretation of what were primarily grave-goods followed orthodox Victorian historiography, assuming that all of these artefacts had been buried with (male) ‘Vikings’.⁵ Nonetheless, his study included a number of artefacts which later antiquarians and archaeologists would associate with women in the same way that they associated weapons with men. Thanks in no small part to Worsaae’s own efforts, two of these artefacts, one from Castletown (040: Highland) and the other from the Phoenix Park (174: Dublin) passed into the

¹ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 1991), p.1

² For a recent study of insular artefacts in Norwegian women’s graves, see Egon Wamers, ‘Insular Finds in Viking Age Scandinavia and the State Formation of Norway’ in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 42-3

³ See in particular Jesch, *Women*, pp 75-83

⁴ See section 1.2

⁵ J. J. A. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852), pp 255, 325-9

possession of what was to become the National Museum of Denmark.⁶ To him, they were ‘bowl-formed’ brooches,⁷ but this term, like the even more short-lived ‘shell-shaped...[or] mammillary brooches’⁸ never gained widespread popularity. Anderson subsequently called them ‘tortoise or bowl-shaped’,⁹ but used the first term rather more frequently, and they continued to be called ‘tortoise-shaped’ or ‘tortoise’ brooches by most commentators until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ Today, the term ‘oval brooch’, first systematically applied to insular examples by James Curle in 1914,¹¹ has overtaken ‘tortoise brooch’ as the preferred name for these artefacts, a status the cognate terms have enjoyed in the Scandinavian languages since the late nineteenth century.¹²

All of these terms are to a greater or lesser extent attempts to describe the distinctive shape of these brooches, which are characteristically 10-12cm long and 5-6cm wide, with a high, domed centre. The wide range of forms in which they occur has attracted considerable attention in the past, and Petersen’s early twentieth-century typology¹³ was further refined by Jansson in the mid-1980s.¹⁴ As always, detailed typological analysis lies outside the parameters of the present study, but it is broadly correct to say that most early (i.e. ninth-century) forms, including the particularly early variation called the Berdal type,¹⁵ are single-shelled, while later (i.e. tenth-century) forms are generally more complex and double-shelled.¹⁶ More directly relevant to the present study has been the realisation that the production of these artefacts was apparently confined to a limited number of Scandinavian sites, of which Birka is the

⁶ Shetelig, Haakon, ‘Notes Supplementary to Viking Antiquities Parts I-V, in Curle *et al*, *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers* (1954), pp 235-46

⁷ Worsaae, *Account*, p.255

⁸ W. R. Wilde, ‘On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), pp 20-1

⁹ Joseph Anderson, ‘Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Norsemen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum’ in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), p.547

¹⁰ See, for example, George Coffey & E. C. R. Armstrong, ‘Scandinavian objects found at Island-Bridge and Kilmainham’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), p.119 and Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland: Haakon Shetelig* (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1940) iii, 38-40

¹¹ James Curle, ‘On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time’ in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvi (1914), pp 292-315

¹² E.g. Oluf Rygh, *Norke Oldsager Ornede og Forklarede* (Christiania, 1885) p.33

¹³ Jan Petersen, *Vikingetidens Smykker. Stavanger Museums Skrifter* ii (Stavanger, 1928)

¹⁴ Ingmar Jansson, *Ovala Spännbucklor. En Studie över Vikingatida Standardsmycken med Utgångspunkt från Björkö-fyndet. Aun* 7 (Uppsala, 1985)

¹⁵ For the role of these artefacts in dating insular Viking Age burials, see section 1.4

¹⁶ James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts – A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980), pp 27-8

best studied.¹⁷ Despite Curle's best efforts to establish a Scottish typology,¹⁸ these artefacts are not particularly common in insular contexts and are widely believed to represent imports rather than locally manufactured items.¹⁹

While early antiquarians were necessarily aware of their significance, oval brooches were sufficient large and robust to survive recovery as a result of casual excavation, and their decoration ensured that they were some of the earliest objects not made of precious metal to be preserved by collectors.²⁰ Although Worsaae himself did not specifically associate oval brooches with women, few of those who followed him shared his hesitation. Even William Rendall, working in comparative isolation at Pierowall, Orkney, noted as early as 1849 that three graves with oval brooches found at that site were 'supposed to be... female', although he demonstrated no knowledge of their typology or origins.²¹ It may have been the discovery of weapon graves at the same time as these brooch burials that led Rendall to this interpretation, but the association of elaborate brooches with 'women' was also part of a general trend in nineteenth-century archaeological thought that extended far beyond the Viking Age.²² While Anderson's 1874 study of the 'Relics of the Viking Period' in Scotland placed 'tortoise brooches' and 'characteristic weapons of the Viking Period' in two separate groups, he resisted this assumption, tentatively suggesting that oval brooches could have been worn by either sex,²³ and it was not until 1879 that he came down firmly in favour of an explicit association between oval brooches and women. Describing a pair of richly-furnished graves found side by side at Ballinaby, Islay (073:2-3: Argyll & Bute) the previous year, Anderson simply stated that one, containing weapons and smithing tools, was male, while the other, containing a pair

¹⁷ For a very basic summary of the production of these brooches, and the identification of key production sites, see James Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Oxford, 1994). This information is of course derived from Janssen *Ovala Spännbucklor*

¹⁸ Curle, 'Recent Scandinavian grave-finds', pp 299-314

¹⁹ S. H. Harrison, 'Viking graves and grave-goods in Ireland' in A. C. Larsen (ed) *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), pp 66-7

²⁰ See section 1.2

²¹ Letter from Mr. William Rendall to Capt. F. W. L. Thomas, 18 Oct 1849, published as an appendix to Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 14 (1879) pp 85-7

²² S. J. Lucy, 'Housewives, warriors and slaves? Sex and gender in Anglo-Saxon burials', in J. Moore & E. Scott (eds) *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), p.155

²³ Anderson *Relics*, p.562

of oval brooches, other jewellery and textile working equipment, was female (**fig.2.3.1 & 2**).²⁴ The gender roles demonstrated by these grave-goods were clearly self-evident to a Victorian scholar such as Anderson,²⁵ and he provided no justification for either identification. While modern scholars have re-provenanced some of the Ballinaby artefacts to the 'opposing' male or female grave, this process has been entirely due to modern reconsiderations of the same artefacts and their perceived gender roles. What Anderson originally identified as a helmet fragment and attributed to the 'male' burial, for example, is now recognised as a heckle, and is consequently associated with the woman's grave today.²⁶ The recent (tentative) identification of the tinned copper alloy objects as shield mounts²⁷ will almost inevitably necessitate their re-association with the 'male' grave-goods.

Despite minor variations in the attribution of specific artefacts and the acknowledged difficulty of establishing what Hadley and Moore call 'material correlates' between artefacts and gender,²⁸ Anderson's association of oval brooches with women has proved absolutely correct. The twentieth century saw a steady increase in the confidence with which Viking Age burials were sexed using grave-goods, a process in which oval brooches, as the most commonly occurring insular grave-goods specifically associated with women, played a central role. The present study has identified a total of ninety-two brooches, the overwhelming majority of which are still extant, which together represent some fifty insular brooch graves spread between thirty-nine sites (**fig.2.3.3**). The pattern is generally dispersed, with all but four of these sites having produced evidence for one grave each. The small (six grave) cemeteries at Ballinaby (073: Argyll & Bute) and Cumwhitton (190: Cumbria) have each produced two brooch burials, while larger concentrations of five and six brooch burials have been found at Kilmainham (177: Dublin) and Pierowall (018: Orkney) respectively. All but eight of the brooches were found in pairs, which is a direct reflection of the way in which they were normally worn (below), and it seems very

²⁴ Anderson *Two Viking Graves*, pp 53, 63

²⁵ Lucy 'Housewives', p.150

²⁶ James Graham-Campbell and C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.124

²⁷ *Pers. comm.* John Sheehan, NUI Cork. See also S. H. Harrison, *Viking Age Shield Bosses in Dublin and the Irish Sea Area* (M.A. thesis University College Cork, 1995), pp 137-9

²⁸ D. M. Hadley, & J. M. Moore, "'Death makes the man"? Burial rite and the construction of masculinities in the early middle ages', in D. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1999) p.23

likely that the eight single brooches, all recovered in less than ideal circumstances, were also deposited as pairs. Like weapons, oval brooches are rarely, if ever found outside burial contexts. A single brooch from the River Bann (087: Antrim/Londonderry), which may represent some form of riverine votive offering,²⁹ but could equally represent a burial eroded from the river bank,³⁰ and a fragmentary brooch from a midden mound at Mangerstadh (051: Western Isles), which could represent either casual discard or the reuse of the an extant mound,³¹ are the only brooches for which there is any evidence that they did not come from graves. Thus, the association between oval brooches and furnished burial is effectively even stronger than that between weapons and these graves.

The more specific association between oval brooches and women has also been confirmed by modern research. Detailed osteological analysis of skeletal material found with oval brooches is even more rare than the analysis of human remains from weapon graves, and only three, from Westness (021.1), Cnip (050.1: Western Isles) and Adwick-le-Street (118: Nottingham) have been published. All three have been identified as woman, and while this evidence is very limited, it conforms to more general international trends, where the correlation between oval brooches and women's graves is almost universally accepted.³² These brooches were worn immediately below the shoulders, connecting together the shoulder straps of an outer garment worn above an under-dress.³³ Where records exist, these brooches are normally found at the shoulders or on the breast of skeletons, demonstrating that they were worn by the corpse, in contrast to weapons, which were usually placed around the body.

While oval brooches (and their associated dress) dominated western Scandinavia and those parts of western Europe and the North Atlantic settled from these areas, they

²⁹ For a summary of the little-studied phenomenon of riverine deposits of weapons, to which the Bann brooch deposit may be related, see J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), pp31-3

³⁰ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The Archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', in H. B. Clarke, M. Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds) *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p.149

³¹ See section 3.2

³² Recent research by Price has pointed to a very limited number of potential exceptions, where oval brooches may have been deposited with men, but none of these are definite, and they are represent specific exceptions to widely held gender identities. See N. S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. AUN xxxi (Uppsala, 2002)

³³ Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London, 1987), p.37

were one of only three common brooch types in Viking Age Scandinavia.³⁴ The association of the other brooch types with Gotland and Finland may have influenced early interpretations of oval brooches, by far the most common of the three, as a kind of 'national costume', and this idea was transferred to Britain at a comparatively early date, where as recently as 1976, oval brooches were seen as 'a distinctive and integral part of the Scandinavian folk dress'.³⁵ Within England in particular, this view of Scandinavian oval brooches can be directly compared to traditional interpretations of Anglo-Saxon brooch types, which sought to link certain brooches to Angles, Saxons and Jutes respectively, an interpretative model that has proved remarkably resilient.³⁶ The origins of these interpretations may well be linked to essentially Victorian concepts of women who, as keepers of the hearth, also functioned as keepers of national culture, if only as passive recipients of their menfolk's wealth and tastes.³⁷

Recent scholarship has, however, questioned such traditional interpretations of oval brooches, and in particular the assumption that *all* Scandinavian women dressed in this way. Recent studies have instead emphasised the role of these brooches as indicators of status, with their use being confined to the better-off members of society.³⁸ Thus, brooch burial, like weapon burial, was a rite that that was only practised by a segment of the Scandinavian population. Indeed, research in Norway has conclusively demonstrated that Viking Age women were far less likely to be buried with grave-goods than men. Solberg's study of central and southern Norway, for example, identified only 833 graves as 'female', despite a methodology that included a considerable number of women's graves without oval brooches (below). This can be contrasted with the 3,796 Merovingian and Viking Age weapon or 'male' graves which she identified in the same study area.³⁹ In this area at this time, there was on average only one furnished 'woman's grave for every 4.6 weapon

³⁴ S. H. H. Kaland, 'Dragt og Smykker', in Else Roesdahl (ed.) *Viking og Hvidekrist: Norden og Europa 800-1200* (København, 1992), p.192

³⁵ D. M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian Settlement in the North and West of the British Isles – An Archaeological Point-of-View', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Ser. xxvi (1976), p.99

³⁶ See, for example, Martin Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1992), p.62

³⁷ See Lucy 'Housewives', pp 150 & 151 for a summary of this approach, as well as a detailed critique.

³⁸ E.g. Roesdahl, *Vikings*, p. 37 Kaland 'Dragt', p.192

³⁹ Solberg 'Social status', pp 66-7. See also section 2.2

(‘male’) burials. Dommasnes, in a more detailed study of a smaller corpus that included a chronological element lacking in Solberg’s study, noted that there was an increase in the number of female burials from the seventh century onwards. This trend peaked in the ninth century, but even then, there were always approximately two male (weapon) burials for every one women’s furnished grave in all four areas examined by her.⁴⁰ By demonstrating that women, who must have represented approximately fifty percent of the population in all areas and times, were far less likely to be buried with grave-goods than their male counterparts, these figures provide further evidence that furnished burial in general was restricted to no more than a fraction of the population.

This evidence, particularly the realisation that not all Scandinavian women were buried with grave-goods, let alone oval brooches, has direct implications for the interpretation of brooch burial in Britain and Ireland. According to the traditional ‘folk dress’ interpretation of these graves, it has been assumed that the number of these brooch burials in a given region is a direct reflection of the total number of Scandinavian women present in that area. As brooch burials are consistently outnumbered by male graves, particularly in the southern part of these islands, it has generally been assumed that the number of women directly involved in the colonisation process was significantly lower than men. If, however, the 50 known insular brooch burials are directly compared to the 200 known weapon graves, the resulting 4:1 ratio is actually fractionally higher than the 4.6:1 figures revealed by Solberg’s study of Norwegian material. As somewhere between 24 and 44% of Solberg’s women’s graves (by region) did not contain oval brooches, the insular ratio is actually even higher than Norway. This comparison is slightly artificial, however, as her study included material from all periods, including the Merovingian, when the number of women’s graves was significantly lower than in the Viking Age proper. If Dommasnes’s more selective figures for the ninth and tenth century are used instead, and given her methodological approach,⁴¹ specifically compared to definite insular graves, then the insular ratio of 94 weapon to 31 brooch burials, a ratio of just over 3:1, is still slightly lower than Dommasnes’s 2:1 figure. Nonetheless, these figures

⁴⁰ L. H. Dommasnes, ‘Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs’ in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), p.82

⁴¹ See section 2.2

suggest that the number of high status women active in ninth- and tenth-century Britain and Ireland was substantially higher than has previously been estimated.

The realisation that not all Scandinavian women were buried with oval brooches also has a direct impact on the interpretation of a number of insular tertiary burials identified in the present study. The use of oval brooches as a kind of ethnic marker for insular Scandinavian graves is so firmly established that the discovery of an insular Scandinavian woman's grave without these artefacts can be seen as deeply problematic. A typical example is the so-called 'pagan lady' from Peel (160.1: Man). This woman, aged over forty, had been buried with no less than ten artefacts and consequently belongs to the most richly furnished five percent of insular Scandinavian burials. Despite this wealth of grave-goods, however, the absence of oval brooches in the grave led the excavator to propose the woman may have been 'Manx' or 'Celtic' in origin, even though she was buried in a Scandinavian fashion.⁴² Further north, a well-furnished boat burial at Scar (013.1: Orkney) contained the skeletal remains of a woman aged over sixty, accompanied by at least nine artefacts but again without the oval brooches which would normally be expected. As a well-furnished weapon inhumation (013.2) was placed in the same boat grave, and the woman was wearing an equal-armed brooch, there can be no serious doubt about this burial's essentially Scandinavian character. The recent reinterpretation of some of the Peel burial's grave-goods has also confirmed the Scandinavian associations of that burial (below). Slightly more problematic, however, is one of the graves from Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072.1: Argyll & Bute), where one of two skeletons laid side-by-side, again within a boat, was accompanied by two oblong brooches adapted from a pair of insular shrine mounts, one of which was found 'adhering to the left collarbone' (**fig.2.3.4**).⁴³ The fact that these brooches form a matching pair and that one of them was attached to the skeleton's shoulder strongly suggests that they were being worn as the equivalent of oval brooches by someone consciously emulating Scandinavian fashions. Whether this 'woman' (an assumption based on the brooches, not skeletal evidence) was a Scandinavian who had found a new status after coming to Scotland, or was a member of a native community emulating Scandinavian

⁴² David Freke, *The Peel Castle Dig* (Douglas, 1995), p.17

⁴³ Malcolm M'Neill, 'Notice of excavations in a burial mound of the Viking time in Oronsay', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxv (1891), p.432

traditions is in some ways irrelevant. This tertiary burial, which like that from Scar was found within the remains of boat, was clearly formed within a strongly Scandinavian milieu by individuals who were well-informed about Scandinavian dress and insular furnished burial practice, and the burial which they created can be directly compared to more conventional brooch graves. Indeed, a more conventional brooch burial (072.3) was found at the edge of the mound that was raised over the woman with 'insular' brooches, although it is not clear whether this grave predated the mound, or represents a secondary burial within it.

Scar (013.1), Peel (160.1) and even Càrn a' Bharraich (072.1), are sufficiently well furnished and closely associated with more conventional (weapon or brooch) burials to allow their identification as insular Scandinavian women's graves. Comparison with Norwegian evidence suggests that a number of other tertiary burials may also be identified as 'female'. In addition to oval brooches, Solberg classified any assemblage of 'five or more beads in [a] reliable grave context and/or textile utensils' as evidence for a woman's grave.⁴⁴ According to these criteria, both Scar and Peel would be identified as women's grave, both containing textile tools, with the latter containing a string of beads as well. In addition, two graves from Kilmainham (177:16 & 31: Dublin) would be identified as women's burials due to the discovery of a string of beads on one occasion, and beads and a linen smoother on the other. The grave from Kingscross, Arran (080: North Ayrshire), with its elaborate stone setting, would also count as a woman's grave due to the presence of a (fragmentary) whalebone plaque among the finds. Less certain evidence is provided by the linen smoothers from Gurness and Howe (024.5 & 032: both Orkney), both of which represent possible graves, while the spindle whorl and beads from Cloghermore Cave (194.2: Kerry) provide evidence for another probable woman's grave. Like Càrn a' Bharraich, there is also some ambiguous evidence from Saffron Waldon (137.1: Essex), where a grave containing a necklace was found in the 1870s. Although necklaces are not normally found in Scandinavian inhumations and the burial could be Anglo-Saxon,⁴⁵ Graham-Campbell believes the elements of this (ninth-century)

⁴⁴ Solberg, 'Social status, p.65

⁴⁵ Geake, Helen, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion Period England c.600 – c.800: BAR British Series cclxi* (1997), p.43

necklace are 'distinctively Scandinavian'.⁴⁶ Consequently, this would seem to provide evidence for another 'female tertiary' burial, identified on the basis of grave-goods. While tertiary burials are discussed in more detail elsewhere,⁴⁷ it may be appropriate to note at this point that no tertiary graves can be identified as 'male' using the evidence of grave-goods.

Further evidence for furnished women's graves in insular contexts is provided by osteological analysis, which has allowed the identification of a number of women who were accompanied by artefacts that are not in themselves diagnostically female, even using Solberg's somewhat broad definitions. For obvious reasons, all are comparatively recent discoveries. Three of the cremation burials from Heath Wood (124.05, 06 & 09: Derbyshire) have been identified as at least 'probably' female, even though two of these are accompanied by artefacts more typically regarded as 'male', notably a strap end and a sword hilt mount, the latter being defined as a weapon rather than a tertiary burial.⁴⁸ At a more modest level, the burials of two mature women, one from Brough Road (023.2: Orkney) and the other from Repton (123.05: Derbyshire) were accompanied by knives, the latter grave also containing a 'strike-a-light'. Neither of these artefact types is exclusively associated with brooch burials, something that can also be said of combs, which are found in both weapon and brooch burials. Tertiary burials with combs at Heysham (107.2: Lancashire) and Benllech (144: Gwynedd) have also been identified as those of women using osteological analysis. Bone pins, on the other hand, are rare finds in either weapon or brooch graves, but there are two cases when the bodies of women have been accompanied by these artefacts, one at Cnip, Lewis (050.3: Western Isles) and the other a probable burial at St Mary Bishophill Junior (115.3: York). The final tertiary burial identified as a woman's grave through osteological analysis is Ackergill (089: Highland), which was accompanied by a length of copper alloy chain. While it is possible that this is a rare example of a Pictish furnished grave, chains occasionally occur in brooch burials, and there is one definite insular example, a brooch burial from near Arklow (187: Wicklow).

⁴⁶ Graham-Campbell, p.114

⁴⁷ See section 3.2

⁴⁸ See section 2.2

Ackergill raises a whole series of complex issues relating to ethnicity which are particularly acute when dealing with tertiary burials, and which are dealt with in more detail in that section (3.2), but given their location and context, there seems little doubt that the other burials can be related to the insular Scandinavian milieu, and regarded as additional, less well-furnished examples of accompanied burial. These twenty graves, ten 'female tertiary' identified by 'female grave-goods', and ten identified by osteology provide further evidence that the number of insular Scandinavian women's graves in Britain and Ireland was actually comparatively high, not unusually low, even allowing for the sixteen tertiary graves that have been identified as male using osteological evidence.⁴⁹

Of course, the distribution of these insular women's graves is rather more complex than these simple figures might suggest. As will already be clear,⁵⁰ the overwhelming majority of brooch burials (74%) are found either in Zones A or B, and half of the ten 'female tertiary' burials have also been found in the these areas (**fig.2.3.5**). Conversely, only one brooch burial has been found in Zone D, and none at all have been found on the Isle of Man (Zone E), although there is the well-furnished tertiary burial from Peel (160.1: above). This gives these two zones male : female ratios of 13.5:1 and 21:1 respectively, far lower than Scandinavia, and perhaps indicative of a much smaller number of relatively high status Scandinavian women in these areas. Dublin and Ireland (Zone F) and northern England (Zone C), on the other hand, have ratios of 5.9 and 5 to 1 respectively, figures that are only slightly lower than Scandinavia itself. However, northern Scotland (zone A) and western Scotland and Ulster (zone B) both have ratios of 1.5 to 1, figures that are higher than any part of Scandinavia for which information has been published. All of these figures are based on graves of all levels of certainty, and it should be noted that the ratios of women's graves are higher in all areas when definite burials are considered in isolation (**fig.2.3.5**). The Scottish figures in particular are a direct challenge to traditional assumptions that the numbers of furnished women's graves are a direct and constant reflection of the number of Scandinavian women present in any given part of Britain and Ireland. Were this the case, then the number of high-status Scandinavian women in ninth and tenth-century Scotland would actually be higher than in Scandinavia

⁴⁹ See section 3.2

⁵⁰ See section 1.4

itself: indeed, women would theoretically outnumber the insular Scandinavian male population. It is, of course, considerably more likely that these figures, rather than reflecting an increase in the total number of women present in this area, instead reflect an increase in the numbers of women being buried with grave-goods, particularly oval brooches. Conversely, while the very low figures for the Isle of Man (zone E) and southern England (zone D) may at some level be related to an absence of high status Scandinavian women here, it is a much more direct reflection of the fact that high status women in these areas were far less likely to be buried with grave-goods. The variations in social circumstances that led to these strong regional fluctuations are not fully understood, but it should be noted that similar regional variations have been noted in Norway. This has been closely studied by Dommasnes, who found that a general increase in the numbers of women's graves in the ninth century was more noticeable in some areas than others, being more prevalent, for example, in the inner part of Sognefjord rather than the outer. In the case of Vik and Aurland, which lie within this inner area, she postulated that the increase in furnished women's graves was directly related to their increasing economic responsibility, as they 'took over the management of the farm while the male head of the household was away on trading or pirating expeditions'.⁵¹ The increased occurrence of women's graves in Scotland is unlikely to be the result of directly comparable social developments, but it seems entirely reasonable to suggest that the large numbers of brooch and female tertiary burials are a reflection of the important social and economic role that high status women played in Scotto-Norse society. At the very least, these figures demonstrate that the deposition of women in furnished graves in zones A and B had a particularly acute social importance which for some reason was not present in the some of the more southern parts of these islands.

While the precise reasons for this change in the perceived importance of women and women's graves must remain open to speculation, it seems clear that the social factors which motivated the creation of furnished womens' graves were at least broadly related to those which resulted in the creation of weapon burials. While land ownership and inheritance were primarily male, women could and did occasionally inherit and control land.⁵² While much of the evidence for this comes from Swedish

⁵¹ Dommasnes 'Female roles', p.81

⁵² Jesch *Women*, p.48

runic inscriptions, the practice was presumably more widespread, and it is entirely possible that at least some of these women's graves are attempts to negotiate and symbolise inheritance in a manner that is effectively identical to the function proposed elsewhere for weapon burial.⁵³ Unless female inheritance was the rule rather than the exception in Scotto-Norse society, however, this model cannot explain the sheer quantity of women's graves in Scotland, but even if these women were not heiresses in their own right, the creation of their graves could still represent attempts to link newly arrived communities to the local environment. Like weapon burials, brooch graves could function as potential focal points within the landscape, representing continuity and smoothing over some of the social tensions inevitably generated by the death of any respected member of the community. In a situation where there may have been a real need to link a family or community to a given location at the earliest possible opportunity, the death of any senior member of that family or community, not simply its male head, may have served as an opportunity to create a monument that fulfilled precisely that function.

The need to link groups to the landscape may also go some way towards explaining the distribution of women's graves in Britain and Ireland. In Norway, women's graves tend to occur in areas of prime agricultural land, and on farms 'where there is known evidence of earlier agricultural settlement in the form of men's graves or graves of persons of unknown sex'.⁵⁴ In Britain and Ireland, the pattern is very different. While, by definition, no (furnished burial) cemeteries were 'long-established',⁵⁵ women's graves show no particularly strong associations either with cemeteries or with male graves. With the exceptions of Pierowall (018: Orkney) and Kilmainham (177: Dublin), the pairs of brooch burials at Ballinaby (073) and Cumwhitton (190), and the three osteological female graves at Heath Wood (124), the distribution pattern of women's graves is dispersed. At some small cemetery sites where there is only one brooch or female tertiary burial, notably Cnip (050: Western Isles), this grave is by far the most richly furnished in the cemetery and must represent the importance of the creation of that grave to the family or community. A similar importance can also be inferred for the twenty-four brooch and three female

⁵³ See section 2.2

⁵⁴ Dommasnes 'Female roles', p.76

⁵⁵ But see the discussion of site reuse in sections 4.3 & 4.4

tertiary graves that are currently the only furnished burial known at their respective sites. These graves can only have had a social function that was directly comparable to that of isolated weapon graves⁵⁶ and serve as a further reminder of the social importance of women's graves, particularly in Scotland, but also in other parts of Britain and Ireland.

In these circumstances, it is possible that the creation of brooch burials in particular could have served as a mechanism for emphasising the maternal ancestry of those creating these graves. Scandinavians, like most Viking Age northern Europe groups, were deeply concerned with genealogy and descent, which could function as a means of reinforcing social hierarchy. In insular contexts, where the fully Scandinavian descent of individuals performing the rite of furnished burial could not always be assumed, the creation of brooch graves may have served as a physical reminder of the Scandinavian origin of mothers and other female relatives, an aspect of lineage which would certainly have had a much greater significance in insular contexts than in Scandinavia itself. As the products of a limited number of sites in Scandinavia, and part of a distinctive, relatively high status costume, oval brooches could have had particular significance in insular contexts as symbols of this descent. An emphasis on maternal Scandinavian descent could also explain the presence of relatively large numbers of women's graves at certain nucleated burials sites such as Kilmainham (above), where they may have emphasised the ancestry of various competing groups within that settlement. Conversely, the social significance of Scandinavian female descent may not have been as acute in those areas where brooch burials form a much lower proportion of the total number of furnished graves. On the Isle of Man, it has sometimes been argued that its 'hybrid' Norse-Manx culture, expressed through its material culture and particularly its sculpture, is the product of intermarriage between male Scandinavians and Manx women.⁵⁷ In this environment, an emphasis on Scandinavian maternal ancestry would not necessarily have the same significance as in northern and western Scotland, an area where no indigenous power groups seem to have survived, and the potential for high status marriage with non-Scandinavian women was presumably much more restricted.

⁵⁶ See section 2.2

⁵⁷ D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), p 41-2

Of course, much of the Manx evidence for 'intermarriage' hinges on the total absence of brooch burials from the island, and there is a real danger of generating what is essentially a circular argument. Theories about the importance of emphasising female ancestry as an aspect of status must remain speculative. Whatever the motivation behind it, however, it is absolutely clear that in most parts of Britain and Ireland, women were at least as likely to be afforded furnished burial as in central and southern Norway, and in some cases seem to have been more likely to be buried in this way. Furthermore, the distribution of their graves suggests that they may have been used as a means of connecting groups to territories in a manner that does not seem to be directly paralleled in western Scandinavia. Given their importance, it seems reasonable to suggest that these brooch and female tertiary burials, like weapon graves, may have been subject to similar social pressures leading to forms of competitive display.

In Norway, Solberg argued that women's graves, like men's, could be divided into three groups, based on the quality and quantity of the grave-goods contained within them, with the rarest combinations representing the highest status graves. Her 'group one' had a minimum of five beads and/or textile utensils, 'group two' had at least one (conical or) oval brooch, and 'group three' graves had (conical or) oval brooches and a third brooch.⁵⁸ It has already been established that Solberg's 'group one' corresponds to what are here called female tertiary burials, as her definition was used to isolate these graves within the larger corpus of tertiary burials. Given her methodology, she has no equivalent for the osteological female tertiary graves identified in the present study, and these figures have consequently been omitted from the following comparative analysis. The same methodology means that Solberg's statistics are most effectively compared to insular graves of all three levels of reliability (i.e. definite, probable and possible). The resulting comparative figures reveal some interesting differences between the two areas (**figs 2.3.6 & 2.3.7**). In Solberg's study area, group one graves are numerous, but are less common than the theoretically higher status group two graves in both central and eastern Norway. Group three graves, on the other hand, are consistently the least frequently occurring

⁵⁸ Solberg 'Social Status', p.67

type in all three of her study areas, ranging from 13-16% of the total, a proportion that suggests these graves may indeed correspond to the highest status group.⁵⁹

In Britain and Ireland, the figures are rather different. Across all zones with more than two women's graves, the most common of Solberg's groups is group two, generally 60-64% of the total women's graves, but which forms 82% of the furnished women's graves in zone B. The percentage of group three graves fluctuates widely from area to area, but given the very small number of insular graves in this group (ten), this is not particularly surprising. Group one graves are equally rare, but only in zone F is the percentage of graves in this group comparable to Solberg's Norwegian figures. Elsewhere, the figures are much lower. If group one graves are indeed the lowest status furnished women's graves, then the low numbers of graves in this category can be directly compared to the relative paucity of group one men's graves in insular contexts and the corresponding increase in groups two and three male graves.⁶⁰ As with weapon graves, the decrease in group one women's graves suggests a move away from comparatively low status graves, either because those creating these burials were investing more grave-goods in these monuments, or because they were simply abandoning the ritual of furnished burial entirely. While it is impossible to produce absolute figures, the increase in the proportion of women's graves relative to weapon graves, particularly in Scotland, makes the first of these explanations the more plausible. Whatever the reason for this shift towards group two and three burials, these figures provide further evidence for the increased importance of women's graves in insular contexts in the ninth and tenth centuries. Nonetheless, it must still be emphasised that while a higher proportion of women were clearly being buried with oval brooches, they, like men buried with weapons, represented no more than a fraction of the total population.

Solberg's system of classifying women's graves, like that employed by her to classify men's graves, represents a simplification of the evidence that focuses on a limited number of artefact types. While her three-fold division of male graves seems to reflect genuine social divisions, however, her subdivision of women's furnished

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp 67-8

⁶⁰ See section 2.2

graves is more problematic. The calculation of total numbers of artefacts in graves⁶¹ is an equally essentially artificial means of quantifying the relative status of graves, but while the figures produced by this analysis broadly correspond to Solberg's three weapon grave groups, in that her group three male graves generally have more grave-goods than groups two and one, this is not the case with her three categories of women's graves, particularly at the upper end of the spectrum (**fig.2.3.8**). For example, the most richly furnished insular woman's grave, Ardvouray (060: Western Isles) with thirteen artefacts, belongs to Solberg's group 2, not group 3. Similarly, Scar and Peel (discussed above), with counts of 10 and 9 artefacts respectively, technically form part of her group 1. Indeed, despite the advantage of the 'central' brooch counting as an additional artefact, only one of Solberg's group 3 graves, a brooch burial with central brooch from Westness (021.1: Orkney) contained more than ten artefacts. In insular contexts at least, it would seem that any one of Solberg's three groups could form part of an elaborate furnished burial, and it is noteworthy that neither of the two women associated with boat burials, at Scar (021) and Càrn a' Bharraich (073), were buried with oval brooches (above). Well-furnished group one graves may reflect the difficulties associated with the acquisition of oval brooches in insular contexts, even for high status individuals. Conversely, the fact that insular graves with central brooches are not particularly well furnished could potentially be a reflection of the fact that many of these brooches, as modified insular mounts, would presumably have been rather more readily available in Britain and Ireland than in Scandinavia. If nothing else, these figures serve as a reminder that the perceived value of individual artefacts was not necessarily constant across the Viking world, and that the comparison of graves over long distances is something that must be undertaken with caution.

At a local level, however, those tertiary burials identified as female solely through osteology were invariably poorly furnished, with only one, from Heath Wood (124.06: Derbyshire) having more than three artefacts. This points to a strong relationship between gender-specific artefacts and status. At a more general level, it should also be noted that whatever the character of the artefacts, women's graves on average contain almost precisely the same quantity of artefacts as weapon graves.⁶²

⁶¹ See section 1.3

⁶² See section 2.2

Even in Scotland, where the numbers of male and female burials are almost equal, women were still fractionally less likely to be buried with grave-goods, but when this ritual occurred, they were accompanied by as many artefacts as their male equivalents. While a lack of published research means that these more general artefact counts cannot be directly compared with any part of Scandinavia, they do reinforce the importance of brooch burial in insular contexts.

This emphasis on the importance of women's graves effectively flies in the face of more traditional approaches to the subject, which have generally minimised their significance as anything more than potential guides to the domestic sphere, or indicators of insular settlement. This approach is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the consistent use of the passive rather than the active voice when discussing almost all aspects of women's graves. In the study of Viking Age burial, like that of Anglo-Saxon period, men are almost invariably described as having been buried with 'their' grave-goods.⁶³ Women, too, are widely believed to have been buried with their personal possessions, but while men are widely assumed to have 'acquired' their grave-goods, women are at least as likely to have been 'given' them.⁶⁴ There is a long tradition of interpreting male grave-goods as an expression of personal status, however underdeveloped this may be in the case of insular furnished graves,⁶⁵ but women's graves are just as likely to be seen as a more or less passive reflection of the status of their husband or family, rather than their own, individual rank. Assumptions of the essentially passive role of women underlie many interpretations of Viking Age grave-goods, both in insular and in Norwegian contexts. Despite the fact that some 85% of insular material found in Norwegian furnished burials comes from women's graves, for example, this material is invariably interpreted as 'gifts' from 'menfolk', rather than material that has actively been acquired by the individual concerned.⁶⁶ Similar material found in male graves, in contrast, is normally seen as the product of raiding or trading by the individual concerned. It is of course true that even high status Viking Age women were associated with the domestic sphere, but

⁶³ Heinrich Härke, "'Warrior Graves?'" The background of the Anglo-Saxon weapon burial Rite' in *Past and Present* 126 (1990), pp 22-4

⁶⁴ Bettina Arnold and Nancy L. Wicker, 'Introduction' to eadem, *Gender and the Archaeology of Death* (Walnut Creek, 2001), vii - xviii

⁶⁵ See section 2.1

⁶⁶ Wamers, 'Insular finds', p.43

the idea that they played no part whatsoever in the acquisition of these and other artefacts that effectively expressed their social rank is remarkable.

The interpretation of women's graves in insular contexts has often been interpreted in a similar, essentially passive manner. While men are described as 'coming' to these islands, either as raiders or colonists, women are instead thought of as having been 'brought', in extreme cases almost as accessories to the oval brooches they carried with them. Similarly, women have often been seen as simple extensions of their husband's property, and although ideas about the deliberate sacrifice of wives at their husband's deaths were disproved by Shetelig nearly a century ago,⁶⁷ related ideas continue to pervade the interpretation of so-called 'mixed' graves of Britain today. At Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) for example, it has recently been proposed that the oval brooches found in this mound represent a kind of 'cenotaph', or token deposit representing the previously deceased wife of a man who was buried there with his weapons.⁶⁸ Edwards' idea is essentially based on the fact that the oval brooches were found back to back within the mound, but it should be noted that brooches have been found in similar positions in what were clearly inhumation graves, as at Reay (035.2: Highland)⁶⁹ and Ballyholme (084: Down).⁷⁰ In the absence of any records of skeletal material from the site, however, it is striking that this 'cenotaph' model was applied to the 'woman's grave, rather than the man's. Wherever such 'double' graves occur, it is almost invariably assumed that it is the male burial that is the more important, even though it is the woman's grave that occupied the more prominent position with the grave at Scar (013: Orkney).

Of course, Viking Age Scandinavian and indeed insular society was dominated by men, with the role of women essentially restricted to the domestic sphere.⁷¹ Nonetheless, the idea that the role of women, and particularly high status women, was entirely passive is problematic. Apart from oval brooches and related dress ornaments, women had their own distinctive repertoire of grave-goods that might be

⁶⁷ Shetelig, Haakon, 'Traces of the custom of Suttee in Norway during the Viking age', in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* x (1910), pp 180-208

⁶⁸ Edwards, *Vikings in the North West*, p.14

⁶⁹ Curle, James, 'Recent Scandinavian grave-finds', pp 295-8

⁷⁰ Robert Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, Co. Down' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxvi (1906), pp.450-4

⁷¹ Jesch *Women*, pp 19, 41, 52

added to graves. Many of these are related to the domestic sphere, but can nonetheless be interpreted as expressions of a distinctly female power.⁷² Were their graves passive expressions of the power of their menfolk, one might be forgiven for expecting consistently fewer artefacts in rather less variety. Given that the dead did not create their own funeral ceremonies,⁷³ the role played by women in the selection of their grave-goods was indeed passive. The number and character of the artefacts placed in any woman's grave were selected by the surviving members of their communities, or perhaps more specifically their families and heirs. However, male, 'weapon' graves were subject to precisely the same social forces and selection process. The fact that men and women were buried with distinctive assemblages, most typically including either weapons or oval brooches, is not merely a demonstration of clearly defined gender roles within a given society, but at some level must also be a recognition of the fact that each derived and expressed authority from subtly different sources, even if this authority was also directly related to the power of the family group.

Whatever the extent to which the sources of female authority could be considered independent of a family unit which was dominated by men, it is clear that conventional models which see the role of women in the colonising process as entirely passive are in no way supported by the burial evidence. The presence of a number of exceptionally early oval brooch types, notably the Berdal form, in insular graves clearly demonstrates that these graves are typologically as early as any insular weapon graves.⁷⁴ If women were indeed 'brought', they arrived at a time when the earliest settlements were still being established. Their graves provide evidence that even ostensibly military settlements such as Dublin were not entirely male environments, and must be a direct reflection of the respected role of at least some women within insular Scandinavian society. Theories that the numbers of Scandinavian women active in Britain and Ireland were comparatively small can no longer be sustained, at least outside southern England and the Isle of Man. Instead, all available evidence points to an increasingly important role for women's furnished graves, as demonstrated by the changing proportions of male and female graves, the

⁷² See section 3.1

⁷³ Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud, 1999), pp 9, 84

⁷⁴ See section 1.4

decrease in the numbers of more poorly furnished examples, and the occurrence of these graves at isolated sites without associated 'male' burials. Whatever the precise reasons for this change, brooch and related furnished burials were clearly potential focal points for communities and groups, and provided opportunities for competitive display. These same subtle changes also provide further evidence that insular Scandinavian furnished burial in general, far from being a simple, passive reflection of firmly established and essentially unchanging traditions, was constantly modified to respond to new circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE – ARTEFACTS (II) GRAVE-GOODS, BELIEFS & SOCIAL STATUS

3.1 High Status Grave-Goods – Interpreting Artefacts

The preceding sections (2.2 and 2.3) have examined the two most common forms of insular Scandinavian furnished burial in the Viking Age: those with grave good assemblages that include weapons or oval brooches respectively. These artefacts are rarely, if ever, found in the same grave, and effectively correspond to male and female burials. Detailed examination of these weapon and brooch graves, which together form 69% of the total corpus and 63% of the definite burials in the present study, has demonstrated that only a proportion of the insular Scandinavian population was buried in this way. Consequently, furnished burials cannot be seen as simple reflections of ethnic identity or religious belief, but must also be viewed as conscious statements of social identity, perhaps related to inheritance, and definitely functioning as expressions of social rank. While it has been argued that all weapon and brooch burials represent the remains of socially significant individuals, it is also clear that there is considerable variety in the number and type of artefacts placed in these graves. This variation must in some way reflect the perceived social importance of the deceased and his surviving relatives or community. In the case of weapon burials, for example, the deposition of multiple weapons within a grave seems to reflect a male hierarchy that is not a simple reflection of military ability. While oval and ‘third’ brooches do not seem to reflect quite such a precise hierarchy, at least in insular contexts, the variation in the total number of artefacts placed in brooch, weapon and indeed tertiary graves must represent related attempts to demonstrate or reinforce a social hierarchy among those creating these graves.

Although there is a high degree of correlation between the two system that have so far been used to identify this hierarchical variation, in that both tend to identify the same graves as ‘high status’, the two approaches are essentially limited. Solberg’s methodology,¹ first developed for central and southern Norway, prioritises a limited group of artefacts and entirely ignores all other grave-goods. As at least one of the

¹ This methodology is presented in Bergljot Solberg, ‘Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources’, in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* viii (1985), pp 63-7. See sections 2.2 and 2.3 with the application of this methodology to insular material

artefacts selected by Solberg – swords, spears, axes, oval and ‘third’ brooches, beads and textile working tools – have been found in 261 of the 379 insular graves included in the present study, it seems clear that these objects were indeed widely perceived as important, and their inclusion (or exclusion) was in some way related to the expression of social status. Nonetheless, ignoring all other artefact types is problematic and can produce some peculiar results, at least in insular contexts. The ‘pagan lady’ from Peel (160.1: Man), for example, technically corresponds to Solberg’s group one, the lowest social group, while a burial from Tiree (063: Argyll & Bute) containing a pair of oval brooches and an additional pin, corresponds to group three, the highest, despite containing no other artefacts. The very basic ‘artefact count’ system used in the introduction to the present study,² which gives a value of ‘one’ to all grave-goods, or occasionally grave good groups, would give a grave good value of ten to the Peel grave, and just two to Tiree, thus reversing perceptions of their relative status.

While artefact count has the advantage of including all grave-goods in its calculations, it effectively treats all artefacts, whether knives, spindle whorls, swords or boats, as objects of entirely equal value, and consequently its results can be as problematic as Solberg’s system. It also implies that the creation of burial assemblages was essentially a process of building up a numerical tally of artefacts until an appropriate status could be demonstrated.³ While wealth was vital to the provision of artefacts for burial, and those buried with more artefacts clearly belonged to families or communities with access to sufficient resources to deposit these objects in graves,⁴ the process of selecting artefacts for incorporation within the burial rite must have been very much more complex, and reflected a far more subtle understanding of the social and indeed symbolic value of specific objects within individual grave good assemblages.

At a basic level, of course, some of the issues relating to the selection and perceived social and symbolic value of artefacts have already been discussed. Weapons, it has

² See section 1.3

³ For a critique of this approach, see D. M. Hadley, ‘“Death makes the man?” Burial rite and the construction of masculinities in the early middle ages’, in eadem (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London, 1999), p.26

⁴ Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England c.600 –c.850: BAR British Series cclxi* (Oxford, 1997), p.26

been argued, were symbols of status as well as instruments by which status might be enforced, and their inclusion in graves was clearly related to ideas of (high status) masculinity and male identity.⁵ Oval brooches, on the other hand, were clearly symbols of female rank that seem to have taken on a new importance in parts of Britain and Ireland, where they may also have functioned as a symbol of a woman's Scandinavian origins and the concomitant Scandinavian ancestry of her descendants.⁶ The widespread use of weapons and oval brooches in insular Scandinavian burials indicates that their symbolic value was widely understood and shared by many insular Scandinavian communities, at least at a general level. Nonetheless, it must be accepted that the perceived value of different artefacts and artefact types must have varied through both place and time, and inevitably hinged on immediate context as much as the artefact itself.⁷ Indeed, a single artefact could potentially be interpreted in several different ways, more or less simultaneously, as a symbol of a series of related, or even unrelated, concepts,⁸ the proposed interpretation of oval brooches in insular contexts being a case in point.

Artefacts have no intrinsic 'meaning' – instead, they are 'read', and given meaning by those who see and use them within specific contexts.⁹ While this statement is fundamental to almost all current (essentially post-processual) approaches to artefact analysis, it is a concept that is far easier to discuss in the abstract than to apply to specific artefacts, places and occasions, even in a proto-historic period such as the Viking Age. While few archaeologists would deny the symbolic value of spears as status symbols and expressions of masculinity, for example, how much credence can be given to the idea that they might simultaneously function as symbols of Óðinn, even as axes might represent Þór?¹⁰ Such complex symbolic interpretations rest not simply on archaeology, but on the historical interpretation of much later documentary sources, frequently in the context of comparative religious studies, and are frequently

⁵ See section 2.2

⁶ See section 2.3

⁷ E. J. Pader, *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains: BAR International Series cxxx* (Oxford, 1982), p.179

⁸ See, for example, Guy Halsall, 'Violence and society in the early medieval west; an introductory survey' in idem, *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998), p.3, where it is proposed that weapons can represent age, class, ethnicity and / or martial ability, as well as rank.

⁹ See Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999), pp 104-6

¹⁰ See Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia: AUN xxxi* (Uppsala, 2002), pp 341

avoided by archaeologists, who instead confine themselves to descriptions of the artefacts. Traditional interpretations of Viking Age insular grave-goods tend to emphasise their functionality, and their potential role in an afterlife that was essentially a continuation of an individual's life, rather than their potential social, or even spiritual value. In an insular context, this tradition was begun by Anderson, who saw the inclusion of smith's tools in the weapon grave at Ballinaby, Islay (073.2) as 'quite in accordance with the faith that foretold the need of weapons', the latter being required for 'Odin's great hall'.¹¹ What can perhaps best be described as 'functional' interpretations of grave-goods, whereby they are seen as specifically personal possessions,¹² reflecting an individual's potential needs for the afterlife, have continued ever since, even where there is little or no documentary evidence to support such interpretations.¹³ Issues of social, and particularly religious significance have been almost entirely avoided in approaches that are fundamentally pragmatic and firmly based on the lowest rungs of Hawkes' ladder of inference.¹⁴

While any move towards more abstract interpretation is inevitably problematic, more detailed consideration of the symbolic role of artefacts within burial assemblages can potentially provide insights to the role of furnished burial within insular Scandinavian society, and provide a counterbalance to the more statistical forms of analysis which dominated the previous chapter. While weapons and oval brooches are the most numerous artefacts found in insular graves, certain artefacts occur rather more rarely, and almost never as the only artefacts in furnished burials. Following Dommasnes's argument that 'an element that occurs only rarely must symbolize a higher rank than a more common element',¹⁵ this rarity suggests that all were considered high status artefacts, at least in funerary contexts. On the other hand, the

¹¹ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell, Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1879), pp 54-5 & fn.

¹² In the context of insular Scandinavian burial, this is often tacitly accepted rather than explicitly stated, but it has been discussed at some length in the context of continental studies of post-Roman furnished burial. See Heinrich Härke, ' "Warrior graves?" The background of the Anglo-Saxon weapon burial rite' in *Past and Present* cxxvi (1990), p.22

¹³ See, for example, the interpretation of the tools from women's graves in Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp 9, 19

¹⁴ Christopher Hawkes, 'Archaeological theory and method: some suggestions from the old world' in *American Anthropologist* lv (1954), pp 155-68

¹⁵ L.H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 15 (1982), p.73

fact that these artefacts are found in graves across Britain and Ireland (and indeed beyond) suggests that the various groups occasionally placing these artefacts in graves must have shared at least some awareness of their significance within the burial rite. As Pader has pointed out, the fact that an artefact's symbolic meaning was 'dynamic' does not in itself mean that it was entirely 'arbitrary'.¹⁶ Crucially, while the incorporation of these artefacts within specific grave good assemblages increases the artefact count, their selection was not random and a more detailed study of these artefacts and their potential symbolic value can provide insights to the function of high status furnished burial in Britain and Ireland.

Perhaps the most obvious, and certainly the largest artefacts to be directly associated with insular Scandinavian furnished burials are boats. In 1906, Shetelig declared that 'among Scandinavian grave finds from heathen times there is scarcely anything that has taken hold upon the general consciousness to a greater degree than the burials from the Viking Age, where the dead was (*sic*) buried in a ship.'¹⁷ This statement has remained true ever since, as demonstrated by the continuing popularity of the *Vikingskipshus* in Oslo,¹⁸ the more recently opened *Vikingemuseet Ladby* on Fyn,¹⁹ the enduring popularity of Ibn Fadlan's description of a *Rus* funeral,²⁰ and the fact that so many popular texts on the Vikings focus almost exclusively on ship graves in discussions of burial practice. Despite such widely held assumptions, however, if current definitions are followed, whereby the dividing line between ships and boats is 20m,²¹ then there are technically no ship burials in either Britain or Ireland. In 1945, Shetelig was exceptionally optimistic in his assessment of smaller, boat burials in this area, identifying no fewer than sixteen examples, but many of these were

¹⁶ Pader, *Symbolism*, p.179

¹⁷ Haakon S(c)hetelig, 'Ship burials, in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* iv (1906), p.326

¹⁸ <http://www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/> (accessed 8 Oct 2007)

¹⁹ <http://www.vistkerteminde.dk/article/55788> (accessed 8 Oct 2007)

²⁰ This somewhat obscure source was first made available in English by Joseph Anderson, 'Description by Ahmed Ibn-Fozlan (an eye-witness) of the ceremonies attending the incineration of the dead body of a Norse chief, written in the early part of the tenth century. Translated from Holmboe's Danish Version of the Arabic original, with notes on the origin of cremation, and its continuance' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ix (1872), pp 518-31 and has been regularly quoted ever since, recently being used to introduce a general text on burial archaeology. See Mike Parker-Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud, 1999), pp 1-3

²¹ Egon Wamers, 'The symbolic significance of the ship-graves at Haiðaby and Ladby', in Ole Crumlin-Pedersen & Birgitte Munch Thye (eds) *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia. Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History* i (Copenhagen, 1995), p.149 fn.1

identified purely due to the presence of a handful of rivets.²² Modern commentators are much more aware of the secondary uses to which ships' timbers could be put on settlement sites and within other structures,²³ activities which could potentially lead to the recovery of ship-rivets from non-funerary contexts. There is also an increasing awareness of the range of artefacts that could be riveted together, from the coffins found in some Anglo-Saxon graves²⁴ to smaller artefacts such as chests,²⁵ or other, even smaller composite artefacts that may be represented by the single rivets that are occasionally recovered from insular burials of this period.²⁶ This new information has led to the rejection of a number of the boat burials which Shetelig identified in 1945, but a number of new examples have also come to light. Shetelig seems to have been entirely unaware of Bersu's excavation of the definite boat burial at Balladoole (167: Man) in 1944-5, and this new example has now been joined by three others, two from Westness (021.3 & 3: Orkney) and the third, containing the remains of three individuals, from Scar (012: also Orkney). On the other hand, early suggestions that ship timbers may have formed part of the cremation burials at Heath Wood have now been discounted, and the various iron fastenings are now seen as parts of chests or other composite artefacts.²⁷ Taking all of these adjustments into account, the current insular total is fifteen boat burials spread between fourteen sites, of which ten are definite, three are probable, and two possible. However, both Scar and Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072: Argyll & Bute) contained two individuals accompanied by grave-goods, which raises the number of individuals buried in this way to seventeen.

²² Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.34

²³ See, for example, Seán McGrail, *Medieval Ship and Boat Timbers from Dublin: Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81* B iii (1993), pp.1-2, or Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England with a Supplement of Viking Antiquities on the Continent of Western Europe*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), pp 13-4, where they dismiss an interpretation of part of a ship on the River Usk, Gwent, as a dam or quay reinforcement in favour of its being a potential ship burial.

²⁴ A summary of this evidence can be found in J. D. Richards 'The Case of the Missing Vikings' in Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph* 17 (London, 2002), p.162

²⁵ James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.96 have proposed that a group of four rivets from Kingscross, Arran (080: N Ayrshire) originally formed part of a chest placed in the grave, rather than part of a boat burial, as proposed by Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940), p.26

²⁶ Single rivets have been recovered from many graves, including Cnip (050.5) and Rubh a' Charnain Mhoir (055.2; both Western Isles) and Kilmainham (177.44: Dublin). While the latter two are early finds, the Cnip grave was professionally excavated. None are likely to have been boat graves, despite the rivet forms.

²⁷ J. D. Richards, 'Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* 84 (2004), p.90

At both Scar and Balladoole, there is also evidence for an additional body unaccompanied by grave-goods, albeit potentially deposited in very different circumstances (below), but these have been excluded from the catalogue for obvious reasons.²⁸

All of the boat burials recorded as 'probable' or 'possible' appear to have been disturbed before excavation took place, and it is also these graves that have produced the smallest number of artefacts. The probable example from Pierowall (also called Gill; 018.17: Orkney), for example, had an artefact count of just four, including the rivets representing the boat, but given the circumstances of its discovery, had clearly been partially eroded before excavation took place.²⁹ At Druim Arstail, Oronsay (071.2: Argyll and Bute), the recovery of 'several hundred' rivets from a sand mound without any other artefacts also suggests disturbance, although the evidence remains sufficiently ambiguous that the burial is no more than possible.³⁰ Of the definite burials that do not appear to have been disturbed before excavation, numerically the most poorly furnished example is from Westness (21.3: Orkney), which nonetheless contained nine artefacts. All other definite burials contained at least ten artefacts, albeit shared between two individuals in the case of Scar (012) and Càrn a' Bharraich (072). This effectively places all of the definite boat burials within the top five percent of insular furnished graves in terms of numerical contents, a statistic that can hardly be coincidental, and which confirms that boat burial was an exceptionally prestigious rite. Indeed, the single most richly furnished grave ever found in an insular context, the weapon burial from Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute), with an artefact count of seventeen, is a boat burial (**fig.3.1.1**). In all, eight of the seventeen furnished burials found in boats were weapon graves, with all the remaining examples (including all but one of the probable and possible examples) being tertiary. However, three of these tertiary graves: Scar (012.2: Orkney), Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072.1: Argyll & Bute) and the possible boat burial from Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire) are well-furnished female tertiary

²⁸ See section 1.3 for basic definitions of the material included in the catalogue.

²⁹ Arne Thorsteinnson, 'The Viking burial place at Pierowall, Westray, Orkney' in Bjarni Niclasen, *The Fifth Viking Congress, Tórshavn, July 1965* (Tórshavn, 1968), p.162

³⁰ C. R. Wickham-Jones, M. M. Brown, T. G. Cowie & J. N. G. Ritchie, 'Excavations at Druim Arstail, Oronsay, 1911-12' in *Glasgow Archaeological Journal* ix (1982), pp 18-19

burials.³¹ Thus, while almost 20% of those buried with grave-goods in boats seem to have been women, none are brooch burials, figures that are too small to be statistically significant but which are nonetheless striking.

It is also interesting to note that at both Scar and Càrn a' Bharraich, the boats also contained the remains of at least one other individual. The Scar boat also contained the remains of a man accompanied by weapons, as well as the body of a juvenile who does not appear to have had any grave-goods (**fig.3.1.2**). While the woman's position close to the centre of the boat and chamber suggests that she was considered the senior individual,³² the artefacts found in this partially eroded grave clearly demonstrate that both individuals were of high status. Weapon and brooch burials have occasionally been found together at other sites, notably Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) and Santon (131: Norfolk), but on those occasions when the presence of oval brooches is not regarded as a 'token deposit',³³ these finds are normally interpreted as representing two graves placed side by side, as at Ballinaby (072.2-3: Argyll & Bute), rather than two bodies within a single chamber, as at Scar. The chances of any high status adult being deliberately killed to accompany the other into the afterlife seems remote,³⁴ and it is most likely that the three individuals buried at Scar died at least approximately at the same time.³⁵ In a recent study of multiple burials in Anglo-Saxon England, Stoodley has argued that these graves represent local responses to the comparatively rare occurrence of simultaneous death within small communities.³⁶ If expenditure on funerary rituals is, as some people have suggested, directly related to the level of social disturbance caused by the death or deaths of individuals,³⁷ then the Scar burial, one of the most richly furnished in Britain or Ireland, could represent a communal response to such a tragedy. While the

³¹ See section 2.3

³² Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), p.155

³³ B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), p.15. See also section 2.3

³⁴ On those rare occasions where this practice seems to have occurred, the murdered individual is usually accompanied by fewer grave goods than the primary burial, or indeed by no artefacts whatsoever. See Haakon Shetelig, 'Traces of the custom of Sutte in Norway during the Viking age', in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* x (1910), pp 180-208

³⁵ Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, 'Scar, Sanday: a Viking boat-burial from Orkney. An interim report' in Björn Ambrosiani & Helen Clarke (eds), *Developments around the Baltic and the North Sea in the Viking age: the Twelfth Viking Congress: Birka Studies* iii (Stockholm, 1994), p.166

³⁶ Nick Stoodley, 'Multiple burials, multiple meanings? Interpreting the early Anglo-Saxon multiple interment', in Lucy and Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England*, p.120

³⁷ Parker Pearson, *Archaeology of Death*, pp 22-23

quantity and quality of artefacts demonstrate access to considerable resources, their utilisation at this particular site may have been at least partially a response to a local tragedy.

At Càrn a' Bharraich, on the other hand, where two skeletons were found side by side close to the middle of the boat, one was accompanied by a pair of brooches, beads and an 'ivory object', while the other, tentatively identified as male, was only accompanied by a single knife (**fig.3.1.3**).³⁸ Other artefacts were found during the excavation, and it is possible that some were associated with the second individual, but the available evidence suggests a considerable discrepancy between the numbers of artefacts accompanying each individual. The phenomenon of a well-furnished burial in close proximity to a burial that was only accompanied by a knife has also been noted at Repton, Derbyshire where the well-furnished weapon grave usually called 511 (123.02) was placed under the same rectangular mound as a second grave (295), which containing the skeleton of a young man accompanied by a knife (123.03). The two graves are not precisely contemporary, but the fact that both were covered by the same mound suggests a relationship between them (**fig.3.1.4**), which Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle have suggested might be that of 'an older warrior buried with his companion, his weapon-bearer'.³⁹ The contrast between this well-furnished male and poorly furnished tertiary grave is striking, and may indeed suggest some kind of subservient relationship, one to which the burial at Càrn a' Bharraich can be compared. It must be stressed, however, that there is no firm evidence that either individual with fewer grave-goods had been deliberately killed, and near-simultaneous death is at least as plausible an explanation for both burials. Nonetheless, placing a presumably subservient individual close to an individual of rather higher status within a funerary context can hardly have been lost to witnesses, whatever their precise interpretation of the event.

³⁸ M'Neill, Malcolm, 'Notice of excavations in a burial mound of the Viking time in Oronsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxv (1891), p.433

³⁹ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army', 873-4', in James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch and David Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997* (Oxford, 2001), p.65

The boat burial at Balladoole (167: Man) also seems to have had two individuals buried within it, one of whom was 'possibly' female.⁴⁰ Although no grave-goods could be specifically associated with the latter individual, it is possible that one of the three knives found within the mound could have been buried with 'her'. Even if this were the case, however, there is a clear distinction between this second skeleton and the rich assemblage of 'male' grave-goods at the site, all of which seem to have been associated with the body of a man, in this case placed close to one end of the boat. Given their poor preservation, a cause of death could not be established for either body, and we should perhaps avoid jumping to conclusions. At Ballateare (154: Man), the only insular site where there is clear evidence for the deliberate sacrifice or execution of an individual as part of the burial of another, the body of a young woman was placed not within the burial pit, but rather in a layer of cremated animal bone in the upper levels the mound which covered it. In this case, evidence of a blow to the back of the skull leaves no doubt that she died a violent death.⁴¹ It has also been suggested that a group of four bodies found immediately southwest of the 'great mound' at Repton (123.10) could represent 'a sacrificial burial associated with the closing of the mound',⁴² but this interpretation has recently been disputed by Hadley.⁴³ While the evidence for deliberate 'sacrifice' in association with any Viking Age furnished burials remains generally ambiguous, the presence of several individuals, apparently of either equivalent or considerably lower status, within no less than three boat burials provides further evidence for the perceived importance of burials of this type.

The boats themselves vary considerably in size. The two largest are Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute) and Balladoole (167: Man), with lengths that have been estimated at 12 and 11m respectively.⁴⁴ The boat buried at Knock-e-Dooney (150: also Man) was only slightly smaller, at 8.5-9.5m,⁴⁵ and that buried at Machrins,

⁴⁰ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph i* (London, 1966), pp 6-7

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.47

⁴² Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings', p.74

⁴³ Dawn Hadley, 'Burial practice in northern England in the later Anglo-Saxon period', in Lucy & Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England*, p.215

⁴⁴ Jan Bill, 'Kiloran Bay revisited – confirmation of a doubtful boat grave', in Andras Mortensen & S. V. Arge, *Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Viking Congress, Tórshavn, 19-30 July 2001* (Tórshavn, 2005), pp 350, 356

⁴⁵ '28 – 30 feet', in P. M. C. Kermodé, 'Ship-burial in the isle of Man', in *The Antiquaries Journal* x (1930), p.129

Colonsay (068) was approximately the same size.⁴⁶ Despite containing two furnished burials, the estimated original length of the Scar burial (012) is *c.* 7.15m,⁴⁷ and the two graves from Westness (021.2 & 3: also Orkney) are smaller again, at just 5.5m and 4.5m respectively.⁴⁸ The dimensions of the Càrn a Bharraich boat are unknown, but it cannot have been larger than the 40ft (12.2m) maximum diameter of the mound, and was probably rather smaller.⁴⁹ Similarly, the boat at Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire), if indeed there was one (below), must have been shorter than the 30ft (9.1m) long ‘heap of stones’ that covered it.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, records of the remaining six boat burials are so poor that no estimate of original length can be made.

In terms of resource expenditure, it can hardly be coincidence that the boat-burials with the most and fewest grave-goods (Kiloran Bay and the second Westness boat) contained the longest and shortest boats respectively, but this rule is hardly absolute. In particular, it will be noted that the boats from Man and the Western Isles are consistently larger than those found in Orkney. Were there an absolute correlation between boat size and social status, these figures would provide some supporting evidence for Brøgger and Eldjárn’s proposals that burial and settlement in western Scotland was in some way more ‘aristocratic’ than that in the Northern Isles.⁵¹ However, it should be remembered that the latter area had almost no supplies of wood suitable for timber in the Viking Age,⁵² and there is clear evidence that the largest boat, at Scar, had been constructed, or at the very least repaired, somewhere

⁴⁶ Although this size has not been estimated, it was found within a mound 30ft (9.1m) long, one end of which had been eroded to the point where the weapons had been exposed. See Malcolm M’Neill, ‘Notice of the discovery of a Viking interment, in the island of Colonsay’ in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxvi (1892), pp 61

⁴⁷ Anne Allen, ‘The boat’, in Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking boat burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), p.44

⁴⁸ S. H. H. Kaland, ‘The settlement of Westness, Rousay, in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds) *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1993) pp 314-6

⁴⁹ Grieve, Symington, ‘Note upon Carn nan Bharraich, or Cairn of the men of Barra, a burial mound of the Viking time on the island of Oronsay, Argyllshire, with an outline of the political history of the Western Isles during the latter half of the ninth century’ in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvi (1914), p.277

⁵⁰ J. A. Balfour, ‘Notice of a Viking grave-mound, Kingscross, Arran’ in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xliii (1909), pp 165-8

⁵¹ A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), pp.126-7; Kristján Eldjárn, ‘Graves and grave goods: survey and evaluation’, in Alexander Fenton & Hermann Pálsson (eds), *The Northern and Western Isles in the Viking World* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp 7-

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⁵² S. H. H. Kaland, ‘Some economic aspects of the Orkneys in the Viking age’ in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 15 (1982), pp 88-9

other than these islands.⁵³ While extensive areas of western Scotland may also have lacked extensive woodland in this period, all the boat burials in zone B occur in the southern islands, where there was easy access to the Irish Sea basin, an area with a ready supply of timber suitable for ship-building as late as the eleventh century.⁵⁴ Given the apparent lack of timber in the Northern Isles, smaller boats may well have had a greater perceived value there than would larger vessels in the Western Isles and Irish Sea area.

Opinions on the seaworthiness of such small boats are rather divided, and it has been proposed that all the Scottish boats were essentially 'well suited for use in inland and coastal waters'.⁵⁵ However, small modern dinghies, less than 5m long, have sailed from Scotland to western Norway, and indeed even further afield.⁵⁶ Although most Norwegian boats seem to have been buried close to their point of manufacture,⁵⁷ there is no reason why Viking age boats of similar size could not have covered long distances, given favourable conditions. Nonetheless, boats of this size were hardly suitable for long-distance raiding or indeed trading. A 4.5m boat, carrying at most four people, would hardly deliver a force capable of striking terror into anything but the smallest and most isolated communities, and even the largest vessels placed in graves in Britain and Ireland were incapable of carrying very large groups. Fotevik 1, from Skåne, dating from c.1100, is the smallest warship included in Crumlin-Pedersen's 1991 study of 'Ship types and sizes', with an estimated crew of sixteen.⁵⁸ At 10.3m, it is directly comparable to the Kiloran Bay, Balladoole, and Knock-e-Dooney boats, which would presumably have had a similar capacity, but warships of this size must have been considered exceptionally small. The Gokstad ship was more than twice this length, at c.24m, and if its thirty-two oar-ports are anything to go by,

⁵³ Diane Dixon, 'Appendix twelve: the petrological investigation of mineral grains trapped between caulking and timber of the boat remains at Scar' in Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, p.225

⁵⁴ Evidence for this is provided by the eleventh century Skuldelev 2, built from oak grown in southeastern Ireland. See Niels Bonde, 'Found in Denmark but where do they come from?' in *Archaeology Ireland* xii.3 (1998), pp 25-7

⁵⁵ James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.150

⁵⁶ Frank & Margaret Dye, *Open Boat Cruising: Coastal and Inland Waters* (London, 1982), p.142

⁵⁷ Allen, 'The boat', p.47

⁵⁸ Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Ship types and sizes AD800-1400' in idem, *Aspects of Maritime Scandinavia: Proceedings of the Nordic Seminar on Maritime Aspects of Archaeology, Roskilde 13th-15th March 1989* (Roskilde, 1991), pp 74-5

would have carried double the number of people.⁵⁹ Indeed, all but these three largest boats from insular graves have far more in common with the three smaller boats found within the Gokstad mound, which were 9.75, 8.0 and 6.6m long respectively, than with the Gokstad ship itself.⁶⁰ While it is not completely inconceivable that 9.5 – 12m boats could have formed part of a war fleet, neither they nor the men crammed aboard them can realistically have formed its core, or have engaged in more than minimal independent military activity. On the other hand, some of these boats clearly provided a means of transport from island to island, and it is possible that some of the larger boats may have served as a kind of small-scale *karve*, or transport vessel for some of the leading individuals of Man and the Western Isles.⁶¹ While their capacity was modest, they could have transported a modest retinue from place to place, and as such could conceivably have been viewed as a symbol of power and authority.

Similarly, there can be little doubt that much of the symbolic value of boats within the funerary ritual came from their similarity to larger vessels. Dommasnes's statement that 'every second scientifically excavated woman's grave [could] be interpreted as a boat-grave, as [well as] every third man's gave'⁶² is almost certainly a reflection of the exceptionally rich burials in her Norwegian study areas, but it seems clear that boat burial, like weapon burial, is rarer in Britain and Ireland than in Scandinavia itself. Just six percent of insular burials, both generally and when definite graves are considered in isolation, are associated with boats. While the use of this practice does not seem to have been the only means by which status could be demonstrated, the Ballateare mound being a case in point (above), it seems clear that all those associated with this practice occupied a position close to the top of the hierarchy that was represented by furnished burial. For those without access to similar resources, there were other means of associating their graves with boats. Richards has drawn attention to the use of what are effectively riveted clinker-built coffins, biers and coffin lids which have been used in a number of graves in Anglo-Saxon England, such as Caister-on-Sea (Norfolk) and Barton-on-Humber

⁵⁹ A. W. Brøgger & Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo, 1951) p.88

⁶⁰ Thorleif Sjøvold, *The Viking Ships in Oslo* (Oslo, 1985), pp 60-2

⁶¹ See Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, p.130

⁶² L. H. Dommasnes, 'Female roles and ranks', p.80

(Lincolnshire). Several of these, including an example from York Minster (114.1) seem literally to be the remains of parts of boats (**fig.3.1.5**) and suggest that the association between these artefacts and burial was particularly strong, perhaps even surviving the local abandonment of other grave-goods.⁶³ The potential symbolic significance of ships and boats in the burial rite is also evident at the cemetery of Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney), where three furnished burials were placed in stone lined, oval graves (**fig.3.1.6**). Kaland has interpreted these as 'boat-shaped', and suggested that a large stone at the pointed ends of the graves closest to the sea is some form of 'prow-stone'.⁶⁴ There are also some suggestions that the Kingscross burial (080: North Ayrshire) may have been a rather larger boat-shaped stone setting, rather than a boat burial in its own right, an re-interpretation that is essentially based on the lack of rivets recovered at the site.⁶⁵ The poor quality of many early records means that the practice of burial in 'boat-shaped' graves may originally have been more widespread, but it seems clear that it can never have been common in insular contexts. It is, however, interesting to note that a symbolic connection with boats seems to have been more important at some cemeteries than others, and presumably reflects some localised belief or burial practice. At Westness in particular, all but one of its six published furnished burials was recovered either from a boat or a boat-shaped grave, and an additional 'half-finished' boat-shaped setting without any associated burials was found a short distance from the cemetery, on the edge of the beach.⁶⁶ While Westness is exceptional, the incorporation of what were effectively physical representations of boats within the furnished burial ritual provides further evidence for the symbolic importance of these artefacts in insular Scandinavian communities.

The idea of boat burial as a primarily ritual activity can be traced back to at least the beginning of the twentieth century, when Shetelig was so struck by the practice that he proposed its development corresponded to a radical change in beliefs about the

⁶³ Richards, 'Case of the missing Vikings', pp 162-3

⁶⁴ S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso & Kirkwall, 22 August – 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.315

⁶⁵ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 96 & 144 do not specifically contradict this, but interpret the rivets as part of a chest and make no reference either to a boat or even a boat-shaped stone setting.

⁶⁶ Kaland, 'Settlement of Westness', pp 314-7

afterlife in Scandinavia. To him, ship or boat burial 'betoken[ed] an altogether altered view of how the grave ought to be arranged to correspond to what would befall man after death' and represented a change from a belief in the grave as 'the resting place of the dead' to one where the dead undertook a journey to the afterlife. In this context, the 'role of ships and boats in these graves was the same as it was in life; the boat was made ready for the journey which lay before the dead'.⁶⁷ Even at the time, however, Shetelig's essentially anthropological approach to the incorporation of boats within graves presented some difficulties, and he was forced to acknowledge the presence of a number of 'transitional' graves which combined a 'bed' chamber with a boat, elements which to him represented diametrically opposed views of the afterlife.⁶⁸

Some forty-five years later, when he collaborated with Brøgger on a general publication on Viking Age ships and ship burials, he had modified his views considerably, and their interpretation of the plundering of the Gokstad and Oseberg chambers as an essentially ritual act is entirely dependent on the surrounding population's belief that the dead continued to 'inhabit' their burial mounds.⁶⁹ This was also the interpretation favoured by Davidson, who found abundant references in Old Norse sources to beliefs in the dead 'dwelling' within their graves, from whence they could communicate with the living on appropriate, and in extreme cases, inappropriate, occasions.⁷⁰ In this context, the departure of the dead for Valhalla may represent a parallel belief, albeit one to which thirteenth-century writers were particularly drawn, perhaps due to its similarity to Christian views of heaven.⁷¹ It has also recently been pointed out that even those later sources which describe the dead travelling to Valhalla associated this journey with riding rather than sailing.⁷² Today, many commentators, rather than seeking anthropological parallels for beliefs relating to 'sailing' to the afterlife,⁷³ have begun to emphasise the potential connections

⁶⁷ Haakon S(c)etelig, 'Ship Burials', in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* iv (1906), pp 329, 331, 333

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.353

⁶⁹ A. W. Brøgger & Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo, 1951), pp 67-8

⁷⁰ H. E. Davidson, *The Road to Hel: a Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge, 1943), pp.83ff

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.86

⁷² Schjødt, J. P., 'The ship in Old Norse mythology and religion' in Crumlin-Pederson & Thye, *Ship as Symbol*, p.23, citing *Eiríksmál*.

⁷³ E.g. Shetelig, 'Ship-burials', pp 329-30

between boats and Freyr, or perhaps Óðinn, member of the Norse pantheon, with boats potentially functioning almost as cultic symbols.⁷⁴ This new emphasis on the potential supernatural associations of what have previously been interpreted as essentially functional artefacts can be paralleled in recent studies of other artefacts, notably textile tools, but also including weapons (above) and perhaps smithing implements (below).

As Price has pointed out, Old Norse mythology was not so much a religion as a belief system,⁷⁵ and lacking a central authority, or even a formal priesthood, there can only have been considerable variation in belief patterns. Snorri Sturlusson seems to have been acutely aware of variation within the Old Norse mythology he recorded in the thirteenth century, and assumed these must have developed as people spread out from the Scandinavian homeland.⁷⁶ Instead, it is likely that while communities must always have shared certain beliefs, a range of interpretations must always have been accommodated within this system, and it is even possible that individuals could have held what are essentially self-contradictory beliefs. In Davidson's words,

‘It is clear that in Scandinavia [and elsewhere] different beliefs and customs have intermingled, and it is very unlikely that any consistent and definite body of beliefs was ever held at any one time about the disposal of the dead and the meaning of it’.⁷⁷

As a result, the reconstruction of the belief systems underlying the creation of any single furnished burial is exceptionally problematic, but this does not mean that this process can be dismissed out of hand. Whatever the opportunities for social display provided by the death of a senior member of the community, the gathering of the grave-goods must have had a ritual as well as a social element, and many, if not all, of those artefacts placed in graves must have had a supernatural symbolism that went beyond an essentially practical view of the afterlife. It should also be remembered that those creating furnished burials, as senior members of their communities, were also those who led most ritual activity, notably the *blót* or sacrificial feast.⁷⁸ Those

⁷⁴ Schjødt, ‘Ship in Old Norse mythology’, pp 22, 23

⁷⁵ Price, *Viking Way*, p.26

⁷⁶ R. N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980), p.103

⁷⁷ Davidson, *Road to Hel*, p.61

⁷⁸ Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London, 1991), p.152

creating furnished graves were also those who perpetuated the pagan belief system at a local level.

Whatever their precise beliefs, it is clear that while all artefacts may have had certain, supernatural associations, many must also have functioned as representations of the present life, and as aspects of the life of the buried individual which those creating the grave wished to emphasise within the funeral ceremony. Ships and boats in particular 'represented aspects of *this* world i.e. of *this* life of the dead',⁷⁹ and were as much symbol of the past deeds of the deceased, real or imagined, as a representation of any future greatness in Valhalla or elsewhere. It has even been suggested that ship-burials represented a specifically 'Viking ideology', one which was based on raiding and conquest and which used the material culture of burial as a means of expressing this ideology.⁸⁰ While small, the boats placed in graves must have evoked associations with these larger vessels, warships and / or travelling ships, and served as physical reminders of the authority of the kin-group. While the presence of high status women in at least two insular boat graves, not to mention the Oseberg burial in Norway, may call this 'Viking ideology' into question in some cases, if these boat burials were created at some of the bases from which raiding parties set out, then the idea of boats as an expression of an essentially military sea-borne authority is not entirely at odds with the idea of burials as static monuments associated with inheritance and land ownership. As all definite (and several other) boat burials occur at sites overlooking important sea routes, however,⁸¹ this symbolism could potentially have been adapted to allow these boats to function as symbols of control of these local waters, as well as, or in addition to, their associations with more far-ranging military ambitions.

Whatever the precise interpretation of their mythological or indeed temporal significance, boat burials clearly functioned as symbols of power and authority in the present world at least as much as in the afterlife, consistently occurring in some of the most richly furnished and physically elaborate burials in Britain and Ireland. The inclusion of horses or horse harnesses in graves, whatever their proposed links to

⁷⁹ Wamers, 'Symbolic significance', p.157

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.156

⁸¹ See section 4.2

concepts of Valhalla (above), must also have functioned as related symbols of social authority. While mounted warfare had yet to develop as a regular practice in northern Europe, horses were seen as high status animals, and indeed horse trappings regularly occur in the comparatively rare furnished burials found in tenth-century Denmark, where they have been interpreted as symbols of military and social authority.⁸² In northern Scotland, it is generally acknowledged that the 'Vikings and their contemporaries... had a riding aristocracy'⁸³ and the situation in the rest of Britain and Ireland must have been similar. Certainly, the slaughter of horses or the incorporation of horse riding equipment within the burial assemblage formed part of a considerable number of insular Scandinavian funeral ceremonies in this period, albeit on a rather smaller scale than the larger Norwegian burials, where ten and twelve horse skeletons have been found in association with the Oseberg and Gokstad burials respectively.⁸⁴ Nonetheless the social importance and prestige of these animals in insular contexts is clearly demonstrated through the not infrequent discovery of elaborate horse trappings in association with these graves, perhaps most spectacularly at the tertiary burial at Athlumney (170: Meath) (**fig.3.1.7**).

The practice of placing horses in insular graves was more widespread than boat burial, with twenty-eight examples known where a horse skeleton, horse furniture, or both have been placed in graves. As might be expected with a larger corpus, there is rather greater variety in terms of evidence reliability and the artefact count from individual graves. In addition, while bodies seem invariably to have been placed within boats in this period, horses were instead placed close to the human remains they accompanied, but occasionally within separate pits. This seems to have been the case, for example, at Cronk yn How (156: Isle of Man), where a pit containing a horse was found close to the edge of an early medieval cemetery, a possible horse burial that may be associated with another tertiary burial within the same cemetery.⁸⁵ At Sedgeford (125: Norfolk), the association between horse and human body is rather closer, with a woman's head having been placed on the side of a horse buried at right

⁸² Klavs Randsborg, 'Burial, succession and early state formation in Denmark, in Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes & Klavs Randsborg (eds), *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge, 1981), pp 113-5

⁸³ D. H. Lorimer, 'The Bodies' in Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, p.55

⁸⁴ Sjøvold, *Viking Ships*, pp 12, 54

⁸⁵ The excavators, J. R. Bruce & W. Cubbon, 'Cronk yn How. An Early Christian and Viking site, at Lezayre, Isle of Man', in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* lxxxv (1930), p.286 called this feature a 'horse-burial', but made no comment on its date or potential associations with any human remains in the cemetery.

angles to her east-west body,⁸⁶ and providing evidence for a probable tertiary burial, despite the absence of any more conventional grave goods. While records (and burials!) are confusing, however, eighteen of the twenty-eight burials (and thirteen of the sixteen definite examples) were weapon graves, which suggests that horses were widely seen as a symbol of male authority, presumably with potential military associations. Nonetheless, the Sedgeford burial and a bridle bit and horse bone found in association with a brooch burial at Reay (035.2: Highland) demonstrate that this gender association was not absolute. Ingestad has, however, argued that the woman buried in the Oseberg ship would not have been expected to ride any of the horses buried with her, but has also pointed out the potential significance of the fact that only one figure in the 'procession' shown on one of the tapestries preserved in the burial is mounted.⁸⁷ Whether or not this figure was a 'king', it is clear that riding horses had considerable social social prestige.

Despite Ingestad's reluctance to associate women with riding, the aforementioned brooch burial from Reay, with an artefact count of six, is one of the better furnished insular horse graves, although the weapon burials at Hesket (093) and Beacon Hill (094: both Cumbria) are better furnished again, with artefact counts of ten and eight respectively. Horses are found in still more richly furnished graves, but all of these examples contain boats as well. There are five sites where both a horse and a boat have been found in the same grave, and with the exception of the disturbed example from Pierowall (018.17: Orkney, above), these are among the most richly furnished in the entire corpus, with artefact counts ranging from ten at Machrins (068: Colonsay) through thirteen and fourteen at Balladoole and Knock-e-Dooney (167 and 150; both Man) respectively, to seventeen at Kiloran Bay (067: Argyll & Bute). Traditionally, the placing of both horses and boats in graves has been seen as a means of providing the dead with a choice of riding or sailing to Valhalla.⁸⁸ Instead, perhaps both should be seen as related symbols of mobility and hence authority in the present world, selected for burial as symbols of something rather more complex than simple economic wealth. Indeed, as the island of Colonsay, where two definite horse burials have been found, is less than 12km long, the usefulness of a horse as a

⁸⁶ Graham-Campbell, (2001), p.112

⁸⁷ A. S. Ingestad, 'The interpretation of the Oseberg-find', in Crumlin-Pedersen & Thye (eds), *Ship as Symbol*, p.145

⁸⁸ Shetelig, 'Ship burials', pp 335-6

practical means of transport within the immediate environment is open to question. Their symbolic importance within the burial assemblages at Machrins (068) and Kiloran Bay (067), on the other hand, is unquestioned.

While the military aspects of both horse and boat burial have perhaps been overemphasised in the past, their broad associations with 'warriors' or even 'chieftains' has gone more or less unquestioned, with Kermode's dismissal of the Knock-e-Dooney boat (150: Man) as a 'half-decked fishing-smack' being unusually negative in its assessment of social status.⁸⁹ This interpretation may have been influenced by the discovery of a number of functional smith's tools within the same burial, artefacts that have rarely been interpreted as high status artefacts. Metalworking tools are the most commonly occurring tools found in weapon burials, although it should be emphasised that while they are relatively common in Norwegian burials,⁹⁰ the deposition of smith's tools in insular graves is actually rarer than either horse or boat burial, with no more than five examples known. As a result of research by the Irish Viking Graves Project, it is now proposed that the smith's tools found at Kilmainham in 1866⁹¹ can be divided into two distinct groups corresponding to two graves, one (177.43) accompanied by a hammer, tongs and crucible tongs, and the other (177.36) accompanied by two hammers. At both Ballinaby, Islay (073.2: Argyll & Bute) and Knock-e-Dooney (above), the bodies were accompanied by a hammer and smith's tongs, while at Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire), a single iron hammer was recovered. It is possible that this latter example and the set of two hammers from Kilmainham were associated with some craft activity other than metal-working, but the fact that smith's graves are already underrepresented in the insular corpus suggests that these objects were probably also related to metal-working.

In the past, it has been widely assumed that these artefacts are indications that those placed in these graves were themselves smiths, and perhaps more specifically

⁸⁹ Kermode, 'Ship-burial', p.129

⁹⁰ Dommasnes, 'Social roles and ranks', p.77, although they are only found in six of the twenty-two male burials summarised by her in table ii.

⁹¹ W. R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), p.17

weapon smiths.⁹² Although this idea has steadily gained popularity since it was first proposed by Anderson (above), the insular evidence does not necessarily support this interpretation. In particular, the Kilmainham material includes a crucible tongs and a particularly small hammer, both of which seem to have been intended to work with metal other than iron.⁹³ The selection of these artefacts for deposition may have been more or less coincidental, however, as it is entirely clear that those smith's tools placed in graves were clearly selected from a much wider range of artefacts. Both the Mästermyr and Staraya Ladoga finds give some indication of the range of artefacts used by highly skilled smiths in the period,⁹⁴ and the tongs and hammers which are found in insular graves represent no more than a fraction of these. They are, however, immediately recognisable artefacts, and the fact that it is these same artefacts that are used to represent smiths in insular Scandinavian art can hardly be coincidental. A hammer and tongs are found, for example, at the bottom of the Leeds Cross, associated with a depiction of Weyland Smith (**fig.3.1.8**), and a hammer and tongs also occupy prominent positions in the depiction of Weyland in his smithy on the Halton Cross, Lancashire.⁹⁵ A slab from Iona also depicts a set of tongs and a hammer above a group of figures in a ship,⁹⁶ and while the specific legend this image depicts cannot be identified, the same tools occur as part of depictions of Weyland in earlier Anglo-Saxon art and Gotlandic picture stones.⁹⁷

While some may regard the similarity between representation of smiths tools in Viking Age art and those tools chosen for deposition in insular Scandinavian burials as no more than coincidence, there is evidence that smithing, clearly regarded as an almost magical activity in some phases of prehistory, continued to enjoy quasi-mystical significance in the early medieval period, with the Weyland legends

⁹² E.g. Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.124

⁹³ George Coffey & E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects found at Island-bridge and Kilmainham' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), p.118 & Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p.47 are the only published twentieth-century descriptions of these artefacts, although Bøe omitted one. They have been divided into two groups as a result of research carried out on behalf of the Irish Viking Graves Project. See Irish Viking Graves Project Interim Report 2001. NMI Archive.

⁹⁴ Else Roesdahl, *Viking og Hvidekrist: Norden og Europa 800-1200* (Copenhagen, 1995), pp 197, 251

⁹⁵ R. N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980), pp 102, 104

⁹⁶ Anon., *Argyll: An Inventory of the Monuments iv: Iona* (Edinburgh, 1982)

⁹⁷ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp 108, 116

forming no more than a part of these beliefs. In a study of Anglo-Saxon documentary and archaeological evidence, Hinton has pointed to the quasi-mystical, transformative power of smiths, and their potential associations with an almost supernatural power within Anglo-Saxon society.⁹⁸ Given the many similarities between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian beliefs, it seems entirely feasible that insular Scandinavian communities may have treated smiths with similar respect. As far as the incorporation of smith's tools within burial assemblages is concerned, it is particularly noticeable that while some Anglo-Saxon graves with smiths tools, such as Tattershall Thorpe (Lincolnshire) included a wider range of tools, they often lack other artefacts that might otherwise be considered high status.⁹⁹ In contrast, all insular Scandinavian smith's tools have been found with weapons, and those that can be linked to discrete assemblages formed part of particularly substantial grave-good groups. Even at Kilmainham, one of the two groups of tools from the site forms part of one of the few artefact groups that appears to correspond to a single, well-furnished weapon burial (177.43) An association between smiths' tools and weapon graves has also been noted in Scandinavia and suggests that many, if not all, of those buried with smith's tools were individuals of considerable status.¹⁰⁰

Paradoxically, it is believed in both Ireland¹⁰¹ and England¹⁰² that iron working at least was relatively common in this period, and that basic metalworking was undertaken at most rural sites. Craftsmen capable of producing high quality material, whether weapons or ornaments, must have been rather less common, but the lowest artefact count for an insular Scandinavian grave with smith's tools is four, and Ballinaby, the discrete Kilmainham assemblage, and the Knock-e-Dooney boat burial have counts of 11, 12.6¹⁰³ and 14 respectively. Effectively, these artefacts form part of some of the most richly furnished graves in Britain and Ireland, and their association with craftsmen, however skilled, is problematic, particularly if these

⁹⁸ D. A. Hinton, *Anglo-Saxon Smiths and Myths: The Toller Memorial Lecture* (Manchester, 1998), pp 14-16

⁹⁹ idem, *A Smith in Lindsey: The Anglo-Saxon grave at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xvi* (London, 2000)

¹⁰⁰ Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts*, p.123

¹⁰¹ Harold Mytum, *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland* (London, 1992), p.235

¹⁰² Hinton, *Anglo-Saxon Smiths*, pp 4-5

¹⁰³ This figure has been arrived at through a subdivision of all artefacts in the 1866 assemblage that cannot be specifically associated with individual graves among the minimum number of burials in the assemblage. Eleven artefacts can be specifically associated with 177.43

craftsmen were also exercising the authority enjoyed by their high status neighbours. Is it possible that the incorporation of smith's tools within these graves is not so much an expression of metal-working ability as a conscious evocation of mystical authority, one which, like the sculptural tradition, perhaps drew upon traditions linked to Weyland. Indeed, given the accepted connections between Weyland and Woden in Anglo-Saxon beliefs,¹⁰⁴ could these artefacts have a deeper cultic significance again? Of course, it can be argued that exceptionally skilled craftsmen were precisely that portion of the population who were most likely to be associated with Weyland, but the purpose of the present section is to point to the complexity of symbolic values which could potentially be associated with grave-goods. Whatever the precise reasons for placing smith's tools in graves, their significance, like the incorporation of either boats, horses, or horse trappings, must go beyond a conviction that they might in some way prove useful in the afterlife. Hammers and tongs clearly had a significance within both furnished burial rites and later sculpture that went beyond a respect for craftsmanship.

Whatever the precise interpretation of 'smith's graves', the association of metalworking tools with particularly well-furnished graves has led to a general acceptance that those buried with these artefacts were moderately important individuals. Oddly, this is not the case when equivalent tools are found in women's graves. Like men, it has been assumed that women will need these artefacts in the afterlife, but while smith's tools are usually interpreted as representing a respected, if not necessarily high-status occupation, the textile-working implements typically found in women's graves are rarely, if ever, viewed in the same light. While the products of an anvil are more likely to survive in the archaeological record than those of a loom, this perception clearly owes at least as much to present values as to the evidence of the past. Textile implements are rather more common finds in insular graves than smith's tools, with at least one artefact known from twenty-seven burials, of which seventeen are definite. Oddly, despite a generally acknowledged association between women and textile production in this period, and Solberg's willingness to identify graves as female on the basis of textile implements,¹⁰⁵ three of the graves with textile implements also contained weapons. At Balnakeil Bay (033: Highland)

¹⁰⁴ Hinton, *Anglo-Saxon Smiths*, p.14

¹⁰⁵ See section 2.3

the definite juvenile burial there was accompanied by what has provisionally been identified as a needle case, at Harrold (128: Bedfordshire), a heckle was found in a probable weapon burial¹⁰⁶ and at Caerwent (148: Gwent), a pair of shears have been linked to another probable burial. Although these graves must be considered unusual, Dommasnes noted a number of similar graves in Norway,¹⁰⁷ and this evidence suggests that not all aspects of textile production were necessarily the exclusive preserve of women. Of the remaining insular burials with textile tools, fourteen were brooch burials and the remaining ten were tertiary burials, forming the 'female tertiary' group identified in section 2.3. In the present context, the fact that textile-working tools were found in tertiary burials may also be taken as a possible indication that textile working lacked at least some of the prestige associated with metal-working, at least in the context of furnished burials. Smithing tools have only ever been recovered from weapon graves, and never occur as the only artefact in a grave good assemblage.

While more common than metal working tools, however, textile-working artefacts are very much underrepresented in insular graves, at least when compared to Norway. Indeed, Shetelig drew particular attention to the absence of such artefacts in insular contexts, particularly spindle whorls, which were 'never missing in women's graves in Norway'.¹⁰⁸ The precise distinction between spindle whorls and buttons, single beads or pendants can be difficult to establish, particularly in the case of early records, and there is a tendency to assume the former, particularly in the case of weapon graves. Nonetheless, it is clear that these artefacts are by far the most common textile tools, perhaps reflecting the time-consuming nature of this particular part of the textile manufacturing process. Even the woman from the Scar boat burial, whose artefact count of nine should mark her out as of particularly high status, had suffered bone deformity in her right hand, apparently the result of constant spinning in the course of her long life.¹⁰⁹ Rather less common finds, particularly in insular Scandinavian graves, are needle cases, shears or scissors, linen smoothers, heckles, weaving battens and whalebone plaques, the three latter categories being the last to

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, what has now been identified as a heckle from Ballinaby, Islay (073.2) was originally associated with the male burial, and was only linked to the adjoining woman's grave (073.3) in the comparatively recent past.

¹⁰⁷ Dommasnes, 'Social roles and ranks', p.78

¹⁰⁸ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.42

¹⁰⁹ Lorimer, 'The bodies', p.58

be identified correctly. In the past, heckles have been misidentified as other artefacts, as at Ballinaby (073.2-3: Argyll & Bute),¹¹⁰ weaving battens have been interpreted as weapons, as at Cruach Mhor, Islay (075: Argyll & Bute),¹¹¹ and whalebone plaques (**fig.3.1.9**) like that from Scar (018: Orkney) caused complete mystification, although they are now almost invariably associated with cloth production, specifically linen smoothing.¹¹² Recently, Owen has pointed to the importance of textile production in the pre-industrial economy, and has suggested that a woman's responsibility for this activity within a given household could have been as much a source of power and symbol of her authority as an occasion for work.¹¹³ In the case of whalebone plaques in particular, Owen has noted the lack of wear associated with these artefacts, fragments of which have also been found in graves at Kilmainham (177.19-26: Dublin) and Kingscross Point (080: North Ayrshire), the only other examples from burial contexts in Britain and Ireland. As only about sixty of these artefacts are known from throughout the Viking world, they are among the rarest of textile-related implements and this, combined with the lack of wear, suggests that they may have functioned as prestige items as much as a functional means of smoothing or pleating linen.¹¹⁴

Owen has also discussed recent research by Näsström, who has pointed to particularly strong connections between women and all aspects of linen production, including the growth and harvesting of flax, and the association of both women and flax with the goddess Freyja.¹¹⁵ By extension, Owen has argued that whalebone plaques may also have had some specific associations with Freyja,¹¹⁶ which would make these whalebone plaques another grave-good type with mystical, if not explicitly religious significance. The careful display of the whalebone plaque at Scar, propped up at one end of the burial chamber, is reminiscent of the occasional positioning of shields in the same way, in a particularly prominent point within the chamber, and further reinforces the point that whatever their relationship to

¹¹⁰ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.124

¹¹¹ Kate Gordon, 'A Norse Viking-Age grave from Cruach Mhor, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxx (1990), pp 151-60

¹¹² James Graham-Campbell, J. c.1980. *Viking Artefacts: A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980), p.23

¹¹³ Olwyn Owen, 'The assemblage as a whole: an overview' in Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, pp 143-5

¹¹⁴ Olwyn Owen, 'The whalebone plaque', in Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, p.79

¹¹⁵ Britt-Mari Näsström, *Freyja – the Great Goddess of the North. Lund Studies in the History of Religions* v (Lund, 1995), pp 84-5

¹¹⁶ Owen, 'Whalebone plaque', p.79

supernatural entities, whalebone plaques and potentially other textile-working implements could function as expressions of social status in a manner which mirrored smiths' tools almost precisely.

While a link between whalebone plaques and Freyja may be tenuous, it is perhaps marginally more plausible than the recently proposed links between spindle whorls and the *nornir*, who spun the fates of humankind,¹¹⁷ and is certainly less controversial than the recent reinterpretation of roasting spits which has been proposed by Price. Rather than seeing these artefacts as domestic in character, he has instead suggested that at least some of these artefacts are actually iron *seiðstafr* or 'sorcery staffs', objects regularly noted and indeed occasionally described in later sources. Although a subject with which many scholars are uncomfortable, magic and magic working were accorded great respect in Viking Age society, and the working of *seiðr* was generally associated with women rather than men, because spell-casting by men could lead to the sexually ambivalent condition of *ergi*, a direct challenge to masculine identity, established gender roles and sources of authority in this period.¹¹⁸ Two examples of these potential *seiðstafr* are known from insular contexts, one a fragmentary example from Kilmainham (177.19-26)¹¹⁹ and the other an intact artefact recovered from the 'pagan lady's grave at Peel (160.1: Man). It is interesting to contrast Price's approach to the Peel burial with that of Graham-Campbell, who analysed the artefacts found in Freke's excavation. The 'pagan lady's grave, easily the best furnished in the cemetery, contained a number of unusual items, including a chicken's wing, which Graham-Campbell proposed might have been used to dust flour during baking.¹²⁰ To Price, on the other hand, this artefact clearly had ritual or magical associations, and he extended this interpretation to propose that a whole

¹¹⁷ Martin Rundkvist, 'Late Viking period pagan burial in Gotland: the symbolic code', in Dragos Gheorghiu (ed.), *Material, Virtual and Temporal Compositions: On the Relationship between Objects BAR International Series cmliii* (Oxford, 2001), p.84

¹¹⁸ Price, N., *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala, 2002), pp 175-200

¹¹⁹ While it may be no more than coincidence, the same assemblage included the whalebone plaque (above), and provides clear evidence for at least one exceptionally well-furnished woman's grave at Kilmainham. The only published image of this artefact is in Bøe, *Ireland*, fig.66 & pp 97-8, where it is listed as unprovenanced.

¹²⁰ James Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves: the Viking-age artefacts and their significance' in David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later: Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii* (Liverpool, 2002), pp 84-5

series of small objects within the grave were 'charms'.¹²¹ To Graham-Campbell, on the other hand, these artefacts, which included a pierced ammonite and a miniature (4.5cm) pestle and mortar, had no particular significance other than 'fascination' or 'toys'.¹²² Given that their presence among the grave-goods is better explained if they had some supernatural associations, Price's interpretation is far from unreasonable and serves as a reminder that the artefacts found in women's graves are at least as likely to have functioned as expressions of authority as the equivalent artefacts placed in male graves. The fact that both men and women could draw upon different repertoires of artefacts to express power at a whole series of symbolic levels may confirm clearly defined gender roles, but also suggests that women's graves did rather more than express the 'reflected status' of their male relatives.¹²³

This section has taken a very different approach to that of chapter two, in that it has attempted to move beyond numerical artefact counts, and to present a slightly more subtle analysis of the motivations underlying the deposition of a limited number of artefacts in particularly high-status graves. By its very nature, this analysis cannot reach definite conclusions, not least because Viking Age belief systems were themselves constantly changing. It should be emphasised that none of the rather tentative interpretations offered here – 'functional', social, mystical or 'cultic' – are in any way mutually exclusive. Instead, male and female symbols of power, including the many artefact types found in their graves, had potential symbolic values that could operate at a whole series of levels, rather than a single, essentially fixed meaning which was immediately obvious to all witnesses. Underlying all of these interpretations, however, is the essential idea that these burials functioned as expressions of power and authority, be it supernatural, temporal, or a complex mixture of both. The artefacts placed in well-furnished graves are no more randomly selected than the weapons and brooches that characterise the overwhelming majority of burials of these type, and have as much to do with the expression of power and authority within the funerary context as their specific association with the individual being buried.

¹²¹ Price, *Viking Way*, pp 160-1

¹²² Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', p.87

¹²³ See section 2.3

3.2 Low Status Graves? Tertiary Burial in Context

Until now, the focus of this study has been on those ninth- and tenth-century furnished burials that have been consistently identified as 'Viking' since Worsaae's visit to these islands in the late 1840s. While neither the weapons nor the oval brooches that characterise these graves are necessarily the simple ethnic markers they have been treated as in the past, only a handful of scholars have challenged their Scandinavian associations, or perhaps more specifically the essentially Scandinavian identity of those buried with them.¹ Given that England is the only part of the study area where an indigenous tradition of furnished burial existed in the early middle ages, it is perhaps unsurprising that most discussions of ethnicity have focused on graves in this area. There has been a particular emphasis on differentiating between Viking Age and earlier Anglo-Saxon weapon burials, using evidence that ranges from the tenuous, as at Blackrod (105: Lancashire),² to the more detailed but nonetheless ambiguous, as at Harrold (128: Bedfordshire).³ There are, of course, Viking Age burials that fail to fit the precise pattern of containing either weapons or oval brooches, but in the past the absence of these artefacts has been widely attributed either to prior disturbance, or the poor recording of information during and after their recovery. It has already been suggested, for example, that the recovery of silver artefacts from several graves in the eighteenth century may be the product of collection interests at the time: iron or indeed copper alloy artefacts could have been present, but simply unrecorded.⁴ From a comparatively early date, however, an essentially predictive model which saw all Viking graves as containing either weapons or oval brooches became firmly established, and Anderson's interpretation

¹ See, however, Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds) *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Studies in the Early Middle Ages* ii (Turnhout, 2000), pp 259-76 and more recently Dawn Hadley, 'Burial practices in northern England in the later Anglo-Saxon period' in Sam Lucy & Andrew Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 17* (London, 2002), pp 209-28 for alternative interpretations, as well as discussion, this section.

² Cowen (1948), pp 75-6 identifies this site as Viking Age, but Audrey Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), p.143 views it as at least potentially Anglo-Saxon in date.

³ B. N. Eagles & V. I. Evison, 'Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire' in *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* v (1970), pp.46 originally identified the burial as Viking Age, but Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-goods in Conversion Period England c.600 - c850: BAR British Series cclxi* (1997), pp 61, 71, 126 dates it to the (very) late Anglo-Saxon period.

⁴ See section 1.3.

of a (lost) set of balance pans from Ensay (053: Western Isles) as a pair of oval brooches is typical of these widely held assumptions.⁵

Late twentieth-century archaeologists have been more willing to admit the existence of Viking Age furnished graves which contained neither weapons nor oval brooches, and indeed the group here defined as 'female tertiary', accompanied either by beads or textile-working tools, have already been discussed.⁶ Recent excavations at sites such as Cnip, Lewis (050: Western Isles), Repton (123: Derbyshire) and Peel (160: Man) have also produced evidence for poorly-furnished graves without either 'typical' artefact type within burial complexes that also contain at least one brooch, weapon, or female tertiary burial. There is, therefore, a new awareness that while the corpus of Viking Age insular furnished burial is dominated by weapon and brooch graves, grave good assemblages without examples of either artefact type do exist. Research carried out in association with the present study has, however, demonstrated that the practice was rather more extensive than is generally believed. If all ninth and tenth-century graves from known areas of Scandinavian activity that contain artefacts other than those directly associated with coffins or related containers for the body are included in this tally, then there are at least 126 potential examples of these tertiary graves, of which 68 are definite, 20 are probable and 38 are possible (**fig.1.4.1**). As the general survey has already made clear,⁷ they have a distinctive distribution pattern (**fig.3.2.1**). In Ireland excluding Ulster (zone F), they form just 13% of both the general and definite corpus of burials, but this low proportion is almost certainly the result of the calculation of minimum numbers of burials at Kilmainham. As this process was essentially based on the numbers of weapons and oval brooches recovered in specific assemblages, the number of tertiary burials at this site (and consequently his zone) has almost certainly been underestimated. The actual number of tertiary burials may have been rather closer to the 30-34% which is characteristic of the rest of the Irish Sea basin and Scotland, with figures ranging from 30% of all burials in zone A (northern Scotland), through 32% of zone C1 / D1 (western England and Wales) and zone E (Man), to 34% of

⁵ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), p.556, referring to a grave from the west end of Ensay (053: Western Isles).

⁶ See section 2.3

⁷ See section 1.4

Zone B (western Scotland and Ulster). While there are some minor variations when definite examples are examined in isolation, none appear statistically significant, and tertiary burials therefore form approximately a third of the total furnished burials throughout the north and west of these islands. In eastern England (zone C2/D2) however, 58% of the total corpus, and 60% of definite burials, are tertiary. This increase in the proportion of tertiary burials is, of course, a direct reflection of the reduction in weapon and brooch burials in the same area, but nonetheless 45 of the 126 examples (36%) come from eastern England, a figure that shows a definite concentration in this area.

In terms of artefact count, tertiary burials in all areas are generally less well furnished than either weapon or brooch burials, with 76% having either one or two grave-goods, compared to 48% of weapon and 40% of brooch graves. It is interesting to note that the eleven female tertiary burials identified in the present study reverse this trend, with only three examples (27%) having an artefact count of less than three. If these eleven graves are removed from the general total, 94 of the 115 remaining tertiary burials (82%) have an artefact count of one or two, and none have a count of more than seven. The three tertiary burials with artefact counts of seven come from Pierowall, Westray (018.16), Middle Harling (132: Norfolk) and Peel (160.4: Man), a distribution that confirms the wide distribution of graves of this type throughout the study area. There does, however, seem to be a slight concentration of less well-furnished tertiary graves in England, with all but one of the 12 tertiary burials in zones C1/D1 having an artefact count of less than three, and 40 of 45 tertiary examples in zones C2/D2 falling in to the same category. While these figures of 92 and 89% respectively are high, however, it must be appreciated that 78% of tertiary burials in zone A fall into the same category, and only on Man is the proportion less than 64%. Thus, while there are more poorly furnished tertiary burials in England, the concentration of these graves in this area is not completely overwhelming.

Throughout the study area, the kinds of artefacts placed in these graves are perhaps most typically related to clothing and dress-fasteners, including ringed pins, bone and metal stick pins, other brooches, buckles and strap-ends, single or paired beads (both normally given an artefact count of one), and fragments of decorated wire from elaborate garments, perhaps cloaks, as suggested for a burial with distinctive woven

silver cones from Peel (160.2: Man). Excluding the better furnished 'female tertiary' examples, 60 of 115 graves (52%) fall into this category. Closely related to this group are graves that contain artefacts that were either worn as decoration or which are thought to have formed part of everyday dress, such as perforated miniature whetstones and knives, both often found in the same graves as the first group. Combs, while they may also have had a liturgical function,⁸ fall into a similar category. There are 38 tertiary graves with artefacts of this type, but considerable overlap with graves with dress fasteners means that there are only fourteen burials that only contain artefacts of this type, combs being the artefacts that most regularly occur in burials without dress fasteners or related artefacts. A slightly different, but probably related practice, discussed in more detail below, is the deposition of coins in graves. Although there is again some overlap with other artefacts, eleven of the fourteen⁹ tertiary burials with coins contained no other artefacts. Together, these three basic categories of dress fasteners, related artefacts and coins, even allowing for overlap between them, incorporate 85 (74%) of the 115 tertiary graves considered here.

The remaining quarter (26%), comprising 30 graves, is exceptionally diverse in terms of the kinds of artefacts placed in them, although almost all are poorly furnished. Tools or utensils of any kind are, however, rare, the only exceptions being a (lost) ladle and 'cauldron' from a possible burial at Rathlin (082.3) and a drinking horn terminal from a probable grave at Pierowall (018.16), both of which fall under the general category of 'cooking implements' in the present study. It also seems likely that at least some of the graves in this group represent burials that were badly damaged before they were recorded, but which were originally better furnished. Given the evidence for so many boat burials being extensively furnished, for example, it seems very likely that some tertiary boat graves that appear particularly poorly furnished, such as the probable examples from the Wick of Aith (010: Shetland), Pierowall (018.17: Orkney) and Huna (038: Highland), as well as the possible example from Druim Arstail (071: Argyll & Bute), fall into this category. Similar comments can be made about some of the nine tertiary burials associated with

⁸ Notably in the case of four burials at the Ladykirk, Ripon (113: North Yorkshire). See section 1.3.

⁹ The female tertiary burial from Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire) also contained a coin, but has been excluded from this tally (see below).

either horses or fragments of horse harnesses. At Reay (035.1: Highland) in 1912, for example, a skeleton was found with two buckles from a horse harness and no other artefacts. Given the ongoing erosion at the site that was to result in the discovery of additional graves in 1913 and 1926 (035.2 & 3), it seems very likely that this burial was originally more elaborately furnished. However, there is now clear evidence from professionally excavated sites that tertiary burials accompanied by horses did occur, ranging from well-furnished examples such as that from Middle Harling (132: Norfolk) to very much more modestly equipped examples such as Sedgeford (125: also Norfolk), the latter providing potential parallels for earlier discoveries such as Saffron Walden (137.2: Essex) and Cronk yn How (156: Man). These modest horse burials can perhaps be compared to those individuals buried with fragments of boats, in as much as they represent a reduced commitment of resources to burial, while retaining a link to the ritual and social symbolism associated with horses. Whatever the symbolic value of the artefacts placed in them, however, the fact that almost all of the artefacts found in tertiary graves are also found in more conventional weapon and brooch graves can only indicate that they are the product of a similar social environment, and strongly suggests that the practices are in some way related.

Unlike weapon and brooch burials, however, none of the artefacts placed in tertiary graves have specific gender associations, with examples also having been recovered from both weapon and brooch burials. The only exceptions to this rule, the eleven female tertiary burials, have already been identified, but it is interesting to note that no equivalent tools or artefacts associated with men have been identified among the contents of tertiary burials, smith's tools being exclusively associated with weapon burials. Nonetheless, many of these tertiary burials contained the remains of men. Typically, only a very limited number of skeletons from tertiary burials have been examined by modern osteologists, and even fewer have been published. While ten have been identified as women, sixteen have been sexed as male, although this is only certain in nine cases. This suggests that even in the case of tertiary burial, men were more likely to be buried with artefacts than women, but it should be pointed out that this sample represents just over twenty percent of the 115 tertiary burials and need not be entirely representative. In particular, while the osteologically female tertiary graves come from a wide range of sites in England, Scotland and Wales, ten of the sixteen male skeletons come from just two sites, York Minster (114.1-3 & 6-8)

and Repton (123.03-04, 06 & 08), with Peel (160.2 & 4) and South Great George's Street (182.3-4) having produced two each, and the final examples coming from Brough Road, Mainland (023.1: Orkney) and St Mary Bishophill Senior (115.1: York). This strong geographical bias towards York, where some of the coins found in the graves at York Minster actually predate the recorded Scandinavian settlement of the area (below) suggests they need to be interpreted with caution. In terms of artefact count, the graves cover the full range of tertiary burials, with the possibly male example from Peel having a count of seven, while four others contained single artefacts. Their contents, which include ringed pins, buckles, strap-ends, decorative elements from clothing, knives and coins, are typical of tertiary burials generally, although it is interesting to note that none of the tertiary burials osteologically identified as female had an artefact count of more than two.¹⁰ Again, this may suggest a slight male bias towards better-furnished burials, but the sample size and its bias towards a limited number of sites means that these results must be treated with caution.

Having assembled a comprehensive list of tertiary burials, it is comparatively easy to summarise their major characteristics. It is, however, far more difficult to place them within a secure context in terms of their origins. In the northern and western parts of these islands, the absence of an indigenous tradition of furnished burial has led to a general assumption that all early medieval furnished burials are Scandinavian in origin, although even here, there are some puzzling exceptions. At Ackergill (089: Highland), for example, the skeleton of a woman with a chain around her neck was recovered from a cist within a Pictish cemetery. Although the excavator identified the chain as Scandinavian,¹¹ this may be problematic. Without engaging in detailed typological analysis, its similarity to the chains used on a ninth-century balance found at Kilmainham in 1866 suggests it is of Viking Age date,¹² but the debate still continuing on the origin of these balances means that this artefact need not be of Scandinavian origin either.¹³ Despite being a furnished grave of approximately the right date, however, this example has been systematically excluded from recent

¹⁰ See section 2.3

¹¹ A. J. H. Edwards, 'Excavation of a number of graves in a mound at Ackergill, Caithness', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xl (1926), p.172

¹² Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p.50, is the only modern description of this artefact.

¹³ See James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts: A Select Catalogue* (London, 1980), p.88

surveys of Scottish 'Viking' graves, even while other 'tertiary' burials have been included.¹⁴

At least some the difficulties associated with the confident identification of such furnished graves as 'Scandinavian' or at least 'insular Scandinavian' is due to a lack of directly comparable published material from Norway. Dommasnes does not seem to have included any graves without either weapons or jewellery in her 1982 study of Sognefjord, and while it is possible that not all items of jewellery were oval brooches, this is never discussed in detail.¹⁵ Solberg, on the other hand, did incorporate the equivalent of 'female tertiary' burials within her 1985 study of southern Norway,¹⁶ but all other later Iron Age burials classified by her contained either weapons or oval brooches. A footnote to the effect that '460 finds [were] regarded as mixed grave finds and have not been included in the present study'¹⁷ may provide some evidence for a comparable group of tertiary burials in Norway, as may a similar comment that of a control group of 112 graves professionally excavated between 1956 and 1978, 34 could not be sexed.¹⁸ As this was presumably due to a lack of either weapons or oval brooches, these figures provide further evidence that the equivalent of tertiary burials do exist in Norway. While Solberg's figures imply that such burials were slightly less common in Norway than in Britain and Ireland, they are insufficiently detailed to allow any real comparison between the two areas, and without a detailed appraisal of individual Norwegian burials, there is no way to compare the two areas more precisely. The equivalent information for Denmark is not readily available either, and as Roesdahl has characterised 'pagan burial customs' there as 'variable in the extreme',¹⁹ parallels may not be readily forthcoming. However, Richards *et al* have drawn explicit links between the tertiary burials at Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire) and a group of barrow cremation

¹⁴ It is not included in either C. E. Batey, 'The Viking and late Norse graves of Caithness and Sutherland', in eadem, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds) *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso and Kirkwall, 22 August – 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp 148-64 or James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998)

¹⁵ L. H. Dommasnes, 'Late iron age in western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), particularly p.71

¹⁶ These female tertiary graves correspond to her group one women's graves. See Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 18 (1985), p.67, and section 1.3.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.63 fn

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.70

¹⁹ Else Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark* (London, 1982), p.164

cemeteries in North Jutland, a comparison that includes the artefacts placed in these graves.²⁰ The possibility that the distinctive pattern of burial found in eastern England reflect Danish rather than Norwegian traditions cannot be entirely ruled out, but as both weapon and brooch burial were clearly adapted to the local insular environment, the assumption that tertiary burials are a simple reflection of Danish practices is inherently problematic.

More immediate parallels for tertiary burial, particularly in eastern England, are provided by the indigenous tradition of furnished burial. The idea that some or all English Viking Age graves could reflect a local rather than a specifically Scandinavian tradition was first seriously proposed by Halsall in 2002, in an iconoclastic paper that criticised the ethnic and religious interpretation of all Viking Age furnished burials, including weapon graves.²¹ More recently, Hadley has pointed to the remarkable diversity of burial practices in Viking Age England, and has proposed that burials accompanied by small artefacts are simply another aspect of this diversity, one which is not necessarily related to Scandinavian practices.²² It is certainly true that the artefacts placed in Anglo-Saxon graves vary very much more than those placed in their Viking Age equivalents, with weapon burials being rather more rare, particularly in the so-called 'final phase' of furnished burial.²³ While women's graves accompanied by elaborate jewellery were more common,²⁴ the presence of a group of graves containing neither artefact type has long been appreciated, and these (gender) 'neutral' burials, which at some sites comprise half of all graves, can be directly compared to Viking Age 'tertiary' burials.²⁵ However, this three-fold division of the Anglo-Saxon burial tradition is characteristic of a period at least two centuries before the arrival of Scandinavian groups in England, and the suggestion that there is a direct link between these graves and insular

²⁰ J. D. Richards, Marcus Jecock, Lizzie Richmond & Catherine Tuck, 'The Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xli (1995), p.62 & Table 2

²¹ Halsall, 'Viking presence in England?', pp 265-7

²² Hadley, 'Burial practices in northern England', pp 215, 217-8

²³ Heinrich Härke, 'Changing symbols in a changing society: The Anglo-Saxon weapon burial rite in the seventh century' in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in North-Western Europe* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp 159-60

²⁴ S. J. Lucy, 'Housewives, warriors and slaves? Sex and gender in Anglo-Saxon burials' in Jenny Moore & Eleanor Scott (eds) *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), p.157

²⁵ eadem, 'Burial practice in early medieval eastern Britain: constructing local identities, deconstructing ethnicity', in Lucy & Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England*, p.78

Scandinavian examples is therefore more problematic than proposing a connection between tertiary burial and contemporary practices in Scandinavia.

Instead, insular Scandinavian practices can only realistically be compared to the so-called 'final-phase' of Anglo-Saxon furnished burials, and even in this case, traditional interpretations of the evidence suggest that furnished burial had effectively died out in England by the mid-eighth century at the absolute latest,²⁶ fifty years before the earliest recorded Scandinavian activity in the area and at least a century before the earliest recorded settlement. In the most recent study of 'conversion period' grave-goods, however, Geake specifically extended the period of study to AD850, a date that implies a period of potential overlap with Scandinavian activity. There are also strong parallels between the artefacts placed in these late graves and those that are found in Viking Age tertiary burials, with Geake emphasising knives, pins, beads, buckles and brooches in particular.²⁷ Many of these 'simple, long-lived artefact types' are exceptionally difficult to date, and it is entirely possible that this tradition of modestly furnished burial survived until the point when it may have influenced insular Scandinavian burial practices. There are, for example, 731 conversion period graves that contain knives.²⁸ Is it entirely unreasonable to suggest that at least some of the fifteen Viking Age tertiary burials with knives, five of which come from zones C or D, demonstrate an element of continuity with this older tradition? On the other hand, Geake freely admits that some of these later (i.e. ninth-century) 'Anglo-Saxon' graves show more affinities with Viking than Anglo-Saxon material culture.²⁹ The better-furnished grave from Saffron Waldon (137.1: Essex) is perhaps a case in point. While the necklace that accompanied this grave is clearly of Viking Age date and has obvious Scandinavian associations,³⁰ the practice of placing necklaces in graves was far more common in Anglo-Saxon than Scandinavian burials,³¹ where the deposition of necklaces (as opposed to strings of

²⁶ Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.1

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.11

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.102

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.125

³⁰ James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds) *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997* (Oxford, 2001), p.114

³¹ Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.50 records 159 necklaces spread between 155 conversion period graves.

beads suspended between oval brooches) was comparatively rare.³² In insular contexts, only three other definite examples of necklaces are known, all strings of glass and amber beads, two of which come from Kilmainham (177.16 & 31: Dublin) and the other from Peel (160.1: Man).

While artefacts such as knives and necklaces provide some interesting points of comparison, the grave good type found in Viking Age furnished burials that seems most clearly to be the product of an Anglo-Saxon tradition is the coin. While coins are 'the commonest individual class of artefact surviving from the Viking period',³³ they are generally rare finds in Scandinavian furnished burials, perhaps not least because with the exception of a few local mints, the overwhelming majority of coins in Scandinavia were imported either from the Middle East or Anglo-Saxon England.³⁴ In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Scandinavian silver economy was based on bullion, and under these circumstances it is perhaps unsurprising that all but two of the coins from insular Scandinavian graves are of Anglo-Saxon origin, both exceptions being Roman finds from York Minster (114.1 & 2). Indeed, several of these coins, while technically of Viking Age date, were minted before the first overwintering of a Viking army in 850, or indeed the settlement of the Danelaw that began in 876.³⁵ The earliest (and undoubtedly the most tenuous) is a possible tertiary burial from Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk). The coin that was the only artefact found in this grave was minted during the reign of Ecgberht (AD828-39). Caister-on-Sea occupied a position at the mouth of a major estuary,³⁶ and it is possible that an early settlement could have been established in the area. On the other hand, it is equally plausible that this burial forms part of an indigenous burial tradition. It is also striking that all three Anglo-Saxon coins found in graves at York Minster (114.6-8) date from the reign of Aethelred II (841-9), at least seventeen years before the conquest of the city by the 'Great Army'. Again, it is possible that these coins were in circulation for long enough to be deposited after this conquest, if not the settlement that began a decade later again, but the possibility that they represent indigenous burials cannot be entirely eliminated. The four coins from a possible

³² Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts*, p.29

³³ *ibid.*, pp 103-4

³⁴ Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London, 1991), pp 110-4

³⁵ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), pp 23, 27

³⁶ M. J. Darling with David Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea Excavations by Charles Green 1951-55: East Anglian Archaeology Report lx* (1993) pp 3-5

burial at St Paul in the Bail, Lincoln (119), dated to the mid-ninth century,³⁷ are perhaps a little more likely to have been buried after a Scandinavian presence was established in the area, and there are no serious chronological difficulties with the remaining examples of the practice, although a number, notably those from Repton (123.01 & 04: Derbyshire) and Reading (141: Berkshire) also seem relatively early.

Further evidence for an indigenous tradition of depositing coins in graves is provided by Geake, who included the Lincoln and Caister-on-Sea, but not the York Minster finds among her Anglo-Saxon conversion period graves.³⁸ However, her study also indicates just how rare the practice was, with only twenty-three recorded instances of coins placed in graves between AD600 and 850, in fourteen of which the coins were Roman rather than contemporary Anglo-Saxon issues.³⁹ Two of her 9 Anglo-Saxon examples date from the middle third of the ninth century, and research associated with the present study has identified a further nine examples from Anglo-Saxon England containing coins dating from 841 to 915, with the earliest and latest examples in the series both coming from York, the earlier coins from the Minster (above) and the latest from St Mary Bishophill Junior (115.1). In addition, the deposition of coins in burials also spread beyond Anglo-Saxon England in approximately the same period, with a further six examples of the practice, all using Anglo-Saxon coins, recorded in Scotland, Man and Wales (**fig.3.2.2**). Theoretically, the earliest coins, from Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute) could have been deposited as early as 831, but as the coins in this grave seem to have been demonetarised, the actual date of deposition may be as late as AD900.⁴⁰ The latest coin in this western area, from Ty Newydd (146: Bardsey), was minted before *c.*973, which makes this definite tertiary burial the latest Viking Age furnished burial known, albeit a problematic example (below). It is also in this western area that coins are found in weapon graves, specifically Kiloran Bay (above) and Buckquoy, Mainland (022: Orkney), as well as the female tertiary burial from Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire). Thus, despite its obvious Anglo-Saxon origins, the practice of depositing coins in graves clearly underwent a revival from the mid-ninth

³⁷ Alan Vince, 'Lincoln in the Viking Age' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, p.159

³⁸ Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, pp 168-70

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.32

⁴⁰ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 118, 122

century onwards. Given that coins clearly occur in weapon and brooch graves, it does not seem altogether unreasonable to suggest that many, if not all, of the tertiary burials with coins in Anglo-Saxon England also have insular Scandinavian associations. The fact that these coins were not of Scandinavian origin does not in any way contradict this interpretation: indeed their associations with England may have been one of the reasons they were incorporated within what were after all insular Scandinavian burials. Furnished burial was once again being adapted to a local environment, and if at least some of the graves containing artefacts were Anglo-Saxon rather than Scandinavian, the close associations between these two groups must have made the distinction increasingly irrelevant as time passed, at least at a local level.

Coins are also useful examples of another issue relating to the interpretation of tertiary burials, in that it can be argued that such small artefacts could potentially represent casual loss rather than deliberate deposits in graves. This is perhaps most clearly expressed in the York excavations, where Phillips was convinced that all the coins found in grave-cuts represented loss, despite the fact that at least one (114.7) was found between the lower arm and pelvis of the skeleton placed in the grave.⁴¹ Given the extensive Roman remains at this site, accidental incorporation is certainly a possible explanation of the two Roman coins found in Viking Age graves at the Minster (114.1 & 2), but Geake has assumed similar deposits in earlier Anglo-Saxon graves were deliberate (above), and there is clear evidence that 'ancient' artefacts were at least occasionally incorporated within Viking Age burial assemblages.⁴² Similarly, a coin from a rather more elaborate tertiary burial at Peel (160.2: Man) has also interpreted as a 'residual inclusion', despite having been found on the floor of the grave.⁴³ At the opposite extreme, substantial groups of coins can be equally difficult to explain within burial contexts. At Hook Norton (129: Oxfordshire), for example, it is possible that the deposit of 23 coins and (perhaps) a silver arm-ring

⁴¹ Derek Phillips & Brenda Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster* (2 vols, London, 1995), pp 90, 497, 500, 528, 581

⁴² See section 4.3

⁴³ James Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves: the Viking artefacts and their significance' in David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later: Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii* (Liverpool, 2002), p.89

was actually a hoard, rather than a deposit within a grave.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the nineteenth-century excavators of the horse burial at Leigh-on-Sea (142: Essex) were convinced that the 23-27 coins from this grave had been placed 'in a hollow of the left shoulder',⁴⁵ and this information strongly suggests that large groups of coins could at least occasionally be deposited in graves. Two smaller assemblages, each containing five coins, have been recovered from graves at Repton, one from the 'mausoleum' (123.01) and the other from a tertiary burial close to the church (123.04). With the exception of Kiloran Bay (above), all other burials with coins contain a single example. While some of these may represent accidental loss, the regularity with which they occur strongly suggests that their incorporation within the burial ritual was deliberate.

The absolute value of these coins, particularly single examples, must always have been limited, but like many other artefacts associated with burial, they may have had a symbolic importance which was more pronounced. Specialists often point to documentary sources, which claim a belief Oðinn would allow any buried artefacts to be taken by the dead to Valhalla,⁴⁶ but the available archaeological evidence does not really support this comparatively late (thirteenth-century) reference. Silver hoards and burials generally consist of rather different artefacts, and while silver artefacts occasionally occur in definite burials, such as the (lost) silver arm ring from the brooch burial at Clibberswick (001: Shetland) or the silver penannular brooch from Westness (021.1: Orkney), they are comparatively rare. Like their more elaborate counterparts, coins may well have been as much a symbol of wealth in the present life as a preparation of the afterlife. Some coins do, however, seem to have had a more elaborate symbolic function, as demonstrated by their position in the grave. The coin from Ty Newydd (146: Bardsey) had clearly been placed within the mouth of the adult male buried in this grave, and a second example of the same practice has been found at Peel (160.6), where the otherwise unaccompanied body of a child also had a coin placed in its mouth. The practice of placing a coin in the mouth, perhaps related to the classical concept of *Charon's Obol*, has no obvious parallels in either

⁴⁴ Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', pp 115-6 makes precisely this argument for the arm-ring.

⁴⁵ R. A. Smith, 'Anglo-Saxon Remains' in H. A. Doubleday (ed.) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Essex* (Westminster, 1903), i, 328

⁴⁶ James Graham-Campbell, *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD850-1100)* (Edinburgh, 1995), p.61, citing *Ynglings Saga / Heimskringla*

Christian or Norse beliefs, and although Graham-Campbell has stated that the practice has also been 'noted' in Scandinavia,⁴⁷ these parallels can hardly be extensive. The reason why this particular practice should have been used in two graves at Christian cemeteries in areas without a contemporary indigenous coin economy is unclear, but these two graves serve a reminder of the diversity of the rituals associated with furnished burial in the Viking Age. They also serve as a reminder that despite Evison's assertion that coins and other small artefacts could be dismissed as 'isolated deposits of a personal or sentimental nature rather than tokens of pagan burial ritual',⁴⁸ there is no particular reason to believe that the small objects chosen for inclusion in less well-furnished graves were selected with any less care than the larger artefacts that accompanied weapon and brooch burials. Indeed, one of the characteristic features of Viking Age tertiary burial is that all the small artefacts placed in these graves at least occasionally occur in better-furnished weapon and brooch burials, a pattern which strongly suggests that those depositing these artefacts and creating these graves, while responding to local circumstances, shared elements of a common material culture and engaged in broadly comparable burial rituals.

It must also be emphasised that while coins are perhaps the most striking example of local artefacts incorporated within insular Scandinavian burials, particularly tertiary examples, it must be emphasised that they are not the only artefacts of insular origin which regularly form part of grave good assemblages. In the western part of the study area, the most obvious parallel is provided by ringed pins, dress fasteners that were originally Irish but which were enthusiastically adopted by Hiberno-Norse (and indeed insular Scandinavian) communities, certainly from the tenth century onwards.⁴⁹ They also occur in no less than forty-seven ninth and (early) tenth-century graves (**fig.3.2.3**), primarily in the western part of these islands, but with three examples from England, two of which come from the eastern area (zones C2 / D2). These examples from Sonning (138: Berkshire)⁵⁰ and Heath Wood (124.10: Derbyshire)⁵¹ provide further evidence that while furnished burial practices in the

⁴⁷ Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', p.94

⁴⁸ V. I. Evison, 'A Viking Grave at Sonning, Berks.' in *The Antiquaries Journal* 49 (1969), p. 341

⁴⁹ Thomas Fanning, *Viking Age Ringed Pins from Dublin. Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81. Series B.iv* (Dublin, 1994)

⁵⁰ Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', pp 329-32

⁵¹ J. D. Richards, 'Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv (2004), pp 75-6

latter area were distinctive, graves in these areas share at least some elements of a common material culture. Ringed pins can also be compared to coins in that they occur in all three types of furnished burial, with 20 occurring in weapon graves, 9 in brooch burials, and the remaining 18 in tertiary graves. In 9 of the latter cases, they are the only artefacts in these graves, but as is often the case with such small artefacts and assemblages, only 3 of these burials can be classified as definite.⁵² Oddly, however, while the relationship between stray finds of ringed pins in cemeteries and individual burials within them is sometimes debated,⁵³ on those occasions when ringed pins can be confidently associated with graves, the essentially Scandinavian character of these graves, whether weapon, brooch or tertiary, is rarely, if ever questioned, despite the insular origins of ringed pins themselves.

Ringed pins are by far the most common dress fasteners found in tertiary burials, and are typical of other artefacts associated with these graves in that they have a low intrinsic value. While possible tertiary burials accompanied by silver artefacts are known, including an example from Kilmainham (117.48), these are invariably early finds that may originally have been accompanied by other artefacts, like the aforementioned penannular brooch from a brooch burial at Westness (021.1), or may even have represented hoards, like Blackerne (090: Dumfries & Galloway). Nonetheless, burials accompanied by copper alloy artefacts such as ringed pins, stick pins, buckles or strap-ends, particularly where these artefacts were tinned or gilt, would have stood out among the majority of contemporary burials, notwithstanding a few possible Anglo-Saxon exceptions. By the ninth century, across the whole of Britain and Ireland, the recovery of any artefacts at all from graves is highly unusual, and the absence even of pins or other dress-fasteners serves as confirmation that burial in clothes had been almost entirely abandoned in favour of burial in shrouds, 'a white sheet wrapped tightly around the body, apparently without fastenings'.⁵⁴ While by no means all tertiary burials occur at sites where burial had already occurred, let alone burial of this type, those burying the dead in clothing,

⁵² These are Stenness and 'Sandwick' (030 & 03: both Orkney), and the aforementioned example from Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire).

⁵³ For some reason, most references to this ambiguous evidence have focused on the ringed pin from Brigham (095: Cumbria). See B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998, p.18), Richards, *Viking Age England*, p.150, and Hadley, 'Burial practices in northern England', p. 223

⁵⁴ Alison Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England* (Stroud, 2001), p.174

accompanied by dress fasteners, like those witnessing the ceremony, must have been aware of how much this practice stood out against the prevailing custom, at least of local populations.

Similarly, while the deposition of large objects in graves had effectively been abandoned, the bland assumption that those few remaining artefacts not directly related to clothing were no more than chance occurrences within graves has to be approached with caution. It is true that most of these artefacts are closely associated with dress or decoration, and may well have been the personal possessions of the deceased, but they could easily have been removed prior to burial. No less than 50 Viking Age furnished graves contain a total of 73 knives, 15 of which occur in 20 tertiary burials. While multiple knives, such as the four found at the definite tertiary horse burial at Middle Harling (132: Norfolk) may have been tools, the vast majority must have been domestic utensils, and their frequent positioning close to the waist of skeletons suggests that they were regularly worn at the belts of both men and women. It has also been suggested that combs can be viewed as personal items, associated with individuals.⁵⁵ Indeed, this is precisely the reason why it is suggested that liturgical combs may have been among the earliest items buried with Christian priests, as perhaps occurred at the Ladykirk, Ripon (113: North Yorkshire).⁵⁶ In all, 21 tertiary burials contained single combs, a total that includes the Ripon examples, although the professionally excavated burial of a woman accompanied by a comb at Heysham (107.2: Lancashire) provides clear evidence that the practice cannot have been confined to members of the priesthood. As with all other artefacts found in tertiary graves, combs are also found in better-furnished weapon and brooch burials, with ten examples occurring in the former and eight in the latter group. At Pierowall, there are nineteenth-century records of the discovery of three brooch burials with pairs of combs placed at the skeleton's shoulders (018.06, 13 & 14: Orkney). If these accounts are reliable, they must represent a local variation in ritual deposition, as the practice is not recorded elsewhere in Britain and Ireland. A final 'personal' item that regularly occurs in tertiary burials is the whetstones. As these items are generally small and frequently perforated items, they could easily have been worn. Indeed, at

⁵⁵ Mytum, *Origins*,

⁵⁶ R. A. Hall & Mark Whytan, 'Settlement and monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to 11th centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* xl (1996), p. 130. See also section 4.4

one of the graves at Cnip, Lewis (050.2: Western Isles), the whetstone seems to have been worn as a kind of pendant, perhaps suspended from the same string as an amber bead that was found beside it. In other burials, such as a definite weapon grave from Reay (035.3: Highland), a similar whetstone was found at the skeleton's pelvis, suggesting that these artefacts, like knives, could also be suspended from belts. Whetstones are, however, comparatively rare finds in tertiary burials, with only seven examples known, and there are no definite instances of their occurring as the only artefact in a grave. They have also been found in 18 weapon and 2 brooch burials, a bias that may reflect an association with weapons, but it should be remembered that some of the examples from weapon graves are very much larger and un-perforated. These strong morphological differences may indicate that not all whetstones were used in the same way, but in the absence of more detailed typological analysis, it is not possible to differentiate between them. It may be appropriate, however, to note that whetstones may have had a potential ritual as well as a functional significance, with some suggestions that they could have been symbols of Þór, and perhaps Oðinn, although this interpretation has been questioned, particularly in Anglo-Saxon contexts.⁵⁷

The potential 'pagan' symbolism of whetstones leads on to a related 'religious' issue. Can the development of insular tertiary burials be seen as a Christian influence on furnished burial practices, with these graves representing 'wavering pagans',⁵⁸ those who were in the process of conversion, or at least individuals whom those arranging their funerals wished to be viewed in this light? In a 1985 study of the transition from paganism to Christianity in Sweden, Gräslund argued that there was a fundamental difference between 'objects which the deceased wore or suspended from his / her clothing' and 'true grave-goods' such as weapons, with the latter group, unlike the former, apparently in conflict with Christian ideas 'as they express a belief in a more bodily life after death where there would be a need for everyday objects.'⁵⁹ Although it has here been argued that even Gräslund's 'true grave-goods' have at least as much to do with present social concerns as any perceived needs in the afterlife, her central

⁵⁷ Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p. 96

⁵⁸ T. W. Potter & R. D. Andrews, 'Excavation and survey at St Patrick's Chapel and St. Peter's Church, Heysham, Lancashire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxiv (1994), pp 55-134

⁵⁹ A. S. Gräslund, 'Pagan and Christian in the age of conversion' in J. E. Knirk (ed.) *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress, Larkollen, Norway, 1985: Universitetets Oldsaksamlings Skrifter* New Series ix (Oslo, 1987), p.85

thesis remains sound and may be worth considering as a means of explaining the development of insular tertiary burials.

Perhaps the most obvious problem with Gräslund's hypothesis is that while a Christian influence may explain the development of the practice of tertiary burial in general, tertiary burials are no more likely to occur at burial sites with Christian (or at least indigenous) associations than any other insular Scandinavian burial site.⁶⁰ While single ringed pins that were potentially associated with burials have been found at sites such as Brigham (095: Cumbria), Llanfairpwllgwyngyll (149: Gwynedd) and Ceann Ear (057: Western Isles), for example, similar finds, also potentially related to Viking Age furnished burials, have been recovered from sites with no Christian associations, such as Oxtro (029: Orkney), Stenness (030: also Orkney) and Kinnegar (081: Donegal). Were the abandonment of grave-goods other than those related to clothing a specifically Christian influence, it might be expected that tertiary burials would be focused at Christian sites. However, it should be noted that a whole series of changes to insular Scandinavian burial practices that show potential Christian or indigenous influences follow a similar pattern, in that they are not focused at Christian sites either. Nonetheless, it remains entirely plausible that the abandonment of grave-goods must be in some way related to the conversion of the insular Scandinavian population.

However, by no means all archaeologists would agree with this basic assumption, and there is an ongoing argument on the extent to which the introduction of Christianity actually influenced burial practices in early medieval northern Europe as a whole. Much of this debate has focused on the evidence from Merovingian Gaul, where it is now convincingly argued that many, if not all, of the spectacularly furnished graves of that period were actually deposited within entirely Christian environments. 'Grave-goods are not in themselves pagan' and there are, effectively, no 'pagan' cemeteries.⁶¹ The early medieval church, it is argued, made very few general pronouncements on burial, and none at all on the exclusion of artefacts of

⁶⁰ This point is developed more extensively in section 4.4

⁶¹ B. K. Young, 'The myth of the pagan cemetery' in C. E. Karkov, K. M. Wickham-Crowley & B. K. Young (eds) *Spaces of the Living and the Dead: An Archaeological Dialogue. American Early Medieval Studies* iii (1999), pp 61-85

any kind from Christian graves.⁶² Even the church's prohibition of cremation is 'rarer than often supposed',⁶³ although the fact that there are only a handful of Viking Age cremation burials in Britain and Ireland suggests that this prohibition at least may have been taken seriously by contemporary communities. Richards' argument that Heath Wood represents a particularly 'pagan' form of burial is at least partially based on the use of cremation at the site. In contrast, the creation of elaborate weapon and tertiary burials at the nearby church site of Repton is seen as in some way conciliatory and 'not particularly Scandinavian or pagan', seeking to associate these individuals with an established power centre.⁶⁴ More recently Hadley has built on Richards' interpretation, suggesting that the furnished burials from Repton need to be understood in the context of the remarkably diverse rites associated with ostensibly Christian burial in the later Anglo-Saxon period, and the existence of other burials accompanied by a few artefacts found in other parts of England.⁶⁵ It is in this context that Halsall has argued that even the Viking Age weapon burials of Anglo-Saxon England could actually be those of Christian Anglo-Saxon magnates.⁶⁶ In the absence of the explicit prohibition of furnished burial of any kind, any aristocrats was theoretically free to use the ritual of furnished burial as a means of bolstering their own power, even within a Christian environment.

There can be little doubt that the views of Halsall and Hadley represent something of an extreme in approaches to ninth- and tenth-century burial, albeit an extreme which has rapidly gained popularity in the field. Geake's detailed study of the earlier Anglo-Saxon period of conversion also emphasised the fact that the conversion did not immediately result in major changes to burial practice, or the abandonment of grave-goods.⁶⁷ O'Brien's recent research on the earlier conversion in Ireland has pointed to a similar continuity in burial traditions in the centuries after conversion took place there.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the fact that the abandonment of grave-goods in

⁶² Helen Geake, 'The control of burial practice in Anglo-Saxon England' in Martin Carver (ed.) *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), p. 261

⁶³ Halsall, 'Viking presence in England?', p. 262

⁶⁴ J. D. Richards, 'Pagans and Christians at a Frontier: Viking burial in the Danelaw' in Carver, *Cross Goes North*, pp 389, 393

⁶⁵ Hadley, 'Burial practice in northern England', p.215

⁶⁶ Halsall, 'Viking presence in England?', pp 269, 271

⁶⁷ Geake, 'Control of burial practice', p.261

⁶⁸ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD: continuity and change' in Nancy Edwards & Alan Lane (eds) *The Early Church in Wales and the West. Oxbow Monograph* xvi (1992), pp 130-7

England is chronologically associated with the introduction of Christianity, not just during the initial conversion period, but again during the conversion of the Anglo-Danish community, must at the very least give pause for thought. However rare explicit prohibitions of grave-goods or indeed the encouragement of shroud burials, may be, the fact remains that 'in England, extensive and wealthy grave depositions are completely incompatible with churchyard burial, the most obvious funerary sign of ideological commitment to the church.'⁶⁹ There are, of course rare exceptions, but 'perhaps under fifty' according to Geake.⁷⁰ However, her characterisation of these exceptions as 'a single pin or knife in one grave' only serves to reinforce the similarities between these late Anglo-Saxon furnished burials and Viking Age tertiary graves. It must therefore remain a distinct possibility that both were responding to similar social and or religious pressures.

In the context of social pressure and conformity, this may be an appropriate point to consider Fanning's proposal that at least some of the ringed pins found in Viking Age furnished graves functioned 'as a form of shroud fastener'.⁷¹ This proposal was presumably based on the positions ringed pins have been found in within these graves, and is perhaps more plausible than Evison's proposal that 'the brooch holding a Viking's cloak was often placed at the hip'.⁷² In point of fact, ringed pins have been found everywhere from the head, as was apparently the case at Birsay (027: Orkney) or chest, as Cronk Moar (153: Man), where one might expect a cloak to be fastened; to the waist, as with one of the tertiary burials from Pierowall (018.07: Orkney), the knees, as at Balladoole (167: Man), and even the back as demonstrated by staining on the skeleton from Sonning (138: Berkshire). By no means all of these graves are tertiary, and consequently the practice of wrapping of the body at burial may represent yet another local influence on all three types of insular furnished burial. However, the possibility of a Scandinavian origin for this practice cannot be entirely eliminated at the present time.⁷³

⁶⁹ Geake, *Use of Grave-goods*, p.134

⁷⁰ eadem, 'Persistent problems in the study of conversion-period burials in England', in Lucy & Reynolds, *Burial in early medieval England*, p.150

⁷¹ Thomas Fanning, 'Some aspects of the bronze ringed pin in Scotland' in Anne O'Connor & D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five: Studies Presented to R B K Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1983), p.325

⁷² Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p. 332

⁷³ Evison, *ibid*, cites the discovery of pins at the hip or waist of skeletons at Birka, Sweden. The resolution of this issue is beyond the present study.

There is also a possibility that individuals may have been wrapped in cloaks rather than shrouds, a proposal that would explain the occasional discovery of metal wire ornaments associated with high status garments in Viking Age furnished graves. Perhaps the best-recorded example is one of the tertiary burials from Peel (160.2: Man), where a minimum of 18 silver wire cones are believed to have lined the hem of a cloak which had been used as a shroud and secured with a ringed pin above the head and a buckle at the corpse's knees.⁷⁴ A smaller group of silver wire cones from a second grave at Peel (160.3) may also have come from a garment used as a shroud, but if so, it would have been unusually short. Given this information, it is at the very least possible that some of the finds of gold wire from English sites such as Repton (123: Derbyshire) formed part of elaborate garments that were also used as shrouds, although here the evidence that these garments were used in this way is less certain. At Repton, all three of the graves containing fragments of metal embroidery (123.07-09) came from a section of the cemetery that overlay the mausoleum / burial mound (123.01) and are therefore assumed to represent a later generation, albeit one which may have seen itself as in some way 'Scandinavian'.⁷⁵ Similar finds of wire embroidery have also been recovered at the neighbouring ninth-century sites at Heath Wood (124.08: Derbyshire) as well as at several high status Christian sites, including St Mary Bishophill Senior (116.2: York) and Carlisle cathedral (106: Cumbria).

Of course, the extent to which these practices were actually 'Scandinavian' in any meaningful sense of the word is open to debate, particularly if these garments were being used as shrouds. Nonetheless, by focusing display on the body, even through an elaborate 'shroud', it can be argued that there is a clear connection between these exceptionally modest tertiary burials and those graves with a much higher artefact count with which these tertiary burials effectively co-existed. It is equally true that these modestly furnished tertiary burials also form part of a complex and diverse range of burial practices specifically associated with English church sites in the later Anglo-Saxon period, and may in some way be related to an earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition. Nonetheless, it is striking that all other variations in burial ritual noted by

⁷⁴ Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', pp 87-8

⁷⁵ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the "great heathen army", 873-4' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, pp 83-4

Hadley, from riveted coffins to chest burials to charcoal-lined graves,⁷⁶ are effectively related either to the material surrounding the body and to the grave-pit, or to a stone memorial placed above it, rather than the body itself. At this level at least, it can be argued that these tertiary burials stand out within this Anglo-Saxon diversity, and if the practice shows local, Anglo-Saxon influences, this is hardly something that is unique to tertiary graves, as the presence of artefacts such as coins and ringed pins in much more elaborately furnished insular Scandinavian graves clearly demonstrates.

Given the current state of debate within the field, much of the present section has focused on the tertiary burials of eastern England, and has demonstrated their clear connections with weapon and brooch burials, both in terms of grave-goods and an emphasis on the display of the body. It has also been argued that at least some of these graves were created as a direct result of a local, Christian influence. Nonetheless, it also seems clear that tertiary burials, like weapon and brooch burials, were at some level created as expressions of status by those directly associated with the funeral ceremony. There is, however, a fundamental difficulty associated with comparing these tertiary burials to their better-furnished counterparts. As Geake has pointed out in the case of Anglo-Saxon graves, while well-furnished graves provide clear evidence for wealth, 'it cannot be concluded from an unfurnished or "poorly" furnished grave that the buried or buriers had few surplus resources'.⁷⁷ The fact that fewer artefacts were placed in tertiary burials is not necessarily an indication that those creating these graves were less wealthy than those creating weapon and brooch burials, but may instead be a reflection of the fact that these graves were created in a different socio-political environment. Those buried in tertiary burials in eastern England were not necessarily poorer than those buried at Dublin, but the pressures of competitive display must have been very different in the two areas. While weapon and brooch burials do occur in eastern England, they do not dominate the burial assemblage in this area in the same way that they do at Dublin,⁷⁸ and within the former context, even modestly furnished tertiary graves would have stood out against the prevailing background of unfurnished burials (above). Were there an abstract and

⁷⁶ Hadley, 'Burial practices in northern England', pp 216-20

⁷⁷ Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.31

⁷⁸ See section 1.4

neutral social scale to which all the occupants of insular furnished burials could in some way be compared, the individual buried in a tertiary grave with an artefact count of approximately five at Kilmainham (177.39: Dublin) could potentially have had a lower status than the individual buried with two in the probable grave at Therfield Heath (136: Hertfordshire).

The fact that the absolute status represented by artefact assemblages may have varied from place to place within Britain and Ireland does not, however, negate the possibility of comparison over long distances. Weapon and brooch burials in particular seem to share a common repertoire of artefacts that suggest that their relative status can indeed be compared over long distances.⁷⁹ At a local level too, it seems entirely reasonable to assume that the inclusion or exclusion of certain artefacts may have been specifically intended to remind any witnesses of a given community's hierarchy. The single knives deposited in the tertiary burials placed beside much more extensively furnished weapon and female tertiary burials at Repton (123.02-03) and Càrn a' Bharraich (071.1-2) can only have been reflections of this practice, however the individuals in the tertiary graves may have died. Similarly, the contrast between the elaborate brooch burial with an artefact count of ten found at Cnip, Lewis (050.1: Western Isles) and the adult tertiary and indeed unfurnished burials from the same cemetery (050.3) is at least as likely to have been a reflection of the local community's hierarchy as a declining interest in grave-goods. While the differences between the various furnished burials at Cumwhitton (190: Cumbria) are rather subtler, they presumably reflect similar social forces and perceptions, albeit acting at the level of weapon and brooch, rather than tertiary burials.

The Cnip cemetery also provides clear evidence that even in these circumstances, tertiary burials could sometimes serve as reminders of status as well as a lack of it. Due to a general lack of osteological evidence, the identification of the furnished burials of children in the Viking Age is exceptionally rare, although there is something of a consensus that they were rarely buried with grave-goods⁸⁰ and are consequently archaeologically invisible. Even the approximately ten-year old juvenile placed in the partially eroded boat burial at Scar, Sanday (012: Orkney) may

⁷⁹ See sections 2.2 & 2.3

⁸⁰ Roesdahl, *Vikings*, p. 61

not have had any artefacts specifically associated with him or her.⁸¹ At Cnip, however, three of the four tertiary burials at the site (050.2, 4 & 5) are those of children, aged six and younger, the most elaborate of which was accompanied by a bead, perforated whetstone and three nails.⁸² Two other graves of children accompanied by artefacts have also been found at Peel (160.6-7: Man), one accompanied by a coin and nail, and the other by beads, a copper alloy bell and nails.⁸³ While these graves may represent local anomalies, it is equally possible that similar graves have simply not been identified in the past. On the other hand, the fact that these particular children were buried with grave-goods can only be a reflection of the status of their family, kin-group or community, and their funerals could conceivably have functioned to remind all witnesses of this status, albeit at a slightly more modest level than the juvenile weapon burial from Balnakeil (033: Highland).⁸⁴ Whatever the potential for variation across Britain and Ireland, the use of tertiary burial was as closely linked to the expression of status as either weapon or brooch burial.

Tertiary burials are by far the least studied of all Viking Age furnished burials, and much of the research that has been carried out has viewed them from an Anglo-Saxon rather than an insular Scandinavian perspective. Lacking a single uniform artefact type, and sharing little more than the general idea of clothed burial, they are harder to define than the other two groups in the present study, and by their very diversity they raise a whole series of issues relating to ethnicity and belief. While similar issues undoubtedly underlie certain aspects of weapon and brooch burial, they are very much more acute in the case of tertiary graves. It seems almost certain that there was a comparable tradition of burial in Scandinavia, but the possibility that the practice was influenced by indigenous, particularly Anglo-Saxon burial practices cannot be dismissed, given the evidence for at least some comparable furnished

⁸¹ Olwyn Owen, 'The assemblage as a whole: an overview' in eadem & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), p. 149

⁸² For a summary of the best furnished of these children's graves, see Trevor Cowie, M. F. Bruce and Neill Kerr, 'The discovery of a child burial of probable Viking-age date on Kneep headland, Uig, Lewis, 1991: Interim Report': 'Appendix' to Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', pp 165-7, and for the other burials, A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, Tim Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), pp 722-7, 735-6, 737, 739

⁸³ David Freke, 'The cemeteries: the excavated evidence', in idem, *Excavations at St Patrick's Isle*, pp 70-1

⁸⁴ Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', pp 157-8

graves in the years before Anglo-Scandinavian settlement began in earnest. On the other hand, all available evidence suggests that the number of tertiary burials increased in the Viking Age and that they began to occur in areas beyond direct Anglo-Saxon influence for the first time. This can only be interpreted as either a revival or a reintroduction of a practice which, given that it also occurs in western and northern Britain, must have been associated with Scandinavian activity in eastern England as well. All tertiary burials demonstrate some local influences, but then so do even the most elaborate weapon and brooch graves, and these local influences should not necessarily blind us to their potential links to broader patterns of insular Scandinavian burial, links that include the kinds of artefacts placed in these graves and the physical proximity of tertiary and other furnished burials in many areas. To deny any elements of continuity between tertiary graves and other forms of insular Scandinavian burials is at least as extreme as insisting that all are entirely Scandinavian. Instead, tertiary burials, like other forms of furnished grave, must be seen as adaptations of a burial rite that was inherently flexible, and which could be modified to reflect local practices, while potentially continuing to demonstrate the social concerns of the groups that created them. While this group of burials clearly requires considerably more research at both a local and insular level, the present discussion has at least placed them firmly within the broader context of insular Scandinavian furnished burial.

CHAPTER FOUR – LANDSCAPES OF FURNISHED BURIAL

4.1 Introduction

No study of furnished insular Scandinavian burial can ignore the remarkable contribution of J. J. A. Worsaae, whose *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland* of 1851,¹ translated into English and published the following year as *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*,² represented the first comprehensive study of historical, linguistic and archaeological evidence for Viking Age Scandinavian activity in Britain and Ireland. The remarkably limited archaeological evidence available to Worsaae has already been commented on, as has the importance of his role in identifying material from Dublin and northern Scotland as both funerary and Scandinavian in character.³ From a modern perspective, however, perhaps the most striking aspect of Worsaae's analysis is his emphasis on the importance of landscape setting to these graves. While acknowledging the importance of the artefacts which 'the common people' sometimes dug from mounds in northern Scotland, he seems to have been at least as convinced by the position of many 'barrows' close to the sea that they represented 'the last resting-places of the daring Vikings, who, not even in death, could endure to be far separated from the foaming maelstrom.'⁴

Perhaps a decade later, Charles Haliday echoed Worsaae's sentiments, noting that 'it may be observed that the custom of burying near the landing place prevailed among the Northmen, the greater number of their tumuli being found on the sea shore or in places commanding a view of the ocean.'⁵ Haliday was, of course, aware of the importance of artefacts in the identification of 'Scandinavian' graves, but Worsaae and he seem to have shared a belief that the location of these burials within the landscape was also highly significant.⁶ Indeed, Haliday's emphasis on the cemetery

¹ J. J. A. Worsaae, *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland* (København, 1851)

² *idem*, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852)

³ See section 1.2

⁴ Worsaae, *Account*, p. 255

⁵ Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd Ed. Dublin, 1884; reprint, Shannon, 1969), p. 154. Note that although the text was not published until 1881, it seems to have been compiled in the mid-1850s. See S. H. Harrison, 'The Suffolk Street sword. Further notes on the College Green cemetery' in *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Viking Congress (forthcoming)*

⁶ The extent to which Haliday was directly influenced by Worsaae is open to debate. While *The Scandinavian Kingdom* is generally well-referenced, Worsaae is not referred to by name at any point

at College Green (180: Dublin) in *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* was in no small part due to the fact he could demonstrate that this site had been coastal in the Viking Age.⁷ Inland sites that had produced similar material, including the Kilmainham complex (177: Dublin), were entirely ignored by him, presumably because of their site.

Quite apart from this obvious bias, however, by the time Haliday's work was (posthumously) published in 1881, his interest in the landscape was very much out of step with that of his contemporaries. William Wilde's 1866 study of 'Scandinavian antiquities recently discovered at Islandbridge' gave an accurate provenance for these finds, but effectively ignored their context within either the physical or cultural landscape, instead focusing almost exclusively on the artefacts.⁸ Joseph Anderson's 1874 study of 'relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland' placed even less emphasis on the provenance of the artefacts he discussed, arranging them according to artefact type and form and paying little attention to their original context.⁹ Subsequent studies of specific burials, such as Anderson's own publication of the Ballinaby graves,¹⁰ provided some notes on context, but for the rest of the nineteenth and much of the early twentieth centuries, most scholars seem to have viewed furnished burials as potential sources of artefacts rather than archaeological phenomena in their own right, and their situation within the landscape was almost entirely ignored. Even Coffey and Armstrong's valiant attempt to organise and publish the finds from Kilmainham in 1910 organised this material according to artefact type rather than date of acquisition or precise provenance.¹¹ While this division is entirely understandable, given the information available at the time, the fact that the area around 'Kilmainham Island Bridge' is not described at all is

⁷ Haliday, *Scandinavian Kingdom*, pp 162-70

⁸ W. R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian Antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), pp 13-22. Some of this lack of interest is, of course, due to the fact that Wilde believed these finds to represent a battle site rather than a grave field, but even so, his failure to refer to the neighbouring fords across the Liffey, if not the monastery of Kilmainham, is striking.

⁹ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), pp 536-94

¹⁰ *idem.*, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell, Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), pp 51-85

¹¹ George Coffey & E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects found at Island-Bridge and Kilmainham' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), pp 107-22

perhaps indicative of archaeological priorities at that time. Similarly, Curle's work on the oval brooches of Scotland, published four years later, was very much an exercise in typological development rather than a study of burial context.¹²

Curle was, however, fully aware that these oval brooches came from burial contexts, and Coffey and Armstrong's work also emphasised that their material represented 'grave finds',¹³ rather than the battle field which Wilde had envisioned, where the dead 'lay there... until the birds of prey picked their bones and the weeds, grass and soil accumulated over them'.¹⁴ A similar awareness of the original context of artefacts can also be seen in the way in which the catalogue volumes of *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* were organised. In the Scottish¹⁵ and English¹⁶ volumes, artefacts were initially divided into categories such as 'grave finds', 'hoards' and 'separate finds', with the material then being subdivided on a regional basis, and while the Irish¹⁷ volume reversed this organisation, its emphasis on Dublin was a reflection of the distribution of finds in Ireland, and the text otherwise followed the general three-fold division used in the other catalogues. The extent to which all three volumes were dominated by grave-goods has already been discussed,¹⁸ and when it is understood that many of the 'stray finds' listed in all three volumes were also probably from graves,¹⁹ the importance of grave-goods to the understanding of insular Scandinavian activity in this period is even more striking.

Haakon Shetelig, whose study of the burial evidence produced by the *Viking Antiquities* project was published as two closely related articles in 1945 and 1954,²⁰

¹² James Curle, 'On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp 292-315

¹³ Coffey & Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects', pp 121-2

¹⁴ Wilde, 'Scandinavian antiquities', p. 14

¹⁵ Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940)

¹⁶ Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England with a Supplement of Viking Antiquities on the Continent of Western Europe*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940). This volume calls these categories 'grave finds', 'gold and silver' and 'single antiquities', but the division is identical.

¹⁷ Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940)

¹⁸ See section 1.1

¹⁹ See Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985) p. 65

²⁰ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), pp.1-53 & idem, 'The distribution of the graves and the extent of Norse settlements' in A. O.

placed a strong emphasis on the burial context of these finds, with extended discussion of burial practices, including the use of cremation, grave-mounds and boat burial. While his summary of the evidence was organised geographically, working steadily south from Shetland, his work shows very little further interest in the context of these graves within the landscape, although he did note that they could occur either in existing mounds or at Christian churches.²¹ Shetelig was also one of the first archaeologists to argue that these burials represented ‘Norse colonists permanently established on the land’ rather than a series of raids and battles around the coast.²² Consequently, there was a direct relationship between these graves and areas of Scandinavian settlement, a proposal that was several decades ahead of its time.

Despite his belief that there was a direct link between burial and settlement, however, Shetelig does not seem to have been at all interested in the potential relationship between individual burial sites and specific settlements, perhaps because so few examples of the latter were known at the time.²³ Indeed, nothing demonstrates the general lack of interest in the geographical distribution of these graves shared by the various contributors to the *Viking Antiquities* project quite so clearly as the fact that the first map based on this information was not published until 1976, twenty-two years after the publication of Shetelig’s second article in the final volume of the series. This map (**fig.4.1.1**) accompanied an article by D. M Wilson²⁴ that built on Shetelig’s work, and demonstrated a new concern with the religious context of these burials, and in particular their association with churches. With this exception, however, the positions of burials within the broader landscape continued to be ignored.

While distribution maps having become more common since the 1970s, most studies have approached Viking graves from either a regional or a national level, using them as a potential source of evidence for insular Scandinavian activity. In the maps of

Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig (eds), *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1954), pp 65-106

²¹ Shetelig, ‘Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland’, pp 29-30, 35-6

²² *ibid.*, p. 2

²³ See section 1.1

²⁴ D. M. Wilson, ‘Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Ser., xxvi (1976), pp 95-113; fig. 1

Britain and Ireland produced as part of the 1994 *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World*, for example, the evidence provided by furnished burial was combined with that provided by hoards, sculpture, settlements and place-names to provide a broad overview of insular Scandinavian settlement at a regional level.²⁵ Burial evidence has also played a key role in studies of the Isle of Man²⁶ and Ireland,²⁷ where it has been combined with other forms of evidence to identify areas of Scandinavian activity and influence. Given the focus of burials in Scotland, it is perhaps unsurprising that furnished graves have played a particularly important role in regional studies in this area, notably Crawford's 1987 survey of *Scandinavian Scotland*,²⁸ as well as Graham-Campbell and Batey's *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey*.²⁹

While all of this regional work rests on the not unreasonable assumption that furnished burials, as the products of established communities, must have been located close to the settlements in which their occupants had lived, specific relationships between furnished burials and settlements remains under-researched. Crawford did, however, establish a direct link between burial sites and the most fertile areas of the north Scottish mainland,³⁰ a relationship that she used to confirm a link between burial and settlement patterns, but which was also one of the first modern attempts to consider the relationship between burial and the local landscape. A more detailed study of the relationship between graves and areas of fertile land had already been carried out by Kaland in 1982, when she noted that graves (and indeed hoards and settlements) were entirely confined to areas of arable land within the Orkney archipelago (**fig.4.1.2**).³¹ Kaland identified 6 burial sites, but if the current total of 23 sites, of which 12 include at least one definite, 5 at least one probable and 6 possible graves (**fig.4.1.3**), is compared to her original map, it will be noted that all

²⁵ James Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Oxford, 1994), pp 134, 153

²⁶ D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1976); Marshall Cubbon, 'The archaeology of the Vikings in the isle of Man' in Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell & Robert Thomsen (eds), *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man* (London, 1983), pp 13-25

²⁷ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 131-65

²⁸ Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987);

²⁹ James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998)

³⁰ Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 118

³¹ S. H. H. Kaland, 'Some economic aspects of the Orkneys in the Viking Period' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), p. 92, fig. 2

of these additional discoveries and rediscoveries continue to correspond to the areas of arable land identified by her. There are, however, also some definite anomalies in the burial pattern at present, notably the almost total absence of furnished burial from the eastern part of Mainland. Barrett has suggested that this absence may represent two separate polities on the island in the ninth and / or tenth centuries, one identifying itself as 'pagan' and the other as 'Christian'.³² While the evidence is inconclusive in this case, this distribution pattern serves as a reminder that not all insular Scandinavian communities necessarily chose to bury their dead with grave-goods. Other groups may have been compelled to engage in competitive display with neighbouring families and communities, as has been suggested for Dublin,³³ but which also be seen in the concentration of graves at Bhaltos, Cnip and perhaps Mangersta (049-51: Western Isles), all on the south shore of Loch Roag, Lewis, or even the group of burials at Sonning, Tilehurst and Reading, (138-41: Berkshire).

If the relationship between areas of Scandinavian settlement and burial sites is not always straightforward, the relationship between specific burial sites and settlements can be even more difficult to establish. Kaland, for example, has proposed a direct relationship between the settlement and cemetery excavated by her at Westness, on the west coast of Rousay (021: Orkney),³⁴ but this relationship is complicated by the existence of another (probable) burial site with two weapon graves at Swandro (020: Orkney), which is more or less equidistant from the settlement. In addition, the houses identified at the site are of Late Norse date, while the latest phases of the cemetery at Westness cannot be any later than the tenth century. While most commentators would agree that there was indeed an important settlement somewhere on the shores of the Bay of Swandro at the same time that the cemetery was in use, its site has not yet been established beyond reasonable doubt, and its relationship to the cemetery remains unknown.³⁵

³² James Barrett, 'Christian and pagan practice during the conversion of Viking age Orkney and Shetland' in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), pp 219-21

³³ See section 2.2

³⁴ idem, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.308-17; Anderson, 'Relics', pp 563-6, 571

³⁵ Batey & Graham-Campbell, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56

At Scar, Sanday, detailed geophysical survey work associated with the discovery of a boat burial at this site (012: Orkney) has identified a possible rectangular structure and associated midden material c.200m to the south-west, but a chronological relationship between the two sites cannot be established without excavation.³⁶ Evidence for a probable brooch burial and settlement site at Cruach Mhor, Islay (075: Argyll & Bute) is interesting, but is so fragmentary that it cannot be considered entirely reliable.³⁷ Similarly, records of the discovery of rectilinear 'Norse' houses at the Broch of Gurness, Mainland (024: Orkney) are sufficiently confused that no definite stratigraphic relationships between these structures and any of the five definite, probable and possible burials at the site can be established.³⁸ At Machrins, Colonsay, on the other hand, a structure has been found c.14m from a definite tertiary burial (068.2: Argyll & Bute), but the fact that this structure is 'Pictish' rather than insular Scandinavian in form again suggests that they may not be contemporary.³⁹

At Buckquoy, Mainland (022: Orkney), a definite weapon burial was placed in the upper levels of an abandoned structure, something that may also have occurred at nearby Stenness (030).⁴⁰ Recent excavations at South Great George's Street (182: Dublin) produced evidence for four burials, at least one of which (182.2) was deposited directly above what has been interpreted as a domestic hearth,⁴¹ but again this habitation site appears to have been abandoned when burials began there. The relationship between the burials at this site and the intensive ninth- and tenth-century occupation associated with Temple Bar West, on the opposite bank of the Poddle, and indeed the many other burials sites in the area around Dublin, is discussed in more detail elsewhere.⁴² Two definite tertiary burials from the Brough Road, Mainland (023: Orkney) also had a definite relationship with a nearby domestic site,

³⁶ Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), p.21

³⁷ Kate Gordon, 'A Norse Viking-age grave from Cruach Mhor, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxx (1990), pp 151-60

³⁸ J. W. Hedges, *Bu, Gurness and the Brochs of Orkney Part II: Gurness: BAR British Series* clxiv (Oxford, 1987)

³⁹ J. N. G. Ritchie, 'Excavations at Machrins, Colonsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxi (1981), pp.263-81

⁴⁰ See section 4.3 for a discussion of this site.

⁴¹ Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin: is this the *longphort*?' in Seán Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), pp 41-2

⁴² See section 4.2

as both were deposited within a developing midden.⁴³ To date, however, perhaps the best evidence for a closely related burial and habitation site comes from Woodstown (191: Waterford), where a definite weapon burial was found 22m outside the northeastern entrance to a substantial D-shaped enclosure, with both the burial and the enclosure producing broadly contemporary dates.⁴⁴

While the comparative rarity of habitation sites directly associated with burial sites can be at least partially attributed to a lack of extensive research on the subject, it should be pointed out that documentary evidence does not always support direct topographical relationships between settlement and burial sites either. Indeed, one of the few explicit references to a 'pagan' burial in *Orkneyinga Saga* describes the burial of the first Earl Sigurd of Orkney, not close to one of his residences at the heart of his Earldom, but rather on its southern borders, 'in a mound on the bank of the River Oykel'.⁴⁵ According to the *Saga*, Sigurd had been campaigning in this area before his death, but the siting of his burial on the southern frontier may well have had wider significance. One of his successors, Thorfinn, was also buried at what might be considered a peripheral site, at Hoxa, North Ronaldsay.⁴⁶ While Hoxa cannot be identified, North Ronaldsay is the closest island in Orkney to both Fair Isle and Shetland, and Thorfinn's graves may have been deliberately placed at this boundary. While the historical reliability of the early sections of *Orkneyinga Saga* is open to debate, there is at least a possibility that these two accounts record a tradition of burial at territorial boundaries. Further south, Richards has noted the proximity of both Heath Wood and Repton (124 & 123: both Derbyshire) to the western limits of the Danelaw, and indeed to the River Trent,⁴⁷ and while his interpretation of these sites does not specifically suggest that any bodies were transported over long distances prior to burial, the possibility cannot be entirely eliminated. His argument

⁴³ Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), pp.190-1; C. D. Morris, *The Birsay Bay Project Volume 1: Coastal Sites beside the Brough Road, Birsay, Orkney, Excavations 1976-1982* (Durham, 1989), p.289

⁴⁴ Richard O'Brien & Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford' in Jerry O'Sullivan & Michael Stanley (eds) *Recent Archaeological Discoveries on National Road Schemes 2004* (Dublin, 2005), pp 111-24

⁴⁵ Hermann Pálsson & Paul Edwards (trans.), *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (London, 1978), p. 28

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.33

⁴⁷ J. D. Richards, 'Boundaries and cult centres: Viking burial in Derbyshire' in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 100-2

that these two large cemeteries represent local responses to the socio-political pressures generated in this area of marchland⁴⁸ is entirely plausible, and the graves at these sites may represent another case of furnished burials being placed at the margins of political units.⁴⁹

While there is some evidence to suggest that some individuals may have been buried a considerable distance from their residences, it seems likely that these must always have been the exception rather than the rule.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, some bodies seem to have been transported over considerable distances prior to burial. At Cronk Moar (153: Man), the presence of many fly puparia in the remains of a cloak buried with dead man suggests some considerable time had elapsed between death and burial,⁵¹ and similar evidence of puparia, this time on a shield boss buried in a grave at Millhill, Arran (079: North Ayrshire) may indicate that this time lapse was not uncommon.⁵² At Westness, Orkney on the other hand, one of the two individuals buried in boat graves there (021.3) had been killed by a number of arrows.⁵³ Given the size of this cemetery, and the elaborate nature of many of the burials there, he must either have died during a successful defence of the area, or have been transported here after death. This evidence is hardly conclusive, but if some individuals were buried close to their homes, then their transport to these sites would effectively represent a reversal of the movement towards the periphery experienced by at least some of those further up the social scale. While many, or even most, individuals buried with grave-goods were probably interred close to the places where they had lived before their deaths, the available evidence confirms Williams's proposal that burial sites should not be used 'as second rate evidence for the positioning of settlements in the landscape', but rather 'as first-rate evidence for the placing of the dead'.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ For the possibility that some of these graves may post-date the over-wintering of the 'Great Army' at Repton in 873-4, see section 2.2

⁵⁰ See also section 4.2

⁵¹ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed., London, 1999), pp 107-8

⁵² *Pers. Comm.* Caroline Richardson.

⁵³ S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in Batey *et al*, *Viking Age in Caithness*, p. 316

⁵⁴ Howard Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead: The reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites' in *Medieval Archaeology* xli (1997), p. 2

It should also be pointed out that the proposal that burials were not invariably adjacent to settlements does not in itself detract from Shetelig and Wilson's fundamental principle that furnished burials were created by communities that were permanently established at specific sites in these islands. As local communities, they were familiar with the surrounding landscape, and while they may have chosen to bury their dead some distance from their settlements, there is no evidence that the care with which they selected burial sites was any less pronounced than that with which they selected the artefacts that were placed in the grave. There is also considerable evidence to suggest that the sites of these burials were marked in a variety of ways, thus becoming a physical part of the landscape in which the surviving community members continued to live after the funerary rites were completed.

Since the nineteenth century, it has been generally accepted that most insular Scandinavian burials were marked by mounds, 'barrows' or 'howes', an assumption which is reinforced by later literary references⁵⁵ and by evidence from Norway, where the practice was virtually universal, even if many of mounds there were comparatively low and have been almost entirely eroded in the interim.⁵⁶ There is considerable evidence for the presence of mounds at many Scottish sites and they were also common on the Isle of Man, particularly along its western coast. Examples are also known from Cumbria and Ireland, although they are rather less common in these areas, where the majority of graves are 'flat' with no evidence for a covering mound. It is, however, possible that this distribution pattern has been influenced by the contrasting expectations of early antiquarians, as Joseph Anderson in particular seems to have assumed that all 'Viking' graves were placed under grave mounds. Antiquarians in other areas need not necessarily have been aware of the importance of recording such features, although many do at least occasionally describe them. Professional excavations on the Isle of Man have demonstrated that substantial mounds were raised over burials at sites such as Knock-y-Doonee, Ballateare and Balladoole (150, 154 & 167: Man), and lower mounds or barrows were raised over

⁵⁵ See H. E. Davidson, *The Road to Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge, 1943), for an extended discussion of these references

⁵⁶ *Pers. Comm.* Dagfinn Skre

the graves and cremation sites at Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire).⁵⁷ Evidence for less substantial surface markers has recently been discovered at Cnip, Lewis (050: Western Isles), where rectangular stone settings were placed more or less directly over a number of adult burials, one of which was modestly furnished. The excavator used stratigraphic evidence to argue that these settings originally acted as kerbstones for low, rectilinear mounds.⁵⁸ Evidence for a rectilinear setting of broken stone that marked the site of two furnished graves has also been discovered to the northeast of the church at Repton (123.02-03: Derbyshire).⁵⁹ Even in situations where no evidence for mounds or cairns survives, it is possible to postulate their existence due to the extreme shallowness of the burials as described in early reports. At Kilmainham in 1866 (177: 36-44: Dublin), for example, Wilde noted that the skeletons were just eighteen inches to two feet (0.3-0.6m) below the surface,⁶⁰ a detail that can only suggest that they were originally some further depth of soil over these graves.

Even in cases where there is no direct evidence for mounds, it seems clear that many graves were marked in some way. At Repton, for example, the same graves covered by the rectangular stone setting also had a substantial rectangular posthole, 0.3 x 0.3m, between them, which presumably marked the grave in some way (**fig.3.1.4**).⁶¹ Another large posthole has also been noted at the top of the mound at Ballateare (154: Man),⁶² and seems entirely possible that similar posts could have been used to mark flat or 'moundless' graves. At Westness (Orkney), many pre-Norse graves were marked with head and/or foot stones,⁶³ and the fact that neither Pictish nor Norse graves inter-cut each other at this site clearly demonstrates that they were marked on the surface in some way. Similarly, Worsaae noted that the burials found at Kilmainham in 1845 (177.06-15: Dublin) were arranged in 'rows', something which

⁵⁷ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph i* (London, 1966), pp.3-4, 45-8; J. D. Richards, Marcus Jecock, Lizzie Richmond & Catherine Tuck, 'The Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxix (1995)

⁵⁸ A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, T. Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), p. 731

⁵⁹ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army', 873-4' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, 'Great heathen army', p. 60

⁶⁰ Wilde, 'Scandinavian antiquities', p. 14

⁶¹ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings' in *Antiquity* lxvi (1992), pp 40-1

⁶² Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed), pp 106-7

⁶³ Kaland, 'Settlement of Westness', p. 312

could not have occurred unless individual graves were marked in some way, either with stones or wooden posts.⁶⁴ In other cases, burial site might be identified through pre-existing features within the landscape, whether ancient or comparatively modern,⁶⁵ but in all cases it seems clear that these burial sites were supposed to be remembered by those witnessing the funeral ceremonies that created them.⁶⁶

Whatever the means by which these graves were ultimately marked at surface level, the performance of these funerary rites must have changed the community's perceptions of the sites at which these monuments were created, for any group's concept of the landscape is not simply a product of the landscape itself, but is rather the result of their extended connection with it, and is shaped and influenced by the memory of different activities carried out at different times and different locations within it.⁶⁷ Of these activities, the burial of individuals with carefully selected grave-goods at a carefully selected location must have been one of the most significant, marking or reinforcing changes in power relations within that community.⁶⁸ By marking these burial sites, families and communities had an opportunity to create a physical link between themselves and this landscape, and by choosing burial sites with care, a whole series of more subtle associations with the local area could also be created.

At the most basic level, insular Scandinavian communities seem to have had a marked preference for burial at sites associated with certain physical features, including inlets, straits and valleys, while other areas were ignored totally. While the selection of these sites ultimately depended on individual communities and kin groups, the reoccurrence of burials in association with these sites can only indicate certain shared concerns and can potentially reveal something of the physical environment in which these communities existed. Crucially, however, none of the areas settled by these groups in the ninth and tenth centuries was in any way a *tabula rasa*, and these settlers cannot but have been aware of the impact of previous inhabitants on the landscape into which they moved. Many insular Scandinavian

⁶⁴ Worsaae, *Account*, p. 325

⁶⁵ See section 4.3

⁶⁶ For further discussion of the relationship between grave-goods and landscape, see section 5.0

⁶⁷ For a very brief summary, see Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999), p. 103

⁶⁸ See in particular sections 2.2 & 2.3

burials occur at monuments which would have been considered 'ancient' by those in the Viking Age, and the reuse of these sites may represent an attempt by these newly arrived communities to link themselves to this past. As some indigenous groups seem also to have held these 'ancient' monuments in considerable respect, their re-use for furnished burial may in some way reflect the relationship between insular Scandinavian communities and these polities. More direct evidence for the relationship between these two groups is also provided by the Scandinavian practice of placing furnished burials at established Christian (or at least indigenous) graveyards, thus effectively placing their burials at the heart of already extant, indigenous power systems. While it can be argued that all furnished insular Scandinavian burials, whether within the physical, ancient or Christian landscape, seek to establish and reinforce power structures, each of these practices is here discussed in a separate section. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that the all three essentially represent forms of manipulation of a single landscape, and there is considerable overlap between them, with certain sites, such as Kildonnan, Eigg (048: Highland) and Balladoole (167: Man) having both Christian and 'ancient' associations, as well as a landscape setting that is entirely typical of burial sites with no cultural associations. While such sites are exceptional, however, they perfectly represent the complexity of the relationship between insular Scandinavian burial and the landscape, a relationship that extended far beyond potential associations with settlement sites.

4.2 The Physical Landscape

Modern approaches to landscape studies tend to draw a rigid dividing line between natural topography and the cultural monuments that have been constructed within it, even if there is an increasing awareness of the close relationship between the two. In the Viking Age, strong beliefs in a whole range of supernatural beings who inhabited and could potentially transform the landscape meant that the world was not necessarily perceived and divided in the same way.¹ Nonetheless, it seems clear that insular Scandinavian communities moved through what is essentially the same physical landscape we see today, and while vegetation may at least potentially have changed out of all recognition, major physical features such as inlets, hills and valleys are unlikely to have altered within such a geologically short period. Consequently, it is the relationship between Viking Age furnished burials and these major physical features that has been examined in the present study. Using modern 1:50,000 maps with 10m contour intervals as the primary source of topographical information, the resulting analysis inevitably focuses on easily recognisable features, although it should be emphasised that more detailed maps and older editions of the Ordnance Survey were consulted whenever it was considered necessary or appropriate. While critics may argue that the resulting analysis lacks an awareness of local geographical subtleties, it represents the first serious attempt to compare the landscape context of furnished graves across these islands, and as such must operate at a large scale. Furthermore, it must be realised that only a minority of Viking Age furnished burials can be provenanced to an absolutely precise location in the landscape. By studying these graves at a larger scale and examining their relationship to major physical features, the present study can also incorporate those burials that can only be provenanced to within 10 or 20 metres of their original find spot. More detailed case studies of specific, well-documented graves will improve our knowledge of these locations, but this information must inevitably be compared to the more general patterns that have been established for the first time within the present study.

Even in the case of substantial physical features, however, the bland assumption that the landscape has not altered at all since the Viking Age is problematic. A prime

¹ Neill Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. AUN xxxi (Uppsala, 2002), pp 54-64

example is those areas of *machair* which dominate large sections of northern and western Ireland and Scotland, and within which dunes regularly destabilise, erode, and reform, often within comparatively short periods of time. These processes have frequently resulted in the exposure and discovery of Viking Age furnished burials, as at Ballinaby, Islay (073: Argyll & Bute) in 1878,² Reay (035: Highland) in 1926³ and Eyrephort (188: Galway)⁴ in 1947. Despite the erosion and redeposition associated with this topography, however, the recent excavation of a series of furnished graves in another area of *machair* at Cnip, Lewis (050: Western Isles) has demonstrated that here at least, the Viking Age ground level 'closely followed that of the current uneroded ground level'.⁵ Although it is entirely possible that Cnip represents an exception rather than a general rule, it raises the definite possibility that even within these areas, the correspondence between the Viking Age and modern landscapes is sufficiently broad to allow at least general analysis to take place.

In some areas the local topography has been altered as a result of human rather than natural activity, and this has occasionally occurred at an exceptional scale. At Tendley Hill (097: Cumbria), for example, extensive quarrying has effectively removed most of the hill upon which a definite weapon grave was found in 1814.⁶ Similarly, a combination of railway construction, gravel extraction and landscaping has resulted in the removal of most of the north side of the gravel ridge between the rivers Liffey and Cammock on which the cemeteries of Kilmainham (177) and Islandbridge (176) were originally situated.⁷ Perhaps the single most dramatic transformation, however, has been at Harrold (128: Bedfordshire) and Sonning (138: Berkshire), the sites of probable and definite weapon burials respectively. In both

² Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), p. 51

³ A. J. H. Edwards, 'Excavation of graves at Ackergill and of an earth-house at Freswick Links, Caithness, and a description of the discovery of a Viking grave at Reay, Caithness' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xli (1927), pp 202-3

⁴ Joseph Raftery, 'A Viking burial in County Galway' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* xxix (1960), p. 3

⁵ A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, Tim Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), p. 744

⁶ OS Landranger Series Sheet 89 (West Cumbria); 1998. B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in the North-West: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), p. 19

⁷ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 204

cases, the gravel pits in which they were found have now been flooded, and there is no trace of the original topography.⁸ Fortunately, areas which have undergone large-scale modification are very much the exception rather than the rule, and even in these cases, an examination of maps which predate this activity have allowed these exceptional sites to be placed within their original topographical context. Elsewhere, Woodward's confident assertion that local topography has 'not altered since prehistoric times' can be applied with equal confidence to the last millennium.⁹

Unfortunately, similar assumptions cannot necessarily be made about the relationship between the modern and Viking Age coastlines. With an intervening period of approximately a thousand years, alterations in the relative heights of land and sea are perhaps not quite the concerns they may be among prehistorians, but it is nonetheless clear that major changes have occurred within this timeframe in some parts of Europe. In southeastern Norway, for example, the current sea level is up to 3m lower than it was in the Viking Age, and this has had a major impact on the local topography. Many modern peninsulas were islands a thousand years ago, and boats and shallow-draughted ships could have sailed through the narrow channels separating them from the mainland, and might approach sites such as Kaupang in an entirely different way than would comparable vessels today.¹⁰ Crucially, this sea-level change has also altered the relationship between the main grave-field at Kaupang and the sea. In the Viking Age, the cemetery was situated close to the head of a shallow bay, with all of its graves less than 250m from the shoreline, but today it is more than 800m inland.¹¹

In Britain and Ireland, no single area has experienced quite such an extreme change in relative sea level in the same time period, and the changes that have occurred have been more varied, with some areas rising while others have been depressed. Extensive geological research has demonstrated that in general land to the north of a zone extending from Galway Bay through the Lleyn peninsula to the Tees estuary

⁸ Landranger Series Sheets 153 (SP 952 572) and 175 (SP 521 060)

⁹ Ann Woodward, *British Barrows: A Matter of Life and Death* (Stroud, 2000), p. 50

¹⁰ R. L. Tollnes, 'Den lokale topografi og kommunikasjonsveiene' in Charlotte Blindheim, Birgit Heyerdahl-Larsen & R. L. Tollnes, *Kaupang-Funnene* (2 vols, Oslo, 1981), i, 17-38

¹¹ Tollnes, 'Den locale topografi: Kaupangområdet', fig. 7 & modified 1:2,500 map

has risen steadily, while land to the south has fallen.¹² The most pronounced rise has been in the Scottish central Highland, where the rate of change is as much as 2mm / year, while the most extreme reduction in the height of land has occurred in East Anglia.¹³ Devoy's model has proposed broadly similar changes, although he suggests that some areas of the Hebrides and northern Caithness may actually be subsiding rather than rising.¹⁴ Neither text suggests that any area which has produced evidence for furnished insular Scandinavian burials has experienced a change in relative sea level of more than 1mm / year. Given the large scale of the current project, and the steep shorelines that characterise much of the study area, the resulting rise or fall of at most one metre should not have a major impact on results.

As on dry land, however, there has been a potential for local changes to marine topography. While those areas which have experienced profound changes to their coastline during the last two millennia, such as the Wash and the Isle of Thanet,¹⁵ are situated some considerable distance from the nearest Viking Age furnished burials, and thus have a limited impact on the present study, other localised changes have occurred in areas with comparatively dense concentrations of graves. In Orkney, for example, erosion is an ongoing concern. Indeed, 7 of the 46 burial sites in zone A (northern Scotland) have been exposed as the result of this activity, with the boat burial at Scar, Sanday (012: Orkney) being the most recent and spectacular discovery. Elsewhere, coastal erosion has resulted in the discovery of a maximum of three burial sites at Kinnegar (081: Donegal), the Morragh (186: Wicklow) and Meols (189: Merseyside). The evidence for localised erosion produced by these sites should, however, be balanced against the evidence for silting that has been identified in other areas, closing off bay and inlets that may formerly have been accessible from the sea. At the exceptionally shallow Pool Bay, Sanday (Orkney), for example, it can be suggested that the water may have been a little deeper a thousand years ago, which would in turn suggest a potential relationship between this inlet and a probable

¹² For a recent summary of this research in an Irish context, see Anthony Brooks and Robin Edwards, 'The development of a sea-level database for Ireland' in *Irish Journal of Earth Sciences* xxiv (2006), pp 13-27

¹³ M. J. Tooley, 'Sea-level and coastline changes during the last 5000 Years' in Seán McGrail (ed.), *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons: CBA Research Report lxxi* (1990), pp 1-16

¹⁴ R. J. N. Devoy, 'Controls on coastal and sea-level changes and the application of archaeological-historical records to understanding recent patterns of sea-level movement', in McGrail, *Maritime Celts*, pp 17-26

¹⁵ Tooley, 'sea level and coastline changes', fig.1.1

burial at South Mire (027), c.300m away. Even more dramatic changes have occurred in the area around Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk), where a possible Viking Age tertiary burial containing a single coin has been discovered.¹⁶ Today, the site is c.800m from the coast, but in the early third century AD, it stood on the north bank of a major estuary that extended as far as the site of medieval Norfolk, and it is abundantly clear that silting and other processes have had a major impact on the local topography.¹⁷

As far as human activity is concerned, the only area with a substantial number of furnished insular Scandinavian burials that has experienced truly dramatic coastal changes is Dublin Bay, where continuous reclamation and associated silting since the end the seventeenth century have completely transformed the areas around the estuaries of the Liffey, Tolka and Dodder (**fig.4.2.1**). Fortunately, this process has been studied in some considerable detail and the original coastline is at least reasonably well known.¹⁸ Where evidence was readily available for other areas, this has also been incorporated within the present study, but in general analysis has been based on the high water mark shown on contemporary 1:50,000 maps. At a general level at least, the inlets and channels through which people sailed, like the slopes they walked across, have remained essentially unchanged since the Viking Age.

Given the nature of the evidence, both topographical and cartographic, it was decided to focus research on four basic issues. First was the distance of individual burials and cemeteries from the coast. Second was their height above sea level. Third was a more general study of the relationship between burial sites and topographical features, notably bays and valleys. Finally, by combining this information some general comments could be made on the direction and extent of views to and from these sites.

When Symington Grieve noted in 1923 that 'The Norsemen as a seafaring people preferred to reside upon, or very near the sea-coast', he was expressing a view that

¹⁶ See section 3.2 for a discussion of this burial and related finds

¹⁷ M. J. Darling with David Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea Excavations by Charles Green 1951-55: East Anglian Archaeology Report lx* (1993), p. 2

¹⁸ John De Courcy, 'Medieval banks of the Liffey estuary' in John Bradley (ed.), *Viking Dublin Exposed: The Wood Quay Saga* (Dublin, 1984).

was already firmly established,¹⁹ and which remains popular today. There have, however, been almost no attempts to assess the evidence for this in any detail. If all available evidence is gathered together, 176 Viking Age furnished burial sites have been provenanced with sufficient accuracy to allow their distance from the sea to be determined. Of these, 80 included at least one definite burial, 50 at least one probable burial and the remaining 46 one or more possible graves. If they are divided into groups on the basis of their distance from the sea (**fig.4.2.3**), it will be noted that comparatively few are positioned directly on the coast, with only 24 examples (14%) situated within 50m of the shore. While 21% of definite burial sites occupy the same position, this is perhaps lower than might otherwise be thought.

Despite avoiding the shoreline there is nonetheless a strong association between furnished burials and coastal areas, with 76 sites (44%) occurring within 500m of the coast, with the percentage of definite examples again being slightly higher (51%).²⁰ If the definition of 'coastal' is expanded to include all burials within 2000m of the shore, the number of burial sites increases again to 113 examples (65%), with the proportion of definite examples corresponding almost precisely. Thus, almost two thirds of insular furnished burial sites occur within 2km of the coast, confirming a coastal distribution, even if less than one in five of all sites occur within 50m of the high water mark itself. Conversely, it should be understood that fully a third of burial sites are situated some distance from the sea, and 51 examples (30%) are situated more than 10km from the coast. While many of these are situated in river valleys (below), by no means all of these are or were navigable and it would seem that it was by no means imperative to bury the dead at a coastal location.

These general figures for Britain and Ireland as a whole also mask a strong regional difference between the northern and western areas on the one hand, and eastern England on the other. If the material from Scotland, Ireland, Man and western Great Britain, corresponding to zones A, B, C1, D1, E & F is examined in isolation (**fig.4.2.4**), then it will be noted that 75 of the 141 (55%) sites that can be accurately provenanced within this area occur within 500m of the coast, and the proportion of

¹⁹ Symington Grieve, *The Book of Colonsay and Oronsay* (2 vols, Edinburgh & London, 1923), ii, 153. For similar, earlier comments, see section 4.1

²⁰ Note that these figures include those burials within 50m of the shore already discussed. See table 4.2.3

definite examples is significantly higher, at 69%. It should also be noted that all burial sites within 50m of the coast fall within this general area, although they continue to form a minority of the total. Inland burial sites, on the other hand, are comparatively rare, with just 19 examples (13%), of which only 5 are definite, more than 10km from the sea. The distribution of burials in eastern England, on the other hand, is completely different. Of the thirty-five burial sites identified that can be provenanced with reasonable accuracy in zone C2/D2 (**fig.4.2.5**), only one originally occurred within 500m of the coast, and this is the problematic possible tertiary burial with a coin from Caister-on-Sea (127: Norfolk). In total, only 3 sites, or 9% of the total, are situated less than 2km from the coast. Instead, the overwhelming majority of burial sites in this area, comprising 29 examples, 83% of the general total, and 95% of definite burial sites, are situated more than 10km from the coast.

While this pattern must be at least partially the result of extensive inland settlement in eastern England, something which did not occur to anything like the same extent in Scotland and Ireland, the fact that almost no burials occur on or even near the coast is remarkable, and suggest that for some reason an entirely different set of priorities governed the selection of appropriate furnished burial sites in eastern England than elsewhere in these islands.

The second issue to be addressed in the present study is the height above sea level of burial sites in the study area. Just 174 burial sites could be provenanced with sufficient accuracy to allow a reasonable estimate of their altitude to be made, of which 78 could be considered definite, 49 probable and 37 possible (**fig.4.2.6**). Of these, the overwhelming majority were associated with comparatively low-lying areas, with 97 examples (59%) occurring below the 20m contour, and 142 (87%) below the 50m contour. Graves at higher altitudes were very much a rarity, and were generally in areas where the prevailing topography was also high. The probable weapon burial at Gortons (045: Moray), for example, was found close to the 150m contour, but at a site that was less than 10m above the floor of the Spey valley at that point. Given these prevailing patterns, some doubt must be cast on the proposed brooch burial at Muckle Hoeg, Unst (002: Shetland), supposedly found *c.* 80m above sea level, and the possible weapon burial represented by a spearhead found in the

Nan Bield Pass (099: Cumbria), which is unlikely to have been below the 600m contour.

Instead, most burials are positioned on land that is slightly higher than the surrounding area, but rarely more than about 20m above it. With a very few exceptions, low-lying ground is avoided, with the only exceptions either occurring at the shoreline, as at Balnakeil (033: Highland), or at least potentially beside river crossings at the bottom of valleys, as with the possible weapon burial at Toome (086: Armagh).²¹ Mountain and hilltops are also consistently avoided, although a limited number of sites do occur on the lower parts of ridges, such as one of the three burials from Kildonnan, Eigg (048.3: Highland). Even burial sites in very prominent positions such as Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), where the barrows occur from 100-115m OD, are situated on upper slopes, rather than at summits. As a result, the majority of burial sites are overlooked by higher ground, and on parts of the west coast of Scotland in particular, this can be very dramatic. At Ardvouray, Barra (Western Isles; 060), for example, the burial site was somewhere close to the 10m contour but was consequently overlooked by 244m and 216m hills to the north-east and south-east respectively. In other places, the height difference is rather less dramatic, but it is striking that the highest ground in any given area seems never to have been used as a furnished burial site.

As a result of avoiding both flat valley bottoms and hilltops, the vast majority of insular burial sites seem to occur on sloping ground, although those which were also placed within existing monuments often effectively took advantage of artificially flattened areas.²² There is also some evidence that burials with no associations with earlier monuments were also placed on slight terraces, although it is not entirely certain if these were natural or artificial. Given their scale, these flatter areas could not be identified on large-scale maps, but specific references to these features have been made in detailed reports of a number of burials, including the 1932 discovery at Ballinaby, Islay (073.4: Argyll & Bute)²³ and the most recent group of burials found

²¹ The siting of furnished burials beside fords remained a debated point. For further discussion, see section 1.3 and below.

²² See sections 4.3 and 4.4.

²³ A. J. H. Edwards, 'A Viking cist-grave at Ballinaby, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lxxviii (1934), p. 74

at Cnip, Lewis (050.2-5: Western Isles).²⁴ As both of these graves formed part of comparatively large, sprawling cemeteries, however, it must be assumed that other graves in the area were either placed on their own, separate terraces or directly within sloping ground. While there is a very marked tendency for burials to occur on slightly elevated, gently sloping ground, however, there seems to be no particular preference for slopes aligned in any particular compass direction. There does, however, seem to be a clear link between these burial sites and two particular landscape features, these being coastal inlets and inland valleys.

Of the 76 burial sites within 500m of the coast, 72 are sufficiently well provenanced to be studied in detail (**fig.4.2.7**). Of these, the vast majority (86%) are in some way related either to a bay, inlet, or to an estuary, although only three burial sites seem to be associated with the latter features. Only ten sites within 500m of the coast are sufficiently distant from one these features to suggest that they had no direct relationship to them. Rather than overlooking bleak sections of coast, furnished burials are very specifically linked to small, sheltered harbours which presumably also acted as foci for local settlement. Not surprisingly, associations with these features are strongest in zones A and B (Scotland and Ulster), where 61 of these 72 examples occur. In these zones and elsewhere, those burials directly associated with bays and inlets tend to occur at very specific points around them.

While some burial sites are positioned at the centre of these bays, as seems to have been the case with the possible brooch burial at Thurso East (041: Highland) and the aforementioned burial at South Mire, Sanday (017: Orkney), for example, these sites are very much in the minority, with only 12 examples known. In contrast, there are 36 examples of burial sites occurring close to the edges of bays, or rather close to the ends of the strands that mark their inner points. The contrast between these two groups is even more striking when the figures for definite burials sites are examined in isolation, with 21 examples occurring at the edges of inlets, and just three definite burial sites at their centres. When it is also appreciated that the overwhelming majority of the 11 burial sites associated with promontories occur on their sides,

²⁴ Dunwell *et al*, 'Cemetery at Cnip', p. 729

rather than their ends, and are thus also associated with the edges of these bays, this tendency is even more striking.

The reasons why burial sites are generally focused at the sides of inlets rather than their edges is not clearly understood. It may be that the preference for slightly elevated sloping sites which has already been identified led to burial sites being established in these areas, as most of these inlets have a more or less extensive area of comparatively flat land immediately behind their beaches. Certainly, many of those burials that were positioned at the centres of bays are located in elevated positions there, with the possible site at Braeswick, Sanday (015: Orkney) and the definite grave at Ballyholme (084: Down) being good examples. There are exceptions, however, like the probable burial at Cruach Mhor, Islay (075: Argyll & Bute), which is situated on low-lying ground close to the centre of the 8km strand at Laggan Bay, Islay (Argyll & Bute), or the probable cemetery at Church Bay, Rathlin (082: Antrim) which seems to have been in an equally low-lying area. A limited number of burial sites at the edges of bays are also low-lying, with Balnakeil (033: Highland) and Skail (025: Orkney) being cases in point, but the majority of burials around the edges of bays, whether at the centre or edges of beaches, or on the sides of promontories occupy slightly elevated sites, often overlooking the flatter land at the head of the inlet. It may also be that these flat areas represented some of the best agricultural land in the area, and that furnished burials consequently avoided this land, being effectively pushed outwards to the peripheral or liminal spaces at the edges of these farmed areas, which they nonetheless overlooked.

The other landscape feature with which Viking Age furnished burials are regularly associated are valleys. Even some burials less than 2km from the coast, such as the possible tertiary example from Weisdale (009: Shetland), or the weapon graves at Ballabrooie and Balladoyne (161 & 163: Man) actually occur in river valleys with no direct view of the sea. Indeed, the definite brooch burial at Newton, Islay (074: Argyll & Bute), although less than 700m from a nearby bay, was positioned on a slope which ensured the site afforded no view of the sea whatsoever, and the probable weapon burial from Workington (096: Cumbria) seems to have occupied a similar position. Further inland, the association between Viking Age furnished burials and river valleys becomes even more dominant, with 49 of the 63 burials sites

more than 2km from the sea (78%) directly associated with these features. In the present context, it is interesting to note that are strong similarities between the sites selected for burial in these valleys and those utilised at the edges of bays in coastal areas. In particular, there is strong tendency for burials to occur at sites that are slightly raised above the level of the valley floor, rather than on the flat valley bottoms or close to the top of the high ground surrounding them, as at Torbeckhill (092: Dumfries & Galloway) and Adwick-le-Street (118: Nottinghamshire), although both of these examples are perhaps a little more elevated above the local floodplain than is usual. Neither matches the site of the barrow cemetery at Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), however, which is as exceptional in its position approximately fifty metres above the floor of the Trent valley as in the burial rituals employed at the site.

Those few burials that are situated on valley floors tend to occur on slightly raised sites, as at Woodstown (191: Waterford), and many of these had attracted earlier activity, as at Wensley (112: North Yorkshire) and Ormside (098: Cumbria), both of the latter also being church sites. Others furnished burials seem to have been located close to fords, as has been proposed for Magdalen Bridge (130: Oxford),²⁵ but as with the evidence from other sites such as Toome (086: Antrim), it can be difficult to separate ritual deposits from burial material. The probable weapon grave at Brockhall (104: Lancashire), on the other hand, clearly overlooked a ford across the Calder, and it seems very likely that at least some of the graves in the Kilmainham burial complex (177: Dublin) can also be associated with a ford across the Liffey called Kilmehanoc.²⁶ There is also some evidence that a limited number of burials were placed beside major roads or routeways, as at Hesketh-in-the-Forest (093: Cumbria)²⁷ and Leeming Lane (110: North Yorkshire),²⁸ with Cork Street (178: Dublin)²⁹ providing an a potential Irish example of the same practice.

²⁵ Discussed in James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in James Graham-Campbell, R.A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings in the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), p. 116

²⁶ Sean de Courcy, 'Looking at the Liffey in 795' in *Archaeology Ireland* ix.3 (1995), p. 16

²⁷ According to an early account of this discovery, the road from Carlisle to Penrith originally curved around this monument. See Christopher Hodgson 'An account of some antiquities found in a cairn, near Hesketh-in-the-Forest, in Cumberland, in a Letter from Mr. Christopher Hodgson, to the Rev. John Hodgson, Secretary' in *Archaeologia Aeliana* 1st Ser. ii (1832), pp 106-9

²⁸ In this case, the burial is said to have been found under a stretch of Roman Road. See Anon., 'Archaeological Intelligence' in *Archaeological Journal* v (1848), pp 220-1

²⁹ Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', p. 137

The lower Liffey valley, within which both Kilmainham and Cork Street lie, is one of the only areas in Britain or Ireland which has produced evidence for contemporary Viking Age settlement and furnished burial sites. In this context, it is interesting to note that the burials at College Green (180), South Great George's Street (182), Ship Street Great / Golden Lane (193) and Bride Street (179) were all placed on the opposite bank of the tributary Poddle to the developing contemporary settlement uncovered during recent excavations at Temple Bar West.³⁰ While two of the sites had, or were to develop, associations with Christian sites, and another seems to have had associations with an 'ancient' monument,³¹ it is tempting to suggest that their position on the opposite side of the river may represent another attempt to place some distance between the living and the dead, and to site furnished burials at the edges of settled space.

Dublin does, however, provide some additional evidence to suggest that there may have been a strong relationship between burial sites and peripheral or liminal locations. The pattern of burial sites in the lower Liffey valley is one of the densest in these islands, with no less than nine examples known at the present time, even excluding the more distant single burials at Finglas (172), Dollymount (173) and Donnybrook (183). While some commentators have made the entirely valid suggestion that this pattern of burial (**fig.4.2.1**) is the result of a dispersed settlement pattern in this area,³² there is also a striking correspondence between the distribution of many of these graves and the boundaries of the high medieval liberty of Dublin, as defined in a series of royal charters and other documents. Although the first comparatively detailed account of these boundaries 'as perambulated on oath by good men of the city' occurs in a grant of King John of 1192,³³ there is no particular reason to suggest that these boundaries were created at this time. Having been

³⁰ For evidence of ninth century settlement west of the Poddle, see Linzi Simpson, *Directors Findings: Temple Bar West: Temple Bar Archaeological Report 5* (Dublin, 1999)

³¹ The Ship Street Great / Golden Lane burials seem to have formed part of a cemetery associated with the church of St Michael le Pole, while the Bride Street grave was found directly opposite St Bride's Church. The potential prehistoric associations of the College Green 'thingmote' are well known. See sections 4.3 and 4.4 for more extensive discussion.

³² Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in Clarke *et al*, *Ireland and Scandinavia*, p. 137

³³ A English translation of John's grant can be found in J. T. Gilbert (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin in the Possession of the Municipal Corporation of that City* (Dublin, 1889), I, 2-6

established, the corporation guarded their boundaries with considerable care, and the practice of 'riding the franchises' played a major role in the corporate life of the medieval and early modern city. A detailed account of 'riding the franchises' in 1488 has survived in the city archives, and describes the progress of the mayor and other city dignitaries as they worked their way clockwise around the city's boundaries (fig.4.2.2).³⁴ In so doing, they passed through Donnybrook (183), close to Bride Street (179), down Cork Street (178), across the Liffey at Kilmainham (177), passing close to the site of a burial found in the Phoenix Park (174) and so back along the north side of the river, the city boundaries extended along the north coast of the bay as far as Raheny, a short distance beyond Dollymount (173). The correspondence between the burial sites and the city franchises is by no means perfect, but the fact that the mayor and commonalty passed close to six of the known burial sites in the area is at the very least a surprising coincidence.

When it is realised that two further sites, at Parnell Square (175) and College Green (180) stood on either side of the Liffey estuary, it would seem that almost all the burial sites of the Liffey valley were at least broadly associated with boundaries. While this association with boundaries cannot explain the enormous differences in size between the various cemeteries of the Liffey valley, it may go some way towards explaining the distance between the grave field at Kilmainham and what is now regarded as the main focus of ninth-century insular Scandinavian activity in the area, at Temple Bar West.³⁵ While perhaps operating at a slightly smaller scale, those controlling the ninth-century *longphort* at Dublin may have been using burial to delineate their authority just as effectively as may the heirs of the Sigurd and Thorfinn in the Earldom of Orkney.³⁶

As one approached Viking Age Dublin from the sea, the prominent 'thingmote' mound at College Green would have been visible on the flat valley floor on the south side of the Liffey to the east of its confluence with the Poddle, and the cemetery at Parnell Square, situated on slightly higher ground on the opposite side of estuary

³⁴ For a description and discussion of these boundaries, see Paul Ferguson, 'The custom of riding the franchises of the city of Dublin' in *Sinsear I* (1979), pp 69-78

³⁵ For a strong argument in favour of this interpretation, see Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials at Dublin: is this the *longphort*?' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin vi* (Dublin, 2005), pp 11-62

³⁶ See section 4.1

would presumably have been at least equally visible. However, views to and from both sites from the east would presumably have been restricted by the Ringsend spit, so that the two sites are most likely to have come into view as boats approached the estuary, neither being visible from the open water of Dublin Bay itself.

In this regard, both sites are typical of furnished burial sites in coastal areas, in that despite their location, their view of the open sea is restricted. While any analysis of 'viewshed' based exclusively on maps must inevitably be cautious, it would seem that the overwhelming majority of sites associated with bays, inlets and estuaries are positioned to overlook these inlets, and perhaps the flat land at their heads, rather than the open sea beyond. This is, of course, a direct reflection of the tendency for these sites to be situated at the sides of bays rather than at their centres, and presumably represents a conscious choice on the part of those selecting these sites. At East Tarbert Bay, Gigha (076: Argyll & Bute), for example, a (possible tertiary) burial is at the southern end of the beach, at a site where the adjoining headlands restrict views to the bay itself. Similarly, the site at Buckquoy (022: Orkney) also had comparatively restricted views over Birsay Bay and the sea immediately outside it. At Tote, Skye (047: Highland), a definite weapon burial was positioned less than 10m from the shoreline, but because of its location at the head of Loch Snizort Beag, it is almost 20km from the open sea. In the vast majority of cases, coastal burials do not afford good views up and down the coast, or even of open water.

The sites of many valley burial sites are directly comparable in that they have similarly restricted views. This is, of course, a result of their tendency to be located close to valley bottoms. As the views from many of these sites, from Talacre (145: Gwynedd) to Athlumney (170: Meath) could have been greatly extended by simply moving them slightly further upslope, it must be assumed that in most cases, extensive views were not a priority for those selecting burial sites. Indeed, of the 150 sites that can be provenanced with sufficient accuracy to allow the extent of the views to and from them to be assessed, 118 (79%) can be loosely classified as having restricted or very restricted views. For the majority of those selecting burial sites, whether in coastal or inland locations, it would seem that the priority was to ensure that these sites were closely related to the immediate, local area rather than situated within a wider landscape. As has already been suggested that the furnished burial rite

may have formed part of the process of inheritance,³⁷ it is tempting to suggest that these small, local areas may at least occasionally have corresponded to all or part of the inheritance involved.

When considering the extent of views to and from burial sites, however, it is interesting to note that when definite examples are considered in isolation, just 54 of the 79 burial sites (68%) have restricted or very restricted views. While this variation is slight, it reflects the fact that better furnished burials, which are more likely to be classified as definite, are also more likely to occur at sites with slightly more extensive views. Some of these overlook channels or straits between islands, as is the case with the cemetery at Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney), which overlooks Eynhallow Sound. While the graves in this cemetery have a comparatively high artefact count, the (apparently) more modestly furnished graves at the nearby sites of Swandro (020) and Gurness (024), on the opposite shore, also overlook the Sound. Inland sites, perhaps most obviously Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), but also sites at slightly less prominent positions, such as Beacon Hill (094: Cumbria) and potentially Sonning (138: Berkshire)³⁸ afford good views up and down their river valleys, but the general tendency for Viking Age furnished burials to avoid hilltops means that few inland sites have the very extensive views enjoyed by a limited number of coastal sites.

As will already be clear from a discussion of the local topography, all of the coastal sites with extensive views overlook open stretches of water. Perhaps unsurprisingly given their position close to the top of the hierarchy of insular Scandinavian furnished graves, boat burials almost invariably enjoy particularly extensive views, many of which may be specifically associated with important sea-routes (**fig. 4.2.8**). The relationship between the burial site of Westness and Eynhallow Sound has already been mentioned, and it should be remembered that an association with boats seems to have played a particularly important role in the burial rites used at this cemetery.³⁹ The probable boat burial at Rubh a'Charnain Mhor, North Uist (055.1:

³⁷ See section 2.2 & 2.3

³⁸ Given the extensive quarrying in this area (see section 4.1), it is very difficult to be certain as to the extent of the view from Sonning, but as a raised site on the edge of the Thames valley, it is certainly likely to have been extensive.

³⁹ See section 3.1

Western Isles) may have enjoyed a similar relationship with Caolas Bhearnaigh, the channel between that island and Berneray. Other boat burials seem to have afforded views over particularly important sea routes, with Scar, Sanday (012: Orkney) for example, looking north and east across the North Ronaldsay Firth in the direction of Fair Isle, the route which would presumably have been taken by most of those sailing from Shetland to Orkney. On Man, although the excavator of the boat burial at Knock-e-Doonee (150) emphasised its links with the river valley to the south,⁴⁰ it is clear that it also looked northwest towards the North Channel, the route taken by anyone sailing south from the Scottish islands. Balladoole (167), on the island's south coast, is positioned to afford views beyond the neighbouring Bay ny Carrickey southwest along the coast towards Dublin. Similarly, for those sailing north or south along the west coast of Scotland, any route from Mull to Islay, whether passing west or east of Colonsay and Oronsay, would have brought them within view of one of the three boat burials on these islands, with Kiloran Bay (067) looking north, Machrins (068.1) west and Càrn a' Bharraich (072.1-2) east. Indeed, the prominence of these two neighbouring islands, and their effective dominance of the north-south sea route through the Scottish islands may specifically have led to the creation of these monuments here, although there can be little doubt that it was also a major power centre in the early middle ages.⁴¹

While there is a particularly strong association between boat burials and sites with extensive sea views, and a more general association between well-furnished graves and similar sites, this relationship is by no means absolute. The probable boat burial at Pierowall (018.17: Orkney), while closer to the shore than most of the burials at this substantial cemetery, seems to have enjoyed no more extensive views than other burials at this cemetery, overlooking the Bay of Pierowall rather than the open sea. Conversely, the (apparently modestly furnished) possible boat burial at Kingscross Point, Arran (080: North Ayrshire) dominated the southern entrance to Lamlash Bay and afforded extensive views south and east across the Firth of Clyde. While this burial may originally have been better furnished,⁴² other graves that were clearly deposited with a limited number of artefacts occasionally occur in areas with

⁴⁰ P. M. C. Kermodé, 'Ship-burial from the Isle of Man' in *The Antiquaries Journal* x (1930), p. 126-7

⁴¹ See Symington Grieve, *The Book of Colonsay and Oronsay* (London, 1923)

⁴² For a discussion of this assemblage, including the possibility that this grave had been disturbed before investigation, see section 3.1

extensive views, with the definite weapon burial from St. John's Point (085: Down) and the probable grave from the Morragh (186: Wicklow) being cases in point. As was emphasised throughout the discussion of grave-goods, however, the selection of artefacts for deposition was influenced by a whole series of factors and consequently a precise correlation between artefact count and / or type and the prominence of burial sites cannot be expected. Nonetheless, the broad correspondence between well-furnished graves and prominent sites is striking, if perhaps unsurprising given that both were potentially closely related mechanisms for demonstrating and reinforcing status.⁴³

While these graves in prominent positions were undoubtedly particularly important social and political statements, it can be argued that all furnished burial sites represent similar, if more restricted attempts to dominate the landscape, or at the very least to establish a connection with it. Burial sites fall into two broad regional groups, with most sites in the north and west occurring in coastal areas, although not necessarily at the shore. Burials in eastern England, on the other hand, effectively ignore the coastal area completely, instead having an inland distribution with particularly close associations with river valleys. In both areas, while slightly elevated sites seem to be preferred, the majority of burial sites are less than 10m above sea level or the neighbouring valley floor. As a result, views to and from the majority of sites are comparatively restricted, and most overlook the inner parts of bays or the neighbouring valley floor, rather than affording extensive views over the surrounding area. Some of these areas may at least broadly correspond to the territories claimed by those performing the burial rites, and there is limited evidence to suggest that some graves were positioned on the boundaries of these areas, or at the edges of larger territories, such as that around Dublin. Possible associations with fords and routeways may also indicate that many graves were placed in what were considered peripheral areas, where they may also have functioned as territorial markers. A limited number of burials are situated in more prominent positions and may also have functioned as particularly important political or social statements. As there is a broad correlation between this latter group and well-furnished graves,

⁴³ This point is developed further in section 5.0

notably boat burials, it seems very likely that grave site and content formed part of an interrelated social and political statement.

Wherever these graves were placed, however, it is clear that all these burial sites were selected with considerable care, and demonstrate a keen awareness of the local topography. However, it must be appreciated that physical features formed only part of the environment into which insular Scandinavian communities moved. A whole series of artificial monuments of varying dates were in existence long before the arrival of any of these groups, and the relationship between furnished burial sites and these features, whether 'ancient' or 'Christian', was at least as important as their relationship with the local topography. Indeed, several of the sites discussed in the context of their topographical situation in this section simultaneously correspond to sites with evidence for earlier activity, whether Christian, as in the case of St John's Point (085: Down), or 'ancient', as with Gurness (024: Orkney). Only 94 of the 194 burial sites examined in the present study (48%) produced no evidence for previous activity, with a slight majority (52%) of sites having associations with earlier or contemporary monuments. Given this clear association, no assessment of the landscape context of Viking Age furnished graves can be considered complete without considering the influence of these monuments on the choice of burial sites.

4.3 The 'Ancient' Landscape

Although some contemporary observers, perhaps influenced by the romantic tradition, think of landscape almost entirely in terms of natural, physical features, the contribution of human activity and indeed perceptions to understandings of the landscape cannot be overestimated either in the past or the present. Knapp and Ashmore have suggested that 'landscape is an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced and contextualised by people', and when these processes have a visible impact on the surrounding environment, they can become part of the physical landscape within which subsequent generations perform the same activities.¹ Recent research by scholars such as J. C. Barrett has focused on the relationship between communities and the 'ancient' landscape that surrounded them and has led to a new awareness of the role of the past in the negotiation of contemporary social relationships. Throughout time, 'each generation can be regarded as having to confront its own archaeology as the material remains of its past pile(s) up before it'.² While the extent to which extant monuments could be regarded as part of 'their' past is perhaps debatable, insular Scandinavian communities cannot but have been aware of the impact of previous generations on the insular landscape through the monuments they had left behind them. In the same way that their furnished burials had a particular relationship with the 'natural' landscape,³ so too a substantial proportion are positioned close to or within extant 'ancient' monuments (**fig.4.3.1**). In point of fact, no less than 44 of their furnished burial sites occur at sites that have also produced at least some evidence for 'prehistoric' activity, here defined as monuments predating the early middle ages.

It has already been pointed out that the Viking Age world view may have precluded a rigid division between 'natural' and 'supernatural' aspects of the landscape, and they can have had no awareness of the relative ages of those monuments in which they placed their furnished burials. Even if they believed some of these monuments to have had an essentially mythical origin, however, they cannot but have been aware

¹ A. B. Knapp & Wendy Ashmore, 'Archaeological landscapes: constructed, conceptualized, ideational' in Wendy Ashmore & A. B. Knapp (eds), *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford, 1999), p. 1

² J. C. Barrett, 'The mythical landscape of the British iron age' in Ashmore and Knapp, *Archaeologies of Landscape*, p. 257

³ See section 4.3

of their 'ancient' character, and there is clear documentary evidence that at least some members of the community took a keen interest in some 'ancient' sites. Smyth has drawn attention to an entry in the *Annals of Ulster* that describes the opening of a series of prehistoric 'caves' in the Boyne valley by Scandinavian raiders in AD863, and while the precise motivation for this activity remains open to debate, it provides clear evidence that these monuments were recognised and investigated by the rulers of Dublin.⁴ Another prehistoric tomb at Maeshowe, Orkney, contains evidence of a slightly later Scandinavian presence in the form of a whole series of runic inscriptions on its walls.⁵ While there is no evidence that furnished burials were deposited at either site in the Viking Age, these two references demonstrate an general awareness of, and interest in, 'ancient' monuments among insular Scandinavian communities, and the creation of graves at these sites can be seen as another aspect of this association.

To many twentieth-century commentators, however, the reason for this re-use of 'ancient' sites was purely functional and could be explained as a labour-saving exercise designed to 'create' an impressive burial mound using minimal effort, a process that is widely perceived to be a 'common economy' of the time.⁶ Although Shetelig conceded as early as 1945 that these ancient sites might 'possibly have afforded the advantage of a ground already consecrated by venerable traditions of the past',⁷ it is the former approach which continues to dominate modern perceptions of the practice, as most recently demonstrated in Edwards's summary of the evidence from Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire).⁸ While interpretations of these kind, which emphasise the comparative ease of utilising an extant mound, may address some aspects of the re-use of these ancient monuments, however, they effectively ignore the fact that local communities must already have been aware of these monuments before they were used as (Viking Age) burial sites, and that the act of associating a

⁴ A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford, 1977), p. 138

⁵ For a recent reassessment of these inscriptions, see M. P. Barnes, 'The interpretation of the runic inscriptions of Maeshowe' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select papers from the Eleventh Viking Congress* (Glasgow, 1993), pp 349-69

⁶ Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), p.190

⁷ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvii (1945), pp 29-30

⁸ B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), p.14

furnished grave with one of these structures cannot but have changed the way in which it were perceived and understood by the community performing that ritual.⁹ The mound at Buckquoy (022: Orkney), for example, while not technically prehistoric, began life as a Pictish settlement, before a series of insular Scandinavian structures were constructed on top of the earlier structures, with the definite weapon burial at the site representing the uppermost phase of activity at what was by then a low mound.¹⁰ While those who deliberately associated this burial with this feature may not have been aware of the full range of its historical associations, it seems extreme to suggest that these had been entirely forgotten in the comparatively short period between the abandonment of the last Viking Age structure and the deposition of the body.

A similar pattern of monument re-use and modification has been noted by Williams in two related studies of burial in Anglo-Saxon England¹¹ that form part of a more general interpretative shift away from explanatory models which see monument reuse as 'fortuitous, accidental or practical', to models which emphasise the potential social complexity of this activity and its importance as a means of incorporating and modifying perceptions of an older past among members of a living community.¹² Monument reuse has been widespread since the Neolithic, with examples involving a wide range of monuments occurring across Europe and indeed beyond.¹³ In the case of early medieval Britain and Ireland, many royal inauguration and ritual sites in Ireland incorporate a whole series of monuments that date back through the Iron and Bronze Ages to the Neolithic. Whatever their precise mythological or historical associations within these communities, their antiquity must have functioned as a means of validating royal power.¹⁴ At a more modest level, Iron Age communities in Scotland clearly reused and modified Neolithic chambered tombs, although the

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this process, see J. C. Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain 2900-1200BC* (Oxford, 1994), pp 52-61

¹⁰ Ritchie, 'Excavation at Buckquoy', pp 175-190

¹¹ Howard Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead: the reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites' in *Medieval Archaeology* xli (1997), pp 1-32 & idem, 'Monuments and the past in the Anglo-Saxon England' in *World Archaeology* xxx.1 (1998), pp 90-108

¹² Howard Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead', pp 25-6

¹³ See Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Society* (London, 2002), chapter 5

¹⁴ Michael Herrity, 'Motes and mounds at royal sites in Ireland' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* cxxiii (1993), pp 127-151

varied evidence for activity at these sites does not include formal burial.¹⁵ Some sites, such as the Howe of Howe, Mainland (032: Orkney) were clearly used, abandoned and re-utilised over millennia. A linen smoother found here in the nineteenth century may or may not provided evidence for a (possible) 'female tertiary' burial,¹⁶ but certainly indicates that there was an insular Scandinavian contribution to a process of abandonment and reuse that had already seen what was originally a megalithic tomb modified to form an Iron Age settlement, which was then transformed into a broch, above which there were six successive phases of Pictish occupation.¹⁷ The stratigraphic record of the broch at Oxtro, on the same island, is rather more confused, but evidence for a (lost) Pictish symbol stone and a number of (undated) cist graves suggests that this broch site may also have been used as a Pictish burial site before a possible tertiary burial represented by single ringed pin was deposited there (029: Orkney). As at Howe, while the evidence for burial is ambiguous, the ringed pin provides clear evidence that monument reuse continued in the Viking Age.

In the case of Oxtro, there is a more or less direct connection between the preceding Pictish activity and the (possible) furnished graves at these sites, and similar, potential associations can be proposed for sites such as Stenness, again on Mainland (030: Orkney) and Braewick, Sanday (015: Orkney), although in both cases the evidence is sufficiently ambiguous to make the precise date of either pre-existing structure uncertain. Oxtro, however, seems to have been distinctive in that it was also a Pictish burial site, and as such it forms part of a limited number of sites where Pictish burial grounds that may or may not have contained the remains of 'Christians' were reutilised for furnished insular Scandinavian burial. While some of the pre-Norse cist burials at Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney) seem to have been orientated at least broadly east-west¹⁸ and might therefore be considered 'Christian',

¹⁵ R. Hingley, 'Ancestors and identity in the later prehistory of Atlantic Scotland: the reuse and reinvention of neolithic monuments and material culture' in *World Archaeology* xxviii.2 (1996), pp 231-43

¹⁶ See section 2.3

¹⁷ Beverley Ballin Smith (ed.), *Howe: Four Millennia of Orkney Prehistory Excavations 1978-1982: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph ix* (Edinburgh, 1994)

¹⁸ See S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Orkney' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso & Kirkwall, 22 August - 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993) fig.17.4

the evidence from Dunrobin Castle (036: Highland) is more unusual. Here, nineteenth-century evidence for a Pictish symbol stone that was re-used as the covering slab for a cist containing a definite weapon burial (036.1) is now supported by the excavation of a rectilinear early medieval cairn c.32m SW of that cist grave, presumably in the same general area as the two other Viking Age furnished burials associated with Dunrobin (**fig.4.3.2**).¹⁹ Mound burial is hardly a conventional Christian burial practice in other parts of these islands, but it has already been established that early medieval insular graves occur in a wide range of forms, even at sites with churches constructed on them.²⁰ In this context, the rectilinear mound at Dunrobin, and indeed similar features at Ackergill (089: Highland) clearly represent a local variation in this ritual, or at the very least burial sites that were at least broadly contemporary with the Viking Age.²¹ While the evidence for a possible tertiary burial found within a burial mound at Ackergill is tenuous,²² the dates produced by the rectilinear mounds at Dunrobin and Ackergill suggest that this form of site re-use, like that which occurs at Westness (021), is better considered in the context of the re-use of more recognisable and broadly contemporary Christian sites which dominates site re-use in the southern part of these islands.

If the distribution of Viking Age furnished burial sites that occur at 'ancient' sites is compared to those that occur at 'Christian' sites (**fig.4.3.3**), it will be noted that the two forms of site reuse dominate two different areas, with the overwhelming majority of sites reused in Scotland being 'ancient', while those further south are 'Christian'.²³ Of the 38 Viking Age burial sites that are associated with existing monuments in zones A and B, 27 (71%) are associated with ancient sites. In the southern area (zones C-F), 44 of the 56 sites in the same category (79%) are associated with Christian (or at least early medieval) burials. When it is further appreciated that the aforementioned three sites in Orkney and Highland have only tenuous connections, this distinction becomes even more clear-cut. In the southern area, a number of furnished burials at 'ancient', specifically Roman sites, are clearly

¹⁹ Joanna Close-Brooks, 'Excavations at the Dairy Park, Dunrobin, Sutherland, 1977' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cx (1980), pp 328-45

²⁰ See in particular section 2.3

²¹ For a discussion of this monument form, see Elizabeth Alcock, 'Burials and cemeteries in Scotland' in Edwards & Lane, *Early Church in Wales and the West Oxbow Monograph* 16 (1992), pp 125-9

²² See section 3.2

²³ This pattern was first identified by Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987), p.117 & fig.31, although her analysis was confined to a comparison between Scotland and Man.

there because they were already being used for early medieval burial, as at Caerwent (148; Gwent), with more tenuous evidence coming from York Minster (114) and Caistor-on-Sea (127: Norfolk).²⁴ Similarly, the coincidence between the Viking Age female tertiary burial at Saffron Walden (137: Essex) and a Roman-British cemetery at the same site can be attributed to an intervening period of Anglo-Saxon burial. Indeed, throughout Zone D (southern England) there is only one furnished burial at an ancient site with no obvious Christian associations, this being Harrold (128: Bedfordshire), and even here there was an intervening phase of Anglo-Saxon activity, albeit apparently dating from the period before the conversion of the local population.²⁵ What these sites do demonstrate, however, is that the indigenous population could be just as concerned with associating themselves with a distant past as were insular Scandinavian groups. As John Blair has pointed out, the coincidence of early medieval English and Welsh church sites with Roman remains is something that goes 'beyond the purely practical'.²⁶

For whatever reason, however, many of those insular Scandinavian communities establishing themselves in Scotland chose to deposit their dead in prehistoric monuments, and many of these furnished burials occur at sites for which there is little or no evidence for activity in the intervening centuries. Williams noted that among early Anglo-Saxon communities, there was a definite tendency to reuse round burial mounds similar to those that they would have constructed themselves.²⁷ Given the wide range of burial markers apparently used by insular Scandinavian communities, it is perhaps unsurprising that no similar trend can be noted in their reuse of 'ancient' sites, but there is a definite tendency to select monuments which occur in landscape settings similar to those which might be selected for furnished burial anyway.²⁸ There is also a clear preference for burial in association with extant, ancient mounds, whatever their precise morphology.

²⁴ For a discussion of the tertiary burials from these sites, see section 2.3

²⁵ Helen Geake has argued that this probable weapon grave is also of Anglo-Saxon date. See *The Use of Grave-goods in Conversion Period England c.600-c.850: BAR British Series cclxi*, p. 126

²⁶ John Blair, 'Minster churches in the landscape' in Della Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), p. 44

²⁷ Williams, 'Ancient landscapes', p. 6

²⁸ See section 4.2

One of the best examples of this practice is Tote, Skye (047: Highland), where excavations of a mound 12.2m in diameter and 2.4m high revealed a 'rude cist' containing c.150 stone flakes that had been constructed at the original ground level, clearly indicating a prehistoric (perhaps Bronze Age) origin for the mound. 0.45m beneath a slight hollow at the top of this mound, however, a Viking Age axe, ringed pin, bead and whetstone were found clustered around some 'charred bone' (fig.4.3.4).²⁹ A very similar deposit seems to have been recovered at Boiden (077: Argyll & Bute), where a sword, spearhead and shield boss were found close together 0.6m beneath the surface of a large mound in 1851. The mound itself was never excavated, but certainly bore more than a superficial resemblance to a prehistoric burial mound. Further south, the evidence from Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire) is slightly more ambiguous, but the presence of 'an urn of baked clay, containing burned bones' (again presumably Bronze Age in date) opens up the definite possibility that this mound was also prehistoric in origin (see also below).³⁰ The discovery of a sword in or near a mound at St John's (162: Man) which also contained a Bronze Age cist almost certainly indicates similar re-use, and in Ireland, the mound at Croghan Erin (171: Meath) was almost certainly re-used in a similar way, as it contained both an urn cremation and an cist inhumation. Unfortunately, the iron spearhead found in this mound, while almost certainly of Viking Age date, is not recorded as having been found in direct association with either burial.³¹ Another example of what may well be the same phenomenon is a (lost) spearhead of 'brass and iron' which was apparently found in one of the prehistoric cairns near Kilmartin (066: Argyll & Bute), and while very unreliable, the evidence from Blackerne (090: Dumfries & Galloway) and Hasty Knoll (105: Lancashire) could be interpreted in the same way, with some evidence for Viking Age (or at least iron) artefacts apparently found in the upper levels of what seem to have been artificial mounds.

Another site where Viking Age furnished burials have been found in close association with possible prehistoric mounds is Kildonnan, Eigg (048.2-3: Highland). Although the SE corner of the island is perhaps best known for its Early Medieval church site, two definite weapon graves in separate but adjacent mounds close to the

²⁹ T. C. Lethbridge, 'A burial of the 'Viking age' in Skye' in *The Archaeological Journal* lxxvii (1920), pp 135-6

³⁰ Anon., 'Proceedings, February 2, 1849' in *The Archaeological Journal* vi (1849), pp 72-5

³¹ *Pers. Comm.* R Ó Floinn, Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report. NMI Archive

harbour seem either to have re-used the central chambers of small prehistoric tumuli or were placed in Viking Age cists and mounds whose construction consciously emulated older monument forms (**fig.4.3.5**). In most Viking Age burial mounds, the chamber is dug into the subsoil and is normally lined with wood, but at Kildonnan, the stone chambers or cists were constructed at ground level in a manner similar to that seen at Tote and many other prehistoric Scottish mounds.

There are also a number of cases where prehistoric burial mounds were not directly disturbed or re-used, but where furnished insular Scandinavian burials were placed beside and around them. A prime example of this practice can be seen at the professionally excavated cemetery at Cnip, Lewis (050: Western Isles), where all but one of the excavated Viking Age graves at this site were found less than 20m west of a multi-phase Bronze Age cairn which would have been visible when the cemetery was created, the remaining, elaborately furnished definite brooch burial at the site being c.60m north of the prehistoric feature. A similar relationship has been postulated for Muckle Hoeg, Unst (002: Shetland), where a pair of oval brooches was allegedly found close to a number of prehistoric mounds, but the relatively high altitude of the site suggests that these (lost) artefacts may have been incorrectly provenanced.³² A ringed pin found close to a Bronze Age cist and mound at Kinnegar (081: Donegal) is still extant, but site erosion means that the stratigraphic relationship between the mound and the possible tertiary burial which it represents could not be established with certainty.

At Church Bay, Rathlin (082: Antrim), it is clear that the Viking Age graves were placed in an area that also contained a number of what seem to have been Bronze Age cists, and an early antiquarian account suggests that the cemetery at Ballinaby, Islay (073: Argyll & Bute) also coincided with an area containing a number of these monuments.³³ In both of these cases, however, the evidence for a direct link between the two phases of activity is tenuous, and recalls the situation at Ballateare (154: Man), where a Viking Age burial and mound overlie part of a (flat) Neolithic

³² See section 4.2

³³ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides* (2nd Ed., London, 1772), p.256

cemetery.³⁴ While these are remarkable coincidences, it is by no means clear that there was any visible evidence for any of these graves when these sites were re-used by the insular Scandinavian community.

If direct links between extant flat graves and subsequent Viking Age furnished graves are difficult to demonstrate conclusively, the relationship between Viking Age burials and monuments which were clearly visible on the surface seems certain, even when these features cannot be precisely dated. Boiden (077: Argyll & Bute) has already been mentioned, but there are also a number of other sites where furnished insular Scandinavian burials seem to have respected earlier, undated mounds. At Pierowall, Westray (018: Orkney), for example, there is no evidence for a direct relationship between the extensive Viking Age cemetery and the chambered cairn in the same parish,³⁵ but nineteenth-century accounts make it clear that at least some of the Viking Age burials had a close relationship with extant features. The area originally contained at least five mounds, each c.15-23m (20-30 paces) in diameter and 0.9-1.2m high, and distinct groups of furnished insular Scandinavian burials seem to have been clustered on and around two of these.³⁶

The first 'elevated circular mound' had a definite weapon grave (018.03) 'upon' it, which led Thorsteinsson to suggest it was secondary (as at Tote and Boiden), while two more furnished burials (018.04-05) were found on the mound's northern side.³⁷ A second group of four graves (018.11-14) were found on the north and south sides of 'a mound of sand and small stones' some distance away. According to Rendall, who excavated this latter group, one (018.13) occurred 'between a row of small stones'. This led Thorsteinsson to suggest it was a cist burial, but Rendall's use of the singular suggests that the burial may have crossed a row of stones, more or less at

³⁴ For details of this cemetery, see G. Bersu, 'A cemetery of the Ronaldsway culture at Ballateare, Jurby, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* xiii (1947), pp 161-9

³⁵ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) Site Number HY44NW 32 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 29 Oct 2007)

³⁶ Anon. 'Discovery of human skeletons, ancient warlike instruments, ornaments, &c., near Pier-o-wall, Orkney' in *Orkney and Shetland Journal and Fisherman's Magazine* xviii (June 1839), reprinted in H. Marwick, 'Notes on Viking burials in Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* x (1932), p. 20

³⁷ Arne Thorsteinsson, 'The Viking burial place at Pierowall, Westray, Orkney' in Bjarni Niclasen (ed.), *The Fifth Viking Congress* (Tórshavn, 1968), pp 164-5

right angles.³⁸ If this is the case, the stones may have formed part of a kerb, and would indicate that at least one of the large Pierowall mounds was at least partially artificial. Even if these mounds were originally natural, however, the fact that nineteenth-century antiquarians believed they were artificial would imply that the local community could have arrived at the same conclusion a millennium earlier. A group of long stone cists arranged in a radial pattern similar to those described at Pierowall was also noted close to the church at St. John's Point (085: Down) in 1857. Subsequent commentators suggested these graves, only one of which was furnished, were focused on the church, but a letter describing the original find makes it clear that this was not the case.³⁹ It remains entirely possible, however, that the burials were respecting some form of extant feature, although its date cannot now be determined. Similar radial patterns of burial have been noted at a number of prehistoric sites in Anglo-Saxon England, although this does not, of course, demonstrate the antiquity of the group at St John's Point.⁴⁰

In other cases, Viking burials were placed in prehistoric features whose non-funerary origins can be determined today, but which may have been mistaken for burial mounds by the insular Scandinavian community. At Weisdale, Mainland (009: Shetland), for example, a possible tertiary burial accompanied by a ring-headed pin, bead, jet bracelet and a copper alloy artefact was placed in what can today be identified as a burnt mound. At Druim Arstail, Oronsay (071: Argyll & Bute), two possible burials seem to have been dug into a prehistoric shell midden, and a similar event may have occurred at Mangerstadh, Lewis (051: Western Isles), where the discovery of an oval brooch fragment provides evidence for a possible brooch burial in what was effectively an extant raised mound. The insertion of two modestly furnished but definite tertiary burials in a still-developing midden at Brough Road,

³⁸ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.169. Rendall's letter is published in Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell, Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in the sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), p. 86

³⁹ This information is contained in a letter from a Major Browne of Janeville, Co. Down, stuck into the *Royal Irish Academy Rough Minute Book* under the entries for 11 May 1857 (RIA Library). The belief that the these burials radiated outwards from the church seems to have been begun by William Wakeman, *Handbook of Irish Antiquities* (Dublin 1903), pp 331. Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report, NMI Archive.

⁴⁰ Howard Williams, 'Monuments and the past in Anglo-Saxon England' in *World Archaeology* xxx.1 (1998), pp 98-9

Mainland (023: Orkney), on the other hand, seems to represent a more complex relationship to a contemporary settlement.⁴¹

Despite their limited distribution, the non-funerary monument at which furnished insular Scandinavian graves most frequently occur are brochs. As has already been suggested, the (possible) tertiary burials at two of these sites, Oxtro (029) and Howe (032), both on Mainland, Orkney, can be seen as a more or less direct continuation of Pictish activity at these sites, but some other brochs were used for burial after what seem to have been an extended period of abandonment. Batey has recently published a study of the re-use of broch sites in Viking Age Caithness, in which she notes that burial was only one of a range of activities carried by insular Scandinavian communities at these sites.⁴² Arguably the best, and certainly the longest-known example of the re-use of one of these monuments as a burial site is the definite brooch burial that was placed in the upper levels of the (probable) broch at Castletown (040: Highland), discovered in September 1786. Then and now, the site must have resembled a high mound, and photographs taken at Gurness, Mainland (024: Orkney) before excavation began at this site indicate that this broch also resembled a single large mound.⁴³

Ultimately, five Viking Age furnished graves were deposited in and around this monument. Two shield bosses (024.3-4) were recovered from its upper levels during the early stages of the excavation and represent probable and possible weapon graves that would have occupied a position very similar to the brooch burial at Castletown (**fig.4.3.6**). The only definite burial from the site, on the other hand, a brooch inhumation (024.1), was found *c.*38m ENE of the centre of the mound, placed in the wall of the (buried) external passage leading to the broch 'gatehouse'. This location at the mound's periphery and well below its surface can be compared to two further tertiary burials, one probable and the other possible, which were within presumably long-buried ditches on the west side of the mound, again at peripheral locations.

⁴¹ See section 4.1

⁴² C. E. Batey, 'Viking and late Norse re-use of broch mounds in Caithness' in Beverley Ballin Smith & Iain Banks (eds), *In the Shadow of the Brochs: The Iron Age in Scotland* (Stroud, 2002), pp 185-90

⁴³ J. W. Hedges, *Bu, Gurness and the Brochs of Orkney: BAR British Series clxiv* (2 vols, Oxford, 1987), p.1

On the opposite shore of Eynhallow Sound, at Swandro, Rousay (020: Orkney), evidence for two probable weapon burials was found while ploughing close to a substantial stone structure that is generally interpreted as a broch, and these may also represent peripheral burials. At Westerseat (043: Highland), on the other hand, there is no evidence that the gravel mound in which this probable brooch grave was found was anything other than natural, but Batey has recently drawn attention to the site's proximity to the broch of Kettleburn, a short distance to the north.⁴⁴ Finally, the discovery of a probable brooch burial near the 'broch of Lamaness', Sanday (014: Orkney) may provide another example of this practice, but in this case the difficulties associated with locating this feature, let alone confirming its identity as a broch, make this example of limited value. Two others 'structures' associated with Viking Age furnished burials, at Braeswick and Stennes (015 & 030: both Orkney) may have been brochs, but there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate this point conclusively.

From the examples given here, it will be noted that overwhelming majority of prehistoric sites used for burial by insular Scandinavian communities, whatever their actual origin, resembled large earth or stone mounds when they were utilised for burial. Apart from the Roman and Christian sites of England (above), the only exception to this general rule is the occasional positioning of a furnished grave close to what was presumably an extant standing stone or stones. At both Ballinaby, Islay (073: Argyll & Bute) and Rathlin (082: Antrim), for example, while the bronze age cists in the area were not necessarily visible, there were also a number of standing stones at both sites. While the relationship between most of the furnished burials and the standing stones at these sites is at best peripheral, antiquarian records state that one of the definite weapon burials from Ballinaby (073.1) was found at the base of one of three exceptionally large standing stones there.⁴⁵ While the apparent size of the Ballinaby stone and the nearby bronze age cists strongly suggests that it was erected in prehistory, this is difficult to demonstrate conclusively. At Ospidale and Watten (044 & 042: both Highland), probable brooch and probable weapon burials were found 'close' to standing stones, and the presence of an 'urn' at Ospidale and a number of 'cists' at Watten opens up the possibility of these stones also being

⁴⁴ Batey, 'Re-use of broch mounds', p.188

⁴⁵ Anderson, 'Two Viking graves in Islay', p.71

prehistoric. At Ardvouray, Barra (060: Western Isles), on the other hand, a 2.1m standing stone embedded in a mound of sand clearly marked the site of a definite brooch burial, but its date cannot be determined, while at Reay (035: Highland), even the spatial relationship between the undated standing stone and the dispersed furnished insular Scandinavian burials in the area is peripheral at best.

There is also clear evidence for at least one site where standing stones seem to have been erected in the Viking Age, this being Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072: Argyll & Bute), where two small 'standing stones', 1.2 and 1.4m long respectively, were thought to have fallen from the top of the Viking Age mound there, but as the excavator also noted that the entire mound contained 'large masses' of schist slabs, this interpretation need not necessarily be correct. While parallels can be drawn between the use of standing stones to mark Viking Age graves, and the post markers for which there is clear evidence at Repton (123.02-3: Derbyshire) and Ballateare (154: Man), it is becoming increasingly clear that the *bauta-stein* thought to have marked the site of many Viking graves was very much less common than Anderson and other early commentators believed.⁴⁶ Indeed, Shetelig emphasised that standing stones were a 'type of grave-monument [that was] not known from the Viking period in Norway'.⁴⁷ If this statement is correct, then the use of (extant) standing stones provides clear evidence that furnished burials at ancient sites were intended as much to associate families and communities with the immediate, local landscape as to faithfully reproduce an essentially static Norwegian burial form. Despite appearing inherently conservative, the practice of creating furnished burials at ancient sites could be adapted to suit local circumstances in the same way that grave contents could be adjusted to serve local needs and interests.

Indeed, grave-goods themselves could occasionally be used to demonstrate connections with the local, or rather insular environment, specifically through the deposition of 'ancient' artefacts as part of burial assemblages. Although the character of much of the record makes it difficult to differentiate between 'residual' material and artefacts that were deliberately placed in Viking Age graves, there are two sites where the deliberate incorporation of ancient objects within the burial assemblage is

⁴⁶ Anderson, 'Two Viking graves in Islay', p.71

⁴⁷ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p. 30

an intriguing possibility. At Claughton Hall (102: Lancashire), the presence of what seems to have been a Bronze Age urn suggests that the mound itself may have been prehistoric (above), but the grave-goods found in direct association with the wooden chest or coffin that contained the Viking Age material apparently included a prehistoric stone 'battle' axe, 11.4cm long (fig.4.3.7). These artefacts are comparatively rare even in prehistoric funerary contexts, and it is not impossible that it could have been recovered from another site and redeposited as part of a Viking Age furnished burial ritual. Explanations of its presence in a ninth- or tenth-century grave have ranged from proposals that it would still have been in some way 'functional' to a more recent proposal that it could have been seen as a kind of 'Thor's hammer' or amulet, and other associations are possible (see chapter 3).⁴⁸

A second possible example of the inclusion of an prehistoric artefact in a Viking Age assemblage was found at Bride Street (179: Dublin) in January 1861 together with a sword, spearhead and shield boss which clearly represent a probable weapon grave. All three artefacts have recently been re-identified and it is now clear that both the sword and shield boss had been deliberately bent and damaged before deposition. As the spearhead has been broken where the blade and socket meet, it is possible that it had also been subject to the same treatment. Intriguingly, the excavation in Bride Street also produced the only Bronze Age halberd in the Irish corpus that had deliberately been bent prior to deposition.⁴⁹ While this evidence is hardly conclusive, the fact that the deliberate bending of artefacts was so rare in both periods makes the fact that they were found together a remarkable coincidence. The possibility that this bronze age halberd was also incorporated with a Viking Age funerary ritual cannot be dismissed out of hand.

A direct parallel with this practice, whereby a Bronze Age weapon was placed in a furnished Iron Age burial, occurred at Lexden (Essex), where a palstave axe was included in an exceptionally well-furnished burial from the end of the first century

⁴⁸ B. J. N. Edwards, 'The Claughton Viking burial' in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* cxxi (1969), p.20

⁴⁹ Peter Harbison, *The Daggers and the Halberds of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland: Prähistorische Bronzefunde* vi.1 (Munich, 1969), p.42

BC.⁵⁰ While neither Claughton Hall nor Bride Street provides conclusive evidence for this practice, the fact that both artefacts involved were recognisable weapons may have been part of their appeal to Viking Age observers, in much the same way that ancient mounds may have been seen as comparable to contemporary funeral mounds. As Bradley has recently pointed out, associations between past and present societies and structures are particularly plausible 'in those cases where the forms of (ancient) artefacts or structures resembled those that were still being made'.⁵¹ While those depositing these artefacts cannot have been aware of their typological significance, the fact that both were clearly of insular origin confirms that they had been recovered here rather than in Scandinavia and suggests that at some level their incorporation within the funerary ritual represented an attempt to connect the dead, and through them the living community, to the local environment.

More tenuous evidence for an attempt to link the Viking Age dead to a more distant past is provided by the inclusion of two Roman coins in burials at York Minster. While the site lies close to the centre of the Roman fort at York and the excavator considered both of them to be residual, it may not be entirely coincidental that both were found in high status graves, one (114.2) containing fragments of gold thread and the other (114.1) a body placed on a clinker-built bier that may have begun life as part of a ship.

While the evidence from York is inconclusive and direct associations between Viking Age graves and their prehistoric antecedents is occasionally tenuous, there is nonetheless clear evidence that a substantial minority of Viking Age graves occur at sites which retained clear traces of prehistoric activity, without necessarily having experienced indigenous activity in the early medieval period. The relationship between this 'ancient' landscape and the contemporary 'Christian' landscape is discussed in more detail elsewhere,⁵² but it may be appropriate to emphasise that local 'Christian' aristocracies also made use of these monuments, as at Dunadd and Kilmartin, where Driscoll has recently suggested that there was a direct relationship between prehistoric and early medieval sites in an area closely associated with the

⁵⁰ Jennifer Foster, *The Lexden Tumulus: A Re-Appraisal of an Iron Age Burial from Colchester, Essex: BAR British Series clvi* (Oxford, 1986), pp 78-80

⁵¹ Bradley, *Past in Prehistoric Society*, p. 7

⁵² See section 4.4

rituals of early medieval kingship.⁵³ In the present context, the fact that there is limited evidence for a (possible) weapon grave in one of the ancient mounds (066: Argyll & Bute) in this area hints at the possibility that both indigenous and Scandinavian elites were manipulating perceptions of the same monuments in order to bolster their own power.

To newly arrived Scandinavian communities, however, there may have been an added urgency in seeking to associate themselves with a more distant past, and just as the careful choice of burial sites within the physical landscape could potentially link those performing the burial ceremonies to the local environment, so the modification of ancient monuments and, more rarely, artefacts could serve to link these first generations of settlers to a more distant, local past. In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, Williams has gone so far as to ask if the use of grave-mounds to mark some late Anglo-Saxon furnished burials was a conscious emulation of a perceived distant past,⁵⁴ and the incorporation of local monument forms, notably standing stones, within the insular Scandinavian furnished burial ritual may represent a similar desire on the part of these communities. In Viking Age Britain, as in Anglo-Saxon England, the re-use of ancient sites was conscious and deliberate, and the process of incorporating and adapting the signs of a visibly more ancient world sent out clear signals about the contemporary status quo.

For those groups who may have sought to have a more direct impact on local power structures, however, particularly in the southern part of these islands, an alternative form of site adaptation and reuse potentially offered more immediate access to the power structures of both newly arrived and long-established polities. Just as the reuse of ancient monuments could potentially make a series of statement about power and authority, so the deposition of furnished burials at contemporary 'Christian' graveyards could potentially allow similar statements to be made about power, authority, and perhaps even belief.

⁵³ S. T. Driscoll, 'Picts and prehistory: cultural resource management in early medieval Scotland' in *World Archaeology* xxx (1998), pp 149-51

⁵⁴ Williams, 'Monuments and the Past', pp 100-102

4.4 The Christian Landscape

Given their clear awareness of the monuments created by previous inhabitants of the landscape in a distant, effectively mythical past, it comes as no surprise that the insular Scandinavian population were at least equally aware of those structures which had been created by contemporary indigenous groups and their immediate predecessors. According to many modern theorists, these structures were not merely a backdrop to daily life but a means by which individual lives were organised and regulated within space and time.¹ The evidence for Early Medieval secular settlement varies widely across the British Isles, from the numerous ringforts of the Irish landscape to the comparatively enigmatic nucleated settlements of Anglo-Saxon England, but everywhere it is clear that society at all levels was increasingly influenced by the church. Although there is still considerable debate on the level of the churches' impact, particularly in northern Scotland, by the end of the eighth century the majority of the insular population had been at least nominally Christian for at least a century, and some areas had a very much longer Christian tradition.²

This new belief system found a physical expression in the establishment and development of churches and other ecclesiastical structures. Very few eighth-century churches survive, but the remains of the boundaries which marked the edges of their enclosures are a common feature of the Irish, Welsh, Scottish and English landscapes. As banks, ditches, walls, and even hedges, these marked out church and burial sites within the settled landscape and served as physical boundaries between the sacred and the profane.³ While it must always be remembered that the scale and

¹ For a discussion of the role of structures, physical and otherwise, in shaping society, see J. C. Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain 2900-1200BC* (Oxford, 1994), particularly pp.3 & 36f. This text applies Giddens' theory of structuration to archaeological material.

² The precise date at which the majority of the insular population became consciously Christian is understandably a hotly debated point. A date around AD700 has been chosen here, and is consciously conservative, being slightly later than the final abandonment of all furnished burial by the Anglo-Saxon population and slightly earlier than the development of Class II Pictish stones in the early eighth century. Both Ireland and Wales had a Christian tradition that was considerably longer, stretching back into the sixth century and beyond, but it has been suggested that even in these areas few of the laity were 'within the fold' of the church before c.AD700. See Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion Period England c.600-c.850. BAR British Series cclxi* (Oxford, 1997), p.124; Charles Thomas, *Celtic Britain* (London, 1987), pp.96-104; Charles Doherty, 'The monastic town in early medieval Ireland' in H. B. Clarke & Anngret Simms (eds), *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe. BAR International Series cclv* (2 vols, Oxford, 1985), I, 59-60

³ Thomas, *Celtic Britain*, pp.136, 149-50. For a more detailed discussion of the Irish material, see Doherty, 'monastic town', pp.57-9 & Leo Swan, 'Monastic proto-towns in early medieval Ireland: the evidence of aerial photography, plan analysis and survey', in Clarke & Simms, *Comparative History*,

morphology of early medieval ecclesiastical sites varied widely across these islands, it is clear that many churches served an increasingly important role as centres for their surrounding communities, with their rites and rituals marking out both the yearly round and the lives of the individuals who partook in them. A key aspect of this increasing influence was the regulation of burial, and while the processes by which churchyard burial was gradually adopted in the British Isles are now acknowledged to be very much more complex than was once thought (below), few would deny that the second half of the first millennium saw a steady increase in the numbers of individuals buried in recognisably Christian cemeteries.⁴ At precisely the same time, the increasing importance of church sites and their associated enclosures found a new physical expression in the development of stone monuments of various types, from simple slabs to very much more complex free standing crosses, as well as the gradual development and elaboration of stone churches themselves, so that by the beginning of the Viking Age, all parts of the British Isles 'had long-established traditions of carving in stone'.⁵

This new range of monuments, as a demonstration of these churches' ability to attract and control resources, was also a direct reflection of their increasing importance within the contemporary political landscape. To the lay aristocracy, above all monarchs, these churches provided a source of moral authority, as well as access to literacy, while their estates and revenues could also provide more practical support. To the developing church, on the other hand, it was obvious that royal or other secular support was absolutely necessary to its continuing development and growth, even as changing theological approaches gave new prestige to secular authority.⁶ In Ireland, the close relationship between secular and ecclesiastical power was given physical expression in the close proximity of a number of important early church sites to established (ritual) centres of royal power, with prime examples being the close relationship between Kildare and Killashee (Kildare), Armagh and Emain

pp.77-102, and for Anglo-Saxon England Rosemary Cramp, 'Monastic sites' in D. M. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), p.204

⁴ For a recent general study of this phenomenon, see S. J. Lucy & Andrew Reynolds, 'Burial in early medieval England and Wales: past, present and future' in idem (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xvii* (London, 2002), pp 1-23

⁵ R. N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980), p.76

⁶ For a detailed discussion of this relationship, which places particular emphasis on its changing theological aspects, see G. Tellenbach (trans. R. F. Bennett), *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford, 1959), pp 61-9

Macha (Armagh) and Dunshaughlin and Tara and/or Lagore (Meath).⁷ In the closely related political environment of Scottish Dal Riata, a similar close relationship has been proposed between the royal site of Dunadd and the early church site at Kilmartin (Argyll and Bute).⁸ In Anglo-Saxon England too, early minster churches were very often situated close to centres of secular power, and it has long been acknowledged that the development of the Anglo-Saxon episcopate owed at least as much to immediate political realities as any abstract Roman plans.⁹ Nor were such close links between secular and ecclesiastical power confined to bishops, major abbots and monarchs. They can often be traced much further down the social hierarchy. While lesser magnates had fewer resources with which to endow churches, and a more limited ability to further their interests, many minor families established close links with particular churches, whose control, indeed, was not infrequently vested in a family member.¹⁰

In Ireland, the presence of ringforts in the landscape allows the physical relationship between secular and ecclesiastical settlements to be examined and further demonstrates close links between the two. At a local level, the relationship between the early ecclesiastical site of Seir Keiran and a nearby multivallate ringfort at Oakleypark (both Offaly) may echo the close proximity of royal centres and church sites mentioned sites, but more generally the physical relationship is less immediate but equally close.¹¹ In southwest Antrim, for example, unpublished research by McErlean noted a tendency for church sites to occur at the edges of definite ringfort clusters which presumably indicate some form of social and political unit.¹² He argued that such sites were 'isolated', but it seems equally apparent that they were directly adjacent to their primary source of patronage and wealth. In the midlands, research by Stout has focused on the physical setting of secular and ecclesiastical

⁷ Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Medieval Society* (London, 1966), p.76

⁸ S. T. Driscoll, 'Picts and prehistory: cultural resource management in early medieval Scotland' in *World Archaeology* xxx.1 (1998), pp 149-51

⁹ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd Ed., Oxford, 1971), pp 108-9

¹⁰ This relationship was noted in an Irish context by A.T. Lucas, 'The plundering and burning of churches in Ireland, 7th to 16th century' in Etienne Rynne (ed.), *North Munster Studies* (Limerick, 1967), p.177. Similar 'proprietary churches' have been noted in Anglo-Saxon England, see Patrick Wormald, 'The age of Bede and Aethelbald' in James Campbell (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1982), p.87-8. Similar *eigenklöstre* and *eigenkirchen* were, however, common throughout northern Europe in the period before the eleventh century. See Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society*, pp 70-4

¹¹ Matthew Stout, *The Irish Ringfort* (Dublin, 1997), p.102

¹² McErlean's (unpublished) work is cited in *Ibid.*, p.68 & figs 17 & 18

sites, and he has also noted a close relationship between secular and ecclesiastical settlement types, with church sites generally occurring at the edges of ringfort clusters and at a somewhat lower altitude. His modification of Simms' model of *tuath* organisation is perhaps most notable for its new emphasis on the role of the local church in the social and economic management of these local political units (**fig.4.1.1**).¹³ It is, of course, true that a limited number of major monasteries, such as Clonmacnoise (Co. Offaly), achieved a certain level of political independence, but even here, a study of artistic patronage at the site is an almost direct reflection of the changing local political landscape, and the rise and fall of various neighbouring dynasties in this border area.¹⁴ For the vast majority of church sites, however, even this level of apparent independence was unobtainable, and their rise and fall was intimately connected to that of their associated patrons. In England too, some of the most impressive Anglo-Saxon church remains, such as Brixworth (Northamptonshire), owe their survival to radical changes in the political environment which left formerly well-patronised sites as comparatively quiet backwaters, with drastically reduced wealth and prestige.¹⁵ Clonmacnoise and Brixworth, of course, represent major ecclesiastical sites with contemporary access to extensive resources and patronage, but while fiscal reality for the majority of churches were very much more limited, all can be seen as extensions of aristocratic prestige and *foci* for surrounding communities, as well as physical expressions of a Christian presence in the landscape.

Given the obvious importance of ecclesiastical sites within the political and social landscape, it would be surprising if insular Scandinavian groups had not acknowledged them at some level. The attraction of such sites to 'Viking' raiders is, of course, indisputable, and indeed church raids are still widely treated as one of the defining characteristics of the early Viking Age. What is rather less well studied, however, is the placing of FISBs at certain church sites and indigenous burial grounds in the ninth and tenth centuries. By doing this, insular Scandinavian communities seem both to have been continuing a rather more contemporary burial

¹³Ibid., p.108 & fig.26. Here, Stout is drawing upon the work of a number of scholars, beginning with Lucas, 'Plundering and burning'

¹⁴Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Clonmacnoise: art and patronage in the early medieval Period' in H. A. King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise Studies i* (Dublin, 1998), pp 87-100

¹⁵Nigel & Mary Kerr, *A Guide to Anglo-Saxon Sites* (London, 1982), pp 86-7

tradition than that associated with 'ancient' monuments,¹⁶ and to have been consciously developing an ongoing process within indigenous society.

Although it was once widely believed that the introduction of Christianity led almost directly to churchyard burial for the vast majority of the population, absolute dating techniques and other research have made it increasingly clear that churchyard burial was initially a comparatively restricted practice. A number of commentators have noted a lack of concern for 'Christian burial' among early Anglo-Saxon church documents, while O'Brien has noted that the introduction of Christianity did not lead directly to the abandonment of traditional burial practices in Ireland.¹⁷ Throughout these islands, as Blair has pointed out, church burial seems initially to have been a privilege rather than an obligation, and one which was confined to senior members of the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy.¹⁸ The fact that new stone structures and monuments reflected the increasing prestige of the church has already been mentioned, but it should not be forgotten that while the specific functions of these monuments were varied, many were directly or indirectly associated with graves.¹⁹ The grave slab traditions of Anglo-Saxon England, Ireland and Man are self-evident, and it seems likely that many Pictish stones, if not specifically grave markers, were also in some way 'identifications of the dead'.²⁰ The free standing stone cross tradition is rather further removed from the funerary tradition, but the requests for prayers with which at least some were carved suggests that they may have had at least a subsidiary function as memorials. Taken to an extreme, it can even be argued that entire churches functioned as funerary memorials, with the two late-seventh to early ninth-century 'mausolea' at Repton (Derbyshire) being cases in point.²¹ While the interpretation of these latter structures is undoubtedly complicated by the

¹⁶ See section 4.3

¹⁷ For church attitudes to the dead in Anglo-Saxon England, see Helen Geake, 'The control of burial practice in Anglo-Saxon England' in Martin Carver, *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), p.237; Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD: continuity and change' in Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (eds), *The Early Church in Wales and the West. Oxbow Monograph* xvi (Oxford, 1992), pp 130-7

¹⁸ John Blair, 'Minster churches in the landscape' in Della Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), p.52

¹⁹ See, for example, Jane Hawkes, 'Statements in stone: Anglo-Saxon sculpture, Whitby and the Christianization of the north' in C. E. Karkov, *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: Basic Readings* (London, 1999), pp.405, 415-17

²⁰ Lloyd & Jenny Laing, *The Picts and the Scots* (Stroud, 1993), p.122

²¹ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings' in *Antiquity* lxvi (1992), pp 36, 42

developing cults of saints, around which many early stone churches were planned, there is nevertheless clear evidence for a close link between church sites and high status burial in the period before the Viking Age. The fact that many insular Scandinavian groups adopted and adapted the use of stone memorials to their own ends demonstrates their awareness both of the practice and of its importance.

It is interesting to note, however, that although some insular Scandinavian groups developed these indigenous traditions of stone sculpture, even introducing their monuments to new areas, the practice seems to have developed independently from, and probably slightly later than, that of furnished burial.²² With the possible exception of Heysham (107: Lancashire) and a few other possible and probable sites, almost all on Man, few churchyards seem to have had both FISBs and insular Scandinavian stone sculpture, despite the fact that the geographical ranges of the traditions overlap over broad areas, as has recently been demonstrated by Griffiths, to whose work can perhaps be added the hinterland of Dublin, with its mutually exclusive groups of furnished burials and Rathdown slabs.²³ Given this extensive overlap, it is all the more remarkable that while insular Scandinavian stone sculpture has been consistently (and correctly) associated with Christian churches and sites, the same cannot be said of FISBs. Instead, many commentators seem to have gone out of their way to deny any possible Christian associations for furnished burials. In Dublin, for example, Frazer's late nineteenth-century description of a 'Viking chieftain' buried on top of a mound of massacred inhabitants at Donnybrook (183) went essentially unchallenged until O'Brien re-examined the evidence in 1992 and reinterpreted the 'mound' as a small Christian cemetery, into the upper levels of which a single (definite) weapon burial was placed, the 'victims' being a sequence of earlier, indigenous 'Christian' burials.²⁴ O'Brien was also the first to point out the clear associations between the cemetery at Kilmainham and the major monastic site

²² See, for example, J. T. Lang, 'Hogback monuments in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cv (1974), pp 206-35

²³ David Griffiths, 'Settlement and acculturation in the Irish Sea region' in John Hines, Alan Lane & Mark Redknap (eds), *Land, Sea and Home. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xx* (2004), pp.125-138; P. Ó hÉailidhe, 'The Rathdown slabs' in *Journal of the Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* lxxxvii (1957), pp 75-88

²⁴ William Frazer, 'Description of a great sepulchral mound at Aylesbury Road, near Donnybrook, in the County of Dublin, containing human and animal remains, as well as some objects of antiquarian interest, referable to the tenth or eleventh centuries' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xvi (1888), pp 29-55; Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A re-assessment of the 'great sepulchral mound' containing a Viking burial at Donnybrook, Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxvi (1992), pp 170-3

after which the area was named, but a tendency to ignore or minimise the relationship between church sites and 'pagan' burials has been widespread throughout these islands, from Birsay, Mainland (027: Orkney) to Santon (131: Norfolk), to name just two examples.²⁵ Even as late as 1966, a number of commentators attempted to dismiss the very obvious juxtaposition of Christian lintel graves with a boat burial at Balladoole (167: Man) as 'coincidence'.²⁶

A limited number of scholars have addressed the phenomenon, however. Shetelig seems to have been the first to draw attention to the presence of furnished burials at churchyards, which he saw as 'peculiar to the British Isles' and focused on the Isle of Man in particular.²⁷ Subsequently, Wilson confirmed the importance of the phenomenon on Man and drew attention to similar examples in England.²⁸ Richards concurred, initially focusing on the same geographic area, but his more recent work has incorporated (mainland) England, a study area that has also been examined in the most recent and radical interpretation of the phenomenon by Halsall.²⁹ Wilson's 1976 study of England was the first to specifically note those potential grave-goods that came from church sites, but Crawford's 1987 map of the same phenomenon in Scotland and the Irish Sea is wider ranging and rather more revealing.³⁰ She was one of the first to suggest that the practice was comparatively widespread, again noting a general distribution south of the North Channel, and a concentration of these graves on the Isle of Man.. It can now be said with some confidence that 57 (29%) of the 194 known insular Scandinavian burial sites are located within or directly adjacent to a church or contemporary indigenous burial site, of which 7 are at sites which have also produced evidence for 'ancient' activity, some of which have already been

²⁵ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A reconsideration of the location and Context of Viking burials at Kilmainham / Islandbridge, Dublin' in Conleth Manning (ed.), *Dublin and Beyond the Pale: Studies in Honour of Patrick Healy* (Dublin, 1988), pp 35-44

²⁶ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph i* (1966), pp. xiv, 13

²⁷ Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), pp.35-6

²⁸ D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age on the Isle of Man* (Odense, 1974), pp.25-6; idem, 'The Scandinavians in England' in idem (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), pp.396-7

²⁹ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed, London, 1991), pp.102-4; (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), pp.149-52; Guy Halsall, G., 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Brepols, 2000), pp.259-76

³⁰ Wilson, 'Scandinavians in England', fig.10.1; Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987), pp 116-27

discussed.³¹ Of the 50 sites without this additional association, 39 occur within sites that were definitely being used for more or less contemporary 'Christian' burial, while the remaining eleven sites have possible Christian associations. Elements of doubt have been introduced for various reasons. In some cases, the graves are situated on the edges of Christian sites, with up to 300m separating them from the other early medieval burials in the area. This is the case with Birsay (027: Orkney), Kildonnan (048:1 Highland) and Santon (131: Norfolk). In other cases, the unfurnished burials at these sites have not produced sufficient evidence to allow them to be dated with certainty, or have not produced evidence for definite Christian associations, with Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney), the Machrins, Colonsay (068: Argyll & Bute), Tendley Hill (097: Cumbria) and West Nappin (169: Man) falling into this category.

Detailed analysis of these figures also confirms what a number of commentators have suggested, in that 39 of these fifty sites (78%) occur in zones C, D, E and F, with the ratio of Christian to non-Christian sites being highest on the Isle of Man, where 11 (55%) of the 20 furnished burial sites have Christian associations (**fig.4.3.3**). The division between Scotland the rest of Britain is not quite as clear-cut as Crawford originally suggested, however, with 12 burial sites occurring in Zones A and B that have produced at least some evidence for Christian activity. Although a number of these Scottish sites, notably the rectilinear barrow cemeteries at Dunrobin and Ackergill (036 & 089: Highland), are highly unusual, and while of early medieval date need not necessarily have Christian associations,³² there are a number of Scottish sites where both the indigenous and insular Scandinavian burial practices closely resemble those further south. To comparatively well-known sites such as the Kirk of St Ola (006: Shetland) with its probable weapon grave can be added the possible tertiary burials at Mail Church (007: also Shetland) and Ceann Ear (057: Western Isles). It must also be noted that while the ratio of Christian to non-Christian sites is highest on the Isle of Man, a far higher number of indigenous burial sites in Anglo-Saxon England have produced evidence for Viking Age furnished burials than

³¹ See section 4.3

³² *ibid.*

has previously been appreciated, even if these tertiary burials can prove difficult to interpret.³³

As far as interpretations of the phenomenon are concerned, it is perhaps not surprising that most commentators have focused on the purely religious aspects of the practice, with these burials seen as an aspect of the interaction between Christianity and Scandinavian paganism. At the risk of oversimplification, most interpretations fall into one of two general camps, of which the more traditional can perhaps best be described as the 'assimilation hypothesis'. According to Shetelig, its earliest advocate, these graves represented 'a transitional stage between the pagan and Christian burial customs, the Norsemen of the first generation after conversion still retaining their habit of providing the appropriate grave-goods.'³⁴ Wilson also saw these burials as in some way transitional, suggesting that 'the invaders...[respected] the sacred nature of the existing burial grounds and presumably [became]...a little more sophisticated in their attitude to burial as a result of their contact with Christianity, caring but little for the elaborate burial ritual of their pagan ancestors'.³⁵ Crawford has made a similar argument for Scottish and Manx examples, and Richards has recently developed the idea a little, arguing that burials at church sites such as Repton (113: Derbyshire) represent those insular Scandinavians who sought 'some sort of accommodation with Mercia and Christianity', in stark contrast to those buried at other sites, particularly nearby Heath Wood (114: also Derbyshire).³⁶

Elsewhere, however, Richards has presented evidence for the opposing interpretation of such church burials, suggesting that they represent a form of 'domination' rather than 'assimilation'. In particular, he points to the fact that one of the two aforementioned mausolea at Repton, a two-cell semi-subterranean structure, was modified to form the chamber of a linear mound burial at some point in the second half of the ninth century, quite possibly while the Great Army was overwintering at

³³ See section 3.2

³⁴ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.36

³⁵ D. M. Wilson, 'The Vikings' relationship with Christianity in northern England' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 3rd Ser. xxx (1967), pp -5

³⁶ Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p.163; J. D. Richards, 'Heath Wood, Ingleby' in *Current Archaeology* xvi (2003), p.184

the site in AD873-4.³⁷ If this was indeed the last resting place of a former king or kings of Mercia, it is difficult to see how the deliberate modification of this structure can be interpreted as anything other than an attempt to physically demonstrate a new political presence in the area. Similar, if slightly less extreme evidence comes from Balladoole (167: Man), where a boat burial was constructed on top of a series of lintel graves, destroying many of them and scattering the human remains which they contained in the process (**fig.4.4.2**). Although this was initially dismissed as ‘coincidence’ (above), Tarlow has recently argued that this activity represents a deliberate act of ‘violent desecration’, with the burial expressing ‘particular tensions between a small elite group and the rest of the population’, rather than any kind of religious or indeed ethnic harmony.³⁸ To Richards, ‘there could be no more potent symbol of the new rulers of the Isle of Man, nor of their disregard for the previous occupants’, although he points out that the practice may have been born not of confidence but ‘of insecurity and need to assert an uneasy political dominance’.³⁹

Despite the recent popularity of this ‘domination hypothesis’, however, it must be pointed out that Repton and Balladoole are the only insular sites that have produced clear evidence for the destruction of existing graves during the construction of FISBs. Given that the overwhelming majority of furnished burials from churchyard sites were recovered from disturbed contexts, generally without direct archaeological supervision, this is perhaps not surprising, but it cannot automatically be assumed that all FISBs in churchyards destroyed older graves. Indeed, a number of sites have produced evidence that suggests precisely the opposite. At Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney), for example, furnished burials were added to this secular but presumably Christian cemetery without disturbing earlier graves. At St Patrick’s Chapel, Heysham (107.2: Lancashire), a definite tertiary grave containing a bone comb was placed within an extant cemetery directly adjacent to the entrance to a small stone chapel, without disturbing any other graves (**fig.4.4.3**), and at Saffron Walden (137: Essex), a definite tertiary burial was placed in a row of unfurnished burials,

³⁷ J. D. Richards, ‘The case of the missing Vikings: Scandinavian burial in the Danelaw’ in Lucy & Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England*, p.167

³⁸ Sarah Tarlow, ‘The dread of something after death: violation and desecration on the Isle of Man in the tenth century’ in John Carmen (ed.), *Material Harm: Archaeological Studies of War and Violence* (Glasgow, 1997), pp 138, 140

³⁹ J. D. Richards, ‘Boundaries and cult centres: Viking burial in Derbyshire’ in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & D. N. Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2003), p.98

apparently forming part of a sequence rather than interrupting it. At Islandbridge (176: Dublin), the furnished burials at this small cemetery do not seem to have disturbed the earlier (presumably Christian) graves, and while the evidence from nearby Kilmainham (177: also Dublin) is more ambiguous, Worsaae specifically noted that these graves were found in rows, at least some of which were probably unfurnished.⁴⁰ Similarly, at Kildale (109: North Yorkshire), a minimum of three furnished burials formed part of two rows of seven-eight graves, the rest unfurnished, beneath the later church.⁴¹ Even at Repton itself, the evidence of the mausoleum must be balanced against a series of three modestly furnished tertiary graves (123.07-09) that formed part of a group of 45 burials, the rest unfurnished, placed between the mound and the church in the years after its construction. The insular Scandinavian community could, it seems, respect as well as 'desecrate' graves, but then, so too could the indigenous community. At Donnybrook (183: Dublin), for example, the lower levels of the cemetery seem to have been disturbed, not by the insertion of a Scandinavian burial, but by the insertion of later indigenous graves. The strictly defined boundaries of Christian graveyards led almost inevitably to the concentration of burials within these areas, and this in turn led to the regular disturbance of earlier burials by later ones. In some cases, these could include furnished graves, as occurred with definite tertiary burials at both Ty Newydd, Bardsey (146: Gwynedd) and St Patrick's Isle, Peel (160.7: Man), and similar processes may explain many of the apparently isolated artefacts found at church sites throughout these islands. It must also be remembered that disturbing earlier graves may not have been seen as a particularly sinister practice by either indigenous or insular Scandinavian groups, but was rather a direct consequence of choosing to be buried within well-established, firmly delineated cemeteries.

It is, however, conceivable that the occasional placing of furnished graves close to Christian sites but outside areas previously used for burial, as is the case with several of the burials at Repton (e.g. 123.02-05), the (two?) graves at Santon (131: Norfolk) and perhaps even some of the weapon burials at Kildonnan, Eigge (048: Highland) is

⁴⁰ J. J. A. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852), p.325

⁴¹ Richards 'Case of the missing Vikings', p.160, states that there were 7-8 furnished graves at Kildale, which 'may predate the use of the land by the Christian church' but neither statement can be substantiated using the available evidence.

an attempt to follow the Scandinavian practice of placing burials adjacent to each other in steadily expanding cemeteries, rather than the Christian practice of superposition within limited spaces, while at the same time broadly acknowledging the importance of the adjacent Christian cemetery. There is also at least one case where a furnished burial may itself have formed the focus for a later Christian church. If the Kirk of St Ola, Mainland (006: Shetland) is indeed dedicated to the Norwegian King-Saint Olaf (martyred in AD1030), then the current dedication, if not the site itself, must postdate the probable weapon grave discovered there.⁴² A number of other sites seem to have early furnished burials, but the confused stratigraphy and poor records that characterise so many Medieval church sites means that St Ola is very much the exception rather than the rule, and there seems no reason to doubt that the overwhelming majority of FISBs associated with unfurnished indigenous burials were placed in cemeteries which were already firmly established. As far as the thorny issues of religion and ethnicity are concerned, it must also be remembered that while there is a distinct possibility that a number of furnished burials, particularly in England, need not necessarily be of insular Scandinavian origin, all but the most cynical observer must concede that the overwhelming majority are.⁴³

What is perhaps most intriguing about this group of furnished burials from Christian cemeteries, however, is the fact that they do not seem to differ substantially from those found in contexts with no Christian associations. In recent years, a number of commentators have postulated a kind of ideological opposition between Early Medieval 'pagan' graves, particularly those associated with mounds, and those placed in Christian contexts.⁴⁴ It is argued that the increasingly elaborate nature of many of these burials, with progressively richer grave-goods and more prominent burial mounds, is a product of close contact with Christianity, and represents a conscious pagan reaction to the latter religion.⁴⁵ In Viking Age Britain and Ireland, on the other hand, a number of burial mounds have been found at or very close to Christian sites, with Balladoole (above) being a case in point. At Jurby parish church

⁴² Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p.178 does, however, make the point that many Norse period churches occur on older pre-Norse sites, and it is entirely possible that this may also be the case here.

⁴³ See section 3.2

⁴⁴ See particularly Robert van de Noort, 'The context of early medieval barrows in western Europe' in *Antiquity* lxxvii (1993), p.72

⁴⁵ Many of these ideas have been developed in the context of explaining the exceptional Anglo-Saxon burial from Sutton Hoo, Suffolk.

(152), also on Man, what is almost certainly a Viking Age burial mound is situated within the cemetery, and may have produced a sword in the last century.⁴⁶ The relationship between the mounds and church site at Kildonnan, Eigg (048: Highland) is more complex, both chronologically and spatially,⁴⁷ but again there is no obvious physical opposition between the 'Christian' and 'pagan' monuments at this site.

Conversely, while many churchyard burials show a range of indigenous Christian influences on their form and layout, the same is true of many burials at sites with no obvious Christian associations. Perhaps the most obvious of these influences is the comparative rarity of cremation among the insular Scandinavian population. Shetelig was the first to notice this, and he drew a specific contrast with Viking Age Norway, where approximately half of all furnished burials were cremations.⁴⁸ He made no attempt to explain this phenomenon, but other scholars have pointed to a strong condemnation of cremation by the Early Medieval church, a condemnation that was rather stronger than any prohibitions on the use of grave-goods.⁴⁹ This, perhaps combined with the fact that cremation was virtually unknown among contemporary population groups anyway, seems to have resulted in the abandonment of the practice by the insular Scandinavian community. Only a handful of possible cremation burial sites are known, and with the notable exception of Heath Wood (124: Derbyshire), the evidence for almost all of these sites rests almost entirely on the discovery of artefacts, particularly weapons, which have been bent or damaged in some way, a ritual which Shetelig specifically associated with the cremation rite.⁵⁰ On this basis, sites such as Tote, Skye (047: Highland), Hesketh (093: Cumbria), Boiden (077: Argyll & Bute), Millhill and Kingscross Point, Arran (079 & 080: North Ayrshire) should all be cremations, as may some other sites which have produced single bent weapons, such as Workington (096: Cumbria) and Gooderstone (126: Norfolk). If this is a specifically pagan rite, however, it is odd that similar damaged artefacts have also been found at two sites with Christian associations, Kilmainham and Bride

⁴⁶ The sword is certainly from Jurby churchyard, but its relationship to the mound remains problematic. See Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st ed.), pp103-4 & fig.63

⁴⁷ See section 4.3

⁴⁸ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.25

⁴⁹ Guy Halsall, *Early Medieval Cemeteries: An Introduction to Burial Archaeology in the Post-Roman West* (Glasgow, 1995), p.62

⁵⁰ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', pp.28-9

Street (177 & 179: both Dublin).⁵¹ This may well suggest that the relationship between belief and burial site was not always particularly close. The ambiguity of the relationship between the two is further underlined by the fact that one of only three Thor's hammers known from burial contexts on these islands comes from a east-west burial immediately east of the church at Repton (123.02: Derbyshire). As Richards has pointed out, this was clearly 'someone for whom the options were being kept open', rather than an individual with particularly close Christian associations.⁵²

Conversely, a number of burials at sites with no obvious Christian associations incorporate a number of features normally associated with Christian burial. While grave orientation and the use of lintel graves may be regarded as somewhat ambiguous evidence (below), it is interesting to note that the only FISB which incorporates specifically Christian objects in its construction is also one of the most elaborately furnished which has ever been found. The boat burial at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute) had an unusual chamber with sides formed of vertical stone slabs, two of which had incised crosses on them. While it has been argued that these may have been brought from a nearby Christian site, the fact that they formed part of opposing ends of the east-west orientated chamber suggests that their inclusion was no mere coincidence, and their inclusion in what might otherwise be thought of as an ostentatiously pagan burial demonstrates the extent to which Christian influences could spread far beyond church sites.⁵³

There is no evidence, on the other hand, that Christianity had a greater impact on burials at church sites than elsewhere. While it seems entirely plausible that the comparative paucity of graves and grave-goods is a local and Christian influence,⁵⁴ there is no evidence that this influence was stronger at church sites than elsewhere. When the number of artefacts from graves with ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical contexts is compared, for example, 79% of the graves from both groups contain 1-3 artefacts, while just under 5% of the graves in both groups contained 10 artefacts or more. Nor does the insular church seem to have had any influence on the kinds of artefacts placed in church graves. The Thor's Hammer from Repton (above) is a

⁵¹ Note that Bride Street is also the burial associated with a bent bronze age halberd. See section 4.3

⁵² J. D. Richards, 'Pagans and Christians at a frontier: Viking burial in the Danelaw' in Carver, *Cross Goes North*, p.388

⁵³ Batey & Graham-Campbell, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp.118-9

⁵⁴ For a detailed discussion, see section 3.2

particularly good example of this, but the church also seems to have failed to influence grave good selection at a more general level. In examining the archaeological evidence for religious conversion in Viking Age Scandinavia, Gräslund has suggested that there is a strong difference between those artefacts buried in graves because they were worn or suspended from clothing, and 'true' grave-goods such as weapons, with the latter group being demonstrably more 'pagan' than the former.⁵⁵ If the material from Christian and non-Christian insular contexts is examined, however, it is clear that there is no substantial difference between the two groups, at least as far as weapons are concerned. In Christian cemeteries, 41 of 106 definite, probable and possible graves contained at least one weapon, while in other contexts, the figure was 88 of 179 graves, with weapon burials therefore forming 39 and 49% of their respective groups. While this difference may be related to changing beliefs, other factors may well have influenced what is a comparatively minor statistical difference. Brooch graves, for example, comprise 3% and 21% of the two groups, a rather more substantial variation, but one that is entirely attributable to mutually exclusive distribution patterns. Thus, while grave good selection, like the more general burial rite, may show some local influences, these are no more pronounced at church and indigenous burial sites than elsewhere.

It is, of course, entirely possible that insular Scandinavian groups were attracted to a far more abstract notion of sacred space than a specifically Christian environment, a concept which may have something in common with the reuse of prehistoric sites discussed in section 3.3. This idea has been proposed by Wilson, who suggests that the occurrence of FISBs at church sites can be seen as 'an indication of the comparative weakness of the Scandinavian religion at this period, or as the acceptance by a pantheistic people of but another god', rather than full and devout conversion on the part of individual Scandinavians, whose attitude towards Christianity he elsewhere describes as 'tolerant'.⁵⁶ Such purely religious explanations of the phenomenon are problematic, however, in that they ignore the social and political role of these burial sites within the contemporary landscape which was

⁵⁵ A. S. Gräslund, 'Pagan and Christian in the age of conversion' in J. E. Knirk (ed.), *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress, Larkollen, Norway 1985* (Oslo, 1987), p.85

⁵⁶ Wilson, *Viking Age in the Isle of Man*, p.26; idem, 'Vikings' relationship with Christianity', p.45

emphasised at the beginning of this section. By choosing to bury their dead at these sites, insular Scandinavian communities were effectively placing them close to the heart of established communities, and were adopting and adapting aspects of a burial practice that seems to have been broadly confined to the more influential members of society. That the insular Scandinavian community wished to be at least broadly associated with a local (presumably frequently displaced) elite is perhaps best demonstrated by the speed with which certain aspects of what are generally considered indigenous elite burial practices were incorporated into the insular Scandinavian burial tradition. Of these, the most obvious is the use of stone lined 'long-cists' or 'lintel graves' for furnished burials. According to Shetelig, the majority of Norwegian and Danish graves had wooden rather than stone structures surrounding them, but long cists and lintel graves were regularly used by many insular communities in the years before the beginning of the Viking Age, most notably in the north and west of these islands.⁵⁷ Given the labour involved in the construction of this grave type, it is widely believed that they represent the graves of particularly significant individuals, the elite groups of local communities.⁵⁸ While stratigraphic evidence from many church sites is poor, it is clear that at some sites FISBs are placed in lintel graves which represent a direct continuation of this tradition. The best excavated and published example of this practice is probably the cemetery at St Patrick's Isle, Peel (160: Man), where two of the seven Viking Age furnished burials at the site (160.1 & 160.2) were placed in lintel graves which directly reflect local traditions, despite some minor construction differences. The fact that these two graves were also the most richly furnished in the group lends some support to a link between this grave type and the perceived importance of the deceased.

Elsewhere, stratigraphic evidence is less clear-cut, but the presence of unfurnished burials in cists and lintel graves at sites such as St John's Point (085: Down) and perhaps Birsay, Mainland (027: Orkney) suggest that the furnished burials in cists at these sites also represent direct continuations of local traditions, as may the use of long cists by the insular Scandinavian community at the apparently 'secular' sites of

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Alcock, 'Burials and cemeteries in Scotland' in Edwards & Lane, *Early Church*, pp 125-7; O'Brien, E., 'Pagan and Christian Burial in Ireland', pp 132, 134

⁵⁸ See, for example, David Freke, *The Peel Castle Dig* (Douglas, 1995), pp 14-16, where the various forms of lintel grave are themselves subdivided on the basis of labour investment.

Dunrobin Castle (036.1:Highland) and the Machrins, Colonsay (068.2: Argyll & Bute). The use of lintel graves also seems to have gained sufficient popularity among the insular Scandinavian community to result in its introduction to a number of sites with no obvious long-cist traditions, such as Brough Road and Skaill, Mainland (023 & 025: both Orkney), Tràigh nam Bàrc, Colonsay (069: Argyll & Bute), Ballinaby, Islay (073.4: Argyll & Bute) and Talacre (145: Gwynedd), as well as (perhaps) Brockhall (104: Lancashire). The practice may have been even more widespread, but the quality of many early records makes it difficult to differentiate between long cists and prehistoric 'short cists' or indeed the reuse of the central chambers of mounds, and the above list represents only the more definite examples. It also seems possible that the discovery of rows of rivets in a number of Scandinavian graves, perhaps most notably at York Minster (114.1), may be the result not of a partial use of Scandinavian boat burial traditions, but rather the adoption of another indigenous high status burial form, that involving burial in riveted wooden coffins or chests, as excavated at Barton-upon-Humber and Ripon.⁵⁹ Neither of these burial practices seems overtly Christian in form (indeed long cists have been found on sites with no obvious Christian associations, particularly in Scotland),⁶⁰ but within Christian contexts both seem to be associated with high status individuals, and the willing adoption of these aspects of burial by the insular Scandinavian community may provide evidence that the reuse of church sites went beyond that envisioned by more traditional religious interpretations of the practice as either 'assimilation' or 'domination'.

The fundamental problem with these two models is the fact that ideas of assimilation and domination are intimately related, and by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, it can be argued that most churchyard burials can be interpreted in either way. By acknowledging the importance of these sites to the local community, and in particular their importance as the burial sites of the local elite, insular Scandinavian groups demonstrated a familiarity with the local social and political landscape which can only have been the result of considerable contact with indigenous groups.

⁵⁹ Warwick Rodwell & Kirsty Rodwell, 'St Peter's church, Barton-upon-Humber: excavations and structural study 1978-81' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxii (1982), pp.283-315; R. A. Hall & Mark Whyman, 'Settlement and monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to the 11th centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* xl (1996), pp 62-150

⁶⁰ Alcock, 'Burials and cemeteries', p.127

Similarly, the adoption of certain burial traditions, particularly the use of lintel graves, established clear connections between the new and old elites which must have been understood by both communities. On the other hand, the calculated use of furnished burial, with few if any concessions to this new burial environment as far as grave-goods were concerned, must have served to demonstrate a new political and social status quo. The relative importance of the two aspects of this ritual may well have varied from place to place, and even from observer to observer, for it must be remembered that despite the many similarities between churchyard burials across these islands, each represents a series of negotiations and decisions made by individuals at a local level, and are far more likely to express reactions to specific local circumstances than a single overarching political plan. As with prehistoric monuments, the destruction or preservation of extant graves in different places must be seen as a physical representation of far more complex negotiations that underlay the relationship between individuals, communities, and landscapes at a local level.

As far as individual sites are concerned, it is unfortunately impossible to reconstruct the precise circumstances which resulted in the creation of individual burials, nor is it possible to determine why specific sites were selected, while other, theoretically more prominent churches, were ignored. It must be remembered, however, that in a period without fixed territorial diocese or parishes, the relative status of individual church sites fluctuated constantly in accordance with the fortunes of their political patrons and the popularity of their cults, and this variation must have been particularly intense in the period of instability associated with ninth- and tenth-century Viking activity. It is, however, interesting to note that whatever their status at the time the furnished burials occurred, the overwhelming majority of Christian sites used for furnished burial seem to have survived the potential 'indignity' of this 'pagan' activity, and remained religious sites until the High and Later Middle Ages, and in many cases remain sites of worship today. On Man, for example, sites such as St Maughold (158), Kirk Michael (159) and Malew (166) are still parish churches, as are Ormside (098) and Rampside (100) in Cumbria, and St Cuthbert's church, Kirkcudbright (091: Dumfries & Galloway), on the far side of the Solway Firth, as well as Repton (123: Derbyshire), despite its formidable group of thirteen furnished graves. Most others clearly survived and even prospered at a more modest level after the Viking Age. 'Balladoole', for example, despite its boat burial and 'desecrated'

Christian graves, had a stone *keeill* built there 'sometime after 1000AD'.⁶¹ In fact, there is only one Christian site which seems to have been abandoned around the time at which its furnished burial occurred, this being Donnybrook (183: Dublin), and here the poor quality of the original record leaves the precise date of abandonment open to question.⁶² Even if the burial ground was abandoned soon after the deposition of a definite weapon grave there, however, this remarkable site may still serve as a reminder that the aspirations of those performing the rite of furnished burial were not always fulfilled, and that not all insular Scandinavian settlements necessarily met with success.

Whatever the ultimate fate of the sites at which they occurred, however, it is difficult to see how these furnished burials at church sites, whatever their precise religious character, can be seen as anything other than conscious displays of some form of authority which were deliberately placed at the centre of extant religious, cultural and political polities of varying sizes, simultaneously expressing a radical change in the status quo and the links between old and new elites. They also demonstrate very clearly that the creation of FISBs was not a static tradition which represented cultural resistance to local influences and changes, but rather a dynamic practice which was constantly modified and adapted to reflect new concerns and traditions. While some of these traditions were undoubtedly religious, the precise beliefs of those burying their dead remain deeply ambiguous and lie beyond the limits the present study. There can be no doubt, however, of the potential importance of these graves as symbols of power and authority which were deliberately placed close to the heart of a changing political and social landscape.

⁶¹ Caroline Madden, 'Chapel Hill, Balladoole, Arbory' in Timothy Darville (ed.), *Billown Neolithic Landscape Project, Isle of Man. Fifth Report: 1999* (Bournemouth & Douglas, 2000), pp 56-8

⁶² O'Brien (1992), pp 170-3

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

As will be clear from the introduction to the present text,¹ more than eighty years have elapsed since the last serious attempt to compile a comprehensive catalogue of insular Scandinavian furnished graves and their contents was made, and it has been fifty-three years since the publication of the last volume produced as part of that project.² While regional publications since that date, notably in Scotland,³ have greatly improved our understanding of these monuments, much of the present study inevitably focused on what was effectively primary research and the production of a comprehensive catalogue of furnished insular Scandinavian graves and their contents. While some commentators may dispute the validity of the precise divisions between definite, probable and possible graves, particularly in individual cases, and regional experts will almost certainly query the inclusion (or indeed exclusion) of specific sites and finds, the strength of the present catalogue lies in the fact that this material was approached in as systematic a way as possible, so that material in Ireland, for example, was at least theoretically sub-divided in precisely the same manner as material from East Anglia. As a result, it has been possible to draw more or less direct comparisons between material recovered from different parts of these islands, and move beyond the regional studies that have characterised approaches to the subject for thirty years or more. The interpretative work based on this catalogue has emphasised broad trends rather than local detail, something which runs against the grain of much contemporary research, but which is essential to a meaningful understanding of the context of individual graves and grave-goods. In this broader context, minor fluctuations caused by the incorporation or exclusion of problematic material should not unduly affect the general trends that have been identified within the present study. Indeed, it is striking that statistics and ratios produced by examining graves of all levels of reliability were rarely contradicted by the results produced by an examination of definite burials in isolation, with the few exceptions to this general trend clearly explicable through recovery circumstances or other related processes.

¹ See section 1.1

² Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (5 vols, Oslo, 1940, vol. 6, Oslo 1954)

³ e.g. James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998)

The figures produced by this interregional study are striking, and will potentially surprise even some experts, in as much as the rarity of insular Scandinavian furnished graves is something that has seldom been emphasised, certainly in general texts. Just 379 examples have been identified, of which only 250 conform to the conventional models of male and female burials, as typified by 'weapon' and 'brooch' graves. Definite examples are even more rare, with just 193 examples, of which only 128 fit the conventional model of 'Viking' graves. The most immediate and obvious result of the compilation of this information must be a categorical rejection of some of the more conservative approaches to this material, which see these burials as essentially religious or ethnic monuments that were created for almost all Scandinavians who died while active in these islands. Instead, only a small fraction of the Scandinavian population were buried with grave-goods of any kind, and it seems clear that the proportion of the population buried in this way was even smaller in Britain and Ireland than in contemporary southern Norway. While the importance of ethnicity and belief systems can never be underestimated, these burials must also be seen as expressions of status and rank, perhaps related to ideas of inheritance, as has been proposed for equivalent graves in Norway.⁴ While it cannot be demonstrated that all of these graves functioned in this way, it remains clear that these graves contained particularly respected members of local insular Scandinavian communities, and were created by their heirs and successors to fulfil their own social needs through an elaborate funerary display.

All insular Scandinavian burials, from the most richly furnished weapon graves to tertiary burials containing single artefacts, seem to emphasise a form of display which is focused on the body rather than the grave, coffin or chamber. Particularly in the case of more elaborate burials, artefacts were placed around or on the body, where they would have maximum impact on those who viewed the resulting 'tableau', a moment which Geake has argued formed a key point in comparable rituals among the Anglo-Saxons.⁵ While all those buried with artefacts were individuals of some status, however, it is equally clear that grave-goods could be used to establish,

⁴ Notably in the work of Dagfinn Skre. E.g. idem, 'Haug og grav. Hav betyr gravhaugene?' in Ann Christensson, Else Mundal & Ingvild Øye (eds), *Middelalderens Symboler* (Bergen, 1997), pp 37-52

⁵ Helen Geake, 'The control of burial practice in Anglo-Saxon England' in Martin Carver (ed.) *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), p. 260

demonstrate and / or reinforce the perceived status of an individual within this group. Regional variations certainly occurred, and there is some evidence both for localised competitive display and areas where furnished burial seems to have been regarded as less important. Despite this variation, however it is clear that those creating these graves shared at least some common perceptions of the rite, as demonstrated through the incorporation of certain artefacts, notably weapons and oval brooches, within the burial assemblage, as well as at least some shared understanding of the kinds of artefacts that could be added to assemblages to reinforce ideas of status. While both Solberg's system of hierarchies within 'male' and 'female' graves⁶ and the 'artefact count' system developed in the present study have their limitations, and it cannot be assumed that either represented an absolute status, it remains absolutely clear that weapon, brooch, female tertiary, and perhaps to a slightly lesser extent other tertiary burials, were created at least as much as expression of social importance as a more abstract social identity.

While a detailed study of weapon and brooch burials leads almost inevitably to statistical comparison of grave contents, a detailed study of some artefacts that occur in no more than a few furnished insular Scandinavian graves has also been carried out, with a particular emphasis on boat burial.⁷ This had the express intention of demonstrating that while artefact count was clearly related to status, the selection of individual artefacts to form burial assemblages was motivated by a sophisticated awareness of the symbolic value of specific artefacts, a symbolism that was not necessarily confined to the physical world but which also had potential supernatural aspects. The Scandinavian belief system was complex and not always entirely consistent, and as a result any statements on this aspect of grave-goods must inevitably be tentative, particularly as single artefacts could potentially represent several concepts more or less simultaneously. Nonetheless, an awareness of this aspect of the perceived value of artefacts must be taken into consideration when considering the original context within which grave-goods were selected or rejected during the preparation of a burial 'tableau', even though much of this proposed

⁶ Bergljot Solberg, 'Social status in the Merovingian and Viking periods in Norway from archaeological and historical sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xviii (1985), pp 61-76

⁷ Chapters 2 and 3 effectively juxtapose these two approaches

supernatural symbolism must inevitably have fed back into the statements of social rank and importance which lie at the heart of these burial assemblages.

The process of conscious selection of artefacts by those creating graves is central to this revised interpretation of furnished burial in this period. Individuals had a direct influence on the selection of artefacts for burial, and as a consequence the resulting sets of grave-goods are 'meaningfully constituted' to a much greater degree than most archaeological assemblages.⁸ The fact that certain artefacts occur and reoccur in burial contexts suggests that insular Scandinavian groups had at least some common sense of the value or apposition of these objects, but suggests a much more active engagement between individual communities and the graves they created for their dead.⁹ Rather than seeing Viking Age furnished burial as an essentially passive and conservative act which simply reflected Scandinavian traditions, it should instead be seen as part of an active process of selecting and rejecting various aspects of Scandinavian and insular traditions to further local social needs.

The role of individuals in the creation of these graves goes some way towards explaining the many regional differences in Viking Age furnished burial, and indeed some of the differences between insular and Scandinavian practices. Some of these differences are comparatively subtle, while others are much more striking. The absence of axes from insular funerary assemblages can perhaps be considered part of the former group,¹⁰ although it is nonetheless significant, while the effective increase in the number of brooch burials, particularly in Scotland, is rather more striking.¹¹ While any suggestions that this increase may be related to the perceived social importance of Scandinavian ancestry is inevitably tentative, the quantity of brooch burials found in Scotland provides clear evidence of a specific adaptation to a local need, rather than a simple expression of the presence of a higher proportion of 'Viking' women in this area. Similarly, the increase in tertiary burials in eastern England in particular, whether directly or indirectly influenced by the local Christian

⁸ Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England: BAR British Series cclxi* (Oxford, 1997), p. 3

⁹ For a related discussion, see Sam Lucy, 'Burial practice in early medieval Britain: constructing local identities, deconstructing ethnicities' in eadem & Andrew Reynolds (eds) *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xvii* (London, 2002), pp 76-7

¹⁰ See section 2.2

¹¹ See section 2.3

milieu, must represent a similar adaptation to local circumstances. In this context, however, it should be stressed that the overwhelming majority of insular furnished graves show at least some local influences, either in orientation, site, construction or contents. The idea that they represent newcomers who had little or no contact with local groups is also unsustainable. The idea that some of these graves, such as the female tertiary burial from Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (071.1: Argyll & Bute) may represent members of indigenous communities who had themselves adopted this funerary rite cannot be disproved, but given that this is one of the rare occasions in the early middle ages when there is clear evidence for population movement, and that indigenous Christian practices ultimately supplanted furnished burial, it is an idea that should be approached with considerable caution. With the possible exception of tertiary burial, any family or community using furnished burial rites would have been so closely associated with insular Scandinavian practices, effectively using the same material culture in the same manner, that while they would be archaeologically undetectable, they would to all intents and purposes have adopted an entirely 'Scandinavian' identity, or at least material culture. Local adaptations to the furnished burial rite, including the incorporation of insular artefacts within burial assemblages, are at some level a reflection of the contact with local groups which formed part of the process by which these 'Scandinavians' rapidly became 'insular Scandinavians'. While their burial practices are at some level an expression of continuity with their origins and functioned as an expression of status and an aspiration for continuity, they also reflect more immediate social concerns and contact.

It has also been argued that furnished burial sites were selected with similar care, expressed similar relationships to the local environment, and fulfilled similar social functions. The fact that only one chapter was given to the 'landscape' of burial in the present study, as opposed to the two on 'artefacts', is of course a direct reflection of traditional research interests, which have almost invariably emphasised grave content before grave site in this period. While again allowing for local variation, this study has identified certain common features of insular Scandinavian burial sites within the landscape that have not previously been noted, or at least systematically studied. In Scotland in particular, there is a strong tendency for graves to occur close to reasonably sheltered inlets, generally on raised slopes overlooking these features and

the reasonably flat land around them, and as a result they are found on headlands or at the ends of beaches. As with so much else, there is a sharp division between distribution patterns in eastern England and elsewhere, with burials occurring much further inland there than elsewhere in Britain and Ireland. While this is at least partially the result of extensive inland settlement on the fertile lands of this area, the total absence of burials close to the coast suggests a sharp division between priorities for settlement here and elsewhere in these islands. Conversely, the placing of burials on sloping ground above flat valley floors can be directly paralleled with burial sites in the coastal areas of the north and west. If these graves are at some level expressions of land ownership or inheritance, the corresponding holdings may sometimes have been quite small. Conversely, approximately ten percent of all burial sites are in positions that afford extensive views, generally over straits, channels, or what can be postulated as major sea routes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, boat burials are particularly likely to occur in these positions.¹²

While these graves may well represent the remains of particularly prominent individuals whose landholdings may have allowed their successors to choose from a particularly wide range of potential burial sites, many graves seem to show a concern for connecting incoming communities to the local landscape, particularly through the use of existing monuments as burial sites. While this practice has often been interpreted as fundamental laziness on the part of insular Scandinavian groups who could not trouble themselves to create their own burial mounds, the practice actually extends to a wide range of 'ancient' monuments, by no means all of which are mounds, and some of which are not usually associated with burial in Viking Age Norway. Following similar re-evaluations of Anglo-Saxon burial sites,¹³ it is here argued that the re-use of these sites represents a conscious attempt to connect the recently deceased and their successors with a more ancient, possibly 'mythical', but fundamentally local past. The choice of these sites is not coincidental, but rather a conscious attempt to manipulate the landscape for social and political effect.

¹² See section 4.1

¹³ Notably the work of Howard Williams; e.g. 'Ancient landscapes and the dead: the reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments in early Anglo-Saxon burial sites' in *Medieval Archaeology* xli (1997), pp 1-32. See section 4.2 for a more extended discussion

An even more conscious manipulation of the local social and political landscape can be seen in the decision of a whole series of insular Scandinavian groups to bury their dead in Christian, or at least indigenous burial grounds, while still accompanied by the artefacts which typify Viking Age furnished burial elsewhere. While this has often been seen as part of a process of conversion, the available evidence suggests that it was at least as much a political and social strategy, whereby burial at an extant high status burial ground was seen both as means of linking the dead to the landscape and a way of demonstrating dominance of the local political environment. While the creation of some of these graves involved the deliberate destruction of existing graves, others were carefully inserted as part of an established burial pattern and it has been suggested that these contrasting practices may in some way reflect the relationship between the insular Scandinavian and indigenous communities, or at least their elites. That some Christian influence was also present seems almost certain, but as there is no evidence that graves in churchyards had fewer grave-goods or were less likely to contain weapons, and Christian influences can be identified at sites with no obvious associations with indigenous burial grounds, the deposition of furnished burials in these burial grounds cannot in itself be taken as evidence for partial conversion. Wherever they occurred within the landscape, however, furnished burials must have stood out against the increasingly prevalent practice of burying the dead in shrouds, and as such, could potentially have reinforced ideas of status among all witnesses, even those who did not necessarily practice the rite themselves.

This emphasis on funerary display may be a means by which the closely related ideas of grave-goods as expressions of status, and landscape as an expression of control and dominance, can be related. Few, if any, archaeologists are both artefact and landscape specialists, and in the past there has been a tendency to treat landscapes of burial and the contents of burial as entirely unrelated aspect of the funerary ritual. After all, grave-goods were at best visible for a short period of time, while the surface signs of burials, particularly mounds, effectively altered the landscape more or less in perpetuity and served as a constant reminder of the presence of the dead. Recent scholarship has, however, begun to challenge this idea, with Williams suggesting that in the case of Anglo-Saxon furnished burial, 'clothing and grave-goods created an image of death that could be remembered long after the grave had

been covered up'.¹⁴ The importance of memory has also recently been discussed by Carver in the context of the Sutton Hoo ship burial, where he has again emphasised the importance of the display of the artefacts, which can be seen as a kind of poetic construction.

The tableau was no doubt on view for several days – a lying in state never to be forgotten by those who saw it... a man equipped with parade costume and cauldrons, everything necessary to meet the ambassadorial obligations of the upper classes. Children watching then could have been told what each object was and the rightness of its inclusion, not necessarily receiving the same account twice...¹⁵

Whatever the precise interpretation of individual artefacts, the display of artefacts was specifically intended to be fixed in the memory of all those who witnessed the funeral tableau, and potentially to be recounted even to those who had not themselves witnessed it. Far from being forgotten as soon as they were buried, grave-goods would have formed an integral part of the way in which local communities thought about specific burial monuments and graves within the landscape, with both grave sites and their contents forming closely related expressions of status and other social relationships.

Of course, no furnished insular Scandinavian grave involved the commitment of even a fraction of the resources dedicated to the Sutton Hoo grave and it may be argued that their rather more modest contents would have had rather less impact on those attending the funeral ceremony. Nonetheless, there is some evidence both that there were witnesses to furnished burial ceremonies and that they remembered what they had seen. Perhaps the most striking evidence is, of course, the remarkable consistency of burial rites throughout Britain and Ireland and the repeated incorporation of certain artefacts within burial ceremonies, notably weapons and oval brooches, but potentially extending into tertiary grave assemblages as well. Rather than seeing these grave good assemblages as part of a commonly held folk belief, independently cherished by communities spread throughout these islands, it is surely more plausible to suggest that memories of this ritual were constantly reinforced

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 'Monuments and the past in early Anglo-Saxon England' in *World Archaeology* xxx (1998), p. 96

¹⁵ Martin Carver, 'Burial as poetry: the context of treasure in Anglo-Saxon graves' in E. M. Tyler, *Treasure in the Medieval West* (York, 2000), pp 42-3

through the witnessing of burial rites, and the communication of that information to other groups. Indeed, how could the instances of local competitive display within insular Scandinavian burial have come into being unless there was just such a shared memory? The practice of breaking swords into three pieces, or of bending blades back on themselves, both of which occur repeatedly at Kilmainham but are rare elsewhere, must provide evidence of the recollection of past rites,¹⁶ and the 'remarkable homogeneity' of material from the same cemetery¹⁷ is potentially as much a product of emulation and rivalry in the Viking Age as it is a reflection of nineteenth-century collectors' interests. At a broader geographical level too, the remarkable similarity between the contents of the larger boat burials at sites such as Kiloran Bay and Machrins, Colonsay (067 & 068: both Argyll & Bute), Knock y Doonee and Balladoole (150 & 167: both Man) is at least potentially a reflection of a similar communication of tableau construction over wider distances, rather than a kind of relict folk memory of what was, after all, a comparatively rare form of furnished burial.

While boat burial is rare, however, it provides further evidence that the funeral rites associated with the creation of furnished graves could be occasions when large groups of people assembled together. Indeed, some of the larger burials could not have been created without a substantial group having been in attendance. While the not inconsiderable labour associated with the digging of a pit to contain the boat, and the raising of a mound over the resulting grave could conceivably have been shared between a limited number of people over many days, the labour required to empty a large boat of ballast and physically drag it inland and not infrequently uphill must have required the presence of a large crowd, even if draft animals were also present. At Balladoole, the highest of the boat burials, the 11m vessel used in this ceremony was dragged a minimum of 400m, and perhaps 900m or more, to a point almost 32m above sea level,¹⁸ an operation that can only have taken place with the cooperation of

¹⁶ For examples of this practice, see Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (5 vols, Oslo, 1940), iii, pp 13-25. Most of these blades have been associated with Kilmainham as a result of work carried out on behalf of the Irish Viking Graves project. IVGP Interim Report 2001, NMI Archive.

¹⁷ This was first noted by James Graham-Campbell, 'The Viking-age silver hoards of Ireland' in Bø Almquist & David Greene (eds), *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress, Dublin, 15-21 August 1973* (Dundalk, 1976), p. 40

¹⁸ Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series i* (London, 1966), p. 1

a large assembly. All of these individuals must have been present to witness the creation of the burial and many may have remained at the site for long enough to assist in the raising of the cairn over the boat afterwards. Boat burials are also unusual in that recent interpretations of these monuments have suggested that they physically impinged on the landscape following their construction. The cairn at Balladoole was, after all, boat shaped, c.12m by 5m, even though it had been eroded to just 0.7m in height before excavations began. The mounds covering the burial at Machrins (068.1) and Scar (012:Orkney) were perhaps oval rather than 'boat-shaped', but the 9.1 by 6.1m and 18m by 12m mounds have very similar proportions to the Balladoole cairn and may also have been intended to evoke an impression of the boats that they covered. At Scar, it has even been suggested that the boat's stem may have 'stood proud of the ground surface as a grave-marker before it rotted away',¹⁹ and it is entirely possible that other boat graves were marked in the same way. Certainly, any masts left stepped in the larger vessels would have been visible from an extended distance, and would have provided another physical link between the mound in the landscape and the contents that lay beneath it.

Boat burials, particularly the larger examples found on Man and in the western Isles, represent something close to the apex of investment in furnished burial, but there is some evidence for similar crowds at other well-furnished sites such as the weapon grave at Ballateare (154: Man), which was covered by a mound c.12m in diameter and 3m high. As the grave itself was cut some 1.2m into the original ground surface, the mound fulfilled no function other than as a mark of status, but must have required a substantial workforce, many of whom must also have witnessed the creation of the chamber and its tableau. While burials on this scale are exceptional, it can perhaps be inferred that while the creation of less well-furnished graves by potentially less influential members of the insular Scandinavian community would have been witnessed by smaller groups, all were intended to be displayed to an assembly of some kind, and subsequently remembered by those witnesses. If, as Davidson has suggested, these graves were also to become the homes of the dead,²⁰ the provision

¹⁹ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p. 139

²⁰ H. E. Davidson, *The Road to Hel : A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge, 1943), pp 90-6

of these artefacts ensured they were accommodated with proper respect, from whence they might remain in contact with the living.

Davidson's ideas also suggest that graves were potentially more than simply memorials, and their associations with the dead may also go some way towards explaining or supporting an idea that has been proposed by David Griffiths in a study of the Irish Sea region in the Viking Age. He suggests that furnished burials and their mounds had a potential appeal that extended beyond the elite who created them, and could potentially have acted as focal points for entire insular Scandinavian communities, whether or not they had a specific relationship to the dead buried there and whatever their social status relative to the deceased.²¹ Griffiths' study also emphasises, however, that these burials were only one of a number of similar focal points within the landscape,²² and as time progressed, those associated with a more Christian worldview must have become increasingly dominant.

While it has been argued that burials in churches show no more Christian influence than those buried elsewhere, this study has perhaps been unusual in suggesting that Christianity, albeit mediated through other social pressures, had a profound effect on Viking Age burial practices before the abandonment of grave-goods. Their conversion led, if not immediately, then certainly within at most a generation, to the abandonment of furnished burial. It could, however, be argued that if furnished graves were indeed as much a means of linking newcomers to the landscape as expressions of belief, then the burial of the initial generation may have been though sufficient to achieve this. Subsequent generations may not have experienced the same need to bury their dead in this way. Despite the clear importance of FISBs at the time when they were created, it is also clear that these graves eventually ceased to function as focal points in the landscape. Those who had been buried at church sites were perhaps most fortunate in that they had been placed at sites which continued to be associated with burial and ritual activity. For every church site with a Viking grave that was abandoned soon afterwards, such as Donnybrook (183: Dublin), there were many more that continued to act as foci for worship and burial at least until the

²¹ David Griffiths, 'Settlement and acculturation in the Irish Sea region' in John Hines, Alan Lane & Mark Redknap (eds) *Land, Sea and Home: Proceedings of a Conference on Viking-Period Settlement at Cardiff, July 2001: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph xx* (Leeds, 2004), p. 127

²² *ibid.*, pp 135-8

end of the Middle Ages, and a sizable proportion remain places of worship today. Even at these church sites, however, there is no real evidence that the sites of furnished graves were remembered, and in other places they were even more comprehensively forgotten.

Nonetheless, the fact that these graves lost their significance as the descendents of those who created them increasingly associated themselves with an exclusively Christian milieu should not blind us to the fact that in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, they seem to have been crucial to the process of territorial acquisition and inheritance, and to the inheritance of political and social authority generally, within in Britain and Ireland. Furnished insular Scandinavian burials were neither fundamentally religious nor ethnic in their character or content, and there was nothing random about either their contents or their distribution. Instead, there is clear evidence that they played a key role in the establishment of insular Scandinavian communities, linking these groups to specific sites and areas, and acting as vehicles by which the relative status of different groups could be expressed, confirming, reinforcing and perhaps even creating ideas of status within, and perhaps even beyond, these groups. Far from representing the passive reflection of an essentially conservative tradition created by transient groups, those who created furnished insular Scandinavian burials selected both their grave-goods and sites with great care, modifying both to suit the local political and social environment, but using them to demonstrate and reinforce ideas of social hierarchy. While these graves can no longer be treated as direct reflections of everyday life and dress, a new appreciation of the milieu within which they were constructed can provide entirely new insights to insular Scandinavian society in the ninth and tenth centuries. It is hoped that the present study may provide a suitable background for future studies of specific areas and artefact types, and that its results may generate a new interest in a monument form that has been strangely neglected for almost half a century.

CHAPTER 6 - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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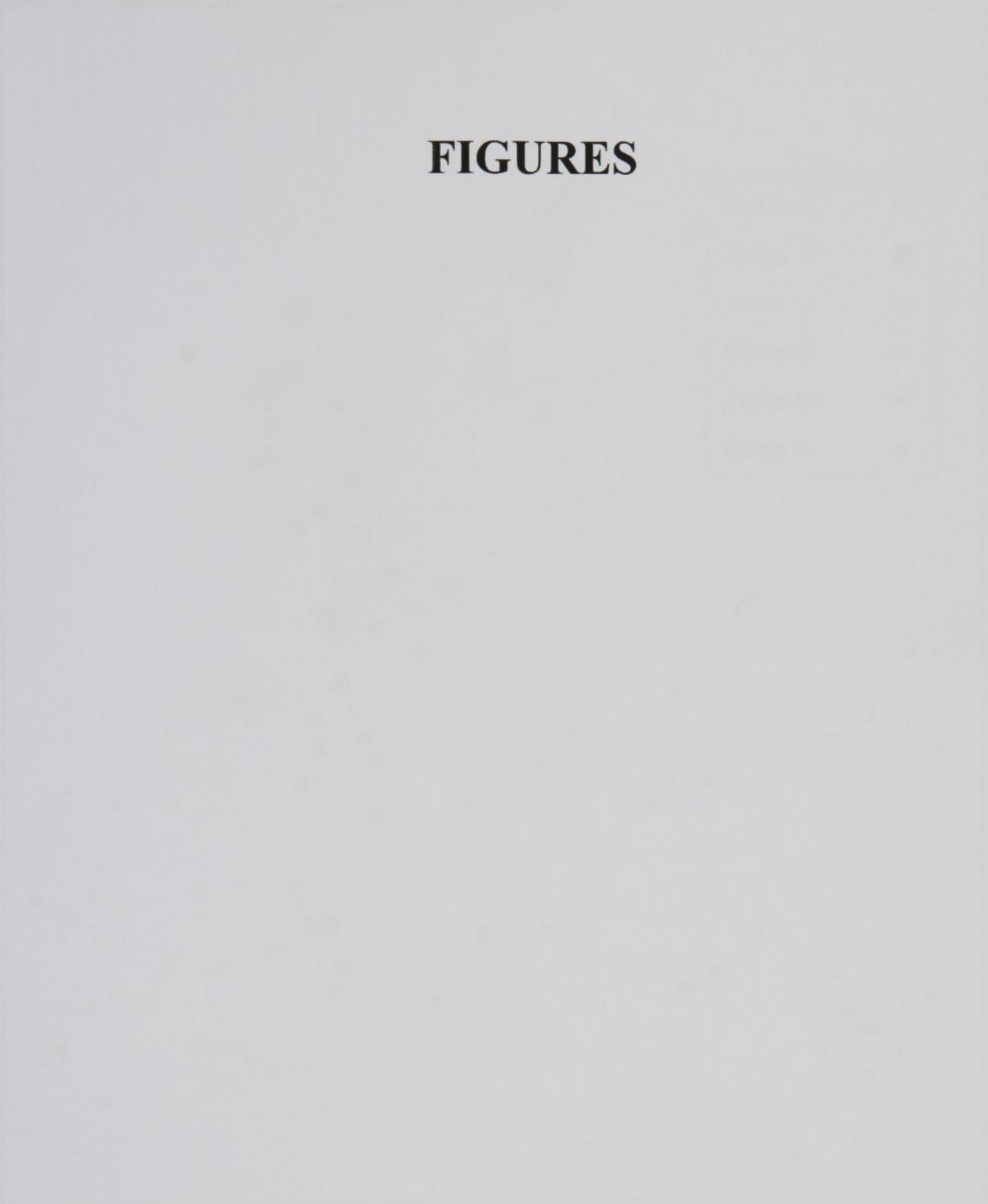
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Fig. 1.1. Nitrogen cycle in a forest ecosystem.



FIGURES

Fig.1.3.1 Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Britain and Ireland. Zones A – F shown.

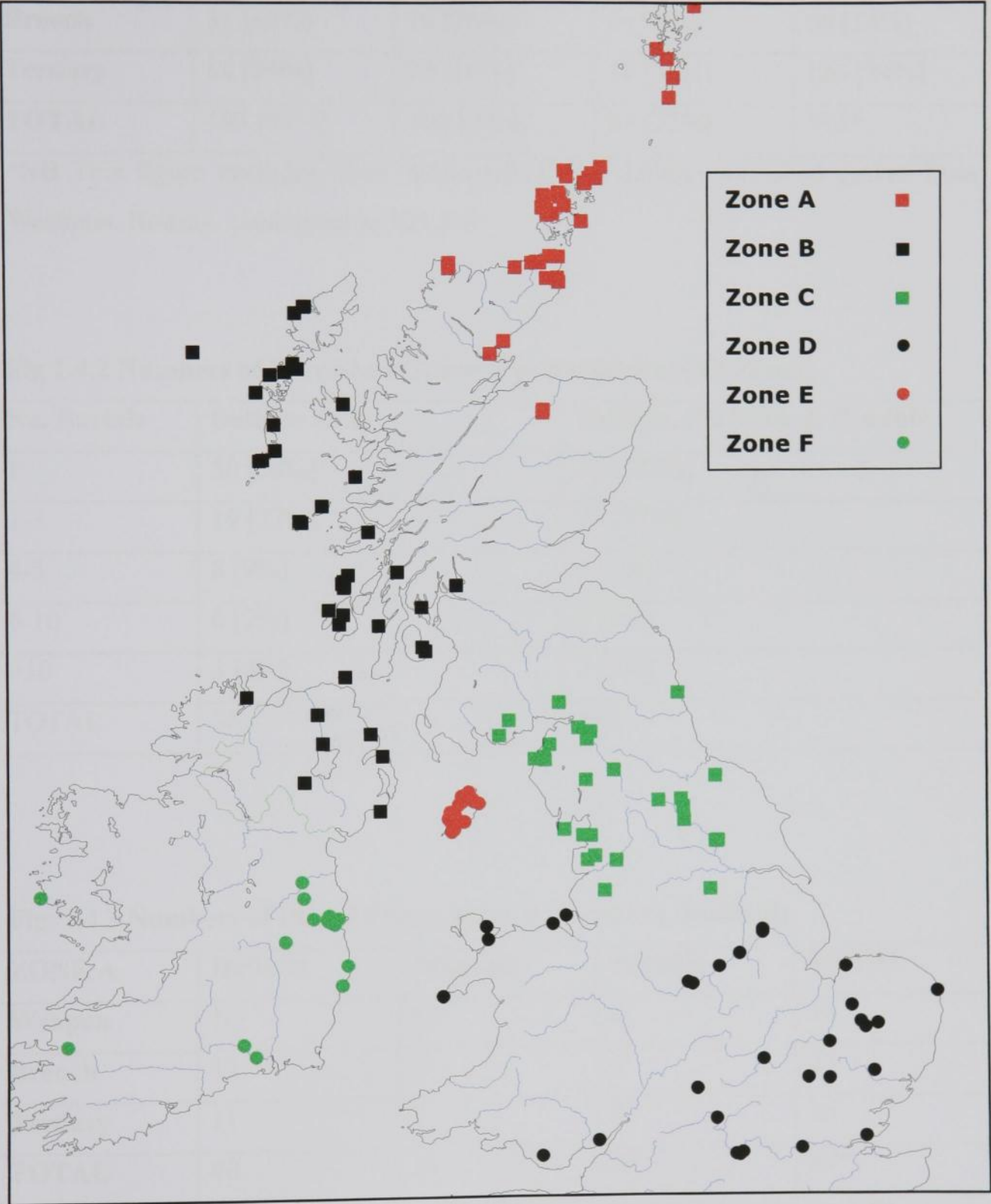


Fig 1.4.1 Total Numbers of Burial Types (All Zones)

	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	94 [47%]	70 [35%]	36 [18%]	200 [53%]
Brooch	31 [62%]	10 [20%]	9 [18%]	50 [13%]
Tertiary	68 [54%]	20 [16%]	38 [30%]	126 [34%]
TOTAL	193 [51%]	100 [27%]	83 [22%]	376*

*NB This figure excludes three 'unclassified' but definite furnished graves from Westness, Rousay, catalogued as 021.6-8

Fig 1.4.2 Numbers of Furnished Graves Per Burial Site (All Zones)

No. Burials	Definite Only	Definite, Probable & Possible
1	50 [58%]	144 [74%]
2-3	19 [22%]	33 [17%]
4-5	8 [9%]	8 [4%]
6-10	6 [7%]	6 [3%]
>10	3 [4%]	3 [2%]
TOTAL	86	194

Fig. 1.4.3 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone A (Northern Scotland)

ZONE A	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	16	12	8	36
Brooch	13	2	6	22
Tertiary	11	7	9	26
TOTAL	40	21	23	87*

*NB This figure includes three 'unclassified' but definite burials from Westness, Rousay, catalogued as 021.6-8

Fig. 1.4.4 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone B (Western Scotland & Ulster)

ZONE B	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	13	8	5	26
Brooch	9	3	3	15
Tertiary	9	2	10	21
TOTAL	31	13	18	62

Fig. 1.4.5 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone C (Northern England)

ZONE C	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	12	8	5	25
Brooch	4	1	0	5
Tertiary	14	5	9	28
TOTAL	30	14	14	58

Fig. 1.4.6 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone D (Southern England)

ZONE D	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	14	9	4	27
Brooch	0	1	0	1
Tertiary	21	2	6	29
TOTAL	35	12	10	57

Fig.1.4.7 Viking Age Furnished Burial in Britain and Ireland, by Zone and Sub-Zone. This maps shows the division between C1 / D1 (Western England and Wales) and C2 / D2 (Eastern England).

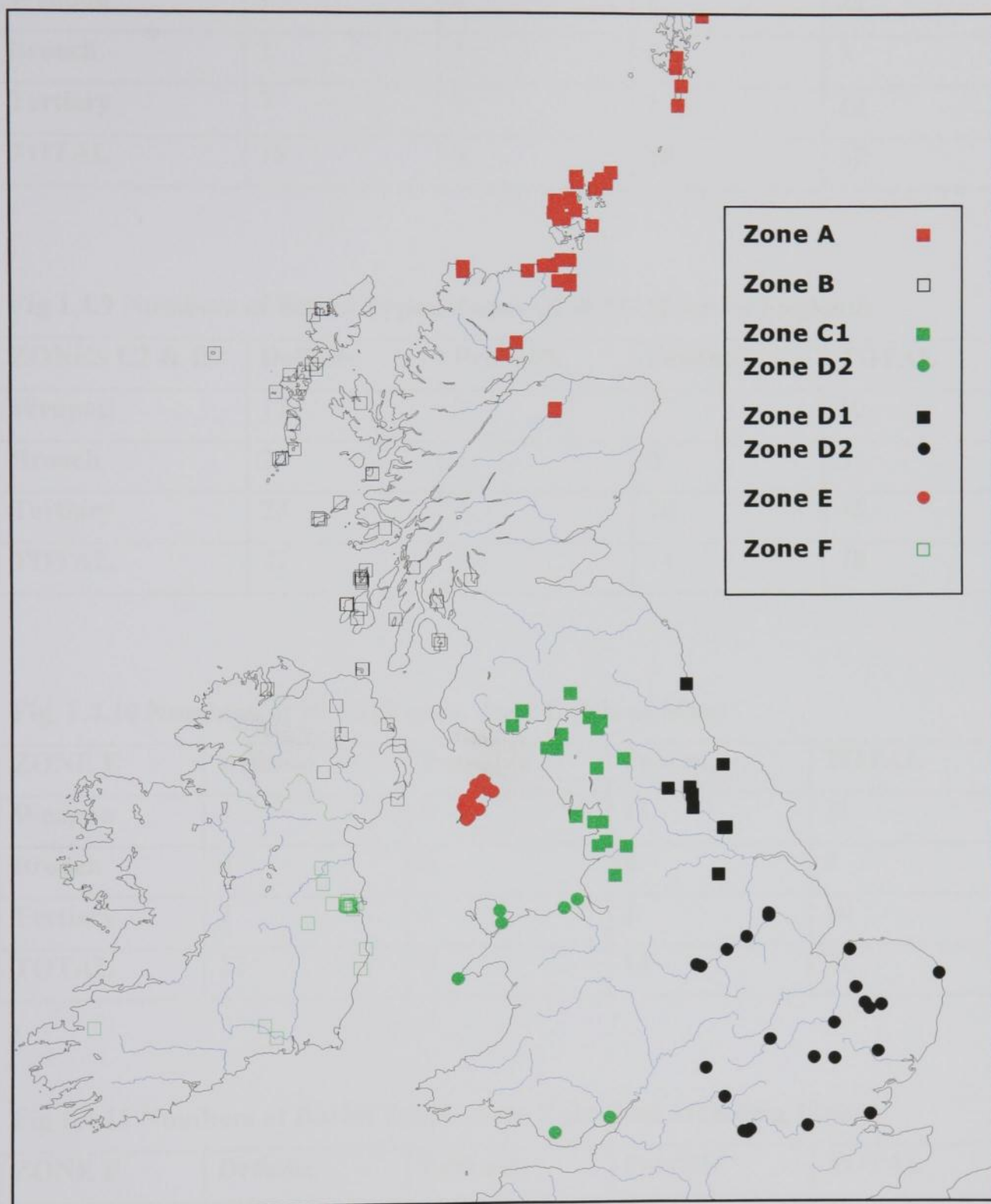


Fig.1.4.8 Numbers of Burial Types, Zones C1 & D1 (Western England)

ZONES C1 & D1	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	9	8	5	22
Brooch	2	1	0	3
Tertiary	7	0	5	12
TOTAL	18	9	10	37

Fig 1.4.9 Numbers of Burial Types, Zones C2 & D2 (Eastern England)

ZONES C2 & D2	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	17	9	4	30
Brooch	2	1	0	3
Tertiary	28	7	10	45
TOTAL	47	17	14	78

Fig. 1.4.10 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone E (Isle of Man)

ZONE E	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	5	4	12	21
Brooch	0	0	0	0
Tertiary	7	1	2	10
TOTAL	12	5	14	31

Fig 1.4.11 Numbers of Burial Types, Zone F (Ireland excluding Ulster)

ZONE F	Definite	Probable	Possible	TOTAL
Weapon	34	29	2	65
Brooch	5	3	0	8
Tertiary	6	3	2	11
TOTAL	45	35	4	84

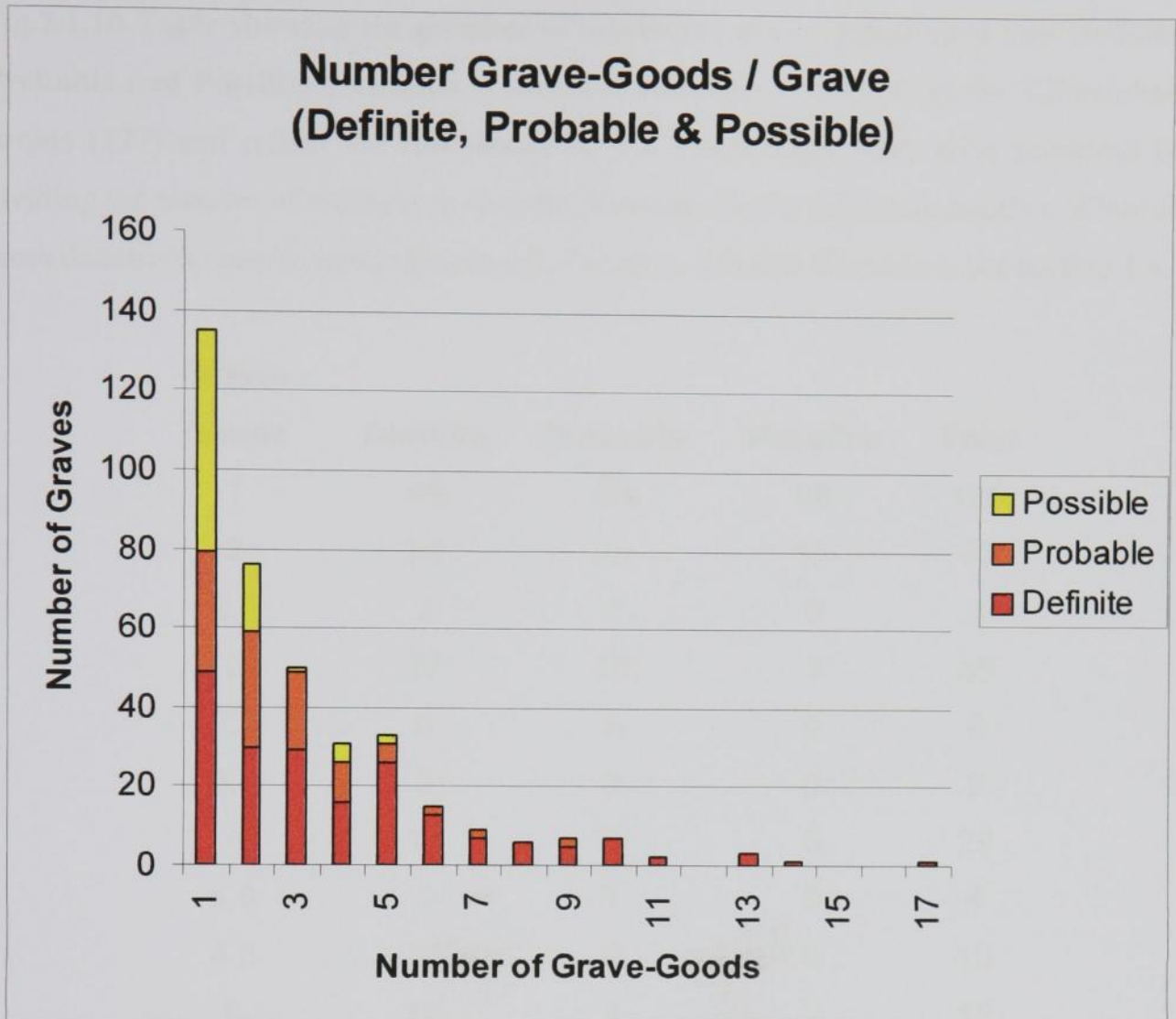


Fig.2.1.1a – Chart showing number of artefacts / grave, subdivided into Definite, Probable and Possible Examples.

These figures reflect the rounding off of estimated minimum totals from the Kilmainham assemblage (177), the original figures being presented as fig.3.1.1b.

Fig.2.1.1b Table showing the number of artefacts / grave, subdivided into Definite, Probable and Possible Examples. Fractional values are derived from the Kilmainham corpus (177) and reflect the complexity of that assemblage. They were produced by dividing the number of artefacts in specific donations by the minimum number of burials these donations seem to have represented. For more detailed discussion, see section 1.4.

Grave- Goods	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
1	49	30	56	135
2	30	29	17	76
2.5	2	2	0	4
3	27	10	1	38
3.3	0	8	0	8
3.5	2	0	0	2
4	14	10	5	29
4.8	3	1	0	4
4.9	10	0	0	10
5	13	4	2	19
6	10	2	0	12
6.3	3	0	0	3
7	7	2	0	9
8	6	0	0	6
8.6	0	1	0	1
9	5	1	0	6
10	7	0	0	7
11	2	0	0	2
12.6	1	0	0	1
13	2	0	0	2
14	1	0	0	1
17	1	0	0	1

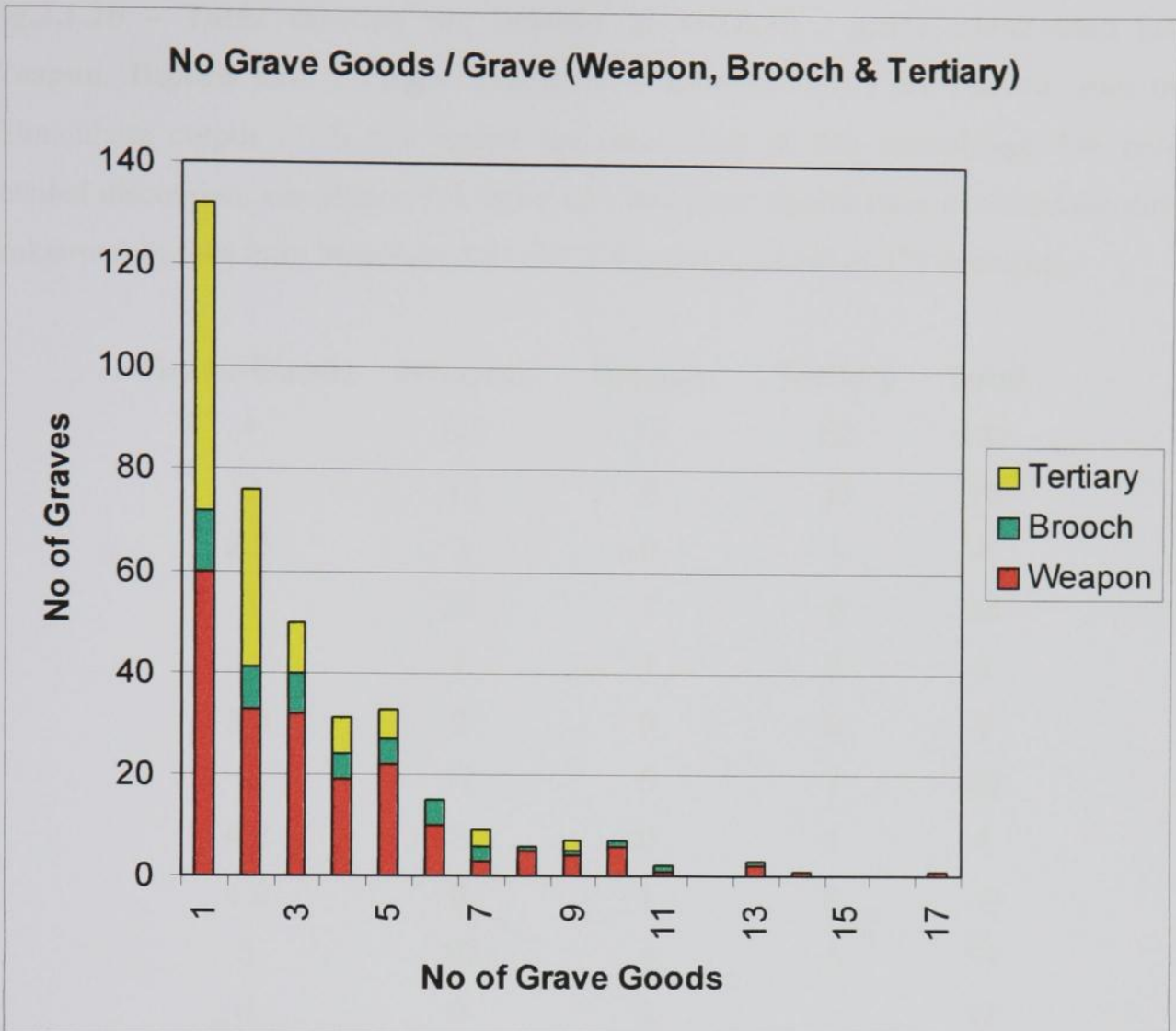


Fig.2.1.2a – Chart showing the number of artefacts / grave, subdivided into Weapon, Brooch and Tertiary Examples. These figures reflect the rounding off of estimated minimum totals from the Kilmainham assemblage (177), the original figures being presented as fig.3.1.1b.

Fig.2.1.2b – Table showing the number of artefacts / grave, subdivided into Weapon, Brooch and Tertiary Examples. Fractional values are derived from the Kilmainham corpus (177) and reflect the complexity of that assemblage. For more detailed discussion, see section 1.4. Note also that these figures have excluded the three ‘unknown’ burials from Westness (021.6-021.8), giving a total of 373 examples.

Grave-Goods	Weapon	Brooch	Tertiary	Total
1	60	12	60	132
2	33	8	35	76
2.5	3	0	1	4
3	22	7	9	38
3.3	7	1	0	8
3.5	2	0	0	2
4	17	5	7	29
4.8	3	0	1	4
4.9	9	1	0	10
5	10	4	5	19
6	9	3	0	12
6.3	1	2	0	3
7	3	3	3	9
8	5	1	0	6
8.6	1	0	0	1
9	3	1	2	6
10	6	1	0	7
11	1	1	0	2
12.6	1	0	0	1
13	1	1	0	2
14	1	0	0	1
17	1	0	0	1
	199	51	123	373

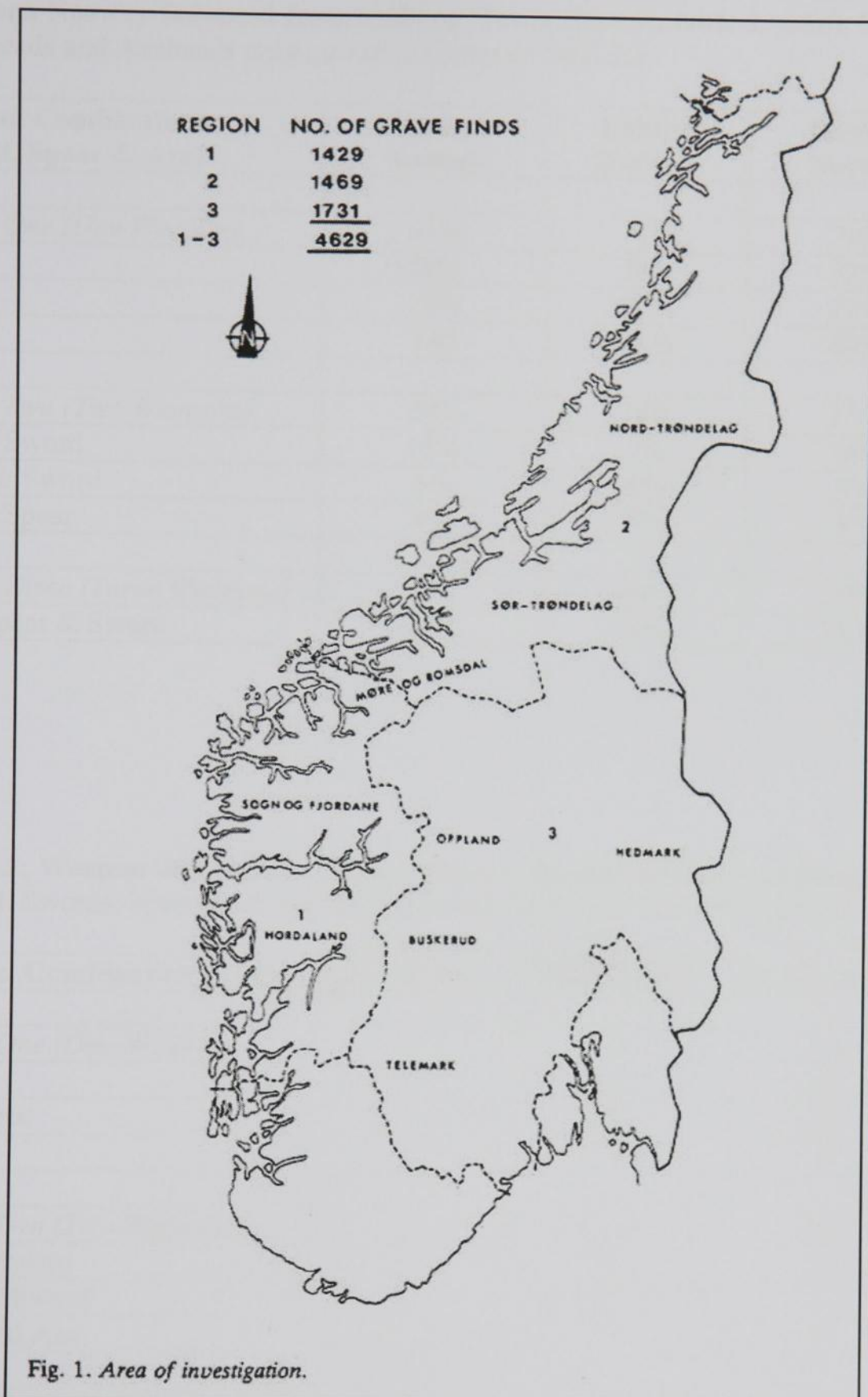


Fig 2.2.1 Study Area for B. Solberg's 1985 Investigation of Norwegian Graves. Region 1, the western area, covers Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane and Sunnmøre. Region 2, the northern area, includes 'central Norway' with Romsdal, Nordmøre, North and South Trøndelag and southern Nordland. Region 3, the southern area, covers Hedmark, Oppland, Buskerud and Telemark. For convenience, this is referred to in the text as 'southern Norway'. After Solberg 'Social Status', fig.1

Fig.2.2.2 Weapon & Weapon Combinations in Furnished Graves in Central and Southern Norway (adapted from Solberg 'Social Status', table 1, p.66). Swords, Spearheads and Axeheads only included. Compare fig.2.2.3

Weapon Combination (Sword, Spear & Axe)	Western Norway	Central Norway	Eastern Norway
<i>Group One (One Weapon)</i>	61%	71%	74%
Axe	29%	28%	32%
Spear	18%	22%	22%
Sword	145	21%	20%
<i>Group Two (Two Weapons)</i>	24%	18%	17%
Axe & Sword	15%	7%	9%
Spear & Sword	5%	8%	5%
Axe & Spear	4%	3%	3%
<i>Group Three (Three Weapons)</i>	15%	10%	10%
Axe, Spear & Sword	15%	10%	10%

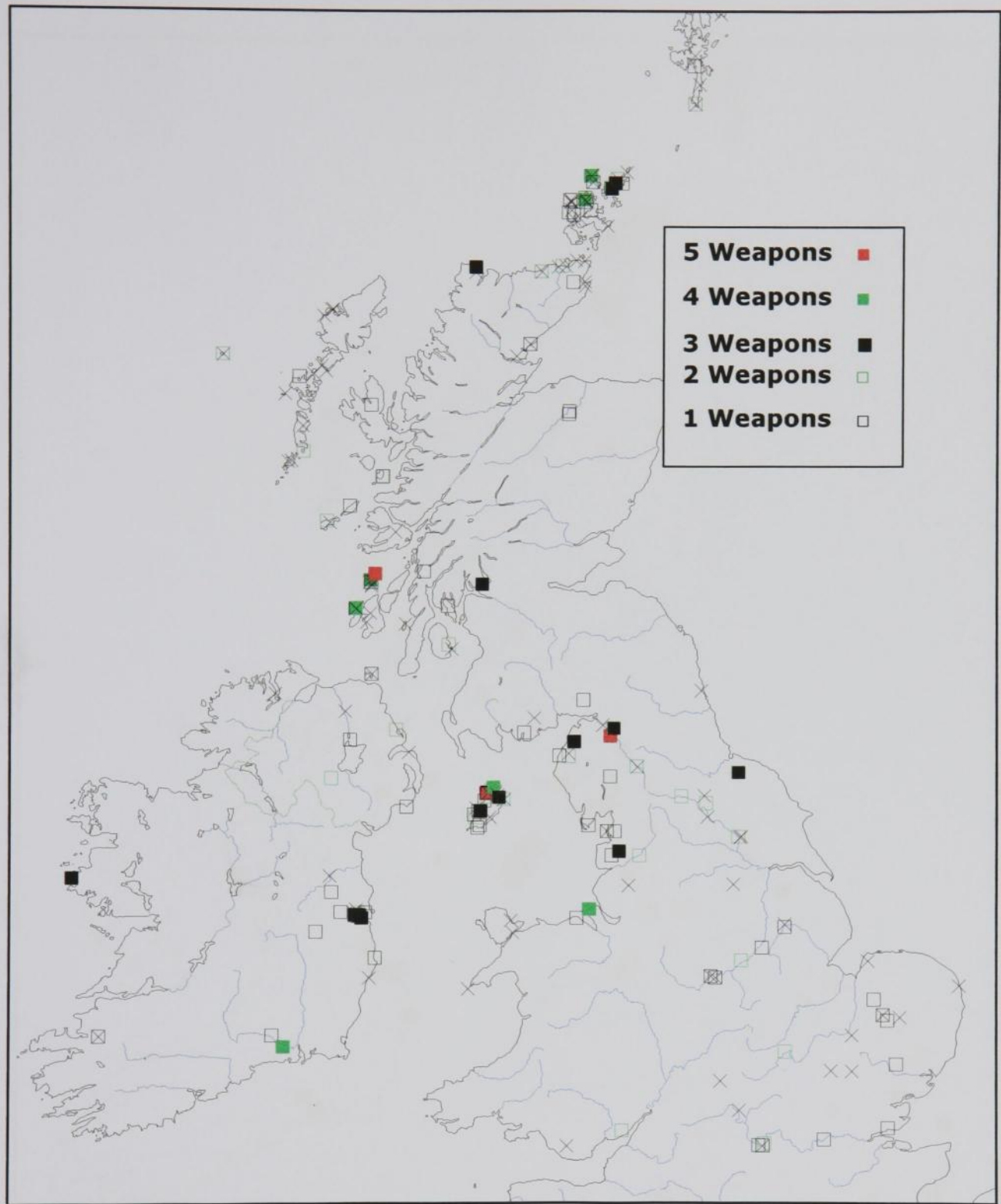
Fig.2.2.3. Weapon & Weapon Combinations in furnished Graves in Britain and Ireland. Swords, Spearheads and Axeheads only included. Compare Fig.2.2.2

Weapon Combination (Sword, Spear & Axe)	Percentage	No. of Graves
<i>Group One (One Weapon)</i>	56%	104
Axe	5%	9
Spearhead	12%	22
Sword	39%	73
<i>Group Two (Two Weapons)</i>	35%	65
Axe & Sword	3%	6
Spear & Sword	31%	57
Spear and Axe	1%	2
<i>Group Three (Three Weapons)</i>	9%	17
Axe, Spear & Sword	9%	17

Fig.2.2.4 Number of Weapons per Grave in Britain and Ireland, expressed as a percentage of Total Weapon Graves (Numbers of individual burials in parentheses). Unlike figs 2.2.2 & 3, these figures include shield bosses and (groups of) arrowheads.

No.Wpns	Overall	A	B	C	D	C1/D1	C2/D2	E	F
1	49% (96)	51% (18)	45% (12)	37% (9)	77% (20)	47% (10)	66% (19)	53% (10)	42% (927)
2	25% (49)	26% (9)	35% (9)	42% (10)	19% (5)	29% (6)	31% (9)	21% (4)	18% (12)
3	17% (33)	11% (4)	8% (2)	17% (4)	0% (0)	14% (3)	3% (1)	16% (3)	31% (20)
4	6% (12)	9% (3)	8% (2)	0% (0)	4% (1)	5% (1)	0% (0)	5% (1)	8% (5)
5	3% (5)	3% (1)	4% (1)	4% (1)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0% (0)	5% (1)	2% (1)
Total	(195)	(35)	(26)	(24)	(26)	(21)	(29)	(19)	(65)

Fig.2.2.5 Distribution of Graves containing multiple Weapons in Britain and Ireland.



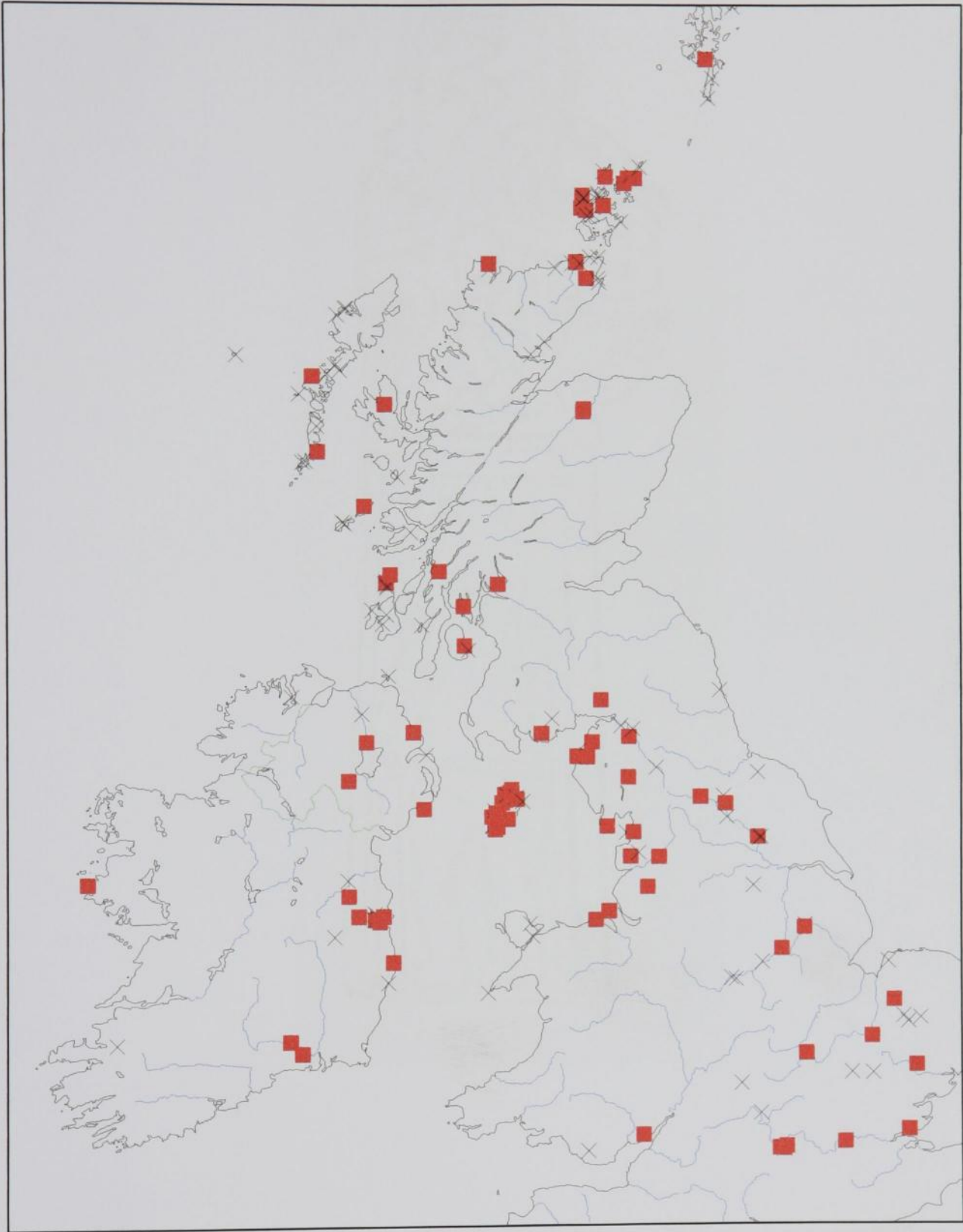


Fig.2.2.6. Insular Scandinavian Furnished Burial Sites Represented by Single Weapon Graves. Their distribution is focused in Scotland and around shores of the Irish Sea



Fig.2.2.7 The Middleton Cross (North Yorkshire). Originally interpreted as a representation of a Viking grave, this carving is now more commonly seen as a representation of a seated 'warrior-lord', surrounded by the weapons that symbolise and enforce his power. After J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England* 2nd Ed. (Stroud, 2000), fig.71.

Fig.2.3.1 'Male' (Weapon) Grave found at Ballinaby, Islay in 1878. The original assemblage comprised a 'helmet' (actually a heckle), a sword, two axeheads, a spearhead, a shield boss, a hammer and tongs, an adze, the remains of a cauldron and a drinking horn mount. The heckle is now associated with the adjoining 'female' grave (fig.2.3.3). This burial is catalogued as 073.2. After Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, fig.



Fig.2.3.2 'Female' (Brooch) Grave found at Ballinaby, Islay in 1878. The original assemblage comprised two oval brooches, a string of twelve beads, a silver pin with a trichinopoly chain, a copper alloy ladle, a linen smoother, a needle case, a heckle and a set of tinned copper alloy mounts. The heckle was originally identified as part of a helmet, and associated with the adjacent male burial (fig.2.3.2) and the mounts *may* have been attached to a shield, in which case they belong the latter grave. The present grave is catalogue as 073.3. After Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*,fig.



Fig. 2.2.3 Brooch and 'Female Tertiary' Burials in Britain and Ireland. Female Tertiary Burials correspond to Bergljot Solberg's Group One.

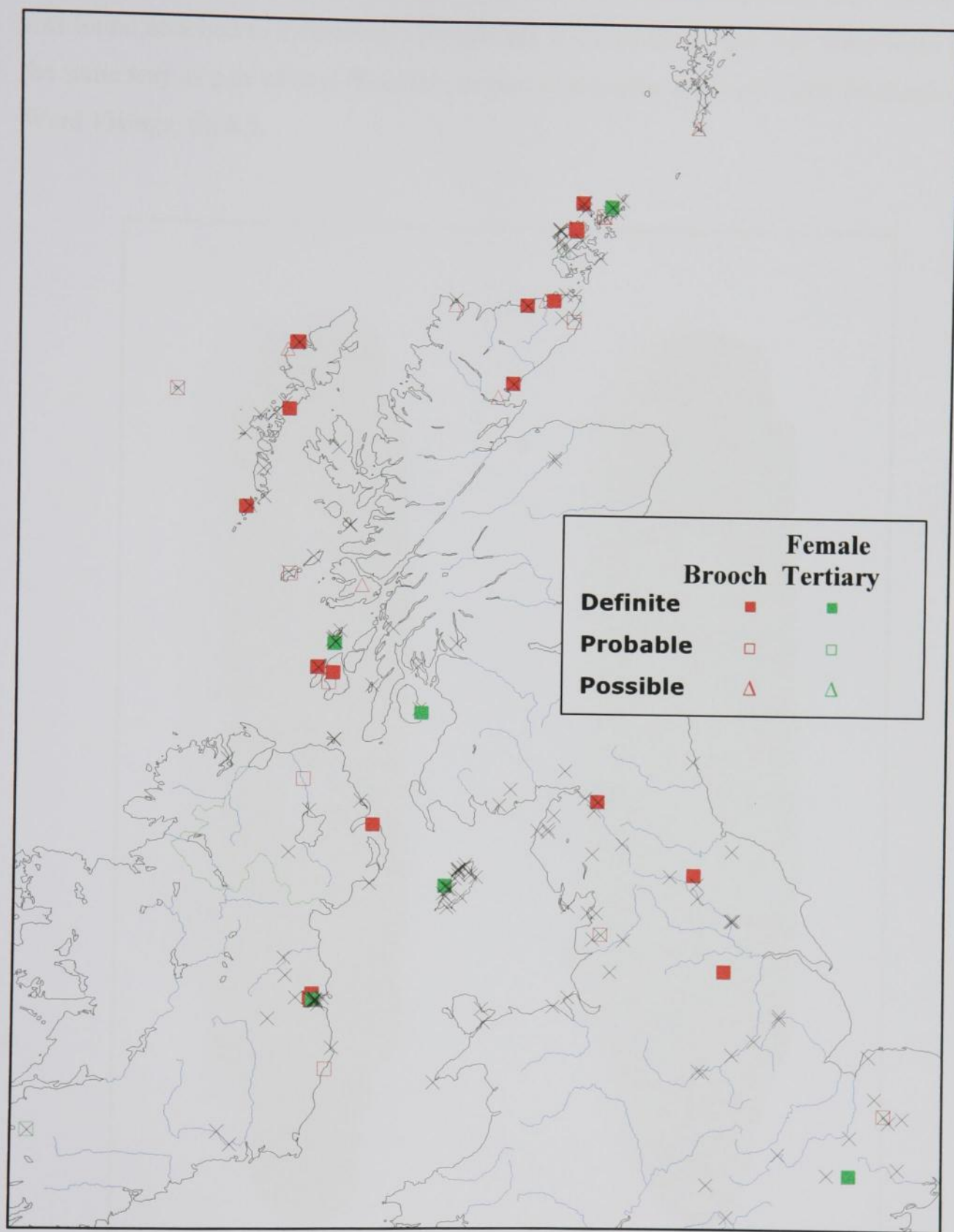


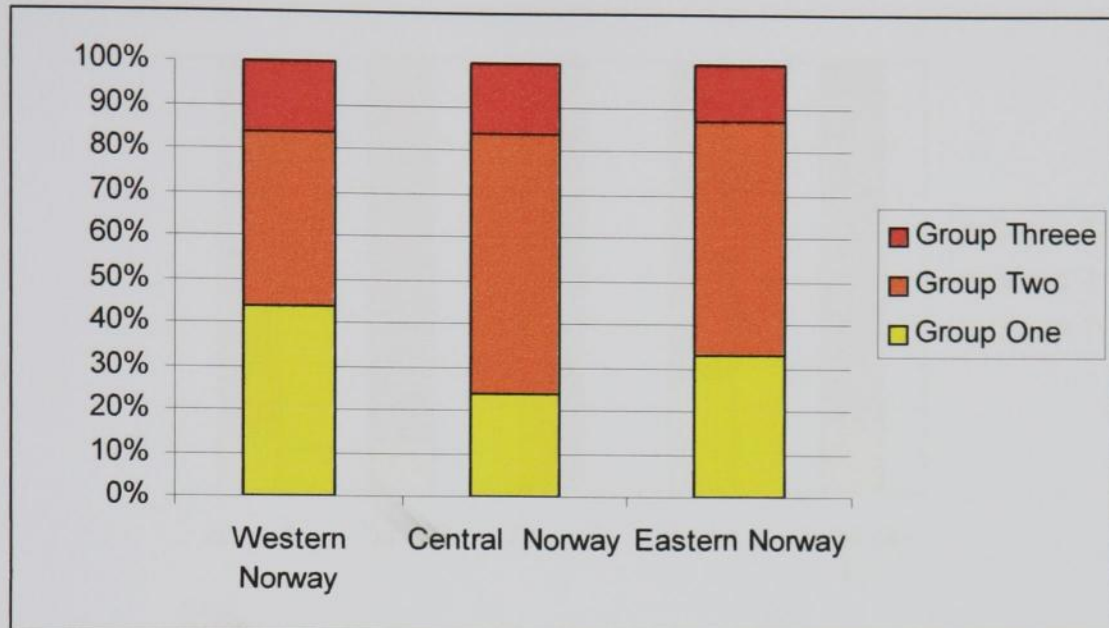
Fig.2.3.4 Pair of Brooches from Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay. These matching brooches are modified insular shrine mounts. As they form a matching pair, and one was found attached to a skeleton's collarbone, it seems likely that they were worn in the same way as pair of oval brooches, as part of a similar costume. After Fitzhugh & Ward *Vikings*, fig.8.5.



Fig.2.3.5 Total Numbers of Insular Weapon, Brooch and Female Tertiary Burials by Region, with ratios of Male/Female Furnished Burials. The figures listed under each burial type represent the total number of graves of that type. Figures in parentheses represent definite examples only. The ratios of male to female graves given in parentheses also relate to definite burials: the other figures express the ratios of graves of all reliability levels.

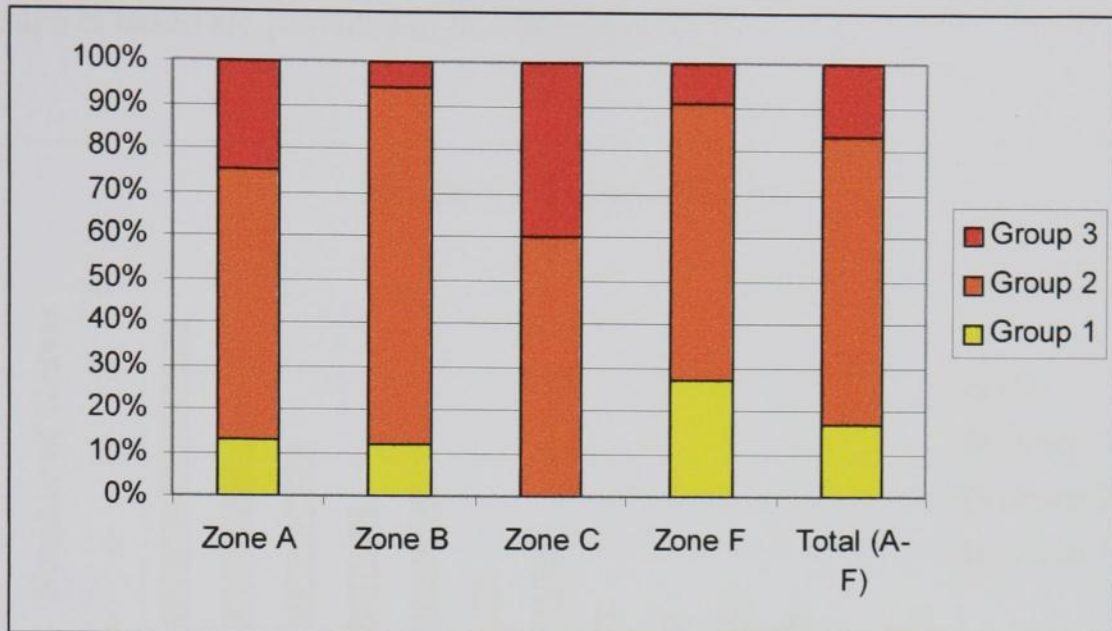
	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Zone E	Zone F	Total
Weapon	36 (16)	26 (13)	25 (12)	27 (14)	21 (5)	65 (34)	200 (94)
Brooch	21 (13)	15 (9)	5 (4)	1 (0)	0 (0)	8 (5)	50 (31)
Female Tertiary	3 (1)	2 (2)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (1)	10 (6)
M / F Ratio	1.5 (1.1)	1.5 (1.2)	5 (3)	13.5 (14)	21 (5)	5.9 (5.6)	3.3 (2.5)

Fig.2.3.6 Proportions of Solberg's Group One, Two and Three Women's Graves in Norway. Figures derived from Solberg 'Social Status' pp.67-8 and expressed as a percentage of all women's graves in a given area. For full definitions of groups, see main text.



	Western Norway	Central Norway	Eastern Norway
Group One (Beads / Tools)	44%	24%	33%
Group Two (Brooches)	40%	60%	54%
Group Three (Central Brooch)	16%	16%	13%

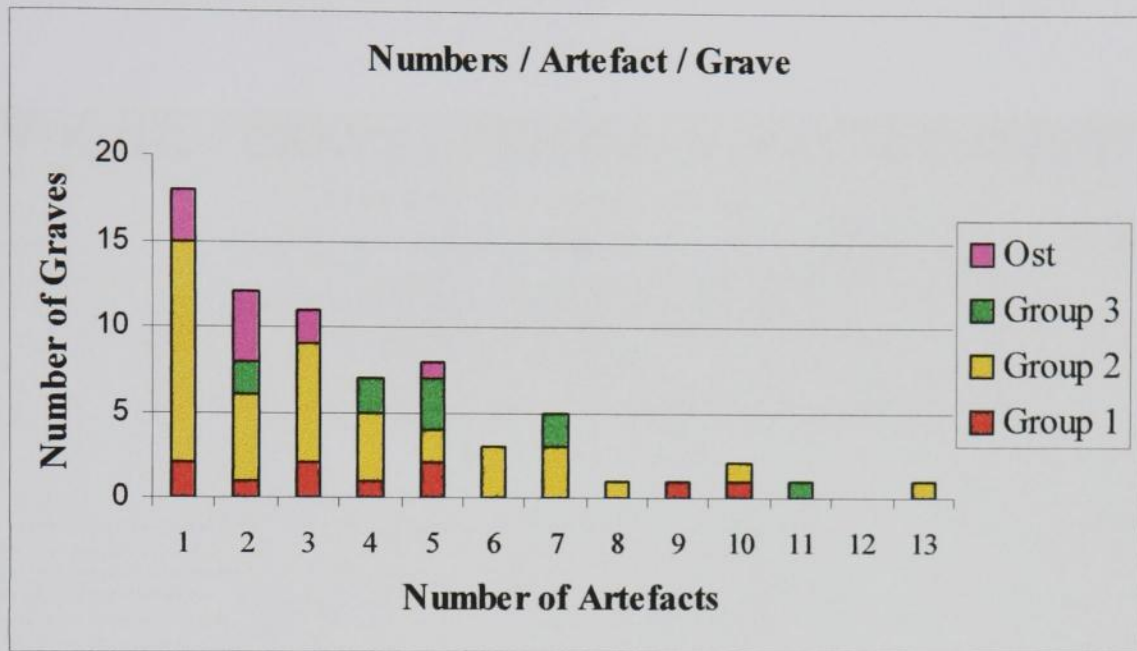
Fig.2.3.7 Proportions of Solberg's Groups One, Two and Three Female Burials in Britain and Ireland (by Zone). Figures expressed as a percentage of all brooch graves and tertiary burials with female grave goods in a given area. Actual numbers are provided in parentheses.



	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone F	Total*
Group 1	13% (3)	12% (2)	0% (0)	27% (3)	17% (10)
Group 2	62% (15)	82% (14)	60% (3)	64% (7)	66% (40)
Group 3	25% (6)	6% (1)	40% (2)	9% (1)	17% (10)
Total	(24)	(17)	(5)	(11)	(60)

NB. Given that there is only one example in Zone E and two in Zone D, these areas have been omitted from the present table, although their graves are included in the general totals.

Fig.2.3.8 Bar Graph Showing Number of Artefacts found in Insular Burials of Solberg's Groups One, Two and Three, as well as Osteologically Female Tertiary (Ost) Graves. As will be clear from this diagram, there is no particular correspondence between the number of artefacts in groups one, two and three, but significantly fewer grave goods were found in the last group. The figures upon which the graph is based are provided in the table beneath it.



No. Artefacts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Group 1	2	1	2	1	2				1	1			
Group 2	13	5	7	4	2	3	3	1		1			1
Group 3		2		2	3		2				1		
Ost	3	4	2		1								

Fig.3.1.1 Watercolour Plan of Chamber of Boat Burial, Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (067: Argyll & Bute). Dated 1889, the chamber as shown here is perhaps artificially regular. After Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999) fig.120. Copyright RCAHMS.

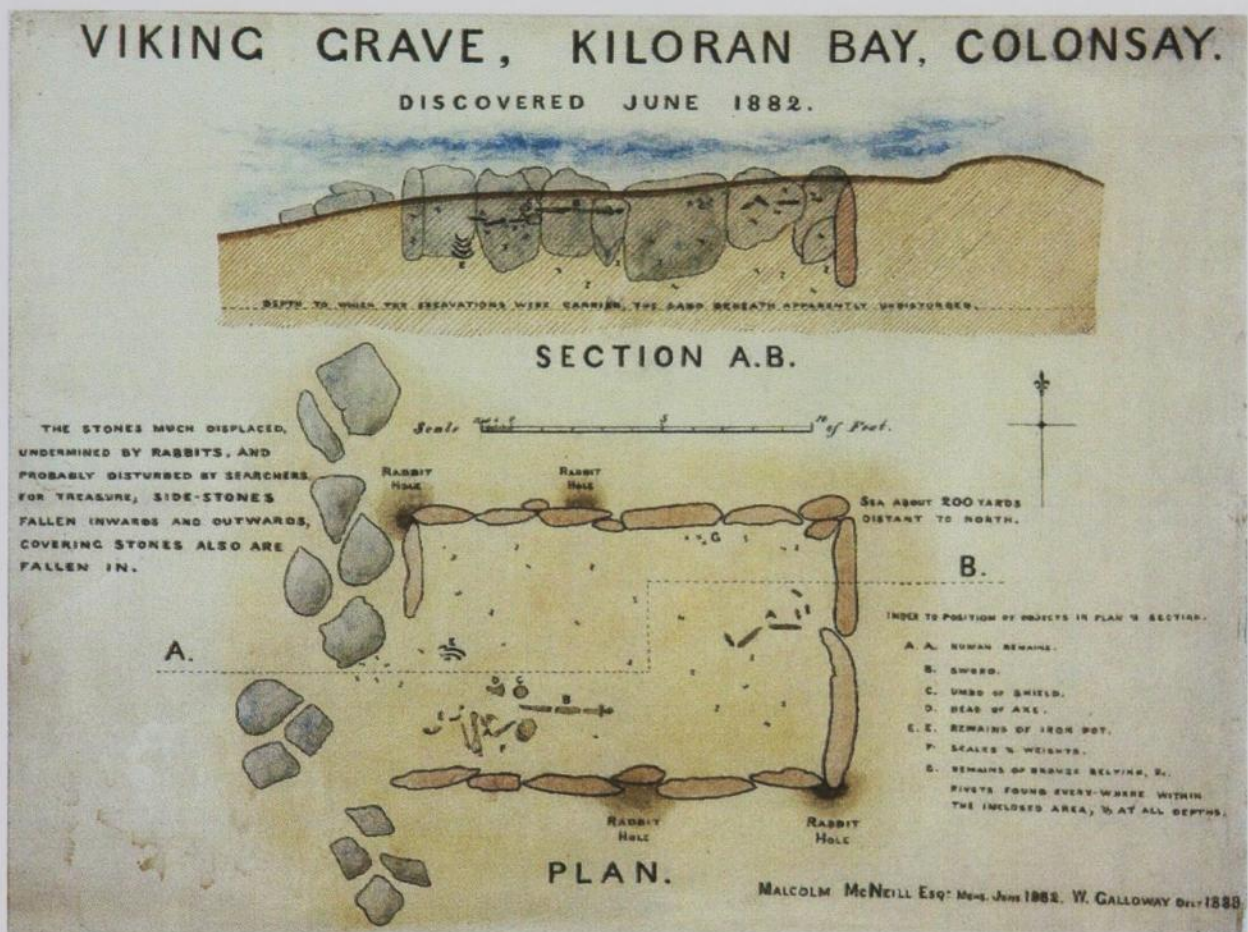


Fig. 3.1.2 Reconstruction of Boat Burial at Scar, Sanday (012: Orkney). After Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), fig.105. Drawing by Christian Unwin.

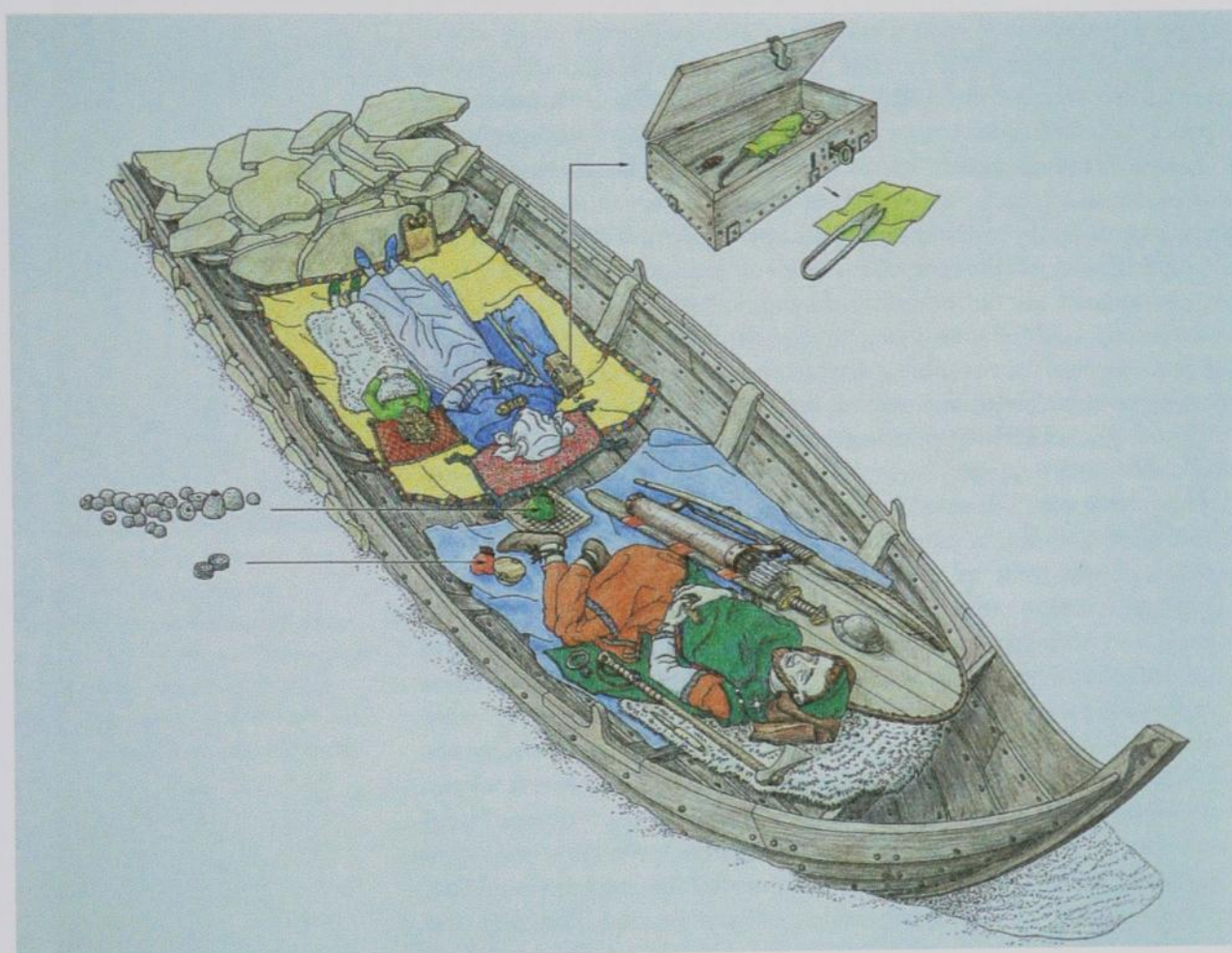


Fig.3.1.3 Sketch Plan of Boat Burial and Associated Mound at Càrn a' Bharraich, Oronsay (072: Argyll & Bute). The 'female' skeleton (F) was accompanied by a pair of brooches created from a set of mounts, while the 'male' skeleton (M) seems only to have been accompanied by single knife. The third body, to the south-east, seems to represent a separate interment, although it is uncertain if it is earlier or later than the boat burial. After Symington Grieve, 'Note on Carn nan Bharracih, or Cairn of the Men of Barra, a mound of the Viking time on the Island of Oronsay, Argyllshire, with an Outline of the Political History of the Western Isles during the latter half of the Ninth Century' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), fig.2

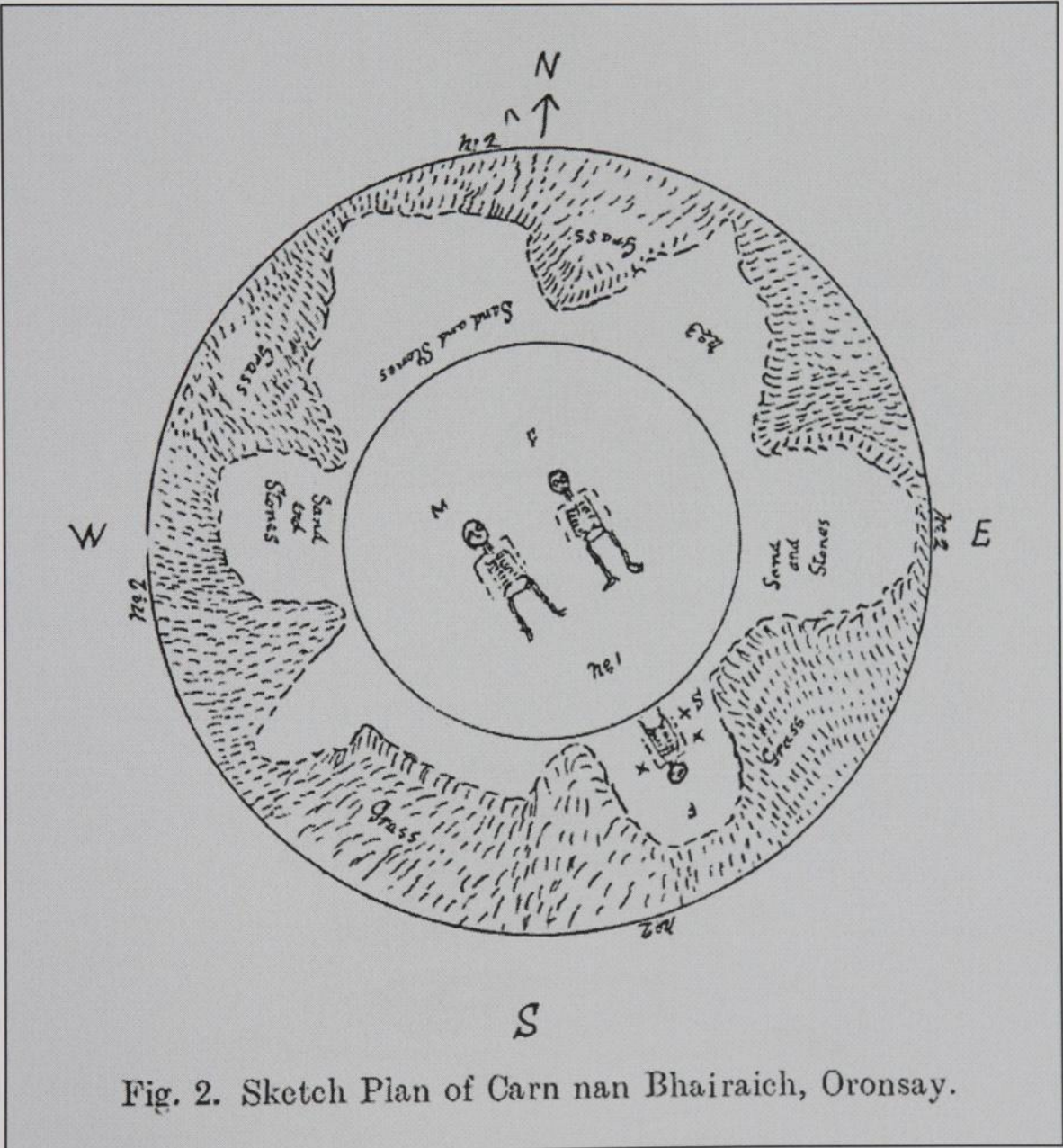


Fig. 2. Sketch Plan of Carn nan Bhairraich, Oronsay.

Fig.3.1.4. Plan of Graves 511 (123.02) and 295 (123.03) at Repton, Derbyshire, showing their Relationship to each other, the Associated Post, and the Rectilinear Mound. After Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings' in *Antiquity* lxxvi (1992), fig.3

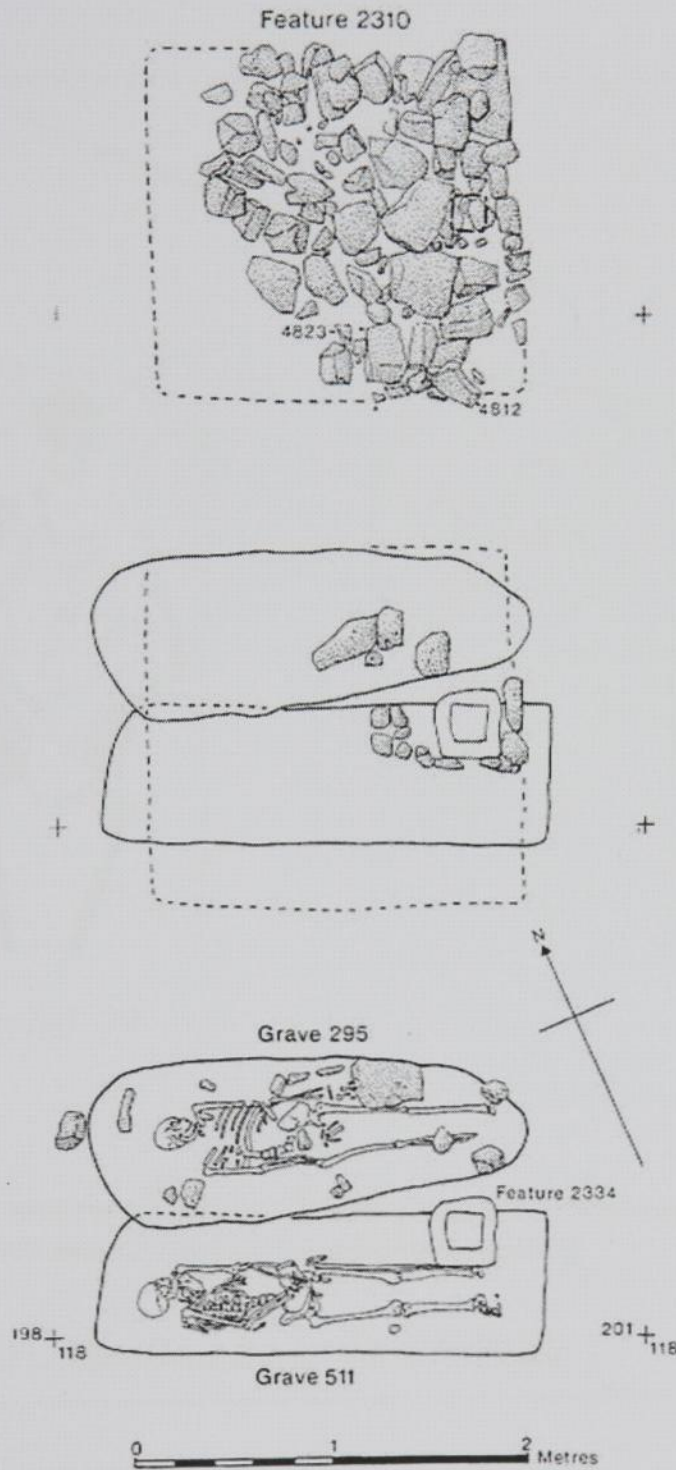


FIGURE 3. Graves 295 and 511 in relationship to the marker, Feature 2334, and the superimposed stone setting, Feature 2310.

Fig.3.1.5 Burial 86, associated with Rivets, York Minster (114.1). This has been interpreted either as a set of boat planks utilised as a bier, and / or a symbolic representation of a boat within this grave. After Derek Phillips & Brenda Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster* (2 vols, London, 1995), fig.21.

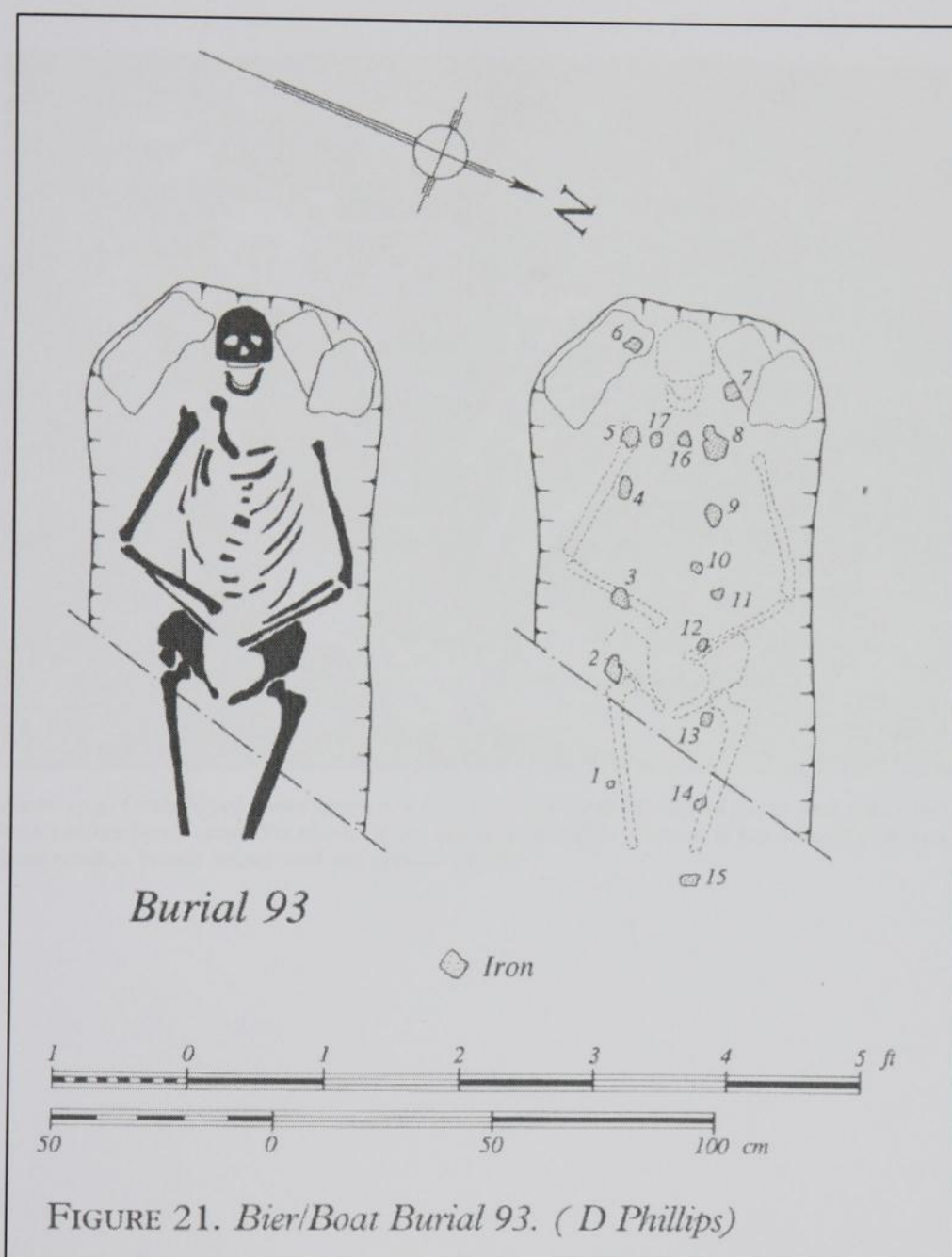


Fig.3.1.6. Oval 'Boat-Shaped' Grave, Westness, Rousay (021: Orkney). This grave contained a (female) tertiary burial. The 'prow-stone' feature is not visible in this image. After S. H. H. Kaland, 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds) *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso & Kirkwall, 22 August – 1 September 1989* (Edinburgh, 1993), fig.17.5



Figure 17.5: Oval-shaped, Norse grave of a woman. The woman was buried on her back with knees bent and her hands across her chest. By her hands is her sickle. The rest of her belongings were a bone comb, a bronze brooch and two spindle-whorls.

Fig.3.1.7 Insular Harness Mounts from a Tertiary Burial at Athlumney, near Navan (170: Meath). No other artefacts were found in association with the horse skeleton and these finds, but as they were found within an indigenous cemetery, it has been interpreted as a definite burial within the present study. After P. F. Wallace & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Treasures of the National Museum of Ireland: Irish Antiquities* (Dublin, 2002), pl. 5:11. Copyright National Museum of Ireland.



[5:11]

HARNES MOUNTS, NAVAN, CO. MEATH.

Eighth century AD.

Fig.3.1.8 Image of Smiths' Tools, Cross-Slab, Iona (Argyll and Bute). Tongs and a hammer can clearly be seen surrounding the figure standing at the left end of the boat and clearly demonstrate the symbolic importance of these artefacts in insular art in this period. From Anon., *Argyll: An Inventory of the Monuments iv: Iona* (Edinburgh, 1982), fig.66

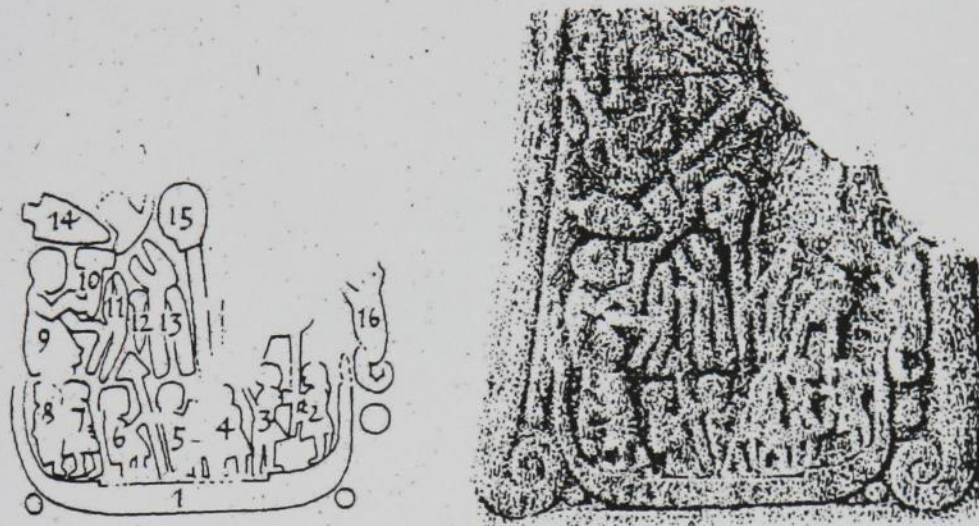


Figure 66. Ship-scene on Iona cross-slab (Abbey Museum no. 49; Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments, Scotland: Crown Copyright reserved). This scene appears on the other face of the cross-slab shown in fig. 65 (see also fig. 5). The numbers relate to identification in RCAHMS, *Argyll Inventory*, IV, no. 95. The figures in the boat (2-8) appear to be wielding spears and swords, while figure 9 can be identified as a smith from the collection of tools (10-15). The animal (16) may be an otter.

Fig.3.1.9 Whalebone Plaque, Scar, Sanday (012: Orkney). This is the single best-preserved example from any insular context, or indeed grave. Image following conservation, with back of plaque shown as inset image. After Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999), Fig.50

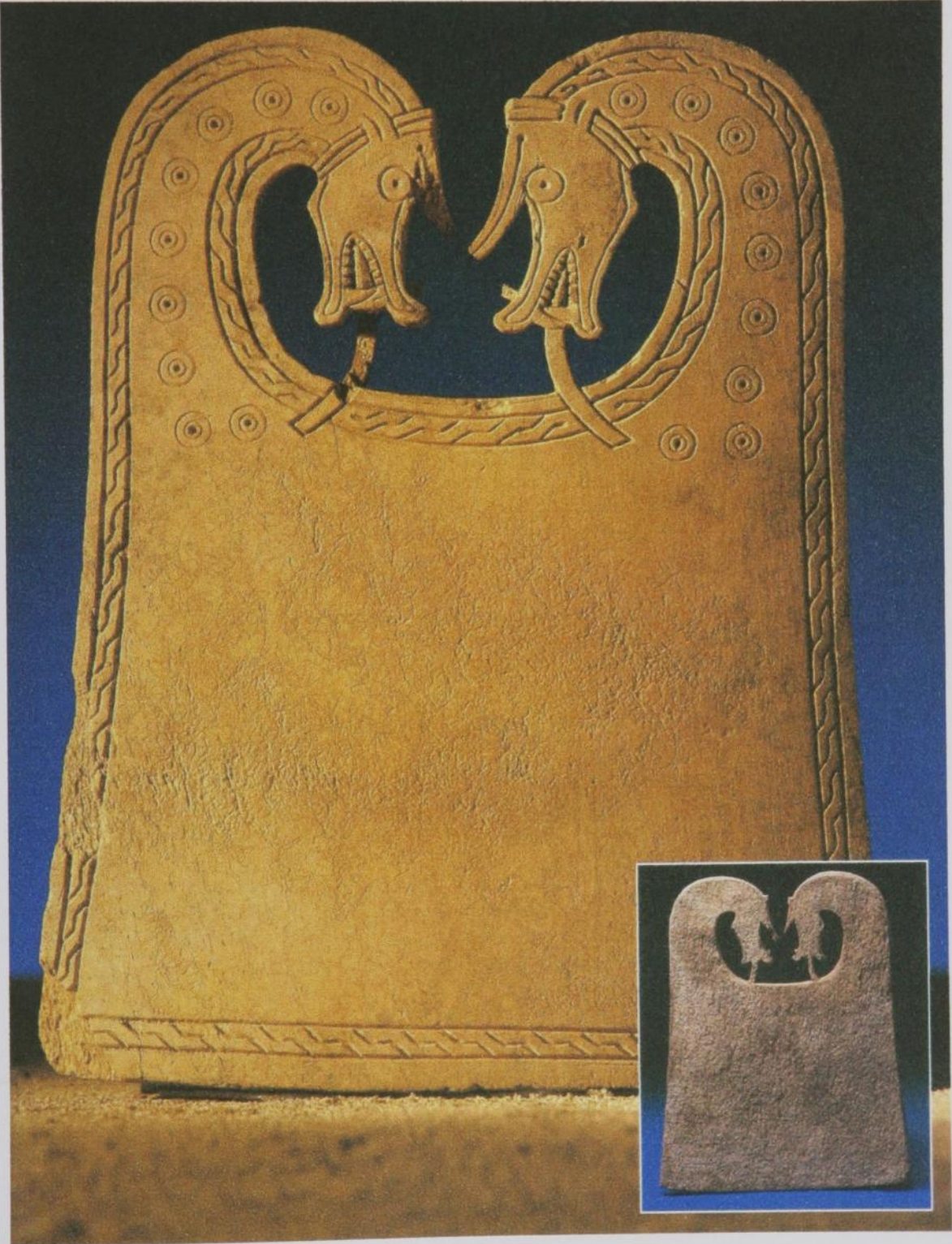


Fig.3.2.1. Tertiary Burials in Britain and Ireland. 'Female tertiary' burials (see section 2.3) are shown in black while all other tertiary burials are shown in red.

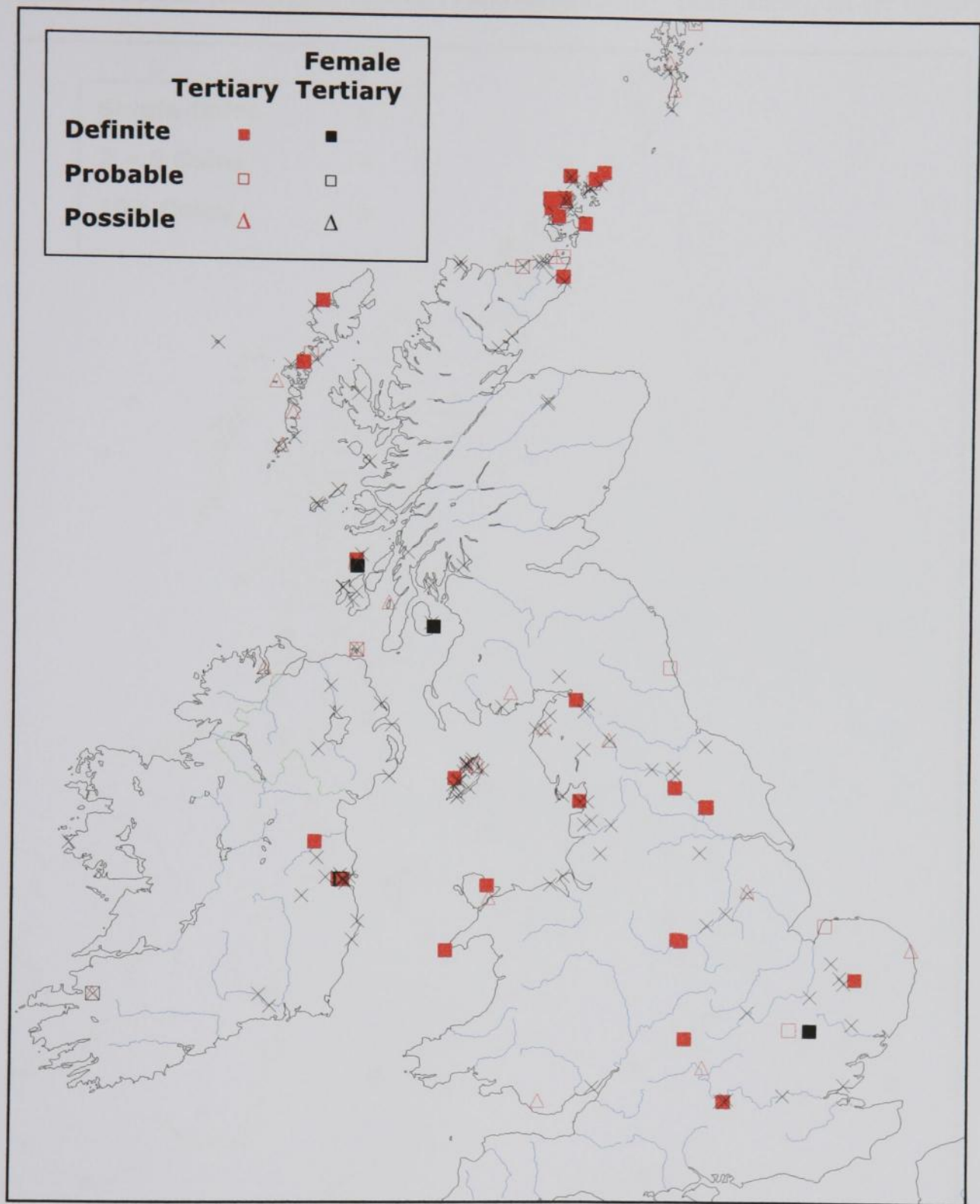


Fig.3.2.2 Viking Age Furnished Burials containing Coins in Britain and Ireland.
 With the exceptions of Buckquoy (022: Orkney) Kiloran Bay (067: Argyll & Bute),
 Kingcross Point (080: North Ayrshire) and Repton (123: Derbyshire), all are tertiary.

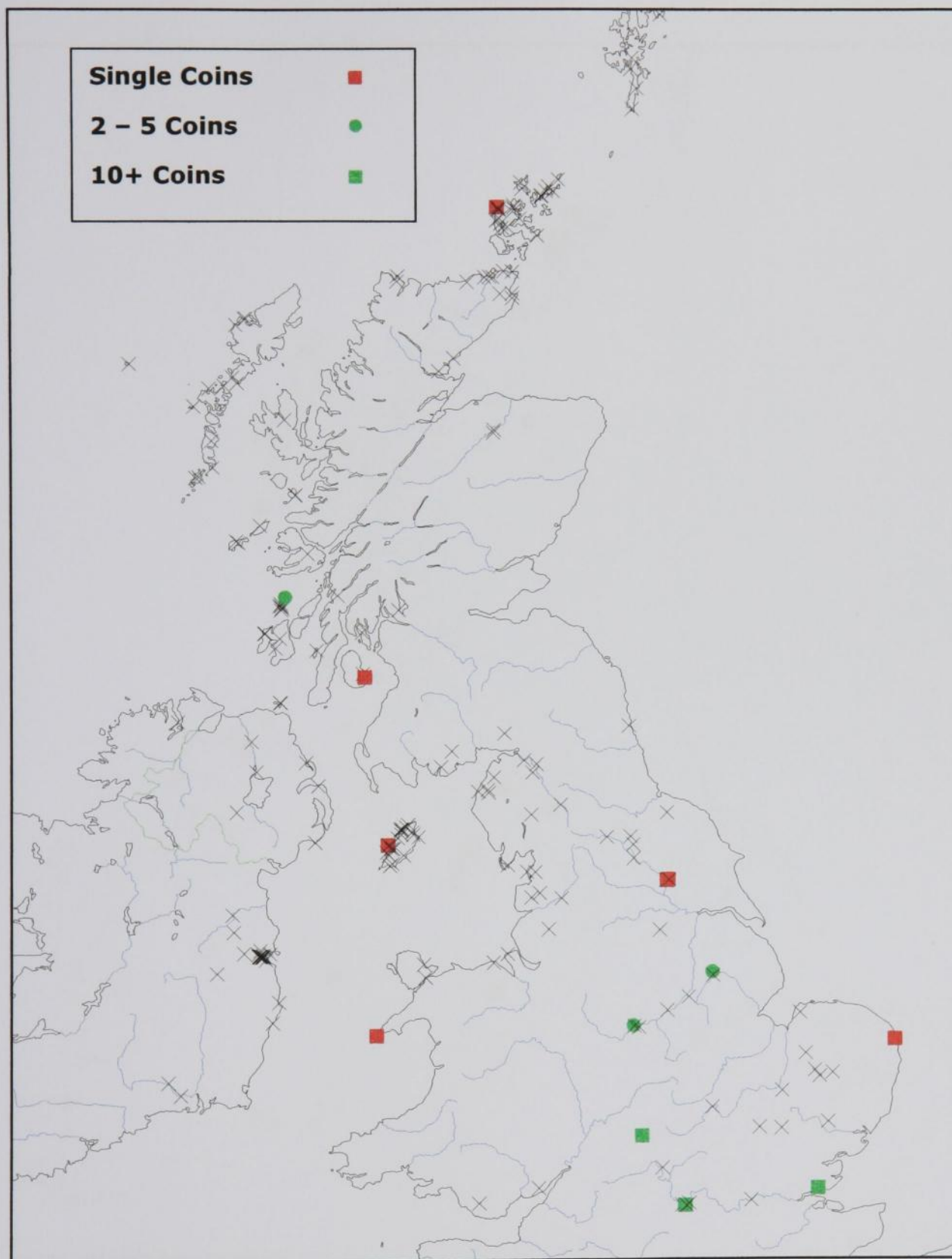


Fig.3.2.3 Ringed Pins from Viking Age Furnished Burials in Britain and Ireland. This map does not differentiate between definite, probable and possible graves, but all examples have been positively identified as ringed pins.

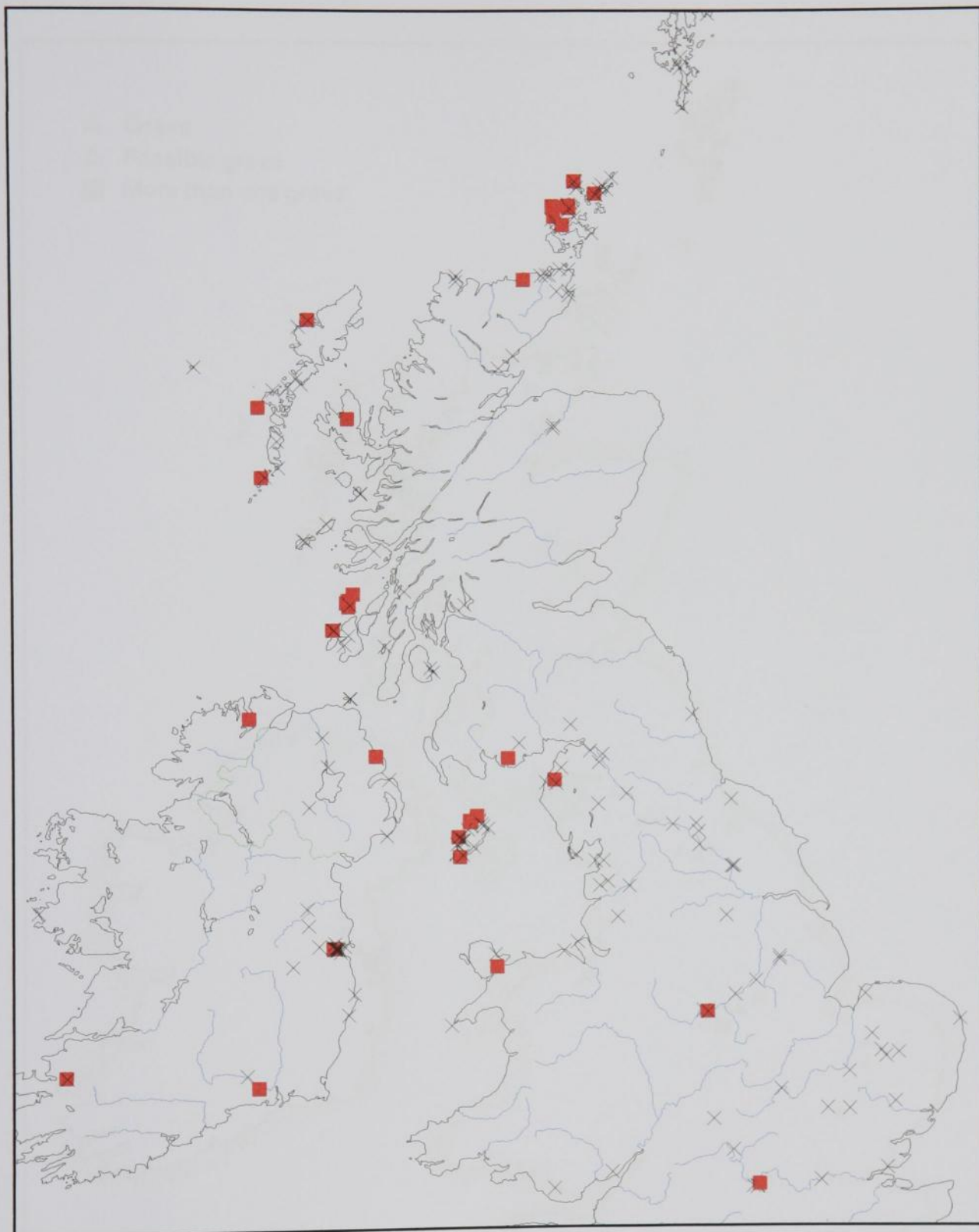


Fig.4.1.1 Distribution Map of 'Viking Graves' (i.e. Viking Age furnished burials) in Britain and Ireland. From D.M. Wilson, 'Scandinavian settlement in the north and west of the British Isles – an archaeological point-of-view' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Society* 5th Series xxvi (1976), fig.1

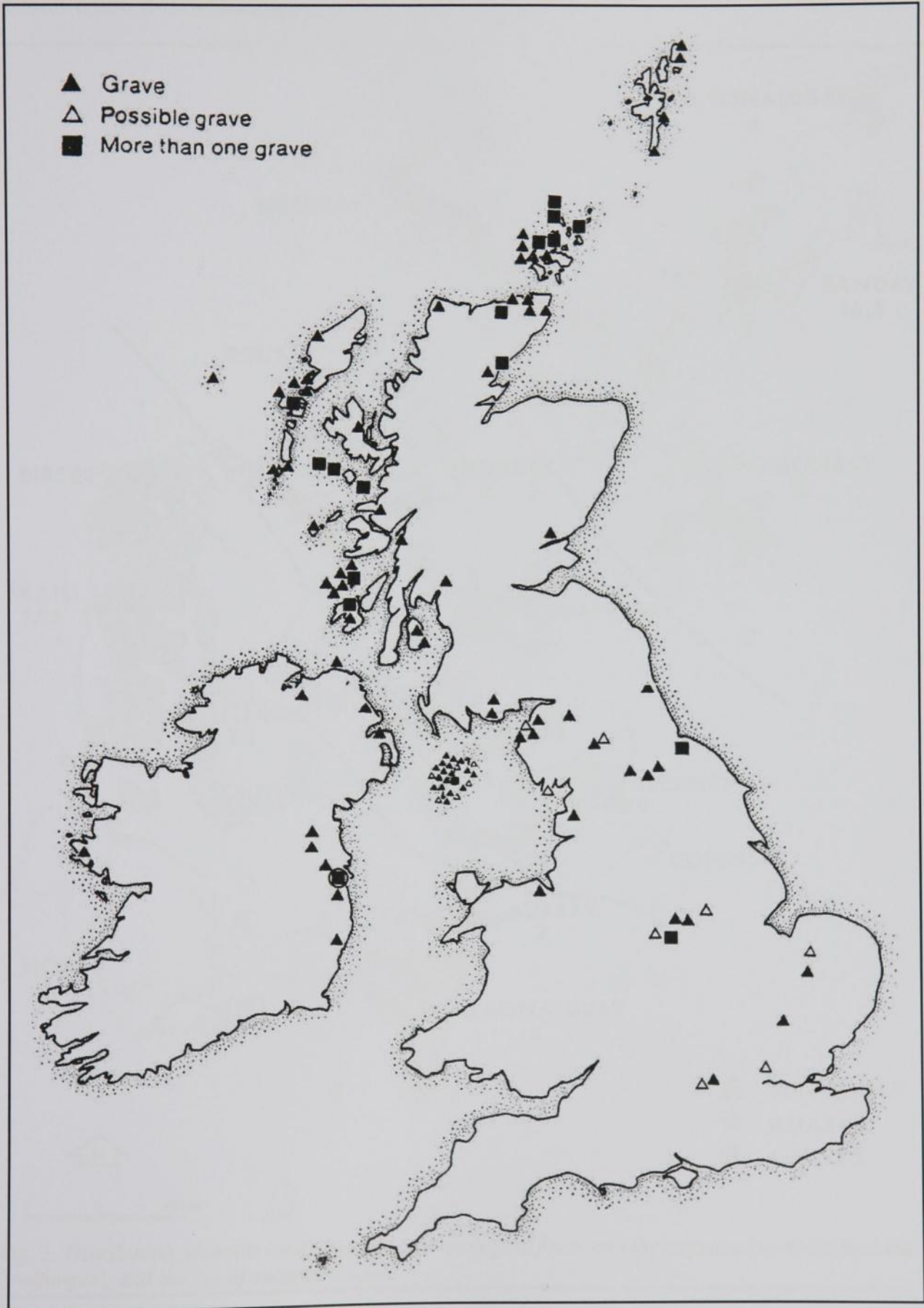


Fig.4.1.2 The Relationship between areas of arable land, Viking Age furnished burials, hoards and settlements on Orkney. After S. H. H. Kaland, 'Some economic aspects of the Orkneys in the Viking period' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* xv (1982), fig.2. Grey areas represent arable land, solid red dots represent burial sites identified by Kaland in 1982, and hollow red circles represent burials identified in the intervening period. No distinction has been made between definite, probable and possible sites.

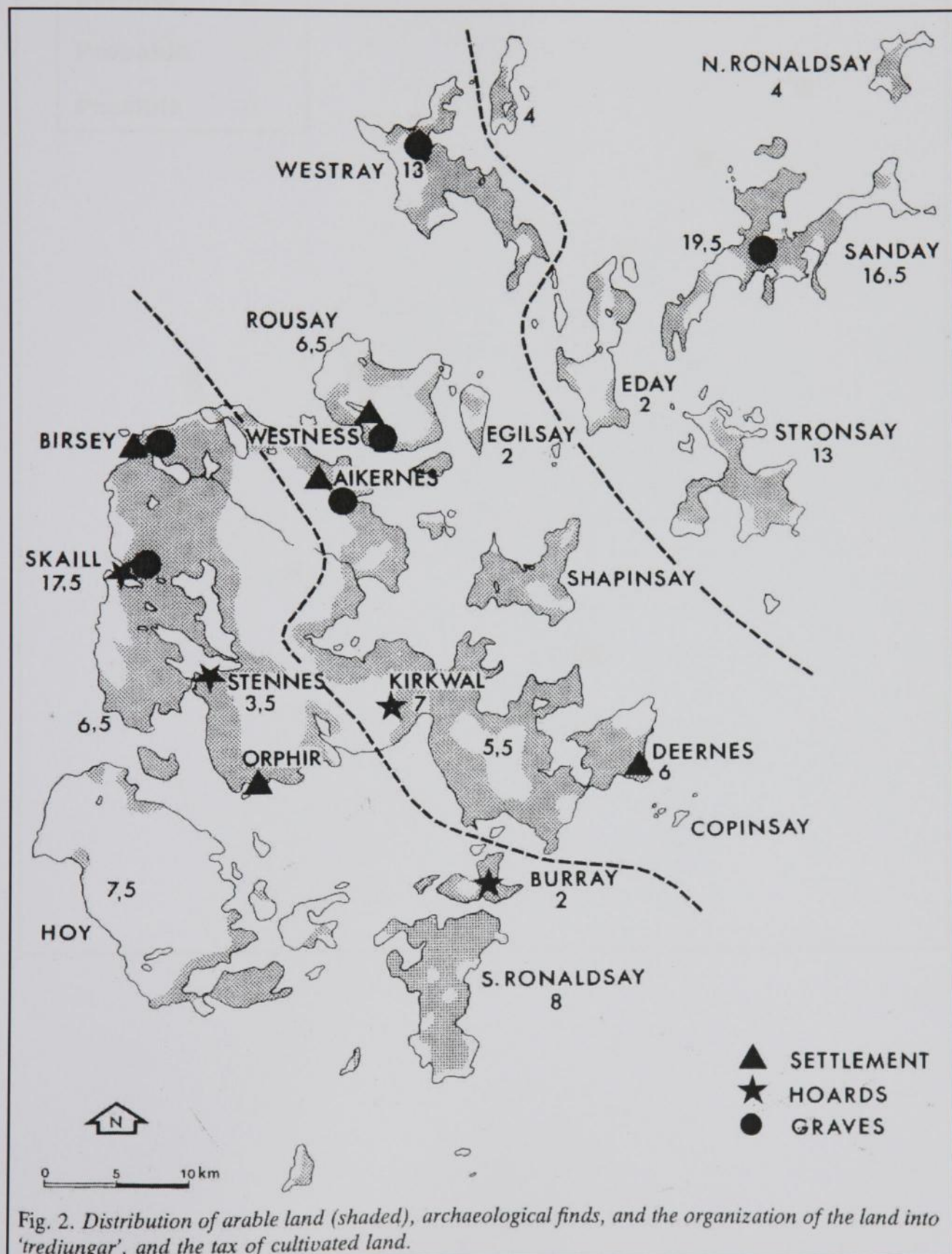


Fig. 2. Distribution of arable land (shaded), archaeological finds, and the organization of the land into 'tredjungar', and the tax of cultivated land.

Fig.4.1.3 Definite, Probable and Possible Burial sites in Orkney. If this map is compared to that produced by Kaland in 1982, it will be noted that burial sites identified since that date continue to correspond to areas of good arable land.

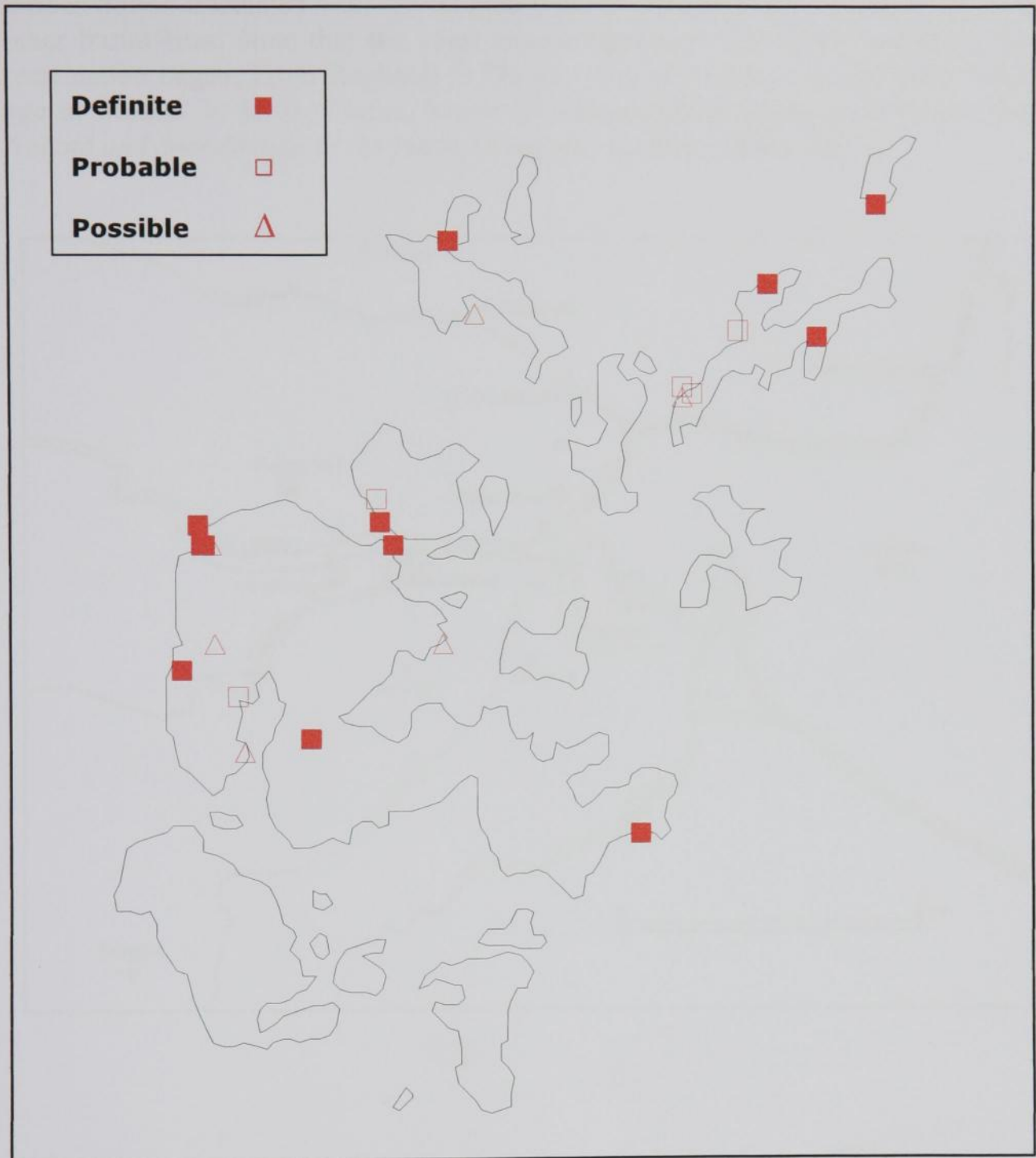


Fig.4.2.1 Map showing furnished insular burials in the Dublin area. Small black dots show single graves while larger grey dots show cemeteries. To these should now be added the small cemeteries at South Great George's Street (182) and Ship Stree Great / Golden Lane, both situated between College Green and Bride Street, and the brooch burial associated with the monastic site of Finglas (172), to the north of the other burial sites. Note that the coast shown represents that before extensive land reclamation began. From Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds) *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), fig.5.1

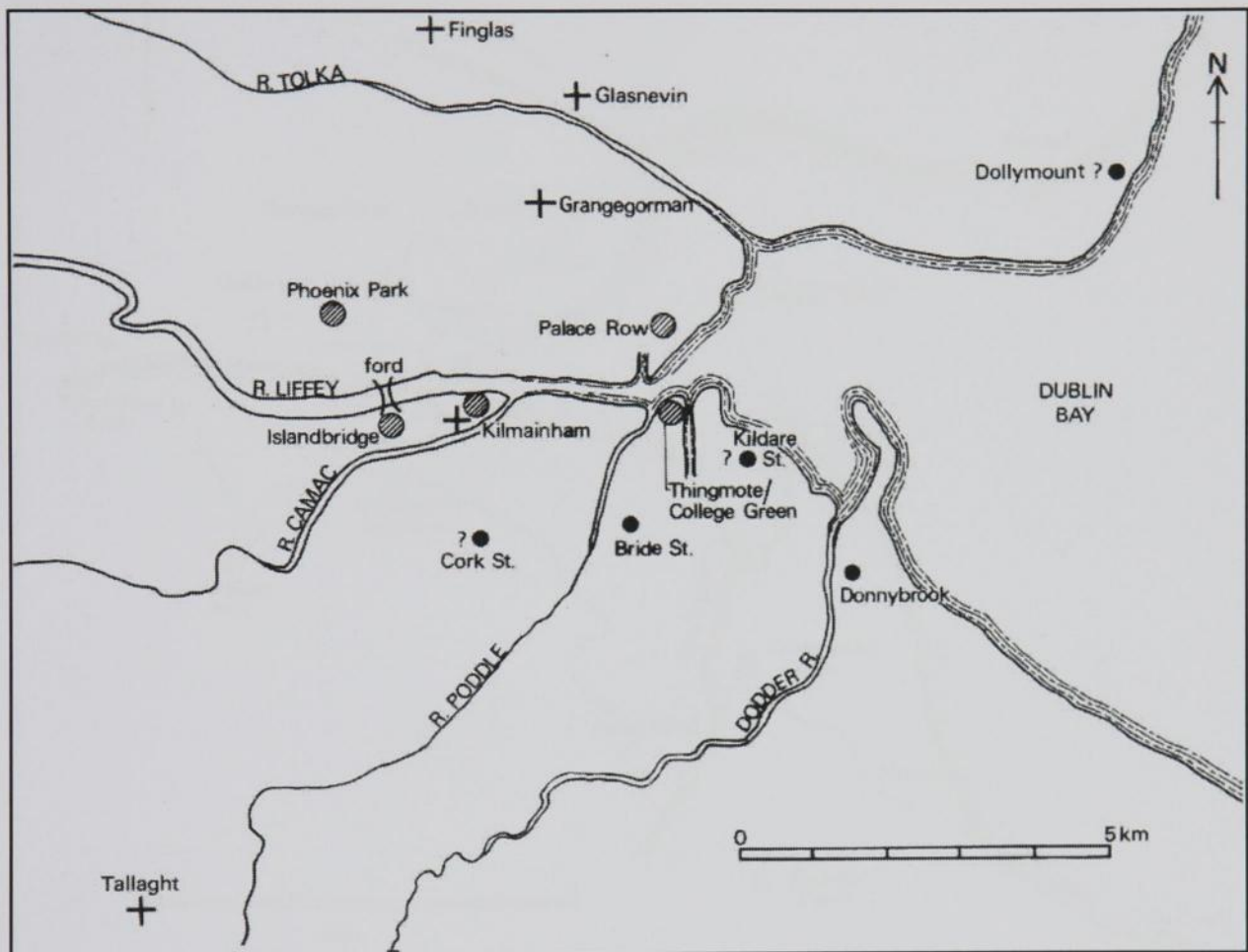


Fig.4.2.2. Map showing the boundaries of the high medieval liberty of Dublin. There is a general correspondence between this boundary and many of the furnished burials that have been found at Dublin, which may have been deliberately placed close to what may be a much older territorial division. Map reproduced from H. B. Clarke, Sarah Dart & Ruth Johnson, *Dublinia: The Story of Medieval Dublin* (Dublin, 2002)(no figure number).

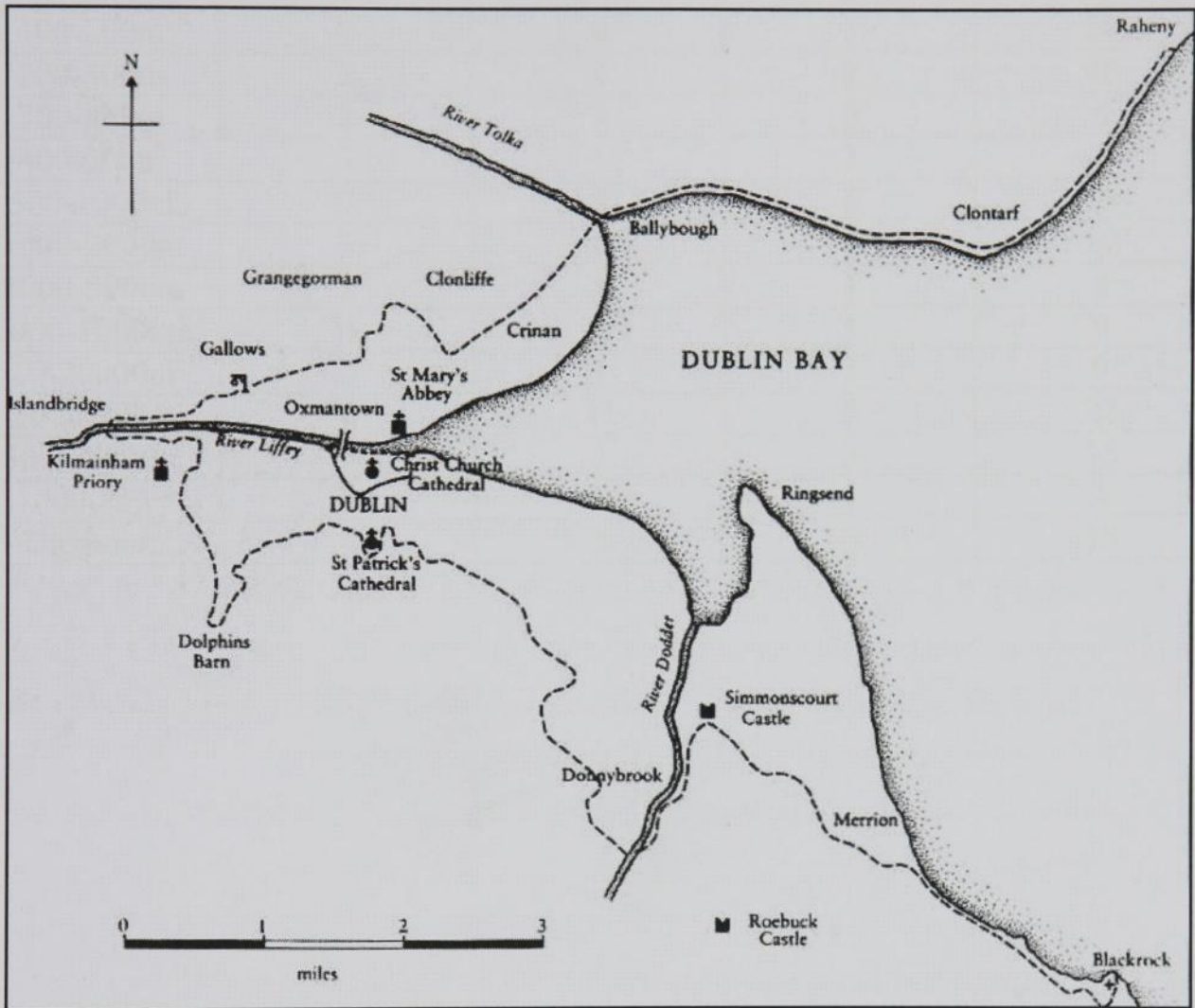


Fig.4.2.3 Table showing distance from high water mark of definite, probable and possible furnished burial sites across Britain and Ireland. This information incorporates information from all six zones (A-F)

Distance Sea	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
Eroding	6	2	2	10
0-10m	4	0	2	6
10-50m	7	1	0	8
50-100m	7	3	3	13
100-200m	9	6	3	18
200-300m	2	4	2	8
300-400m	3	3	0	6
400-500m	3	1	3	7
500-1000m	7	5	6	18
1000-2000m	3	7	9	19
2000-5000m	2	1	1	4
5000-10000m	4	2	3	9
10-20000m	5	1	3	9
20-50000m	6	11	5	22
50-100000m	9	3	3	15
100000m+	3	0	1	4
Unknown	4	5	9	18

Fig.4.2.4 Table showing distance from high water mark of definite, probable and possible insular furnished burial sites in western and northern areas. This information incorporates information from zones A, B, C1 / D1, E & F).

Distance Sea	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
Eroding	6	2	2	10
0-10m	4	0	2	6
10-50m	7	1	0	8
50-100m	7	3	3	13
100-200m	9	6	3	18
200-300m	2	4	2	8
300-400m	3	3	0	6
400-500m	3	1	2	6
500-1000m	6	4	6	16
1000-2000m	3	7	9	19
2000-5000m	2	0	1	3
5000-10000m	4	2	3	9
10-20000m	4	1	2	7
20-50000m	1	7	4	12
50-100000m	0	0	0	0
100000m+	0	0	0	0
Unknown	4	4	9	17

Fig.4.2.5 Table showing distance from high water mark of definite, probable and possible insular furnished burial sites in eastern England. This information incorporates information from zones C2 & D2.

Distance Sea	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
Eroding	0	0	0	0
0-10m	0	0	0	0
10-50m	0	0	0	0
50-100m	0	0	0	0
100-200m	0	0	0	0
200-300m	0	0	0	0
300-400m	0	0	0	0
400-500m	0	0	1	1
500-1000m	1	1	0	2
1000-2000m	0	0	0	0
2000-5000m	0	1	0	1
5000-10000m	0	0	0	0
10-20000m	1	0	1	2
20-50000m	5	4	1	10
50-100000m	9	3	3	15
100000m+	3	0	1	4
Unknown	0	1	0	1

Fig.4.2.6 Table showing height above sea level of definite, probable and possible furnished burial sites throughout Britain and Ireland. This includes burial sites from all zones.

Altitude	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
<10m	31	21	9	61
<20m	20	9	7	36
<30m	7	4	8	19
<40m	5	7	5	17
<50m	4	2	3	9
<100m	5	5	3	13
<200m	6	0	1	7
>200m	0	1	1	2
Unknown	8	6	16	30

Fig.4.2.7 Table showing relationship between furnished burial sites and coastal features in Britain and Ireland.

Feature	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
Bay (Centre)	3	6	3	12
Bay (Edge)	21	8	7	36
Promontory	8	1	2	11
“Distant”	5	2	3	10
Estuary	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	38	18	16	72

Fig.4.2.8 Boat Burials in Britain and Ireland. Note that on this map, symbols relate to the quality of evidence for a boat at specific sites, rather than the quality of evidence for a burial. Both Rubh a' Charnain Mhor and Kingscross Point are definitely burials, for example, but the evidence for a boat at either site is more ambiguous.



Fig. 4.3.1 Definite, Probable and Possible Burial Sites associated with ‘Ancient’ Sites. These examples include sites that have only produced limited evidence for prehistoric activity as well as those that have produced evidence for both ‘ancient’ and ‘Christian’ (i.e. contemporary indigenous) activity.

Previous Activity	Definite	Probable	Possible	Total
Definite ‘Ancient’	9	6	5	20
Possible ‘Ancient’	5	5	8	18
‘Ancient’ and ‘Christian’	3	2	1	6
Total	17	13	14	44

Fig.4.3.2 Rectilinear Pictish Burial Mound at Dunrobin (036: Highland). Definite weapon and brooch graves and an additional possible weapon burial were found in the same general area. This form of site reuse has rather more in common with the more reuse of more demonstrably Christian sites in the area south of the North Channel than the reuse of 'ancient' sites that characterises most monument reuse in zones A & B. After Joanna Close-Brooks, 'Excavations at the Dairy Park, Dunrobin, Sutherland, 1977' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cx (1980), fig.2.

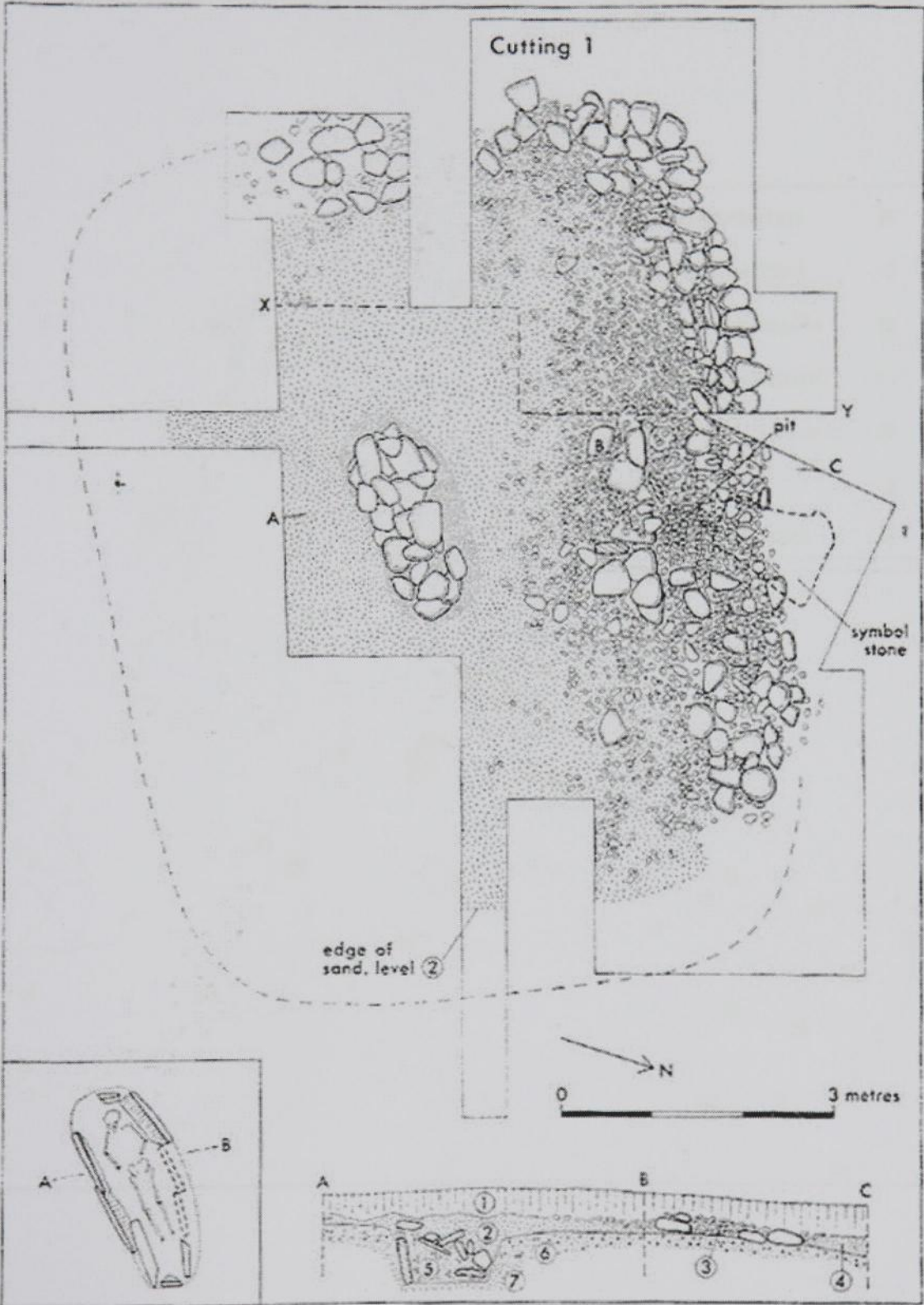


FIG 2 Dunrobin, cutting 1: cairn and long cist. The detail shows the cist after removal of capstones and fill

Fig.4.3.3 Map showing prehistoric, Christian and domestic sites reused for furnished insular Scandinavian burial in the Viking Age. Note the clear division between areas dominated by the reuse of prehistoric and Christian sites, broadly corresponding to the North Channel. Sites with no associations with other activity are marked with an 'x'.

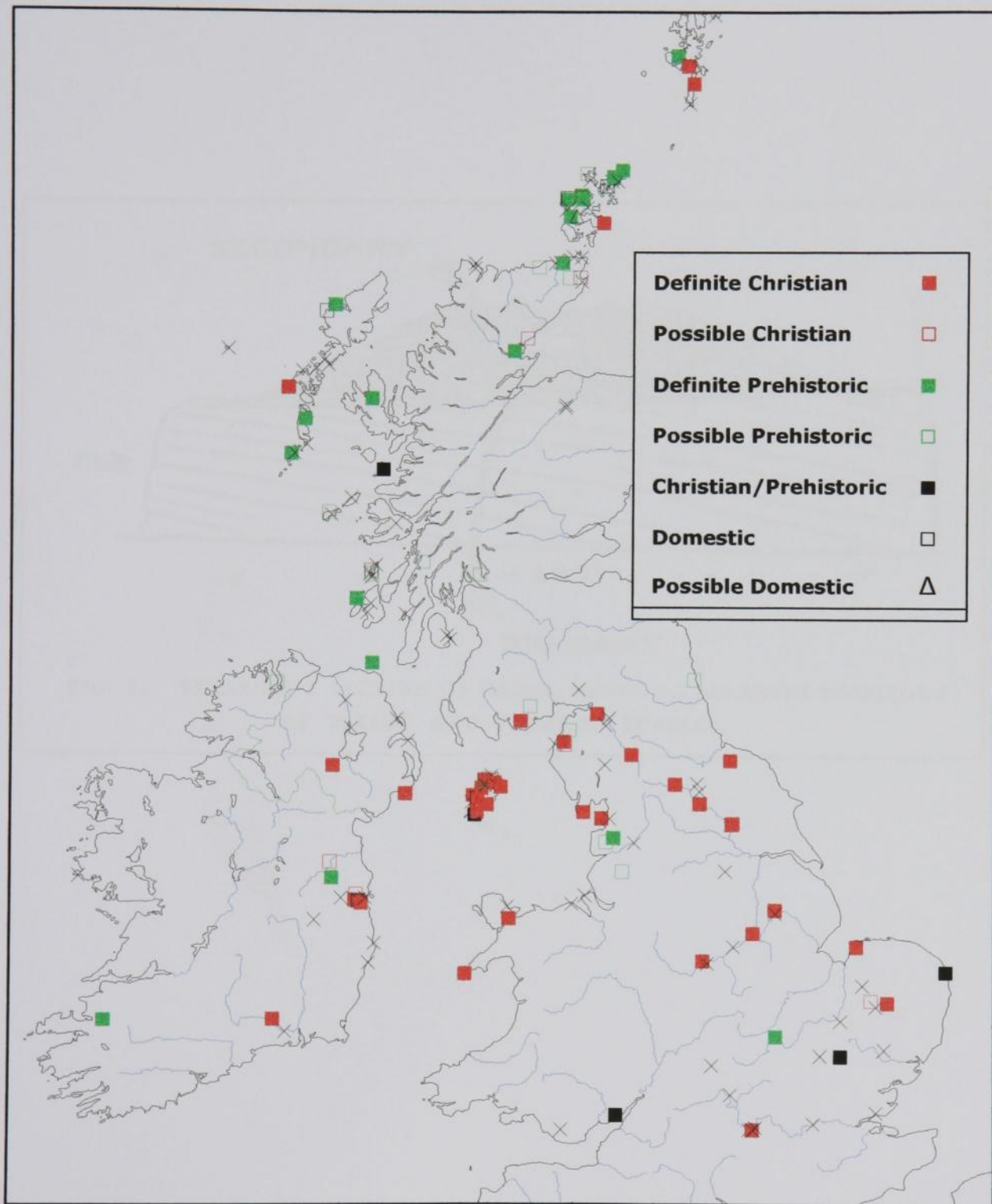


Fig.4.3.4 Cross-section of burial mound at Tote, Skeabost, Skye, excavated by T.C. Lethbridge in 1922. (047: Highland) This is the only visual record of the excavation that has ever been published. Despite its crudity, it clearly shows a Viking age weapon burial, probably a cremation, that has been deposited in the upper levels of this prehistoric mound. After T. C. Lethbridge, 'A burial of the 'Viking age' in Skye' in *The Archaeological Journal* lxxvii (1920), fig.1

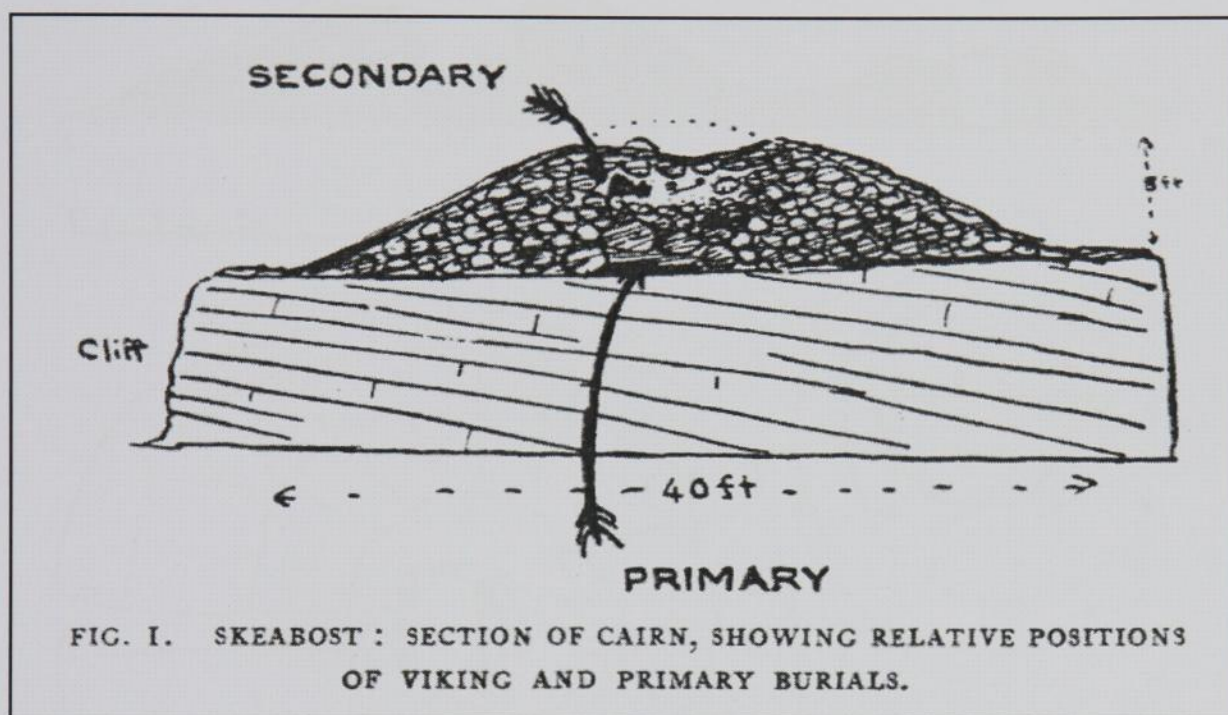


Fig.4.3.5 Plan & section of two adjacent burial mounds at Kildonnan, Eigg, excavated in October 1875. (048.2-3: Highland) The contrast between the quality of these plans and the sketch published by Lethbridge 45 years later is striking (see fig.4.3.6). Their construction is very unusual for the Viking Age. If they are not of prehistoric origin, it seems that were built to imitate them. After Norman MacPherson, 'Notes on antiquities from the isle of Eigg' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xii (1878), figs.12 &13

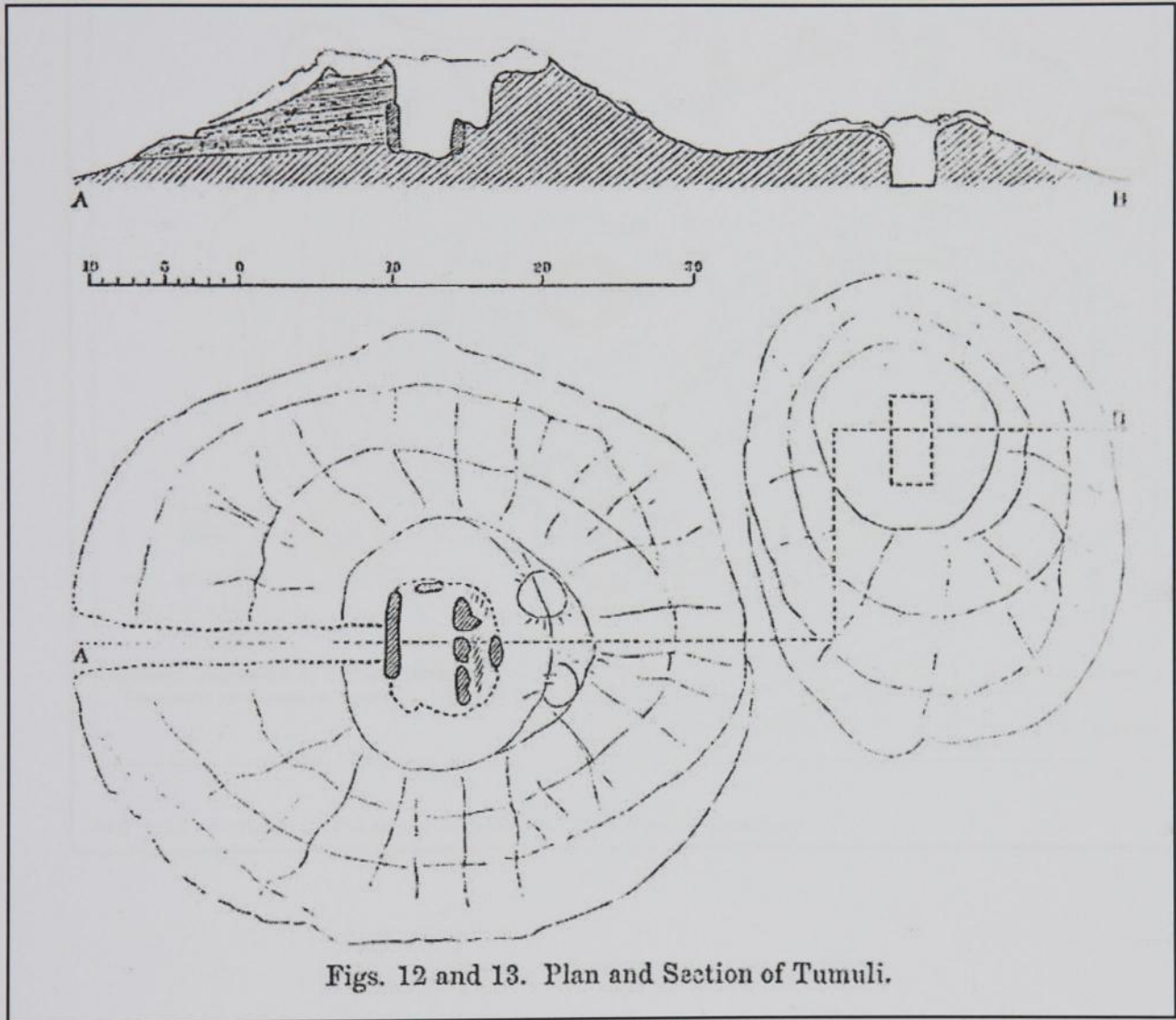


Fig.4.3.6. Simplified Plan of Excavations at the Broch of Gurness, Mainland, Orkney. Two of the seven Viking Age burials proposed by the excavator (V & VI) were rejected in the present study due to lack of evidence. Of the remaining burials, the brooch burial 024.1 corresponds to VII on this plan, the tertiary burial 024.2 corresponds to III, the weapon burials 024.3 & 4 to I & II, and the tertiary burial 024.5 to IV. In all cases, red circles represent definite, orange probable and yellow possible graves. After J. W. Hedges, *Bu, Gurness and the Brochs of Orkney*. BAR British Series clxiv (2 vols, Oxford, 1987), ii, fig.2.15, modified for present study

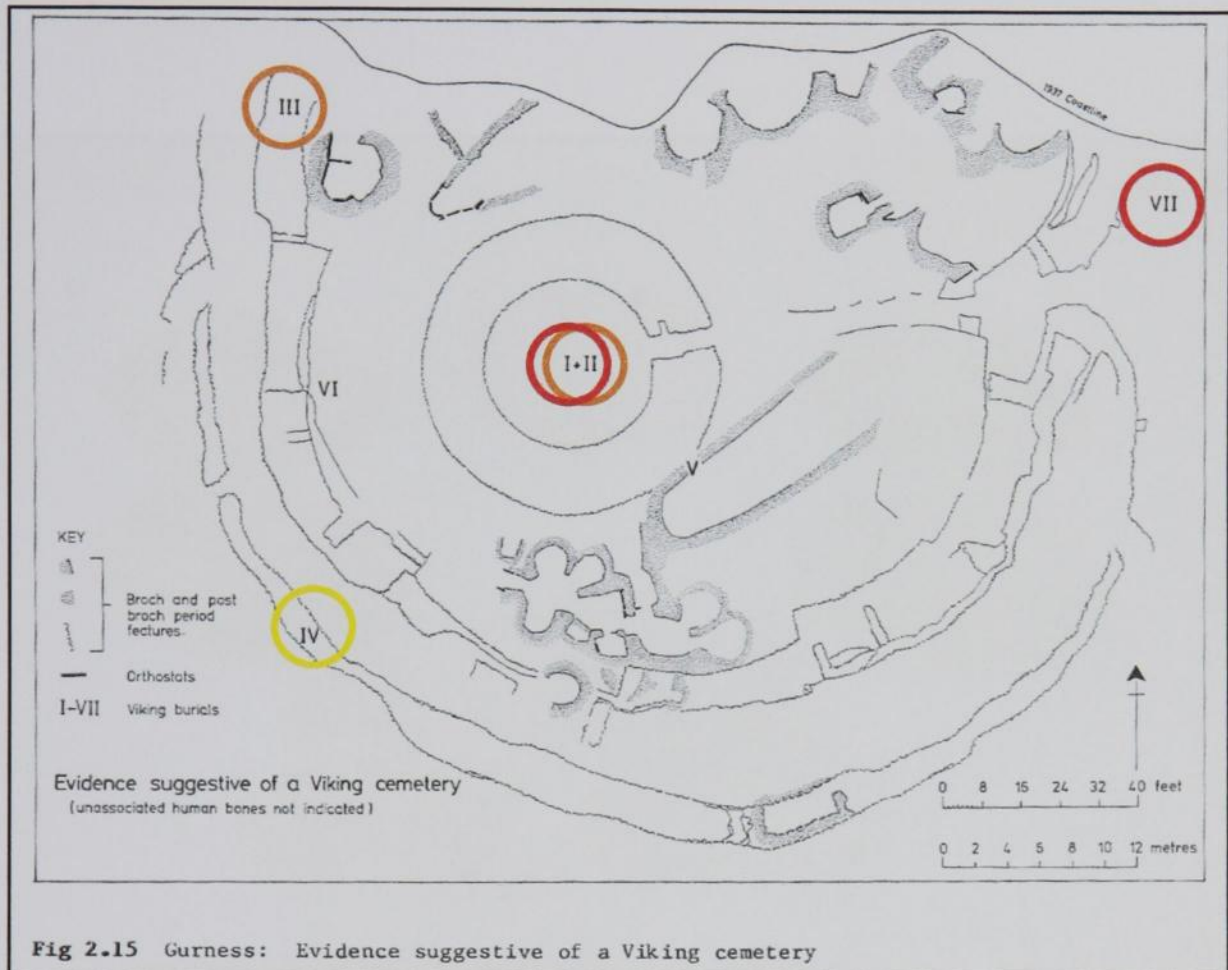


Fig.4.3.7 Watercolour illustration of artefacts found at Claughton Hall, Lancashire, in 1822. (102.1-2). The fact that the two oval brooches from the sites were allegedly found back to back with a number of amulets placed inside them has led to suggestions that they represent some form of ritual deposit. The mound in which these artefacts were found was clearly bronze age in origin, but there is some evidence to suggest that the stone battle axe was deposited with the Viking Age rather than the prehistoric material. Reproduced in J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), pl.19 by courtesy of the Society of antiquaries.



Fig.4.4.1 Stout's adaptation of Simm's 1986 model of an Early Medieval *Túath*. It illustrates the close social, political and economic ties between these secular territories and the ecclesiastical sites which they patronised. From Matthew Stout, *The Irish Ringfort* (Dublin, 1997), fig.3.4

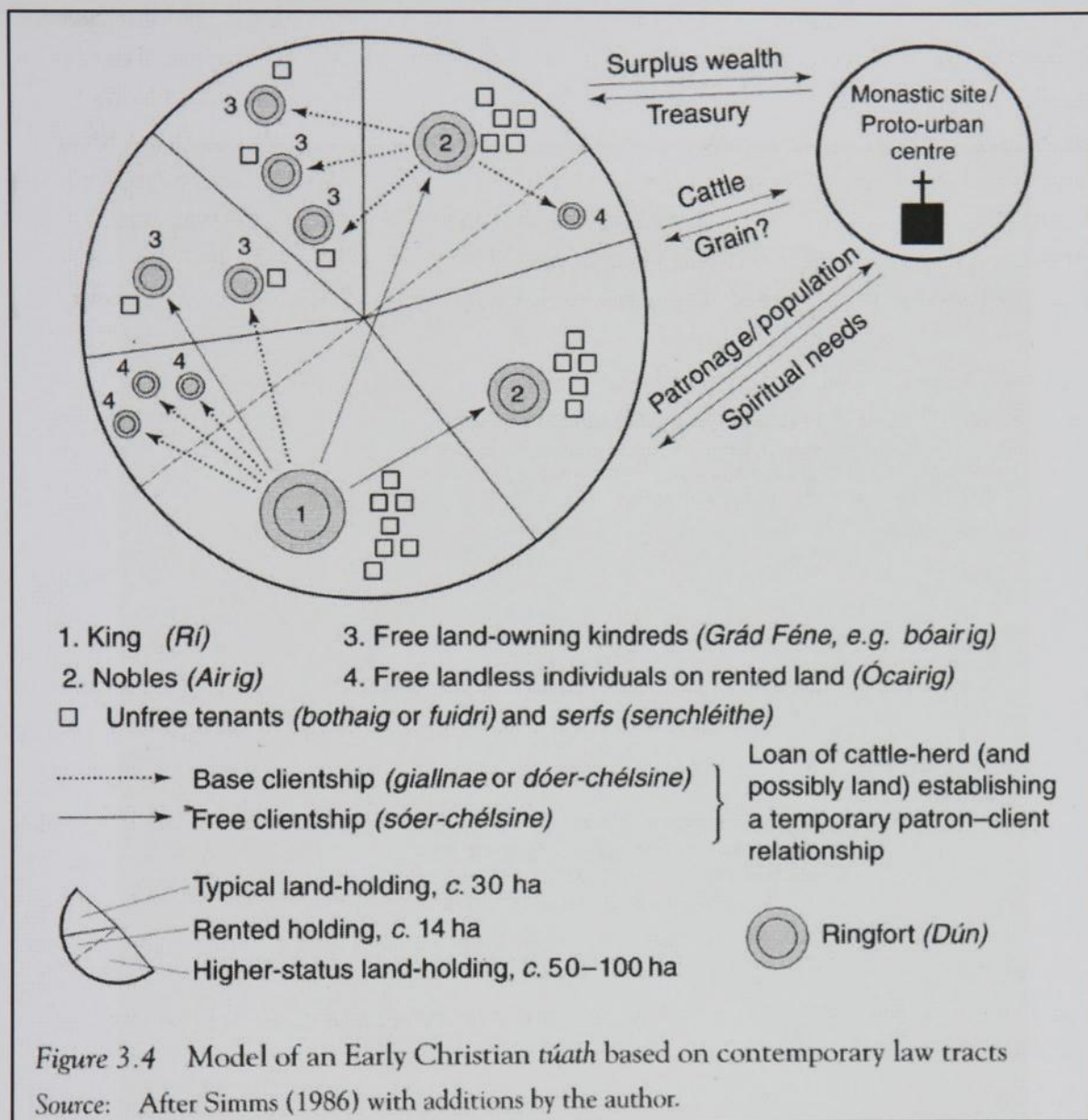


Fig.4.4.2 The boat burial at Balladoole, Man, under excavation. (167). This view clearly shows the damage caused to the underlying, high-status cist graves that underlay the mound. It has been suggested that this destruction was a deliberate demonstration of the authority of those who constructed the boat burial at this site. Others have argued that this juxtaposition is no more than coincidence. Image from D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence* (Odense, 1974), fig.10.

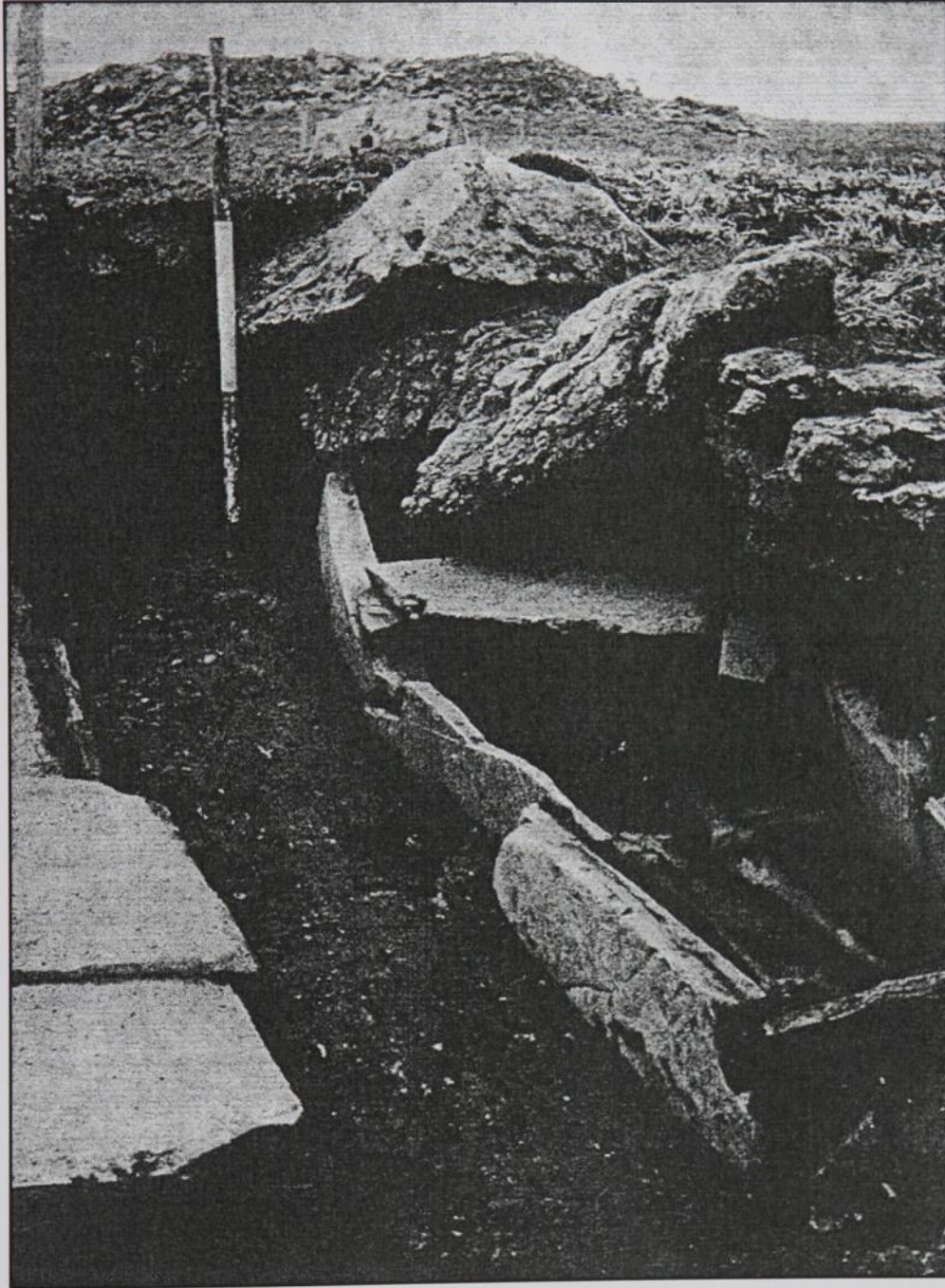
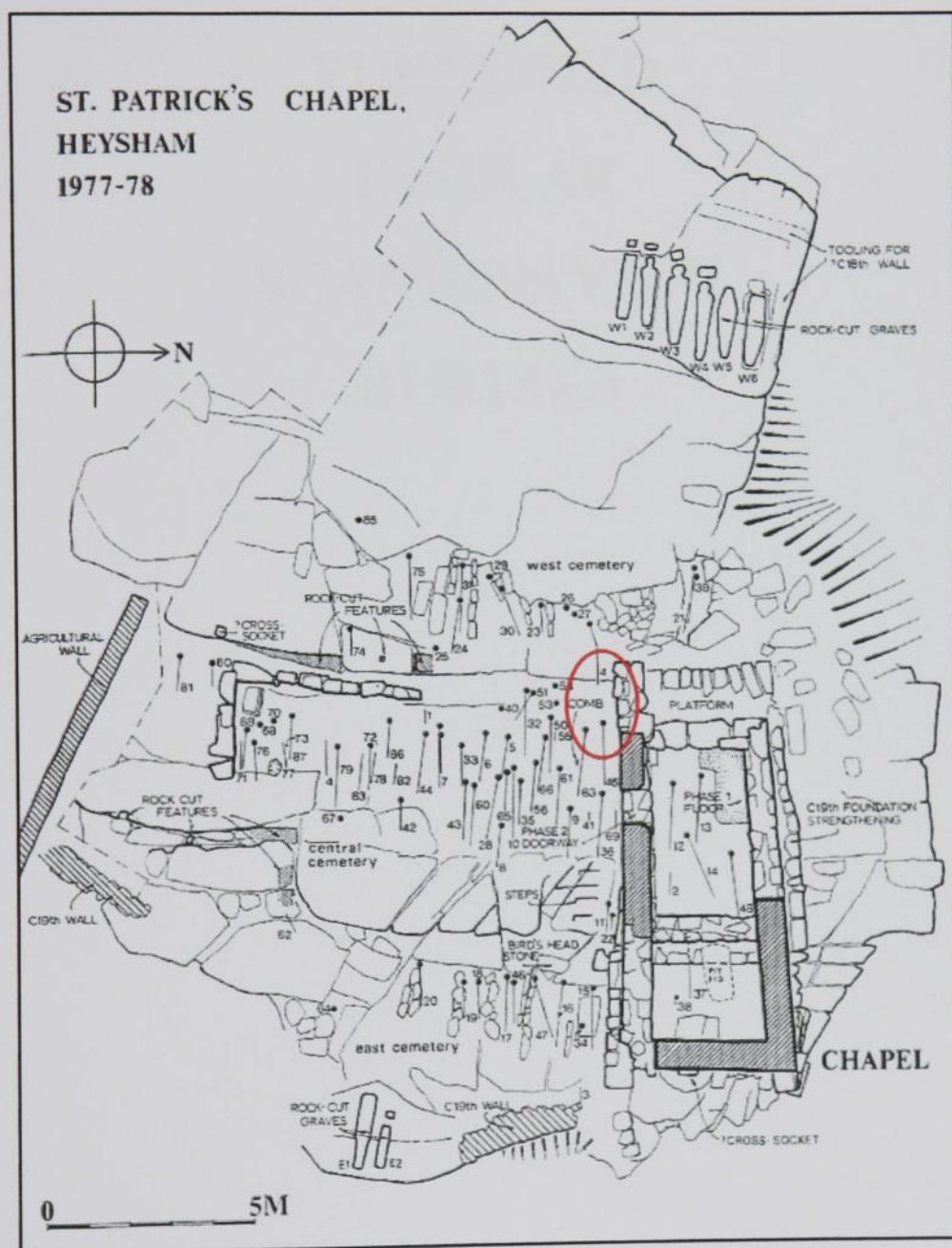
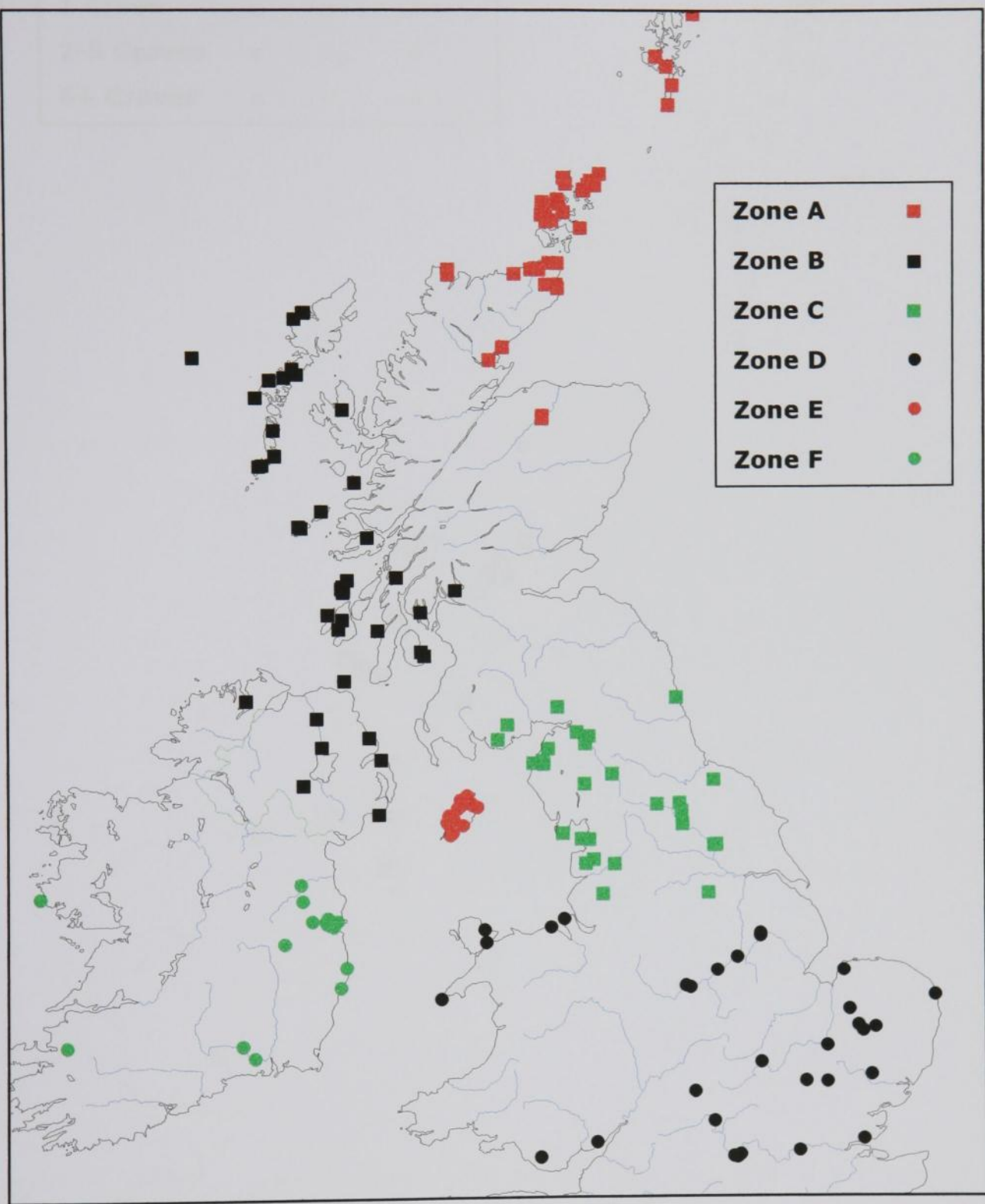


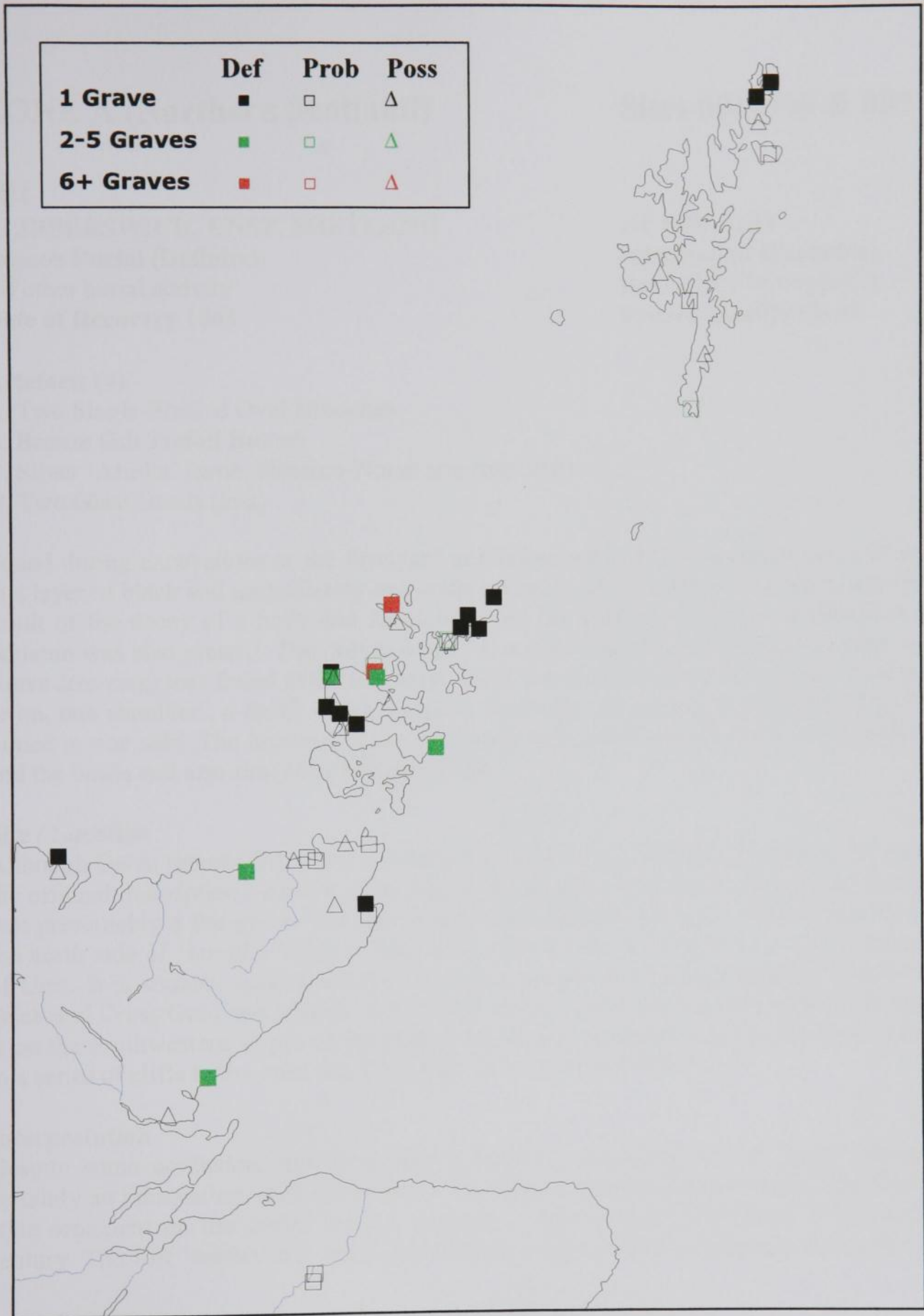
Fig.4.4.3 Plan of the excavations at Heysham, Lancashire. (107.2) A tertiary burial accompanied by a single comb (here circled in red) has been placed close to the entrance to St Patrick's Chapel, close to the centre of a Christian cemetery. In contrast to the situation at Balladoole, no unfurnished burials were disturbed during the excavation of this more modestly furnished grave. After T. W. Potter & R. D. Andrews, 'Excavation and survey at St Patrick's Chapel and St Peter's Church, Heysham, Lancashire, in 1977-8' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxiv (1994), fig.



**A
CATALOGUE
OF
FURNISHED
INSULAR
SCANDINAVIAN
BURIALS**

Catalogue Map - Zones A (001-046 & 085), B (047-088), C (090-118 & 190), D (119-149 & 189), E (150-169) & F (170-188 & 191-194)





Map – Zone A Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Northern Scotland. These burials correspond to Catalogue Entries 001-046 & 089.

ZONE A (Northern Scotland)

Sites 001-046 & 089

001

CLIBBERSWICK, UNST, SHETLAND

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No other burial activity

Date of Recovery 1863

HP 6482 1238

Inhumation (Probable)

Earth-Cut Flat Grave (?)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

A. Two Single-Shelled Oval Brooches

B. Bronze Gilt Trefoil Brooch

C. Silver 'Armlet' (prob. Hiberno-Norse arm ring: lost)

D. Two Glass Beads (lost)

Found during excavations at the farmyard at Clibberswick, all the artefacts were found in a layer of black soil immediately above the bedrock. Irvine believed this layer was the result of the decay of a body and its clothes, but his description makes it clear that a skeleton was also present. The 'silver armlet' (recently identified as a possible Hiberno-Norse arm-ring) was found at the left wrist, while the oval brooches were found 'near to, or on, one shoulder', a detail which suggests the body was supine, but perhaps slightly turned to one side. The location of the two beads and trefoil brooch were not recorded, and the beads and arm-ring have both been lost.¹

Site / Location

Although Owen reports that a low mound c.5 x 3m is locally identified as the burial site, the original description makes it clear that it was found within the farmyard, and that it was presumably a flat grave. The site is just below the 20m contour, 400m inland from the north side of Harold's Wick, a 3km deep indentation on the east coast of the island of Unst. It is situated approximately mid-way between two modern beaches (Harold's Wick and Cross Geo) and affords views south and east over the Harold's Wick. The site is on the southwestern slopes of the Hill of Clibberswick, which rises to 160m and falls in a series of cliffs to the open sea 1.5-2.0km to the east and northeast.

Interpretation

Despite some confusion, this is clearly a modestly furnished brooch burial, almost certainly an inhumation, with no evidence for either a mound or stone lining. The Borre style ornament on the trefoil brooch suggests a date in the second half of the ninth century. The lost 'armlet' has been identified as a plain Hiberno-Viking arm-ring by J.

¹ Anon., 'Proceedings of the Society June 10' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* xix (1863), pp 312-4; Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940) p.105; Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.4; Anon., 'Purchases for the Museum, December 11, 1882', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xvii (1883), pp 17-18

Graham-Campbell, and is the only example from a definite grave in the British Isles. A definite brooch burial.²

002

MUCKLE HEOG, UNST, SHETLAND

Brooch Burial (Possible)

Two prehistoric mounds c.250m S

Date of Recovery Before 1874

HP 6308 1108

Inhumation (Possible)

No Details of Grave

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two Oval Brooches

In 1874, Anderson noted that: 'In one of the graves opened on the Meikle Heog (*sic*) (but it is uncertain which) two beautiful circular bronze brooches of the Scandinavian form were found.' Although these seem to have been oval brooches, they are not included in a list of Scottish examples presented later in the same paper. Although this may be a simple oversight, it casts doubt on this burial, particularly as the brooches were lost following the break-up of the Lerwick Museum in 1882. The assumption that it was an inhumation rests solely on Anderson's use of the term 'grave'.³

A number of artefacts from an unidentified brooch grave on Unst were acquired by the NMA in 1893, but there is no direct evidence to link these artefacts to this site (see 004).

Site / Location

The RCAHMS has tentatively identified the burial site as a mound called 'Harold's Grave', one of three burial mounds on Muckle Heog, but the evidence for this association is morphological and linguistic, and somewhat tenuous. If one of the mounds in this area is a Viking burial, its situation is highly unusual, in that it is over a kilometre SW of the southern side of the sea at the head of Harold's Wick, with no clear view of the bay, despite an elevation of c.80m. It does, however, provide a clear view north to the flat land at the head of that inlet. Two cairns, presumably prehistoric, are situated less than 250m south, and on higher ground.⁴

Interpretation

The exclusion of these (lost) artefacts from Anderson's main list of oval brooches, the vague nature of the record, and the altitude of the proposed site all indicate that this should be classified as a possible brooch grave. One of the other graves in area produced a number of steatite vessels, but Anderson's confident association of these with the Viking Age can no longer be sustained. A possible brooch burial⁵

² James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.154; idem, *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1995), p.154

³ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), p.543, fn.3.

⁴ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) Site Number HP61SW 19 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁵ Anderson, 'Relics', p.543

003

LEE of CLIVOCAST, UNST, SHETLAND

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Standing Stone Nearby

Date of Recovery 1875

HP 6042 0053

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. 'Armour'

According to the unpublished Ordnance Survey Name Book, human remains, armour, and a quantity of ashes were found under a mound at this site in 1875. This is the only record of a possible Viking burial in the area. The site was visited by RCAHMS in 1930 and 1969, with the mound being slightly more reduced on each occasion. Local tradition associating the site with the grave of Haraldr Harfager's son is not in itself evidence for a furnished burial. A standing stone is less than 100m from the site, and up slope from it. There is no evidence that the 'armour' mentioned in the Ordnance Survey Name Book, was collected at the time of discovery.⁶

Site / Location

The NGR given by RCAHMS is on the S coast of Unst and just over 100m from the cliffs on the N shore of Skuda Sound, which is c.600m wide at this point. The Sound separates small island of Uyea from Unst and provides access to the sheltered head of Uyea Sound from the E. The site was close to the 30m contour and immediately below a Standing Stone. The site provides clear views across the Sound to the S and E, but views to the W and the sheltered head of the Sound are very much more restricted. The site is on the lower slopes of a slight ridge which rises over 50m, restricting views to the N.

Interpretation

While it is possible that this site was originally a weapon grave beneath a low tumulus, the quality of the record is very poor, and the 'armour' may well have been the remnants of almost any weapons. Nonetheless, a possible weapon grave.

004

UNKNOWN SITE, UNST, SHETLAND

Brooch Burial (Probable)

No evidence other Burial Activity

Date of Recovery 1861

Artefacts (3)

A. Oval Brooch

B. Copper Alloy Balance Case ('Circular Box/Cup')

C. Serpentine Button

C. HP 600 080

Inhumation (Probable)

No Information on Graves

Record Quality Poor

⁶ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database Site Number HP60SW 7 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007))

All of these artefacts were found in a Viking grave at an unspecified site on Unst in 1861, and passed to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland following the sale of the Bateman collection in 1893. There are no details of their original context, but it seems probable that they came from a burial. Both Brøgger & Grieg identified the 'cup of bronze' as the case for a balance, but no other related artefacts were found. While it was possible that the balance box had found another 'secondary' use before burial, the fact that only one oval brooch was preserved suggests that Bateman acquired only part of the original assemblage.⁷

Site / Location

These brooches can only be provenanced to Unst. As they came from the Bateman collection in 1893, there is a faint possibility that the brooch is one of those found at Muckle Heog, allegedly sold at the break-up of the Lerwick Museum in 1882 (see 002). However, the presence of a number of other artefacts in this assemblage, and a discrepancy in dates suggest that these finds represent another 'lost' burial.

Interpretation

There is sufficient evidence to classify this find as a probable brooch grave, one of the few with a balance box.

005.1-2

NEWARK, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

2 Tertiary Burials (Definite & Possible)

Associated Christian cemetery

Date of Recovery 1970s

HY57460413

Inhumations (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2: Avg. 1 / grave)

A. Jet-like bracelet

B. Antler comb

The only published references to these graves occur in two articles by Barrett. Both were found during the excavation of a Christian cemetery with Pictish origins which continued in use until the high middle ages, both dates being derived from radiocarbon samples of skeletons. A total of 250 burials were found in association with a mid-tenth century east-west structure that was presumably a church. Of these graves, one, either 69/104A or 69/104B, contained a 'jet-like' bracelet, while another, 70/28, may have been associated with a Pictish comb. As this latter artefact was found c.40cm from the skeleton's skull however, this association is not absolutely certain. Both graves appear to have been east-west and earth-cut, but no further information is available.⁸

⁷ Anon., 'Purchases for the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xvii (1883), pp 17-18; A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), p.116; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.103

⁸ J. H. Barrett, 'Radiocarbon dating and marine reservoir correction of Viking age Christian burials from Orkney' in *Antiquity* lxxiv (2000) 537-543; J. H. Barrett, 'Christian and pagan practice during the conversion of Viking age Orkney and Shetland' in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North* (York, 2003), pp 207-26

NB – This number was re-allocated at a late phase in this study and despite its place in the sequence, is associated with Orkney, not Shetland.

Site / Location

This extant burial site is now located in an area of eroding shoreline above a rock-cut shelf, on comparatively flat land below the 10m contour. Despite the erosion, it must always have been located close to the end of the beach at the head of Newark Bay, and afforded views west across the Bay, and potentially southwest along the SE coast of Mainland towards Holm Sound.

Interpretation

Despite some confusion, there is sufficient evidence to classify the burial with the bracelet as a definite tertiary grave. The burial with the comb is more problematic, and has been classified as a possible tertiary burial, primarily because the comb is Pictish rather than Scandinavian and its date is consequently uncertain. The closest parallels for this material come from rather further south, within the Danelaw.

006

KIRK OF ST. OLA, MAINLAND, SHETLAND

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Associated Christian cemetery

Date of Recovery 1938

HU 3866 4442

Inhumation (Probable)

No Information

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Axe

In 1938, a Viking Age axe was discovered in the graveyard associated with St Ola's church, at Whiteness, Mainland. Despite being excluded from Grieg's survey, a brief reference to the find was made by Shetelig in 1945, when he misread St Ola as St Olaf. While there is some chance that the site may have been rededicated, the cemetery has produced fragments of a cross shaft and ogham inscriptions which demonstrate that it predates the latter saint's martyrdom in 1030, and must already have been in existence when the axe was deposited.⁹

Site / Location

On the west coast of Mainland, this cemetery site is situated on a narrow north-south peninsula called White Ness, between Whiteness Voe and Stromness Voe. A small stream flows less than hundred metres to the south of the site, emptying into Stenness Voe approximately 200m to the ESE. The altitude is 30-40m and there is a sharp drop to the shore, while there is higher ground to both the north and south. Neither shore is particularly sheltered, but as the narrow inlets are less than 700m wide, they may have provided some shelter.

Interpretation

⁹ Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.4; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU34SE 3 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

A probable weapon grave, presumably disturbed, but deposited within what was clearly a Christian context. The shore below the site is not particularly sheltered, but the Voe itself is only 700m wide at that point and may have provided a reasonably sheltered haven, the open sea being some distance to the south.

007

MAIL CEMETERY, MAINLAND, SHETLAND

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Adjoining Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1993

HU 4325 2790

Unknown (Inhumation?)

Disturbed?

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Strap End

B. Comb

C. Spindle Whorl / Bead

While carrying out excavations for a new car park adjoining the cemetery at Mail, Dunrossness (Mainland), a number of artefacts were recovered, including a Viking Age strap end. While no traces of a burial were found in association with this find, its proximity to a cemetery of considerable antiquity, as demonstrated by the presence of a Class I Pictish stone, may suggest that it originally formed part of a furnished burial at this site. Graham-Campbell and Batey noted that the same site also produced a Norse antler comb and a stone spindle whorl, although none of these can be directly linked to burials.¹⁰

Site / Location

Situated on the east coast of Mainland, Shetland, the cemetery with which this find is associated is situated on a small (c.200m) promontory between two south-facing sandy bays. It is below the 10m contour, on a comparatively flat plain c.2km NS and 1km E-W, bordered by the Hill of Skeomire (247m) and associated features to the west, Aith Voe to the east, and Aithsetter North Scoo (74m) to the north.

Interpretation

Despite the lack of evidence for human remains in association with the find, it is possible that the strap end represents a modestly furnished, disturbed grave associated with a pre-existing cemetery. The additional finds do not alter this tentative identification of a single possible tertiary inhumation.

008.01

SUMBURGH AIRPORT, MAINLAND, SHETLAND

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No known Associations

Date of Recovery Before 1945

HU 3926 1061

Inhumation

No evidence mound

Record Quality Poor

¹⁰ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.64; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU42NW 5 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (& Scabbard)

D. Shield Boss (cooking pot?)

According to the curator of the Lerwick Museum, a 'grave said to contain an iron sword and scabbard, broken in three pieces, a small cooking pot, and part of a human skull, was found whilst bulldozing the site for Sumburgh Airport Control tower during the Second World War'. Unfortunately, both artefacts have been lost in the interim, but the description strongly suggests a weapon burial, with the 'cooking pot' presumably referring to a shield boss.¹¹

Site / Location

Sumburgh Airport is located approximately 2km from the southern tip of Mainland, in the parish of Dunrossness. The control tower occupies a central position, being approximately 400m from the Pool of Virkie to the north, and 300m from an equally sheltered (but today rather deeper) bay to the south. The site is situated just above the 10m contour, and would originally have had clear views inland to the N in particular. The later Norse settlement of Jarlshof, however, is on the eastern shore of the southern bay.

The spatial relationship between this burial and the woman's grave from the same site (008.2) is not understood.

Interpretation

Despite the poor quality of the record and the fact that the artefacts have been lost, the association of an iron sword, broken into three pieces, with human remains are such that this burial has been classed as probable rather than possible.

008.2

SUMBURGH AIRPORT, MAINLAND, SHETLAND

Brooch Burial (Probable)

No known Associations

Date of Recovery Before 1945

c. HU 3926 1061

Inhumation (Possible)

No evidence mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Oval Brooch

Like the weapon burial found at the site of the control tower (008.01), this possible burial was discovered while constructing the airport and associated buildings during the Second World War. The relevant entry in CANMORE notes that the Accession Register

¹¹ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU31SE 18 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

of the Shetland Museum, consulted in 1968, contained a 'Viking tortoise brooch' (*sic*) discovered at Sumburgh Airport during the Second World War.¹²

Site / Location

Unlike the male grave from this area, the precise site of this burial cannot be identified, although the fact that it was discovered while laying a water pipe suggests it may have been found close to some buildings, and hence reasonably close to the first grave (008.01). The NGR given here is based on 008.1 and must be regarded as an approximation

Interpretation

Given the rarity of oval brooches from non-funerary contexts, this brooch represents a probable brooch grave, although the (three line) entry in the Shetland Museum Catalogue makes no specific reference to human remains.

009

WEISDALE, MAINLAND, SHETLAND

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Prehistoric (Burnt?) Mound

Date of Recovery c.1862

HU 3956 5345

Unknown

Circular / Crescentic Mound

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Whetstone

B. Glass Bead

An enigmatic record of a small perforated whetstone and a blue and white glass bead which were discovered in 1862 or 1863, within a mound of burnt stones, described as circular and hollow at the centre when visited in 1930, but crescentic when visited in 1968. An 'urn' was found at the same time as the whetstone and bead, and in the early 1930s some other prehistoric artefacts from the site were presented to the NMAS. Graham-Campbell and Batey note that the site has the local name of 'Fairy Knowe', and suggest that it represents a 'possible secondary burial' in a prehistoric mound.¹³

Site / Location

The 'burnt mound' at Weisdale is clearly marked on modern OS 1:10,000 maps. It is situated approximately 100m west of the Burn of Weisdale, on the floor of this c.500m wide glacial valley. The head of the c.6km long Weisdale Voe is c.1.1km south of the site and would have provided a safe landing place. The mound is close to the 20m contour on the west side of the valley, above which hills rise to 260m and 176m on the west and east sides of the valley respectively.

¹² RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU31SE 20 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

¹³ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum, Monday, 14 March 1932' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lxxvi (1932), p.213; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.64; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU35SE 1 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Interpretation

Although the record quality is poor, these finds represent a possible tertiary grave within a prehistoric structure that may have resembled a burial mound by the time it was used by the insular Scandinavian community. Graham-Campbell and Batey have pointed to similarities between this find and the child's burial from Cnip (Lewis; 050.2).¹⁴

010

WICK OF AITH, FETLAR, SHETLAND

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

None Known

Date of Recovery mid 20th century

HU 6391 8996

Unknown

Linear Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

- A. Fragment of Copper Alloy Plate and Rivet (?) (lost)
- B. 'Several dozen' iron (boat) rivets (some lost)

Local traditions identifying this prominent mound as a 'Giant's Grave' gradually changed to identifying it as that of a 'Viking'. The oval mound was 10.7 x 5.5m when it was visited in 1989. The site was investigated at some point before 1969, when a boat-shaped line of stones was discovered, together with a number of rivets and some fragments of wood. The copper alloy plate from the site was acquired by the NMAS in 1932, and suggests the mound had been disturbed before these investigations took place.¹⁵

Site / Location

This burial is situated on the shore of the Wick of Aith, approximately half way along the northern shore of the Wick of Tresta, which divides Lamb Hoga from the rest of the island of Fetlar. The linear mound is orientated NE SW, parallel to the north shore of the Wick of Aith, which it overlooks together with the beach at the its head, c.300m to the east. A small inlet immediately below the mound is unlikely to have served as harbour, given the steep slope leading down to it. The mound itself is situated close to the 10m contour, but is less than 50m from the sea.

Interpretation

Although the poor quality of the record makes this site difficult to interpret, it can be classified as a probable tertiary grave, and it also seems very likely that it represents a boat burial, from which only a handful of artefacts have been recovered.

¹⁴ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.64

¹⁵ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HU68NW 1 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

011

HOWAR, N. RONALDSAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

None Known

Date of Recovery 1939 -1945

HY 7607 5140

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Copper Alloy Penannular Brooch

B. Spindle whorl / bead

According to CANMORE, this site was discovered during the Second World War, the find spot being re-identified in the 1970s. Some stones discovered at this time may originally have been associated with the inhumation, which was discovered in the clay face of a coastal cliff, and was accompanied by a copper alloy penannular brooch and a whorl or ring of vitreous material: presumably either a spindle whorl or bead.¹⁶

Site / Location

While the coast in this area has clearly suffered some erosion, this burial must originally have been situated very close to the cliff edge. The site is at the southwestern corner of Strom Ness, the southernmost peninsula of North Ronaldsay, overlooking the approaches to South Bay and with a view south across the North Ronaldsay Firth to the northeastern end of Sanday. The sites elevation is less than 10m. It is nearly 700m from the southern end of the beach at the head of South Bay and c.200m from the broch and associated features at the southeastern corner of Stromness.

Interpretation

Despite the poor quality of the record, this is one of the few definite tertiary burials in this study, as well as one of the few isolated examples. The brooch is of insular origin, but the whorl/bead is rather more ambiguous.

012.1 & 012.2

SCAR, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Weapon & Tertiary Burials (Both Definite)

Pre-existing Feature

Date of Recovery November - December 1991

HY 6780 4584

Inhumations (Definite)

Oval Mound

Record Quality Very Good

Artefacts (17)

A. >300 boat rivets (vessel c.6.3m long)

B. Sword (double-edged; broken)

C. Equal-armed brooch

D. 8 arrows

E. 22 gaming pieces

F. Tinned bronze mount

¹⁶ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY75SE 2 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

- G. Whalebone plaque
- H. 2 spindle whorls
- I. 2 combs
- J. Iron shears
- K. Needle tidy
- L. Sickle
- M. Maplewood box
- N. Iron handle
- O. Copper alloy mount
- P. 2 lead weights
- Q. Bead (glass)

Threatened by erosion, the site was professionally excavated in 1991, when a boat burial containing three inhumations was discovered towards the northern end of an oval mound originally c.18m x 12m and 1m high. This mound had built up around the remains of a pre-existing wall, and was already in existence when the burial was placed in it. Orientated approximately E-W, the boat was placed parallel to the shore, and its northern side had been eroded before excavation began. At some point, the burial was further disturbed when the chamber was used as an otter holt.

Despite this disturbance, this exceptional burial is the only example known from the British Isles where three individuals were placed in a single chamber, formed by filling the eastern third of the boat with stones and placing planks across the gunwales of the western section. A woman, probably in her 70s, was placed in the centre of the boat with the body of a 10-year-old juvenile beside her, while the man, in his 30s, had been placed at the end of the boat. None of the (partial) skeletal remains provided any evidence for cause of death. The man was accompanied by a sword (broken in its scabbard), a quiver of eight arrows, a comb and (probably) a set of 22 whalebone gaming pieces. An iron handle and copper alloy mount may have been associated with a shield, but this is uncertain. The woman had an equal-armed brooch, a whalebone plaque, two spindle whorls (one of local stone), a comb, a shears, a needle tidy, a sickle and a maplewood box. No artefacts were found in association with the juvenile skeleton, but two lead weights and a glass bead were found on the beach close to the mound, and almost certainly came from it. It seems clear that more artefacts had been placed in the eroded section of the boat.¹⁷

Site / Location

Situated on the north coast of the Burness peninsula, which itself extends north from the island of Sanday, the burial was presumably situated very close to the high water line, and is on the south side of a small sandy bay, about 200m wide, flanked by rock-cut platforms, on a section of coast which is generally orientated SW-NE. The peninsula is very low lying, although the view south towards the rest of Sanday is blocked by high ground. The view north over the North Ronaldsay Firth and beyond is completely unimpaired, although the view to the north-east, towards North Ronaldsay itself may be

¹⁷ All of this information has been taken from Olwyn Owen & Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (Phantassie, 1999)

slightly hampered by the rocks of the Riv. Westray, some 18km to the west, would potentially be visible in clear weather.

Interpretation

Clearly a definite boat burial, with a definite weapon and tertiary burial, although the latter does have an equal-armed brooch. The juvenile body is technically unfurnished (and can perhaps be compared to the unfurnished graves placed in burials on Man (i.e. Ballateare 154 & Balladoole 167). At a more general level, the age difference between the adults makes it unlikely that they were married, but the presence of grave goods suggests that they were of comparable status, and the differential erosion of different parts of the burial make it difficult to draw exact comparisons. The circumstances which led to the deaths of two, or perhaps three, high status individuals cannot be determined, but make this a quite exceptional burial.

013

STYES OF BROUGH, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Area of Prehistoric Activity

Date of Recovery Before 1875

HY 6547 4210

Inhumation (Probable)

Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Axe
- C. 'Cauldron' (Shield boss?)

According to Anderson, a 'Scandinavian' sword then in the possession of W. Denison of Brough 'was found in a tumulus at Sties'. When this area of Sanday was visited in 1928, it was suggested that this was located 'near the beach between Ebb and Tress Ness, presumably in the vicinity of Sty Wick'. More recently, it has been tentatively associated with a small knoll at this site.¹⁸ Channel 4's 'Time Team' partially excavated one of four mounds at the end of the headland on the Ness of Brough in 1997, and demonstrated that all were prehistoric, although one contained a boat-shaped stone setting.¹⁹

Grieg identified the sword in Hunterian Museum, and found references to several other artefacts which had originally belonged to Denison. In addition to an axe, a 'cauldron', said to have contained a human skull when found, may have been a shield boss placed close to the head of the skeleton. While this may provide evidence for a second 'weapon' burial in the area, it does prove its existence.²⁰

¹⁸ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY64SE 18 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

¹⁹ Anderson, 'Relics', p.566; Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, p.14; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY64SE 18 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

²⁰ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.171-2

Site / Location

Situated approximately two thirds of the way up the west coast of Sanday, close to the base of the much larger Burness peninsula, the Ness of Brough is a c.500m x 300m peninsula which is linked to Sanday by a narrow, low-lying isthmus. The Styes are situated at the southern end of the Ness, immediately above the 5m contour, and overlooking the entrance to the Bay of Brough from the north. A gentle slope leads down to a wide beach no more than 150m away, this being the only beach within the Bay. There is a clear view west across the North Sound, but higher ground to the north, south and east, restrict views in these directions.

Interpretation

This fragmentary evidence could represent three separate graves, and indeed Lamb has recently suggested the area was an insular Scandinavian cemetery.²¹ It is, however, equally possible that all the evidence relates to a single grave, and it has been interpreted accordingly, as evidence for a single probable weapon burial.

014.1

LAMBA NESS, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Uncertain

Date of Recovery Before 1878

c. HY 6138 3797

Unknown

Unspecified

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (10)

- A. Sword (double-edged, fragmentary)
- B. Spearhead (fragmentary)
- C. Axehead
- D. Shield Boss (lost)
- E. Knife handle (bone)
- F. Comb (bone)
- G. 2 copper alloy pins
- H. 'Deerhorn implement'
- I. 4 spindle whorls / beads ('buttons')
- J. 'Copper alloy needle' (shank of ringed pin?)

These artefacts were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by one Col. Balfour, a keen collector, in April 1878. All were found 'in digging at Lamaness (*sic*), Sanday'. For some reason, Grieg only noted the presence of a sword and spearhead, and stated that they had been found 'in 1878 at the digging out of the ruins of a building'. This is almost certainly a conflation of two successive finds from the site (see 014.2). When visited in 1970, there was a local tradition of artefacts having been found in a grave. This was not specifically linked the Lamba Ness structure, but they are unlikely to have been found too far from it.²²

²¹ Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56

²² Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xii (1878), p.599; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.88;

Site / Location

Like the site at the Styes of Brough to the north (see 013), this burial (or possibly burials) would seem to have been situated on a peninsula on the west coast of Sanday, in this case close to the western end of the island. If it can be associated with the only extant archaeological structure in the area, incorrectly identified as a broch as late as the 1920s, the burial was situated less than 100m from the northern extremity of the headland, close to the 10m contour, and looking out across the c.2km wide Eday Sound towards that island to the west, although any site on the west side of the peninsula would afford similar views. See also 014.2

Interpretation

Balfour's artefacts provide evidence for a probable weapon grave accompanied by a number of other artefacts, and Graham-Campbell and Batey's recent suggestion that a shield boss may also have been present does not change this interpretation.²³ The presence of no less than four spindle whorls (one at least 2 inches in diameter) and the presence of 2-3 copper alloy pins also opens the definite possibility of one or more other graves in the same area, but none can be identified with certainty, and they have not been given specific numbers within this catalogue.

014.2

LAMBA NESS, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Probable)

Uncertain

Date of Recovery Before 1914 (c.1903)

c. HY 6138 3797

Cremation (Possible)

'Mound'

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. 2 oval brooches
- B. Ringed Pin
- C. Lignite armlet
- D. Amber bead

These five artefacts were purchased by the NMAS in 1914, when it was noted that they were found 'near the Broch of Lamaness (*sic*)... Sanday'. As such, they were presumably located close to the male grave discovered before 1878 (014.1). Interestingly, Graham-Campbell and Batey state that these grave-goods were found in the midst of a deposit of burnt bones in the centre of a mound, perhaps suggesting a cremation. These references to burnt bone and a mound suggests that this is Charleson's woman's grave from 'an island near Mainland' discovered in 1905. The precise correspondence of artefacts, and the fact that Grieg clearly confused the two supports this argument. Brøgger, also confused, seems to have 'created' a second burial with almost identical grave goods at Harray, Mainland (Orkney). If these records do indeed

²³ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.57

relate to the same burial, then the two brooches were found within 9in. (22.9cm) of each other, on a layer of burnt bone, with the other artefacts nearby.²⁴

Site / Location

According to the RCAHMS, there is no broch at Lamba Ness, but a site close to the northern end of the peninsula was mistaken for a broch as late as the 1920s. More recently, the same feature has been tentatively identified as a 'chapel', although this seems equally unlikely.²⁵ As the burial was 'near', rather than on, the site, they may not be directly related. Although a considerable distance may have separated the male and female graves on Lamba Ness, they would have enjoyed a very similar view, unless the burial was on the eastern slope of the peninsula, in which case it would have overlooked the approaches to Braes Wick (see also 014.1).

Interpretation

Taken together, these artefacts clearly represent a reasonably well-furnished probable brooch grave. There is also some evidence to suggest that it was a cremation beneath a mound, although Grieg does not note any fire damage in his description of the artefacts.

015

BRAESWICK, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Possible)

Uncertain

Date of Recovery Before 1914

c. HY 611 371

Unknown

Stone-lined grave?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Oval Brooch

B. 3 beads (2 glass, 1 amber)

When initially acquired by Society of Antiquaries, it was simply noted that these artefacts were 'all found together, on the Island of Sanday', and both Brøgger and Grieg gave them an equally vague provenance.²⁶ However, research by the RCAHMS has associated them with Braeswick, and more specifically 'a portion of a narrow subterranean passage', which has since disappeared. The same source notes that the artefacts were wrapped in skin, which casts some doubt on their being a burial at all.²⁷

²⁴Anon., 'Purchases for the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* il (1915), p.15; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.57; M. M. Charleson, 'Notes on some ancient burials in Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxxviii (1904), pp 560-2; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 86-8 & fig.48; Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, pp 118, 130

²⁵ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY63NW 12 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

²⁶ Anon., 'Purchases for the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* il (1915), p.14

²⁷ *ibid.*; Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, p.132; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.88; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY63NW 16 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

According to the RCAHMS archive, the find spot was less than 150m south of the beach at Braes Wick, close to the northwestern corner of Sanday. Close to the 10m contour, views from the site are restricted by Stranguoy Taing to the west and Lamba Ness to the north, but the site does afford views out over Eday Sound towards the Wick. The site is less than a kilometre from the burials at Lamba Ness (see 014).

Interpretation

While it is possible that the 'subterranean passage' was actually a stone-lined cist, it is also possible that the finds were placed in an extant structure for safekeeping, rather than as part of a burial ritual. As a result, it has been classified as a possible brooch burial for the purposes of this study.

016

NEWARK, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No known associations

Date of Recovery 1866

c. HY 715 415

Inhumation (Probable)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Axehead (lost)

First published in 1911, this axe was originally part of W. Denison's collection. Grieg's provenance seems to relate to Denison's residence, and while others have tried to link this axe to the Styes of Brough site (013),²⁸ Graham-Campbell and Batey have recently indicated that it came from a previously unrecognised burial, found as a result of coastal erosion at Newark in 1866. There is no reference to the axe's position in the grave, which was presumably a flat inhumation, but this is uncertain.²⁹

Site / Location

The coastal burial described by Graham-Campbell and Batey seems to have been found in the sands at the Bay of Newark, south of the village of the same name, on the south coast of Sanday. The grid reference given is very approximate, but as the terrain in this area is very flat and below the 10m contour, most sites would afford a clear view across Cata Sand to the west, as well as an unobstructed view to the southeast. Tres Ness would, however, block out any view of Stronsay to the south.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, the poor quality of the original record may suggest that it was originally somewhat better furnished.

²⁸ A findspot at Styes is implied in Owen & Dalland, *Scar*, p.14

²⁹ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.172; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56

017

SOUTH MIRE, SANDAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No known associations

Date of Recovery 1770s

c. HY 621 375

Unknown

Unknown (Boat?)

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. Spear
- C. Shield Boss
- D. Boat Rivets?

Graham-Campbell and Batey are the only source to note that a burial may have been found at South Mires (presumably corresponding to the OS South Mire), Sanday. There is only one (unspecified) reference to the find, which notes that a sword, spear and shield boss were found together with what may have been boat rivets. None of these can be identified today.³⁰

Site / Location

The buildings at South Mire are situated towards the western end of Sanday, close to the 20m contour, and c.300m SE of the edge the badly silted Pool Bay. The NGR given relates to these structures and must be regarded as approximate only. If the grave was close to the house, the burial site at the southern end of Lamba Ness (014) may have been visible, but if the burial was found in the fields below the farm, views would have been largely restricted to Pool Bay and the North Sound.

Interpretation

As the original source could not be consulted, this has been classified as a probable weapon burial. Its identification as a boat burial is rather more tenuous.

018.01

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No known associations

Date of Recovery Before 1688

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

- A. Sword
- B. Axe

J. Wallace, who died in 1688, noted that graves had been found in the sand at the Links of Trenabie (e.g. Pierowall), and that one contained a skeleton accompanied by a sword and axe. Others graves in the area contained 'dogs, and combs and knives'.³¹ Given the

³⁰ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56

³¹ Cited in *ibid.* p.129

vague nature of the record (and the problems with 018.02), these latter graves have not been included as separate records.

Site / Location

The Links cover an area of several square kilometres, and this group of burials could have been found anywhere within this area. However, those burials that can be provenanced with more certainty seem to come from the east side of a 28m high hill north and west of the modern village of Pierowall (see 018.03). It seems likely that this burial came from the same area.

Interpretation

As there seems to be some confusion as to the presence of Later Iron Age burials in the area (see 018.02), Wallace's description has been taken as evidence for a probably weapon burial rather than a definite example. The other graves (presumably at least two) have not been given separate numbers, or included in any calculations.

018.02

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial(s) (Possible)

Possibly Iron Age?

Date of Recovery Before 1788

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts

A. See Description

A problematic reference discovered by the Scottish Viking Graves Project notes that in 1788, G. Low noted that the bones of horses and dogs, various weapons, knives, brooches, beads, combs, a spoon, a gold ring and a glass vessel were discovered with a group of burials. Of these, the 'glass vessel' has survived, and is of Roman date. This suggests that the whole group may date from the Late Iron Age rather than the pagan period. As a result, these burials were not counted as insular Scandinavian by Graham-Campbell and Batey.³² The presence of the gold ring and glass cup certainly raises some interesting issues.

Site / Location

These burials were exposed in a northwesterly gale, which suggests that they must have been on the northern or western side of the hill at the Links of Pierowall. As such they would have had a view to the north and west, the view to the north-east being somewhat blocked by the low lying peninsula of Aikerness and would have been at some distance from the rest of the group (see 018.03 *ff*).

Interpretation

The identification of the Roman cup makes the interpretation of these burials rather problematic. Elaborately furnished burials of Roman date are comparatively rare, and

³² *Ibid.*, p.129

other aspects of the assemblage correspond closely with what might be expected of FISBs. While the survival of a glass vessel for more than 500 years is improbable, it could have been included in a Viking Age grave: if not, this small group of burials may have been drawn to this site as an older area of burial. Neither hypothesis can be substantiated.

018.03

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Extant feature

Date of Recovery 25 April 1839

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. 'Dagger' (Spearhead)
- C. Shield Boss
- D. Comb

Excavated by William Rendall, this grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 1) was found 'upon an elevated circular mound', a feature which led Thorsteinsson to suggest that it was 'secondary'. An early account of the burials suggests that this mound (one of at least five in the area; see 018.03-07)) was approximately 30 paces (c. 22.9m?) in diameter and 3-4 feet (0.9-1.2m) high. A large stone was positioned behind the head of the skeleton, which was intact, and orientated W-E, although the knees were bent to the (skeleton's?) left, the head turned slightly in the same direction. The sword was on the (skeleton's?) left with the hilt adjacent to the skull; the spearhead on the right (the spear had presumably been broken); the (half) shield boss rested on its edge above the skeleton's right shoulder, and a comb lay nearby. The position of the shield boss suggests that there may originally have been a chamber. The sword broke in two as it was recovered.³³

Site / Location

If the account of Rendall's excavations can be taken literally and the burial was 400m (¼ mile) north of the village, then it was very close to the 20m contour, and approximately 300m from the shore at the Bay of Pierowall to the south-west, a site that seems to have been called *Hofn* ('harbour') in *Orkneyinga Saga*. The site would also have provided a good view through the mouth of the Bay to Papa Sound and Papa Westray, c.5km away. The earliest account of the burial suggests that it was one of three mounds, each 30 paces (c.22.9m) in diameter and 30-40 paces (c.22.9-30.5m) apart, the three forming a 'curved line', but the text is slightly ambiguous.³⁴

³³ Arne Thorsteinsson, 'The Viking burial place at Pierowall, Westray, Orkney' in Bjarni Niclasen (ed.), *The Fifth Viking Congress* (Tórshavn, 1968), p.164; Anon., 'Discovery of human skeletons, ancient warlike instruments, ornaments &c., near Pier-o-Wall, Orkney' in *The Orkney and Shetland Journal and Fisherman's Magazine* xviii (June 1839), reprinted in H. Marwick, 'Notes on Viking burials in Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* x (1932), p.28

³⁴ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56; Anon., cited in Marwick 'Notes', p.28

Interpretation

Clearly a definite weapon burial, almost certainly placed within an extant (but not necessarily artificial) mound, it occupied a prominent position above the harbour. At least five substantial mounds were known from the general area, including the three mentioned above.

018.04

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Extant feature to south

Date of Recovery 25 April 1839

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (3)

A. 2 oval brooches

B. 'Sword or dagger' (weaving sword/roasting spit?)

C. Ring-headed pin

Excavated by Rendall on the same day as 018.03, this skeleton (Thorsteinsson Grave 2) was found 'a few yards' to the north of the latter, and was badly decayed. Orientated with the head to the south, it may have been respecting the mound in which 018.03 was placed (see also 018.04), and would have faced up slope. Two brooches seem to have been *in situ*, and a ringed pin lay under the skull, which was face down.³⁵ An iron implement to the (viewer's?) right has been interpreted as a weaving sword or knife by Graham-Campbell and Batey: a roasting spit or *seiðrstafr* is another possibility.³⁶

Site / Location

While very slightly further north, all general notes relating to 018.03 apply equally to this grave. The fact that the body seems to have been prone, however, suggests that view was not a priority.

Interpretation

While its prone position is unusual, this grave can be classified as a definite brooch inhumation.

018.05

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Extant feature to south

Date of Recovery 1 May 1839

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

A. 2 oval brooches

B. Penannular Brooch (Ringed Pin?)

³⁵ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.164

³⁶ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.164; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.131

- C. Comb
- D. Sickle
- E. Spindle whorl
- F. Needle case (bone)

This grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 3) was investigated by W. Rendall 6 days after the first two (018.03 & 4), and was 'in the same place' as 018.04. There are no references to orientation, but the (much decomposed) skeleton was supine, with its knees flexed to the (skeleton's?) left. The oval brooches lay on the collar bones with the bone needle case between them; the pin was found inside the right elbow joint; the comb on the left elbow; the sickle against the same arm, and the spindle whorl on the skeleton's breast.³⁷

Site / Location

All the notes relating to 018.04 must also apply to this burial, although its orientation cannot be determined. We do not know on which side of the former grave it lay, but it must also have been immediately to the north of the mound in which 018.03 was placed.

Interpretation

A reasonably well furnished, definite brooch grave. The brooch diameter cited by Thorsteinsson is rather large for a ring-headed pin, but is a reasonably close match for the penannular brooch donated by Rendall in 1851, and has been cautiously interpreted as such here.³⁸

018.06

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

None known

Date of Recovery 2 May 1839

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone Cist

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. 2 oval brooches
- B. 7 beads
- C. Circular brooch (?)
- D. Ring-headed pin
- E. 2 combs

This grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 4) was excavated on the day after 018.05, once again by W. Rendall. It was clearly a long cist grave, surrounded and covered by large flat stones, and was orientated N-S, with the head to the south. The body lay on its left side, the upper body was bent forward, and the head was turned upwards. The oval brooches were still at the breast, with a circular brooch and 7 (glass?) beads close to them; the ringed pin was on the abdomen, while the two combs were positioned in a line at the right (upper) elbow joint.³⁹

³⁷ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.165-6

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.166 & 160-1; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.94

³⁹ Thorsteinsson 'Pierowall', p.166

Site / Location

This burial was approximately 30 yards (27.5m) east of the others in this group (018.03-07), and thus slightly closer to the sea at the Bay of Pierowall to the south and east (see 018.03). It may have been placed under one of the three mounds mentioned in the earliest description, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. The same description makes it very clear that the majority of cist graves were situated between the mounds.⁴⁰

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation within a stone cist, possibly associated with a mound.

018.07

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

None known

Date of Recovery 2 May 1839

c. HY 437 490

Inhumation (Definite)

No Details

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Ringed Pin (probable)

B. Knife (?)

This body presumably corresponds to Thorsteinsson Grave 5, although details of this grave were omitted from his publication. There is no reference to any stones surrounding the skeleton, which was 'very much decomposed'. What was probably a ringed pin, and rather more tentatively a knife, were found in the area of the abdomen.⁴¹

Site / Location

According to the original source, this grave was found 'in the same place' (as 018.06), some distance east of the first three burials (018.03-5) excavated by Rendall in 1839. No details of orientation are given in the account.

Interpretation

A moderate record of a poorly furnished but definite tertiary inhumation.

018.08

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

None known

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 440 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

A. Axe

B. Shield Boss

⁴⁰ Anon., cited in Marwick, 'Notes', p.29

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

C. Iron Fragments

Investigated by W. Rendall at an unknown date after his excavation of the first five graves (018.03-7), he clearly saw these nine additional graves as part of the same 'burying ground'. One group of three furnished burials (018.08-10) was found 'near the shore'.⁴² The first recorded (Thorsteinsson Grave 6) was orientated north-south with its feet to the north, but inclining to the right (towards the sea). The axe lay 'before' the body (on its right side), and half a shield boss was present, together with several iron fragments, whose position was not recorded. Only half of the skull was present, which led Rendall to suggest it had been 'cleft before being buried', but it is equally likely that the grave had been disturbed at an earlier date.⁴³

Site / Location

One of three burials (018.08-10) arranged in a north-south line close to the seashore. As the last in the group described by Rendall, an unfurnished burial, was 'a considerable way towards the north', this suggests that this grave was the south-most example. As evidence suggests that the second grave in the group (018.09) overlooked the Sand of Gill, rather than the Bay of Pierowall itself, they must have been located on the peninsula between the Bay of Pierowall and the Sand of Gill, close to the 10m contour. This grave may well have overlooked both inlets (certainly the southern one), and should also have had clear views eastward through the mouth of the inlet across Papa Sound to Papa Westray, c.4.5km away. The first group of graves (018.03-07) would have been c.200m to the west (slightly less in the case of 018.06 & 07).

Interpretation

The precise location of this definite weapon inhumation can be fixed with some accuracy, and it can be classified as a certain weapon burial. Only half of the skull was present, which led Rendall to suggest that it had been 'cleft before being buried', but an equally plausible explanation is that the grave had been disturbed at an earlier date.

018.09

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

None Known
boat)

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 440 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown (Horse; poss.)

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (7)

- A. Horse skeleton
- B. Dog skeleton
- C. Bridle bit
- D. Buckle

⁴² Letter from W. Rendall to F.W.L. Thomas, 18 October 1849, published in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), pp 85-7 and Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 97-9

⁴³ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.167; Rendall, cited in Grieg, *Scotland*, p.97; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.133

- E. Spearhead (?)
- F. Iron fragments
- G. Bridle ring & 9 rivets (?)

The second of a linear group of three furnished graves investigated by Rendall (Thorsteinsson Grave 7), the skeleton lay with its feet to the north, 'immediately before' the head of a horse skeleton on its belly, orientated NE-SW, with the head to the west. A fragmentary dog skeleton was also found in the grave. The bit was found in the horse's 'paws', while the buckle was on the skeleton's right side. What may have been the handle of a bone knife was also in this area. Many iron fragments were also found, including what was probably the remains of a spearhead, but the fact that part of the skeleton was missing suggests that the grave had been disturbed before it was investigated.⁴⁴

In addition, it seems likely that either this burial or one nearby (018.10) may have been the 'skeleton of a man and horse with fragments of a shield etc' which was visited (but not excavated) by Petrie at the 'sand of Gill' in 1841. Petrie recovered a copper alloy bridle ring from his site (perhaps the counterpart of that discovered by Rendall) and 9 rivets have subsequently been associated with his visit, suggesting that to some commentators that it may even have been a boat burial. This would also explain Petrie's reference to shield fragments.⁴⁵

Site / Location

As Rendall's letter clearly states that the horse was placed 'with its head towards the sea and directed north-east ... resting on the nose', this grave must have been placed south-west of the Sand of Gill, and hence somewhere in the general area described for 018.08. Situated close to the 10m contour and c.150m from the shore, the skeleton would originally have faced north, parallel to the western shore of the Sand, but the site would also have afforded a view across Papa Sound, although Papa Westray would have been obscured by the high ground behind what is now Gill Pier.

Interpretation

Clearly a horse burial, it has been interpreted as a definite weapon burial, despite the poor state of preservation of the artefacts. It is also possible that this is the boat burial recorded by Petrie (above, but see also 018.10), and while this cannot be demonstrated conclusively, there seems no reason to record Petrie's Gill burial as a separate entry.

018.10

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

None Known

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 440 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound (Horse)

Record Quality Moderate

⁴⁴Rendall cited in Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 97-8; Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.99-100

⁴⁵Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* v (1864), p.16; Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq., of Ballinaby' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), p.79

Artefacts (3)

- A. Spearhead (?)
- B. Horse skeleton (disturbed)
- C. Bridle bit

This burial (Thorsteinsson Grave 8) was presumably the northernmost of these three furnished examples (018.08-10) in the area, and both the human and horse skeleton in the grave had clearly been badly disturbed before Rendall examined it. Only a few artefacts are recorded: a 'small dagger', more (probably a spearhead) which lay beside the skeleton, and the remains of a bridle bit, was found with the horse bones.

If, as seems likely, this burial also overlooked the Sand of Gill, it could also have been the one visited by Petrie in 1841, although the better state of preservation of 018.09 makes it the more likely candidate (see latter entry).

It is also worth noting that Rendall recorded a fourth burial in this linear group (Thorsteinsson Grave 9), 'a considerable way towards the north' (presumably of this burial). This was a unfurnished crouched burial, placed on its right side, which cannot be dated, but which may suggest either a prehistoric burial or an unfurnished example of Viking Age date. No orientation was given.⁴⁶

Site / Location

It seems likely that this grave was situated at the northern end of a line of three furnished burials: certainly it was close to 018.09 and would have had a very similar view.

Interpretation

Despite the poor state of preservation of this grave, it has been classified as a probable weapon inhumation accompanied by horse. Evidence for a boat burial is rather more tenuous (see also 018.09).

018.11

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing mound

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 436 494

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound (peripheral); cist

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword
- B. Shield boss
- C. Comb
- D. Whetstone
- E. Glass beads
- F. Composite wood & iron fragments

⁴⁶ Rendall cited in Grieg, *Scotland*, p.98; Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.168

This burial (Thorsteinsson Grave 10) was situated on the south side of what was presumably a pre-existing mound, perhaps natural, although there is a possible reference to some kerbstones in another description (see 018.13). This grave was surrounded by large stones set in a 'square form', indicating either a cist, or a chamber / enclosure similar to those at Ballinaby (073) or Kiloran Bay (067). Orientated north-south with the head to the south (towards the mound), the skeleton was on its left side with its knees drawn up and arms crossed. The sword was on the (viewer's?) left side, the shield boss was near the head, and no position is given for the other artefacts.⁴⁷

Site / Location

All the graves in this, Rendall's third group (018.11-14), were positioned around 'a mound of sand and small stones at a considerable distance from the sea ... north-west from the former sites of graves'. These 'former sites' are presumably the linear group 018.08-10, situated SW of the Sand of Gill. As the north coast of Westray is only 1000m NW of this point, the burials are very unlikely to have been more than 500m away, although it is possible that they were on the west side of the hill, obstructing views to the Bay of Pierowall. The NGR presented here is based on this assumptions, but the graves could have been a little further east, although it seems that they were not sufficiently close to the top of the hill to allow a view north.. Rendall's description of the first group (018.03-07). implies that all the Pierowall mounds were similar, but this cannot be taken entirely at face value.⁴⁸

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, within a more enigmatic 'square' stone setting. Like the other burials in this group, it seems to respect a pre-existing mound, possibly with kerb stones (see 018.13). The group of beads is slightly unusual, but Petersen notes that groups of up to four are not uncommon in male (*i.e.* weapon) graves.⁴⁹

018.12

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing Mound

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 436 494

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. 2 oval brooches

B. Trefoil brooch

This burial (Thorsteinsson Grave 11) was found on the north side of the mound, and contained a 'small' skeleton, orientated N-S, with its head towards the south (*i.e.* towards the mound). The oval brooches were on the breast, and another object in the stomach area has recently been identified as a trefoil brooch. The 'pin' associated with

⁴⁷ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.168

⁴⁸ Rendall cited in Grieg, *Scotland*, p.98; *Anon.*, cited in Marwick 'Notes', p.28

⁴⁹ Jan Petersen, *Vikingetidens Smykker* (Stavanger, 1928), p.169

this brooch was treated as a separate artefact by Thorsteinsson. The original record is ambiguous, but seems to indicate it was part of the 'circular piece' (e.g. brooch).⁵⁰

Site / Location

All notes relating to the nearby burial on the south side of the mound (see 018.11) apply equally to this grave. It must have been particularly close to 018.13 & 14, but no details of this relationship are available.

Interpretation

A definite brooch burial, presumably earth-cut, and associated with a pre-existing mound of some kind.

018.13

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Adjacent to Pre-existing Mound

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 436 494

Inhumation (Definite)

Poss. (unlikely) stone-lined

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

A. 2 oval brooches

B. (Ring-headed?) pin

C. 2 combs

Like the adjacent burial (018.12), this grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 12) was on the north side of the pre-existing mound, and the skeleton (again small) was orientated N-S, with the head to the south (towards the mound). Thorsteinsson suggests that there were rows of stones on each side of the grave, but Rendall described it as occurring 'between a row (*singular*) of small stones', which may suggest the remains of a kerb associated with the adjacent mound. Two oval brooches were found, together with 'a small pin as the former', which Thorsteinsson interprets as a ring-headed pin. In addition, two combs had been placed one above each shoulder, but there seems no evidence to support the idea that they were in cases.⁵¹

Also on the north side of the mound was a third skeleton (Thorsteinsson Grave 13), again orientated with its head to the south, but without grave goods. As it had been disturbed, it is possible that these had been lost, but this cannot be substantiated and it has been excluded from the catalogue.⁵²

Site / Location

⁵⁰ Rendall, cited in Grieg, *Scotland*, p.98; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.133; Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.169. Confusingly, Grieg's text of Rendall's letter does not refer to a 'pin', but Anderson's earlier transcript, in 'Two Viking graves', p.86, does

⁵¹ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.169; The stones are described as a 'row' in both Grieg, *Scotland* p.98 & Anderson, 'Two Viking Graves', p.86. Rendall's comment that the comb teeth were 'fastened between two plates of bone' seems to refer to its construction rather than associated comb cases

⁵² Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.169

Situated on the north side of the mound, this burial must have been positioned very close to 018.12. If Rendall is moving in a clockwise direction, this was further to the east, but this cannot be substantiated. If the 'row' of stones is a kerb (above), it suggests the mound may have been artificial, but its date cannot be determined. Views from this burial would be virtually identical to those described for 018.11.

Interpretation

A modestly furnished definite brooch grave, probably earth-cut, although this latter feature cannot be determined with certainty.

018.14

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Adjacent to Pre-existing Mound

Date of Recovery 1839-49

c. HY 436 494

Inhumation (Definite)

Presumably earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. 2 oval brooches

B. (Ring-headed?) pin

C. 2 combs

The most poorly described of any furnished burials in Rendall's 1849 letter, this grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 14) was found on the northeast side of the afore-mentioned mound, with its head towards the south. Two oval brooches seem to have been present, a pair of combs is implied, and there was also a pin, which might be ring-headed, trefoil or another form again.⁵³ Unfortunately, none of these artefacts can be identified today.

Site / Location

Like the other burials in this group (018.11-14) this burial was placed close to a pre-existing mound, and would have enjoyed a very similar view, particularly to the east (See 018.11). It is the only grave described as northeast of the mound, suggesting some distance between it and the two to the north of the same feature (018.12-13).

Interpretation

Despite some debate on the character of the third brooch and the number of combs, this is clearly a definite brooch inhumation related to a pre-existing feature.

018.15

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Unknown

Date of Recovery 1849-51

c. HY 436 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

⁵³ Rendall, cited in Anderson, 'Two Viking graves', p.87; Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.169 & Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.133 all assume this artefact was a ringed pin

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. Spear
- C. Axe
- D. Shield Boss

The evidence for this burial rests on a letter from Rendall to the Society of Antiquaries which accompanied the donation of a number of artefacts and a skull, all of which were found in the same grave. As no single grave described by Rendall elsewhere contained all four weapon types and he seems to have given away almost all his collection soon after excavating it, Thorsteinsson and others have assumed this was another grave, investigated after 1851 (Thorsteinsson Grave 15). It should be pointed out, however, that the donated objects were described as 'the refuse of the collection ... which nobody thought worth taking away'. It is thus possible that these artefacts represent material already recorded elsewhere in this group.⁵⁴

Site / Location

Assuming that these artefacts represent an entirely new grave, the most detailed provenance we have is to Pierowall, but it may perhaps be assumed that they came from the same general area north of the village and in the Links. Given the vague account, however, it does not seem appropriate to comment on precise site or potential views (but see 018.01)

Interpretation

If these artefacts do indeed represent another burial, it is clearly a definite weapon inhumation, and one of the more elaborate in the complex. The other artefacts presented by Rendall at that time, a penannular and an oval brooch, were 'found in graves beside (*i.e.* other than) the above one', and have not been counted as additional burials for the purposes of this study.⁵⁵ For the penannular brooch in particular, see 018.05.

018.16

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Unknown

Date of Recovery Before 29 October 1855

c. HY 436 490

Inhumation (Possible)

Unknown (Poss. boat)

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (7)

- A. 2 knives
- B. Sickle
- C. Drinking horn terminal
- D. Key / Latch-Lifter
- E. Clay bead
- F. Composite artefact (wood and iron)

⁵⁴ Cited in Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.161

⁵⁵ This interpretation is also followed in Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall' pp 161, and Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 133-4

G. 'nails and nail heads

These artefacts were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by one J. Farrer, who spent several summers excavating in Orkney. They are described as 'from the grave ... at Pierowall' but there is no other record of his excavating there. The fact that it was recognised as a grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 16) suggests it was an inhumation, but as 'a small mass of black unctuous matter' was described as 'possibly the decayed hand of the dead', it may not have been particularly well preserved! The clay bead is not described in the original list, but may well have been overlooked. It has been suggested that the nails and nail heads represent a boat burial, although others suggest a more modest composite artefact: however they are directly compared to known boat rivets elsewhere.⁵⁶

Site / Location

Although described as from 'the Links near Pierowall', no further details on the location of this grave are available, but it may perhaps be assumed to come from the same general area as the other burials, and to have afforded broadly similar views.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary grave, although the number of artefacts, all of which can still be identified, is unusual. Some of the artefacts suggest a female grave, but the evidence is inconclusive.

018.17

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Unknown

Date of Recovery Before 11 April 1864

c. HY 436 490

Inhumation (Definite)

Horse; Mound; Poss. boat

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

- A. Min. 21 boat rivets
- B. 2 iron buckles
- C. Bone button
- D. Horse

This grave (Thorsteinsson Grave 17) was the second investigated by J. Farrer and was clearly very disturbed before he arrived. Only portions of the upper part of the skeleton were preserved, along with some of the legs and vertebrae of a horse. The 'buckles', which could not be identified by Grieg, may well have been part of an associated bridle

⁵⁶ See John Stuart, 'Notice of antiquities on the isle of Eday, Orkney, recently examined by James Farrer of Ingleborough, M.P.', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ii (1856), p.158
Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.170-1; For a minimal interpretation, see Grieg, *Scotland*, p.96; Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* v (1864), pp 300-1

or harness. The boat rivets seem to represent only a portion of those described by Farrer. The bone button is not included in the original donation list.⁵⁷

Site / Location

According to Thorsteinsson, the grave was in 'the lower part of the Links', that is to say towards the bottom of the slope of the hill north of Pierowall, and hence somewhere reasonably close to the shore, either at the Bay of Pierowall or the Sand of Gill. Given the poor quality of the record, however, there seems no need to speculate on details of view, beyond those expressed in 018.01 and perhaps 018.08. Found in a 'sand-hill', the disturbed character of the burial lends some support to Thorsteinsson's suggestion that this was no more than 'a natural sand dune'.⁵⁸

Interpretation

Despite the poor quality of the evidence, it seems entirely possible that this burial represents a second, (or even third) boat burial at Pierowall, reinforcing the importance of this burial site in the Early Viking Age. It may, perhaps, be assumed that more artefacts were present, and that this was originally either a weapon or brooch grave: for the purposes of this study, however, it can be classed as an tertiary burial, albeit one that also contained a horse and boat. The possibility that it represents a third investigation of a single mound (see 018.09) has been discounted.

019.1-2

TUQUOY(?), WESTRAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burials (Possible)

None known

Date of Recovery Before 1841

c. HY 454 438

Inhumations (Probable)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. 'Swords'

B. 'Articles of Dress'

Graham-Campbell & Batey note that the *New Statistical Account* records a number of graves found in the north and south of Westray, both of which produced 'swords' and 'articles of dress'. 'Some other circumstantial evidence' suggests that the southern burial field may have been 'on the Links of Tuquoy'. The description suggests several weapon burials, and perhaps some brooch burials. There is no evidence that any of these artefacts survive to the present day.⁵⁹

Site / Location

The modern settlement of Tuquoy is on the western side of the large bay of the same name, less than a kilometre from the site known as the Ness of Tuquoy, approximately halfway down the west coast of Westray. In the absence of any more substantial

⁵⁷ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* v (1864), p.300-1; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.95; Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.171

⁵⁸ Thorsteinsson, 'Pierowall', p.171

⁵⁹ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.56

evidence, it seems inappropriate to comment on the landscape in any more detail and the NGR given here must be seen as very approximate.

Interpretation

A very ambiguous reference to what would seem to be a minimum of two possible weapon burials, perhaps part of a larger cemetery which also contained some women's graves, but the surviving reference is so vague that even this information must be seen as speculative..

020.1

SWANDRO, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Close to Pre-existing Mound (Broch?)

Date of Recovery 1826

c. **HY 376 298**

Inhumation (Probable)

Stone-Lined?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double edged)(4 pieces?)

B. Shield Boss (Dublin type)

These artefacts were the first to be found at Swandro (Sweindrow). Traill first exhibited a sword and the 'boss of a baldrick' to the Society of Antiquaries in 1834, when it was noted that one was found 'near' the other.. While this might imply that they were found in separate graves, they have been treated as evidence for a single grave within this study. The sword was found during ploughing in 1826, and what was clearly a Dublin type shield boss was presumably found at approximately the same time (but see also 020.2). A note on this boss stated that it came from a 'howe', but if it was recovered during ploughing, this feature cannot have been very substantial. In 1867, Barry's *History of Orkney* noted that 'graves formed with stones set on edge' could be seen around some 'great piles of stone' (the Knowe) on 'a plain on the shore' west (*sic*) of Westness. In 1928, a number of slabs set on edge were still visible in the general area.⁶⁰

Site / Location

Situated on the west coast of Rousay, directly opposite the small island of Eynhallow, the Knowe of Swandro is a substantial stone feature, possibly a broch, on the northern side of the Bay of Swandro. A substantial rock-cut platform suggests considerable erosion has taken place in the area. These artefacts were found in a ploughed field beside the Knowe, less than 500m north of the very substantial cemetery at Westness (021), at the southern end of the Bay. The modern field is quite large, but Barry's description indicates that the stone-lined graves at least were found in the lower part of the field, close to the Knowe.

Interpretation

Although this is clearly a probable weapon grave, the surviving record makes any further interpretation difficult. The artefacts may have come from a cist, or a mound, but

⁶⁰ Anderson, 'Relics' pp 563-6 & 571, citing Barry's *History of Orkney* (Kirkwall, 1867); Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.135-6; Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, pp 113, 131-2

neither can be demonstrated conclusively, and the idea that both came from a single grave is at least partially based on Traill's assumption that the boss belonged to a baldrick.

020.2

SWANDRO, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Close to Mound (Broch?)

Date of Recovery 1826-1836

c. HY 376 298

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone-Lined?

Record Quality Very Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Shield Boss (Scandinavian)(fragmentary)

Although this shield boss has always been provenanced to Sweindrow, Anderson seems to have made a fundamental error in assuming that this was also the 'boss of a baldrick' exhibited with the Sweindrow sword in 1834 (see 020.1). Instead, it seems clear that this 'helmet' was not sent to Prof. Traill until 1836, two years after the 'boss of a baldrick' had been exhibited with the sword at the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1834. Thus, this artefact, also found in 'the immediate vicinity' of the sword, was recovered some time later, at a time when the 'place where was found' was being 'reserved' for Prof. Traill's arrival. Thus, it almost certainly represents a separate grave, and is the only artefact from Sweindrow specifically described as coming from a grave in Traill's published notes. Unfortunately, Traill provided no additional details.⁶¹

Site / Location

Although it seems to represent a second furnished grave at Sweindrow, the available information suggests that it was recovered close to the site of the first grave (020.1).

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation from Sweindrow, possibly within a stone cist, which may have been more elaborately furnished originally.

021.1

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite) & Infant

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1963

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Definite)

Disturbed

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (11)

- A. Two Oval Brooches
- B. Beads (40)
- C. Penannular brooch (Silver; 8th century)
- D. Gilt bronze mount (insular)
- E. Two strap-ends (Anglo-Saxon)

⁶¹ Anderson 'Relics', p.564

- F. Comb
- G. Sickle
- H. Basin (copper alloy)
- I. Shears
- J. Weaving Sword
- K. 2 heckles

An unusually well furnished brooch grave and the first to be discovered at Westness, it was accidentally discovered during the burial of a dead cow and was consequently somewhat disturbed when investigated by archaeologists. Nothing could be determined about the grave form or the position of the artefacts within the grave, but the analysis of the skeletal remains indicated that a woman had been buried with a newborn child, having presumably died in childbirth.⁶²

Site / Location

The burial site at Westness, the only one to have been fully excavated using modern archaeological techniques, is situated on the southwestern side of the island of Rousay, on the edge of Eynhallow Sound. The cemetery is on a peninsula at the southeastern side of Swandro Bay, immediate above a small beach. Across a narrow (less than 1km) channel is the small island of Eynhallow. A detailed survey of the area indicates that the cemetery occupied a slight (c.1m) rise close to the end of what is otherwise a comparatively flat (less than 10m) peninsula, and hence would also have afforded a view southwards into the main body of Eynhallow Sound.⁶³ The excavated area was no more than 30m x 25m, suggesting that the 32 graves discovered were fairly closely packed, although none were intercut. Only 8 of these burials were furnished, but the others would also seem to have been of high status, given that they were slab-lined and furnished with headstones. The oldest graves have been radiocarbon dated to the seventh century, so the cemetery was already well established when the first FISBs were placed at the site (see also 021.6-8). It is assumed that it was then a native 'secular' cemetery. All the FISBs seem to be of ninth century date, although some of the artefacts are even a little older, including the brooch from this grave. This is the only grave that was not professionally excavated, and its relationship to the excavated area is not fully understood.⁶⁴

Interpretation

Despite poor recovery conditions, and the absence of any formal publication, this was clearly a definite brooch inhumation. The association with a newborn child also makes this one of the few FISBs where a cause of death can be suggested, if not stated with certainty.

⁶² Kaland, S. H. H. 'The settlement of Westness, Rousay' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.314; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.136

⁶³ Kaland, 'Westness', fig.17.2

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.312

021.2

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1968-84

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Definite)

Boat burial

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (10)

- A. Boat (5.5m, 3-4 strakes)
- B. Sword
- C. Axehead
- D. Spearhead
- E. Arrowheads
- F. Shield Boss
- G. Adze
- H. Sickle
- I. Whetstone
- J. Strike-a-light

One of two boat burials discovered during the excavations at Westness, this is the larger and better furnished. The boat was placed in a hole in the ground and both ends were filled with stones to form a central chamber, in which the body was placed on its back surrounded by grave goods. The two published photographs of the grave are mirror images of each other, so it is impossible to make any definite comments on the distribution of grave-goods, other than the fact that the sword lay on one side of the body, and the shield boss close to the skull. Because of the 'mirror image' problem, it is impossible to tell if the boat is orientated NW-SE (as shown) or NE-SW (if reversed). In either case the head is to the north, as are some of the oval stone set graves. No further details are available at present.⁶⁵

Site / Location

This grave was definitely found within the excavated area close to the top of the aforementioned mound, but no further information is available. See also 021.1.

Interpretation

A professionally excavated definite weapon burial within a small boat, the interpretation of which is severely hampered by a lack of published information.

021.3

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1968-84

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Definite)

Boat burial

Record Quality Moderate

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 314-6, fig.17.7; James Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Abingdon, 1994), p. 154, upper fig.

Artefacts (9)

- A. Boat (4.5m, 3-4 strakes)
- B. Sword (type uncertain)
- C. Axe
- D. Shield Boss
- E. Arrowheads
- F. Bone Comb
- G. Adze
- H. Sickle
- I. Fishing Weight

The second and smaller of two boat burials at Westness, this example was formed in the same way as the first (021.2), filling the boat ends with stones to leave a central chamber, and it also contained a male skeleton accompanied a sword, axe, shield boss and arrowheads, and this grave also contained an adze and sickle, as well as a bone comb and fishing weight. The broken tips of four arrowheads in the back, arm, belly and thighbone of the skeleton suggest that this individual met a violent death.⁶⁶

Site / Location

A photograph of this boat grave following the removal of the body indicates that it was situated close to the modern shoreline and orientated E-W. As such, it pointed out over the rock-cut shelf to the Bay of Swandro and Eynhallow, a slightly more precise location than is available for the other graves within the excavated area. See also 021.1

Interpretation

Despite a lack of published information, this definite weapon inhumation within a boat was a little less well-furnished than the other boat burial at the site. It is also one of the few FISBs where evidence for violence has been recorded (although this must at least in part be a result of the evidence base).

021.4

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1968-84

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Definite)

Oval Stone Setting

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (6)

- A. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type)
- B. Arrowheads
- C. Ring-headed Pin
- D. Comb
- E. Sickle
- F. 'Dice' (Gaming pieces)

⁶⁶ Kaland, 'Westness', p.315-6

A male inhumation in an oval stone setting, a higher stone behind the skull ('the prow-stone' or 'stemstone', according to Kaland), pointed towards the sea, a feature shared by other oval graves at this site. A published photograph indicates that the sides and floor of this comparatively large grave were covered with slabs, and that the body had been placed on its back with its legs flexed slightly to one side. This seems to be the same burial referred to in the *Glasgow Herald*, which notes that there were 23 'dice' and that the grave measured 2 ½ x 1 ¼ yards (2.29 x 1.14m). A cryptic reference in the same source to 'a woman and some animals' sacrificed on top of the grave would surely have been included in Kaland's summary, had they proved correct.⁶⁷

Site / Location

While all general notes also apply to this grave (see 021.1), Kaland indicates that in the case of oval graves, the 'prow-stone' was 'behind' the inhumation's head.⁶⁸ This indicates that the bodies in these graves were placed with their heads towards the sea, presumably the Bay of Swandro. However, their precise orientation cannot be determined using published evidence.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within an oval stone setting, the absence of any offensive weapons other than arrowheads is interesting, given its professional excavation.

021.5

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1968-84

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Certain)

Oval Stone Setting

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (4)

- A. CA Penannular Brooch
- B. Comb
- C. Sickle
- D. 2 spindle whorls

A female inhumation within an oval grave, the sides of which were at least partially lined with slabs. Unlike the other burials from the site, she was crouched on her right side, although her shoulders lay flat. No further information is available.⁶⁹

Site / Location

As a burial within an oval grave, it must be assumed that this grave was also placed with its head towards the Bay of Swandro (see 021.4), but this is not explicitly stated in the text.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.314-5 & fig. 17.6. Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.136-7, identify Kaland's dice as gaming pieces.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.315

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* fig. 17.5

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation with osteological evidence for the sex of the deceased, this is one of the few identifiable womens' graves that does not contain oval brooches. The absence of any clear published material makes further interpretation very difficult.

021.6 - 021.8

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Unclassified (min 1 weapon?)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1968-84

HY 3759 2932

Inhumations (Definite)

Oval Shaped

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts

A. See notes

While providing a number of descriptions and illustrations of specific graves (recorded as 021.1-5), Kaland is very vague about precise numbers. Graham-Campbell and Batey state that there were 32 graves, of which eight were furnished, which suggests there were three other furnished graves at the site. Elsewhere Kaland noted that there were five oval graves which contained 'weapons, jewellery and tools', which suggests that all three remaining FISBs were in graves of this type. Kaland's published material also implies that there was at least one other weapon grave, and that another grave contained 'weaving implements'. Her comments are, however, too vague to allow the reconstruction of these graves at any detailed level.⁷⁰

It should also be noted that there were 24 unfurnished burials at the site (75% of the total) and that the site was in use in the seventh century, before the first FISBs were deposited. The earliest graves, marked with headstones, were respected by those creating the later furnished graves, and were extended inhumations in narrow rectangular graves, some of which were completely or partly lined with slabs. Kaland noted that the cemetery contained the bodies of all from newborn children to individuals about 50 years old, and believes that they represent 'the whole community of Westness'. It is not clear how she differentiates between rectangular 'Pictish' and 'Viking' graves, and the possibility that some of the unfurnished burials are insular Scandinavian cannot be dismissed out of hand. Also interesting in terms of ritual activity at the cemetery is a 'big stone setting shaped as a boat built of large slabs' which was discovered on the edge of the beach. Oddly, it was only half finished, and no grave was discovered within or near it.⁷¹

Site / Location

If all three of these graves were oval-shaped, Kaland's description suggests that they had high 'prow-stone' and pointed towards the sea (see 021.4), presumably the Bay of Swandro, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. It can be assumed, however, that they were found within the excavated area.

⁷⁰ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.136; Kaland, 'Westness', p.315; Discovery and Excavation Scotland, 1980, p.25, cited in RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) HY32NE 7 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁷¹ Kaland, 'Westness', pp 313-4. 316-7

Interpretation

While these are clearly definite furnished burials, a lack of published information makes it virtually impossible to discuss them in any detail, and they have been classed 'unclassified' and eliminated from most statistical calculations within this thesis.

021.9

WESTNESS, ROUSAY, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Pre-existing ('secular') cemetery

Date of Recovery 1997

HY 3759 2932

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts

A. Bone comb (fragment)

In 1997, a c.1 hectare area adjoining the known cemetery at Westness was subjected to geophysical surveying and trial trenching. No evidence for further graves was discovered, but one trench, at the southern tip of the peninsula, produced a fragmentary human skull, together with a bone comb fragment. This was interpreted as a disturbed burial by the excavators.⁷²

Site / Location

Located SW of the main group of burials, this site would have afforded a view up and down Eynhallow Sound very similar to that from burials located within the excavated area.

Interpretation

This burial can be classified as a definite tertiary burial, although its disturbed condition means it is entirely possible it may originally have been either a weapon or brooch grave.

022

BUCKQUOY, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

On Site Pictish & Norse Houses

Date of Recovery 1970-1

HY 2436 2823

Inhumation (Definite)

Pit Grave

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (7)

A. Spear

B. Ringed Pin

C. Buckle

D. Knife

E. Bone mount (for sheath?)

⁷² Discovery and Excavation Scotland, 1997, p.60, cited in RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) HY32NE 7 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

F. Whetstone

G. Half penny Eadmund (940-6)

This very shallow burial had been disturbed by ploughing, but would appear to have been crouched on its right side, the knife, mount, whetstone and half penny being found close to its waist. The ringed pin lay across the lower vertebrae, and the spearhead was to the right of the upper part of the skeleton, although this latter object may have been disturbed. Despite the poor condition of the bone, osteological analysis suggests that the individual was male and over forty when he died. Given the coin and other evidence, the excavator suggested a burial date in the third quarter of the tenth century.

Although the site was the focus of extended habitation, two other unfurnished burials were known. The disarticulated bones of a neonate were found under a flat stone in the NE corner of the latest (insular Scandinavian) house on the site, and a male skeleton was found in a long cist N of the Pictish dwellings, although it is not directly associated with Pictish activity. There is, however, no evidence that those depositing the furnished burial were aware of either of the earlier graves.⁷³

Site / Location

This shallow grave was marked by a slight 'hump' at the crest of a linear mound 0.5m high and c.20m long, much of which had already been eroded by the sea to the SW. Beneath the mound were five phases of occupation, represented by six structures, the furnished burial having been placed in its upper levels after the final phase house (no.1) had collapsed.

The peninsula of Buckquoy is low and flat, ranging from 4-6m in height, and is situated close to the NW corner of Mainland. From it, a causeway extends out to the Brough of Birsay, a major power centre of the Norse Earldom. The best views from the burial site extend over the Bay of Birsay to the south and west, this being one of the few well sheltered bays on the west coast of the island.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, albeit slightly disturbed by ploughing. Its relationship to the houses and earlier burials at the site is unlikely to be coincidental, despite the excavator's comments on the subject.

023.1

BROUGH ROAD, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Within Midden Material

Date of Recovery 1978

HY 2466 2805

Inhumation (Definite)

Poor Cist Grave

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

A. Antler Comb

⁷³ Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), pp 183-4, 188, 190-1, 192, 219-220

- B. Iron Knife
- C. Min. 2 iron rivets

A somewhat disturbed 'rough-and-ready' cist grave discovered during a series of small-scale excavations associated with the Birsay Bay Project, this was the most elaborately furnished of two FISBs found in areas 1 and 2. The skeletal remains (Area 1, Phase E, episode 10) were those of a man, perhaps in his mid-50s or 60s, who was suffering from osteo-arthritis of the spine, as well as periodontal disease. The body was orientated E-W, but had been disturbed, perhaps by burrowing animals, so that the original position of the grave-goods could not be determined. Radiocarbon dating suggests the body dates from AD600-915 (calibrated).⁷⁴

Site / Location

This burial is unusual in as much as it was placed within developing deposits of midden material, which may have produced a slight rise in elevation. The summit of the mound is however further inland, this burial having been found within a few metres of the modern coast. The E-W orientation would leave the body's head towards Birsay Bay, the site being on its north-eastern shore. It is c.500m ESE of the burial at Buckquoy (022), these burials forming part of definite cluster at the NW corner of Mainland, Orkney.

A second (unfurnished) burial was found close to this one. Also in an E-W cist, the bones were those of an individual aged 30-35 years, with a (calibrated) radiocarbon date of AD850-1140. This second burial was not directly related to the midden material, but had been placed in the upper levels of a Pictish cairn, one of two within the excavated area. A number of late Roman and Pictish inhumations were also found at the site.⁷⁵

Interpretation

Given the quality of the excavation, a definite tertiary burial, although the level of disturbance suggests that the it may have been more richly furnished originally. Its associations with a developing midden are particularly unusual.

023.2

BROUGH ROAD, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Within Midden Material

Date of Recovery 1978

HY 2466 2805

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone-lined grave

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

- A. Iron knife

⁷⁴ Morris, C. D., *The Birsay Bay Project Volume 1: Coastal Sites Beside the Brough Road, Birsay, Orkney Excavations 1976-1982: University of Durham Department of Archaeology Monograph Series i* (Durham 1989), pp 114-5,273-4, 287-94

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 287-94

This extended east-west burial was found slightly earlier than 023.1, but was even more poorly furnished, perhaps because much of the right side of the body had already been eroded before excavation. The skeleton, probably that of a woman in her 50s, was found within a rough stone-lined grave, and a knife had been placed by her left arm. She had been in poor health at the time of her death, which was probably the result of a fracture to the base of her skull.⁷⁶

Site / Location

This inhumation was *c.*20m NW of the other furnished grave at this site (023.1), and was being eroded from the modern cliff when found. It was also placed within developing midden material that also contained some other human remains, presumably indicating other burials had occurred in the area.

Interpretation

One of the few definite modestly furnished tertiary burials in this study, an identification made possible by its excavation under controlled circumstances.

024.1

GURNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Broch

Date of Recovery 1939

HY 3818 2685

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone-lined Grave

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. 2 oval brooches
- B. Iron necklet (with Thor's hammer amulet)
- C. Bone Pin
- D. Sickle
- E. Iron knife

Also known as the 'Knowe of Gurness', this site has produced evidence for seven graves, five of which were furnished, but this is the only definite example. The skeleton was badly decayed, but had been placed in an east-west stone-lined chamber *c.*1.8 x 1.1m wide, which made use of some much earlier stonework *c.*0.76m below the 1939 ground surface, the head having been at the west end of the chamber. The bone pin can no longer be identified, but the iron necklet is particularly interesting in that one of the amulets is in the shape of a Thor's hammer, one of the few examples from an insular context.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 42, 59-61, 274-5, 287-94

⁷⁷ Hedges, J. W., *Bu, Gurness and the Brochs of Orkney* BAR Brit. Ser. 164 (2 vols, Oxford, 1987), ii, 73; Robertson, W. N., 'A Viking grave found at the Broch of Gurness, Aikerness, Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ci (1969), p.290; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 126, 146, 149

Site / Location

In 1929, when it was first investigated, the broch of Gurness was a round mound on the north coast of Aiker Ness, a short peninsula projecting into Eynhallow Sound from the NE coast of Mainland. The is coastal but close to the 10m contour and would have afforded a view north and east along the Sound, which is c.1.3km wide at this point, although the view to the south-east is restricted higher ground on the eastern part of the peninsula. Moa Ness is clearly visible just over 2.5km to the north, although it is not certain if the Westness cemetery (021) would have been equally visible. Unusually, the Point of Hellia and associated high ground restricts the view of the nearest beach, at the Sands of Evie. The land around Aiker Ness and the Sands is comparatively flat and surrounded by very much higher land to the south and west. It is also interesting to note that two possible Viking Age / Late Norse houses were constructed on top of older structures in direct proximity to what was then the central mound of the site. Unfortunately, no precise information on their date is available.⁷⁸

Within the broch complex, this grave (Hedges No.VII) was situated c.4m from the 1937 coastline, c.38m ENE of the centre of the then buried broch tower. It was placed in the northern wall of the external passage leading to the broch 'gatehouse', although all of these features were buried long before the grave was placed in them. Robertson notes that a rough cist was made in the old wall 'to gain greater depth', although the possibility that it had greater significance for those constructing the grave cannot be ruled out. It is possible that this section of the rampart may have resembled a small mound in its own right, the excavation record being very inadequate in this regard. It has also been suggested that the burial may have been covered with a mound after its deposition. In either case, this particular site would have given a clear view to the north across the Sound.⁷⁹

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation within an older structure, although it has been argued that this is coincidental. The Thor's hammer is a particularly unusual find, the only other definite example from the study area having been found at Repton, Derbyshire (123.02).

024.2

GURNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Broch

Date of Recovery 1930-9 (year uncertain)

HY 3818 2685

Inhumation (Probable)

Disturbed

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Ring-headed Pin

B. Amber Bead

A second, probable, grave at Gurness was discovered during the excavation of the western section of the narrow 'Middle Ditch' between the outer ramparts of the broch. A

⁷⁸ Hedges, *Gurness*, pp 1, 67-8, 71

⁷⁹ Hedges, *Gurness*, p.73 & fig.2.15; Robertson, 'Gurness' p.290; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.128

ring-headed pin and an amber bead were found together with what was later identified as some fragments of a human cranium at an unspecified depth in the upper fill of this feature.⁸⁰

Site / Location

Situated *c.*15m from the centre of the mound that would then have marked the broch tower and *c.*20m from the coast, it is uncertain why this particular location was chosen for what seems originally to have been a modestly furnished burial. Perhaps some extant topographic feature has been lost in the interim. For more general information, see 024.1

Interpretation

Although clearly disturbed, it seems reasonable to classify this burial as a probable tertiary inhumation.

024.3

GURNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Broch

Date of Recovery *c.*1930

HY 3818 2685

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type)

The first excavator of Gurness, H. Craw, proposed that a shield boss from 'the top of the mound (above the broch tower) may have come from a Viking burial'. It is not certain if this was based on a belief that all shield bosses came from burial, or whether some bone was found in association with it. Site records indicate, however, that two shield bosses came from the upper mound or inner fill of the broch, and it is uncertain which was associated with this grave: indeed, it is possible that both were placed in the same grave (see also 024.4).⁸¹

Site / Location

Photographs of the site before excavation show a fairly substantial mound at the site, and it was presumably within this that the shield boss(es) and probable associated burials were placed. The summit of this mound would have provided the best view of any burial on the site. For more general notes on the location of the site, see 024.1.⁸²

Interpretation

Given Craw's conviction that one of the shield bosses was from a burial, the identification of one definite and one probable FISB at the site, and the fact that a substantial volume of now unprovenanced human remains were recovered during the excavations, it seems reasonable to classify this example as a probable weapon burial.

⁸⁰ Hedges, *Gurness*, p.73

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.17, 73

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.73, pl.2.1 & 2.2 & fig.2.15

024.4

GURNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Broch

Date of Recovery c.1930

HY 3818 2685

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type)

Although Craw postulated a single Viking grave in the fill of the broch tower (see 024.3), two shield bosses were recovered from this area, and Henley has suggested that each may have accompanied a different burial, the second being Henley II This is the only evidence for a second burial in the upper levels of the broch. ⁸³

Site / Location

As this second find cannot have been more than 10m from the first (024.3), all notes for the latter grave apply equally to this

Interpretation

Given the paucity of evidence, this has been classified as a possible weapon burial.

024.5

GURNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Broch

Date of Recovery 1935

HY 3818 2685

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. Linen smoother
- B. CA balance
- C. Spindle Whorl / Bead (Jet)
- D. Whetstone
- E. 3 frags. iron ore (nails /rivets?)

The fifth grave for which there is some evidence (Henley V & VI having been rejected), the artefacts which may represent the grave were found while clearing out 'superficial layers' of the Great Ditch to the west of the broch. Human bone was recovered from the Ditch, but there is no evidence to directly associate it with these artefacts.⁸⁴ While all of this material could conceivably be domestic refuse associated with the long houses at the site, their proximity and the burial tradition at the site open the possibility of their representing an additional grave.

Site / Location

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.17, 73

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73

Like 024.1 & 2, this site is some distance from the broch tower, and like 024.1 in particular, it is directly adjacent to the coast, c.5m from the 1937 coastline and c.12m from the centre of the broch tower. There is no evidence for any form of grave marking, but the available evidence suggests that it may have been disturbed prior to excavation..

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial that was presumably disturbed before excavation. The linen smoother and possible spindle whorl would suggest a woman's grave.

It should also be noted that a further twelve separate deposits of human bone were found within the broch. None are recorded as having been accompanied by grave goods, although deposits could conceivably have been found with 024.3, 4 & 5. Even if this is the case, however, the evidence suggests that there were at least nine other unaccompanied burials within the broch mound. Unfortunately, none can be dated with confidence to the Viking Age. The other 'putative' graves listed by Hedges (V & VI) have been rejected for a variety of reasons.⁸⁵

025

SKAILL, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Midden?

Date of Recovery 1888

HY 2295 1874

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist burial (horse?)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (8)

- A. Spearhead
- B. Comb & Comb Case
- C. Knife
- D. Whetstone (small)
- E. 'Iron Rod'
- F. Iron nail / rivet
- G. Stone disc
- H. Animal bone (horse, bird, fish)

An unusually comprehensive account of an extended inhumation within a full cist grave, 1.8m x 0.66m and 0.61m high, orientated NW-SE, and with the skull at the west corner. The spearhead was partially under the skull, the comb about 30cm from the head, the knife, iron rod and whetstone closer to the waist, and the stone disc close to the feet. Small animal bones (bird and fish) were found close to the head, and a possible horse leg bone was found near the foot of the grave, but Graham-Campbell and Batey have expressed some caution about these, suggesting that they may be intrusive. They suggest the grave was placed in a midden or 'prominent settlement mound', either of which might have contained such animal bones. They also note that the cist was covered with

⁸⁵ For a discussion of these graves, see Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Gurness*, p.128, but it should be noted that the amber bead representing the possible grave five was found within one of the two long houses structures identified at the site.

'slabs and water-worn boulders', an interpretation which is not substantiated elsewhere.⁸⁶

Site / Location

Skaill Bay is situated on the west coast of Mainland, and its headlands and beach provide one of the best harbours between Birsay and Stromness. Close to sea level, and at the edge of the beach, the burial is less than 150m from the Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae (which also contained two 'intrusive' cists with unfurnished burials)⁸⁷ this grave was situated very close to the south end of the beach, and had begun to erode before it was excavated. Its orientation meant that the feet pointed towards the centre of Skaill Bay. To the south and west the land rises steadily to cliffs c.50m high, but the land is rather flatter to the north and east, the Loch of Skaill lying in the latter direction.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within a cist, one that does not seem to have been badly disturbed before investigation. One of the few examples containing only a spear, its identification as a horse burial is rather more problematic

026

LYKING, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

None known

Date of Recovery Before 1870

c. HY 271 152

Cremation (Probable)

Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. Spearhead

B. Comb

C. Strap Buckle

This material entered the NMA collections as part of the collection of Prof. Traill (also associated with the finds from Swandro 020) in 1870. Ignored by Anderson, Brøgger first published them, using Grieg's notes, stating that they had been found in a 'tumulus' with 'burnt bone'. This suggests that this was one of the few cremations in the study area, although this cannot be demonstrated conclusively, and Shetelig points out the comb was certainly unburnt. The site has been confused with another Lyking (Holm parish, also Orkney), but all recent sources seem to agree on this location.⁸⁸

Site / Location

⁸⁶ Watt, W. G. T., 'Notice of the discovery of a stone cist, with an iron age interment, at Skaill Bay', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxii (1888), pp 283-5. Some minor reinterpretations of the artifacts are given in Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 81-4

⁸⁷ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.59

⁸⁸ Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, pp 112, 130; Haakon Shetelig, 'The distribution of the graves and the extent of Norse settlements' in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), p.88. Shetelig points out that the comb from Heskett-in-the-Forest (093, zone C) is not burned either.

Lyking is in the western part of Mainland, on the north shore of the Loch of Stenness. While original descriptions are rather vague, the RCAHMS archive shows the burial site as 300m west of the modern settlement, at the centre of a shallow north-south valley, close to the Burn of Lyking and c.100m from the broch at Stackrue.⁸⁹ The site is overlooked by higher ground, particularly to the west, and is c.270m from the Loch shore, close to the 10m contour. The Loch, which must have been visible from the burial site, may well have been accessible from the sea in the Viking Age.

Interpretation

A probable weapon grave, possibly a cremation.

027

BIRSAY VILLAGE, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Beside Church

Date of Recovery Before 1863

c. HY 248 277

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist Grave (?)

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin

A rather vague record of what is certainly a ringed pin, allegedly found 'sticking through the back part of a human skull near the Earl's Palace, Birsay'. Although ignored by Grieg, this is strongly suggestive of a burial context. More recently, Batey & Graham-Campbell have described what is presumably the same pin, but they note that it was discovered in a cist grave that eroded out of the shore by the church, a description which is not entirely incompatible with the original description.⁹⁰

Site / Location

A coastal location near the Earl's Palace and the parish church at Birsay would place the burial close to the north bank of a stream less than 100m from a sandy beach close to the centre of the Bay of Birsay, and immediately to the north of the Point of Snusan, which divides the inner part of that bay in half. It lies at the mouth of a shallow valley with gently rising ground to the south and north-east. Close to the north-western corner of Mainland, Birsay Bay is one of the few sheltered harbours on the west coast.

Interpretation

Assuming that Graham-Campbell and Batey's information is correct, this is a definite tertiary burial within a cist and close to a church.

⁸⁹ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY21NE 24 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁹⁰ Anon. 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* v (1864), p.16; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.57; Thomas Fanning, 'Some aspects of the bronze ringed pin in Scotland' in Anne O'Connor & D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five'* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp 327, 338

028

'Nr. RENDALL Manse', MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Weapon Burial (Possible)

None Known

Date of Recovery Before 1861

C. HY 425 195

Inhumation (Possible)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. Shield Boss (? Iron cup)

B. Drinking horn terminal

C. 'fragments of iron'

Batey & Graham-Campbell note that 'what must have been a male burial' was found 'near the manse in the parish of Rendall (modern Evie and Rendall). A drinking horn terminal was sketched at the time of discovery, and it was noted that it was found with an iron cup, which they interpret as a shield boss. This discovery is presumably the result of recent research by the Scottish Viking graves project, and cannot be substantiated at the present time.⁹¹

Site / Location

The site of the manse of Rendall was presumably somewhere close to the original parish church, which is situated on the east coast of Mainland, immediately to the north of the Bay of Hinderayre with its long beach. From the beach, the land slopes gently upwards to the west, culminating in Gorseness Hill (124m), c.2km away. Views would have been to the east, but in the absence of more definite evidence, detailed speculation is pointless.

Interpretation

Without access to original sources, this burial has been classified as a possible weapon burial.

029

OXTRO, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Broch (multi-phase activity)

Date of Recovery 1847 (?)

HY 2537 2678

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin (& see below)

Oxtro is a highly complex multi-phase site dominated by a broch, but which also seems to have contained cists of uncertain date, as well as a range of artefacts from the Roman Iron Age and later. A ringed pin from the site is of Viking Age date, but is not specifically associated with a grave. More recently, J. Graham-Campbell has suggested that a lost artefact from the site may have been the ball of a thistle brooch, but in this

⁹¹ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.61

case, it seems unlikely to have come from a grave. The site also produced a (lost) Pictish symbol stone which seems to have been placed flat on top of a grave, an action which is associated with Scandinavian re-use of these slabs in other sites around Scotland.⁹² Interestingly, Batey & Graham-Campbell list the site in their discussion of Christian Norse sites, presumably based on the symbol stone.⁹³

Site / Location

If Oxtro is a FISB, it is in rather an unusual location, being more than 700m to the east of the coast and at an elevation of more than 25m. It is by no means certain that the site has a view of the sea, but Broadhouse Loch is less than 200m to the east and c.10m below the site. Flat, slightly lower land lies to the north and west, while the ridge of Ravie Hill (98m) dominates the skyline to the south.

Interpretation

Limited evidence for a possible tertiary burial within a very complex, multiphase site, which could not be fully investigated in the context of the current study.

030

STENNESS, MAINLAND, ORKNEY

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Over older structure

Date of Recovery 1902

C. HY 325 115

Inhumation (Definite)

No detail

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin

In the summer of 1902, M. M. Charleson visited 'an ancient inhabited site in the parish of Stenness' (Orkney). He provided no details on the 'building' brought to light, but noted that an unburnt burial was discovered 'immediately above it', about 2ft (0.6m) beneath the surface. It had already been disturbed, but a ring-headed pin, found in association with it, was later purchased by the National Museum.⁹⁴

Site / Location

Charleson is not noted for his geographical precision (see also 014.2), and the burial could have come from anywhere in Stenness. Some point on the east shore of the Loch of Stenness or Bay of Ireland can be postulated but not confirmed, and further comment is inadvisable under the circumstances.

⁹² Morris, *Birsay Bay*, p.26

⁹³ Fanning, 'Ringed pin in Scotland', p.336; Graham-Campbell, *Gold and Silver of Scotland*, p.155; Morris, *Birsay Bay*, p.26; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.61; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) HY22NE 4 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁹⁴ M. M. Charleson, 'Notice of some ancient burials in Orkney' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxxviii (1904), pp 565-6; According to the RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. HY31SW 4 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007), this pin is FC193, also noted in Grieg, *Scotland*, p.170, although the later source does not give its provenance

Interpretation

Although a definite tertiary burial, no further information is available either on its precise provenance or the nature of the structure into which it was inserted.

031

Unknown Site SANDWICK, MAINLAND, ORKNEY	C. HY 255 205
Tertiary Burial (Possible)	Inhumation (Possible)
No record	Within Mound
Date of Recovery Unknown	Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin

Batey & Graham-Campbell note the presence of 'an individual mound' which contained an inhumation accompanied by a ringed pin at Sandwick. The site is directly compared to that from the parish of Stenness (see 030), which had an equally vague provenance, but no further information is forthcoming at present.⁹⁵

Site / Location

Given the vague provenance, very little can be said about this burial, other than the fact that it was probably situated within a few kilometres of the west coast of Mainland. The NGR given here relates to the parish name on the Landranger series maps.

Interpretation

As the reliability of the original source cannot be assessed, this has been classified as a possible tertiary burial.

032

Howe of HOWE, MAINLAND, ORKNEY	HY 2759 1092
Tertiary Burial (Possible)	Unknown
Broch, Chambered Cairn & Habitation	No record
Date of Recovery 1860s	Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Linen Smoother

The association of a single 'stray' find with a possible burial at this site is somewhat tenuous. Before excavations began in 1978, the site was a large mound c.40m in diameter and 4.5m high, and it can be assumed that the linen smoother was found in its upper levels. Grieg is the only one to explicitly state that it came from a grave, a conclusion which the excavation of the site calls into question. An Iron Age ringfort was overlain by a broch, which was in turn overlain by up to six phases of Pictish occupation. Further excavation revealed two successive megalithic tombs, although it is very unlikely they could have been recognised as such in the Viking Age. Despite these

⁹⁵ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.61

very extensive excavations, the linen smoother remains the only find of Viking Age date from the site, and while its context is far from certain, these artefacts are comparatively rare finds on settlement sites.⁹⁶

Site / Location

The Howe is situated towards the SE end of a prominent ridge, between 25 & 30m above sea level. It affords good views over the Bay of Ireland and the Loch of Stenness, as well as the Rush, the channel between the two, which is c.0.5km E of the site. High ground lies to the W and NW, but there are good views in other directions. Brøgger (who had sailed in the area) noted that the 'mound (was) very prominently situated and (was) used as a sea-mark'.⁹⁷

Interpretation

The vague nature of the original record and the possible Viking Age settlement activity at this site mean that this must be classified as a possible tertiary grave.

033

BALNAKEIL BAY, DURNESS, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery May 1991

NC 3865 7068

Inhumation (Definite)

Sand-cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (10)

- A. Sword
- B. Spear
- C. Shield Boss
- D. Penannular Brooch (CA)
- E. Three Beads (amber & glass)
- F. Strap End
- G. Antler Comb
- H. Needle Case (bone) (?)
- I. Fish Hook
- J. 14 Gaming Pieces

This burial was professionally excavated following its partial erosion from the base of a 5-6m high dune. The surviving skeletal material indicates a boy of 8-13 years and 4ft 9in – 5ft (1.45-1.52m) tall, who had been placed on his right side (no details of orientation are available). The shield boss and spear were by his head, and he lay on top of the sword. The possible strap end was at his waist, and the other artefacts lay around him. Corrosion products on some of the artefacts provide evidence for straw, twigs, feathers

⁹⁶ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.81 believed the entire feature was a 'burial-mound'. John Hedges & Bernard Bell, 'The Howe', in *Current Archaeology* vii (1980), pp 49-50; Beverley Ballin Smith (ed.), *Howe: Four Millennia of Orkney Prehistory Excavations 1978-1982: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph ix* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.259; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no HY21SE 41 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁹⁷ Ballin Smith, *Howe*, p.1; Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, p.130

and textiles fragments. These latter artefacts suggest the body may have been placed on a pillow. The burial is richly equipped, although the needle case is very unusual and may reflect the individual's young age. Indeed, there is some debate as to whether or not he would have been capable of wielding the sword.⁹⁸ A particularly significant burial which has not yet been fully published.

Site / Location

This burial is on the west side of Foraid Head, 13km east of Cape Wrath, on the north coast of Scotland. As such, it faces the broad and sheltered Balnakeil Bay, although the burial's low elevation and a number of skerries a few 100 metres offshore restrict the view somewhat. When discovered, this burial was 4m from the high water mark at the foot of a substantial dune, although this latter feature may have built up since the burial occurred. It is overlooked by higher land to the north and east, where substantial cliffs (over 100m in some cases) fall to the sea. Views to the north and east, and west towards Cape Wrath are all restricted: there are, however, clear views south across the Bay.

Interpretation

The osteological evidence from this burial provides some very interesting additional information on what can be classified as a definite weapon inhumation.

034

KEOLDALE, DURNESS, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1837?

C. NC 383 662

Unknown

Mound / Cairn?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (5; poss. 1)

- A. Oval Brooches
- B. CA & Enamel Brooch
- C. CA & Silver objects (?)
- D. Small Bell (?)
- E. Wood/iron remains (?)

T.C. Lethbridge (also the excavator of the burial at Tote, Skye) noted that two tortoise brooches had been found together with 'padlocked chests' close to a 'rifled barrow' at Keoldale, Sutherland. These may or may not be related to a group of artefacts from Keoldale recorded and illustrated in another of his publications (B-D above). The significance of the bell has been pointed out by Batey, but the other 'ear-rings' do not seem to be of Viking Age date, and Lethbridge himself states that these objects were found with artefacts of seventh-eighth century date, rather too early for oval brooches. More recently, the Scottish Viking Graves Project has discovered a reference to 'the bottom of a brass candlestick' (an oval brooch) found in a cairn a few miles from

⁹⁸ Batey, C. E., 'The Viking and late Norse graves of Caithness and Sutherland' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp157-8; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 140-2

Durness in 1837, which provides some corroborating evidence.⁹⁹ There is no certain evidence that all these objects came from the same grave, and none (with the possible exception of the bell) can be identified today.

Site / Location

The modern settlement of Keoldale, to which the NGR refers, is a small village on the east shore of the Kyle of Durness, c.3km from the point where it enters Balnakeil Bay. Situated on low ground (less than 10m) between the Kyle and Loch Borrallis to the north, it is overlooked by higher ground on all sides. On the opposite side of the Kyle, Beinn an Arnair (280m) rises directly from the shore. Lethbridge's provenance could refer to almost anywhere within about a kilometre of the modern settlement.

Interpretation

Given the poor quality of the record and the fact that none of the artefacts can be identified today, this has been classified as (single) possible brooch grave, with an uncertain artefact total.

035.1

REAY, REAY HIGHLAND

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1912

c. NC 973 651

Inhumation (Probable)

Horse

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two iron buckles (horse harness?)

In 1912, a skeleton with a buckle (later identified as part of a horse-bridle) was found at an unspecified site at Reay, Caithness. The bones were subsequently reburied in the churchyard, and the artefacts do not seem to have been preserved. The burial may well have been disturbed before its (accidental) discovery in 1912.¹⁰⁰

Site / Location

Although the precise site of the burial is unknown, it presumably came from the same general area as the other FISBs from Reay, east of the modern village. The NGR given here is derived from the RCAHMS Archive, and is based on the site of the 1927 find (see 035.3). The site was still known in 1928, when Edwards noted that it had been placed 'close to the side of a drybuilt stone wall...part of a building of circular construction', although the stratigraphic relationship between the two is unclear. While the precise site is uncertain, it would have been less than 700m from the sea, and

⁹⁹ Cited in Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.155; T. C. Lethbridge, *Merlin's Island: Essays on Britain in the Dark Ages* (London, 1948), p.87; C. E. Batey, 'A Viking-Age Bell from Freswick Links, Caithness' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxii (1988), pp 213-6; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.69 also cite an unnamed source from 1867

¹⁰⁰ A. J. Edwards, 'Excavations at Reay links and at a horned cairn at Lower Dounreay, Caithness' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lxiii (1929), p.138; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NC96NE 13 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

between the 10 and 20m contours, on a gentle slope towards Sandside Bay, a broad inlet with a wide beach. High ground to the east and west would restrict views along the coast.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary burial, largely on the basis of the other FISBs in the same area. It may well have been more elaborately furnished originally.

035.2

REAY, REAY, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery September 1913

c. NC 973 651

Inhumation (Definite)

Sand-cut (horse?)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Two oval brooches
- B. Ringed Pin
- C. CA buckle
- D. Spindle Whorl (steatite)
- E. Tweezers ('small iron cross')
- F. Bridle-bit & iron buckle

This burial was found as the result of erosion at the links of Reay, the skeleton being 4ft (1.2m) below the (then) contemporary ground surface. It seems to have been crouched, the back of the skull being the first part exposed. The two oval brooches were found about a foot (0.3m) below the skull, and 'appeared to have been placed together face to face' (compare Claughton Hall; 102). The other artefacts were 'near them', with the exception of the buckle and tweezers, which were found 'shortly afterwards'. The grave's equestrian associations are confirmed by the identification of 'the ankle bone of a small horse'.¹⁰¹

Site / Location

As with 035.1, the precise location of this burial is difficult to determine, although its association with 'links' would suggest a location to the west of the Isauld stream, marked as 'Dunes' on the modern OS map. Again, the grid reference is based on the location of the 1927 burial (see 035.3). Any site in the same general area would have afforded a view down to Sandside Bay, raised ground restricting views in other directions.

Interpretation

¹⁰¹ James Curle, 'On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp295-8. Grieg, *Scotland*, p.22-4 identified the tweezers, although he incorrectly associated these with another burial at Reay; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NC96NE 13 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Despite the unusual position of the brooches, there is no reason to doubt that this is a definite brooch inhumation, accompanied by horse trappings, and probably a horse.

035.3

REAY, REAY, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1926

c. NC 973 651

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone-lined?

Record Quality Very Good

Artefacts (10; poss. 9)

- A. Axe
- B. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type)
- C. 'Knife' (26.7cm long)
- D. Sickle
- E. Ring-headed pin
- F. Buckle (iron)
- G. Whetstone (6cm)
- H. Iron mount
- I. Iron rivet
- J. 2 flint fragments (unrelated?)

This grave, some 6ft (1.8m) below the then contemporary turf line, was discovered as a result of wind erosion. The skeleton lay extended on a 'paved surface' with its feet to the NW (towards the bay) and its head slightly raised. A 'stratum of dark coloured sand mixed with pieces of slag and burnt iron' was found at the bottom of the grave (under the paved layer?). The axe lay under the left knee, the shield boss had been placed on the chest, the sickle and unusually long 'knife' (?) to the skeleton's left, the iron mount beside the head, the buckle and whetstone near the pelvis, the rivet near the right elbow and the ring-headed pin on the right femur. Two flint flakes may have been intrusive, although one had 'particles of iron adhering to it'. Edwards suggested a date of 950-1000, while Bryce's examination of the skeletal remains suggested that the individual was probably male and 5ft 6 ¾ in. (170cm) tall, without any obvious injuries.¹⁰²

It should also be noted that Edwards also noted 'numerous traces of what must be either graves or other regularly constructed works of stone' 'in the cleared spaces between the dunes'. Edwards subsequent investigations In 1928, subsequent excavations revealed an 'empty' long cist under a mound some 160 yards (*c.* 146m) west of the site, and a further two empty east-west cists on the east bank of the Isauld burn, *c.* 100m to the east. Others were reinterpreted as 'building(s) of circular construction'. None, however, could be identified on the ground in 1964.¹⁰³

¹⁰² J. H. Edwards, 'Excavation of graves at Ackergill and of an earth-house at Freswick Links, Caithness, and a description of the discovery of a Viking grave at Reay, Caithness' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xli (1927), pp 202-9

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.203; Edwards, 'Excavations at Reay', pp 138-9; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NC96NE 13 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

The only grave from Reay which can be provenanced with some accuracy, the NGR given for the other graves in this group has been based on this. If these graves and the 'empty' cists were contemporary, the cemetery would have covered an extensive area, although all the burial sites would have had a similar view towards Sandside Bay to the north.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation. The paved floor and clay deposits have some parallels with other graves within the study area.

036.1

DUNROBIN CASTLE, GOLSPIE, HIGHLAND

NC 8494 0057

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Symbol Stone (& Rectangular Cairn)

Cist Grave

Date of Recovery May 1854

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Spear (socket only)

Despite its early date, a detailed account of a stone-lined grave with a sandy floor orientated SW-NE and c.8ft (2.4m) long, which contained the remains of two individuals, although only one skull was found. The only grave good was a socket, treated with some derision in a recent publication by Close-Brooks, but associated with a Scandinavian spearhead by others, including Grieg, with whom I concur. One of the three cap-stones overlying the grave was inscribed with Pictish symbols, and it has been suggested that it was reused. A second cist, also orientated SW-NE, was found 'a few yards' to the west of the first. It had no grave-goods, but its orientation is not typically Christian. In 1977, another SW-NE cist grave was discovered 30m SW of these graves, covered by a low rectangular cist, on top of which another symbol stone was found. Radiocarbon dates confirm that it predated the Viking Age and demonstrate that the area was in use as a burial site before the arrival of the insular Scandinavian population. A third symbol stone, used as a (short) cist capstone, was found at Golspie in 1942, and a number of others are known from the general area.¹⁰⁴

Site / Location

Research by Close-Brooks, has allowed the 1854 find to be provenanced with some accuracy. It was on a long raised beach, 5-6m above sea-level, overlooked by a high, if fairly gently sloping ridge, which rises to over 230m c.1.5km inland. Although not on a

¹⁰⁴ J. J. Ross, 'Notices of two ancient graves recently opened in the vicinity of Dunrobin Castle, Sutherlandshire' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* i (1854), pp 297-9; Joanna Close-Brooks, 'Excavations in the Dairy Park, Dunrobin, Sutherland, 1977' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cx (1980), p328-36. Anderson, 'Relics', p.571, Grieg, *Scotland*, p.17. The skull was subsequently examined in J. B. Davis & J. Thurnam, *Crania Britannica. Delineations and Descriptions of the Skulls of the Aboriginal and Early Inhabitants of the British Isles: with Notices of their other Remains* (London, 1865), p.1, although this source provides no real additional information.

promontory, there were clear views seaward and some distance up and down the coast. It cannot have been more than 10m from the modern shoreline, directly opposite a sandy, if not particularly well-sheltered beach. It was clearly a Pictish site of some importance. The precise relationship between this grave and the other FISBs at Dunrobin is not fully understood (see 036.2 & 036.3).

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, and the only one found in direct association with a Pictish symbol stone (but see also Oxtro, Orkney: 029).

036.2

DUNROBIN CASTLE, GOLSPIE, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Near Pictish Burial?

Date of Recovery 1854 / 1855

c. NC 849 006

Inhumation (Probable)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two oval brooches

Anderson was the first to publish these brooches, which he said were from 'a grave near Dunrobin'. This presumably indicates that it was an inhumation, but no further details are forthcoming. Although the outer shells have been lost in the interim, the brooches themselves are of a tenth century type.¹⁰⁵

Site / Location

Grieg noted that the brooches had been in Dunrobin Castle Museum since 1855, and as they were not mentioned by Ross, it can perhaps be assumed that they were found after May 1854 (see 036.1). Given that excavation work was going on in the area around 'Meg's garden' at this time, it seems reasonable to suggest that this grave came from the same general area, and it has been treated as the second FISB within a single burial field (although not necessarily a compact one). Like 036.1, it presumably had some Pictish associations.¹⁰⁶

Interpretation

While Anderson's description lacks detail, the finds have been treated as a definite brooch burial, and as part of a small cemetery.

036.3

DUNROBIN CASTLE, GOLSPIE, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Near Pictish burials?

Date of Recovery 1872-1925

c. NC 849 006

Unknown

Possible horse burial (?)

Record Quality Poor

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, 'Relics', p.554. The outer shells of the brooches had already been lost at that point.

¹⁰⁶ Grieg, Scotland, p.17

Artefacts (2)

- A. Axe
- B. Iron ring (bridle?)

Grieg seems to have been the first to publish an axe in Dunrobin Castle Museum. Like the oval brooches (036.2), it was presumably discovered after Ross's 1854 article. In the 1920s, it was displayed with an iron ring, which was presumably found with it (and which does not in itself provide evidence for a fourth burial, nor does a 'long knife' (similar to that from Reay: 035.3) from 'near Dunrobin Castle' which was also on display in the museum. A pair of smith's tongs in the same museum has recently been re-provenanced to what seems to be a settlement site at Gartymore. Brøgger conflated all the iron artefacts from Dunrobin into a single exceptionally well furnished grave, but there is no evidence to substantiate this interpretation.¹⁰⁷

Site / Location

According to Grieg (and the Museum catalogue), the axe was found 'near the shore' at Dunrobin Castle. Unlike the oval brooches (see 036.2), it was found at least 18 years after the first weapon burial (see 036.1), but its provenance suggests that it was found on the same raised beach, and consequently it is unlikely to have been too far from the other furnished burials. Wherever it may have been located on the raised beach, the views from the site would have been very similar to those from 036.1.

Interpretation

With no direct reference to human remains and only a tenuous link between the artefacts, this has been classified as a possible weapon burial.

037

Near HARROW, CANISBAY, HIGHLAND

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

No references

Date of Recovery 1992

ND 285 742

Unknown

No details

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

- A. CA Penannular Brooch (Baltic type)

As a result of metal detector use, a ninth century brooch accompanied by the pin from a later, larger brooch was discovered in the early 1990s and claimed under Treasure Trove. Batey listed it as a possible grave find due to personal communication with the Regional Archaeologist, Robert Gourley. The brooch type is unusual for the Viking West, but so too are the oval brooches from nearby Castletown (see 040).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.17; 163; Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants*, p.134; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NC80SE 15 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

¹⁰⁸ Batey 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.159; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no ND27SE 20 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

Discovered eroding from the cliff edge *c.*350m east of Wester Haven, a deep and narrow inlet with a sandy beach on the north coast, the site is at the edge of a rock shelf between the 10 and 20m contours. It overlooks the bay to the east, as well as affording good view north across the Pentland Firth to the south coast of Hoy, *c.*14km away. There is no evidence of any previous activity at the site.

Interpretation

Despite Gourley and Batey's suggestions (above), the lack of evidence for human remains means that it has been classified as a possible tertiary burial.

038

HUNA, CANISBAY, HIGHLAND

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

No references

Date of Recovery 1935

ND 3599 7363

Inhumation

Boat burial

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Boat Rivets / Timber fragments

B. Chain (iron?)

A very poorly recorded find from the coast at Huna, described as the 'scattered remains of rivets, timber fragments, chain and skull fragments' none of which have survived or been recorded in detail. If it was a boat burial, it was clearly disturbed long before Curle visited the site.¹⁰⁹

Site / Location

The site identified by Batey is 120ft (*c.*37m) from the 1935 HW mark and close to the 5m contour, immediately above a narrow beach. It is less than 250m from the Haven of Sand, a narrow inlet, but only the outer part of this is visible from the site, which also affords excellent views north to the island of Stroma and northwest to South Ronaldsay.

Interpretation

Despite Batey's emphasis on the potential importance of this site, the poor quality of the record has led to its classification as a probable tertiary burial. The possibility that it may have been a boat burial cannot be entirely ruled out.

039

MURKLE BAY, OLRIG, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No references (cemetery?)

Date of Recovery 1840

ND 166 695

Inhumation (Probable)

No details

Record Quality Poor

¹⁰⁹ Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.152

Artefacts (3)

- A. Spearheads (no. unknown)
- B. 'brass horse shoe' (CA penannular brooch head?)

In 1840, workmen extracting sand came across 'human bones, iron spearheads and a 'brass' horseshoe at Murkle Bay.¹¹⁰ Human remains unaccompanied by Viking Age artefacts were also discovered at other locations around the Bay in the same year (1840), as well as 1860, 1872, 1981 and 1986. In the latter case, several disturbed cists were investigated, and a radiocarbon date of AD1260-1420 was obtained from skeletal material from one of them. This strongly suggests that a Christian Late Norse community were buried at the site. The evidence for a pre-existing indigenous cemetery into which at least one furnished grave was placed is unfortunately more tenuous.¹¹¹

Site / Location

The artefacts seem to have been found on the north side of Murkle Bay, in the same general area as the unfurnished burials. As such, grave is likely to have been below the 10m contour and not too far from the beach, and would have afforded clear views east across Murkle Bay and the mouth of the wider Dunnet Bay, while the view to the north was more restricted by the Spur and its associated promontory. The burial site at Castletown (040), c.2.8km to the east, was almost certainly not visible from the area

Interpretation

Given the vague nature of the record, it has been taken as evidence for a single probable weapon burial, although the possibility that there was more than one cannot be entirely ruled out. The continued use of this area for burial after the deposition of the FISB is particularly interesting, and can be compared to a number of other sites in the study area.

040

CASTLETOWN,OLRIG, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Presumed broch (extant mound)

Date of Recovery September 1786

ND 1936 6876

Inhumation (Definite)

Under stone slab

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

- A. Two Oval Brooches
- B. Jet Armlet
- C. Bone Pin

¹¹⁰ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND16NE 25, citing Ordnance Survey Name Books (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

¹¹¹ Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.160; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND16NE 25, citing Ordnance Survey Name Books (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

In 1787, James Traill presented two oval brooches to the Museum. They had been dug out of 'the top of the ruins of a Pictish house (*e.g.* broch) in Caithness, lying beside a skeleton, buried under a flat stone with very little earth above it'. Although one brooch is now in Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen, all the artefacts can still be identified. The flat stone above the burial sounds similar to the brooch burial from Gurness (024.1), and may suggest some form of cist grave. The brooches are of a comparatively late (tenth century) type. While Anderson seems to have been certain the mound was a broch, a RCAHMS visit in 1965 was more cautious, describing it as an artificial mound 19m x 13m and up to 2.7m high, which may have been a broch.

One of these brooches was subsequently presented to Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen, but both can still be identified, as can the associated artefacts. The description of a flat stone covering the body is reminiscent of that of the brooch burial from Gurness (024.1) and may suggest some form of simple cist. The brooches are of a comparatively late (tenth century) type. When visited in 1965, the 'broch' site was described as an artificial mound, 19 x 13m and up to 2.7m high. It seems clearly artificial, but there is some debate as to its identity, despite Anderson's certainty on the matter.¹¹²

Site/Location

The mound at Castletown (otherwise Castlehill) is situated close to the 10m contour at the western end of the long (more than 2km) strand at the head of Dunnet Bay. The land behind rises gradually but allows views northwest and north from the site, including the c.3km wide Bay, but view beyond this feature are blocked by the Spur and the Thirl respectively.

Interpretation

While there is some debate on the precise character of the Castletown mound, it is clearly artificial and resembled a large barrow when reused by the insular Scandinavian community. Despite its early date, this is a definite brooch inhumation.

041

THURSO EAST, THURSO, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Possible)

None known

Date of Recovery 1973/1974

ND 124 690

Unknown

Disturbed

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. One Oval Brooch

Batey, states that a single oval brooch was recovered from ground disturbed by heavy machinery being used to salvage two grounded trawlers on the shoreline at Thurso East,

¹¹² Anderson, 'Relics', pp 549-50; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.24; Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.151; Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the structure, distribution and contents of the brochs, with special reference to the question of their Celtic or Norwegian origin' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xii (1878), pp 329-30; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND16NE 11 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

and was acquired under Treasure Trove eleven years later in 1985. The site was examined, but no further evidence for a burial was forthcoming.¹¹³

Site/Location

Batey states that the brooch was found at Thurso East, although this area does not seem to include a beach. The RCAHMS archive gives a provenance of 'Thurso' rather than 'Thurso East', and the NGR given is only four digit. That given here relates to the point where two roads lead down to the shore at Thurso East, but this must be regarded as approximate. Whatever its precise location, the burial was on low-lying ground east of the Thurso River, and would have afforded good views across the Bay, views to the north-west and east being restricted by higher ground, which also slopes upwards to the south. The probable burial at Murkle Bay (039) is c.5km to the east.

Interpretation

Given its disturbed context, this has been interpreted as a possible brooch burial, one which was presumably rather more richly furnished originally.

042

Mill of WATTEN, WATTEN, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Probable)

None known (Cists & standing stone nearby)

Date of Recovery 1867

ND 2511 5496

Inhumation (probable)

(Short?) Cist Burial (mound)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts(1)

A. Spearhead

In April 1871, a spearhead was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland that had been found in a short stone cist, one of two parallel examples c.6ft (1.8m) apart, which lay in (or perhaps under) a 'gravel hillock'. A third short cist had been found c.20 yards (18.3m) away in 1867. The Ordnance Survey Name Book notes that a 5ft (1.5m) standing stone had stood 'nearby' until recently, that one of the two cists had a complete skeleton in it, the others containing 'decayed human bones and black earth', and that all three were orientated E-W, suggesting that they cannot have been particularly 'short'. In 1874, Anderson confused matters somewhat by stating that the spearhead had been found 'in or close beside a cist', rather less definite than the original *PSAS* entry, but similar to that given in the Name Book. The spearhead is unusual, being variously described as Anglo-Saxon or 'late' (e.g. tenth century), but when examined by Batey, it was so severely corroded that the original form was far from clear. It has been suggested that a second 'woman's' grave was found at this site, but this is clearly based on an error by Shetelig, and the spearhead head is the only recorded artefact from the site.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', pp 158-9; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND6NW 67 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

¹¹⁴ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum, April 10, 1871', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ix (1872), p.183; OS Name Book, cited in RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND25SE 4 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007); Anderson, 'Relics', p.574; Batey, 'Viking and

Site / Location

This site is unusually far inland, some 13km upstream from the estuary of the Wick River and 9km west of the coast at Sinclair Bay. It was close to the bottom of the valley, between 10 and 20m above sea level, with low (less than 50m) hills on each side. The site would have afforded clear views up and down the valley, as well as the slopes on each side.

Interpretation

Sources disagree on details of this burial, with one arguing that the spearhead was found in an 'empty' cist, while the other states that it was found 'near' a cist with a skeleton. Given this ambiguity, it has been classified as a probable weapon grave, perhaps under a mound, which formed part of a small group of unfurnished burials of uncertain date..

043

Longhills, WESTERSEAT, WICK, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Probable)

None known (extant mound?)

Date of Recovery 1840/1841

ND 357 513

Unknown

(Short?) Cist Burial

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two Oval Brooches (not matching)

According to Anderson (the earliest published source), these artefacts were found in a short cist on the top of a gravel mound in 1840, although 1837 and 1841 have also been given as alternative dates. There seem to have been other cists within the mound, but there is no specific reference to skeletal material, and these brooches are the only recorded artefacts. Although technically of different types, they could have been worn as a pair, and there is no reason to suspect there were two graves.¹¹⁵

Site/Location

Although the mound no longer exists, Longhills is a riverside field centred on the NGR given above. On the north bank of the Wick River, c.1km upstream from the point where it flows into Wick Bay, on a gentle slope up from the river, there is no high ground in the immediate vicinity, although a slight spur restricts views towards the sea. The river is still tidal at this point, and the burial is well below the 10m contour.

Interpretation

Given the presence of two brooches in a cist, this can be classified as a probable brooch burial.

late Norse Scotland', p.151; Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.8, seems to have confused this weapon burial with the brooch grave from Westerseat (043).

¹¹⁵ Anderson, 'Relics', p.551; Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.151; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 24-5; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND35SE20 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

044

OSPIDALE, CREICH, HIGHLAND

Brooch Burial (Possible)

Standing Stone

Date of Recovery 1830

NH 7185 8968

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Oval Brooch

While Anderson simply stated that a single oval brooch was found at Ospidale, Grieg gave a much more precise provenance and noted that it was found close to a standing stone and in close proximity to an 'urn', which he suggested may have been a steatite vessel. However, such finds are unusual grave-goods and there is no direct evidence to link the two objects. The brooch has been badly damaged, but is clearly of tenth century type.¹¹⁶

Site/Location

The most southerly (possible) burial on the east coast of Scotland, the site is *c.*1.3km from the north shore of Dornoch Firth, but more than 9km inland from Dornoch Point and Whiteness Sands, which constrict the Firth to *c.*2.7km in width. The site is just over 1km from the head of Loch Ospidale, which would have been accessible from the Firth before the silting up of Poll na Caorach, and the Allt Garbh flows past the bottom of the slope on which the brooch was found. The site is close to the 50m contour, approximately half-way up a steep slope, and affords an excellent view of W, S and SE over the inner Firth, views towards the open sea being rather more restricted.

Interpretation

Given the ambiguity of the record, a possible burial site, and one of a limited number of sites linked to standing stones (see also Ardvouray: 060, Ballinaby: 073 and Rathlin: 082).

045

GORTONS, KNOCKANDO, MORAY

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery *c.*1860

NJ 183 390

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

¹¹⁶ Anderson, 'Relics', p.553; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 17-18; Batey, 'Viking and late Norse graves', p.155

Discovered while excavating a cutting on the Strathspey Railway, 'near Gortons, Elginshire'. Anderson and Grieg treated this sword as a 'stray find' and Shetelig was also cautious in his interpretation.¹¹⁷

Site / Location

Gortons is some 30km SSW of the coast at Spey Bay, and c.43km upstream from the mouth of the Spey at the same place. Although the original reference is quite vague, the RCAHMS archive notes that the railway cutting nearest to Gortons was under construction at the time the sword was discovered, and it is assumed that the sword came from this point. This is close to the 150m contour, overlooked by a 300m hill less than 1km to the W and a 308m hill to the NE. It seems originally to have been on a slight slope immediately above the river, close to the valley bottom. Even if this location is not absolutely correct, the valley topography is very similar for more than a kilometre in both directions.¹¹⁸

Interpretation

As this sword seems to have come from a 'dry' site, it has been classified as a possible burial for the purposes of this study.

046

BALLINDALLOCH, INVERAVON, MORAY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1829

c. NJ 178 366

Inhumation

Horse

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. 'small cup' (Shield Boss)
- B. Bridle Bit
- C. 'quantity of rings and bits of iron'
- D. Iron Hoop (?)

Published by Anderson using MSS evidence from the Society of Antiquaries, he described it as a grave 'more than a foot (0.3m) from the surface', which contained 'a human skeleton along with the skull and bones of a horse' as well as the listed artefacts, although their location within the grave is not noted. The large iron hoop could have been a chariot wheel, but Anderson suggested a shield rim, although these are not widely known in the Viking Age either. While Anderson believed it was a horse burial, Shetelig, and Graham-Campbell & Batey have been rather more cautious, while Grieg

¹¹⁷ Anon., 'Donations' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* v (1864), p.215; Anderson, 'Relics', p.367; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.159; Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', pp 8-9

¹¹⁸ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NJ13NE 12 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

seems to have ignored the find completely. The bridle bit has been compared to an Iron Age example, but as all the finds have been lost, this cannot be confirmed.¹¹⁹

Site / Location

This grave was discovered 'by a labourer digging on a moor about a mile (1.6km) from Ballindalloch'. The Castle is on low ground close to the confluence of the Spey and its tributary, the Avon, but is entirely surrounded by high ground, now forested but presumably open moorland at that time. While the highest and most open ground is to the S, this is speculative, and other than suggesting the burial is outside the valley itself, nothing definite can be said about the site, and the NGR given here relates to Ballindalloch Castle. It is interesting to note, however that the possible weapon burial at Gortons (045) is just over 2km N of the Castle.

Interpretation

As the 'cup' or shield boss image seen by Anderson is no longer available, the date of this burial remains uncertain. However, an Anglo-Saxon or Iron Age burial would be at least as bizarre as a Viking Age one, and consequently this site has been treated as a possible weapon grave.

089

ACKERGILL, WICK, HIGHLAND

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Pictish Cemetery w/ Symbol Stones

Date of Recovery 1925

ND 3487 5497

Inhumation

Chamber within mound

Record Quality Excavated

Artefacts (1)

A. CA Chain (40cm long)

This burial was one of four inhumations within a single chamber, but the only one accompanied by an artefacts, the chain having been found around the skeleton's neck. It was found beneath a circular cairn some 18ft (5.5m) in diameter, delineated by a stone kerb 1-2ft (0.3-0.6m) high. At the centre of the cairn, constructed more or less at ground level, was an rectilinear chamber with curving sides, 7ft 3in (2.2m) long, up to 4ft (1.2m) wide and 3ft 3in (1.0m) high, the walls of which were constructed using a corbelled technique, although there was no evidence for any roof. The chamber had been entirely filled with sand, which was then overlain with cairn material. The lowest body in the chamber (at floor level) was that of an aged man, while at a slightly higher level was the body of a juvenile of uncertain sex. Both of these had been placed in extended positions. Close to the top of the chamber was a male skeleton which had been placed flexed on its left side. The highest burial in the chamber was that of a woman, 'a little over twenty' and 4ft 11in to 5ft (150-2cm) high, who had been placed extended on her left side with her face downwards. It was this last skeleton (F in the original report) which had the chain around its neck.

¹¹⁹ Anderson, 'Relics', pp 569-70; Shetelig, 'Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland', p.8; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.105; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NJ13NE 2 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Ackergill was the scene of considerable burial activity in the Early Medieval Period. Approximately 200ft (61m) ESE of the circular cairn were a series of 8 other cairns in two groups of 6 and 2 respectively. All were rectilinear rather than circular, but the chamber in the largest of these (Edward's mound 5) was constructed in a very similar way to Edward's mound 6, in which the chain was found. A total of twelve cists and burials were found in this area, all but two of them under the cairns, but none were accompanied by grave-goods. Batey reported evidence for two other eroding burials in 1981. Two Pictish symbol stones have also been found at the site, one of which originally stood less than 20ft (6.1m) from the circular mound which contained the furnished burial. Edwards was convinced that all of these graves were of Viking date, despite the absence of grave-goods, but a more general consensus now suggests that the unfurnished burials are Pictish, and it is possible that the burial with the chain may be a later addition to the site. Parallels with the Pictish and Viking Age graves at Dunrobin Castle are particularly striking.¹²⁰

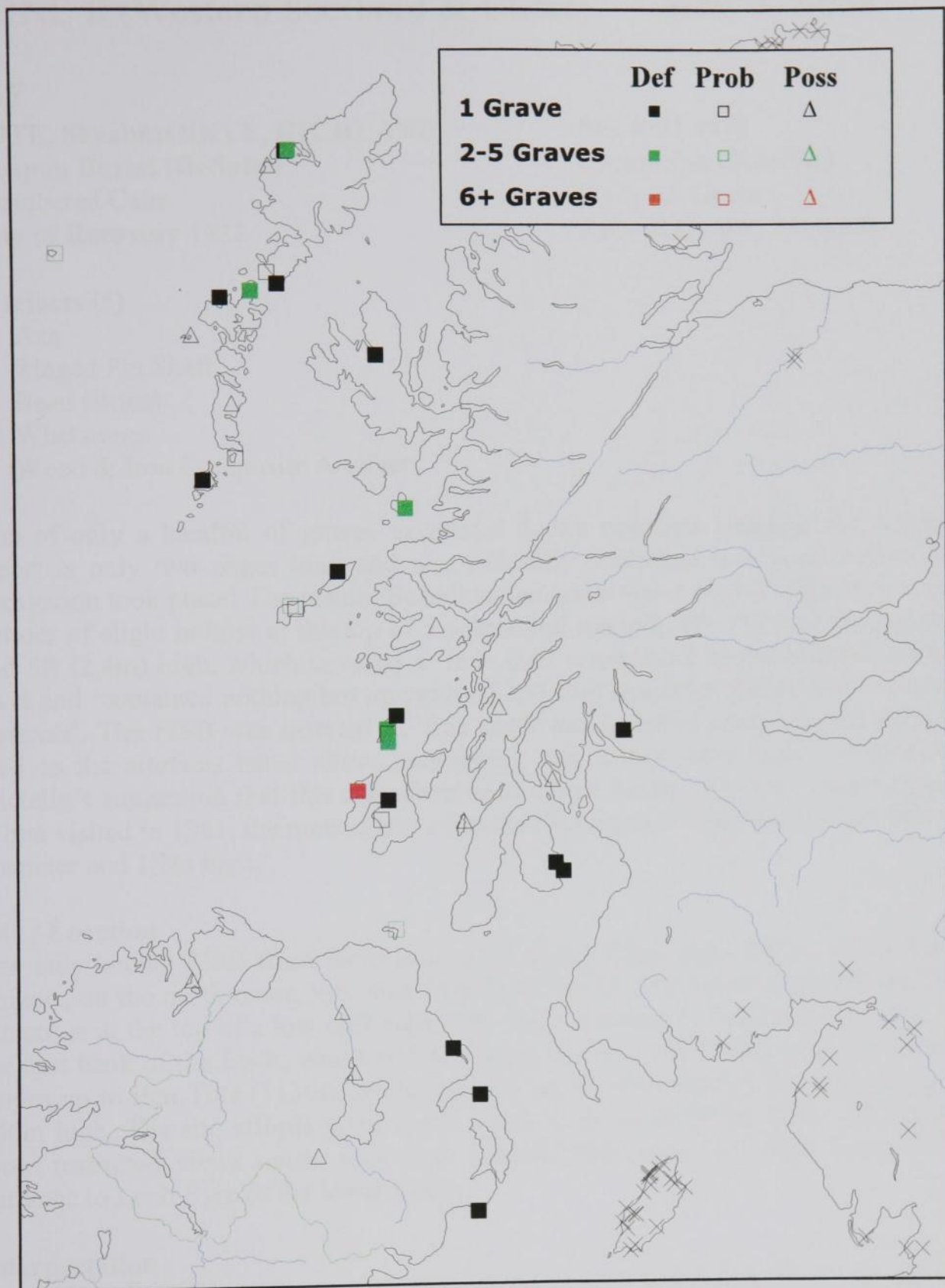
Site / Location

According to Edwards, all of the burials at Ackergill were placed in a natural sand mound, c.400ft (122m) long and c.70ft (21.3m) wide, some 100ft (30m) from the HWM and 20ft (6m) above sea level, but approximately parallel to the SW shore of Sinclair's Bay, on ground which sloped gradually up from that direction. The site was close to the end of the strand at Sinclair's Bay, more than 2km long. Despite its low elevation, the site affords views across Sinclair's Bay and further north along the coast, as well as east towards Noss Head, c.3.75km away.

Interpretation

There can no longer be any serious doubt that this cemetery is essentially Pictish, but the presence of a tenth century Norse chain provides evidence for a definite tertiary inhumation at the site, perhaps inserted into a chamber that was Pictish in origin, although it is also possible that the earlier burials were Scandinavian but unfurnished.

¹²⁰ A. J. H. Edwards, 'Excavation of a Number of Graves in a Mound at Ackergill, Caithness', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xl (1926), pp 160-82 & 'Excavation at Ackergill and Freswick Links' pp 196-209; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. ND35SW 12 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007); Elizabeth Alcock, 'Burials and cemeteries in Scotland' in Nancy Edwards & Alan Lane (eds), *The Early Church in Wales and the West*; Oxbow Monograph xvi (Oxford, 1992), pp 125-9



Map – Zone B Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Western Scotland and Ulster (Zone B). These correspond to Catalogue Entries 047 –088. Sites marked with an ‘x’ form part of other zones.

ZONE B (Western Scotland & Ulster) Sites 047-088

047

TOTE, Skeabost SKYE, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Chambered Cairn

Date of Recovery 1922

NG 4097 4975

Cremation (Possible)

Earth-cut Grave

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (5)

- A. Axe
- B. Ringed Pin Shaft
- C. Bead (Bone)
- D. Whetstone
- E. Wood & Iron Composite Artefact

One of only a handful of graves excavated in the twentieth century, the original report is only two pages long and was officially published two years before the excavation took place! The insular Scandinavian grave was 1 ½ ft (0.45m) below the bottom of slight hollow at the top of a substantial mound, 40ft (12.2m) in diameter and 8ft (2.4m) high, which covered a 'rude cist' constructed at the original ground level and 'contained nothing but upwards of 150 flint and other flakes, and two rude scrapers'. The FISB was inserted in 'fine sand' and included some charred bone as well as the artefacts listed above, suggesting that it may have been a cremation. Shetelig's suggestion that this may have been a boat burial cannot be substantiated. When visited in 1961, the mound had subsided slightly, and was described as 19m in diameter and 1.2m high.¹

Site / Location

The only known FISB from Skye is situated nearly 20km from the mouth of Loch Snizort, on the north coast, less than 1km from the head of Loch Snizort Beag. The mound is at the top of a low cliff (less than 5m, according to Lethbridge's plan), on the east bank of the Loch, which is 500m wide at this point. To the east, the ground slopes up to Ben Tote (113m), while the hills on the west side of the inlet are up to 246m high. The site affords good views south to the head of the inlet, and slightly more restricted views north, with high ground obstructing any clear view of the entrance to Loch Eyre or the lower Loch.

Interpretation

While the report is problematic, this is clearly a definite weapon burial, possibly a cremation, within the upper levels of a prehistoric chambered cairn.

¹ T. C. Lethbridge, 'A burial of the 'Viking Age' in Skye' in *The Archaeological Journal* lxxvii (1920), pp 135-6; Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.10, as Sheabost (*sic*); RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NG44NW 4 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

048.1

KILDONNAN, EIGG, SMALL ISLES, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence (300m from church)

Date of Recovery c.1830

c. NM 491 854

Unknown

Unknown (mound)

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword (hilt extant)
- B. CA buckle/distributor & Strap Ends
- C. Whetstone (small)
- D. CA Object (anvil/vessel foot?)

When it was published in 1878, the provenance of this grave was provided by Donal Ban Mackay, 'a blind old man of very retentive memory', who stated that his brother found the artefacts 'while levelling a hillock'. It is hardly surprising that there is no description of the grave cut, human remains, or the position of the artefacts in the grave.²

Site / Location

MacPherson's description makes it clear that the grave was found c.300m west of St. Donan's Church and c.650m NNW of the second group of burials at Kildonnan (see 048.2 & 3), at the south-eastern corner of Eigg. It was close to the 40m contour on a slight ridge which continues to rise to the north, slightly higher than the church, and c.300m from the cliffs at Leac a' Ghuidhat. The site affords good views to the east and south across the shallow but well sheltered Poll nam Partan and west to the eastern slopes of An Sgurr (393m). The church site was certainly in use at the time, but its relationship to this burial is ambiguous.

Interpretation

Given the absence of an explicit reference to human remains, this has been classified as a probable burial.

048.2

KILDONNAN, EIGG, SMALL ISLES, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Mound (Prehistoric)

Date of Recovery October 1875

NM 4899 8488

Inhumation (Probable)

Stone-lined (mound)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (8)

- A. Axe
- B. Spearhead
- C. Knife (large)
- D. CA 'ball-type' brooch
- E. CA Buckle
- F. 3 Beads (2 amber, 1 stone)
- G. Sickle

² Norman MacPherson, 'Notes on antiquities from the island of Eigg' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xii (1878), pp 577-97; Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940), pp 63-7

H. Whetstone (small)

One of two graves investigated by MacPherson and Joass, the published drawings indicate that the mound was then some 40ft (12.2m) in diameter and 7ft (2.1m) high. In 1972, the original excavation trench, which had entered the mound from the northwest, was still visible and the chamber was 1.1 x 1.3m. The SW end was, however, missing, and the original drawing indicates that it was originally somewhat longer. As the surviving slabs forming this chamber are placed on the original ground surface, it seems very likely that this was a reused prehistoric mound: indeed, a depression at the centre of the mound noted during the original excavation may have been the means by which the chamber was accessed. Only fragments of bone were found within the chamber, and the axehead, spearhead, sickle and beads were found as a result of 'riddling of the soil': the position of the other grave-goods in the chamber is not recorded. Graham-Campbell suggests the brooch (D) is a tenth century Scandinavian copy of an insular type, which also provides a date for the burial as a whole.³

Site / Location

Situated on a slight promontory between two shallow sandy bays c.500m SSW of St. Donan's church, this mound is just below the 10m contour and c.30m from the edge of a slight cliff. Although overlooked by higher land, it is in a prominent position from the perspective of anyone entering Poll nam Partan from the sea, and affords good views across the low lying peninsula at Rubha na Crannaig to the open sea to the east and southeast, as well as overlooking the sands of Poll nam Partan itself. Views to the north are rather more restricted by rising ground. It is unlikely that the site of the first grave at Kildonnan (048.1) is visible from this site.

Interpretation

As some bones seem originally to have been present, this has been classified as a definite weapon inhumation within what seems to be prehistoric burial mound.

048.3

KILDONNAN, EIGG, SMALL ISLES, HIGHLAND

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Beside prehistoric (?) mound

Date of Recovery October 1875

NM 4899 8488

Inhumation (Probable)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword (double-edged, fragmentary)
- B. CA Brooch
- C. CA Buckle
- D. 2 Beads (jet)
- E. Whetstone (small, perforated)
- F. Flint fragments (not extant)

³ MacPherson, 'Antiquities from Eigg', pp 589-91; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 67-9; James Graham-Campbell, 'Some Viking-age penannular brooches from Scotland and the origins of the 'thistle-brooch' in Anne O'Connor & D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five: Studies presented to R B K Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1983), p.312

According to the published plan, this mound, c.25ft (7.6m) by 20ft (6.1m) and 3ft (0.9m) was directly adjacent to 048.2. The plan shows a rectilinear grave cut, c.6ft (1.8m) x 2½ft (0.75m), orientated NE-SW and apparently cut into the original ground surface below the mound, but there is no reference to this feature in the text. The fact that the feature is described as a 'tomb' suggests some structures and/or bones were found, but only the artefacts are described, and their position within the cut is not recorded. Unlike the adjacent feature, there is no direct evidence that this mound was prehistoric. It and the excavation trench were still visible when the site was visited in 1972.⁴

Site / Location

Situated immediately southeast of the larger mound at this site (see 048.2).

Interpretation

As a 'tomb', this has been classified as a definite weapon burial, despite specific references to human remains, but as the cut seems to have extended into the original ground surface, there is no direct evidence for prehistoric activity (but see 048.2).

049

BHALTOS, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April 1915

NB 085 363

Inhumation (Certain)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (8)

- A. Two oval Brooches (single-shelled)
- B. Circular Brooch (CA)
- C. Chain (CA)
- D. Penannular Brooch (CA)
- E. Buckle (CA, silver & niello)
- F. Amber Bead (cylindrical)
- G. Weaving Sword
- H. Composite CA and Iron object

An elaborately furnished brooch burial was discovered by school children in an area of aeolian erosion in 'hummocky ground' at Bhaltos shortly before the visit of a school inspector in 1915. The bones and artefacts listed here were found eroding from a shallow cliff approximately 18in. to 2ft (0.45-0.6m) below the modern grave surface, with no evidence for a mound or other form of grave marker. MacLeod, the inspector, found several iron and composite artefacts at the same site, and it has been suggested by Graham-Campbell & Batey that one of these was a weaving sword. This had previously been interpreted as a spearhead and taken as evidence for a male burial at this site, but this has been rejected. The brooches, and presumably the grave, date from the ninth century.⁵

⁴ MacPherson, 'Antiquities from Eigg', pp 591-2; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 69-70

⁵ D. J. MacLeod, W. J. Gibson & James Curle, 'An account of the find of ornaments of the Viking time from Valtos, Uig, in the island of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 1 (1916), pp 181-9; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 75-8; James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p.74; For a discussion of iron weaving

Site / Location

Bhaltos is situated on northwest coast of Lewis, on the southern side of Loch Roag, the first major inlet south of the Butt of Lewis, on the south side of a smaller Bay called Camas na Clibhe. Recent research by the RCAHMS indicates that the site marked on modern OS maps is perhaps 50m from the correct position, but either site is at the centre of the beach (Tràigh na Clibhe), less than 200m from the high water mark and close to the 30m contour at the point where the ground begins to slope more steeply upwards towards the summit of a 100m hill. Hills of a similar height fully enclose the small area of flat land at the head of the bay, with a ridge separating this burial from the nearby site at Cnip (see 050). Views are effectively confined to the bay.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation with a weaving sword, rather than a spearhead (and hence a possible male grave).

050.1

CNIP, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Brooch Burial (Definite)

c.10m SW of Bronze Age Cist

Date of Recovery July 1979

NB 099 364

Inhumation

Earth-cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (10)

- A. Two oval brooches (double-shelled)
- B. 44 Glass Beads
- C. Ringed Pin
- D. Strap Buckle and Strap End
- E. Sickle
- F. Knife (17.5cm, incl. Tang)
- G. Whetstone (miniature, perforated)
- H. Needle Case (w/ 2 bodkins)
- I. Comb (Antler)
- J. Rivet (iron)

This burial (corresponding to Dunwell *et al*'s Grave A) was accidentally discovered as the result of erosion on Kneep headland, and excavated without archaeological supervision by the Procurator Fiscal. However, considerable care was taken in the recovery of both the artefacts and human remains, and recording was sufficiently detailed to allow a full reconstruction. The body was supine and orientated SW-NE and there was no trace of any structures associated with it. The oval brooches (one of which was upside down) were at chest level with the beads close to the neck; the pin and sickle rested on the chest; the buckle and strap end at the waist; the comb under the right arm; the knife, whetstone and needle case beside the left arm, and the rivet at the waist, although the direct association of the latter with the body has been debated. Analysis of the skeletal remains revealed they were the remains of a woman aged about 35-40, who had been c.1.60m high. Although other graves have now been

swords / battens, see Kate Gordon, 'A Norse Viking-age grave from Cruach Mhor, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxx (1990), pp 151-60

found nearby, this is by far the most richly furnished grave known from the cemetery.⁶

Site/Location

This grave is situated c.18m W of a Bronze Age cairn, now eroded, but which would almost certainly have been visible on the surface when the Viking Age cemetery was established. While several changes in the local (machair) ground surface have occurred, there is no evidence that the basic contour profile has changed, and it (and the other graves at this site) are located on the southern slopes of Cnip Headland, close to the 20m contour and just under 125m from the coast. A slight ridge to the east slightly restricts views in that direction, but there are clear views SE over the c.1.5km Traigh na Berie and its associated machair system. The remains of a shallow pool directly south of the headland may have provided a suitable sheltered harbour, and a naust of uncertain date is situated in the same general area. Views to the west and north are restricted by the slope, and even views to the east are restricted to the channel of Caolas Phabaigh by a series of islands less than 1km offshore.

Interpretation

Despite problematic recovery circumstances, a definite brooch inhumation.

050.2

CNIP, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Some distance from Bronze Age Cist

Date of Recovery May 1991

NB 099 364

Inhumation

Earth-cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

A. Bead (amber)

B. Perforated Pendant / Miniature Whetstone (4.1cm)

C. 3 iron nails

This grave (corresponding to Dunwell *et al* B) is one of a number of furnished children's graves from the site (see also 050.4 & 5). The skull, bead, and pendant were accidentally discovered as a result of erosion, while the remainder of the body was professionally excavated. The body had been placed with its head to the south in a shallow north-south grave cut, c.1.55 x 0.85m, flexed on its left side, with the beads and pendant probably suspended around its neck originally. The three nails 'may' have been present in the fill of the grave, while approximately 25 pottery shards of late or post-medieval date were found in the levels which sealed the grave. There is no evidence that the grave, which seems to have been cut into machair, was marked in any way, and a large stone in close proximity to the grave does not seem to have been noticed by those burying the child. Osteological analysis indicates that the child was c.6 at the time of death, and showed normal (healthy) growth patterns.⁷

⁶ R. D. E. Welander, C. E. Batey & T. G. Cowie, 'A Viking burial from Kneep, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxvii (1987), pp 147-74. See also A. J. Dunwell, T.G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, Tim Neighbour & A. R. Rees, 'A Viking age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxxv (1995), pp 719-52

⁷ Dunwell *et al*, 'Viking age cemetery at Cnip', pp 722-7, 737; T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce & Neill Kerr, 'The discovery of a child burial of probable Viking-age date on Kneep Headland, Uig, Lewis, 1991: interim report': 'Appendix' to C. E. Batey, 'The Viking and late Norse Graves of Caithness and

Site / Location

This grave was situated somewhere between 40 and 45m north-east of the first grave discovered at Cnip (see 050.1), at a slightly higher elevation (c.25m) and with a less restricted view to the east, over Caolas Phabaigh, views in other directions being very similar to those already described (see 050.1) This the only known grave from Cnip which lies outside the main concentration west of the Bronze Age cist.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, and one of the few furnished children's burials.

050.3

CNIP, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

c.10m W of Bronze Age Cist

Date of Recovery March-April 1992

NB 099 364

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut (stone setting)

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. Bone Pin (129mm)

B. Perforated Iron Plate

This burial (Dunwell *et al* E) was one of three placed in close proximity to each other and just a few metres NNW of the first grave found at the site (050.1). It was the only one of these three with grave-goods, but the close proximity of the burials, the many similarities between them, and a number of radiocarbon dates indicate that they were all broadly contemporary. The furnished burial was orientated E-W, with a 1.9 x 0.8m grave-cut, in which the body of adult female, aged 35-45 and c.1.6m tall, had been placed in a flexed position with the skull to the E, with both artefacts positioned close to the skull. The body had some signs of minor trauma, but slightly less than the other two burials in the group. Both of those were mature adult males, one (Dunwall *et al* C) orientated E-W and the other (Dunwall *et al* D) N-S. All three graves were marked at surface level with rectilinear arrangements of undressed stone, the furnished grave having the best preserved of these, as well as 'slightly blockier' stones at three of its corners. Some stratigraphic evidence suggested that all three stone settings may have enclosed low mounds.⁸

Site / Location

No more than 5m from the first furnished burial at this site (see 050.1).

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation. Its proximity to two unfurnished burials is interesting, particularly as these are male.

Sutherland' in C. E. Batey, Judith Jesch & C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp 165-71

⁸ Dunwell *et al*, 'Viking age cemetery at Cnip', pp 727, 739

050.4

CNIP, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

c.10m W of Bronze Age Cist

Date of Recovery Summer 1994

NB 099 364

Inhumation

Earth-cut

Record Quality V. Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Decorated bone pin (113mm)

B. Three amber beads

One of two infant graves discovered in 1994, this grave (Dunwell *et al* F) had been truncated prior to excavation, but its surviving dimensions were c.0.55 x 0.2m, the burial being orientated NW-SE. Preservation was poor, but the supine remains were those of a infant c.6-9 months old. One bead was found beneath the jaw, while the other artefacts were found on the surface prior to excavation. No surface stone settings were associated with the grave, nor were there any traces of a mound (although one could have been present). It forms part of a tightly focused burial complex, being less than 0.5m SW of the group associated with 050.3 and 1m E of 050.5.⁹

Site / Location

See 050.1.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary infant burial, one of two at the site.

050.5

CNIP, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

c.10m W of Bronze Age Cist

Date of Recovery Summer 1994

NB 099 364

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality V. Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Rivet head (iron)

The least impressively 'furnished' grave from Cnip, the excavator suggested that the single object in this grave (Dunwall *et al* G) might have worked its way into the fill accidentally, although the possibility that it formed part of a composite artefact was also considered. The body of an infant that had died at or around birth was placed in a flexed position on its right side, facing south, within a pit 0.66 x 0.48m, the long axis and skeleton being E-W. The rivet head lay beneath the skull, suggesting it had been placed there deliberately.¹⁰

Site / Location

Part of a focused burial group at Cnip (see 050.10)

⁹ *Ibid.* p.735, 736, 739

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.735, 737, 739

Interpretation

A probable tertiary burial, a classification that reflects some confusion as to whether the rivet was deliberately placed in the grave, but also that it may represent some form of coffin. Similar burials with rivets in England have been rejected on this basis (see, for example, some of the graves from York Minster (114).

051

MANGERSTADH, LEWIS, WESTERN ISLES

NB 009 311

Brooch Burial (Possible)

Unknown

Midden Material

Disturbed

Date of Recovery 1975

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Oval Brooch (fragmentary; single shelled)

In 1975, a 30mm x 20mm fragment of a single shelled oval brooch was recovered from an unstratified context close to the face of an eroding dune. Between 1974 and 1976, pottery shards and a comb (not a Viking type) were recovered from 'habitation levels' in the same general area. The presence of abundant shell and bone has led some commentators to suggest that the site may have been a midden (compare 023). The fragmentary brooch was clearly out of context and badly damaged when found, and its links to a mortuary context cannot be demonstrated conclusively.¹¹

Site / Location

Mangerstadh is one of the few sheltered harbours on the west coast of Lewis south of Loch Roag. A band of dunes extend inland from Tràigh Mhangurstadh and the brooch and associated finds came from the north side of these, c.100m from the beach. Close to the 10m contour, the site overlooks the flat land beside the bay, which is surrounded by land which rises to 40 or 50m. Views to the west and southwest across the beach towards the mouth of the bay are more open, but the northern headland restricts views towards the open sea.

Interpretation

Although this may be no more than a midden site, oval brooches are such rare finds outside burial contexts that this has been classified as a possible brooch burial.

052.1

ST KILDA, WESTERN ISLES

c. NF 102 993

Brooch Burial (Probable)

Unknown

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1873

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two Oval Brooches (1 extant)

¹¹ M. Carson, 'Iron age finds from the isle of Lewis' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cviii (1977), p.370

The earliest reference to these brooches occurs in Anderson's 1874 article. Grieg did not have an opportunity to view either, but one is preserved in Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen. This is single-shelled. No further details are available.¹²

Site / Location

Hirta, the main island of the St Kilda group, is very mountainous (up 361m). Given the lack of flat land and safe harbours, it seems most likely that the burial was somewhere in the vicinity of Village Bay, where Viking Age weapons also found (see 052.3). The NGR is based on the approximate position of the church (& hence glebe; see 052.2), and must be regarded as approximate. While the grave can hardly have been more than 1km from the sea, no further comment is possible.

Interpretation

Despite the absence of specific references to human remains, the discovery of two oval brooches means that this site has been classified as a probable brooch grave.

052.2

ST KILDA, WESTERN ISLES

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1843

c.NF 102 993

Unknown

Under mound

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. Spear
- C. Whetstone
- D. Iron fragments

According to Graham-Campbell & Batey, the Revd Neil Mackenzie (minister on St Kilda 1829-43) found a sword, spear and whetstone, along with fragments of iron of irregular shape, after removing 'a mound in a little field' on the glebe. The source of this information is not given, although the sword is presumably the same one to which Goodrich-Freer referred in 1900. The iron fragments may have been the remains of a shield boss, but this is of course speculative, as all the grave-goods have been lost.¹³

Site / Location

The site of the glebe at St Kilda is not known, but was presumably close to the site of the (medieval) church, on the east bank of the Abhainn Mhor, close to the 40m contour, and was certainly somewhere on the shores of Village Bay. Views to the N, W, and E were entirely blocked by the surrounding hills, but anywhere within the bay would provide a clear view of the beach and bay, as well as a view S and SE towards the rest of the Outer Hebrides, as well as the valley as a whole. The site is

¹² Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), pp 555-6; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.78-9; A. B. Taylor, 'The Norsemen in St. Kilda' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* xvii (1968), pp 133, 135. Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.77 state (incorrectly) that the brooch is double-shelled

¹³ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.77; A. Goodrich-Freer, 'The Norsemen in the Hebrides' in *The Saga Book of the Viking Club* ii.1 (1900), p.61

unlikely to have been more than 400m from the sea. The relationship between this grave and the other one from St Kilda is unknown.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial beneath a mound.

053

'West End', ENSAY, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1703

c. NF 972 867

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. CA balance

B. Small hammer

In one of the earliest references to a possible Viking burial anywhere on these islands, Martin Martin, noted that 'on the Island of Ensay...there was lately discovered a grave in the west end of the island, in which were found a pair of scales made of brass, and a little hammer, both of which were finely polished'. Anderson suggested that these 'scales' were actually a pair of oval brooches, but this idea was subsequently rejected by Grieg and Shetelig, both of whom believed Martin to be describing a balance (compare the find from East Tarbert Bay: 076). Both believed the other artefact to be a Thor's hammer, one of only a handful from an insular context (see also Gurness: 024.1 & Repton: 123.02).¹⁴

Site / Location

Ensay is a small (*c.* 2.7 x 1.4km) island on the north side of the Sound of Harris, the channel between Harris and North Uist. If the burial came from the north end of the island, it was presumably close to the NW point, called Tobhan, and thus close to the beach at Tràigh Mhànais. Despite the protection of the western point of Harris and the island of Pabbay, this beach would be comparatively exposed in NW gales. While the precise site cannot be identified, the grave is unlikely to have been more than 200m from the sea, or more than 20m OD.

Interpretation

Despite Martin's vagueness, a definite tertiary burial, and almost certainly Viking Age in date

054

LANGAY (?), WESTERN ISLES

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1763

C. NG 013 816

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

¹⁴ Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (London, 1703), p.50; Anderson, 'Relics', p.556; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.79; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.9

Artefacts (2)

- A. Two Oval Brooches (single-shelled)
- B. Two Copper Alloy Pins (?)

Citing an older source, Anderson noted that 'a brass pin' and 'bronze needle' (presumably copper alloy dress pins), were found with two oval brooches, one on each side of a skeleton, 'on the island of Sangay, between the isles of Uist and Harris'. Unfortunately, there is no Sangay in the Sound of Harris, but more recently it has been suggested the island may have been Langay (see Site). As oval brooch pins are generally iron, it seems clear the two pins represent additional finds. It seems likely that one of the two oval brooches has been preserved in the British Museum, but this is not absolutely certain.¹⁵

Site / Location

If the association of Sangay with Langay (G. *Langaigh*) is correct, the burial came from a small (c.0.7 x 0.1km) island at the western end of the Sound of Harris, represented by the NGR. The island has no reasonable harbour and was almost certainly too small to sustain a permanent settlement in any period. If correctly provenanced, therefore, the burial occurred a considerable distance from any settlement. No point on the island is more than 10m OD or 60m from the sea. The most extensive views from the island are arguably to the west and north, skerries obscuring the view in other directions. Graham-Campbell & Batey have suggested Ensay as a 'more probable location' (see 053), but this has been rejected for the purposes of this study.

Interpretation

A definite brooch burial somewhere in or near the Sound of Harris, it is no longer possible to associate it with a specific island.

055.1

RUBH' A' CHARNAIN MHOIR, WESTERN ISLES NF 9043 7935

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1911

Inhumation (Definite)

Boat / Rivets (Mound)

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

- A. Boat Rivets (9)
- B. Glass Beads ('a number')
- C. Comb

A set of 9 iron rivets 'of Viking type' from Carnan Mor were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1912. Although Grieg listed them among his 'finds from dwelling-places', Beveridge noted that they were recovered during the examination of a cairn, together with the remains of a skeleton. The modest grave goods may suggest either that the grave had already been disturbed, or that only a

¹⁵ Anderson, 'Relics', p.555, citing *Vestusta Monumenta* ii; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.79; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.76; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NG08SW 1 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

portion of a boat or other composite artefact had been buried (compare York 114.1). The mound was still recognisable in 1965, when it was 0.3m high.¹⁶

Site / Location

Situated on the west side of the northern peninsula of North Uist, within 100m of the shore and well below the 10m contour, this burial is in a prominent position, overlooking the Caolas Bhearnaigh, the c.500m wide channel between North Uist and Berneray. It affords clear views to the west and east, while the highest ground in the area is Beinn a' Chaolais (67m), c.1km to the south.

Interpretation

There is clear evidence for a definite tertiary inhumation, although the presence of a boat at the site is rather more debatable.

055.2

RUBH' A' CHARNAIN MHOIR, WESTERN ISLES	NF 9042 7930
Tertiary Burial (Possible)	Inhumation (Definite)
No evidence	Boat / Rivets (Mound)
Date of Recovery 1870 / Before 1911	Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Iron rivet

According to Beveridge, a second cist 45m S of the first (055.2) was excavated in 1870, when skeletal remains were found. Subsequently an iron rivet was found at the site, which led him to suggest that this was a second 'boat' grave. A cairn c.5m in diameter was noted in approximately the correct position when the site was visited in 1965. There may be some parallels between this possible grave and a child's grave from Cnip (050.5).¹⁷

Site / Location

According to the 1914 *Inventory*, this grave was on the opposite side of the ridge to the first grave (i.e. 055.1), but as it misplaces that as well, the location suggested by the RCAHMS seems more plausible. This mound is c.45m SSW of the first, close to the 10m contour, but with very similar views to those from the other mound.

Interpretation

Given that the skeletal remains and rivet were found at different times, and that neither are extant at the present time, this site has been classified as a possible other grave.

¹⁶ Anon., 'Donations to the museum and library, Monday, 8 April, 1912' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvii (1912), p.331; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.146; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NF97NW 1 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007), citing E. Beveridge, *North Uist: its Archaeology and Topography, with Notes upon the Early History of the Outer Hebrides* (Edinburgh, 1911), p.267; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.79, citing 1914 *Inventory*

¹⁷ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.79, citing 1914 *Inventory*; citing Beveridge (1911), p.267; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NF97NW 2 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007), citing Beveridge, *North Uist*

056

BHALAIGH, WESTERN ISLES

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1954

c. NF 774 773

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead (with CA rivet)

A Viking Age spearhead 'found in a grave (?) Vallay, North Uist' was first published in 1954, but Graham-Campbell & Batey provide the additional information that it was 'found beside some skeletal remains north of the cattlefold', without providing a source. No further information on this probable grave is available.¹⁸

Site / Location

Bhalaigh is a small (c.4.0 x 1.0km) tidal island less than 0.5km off the north coast of north Uist. The cattlefold referred to in the basic description cannot be identified today, but was somewhere on the south coast of the island, presumably close to Vallay House. As such the burial can be assumed to have been within 200m of the sea, and below the 10m contour, with views south over a greater or lesser part of Tràigh Bhalaigh. Further details are entirely speculative.

Interpretation

Despite some difficulties with the record, a definite weapon inhumation.

057

CEANN EAR, HEISKER, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Within Cemetery

Date of Recovery Before 1856

NF 6447 6233

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ring-headed Pin (Kidney-ring, polyhedral head)

A nineteenth century record notes that this pin was found in a burying-ground in the Island of Heisker, with Beveridge identifying this as site called Cladh na Bleide. A chapel of unknown date also seems to have present at this site, but no trace of either it or the burial ground remained when it was visited in 1965.¹⁹

Site / Location

Cladh na Bleide is on Ceann Ear, the east-most of a small archipelago called the Heisker or Monarch Islands, 7km off the SW coast of north Uist. The site is close to the 10m contour on this low-lying island, and c.300m W of Seana Phort, a sandy bay

¹⁸ Haakon Shetelig, 'Notes supplementary to Viking antiquities parts I-V, in A. O. Curle, Magnus Olsen & Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Civilisation of the Viking Settlers in Relation to their Old and New Countries*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vi (Oslo, 1954), p.237; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.80

¹⁹ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ii (1856), p.176; Beveridge cited in RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database), site no. NF66SW 5 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

on the NE side of the island, and affords clear views north and north-east across the Sound of Monach to North Uist.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, as despite having been found within a burial site, there is no evidence that the pin was directly associated with a grave.

058

Unknown Site, S. UIST, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Some prehistoric material

Date of Recovery Before 1872

C. NF 790 330

Unknown

In Cist in Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1; poss. 4)

- A. Bone Comb (Scandinavian type)
- B. CA brooch (3.2cm dia.)(later?)
- C. CA buckle (1.3cm dia.)(later?)
- D. Flint arrowhead

Found 'in clearing out a stone cist in a sandy hillock in South Uist', together with two small CA brooches or buckles and a flint arrowhead, only the comb from this site was described by Grieg. It has been suggested that the (lost) 'brooches' are later, while the arrowhead is obviously earlier, although its presence may not be accidental (compare Reay 035.3 and Claughton Hall 102, for example).²⁰

Site / Location

Other than the fact that it was found somewhere on South Uist, an island 33km long and up to 15km broad, no further details are available.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary grave with a comb and perhaps some other artefacts.

059

Unknown Site, ERISKAY, WESTERN ISLES

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1906

c. NF 795 110

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

- A. Sword (double-edged; fragmentary)
- B. Spearhead (8.9cm, broken at neck)
- C. Whetstone (12.5cm)

All that is known about this assemblage is that the artefacts were 'dug up in the Island of Eriskay by the late Rev. Mr. Macdonald, P.P.' Grieg confirmed that the sword and

²⁰ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* ix (1872), p.446; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 73-5 implies the brooches are later, a suggestion taken up by Shetelig, 'Notes supplementary', p.239; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NF73SE 6 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

whetstone were of Viking Age date, but the (unusually small) spearhead, could not be identified. Shetelig was confident that the material came from a grave, despite the poor quality of the original record, but there was no local knowledge of the find when the island was visited in 1965.²¹

Site / Location

This find can only be provenanced to Eriskay, a small (4.5 x 3km) island south of South Uist, on the N side of the Sound of Barra. It cannot have been more than 1km from the sea, but further speculation is pointless.

Interpretation

Given the presence of these three objects, a probable weapon burial.

060

ARDVOURAY, BARRA, WESTERN ISLES

NF 652 014

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Standing Stone

Mound

Date of Recovery September 1862

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (13)

- A. Two Oval Brooches (single shelled)
- B. CA Penannular Brooch
- C. Comb
- D. Drinking Horn Mounts
- E. Heckle (fragmentary)
- F. Weaving Sword (iron; 83.8cm)?
- G. Shears
- H. Needle Case
- I. Iron Knife (broken)
- J. Whetstone (small)
- K. Iron Buckle
- L. Bronze Rod
- M. Shell

The earliest account of the burial at this site (sometimes called Ardvonrig) describes the investigations of one Cmdr. Edge around a 7ft (2.1m) standing stone embedded in 'a tumulus of sand', which revealed a skeleton some 3ft (0.9m) below the surface, and orientated NNW-SSE (true). There are a number of other standing stones in the area. A 'sword' (recently identified as a weaving sword by Gordon) was found beside the skeleton, while a 'shield boss' (heckle) was found on it. The oval brooches, 'tongues of buckles' (drinking horn mounts?), whetstone, comb and clam shell were all found close to the body, and the artefacts certainly formed a discrete corpus when described by Grieg, although he managed to count one of the oval brooches twice (thus creating a 'second' woman's grave) and ignored the weaving sword and the shears, which were first published by Graham-Campbell & Batey. A more widespread error, based on Edge's original description, was that there was also

²¹ Anon., 'Donations to the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xl (1906), pp 215-6; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.73; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.9-10; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NF71SE 3 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

a male burial at the site, but there is no longer any evidence to substantiate that claim. The range of artefacts associated with cloth production is particularly impressive.²²

Site / Location

Situated approximately halfway down the west coast of Barra, the burial site seems to have been close to a number of standing stones at the base of a broad peninsula called Bruach Bearnasdale. The site identified by the RCAHMS is on the north side of a slight rise, close to the 10m contour, and affords views north and west in particular. The area around the peninsula and extending inland along the Borgh River is comparatively flat and low-lying, and stands in contrast to much higher ground to the north and south east (244m & 216m respectively). . The site is less than 100m from Traigh Chaise, a c.100m wide inlet which faces west.

Interpretation

Although the record has become confused, there is evidence for a single definite brooch burial.

061

Unknown Site, BARRA, WESTERN ISLES

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1880-8

C. NF 680 020

Unknown

Cist

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Bone Comb

An exceptionally vague account of a bone comb 'found in a stone cist on the island of Barra', which was exhibited at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1880, this was subsequently linked to a comb in the collection of the late H.H. Mackenzie by Close-Brooks and Maxwell, acquired with the rest of the collection by the National Museum in 1972.²³

Site / Location

Other than the fact that this cist was on Barra, an island some 13 x 9km in extent, and that it is perhaps unlikely to have come from its mountainous interior, nothing more can be said. The NGR represents the centre of the island.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, with even this association resting largely on its discovery in a cist.

²² Anon., 'Proceedings' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 2nd Ser. ii (1864), pp 229-31; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 72-3, 168; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 82-3; R. A. Smith, *British Museum Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities* (London, 1923; reprint Ipswich, 1993), pp 128-9; Gordon, 'A Norse Viking-age grave', p.153

²³ Joanna Close-Brooks & S. Maxwell, 'The Mackenzie collection' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cv (1974), p.290; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NF60SE 26 cites International Exhibition record (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

062.1 & 062.2

CORNAIGBEG, TIREE, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burials (Probable) (Min 2)

'Brass Spear' (?)

Date of Recovery Before 1794

c. NL 992 469

Inhumations (Definite)

Horses

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (Min. 5; Avg. 2.5/grave)

A. 'Swords'

B. 'Shields'

C. 'CA / Bronze Artefact'

D. Horse skeletons (?)

Information on what is normally classified as a possible cemetery rests entirely on a reference in J. Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* of 1794, who notes that the skeletons of men and horses were discovered on several occasions during the construction of potato pits, these being accompanied by 'two handed swords ... diminished with rust; silver work preserved in the handles; there were also shields and helmets with a brass spear. Nigh this was discovered another skeleton, holding the skeleton of an infant in its arms.' Despite the confusion between one- and two-handed swords, the other details conform to what might be expected of FISBs, the helmets presumably being shield bosses. The reference is vague, but suggests at least two weapon burials with horses, there being no explicit reference to grave-goods with the double inhumation, presumably that of a woman and child. Although the same source notes that some of the artefacts were in the possession of the Duke of Argyll and that further excavations were planned, there is no further evidence from the site.²⁴

Site / Location

Tiree, c.18 x 10km, is the west-most island of the Inner Hebrides, separated from Coll by a narrow channel. The modern settlement of Cornaigbeg is approximately 1km southwest of the coast at Balephetrish Bay, on the N coast of the island. The place-name use suggests that the burials came from somewhere between the settlement and this bay, and as such, the site was almost certainly on the SW side of the bay on a north facing slope between the 10 & 20m contours, no more than 400m from the bay, with the NGR given here being an approximation of that site.

Interpretation

Sinclair's description suggests a minimum of two probable weapon inhumations, although it is implied that there were considerably more. These minimum and average figures cannot be regarded as accurate. The 'brass spear' is interesting – clearly confused, it could refer to a CA pin, or might equally note the presence of a Bronze Age artefact of some kind (compare Bride Street, Dublin), but is too vague to draw any definite conclusions.

²⁴ John Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (21 vols, Edinburgh, 1794), x, 402; Anderson, 'Relics', p.555; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.63; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.87

063

Unknown Site, TIREE, ARGYLL & BUTE
Brooch Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1847

c. NM 004 452

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Two Oval Brooches (one lost)

B. Lozenge-headed CA Pin

An oval brooch and pin from Tiree presented to the Museum in 1872 were linked by Anderson to a brooch exhibited by Sir John Graham Dalzell in 1847. It is uncertain if one or two oval brooches were originally present, but only one is extant today. No further information is available.²⁵

Site / Location

As the precise location of this find is unknown, the NGR given here indicates the centre of the island. While Anderson suggested the finds came from Cornaigbeg, they may equally have come from another, unknown site on the island. No further information is available.

Interpretation

As it seems clear there were originally two oval brooches, a probable brooch burial. Its relationship with Cornaigbeg cannot be determined at present.

064

GRISHIPOLL, COLL, ARGYLL & BUTE
Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Early 1950s

c. NM 191 598

Inhumation

Poss. Cist

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead (broken)

A spearhead acquired by the NMAS in 1978 was originally found in direct association with an inhumation in sand hills, the spear being at one end of the grave, which was discovered 'under a flat slab', perhaps indicating it was stone-lined in some way. Although described as 'undiagnostic', the spearhead has strong similarities with the narrow type from Dublin. Examination of the surviving mandible led D.A. Lunt to that what was presumably a young male was 15-17 when he died.²⁶

²⁵ Anderson, 'Relics', pp 554-5, 561; idem., *Scotland in Pagan Times* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1883), ii, 40-1; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.63; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.87

²⁶ Joanna Close-Brooks, A. M. Lane, J. N. G. Ritchie & Caroline Wickham-Jones, 'Notes on prehistoric and later artefacts from Coll' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cix (1978), pp 85-99. For examples of the narrow 'Dublin type' spearhead, see Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*; Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), pp 26-9

Site / Location

Grishipoll is on the northwest coast of the island of Coll, with the burial coming from the south side of Grishipoll Bay, well below the 10m contour and less than 50m from the sea, close to the edge of the rock shelf. The site affords good views over the Bay and a limited area of comparatively flat land immediately beside it, but views along the coast are restricted by the headlands of Rubha Ard and Grishipoll Point (55m). While the modern bay is rocky and inhospitable, this need not always have been the case.

Interpretation

Given the rarity of furnished Iron Age burials in Scotland, and the similarities between this spearhead and the 'Dublin type, a definite weapon inhumation.

065

Unknown Site, MULL, ARGYLL & BUTE

Brooch Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before August 1877

C. NM 590 350

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. 'One or More' Oval Brooches

According to Anderson, a John F. Campbell of Islay stated that 'one or more' brooches similar to those found at Ballinaby in 1878 (see 0073.3) 'were found in Mull, and were lately in the possession of Lord Northampton at Torloisk'. This is the only reference to this discovery, and the brooches can no longer be identified. Grieg's suggestion of three brooches cannot be sustained, nor can his suggestion that they were of type R649, although they may well have been single shelled. More recent commentators have been very cautious in their interpretation of this material.²⁷

Site / Location

While Graham-Campbell & Batey have pointed out that Mull's mountainous interior confines settlement to the 'coastal fringe', this burial could have come from almost any coastal area on this large 41m x 46km island, and the NGR merely represents the centre of the island.

Interpretation

A possible brooch burial.

²⁷ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the contents of two Viking graves in Islay, discovered by William Campbell Esq., of Ballinaby; with notices of the burial customs of the Norse sea-kings, as recorded in their sagas and illustrated by their grave-mounds in Norway and in Scotland' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xiv (1880), p.72; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 62-3, 166; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.87

066

Uncertain Site, KILMARTIN, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Extant Cairn

Date of Recovery Unknown

c. NR 835 989

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead (insular type?)

Only Graham-Campbell & Batey makes any reference to the discovery of a spearhead 'composed of a mixture of brass and iron' in 'one of the prehistoric cairns at Kilmartin'. There is no specific reference to human remains, but the association with a prehistoric burial place is interesting, and the description could easily refer to an insular spearhead with copper alloy rivets of Viking Age date. The potential importance of this prehistoric landscape to the indigenous community in the Early Middle Ages has recently been pointed out by Driscoll.²⁸

Site / Location

Many cairns have been identified in the parish of Kilmartin, some of which were (informally) excavated in the nineteenth century or earlier, and any could have produced this spearhead. Most sites are south of the village of Kilmartin, close to the edge of the flat bottom of the valley of Kilmartin Burn, around the 20 or 30m contour, and overlooked by higher ground to the east (200m+) and west (100m+). Kilmartin village is *c.*4km east of the coast over several ridges, and *c.*7km NNE of Loch Crinan.

Interpretation

While a particularly interesting site, there is only evidence for a possible weapon burial.

067

KILORAN BAY, COLONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence (Cross Slabs?)

Date of Recovery 1882 & 1883

NR 4008 9764

Inhumation (Definite)

Boat Burial; Cist; Horse

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (17)

- A. Boat (130 rivets, *c.*12m long)
- B. Sword (double-edged; bent)
- C. Spearhead
- D. Axehead
- E. Shield Boss (Irish Sea B, w/ CA mount)
- F. 2 Arrowheads`
- G. Ringed Pin
- H. Stick Pin (CA)
- I. Balance

²⁸ Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 84-5; S. T. Driscoll, 'Picts and prehistory: cultural resource management in early medieval Scotland' in *World Archaeology* xxx (1998), pp 149-51

- J. Seven Decorated Weights
- K. Sickle (possible)
- L. Iron Cauldron
- M. 3 knives (1 folding)
- N. Whetstone (miniature, broken)
- O. CA horse harness, Iron bit, and girth buckle
- P. Iron Chest
- Q. Three Anglo-Saxon Stycas (Unidentified; Eanred 808-40; AB Vigmund of York 831-854). Both perforated and 'demonetarised'.

One of the most elaborately furnished burials ever discovered in the British Isles, the site was excavated in three stages over two years, but was not published for another twenty-four, when both Anderson and Schetelig (*sic*) published notes on the subject. Grieg provided a comprehensive (if occasionally confusing) study of the artefacts some years later, and more recently, Graham-Campbell & Batey have provided a more accurate synopsis. Combining these sources, there is evidence for an 'irregular' stone enclosure, 15 x 10ft (4.6 x 3.0m) at the centre of a boat *c.* 12m long. Notes and two surviving plans by William Galloway agree that the body was placed in the southwest corner of the east-west chamber, crouched on its left side, facing the south wall. The balance and weights were found between the skeleton's chin and knees, while the sword, axe, shield boss and cauldron were behind his back. The rougher plan suggests these artefacts were in the north-west corner of the chamber, but the more finely drawn plan suggests they were directly adjacent to the skeleton, and further notes that the bridle was found close to the east end of the north wall. All sources agree that the rivets were found 'all over the area'. The cauldron was in pieces when discovered, a feature that may be the result of disturbance, a point emphasised by Galloway. All of the above material was recovered by Sir Malcolm M'Neill in June 1882, but further excavations were carried out by Galloway in the following year, in which he discovered that two slabs, one at the west and one at the east end of the chamber, were inscribed with simple crosses. He also discovered the skeleton of a horse and an associated iron girdle strap lying on its right side immediately outside the chamber (to the west, according to Anderson, but the east according to Graham-Campbell & Batey). In either case, it clearly lay within the boat. The three coins were discovered some time after the excavations had been completed, and call into question the quality of both excavations. Recently, the harness has been reassembled, and a bridle bit, the remains of a chest, and what is almost certainly a copper alloy shield boss mount have been identified.

Galloway's second plan shows a second group of bones close to the east wall of the chamber, but this is not supported by the surviving osteological evidence, which has produced evidence for just one (male) body, aged over 40 at the time of death. The horse was healthy and 6-8 years old (rather less than Anderson's estimate), and some damage to the right rear leg may represent an attempt to hamstring the animal, which was otherwise healthy.

Galloway was convinced that the boat had been inverted over the chamber, but this interpretation has been challenged by Graham-Campbell & Batey, among others, who suggest that the chamber was built within it. It seems clear that this elaborate grave must have been marked in some way, but it is uncertain if the stone setting projected above the surface, as at Cnip (050.3), or whether a mound originally

covered the site, as with the majority of Scandinavian boat burials Shetelig made a point of saying that no mound was present, but Anderson and Galloway's plans suggests there may have been one.²⁹

Site / Location

Local knowledge associates the burial with the NGR given here, a site which does not contradict Galloway's vague notes. As such, it was towards the southern end of Kiloran Bay, close to the 20m contour and immediately above a small stream which flows into the Bay at the southern end of Tráigh Bán, the beach at the head of the bay, which is c.190m away. The site is overlooked by higher ground (more than 100m OD) to the west, north and east, restricting views to the harbour, but the site also affords good views north-west to the west end of the Ross of Mull and Iona, around which all those wishing to avoid the strong currents of the Sound of Mull would have to sail when moving north or south along the Scottish coast.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within a boat, and accompanied by a horse, but discrepancies in the record mean that all details have to be treated with some caution.

068.1

MACHRINS, COLONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

NR 358 932

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Uncertain

Cist burials (date unknown)

Mound w/ Boat & Horse

Date of Recovery 1891

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (10)

- A. Boat (min.32 rivets; possibly min57; boat dimensions c.9m?)
- B. Iron Sword (double-edged; broken)
- C. Spearhead (broken)
- D. Axehead
- E. Shield Boss (poss.)
- F. CA Penannular Brooch
- G. Bronze Pin
- H. Amber Bead
- I. Cauldron
- J. Horse Bit

The primary source for this burial is a two-page article published by Malcolm M'Neill (see 067) the year after its excavation by his brother Sir John M'Neill, (see

²⁹ Joseph Anderson, 'Notice of bronze brooches and personal ornaments from a ship-burial of the Viking time in Oronsay, and other bronze ornaments from Colonsay. Presented to the National Museum by the Right Hon. Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, G.C.M.G. with a description, from notes by the late William Galloway, of a ship-burial of the Viking time at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xli (1907), pp 443-449; Haakon Shetelig, 'Ship burial at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay, Scotland' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* v (1908), pp 172-4; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 48-61; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 18-22; Owen & Dalland, *Scar* fig.114, pp 181; Jan Bill, 'Kiloran Bay Revisited – Confirmation of a Doubtful Boat Grave' in Andras Mortensen, Andras & S. V. (eds), *Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Viking Congress, Tórshavn, 19-30 July 2001* (Tórshavn, 2005), p.356; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NR49NM 14 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

also 071.1 & 2). A trench was excavated from south to north through the long axis of an oval mound of sand, shell and occasional schist slabs 30 x 20ft (9.1 x 6.1m) and up to 7ft (2.1m) high, which was already eroding at its southern end, where the sword, axehead and cauldron were found together. This may suggest that the body had been placed at one end of the boat, which was c.9m long. Further north, the sand 'was found to be freely sprinkled with boat-rivets', and an usual 'mass of material like mortar or cement' was interpreted as 'the boat's cooking hearth'. A horse skeleton, a bridle bit, and 'portions of shield bosses' (perhaps a single example) were found 'within' the boat, while all the other artefacts were found 'in sifting the sand'. It was believed that the site had been disturbed, either by rabbits or treasure seekers, but that damage to certain artefacts was the result of deliberate damage prior to deposition. The sword, shield boss and/or cauldron, and some of the rivets seem to have been acquired by the Antiquities Museum in 1898, when it purchased William Galloway's collection, and the CA penannular brooch was also in the Museum by 1907.³⁰

In 1902, due to the erosion of 'a mound of sand', a human tooth, 'ox' tooth and 25 boat rivets were found at Cnoc nan Gall, northeast of Port Lobh. Grieg described it as a second burial, and Ritchie has tentatively suggested that it may have been a 'token' form of boat burial, but it is equally possible that if M'Neill had left even a few boat rivets behind, these could have been recovered a decade later. The 'ox' tooth has been reidentified as that of a small horse or pony, which could support a possible link, while the fact that both burials could be located using a farm wall projecting into the golf course further supports this association. The human tooth is believed to be that of a young adult of c.13-19 years, and would provide evidence for the presence of human remains at the Machrins, a presence also suggested by M'Neill's insistence that the 1891 discovery was a 'burial mound'. Interestingly, it has been suggested that cist burials were found in the same general area, but no further details on their date or contents are known (see, however, 068.2)³¹

Site / Location

While the original description is very vague, the RCAHMS have associated the burial with a site at the Machrins, although no mound could be identified when it was visited in 1974. Ritchie, however, proposes that both the 1891 and 1902 finds can be related to a single field wall at NGR given here, which is c.300m further south and at a slightly higher location just above the 10m contour, and some c.300m from an inlet called Port Lobh (which Ritchie describes as the 'twin bay' of Tobar Fuar), which it probably overlooked, although the gentle slopes in the area make this uncertain. A site anywhere in this area would be on very gently sloping ground overlooked by Beinn na Caorach (126m) to the northeast. Views in all directions other than down slope would be restricted, and higher ground at the end of the headland would also restrict views towards the open sea.³²

³⁰ Malcolm M'Neill, 'Notice of the discovery of a Viking interment, in the island of Colonsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxvi (1892), pp 61-2; Anon., 'Purchases for the Museum' in *Proceeding of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxxiii (1899), p.7; Anderson, 'Ship-burial', p.441

³¹ Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 61-2; J. N. G. Ritchie, 'Excavations at Machrins, Colonsay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* cxi (1981), p.263; Specialist Report by D. A. Lunt, 'Appendix 6: Cnoc nan Gall, Machrins, Colonsay' in Ritchie 'Machrins', pp 278-9

³² Ritchie, 'Machrins', pp 263-4; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site nos NR39SE 26 & NR39SE 46 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Interpretation

Given the comparative rarity of boat burials in Britain and Ireland, the suggestion that these two sites are the same is not implausible, and certainly represents a minimum number. Combining the two sources provides evidence for a definite weapon inhumation within a boat, and accompanied by a horse.

068.2

MACHRINS, COLONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

NR 3579 9330

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist burials (date unknown); Structures

Cist burial w/ dog

Date of Recovery 1977 / 1978

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. CA Ringed Pin
- B. CA Fragment (adapted to strap fitting?)
- C. Knife
- D. Iron nail

Professionally excavated, this burial was effectively marked on the surface by the southwest (head) stone, which projected above the modern surface. The cist was 1.6 x 0.7 x 0.3m and had been disturbed in antiquity. Although most of the upper skeleton was missing, it was on its right side, facing southeast. The ringed pin was found close to the skeleton's right ulna, the CA fragment, perhaps originally a pail fitting, but modified for use on a belt, was close to the waist, while an iron nail was found close to the skull of a dog, which had been placed in the grave with its head on the skeleton's knees. The knife was recognised after excavation. The body could not be sexed with certainty, but teeth wear suggested he or she was over 40 and suffering from slight osteoarthritis. The dog was of a small breed and unlikely to have been more than 6 at death. Radiocarbon dating from the long bones has produced a calibrated date of AD709-1020. 14m WNW of the cist was a group of four houses built in the 'native' tradition, but which produced a similar (uncalibrated) radiocarbon date. Unfortunately, a direct relationship between the two cannot be established. There are also some general references to cist burials in the area, but none were discovered during the excavation.³³

Site / Location

This site was approximately 100m north of the Machrins boat burial site used in this thesis (see 068.1) and was thus potentially part of the same burial complex. Its more northerly location suggests, however, that it may be related to Tobar Fuar the 'twin bay' of Port Lobh, although it is physically closer to the latter. In either case, it is situated close to the 10m contour in a machair landscape very similar to 068.1.

Interpretation

Although disturbed, this is a definite tertiary inhumation which is particularly unusual in its inclusion of a dog with the body. While Ritchie has discussed the possibility that it might be a furnished 'Scottic' burial, the calibrated radiocarbon

³³ Ritchie, 'Machrins', pp 263-81; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 90-1

date and the artefacts suggest the it is an FISB. The ringed pin may have functioned as a 'shroud pin', or simply held a cloak in place over the body.

069

Tràigh nam Bàrc, COLONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

c.NR 360 914

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Inhumation

Possible Extant Mounds

Cist

Date of Recovery c.1830

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword

B. 'Weapons'

The earliest reference to this site seems to be from 1881, when Stevenson noted that a burial had been found near 'three circular mounds of sand called Sheean Mòr, Sheean Meadhonach, and Sheean Beg ... upwards of fifty years ago'. 'Some armour and weapons were found under some stones ... an old man, Angus M'Millan, Kilchattan ... broke the sword'. All subsequent references seem to be based on this, although Graham-Campbell & Batey quote an (unreferenced) source which states that it was in a 'stone coffin', the sword being 'rusty and almost mouldered away'. More recently, a ringed pin has been found in the area, but as it was associated with a hearth, it may have come from a domestic context. As none of the mounds have been excavated, they have not been dated, but it is certainly possible that they may predate the Viking Age grave, although it should be remembered that the grave was not found in direct association with them.³⁴

Site / Location

The three mounds named by Stevenson can still be identified at the NGR given here, and the Viking Age grave was clearly in the same general area. They are 150m from the head of the strand at Tràigh nam Bàrc in an area of flat land well below the 10m contour, but overlooked by low but rocky crags on all sides. It is situated at the head of the bay, which is now very silted, and views are confined to the SW, over the bay and beyond.

Interpretation

As the weapons themselves do not survive, this has been classified as a probable weapon inhumation, representing a minimum of one grave.

070

ARDSKENISH, COLONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

c. NR 345 914

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Unknown

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1891

Record Quality Poor

³⁴ William Stevenson, 'Notes on the antiquities of the islands of Colonsay and Oransay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xv (1881), p.144; Ritchie, 'Machrins', p.268; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.91; Symington Grieve, *The Book of Colonsay and Oransay* (2 vols, Edinburgh & London, 1923), ii, 336; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site nos NR36SE 111, NR36SE 112 & NR36SE 113 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Artefacts (2)

- A. CA Ringed Pin (plain)
- B. CA Strap Buckle

First described by Anderson in 1907, when these artefacts were presented to the Society of Antiquaries by Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, they were found in same year as the Machrins boat burial (068.1). While there is no record of their original context, Grieg listed them as grave finds, but Graham-Campbell & Batey note they might equally have come from eroding occupation or midden levels.³⁵

Site / Location

The NGR given here relates to the modern settlement of Ardskenish, and is very approximate. It can be assumed, however, that the burial came from somewhere on this peninsula on the W coast of the island between Plaide Mhòr and Tràigh nam Bàrc, which rises to a max. height of 22m. It was almost certainly more than 1km from the burial at Tràigh nam Bàrc (see 069), but no further information is available.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary grave.

071.1

DRUIM ARSTAIL, ORONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

NR 364 889

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Unknown

Extant Shell Midden?

Stone Setting? / Mound

Date of Recovery 1911

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. Ring-headed Pin
- B. Blue Bead (half)
- C. Jet Bracelet (frag.)
- D. CA fragments

Published more than seventy years after one Mungo Buchanon dug into 'a mound of shell and stone' of uncertain dimensions, which contained (or was surmounted by) a ring of flat stones some 6m in diameter. The artefacts were found among the stones on the south side of the mound, but there is no evidence of a grave cut or skeletal material. Druim Arstail was clearly a shell-midden that was re-used in the Viking Age, and other activity in this area would appear to have been domestic rather than funerary, as indicated by a bloomery hearth and other features. There is, however, evidence for a possible boat burial to the northeast (see 071.2).³⁶

Site/Location

Located on the east coast of Oronsay, close to the 10m contour and c.150m from the end of a beach called Traigh a' Ghobhainn, which it overlooks, along with an extensive bay. Oronsay is low-lying, but there is higher ground to the north, west and

³⁵ Anderson 'Ship-burial', p.441-2; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 61-2; Graham-Campbell & Batey *Vikings in Scotland*, p.91

³⁶ C. R. Wickham-Jones, M. M. Brown, T. G. Cowie & J. N. G. Ritchie, 'Excavations at Druim Arstail, Oronsay, 1911-12' in *Glasgow Archaeological Journal* ix (1982), pp 18-19; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.91

east, and the most extensive views would have been to the southeast, towards the coast of Jura some 15km away.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, there are strong parallels between this assemblage and that from Ardskenish (070).

071.2

DRUIM ARSTAIL, ORONSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE	NR 365 890
Tertiary Burial (Possible)	Unknown
Unknown	Boat?
Date of Recovery 1911	Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. 'Several hundred iron rivets'

In addition to the assemblage close to the top of the shell midden at Druim Arstail (see 071.1), Buchanon also discovered a deposit of 'several hundred iron rivets' c.100m further northeast, in what he called the 'Upper Viking Mound'. There is no evidence for a body or other artefacts, but specimens of the rivets, which are a Viking Age type, survive in both the NMAS and the Hunterian Museum.³⁷

Site / Location

The NGR given here is a location 100m NE of 071.2, but if this was a grave, it was clearly part of the same complex, albeit slightly higher up the slope, close to the 20m contour, with slightly clearer views south and south east, but otherwise corresponding to the first (possible) grave at this site.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, based purely on the quantity of rivets.

072.1 & 2

Càrn a' Bharraich, ORANSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE	NR 3606 8833
Two Tertiary Burials (Definite)	Inhumations (Definite)
Poss. Shell Midden?	Boat? Mound
Date of Recovery April 1891	Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (10: 1 w/9; 1 w/1?)

- A. Two Oblong Brooches (modified shrine mounts)
- B. Two Beads (1 amber, 1 serpentine)
- C. CA Penannular Brooch
- D. CA ring (poss. of ringed pin)
- E. Knife (blade 17.8cm)
- F. Ivory object (? Pin)
- G. Six fragments 'corrugated' CA sheet
- H. Rivets ('a quantity')
- I. Sinker / Whetstone (11.4 x 6.4 x 3.8cm; perforated)

³⁷ Wickham-Jones *et al* 'Druim Arstail', p.19; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NR38NE 6 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

J. Two flint 'chips'

A particularly difficult site to interpret, which was initially investigated by Sir John M'Neill in April 1891 and reported by his brother Malcolm the following year (see also 068.1). Some boat rivets were initially discovered eroding from the W side of a mound later estimated at 35-40ft (10.7 – 12.2m) in diameter and at least 4ft (1.2m) high the mound, through which M'Neill cut three trenches. These trenches were still visible in 1914, but were not recorded then (see 072.3). The first uncovered nothing but 'clean sand mixed with shell', but the second exposed two extended skeletons with their feet to the SSE positioned at the centre of the mound. The more easterly had one of the two oblong brooches attached to its left collarbone, the two beads and an 'ivory object' (perhaps a pin) being close to the skull. The western skeleton had a knife adjacent to its right thigh, but no other artefacts. A third trench, excavated the following day, was 'carried to the centre of the mound' and 'passed through a considerable bed of charcoal containing boat rivets and ... pieces of bronze', as well as the stone sinker / whetstone. Other artefacts are described in the article, but are not given a specific findspot. Similarly, two narrow stones, 4ft (1.2m) and 4ft 6in (1.4m) long respectively, were assumed to have fallen from the top of the mound, but as the entire mound was found to contain 'large masses' of schist slabs, this may not be entirely reliable.

Directly related to this find may be a set of 18 rivets, some charcoal, oak fragments and human teeth which were acquired by the Museum in 1891 and provenanced to Lochan Chille Mhoire on the east coast of Oronsay. This site is less than 500m from Càrn a' Bharraich, a place name first published by Grieve in 1914 (see 072.3), and it seems very likely that these artefacts represent finds from the same site, particularly as M'Neill specifically stated that some of these artefacts had been brought to Edinburgh by him. The RCAHMS advances a similar suggestion, noting that the teeth were from an individual aged between 25 and 30. The remaining artefacts in this assemblage entered the NMAS in 1907, *via* the collection of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal.

What is almost certainly the pin associated with the ringed pin head found in 1891 (both being tinned copper alloy) was recovered at the site in 1957, and effectively demonstrates the casual nature of the excavation.

The stratigraphy of this mound is very confused, and there are a number of artefacts which cannot be associated with either individual. While it seems likely that the two burials were contemporary, it is by no means clear that they were directly associated with the boat. The fact that rivets were found in the west and south parts of the mound also suggests considerable disturbance, as does the fact that only one of the two oblong brooches was found *in situ*. Graham-Campbell & Batey have suggested that the penannular brooch (C) may have been associated a cremated boat, but it is also possible that the 'charcoal' found may actual have been decayed rather than burnt wood.³⁸

³⁸ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.46; M'Neill, 'A Viking interment' p.435; Anderson, 'Ship-burial', pp 437-41; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.116; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site nos NR38NE 4 and NR 38NE 24 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

Grieve, who had been familiar with the site since the 1880s, provided a map with his 1914 publication, and the position recorded in the RCAHMS archive corresponds closely with it, this latter site being marked by what is presumably a modern rectangular stone setting, 1.5 x 1.0m, on top of a shell midden. The site is just above the 10m contour and c.100m from the sea at a small sheltered inlet called Port na h-Atha. It is also close to the end of Tràigh a'Ghobhainn opposite the possible burials at Druim Astail (071). Like those burials, views to the north and west are restricted by high ground, but there are clear views over the large sheltered inlet south east of the island to Eilean Ghaoideamal, and indeed Jura.

Interpretation

Technically two definite tertiary burials, although the better furnished clearly used modified shrine mounds as a substitute for oval brooches. The associations between these graves and the possible boat are unclear, but there is insufficient evidence to suggest an additional burial. The relationship between these graves and the brooch burial at the site (see 072.3) is also unclear.

072.3

Càrn a' Bharraich, ORANSAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Poss. Shell Midden?

Date of Recovery May & June 1913

NR 3606 8833

Inhumation (Definite)

Boat? Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Two Oval Brooches
- B. Ringed Pin
- C. Shears
- D. Needle Case (Bone)

Twenty-two years after the first investigation (072.1), the local farmer, Neil M'Neill found a skull on the south side of the mound, the oval brooches, ringed pin and possible needle case being found roughly at shoulder level. Grieve visited some days later, acquired these artefacts for the NMA, and in June carried out a small excavation with a spade, when the torso of the skeleton was excavated, the shears being found on its left side. A number of rivets not mentioned by Grieve are listed as part of the 1913 finds by Grieg, as are a small socket and an iron bar. The skeleton below the waist had been cut either by one of the 1891 trenches or by activity associated with the central burials. Grieve's sketch suggests that all three skeletons could have been within a single boat, but it is more likely that this body represents another phase of burial activity. While the brooches are an unusually early Berdal type, the burial's position at the edge of the mound would suggest it was secondary. The chronological relationship is not understood.³⁹

³⁹ Symington Grieve, 'Note upon Carn nan Bharraich, or Cairn of the Men of Barra, a burial mound of the Viking time on the island of Oronsay, Argyllshire, with an outline of the political history of the Western Isles during the latter half of the ninth century' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp 272-91; James Curle, 'On recent Scandinavian grave-finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness, with notes on the development and chronology of the oval brooch of the Viking time' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp 292-315; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 42-4

Site / Location

This burial cannot have been more than 6m from the other graves at this site (072.1 & 2), and were covered by the same mound.

Interpretation

A definite brooch burial associated with two other burials which could be earlier, but are perhaps more likely to be later. It is interesting to note that the two 'women's graves are the more elaborately furnished, and in this regard, parallels can perhaps be drawn with Cnip (050).

073.1

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Standing Stone

Date of Recovery Before 1788

c.NR 220 673

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two Oval Brooches

In 1874, Anderson noted that these artefacts had been donated by a Col Campbell of Ballinaby, but in 1883 he stated that they had been found in a 'grave' under a large standing stone on the estate, elsewhere interpreted as 'the *bauta-stein* of a Norse grave-mound'. While this interpretation can be rejected, Anderson does seem to have had access to an unidentified source in the intervening decade. Grieg confirmed that the brooches were double-shelled and of tenth century date.⁴⁰

Site / Location

While not a *bauta-stein*, it seems clear that there was a link between this grave and a standing stone. Two are marked on the 1987 OS 1:10,000 sheet, and the RCAHMS notes a third (described by Pennant in 1772), which was probably on the S slope of an 80m hill called 'An Carnan' somewhere close to the 50m contour, rather higher than the two extant examples. The NGR given here is approximately half-way between the latter stones, and must be seen as approximate, but anywhere in this general area, view north are restricted by An Carnan, but views west towards the inlets at Saligo Bay and Tràigh Flèisgein Bheag are good, as are those south across the flat land around Loch Gorm. Although c.1000m from the coast, a site at sufficient altitude could have afforded good views over the open sea.⁴¹

Interpretation

Using the evidence of Anderson's second article, a definite brooch inhumation, associated with a standing stone which was almost certainly older.

⁴⁰ Anderson, 'Relics', p.554; idem., 'Two Viking graves', p.71; Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times*, p.38; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 41-2

⁴¹ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and a Voyage to the Hebrides* (2nd Ed., London, 1772), pp 255-6; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site nos NR26NW 13, NR26NW 14 & NR26NW 15 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

073.2

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery August 1878

NR 218 671

Inhumation

Stone-Lined

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (11)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Two axes (one tool?)
- D. Shield Boss (Dublin type, w/CA handle)
- E. Fishing Spear (originally a 'ferrule'?)
- F. Five gilt CA Shield Mounts (?)*
- G. Tongs
- H. Hammer
- I. Adze
- J. Drinking Horn Terminal (& rim mount*)
- K. Cauldron (fragmentary)

* Originally listed with 'woman's artefacts – see 073.3.

One of two well-furnished inhumations found 'a little apart' in an area of erosion in the links at Ballinaby, each orientated its head to the east, and delineated by 'a line of stones on edge form(ing) a sort of enclosure'. Unfortunately, the position of individual grave-goods was not recorded, and there seems to have been some confusion with minor artefacts, such as the probable shield mounts the iron heckle, and the drinking horn mounts (see also 073.3). It is assumed that the drinking horn was part of the male grave, as the terminal was specifically illustrated by Anderson. The 'fishing spear' has been identified by Graham-Campbell and Batey. Edwards suggested a tenth century date, but it may be a little earlier.⁴²

Site / Location

The NGR given here is derived from the *Argyll* inventory, which places the burials c.400m west of the modern settlement, presumably using older records. As such it is about 250m from southern and 400m from the northern (extant) standing stones (see 073.1), and presumably part of the same cemetery. The graves were situated on a south-facing slope, with good views over Loch Gorm and towards Saligo Bay, c.1000m away, and more restricted views to the west and particularly the north, where they were overlooked by An Carnan. The nearest coast was Tràigh Flèisgein Bheag, c.800m away.

Interpretation

Despite the confused record, this was clearly a definite weapon inhumation.

⁴² Anderson, 'Two Viking graves', pp 51-63; A. J. H. Edwards, 'A Viking cist-grave at Ballinaby, Islay' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* lxxviii (1934), p.74; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 122-4; For shield mounts, see S. H. Harrison, *Viking Age Shield Bosses in Dublin and the Irish Sea Area* (MA, University College Cork, 1995), pp 137-9

073.3

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery August 1878

NR 218 671

Inhumation (Definite)

Stone-Lined

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (9)

- A. Two Oval Brooches (double-shelled)
- B. 12 beads (7 glass, 1 amber, 1 jet, 3 ceramic)
- C. Silver Pin
- D. Trichinopoly Chain
- E. Bronze Ladle
- F. Iron Heckle*
- G. Glass Linen Smoother
- H. Needle Case

* Originally listed with 'man's artefacts – see 073.2.

Like the man's grave found beside it (see 073.2), this burial had its head to the east and was surrounded by an 'enclosure' of stones laid on edge. It was also elaborately furnished, although the positions of the artefacts was not recorded, and there was some confusion concerning minor items, such as the heckle. Graham-Campbell & Batey suggest the 'shield' mounts formed part of this assemblage, but they have here been included with the 'male' grave-goods.⁴³

Site / Location

As the two graves were only 'a little apart', see 073.2 for detailed notes.

Interpretation

Despite the confused record, this is a definite brooch inhumation.

073.4

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery June 1932

NR 214 671

Inhumation

Cist

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword (double edged; 4 fragments)
- B. Axe
- C. Shield Boss
- D. Ring-headed Pin
- E. Strap Buckle (gilt with enamel: insular)
- F. Sickle (possible)

Discovered following erosion by a shepherd, Neill M'Lellan, while rescuing a lamb, the artefacts were taken into custody by the local Sergeant, who described their position in the grave when Edwards visited the site 17 days later. Orientated at 065°

⁴³ Anderson, 'Two Viking graves', pp 51-2, 63-9; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.122-4

magnetic (ENE) and 1ft 6in (0.45m) below the contemporary ground surface, the long sides and roof were each composed of four schist slabs, forming a cist 7ft (2.1m) long, 1ft 9in (0.53m) to 2ft 6in (0.6m) wide, and 1ft 9in (0.53m) high, but without surviving end slabs. The skeleton had been in an extended position with the sword to its left, the hilt close to the waist, the shield boss on the same side at chest level, and the axehead on its right side, close to the elbow. The pin and buckle were both found close to the centre of body, but no note is made of the location of the sickle. Bryce suggested an original height of about 5ft 7in (1.7m) for an individual 'far advanced in life', that (osteologically at least) might 'just as well have been that of a woman as of a man'.⁴⁴

Site / Location

The NGR reference given is derived from the RCAHMS archive, and reflects Edwards' statement that it was c.400 yards (366m) west of the 1878 burials (073.2 & 3), which had been discovered by M'Lellan's father. As such it was in the western part of the 'cemetery', between the 10 and 20m contours and c.300m from the head of Tràigh Flèisgein Bheag. Edwards stated that it the was 'on a natural shelf near the top of a rocky knoll now covered with sand and overgrown with grass', but does not state which side of the knoll it was on, although the contours suggest the north-west. This would give views down a shallow valley to the Bay, but views north and south along the coast would be restricted by the headlands of Rubha Lamanais and Coul Point. While overlooked by An Carnan, it had restricted views of the area around Loch Gorm.

Interpretation

Despite a lack of direct archaeological supervision, a definite weapon inhumation within a cist.

073.5

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Standing Stone

Date of Recovery 1788-9

NR 220 672

Inhumation (Probable)

Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword(s)

B. Spearhead

The *Argyll* Inventory notes that a Capt. Burgess of HMS *Savage* visited Islay several times between the dates indicated, and dug up 'one or two swords' and a 'pike-head', together with 'many human bones' from a sand-hill near the largest of the standing stones at Ballinaby. While none of these are extant, it seems probable that they were of Viking Age date.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Edwards, 'Viking cist grave', pp 74-8; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 124-5

⁴⁵ Anon., *Argyll: An Inventory of the Monuments 5: Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Oronsay* (HMSO, Edinburgh, 1984), p.294, citing the *New Statistical Account*; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.122. HMS *Savage* was a 16 gun ship-rigged sloop-of-war built at Ipswich and launched on 28 April 1778 (www.woodenwalls.co.uk/hms_ships.htm, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

According to Graham-Campbell & Batey the sand-hill investigated by Burgess was near the largest of the standing stones at Ballinaby. As Pennant noted that the largest stone was 17ft tall, and the southern standing stone recorded by the RCAHMS is the same height, this suggests that the burial was in the general area. As such, it was above the 30m contour and just under 1000m from the coast, with views very similar to those already noted for 073.1, which must have been comparatively close by, and indeed was recovered at approximately the same time.⁴⁶

Interpretation

As no artefacts survive, a minimum of one probable weapon inhumation.

073.6

BALLINABY, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

c.NR 220 672

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Unknown

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1772

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Pennant's *Tour in Scotland* of 1772 includes an illustration of what is clearly a Viking Age sword with the caption 'part of a rude iron sword, found in Ilay (*sic*)'. Anderson and Grieg both followed this provenance, but the *Argyll* inventory suggests that it may have been from Ballinaby. Pennant dined with 'Mr. Campbel, of Balnabbi' in July 1772, and a Col. Campbell of Ballinaby presented the oval brooches representing 073.1 to the Society of Antiquaries in 1788. While this cannot be demonstrated conclusively, this provenance reflects minimum numbers for the island. Note that it cannot have been the sword discovered by the crew of HMS *Savage*, who visited the site at least 15 years later (see 073.5).

Site / Location

Assuming that this sword is from Ballinaby (and the available evidence is circumstantial), it could have been found almost anywhere in the area of the other graves (073.1-5), and further speculation is pointless.

Interpretation

Although it does not survive, the illustration of the sword means that it has been classified as a probable burial.

074

NEWTON, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

c. NR 344 627

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Unknown

No Evidence

'Gravel bank'

Date of Recovery 1845

Record Quality Poor

⁴⁶ RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no NR26NW 13 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Artefacts (3)

- A. Two Oval Brooches (single-shelled)
- B. Amber Bead
- C. Iron fragments (knife?)

First published 35 years after its discovery, Anderson relied on the then owner, one John Campbell, who said they came from a 'grave in a gravel bank'. As Anderson noted that 'no records of the find circumstances (were) preserved', Grieg's statement that the body had been placed with its head to the east, and was framed with stones seems to rest on a very optimistic reading of Anderson's statement that it was 'similar' to that at Ballinaby, in which he also managed to confuse the 1788 burial (073.1) and 1878 burial (073.3), The *Argyll* Inventory is the only source that refers to a knife among the assemblage, and none of the artefacts can be identified today.⁴⁷

Site / Location

Anderson noted that the gravel bank that contained the grave was found 'near Newton distillery... on the side of the strath (river valley)'. This distillery (which closed in 1837) was just outside Bridgend on the Part Askaig Road, suggesting the burial was on the north bank of the River Sorn, on sloping ground approximately 10m OD, overlooking the river, but with no views of the sea, the closest coast being the beach at Bridgend, 300-700m away, a particularly sheltered location at the innermost point of Loch Indaal. The specific NGR given here is based on the RCAHMS archive and must be regarded as approximate.⁴⁸

Interpretation

Given Anderson's confidence, a definite brooch inhumation.

075

CRUACH MHOR, ISLAY, ARGYLL & BUTE

Brooch Burial (Probable)

No Evidence (E. Med. Activity?)

Date of Recovery 1958, 1961, 1978

c. NR 308 545

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Medium

Artefacts (7)

- A. Two oval brooches (damaged)
- B. Six Beads (1 amber, 2 glass, 3 jet)
- C. CA Buckle (?)
- D. Weaving Sword
- E. Spindle Whorl (steatite)
- F. 1-2 knives
- G. Sickle

A complex site that had suffered severe erosion before its discovery, all of these 'grave goods' were recovered as surface finds, albeit within a confined area. Older

⁴⁷ Anderson, 'Two Viking graves', pp 71-2; Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times*, p.39; Grieg, *Scotland*, p.42; Anon *Argyll* v (1984), p.153; Anon., 'Review of J. Anderson's *Scotland in Pagan Times*' in *Archaeological Journal* xl (1883), p.467

⁴⁸ Anderson, 'Two Viking graves', p.71; www.islayinfo.com/lostdistilleries.html, accessed 13 Oct 2007), RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database), site no. NR36SW 2 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

material was also recovered, as was Viking Age 'habitation' material. A 'nearby' rectilinear house was excavated in 1976 and 1977, but could not be dated. Although no human remains were recovered, the oval brooches, weaving sword, and group of beads would be unusual domestic finds, although the precise dividing line between the two groups is unclear.⁴⁹

Site / Location

The site at Cruach Mhor is in a flat area of rough grazing and dunes well below the 10m contour, and it is not certain that the 8km long strand of Laggan Bay, c.400m away, is visible from the site. There is no particularly sheltered point on this strand, and the site is almost completely unprotected from southwest winds, although the Rinns of Islay protect it from the west. In this regard, the site resembles some of those on the west coast of Man (Zone E), although views from it are very much more restricted.

Interpretation

Despite possible confusion between burial and habitation material, the presence of two oval brooches suggest this is a probable brooch burial.

076

E. TARBERT BAY, GIGHA, ARGYLL & BUTE	NR 6567 5201
Tertiary Burial (Possible)	Unknown
No Evidence	Cist (square)
Date of Recovery Before 1849	Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

- A. Balance (CA)
- B. 4 weights (1 decorated)

Although presented to the Hunterian Museum in 1849, these artefacts were not published until 1913, by which time most contextual information had been lost. However, R.S.G. Anderson, citing local information, noted that they had been found in a 'square box of stone' 'covered by a large boulder'. This suggests a cist burial, but there were no specific references to human remains, and it could represent another form of deposition. The finds have been dated to the tenth century.⁵⁰

Site / Location

According to Anderson, the site was 'a few yards from the beach, at the south end of the east bay at Tarbert', a location confirmed by an annotated map in the RCAHMS archive which is the source of the NGR reference here. As such, the site was well below the 10m contour and less than 5m from the S edge of a small beach, close to the base of a narrow peninsula. It is overlooked by high ground to the south (68m)

⁴⁹ Gordon, 'A Norse Viking-Age Grave, pp 151-60; Anon., *Argyll* v (1984), p.150

⁵⁰ T. H. Bryce, 'Notes on a balance and weights of the Viking period, found in the island of Gigha' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlvii (1913), pp 436-43; Anon. *Argyll: An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments 1: Kintyre* (Edinburgh, 1971), p.97, citing R. S. G. Anderson, *The Antiquities of Gigha, A Survey and Guide* (2nd Ed., Newton Stewart, 1939), p.17

and the view from the site is restricted to the adjoining inlet and the inner part of East Tarbert Bay.⁵¹

Interpretation

A possible tertiary grave, there may be parallels with a burial from Ensay (053), but it could also have been placed in the cist for safekeeping, as with the Lewis chessmen.⁵²

077

BOIDEN, LUSS, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Extant Mound

Date of Recovery April 1851

NS 3554 8600

Cremation?

Cairn (mound?)

Record Quality Medium

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type; damaged)

C. Spearhead

These artefacts were found within an area 1 ½ to 2ft (0.45-0.6m) square, 2ft (0.6m) beneath the top of a mound called Boiden by a local forester who was transplanting a tree. In addition to the extant mound, Stewart stated the burial had been marked with a large cairn. The bending of the artefacts and the confined area within which they were found may suggest cremation or another variant of the burial ritual. Although illustrations survive, the artefacts themselves can no longer be identified.⁵³

Site / Location

Although the mound is now destroyed, its location can be plotted with some accuracy. It stood just below the 20m contour on a south-facing slope 450m south west of the shore of Loch Lomond, but on the far side of a slight ridge. It overlooked the valley of the Froon, which was 350m away, and may also have afforded some views over the lake. It is 6km inland from the nearest coast, and considerably more following the river downstream from the lake.

Interpretation

Although unusual, this is a definite weapon inhumation within an extant mound, which may have been a cremation.

078

DRUMACHLOY, BUTE, ARGYLL & BUTE

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1911

c. NS 032 671

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

⁵¹ Anderson, *Antiquities of Gigha*, p.17; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no. NR65SE 11 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁵² Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.92 argue for this interpretation

⁵³ J. H. Stewart, 'Notice on the discovery of some ancient arms and armour, near Glenfruin, on the estate of Sir James Colquhoun of Luss, Baronet' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* i (1854), pp 142-5; Anderson 'Relics', p.569; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.144; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site no NS38NE 5 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged; fragmentary)

A fragmentary sword from Bute which was displayed at the Scottish Exhibition in Glasgow in 1911, the hilt and six pieces of the blade were present when Grieg examined it. Shetelig provenanced it to 'Drumachlay farm (*sic*)', and while Shetelig's additional information is not always reliable, this provenance is supported by Graham-Campbell & Batey. The RCAHMS lists the sword twice, once for 'Bute' and once from 'Drumachloy'. Grieg described the sword as a 'separate find', and all other commentators have reserved judgement on the deposition circumstances.⁵⁴

Site / Location

Drumachloy is a small farm on the west coast of Bute, the NGR given here being that of the modern settlement, on an east facing slope between the 30 & 40m contours, 600m from the north west end of Ettrick Bay. On the side of Eenan Hill (166m), it overlooks a narrow N-S valley between this hill and Muirton and Kilbride Hills (both 256m). A burial site anywhere within c.300m of this site would afford roughly equivalent views over an area of flat land c.1km square at the head of Ettrick Bay, and would also have afforded a view past Watch Hill, on the south side of the Bay along the W coast of Bute, although rising ground would have blocked any view to the west, beyond the inner part of the Bay.

Interpretation

While the evidence needs to be interpreted cautiously, this sword provides evidence for a possible weapon burial in this area.

079

MILLHILL, ARRAN, N. AYRSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1896

NS 0335 3189

Cremation?

Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (single-edged, bent, broken)

B. Shield Boss (Irish Sea A type)

First published by Balfour in 1910, these artefacts were discovered together 3-4ft (0.9-1.2m) below the surface during the removal of a 'small gravel mound' prior to the construction of a house. Although the shield boss was undamaged, the sword (now lost), had been 'doubled'. This may suggest a cremation, or indeed a 'cenotaph', but recent analysis of the boss revealed traces of fly puparia, suggesting an inhumation. Suggestions that this boss is exceptionally early have recently been disputed by Harrison, although it remains likely that it is ninth century.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Grieg, *Scotland*, p.164; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.12; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.97; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) site nos NS06NW 2 & NS06NW 43 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

⁵⁵ J. A. Balfour, 'Notices on a Viking grave mound at Millhill, Lamlash, Arran' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlv (1910), pp 221-4; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 27-8; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, pp 95-6; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.20; Bjørn Myhre, 'The beginnings

Site / Location

Although no trace of the mound survives, the site is well known, on a gentle slope well below the 10m contour and 170ft (52m) from the high water mark, at the mouth of a slight valley between Clauchland Hills (260m) and Meall Buidhe (277m), north of a rather larger flat area inland from the modern settlement of Lamlash. The mound site affords views over the 2.5km long strand, as well as much of Lamlash Bay and the channels to the north and south of Holy Island, and the burial at Kingscross Point (080). Views beyond the Bay are, however, severely restricted.

Interpretation

Given the new evidence of fly puparia, a definite weapon burial.

080

KINGSCROSS POINT, ARRAN, N. AYRSHIRE

NS 0559 2825

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation?

No Evidence

Cairn & Stones

Date of Recovery 1909

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. Whalebone Plaque
- B. CA Mount
- C. Remnants of Chest (casket clasp & lock plate)
- D. 'Boat' Rivets (4) & Nail (1)
- E. Styca (AB Wigmund of York, 837-54)

First described by Balfour (see 079), who excavated it, the site was marked by an irregular heap of stones *c.*30 x 8ft (9.1 x 2.4m) and 1½-2ft (0.5-0.9m) high when investigated, although it had clearly been disturbed prior to this date. Its long axis was NE-SW, and during excavation two linear stone settings *c.*6ft (1.8m) apart were uncovered on either side of a slight depression in the rock surface of the area. 'Calcinated' human bone and charcoal was found close to the NW stone setting, together with the artefacts, the whalebone plaque fragment showing clear signs of burning. The 'boat' rivets convinced Balfour and others that this was a badly disturbed boat burial, but Graham-Campbell & Batey, point out that the rivets may have been part of a chest placed on the pyre, or at most a token portion of a boat.⁵⁶

Site/Location

This burial occupied an irregular rock plateau at the top of Kingscross Point, some 80ft (24.4m) above sea level and *c.*30m from the current cliff edge. As such it affords views across the 600m channel which separates the peninsula from the south end of

of the Viking age – some current archaeological problems' in Anthony Faulkes & Richard Perkins (eds), *Viking Revaluations: Viking Society Centenary Symposium 14-15 May 1992* (London, 1993), p.190; Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland: Studies in the Early History of Britain: Scotland in the Middle Ages* ii (Leicester, 1987), p.120-1; S. H. Harrison, 'The Millhill burial in context. Artefact, culture and chronology in the 'Viking west'' in Steffen Stumman Hansen & Klavs Randsborg (eds), *Vikings in the West: Acta Archaeologica* lxxi; *Acta Archaeologica Supplementa* ii (2000), pp 65-78

⁵⁶ J. A. Balfour, 'Notice of a Viking grave-mound, Kingscross, Arran' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xliii (1909), pp 371-5; idem, *The Book of Arran* (Glasgow, 1910: Reprint Brodick, 1982), pp 165-8; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.96

Holy Island, as well as views across Lamlash Bay (including the site at Millhill: 079), and south and west across the Firth of Clyde to the mainland some 20km away. Unusual for a Scottish burial, these extensive views can be compared to a number of Manx burials (Zone E), although these are generally better furnished.

Interpretation

Given the evidence of bone, a definite tertiary burial, perhaps originally richly furnished, although it is unlikely to have been a conventional boat burial. It may also have been a cremation.

081

KINNEGAR STRAND, KINNEGAR, Co. DONEGAL C 300 297

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Unknown

Bronze Age cairn?

Cairn?

Date of Recovery 1935 & early 1980s

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin

In 1935, W.J. McCallien noted and recorded a small cist beneath a cairn a few feet above the high water mark, that was being eroded by the sea. The cairn dimensions were not recorded, but the surviving part of the cist was 2ft (0.6m) square and 7ft (2.1m) below the surface, although the depth had apparently been increased by a later deposit of sand. The cist contained eighty fragments of cremated bone, some of which had been stained by contact with 'some object of bronze'. Originally dated to the Bronze Age, the discovery of a ring-headed pin at the same site in the early 1980s led Lacy to suggest it may have been Viking Age, an interpretation followed by some others, although Ó Floinn believes the pin to have been a 'stray find'. By 1983, the cairn was almost entirely destroyed.⁵⁷

Site/Location

The site is on the west shore of Lough Swilly, c.19km from the open sea, on a slight promontory about 150m south of the estuary of a small river which flows under Killygarvin Bridge, and close to the north end of the 2.5km Kinnegar Strand, less than 5m above sea level. Overlooked by Crocknaglaggan (160m) to the northwest, the site affords views across the Lough, c.3km wide at this point, but views to the north and south are obstructed by Killygarvin Point and Kinnegar Head respectively.

Interpretation

While there is no direct evidence for burial, the discovery of this pin close to the site of Bronze Age grave is sufficiently unusual to justify its inclusion as a possible tertiary burial. In some ways, it can be compared to the cemetery at Cnip (Lewis: 050).

⁵⁷ W. J. McCallien, 'Note on a bronze age cist, Kinnegar Strand, Lough Swilly, Co. Donegal' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* lxxv (1935), pp 329-33; John Waddell, *The Bronze Age Burials of Ireland* (Galway, 1990), p.73; Brian Lacy, *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* (Lifford, 1983), p.66, citing *pers. comm.* Richard Warner; Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, M. Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p.146, fn.81

082.1

CHURCH BAY, RATHLIN, Co. ANTRIM

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Bronze Age Cists / Mounds

Date of Recovery Before 1784

c. D 153 509

Inhumation?

Mound / Standing Stone

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Silver bossed penannular brooch

B. Beads (a 'number')

In 1784 W. Hamilton noted that on Rathlin 'a number of small tumuli were lately opened...The chief himself lay in a stone coffin, and beside him an earthen vessel stood... Within the tumuli lay a considerable number of human bones... a large fibula was found in one of [them]'. In 1851, C. Gage noted that the 'fibula' had been found with 'a number of beads' in a grave over which 'a large stone somewhat resembling a modern tombstone in shape' had been placed'. More recently, Johansen and Warner has combined these references and successfully identified the brooch, but the beads (which need not have been Viking Age) have since been lost. Hamilton and Gage's descriptions seem to relate to a possible Bronze Age cemetery in the area, a suggestion confirmed by more recent excavations in the same area.⁵⁸

Site/Location

Rathlin is a c.7.5 x 5km L-shaped island 4km off the Irish coast and c.24km from the Mull of Kintyre, with a sheltered harbour ('Church Bay') on its SW side, in the crook of the L. Hamilton stated that the burials were found 'in a little plain about the middle of the island', while Gage note that they were 'a short distance from Church Bay'. There is an area of comparatively flat land immediately behind Church Bay, centred on the NGR given here, but. Warner's association of Gage's 'tombstone' with the extant standing stone at Rathlin is rather more tenuous, the (Bronze Age?) burials extending from the coastguard station to this stone, and south to an area of more recent quarrying. Thus, while no burial in this group can be exactly provenanced, all were below the 10m contour and perhaps 200-300m from the coast at Church Bay. Higher ground to the north, east and south would restrict views to the Bay, although the Irish coast may well have been visible, 10.5km to the SW.

Interpretation

While it is possible that this may be some form of hoard, the discovery of a silver brooch (and perhaps beads) in a cist under a mound is sufficiently unusual for it to be considered a probable tertiary burial, which Ó Floinn suggests may have been female.

⁵⁸ Richard Warner, 'The re-provenancing of two important penannular brooches of the Viking period' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* xxxvi-xxxvii (1973-4), pp 58-70; O. S. Johansen, 'Bossed penannular brooches: a systematisation of their cultural affinities' in *Acta Archaeologica* xlv, 121-2; Catharine Gage, *A History of the Island of Rathlin* (Coleraine, 1995), pp 9-10; Ann Hamilton & Chris Lynn, (eds) *Pieces of the Past: Archaeological Excavations by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland 1970-1986* (Belfast, 1988), 14-15; Waddell, *Bronze Age Burials*, p.49; Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', pp 144-5; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI archive)

082.2

CHURCH BAY, RATHLIN, Co. ANTRIM

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Bronze Age Cists

Date of Recovery Before 1851

c. D 149 509

Inhumation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Iron Sword (lost)

Writing in 1851, Gage noted that 'an iron sword which crumbled away soon after being exposed to the air' was also found in 'one of these ancient tombs' (e.g. cists) on Rathlin together with a skeleton and 'an urn containing ashes'. As an illustration of this 'urn' suggests it was prehistoric, and her drawing of the sword is 'fanciful', this is not definite evidence for an FISB. It is possible, however, that she may have confused accounts of two different graves, and this artefact must be given some consideration.⁵⁹

Site / Location

Mrs Gage states that the burial was found 'while some labourers were digging the foundation of a wall near the coastguard station'. Warner's provenance, based on this information, is perhaps a little too precise, but in the period between the 1832 and 1906 Ordnance Survey maps of the area (Antrim six inch sheet 1), a number of new field boundaries are shown in this area.. As such, this grave was in the same area where seven Bronze Age burials were discovered in the 1980s. While obviously further west than the first Rathlin burial (082.1), within 50m of the coast and below the 10m contour, views from the two graves would have been very similar.

Interpretation

Although there are specific references to human remains and an iron sword, Gage's account is clearly confused, and it has been classified as a probable burial. It clearly occurred within a Bronze Age cemetery, although the relationship between the sword and food vessel is more debatable (but see Cloughton Hall: 102 and Crossmoor 103).

082.3

CHURCH BAY, RATHLIN, Co. ANTRIM

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Bronze Age Cists

Date of Recovery Before 1851

c. D 153 509

Inhumation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. CA ladle

B. Composite CA & iron artefact ('cauldron?')

In 1851, Gage also noted that a 'brazen vessel of curious shape... ornamented with circles and other devices neatly engraved upon it' was found together with 'a number of iron knobs with rings of the same material'. If the 'same material' was iron, this latter artefact may have been a horse bit: if copper alloy, they might well represent a

⁵⁹ Gage, *History of Rathlin*, p.9; Warner, 'Two penannular brooches', p.62, Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', pp 144-5, Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI archive)

'cauldron', as suggested by Warner and others. The first artefact, which was illustrated by Gage, has been identified as an Early Medieval Copper Alloy Ladle, which would be similar to one of the Ballinaby brooch burials (073.3), c.60km to the north. Unlike the other Rathlin finds, however these artefacts do not seem to have been associated either with a cist or with human remains.⁶⁰

Site/Location

Gage notes that these objects were found 'in a field a little distance (from the standing stone)', this presumably being the same stone which marked the first burial found at the site (081.1). As such, it was in the eastern part of the cemetery, with all other aspects of this site corresponding to those for 081.1.

Interpretation

As these objects were not specifically associated with human remains, a possible tertiary burial.

083

Larne Lough, Inver, LARNE, Co. ANTRIM

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery November 1840

c. D 404 017

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

A. Sword (double edged)

B. Spear

C. Ring-headed Pin

D. Comb (broken)

One of the best recorded nineteenth century Irish FISBs, it was discovered on the shore of Larne Lough. An extended skeleton, with its head to the northwest was found under 18in–2ft (0.45-0.6m) of sand. The sword lay across the skeleton's breast with its hilt towards the right hand, and the spearhead was 'under' this, on the skeleton's right side. Having been 'lost' for many years, Fanning discovered the artefacts in the Northumberland collection at Alnwick Castle, and they are now on loan to the Ulster Museum. The skull (now in TCD) was illustrated in Davis & Thurnam's *Crania Britannica*. Fanning dated the burial to the late ninth or early tenth century, although type X swords are normally considered tenth century.⁶¹

Site/Location

The burial was found during the construction of a railway line from a quarry to a small pier, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (1.2km) from the town of Larne, 70 yards (64m) from the shore,

⁶⁰ Gage, *History of Rathlin*, p.10; Warner, 'Two penannular brooches', p.62; Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', p.145

⁶¹ J. H. Smith, 'An account of the discovery, in the month of November last, of a human skeleton, accompanied with weapons, ornaments, &c., interred on the sea shore, in the vicinity of Larne, in the County of Antrim' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* ii (1844), pp 40-6; Bøe, *Ireland*, p.76; Thomas Fanning, 'The Viking grave goods discovered near Larne, Co. Antrim in 1840' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* c (1970), pp 71-8; J. B. Davis & J. Thurnam, *Crania Britannica: Delineations and Descriptions of the Skulls of the Aboriginal and Early Inhabitants of the British Islands, with Notices of their Other Remains* (London, 1865), pl.56 & notes

and c.5ft (1.5m) above the HWM (presumably vertically), in sand. As such it was close to the bottom of a comparatively steep 100m slope near the north-west corner of Larne Lough, in an area further sheltered by the spit on which Olderfleet Castle now stands. Views from the site are limited by this spit and Island Magee, with no view of open sea, or indeed the mouth of the Lough. The site does, however, afford clear views of the inner bay on which it is situated, and southeast across the Lough to Barney's Point.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation.

084

BALLYHOLME, Co. DOWN

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Autumn 1903

J 522 824

Inhumation (Possible)

Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (3)

A. Two Oval Brooches (single-shelled)

B. CA Bowl

C. Fragments Wool /Linen (lost)

These artefacts were found in a nine-foot (2.7m) perpendicular cutting which was being 'excavated for building purposes'. A V- or wedge-shaped area of black earth beginning 2ft (0.6m) below the surface continued down for 6ft (1.8m), and was sharply defined from the surrounding dark red sand. Ó Floinn's suggestion that this might represent a boat burial is interesting, but there is no other evidence to support it. The two brooches were found at the bottom of this cutting, 'the hollow sides face to face'. The position of the bowl is not recorded, but allegedly had a fine chain attached to it and contained 'a great quantity' of what experts 'pronounced to be wool'. Theories that this was a hanging bowl can be discounted. Some bones were also found with the bowl, as was a large piece of 'thin linen like fine canvas'. Unfortunately, only the oval brooches and bowl survived to be exhibited by Cochrane in 1906, the organic material and fine chain having been destroyed in the interim. The site was marked by 'a hillock', but it is not certain if this was natural or artificial.⁶²

Site/Location

The burial, was found on a section of the raised beach at Ballyholme Bay that was divided from the adjoining ground by a 'small rivulet which [had] formed a deep ravine', while the sea was directly in front of it, and this site has been identified close to the centre of the Bay, no more than 20m from the shore, and c.10m above sea level. The surrounding area is comparatively flat, although it gradually rises to 30m inland, and the site affords good views across the Bay and the mouth of Belfast Lough to Black Head 11.5km away, and Cochrane stated Kintyre was also visible.

⁶² Robert Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, Co. Down, in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxvi (1906), pp 450-4; Ó Floinn 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', p.147

Views to the east, on the other hand, are almost completely restricted by Ballymacormick Point.

Interpretation

A definite brooch burial, presumably an inhumation given the presence of bones, although the positioning of the brooches is unusual. It is very unlikely to have been a boat burial.

085

St. John's Church, ST JOHN'S POINT, Co. DOWN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Church Site

Date of Recovery Before May 1857

J 528 338

Inhumation (Definite)

Long Cist

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword

Discovered as part of research carried out for the Irish Viking Graves Project (IVGP), the key piece of evidence is a letter stuck into an RIA 'Rough Minute Book' under 11 May 1857, which states that a Major Browne of Janeville House found an 'ancient sword in a stone coffin or grave which formed one of seven similar graves placed in a circular or oval form...of which the one in question pointed to the east—the remainder north and south' near the ruins of St. John's Church. A sketch in the margin of the letter shows an oval with three vertical lines extending up and down from its upper and lower surfaces and a seventh extending out to the right. If it is assumed that north is at the top, this last stroke must represent the grave in which the sword was found. Browne's certainty that it was a 'grave' suggests skeletal material was present in what was clearly a stone cist. Wakeman suggested the circular pattern applied to the whole cemetery, but recent excavations have demonstrated that this was not the case. No trace of Browne's cists survive today, but they would seem to have been focused on a (lost) central feature. Their orientation would suggest that they were not Christian, but as the only grave good was found in the only east-west example, this evidence should be approached with caution. While the sword clearly entered the NMI collections, it cannot be identified today.⁶³

Site / Location

St John's Church is located on St. John's Point, on the north east side of the (outer) Dundrum Bay, and is a major landmark. The church is located just above the 10m contour and is c.200m from the coast, with good views to the east and south in particular. The surrounding land rises steeply from the sea, but then levels off, not rising above 50m for several kilometres inland. Sandy Port, on the west side of the peninsula is perhaps the most readily accessible sheltered inlet. Browne's description makes it clear that the grave cannot have been far from the church, and may well have been within its original precincts.

⁶³ Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive); W. F. Wakeman, *Handbook of Irish Antiquities* (1st Ed., Dublin, 1897), p.184

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in a stone cist, and clearly associated with an extant Christian site. The circular pattern of graves is unusual, but can perhaps be compared to some of the graves at Pierowall (018).

086

Ford, TOOME, Co. ANTRIM

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before May 1926

H 989 908

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Bøe seems to provide the only published reference to this find, which had been 'found buried in the sand in the bar or shoal between Tome and Greagh (*sic*), the ancient ford of the River Bann'. An association with a ford may suggest a burial, as at Magdalen Bridge, Oxford (130), but the great difficulty lies in differentiating between burial and other ritual activity. Ó Floinn omitted the sword, a tenth century Petersen type X, from his study of 'Early Scandinavian Activity', as did Walsh.⁶⁴

Site / Location

Toome is situated on the north-west shore of Lough Neagh, where the (Lower) Bann leaves the lake. The fords and sandbank presumably occupied the same general area as the modern bridges (represented by the NGR), between the 10 and 20m contours in a broad (11km), flat valley. Given the extent to which the river channel has been modified, the extent of the views from the site is debatable, but must have included the surrounding hills and perhaps the lake immediately upstream. The closest section of coast is *c.*36km away, at Belfast Lough, but the site is *c.*56km upstream from the mouth of the Bann.

Interpretation

Given the variety of activities at ford sites, and the absence of specific references to human remains, a possible weapon inhumation. Were it not for the fact that this sword was found at the site of a ford, it would probably have been dismissed as a 'stray find', and indeed it could have been lost while fording the river at this point. It should also be noted that the sword is of Petersen's type X, indicating that it is at least 10th century, and may be even later, which would reduce the chances of its coming from a burial. Such a late date also reduces the chances of its being some form of votive deposit, as has been suggested by a number of recent commentators.⁶⁵ Despite this, it is just possible that it represents the remains of a weapon burial at the site, and consequently it has been classified as a possible weapon burial for the purposes of this study.

⁶⁴ Bøe, *Ireland*, pp 83-4; Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age'; Aidan Walsh, 'A summary classification of Viking age swords in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, M. Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 222-35

⁶⁵ J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (Stroud, 2000), p.116

087

Lower BANN, Co. ANTRIM / (LONDON)DERRY

Brooch Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before May 1926

C. C 930 160

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Oval Brooch (double-shelled)

A badly provenanced find from 'found in the River Bann', presumably as the result of dredging. Ó Floinn has suggested that it may have come from an eroded grave on the riverbank, although it might equally represent 'casual loss', or indeed some form of ritual deposit.⁶⁶

Site / Location

According to Bøe, this artefact was found 'in the River Bann – north of Belfast', a somewhat cryptic description that nonetheless suggests it came from the Lower rather than the Upper Bann, but it could have been found anywhere on its c.56km length, the NGR given here simply reflecting a central point. As such it must be regarded as very approximate, and other than associating it with a river valley, no further associations can be made.

Interpretation

While the deposition circumstances are unknown, there is still evidence to suggest this is a possible brooch burial.

088

LEGAR HILL, Co. ANTRIM

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Burial Ground (Extant?)

Date of Recovery Before 1908

HP 8482 5524

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Axe (?)

In 1908, a sword was acquired by the Dublin Museum of Science and Art which was provenanced to 'Leger Hill (*sic*), near Charlemont, Co. Armagh'. An axe acquired at the same time may have come from the same location, which has an enclosed 'burial ground' at its summit. It is suggested that the enclosure is a 'rath', while the burial ground is post-medieval, but no evidence has been provided to substantiate this. As a 46 x 40m enclosure would represent a particularly substantial univallate ringfort, it is therefore at least possible that the ditch and bank represent an early ecclesiastical enclosure, in which case the association of this sword with a burial would markedly increase.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Bøe, *Ireland*, p.91; Ó Floinn, 'Archaeology of the early Viking age', p.149

⁶⁷ Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive); Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Database: Armagh 008:001 (www.ehsni.gov.uk/built/mbr/monuments_database/mons.asp, accessed 14 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

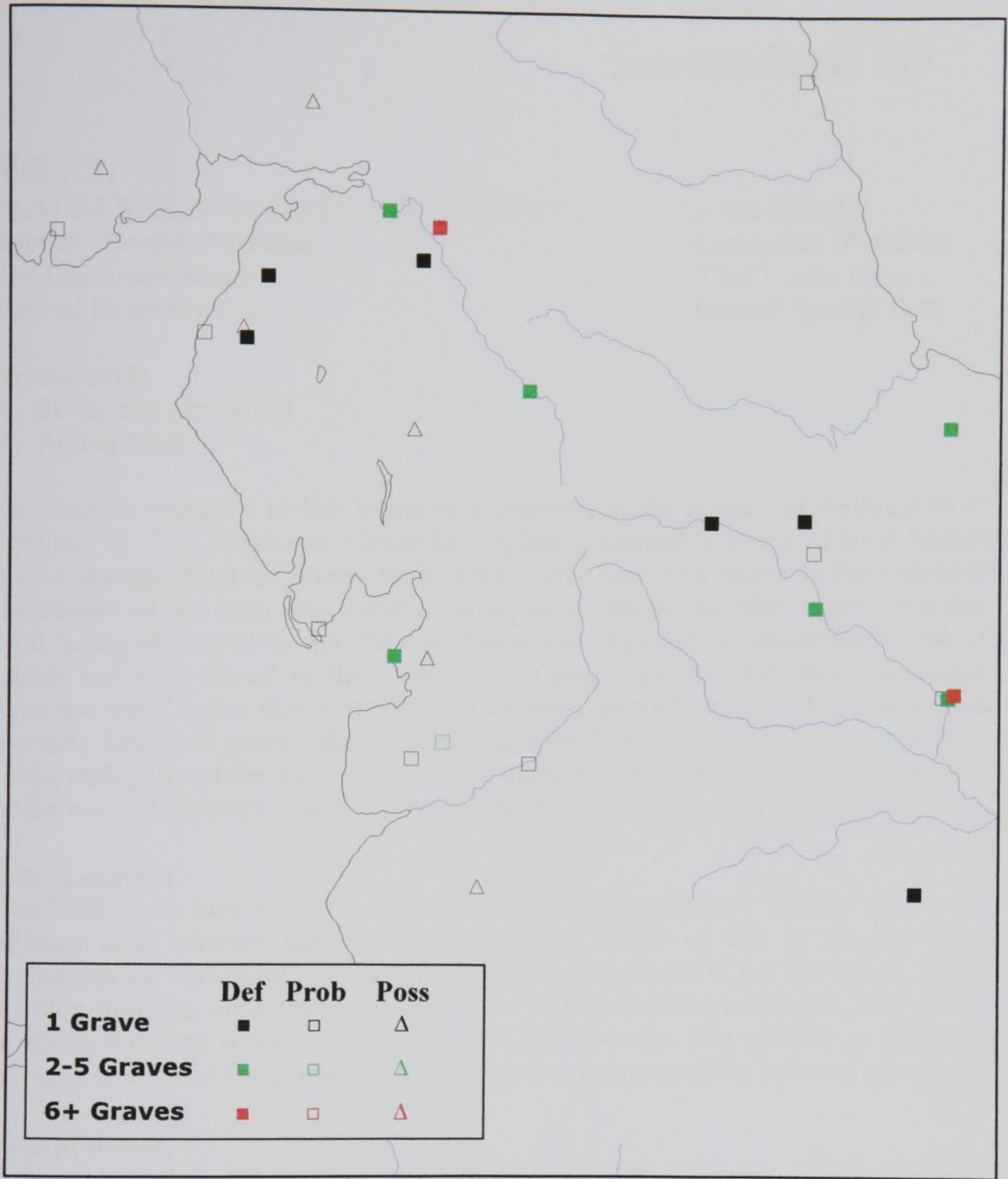
The enclosed burial ground at Legar Hill is on the top of a 43m hill 200m from the E bank of the Blackwater River, which it overlooks, being more than 20m above it. The site is 15.5km upstream from the point where the river flows into Lough Neagh and is in an area of drumlins. The closest coast is the head of Carlingford Lough more than 35km away, and the distance to the estuary of the Lower Bann is even further, particularly following the river network.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial within a possible early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure. Even if the axe is from the same site, it does not in itself provide evidence for another grave.



[Faint, illegible text, possibly a caption or reference note.]



Map – Zone C Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Southern Scotland & Northern England. These correspond to Catalogue Entries 090 –118 & 193.

ZONE C (Southern Scotland & Northern England)
[C1 – Western Area: C2 – Eastern Area]

Sites 090-118 & 190

090 (C1)

BLACKERNE, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Possible Extant Mound

Date of Recovery 1756

c. NX 785 644

Cremation (Possible)

(Cist?) under Cairn

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Silver ring (arm-ring)

B. Amber Bead

The earliest reference to this burial is a donation to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1782, when one Alexander Copland presented ‘a parcel of burnt human bones, among which are several teeth, found in the heart of a cairn...In the middle of the bottom of the cairn was found a coffin, composed of flat whin stones’ together with ‘a ring of pure silver’ (an Hiberno-Norse arm-ring) and ‘an amber bead’, both of which had been found in the same cairn. Grieg suggested that this represented ‘treasure trove’ rather than a burial, but Graham-Campbell suggests it may represent a poorly furnished grave. More recently Graham-Campbell and Batey have pointed to the ambiguity of the record, in that it is unclear if the artefacts came from the cist or the body of the cairn, and it is possible that they were buried for safe keeping.¹

Site / Location

The NGR given here relates to the modern nucleated settlement, situated on the old military road between Castle Douglas and the Haugh of Urr, in the Parish of Crossmichael. The village is *c.*9km from the sea (the estuary of the Urr water), and is *c.*2.4km from the same river, which was not visible from the burial site. The village is above the 70m contour, while the river is below the 20m contour at the point where it flows past the Haugh of Urr. The precise location of the ‘cairn’ is unknown.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, despite the presence of cremated bone, which may have come from another (older?) deposit within the cairn.

091 (C1)

St Cuthbert’s Church, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

In Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery Before 1925

NX 6903 5119

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

¹ Sigurd Grieg, *Viking Antiquities in Scotland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* ii (Oslo, 1940), p. 109; James Graham-Campbell, *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD850-1100)* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 153; James Graham-Campbell & C. E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp 108-9

Artefacts (3)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Ringed Pin
- C. Jet Bead

As Grieg was the first to note these finds, they were probably discovered after the local museum survey of 1887, but no details of their recovery are recorded, other than the fact that they came from 'St Cuthbert's Churchyard'. Graham-Campbell and Batey think it very likely that they represent the contents of a Viking grave.²

Site / Location

St Cuthbert's Church, as identified by J.G. Scott and RCAHMS, is situated on the upper slopes of the Dee valley between the 60 and 80m contours, to the northeast of the modern town of Kirkcudbright. As such, it affords clear views over the valley, but the slope restricts views towards the its estuary at Kirkcudbright Bay. The site itself is c.500m from the river and c.1.3km from the point where it reaches the Bay, but c.8km from the open sea.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial within a Christian cemetery.

092 (C1)

TORBECKHILL, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

NY 2330 7928

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Autumn 1913

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

- A. Sword (double-edged)

A ninth century Anglo-Saxon sword was recovered from 'the top of a quarry' at this site, where it was found 'some two feet' (0.6m) below the surface at this site. Although Grieg stated it was found under a 'mound', this cannot be substantiated in any other source No human remains were recorded, and both Shetelig and Graham-Campbell and Batey are cautious about identifying it as a burial.³

² Grieg, *Scotland*, p.13; Joseph Anderson & G. F. Black, 'Reports on the local museums in Scotland, obtained through Dr. R. H. Gunning's jubilee gift to the Society' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xxii (1888), pp 331-422; Graham-Campbell & Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.108; J. G. Scott, 'A note on Viking Settlement in Galloway' in *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 3rd Ser. lviii (1983), pp 52-5; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) Site Number NX65SE 34 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

³ A. O. Curle, 'Notices of the discovery of a hoard of rapier-shaped blades of bronze at Drumcoltran, in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, and of a Viking sword at Torbeckhill, near Ecclefechan' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* xlviii (1914), pp 332-5; Grieg, *Scotland*, pp 13-14; Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p. 13fn; Batey & Graham-Campbell, *Vikings in Scotland*, p.109; RCAHMS Archive (CANMORE database) Site Number NY27NW 7 (www.rcahms.gov.uk, accessed 13 Oct 2007)

Site / Location

Although Grieg misunderstood Curle's description of the site, it has been identified by the RCAHMS as Cat Craig, on the east bank of the Mein Water, immediately below the Torbeckhill Reservoir in the parish of Middlebie. The sword must have been placed in comparatively steeply sloping ground just below the 170m contour in a narrow (300m wide) N-S valley, where it was *c.*30m above the valley floor. The ridge behind it rises to 200m and that on the far side of the valley rises to 247m and ground to the north is even higher. Although the ground falls away to the south and southwest, the angle of slope hides this from the site, which is *c.*15km due north of the Solway Firth. The Mein Water is a tributary of the River Annan and follows a much longer route to the Firth at Annan.

Interpretation

The altitude of this site is unusual, and the sword is of Anglo-Saxon rather than Scandinavian type, but nonetheless, a possible weapon burial.

093 (C1)

HESKET-IN-THE-FOREST, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 5 February 1822

NY 470 455

Cremation (Probable)

Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (10)

- A. Sword (double-edged; bent)
- B. Spear-head (point bent)
- C. Spear-head (bent)
- D. Axe-head
- E. Shield-boss (Scandinavian; damaged)
- F. Bit
- G. Two Spurs (lost)
- H. Sickle
- I. Whetstone (11.4cm)
- J. Two buckles (horse trappings?)

A burial discovered during improvements to the 'great road' (originally Roman) between Carlisle and Penrith which had previously curved around the west side of a cairn which had been continuously quarried for stone for some half a century previously and was now *c.*2ft (0.6m) below (?) the surface of the field. The surviving 'cobblestones' were both local red sandstone and a darker blue rock, 'some of them ... so large as to take three men to roll them out' and formed a circle *c.*22ft (6.7m) in diameter, with the largest stones closer to the centre. Several fragments of millstones were also found at this level, which was *c.*1ft (0.3m) thick when discovered. Beneath this, resting on sand, was a layer of 'charcoal, burnt bones and ash about 14ft (4.3m) in diameter, in which all the artefacts were found, although their precise positions were not recorded. In 1934, Cowen examined the artefacts, which were preserved at the Tullie House Museum, and called them 'a tolerably complete inventory of the personal possessions of a Norse warrior'. Shetelig pointed out the links between bent weapons and cremations, and the site has been described as one of the few clear examples of a cremation burial in the British Isles. More recently, Edwards has pointed out that the comb and case are unburnt, although the other artefacts may well

have been exposed to heat, and has also pointed out the importance of the Court Thorn as the meeting point of the Manor Court of Inglewood Forest Nether Ward, and has suggested that the importance of this site 70 yards (64m) away may have influenced the site of the burial.⁴

B.J.N. Edwards has identified a house named Court Thorn on the main Carlisle-Penrith Road (A6), approximately mid-way between High and Low Hesket and suggests the burial was found a short distance south of the house, on the east side of the road, 70 yards (64m) from the modern successor to the older 'Court Thorn'. As such, the site was beside a Roman Road, on the south-west side of a slight ridge, between the 110 and 120m contours with views west and southwest towards the River Petterill c.1.3km away and some 40m below the site, although the river would not be visible from the site, which is at least 18km from the head of the Solway Firth.

Interpretation

An unusually well furnished definite weapon burial which was probably a cremation, although some it should be remembered that some inhumations on Man have deposits of cremated animal bone associated with them (e.g. Ballateare 154).

094 (C1)

Beacon Hill, ASPATRIA, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Bronze Age Rock Art?

Date of Recovery 1789

NY 141 418

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist in Mound

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (8)

- A. Sword (silver hilt)
- B. Spearhead ('dagger')
- C. Axe-head
- D. Horse-bit
- E. Spur
- F. Carolingian buckle
- G. Strap End
- H. Wood Fragments

A published letter of 1790 from Hayman Rooke to the Rev. Dr. Lort uses the testimony of one Mr. Rigg, the landowner, to describe the investigation of this 'barrow', 90ft in circumference (*i.e.* 8.73m in diameter) and c.6ft high. Under it, in a long cist, lay the 7ft (2.1m!) skeleton of man, on whose right side 'near the shoulder' was a sword, the spearhead ('dagger') having been placed on his left. Near this (*i.e.*

⁴ Christopher Hodgson, 'An account of some antiquities found in a cairn, near Hesket-in-the-Forest, in Cumberland, in a letter from Mr. Christopher Hodgson, to the Rev. John Hodgson, Secretary' in *Archaeologia Aeliana* 1st Ser. ii (1832), pp 106-9; J. D. Cowen, 'A catalogue of objects of the Viking period in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 2nd Ser. xxxiv (1934), pp 174-8; *idem*, 'Viking burials in Cumbria: A Supplement' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Ser. lxxvii (1967), pp 31-3; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p. 13; B. J. N. Edwards, 'The Vikings in north-west England: the archaeological evidence' in James Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Viking Treasure from the North-West: The Cuerdale Hoard in Context* (Liverpool, 1992), pp 45-6; B. J. N. Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England: The Artifacts* (Lancaster, 1998), pp 12-33

at the centre of the skeleton?) were the buckle and strap end, which seem to have been Carolingian in origin, although whether they were gold or gilt is more debatable. The axe and wood fragments also came from the cist, but their position is not recorded, and Rooke's text does not refer to the bit and spur at all. Two of the stones used to form the cist were inscribed with carvings of prehistoric (Bronze Age?) date, and it is unlikely that these have been moved a significant distance. Cowen was the first to interpret the site as a Viking burial, and more recently Edwards has suggested that the cist was three feet (0.9m) below the original ground surface of the cairn. However, it seems more likely that it was three feet below the summit of the mound and hence built on the original ground surface.⁵

Site / Location

The mound was located c.200 yards (183m) north of Aspatria, just behind Rigg's house, and Edwards believes he has located the original site as 'a circular area' on a ridge to the north of the modern school. Rooke noted that the 'barrow...command(ed) an extensive view in every way', although Edwards was a little more critical, noting that high ground restricts visibility to the west. It was just above the 80m contour, with clear views over the Ellen valley, the river being 1.25km away. Following the meanders of the river, the burial is c.16.7km upstream from its estuary at Maryport, but the nearest coast is 6.25km away, at the centre of Allanby Bay.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, probably reusing a prehistoric site of some kind. There seems no reason to suggest an Anglo-Saxon influence.

095 (C1)

BRIGHAM CHURCH, CUMBRIA

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery 1864-5

NY 086 309

Unknown

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Ringed Pin

In 1903, a ringed pin was exhibited to the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society which had been donated by a Mrs. Fletcher, presumably a relative of the Isaac Fletcher who restored Brigham Church from 1864-5. According to the original account, it had been found 'in the foundation of Brigham Church Tower', and thus clearly predates this thirteenth century structure. It was presumably associated with a burial, but there is no specific reference to skeletal material in the (very brief) account.⁶

⁵ Rooke, Hayman, 'Drudical and other British remains in Cumberland, described by Hayman Rooke, Esq., F. A. S., in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Lort' in *Archaeologia* x (1792), pp 111-3; J. D. Cowen, 'Viking burials in Cumbria', in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series xlviii (1949), p. 74; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England' pp 43-5; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, pp 8-10

⁶ Anon., 'Proceedings: annual meeting' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 2nd Ser. iv (1904), p. 340;

Site / Location

Brigham Church, dedicated to St. Bridget, is c.600m north of the modern village of Brigham, in the valley of the River Derwent. It stands on a slight rise just above the 40m contour, c.200m south of the river and no more than 10m above it at this point. The valley is over 1km wide at this point and the church provides a clear view over its floor, particularly to the west. To the south is higher ground, representing a northern spur of Tendley Hill (see 097). The site is some 7km from the coast (and the Workington grave: 096) in a direct line, and some 15.8km upstream following the course of the Derwent.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial within a Christian cemetery.

096 (C1)

Oysterbanks, WORKINGTON, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1902-3

NY 003 296

Cremation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (Double-edged: bent)

Recovered from a gravel ridge during the construction of a road, there is no specific reference to human remains having been found with this sword, but it had been bent prior to deposition, a ritual normally associated with burial (and more controversially cremation) in the Viking Age. Interestingly, it was argued that the sword had been bent while still in its sheath, but as it has been lost since at least the 1940s, this cannot be confirmed.⁷

Site / Location

Collingwood noted that the find spot was 80 yards (c.73m) north of the River Derwent, that the gravel ridge was called Oysterbanks, that it was the 'continuation' of the ridge upon which the Burrow Walls fort stood, and that it was 'opposite' St. Michael's Church (Workington). It was on land owned by the Vicar of West Seaton, and Cowen stated that it was 67 yards (61m) south of the Vicarage. Although the exact site could not be identified, it was clearly found somewhere close to the NGR given here, in the area called North Side, close to the 10m contour on a south-west facing slope overlooking the river, but overlooked by higher ground (30m+) to the north-east. The clearest views were of the river valley, with high ground restricting views to the sea, c.1.5km to the west.

Interpretation

Although not specifically linked to human remains, the fact that this sword was bent suggests that it should be considered a probable weapon burial. Bjørn and Shetelig thought it 'most likely'. Although not specifically associated with skeletal material or

⁷ Anon., 'April meeting' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Ser. iv (1904), p. 335; W. G. Collingwood, 'The Workington sword' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* iii (1904), pp 302-3; Cowen, 'Viking burials in Cumbria', p. 75; Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), p. 22

other evidence for burial, the fact that this sword was clearly bent prior to deposition strongly suggests that it was associated with a burial of some kind, and consequently it has been classified as a probable burial for the purposes of this study, which is slightly less emphatic than Bjørn and Shetelig's 'most likely' classification.

097 (C1)

TENDLEY HILL, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Other (unfurnished) burials

Date of Recovery 1814

c.NY 092 285

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead ('halberd')

C. CA (penannular?) brooch

Cowen first associated a sword in the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Upon Tyne collections with a discovery at or near Eaglesfield in 1814, when a skeleton was found together with a sword and 'halberd', both much rusted, and a 'bronze fibula' with zoomorphic decoration. The silver decoration on the sword hilt has been lost, as have the other artefacts. At least six other (unfurnished) inhumations were found in the same area, but their chronological relationship to the FISB is not known. The fact that they were shallow graves (14 in – 0.4m deep) would suggest a medieval date, and as one of them had its head turned to the right, with 'its eyes towards Eaglesfield', would suggest at least one of them was orientated east-west.⁸

Site / Location

Cowen used a contemporary annotated copy of the *Cumberland Pacquet* to demonstrate that the artefacts were found at Tendley Hill, c.1000m from the village and one of the 'most elevated situations' in the area. This provenance is confirmed by what is apparently an independent account of the burials from 1877, which associates the burials with 'the limestone bluffs of Hotchberry and Tendley', beneath which the old Roman road passes. Today the topography of the hill has been altered by extensive quarrying, but contemporary descriptions indicate that the burials overlooked the village, suggesting the burial was on the south-east slope of the hill, the NGR reflecting this general assumption. It would have been between the 100 and 130m contours, overlooking the narrow valley in which Eaglesfield is situated, c.10.5km from the sea and nearly 3km from the nearest large river, the Derwent.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, albeit one that is unusual for its elevation and distance from a river valley. Edwards, originally sceptical, listed among his certain graves in 1998.

⁸ J. D. Cowen, 'A Viking sword from Eaglesfield, near Cockermouth' in *Archaeologica Aeliana* 4th Ser. xxvi (1948), pp 55-61; Cowen 'Viking burials in Cumbria', pp 33-4; idem, 'Museum notes 3: more about the Viking grave at Eaglesfield' in *Archaeologica Aeliana* 4th Ser. xlv (1967), pp 197-203; Edwards, 'Vikings in North-West England', p. 48; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, p. 19; William Dickinson, 'On and off the Roman road from Papcastle to Lamugh Woodmoor' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 1st Ser. iii (1877), p. 343

098.1 (C1)**ORMSIDE CHURCHYARD, CUMBRIA****Weapon Burial (Definite)**

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery 1898

NY 701 176

Inhumation (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Good**Artefacts (3)**

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Shield Boss (Irish Sea A)(with grip?)

C. Knife (lost)

The Rev. J. Brunskill of Ormside witnessed this discovery, climbing into a grave after a funeral ceremony to examine the remains of a 'thigh' bone and skull, which he left in the ground, an a probable shield grip, which he collected, the other artefacts having already been removed. The sword allegedly lay across the 'thigh' bone, but as this was close to the skull, it may equally have been part of the arm. Considerable debate has focused on the shield boss, which has been used to ascribe an early date to the burial. It is, however, an example of the Irish Sea A type, dating from the ninth, or perhaps even the tenth century.⁹

Site / Location

Although the position of the grave within the churchyard is not recorded, Ormside Church occupies 'a considerable eminence, partly artificial and partly natural' close to the 130m contour, slightly raised above the Eden, which flows less than 100m north of the church. The river meanders through a valley whose width varies from 500-1000m, and which has high ground of up to 160m on each side. Views from the church are restricted to the nearest part of the valley, with perhaps some views upstream to the east. The site is c.40km from the Kent estuary at Morcambe Sands, but c.54km in a direct line from the Eden estuary on the Solway Firth.

Interpretation

Given the direct association with human remains, a definite weapon inhumation.

098.2 (C1)**ORMSIDE CHURCHYARD, CUMBRIA****Tertiary Burial (Possible)**

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery Before 1823

NY 701 176

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor**Artefacts (1)**

A. CA decorated bowl (14cm diameter)

The richly decorated Ormside Cup or Bowl was presented to the York Museum in 1823, having been found in Ormside churchyard at an unknown date. Although clearly Anglo-Saxon, it was first associated with Scandinavian activity by

⁹ R. S. Ferguson, 'Various finds in Ormside Churchyard' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 1st Ser. xv (1899), pp 377-80; Cowen, 'Catalogue of objects', pp 171-4

Collingwood, and more recent scholars have suggested that it may have come from a grave (compare Ballyholme, Antrim: 084). Given the 74-year interval, it seems very unlikely that it came from the weapon grave at the site (098.1), but its early recovery date suggests it is entirely possible that other, less spectacular grave goods, or human remains, may have been ignored. It is, however, also possible that it formed part of a hoard, or 'loot'. The bowl has been crudely repaired, and was probably of some antiquity when buried.¹⁰

Site / Location

Found somewhere in Ormside churchyard, no further information is available, but the site is effectively identical to 098.1.

Interpretation

Despite the poor quality of the record, a possible tertiary burial, although it is also possible that it may have been buried for safekeeping.

099 (C1)

NAN BIELD PASS, CUMBRIA

c.NY 452 095

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1967-1992

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Iron Spearhead

The discovery of a Viking Age spearhead on the Nan Bield Pass, north of Kentmere was first noted by Edwards in 1992, when it was in the Tullie House Museum. It was presumably acquired after Cowen's 1967 article, but no further information is forthcoming.¹¹

Site / Location

The NGR given here refers to the highest point on the Nan Bield Pass, and while it could have been found on either side of the ridge, it is unlikely to have been below the 600m contour, and must have been on steeply sloping land. The site is c.25km from the sea at the mouth of the Kent, a source of which flows down the south side of the pass through the Kentmere valley, within which, at the edges of Kentmere tarn, two spearheads were discovered in the 1940s, although both seem to have been water deposits. If this is a burial site, it is in every way atypical.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial, but this site is so unusual that the possibility of some form of ritual deposition cannot be ruled out, despite the absence of water.

¹⁰ W. G. Collingwood, 'The Ormside cup' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 1st Ser. xv (1899), pp 381-7; Ferguson 'Ormside churchyard' p.378-9; Cowen, 'Viking burials in Cumbria', p.75; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, pp 17-18, 39-41

¹¹ Edwards 'Vikings in north-west England', p.51; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, p.27. See also Clare Fell, 'A Viking spearhead from Kentmere' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 2nd Ser. lvi (1956), pp 67-9

100 (C1)

St Michael's Churchyard, RAMPSIDE, CUMBRIA SD 238 673

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1909

Inhumation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (single-edged)

The earliest published account of this discovery states that it was found while digging the grave of one Thomas Curwen in March 1909, in ground that had already been disturbed during the construction, or demolition of a Sunday School building in 1842 and 1892 respectively. As a result, the breaks in the sword cannot be assumed to be result of ritual activity, and it may have been separated from its associated human remains. The site has been a church since at least 1292, and is probably considerably older. The sword, now in the Barrow-in-Furness Museum, is the only single-edged example from the east coast of the Irish Sea. Analysis indicates that it had a relatively high carbon content and seemed to have been buried in its sheath.¹²

Site / Location

Gaythorpe's description extends to a precise position in the graveyard, 8 yards (7.3m) west of the boundary wall and 16 yards (14.6m) south of the chancel. He also noted that from the 75.4 ft (23m) OD site of St Michael's there was an excellent view west and south over a flat coastal area to Walney and Roa Islands, Morecambe Bay and the Irish Sea, views to the north and east being more restricted by higher ground. The site is 900m from the coast, and a little further from the modern village of Rampside, at the south end of the ridge upon which the church stands.

Interpretation

Due to previous disturbance, a probable weapon grave, a classification supported by both Bjørn & Shetelig and Edwards.

101 (C1)

Storey Bros Factory, LANCASTER, LANCASHIRE c. SD 480 613

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1961

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead (Late Anglo-Saxon; bent)

A brief note to the effect that 'a late Saxon spear-head was found during excavation for the foundations of the new works of Messrs. Storey Bros.' in Lancaster was the only published comment on this find until Edwards added the comment that it was 57.7cm long and retained some of the wood of its shaft. He also noted that it 'had

¹² Harper Gaythorpe, 'The Rampside sword; with notes on the church and churchyard of Rampside in Furness' in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Ser. x (1910), pp 298-306; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.18; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England', p. 49

been bent and was straightened by its discoverers without apparent damage', a detail which might suggest a funerary context.¹³

Site / Location

Edwards provides a NGR for the site that places it south of the centre of Lancaster, just below the 30m contour on a gentle slope that falls towards the Lune, some 900m north of the site. The Storey Bros. factory originally fronted on to White Cross Street, but the structural modifications may well have occurred elsewhere on their property. The site is 4.9km from the coast, but 13km following the river, with both measurements ignoring the extensive sands which are a feature of this coast.

Interpretation

Although Edwards noted that 'speculation as to the reason for [this artefact's] presence [is] both inevitable and pointless', a possible weapon burial, with some additional support from this hypothesis being provided by the fact that it was originally bent. It is, however, also potentially quite late.

102.1 & 2 (C1)

Lodge Road, CLAUGHTON HALL, LANCASHIRE

c. SD 513 421

Weapon & Brooch Burials (Both Probable)

No Evidence

Bronze Age Cremation

Mound

Date of Recovery 1822

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (8; Avg. 4/grave)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Axehead
- D. Hammer
- E. Stone hammer
- F. Two Oval Brooches
- G. Oval Mount / Brooch (Carolingian)
- H. Two beads ('paste'; blue and red)

A complex, probably double, burial was discovered while removing a low 'hill of sand' during the construction of a new road in 1822. The artefacts were found 2-3ft (0.6-0.9m) below (its) surface, perhaps suggesting they had been inserted into an extant mound. The earliest (1849) description focused on the oval brooches, which had been found back to back, forming a 'kind of box', which contained the modified Carolingian baldric mount, the two beads and a tooth. Some sources suggest that all of these artefacts were found in a cloth-lined wooden box. The sword, spearhead, axehead, hammer and 'stone axe' were found at the same level, and the 'whole of these remarkable remains were enclosed in a wooden case'. At the same time 'an urn of backed clay, containing burned bones, was also found at the same place, but unfortunately was not preserved'. In 1969, Edwards concluded that despite some disagreement, all the early accounts were derived from a single (near) contemporary source, probably a MS account by one John Weld of Leagram Hall, Chipping.

¹³ D. M. Wilson & D. G. Hurst, 'Medieval Britain in 1961' in *Medieval Archaeology* vi-vii (1962-3), p.308; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England', p. 51; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, p. 27; Ms D. O'Sullivan provided information on the site.

The interpretation of these remains has generated considerable debate. Although Edwards suggests that the 'urn' may have been of Viking Age date, the site being unusual for a Bronze Age burial (but compare Crossmoor: 103), it is very much more likely that it was prehistoric, and probably Bronze Age, in origin. Some commentators have linked the stone axe-head to this prehistoric activity, but these artefacts are very rarely found in prehistoric graves, and original accounts imply it was found with the Viking Age artefacts in the 'wooden case', unlike the 'urn'. The axehead (just 4 ½ in / 11.4cm long) could still have functioned as such in the Viking Age, but it seems more likely that it had a symbolic significance, perhaps even a link to Thór.

Of these artefacts, the iron weapons would seem to represent a weapon burial, with which the iron hammer might well be associated. The absence of human remains may be the result of acidic soil, rather than cremation, as none of the artefacts appear to have suffered heat damage, nor does the 'wooden case', presumably a chest, coffin, or perhaps even a wooden chamber.

The oval brooches, mount and beads were clearly separate from the other artefacts, although they seem to have been placed within the same 'case'. Bjørn and Shetelig had no doubt that Claughton Hall represented a 'double' (male and female) burial, but more recent commentators have cast doubt on this, with Edwards seeing these artefacts as a kind of 'memento' or 'keepsake' of the dead man's wife, while Richards sees this group as 'a ritual deposit of various amulets' within a male burial. When the brooches were cleaned in the 1930s, Kendrick made no reference to any traces of cloth on the outside of the brooches, and it is possible that original observers may have been confused by the impression of cloth on the oval brooches' inner surface. Brooches in what are known to have been inhumations have occasionally been found back-to-back (as at Reay: 035.2 and Ballyholme: 084), and the various beads and brooches could have been worn between them. Thus, while the possibility of a cenotaph cannot be entirely ruled out, it is possible that a woman's body was originally present.¹⁴

Site / Location

Although the original account of the burial site is rather vague, Kendrick established that the site was approximately half a mile east of the Preston-Lancaster Road, and Edwards identified the 'New Road' as that now known as Lodge Road. The site was somewhere along a 300m stretch towards the south end of this road, with the NGR representing a central point. Any site in this area would be between the 20 and 30m contour lines, on a very gentle west or south-west facing slope approximately mid-way between the west-flowing Rivers Brock and Calder, without a clear view of either. The very shallow valley that the site overlooks is today dominated by the Lancaster Canal and M6, both of which have presumably altered the topography considerably, but the site can never have enjoyed extensive views. It is c.15km in a

¹⁴ Anon., 'Proceedings, February 2, 1849' in *Archaeological Journal* vi (1849), pp 72-5; T. D. Kendrick, 'The Claughton Hall brooches' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* ix.2 (1935), pp 117-24; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, pp 15-18; B. J. N. Edwards, 'The Claughton Hall Viking burial' in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* cxxi (1969), pp 109-16; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England', p.46; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, pp 14-17; J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), p. 144 & pl. 19

direct line from the Wyre estuary (both the Brock and Calder being tributaries of this river), and c.21km from the open sea.

Interpretation

Despite the absence of human remains, the weapons clearly represent a probable burial of some form, and despite the debate on amulets, there is also sufficient evidence for a probable brooch burial at the site as well. Whatever the origins of the stone axe, the urn strongly suggests the reuse of a prehistoric burial site.

103 (C1)

Near CROSSMOOR, LANCASHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Bronze Age Burial (?)

Date of Recovery 1889

c. SD 444 384

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spear (possible)

Edwards has discovered an account of the discovery of a group of artefacts by Henry Fishwick, who noted that they were found 10ft (3m) below the surface by workmen excavating for gravel. A broken and blackened 'urn' was discovered, and a sword and 'large dagger' were found 'near to it'. The 'urn' and 'dagger' have been lost, but the sword survived in the possession of the Shuttleworth family, and was in the Blackburn Museum in 1992. Clearly of Viking Age date, it has led to the suggestion that the dagger (presumably also iron) was actually a spearhead. Edwards has suggested that the 'urn', like that at Claughton (102) may be of Viking Age date, but Fishwick's description of a round vessel, 'narrowing from the base and then broadening out, and again contracting at the mouth', the rim of which 'was slightly ornamented with curved lines' strongly suggests a prehistoric (Bronze Age?) date. Fishwick made no specific references to human remains, at the site but his conviction that the ceramic vessel as a 'cinerary urn' strongly suggests that some cremated remains were found with this object at least.¹⁵

Site / Location

The modern settlement at Crossmoor is slightly east of that shown on the relevant 1847 OS sheet for Lancashire and Furness, and the NGR given here reflects this, although it must still be seen as approximate. The surrounding land is very flat, between the 10 and 20m contours, and the area is c.2km south of the River Wyre and 5.2km in a direct line from its estuary, the open sea being 13.5km away. Given the flat topography, views from the site are likely to have been comparatively restricted, with neither the river nor the sea being visible.

¹⁵ H. Fishwick, *The History of the Parish of St. Michael's-on-Wyre in the County of Lancaster Chetham Society* xxv (1891), pp 2-3; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England', p.48; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, pp 20-1

Interpretation

Given the absence of specific references to human remains, a probable weapon burial. Despite Edwards' suggestions on the date of the urn, it seems rather more likely to be prehistoric, and suggests reuse of the site in the Viking Age.

104 (C1)

BROCKHALL, LANCASHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1836

c. SD 699 374

Inhumation (Probable)

Cist in Earth Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Spearheads (?)

Another reference discovered by Edwards (who places it in Billington), it was described by F.R. Raines in 1850, some fourteen years after its discovery by the farmer at Brockhall, Lancashire. When removing 'a large mound of earth', he uncovered 'a Kist-vaen, formed of rude stones, containing some large human bones and the rusty remains of some spear heads of iron. The whole crumbled to dust on exposure to the air.' The description suggests an inhumation within a long cist, accompanied by at least one spearhead, and it is possible that some other artefacts were misidentified at the time.¹⁶

Site / Location

For some reason, Edwards places the site some distance east of Brockhall, in the valley of the river Calder, but this cannot be substantiated. Raines original description notes that the mound was 'about five hundred yards' (*c.*457m) from the Ribble but also states that it was 'within two hundred yards (*c.*183m) of a ford of the Ribble'. Clearly both statements cannot be correct, and seems likely that the first statement is an error, the site being just over 500 yards from Brockhall Farm rather than the river. Immediately west of a road leading north from the farm buildings and *c.*216 yards from the only ford in the area, the Ordnance Survey map of 1847-8 shows the 'Site of a Tumulus' in an area called 'Brockhall Ees'. Given this evidence, there can be little doubt that this was the mound investigated by Thomas Hubberly, the farmer at Brockhall, in 1836.

As such, the site was close to the centre of a broad meander of the Ribble, less than 100m from the riverbank and slightly elevated, with reasonably views downstream to the west. Between the 35 and 40m contours, it is overlooked by steep sloping higher ground to the north west (84m), with the slope to the south of the river being more gentle but rising to 200m *c.*4km to the S. Following the various meanders of the Ribble, the coast is *c.*59km away, but only just over half this distance in a straight line.

¹⁶ F. R. Raines, *Notitia Cestrensis, or Historic Notices of the Diocese of Chester by the Rt. Rev. Francis Gastrell, DD, Ld. Bp. of Chester* 2.2, Chetham Society xxi (1850), p.286; Edwards, 'Vikings in north-west England', p.48; Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, p. 19-20

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, despite Edwards doubts on the subject, although there is a faint possibility that it might be late Anglo-Saxon rather than Viking Age, but its location outside the main areas of burial, and its association with a stone-lined cist strongly suggest that this is not the case.

105 (C1)

Hasty Knoll, Near BLACKROD, LANCASHIRE

c. SD 588 110

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Unknown

Possible Extant Mound?

Unclear

Date of Recovery Summer 1770

Record Quality V. Poor

Artefacts (?)

A. 'Many fragments of iron...the remains of...military weapons'

A rather ambiguous record first noted by Cowen, which Meaney has suggested may have been an Anglo-Saxon Grave. According to Whitaker, who published five years after the monument's destruction, 'a considerable barrow, popularly denominated Hasty-knoll ... was originally a vast collection of small stones taken from the bed of the [river] Douglas' although great quantities of these had been taken away in the past. 'Many fragments of iron had been also discovered occasionally within it, the remains of ... military weapons ... [O]n finally levelling the barrow, was found a cavity in the hungry gravel immediately under the stones, that was about seven feet [2.1m] in length...and all filled with the loose and blackish earth of [a British officer's] perished remains.' The references to weapons in the upper levels of the mound may refer to secondary burials, but if they do, they cannot be dated with any certainty. The cist beneath the mound seems to have contained an unfurnished burial of some kind, perhaps an inhumation on the basis of its length, which may have predated the 'iron' depositions.¹⁷

Site / Location

Whitaker noted the site was 'about a mile and a half from [Blackrod]', and the fact that the cairn was made of stones from the Douglas suggests it was in its floodplain. Unfortunately, the Douglas describes an extensive meander around Blackrod and the burial could have come from almost anywhere on its banks. If Whitaker's distance is taken literally (as 2.4km), it was either in the general area of SD 588 110 or SD 636 123. He also notes that the burial was close to the site of a 'Roman station', but no Roman site is marked on any modern map. If, however, he thought it was close to a Roman road, he may have been thinking of the proposed Roman road between Walton-le-Dale and Wigan, which would suggest the first site, and this has been used here. Although clearly associated with a river valley at least 23km from the sea at the Ribble estuary, and at least 70m OD, further speculation is impossible, given the vagueness of the topographical references.

¹⁷ John Whitaker, *The History of Manchester* (2 vols, London, 1775), ii, 36-7; Cowen, 'Viking burials in Cumbria', pp 75-6; Edwards 'Vikings in north-west England', p. 48

Interpretation

Taken literally, Whitaker's description implies at least one possible weapon burial in the upper levels of what appears to have been an extant mound. Possible Anglo-Saxon connections suggest the site should be treated with considerable caution.

106.1-4 (C1)

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL, CUMBRIA

Tertiary Burials (Definite)

Christian Church

Date of Recovery 1988

NY 399 559

Inhumations (Definite)

Unknown

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (6: Avg. 1.5 / grave)

- A. Four CA buckles and strap-ends
- B. Strap end
- C. Pins (unspecified number)
- D. Silver hooked tag
- E. Whetstone (small) with silver mount
- F. Gold wire pendant / toggle

In 1991, Richards noted that a 'number of early tenth century burials with grave-goods were revealed by excavations at Carlisle Cathedral'. In 1998, Hall noted that what was presumably the same group of burials came from Cathedral Green and included the artefacts listed here. An interim report on the excavation is forthcoming, but in the absence of further evidence it seems perhaps most appropriate to suggest a minimum of four furnished burials. The excavator has dated the objects to c.900-950 on typological grounds and suggests that they represent 'high status Norse incomers'.¹⁸

Site / Location

The cathedral is situated on comparatively flat ground close to the 15m contour, approximately 500m south of the Eden and 300m east of its tributary, the Caldew, the site being c.9km upstream from the estuary close to the head of the Solway Firth. There is slightly higher (50m) ground to the S, but no major slopes. Views from the site (which only became a cathedral in the twelfth century) must always have been comparatively restricted.

Interpretation

A minimum of four definite tertiary burials at this church site. They seem typical of the group discussed by Halsall, and it may be argued that their ethnicity is open to debate.

¹⁸ Richards *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed.), p.150, citing R. Keevill, *Carlisle Cathedral Excavations 1988: Interim Report* (Carlisle 1989); R. A. Hall, 'A silver appliqué from St Mary Bishophill Senior, York' in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* lxx (1998), p. 65, citing D. Tweedle, *forthcoming*: 'The decorated metalwork' in *Excavations at Cathedral Green, Carlisle*; David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later: Centre for Manx Studies Monograph* ii (Liverpool, 2002), p.89; Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Studies in the Early Middle Ages* ii (Brepols, 2000), pp 259-76

107.1 (C1)

St Peter's Church, HEYSHAM, LANCASHIRE

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery c.1800

SD 410 616

Inhumation (Probable)

Hogback (?)

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead

The earliest record of this find (from 1823) notes that 'an iron spearhead... greatly corroded' was found in the same place as a hogback stone to the north of St. Peter's Church, Heysham. However, no human remains were found in association with either artefact. The hogback is preserved in the church, but the spearhead cannot be identified today.¹⁹

Site / Location

St Peter's at Heysham is one of two churches less than 40m apart, both of which seem to date from the eighth century, and consequently predate any Scandinavian activity in the area. The churches are situated close to the base of a broad peninsula (Heysham Head) c.400m wide and c.200m long, on its north side. St Peter's is in an elevated position (c.20m OD) but less so than the neighbouring St Patrick's Chapel (see 107.2), and has been described by Potter & Andrews as 'nestling in a hollow'. The best views are to the north, where the site overlooks a sheltered beach (the site being at its west end) as well as Heysham Sands, and Morecambe Bay. Views to the west, on the other hand, are blocked by the high ground known as Chapel Hill.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial within a Christian context, particularly interesting for its alleged association with a hogback grave, one of the few occasions when the two traditions have apparently been juxtaposed.

107.2 (C1)

St Patrick's Chapel, HEYSHAM, LANCASHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery 1977-8

SD 410 616

Inhumation (Definite)

Some Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Bone Comb

During the excavations of St Patrick's Chapel, c.40m W of St Peter's (see 107.1), a female inhumation was discovered within an earth-cut grave which had a (cattle) bone comb placed to the right of the pelvis. The grave, orientated E-W, with the head to the west, was the only accompanied burial excavated in association with the chapel, and was in a prominent position, south west of the south door to the structure.

¹⁹ T. W. Potter & R. D. Andrews, 'Excavation and survey at St Patrick's Chapel and St Peter's Church, Heysham, Lancashire 1977-8' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxiv (1994), pp 55-134; Richards *Viking Age England* shows the find as a sword (fig.63) but states that it was a spearhead in the text (p. 150).

It had also been covered with charcoal, a practice associated with a steadily increasing number of high status Anglo-Saxon Christian burials. The comb is probably of tenth or eleventh century date, but the body was stratigraphically within the cemetery. The fact that it was not disturbed suggests it was marked in some way. Other than sex, no osteological information is available, but while the constricted ribs suggests shroud burial, traces of which may have been noted on the comb, its position in the grave could also suggest suspension from a belt.²⁰

Site / Location

Although this site is higher up the slopes of Chapel Hill than St Peter's (107.1) views to the west were still restricted by the slope, although the excavators noted 'commanding views across Morecambe Bay and into the southern hills of the Lake District'. However, the chapel effectively obstructs all views north from the burial site. Like St Peter's, the chapel seems to date from the eighth century, and the body seems orientated on the church, suggesting it (or a predecessor) was extant when burial occurred.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation of a woman in what would normally be considered a socially prestigious part of a Christian cemetery.

108 (C2)

CAMBOIS, NORTHUMBERLAND

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1859

NZ 294 852

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist & Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Enamel disc brooch

B. Bone Comb

While a recent note by Alexander has clarified some issues, the original record remains confused. According to a Dr. Ward, an extended inhumation with the head to the east (but see site/location) had been found encased in clay and with a line of stones around the body. The brooch, if not the comb, was found in direct association with this. However, Alexander suggests that three skeletons were found in this 'cist', (compare Ackergill: 089), and examination of the three skulls suggest they were those of a woman of 45-60 and two males in their 20s and 40s respectively. It is not known which of these was the furnished burial (or indeed burials). Other texts have focused on the artefacts, and some have suggested the grave may be Anglo-Saxon rather than Scandinavian.²¹

Site / Location

An early note states that this 'tumulus' was found on the east side of the river Wansbeck, but the river flows east in the 3km before it reaches the coast. However, the fact that it was associated with Cambois rather than North Seaton suggests that it

²⁰ Potter & Andrews 'Heysham', pp 76-9, 122-4

²¹ M. L. Alexander, 'A 'Viking-age grave from Cambois, Bedlinton, Northumberland' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxi (1987), pp 101-5; R. A. Smith, *British Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities* (1923; Ipswich 1993), p.101; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p. 14

was found on its south bank, and the NGR given here represents a central point on the south bank, c.1km inland. A weir built since the discovery was made has altered the river level, and any further speculation on the precise location of the burial is pointless.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary inhumation. While outside the main area of Anglo-Saxon burial, the possibility that it may predate the Viking Age cannot be entirely eliminated.

109.1-3 (C2)

KILDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Three Weapon Burials (Definite)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery 1867

NZ 603 096

Inhumations (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (12: Avg. 4 / grave; 1 w/ 7, 2 w/ 2)

- A. Three Swords
- B. Three 'Daggers' (Spearheads)
- C. 'Longer Weapon (?)'
- D. Axe
- E. CA buckle and strap-end
- F. Balance
- G. 1 Lead Weight (w CA mount)
- H. Whetstone (10cm)
- I. Composite wood and iron object
- J. Tweezers
- K. CA object
- L. Iron buckle

A remarkable assemblage recovered during restoration and rebuilding work in Kildale Church at the end of 1867. While the record is exceptionally poor, it is clear that a series of 7-8 east-west inhumations were found immediately south of the north wall of the nave, arranged in either one or two lines. Of these, three seem to have been furnished. The single most elaborate grave had a sword, spearhead, tweezers, balance and weight, strap end (and presumably buckle), while two others each had swords and spearheads in them. Although the axe 'lay on the instep of its departed owner', Atkinson does not specify which grave it came from, and the whetstone and buckle were not mentioned in any early account, although they are illustrated in a later text. All of 'the swords ... lay with their bones obliquely across the bones of the leg, the hilt at the right hip'. The skeletons were reburied immediately after their discovery, and while the artefacts were preserved, they were unfortunately stolen from the church at some point before 1930.²²

²² J. C. Atkinson, 'Account of discoveries recently made in the parish church of Kildale, Yorkshire' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 2nd Ser. iv (1868), pp 52-4; Frank Elgee, *Early Man in North-East Yorkshire* (Gloucester, 1930), pp 220-1

Site / Location

Situated close to the bottom of a *c.* 1km broad valley less than 100m from the south bank of the River Leven, this church sits in a slight depression in the valley floor just above the 150m contour, which restricts views considerably. This section of the valley floor is comparatively flat, but the ground continues to rise to the east, the watershed (and a pass) being *c.* 3km away, and the church is overlooked by Kildale and Coate Moors (both >320m). The sea is at least 13km NNE in a direct line, and is substantially further following the Leven.

Interpretation

Despite some ambiguity, surviving records indicate a minimum of three definite weapon inhumations at this site, substantially less than the more usual estimate of 7-8, based on Atkinson's opening lines.²³

110 (C2)

LEEMING LANE, nr. Bedale NORTH YORKSHIRE *c.* SE 291 896

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Roman Road (?)

Date of Recovery *c.* 1840

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Two Oval Brooches

B. Iron Artefact ('long square spearhead')

In 1848, W. Hylton Longstaff noted that a pair of oval brooches had been discovered with a skeleton 1-2ft (0.3-0.6m) beneath the surface of an old Roman Road near Bedale. The oval brooches were on the skeleton's shoulders (suggesting it was supine), while the breast was 'transfixed by a rude long square spearhead, very much corroded'. This artefact is perhaps rather more likely to have rested on the skeleton's chest, and may well have been a weaving sword or cooking spit (*seiðstafr*) rather than a spearhead. Its associations with the 'centre' of the road are problematic, but may indicate that the road had moved slightly through time. Other burials, most noticeably Hesketh-in-the-Forest (093) have also been found in close association with proposed ancient routes. In the case of Leeming Lane, only the oval brooches survive, and seem to have been reunited by York Archaeological Trust, after an extended period in two separate institutions. Richards suggests that the two brooches had originally been fastened together with wire in a manner reminiscent of the pair from Claughton Hall, Lancashire (102), but I can find no evidence to substantiate this comment. No further information on the find circumstances is available.²⁴

Site / Location

The provenance of this burial has been confused, perhaps due to the separation of the brooches soon after their discovery. Bjørn & Shetelig associated the find with Northallerton, and they have been more generally associated with Bedale. Longstaff's original notes, however, state that it was found 'on the old Roman road

²³ Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 150 supports the former view, which seems to be based on a misreading of Atkinson 'Discoveries recently made', which has effectively doubled the number of burials.

²⁴ Anon., 'Archaeological Intelligence' in *Archaeological Journal* v (1848), pp 220-1; Richards, *Vikings in England*, p. 151-2; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p. 15; Anderson, 'Relics', p. 556

from Catterick to Piersebridge now called Leeming-Lane. An OS map of the area from 1857 shows that the settlement now called Leeming Bar was originally called Leeming Lane, and an (abandoned) road of the same name extended SE from there to the village of Leeming, bypassing the modern road. The burial is perhaps most likely to have come from this 800m stretch of abandoned road, the NGR being based on its middle portion. As such, comparatively little can be said about the site, other than the fact that it was somewhere between 25 and 40m OD and was associated at some level with the shallow valley of Bedale Beck, a tributary of the River Swale. It was also at least 40km from the sea at the Tees estuary and substantially further following the course of the Swale.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation, although the identity of the 'spearhead' remains open to debate. It may also be suggested that the burial was originally positioned beside, rather than underneath the road, although neither claim can be substantiated.

111 (C2)

CAMP HILL, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1875

c. SE 311 825

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead

Registered in the British Museum as having been found together in 1875, no further information is available. Richards states that they were found with a skeleton in a 'natural hill' at the site perhaps drawing on Shetelig's classification of the find as a 'man's grave', but there does not seem to be any independent evidence to support either suggestion.²⁵

Site / Location

Camp Hill is a substantial house with an extensive demesne on raised ground (summit 49m) c.8km SE of Bedale and c.5km from the river Swale. The NGR given here relates to this house, as the burial cannot be provenanced more precisely.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial.

112 (C2)

WENSLEY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 20 November 1915

SE 092 895

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

²⁵ Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.15; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p. 14; Richards, *Vikings in England*, p. 145

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Sickle
- D. Knife

Ignored by Bjørn and Shetelig, this inhumation was found while grave-digging in the churchyard. An east-west skeleton (presumably male) was found with its head to the west, the sword (of Anglo-Saxon manufacture) on his right, and the other objects on his left side, all with their pointed ends towards his feet. The artefacts were purchased by the BM in 1965. Recently, Halsall has pointed to the anomaly of using an Anglo-Saxon sword as evidence for a 'Viking' grave.²⁶

Site / Location

The parish church at Wensley is situated immediately above the 110m contour overlooking the River Ure, which is less than 200m away. The valley floor on the south side of the river is comparatively flat and c.500m broad at this point, but the land to the north and south of the site rises steeply to more than 170 and 200m respectively. Although to the east of the watershed, the site is close to the centre of northern England, being c.60km from the E and c.65km from the W coasts.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in close association with a churchyard.

113.1 (C2)

Ladykirk, RIPON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1955

SE 315 712

Inhumation (Definite)

(In Chancel)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

- A. Comb and Comb-case

In 1955 an excavation by A. Paget-Baggs at Ladykirk uncovered a number of burials in the south-east corner of an undated chancel. All were presumably earth-cut, and orientated east-west, respecting the line of the chancel, and the director suggested that they represented a second phase of burial at this site, which subsequently became a high medieval chantry. The comb and case had been placed on the chest of the skeleton in grave 27. Like the others (see 113.2-4), it dates from the late ninth to mid eleventh century. Debate continues on the character of this and the other furnished burials at the site, and it has been suggested that they represent liturgical combs, with the bodies being those of priests. Ailcy Hill (SE 317 711), c.200m south

²⁶ D. M. Wilson, 'Some neglected late Anglo-Saxon swords' in *Medieval Archaeology* ix (1965), pp 41-2; idem, 'The Scandinavians in England' in idem (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1981), fig.10.1; Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 150; Halsall, 'Viking presence?', p. 264

east of this site, has also produced a number of unusual burials, in this case a number of burials in chests, but all of these seem to predate the ninth century.²⁷

Site / Location

Ripon was a major monastic site founded in the seventh century, and it seems likely that the Ladykirk formed part of this complex. Situated close to the 30m contour, slightly lower than the Minster to the south, the church originally stood on a slight gravel hill which has been extensively landscaped. The River Ure is c.700m to the NE but was probably not visible from the site. To the west and south the ground rises gently but steadily towards the Pennines. The coast is c.63km NE (at the Tees estuary), and rather further following the course of the Ure and Ouse to the Humber estuary.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation of Viking Age date, the great difficulty with this grave (and the others at this site) lies in its interpretation.

113.2-4 (C2)

Ladykirk, RIPON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Tertiary Burials (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1955

SE 315 712

Inhumations (Definite)

(In Chancel)

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (3; 1 / grave)

A. Three antler combs & one comb case

In addition to Grave 27 (113.1), three more combs and one comb case were found in the fill of three more graves. While the original record is unclear, Paget-Baggs seemed to think that they had been backfilled into these graves. One comb is certainly very fragmentary, but the presence of these artefacts in the area strongly suggests that three other graves in this immediate area of the chancel (<3m x 3m) originally contained combs. Like the comb found in direct association with a skeleton, however, their interpretation remains controversial.²⁸

Site / Location

Found within the same structure, and directly adjacent to 113.1.

Interpretation

Three probable tertiary inhumations, despite some evidence for disturbance, although their interpretation remains problematic (see 113.1).

²⁷ R. A. Hall & Mark Whyman, 'Settlement and monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to 11th Centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* xl (1996), pp 62-150; Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 150

²⁸ Hall & Whyman 'Settlement and monasticism', pp 124-30

114.1 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Definite)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Definite)
No Evidence
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

- A. 20 rivets / clenchnails
- B. Denarius (Posthumous Faustina I – AD141+)

Arguably the most elaborate grave found at the Minster, burial 93 occurred outside the south transept and at the eastern edge of the excavated area. Unlike all the other graves in this group, it was laid out east-west rather than following the line of the basilica (see site/ location), but as it was subsequently cut by graves following the old orientation, this does not indicate a later date. A middle-aged man resting on three riveted and caulked planks represented by two rows of rivets 20cm apart had been placed in a 0.6m wide grave cut, with its head placed between pillow stones. There is some debate as to whether the body was placed in a portion of a small boat, or laid on a bier of planks from another larger structure. There is no reference to the coin in the main text, and it was presumably dismissed as residual. The excavator dated the grave to the tenth or eleventh century, and drew a number of parallels with small Scandinavian boat burials, but burials with rivets are also known from a number of Anglo-Saxon contexts.²⁹

Site / Location

The remains of the basilica within which all of the graves in this group were placed is c.400m NE of the River Ouse and stood at the centre of the old Roman legionary fortress at York. This is the only furnished burial in the group which is orientated east-west, all of the others taking their long axis from the short sides of the basilica, which would have been at least partially visible at the time. Like all the graves in the group, it was between 10 & 15m OD in an area of comparatively flat land without extensive views (it is uncertain, for example, if the river was visible from the site). Like the other burials at this site and elsewhere in York, it is c.60km from the coast, but c.36km in a straight line from the head of the Humber estuary and 90km from Spurn Head, both distances being substantially greater when the meanders of the Ouse and Humber are taken into consideration.

Interpretation

Despite the absence of definite grave-goods, the presence of rivets has led to a classification as a definite tertiary burial, albeit a highly unusual one which may or may not reflect Anglo-Saxon as much as Scandinavian burial practices.

²⁹ Derek Philips & Brenda Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster*, (2 vols, London, 1995), pp 91, 399, 500-5, 562, 582. For parallels with Anglo-Saxon burials, see the five clinker-built coffins found at St Peter's Parish Church, Barton-on-Humber (Humberside), described in Warkwick Rodwell & Kirsty Rodwell, 'St Peter's church, Barton-upon-Humber: excavation and structural study 1978-81' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxii (1982), pp 290-2. J. D. Richards, Marcus Jecock, Lizzie Richmond & Catherine Tuck, 'The Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxix (1995), p.64 state that these graves 'have also now been re-interpreted as having used boats or parts of boats as grave covers', but do not provide any source for this information.

114.2 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Definite)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Definite)
No Evidence
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

- A. Coin (Magnentius, 351+)
- B. Gold Thread
- C. Chest fittings

Burial 79 was that of an adolescent aged 12-15, probably male, who had been buried in a flexed position on his right side inside a wooden chest, five fittings of which survived. A piece of gold thread was found 'around' its ankle but there is no record of the location of the coin. If its presence in this grave is not to be dismissed as a coincidence, it may be another example of antique curiosity. Unlike 114.4 & 114.8, there seems little doubt about the date of this grave, which is from the late ninth or early tenth century, according to the excavator. Like the latter two graves, it had also cut and been cut by other graves in the area. See also 114.1 & 114.3.³⁰

Site / Location

Although found within the transept of the Minster, rather than immediately outside it, the notes on Site and Location given for 114.1 apply equally to this grave.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation dating from a period that would allow it to be Anglo-Scandinavian. The association of grave goods with a non-adult can be compared to sites such as Cnip (050) and indeed St Mary Bishophill Junior (115.3), although the only other adolescent's grave is that from Balnakeil (033).

114.3 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Probable)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Definite)
Stone Grave Marker
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

- A. Bone Comb Fragment
- B. Iron Nail Head

Burial 50 was part the cemetery discovered beneath and around the south transept of York Minster and was marked by a decorated slab, head and footstones, all of which had remained *in situ* due to the deliberate building up of material in the area in the post-conquest period. Like all the skeletons in this group, it occurred within the walls of the Roman basilica and like almost all these graves, it was orientated NE-SW, parallel to its shorter walls, rather than E-W as the later cathedral. The skeleton was that of male aged over 35 and a comb tooth and nail head were found with it. While

³⁰ Philips & Heywood, *York Minster*, pp 91, 410, 495-7, 582

their presence might be considered coincidental, it is noticeable that almost all the artefacts in this group of 109 graves were recovered from burials that are marked as prestigious in some other way (e.g. stone slabs, chests, coffins, etc.), although the dates of some of these are problematic.³¹

Site / Location

Situated outside the medieval transept of the cathedral, all notes relating to the site and location of 114.1 apply equally to this example.

Interpretation

While a grave of this type would normally be classified as definite, dating problems and the possibility that the comb tooth might be residual has resulted in its classification as a probable tertiary burial. Compare also the comb burials from Ladykirk, Ripon (113).

114.4 (C2)

York Minster, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. CA Dress Pin (Anglo-Saxon?)

B. Chest fittings

A number of artefacts were recovered from a disturbed context in the area outside the transept and less than 10m W/SW of 114.1, which included a number of iron fittings probably from a substantial chest with a lock that had presumably been reused as a coffin. No skeletal material was recovered, and some fragments of pottery and glass found in the same area cannot be associated with this burial with any confidence. The same can also be said of the dress pin found in the same area, but it seems at least possible that it may have accompanied a grave. A radiocarbon date linking these levels to the ninth to eleventh centuries does at least suggest that the burial dates from the Anglo-Scandinavian period.³²

Site / Location

See 114.1.

Interpretation

Despite the disturbed context from which this material was recovered, a possible tertiary burial.

³¹ Ibid., pp 75-92, 192-3; 2, 581-3

³² Ibid., pp 92, 562, 482, 522, 583

114.5 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Possible)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Probable)
No Evidence
Record Quality Good

Artefacts

A. Silver finger ring

Burial 86 is described as an uncertain grave in the York Minster report and no details of the (assumed!) skeleton and / or grave-cut are provided. A silver ring was found in association with it, but there is no indication as to whether or not it was found *in situ*. The ring does not appear to have been dated, although the other burials in the cemetery are Anglo-Scandinavian.³³

Site / Location

Found close to the E wall inside the transept. See 114.1 for further details.

Interpretation

Given the excavator's doubts, a possible tertiary inhumation.

114.6 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Possible)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Probable)
No Evidence
Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Gold thread (2 frags)
B. Coin (Aethelred II: 841-9)

Burial 89 is another 'uncertain grave' from inside the S transept of the Minster, which in this case contained the fragmentary remains of two males, one of which was adult. It is not certain which (or both) of these bodies was accompanied by these artefacts and there is no information on their precise location. The coin, like two others found in association with bodies in this cemetery (see 114.7 & 8), is one of Aethelred II. The area had clearly been disturbed at some point after the deposition of the two bodies.³⁴

Site / Location

See 114.1 for details.

Interpretation

Although this context had clearly been disturbed, the presence of gold thread provides evidence for a possible tertiary inhumation, but the date of the coin makes its association with Anglo-Scandinavian burials problematic.

³³ Ibid., pp 91, 522, 581

³⁴ Ibid., pp 91, 528, 582

114.7 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Possible)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Definite)
No Evidence
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Coin (Aethelred II: 841-9)

Burial 65 contained the skeleton of an adult, probably male, which was found with a coin and a coffin fitting, the grave being interpreted as having occurred in either a coffin or a chest. The coin was found between the lower left arm and pelvis, but there was still some debate as to whether it was primary or secondary. It may not be insignificant that the artefact was found in a grave marked as high-status in other ways, but its early date is problematic and may even indicate a tradition of modest furnished burial before the Anglo-Scandinavian period. The grave is the uppermost of a series of three intercutting graves in an area of dense burial in the east part of the transept and cut the 'furnished' burial 81 (see 114.8).³⁵

Site / Location

This burial is part of the same complex as 114.1.

Interpretation

Although a definite tertiary inhumation according to working definitions, the early date of the coin makes its interpretation as Anglo-Scandinavian problematic.

114.8 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Definite)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Definite)
No Evidence
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Coin (Aethelred II 841-9)

Burial 81 was that of a mature adult aged over sixty and probably male, who had been buried extended in what was probably a repaired old chest. The coin, found at the foot of the grave, was interpreted as residual by the excavator. On the east side of the medieval transept, the grave was cut by burial 65 (114.7), which also contained a coin of Aethelred II. See also 114.1 & 7.³⁶

Site / Location

See 114.1.

³⁵ Ibid., pp 90, 497, 500, 528, 581,

³⁶ Ibid., pp 91, 497-9, 527, 582

Interpretation

Although clearly a definite tertiary burial, the early date of the coin and its stratigraphic relationship to 114.7 make its Anglo-Scandinavian associations problematic.

114.9 (C2)

York Minster, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Possible)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1967-72

SE 603 521
Inhumation (Probable)
No Evidence
Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

- A. CA Finger Ring
- B. Key

Burial 68 was also cut by 65 (114.7) and is therefore slightly earlier. No information on the body within this grave is available, but three angle fittings and five nails in its fill suggest that it was a coffin grave. Neither the position of the key nor the finger ring is recorded. Neither artefact is chronologically diagnostic, but the fact that it was cut by 114.7 with its early coin means that there are chronological difficulties with this burial. See also 114.7 & 8.³⁷

Site / Location

See 114.1, and also 114.6 & 114.7, which were particularly closely related to this grave.

Interpretation

While there is no doubt that the finger ring was found in the grave cut, the fact that it is cut by a grave with such an early coin makes it difficult to link to Anglo-Scandinavian activity, and consequently it has been classified as a possible tertiary burial.

115.1 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Junior, YORK
Tertiary Burial (Definite)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1961-3 / 1967

SE 599 514
Inhumation (Definite)
No Evidence
Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (4)

- A. Buckle-plate
- B. Whetstone
- C. Knife
- D. Coin (c.905-915)

In the course of a series of summer excavations on the north side of St Mary Bishophill Junior, a group of four extended inhumations were found, all orientated between NE-SW and ENE-WSW with heads to the west. Two were accompanied by grave-goods, of which skeleton 1 was male, at least 18, and c.1.71m tall. The coin

³⁷ Ibid., pp 90, 499, 522, 524, 581

was found among his fingers, which had been placed over his stomach, the whetstone was over the stomach above the hands, and the buckle-plate was between the two. The knife was found halfway up the back 'as if embedded in it', although the body is perhaps rather more likely to have been lying on it. The coin evidence suggests a burial date in the early tenth century, but it is interesting to note that none of the skeletons respect either the line of the underlying Roman remains or the modern church. Fragments of Anglian sculpture have been recovered from the site, however, which indicates a religious use before the creation of this grave.³⁸

Site / Location

The site is on a small plateau *c.*20m OD and *c.*300m south west of the modern bank of the Ouse, within the Roman *colonia*, elements of which were clearly visible when the burials occurred. The surrounding land is comparatively flat and views from the site would appear to be limited.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation at a Christian site. Whether or not it is insular Scandinavian in character is perhaps more debatable, although there are parallels from northern and western Britain and Ireland.

115.2 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Junior, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1961-3 / 1967

SE 599 514

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Silver Armring

Skeleton 4, part of the same group of four as 115.1, was orientated in the same manner as the others and was *c.*1.75m tall and at least 18, but 'not certainly female'. The only grave-good was a penannular silver arm-ring with an attached silver ring, which was found on its upper left arm. Dating from the late ninth or tenth century, it corresponds to the date proposed for 115.1.³⁹

Site / Location

Found beside 115.1.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, and one of a handful containing silver armrings, Clibberswick (001) and the possible burial at Blackerne (090) being the most obvious other examples.

³⁸ L. P. Wenham, R. A. Hall, C. M. Briden & D. A. Stocker, *St Mary Bishophill Junior and St Mary Castlegate; The Archaeology of York: Anglo-Scandinavian York* viii/2 (London, 1987), pp 75-83; 122

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80

115.3 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Junior, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery (?)

Date of Recovery 1961-3 / 1967

SE 599 514

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. Bone Pin

B. Iron hook (?)

As part of the same excavation programme, Wenham excavated two trenches in the area of Florence Row, north west of the trenches beside St Mary Bishophill Junior that produced the first two FISBs (115.1 & 2), with the same orientation as these graves, but 3.2-3.3m below the modern ground surface. The bone pin was found c.0.15m from the skull of a woman aged over 45 and 1.57m tall, but could not be associated with the burial with certainty. The iron hook had traces of wood adhering to it, and may have been a coffin fitting.⁴⁰

Site / Location

See 115.1, although this grave was slightly further from the church.

Interpretation

While its date is problematic, this is a probable tertiary inhumation.

115.4 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Junior, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery (?)

Date of Recovery 1961-3 / 1967

SE 599 514

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Silver arm-ring (fragmentary)

Less than 20m SW of 115.3 and at approximately the same level, the edge of a grave was found which contained a few disturbed bones, from a child aged c.4, and a silver arm-ring fragment of the same type found with 115.2. The grave cut had the same orientation as the others in the group.

Site / Location

See 115.1, although rather further from the (medieval) church.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary burial, unusual both because it is that of a child (compare Cnip 050) and because it seems to contain silver (compare Clibberswick 001, and of course 115.2).

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp 80-81

116.1 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Senior, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1964

SE 601 514

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. CA Strap End

In the course of excavations at the now demolished church of St Mary Bishophill Senior, a short distance south of St Mary Bishophill Junior (see 115), the excavator recovered a group of bones together with a tenth century strap end. Both he and Wilson argued that this represented a tenth century furnished burial that had been disturbed by later activity. Several fragments of tenth century Anglo-Saxon sculpture demonstrate that there was already a church at this site, but as the excavations were partial, it is difficult to place this burial in context.⁴¹

Site / Location

The church occupied a site that had been terraced in the Roman period, and which was expanded in the Middle Ages. Approximately 150m south west of the modern quays, and at 17m OD, c.10m above them, the site's elevation would have provided some modest views, at least before the settlement grew up around it. The surviving record does not make it clear where within the cemetery the burial was found. See also 114 and 115.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary burial, disturbed but apparently accompanied by a strap end. Compare Mail (007)

116.2 (C2)

St Mary Bishophill Senior, YORK

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1964

SE 601 514

Inhumation (Possible)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Silver Wire Appliqué

The same excavations which produced evidence for a probable burial (116.1) also uncovered a small silver wire mount of (early) tenth century date that seems originally to have been attached to a garment of some kind. Although not found in direct association with any skeletal material, Hall suggested that it may have come from another grave at the site.⁴²

⁴¹ H. G. Ramm, 'The church of St Mary, Bishophill Senior, York: excavations 1964' in *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* xlviii (1976), pp 35-68; D. M. Wilson, 'Two tenth century bronze objects' in *Medieval Archaeology* ix (1965), pp 154-6

⁴² *ibid.*; Richard Hall, *Viking Age York* (London, 1994), p.45

Site / Location

See 116.1. Again, the find is not provenanced to a specific part of the churchyard.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, similar appliqué pieces have been recovered from burials at Carlisle (106) and Peel Castle (160.3).

117 (C2)

Severus' Hills, ACOMB, YORK

SE 580 516

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Unknown

No Evidence

Mound (?)

Date of Recovery Before 1900

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Spearhead

B. Sword (?)

The only known weapon burial in the York area, Hall noted that spearhead was found in an area called Severus' Hills at Acomb, 3.2km west of the Viking Age city. A site called How Hill in the same area may have led Richards to suggest that it came from a burial mound. He also suggested that a sword was found at the site, but I can find no other evidence for this, and the second edition of *Viking Age England* makes no reference to it. It is not certain if these weapons are the same as those listed by Bjørn and Shetelig in 1940, but there is no reason to suggest an additional burial at the site.⁴³

Site / Location

An OS map from 1853 shows Severus' Hills northeast of the village of Acomb, and the NGR given here marks its approximate centre. How Hill is at the south end of the area, just above the 100ft (30m) contour, at an unusually prominent site. A less elevated site further north would still be close to the 30m contour, and is approximately as far inland as York itself (see 114.1). While speculative, an eastern or summit location in the area would afford excellent views over the Ouse valley to York.

Interpretation

Having been unable to identify an original source for this find, a possible weapon burial.

118 (C2)

ADWICK-LE-STREET, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SE 5302 0870

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Roman (?) Burials & Road

Earth-cut

Date of Recovery January 2001

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (4)

A. Two Oval Brooches

⁴³ R. A. Hall, *Viking Age York* (London, 1994), p.44; Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st ed.), p.114; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p. 93

- B. CA Bowl (fragmentary)
- C. Iron Knife
- D. Iron Key/Latch Lifter

During monitoring work, a 1.82 x 0.7m earth-cut grave was discovered cut into a Romano-British boundary ditch. Just 0.13m deep, it had been truncated by ploughing and the skeleton of an individual (probably) female and at least 33-45 years old, had been partially disturbed. Isotope analysis suggested she had been brought up in Trøndelag. The oval brooches were still in situ on the chest. Both worn, one had been repaired, and unusually they were not a matching set (although both were type P37). The bowl, originally 18-19cm in diameter, had been disturbed, but originally rested at the skeletons feet, along with the latch-lifter or key, while the knife was close to the upper arm, and may originally have been suspended from one of the brooches. The bowl is probably of insular manufacture, and can be compared to that from Ballyholme (084). A date in the late ninth or early tenth century has been suggested using artefactual evidence. There is some evidence that there were some Roman burials in the area, but it is not known if they were visible on the surface.⁴⁴

Site / Location

The NGR given here is derived from the excavation report, which notes that the burial was placed within a 'distinct level area' at 27m OD on the east side of 51m ridge overlooking the 5m OD floodplain of the Don. A Roman road ('the Roman Ridge') was c.500m to the west, and is the same north-south route that forms Leeming Lane This site is c.35km in a straight line from the head of the Humber estuary.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation in an earth-cut grave, perhaps associated with the nearby Roman road.

190.1 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (7)

- A. Two Oval Brooches (Double-shelled)
- B. Trefoil Brooch
- C. Bead
- D. Knife
- E. Latch-Lifter / Key
- F. Weaving Sword (Bent)?
- G. Chest (Under Excavation)

⁴⁴ Greg Speed, G., & Penelope Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* xlvi (2004), pp 51-90; Anon., 'A Viking woman from Doncaster' in *Current Archaeology* cxc (Feb 2004), pp 466-7

The first of the six furnished Cumwhitton burials to be excavated, the two oval brooches and the trefoil brooch were discovered by a metal detector user, but seem to have been in ploughed earth above the grave. The latchkey was found some distance away during excavation. The body, in a truncated rectilinear grave cut, was some distance SSW of the main concentration of graves (190.2-6), and while bone preservation was very poor, the bead and knife were found at unspecified locations within the cut, while the possible weaving sword and chest were found at her feet. No remains of a mound or other surface markers were found, but these could easily have been removed by up to 20cm of ploughing. The brooches suggest a tenth century date, with the cemetery as a whole dating to the middle of the century. Post-excavation work is continuing.⁴⁵

Site / Location

The available accounts of the burials make it clear that they were found to the west of the modern village of Cumwhitton, close to a straight footpath, and overlooking a small, steep valley. Comparison with local Ordnance Survey maps indicates the site must be very close to the NGR given here. As such, all of the graves were close to the 100m contour on the east side of a slight ridge adjacent to the narrow Cumwhitton Beck, and had reasonable, but not exceptional views, perhaps most extensive towards the north west. Graham-Campbell has pointed out that 'if the people were to stand up in their graves... they would face the village', which may represent the Viking Age settlement site. The beck flows into the River Eden, c.2km west of the site, and is c.13km in a direct line from its estuary at the head of the Solway Firth.

Interpretation

Despite some ploughing disturbance, a definite brooch inhumation.

190.2 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. Beads (number unknown, but incl. Roman melon bead)
- C. Three Silver Rings
- D. Strike-a-Light (CA?)

This burial, corresponding to Skeleton 24 in early accounts, was the south-west most of the group of five which lay some distance NNE of 190.1. The grave-cut was rectilinear and c.2.2 x 1.0m, and orientated WNW-ESE, the body having been placed with its head to the west. The sword seems to have been on its right, with the hilt level with the head, the strike-a-light and knife at chest or waist level, and the beads

⁴⁵ Mike Pitts, 'Cumbrian heritage', in *British Archaeology* lxxix (Nov 2004), pp 28-31; <http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk/vikingburial/index.htm> (accessed 08 Sept 2004)

and silver rings seem to have been positioned round the neck, where they formed some kind of necklace or series of pendants. Research is continuing.⁴⁶

Site / Location

See 190.1. The fact that all of these graves share a virtually identical alignment, and that none of these graves (190.2-6) intercut must be taken as evidence that they were marked on the surface in some way. The possibility that they were focused on 190.3, with its apparent ring-ditch, must also be considered.

Interpretation

Despite the poor preservation of human remains, a definite weapon inhumation.

190.3 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. Sword
- B. Spearhead
- C. Strike-a-Light
- D. Bridle (?)
- E. Spurs

This grave, corresponding to Skeleton 25, is the only one to produce evidence for some form of surface marker, this being a U-shaped ditch, perhaps originally oval or sub-rectangular, on the eastern side of a *c.*2.6 x 1.0m rectilinear grave cut. The body had been placed with its head to the west, and with a sword on its left side. The strike-a-light was roughly at waist level on the right side, while both the spurs and possible bridle were at the bottom of the grave, presumably at the skeletons feet. Given that this clearly marked burial occupied a point close to the centre of this concentration (190.2-6), with one burial to the northeast and three to the southwest, raises the definite possibility that it acted as a focus for the other burials.⁴⁷

Site / Location

Potentially the 'central' grave of this complex. See also 190.1 & 190.2.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation with horse furniture, apparently surrounded by a ring ditch.

190.4 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

⁴⁶ <http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk/vikingburial/index.htm> (accessed 08 Sept 2004)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Artefacts (6)

- A. Oval Brooches (single shelled?)
- B. Beads (number unknown)
- C. Jet Bracelet
- D. Jet Ring
- E. CA Strap End
- F. Composite Iron (and CA?) Object

A rectangular grave (skeleton 27) cut, c.2.1 x 1m, orientated WNW-ESE, southwest of, and parallel to, 190.3. The (fragmentary) oval brooches were recovered using metal detectors, but as there were no other grave cuts in the area, they presumably came from this example. The jet bracelet is believed to have been on her left wrist, and the strap end was in situ at the waist, while the beads, jet ring, CA and iron objects were 'concentrated around the head area'. Research is continuing.⁴⁸

Site / Location

See 190.1 & 2. It is tempting to suggest a particularly close relationship between this grave and 190.3, given that they are parallel and adjacent, but this can hardly be substantiated.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation.

190.5 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword (?)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Knife
- D. CA Pin (type unspecified)

The only burial northeast of that marked by the ring ditch (190.3), this (skeleton 32) was also the most truncated by ploughing. A sword hilt found out of context in the plough zone is believed to have come from this rectilinear grave, orientated WNW-ESE and c.2.1 x 1m. The spearhead was found in situ on the skeleton's left, at its feet, while the knife and pin were found at chest or waist level. As with all the graves, bone preservation was very poor.⁴⁹

Site / Location

See 190.1, 190.2 & 190.3.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, probably with a sword.

190.6 (C2)

CUMWHITTON, CUMBRIA

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery April-June 2004

NY 503 524

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. Sword
- B. Shield Boss (type unknown)
- C. Spearhead
- D. CA Pin
- E. Composite Iron fragments

West of 190.3, this grave interrupts the projected line of the latter ring-ditch, and is directly adjacent to 190.4. Rectilinear, orientated ENE-WSW, and *c.*2.4 x 1m, the sword was found on the skeleton's left, the hilt roughly level with the waist, while the boss was beside this, presumably having rested on the skeleton's chest or stomach. The spearhead was on the skeleton's right, close to the feet, while the pin was close to the sword point, and must originally have been close to the body's knees. This can be compared to a number of other graves in Britain and Ireland, such as Reay (035.3), and may be evidence for the use of these pins to secure shrouds.⁵⁰

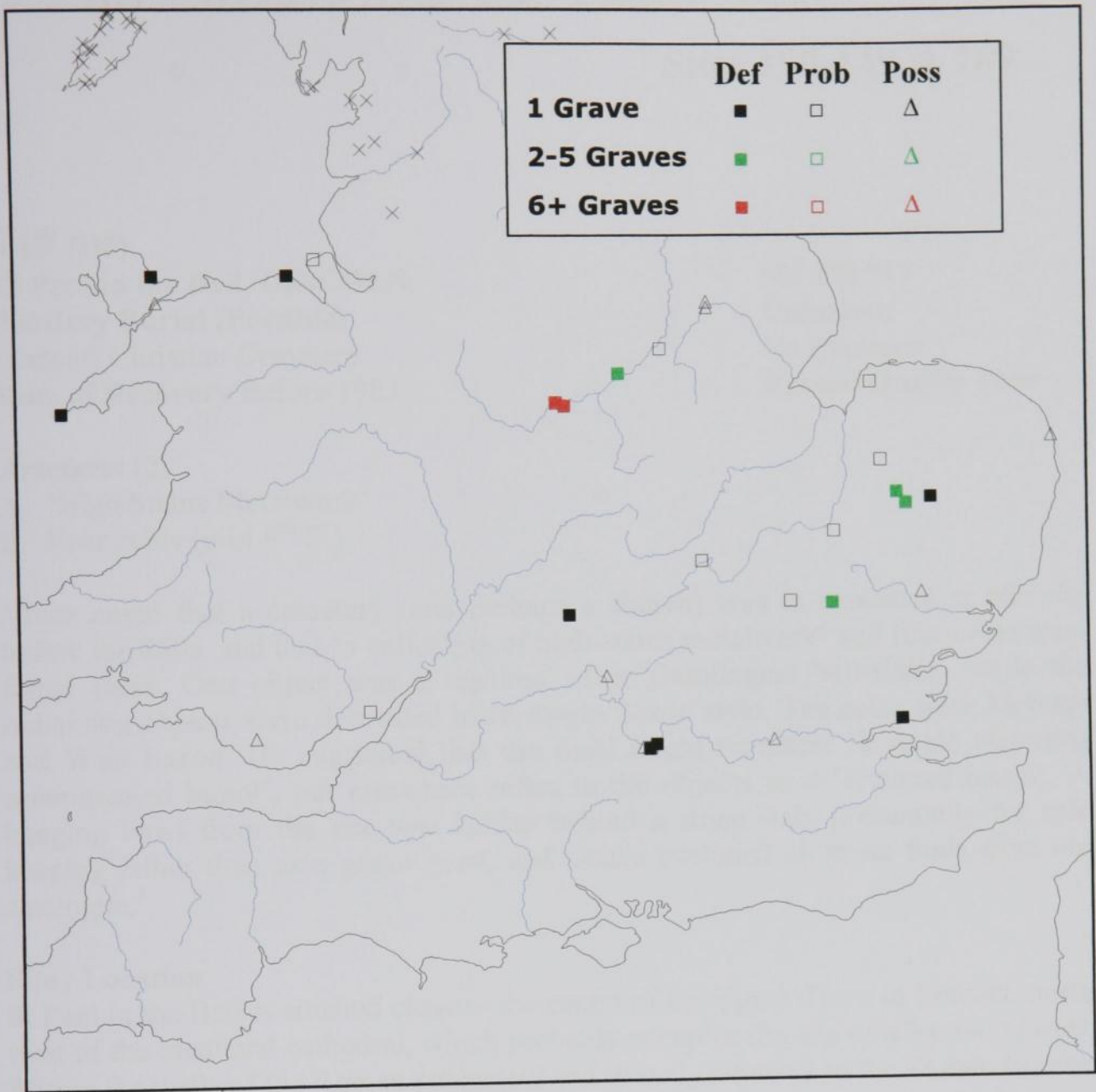
Site / Location

See 190.1, 190.2 & 190.3

Interpretation

A definite weapon burial.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



Map – Zone D Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Southern England and Wales. These burials sites correspond to Catalogue Entries 119 – 148 & 189

ZONE D (Southern England & Wales)
[D1 – Western Area: D2 – Eastern Area]

Sites 190-149 & 189

119 (D2)

St Paul in the Bail, LINCOLN

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

(Extant) Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery Before 1983

SK 976 719

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. 'High Status Metalwork'

B. Four coins (mid-9th C.)

Vince noted that a cemetery (and perhaps a church) was in existence at this site before the 850s, and that 'a collection of high-status metalwork' and four coins were found there. One object was a repaired silver Carolingian belt-slider, while the remaining objects were decorated in an Anglo-Saxon style. The coins were Mercian and West Saxon. He suggested that the finds might represent 'a single disturbed accompanied burial', but elsewhere refers to the objects as a 'scattered hoard'. A hanging bowl from the site was hidden behind a stone slab, presumably for safe keeping rather than as a grave good, and Geake excluded all these finds from her catalogue.¹

Site / Location

St Paul in the Bail is situated close to the centre of the Upper Town in Lincoln, north west of the medieval cathedral, which probably occupies the site of a Saxon minster. Within the walls of the Roman settlement and directly adjacent to the Roman Ermine Street, it is 800m north of the River Witham, and above the 50m contour. In the mid-ninth century, nucleated settlement would have been comparatively restricted, but views would presumably still have been restricted. Lincoln is just over 50km in a direct line from the modern shore of the Wash, although extensive coastal modifications mean the original figure may have been slightly less.

Interpretation

Although clearly disturbed prior to recovery, a possible tertiary burial of at least two objects, although the hanging bowl clearly represents another deposit.

¹ Alan Vince, 'Lincoln in the Viking Age' in James Graham-Campbell, R. A. Hall, Judith Jesch & David Parsons (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), pp 158-60, 173; Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion Period England c.600-c.850: BAR British Series cclxi* (Oxford, 1997), p.87

120 (D2)

CANWICK (South?) COMMON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1940

c.SK 976 695

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality V. Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Briefly mentioned by Bjørn and Shetelig, this sword with curved guards and a trilobate pommel can now be associated with Canwick common, well outside the medieval city (see Site & Location) on a dry land site. Although Anglo-Saxon, and often considered of eleventh century date, its blade inscription is very unusual, and it is *possible* that it is tenth century, and as such may be considered evidence for a possible weapon burial.²

Site / Location

Although Canwick Common could not be located on any available map, the modern village of Canwick is over 2km SSE of Lincoln cathedral, on the opposite bank of the River Witham, and is directly adjacent to Lincoln's South Common. Confusion between these place-names could also explain Bjørn and Shetelig's confusion. The NGR given here represents the centre of the Common, on sloping ground facing the river that rises from 10 to 60m. Any burial in this area would afford clear views to the northwest, and one further east (closer to Canwick) would also have overlooked the site of medieval Lincoln, as well as the early tenth century suburb of Wigford, on the south bank of the Witham.³ The (Roman) Ermine Way, and Brayford Pool, at the end of the (Roman) Fosse Dyke, which linked the Witham to the Trent at Torksey may also have been visible, if the site were sufficiently elevated. Like St Paul in the Bail (119) the site is over 50km from the sea.

Interpretation

While the evidence is ambiguous, particularly with regard to chronology, a possible weapon burial.

121 (D2)

FARNDON CHURCH, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1892

SK 767 518

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

According to Graham-Campbell, citing the BM register, this intact sword was found while digging a staircase to the heating chamber below the church at Farnon. While

² Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), p.99; R. A. Smith, *British Museum Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities 1923* (London, 1923; Reprint Ipswich, 1993), p.94

³ Vince, 'Lincoln', p.164

the current St. Peter's Church is rather late, it probably occupies an older, comparatively high status location. Graham-Campbell and Wilson consider it evidence for a probable disturbed grave, but while Richards mapped it, he does not discuss it in his text.⁴

Site / Location

The old village of Farndon and its associated church are on the east bank of the Trent, at the neck of a meander, the churchyard being 350m from the closest part of the river. Between 10 and 15m OD, the site is not particularly prominent, and surrounding land is exceptionally flat. The (Roman) Fosse Way is 400m SE of the site. Similar, albeit distant links to Roman roads can be seen at Hesketh-in-the-Forest (093), Leeming Lane (110), Adwick-le-Street (118) and perhaps Lincoln (119 & 120) The modern coast of the Wash is just under 60km away, but the Trent flows N to the Humber, some 68km away in a straight line.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation at a Christian site, with possible associations with a Roman road.

122.1-2 (D2)

Bath Street, NOTTINGHAM

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1851

c. SK 578 401

Inhumations (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3; Avg. 1.5 / grave)

A. Two Swords (both double-edged)

B. Spearhead (with wings)

Graham-Campbell (citing a contemporary *Archaeological Journal*) noted that these weapons were found 'with two skulls and other human remains' at a depth of 3 feet (0.9m), and has also pointed out that 'traces of woody fibre' were noted on the spearhead, suggesting a further wooden object (or perhaps a coffin). While the spearhead is ninth century, both swords would seem to be tenth century or later, which raises the possibility of three graves at the site. It is also possible that some unfurnished burials were present, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively.⁵

Site / Location

This find was made 'in a field adjoining the new baths and wash-houses outside the town', and Hall has linked this to the south side of the modern Bath Street, which was outside the walls of the medieval town. As such, the site, at c.30m OD, was at least 1.5km from the river Trent, which could not be seen from it. The ground rises gently towards the west and north out of the valley, but views were generally restricted. The site is nearly 80km from the modern coast of the Wash, but even further in a straight line to the confluence of the Trent and Humber.

⁴ James Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial in the central and southern Danelaw' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, pp 106-8

⁵ *ibid*, pp 105-6

Interpretation

Despite the poor quality of the original source, evidence for a minimum of two definite weapon inhumations.

123.01 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Extant Mausoleum

Date of Recovery c.1686; 1787; 1980-86

SK 302 271

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound (kerbed)

Record Quality Varied

Artefacts (9)

A. Sword (double-edged; fragmentary)

B. Axe

C. Two 'seaxes'

D. Six gilded CA pins

E. Seven fragments metalwork

F. Several Smaller Knives

G. Key

H. Chisel

I. Five Pennies (early/mid 870s)

An exceptionally complex deposit, first investigated and disturbed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and finally scientifically excavated in the 1980s. The earliest activity was c.AD700, when a two-celled sunken stone building, orientated east-west, was constructed, probably as a mausoleum for one of the kings of Mercia, several of whom are known to have been buried at this major monastic complex. Possibly after a short period of decay, the eastern chamber was prepared for a new set of burials when a deposit of red marl was spread over the floor. Some form of stone coffin or cist was placed at its centre, but no trace of this survived to the 1980s, when the excavators did, however find the disarticulated remains of 264 individuals, over 80% of whom were robust males, the majority aged 15-45. Although badly disturbed, they suggest that the long bones were originally stacked around the central coffin with their ends pointing towards it. The artefacts listed here were found within the chamber, and it is assumed that the majority accompanied the central, articulated burial, although smaller objects, such as the knives and pins, may have been deposited with the bones. The early, fragmentary metalwork, on the other hand, may have been associated with pre-Viking Age activity. It has been suggested that the central body was that of *Ívarr inn Beinlausí* but the evidence for this is tenuous. The disarticulated remains have been variously associated with the re-assembled remains of the Great Army's dead to the original occupants of the museum or monastery. An association between the burial and the splitting up of the 'Great Army' in 874 may be a more realistic hypothesis.

As part of the site's re-use, the original structure was demolished to ground level. Flat stones were then placed on joists to cover the chamber, which was then sealed by a low stone cairn, which was in turn overlaid with a rectilinear pebble or earth mound with a stone kerb. It has also been suggested that four pits in close association with the outer mound may have contained offerings, while a grave dug to the SW of the main mound containing the bodies of four young people may represent some form of 'sacrificial burial' (see 123.10). In the late ninth and early tenth century, a

small cemetery was established southeast of the mound, which included a number of modestly furnished inhumation graves (see 123.07-09).⁶

Site / Location

The monastic complex at Repton, which by the mid-ninth century included at least two stone structures and a stone cross, stood on at the top of a low (6m) cliff on the south bank of the Trent (now the Old Trent Water), immediately west of its confluence with Repton Brook. It was a major royal and ecclesiastical site, and an important road and river junction. To the north of the site, across an important ford, is the 1.5km wide flat valley floor, while to the south the land gradually rises out of the valley. The site affords good views of the north, west and east, and while not everyone would agree with the Biddle's statement that the Trent represents 'the greatest natural boundary in England',⁷ it is an important physical feature along which a number of furnished Scandinavian burials have been found (see 121, 122 & 124). The mound was by far the most prominently marked burial in the area and was some 20m west of the west ditch of what is believed to have been the overwintering site of the Great Army (see 123.02). More generally, the monastic site is 45-50m OD and over 100km in a straight line from either modern coast of the Wash or the Humber, where the Trent. The Dee estuary, on the west coast is only about 10km further away.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, but one which occurs as part of a particularly complex deposit. The elaborate grave structure is unusual, as are the disarticulated remains, and it is difficult to interpret this site without reference to significant changes in local and regional power structures. The possible 'sacrificial burials' are also unusual, although there are precedents (see 123.10).

123.02 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Christian Church

Square Cairn & Post

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (10)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Strap fitting
- C. CA (belt) buckle
- D. Two beads
- E. Thor's Hammer
- F. Key
- G. Knife
- H. Folding Knife
- I. Wild boar tusk
- J. Jackdaw bone

⁶ Martin Biddle & Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings' in *Antiquity* lxvi (1992), pp 36-51, particularly 42-8; idem, 'Repton and the 'great heathen army', 873-4' in Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw* (2001), pp 67-84

⁷ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the great heathen army', p.83

The most elaborately furnished burial found at Repton, Grave 511 was one of the first placed north-east of the crypt, although there were already Anglo-Saxon graves south-east of it. In an east-west grave with its head to the west was the skeleton of a man aged at least 35-40 and 1.81m tall. The sword was by his left leg, as though suspended from his belt, and the two knives were beside its hilt, perhaps suggesting the same thing. The belt buckle was in position, while the two beads and Thor's hammer seem to have been suspended from a necklace. The key was positioned about half way down the sword blade. The boar tusk lay just below the pelvis and between the thighs was a cube of soft earth believed to represent a box or bag, within which the jackdaw bone was found. The man had been killed by a blow to the left thigh that had severed the femoral artery. Following the backfilling of the grave, a substantial (30cm) square post marked both this grave and the closely related one to the N (see 123.03). Ultimately, both were covered by a square stone setting with 1.8m sides and c.0.4m high, which included at least five fragments of an Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft. At some point after this, the post was removed, presumably because it was no longer needed as a marker. Although burials continued in the area around this stone setting, no burial was ever cut into it, although the west side of the setting was eroded by a path in the later Middle Ages. See also 123.03.⁸

Site / Location

While part of the same complex as 113.01, this grave was some distance from it, and lay within a substantial D-shaped enclosure delineated by a substantial ditch and external bank which seems to have used the Anglo-Saxon church as a gate-house. Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle assume that this burial, like the enclosure, can be directly linked to the overwintering of the Great Army at the site, but conditions within the 1.46ha enclosure must have been remarkably cramped at that time, and it seems at least as likely that the burial occurred shortly afterwards, when Repton became a site close to the boundary of what would become the Danelaw.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within a rectilinear mound, its basic shape recalling 'Pictish' influenced Scottish sites such as Ackergill (089) and Dunrobin (036). The more modest grave immediately north of it, and covered by the same mound, is also interesting.

123.03 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Christian Church

Square Cairn

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Iron Knife

An east-west, earth-cut grave that contained the skeleton of a man aged 17-20 and 1.79m tall, Grave 295 was immediately N of Grave 511 and cut it slightly. It respected the post that initially marked that grave, and both graves were ultimately

⁸ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings', pp 40-1, 48-50; idem, 'Repton and the great heathen army', pp 60-65

covered by the same square stone setting. The knife was found at his waist, suggesting suspension from a belt. He had experienced considerable physical strain and may have been killed by a cut to the right side of the skull. The relationship between this individual and the occupant of the neighbouring grave is open to debate, although the fact that both were covered by a single mound suggests a relatively close relationship. Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle suggest that the younger man may have been the older man's 'weapon-bearer' but this cannot be substantiated. The presence of two grave-cuts suggest that some time elapsed between the backfilling of grave 511 and the cutting of 295, making it unlikely that this grave is a 'sacrificial companion'.⁹

Site / Location

Situated immediately north of 123.02 and within the same general area as 123.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, the relationship between this grave and 123.02 (and hence their occupants) is particularly interesting, but clearly complex.

123.04 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Christian Church

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. Gold finger ring

B. Five pennies (mid 870s)

Situated directly east of the north porticus (indeed the edge of the grave cut touched it), Grave 529 was about 7m southwest of 123.02 & 3, and like them, orientated east-west. There is some debate over the skeleton's sex, but it has most recently been described as that of a man aged 25-35 and 1.77m tall. According to Biddle and Blair, the coins were found on the floor of the grave, on the south (right) side of the skeleton's head and shoulders. The coins indicate a burial date in the mid-870s, which the excavators have taken to indicate burial during the occupation of the site by the Great Army, although this may be a little too precise.¹⁰

Site / Location

See 123.01 & 123.02.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, an example of what seems to be a particularly Anglo-Scandinavian practice of putting coins in graves.

⁹ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings', p.41; Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 'Repton and the great heathen army', pp 60, 65

¹⁰ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings', p.41; Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the great heathen army', p.65; Martin Biddle & John Blair, 'The Hook Norton hoard of 1848: a Viking burial from Oxfordshire?' in *Oxoniensia* lxii (1987), p.193

123.05 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Church

Date of Recovery 1974-93

SK 302 271

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Iron knife (with silver wire)

B. Strike-a-light

Grave 203 was also orientated east-west and was part of the group northeast of the church, being immediately northeast of Grave 529 (123.04). No details on the position of the artefacts are available, but the body was that of a woman aged *c.*45. There seems to be some confusion as to its date, with an earlier suggestion that it dated from the mid-870s having been revised to a statement that it dates from 'a generation later', and hence represents a continuation of the practice of furnished burial.¹¹

Site / Location

See 124.01 and 124.02.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, whatever its date, and one of an increasing number of recently excavated graves that have produced knives.

123.06 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Church

Date of Recovery 1974-93

SK 302 271

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. CA ring

Positioned *c.*4m south of the crypt and chancel of St Wystan's, Grave 83 is the only definite furnished burial from this part of the cemetery (but see also 123.11). Unlike the area northeast of the church (see 123.02-05), this area had been used for burial before the arrival of the Great Army and lay outside the ramparts established by them. The ring was on the third finger of the left hand of a man aged *c.*50 and 1.78m tall, who had been buried in a coffin. Interestingly, a second coffin containing the remains of a man aged *c.*20 and also 1.78m tall (Grave 84) had been placed in the same grave pit and the excavators have drawn parallels between this double burial and that of 123.02 & 03, with both having the burial of a younger man positioned to the north of the more elaborately furnished burial of an older man. While this may suggest a date close to the period of occupation of the Great Army, the burial does not seem to be particularly securely dated.¹²

¹¹ Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 'Repton and the Vikings', p.41; Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the great heathen army', pp 65

¹² Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the great heathen army', pp 65

Site / Location

This burial was situated immediately outside the rampart which was constructed at Repton, presumably in 873-4, and was southeast of the presumed entrance through St Wulfstan's church. See also 123.01 & 02.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, although its Anglo-Scandinavian associations are perhaps more debatable.

123.07 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Mausoleum / Grave mound

Date of Recovery 1974-93

SK 302 271

Inhumation (Definite)

Post

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Embroidered Cuffs

B. Three silver pendants / beads

Grave 380 is one of a group of burials which developed around the mausoleum / burial mound at Repton (123.01). Like the others in this group, it was orientated east-west, and contained the skeleton of a woman aged 17-23 whose grave had been marked with a 'massive post'. She had been buried wearing a garment with elaborate embroidered cuffs and a group of three associated silver pendants or beads, the closest parallels for which seem to come from a cemetery at Fyrkat (Denmark). While modestly furnished, the elaborate nature of this costume adds support to the theory that these graves represent elite burials (see Site / Location). Unfortunately, the precise location of this grave is uncertain.¹³

Site / Location

This group of at least 45 burials developed around the burial mound in the first half of the tenth century and continued for 'three burial generations'. Although only three burials were 'furnished', all with embroidery fragments (123.07-09), an unspecified number also contained knives. Other indications of status are the fact that almost half the burials had coffin fittings and that there are almost no children's graves, unlike the contemporary burial group which was developing to the east, around St Wystan's and the backfilled defences of the overwintering site. See also 123.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, albeit buried in clothing rather than with grave-goods. Comparisons can be made with a number of other graves from sites such as York Minster (114.2 & 6) and Peel, Man (160.2).

¹³ Ibid., pp 85-6

123.08 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Mausoleum / Grave mound

Mound (?)

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Gold Braid (Cloak?)

Grave 387, orientated east-west, was directly adjacent to the east side of the mound and contained the remains of a man aged 17-20. He had been buried in a coffin with iron fittings and had 'a long gold embroidered braid or ribbon from head to toe, suggesting the decorated facings of a cloak or 'caftan'.¹⁴

Site / Location

This burial formed part of a possible élite cemetery which developed around the burial mound/mausoleum in the tenth century. See also 123.07 & 123.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, suggesting burial in an elaborate cloak.

123.09 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Inhumation (Definite)

Mausoleum / Grave mound

Mound (?)

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Trilobate embroidered leaf

Also deposited on the east side of the burial mound, *c.*2m south of the furnished male burial (123.08), this grave contained the remains of an unsexed adult aged 25-30 who had also been buried in a coffin with iron fittings. The gold embroidery remains were found on the skeleton's torso and were presumably part of an elaborate garment.¹⁵

Site / Location

See 123.01, 123.07, and the remarkably similar 123.08.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation in an elaborate garment.

123.10 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Tertiary Burials (Definite)

Inhumations (Definite)

Mausoleum / Grave mound

Square post?

Date of Recovery 1974-93

Record Quality Excellent

¹⁴ Ibid., p.86

¹⁵ Ibid.

Artefacts (1)

A. Sheep jawbone

A complex deposit which is hardly a furnished burial in the conventional sense, the skeletal remains of four 'young people' were buried in a single rectangular pit or grave at the south-western corner of the mound (123.01). An 8-12 year old was supine at the bottom of the cut, over which were placed the crouched remains of two children aged 8-11, and the crouched remains of an individual aged *c.*17. The sheep jaw, the only artefact, was placed at the foot (east end) of the grave. A substantial stone lined square pit was found on the south side of the grave, which may have held a timber marker of some kind. The excavators have suggested that it was a sacrificial burial associated with the creation of the mound, although this does not explain why these children and juveniles were excluded from the main chamber.¹⁶

Site / Location

Situated at the south-west corner of the mound and very probably deposited at the same time, unlike the high status (?) graves to the east. See 123.01

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, it seems likely that these four bodies formed a ritual deposit associated with the creation of the grave mound (123.01). The only other site to have produced similar burials with food offerings is Islandbridge (176.4 & 76.5).

123.11 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

SK 302 271

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Inhumation (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

No Evidence

Date of Recovery October 1923; 1974-93

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Axe

In 1923, a Viking Age axe was found *c.*5ft (1.5m) below the surface close to the south-west end of the crypt at Repton. Archaeological investigations more than 50 years later discovered a corresponding grave cut in which the body only survived as a shadow, but which had been buried in a coffin with iron fittings. The absent body and the axe's very detailed provenance has led Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle to suggest that it was originally deposited in this burial, Grave 52. Even if incorrect, it seems probable that there was a modest weapon burial in this area.¹⁷

Site / Location

One of two burials south of the crypt, and hence outside the earthwork fortifications, the other (123.06) being *c.*5m further south. See 123.01 & 123.02.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.74 & fig.4.22

¹⁷ Ibid., pp 55, 65

123.12 (D2)

St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery October 1923; 1974-93

SK 302 271

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead

This spearhead was found in a post-Viking Age pit north of the two burials under the stone setting (123.02 & 03), but strongly suggests a disturbed furnished burial in this area. As no other furnished graves in the area seem to have been disturbed, and the axe burial (123.11) was 20m away, on the opposite side of the church (and enclosure), it seems that this must be treated as an additional weapon grave.

Site / Location

Clearly from a secondary context, the burial which included this spearhead was probably part of the group deposited northeast of the crypt (e.g. 123.02-05), See also 123.01 & 02.

Interpretation

Evidence for an additional, probable weapon burial at this site.

123.13 (D2)

Nr. St Wystan's Church, REPTON, DERBYSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Possible Fording Site, Christian Church

Date of Recovery 1839

SK 301 272

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

In 1839, a sword was discovered 'in the midst of a large quantity of human bones' during the construction of a new road at Repton, and a surviving illustration clearly indicates that it was a Viking Age type. The reference to a 'quantity' of human bones perhaps suggests that there were also a number of unfurnished burials at the same site.¹⁸

Site / Location

Research by Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle and the 1887-8 OS map both show the find spot of this burial on the N side of the Old Trent Water, less than 200m upstream (west) of the Viking enclosure. As such, it is the burial that is most tenuously related to the church site, and the only one that was definitely deposited outside the ecclesiastical enclosure. It is not certain if a ford predated the bridge at this spot, but it seems that there were a number of fords in the immediate area of Repton, certainly in the High Middle Ages. Despite its tenuous connections to the enclosure, the fact that the burial is less than 150m from the main burial mound (123.01) means that it

¹⁸ Ibid., pp 55-6, citing R. Bigsby, *Historical and Topographical Description of Repton* (1854), pp 251-2

has been included in the main Repton group, despite its slightly different associations.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, perhaps associated with unfurnished burials or a ford site, and some distance from the main group of burials and the camp at Repton.

124.01 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 22 May 1855

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Iron 'pin' (4.3cm)

One of five 'bowl shaped' 'tumuli' at what is now Heath Wood that were investigated by Thomas Bateman in a single day. The mounds at the site (59 are known today) varied from 7-10 yards (6.4-9.1m) in diameter and 2-3ft (0.6-0.9m) high (see also 124.03). Where excavated, each 'mound had been raised over calcined human bones' which rested on the natural surface, 'the bones and black ashes of the pyre' forming a compressed (?) layer about an inch (0.02m) thick and 4-5ft (1.2-1.5m) in diameter at their centres, the mounds themselves being formed of a mixture of burnt stone and earth. Only two of Bateman's mounds produced artefacts, both single 'very small fragments of iron', one of which (represented by this entry) 'had the definite form of a very slender pin'. Given more recent excavations, it seems likely that the 'pin' was actually a rivet, but iron ringed pins are not entirely unknown. The other three mounds were interpreted as cenotaphs, although Richards has recently questioned this interpretation. See also 124.02.¹⁹

Site / Location

All of the mounds that form this very extensive cemetery occur within the modern boundaries of Heath Wood, planted in the eighteenth century. Prior this, the site was open heath land on the south side of the Trent valley, and archaeologists from Bateman onwards have commented on the potential view, were the trees not present. The site is on the north-west side of a spur that projects towards the valley, with all the barrows occurring between the 100 and 115m contours. The slope angle directs views to the west and includes St Wystan's at Repton (see 123). The barrows form four distinct clusters of varying sizes, spread over an area some 180m N-S by 220m E-W, and there is no indication of any encircling enclosures or boundary ditches. Unfortunately, the precise location of the mounds investigated by Bateman cannot be identified today, although a number of those investigated by the RCHME survey showed signs of having been excavated. The current course of the Trent is c.1.3km

¹⁹ Thomas Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills in the Counties of Derby, Stafford and York from 1848 to 1858* (London, 1861; Reprint 1978), p.91; J. D. Richards, Marcus Jecock, Lizzie Richmond & Catherine Tuck, 'The Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Medieval Archaeology* 39 ixl (1995), p.53; J. D. Richards, 'Excavations at the Viking barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv (2004), pp 23-116

from the site, and like Repton Heath Wood is over 100km from its estuary at the Humber and the modern coast of the Wash.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation, although exactly what was represented by the iron pin is more open to debate.

124.02 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 22 May 1855

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. 'very small fragment of iron'

Two of the five mounds at the site that Bateman investigated contained single fragments of iron, and this number has been used to represent the second of these. As far as Bateman's description is concerned, all five were effectively identical in terms of form and stratigraphy. The other iron fragment was 'pin' like (see 123.01), and it is possible (but perhaps unlikely) that this example was similar.

Site / Location

None of the mounds investigated by Bateman can be identified with certainty. See also 123.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation, with an unknown iron artefact or artefacts.

124.03 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1941-5

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. CA loop & frags (probably sword belt)
- C. Iron buckle & strap slide
- D. Animal bone (cremated)

One of six mounds excavated by the Burton-on-Trent Natural History and Archaeological Society, two of which were interpreted as 'cenotaphs' and produced no remains. Clarke and Fraser described the mounds as between 20 & 45ft (6.1-13.7m) in diameter and 18 to 60 in (0.46-1.52m) high, a rather greater range than that suggested by Bateman. All were excavated using 6ft (1.8m) trenches, widened where substantial deposits were encountered. This mound (mound 1) was 32ft (9.8m) in diameter and 34in (0.86m) high, and was built of a series of concentric bands of material. At its centre, resting on sand, was an area of intense burning c.6ft (1.8m) in diameter, surrounding by a ring of sandstone, which may well correspond to one of

Bateman's 'cremation hearths. The 2in (5.1cm) layer of charcoal contained the artefacts listed here, together with the burnt and probably deliberately broken bones of a human, and the bones of what may have been a sheep, and a young (or small?) dog, as well as fragments of an unburnt cattle skull (for parallels with this latter object, see 124.09), which were interpreted as the remains of funeral feast. It was the sword from this burial which first led to the identification of this cemetery as 'Viking' rather than Anglo-Saxon. Although there is some debate, the original report and Richards believe the artefacts were burnt with the cremation, rather than deposited afterwards.²⁰

Site / Location

Unlike Bateman's excavations, the mounds investigated in this period have been identified on the ground. Mound 1 was close to the western edge of the cemetery, c.15m NW of the main (western) concentration of barrows, slightly further down slope, between 106 & 108m OD. For more general information, see 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite weapon cremation in a mound, one of only a handful from the British Isles.

124.04 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1941-5

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

- A. CA fragments (sheet & rod): lost
- B. Iron buckle
- C. Two iron nails (composite artefact)

This mound, (mound 3 of the Burton-on-Trent Society's excavations), was 28ft (8.5m) in diameter and 30in (0.76m) high, and was also investigated using a 6ft (1.8m) trench (see 124.03). In addition to the artefact fragments listed here, fragmentary bone (some human) and charcoal 'were unevenly distributed through the excavated area', but there was no evidence for *in situ* burning, which may suggest that the actual cremation had taken place elsewhere. Again, there is some debate as to whether or not the artefacts were burnt with the cremation, or were deposited at a later date. The nails have also attracted attention, but while it has been suggested that they may represent a bier, coffin, and / or fragments of a ship or boat, Graham-Campbell has recently pointed out that they indicate no more than the presence of a composite wooden artefact or artefacts. Note that mound 2 in this series produced no evidence of finds and was interpreted as a cenotaph.²¹

²⁰ Camden Clarke & William Fraser, 'Excavation of pagan burial mounds: Ingleby, Derbyshire' in *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* lxxvi (1946), pp 4-6, 15-16, 20-22; Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.53, 68 & Table 1; Richards, 'Excavations', pp 28-31

²¹ Clarke & Fraser, 'Pagan burial mounds', pp 7, 16-17, 21; Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery' p.53, 62-5 & Table 1; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.109; Richards, 'Excavations', p.32

Site / Location

Mound 3 is close to the NW corner of the cemetery, just beyond the centre of that group of burial mounds. It was topographically the lowest of the mounds that have been excavated to date, just below 104m OD. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation within a mound.

124.05 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1941-5

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Two iron nails

B. Animal Bone (cremated)

This burial (number 5 in the Burton-on-Trent Society series) was discovered during the excavation of a mound 28ft (8.5m) in diameter and 36in (0.91m) high using a 6ft (1.8m) trench, which uncovered a charcoal hearth close to its centre, in which were found 'numerous' fragments' of bone. The substantial nails were presumably also discovered in this area, and have attracted discussion similar to that associated with those from mound 3 (see 124.04). The human remains, the most complete found in this excavation campaign, were those of an adult, probably a woman, and the bones of cattle and perhaps horse were also present. Note that Mound 4 in this series (like Mound 2) did not produce any finds or burial evidence and was also interpreted as a cenotaph.²²

Site / Location

This mound was close to the centre of the cemetery area, just inside the northern edge of the largest (western) group of mounds at the site. It was located immediately above the 110m contour, at the top of a definite slope / bluff, affording particularly good views to the north. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation within a mound, although it is possible that the nails were actually part of a coffin, rather than grave goods proper.

124.06 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1941-5

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (5)

A. CA Strap End

²² Clarke & Fraser, 'Pagan burial mounds', pp 18, 21, 22; Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.53 & Table 1; Richards, 'Excavations', pp 33-4

- B. CA fragments (decorated and undecorated)
- C. Two Iron buckles
- D. Six Iron Rivets
- E. Animal Bone (cremated)

The sixth and final mound excavated by the Burton-on-Trent society, this mound was 30ft (9.1m) in diameter and 33in (0.84m) high. Excavated using the 'usual' trenching technique (see 124.03), a very thin layer of charcoal and burnt bone, presumably representing a hearth, was found in its northern quadrant, and the artefacts presumably came from the same context. Attention was specifically drawn to the fact that the bones were 'suggestive of a deliberate pounding and breakage after cremation'. There was nothing to suggest that more than one individual had been present, and it was tentatively suggested that the remains may have been female, a suggestion recently supported by Richards. Cattle bone was certainly present, and there is less certain evidence for pig. The grave-goods make this the second most richly furnished burial in this group, but their fragmentary character makes them difficult to identify.²³

Site / Location

Mound 6 was on the SW side of the cemetery, on the western edge of the main (SW) concentration of burials, almost directly on top of the 110m contour. It is set c.20m back from a continuation of the same steep slope which passes the N side of mound 5 (124.05), with views towards the NW in particular. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation under a mound.

124.07 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery Autumn 1948

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

- A. Sword (damaged)
- B. Twenty-four rivets (probably for shield)
- C. Spur fragment

This mound (number 7) was excavated by Clarke and Frazer (the directors of the Burton-on-Trent Society's campaign) a few years after the 1941-5 excavations (see 124.03-6), using the same trenching techniques. A very thin oval layer of charcoal 10 x 8ft (3.0 x 2.4m) was found centred on the NW quadrant 'well away from the centre of the mound', which was 28ft (8.5m) in diameter and 36in (0.91m) high. Just over fifty years later, Richards also discovered an off-centre area of burning in mound 56 (124.10). Bone fragments and the artefacts listed here were discovered in the charcoal area. The rivets have attracted considerable attention, with Richards *et al* tentatively suggesting they may be associated with ship timbers, although Graham-

²³ Clarke & Fraser, 'Pagan burial mounds', pp 8, 18, 21-22; Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.53 & Table 1; Richards, 'Excavations', p.34

Campbell thinks they are more likely to be associated with a shield or other composite artefact. No information on the bone remains is available. Posnansky, who led the third series of excavations at the site, indicated that Clarke and Frazer excavated a ninth barrow in 1948-9, but this was again interpreted as a cenotaph, as no evidence for a burial or cremation was discovered. For further information, see 124.01 & 03.²⁴

Site / Location

Mound 7 was only a short distance west of mound 6 (124.06). As such, it is close to the centre of the S concentration of barrows, in the SW portion of the cemetery. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite weapon cremation under a mound.

124.08 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1955

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (4)

- A. Silver Wire embroidery
- B. 3 nails
- C. [Iron Spade]
- D. Animal Bone (cremated)

The third campaign of excavation at Heath Wood was carried out over a 3 ½ week period by Merrick Posnansky prior to the replanting of Heath Wood. The Forestry Commission agreed to leave the four major concentrations of barrows unplanted and the excavations specifically targeted those more isolated mounds that were considered most at risk from replanting. A total of seven barrows were investigated, of which one proved to be entirely natural and five others produced no evidence for cremation or burial and were interpreted as cenotaphs. All were described as 20-25ft (6.1-7.6m) in diameter and 0.75-4.5ft (0.2-1.4m) high and were 'false cairns', with a capping of stone over earthen mounds. Some had kerbstones, while others were surrounded by shallow ditches. Neither feature was associated with the one furnished burial, under mound 11, which was excavated in four quadrants. This contained a cremation hearth and a layer of charcoal and burnt bone 2-3in (0.5-7.5cm) thick. Three iron rivets were found, as was a fragmentary piece of silver wire embroidery with possible Scandinavian parallels. Analysis of the bone fragments produced evidence for a human adult, horse, dog and sheep. The spade, while found within the mound, may well have been associated with its construction rather than the burial placed within it.²⁵

²⁴ C. Clarke, W. Fraser & F. W. Munslow, 'Excavations of pagan burial mounds at Ingleby. Second report' in *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* lxiv (1949), pp 78-81; Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.54 & Table 1, p.63; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.109; Richards, 'Excavations', p.36

²⁵ Richards *et al*, 'Viking barrow cemetery', p.54-5, 65; Richards, 'Excavations', pp 42-5

Site / Location

Mound 11 was a comparatively isolated example in the north part of the cemetery, approximately mid-way between the north-west and north-east groups of graves and close to the 108m contour. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary cremation under a mound.

124.09 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

SK 341 258

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Cremation (Definite)

No Evidence

Mound

Date of Recovery 1998

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (5)

- A. Silver Sword hilt mound
- B. Chest (hinge plate and nails)
- C. Shield Rivets and Rim Clamps
- D. Knife (fragmentary)
- E. Animal bone (cremated)

The fourth (and most recent) campaign undertaken at Heath Wood was carried out by Julian D. Richards, who selected two mounds close to the centre of the main (south) complex for a research excavation. The larger (mound 50) was found to have had a complex development. A ring-ditch was dug, leaving two causeways for access, and the internal area was then covered with a layer of clean sand. The funeral pyre, represented by a spread of charcoal and cremated bone, was then built on this surface, and produced evidence for an adult, 18-45 years old, and probably female, and an infant or juvenile, as well as 'cremated animal offerings' which seem to have included cattle (probably ox) and sheep, as well as horse, pig and dog. In addition, fragments of a cow skull were found immediately above the cremation layer, and were interpreted as evidence for a funeral feast. The fragmentary nature of the artefact assemblage and its even distribution were interpreted as evidence that the pyre had been swept before the mound was built.²⁶

Site / Location

This mound was close to the centre of the main (S) group of mounds, between the 110 and 112m contour, some distance above the bluff which extends past mound 5 (124.05). See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite weapon cremation beneath a mound, unusual in that it also contained a juvenile or infant as well as an adult (although traditional excavation techniques may not have revealed this information).

²⁶ J. D. Richards, 'Heath Wood, Ingleby' in *Current Archaeology* xvi (2003), p.172; Richards, 'Excavations', pp 54-68, 77

124.10 (D2)

HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY, DERBYSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1998-2000

SK 341 258

Cremation (Definite)

Mound

Record Quality Excellent.

Artefacts (1)

A. Ring-headed Pin (CA, loop-headed)

The second mound excavated by Richards, mound 56, was described as a 'satellite mound' to 124.09, and was 'smaller' than the latter feature. In this case, a patch of charcoal and burnt human bone was found together with the pin (which had experienced intense heat) close to the north edge of the mound, rather than at its centre. Although they rested on a layer of sand, there was no evidence for a pyre, and these deposits must have been brought from elsewhere. Richards campaign also investigated a third mound (21), but this had been badly disturbed by ploughing, and perhaps a previous excavation. Given earlier excavation techniques, Richards now suggests that the 'cenotaphs' investigated by previous excavators were actually burials of this type. This would a possible total of 59 burials for the site, but as only ten have produced grave-goods, the others have been ignored in this thesis. No further information on this burial is available at present.²⁷

Site / Location

This smaller burial mound was less than 10m SSW of the larger and more elaborate mound 50 (124.09) at approximately the same altitude, just above the 110m contour. It is slightly closer to the south-west edge of the south concentration of mounds, although there are more outlying burials. See also 124.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation under a mound. The ringed pin is interesting, and has extensive parallels elsewhere.

125 (D2)

SEDFORD, NORFOLK

Tertiary Burial (Probable) w/ horse

Christian Cemetery (extant)

Date of Recovery 1997

c. TF 709 366

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Horse skeleton

Although not technically a furnished burial, the skeleton of a woman was found together with that of horse during the excavation of a middle to late Anglo-Saxon cemetery at this site. The burial was east-west, with the horse laid north-south beneath the woman's head. The excavators noted that such a horse burial is 'unusual' in a Christian context, and suggested that it may have been serving an Anglo-Scandinavian community, an opinion with which Graham-Campbell broadly concurs, drawing a parallel between this grave and the possible horse burial from

²⁷ Richards, 'Heath Wood', pp 170-3; Richards, 'Excavations', pp 69-76, 89

Saffron Walden (137.2). The cemetery is too late to allow for the possibility of its being a furnished Anglo-Saxon burial.²⁸

Site / Location

The precise location of the cemetery which produced this burial has not been established, but the modern settlement of Sedgeford is centred on the NGR given here, on the north side of a narrow 30m valley of the Heacham. The burial was presumably somewhere between 10 & 60m, based on the surrounding topography, and the site is c.5km from the modern east shore of the Wash, the distance following the stream being c.7km. Local topography suggests the coast may originally have been rather nearer. In the absence of further information, however, it is unwise to speculate further.

Interpretation

A probable tertiary inhumation, due to the absence of more conventional grave goods. The placing of the human and horse at right angles recalls a number of other sites, perhaps most obviously Pierowall (018.09).

126 (D2)

GOODERSTONE, NORFOLK

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery October 1957

TF 755 018

Cremation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged, bent)

Discovered during ploughing, this sword has attracted comparatively little attention despite its decorated hilt. Generally regarded as a stray find, its bent condition suggests some association with a funerary ritual (although the possibility of plough damage cannot be entirely eliminated). Shetelig associated bent swords with Norwegian cremation burials, but more recent research suggests that the ritual may also have been employed in inhumations Mapped as a possible burial by Wilson, it was not included in Richards' 2001 map, and has recently been dismissed by Graham-Campbell.²⁹

Site / Location

The sword was found a quarter of a mile (c.400m) east of Chalkrow Cottages at Gooderstone, a location which places it close to the centre of large field south-west of the village. The surrounding land is c.10m OD and very flat but rises very gently

²⁸ Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.112, citing A. Cox, J. Fox, & G. Thomas, 'Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project, 1997 Interim Report' in *Norfolk Archaeology* xliii (1998), pp 172-7

²⁹ D. M. Wilson, 'Some neglected late Anglo-Saxon swords' in *Medieval Archaeology* ix (1965), p.35-6; Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica* xvi (1945), p.26; Wilson, D. M., 'The Scandinavians in England' in idem (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1981), fig.10.1; J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (2nd Ed., Stroud, 2000), fig.63; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.112

towards the east. Less than 200m from the River Gadder, the site is just under 30km from the modern coast at the south-east corner of the Wash. The Gadder is a tributary of the Wissey, which is in turn a tributary of the Ouse, which flows into the Wash at the same point. Following the streams and rivers, the coast is *c.* 52km away.

Interpretation

Despite recent scepticism, this site fulfils the criteria for a probable burial.

127 (D2)

CAISTER-ON-SEA, NORFOLK

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Extant Cemetery (& Roman Fort)

Date of Recovery 1951-5

TG 517 122

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Coin (Ecgberht of Wessex *c.* 828-39)

The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Caister-on-Sea was excavated by C. Green between 1951 & 1955. Located immediately south of a Roman fortress, traces of which seem to have been visible until at least the early seventeenth century, only a small portion of the cemetery along the A1064 (Norwich / Filby Road) was excavated, recovering 147 inhumations from a cemetery that has been estimated to hold 3-4,000 graves. All the excavated graves were orientated east-west with the feet to the east, and dated from the 8th to the mid- 11th centuries. It has been suggested that a monastery and / or minster site may have been situated somewhere nearby. Thirteen burials that seem to have been placed in the ground with riveted timbers, presumably from parts of boats, in a manner reminiscent of the clinker-built coffins from Barton on Humber (Humberside) and the possible boat burial from York Minster (114.1). In all but one of the graves at Caister, the timbers seem to have been placed over the body, with the timbers having formed a bier in the remaining example. With the exception of the resulting rivets, however, none of these burials seem to have been furnished. The only 'grave-good' recovered was a silver penny, found under the head of the skeleton in grave 14. No further information on this skeleton is provided in the report. Evison seemed convinced, however, that 'grave-goods' had been more numerous, but suggested that 'these must be regarded as isolated deposits of a personal or sentimental nature rather than tokens of pagan burial ritual'. As with the coin burials from York Minster (114), the Caister coin certainly predates the extensive Scandinavian activity associated with the Great Army and the subsequent settlement of East Anglia.³⁰

Site / Location

Caister-on-Sea (also called Caister-by-Yarmouth) is just under 4.5km north of the confluence of the rivers Yare and Bure at Great Yarmouth, and *c.* 800m from the modern coast. The coastline in the area has, however, changed considerably in the past two millennia. When the Roman fort was built at the site in the early 3rd century,

³⁰ M. J. Darling with David Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea Excavations by Charles Green 1951-55: East Anglian Archaeology Report lx* (1993), pp 45-61, 69-71, 104; Warwick Rodwell & Kirsty Rodwell, 'St Peter's church, Barton-upon-Humber: excavation and structural study, 1978-81' in *Antiquaries Journal* lxii (1982), pp 283-315; Vera Evison, 'A Viking grave at Sonning, Berkshire' in *Antiquaries Journal* il (1969), p.341

it was on the north bank of a 'major estuary', with estuarine conditions extending to within 7km of Norwich. A sheltered bay extended from this estuary to within 350m of the fort and subsequent cemetery, although it is not certain when this inlet silted up. The excavated portion of the burial site is between the 10 & 15m contours on a gentle south-facing slope that would have overlooked the area of this inlet and the estuary beyond it. Given the changes in coastline, it is uncertain how far from the sea the site was, but it is unlikely to have been more than 500m.³¹

Interpretation

Although it fulfils the criteria of a 'definite' tertiary burial, the coin date and Sherlock's insistence that 'it need *not* denote the burial of a pagan Viking settler, trader or warrior' has resulted in its being treated as a possible burial instead.³²

128 (D2)

HARROLD, BEDFORDSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Extant AS cemetery & BA Barrows

Date of Recovery 1951-2

SP 952 572

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Glass Bead
- D. Iron 'Bucket'
- E. Heckle
- F. Knife

A site excavated in the course of extensive gravel extraction, the untimely death of the excavator led Evison to publish thirteen early medieval graves, of which six were furnished. At least three of these graves were directly associated with the ditch of a Bronze Age barrow 59ft (18m) in diameter, with the remaining examples *c.* 80m to the northeast. It is not clear where the most controversial burial, grave 3, was found, although it was 'nearly alongside' an unfurnished grave, and as all but one of the skeletons were orientated east-west with the head to the east, it can be assumed that it was orientated the same way. Assumed to have been male, the skeleton was 6ft (2.1m) long in the ground, and had a sword placed with the hilt under the right arm and the point on the left side; a hone close to the sword point; and a bucket and heckle close to its feet, while the bead and knife were found within the grave. The spearhead was found in a nearby spoil heap, but the excavator believed it came from this grave, the only weapon burial discovered at the site. Evison noted that the spearhead was probably eighth or ninth century, and that heckles and buckets are more common Scandinavian than Anglo-Saxon graves, and consequently suggested that this 'was the grave of a Viking who was buried in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery just within the boundary of the Danelaw' in the ninth century'. Geake has been rather more cautious in her assessment of the find, suggesting it is the latest Anglo-Saxon grave that does not show Scandinavian characteristics, and it has been ignored by Richards and Graham-Campbell. Note also that two other skeletons, neither

³¹ Darling with Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea*, pp 3-5

³² D. Sherlock, 'The post-roman coins and jettons' in Darling with Gurney, *Caister-on-Sea*, p.69

described in detail, here were accompanied by knives, artefacts which are particularly difficult to date and which have at least the potential to be of Viking Age date.³³

Site / Location

The area in which this group of graves were discovered has been extensively modified as a result of gravel extraction and is now a lake. Originally, it was a gravel terrace on the north bank of the Great Ouse, c.300m from the river. The site would have been below the 50m contour but the original slope is difficult to reconstruct and it is uncertain if the river was visible. It was however, clearly raised slightly above the (c.40m) valley floor, on each side of which hills gradually rise to 90 or 100m. The site is over 90km in a direct line from the modern coast of the Wash, and very considerably further following the meandering route of the Great Ouse.³⁴

Interpretation

Although technically a definite weapon inhumation, difficulties associated with dating this burial to the Viking Age have resulted in its being classified as probable. It is associated both with a contemporary cemetery and a prehistoric monument.

129 (D2)

HOOK NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery July 1848

SP 357 330

Inhumation

Mound?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. 23 Silver Coins (6 identified)

B. Silver Arm Ring (Uncertain)

A somewhat enigmatic burial extensively researched by Biddle and Blair in the late 1980s. According to a letter by William Colgrave, 'the coins were found all sticking together, under, or beside two human skeletons', which were 'about a yard (0.9m) deep in the ground'. The bones were described as exceptionally large, but were never examined by experts. Some secrecy seems to have surrounded the hoard's discovery and dispersal, and Graham-Campbell has recently suggested that a silver arm-ring erroneously associated with the Cuerdale hoard, may actually have formed part of this burial. The original letter finishes with the cryptic remark that 'the mound, that the largest skeleton belonged to must have been 8 or 9 feet (2.4-2.7m) high'. This would suggest an enormous structure, and it may be that Colgrave was confusing height and diameter, the latter being rather more credible. This would also concur with his earlier comments, which suggest that the two skeletons were found comparatively close to each other. No further information is available.³⁵

Site / Location

Biddle & Blair have associated the Hook Norton site with an area of land that seems to have been owned by William Colgrave in Southrop, the southern part of Hook

³³ B. N. Eagles & V. I. Evison, 'Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire, 1951-3' in *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* v (1970), pp 17-55; Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.61, 71, 126

³⁴ Eagles & Evison, 'Harrold', p.17

³⁵ Biddle & Blair, 'Hook Norton hoard', pp 186-95

Norton. The site is close to the 160m contour, just below the crest of a narrow ridge and looks north over a small (c.200m wide) shallow valley with an east-flowing stream at its base, that flows into the Swere, and then the Cherwell, before entering the Thames at Oxford. The ground rises steadily to the south, west and north, and views to the east are restricted by a spur. In a direct line, the site is just under 60km from the upper tidal reaches of the Severn, and 120km from its mouth, but this is on the opposite side of the watershed. The Thames estuary, where the water from the Hook Norton Stream meets the sea, is just over 150km away in a straight line, and substantially further following the meanders of the Thames and its tributaries.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, perhaps associated with a mound. Arm rings have also been found at Clibberswick (001) and St Mary Bishophill Junior (115), while coins are comparatively common finds in English graves, such as Repton (123).

130 (D2)

MAGDALEN BRIDGE, OXFORD

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1884

SP 521 060

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. 2 Stirrups

B. Shears

Acquired by the Ashmolean Museum in 1886, these artefacts were tentatively associated with a 'Scandinavian interment' by Bjørn and Shetelig, although Shetelig was subsequently rather more cautious. A more recent article by Blair and Crawford developed this idea considerably, pointing out that the artefacts were found together with the bones of one or more horses and men above the waterline in the bank of the Cherwell, and drew parallels with a number of similar furnished burials in Denmark. The material was clearly not from an entirely sealed context, however, as a third (eleventh/twelfth century) spur and a medieval/post-medieval horseshoe formed part of the same assemblage. Bjørn and Shetelig conflated this report with a second relating to a shield boss and spearhead found under the E arch of Magdalen Bridge, but while the spearhead is potentially of ninth century date, the shield boss seems rather earlier, and there seems no reason to suggest that they represent a furnished burial. The other artefacts do, however, suggest a furnished Viking burial accompanied by a horse, although Graham-Campbell has recently cast doubt on the entire assemblage by suggesting that the spurs may be later than was previously thought, seriously diminishing the possibility of the assemblage representing a burial. At an earlier date, Evison was equally sceptical.³⁶

³⁶ Percy Manning & E. T. Leeds, 'An archaeological survey of Oxfordshire' in *Archaeologia* lxxi (1921), p.253; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.12; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.15; John Blair & B. E. Crawford, 'A late-Viking burial at Magdalen Bridge, Oxford?' in *Oxoniensia* lxii (1997), pp 135-43; W. A. Seaby, 'Late dark age finds from the Cherwell and Ray 1876-86' in *Oxoniensia* xv (1950), pp 29-43 suggests these weapons are related (despite their differing ages), but does not suggest that they represent a burial; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', pp 116-7; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p.341

Site / Location

The deposition site identified by Blair and Crawford is close to the southern extremity of the eyot on the River Cherwell spanned by Magdalen Bridge, from the corner of which it was dredged in 1884. The same commentators note that a number of channels are shown crossing the island on early maps, and suggest that the objects may have been deposited in one of these, although this hardly ties in with their having been discovered above the waterline. As such, this possible burial would have been on the east bank of the Cherwell, just over 1km north of its confluence with the Thames / Isis and close to the 60m contour in an area of comparatively flat land. As a result views from the site would not have been particularly extensive, although they would almost certainly have included the fording spot(s) that presumably predated the current bridge. The weapons were found close to the east bank of the same river at this point, but seem to be of radically different dates. An association of either artefact group with a possible Danish garrison or settlement in the area of St Clement's Church is rather more controversial and depends on a narrow chronological range for the material. At a more general level, the site is over 120km from the mouth of the Severn on the other side of the watershed, and more than 132km from the mouth of the Thames, both being direct line distances which ignore river meanders.³⁷

Interpretation

Despite the clear contextual and chronological problems, a possible tertiary inhumation.

131.1 & 2 (D2)

SANTON, NORFOLK

Weapon Burial (Definite) & Brooch Burial (Probable)

c.200m from Church

Date of Recovery 1867

TL 829 874

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged; Anglo-Saxon)

B. Two Oval Brooches (double-shelled)

The most accessible detailed description of this site is provided by Smith, who noted that a skeleton was found 2ft (0.6m) deep in gravel together with these artefacts, all of which were in the British Museum by 1901. Bjørn and Shetelig suggested that it could be interpreted as 'a double interment of a man and woman in one grave', a claim reiterated by Shetelig in 1945. It is not clear, however, why they chose to interpret the burial in this way rather than as two burials side by side, as at Ballinaby, Islay (073). Recently, Richards has suggested that there was just one male burial at the site, with the brooches forming a kind of 'offering', as has also been proposed for Claughton Hall, Lancashire (073). This would agree with the statement that there was just one skeleton at the site, although it should perhaps be pointed out that it might equally be the sword which represents a token presence, as at Claghbane on the Isle of Man (157). The sword is Anglo-Saxon, but despite Halsall's doubts, there

³⁷ Blair & Crawford, 'Magdalen Bridge?', pp 136-7, 141-3

seems no reason to doubt a strong Scandinavian influence on this tenth century assemblage.³⁸

Site / Location

Although the site has been associated with Santon Downham by all commentators since Bjørn & Shetelig, Doubleday's account of the burial places it in Santon, a site c.1.4km ESE of the village of Santon Downham. The burial was found by men 'raising gravel...on the slope of the hill to the north of the church, and at no great distance from the River Ouse', and the relevant OS sheet for 1892 clearly shows an 'Old Gravel Pit' almost due north of the church on the slope of the hill, c.300m from the banks of the river and c.200m from the church itself. The NGR given here is based on the location of this gravel pit, which must represent the general area, if not the precise location of the burial. As such, it was immediately above the 15m contour, 5-10m above the valley floor and with c.35m hills on each side of the valley. The site would have afforded views to the south and southwest along the (now heavily forested) valley. Its relationship to the church is ambiguous, not least because it may be a comparatively late foundation, and it is certainly well beyond the limits of its graveyard. In a direct line, the site is c.44km SSE of the south-east corner of modern Wash, and c.66km following the course of the Little Ouse and Great Ouse, the estuary of the latter being in the same area. The original coastline was rather further inland, and both figures should be adjusted slightly to reflect this fact.³⁹

Interpretation

Given Richards suggestions, a definite weapon and probable brooch inhumation, although there is no absolute reason why these identifications should not be reversed.

132 (D2)

MIDDLE HARLING, NORFOLK

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

In Christian Cemetery (date uncertain)

Date of Recovery 1982 &1983

TL 979 851

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (7)

- A. CA Buckle w/ iron plate
- B. Iron buckle
- C. CA Earscoop
- D. Whetstone (miniature)
- E. Spur
- F. 2 Knives
- G. 2 Pivoting Blade Knives

³⁸ R. A. Smith, 'Anglo-Saxon Remains' in H. A. Doubleday (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Norfolk* (London, 1901), i, 347-49; Evison, V. 'Viking grave at Sonning', pp 334-5; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, pp 12-3; Shetelig, 'Viking graves', p.14; J. D. Richards, 'Boundaries and cult centres: Viking burial in Derbyshire' Graham-Campbell *et al*, *Vikings and the Danelaw*, p.151; Guy Halsall, 'The Viking presence in England? The burial evidence reconsidered' in D. M. Hadley & J. D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Studies in the Early Middle Ages ii* (Brepols, 2000), p.269

³⁹ Smith, 'Anglo-Saxon remains: Norfolk', p.347; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p.333

A late ninth or early tenth century furnished burial that turned up unexpectedly during a series of excavations intended to investigate the context of a mid-eighth century East Anglian coin hoard. The site is immediately north of the site of a St Andrew's Church, and although it is not absolutely certain that it was extant at the time, a number of unfurnished burials were found in the same general area, some of which may have been contemporary. All, including the (only) furnished grave, were orientated east-west with the heads to the west. Burial 451 was on the north side of this group of skeletons, and was cut into the fill of what may have been a boundary ditch for the cemetery. It was comparatively well furnished and well recorded, despite the fact that some of the artefacts were recovered several months before the detailed examination of the grave. The larger buckle was on the left pelvis, while the smaller iron one was at the left knee. The whetstone and three of the knives were immediately west of the 'belt' buckle (where they had presumably been bundled together?), while the fourth knife was inside the left elbow. The spur was at the left foot, while the earscoop was found at a slightly higher level in the fill, which also contained a shard of Thetford-type ware. This distribution may suggest some disturbance to the right side of the skeleton, perhaps as a result of ploughing. The bones were badly decayed, and the skull fragments were mislaid on the London Underground (!) but it is suggested that the (male?) adult was 174cm tall. There is no evidence that the grave was marked and the site was presumably forgotten, as a posthole was subsequently driven through the burial's right thigh. The director, A. Rogerson, is convinced that it represents a Viking burial, an interpretation with which most commentators, including Graham-Campbell, concur.⁴⁰

Site / Location

The site of St Andrew's church is in the broad shallow valley of the River Thet (a tributary of the Little Ouse), on an area of comparatively flat ground c.19m OD and c.350m from the river, which is unlikely to have been visible from the site. The flat surrounding land would have limited views in most directions. The site is c.53km from the modern east coast of Norfolk, but c.57 in a straight line to the modern SE corner of the Wash, where the water of the Thet eventually flows into the sea. The distance following the rivers is substantially greater.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, and a particularly well-furnished example of the type. There is, however a faint possibility that a weapon on the left thigh may have been destroyed or removed by the posthole.

133.1 (D2)

Queensway, THETFORD, NORFOLK

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence (later burial)

Date of Recovery July 1953

TL 8677 8223

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged; Anglo-Saxon)

⁴⁰ Andrew Rogerson, *A Late Saxon and Medieval Site at Middle Harling, Norfolk: East Anglian Archaeology* lxxiv (1995), pp 14-25, 79-80, 89-90; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.111-2

Recovered during one of a series of excavations and what would now be called monitoring operations in Thetford by Guy Knocker, this burial was discovered 4ft (1.2m) below the ground. Presumably supine, it lay with its head to the northwest and feet to the southeast, with a late Saxon sword on its left. The blade is bent and it has been suggested that this occurred before interment, but the distortion is comparatively modest and confined to the hilt. A small number of unfurnished burials were found in the same general area, one of which had a late tenth or early eleventh limestone grave covering. See also 133.2.⁴¹

Site / Location

The burial was found between the 20 and 25m contours on the west bank of the Little Ouse, c.600m from its present course. It is on east sloping ground above the floor of the shallow valley, the sides of which do not rise far beyond 25m in this area, and affords clear views of the river, and perhaps its confluence with the Thet. The modern coast at the south-west corner of the Wash is c.52km in a straight line, with the distance following the Ouse being c.66km. The distance would, however, have been slightly less in the Viking Age.

Interpretation

Although Rogerson and Dallas are extremely cautious in their interpretation, the sword is late and clearly associated with human remains, and so a definite weapon inhumation.

133.2 (D2)

Queensway, THETFORD, NORFOLK

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence (associated burials)

Date of Recovery 1953

c.TL 868 822

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Spearhead

B. Knife

Recorded in the same source as the sword burial from Thetford (133.1) but with rather less certainty, this burial was one of three inhumations uncovered in the 'same general area', the other two being unfurnished. The spearhead is extant but of uncertain date, being long and nearly straight-sided, and the knife is now lost. No details of the position of the artefacts in the grave are available, and there are some dating problems, but Graham-Campbell included it in his discussion of 'pagan Scandinavian burial'.⁴²

Site / Location

Found close to 133.1.

⁴¹ Andrew Rogerson & Caroline Dallas, *Excavations at Thetford 1948-59 and 1973-80: East Anglian Archaeology* xxii (Dereham, 1984), pp 53, 106; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.112

⁴² Rogerson & Dallas, *Excavations at Thetford*, pp 53, 105; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.112

Interpretation

As with other burials in this area, while a definite weapon inhumation, dating difficulties mean that it has been classified as a probable weapon inhumation.

134 (D2)

WICKEN FEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1938

c.TL 546 701

Inhumation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. 'Scramasax' / 'seax'

B. Knife

A frustratingly vague reference to a scramasax and knife discovered in Wicken Fen which might have been dismissed as a wetland deposit, were it not for the fact that they seem to have been found together with a skeleton. Graham-Campbell noted that this gives 'pause for thought', while Evison noted that the grave's isolated location suggested 'special reasons' for the burial. Unfortunately, no further information on the discovery are available, although the artefacts are potentially of the right date, the seax also being of high quality.⁴³

Site / Location

The NGR given here reflects a location within the western part of the current Wicken Fen nature reserve, which reflects Lethbridge's statement that it probably came from near Upware. If the finds do represent a burial, it was presumably somewhere on the periphery of the marsh, but in the absence of more detailed records it is unwise to speculate too much. The surrounding ground is exceptionally flat (indeed an area to the south is below sea level) and the site must have been below the 5m contour. It is c.58km from the current south-east corner of the Wash, which is also the point at which the water of the New River reaches the sea, having first flown in the Cam, and subsequently the Great Ouse. As the name suggests, however, this must be treated with caution.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, based on the original record, modified for context.

135 (D2)

KERSEY, SUFFOLK

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1960

TL 9330 4334

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

⁴³ T. C. Lethbridge, 'Anglo-Saxon Cambridgeshire' in L. F. Salzman (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely* (London, 1938), i, 327; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p.341; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.112

According to Wilson, a 'typical English' sword dating from the ninth century was 'turned over by the plough' in 1960. Its tip, pommel, upper hilt and parts of the blade are all missing, but the surviving hilt is richly decorated. While no other material was recovered from the site, it is possible that it represents a burial that had previously been disturbed by ploughing. It should also be noted that there is a small lake or tarn a short distance to the southeast.⁴⁴

Site / Location

The find spot of this sword is on a comparatively flat plateau, c.500m x 700m, between the 55 and 60m contours, to the north and south of which the land falls steeply to two unnamed east-flowing streams, both of which join the river Brett c.1km from the site. Both valleys are steep sided and 20-25m deep and the site only affords limited views into them. The surrounding hills are of roughly the same height as the plateau, although the ridge on which the site stands rises slightly to the west. The site is just over 30km in a straight line from the mouth of the Stour, of which the Brett is a tributary, but just 16km from in a straight line from the head of the estuary, with both distances being rather longer if the river valleys are followed.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial.

136 (D2)

Therfield Heath, HERTFORDSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1858

c.TL 341 400

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. CA buckle

B. Annular Brooch (?)

According to Lethbridge, these artefacts were found with a skeleton on 'Royston Heath'. The CA buckle is decorated in the (ninth century) Trewhiddle style, and the 'minute annular brooch of wire' was probably of a similar date. Evison notes that a late burial in an isolated location would have been for 'special reasons'. She also states, however, that 'the brooch and buckle ... are so small that they may have been buried unnoticed in the clothing of the body'. It is also at least possible that the burial is Anglo-Saxon rather than Scandinavian in inspiration.⁴⁵

Site / Location

Lethbridge and Evison both attribute the burial to Royston Heath, but the OS does not record this place-name anywhere in the immediate area of Royston. There is, however, a Therfield Heath immediate west of the modern settlement. As this is the only high ground in the area, it is possible that this was colloquially known as Royston Heath (compare South Common and Canwick Common 120). Even if this is correct, however, no further information on the site of the burial is available and no details of elevation or potential views can be deduced, although the site is perhaps

⁴⁴ Wilson, 'Late Anglo-Saxon swords', pp 37-8

⁴⁵ Lethbridge, 'Anglo-Saxon Cambridgeshire', p.322; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p.341

likely to have been at least slightly elevated, and was certainly c.70km from the coast, at the mouth of the River Blackwater. There are no rivers in the immediate vicinity.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, but the nature of the artefacts raise the possibility of Anglo-Saxon connections, and hence it has been recorded as probable.

137.1 (D2)

SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Anglo-Saxon (& Romano-British) cemetery

Date of Recovery 1876

TL 535 382

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

- A. Necklace (w/3 silver pendants, 2 silver, 2 cornelian, 2 crystal & 2 glass beads)
- B. Strap-end (lost)
- C. Knife (lost)

An early discovery of a furnished burial within a cemetery of unfurnished graves, at least some of which may have dated from the Romano-British period. Approximately 150 burials were found in 1877, and 50-60 more were found in the same area in the 1830s (see 137.2). Some burials (presumably the older ones) were orientated north-south, but the majority seem to have been east-west (head to the west) and were arranged in 9 rows. These had been cut approximately 1ft (30cm) into the underlying chalk, but the level from which they had been dug could not be determined. Bassett suggested that these burials may have been associated with a middle Saxon church, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. All seem to have been placed within a substantial rectangular ditched enclosure of unknown (but almost certainly pre-Viking Age) date. At least one of the Romano-British graves was furnished, and it is possible that some of the Anglo-Saxon artefacts that were recovered came from graves, but as the area also seems to have been used for domestic activity at some point, this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. No other brooch or weapon graves were present however, and this example was by far the most richly furnished. The skeleton was presumably female (although no osteological analysis was carried out). Two of the pendants and silver beads have strong Scandinavian associations, while the third pendant has a cross inscribed on it. Evison suggested a date around the end of the tenth century, but Graham-Campbell proposes a date in the ninth, which would be a little less remarkable.⁴⁶

Site / Location

Changes to the local topography make it difficult to pinpoint the burial site with absolute precision, but the NGR given here is a reasonable approximation. It seems to have been c.400m SSW of the medieval church of St Mary, on the south bank of the River Slade, which flows into the Cam c.800m to the west of the site. The site was close to the valley floor, just above the 50m contour, with views to the west

⁴⁶ H. E. Smith, 'An ancient cemetery at Saffron Walden' in *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* New Ser. ii (1884), pp 321-6; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', pp 336-41; S. R. Bassett, *Saffron Walden: Excavations and Research 1972-80*; *CBA Research Report* xlv (1982), pp 9-15; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.114; Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.43

obstructed by a slight spur. The sides of the valley rise to over 100m to the north, east and south, somewhat restricting views, although the site would have allowed views across the valley of the Slade. The cemetery was clearly in existence long before the Scandinavian community arrived, and the fact that the burial was part of a row would suggest that it was in regular use as a cemetery at the time when the furnished burial took place. The closest section of coast is the mouth of the Blackwater, c.60km to the east, but the watershed leads into the Cam and Ouse, with the south-east corner of the Wash being some 75km away in a straight line, and rather further following the various rivers.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation within an extant, originally Roman, cemetery, although necklaces are generally rare finds in Scandinavian contexts.

137.2 (D2)

SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Anglo-Saxon (& Romano-British) cemetery

Date of Recovery 1830

TL 535 382

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Horse skeleton

The somewhat confused record of the discovery of 50-60 skeletons at a site less than 100m west and south of the group associated with 137.1, and 46 years earlier. They were also found arranged in (two) rows, and one had been buried with a horse. Evison suggested that an 'Anglo-Saxon' bit recovered at that time may have been found in association with this or another horse skeleton, but this does not seem to be supported by the original text. It is entirely possible that the burial may have been Anglo-Saxon, but the absence of any certain furnished Anglo-Saxon graves in the cemetery (or indeed this general area) and the date of the other furnished burial from this site (see 137.1) open up the definite possibility that it may be of Viking Age date.⁴⁷

Site / Location

Although very slightly to the west of the site of 137.1, this possible burial formed part of the same cemetery.

Interpretation

Despite the absence of conventional grave-goods, and the possibility that it might pre-date the Viking Age, a possible tertiary inhumation, with parallels being provided by Sedgeford (125) in particular.

⁴⁷ Smith, 'Saffron Walden', pp 312-3; Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', p.337; Barrett, *Saffron Walden*, p.13; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.114

138 (D2)

Play Hatch, SONNING, BERKSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1966

c.SU 743 754

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (5)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. 6 Arrowheads
- C. Ringed Pin
- D. Knife
- E. Composite artefact

An accidental discovery by a machine operator at a gravel quarry, the deposit was already badly disturbed when investigated and no stratigraphic evidence survived. One of the two fragmentary skeletons which were recovered was that of a man aged over 20 and 170cm tall, who had traces of copper staining on the position corresponding to the small of the back and iron staining on the back of the (right) tibia. The CA staining must be the result of contact with the ringed pin, and that on the tibia with one of the weapons. This strongly suggests that the majority (perhaps all) the artefacts were associated with one body, while the second (identified as that of a male aged 20+/-2 and 180cm tall) was either poorly equipped or had very few artefacts. The latter interpretation has been favoured (see below). No further information is available.⁴⁸

Site / Location

Although this burial is normally associated with Sonning (following the title of Evison's article), it is clear that the grave was actually found on the opposite side of the river, at Play Hatch. There is a quarry immediately north of the modern village of that name, but Evison's description makes it clear that the site was 'a matter of 300 yards (274m) N of the present bank of the Thames'. As such, it is rather more likely to be under the current (unnamed) lake to the N of the Thames, which may well represent former gravel workings as does the lake at Harrold (128). The area is certainly shown as dry land in the 1882 Ordnance Survey map of the area. The NGR given here represents a site close to the south shore of this artificial feature. The original topography of the area cannot be reconstructed using available resources but seems to have been on the flat bottom of the Thames valley, which is some 1.5km wide at this point, although with steep sides up to 70m on each side, particularly to the south. The original altitude of the burial was c.40m, and the closest coast is at Portsmouth, c.70km to the south, but the mouth of the Thames is c.115km to the east in a straight line, the distance being very substantially further following the river.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, with a second, very modestly furnished or unfurnished burial in close association with it.

⁴⁸ Evison, 'Viking grave at Sonning', pp 331-3, 343, 344-5

139 (D2)

Oxford Road, TILEHURST, BERKSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery September 1917

SU 680 740

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Mod.

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

A fragmentary tenth century double-edged sword was recovered during road-widening activity at this site. Although bent, this seems to have been the result of post-depositional activity rather than ritual activity. No other artefacts or traces of human remains were recorded, and the artefact has been ignored by most commentators. Nonetheless, as a sword recovered from a dry land site, the possibility that it represents a burial must be considered.⁴⁹

Site / Location

Although normally associated with Tilehurst Station, the sword was found 800 yards (732m) south-east of the Station, under the current Oxford Road, and the NGR given here is based on that description. As such, the site was on comparatively low lying ground just over 100m south of the modern bank of the Thames, at the foot of a slope which rises to over 80m, the burial being just below the 40m contour. The ground on the opposite side of the river is comparatively flat for c.500m before rising steeply to over 80m. The original height of the site above river level cannot be established. The site is c.7km due west of Play Hatch, and is consequently approximately the same distance from the south coast and more than 120km from the mouth of the Thames.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial.

140 (D2)

The Ballast Pit, READING, BERKSHIRE

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery June 1831 (*sic*)

c. SU 720 737

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double edged)

B. Horse skeleton

A brief and problematic record of a sword found c.2-3ft (0.6-0.9m) below the surface of the ground, 'bent into the curve of the ribs of a horse, the skeleton of which was upon it'. A human skeleton was also apparently present, but no information is available on the relationship between the two. The sword may have been deliberately bent, but the most recent article on the artefact makes no reference to this. The hilt is richly decorated and probably ninth century in date (with East in particular arguing

⁴⁹ F. M. Underhill, 'Notes on recent antiquarian discoveries in Berkshire' in *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal* xli (1937), p.39; L. R. A. Grove, 'Five Viking-period swords' in *The Antiquaries Journal* xviii (1938), pp 251-2; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.58

for a comparatively early date), and like the other burials in this area (see 138-141), has sometimes been linked to the over-wintering of the 'Great Army' at what was then a royal manor. Geake has recently argued that it may be a late Anglo-Saxon furnished burial, but this is difficult to substantiate.⁵⁰

Site / Location

The original account of this find is quite specific, stating that it was 'found in June 1831, in the ballast pit at Reading, about a hundred yards (c.91m) from the end of the engine sheds'. The first problem with this account is the fact that no serious work on the Great Western Railway was carried out before 1836, and the railway line to London did not open until 1840, the line to Bristol opening the following year. Thus, it seems that J.Y. Akerman, who reported the find, had made at least one serious error. The 1883 OS sheet for the area shows not one, but two engine sheds at Reading, as well as the main Great Western 'works', to the north of the station. The westernmost stood at SU 706 738 and the easternmost at SU 720 737, while the works were centred on SU 714 739. Unfortunately, none seem to be associated with any form of ballast pit, although some form of sunken feature is shown immediately to the west of the east-most engine shed, and the NGR relates to this feature. However, all three sites, however, share a number of features in common, all being on the south side of the Thames, between 35 and 40m OD in areas of flat land close to the floodplain, although the local topography has almost certainly been altered as a result of railway construction. The Thames valley in this area is broad and comparatively shallow, and all three sites are immediately above the floodplain, as well as c.2-4km WSW of the Play Hatch site(138), c.70km from the south coast and c.115-120km from the mouth of the Thames. The two eastern sites are also within 200m of the modern riverbanks, and in the angle between the Thames and Kennet.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation with a horse, based on the oldest surviving record.

141 (D2)

St Mary's Church, READING, BERKSHIRE

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Christian Cemetery (Extant?)

Date of Recovery 18th/19th Century

SU 714 733

Inhumation (Possible)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. 11 Coins (Anglo-Saxon, c.870-1)

Available records of this burial are rather vague, but relate to a parcel of 11 Anglo-Saxon coins which were found 'in a coffin' at this site at an unspecified but presumably early date. The eleven recorded coins may only be a 'small proportion' of those found, but they have been linked to the Great Army's over-wintering at the

⁵⁰ Anon., 'Proceedings, Thursday, March 28th, 1867' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 2nd Ser. iii (1867), pp 461-3; K. East, 'A lead model and a rediscovered sword, both with gripping beast decoration' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxx (1986), pp 1-7; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', pp 114, 115; Geake, *Use of Grave-Goods*, p.71

royal vill of Repton, although most commentators on the church suggest a date of establishment (as a nunnery) over a century later.⁵¹

Site/Location

St Mary's Church in Repton is a site which can be identified with confidence, some 800m south of the modern course of the Thames, and 250m north west of the Kennet, the site being within the angle of the two rivers. The site is c.40m above sea level, on ground that slopes gently towards the Kennet rather than the Thames. As with the most likely site for the 'Ballast Pit' grave, the surrounding land in the Thames valley is comparatively flat, although it gradually begins to rise towards the west. Also as with the Ballast Pit grave, the site is c.70km from the south coast and c.115-120km from the mouth of the Thames.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, although the surviving record is so poor that it might equally represent a 'hoard' buried for safe keeping in or near the church.

142 (D2)

LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1893

C. TQ 844 860

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword

B. 23-27 Coins

C. Horse Skeleton

A poorly recorded burial best known for its coins, rather than the sword and horse which also accompanied the associated skeleton. The coins, of Alfred (871-900) and Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury (890-914), and as a group likely to date from the 890s, had been placed 'in a hollow of the left shoulder'. There is, however, some debate as to how many burials were discovered, and whether the coins might represent one or more separate hoards.⁵²

Site/Location

Given the vague nature of the original record, it is impossible to define this site with any certainty, and the NGR given here merely represents a concentration of churches close to the heart of what is now an extensive settlement on the north side of the Thames estuary. The site is unlikely to have been more than 1km from the coast, but the ground slopes steeply and any other suggestions are merely speculative.

⁵¹ Biddle & Blair, 'Hook Norton hoard', p.193; N. P. Brooks & James Graham-Campbell, 'Reflections on the Viking-age Silver hoard from Croyden, Surrey' in M. A. S. Blackburn (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History: Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley* (Leicester, 1986), pp 107-9

⁵² R. A. Smith, 'Anglo-Saxon remains' in H. A. Doubleday (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Essex* (London, 1903), i, 328; Biddle & Blair, 'Hook Norton hoard', p.194 (& fn.34); D. M. Metcalf, 'The monetary history of England in the tenth century viewed in the perspective of the eleventh century', in Blackburn, *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History*, p.139; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.115

Interpretation

A minimum of one definite weapon burial, with the possibility of one or more tertiary graves, although the latter have not been included.

143 (D2)

BATTERSEA, LONDON

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1868

C. TQ 270 774

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

One of the only riverine finds that has been included as a possible burial site within this thesis, this sword was dredged from the River Thames at Battersea at some point before 1868 and is now in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford. The suggestion that it may originally have come from a burial on the river bank on the fact that it is bent, an attribute more usually associated with burial, and the fact that the blade point is covered with encrustations, a corrosion process more generally associated with dry land sites, and one which might be expected to affect the full length of a sword on the river bed. The sword dates from the tenth century at the earliest, and may be as late as the twelfth, in which case there is no possibility that it comes from a burial.⁵³

Site / Location

The NGR given here corresponds to Battersea Bridge, more or at less at the centre of Battersea Reach, and represents no more than an approximation of the site where the sword was found. If the blade does represent a burial, it presumably came from the bank of the river somewhere upstream, but it seems unwise to speculate any further on the subject. In a straight line, the mouth of the Thames is nearly 65km downstream, but the area is still within the tidal reaches of the river.

Interpretation

While the evidence is tenuous, a possible weapon burial.

144 (D1)

BENLLECH, GWYNEDD

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Early Summer 1945

c. SH 522 824

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Mod

Artefacts (3)

A. CA Object (finger ring / pin / brooch)?

B. Antler Comb (fragmentary)

C. Four Iron Nails

Discovered by children 3-4ft (0.9-1.2m) below the surface in the ridge between two sandpits, this skeleton was initially treated as modern and removed without

⁵³ Wilson, 'Late Anglo-Saxon swords', pp 32-3; Graham-Campbell, 'Pagan Scandinavian burial', p.117

archaeological supervision. As a result, while the skeleton's head is recorded as orientated to the north or northeast, the position of the grave goods is not recorded, although staining on the fingers could be linked to the CA artefact. The skeleton, that of a young woman, has recently been re-examined, and it is now suggested that copper alloy artefact may have been a brooch rather than a finger ring. It seems likely that the nails formed part of a coffin or grave covering rather than a separate composite artefact. The comb is double-sided (and hence perhaps Irish or Welsh in origin), but the burial practice is hardly indigenous.⁵⁴

Site / Location

Edwards's grid reference seems a little too far north for the original description, which notes that the burial was found half way between the Bay View estate and the cliff edge. The NGR given here reflects a mid-point on both axes, but is still an approximation. This places the burial on a northeast-facing slope close to the top of a cliff overlooking the sea. It was c.150m inland and c.50m above sea level, the precise details being difficult to determine due to the proximity of contour lines in the area. Steep cliffs are found to the north and south of this area, and the burial site is approximately half way between the points where two streams flow into the sea. Beyond these streams, there is higher ground, particularly to the south and west. The burial is close to the centre of Benllech Sands, and affords uninterrupted views to the northeast and east, but headlands obstruct views up and down the coast.

Interpretation

Although Edwards suggested that this was a possible burial, and Redknap seems equally uncertain, it fulfils the criteria for a definite tertiary inhumation.

145 (D1)

TALACRE, GWYNEDD

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Early 1930s

c. SJ 114 832

Inhumation (Definite)

Possible Mound / Stone

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Large Spearhead (c.50cm)

B. Knife

A burial discovered during the excavation of a cesspit for a new house, 9ft (2.7m) below the modern surface of a hill of sand, in a cist which was constructed on a (natural) waterlogged gravel layer. The cist was 6ft 6in (1.98m) long and 2ft 9in (0.84m) wide and orientated northeast, although it is not clear which way the skeleton was placed within in. The sides and covering were each composed of three flat slabs, with two more stones sealing the ends. Examination of the bones indicated that the individual was male, between 35 and 40, and 5ft 6-7in (1.68-1.70m) tall, and had an unusual additional molar. The spearhead was found 'among the long bones' (and hence presumably close to the individual's feet, while the position of the knife is not recorded. Six feet (1.83m) south of the cist and the same distance above its

⁵⁴ I. Williams, 'Recent finds in Anglesey: Benllech' in *Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Transactions* (No vol. no.) 1945, pp 21-2; Nancy Edwards, 'A possible Viking grave from Benllech, Anglesey' in *Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Transactions* (No vol. no.) 1985, pp 19-24; Mark Redknap, *Vikings in Wales: An Archaeological Quest* (Cardiff, 2000), pp 96-7

base was what Gilbert Smith interpreted as a boat shaped stone setting 4ft 6in (1.37m) x 1ft (0.30m) and 9in (0.23m) high, the long axis of this feature being at right angles to the cist. It should be pointed out, however, that a relationship between the two features cannot be demonstrated conclusively and they may be of different dates. Although 'extensive excavations' were carried out in the surrounding area, no other burials or contemporary archaeological material was recovered.⁵⁵

Site / Location

The original description of the burial site is exhaustive but confusing, and some aspects, such as the fact that it was 'half a mile' (c.805m) from the sea must be taken as approximations. The key piece of information is that it was 'some little distance' beyond the road to Talacre Station on the landward side of the road from Gronant to Ffynnongroew, a location represented by the NGR given here. However, most locations on this 1km section of road are very similar topographically. The site was clearly on slightly elevated ground, 16ft 6in (5m) OD, at the base of an inland cliff 100ft (c.30m) high according to Gilbert Smith, although the slope continues to rise to well over 100m. As such, the site afforded clear views over the flat sandy plain extending northeast towards the low-lying Point of Ayr, although views to the northwest and southeast were restricted by the same inland cliff onto which it backed. Today the site is c.750m from the nearest stretch of coast, although it may originally have been closer. At a more general level, the burial is on the west bank of the Dee estuary, close to its mouth, a position of some importance in the period.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within a cist and possibly beneath a mound. Although often treated as the burial 'of an ordinary member of a roving band', it is likely to be rather more significant.

146 (D1)

Ty Newydd, BARDSEY (Ynys Enlli), GWYNEDD SH 120 221

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

No Evidence (Christian cemetery?)

Date of Recovery 1993-8

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Coin (Eadgar, before c.973)

The remains of a minimum of 28 people were discovered during excavations under the site of a nineteenth century house c.50m south of the site of a thirteenth century Augustinian abbey. Five burials in a single mass grave were orientated north-south, with the remainder being orientated east-west. Only one grave contained any furnishings, and in this case the coin had been placed inside the corpse's mouth. This particular practice is not particularly closely associated with Scandinavia, although there is a parallel with a grave from St Patrick's Isle / Peel (160.6). The body was that of a mature male, aged c.40-45, and while absolute dating is difficult, had been cut by one other grave. This suggests that the grave was not clearly marked at surface level. As the excavation revealed the bodies of men, women, adolescents and

⁵⁵ F. G. Smith, 'Talacre and the Viking Grave' in *Proceedings of the Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and District Field Club* xvii (1933), pp 42-7; Redknap, *Vikings in Wales*, pp 94-6

children, the cemetery is unlikely to be directly associated with monastic activity on the island, particularly as the earliest references date to the twelfth century.⁵⁶

Site/Location

Ty Newydd is located on the west side of Mynydd Enlli at c.45m OD. Today, it is on a slight terrace, but this may be the result of the construction of the 19th century house rather than a feature of the landscape. As such, the site affords good views west and north over the more low-lying parts of the island, views to the east being blocked by higher ground (167m). It is c.400m from the sea at Bae'r Nant, a small but reasonably sheltered north-facing bay, but it is not certain that this feature is visible from the site.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, although its cultural affinities are perhaps more complex.

147 (D1)

ST MARY HILL, GLAMORGAN

C.SS 962 787

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1893

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Two Stirrups (undecorated)

A number of commentators, particularly Seaby and Woodfield, have suggested that this matching pair of undecorated stirrups of late ninth or early tenth century date may come from a pagan Viking grave in this area. The fact that a pair was recovered suggests this is not a case of casual loss, but their interpretation is more complex..⁵⁷

Site / Location

Unfortunately, no details of the provenance of these artefacts seem to have survived. The NGR given here is mid-way between the modern settlement of St Mary Hill and the hill known as St Mary Hill Down. Anywhere in this general area, the findspot would be on a southwest-facing slope and can hardly have been below the 20m contour (although equally it may have been as high as 120m). It overlooks a c.500m wide valley through which a stream flows northwest to join the Ogmore c.1.5km downstream. The site is c.9km from the nearest coast and 10km from the mouth of the Ogmore, both distances being in a straight line. The final 2.5km of the Ogmore however, flow along the south side of an extensive Dune system, and it is possible that this area of Treath yr Afon has come into existence since the Viking Age.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, if not with a horse then certainly with equine associations.

⁵⁶ C. J. Arnold, 'Excavation of 'Ty Newydd, Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island), Gwynedd' in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* cxlvii (1998), pp 96-132

⁵⁷ W. A. Seaby & Paul Woodfield, 'Viking stirrups from England and their background' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxiv (1980), pp 98, 118; Redknapp, *Vikings in Wales*, p.54, 97

148 (D1)

CAERWENT, GWENT
Weapon Burial (Probable)
Extant Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery 1899-1913

ST 468 905
No Evidence
No Evidence
Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (5)

- A. Spearhead
- B. Axehead
- C. Shears
- D. Arrowhead (poss.)
- E. Three lead weights (poss.)

A group of artefacts recovered during large-scale excavations of the Roman town of *Venta Silurum* (modern Caerwent) and within the perimeter of a pagan temple, although this had gone out of use a long time previously. Of slightly more relevance is the fact that the artefacts come from the northern edge of an early medieval cemetery, where at least some burials seem to date back to the seventh century and may be associated with the church of the Irish St Tatheus, allegedly founded within the walls of the Roman town in the fifth century. It must be stressed, however, that the artefacts were spread over a wide area, the arrowhead and possible weights cannot be identified today, and none were found in direct association with human remains.⁵⁸

Site / Location

Situated close to the centre of the area enclosed by the fourth century Roman walls, which would still have been visible at that time, and on the north edge of the cemetery associated with St Tatheus' church, this possible burial is situated just above the 25m contour, close to the top of a slight ridge. The walls would presumably have restricted views, although the site would otherwise overlook the valley of the Nedern Brook, the land rising steeply on the opposite side of the stream to over 80m. The site is c.3.5km from the sea and the estuary of the Nedern on the Bristol Channel.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial at a Roman and Christian site. It is possible that some of these artefacts came from different graves, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively.

149 (D1)

St Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, GWYNEDD
Tertiary Burial (Possible)
Christian Cemetery
Date of Recovery Before 1940

SH 536 712
No Evidence
No Evidence
Record Quality Mod

Artefacts (1)

- A. Ring-headed Pin

⁵⁸ J. K. Knight, 'Late Roman and post-Roman Caerwent: some evidence from metalwork', in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* cxlv (1996), pp 56-9; Redknapp, *Vikings in Wales*, pp 53, 97-8

In 1940, C. Fox reported the recovery of a tenth century ring-headed pin from the graveyard at Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. According to the finder, it was recovered at a depth of 9ft (2.7m) in an area of 'new ground', but it is difficult to see how the pin could have been found at such a depth without considerable soil movement. Although no obvious 'old graves' were recognised, it is at least possible that this artefact came from a grave, although it may also have been out of context when found.⁵⁹

Site / Location

The church of St Mary is a short distance outside the modern town, on sloping ground at the north end of a small valley, close to the source of a small stream which flows south into the Menai Strait less than 150m away. Between the 0 & 15m contours, it is overlooked by much higher land to the north and west, but affords clear views over the strait, particularly to the southeast, the view to the northeast being blocked by a slight spur of land.

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial in a Christina context, one of a substantial number represented by single ringed pins.

189 (D1)

Dove Point, MEOLS, MERSEYSIDE

c. SJ 231 905

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

No Evidence

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Nineteenth Century

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword
- B. Spearhead (Bent)
- C. Axehead
- D. Shield Boss

The extraordinary multi-period trading site at Meols was gradually exposed as a result of coastal erosion in the nineteenth century, and seems to have been focused on an area called Dove Point. More than 3,000 objects are known to have been recovered, and are currently being re-examined by Griffiths, Philpot and Egan. It has been suggested that four of these objects, listed here, may have come from a 'Viking grave' at the site, which may or may not be linked to an antiquarian reference to a 'British burial mound' in the area, although a more recent publication omits any reference to a sword.⁶⁰

Site / Location

The NGR given here refers to Dove Point, around which the Meols finds seem to have been focused. This is a low-lying area of dunes (less than 5m OD) on the north coast of the Wirral, and area which suffered up to 500m of erosion in the nineteenth

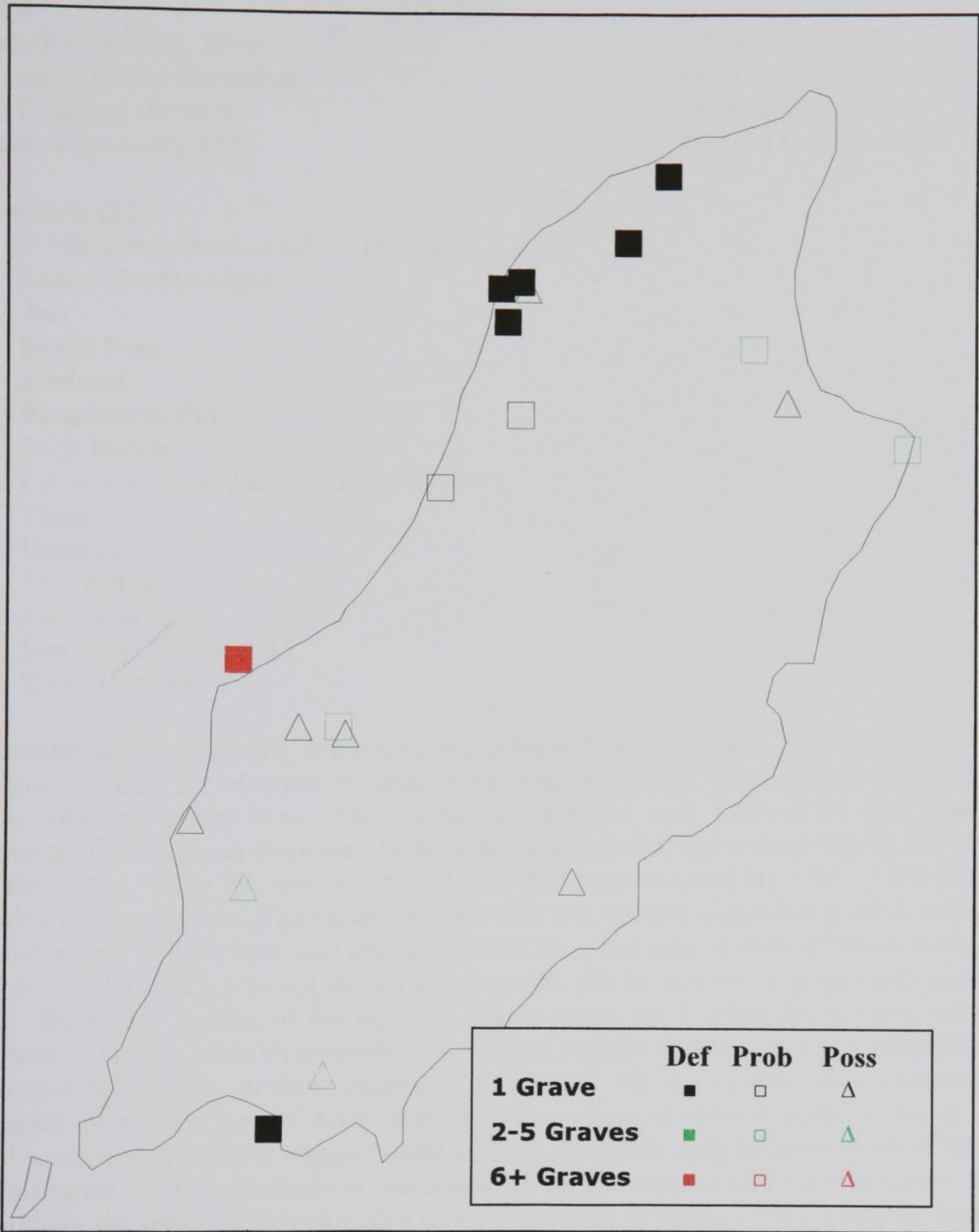
⁵⁹ Cyril Fox, 'An Irish bronze pin from Anglesey' in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* xcv (1940), p. 248

⁶⁰ David Griffiths, 'Great sites: Meols' in *British Archaeology* lxii (2001), pp 20-5; idem, 'Settlement and acculturation in the Irish Sea region' in John Hines, Alan Lane & Mark Redknap (eds), *Land, Sea and Home: SMA Monograph* xx (2004), pp 135-6

century. As a result, it is almost impossible to recreate the original topography of the area, although it can be suggested that the probable burial could not have been any further from the sea, and is likely to have been very much less. Given this erosion, it is impossible to establish any relationship between the burial and any bays or inlets. Although a number of Manx graves are associated with similar exposed sections of coast, the clear importance of the site as a trading centre would suggest that this was not originally the case here. Similarly, continuing erosion makes it impossible to discuss views from and two the site.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial.



Map – Zone E Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in the Isle of Man (Zone E).
 These burial sites correspond to Catalogue Entries 150 – 169

ZONE E (The Isle of Man)

Sites 150-169

150

Knock-e-Dooney, MAN
Weapon Burial (Definite)
No Evidence (flints?)
Date of Recovery 1927

NX 407 021
Inhumation (Definite)
Mound, Boat & Horse
Record Quality Good

Artefacts (14)

- A. *c.* 300 Rivets (boat, *c.* 8.5-9.1m long)
- B. Sword (double-edged)
- C. Axe
- D. Shield Boss
- E. Axehead
- F. Ring-headed Pin
- G. 2 CA buckles
- H. CA strap-ends and distributors (baldric?)
- I. Tongs
- J. Hammer
- K. Two Knives
- L. Fishing Weight
- M. Iron Bowl (0.38m dia.)
- N. Horse Harness

Although archaeologically excavated, the published report is brief, and occasionally vague, omitting, for example, the date of the excavation (1927, according to Megaw). The covering mound was 51ft (15.5m) in diameter and 7-8ft (2.1-2.4m) high, although figures given elsewhere in the text suggest it may have been slightly higher at the centre, while the area around its base had been lowered by 1-2ft (0.3-0.6m) during its construction. The mound's north side was already somewhat eroded, and a trench seems to have been dug into the mound from this side. A layer of small stones 6ft 8in (2.0m) thick covered the central deposits, this in turn being covered by sand and 'the grassy surface of the mound'. These stones were originally covered with 'pieces of broken white shore-pebbles', and may suggest that this core was originally intended to be seen. A short section of stone wall 7ft (2.1m) long was preserved beneath the western part of the mound and may suggest an older structure at the site, and some flints may also suggest older activity. Kermode only became aware of the significance of the boat rivets in the course of the excavation, and his description is confused, but when combined with a small illustration, it indicates that a boat 28-30ft (8.5-9.1m) long and somewhat fancifully described as 'a half-decked fishing smack' by the excavator was placed close to the centre of the mound, orientated NE-SW. It is not clear whether the boat rested on the surface or was sunk into some form of pit, although the latter hypothesis could explain discrepancies in heights of various layers within the mound. Close to the centre of the boat and 4ft (1.2m) NNE of the centre of the mound, the four weapons were found, together with what were later identified as a ringed pin, two CA buckles and the CA strap-ends and distributors (presumably a baldric, and of Anglo-Saxon origin according to Wilson). Two fragments of a human skull were also found in this area. The iron bowl, which had originally been covered with coarse cloth, was found together with a knife 5ft (1.8m) south-west of the

weapons, and a foot (0.3m) SW of these the smiths tools, the second knife and the fishing weight were found. A small pile of stones 20in (0.51m) in diameter were found 7ft (2.1m) SW of the centre of the mound, close to one end of the boat, while the remains of 'a rather big-headed old nag' were found together with a harness at the other end of the boat, 17ft (5.2m) NE of the mound's centre. Kermodé's sketch map suggests it had been placed inside the boat, but this is not absolutely clear. The only other feature under the mound was a small area of 'soft decayed animal matter' 15in (0.38m) in diameter and 12ft (3.7m) from its centre. Somewhat bizarrely, Kermodé suggested this was the remains of a dog, which should perhaps be treated in the same way as his identification of the iron bowl as a *hlaut-bolli* or 'final offering to Odin'. His (artefact-based) tenth century date for the burial is a little less controversial.¹

Site/Location

This is one of the few Viking burial sites specifically marked on the Landranger series, although typically Kermodé's description confuses the issue somewhat. The burial was situated at 182ft, corresponding to the modern spot height (55m), on a narrow NE-SW ridge 1.1km from the modern coast, this being the highest point between the coast and the hills around Snaefell, c.8km to the S, with the only adjacent higher ground to the east (96m). Consequently, the site affords excellent views in all directions, including north and northwest towards the coast of Galloway and the North Channel, c.30 and 40km away respectively. The fact that the mound was most eroded on its north side also suggests the ground sloped in that direct, but Kermodé, states that this 'early settler... had his back to the sea and faced the plain (to the south)'. Given the site, he is surely speaking metaphorically. The coast to the north forms one long strand today, with no sheltered beaching spot, and its stability is not entirely certain, the 10m contour being some 600m inland.

Interpretation

Despite problems with some of details, a definite weapon inhumation within a boat, accompanied by a horse, and one of the most prominent and elaborately furnished FISBs ever found.

151

Ballachrink, MAN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Prehistoric mound?

Date of Recovery c.1880

SC392 997

Unknown

Mound & Cist

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead (shouldered)

C. Stone bead (?)

¹ P. M. C. Kermodé, 'Ship-burial in the isle of Man' in *The Antiquaries Journal* x (1930), pp 126-33; Anathon Bjørn & Haakon Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in England*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv (Oslo, 1940), pp 23-25; B. R. S. Megaw, 'Weapons of the Viking age found in Man' in *Journal of the Manx Museum* iii (1937), p.234; Gerhard Bersu & D. M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves from the Isle of Man: SMA Monograph* i (London, 1966), p.55

Megaw cites an (unpublished) note by one F.S. Tellet which states that these two fragmentary weapons were found in a 'flagged cist' together with a 'perforated stone disc'. The latter does not survive, but is perhaps more likely to have been a bead than the more obvious spindle whorl. The cist was in one of a pair of barrows, but no prehistoric artefacts are recorded from either and their relative dates are unknown. Cubbon, however, seems to have been convinced both were Viking Age. The weapons indicate a tenth century date.²

Site / Location

As Cubbon notes that the mound now called 'Knock-y-Dowan' at Ballachrink was originally one of pair, it seems certain that the 'tumulus' marked on the modern OS map effectively marks the site of the (now destroyed) tumulus which contained the weapon burial. As such, the burial was in a prominent position, just above the 20m contour and overlooking the shallow Lhen valley to the east and north, the burial effectively occupying a crest above it. There is slightly higher ground to the north and east, on the far side of the river, which is 0.5km away and over 10m lower. The sea is 2.3km to the northwest in a direct line, and 3.5km following the course of the river.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in a cist under a mound, even though there are no specific references to human remains.

152

Jurby Churchyard, MAN
Weapon Burial (Probable)
Christian churchyard
Date of Recovery c.1930

SC 350 985
Unknown
Mound?
Record Quality V. Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged?)

According to Megaw, citing Cubbon, the sexton of Kirk Patrick, Jurby, uncovered part of a Viking sword with a lobed pommel while digging a grave in the churchyard there 'some years before' 1937. The vicar reinterred it, but provided a sketch showing it had a lobed pommel. Jurby churchyard also contained a number of Norse sculptures and a burial mound that is generally believed Viking Age in date. Freke has recently noted that the bank of an early cemetery is still visible at the site, and that the mound lies within it. Richards has suggested that the sword came from a burial associated with this mound (now covered with more modern graves), but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively and it may have come from another part of the cemetery, although presumably still within the enclosure.³

² Megaw, 'Weapons', pp 234-5; A. M. Cubbon, *The Ancient and Historic Monuments of the Isle of Man* (Douglas, 4th Ed., 1973), p.40; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.25

³ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235; Cubbon, *Ancient and Historic Monuments*, pp 40, 41; David Freke, *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking Medieval and Later: Centre for Manx Studies Monograph ii* (Liverpool, 2002), p.73; J. D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed., London, 1991), p.104

Site / Location

The artificial mound at Jurby is 40 yards (c.37m) north of the church, with both marked on Landranger sheet 95, and the possible burial was certainly from this general area. Like the church, it stood on a slight hill just above the 30m contour, with views over the flat land to the east, and to the west down a slight valley, as well as more restricted views to the north. The modern coastline is c.450m to the northwest, and like most of the north and west coast of Man, is an exposed beach with cliffs behind it. These cliffs are, however, lower in the area immediately adjacent to the church. While the beach itself need not have been visible, the site does provide clear views of the sea to the northwest and west.

Interpretation

Although the sword does not survive, and there are no specific references to human remains, a probable weapon burial from a Christian site, that may have been associated with a mound.

153

Cronk Moar, MAN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1939 & 1945

SC 343 982

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Shield Boss (& 3 nails?)
- D. Ringed pin
- E. Distributor & Strap End (baldric?)
- F. Knife

The excavation of this mound was begun by Ifor Bowen immediately before the outbreak of WWII, when he levelled a badly eroded mound 10-11m in diameter and c.3m high composed of local sand, but with some fragmentary charcoal, burnt bone, ash, slag and shell. The lower levels of the site (including the chamber) were excavated by Bersu at the end of the Second World War. He found evidence for a series of prehistoric postholes and a ditch below the mound, and this settlement may have been the source of some of the material in the mound. Cutting the postholes on the south side of the mound were a series of plough furrows, which Bersu believed to be of Viking Age date, although his argument is not entirely convincing. A larger ditch on the north side of the mound, extending WNW-ESE parallel to the plough furrows was interpreted as a contemporary field boundary. The body had been placed in a rectilinear pit, 2.15 x 0.9m and 0.7m deep, and orientated east-west, which had been lined with wood. Bersu thought this represented a coffin, but Wilson suggested it was a form of grave chamber, with a substantial wooden beam 2.7m long partially overlying the pit representing some form of ridgepole. Within the chamber, some skull and teeth fragments were found close to its west end, indicating an extended inhumation. The ringed pin and knife were found in the chest area, while what was interpreted as the remains of a baldric (although the strap end seems to have originated as an insular book strap) was to the skeleton's left, the sword also being on that side with the hilt rather further west than the waist. It had been buried in a

decorated leather scabbard and was in three pieces, although it is not certain if this was deliberate. The body had been wrapped in a shaggy cloak that contained the remains of many fly puparia, and it has been suggested that this indicates the body lay in state for some time before burial. The spearhead was found at one end of the pit, 45cm above its floor, while the shield boss was stratigraphically above the beam, and must have rested on the roof of the chamber/coffin. The mound was then raised, but unlike Ballateare (154) there was no evidence for a central post or distinct layer of cremated bone, although it is possible that these had been eroded prior to excavation, and the abovementioned fragments of charcoal and burnt bone may represent the remains of this feature. No artefacts in the assemblage allowed a precise date to be established.⁴

Site / Location

According to Bersu & Wilson, the mound at Ballateare was 30m from a cliff which was steadily eroding and stood on a slight rise affording a 'wide and commanding view' in what was otherwise level ground. The NGR given in that text is incorrect, but the mound of Cronk Moar is marked on a nineteenth century OS map. It was close to the 20m contour and had excellent sea views from the north to the southwest, the views over the flat land of the interior also being good. The burial site at Jurby churchyard (152) 750m to the NE was almost certainly visible, and the site also afforded views in the general direction of Ballateare (154), 1.1km to the south.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in a wooden chamber beneath a mound.

154

Ballateare, MAN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Neolithic flat cemetery

Date of Recovery October-November 1946

SC 344 970

Inhumation

Mound

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (8)

- A. Sword (double-edged; broken)
- B. Spearhead (Dublin type?)
- C. Spearhead (Norwegian)
- D. Spearhead (Norwegian; decorated)
- E. Shield Boss (Scandinavian; damaged)
- F. Three CA strap-ends etc (baldric; Anglo-Saxon)
- G. Ring-headed Pin
- H. Knife (in leather scabbard)

Excavated under controlled conditions by Bersu, this grave lay under a mound originally *c.* 12m in diameter and *c.* 3m high, which was excavated in quadrants using 20cm spits, with the lowest deposits around the coffin being boxed and excavated at the museum. The mound had covered and protected a group of at least ten deposits of cremated bone dating from the Neolithic, although the excavator was confident that no mounds or other markers were visible at the surface when the Viking Age burial was created. An east-west pit 2.1 x 0.7m and 1.2 deep was cut into the original

⁴ Bersu & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, pp 63-83; Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed.), pp 107-8

ground surface, into which was placed a 1.8 x 0.4 x 0.4m coffin originally containing an extended skeleton with its head to the west. The possibility that this was a chamber rather than a coffin must also be considered. Although only a few fragments of skull and teeth had survived, this was sufficient to allow him to be aged to 20-25. The sword lay in pieces close to the body's left leg, with the various strap ends around it, suggesting it was not attached to the body. The smallest and most elaborately decorated spearhead lay point down along its left leg, while the ringed pin was close to the left side of the skull, where it presumably held a woollen garment in place. The knife suggested seems to have been placed resting on its chest. Outside the coffin, on its S side was the shield boss and a fragmentary shield board, while the two larger spearheads rested on the foot of the coffin. All three spearheads may well have been broken before deposition, as they would have been exceptionally short otherwise. Once the pit had been backfilled, the covering mound was built up using layers of sod 20cm thick, until it was 1.2m high. This would have required stripping more than 500m² of topsoil, and Bersu suggested that the sods were taken from several different areas, all at some distance from the site. On top of this low mound of turves, the body of a woman aged 20-30 who had almost certainly been killed by a blow to the back of the head was laid out north-south, apparently with her arms upwards, and was then partially covered by a layer of cremated animal bone c.3m in diameter and 3in (8cm) thick, which included the remains of cattle, horse, sheep and dog. This material had not been burned *in situ*. At the top of the mound, and partially filled by the cremated material, was a substantial post-hole, 70cm in diameter and 40cm deep, with a pointed base. Richards in particular has drawn attention to the importance of this feature as some form of marker for the site. The remaining portion of the mound was then built up. The artefacts suggest a tenth century burial.⁵

Site / Location

Bersu & Wilson provide a comprehensive account of the burial site, noting that it was on 'a slight rise' just above the 50ft (15m) contour on the north side of the shallow marshy valley of the Killane, c.250m away. The sea was c.500m away in 1966, and is c.450m away today, perhaps a result of extensive erosion of up to a metre a year, noted by Wilson. As with the rest of the north-west coast of Man, the shore is an exposed beach backed by cliffs, although the section where the Killane meets the shore c.500m to the southwest SW is a notable exception. The site afforded 'a wide view over the sea, the distant mountains to the south and the plain to the north'.⁶

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation under a mound, perhaps consciously associated with prehistoric burials, and one of the few examples of possible human sacrifice in the study area.

⁵ Bersu & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, pp 45-62; Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed.), p.106-7; Marshall Cubbon, 'The archaeology of the Vikings in the isle of Man' in Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell & Robert Thomson (eds), *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man* (London, 1983), p.16; G. Bersu, 'A cemetery of the Ronaldsway culture at Ballateare, Jurby, Isle of Man', in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society New Ser.* xiii (1947), pp 161-9

⁶ Bersu & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p.45

155

Ballaugh, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery February 1824

SC 3494 9346

Inhumation (Probable)

Mound?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead

These artefacts were discovered lying parallel to each other in an area of dark discolouration 6-7ft (1.8-2.1m) beneath the surface in February 1824. Anderson suggested there was evidence for a 'small gravelly mound', but Megaw (who had access to a second source) was less convinced. Traces of the spear shaft and the sword scabbard were visible when the artefacts were first recovered, which suggests that this was probably an inhumation. The sword was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by one J. R. Oswald (see also St Maughold: 158.1), but the spearhead has been lost.⁷

Site / Location

Oswald noted that these artefacts were found 'whilst digging foundations for a threshing machine in the rear of a house in the main street of the village', and the 1870 six inch sheet for the area marks the site of the discovery with a cross. It was in a flat area just above the 30m contour at the point where it formed a very slight spur, affording views over the flat land to the north and northeast, although views of the sea 2.6km away to the NW would have been comparatively restricted by higher ground. The stream that reaches the coast at this point flows c.150m W of the site and is unlikely to have been visible from it, although the site provides a clear view up the narrow Glen Dhoo to the south. Half a kilometre to the southeast the ground begins to rise steeply to the ridge of Gob y Volley (250m) and the central hills of Man.⁸

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial, probably an inhumation, perhaps associated with a mound.

156.1

Cronk yn How, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

'Keill' Site

Date of Recovery Before 1930

SC 436 956

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence (Cist)

Record Quality Mod

Artefacts (3)

A. Knife

B. Iron 'button'

⁷ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the relics of the Viking period of the Northmen in Scotland, illustrated by specimens in the Museum' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* x (1874), pp 567-8; Megaw, 'Weapons', pp 235-6; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.22

⁸ Oswald's information is cited in *ibid.*; www.oldmaps.co.uk (accessed 20 Oct 2007)

C. Composite Iron & Wood Artefact (?)

A confusing site, both stratigraphically and in terms of the material produced, that has been ignored by most commentators. A substantial mound 42ft (12.8m) in diameter and 4ft 6in (1.4m) high, which the excavators assumed had been created as single event in the period before the Viking Age, it contained numerous lintel and coffin graves, although acidic soil conditions had destroyed almost all of the bones associated with these burials. Although numerous nails and rivets were found at the site, Bersu's suggestion that a boat burial occupied the site prior to the construction of the keill site cannot be substantiated. Only one burial at the site was furnished. This was 6ft (1.8m) northeast of a later stone structure, presumably a high medieval church, and close to the base of the mound. Orientated east-west, the knife was found close to the right hand, while the badly corroded iron button (possibly even a buckle) was at the thighs. The composite artefact, represented by a series of rivets, was close to the feet. Interestingly the head had been covered with a small slab, the upper face of which was marked with a simple incised cross, while the lower face (that in contact with the skull) was marked with a compass-drawn hexefoil. Although the excavator believed that this burial was Viking Age in date, there is no real evidence to support this, and there seems to be no evidence whatsoever to support the suggestion that the body was buried under the original keill at the site. A Viking Age bead was recovered from the site, but from the remains of a small chest, presumably buried for safekeeping, with no evidence for an associated burial. Much the same problems are associated with the horse-skeleton from the site (see 156.2). Site development is extremely difficult to reconstruct, but the excavators certainly believed that the raised mound was Christian and predated the Viking Age activity at the site.⁹

Site / Location

The site of Cronk yn How is marked on the current Landranger Sheet as a 'tumulus'. Just above the 10m contour, the excavators noted that the ground sloped away steeply to the southeast, but the modern map suggests rather that it falls away to the north towards the former site of Lough Mallow. The site seem to overlook this shallow valley, views being restricted in all directions by higher ground, although the substantial bulk of North Barrule (565m) must have been visible to the south. The site is 1.5km from the coast at a section of exposed beach, although the Sulby estuary a kilometre further south would have provided a more sheltered landfall.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, despite some difficulties with dating and stratigraphy.

156.2

Cronk yn How, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

'Keill' Site

Date of Recovery Before 1930

SC 436 956

Inhumation?

No Evidence (Cist)

Record Quality Moderate

⁹ J. R. Bruce & William Cubbon, 'Cronk yn How. An early Christian and Viking site, at Lezayre, Isle of Man' in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* lxxxv (1930), pp 267-308; Basil Megaw, 'Norseman and native in the Kingdom of the Isles. A re-assessment of the Manx evidence' in Peter Davey (ed.), *Man and Environment in the Isle of Man: BAR British Series* liv (2 vols, Oxford, 1978), ii, 298

Artefacts (1)

A. Horse skeleton

In addition to the furnished burial from the north-east part of the site, Bruce and Cubbon noted the presence of a pit some distance from the west end of the later church (to which it was not stratigraphically related). The pit was 5ft 6in (1.7m) deep and 6ft 6in (2.0m) by 3ft (0.9m) at its base, with sloping sides. Within it was found some badly decayed remnants of the skeleton of a horse, together with a portion of iron horseshoe, a nail and some iron slag. While there is no evidence for an associated human skeleton, and it is entirely possible that this represents a later deposition, the presence of a horse skeleton in an otherwise Christian cemetery is sufficiently unusual to at least raise the possibility of a horse burial at the site. At the same time, the probable burial at the site is some 25ft (7.6m) to the east and therefore unlikely to be directly related. Similar evidence for a horse skeleton without other obvious grave goods at a Christian site comes from Sedgeford, Norfolk (125) and Saffron Walden, Essex (137.2).¹⁰

Site / Location

Part of the same mound as 156.1

Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, although the evidence is very tenuous.

157

Claghbane, MAN

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery September 1979

SC 449 935

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality V. Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Sword (double edged; bent)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Shield Boss (Dublin type) & shield fittings
- D. Bead

An enigmatic find, initially uncovered during machine topsoil stripping in advance of housing construction, and subsequently excavated over three days. Stripping to 13in (0.33m), the machine had broken off the lower part of the sword, apparently bent to *c.*90° and placed with its point uppermost and its hilt resting on a *c.*22in (0.56m) shield board placed flat on the ground with the shield boss uppermost. The bead was found close by, as were the fragmentary and disturbed remains of the spearhead. Although this material had been buried well below the original surface, no trace of a cut was found, nor was there any evidence for associated human remains. This led the excavator to suggest that these weapons were some form of ritual deposit, such as a cenotaph, perhaps linked to ideas in the *Ynglingasaga* or to a more conventional Christian burial elsewhere. It should be noted, however, that bone seems rarely to survive in the acidic conditions of Man, and Richards, for example, includes the site in his map of 'Viking burials' on the Isle of Man, although he also notes the

¹⁰ Bruce & Cubbon, 'Cronk yn How', p.286

'cenotaph' interpretation. The sword is Petersen type L, one of the more common types from Man, and dates from the late ninth or tenth century.¹¹

Site / Location

The deposit was recovered from 'an evenly-sloping area' close to the 40m contour at the mouth of Elfin Glen, c.100m from a steep 100m slope that continues to rise more gently to North Barrule (565m), although the latter summit is not visible from the site. It is approximately 150m from the stream which flows out of the Glen and c.900m from the coast. The site was clearly an excellent vantage point, affording views to the west, north and east over the Sulby valley and its estuary and beyond over the northern plain.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial, despite Cubbon's conviction that it represented some other type of ritual deposit.

158.1

St Maughold Churchyard, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery Before 1816

SC 493 917

Inhumation (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword

B. Spearhead (lost)

A fragmentary sword from the churchyard at St Maughold was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by J.R. Oswald in 1824 (see also Ballaugh: 155), and had been recovered by him from under the seat of the clerk's desk at the church, where it had been 'thrown with the other rubbish' following its recovery 'many years before'. Additional information on the find was provided by one S.N. Harrison, who noted that 'old swords and daggers' had been dug up southwest of the (high medieval) church. These (lost) 'daggers' were presumably spearheads. St Maughold was a clearly a Christian site of considerable importance before the Viking Age, and contains the remains of four keeills, as well as almost a third of the pre-Norse stone crosses known on Man.¹²

Site / Location

The ecclesiastical site at St Maughold is located between the 60 and 70m contours on a south-west facing slope on the south side of Ramsey Bay, although high ground to the north falling in 80m cliffs to the Bay 400m away effectively obstruct views in that direction. Instead, the site overlooks a narrow but comparatively flat-floored valley falling to a beach at Port Mooar 1km SSW of the site, and affords clear views across the sea to the southeast and south, but views are otherwise restricted to the valley.

¹¹ A. M. Cubbon, 'Find of a Viking sword, spear and shield at Claghbane, Ramsey, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* viii.4 (1982), pp 439-457; Richards, *Viking Age England* (1st Ed.), fig.62, p.108

¹² Anderson, 'Relics', pp 568-9; Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.23

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial at a well-established Christian site.

158.2

St Maughold Churchyard, MAN

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery After 158.2 (but before 1816)

SC 493 917

Inhumation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. 'Pieces of' 'old swords and daggers'

The same note which provides evidence for at least one spearhead accompanying the sword now in the National Museums of Scotland also provides limited evidence for at least one other weapon burial at St Maughold. In addition to using the plural of both 'swords' and 'daggers', Harrison notes that he remembered 'pieces of others...dug up at a later date'. While it is possible that they may all have come from a single, well-furnished weapon grave disturbed on two separate occasions, it seems rather more likely that at least two graves were present. As only the NMS sword is extant, however, this cannot be substantiated.¹³

Site / Location

Harrison's description implies that the second group of finds were found reasonably close to the first, SW of the parish church (see 158.1).

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial, an interpretation reflecting minimum numbers.

159

St Michael's Church, KIRK MICHAEL, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery April 1895

SC 317 908

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead

In 1937, Megaw noted that a spearhead in the Manx Museum had a label noting that it had been 'found while digging a grave in Michael churchyard, April '95'. This is the only information available on this find, although the spearhead is clearly of a Viking Age type, while the church has the largest collection of Norse sculpture on the island. The fact that a number of pre-Norse stones are also present confirms that the church was in existence when the spearhead was deposited.¹⁴

Site / Location

¹³ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235

¹⁴ Ibid., p.235

Kirk Michael church stands just above the 30m contour, on gently sloping ground that falls away into a shallow, narrow valley to the north. The coast is c.550m to the northwest, where the beach is backed by cliffs over 30m high for several kilometres in both directions. Although it is possible that some shelter may have been available at the stream mouth, the beach is otherwise very exposed. The slightly larger Cooil Dharry stream 800m south west of the site may also have provided some shelter. Half a kilometre to the east, the ground begins to rise steeply towards Slieau Curn (351m), but the areas to the north and south are comparatively flat, with the exception of the two valleys. The site would have afforded extensive views seaward, particularly to the north west but views along the coast would have been very much more restricted.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial in a Christian context.

160.1

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist / Lintel Grave

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (10)

- A. 71 Glass, Amber & Jet Beads
- B. Pierced Ammonite & two amber beads
- C. 'Pestle & Mortar
- D. Cooking Spit / *Seiðr Stafr*
- E. Shears
- F. 'Workbox' w/ needles
- G. 'Toilet Set' (CA & organic material)
- H. Iron Knife (silver wire handle)
- I. Iron Knife (wooden handle)
- J. Comb (single-sided)

The most elaborately furnished of seven FISBs discovered during an extensive research project on St Patrick's Isle, the 'pagan lady's grave (I – 84.16/L – 483) had been placed in a particularly elaborate lintel grave with a double layer of capstones, although it was also the only lintel grave in the cemetery without end stones. The body of an adult female, aged over forty and 1.65m tall, who had been suffering from a serious vitamin D deficiency, was placed in this cist, orientated at 294°. The main string of beads was found clustered around her head, while the ammonite and two amber beads were at the waist, where it was suggested they had been suspended from a girdle. Analysis indicated that the beads had been produced in a range of locations, and that some of them may have been of considerable antiquity at the time of burial. The 'cooking spit' (perhaps a *seiðrstafr*) was placed along her right side and preserved the impression of a series of cloth layers, together with a bird's contour feathers and traces of a bag or packet of seeds. The shears and comb were laid along the right leg, and may also have been suspended from the girdle, and the miniature pestle and mortar was placed at their points. The knife with the silver wire hilt was found at the pelvis, and may also have been suspended from the girdle, while the wooden handled knife was at the right side, also at the waist. The suggested 'toilet

set' (8 CA fragments, 3 glass beads, a metal ring and 'an organic mass' had been placed on the chest, while the 'workbox' had been placed under the skull and over the right shoulder, where it had also preserved traces of what seems to have been a feather-stuffed pillow. Traces of textiles were preserved through contact with a number of iron items, and it was suggested that the spit had been wrapped in fine cloth, although it also preserved traces of at least three layers of cloth that were almost certainly worn by the woman. Interpretations of the burial by Graham-Campbell and Freke focus on the domestic aspects of the burial, with even the feathers being seen as dusters, flour spreaders or basting tools, but even using a less comprehensive report, Price has suggested that the cooking spit may have been a *seiðrstafr*, or magic staff, and the clear talismanic qualities of other objects in the grave would tend to give added support to this interpretation. The fact the burial otherwise mimics Christian practices and occurs in a Christian cemetery further emphasises the complexities associated with linking burial practices with religious associations.¹⁵

Site / Location

St Patrick's Isle, sometimes known as Holm Patrick, is a small island on the west side of the 500m Neb estuary, one of the only sheltered harbours on the west coast of. Rising to 25.45m, the island is now connected to the north side of the 148m Peel Hill by a causeway, but there may originally have been a channel between the two, certainly at high water. The modern excavations have recovered evidence for prehistoric settlement, which seems to have been permanent from the Iron Age onwards, but none of these features would have been visible at surface level when the mid-tenth century burials occurred. The east part of the island was, however, already a Christian cemetery, and potentially one of comparatively high status, given that a substantial proportion of the burials (a minimum of 16) were placed in lintel or long cist graves. Like the other FISBs at this site, this example more or less follows the east-west orientation of the surrounding Christian burials. To the south and east of the FISBs, the substantial foundations of a small keeill were found, and while the precise chronology is uncertain, it seems likely that it was constructed at approximately the same time, or perhaps slightly before the burials. To the northeast, on the other hand, the remains of what was interpreted as an Early Medieval cemetery wall was discovered. Again, the precise date is problematic, but it certainly predated a Late Norse defensive bank of c.AD1000, which overlay it. All the burials in this group were 25-30m from the sea, and 16-18m above sea level. Assuming the cemetery wall was not particularly extensive, there would have been clear views over the Nab estuary to the east, but views to the north and west (the open sea) would have been limited by higher ground.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial in a Christian context, this is one of the best furnished of this group. Possible magical associations are discussed in more detail in the text.

¹⁵ David Freke, 'The cemeteries: the excavated evidence', in idem, *St Patrick's Isle*, pp 61-3 & 66-9; James Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves: the Viking-age artefacts and their significance' in Freke, *St Patrick's Isle*, pp 82-7; J. Henderson, 'An archaeological and scientific study of 47 glass beads', in Freke, *St Patrick's Isle*, pp 349-62; N. S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia: Aun xxxi* (Uppsala, 2002), pp 160-1

160.2

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Cist / Lintel Grave

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (4)

A. CA Ringed Pin

B. CA Buckle

C. *Min.* 18 silver wire cones / balls

D. Coin (Eadmund 939-46)

A second FISB in a lintel grave found during the excavations at St Patrick's Isle (II – 84.16/L – 420), this example, orientated at 277°, was rather less substantial and more damaged than that associated with 160.1. It contained the poorly decayed remains of an adult, *c.*1.7m tall, and probably male. The silver balls are believed to have ornamented the hem of a light cloak which had been used as a shroud, the ringed pin having been found above the head and the buckle at the knees, where they could have been used to secure this item. The coin was found on the floor of the grave, but was nonetheless considered residual by Graham-Campbell. Although the use of the cloak as a kind of shroud might be taken as a Christian influence, the fact that some human remains were arranged around the corpse confuses the issue somewhat. Two femurs and a tibia were placed across the chest, and some arm bones framed the head. While it is possible that these bones were residual and included in a desire to be 'tidy', some form of ritual activity sounds at least equally plausible.¹⁶

Site / Location

Found less than 1m S of the well-furnished woman's grave (160.1).

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial within a cist at a Christian site.

160.3

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Four silver wire balls

The burial of an adult orientated at 268°, with poorly preserved bone and no information on sex or height (III – 85.60/L – 595). Definitely not buried in a coffin, it was accompanied by four silver balls very similar to those in 160.2, which seem to have decorated the hem of a short cape or shawl, and which may have been used as a shroud, although the position of the balls suggests the cloth only reached the pelvis. No other artefacts were found in the grave.¹⁷

¹⁶ Freke, 'Cemeteries', pp 69-70; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', pp 87-9

¹⁷ Freke, 'Cemeteries', p.71; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', p.89

Site / Location

Although the precise site of this grave cannot be established, it was southeast of the 'pagan lady's grave (160.1), and cannot have been more than 6m from it.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial within a Christian cemetery, albeit one only accompanied by clothing. Compare some of the Repton burials (123.07-09).

160.4

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Chest?

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (7)

- A. Ringed Pin
- B. CA Buckle
- C. CA Strap End
- D. Comb (rivets only)
- E. Iron object (awl/knife?)
- F. Possible purse?
- G. Composite Chest (17 nails & hasp)

Another poorly furnished burial (IV – 85.60/L – 1155), possibly male, and aligned at 279°. It had been placed in a chest 1.65 x 0.32m and with a curved wooden lid, and as such has parallels with a number of English sites such as Ripon, where some examples of this practice predate the Viking Age. Viking Age examples of the practice are also known from York Minster (114.7 & 114.8) and Repton (124.10). The ringed pin was found placed obliquely over the lower chest and had been passed through several folds of cloth. The excavators believed it had been used as a shroud pin. The buckle and strap end were found as though holding a belt in place, with the strap end hanging down. The comb and awl / knife were found on the left side, and may have been suspended from the belt, while the possible purse was in a similar position on the right side. If a shroud was used, therefore, it covered a clothed body.¹⁸

Site / Location

This body was found c.6m south of the 'pagan lady's grave (160.1).

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation at a Christian site, probably within a chest.

¹⁸ Freke, 'Cemeteries', p.70; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', pp 90-1

160.5

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (4)

A. CA buckle/w decorated plate

B. CA mount & strap end

C. Iron knife w/glass ornament

D. Composite artefact (box?)

This burial (V – 84.16/L – 629) was definitely not associated with a coffin, and bone decay meant that it could only be identified as that of an adult oriented at 266°. The knife was in a scabbard decorated with a glass ball and was suspended from the belt on the left side, the buckle being in position. A gilt mount and second strap end were found in an organic mass between the legs, perhaps a box, and a second, more certain box, represented by four small pins, had been placed under the head.¹⁹

Site / Location

Although the precise location of the burial has not been published, it was one of those southeast of the 'pagan lady's grave, and cannot have been more than 6m from it.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation within a Christian context, accompanied by a number of unidentified composite artefacts.

160.6

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth cut

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. Coin (halfpenny, Eadred 946-55)

B. Nail

This burial (VI – 85.60/L – 682), orientated at 272°, contained the supine body of a child *c.*1.4m high, intact from the head to the knees, but considered uncoffined as only a single nail was found in the fill. The coin was found under the right side of the jaw, and was almost certainly originally placed in the mouth as a kind of Charon's obol. Graham-Campbell noted that this practice is also known in Scandinavia, although the closest (only?) insular example is the grave of a mature adult male from Ty Newydd, Bardsey (146: Gwynedd).²⁰

¹⁹ Freke, 'Cemeteries', p.71; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', pp 91-4

²⁰ Freke, 'Cemeteries', p.71; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', p.94

Site / Location

This grave was one of those southeast of the 'pagan lady's grave (160.1), and cannot have been more than 4m from it.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial in a Christian context, one of the few children's graves in this study (but compare Cnip 050.2 and Balnakeil 033).

160.7

St Patrick's Isle, PEEL, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 1982-8

SC 241 845

Inhumation (Definite)

Coffin

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

A. CA bell

B. *Min.* 6 glass & 2 amber beads

C. 6 nails (from coffin)

This burial was identified as that of a child on the basis of its size. It was found in a coffin which was held together with six nails. The bell and 3 of the beads were found near the child's neck, with the other beads being recovered from the grave fill during sieving. A second, very similar bell was recovered from a disturbed context at St Patrick's Isle and these artefacts have been discussed in detail by Batey. Freke has argued that blue beads recovered from the fills of thirteen later (post-tenth century) graves at this site actually come from this grave, which was disturbed in antiquity.²¹

Site / Location

See 160.1

Interpretation

A definite tertiary burial, the second of a child at this Christian site (see also 160.6).

161

BALLABROOIE, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Spring 1964

SC 263 819

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

The hilt and upper part of the blade of this sword was discovered while using new 'grubbing' techniques in a long-cultivated field, and no other material was discovered in the area. Cubbon suggested that ploughing could have removed all traces of a mound and chamber, but there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. Interestingly, this is one of the last publications to suggest the blade might represent

²¹ Freke, 'Cemeteries', p.66, 70; Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', pp 94-5; C. E. Batey, 'A Viking-age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxii (1988), pp 213-6

casual or battle-related 'loss'. The sword seems to have been buried in its scabbard and X-rays indicated the blade was pattern welded.²²

Site / Location

The sword was recovered from a site c.225m south of the Neb, and although not shown on the current 1:50:000 sheet, Cubbon noted that it was found 'on the crest of a clearly marked rise in the ground', on the river terrace 15-20ft (4.6-6.1m) above the floodplain, affording clear views across the valley and downstream. The site is just below the 30m contour, and at the base of a concave slope which rises towards the 250m north spur of Slieau Whallian (333m). The ground on the far side of the valley is rather flatter, but rises to over 70m in places. The site is 2.9km from the south side of Peel Bay, and 4.2km from the Neb estuary, following the course of the river.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation

162.1

Giant's Grave, ST JOHN'S, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Bronze Age Mound

Date of Recovery Before 1860

SC 277 819

No Evidence

Cist / Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

- A. Axehead
- B. Stirrup
- C. Beads (a 'handful')

According to Megaw, these artefacts were discovered by a Frank Matthews of Glenmoor, c.500m N of the modern settlement of St John's. The road between the two settlements cuts through an Early Bronze Age mound, the cist of which is still visible on the west side of the road. The finds were recovered from a 'much smaller' cist on the same side of the road, apparently further west in the same mound. The identification of the remains as Viking Age hinges on the (iron) axe and an early illustration of the beads, as all the artefacts are now lost. See also 161.2.²³

Site / Location

This site is c.30 yards (27m) north of Tynwald Hill, which many commentators believe may have prehistoric origins, although this has never been demonstrated conclusively. In an area of comparatively flat land just above the 40m contour and about 250m east of the River Neb, the site seems slightly raised above its floodplain, with the best views down the valley towards (but not to) Peel. The coast on the south side of Peel Bay is 3.75km in a direct line, and it is just over 5.5km following the river to its estuary below St Patrick's Isle. There is a low (90m) hill immediately to the east, and other low hills on the far side of the River, but the view to the south is dominated by Sieau Whallian (333m) and its north-east spur.

²² A. M. Cubbon, 'A Viking sword from Ballabrooie, Patrick, with evidence of pattern-welding' in *Journal of the Manx Museum* vii: 81 (1965), pp 249-53

²³ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235; Cubbon, *Ancient and Historic Monuments*, p.33

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial, based on the Viking Age date of the beads.

162.2

Giant's Grave, ST JOHN'S, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Bronze Age Mound (close to)

Date of Recovery Before 1937

SC 277 819

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

A sword was discovered by workmen digging gravel in the field west of the Bronze Age cist (162.1), and was presented to the Manx Museum 'some years' later. It may well have been deposited at the edge of the prehistoric mound at this site. No other finds were recorded, but the sword is probably of tenth century type.²⁴

Site/Location

As the 'Giant's Grave' was already known as a prehistoric monument by the 1930s, it seems highly unlikely that gravel extraction would have occurred at the mound itself. Consequently, it seems likely that the (possible) burial represented by this sword occupied a position on the mound's periphery, but it is unlikely to have been more than a few metres from the first burial at the site (162.1)

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial in association with a prehistoric mound. Compare Pierowall (018.11-14)

163

BALLADOYNE, St John's, MAN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 2 December 1937

c.SC 280 815

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Mod.

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead

C. Shield Boss (Scandinavian type)

These artefacts were found within 2-3ft (0.6-0.9m) of each other, approximately the same distance below the original turf line, by a group of workmen extracting sand and gravel on behalf of a railway company. They were found in the midst of a group of 32 long cist or lintel graves, the majority of which were orientated east-west, although at least two (numbers 12 & 13) were off this orientation by at least 45°. None of these graves contained grave-goods, and the weapons must have been placed in an earth-cut grave or pit. A fragment of pelvis was found at the foot of the working face of the gravel pit in the same area and may have been related to the finds. Megaw suggested the artefacts may have been removed from a neighbouring

²⁴ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.236; Bjørn & Shetelig, *England*, p.26

cist when it was reused for an additional burial, but there is also a possibility that it represents some other form of ritual deposit. The sword, which seems to have been deposited in its scabbard, and the spearhead are in pieces, but it is not certain if this occurred before the initial deposition. Megaw's suggestion that the site represents a transition from 'pagan' to 'Christian' may be correct, but there is no evidence for a keeill at the site, although there is an example c.122m to the northeast.²⁵

Site / Location

Megaw specifically notes that all of these graves were situated at the edge of what he calls the 'St John's plateau'. Hachures showing a definite break of slope are shown on the local Ordnance Survey sheet for 1870 and the current Landranger Sheet 95 shows a break of slope in the same area, despite the gravel extraction which led to the discovery of the site. The NGR given here is based on this feature and the distances from other features provided by Megaw, and it is clear that the site was very close to the 40m contour in an area of flat land, and overlooked a small stream at the bottom of a narrow valley, as well as the railway station noted in the original report. Views down this stream towards its confluence with the Neb 950m to the west should also have been possible, and views over the plateau would have been possible in an open landscape, probably including Tynwald Hill, 350m to the northwest. The site is directly overlooked by the same spur of Slieau Whallian (330m) mentioned in the case of Ballabrooie (161), which begins to rise steeply from the valley 300m to the south west, and by other high ground to the north and south. The coast on the south side of Peel Bay is 4.3km WNW of the site, and the mouth of the Neb is 6.1km away following the course of the river.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial within an Christian, or at least indigenous, context. If the bone fragments could be directly linked to this grave, it would be definite.

164.1-2

GLEN RUSHEN, MAN

Weapon Burials (Possible)

Under (standing?) stone

Date of Recovery Before 1810

C.SC 240 767

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality V. Poor

Artefacts (3; Avg.1.5 / grave)

A. Sword

B. Sword

C. Spearhead ('mounted with gold')

Megaw notes an obscure reference to these artefacts having been found 'under a large projecting rock' (perhaps a standing stone?) and suggested they may have been Viking Age. He certainly seem to have been convinced that the artefacts in question were at least iron, and if the 'gold mounts' were actually copper alloy, and hence perhaps rivets, this might add some further substantiating evidence for a very obscure reference.²⁶

²⁵ B. R. S. Megaw, 'An ancient cemetery at Balladoyne, St. John's. New discoveries near Tynwald Hill' in *Journal of the Manx Museum* iv.54-63 (1940), pp 11-14

²⁶ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.236, citing the *Manx Advertiser* of 3 February 1810.

Site / Location

The original record merely noted that the artefacts were found at Glen Rushen, a narrow valley which extends SSW from the head of Glen Mooar, on the south west side of the island. The valley is c.3km long, with a very narrow floor, rising slowly from c.140 – 160m OD, but with steep sides rising to 280m to the northwest and the 483m summit of South Barrule to the southeast. The sea is 1.5-3.5km to the west, although there are sheer cliffs at this point. Following the valley, the coast is 3-5km away. While at an unusually high altitude for an FISB, further speculation is pointless.

Interpretation

Two possible weapon burials, although the evidence is rather tenuous.

165

Balleby, MAN

Weapon Burial (Possible)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery c.1850

C.SC 220 786

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Axehead

A confusing reference recorded by Oswald and repeated by Megaw, which noted that an Evan Gell of Balleby had dug into a mound of earth on his farm and found a complete skeleton with a 'halbert (*sic*) or battle-axe' by its side, complete with traces of its haft. This had not been disturbed. Megaw further suggested that a second reference by Oswald to a burial with a sword in a cist might also relate to this grave, but as the latter reference notes the sword was 'basket-handled', there seems no particular reason to link the two references, or indeed to assume that the second reference relates to an FISB.²⁷

Site / Location

The NGR given here represents the modern settlement called Balleby, on the west coast of Man which is situated on land sloping down to sea level from at altitude of c. 70m OD, above which the land climbs very steeply to a ridge. Close to the summit of this ridge, the 1870 edition of the local OS sheet notes the site of a destroyed tumulus, which still seems to be within the district of Balleby, but there is no evidence to link this site (c.SC229 787) to the possible Viking grave. While the site is unlikely to have been more than a kilometre from the coast, further speculation is pointless.

Interpretation

A possible weapon inhumation, as it is never specified that the 'halbert' was iron rather than bronze.

²⁷ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235

166.1-2

MALEW Parish Church, MAN

Weapon Burials (Possible)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery Before 1854

SC 268 694

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2; Avg. 1/grave?)

A. Two Swords

A footnote in Megaw's study of the recent finds from Balladoyne (163) notes that a J.G. Cumming recorded the recovery of two Scandinavian swords from a grave at Malew Parish churchyard a short time before 1854. Unfortunately, neither has survived to the present day, although Cumming's confident identification would suggest that they were iron, and hence probably Viking Age. It seems likely that the swords were found during the excavation of a Victorian grave, rather than within their own cut (or more likely cuts). No further information is available.²⁸

Site / Location

St Lupus (or perhaps St Mo-Lua's) parish church is situated between 20 and 30m OD on the west side of the broad Silver Burn valley, some 500m from the stream, which is not visible from the site. It is on the east side of a small (30m) hill, which was formerly the site of a tumulus. The surrounding terrain is irregular but comparatively flat, with views from the site being largely restricted to the river valley to the southeast, although the sea may well be visible to the south. The shore of Castletown Bay, a particularly sheltered harbour, is 1.75km away, and this is also the point at which the Silver River reaches the sea.

Interpretation

Two possible weapon burials at a Christian site, based on the assumption that no more than one sword was ever placed in an individual grave.

167

Chapel Hill, BALLADOOLE, MAN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Churchyard & Prehistoric Enclosure

Date of Recovery 1944-5

SC 247 681

Inhumation (Definite)

Mound, Boat, Horse

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (13 objects)

A. More than 300 Boat Rivets (boat c.11m long)

B. Shield Boss (Irish Sea B)

C. Ring-headed Pin

D. Silver Gilt (Belt) Buckle

E. Strap End

F. Three Knives

G. Whetstone (7.2cm)

H. Cauldron

I. Possible Strike-a-Light (flint)

J. Bridle Bit & Harness

²⁸ Megaw, 'Ancient cemetery at Balladoyne', p.13*fn.*

- K. Stirrup irons & girth buckle
- L. Spurs and CA attachments
- M. Four CA mounts (for bridle / shield boss)

The first FISB that might reasonably be considered scientifically excavated, this site was dug by G. Bersu and some other German internees. They were investigating the east entrance to a c.100m x 60m enclosure later identified as an Iron Age 'hill fort' when they discovered a 7m row of stones which defined one edge of a spread of black earth, stones and clenched nails, which had been badly disturbed by rabbits. A boat had been sunk into a slight 11m x 3m hollow, which seemed to define its maximum dimensions. More recent scholars have suggested the boat was larger (13m x 3.5m), although this would make it larger than the proposed dimensions for the mound (below). The body of a mature individual, probably male and 5ft 9¼in (1.76m) tall, had been placed in a supine position towards the south-west end of the boat, slightly north of the centreline, perhaps to avoid the mast step. The shield boss was found over his knees, while the ringed pin was found between them, perhaps suggesting use as a shroud pin. The belt buckle was in position, but Bersu thought the associated strap end had been 'disturbed'. It is, however, possible that it had hung from the belt in a manner similar to more carefully excavated examples. The flint and (one?) of the knives were suspended from his belt. The bit and bridle trappings were placed above his head, in the stern (?) of the boat, while the spurs were on or close to his feet and the stirrups and girth buckle were north of the body. Bersu suggested that the horse trappings overlay the body, but it is perhaps more likely that the harness was at his head, and the saddle at his feet. Also near the skeleton's left leg were the remains of a cauldron. A second body was found slightly further north, towards the centre of the boat, which seemed to be the remains of a woman, c.5ft 2in (1.57m) tall, who may have been placed in the grave with the man. However, the remains of two other individuals were also found within the mound, and these seem almost certainly to have come from a series of east-west lintel graves containing unfurnished inhumations that underlay the mound. These had been disturbed at a time when many of the bones were still articulated, presumably when the mound was being constructed. The mound built over the boat was originally c.12m x 5m and was 0.7m high when the excavation began. Bersu suggested, however, that dry stone kerbing would have given it an original height of c.2m, although this is perhaps a little excessive. Over this mound was spread a layer of cremated bone, which included the remains of cattle, pig, sheep/goat, dog and cat. To this list, Redknap adds horse, but no horse remains were discovered within the burial, despite the presence of the furniture. None of the animal remains had been burned *in situ* but some elements had worked their way down through the mound at a later date. To the north of the south-west end of the boat, a very substantial post, 0.6m across, was found filled with the cremated material. This must have been contemporary, and 'must have risen to a fair height and been visible from a considerable distance'. The artefacts show a wide range of origins, with the shield boss and bridle being insular, while the spurs and their trappings are continental (Carolingian). Recent research has also confirmed the complexity of activity at the site before the Viking Age, with Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatters and some Bronze Age ritual activity (including burial) predating the Iron Age enclosure, when a 2.5-3m bank enclosed 0.45ha. The full extent of the lintel grave cemetery is not known, but it and the boat burial predate the medieval keeill at the other end of the Iron Age enclosure. A recent geophysical survey has also identified a rectangular structure immediately north of the boat

mound, and it has been tentatively suggested that this might be a Viking Age house. This is, however, speculative, and the chronological relationship between the two structures is not understood at this time.²⁹

Site / Location

The burial mound and associated post were situated within an extant Christian cemetery at the east side of an older Iron Age enclosure at the top of a low but prominent hill, 104ft (31.7m) above sea level, and 400m north-east of a small sandy inlet on the north-east side of the broad and sheltered Bay ny Carrickey, which the site overlooked, with views also extending along the coast to the south of the Calf of Man and towards Dublin. The site also affords good views over the gently undulating land at the head of the Bay to the northwest, and north towards the central mountains of the island, although views to the northeast and east are slightly more restricted. The mound and post would ensure the site was highly visible through the same arc. This is arguably the most prominent FISB site known, and (with Knock-e-Dooney: 150) one of the few specifically placed on a hilltop.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation with a boat, probably accompanied by a horse, and perhaps by an unfurnished woman's grave, within a Christian site with prehistoric associations.

168

St Braddan's Church, KIRK BRADDAN, MAN

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Christian Churchyard

Date of Recovery 1865

SC 364 768

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Megaw cites a reference in the *Manx Sun* for 26 August 1865, which notes that 'a portion of an ancient sword [was] dug out of a grave on the north side of Kirk Braddan churchyard', this being a clear reference to the old parish church at the site. The presence of a number of 'celtic' cross slabs indicate that this was an important church site at the beginning of the Viking Age, while the presence of some Norse examples indicate the site's continuing importance in the period after this sword was deposited. The 'grave' in the original reference was presumably a modern example, and there is no specific reference to human remains.³⁰

Site / Location

The church site at Braddan is situated on the west bank of the Dhoo, between the 20 and 30m contours and less than 10m above river level. The banks on both side of the

²⁹ Bersu & Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, pp 1-44; G. Bersu, 'Chapel Hill – A prehistoric, early Christian and Viking site at Balladoole, Kirk Arbory, Isle of Man' in *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* vii.4 (1972), pp 632-65; Caroline Madden, 'Chapel Hill, Balladoole, Arbory' in Timothy Darvill, *Billown Neolithic Landscape Project, Isle of Man. Fifth Report: 1999* (Bournemouth and Douglas, 2000), pp 54-75; Mark Redknap, 'Great sites: Balladoole' in *British Archaeology* lix (2001); <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba59/feat4.shtml> (accessed)

³⁰ Megaw, 'Weapons', p.235; Cubbon, *Ancient and Historic Monuments*, p.41

river are steep at this point, with the east bank rising to 40m and the west rising steadily to 90m before levelling off slightly. As a result, views from the site are restricted to the valley, although there should be reasonably clear views downstream in particular, where the valley opens somewhat where the Dhoo joins the Glass. Higher ground to the east and southeast, however, blocks all views to the sea, which is 2km to the southwest. Following the course of the river, however, the distance is c.3.1km, ignoring the modern breakwater.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial within a Christian cemetery.

169

WEST NAPPIN, MAN

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Christian Burial Site?

Date of Recovery Before 2002

C.SC 352 981

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Ringed Pin

B. Hexagonal Bell

In his discussion of a similar bell from St Patrick's Island (160.7), Graham-Campbell (citing L. Garrad) notes the recent discovery of a similar bell and a ringed pin 'in an area of disturbed inhumations' at West Nappin, Jurby. This is the only source of information for any finds from this area, and it seems clear that if these objects were associated with an individual grave or graves originally, they were out of context when found. No further information is available at present.³¹

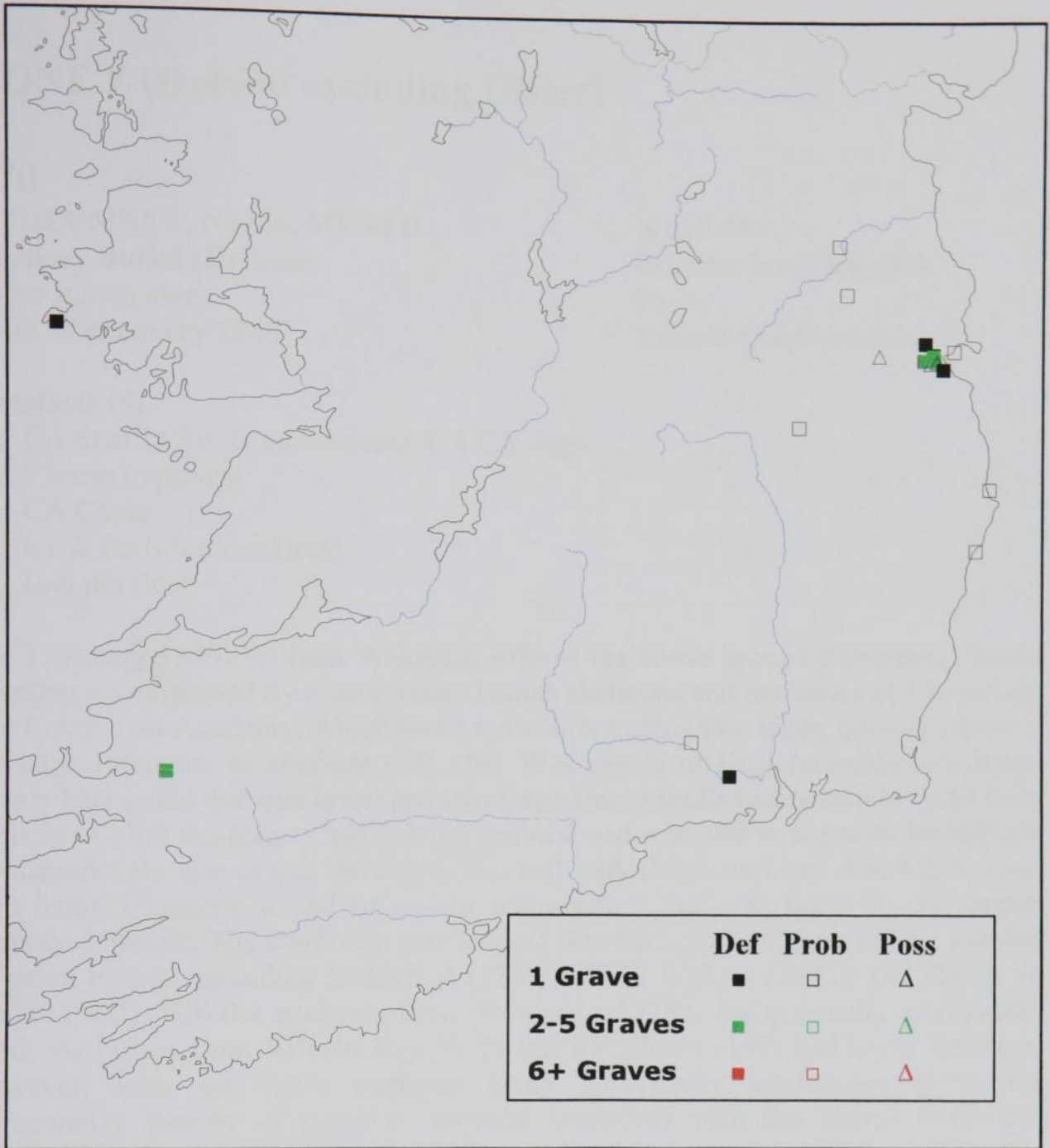
Site / Location

The only provenance available is vague, and the NGR given here corresponds to the centre of the modern settlement. Perhaps the most likely source of these burials is a keeill site slightly further to the west (SC 346 980), but the find may equally have come from an unmarked grave field in the area. At either site, the burial would be in an area of comparatively flat land between the 20 and 30m contour, with correspondingly restricted views which would almost certainly not include the coast, which less than 1km to the west.

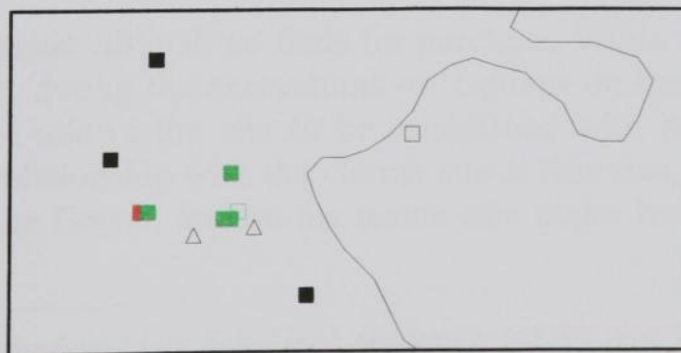
Interpretation

A possible tertiary burial, badly disturbed before investigation took place.

³¹ Graham-Campbell, 'Tenth-century graves', p.94



Map – Zone F Viking Age Furnished Burial Sites in Ireland excluding Ulster (above) and in the Dublin area (below). These correspond to Catalogue Entries 170 – 188 & 192 – 194, with those around Dublin corresponding to 172-184 & 193



ZONE F (Ireland excluding Ulster)

170

ATHLUMNEY, Navan, MEATH

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Other Inhumations

Date of Recovery 1848

N 875 675

Inhumation (Definite)

Horse

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (5)

A. CA Snaffle Bit, harness mount & 4 CA rings

B. 7 horse trappings

C. CA Chain

D. 6 CA studs/buttons (lost)

E. Iron pin (lost)

On 1 January 1849, William Wakeman offered the above group of artefacts, 'found together accompanied by a great many human skeletons and the bones of a horse', to the Royal Irish Academy, which made a decision to purchase them, although there is no clear reference to artefacts C-E after Wakeman's original (unpublished) letter. Wilde later noted that one intact and two fragmentary skulls had been recovered from 'this heap', but the former had left the country, and it would in any case be difficult to demonstrate that it was directly associated with these artefacts. The bit, harness and harness mounts are all of insular manufacture, but also occur in Norwegian furnished burials. The confusion surrounding this find can be compared to a number of other burials, including Sedgeford (125), Saffron Walden (137.2) and Cronk yn How (156.2) with the evidence from 'Newbridge' (185) being equally ambiguous. Both the horses from Kiloran Bay (067) and Balladoole (167) had horse furniture, however, with the latter example being particularly interesting, given the comparative paucity of personal artefacts associated with the human interment. Given Wakeman's description, confirmed by Wilde, it seems clear that this inhumation took place within an extant cemetery of unknown (but presumably Early Medieval?) date. It has also been suggested that the 'horse trappings' have had some kind of ecclesiastical function, although if this is the case, it seems clear that they had been modified before deposition at this site.¹

Site/Location

A decade after Wakeman offered the finds for purchase, Wilde stated that they had been found at Navan, during the excavations of 'cuttings on the eastern side of the river [Boyne]'.² This allows the site to be established with some precision, and strongly suggests a relationship with the church site at this area, on a definite ridge immediately above the Boyne, and on the inside of a major bend in the river, just

¹ Anon., 'Appendix', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iv (1849), lxiv; W.R. Wilde, *Beauties of the Boyne and its Tributary, the Blackwater* (Dublin, 1850), pp 134-5; idem, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities of Animal Materials and Bronze in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1861), pp 373-5; 592-3; 605-6; 611; 617; 619-20; E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Some Irish antiquities of unknown use' in *Antiquaries Journal* xi (1922), pp 6-12; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

² Wilde, *Beauties of the Boyne*, pp 134-5; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

over 500m above its confluence with the Blackwater. As such, the site is close to or above the 40m contour and on a definite rise above the river. To the east, the ground rises very much more gradually towards Carn Hill (120m), some 4km away, the surrounding terrain (with the exception of the river valley) being essentially flat. The closest point on the coast is the Boyne estuary some 30km in a straight line from the site, and c.35km following the course of the river.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation accompanied by a horse, apparently within a Christian cemetery, albeit one that may have been more elaborately furnished originally.

171

CROGHAN ERIN, Kiltale, MEATH

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Extant (Bronze Age?) Mound

Date of Recovery 1848/9

N 899 531

Inhumation

Cist in Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Spearhead

This artefact was presented to the RIA together with a bronze sword and 'some fragments of ...urn' in June 1849, having been recovered from a mound called 'Croghan Erin', c.18.3m in diameter and 3.7m high, with sloping sides and a flat top, which was excavated from the side. Below the mound, cut into natural gravel, was a pit c.1.2m deep containing the urn (which was broken on recovery), accompanied by a thin CA plate some 45.7cm long, which had already been lost. At a much higher level, 2.1m above the original group level, was the covering slab of a cist of unknown size, which contained 'a human skeleton in a perpendicular position', perhaps more likely to have been crouched than extended, as Capt. Larcom's original report suggests. The spearheads (plural) were found 'in the vicinity', but not specifically in association with this secondary burial. The position of the Bronze Age sword is not recorded.

Despite the somewhat confused original account, it seems clear that a secondary burial was placed in the upper levels of an extant (presumably Bronze Age) mound, and it is consequently difficult to see how the spearhead can be seen as anything other than a grave-good. The issue is, however, somewhat confused by the fact that it is not a standard Viking Age type, although it may have Anglo-Saxon parallels.³

Site/Location

The first edition of Ordnance Survey six-inch sheet 37 (Meath), surveyed in 1836 shows a mound called Croghan Erin at the NGR given here. As it is not shown on the second edition from 1882, it must have been destroyed at this point. It was situated on the north side of the Trim-Clonee Road, in Kiltale townland. As such it was 7.5km south-east of the Boyne at Trim, and outside any obvious river valley, being located in comparatively flat land immediately below the 90m contour, on the north

³ Anon., 'Proceedings, June 25th 1849', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iv (1849), pp 388-9. William Wilde, 1857. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities of Stone, Earthen and Vegetable Materials in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1857), p.194; William Wakeman, *Handbook* p.228; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

side of a very slight ridge, and less than 1km from the low summit of Tullaghmedan (121m) to the south-west. Given the comparatively flat and irregular terrain to the north of the site, views are not particularly extensive. The site is 32.5km from the head of the Rogerstown estuary, and c.37km from the open sea, both in direct lines.

Interpretation

Given the difficulties with the spearhead's date, and its association with a cist, a probable weapon inhumation within a prehistoric burial mound.

172

FINGLAS, DUBLIN

Brooch Burial (Definite)

Close to Monastic Enclosure

Date of Recovery August 2004

c.O 132 388

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (3)

A. Two Oval Brooch (double-shelled)

B. Bracelet (material unknown)

C. Bone Comb

A very recent discovery, of which a newspaper report notes that the body of a 25-35 year old woman, intact but for her feet (cut by a later pipe), was found on the same excavation which uncovered the monastic boundary at Finglas, although it remains unclear whether the body was placed inside or outside the enclosure. The skeleton's left hand was found 'under' one of her brooches, together with fragments of some cloth, while the other hand seems to have been placed by her side. The comb was found on the skeleton's right side, resting on the femur. Earlier reports of a ring may have referred to part of the broken oval brooch found at the site. The monastery at Finglas seems to have been dedicated to St Canice, but no detailed records of the site are available. No published source makes any reference to unfurnished burials at this excavation. A provisional date of c.AD950 has been assigned to the burial, presumably based on the brooch.⁴

Site / Location

The grid reference given here is based on the published articles and the site of the Early Medieval monastery at Finglas. As such the burial was on land between the 50 & 60m contours which sloped gently towards the south and east towards the valley of the Tolka, c.1.2km away and 20-30m lower, which was not visible from the site. The current coast at the mouth of the Tolka is 5.5km away in a direct line, and only c.2-300m more following the river valley, although both distance may have been slightly less in the Viking Age.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation in association with a Christian site.

⁴ Kathy Holland, 'Remains of 10th century woman found' in *The Irish Times*, August 24, 2004, p.4; P. F. Wallace, 'A woman of importance in ninth-century Finglas' in *Archaeology Ireland* xviii.3 (2004), p.7

173

DOLLYMOUNT, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1872

c.O 214 365

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged; bent)

This sword was sold to the Royal Irish Academy in 1872, having been recovered from ‘the sand at Dollymount’, and the only published reference to it occurs in Bøe. By 1940, however, records had become confused, and it is only as a result of the IVGP that the correct sword has again been associated with this purchase by the Academy. The sword in question is bent approximately halfway along the blade and again at the tang, the pommel being missing. If, as seems likely, this is an example of ritual bending, this would increase its chances of being from a burial, despite the absence of specific references to human remains.⁵

Site / Location

The only provenance for this sword is ‘the sand at Dollymount’, which suggests a coastal location, perhaps in dunes, as is common in Viking Age Scotland. By 1872, an embanked coast road marked the edge of the land in this area, and the sword was presumably found near this.. The NGR given here represents the centre of this road at the village of Dollymount, and while it is an approximation, is unlikely to be very inaccurate. It is possible that the sword may have been associated with one of a number of mounds marked on the second edition six-inch sheet for the area, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. In either case, the sword is very unlikely to have been found more than 200m from the shore, and was probably substantially closer, while the local topography indicates it must have been below the 10m contour.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation at a coastal site, with some further support being provided by the bent condition of the sword.

174

PHOENIX PARK, DUBLIN

Brooch Burial (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1848

C.O 115 355

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Two oval brooches (single-shelled)

B. Modified Gilt Bronze Plate/Brooch

⁵ Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*: Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p.85: Unpublished ‘New Register’, NMI Archive, 1872:36: Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

The most detailed account of the provenance of this find is Worsaae, who noted that 'in the Phoenix Park, near Dublin... a pair of bowl-formed brooches were found near a skeleton'. He may have been familiar with the site from his own visit to Dublin in 1847-8, or through one of the oval brooches, which was presented to the National Museum in Denmark, the other being acquired by the British Museum in 1854. The modified plate, also provenanced to the Phoenix Park, was acquired from the same individual at the same time, and Hall has suggested that it may have come from the same grave. In the 1860s, it was suggested that several furnished burials had been found at the site, but this may well be a misunderstanding of Worsaae's (poorly translated) original text. The brooches suggest a ninth century date.⁶

Site/Location

Unfortunately, the brooches cannot be provenanced to a specific site within Phoenix Park, which covers a 5 x 2.75km area, and while it might be suggested that they come from the southern part of this area, perhaps looking towards the Kilmainham and/or Islandbridge cemeteries (177) on the opposite bank of the Liffey, this cannot be demonstrated with any certainty. The NGR given here represents the approximate centre of the park, and could be in error by well over a kilometre. Theoretically the burial could either be close to the narrow Liffey valley, or in comparatively flat land set a little way back from it, and anywhere between less than 10 and over 50m OD. It was at least 2.5km from the original coast, but may well have been considerably more.

Interpretation

A definite brooch inhumation.

175.1

PARNELL SQUARE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Many unaccompanied Graves

Date of Recovery Before 1763

O 156 351

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword

B. Spearhead

C. 'numberless' rivets

A somewhat confusing account of 'vast quantities of human bones', found while laying out the 'New-Gardens' (now the centre of Parnell Square), and which apparently extended as far as Cavendish and Granby Rows, a substantial distance, even ignoring the clearly exaggerated claims of Ledwich that they stretched to Mountjoy Square and beyond, providing clear evidence of the site of the Battle of Clontarf! At Cavendish Row (now Parnell Square East), a number of trenches were found, and 'among the bones' the above artefacts were found. While the 'rivets' may have been associated with a boat burial, it seems equally likely that they were associated with wooden coffins or other composite artefacts buried at the site. The

⁶ J. J. A. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1852), p.331; R. A. Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Dublin' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* civ (1974), pp 39-43; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

finds have been interpreted as evidence for a minimum of one grave, as a sword from 'Rutland Square' presented to the RIA in 1795 could potentially be this example, first mentioned in a *Dublin Magazine* article. Unfortunately, this sword seems to have been lost before the mid nineteenth century catalogues were begun, and none of the other objects survive either. Given the quantity of human remains, it seems at least plausible that the unaccompanied graves are of medieval date, but their stratigraphic relationship to the probable Viking burial cannot be established, and they could be very much later. If the site is to be regarded as Christian, the absence of a church is also problematic. No further information is available (but see 175.2).⁷

Site/Location

The original description of the burials suggests that they were concentrated towards the north end of Parnell Square, and the general NGR given for this concentration of graves reflects this. As such, the burials were located close to the 10m contour in an area where the land sloped gently downwards from north west to south east and the original shore line of the Liffey, as shown by estuarine deposits, would have been at the foot of the rise on which this cemetery was built, perhaps 400m away, (although the mouth of the modern Dublin Harbour is now some 8km away). The presence of an extant Christian cemetery at this site is also a definite possibility, although this cannot be demonstrated conclusively.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, perhaps within an indigenous cemetery.

175.2

PARNELL SQUARE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Possible unfurnished Graves

Date of Recovery Before 1763

O 156 351

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Shield Boss ('helmet')

A second burial at Parnell Square, found when Parnell Square North was initially laid out between 1761 & 1763. According to Walker, who provided the earliest record, these two artefacts were found with 'several human bones, in working the foundations of Mr. Deane's home. Although the house cannot be identified, it must have been one of comparatively short row of ten, and it seems highly likely that it was part of the same cemetery as 175.1, although only one set of bones is suggested by Walker's description. The sword was in the possession of Mr Deane in 1818, long after the Rutland Square sword had been presented to the Royal Irish Academy, and clearly seems to represent a second furnished burial at the site.⁸

⁷ An original article in the *Dublin Magazine* of 1763 is cited in P. Traynor, 'Where was the battle of Clontarf fought?' in *The Irish Builder* xxxix (1897), p.106; Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking age in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh & Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p.134

⁸ J. C. Walker, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (2nd Ed., Dublin, 1818), p.131; Douglas Bennett, *Encyclopaedia of Dublin* (Dublin, 1994), p.30

Site / Location

Although this find was discovered at an uncertain distance north and east of the first find at this site, the two cannot have been more than 200m apart, and were almost certainly rather less. Views from and two the burials would have been very similar. See also 176.1.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, the surviving illustration and recorded comparisons with one of the Kilmainham swords adding some confidence to the classification.

176.1

ISLANDBRIDGE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Possible unfurnished graves

Date of Recovery 11 February 1933

O 121 339

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (5)

- A. Sword (double-edged: 3 pieces)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Axehead
- D. Slotted Object ('Strike-a-light')
- E. Composite Artefact (2 staples/handles & 4 rivets)

These artefacts were discovered during the construction of the War Memorial Park at Islandbridge, Dublin, and although it is suggested in some sources that the museum was called in before the disturbance of the associated grave, there is some confusion about this. There are no extant photographs of the material *in situ*, nor are any detailed descriptions of the positions of the artefacts within the grave, although it has been suggested that the skeleton was orientated north-south. The skeletal material does not survive, and seems never to have been analysed. O'Brien in particular suggests that a substantial number of unfurnished burials were found at the same site, and suggests that it was an indigenous cemetery, perhaps secular, without any direct ecclesiastical associations.⁹

Site / Location

The 1943 revision of the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey for this area (Dublin 18:10) shows the sites of three Viking graves in the War Memorial Park, all in the SW quadrant, and while unfortunately these cannot be associated with specific graves, they do at least illustrate the general area from which they were recovered. The local topography has been extensively altered, but it seems that this cemetery occurred somewhere between 10 and 20m above sea level, and approximately the same level above the river, on a gentle south facing slope, the river being *c.*200m to the N. The mouth of Dublin harbour is now 11km to the E, but the original mouth of the estuary was *c.*4km as the crow flies, and only marginally longer following the course of the river. While the weir at Kilmainham marks the highest point on the tidal river today,

⁹ Bøe, *Ireland*, pp 62-5; Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A reconsideration of the location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham / Islandbridge, Dublin' in Conleth Manning (ed.), *Dublin and Beyond the Pale: Studies in Honour of Patrick Healy* (Dublin, 1998), pp 38-9; *Irish Independent*, Monday 13 February 1933; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

the Liffey would almost certainly have been navigable at least to this point in the Viking Age. The site is overlooked by higher ground both to the S, and on the N side of the river, where the ground rises steeply above the river.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, probably within an extant cemetery.

176.2

ISLANDBRIDGE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Possible unfurnished graves

Date of Recovery 11 February 1933

O 121 339

Inhumation (Possible)

Earth-cut?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefact (1)

A. Sword (double-edged: broken & bent)

This sword was found in roughly the same area as the finds listed as 176.1, but contemporary sources treat it as evidence for an additional 'disturbed' grave in the area, although there seems to be some disagreement as to whether this occurred 'long ago' or merely 'before the Museum was notified'. Given the rarity with which more than one sword occurs in FISBs, it seems likely that this find represents an additional burial. Although distorted, the sword has not been bent back on itself, and thus provides only the most tenuous evidence for deliberate ritual activity.¹⁰

Site / Location

Found at the same spot as 176.1.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial probably within an extant, indigenous cemetery.

176.3

ISLANDBRIDGE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Possible unfurnished graves

Date of Recovery 12 October 1934

O 121 339

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged; broken)

B. Spearhead

Much of this burial was actually excavated at the National Museum, having been transported there in a 'caisson', although contemporary photographs make it clear that much of it had been exposed before this. An extended north-south inhumation with its head to the south, there is no evidence that the body was placed in anything other than an earth-cut grave. The sword was placed on the skeleton's right side, with the pommel roughly level with the top of the skull. The spearhead (mistaken for a 'dagger') has been displayed close to the skeletons left hip for a considerable time at

¹⁰ Bøe, *Ireland*, p.62; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.38

the NMI, and is described as such by Bøe. Contemporary photographs do not show it in this position, however, and other sources state that it was found while preparing the 'caisson'. The skeleton has been identified as that of a male 5ft 11 – 6ft (1.77-1.8m) tall.¹¹

Site / Location

This burial was clearly one of the two southern burials marked on the 1943 OS map and described in a number of sources. While the site cannot be pinpointed precisely, it was clearly less than 100m from the other burials in this complex. See 176.1

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, probably within an extant indigenous cemetery.

176.4

ISLANDBRIDGE, DUBLIN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Possible unfurnished graves

Date of Recovery 14 April 1934

O 121 339

Inhumation (Definite)

Coffin?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Cattle Jawbone

An extended inhumation, partially disturbed by workmen, but apparently originally buried in a wooden coffin, this body was accompanied by a cattle jawbone placed close to and immediately above the skull. As such, it is one of the most modestly furnished 'other' burials recorded in this catalogue, although it may well be the case that similar offerings or 'grave goods' were rather more common than surviving records would indicate. It can perhaps be compared to the cattle skull from mound 50 at Heath Wood (124.09). A number of completely unfurnished burials seem to have been recovered from the same general area at approximately the same time.¹²

Site / Location

Although the precise site of this burial cannot be identified, it is clear that it cannot have been found more than 100m from the other burials in this group. See 176.1.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, albeit very modestly furnished, probably within an indigenous cemetery.

¹¹ *The Irish Press*, 13 & 16 October 1934; *The Irish Times*, 16 October 1934; Bøe, *Ireland*, p.62; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.38-9

¹² Bøe, *Ireland*, p.59; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.38

176.5

ISLANDBRIDGE, DUBLIN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Possible unfurnished graves

Date of Recovery 1 May 1934

O 121 339

Inhumation (Definite)

Coffin?

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Teeth (one cattle, one horse)

A second modestly furnished burial from this site, the two teeth having been found near the feet of an extended skeleton, buried with its right hand under the left side of the head and the left arm crossing the body above the pelvis, within a grave allegedly 8ft 6in x 4ft (2.59 x 1.22m), but nonetheless identified as a 'coffin' in contemporary NMI records. It is clear that the account is at least slightly confused, but the available details make it clear that this was anything but a typical Christian inhumation, although the possibility that the inclusion of the teeth was accidental cannot be entirely eliminated.¹³

Site / Location

While the precise location of this burial cannot be identified, it was clearly found in the same area as the other graves in this group. See 176.1.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, the closest parallel also coming from this cemetery (176.4).

177.01

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery c.1785

O 128 338

No Evidence

Cist?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

A confusing account of what seems to be same sword and discovery, independently recorded by Walker and Petrie. Walker noted that what he believed to be a 'Templar's sword' (later seen as directly comparable to that from Larne) was found 'on a tiled floor, near the site of the old Priory of Kilmainham', while Petrie later stated that a sword had been found in the cemetery of Bully's Acre while re-erecting a fragment of stone cross at approximately the same date as that referred to by Walker. Both publications showed a pommel-less sword with straight guards and noted that it came into the possession of General Pitt, the Commander of the Forces and *ex officio* Master of the Royal Hospital. While it is possible that two different swords are being described here, it seems more likely that these both refer to a single weapon grave at Bully's Acre, perhaps within a cist.¹⁴

¹³ Bøe, *Ireland*, pp 59-60; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.38

¹⁴ Walker, *Historical Memoirs*, p.131; George Petrie, 'Ancient monument in the Hospital Fields, Dublin' in *Dublin Penny Journal* i.9 (25 August 1832), pp 68-9

Site / Location

As the single largest concentration of known furnished inhumations in the British Isles, the cemetery at Kilmainham covers a considerable distance, although there seems to have been a definite focus of burials around the modern village of Islandbridge (O 129 342), with occasional burials to the south and east, as well as the Islandbridge complex (176) to the west. The local topography has been heavily altered by a combination of gravel extraction and railway construction, but it is clear that all of the burials occurred on a gentle north-facing slope that led down to the Liffey at a point where it was still tidal, and immediately downstream of the ford called Kilmehanic in early sources. A more secure crossing point than the Áth Cliath further down the tidal river, this may well have been one of the more important fords on the lower Liffey. All the burials can also be at least loosely associated with the monastery of Kilmainham. While its precise location is unknown, the Templar house which eventually superseded it was west of the later Royal Hospital, close to the top of the ridge between the Liffey and the Cammock, and presumably somewhere reasonably close to the cemetery of Bully's Acre with its fragment of stone cross. The majority of the burials seem to have been to the north of this latter site, and their relationship with the monastic enclosure is unknown. Attempts to reconstruct the original topography suggest that they would have been between 7 and 23m OD, with the majority at the lower end of this range, close to the river. The Liffey estuary would originally have been c.3.5-4km downstream from the site, depending on the rate of silting, although even then the Ringsend spit meant the open sea was a little further away, perhaps 6km, both distances being given as straight lines.¹⁵

As the only known (possible) furnished grave from Bully's Acre, this site was presumably closer to the centre of the monastery than the majority of the burials, somewhere close to the 20m contour and c.475m south of the river.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial at a Christian site.

177.02

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery 1832 or 1833

O 132 342

Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

In 1841, J. Huband Smith displayed to the RIA an iron sword which had been lent to him by one Captain Hort of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, and which had been found 'under similar circumstances' to the artefacts listed as 177.03, but several years earlier. This indicates that they were found during gravel extraction, and strongly suggests it may have been found in association with human remains. The sword cannot be identified today, but was compared to that from Larne (083),

¹⁵ Seán De Courcy, 'Looking at the Liffey in 795' in *Archaeology Ireland* ix.3 (1995), pp 16-18; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', figs. 2 & 3

suggesting it was double-edged. It does not seem to have been acquired by the RIA, and hence represents an additional burial to those represented by the 1845 material (see 177.06-15).¹⁶

Site/Location

For general notes on this cemetery, see 177.01. This particular artefact seems to have been recovered from the northern part of the hospital grounds during gravel extraction carried out by one Patrick Lacy. The very earliest OS six inch sheet for the area (Dublin 18), surveyed in 1837, shows a rectilinear gravel pit, c.125 x 40m, immediately east of the Royal Artillery barracks, and it was presumably this pit or a smaller predecessor which produced this find, and the NGR given here reflects this. As such, this is an outlying burial to the north and east of the main group.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial in association with a Christian site.

177.03

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery 1836 or 1837

O 132 342

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut?

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (5 objects)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Axehead
- D. Shield Boss
- E. Ringed Pin

A slightly more recent discovery than 177.02, these finds were also recorded by Smith in 1841. Labourers raising gravel 'discovered a skeleton, around which were disposed a variety of weapons and ornaments', which could be directly compared to those from Larne, and are listed here. Rumours that one of the labourers secreted 'some ornaments of gold of considerable value', with the proceeds of which he subsequently opened a shop near Dublin can be dismissed as hearsay. Most of the more intact artefacts made their way to the Commander of the Force's residence, in whose possession they remained in 1841, but their present location is unknown. As they do not appear to have made their way into the RIA collection, however, it is clear that they represent an additional grave. No further information is available.¹⁷

Site / Location

This burial clearly came from the same rectilinear gravel pit with which 177.02 has also been associated. For more general information, see 177.01.

¹⁶ J. H. Smith, 'An account of the discovery, in the month of November last, of a human skeleton, accompanied with weapons, ornaments, &c., interred on the sea shore, in the vicinity of Larne, in the County of Antrim' in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* ii (1844), pp 40-46

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.44; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration', p.35

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in association with a Christian site, despite the fact that the artefacts have been lost.

177.04 - 05

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

2 Weapon Burials (Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery November 1845

O 129 340

Inhumations (Probable)

Cist Burials

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3 objects; avg. 1.5 / grave)

A. Two Swords

B. Spearhead

On 13 November 1845, the Secretary of the Great Southern & Western Railway sent '[2] swords and [a] spearhead' to the RIA, the first of a substantial group of artefacts recovered during the construction of the railway cutting north-west of the Royal Hospital and south of Islandbridge. Unfortunately, these items were not catalogued until sometime after 1847, by which time they had become conflated with a slightly later and much more extensive group of artefacts catalogued here as 177.06–15. As a result, the swords and spearhead cannot be identified precisely, although it seems likely that they were undamaged examples. If Worsaae's comments can be said to apply to these graves as well as the main group, then they were inhumations placed within some form of stone setting or lintel graves, but this is essentially speculative.¹⁸

Site / Location

According to the original letter, these artefacts were found 'when cutting the line of railway thro' the grounds of the Royal Hospital', presumably a comparatively recent event. Continuing gravel extraction had resulted in extensive gravel pits in the east part of the Hospital grounds, and hence this 'cutting' must refer to the west portion of the railway line, south of the Royal Artillery (now Clancy) Barracks and immediately east of the South Circular Road. An article in *The Irish Railway Gazette* confirms that by the end of September, the 'Inchicore cutting' was the only major obstacle between Dublin and Sallins, and that the foundations of the road bridge were being sunk. Thus, it seems clear that these artefacts came from this north-west part of the hospital grounds, somewhere close to the 15m contour and c.250m S of the modern river. The NGR given here represents the central section of this cutting. See also 177.01.¹⁹

Interpretation

A minimum of two definite weapon burials, probably inhumations, in association with a Christian site.

¹⁸ Worsaae, *Account*, pp 325, 330; RIA Rough Minute Book (1843-8); Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

¹⁹ *The Irish Railway Gazette* ii (22 September 1845), p.612

177.06 - 15

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

9 Weapon & 1 Brooch Burials (All Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery November – December 1845

O 128 339

Inhumations (Definite)

Cist Burials

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (49 objects: *avg. 4.9 / grave*)

- A. Nine swords (7 double edged; of which 2 bent; 2 broken; 4 single edged)²⁰
- B. Eight Spearheads (2 bent) & 1 ferrule
- C. Two Axeheads
- D. Nine Shield Bosses (2 Scandinavian; damaged; & 7 Dublin type)
- E. Nine Arrowheads
- F. Five Socketed Knives
- G. Oval Brooch (linked 177.18-25:F)
- H. Equal-armed Brooch
- I. Quatrafoil Brooch
- J. Three Ringed Pins (1 pin only)
- K. CA Buckle
- L. Enamel Mount (insular)
- M. Four Gaming Pieces
- N. Five Tanged Knives
- O. Misc. Iron Objects (3)

The most extensive assemblages of Viking Age grave goods ever recovered as a single assemblage in the British Isles, this is also one of the most poorly recorded, although the artefacts are listed in two unpublished catalogues. At a very early date, they became confused with material acquired in the previous month (see 177.04 & 05), and artefacts from what is almost certainly the same collection made their way into a number of private collections. These artefacts seem to have been a joint presentation by the Royal Hospital and the GS&W Railway, and although there are some suggestions that there were two separate donations on the same day, it seems clear that both came from the ongoing railway cuttings. The two donations may reflect ongoing disputes between the two bodies.

Taken as a unit, the assemblage provides evidence for a minimum of one brooch grave (represented by objects G & H) and 9 weapon graves, each with at least a sword and shield boss, and all but one with a spearhead as well. This gives a potential minimum of 3 objects / grave, although the average is 4.9. This comparatively high number of objects per grave may, however, be a product of the minimum number calculations. It is also worth noting that 2 swords and 2 spearheads have been deliberately bent and that two shield bosses have been deliberately dented prior to deposition, perhaps suggesting two graves at which this ritual activity took place. A number of other artefacts, perhaps most particularly associated with the brooch grave, made their way into other collections, perhaps most notably that of George Petrie (see 177.18-25). Although no Irish source makes specific reference to human remains, Worsaae noted that the railway cuttings revealed 'whole rows of skeletons, each in its own grave' and surrounded by artefacts, and also stated that 'each is said to have been set or enclosed with stones'. This suggests that many of the

²⁰ These figures include the 2 swords listed here as 177.04 & 05

burials were in cists or lintel graves, although the possible evidence for cremation serves as a reminder that this was undoubtedly a generalisation.²¹

Site / Location

According to the published account in *PRIA*, the material presented by the GS&W Railway came from their 'cuttings... near Kilmainham', while the Royal Hospital material came from 'near Kilmainham'. Unpublished accounts in the RIA and NMI archive strongly suggest that both came from the railway cuttings within the Hospital grounds, although there is a slightly possibility that some of the GS&WR material may have come from the cutting west of the South Circular Road. Essentially from the same location as 177.04-05, the NGR given reflects the possibility that they were found a little further to the west of the first group, but is almost certainly accurate to within 100m. The volume of finds suggests a comparatively dense concentration of graves, a suggestion supported by Worsaae's reference to 'rows'. For more general information see 177.01 & 177.04-05.

Interpretation

Evidence for a minimum of 10 definite inhumations, of which nine were weapon graves, and one a brooch burial. These figures clearly reflect minimum numbers.

177.16

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery September 1845

O 137 343

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Twelve Beads (9 extant: 2 amber, 7 glass)

The evidence for this burial comes from the NMI New Register and a undated letter from Underwood to Worsaae which must have been composed at least 18 months after the event. Combining the two sources, it seems that an inhumation was found with its feet to the east, associated with a string of beads, nine of which were acquired by Perry and eventually entered the RIA collection in 1881. A number of other artefacts found close by are more likely to come from a weapon grave or graves, and have been grouped accordingly (see 177.15 & 16). There are some inconsistencies in the two accounts, but it seems appropriate to assume both refer to a single find in 1845. No further information is available.²²

Site / Location

In September 1845, GS&WR employees were working on the foundations of the terminus and had just begun the 'Inchicore cutting' (see 177.06-14), but the fact that the burial was found 'near the river' may suggest that the terminus is the more likely location. If this is correct, the burial came from the east end of the cemetery, and the NGR given here reflects this. The terminus is on comparatively flat land close to the

²¹ Worsaae, *Account*, pp 325, 330; RIA Rough Minute Book (1843-8); Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

²² C. S. Briggs, 'A neglected Viking burial with beads from Kilmainham, Dublin, discovered in 1847' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxix (1985), pp 94-108; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

river, and below the 7m contour. Even if this association is incorrect, however, there can be no doubt that they formed part of the same cemetery. See also 177.01.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation associated with a Christian site.

177.17

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery September 1845

O 137 343

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Mod.

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (pommel and upper guard only)

B. Spearhead

The evidence for this grave rests almost entirely on Underwood's letter, although both artefacts were almost certainly acquired by Perry and are in the NMI today. According to his letter, they were found so close to the other grave in this area (177.15) that it was assumed they came from it. It is, however, rather more likely that they represent a weapon grave in the area, perhaps one which had previously been disturbed. Despite the problematic nature of the record, there seems no particular reason to doubt their association with the Kilmainham complex.²³

Site / Location

Found beside 177.15 and within the same general complex as 177.01.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation. There is a faint possibility that the two artefacts may have been linked to the woman's grave (177.15). Weaving swords have been mistaken for spearheads elsewhere, and a fragmentary sword hilt was found with what were apparently female remains at Heath Wood (124.09).

177.18

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Possible)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery September 1845

O 137 343

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (broken)

The most tenuous reference to a burial in this group of three (see also 177.15 & 16), it relies on a statement by Underwood to the effect that he had retained what seem to have been the broken fragments of a sword for himself. Given the other artefacts in this assemblage, it seems likely that this sword was of Viking Age date. Its fate after

²³ Briggs 'Neglected Viking burial', pp 94-108

this point is unknown, although Underwood apparently sold two swords and some other artefacts to the RIA at roughly the same time.²⁴

Site / Location

Although perhaps found a little further from the bead burial (177.15) this sword must have come from the same general area. See also 177.01.

Interpretation

A possible weapon burial, given the vagueness of the only available source.

177.19 - 26

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

7 Weapon & 1 Brooch Burial (All Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery c.1845

O 129 342

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (26: avg. 3.3 / grave)

- A. Six Swords (5 double-edged, 1 single-edged; 2 broken)
- B. One Sword Pommel
- C. Four Spearheads (1 bent)
- D. Three Sockets (possibly spearheads)
- E. Three Shield Bosses (all Dublin type)
- F. Three Oval Brooches (single-shell: one the partner of 177.06-15:G)
- G. Penannular Brooch (CA)
- H. Chain (CA)
- I. Two Beads
- J. Roasting Spit / *Seiðrstafr*
- K. Whalebone Plaque
- L. Antler Burr
- M. Byzantine Seal

This group of artefacts represents finds that can either be linked to railway construction at Kilmainham, or to the general area of Kilmainham in the mid-1840s, or to collectors who are known to have had strong Kilmainham links. In particular, there can be no doubt that that the six swords, one pommel and two oval brooches on which the minimum number is based (see 'Interpretation') came from this site. Some material, such as the shield mounts and whalebone plaque, are first recorded in Wilde's (unpublished) catalogue, compiled approximately a dozen years after 1857, while other material comes from the Wakeman, Petrie and Perry collections. It seems certain some other antiquarians and dealers were also involved. Other objects were chosen by Worsaae from among the *purchased* objects in the RIA collections, and are now in the National Museum in Denmark. Other *allegedly* purchased material was recorded shortly before its destruction by J.W. Mallet, who carried out a series of experiments on the chemical composition of an otherwise unknown sword and two beads from Kilmainham in the 1860s. The Byzantine seal is known only from a wax impression, while the last object in this collection to enter the (then) Dublin Museum of Science and Art was a sword acquired in 1911. It seems clear that while the RIA, with the support of the Board of the GS&WR and the Governors of the

²⁴ Ibid.

Royal Hospital, acquired the bulk of material recovered during the railway construction, and indeed other events, a substantial body of material made its way into private collections around the city.

Given the poor level of detail available for the find circumstances of so many of these artefacts, very little can be said about them, and none can be directly related to each other. Even the precise circumstances under which the pair of the Perry oval brooch entered the RIA collections is not fully understood. It is clear that there was at least one comparatively well furnished woman's grave, with a roasting spit / *seiðrstafr* and whalebone plaque, but it is not certain with which set of brooches these were associated. It is entirely possible that some artefacts may have been recovered from either of the main group of graves (177.04-05 or 177.06-15), or even from the smaller grave group vaguely described by Underwood (177.15-17). Bearing this in mind, the proposed average of 3.3 artefacts/grave within the group itself must be treated very cautiously.²⁵

Site / Location

Although it seems clear that at least some of these objects, notably those in the Petrie collection, came from the same section of the railway cuttings which produced the RIA 1845 artefact group (see 177.06-15), the poor quality of recording associated with most other objects listed here means that the group as a whole can only be provenanced to Kilmainham, with the NGR given here indicating a point close to the centre of the cemetery, as defined by more securely provenanced artefacts. See also 177.01.

Interpretation

Seven probable weapon burials and one probable brooch burial. As always, these figures reflect minimum numbers.

177.27

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before April 1847

O 127 338

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Wrongly dated in a number of published accounts to 1842, this sword was purchased from one William Thompson, and provenanced to Kilmainham, being appended to the main list of material from that site in the RIA Old Register (i.e. 177.04-15). No additional information is available.²⁶

²⁵ J. W. Mallet, 'Report on the chemical examination of antiquities from the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy' in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* xxii (1853), pp 313-342; George Eogan, 'Irish antiquities of the bronze age, iron age and early Christian period in the National Museum of Denmark' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xci C (1991), p.133, 169-71; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

²⁶ O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.35; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

Site / Location

This sword was purchased nearly two years after the completion of excavations at Kilmainham, and while it is possible that Thompson had simply held on to it for an extended period of time, there is a more plausible alternative. An Archibald Thompson was a tenant of the same Mrs. Drum whose field at Kilmainham produced a sword Kilmainham in 1851 (see also 177.31). The gravel workings in this field were already underway in 1847, and it seems entirely possible that the sword was a comparatively recent discovery in these excavations rather than an older find from the railway cuttings. As such this sword comes from the south-west part of the cemetery, west of the assumed site of the monastic complex at Kilmainham, although its precise relationship with the monastic enclosure cannot now be determined. Topographically, the burial was above the 20m contour and close to the top of the ridge on which the monastery was built. Due to substantial earth removal in the area, it is not certain if it afforded views north towards the Liffey or south towards the Cammock, although the latter is marginally more likely. Today, the Liffey is 5-600m away, depending on precisely where the sword was found within the gravel pit. See also 177.01.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation in association with a Christian site.

177.28-29

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

2 Weapon Burials (Both Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before November 1848

O 133 339

Inhumations (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (5 Objects; avg. 2.5/grave)

- A. Two Swords (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Shield Boss
- D. Seven Arrowheads

Presented to the RIA by one Richard Young of Islandbridge, who was 'about opening a gravel pit' at Kilmainham, these artefacts have been reidentified as a result of the IVGP, although some of the other associations are problematic. Young's original letter does not survive, but a published summary of this document implies that these 'antique remains' were found in association with skeletons, a detail which seems entirely plausible given the available evidence.²⁷

Site / Location

According to the published note on these finds, they were found 'near the terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway', apparently in the course of opening a gravel pit. Between the 1847 and 1875 six inch sheets for the area (Dublin 18), only one additional gravel pit appears in the area near the terminus, this being immediately south of the station and north of the Commander's gardens at Kilmainham. While a gap of 27 years means that we cannot be certain that it was this

²⁷ Anon., 'Proceedings, 13 November 1848' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iv (1848), p. 219; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

pit, it seems certain that this burial must have been in this general area, and the NGR given here must be at least approximately correct. As such, the graves were above the 10m contour and c.350m from the Liffey, although the original topography has been almost entirely transformed. The material presented by Richard Young three months later must have come from very close by (see 177.29-30).

Interpretation

Evidence for two definite weapon inhumations, associated with a Christian site.

177.30-31

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

1 Weapon & 1 Tertiary Burial (both Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before January 1849

O 133 339

Inhumations (Probable)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (5 Objects; avg. 2.5/grave)

- A. Sword Hilt (Upper Guard?)
- B. Conical Mount (for Shield Boss?)
- C. 13 Beads (9 glass, 3 steatite, 1 ceramic)
- D. Linen Smoother
- E. CA band ('brass hoop')

According to RIA records, these objects were presented by one Thomas Young of Islandbridge, although Wilde later associated some of the objects with an otherwise unknown George Young. Their association with skeletal material depends on a reference in the previous Young donation (see 117.27-8). The interpretation of some of the artefacts is problematic, but suggests a (damaged?) sword and shield boss (presumably conical), as well as a group of beads and a linen smoother, the latter objects suggesting a female tertiary grave.²⁸

Site / Location

According to the earliest (unpublished) records, these finds came from 'Islandbridge', but Wilde suggested that they were actually from Kilmainham, the two terms being far from mutually exclusive. More importantly, it seems highly likely, given the donor's name and a reference a few months earlier (see 177.27-8), that these objects were discovered while 'opening a gravel pit, which it is supposed, (might) contain skeletons and antique remains'. As such, it seems likely that these objects came from an area close to the gravel pit which produced the November 1848 objects, and the NGR given here reflects this assumed provenance. See also 177.27-8.

Interpretation

Evidence for two probable graves, one weapon and one tertiary, the latter being one of a handful of furnished women's graves without oval brooches. They were found in close association with a Christian site, but without specific references to human remains.

²⁸ Anon., 'Stated Meeting, 17 March 1849' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iv (1849), p.311; Wilde, W. R., *Antiquities of Stone, Earthen and Vegetable Materials*, p.165, 168, 196; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

177.32

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before 21 July 1851

O 127 338

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (Double-edged)

A poorly preserved sword that was purchased from one Henry Swift for seven shillings and sixpence in 1851. He had apparently discovered it during gravel extraction at Kilmainham.

Site / Location

According to unpublished material in the RIA archive, this sword was found in 'Mrs. Drum's field near Kilmainham'. This field can be identified using Griffith's valuation as a 2 acre 16 perch (0.85 hectare) site owned by Margaret Drum immediately west of Bully's Acre and corresponding to the NGR given here. Comparison for the relevant six-inch sheets for 1843, 1847 and 1875 show the steady development of a gravel pit in this area, and it seems highly likely that Swift was associated with this activity in some way. The same pit seems to have produced another sword some four years earlier (see 177.26). Thus, the weapon grave which this sword presumably represents must be one of the southernmost of the Kilmainham complex. See also 177.26.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial in association with a Christian site.

177.33

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before 10 December 1860

c.O 133 339

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (5)

A. Sword (single-edged)

B. Spearhead

C. CA Balance

D. 'Misc. Iron Fragments' (14)

E. 'Faunal Remains'

The artefacts associated with this burial were the first from Kilmainham that were acquired through William Wilde, who presented them on behalf of one 'William Young Esq. of Island Bridge'. This William Young was presumably a relative of the Richard and Thomas (or George?) Young who presented similar material in 1848 and 1849 (see 177.27-30), and these artefacts, 'found in an excavation' may also have been discovered through gravel extraction. Some skull fragments have survived to the present day, together with an assemblage of animal bone, but none of the 'misc. fragments' can be identified. The original catalogue entry states that they were

the remains of 'implements', suggesting some diversity, and it is not inconceivable that they represented a shield boss, or even weights associated with the balance, but this is speculative.²⁹

Site / Location

The published note on these finds states that they were found 'near Kilmainham' and their association with the Young family suggests they may have come from the same gravel pit as some earlier donations (see 177.27-30). Although the fact that they were acquired after a nine year interval means that this cannot be demonstrated conclusively, the NGR given here represents this feature, and even if incorrect, they were clearly part of the same burial complex, and probably from the area to the east of the modern village.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation associated with a Christian site.

177.34-5

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Two Weapon Burials (Both Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery August 1860

c.O 133 342

Inhumations (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (7; avg. 3.5 / grave)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Sword (single-edged)
- C. Spearhead
- D. Shield Boss (Dublin type)
- E. Knife (tanged)
- F. Gilt CA Spoon
- G. CA Sheet (fragmentary)

These artefacts were presented to the RIA by George Miller in December 1860, together with 'numerous fragments of bone, chiefly human', although the latter have since been lost. O'Brien has identified the site of the discovery, and has suggested that some of the bone fragments may come from unfurnished burials in the same area.³⁰

Site / Location

O'Brien's research has indicated that in 1860, a bend in the railway line immediately W of what is now Heuston Station was straightened, and that George Miller was an engineer with the GS&WR. As such it is almost certain that the finds were made on this new, 500m stretch of line, the NGR given here representing its midpoint. Levelling associated with the railway line has removed all traces of the local topography, but it is clear that the site was c.200m south of the Liffey, on what was originally sloping ground at the edge of the floodplain, well below the 10m contour.

²⁹ Anon., 'Proceedings, 10 December 1860', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* vii (1860), p.360; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

³⁰ Anon., 'Proceedings' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* vii (1861), p.376; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p.37; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

Like the 'Young' burials (see 177.27-30 & 32), these artefacts represent some of the most easterly in the cemetery.

Interpretation

Two definite weapon inhumations in association with a Christian cemetery, evidence for a minimum of two graves being provided by the two swords.

177.36-9

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

3 Weapon (Definite) & 1 Tertiary (Probable) Burials

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before October 1866

O 126 342

Inhumations (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (19; avg. 4.8 + 1./6 = 6.4 / grave)

- A. Three Swords (2 double-edged; 1 single-edged)
- B. Two Spearheads
- C. Three Shield Bosses (1 Scandinavian, 2 Dublin type)
- D. Bridle (Ring) Bit
- E. Two Weights
- F. Sickle
- G. Two Hammers (1 large, 1 small)
- H. Whetstone (large)
- I. Shears
- J. Two Spindle Whorls
- K. CA Fragments and Mount
- L. Amber Stud

A sub-group of the artefacts from a 'battle site' first published by William Wilde in 1866, a previously unrecognised rough draft of the RIA New Register notes that these objects were acquired from a number of individuals in the months of September and October 1866 by Edward Clibborn. As with all the other graves found in 1866 (see also 177.39-43), the artefacts were found 0.45-0.6m beneath the surface, directly above gravel and in association with 'several' skeletons. The fact that Wilde considered there was no evidence of 'interment' suggests that the graves were no longer marked in any way. Some samples of the 'osseous remains' seem to have been acquired by the RIA at the time, but none can be identified today. The piecemeal acquisition of these artefacts over a comparatively extended period of time suggests that a number of graves are represented by these finds, and the presence of two spindle whorls and the shears suggests a (female) other grave may have been found with the three weapon graves for which there is slightly more substantial evidence. The average number of artefacts calculation includes some additional material recorded here as 177.43, the majority of which probably belongs to one of the other three groups. Despite stray references in the RIA archive, it has proved impossible to subdivide the material representing these four graves any further, and no further information on their original context is available.³¹

³¹ Wilde, W. R., 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (1866), pp 13-22; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', pp 37-8; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

Site / Location

Wilde specifically noted that all of the objects in the 1866 purchases came from 'the surface of the great pit from which the macadamising material of Dublin was being procured ... in the fields sloping down from the ridge of Inchicore to the Liffey, and to the south-west of the village of Islandbridge'. The Six Inch Ordnance Survey sheet surveyed in 1867 shows only one 'great' gravel pit in this area, immediately west of Islandbridge village, but accessed from the SW side of the village, which may have been what Wilde was thinking of when he wrote this description. As the S part of the pit had already been excavated at an earlier date, and the lower (N) part would presumably have flooded regularly, the area in which the burials could have occurred was comparatively confined, and the NGR corresponds to this point. The piecemeal acquisition of the material as a whole suggests the burials were comparatively widely dispersed within this area, but no further information is forthcoming. All of the burials in this group seem to have been on the western side of the cemetery, but close to its W boundary.

Interpretation

A minimum of three definite weapon inhumations, each represented by a sword, and an additional probable tertiary inhumation, represented by the spindle whorls and shears, all associated with a Christian site.

177.40-42

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

1 Weapon & 2 Brooch Burials (All Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before October 1866

O 126 342

Inhumations (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (19 Objects; *avg.* 6.3 + 1.6 = 7.9 / grave)

- A. Sword (double-edged) & Scabbard Guard
- B. Spearhead (Irish type?)
- C. Shield Boss (Dublin type)
- D. Four Oval Brooches
- E. Beads (1 ceramic, 4 glass, 19 composite)
- F. Balance
- G. Two Weights
- H. Needle Case
- I. Two Purses (CA mounts only)
- J. Penannular Brooch Ring
- K. CA Ringed Pin
- L. CA Stick Pin
- M. Two Buckles
- N. CA Gilt Miniature Axe
- O. CA Ring
- P. CA Disc

The second group of artefacts from the gravel pit at Islandbridge, all of these objects were purchased using Treasure Trove funds from one John McDonald on 24 October 1866. The relationship between McDonald and those who had recovered the material is unknown, but strong differences between the various artefact groups suggest all represent discrete grave groups. This group, for example, contains all four oval

brooches recovered at this time, indicating a minimum of two brooch burials, while the weapons indicate at least one additional male burial was present. Given the exceptionally large number of artefacts per grave, it is entirely possible that more graves were present, particularly if the 'miniature axe' functioned as a (fourth) brooch / pin. While it is likely that the weapons and brooches came from separate graves, however, the other material cannot be further subdivided.³²

Site / Location

Like the other artefacts recovered in 1866, these objects came from the great gravel pit west of Islandbridge. See 177.35-8

Interpretation

This material provides evidence for a minimum of one weapon and two brooch inhumations, all definite, and found in association with a Christian site.

177.43

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before October 1866

O 126 342

Inhumation (Definite)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (11 Objects + 1.6 = 12.6)

- A. Sword (double-edged)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Balance
- D. Six Weights
- E. Tongs
- F. Crucible Tongs
- G. Hammer
- H. Zoomorphic Stick Pin
- I. Buckle
- J. Steatite Bead
- K. Zoomorphic Mount

A second group of artefacts purchased using Treasure Trove funds on 24 October 1866, these objects were purchased from one Edward McDonnell. It is interesting to note that the character of these objects is very different to the material purchased from John McDonald on the same day, and that while the context is of course debatable, the artefacts listed here would correspond to a single well-furnished weapon burial accompanied by a number of interesting items, particularly the smith's tools and zoomorphic mount. It has been suggested that the latter object can be related to a wind vane, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively.³³

Site / Location

Recovered at much the same time as the other material from the great gravel pit, these artefacts, while presumably representing a discrete burial, must come from

³² Wilde. 'Scandinavian antiquities', p.13-22; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

³³ Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

approximately the same area as the other finds (see 177.35-41), and the NGR given here reflects this. For more general information, see 177.35.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in association with a Christian site, if all these artefacts come from a single grave then it is the richest in the cemetery, and one of the best furnished in Britain and Ireland.

177.44

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

1 Weapon Burial (Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before October 1866

O 126 342

Inhumation?

Earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (14 Objects; *avg. 2 + 1.6 = 3.6 / grave*)

- A. Sword (Hilt only)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Six Knives
- D. Three Iron Tools
- E. CA & Wood Composite Artefact(s)
- F. Three CA Rings
- G. Iron Fragments (9)

The material in this group comprises those artefacts acquired in 1866 which cannot be related to a specific purchase or purchases. Because of this, the minor objects have been divided by the total minimum number of 1866 and divided among the three other groups to produce an average figure. The sword hilt, on the other hand, must be taken as evidence for at least one extra (probable) weapon grave, and there is also a suggestion that it was acquired in January 1866, nearly 10 months before the rest of the material, further suggesting an additional and separate grave. The composite CA artefact includes the fragments of a broken house shrine panel, which may or may not be related to the amber stud listed as part of 177.35-8. Other objects, particularly the knives, are most likely to have been associated with other burials, the artefacts being listed together for convenience.³⁴

Site / Location

Although the sword hilt upon which the identification of this weapon burial depends may have been discovered some time before the other artefacts, its inclusion in the main 1866 group strongly suggests that it was found as a result of the same activity in the same general area. Thus, the NGR given here is at least broadly correct. See also 177.01 and 177.35-8.

Interpretation

While it is not suggested that these objects represent a discrete group in the same way as the other 1866 purchases, the sword hilt has been taken as evidence for an additional probable weapon burial resulting in a minimum of 9 graves (6 weapon, 2 brooch & 1 other) in the 1866 group (177.35-43).

³⁴ Wilde, 'Scandinavian antiquities', p.16; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

177.45-7

KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

2 Weapon & 1 Brooch Burials (All Probable)

Christian Site

Date of Recovery Before 30 October 1869

c.O 126 342

Inhumations (Probable)

Earth-cut

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (15 Objects; avg. 5 / grave)

- A. Two swords (2 double edged; 1 bent)
- B. Two Spearheads (1 Dublin)
- C. Shield Boss (Scandinavian)
- D. Arrowhead
- E. Two Oval Brooches
- F. Three Knives (?)
- G. Tanged Tool
- H. 'Strike-a-Light'
- I. Box Mount
- J. Amber Brooch
- K. CA Ring

By far the worst recorded and enigmatic of the Kilmainham groups, this assemblage was also, paradoxically, the most recently recovered. Unfortunately, they were acquired during the construction of a 'new museum' at Academy house and a time when the 'New Register' was undergoing a major revision. As a result the only contemporary record of these finds is a note in the (unpublished) RIA *Committee Book of Antiquities* for 30 October 1869, to the effect that a payment of six pounds be made to Sir William Wilde 'for a collection of stone, iron and bronze antiquities procured from Islandbridge'. He was also to be 'permitted to borrow a brooch out of the above collection'. One artefact in the museum retains a label linking it to this purchase, and others can be related to it through William Wakeman's *Catalogue*. While regularly confusing 1866 with 1869, the latter document contains circumstantial details, most notably the date or payment of six pounds to Wilde, which allow artefacts to be linked to the 1869 group. In addition, it is almost certain that at least one set of unprovenanced oval brooches were acquired as part of this group, resulting in Coffey & Armstrong's assumption that the four brooches from 1866 (see 177.40-1) were actually four pairs of brooches. Unfortunately, this latter hypothesis cannot be demonstrated conclusively using the available evidence. No specific relationships between these artefacts can be established at present.³⁵

Site / Location

The confusion relating to this purchase also extends to their find spot, and the circumstances under which they were recovered. Wilde (unlike many later writers) is normally quite specific in his use of 'Kilmainham' and 'Islandbridge', using the latter term to refer to the village and the ground to the west of it, and this would suggest that they came from the same general area as the 'great gravel pit' finds of 1866. Given the subsequent confusion between these two groups, this would be particularly appropriate. A comparison of 1867 and 1875 OS maps of the area

³⁵ George Coffey & E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Scandinavian objects found at Island-Bridge and Kilmainham' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xxviii C (1910), p.119; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

indicates that this pit had not expanded enormously in the interim, although it had been pushed slightly further towards the east at some point. The NGR given here corresponds to the pit, and while it may not be absolutely correct, it is unlikely to be out by more than a hundred metres. As such, these graves came from the north-west side of the main concentration of graves at this cemetery, on sloping land, presumably at the edge of the floodplain. For further information, see 177.01.

Interpretation

A minimum of two probable weapon burials, represented by two swords, and a probable brooch burial, all associated with a Christian site.

178

CORK STREET, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1842

c.O 144 333

No Evidence

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefact (1 Object)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Acquired by the RIA as part of the Dawson collection in 1842, all that is known of this find is that it was discovered by men digging foundations in Cork Street. The pommel is missing and one of the guards is twisted, but there is no evidence that this occurred prior to deposition.³⁶

Site / Location

While it is clear that this sword was discovered in Cork Street, the surviving description does not note where on the road this occurred, and the NGR given here simply represents its central point. Despite this, it can be said with some confidence that it was not directly related to water, being *c.* 1km S of the Liffey, and *c.* 2km from the sea at its original estuary. The surrounding area is comparatively flat, with the burial occurring at approximately 19m OD. It is also widely believed that *Slige Dála* approached Dublin along this route, and this burial would presumably have been placed directly adjacent to it.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial adjacent to a major routeway. As such, it can be compared to Heskett-in-the Forest (093), Leeming Lane (110) and Adwick-le-Street (118).

179

BRIDE STREET, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian Site (prehistoric halberd)

Date of Recovery 1860

O 153 337

Cremation?

No Evidence

Record Quality Mod

Artefacts (6)

A. Sword (double-edged; bent)

³⁶ Bøe, *Ireland*, pp 18, 68; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

- B. Spearhead
- C. Shield Boss (damaged; insular type)
- D. Iron Spike / Tool
- E. Bronze Halberd
- F. CA Stick Pin?

These artefacts together with a 'human skull' were acquired by the RIA on 28 January 1861 from Blake Neville, the City Engineer, all having been 'found under the street opposite to St Bride's Church (Dublin). The sword and spearhead were misidentified by Wakeman and Bøe, but reidentified by the IVGP. No details of its find position are recorded, but the sword and shield boss had both been damaged prior to burial, as had the bronze halberd. As the only halberd in the Irish corpus that has been damaged in this way, it seems likely that it was deposited as part of an FISB. The stick pin is one of eight associated with the site, but the majority seem to reflect high medieval activity in the area, rather than evidence for burial. The sword is tenth century.³⁷

Site / Location

According to the unpublished *Academy Minute Book*, these artefacts came from 'under the street, nearly opposite St Bride's Church'. As Neville was in charge of laying out the city's new sewer system at the time, it seems that this reference is to be taken literally, but would suggest that the road has moved since the deposition took place. The burial was in an area c.50m west of the Poddle, c.15m OD, on east-facing ground that sloped down to the Pool c.225m away. In the Viking Age, it would only have been c.680m from the mouth of the Liffey to the north-west, although even then it seems likely that the Ringsend spit would have marked the open sea, c.2.8km from the site. Although surviving records make no reference to other human remains at the site, it seems likely that St Bridget's church was in existence at the time of the burial, but even if it was not, it lay close to St. Michael le Pole and the postulated site of the monastery of Dubh Linn, and thus clearly had ecclesiastical associations.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in association with a Christian site or sites, and particularly noteworthy for the likely use of a prehistoric artefact among the grave-goods (compare Claughton Hall:102).

³⁷ Anon., 'Proceedings 28 January 1861' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* vii (1861), p.376; Bøe, *Ireland*, p.66; Peter Harbison, *The Daggers and Halberds of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland. Prähistorische Bronzefunde* vi.1 (Munich, 1969), p.42; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

180.1-2

COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN

Two Weapon Burials (Probable)

Possible Prehistoric Mound

Date of Recovery c.1819

O 159 340

Unknown

Extant (?) Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (8; avg. 4 / grave)

- A. Two Sword (1 double-edged; 1 single-edged)
- B. Four Spearheads (3 insular; 1 uncertain)
- C. Shield Boss (Irish Sea type)
- D. Tinned CA & Amber Buckle

A group of eight 'British Antiquities' acquired by Major Henry Sirr, which passed to the Royal Irish Academy with the rest of his collection in the early 1840s, they were found 'under the site of the Royal Arcade', presumably during its construction, but no other details were recorded. Although there are no explicit references to human remains, they are widely believed to be grave-goods. More than 150 years earlier, in 1646, in approximately the same area, the removal of a 'lowly hill' revealed a rectilinear cist allegedly filled with a mixture of burnt and unburnt human remains, but without grave-goods. Although its date is uncertain, it has been compared to some Pictish sites (see Dunrobin, 136, and Ackergill, 089).³⁸

Site / Location

The Royal Arcade was a covered thoroughfare that linked College Green and Suffolk Street, and was situated directly east of the Thingmote or Hogges, an artificial mound c.22m in diameter and 12.2m high, with a distinctive stepped profile that has been compared to Tynwald Hill on the Isle of Man. It has been suggested that it marked the assembly ground of the Hiberno-Norse community, and there has also been some speculation that it may have been a prehistoric burial mound originally. There is, however, no evidence to support the latter suggestion (but see 180.3). Although there is no evidence that these graves were marked in any way, they were closely associated with this very substantial mound, which stood on flat ground immediately east of the settlement at Dublin, on the east bank of the Poddle and c.200m from the banks of the Liffey as it then was. At c.7m OD, the ground sloped very gently upwards to the south, but the site afforded excellent views over the inner part of Dublin Bay, the shore of which was perhaps only 50m away, although the Ringsend Spit and the open sea beyond it were c.2.1km away.

Interpretation

Two probable weapon inhumations associated with what may have been a symbol of the Dublin community, and with possible prehistoric associations (see 180.4).

³⁸ S. H. Harrison, 'College Green – A neglected 'Viking' Cemetery at Dublin' in Andras Mortensen & S. V. Arge (eds) *Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Viking Congress, Tórshavn 19-30 July 2001* (Tórshavn, 2005), pp 329-339; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

180.3

COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Possible Prehistoric Mound

Date of Recovery *c.*1850

O 159 340

Inhumation (Definite)

Extant (?) Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Sword (double-edged?)

B. 'Armour'

A letter from Richard Glennon, a nineteenth century dealer in antiquities, to Thomas Bateman in 1855 noted that 'some years ago, there was found... a skeleton of man of enormous size with a complete suit of armour ornamented with gold and a gold hilted sword.' This must be the same 'Danish sword' noted by Haliday as 'one the most valuable... discovered in Ireland'. There was only one sword in the TCD collection when it passed to the RIA, and while not 'gold hilted', it does have traces of twisted silver wire on it. The armour, presumably a composite artefact of some kind, has not survived.³⁹

Site / Location

According to Glennon, the sword was found about 10 yards (*c.*9.1m) from his premises at 3, Suffolk Street, and although he does not give a specific direction, this indicates that it was found on the south side of the Thingmotte / Hogges, and somewhere between 20 and 70m west or south-west of the *c.*1819 burials. See 180.1-2. Like the latter burials, it can be directly associated with this mound, although the same feature would presumably have obscured views towards the Bay.

Interpretation

Despite some ambiguities in the surviving records of the site, a definite weapon inhumation, possibly associated with a extant mound or prehistoric feature (see 180.4).

180.4

COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Possible Prehistoric Mound / Artefacts

Date of Recovery 1855 or 1857

O 159 340

Inhumation (Definite)

Extant (?) Mound

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Shield Boss (?)

The most complete account of this burial is provided by Haliday, who note that a skeleton had been found at Suffolk Street, 'the skull of which having been stained by contact with metal... gave rise to the opinion that the owner had been buried in his armour.' This seems to be the same skull 'supposed to a warrior from the number of deep cuts on his forehead and top of his head, some of which had healed up while he

³⁹ C. S. Briggs, 'Dealing with antiquities in nineteenth century Dublin' in *Irish Historical Record* xxxi.4 (1978), p.147; Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd Ed., Dublin, 1884: Reprint Shannon, 1969), p.155; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

was living', which Richard Glennon offered to sell to Thomas Bateman (see 180.3), and which a note associated with the Ray collection states was orientated north and south, and apparently near a 'clay urn full of bones', and two copper alloy axes, the latter objects apparently providing evidence of prehistoric activity in the area. The skeleton itself was allegedly found ten feet (*c.*3.0m) below the surface, although this may be a reflection of the fact that the ground in the area had been artificially raised in the post-medieval period. It has been suggested that the rust staining on the skull is evidence for a shield boss, which seems a reasonable suggestion.⁴⁰

Site / Location

Like the Bride Street material (179), these artefacts seem to have been discovered during the construction of the city's sewer system, more specifically while 'sinking a shore' opposite No. 3 Suffolk Street, Richard Glennon's residence. As such, this burial was on the south side of the Thingmote, and *c.*9.1m from the weapon inhumation discovered a few years earlier. See 180.1-2 & 3.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, possibly associated with prehistoric activity near the Hiberno-Norse assembly ground.

181

KILDARE STREET, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1885

O 163 336

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

Despite having been found during the construction of the National Museum building, no information on the context of this sword is available. It was heavily cleaned in the mid-twentieth century, and as an example of Petersen's type H, could be either ninth or tenth century in date. The assumption that it was a burial rests on the fact that it is clearly a dry land context.⁴¹

Site / Location

The burial was almost certainly found under the northern part of the present building, *c.*13m OD, and although the ground surface has been extensively modified, seems to have been close to the point where ground rising from the river levelled out in the area around the modern Stephen's Green. Comparison with alluvial deposits suggests that it was *c.*250m from the Liffey, and in the absence of buildings would have afforded views north and northeast towards the estuary. The College Green cemetery (180), *c.*500m away, would also probably have been visible.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial, about which almost nothing is known.

⁴⁰ Briggs, 'Dealing with antiquities', p.147; Haliday (1882), p.155; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

⁴¹ Bøe, *Ireland*, p.68; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

182.1

South Great GEORGE'S STREET, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Habitation activity (hearths)

Date of Recovery 2003

O 155 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (2)

A. Shield (Irish Sea Type), Grip & Rivets

B. Knife

The first of a series of four graves excavated at this site, like the others, this (F196) had been disturbed by later activity, which had removed the legs. The skeleton of a robust young man, aged 25-29, and 1.71m tall, had been buried in a supine position in an east-west grave, with his head to the east. The left arm had been placed across the abdomen, but most of the right arm was missing, leading to suggestions either that the grave was disturbed soon after deposition, or that the arm was severed when placed in the grave. Isotope analysis of a tooth suggested a possible Scottish origin. The shield boss was found placed across the chest, and surrounded by a number of shield rivets and fittings, while the knife was at the left hip. Given the later disturbance, it is possible that the grave was originally more richly furnished, but other weapon burials furnished only with shield bosses are known (e.g. Balladoole: 167).⁴²

Site / Location

The site was directly adjacent to a small inlet on the east or south-east side of what is widely believed to have been the original 'Black Pool' of Dublin, and which certainly seems to have been an area of open water in the Viking Age. In one of the earliest phases of activity, a clay bank surmounted by a palisade was built along its shore, presumably to control flooding. The burial lay within 10m of the shoreline, and it is interesting to note that domestic activity seems to have continued in the area after the burial took place. Now at approximately 8.5m OD, the burial was on the opposite side of the Pool to the developing settlement in the Temple Bar area, in an area of comparatively flat land separate by a very slight rise from the flat ground of Hoggen Green, and which must originally have afforded views across the Pool to the ridge upon which the Hiberno-Norse town developed.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation. It may originally have been more richly furnished, but other examples of weapon graves with shield bosses as the only 'weapon' are known (e.g. Balladoole 167).

182.2

⁴² Linzi Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin: is this the longphort?' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin* vi (Dublin, 2005), pp 11-62; Ruth Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin* (Dublin, 2004), p.39, 61. The shield boss is of the Irish Sea A type, see S. H. Harrison, 'The Millhill burial in context. Artefact, culture and chronology in the 'Viking west'' in Steffen Stumman Hansen & Klavs Randsborg (eds), *Vikings in the West: Acta Archaeologica* lxxi; *Acta Archaeologica Supplementa* ii (2000), pp 65-78

South Great GEORGE'S STREET, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Habitation activity (hearths)

Date of Recovery2003

O 155 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Shield Boss (possible, fragmentary)

The second inhumation found at this site, this burial (F223) was close to the first, and had been placed directly on top of the cold charcoal of an open hearth, analysis of which produced evidence for numerous plant remains, including the first pea from an Irish context (?). This was interpreted as a cooking hearth, although the possibility that it represented some form of ritual activity cannot be entirely ruled out. The same can be said of a second hearth, at a higher level, at this site. The grave was truncated and the skeleton was missing its legs, but had been placed in a supine position with its head to the northwest. Given the damage to the skeleton, its height could not be estimated, but it was identified as a male, aged 17-20, and isotope analysis suggested a probable Scandinavian origin. A radiocarbon date of the bone gave a calibrated date of AD670-880, calculated to two standard deviations. The only grave goods were some fragments of iron and iron staining on the chest, which has been interpreted by the excavator as evidence for a shield boss.⁴³

Site / Location

A few metres from 182.1

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, the only confusion relating to the identification of the metal fragments found with it, which could form part of another composite artefact.

182.3

South Great GEORGE'S STREET, DUBLIN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Habitation activity (hearths)

Date of Recovery2003

O 155 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (1)

A. Animal Bone (Cattle, Horse, Dog, Goat/Sheep and Pig)

A third skeleton found at the site, only the legs of this example (F342) survived, but indicated that the body had been laid in a supine position, orientated north-south with the head to the south, and was that of a young adult, probably male, less than twenty-five years old, and 1.66m high. Radiocarbon analysis of the bone remains gave a calibrated date of AD689-882, calculated to two standard deviations, while tooth isotope analysis suggested an origin in the Western or Northern Isles. The only objects found in association with the grave were c.151 animal bone fragments, representing cattle, horse, dog, goat/sheep, and pig. These produced no evidence of butchery marks, and are therefore unlikely to represent the remains of a funeral feast,

⁴³ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials', pp 41-4, 52; Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p.61

but had been buried soon after death. They could, nonetheless, represent some form of 'ritual activity'.⁴⁴

Site / Location

No more than a few metres from 182.1.

Interpretation

A definite tertiary inhumation, albeit with animal bone rather than more conventional artefacts. As such, it can be compared to two of the graves from Islandbridge (176.4 & 5) or some of the possible food offerings found at Heath Wood (e.g. 124.09).

182.4

South Great GEORGE'S STREET, DUBLIN

Tertiary Burial (Definite)

Habitation activity (hearths)

Date of Recovery2003

O 155 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

A. Comb (Scandinavian type)

B. Knife & Knife-Guard (?)

C. Bone Pin (Zoomorphic)

The last of the burials at this site to be discovered, this (F598) was also the most intact, although the skull and lower legs were missing. The skeleton of a young man aged 17-25 and 1.76m high, and particularly 'stocky and muscular'. Well-developed right arm muscles were consistent with 'rotation and swinging movements such as those used frequently in battle.' A bone sample gave a radiocarbon date of AD786-955, calculated to two standard deviations, while tooth isotope analysis suggested a Scandinavian origin. His grave, with his head to the west, had been cut into an extant ditch, and his legs seem to have been disturbed at some point soon after burial. The comb seems to have been beside his right arm, and directly underneath it was a composite object that may be the remains of a knife and knife-guard. The zoomorphic bone pin was found close to the right shoulder, where it had presumably fastened a cloak. . The absence of weapons in the grave of one apparently well capable of wielding them stands in direct contrast to the weapons placed in the grave at Balnakeil (033), although it is of course possible that they may have been removed as a result of later disturbance.⁴⁵

183

Aylesbury Road, DONNYBROOK, DUBLIN

Weapon Grave (Definite)

Extant Cemetery

Date of Recovery1879

O 182 313

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged, broken)

B. Spearhead

⁴⁴ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials', pp 44; 52; Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p.61

⁴⁵ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials', pp 44-8; Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, pp 61-2

C. Three Arrowheads

During the construction of a house, a mound 30.5m in diameter and 0.9m high was excavated from north to south, revealing perhaps 6-700 bodies in three distinct layers. In the upper levels, towards the north side of the mound, was the skeleton of a man of exceptional size, who had been buried in a north-south position, flanked by a sword and spearhead, allegedly with the skeletons of two 'women' at his feet. The arrowheads were found in the same area at a later date. Initially interpreted as the site of a massacre, O'Brien has recently re-evaluated the evidence and instead argued that it represents a small Christian 'secular' cemetery, into which an FISB was placed, and this interpretation has been followed here. Similarly Frazer's assertion that the skull had suffered 'a fatal sword cut, perforating the frontal lobe', cannot be entirely relied upon, as this may represent post-depositional damage. Unlike some other Christian sites with FISBs, this particular burial ground seems to have been abandoned before the High Middle Ages, although it does seem to have had a final phase of use as a killeen. The sword is exceptionally fine, but cannot be dated with precision.⁴⁶

Site / Location

The extant cemetery where this FISB was interred was situated on a slight spur, c.13m OD and 270m from the east bank of the Dodder. To the east, ground sloped gradually way to the coast, 1.6km away today. Views from the site are difficult to determine today, but probably would have included the river valley, but it is not certain if the major crossing point less than 300m away, was visible. Even if this were not the case, however, some relationship between the two seems very likely.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation within an extant Christian burial ground.

184

BARNHALL, Co. KILDARE

Weapon Grave (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery Before 1788

c. N 994 355

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (2)

A. Axehead

B. 'Other Weapons'

Walker provides the only evidence for this probable burial in Kildare. A note describing one of his plates describes 'a small iron battle axe found with fragments of other iron weapons and some human bones on the lands of Barnhall, Co. Kildare'.

⁴⁶ William Frazer, 'Description of a great sepulchral mound at Aylesbury-road, near Donnybrook, in the County of Dublin, containing human and animal remains, as well as some objects of antiquarian interest, referable to the tenth or eleventh centuries' & 'The Aylesbury-road sepulchral mound. Description of certain human remains, articles of bronze, and other objects obtained there', both in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* xvi (1879 & 1882), pp 29-55 & 116-8 respectively; R. A. Hall, 'A Viking-Age Grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin', in *Medieval Archaeology* xxii (1978), pp 64-83; Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A re-assessment of the great sepulchral mound' containing a Viking burial at Donnybrook, Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* xxxvi (1992), pp 170-3

The illustration is crude, but may well represent a Viking Age axe. Its association with human remains is sufficiently unusual in an Irish context to merit attention.⁴⁷

Site / Location

The townland of Barnhall is c.15km southwest of Leixlip Bridge, on the north-western side of the Liffey. Unfortunately it is not known where in this 91 hectare townland the burial was found, and the NGR given here represents the middle of the townland. It could have been anywhere between 75 and 1876m from the river, and its altitude cannot be determined, but it was clearly c.20km from the original Liffey estuary in a straight line.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation, there is insufficient evidence to suggest more than one burial at this site.

185

Between NEWBRIDGE & Milltown, Co. KILDARE

C. N 780 165

Weapon Grave (Probable)

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Horse Burial

Date of Recovery Before 1859

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (3)

- A. Spearhead ('Iron Dagger')
- B. Bone Pin (Anthropomorphic)
- C. Horse

In 1859, one Frederick Grome, Esq., presented the RIA with 'a curious bone pin, found in a field between Milltown and Newbridge, county of Kildare, with an iron dagger and the skeletons of a man and horse'. The bone pin has a head in the form of a squatting figure and has no direct parallels. The 'dagger' (presumably a spearhead) was not acquired by the Academy and must be assumed lost, as are the human and horse remains.

Site / Location

The original description is very vague, and the NGR given here simply represents a point approximately mid-way between the two modern settlements. Given the vagueness of the topographical reference, it can only be said that it was probably c.90m OD in an area of comparatively flat land to the east of Pollardstown Fen, and while less than 5km from the Liffey, the precise distance is unknown. The site is approximately 45km from the original Liffey estuary in a straight line, and rather further following the course of the river.

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation with a horse at a site with no known earlier features.

⁴⁷ Walker, *Historical Memoirs*, p.173 (pl.13)

186

THE MORRAGH, Co. WICKLOW

Weapon Grave (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery c.1888

c. T 312 960

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Moderate

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged)

In 1908, a sword was presented to the Dublin Museum of Science and Art that had been 'found some 20 years [previously] after a storm in the peaty earth of the Morragh at Wicklow, where the peat becomes exposed at the margin of the shingle beach.' Although fragmentary today, this elaborate example of Petersen's type K was intact when found, but the surviving records make no record either of associated human remains or other artefacts. This may, however, be a reflection of the fact that the site had been eroded before the find was made.⁴⁸

Site / Location

The only (probable) burial south of the North Channel to have been discovered as a result of coastal erosion, it was clearly found on the east side of the Morragh, a c.3.4km long spit on the north and east sides of the Vartry river, north of the town of Wicklow. Erosion in this area, while not particularly rapid, is ongoing, and it is probable that the entire find spot has now been eroded. The NGR given here represents a midpoint on the east coast of the Morragh and must be seen as approximate, although it can hardly be more than 1km out. All coastal sites in the area would have been directly adjacent to the sea and less than 5m above sea level, and would presumably have afforded views east towards the Irish Sea rather than inland, although the flat character of the spit means that this cannot be assumed.

Interpretation

A probable weapon burial at a coastal site.

187

Between ARKLOW & Three Mile Water

Brooch Grave (Probable)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 1900 / 1901

C. T 270 780

Unknown

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (2)

A. Two Oval Brooches (double-shelled)

B. Silver Chain & Needle Case

In 1901, the Dublin Museum of Science and Art acquired these artefacts, which had allegedly been found 'when digging a ditch', but apparently passed through several

⁴⁸ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking burials from County Wicklow' in *Wicklow Archaeology and History* i (1998), pp 29-35; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

hands before arriving in the museum. The chain may be of insular manufacture, while the brooches are almost certainly of tenth century date.⁴⁹

Site / Location

The Science and Art Register states that the brooches came from an unspecified site between Three Mile Water and Arklow, and the NGR here must be regarded as very approximate, representing a mid-point between the two settlements, which are c.16km apart. Some recent commentators have attempted to link the brooches either to Ballymoyle or Ennereilly, but neither provenance can be substantiated at present. Given the vague provenance, no detailed statements can be made about the burial site.

Interpretation

A probable brooch burial.

188

EYREPHORT, Co. GALWAY

Weapon Grave (Definite)

No Evidence

Date of Recovery 17 March 1947

L 584 531

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Excellent

Artefacts (3)

A. Sword (double-edged)

B. Spearhead

C. Shield Boss

Although removed without archaeological supervision, a rapid visit by the National Museum meant that this burial could be reconstructed with a reasonable level of detail. Placed in an earth (or rather sand) cut grave, orientated SW-NE, with the head to the SW (towards the sea), the sword had been laid on the skeleton's left side, with the point close to the ankles, while the spearhead was close to the skeleton's right hip, and the shield boss had been placed over the ankles. The skeleton was that of 'an exceptionally large, strong young man'. Recent research has indicated a number of hearths in the same area, which may represent an associated settlement. The original statement that it was 12ft (3.6m) below the surface may reflect the movement of sand in this machair environment.⁵⁰

Site / Location

Although there has been some confusion about the site of the burial in the past, local knowledge indicates it was at the above NGR, in dunes overlooking a west facing beach called Trawnaman, sheltered by a number of small off-shore islands at the end of the Eyrephort peninsula. It was around the 10m contour and about 46m from the High Water Mark. Rising ground inland would have confined views to the bay, and

⁴⁹ George Coffey, 'A pair of brooches and chains of the Viking period recently found in Ireland' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxii (1902), pp 71-3; Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking burials', pp 29-35; Irish Viking Graves Project 2001 Report (NMI Archive)

⁵⁰ Joseph Raftery, 'A Viking burial in County Galway' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* xxix (1961), pp 3-6; John Sheehan, 'A re-assessment of the Viking burial from Eyrephort, Co. Galway' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* xli (1988), pp 60-72

the offshore islands of Inishturk and Turbot, on the far side of a narrow 500-700m channel.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation, perhaps close to an area of settlement.

189

Meols, Merseyside. See Zone D (1)

190

Cumwhitton, Cumbria. See Zone C (1)

191

WOODSTOWN, Co. WATERFORD

Weapon Grave (Definite)

Associated *longphort* (?)

Date of Recovery 2004

S 552 115

Inhumation (Probable)

Possible Cairn

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Sword (double-edged; broken)
- B. Spearhead
- C. Axehead
- D. Shield Boss (& rivets)
- E. Ringed Pin
- F. Whetstone

The first ever Viking grave scientifically excavated from an Irish rural context, it was discovered during work being carried out in advance of the Waterford bypass. This revealed a substantial D-shaped enclosure fronting on to the Suir, surrounded by 2.5m deep ditch with an internal bank. An entranceway was discovered on the north-east side of the site, and the burial was 22m outside that. Although damaged by ploughing, the presence of some large rocks in the grave cut led to suggestions that it may originally have been marked by a low cairn, particularly as it was just 0.25m below the modern ground surface. An absence of human remains is almost certainly a reflection of the acidic quality of the local soil. The grave cut was approximately east-west and 2.0m by 0.8m and all the grave goods were found within it. The sword hilt was on the right side of the grave cut (on the skeleton's left?), although two other fragments of the sword were at the west end ('head?') of the grave. The shield boss was also in this area, as was the copper alloy pin, which may have held the cloak in place. The small whetstone was further to the east, and had perhaps been suspended from the belt. Research is ongoing.⁵¹

Site / Location

The burial, possibly marked by a cairn, lay north-east of the enclosed area of settlement that has recently been proposed as a possible *longphort*, and which

⁵¹ Richard O'Brien & Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford' in Jerry O'Sullivan & Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent Archaeological Discoveries on National Road Schemes 2004* (Dublin, 2005), pp 111-124

produced substantial evidence for metal working (iron, silver and copper alloy) and trading / exchange, as represented by weights. It was below the 10m contour, a short distance from the river, and c.10km from the sea at Tramore, the distance to the mouth of Waterford Harbour via the Suir being substantially longer. Given the north-facing slope, views were largely restricted to the immediate reach of the river. It would, however, have been highly visible to anyone using the adjacent (and presumably broadly contemporary) entrance to the Woodstown enclosure.

Interpretation

Despite the absence of surviving human remains, a definite weapon inhumation in association with a possible contemporary Viking settlement.

192

TIBBERAUGHNEY, Co. KILKENNY

Weapon Grave (Probable)

Ecclesiastical Site

Date of Recovery 1851

S 441 215

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Poor

Artefacts (1)

A. Sword (double-edged?)

The most contemporary (and useful) source for this discovery is a manuscript 'Kilkenny Archaeological Society Report' from 1852, which notes that during the construction of the railway line at Tibberaughney, large quantities of human remains had been found, together with an iron sword of Danish type, to the surface of which the bone of a man's forearm was firmly attached. It is not entirely certain if this sword survives, but the description leaves little doubt that it was a Viking burial of some kind.

Site / Location

The railway line in Tibberaughney passed directly south of the modern grave yard associated with St Factna's Church, and all available sources agree that many skeletons were discovered, particularly to the east of the modern enclosure. The furnished burial was presumably found among these. As such, it was in an area of flat land well below the 10m contour and 350m northeast of the north bank of the Suir, which is still tidal at this point. On the opposite side of the river, the ground rises steeply into the Comeragh Mountains and Carrickatober (344m), but views from the site itself were probably quite restricted, although it is likely that the river is visible from this point.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in association with a Christian ecclesiastical site.

193.1

SHIP STREET GREAT / GOLDEN LANE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Adjacent to Christian Cemetery

Date of Recovery 2001

O 154 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (3)

- A. Sword Fragment(double-edged)
- B. Bead
- C. Two Rings (silver)

An east-west inhumation (head to the west) in a shallow grave, 3m below the surface, truncated below the upper torso by a later cellar. While the (pattern-welded) blade fragment was out of context, all of the other artefacts were found in the neck region, and were probably worn as pendants. Indeed, it is doubted if the interred individual, who was probably male and aged 25-29 and had either suffered nutritional deficiency or an acute disease at some point, could have fitted it on his finger. A radiocarbon date of 665-865AD (calibrated to two standard deviations) was produced by the bones.⁵²

Site / Location

The burial at Ship Street was its southern end, 50m southeast of the eleventh century church of St Michael le Pole, which clearly stands on an older site, with activity, including burial, stretching back to at least the eighth century. There were, however, no other burials found at this site, which suggests it may have been immediately outside the main focus of Christian burial. The proposed south-west shore of the Pool, an area of open water in the Viking Age is just over 100m to the north. The burial was at *c.*9m OD (perhaps *c.*6m in the Viking Age), in an area of comparatively flat land which sloped gradually up to the south, and which faced the low ridge upon which the settlement at Dublin may have been developing at the time when the burial was deposited. The site would clearly have afforded views of this feature and the adjacent Pool, but it is likely that the 'viewshed' was otherwise quite restricted, and certainly would not have extended to the Liffey mouth, *c.*600m away in a straight line, while the Ringsend Spit and the open sea were further away again.

Interpretation

Given the available evidence a weapon tertiary inhumation associated with a Christian site, and part of a complex of burials on the south bank of the Poddle (see also Bride Street: 179 and George's Street: 182).

193.2

SHIP STREET GREAT / GOLDEN LANE, DUBLIN

Weapon Burial (Definite)

Christian cemetery

Date of Recovery 2005

O 154 337

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (4)

- A. Spearhead
- B. CA Buckle
- C. CA Strap End
- D. Knife

The most recently discovered Viking grave in this study, the site was visited in the course of excavation. Although part of a different excavation, this burial cannot have been more than 50m at most from 193.1, and was clearly part of the same burial

⁵² Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, pp 59-61; Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials', pp 32-4

complex. As with that burial, this grave seems to have been placed on the fringes of an area of Christian burial, but in the case of Golden Lane, Christian burials (albeit still of uncertain date) were found to the north, closer to the site of the eleventh century church. This furnished grave had been badly disturbed by a later pit, in the fill of which the spearhead was found, but the other artefacts were found in situ around the skeleton's waist. As research is still under way, no further information is available at present. See also 193.1.⁵³

Site / Location

Only a few metres from 193.1.

Interpretation

A definite weapon inhumation in association with a Christian cemetery.

194.1

CLOGHERMORE CAVE, Co. KERRY

Weapon Burial (Probable)

Cave with 'pagan' ritual

Date of Recovery 1998-2000

Q 906 128

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (6)

- A. Shield Boss (fragmentary)
- B. CA Ringed Pin
- C. Two CA flat-headed pins
- D. CA 'button'
- E. Knife
- F. Whetstone

The result of a series of excavations of parts of a 375m cave system under an ancient reef, it had been extensively disturbed in modern times. The excavators found the original entrance to the cave, a modified fissure which had been surrounded by a D-shaped enclosure, 16.8 x 28m, apparently of pre-Viking Age date, which seems to have been used as a centre for ritual activity, one aspect of which involved the deposition of disarticulated and / or cremated human remains within the cave system. The system was then used in the ninth and tenth century for the deposition of a least four adult graves, at least three of which were furnished, although the cave disturbance made it difficult to establish precise numbers. This grave, the only articulated example in the cave, was clearly one of the last deposited, as it lay very close to the entrance. The remains of an adult male aged 30-40, who was originally c.167.9cm high, his head had been removed at a point before the body was fully decomposed, perhaps in a act of deliberate desecration, which may also have involved the dispersal of the grave goods, none of which were in situ, although they remained 'closely related' to the body. It is possible that some other artefacts in the cave, such as a horse bit and spearhead, may also have been associated with this, or another, body, but this cannot be demonstrated with certainty. Similarly, horse and

⁵³ *Pers. comm.* Ed O'Donovan; www.mglarc.com/projects/golden_lane.htm (accessed Jan 207)

dog remains cannot be directly associated with any burial at this site, and have not been included in counts of grave goods.⁵⁴

Site / Location

The top of the ancient reef which covers the cave (and where the double-banked) D-shaped enclosure was placed, affords extensive views over the surrounding area, despite only being 51m OD, particularly south toward the Little River Maine and south-west towards the Slieve Mish, although higher ground to the west blocks all views of the sea, which is c.9km to the west in a straight line, where the Lee, of which the Little Maine is a tributary, enters the sea at Tralee Bay. Some consideration should perhaps be given in this case, however, to the subterranean nature of the burials!

Interpretation

A probable weapon inhumation with strong Scandinavian associations, this burial seems to be unique across the Scandinavian world in terms of its subterranean character. This must be regarded as a continuation of a local practice.

194.2

CLOGHERMORE CAVE, Co. KERRY

Tertiary Burial (Probable)

Cave with 'pagan' ritual

Date of Recovery 1998-2000

Q 906 128

Cremation / Inhumation

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

Artefacts (2)

A. Spindle Whorl

B. Five Amber Beads

Found within an area of the cave called the 'Graveyard' area was a pit containing cremated remains and these artefacts, which have been interpreted as evidence for a Viking Age (presumably Scandinavian) cremation. Although the artefacts were closely associated with a cremation pit, the amber beads cannot have been burned with the body, although they do show some evidence for heat damage. The spindle whorl, on the other hand, does seem to have been burned.⁵⁵

Site / Location

Further within the same cave system as 194.1, it was deposited within its floor.

Interpretation

Despite some confusion, a probable tertiary cremation within this cave system.

194.3

CLOGHERMORE CAVE, Co. KERRY

Tertiary Burial (Possible)

Cave with 'pagan' ritual

Date of Recovery 1998-2000

Q 906 128

Inhumation (Definite)

No Evidence

Record Quality Good

⁵⁴ Michael Connolly & Frank Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld; Death and Burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry* (Bray, 2005)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Artefacts (4)

- A. Bone Comb (possibly related Dublin types?)
- B. Gaming Piece
- C. Walrus Ivory Sphere
- D. Iron and CA fragments

An unusual assemblage from areas C and D of the 'graveyard', the excavators tentatively associated these objects with the partial remains of a 'prime' adult male and/or female, which had been badly disturbed, but which lay within the same general area. These clearly formed part of the second (ninth/tenth century) phase of ritual activity at the site, and were deepest within it. Given the level of disturbance, the excavators suggested that it may have been deliberately desecrated in a manner similar to the treatment of 194.1. As with the latter burial, it is possible that some of the other artefacts scattered around the cave floor may also have been associated with this grave / graves, but this cannot be demonstrated conclusively.⁵⁶

Site / Location

Slightly further into the cave system than 191.1, it was presumably accessed from the same point on the surface.

Interpretation

Due to the disturbed nature of the cave deposits, a possible tertiary inhumation, albeit one in a very unusual location. The possibility that both inhumations were furnished is entirely possible, but cannot be demonstrated conclusively. See 191.1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

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